



Cisalpine Celtic varia III

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The article collects notes on the readings, analyses and etymologies of forms in three Cisalpine Celtic inscriptions (MI·24 **kituaretos**, VA·20 **ṣnašjouiṭoṣ**, T1·43 **]oni : kuimpaḷui[?] : paḷa**), argues for the interpretation of T1·29 **]aniui : p[** and T1·31 **]aḷa[** as parts of the same inscription, and discusses graffiti and inscriptions on Golasecca beakers.

Keywords: Cisalpine Celtic, Lepontic, Cisalpine Gaulish, Celtiberian, North Italic epigraphy, Continental Celtic onomastics

The present article constitutes the third instalment in a series which is intended to draw attention to new readings, analyses and interpretations of Cisalpine Celtic inscriptions and the linguistic forms attested in them which have been implemented in the digital edition *Lexicon Leponticum* (LexLep). The text is, in essence, drawn from the respective LexLep entries, but was adapted to the format of a print publication. Data and details about aspects of the inscriptions which are not discussed here, as well as images and further references, can be found in the entries on the website. The inscription sigla used for Cisalpine Celtic inscriptions are those of LexLep; concordances of the LexLep sigla with the major print editions of the Cisalpine Celtic inscription corpus (Whatmough 1933; Tibiletti Bruno 1981; Solinas 1995; Motta 2000; Morandi 2004) are provided on <https://lexlep.univie.ac.at/wiki/Concordance>.¹

I. MI·24 **kituaretos** (MILANO; mid-third to first century BC)

One of the recent inscription finds from urban excavations in Italy (Fedeli et al. 2024: 79–84) comes from Via Gorani in Milano. Only the foot of the ceramic bowl, found in 2010 and published in Casini & Motta (2011: 465–466), is left, but the inscription is preserved on it practically undamaged. The reading

1 The research for this article was conducted in part for the project *Cisalpine Celtic Language and Literacy* (Austrian Academy of Sciences APART-GSK fellowship 2019; Department of Linguistics, University of Vienna), in part for the project *Celtic Language and Identity in Northern Italy and the Alpine Region* (EU Horizon Europe Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship, project 101107478; Department of Early Irish, Maynooth University). I am grateful to David Stifter, Dagmar Wodtka and Carlos Jordán Cólera for their advice, and to two anonymous reviewers for valuable suggestions and references.

ϝOXϞDϞVXIX **kituaretos** is unproblematic. After final sigma follows another clearly intentional mark consisting of two curved vertical lines which converge at the top and bottom; the space in between the scratches seems to have also been scratched off a little. The mark does not particularly look like any letter (omicron at most), and none would be expected after the ending *-os*. Casini & Motta suggest a punctuation mark, but I am not aware of anything similar in Cisalpine Celtic inscriptions.

Whatever the function of the final element, **kituaretos** is a dithematic personal name. On the face of it, the first element could be *kintu-* ‘first’ with /n/ not spelled in the cluster **/nt/* as typical for the Lepontic alphabet (cf. Casini & Motta 2011: 467), or – as noted by a reviewer – *kitu-/kito-* as listed by Delamarre (2019: 220). The second element could contain *ret-* ‘run, race’ or *rēd-* ‘ride, drive’; to account for *-a-*, we can assume that (u) reflects both the stem vowel of *ki(n)tu-* and initial *u-* of the second element. A fitting name *uarēdō*, *uarēdonjus* (*uo-rēd-*?) is attested in Germania superior (CIL XIII 10010,1975, XIII 3707). The compound **kituaretos**, however, finds a full comparandum in Galatia: the personal name *centaretus* (Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 8, 158; *cintaretus* Solinus 45, 13; κεντοαράτης Aelianus *Nat. Anim.* 6, 44)² is borne by a man who achieved fame by stealing a horse and immediately falling off it. The Galatian attestations, though evidently corrupt, confirm *kintu-* as the first element, and show that the dental in the second element is /t/. The most plausible segmentation is thus *kintu-ua-ret-os* ‘who helps first’ (OW *-guaret* ‘deliver, help’),³ attesting the sporadic development of *uo-* ‘under’ > *ua-*.⁴ Alternatively, the second element could be *uar-* suffixed with agentive *-et-*: *kintu-uar-et-os*; the semantics of such a formation are, however, unclear.⁵

2 See Holder (1896–1907 I: 988–989), Freeman (2001: 37–38).

3 Cf. the meaning ‘running to someone’s aid’ suggested for names in *atepo-* by Meid (2005: 96).

4 Koch 1992: 477–479, Schrijver 1995: 128–130. In Cisalpine Celtic cf. VB-16 **uasekia** *ua-seg-iā* and BS-19 **uasi** *uass-i*.

5 An element *uara-* or *uari-* is sporadically attested in Gaulish names (see Delamarre 2007: 235 et passim) and possibly also in TI-40 **uarsileos**, if this should be segmented *uar-sil(l)-os* (with second element *silo-* ‘progeny’) as per Delamarre (2007: 232). The absence of a composition vowel makes the latter unlikely; preferable is an analysis of the base as **uarsā-* < PIE **ur̥seh-* ‘high point’ (OIr. *farr* ‘prop, post’) before the assimilation of /rs/ > /rr/ (see Stifter 2024: 13). The same root PIE **uers-* ‘rise’, now with assimilated cluster, may in fact come into consideration for *uar-* in *kintu-uar-et-os* (‘who rises first’?). An alternative is PIE **uer-* ‘perceive’, from which Matasović (2009: 219–220) derives **uarjo-* in **ko(m)-uarjo-* > OIr. *coir*, MW *cywair* ‘in proper order’ with generalised zero-grade (also OIr. *cōrae* < **ko(m)-uarjā* ‘justice’; cf. also Stifter (2003: 240) on the ethnonym *quariates*). A reviewer draws my attention to *uer-/uar-* ‘(body of) water’ in the ethnonym *trēuerī*, according to Vendryes (1936: 374) with zero-grade in the toponyms *uarejā* (ES) and *argantouariā* (FR) and in the

2. VA-20 **ṣnašiuṣiṣ** (ARSAGO SEPRIO; late second to first century BC)

The fragment of part of the foot and bottom of a ceramic open vessel (patera or cup) was found in the ustrinum of grave 10 (excavation 1986/1987) of the Gallo-Roman necropolis of Sant’Ambrogio in Arsago Seprio.⁶ The inscription, applied sinistroverse and upside-down on the bottom near the rim of the foot, is carefully incised, but much abraded; the majority of the letters is incomplete on the bottom. The only clearly legible section is **naš**. Before nu, a fainter trace could be only slightly curved sigma ṣ as repeatedly attested at Sant’Ambrogio (cf. VA-7, VA-8).⁷ The lower parts of the five letters following san are missing, but can be reconstructed with reasonable confidence as iota I, omicron O, upsilon V, iota I and St. Andrew’s cross X (most already in the reading of Morandi 2001: 12, no. 5 [also 2004: 604, no. 120] **našiuṣi-ṣi**). St. Andrew’s cross is particularly deeply incised, while the last two letters are more faint, though complete. Omicron is clear; Morandi identifies the final letter as iota, but again a slight counterrotating curvature indicates sigma ṣ: **ṣOXIVOIXAIṢ ṣnašiuṣiṣ**. Offset toward the bottom of the line follows a large fragmentary character which is judged by Morandi to be a para-script sign, possibly a potter’s mark and presumably unconnected with the inscription. The inscription is thus complete, also in the beginning, where no trace of letters can be seen in the 1 cm gap before initial putative sigma. The alphabet is Lepontic (alpha, san), but nu has a Latin shape (cf. VA-19 **uini** from the same grave).

If the final letter is ⟨ṣ⟩, the form **ṣnašiuṣitos** can be interpreted as an *o*-stem personal name in the nominative; ⟨io⟩ in the middle suggests a segmentation into two stems *ṣnašio-* and *uito-*.⁸ The use of two ambiguous letters (san /ts/ uel sim. [tau gallicum] or /d/, St Andrew’s cross /t(t)/, /nt/ or /d(d)/) leaves room for a number of hypothetical reading options, but the name finds an unexpected comparandum on Botorrita III (MLH K.1.3) 2.30 **ṣnaziueṣtos** or possibly **ṣnaziueṣitos** (Beltrán 1996: 154) which allows us to determine the phonetic shape of the name more precisely – to an extent.

The first element features a thematic composition vowel in the Cisalpine, but not the Celtiberian form; whether the name is formed with an *i*-stem as first

Gaulish ethnonym *ambiuareti* (Caesar, *B.G.* VII 75.2), where it would appear with the same suffix as in **kituaretos**.

- 6 See Binaghi Leva (1990: 38, 46) for details about the grave and finds and the dating.
- 7 The reading as alpha suggested by Volontè Fredini (1990: 68, 72) (also Solinas 1995: 384) does not seem possible to me. Morandi (2001: 12, no. 5, also 2004: 604, no. 120) describes the trace as an unintentional half-moon-shaped scratch, but considering the smoothness of the surface around the inscription the trace must have some significance.
- 8 For a first element *našio-*, Morandi compares VB-3.1 **našom**, but this form is — as noted by Morandi himself (2004: 551) — a ghost word; see the entry in LexLep on the preferable reading **natom**.

element and a secondary *-o-* was inserted in **snašiouitos**, or *-o-* in **snaziuentos** was assimilated to following /u/ is unclear. The latter development is argued by Eska 2006b (with previous literature) for the dat. sg. LUGUEI < **lugouej* at Peñalba de Villastar (MLH K.3.3); the sequence /uɥ/ would be spelled with single (u) in the Celtiberian script. Concerning the inlauting dental in the first element, it cannot at this point be entirely discounted that sigma (**z**) in the Celtiberian script could denote sounds which are etymologically related to tau gallicum, such as reflexes of dental-dental clusters, but the letter appears to primarily denote voiced fricative reflexes of */s/ or */d/ (see the detailed discussion in Jordán Cólera 2019: 115–130), in the present position (*VzV* if *snazi-* or *snazijo-*, *VziV* if *snazjo-*) most probably of */d/ (ibid.: 125, 129).⁹ The sound spelled with san in **snaši-** is thus also most easily interpreted as (*)/d/ (whatever its precise allophonic form) as per Stifter (2010: 372–373) rather than a complex sibilant of the tau gallicum variety: *snadžo-*. Wodtko (2000: 338) and Stifter (2024b: 134), independently for the Celtiberian and Cisalpine Celtic name respectively, compare OIr. *snaidid* ‘cut, chip, hew’ (< PC **snad-*, see Schumacher 2004: 594–595) or OIr. *snáidid* ‘protect’ (< PC **snād-*), though Wodtko notes that neither are common in onomastics.

As for the dental or nasal-dental cluster in the second element, the options are less restricted due to the uncertainty concerning the eighth letter in the Celtiberian name (𐌛 **n** or 𐌛 **i**). We can exclude only a cluster /nd/, which would be spelled ⟨n⟩ in the Lepontic alphabet, and /χt/ (suggested as a formal option for the Celtiberian name by Wodtko ibid.), which would be spelled ⟨kt⟩ or ⟨χt⟩ in Lepontic (cf. VC.1.2 **teuoxtoni**[...]). /d/ is almost equally unlikely, since it should be expected to be written with the same letter – sigma **z** or san **ś**, respectively – as in the first element. This is admittedly not fully conclusive, because the phonetic contexts are not the same. Specifically in the Lepontic alphabet, the rationale behind the extension of the use of san to cover (reflexes of) /d/ is not entirely understood (cf. Stifter 2010: 374); in the present context, it might be argued that the spelling of /d/ in *snadžo-* with san is due to palatalisation before /j/ (cf. MI.10.1 **mešiolano** /medjolanō/ as per Tibiletti Bruno 1986: 102–105, 108). There are, however, currently no clear examples for intervocalic /d/ being spelled with St Andrew’s cross after the archaic period, indicating that the spelling of /d/ with san covered these allophones. Similarly, in Celtiberian, the syllabogram **u to** is technically bivalent in the non-dual system, but sigma is used in the first element and also appears quite frequently between vowels in Botorrita III, suggesting that it would have been employed to spell *-ueidos* unambiguously – thus, despite the attestation of *uejdūj* (dat., K.0.7 **ueidui**, K.6.1 **ueizui**, probably from PIE **ueid-* ‘see’), a reading of the dental as /t/ is also preferable here. Untermann in Beltrán (1996: 154) does not consider *-ueidos* in the analysis of the name.

9 Though Jordán Cólera notes that /d/ may have been preserved in first elements of compounds.

We are left with *-uentos* ~ *-ūintos* or *-uejtos* ~ *-ūjtos*. The first of these two pairs agrees well in terms of Continental Celtic sound change, /e/ > /i/ before /nC/ in Gaulish being a well-supported development (in Cisalpine Celtic cf. MI-24 **kituaretos** above, VR-24 **eskikorikos** *eskingorīgos* [gen.]). For Celtib. *-uentos*, the most plausible analysis proposed by Untermann in Beltrán (1996: 154) is a *t*-derivation from the root PIE **uēnH-* ‘love’, though Irslinger (2002) lists no such formation in Celtic (cf. Wodtko 2000: 338). A *tā*-derivation **uentā* ‘place’(?), attested in Brittonic toponyms (*W gwent*, in *cadwent* ‘battle(ground)’), is reconstructed from different roots by Irslinger 2002: 346 (PIE **uēn-* ‘vanquish’) and Schumacher (2004: 368) (**h₂uēn-* ‘put’). Untermann’s suggestion **uēnto-* ‘Wind’ (*W gwynt* etc.) is formally irreproachable, but maybe less attractive semantically.¹⁰ The second pair *-uejtos* ~ *-ūjtos* is more difficult to bring in line, as /ej/ > /ē/ in Gaulish. We may consider the possibility that ⟨i⟩ in the Cisalpine Celtic name reflects /ī/ as a variant of /ē/, as assumed e.g. for the putative spelling variants ⟨di(u)o⟩ of ⟨de(u)o⟩ *dēyo-* ‘god’, which are variously attributed to closed pronunciation, dialectal variation or interference from Latin (e.g. Schmidt 1957: 191, Evans 1967: 191, Stüber 2005: 103–104), though continuations of zero-grade derivations of the root PIE **deǵ-* ‘be bright, shine’ (with short /i/) may also be involved.¹¹ Untermann in Beltrán (1996: 154) suggests a connection of Celtib. *-uejtos* with PIE **ueǵh₁-* ‘strive for sth.’. Alternatively, cf. Irslinger (2002: 202–204) for *t*-derivations from the PIE root **ueǵh₁-*/**ueǵh₂-* ‘wind, wrap’ (OIr. *féith* ‘kidney, fibre, twining plant’ etc.; see also Zair 2012: 230). An element **uītu-* ‘withy, willow’ is quite well established in Gaulish onomastics, though it usually appears as first element in compound personal names (e.g. RIIG GAR-02-21 [RIG G-180] ΟΥΤΟΥΡ, CIL XIII 3428 UITUBENA) and toponyms (e.g. *uitudurum* > *Winterthur*).¹²

In summary, the most cogent analysis seems to be **snād(i)jo-uentos*; the etymology of both elements being as uncertain as it is, no speculation about the name’s semantics are profitable at this point. It may of course be possible that **snaziuentos**/**snaziueitos** and **snasiouitos** do not go back to the same PC name, but that one is an inner-Celtic loan of the other (or indeed that both are loans from a non-Celtic IE language), in which case non-regular sound substitutions or morphological transformations may have occurred.

10 Cf. also Falileyev (2015) on the theonym *ūintjūs* and possibly associated toponyms in south-eastern France.

11 Dottin (1920: 252), Delamarre (2003: 142–143). **dj-ey-* in OIr. *die, dia* ‘day’ etc. (cf. Matasović 2009: 101 s.v. **diy(w)o-* ‘day’), **di-ū-* in Lat. *dīus* ‘during the day’, **di-ū-jo-* in Ved. *divyá-* ‘divine’, see Wodtko et al. (2008: 69–81); cf. also Delamarre (2003: 145) s.v. *dīiuiou* ‘des dieux, des divins’ on the Gaulish form in Chamalières.

12 See Schmidt (1957: 298), Delamarre (2003: 323), Delamarre (2007: 236 et passim), Stüber (2005: 108–109), Stüber et al. (2009: 276).

3. TI-43]ōni : kuimpa]ui? : pa]a (Bioggio)

The three inscription stelae found in the 1990s in secondary contexts in the area of the church San Maurizio in Bioggio, published by Solinas (2002), conform largely to what is expected of funerary inscriptions from the greater Lugano area (Malcantone, Veduggio, Cassarate and Capriasca valley): one-line inscriptions running from the bottom toward the top of large rectangular mica schist stelae inside anthropomorphic frames, naming the deceased in the dative plus the formula word *pala* prob. ‘grave’: ‘*pala* for X son/daughter of Y’. The words are separated by rows of two or three dots; the patronym (or appositive) is formed with the suffix *-alo-*. TI-44]ōni : klanalui : pa]a on a fragment found in the Roman temple of Jupiter (mid-second to early third century AD) preserves all but the body of the *on-*stem personal name; the second, complete and impressively large stela from the same context features two associated inscriptions in adjacent frames of slightly different dimensions, probably relating to a married couple (cf. TI-36.1/2): TI-45.1]e-ē[---]alui : pala, TI-45.2 a]a] : uesa-a] : pala.

An irregularity arises in TI-43 on a fragment which was found used in the wall of a tomb in the graveyard of the Romanesque church S. Maurizio (fifth to sixth century AD). The fragment constitutes the upper part of the stela and preserves the exact same section of its inscription as TI-44: a personal name in the dative]ōni,¹³ a second name in the dative ui, and pala; the inscription is dextroverse, the frame ends in a stylised head without a neck. Though the inscription is overall the best legible of the four from Bioggio in terms of the condition of the surface, the state of preservation of the letters deteriorates considerably toward the top; in addition, the letters are unequally spaced, as the engraver tried to save space when writing the latter part of the second name before filling out the rest of the frame comfortably with final pala (which is hardly legible due to abrasion; cf. Solinas 2002: 484). The problem lies in the reading of the second part of the name formula, i.e. the expected patronym in *-alo-*. Solinas’ original reading **kui-ek]rui** was improved by Morandi (2004: 717–718, no. 300), who identified the group of lines after the second iota as a very generously carved mu, whose four bars are executed as two half-circles. For the sequence after mu, Morandi suggested IXDVI **itru]** rather than **ekru]**. Solinas’ epsilon and kappa are indeed impossible; rho is highly doubtful as well, as the putative hasta and curve do not touch at either the bottom or the top. The resulting, rather dubious **kuimitru]** evidently lacks the suffix *-alo-*. To achieve a more linguistically plausible form, a reading of the difficult sequence as **palui** may be feasible. The group of lines after mu can be read as pi Γ and alpha Λ rather than iota and somewhat wonky St Andrew’s cross,

13 Though the rationale of the chronological and linguistic mapping of the two endings in the Cisalpine Celtic evidence is not quite clear, the original locative ending appears to have replaced the old dative ending in *-e]* in *on-*stems as in Old Irish and Transalpine Gaulish (Eska & Wallace 2001).

though the two putative hastae of alpha do not touch at the top. There are also other issues, primarily that the bar of putative lambda L is difficult to make out with certainty. Whether the spelling ⟨mp⟩ should be considered irregular is up for debate. Intramorphemic */mb/ should arguably be spelled ⟨m⟩ paralleling */nd/ spelled ⟨n⟩, but only VB-2 **amašilu**, if formed with *ambi-*, provides an uncertain example. TI-36.2 **piuotalui** *biuontialūj* clearly demonstrates the non-spelling of /n/ before /t/ in the same linguistic subcorpus, but evidence for the labial cluster is again absent throughout the Cisalpine Celtic corpus (see the discussion in Uhlich 2007: 382–405).¹⁴ A reading **kuimpalui** is preferable from a linguistic standpoint; epigraphically, it is equally as problematic as **kuimitruui**.

Neither *kuimpos** nor *kuimitros** finds immediate comparanda in Gaulish. Initial ⟨kuV⟩ in names on Lepontic stelae (TI-26 **kualui**, TI-27.1 **kuašoni**) has given cause for concern since the early twentieth century, as a *p*-Celtic state of things was demonstrated by enclitic *-pe* in VB-3.1 (e.g. Kretschmer 1905: 126, Whatmough 1933: 69). Eska (2006: 232, n. 7) (also Eska & Evans 2009: 36) suggests that some of the names, unless they have rare /g^v/ < PIE */g^{uh}/, could attest PIE */k^v/ before the shift to /p/, which is difficult to refute, but does not generate any obvious etymologies in the present case. As noted by Stifter (2003: 240–241), initial ⟨quV⟩ in Continental Celtic names could reflect /ku^vV/ and be amenable to a segmentation *kom-* ‘with’ + second element with initial /u/, in that /ku^vV/ < /kouV/ with assimilated /m/ and /o/;¹⁵ this is especially true for the Lepontic alphabet, where letters are not repeated, so that /u^v/ and /u^v/ are regularly ⟨u⟩ in writing (cf. VA-6 **teu deuū**; thus already Lejeune 1971: 68–69 for **kualui**). Delamarre (2007: 78) accordingly analyses names in ⟨uat-⟩ (CIL XIII 5510 **CUATASIUS** [Dijon], **CUATILUS** [Heiligenberg]) as *ko(m)-uat-* (with *uati-* ‘prophet’/ *uatu-* ‘prophecy’).¹⁶ Applying this method also to *kuimpos**, an analysis as *kuūimpos** < *ko(m)-ūimpos* with second element *ūimpo-* ‘pretty’ may be feasible. Alternatively, of course, *kuimpos*/kuimitros** may not in fact be etymologically Celtic – names borrowed from sub- or

14 The cluster is spelled out in TV-1 **pompeteχuaiois** (with *pompe-* ‘five’), but the orthography of the mixed document is more indebted to Venetic than Celtic practice.

15 A reviewer notes that the second step /Co-ūV/ > /Cu-ūV/ may be seen in the potter’s name *ruicco*, if < **ro-ūik-* as per Delamarre 2007: 156.

16 Contrary to what I say in Salomon (2024: 152), *uati-*/*-u-* plus a dental suffix to account for the spelling with san cannot be the second element in *kuuaδū**, as the element is not attested with tau gallicum in auslaut; in fact, /t/ in the Celtic root may itself be the reflex of a dental suffix (see Irlinger 2002: 98–100). Alternatively, *kuuaδū** could be a hypocoristic from a compound **ko(m)-uasso-* before the assimilation of **st* or intermediate cluster to /ss/. Cf. Prósper & Medano Dunque (2023: 22), who suggest **ko(m)-ad-sth₂-ó-* ‘ready’, comparing a potter’s name **CUASUS** (as in Tibiletti Bruno 1997: 1019, n. 45, Motta 2000: 199, Morandi 2004: 534) and **COASO**, with etymological /o/ being pronounced as a high back schwa and variously reflected with omicron or upsilon in writing.

adstrate languages must be expected (cf. e.g. TI·26 *teromos**, VB·3.1 *sapsutā**), and particularly *kuimitros** might represent a second name with Celtic(ised) ending, but non-Celtic formation.

4. TI·29]aṅiuī : p[, TI·31]a]a[(ARANNO)

The four stela fragments from Aranno (TI·29–TI·32), found in March 1841, are – according to their first owner Vittore Pelli – the remains of a grave chamber of uncertain age, which had been destroyed by the finders (Mommsen 1853: 202–203, no. 5).¹⁷ Due to this association, they were originally treated as parts of the same stela despite not fitting together. After Rhÿs (1913: 23) had observed that at least TI·30 **mationa]** must belong to a separate inscription,¹⁸ Tibiletti Bruno (1965: 109–114), based on micro- and macroscopic petrographic analyses, concluded that the fragments were the remains of at least three different stelae which had been reused for the Aranno tomb (cf. the very similar find situation of the four stelae from Brisino VB·22–25). While she noted that the fragments bearing TI·29 and TI·31 could be part of the same stela from a petrographic perspective, she (p. 115) argued that this was not the case, because the frame widths of the inscriptions did not agree. When Tibiletti Bruno saw the fragments, they were built into a wall of Pelli’s house; only in May 2000 were they removed to be part of the *I Leponti* exhibition at Locarno. They are now housed in the Museo del Malcantone in Curio, where I saw them in October 2023.¹⁹ Having examined the four fragments without obstruction, I am strongly inclined to think – though it is practically impossible to prove conclusively – that the fragments bearing inscriptions TI·29 and TI·31 do indeed belong to the same stela, and that TI·29 preserves a section of the same inscription as the remains of line 1 of TI·31.

TI·29 on a rectangular fragment consists in the middle sections of three sinistroversive lines of text, incomplete at both ends, each between frame lines which are shared. Comparison with other *pala*-stelae from the Ticino with multiple associated inscriptions (TI·36.1/2, TI·45.1/2, TI·34.1/2) suggests that each line belongs to a discrete inscription rather than one inscription in multiple lines; the decreasing width of the frames from line 1 to 3 indicates that the inscription in line 1 is the primary one.²⁰ TI·31 on a smaller, triangular fragment consists of only three letters in one line; there are no letters above it, but the shape of the

17 See Tibiletti Bruno (1965: 105–109) for a discussion of the find circumstances.

18 Thus also Whatmough (1933: 89).

19 I am grateful to Moira Morinini Pè of the Ufficio cantonale dei beni culturali Bellinzona for hosting me and arranging my visits to the Ticino museums.

20 Tibiletti Bruno (1965: 121) suggests that the inscriptions in lines 1 and 2 belong together, while the one in line 3 may have been added at a later date.

fragment makes it impossible to judge whether sections of the inscriptions of lines 2 and 3 of TI-29 were inscribed underneath it. The frame width of TI-29 line 1 of 16 cm at the bottom (right) end tapering to 15 cm at the top (left) end agrees with a frame width of 15 cm in TI-31;²¹ the width of the frame lines themselves is also equivalent (5 mm). Furthermore, the two fragments are of equal thickness (ca. 7.5 cm); the colour and structure of the stone on the now visible fracture surfaces looks – as suggested by the analyses commissioned by Tibiletti Bruno – very similar.

Line 1 of TI-29 **ᵻᵻniui : p[** preserves the end of a personal name in the dative *-ūi*, followed after the separator by a word beginning in ⟨p⟩; the hasta of the following letter may also be preserved, though this is uncertain because of the surface abrasion at the breaking edge. This could theoretically be *pala* – thus Motta (2000: 202, no. 8a) and Morandi (2004: 534–535, no. 27); cf. the three inscriptions on the Tesserete stela TI-34 with only individual names plus *pala* and the stela from Mezzovico-Vira TI-27.1 **kuāṣṣṣni : pala : telialui** with switched patronym and object. It is, however, more likely to be the first letter of a patronym, in accordance with the standard text formula of *pala*-stelae (cf. Tibiletti Bruno 1978: 136–137, 1997: 1015).²² In TI-31 **ᵻᵻᵻ[**, only the upper part of a hasta remains of the middle letter – its identification as lambda, which goes back to Whatmough (1933: 89–90) and is followed by later editors, is based on the plausible assumption that the sequence is part of *pala*. The end of the bar of pi may be visible right beside the breaking edge before alpha, but it is possible that the impression is merely due to the flaking of the surface. Since the two fragments do not fit directly together, TI-31 cannot be the immediate continuation of TI-29 line 1. Together, line 1 of TI-29 and TI-31 thus preserve two sections of a standard Ticino funerary inscription: **ᵻᵻniui : p[–ᵻᵻᵻ[** ‘*pala* for °anios, son of P°’.

5. Inscriptions and inscriptoids on Golasecca beakers of the sixth century BC

In 1824, Giovan Battista Giani, the first investigator of the Golasecca culture, published in his seminal book *Battaglia del Ticino tra Annibale e Scipione* a number of graffiti on ceramic vessels from the Golasecca necropolis (p. 25, 170). Believing, as indicated by the book’s title, that his finds were connected with the

21 This corresponds to the measurements given by Whatmough (1933: 89), and cf. already Mommsen.

22 Cf. e.g. **piuotialui biᵻonijalūj** in TI-36.2. The same is true of line 2 **ᵻᵻkionei : p[** — if the inscriptions in lines 1 and 2 are associated, it seems possible, though by no means necessary, that the persons named in them are brothers, who would bear the same patronym (cf. Tibiletti Bruno 1978: 137), rather than husband and wife as in TI-36.1/2 and probably TI-45.1/2.

Battle of Ticinus, Giani identified the characters in his inscriptions as Etruscan; one of them, written on a black-glazed globular Golasecca beaker, which found its way into the Cisalpine Celtic corpus (VA·5), features three discreet characters read by Giani as an abbreviation of Latin *Tiberius Equitis Filius* (p. 170 = fig. 1a). The alphabetic nature of the inscriptions published in 1824, with drawings (tav. IV.15–20) showing a mix of very basic and overly complex characters, was doubted by a reviewer in *Bibliotheca Italiana*; Giani defended his readings in 1825 (p. 16–18), though a second batch of inscriptions (p. 71, no. 1–12) proved even less convincing. Mommsen (1853: 216–217), who reproduced five drawings in his *Taf. III* (no.s 39–43), asked the opinion of Bernardino Biondelli, who wrote to him in a letter that “[l]e iscrizioni non hanno mai esistito, se non nella mente visionaria dell’autore, che trasportato da’ suoi sogni ha veduto ciò che nessun altro vide”. The only one of Giani’s inscriptions whose existence Biondelli could verify was VA·5 (then in the possession of collector Ambrogio Uboldi), which he was certain had been applied by Giani himself: “la freschezza della graffitura è troppo evidente, non che la mano inesperta che tentò imitare qualche lettera arcaica od etrusca senza sapere che cosa si facesse”. Biondelli stressed that he had examined all vessels found by Giani, himself, and others at Golasecca, and that not a single one bore an inscription. Mommsen added that the placement of many of the alleged scratchings inside the vessels as well as Giani’s imaginative Latin interpretations were suspicious. The five drawings which had been reproduced by Mommsen were subsequently included by Fabretti (1867) in the *CII* as inscriptions 6–10 (VA·5 = no. 7), but following Mommsen in the comment “litterae deformatae [...], fortasse recentiori manu”. After De Mortillet (1865: 465–466) pointed out that Biondelli’s claim that the scratches looked recent was not much to go by, and it was hard to see why Giani should have forged an inscription, Castelfranco (1876: 99) suggested that maybe somebody other than Giani had forged inscriptions with a view to selling them, pointing particularly to Giani’s no. 15, whose characters “non mi ispirano alcuna fiducia”. Castelfranco also noted, though, that he himself had unearthed pottery with marks which sometimes resembled, but were not really letters. He provided some examples in his tav. III.27 and 28; the latter (fig. 1c), three characters on a beaker similar to Giani’s, but with a handle, is included in *LexLep* as VA:32.²³

23 Gambari & Colonna (1988: 160, no. 1) give Castelletto sopra Ticino (Novara) as find place, but the museum’s records name the Galliasco, one of the sites of the Golasecca necropolis – this is doubtlessly correct, as Castelfranco’s publication is about finds from the necropolis; the beakers mentioned below all come from the localities Galliasco, Monsorino and Presualdo, i.e. Golasecca or Sesto Calende (Varese).

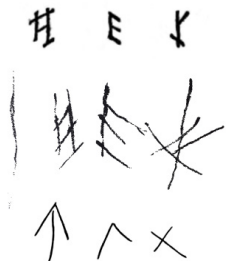


Fig. 1: Giani's and Garovaglio's drawings of VA:5 (above) and Castelfranco's drawing of VA:32 (below).

In 1883, Garovaglio, who had seen VA:5 (by then in the Civico Museo Archeologico in Milano), observed that it had been published “poco esattamente” by Giani (p. 21, no. 21) and provided a new drawing (fig. 1b). The graffito as drawn by Garovaglio was mentioned in passing by Whatmough (1933: 103–104, note xvi) and Lejeune (1971: 15, n. 44). Both Giani's (VA:5) and Castelfranco's (VA:32) graffiti were included in a list of archaic Cisalpine Celtic inscriptions by Gambari & Colonna (1988) (VA:5 G II B, second half of sixth century BC; VA:32 G II B, late sixth to early fifth century BC). The authors, who reported the beaker with VA:5 to be untraceable (p. 160, no. 2), expressed their conviction that Giani's inscriptions were authentic, VA:5 being the only usable one because of Garovaglio's redrawing (p. 133, n. 59). They argued that Biondelli was not an epigraphist and thus not competent to make a judgement,²⁴ and that Mommsen was prejudiced against Giani because of the latter's mediocrity as a Latinist. Based on Garovaglio's drawing, they (p. 160, no. 2) gave a tentative reading of VA:5 as (dextroverse) $\text{I}|\text{E}|\text{Y}$ *iheχ*, uncertain due to the difficulty of distinguishing intentional from unintentional scratches. Their reading of the three characters in Castelfranco's VA:32 is (inverted and sinistroverse) $\text{XV}\downarrow$ *χut* (p. 160, no. 1).²⁵ Around the same time, De Marinis (1986: 76, n. 55) also mentioned the two graffiti together. He read VA:32 as *χlt*; for VA:5 he gave – with reference to Giani's original drawing – a reading as *aev*, i.e. a (putative) pars pro toto Lepontic alphabetarium as attested twice in the fifth century at Prestino (CO:53, CO:54).²⁶

24 Indeed, he also doubted the authenticity of the now lost MI:6 *setupk*, which is linguistically plausible and widely regarded as a genuine inscription.

25 Similarly Solinas (1995: 369, no. 114) *ut*, Morandi (2004: 571, no. 75) *χut*.

26 This reading, which is inexplicable to anyone who has only seen Garovaglio's drawing, led Prosdocimi (1990: 297) and Morandi (1999: 177, n. 87) to suspect that De Marinis had got VA:5 mixed up with CO:53, which had only recently been published by himself. The confusion caused Solinas (1995) to reproduce a drawing of CO:53 sub n. 118 with data which clearly pertains to VA:5; the two documents are also conflated by Eska (1998: 65, n. 10). It is easily conceivable, however, how De Marinis could have seen *aev* in Giani's drawing, even though this is quite impossible in Garovaglio's.

Both vessels are currently kept in the depot of the Civico Museo Archeologico Milano, where I examined them as well as ten other black-glazed globular beakers with graffiti excavated by Giani and Castelfranco at Golasecca in April 2022.²⁷ The autopsy has shown that there is no reason to assume that the incised characters of VA·5 (inv. no. A 0.9.3243) are not ancient. The judgements of Biondelli and Mommsen are (characteristically) harshly put and may well betray a preconceived inclination to dismiss Giani's work. Giani's drawing, however, is indeed largely fantastical, while Garovaglio's is very accurate. The single vertical scratch on the left is 2.6 cm distant from the heta-like character and much longer than the three more complex characters. While the latter, especially the epsilon-like shape in the centre, vaguely resemble Etruscan/North Italic letters, the one on the right is in fact an asterisk with a long vertical hasta; heta is used in a form with three bars in the Raetic Magrè alphabet (see Salomon 2021: 189–190), but – as noted by Gambari & Colonna (1988: 160, no. 2) – not at all in the Lepontic one. In VA·32 (coll. Castelfranco 219, A 0.9.28460), the rightmost and middle characters could be interpreted as Lepontic St. Andrew's cross and (wonky inverted) upsilon; the leftmost character is an arrow-shaped sign ↑, which is used as an alphabetic letter in the Raetic Sanzeno alphabet and appears in Camunic alphabetaria, but not in the Lepontic alphabet – hence the fact that both Gambari's and De Marinis' readings turn the inscription upside-down to get a letter which at least resembles chi, and upright upsilon as typical for the Lepontic alphabet.

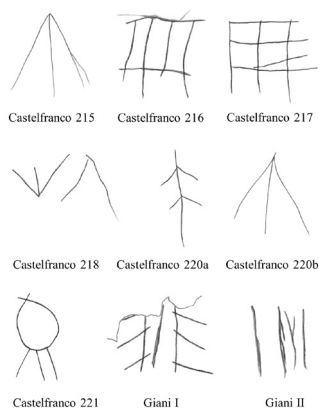


Fig. 2: Graffiti on globular beakers from the Golasecca necropolis in the Civico Museo Archeologico Milano.

27 My thanks are due to Sara Loreto and Anna Provenzali, who kindly assisted with my examinations and spontaneously located the additional beakers from the Giani and Castelfranco collections which are not in LexLep.

Both graffiti are unlikely to be language-encoding Lepontic inscriptions. Instead, they show similarities with the marks which are applied – also usually on the neck – on other globular beakers found in the Golasecca necropolis by Giani and Castelfranco. The other two of Giani's finds kept at the Civico Museo Archeologico (which are not among the graffiti reproduced in Giani's publications) bear the marks $\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{E}$ (A 0.9.3301) and \mathfrak{H} (A 0.9.3109), respectively. The other seven graffiti from the Collezione Castelfranco include another one with reasonably letter-like characters $\mathfrak{V}\mathfrak{A}$ (coll. Castelfranco 218, A 0.9.28481), mentioned and read $\mathfrak{p}\mathfrak{x}$ by De Marinis (1986: 76, n. 55). De Marinis pertinently judged both this and VA:32 to be “sigle più che di nomi”. The others²⁸ feature various more or less complex single marks – all but one on the neck – which are not alphabetic letters (see fig. 2). “Segni graffiti”, presumably of a similar kind, on Golasecca beakers from necropoleis at Castelletto Ticino and Ameno are mentioned by Gambari & Colonna (1988: 126–127).

This is not to say that language-encoding inscriptions were not written on Golasecca beakers. An unequivocal example, found in 1985, exists in NO-1 $\mathfrak{x}\mathfrak{o}\mathfrak{s}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{o}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{o}$ ‘of Xosios’ (Castelletto Ticino, G II A, mid-sixth century BC), which is accompanied by para-script elements, viz. a zig-zag line connecting to and extending rightward from the first letter \mathfrak{V} , and a single complex character at a distance after the end of the inscription – both of unclear function. More difficult is the document VA-4 (Sesto Calende, G II A, early sixth century BC), found in 1994. Though Rocca in the original publication (Binaghi & Rocca 1999: 443–444) suspected that both inscriptions on the beaker are pseudo-script, arguing that the majority of characters cannot be clearly identified because they are merely imitations of letters, both are now usually assumed to be language-encoding (cf. Sassatelli 2000: 55–56). The damaged and largely illegible VA-4.1 $\mathfrak{a}/\mathfrak{u}??\mathfrak{o}/\mathfrak{O}\mathfrak{u}\mathfrak{v}\mathfrak{i}??(?)\mathfrak{r}\mathfrak{i}$ features some highly irregular letter forms, but its length together with the presence of clear, if untidy, omicron \mathfrak{o} or theta \mathfrak{O} , upsilon \mathfrak{A} , waw \mathfrak{F} , iota \mathfrak{l} and rho \mathfrak{D} does indicate that we are dealing with a language-encoding inscription – though whether the uncertainties about the reading are due to shortcomings on our or on the scribe's part is at this point impossible to determine. The short, but undamaged VA-4.2 $\mathfrak{f}\mathfrak{l}\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{A}$ $\mathfrak{v}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{x}\mathfrak{u}$ or $\mathfrak{f}\mathfrak{l}\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{A}$ $\mathfrak{z}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{x}\mathfrak{u}$ even lends itself to plausible linguistic analysis (Celtic personal name $\mathfrak{u}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{k}\bar{\mathfrak{u}}$ from $\mathfrak{u}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{k}\mathfrak{o}$ -‘fight’ or Etruscan personal name $\mathfrak{z}\mathfrak{i}\mathfrak{k}^{\mathfrak{h}}\mathfrak{u}$ ‘Scribonius’). Multiple scholars have observed that the letters in VA-4.2 appear to feature rather more lines than strictly necessary (cf. Sassatelli 2000: 55–56, Morandi 2017: 369, Dupraz 2015: 38, n. 16),

28 Coll. Castelfranco 215–217, 220–222 = A 0.9.28453 (Golasecca), A 0.9.28482 (Galliasco), A 0.9.28484 (Galliasco), A 0.9.28457 (Monsorino), A 0.9.28447 (Monsorino), A 0.9.28455 (Monsorino). On the foot of the beaker with VA:32 is incised an additional circle-shaped mark which is referred to as theta “crociato a doppia traversa” by Gambari & Colonna, but is certainly non-alphabetic.

which need to be discounted to achieve either reading.²⁹ In this regard, VA·4.2 looks uncomfortably similar to VA·5, and putative chi and upsilon are inverted as in VA·32 – VA·4.2 is thus graphically close to comparatively script-like specimens of a group of clearly non-script marks on Golasecca beakers. The graffiti on the beakers form a spectrum which ranges from clearly non-alphabetic characters (coll. Castelfranco 216, 217, 220, 221) via graffiti which may be influenced by alphabetic letters and possible pseudo-script to certainly language-encoding inscriptions (NO·1), the point at which the line between “sigle”/“marks” and inscriptions should be drawn being somewhat debatable. It seems possible that non- or pseudo-alphabetic characters were applied by non-literate people in the place where inscriptions would otherwise go. Alternatively, it could be considered whether a local tradition of applying personal marks on Golasecca beakers, possibly on the occasion of a funeral (cf. Gambari & Colonna 1988: 127), was gradually influenced by alphabetic writing, so that the marks came to be replaced by alphabetic inscriptions or by sequences intended to imitate them. It may be worthwhile to collect para-alphabetic graffiti on Golasecca beakers found since the nineteenth century and conduct a comprehensive analysis in terms of graphic shapes and chronology, not only to provide context for the language-encoding inscriptions, but as a step toward the systematic study of para-script marks in Iron-age Europe.

Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|-----------------------|
| LexLep | Stifter et al. 2009–. |
| MLH | Untermann 1975–2000. |
| RIG | Duval 1985–2002. |
| RIIG | Ruiz Darasse 2020–. |

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29 As observed by Dupraz, **viꝯu** as proposed by Morandi 2001: 10, no. 1, is the epigraphically preferable reading, insofar as the apparent prolongation of the first letter’s lower bar on the left (which would form zeta) may be classified as one of the superfluous lines. For a reading of the first letter as zeta, the upper bar, which does not even reach the hasta, must be assumed to have been drawn too short and then left in that easily remedied state. In fact, from a purely epigraphical standpoint, it is the short upper bar which looks like an unconnected scratch, so that tau † cannot technically be excluded.

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