
Eretas

A CONSTRUCTED LANGUAGE

by Keith Gaughan

This document details—in a rather disorganised fashion—the preclassical ERETAS language. This is the language spoken by the *theocracy* culture that was the source of the Porteressians. I do not know their name, but that doesn't matter currently.

ERETAS has gone through a lot of changes since I first started it. It began as a brainfart, which I called IRITASA. One night in October 2001, I took that mess and tried to put some shape on it. One description I got for it was “*It looks rather like Tolkien’s Quenya with a triple helping of Finnish and umlauts 75% off the menu price*”. In retrospect ERETAS, or ERITAS as it was called then, did look somewhat like that.

I took that comment to heart when I read it. I didn't want the language to be some kind of Tolkien rip-off—whatever influences there were in there from his languages, I wanted them to be influences and nothing more. The language should have a character of its own.

1. ERETAS as a language is supposed to seem vaguely familiar to anybody who knows an Indoeuropean language. It's supposed to sound and look fairly pleasant, but not so much as to be sickly sweet¹. It's supposed to be a language you'd be comfortable doing your shopping with.

The world in which ERETAS is spoken is not a fantastical one. It is just like ours except the geography is different, and so is its history. No dragons, no orcs, no magic. It, like the language, forms a setting for a story.

Technologically, the time and place where ERETAS is spoken is like the mediterranean approximately between 500BC and 500AD. That's a big stretch of time, but it takes elements from cultures in the mediterranean between those dates and from places beyond it too. As a point of reference, those dates are good.

It's the decay of one order, the birth of another, and their mutual corruption. it's how the good intentions of one can be skewed and twisted to suit the ends of others. it's about the danger of mass movements. It's about one man, Portu, and the ideas he created.

¹ This is one of the more off-putting aspects of Tolkien's languages for me, and one I wanted to avoid.

2. Phonology and Orthography.

Phonologically, ERETAS is pretty simple. The romanisation outlined below is pretty phonemic, so you shouldn't have much difficulty understanding what's going on.

3. ERETAS has two series of consonants: the *velar* series and the *palatal* series. Note: where two consonants are separated by a slash, the consonant on the left is the voiced form and the other the unvoiced.

	Nasal	Stop	Fricative	Lat. Fric.	Lat. Approx.	Flap
Bilabial	m ^j	b ^j /p ^j				
Labiodental			v ^j /f ^j			
Dental		d/t	dh ^j /th ^j			
Alveolar	n		s/s	hl ^j	l ^j	r ^j
Alveoplatal	nj	dj/tj	sj/sj			
Palatal	nj	gj/kj	/hj			
Velar	n	g/k	/h			

4. All consonants can be palatalised. The letter **j** is used to indicate palatalisation. Where in the above chart a consonant is marked with **j**, the consonant radically changes position when palatalised. If you don't see a palatalised version of a consonant in the chart, I probably haven't work out exactly where it goes.

Note that **r^j** sounds like the Polish **rz**, or the **r** in the Czech name *Dvorak*. Sounds similar to **rsh**.²

5. Syllables in ERETAS are, I think, more like moræ in Japanese, and so the words are interchangeable. Each one has a constant length. This is what gives the language its rhythm. There are certain consonants that may be written doubled. These are **m**, **n**, **l**, **r**, and **s**. Doubled consonants represent several phenomena:

1. Lengthening of the sound.
2. Intervocally, it *binds* the consonant to the previous mora, and the following vowel is lengthened to compensate. This extra length comes from the vowel of the previous mora. This has an effect on secondary stress to be discussed later.
3. **s** is voiced intervocally and finally after a vowel. Doubling expresses it unvoiced.

6. ERETAS has six vowels³, five of which correspond to the classical Latin series with one addition: the vowel represented by **y**⁴ is pronounced as an open rounded back vowel.

i	u
e	o
a	y

Stress, as in Spanish, generally falls on the penultimate syllable. When it does not, stress is marked with an acute accent, e.g. *méosses* 'rain'.⁵

To do: Explain moræ in ERETAS and how it affects stress and length patterns.

² What's the proper name of this sound?

³ In fact, seven technically. The seventh is a schwa and it not written in *fenai*. However, it often occurs epenthetically for clitics and is represented by an apostrophe in this romanisation.

⁴ Why **y**? Simply because I wanted a single glyph for each of the sounds that was writable with an acute accent in the Latin-1 character set.

⁵ In the native orthography, stress is indicated by special versions of the vowel glyphs that evolved from two consecutive instances of the glyph.

7. The native orthography, called *fenai* ‘the strokes’ includes a special marker called the *nasal characteristic*, which is used for marking all nasals. It’s marked with a circle on either side of the supporting line, or by a figure-eight cutting it. But how to pronounce it? To put it simply—you just don’t know if it’s intervocalic. When it’s beside a stop or fricative, you can figure it out. Other than that it needs to be learned. It’s not considered important enough as it varies with dialect.

8. Phonotactics.

ERETAS is phonotactically very simple and allows only the following syllable shapes: C_1VC_2 , and $C_1VC_2C_1$ finally.

V is required and may be one of **a, e, i, o, u**, or **y**.

C_1 is optional and may be one of **b, d, dh, f, g, h, k, l, hl, m, n, p, r, s, t, th, v**, or **ts**. These may all be palatalised.

C_2 is optional and may be one of **m, n, l, hl, r**, or **s**.

9. Final consonant clusters are exceptional. Earlier in its history, ERETAS lost its final vowels and consonants. Final nasal, rhotics, sibilants and liquids had their quality infused into any vowels they were next to, but this effect has now gone. The effect of these final vowels and consonants is still felt in some conjugation irregularities. I don't as yet know what these are, however.⁶

10. There are some obvious restrictions on which consonant clusters may appear together. First of all, nasals with stops or fricatives must be at the same point of articulation. In the native script of ERETAS, nasals are denoted using a special character called a *nasal characteristic*. The position of the nasal characteristic when unmarked for position changes depending on the position of the other consonants it shares the cluster with.

⁶ One I do know is that word ending in the cluster **ns** were once spelt **nts**, and this creeps back into these words sometimes. **Ts** finally is always reduced to **s**. It's also worth pointing out that the **s** in these clusters is *unvoiced*.

11. Nouns.

Currently, I only know a bit about nouns. I know that one of the noun declensions, the one containing all the agentive forms of the verbs, has the agent nouns falling into two categories: open and closed. Open nouns end in a vowel while closed nouns end in a consonant.

There are three open endings: *-ý*, *-ó* and *-ú*⁷, and these correspond to the gerund endings *-an*, *-en* and *-in*. The plural markers for the open nouns are *-adas*, *-edas* and *-idas*. Example: *Sjolan* ‘Travel’, *Sjolý* ‘Traveller’, *Sjoladas* ‘Travellers’.

Closed agent nouns are derived by dropping the gerund ending and ‘opening’ the final two consonants. The vowel used to open it is the vowel of the gerund ending, e.g. *kaldan* → *kallád*, *fenlen* → *fenél*⁸. The doubling of the penultimate consonant is not always predicable, except via the word’s etymology. Pluralisation is simply a matter of adding the suffix *-as*. Example: *vellestan* ‘pierce’, *vellessát* ‘piercer’, *vellessatas* ‘piercers’.

$$\begin{array}{l} \acute{a}n \rightarrow \tilde{a} \rightarrow \acute{y} \\ \acute{e}n \rightarrow \tilde{e} \rightarrow \acute{o} \\ \acute{i}n \rightarrow \tilde{i} \rightarrow \acute{u} \end{array}$$

12. Colours are always nouns. If you want to say something is a particular colour, use the genitive, e.g. *rinde irillean* ‘red coat’.

⁷ As you’ve no doubt noticed, stress in agent nouns *always* falls on the final syllable. This, though regular, is still marked.

⁸ Cf. *fenlen* and *imarrellen*. One might expect that *fenlen* would have a form more like *fenellen*, or *imarrellen* like *imarlen*, both being compounds of the verb *ellen* ‘do’ and a noun. However *imarrellen* is a neologism, whilst *fenlen* has been in use for quite a while and has already gone through some phonetic changes.

13. Pronouns, Demonstratives and Articles.

Information on pronouns is a bit sparse right now. Suffice it to say that I know the noun *essu* ‘Thing, Entity, Individual’ is commonly used as an impersonal pronoun and sometimes as a general 3rd person pronoun. More commonly used are the demonstratives as 3rd person pronouns. I’m not sure what their shape in all forms is right now.

	Pronounal	Definite
This	nar	ir
That	nal	il
Yon	nan	in

Formerly, the pronominal and definite forms were identical. The definite form ended up being attached as a clitic to the previous word, causing **na** to wear away, causing the **r**, **l** and **n** to become syllabic. It later separated⁹ again and gained epenthetic **i**.

The 1st and 2nd person pronouns in their most basic forms are *e* and *se* respectively.

There are no plural forms for pronouns.

14. Ok, we’ve ‘essu’, these pronominals and definite articles, but I’d like a word like ‘ce’ in french, with a bunch of dexis suffixes like -ci and -lá, which can be used seperately.

So how about this: ‘na’ and ‘i’ are the equivalents of ‘ce’ in ERETAS, and ‘-r’, ‘-l’, and ‘-n’ are the dexis suffixes? No, I don’t like that.

I also want a word that can be used as a reflexive pronoun and, if used as the subject, an impersonal pronoun. I want those affixes to be usable generally, like french but moreso, for instance, I want to be able to create ‘I-here’ and treat this as ‘we’.

I’ve ruminated, and here’s what I have:

1. ‘me’ is the reflexive pronoun. If used as the subject, it can also be used as an impersonal pronoun.
2. The three dexis words for ‘here’, ‘there’, and ‘yon’ are ‘ar’, ‘al’, and ‘an’.
3. ‘na’ can be used by itself as a pronoun. It simply has no dexis.
4. The dexis words can be prefixed to other words, just like in french, only moreso, e.g. *ar-e* ‘I-here’*. If the word starts with a vowel the consonant doubles: *arre*, *alle*, *anne*.

⁹ Is this even possible?

15. Conjunctions.

I know of only one coördinating conjunction currently, 'l 'and'. This clitic attaches itself to numbers and verbs. With nouns, the concommitative case is used.

16. Verbs.

I know little or nothing of verbs at the moment except that virtually all verbs require an auxiliary to be used. The only surviving forms for most are the imperative, the verbal nouns (of which there are many), and the verbal adjectives.

17. The Imperative is formed in a similar way to the agent noun of a verb. With where the verb is open, it's simply a matter of dropping the ending, e.g. *mjuhlin* → *mjuhl*, *thaorellan* → *thaorél*. Stress is on the final syllable if unmarked on the gerund. With closed verbs, it shares the same form as the agent noun, e.g. *vellestan* → *velessát*.

18. The 'that which was/is/will be done' Verbal Noun. I only know of one instance of seeing this, and that's the word *ellevas* 'history' (*lit.* 'that which was done'). It comes from the verb *ellen* 'do'. I haven't a clue how it's formed for other verbs yet.¹⁰

19. The Agent, just for confusion's sake, and because it ended up there first, for an explanation of it, see the section on Nouns.

20. The Continuative Noun. This means 'having done something'. It's useful, helps make the language compact, and is used all the time, but especially in storytelling. Stolen from Burushaski. Must explain in detail...

21. Need to work on verb conjugation:

1. Agreement between verb, agent/experiencer, and patient/experiencer.
2. Language is fluid-S (nominative-absolutive).
3. Extensive use of auxiliary verbs. Meaning of some may have been lost.

¹⁰ Nor do I even know its proper name!

22. Numbers.

These are currently quite tentative and very much subject to change. I'm not quite happy with them. They seem too ad-hoc and messy even for a *real* language.

	Cardinal	Ordinal
0	Nalova	ⁿ / _a
1	Este	Ester
2	Vera	Verar
3	Tome	Tomel
4	Kannas	Kannar
5	Tseala	Tsealar
6	Ellas	Ellar
7	Esselles	Essellar
8	Verelles	Verellar
9	Tomelles	Tomellar
10	Kanselles	Kansellar
11	Tselles	Tsellar
12	Verlas	Verlar
13	Este'l Verlas	Ester'l Verlas
...
18	Ellas'l Verlas	Ellar'l Verlas
19	Esselles'l Verlas	Essellar'l Verlas
...
24	Tomlas	Tomlar
25	Este'l Tomlas	Ester'l Tomlas
...
30	Ellas'l Tomlas	Ellar'l Tomlas
31	Esselles'l Tomlas	Essellar'l Tomlas
...
36	Kanlas	Kanlar
48	Tselas	Tselar
60	Piado	Piadar
...

Este, *vera*, *tome*, *kanna*, and *tseala* are the names of the digits, running from the little finger to the thumb in order.

After 60, things get yet more complicated... it's the kind of chaos I want to remove from the language!

23. Eretas-English Glossary.

The collation order more-or-less follows that of English. However, the letter **j** is not counted as a separate letter. It is counted as an accent on the previous consonant and is therefore ignored in collation. **Th**, **dh** and **hl** are counted as letters by themselves (as they are in the native script) and therefore matter in collation. For verbs, the agent form is given in brackets. This is needed as in some cases the derivation is irregular, e.g. *andan* → *annád*.

— A —

ADHOSEN (ADHOSÓ)

v. Deny.

ALLAHJU

n. Fish.

ALSEN

n. House.

ANDAN (ANNÁD)

v. Test; Trial.

ANVALARAN (ANVALARÝ)

v. See.

ARDANS

adj. Great; Much; Big.

AST

n. Earth, Soil.

ASTANS

n. Building material.

AVANTAHL

n. Unlimited potential; Purposefulness; Tao.

— B —

BANAN (BANÝ)

v. Confuse.

BESSE

n. Warmth.

BESSU

adj. Warm.

BORNEA

n. The Southern Lands.

— D —

DARESIN (DARESÚ)

v. Scatter; Disperse.

DEASS

n. God.

DEASSERESSIA

n. Pantheon.

— E —

EAN

n. Bird.

ELLEANS

adj. Young; New. (*lit.* ‘Just made’)

ELLEDAS

n. The *People*, or *Makers*—the ancestors of the speakers of ERETAS.

ELLEN (ELLÓ)

v. Make; Do.

ELLÓ

n. Person. (*lit.* ‘Maker’)

ELLEVAS

n. History. (*lit.* ‘That which was done’)

ERESSIA

n. Nation.

ERETAS

n. Language.

ESSELLES

num. Seven.

ESSELLAR(S)

ord. Seventh.

ESSU

n. Thing; Entity; Individual. Used as an impersonal pronoun.

ESTE

num. One, Single

ESTER(S)

ord. First, Premier; (+s) Primary, Head.

ETENDEL

n. Reputation.

— F —

FENE

n. Stroke; Line. (pl.) *fenai*.

FENLEN (FENÉL)

v. Paint; Write. (*lit.* ‘Make strokes’)

— HL —

HLESSU

n. Blueness; Blue.

— I —

IANNOLT

n. The Eastern Lands.

IRILLE

n. Redness; Red.

IMAR

n. Word.

IMARRELLEN (IMARRELLÓ)

v. Coin a word.

IMARRELLÓ

n. Conlanger. (*lit.* ‘Word-maker’)

ISSEONA

n. The Western Lands.

— K —

KALDAN (KALLÁD)
v. Smite; Hit.

KALLÉDH
n. The Northern Lands.

KALLEDEL
n. Strength.

KANLAS
num. Thirty-six.

KANLAR(S)
ord. Thirty-sixth.

KANNAS
num. Four.

KANNAR(S)
ord. Fourth.

KANSELLES
num. Ten.

KANSELLAR(S)
ord. Tenth.

KASSILEN (KASSILÓ)
v. Break; Give up, Fail (used reflexively with dative).

— L —

LENDAS
n. City.

— M —

MÉOSSES
n. Rain.

MONAHE
n. Monkey.

MJUHLIN (MJUHLÚ)
v. Die

— N —

NALOVA
num. Zero; Nothing.

NESI
n. Small, round, furry object.

NISSA
n. Dream; Wish.

NIS
adj. Small

NISSE
n. Smallness

— O —

OIA
n. Song.

ORDÚS

n. Fear.

OVEAN (OVÉ)

v. Find; Discover.

OVIAN

n. River.

— P —

PALLAVAR

n. A city name.

PIADO

num. Sixty.

PIADAR(S)

ord. Sixtieth.

PIESSAR

n. Animal.

— R —

REANSE

n. Tightness.

RINDE

n. A kind of heavy, billowing, body-length cloak or coat.

ROÁTHOSSAN

adj. Deniable.

— S —

SJAKIRAN (SJAKIRÝ)

v. Scream.

SALANDE

n. Homeland.

SALARDA

n. Tower.

SALOSSAN (SALOSSÝ)

v. Blow.

SALOSSÝ

n. Wind.

SELAR

v. Sky; Heaven.

SJESUIN (SJESÚ)

v. Dispute.

SILAS

n. Time.

SJINAR

n. Shinar (a transliteration).

SIONNAN (SIONNÝ)

v. Declare.

SJOLAN (SJOLÝ)

v. Come from; Travel from.

SJOLÝ

n. Traveller.

SJONESI

n. Fuzziness; Furriness. Typically used when referring to household pets.

— T —

TAL

n. Star.

TALÍDEON

n. Morningstar.

TALISRA

n. Evenstar.

TOME

num. Three.

TOMEL(S)

ord. Third.

TOMELLES

num. Nine.

TOMELLAR(S)

ord. Ninth.

TOMLAS

num. Twenty-four.

TOMLAR(S)

ord. Twenty-fourth.

TSEALA

num. Five.

TSEALAR(S)

ord. Fifth.

TSELAS

num. Forty-eight.

TSELAR(S)

ord. Forty-eighth?

TSELLES

num. Eleven.

TSELLAR(S)

ord. Eleventh.

— TH —

THAORA

n. Pebble.

THAORELLEN (THAORELLÓ)

v. Count; Add. (*lit.* ‘Do the stones’)

THAORELLÓ

n. Accountant; Computer; Calculator.

— U —

UDANNES

n. World.

— V —

VALLAN (VALLÝ)

v. Share.

VALSAN (VALÁS)

v. Drop; Remove.

VASSU

n. The Sun.

VELLESTAN (VELLESSÁT)

v. Pierce.

VELLEN (VELLÓ)

v. Agree.

VERA

num. Two, Dual.

VERAR(S)

ord. Second; (+s) Secondary.

VERELLES

num. Eight.

VERELLAR(S)

ord. Eighth.

VERLAS

num. Twelve.

VERLAR(S)

ord. Twelfth.