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## SEARCHING FOR THE ORIGINS: THREE ITALIAN TOPONYMS BETWEEN PRE-INDO-EUROPEAN AND INDO-EUROPEAN

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**Abstract:** *The aim of this paper is to reconstruct, for the first time, the etymology of three Italian place names from the current regions of Piedmont and Liguria (North-Western Italy). The toponyms analyzed in this study, Vinchio (Piedmont), Laigueglia (Liguria), and Lingueglietta (Liguria), allow the assessment of epistemological issues connected with the dynamics pre Indo-European / proto-Indo-European in the reconstruction of European hydronymy and toponymy. Vinchio and Lingueglietta, in particular, offer the opportunity to evaluate possible common etymologies both by hypothesizing pre-Indo-European origins and by analyzing their original naming process according to an eminently Indo-European approach. Some Indo-European place names whose etymology is debated and difficult to ascertain and establish can find in a possible pre-Indo-European substratum. However, the impossibility of explaining a toponymic etymology according to Indo-European historical phonetics does not necessarily mean that the origins of a place name can be found in an undefined 'pre-Indo-European' time. The present work reconstructs, for the first time, the Indo-European (prehistoric) etymologies of Laigueglia, Vinchio, and Lingueglietta, highlighting links among the place names and paronymologies that have survived over centuries, in an effort to shed light on the remote origins of these possibly prehistoric place names. The aim of this paper is to fill the research gap affecting the etymological reconstruction of the three toponyms and their onomastic relations, since there is no previous scientific literature on them. The article is the first comprehensive study on the etymology of the three place names in the context of Indo-European toponymy. This toponymic research in the field of historical toponomastics is eminently qualitative and intensive, reconstructing proto-forms and roots of the place names on a case-by-case basis. The aim of studies like this is to provide, over time, a large amount of documented and reliable etymologies of toponyms to allow a quantitative and extensive research with the ultimate goal of reconstructing patterns in the naming processes of place names and to allow the assessment of settlement dynamics and population movements in prehistoric times.*

**Key words:** *Indo-European toponymy, pre-Indo-European toponymy, Vinchio, Laigueglia, Lingueglietta*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of pre-Indo-European, considered a sort of ‘incognizable and undefined pre-proto-language’ or a cluster of remote languages (possibly connected with each other or independent – at least in part – from each other) from Prehistory<sup>1</sup> has progressively lost ‘appeal’ in the studies on languages of prehistoric Europe, leaving often space to interpretations describing prehistoric Europe as an eminently – and ‘originally’ – (proto-)Indo-European linguistic area<sup>2</sup>. However, not all the etymologies in Indo-European languages can be explained according to the Indo-European historical phonetics and, even less, the origins of prehistoric European place names commonly considered Indo-European. Toponyms, hydronyms, and oronyms are, often, linguistic ‘fossils’ and can reveal very remote stages of proto-languages and also the existence of lost languages<sup>3</sup>.

The study here proposed is aimed at the reconstruction, for the first time, of the prehistoric etymologies of three Italian place names, *Vinchio*, *Laigueglia*, and *Lingueglietta*, from the current Piedmont (*Piemonte*) and Liguria regions (North-Western Italy) according to a convergent historical-linguistic methodology, by analytically discussing both the pre-Indo-European and (proto-)Indo-European options for the origins of the three toponyms.

This etymological research belongs to the scientific field of Historical Toponomastics<sup>4</sup> and is aimed at providing documented and reliable etymologies for place names so far neglected, which can shed light not only on prehistoric naming processes in Europe, but also on remote and undocumented population movements and settlement dynamics. No previous scientific literature on the ancient etymology of the three toponyms analyzed in this paper exists at the current stage of the research. The paper itself, therefore, would like to become and to be the first study documenting and reconstructing the onomastic origins of the three place names and their mutual relations in remote, prehistoric times. The lack of a comprehensive and universally recognized study on prehistoric European Toponymy highlights the urgency of a series of systematic micro-studies focused on the identification and analysis of toponymic systems and on the etymological reconstruction of the names of the places belonging to them, with the aim to unveil, step-by-step, through the study of the micro-context of local place names, the macro-context of prehistoric Indo-European (and, possibly, in specific cases, pre-Indo-European and/or non-Indo-European) Toponymy in Europe. This is exactly the aim of this paper, as mentioned the first documented study on the etymological reconstruction of *Vinchio*, *Laigueglia*, and *Lingueglietta*, and this is why the three analyzed place names and their remote origins are significant in the context of Historical Toponomastics and, ultimately, of Historical Linguistics.

Among *Vinchio*, *Laigueglia*, and *Lingueglietta* – the three analysed place names – *Vinchio* and *Lingueglietta* allow more interesting remarks on the possible pre-Indo-

<sup>1</sup> Cf., for an original approach, Mailhammer, R., Vennemann Th., Olsen, B.A., (2015), pp. 29-75 (*Diversity vs. Uniformity: Europe before the Arrival of the Indo-European Languages - A Comparison with Prehistoric Australia*, by Mailhammer, R.).

<sup>2</sup> Cf., among others, Garrett, A., (2018), pp. 25-38.

<sup>3</sup> Cf., among others, Mailhammer, R., (2016), pp. 318-329.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Perono Cacciafoco, F., Cavallaro, F., Kratochvíl, F., (2015), pp. 31-32.

European / (proto-)Indo-European dynamics in the remote naming processes of toponyms in prehistoric Europe.

## 2. STUDIES ON EUROPEAN TOPONYMY AND HYDRONYMY

European Toponymy and Hydronymy have been prevalently studied, according to a historical perspective, in relation to the so-called ‘theories of the homeland’, trying to ascertain and establish the location of the motherland of Indo-European peoples entering Europe in prehistoric times and populating the Old Continent, spreading, contextually, proto-Indo-European, the proto-language at the origins of most of the currently spoken European languages<sup>5</sup>. It is difficult, therefore, to consider ‘comprehensive’ and ‘exhaustive’ the current situation of the studies on European prehistoric Toponymy and Hydronymy. The main *aporia* is the lack of documented and reliable studies on Indo-European (and/or, according to different interpretations, pre-Indo-European or non-Indo-European) toponymic systems and place names, belonging to local contexts and not connected with major European inhabited centres or bodies of water. When studied or, at least, ‘approached’, local place names are, in the current scientific literature, prevalently parts of toponymic lists, generally compiled to demonstrate that they originate from a possible common root or to connect them with significant proto-forms in the general lexicon of the related proto-language for linguistic and etymological reconstructions.

Antonio Tovar<sup>6</sup>, for example, while analyzing Hans Krahe’s classical work<sup>7</sup> on Old European Hydronymy, drew up a linguistic map of European prehistoric hydronyms derived from the well-known (proto-)Indo-European root *\*kar-* (> *\*kar[r]a*)<sup>8</sup>, meaning ‘stone’, ‘rock’. This stem is involved in the ‘making’ of the original names of many European rivers and places. Tovar’s work is outstanding in that it reconstructs and re-analyzes a large European toponymic system, but lacks, sometimes, of thoroughness and accuracy in the analysis of the single place names.

Krahe’s work on Old European Hydronymy is still a very valuable reference on the ancient names of European bodies of water, not properly in its theoretical statements and foundations, but in the effort of collection and analysis of hydronyms.

Krahe’s and Tovar’s works deal with the epistemological dichotomy pre-Indo-European vs Indo-European and, despite being a little bit ‘dated’, are fundamental in the debate about Indo-European origins and the settlement dynamics of Europe between the last Ice Age and the Neolithic.

Peter R. Kitson<sup>9</sup> has developed a thorough re-analysis and discussion of Krahe’s Hydronymy, by problematizing the notion of ‘pre-Indo-European’ and ‘Old Europe’ and by giving a comprehensive Indo-European interpretation of ancient European Hydronymy. This not only in the effort to ‘update’ or to re-assess Krahe’s findings, but also in order to deny the theoretical premises and assumptions of the so-called ‘Vasconic Substratum Theory’ by Theo Vennemann<sup>10</sup>, which hypothesizes the existence of an ancient family of Vasconic (non-Indo-European) languages, in Europe, after the

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Mallory, J.P., (2005), *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Tovar, A., (1977), pp. 4-42; Tovar, A., (1982), pp. 8-32.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Krahe, H., (1962), *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Perono Cacciafoco, F., (2015), pp. 35-38.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Kitson, P.R., (1996), pp. 73-118.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Vennemann, Th., (1994), pp. 215-284; Vennemann, Th., (2003), *passim*.

last Ice Age (family of which the Basque language would be the only documented survivor). Vennemann's reconstruction is strongly based on his analysis of 'Old European' Toponymy and Hydronymy, and on a 're-reading', in a Vasconic key of interpretation, of Krahe's study on ancient European Hydronymy. Scholars like Harald Bichlmeier<sup>11</sup> and Jürgen Untermann<sup>12</sup> have further developed the process of historical reconstruction of European origins through the study of Toponymy and Hydronymy by assessing and re-interpreting the previous theoretical positions and adding a more analytical focus to the study and etymological restitution of ancient, prehistoric European place names and hydronyms (also in specific areal contexts, like Italy and Spain). However, at the current stage of the research, the main gap is represented by the lack of analytical studies on local place names that can provide – through the reconstruction of their origins and morphological roots – valuable (and still 'hidden') insights into the interpretation of naming processes and population dynamics in prehistoric Europe. The aim of studies in Historical Toponomastics like this paper is exactly to fill that gap.

Research on the remote prehistoric origins of place names, especially in the European (prevalently Indo-European) context, can be only (or, at least, eminently), qualitative and intensive (as defined by Jan Tent<sup>13</sup>), focused on the reconstruction of the etymologies of toponyms on a case-by-case basis, with the aim to provide the most exact and reliable possible etymology for each analyzed place name<sup>14</sup>. Only after such effort in reconstruction and after having collected a reasonable amount of data (etymological reconstructions), the assessment can become, to some extent, quantitative and extensive.

The limit of the studies mentioned above (if a limit exists) is to try, sometimes, to apply a quantitative and extensive approach to the ancient European Toponymy before having completed a qualitative and intensive analysis of the place names that are part of the historical and historical-linguistic reconstruction. This paper would like to be an example of qualitative analysis of prehistoric place names, and a contribution to the intensive historical study of European toponyms.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This paper, as mentioned, tries to shed light on the etymological origins and original meanings of three Italian place names, *Vinchio*, *Laigueglia*, and *Lingueglietta*, through a dual approach. The study hypothesizes and analyzes, on the one hand, possible Indo-European origins for the three toponyms, by applying the Comparative Method with the aim of reconstructing their etymology. On the other hand, the linguistic investigation also assesses the epistemological option of plausible pre-Indo-European (or, at least, non-Indo-European) origins (for *Vinchio* and *Lingueglietta*), discussing a possible proto-form, for both toponyms, not explained by the Indo-European historical phonetics, in order to provide a comprehensive reconstruction based on the available data and epistemological approaches. The paper is also aimed at giving a contribution to the discussion on the pre-Indo-European / (proto-)Indo-European dichotomy in prehistoric Europe, both in the context of the studies on the origins of European

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Bichlmeier, H., (2012), pp. 365-395.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Untermann, Jü., (2009), pp. 1-34.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Tent, J., (2015), pp. 65-74.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Nash, J., (2015), pp. 233-236.

languages and in the assessment and reconstruction of population movements and settlement dynamics in Europe between Upper Paleolithic and Neolithic<sup>15</sup>.

Etymological reconstruction and morphological analysis are conducted within the framework of the Historical Toponomastics<sup>16</sup> theory, being based on available historical sources (mainly archival documents and chronicles) and on the Comparative Method in the historical-phonetic restitution of the possible original proto-forms and roots for the three place names. The reconstruction of the history of the place names and of their origins is, therefore, historical-linguistic, philological, geographical, and topographical<sup>17</sup>. The available sources (mentioned below, in the sections on the etymological reconstructions of the three toponyms) on the names of the three places are very few in number and not always accurate, dealing more with anecdotal information than with a scientific attempt to reconstruct the etymologies of the toponyms. Not only the amount of bibliographical resources is very limited, but those texts, generally, also do not consider or ignore the remote stages of the naming processes for *Vinchio*, *Laigueglia*, and *Lingueglietta*.

As mentioned, the present paper would like to give, for the first time, a reliable and accurate etymological reconstruction for the three place names. In order to achieve this goal, archival research has been conducted, mainly at the Historical Archive and Diocesan Library of the Savona-Noli Diocese (North-Western Italy, Liguria), at the Historical Archive of the Albenga-Imperia Diocese (North-Western Italy, Liguria), at the Episcopal Historical Archive of Acqui Terme (North-Western Italy, Southern Piedmont), and at the Diocesan Historical Archive of Asti (North-Western Italy, Southern Piedmont). This archival research was mainly aimed at reconstructing the toponymic and diachronic stratigraphy of the three place names and at documenting the different denominations used, over time, for them. The data collected from this survey has confirmed some of the general information given by the numerically limited historical studies on the three villages and completed in part the insufficient research conducted by scholars so far on the toponymic diachronic development of the three place names (mainly limited to dictionaries of Toponymy, like the cited Olivieri, 1965 and DTI, 1999), allowing the addition of some local forms, mainly dialectal, used, over time, by local speakers to the set of onomastic variants.

This research has also a Language Documentation component, developed directly on the field, in a two-year time frame, by informally collecting data with the inhabitants of the three villages, trying to reconstruct the historical phonetics of the dialectal forms of the place names and to document local oral traditions or stories involving the three inhabited centers. This process has highlighted the deep-rooted existence and the persistence of paronymologies used by the local speakers to explain the origins and original meanings of the names of their places. Generally, such attested paronymologies are based on local stories passed down orally generation-by-generation and on the typical (and erroneous) process of associating two place names (in this case *Laigueglia* and *Lingueglietta*) because of their apparent morphological – and phonetic – similarity. As far as the reconstruction of the remote, prehistoric etymologies of the three place names, taking into account the possible dichotomy pre-Indo-European (or non-Indo-European) vs proto-Indo-European, Comparative Method has been applied to the attested forms of the toponyms, by assessing the suitability of some different

<sup>15</sup> Cf., among others, Joseph, B.D., (2018), pp. 15-24; Richards, M., (2003), pp. 135-162.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Perono Cacciafoco, F., (2014), pp. 79-98.

<sup>17</sup> Cf., among others, Crețan, R., (2000), *passim*; Crețan, R., Frățilă, V., (2007), *passim*.



possible source-languages (or proto-languages) to explain the origins of the place names. The best ‘candidate’ for an Indo-European etymology of the three toponyms is, for self-evident historical and geographical reasons, Celtic (proto-Celtic) and that is the main direction followed in the etymological reconstruction of possible Indo-European origins for the three place names. However, also plausible Germanic (and/or proto-Germanic) options have been assessed, despite having been, then, discarded.

In the case of *Vinchio*, by applying the Comparative Method to the reconstruction of the historical phonetics of the place name, it has also been possible to evaluate and discuss the hypothesis advanced by Charles Rostaing of non-Indo-European origins for European place names of the *\*vent-* / *\*vint-* type<sup>18</sup>. All the Indo-European and the possibly non-Indo-European etymological reconstructions proposed in this study are original and this paper is the first systematic study on them. The Celtic etymologies and their historical-phonetic sequences have been carefully double-checked with the most accredited and reliable sources, like the *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic* by Ranko Matasović<sup>19</sup>.

#### 4. THE THREE VILLAGES

*Laigueglia* ([lai'gweʎʎa], Ligurian dialect: *L'Aigheuja* [lej'gøjja] / *Aigöia*; geographic coordinates 43°58'28.24"N 8°09'29.92"E) is a small Italian town (6 meters of altitude above sea level) located in Liguria, North-Western Italy (currently in the province of *Savona*), bordering the municipalities of *Andora* and *Alassio* and overlooking the Ligurian sea on its eastern side. The inhabited center is located on the so-called *Bay of the Sun* (*Baia del Sole*, in Italian) between *Capo Santa Croce* and the *Capo Mele* lighthouse. *Laigueglia* is the smaller municipality of the *Savona* province. The territory of *Laigueglia* was inhabited already from the Upper Paleolithic (at least from 10000 years BC), as witnessed by paleo-anthropological and archeological findings in the surrounding areas, for example in the famous *Toirano* Caves (geographic coordinates 44°07'N 8°13'E)<sup>20</sup>. The first written sources on *Laigueglia*'s territory date back to the XII century. The fief swore fidelity to the Republic of Genoa in 1191, after having been part of the *Albenga* (*Albingaunum* < *Album Ingaunum* < *\*alb-*<sup>21</sup>, ‘water’) Commune, being administered by a local mayor chosen by Genoa.

*Vinchio* (Piedmontese dialect: *Vinch*, *Vens*, and *Vèins*; geographic coordinates 44°48'43"N 8°19'19"E) is a small village (269 meters of altitude above sea level) located in Southern Piedmont, North-Western Italy (currently in the province of *Asti*, about 60 kilometres from Turin, Piedmont's administrative center, and bordering the municipalities of *Belveglio*, *Castelnuovo Calcea*, *Cortiglione*, *Mombercelli*, *Nizza Monferrato*, and *Vaglio Serra*). In the Indo-European context, *Vinchio* was a Celtic (Cello-Ligurian) settlement, then become Roman after the conquest, by the Romans, of Northern Italy. In the High Middle Ages, *Vinchio*'s territory was subject to the presence of Saracen pirates. Aleramo of *Monferrato*, Earl of *Acqui*, defeated them and a small village in *Vinchio*'s area started to be inhabited by people from the neighbouring *Castelnuovo Calcea* (XII century). *Vinchio* belongs, with *Vaglio Serra* and *Incisa*

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Rostaing, C., (1994), *passim*; Rostaing, C., (1992), *passim*.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Matasović, R., (2008), *passim*.

<sup>20</sup> Cf., among others, Arobba, D., Boschian, G., Caramiello, R., Giampietri, A., Negrino, F., Tozzi, C., (2008), pp. 69-88.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Perono Cacciafoco, F., (2013), pp. 7-24.

*Scapaccino*, to the so-called *Sarmassa Valley*, a place already populated in the Upper Paleolithic, as witnessed by paleo-anthropological and archaeological findings from the localities of *Serrocorta* and *Monte Mare*<sup>22</sup>.

*Lingueglietta* (Ligurian dialect: *Lingöia*; geographic coordinates 43°52'04"N 7°55'51"E) is a very small hamlet (325 meters of altitude above sea level) of the *Cipressa* municipality, located in Liguria, North-Western Italy, currently in the province of *Imperia*. The medieval urban planning of the hamlet has been almost entirely preserved, making of *Lingueglietta* one of the most evocative inhabited centers of Western Liguria (the *Liguria di Ponente*). The origins of the medieval village could date back to 1049, when Anselmo Quaranta, founder of the *Lengueglia* local feudal dynasty, would have received the lands in *Lingueglietta*'s area and its surroundings from the Marquises of *Clavesana*.

The territories of *Cipressa* and *Lingueglietta* were periodically occupied, in prehistoric times, by hunters, fishermen, and gatherers, and then, before the Roman conquest, by the *Ligures Ingauni*<sup>23</sup>. *Lingueglietta* is located on a steep hill (cliff) overlooking the village of *San Lorenzo al Mare* (6 meters of altitude above sea level), on the seashore.

## 5. ETYMOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS AND RECONSTRUCTIONS

### 5.1. *Laigueglia*

The historical settlement of *Laiguèglia* dates back to Roman times, with archaeological findings connecting the place with the occupation, by the Romans, of its area. However, the current village started to develop in the late XIV century, with the immigration of people from *Andora*<sup>24</sup>.

The historical toponym for the place, *Aquila*, dating back to 1326 and confirmed by the dialectal diction *Aigöia*, has been connected with Latin *aquila*, 'eagle', the symbol of the Roman legions moving towards the North through the so-called *via Iulia Augusta* (the route connecting *Aquileia* with the *Noricum*; actually, that road had no name in Roman times, being developed on a prehistoric track, and its odonym was proposed by Carlo Gregorutti in 1884<sup>25</sup>). However, the toponym *Aquila* (as shown also by the Ligurian dialect form *Aigöia*) does not come from the Latin word *aquila*, but from the form *aquicula*, diminutive of *aqua*, 'water'. The diminutive would not indicate lack of water in the area, but would be connected with the short watercourse flowing in *Laigueglia*'s territory, the *Sarosa* stream, debouching at the eastern border of the inhabited center. The form *Laigueglia*, in Italian, derives from the intergrowth of the definite article (feminine singular), *la* ('the'), merged with *Aquila* (*la* + *aquila* < *aquicula* / *la* + *aquila* ~ *aigöia*)<sup>26</sup>.

*Aquicula*, meaning – literally – 'small water', cannot have been originated before the II century BC, more probably between the I century BC and the end of the IV century AD, the time of the introduction of Latin in the local linguistic context. It is

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Gallo, L.M., (1992), pp. 97-103; Baldereschi, S., Gallo, L.M., (1992), pp. 69-74.

<sup>23</sup> Cf., among others, Gandolfo, A., (2005), pp. 865-866.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Petracco Sicardi, G. (DTI), (1990), p. 340, s. v. *Laiguèglia*.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Gregorutti, C., (1885), pp. 110-117; Buora, M., (2011), p. 45 (and n. 36) and p. 49.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Petracco Sicardi, G. (DTI), (1990), cit., p. 340, s. v. *Laiguèglia*.

possible the form was translating a more ancient (and lost) paleo-Ligurian hydronym, in any case morphologically different from *Aquicula*.

As for the name of the *Sarosa* brook, the hydronym could come from the form \**Sarusia*, from paleo-Ligurian \**Sārūsīā* < proto-Indo-European \**Sṛh<sub>3</sub>ǵsīāh<sub>a</sub>*, ‘that flows on time’ (a feminine active aorist participle). An alternative etymological explanation for *Sarosa* could come from Celtic, and precisely from Ingaunian, Celtic Ingaunian \**Sārōsā* < Proto-Celtic (Indo-European) \**Sārō-pōsā* < proto-Indo-European \**Sṛh<sub>3</sub>ǵ-pōsāh<sub>a</sub>*, ‘that fertilizes by flowing’. *Sarosa*, if it was a paleo-Ligurian hydronym, could have influenced the Latin coinage of *Aquicula*, since, with the ‘vanishing’ of /p/ in Celtic, the compound could have become ‘opaque’, and *-ōsā* could have been ‘translated’ into *-icula* by approximation.

Among local speakers, a paretymology connects the toponym *Laigueglia* with the place name *Lingueglietta*, being, according to this interpretation, *Lingueglietta* a sort of diminutive of *Laigueglia*. Also the dialectal forms of the toponyms contribute to the possible misunderstanding, being, in the local diction, *Laigueglia Aigöia*, and *Lingueglietta Lingöia*. This interpretation, based on a weak comparison between the two Italian and local dialectal denominations and not taking into account the historical phonetics and the history of languages involved in the naming processes of the two toponyms, does not have any linguistic foundation.

## 5.2. Vinchio

The first written attestation of the place name *Vinchio* is from 948, “subtus castello ubi *Vinti* dicitur”<sup>27</sup>. In 961, *Vinchio* appears as *Viginti*<sup>28</sup>; in 1125, as *Venti*<sup>29</sup>; in 1203, again as *Viginti*<sup>30</sup>; in 1204, as *castro Viginti*<sup>31</sup>; in 1212, as *castrum Viginti*<sup>32</sup>; in 1290, as “*Viginti* seu *Vincium*”<sup>33</sup>. The attestations connect the place name with the Latin numeral *viginti*, ‘twenty’, which could indicate the *iūgera* (1 Roman *iūgerum* = about 71×35½ meters = about ¼ hectare) of the original *castrum* or the distance, in Roman miles (1 Roman mile, standardized to 5000 Roman feet by Agrippa in 29 BC and called ‘Agrippa’s Imperial Roman mile’, is estimated to have been equivalent to around 1481 meters), from the city of *Alba* (< \**alb*<sup>34</sup>, ‘water’), *Cuneo* province. An ancient route was connecting *Alba* with *Vinchio*, along the *Tinella* Valley, touching *Burio* and crossing the valley of *Nizza Monferrato* through *Castelnuovo Calcea*, till the territory of *Acqui (Terme)*, the ancient *Aquae Statiellae*.

The historical-phonetic development between *Viginti* and the ‘modern’ version of the name, *Vinchio*, is not clear. Already in 1290, it seems the denomination was dual (“*Viginti* seu *Vincium*”). *Vinchio* (*Vincium*) seems more plausibly derived from *vinculum*, ‘willow’, possible anthroponymic component (*de Vinchel* / *de Vinchulis*) typical of the local territory. A toponymic paretymology could be at the origin of this ‘modern’ version of the name<sup>35</sup>. The numerical origin of *Viginti* is not uncommon in the

<sup>27</sup> Cf. BSSS, (1899- ), XXVIII, 64, 117.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. BSSS, (1899- ), cit., CXIII, 2, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Olivieri, D., (1965), p. 372, s. v. *Vinchio*.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. BSSS, (1899- ), cit., CXV, 229, 54.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Rossebastiano, A. (DTI), (1990), p. 711, s. v. *Vinchio*.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Rossebastiano, A. (DTI), (1990), cit., p. 711, s. v. *Vinchio*.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. BSSS, (1899- ), cit., CXV, 229, 602.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Perono Cacciafoco, F., (2013), cit., pp. 7-24.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Rossebastiano, A. (DTI), (1990), cit., p. 711, s. v. *Vinchio*.



area, where the name of the village of *Quaranti* (Southern Piedmont, North-Western Italy, currently located in the province of *Asti*) comes from Latin *Quadráginta* (version of the toponym attested in the year 1152), ‘forty’, used as an anthroponymic component. In 1199, the Latin place name *Quadráginta* had already its attested vernacular Italian version, *Quaranta*. The name indicates the number of *iūgera* of the territory surrounding the village. The form with the Latin numerals ‘four’ (*quattuor*) and ‘forty’ (*quadráginta*) is widespread in the area, with other place names like *Quargnento* (Southern Piedmont, North-Western Italy, *Alessandria* province) and *Quattordio* (Southern Piedmont, North-Western Italy, *Alessandria* province) still attesting it<sup>36</sup>.

A possibly widespread toponymic paronymy connects *Vinchio* with the Latin verb *vincēre* (Italian *vincere*), ‘to win’, ‘to defeat’. This interpretation does not take into account the historical phonetics of the toponym and is based on sources describing events between history and legend. It is said that, in the Middle Ages, Saracen pirates would have been defeated (in Italian, *vinti*, past participle passive, masculine plural, of the Italian verb *vincere*, in Latin *victi*, perfect participle passive, masculine nominative plural, from the Latin verb *vincēre*) and dispersed by the inhabitants of the County of *Acqui*. Still in 1802, in *Vinchio*’s area, some place names were connected with stories on the Saracens. For example, the so-called *Bricco dei Saraceni* (*Saracens’ Hill*), where a grave full of human bones was found, the so-called *Contrada dei Saraceni* (*Saracens’ Quarter*), and, nearby, in *Corticella*’s territory, a small valley called *Malamorte Valley* (*Bad Death Valley*) or *Valle della Morte* (*Valley of Death*), where many bones’ fragments were found. From that ancient massacre, the territory of *Vinchio* and the inhabited center itself would have got the name *Vinti* (‘defeated’), linked to the defeated Saracens. However, this story is based on questionable historical sources and the toponym *Vinti* does not even match up with the historical phonetics of the Latin participle *victi* (Italian *vinti*) and of its local (dialectal) equivalent, *vinci*<sup>37</sup>.

In order to try to give a more consistent etymological interpretation of the place name *Vinchio*, it is meaningful to consider the 1212 form for the place name, *Castrum Viginti*, as a probable interpretative spelling of /*venti*/, the form *Venti* dating back to 1125, almost one century earlier. That attestation is, indeed, compatible with the current dialectal version *Vèinc* [*v'einj*]. Therefore, the late Latin antecedent could be *\*vīntī* or *\*vēntī*. As mentioned, the widespread Latin-Romance etymology identifies the etymon exactly with *viginti*, ‘twenty’, interpreting its origin as a reference to the measurement of the land, 20 *iūgera*. Theoretically, it could be possible to hypothesize, as an alternative interpretation for the toponym, a singular locative *uēntī*, ‘in the wind’, of Latin *uēntus* (Italian *vento*), ‘wind’ < Indo-European *\*wēnto-s* < *\*h<sub>2</sub>weh<sub>1</sub>-nto-s* (root *\*h<sub>2</sub>weh<sub>1</sub>-*, ‘to blow’). An alternative Germanic etymology is more difficult to be postulated, since the Lombardic language is identifiable with Old High German, where is attested a plural *wenti* of *want*, ‘side’, ‘wall’ < Germanic *\*wandi-z*, feminine < Indo-European *\*wondh-i-s* (root *\*wendh-*, ‘to turn’). However, in this case, the Romance expected *exitus* would be in *\*gue-* and not simply in *\*ve-*.

A better option is Celtic, in particular Ancient Celtic. A possibility could come from *\*uēntā*, ‘marketplace’, ‘place of exchange and trade’, since its locative would be *\*uēntī* (phonetically normalized, in Latin, *\*uēntī* > *\*vēntī*). Another quite acceptable option could be a Latinized locative *\*uīntī*, from Gaulish *\*winto-s*, corresponding to the

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Rossebastiano, A. (DTI), (1990), p. 525, s. v. *Quaranti*.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Rossebastiano, A. (DTI), (1990), cit., p. 711, s. v. *Vinchio*.

Middle Welsh *gwynt*, ‘wind’ < Celtic *\*winto-s* < *\*wīnto-s* < Indo-European *\*wēnto-s* < *\*h<sub>2</sub>weh<sub>1</sub>-nto-s* (root *\*h<sub>2</sub>weh<sub>1</sub>-*, ‘to blow’), Latin *uēntus*, Italian *vento*.

Charles Rostaing proposed a pre-Indo-European origin for toponyms like *Vinchio*, specifically for the Provençal place names *Ventabren*, *Ventrabrun*, and *Ventadour*. His interpretation involves also, among others, the Italian toponym *Benevento* and the British place names *Bannauena*, *Glannouenta*, *Venta Belgārum*, and *Venta Icēnōrum*<sup>38</sup>.

According to the scholar, these toponyms would derive from a proto-form *\*vi-nt* < *\*uěntāh<sub>a</sub>*, meaning ‘high ground’, ‘hill’. This form could be considered pre-Indo-European (Ligurian pre-Indo-European, not to be interpreted as Ligurian Indo-European), since there are no proto-Indo-European roots plausibly related to it. In this case, the proto-form could also be considered simply non-Indo-European (because calling it ‘pre-Indo-European’ would imply its existence in a linguistic substratum widespread before the possible ‘arrival’ of the Indo-Europeans in their historical territories, and that is highly disputed, at least in the context of the above mentioned place names). However, if *\*uěnh<sub>1</sub>-*, in the meaning of ‘to love’, ‘to desire’, comes semantically from the seme ‘to make an effort’, also ‘semantic items’ like ‘high ground’ and ‘hill’ could come from ‘a set of places (or a single place) characterized by effort’ < *\*uěnt-*, ‘effort’, allowing a sort of Indo-European interpretation of the form. The historical phonetics shows some issues in the anaphonesis of the radical vowel (*\*uěnt-* > *Vint-*), but, in *Vinchio* (*Vinti*), that could be explained as a phenomenon of metaphony, due to the following *-i*, namely the ending / desinence of *Vinchio* (*Vinti*)’s locative. It is possible to postulate also a stem / theme in *-i-*, *\*uěn-tī-s*, ‘effort’ > ‘hill’, replacing the solution with the locative (and that would allow an Indo-European explanation of this interpretation of the place name). *Vinchio* is located on a hill (269 meters above sea level) and is surrounded by hills. This etymology, therefore, seems to match up with the landscape features of its territory.

### 5.3. *Lingueglietta*

It is reasonable to postulate a quite remote origin for the place name *Lingueglietta*, going back in time at least to Celtic (Ingaunian) or to paleo-Ligurian. However, a widespread tradition connects the toponym *Lingueglietta* with the name of the feudal family ruling its territory from 1049, the Marquises of *Lengueglia* (since, in the local dialect, *Lingueglietta* is also *Lingöia*).

The ancient name of the village was *Vinguilia*, attested by Agostino Giustiniani in the year 1537 in his *Annals of the Republic of Genoa*<sup>39</sup>. If the toponym really derives from the name of the *Lengueglia* family, it is plausible to think of a reading error, by the author, of the first consonant, *v* ~ *l* (*Vinguilia* ~ *\*Linguilia*). It is, nevertheless, possible to consider ‘original’ the form *Vinguilia*, and, in that case, it is necessary to try to reconstruct a presumably paleo-Ligurian etymology for the toponym. An option could be (proto-)Celtic, *\*Uīndō-guīllīā* < Indo-European *\*Uīndō-g<sup>wh</sup>ih<sub>x</sub>slīā*, meaning something like ‘of the white edge’, and referring to the cliff where *Lingueglietta* is located, since, locally, ‘white’ is used in order to indicate ‘a barren landscape, with no trees’. The second morphemic part of the place name, *\*g<sup>wh</sup>ih<sub>x</sub>slīā<sub>a</sub>*, ‘string’, ‘edge’,

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Rostaing, C., (1994), cit., *passim*; Rostaing, C., (1992), cit., *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> Cf., among other attestations in his work, Giustiniani, A., (1854), I, p. 28.

would come from  $*g^{wh}ih_xslāh_a$  (Latin *filum*), or from  $*g^{wh}ih_xslāh_a$ , ‘vein’, here in a metaphorically geo-morphological meaning.

An alternative etymology could refer to the above mentioned (for *Vinchio*) form  $*vi-nt < *uěntāh_a$ , meaning ‘high ground’, ‘hill’, reconstructed by Charles Rostaing for Provençal place names and possibly dating back to a pre-Indo-European linguistic substratum. This etymology should at least be considered non-Indo-European, since it cannot, basically, be connected with any Indo-European root. However, if, as mentioned above,  $*uěnh_1-$ , meaning ‘to love’, ‘to desire’, could have been originated semantically from the seme ‘to make an effort’, also ‘semantic items’ like ‘high ground’ and ‘hill’ could come from the meaning ‘a set of places (or a single place) characterized by effort’  $< *uěnt-$ , ‘effort’, allowing an Indo-European explanation of the form. Despite the historical-phonetic problem of the anaphonesis of the radical vowel ( $*uěnt- > Vint- / Ving-$ ), metaphony, due to the following *-i*, could explain the phonetic phenomenon. In the case of *Vinguilia*, it could be possible to have a theme / stem in *-i-*, originating a Celtic form  $*Uinti-guillīā < \text{Indo-European } *Uěn-tī-s-g^{wh}ih_xslāh_a$ , meaning ‘cliff’s edge’, ‘hill’s edge’, with  $*uěn-tī-s$ , ‘effort’  $> \text{‘cliff’ / ‘hill’}$ , like in the related naming process of the toponym *Vinchio*.

According to the above described reconstruction, interpreted through an Indo-European solution, the place names *Vinchio* and *Lingueglietta*, in their ancient forms *Vinti* and *Vinguilia*, would be etymologically connected with each other. It is actually important to observe that the possible pre-Indo-European (or, at least, non-Indo-European) origins of the two place names should not be excluded *a priori*, and that the possibility of a reuse and refunctionalization of a plausibly pre-Indo-European root (as postulated by Rostaing) by Indo-European (proto-Celtic and/or paleo-Ligurian?) speakers in the naming processes of the two toponyms cannot be denied. As told, the pre-Indo-European possibly at the origins of the two place names would be Ligurian pre-Indo-European, not to be confused with the Ligurian Indo-European.

As mentioned, *Lingueglietta* is located on a steep cliff (a hill rising 325 meters above sea level) overlooking the village of *San Lorenzo al Mare* (6 meters above sea level), on the seashore, and, like in the case of *Vinchio*, the etymology of its name seems to show a strong connection with the geo-morphology of its landscape.

## 6. EPISTEMOLOGICAL NOTES ON THE RECONSTRUCTION PROCESS

The etymological reconstruction of prehistoric place names in Europe is often problematic, both in the context of the onomastic reconstruction itself, having to deal with proto-languages, non-attested prehistoric languages from which the currently spoken languages would be derived (and also with the theoretical notion of ‘pre-language’), and in the attempt to highlight and isolate paronymies produced over time by the loss, by the local speakers, of the original morphology and original meaning of their place names, with the natural process of ‘diachronic overlapping’ of different toponymic variants sometimes connected with local oral traditional stories.

However, an accurate and reliable etymological reconstruction of the proto-forms and roots of place names in the European prehistoric context is extremely valuable not only for its onomastic component, but also because it allows reconstructing possible settlement dynamics and population movements in prehistoric times, undocumented because of the absence of historical records. The correct etymology of

toponyms, like in the case of the *Vinchio*, *Laigueglia*, and *Lingueglietta* villages, can shed new light on the study of the Indo-European or non-Indo-European prehistoric communities inhabiting their territories in very ancient times, confirming or disproving theories about the proto-languages (or pre-languages) spoken in a specific area in a specific time (in the case of the three villages here mentioned, realistically proto-Celtic).

In the assessment process of the analysis and correctness of the etymological reconstruction of a place name one of the fundamental points (and requirements) is the evaluation of the links of the stem of the toponym and its original meaning to the hydro-geo-morphology of the territory of the place and with its landscape features<sup>40</sup>, like, for example, in the case of *Lingueglietta*. This assessment has to be verified both in the context of Historical Toponomastics (with available documents and sources) and in the context of Diachronic Toponymy (where the etymological reconstruction is conducted generally in the absence of historical records and data, mainly in the context of aboriginal endangered and undocumented languages<sup>41</sup>). Moreover, when reconstructing the etymological origins of possibly Indo-European place names, it is always methodologically important to take into account the hermeneutic and theoretical option of pre-Indo-European or non-Indo-European origins for those place names<sup>42</sup>. The assessment, like in the case of *Vinchio*, has to be conducted through a thorough and intellectually honest analysis of the historical phonetics leading to the reconstruction of the proto-forms and roots of the analyzed toponyms, without trying to ‘shape’ the phonetic sequence with the aim to follow one specific approach (Indo-European) or the other (non-Indo-European).

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The historical-linguistic search for the etymological origins of possibly prehistoric place names, in the Indo-European context, allows identifying connections among toponyms belonging to different areas and showing an apparently unrelated morphology. *Vinchio* and *Lingueglietta* seem, indeed, two place names with completely independent morphological origins. However, by reconstructing their etymologies, going back in time to their ancient attested forms, *Vinti* and *Vingulia*, and, then, back again, to their possible roots, the link between the two toponyms becomes clear, both at the level of their etymology itself and at the level of their historical semantics, their original meaning. Moreover, by assessing interpretations based on historical-phonetic reconstructions, it is also possible, for the two place names, to hypothesize origins beyond Indo-European, pre-Indo-European, indeed, if considered in a diachronic context, or non-Indo-European, if evaluated only on the basis of historical-phonetic compatibility.

The etymological analysis and reconstruction of place names considered connected with each other allows to highlight phenomena of toponymic paretyymology surviving over time, like in the case of *Laigueglia* and *Lingueglietta*, considered two related place names not only for the morphology of their current Italian denominations, but also for the local (dialectal) diction of their names, *Aigöia* and *Lingöia*, while the two place names come from two different etymological origins, the first connected with the notion of ‘water’, the second linked to the concept of ‘high ground’.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Perono Cacciafoco, F., Cavallaro, F., Kratochvíl, F., (2015), cit., pp. 29-47.

<sup>41</sup> Cf., among others, Koch, H., Hercus, L., (2009), pp. 1-5 and *passim*.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Perono Cacciafoco, F., (2014), cit., pp. 79-98.

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