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# Dating Cisalpine Celtic stone inscriptions from the Lugano region in an archaeological perspective<sup>1</sup>

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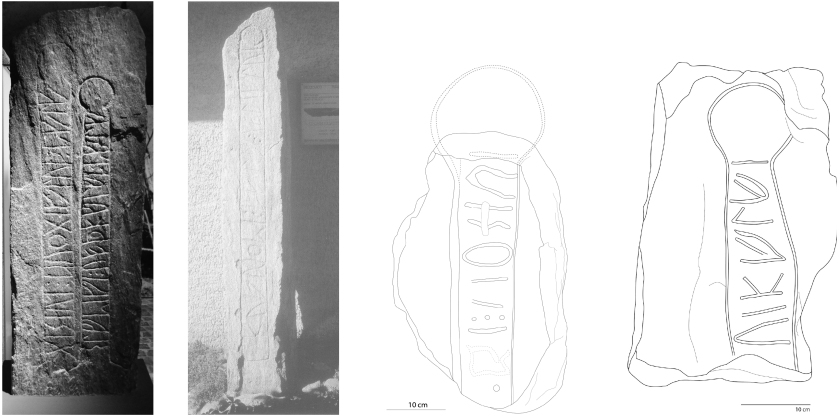
## *Abstract*

Stelae with Celtic inscriptions from the Lugano region (Canton Ticino, Switzerland) were mostly found in situations of re-use, and scholars have dated them based on palaeographic comparisons. In this paper, these inscribed stelae will be put into the archaeological context of the area, whose greatest occupation took place during the Early Iron Age (Golasecca culture). Moreover, tombs from that period are often attested near the findspots of inscribed stelae. Since finds from the Early and Middle La Tène culture are extremely limited in the Lugano region, it seems unlikely that there was a significant epigraphic production in the Late Iron Age. The Celtic inscriptions on stone stelae found in the Lugano region should therefore be a local expression of the Golasecca culture.

**M**ANY stone stelae with Cisalpine Celtic inscriptions have been discovered in the Lugano region (Swiss Canton Ticino) since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. None of these funerary stelae has been found in a primary archaeological context, but major displacements for such objects seem unlikely. These documents constitute an important cluster in the study of Cisalpine Celtic epigraphy, so much so that their script is sometimes referred to as the ‘Lugano alphabet’. A recurrent scheme can be observed: a sinistroverse text is arranged vertically (from bottom to top) within a schematized anthropomorphic figure that occupies a sig-

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Corinna Salomon and David Stifter for inviting me to the symposium, Daniela Greger for her very careful proofreading, Lucien Raboud for his contribution to the map, and Cédric Cramatte for his help with image processing.



**Fig. 1:** Examples of stone stelae with Celtic inscriptions from the Lugano region. From left to right: TI·36, from Davesco (photograph by Corinna Salomon from LexLep); TI·27, from Mezzovico (photograph by Carlo Reguzzi from MOTTA 2000: 198); TI·38, from Pregassona (cf. DELL'ERA 2020); TI·54, from Dino (cf. DELL'ERA 2018a).

nificant area on the front of an elongated schist stela. The texts consist in masculine or feminine onomastic formulae in the dative case, sometimes accompanied by the word *pala*. This particular epigraphic production is endemic to the Lugano region, where no other kind of Cisalpine Celtic inscriptions, such as graffiti, has ever been discovered.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Seventeen inscribed stelae are considered in this paper: TI·26, TI·27, TI·29, TI·30, TI·31, TI·32, TI·33, TI·34, TI·35, TI·36, TI·37, TI·38, TI·39, TI·43, TI·44, TI·45, TI·54. Cf. PIANA AGOSTINETTI 2004b: 145–147, 151–174, 367–368. The only stela from the southern Locarno region (TI·26) is included in this list due to typological proximity. The four Celtic stone inscriptions from the Mendrisio region (TI·28, TI·40, TI·41, TI·42) could be related to other epigraphic productions: if TI·42 still shows some similarities to the stelae from the Lugano region (albeit with important iconographic, palaeographic, and epigraphic peculiarities), the other three are completely different. The same can be said about the only Celtic stone inscription from the southern Grisons (GR·1). Celtic inscriptions from Como are mainly graffiti. Merely three stone inscriptions have been discovered there: CO·21, CO·48, CO·71. Only this last one, very fragmented, might be typologically related to the inscriptions from the Lugano region. On onomastic formulae see MOTTA 2009; STIFTER 2020: 354–357. On *pala* see SOLINAS 2015. For a historiographic approach to Cisalpine Celtic epigraphy see SOLINAS 1992–1994.

## Existing dating proposals

The first chrono-typology of Cisalpine Celtic stone inscriptions was proposed by Raffaele De Marinis in 1991. He attributed the inscribed stelae from the Lugano region to two of the five types he defined. Type B, showing a very schematized anthropomorphic figure and an ‘ancient’ script (with a classical closed-shaped alpha  $\mathbf{A}$ ), was dated to Golasecca III A. Type C, showing a less schematized anthropomorphic figure and a ‘recent’ script (with a more or less open-shaped alpha  $\mathbf{\Lambda}$ / $\mathbf{\aleph}$ , similar to the former digamma), was dated to La Tène B–C.<sup>3</sup> A few years later, Patrizia Solinas accepted De Marinis’ typology and chronology, but she conceded that the categorization might be too schematic and possibly required transition phases.<sup>4</sup> Filippo Motta pointed out that alpha is the only dating sign, and that the transition from ‘ancient’ to ‘recent’ script is very difficult to date.<sup>5</sup> In 2004, Alessandro Morandi used De Marinis’ typology with some reservations, especially about palaeography as the main dating criterion.<sup>6</sup> Then, in 2014, Daniele Maras proposed a new chronology of the Cisalpine Celtic inscriptions. The documents from the Lugano region are divided into three phases: the archaic one (Golasecca II A–III A2, 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) with closed-shaped alpha  $\mathbf{A}$ , the transitional one (Golasecca III A2–3, end 5<sup>th</sup>–first half 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) with ‘half-open’ alpha  $\mathbf{\Lambda}$ , and the recent one (La Tène B–D, 4<sup>th</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.) with completely open, digamma-shaped alpha  $\mathbf{\aleph}$ .<sup>7</sup> However, Maras’ transition phase is only attested on stone stelae from the Lugano region (without archaeological context), whereas the ‘half-open’ alpha is already attested in an archaic graffito from Como, dated to the middle of 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Golasecca III A1).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> DE MARINIS & MOTTA 1990–1991: 206–218. The chronology of type C depends on the fact that the allegedly later type D is dated to La Tène D1 because the stela TI·40 was found in San Pietro di Stabio (Mendrisio region) in 1875 together with fibulae of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> or the early 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. (cf. PIANA AGOSTINETTI 2004b: 179–181).

<sup>4</sup> SOLINAS 1994: 313. See also SOLINAS 2002: 482 (first publication of the inscribed stelae from Bioggio, TI·43, TI·44, TI·45).

<sup>5</sup> MOTTA 2000: 184, 196.

<sup>6</sup> MORANDI 2004: 519. The dates proposed by Morandi were organized into chronological phases by PIANA AGOSTINETTI 2004b: 307–315.

<sup>7</sup> MARAS 2014: 85–86.

<sup>8</sup> CO·53. Cf. CO·54, another graffito from Como with an open-shaped alpha and

Lexlep	Place	De Marinis	Solinas	Motta	Morandi – Piana Agostinetti	Maras
Ti 26	Vira Gambarogno	G III A – type B	G III A	G III A	1st half 4th cent. – LT B	5th – beginning 4th cent. – type 2
Ti 27.1	Mezzovico	G III A – type B	G III A	G III A	5th-4th cent. – G III A3	2nd half 5th cent. – type 2
Ti 27.1	Mezzovico				advanced 3rd cent.	end 5th – beginning 4th cent. – type 3
Ti 29	Aranno	LT B-C – type C	LT B-C	LT B-C	full 4th cent. – LT B (earlier)	
Ti 30	Aranno	LT B-C – type C	LT B-C	LT B-C	'quite late' – LT B (later)	end 5th – 1st half 4th cent. – type 3
Ti 31	Aranno	LT B-C – type C	LT B-C	LT B-C	'quite late' – LT B (later)	
Ti 32	Aranno	LT B-C – type C	LT B-C	G III A	beginning 4th cent. – LT B (earlier)	
Ti 33	Banco	G III A – type B	G III A	G III A	advanced 4th cent. – LT B	5th – beginning 4th cent. – type 2
Ti 34.1	Tesserete	G III A – type B	G III A	G III A	4th-3rd cent. (earlier) – LT B	5th – beginning 4th cent. – type 2
Ti 34.2	Tesserete	LT B-C – type C	LT B-C	LT B-C	4th-3rd cent. (later) – LT B (end)	4th cent. – type 3
Ti 34.3	Tesserete	LT B-C – type C	LT B-C	LT B-C	4th-3rd cent. (later) – LT B	5th – beginning 4th cent. – type 3
Ti 35	Ponte Capriasca			LT B-C	3rd-2nd cent. – LT C1	
Ti 36.1	Davesco	LT B-C – type C	LT B-C	LT B-C	4th-3rd cent. (earlier) – LT B (end)	end 5th – 1st half 4th cent. – type 3
Ti 36.2	Davesco	LT B-C – type C	LT B-C	LT B-C	4th-3rd cent. (later) – LT B (end)	4th – 1st half 2nd cent. – type 4
Ti 36.3	Davesco	G III A – type B	G III A	G III A	4th-3rd cent. – LT B	5th – beginning 4th cent. – type 2
Ti 37	Viganello	LT B-C – type C	LT B-C		3rd-2nd cent. – LT C1	end 5th – 1st half 4th cent. – type 3
Ti 38	Pregassona				3rd-2nd cent.	
Ti 39	Sorenago	LT B-C – type C			4th-3rd cent. – LT B (end)	
Ti 43	Bioggio		G III A3		LT B (end)	1st half 4th century – type 3
Ti 44	Bioggio		G III A3		advanced 3rd cent. – LT B (end)	2nd half 5th cent. – type 3
Ti 45.1	Bioggio		G III A3		beginning/1st half 4th cent. – LT B	
Ti 45.2	Bioggio		G III A3		beginning/1st half 4th cent. – LT B	

**Fig. 2:** Different dating proposals for Celtic inscriptions from the Lugano region (references to DE MARINIS & MOTTA 1990–1991, SOLINAS 1994, SOLINAS 2002, MOTTA 2000, MORANDI 2004, PIANA AGOSTINETTI 2004b, and MARAS 2014). In orange the Early Iron Age (Golasecca), in green the Late Iron Age (La Tène).

While generally agreeing on relative chronology, these scholars have proposed significantly different absolute chronologies. If one compares them, the same stelae and inscriptions are dated either to the Early or Late Iron Age (respectively Golasecca and La Tène cultures). De Marinis, followed by Solinas and Motta, divided them between both periods, but Morandi, followed by Piana Agostinetti, dated nearly all inscriptions to the La Tène culture, whereas Maras attributed almost the entire Cisalpine Celtic epigraphic production from the Lugano region to the Golasecca culture.<sup>9</sup> Evidently, palaeographic analysis can lead to different dates.



dextroverse writing, classified in the recent phase but dated to the second half of 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Golasecca III A2) by MARAS 2014: 88. Cf. also CO 47.

<sup>9</sup> Besides, none of the Celtic inscriptions from the Lugano region surely include letters that could be dating elements, such as digamma, theta, qoppa, phi or chi (cf. MARAS 2014, 2020: 943–945).

## Problems of absolute and relative chronology

The shape of alpha is considered as the main dating criterion for the Cisalpine Celtic inscriptions from the Lugano region, whereas non-closed alpha, foreign to the Etruscan writing tradition, seems to be attested not only in graffiti from Como as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Golasecca III A1–2), but also in other North Italic Early Iron Age epigraphic cultures such as the Raetic and maybe Venetic one.<sup>10</sup> Since Celtic graffiti are unknown in the Lugano region and inscribed funerary stone stelae are very rare if not absent in Como, it is difficult to compare their respective epigraphic productions, especially for a chronological purpose. Furthermore, to understand how difficult the definition of a relative chronology can be, it seems interesting to mention some critical notes made by Maria Grazia Tibiletti Bruno regarding De Marinis’ proposals. Contrary to the latter, she suggested that the earlier stelae should show the less schematized anthropomorphic figures – with still distinguishable head and feet –, but that older stelae could also be used as iconographic models in later times. She also pointed out that the analysis of the inscribed object should take precedence over palaeography to determine which inscription has been carved before or after another on the same stela: as a result, according to her, a closed-shaped alpha should not necessarily be earlier than a non-closed one but may have been borrowed from another epigraphic tradition that had developed a different writing variety.<sup>11</sup> Regarding relative chronology of inscriptions

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<sup>10</sup> For a useful overview see MARAS 2020. On Raetic writing and its chronology: MARCHESINI & RONCADOR 2015; SALOMON 2020: 273–277. For example, non-closed alpha can be observed on the Demlfeld bronze plaque (TIR IT-5), which is dated to the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (DE SIMONE & MARCHESINI 2013). Open-shaped alpha is used in the north-eastern variety of Venetic writing, but those inscriptions cannot be dated more precisely than between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. (MARINETTI 2020: 372–377). Dating is even more complex for Camunic inscriptions, which always show open-shaped alpha (MARCHESINI 2011). It might be worth noting that open-shaped alphas are also attested in 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup>-century Latin inscriptions from Rome (MARAS 2020: 941).

<sup>11</sup> TIBILETTI BRUNO 1997: 1003–1013, with remarks on TI-27, TI-34, TI-36, TI-42: “Per l’iconografia ritengo quindi che quest’epigrafe di Mezzovico sia da considerare fra quelle «attardate», o meglio con ripresa di motivi ormai poco compresi e pertanto grossolanamente interpretati o esasperati.” On TI-34: “Mi è parso ovvio [...] che la più antica fosse l’iscrizione mutila [...], poi venisse, sull’altra faccia della pietra,

engraved on the same stela, scholars have made different proposals, which also depend on their greater or lesser emphasis on either inscribed objects or palaeography.<sup>12</sup>

### The Lugano region in the Iron Age

A possible solution to these chronological problems would be to compare Cisalpine Celtic stone inscriptions with the Iron Age archaeological finds from the Lugano region.<sup>13</sup> The Cassarate Valley, corresponding to the eastern part of the area, can be used as a case study because its archaeological finds have been studied recently.<sup>14</sup> None of the Iron Age finds of the Cassarate Valley were unearthed during a systematic archaeological excavation, and many of them were discovered by chance during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many archaeological sites of the Early Iron Age are known throughout the valley, such as stray finds, dwellings, and especially cremation tombs, found either in isolation or in small groups (Golasecca II A/B–III A3). The two tombs of Pregassona

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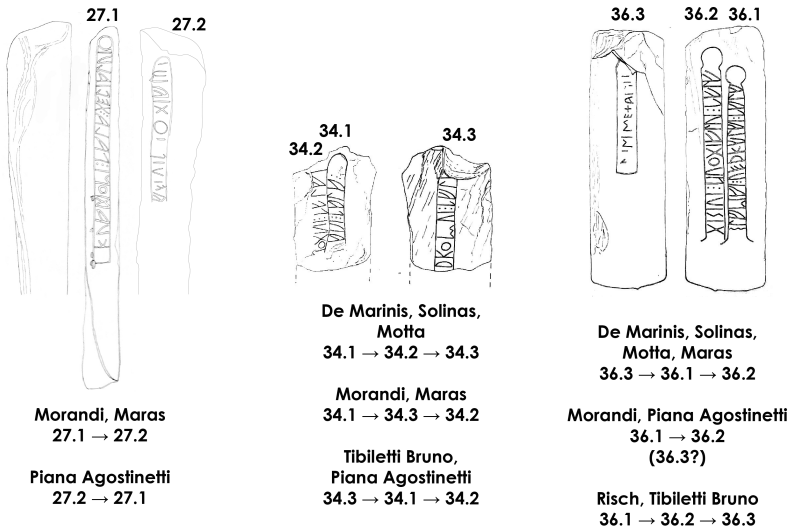
l'iscrizione nell'ominide [...] e infine l'iscrizione nel cartiglio". On TI-36: "La pietra che sembrava portare solo su una faccia due iscrizioni, l'una a fianco dell'altra, una volta smurata ha lasciato riconoscere sull'altra faccia l'esistenza di una iscrizione poco leggibile [...]. Questa faccia è rovinata, ma mi sembra anche poco sgrossata, con ondulazioni, mentre la faccia con le due figure umane è liscia, come di solito avviene quando si prepara *ex novo* una pietra per l'incisione di un'epigrafe". That was also the opinion of Ernst Risch, who discovered the third inscription on the stela (RISCH 1989: 1581–1582; cf. 1984: 26).

<sup>12</sup> Different proposals about TI-27, TI-34, TI-36: DE MARINIS & MOTTA 1990–1991: 217–218; SOLINAS 1994: 322, 331; MOTTA 2000: 200–201; MORANDI 2004: 538, 539–540, 707–708; PIANA AGOSTINETTI 2004b: 154, 157, 159–161; MARAS 2014: 81–82, 86, 88. If one considers that a stela would have been re-inscribed after a break, there may have been a time lag of a few generations between the inscriptions.

<sup>13</sup> RUBAT BOREL 2005: "Infatti nella prospettiva di una ricostruzione delle culture antiche (e questo è il caso soprattutto della protostoria) non si può prescindere da nessun dato e quelli linguistici sono importanti esattamente quanto quelli paleoambientali o antropologici. D'altro canto, ciò che noi sappiamo di queste lingue, tranne poche glosse negli autori greci e romani, viene da contesti archeologici su reperti archeologici. Perciò, se da un lato c'è bisogno dello specialista (il linguista), dall'altro è l'archeologo a contestualizzare l'iscrizione e svilupparne i risultati nella ricostruzione culturale e storica."

<sup>14</sup> DELL'ERA 2019.



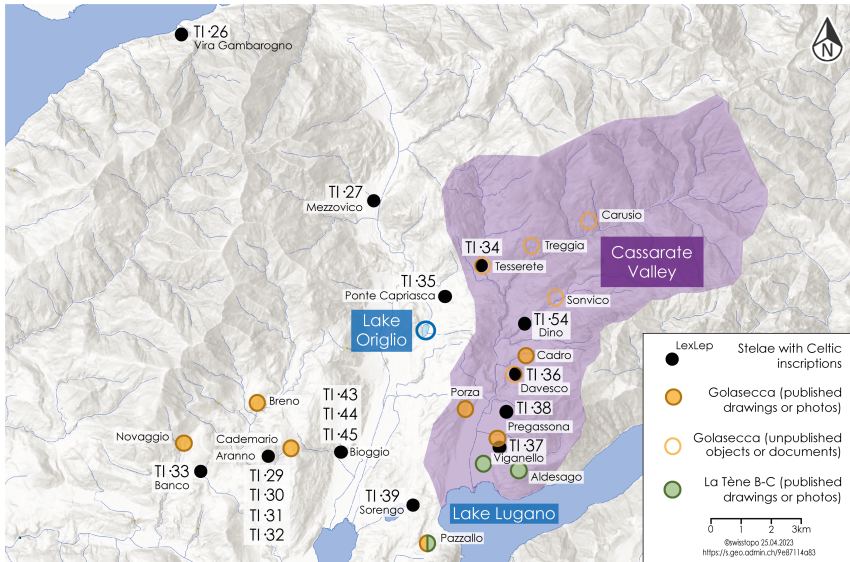


**Fig. 3:** Different proposals about internal relative chronology for Celtic inscriptions on the same stela (references to RISCH 1989, DE MARINIS & MOTTA 1990–1991, SOLINAS 1994, MOTTA 2000, MORANDI 2004, PIANA AGOSTINETTI 2004b, and MARAS 2014). From left to right: TI-27, from Mezzovico (drawing from DE MARINIS & MOTTA 1990–1991: 203, and MORANDI 2004: 708, completed after comparison with a frottage of Ernesto Oeschger from Pietra, Carta, Carbone); TI-34, from Tesserete (drawing from DE MARINIS & MOTTA 1990–1991: 208); TI-36, from Davesco (drawing from DE MARINIS & MOTTA 1990–1991: 208).

(Golasecca II A/B–III A1) and the three of Porza (Golasecca III A1) contained interesting pottery and bronze items that have been thoroughly studied and published.<sup>15</sup> Other cremation tombs were found in Davesco, Sonvico, and Tesserete; their grave goods are now lost, but they should be dated to the Early Iron Age.<sup>16</sup> The bronze parure stray find of Cadro

<sup>15</sup> Porza, Belvedere: MAGNI 1910; PRIMAS 1970: 139 + pl. 47/A, B, C. Pregassona, Viarretto: MAGNI 1921; PRIMAS 1970: 139–140 + pl. 48/A, B; SCHINDLER & DE MARINIS 2000: 165–168; DE MARINIS 2000: 369–370.

<sup>16</sup> Davesco, Comòrt, and Sonvico, Ganón: BASERGA 1936: 302. Tesserete, Morín: GIUSSANI 1902: 27–28.



**Fig. 4:** The Lugano region in the Iron Age: finds from Golasecca II to La Tène C.<sup>21</sup>

has been lost too, but it can be surely dated to Golasecca III A thanks to a photograph.<sup>17</sup> More recent finds of the Early Iron Age are still unpublished: a dwelling in Treggia (1991 and 1996) and two tombs as well as other stray finds from Carusio (1999 and later).<sup>18</sup> All those archaeological sites show that many communities of the Golasecca culture were settled in the Cassarate Valley. In contrast, Early and Middle La Tène finds are very few and confined to the lower part of the valley, near Lake Lugano: a La Tène B cremation tomb was discovered in Aldesago, and three Celtic drachmae (3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.) were by chance found in Viganello.<sup>19</sup> Inscribed stelae have been found in the whole valley, often in the same villages or neighbourhoods as Golasecca finds.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cadro, Novarét: ORTELLI 1946.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. DELL'ERA 2019: 229–231, 234.

<sup>19</sup> Aldesago: DELL'ERA 2018b. Viganello, via alla Roggia: CHIESA 1996: n° 7; NICK 2015: 1313.

<sup>20</sup> DELL'ERA 2019: 233. See also DELL'ERA 2018a: 154–155.

<sup>21</sup> On the Cassarate Valley see DELL'ERA 2019; on the other areas cf. DE MARINIS & BIAGGIO SIMONA 2000: II 394–397, and JANKE 2015: 40–42, with bibliography.

As far as is known from the relatively few published and studied sites, the tendency observed in the Cassarate Valley seems to be valid for the rest of the Lugano region as well.<sup>22</sup> The numerous Golasecca cremation tombs are well distributed in the valleys, especially in the western Lugano region, called Malcantone. The best-known site is the necropolis of Cademario (Golasecca III A1–III A3) with 31 structures (tombs and ustrina) excavated in 1939–1940.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, further contemporary tombs were discovered in Novaggio and Breno.<sup>24</sup> In Pazzallo, near Lake Lugano, a tomb dated to Golasecca III A1 was found in 1963, and another three were identified six years later.<sup>25</sup> While one of them is dated to Golasecca III A3, the other two have been dated to La Tène B1 and are the only remains in the Lugano region outside the Cassarate Valley that can be securely attributed to the Early La Tène period.<sup>26</sup>

The archaeological finds (mainly tombs) thus seem to indicate that the whole Lugano region was densely occupied during the Early Iron Age, but not in the Late Iron Age.<sup>27</sup> However, since ‘the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence’, another explanation might be possible: it could be suggested that the region was inhabited by an Early and Middle La Tène population that had different funeral practices, which left no or fewer traces in the ground – and maybe used to raise inscribed stelae on their tombs.<sup>28</sup> In the absence of archaeological contexts for inscribed stelae, the use of anepigraphic stone stelae as grave markers may be pointed out for Early Iron Age cremation tombs in the Lugano region, as well as for several inhumation tombs in the regions of Bellinzona and Locarno, of both Golasecca and La Tène cultures.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>22</sup> JANKE 2015: 40–42; cf. DE MARINIS & BIAGGIO SIMONA 2000: II 394–397.

<sup>23</sup> Cademario, Fórcora: CRIVELLI 1939a; 1939b; SILVESTRINI & CRIVELLI 1941; PRIMAS 1970: 125–126 + pl. 27/B, C–28/A, B, C.

<sup>24</sup> Novaggio: CHIESA 1938; CRIVELLI 1942. Breno: SILVESTRINI & CRIVELLI 1941: 449, 451.

<sup>25</sup> Pazzallo (1963): PRIMAS 1970: 138 + pl. 46/B. Pazzallo, Carzo (1969): DONATI 1972–1973; cf. DE MARINIS 2000: 357, 375–377, 379, 383.

<sup>26</sup> Some Celtic coin hoards from Malcantone could possibly be dated to Middle La Tène, but more probably to Late La Tène: NICK 2015: 1300–1317 (all coins are lost).

<sup>27</sup> JANKE 2015: 38, 43.

<sup>28</sup> According to PIANA AGOSTINETTI 2004b: 305–306, inscribed stelae could have taken over the function of grave goods.

<sup>29</sup> CRIVELLI 1943: 30, 45–46. In the Lugano region, anepigraphic stelae are attested in Cademario, tomb 25 – Golasecca III A3 (SILVESTRINI & CRIVELLI 1941: 446;

Additional information on human activity in the Lugano region during the Iron Age can be garnered from palaeoecological data. The sediments of Lake Origgio contain pollen and traces of charcoal. Logically, pollen values of cereals and pasture plants – which indicate human activity – are higher when those of forest trees are lower and vice-versa. Significant charcoal traces, dated by radiocarbon analyses, are related to forest clearances through burning. These very interesting data are relevant for the whole Lugano region and show great human activity in the Early Iron Age (600–500 B.C.), declining from around 450 B.C. onwards due to climate cooling. Very little human activity is attested in the Late Iron Age: anthropic indicators reached their minimum around 350 B.C. and did not significantly increase before 50 B.C.<sup>30</sup>

### **New dating proposals**

The Cisalpine Celtic stone inscriptions from the Lugano region cannot be precisely dated through palaeographic analysis alone, and even their relative chronology is not without uncertainties. Tombs from Golasecca II A/B–III A<sub>3</sub>, which corresponds to the greatest occupation of the region, are relatively often attested near places where inscribed stelae were found. In contrast, finds of La Tène B and C are extremely limited in the Lugano region. Considering that palaeoecological data attest to a low level of human activity during the Late Iron Age, a significant epigraphic production at that time seems unlikely.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, well dateable Celtic inscriptions (like graffiti on pottery) are extremely

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PRIMAS 1970: 126), and in Novaggio – one stela for two tombs (CRIVELLI 1942). Inhumation tombs with anepigraphic stelae are known in Gudo near Bellinzona (Golasecca III A<sub>2</sub>–3: SORMANI 2011–2012: 126–129) and in Solduno near Locarno (La Tène C<sub>1</sub>–2: CRIVELLI 1941a; 1941b; cf. STÖCKLI 1975: 117–128, 139–188). The regions of Bellinzona and Locarno, unlike the Lugano region, did not decline and were prosperous during La Tène B (JANKE 2015: 43–44; CARLEVARO 2018: 348–352). On the history and territory of the Lepontii, who are often identified as the Iron Age population of these regions, see DELL'ERA & GREGORI 2021: 167–174 (with bibliography). On the problem of using the term 'Lepontic' for the (Early) Iron Age Cisalpine Celtic language see LEJEUNE 1972; ABERSON et al. 2019: 22–24.

<sup>30</sup> CONEDERA & TINNER 2000: 67–69.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. DELL'ERA 2018a: 154–155; 2019: 233.

rare in Northern Italy during the same period.<sup>32</sup> Celtic inscriptions on stone stelae from the Lugano region may thus be dated to a period of time corresponding to the highest human presence in the same area, i.e. between the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the first decades of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Golasecca II A/B to III A<sub>3</sub>). However, given the problems within the relative chronology, it cannot be excluded that the inscribed stelae are the expression of a relatively short-lived local phenomenon that did not outlast the transition to the Late Iron Age.

## References

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<sup>32</sup> SOLINAS 2017; STIFTER 2020: 338–339.

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