II. CELTIC IN NORTHERN ITALY: LEPONTIC AND CISALPINE GAULISH

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

From Northern Italy, from the Northern Italian lake region and from a wider area north of the River Po, stem appr. 350 objects bearing slightly more Celtic inscriptions. These texts are usually ascribed to two different languages, Lepontic and Cisalpine Gaulish, but there are divergent opinions. For some, all inscriptions belong to a single language with only dialectal/chronological differences. Lepontic is considered by some to be only a dialect or chronologically early variant of Gaulish. Here, the mainstream view is followed which distinguishes between two different, albeit (closely?) related languages. Since almost all texts are extremely short and since the languages are so similar, it is often impossible to make a certain ascription of a given text to a language. As a rule of thumb, those inscriptions found in the Alpine valleys within a radius of 50 km around the Swiss town of Lugano are usually considered Lepontic. Celtic inscriptions from outside this area are considered Cisalpine Gaulish.

The Lepontians are one of many peoples who in the first millenium B.C. inhabited the valleys of the Southern Alps. The Valle Leventina in Cn. Ticino/Tessin (Switzerland) still bears their name. Lepontic inscriptions date from the period of ca. the beginning of the 6th c. B.C. until shortly after Christ’s birth, making Lepontic the oldest attested Celtic language. The Early Lepontic phase coincides with the final two periods of the archaeological Golasecca culture. With the Gaulish invasion in Northern Italy in the 5th c. B.C., the La-Tène style arrived in the Lepontic area. It is difficult to say whether this invasion meant only a cultural or also a linguistic gallicisation of the area. In any case, the so-called Cisalpine Gaulish inscriptions from Northern Italy are considered to be a consequence of this Gaulish invasion.

The language is known almost exclusively from the ca. 350 inscriptions found to this day. Onomastic material in foreign transmission has been only insufficiently studied. The inscriptions are written in a special alphabet called Lepontic (older: Lugano) alphabet, one of the several variants of the North Etruscan script. Texts are found on worked and crude stones and on pottery (vases, urns, often potsherds). The script is preponderantly sinistroverse. In most cases the dating depends on the archaeo-
logical context. As regards the contents of the texts, tombstones, possessor and producer notes and dedicatory inscriptions are found. The texts are extremely short. Only few contain more than two words, the longest has seven words. Almost exclusively names are attested, many of these in fragments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Golasecca II A</th>
<th>beg. 6th c.–525</th>
<th>Golasecca culture since 9th c., without break since 12th c.</th>
<th>Early Lepontic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Golasecca II B</td>
<td>525–480/75</td>
<td>[cont. ← G I A-C (9th–7th c.) ← Proto-Golasecca (12th–10th c.) ← Canegrate (13th–12th c.)]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golasecca III A 1</td>
<td>480/75–450/40</td>
<td>Gaul. invasion of Po Valley, ca. 400</td>
<td>Middle Lepontic, few texts, mostly from Kn. Ticino/Tessin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golasecca III A 2</td>
<td>450/40–400</td>
<td>Roman conquest of Cisalpine Gauls, 225/191</td>
<td>Late Lepontic, mostly south of Kn. Ticino/Tessin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golasecca III A 3</td>
<td>400–375</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Tène A = G III A 2–3</td>
<td>450–375</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Tène B 1</td>
<td>375–end 4th c.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Tène B 2</td>
<td>1st half of 3rd c.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Tène C 1</td>
<td>2nd half of 3rd c.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Tène C 2</td>
<td>2nd c.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Tène D 1</td>
<td>end 2nd c.–beg. 1st c.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Tène D 2</td>
<td>remainder of 1st c.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. 1.3.: Lepontic language periods and archaeological periods (after Uhlich 1999).

Be careful: Much of the information given in this chapter (e.g. illustrations, charts, tables) is taken from older publications which are based on obsolete data. It is nevertheless reproduced here since no studies based on more recent data have been produced yet.

2. LITERATURE ABOUT LEPONTIC

LEXLEP

David Stifter, Martin Braun, Michela Vignoli et al., Lexicon Leponticum, at: http://www.uni-vie.ac.at/lexlep, 2009–.

2.1. Linguistic surveys, editions, studies:

Uhlich 2007

Agostinetti 2004

Morandi 2004

Motta 2000

Meid 1999

Uhlich 1999

Esk 1998
2.2. Historical, archaeological:

ARSLAN 2001

CANEVASCINI 2001

DE MARINIS & BIAGGIO SIMONA 2000

FREY 1995

DE MARINIS 1991

DE MARINIS 1988
3. THE LEPONTIC (‘LUGANO’) ALPHABET

III. 3.1.: The distribution of variants of the North Etruscan (North Italian) alphabets (from LEJEUNE 1971: 365).

Note: The language of Sondrio is now called Camunian, that of Magrè and Bolzano Raetic, that of Este Venetic, and that of Lugano Lepontic.

4. THE LINGUISTIC POSITION OF LEPONTIC

4.1. LEPONTIC = AN INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>sg.</th>
<th>ã-decl.</th>
<th>o-decl.</th>
<th>n-decl.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nom.</td>
<td>-a &lt; *-eh₂</td>
<td>-os &lt; *-os</td>
<td>-u &lt; *-o(n)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>-i [-oiso &lt; *-osjo]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>-ai &lt; *-eh₃ei</td>
<td>-ui &lt; *-ōi</td>
<td>-onei [-oni] &lt; *-onei</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>-am &lt; *-eh₃m</td>
<td>-om &lt; *-om</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. 4.1.: IE morphological traits in Lepontic (after KRAHE 1936: 243)

4.2. LEPONTIC – A CELTIC LANGUAGE

Lepontic shares isoglosses (i.e. sound changes) with other Celtic languages (after KRAHE 1936: 244–247; LEJEUNE 1971: 472–477).

1. PIE *-ō(C) > -ō(C): nom. sg. -u, dat. sg. -ui
2. PIE *g > b; * g⁽²⁽h⁾⁾yo > piuo- (= /bיוo-/ ‘living’
3. PIE *p > (p >) 0: *uppmno- > uvamo- ‘highest’
4. PIE *ē > ū: *sēd- > sit- (= /sēd-/ ‘to sit’
5. PIE *st > ts: *gʰostis > -kožis ‘guest’, *istos > išos
6. lexicon: *qindos ‘white’ in alkouinos (cp. Gaul. Alcouindo)
7. PIE *i > *e: *-onib²os > -onepos (but not general in Celtic!)

4.3. LEPONTIC: A SEPARATE CELTIC LANGUAGE OR AN ARCHAIC GAULISH DIALECT?

4.3.1. Lepontic ≠ Transalpine Gaulish (after LEJEUNE 1971)

1. *nd > nn: *qindos > -uinos (vs. Gaul. uindo-, amb-, cingo-) (only graphic?)
2. *NT > NT: *g⁽²⁽h⁾⁾yo-n > piuo, pioiuialu (vs. Gaul. canto-, tano-) (only graphic? (ep. pioiualta!)
3. *q > en (?): *sēdqs > sitæs?, *dqs⁴yeh₂ > -teguaio (vs. Gaul. > an: ande-, brigant-)
4. *gs > s(s): sasamos, esopnio (vs. Gaul. Sax(s)amus, Ex(s)obno-) (only graphic?)
6. word formation: patronymics in -al(o/a)- (vs. Gaul. patronymics in -ikno/a-)

4.3.2. Lepontic compared to Cisalpine Gaulish

a. common features (≠ Transalpine Gaulish) (after UHLICH 1999 and 2007):

1. *nd > nn: *ande- > -ane-, *and(e)-are- > an-are-, ?*and-o-kom- > ano-ko- (but see above!)
2. *NT > NT: *kom-bog(i)jos > -ko-pokios, Quintus → kuitos, *arganto > arkato-, *longam > lokan (but see above!)
3. *gs > s(s): *egs- > *egs > es- in es-anekoti, es-opnos (but see above!)

b. differences between Cisalpine Gaulish and Lepontic:

1. *-m# > -n#: teuoptonion, lokan vs. Lep. pruiam, palam, uinom natom (but also Cis-Gaul. atom)
2. word formation: ending of 3. sg./pl. preterite in -u, cp. karnitu(s) (Gaul. κορνύτου), vs. Lep. karite, kalite
3. patronymics in -ikno/a- vs. Lep. -alo-, -ala-, -al (but also mixed in Late (?) Lepontic)
5. LEPONTIC INSCRIPTIONS

Ill. 5.1.: the oldest Lepontic inscription (ca. 575 BC) from Castelletto Ticino (NO·1), containing the name ζοιοίζο (from: F. M. Gambari, G. Colonna, ‘Il bicchiere con iscrizione arcaica da Castelletto Ticino e l’adozione della scrittura nell’Italia nord-occidentale,’ Studi Etruschi 54 (1986), 130).

transcription:
pelkui : pruiam : teu :
karite :
iśoṣ (i ka)ljite : palaṃ

left: Ill. 5.3-4.: inscription from Davesco (TI·36.1, ·2) (photo from: MOTA 2000: 201)

right: Ill. 5.4.: drawing of the inscription from Davesco A (TI·36.1, ·2); source unknown (EICHNER SS 1999)
left: Ill. 5.5.: inscription from Prestino (CO·48; from: Alessandro Morandi, *Epigrafia Ittica*, Roma: Bretschneider 1982, 188)

transcription: uvamokozis į plialeθu į uvtiauiopos į ariuonepos į siteš į tetu

above: Ill. 5.6.: inscription from Ornavasso (VB·3.1) (from: Michel Lejeune, “Le vase de Latumaros,” *Latomus* 46 (1987), 498)

transcription: latumarui į sapsutai į pe į uinom į nathom (not: našom!)

right: Ill. 5.7.: sekekos, inscription from Prestino (Como; CO·57) (from: Motta 2000: 207)

Ill. 5.8.: [miu] or [niś] ? (Casate, CO·51)

Ill. 5.9.: [tioiso ql] ? (Rondineto, CO·11)

Ill. 5.10.: z v ašoris (Casate, CO·62)
6. DATED LEPONTIC TEXTS

From UHLICH 1999, using his readings; datings based on information in SOLINAS 1995 (unreliable). Key: inscriptions are basically sinistroverse, unless marked → = dextroverse; G = Golasecca, LT = La Tène; letters with underdots are uncertain.


1. γοσιοίσσα, Castelletto Ticino (Varese), G II A, 2nd quarter 6th c., NO-1
2. ἢβαμοκοίς : πλιάλεθυ : ὑβλταίιοποσ : αρίουνεποσ : σίτει : τετυ, Prestino (Como), 6th or beg. 5th c., CO-48
4. κουασοίνι : παλα : τελ/τιαλύ, Mezzovico (Ticino), G III A, TI-27.1
5. τακός, Brescia, 5th c. (?), BS-5
6. πιῦότ, Parre (Bergamo), 5th c., BG-18
7. αλίους, Civiglio (Como), G III A 1, CO-73
8. πλίοισσα, Rondineto (Como), G III A 1–2, CO-66
9. πλίοισσα, S. Ferro della Battaglia (Como), G III A 1–2, CO-72
10. ἰνάιλιο : παλα, Banco (Ticino), G III A, TI-33
11. / Iνί (?): μεταλαύμαλαφα, Daveso B (Ticino), G III A, TI-36.3
12. ακλύ : παλα, Tesserete Aa (Ticino), G III A, TI-34.1
13. τερομίου : κουαλί, Vira Gambarogna (Ticino), G III A, TI-26
14. ιράκι / ἵκαρ (?), Casate (Como), G III A?, CO-64

Furthermore (summarily):
15. (G II, 6th c.) ζα; τεχ; πα? υα? [→], χαθ/τρ; ihεγ? [→]; πχ
16. (G III A, ca. 5th c.) ἦμπαστος; [−−]Ἰοῦσα; -Ἰίοσο: αεὐ;
   [−−]? ἰνιεός; pe; ἱπση[? →]; po k ru; prn
17. (5th–4th c. ?) ἱπίοισσα—, Ἰ— ἐκ [→]; ἱασί; ἐβ—; ἀσι?: pei;
   ἑβ or ᾑα [→]; Ἱ : ἱπολεικής; ἱακήρ; ἱουκή; ἱακή:[?];κεφ : τρ—;
   σθαφ; ἱαρφ; α— [→]; ἱανφ / ἰτ—; ἱκινμυφ; ἱντίφα; ἱαίσε; ἱρπια[?];
   ἱπθλ?; ἰπασ οδρ ἱεσα; στθυ; β—παιφι / σαφ; ?ιου οδρ ?]ρυ, αλ

6.2. Middle Lepontic (beg. 4th–3rd c., La Tène B 1/2–C 1, ‘Gaulish period’)

19. στεποκιός, Solduno (Ticino), 3rd c., TI-23
20. αντσείου, Solduno (Ticino), 3rd c., TI-25
21. A: ιακίρ, B: κόι, Giubasco (Ticino), LT B 1, TI-18
22. πλαφ-Ιπ, Giubasco (Ticino), LT C 1, TI-14
23. αναρεκτάρος, coin A 2, at latest 3rd c., NM-2
24. σεφεθύ, coin A 6, at latest 3rd c., NM-6

6.3. Middle until/or Late Lepontic (La Tène B/C)

26. μινκόου : κόμονεος, San Pietro di Stabio (Ticino), TI-42
27. ιρκομίου : παλα, Tesserete B (Ticino), TI-34.2
28. συκολεί : μακφ, Viganello (Ticino), TI-37

30
6.4. Selection from Late Lepontic (2.–1. jh. La Tène C 2 – D 1/2, ‘Roman period’)

29. *sasamos*, Ornavasso (Novara), beg. 2nd c.–1st quarter 1st c., VB-1
30. *oletu amašilu*, Ornavasso (Novara), beg. 2nd c.–1st quarter 1st c., VB-2
32. *ualaunal / raneni* [→], Mesocco (Ticino), LT D 1, GR-1
33. *alkouinos / aškonei* [→], San Pietro di Stabio (Ticino), LT D 1, TI-41
34. *tunal / koimila*, Levo (Novara), 1st c., VB-26
35. *namu / ešpno* [→], Levo (Novara), 1st c., VB-28
36. *piuonta*, Coccaglio (Brescia), LT D 2 (?), BS-1

7.5. undated, e.g.:

37. *metelui : mæšilalu : uenia : metelikna : ašmina : krasanikna* [→], Carcegna (Novara), NO-18
38. *jon : m[ / ]ena / [ ], San Ferma della Battaglia (Como), CO-71
7. CISALPINE GAULISH

The Cisalpine Gaulish inscriptions are frequently combined with the Lepontic inscriptions under the term ‘Celtic language remains in Italy’ (see above point 2. for some of the literature). As the name reveals, linguistically these texts seem to go together with the Gaulish language known from Transalpine Gaul. While it is possible that the Lepontians were autochthonous to northern Italy since the end of the 2nd millennium B.C., it is well-known that the Gauls invaded the regions north of the river Po in several waves since the 5th century B.C. They apparently took over the art of writing from the Lepontians, including some of the orthographic peculiarities. In the handbooks on Gaulish, only about half a dozen Cisalpine Gaulish inscriptions are mentioned, three of which are ‘longer’ than just one or two words. In fact, however, the number must be vastly higher, even though the vast majority of the material contains only fragmentary forms. The inscriptions basically stem from the area south of the Lepontians. The bilingual inscription from Todi/Umbria is an exception and must be due to an emigrant.

8. LITERATURE ABOUT CISALPINE GAULISH

**LAMBERT 2003**


**MEID 1992**


**RIG II.1**


9. CISALPINE GAULISH INScriptions

[Image of a bilingual inscription from Todi (Umbria), face A (PG·1.1–2, from: MEID 1992: 14).]
III. 9.2.: Drawing and transcription of the bilingual text from Todi, face A (PG·1.1-2; from: RIG II.1, 45–51).

III. 9.3.: The bilingual text from Todi (Umbria), face B (PG·1.3–4; from: Mēid 1992: 15).

III. 9.4.: Drawing and transcription of the bilingual text from Todi, face B (PG·1.3–4; from: RIG II.1, 45–51).
Ill. 9.5.: drawing and transcription of the bilingual text from Vercelli (VC·11–2; from: RIG II.1, 29–37).

transcription:

left: takos · toutas[...]
right top: [n[...]k[...]tesasopokan]

main text:

tanotaliknoi  
kuitos  
lekatos  
anokopokios  
setupokios  
esanekoti  
anareuišeos  
tanotalos  
karnitus

Ill. 9.6.: The inscription from Briona (NO·21; from: RIG II.1, 15).
transcription:
a) mešiolano
b) miliarios
c) ulil or lutuu
d) [p?]ossito [?]iu

e) oieiplu or oiesplu
f) šuro
g) u[r?][rkiu ku or u[r?][rkiu ku
h) [ ]rkiu

Ill. 10.7.: the mural graffiti from Milan (MI-10; from: Maria Grazia Tibiletti Bruno, ‘Nuove iscrizioni epicoriche a Milano,’ in: Scritti in ricordo di Graziella Massari Gaballo e di Umberto Tocchetti Pollini, Milano 1986, 100)
10. ITALO-CELTIC ONOMASTIC FORMULAS

Isolated individual names reveal nothing about onomastic formulas, since we may be looking at informal short names. The typical basic structure of the Lepontic and Cisalpine Gaulish onomastic formulas is *individual name + patronymic*. The name of the father can be expressed in various ways. A development in the expression of the patronymics can be observed, probably under influence from Gaulish. It must be kept in mind, however, that the linguistic ascription of many of these texts is uncertain. The patronymic suffix in *-al* is probably a loan from Etruscan.

**individual name alone:**
- Early Lep.: e.g. χοιοισο, πλιοισο, τακοσ, πελκυ
- Middle Lep.: e.g. σετυποκιοσ, αντεςιλυ, σεγεθυ, αναρκατοσ
- Late Lep.: e.g. σασαμοσ, λατυμαρυι, σαπσυται, πιυοντα

**individual name + patronymic in -al-:**
- Early Lep.: κουασονι τελ/ριαλυι, τερομυι κουαλυι
- Middle Lep.: σλανιαι υερκαλαι, τισιυι πιουτιαλυι
- Late Lep.: μετελυι μαεςιλαλυι, κικετυ ρ...ταλοσ
- Unclear dating: πιουνει τεκιαλυι

**individual name + further element (?):**
- Early Lep.: ιυμακόζεις πιλαεθυ
- Late Lep.: ασκονετιο πιανυ

**individual name + patronymic in -ifo-?:**
- Middle Lep.: μινυκυ κομνευοσ
- Late Lep.: ναμυ εσοπνιο, κομνευοσ υαρσιλευοσ

**individual name + name of father in genitiv:**
- Late Lep.: uαλαυαναλ ρανενι, αλκουινοσ ασκονετι, ατεκυα ασουνι

**individual name + patronymic in -il-?:**
- Late Lep.: τολτυ αμασιλυ, τυναλ κοιμιλα

**individual name + patronymic in -ikno-:**
- Late Lep.: uενια μετελικνα, αxbaμινα κρασανικνα

**Cisalpine Gaulish:**

**individual name + name of father in genitiv:**
*esopnos kepi, esanekoti anareuišeos tanotalos* (two individual names + preposed patronymic!)  

**individual name + patronymic in -ikno-:**
*sola nimonikna, tanotaliknoi, ateknati trutikni, koisis trutiknos*

**individual name + further element:**
*akisios arkatokomaterekos*