

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 27 (2000)
Heft: 1

Artikel: "Bien di bien onn" rather than champagne
Autor: Cadruvi, Claudia
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-907622>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 24.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

"Bien di bien onn" rather than champagne



Photo: Bildagentur Baumann AG

The "Chalanda Marz" rings in the start of spring with deafening clangs.

BY CLAUDIA CADRUSSI

AT MIDNIGHT on New Year's Eve I avoid kisses, champagne and the ringing of bells. I need something else at New Year, and spend January 1st as often as I can in the Grisons Oberland. There, in the small snow-covered villages, the children go from house to house, entering without knocking. As soon as the householders appear the children greet them with the words "Bien di bien onn", which roughly translated means "Good day, good year". In some villages the children ask without further ado for a "biamaun", a New Year's gift. In other villages the New Year's greeting is followed by a special prayer, and the master or mistress of the house is wished happiness in Heaven.

How big is the coin?

Rhaeto-Romanish is gradually being eroded, and unless you know exactly what the shivering hordes of children are about, you will understand nothing. But the children care not a fig about articulation, far less the Kingdom of Heaven. Because the most important part of the ritual is the "biamaun" which follows their greeting. Critically and silently they follow every gesture of the

house-owner. The small pre-schooler beams when he is handed a large denomination of coin. In sheer joy he forgets to thank his benefactor and rushes outdoors. There the children congregate and tell each other what or how much they have been given, rejoicing or feeling offended if they think they have been given too little for their age. The smallest ones who are still too young to be entrusted with a purse are ecstatic.

The groups make their way throughout the village. They know from the previous year roughly what they can expect in each house. One door is pushed open with eager anticipation, while at another door they stop to debate who should enter first. One yard smells good, another sour. The old teacher Maissen welcomes the girls and boys warmly and takes the time to tell every child

how he or she resembles one or other of his or her parents. At Giuseppa's, the post-mistress, every child is dryly mocked, and woe betide the child who made fun of her last year. For strategic reasons many courageous children make the village rounds on their own. "There's more that way", they argue, though that is not always the case in the final count.

If I could join these children again, I would even refuse the banknote from old Giachen. All I would wish for is a cold nose filled with aromas of cooking from various kitchens, and the delicious sense of anticipation before opening every door. But I am too old for that, so instead I look forward to a Rhaeto-Romanish New Year and the sight of fidgeting, excited children exclaiming "Bien di bien onn".

Advertisement

JOHN F. KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL GSTAAD, SWITZERLAND

Employment Opportunities

Small English-language boarding school seeks applications from Swiss nationals or persons with working permission for Switzerland. Positions may be available starting in September 2000 for qualified and experienced teachers trained to teach in an English-language program designed for children 5-14. Persons interested in working with our boarding students as house parents, assistant house parents or cook may also wish to apply.



Contact - W. Lovell, CH-3792 Saanen, Switzerland
Tel. (+41 33) 744 13 72, Fax (+41 33) 744 89 82
E-mail: lovell@jfk.ch

The author is editor of the Rhaeto-Romanish news agency "Agentura da Novitads Rumantscha".