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ISTOK'S CUP – THE OLDEST CELTIC INSCRIPTION

Povzetek

Istokova skodelica, ki je poznana pod različnimi oznakami in je zelo dragocena predvsem zaradi napisa na grlu. Razkriva namreč najstarejši keltski napis, ki so ga kdaj našli, saj izhaja iz 6. stol. pr. Kr. in ga uvrščajo v Lepontstko dobo. Ta je 300 let starejša od naslednjega najstarejšega keltskega obdobja.

Napis na skodelici zaenkrat še ni bil zadovoljivo pojasnjen. Po pričakovanju, glede na razlage ostalih napisov, znanstveniki v napisih vidijo zgolj imena. Napise razlagajo na tako okoren način, ne glede na to, da so jim dostopna besedila na nagrobnikih tako iz starih, kot tudi iz novejših časov, ki poleg imen vsebujejo tudi posvetila namenjena umrlim. Drugi znanstveniki so napis razlagali s pravilnejšim pristopom, pa vendarle ne tako, da bi bilo branje tekoče, ali da bi imel napis nek zares smiseln pomen.

Gambari in Colonna povesta, da je napis zapisan na zelo okoren način. Tu je potrebno pojasniti, da napis na skodelici ni bil narejen z namenom okrasitve ali polepšanja skodelice, pač pa zato, da bi v onostranstvo ponesel dobre želje za pokojnika.

Najti pravičen pomen je skrivnost, ki jo je težko razkriti. Pa vendar, če je napis razložen tako, da ima jasen smisel, je to znak, da smo na pravi poti rešitve. Če pa je napis razložen iz obeh strani tekoče, ne da bi mu na silo dodajali ali odvzemali kakršnekoli znake, pa je to zanesljivo znamenje, da je napis prebran tako, kot ga je zapisal avtor pred starodavnimi časi. Po moji razlagi je napis na Istokovi skodelici sopomenka z jasnim sporočilom, ne glede na to ali jo, črko po črko, beremo iz leve ali iz desne strani.

Da bi prišli do pravilne razlage napisa je pomembno upoštevati vsakršno, tudi najmanjšo črtico ter usmerjenost samega znaka. Tako imenovani cikcak okrask, kot ga vidijo takorekoč vsi znanstveniki, pravzaprav predstavlja simboliko, sestavljeno iz 9-ih U črk z dodano besedo RI na koncu. Do števila 9 pa ni prišlo slučajno, pač pa je bilo uporabljeno z določenim namenom, saj gre za stilizirano zloženko, ki povsem odgovarja pomenu venetske besede jekupataris.

Introduction

In the town of Castello Ticino, which is well known to Etruscanologist, a great discovery was brought to the light in 1985. There was a great interest for the inscription, but also for the grave, in which the cup with inscription was found, because it offers very accurate chronological classification. Many necessary excavations were made in the present center of Ticino, under superintendence of the Archeological Department of Piedmont in 1985. On the place by Via Aronco, where a primary school was planned to be built, a little necropolis of the Golasecca style was found. In the central area of the necropolis, a kind of

sarcophagus (tomb no. 5) made of the local granite (serizzo) was discovered. The tomb's cover was missing, probably damaged and overturned, because of ploughing. All other findings were not damaged and were found in perfect condition, completely untouched. Findings were excavated and restaured in situ.^[1, pp.119–20]

The inscription on the drinking cup found in Castelletto Ticino is of a great significance, to prove the Celtic presence in the north Italy, especially for it is 2 centuries older than the previous oldest know Lepontic inscription.^[2] Lepontic is the earliest attested Celtic language. It was written exclusively in the Lepontic script (also known as the 'alphabet of Lugano'), which was derived from Etruscan. Lepontic inscription from Castelletto Ticino, the earliest definitely Celtic inscription.^[3] The inscription is written in the middle part of the neck and is in a perfect condition. The great importance of the epigraphic name is emphasized by the wave decoration at the beginning of the inscription, which is started by the crescent shaped symbol. The noted zigzag element has also a chart value because the writer exposed it as antecedent and preparatory part of the writing, with decorative, but certainly also a symbolic purpose.^[4, p.153]



Figure 1: Inscription drawn from the Istok's cup.^[9]

Basic data

Object:	cup (drinking)
Size:	7.6 cm (height) x 8.6 cm (rim diameter)
Letter height:	0.6 – 1.5 cm
Period:	cca. 575 BC ^[1, p.130] ; mid-6 th BC ^[5]
Workmanship:	Scratched
Site:	Castelletto Ticino: The cup was found in the cist grave no. 5 during excavation of the building of Baraggia. The grave was delimited by granite slabs. The cup was found in a perfect condition. Site is situated 350 m south of the Ticino River and 2.7 km SEE from the mouth of the southeast part of the Maggiore Lake. The location is located in the northern part of the Castelletto Ticino town, which is positioned exactly 59 km northwest from Milano and 45 km northeast from Mendrisio in Switzerland. It is situated on the northern edge of the Po Plain in northern Italy. Its elevation is 226 m above the sea level.

Field:	building Baraggia
Location:	45°43'8.4" N, 8°38'13.2" E ^[5]
Current location:	Soprintendenza Archeologia del Piemonte, Torino
Inventory No.:	St 51899
Inscription mark:	NO-1 (RIG 2.1)
Alternative sigla:	113bis (Solinas), 74 (Morandi)
Arch. Culture:	Golasecca II A
Script:	Lepontic script ^[1] , North Italic Script ^[5]
Language declared:	Celtic (Lepontic)
Language actual:	Slovene
Starting position:	from letter Q to the right
Writing direction:	both
Reading direction:	dextroverse (inscription part 1), sinistroverse (inscription part 2)
Inscription part 1:	Qʒ OIʒQʒ [zigzag scribble] DI →
Inscription part 2:	Qʒ OIʒQʒ
Letters:	10 monophthongs, 6 diphthongs, 2 triphthongs
Combined letters:	6 diphthongs To read this part, please click here 2 triphthongs To read this part, please click here
Transliteration: *	OISIIOISOG[VVVVVVVVVV]RI
Transliteration: *	GOISI[IOI IOI IOI]OISIIO
	<i>* Transformation of the Gaulish letters to the Latin letters one by one, without influence of the contents or explanation of the inscription. If the Gaulish letter is compounding two letters, the secondary is</i>
	To read this part, please click here
Transcription: #	OJŠČIJOISTOχ[UUUUUUUUU]RI χOJSTI[JOJ JOJ JOJ]OJSTIJO
No. of letters:	27 (37) <i># Transcription of the Raetic letters to an adequate sounds represented by the Latin letters on the basis by knowing the meaning and partitions of the contents. Compound letters are separated by sounds. Each letter corresponds to an exact sound.</i>
Word partitions:	OJŠČIJO ISTOχ [UUUUUUUUU] RI χOJSTI [JOJ JOJ JOJ] OJSTIJO
IPA pronounce 1:	/o:ʃʃtʃijo i:stɔfɪə [u:] ri: fio:ʃsti [joj joj joj] o:ʃstijo/ ^{[6]-[8]}

IPA pronounce 2: /o:ʃfʃijo i:zdofə [u:] ri:
 fi:ɔjsti [joj joj joj] o:jzdijɔ/^{[6]–[8]}

No. of words: 5 (9)

Interpreter: Mark Lublanski

Date revealed: September 2015 (part 1), finalized 11th–16th of April 2016 (zig-zag structure, RI and Part 2: palindrome)

Interpretation of F. M. Gambari & G. Colonna (1986)^[10]

The cup has inscription written on the neck, which is set of artificial short single word of a sinstroverse direction. The word is 2 cm high, followed with quite rough sequence of marks on the right side of the inscription, which are forming an ornament of a zig-zag shape. It seems that the ornament is set up of 2 letters, U and V, connected at the spine, Those wings from left to right and include 17 parts, from which those at the end are much apart, compared with the others. The last base shape is combined with a curved stretch, which closes the ornament on the right side with arch. Its line continues over the intersection with the last base shape. Apart from the ornament, it seems that the word is positioned from left to right. The word consists of 8 letters, which height is stretching 0.6 to 1.5 cm and is expanded 4.8 cm in length.

Inscription: Qʃ|0|ʃQʃ [zigzag scribble]

Transliteration 1: χ osioiso; Transliteration written by the original inscription sketch.

Transliteration 2: χ osioio; After additional estimation of the inscription, author reconsidered transliteration and corrected to a word which consists of only 7 letters.

Transliteration 3: χ osioiio or χ osioiiso; less probable

Interpretation: Individual Lepontic name χ osioio.

Note1: The phonetic value /kosioiso/ was written in conclusion of the transliteration of the original inscription.

Note2: The oldest surname Cossus was recorded in Latin. It derives from a variant of the family name Cornelia that could be seen from name A. Cronelius Cossus from the year 428 BC. The chronological sequence of the noted name before 400 BC can be seen as follows:

	<i>Origin</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Time</i>
χ osios	lep.	individual name	1 st half 6 th c. BC
kusiunaś	etr.	family name	2 nd half 6 th c. BC
*cusu(i)	etr.	baptismal name (f.)	
χ usu	ret.	individual name	2 nd half 5 th c. BC
Cossus	lat.	surname	

Interpretation of Patrizia Solinas (1994)^[11]

Inscription:	Q̅ OI̅Q̅Y [zigzag scribble]
Transliteration:	χosioiso
Note:	Possessive genitive in suffix -oiso (< *-oiso)

Interpretation of Alessandro Morandi (2004)^[4, pp.153–6]

Inscription:	Q̅ OI̅Q̅Y [zigzag scribble]
Transliteration:	§ χosioissi v
Interpretation:	χosioi(s)o or χosioi(s)si
Note:	A reconstitution of χosioi(s)o or χosioi(s)si is undoubtedly problematic, especially since we have no comparable examples of the suffix -si of the time that is obligatory a genitive; while the base form xosios is entirely preferable to other, more complex inscription engraved on horns in the Celtic language (see. Cososus, in Holder, I, p. 1139). However, the strangeness of the writing is undeniable, whereas the presence of three sections of the letter S is present here, which is not against the graphic standards, since the coexistence of the different styles of sibilants within the same word is verifiable in various contexts. The transcription χosioi(s)o takes into account the possible cancellation of the second s.

Interpretation of David Stifter (2012)^[12]

Inscription:	Q̅ OI̅Q̅Y [zigzag scribble]
Transliteration:	§ χosioiso v
Interpretation:	§ χosioiso v = /gotsioiso/ < *g̃hosti- (but CO•48 -kozis) ^[13]
Note:	χ for /g/

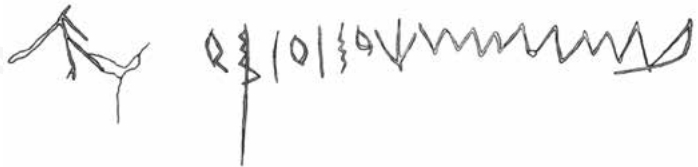


Figure 2: Another drawing from Istok's cup.^[4, p.154]

Interpretation of Mark Lublanski (2016)

Inscription:	Q̅ OI̅Q̅Y [zigzag scribble]DI Yq̅ [IOI IOI IOI]OI̅Q̅
Transliteration:	OŠIIIOISTOG[V]RI GOI STI [IOI IOI IOI]OISIIO

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Consider the symbolical meaning of the number 9. Number 9 is a sacred number, which can be seen from detailed study. Looking mathematically, the number 9 has a special value that can be seen from multiple numerical combinations. Yet a brief look on some of specialties of the number 9 reveals that it really has some special value. For instance, the multiplication of every other positive numeral with the number 9, ultimately gives a sum of the number 9, as follows:

$$\begin{array}{l} 1 \times 9 = 9 \quad \rightarrow \quad 9 = 9 \\ 2 \times 9 = 18 \quad \rightarrow \quad 1 + 8 = 9 \\ 3 \times 9 = 27 \quad \rightarrow \quad 2 + 7 = 9 \end{array}$$

...

The number 6, eventually 666, is considered being the devil's number. It is much interesting that the number 6 in a mirror image of the number 9, which completely corresponds to dualism between good - bad, positive - negative, light - dark, God - devil, etc.

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Slovene pronunciation

The Lepontic language cannot be restored without the help of the Slovene language. By revealing the ancient Lepontic words becomes evident, that the ancient Lepontic and modern Slovene language are not only related, but are just two different names of one and the same language, that for many centuries did not change much. The pronunciations of all Lepontic words can be restored by using the Slovene language.

Meaning

<i>Lepontic</i>	<i>Slovene</i>
Ojščijo Istoχ (vija) u RI. χojsti (joj joj joj) ojstijo.	Ojščijo Istoχu (na pot) u RI. χojsti (joj joj joj) ojstijo.

Table 1: Full words of the Istok's cup inscription in Lepontic, with translation into the Slovene language.

<i>Literal Slovene</i>	<i>English</i>
Voščijō Istoku (na poti) v RI. Gosti (joj joj joj) ostanejo.	Wish to Istok (on the way) in RI. Guests (oh oh oh) remain.

Table 2: Full words of the Istok's cup inscription in the literal Slovene and English.

The correctness and an accuracy of reading of the Istok's cup inscription is clearly proven by semantics. Scholars who are not familiar with Slovene language will have much difficulties to designate the right meaning of some other, yet unrevealed Lepontic, Raetic, Etruscan or Venetic inscriptions.

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Inscription lesson

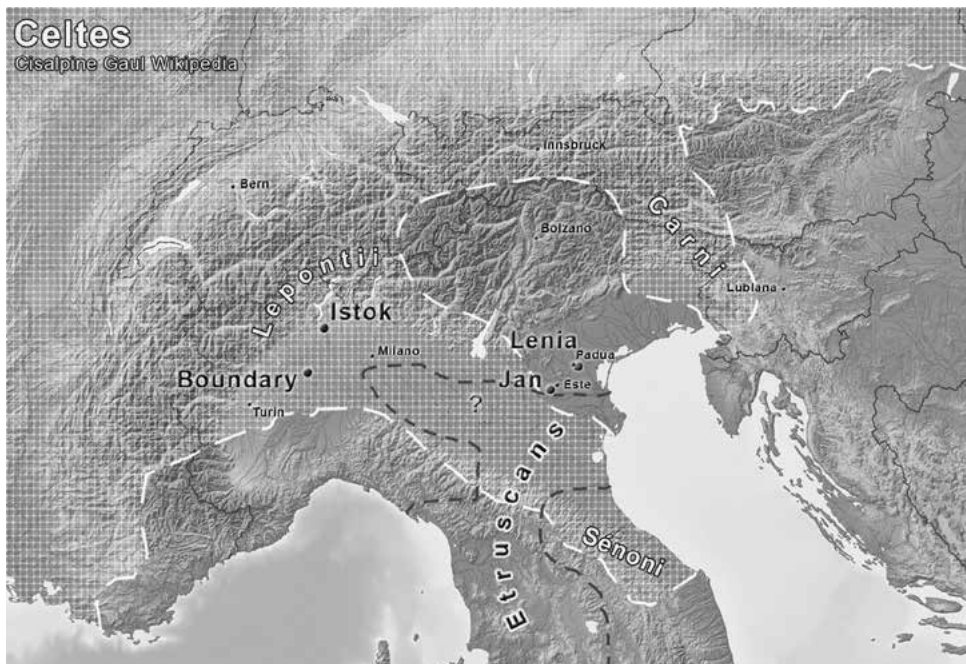
The inscription is semi-palindrome and therefore holds more information as it seems at the first sight. Inscription is nothing special by the information it has. What makes it very special is its oldness, which classifies Celts among the oldest civilized cultures of the World. The inscription contains 6 clearly recognized words that are all, except the name of the Goddess, still in use in unspoiled form. There are another 3 interjections joj-joj-joj 'oh-oh-oh' possibly involved within inscription, if we take into consideration that letter was wrote only once, if the same voices stand one by another in sequence. After all, the noted interjections suits fine to the contents.

One of words is the personal name that is interlaced within the inscription. It seems that many, if not all funeral inscriptions base on the personal names that are somehow involved in a short note devoted to the dead person. That would have meant that more inscriptions are semi-palindrome than we thought by now. In that manner the name Istofi was revealed from the researched inscription. The spoken form of the name Istofi has been preserved in some of the present Slovene dialects, while the general literal form is Istok.

The remaining inscription reveals that mourner wish the dead friend to go to the heaven in peace. That information reveals again, that ancient people were strongly religious, apart from the modern humans, they believed in God and heaven. Celts believed in the goddess RI. The same goddess RI we found also in the Raetic^[18, pp.5–92] and Venetic inscriptions, see the Lenia inscription within these Proceedings, which indicates that those people have a common pantheon.

The so-called zig-zag ornament, supplemented with the name RI, has a meaning ‘way to the (goddess) RI’ and corresponds completely to the Venetic word jekupetaris by meaning, although it is covered with symbolism. In fact, the exposed meaning is proved yet in another way. Thus, it is connecting very well with the part of inscription that is afterwards reading reverse, and has a meaning of ‘guests are staying’.

An unrecognized zig-zag ornament is set of 9 V letters, which involve symbol of ‘path’ or ‘go’, word ‘to’ and the sign of God, since the number 9 in divine number, not by imagine, but because of mathematical superiority. That means that Gauls recognized the number 9 as a divine number at least 2600 years ago. In contrast to us, who lost the primary knowledge, they used it in every day practice.



Picture 2: Locations of the Istok and the other studied inscriptions.

List of Abbreviations:

acc	Accusative	adj	Adjective
act	Active	adv	Adverb

conj	Conjunction	loc	Locative
dat	Dative	m	Masculine
du	Dual	nom	Nominative
f	Feminine	n	Neuter
gen	Genitive	p.prn	Personal Pronoun
ind	Indicative	pl	Plural
indecl	Indeclinable	prn	Pronoun
inf	Infinitive	prps	Proposal
inst	Instrumental	prs	Present
i.prn	Interrogative Pronoun	prtc	Participle
intj	Interjection	sg	Singular
bkr	Bela krajina slv. dialect	pol	Polish
blg	Bulgarian	prkm	Prekmurje slv. dialect
blr	Belarusian	rus	Russian
cz	Czech	slk	Literally Slovene
dlž	Lower Lusatian	slv	Slovene
eng	English	srb	Serbian
ger	German	srh	Serbo-Croatian
glž	Upper Lusatian	stcs	Old Church Slovene
gr	Greek	svk	Slovak
ita	Italian	štj	Styria slv. dialect
lat	Latin	ukr	Ukrainian
lpt	Lepontic	vzh	Eastern slv. dialects
mkd	Macedonian		

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Abstract

The Istok’s cup, known by different siglas, is very valuable, for inscription found on the neck of the cup. It reveals the oldest Celtic inscription ever found. It dates to the 6th century BC and classifies to the Lepontic era, which is 300 years older from the next Celtic period. Understanding of the inscription is not explained adequately yet. As it can be expected from other inscriptions, scientists mostly read names from inscriptions. Irrespectively to the fact that we actually know from other ancient and modern texts, that tombstones, beside names also involve short notes, dedicated to the dead person. Some other scholars explain the inscription more correctly, but without fluent understanding or clear sense.

Gambari & Colonna expose that inscription is quite rough. Well, it has to be explained that inscription on the cup was not made to meet an aesthetic effect, but to transmit the best wishes for the dead one to eternity.

Finding out the correct form is a mystery that is hard to break. Nevertheless, when inscription is explained with a logical meaning, it is a signal that understanding could hold the water. If inscription could be fluently understand in both sides, without any prosthetic marks involved or disturbing symbols removed, it is a reliable sign that understanding is correct. By my understanding, Istok's inscription is a semi-palindrome, which is understood from both sides, letter by letter.

To find out the right reading, every tinny mark and symbol orientation is very important, because every deviation that seems to be odd was often made on purpose. So-called zigzag ornament, as all scholars understand that artwork, actually represents a symbolism, set up of 9 letters of U, followed with the word of RI. Number 9 was not happened just coincidentally, but was used on purpose, and together with the following letters of RI represents a divine symbolism and meaning, which is artificial writing of compound that corresponds to the Venetic word jekupetaris.