

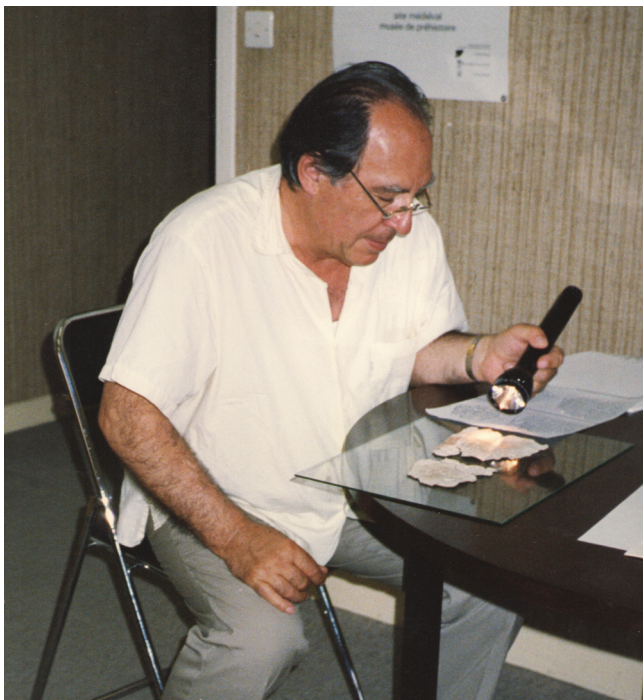
# ARCHAEOLINGUA

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ERZSÉBET JEREM and WOLFGANG MEID

Series Minor

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The Author examining the Larzac tablet  
Millau Museum, June 1, 1992



**WOLFGANG MEID**

# **GAULISH INSCRIPTIONS**

**Their interpretation in the light of archaeological  
evidence and their value as a source of linguistic  
and sociological information**



**BUDAPEST 2014**

Third edition,  
revised and enlarged 2014

The Cover photograph shows the Menhir of Vieux-Poitiers,  
with Gaulish inscription (see p. 36)

*Ratin briuationom Frontu Tarbetisonios ieuru*

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## Preface

This short survey of Gaulish epigraphical “literature” was first published in 1992, then reprinted with minor revisions in 1994. It has been out of print for many years since, but being still in demand, a renewed edition was called for. Considering the progress made in the field of Gaulish epigraphics in the meantime, this new edition has been updated to account for more recent scholarship and also has been extended in order to deal with, among others, the one major inscription discovered in 1997 at Châteaubleau, which has received considerable attention in the meantime.

Among the dubious or pseudo-Gaulish inscriptions stands out the one discovered as early as 1887 at Rom (Deux-Sèvres), believed to be the longest of Gaulish inscriptions known at that time, which had received various fanciful interpretations since, Gaulish as well as Latin, and of which even the latest treatment in vol. II,2 of the grand *Recueil des Inscriptions Gauloises* is at a loss to extract some meaning. I have added my opinion, for whatever it is worth, of this strange document which I consider a sort of “love story” in a slave milieu, composed in an extraordinary linguistic medley of rather low-grade Latin, Greek and Gaulish.

Innsbruck, November 2014

Wolfgang Meid



## Gaulish Inscriptions

From historical and archaeological records and from the distribution of place-names we know, or at least can infer, that the ancient Celts, at the height of their expansion in the latter half of the first millennium BC, occupied, or controlled, vast territories in South Central, Western and Eastern Europe. They were present in southern Germany, France and Belgium, the British Isles, Spain and Portugal, Italy, Bohemia, Austria and Hungary; they invaded the Balkans, Greece and Minor Asia where some of them settled permanently – the Galatians of the New Testament were of Celtic descent (Γαλάται being one of the general names under which the Celts were known in antiquity<sup>1</sup>). Compared to this huge expansion of what we assume were Celtic peoples speaking varieties of an ancient Celtic language, the actual linguistic remains of that era, documented in the form of texts, are very meagre indeed.

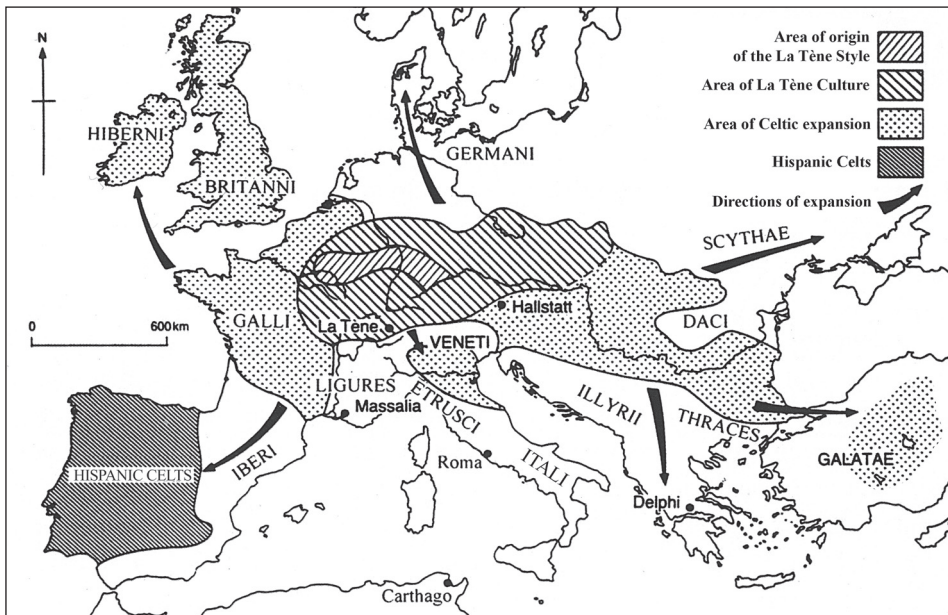


Fig. 1. Prehistoric expansion of the Celts and historic migrations since the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Map adapted from R. and V.S. Megaw, *Celtic Art*, p. 11.

<sup>1</sup> Κελτοί, -αί / *Celtae*, *Gallī* being the others.

The Celts, being heirs to a culture which depended on oral tradition, were not given to writing and adopted this habit comparatively late in the course of their cultural contacts with Greeks, Romans and other peoples of the Mediterranean world. Since, after the Roman conquest of Gaul and of other territories inhabited by Celts, Latin became the normal medium of public communications, and since, under the impact of Latin, Celtic speech declined rapidly, there was neither much need nor much opportunity for writing in the native tongue.

All the same, the surviving records of Ancient Celtic, although scanty compared with the mass of Latin or other inscriptions, are by no means negligible. Apart from the names and glosses transmitted in other contexts the inscriptions constitute the only direct linguistic evidence for that period. At the same time they supply valuable sociological and cultural information. In the last few decades many new inscriptions have been discovered, some of them longer texts which seem to indicate that the practice of writing in the vernacular was perhaps not quite so unusual after all. It is worthwhile then to survey this material and to ask ourselves what information – linguistic or otherwise – it yields.

Inscriptions in Celtic speech have been forthcoming mainly from three areas:

(a) from the north-central part of the Iberian Peninsula – “Celtiberian” with mostly very brief texts, but also some longer and two rather long inscriptions, both found at Botorrita (the one in 1970, the other – much longer – in 1992;<sup>2</sup>

(b) from the district of the lake of Lugano – “Lepontic” with about 40 brief or very brief texts;

(c) from Gaul – both Cisalpine and especially Transalpine Gaul.

These areas also represent dialect areas with distinct linguistic features. The Celtiberian area is particularly complex and archaic; it represents an archaic *q*-Celtic area. Lepontic is *p*-Celtic, and so is Gaulish, apart from a few archaisms<sup>3</sup> which still show reflexes of the original Indo-European labiovelar.

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<sup>2</sup> The adjoining Lusitanian inscriptions have also been taken to represent a Celtic dialect, so by J. Untermann, but a different Indo-European idiom by most other scholars, and quite recently the so-called “Tartessian” inscriptions in the Southwest of the Peninsula, hitherto considered non-Celtic or even non-Indo-European, have also been claimed for Celtic, so by John T. Koch (who even believes this area to represent the nucleus of Celtic expansion), but this matter is still *sub iudice*. Cf. John T. Koch, *Tartessian. Celtic in the South-west at the Dawn of History. Second edition, revised & expanded*. Aberystwyth: Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. National Library of Wales. 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Such as *Equos*, name of a month in the Coligny Calendar (see fn. 124), as against \**epos* in ordinary Gaulish.

Names with preserved Indo-European *\*p* can also be found in Gaul which raises similar questions as in Spain. I am inclined to see in them traces of other Indo-European dialects in sub-, ad- or peristratic relation to the Celtic idioms which in turn became the dominating language of these areas.<sup>4</sup> While Lepontic may be considered an archaic side-dialect of Gaulish, Celtiberian appears to be a rather different Celtic language altogether.

In what follows I shall concentrate on Gaulish. Gaulish inscriptions are by no means a uniform corpus of documents. They span several centuries, are attested in three geographically distinct areas and comprise diverse subject matter. By being written in three different alphabets they exhibit cultural affinities to the Italic, Greek and Roman worlds.

Italy presents three inscriptions of importance (Todi, Briona, Vercelli); they are in the North Italic alphabet which does not distinguish between voiceless and voiced occlusives; two of these inscriptions are bilingual. Gallia Narbonensis presents about 60 inscriptions in the Greek alphabet, most of them funerary and votive inscriptions. Eastern and Central Gaul have more than 100 inscriptions in the Latin alphabet which, of course, are chronologically later than the bulk of the Gallo-Greek and the Gallo-Italic inscriptions. The great pottery centres of Lezoux and La Graufesenque in Aquitania present us with a great number of graffiti; for the greater part they are in Latin or meant to be so, but many contain Gaulish words or even short sentences. The La Graufesenque graffiti<sup>5</sup>, for instance, apart from some technical vocabulary<sup>6</sup>, give us the Gaulish ordinal numerals from one to ten.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This has parallels in the Germanic linguistic territory where (particularly in the Northwest) we also find traces of an integrated substratum language with retention of Indo-European *\*p* and other stops not subjected to the Germanic sound-shift. See W. Meid, "Hans Kuhns 'Nordwestblock'-Hypothese. Zur Problematik der 'Völker zwischen Germanen und Kelten'." In: *Germanenprobleme in heutiger Sicht* (ed. H. Beck), Berlin 1986, pp. 183–212.

<sup>5</sup> Masterly new edition by Robert Marichal, *Les graffites de la Graufesenque*, Éditions du CNRS, Paris 1988. Regrettably the Gaulish sentences are not part of this edition, but they have been edited in vol. II, fasc. 2 of RIG published in 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Gaulish words attested are *tuθ(θ)os* (*tuððos*) "filling (of the furnace)" (always with ordinal numeral: first, second etc., up to ten), *luxtos* (gen.) "charge (of the furnace)", *autagis* "detachment, (sub)division", *uxsedia* (equivalent to Latin *summa*) "grand total". The names of the various vessels, though, are in (Vulgar) Latin.

<sup>7</sup> *cintux*, *allos*, *tr[* (= *tritios*, cf. Welsh *trydydd*), *petuar(ios)*, *pinpetos*, *sueyxos*, *sextametos*, *oxtumetos*, *namet(os)*, *decametos*. These formations are, for the greater part, Common Celtic (cf., for instance, *sextametos* = Old Irish *sechtmad*, Welsh *seithfed*). It may be

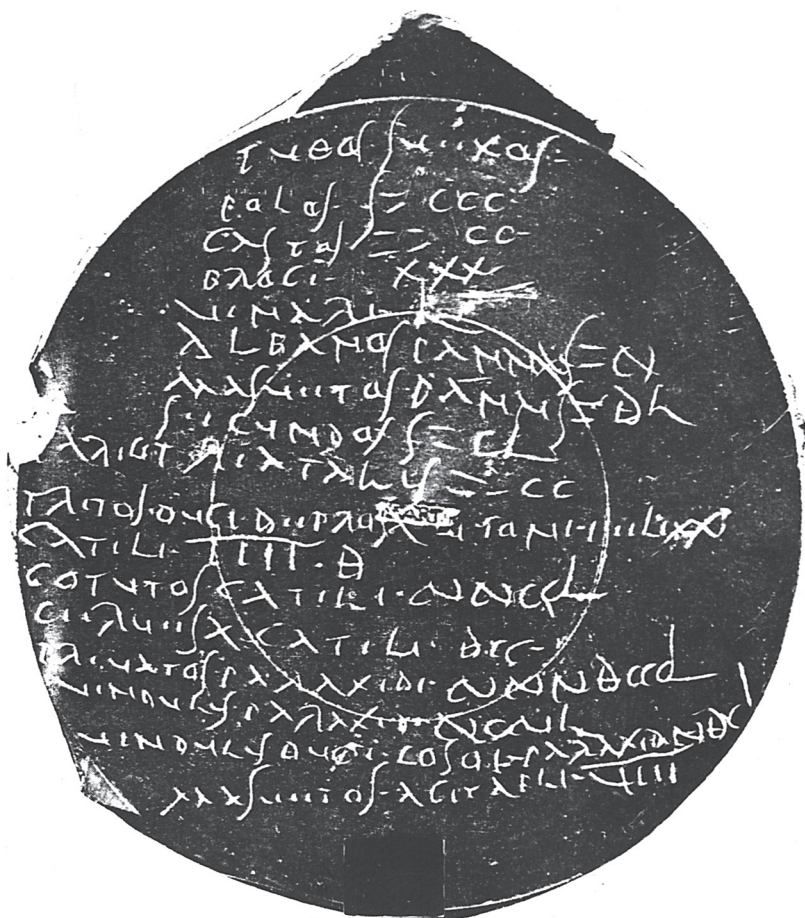


Fig. 2. Graffito from La Graufesenque; the first words are *tuθos suexos* “sixth charge (of the furnace)”. Musée de Millau.

The above numbers mean inscriptions of any substance. To determine the total number of Gaulish inscriptions is quite impossible because many are fragmentary, consisting only of a few letters, others consist only of a single word or name; therefore one cannot be always sure if they were meant to be in the

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noted, however, that on a recently discovered lead plate from Rezé (estuary of the Loire) recording commercial transactions, some alternative ordinals of more archaic formation seem to be attested, such as *[pi]χte*, representing *\*piχto-* < *\*k<sup>w</sup>ηk<sup>w</sup>-to-* (cf. Latin *quintus*) as against *pinpetos* in La Graufesenque (= Old Irish *cóiced*, Middle Welsh *pymhet*). Cf. P.-Y. Lambert – D. Stifter, *Études Celtiques* 38 (2012), 146–150.



Gaulish language (the hypothetical context might have been Greek or Latin). There are other inscriptions which cannot be classified with certainty because their status is unclear.<sup>8</sup> Others appear in a sort of mixed language or show code-switching. Such texts are of course particularly interesting because they testify to the decline of Gaulish and point to hybrid forms of speech as an intermediate stage before the total disappearance of Gaulish.

The normal practice in dealing with inscriptions is to list them regionally according to place of provenance. While this approach is all right for purely descriptive and cataloguing purposes and for regional statistics, it neglects the relevant semantic and pragmatic features of the texts themselves which do not come out sufficiently well by this method. The cataloguing of inscriptions according to place of provenance should be complemented, therefore, by a classification according to semantic and pragmatic criteria and their corresponding linguistic expression. Relevant criteria are, e.g., carrier of the inscription (stone, metal, other materials; type of the object) and type of script used, character (public, monumental, private, intimate, magic, religious), function (funerary, votive, dedicatory), indication of manufacture or ownership, commercial, etc.), special intention (charms and incantations, texts of playful nature or erotic significance, etc.). The various types of inscriptions usually have linguistic properties in common which emerge clearly only through such comparison; these typological similarities may facilitate the interpretation of difficult or obscure texts. The temporal and local distribution of types and features tends to show certain

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<sup>8</sup> This applies to a rather large body of apparent votive inscriptions found in what is believed to have been an ancient sanctuary near present-day Glozel, about 70 km south of Vichy. At least part of them are genuine, written (like Lepontic) in a sort of North-Italic alphabet, dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC until the Roman era. Their reading however, and still less their interpretation, cannot be taken as assured, and therefore they are left out of consideration here, especially as falsifications must have been fabricated in later times, for souvenir or other purposes. As far as they can be deciphered they show similarities to Gaulish, but the forms of the names or lexemes are strangely syn- or apocopated.

Still, this material would deserve serious investigation, but so far no celticist of repute has taken the pains to deal with it. It was left to a Swiss amateur researcher, Hans-Rudolf Hitz, to make the elucidation of this dubious matter his life interest. His last two major publications, with ample bibliography, are (published privately): *Ein Corpus der altkeltischen Inschriften von Glozel* (2009), and *Die Hintergründe der Inschriften 'im heiligen Hain von Glozel'* nemu Chlausei. *Von den lepontisch-etruskischen zu den gallisch-keltischen Einflüssen* (2011). See also my note in *Kratylos* 43 (1998), 26.

patterns, which usefully links this approach with the purely geographic listing, giving it profile and accentuation.

Concentrating on those inscriptions which have a certain body of text and which can tell us something, linguistically or otherwise, we may divide them into two major groups:

- (a) lapidary inscriptions (i.e. cut in stone),
- (b) inscriptions on other carriers.

The first group is, by its very nature (the durability of the material) monumental in character: for the most part, it consists of funerary or votive inscriptions.

The second group consists of inscriptions on objects of everyday use – pottery and other household implements, toilet articles etc. –, a wide range of objects such as the editors of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* would call the *Instrumentum domesticum*. Inscriptions on such objects are, as a rule, of a personal, private nature; in many cases they simply indicate the owner or the maker of the object. In some cases we get votive inscriptions, too, if the object in question was given, as a votive gift, to a god (or to a number of divinities in common). Pottery and metal objects are the main carriers; wood, cloth and other possible materials, being subject to decay, have not survived as bearers of inscriptions.

A special group is represented by little lead plates carrying inscriptions (usually in a Latin cursive script) which clearly served a magical purpose. Several of these have been found in recent years, and – being longer texts – they are the most important addition to our knowledge of Gaulish, although they are also the texts which present the greatest difficulties. The Chamalières text found in 1971 contains about 60 words, the inscription of Larzac found in 1983 has about 160 words and is thus the longest continuous Gaulish text which we now possess, the most recent addition, the Châteaubleau tile discovered in 1997 with a text of intimate character has 60 or more words (word division often being uncertain).

The problem is that being confronted now with longer texts we realize that we still know very little of Gaulish. Up to the seventies of the last century we had to do only with rather brief texts of a stereotyped nature – short sentences the meaning of which one could more or less correctly guess. Being able to understand such texts and to identify their limited grammar and vocabulary one could deceive oneself into believing that Gaulish was an easy thing, at least as far as the evidence went. The emergence of longer texts, with a different subject matter, has brought home to us that Gaulish is a vast field of which we previously had just caught a glimpse and that our knowledge acquired so far is quite insufficient when we

have to deal with such new matter.<sup>9</sup> In order to overcome such difficulties and to progress towards an understanding of such texts it will be necessary to develop, and apply more subtle techniques in dealing with them, making use not only of the analytical, philological and comparative methods which are at the linguist's disposal but taking advantage also of all extralinguistic factors which may shed light on the semiotics and semantics of these texts. Semantics: the question of what it is all about is the main issue and the key to the matter, previously known and identifiable linguistic elements serving only to guide our steps and prevent us from errors. The methodological crux in the deciphering of such texts is that although we may be able to identify certain words and linguistic forms, they may not be vital to the issue, they may be peripheral, and any theories built upon peripheral elements while ignoring the essential ones are almost certainly doomed to failure. To have a fair chance of success it will be necessary to find out the central arguments of the text and to interpret them correctly; the rest will then fall into place. We are still quite a distance away from such success, but good progress has been made with the Chamalières inscription which is perhaps 80 % clear whereas with the Larzac inscription this rate is considerably lower, which means that this text is only partly understood and, in some essential parts, not understood at all. Most of what one can see is that in Larzac women play a prominent part, two groups of women magicians (*mnas brictas*) apparently fighting each other with magical means. This, in itself, however, is interesting enough.

But let me not be tempted to start at the difficult end; let us rather start from the easy end, and let me try to present a sort of typological approach to Gaulish inscriptions, by which common as well as distinguishing features will come out more clearly.

The most simple type of a meaningful inscription is that which – on any material – consists of just one word. In most cases this will be a personal name. Thus, the objects of the *instrumentum domesticum* will, often enough, carry their possessor's name (in the same way as we have our names inscribed on personal objects). Thus one finds names like

Μαρος, Εβουρος, Λουγους, Μαγα, Μαγεσιλλα, Κριξια,  
Καμουλα, Δοννιας

on objects of pottery. They are not high-sounding compound names of noble people but uncompounded names or extensions of simple word stems; these names, we

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<sup>9</sup> The insular Celtic languages are of no great help; they are attested much later, have changed considerably in the meantime, and the subject matter of their texts is quite different.

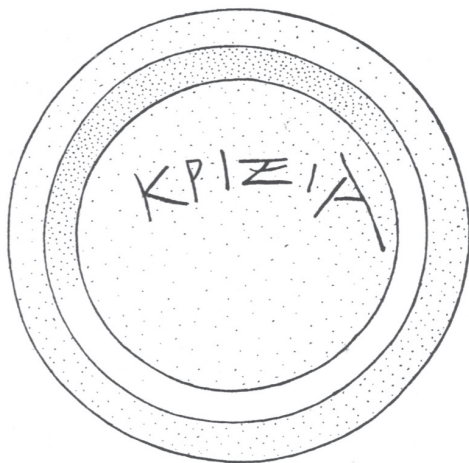


Fig. 3. Graffito on the bottom of a vase from Eyguières (Bouches-du-Rhône); the reading is ΚΡΙΞΙΑ. Musée de Salon.

to have his or her name inscribed on an epitaph. The setting-up of stones, of course, goes back to times immemorial, before the practice of writing was known. The stone itself, bare or with lines of ornament, or with the outline of a human person, symbolized the dead person and perhaps was considered a repository of his soul. Examples of such stones are known, among other places, from Württemberg, an early Celtic area.

The next step would be then to write the individual's name on to the stone. The cases where we find just a single name are rare, Κομα, Ατιλα, ]ruondu being

can infer, are, for the greater part, the names of ordinary people; *Māros* means "great", *Maga* the same, *Kriksia* (Welsh *crych*) means "curly". *Donniās* is the genitive of an *ā*-stem which may be masculine or feminine (*donna* "brown"). Perhaps *Eburos* "yew" (Old Irish *ibar*) is the short form of a compound name, perhaps also *Lugus*<sup>10</sup> which in a way falls out of place. *Lugus*, being the name of the highest god, would be unusual as a man's name in that form, but could be the short form of a compound.<sup>11</sup>

Lapidary inscriptions which consist of personal names are memorial in character. The simplest way to commemorate a dead person is



Fig. 4. Bifacial stele on top of a funerary mound at Tübingen-Kilchberg.

<sup>10</sup> RIG I, G-159

<sup>11</sup> *Llywarch*, name of a famous Welsh poet, could be such a name, going back to *\*Lugu-markos* "the stallion of Lugus".

instances.<sup>12</sup> These names are in the nominative, but Κρεῖτε /krītē/, on a beautifully carved stone from Nîmes<sup>13</sup>, probably is in the dative: “(monument) for Krītis”. Definitely in the dative is Αδγεννoui, also from Nîmes<sup>14</sup>. The identity of these individuals probably was well known or could be inferred from the environment in which the stones stood, constituting perhaps a family burial-ground.

The more common practice, however, is that a person is properly identified by reference to his or her father. That is, the name occurs in what may be considered its official form, with patronym attached. There are two main types of the patronymic formula. The first type gives the father’s name in the genitive, e.g. *Doiros Segomari* “Doiros son of Segomāros”. This formula occurs hardly at all on epitaphs which give nothing but the name of the deceased; it occurs, however, in larger contexts.<sup>15</sup> It is not found in southern Gaul. No doubt it is an archaism which had partly gone out of use, for it is the usual way of expressing the patronym in Celtiberian, and it occurs also in Cisalpine Gaul and in Lepontic. In contrast to the practice in Ireland and Wales, the word for “son”, which would be \**mapos*, is never explicitly mentioned in Gaulish inscriptions.

The other way of expressing the patronym is by means of a patronymic adjective. Of the two main formations, the one by means of a *-kn-*



Fig. 5. Epitaph from Nîmes,  
with inscription Κρεῖτε  
“for Krītis”.  
Nîmes, Musée Archéologique.

<sup>12</sup> RIG I, G-114, G-218, RIG II,1, L-5.

<sup>13</sup> RIG I, G-213.

<sup>14</sup> RIG I, G-208.

<sup>15</sup> *Doiros Segomari* is the subject in the dedication to the god *Alisanos* on a bronze pan from Couchey (Côte-d’Or): *Doiros Segomari ieuru Alisanu*, DAG, p. 492, RIG II,2, L-133. On the *ieuru* inscriptions see below, pp. 28, 33 ff.



Fig. 6. Inscription on the handle of a bronze patera from Couchey (Côte-d'Or).  
Dijon, Musée Archéologique.

suffix, type *Ategnatos Drutiknos* – “Ategnātos son of Drūtos”<sup>16</sup>, again is not found in southern Gaul, only in the North and in Cisalpine Gaul, and it hardly occurs out of context. Southern Gaul, i.e. the Gallo-Greek inscriptions, exclusively have a form with suffix *-iō-*, appearing as *-io-* or *-eo-*; e.g.:<sup>17</sup>

Μεδουρειξ Λι[του]μαρεος  
Ατεσθας [Σ]μερτουρειγιος  
Εσκιγγορειξ Κονδιλλεος

fem., in the dative,

Εσκεγγαι Βλανδοουικουνιαι

There are quite a number of examples of this type.

The next step would be to have more elaborate funerary inscriptions, giving perhaps the name of the caretaking person, referring to the burial itself by means of a verbal form, or giving other particulars.

A small group of inscriptions is characterized by the verb *karnitu* (3<sup>rd</sup> sing.) or (3<sup>rd</sup> pl.) *karnitus*. Most explicit of all is the bilingual inscription found at Todi (Umbria), outside the actual Celtic settlement area, preserved in the Vatican Museum.<sup>18</sup> It is also a duplicate inscription, with almost identical text on both sides. The Gaulish text is in the North Italic alphabet. The inscription marks the burial of one Ategnātos son of Drūtos by his youngest brother Coisis, and the

<sup>16</sup> See on p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> RIG I, G-71, G-3, G-207, G-146.

<sup>18</sup> RIG II,1, E-5 (with ample bibliography).





*Fig. 7. Epitaph from Nîmes reading Εσκιγγορειξ Κονδιλλεος.  
Nîmes, Musée Archéologique.*

Latin text, as far as it is preserved, says in reference to the burial-place that *Coisis Druti f. frater eius minimus locavit et statuit.*



*Fig. 8. Epitaph from Coudoux (Bouches-du-Rhône), with inscription Ατεσθας [Σ]μερτουρειγιος. Private.*



*Fig. 9. Woman's epitaph from Gargas (Vaucluse); horizontal inscription on a stone block: Εσκεγγαι Βλανδοουικουνιαι. Avignon, Musée Calvet.*



The Gaulish text, with variant readings on sides A and B, is:

*ateknati trutikni karnitu lokan / artuaś kosisis trutiknos*

In phonetic transcription, and with names capitalized, it would read:

*Ategnati Drutikni. karnitu logan / artuaś Kosisis Drutiknos.*

To the mentioning of the name of the deceased, in the onomastic formula (*Drutiknos* = *Drūtī filius*), there is appended a sentence which refers to the setting-up of the burial site, *loga* apparently being the grave-bed and *artua* referring to the covering or superstructure. The latter word stands in the accusative plural (-ś < \*-ns). It is apparently related to Old Irish *art* “stone slab”, cf. in Cormac’s glossary *art .i. cloch no leac lige*<sup>19</sup>, *lige* being here the semantic equivalent of Gaulish *loga*, and also etymologically related. The verbal stem *karni-* apparently is derived from a noun which is well known from Irish and Welsh, *carn* “heap of stones, stone memorial, ‘cairn’ ”. It was common, from times immemorial, to cover the dead with stones (for which there probably were practical as well as religious reasons). From this there arose the practice of laying out, or mantling the burial-place with stones. Stones by themselves may be a memorial. From Ireland there is attested the custom that, when warriors went to battle, everyone would pick up a stone and throw it onto a heap. Returning from battle each of the survivors would take up ‘his’ stone again, the remaining stones thus symbolizing the number of the dead and at the same time being their monument. From such a collective memorial it is not a big step to an individual memorial. Here, in the civilized Mediterranean world, we are a further stage away from the simple heaping-up of stones; *karni-*, a verb with archaic content, has become a technical term for the erection of a grave. *καρνιτου* occurs once again in a defective inscription from southern Gaul.<sup>20</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> pl. form *karnitus* occurs after a list of plural subjects introduced by *tanotaliknoi* “descendants of Tanotalos” (= /Dannotalos/)<sup>21</sup> in the inscription from Briona (near Novara).<sup>22</sup> Part of this inscription is illegible, but there is mention of *takos toutas*, apparently the magistrate of the community (*takos* = /tagos/ rather than /tankos/). One of the sons of Tanotalos carries the title *lekatos* (= /legātos/) which shows the beginning integration of these Gauls into the Roman system of administration.

<sup>19</sup> “*art*, this is ‘stone’ or ‘stone plate of a tomb’.” Cormac was bishop of Caisel and king of Munster, a learned man. The glossary attributed to him dates from the late 9<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>20</sup> RIG I, G-151.

<sup>21</sup> For the phonetic form of this name, see the inscription from Alesia (p. 34 f.).

<sup>22</sup> RIG II, I, E-1 (with ample bibliography).

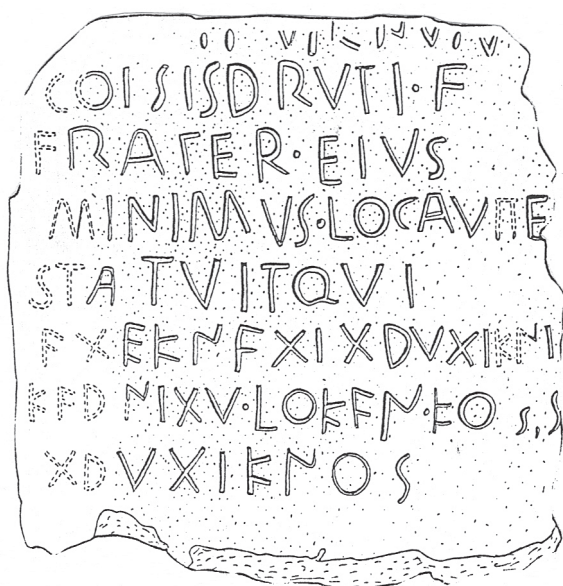
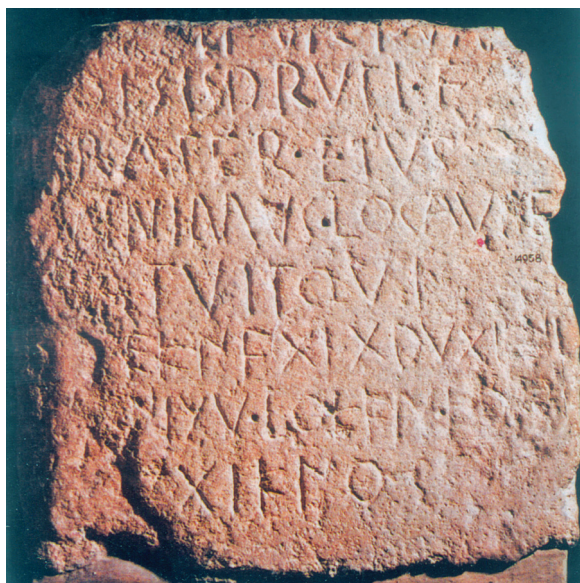
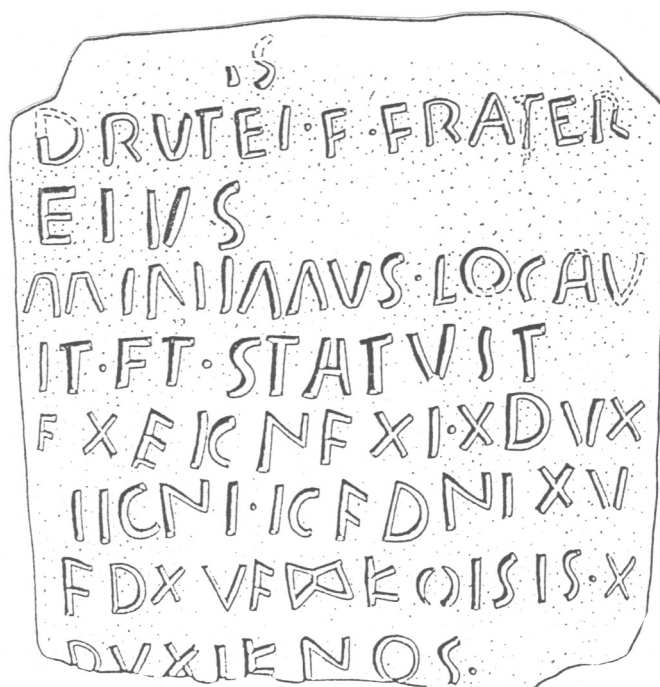


Fig. 10–11. Bilingual funerary inscription from Todi (Umbria), on the front and reverse sides of a cippus. Latin and Gaulish. The Gaulish text is in the North Italic alphabet. Rome, Vatican Museum.





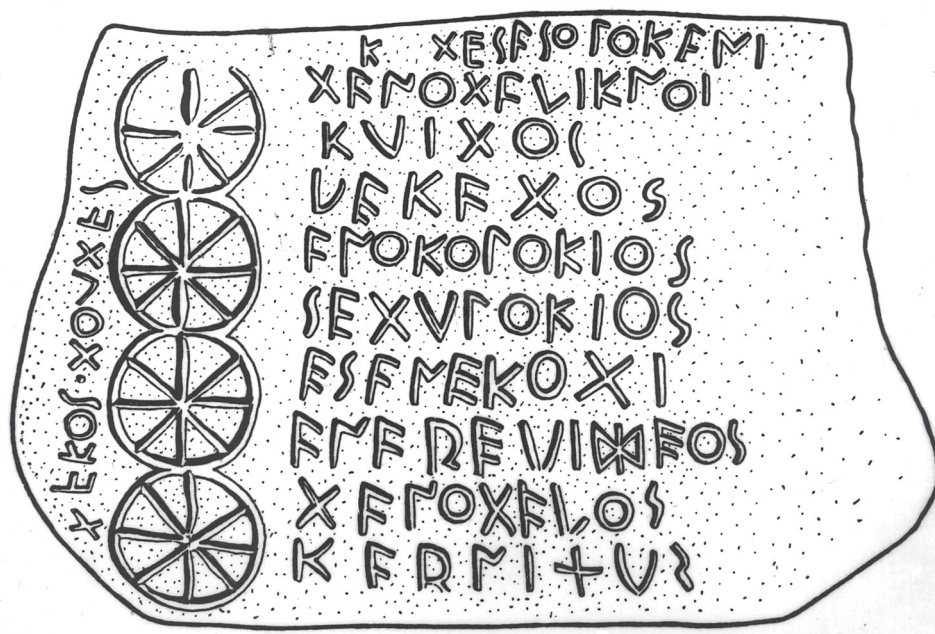


Fig. 12. Funerary inscription from Briona (Novara), written in the North Italic alphabet. Novara, Museo Lapidario.

We find a similar case in southern Gaul where in a fragmentary inscription<sup>23</sup> a person carries the title  $\pi\rho\alpha\iota\tau\omega\rho$  (= Latin *praetor*).

The relation 3<sup>rd</sup> sing. : 3<sup>rd</sup> plur. which we find in *karnitu* : *karnitus* is a rather strange one, the plural being marked simply by an addition of -s to the singular form. We should have expected something like a *t* : *nt* relation in the endings, but apparently *t* is not part of the ending but is a preterital suffix similar to the one of the Germanic dental preterite. Another plural form of the same kind, *lubitus*, was seen in a sentence from a La Graufesenque graffito the meaning of which is obscure but where a quantity of three thirds plays a role:

*aricani lubitus ris tecuandoedo tidres trianis.*

But this inscription is no longer a valid testimonial, since *aricani* is not a plural subject (as originally supposed) but the genitive of an otherwise well-attested potter's name *Aricanos* (or -us), and *lubitus* (whose reading was always in doubt) is now being read as *lubitias*, so this inscription must be seen now in another context (see p. 66 below).

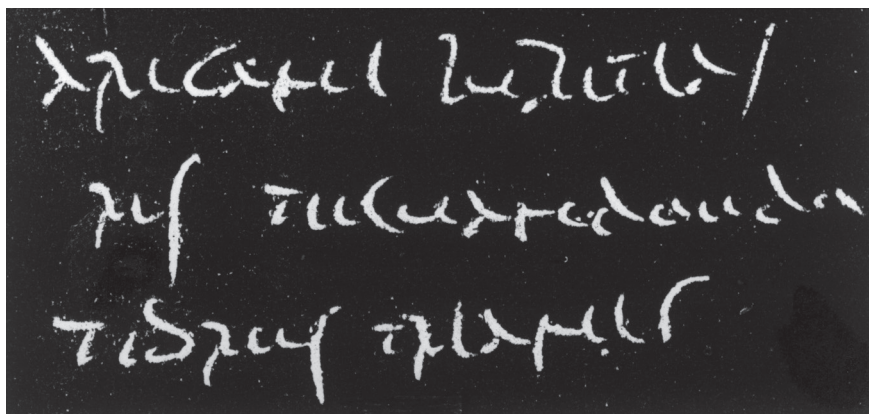


Fig. 13. Graffito from La Graufesenque with a short sentence in Gaulish.  
Collection Hermet, Musée de Rodez.

The same singular : plural relation applies also in the verbal form for the act of dedication, 3<sup>rd</sup> sing. *ieuru* : 3<sup>rd</sup> plur. *\*ieurus* (actually attested *iourus*).

We have seen that *karnitu* is a derivative of *\*karno-* (or *\*karnā-*). In the same way *logitoe*<sup>24</sup> in the inscription of Nérès-les-Bains

<sup>23</sup> RIG I, G-108.

<sup>24</sup> If this is the correct reading; see the following note.

*Bratronos Nantonin(os) Epaðatextorigi Leucullo suiorebe logitoe*<sup>25</sup>

is a derivative of *loga* which occurs in the Todi inscription in the meaning “grave”. But here the verb may just mean “placed it” and refer to a dedication, like the form *legasit* on a vase with the inscription

*Buscilla sosio legasit in Alixie Magalu*<sup>26</sup>

BVSCILLA SOSIO LEIT SIT  
IN ALIXI MAGALY



Fig. 14. Vase with dedication *Buscilla sosio legasit in Alixie Magalu* from Séraucourt (Bourges). Musée des Antiquités Nationales, St.-Germain-en-Laye.

Another inscription which appears to have to do with funeral rites is on an urn<sup>27</sup>; it reads

*vercobretos readdas*

<sup>25</sup> The word-division and the reading are partly in doubt; Lejeune, RIG II,2, p. 94 ff. proposes *Leucutio* and *togitōi*. *logitoe* (or *logitōi*) could be interpreted as a 3<sup>rd</sup> sing. preterite form *\*logito* + pronominal object *\*-ed* (or *\*-id*). *suiorebe* probably means “with his sisters” (instrumental form, *-be* < *\*-bi*), continuing (with internal loss of *-s-*) the Indo-European lexeme *\*suesor-*.

<sup>26</sup> Séraucourt (Bourges); CIL XIII, 10017,70; Dottin no. 47; DAG p. 354; RIG II,2, L-79.

<sup>27</sup> Found 1978 at Argenton-sur-Creuse (the ancient Argentomagus); published by L. Fleuriot, *Études Celtiques* 18 (1981), 93–97. Now in RIG II,2, L-78.





Fig. 15. Urn from Argenton-sur-Creuse with inscription *vercobretos readdas*.

*readdas* no doubt is a verbal form; the meaning probably is that the magistrate (*vercobretos*<sup>28</sup>) provided for the funeral. *re-*, a weakened form of *ro-* (< \**pro*), is a preverb, and *addas* apparently contains another preverb, *ad-*, combining with a form either of the Indo-European root \**d<sup>h</sup>ē-*, zero grade Celtic \**da-*, or of \**stā-*, zero grade Celtic \**sta-*, both in the meaning of “to place, to set up”. As to a semantic equivalent, cf. German ‘beisetzen’.

If we leave funerary inscriptions and pass on to dedications, we may at once draw attention to another important bilingual inscription found in 1966 near Vercelli in northern Italy and apparently dating from the first century BC, some time after the famous battle against the Germanic Cimbri.<sup>29</sup> The Latin text, which is more explicit and well legible, tells us that a certain Acisius Argantocomaterecus

<sup>28</sup> A word known from Caesar, *Bellum Gallicum* 1,16,5 and from coins. Its etymological meaning may be paraphrased by “commissioner of public works”.

<sup>29</sup> First publication by M.G. Tibiletti Bruno, “La nuova iscrizione epicorica di Vercelli”, *Rendiconti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, XXXI 5–6 (1976), pp. 355–376; subsequent discussion by M. Lejeune, “Une bilingue gauloise-latine à Verceil”, *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Comptes rendus* 1977, pp. 582–610, and edition in RIG II,1, E-2. For further discussion, based on an autopsy of the stone, see Meid 1989, 7–16.



*Fig. 16. Stele with bilingual inscription in Latin and Gaulish, found near Vercelli.  
The Gaulish text is in the North Italic alphabet. Vercelli, Museo Leone.*

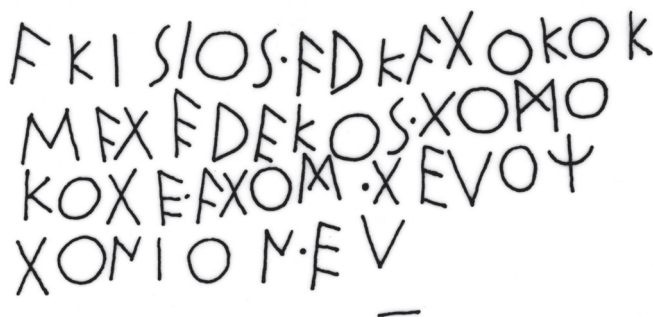


(a dealer in money apparently, a banker, and, therefore, a rich man) donated these grounds, a *campus*, both to gods and men:

... *comunem deis et hominibus* ...

The Gaulish text, which is shorter and badly legible in parts, contains what seems to be the semantic equivalent of the Latin phrase, in the form of a *dvandva* compound consisting of the etymological cognates of Latin *deus* and *homo*:<sup>30</sup>

*tevoχtonion*  
/dēvogdonion/  
“of gods and men”



F K I S I O S · F D K F X O K O K  
 M F X F D E K O S · X O M O  
 K O X F F X O M · X E V O Y  
 X O M I O M · F V  
 —

akisios · arkatoto[k]  
materekos · tośo  
kote · atoś · teuoχ  
tonion · eu

Fig. 17. Facsimile of the Gaulish text of the Vercelli inscription.

The *dvandva* type is rare and archaic, and this compound shows an additional archaic feature – the word for “man”, which in Irish and Welsh is *duine* or *dyn* respectively, from Celtic *\*donios*, occurs here with the older and original consonant cluster *gd-*, protected here by compound juncture. *\*(g)donios* means “terrestrial” (as opposed to the celestial gods) and is a derivative of the ancient Indo-European word for “earth” preserved in Greek χθών, Celtic *\*gdonios* being

<sup>30</sup> This striking interpretation is owed to M. Lejeune.

consequently formally equivalent to Greek χθόνιος. The initial cluster has been simplified in most languages.

As for dedications or tributes to gods there are two main types:

(a) One group of inscriptions (which are in the Greek alphabet and occur only in the South) contains the phrase δεδεβρατουδεκαντεμ.<sup>31</sup>

(b) Another type (written in either alphabet, Latin or Greek, and occurring both in the South and in the North) contains the verb *ieuru*.<sup>32</sup>

In group (a) the recipient is always a god or a triad of *mātrēs*; no specific object is mentioned apart from the phrase δεδεβρατουδεκαντεμ which therefore must express the dedication.

In group (b) specific objects are mentioned, except in the case where the object is self-evident. The recipient is in most cases a god, but the particular object may also be for the benefit of humans; for this reason, *ieuru* expresses a solemn gift, normally in a religious context but not necessarily so.

Unfortunately the verbal form *ieuru* has so far resisted all attempts at formal and etymological analysis; it may be a disguised reduplicated form.<sup>33</sup> The form δεδε, however, is formally transparent; it is a reduplicated perfect, possibly equal to Latin *dedit*, as one would be inclined to think at first glance, but more likely a form of the Indo-European root *\*dʰē-* (in Greek τίθημι, ἔθηκα) in the sense of “dedicate”. βρατου, which is formally an instrumental, is cognate with Latin *grātus* and therefore means “gratefully” or “in gratitude”. We can see then that we have to do here with a vote of thanks. The rest of the formula had always been misunderstood. Scholars had favoured a division βρατουδε καντεμ (-v), assuming that δε was a postposition (= Latin *dē*). They were left then with an enigmatic lexeme καντεμ (-v), apparently the object, but resisting all attempts at semantic or etymological interpretation. The matter remained undecided until 1974 when O. Szemerényi with a stroke of genius cut the Gordian knot, showing a solution

<sup>31</sup> Complete dossier in M. Lejeune, “Inscriptions lapidaires de Narbonnaise, I-VII”, *Études Celtiques* 12 (1968), 21–91. The formula may be shortened, or show abbreviations.

<sup>32</sup> M. Lejeune, “Le dossier gaulois *ieuru*”, in: *Recherches de Linguistique. Hommages à M. Leroy* (Bruxelles, 1980), pp. 110–118.

<sup>33</sup> There may be loss of Indo-European *\*p* involved which would account for the lack of transparency. There are attempts to connect the form with Old Irish *ro-ír* “granted” (present *ernaid*, a *p*-root): P.-Y. Lambert, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 37 (1979), 207–213, K.H. Schmidt, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 41 (1986), 373. See also M. Lejeune, *Hommages Leroy*, p. 110 and Delamarre 2003, 188 f. (with additional bibliography).

which was self-evident in its simplicity.<sup>34</sup> By drawing attention to Greek and Latin dedications which contained δεκάτη, or *decuma* respectively (“tenth part, tithe”), like

Μεσσήνιοι καὶ Ναυπάκτιοι ἀνέθεν Διὶ Ὀλυμπίῳ  
δεκάταν ἀπὸ τῶν πολεμίων

or

Hercolei sacrum. Caesius C. I(ibertus) Tertius  
*decuma* facta dedit donum mereto

he was able to show that the word division was δεδε βρατου δεκαντεμ, the phrase meaning “dedicated in gratitude the tithe”. Example<sup>35</sup>:

Ουηβρουμαρος δεδε Ταρανοου βρατου δεκαντεμ  
“Vebrumāros dedicated to (the god) Taranus gratefully the tithe”.

The lesson to be learned from this is that there is intercultural influence at work, and that the awareness of such intercultural features will be of assistance in the interpretation of particular Gaulish texts.<sup>36</sup>

The remarkable thing linguistically is that δεκαντεμ, accusative of *\*dekantā* or *\*dekantī*, a feminine formation of Indo-European *\*dek̑mtos*, is of archaic formation, because the common form of the ordinal “the tenth” in Gaulish is *decametos* which, with its thematic suffix, clearly is an innovation – one which is, however, already Common Celtic (Old Irish *dechmad*, Welsh *degfed*, also Celtiberian *dekameta*<sup>37</sup> which occurs in the same technical meaning as Gaulish δεκαντεμ).<sup>38</sup> From a semantic point, though, the question remains what in the individual case this special “gift” consisted in.

Some of these dedications are to the Mother Goddesses (usually a triad):

<sup>34</sup> “A Gaulish dedicatory formula”, *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 88 (1974), 246–286. But see also M. Lejeune, “Quel celtique dans ΔΕΔΕΒΡΑΤΟΥΔΕΚΑΝΤΕΜ?”, in: *Studies in Greek, Latin, and Indo-European Linguistics Offered to L.R. Palmer*, ed. A. Morpurgo-Davies and W. Meid (Innsbruck, 1976), pp. 135–151, and again O. Szemerényi, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 44 (1991), 303–310. The superiority of Szemerényi’s interpretation has been stressed by E. Campanile in *Le lingue indoeuropee di frammentaria attestazione*, ed. E. Vineis (Pisa, 1983), p. 211 f.

<sup>35</sup> Orgon (Bouches-du-Rhône); DAG no. 44, p. 90 f.; RIG I, G-27, pp. 52–56.

<sup>36</sup> See also E. Campanile, *loc. cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>37</sup> Acc. *TeKameTam* in the first Botorrita inscription.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. also fn. 7 above (end) for another possible case of archaic formation.

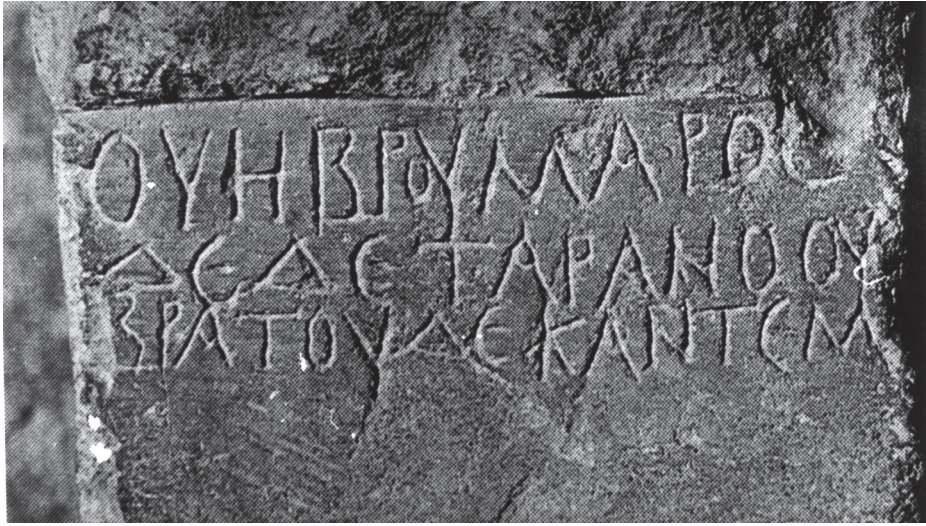


Fig. 18. Dedication to the god Taranus from Orgon (Bouches-du-Rhône).  
Avignon, Musée Calvet.

Ματρεβο Ναμαυσικαβο “to the Mothers of Nemausus” (Nîmes)<sup>39</sup>

Ματρεβο Γλανεικαβο “to the Mothers of Glanum” (St.-Rémy)<sup>40</sup>

Ροκλοισιαβο “to the Very Renowned Ones” (also St.-Rémy)<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> RIG I, G-203; beautifully carved inscription on a capital. Full text: [Κ]αταρ[ος] Ιγλανουιακος δεδε Ματρεβο Ναμαυσικαβο βρατου δε[κα].

<sup>40</sup> RIG I, G-64; on the socket of a little altar. Full text: Ματρεβο Γλανεικαβο βρατου δεκαντεν. This name of the Glanian Mothers occurs also in the exactly corresponding Latin form in a Latin dedication to the divinity of the source, from which Glanum derives its name, to the Glanian Mothers and to Fortuna Redux: *Glani et Glanicabus et Fortunae Reduci* ... (Glanum, *in situ*; see the photograph in F. Salviat, *Glanum*, St.-Rémy-de-Provence 1980, p. 36). – The lexical element *glan-*, well attested in Celtic river-names, means “clear, pure”.

<sup>41</sup> RIG I, G-65; likewise on the socket of a small altar. Full text: Κορηλια Ροκλοισιαβο βρατου δεκαντ. The epithet of the divinities (no doubt also the Glanian Mothers) is based on the well-known Indo-European lexeme *\*k̑leues-* “fame”; for a formal analysis and for the sound development see K.H. Schmidt, *Studia Celtica* 14/15 (1979/80), 285 f., who improved on the treatment by M. Lejeune, *Études Celtiques* 15 (1976–78), 95 f.; additional remark by E.P. Hamp, *ibid.* 23 (1986), 47. See also M. Lejeune, *Études Celtiques* 16 (1979), 101 f. and RIG I, G-65 (interpretation “les Écoutantes”, with reference to *Auribus* in Latin inscriptions). The correct interpretation is no doubt “to the Very Renowned Ones”; it finds formal, if not semantic support in two formations

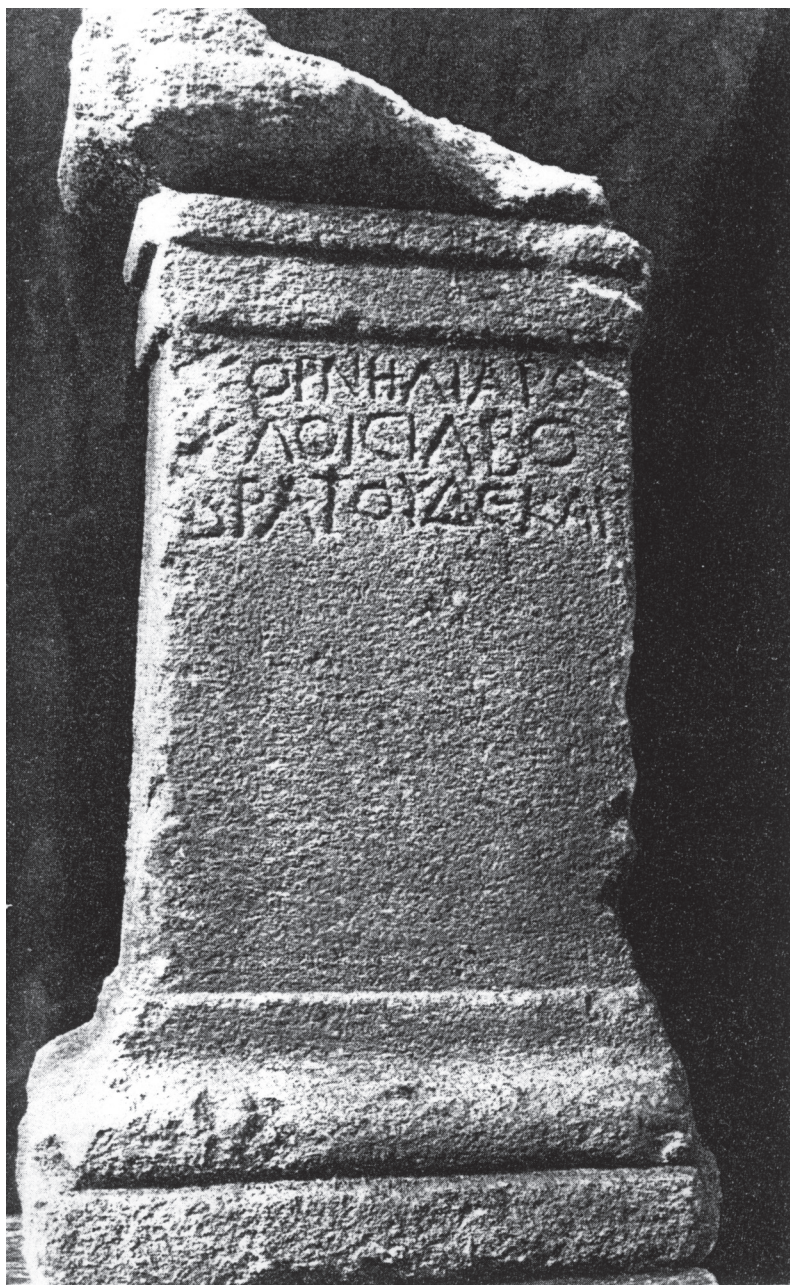




Fig. 19. Dedication to the “Nemausian Mothers”. Nîmes, Musée Archéologique.



Fig. 20. Dedication to the “Glanian Mothers”. St.-Rémy-de-Provence, Hôtel de Sade.



*Fig. 21. Dedication to the "Very Renowned" Mothers.  
St.-Rémy-de-Provence, Hôtel de Sade.*



By the way, the new inscription from Larzac has come up with the nominative sing. of the word for “mother” which is *matir* (and also with “daughter”, *duxtir*).<sup>42</sup>

An interesting fact is that we not only have dedications to Mothers but in one instance also to Fathers: In an inscription discovered on a stone in the churchyard of Plumergat (Brittany)<sup>43</sup> we read ... *Atrebo Aganntobo* ..., the latter word being apparently an adjective from a local (tribal?) name, in the dative plur. masc. (-*obo* as against fem. -*ābo*). This may surprise at first glance, but we must remind ourselves that ‘father’ is well known as an attribute of gods, particularly in the Roman world (*Mars pater*; *Dis pater*; *Juppiter*) but also elsewhere; it is a trait of Indo-European religion whereas the cult of the Mothers is pre-Indo-European in origin.

Let us now cast an eye upon the *ieuru* inscriptions.

In one well-known inscription<sup>44</sup> a citizen of Nemausus (Nîmes) dedicates a νεμητον, a consecrated area, to the goddess *Belisama*, in another case<sup>45</sup> the object is a *canecosedlon*, an upholstered seat (?), in still another case it is a



Fig. 22. Stone in the churchyard of Plumergat (Bretagne), dedicated to the “Agantian Fathers”.

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from Vedic Indic adduced by E. Campanile, *loc. cit.*, p. 215, one with *pra-* (= Gaulish *ro-*) directly on the basis of the *s*-stem *śrávas-*: *prá-śrávas-* (“weit berühmt” oder “laut tönend”: H. Graßmann, *Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda*, col. 883), one with suffix *-(i)ya-* from the same base, but without prefixed *pra-*: *śrávasiya-* (“rühmend, preiserstrebend”: *ibid.*, col. 1421).

<sup>42</sup> Also the genitive plur. *Ματρων* “(Sanctuary) of the Mothers” is known from a rock inscription on a hill near Istres (Bouches-du-Rhône); see M. Lejeune, *Études Celtiques* 25 (1988), 97–101.

<sup>43</sup> First edited by G. Bernier, *Annales de Bretagne* 77 (1970), 655–667, with a note by M. Lejeune, 669–672; subsequently in RIG II,1, L-15, pp. 177–181.

<sup>44</sup> Vaison-La-Romaine (Vaucluse); RIG I, G-153.

<sup>45</sup> Autun; RIG II,1, L-10.

*celicnon*, some kind of building. This inscription is from Alesia<sup>46</sup>, and it is famous for its relative clause with its relative verbal form (up to recently the only example known from Gaul):

*Martialis Dannotali ieuru Ucuete sosin celicnon*

*etic gobedbi dugiiontiio Ucuetin in Alisiia*

“Martialis son of Dannotalos dedicated this building to Ucuetis, together also with the metal-workers<sup>47</sup> who serve Ucuetis in Alesia”

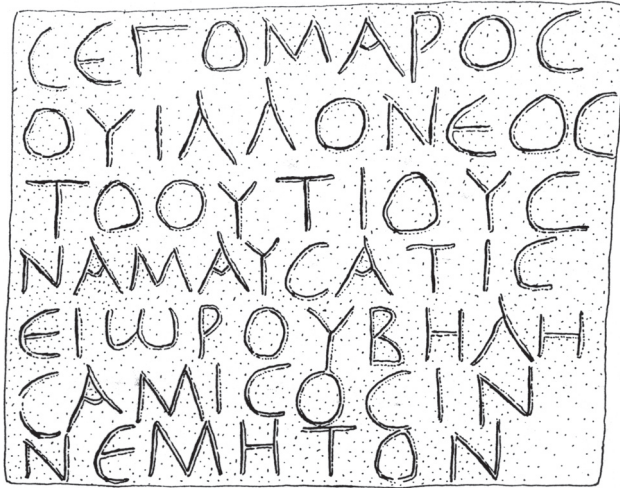


Fig. 23. Dedication of a nemeton by a citizen of Nemausus. Avignon, Musée Calvet.

The beneficiaries are the god *Ucuetis*, and doubtless also the *gobed-*, the metal-workers. Alesia, as the archaeological evidence shows, was a centre of metal works, and the remains of the building, the centre part of which must have been two-storied, are still to be seen.<sup>48</sup> The word *celicnon* has passed into Gothic, perhaps from Galatian Celtic; Gothic *kelikn* denotes the upper part of a building.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Alise-Sainte-Reine; RIG II,1, L-13 (with ample documentation).

<sup>47</sup> *gobedbi* which formerly was taken as dative plur. (“to the metal-workers”) is now better interpreted as instrumental, in accordance with the inherited function of the suffix, since more forms with instrumental force are now attested (e.g., *mesamobi* “by the worst”, see p. 63 below). The word itself is related to Old Irish *gobann* “smith”.

<sup>48</sup> The plate with the inscription was found in its immediate vicinity.

<sup>49</sup> This fits the meaning of *celicnon* here, but unfortunately (if one may say so) there exists another form *celicnu*, in a different context, on a graffito from Banassac: *lubi rutenica onobiia, tiedi ulano celicnu*, where it is uncertain what it means, and so far it has been impossible to make the two words compatible in meaning. The text of this inscription is an advertising slogan of the *buy me* type. The first part seems clear: “prefer Rutenian aquavit”, but for the second part anything goes. See in particular





*Fig. 24. Alesia. Remains of a building near which the inscribed stone plate, shown below, was found and to which it doubtless refers.*



*Fig. 25. Dedication of a celicnon at Alesia in honour of the god Ucuētis. Musée de Alise-Sainte-Reine.*



Fig. 26. The inscription on the menhir of Vieux-Poitiers.

In another example, on a menhir (Vieux-Poitiers, still *in situ*<sup>50</sup>), we find *ratn briuationom*, “a bridge ramp”, as the object of *ieuru*. There is a river nearby, and there are indications that there had been a bridge; no doubt the dedication was for the public benefit.

Most remarkable, at first sight, is the inscription discovered 1953, together with the upper part of a human statue, from St.-Germain-Sources-Seine:<sup>51</sup>

*Aresequani Ariios iourus Luciio(n) Nertecoma(ri)*

Δαγολιτους αουουτ

Here we have a plural subject *Aresequani Ariios* “the riverains of the Seine (and) Arios”, and the plural form of the verb, *iourus*. But the interesting part of it is the fact that – judging from the linguistic expression – the dedication would appear to be not an object but a person: *Luciio(n) Nertecoma(ri)*. But how is this to be understood?

The sources of the Seine (today the property of the City of Paris, and still an idyllic place) had been the place of a sanctuary, and many votive objects dedicated to the *dea Sequana* have been found there, including wooden sculptures of human

L. Fleuriot, *Études Celtiques* 14 (1975), 443–450 and, more soberly, M. Lejeune, *Revue des Études Anciennes* 81 (1979), 260. See below p. 66 on the *lubi* inscriptions.

<sup>50</sup> Naintré (Vienne); RIG II,1, L-3, pp. 69–82 (with ample documentation).

<sup>51</sup> RIG II,1, L-12; Meid 1989, 32–35.





*Fig. 27. Area of the sources of the Seine. It was the site of a sanctuary dedicated to the dea Sequana, from which many votive gifts have been recovered.*



*Fig. 28. Modern classicistic representation of the dea Sequana in an artificial grove in the source area of the Seine.*



*Fig. 29. Upper part of a stele with human statue and votive inscription, excavated from the sanctuary of the Seine. Dijon, Musée Archéologique.*





*Fig. 30. Votive gifts from the sanctuary of the Seine, representing human body parts.  
Dijon, Musée Archéologique.*

bodies and body parts, put there by individuals seeking cures.<sup>52</sup> The dedication of the man Lucios is of a different nature; it is honorific, but materially it is on similar lines: the verb *iourus* apparently does not refer to the person but to the statue which was erected in his honour, and dedicated to the divinity of the sanctuary. Linguistically it is a clumsy formulation. The lower part of the inscription is in Greek letters and constitutes the signature of the artist: “Dagolitus made it”. *auot* which occurs several times and which is another mysterious verbal form<sup>53</sup> thus has the meaning of “fecit, ἐποίησεν”.

I ought to mention that apart from 3<sup>rd</sup> sing. *ieuru* and 3<sup>rd</sup> plur. *iourus* we now also have an instance of what appears to be the 1<sup>st</sup> sing., *ieuri* (-ī < \*-ai):<sup>54</sup>

... *ieuri Rigani Rosmertiac*

“I dedicated (this) to the Queen and to Rosmerta”,

the ‘Queen’ apparently being the Great Mother (cg. Welsh *Rhiannon* < \**Rīgantonā*).<sup>55</sup>

Dedications or votive gifts are not the only cases where a divinity is mentioned by name. Cult representations of the divinities, effigies, altar reliefs might carry their names, as a few instances show. Thus on the famous altars from Notre Dame de Paris<sup>56</sup> we see several pictorial representations, one of a horned god with superscription, now already very damaged and only partly legible, *Cernunnos*; another one of a god with an axe who is cutting a tree, superscribed *Esus*; a third one of a mythological configuration consisting of a bull standing behind a tree, with three birds standing on the bull’s head and back showing through the foliage

<sup>52</sup> See Meid 1989, 29 f.

<sup>53</sup> The suggestion of P.-Y. Lambert in *Mélanges J.-B. Colbert de Beaulieu* (1987), p. 527 f. that *au(u)ot(e)* is to be segmented into a preverb *au-* and a verbal stem *uot-* from an Indo-European root \**uedh-* “to conduct” would appear plausible on semantic grounds (cf. German ‘ausführen’ in the sense of “to execute”), but does in no way account for the phonetic and morphological problems and is therefore no more than a faint possibility.

<sup>54</sup> On an inscription in Latin cursive script found at Lezoux, published by M. Lejeune and R. Marichal in *Études Celtiques* 15 (1978), 151–156. The interpretation of *ieuri* as 1<sup>st</sup> pers. sing. is by M. Lejeune; see also *Hommages Leroy*, p. 113, RIG I, pp. 448, 451. It has been contested by O. Szemerényi who concludes that the form must be 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. dual (subjects *Rigani* and *Rosmertia*): *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 36 (1979), 295 fn. 11, *ibid.* 44 (1991), 305, fn. 4. A form εἰωραι subsequently discovered and interpreted as 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sing. has resulted in a new discussion of the entire paradigmatic complex; see RIG II, 2, L-67, p. 182.

<sup>55</sup> About these connections see Meid 1991, 40–45, also 2010, 170.

<sup>56</sup> Now in the Cluny Museum.



*Fig. 31. Representations of the "Woodcutter God" Esus and of the Tarvos Trigaranus, "the Bull with the Three Cranes", on a Paris altar stone.  
Paris, Hôtel de Cluny.*





*Fig. 32. The Woodcutter God and the Bull on a representation from Trier:  
Trier, Rheinisches Landesmuseum.*



of the tree. The superscribed legend is *Tarvos Trigaranus*, “the Bull with the Three Cranes”. The Woodcutter God and the *Tarvos Trigaranus* obviously are part of one and the same mythological scenarium<sup>57</sup>, because they occur together in a somewhat differently arranged representation from Trier.<sup>58</sup>

Let us now turn to texts of a magical character, and this is also where some of the recently-found longer inscriptions come in. I shall treat in some detail (though not exhaustively) the two most important ones, the one from Chamalières (near Clermont-Ferrand), and the other from Larzac (near Millau). Both are written in Latin cursive script on pieces of lead which, for several reasons, is the preferred metal for writings addressed to the deities of the underworld, as the numerous examples of *defixiones* in the Latin language show.

The already famous inscription from Chamalières, found in 1971 together with many votive objects when the building which belonged to the *Source du Rocher* was demolished and cleared for a new building site, has been well treated already, and there is a good deal of agreement.<sup>59</sup> The text is a plea to *Maponos* (the youthful god and Gaulish Apollo) by a group of elderly men to provide a cure to their various ailments – rheumatism, failing eyesight, failing potency – and it is interesting, how the material finds from holy watering-places like Chamalières itself (which is a renowned spa even today) and Sources-Seine (votive objects consisting of sculptures of human bodies or parts thereof, mainly from wood) bear out the interpretation by their pictorial language. The interpretation of these inscriptions calls therefore for interdisciplinary research.<sup>60</sup>

In the beginning the Arvernian *Maponos* is being invoked (by his name, the “youthful” god and in Celtic mythology the son of the Magna Mater *Matrona*<sup>61</sup>),

<sup>57</sup> This may have had to do with Destruction (Death) and Regeneration (Rebirth) as cosmic forces.

<sup>58</sup> This, however, carries no inscription.

<sup>59</sup> First edition by M. Lejeune and R. Marichal, *Études Celtiques* 15 (1976/77), 156–168; see also L. Fleuriot, *Études Celtiques* 15 (1976/77), 173–190, 16 (1979), 135–139, 17 (1980), 145–159; P.-Y. Lambert, *Études Celtiques* 16 (1979), 141–169, idem, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 34 (1987), 10–17; K.H. Schmidt, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 29 (1980/82), 256–268; P.L. Henry, *Études Celtiques* 21 (1984), 141–150, Meid 1987, 48–53, Meid 1989, 27–31. There have also been observations by various scholars on single points which, however, are too numerous to be recorded here. See RIG II,2, L-100, pp. 269–280.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Meid 1987, 27–31 (with further references).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *Mabon uab Modron*, a remote character in medieval Welsh saga; see Meid 1991, 42.



who with the help of *brixtia anderson* is supposed to effect (lit.: “to speed up”<sup>62</sup>) something on behalf of a group of male persons one of whom is their “speaker”. *brixtia* is related to Old Irish *bricht* “magic formula”, and *brixtia anderson*, according to M. Lejeune, may mean “by magic of the subterraneans” (the *dī inferī*), *anderson* in this case being genitive plur. of a word *anderos* which would be the Gaulish equivalent of Latin *inferus* and Sanskrit *adhara-* “nether”, all three from Indo-European *\*ndʰeros*. There is another possibility, however (advocated by P.L. Henry), that *brixtia anderson* may mean “by magic of women”, *anderson* in this case being connected with Old Irish *ainder* (from *\*anderā*) “(young) woman”. This interpretation would find support (apart from a famous passage in Old Irish literature<sup>63</sup>) in the occurrence of *brictas* “magically powerful” qualifying *mnas* “women” in the Larzac inscription in which women magicians play a dominant role.

Another word with magical significance in the Chamalières text is *naritu* in the instrumental phrase *risu naritu* “with magically powerful inscription”. This word derives in last instance from the Indo-European root *\*(ə)ner-*<sup>64</sup>, the basic meaning of which is “creative force”, hence “magical power”, with derivations in form of Celtic *\*nerto-* “power, strength”, Germanic *Nerthus*, name of a goddess glossed by Tacitus as “Terra mater”. The immediate base of *naritu-* seems to be a verbal stem with causative force and long *o*-grade ablaut *\*nōr-ej-* or *\*nōr-ī-* (Indo-European *\*ō > Celt. ā*) “to strengthen magically”, from which we would get *\*nārīto-* “magically strengthened”.<sup>65</sup> After a list of the names of the persons involved (one of which is their “speaker” or advocate, *adgarīos*<sup>66</sup>), and after the mention of a special group “who will swear”: *toncsiiontio*<sup>67</sup>, there follows the central part of the text in which in somewhat cryptical terms three magical effects are formulated which can be understood as transformations from a negative to a

<sup>62</sup> *lotites*; *lōt-* cf. Old Irish *luath* “swift”.

<sup>63</sup> In the *Lorica* of St. Patrick, which provides protection, among other things, “against the spells of women, smiths and druids”: *fri brichta ban ocus gobann ocus druad*; *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* II 357.

<sup>64</sup> IEW 765, in laryngealistic notation *\*h<sub>2</sub>ner-*.

<sup>65</sup> For the long *o*-grade in this root cf. Hom. Greek *νῶροψ* in *νῶροπι χαλκῶ* and *νωρεῖ* · *ἐνεργεῖ* Hesych.

<sup>66</sup> Root *gar-* “to call” (Old Irish *gairid*). Since *gar-* is semantically equivalent to Latin *vōcāre*, Gaulish *adgarīos* may be a calque on Latin *ad-vōcātus*.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Old Irish *tongid*.





*Fig. 35. Votive gifts from the sanctuary of the Source du Rocher at Chamalières.  
Clermont-Ferrand, Musée Bargoin.*



positive state and which are linguistically expressed by three pairs of semantic oppositions:

*meion ponc sesit buetid ollon*  
 “Small ... shall become big”

*reguccambion*  
 “I stretch (what is) crooked”

*exops pissiumi*  
 “(As one) deprived of eye-sight I shall see”

Interesting verbal forms in these phrases are *buet-id*, equatable with Old Indic (Vedic) *bhuvāt*, and *pissiu-mi*, 1<sup>st</sup> sing. future of *pis-* “to see”, see also p. 67 on *appisetu* (< \**ad-pis-*), cf. Old Irish *ad-cí* “sees” (Indo-European root \**k<sup>w</sup>is-*).

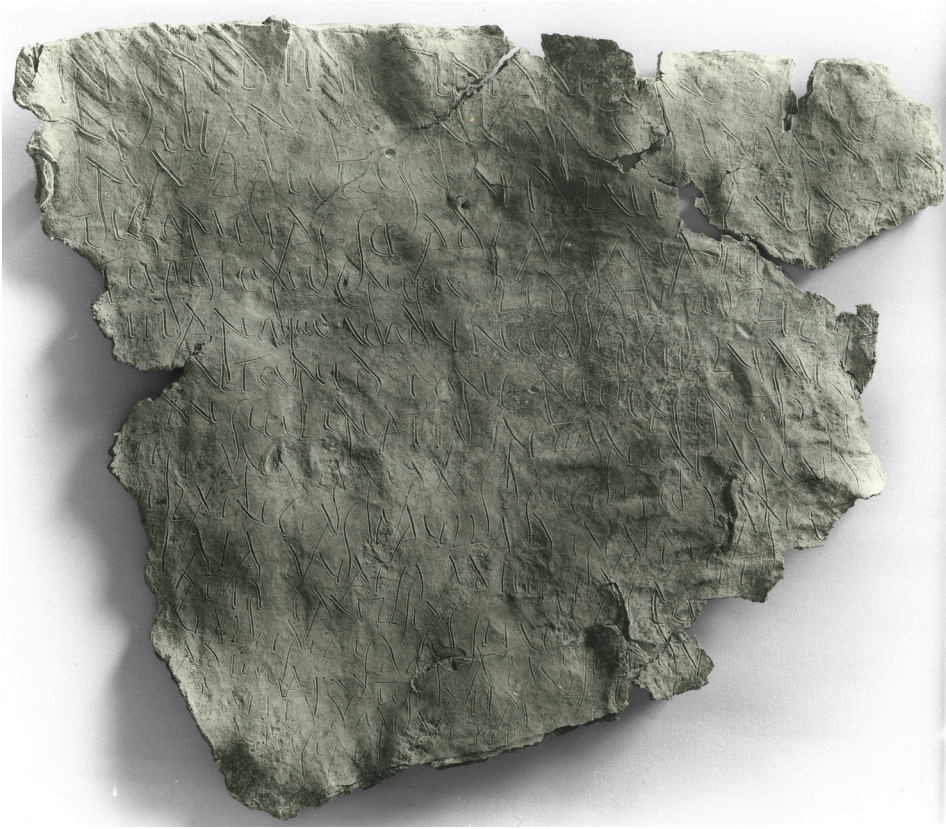
Apparently these are effects desired by the persons in question, clothed in speech forms which purport to anticipate the result and are thus, in this context, magically performative.<sup>68</sup> In the final part of the text this magical procedure is put into operation by going through the appropriate ritual.

The inscription found in 1983 at Larzac (in the vicinity of Millau, about 15 km south of the great pottery centre La Graufesenque) contains about 160 words and is thus the longest Gaulish text which we now possess. It was found in a grave chamber. The text was inscribed on a lead plate which had been broken into two pieces; these served to cover an urn which contained the remains of a female body. The four sides of the broken tablet were originally inscribed with a continuous text by one and the same hand; subsequently, however, a different person on one side erased several lines of the original text and substituted another, different text. The original text therefore is no longer continuous but is interrupted by this superimposed short text. Apart from the loss of some letters at the margins through decay the main body of the text is well preserved.

The text of the Larzac inscription is of extraordinary interest since, unlike Chamalières, where men are the protagonists, the *dramatis personae* in this piece are women. Not ordinary women, though, but members of a rather formidable breed of *mnas brictas* “women endowed with magic”. Apparently there are two rival groups. One is represented by two females, Severa and Tertionigna, together with their unnamed indigenous and non-indigenous followers. This group had apparently practised harmful magic upon another group, and it is this other group which, with the help of a “wise woman”, *uidlua*, tries to counter this attack,

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<sup>68</sup> See Meid 1987, 50–52.



*Fig. 36. Fragment of the longest Gaulish inscription, found at Larzac (Aveyron), near Millau. The text is a counter-charm against a group of women magicians. Here the beginning of the text is shown. Musée de Millau.*

reduce its effects, render Severa and Tertioncna innocuous, and even proposes some kind of a non-aggression pact.

The Larzac text was first edited in 1985 by a French team under the direction of Michel Lejeune.<sup>69</sup> On that occasion, two members of the team, L. Fleuriot and P.-Y. Lambert, offered complete interpretations of the whole text which, however, are divergent or even contradictory in many parts. On the other hand, M. Lejeune exercised remarkable restraint, prudently limiting himself to analyzing the structure of the text and discussing some of its salient features. All this tends to show that the

<sup>69</sup> “Le plomb du Larzac”, *Études Celtiques* 22 (1985), 88–177 (also separately: *Le plomb magique du Larzac et les sorcières gauloises*, Paris 1985).

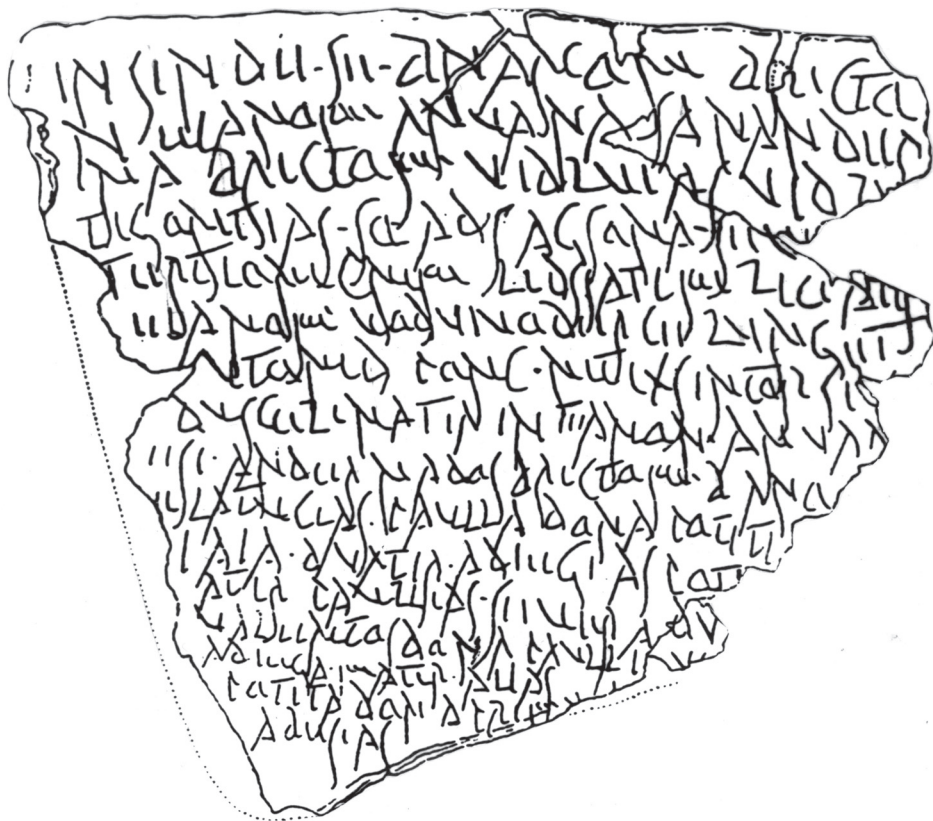


Fig. 37. Facsimile of this fragment of the Larzac inscription by A. Vernhet, the excavator of the site.

text, at that time, was still far from being fully understood. In the meantime some progress has been made in particular by K.H. Schmidt who interpreted several passages and commented on some of the linguistic forms of the text<sup>70</sup>, with the result that a better, though by no means complete understanding has been arrived at. For reasons of time and space I will not enter here into a detailed discussion of the text<sup>71</sup>, but restrict myself to pointing out some of its interesting features.

<sup>70</sup> "Zum plomb du Larzac", in: *Celtic Language, Celtic Culture, Festschrift for E.P. Hamp* (Van Nuys, Cal. 1990), 16–25, also in *Linguistique Balkanique* 31 (1988), 25–29, finally and comprehensively in Meid – Anreiter 1996, 23–36.

<sup>71</sup> For such a discussion see W. Meid in Meid – Anreiter 1996, 41–50 as well as the important contribution by K.H. Schmidt in the same volume, pp. 23–36. The whole text is now re-edited and discussed in RIG II, 2 under L-98, pp. 251–266. Most recent

The subject is women: *mnas* (nom. pl.), *mnanom*, *bnanom* (gen. pl.); they are characterized as *brietas* “possessing magic” or by other attributes. A certain number of them are mentioned by their names, and in this list they are defined by reference to another women who may be either the mother or the daughter of the person in question. In a few cases this reference is mutual. The word *duxtir* “daughter” is new in this context<sup>72</sup>, and so is the nominative *matir*. Another term of relationship is *dona*, of uncertain meaning and provenance: it hardly represents Latin *domina* (through *domna*, *donna*), more likely it is a genuinely Gaulish word, connected with Old Irish *duine*, Welsh *dyn* “person”.<sup>73</sup> *dona* is followed, as far as one can make out, by a form in *-us* or *-ius* which Lejeune would interpret as instrumental plural of an *o*-stem: *dona paullius* “female person in relationship with the Paullians”. In connection with *Severa* and *Tertionica*<sup>74</sup> *andogna* “indigenous” and *anandogna* “non-indigenous” occur, also *acolut* [“followers” (or verb “to follow”), ultimately of Greek origin.

*Severa* and *Tertionica* are to be rendered *lissata*, *liciata*; these words apparently express specific effects of magic: perhaps “spell-bound” and “fettered with bonds” (‘fascinated’, in its literal sense), respectively; related nouns are *lissina*, *licina*.<sup>75</sup> Their dreaded practice is *ni-tig-* “to stick (stab, prick) into”, hence “perform harmful magic”: *ponc nitixsintor sies* “when they should perform harmful magic”.

This verb has the same technical meaning as Latin *defigere* (*defixus*; *defixio*) of which it seems to be a semantic calque, though from a formal point *infigere* is nearer<sup>76</sup>; its etymological connection, however, is with Latin *in-stīg-ā-re* “instigate” (originally by pricking into), Sanskrit *tig-mā-* “sharp, pointed”, Greek στίγμα, English *stick*, *stitch*, German *stechen*.<sup>77</sup> The root *sag-* “to pursue” (Old Irish *saigid*) is present in a participial formation *sagitiont-* and in an agent noun

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discussion of the text (with special regard to typology, structure and rhetorical features) by B. Mees, “The Women of Larzac”, *Keltische Forschungen* 3 (2008), 169–188.

<sup>72</sup> It occurs in the form typical for the Western Indo-European languages, without intermedial vowel (“laryngeal” reflex).

<sup>73</sup> The insular Celtic words, however, like the /dēvo-gdonion/ of the Vercelli inscription, show a different formation, with suffix *-io-*, whereas *dona* implies a thematic formation *\*don-o-s/-ā*. The derivation from Latin *domina* is defended by G. Neumann in *Indogermanica et Italica. Festschrift für H. Rix*, Innsbruck 1993, 340.

<sup>74</sup> It is not quite clear whether *Severa Tertionica* (so in most instances) represents one or two persons (Lejeune is in favour of two).

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Greek λίσσομαι “entreat” (?). Latin *licium* “thread”. The Gaulish forms probably stand in some loan-relationship to these words.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *gladium hosti in pectus* (Cic.), *sagitta infigitur arbore mali* (Verg.).

<sup>77</sup> Indo-European root *\*(s)teig-/ (s)tig-*, IEW 1016 f.



formation *adsagsona* “persecutrix”. Another verb is *peti-* “to spare”, connected with Welsh *ar-bedu*, Old Irish *ar-cessi* in the same sense: *suet petidsiont sies peti sagitiontias seu[er]im tertio[nicnim]* “inasmuch as they shall spare, spare the ones persecuting Severa (and) Tertionica”. Noteworthy are the 3<sup>rd</sup> person imperatives *biietutu*, *bi(i)ontutu* “shall be” or “shall strike”(?)<sup>78</sup> on account of their doubly marked endings, though it is not clear in whatever way these are to be explained.<sup>79</sup> In the short but rather obscure text written by the second scribe there occurs what seems to be the term for the “underworld”, *antumnos* (for *andumnos*) corresponding to Welsh *annwfn*.<sup>80</sup> Other words of interest are *anatia* “soul” (cf. Welsh *eneid*), *anuana* “names” (which shows vocalization of internal *m* through lenition; cf. Old Irish *anmann*, Middle Welsh *enwain*), *barnauno-* “standing trial, being judged”, a participial formation with *\*-mno-* (likewise with vocalization of *m*) from a verbal stem *barna-* “to judge” (cf. Old Irish *barn* “judge”, Welsh *barn* “judgement”), *ratet*, a 3<sup>rd</sup> sing. verbal form in the sense of “pledge, promise, guarantee” (cf. Old Irish *ráth* “pledge”).

All in all, this text offers profound insights into the practice of sorcery, the belief and superstitions connected with it, and into the status and social organization of the persons involved.

Another text of apparently magical character was found in 1973 at Lezoux. It is inscribed on a metal lamina folded together around a coin and pierced, obviously to be worn around the neck as an amulet. The text was subsequently edited by L. Fleuriot<sup>81</sup>; the reading is partly in doubt and the text itself for the most part obscure.<sup>82</sup> One can only make vague guesses as to the meaning of the text and its function. It seems to be a protective charm, apparently designed to protect a person named Dagilos (spelt *dagilox*) on a particular journey, or more generally, on his journey through life. This type of protective charm, where it occurs in a literary form, is called *lōrīca* (which is Latin and means literally

<sup>78</sup> In the latter meaning probably forms of the root *bi-* in Old Irish *benaid* “strikes”, subj. *-bia*; equally possible, even preferable, from a formal point would be “shall be” (root of Old Irish *biid*, Latin *fiō*), but this seems to be ruled out by the syntax of *biontutu* which appears to be governing an accusative object.

<sup>79</sup> Inherited imperative ending *\*-tu* + affixation of the adverbial particle Indo-European *\*-tōd* found also in the “future” imperatives of Latin, Greek and Sanskrit (Old Latin *datōd*, Sanskrit *bharatād*)?

<sup>80</sup> The original Celtic form perhaps was *\*ande-dubnos* “very deep”, see Meid 1991, 50 with fn. 6.

<sup>81</sup> *Études Celtiques* 23 (1986), 63–70.

<sup>82</sup> Now re-edited in RIG II, 2, L-101 with alternative readings also by R. Marichal.

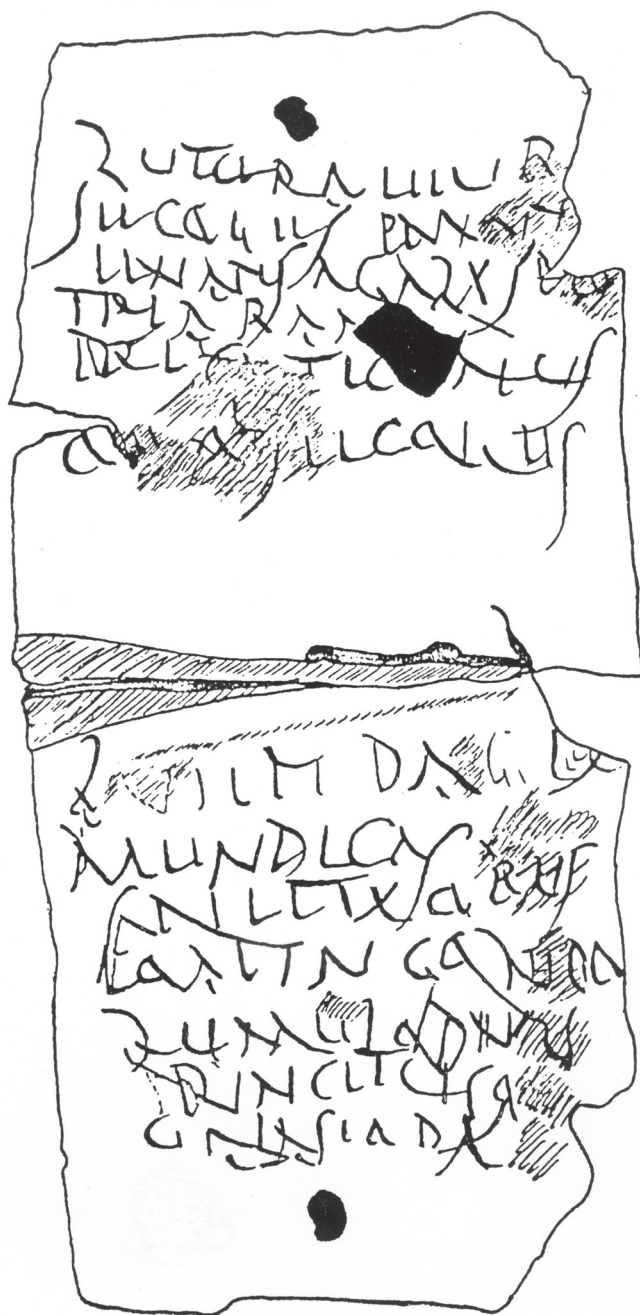


Fig. 38. Amulet found at Lezoux with Gaulish inscription. Drawing by L. Fleuriot.

“breastplate, cuirass”). There are two famous literary *loricae* in Old Irish, one of them a charm which St. Patrick is supposed to have sung when being ambushed by his adversaries.<sup>83</sup> The other *lorica*, although in Christian guise, is in essence pagan. In our case we would thus have an example of a Gaulish *lorica* designed to guide its wearer through all dangers on a journey; for instance he should chase away begging women: *mendicas soniti*. Interestingly *mendica* is the well-known Latin word (feminine of *mendicus* “beggar”), whereas *soniti* is connected with Old Irish *sennid* “chases, hunts”. The second Irish *lorica* mentions vagabond women in the same breath with robbers and armed bands which shows that they were, in their special way, potentially dangerous to the lone traveller.<sup>84</sup>

Other inscriptions serving a magical or a similar purpose are known or have been discovered recently, but most are of limited interest, being partly or wholly unintelligible, and may be passed over here.<sup>85</sup>

Of great interest, however, is another rather long Gaulish text, eleven lines inscribed on a tile, which came to light in 1997 during excavations at a Roman site near Châteaubleau, a small village in the North of France (dep. Seine-et-Marne). This text, evidently composed by a man, who speaks several times of himself in verbal forms of the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular and addresses himself in the first place to a woman, but referring also to her family background, was first edited, with ample commentary, in 1998 by P.-Y. Lambert in *Études Celtiques*, then again in 2002 in the latest volume of *Recueil des Inscriptions Gauloises*, also by Lambert.<sup>86</sup> Lambert regards this rather personal text as some sort of marriage proposal, other commentators seem to agree, though, considering its many uncertainties, with certain reservations,<sup>87</sup> but most recently B. Mees has

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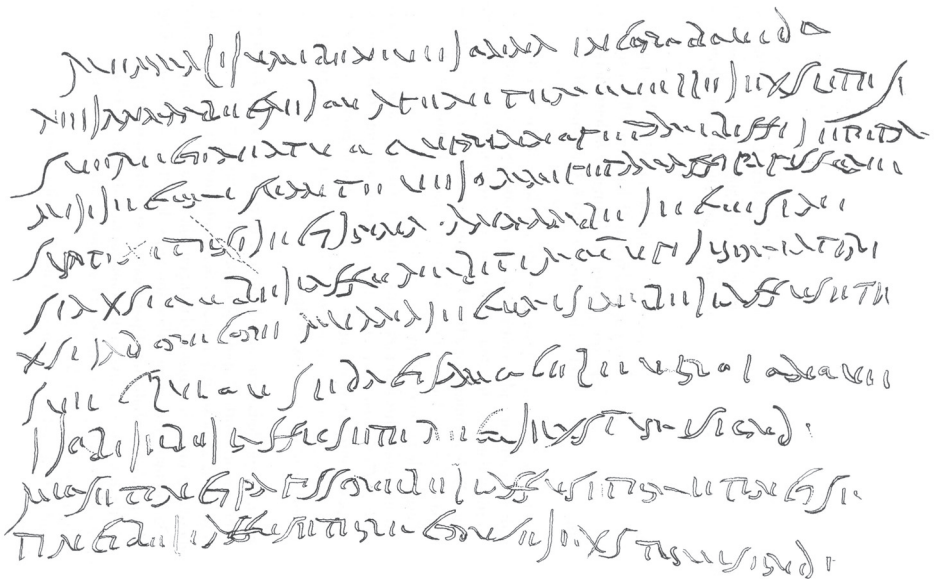
<sup>83</sup> See also fn. 63.

<sup>84</sup> *Nám millither téol ná cuire ban ná cuire buiden* “May no thief attack me, nor a company of women, nor a company of warriors”: D. Greene – F. O’Connor, *A Golden Treasury of Irish Poetry A.D. 600 to 1200*, London 1967, p. 34 f.

<sup>85</sup> Some are not really Gaulish inscriptions as their basic language is Latin but containing Gaulish words or phrases, and of course native Gaulish onomastics. The opposite (Gaulish texts containing Latin elements) also occurs, as we have seen.

<sup>86</sup> P.-Y. Lambert, “La tuile gauloise de Châteaubleau (Seine-et-Marne)”, *Études Celtiques* 34 (1998–2000), 57–115 and RIG II, 2, L-93.

<sup>87</sup> P. Schrijver, “The Châteaubleau Tile as a link between Latin and French and between Gaulish and Brittonic”, also in *Études Celtiques* 34, 135–142 (stressing in particular the linguistically late character of the text); D. Stifter, “Notes on Châteaubleau (L-93)”, *Keltische Forschungen* 4 (2008), 229–244.



*Fig. 39. The Châteaubleau tile, photo and facsimile by P.-Y. Lambert from RIG II,2, L-93 p. 239; also in Études Celtiques 34 (1998–2000), p. 64 f.*



tried to interpret it as a *defixio*, a curse against the woman in question, hence also as a magical text.<sup>88</sup> His interpretations, however, which he supports by typological arguments, seem to me rather forced and, on the whole, do not carry conviction. I think that Lambert is basically right, though his suggestions need not always be correct. Considerable parts of the text remain unclear, but the general meaning can be inferred from many indications. The text falls into three parts. In the first part the man, who does not name himself, states his interest in a certain woman whom he also does not name, probably in order not to compromise her. But he will not formally propose before he knows whether she or her family will accept him as a suitor. The central part seems to be about getting positive signals which would encourage him to propose formally. If she would have him, and tell him so – so the final part –, she would get a very good husband in him, and he would be glad to take her as his wife.

In what follows I give an unedited transliteration of the text:<sup>89</sup>

- 1 *nemnaliūmi beni. ueīonna incorobouido*
- 2 *neīanmanbe gniīou apeni temeuelle iēxsetesi*
- 3 *sueregeniatu o quprinnopetamebissi iēteta*
- 4 *mili iēgumi. suante ueīommi petamassi papissone*
- 5 *suirexetesi iēgiinna anmanbe iēguisini*
- 6 *siaxsiou. beīiassunebiti mot upiūmmiateri*
- 7 *xsi īndore core. nuana iēgumisini. beīassusete*
- 8 *sue cluiou sedagisamo cele uiro īnoue*
- 9 *īiobiē beīiassusete rega iēxstumisendi*
- 10 *me. setingi papissonebeīiassusetemetingise*
- 11 *tingibeīiassuseteregarise iēxstumisendi*

<sup>88</sup> B. Mees, “Words from the well at Gallo-Roman Châteaubleau”, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 58 (2011), 87–108.

<sup>89</sup> Mainly after Lambert, with some minor alterations, barring errors. This transliteration, however, does not make the morphological and syntactic structure of the text transparent. Word or morpheme boundaries are often unmarked or in doubt, spacings often wrong or misplaced. In an edited text word boundaries should be marked, and in subsequent quotations I have marked them according to my understanding. B. Mees in the article cited above provides an edited text (p. 91) with which I can agree to some extent, but my interpretation would be different. – As in other transcriptions, *i* (with accent) renders I (*i longa*); *x* denotes the guttural spirant  $\chi$ . Double *ss* in certain forms is barred: *ss̄*, representing the characteristic Gaulish double dental spirant (the so-called *Tau gallicum*), finally resulting in *ss*.

In his opening remark the man, rather surprisingly, states that he has nothing against women: *nemnaliūmi* (= *ne mnā(s) lījū-mī*) “I do not accuse women” (cf. Old Irish *liid* “accuses, violates”)<sup>90</sup>, but since he obviously wants one for wife (which the following *beni ueionna* seems to indicate) he thinks he needs to be careful going about this matter, not publicizing his intentions by means of contracts and mentioning of names: *in corobo uido neí anmanbe gniū* “in contracts publicly (= “wittingly”) I do not do it by name”<sup>91</sup>, continuing “so that they (lit. “you”, plur.) could not say that you want me”<sup>92</sup>, *ape ni te me uelle íexsetesi*, taking *ape* as a conjunction (< \**at-k<sup>w</sup>e*), *ni* as the negation, *íexsetesi* as the verb (2<sup>nd</sup> plur., *s*-subjunctive; root \**iek-* “speak, declare”, cf. Old High German *iehhan*, Middle Welsh *ieith* “speech, language”), and *te me uelle* as a Latin *accusativus cum infinitivo*. Since many Gaulish texts contain Latin words or phrases this may not be surprising.<sup>93</sup>

In the middle part in which only few words stand out clearly, the speaker apparently mentions the family of the woman (*sue-regenia*, cf. Welsh *rhieini* “parents”), wondering whether they would accept him as a suitor. In that case he would proceed (*siaxsiou* “I shall follow up”, corresponding to Old Irish *sīass-*, future of *saigid*) and declare his intent, make known the names and see (*piūmmi*<sup>94</sup>) her father: *ateri-xsi*<sup>95</sup>, with a view of making a contract (*in ... core*).

He then expects the woman to signal her consent: *se te sue cluiou* “if I hear you so”, *se dagisamo cele, uiro iono ueíobíe* “if you desire a very good husband, a right man”<sup>96</sup>, *belia~~ssu~~* “then I would like to be it”. The end seems to convey the idea “If you are willing I am willing too”: *me se tingi papissone belia~~ssu~~* “if you will accept me as your husband I shall be it”, *se te me tingi, se tingi, belia~~ssu~~* “if

<sup>90</sup> It is a cautionary statement; the meaning may not be so drastic, perhaps “I do not wish to say anything disfavoured about women” (or “to offend women”).

<sup>91</sup> *anmanbe* (-*be* < \**-bi*) instrumental plur.; the plural in “by name” may refer to the *duo* or *tria nomina* to identify a person, or perhaps to the names of both persons involved. *corobo* I take as dative plur. of the word corresponding to Old Irish *cor* “contract”; *gniū* corresponds exactly to Old Irish *gníu* “I do, make”.

<sup>92</sup> Alternatively “that I want you”.

<sup>93</sup> It would be possible to understand this phrase also as Gaulish by reading *ueíe* (for *ueíe(s)*) instead of *uelle*: “that you want me” (the root being \**uī-*, cf. Latin *vīs* (in the paradigm of *velle*: *volō, vīs, vult*).

<sup>94</sup> *pis-* “see” (cf. p. 47 above), with intervocalic loss of *s*.

<sup>95</sup> Possibly for *ateri(n) (i)xsi*, the latter Gallo-Latin = *ipse*.

<sup>96</sup> *cele* = Old Irish *céile* “companion, partner, husband”, Welsh *cilydd*; *uiro* I take to be the word for “man” (\**uiros*), but it could also be the adjective \**uīros* “true” (Old Irish *fír*, Welsh *gwir*); *iono* = Welsh *iawn* “just”.

you will accept me, if you will, I shall be it”<sup>97</sup> – but “you should tell me this”: *iexstu-mi sendi*.<sup>98</sup>

As regards the form *tingi* which I have translated here with “accept”, I do not think one can impute it the strongly negative, “stigmatic” meaning of *tig-* in the Larzac plate (*ni-tixsintor*; see p. 50 above); the situation and the context demand a positive meaning: the wooing must be concluded by mutual acceptance. Therefore I posit “take, accept” as the meaning of *tingi*, connecting it, though hesitantly, with the root *\*tek-*<sup>99</sup> which is attested in Old Irish in the sense of “take hold, take possession” (*techt-* in *techtaim* “have”, *techtaigid* “takes possession”, *con-tetaig* “has in common, shares”) and in Germanic (Old Norse *þiggja*, Old Saxon *thiggian* in the meaning “accept, receive”) and which, in Lithuanian *tenkù, tèkti*, shows also nasalization in the present stem. Gaulish *ting-* thus could be explained as a nasalized form of *\*tek-* with raising of *e > i* before the nasal and lenition of the final consonant.

What I have tentatively translated as “husband”, *papissone*, which previous commentators have taken as a personal name (a divine name: Lambert, the woman’s name: Mees), I rather take as a noun, the obvious base of which is the familiar *papa* word. The (seemingly) hypocoristic formation *\*papissō* (or already the Vulgar Latin general form *papissone*) may denote, rather jokingly, the *pater familias*, as the suitor already sees himself (so to speak as “the future father of your children”).

The text of this inscription which may be dated into the late 2<sup>nd</sup> or the 3<sup>rd</sup> century represents a variant of northern Gaulish with remarkable late dialect features. Most remarkable of these is the loss of final consonants, in particular of *s* and *n*, the original markers of nominative and accusative, which is in line with the contemporary development in spoken Latin. There is weakening of unstressed vowels, curious phonetic breaking (like *-ei-* for *\*iĭ* or *\*ī*) or diphthongization, so in the final *\*-ū* of 1<sup>st</sup> person singular forms (*gniĭlou*, *chuiou*, *siaxsiou*), which however is preserved as such before a suffix (as in *iegu-mi*). The root *\*iek-* “speak, declare” appears in numerous verbal or nominal forms which exhibit lenition of *k > g* in intervocalic position, whereas lenition elsewhere is not regularly marked

<sup>97</sup> *beliassu* is a form of *\*biĭa-* (< *\*b<sup>h</sup>uiĭā-*), cf. Old Irish *bíu*, Welsh *byddiāf*, but the Gaulish form apparently is extended by a dental suffix plus futuric or desiderative *s* resulting in the characteristic double spirant (*Tau gallicum* or *ss*).

<sup>98</sup> I accept here the analysis of this form by P. Schrijver in the article cited, p. 138, but with *\*iek-* as the verb.

<sup>99</sup> IEW 1057 f.

in writing (which, being by nature conservative, need not always represent the actual pronunciation).

All in all, the Châteaubleau tile is a very interesting document which invites further elucidation.

The text I am going to comment on next, is, in my opinion, also some sort of a "love story", though coming from quite a different milieu. It is not exactly a Gaulish text, though it was considered as such in the beginning. It dates from about the same period (2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century). It is written on a lead tablet found already in 1887 during excavations at the site of ancient Rauranum, now Rom (Deux-Sèvres), situated at the Roman road between Saintes (Mediolanum Santonum) and Poitiers (Linovum Pictonum) in Aquitania. This text, inscribed on both sides of the tablet in *scriptio continua*, deciphered and edited, with facsimile, in 1898 by Camille Jullian<sup>100</sup> and believed by him to be in the Gaulish language, has for quite a while passed for the longest Gaulish text extant at the time, so still in Dottin.<sup>101</sup> But the knowledge of Gaulish was very restricted at that time, and since the text was incomprehensible there was no safe basis for that attribution,

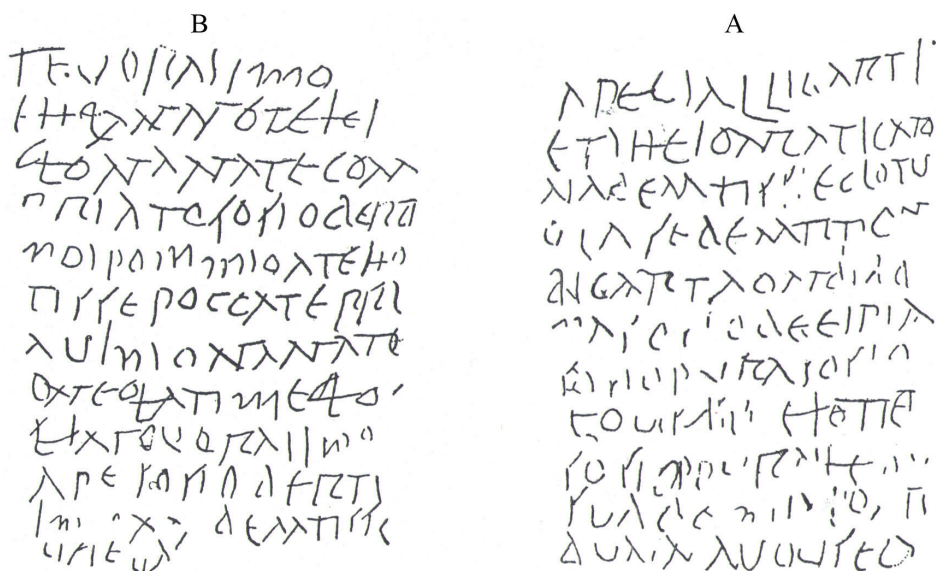


Fig. 40. Inscription of Rom (Deux-Sèvres). Facsimile by C. Jullian

<sup>100</sup> *Revue Celtique* 19 (1898), 168 ff.

<sup>101</sup> Dottin no. 52.



especially as some passages appeared to be in Vulgar Latin, as noted in particular by Whatmough and Pokorny.<sup>102</sup> This, however, did not deter some scholars from producing Gaulish interpretations<sup>103</sup>, but these, being largely fanciful, need not be taken seriously. In fact the text was never really understood, and celticists could not make much of it. So it came as something of a relief when in 1962 it seemingly was demonstrated that the text was in plain Latin, representing a *defixio* in a milieu of rival stage actors. This apparent demonstration was produced by the Austrian archaeologist Rudolf Egger in collaboration with the Breton celticist Christian Guyonvarc'h who had provided photographs, and it was published in the memoirs of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.<sup>104</sup>

But this new reading of the text, differing considerably from the previous ones, and its novel interpretation seemed too good to be true, and raised serious doubts. An autopsy of the object which I made in the Museum of St.-Germain-en-Laye in 1987 and another one in 1997 convinced me that the new readings had no factual basis, and were in fact chimerical, hence the interpretation based on them was illusionary, the result of wishful thinking. The consequence was that one had to return to the older readings, eventually correcting them where necessary. As the surface of the object is rather deteriorated and the writing badly legible in parts, also of irregular ductus and with many ligatures, it will be difficult to provide incontestable readings throughout, alternative readings being possible in not a few places.<sup>105</sup> But the frequent repetitions or variations of certain phrases will be of help in establishing the text. The latest treatment of the object in vol. II,2 of the *Recueil* provides revised readings by R. Marichal; some of them, however, are doubtful or improbable for linguistic reasons. As for the supposed meaning of the text, no opinion is provided.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Whatmough, DAG p. 391 f., J. Pokorny, *Celtica* 3 (1956), 306.

<sup>103</sup> O. Haas, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 23 (1943), 285–297, G.S. Olmsted, *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 19 (1991), 283–286.

<sup>104</sup> R. Egger, *Die Fluchtafel von Rom (Deux-Sèvres). Ihre Entzifferung und Sprache*. Wien 1962 (Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften).

<sup>105</sup> I have refrained from marking uncertain letters, because there are so many of them. To discuss all potential readings would lead too far here and would be the task rather of a critical edition of the text.

<sup>106</sup> RIG II,2, L-103, pp. 285–296, with ample bibliography.

I have dealt with this text twice, in publications of 1996 and 2007, to which I refer for more detailed information and opinion.<sup>107</sup> Here I shall only give a summary.

The texts on both sides of the tablet are conventionally marked A and B; in my opinion the sequence is B – A, since the first word on A is a subordinate Gaulish conjunction: *ape* (possibly < \**at-k<sup>w</sup>e*).<sup>108</sup> My provisional reading is as follows:

B 1	teuoraiimo	A 1	apECIALlicarti
2	ehzaatantotehon	2	etiheiontcaticnato
3	zoatantatecom	3	nademtisseclotu
4	priatososioderti	4	cilasedemtitiont
5	noipommioateho	5	eticartaontdibo
6	tissepoteatepri	6	nasosiodeuipia
7	auimoatantateh	7	sosiopurasosio
8	ontezatimezo	8	gouisa[--]ehotisse
9	ziateuoraiimo	9	sosiopuraheoti[
10	apesosioderti	10	suademaapo
11	imonademtisse	11	dunnauoliset
12	ueie[-----]		

The base language is Latin, even if this is not obvious at first sight. What kind of Latin is it then? Apparently a Vulgar Latin on a very low level, on the way already towards Romance; so *priaiimo* (B 6–7) < *precavimus* is already near to French (*nous*) *priâmes*.<sup>109</sup> This Vulgar Latin is mixed with elements which may be Greek, and with Gaulish ones such as the pronoun *sosio*.

As regards the script, the occurrence of several instances of *h*, and moreover of *z*, is worthy of note. Of course *h* occurs also in late Latin texts, but it is no longer pronounced and is therefore often written as a mute letter (before vowel, or in hiatus). *z* is not an original Latin grapheme, nor a Gaulish one; it has passed into Latin from Greek, and it may be taken here as an indication of possible Greek

<sup>107</sup> „Die Inschrift von Rom (Deux-Sèvres)“, in: Meid – Anreiter 1996, pp. 118–123; „Die pseudo-gallische Inschrift von Rom (Deux-Sèvres). Text und Interpretation“, in: *Gaulois et Celtique Continental* (ed. P.-Y. Lambert et G.-J. Pinault), Droz 2007, pp. 277–284.

<sup>108</sup> This occurs also in B 10 and in the Châteaubleau tile (p. 56 above).

<sup>109</sup> Of course, this verb being originally deponens (*precārī*), we would never get a form like this in Classical Latin (but *precati sumus* instead).

(or Latinized Greek) elements in the text.<sup>110</sup> These elements apparently refer to the religious sphere. So in B 7–8 we find *atanta tehon* which I would interpret as *αθανατα θεων* “immortal one of gods”,<sup>111</sup> while *zia* (B 9) and contracted *za* (B 2, 8) may be < Greek *δῖα*, *διᾶ* (> *ζα*) “divine” or perhaps < *θεία* (of *θεῖος*), also “divine”.<sup>112</sup>

Another example of Greek is *timezo* (B 8) “I shall honour” = *τιμήσω*, future of Greek *τιμάω*, and, if I am not mistaken, we can find the verbal expression of male sexual activity, Greek *οἶφω*, in B 5 *oipommio* which may be a Gallicized relative verbal form *\*oipomi-īo* “quam futuo”.

As one can already guess, love is involved here. Perhaps the loving couple belongs to the rank of slaves, which would account for the low linguistic register and the mixed language of the text. The following scenario may be imagined. A young man, Catignatus, is in love with a young woman, Clotucilla, who is his concubine. He refers to her as his *derti* (literal meaning “skin”, related to Greek *δέρω*, *δέρμα* – a figurative term for a person of female sex, comparable to Latin *scortum*)<sup>113</sup>: *compriato sosio dertin* (B 3–5) “this beloved darling”, *sosio derti(n) imo(n)* (B 10–11)<sup>114</sup> “this my darling”. He fears that she could be taken away from him (*na demtisse* A 3, B 11) and implores the goddess Divona (*dibona*, A 5–6) that, should she be taken from him (*se demtitiont*, A 4), she (*sua demta*, A 10) be restored to him. The basis of these extraordinary verbal forms is of course Latin *dēmo*, *demptus*, but in *apodunna* (A 10–11) we have a possible reflex also of Greek *ἀποδοῦναι* “give back”.

<sup>110</sup> The occurrence of Greek elements in Gallo-Latin and then also in Gaulish speech need not surprise on account of the vicinity of Marseille, a Greek colony by origin, and the use of Greek letters in early writings. The Gallo-Latin charm on a silver plaquette of Poitiers, beginning *bis gontaurion analabis ... bis gontaurios catalages* (Meid 1980, 9 f., 29, RIG II,2, L-110) features, apart from the name of the medicinal herb itself, two Latinized Greek verbal forms (*ἀναλάβης*, *καταλλάγης*), and we find Greek elements also in the Gaulish healing charms recorded by Marcellus of Bordeaux (Meid 1980, 10, more in *Heilpflanzen und Heilsprüche. Zeugnisse gallischer Sprache bei Marcellus von Bordeaux*, Innsbruck 1996, *passim*).

<sup>111</sup> It should be noted, however, that Greek *ἄθανατος* is an adjective of two endings (-ος m. f.), and therefore should not have a feminine form in -α. The feminine form *atanta* (also in B 3) < *\*atanata* is therefore analogical, possibly the product of Latinization.

<sup>112</sup> As to the phonetic representation by *z* cf. Italian *zio*, *zia* „uncle, aunt“ from the homonym *θεῖος*, *θεία*.

<sup>113</sup> Comparable also French *la peau*, jargon for a prostitute, German (without sexual connotation) *arme Haut*.

<sup>114</sup> Possibly *derti-mo*.

The proposed restoration of the text, in semantic units, with word separation, is as follows:

*te uoraiimo, eh, za, atanto tehon, zo(a), atanta te,  
compriato sosin dertin oipommio atehotisse potea(t).  
te priauiimo, atanta tehon, te, za, timezo, zia,  
te uoraiimo, ape sosio derti(n) imo(n) na demtisse [ueie...?]  
ape ci alli carti eti heiont Caticnato  
na demtisse Clotucil(l)a.  
se demtitiont eti cartaont, Dibona, sosio, deui, pia,  
sosio pura, sosio gouisa [at]ehoti[sse],  
sosio pura heoti[sse]  
sua demta apodunna uolis(s)et.*

Paraphrasing interpretation:

“We implore you (*oravimus*)<sup>115</sup>, divine one, immortal one of gods, living one, immortal one, you, that this beloved darling, whom I fuck, might be left to me.

We pray to you (*precavimus*)<sup>116</sup>, immortal one of gods, you, divine one, I shall honour, we implore you, that this darling of mine may not be taken away, that any other lovers leave her to Catignatus, that Clotucilla is not taken away.

If they take her away and befriend her, o Divona (we implore you that) she, o goddess, remain faithful, pure and joyful, be left pure, (and that) he (= the other lover) would be willing to give back the one taken away.”

I am aware that, due to the uncertainties of the readings and the extraordinary linguistic forms and meanings, my interpretation is subjective as well as speculative, but it is coherent and makes sense. Thus, it may serve as a basis for further discussions of this remarkable document, which offers us an invaluable insight into the linguistic usage of the lower ranks of society, which we would never get in literary texts.

Leaving now the “magical” inscriptions we move on to texts which are in various other ways of human interest. Partly they have a socializing function, partly they are personal or even intimate in character. The first of these texts which I shall mention still falls into the category of longer texts.

<sup>115</sup> The initial *u* (= *v*) in *uoraiimo* seems to be an on-glide.

<sup>116</sup> In both cases the sense is rather that of present tense *oramus*, *precamus* (class. *-mur*)



It was also found at Lezoux, and it was on a terracotta plate of which, however, only a fragment of about one third of its size has survived, so that the greater part of the text is missing. As some intelligible phrases show, it was moralizing in character, giving advice to a young person about how to conduct himself properly in life:

*mesamobi molatus certiognu sueticon*

“praise by the worst (is) self-damaging to the righteous”<sup>117</sup>

*nu gnate ne dama gussou*

“now, my boy, do not yield to violence” (?)

*batoron ueia suebreto*

“one should go one’s way by one’s own judgement”.

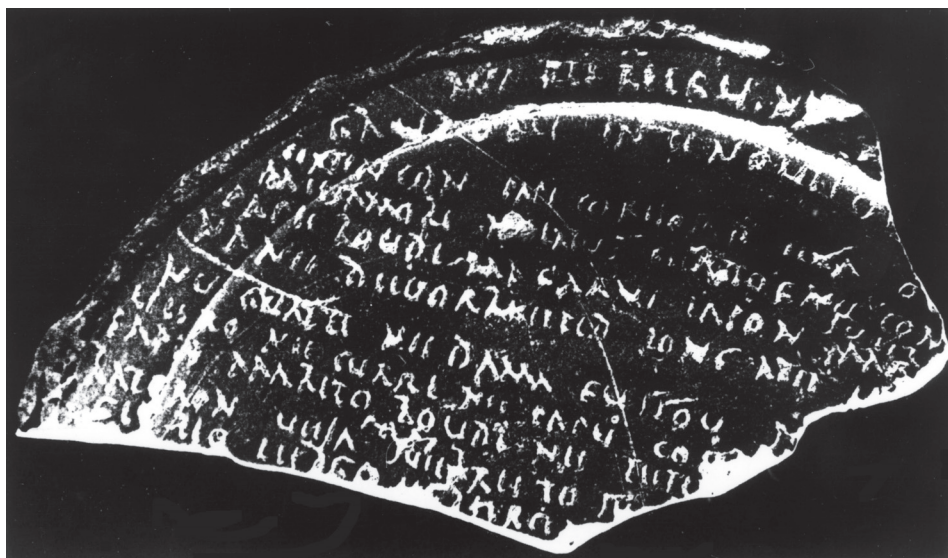


Fig. 41. Fragment of a terracotta plate found at Lezoux, inscribed with a moralizing text.

As one can judge from even these short phrases, this text, had it survived in its full length, would have to be regarded as one of the most important and most interesting of Gaulish texts, as well as for its quasi-philosophical content as for

<sup>117</sup> *mesamobi* is instrumental plur., equatable with Old Irish *messam* “worst” (superlative of *olc* “bad”); *molatus* = Old Irish *molad* “praise”.

its sophisticated language. As many other texts, also this one shows a certain admixture of Latin elements, e.g. *uero ne curri, ambito* (= -u).

For curiosity's sake it may be mentioned that its first (anonymus) editor considered this text a cooking recipe (for making some sort of a *pasta*), apparently because the repeated occurrence of the lexeme *pap-* suggested to him a meaning like “pap” (Latin *pappa*, etc.) Even L. Fleuriot, its second editor<sup>118</sup>, although well aware that *pap-* was nothing but the pronominal adjective \**pāpos* “every” (Welsh *pawb*), could not free himself from the impression that this text had something to do with eating (perhaps because it was written on a plate). As a matter of fact, the text has nothing to do with the nature of the object which is just a suitable carrier, in the same way as in the modern souvenir industry ceramic plates are inscribed with sentimental or “funny” texts (often parodies of popular wisdom and morals).



Fig. 42. Graffito on a drinking cup from Banassac (Lozère).  
Musée des Antiquités Nationales, St.-Germain-en-Laye.

<sup>118</sup> *Études Celtiques* 17 (1980), 127–147. Now in RIG II, 2, L-66. A “military context” is assumed by K. McCone in Meid – Anreiter 1996, 107–117.

On the other hand, drinking vessels may carry inscriptions which do refer to their special purpose. Noteworthy is the repeated reference to communal drinking or its socializing effect:<sup>119</sup>

*neddamon delgu linda*

“I contain the drinks of the nearest”<sup>120</sup>

*ibetis uciu, andecari biiete*

“Drink from this, (and) you will be very amiable”<sup>121</sup>

οὐενικοί μεδου

“Friendly through mead”.<sup>122</sup>

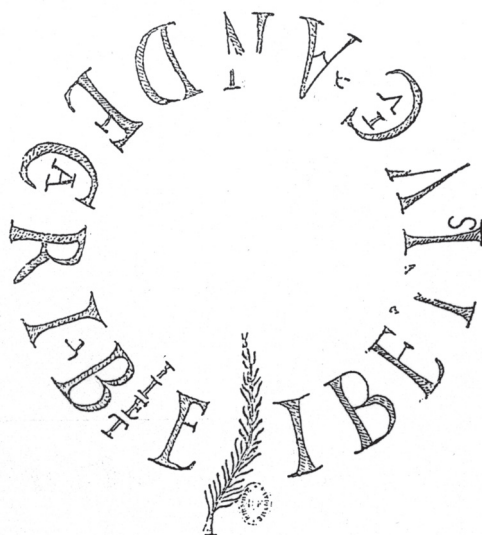


Fig. 43. Inscription on the foot of a bottle from Limé (Aisne), now lost.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. CIL XIII 10016,4 *accipe me [si]tie(n)s et trade sodali*, on a drinking vessel from Mainz.

<sup>120</sup> Drinking cup from Banassac (Lozère); RIG II.2. L-50. First correctly read and interpreted by J. Vendryes, *Études Celtiques* 7 (1955), 9–15 (“proximorum teneo potus”); *neddamon* (*dd* = *ðð*) cf. Old Irish *nessam* “nearest”.

<sup>121</sup> According to the reading and interpretation by L. Fleuriot, *Études Celtiques* 18 (1981), 89–93. This inscription on a bottle from Limé (Aisne) was formerly believed to be in Latin (cf. CIL XIII 10025,188).

<sup>122</sup> Goblet from Vallauris (Alpes-Maritimes); RIG I, pp. 414–419 (with different interpretation).

Several graffiti on drinking vessels seem to contain an “advertising” message suggesting to take pleasure in (and thereby to buy) wines or other potables of a particular region, such as the already mentioned

*lubi rutenica onobiā*

“prefer Rutenian aquavit”<sup>123</sup>

or

*lubi caunonnas sincera*

“prefer the full-bodied (wines) of Caunonna”<sup>124</sup>

Here we find the 2<sup>nd</sup> sing. imperative of the verbal stem *lubi-* “to love, desire”, of which also the 2<sup>nd</sup> sing. subjunctive, *lubiias*, is attested in a fragmentary graffito<sup>125</sup> where a certain potter Aricanos apparently suggests that “you may love” his ware: [*ari*]cani *lubiias* ... (rest unintelligible).

The same Aricanos, again in the genitive *Aricani*, figures in the graffito already cited on p. 23, in which the supposed reading *lubitus* must be replaced now by *lubitias*, apparently a noun depending of *Aricani* and referring to an order of an unspecified speciality of his in popular demand: “his fancied (specialities)”.<sup>126</sup>

*aricani lubitias*

*ris tecuandoedo*

*tidres trianis*

The strange word in the second line (so far unexplained) consists, in my opinion, of the pronoun *te* (dependent on *ris*), and the Latin phrase *quando edo* “when I take (them) out”.

Among personal objects rings have a special significance because a ring is more than a mere ornament or object of value: it is above all a binding symbol. Inscriptions on rings therefore are of an intimately personal character and express attachment to a partner.

A fine example of this is offered by a gold ring from Thiaucourt (Belgica).<sup>127</sup> In the past, owing to wrong word-division, the continuous inscription around this

<sup>123</sup> Banassac; RIG II, 2, L-51 (listing all sorts of dubious interpretations as regards the second part of the inscription, omitted here; see fn. 49 above). Another graffito from Banassac, also with *lubi*, but for the rest unintelligible, is L-53.

<sup>124</sup> La Graufesenque; RIG II, 2, L-37. *sincera* is taken from Latin (*sincērus* “genuine”), meaning here, as neuter plur., unblended, undiluted wines.

<sup>125</sup> La Graufesenque; RIG II, 2, L-36.

<sup>126</sup> La Graufesenque; RIG II, 2, L-35.1; with full bibliography.

<sup>127</sup> See L. Fleuriot, *Études Celtiques* 16 (1979), 123–134 whose interpretation, however, cannot be accepted. Now in RIG II,2, L-127, but with equally unsatisfactory treatment.



octagonal ring had always been misread and consequently misunderstood. With correct word-division a very moving text emerges in which the wearer (a woman) assures her partner that she will never ‘turn away’ from him:

*Adiantunne, ni exuertinin appisetu*

“Adiantunnos (voc.), (this ring) shall not see a disloyal one”,

literally “one who turns away”. In slight modification of K.H. Schmidt’s analysis and interpretation<sup>128</sup> I take *exuertinin* to be accusative of a nominative *exuertina* (or *-inis*)<sup>129</sup>; *appisetu* is 3<sup>rd</sup> person sing. imperative of *ad-pis-* “to see”.<sup>130</sup>

Finally I should like to draw attention to a curious category of texts all of which come from Eastern or East-Central France (several from Autun).<sup>131</sup> Their outward characteristic is that they are inscribed on so-called spindle-whorls.<sup>132</sup> However, they have nothing to do with the practice of spinning (as J. Whatmough erroneously thought<sup>133</sup>) but rather reflect spinning-room amusements. These short texts are, either in a subtle or in a more direct way, erotically suggestive. They are, as a rule, addressed to young women; the implied speakers are, of course, young men. Some of the texts are in straight Latin and as such do not interest us here, but they may give us an idea of what to expect in the Gaulish texts:

*accede, urbana*

*aue, uale, bella tu*

*salue, soror*

*salue tu, puella*

*aue, domina, sitiio*

<sup>128</sup> In *Le lingue indoeuropee di frammentaria attestazione*, ed. E. Vineis (Pisa 1983) 83, and somewhat differently in *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 41 (1986), 178, 373 fn. 5.

<sup>129</sup> A derivation of a noun *\*exuertis* (or *exuerta*) “turning away, separation”. The etymological sense of *exuertina* (*-is*) comes out better in German translation: “eine Abtrünnige”.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Old Irish *ad-cí*; the simplex *pis-* occurs in the Chamalières inscription (*pissiumi*).

<sup>131</sup> I have discussed these in *Gallisch oder Lateinisch?* (Meid 1980); see also M. Lejeune, *Études Celtiques* 15 (1976–78), 96–104 and for the references DAG pp. 359, 495 f., 499 f. and now RIG II,2, pp. 317–335 (L-111 to 122).

<sup>132</sup> A spindle-whorl (French *peson de fuseau*, German *Spinnwirtel*) is a ring of a conical shape, usually made out of schist, which was stuck onto a spindle in order to give it weight and momentum.

<sup>133</sup> *Language* 25 (1949), 388–391.

In the last phrase, *sitiio* is a good example of the allusive suggestiveness and ambiguousness of these texts, since the speaker is most likely not thirsting for beer ...

Some texts are in pure Gaulish:

*moni, gnatha, gabi buððutton imon*<sup>134</sup>

“Come here, girl, take my little kiss”

*tionouimpi morucin*<sup>135</sup>

“Divinely-beautiful maiden”<sup>136</sup>

The greater part, however, is couched in a kind of mixed language, a colloquial jargon composed of elements of Latin and Gaulish, the basic grammatical structure of which is Latin while the vocabulary is to a large extent Gaulish or is ambiguous in the sense that its etymological roots are identical for both languages. This vocabulary common to, or similar in both languages may be considered as one of the reasons why Gaulish gave way so easily to Latin. Our texts testify an intermediate stage – a Gallo-Latin strongly coloured by the native Gaulish idiom:<sup>137</sup>

*nata uimpi, curmi da*

“Pretty girl, give beer”

*geneta, uis, cara*

“Dear girl, are you willing?”

*taurina uimpi*

“Pretty bull-girl”<sup>138</sup>

<sup>134</sup> St.-Réverien (Nièvre); RIG II,2, L-119. See also C. Watkins in *Studia Celtica et Indo-Europea* (Archaeolingua vol. 10, Budapest 1999), 541 f. who thinks that *buððutton* calls for a stronger meaning and opts for the male organ, comparing Old Irish *bot* “penis” (and interpreting also the divine epithet *Bussu-mārus* in the same sense). This is taken up by Delamarre 93, but is rejected by Stifter, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 58 (2011), 174, fn. 20.

<sup>135</sup> Gièvres (Loir-et-Cher); RIG II,2, L-111.

<sup>136</sup> For *morucin* cf. Welsh *morwyn* “girl”; *tiono-* represents *\*dēvono-* (through *\*dīvono-*, *\*diono-*).

<sup>137</sup> All are from Autun; RIG II,2, L-112–115, 117.

<sup>138</sup> From a grammatical point of view *taurina* is nothing else but a motion feminine of *taurinus* “young bull”, formed automatically in disregard of semantic inhibitions. This grammatico-semantic monstrosity is nevertheless erotically suggestive: a heifer fit for the bull ...

*marcosior maternia*

“I should like to ride ...”<sup>139</sup>

*matta dagomota, baline enata*

“Silly-girl, good-to-fuck”<sup>140</sup>, engendered by the phallos”

Superficially one may experience doubt as to whether to class these phrases as Latin or Gaulish, but in fact they are gallicized Latin. Later this Gallo-Latin replete with Gaulish words was gradually “purified”, to the extent that in modern French only a small number of words of Gaulish origin have survived.

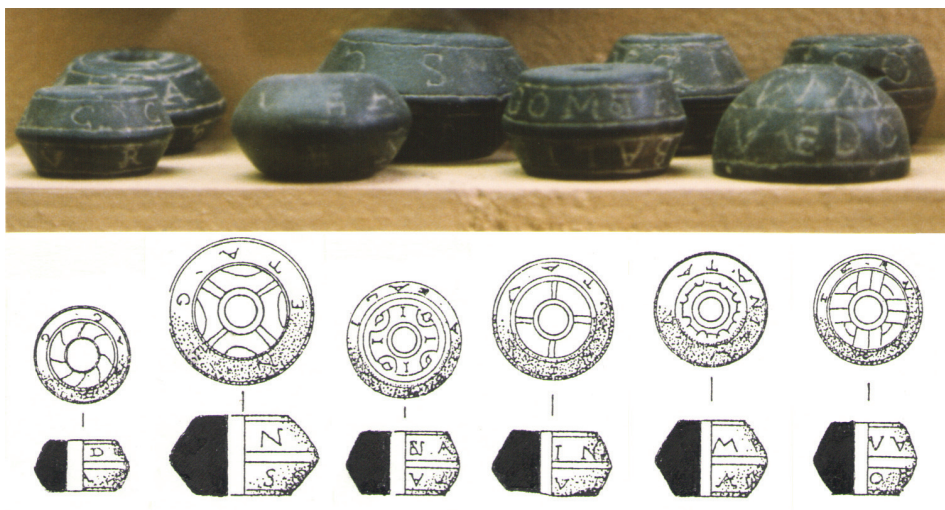


Fig. 44. Examples of inscribed spindle-whorls from the Museum of Autun.

This ends our survey of Gaulish “literature” which – though it illuminates certain facets of Gaulish public and private life – is in no way representative of the material and especially of the spiritual culture of the Gauls. There are two main reasons for this, representing seemingly unsurmountable obstacles to our full understanding of the Gaulish language and of what used to be expressed in it.

The first, and principal, reason is that all “druidical” learning and wisdom (which must have been immense) and all practice connected to it, by religious interdiction was never committed to writing but used to be only orally transmitted

<sup>139</sup> On *marcosior* cf. M. Peters, also in *Studia Celtica et Indogermanica*, p. 305.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Old Irish *moth* “membrum virile”.



Fig. 45. Fragment of the Gaulish Calendar found in 1887 near Coligny, showing the months Equos and Samon(ios). Lyon, Musée de la Civilisation Gallo-Romaine.



to a select class of persons, so that one important source (comparable no doubt to the total corpus of the Vedic literature of Ancient India) falls out altogether.<sup>141</sup> This source, if it existed, would have covered the language fully.

The second reason (which is partly the consequence of the first, but mainly due to the conquest and colonization of Gaul) is that – in the absence of a tradition of writing in the Gaulish language – any writing which *was* in fact done, was done at first in the Greek, then in the Latin language which, as time progressed, became the universal language in Gaul.

Thus any habit of writing in the Gaulish language which had developed in the meantime came to an end. In view of this unfavourable situation one must be content with what in fact did survive of Gaulish texts, and make the most of it. The results of recent excavations which brought a considerable increase in Gaulish texts let us hope, though, that this constant flux of newly found inscriptions may continue also in the future, leading to a gradual increase of our knowledge of Gaulish. Although at present it may seem unrealistic that Gaulish will ever leave the state of a fragmentarily attested language (a so-called “Trümmersprache”) and attain the status of a sufficiently documented “corpus” language<sup>142</sup>, the increase of new texts will result in the filling of more and more gaps, so that the grammar and the lexicon of Gaulish will have to be constantly revised and rewritten.

<sup>141</sup> The only (fortuitous) exception concerns Astronomy and the Calendar of which a fragment (the so-called Coligny Calendar) has come down to us – evidence of the supreme standard of astronomical knowledge. It must be borne in mind, however, that the bronze plate on which this calendar was engraved was deliberately destroyed before it was hidden in the earth. The most recent research on the Coligny Calendar is by Garrett S. Olmsted who has attempted to reconstruct its run over its full period: Garrett Olmsted, *The Gaulish Calendar. A Reconstruction from the Bronze Fragments from Coligny with an Analysis of its Function as a Highly Accurate Lunar/Solar Predictor as well as an Explanation of its Terminology and Development*. Bonn 1992, followed by *A Definitive Reconstructed Text of the Coligny Calendar*, Washington D.C. 2001 (Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph vol. 39). These monographs follow upon the edition contained in Vol. III: *Les Calendriers*, par P.-M. Duval et Georges Pinault, Paris 1986, of *Recueil des Inscriptions Gauloises*. From a linguistic point of view the Coligny Calendar is important inasmuch as it contains the Gaulish names of the months apart from other technical vocabulary much of which, however, occurs in abbreviated form.

<sup>142</sup> There is always hope that the unexpected may yet occur, as is shown by the example of Celtiberian where the sensational discovery at Botorrita in October 1992 of a very long inscription (several times longer than the one found there in 1970) and subsequently of several other substantial texts has changed the overall situation of that language, in spite of the uncertainties remaining, very much for the better.



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