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A NEW CONSTANTINIAN MILESTONE FROM VENICE*

This article presents an unpublished milestone which is located in the garden of the *Trattoria Pizzeria Al nono risorto* in the Santa Croce district of Venice.¹ The text is incised on a fractured marble column, whose provenance, and time and means of acquisition are unknown. Its absence from epigraphic manuscripts suggests that it was discovered relatively recently. The artefact, described as a «fusto di colonna romana», features in an annually updated inventory of artistic objects belonging to historical restaurants and establishments in the Veneto region, a list first created in 2006.²

The milestone currently stands in the garden of the *Trattoria*. The inscription was checked by autopsy in February 2016. Digital virtual unwrapping carried out by Gaia Trombin facilitates its examination (fig. 1). The top of the monument is missing, while its lower part is fully preserved. The height is 88 cm, the diameter 36.5 cm. The letters range from 5.5 cm for l. 6, to 5 cm for l. 1, and 4.5 cm for ll. 2–5.

The text is extremely fragmentary for two reasons: a) the surface of the left side of the inscription was chiselled away for a later reuse; b) most of the surviving portion of l. 2, the whole of l. 3, and some letters of l. 4, were deliberately eradicated in antiquity. In the following transcription both erasures have been enclosed in double square brackets, but it should be borne in mind that they certainly date to different periods:

```

[[ [- - -] DD ·]]NN FLAV
[[ [- - -] ]][VS ]][ET VAL]]
[[ [- - - - -] ] ]
[[ [- - -] ] ] ET FLAV
5 [[ [- - -] ] ] ONSTANTI
  [[ [- - -] ] ] NOB CAESSS

```

The *ductus* is regular. Words are separated by triangular interpuncts. In the claw-chiselled left part of the inscription only a few faint strokes are discernible, which include dim traces of the letters *DD* in l. 1. Between the last *D* and the first surviving *N* there is room only for one missing letter, which must have been another *N*. In l. 2 a *-VS* termination is visible, thus indicating that, unlike most late-antique milestones, the inscription was constructed in the nominative rather than in the dative case. The surviving portion of the monument does not contain any indication of distance.³

Restoring the missing text of the milestone is problematic. Yet, two points can be established for certain. First, the inscription must date to the first half of the 4th century AD, since it refers to members of the Constantinian dynasty. This is demonstrated by the *gentilicium Flav(ius)* in ll. 1 and 4, as well as by the fragmentary name [C]onstanti[nus] (ll. 5 and 6). Secondly, the presence of *Caesss(ares)* at the end of l. 6 and the reconstructed introductory formula *ddd(omini) nnn(ostri)* show that the milestone was set up by three Caesars. The relatively larger lettering of l. 6 possibly aims at emphasising their rank, while the first part of the text has no room for reference to any Augustus. We can therefore assume that the inscription commemorated three Caesars of the Constantinian house and no-one else. Such a consideration leads to three different options:

- 1) Crispus, Licinius II, and Constantine II, who were jointly appointed at Serdica on 1 March 317;
- 2) Crispus, Constantine II, and Constantius II (who succeeded to Licinius II on 8 November 324);
- 3) Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans (who was created Caesar on 25 December 333).

* I would like to thank Prof. Lorenzo Lazzarini of the Istituto Universitario di Architettura in Venice, who first brought the milestone to my attention. I am also grateful to Patrizia Basso, Riccardo Bertolazzi, Alfredo Buonopane, Giovannella Cresci, Simone Don, Piergiovanna Grossi, Franco Luciani, and Brent Shaw for their help and advice.

¹ The address of the garden entrance to the restaurant is Santa Croce 2339, Sotoportego de siora Bettina. I am indebted to the owner, Mr. Claudio Spavento, and the staff for facilitating my work.

² See *Inventario degli arredi mobili, strumentazione o altri elementi di interesse storico, artistico ed ambientale relativi all'elenco dei locali storici del Veneto aggiornato al 2006*, p. 10. The document can be accessed at the Assessorato ai lavori pubblici of the Regione Veneto.

³ For the potential ideological implications of these two features see Sauer 2014.



Fig. 1. Digital unwrapping of the milestone surface (G. Trombin)

When referring to any of these three groups of Caesars, official documents, such as milestones and other public inscriptions, mention their names according to the order in which they are listed above.⁴

As anticipated, autopsy clearly reveals that the second of the three Caesars mentioned in the milestone was subject to *damnatio memoriae*. Yet the first erased letters of his name are still discernible and indicate that his onomastic formula began with the gentilician name *Val(erius)*. This can only refer to Licinius II, the son of Licinius and Constantia (Constantine's favourite stepsister), born in July/August 315. In fact, when he was created Caesar in 317, his full name became Valerius Licinianus Licinius, often followed by the designation *Iunior*.⁵ After the battle of Chrysopolis, both he and his father were forced to abdicate on 19 September 324. Their images were destroyed and their names expunged from official records, even if they sometimes survive in epigraphic documents.⁶ The acts and legislation that they had introduced were also nullified.⁷ In 326, Licinius II was eventually killed for his alleged involvement in a rebellion on Cyprus.

Having ascertained the identity of the second Caesar mentioned in our milestone, the other two must be Crispus and Constantine II. Since 317, Crispus' regular onomastic formula was Flavius Iulius Crispus, albeit other combinations such as Flavius Claudius Crispus, Flavius Valerius Crispus, or simply Flavius Crispus also occur.⁸ As for Constantine II, after his proclamation as Caesar he was officially named Flavius Claudius Constantinus, although some coins also refer to him as Iulius Constantinus.⁹ Even if both Crispus

⁴ On the dates of appointments of the Constantinian Caesars see Kienast 1996, pp. 296, 305–306, 310–317; for numismatic evidence see Arnaldi 1981.

⁵ On Licinius II see Chastagnol 1972. On his onomastic formulae and titles see Andreotti 1958–1959, pp. 1038–1041; Kienast 1996, p. 296; Cambi 2004, p. 43. For the chronologies offered in this article I follow Kienast 1996, taking into account also Barnes 2011 and Lenski 2012.

⁶ See Andreotti 1958–1959, pp. 1030, 1039; Costabile 1991.

⁷ For this aspect see Corcoran 1993.

⁸ On Crispus see Pohlsander 1984. On his onomastic formulae see Ferrero 1900a, pp. 654–655; Kienast 1996, p. 306; Cambi 2004, pp. 44–45.

⁹ On Constantine II's onomastic formulae see Ferrero 1900b, pp. 656–657; Kienast 1996, p. 310.

and Constantine II were also inflicted *damnatio memoriae* after their death,¹⁰ in the Venetian milestone such a practice was only perpetuated against Licinius II.

Milestones and honorific inscriptions celebrating Crispus, Licinius II, and Constantine II are relatively frequent.¹¹ Nonetheless, on most epigraphic documents their name is associated with that of their fathers, while there are only a few cases of dedications to the three Caesars alone. In particular, only three other milestones written in Latin in the nominative case are attested, all of them coming from the western part of the *Venetia et Histria* region.

Two were found in the territory around Verona and are incised on reused red limestone columns, both of which originally carried texts set up in honour of Maxentius. The first of them comes from Colognola ai Colli, about 20 km east of Verona, on the road from Verona to Vicenza:¹²

*Dd(omini) nn(ostri) Iul(ius) Crispus et [[Licin-
ianus Licini]]us et
Fl(avius) Constantinus nobb(ilissimi)
Caess(ares). M(ilia) p(assuum)*

5 XI.

The inscription commemorates Crispus, Licinius II, and Constantine II. Despite this, the text only bears the dual titles *dd(omini) nn(ostri)* and *Caess(ares)*, and, as Mommsen saw, never made reference to a third Caesar.¹³ Crispus bears the abbreviated gentilician name *Iul(ius)*, Constantine II the abbreviated gentilician name *Fl(avius)*, while Licinius II is called *Licinianus Licinius*. As in the Venetian milestone, *damnatio* was only applied to the latter's name.

The second milestone is from Castelrotto by San Pietro in Cariano, about 12 km northwest of Verona, on the road to Trent and the Alps. While early photographs show that at the time of its discovery the whole column was extant, today only its lower section survives:¹⁴

*[Dd]d(omini) nnn(ostri) [Iu]l(ius)? Crispus
et Licin(ianus) [Licin]ius Iun(ior)
et Cl(audius) Constantinus,
nobb(ilissimi) Caess(ares). M(ilia) p(assuum) VII.*

The text shows some inconsistency between the imperial title mentioned in l. 1, with correct reference to three Caesars, and that in l. 4, where the third *B* and *S* are not present, respectively, in *nobb(ilissimi)* and *Caess(ares)*. A recent drawing made by Piergiovanna Grossi shows that the letters that preceded the *L* in l. 1 are no longer visible and that there is probably space for an alternative restoration such as *[F]l(avius)*.¹⁵ In spite of this, it should be noted that the similarities of this text with that of the Colognola milestone are striking. Indeed, if the reading *[Iu]l(ius)* were correct, the onomastic formulae of the three Caesars in the two stones would be identical. In the Castelrotto milestone Licinius II's name did not undergo any form of *damnatio*.

A third milestone, also hewn out of a block of red limestone, comes from the south-western shore of Lake Garda by the village of Reciago and was published only very recently:¹⁶

*[D]dd(omini) nn[n(ostri)] [[Iul(lius)? Crispus e]]-
t [[Licin(ianus) Licinius]] Iun(ior) e-
t [Cl(audius)?] Constantinus Iu[n(ior)],
[n]o[b]b[b(ilissimi)] Caess[s(ares)], [b(ono) r(ei)] p(ublicae) n[a]t(i).*

¹⁰ See respectively Matijašić 2014 and Cahn 1987.

¹¹ See Christol, Drew-Bear 1986, pp. 43–51; cp. Andreotti 1958–1959, p. 1038.

¹² CIL V 8015; Basso 1987, pp. 118–119, no. 50b. The milestone is in Verona, Museo Lapidario Maffeiiano, inv. 152.

¹³ See CIL V 8015: «Numquam fuit in hoc DDD NNN nec NOBBB CAESSS.»

¹⁴ Basso 1987, pp. 69–71, no. 28b; Bertolazzi 2012, pp. 263–265, no. 10; AE 2012, 579. The milestone is in Verona, Museo Archeologico al Teatro Romano.

¹⁵ The drawing is to be found in Bertolazzi 2012, p. 264.

¹⁶ Don 2012–2013. The milestone is kept at the abbey of Santa Maria Assunta in Maguzzano.

5 *M(ilia) p(assuum)*
XXVII.

Restorations in ll. 1–3 follow the parallel texts of the Colognola and Castelrotto milestones. It should be borne in mind, however, that the gentilician name *Iul(ius)* for Crispus is actually legible only on the Colognola milestone. Similarly, *Cl(audius)* for Constantine II only appears in the Castelrotto milestone, while the Colognola milestone has *Fl(avius)*. Like the Castelrotto and Venice inscriptions, this one also refers to the three Caesars with their proper *ddd(omini) nnn(ostri)* and *nobbb(ilissimi) Caesss(ares)* titles. On the other hand, even if its reading is very corrupt, its text is the only one that includes the formula *b(ono) r(ei) p(ublicae) nat(i)*: this could imply that the Reciago milestone did not belong to the same series as the other two.¹⁷ In this inscription both the name of Crispus and that of Licinius II underwent *damnatio memoriae*. The following table sums up the onomastic formulae of the three Caesars as they are attested in the three milestones from western *Venetia*:

	Crispus	Licinius II	Constantine II
Colognola	<i>Iul(ius) Crispus</i>	[[<i>Licinianus Licini</i>]] <i>us</i>	<i>Fl(avius) Constantinus</i>
Castelrotto	[[<i>Iu</i>]] <i>(ius)? Crispus</i>	<i>Licin(ianus) [Lici]nius Iun(ior)</i>	<i>Cl(audius) Constantinus</i>
Reciago	[[<i>Iul(ius)? Crispus</i>]]	[[<i>Licin(ianus) Licinius</i>]] <i>Iun(ior)</i>	[[<i>Cl(audius)?</i>] <i>Constantinus Iu[n(ior)]</i>]

Inconsistency shows clearly through comparison between the three inscriptions. Reconstructing the missing text of the Venetian milestone with absolute certainty is therefore not possible. Furthermore, our inscription shows specific features that differentiate it from the other parallels. Aside from the missing reference to mileage, in the Venetian milestone greater emphasis appears to have been given to the three gentilician names of the Caesars. Thus we find *Flav(ius)* for Crispus, *Val(erius)* for Licinius II, and, again, *Flav(ius)* for Constantine II.

Comparison with the three milestones, as well as with other epigraphic and numismatic documents mentioning the same three individuals, suggests the following tentative restoration of our fragmentary text (fig. 2):

[[*D*]]*ddd(omini) [n]]nn(ostri) Flav(ius)*
 [[*Iul(ius) Crisp*]]*us* [[*et Val(erius)*]]
 [[*Licinianus Lici*]]-
 [[*nius Iun(ior)*]] *et Flav(ius)*
 5 [[*Claud(ius) C*]]*onstanti-*
 [[*nus*]] *nob(ilissimi) Caesss(ares).*

Two final questions need to be addressed: the dating and the geographical origin of the Venetian milestone. The first may be answered relatively easily. In fact, we can confidently assume that the inscription commemorating Crispus, Licinius II, and Constantine II was set up between their proclamation as Caesars on 1 March 317 and the outbreak of the civil war between Constantine and Licinius in 324. Since scholars have demonstrated that the first signs of discord between Constantine and Licinius already appeared in 321, when the former proclaimed his two sons consuls without the latter's consent – Thomas Grünwald colourfully calls it «die Anfangsphase des 'kalten Krieges'»¹⁸ –, it seems more plausible that the epigraphic text was set up between 317 and 321, if not just in 317 itself, as a means of celebrating the first official appointment of the three Caesars.

The issue of the provenance is much more complex. The lack of any information about how the milestone ended up in its current location precludes any firm reconstruction of the context for which it was originally conceived. Some hints are provided by petrographic analysis, kindly carried out by Prof. Lorenzo Lazzarini, who verified that the text was incised on a column of *marmor Carystium (cipollino bigio)* or

¹⁷ See Bellezza 1996, esp. pp. 91–94 for Constantine's use of the title. On late-antique imperial titles see also Chastagnol 1988.

¹⁸ See Chastagnol 1982; Christol, Drew-Bear 1986, pp. 43–51; Grünwald 1990, pp. 124–132; Barnes 2011, pp. 103–106.

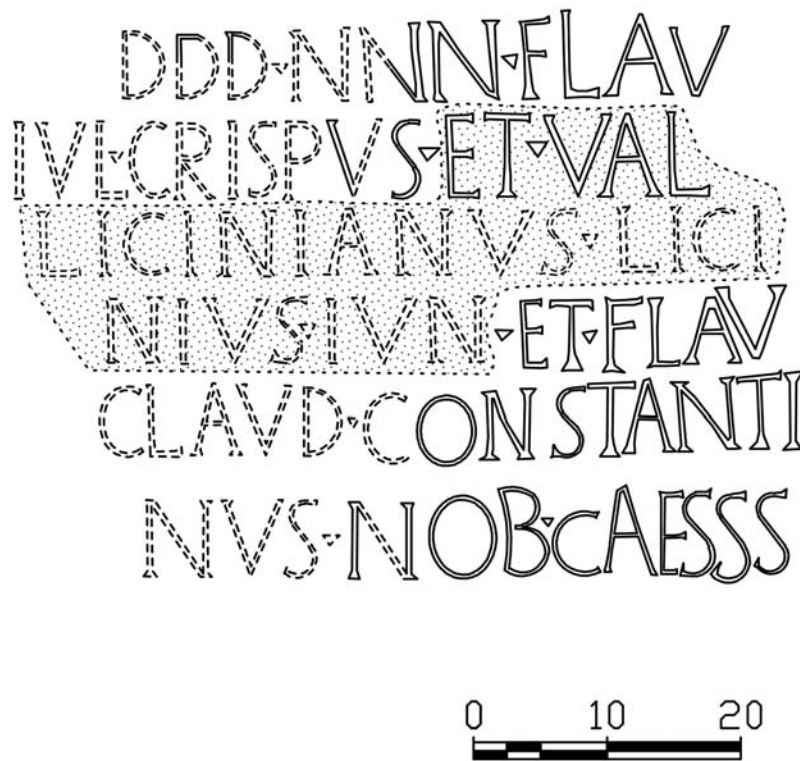


Fig. 2. Tentative reconstructive drawing of the milestone text (G. Trombin)

bigio antico), which originates from the island of Euboea in Greece.¹⁹ Other inscribed milestones made from the same marble and dating to the first half of the 4th century AD have been found in the *Venetia et Histria* region.²⁰ These parallels show that, despite the geographic origin of its material, our milestone could actually have been set up for a Roman road of north-eastern Italy. Such a scenario would fit well with the provenance of the three previously examined inscriptions, which are the only other known milestone-texts that present the names of Crispus, Licinius II, and Constantine II alone in the nominative case.²¹ Furthermore, recent scholarship has convincingly argued that Constantine put special effort into promoting his image and that of his family in northern Italy by means of textual and visual propaganda celebrated through different media, including milestones.²² Despite these general considerations, however, if no further data become available, our milestone must still be considered of unknown provenance, thus increasing the number of *pierres errantes* or – rather – *flottantes*, that landed on Venetian soil.

¹⁹ Prof. Lazzarini suggested that the marble might come from the quarries of Myloi by the town of Karystos on the island of Euboea (personal communication, September 2013). On the *marmor Carystium* see Lazzarini 2007, pp. 183–203; Pensabene 2013, pp. 298–301.

²⁰ On the types of stone used for milestones in *Venetia et Histria* see Grossi, Zanco 2003. *Marmor Carystium* milestones from the region are attested as follows: two specimens dedicated to Maxentius come respectively from Isola della Scala on the road from Ostiglia to Verona (Basso 1987, p. 15, no. 1) and from near *Opitergium*, marking the first mile of the road to *Iulia Concordia* (CIL V 8000; Basso 1987, p. 136, no. 65); one milestone dedicated to Constantine comes from *Iulia Concordia* (Basso 1987, p. 179, no. 83); one milestone dedicated to Licinius alone comes from San Giorgio di Nogaro on the Via Annia westwards of Aquileia (Basso 1987, pp. 181–183, no. 85).

²¹ Another milestone celebrating the same three Caesars, but built in the dative, was discovered in 2011 in a milestone cluster by the river Torre on the road between Aquileia and *Iulia Emona* (Ljubljana): see AE 2011, 399b, with further literature.

²² See Buonopane 2003; Gregori, Filippini 2013, pp. 525–526; Buonopane, Grossi 2014; cp. also Grünwald 1990, pp. 224–237, nos. 287–374.

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