

Raetia as Case Study for Changes and New Elite Identities

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The issue of the paper is to give an overview of the development of elites and their influence on the acculturation processes in *Raetia* from early-Roman times to the eighth century. The province was chosen because here continuity of habits, traditions or language reaches over long periods. Although the literal sources are very sparse and epigraphic sources are hardly to be found, there are rich archaeological sources that can be interpreted.

The main emphasis is laid on the many differences between the south-western, alpine part of *Raetia* (late antique *Raetia prima*) and the northern part, between the foot of the Alps and the Danube river (late antique *Raetia secunda*).

In *Raetia secunda* new roman elites appeared shortly after the occupation in the early first century AD. Their influence on the local population was very intensive, so at the end of the first century romanization was already accomplished and it remained stable up to the late fourth century. One of the best examples both for local elites and successful romanization is the provincial Claudius Paternus Clementianus who became *procurator* in *Judaea*, *Sardinia*, *Africa* and *Noricum* in the early second century. Even in the fourth century the roman provincial culture was strong enough to acculturate immigrating individuals and small groups of non-roman origin.

From the fifth century on, however, non-roman elites appeared. They soon pushed back the vanishing roman elite, although in the few old cities a small remaining group still held up culture, burial rites, and religion “in the roman way” or at least what had become of it.

In alpine *Raetia* we can't see any outstanding social group from the first to the third century. The romanization process in this part of the province was remarkably slow and not very intense. As an example we see pre-roman burial rites being practised for the first 300 years of roman domination, a lack of inscriptions and a very low number of indications for ingredients or dishes roman cuisine couldn't do without.

As soon as the new administrative elites appeared after the division of the Province *Raetia* in the fourth century, the provincial population suddenly adapted the romanized cultural influences from the adjoining regions. The conservative burial rites were given up quickly.

The social system and the ruling elite developed very stable until the late 8th century. The political power was unified together with the religious power in one provincial dynasty. During this time the highly romanized culture remained very strong although in the nearby regions non-roman elites came to power, as the Ostrogoths, the Franks and the Langobards. Even today in some valleys of alpine *Raetia* in South-East Switzerland the people call themselves "Romantschs" and they still speak some kind of vulgar Latin.