A RE-READING OF C.I.L., X, 7506

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One of the Roman inscriptions exhibited in the Gozo Archaeology Museum is that set up by a certain Marcus Marcianus in respect of his own best and dearest friend — Cestius Gallus and in respect of Varenianus Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus, patronus of the municipium of Gozo.  

The inscription appears to have been one of those which, on completion of the road leading to the Gozo Citadel's entrance in 1623, were (together with an ancient statue) placed there to embellish the same road.  

It was placed beneath a statue located across the bridge close to the (old) gate of the Citadel. A drawing of this statue was also reproduced by Glio: Francesco Abela in his Della Descrittione di Malta.

Traces of white lime mortar, evident on both sides of the inscribed stone, may be the remains of the lime mortar which cemented it (i.e. the inscribed stone) to the sides of a niche that contained both the inscribed stone itself and the statue on top of it. However, having been erected for two individuals, the inscribed stone is not expected to have originally carried a single-figure statue like the one reproduced by Abela; certainly not even a double-figure one because the size of the stone (carrying the inscription) could not allow

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2. Ibid.
3. See infra.
4. G.F. Abela, Della Descrittione di Malta Isola nel Mare Siciliano con le sue Antichita', ed altre Notizie, Malta 1647, facsimile edition, Midsea Books Ltd 1984, 216-7. See also: G.P.E. Agius De Soldatis, Il Gozo Antico-moderno e Sacro-profano. Isola Mediterranea Adiacente A Malta Africana, ii, Gozo 1746, 1.120r [p.204]. The latter is an unpublished manuscript kept at the National Library of Malta and catalogued as Library Manuscript 145.
sufficient space for such a statue. Even if one was to argue in favour of a bust (single or double-figure) instead of a statue, the same argument would also apply. Moreover, if the statue reproduced by Abela is female, one would not expect it to have originally stood on an inscribed stone erected for male individuals either. Thus, the original use and purpose of the inscribed stone appears to have been different.9

Interpreting incorrectly a 17th century A.D. Latin inscription, until some time ago also kept at the Gozo Archaeology Museum, A.A. Caruana states that the "ectype of this Roman inscription" was found in 1622 and, in the following year, it was placed in the wall at the entrance of the Citadel by Grand Master Antoine de Paule.7 The seventeenth century A.D. inscription, carved on the flat surface of a vertically-sliced marble column shaft (even bearing traces of fluting), in fact, commemorates the construction of the road leading to the Citadel's entrance and its embellishment with an ancient statue and ancient inscriptions in the year 1623 during the rule of Grand Master Antoine de Paule. However, it does not mention or make reference to any particular one of those ancient inscriptions embellishing the new road, but C.I.L., X, 7506 is very likely to have been one of them. Nor does it indicate when or where these ancient inscriptions had been found or brought from, although they are not expected to have originated from much afar.

The stone carrying the inscription
The stone (measuring approximately 41 cm x 36 cm x 36 cm), on the front of which the inscription in question is carved, carries a round (almost tapering) concave basin hollowed on its top surface. It seems unlikely that this 19 cm deep basin (with an average diameter of 38 cm at the top) could have served as a socket to hold in place a statue, a bust, or some sort of a cippus-like monument on top of the inscribed stone. While the possibilities of having held a statue or a bust have already been eliminated, these or any cippus-like monument requiring such a deep and large socket must have been of a substantial height which would otherwise have been out of proportion with the inscribed stone. On the other hand, any monument -- be it in the form of a statue, bust, or cippus -- in good proportions with the inscribed stone did not necessitate such a deep and large socket. Nor does the basin seem to have been hewn in the seventeenth century as a socket for the statue (now preserved in the above-mentioned Archaeology Museum) which then came to be borne by the inscribed stone in question, as the dimensions -- but more particularly the outline of this statue's base -- would not have fitted in. The inscribed stone's shape and relative size (particularly its height: 36 cm) would also render it unlikely to have been a column's base. Moreover, a column's base is not the place where one would normally expect to find such a dedicatory inscription. Thus, it is also improbable that the basin was hewn as a socket for a standing column. Furthermore, the unpolished and unsmoothened surface within the basin would also rule out any possibility that the basin was carved or used at some time in association with activities like pounding or grinding. Therefore, this basin together with the general appearance of the stone itself (with the heavily-broken sculptured moulding running along the top and bottom edges on its front and sides) may suggest that the stone might have been itself a cippus or small altar (or perhaps the upper part of an altar) with a basin into which libations/liquid offerings could be poured.

As the individuals for whom the inscribed stone was erected were themselves neither deities nor were they deified members of the imperial family, this presumed cippus or small altar is unlikely to have originated from a religious context like a temple or shrine. On the other hand, as -- Cestius Gallus and Varenianus Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus do not appear to have been ancestors of Marcus Marciianus, it is also unlikely to have come from a household shrine where the spirits of the dead ancestors used to be worshipped. Therefore, it seems more probable to have originated from a funerary context like a tomb and, thus, it might have been a funerary or sepulchral cippus/altar. Several funerary or sepulchral cippus/altars to the Munes spirits of the dead -- sometimes also carrying an epitaph and the names of the dead -- are known from funerary contexts, like tombs or

5. See supra.
6. See infra.
7. A.A. Caruana, "Report on the Phoenician and Roman Antiquities in the Group of the Islands of Malta, Malta 1882, 148-9. De Soldanis, who reproduces the 17th century inscription, also gives a wrong date for the placement of the Roman inscription (and statue) in the bastion wall at the entrance of the Gozo Citadel; see: Agius De Soldanis, f.1200 (pp.204-5).
8. On the basis of information kindly provided to the writer by Prof. Lorenzo Lazzarini (from the Laboratorio di Analisi dei Materiali Antichi, Università di Venezia) who examined this inscription, the marble on which this same inscription is carved had been imported from the island of Marmara, in antiquity known as Proconnesus. The island, which was celebrated for its marble, is to be found in the sea bearing its name (i.e. Sea of Marmara), an inland sea leading from the Aegean to the Black Sea. The writer is also indebted to Prof. JoAnne Cassar through whom contact with Prof. Lazzarini has been facilitated.
9. See supra.
10. The Munes were the spirits of the departed who were worshipped as gods.
columbaria, in the Roman world. As stated above, the concave basin on
our presumed cippus/small altar may have received liquid offerings. For
example, according to the Graeco-Roman custom of liquid offerings to
the dead, wine was considered as life-giving, ensuring immortality and
substituting blood which appeases the spirits of the dead.

Alternatively, but likewise within a funerary context, one might perhaps
think of an ossuary or even an altar-ossuary like, for example, those known
from Aquileia (in Italy) which are, however, on a rather monumental scale.
The concave basin in our example could have thus contained the cremated
remains of the deceased while a covering lid may have provided a surface
onto which offerings could be made if it also served as an altar.

If it was a funerary or sepulchral cippus/ossuary/altar (or perhaps the
upper part of an altar), it is likely to have originally stood either on some
sort of support against a wall or in a niche/edicula (as, in both cases, the
stone’s uncarved back would seem to suggest) in the interior of a tomb
chamber in the extra-mural necropolis of the town of Gaulos. As shown by
the inscription it carries, this presumed funerary cippus, ossuary, or altar may
have been erected by Marcus Marcianus to contain the cremated remains
of his own best and dearest friend ——Cestius Gallus and of Varenianus
Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus, patronus of the Gozo municipium, or/and to
commemorate or, perhaps, rather to honour (even, possibly, through any
offerings made) their Manes/spirits.

The inscription on the stone lacks the traditional formula Dis Manibus
or Dis Manibus Sacrum. This formula appears on funerary inscriptions (in
the beginning of the text) from the Augustan age onwards. However, one
may also come across funerary inscriptions wherein, like the one under
discussion, this formula is omitted. One such example, also from Gozo, is
provided by the funerary inscription of Quintus Lutatius Longinus and his
wife Iunia recorded to have been found in the area known as Il-Tomba in
Victoria.

13. C. Calabi Lemineni, Epigrafe Latine, Milano-Varese 1968, 204-8 and 211.
14. Toynbee, 35.
15. C.I.L., X, 7511 and 7512. See also: idem, Fragmento Critico della Storia Fenicio-Carthaginese, Greco-Romana ed Etrusca, Musulmana e Normanna-Aragonese delle isole di Malta, Malta 1889, 303 wherein he reports that the inscription was found by the priest Don Carlo Borg in 1845 in the lands known as Tit-Tomba near the friary of the Augustinians.

The inscription

C.I.L. Text

1 L · CESTIO · L · F · POMPT · GALLO · Ve
2 LENIANO · LVTATIO · NATALI · AE[M]I
3 LIANO PATRONO · MVNICIP[I]
4 MARCVS MARCIANVS · AMICO · OPTIMO
5 ET KARISSIMO SIBI HONORIS CAVSA · S p

Interpolated Text

1 [(-----)] CESTIO LVCII FILIO POMPT[NA TRIBV] GALLO VA
2 RENIANO LVTATIO NATALI AE[M]I
3 LIANO PATRONO MVNICIP[I]
4 MARCVS MARCIANVS AMICO OPTIMO
5 ET KARISSIMO SIBI HONORIS CAVSA S[VA] P(ECVNIA)

Translation

Marcius Marcianus (set up this cippus/ossuary/altar) at his own expense
in honour of his own best and dearest friend ——Cestius Gallus of the
Pomptine tribe and son of Lucius and in honour of his Varenianus Lutatius
Natalis Aemilianus, patrornus of the municipium.

Dating the inscription

The cursive style of lettering adopted in this inscription had emerged by the
second half of the second century A.D., becoming more evident during the
third century A.D. Internal evidence appears to be in conformity. Already
in the second century A.D., the use of the praenomen/forename started
to disappear from inscriptions — apparently, the praenomen of Marcus
Marcianus in this inscription is missing, as ‘Marcius’ seems to be a nomen
gentilicium/family name and not a praenomen — and then, it disappeared.

16. As in the text inscribed on the actual stone, several letters in the C.I.L. text are combined, forming
monographs.
17. The textual reconstruction given here follows the epigraphic conventions as in L. Keppie,
18. See: Inscriptiones nos.12 and 15, both from Palermo and dated to the late 2nd century A.D.,
and the sepulchral inscriptions nos.179 dated to the 2nd half of the 2nd century A.D., no.183 dated to the
2nd century A.D., and no.267 dated to the 3rd century A.D., all from Rome in L. Bivona, Inscriptio
Latin in Lapidario del Museo di Palermo, Palermo 1970, 314-5, 155-2, 156-7 and 212 (pl.VIII, XI,
LXXXVIII, XC and CXXXIX).
almost completely in the third century A.D. Since the indication of the voting-tribe – in this inscription: the Pomptine tribe – started to disappear from inscriptions by the late second century A.D., this inscription must have been made during the second half, and perhaps towards the end, of the second century A.D. One finds also other inscriptions abroad which bear the same lettering style found in ‘our’ inscription and are also dated to the same period.

**The voting-tribe (tribus)**

For the purpose of voting in the assemblies, the Roman people were distributed among voting-tribes/voting-districts into which Roman territory was divided. Thus, these voting-tribes had nothing to do with kinship groups. They might also bear little relationship, if any, to the citizen’s domicile or his property. According to tradition, there were four urban voting-districts and seventeen rural ones in the old Roman territory, later adding another fourteen rural ones, bringing the total to thirty-five, ending with the *tribus Velina* and *Quirina* in 241 B.C. As required by the Gracchan *lex repetundarum*, the inclusion of the tribe in male official nomenclature followed the patronymic and preceded the *cognomen* (often a personal epithet). The tribe was indicative of Roman citizenship, not only for those born of Roman fathers but also for those incorporated into the Roman citizen body from outside.

**The *tribus* in this inscription**

The voting-tribe to which ——Cestius Gallus as a Roman citizen was ascribed was the *tribus Pomptina*. But, in the case of ‘our’ inscription, this is often confused as being one of his *triba nominis*. To this effect, the abbreviated form of this *tribus* in ‘our’ inscription is often interpreted as *POAMPIVS/POAMP!

24. Giovanniantonio Ciantar even goes to the extent of suggesting it as *P.O. AMPL. standing for *PATRI OPTIMO AMPLISSIMO*. However, a close analysis of the actual inscription would reveal that, among the various combined letters/monograms which are to be found in this inscription, what appears to be an *A* combined with an *M* in this perplexing word is, in fact, not so. For what appears to be a horizontal bar in the supposed *A* is only an accidental scratch because it (i.e. the scratch) is not as deep and well-defined as the engraved letters (including the *As* themselves) and, moreover, it is also different in position from the bars in the *As* found in this inscription. Furthermore, what appears to be an *I* in this same word is, in fact, a *T* with a shortened upper bar which is still, however, slightly longer than the upper bars of the *Is* in this inscription. Therefore, the word must be *POMPIT*, standing for *POMPIT(INA TRIBV*), as also given in *C.I.L., X, 7506*. The *tribus Pomptina* (together with the *tribus Publilia*) was created in 358 B.C.

In the present writer’s opinion, the argument put forward by A.A. Caruana suggesting that the reading *POMPIT(INA TRIBV*) would be inconsistent with the other Roman inscriptions (recorded in the Maltese islands) from which, according to him, it is shown that the Maltese (and Gozitans) were ascribed to the *tribus Quirina*, does not hold ground. The persons who certainly belonged to this *tribus* (i.e. the *tribus Quirina*), specifically established for enfranchised (Roman) citizens, were only those (living in Malta and Gozo) whose nomenclature included the *tribus Quirina* on acquiring Roman citizenship.

**The protagonists in the inscription**

The inscription was authored by Marcus Marcianus in respect of ——Cestius Gallus (whose *praenomen* is unknown as its initial, to which a *praenomen* is usually abbreviated on inscriptions, is missing due to breakage on the relative part of the inscription) and in respect of Varenianus Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus. The last one was *patronus* of the *Gozo municipium*.


The last two, namely, Cestius Gallus and Varenianus Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus, are often confused as being one and the same person with five cognomina: Gallus, Varenianus, Lutatius, Natalis, and Aemilianus. Although the occurrence of five cognomina attached to a single person is extremely rare but possible, one normally expects that the inclusion of two different nomina/family names (in our case, Cestius and Lutatius), implies two different persons and not one. One may argue, however, that the inclusion of two different nomina/family names with one of them inserted amongst the cognomina might be an indication of some form of relationship enjoyed by the subject with another gens/family different from his (or with an individual belonging to another gens/family) and whose name (i.e. nomen gentilicum or gens/family name) appears inserted amongst the former’s cognomina. Although one of ‘our’ inscription’s cognomina – AEMILIANVS – seems to be indicative of such a type of relationship in the form of adoption, the subject could not have, in this case, retained his tribus in his nomenclature and, so, the inclusion of a tribus (the tribus Pompitina) on one hand and the inclusion of a cognomen indicative of adoption on the other hand account for two separate individuals and not one. As VARENIAVS immediately precedes LVATIVS (which is a nomen gentilicum), it is unlikely to have been a second cognomen (together with GALLVS) of CESTIVS and not a praenomen preceding LVATIVS. Furthermore, for reasons elaborated infra, a second cognomen with an –ANVS ending like VARENIAVS could not have pertained to an individual retaining his tribus and, therefore, VARENIAVS could not follow GALLVS as a second cognomen but rather precedes LVATIVS as a praenomen of a separate individual as stated above. Thus, the two different persons must have been Cestius Gallus and Varenianus Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus; the latter having two cognomina, namely, Natalis and Aemilianus. The missing conjunction ET between the cognomen GALLVS and the praenomen VARENIAVS may perhaps be explained in terms of lack of space as shown by the presence, in the text, of a number of monograms/combined letters.

The nomen ‘Lutatius’, in the case of Varenianus Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus, is also met with in other epigraphical evidence from Gozo:


29. See infra.

30. See infra.
Lutatius is also the *nomen* of Quintus Lutatius Longinus in an already-mentioned funerary inscription recorded to have been found in the area known as *It-Tomba* in Victoria\(^{31}\) and, as Roman women were known by the feminine form of their fathers’ *nomen* / family name,\(^{32}\) the *nomen* of Caius – the father of the priestess Lutatia in a dedicatory inscription from Gozo\(^{33}\) – must have been Lutatius. Thus, the common *nomen* / family name shared by Caius (Lutatia’s father), by Quintus Lutatius Longinus, and by Varenianus Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus – or perhaps, his adoptive father,\(^{34}\) indicates that all of them somehow hailed from the same family / gens, namely, the plebeian family of the Lutatii.

Already, in republican times, one could have more than one *cognomen*. In republican times, the second *cognomen* could have come about as a result of adoption. In such a case, the adopted son used to adopt the *triba nominis* of his adoptive father, turning his own *nomen* into a second *cognomen* ending in *-anus*.\(^{35}\) Consequent to adoption, he would lose his allocated tribe (normally that of his father) on changing his family through being adopted.\(^{36}\)

Thus, although this inscription is dated to the imperial period, Varenianus Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus appears to have been adopted by a certain Varenianus Lutatius Natalis with his (i.e. the former’s) own original *nomen* being Aemilius, subsequently turned into a second *cognomen* as Aemilianus following adoption. His original *praenomen* and *cognomen* before adoption would, in this case, remain unknown to us while the missing *tribus* in his nomenclature must have come about as a result of his adoption.

On the other hand, and in view of the above, the inclusion of a *tribus* (the *tribus* Pomptina) seems to confirm the distinction between ----Cestius Gallus and Varenianus Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus as two separate individuals\(^{37}\) because, had they not been so but one single individual with five *cognomina*, this single individual could not have retained his allocated tribe if he was adopted, which adoption is indicated by the *-ANVS* ending of the last *cognomen*.

31. See note 15.
34. See *infra*.
35. Calabi Limentani, 158.
37. See *supra*.

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**Citizenship of the protagonists in the inscription**

Ascribed to the Pompitine tribe, there is no doubt about the Roman citizenship of ----Cestius Gallus, while the inclusion of his father’s name (i.e. the patronymic) in his nomenclature further shows that he was a freeborn citizen.\(^{38}\)

As previously shown, the distinguishing factor of a Roman citizen was his enrolment in a *tribus* (or one of the 35 Roman voting-districts) written in an abbreviated form after the patronymic in a male’s official name.\(^{39}\) However, anyone carrying an apparently Roman name but without this distinctive mark, might be either someone having only Latin rights or a foreigner who adopted Roman nomenclature.\(^{40}\) This might have been the case of Marcus Marcianus whose nomenclature does not include the mention of a tribe, nor does he appear (from this inscription) to have occupied any magistracy or status implying Roman citizenship, like patronage or knighthood. However, the absence of a *tribus* in a male’s official nomenclature did not always necessarily mean that he had no tribe at all, but that he may have been ascribed to one of the four urban tribes, particularly one of the pair held inferior, namely, the *tribus* Esquilina and the *tribus* Suburanus.\(^{41}\) Thus, the absence of a *tribus* in Marcianus’ nomenclature may, perhaps, be also explained in terms of a lesser possibility that he was a Roman citizen ascribed to one of these four urban voting-districts, particularly the *Esquilina* or the *Suburanus*.

On the other hand, notwithstanding the fact that he lost his allocated tribe on changing his family through being adopted,\(^{42}\) Varenianus Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus must have certainly been a Roman citizen, having been *patronus* of the Gozo *municipium*. As shown by surviving or documented Roman inscriptions in Malta and Gozo, the highest positions – like that of *patronus* – in each of the two *municipia* were held by Roman citizens.\(^{43}\)

38. While freedmen and freedwomen (i.e. ex-slaves or freed slaves) carried the name of their former master in their official nomenclature, generally also adding a Greek *cognomen*, freeborn men and women enjoyed the right of carrying their father’s name (patronymic) in their official nomenclature.
39. See *supra*.
40. Linton 1993, 162.
41. Linton 1993, 118.
42. See *supra*.
The friendly relationship between Marcius Marcianus and ----Cestius Gallus

Castrated male priests of Magna Mater (or Cybele) were called galli. It was alleged that these eunuch priests castrated themselves using a sharp piece of broken pottery or a sharp-edged stone. To complement their effeminate looks, the galli even wore brightly coloured clothing like that donned by women. It was initially prohibited for Roman citizens to become galli but this ban was later abolished during the reign of Claudius (41-54 A.D.).

Marcius' best and dearest friend might have been a gallus as suggested by his own cognomen. The presence of a gallus could be indicative of a cult of Magna Mater which might have been practised in Gozo at that time. But, on the other hand, the characteristics attributed to the galli and outlined above may perhaps throw some light on the type of friendly relationship which Marcius Marcianus and ----Cestius Gallus might have enjoyed: a type of relationship which the superlative adjectives 'best' and 'dearest' used in respect of Marcius' friend may perhaps further confirm. This friendly relationship might have been sufficient for ----Cestius Gallus to warrant Marcius' favour not to any lesser degree than the patronus of the Gozo municipium (i.e. Vareniatus Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus) with whom he thus shared the dedicated cippus, altar, or ossuary.