Cisalpine Celtic literacy

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On the Celtic inscription of Briona

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Abstract

I make some suggestions about the lapidary inscription written in the 'Lepontic' alphabet, found in San Bernardino di Briona in the 19th century and now preserved in the Lapidary Museum of the rectory of the Cathedral of Novara. The aim is to show just how much the traditional interpretation needs revision. This follows the re-assignment to the stone of what must have been its original vertical position, with the short side placed into the ground, the 'wheels' arranged horizontally and ten of eleven lines of writing to be read from top to bottom. I wish to highlight some pragmatic and linguistic difficulties in the traditional interpretation, while, on the other hand, I would like to show how the 'vertical approach' has some advantages for the interpretation. The reassessment also leads to reflections on the relationship of the direction of writing with the sequence of reading of the vertical lines.

1. Premises and objectives

I propose some reassessments of the well-known Celtic inscription of San Bernardino di Briona.[1] My objective is not to provide a new interpretation of this much-discussed document, which would obviously be too broad for this occasion, but rather to show how much the interpretation has changed (or needs to be changed). This follows the re-assignment to the stone of what must have been its original vertical position, with the short side placed into the ground, the 'wheels' arranged horizontally, and ten of the eleven lines of writing to be read from top to bottom (see Fig. 4 in Arcà & Rubat Borel in this volume).

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[1] LexLep NO·21 = RIG II E-1, Solinas 1994 n° 140, Morandi 2004 n° 97. The number of epigraphic testimonies of Celtic from Italy is constantly increasing. In this article, I identify inscriptions with reference to the main corpora currently in use.

The idea of a different analysis goes back to the observation (made over thirty years ago by A. L. Prosdocimi)[2] that the shape of the stone indicates the area intended for being covered by soil. This indicates that the original position of the stone must have been vertical and inevitably carries implications about the sequence in which the lines are to be read and the relationship between the various parts of the written text. Immediately after Prosdocimi's observation, I had drawn only a few consequences from it,[3] especially because of the influence exerted by previous authoritative analyses such as that of Lejeune for the whole text or that of Campanile for the identification of the famous *Quintus legatus*.[4] I went back to the inscription on the occasion of the study of the Gallo-Latin necropolis of Cerrione (Biella),[5] which is close both in terms of location and of chronology. From this necropolis, some inscriptions in the Lepontic alphabet emerged, with a textual *dispositio* comparable to that of Briona. In more recent years, proposals have been made to reread some signs in the Briona inscription, offering an opportunity for a new interpretative perspective on the entire text. However, due to the uncertainty and the erroneousness of the proposals,[6] this did not happen. Recently, the new study by Arcà and Rubat Borel[7] prompted me to reflect again on the document, encouraged by the fact that, also from the perspective of a non-epigraphic and non-linguistic investigation, the original position had to be vertical.

My objective is therefore to restart from Prosdocimi's observation and to reconsider the whole monument, freeing the analysis from what had been imposed by the traditional horizontal view. I do not intend to present a new interpretation of the text and the precise forms that it includes, but rather I wish to highlight some pragmatic and linguistic difficulties of the traditional interpretation. At the same time, I would

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[2] Prosdocimi 1991b: 291–293.

[3] Solinas 1994: 379–381.

[4] RIG II E-1; Campanile 1981.

[5] Cresci Marrone & Solinas 2013.

[6] Various attempts have been made to (re)read Lejeune's lines B1 and A1. However, the state of the engraving is such that it is difficult to reach an unanimous reading, except perhaps for the **takos:toutas** segment of B1. I do not think we should accept the alternative reading **kuitoi** instead of **kuitos** proposed by Estarán Tolosa 2015. Arcà & Rubat Borel in this volume share the same opinion, as do Eska & Eska 2017.

[7] Arcà & Rubat Borel in this volume.

like to show how the 'vertical approach' has some advantages for the interpretation.

The reassessment has also led me to reflect on the relationship of the direction of writing with the sequence of reading of the vertical lines: if the direction of writing of the inscription is dextroverse, should the vertical lines be read in succession from right to left (the traditional sequence) or from left to right (in accordance with the direction of writing)? Here, the aim is not so much to answer this question or to present a new analysis, but rather to find some plausible comparisons in other epigraphic documents from Celtic and non-Celtic areas in northern Italy, and to show how the left-to-right succession could solve some interpretative problems.

2. The traditional interpretation

As concerns the stele and the archaeological context, I refer here to the article by Arcà & Rubat Borel in the present volume. I only mention the fact that the inscription cannot be dated archaeologically. It has been dated based on palaeographical considerations, and, overall, in reference to its historical context – the complex and diversified phenomenon of 'Romanization'. The ways and strategies of 'Becoming Roman'[8] are different in different areas and chronologies; indeed, historical research has shown how, in northern Italy, the assimilation process has had more peculiar features than elsewhere.[9] For this reason we do not enter into the specifics of the arguments put forward by various scholars to arrive at a dating of the document between the end of the second and the first century B.C.

The interpretation of the text – with a story disturbed only by the alternative voice of Rhŷs (1906 and 1913) – finds its current form in the *Recueil des inscriptions gauloises* (RIG) of M. Lejeune (1988). The traditional analysis of the structure of the text, today almost unanimously accepted and substantially coinciding with that of Lejeune, can be illustrated in a brief and simplified manner. Lejeune rightly notes how the written text is arranged around the four circles present in the writing space:

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[8] Woolf 1998. See also Haeussler 2013.

[9] The literature about this is obviously endless, see for example Cassola 1991 and numerous studies by G. Bandelli.

"Ont d'abord été gravées, en alignement vertical, et tangentes, quatre «roues» à huit rayons, d'un diamètre de 22 cm, dont la série occupe pratiquement toute la hauteur de la pierre, du côté gauche, ne laissant à sa gauche qu'une marge étroite, mais ménageant vers sa droite un vaste champ pour l'inscription (champ dont le lapicide n'a d'ailleurs pas utilisé toute la largeur). Il est clair que les «roues» sont l'élément primordial de la gravure, autour de quoi s'est venu ordonner le texte" (RIG II-1: 17).[10]

Therefore, the inscription would be read in the position in which it is visible at the Lapidarium of Novara, namely with the long side set horizontally and, consequently, with ten lines of horizontal writing, one below the other.[11]

The inscription is divided into three sections of different conditions of conservation:

1) a central section of nine well-preserved lines (A2–10 of Lejeune in RIG II), read almost unanimously as dextroverse and arranged horizontally one below the other, each one consisting of a single word: **tanotaliknoi** | **kuitos** | **lekatos** | **anokopokios** | **setupokios** | **esanekoti** | **anareuiśeos** | **tanotalos** | **karnitus**.

2) a section read vertically from bottom to top on the extreme left of the epigraphic space, still dextroverse and parallel to the vertically aligned radial motif (B1 of Lejeune in RIG II): **takos** : **toutas** :[.

3) a third section – perhaps connected to section 2 – inscribed on the edge of the upper end of the stone, maybe a secondary incision, made up of poorly preserved and hardly legible letters, understood as a dextroverse horizontal line (A1 of Lejeune in RIG II):
   ]**n**[-]**k**[--]**esasoioikan**[-].

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[10] I will return to the fact that Lejeune's intuition on the centrality of the 'wheels' in the way the text is constructed and operates remains valid even and above all when considering a vertical positioning of the stone.

[11] RIG II-1: 17: "Son mode d'utilisation est incertain: couchée? adossée à la pente d'un tertre ou à la paroi verticale d'une construction? en tout cas, non érigée par implantation dans le sol, puisque l'inscription va jusqu'au bas de la pierre. [L'orientation de la stèle ne fait pas de doute; seul Rhŷs a eu l'idée saugrenue que la série de figurations de roues et la ligne écrite qui lui est parallèle devaient être horizontales, les dix autres lignes d'écriture se dirigeant de haut en bas.]"

There is no agreement among scholars about the relationship between the sections and their sequence of reading.

The structure of the central section was regarded as a series of binomial onomastic formulas that serve as subjects for the closing verb form (*karnitus*).[12] The onomastic formulas have been identified as nominatives of personal names, mostly of recognizable Celtic ancestry. In three cases (*kuitos lekatos*, *anokopokios* and *setupokios*),[13] these names are completed by a preceding 'cumulative' adjectival patronymic in the nominative plural (*tanotaliknoi* 'sons of *tanotalos*') and, in the other two (*anareuíśeos* and *tanotalos*), by a genitival patronymic, again 'cumulative' and put before the names (*esanekoti* '(the sons) of *esanekotos*'). Lejeune proposes the Latin translation: "Dannotali fili, Quintus Legatus, Andocombogius, Setubogius, Exandecotti (autem fili), Andarevisseus, Dannotalos, erexerunt" (RIG II-1: 20), and similarly Lambert: "Les fils de Dannotalos, Quintos, légat, Andombogios, Setubogios, et (les fils) d'Essandecot(t)os, Andareuiseos, Dannotalos, ont élevé le tumulus" (1994: 72).[14]

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[12] Following her proposed reading of **kuitos** as **kuitoi**, Estarán Tolosa 2015 proposes that the phrase *tanotaliknoi kuitoi* (dative singular) is the name of the dedicatee: "«Au fils de Dannotalos, Quintos». Les autres noms désigneraient les dédicants" (106); alternatively, if it were not a personal name, *kuitoi* would still be syntactically connected to *tanotaliknoi* as a nom. pl. *o*-stem. (Estarán Tolosa 2015 speaks of a traditional interpretation with "une série de sept individus qui sont chacun représentés par un *nomen unicum* local" (95), but in the literature I cannot seem to find interpretations with seven individuals.)

[13] For simplicity's sake, I leave aside the phonetic interpretations, which, in some cases, could also vary in the analyses of different scholars, and I quote the forms of the text through graphical notation.

[14] Markey & Mees 2003: 139–140 propose an unconvincing structure: "the sons of Dannotalos, Quintos the legate (and) Annocombogios, Setubogios son of Essannecottos (and) Anarevisos's son Dannotalos, raised this *cairn*"; the same in LexLep. On this proposal, see also Eska & Eska 2017: 83, n. 10, which expresses perplexity on the coexistence in the same text of three diverse ways of giving the patronymic in various positions. Likewise, Peyre 2000: 179–180 is puzzled by the three different ways of expressing the patronymic (even if one adopts Lejeune's analysis which, regardless of the original functionality, considers -*eos* as a formant of an idionym). Therefore, he proposes -*eos* as a suffix with agentive value and then *anareuíśeos* as a function name, parallel to *lekatos*: "celui qui veille (ou qui s'occupe) de manière générale (ou en premier) aux côtés de (ou à la place de), en somme un mandataire général" (2000: 180). In this perspective, the textual structure would be different

In section 2, Lejeune considered only **takos : toutas** to be readable with sufficient certainty: he interpreted *toutas* as a genitive[15] of the name of the 'city' or 'community',[16] maybe syntactically connected with a following noun, in a phrase with a meaning like 'civitatis iussu'. As regards *takos*, he suggested a neuter accusative singular 'sepulcrum', object of *karnitus*, or a neuter nominative singular of an abstract noun **tangos* 'decretum' (sigmatic derivative of the same nasal stem which is found in the Oscan accusative *tanginom*), here functioning as nominative absolute. This analysis is taken up in P.-Y. Lambert's handbook *La langue gauloise*.[17] More recently, the hypothesis of *takos = tagos* as a name of a magistrate has been put forward,[18] hence the *tagos* of the *touta* would be seen as the 'guarantor' of what is described in the central section.

The reading of the third section is so uncertain that an interpretation, even a partial one, is not possible.

In my opinion, the traditional analysis presents more than one difficulty. Here, I highlight two of these, which seem to be at least partially overcome by my revised analysis of the text. Firstly, there is a difficulty of a pragmatic order and of general verisimilitude: the monument (funerary or not) is evidently the result of an important design, for which therefore we may imagine minimal randomness. However, the mention of the *touta* and possibly of one of its hypothetical magistrates or one of its decisions (*takos*) is found in a secondary section of the writing space. This truly makes little sense.

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and the genitive *esanekoti* would be a determinative: "le fils de Dannotalos, Quintos le Légat (1), Anoco(m)bogios (2), Setubogios mandataire général d'Esanecotos (3), Dannotalos (4 portant le même nom de son père), ont élevé le monument" (2000: 180).

[15] *toutas* as a genitive singular is an important morphological piece of evidence – as are others of Italian Celticity such as *rikanas* from Oleggio (LexLep NO·8 = Morandi 2004 n° 84) – for the question of the inflection of *ā*-stems in Celtic. The bibliography is boundless, see for example Lejeune 1985, Motta 1989, Prosdocimi 1989, Lambert 1995, De Bernardo Stempel 2007.

[16] Cf. Matasović 2009: 386 s.v. **towtā*.

[17] Lambert 1994: 74. Cf. also Gambari & Solari 1999: 146.

[18] Cf. for instance Markey & Mees 2003: 131. I believe (as did Rhŷs 1913: 47) that Briona's *takos* is to be compared also with *Prasutagus*, see the analysis proposed by Delamarre 2017: 104–105.

Secondly, there are some issues that I would define as of a linguistic-cultural order: in a Celtic binomial onomastic formula, even in the context of cultural Romanization *in fieri*, the genitive with patronymic function or the patronymic constructed as a derivative (-*ikno*-) always constitutes the second element of the formula,[19] cf. *esopnos kepi* (LexLep PV·1 = RIG E-4, Solinas 1994 n° 110, Morandi 2004 n° 101), *alkouinos aśkoneti* (LexLep TI·41 = Solinas 1994 n° 21, Morandi 2004 n° 38), *esonius urenti* (LexLep BI·4), *aśmina krasanikna* (LexLep NO·18 = Solinas 1994 n° 122, Morandi 2004 n° 94), *koisis trutiknos* (LexLep PG·1.2 and .4 = RIG E-5, Solinas 1994 n° 142, Morandi 2004 n° 277) etc. In the traditional interpretation of the Briona stele, on the other hand, both *esanekoti* (cumulative genitive patronymic for several individuals) and *tanotaliknoi* (cumulative patronymic with the formant -*ikno*-) would be placed before the personal names. We do not have structural parallels of cumulative patronymics in the Celtic epigraphy of Italy, but in the inscription in Latin characters and in the Venetic language from Canevoi (Belluno) we read: ENONI.ONTEI.APPIOI.SSELBOISSELBOI.ANDETICOBOS ECUPETARIS (LV Bl 1). In this example, the cumulative patronymic *andeticobos* is postponed to all idionyms (*ontei*, *appioi*) and also to *enonios*, the curator of the burial (gen. ENONI), through *sselboisselboi*.[20]

3. The vertical position of the stele

Here, I introduce my proposal for the structure of the text and some related observations. This does not set out to be a new and complete interpretation, but only starting points for a future interpretation. Both the space and occasion allow me to present only those aspects that I would define as structural, without discussing detailed arguments referring to etymologies and cultural and institutional contents, that I will consider elsewhere.

The general impressions that I had acquired when I personally

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[19] On the structure of the onomastic formula in northern Italy and in the Celtic context in particular, cf. Prosdocimi 1988: 367–388 and Prosdocimi 1991a: 159–176. See also De Bernardo Stempel 2009; Motta 2009; Solinas 2013: 199–204.

[20] The inscription is lost but can be read from a preserved apograph; see also Prosdocimi 1988: 307.

examined the stele a few years ago seem to be confirmed by what has been highlighted by Arcà and Rubat Borel: the original position of the stone was vertical, and we can clearly observe the space which was going to be underground and did not undergo any preparation for engraving.[21]

3.1 The structure of the text

The written text is arranged around the horizontal line of 'wheels', which, in my opinion, must also play an important part in the reconstruction of the meaning of the entire monument. Without going specifically into the various hypotheses which have been formulated about the symbolic value of the wheels, they could be elements of reference to the funeral rite (*petorritum*)[22] or to a public judgment or to a vote.[23]

However, I believe that the vertical position of the stele and the centrality of the wheels in textual semiology are premises that, when combined, must condition the entire interpretation. Indeed, it is evident that the text as a whole is articulated and works around the four wheels, which have both the function of separating the various sections and of joining them in a textual syntax (which does not necessarily have to coincide with the linguistic syntax). The wheels, obviously, also have the function of an iconographic reference to a series of cultural contents which I will not go into here, but which contribute to the construction of the textual meaning. The topic is that of the so-called 'symphysical context' of Bühler 1934, for which the relationship between the linguistic sign and the object with which it is related (in our case the stele with the four wheels) has meaning in relation to the 'cognition of things' of the interpreter. Therefore, I believe that an interpretation aiming at the reconstruction of the meaning of the text must consider the whole complex of the engraved space as a unit articulated in images and lines of

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[21] Estarán Tolosa 2015: 97 noted that the idea of vertical placement is not plausible due to the little space that would remain between the last signs and the base. To refute the objection suffice it to compare the proportions of the buried parts and the position of the letters in other Cisalpine Celtic inscriptions of Italy, for example the inscriptions of Vergiate (LexLep VA·6 = Solinas 1994 n° 119, Morandi 2004 n° 106) or of Vercelli (LexLep VC·1 = Solinas 1994 n° 141, Morandi 2004 n°100).

[22] RIG II-1: 17–18; Hamp 1990; Eska & Eska 2017.

[23] Peyre 2000.

alphabetic writing with different orientations.

The nine lines of vertical writing (A2–10) are arranged exactly under the four wheels and, in the original layout, were surrounded on all four sides by an empty frame. It seems to me that this general arrangement had to include the top horizontal line (B1). The same cannot be said with certainty for the line engraved on the far right margin (A1), since this is located in a space which, in the original layout, was intended to be empty. Furthermore, the signs engraved in this line, slightly smaller than those of the contiguous line, are less spaced apart, and dividing dots are present between the words. Dots are not present in the vertical lines of the inscription, perhaps also because the division into one-word lines did not require them. Moreover, this is the same logic of division through dots adopted in the inscriptions coming from the necropolis of Cerrione, which I will discuss later.

It would appear quite clear that there was no writing in the upper right corner, which is now damaged. The textual structure resulting from the vertical repositioning of the stone is therefore:

- A dextroverse horizontal line which I read as **takos : toutas : eu**.[24]
- The horizontal line of the wheels.
- Nine dextroverse parallel vertical lines to be read from top to bottom (but should they be read from right to left or from left to right? – see below).
- The vertical line on the far-right margin remains of uncertain reading. However, for the purposes of identifying a textual structure, reading is not as relevant as the fact that this line of writing remains of uncertain connection (syntactic or not) with the rest of the text. I would rule out a syntactic connection with **takos : toutas : eu**, but it is not possible to exclude that there is some link with the other nine vertical lines.

In any case, the question of the number and the connection of the utterances must be tackled from a textual perspective (especially with a text made up of linguistic and non-linguistic signs). In such a perspective it would also be possible that the absence of a syntactic connection does not invalidate a connection in the articulation of the meaning of the text.

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[24] Other readings have been proposed by others, most recently ARCÀ & RUBAT BOREL in this volume.

Various proposals have been put forward on both the morphology and the lexical basis of the plural verb *karnitus*. Here, to identify the general structure of the text and any syntactic connections, it suffices to point out that the semantics must be those of 'building', 'setting up' or 'preparing' – more generally one could say of 'doing' – for which an object is implied. This object could be a) not expressed linguistically, but pragmatically evident in the original context of the placement of the stone (again what Bühler would call symphysical context), or which more simply would be called a contextual object and specifically, in my opinion, this would hardly be a burial for an unmentioned dedicatee; b) expressed in the first horizontal line above the wheels, where it could be *takos* (perhaps to be interpreted in relation to Welsh *tanc* 'pace' < **tanco-*); c) expressed in the line on the far right margin in the form in *-am*, which could be the accusative of the object. I believe that the most plausible hypothesis is that of the contextual object and that, due to the absence of a reference to the dedicatee, it is difficult to think of a funerary inscription.

3.2 The vertical view of the stele

In support of the vertical view of the stele, I believe that an item of historical-cultural – rather than linguistic – evidence can be adduced. The arrangement in vertical lines of the inscriptions on stone seems to be a characterizing trait in Cisalpine Celtic epigraphy, from its beginnings up to more recent times. Indeed, the texts of many of the oldest inscriptions (from the 5th century B.C.), characterized by large supports, are arranged in vertical lines and, in some cases, the word *pala* is present to indicate the burial.[25] Arriving at a more recent epoch, closer to the context of the Briona inscription, we can consider, for instance, the Gallo-Latin necropolis of Cerrione (Biella).[26] The ancient presence in the necropolis dates from the beginning of the 1st century B.C. to the 3rd century A.D., but all the inscriptions in the Lepontic alphabet are dated to the 1st century B.C. The case of Cerrione is significant because of a

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[25] Cf. for instance the inscriptions of Bioggio: LexLep TI·43 = MORANDI 2004 n° 300; LexLep TI·44 = MORANDI 2004 n° 301; LexLep TI·45 = MORANDI 2004 n° 302 A e B. About 'Lepontic *pala*' see SOLINAS 2015.
[26] See CRESCI MARRONE & SOLINAS 2013.

rare aspect among the documentation of north-western Italy, namely
the coexistence in the same burial site of two different alphabets, the
Lepontic[27] and the Latin one. This peculiarity is a fruitful starting
point for investigating the modalities of Romanization in progress in
a peripheral area compared to the better investigated and better known
urban contexts. The necropolis of Cerrione yields inscriptions in the
Lepontic alphabet which can be compared to the one of Briona, owing
to their arrangements in lines of vertical writing, engraved on large
tombstones.[28] In contrast, the inscriptions in the Latin alphabet from
the same necropolis, even in cases where the support is large enough,
always present horizontal lines of writing.[29] Based on this comparison
with what is found in other Po-valley contexts of Romanization, it can
be hypothesized that, in recent chronological phases, the arrangement in
one or more vertical (possibly parallel) lines may have been perceived as
characterizing a non-Latin text model – therefore, what we could call a
text model pertinent to local culture, written in the local Lepontic alpha-
bet, with local onomastics and, in the case of the Briona monument, with
a local institutional reference (*touta*).

The presence of the term *touta* demonstrates an intervention/will/pa-
tronage of the community in relation to what is mentioned in the rest
of the text. I believe that the form *eu* could be the same that appears in

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[27] The Lepontic alphabet in ancient Italy is associated with manifestations of Celtic
identity. Writing has played a key role in the issue of linguistic Celticity in Italy,
but here I wish to note that the creation of the alphabet of the Celtic of Italy dates
back to around ± 600 B.C. in the area of the Golasecca culture. Since the earliest
attestations, the epigraphic corpus is produced in alphabetical varieties with local
characteristics, and these varieties continue from the beginning up to Cerrione in
the 1st century B.C. The motivation for so much vitality and longevity is ideological:
it is perceived as a manifestation of Celtic identity in, but also outside of Italy,
as shown by the attestations in transalpine contexts, see MARINETTI et al. 2000,
SOLINAS 2002.

[28] LexLep BI·1–6. A separate case is that of LexLep BI·7, engraved on a large support
in a single vertical line, but in the Latin alphabet with graphical features which
refer to the Lepontic tradition. The text also contains an onomastic formula. In
terms of bases and structure, this refers to the indigenous context for which the
inscription, in a cultural horizon of Romanization *in fieri*, can be interpreted as
an expression of transition (CRESCI MARRONE & SOLINAS 2013: 49–52), but also of
deliberate reference to a non-Latin cultural model (cf. SOLINAS 2002).

[29] Cf. for instance CRESCI & SOLINAS 2013 n° 9, n° 10, n° 11 etc.

Vercelli (LexLep VC·1.2 = RIG II E-2) and on the bronze of Vieil-Evreux
(RIIG EUR-01–01 = RIG I L-16), which Lejeune suggested to interpret as
an abbreviation of a Gaulish expression equivalent to Latin *ex voto*, but
for which other hypotheses could also be made. The public legitimacy of
the curation mentioned in the text is given by the reference – in a priv-
ileged position in the textual structure – to the authority of a magistrate
or a judgment of the community. The vertical view of the stele allows us
to eliminate the aforementioned difficulty represented by the fact that
the mention of the *touta* and of a *takos* (be it a 'decree, a 'judgment' or
a 'magistrate') would cover a secondary position in the text as a whole.
Instead, the vertical view places it, as we would expect, in a prominent
position, which distinguishes it from the indication of the construction /
curatorship expressed in the vertical lines.

3.3 On the succession of reading of the vertical lines

In my proposal for a vertical view of the inscription, I raised the question
of the sequence of reading of the vertical lines, wondering if it is not
plausible to consider a reading that would start from the first vertical
line on the left. It does not seem possible to identify decisive arguments
in favour of this hypothesis, but it is certainly possible to highlight some
neutral aspects and some facts in favour as well.

Regarding the arrangement of the text in the space prepared for the
engraving, it can be observed that the vertical lines are more regular,
larger, and more regularly spaced out on the left side of the stone, and
gradually become smaller and closer to each other on the right side. This
could be an indication of an incision which started from the left. If this
observation is valid, it would be an argument in favour of a sequence
of vertical lines from left to right. This modality in the succession of
reading of the vertical lines may appear unusual to the modern viewer,
who tends to visualize also the vertical and parallel lines of writing as
horizontal and underlying one another. The modern textual model con-
ditions this visualization, so that, even when the arrangement of the
lines is vertical, there is a tendency to mentally bring what we see back to
a horizontal type of arrangement. Different perspectives of textual con-
ception allowed the dextroverse direction as well as the sinistroverse and
the boustrophedon, and horizontal lines as well as vertical lines. In fact,
the arrangement (and succession of reading) of vertical lines from left

to right is not unusual either in the Cisalpine Celtic context, or in other epigraphic corpora of ancient Italy, for example in the Venetic context.

Hence, the **komoneos | uarsileos** of the inscription from San Pietro di Sta-bio (LexLep TI·40 = SOLINAS 1994 n° 23, MORANDI 2004 n° 40) could be the result of the reading in two parallel vertical lines in succession from left to right. Return-ing to the aforementioned necropolis of Cerrione, we can consider for instance the inscription **lukios | sipionios** (LexLep BI·1) engraved in two parallel vertical lines: if, as it seems likely for morphological rea-sons, the form *sipionios* is in apposition and thus in second position in a binomial onomastic formula, the first line in the order of reading would be the one on the left (see Fig. 1).[30] On the other hand, from
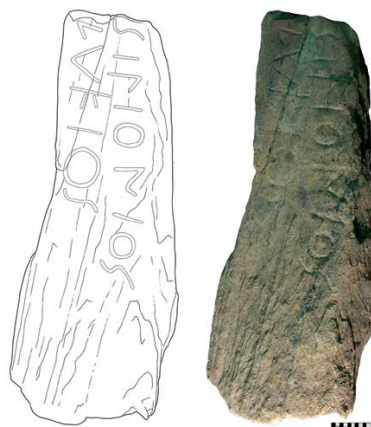

Fig. 1: lukios | sipionios (LexLep BI·1).

the same necropolis we can consider the inscription **esonius | urenti | akitu : esonius | ueriounos** (LexLep BI·4). The text is arranged in three vertical lines, but the distribution of the signs shows a reduction towards the left of the writing space – clearly to correct an erroneous calculation of the layout – and that makes the succession of lines proceeding from right to left almost certain. It is possible that for the latter inscription, which is placed at a slightly more advanced chronology and shows traits of a strong mixture with the Latin cultural and writing model, there are reasons to think of influence from that model of writing and of textual disposition.[31] In any case, it is evident that there is no univocal criterion for documents that come from the same cultural context and even from the same necropolis. From Venetic epigraphy, I can recall a couple of examples. The first case is *Fremaistos Vennonis molon Vennonis itos gen-tei* from Padua (LV Pa 13),[32] which was read according to two different premises: the first one identifies dextroverse horizontal lines in succes-

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[30] The same reasoning could apply in the case of other inscriptions from Cerrione, see CRESCI MARRONE & SOLINAS 2013.

[31] CRESCI MARRONE & SOLINAS 2013.

[32] See also PROSDOCIMI 1988: 293.

sion from bottom to top; the second, probably preferable, identifies vertical and dextroverse lines in succession from left to right. Another case is that of a cippus, again from Padua, *entollouki termon* (LV Pa 14), for which we cannot exclude a succession *termon entollouki*, which – even in a predictably gen. + N language like Venetic – would be justifiable with the needs / will of topicalization. It is also worth highlighting how, both in Cerrione and in the Venetic inscriptions of Padua, it is evident that the high-low orientation of the letters is not decisive for the logic of succession of the lines. Therefore, there would not seem to be any reasons to exclude a succession of lines from left to right *a priori*. On the other hand, there could be evidence regarding the consistency with the direction of writing that may well prove to be in favour of this notion. If the succession and orientation of the letters in the line goes from left to right, then the same could be also the direction in which the vertical and parallel lines are arranged.

Reading the vertical lines in sequence from left to right would make it possible to eliminate the difficulty of the cumulative patronymics in the first position of the onomastic formulas. We are all fond of *Quintus Legatus* identified more than forty years ago by Enrico Campanile but, apart from wishful thinking, I do not think there are any reasons not to review the function and the attribution and interpretation of the form *lekatos*. The similarity with Latin *legatus* is strong and seems compelling, but it is not a given that the form must be an integral part of an onomastic formula with *kuitos*, as has been said up to now. In a reading of the vertical lines that starts from the left, *lekatos* could refer to *kuitos*, which follows it, but also to *anokopokios* which precedes it. So, even if we wish to keep the idea of the name of a temporary institutional office that has become a stable element of the onomastic formula placed in second position after the primary onomastic designation, why not an *anokopokios lekatos tanotaliknos* followed by a *kuitos tanotaliknos*? I do not even see good reasons to exclude a *lekatos* (name of institutional office preceding the uninterrupted onomastic designation) *kuitos tanotaliknos*. This arrangement would also have the advantage of standardizing all the onomastic formulas as binomial formulas, as well as that of giving back to the text an order corresponding to the succession of generations: if *setupokios, anokopokios* and *kuitos* are brothers, sons of *tanotalos*, it is reasonable that they are named after their father *tanotalos* and their uncle *anareuiśeos*, the sons of *esanekotos*.

Lastly, the verbal form *karnitus*, in first position in the sequence of vertical lines, could be justified with arguments of different types. The question of the syntactic order of the constituents in Celtic languages, and in a language of fragmentary attestation mostly in formulaic sequences, is quite complicated; however, it seems appropriate to emphasize that, in an inflected language, the syntactic order is always adaptable to the needs of topicalization in order to indicate a relevant semantic core.[33]

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[33] Cf. within Cisalpine Celtic the position of *karnitu* in the bilingual inscription of Todi (LexLep PG·1 = RIG II E-5, Solinas 1994 n° 142, Morandi 2004 n° 277) and in the inscription of Gozzano (LexLep NO·19 = Morandi 2004 n° 95): in the former, after the mention of the dedicatee, there are the verb (*karnitu*), its object (*lokan / artuaś*) and, lastly, the subject (*koisis trutiknos*), all in correspondence with a Latin text in which the order is different, with the verb translated with *locavit et statuit* and in absolute final position. In the latter – which, by the way, also features 'wheels' – presumably the order is dative of the dedicatee + *karnitus* + nominative of the dedicant.

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