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A Plurilingual Family in the Sixteenth Century: Language Use and Linguistic Consciousness in the Salis Family Correspondence, 1580–1610

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The family correspondence of the Salis family in eastern Switzerland reveals complex patterns of language usage. Letters by family members during the late sixteenth century used their native Romansh as well as Latin, German, Italian, and French. Sons used Latin to write their father, whereas he felt free to write them in other languages as well, and admonished his sons for speaking Romansh. Women did not know Latin, but struggled to write in German or Italian rather than use Romansh. In addition to the constraints of intelligibility and social context revealed by their language choices, the letters reveal family members' heightened linguistic consciousness. Salis writers deployed arguments about the status of languages in their own discussions, and they showed a keen awareness of the importance of both language and dialect for social advancement.

PERSONAL LETTERS have always been an important historical source, and correspondence among family members has more recently been recognized as providing valuable insights into the social history of the family, as well. Indeed, in arguing for a return to written sources such as family letters, Steven Ozment has even claimed that "unlike the voiceless masses whose human experience and culture they share, these people are also able to speak for their age."[1] Yet family letters do not only uncover the experiences of their authors, as Ozment suggests: they also carry many other kinds of information, such as patterns of communication and deference within the family, clues to educational backgrounds and rhetorical strategies, and—the topic of this paper—the use of different languages in a world where the correspondents could choose among several. A substantial collection of such letters has survived from one branch of the Salis family of eastern Switzerland.[2] At the end of

[1] Steven Ozment, *Three Behaim Boys: Growing up in Early Modern Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), xii.

[2] The collection is located at the Staatsarchiv Graubünden [STAGr], Dauerdepositum Salis, in the signatures D II a3–a28 (mixed with correspondence and documents from other branches of the widespread Salis clan). For this paper I collected information on 185 family letters, and actually copied, transcribed, and translated 60. Some of the Latin letters also contain snippets of Greek, but these were usually single words or at most quoted aphorisms.

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the sixteenth century, members of this family wrote to each other in no fewer than five different languages: Latin, Italian, German, Romansh, and French.

This is in itself unusual; more typical European families, like those studied by Ozment, might conduct their business in several vernaculars, but they corresponded primarily in their native tongue. Scholars, lawyers, and intellectuals, meanwhile, still favored Latin; the best educated might even be bilingual, in both Latin and Greek. Rarely, however, is such a multiplicity of tongues found within the letters of a single family.[3] Yet such an unusual situation can be useful: because they were comfortably multilingual, the Salis family correspondence can reveal the place that different languages took in the writers' personal and family lives, while the differences in language use between men and women, between young and old, between parents and children can provide fascinating clues to patterns of communication, hierarchy, and education within the family structure. The letters help reveal how the Salis family chose among the languages available to them, and how their situation affected their ideas about the importance of language in general.

It is well known, of course, that many languages were used in continental Europe during the early modern period, and that the linguistic landscape could be extraordinarily complex.[4] As vernacular languages took written form towards the end of the Middle Ages, even nominally monolingual regions could expect to encounter at least three languages in daily use: Latin for legal and church documents, a written vernacular for everyday record keeping, and local spoken vernaculars that might differ considerably from the written form, and even from village to village. Closer to the boundary between major linguistic zones, the situation could get even more complicated. Georges Lüdi has shown how Fribourg, Switzerland, which lies right on the divide between French and German, experienced effective pentaglossy during the fifteenth century: Latin, chancery German, and Parisian French were used as formal languages, while more informal communication might take place in either Alemannic German dialect or Franco-Provençal Romance. Apparently many speakers were multilingual, and all five languages appear in the written records to some extent.[5] Along the Franco-German border further north, in contrast, bilingualism seems to have been much less common

[3]Ozment, *Three Behaim Boys*, does not usually state the original language used, but his notes and the comments on p. xiv reveal that some were in Latin, some in German.

[4]In addition to the specific studies cited, I have benefited from various studies of literacy and language use in the medieval and early modern period; see, e.g., Peter Burke and Roy Porter, eds., *The Social History of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), and *Language, Self and Society: A Social History of Language* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), 151–174; Joshua Fishman, "Bilingualism and Biculturism as Individual and as Societal Phenomena," reprinted in *Language and Ethnicity in Minority Sociolinguistic Perspective* (Clevedon and Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, Ltd., 1989), 181–201, and "The Relationship between Micro- and Macro-Sociolinguistics in the Study of Who Speaks What Language to Whom and When," in *Sociolinguistics*, ed. J. B. Pride and J. Holmes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 15–32.

[5]Georges Lüdi, "Ein historisches Beispiel für Polyglossie: Stadtsprachen in Fribourg/Freiburg i. Ue. im XIV./XIV. Jahrhundert," in *Historische Sprachkonflikte*, ed. P. H. Nelde (Bonn: Dümmler, 1989), 37–55.

until the growing pressures from states on both sides of the border during the later Ancien Régime made language use a pressing issue.[6] Some of the most extreme examples of linguistic complexity during this period come from the central Alps where the Salis family lived, where the German, Italian, and Romansh languages overlapped in a crazy-quilt pattern.[7]

On the whole, the details of language choice in early modern Europe are still unexplored territory, with most scholarship focusing on the implications of the Latin-vernacular distinction.[8] Passing references to the issue appear in many historical studies, but sociolinguists have been the most systematic in their research. According to their studies, a primary criterion for language choice was always the ability of the intended partner, reflecting the fundamental function of language as a medium of communication. They have also noted the frequency of "code switching"—changing languages in midstream—in early modern written texts, while recent sociolinguistic models have generally moved beyond the simple distinction between "high" and "low" languages to investigate more complex hierarchies, and to inquire about the appropriateness of a given language in a variety of social situations.[9] In what follows, I hope to expand on such results by looking at how members of the Salis family used their different languages in their letters.

The particular branch of the Salises involved, the Salis-Samedan, lived in the Upper Engadine valley in Graubünden, where the local language was the Puter dialect of Romansh.[10] Immediately to the south lived Lombard-Italian speakers in

[6] When the French took control of Strassburg in 1680, not a single professor at the city's university was able to make a speech in French. Frédéric Hartweg, "Vielfalt oder Uniformismus? Zur sprachpatriotischen Diskussion im Elsaß während der französischen Revolution," in *Historische Sprachkonflikte*, ed. P. H. Nelde (Bonn: Dümmler, 1989), 25. See also Klaus Pabst, "Sprachkontakt und Sprachkonflikt im napoleonischen Frankreich: Eine amtliche Bestandaufnahme der Sprachen und Dialekten im Französischen Kaiserreich 1806–1808," in ibid., 7–22; and "Mehrsprachigkeit im-Rheinland in französischer Zeit (1794–1815): Methodische Vorüberlegungen zu einem historisch-linguistischen Forschungsprojekt," in *Mehrsprachigkeit und Gesellschaft*, ed. René Jongen et al. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1983), 115–126.

[7] See esp. Andres Max Kristol, *Sprachkontakt und Mehrsprachigkeit in Bivio (Graubünden): Linquistische Bestandaufnahme in einer siebensprachigen Dorfgemeinschaft* (Bern: Francke, 1984).

[8] On the Italian Renaissance, see Sarah Stever Granvelle, "The Latin-Vernacular Question and Humanist Theory of Language and Culture," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49, no. 3 (1988): 367–386, which refers to much of the older literature on this topic. On the Reformation, Birgit Stolt, *Die Sprachmischung in Luthers Tischreden: Studien zum Problem der Zweisprachigkeit* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1964), addresses the issue most directly. On the later French Renaissance debate, see Marc Fumaroli, "L'apologétique de la langue française classique," *Rhetorica* 2, no. 2 (1984): 139–161. For Spanish, see Kurt Reichenberger, "Landessprache versus Latein: Über ihr Verhältnis in den spanischen und katalanischen Drucken des 15. Jahrhunderts," *Gutenberg–Jahrbuch* 62 (1987): 73–87.

[9] Peter Burke, "Languages and Anti-languages in Early Modern Italy," *History Workshop Journal* 11 (1981): 24, states: "What we need is a map of the whole linguistic terrain at different periods, both to situate our documents, and to interpret change over time."

[10] A brief sketch of the Salises in *Historisch–Biographisches Lexicon der Schweiz*, ed. Heinrich Türler et. al., 7 vols. and supp. (Neuenburg: Administration des Historisch-biographischen Lexikons der Schweiz, 1921–1934), 6:15–20. See also Nicolaus von Salis-Soglio, *Die Familie von Salis: Gedenkblätter aus der Geschichte des ehemaligen Freistaates der drei Bünde in Hohenrhätien (Graubünden)* (Lindau: Joh. Thomas Stettner, 1891). The original home of the widespread Salis clan had been the Val Bregaglia, where a language somewhere between Lombardic Italian and Ladin Romansh remained the local dialect into the seventeenth century.

the Val Poschiavo, the Val Bregaglia, and the Valtellina, while a few kilometers to the north were both Alemannic German and Surmeiran Romansh communities. The Salis-Samedan had settled in Samedan two generations before the correspondence studied in this paper, and had married into a local Engadinish family, the Travers. While we cannot be certain about the house language of the family, it was probably Ladin Romansh. The fact that correspondence among the youngest or least educated members of the family took place in Ladin reinforces this conclusion.[11] The Upper Engadine was part of the Freestate of the Three Leagues, a political confederation allied with the Swiss, whose political affairs were conducted primarily in German; the Engadine's trade, in contrast, went mostly to the Italian south towards Milan, the major market for the valley's cattle and dairy products.[12]

The family members discussed in this paper thus had reason to learn several languages, yet not all of the languages they used were equally developed in the late sixteenth century. Least formalized was Romansh. Unlike either German or Italian, not to speak of Latin, Romansh did not yet have a standardized form either in writing or in speaking.[13] Not only did village dialects vary considerably across the Three Leagues, but few printed texts attempted to represent Romansh at the time. Only six books were published in Romansh before 1600, beginning with Jachiam Bifrun's Bible of 1560 and his catechism of 1562, both in the Puter Ladin spoken by the Salis-Samedan. Italian, meanwhile, existed in both Tuscan and Venetian "high" versions as well as in the Lombardic dialects found near Samedan, just as German ranged from Alemannic dialect to southwestern chancery standard during this period. Only Latin—a language that was rarely spoken—showed any consistency in orthography and spelling in the Salis correspondence, an observation consistent with the use of all these languages throughout Switzerland before 1600.

The correspondence analyzed here involves the immediate family of a single individual, Johann Baptista à Salis–Samedan, born in the Engadine in 1546.[14] Among the authors and recipients of letters are his mother, Ursina; two of his three wives, Eiva à Planta–Zuoz and Ursula Stocker from Schaffhausen; and his children Cäcilia, Rudolf, Friedrich, Johann-Friedrich, Theodosius, and Andreas. All five of his sons went away both for schooling and in some cases for university, and much of the correspondence consists of the boys' letters home from distant schools. The

[11]E.g. the letter in Romansh from Theodosius Salis to his brother Friedrich in ca. 1591, when Theodosius was only eleven years old. STAGr D II a7, ca. 1591.

[12]On Graubünden in this period, see Randolph Head, *Early Modern Democracy in the Grisons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Polyglossy and multilingualism in Switzerland have been the subject of considerable study, most of it on the period after 1854. See Kenneth D. McRae, *Conflict and Compromise in Multilingual Societies: Switzerland* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1983); Hans–Peter Müller, *Die schweizerische Sprachenfrage vor 1914: Eine historische Untersuchung über das Verhältnis zwischen Deutsch und Welsch bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977).

[13]Remo Bornatico, *L'arte tipografica nelle Tre Leghe (1547–1803) e nei Grigioni (1803–1975)*, 2d. ed. (Chur: By the author, 1976), 80 has a list.

[14]In the standard Salis family tree (STAGr FGR 18), Johann Baptista is designated 7/15 and 8/1. He should not be confused with several individuals with the same name. On his life, see Silvio Färber, *Der bündnerische Herrenstand im 17. Jahrhundert: Politische, soziale, und wirtschaftliche Aspekte seiner Vorherrschaft* (Zurich: Zentralstelle der Studentenschaft, 1983), 164–66, 246–50.

Salises were powerful magnates in the region, and Johann himself was an influential figure in the Freestate of the Three Leagues: he was instrumental in securing an alliance with Venice in 1603, and spent a number of years around 1600 trying to build up an iron mining and smelting enterprise in the middle valleys of the region. While not wealthy compared to the high nobility or to great merchant families, the Salises had the resources to prepare their children for a life on the European stage: young Friedrich became almoner to Henri IV of France, for example, while other relatives rose high in military service to potentates around the Continent.[15]

A family from a linguistically diverse region such as the Engadine provides a unique opportunity to examine the use of various languages. Aside from knowing Romansh, men and women in the family learned at least some German and Italian, although the women's performance was much more likely to reflect local dialects.[16] The men also went on to learn Latin and High German, and sometimes other languages such as Greek, French, and even Hebrew.[17] Under such circumstances, a letter writer might choose from several languages, or might mix several languages within one letter. The imperative to write so that the recipient could understand was relaxed, letting us see other elements that went into the choice of language: among these are the sex and family status of the individuals involved, and the content and context of a particular letter or passage. In addition, the Salis correspondence contains many statements about languages, their relative status and usefulness, and about the means to acquire them. In what follows, I first lay out the patterns of language use found in the Salis correspondence, including the way both social context and content seem to have influenced language choice. Afterwards, I discuss the Salises' linguistic consciousness: how they thought about languages and how they tried to influence or manipulate their correspondents' attitudes about the various languages at their disposal.

Language use in the Salis letters

Let us begin by considering the distribution of languages found in this body of letters. Over half of the letters here, 104 in all, were written primarily in Latin; next most frequent were Italian and German, appearing as the main language of 38 and 35 letters respectively.[18] Romansh was the main language of only six letters, and

[15]Friedrich is the only member of this branch of the Salis family who left a trace in the intellectual and cultural history of the period. A convert to Catholicism, his letters to his father about his reasons for converting were published several times, e.g. in Paris in 1616. See Nicolaus von Salis-Soglio, *Die Convertiten der Familie von Salis* (Luzern: Druck und Verlag von Gebrüder Räber, 1892), 5–8.

[16]See the discussion below of women's use of language. That village schools teaching both boys and girls existed in Graubünden is attested by the contemporary chronicle by the schoolmaster Hans Ardüser, *Rätische Kronik* (reprinted Sandig: Wolluf bei Wiesbaden, 1973), 3–26.

[17]In one letter, Rudolf Salis claims at least the intention of studying "linguae hebraicae, theologis inprimis necessariae." STAGr D II a3a, Aug. 10, 1587. In a subsequent letter, however, he reports that the Hebrew course in Geneva has been disrupted by recent events. D II a3a, Nov. 8, 1587.

[18]In most of the letters, a single language predominates, which I call the main or primary language. In the few letters where several languages are present in roughly equal amounts, I designate the first one to appear as the main language.

French is represented in a few letters that Friedrich von Salis wrote home from Paris,[19] as seen in tables 1 through 4. The predominance of Latin shows that we are considering a well-placed family which could afford to invest in the education of its sons. Johann Baptista sent his boys to distant schools and universities: most of them went to secondary school in Augsburg, while Rudolf attended university in Basel and Geneva, Friedrich in Ingolstadt and Paris.[20] Learning Latin was a key reason for sending the boys to school, which helps explain the obligation they felt to write to their father in that language. Of the 104 Latin letters, 67 were written to Johann by his sons; this connection appears even stronger when we note that only nine letters from his sons were not in Latin, and almost all of these were business letters written by Johann-Friedrich as an adult. The two best educated boys, Rudolf and Friedrich, wrote their father almost entirely in Latin throughout their lives. Not one of the women in the family ever used any Latin in her letters.[21]

The Salis boys did not write their father in Latin only to demonstrate the progress of their studies, whose cost was frequently on Johann's mind. By using the most formal language available, the sons could also assert their own progress towards adulthood and autonomy even while showing respect for their father. The multiple possibilities that writing in Latin could convey are illustrated in a series of letters from Rudolf to his father between 1585 and 1587. On the one hand, Rudolf drew on the powerful rhetoric of his Latin models, even adding the occasional expostulation of "Hercle!" when he wanted to argue about his need for more money, about his lodgings, or similar issues.[22] The Latin epistolary tradition here provided him a tool for establishing his own individuality against his father's commands.[23] On the other hand, Rudolf also filled his letters with expressions of filial obedience, growing more effusive as his command of the humanist tradition improved. In the same letter in which he complained that his father's plan to withdraw him from school "bitterly wounded my ears," he went on to praise Johann's goodness and (in Greek) *philosophion*, in the hope of changing Johann's mind.[24]

[19]Like most surviving early modern correspondences, that of the Salis family is full of gaps and holes: rarely, for example, do we have both sides of any correspondence during the period covered here. This might have some effect on the language distribution described here.

[20]Friedrich's studies in Catholic Ingolstadt, even though his family was Protestant, were not unusual for Graubünden's elite. See the comments by Fortunat von Juvalta (1567–1654), a young Protestant who studied in Dillingen at about this same time, in his *Denkwürdigkeiten*, ed. and tr. Conradin von Moor (Chur: Hitz, 1848), 1–2. Juvalta also attended school in Augsburg in 1586, after Rudolf but before the other Salis boys.

[21]The only exception is a postscript in a German letter from Violanta von Hohenbalken to her brother-in-law Friedrich Salis, STAGr D II a3a 1571, dated Apr. 26, 1618. Since Violanta's two letters in German were in two different hands, neither of which shared features with her otherwise consistent Italian script, we may assume that scribes wrote these letters, and probably added the Latin note (whose script itself does not resemble Violanta's Italian hand).

[22]The best example is in STAGr D II a3a, May 8, 1586, when Rudolf learns that his father is thinking of calling him back from university. "Haec nova res quam acerbe meas vulnerarit aures...," he complains, and "Ac demiror, hercle, quis in hanc te adduxerit sententiam...." A later letter then apologizes for such vehemence.

[23]See the notes in Ozment, *Three Behaim Boys*, 181 n45, 201–204, about formularies for letter writing that were available to students. Stephan Carl Behaim clearly saw a Latin letter as a more effective way of influencing his guardians than a German one.

[24]STAGr D II a3a, May 8, 1586: "tantam ... tuae bonitatem ac φιλοσοφιον...."

Language	Used as Main Language	Used as Additional Language[s]
Latin	104	4
Italian	38	4
German	35	30
Romansch	6	8
French	2	0
Total	185	—

Table 1: Languages Used in Salis-Samedan Family Correspondence, 1583–1618

Language	Female Sender	Male Sender
Latin	0	104
Italian	9	29
German	5	30
Romansch	4	2
French	0	2
Totals	18	167

Table 2: Main Language by Gender of Sender

Languge	Female Recipient	Male Recipient
Latin	0	104
Italian	0	38
German	2	33
Romansh	2	4
French	0	2
Totals	4	181

Table 3: Main Language by Gender of Recipient

Relationship (no pair had more than 5 letters)	French	German	Italian	Latin	Roman
Brother to Brother	2	6	16	14	1
Son to Father	0	2	7	67	0
Father to Son	0	20	5	20	0
Totals	2	28	28	101	1

Table 4: Selected Examples for Main Language according to Family Roles

Latin let the boys demonstrate their filial obedience, yet express their own desires in an authorized form that showed respect even when they challenged their father's decisions.

The thirty-eight Italian letters arose from quite different circumstances. Italian was the most common language for letters between the brothers, and also for the letters written by women in the family. Johann, too, used Italian comfortably, which is not surprising considering his extensive political and business dealings to the south. In fact, with the exception of Cäcilia, every Salis considered here wrote some Italian letters.[25] If we look at the nonfamily correspondence found in this same archive, moreover, Italian is extremely common. Writing in Italian may have been especially important to the family's women: even though Rudolf wrote to his grandmother Ursina in Romansh, she herself wrote to another grandson at Augsburg in Italian.[26]

The Italian written by the Salis women was tinged with Romansh usages, however. Ursina's letters are far from the standard Tuscan of the period: at one point, she even remarks "nun sai che scrivær altro" (I don't know what else to write), only to follow by apologizing "per scheuse per che iho scrisse male" (forgive me that I write badly).[27] Violanta, Rudolf's wife, wrote letters that were more Tuscan in their vocabulary, but which displayed creatively nonstandard orthography. Clearly, Ursina and Violanta had not been educated to write in formal Italian. Similarly, Cäcilia in her German letters used such helveticisms as "genon" for "genommen," and "uffy" for "hinauf,"which are rarely found in formal German texts, even in Graubünden.[28]

The women's letters also share another surprising characteristic. Even though their sons or husbands often dropped into Romansh or German for a few lines in their letters, the Salis women never mixed tongues, preferring to stick exclusively to German or Italian to the best of their ability. Whereas 24 percent of the letters by men contained another language besides the main one (40:170), every letter by a woman was written in one language only. Why did these women make such efforts when their own male relatives did not hesitate to write to them in Romansh? Both the status of Romansh as a language and the authors' status as honorable women probably contributed to this pattern. Even the rapid advances that Romansh was making as the carrier of Reformed Protestantism in the Engadine were not enough to lend it status within the elite families. These women might not have mastered other, more prestigious languages, but they recognized that use of the "learned" languages represented a more effective claim to be taken

[25]The majority (7 out of 9) of the Italian letters by a woman came from an in-law, Rudolf's wife Violanta. Violanta normally wrote her male relatives in Italian, but wrote her German-speaking stepmother-in-law, Ursula Stocker, in German in 1605 (STAGr D II a29), probably with the help of a scribe.

[26]STAGr D II a28, Aug. 15, 1585, and D II a6, o.D. (2 undated letters to Friedrich, ca. 1591).

[27]STAGr D II a6, undated ca. 1591. She also uses characteristically Romansh terms such as "àmada" for "grandmother."

[28]STAGr D II a25, ca. 1590–91. Cäcilia was also the only woman to write letters in Romansh.

seriously than did letters in Romansh—even in a family context.[29]

Although the Salises felt most comfortable using Italian, German also took a large part in their letters among themselves. Italian was slightly more common than German as the main language (thirty-eight letters versus thirty-five), but German was overwhelmingly more common as a second language, appearing in that role in another thirty letters. In other words, the Salis men were far more likely to switch into German briefly than into any other language, especially when they were writing in Latin.[30] This rather unexpected distribution of the use of German requires some explanation.

First, the evidence does not suggest any particular inclination toward German among the Salis sons: only six of the letters between brothers were in German, compared to thirty-three in other languages. This makes sense when we consider that their native Romansh was closely related to Italian, and more distantly to Latin, whereas German was quite distinct in vocabulary and grammar. Yet German was the language of public life in the Freestate of the Three Leagues. The day-to-day struggle for power and influence in the region was conducted almost entirely in German, even in areas whose local language was Romansh. We can see this in the extended dispute that arose about partitioning the commune of the Upper Engadine, where the Salis-Samedans resided. During this long and acrimonious struggle in the 1570s and 1580s, both parties within the commune drew up numerous manifestos proclaiming their position: every one of these documents that survives was in German.[31] Additionally, most assemblies of the Three Leagues were conducted in the German-speaking capital, Chur, and the region's closest political ties were to the German-speaking Swiss Confederation.[32] Like their father, moreover, the Salis boys were sent to study in German schools and universities. Even though it was not their favored language, therefore, German was omnipresent as a linguistic alternative, tied to a variety of practical and political concerns. Any of a number of cues was enough to encourage a code switch into German: the German vocabulary found in the university letters often has to do with money, clothing,

[29]Compare the situation of Johann's third wife, Ursula Stocker from Schaffhausen. A native German speaker, Ursula did not hesitate to conduct an extensive correspondence with her husband and stepson in German, which she had evidently learned quite well before marrying Johann. Most of her letters are preserved in STAGr D II a24.

[30]See Stolt, *Sprachmischung*, for a detailed analysis of how and when Luther made such switches between Latin and German. The easy insertion of Latin phrases into German texts, and German ones into Latin texts, is familiar to anyone who has read documents from this era. For examples of Romansh insertions in a Latin chronicle, see Ulrich Campell, *Ulrici Campelli Historica Raetica* (Basel: Felix Schneider, 1887–90), e.g. 1: 92–93.

[31]STAGr ASp. III/6, Dossier "Oberengadin."

[32]Language relations in Graubünden are still under study. One common view is that of Robert Billigmeier, *A Crisis in Swiss Pluralism: The Romansh and Their Relations with the German- and Italian-Swiss in the Perspective of a Millennium* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), who casts the situation of the Romansh language almost entirely in terms of competition with German. For a longer exposition of my own view, see Randolph C. Head, "Social Order, Politics, and Political Language in the Rhaetian Freestate (Graubünden), 1470–1620" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1992), 28–33.

housing, and so forth, while in other letters German appears when the subject turns to political matters.[33]

German could also be used for business within the Freestate. In his extensive correspondence about his mining enterprise, Johann conducted business in German and Italian with equal facility. (That the mine was located in the Romansh-speaking Bergün had no noticeable influence.[34]) Consider the following sequence of letters from Johann to his son Johann-Friedrich, who was on site in Bergün in August of 1606. On August 3, Johann wrote to his son in Italian, but his next letter, on the 13th, was in German. On the 16th, he wrote in Italian, on the 21st in German. On the 23d, he sent a letter that was about half German, half Italian, but in the last letter of the sequence—three days later on the 26th—he reverted to all German. Such easy movement between two quite different languages in a correspondence about a single subject to a single recipient shows that Johann was relatively indifferent to which of the two languages he used in this matter.[35]

Unlike the high status of Latin and the easy flexibility with which Italian and German were used, the Romansh language took a subordinate place in the Salis correspondence. Unlike all the other languages, Romansh was more likely to appear in asides or brief passages than to be the main language of a letter. Moreover, the letters whose main language was Romansh were written entirely by women and youths.[36] Three were by Cäcilia à Salis, who seems to have been the least educated of the Salis women, as she is the only one not to have written any letters in Italian. Another brother, Theodosius, wrote in Romansh as well, around 1591 when he was only about eleven, and Rudolf used Romansh for a letter to his grandmother Ursina shortly after he went off to school, when he was about seventeen. All these letters were narrowly focused on domestic affairs: they conveyed affection, news of deaths and births, or that the author missed the recipient. Even though Ursina used Italian in the letters she wrote, her grandson used Romansh to write to her when he learned that she had been sick.[37]

It is possible that the fundamental constraint of intelligibility may have prevented greater use of written Romansh. In one letter, Johann-Friedrich expressed his difficulty in understanding his brother's efforts to write it: "I couldn't read much in [your letters], especially what you wrote in our own language. What you wrote

[33]Examples of the former in STAGr D II a3a, Aug. 14, 1585, where Rudolf switches to German to discuss the purchase of some wool; D II a3a, Sept. 28, 1586, to claim he has bought no clothes but some stockings; and D II a3a, Jan. 30, 1587, where he remarks: "Grosse und feste käß, wie wir machen, amat herus [magister] meus, sed eas transuehere minus commodum."

[34]On the history of this enterprise, see Leonhard Juvalta-Cloetta, "Aus der Geschichte des Bergüner Bergbaues nach Dokumenten von 1556–1616," *Bündnerisches Monatsblatt* 10 (1928): 305–338, which makes explicit reference to the correspondence used in this paper.

[35]All the letters in STAGr D II a3c, 1606. Johann-Friedrich's few surviving letters to his father from this period are all in Italian, except for one that switches in midcourse to Latin when the subject turns to religion; see DII a7, 1605 and 1606.

[36] References: STAGr D II a7, n.d., ca. 1591; D II a23, no year, March 3; D II a25, ca. 1591, Mar. 28; D II a25, ca. 1591, June 6; D II a27, April 20, 1626; and D II a28, Aug. 15, 1585.

[37]STAGr D II a28, August 15, 1585. Rudolf dated this letter one day after a Latin letter to his father; the two letters probably went by the same courier to Samedan; the Latin letter also expresses Rudolf's sorrow that his grandmother is suffering from "podagra." STAGr D II a3a, Aug. 14, 1585.

in Latin, I could."[38] Unlike either German or Italian, not to speak of Latin, Romansh did not yet have a standardized form either in writing or speaking. Not only did village dialects vary considerably across the Three Leagues, but written models for recording Romansh were still scarce. The process of connecting Romansh sounds to written signs was still beginning as the Salis correspondence came into being, and the accompanying uncertainty may have encouraged authors to choose better-established languages.

Romansh also appeared as a second language in eight of these letters, but in a quite different way than did German. Rather, the secondary use of Romansh echoes the conclusions we can draw from letters primarily in that language. Letter writers switched from Latin or German into Romansh when they wanted to exhort or apologize or when they turned from education and politics to the affairs of close kin, especially of women. A letter of 1591, from Johann in Chur to Rudolf, who was back at home in Samedan, reveals the way Romansh was linked to domestic contexts and emotionally loaded material. After complaining that Rudolf had neither written nor carried out his father's requests properly—this in both Latin and German—Johann changed to Romansh to send greetings for his wife: "Greet your mother and tell her to be cheerful ... and you children should all be obedient to her and don't let her lack anything that she needs...."[39] Johann's emotional involvement in these remarks was enough to bring about a code switch into Romansh, especially when the indirect recipient was a woman. Tellingly, when Johann turned back to political matters, he switched back into German.

Another example appears in a letter home from young Friedrich, sixteen years old and in his first year of school in Augsburg. After sixteen lines of Latin, he remarked, "As far as domestic matters go ..."—and switched to Romansh to narrate an embarrassing incident on a holiday, when his lack of money had led to an insult.[40] The description of domestic affairs, coupled with telling about a rather awkward moment, was enough to cause Friedrich to switch to his native tongue. A letter back to Friedrich from his father a year later is quite similar: after a long moralistic harangue in German, spiced with Latin aphorisms, Johann turned to Romansh in an apology for taking so long to send money. In fact, he said, the money he was sending with the letter had to be borrowed.[41] He returned to

[38]STAGr D II a6, Nov. 14, 1591: "Weliche brieffen mich sehr gefreuet habend deine gsundhaid zuvernemmen. Hab auch nicht vill leßen kunnen, sunderlich, das so du in unseren sprach geschriben hast. Wz du aber in Latein geschriben hast, wol."

[39]STAGr D II a3b, February 8, 1591: "Sa saluda la mama e dilg chia la stetta allegra e sfatcha hunur e nun s'lascha increschar, e uus yfauns et ilg pustüt ta Rodolf lg saias ubediains et nun lg'lascher amanchier ungutta da quae chi lg fo bsong, eau gnis gugendt ussa a chiesa, ma par utel dalla chiesa stou eau staer aunchia 8 uvayr x dyss alla plü lungia."

[40]The transitional phrase reads: "Quod ad domesticum statum attinet.... " STAGr D II a3b, June 14, 1590. Interestingly, he quotes the insult itself in German, introduced with the Latin remark, "hisce verbis:" Unfortunately, the letter is somewhat damaged and not entirely legible.

[41]STAGr D II a6, Feb. 7, 1592. The syntax of the Romansh sentence is not entirely clear to me, but the apologetic tone is unmistakable: "Tu poust sauayr co nus statti, sch'eau haves pudieu schi t'hauer eau tramis ls'daners plu bott, mu eau nun a pudieu, et aquiasts eau imprastò oura. Mitt diese 25 ffl magst dich verrichtten und was mitt der H. Maior, abrechnen...."

German, however, to instruct his son how to spend the arriving funds. It seems that the desire to apologize, perhaps linked with admitting the awkward necessity to borrow even the little he could send, turned Johann toward Romansh in this situation.

Finally, there is a striking passage in a letter from Johann to his sons that seems not to fit the pattern above. Writing from Chur in 1591, Johann used Latin to tell his two sons in Augsburg that he had received their letters, that he would send money, and that they should be "pious, modest, and upright" in the meantime.[42] Indeed, Johann sounded quite proud, remarking that "our messengers recently returned from Augsburg confirm the hope that I have conceived in you."[43] Without warning, then, Johann switched to Romansh to reprove the boys:

> I've heard that all you boys, and especially you two young ones, are always speaking Romansh and never German, which is not what you promised ... the money costs us in any case, spent so that you will learn Latin and German, and not Romansh.[44]

One may wonder why Johann put such a statement in the very language he was asking them not to speak. At the simplest level, he might have wanted to ensure that his message got through. If he had any doubts about the boys' comprehension of German or Latin, the functional imperative of communication might have pushed him toward Romansh. The majority of the letter was in Latin, which implies that Johann was confident that its recipients knew that language. But the letter was addressed to Friedrich and two younger boys, whereas the admonition in Romansh was aimed specifically at the younger ones; thus it could be that the Latin was for Friedrich, who would read and translate the letter for his younger siblings.[45] But it is hard to believe that comprehension was the only reason; perhaps Johann also wanted to increase the impact of his instructions. Latin might be the language of authority among adults and intellectuals, but for a father speaking to teenage boys, their native tongue carried greater weight. Finally, Johann's choice of Romansh for this passage was surely ironic. In effect, his message was, You are being so irresponsible that I need to address you in this child's language, to make sure you understand me! By expressing his complaint about the boys' use of Romansh in that very language, Johann was not merely communicating his opinion; he was also illustrating his own attitude towards the various languages at his disposal. It is to

[42]STAGr D II a6, Feb. 7, 1591. "Interim estote pij, modesti et probi...."

[43]Ibid. "Legati nostri nuperrime Augusta redientes spem meam de uobis conceptum confirmant, faxit Deus O. M. ne fallar...."

[44]Ibid.: "Eau hai iudit chia vus mats tuts, e specielmaint vus duos giuvans tschantschais adüna rumauntsch e mæ tudaisk, lg quel nun e aque vus hauais impromis ... ls daners cuostan nus yschas[?] mis oura parchia vus imprendas latin e tudaisk e bricchia rumaunsch." The letter is to Friedrich and Johann-Friedrich, who were both studying in Augsburg at the time. I am taking "yschas" as an orthographical variation on "istess, listess," although both this reading of the blotted manuscript and such an interpretation of the word are uncertain.

[45]Friedrich was about seventeen, his brother Johann-Friedrich was sixteen; the third boy was their cousin Gion Antoni Travers.

such attitudes, and to the ambiguities of language consciousness among the Salis, that we now turn.

Linguistic Consciousness in the Salis correspondence

The experience of speaking and writing in several languages ensured that members of the Salis family became aware of the importance of mastering them. This awareness had both a functional and a normative dimension: on the one hand, learning to communicate in languages besides their native Romansh was a challenge, as was writing in Romansh itself; on the other hand, their knowledge of several languages heightened their sense that some were better than others, or even that certain versions of one language were better than other versions. Their comments about these two issues illustrate both considerable hardheadedness about language use and diligent attention to the differences in status that various languages carried. But once awakened, linguistic consciousness could go even farther. Rudolf, as we shall see, showed great concern about where and how he learned languages. His concern was partly a tactic for arguing with his father about the course of his studies, but it also showed a sensitivity to the influence that his linguistic environment might have on his identity and on his prospects. This suggests that he was not only conscious of the relative usefulness and status of the idioms that he was learning, but also that he could distance himself enough from this experience to take a broader view of the European linguistic landscape.

That the Salises recognized the importance of learning several languages is neither surprising nor unique. Ozment's Behaim boys, too, recognized the importance that learning Italian or Czech or Polish could have for their subsequent careers. Young Michael Behaim endured an otherwise frustrating stay in Bohemia because he wanted to "converse here on occasion with a Bohemian, for it is not always possible for one to learn such a difficult language well in so short a time"; he did not want to go to Cracow because "Germans almost outnumber Poles ... now, and it would not be possible for me to learn Polish in the six months I am to be there...."[46] The Salis boys expressed similar views about the importance of linguistic education. In one of his first Latin letters home to Johann, Rudolf admitted that his letters contained rows of "solecisms and barbarisms," and thanked his father for bringing them to his attention.[47] He also began inserting Greek words and phrases into his letters as his studies progressed, while a late letter, begging that his father send more money, even mentioned the importance of learning Hebrew.[48]

Not just the classical languages occupied Rudolf's attention while he was studying. In a later letter, he commented favorably on his father's suggestion that he associate with French students, not only to "learn more gentlemanly conduct, but also to learn something of their language...."[49] Learning French was also an

[46]Ozment, *Three Behaim Boys*, 27, 25 respectively.

[47]STAGr D II a3a, Aug. 14, 1585.

[48]STAGr D II a3a, Aug. 10, 1587.

[49]STAGr D II a3a, Jan. 12, 1586: "Suades ergo ac praecipis mihi denique, ut nobilium Gallorum consuetudine utar, ex quibus tum mores generosiores, tum etiam linguam aliquantisper addicere potero." His following remark here, that doing so would require enough money to share their meals and fellowship, reveals the manipulative side of Rudolf's assent.

important consideration in his move to Geneva at the end of 1587. At first, one of his teachers in Basel had discouraged such a move because of the "great barbarity of the French language" there; Paris, according to the teacher, would be a better choice.[50] Once in Geneva, Rudolf approvingly reported Theodore Beza's advice:

> According to his advice and persuasion, if I lived at the table of certain honorable studious Frenchmen known for their good learning, I would soon have a good knowledge of their language and habits. But if I lived somewhere else with some learned man, or with a common citizen ... it would not go so comfortably, because I would not learn the language from them as quickly and easily.[51]

Not only was learning French one of his main reasons for going to Geneva, but he wanted to learn the proper form, rather than that spoken by the "common citizens" of the town.

Rudolf's keen awareness of the usefulness of various languages—an awareness that he clearly shared with his father—included a readiness to denigrate his own native Romansh. On several occasions, Rudolf sought to play on the lower status of Romansh, arguing that he had learned more among the learned doctors in one year than he would have "among the uneducated or our common people in two."[52] In the summer of 1586, he mounted a sustained campaign in his letters to his father, urging that he be allowed to stay away from home because returning would ruin his new linguistic skills. "It would be better that I live in some more humble place inaccessible to our people," he wrote, "than to pick up their corrupt and depraved way of speaking."[53] In another letter he argued that "for the sake of improving my crude habits, I willingly removed myself far from our people's words and conversation; and I have no doubt but that in this way, I am about to turn from such horrid and rude speech to polished and smooth oration."[54]

Criticisms of vernacular languages were not in themselves unusual at this time, and Rudolf deployed these commonplaces in the hope of persuading his father to pay for his continued education, knowing that his arguments would find a sympathetic ear. Such a concern for language acquisition can be explained by any Romansh-speaker's need to communicate with the outside world: success in

[50]STAGr D II a3a, July 27, 1586: "duas huius rej adducens rationes: quam prima est, Linguae Gallicae barbaries summa...."

[51]STAGr D II a3a, Nov. 8, 1587: "Eius consilio ac suasu, cum honestis quibusdam bonarumque disciplinarum studiosis Gallis propria quadra viuo, temporis ac linguae huius iusta ratione habita. Nam si alibi cum viro aliquo docto, uel ciue plebeio vivendum mihi foret: Et multo maiori praetio, et forsan etiam non tam commode, quam hîc, id fieret: Quandoquidem ab his non lingua tantum citius et facilius addiscere datur."

[52]STAGr D II a3a, May 9, 1587.

[53]STAGr D II a3a, May 8, 1586: "praestat enim in loco aliquo viliore, & a popularibus nostris inaccesso quamvis abste, & a tanta hominium consuetudine sit remotus nonnihil, viuere ... quam cum illis vitiosum ac deprauatum loquendi habitum contrahere."

[54]STAGr D II a3a, July 27, 1586: "interim tamen, vitiosae consuetudinis emendandus causa, libenter longe me a nostrorum popularium sermone et conuersatione abducerem: dubium enim mihi non est, quin hac ratione, horridum illum et inexcultum sermone, polita atque suaui oratione commetaturus sim."

politics or business required fluency in various other languages, and there is no doubt that Rudolf and his father were fully aware of this fact. Like most contemporaries, the Salises also knew that using a given language conveyed a message about the speaker's status: knowledge of Latin and Greek signaled membership in a Europewide elite, just as the use of Parisian rather than of Genevan French signified good breeding and education.[55]

But Rudolf's aversion to Romansh went further than this. His fear that returning to the Engadine would "corrupt" his efforts to polish his Latin and French revealed his recognition that humans were dependent on their linguistic surroundings. Instead of seeing various languages as information to be learned, he saw from experience that what he spoke and heard on an everyday basis would influence the way he used other languages. Progress in languages, therefore, required the company of men who were learned and virtuous—a Renaissance commonplace—but also required men who spoke with the right accent. No doubt, Rudolf's feelings on this subject reflected the central place that the correct use of language took in the entire humanist curriculum. The humanist creed that good rhetoric could mold good men meant, even more for Rudolf than for his contemporaries, good rhetoric in the right languages, and he unhesitatingly sought to persuade his father by deploying such views.[56] Like his father's ironic use of Romansh to order his sons to stop speaking Romansh, Rudolf's denigration of his native tongue as a rhetorical tactic illustrates how the plurilingual experience of people in his position shaped their perceptions. Without being philologists or philosophers, the Salises understood not only that language mattered, but also that the existence of a conventional hierarchy among languages represented an opportunity for those who were sophisticated enough to take advantage of it.

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The way the members of this atypical family used the languages at their disposal reveals constraints of several different orders. Most unavoidable were a series of functional limits that influenced them as they wrote. Basic knowledge was a starting point: the women in the family did not learn to write Latin, for example, thus limiting them in a very direct way. For the men such constraints became secondary, although we should not assume that they were equally at ease in every language. Intelligibility of the various tongues formed a second functional constraint: Romansh, which lacked a fixed written form, might not be understood correctly

[55]Charles Paschal, the French ambassador to Graubünden in the early seventeenth century, commented in his published memoirs: "Verum si ea lingua [scl. Romansh] origine Latina est, quo longius a suis initiis provecta est, eo plus Gallicae et Hispanicae peregrinitatis assumpsit." *Caroli Paschalii Regis in Sacro Consistorio Consilarii Legatio Rhaetica* (Paris: Petri Chevalier, 1620), fols. 148v–149r. See also Billigmeier, *Crisis in Swiss Pluralism*, 63–64.

[56]The passages cited above, where Rudolf attacks Romansh, are directly connected with others that claim he is achieving a new identity through his progress in Latin. See esp. STAGr D II a3a, May 8, 1586, where Rudolf argues against leaving Basel just as his studies are progressing not only by denigrating Romansh, but also by appealing to his father's own educational successes; and D II a3a, July 27, 1586, where he points out "cum filius sapiens sit gloria patris sui…," right after arguing that removal from a Romansh environment had been essential to his progress in polished Latin.

by a reader for purely orthographic reasons. A letter's fundamental character as a piece of communication therefore limited what languages the author could employ. Finally, we have seen that certain languages appeared to be suited to certain kinds of content: Romansh for affection or embarrassment, German for everyday business or for politics, and Latin for persuasion and respect. Certain functions evoked certain languages, even if this meant switching codes in the middle of a letter.

Beyond this, the Salis correspondence is unusual in that it lets us see other types of constraints on language use as well. Some of these might be called structural: the role of an individual author vis-à-vis the recipient of the letter, and the role of each individual language in the larger communicative world fall into this category. Sons wrote their father in Latin not only because of the subjects they discussed, but because doing so conformed to their role as students moving towards adulthood. Their father, in contrast, stood under no such constraint, and his letters moved easily from one language to another as the subject and the circumstances changed. Similarly, Rudolf might write his grandmother in Romansh, but she and the other women in the family avoided that language, even when they had to strain to write in Italian.

Naturally, such asymmetries that echoed family hierarchies and social expectations also reflected the relationship among contemporary languages as modes of communication. While part of the association between certain languages and certain contexts might be the result of a language's vocabulary or other functional aptitude, much of it reflected the relative status of each language as a marker of cultural identity. Latin not only provided a standardized epistolary tradition, but its use also conveyed the increasing status of its student authors. Romansh may have been emotionally suited to affection, apology, or remonstrance, but its use might also be corrupting or even dismissive, as when Johann scolded his boys for using it too much. Language choice in these letters thus depended on the entire structure of the communicative moment—a structure which included both the identities of the participants and the exact context in which a particular language was employed.

Finally, we have seen that the Salises' unusually plurilingual situation resulted in a heightened linguistic self-consciousness. Such self-awareness, which appeared to some extent all over educated Europe at this time, explains the Salises' concern for learning languages and for learning them correctly. No one whose first language was confined to a few villages in the mountains could expect to succeed in the larger European world without commanding a variety of tongues: plurilingualism was a simple necessity for an ambitious family like the Salises. Beyond this practical consciousness, however, the letters also reveal an awareness that language was more than simply a tool for communication. One's linguistic needs and abilities could themselves become tactical moves in larger games of intrafamily negotiation, as we have seen in the case of Rudolf's letters to his father. At the broadest level, moreover, Rudolf seems to have recognized that his linguistic environment helped to shape who he was and who he would become: his pleas to his father not to force him back into "barbarous" linguistic surroundings had a manipulative aspect, to be sure, but they seem also to have reflected his sense that a polished linguistic identity

was essential to his future. The authors of these letters lived in a world in which multiple languages represented distinct possibilities for organizing different kinds of communication and helped define their identities in both local and European terms.