

Winfried Kumpitsch[†], Verena Reiter, Wolfgang Spickermann

Celtic divine names in Latin inscriptions from *Germania* and *Raetia*. A digital edition

1 The project and its aim

Since 2017, the Department of Classics, specifically the Ancient History and Epigraphy branch, under the leadership of Wolfgang Spickermann, has been conducting a research project on Celtic divine names. Initially focused on Germania Inferior (Phase I),¹ the project has now been extended in two subsequent phases to Germania Superior and the neighbouring region of Raetia (Phases II and III), with funding from the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).²

This research is closely linked to the largest international project dedicated to the study of Celtic divine names on Roman inscriptions – the F.E.R.C.AN. (Fontes Epigraphici Religionvm Celticarvm Antiquarvm) project of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW). The aim of this broader initiative is the comprehensive collection, analysis and re-edition of epigraphic monuments bearing Celtic divine names.³

Each inscription is assigned a handle.net entry and is linked to EDCS, EDH, and Trismegistos databases. However, the project's focus on Celtic divine names does not imply the existence of a uniform Celtic religion or a homogenous Celtic cultural area. Rather, this focus represents a pragmatic approach to defining the research scope.⁴

In this short article, we aim to outline the project, its research objectives, and the twofold approach to publishing the edition. Additionally, we will present some of our preliminary findings from Phase II of the project.

2 The research area

Our research aims to provide a comprehensive collection and documentation of epigraphic evidence containing Celtic divine names. This includes both monumental inscriptions and the so-called *instrumentum domesticum*, not only to establish a solid

¹ For the linguistic analysis of the theonyms from Lower Germany, see de Bernardo-Stempel 2022; for the cults of female goddesses, see Schmölzer 2023.

² Cf. <http://gams.uni-graz.at/context:fercan> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

³ For F.E.R.C.AN., see Hainzmann 1997/99, 2001, 2013; see also the critical remarks by Wiegels 2016.

⁴ See Petermandl/Schmölzer/Spickermann 2019.

Note: This article was completed shortly before the sudden and unexpected passing of Dr. phil. Winfried Kumpitsch MA. We dedicate it to his memory with gratitude for his enduring commitment to scholarship.

foundation for future research projects with similar interests but also to gain new insights into religious phenomena that emerged in regions where different cultural and religious influences intersected.

Accordingly, the main research questions and areas of interest are:

- I. Whether a given Celtic divine name represents the actual name of a deity or merely an epithet for, or a translation of, a Roman goddess or god.
- II. The geographical distribution of Celtic divine names and their potential connections to cult practices within material-cultural environments, as well as broader social norms. This includes, but is not limited to, considerations of ethnicity, gender and social backgrounds of worshippers, as well as the context in which worship took place.
- III. The role of these deities in the religious and socio-political life of the populace and how their significance evolved over time.

During Phase II, the study area was initially limited to the military zone on the left bank of the Rhine in Upper Germany, specifically the region around Mainz and the territories of the Treveri, Vangiones, Nemetes and Triboci. This area was selected due to its comparable situation to the previously examined province of Lower Germany, where the local Celtic population coexisted with incoming Germanic groups from the right bank of the Rhine, alongside Roman soldiers and civilians, as well as individuals migrating from inner Gaul.⁵

However, as the project progressed, the study area was expanded to include the Roman-controlled territories on the right bank of the Rhine, which had originally been excluded. This expansion was prompted by the realisation that the Rhine did not constitute a strict religious or cultural boundary; rather, there were strong connections between the areas on either side of the river. This made it valuable to investigate the spread of Celtic-named deities across a broader, militarised zone.

In phase III, the research focuses on the territories of the Lingones, Sequani, Rauraci and Helvetii – regions with relatively little evidence of military presence or of groups originating from the right bank of the Rhine. In terms of population dynamics, this civilian, Celtic-dominated area stands in contrast to the largely militarized frontier zone analysed in Phases I and II. Meanwhile, the province of Raetia presents another form of cultural division, with the Celtic populations of the Alpine foothills – namely, the four tribes of the Vindelici – contrasting with the Raetian-dominated Alpine region. The fate of the pre-Roman population in the Alpine foothills remains a subject of scholarly debate.⁶

5 On the timing of the migration, see Nesselhauf 1951, 78; see also Wilmanns 1981, 96–97, esp. n. 331; Frezouls 1990, 495; Raepsaet-Charlier 1998, 161.

6 Dietz 2004a; Dietz 2004b; Dietz 2007; Kaiser 2003; Neumann 2003; Zanier 2007.

By the late 1st century AD, following the establishment of the two German provinces and Raetia, these diverse population groups had largely coalesced into a new provincial society. This society was no longer structured around pre-Roman tribal identities but instead defined itself through its affiliation with newly created Roman administrative units, namely the *civitates* and urban centres. The process of Romanisation⁷ was accompanied by what has been termed *detribalisation*: former tribal structures ceased to play a significant role during the imperial period.⁸ The elite classes became increasingly engaged in agriculture and trade. Marking a transition from a warrior society to one of Romanised, civilian citizens. The shift likely involved profound cognitive and psychological changes in how these societies understood themselves and their role within the empire.⁹

The project treats provincial borders as administrative constructs rather than rigid cultural boundaries. Therefore, reconstructing their exact locations is of secondary importance. Instead, the primary aim is to document all relevant material comprehensively, including inscriptions from sites with disputed provincial affiliation or from so-called *Grenzheiligtümer*¹⁰ (border sanctuaries), which are also of particular interest.

3 The online edition and the PATRIMONIVM-Editor

As in Phase I, the collection of inscriptions from Phase II has already been published as a searchable digital database,¹¹ while the historical analysis will be published in print once the ongoing third and final phase, *Celtic Divine Names in Latin Inscriptions in the Southern Region of the Germania Superior and in the Province of Raetia. Religious Phenomena in a Cultural Contact Zone* (PAT1134324), has been concluded.

In line with the project's objectives, the online edition of Phase I has been updated (<https://gams.uni-graz.at/context:fercan>), incorporating 140 epigraphic sources from the northern research area of Germania Superior that contain Celtic divine names, bringing the total to 590 testimonia. Each inscription is presented with both a majuscule and a minuscule transcription, along with German and English translations. In addition to standard epigraphic data – such as material, date, place of discovery, and relevant scholarly literature – each entry includes a commentary discussing the Celtic divine name(s) mentioned in the inscription, as well as aspects requiring further explanation. Furthermore, each record is supplemented with one or more

⁷ On the Romanisation process, see especially Woolf 1998.

⁸ Nierhaus 1977.

⁹ Roymans 1990.

¹⁰ Spickermann 2003, 30–31; 260–261.

¹¹ Cf. <https://gams.uni-graz.at/context:fercan> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

photographic images of the object, where available. Several new photographs were taken during the project, ensuring that all iconographic details related with the epigraphic testimonia of Celtic divine names, and in some cases even depictions of the worshipped deity, are thoroughly documented. Iconography and archaeological aspects are also explored in dedicated commentaries.

A new feature introduced in Phase II – the ‘shopping cart’ function – now allows users to print or save multiple inscriptions as PDF files simultaneously, including all the associated information outlined above.

The online edition provides a range of useful tools, enabling searches not only for Celtic divine names and theonymic formulas but also for geographic names, names of dedicants (by *nomen gentile* or *cognomen*), religious and military aspects mentioned in the inscriptions, as well as the locations where the inscriptions were discovered or the material of the objects. Additionally, the geographical distribution of find spots is visualised using a GIS-based map. The advanced search function, which accommodates various criteria, grants access to source material that is not available in other electronic databases. For instance, users can search for buildings associated with cultic practices or according to archaeological classifications – options not typically offered by other databases. Similarly, military ranks mentioned in the inscriptions can be quickly retrieved through a dedicated search function.

The comprehensive GIS-based online maps provide an overview of how relevant divine names are distributed across Germania Inferior and Germania Superior. Ancient place names are linked to the Pleiades gazetteer.¹²

This online edition was developed in close collaboration with the Austrian Centre for Digital Humanities in Graz, with two primary objectives: firstly, to create a user-friendly and functional edition of the sources, and secondly, to ensure the continuous updating, expansion, and correction of content as needed.

To streamline the process of transferring and curating testimonia in the online edition, the PATRIMONIVM-Editor was adapted in Phase II to meet the project’s specific requirements.¹³ This editor is a modular, customisable, and integrated web application for managing epigraphic corpora, built on the eXist-db platform. It generates TEI XML based on EpiDoc standards, ensuring that the data can be used in digital editions. Its interface is customisable and user-friendly, facilitating both data input for publication and internal comments and documentation. By adhering to TEI/EpiDoc standards, the editor ensures interoperability and compatibility across platforms and research initiatives.

One of the PATRIMONIVM-Editor’s key advantages is its ability to adapt to specific metadata fields, allowing for customisation of the TEI XML and enabling the reuse of generated data for different research purposes. Additionally, certain validation pro-

¹² See www.pleiades.stoa.org [last accessed 05.02.2025].

¹³ For the documentation of the adaption process, see Pollin/Kumpitsch 2024.

cesses can already be partially implemented at this stage for selected metadata fields, expediting post-processing.

Furthermore, the editor's newly developed text converter facilitates the import of majuscule and minuscule texts encoded in various standards, including the Leiden Conventions, by converting these non-EpiDoc texts into XML. It also enables users to encode inscriptions directly in XML via a dedicated toolbar. This text converter proved particularly valuable in preparing the online edition for the expanded research area once the PATRIMONIVM-Editor was fully integrated into the project's workflow.¹⁴

4 Preliminary results of phase II

The analysis will be published in a printed volume, comprising a comprehensive compilation and detailed presentation of all the Celtic divine names attested in the research area. Since the proposal for the third and final phase of the project – focusing on the southern parts of *Germania Superior* and *Raetia* – has been accepted for funding and commenced on December 1st 2024, the results of both project phases will be published together. This approach ensures a more accurate assessment of the potential influence of different population compositions within *Germania Superior*, particularly the contrast between the military zone and the predominantly demilitarised southern regions).

However, the following observations can already be made:

A total of 57 Celtic divine names have been identified in the military zone of the *Germania Superior*. Of these, 23 are either exclusively attested in *Germania Superior* or can be conclusively traced to this area, while 29 appear in both *Germania Superior* and other regions. In five cases, this distinction is unclear and requires individual analysis. Both *Ollogabiae*¹⁵ and the goddess *Virodactis*¹⁶ are attested in the *Germania Inferior* with different spellings. *Arvernorix*¹⁷ appears only in *Germania Superior* but

¹⁴ Kumpitsch et al. 2024.

¹⁵ *alagabiae* CF-GeI-264 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.264> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeI-265 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.265> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; *Ollogabiae* CF-GeS-1037 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1037> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeS-1038 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1038> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

¹⁶ *Viradectis* CF-GeI-74 <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.74> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeI-75 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.75> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeI-76 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.76> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; *Virodactis* CF-GeS-1021 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1021> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeS-1085 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1085> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeS-1119 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1119> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

¹⁷ CF-GeS-1088 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1088> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

is likely linked to *Arvernus*,¹⁸ who is exclusively found in Germania Inferior. Finally, *Alaunus*¹⁹ and *Visucia*²⁰ are otherwise attested as *Alauna* and *Visucis*,²¹ with the latter also appearing in Germania Superior. This raises the question of whether *Alaunus* and *Visucia* should be considered lesser-known homonymous divine counterparts or rather gender-swapped duplicates.

The printed volume will provide a comprehensive analysis, synthesising all available evidence for Celtic divine names in Germania Superior. The research will address key questions concerning localisation, cultural background, worshippers, cult practices, origins, motivations, and other relevant aspects. Additionally, a separate section will outline the specific archaeological contexts in which the inscriptions were discovered.

To determine the Celtic origin of a name, the project has collaborated with Dr. Bernhard Bauer (Graz) and Prof. Dr. Bernhard Maier (Tübingen), both specialists in Celtic language and culture.

4.1 Scholarly advancements and new insights

This project has significantly expanded the field of research, providing new scholarly insights in an area that had not previously been the subject of a systematic compilation and evaluation. All relevant inscriptions have been edited and published online, integrating epigraphic and archaeological data while enabling access to source material in innovative ways through newly developed search functionalities.

For the first time, the comprehensive compilation of sources from the military zone of the Germania Superior has allowed for evidence-based assertions and evaluations across the entire available corpus. One notable finding is that in Germania Inferior, the overwhelming majority of Celtic deities are female, a trend that also extends to the garrison locations CUT/Xanten and Bonna/Bonn. However, in the military zones on both the left and right banks of the Rhine in the Germania Superior, male deities form a slight majority. The ongoing third phase of the project will provide figures for the entire province, but even minor variation is an important insight. Without this

18 CF-GeI-26 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.26> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeI-66 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.66> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeI-67 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.67> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeI-68 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.68> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeI-69 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.69> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeI-70 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.70> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

19 CF-GeS-1133 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1133> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

20 CF-GeS-1131 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1131> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

21 CF-GeS-1029 [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeS-1093 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1093> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeS-1115 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1115> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeS-1131 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1131> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

comprehensive dataset, identifying such trends would have required an enormous investment of time for an individual scholar.

Furthermore, the complete collection of sources helps determine which research questions cannot be answered based on the available material. This highlights the extent to which certain claims in the scholarly literature lack sufficient evidentiary support.

For example, it is beyond doubt that new religious phenomena emerged in the military zone of *Germania Superior*, as evidenced by the fusion of non-Roman and Celtic linguistic elements with those originating within the Roman Empire. A key outcome of the project has been to assess the extent to which these new religious forms can be considered “Roman” – given that they involve dedications in the Roman style, Latin inscriptions, Roman cultic activities, and dedicants with Roman names. Only the Celtic-language divine names can be directly attributed to Celtic influences, though this does not necessarily imply the existence of a distinct “Celtic religion” or “Celtic religions”. In some cases, the divine names may even be derived from Celtic personal names.²²

The only secure conclusion is that some gods were referred to by Celtic names. Whether these names represent genuine Celtic theonyms or merely Celtic descriptions of Roman deities remains open to discussion.²³

4.2 The issue of combined theonyms

In cases where a Roman god is paired with a Celtic theonym, such as *MARS Exalbix/Exalbiovix*, the available sources do not clarify which of the following five interpretations applies:

1. The Roman god *MARS* is identified with a non-Roman deity bearing a Celtic theonym *Exalbix/Exalbiovix* (*identificatio*).
2. A Celtic theonym (*Exalbix/Exalbiovix*) is applied to the Roman god *MARS* (*interpretatio Celtica*).
3. The Roman god *MARS* is given a Celtic attribute or explanatory adjective (*Exalbix/Exalbiovix*) (*explicatio vel translatio Celtica*).
4. A non-Roman god with the Celtic theonym *Exalbix/Exalbiovix* is given only the Roman theonym *MARS* (*interpretatio Romana*).
5. A non-Roman god, to whom the Roman theonym *MARS* has been applied, is further described with the explanatory adjective *Exalbix/Exalbiovix* (*interpretatio Romana* combined with the concept *explicatio vel translatio Celtica*).²⁴

²² Spickermann 2025.

²³ See Petermandl/Spickermann 2022.

²⁴ Compare Petermandl/Schmölzer/Spickermann 2019, 9.

This demonstrates that understanding what the sources do not reveal is just as important as identifying what they do tell us.

4.3 Key findings: Social and geographical patterns

The most significant findings relate to the social background and gender of the worshippers, as well as the geographical distribution of divine names within the study area. The presentation and localisation of the entire epigraphic corpus will be of considerable interest, particularly for Celtic linguistics.

In Phase II, the majority of inscriptions originate from civilian settlements, and most dedicants are men, with soldiers and veterans forming the largest social group. However, from the thirteen inscriptions mentioning women:

- In seven inscriptions, women acted as sole dedicants.²⁵
- In five inscriptions, they were co-dedicators with a man (one unspecified relationship,²⁶ three husband-and-wife pairs,²⁷ one brother- and- sister pair²⁸).
- In two of these cases, the inscriptions also mention their sons and daughters by name.²⁹
- In one inscription, a husband is recording dedicating on behalf of his wife and son.³⁰

Regarding the addressed deities in these inscriptions:

- Eight inscriptions honour a goddess.³¹
- Four inscriptions mention a divine pair.³²
- One inscription refers to a god.³³

25 CF-GeS-1023 <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1023> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeS-1028 <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1028> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeS-1037 <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1037> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeS-1043 <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1043> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeS-1053 <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1053> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeS-1119 <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1119> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeS-1128 <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1128> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

26 CF-GeS-1113 <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1113> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

27 CF-GeS-1034 <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1034> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeS-1079 <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1079> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; CF-GeS-1117 <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1117> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

28 CF-GeS-1017 <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1017> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

29 CF-GeS-1028 (nur die Mutter); CF-GeS-1079; CF-GeS-1117.

30 CF-GeS-1135 <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1135> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

31 Herecura: CF-GeS-1028; CF-GeS-1128; Maesama: CF-GeS-1135; Diana Mattiaca: CF-GeS-1079; Nemetona: CF-GeS-1034; Ollogabiae: CF-GeS-1037; Suleviae: CF-GeS-1017; Virodactis: CF-GeS-1119.

32 Herecura et Dis Pater: CF-GeS-1113; Apollo et Sirona CF-GeS-1023; CF-GeS-1117; Mercurius et Rosmerta: CF-GeS-1053.

33 Mars Loucetius: CF-GeS-1043.

Among the dedicants, the level of Romanisation is reflected in naming conventions:

- 24 inscriptions record up to 30 individuals with a cognomen only.
- 34 inscriptions list up to 41 individuals with a gentilicium and cognomen.
- 44 inscriptions mention up to 50 individuals with the *tria nomina*.

This suggests that the worship of these deities was well integrated into the Roman and Romanised society.

Notable high-status dedicants include:

- Aulus Didius Gallus Fabricius Veiento,³⁴ three-time consul, along with his wife Attica.
- Antonia Postuma,³⁵ wife of Titus Porcius Rufianus, *legatus legionis* in Mogontiacum/Mainz.

5 Case study: *Mercurius Tourenus*

One significant outcome of Phase II is the correction of an erroneous reading of a divine name.³⁶ The deity in question was identified in the 20th century as *Toutenus*, despite earlier correct readings as *Tourenus*. Previously, this name was known from four inscriptions, which were discovered in:

- 1821 at Hohenburg near Ruppertsberg.³⁷
- 1926 during construction work in the parish church of St. Martin in Bingen.³⁸
- 1970 at a construction site in Neustadt an der Weinstraße.³⁹
- 1970–1971, when the most recent inscription was found alongside six other inscriptions in Osterburken during the demolition of St. Kilian's Church.⁴⁰

For correcting the reading of the divine name, only the inscriptions from Ruppertsberg and Neustadt are of primary importance. The Bingen inscription preserves only the first three letters of the divine name, while the Osterburken inscription presents *Toureio* as a possible variant.

³⁴ CF-GeS-1034; Spickermann 2024, 211, 224.

³⁵ CF-GeS-1079; Spickermann 2024, 212, 224.

³⁶ Kumpitsch 2025 (forthcoming).

³⁷ König 1821, 485; CIL XIII 6122; CF-GeS-1057 In: <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1057> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; Museum der Pfalz in Speyer, Inv.No. A 11.

³⁸ Behrens 1926, 146; AE 1927, 70; CF-GeS-1056 In: <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1056> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; Museum am Strom in Bingen, Inv.No. 2023/001.

³⁹ AE 1997, 1185; Bernhard 1983, 94, No. 202; CF-GeS-1055 In: <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1055> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; Historisches Museum der Pfalz in Speyer, Inv.No. HM 1971/0081.

⁴⁰ Schillinger-Häfele 1974, 533; 538–540; CIL XIII 4N 46; CF-GeS-1121 In: <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1121> [last accessed 05.02.2025]; Rörmuseum in Osterburken, Inv.No. 1971-18-9000-3.

The *ara* from Ruppertsberg (Fig. 1) measures 46 cm in height, 25 cm in width, and 23 cm in depth. The letter size ranges between 2.2 cm and 3.7 cm. The sixth letter in line 2, of which only the vertical stroke appears to have survived, has been a point of contention. While 19th-century scholars uniformly transcribed this letter as 'R',⁴¹ alternative readings began to emerge in the early 20th century.⁴²

MERCVR	Mercur-
IO TOVRE	io Toure-
NO FIRM	no Firm-
O ATRONIS	o Atronis



Fig. 1: Inscription to *Mercurius*, Historisches Museum der Pfalz, Speyer Inv. No. A 11.

The *ara* from Neustadt an der Weinstraße (Fig. 2) was found already broken, with an unknown portion of its lower section missing. The surviving upper part measures 25 cm in height, 21 cm in width and 18 cm in depth. The letters size ranges between 2.7 cm and 3.3 cm.

⁴¹ König 1821, 485; Lersch, 1843, 123 No. 2; Steiner 1851, No. 781; Becker 1852, Col. 492 No. 2.

⁴² CIL XIII 6122; Hildenbrand 1911, No. 178; Riese 1914, No. 3365; Feist 1927, 13; Sprater 1948, 64; Bernhard 1976, 149; Hirte 1995, 416; Recently, the EDH rejected the legibility not only of the second line ('IOTOVI[-JES']), but also of lines 3 and 4: EDH, HD076038: <https://edh.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/inschrift/HD076038> [last updated 2021-02-17].

Apart from the first three lines, the rest of the inscription is lost. Once again, the fourth letter in line 2 is damaged in such a way that only a vertical stroke remains. The readings of this inscription were based on the *Toutenus* reading from Ruppertsberg⁴³ and the reconstruction of the fragment from Bingen.⁴⁴

DEO	Deo
TOVREN	Touren-
O AVENTO	o Avento
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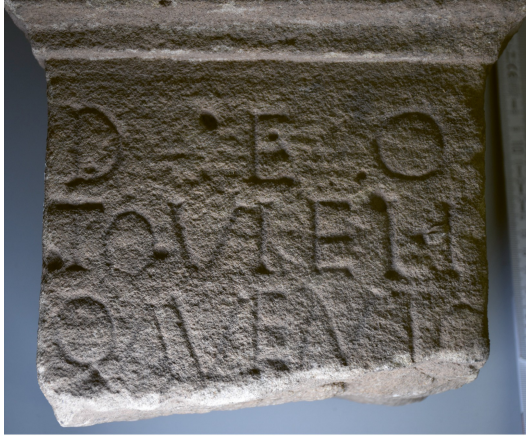


Fig. 2: Inscription to *Tourenus*, Historisches Museum der Pfalz, Speyer Inv. No. HM 1971/0081.

Although on both *arae*, the fourth letter of the divine name is damaged in such a way that only a vertical stroke remains clearly visible, we first noticed a peculiar leftward shift in the available images. If the letter had been a ‘T’, this misalignment would have caused an unnecessary overlap between the horizontal stroke of the ‘T’ and the ‘V’ to the left, despite there being sufficient space to center the ‘T’ between ‘V’ and ‘E’.

Secondly, upon closer inspection of the images of the Ruppertsberg *ara* on ubi erat lupa,⁴⁵ we believed we could discern additional strokes forming an ‘R’, which

⁴³ Bernhard, 1983, 94 No. 202; AE 1997, 1185; EDH, HD049730: <https://edh.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/inschrift/HD049730> [last updated 2020-07-29]; Scheungraber, 2020, 540 No.2; contrary Hupe (1997, 197 No. B14), who argued that the readings of *Toutenus* in these inscriptions were uncertain and subsequently proposed *Tovieno* as an alternative reading.

⁴⁴ Behrens 1926, 146–148; Behrens 1938, No.15; Behrens 1954, 21; Boppert 2005, No.13; EDH, HD024946: <https://edh.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/inschrift/HD024946> [last updated 2018-06-28]; Scheungraber, 2020, 540 No.1.

⁴⁵ <https://lupa.at/26685> [last updated 2024-10-26].

sparked our interest. Consequently, during an autopsy tour in November 2023 we conducted a first-hand re-examination of these two inscriptions.

The result confirmed that, under optimal lighting conditions, the arch and diagonal stroke of the 'R' became visible on the stone in both cases. This finding led us to revise the reading of *Toutenus* to *Tourenus*.

Before addressing the linguistic implications of this corrected reading, a fifth inscription with uncertain origins warrants discussion.

This inscription was first reported by Lersch in 1843, who had been informed by Dr. Hepp from Neustadt an der Hardt that he possessed an inscription nearly identical to the Ruppertsberg *ara*, but allegedly found in Rheinabern.⁴⁶ The inscription was mentioned several times in conjunction with the Ruppertsberg inscription before the publication of the CIL.⁴⁷ However, after Brambach and the CIL declared the inscription a *falsa*,⁴⁸ it was subsequently forgotten.

It was only in 1948 that Sprater reintroduced the inscription, arguing – contrary to Brambach – that the forger had not copied the Ruppertsberg inscription, but rather a different lost original.⁴⁹

Since the current location of the inscription is unknown, and there is no documentation on it was identified as a forgery, making verification impossible, we have decided to include the inscription as CF-GeS-1141⁵⁰ for the following reasons:

1. If the inscription is authentic, or at least a copy of a lost original,⁵¹ it should be preserved.
2. Its inclusion does not significantly affect our conclusions, as all information derived from it is already attested by other inscriptions.

5.1 Distribution and cult of *Tourenus*

Assuming that the Rheinabern inscription is authentic, three of the now five known inscriptions for *Tourenus* originate from the territory of the Civitas Nemetum. Although this concentration suggests that *Tourenus* was primarily worshipped in this region, the limited number of inscriptions does not rule out the possibility that this distribution is merely coincidental.

⁴⁶ Lersch 1843, 123 No.1.

⁴⁷ de Wal (1847, No. 266); Steiner (1851, No.754; No. 781); Becker (1852, Col. 492 No.1); von Hefner (1852, No. 65); von Orelli (1855, No.5917); and von Hefner (1860, 112) mention existing doubts regarding the authenticity of the inscription but provide no details as to the reasons. Brambach (1867, No. 1830) claims that the Rheinabern inscription is a forgery, possibly based on the one from Ruppertsberg; CIL XIII 6122.

⁴⁸ Brambach 1867, No. 1830; CIL XIII 6122.

⁴⁹ Sprater 1948, 64.

⁵⁰ CF-GeS-1141 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1141> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

⁵¹ As is the case with CF-GeS-1033 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:fercan.1033> [last accessed 05.02.2025].

Additionally, the Bingen and Osterburken inscriptions are of uncertain provenience, as they were found reused as *spoliae*. Furthermore, it remains unclear, whether *Toureio* is:

- A spelling error.
- A variation of *Tourenus*.
- Or an unrelated term altogether.⁵²

Even if both inscriptions are dedications to *Tourenus*, it remains uncertain whether:

- The dedicants from Bingen and Osterburken originated from Nemetum or were influenced by his cult there.
- His cult was also known in neighboring territories.

This question is of considerable significance, as the *beneficiarius consularis* from Osterburken is the only attested non-civilian dedicant.

At the very least, the Neustadt an der Weinstraße inscription, where the deity is referred to as *Deo Toureno*, supports the interpretation of *Tourenus* as a proper theonym. This contrasts with the case of *Mercurius Gebrinios*, where the Celtic name functions as an attribute or explanatory adjective for the Roman god *Mercurius*.⁵³

5.2 The linguistic issue: Is *Tourenus* a Celtic word?

The question of whether *Tourenus* is of Celtic origin remains unanswered.

The Celticity of ‘toure-’⁵⁴ was abandoned in favor for ‘toute-’, partly due to its alleged derivation from ‘*touto-’ (meaning ‘tribe, people’), found in divine names such as *Toutatis* or *Teutates*.⁵⁵

This reasoning, however, resulted in a circular argument:

- Early 20th-century epigraphers – doubting the established reading of the Rupertsberg *ara* as *Tourenus* – relied on linguistic arguments to interpret the name *Toutenus*.⁵⁶
- This in turn led linguists to cite the epigraphic reading of *Toutenus* as evidence for its existence, while *Tourenus* effectively disappeared from scholarship.

⁵² See the linguistic problem in the following paragraph.

⁵³ Petermandl/Schmölzer/Spickermann 2019, 9–10.

⁵⁴ Holder 1904, Col. 1896 s.v. *Tourenus*; Col. 1897 s.v. *Toutenus*.

⁵⁵ For the equation of *Toutenus* with ‘*touto-’ and further literature, see: Evans 1967, 266–269 s.v. *Teuto*; Delamarre ³2018, 295 s.v. *teuta, touta*; 296 s.v. *teuto-, touto-, tuto-*; 305 s.v. *tuto- < touto-*; Scheungraber 2020, 540; de Bernardo Stempel/Hainzmann 2020, 332 s.v. *Toutatis*; Hainzmann 2021, 200.

⁵⁶ For example, see Feist 1927, 13; von Kienle 1938, 255; Heichelheim 1931, Col. 996 s.v. *Mercurius XLII: Toutenus (oder Tourenus)*; Heichelheim 1937, Col. 1840 s.v. *Tourenus*; s.v. *Toutenus*.

As a result, it is currently impossible to determine the language affiliation of *Tourenus* with certainty.

5.3 Conclusion: The significance of this case study

This case study exemplifies the range of new findings generated by the project and illustrates the types of questions that can be expected to be addressed upon its completion.

Together with the preliminary results from Phase II, these findings highlight the new contributions of the project not only to the study of Romano-Celtic interactions and religious influences in the Rhine-Danube region, but also to broader religious and cultural studies in Central Europe.

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