

## Decipherment of two bronze situlas from Slovenia

Stuart L Harris, July 2021, Graz, Austria

At a conference on Celtic Archaeology in 2009, Peter Turk et al. presented two inscribed bronze situlas from Grad and Posočje in western Slovenia. They were made at Etruscan workshops around Trentino and Veneto in Italy in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC, before Rome conquered the Etruscans in 300 BC (Turk et al, 2009).

The situla from Grad was reused as a funerary urn. It describes a huge gathering of young people to court and drink 30,000 liters of wine provided by a wealthy blacksmith named Soan meaning 'War'. Ancient authors make no mention of communal courtship celebrations associated with alcoholic beverages, but these continue to this day as Oktoberfest.

The situla from Posočje was a votive offering. It carries a plea from a slave to First Maiden to remove the fetters from around their necks in order to increase the production of honey. Slovenia remains a volume supplier of honey, produced by a special bee that pollinizes seven varieties of trees. Hives are stacked together like an apartment house.

Both inscriptions are in Finnish. The script from Brad matches that of Val Camonica in the Alps of northern Italy. The script from Posočje matches that of Etruscans living in the Po Valley of northern Italy.

### Bronze situla from Grad

The situla from Grad measures 16.6 cm wide, 17.6 cm tall and holds about 3.2 liters. Other situlas with the same general shape come from Trentino, Veneto, Este and Valle di Cadore in Italy in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC.

The riveting and soldering technology matches that of Etruscans, as does the shell motif and the script.

The bronze plate has 18% tin.

The cast bronze handle attachment has 9.6% tin and 19.3% lead.

The rivets contain 15% tin and 11% lead.

The solder is a mixture of tin and lead with variable proportions of tin; 27%, 29%, 37%, 45%, 54%, 62% and 91%. Modern solder is 33-35% tin.

Copper contains significant arsenic, 0.25-0.53%.

Decoration resembles that of a bronze vessel in Raetian territory near Innsbruck.

Its syllabary closely matches three related scripts: Etruscan in Italy, Val Camonica in alpine Italy, and Tartessian in Portugal. These letters all derive from a common source in Turkey prior to 701 BC. At that time, all but a handful of the population fled an impending disaster, and took their writing with them. This population descended from refugees of Troy in Finland, and spoke and wrote in Finnish (Vinci, 1993).

Figure 1: Grad syllabary compared with three others.

	Grad	Etrus	Val Cam.	Tar-tes.		Grad	Etrus	Val Cam.	Tar-tes.
KA					PÖ	≡	≡	≡	≡
KU	⋈	⋈	⋈	⋈	RA				
MA	∩	∩	∩	∩	RI	∩	∩	∩	∩
ME	◇	◇	◇	◇	SO	◁	◁	◁	◁
NI	↑	↑	↑	↑	TA				
NU	E	E	E	E	TU	∞	∞	∞	∞
PÄ	A	A	A	A					

Rome conquered the Veneto region around 300 BC, but Val Camonica remained independent until 16 BC.

Radiocarbon dating of cremated bone fragments within the bronze situla lie between 90 BC and 10 AD.

The long inscription describes a huge gathering of young people for courtship and drinking. They consumed a thousand wizards (30,000 liters) of strong red wine supplied by a wealthy blacksmith named War (Soan), plus six containers of milk, a keg of berry wine, and six kegs of mead.

The short inscription notes that the owner of the copper bucket is also the blacksmith.

It appears that the blacksmith had a profitable business trading metal items for amphoras of red wine. These were consumed annually at a communal courship event like Oktoberfest.

Figure 2: Bronze situla from Grad. (Bozie, 2021)

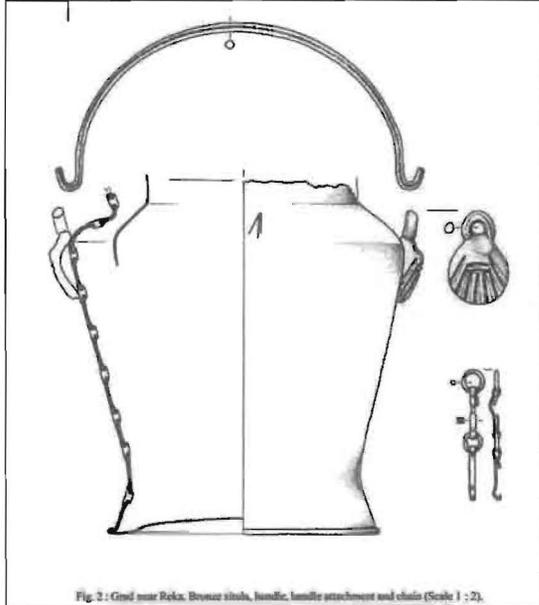
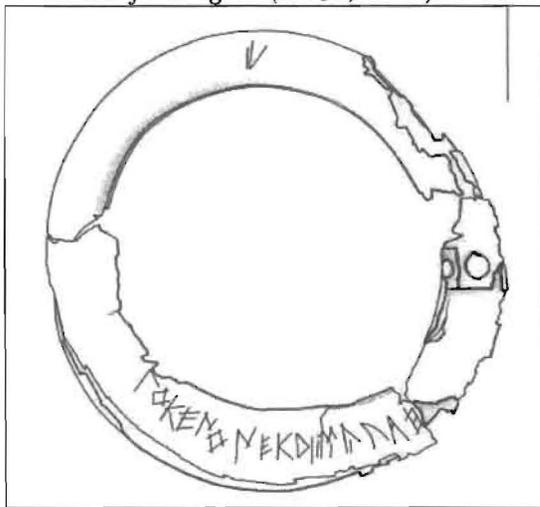


Figure 3: Inscription on bronze situla from Brad. The long inscription is written backwards and reads right to left, while the short inscription reads normally from left to right. (Bozie, 2021)



Notes

1b. A wizard (taika or noita) was an amphora or keg of strong red wine. In Minoan Crete, a pithos of 1003 liters held 32 measures of wine. Each measure was 32.3 liters. A Greek amphora held 'about 34 liters', a Roman amphora 28 liters, a pony keg 29 liters.

Figure 4: Transcription of bronze situla from Brad, reversed. The letters match Etruscan circa 600 BC. Etruscans usually wrote backwards and read right to left. This analysis reverses the text and reads left to right (Harris, 2013a).



Etruscan script

- 1a. NU-RA PÄ RI,
- 1b. NI KA TU TA
- 1c. RA SO,
- 1d. KU PÖ MA-ME,
- 1e. MA PÖ,
- 1f. KU ME NI.
2. [Kupari-ämpäri] NI RA.

Finnish decipherment

- 1a. Nu-rahvas päästi riata,
- 1b. niin kaatoi tuhat tai'aa
- 1c. rautiosta Soan,
- 1d. kuus pönttöä maito-mme,
- 1e. marjan pönttöä,
- 1f. kuus mettä niin.
2. [Kupari-ämpäri] niin rautiosta.

English translation

- 1a. Young people arrived to court,
- 1b. then drank a thousand wizards
- 1c. from the blacksmith Soan (War),
- 1d. six containers of our milk,
- 1e. a keg of berries,
- 1f. six meads as well.
2. [The copper bucket is] also from the blacksmith.

**Bronze situla from Posočje**

The bronze situla of Posočje came from a site in central Slovenia used for votive offerings from the 5<sup>th</sup> c. BC to the 4<sup>th</sup> c AD. The design of the situla resembles that from Etruscan workshops c. 400 BC.

Decoration matches that of a situla from Valle di Cadore, 100 km north of Venice. Two different writing styles suggest that the bronze workshops were not the same. Moreover, the bronze rivet has 22% tin, quite different from the Grad rivets. The sheet bronze measured 27% tin from a poor sample and was probably lower.

The inscription reads left to right. Its style matches that of Val Camonica in the Alps of northern Italy, whose people remained independent until 16 BC. It nearly matches that of Celts in Gaul, Etruscans and other descendants of migrants from Turkey prior to 701 BC (Figure 5).

Letter ME is a diamond instead of a circle, a common means of writing the letter with straight strokes.

Figure 5: Chart of Posočje script vs. contemporaries.

	Posočje	Val Camonia	Old European	Etruscan	Gaul
E	^	^	^	^	^
KA					
LO	^ ^	^ ^	^ ^	+	+
ME	◇	○	◇○	◇○	○
NE	'	'	┌┐	∨	└┘
RA					
SE	~	~	~	~	~
TA					

The votive inscription pleads for removal of their neck fetters to increase production of honey. It appears that Celts subdued and enslaved the local population, both sides speaking Finnish.

First Maiden understand; for the country people to increase honey, set free all of our necks.

Figure 6: Bronze situla fragment from Posočje. (Bozic, 2021)

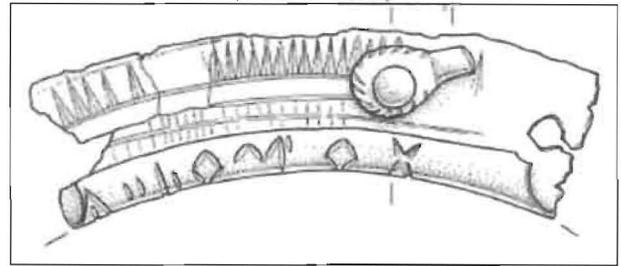
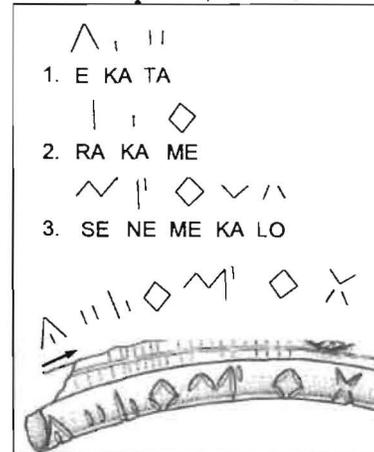


Figure 7: Transcription of bronze situla from Posočje in Old European (Harris, 2013b).



Old European script

- 1. E KA TA;
- 2. RA KA ME,
- 3. SE NE ME KA-LO.

Finnish decipherment

- 1. Eheys Kave tajua;
- 2. rahvahan kasvattaa mettä,
- 3. selvitä ne meidän kauloja.

English transation

- 1. First Maiden understand;
- 2. for country people to increase honey,
- 3. set free all of our necks.

Notes

- 2. ME expands to *medan* meaning 'honey; mead'.
- 2. 3% of the population of Slovenia raise bees. A special bee pollinates seven kinds of trees, not flowers.
- 3. KA-LO is written like a squeezed neck.
- 3. Letter KA could also be read TU, in which case the phrase becomes 'clear all of our thousands of rocks'.

## References

Harris, Stuart L. (2013a); Etruscan translations from Italy, Greece and Turkey; CreateSpace, part of Amazon.com. Deciphers Etruscan inscriptions from a wide variety of objects.

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Turk. Peter; Dragan Bozic, Jank Istenic, Nada Osmuk, Ziga Smit (2009); New Pre-Roman inscriptions from western Slovenia: the archaeological evidence; *Keltske studije II, Studies in Celtic Archaeology, papers in honour of Mitja Gustin, Protohistoire europeenne; editions monique mergoil montagnac, Montagnac, 2009; Georg Tiefengraber, Boris Kavur, Andrej Gaspari (eds).*

Vinci, Felice (1995); *Omero nel Baltico*, Polombi; translated into English and reissued as: *The Baltic origins of Homer's epic tales*; tr. by Amalia de Francesco; Inner Traditions, Rochester Vt., 2005. Vinci discovered that the List of Ships in Book II of the Iliad goes counter-clockwise around the Baltic Sea starting north of Stockholm. He found a hundred place names, in sequence; Troy is in SW Finland, near Toija.

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