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New early second-century Gaulish texts from La Graufesenque (L-143a-c)[1]

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In this article, several short texts produced by the potter L. Cosius in La Graufesenque, dating to the early 2nd century A.D., will be discussed, some of which could be Gaulish in language. Although objects bearing these texts have been known since the 19th century, to my knowledge the possible Gaulish character of their content went unnoticed so far. I became aware of them when Fritz Mitthof (Department of Ancient History and Classical Studies, Epigraphics and Papyrology, University of Vienna) asked for my assistance in the interpretation of inscriptions on Samian ware from La Graufesenque that were incomprehensible to him. On closer scrutiny, the strange 'Latin', as he thought at the time, of the inscriptions turned out to show characteristics of the Gaulish language, and made a special linguistic and philological examination necessary.

1. General Characteristics

The letters of the texts under scrutiny resemble capital script. They are unlike the Gaulish and Latin graffiti known from La Graufesenque, that is, they are not notes and records mostly for administrative purposes, scratched into earthenware in informal, cursive script,[2] but they are an integral component of the artistic composition of the objects, being moulded onto the object like other figurative and ornamental depictions and potters' stamps, and adding information to the figurative depictions also present on the objects. In this respect, the texts under scrutiny have a parallel in the tripartite Gaulish inscription L-70 from Lezoux. All texts are fragmentary at the present. One text (text A below), which in all likelihood consists of not more than three or four words, can be plausibly reconstructed and comprehended in its entirety, whereas the interpretation of the other texts (texts B–E below) is strongly constricted by their fragmentary status, so much so that often no clear statement can be made about their language. The fragments come from places all over France, Germany and Switzerland. Because of the unusual conditions of the transmission of the texts, it is not excluded that more fragments may be discovered in time to complement the currently known portions. Again, this finds a parallel in L-70 of which, to this day, three fragments of different objects and from different places in Western Europe are known.

The present discussion of the new texts relies primarily on the archaeological edition in Mees 1995, which was the most comprehensive publication about mould-signed decorated south-Gaulish Samian ware available to me. The reference numbers used in part 2 of this article have been taken from this publication. However, since the readings provided in Mees (1995: 138–139) are partly erroneous and misleading, and since the illustrations – drawings and photographs – on the relevant plates 34 and 35 are not always clear and detailed enough, additional material and information has been drawn from Déchelette 1904, Labrouse 1981, Tomasevic Buck 1991, Petolescu (1996: 193–195), Rusu-Bolindeţ 2008, Mitthof 2010 and Velescu 2010. Because the various fragments are scattered over numerous museums in Western Europe, it was not possible to undertake an autopsy of them for this article.

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2   For the graffiti from La Graufesenque, see Marichal 1988, RIG II-2, 83–146 and, as the latest contribution to the topic, the paper by Alderik Blom in the present volume of *Keltische Forschungen*.

The objects were produced in La Graufesenque (Aveyron)[3] by the artist L. Cosius[4] whose signature – applied in the same technique as the texts discussed below – can be found on many of the objects. Because of his very distinct artistic style that sets his works apart from more conventional productions, several fragments not bearing his name can be assigned to him with great confidence. L. Cosius was active during the latest period of production on the site, in the years before or around 120 A.D. (MEES 1995: 74), when the position of La Graufesenque as a centre of pottery had been superseded by places like Banassac, Lezoux, or production sites in the west of modern Germany, and the place slowly declined and came to cater only for the local market. Nevertheless, pieces produced by L. Cosius have been found from all over Western and Central Europe (Gaul, Britain, Germania, Raetia, and fragments also in Italy, Pannonia and as far as Anatolia). L. Cosius produced only bowls of the type Dragendorff 37. Plates 23–35 of MEES' 1995 book are devoted to his work. The fragments relevant for the present study are found on plates 34 and 35.

Before the texts themselves can be examined in detail, a few words must be said about their historical context. L. Cosius stands out from the typical production of the late phase of La Graufesenque in that the motifs on his products partly refer to contemporary political events, in particular to the victories of Emperor Trajan over the Dacians under king Decebalus and over the Parthians. *Decebalus* (also *Decibalus*, *Dicebalus*)[5] was the last Dacian king (ruled 87–106 A.D.). Fiercely and – for a long time – successfully, he opposed the Roman power in Dacia until, after a decisive defeat by the Romans, he committed suicide by slitting his throat lest he be captured and humiliated in Rome. Because on some fragments a male figure in the act of committing suicide with a sword is explicitly identified as Decebalus, the production of these objects can be dated securely after 106. In addition to this, those pieces that contain references to Parthians by implication postdate Trajan's activities in the east and therefore the years 116/7. If all of L. Cosius' artifacts with political messages were produced at the same time, they must all be dated to 117 or shortly

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3   See the introductory sections of Alderik Blom's article in this volume of *Keltische Forschungen* (pp. 7–47) for more information about La Graufesenque and the production of *terra sigillata* there.
4   MITTHOF (2010: 139 fn. 2) is sceptical that this L. Cosius is identical with the potter L. Cosius Virilis, whose stamp appears on vessels several decades earlier (cp.: http://www.pragris.com/texts/lcosiusvirilis.html; 22.10.2011).
5   For this name, see DANA 2006: 114–117, 121–124 and DANA 2007.

afterwards. Perhaps they were inspired by the double triumph in celebration of the Roman victories over the Dacians and the Parthians.The new Emperor Hadrian had organised this triumph in September 118 for his predecessor Trajan who had unexpectedly died before he could return to Rome. MITTHOF (2010: 150–151) has made the attractive suggestion that L. Cosius' immediate stimulus for using motifs that illustrate Trajan's exploits may have been *ludi Parthici*, i.e. circus spectacles celebrating the success in the east, spectacles that the Senate had decreed to be held annually. Whatever L. Cosius' exact motivation was, because of their unmistakable historical context the texts discussed in this article are among the most precisely datable Gaulish texts. For a more detailed discussion of the research history of the pottery series and of its historical background, see MITTHOF 2010.

2. THE FRAGMENTS

Some of the fragments are relatively large (numbers 34.1., 34.4., 35.1. in MEES 1995), but most are tiny, measuring only a few square centimetres and revealing next to nothing about the artistic context in which they were originally set. Mees makes no statement about their mutual relationships, but it is evident that some of the fragments can be grouped together, even though the extant pieces originally belonged to different objects found in distant places. Belonging to the same production series, they occasionally complement each other like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. In the following paragraphs, the textual fragments are presented in the order in which they appear in the catalogue of MEES' book (1995: 138–139),[6] but I will use my own readings which are based on the illustrations published in MEES (1995: plates 34 and 35) and TOMASEVIC BUCK (1991: 258–259).

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6   The following fragments recorded on plate 35 belong to an entirely different thematic complex: 35.5. ACTẠ[| ERCVL[| EṆ[, 35.10]Ạ |]CVL |]ṬIS (wrong Mees who reads]YIS), Add. 1 L.COSI | ACTA | ERCVLENTIS. They are all examples of the caption *acta Erculentis* 'the tasks of Hercules'. This phrase is Latin and therefore of no further interest for the present study. The Latin genitive *-entis* is rare, but not without parallels for the name *Hercules* (LEUMANN 1977: 451).

fr. 34.1.]ṬOR / /N[………..] R?[…]ḌAẸ·PART[.]Ị

  DECIBAL/ /DVSẠ[.(.)]ḄỊ

  DECIBALE

  DVMEṆVS

  [.ˀ]ṬˀV·BṚ[…]

  ]NV

  ]COVI

  ]V

This relatively large fragment, discovered in Blain/Blaen (Loire-Atlantique) in 1868 and known as 'vase de Blain', requires a more detailed discussion than the others. For a research history of this object, see the elaborate account in Velcescu (2010: 54–66). Recorded in CIL 13, 10013,39. At least two drawings of the object exist with divergences in some details which have significance for the reading (cp. Mitthof 2010: 143 fn. 16): one drawing by Jules Revelière, first published in 1903 (ill. 1), the other one by Alain Vernhet (ill. 2), apparently first published in Labrousse (1981: 64). The photograph of the fragment in Velcescu (2010: 58) does not help in identifying the controversial letters. In addition to Velcescu's photograph, I discovered three photographs of the original on the internet which, however, are also only partly suited to clarify difficult passages of the text.[7] The differences in the reading will be mentioned wherever they are relevant. The reading proposed here is provisional only until the original fragment, kept at the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires du Pays de Blain, has been subjected to a new examination, the first after more than a century (cf. also the remarks by Velcescu 2010: 65).

It seems that the decorated and inscribed area can be divided into three segments for which the figurative illustrations partly serve as structuring and separating elements:

1. On the left-hand side, there is one (or possibly two) textual segment(s) of which only]ṬOR and DECIBAL survive. The fragmentary depiction of a fighting man with a shield separates this segment from

2. the central text field which – notwithstanding the lacunae – is apparently arranged in a column of approximately 5cm width. To the right of the textual column the figure of a captive woman seems to serve as the separator from textual segment

3. which probably consists of the explanatory caption R?[…]ḌAẸ·PART[.]Ị at the very top, accompanying the depiction of captive persons beneath it.

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7 http://www.ville-blain.fr/imagecatalogue/slideshow/39, http://blaineuropa.free.fr/gallo_romain/blain_gallo_02_1.htm and http://www.id2sorties.com/vase-de-decebal-musee-de-la-feve-et-de-la-creche-blain-photo-id-sorties_4458_0.aspx (all visited Dec. 17, 2010).

Line 1: Instead of recognising three separate textual segments, Mees reads TOR N[–]RV[–] DA(cicus)E(t) PART[in the first line as one continuous sequence. That is to say, he presents the text as if TOR and N were immediately following one another or were, despite the space between them, part of one word. In fact, the two are almost 9cm apart, separated by the upper section of a figurative field. I regard it as rather unlikely that the two syllables belong to one word. On the basis of Vernhet's drawing, Mees reads V where I have put a question mark. Revelière saw no letter there or was not able to recognise one. Mitthof (2010: 148) makes the attractive suggestion to conjecture Ṣ in this place (see further below). Mees' suggestion that DA be the abbreviation of DA(cicus) 'Dacian' is quite incredible and counter to normal practices of Roman abbreviation. The letter E looks a bit unusual: the vertical hasta goes through the middle of the three horizontal hastae (the bottom one is lost in fr. 34.1., but is preserved in 35.2.). Mitthof (2010: 147) argues convincingly that this should be read as a slightly misshaped E, not as the ligature E͡T (thus, for example, Mees). L. Cosius' technique of writing – he had no special punches for the letters, but used punches for basic shapes like lines or curves to piece together each letter – favoured the chances that he failed in the creation of some letters. An emendation of the final part of the line to ARSACIDAE PARTHI suggests itself.

Line 2: Mees reads DECIBAL DVSA[, as if the two words were contiguous. In fact, they are separated by the depiction of the dying Decibal and are ca. 3cm apart. DECIBAL is probably an explanatory label in the nominative, i.e. DECIBAL(us), referring to the immediately adjacent figure of a man. Instead of]ḄỊ at the end of line 2 of segment 2, the reading]ỊṢỊ is a conceivable alternative. Traces of a letter below the lacuna between DVSẠ and ḄỊ are recognisable in Vernhet's drawing, but not in Revelière's, but it is impossible to say which letter. On the images found in the internet (see footnote 7), nothing at all can be recognised after DVSA.

Line 4: While both drawings have an Ṇ as the fifth letter, the photographs (footnote 5) show a lacuna in its stead.

Line 5: Mees reads only].BR, but the top horizontal hasta of a letter and a Ṿ or X̣ are recognisable before it in both drawings. For the letter before the Ṿ or X̣, I have tentatively chosen Ṭ, but Ẹ (thus Mitthof 2010: 144) or F̣ are equally possible. After BR, there is a hole in the object. It is impossible to say whether letters are missing at the end or not. In front of the putative Ṭ(?)Ṿ or ẸX̣, there is at best space for a single letter.

Some of the open questions about the readings of individual unclear letters can only be solved by an autopsy of the original object.
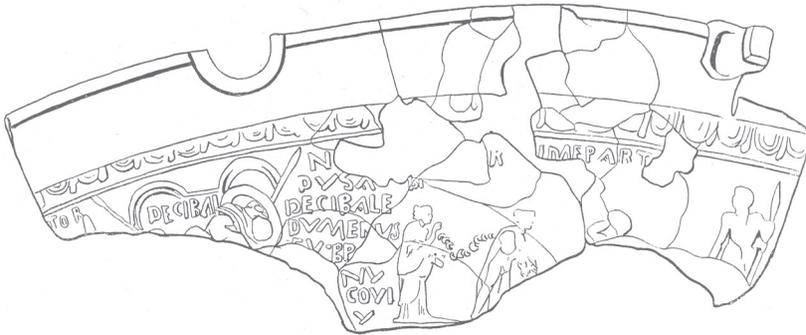
Ill. 1: Drawing of the vase of Blain by Jules Revelière (from Dechelette 1904: 214).
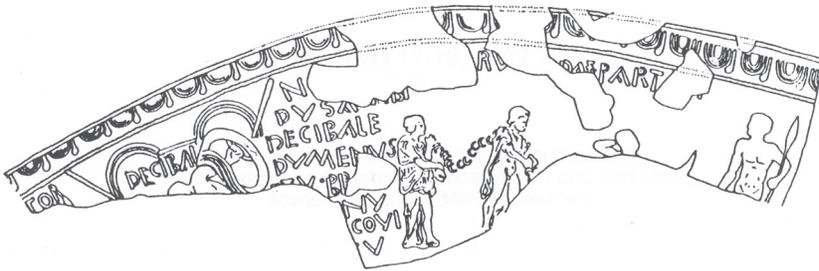
Ill. 2: Drawing of the vase of Blain by Alain Vernhet (from Labrousse 1981: 64).

fr. 34.2.   ]Ạ[

Mees reads]A[. I cannot see the letter on the photograph.

fr. 34.3.   ][.]M [.] ẠṚ SACIDẠ[

Found in Strassburg. Mees reads]AM[–] at the beginning, but I cannot see the A. On the basis of the parallel fr. Add. 2 (see below), Mitthof (2010: 144) rightly conjectures GE]ṚMẠN(I) ARSACIDA[E.

fr. 34.4.   DECIBALE·N[
                 ATEVA⁀NE

Found in La Graufesenque in 1980, see ill. 3.

Ill. 3: Drawing of fr. 34.4. (from Mees 1995: pl. 34).

fr. 35.1.   Ḷ·COSỊ
                DECIBALV (2×)
                PARTV

Found in La Graufesenque in 1979. The captions in 35.1. come from a plate of which the greatest part has been preserved. The captions have been fitted into the spaces between the figures. They do not form a continuous text. See ill. 4.

Ill. 4: Drawing of fr. 35.1. (from Mees 1995: pl. 35).

fr. 35.2.   ]Ẹ·PART HỊ[

Found in La Graufesenque in 1934. Wrongly read by Mees as]I·PARTHI[. The ornament at the top is identical to that of 34.1., suggesting identity of the mould.

fr. 35.3.   ]TV[.][
                 ]TRA[
                 ]OST[
                 ]AˀNC[
                 ][.]I[

Found in Vertault (Côte d'Or), see ill. 5.

Line 1: Mees reads only]TV[, but the V stands in ligature with the following letter which could be M or N.

Line 4: The first two letters stand in ligature. Mees reads]ANC[.

Line 5: Mees reads]NI[, but on the drawing the first letter does not look like N, rather like M.

Ill. 5: Drawing of fr. 35.3. (from MEES 1995: pl. 35).

fr. 35.4.   [.][
                 M[
                 V·B[.][
                 RAIA[.][
                 TV.TVEI[.][
                 TRASATỌ[

Found in Kaiseraugst (Aargau, Switzerland) between 1970–1974, see ill. 6. To the left of the text, two columns of heads are depicted. To the left of them, the feet and the body of a seated figure are discernible. My transcription has one line (= line 1) more than Mees' who starts with M[. TOMASEVIC BUCK (1991: 252) reads the feet of the single hastae discernible at the ends of lines 1 and 3 as I, but this is no more than conjecture.

Line 4: Mees reads RATA[, but on the photograph and in Ines Horisberger's drawing (in TOMASEVIC BUCK 1991: 258) the I is clear. TOMASEVIC BUCK (1991: 252) interprets the traces of a hasta at the end of the line as that of an N, and she believes that the sequence is part of a form of *Traianus*. This is indeed likely.

Line 5: In Horisberger's drawing, there is a dot on the base line after the first TV. On the photograph, this cannot be recognised with certainty.

Ill. 6: Drawing of fr. 35.4. (from TOMASEVIC BUCK 1989–90: 258).

fr. 35.6.   ] NVTO·[
                 ] DVSA.[
                 ]D̲ECIB̲[

Found in Clermont-Ferrand, see ill. 7. There is a space at the beginnings of lines 1 and 2. It seems as if the topmost tip of a vertical hasta can be recognised at the end of line 2, but because of the poor quality of the reproduction one cannot be absolutely certain.

Ill. 7: Photo of fr. 35.6. (from Mees 1995: pl. 35).

fr. 35.7.   ]ẒES[
                    ]ECṾ[

fr. 35.8.   ]VSO
                    ]ẠNṢ

Mees reads]ANS. I cannot see the letters on the photograph.

fr. 35.9.   ]ẠṾẸ[

Mees reads]AVE[. I cannot see the letters on the photograph.

In addition to these fragments, Mees (1995: 139) mentions another inscription without an accompanying illustration:

fr. Add. 2   ]RMẠṆ AR   SACIDAE PARTHI[

Recorded in CIL 10, 8056,3. No picture of this fragment, found in Pozzuoli in 1881, has ever been published. Mees offers the reading ARSACIDAE PARTHI[. The first word]RMẠṆ must have been forgotten accidentally.

3. Conspectus and Reconstruction of the Texts

1. Fr. 34.4 is isolated within the collection, as far as I can see. It constitutes a text of its own (= A). It will be discussed in section 4 below.

2. The large fr. 34.1. is the starting point for text B. In line with what has been said above, it seems that at least three different textual blocks or segments, B1 (left-hand side), B2 (middle column) and B3 (top right-hand side), should be recognised for this fragment, of which B2 is the longest. I am convinced that B3 is unrelated to B2 to its left because the apparent nominative *Arsacidae Parthi*, which can be reconstructed for B3 with some confidence, does not fit syntactically into the text of B2. Regarding the possible relationship of B1 and B2, things are not so clear-cut. The fragment is broken in a manner (cp. ills. 1 and 2) that renders it impossible to say whether more text stood to the left of the figure of the dying Decibalus, that is in segment B1, apart from the top line of which the three letters]TOR are preserved. Irrespective of the interpretation of the top line, the lable DECIBAL right beside the figure can be interpreted as a mere explanatory legend, like in fr. 35.1. (see below), without relationship to any other textual portion.]TOR in B1 is probably the final part of a word like *imperator*, and formed part of a text field of which at the moment nothing else is preserved, unless DECIBAL goes together with it. Neither]TOR nor DECIBAL is suspect of being anything other than Latin.[8] Consequently, they will not be discussed here.

Fr. 35.6. can be fitted in segment B2 like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle and thereby complements the text. This text adds the three letters VTO followed by a word divider after the N[of the first line.[9] Lines 2 and 3 of fr. 35.6. replicate letters that are already known from fr. 34.1. On the top section of the fragment the same ornamental band can be discerned that is seen on fr. 34.1. These two fragments are perfect matches (see ill. 8) and have therefore been cast from a single model. But this is probably not the end of the story. There is the seductive possibility that fr. 35.4. furnishes another piece of the puzzle, even though it cannot be fitted in with the same precision as fr. 35.6. Nevertheless a number of tantalising correspondences can be observed. First of all, the height of the

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8   In view of the possible Gaulish interpretation of B2 advocated further below, one might consider the possibility of interpreting *-tor* as the Gaulish medio-passive ending of the third person. But given the fragmentary state of the text, nothing would be gained by such a hypothesis.

9   Thus also Velcescu 2010: 64 and Mitthof 2010: 146.

letters and the general layout of the lines in frs. 34.1. and 35.4. are the same. As for the text, the fragment of a hasta in line 1 of 35.6. cannot, of course, be correlated with anything. The M of line 2, however, finds a match in the M of DVMENVS in fr. 34.1. While this is not yet decisive, the next line 3, V·B[.] features three consecutive correspondences with [.?]T̩?V·BṚ[…] in line 5 of B2, including the non-trivial match of the punctuation. The remaining single hasta at the end of line 3 in fr. 35.4. is compatible as a match for the R of B2. Line 4 of fr. 35.4. has RAIA[.], of which the last character could be an N (thus TOMASEVIC BUCK 1991: 252). This easily accords with the sequence]NV in line 6 of B2, the overlap being the N. In the last two lines, there is no more overlap. However, the large gaps at the beginning of lines 7 and 8 of B2 could be easily filled by the contents of lines 5 and 6 of fr. 35.4. For the present, it cannot be said with certainty whether lines 5 and 6 of fr. 35.4. are directly continued in fr. 34.1. or if one or more letters have been lost in between.
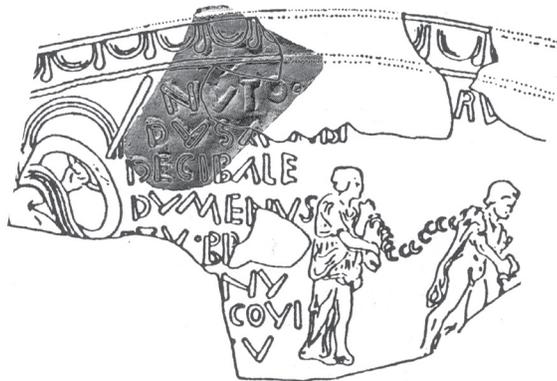
Ill. 8: Collage of fr. 34.1. and 35.6.
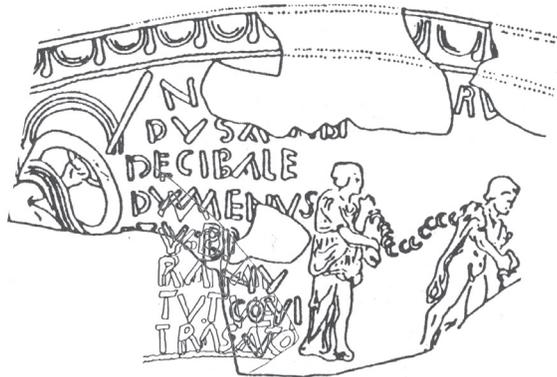
Ill. 9: Collage of fr. 34.1. and 35.4.

As remarked above, there is no exact formal match between frs. 34.1. and 35.4. like there is between frs. 34.1. and 35.6. This is strikingly demonstrated by ill. 9, where the two texts have been laid above each other in a collage. The collage was made in such a way that the M of the second and the V of the third line overlap. While this works out fine for these two lines, it does not do so for the following three lines. The text of fr. 35.4. runs across different sections of text in fr. 34.1. The layout of the text at the beginning may be similar, but it becomes blatantly dissimilar in the lower sections. Another dissimilarity that catches the eye is that in lines 2 and 3 of fr. 35.4. M and V stand in a column at the beginnings of the lines, whereas the corresponding letters in fr. 34.1. are the third letters of their respective lines. Two explanations are possible for this odd fact. The initial letters could have been cut off mechanically by the executing artisan, without regard to the coherence of the text. This could mean that the person doing it (perhaps not the original artist) did not understand the text he was manipulating and curtailed it without regard to its meaning. Alternatively, in the process of adapting the text to a different graphic environment, the artist could have drawn the text around the illustration. In that case, the lines would have begun on the left side of the illustration (now lost) and continued on the right. Finally, the accompanying pictorial motifs are very different: while to the left of B2 the dying Decibalus is depicted, fr. 35.4. seems to display a sitting woman with two rows of three (possibly female) heads each beside her.

In summary, caution is in place. The frs. 34.1. and 35.6. on the one hand and fr. 35.4. on the other hand have not been cast from the same model. They do not represent a single text in the sense of unitary contents and layout, but – at best – two recensions with different layouts of one text or perhaps two different, albeit related texts altogether. Therefore the former will be called B2, the latter C. Both will be discussed below.

The small fr. 35.2. adds the unsurprising letter H at the end of line 1 of segment B3. This is partly supported by frs. 34.3. and Add. 2. Before ARSACI-DAE, the latter two have traces of letters which most likely can be completed to GERMAN(I). In all three instances, this legend stands above depictions of captives. However, there is not enough space in 34.1.B3 for the word GER-MAN(I). So, while sharing motifs and some text, 34.1.B3 and 34.3./Add. 2 belong to two different recensions. Since both variants, ARSACIDAE PARTHI and GERMAN(I) ARSACIDAE PARTHI are clearly recognisable as Latin by their endings, they will not be discussed here.

3. The captions in fr. 35.1. form a text of their own, text D. It will be discussed in section 6 below. Because the plate is so fully preserved, it is virtually certain

that no other textual fragments belong here. At worst, a second occurrence of PARTV may have been lost.

4. Superficially, there seems to be a connection between frs. 35.3. and 35.4. in so far as the beginnings of the first two lines of fr. 35.3., TV and TRA, are also found on fr. 35.4. But the appearances are deceiving. Lines 1 and 2 of fr. 35.3. are the first lines of the text (there is a rule above line 1), whereas lines 5 and 6 of fr. 35.4. are the bottom lines of their text (there is an ornamental band beneath line 6). The TV of fr. 35.4. is followed by a T, whereas in 35.3. an oblique hasta (perhaps M or N), which cannot be squared with T, seems to follow the TV. Even though the four letters themselves are mirrored, there is a mismatch of the wider context of the two fragments and they are better treated separately. Nothing can be said with certainty about the linguistic affiliation of fr. 35.3. (= text E), except that the sequence *-ost-* should be excluded word-internally for Gaulish. All inherited sequences of voiceless dental + sibilant should surface as what is known as '*tau Gallicum*' in Gaulish, a fricative or affricate sound of not entirely clear phonetics (see Eska 1998 for a full discussion of the facts). Although the spelling ‹ST› is among the approximately two dozen possible spellings of *tau Gallicum*, it is a rather marginal possibility. In Latin, on the other hand, the sequence *-ost-* could, for example, belong to a form of *hostis* 'enemy', an appropriate word for the context. However, we cannot be absolutely sure that there is no word boundary between *-os* and *t-*. Given L. Cosius' practice in B2, a raised dot might be expected to mark the word boundary. All other sequences of letters in text D are phonotactically compatible both with Latin and Gaulish interpretations. On a very speculative note, one could toy with the idea that fr. 35.3. went together with the left-most segment of fr. 34.1, in which case we could conjecture that line 1 ended in (*impera*)TOR and line 2 began with TRA(*ianus*). Because of its fragmentary state, text E will not be discussed here.

5. Finally, the remaining small fragments (34.2., 34.3., 35.7., 35.8., 35.9.) cannot at the moment be connected with other fragments, even though the style of fr. 35.7. resembles that of fr. 35.4., i.e. small letters in tightly assembled lines. It is impossible to assign these fragments with any certainty to a language, let alone to interpret them. They will not be discussed here.

4. Text A: A Gaulish Caption on Moulded Ware (L-143a)

The text reads:

DECIBALE · N[
ATEVANE

The analysis of *Decibale* as the vocative of the name *Decibalus* is undisputed and finds further support in the analysis of *ateuane* suggested below. Strictly speaking, its linguistic ascription is unclear because vocatives in *-e* can be found in most ancient Indo-European languages (for what it is worth, theoretically it could even be Dacian). The matter is different with the other fully legible item, though. A Latin interpretation is not completely excluded. Mitthof (2010: 148) proposes "*n[± 3]a te vane*" for the entire section after *Decibale*, which could, for example, be emended to *n(ec)a te uane* 'kill yourself vainly'. However, even though the reference to self-killing would fit the context, the use of the adverb *uanē* is unmotivated. Furthermore, L. Cosius sometimes employs raised dots to separate words from each other (as indeed he does after *Decibale*; cf. also text B2), so the lack of these in *n(ec)a te uane* would be remarkable. Therefore, a non-Latin interpretation is preferable. *Ateuane* could receive a vocative interpretation, too, namely that of the Gaulish name **Ateuanos*, made up of the preverb *ate-* '*re-*, back, again', which has also an intensifying function (DLG 57), and the agent noun *-uanos* 'striker' < PC **g^{u}onos* < PIE **g^{uh}onos*.[10] This name is once attested in syncopated form as that of a potter in the area of the Bituriges Cubi, Aquitania, namely gen. *Atuani* (CIL 13, 1328; Saint-Martin-Petit). However, the resulting syntactic structure of the text would be odd. Two forms of address are not normally expected to follow each other more or less immediately and asyndetically. While the recipient of the first address *Decibale* can be identified with the figure committing suicide, there is no other figure present to whom the second name *Ateuane* could be referred. And there would be an imbalance between the two persons, one a historically important figure, the other one lost in the silence of historiography. It is therefore an alternative and more satisfying interpretation to read *ateuane* as a verb and to regard the entire sequence of L-143a as a complete sentence.

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10 With **ṷo* > **ṷa* in Gaulish, cp. Schrijver 1995: 116–130, esp. 128–130; for Celtic compound personal names with **g^{uh}onos* as second element see DLG 306–307 and Stifter forthc. b.

Since no such Latin verb exists, the most straightforward interpretation is to read it as a Gaulish 2sg imperative of a verb that consists of the same elements as the personal name **Ateuanos* just mentioned. Forms of this verb are attested, albeit rarely, in the Insular Celtic languages: OIr. *ad·goin* 'to wound again',[11] MW *adwanaf* 'to strike again'[12] (KP 362–368). Gaul. *ateuane* shows thematic inflection, as does the OIr. cognate. However, despite being now attested in three different branches of Celtic, the compound verb **ate-* 're-, back, again' + *gʷan-*[13] 'to strike, wound' need not necessarily be projected back to Proto-Celtic. The morphology of all three verbs is synchronically transparent and a compound of this type and semantics could have been formed productively at any time. Theoretically, *ateuane* could also be interpreted as the imperative of a Gaulish loan verb into Latin, i.e. **ateuanō, ateuanere*, but there are no other traces of such a verb, and borrowing of verbs is rare altogether. The only certain Latin verb rooted in Gaulish, *cambiare* 'to change', inflects as a weak *ā*-verb. Its inflection in Gaulish is unknown.

Given the probable linguistic ascription of *ateuane* to Gaulish, it is advisable to read *Decibale* as Gaulish, too. Vocatives in -*e* of *o*-stems are attested several times in the extended Gaulish corpus (*pace* LAMBERT 2003: 52): *gnate* 'son' (L-66,7), *nate* 'id.' (*Endlicher's Glossary* 21; see STIFTER 2007: 229; perhaps a literary quote from the next item), *nate, nate Synforiane* 'oh (my) son, oh (my)

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11 DIL (s.v.) records the following attestations: *adrogegonsa* 'I have struck back' gl. *repupugi* (Sg. 181a7); *atgonat cride* 'they wound the heart (again)' (*Archiv für celtische Lexicographie* 3, 297 §53); *buaidh indsci anaib adgonar go gú bretha* '?' (CIH 1146.30 = O'Curry 1606, RIA 23Q6, p. 5a) = *buadh innsci banaib atgonar go gubrethaib* (CIH 1307.34 = O'Curry 2268, Eg. 88 f. 20a) = *buadh inngi anaib adgonar* (CIH 1309.24 = O'Curry 2273, Eg. 88 f. 20b); *ruc C. furri [...] ⁊ nira gonastarsum ní athgonad sum na díaid hí* 'Cú Chulainn came upon on her […] and he did not wound her and would not wound her after that' (LL 12328 = *Táin Bó Cúailnge* Rec. II 4834); *do hathghonadh eidhre Dé* 'the heir of God was wounded again' (*Dán Dé* ii 21); *⁊ gonais Eōgan ⁊ ath-ghonais ⁊ tres-gonais Eōgan éiséin* 'Éogan wounded him and wounded him again and wounded him a third time' (*Cath Maige Léna* 1894).

12 GPC 28 and GPC II 64 record the following two attestations in a single manuscript: *e neb a wanei nyt atwenit* 'whomever he would strike, that one would not be struck again' (13ᵗʰ cent., *Book of Aneirin* 10, 13) and *nit at wanei ri guanei ri guanet* 'he would not strike again, he would strike, he would be struck' or, with some difficulty, 'he, whom he would strike, would not strike again (because) he would be struck' (id., 36, 21–22; cf. ISAAC 1996: 168; SCHUMACHER 1999: 208).

13 Unlike in the nominal form, in the verbal stem the vowel *a* of **gʷan-* continues the zero grade of the PIE root **gʷʰņ-* generalised from preconsonantal contexts. The literature about this IE root is legion, see LIV 218–219.

son Symphorianus' from the *Vita St. Symphoriani* (unless this is Vulgar Latin or Proto-Romance; see Thurneysen 1923). Indirect evidence is furnished by vocatives of personal names that were borrowed from Gaulish into neighbouring languages where they were integrated into the grammar as new '*e*-stem' nominatives, e.g. Iberian *latubaŕe* (B.1.364) < **latumāre*, *katubaŕe* (B.1.373) < **katumāre* (Untermann 1980: 48), Etruscan *eluveitie* < **elu̯ei̯tii̯e* (Vitali & Kaenel 2000), and several more.[14] It is essential to note that the non-trivial interpretation of the third word as a 2sg imperative and the undisputable vocative ending of the first word mutually support each other.

There remains to be clarified the middle, fragmentary word of the inscription. In Mees' reconstruction drawing, there is a space of approximately 3cm between the N[and the figure of a jumping lion[15] (cp. ill. 3). The space is wide enough for up to three or four letters to follow the N[. Before an attempt can be made to find concrete suggestions to fill the gap, it may be useful to consider what message the artist wanted to convey with the text from a pragmatic point of view. The inscription functions like a caption beside the illustration and thus is not unlike a speech bubble in a comic strip. Two interpretations are conceivable in the historical-narrative context suggested by the accompanying illustration, the date and the type of the object on which the inscription is found: one is the prohibition 'Decibalus, do not strike again!', derisively aimed at the dead Decibalus whose guerilla tactics had challenged the Roman power for a long time, or perhaps a slogan shouted at the dying man who impersonated the king in a gory show staged in the arena, if the illustration was inspired by circus games, as suggested by Mitthof (2010: 150–151). The other interpretation is 'Decibalus, strike/wound yourself!', prompting the king or his impersonator to commit suicide, a command no less derisive than the previous one. In a famous remark in a letter addressed to his friend Lucilius Iunior, dating to the sixties of the 1st century, the Roman philosopher L. Annaeus Seneca (ca. 4 b.c.–65 a.d.) described what the crowd would shout at the protagonists during the bloody circus spectacles in Rome: *Occide, uerbera, ure!* 'Kill, hit, burn!' (*Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales* 1,7,5). L. Cosius' caption is very reminiscent of those words and of that mindset.[16]

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14 See Stifter forthc. c for a study of the underlying process of borrowing names in the vocative.

15 The reconstructions of the fragmentary figures are fairly certain because the artist used only a limited number of recurrent punches to imprint the illustrations into the clay.

16 It is curious that another imperative in the semantic field of 'striking/wounding/killing' should be attested for Gaulish in the gloss *orge · occide* 'kill', from the Épinal glosses (KP

In case of the first interpretation, 'Decibalus, do not strike again!', it is most natural to regard the *n-* as the remains of the negative particle, most probably **ne*. For the use of *ne* in prohibitive commands in Gaulish, cp. two examples from the plate from Lezoux: *nu gnate ne dama gussou* 'now, son, do not yield to violence' (L-66,7),[17] *uero ne curri* 'but do not run' (L-66,8). The lead tablet from Larzac provides examples with 3sg imperatives: *ne · incitas · biontutu* 'let them not be *incitas*' (L-98,1b6) and repeated with an additional *-s* after the verb: *ne · incitas · biontutus* (L-98,1b11). Less secure is L-127, the ring from Thiaucourt (Meurthe-et-Moselle) which reads ADIA|NTVN|NE-NI|EXVE|RTIN|INAP|PISET|V. If it is segmented *Adiantunne, ni exuertinin appisetu*, a 3sg imperative *appisetu* 'let see' would be preceded by the negative particle *ni*. On the tile fragment from Grafenstein (Carinthia; L-95), in line 3 *ne · saḅiṇes* (or *saḍi.ịs*, or any variant thereof) the reading of the second word is uncertain (autopsy D. Stifter). Therefore, it cannot be said with certainty that it contains a negative command, which actually would not be expected in the context, a kind of account, in the first place.

The other interpretation, 'Decibalus, strike/wound yourself!' requires some kind of strategy of expressing the object of the action. The verb *ateuane* has an active, not a middle ending. Therefore a pronominal strategy to express the object is expected. This could either be a reflexive pronoun or a plain personal pronoun. No suitable reflexive pronoun beginning with *n-* is known to me in a Celtic language. Rather, ordinary personal pronouns typically occur in such contexts in Insular Celtic. It is conceivable that Gaulish, via Proto-Celtic, had inherited PIE **te* as the accusative case of the enclitic 2sg pronoun; alternatively, Gaulish could have replaced the inherited form by **tŭ*, originally proper to the nominative, thereby giving up the formal opposition between subject and direct object. This is the direction that Irish must have taken in its prehistory. One possible way of utilising either variant for the present text is to reconstruct **nu(·)te/tu | ateuane*. For the sentence-initial position of *nu* 'now', one may compare the sentence *nu gnate ne dama gussou* 'now, son, do not yield to

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497, DLG 244). The gloss lacks any context and remarkably appears among otherwise Old English glosses. Various scenarios are conceivable: some of the Gaulish glosses in Endlicher's Glossary are clearly taken from literary sources like historical or hagiographical works (cp. the remarks on *nate* above). Perhaps *orge* is from a lost saint's life in which, like in the *Vita Symphoriani*, a Gaulish or Gallo-Latin phrase had been inserted to add local flavour. Alternatively, it could have been taken from a genre similar to that of *ateuane*, that is to say, from a text that stood in some relation to circus games in Gaul.

17 Differently about *ne dama* McCone 1996: 113 and KP 262.

violence' (L-66,7), quoted above. I am aware of two more occurrences of the – possibly sentence-initial – sequence of letters *nu°* in Gaulish: in the case of *nuana* in the Châteaubleau tile (L-93,7), it is by no means certain nor, indeed, obvious that it is a sentence-initial particle.[18] For the other possible instance, *nuto·* on fragment B2 of L. Cosius' work, see the considerations further below. Unlike Old Irish *no·*, which is most probably a direct cognate,[19] *nu* in L-66 is clearly not a meaningless dummy host for enclitics; neither can it be regard as such in the phrase reconstructed here. Even though its semantics in L-66 may be somewhat attenuated, the particle manifestly fulfils some pragmatic function. Because its appearance in Gaulish was clearly optional, it may be surmised that its occurrence depended on the intentions in the discourse, i.e. the stylistic choices of the speaker. It probably connects the contents of the present sentence to that of the previous one, either in a consecutive or an adversative sense. At the same time, it is – in connection with the vocative and the imperative – exhortative in regard to the addressee *nate*. Sentences like this may highlight one avenue along which the development of *nu* to a grammaticalised particle to host clitics may have proceeded in the prehistory of Irish.

An even more speculative variant of the pronominal interpretation may be considered, namely to emend **Decibale, nu a-te uane*. Under this analysis, *nu* fulfils the same function as laid out above. The sequence *ate*, however, would not represent the PC preverb **ati*, but would combine two elements, the particle **ad* or **a*[20] followed by the enclitic object pronoun *te*; *uane* is again the 2sg imperative of the simple verb 'to strike, wound'. This particle **a(d)* would be identical with MW and MBr. *a*, which serves as a dummy host for enclitic pronouns in those languages. Stefan Schumacher (pers. comm.) suggested that this particle go back to adverbially used **ad* 'additionally', that is to the etymon **ad*, which is used in Celtic, Italic and Germanic as a local preposition and preverb. However, the lack of a word separator between *a-te* and *uane* (if the two, resp. three elements were indeed separate words in the grammars of the speakers) speaks against applying this interpretation to the present text. Imperatives have a propensity to stand at the heads of clauses, but forms of

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18 Cp. my entirely different speculations about the form in STIFTER 2009: 233–236.

19 Alternatively, it has been suggested (SCHRIJVER 1997: 159–161) that *no·* is related to the MW so-called 'affirmative particle' *neu(t)*, in which case it cannot be directly related to Gaul. *nu*. I want to address this rather complex question in a separate study.

20 With loss of final *d*, which may be regular in Gaulish according to SCHRIJVER 2007: 357–360. In Gaulish compounds, the *d* is preserved (DLG 31), e.g. *Adiantus*, *Adnamatus*, *Adbogius*.

address can appear before them because of the very natural exigencies of pragmatics, and sentence particles like negators and clitic pronouns may also precede them. Irrespective of how we emend the fragmentary second word N[in the text, the position of the imperative *ateuane* not at the head of its clause is fully warrented under any of the proposed analyses.

5. Texts B2 (L-143b) and C (L-143c)

Text B potentially contains Gaulish language remains. The sequences TOR and DECIBAL in segment B1, which were above argued to be separate from the rest of the text and which are too short to allow for any linguistic interpretation, are omitted from the examination, as well as the fragmentary line R?[…] DAE·PARTHI that constitutes segment B3 and that probably contains the Latin name of the Parthian dynasty. What remains, is text B2. Complemented by fragment 35.6., it (= L-143b) can be constructed as follows:

NVTO·[…]
DVSA[.]ḄI (*or*]ỊṢỊ)
DECIBALE
DVMENVS
[.ˀ]ṬˀV·BR[…]
         ]NV
      ]COVI
       ]V

Because of its fragmentary state, little in this text permits a reliable analysis beyond commenting upon each element individually. An answer to the question whether or not this fragment can be ascribed to Gaulish can thus only emerge from accumulating more or less disjointed pieces of evidence, rather than from a single overarching interpretation.

Line 1: From the point of view of Latin, NVTO· could be understood as the 1sg verb *nūtō* 'I nod', or as the ablative of the past participle of *nuō* 'to nod' (e.g. in an *ablatiuus absolutus*), or as a vulgar *o*-stem ablative 'with/by a nod' of the *u*-stem noun *nūtus* 'nod'. I dare say that neither solution leads to a satisfactory beginning of a sentence. If interpreted as Celtic, *nuto* is formally reminiscent of the OIr. verb-initial sequence *nod·* < **nutu-*. OIr. *nod·*, which is typically sentence-initial, consists of the so-called empty particle or dummy preverb *no·*

< *nu* and the 2sg infixed pronoun -*d* < *tu*. So the similarity of the present form may be coincidental because it would require the lowering of final *u > o* in Gaulish, a change for which there is otherwise not much evidence before late antiquity. A rather similar preform *nu(-)te/u* was suggested as one possible reconstruction for fragmentary *n[…]* in text A (= L-143a) above. However, even if there was some parallelism with text A, it could not extend beyond the initial particles. There is not enough space available in B2 for *ateuane*, the verbal form of A, neither to the left nor to the right of *nuto·*. Alternative to reading it as a complex of preverbal host + clitic pronoun, one could think of a sequence of the particle *nu* and the preverb *to-*. In Irish, the use of the two in one verbal form would be mutually exclusive,[21] but this may have been a special development of Irish and need not have been the case in Gaulish, in particular if *nu* had still retained its semantic independence as a temporal adverb for 'now'.

Line 2: It has been suggested that DVSA be the final part of the placename *Sarmizegedusa*, the capital of Decibalus' Thracian kingdom (TOMASEVIC BUCK 1991: 256, a suggestion going back to Adrien de Longperier in 1870, cf. VELCESCU 2010: 58 fn. 159 and 63). However, there is not enough space in the inscription, neither to the left of *dusa* nor at the end of the preceding line,[22] for the missing portion of the word. At least some of the missing nine letters could be expected to show up somewhere on the preserved part of the inscription, but there is no trace of them. To all extents and purposes, it seems as if *dusa* were the beginning of a word. There are no native Latin words starting with *dusa*. From a Gaulish point of view, such a word could be a compound noun or adjective with the negative prefix *du-* or *dus-* 'bad' as the first member and an element starting with *(s)a°* as the second member, or a prepositional phrase with the preposition *dū* 'to, for' (cp. OIr. *do*, OW *di*). Depending on the reading, the final letters of the line could be interpreted as the Gaulish dative/instrumental plural ending -*bi*, or as the dative -*isi* of an s-stem or the ending of a 2sg verb, both from earlier *-esi*.

Line 3: *Decibale* could be the Latin or the Gaulish vocative of the name *Decibalu/os*.

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21 The OIr. dummy preverb *no·* can only appear when there is no other preverb, like *to-*, present in the verbal form.
22 The lacuna which occupies the end of the preceding line was probably taken up for the greatest part by the name [A]R[SACI]DAE. In any case, the space would not be wide enough for the required SARMIZEGE.

Line 4: From a Latin perspective, DVMENVS could be the final portion of *diadumenus* 'wearing a diadem' (MITTHOF 2010: 148), but there is no trace of the required *dia-* anywhere to be seen. Most previous commentators regarded *dumenus* as a vulgar form of *dominus* (see the literature assembled by VEL-CESCU 2010: 59–63), but this finds no support in the development of Vulgar Latin in Gaul where *o* remained as such. If the interpretation is based on Gaulish, *dumenus* can be analysed as a compound of the pejorative prefix *du-* ← PIE **dus-* 'bad' and *meno-* 'minded', a cognate – albeit with different stem-formation – of Greek δυσμενής, Old Avestan *dužmanah-* 'hostile', Sanskrit *durmanas-* 'sad, sorrowful', and the negative counterpart, meaning 'malicious, wicked (malveillant)', of the name *Sumena* for which Delamarre proposed the meaning 'la bienveillante' (DLG 283). If *dumenus* is a Gaulish adjective or name in the nominative singular, its proper Gaulish ending **-os* must have been replaced in writing by Latinate *-us*. Otherwise, *-us* could either stand for the *u*-stem nominative or the *o*- or *u*-stem accusative plural.

Line 5: The three largely illegible letters at the beginning could conceivably be the remains of Latin *rex* 'king' (cf. VELCESCU 2010: 59, 63; see also the discussion in chapter 2); the alternative reading [.]TV would only be compatible with the ablative of the rare Latin word *itus* 'going, gait', a very unlikely solution. Under a Gaulish interpretation, the form could, for example, be emended to the imperative **itū* 'let him go!', but ultimately the form is too fragmentary to be of great use (see also further below). There is a clear word-separator between this and the next word which breaks off after BR[. Inherited words beginning with *br-* are exceedingly rare in Latin. DE VAAN's etymological dictionary of Latin (2008: 75–76) lists only two such headwords (*breuis* 'short' including its derivative *brūma* 'mid-winter', and *brūtus* 'dumb'). Dictionaries of classical and late Latin contain more such words because over time their number was added to by loans mainly from Greek, but also from Gaulish. Gaulish, on the other hand, like any Celtic language, has a great number of inherited words with *br-*. MATASOVIĆ's etymological dictionary of Proto-Celtic (2009: 72–82) lists over thirty of them. Although it is no proof, it is noteworthy that the statistical chances for a word beginning with *br-* are higher to be Celtic than to be Latin.

Lines 6 & 8, which are very fragmentary due to the large-scale loss of the initial letters, seem to end in words ending in *-u*. A possible third such word was seen earlier in line 5. Such words are rare in Latin where they could only represent case forms of *u*-stem nouns. In Gaulish, such words must have been very frequent, as final *-u* would have appeared in a variety of categories (dative/abla-

tive/instrumental of *o*-stems, instrumental/ablative of *u*-stems, nominatives of *on*- and *ū*-stems, 1sg of thematic verbs, 'future' imperatives in < *-*tōd*, to name but the most salient ones). Although it is impossible to make more precise statements about]NV and]V in lines 6 and 8 (but see further below for]NV), their origin in Gaulish is more probable than one in Latin. At best, it could be hypothesised that all forms in -*u* are Latin words ending in -*us* with vulgar loss of the final -*s*, like possibly in *Decibalu* and *Partu* in text D (but see below for a different explanation of them). However, *dumenus* with retained final -*s* in L-143b speaks against this possibility.

Line 7:]COVI stands at the end of the line and could thus be the end of a word. There are no Latin words ending in anything resembling this sequence.[23] In Gaulish, the word-final sequence -*coui* could have arisen in several contexts, e.g. as inflectional forms of nominal formations ending in *-*ouio*-. Moreover, on the lead tablet from Chamalières (L-100), line 7 contains the sequence *etic se couitoncnaman*, in which *etic* is the connector 'and', *se* is probably the demonstrative 'this, that'; *couitoncnaman*, which is written in *scriptura continua*, is usually split into *coui*, which resembles the word found in our present text, and *toncnaman*. By its position in Chamalières, *coui* could be an adverb or a pre- or postposition. If, however, in L-143b *coui* is part of or the start of a word that continues into the next line, it could be a vulgar byform of Latin *conui*-, with a wide range of possible interpretations, e.g. *conuictus* 'overcome, conquered' (cp. VELCESCU 2010: 59). However, a Gaulish interpretation is not ruled out in that case, either, e.g. *couiros* 'true' (DLG 128).

In summary, there is nothing in this fragmentary text that makes a Latin interpretation inevitable. Instead, a Latin analysis is excluded or at least very difficult for several items, whereas on the other hand analyses on the basis of Gaulish often suggest themselves, be it because of typically Gaulish phonotactics (initial *br*-, final -*u*), or because of sequences that are reminiscent of Gaulish or Old Celtic morphology (*nuto,]coui*, compounds in *du(s)*-). Unfortunately, the deplorable state of the text does not allow for any more detailed interpretation.

Now for an even more speculative text. As argued in chapter 3 above, there is the possibility for a partial textual overlap between the text just examined, L-143b (= B2 + fragment 35.6.) and fragment 35.4. This constructed, hybrid text C that is the product of this overlap will be given the siglum L-143c, even

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23   http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/resolveform?type=substring&lookup=cov&lang=la.

though it is, by necessity, to a certain degree identical with L-143b. The text in italics has been added from L-143b.

NVTO·[…]
DVSA[.]ḄI̦ (or]I̦ṢI̦)
DECIBALE
DVMENVS
[.ˀ]ȚˀV·BR[…]
    RAIA*NV*
  TV(.)TVEI[.ˀ]*COVI*
  TRASATO[.ˀ]*V*

Only those sections that diverge from L-143b will be discussed in the following. Line 6: The overall cultural and historical context of L. Cosius' production of Samian ware suggests strongly that RAIA[.] is part of the name of Emperor *Traianus*. If]NV of B2 belongs here and forms the end of the word – neither of which can be demonstrated with ultimate certainty – we are either looking at an instance of loss of *s* if the name is in the nominative, or the form is a Gaulish dative/instrumental/ablative. It is unclear where the missing *T* of *Traianu°* is. It was said earlier that text C does not necessarily presuppose the same layout as B2, so the *T* could have stood at the end of the preceding line or to the left of the accompanying illustration. The interpretation of line 6 as the Latin name *(T)raianu°* does not stand in the way of identifying the language of text C as Gaulish since the name of the emperor was surely borrowed into the vernacular language of Gaul.

Lines 7 & 8: The words of the last two lines of text C, TV.TVEI[and TRA-SATO[, do not look like Classical Latin. It is at best possible to read them as non-classical Latin: *trasato* could be vulgar for *trānsāctō*, the sequence *tutue* is once found epigraphically as part of the verb *restutuerunt* instead of classical *restituerunt* (CSIR-D 4-3, 301). TV on its own could be the 2sg personal pronoun *tū* in either language. If, like perhaps in RAIA[.] in the preceding line, a letter had been cropped before the initial TV, this may be compared to [.ˀ]ȚˀV in line 5 of L-143b. Otherwise, the same considerations apply to it as to other words ending in -*u*, mentioned above. A word beginning with *tue*- is only compatible with forms of Latin *tueor* 'to look, gaze, observe, etc.'. For Gaulish or Celtic, no appropriate words come to mind. Whatever the final part of the form, *tras*- could be the Gaulish equivalent of Latin *trans*- 'across' (cp. Schumacher forthc.).

In conclusion, it must be remembered that the combined text C is only a hypothetical possibility. The outward appearance of text C speaks against regarding its language as Classical Latin. Some of the forms could be explained under the assumption that the text, or at least some words, are Gaulish. However, a strongly 'vulgarised' variant of Latin cannot be ruled out, either. In any case, the question of the language of 35.4. (= text C = L-143c) has to be left open for the time being.

6. Text D: Two Gallo-Latin Captions?

The reference to Decibalus and to a *Parthus* 'a Parthian' on the same object (fr. 35.1.) places the scene into the final years of Trajan or the early years of Hadrian, after Trajan had successfully completed his campaigns against the Parthians in the East. The illustrations on the plate include the twice repeated image of a man committing suicide and the twice repeated image of a naked man between wild animals, lions and bears. The man committing suicide is familiar from other objects of L. Cosius' production, and he is duly identified by the caption DECIBALV in both instances. Only one of the two depictions of a naked man is accompanied by the caption PARTV. Were it not for the missing -*s* in all three forms, nothing would speak against reading the inscriptions as Latin. The absence of final -*s* has two possible explanations, a graphical and a linguistic one. According to the graphical explanation, L. Cosius had to leave away the final -*s* because he had run out of space. All three captions are written into the free spaces between the human and the animal figures. L. Cosius' technique of writing was not to use special punches for the letters, but to put the letters together with punches for basic graphic elements like strokes and curves. Since, therefore, each letter could differ from every other, the artist may have found it difficult to properly plan the captions and just fitted in what the space allowed. In this sense, the forms ending in -*u* could be mere abbreviations for the full ones ending in -*us*, a strategy known from coin legends, another genre where only limited space was available (LAMBERT 1997: 402–405).

From a linguistic point of view, one could be tempted to explain the words in -*u* as *sprachwirklich* forms that displayed the loss of final -*s*. However, if the absence of -*s* reflects a linguistic phenomenon, what language does it belong to? Western Latin resp. Romance, unlike the vulgar variant of Latin in the East (i.e. in the Balkans and in Italy), did not lose final -*s* (VÄÄNÄNEN 1966: 77–81). In STIFTER forthc. a, I expressed the opinion that the loss of final -*s* was

a feature of the lower registers of Middle Gaulish (i.e. from the 1st century A.D. onwards) that in conjunction with the sociolinguistic demise of Gaulish slowly percolated to all registers. In the potters' graffiti from La Graufesenque, dating to the middle of the 1st century, around 15% of the relevant forms, mainly nominatives, lack final -*s* (MARICHAL 1988: 68–70), even though no rules for its absence or presence can be determined. The more the position of Gaulish in society eroded in the face of the prestigious language Latin, the more it must have become acceptable to use lower-register features even in higher styles. In the meantime, new evidence in the form of a late-2nd-century Gaulish inscription from Rezé at the mouth of the River Loire has come to light that supports this view. The text, which seems to be a business account and which is therefore likely to represent spoken, everyday language, shows consistent loss of final -*s*. I have tried to show that part of L. Cosius' works belongs to the linguistic environment of Gaulish. It should therefore not be surprising to find vulgar Gaulish influence, like the loss of final -*s*, even in Latin texts. If the forms *Decibalu* and *Partu* have to be explained linguistically and not graphically, I regard these *s*-less nominatives as Gaulicisms, i.e. as fundamentally Latin words that underwent phonetic rules of Middle Gaulish.

7. EVALUATION

I hope to have adduced enough evidence to demonstrate that of all the texts presented in this article, text A (L-143a) is certainly Gaulish. There are a number of indications that text B2 (L-143b) is also Gaulish, but a definite proof must be postponed until more fragments of it are discovered. The linguistic ascription of those sections of text C (L-143c) that are not shared with B2 (if the two belong together at all) is even more uncertain, but Gaulish is a possibility. In case of text D, the language is best identified as Latin, but perhaps with linguistic influence from Gaulish. Finally, the linguistic ascription of text E is entirely unclear.

The significance of the Gaulish or possibly Gaulish texts for the external history of the Gaulish language and for its sociolinguistic position in the Roman imperial period, especially in regard to its everyday use, cannot be overestimated. The historical setting, which is directly reflected in the motifs depicted on the objects, makes them the most precisely datable Gaulish texts. If MITTHOF's hypothesis (2010: 146–147) is correct that L. Cosius was inspired for his illustrations by circus games, either ones the artist had witnessed himself or ones

he had heard about, further exciting hypotheses open up. Mitthof mentions the practice in the Roman arena of having wooden tablets (*tituli*) carried around that commented upon the performances or that contained slogans which the crowd was encouraged to pick up and shout at the performers, and he explicitly links such *tituli* and slogans with the captions on L. Cosius' pottery. I want to go a step further: there is the distinct possibility that some of L. Cosius' captions were not only *inspired by* events in the arena, but perhaps they directly *reproduce* Gaulish *tituli* displayed in circus games held on Gaulish soil. *If* this is the case, this would furnish direct evidence for the use of Gaulish in a Romanised public context at the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. The very fact that L. Cosius produced objects like these further implies that in the first quarter of the 2nd century A.D. Gaulish must have been sufficiently alive and that there must have existed a stratum of educated Gauls who were able to read Gaulish, to warrant the industrial production of Gaulish-inscribed souvenirs, a fact borne out also by the other industrially produced item known today, L-70. The texts are also a cultural expression of a Gaulish population identifying itself with the fates of the Roman empire, a Gaulish population that is therefore ideologically and politically Romanised, even though it still adheres to its vernacular language.

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