

# Raetic

## *Rético*

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**Abstract:** The paper gives an overview of the study of Raetic. Part one contains introductory remarks concerning the structure of the corpus, research history and editions, archaeology and ancient sources, chronology and distribution, types of inscriptions and supports, alphabets, onomastics and language. Part 2 discusses open questions and possible lines of future research.

**Keywords:** Raetic. Tyrsenian language family. North Italic alphabets. Alphabet history. Epigraphy.

**Resumen:** Este trabajo busca proporcionar una panorámica del estudio del rético. La primera parte contiene unas notas introductorias acerca de la estructura del corpus, la historia de la investigación y de las ediciones, arqueología y fuentes clásicas, cronología y distribución, tipos de inscripciones y soportes, alfabetos, onomástica y lengua. La segunda parte analiza cuestiones abiertas y futuras posibles líneas de investigación.

**Palabras clave:** Rético. Familia lingüística tirsénica. Alfabetos del norte de Italia. Historia del alfabeto. Epigrafía.

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**Recepción:** 28.09.2019 | **Aceptación:** 11.03.2020

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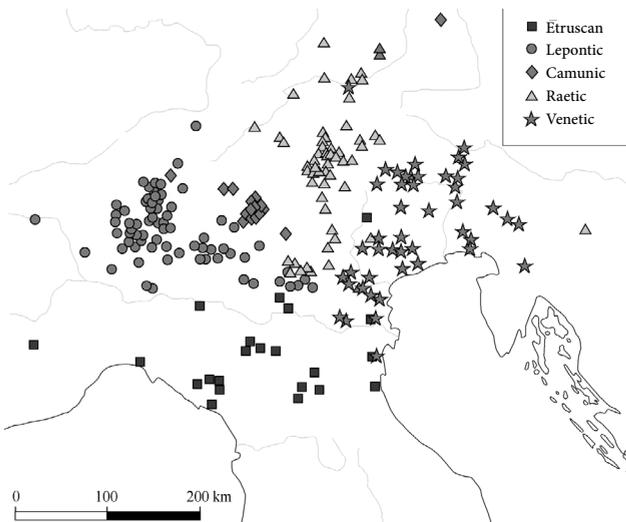
**Funding:** The research for this paper was in part funded by FWF-Austrian Science fund (project no. P 25495 *Thesaurus Inscriptionum Raeticarum*).



# 1. State of the art

## 1.1. Overview and context

The Raetic language is fragmentarily attested in a few hundred inscriptions in the Central Alpine region during the Iron Age. Together with those of Venetic, Camunic, and Cisalpine Celtic,<sup>1</sup> the Raetic corpus of inscriptions is counted among the so-called North Italic corpora, a linguistically inhomogeneous group of epigraphic corpora in Iron Age Northern Italy. These four corpora are connected, beside their chronological and geographical proximity, by the close association of their literary traditions: the various North Italic alphabets are all ultimately derived from the Etruscan alphabet of Central Italy, and are accordingly very similar in character inventory and use. The Raetic corpus includes two alphabets, which are hardly closer to each other than they are to neighbouring North Italic alphabets. The underlying languages, however, are highly diverse: with the possible but unlikely exception of the undeciphered Camunic, the Raetic language is not related to any of the other North Italic languages, but to Etruscan;<sup>2</sup> together with Lemnian on Lemnos in the Aegean, Raetic and Etruscan form what Rix 1998, 59f., has termed the Tyrsenian language family.



Map 1. This map of find places of North Italic inscriptions shows the distribution of the four corpora.

- 1 See the contributions of A. Marinetti on Venetic and D. Stifter on Cisalpine Celtic in this volume.
- 2 See the contribution of V. Belfiore on Etruscan in this volume.

## 1.2. Ancient sources, archaeology and terminology

The ethnographic term Latin *Raeti* / Greek *Ραιτοί* is borrowed from ancient geography and historiography. Polybios *Hist.* 34.10.18, Cato the Elder, *via* Servius, *Virgil Georg. comm.* 2.95, Suetonius *Aug.* 77, Pliny *Nat.* 3.130-135 and 146; 14.16 and 67, Strabo *Geogr.* 4.3.3; 6.6; 6.8; 5.1.6; 7.1.5; 5.1f., Ptolemy *Geogr.* 2.12.2, Cassius Dio *Hist. Rom.* 54.22 and Horace *Carm.* 4.4 and 14, mention the Raetians as an Alpine ethnos — initially for the quality of their wine, later as fearsome enemies in the context of Augustus' Alpine campaign of 15 BC, during which the Central Alps were conquered by Rome.<sup>3</sup> The ethnonym also occurs in a handful of Roman and Greek inscriptions.<sup>4</sup> The ancient authors' knowledge of the Alpine peoples was patchy at best, but they located various Raetic tribes with reasonable consistency in the areas of Verona, Trento and Feltre, at the sources of the Rhine and around Lake Constance — that is, roughly between Gaul in the west and the Celtic kingdom of Noricum in the east.<sup>5</sup> Pompeius Trogus, *via* Justin 20.5, claims that the Raetians were Etruscans who had fled the immigration of Gauls into the Po valley in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC to the Alps; Livy 5.33.11 reports that their language, though barbarised, was recognisably similar to Etruscan.

The association of this ancient ethnonym with the language and corpus of inscriptions to which we refer as “Raetic” today goes back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Conte Benedetto Giovanelli, mayor of Trento, can be considered the earliest researcher of Raetic (e.g., 1844). Although he knew only two inscriptions — one from Cembra east of Trento (CE-1) and one from Matrei am Brenner in North Tyrol (WE-1) — he deduced from the find places and the un-Indo-European look of the texts that these inscriptions could be documents of the ancient Raetians — a somewhat wild guess which hit the right thing: an ever-increasing number of similar inscriptions fit geographically with the ancient accounts of the Raetians' seats.<sup>6</sup> The linguistic relation with Etruscan, long suspected, was finally demonstrated in the 1990s (Schumacher 1998; Rix 1998). Pompeius Trogus' story, however, is historically and chronologically implausible — not only does Raetic literacy predate the Gaulish immigration, but the languages, though clearly related, are not identical. We do not know

3 Frei-Stolba 1992; Marzatico 2001, 487-492.

4 *CIL* X 6087, *CIL* V 3927, *CIL* V 5050 (*Tabula Clesiana*), *Tropaeum Alpium*, Sebasteion of Aphrodisias (Asia Minor).

5 Lunz 1981a; Gleirscher 1991.

6 A detailed research history can be found in Schumacher 2004, 19-108.

for how long Raetic and Etruscan had gone separate ways before they started to be written down.

From an archaeological perspective, speakers of the Raetic language or of Raetic dialects must have been settling somewhere between the Inn valley and Rovereto since the Bronze Age, or have immigrated so unobtrusively that their presence left no clear marks on the material culture of the previous inhabitants — we cannot detect the immigration of a distinct archaeological group which could be identified with speakers of Raetic into the Central Alps at any point (Gleirscher 1991, 58). It can be observed that the core area of Raetic inscription finds coincides with that of the Fritzens-Sanzeno culture of the Trentino and South Tyrol (Frei *et al.* 1984). This horizon, however, emerged organically from its precursors at the turn from the early to the late Iron Age, characterised by typical ceramics and a number of features pertaining to dress, buildings, armament and cult.<sup>7</sup> The pronounced Mediterranean aspect of Fritzens-Sanzeno is attributed to the Etruscan presence in the 6<sup>th</sup>-century Padan plain (Marzatico 1992, 233; Gleirscher 1993, 77ff.). Particularly in the cultic sphere, the dependence on influence from the south is manifest in the ornamentation and imagery on situlae and other luxury items, and, notably, in the use of script.<sup>8</sup> Though the Fritzens-Sanzeno culture — “Retico” in Italian — is generally identified as the material culture of the Raetians (Marzatico 2001, 483f.), we have numerous inscription finds from marginal areas. In the north, the Inn valley, despite its clear affinity with the Fritzens-Sanzeno group, retains some distinguishing characteristics (Gleirscher 1999, 259ff.); the region of the Alpine foothills between Trento and the Padan plain is considered part of the Raetic area, but kept apart archaeologically, its material culture being designated the “Magrè group” (Gleirscher 1991, 20; Lora & Ruta Serafini 1992). The area of Raetic inscription finds cannot be said to ever consolidate to form a homogenous “Raetic” culture.

It is not admissible to assume a one-to-one correspondence between the uncertainly defined *Raeti* as seen through the eyes of the classical authors, any archaeological groups, and the speakers of the Tyrsenian language we now call Raetic. The origin of the term *Raeti* is unknown; it may well be an exonym. We do not know whether or in how far “the Raetians” considered themselves to be an ethnos, and, if they or some of them did, whether such a community/communities was/were based on language, history, area of settlement, elements of

7 Marzatico 2001; Sölder 1992; Egg 1992.

8 Gleirscher 1991, 51f.; De Marinis 1999, 648f.; Gleirscher *et al.* 2002, 202ff.

material culture, or cult (Marzatico 2001, 484). According to Pliny, the Raetic tribes were not politically unified; the Roman division of the epigraphically Raetic area into *regio X Venetia* and provincial *Raetia* also points in this direction (cf. Gleirscher 1991, 60). Today, the term “Raetic” is primarily defined linguistically: Raetic inscriptions are those which encode the Raetic language. Palaeographic definitions, which were more important before the ultimate deciphering of the texts in the 1990s, have become secondary; aspects of material culture may be considered with due care.

Some scholars use a form with initial *rh* (“Rhaetic”, “Rhaetian”, *vel sim.*) to refer to the language and epigraphic corpus, reflecting the Greek sources for the ethnonym. We do not know the name’s etymology, but considering that the Latin form is almost certainly primary, the variant with simple *r* should be preferred.



Fig. 1. Fragment of a Fritzens bowl, one of the index types of the Fritzens-Sanzeno culture, with the inscription IT-2 *χaisurus* ‘of Xaisur’. Museum Wattens, inv. no. W.620. Photo by G. Bajc ©TIR.

### 1.3. Corpus

Today, we know between 300 and 400 Raetic inscriptions. The number depends, of course, on the edition — with new witnesses being found almost annually —, but also on the rationale of the count. Only about 160 inscriptions are certainly or at least very probably language-encoding, i.e. written in an alphabetic script which reflects linguistic entities of the Raetic language. They are usually short, with about 6-16 letters or 1-3 words. The eight longest texts have 30-40 letters or 5-8 words; even the fragmentary ones can hardly have

been much longer. About 90 inscriptions, often too damaged to be interpreted, are of doubtful status, but may be at least partly language-encoding. The rest — about 130 inscriptions — are clearly non-script: short marks with 1-5 characters of uncertain function whose elements resemble or imitate alphabetic letters and sometimes accompany “proper” texts, pseudo-inscriptions, and even outright ornaments.

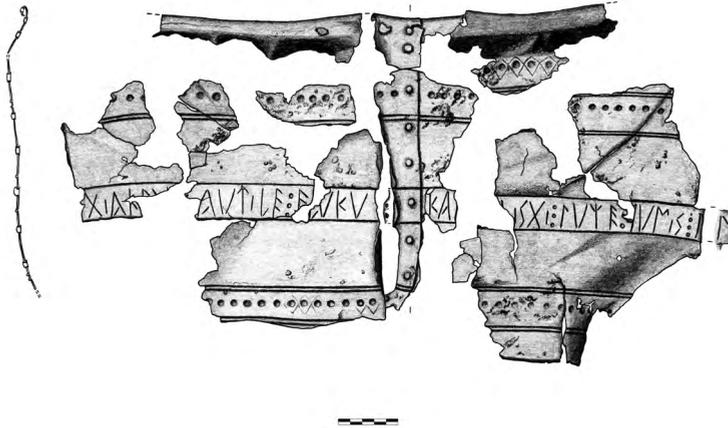


Fig. 2. One of the longest inscriptions in the Raetic corpus, the fragmentary SZ-30 on the remains of the Sanzeno situla. Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, no inv. no. Drawing by G. Bajc ©TIR.

Collections of Raetic inscriptions of historical interest include Mommsen 1853, Pauli 1885, Whatmough 1933 (*PID*) and Mancini 1975. Two printed editions have been published in recent years: Mancini 2009-2010 (*LIR*) with 262 inscriptions, with some additional non-script material, but no new language-encoding texts, and Marchesini 2015 (*MLR*), including many important new documents, with 309 inscriptions plus 20 documents whose ascription to the corpus is judged uncertain. The most current collection is the continuously updated online edition *Thesaurus Inscriptionum Raeticarum* (*TIR*) with, as of date, 379 entries, counting every separate sequence on 295 objects. This chapter cites inscriptions according to the *TIR* sigla system.

#### 1.4. Geography and chronology

Raetic inscriptions come mainly from the Trentino and South and North Tyrol. We can deduce from the ancient accounts and also from the extent of the Roman province Raetia, which was established in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century AD, that the settlement area of Raetic tribes was considerably larger than the inscription finds suggest. This is due to the fact that not all parts of the Raetic-speaking area were literate — the knowledge of writing spread north along the main water transit routes, while the hinterland remained untouched by literacy. In the south, Raetic epigraphic sites are sandwiched between the realms of Venetic and Cisalpine Celtic: we have inscriptions from the area of Verona east of the Adige and from the Alpine foreland, as well as two outliers from Padova and Castelcies (Treviso). Numerous find places in the Val di Non, including the major site Sanzeno, and in the Bolzano basin form the epicentre of Raetic literacy. In the upper Adige valley, inscriptions were found in the Vinschgau; more finds are known from the valleys of Eisack and Sill and the surrounding highlands, especially the area of Brixen and the tributary Puster valley. Inscriptions from the Inn valley come mainly from the central part around Innsbruck, though there are also finds from further west — as far as the Lower Engadine, if one single inscriptoid from Ardez (EN-1) is indeed Raetic.<sup>9</sup> Three petrograph sites, all with multiple inscriptions, are situated in the Northern Limestone Alps. Only two inscriptions on portable objects have been found beyond the Inn valley so far — one on the Fern pass (FP-1), and one in Bavaria (AV-1).

The Raetic find area is quite clearly delimited. A single Venetic inscription (It 1) was found in the Inn valley; otherwise, no foreign-language documents are known from the epigraphic realm of Raetic. All Raetic outliers in terms of geography are also marginal or unusual in other ways. AV-1 on a silver ring from Bavaria is — if the reading (Ziegeus & Rix 1998) is correct — linguistically Raetic, but written in a Camunic alphabet. It is the only inscription so far which shows Raetic written in a non-Raetic alphabet. An association of Raetic and non-Raetic literacy is also documented on the Negau helmets found in Slovenia. While the Vače helmet (SL-1) has only a Raetic inscription, the Negau helmet A (SL-2) boasts three or four linguistically and alphabetically Raetic inscriptions beside one Celtic name written in a Venetic alphabet (Marstrander 1925; 1927). Two problematic finds come from the Piave area.

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9 Risch 1989, 1580; Pellegrini 1985, 98, n. 14; *MLR* 5-7.

A comparatively lengthy and fragmentary text (TV-1.1), which is generally classified as Raetic more for its opacity than any clear Raetic features, is inscribed on one side of a small slab of stone which bears upon its other side an equally difficult Latin inscription. However, the two inscriptions appear to be unassociated (Morandi 1999). The inscriptions of Feltre on two stone slabs are widely considered to be Etruscan outliers,<sup>10</sup> but cannot at this point be absolutely excluded to be Raetic.

The Raetic writing culture lasted from the late 6<sup>th</sup> century, when the Raetians learned to write from neighbouring cultures, to the establishment of Roman rule in the Central Alps the late 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. Based strictly on archaeological datings — often uncertain or absent due to problematic find circumstances — we can reconstruct a rough chronology which begins with the Situla in Providence, the oldest object in the Raetic corpus, dated to the third quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century (Frey 1962, 46). Its inscription (HU-7) cannot, of course, be excluded to be younger — an issue that needs to be kept in mind for all inscriptions on objects of use (i.e. all objects except gravestones and votive objects without an every-day function). A handful of lengthy inscriptions on atypical objects from various places — PA-1 on the Paletta di Padova, PU-1 on the Lothen belt plaque, VR-3 on the Spada di Verona, and NO-13 on an astragalos from the Monte Ozol — are also comparatively old (6<sup>th</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>11</sup> Around 600 BC, literacy takes hold in the central Raetic area, with large numbers of finds, mainly on ritual bronze objects, from the Val di Non and the Bolzano area.<sup>12</sup> Isolated finds from the 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century also come from the Inn, Wipp and Eisack valleys, from the area of Trento, and from a single site near Verona.<sup>13</sup> In the 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century, the central Raetic area yields literary dominance to the southern parts, with group finds of inscriptions on the Alto-piano di Asiago and in the area of Verona, at Magrè (Schio) and Trissino, but also in the Vinschgau and, again sporadically, in the Inn valley.<sup>14</sup>

10 *ET Pa 4.1*; Rix 1998, 58, n. 83; Colonna 1997, 174f.; Maras 2007, 111.

11 Gambacurta *et alii* 2002, 186, no. 20; Lunz 1981b, 22; Marinetti 1987, 138f., n. 5; Perini 2002, 767.

12 Relevant datings, e.g., in Walde-Psenner 1983, 108, no. 85; Zemmer-Plank *et alii* 1985, 165, no. 34; Tschurtschenthaler & Wein 1998, 243; Schindler 1998, 231; Marzatico 2001, 526 and *passim*; Steiner 2002, 258; Gleirscher *et alii* 2002, 205f.; Gleirscher apud Schumacher 2004, 247; Marzatico 2012, 320-324.

13 E.g., Tschurtschenthaler & Wein 1998, 247; Tecchiati *et alii* 2011, 50; Marzatico 2001, 505 and 512; De Marinis 1988, 121; Gambacurta 2002b, 122, n. 22.

14 De Guio 2011, 176; Marinetti 1991, 42; Marinetti 2004a, 409 and 412; Gambacurta 2002b, 122; Ruta Serafini 2002b, 259; Gamper 2006, 254 and 265f.

Unlike the Cisalpine Celtic and especially the Venetic corpora, the Raetic one is poor in evidence for Latinisation. A single document exhibits the typical mix of vernacular language and Latin-influenced writing: a funerary inscription on a slab from Maderneid in the Bolzano area (BZ-24) which can be dated to the Late Roman Republican period by the style of its decoration. Otherwise, we have no clues about the last phases and demise of Raetic literacy. The Raetic south (up to Merano) was Romanised peacefully, which suggests a slow replacement of Raetic with Latin features as meagrely represented by the Maderneid inscription, while the Roman Alpine campaign of 15 BC is likely to have put a more immediate end to vernacular Raetic literacy in the north.

### 1.5. Object and inscription types

The Raetic inscriptions stand out among the North Italic ones by their particularly close connection with the cultic sphere. Find places are settlements, often in ritual buildings, notably many burnt-offerings sites, rarely grave fields. All the texts whose function we can determine with certainty are votive (85); a votive function is also the most likely interpretation for the majority of the remaining language-encoding inscriptions. The fact that all the obvious interpretations — dedications, funerary and owner's inscriptions — involve names often makes a determination of function difficult. There are two major groups of inscription-bearing objects — bronzes and antler pieces — which can be clearly identified as primary votive objects (i.e. objects which are made to be offered and have no other function); the interpretation and analysis of the texts applied on them further allows the classification of inscriptions on different objects. Beside the simple naming of the donor, the two predominant — or: the best understood — Raetic votive formulae are an active construction 'X donated' and a passive construction 'donated by X'.

Bronze votives — predominantly full or half-plastic statuettes depicting horses and other zoomorphic creatures, but also plaques and bronze-sheet figurines — belong in the context of orientalisising cults imported from the south; they are typical for the central Raetic area, particularly the trade and cult centre Sanzeno in the Val di Non, where the majority of them was found. Inscribed antler votives are a peculiarity of the Raetic corpus; they are distributed over the entire Raetic area, with larger find complexes at a burnt-offerings site at Magrè and in a probable cult building at Serso. Both bronzes and antler pieces are perforated, conceivably to be attached to vertical structures in sanctuaries.

Fig. 3. Bronze votive with a horse's head from Dercolo in the Val di Non with inscription NO-11 *pirikanišnu* 'Piri Kanišnu'. Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, inv. no. 1.086. Photo by W. Söldner ©Ferdinandeum.



Further major types of inscribed votive objects are ritual implements of bronze, bones and bone objects, and rock. Like the inscriptions on votive bronzes, dedications on bronze objects such as *situlae* and *simpula* are typical for the Val di Non and the “sacro anglo” — thus named for the large number of find places associated with cult — around Bolzano, while bones are found all over the Raetic area. It should be said that bones — unworked shinbones of sheep, goats or pigs, and worked needle-like objects — are classified as votives mainly because no alternative use is evident, but no bone object found so far bears a clearly dedicational inscription. The majority of the petrographs of the Northern Limestone Alps, on the other hand, are recognisable as votives by their grammar (Schumacher & Salomon 2019), even though archaeological contexts are missing. Many of the object types which are commonly inscribed with votive texts are also found bearing non- or para-script marks, which may indicate efforts to imitate writing in a cultic context.

The most prominent candidates for non-dedicational inscriptions are the texts on stone slabs, which would be expected to be funerary in function. Their number in the Raetic corpus is noticeably smaller than in the Venetic and Cisalpine Celtic ones: apart from the Roman-age Maderneid stone, only two stones can be referred to as *stelae* (BZ-6, BZ-10); two smaller and irregular slabs (NO-10, RN-1) may also belong here. None of the inscriptions are understood, but the Maderneid inscription and the inscription on the Pfatten stela (BZ-10), which arguably contain personal names in the nominative, are indeed best interpreted as funerary texts.



Fig. 4. Slab from Pfatten with inscription BZ-10.1 *tnake p<sup>i</sup>iθamu | lape?* ‘Tnake Piθamu (or Viθamu) *lape?*’. Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, inv. no. 8.636. Photo by W. Sölder ©Ferdinandeum.

In spite of the huge amount of iron objects in the corpus, there are only two certainly language-encoding documents (BZ-12, IT-7). The bulk is made up of factory marks on tools from the iron working and trading centre Sanzeno (Nothdurfter 1979). Similarly, the large number of potsherds in the Raetic corpus is unrepresentative, as the vast majority are bowls bearing short marks of unclear function. The three linguistically usable documents all come from the northern Raetic area: one votive inscription on a vessel (WE-4), and two documents from the Inn valley which contain individual names and represent the best candidates for owner’s inscriptions (IT-2, IT-8). The latter text type may generally be suspected for inscriptions which consist only in a personal name in the genitive, maybe also the nominative. We know both such inscriptions also from votive objects, however, so that a possible votive function remains possible for all of these inscriptions. Likely owner’s inscriptions are the names on the Negau helmet A, which were not inscribed at the same time and can hardly all be votive (Nedoma 1995, 20f. and *passim*).

### 1.6. Writing

The Raetic language is written with two subtly different alphabets or, if preferred, alphabet variants, which are named after the respective most important find places: Sanzeno and Magrè.<sup>15</sup> The two alphabets appear to be practically identical in character inventory and use; the differences lie in the systematic use of graphic variants of certain letters (Salomon fthc.b). The main and defining distinction consists in the associated forms of pi, lambda and upsilon: the Sanzeno alphabet features traditional forms in pi with a single bar, lambda with the bar on the bottom, and tip-down upsilon, while the

15 Pauli 1885, 46ff.; Pellegrini 1918; Mancini 1975, 306, n. 42.

Magrè alphabet employs innovative forms which are typical for the Venetic alphabets: pi with two bars, inverted lambda with the bar on top, and inverted, tip-up upsilon. Further systematic differences are the forms of tau (Salomon 2017, 244ff.), heta, and the letter for the dental affricate. The latter is, or rather: are, one of the most curious feature of the Raetic alphabets. The “arrow” character of the Sanzeno alphabet is used in inscriptions from different find places, whereas the Magrè alphabet’s “zig-zag” character is only employed at the Magrè site itself. The two letters are systematically equivalent, both representing the dental affricate /tʰ/ (Schumacher 2004, 309ff.). Finally, the two alphabets employ diverging punctuation practices. Word separation with one to usually three dots is sporadically employed in the Sanzeno alphabet, but never in the Magrè alphabet. In the latter, instead, vestiges of Venetic syllabic punctuation, where letters for sounds which do not form part of a CV-syllable are marked by puncts, can be argued to be found at certain find places.

	alpha	epsilon	waw	zeta	heta	theta	iota	kappa	lambda	mu
M	Α	ϵ	ϰ	ζ	η	θ	ι	κ	λ	μ
S	Λ	ϵ	ϰ	—	Η	Χ	Ι	Κ	↓	ϰ
	<i>a</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>θ</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>m</i>

	nu	pi	san	rho	sigma	tau	/tʰ/	upsilon	phi	chi
M	ν	π	σ	ρ	ς	τ	ϰ	ϵ	φ	χ
S	ν	π	σ	ρ	ς	τ	↑	∨	Φ	Υ
	<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>þ</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>φ</i>	<i>χ</i>

Table 1. The characters of the Magrè (M) and Sanzeno (S) alphabets (standardised and sinistroverse) with transliteration letters.

The transliteration in this chapter, following the *TIR* standard, strictly adheres to the characters used in the inscriptions: each letter of the Raetic alphabets has its own transliteration sign according to the archigrapheme, i.e. the ultimately Greek letter in whose tradition it stands (plus a randomly selected sign *þ* for transliterating the two new letters for /tʰ/).<sup>16</sup> These transliteration signs make no statement about the underlying phonemes or phones. Though many Raetic letters — those for the vowels, liquids, nasals and sibilants —

16 Since *z* is used to represent zeta, which appears sporadically in inscriptions, it is unavailable as a transliteration letter; *þ* is chosen for its similarity with the zig-zag character, but is not intended to support the dubitable theory that the Runic letter “thorn” *þ* is derived from the Magrè letter (*cf.* Salomon 2020, 173).

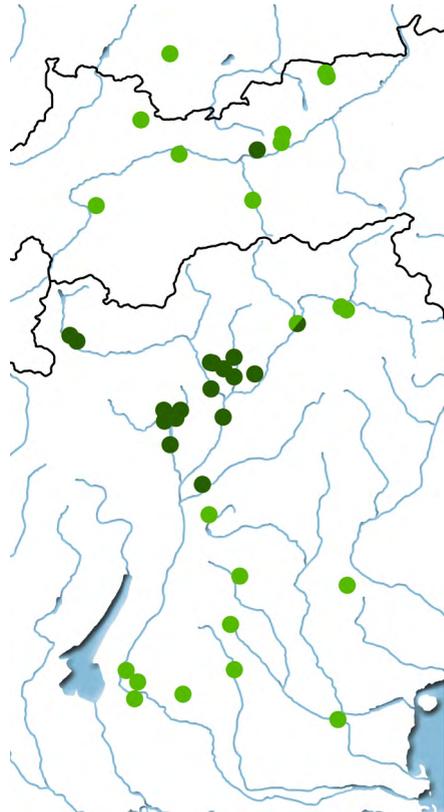
can be fairly straightforwardly transliterated/transcribed on the assumption that the underlying phoneme is reasonably closely reflected by the obvious transliteration sign, many others — mainly the letters for stops — do not lend themselves to interpretation so easily. We do not at this point know enough about the orthography of the Raetic alphabets to be in a position to interpret the evidence phonetically or even phonemically. Transcriptions — i.e. interpretative renderings of the texts which reflect normalised underlying forms — are possible in some, but not all cases, and are, for now, better avoided altogether.

The Raetic alphabets lack omicron, a feature which sets them apart from the Venetic and the Lepontic alphabet. Further characteristics pertaining to both Raetic alphabets which can be considered typical, although they are not unknown in the neighbouring alphabets, are mu with only three bars instead of the otherwise common four, and the frequent use of retrograde forms of alpha (with the bar slanting downwards against writing direction) and sigma (with the upper angle opening against writing direction) — both the latter features are significantly prevalent in the Magrè alphabet and as good as exclusive in the Sanzeno alphabet.



Fig. 5. Bronze tablet from the Demlfeld sanctuary (Ampass) with inscription IT-5. Abteilung Ur- und Frühgeschichte Universität Innsbruck, no inv. no. Photo by A. Blaickner/G. Bajc ©Abteilung Ur- und Frühgeschichte Universität Innsbruck.

The distribution of the two alphabets is not random, but involves both geographical and chronological factors. The Sanzeno alphabet is very uniform, and only used in the Central Raetic area, viz. in and between the Val di Non and the Bolzano basin. It is the alphabet which is featured in the numerous bronze votives typical for those parts, and all datable material comes from the 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century. The only exceptions are the inscription IT-5 on a bronze tablet found in the Inn valley, which is reminiscent of Central Raetic finds both inscription- and object-wise and is best classified as an outlier (Salomon 2018, 73f.), and the subcorpus from the Ganglegg settlement in the Vinschgau, which is dated to the late 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (Gamper 2006, 254). The Magrè alphabet, on the other hand, is found throughout the time of attestation in all the find places in the south (up to Trento) and the north (beyond Brixen) of the Raetic area (Salomon fthc.b). It is accordingly heterogeneous — the term “Magrè alphabet” is in fact more of a cover term for a number of local and chronological variants which share the features enumerated above, but exhibit differences with regard to, e.g., individual letter forms, obstruent spelling, and (syllabic) punctuation (*ibid.*).



Map. 2. The distribution of inscriptions written in the Sanzeno (dark dots) and Magrè (light dots) alphabets (without the Slovenian helmet finds). ©TIR.

The writing direction in Raetic inscriptions is predominantly sinistrotverse (ca. three quarters of the inscriptions), with dextroverse orientation being slightly more frequent in certain contexts, e.g., in the inscriptions from Magrè or in a certain type of rock inscriptions (Salomon 2020, 167f.). Inverted letters also occur more frequently on certain objects — in some cases, we can see that the writer turned the object in his hand while writing, with little regard to consistency of orientation (*ibid.*, 185). Real boustrophedon writing is absent, but a few inscriptions are written in reverse or false boustrophedon (e.g., WE-3).

So far, we know two ligatures in Raetic inscriptions: a ligature of nu and epsilon in certain rock inscriptions (Zavaroni 2004, 56ff.), and a ligature of lambda and the letter with a dot on top (“a punto”), possibly also including iota (Salomon 2018, 52). Putative syllabic punctuation marks in Magrè context are often inscribed into the letter they mark (Salomon 2020, 183, n. 30).

### 1.7. Onomastics

In the ca. 160 language-encoding inscriptions in the Raetic corpus, about 70 sequences can be identified as personal names with some certainty; another 30 or so sequences may be tentatively interpreted thus. Up to fourteen names, sometimes in variants, are attested more than once, e.g., *esimne*, *lavise*, *lasta*, *piθamne* and *piθie*. Many inscriptions contain only a single (individual) name, e.g., BZ-9 *piθame*, BZ 14 *rušie*, SZ-8 *kaθiave*. Most of the individual names attested in Raetic end in a vowel — particularly frequent are <sup>o</sup>*e*/<sup>o</sup>*ie*; also common are <sup>o</sup>*i*, <sup>o</sup>*a* and <sup>o</sup>*u*. The only consonantal auslaut is <sup>o</sup>*r* due to apocope, with original auslauting <sup>o</sup>*u* preserved in suffixed forms (VN-10 *laθur* vs. SZ-16 *laθuru-si*). As already observed by Untermann (especially 1959), the Raetic inscriptions share a lot of their onomastic material with pre-Roman and Roman documents from the surrounding areas of Transpadania, viz. the Venetic and Celtic spheres, particularly the distinct onomastic group of the area around Brescia. A considerable number of the names attested in the Raetic corpus appear to be loans from the other, mostly Indo-European, language groups of the Southern Alpine area, e.g., NO-15 *esumne*<sup>o</sup> ← Celtic *\*exs-obno-* ‘without fear’ (Gaul. *exomnus*), CE-1.5 *vinuθali*<sup>o</sup> ← Celtic *\*uinnotalos* < *\*uindotalos* ‘having a white forehead’ (Schumacher 1998, 102), MA-17 *valθi-ki*<sup>o</sup> ← Venetic base *volti-*. Parallels with Etruscan name material are rare and doubtful (e.g., SR-6 *aruse* ~ Etr. Vc 2.6 *arusia*) (see also Marchesini 2019). Candidates for vernacular Raetic names are, e.g., VN-11 *lumene* and SZ-2.1 *remi*, and partic-

ularly names with anlaut clusters which are unusual in Indo-European, e.g., MA-18 *knuse* and BZ-10 *tnake*.

A full Raetic name formula, attested up to 30 times, consists of an individual name and a patronym which is derived from the individual name of the father or other ancestor by suffixation of *-nu* or *-na*. These suffix allomorphs are assumed to reflect the bearer's gender, with *-nu* for masculine and the less common *-na* for feminine names (Schumacher 1998, 101; Rix 1998, 19). They are related to the Etruscan derivational suffix *-na*, which also forms patronyms (Wallace 2008, 88f.). That the Raetic patronyms were productive is shown by the rock inscription group ST-1-3. These three inscriptions name a father and his two sons, who derive their second name from the individual name of their father: ST-1 *kastrie° eθunnu°* 'Kastrie son of Eθune', ST-2 *pitaune° kaszrinu°* 'Pitaune son of Kaszrie' and ST-3 *esimne° kaszrinu°* 'Esimne son of Kaszrie' (Schumacher 2004, 342ff.). All in all, up to seven names are attested both as individual names and as bases of patronyms, e.g., SZ-3 *vistexa* → SZ-2.1 *vistexanu*. Raetic patronyms surface sporadically in Roman inscriptions of the first centuries AD, e.g., *CIL V 5023 LAUISNO* ~ VN-9 *lavise* (\**lavisnu*), *CIL V 5068 LUMENNONES* ~ VN-11 *lumene* (\**lumennu*), and, in translation, *CIL V 5033 REMI · F* ~ SZ-2.1 *remi* (\**reminu*) (Untermann 1959, 86f. and 97).

The name of the recipient of a votive gift does not appear to be an obligatory part of any Raetic dedication formula, so we do not know for certain the names of any deities. The best candidate for a Raetic theonym is *tianu*, which appears on three votive objects from sanctuary context in the Val di Non, e. g., SZ-16 *laθurusi tianus atanin* 'by Laθur for Tianu *atanin*'. The Celtic theonym *taranis* seems to be attested in an inscription on an antler piece (FI-1; Marchesini 2012).

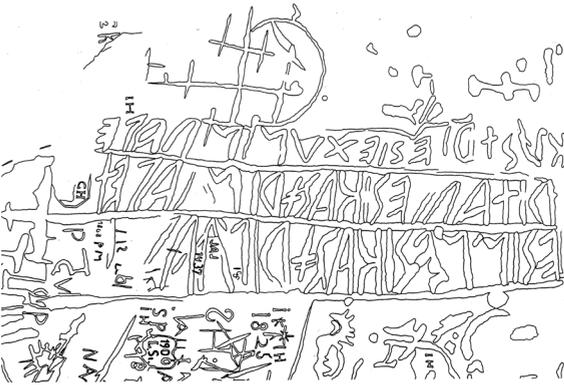


Fig. 6. The petroglyphs ST-1-3, naming Kastrie and his sons Pitaune *vel sim.* and Esimne as donors or worshippers. In situ Schneidjoch, Rofan mountains (North Tyrol). Photo from Mandl 2011, Abb. 1; drawing from Schumacher 2004, Taf. 18.

### 1.8. Language

As is often the case with fragmentary languages, our knowledge of Raetic is restricted by the limitations of the material, not only in quantity, but also in quality. The prevalent Raetic text types contain mainly personal names, beside a handful of formulaic terms; the few comparatively long and complex inscriptions remain mostly obscure due to lack of material for comparison. At the other end of the scale, a great number of inscribed characters do not appear to encode linguistic entities and cannot at this point be used for the purpose of investigating the Raetic language. Our understanding of the Raetic language is largely based on comparison with the much better attested Etruscan. There are no historical sources of Raetic, and it has left no identifiable traces in the modern languages of Switzerland, Austria and Italy — this includes the Rhaeto-Romance languages, whose name refers to the Roman province, not the original Raetians. At this point, we cannot detect evidence for dialectal, diachronic or diatopic variation within the corpus, though it must have existed over an area of roughly 500 x 250 km and more than half a century of attestation.

### 1.8.1 Phonology

The many uncertainties concerning the orthography of the Raetic alphabets condition corresponding uncertainties in the field of phonology. Since both the Venetic and the Lepontic alphabets managed to acquire omicron to write the respective languages' /o/, the absence of omicron in both Raetic alphabets is assumed not to be a palaeographic feature, but to reflect a linguistic reality, viz. the lack of phonemic /o/ in Raetic and a four-part vowel system like in Etruscan (/a/, /e/, /i/, /u/).<sup>17</sup> The evaluation of the consonant inventory is more difficult. In regard of the similarity of the vowel system, our working hypothesis is that the phoneme system is overall the same as in Etruscan. This is hard to demonstrate, however, especially for the stops, where we would expect two phonemic sets, but cannot distinguish them in the inscriptions. Raetic had a phonemic dental (or palatal) affricate /tʰ/ and probably also two sibilants /s/ and /š/ (dental and palatal), as well as two nasals /n/, /m/, and two liquids /r/, /l/ to match the corresponding Etruscan phonemes. As in Etruscan, only the glide /ɥ/ is reflected on the graphematic level — a relic from Greek writing — and it is not clear whether the glides /j/ and /ɥ/ were phonemic. Sporadic heta indicates the presence of a glottal fricative.

### 1.8.2 Morphology

Since the dominance of names in the corpus does not restrict the attestation of morphological elements as much as that of lexical items, the nominal inflectional morphology is the best understood part of Raetic. Indeed, it was the comparison of derivational and inflectional suffixes which ultimately led to the verification of the claim that Raetic and Etruscan are related languages (Rix 1998; Schumacher 1998).

Nom./Acc.		Locative		Genitive		Ablative		Pertinentive	
-∅	-∅	-i	-iʔ	I -s	I -s	I -s (+uml.)	I -s (+uml.)	I -si	I -si
				II -a, -(a)l	II -aʔ	II -las		II -(a)le	II -(a)le

Table 2. Case endings in Etruscan (grey; following Rix 1985, 223ff.) and Raetic (white).

17 See chapter on Etruscan, section 1.4, in this volume.

Apart from the unmarked *casus rectus*, the best attested cases in Raetic are the genitive and the pertinentive. The genitive has two allomorphs in Etruscan, but only one, genitive I *-s*, is certainly attested in Raetic; the existence and exact shape of the genitive II allomorph is under discussion. The pertinentive is a complex case, viz. a locative to the genitive, whose make-up is reflected in its two allomorphs I *-si* and II *-(a)le* — both attested in Raetic —, which are based on those of the genitive. There are a few forms, all in inscriptions with uncertain segmentation, which may feature an ending *-i*, e.g., BZ-4 *aχvili*, but it is not certain whether these are locatives. More reliable is the single attestation of the ablative ending *-s* in IT-5 *kleimunθeis* (De Simone 2013, 59).

The majority of inscriptions contains probable donors' names in the nominative, e.g., MA-1 *piθamne helanu* and CE-1.5 *φelna vinuθalina*. The pertinentive marks the names of the donors of votive gifts in passive phrasing, e.g., NO-17 *ketavuvale* 'by/from Ketanu', ST-1 *kastriesi eθunnuale* 'by/from Kastrie Eθunnu'. The individual name is almost always marked with the allomorph *-si*, the patronym with *-ale*. The genitive sometimes appears on its own and may mark owners in inscriptions like BZ-2 *enikes* 'of Enike' and IT-2 *χaisurus* 'of Xaisuru'. In clear dedicational texts like NO-15 *esumnesi nuβnuale utiku tianus* 'by Esumne Nuβnu gift of [= for<sup>2</sup>] Tianu', it seems to refer to the recipient of the votive gift.



Fig. 7. Bronze axe from Tisens with inscription BZ-2 *enikes* 'of Enike'.  
Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, inv. no. 1.684.  
Photo by W. Sölder ©Ferdinandeum.

The Etruscan animate plural ending *-r(a)* is attested twice in Raetic: SZ-4.1 *φute-r* and IT-5 *avaśue-ra-si* — as in Etruscan, auslauting *a* was lost through apocope, as shown by *φuter*, while it is preserved in the morpheme syntagma *-ra-si* in *avaśuerasi* (De Simone 2013, 56). The two forms show that Raetic was, like Etruscan, agglutinating.

As regards verbal morphology, we can identify two suffixes, also known from Etruscan: the 3<sup>rd</sup> person preterite ending *-ke*, attested securely only in the verbal form *pinake/pina-χe* ‘donated’ *vel sim.*, and a suffix *-u* which derives verbal nouns from preterite forms. The latter is so far only attested in two forms which occur repeatedly and can be translated as preterites or nouns: *uti-k-u* ‘given’ or ‘gift’ *vel sim.* and *elu-k-u* ‘sacrificed’ or ‘sacrifice’ *vel sim.* While *pinake* appears with names in the nominative, e.g., MA-8 *reiθe muiu pinaxe* ‘Reiθe muiu donated’, the *ku*-forms are part of passive constructions in combination with pertinentive and sometimes genitive forms, e.g., WE-3 *lastasi eluku piθamnuaie* ‘sacrificed by / sacrifice from Lasta Piθamnu’ and NO-3 *φel(i<sup>?</sup>)turiesi φelvinuaie utiku* ‘given by / gift from Φel(i<sup>?</sup>)turie Φelvinu’. The sparse evidence indicates that Raetic had unmarked SOV word order.

### 1.8.2 Lexicon

Due to the nature of Raetic inscriptions in terms of text type, we do not have much in the way of lexical material other than names. The best sources for non-onomastic material, the longer inscriptions, are notoriously hard to interpret and yield mainly hapax legomena. The identification and interpretation of lexical items is, again, primarily based on comparison with Etruscan.



Fig. 8. Antler piece from Stufels (Brixen) with inscription WE-3 *lastasi eluku piθamnuaie* ‘sacrificed by Lasta Piθamnu’. Amt für Bodendenkmäler Bozen, inv. no. St. 6992. Photo by G. Bajc ©TIR.

The most convincing equation, already recognised by Thurneysen 1933, 1ff., is the frequently attested Raetic *ke*-preterite *þinax̥e* ~ Etr. *zinace*. The verbal nouns *eluku* and *utiku* have been compared to Etruscan forms (*ilucu* ‘sacrifice’ and *utince* in the *Liber Linteus*) by Rix 1998, 36ff., but both Etruscan comparanda are disputable in themselves. Rix 1998, 48, n. 2, also suggested an Etruscan connection for the well-attested Raetic *terisna*, which he compared with Etr. *zeri* ‘all’ → \**zeris-na* ‘belonging to everyone’ = ‘public’ — this etymology also involves Lemnian forms (cf. Salomon 2017, 253ff.) and remains problematic. SZ-2 *sþura* has been compared with the amply attested Etr. *sþura* ‘township, community’ (Schumacher 2004, 301). SZ-4.1 *þal* has a clear cognate in Etr. *zal* ‘two’ (Rix 1998, 57s.), the interpretation being supported by the accompanying plural noun *þuter*, though the latter’s meaning is unknown. Further re-occurring opaque sequences which may be nouns include *tani(u)n*, *kaial* and *aþvil*.

The enclitic deictic pronoun (archaic Etruscan [-]ita, Neo-Etruscan -ta) is attested twice: WE-4 -ta (Tecchiati *et al.* 2011, 51) and IT-5 -þeis (ablative; De Simone 2013, 59). Both inscriptions are fragmentary, so that the element cannot be analysed in a complete syntactic context. The only well arguable attestation of a Raetic equivalent of the Etruscan enclitic conjunction -c ‘and’ was suggested by Rix 1998, 34, for VR-3 *remie-s-hi ratasuv-a-k-hi* ‘by Remie and Ratasu’ (with -hi as an enclitic particle with genitive), but no further evidence can be adduced. The Etruscan postposition -þi/-ti ‘in, by’, which occurs with locative forms, may be attested in BZ-4 *aþvili-ti* ‘in/by the X’, supporting the interpretation of *aþvili* as a locative in -i.

## 2. Future challenges

### 2.1. Corpus and edition

The Raetic corpus is very well edited, and new-found inscriptions tend to be published quickly and accessibly. With *TIR*, a complete and continuously updated critical edition is available online, making the Raetic corpus currently the best edited one of the North Italic, maybe of all Italic epigraphic corpora. If anything, we are dealing with a surplus of editions, especially as editors are disposed to introduce ever new sigla systems — at the moment, three are available: Schumacher’s sigla, introduced in 1992 and used here, are modelled on Pellegrini & Prosdocimi’s system for Venetic,<sup>18</sup> working with two-letter area

18 See chapter on Venetic, section 2.1, in this volume.

codes for a rough subgrouping of documents. Mancini's *LIR* sigla are confusingly similar to Schumacher's in form, but entirely different in detail — this system is not, to my knowledge, used in the literature. In Marchesini's *MLR*, inscriptions are ordered by find place, but consecutively numbered without subgrouping. Scholars who are not immediately concerned with Raetic often cite inscriptions from outdated editions, particularly Whatmough's *PID*. *TIR* provides automatic concordances for all editions, but the failure to agree on a convention remains dissatisfactory.

Another issue concerns the disproportionate number — both in absolute terms, and in comparison with other Italic epigraphic corpora — of non- and para-script items which inflate the Raetic corpus. The vast majority of these marks must be expected to have a para-linguistic meaning (factory marks, tokens, symbols, pseudo-script, possibly numbers) and should not be completely disregarded — in any case, they are hard to eject after they have been repeatedly included in editions and ascribed unique sigla. The decision whether to include more such marks, especially ones that accompany language-encoding inscriptions or resemble already represented marks, in the corpus depends on the individual judgement of the editors.

There is no consensus on transliteration/transcription, though this is due not so much to different approaches than to disagreements about the interpretation of individual letters. This concerns particularly the characters for dentals: the letters for /t<sup>s</sup>/ are often reflected in transliteration by non-committally reproducing the Raetic letter forms with specially-made glyphs, which is laudably non-interpretative, but hard to reproduce for scholars who do not regularly deal with Raetic forms. Tau and St. Andrew's cross, on the other hand, tend to be indiscriminately transliterated with *t*, masking possible different derivations, systemic functions, and sound values (e.g., *MLR*). The character *a punto* is provisionally filed as a variant of tau in *TIR*, but other scholars regard it as a third letter variant for /t<sup>s</sup>/ (e.g., Mancini 1991, 82ff.; *LIR*) or as a form of phi (e.g., *MLR*). The interpretation of Sanzeno tau as such is quite new (Salomon 2017, 244ff.); the letter is treated as a variant of pi in the previous literature. Pi with a pocket, on the other hand, is sometimes interpreted as a form of rho (e.g., *MLR*; Markey 2006, 153ff.). There is also debate about the function of punctuation marks in Magrè-alphabet context as syllabic puncts (*TIR*) or word separators or other marks (*MLR*).

## 2.2. Writing

While the Raetic alphabets are in essence standard North Italic letter inventories which can be read without difficulties, our understanding of their peculiarities is in fact rather vague. Maybe the most prominent issue concerns the alphabets' origin(s). Long before the uniformity of the language was ascertained, it was established that, from a palaeographic perspective, two subcorpora were involved: the Sanzeno alphabet with its more "traditional" letter forms has an Etruscan look to it, while the inverted letters and in-word punctuation of the Magrè alphabet, coupled with the southern Raetic area's proximity to the Venetic realm, suggest a connection with Venetic writing traditions (e.g., *PID*, 507; Prosdocimi 1971, 31ff.). Yet the two alphabets share certain features which indicate a common origin — most importantly, as elaborated by Rix 1998, 48ff., in the use of two new letters to denote /t<sup>s</sup>/. Rix's argument states that, since the Etruscan alphabet had a perfectly adequate letter for the affricate in zeta, the non-employment of that letter for Raetic /t<sup>s</sup>/ shows that both Raetic alphabets were derived from a Venetic model — the Venetic alphabets making no or different use of zeta.<sup>19</sup> Rix further attempted to support his theory by showing that the reason for the apparent irregularity of Raetic obstruent orthography can be found in Venetic mediacy as well. From comparison with Etruscan, two phonemic sets of stops/obstruents should be expected in Raetic, but if they exist, they are obscured by orthographic practice. Based purely on statistics, it appears that pi, St. Andrew's cross (theta) and kappa are the standard letters for stops; the function(s) of phi, tau and chi are not evident. To explain this deviation from Etruscan orthography, which should have matched the Raetic phonemes perfectly, Rix argued that the use of St. Andrew's cross as the main dental character was a Venetic feature and that the seemingly random distribution of the stop characters reflected optional allophone spelling based on Venetic sound values. The latter theories retain some explanatory value, especially for the unexpected variation of <ke> vs. <χe> for the underlying preterite ending *-ke*, but are not entirely convincing in detail (not least because Rix' analyses of Etruscan and Venetic phonetics are not always *communis opinio*). The zeta-argument, however, remains compelling. It is yet to be determined whether the Raetic alphabets a) originated as one, then separated, b) are based on different models, with shared features due to secondary adaptation processes, or c) whether we have to imagine a more

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19 See chapter on Venetic, section 3.2, in this volume.

complex scenario in which they emerged and developed parallel to each other and in permanent contact with neighbouring traditions (Salomon fthc.b).

In all this, it must of course not be forgotten that, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a “Magrè alphabet”. The oldest documents are not at all uniform in their character inventories: HU-7 and VR-3 feature the character *a punto*, PA-1 appears to only know pi, theta and kappa for stops, and PU-1 is one of the few inscriptions which contain zeta, albeit in a highly marginal variant (Salomon 2018, 66). There are two distinct types of rock inscriptions (e.g., at Steinberg, ST-1-3 vs. ST-5 and 6), which differ in letter forms and content (Salomon 2020, 167f.). The zig-zag character is only used at Magrè, the Inn valley has its own variant of pi with a large, open pocket (Salomon 2018, 95), and certain inscriptions from the area of Verona display some highly idiosyncratic features (*ibid.*, 42ff.). Syllabic punctuation and other, more obscure punctuation practices are only employed at a few sites, and rare letters like the character *a punto* and zeta pop up sporadically in different contexts. In stark contrast, the Sanzeno alphabet displays no internal variants beyond very minor differences in letter forms (Salomon fthc.b), so that we may entertain the possibility that it represents a centralised writing tradition, maybe emanating from a sanctuary at Sanzeno.<sup>20</sup>

The issue of the alphabets’ respective origin has repercussions for the identification and interpretation of individual letters — the main contentious points were already mentioned in the context of transliteration. The models for the letters for the dental affricate are yet to be identified — Schumacher 2004, 311, judged them to be creations from scratch, but other scholars have suggested possible derivations via ligatures of tau and sigma or san (Rix 1992, 420; 1998, 47; Markey 2001, 93), and both letters have potential comparanda in characters found in Camunic alphabetaria (Salomon 2020, 171ff.). A particularly intriguing problem is posed by the letter *a punto*, whose model is equally obscure. The letter is rare and appears only in inscriptions until the 4<sup>th</sup> century; it seems to be systematically equivalent to Sanzeno tau, but its origin and reason for existence remain unclear (Salomon 2017, 250ff.). Another major point that needs clearing up is the relation between regular tau with a straight hasta and St. Andrew’s cross. While the two letters are widely regarded as equivalent, a look at the neighbouring corpora shows that the situation is rather complex. St. Andrew’s cross is a peculiarity of the North

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20 Cf. Gleirscher *et al.* 2002, 251, no. 155; Nothdurfter 2002, 1136; Marzatico 2001, 494f.

Italic alphabets, and involved theories for its origin(s) (from theta vs. tau) and function(s) have been put forward for the Venetic (Prosdocimi 1988, 332) and Cisalpine Celtic (Maras 2014, 82f.) corpora. The identification of Raetic St. Andrew's cross as theta is advisable in regard of the absence of any other forms of theta in the corpus, but the dependence of the Raetic alphabets on neighbouring North Italic ones means that the possibility that St. Andrew's cross has more than one origin (and function?) in Raetic must be kept in evidence (Salomon fthc.a). The same goes for san — the letter would a *priori* be expected to denote a second (palatal) sibilant, as it does in Etruscan, but, again, neighbouring North Italic orthographies, in which san is put to various creative uses,<sup>21</sup> may have influenced Raetic writing practice, so that it is not clear that the letter has a consistent function throughout the Raetic corpus (Salomon fthc.a). Finally, the motivation(s) and function(s) of zeta in its different contexts — the archaic inscription PU-1, one of the two types of petrographs, one inscription at Magrè (MA-23), and inscriptions from the area of Verona — need to be addressed: does the letter spell a dental stop like in the Venetic Este alphabet, or is it in some traditions used to denote /t<sup>s</sup>/ after all? (Salomon 2018, 42ff.)

#### 2.4. Onomastics

Promising lines of research in the area of onomastics are numerous — our picture of the Raetic namescape today is fairly clear in its outlines, but most details require closer inspection. Cumulative insights like new or improved analyses of and etymologies for onomastic elements will contribute to our understanding of the place of Raetic in the North Italic namescape: whence are onomastic bases and suffixes loaned; can we find Raetic onomastic material in neighbouring corpora; how much Tyrsenian name material is left in Raetic?

An issue connected with the question of Tyrsenian vs. Indo-European in Raetic names concerns the auslauts of individual names. The commonness of names ending in *-(i)e* is a notable parallel to Etruscan, but it is not clear whether this reflects a common Tyrsenian stem class (*cf.* De Simone 1970, 142) or whether the similarity is typological rather than genetic, in that these auslauts are imported from Indo-European languages in *o-* and *i̯o-*stem names which were borrowed in the vocative.<sup>22</sup> Due to the differences in name systems and borrowing history, the analysis of Raetic based on Etruscan reaches

21 See chapter on Cisalpine Celtic, section 1.6, in this volume.

22 Schumacher 1998, 95; 2004, 295f., n. 173; Stifter 2013, 49ff.

its limits here. Raetic names in °*i* are mostly short (e.g., NO-11 *piri*, SZ-10 *χeli*, SZ-2.1 *remi*), so that *-i* might be a suffix for forming hypocoristic names, but it also appears to serve as a suffix for feminine names. The gender significance of °*a* is equally uncertain — any number of the Raetic names in °*a* may be loaned from Indo-European languages, but while we do not have any certain equations with demonstrably feminine names in other corpora, we do have such equations for masculine names in °*a*, which are frequent in the area of Brescia (e.g., CIL V 4376 *vassa* ~ SZ-5 *vaḫanu*; Untermann 1959, 143ff.).



Fig. 9. Antler piece from Magrè with inscription MA-18 *knusesusinu* ‘Knuse Susinu’. Museo Nazionale Atestino, inv. no. 58818.  
Photo by G. Bajc ©Museo Nazionale Atestino.

The problem of distinguishing masculine and feminine individual names is at once aided and complicated by the question of whether the patronymic suffixes *-nu* and *-na* mark gender — the theory that they are gender-specific is intuitively appealing and supported by the fact that there is no overlap between individual names combined with *-nu* or *-na*, but not conclusively verifiable. A connection of the suffix with the Etruscan derivational suffix *-na*, which forms genitival adjectives and patronyms, seems evident, but it is not clear how the Raetic forms — specifically, the *u* in *-nu* — and the putative distribution came about (cf. Rix 1998, 20, n. 3).

Concerning the patronymic system as a whole, the evidence for productive patronyms stands beside such as may indicate inherited family names, viz. the occurrence of single names ending in °*nu*/°*na*. These names, e.g., SR-3.1 *aruśnas* (gen.), NO-17 *ketanuvale* (pert.) or SZ-31 *remina*, do formally look like patronyms, and their appearance without an accompanying individual

name would be an unexpected feature in a patronymic system. The Raetic name system may have shifted to a family name system at some point during the half-millennium of its attestation (cf. Salomon fthc.c).

No patronymic/surname-forming suffixes other than *-nu* and *-na* have so far been identified, though the wealth of such in neighbouring traditions and in Etruscan strongly suggests that they must be there. A handful of likely name formulae feature second names which do not end in *nu/-na*, but *-i* (SZ-14 *φelituriesi sletile* (pert.), HU-7 *?ekiesi metlainile* (pert.), IT-4 *piθiavesi χurvile* (pert.) and CE-1.1 *lavise śeli*), but these examples are not sufficient to posit the existence of a suffix *-i*. A word-final element *-pu* occurs three times at Magrè (e.g., MA-5 *piθieikuśipu*) — it may be observed that all three elements which are suffixed with *-pu* may find possible comparanda in the Transpadanian onomastic pool, but the element is opaque and may be lexical as well as onomastic.

## 2.5. Language

Most major issues which concern the phonology and phonetics of the Raetic language, such as the fate of the second obstruent row and of Etruscan phonemic /f/, are dependent on advances in the area of graphematics. In addition to those mentioned in section 2.2, interesting questions include the spelling of [o] in Indo-European loan names with alpha or upsilon, and whether it reflects a phonetic development like the one proposed for Etruscan by Agostiniani 1992, 48. The topic of the sound value(s) denoted by san is complicated by the possibility of palatalisation processes paralleling those of Northern Etruscan, such as *s > ś / \_n* (Eichner 2012, 25 [n. 43]), e.g., SR-6 *aruse* ~ SR-3.1 *aruśnas* (gen.), or the *lariś*-rule (*ibid.*, 30s.), e.g., the tentative equation VR-14 *lav[i]śa* ~ VN-9 *lavise*.

As far as morphology and lexicon are concerned, the study of Raetic suffers from the same problems as that of other very fragmentarily attested languages — there are few texts, those that there are are formulaic and contain mainly names; the few longer texts are obscure due to lack of comparanda. New insights can be expected from new finds, as demonstrated by the Ampass bronze tablet (IT-5), published in 2015, which documents two firsts in a certain ablative form and a recognisable complex inflected form which shows agglutination. Otherwise, advances in the study of the better understood Etruscan can provide starting points for investigations of Raetic — for example, the matter of the existence of the Etruscan genitive II in Raetic, and

the relationship between the pertinentive II allomorphs *-le* and *-ale*, which is difficult to tackle in Raetic as long as it is not resolved in Etruscan.

The next necessary step is the investigation of Raetic case functions — although the case endings are practically identical formally to those of Etruscan, the semantics, especially of the pertinentive case, appear to differ from those of Etruscan. The exact range of functions of the Etruscan pertinentive — specifically, which party it names in votive or secular gift inscriptions — is itself under discussion (Rix 1985, 227); according to Agostiniani 2011, 26ff., it always refers to the recipient or beneficiary in passive constructions, having systematically taken over one of the functions of the dative in marking the indirect object. Agostiniani's attractive analysis is, unfortunately, in direct contradiction to the Raetic evidence, where the numerous two-part name formulae in the pertinentive which dominate the votive inscriptions can hardly name so many deities, but must be expected to refer to the donors. We need to either explain this contradictory semantic outcome which contrasts the practically identical morphology, or to refine our analyses to achieve a more consistent picture, e.g., by involving additional parties than the obvious ones, such as sponsors and beneficiaries.

A decided semantic discrepancy is also in evidence in our best Tyrsenian lexical equation *pinake* ~ *zinace*. The Raetic and Etruscan forms are lexically and morphologically equivalent, but Etr. *zinace* means 'made, produced', appearing in workmen's inscriptions, while its Raetic equivalent appears on votive objects produced specifically for donation, whose inscriptions are unlikely to say 'X made this'. Rix 1998, 44f., suggests that the two differing meanings 'made' vs. 'dedicated' are derived from an original one 'put, place'. An alternative is hinted at by Agostiniani 2011, 34f., who translates Etr. *zinace* as 'ha inciso'.<sup>23</sup>

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23 See chapter on Etruscan, section 2.1, in this volume.



Fig. 10. Bronze simulum from Terlan with inscription BZ-3 *taniun:lašanuale* | *utiku:terunies:šxaistala* 'taniun by Lašanu given for' Terunie *šxaistala*'. Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, inv. no. 115. Photo by W. Sölder ©Ferdinandeum.

It is at this point hard to judge how closely Etruscan and Raetic are related to each other, not least because of the conflict between high formal similarity and unexpected semantic variance. The forms of the grammatical morphemes which we can compare are, in the majority of cases, identical, having undergone prehistoric apocope, and so are some of the lexical morphemes and indeed full equations. On the other hand, we have well-attested words in Raetic which find no or no convincing comparanda in Etruscan, the onomastic material shows little to no overlap, and the Raetic patronymic suffixes, though they can be formally and functionally compared to those of prehistoric/archaic Etruscan, are different even from those used in Etruria before the emergence of the Central Italic family name system. Of course, some of the discrepancies may have more to do with differences between formulaic text types than between languages. The Raetic writing culture is only partly, if at all, dependent on that of Etruscan, so that its inscriptions resemble those of Etruscan only at one remove. The formulae which emerged probably did so without immediate reference to Etruscan texts, and the vocabulary which is habitually used in them is an independent selection from the language's inventory.

Rix 1998, 60, assumed a separation of Raetic and Etruscan a few centuries prior to their attestation; he dated Proto-Tyrsenian to around the turn from the second to the first millennium BC. Schumacher 2004, 316f., further points to the lack of any Raetic evidence for syncope triggered by protosyllabic stress, which is so characteristic for Etruscan from the 5<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In Etruscan, sporadic variation between vowels in non-initial syllables already in the

7<sup>th</sup> century shows that the dynamic protosyllabic accent dates at least to archaic Etruscan (Rix 1985, 217); Schumacher concludes that this accent pattern in Etruscan is prehistoric, and that Raetic, which either had no protosyllabic stress or none strong enough to lead to syncopation, was already distant from Etruscan at that time, but *cf.* Rix 1985, 117f., and Agostiniani 1992, 52. The question of the relationship between and time of separation of Raetic and Etruscan feeds into the much-discussed Tyrsenian homeland issue, which also involves the evidence of Lemnian, the third Tyrsenian language, which is attested in the Aegean. The presence of speakers of a Tyrsenian language in the Italian Alps, especially if they separated from the Etruscan branch already in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC as assumed by Rix, certainly supports an Italic origin of the Tyrsenian languages by shifting the balance point of evidence, even though an arrival of the Raetians in their historic homesteads itself is not archaeologically manifest.

## 2.2 Epigraphy

As indicated in section 1.4, the chronology of Raetic inscriptions is a difficult issue, and different positions are being held by current scholars. The Raetic corpus contains a plethora of old finds, whose context is unknown, and typological datings can only be extended to inscriptions with great care. An attempt at a comprehensive chronology based on letter forms with the help of serialisation software was made by Marchesini in *MLR*.

Despite the good state of research on the Fritzens-Sanzeno culture, there are still types of inscribed objects whose function is unclear, which hampers our efforts to interpret the inscriptions. This concerns, for example, the bones and particularly the “bone needles” or better “bone points” — small bone objects with a flattened blade and usually round handle — which occur both uninscribed and bearing marks or names. In the Ganglegg settlement in the Vinschgau (Gamper 2006, 107ff.) and at the Trissino site (Lora & Ruta Serafini 1992, 262), bones and bone points were found in layers of ash and debris on the floors of houses which were ritually abandoned. The fact that they are usually perforated associates these objects with the bronze and antler votives, but they have also been interpreted as *sortes* (e.g. Gambacurta 2002, 122ff.). Gamper 2006, 144f., suggests that the bone points were craftsmen’s instruments or clothing accessories, pointing to an uninscribed specimen whose hole looks as if it was worn out by a string.



Fig. 11. Bone point from the Ganglegg in the Vinschgau with inscription VN-11 *lumene·χα·χιθiiii* 'Lumene ??'. Vintschger Museum, inv. no. G 97.207. Photo by G. Bajc ©TIR.

The significance of the characteristically Raetic worked antler pieces is also not entirely clear. The objects are widely considered to represent the handles of keys and function as *pars-pro-toto* offerings (e.g., Nothdurfter 2002, 1131) — the ritual relevance of the key is thought to be derived from its status as an attribute of a female deity or priestess known from depictions in the Venetic area (though inscribed antler pieces are notably absent from the Venetic corpus). The question also concerns the handful of inscribed antler grip plates in the corpus, whose relation the straight-to-votive antlers is uncertain, and for whose inscriptions a secular function cannot be excluded.

Finally, we don't know how deep Raetic literacy went — could dedicants write their own names, or was this done by scribes or priests at sanctuaries? Do we have any private texts at all? Are the petrographs connected to sanctuaries at important travel routes? Is all Raetic literacy connected with cultic practices along routes of transit? Why is there hardly any evidence for Romanisation, even in the peacefully integrated south? The Raetic epigraphic corpus holds a plethora of unanswered questions which invite future research.

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