

Rhaeti & Co.

New multidisciplinary data on the Tyrsenic question - Rhaeti and Etruscans

A(rchaeologist)
H(istorian)
L(inguist)
G(eneticist)

What's new about the origin of the Alpine and Etruscan populations?

online Event & Round Table

24 September 2021

VERONA - ROME 9:30 - 16:30 CEST



9.30-10.00 Introduction

S. Marchesini (L), A. Vanzetti (A), L. Zaghetto (A) (*Organising Committee*)

10.00-11.15 First session: presentations and flash questions

D. Caramelli (G), C. Posth (G), *Recent genome analysis on Etruscans*

F. Marzatico (A), *Continuità o cesura? I Reti dal punto di vista archeologico: autoctoni o discendenti dagli Etruschi?*

M. Migliavacca (A), *Approaching to a comparative analysis of Rhaetic domestic spaces. Some methodological remarks*

E. Migliario (H), *I Reti nelle fonti etnografiche e storiografiche*

11.15-11.30 Break

11.30-13.15 Second session

E. Benelli (A, L), *Rhaeti and Etruscans. The Etruscological perspective*

I. Hajnal (L), *The Tyrsenic question: why a quick solution is unlikely*

P. Poccetti (L), *Remarks on some Etrusco-Italic shared linguistic features*

G. Kroonen (L), A. Wigman (L), *Fish in a Net: Finding Etruscan in Larger Corpora*

A. Mittnik (G), *Magna Graecia's Melting Pot – Genomic Insights into Iron Age Campania*

G.F. Chiai (H), *Lemnos and its cultural memories*

13.15-14.30 Lunch break

14.30-16.30 Third session - Round Table (in progress)

R. Blecha, A. Campus, C. Cavazzutti, A. Dore, E. Gilli, S. T. Levi, M. Marchesi, H. McColl, T. Reitmaier, E. Rodriguez, M. Saracino, C. Servadei, W. Sowa, G. Tomedi.

According to most recent theories Rhaetic and Etruscan both belong to the family of Tyrsenic languages. How does this thesis impact Genetics and Archaeology?

The event can be followed via **Facebook** streaming on the **Alteritas** page



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The Topic

The identification of a new Language belonging to the Tyrsenic linguistic family – the Rhaetic – over the last 30 years, and the focus given in several publications (1) to the three languages of this linguistic family have led to renewed interest and a re-analysis of the relationships among the peoples of central and northern Italy and the northern Aegean.

Three non-Indo-European languages are related to the Tyrsenic linguistic family: namely Etruscan, Rhaetic and the language known from the inscriptions on the island of Lemnos. The three languages are strictly related, presenting features of a mutual relative/chronological relationship. Etruscan and Lemnian present more similarities than Etruscan and Rhaetic. Rhaetic accounts for a more archaic phase in comparison with Etruscan. The three languages share common linguistic traits at a phonological, morphological and onomastic level. The lexicon shows more correspondences between Etruscan and Lemnian than between Rhaetic and Etruscan.

The three languages are differently represented in the records, as Etruscan is attested from the 7th to the 1st c. BCE by ca. 11.000 inscriptions, Rhaetic from the end of the 7th to the 2nd c. BCE by circa 350 inscriptions and Lemnian from a few inscriptions dated to the 6th c. BCE, among which the well-known Stele of Lemnos.

The anthroponymy has surprisingly recorded common roots between Rhaetic and Etruscan (2), thus presenting fossilised traces of a common lexicon reflected in personal names since, as widely known, almost all personal names find their origin (synchronically) in the lexicon. Etruscan presents features of innovation compared to Rhaetic: in the name system, in the introduction of the “Motion-suffix” – i.e. creating feminine personal names from the masculine ones – and, in the 5th c., the phonological and stress-related feature of the syncope of the post tonic syllables, which allows dividing Etruscan linguistic records into two main phases: archaic (7th-5th) and recent (4th-1st BCE).

Some late literary sources (Titus Livius, Plinius the Older, Pompeius Trogus) establish a connection between Rhaetians and Etruscans, arguing that the Rhaeti were Etruscans retired to the Alps following their head Raeto as the Celts spread into the Po Valley (4th BCE, or even before). Livius (V, 33,5 and 11) further describes a similarity in the two languages, even if the two peoples substantially differ in other aspects. Only the language’s sound (sonus linguae) was preserved, even if not clean (nec eum incorruptum).

A relative chronology and a linguistic “Stammbaum” of the three branches of the Tyrsenic family has been recently proposed by Marchesini (3). If we consider the...



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linguistic ‘distance’ among the three languages, it seems that a first split must have involved Etruscan and Rhaetic in prehistoric times, while a second one must have later concerned the separation of Lemnian and Etruscan. The evidence mentioned above requires re-reading all the several disciplines’ data so far and concerns the so-called “Etruscan ethnogenesis”. As Etruscans represent a considerable ‘ethnic’ entity within the European proto- and historical scenario, their ethnogenesis involves the relationship and interaction with the other peoples present in Italy and the sequence of their establishment in the Italian Peninsula.

The ‘when’ and ‘how’ of the spreading of the Tyrsenic family involves considerations at a large scale in the reconstruction of Paleo-Europe. This is all the more true, as different disciplines have produced different outputs so far. Population genetics, Archaeology, History and Linguistics offer partial or questioned solutions, while the conspicuous literature published on this topic reveals a timeless interest in the argument.

The recent aDNA results obtained about mobility and genetic input into Europe from Anatolian/Levantine areas in the Early Neolithic and from the Steppes around 3000 BCE have brought back into discussion the timing and ways of the spread of Indo-European languages. Indeed, aDNA research in Central Mediterranean Europe has not been wide enough to provide clear evidence so far, and the impact of the Steppe-derived aDNA seems here to have been less intense than in Central and Northern Europe, and somehow delayed. There are hints that a complex interaction of communities related to the Mediterranean and Steppe-derived ancestry brought to the historical age peoples, whose written languages are known to us.

Any discussion of aDNA and languages should also consider the interrelations with the material culture and the continuity of socio-cultural phenomena, and therefore involve archaeologists. Even if material culture is not the same as people, genetic shift is not the same as population replacement, and language is not the same as community descent: all these factors have to be appropriately considered for a correct understanding of the past history of human communities. In the case of Rhaeto-Etruscan-Lemnian (Tyrsenic) languages, continuity and discontinuity of material culture and social aspects and genetic composition of populations should therefore be part of the discussion, each one in terms of its own methodological and theoretical basics.

A group of Linguists, Archaeologists, Historians and Geneticists will share their opinions on this emerging new framework. The event will include a number of short presentations and a wider discussion held in the form of a Round Table on 24 September, 2021 in videoconferencing on Zoom. The general discussion will also reflect on the possible strategies of future investigations.

(1) Rix1998; de Simone 2009; de Simone Marchesini 2013 (2) Marchesini 2020 (3) Marchesini 2013



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The Organising Committee

Simona Marchesini - (Alteritas, IT, L)

Alessandro Vanzetti - ("Sapienza" University of Rome, IT, A)

Luca Zaghetto - (Alteritas, IT, A)

Invited lecturers

Enrico Benelli, CNR - ISMed, IT (A, L)

David Caramelli & Cosimo Posth, Univ. of Florence - Tübingen, IT (G) - DE (G)

Gian Franco Chiai, Northeast University of Changan/Alteritas, CN/IT (H)

Ivo Hajnal, University of Innsbruck, AT (L)

Guus J. Kroonen & Andrew Wigman, Leiden University, NL (L)

Franco Marzatico, Cultural Heritage Directorate Prov. Trento, IT (A)

Elvira Migliario, University of Trento, IT (H)

Mara Migliavacca, University of Verona/Alteritas, IT (A)

Alissa Mittnik, Harvard University, US (G)

Paolo Poccetti, University of Rome "Tor Vergata", IT (L)

Likely participants in the Round Table (in progress)

Ramona Blecha, University of Innsbruck, AT (A)

Alessandro Campus, University of Rome Tor Vergata/Alteritas, IT (A, L)

Claudio Cavazzutti, University of Bologna, IT (A)

Anna Dore, Marinella Marchesi, Archaeological Museum of Bologna, IT (A)

Emanuela Gilli, Museo St. Nat. Arch. Montebelluna, IT (A)

Sara T. Levi, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Hunter College New York, IT (A)

Hugh McColl, University of Copenhagen, DK (G)

Thomas Reitmaier, Archaeological Service of the Canton of Grisons, CH (A)

Elena Rodriguez, Alteritas, IT (A)

Cristina Servadei, i.r., IT (A)

Wojciech Sowa, AMU University Poznan/Alteritas, PL (L)

Gerhard Tomedi, University of Innsbruck, AT (A)

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