



Motta, F.: *Studi celtici*. A cura di Andrea Nuti. Pisa: Pisa University Press. 2020. xxiv + 520 pp. ISBN: 978-88-3339-275-2. €32.

This volume is a collection of articles by Filippo Motta, professore di glottologia e filologia celtica at the Università di Pisa, on the occasion of his retirement. It assembles twenty-one articles from almost forty years of research. It is a fundamental issue of honouring collections like this one that much of the contents may have been overtaken by new insights in the meantime. The earliest contributions in this volume appeared more than forty years ago, and most are at least twenty years old. This is at least one academic generation. Even in a small, seemingly slow-moving discipline such as Celtic Studies, important progress comes now at the pace of a couple of years, if not months. There is no longer the comfort of relying on data and its analysis of decades or generations ago. For that reason, it is often the methodology demonstrated in the contributions in this volume that is the lasting contribution, while conclusions and results themselves may have been superseded by newer ones.

The volume starts with an introduction by the editor Andrea Nuti and a publication list of the honorand (pp. xi–xxiv). The articles are arranged in seven thematic ‘parts’. The eighth section comprises the indices. Given the rich content, not all articles can be discussed in this review.

‘Parte Prima’ comprises articles about Celtiberian. ‘Per un’interpretazione della faccia B del bronzo di Botorrita’ (pp. 3–29) is one of the earliest contributions in the book, written in 1980 shortly after the important Celtiberian inscription, now known as Botorrita I (K.1.1. = Z.09.01), had been presented to the public. Although many of the readings, interpretations of letters and etymologies, on which Motta relied in this article, are now obsolete, it is still a lucid demonstration of how to analyse the structure of a text—in this case the list of names on the reverse side of Botorrita I—and how to distil functional information from them. Motta’s methodology can serve as a model for future decipherments. Other articles in this section are ‘Valutazione della toponomastica preromana nel papiro di Artemidoro’ (pp. 37–62), and ‘Un relitto morfologico celtiberico’ (pp. 31–35) from 1981, which contains the very important insight that the Celtiberian genitive *abulos* of the name, which is *abulu* < **abulō(n)* in the nominative, hides a zero grade of the nasal suffix, namely **abul-n-os*, while in most other names belonging to this inflectional class the full grade has been generalised.

‘Parte Seconda’ is dedicated to ‘Ogamico e Brittanico’, i.e. the earliest attested stages of Irish and the British languages. It begins with two short articles, ‘Brevi note sulle bilingui ogamico-latine di Britannia’ (pp. 65–73) and ‘Su due possibili testimonianze dirette del britannico antico’ (pp. 75–81), dedicated to a curse tablet in cursive script and to the so-called ‘Bath-pendant’. The long article ‘Lo

stato attuale della ricerca sulla scrittura ogamica' (pp. 83–118) from 1997 gives a wide-ranging overview of the state of research into the ogam script at the time, including a detailed review of the—then still recent—book *A Guide to Ogam* by McManus (1991). This is, of course, a generation ago. Knowledge about ogam has changed dramatically since then (for the most recent overview, see Stifter 2020). A major theme of the article is the unreliability of R. A. S. Macalister's *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum* (Macalister 1945), compounded by the lack of resources with secure readings of ogam inscriptions. Important progress has been made in this matter. In particular, the website *Ogham in 3D* hosted by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (White 2013) contains three-dimensional, high-resolution scans of approximately a third of the stones in Ireland, and the current AHRC-IRC-funded project OG(H)AM¹ will add data for all remaining ogam-bearing objects from Ireland, Britain and the Isle of Man. This includes not only inscriptions from the 'orthodox', i.e. classical, period but, since ogam never went completely out of use, everything up to 1850 will be investigated. The project will also give full attention to portable objects and to the use of ogam in manuscripts (of which there are at least over eighty different examples). The ogams from Scotland are particularly diverse and unique in genre, form, and language.

'Parte Terza' comprises three articles about Gaulish. The first is 'Sulla declinazione celtica dei temi in \bar{a} ' (pp. 121–133), a contribution in which the author makes important observations about the convergent inflection of \bar{a} - and \bar{i} -stems in Gaulish and Irish in the genitive, accusative and dative singular. I restrict myself to small comments: OIr. *súil* 'eye' is probably not relevant for the question of \bar{a} -stems, since it is best explained as originating from **suh₂l-ih₁*, the original dual of PIE **seh₂ul* 'sun', meaning 'two suns'. Because of its formal similarity, Proto-Celtic **sūlī* must have then been reinterpreted as an \bar{i} -stem. Regarding the accusative of OIr. \bar{a} -stems, Motta concludes that we can 'reconstruire[...] tranquillamente **iōtin*' (p. 126), i.e. with an accusative ending that mirrors that found in late Gaulish forms. However, it has now been settled that the preform of the Old Irish accusative was *-en* (cf. McCone 1996: 78–79; Breatnach 1997). Early instances such as *toil* 'will, desire' < **tolen* without raising, against dative *tuil* < **tolī* with raising of the root vowel, bear out this distinction. This means that the convergence of \bar{a} - and \bar{i} -stems in Gaulish and Irish is not a common inheritance, but a parallel development, perhaps springing from a common seed, but a development that does not overlap in all cases. The other

1 The full title of the project is *Harnessing Digital Technologies to Transform Understanding of Ogham Writing, from the 4th Century to the 21st* (OG(H)AM). It is in receipt of a UK-Ireland Collaboration in the Digital Humanities research grant for 2021–2024, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK Grant number AH/W001985/1) and the Irish Research Council (Irish Grant number IRC/W001985/1). More information can be found on the website: <https://ogham.glasgow.ac.uk/>.

two articles are ‘Contatto culturale ed emersione di lingue: il caso del gallico’ (pp. 149–164), which discusses language contact of Gaulish, with a particular focus on the bilingual Celtic inscriptions from Italy; and ‘Gall. δεκαντεν, pitt. δεκανται, ant. irl. *-dei(i)chet*’ (pp. 134–148). In the latter, Motta establishes an old ordinal number **dek̑nto-* > **dekanto-* ‘tenth’ for Celtic, from which he believes the ogam name MAQI DECEDAS (attested in numerous variations) and the Old Irish personal name *Mac Deichet* were derived via transition of *o*-stem **dekanto-* to consonant stem **dekant-*. But such a development is extremely unusual and, to my knowledge, without parallel. For Indo-European consonant-stem decads of the form **dek̑nt-*, see now rather Rau 2009 (who does not seem to be aware of the Irish names).

‘Parte Quarta’ is dedicated to ‘Lepontica’ and the ancient Celtic languages of Italy. Unsurprisingly it is the most extensive section of the collection. The reprint of Motta’s thorough description of Lepontic, ‘La documentazione epigrafica e linguistica’ from the catalogue *I Leponti tra mito e realtà* (2000), takes up a hundred pages of the present volume (pp. 167–267). I just want to add tiny comments on readings of inscriptions. Motta interprets his inscription N° 17 (pp. 237–239) *atepu* (= *LexLep* TI·8) as a compound of Celtic **ate-* + **ek^uo-* ‘horse’. But this makes little sense. The preverb **ate-* ‘back, re-’ combines typically with verbs, not with nouns. It is better to analyse the underlying *Atepoȓ̄xs* and the short name *Atepū* as compounds of **ad-tek^uo-* ‘refuge’ (cf. OIr. *ad-teich* ‘to flee to, pray to’, *attach* ‘refuge’) and as being a near-cognate of the Old British name *Votepoȓ̄xs* of the same meaning. For N° 21 (pp. 243–245), we have rather opted for the reading *runelos* in *LexLep* TI·11, instead of Motta’s *rupelos*. The tiny stroke on top of the letter that makes the difference between *nu* and *pi* seems to be intentional. For reading *remu*, not *reśu*, in N° 22 (pp. 245–247 = *LexLep* TI·9), see my general arguments in Stifter (2010: 367). The *mu* of *remu* is similar to the letter in *namu esopnio* (*LexLep* VB·28). The reproductions of the black-and-white photos and drawings of important Lepontic inscriptions in this article are larger than in the publication of 2000. However, they do not seem to be new prints made on the basis of the original photographs, but rather enlargements of what was printed then. This is recognisable by the tell-tale cross-hatches caused by optical interference. Colour images in larger resolution are available on *Lexicon Leponticum*, e.g., the stela of Davesco (N° 6, p. 213 = *LexLep* TI·36), or the bowl of Giubiasco (N° 22, pp. 245–247 = *LexLep* TI·9).

Particularly useful for the decipherment and study of Cisalpine Celtic inscriptions are the articles ‘Val Brembana golasecchiana: nuove testimonianze epigrafiche da Carona’ (pp. 283–290) and ‘Sulle ultime campagne di studio delle epigrafi preromane di Carona’ (pp. 321–336). In them, Motta provides a provisional introduction to the eminently rich and diverse rock graffiti from Carona (= *LexLep* BG·41.1–30). Discovered in 2005 and investigated by a group of researchers, including Motta, in the following years, they have not received

a lot of attention as of yet. They hold the promise of vastly expanding our knowledge of Cisalpine Celtic. For instance, it may be possible that they contain more verbal forms than are currently known. Motta sounds a note of warning, however: instead of clarifying aspects of Cisalpine Celtic, more data may instead increase the number of problems, and not all new texts written in the Lepontic script need to be Celtic in language. Maybe the new material includes hitherto unknown languages. Other articles in this section are ‘Gall. *karnitu*, lep. *karite*’ (pp. 269–281) and the very useful ‘Tipologie dell’onomastica personale celtica nell’Italia antica’ (pp. 291–319). I found the final remarks about alliterating names particularly enlightening, especially in view of the predilection for alliteration in ancient Celtic poetical style.

‘Parte Quinta’ is concerned with ‘Cultura e Antropologia’. The article ‘Un frammento di Filarco relativo ai Galati’ (pp. 339–352) compares a historical report about the largesse of the Galatian king Ariamnes with the social institution of the Old Irish *bríugu* ‘hospitaller’ who has to provide generous hospitality to his guests. ‘Dono e magia fra i Celti. A proposito di alcuni lavori di Marcel Mauss’ (pp. 353–385) looks at Irish *loricae* ‘protective spells’, verbal magic, and the role of poets in medieval Irish society. ‘L’Aurora scozzese’ (pp. 387–395) interprets the Irish St Brigit as an equivalent of a goddess of morning light.

‘Parte Sesta. Etimologie’ comprises two articles, dedicated to the etymology of two items, OIr. *bríugu* ‘hospitaller’ (‘Per l’etimologia di antico irlandese *bríugu*’, pp. 399–405) and Gaul. *celicnon* (‘La sala del convivio dei fabbri gallici: per l’etimologia di gall. *celicnon*’, pp. 407–414). As for the former, Motta explains it as a perfect participle of the verb *brigaid*, which he glosses as ‘dichiara, annunzia’ (p. 403) and which eDIL defines as ‘shows; asserts, declares; adjudges; respects; proves, verifies, confirms’ (dil.ie/6815). Unfortunately, rhyming examples are lacking. However, the semantics and the morphology of the verb make it likely that it is denominal from *bríg* ‘power’ and that it has to be set up as *brigaid* with a long vowel. Any etymological connection with *bríugu* is thereby precluded. The idea that *bríugu* is originally a perfect participle in **-uōt-/uot-* is unaffected by this, but the verbal root is probably rather that also seen in *Brigit*, *Brigantes*, etc., i.e. the PIE root **b^herǵh-* ‘to become high, to rise’. I want to mention here a morphological feature that has not been adequately appreciated in the past: since the inflection of the word is *bríugu*, genitive *bríugad*, it follows that a **u* must have stood in the second syllable throughout the whole paradigm. This means that the lengthened grade of the suffix was generalised also in the oblique cases, i.e. **brigūt-* < **b^hrǵ^huōt-* without suffixal ablaut. I have argued that this was pragmatically restricted to words that refer to beings high up the animacy hierarchy, i.e. mainly humans (Stifter 2011: 558–562). Apparent exceptions like OIr. *Sinann* ‘the river Shannon’ < **senūnā-* ‘old one’ and *sinnach* ‘fox’ < **senūnāko-* ‘old one’, built on a ‘highly animate’ stem **senūn-*, have been metonymically transferred to entities of lower animacy.

‘Parte Settima’, finally, is devoted to ‘Storia della celtistica’. This assembles two contributions, ‘Su alcuni lavori di celtistica di Tristano Bolelli’ (pp. 417–437), and ‘Il contributo di Ascoli alla nascita della linguistica celtica moderna’ (pp. 439–487).

In summary, this is a rich and diverse collection that paints a comprehensive picture of the honorand, Prof. Filippo Motta, and of his ability to combine research into ancient Celtic languages with the study of the medieval Irish tradition. This collection demonstrates his linguistic, epigraphic, and cultural-historical knowledge of these subjects.

Abbreviations

Gaul. Gaulish
LexLep Stifter et al. 2009–
 OIr. Old Irish

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David Stifter
 Maynooth University