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THE INDO-EUROPEAN PERSONAL NAMES OF PANNONIA, NORICUM AND NORTHERN ITALY: COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS IN CELTIC, VENETIC, AND SOUTH-PICENE

This work aims to clarify a number of issues concerning the etymology of personal names attested in Latin epigraphy in the Alpine region, especially in Gallia Transpadana, Venetia et Histria, Pannonia and Noricum. The author selected a number of comparative and superlative proprial forms which may be classified as Celtic or Italic, and attempted to establish their language attribution based on the analysis of their etymology, geographic distribution and the sound changes that they presumably underwent. The author also offers an explanation of the different and apparently contradictory types of vowel syncope characteristic of the Gaulish superlative forms, which is based on a hypothesis about the successive accent shifts, before and after the split-up of the Celtic language family. Additionally, this analysis has some bearing on the interpretation of several South-Picene inscriptions, namely that from Penna Sant'Andrea. The paper also seeks to make a methodological point by exhibiting how much the evidence of proper names with clearly discernable patterns may contribute to the understanding of particular issues related to the phonology and morphology of the whole group of languages. Such information may lead, in its turn, to new etymologies, and therefore to better understanding of some particular features of the Celtic languages in their early period.

Key words: Italic languages, Celtic languages, Gaulish, Oscan, Umbrian, Venetic, South-Picene, personal names, Indo-European onomastics, Indo-European word formation, Latin epigraphy.

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“It is disheartening but true: we get out of texts largely what we put into them.”

Peter Gay, *My German Experience: Growing up in Nazi Berlin*

1. Introduction

The ethnic and linguistic ascription of the inhabitants of Roman Pannonia and Noricum is very difficult to pin down. The epigraphic record offers a patchwork of onomastic material in which Latin, Celtic (often said to have spread from Noricum) and the elusive “Balkanic,” “Illyrian” or “Pannonian” dialects are often impossible to differentiate from one another. To make things more difficult, some cities or territories have been successively ascribed to different areas and provinces. Some of them exhibit a personality of their own, in that names are often not attested anywhere else or show unexpected traits. For instance, Emona has been recently shown to have belonged to Italy and not to Pannonia [Šašel-Kos, 2003], which constitutes a further complication when it comes to the indeterminacies of dialectal attribution.¹

Of course, this short study does not aim at exhaustivity and has been preceded by such comprehensive works as [Meid, 2005], complemented in recent times by specialized monographs by Radman-Livaja [RLSiscia], Stifter [2012], Repanšek [2016], Falileyev [2014], and Falileyev & Radman-Livaja [2016]. Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go before we have sufficiently clarified not only the etymologies but also the dialectal affiliation of most forms, and, as usual, much of the existing research limits itself to comparing the names under study with Celtic or non-Celtic names attested elsewhere.

This work aims to point out the existence of Italic names to the north of the Alps, which must be weighed against an overwhelming amount of Celtic names. The indeterminacy of the word “Italic” is insofar justified as some scholars have posited one or more Italic layers preceding the Celtic invasions of Noricum and Pannonia [cf. Alföldy, 1974, 17–19]. For the sake of economy, I shall mostly use the convenient label “Venetic”: the idea that Venetic is not an Italic language but an independent branch of Indo-European is increasingly belied by contemporary linguistic analysis. In one of his last works on Venetic, Madison Beeler [1981] reminded the reader of the fact

¹ According to the recent reinterpretation, the city belonged to Regio X from the beginning of the division of Italy into regions of the sources, and to the Cisalpina before that.

that “although no one any longer accepts the Illyrian doctrine, there is likewise no universal acceptance of the Italic theory. The reason, I think, is clear: the close agreement in the phonological area is not matched in the lexicon and morphology.” This is unfortunately to be put down to the lack of interest in a wide scope research in Venetic morphology that includes onomastics, and not to the lack of materials. As I have tried to show elsewhere, a reappraisal of the indigenous Venetic inscriptions and a detailed search for specific patterns of word formation may prove instrumental in the classification of Venetic as an Italic dialect standing in a very close genetic relationship to Latin [see Prósper, *in press*, a, b].

On the other hand, while such non-committal language names as “Pannonian” or “para-Italic” have occasionally been put into service, they are *ad hoc* creations deprived of substance as long as no indigenous texts corresponding to them have ever been found and, crucially, no recurrent set of sound shifts incompatible with Italic or Celtic, however meager, has been identified for them. Additionally, as I anticipated above, unless a consistent pattern emerges from these PNs that compels the postulation of a new language or language family, sound methodology dictates that Italic-looking materials be considered, *faute de mieux*, as Venetic. In other words, it may prove impossible, given our insufficient knowledge of the Venetic dialect, to distinguish its testimonies from older Italic dialects spoken to the north and west of the historical Venetic region.

To begin with, it is impossible to ascertain whether the onomastic examples from Noricum go back to the last remainders of a vast Italic continuum of populations that migrated through the Alps into Italy from Noricum and were much later divided by the Sabellic peoples who may have penetrated Italy from the west, or, alternatively, whether these are exclusively the product of secondary Venetic offshoots ultimately stemming from Italy. In my view, the first scenario is provisionally favoured not only by the isolation and archaic nature of some of these names, but also by the Italic expansion into Pannonia, which may have proceeded in parallel to the southward migration into Italy of what has come to be known as “Venetic populations” under the pressure of Celtic peoples.

Unfortunately, it will not always be possible to distinguish Venetic from Illyrian materials; this IE dialect is commonly held to be a *satem* language, showing no distinction between /a/ and /o/, but there is no consensus about it. At present, morphological coincidence between the onomastic evidence and the Italic languages, the distinction of /a/ and /o/ and the treatment of the *mediae aspiratae* are the most reliable criteria for the classification of a name. Finally, PNs containing <EV> will be classified as Venetic and not Celtic, although an Illyrian attribution of these forms also remains possible. Note that the Celtic PINs in the area which contain the /eu/ diphthong often considered as an archaism, like *Neviodūnum* (where retention of the original diphthong may be put down to the preceding coronal), may simply contain a first member belonging to another language, from which it was borrowed already as a propriial and not an appellative unit.

The present paper also aims to clarify some aspects of Cisalpine Celtic phonetics and contribute a grain of sand to the interpretation of South-Picene inscriptions by bringing to bear some partly disregarded features of Italic phonetics.

2. A new personal name from Pannonia and Noricum: MEITIMA and its Italic cognates

As far as I know, the female PN MEITIMA remains uninterpreted in spite of its many reliable attestations:

MEITIMA CASA/MONIS F(ILIA) (Vereb/Aquincum, Pannonia Inferior) [CIL, 3, 10348].

D(IS) M(ANIBVS) / VEAPONVS / AVITVS / VIV(VS) FEC(IT) SIBI / ET DIACOXIE / MEITIME / CON(IVGI) KARISSIME (Sankt Veit/Virunum, Noricum, 2nd–3rd c. AD) [CIL, 3, 4857].

SEX(TVS) / CALVENTIVS / INGENV(V)S V(IVVS) F(ECIT) / SIBI ET MATTIAE / MEITIMAE CON(IVGI), etc. (Celje/Celeia, Noricum) [AE, 1995, 1203].²

MEITIME FILIE / E[L]IVS PROVIN/CIALIS HER(ES) P(OSVIT) (Nagyteteny/Campona, Pannonia) [CIL, 3, 3401].

D(IS) M(ANIBVS) / CETENIO / LEONI QV[I] / VIXIT ANN[IS] / XXVI ME(NS)I(BV)S E[T] / DIEB(VS) ET CET[E]/NIO SERVA[N]/DO QVI VIXI[T] / ANNIS X ME(NS)I(BV)[S] / ET DIEB(VS) II / METIMA (Milan/Mediolanum, Transpadana, 171–300 AD) [AE, 2001, 1089].

Meid [2005, 262] cursorily labels it as Illyrian: “illyrischen Namen *Meitima*, cf. *Teut-meitis*”; this opinion is repeated by [Radman-Livaja & Ivezić, 2012] without further considerations. Therefore, it has apparently passed unnoticed that it is identical to the South-Picene noun attested in two monuments, respectively as *meitims* (nom. sing., Penna Sant’Andrea [cf. Marinetti, 1985, 217; IItal., 1, 196–197] and *meitimúm* (acc. sing., Castignano) [cf. Marinetti, 1985, 176–183; IItal., 1, 192–193]. This form has been taken to mean either ‘monument’ or ‘gift,’ and is traditionally compared with Goth. *maiþms* ‘present,’ ON. pl. *meiðmar* ‘presents,’ which go back to **mojtmo-*. I shall contend, however, that too many uncertainties linger around this comparison. But before distant cognates are considered, some words on a number of allegedly related Italic forms are in order.

According to Vine’s exhaustive analysis of the Early Latin Duenos inscription [Vine 1999], MITAT in l. 1 is certain to be an indicative form of a verb ‘to give, offer,’ built from a root **(h₂)mei-*.³ The Latin verb *mūtāre* ‘to (ex)change’ and *mūtūus* ‘interchangeable’ can easily be taken as derivatives of a substantivized **móji-to-* ‘something

² The online databases unanimously defend the reading MELTIMAE. However, besides the fact that this would be a hapax, the photographs at [<http://www.ubi-erat-lupa.org/monument.php?id=22185>] do not bear this out; a diagonal scratch of the slab has worn it out at precisely this spot and there is nothing left of the downright stroke of the alleged <L>.

³ Classed as **mei-* ‘wechseln, tauschen, ändern’ in [LIV, 426]. According to Vine, the past part. **mitó-* could have given rise to a frequentative present **mit-eh₂(ie/o)-*. However, [LIV, 430] traces MITAT back to a different root, **meiþh₂-* ‘wechseln, austauschen, entfernen,’ and reconstructs the present **mith₂-eje/o-*.

given in exchange',⁴ itself derived from a zero-grade past part. **mi-tó-* of the same root. In his view, it is also conceivable that *meitimúm* and *meitims* show a parallel *e*-grade substantivization **měj-to-* (for the connection of the South-Picene and Latin forms see already [Eichner, 1989–1990, 197]).

In the same work, Vine has additionally suggested an original explanation of a word in the Duenos inscription that he segments as MEINOM. This form had passed undetected because this document is conducted in *scriptio continua* and, besides that, avoids double letters, even across words. For that reason, the sequence <ENMANOMEINOM> in l. 3 had previously been read at face value as <EN MANOM EINOM>. Vine interprets the form MEINOM, obtained according to the alternative word division and restitution, as a substantivized **měj-no-* 'something given in exchange, gift' and invokes a parallel formation **mój-no-* attested in Lith. *maĩnas* 'exchange,' OCS. *měna* 'change,' OIr. *maĩn*, *moĩn*, *muĩn* (fem. *-i*-stem) 'gift, countergift; treasure,' as well as Lat. *mūnus* (**mój-n-es-*). Finally, an adjectival stem **mój-ni-* is continued by Lat. *mūnis* 'obliging' and constitutes the base of U. *muneklu* 'donation' (**moj-ni-tlo-*) and O. *múiníkú* 'communis' (**moj-ni-ko-*). In accordance with this view, he translates the phrase <ENMANOM (M)EINOM> as "as a fine gift."

Let us note in passing that **mój-ni-* is now treated as a substantival formation by Hackstein [2010], and in this way regularly fits into the Caland alternation as laid out by Nussbaum [1999], by which a thematic adjective **mo/ej-no-* corresponds to an acrostatic abstract noun **mo/ej-ni-*. Finally, Arm. *āmen* 'all' goes back to **sm̥-moj̥ni-* according to Olsen [1999, 281], and is closely related to Goth. *ga-mains* (*-i-*), Lat. *commūnis* 'common'.⁵

Nonetheless, if we accept the existence of a noun **měj-to-* and derive MEITIMA and *meitims* from it, we may well wonder about the origin and purpose of the sequence *-i-mo-*. In spite of former accounts, there are too many indeterminacies surrounding the actual derivational process leading to PItal. **mej̥timo-*. If we start from **měj̥t-mo-* on the strength of the Germanic forms which, as observed above, go back to **mój̥t-mo-*, both the suffix and the *e*-grade of the root remain unaccounted for. Additionally,

⁴ According to Vine, "directly comparable to the Sicilian material, which may even be borrowed from Italic" [Vine, 1999]. In fact, the Sicilian forms may belong to a dialect of Oscan: cf. Varro's account "si datum quod reddatur, mutuuum, quod Siculi *moeton*" (Ling. Lat., 5, 179) and the Siculan idiom μοῖτον ἄντι μοῖτον reported by Hesych. The Lusitanian form MVITIEAS (acc. pl.?, Arroyo de la Luz, Cáceres, South-Western Spain) inherits an adjectival derivative **mojt-iajo-* and therefore is structurally equatable to *mūtuus* and, in my opinion, ultimately belongs to an Italic dialect.

⁵ Interestingly, **mój-no/i-* has an overlooked onomastic parallel which occurs as a pseudo-gentilic *Moenius* but is mostly attested in the epigraphic group of Lara de los Infantes (Burgos): MOENIO FLAVIO, MOENIO MESSORI, CAIO MOENIO besides MOENIVS in Venetia et Histria and Dalmatia. In addition, a purely indigenous name of the same origin is attested in Germania (MOENVVS, Mainz), and Hispania among the southern Vettonian populations: MOENAE (Arévalo, Ávila), CONTAECA MOENICC (Toledo, 1st c.), TVRAMVS / COEROBRI(GENSIS) / MOENICCI / F(LIVS) (Toledo, end of the 1st c.), LICINIA MO/ENICV B PATER/NI MAGANI/Q(VM) F(ILLIA) (lost, probably 2nd c.; there is a variant MOENIC, so the reading of the second word is dubious).

a change **méjt-mo-* >> **mejt-i-mo-* can be defended only at the cost of accepting that a medial vowel was inserted by analogy, and by no means phonetically: a context-bound anaptyxis would not be sufficiently motivated. The exact conditions under which anaptyxis took place in South-Picene are not completely clear, and in this case *-i-* would seem to be copying the colour of the preceding vowel. This is very uncommon, however. Counter to expectations, the text of Penna Sant' Andrea shows no anaptyxis in clusters of *muta cum liquida*: we find *meitistrúí* (that is, no †*meitistirúí*), *múfqlúm* (and not †*múfqlúlúm*) and *praistaklasa* (and not †*praistakalasa*), and, consequently, it is not expected to occur in *meitims*.⁶

In addition, since the PN *MEITIMA* is unlikely to be South-Picene, we have to accept that the proposed anaptyxis took place independently, which is unattractive, or was Proto-Italic, which is refutable since the vowel remained unaffected by the following labial sound, as opposed to such superlative forms as Palaeo-Italic *Φολαισῦμος*, O. *últiumam*, Lat. *maxumus* or Palaeo-U. *setums*.⁷

One may, of course, have recourse to the Caland derivatives in *-i-mo-* and regard *-i-* as originally belonging to the suffix. However, this kind of suffix is infrequent, it shows a limited productivity in Greek and Sanskrit and, furthermore, is unknown in Italic. Needless to say, this solution destroys the relationship with the Germanic form. Again, an inherited **mejt-i-mo-* would leave some questions unanswered, since with the possible exception of *opesa[-]úom* (Cures) South-Picene forms undergo medial vowel syncope, with or without subsequent anaptyxis (cf. *meitistrúí*, *deiktam* — from an earlier **dejektām* — and *Velaimes*, on which see below 3. a). In fairness, a nominative **mejtims* with the final vowel syncope could have exerted an analogical influence on the rest of the inflection and the prevailing stem would have ousted all the variants exhibiting the outcome of medial syncope, like the acc. sing. **mejtmom*. But since there is no comparative reason to see **mejtimo-* as a form inherited from older stages, and

⁶ In similar cases of “*muta cum liquida*”, where we are reasonably sure that it took place (as in *qupírh* in Castignano vs *kuprí* in Capecstrano, from **kuprē(d)*) or where it can be hypothesized that the vowel is equally anaptyctic and then not analogical on the nom.-acc. (as in *matereih*, *patereih* in Castignano, from **mātrej*, **patrej*), the vowel copies that of the next syllable. Very often there is no anaptyxis at all (in fact, Castignano is exceptional): cf. *brimeqlúí*, *okrei* (Penna Sant' Andrea) [cf. Marinetti, 1985, 220–223; Ital., 1, 200; Clackson, *in press*]. Different inscriptions or scribal traditions seem to follow different rules regarding whether these vowels should be rendered or left off, which leads one to think that, at that time, they were still subphonemic. Castignano shows the same tendency in the comparatively more stable sequence *-R.C-*, as in *arítih* (< **artī(d)*). Accordingly, the best known exception is the verb *qolofítúr*, in which the medial vowel /o/ copies the preceding one (and then we do not find the expected †*qolifítúr*) if and only if one accepts Vine's ingenious etymology [Vine 2006], by which this is a deadjectival present from **kolHi-d^hh,ρ-* ‘high.’ The SP. PN *Peteronis* ‘Petronius’ (Servigliano) [cf. Marinetti, 1985, 192–195; Ital., 1, 186–187] also qualifies as a case.

⁷ According to Martzloff [2006, 85, fn. 92] “**meitmos* (cf. gotique *maiþms* ‘don’), avec dégage­ment par *-m-* d' un point d' appui vocalique de timbre [i].” The same reconstruction in Eichner [1988–1990, 200; EDLIL, 384, s.u. *mittō*, *-ere*]. A direct connection with Lat. *mēta* ‘limit, turning point’ [Morandi, 1983, 604, relying on an idea by V. Pisani] is untenable.

there survive no Italic *-i-mo-* forms which could have triggered its analogical creation from an older **méit-mo-* at any stage, we arrive at a dead end.

On the other hand, there is no independent evidence for a substantivized **méi-to-* apart from the forms at issue, and consequently, we could narrow down the formational variants by accepting that only the widely attested **móĭ-to-* has ever existed and that an alternative analysis of **méiti/īmo-* is possible. **móĭ-to-* is the ultimate source of Lat. *mūtuus* and the Siculan and Lusitanian forms (see above, fn. 4). Both Goth. *maidjan* ‘to falsify, adulterate’ and Lat. *mūtāre*, for which a causative **moĭth₂-eĭo/e-* is often reconstructed ([LIV, 430] takes both forms from **meĭth₂-* ‘wechseln, austauschen, entfernen’),⁸ may simply be denominative to **móĭ-to-* [cf. Vine, 1999, fn. 6], and a single root may have originated all the extant forms, directly or indirectly. In turn, this is a verbal noun of the well known type *vόστος*. PGerm. **maīþmaz* may consequently be derived from this very form, matching a number of *-mo-* nouns built from the *o*-grade of a synchronic verb stem (cf. **drau(g)-ma-* ‘dream,’ **flau-ma-* ‘stream,’ **hai-ma-* ‘home’).

The sequence of derivations could be depicted as follows: **móĭ-to-* has given rise to a denominative preserved (with a semantic narrowing ‘in malam partem’) in Goth. *maidjan* ‘to change, falsify,’ and thereupon the secondary stem **moĭt-* has been abstracted and has been enlarged by the suffix *-mo-*. Or, on a more likely account, **maīþmaz* does not even presuppose the existence of a noun **maīþaz* from **móĭ-to-* in Germanic, but is simply, like the above forms, an *o*-grade deverbative adjective from **meĭt-e/o-*, continued by Lat. *mittō* and perhaps PGerm. **meīþa-* ‘avoid, conceal (oneself)’.⁹ In any event, since it fits into a productive pattern, **maīþmaz* is in all likelihood not inherited and, therefore, not directly related to the Italic forms. **maīþmaz* and **méiti/īmo-* are mere look-alikes containing not only different suffixes and vocalic grades but, crucially, also different roots. As we are going to see, they additionally belong, both synchronically and diachronically, to different lexical classes.

3. Non-typical Sabellic superlatives that lack *-s-*

All the abovesaid crucially impinges on the unresolved problem of the Italic superlative forms in *-imo-* and *-aimo-*.

⁸ Scholars seem to be divided about how to come to grips with the Latin form in view of *mūtuus*, which gives rise to an undesired proliferation of reconstructions. See yet another reconstruction of *mūtāre* as **mĭuh₁-teh₂-ĭo/e-* by Garnier [2010, 232, fn. 52], who expresses his objections to the formation of the perfect stem.

⁹ In turn, **meīþa-* is based upon a secondary verbal stem **h₁meĭt-* [LIV, 426, 2.*meĭ-] or upon **meĭth₂-* [LIV, 430] ‘remove.’ But note that this root, which is not certain to exist as such outside Indo-Iranian (and perhaps Tocharian), requires a final laryngeal that poses problems for the reconstruction of the Italic and Germanic forms (see for the latter [Müller, 2007, 110]).

A. The SP. PN *Velaimes* (Crecchio) [Marinetti, 1985, 224–232; *IItal.*, 2, 1260–1263], O. *valaimas* (*defixio* from Capua) [*IItal.*, 1, 443–446], O. *VALAEMOM* (Banzi) [*IItal.*, 3, 1437–1438], as well as the Latin borrowing (from Oscan?) *volaema* ‘a fine kind of pear.’ These are not inherited root forms, but deadjectival to an agent noun **uolH-ó-* probably created in Italic and Celtic only.¹⁰ They look ultimately identical to the nom. pl. *Φολαισμοσ* (cippo di Tortora, see [Lazzarini & Poccetti, 2001, 134–138]. Additionally, there is an Eastern PN *CALPVRNIA VOLAESA* (Karin Gornji / Carinum, Dalmatia) which it is very tempting to trace back to an Italic comparative **uolajs-ā* matching the Italic superlative. In that case, SP. *velaimes* either has a secondary vocalism or indirectly reflects an earlier, regular root superlative **uelH-is-m̥Ho-* ‘most powerful’ (**uelH-* in [LIV, 676]) with the original *e*-grade, and then the *o*-grade forms are redone in analogy to **uolH-ó-*, itself attested as a nom. pl. *Φολοσ* ‘valuable, noble’ or the vowel has been dialectally rounded in this context.¹¹

B. O. *MAIMAS* ‘greatest’ (gen. sing. fem., Banzi) [*IItal.*, 3, 1437–1438]. Whether or not the PN *MAEMA* in Skopje, Macedonia (Moesia Superior) beside *MAIM[-]* in Pannonia Superior belong here is debatable, but I am inclined to think that this is a Venetic name. I am still convinced that the Italic languages, including Latin, have inherited a superlative **májsVmo-* (as if from **meh₂-is-m̥Ho-*), which was redone in Latin into **magisVmo-* [Prósper, 2016a, 98–99], but has probably undergone a chain of changes **májsVmo-* > **májzmo-* > **máimo-* in the rest of Italic.¹² Neither **ma-i-mo-* (the reconstruction favoured by [WOU, 442]) nor **mag-imo-* > **maj-imo-* [cf. Bakkum, 2009, 190] make any sense to me in formational terms, since it is impossible to come

¹⁰ There is a probably identical PN *BVLESVS* on a leaden tag from Siscia [RLSiscia, 196]. There is hardly any doubt that this PN cannot be taken at face value. In my view it is corrupted for †*VOLAESVS*, and perhaps occurs as *BOLESA* (Montans, Aquitania, potter’s name; see [Gavrielatos, 2012, 251]). It is not certain at all that the name of the consul of the Augustan age *Lucius Valerius Volesus*, and still earlier *Volesus*, or *Volusus*, the founder of the *gens Valeria*, should be included here. This name is held to be of Oscan origin, and /e/ is anyway unlikely to be the product of monophthongization given the variants. In any event, the assumed derivation **uel-es-* remains unexplained. On the monophthongization of /ae/ in this region, cf. other PNs of Siscia like *CEBALA*, *CESONIS* or *CEDA*.

¹¹ In an earlier work, I contended that Gaulish PNs like *NERTOVALVS* (and, crucially, we may add *ATEVALI*, gen., Noricum) preserve this very agent noun with unrounding [Prósper, 2017a, 88]. By contrast, *ATEVLA*, *ATEVLO* could be short names ultimately representing *ATEVLATVS* or possibly even decompositional to prestige names: a phonetically reduced **ate-uVlo-* ‘very powerful’ occurs as the first member of a compound *ATEVLOIBITIS* (gen., Narbonensis), *ATEVLOIBITO* (Narbonensis) and is matched by *ATEVLOIB* and *ateu-loipitus* (athematic gen.?, Lugano script) in Cisalpina. This may be a very archaic compound, going back to **ate-uolo-* ‘powerful’ and a Celtic agent noun **qibēt-* from late IE **pi-b-e-* + *-et-*, and consequently meaning ‘heavy drinker’ (cf. Lat. *bibitor*). Interestingly, the preservation of the string <oi> is indicative of the existence of a hiatus when this compound was created and syncope of unstressed *-o-*.

¹² As Nishimura [2005, 164] has observed, the rest of the *Tabula Bantina* yields an original diphthong as <ae>, the issue that was left unmentioned by Weiss. His own solution, however, according to which the original sequence is **magismo-* (>) **majismo-* by analogy with the comparative), is more difficult to believe. The comparative *MAIS* in the same document is analogical to the superlative in that it also writes <ai> or contains a hiatus.

to grips with the medial /i/, whatever morphological segmentation one opts for.¹³ Note that a Celtic attribution cannot be rejected out of hand, however, since the reconstructed superlative is equally **májsamo-* (see a brilliant account in [Jasanoff, 1991, 180]), and that MAEMA could be the “Balkan match” of the recently uncovered DN MAESAMAE in Germania Superior (see the details in [Prósper, 2016a, 97]).

C. O. *nessimas* (Capua) [IItal., 1, 434–435] ‘nearest,’ NESIMVM, NESIMOIS (Banzi); [IItal., 3, 1437–1438], U. *nesimeis* (loc. sing., *T.Ig.* VI) are in all likelihood closely related to OIr. *nessam*, Gaul. NEDDAMON ‘closest, nearest’ and will be discussed together below.

D. U. *nuvime* ‘novissime’ (adv., *T.Ig.* IIa; perhaps, alternatively, the acc. sing. with a prep. *-e(n)* of an adjective going back to **neujo-*). See [WOU, *s.u.*] and [Nishimura, 2005, 167] for outdated etymologies.

As has often been observed, the forms in *-(a)imo-* are paradoxical in that they look like superlatives but at the same time are held not to go back to *-(a)isVmo-* for phonetic and chronological reasons, since intervocalic *-s-* is regularly preserved in Italic [cf. Lazzarini & Poccetti, 2001, 135].¹⁴ But the alternative solution would consist in identifying these forms with archaic superlatives in **-m̄Ho-*. However, this would leave no explanation for the (unsyncopated!) medial /i/.

Consequently, the problem can be circumvented only if the *-s-*-less forms somehow continue the superlative *-isVmo-* with a weakening of the Italic outcome of medial /s/. Cowgill [1970] uniformly traced them back to *-ism̄mo-*, and he was probably on the right track. In modern terms, this suffix is reconstructed as **-is-m̄Ho-*, the result of the combination of the intensive suffix and the inherited superlative suffix. In his footsteps, Weiss [2017] has conducted an interesting work which assumes that the sibilant was retained in the original sequence **-sm-*, but in a cluster **-sm-* resulting from vowel syncope the sibilant was lost with compensatory lengthening. Consequently, in these cases *-ism̄mo-* yielded *-īmo-*. Weiss argues that this hypothesis can work only if the secondary sequence **-zm-* differed phonetically from the inherited sequence, and he claims that the intervocalic allophone [z] was in some way more “reduced” than preconsonantal [z], and perhaps shorter or more approximant-like in a labial environment. Nishimura

¹³ On the other hand, we have to reckon with the possibility, however remote, of a verb form **meh₂-i-mo-*. Nikolaev [2014, 132], building on Yakubovich [2010], spoke in favour of “an *i*-present **meh₂-i-*, which can be expected to have either a stative meaning ‘to be big, great’ or an inchoative one ‘to become big, grow,’” reflected in Hitt. *māi-/mija-ḫi* ‘to grow, to thrive.’ **meh₂-i-mo-* would be the equivalent of Hitt. *majant-* ‘young man, adult,’ ultimately going back to **meh₂-i-(V)nt-* and, possibly, the form we would expect in Luwian or Lycian. If this were right, the explanation of SP. *velaimes* and O. *valaimas* would run along the following lines: an ancient form **yela-i-mo-* was built from a root **yelH-* like Lat. *valeō* ‘to be strong, prevail,’ in analogy to **mai-mo-*. This is little more than a *jeu d’esprit*, and the actual sequences are too close to the reconstructed superlatives to allow for an alternative morphological origin if a phonetic explanation is available.

¹⁴ Note that I am in principle non-committal as to the quality of the vowel of the suffix in Proto-Italic, which is likely to have been [o] in view of the oldest examples, and was variously phonologized in the dialects.

[2005] proposed to trace these forms back to an alternative superlative suffixal chain *-is-mo-*, which is in conflict with the habitual preservation of the cluster *-sN-*. To account for this, he points out that most of the adduced examples contain the apparently more stable *-sn-*. This falls short of accounting for Pael. (nom. sing. fem.) *prismu*, however, a form in all likelihood identical to Lat. *prīmus* ‘first.’ *Prismu* is explained away as an archaism by Nishimura (which is anachronistic anyway) and not mentioned by Weiss who, in a previous work [2009, 167, 295, 357, fn. 17], repeatedly takes it from **prīs-mo-* and correctly compares it to *prīscus*, but finally concedes that there may have been a very early syncope.

As we see, if one retains the reconstruction of the complex suffix **-is-m̥Ho-* for virtually all the extant superlatives, the Paelignian outcome is unexpected by all accounts and, last but not least, deadverbial derivation of superlative forms by means of **-is-m̥Ho-* is uncommon. Both these conflictive forms, however, can be seamlessly explained as going back to a late Italic, not IE form **prīs-mo-*, which was built from the comparative adverb **pri-is-*; in other words, it is analogical to the older synonymous form **pro-mo-*, which shows the typical postvocalic outcome of **-mHo-* and has been eventually ousted by the younger form **prīs-mo-* in Latin at least.¹⁵ Furthermore, it underpins the idea that O. *mais*, Lat. *magis* contain *-is* like their Celtic and Germanic cognates, and not, as often assumed, a syncopated *-jos*.

4. A new Italic superlative and the South-Picene inscription from Penna Sant’Andrea

On balance, *MEITIMA* is likely to be nothing but a Venetic form, and its well attested usage as a PN underpins the idea that it is adjectival, in all likelihood a superlative, and in that case goes back to PItal. **mei̯t(i)-isVmā*. This form would regularly yield **mei̯tūmo-* in line with the above discoveries, which has the advantage of explaining why medial /i/ is not syncopated in South-Picene in any of the attested forms, and the spelling <*i*> is expected (cf. the suffix *-īno-* in SP. *brimekdinais*, according to the new reading by Clackson [*in press*], or *safinūs*, *safina*).

The matter is further entangled by the recent approaches to the South-Picene dative form *mefistrúī* in Penna Sant’Andrea, which coexists with *meitims* in the same text. This form is now read as *meit{t}istrúī* by [IItal., 1, 196–197], which favours the reading *meit{t}istrúī*. Martzloff [2014] equally opts for *meitistrúī*, thus giving up his own earlier, alternative readings [Martzloff, 2006]. The new, and probably definitive reading, has led Fortson & Weiss [2013] to suggest in passing that *meitims* and *meitimúm* are

¹⁵ The same kind of analogical spread actually explains the Celtic form **kintu-mo-* in such PNs as Gaul. ΚΙΝΤΟΥΜΑ and western Hispano-Celtic (gen. sing.) CINTVMVNIS, which are unlikely to result from syncopation. See [Prósper, 2016a, 16] for the Cantabrian-Celtic spread of the suffix *-mo-* to other terms of the local subsystem of ordinal numerals.

the superlative forms corresponding to a comparative in *-istero-*, continued by *meit{t}ístrúí*. This is an unavoidable conclusion in my view, and leads to further discoveries.¹⁶

SP. *meitimúm* and *meitims* are, in my interpretation, both adjectival and predicative, and thus cannot directly designate the monument, as previously believed, and do not play the role of the direct object.¹⁷ In Penna Sant'Andrea, the sequence *meitistrúí nemúneí praistáit panivú meitims* constitutes a syntactic unit, which could mean something like “stands (*praistáit*), as the most valuable or dearest ‘gift (*panivú meitims*), for (to honour) nobody more valuable (*meitistrúí nemúneí*).” We are dealing with a ring construction or chiasmus with a symmetrical structure A B C B A, with the verb occupying the middle place, in which:

- a) the repeated adjective (A–A) is marking out the limits of the sentence,
- b) both A–B (adj. + pronoun in the dative case) and B–A (noun + adjective in the nominative case) show agreement, and
- c) the whole sequence is a *Wortspiel* intended to manifest that no other destinatory of the monument could have deserved it more; in other words, that nobody could be better than he had been. See more on the complex use of the homoeoteleuton and the etymological play in this inscription (with the outdated reading) in [Costa, 2000, 98–99].¹⁸

¹⁶ Let us say in passing that all this removes any phonetic obstacles against Adiego's equation of *posmúí* at the end of Penna Sant'Andrea (*titúí praistaklasa posmúí*) and Lat. *postumus* [Adiego Lajara, 1992, 33, 91] (this superlative is preserved in O. *pustmas* and *POSMOM*), which is also syntactically preferable to a relative pronoun closing the sentence.

¹⁷ In Castignano, *púpúnúm estufk apaiús adstaiúh súais manus meitimúm* consequently means something like “the elders of the Pupuní have erected here with their hands as the most valuable thing.” In fact, *meitimúm* is held to be a predicative noun in former interpretations, like those of Eichner and Martzloff, who interestingly views *púpúnúm* as a direct object (with a spelling error *-um* for *-úm*) and not a genitive plural [Martzloff, 2006, 85, fn. 92]. Note that this would have the advantage of creating a ring structure with the verb again standing in the middle, but is semantically doubtful since this word usually accompanies PNs as an EN or a FN.

¹⁸ While a full syntactic interpretation of the preceding lines is premature in spite of many incontestable achievements, a chiasmic structure looks equally attractive for *šidom safinús estufesélsit tiom povaisis pidaitúpas fitiasom múfqlúm*. Eichner [1988–1990, 199] translates: “Dies haben hier die Sabiner errichtet, Dich, Povaisis, als Monument (dessen), was du vollbracht hast an Taten,” and Martzloff [2006]: “Les Sabins ici dressent ceci (qui est) toi [les Sabins ici t'érigent en ceci], pour que tu fasses montre des exploits que tu as accomplis.” But the pronoun *tiom*, acc. of ‘you,’ stands in the middle and in spite of former attempts it is awkward to identify its referent with that of the first and last word. If this were, by contrast, a double accusative construction, as Eichner seems to imply, the whole sentence would revolve around it as a mention of the destinatory: “This — the safini here have erected — (for) you — ... — of deeds (as) a monument.” The forms beginning with <p>, correctly understood by Martzloff as subordination particles, could be very tentatively seen as proclitics and segmented as *pov-ai* and *pid-ai* with a generalizing enclitic *-ai*. In the first case, *sis* might be rendering /si:s/, from the IE optative **h₁s-je_h-s* (to be compared with the 1st pers. *ekú sim*, *rufra sim* in Crecchio, whatever its synchronic value). In the second case, a segmentation *pidai tú pas* with a 2nd pers. pronoun **tū* looks attractive (but the use of <ú> instead of <u> for /u:/ needs special pleading). And in that case *pas* could be a subjunctive **(s)k^uās* comparable to the isolated Latin 1st person *inquam*, and both sequences would be parallel, meaning something like “where/how-ever you are, whatever you say.”

Consequently, I cannot share the scepticism of those who refuse to accept Marinetti's translation of *nemúnei* as 'nessuno' on account of its first vowel.¹⁹ In fact, a contraction of **ne-* + *(h)e/omō* may have given a different outcome from that of inherited /e:/, probably an open vowel /ɛ:/. No alternative has proved thus far more convincing from a morphological, syntactic or semantic point of view.²⁰

Additionally, this might cast some light on *panivú*, the word preceding *meitims*. This is unlikely to be a nom. fem. sing. in *-ā* as posited by [Ital., 1, 197], but it could be the nom. sing. of a nasal stem, and then agreeing with *meitims* "(as) the dearest or most excellent <...> monument, present, witness." This only demands one assumption: That South-Picene nominatives going back to IE **-ō* were not recharacterized by *-ns*. In fact, U. *karu* and *tribriçu* suggest this may not be a Proto-Sabellic innovation after all. And the attestations of final *-uf* (e.g. *tribuf*, *fruktatiuf*) are thus far exclusively Oscan for all I know. The addition of *-ns* to nasal stems is unknown in Latin, Faliscan and Venetic, and the present interpretation only adds complexity to the entangled appearance of the Italic continuum.²¹ In sum, *panivú*, not *meitims*, is the word designating the kind of gift or homage that the monument (*mífqlúm* in the first unit, see fn. 18 above) is intended to be.²²

¹⁹ Note that the syntax of the two consecutive datives is difficult to interpret otherwise: still, Marinetti's translation of her own reading *mefistrúí nemúnei* as "per uno a nessuno inferiore" [Marinetti, 1985, 126] silently projects the syntactic usage of modern Italian to the case syntax of an ancient text, in which we would probably expect the second term of the comparison to be inflected for ablative.

²⁰ Cf. Vine [1993, 244–245] and Martzloff [2006, 84] in favour of this identification. Eichner's [1988–1990, 206] translation of *Mefister Nemo* as a "hainbewohnender Parhedros der Mefitis" is not an option any more.

²¹ Nonetheless, this poses some problems for the chronology of the secondary 3rd pers. pl. *-ns* common to Oscan and Umbrian. Whether this ending demonstrates an Osco-Umbrian unity [Adiego Lajara, 1990] or is a common choice among a set of allomorphs when the verbal system was *in fieri* or spread by language contact, and then is not diagnostic [Clackson, 2013, 29] is difficult to ascertain. But note that if we assume that there was such an Osco-Umbrian unity in which *-ns* already existed, it is implausible that Oscan later created a nominative form in *-ns* which in turn subsequently gave *-f*. We cannot rule out the possibility that Umbrian genetically aligned with South-Picene within Sabellic but Oscan and Umbrian were later exposed to long and pervasive mutual influence (indeed, this is likely to have happened, irrespective of their degree of genetic relatedness). Hypothetically, a secondary Oscan nom. ending *-ns* could have been subject to the same rule giving *-f* as is presumed for Proto-Sabellic. By contrast, the verbal ending *-ns* presupposes a rather different input: *-Vnd-es* or even *-Vd-es* may have been created at some point by analogy with existing syncopated forms going back to 1st *-mo/es*, 2nd *-tes* in order to counteract the effects of phonetic erosion that threatened the original form, as transpires from the archaic stages of the other dialects: Tortora *-oð*, SP. *-úh*, Lat. *DEDRO*, Ven. *donasa*, *vido* (on which cf. [Prósper, *in press*, b]). Later on, the new ending was phonetically simplified into *-ns* and possibly spread areally, but never underwent any further changes, at least within the time range of our preserved materials.

²² Meiser's account [Meiser, 1987], by which *panivú* is an adverbial identical to Lat. *quamdiū*, poses more morphological, phonetic and contextual problems than generally assumed: his original reconstruction **-diyou* is unsupported, and under acceptance of an inherited locative *-dieu* one could hardly expect any realisation but an automatic *-diyou* as in Latin (in which both paradigmatic and extra-paradigmatic forms of the word for 'day' are in fact disyllabic Lindeman-variants) and finally *-diw̄*, not *-diw̄* with a labial glide, as per Martzloff [2006] (with reference to earlier works). Even if the univerbation was very early and led to phonetic reduction of the initial cluster, we would rather expect **quand̄iou* to yield **quan̄iou* or **quan̄iou*, again very unlikely to result in the attested outcome.

The positive adjective corresponding to these comparative and superlative forms could of course have the form **meĭto-/-i-* and, in accordance with previous views, would be related to **meĭ(-t)-* ‘exchange.’ Still, as we have seen, there are no parallels for a substantival, let alone an adjectival formation of this origin. But a different path opens itself: it could be an adjective **meh₁i-ti-* or **meĭH-ti-* ‘pleasant, full’.²³ In that case it would be a close cognate of Lat. *mītis* ‘soft, gentle,’ which is usually taken from **mh₁i-ti-* or **miH-ti-* but is compatible with a full grade even if the spelling <*i*> is attested only from the 2nd c. BC, and is crucially identical to OIr. *méth* (-*o-*, -*i-*) ‘plump, fat,’ W. *mwydion* ‘soft parts’ (and then presupposes an alternating stem). There is an isolated, thematic PN MEITAE in Pannonia, possibly a short name.²⁴ This poses no obstacle to Vine’s reconstruction of a noun **moĭ-to-* and at the same time saves us from having to reconstruct a parallel, unjustified and unaccountably synonymous noun **meĭ-to-*, which does not meet the requirements to form the base of the hypothetical preform **meĭt-(i/ī)mo-*. And we can assume that one single preform **meĭt(i)-isVmo-* has given rise to Venetic and Sabellic **meĭtīmo-* and to Lat. *mītissimus* by way of the opposite processes of lenition vs fortition of the original intervocalic sibilant.

It goes without saying, this interpretation of *meitims* and *meitimúm* as superlative forms meaning ‘dearest, most pleasant, most valued’ saves us from having to explain why MEITIMA is used as a feminine PN showing gender change and no derivational suffix, something not unheard of, but less compelling if **meitī/imo-* were a noun meaning ‘gift, memory, monument,’ etc. The fact that in two cases from Noricum the dead women bear Celtic names (see below) and MEITIM(A)E occurs beside them as a second name leaves us wondering whether the name was still actually meaningful as an appellative, and roughly equivalent to expressions like CRITONIAE QVARTHILAE / AVIAE MITISSIMAE (Roiate, Latium et Campania).

In sum, this may be conceived of as an early areal feature of fricative weakening embracing most of the Italian Peninsula and possibly preceding the more general phenomenon of medial and final vowel syncope shared with some differences by Sabellic, Latin and Etruscan, which in spatial terms partly overlaps with the present one with the result that only Sabellic is covered by both waves. As we are going to see, what we might call the “northward vector,” i.e. the sound shift that gave rise to the superlatives in *-ī-mo-*, exceeded the limits of the Italic branch as such.

²³ Which is, in turn, an extension of either **meh₁-* ‘to measure’ [cf. LIV, 424] or **meiH-* ‘to thrive, grow,’ the etymology explicitly chosen by [LIV, 428].

²⁴ Upon reading a pre-print version of this work, Sergio Neri has kindly informed me that he has entertained the same etymological connection for years but has never published it.

5. Are the “Alpine Celtic” DNs in *-i/ī-mo-* overlooked superlatives in **-is-amo-*?

Interestingly, these syncopated forms are matched by an array of onomastic forms which it is advisable to ascribe to Celtic dialects on etymological and geographical grounds; most of them refer to divinities who receive a dedication and are consequently mentioned in the dative case. In all these cases, *-imo-* seems deadjectival. Some of these forms are even matched by “full forms” outside Italy.

A. The DN BERGIMO (dat. sing., five times in Brescia, Venetia et Histria) and a PN BERGIMI on a tile (gen. sing.) [CIL, 15, 889] is, in this light, identical to the PIN CASTELLO BERISAMO (abl. sing., Callaecia, Hispania, probably from **berg-isamo-* with dialectal loss of *-g-* in the neighbourhood of a palatal vowel). Accordingly, I would put forward an explanation based on substrate or adstrate effects: this DN, which in two cases is used as an epithet of Jove, goes back to a superlative in *-isamo-*, in which the suffix has been reduced to *-īmo-* in line with Weiss’ arguments. In fact, it has passed unnoticed that at least one of the attested instances of BERGIMO [CIL, 5, 4201] shows an “<I> longa”, which unmistakably points to the rendition of a long vowel.

B. The DN REINIMO IOVI O M (dat. sing., Como, Transpadana, 2nd–3rd c. AD) [AE, 1996, 736]. This epithet, if related to CCelt. **regini-* ‘stiff’ at all,²⁵ reveals the same weakening and loss of medial /g/.²⁶

C. The DN I O M VXELLIMO (Rimske Toplice, Noricum, 2nd–3rd c. AD) [CIL, 3, 5145] is a comparatively recent formation derived from Gaul. **uxsello-* ‘high,’ and possibly imported from the Italian Peninsula. Note that the relationship of Gaul. *uxsello-*, which

²⁵ As contended by De Bernardo Stempel [2013, 78, 84]. Nonetheless, her explanation, by which *-imo-* (in BERGIMO) is rendering the reduced outcome of the original, simple superlative suffix *-amo-*, is purely descriptive, phonetically unconvincing, and not paralleled by convincing examples from the same area. She offers an inconsistent account of the forms in *-imo-*: while she translates REINIMO as a superlative (which is hardly possible in her own terms, since this form would somehow have to be traced back to **reginjamo-*), she alternatively considers it in fn. 114 as a “*-mo-* derivative.”

²⁶ Cf. also such isolated instances of palatalization or lenition of /g/ as CATVBRINORVM (Belluno, referring to the inhabitants of present-day Cadore) or the Venetic PN *Bro.i.jokos* (Lagole), held to go back to Gaul. **brogio-*. Schürř [2011] contends that this altogether natural weakening has reached the Venetic dialect. Still, his examples, in current transcription *maisteratorbos* and *Fouvos*, which he respectively takes from **magistero-* and **fougo-*, are amenable to other explanations (see [Prósper, 2016a, 98–99] on **maistero-* and [Prósper, 2017a, 96] on **folguo-*). On balance, a tendency of Celtic intervocalic /g/ to disappear in the neighbourhood of palatal vowels is paralleled by western HCelt. and probably a trait of (north-)Italian Gaulish. As regards the PIN *Teurnia*, Schürř is probably right in reconstructing **tegunia*, but the change is not certain to be Venetic: Celtic loss of /g/ in the neighbourhood of /w/ has different causes and possibly an entirely different distribution, including northern Italian Celtic (*Seuso*), western HCelt. (MEDVENVS, etc.) and also some parts of Celtiberia (as in *tuateres* from **dugateres* in Contrebia Belaisca) from an early date. Finally, *me.u.fasto* “made me” (Vicenza) for the “correct” *me.g.fagsto* may be indicative of the enclitic position of the first person pronoun and/or of Celtic interference. Conceivably, an apocopated proclitic **megʷ* would have eventually resulted in **meŷ* before a consonant by fricativization, probably palatalization and eventually (pre)vocalization.

by no means can be seriously believed to contain a diphthong, with ICelt. **ouxsel(l)o-* in OIr. *úasal*, etc. has never been satisfactorily clarified. The often invoked cognate Gk. ὑψηλός cannot be easily ignored, since it is an archaism itself. In my present view, the stem **upsē-* (< **(H)ups-eh₁-*) is verbal and belongs to the Caland system. It continues a stative formation **h₁ups-eh₁-* which has not survived, and *-lo-* is consequently a typical quasi-participial suffix occasionally deriving adjectives with a passive sense, as in αἰδηλός ‘invisible’ (**h₁uidēh₁-lo-*) or νοσηλός ‘sickly,’ Lat. *ad-sidēlus* ‘sitting close’ and perhaps Gaul. ADSEDLI (Noricum), AÐÐEDILLI (Chamalières), with the expected phonetic outcome /i:/.²⁷ **h₁ups-eh₁-* ‘to stand high’ is the present originally related to the *-es-*stem in Gk. ὕψος ‘height,’ whose collective form is indirectly attested in the Gaulish PN VXSASVS (< **ups-ōs-o-*) [cf. Prósper, 2016a, 112].

If CCelt. inherited an identical form **uxsēlo-*, it must have been resyllabified into **uxsello-* early on by way of what is usually labeled “inverse compensatory lengthening” or, by its numerous Latin examples, “Lex flamma.” This is an insufficiently explained phenomenon by which an original long vowel alternates with a long consonant, preserving the syllable length (see a plethora of Celtic examples of this alternation in [Prósper, 2015; 2016a, 95, 159]). Note that any other attempt at coming to grips with the Gaulish geminate is futile: a suffixal sequence *-el-no-* or *-el-do-* is morphologically unsupported. Since Continental Celtic does not preserve any traces of a full grade of the root, the ICelt. root vocalism is analogical on the preposition **ouxsv-* in OIr. *ós, úas*, etc. ‘above,’ itself perhaps indirectly bearing witness to the existence of a *-s-*stem **h₁eups-os*.

D. An indigenous PN LOVCIMA ADGENONIS F (Novara, Transpadana) [AE, 2007, 650] probably goes back to **leuk-isamo-* ‘most gleaming’ (Gk. λευκός ‘white,’ Skt. *rocá-* ‘bright’).

E. A dedication to a LVBAMAE CLVSSIMI (Brescia, Venetia et Histria) [CIL, 5, 4637] could be interpreted as an indigenous superlative artificially glossed over, perhaps by the scribe himself, to look like a Latin superlative form in *-issimus*. Still, the arguments I have laid out above lead me to believe that this may be in fact a superlative **kluss-isamo-* which regularly yielded **klussīmo-* in this area. The underlying adjective **klusso-* stands at first glance a good chance of being a past participle. But notice that, if the geminate /s:/ (or its immediate antecedent /ts/) were in fact Common Celtic, due, for instance, to the contact of two dental segments, we would expect an early Celtic syncopation **kluss-isamo-* > **klussamo-* in view of Jasanoff’s discoveries (see below section 6). Alternatively, one could trace the base of this form back to a CCelt. past part. **klus-tó-*, belonging to an enlarged IE root **kleu-s-* ‘to hear’ which is well represented in Celtic. This very form is possibly preserved in the OIr. passive preterite *ro-closs* ‘was heard’ (Wzb. gloss), on which see [NIL, 433–434]. The resulting superlative **klust-isamo-*, which must have yielded **kluts-isamo-* and then **kluss-isamo-* by a sound

²⁷ Nonetheless, this PN stands a good chance of being a diminutive of the frequent ADSEDVVS, ADSEDIVS, ADSEDONIS (on the possible origin of Gaul. *-illo/-īlo-*, cf. [Prósper, 2015]).

change not shared by Celtiberian, would mean something like ‘most obeyed / listened to.’ Note that the coexistence of CLVSSIMI with LVBAMAE stands in open contradiction with the idea that the unstressed vowel of the superlative suffix *-amo-* underwent unmotivated raising in the area (see fn. 25 above).

F. A PN VENIM[A] CONIVX (Teufenbach, Murau, Noricum) [CIL, 3, 11644] could doubtlessly be explained away as a shortname for VENIMARA ‘great in / by bounty / goodness’. Still, I have contended [Prósper, 2016a, 136] that a Celtiberian PN VENISTI (gen. sing., Lara de los Infantes, Burgos)²⁸ and a Gaulish EN in the gen. pl. VENISAMORVM (Segusio, Alpes Cottiae) are superlative formations in **-is-tHo-* and **-is-m̄Ho-*, derived from an adjective **d̄yeno-*, preserved in archaic Lat. DVENOS, later *bonus* ‘good’ and OIr. *den* ‘firm,’ with a different outcome of the cluster **d̄y-* in Insular and Continental Celtic. Accordingly, **d̄yen-isamo-* in VENISAMORVM is identical to Lat. *bonissimus*. It may then be the case that VENIM[A] is the match of VENISAMORVM.

G. No fewer than three instances of ELVIMA (Noricum) [CIL, 3, 5446, 5512] suggest that this form is a superlative going back to **φelu-isamo-*, on which see below section 9.

H. Two instances of a PN OCIMO in the same text (dat. sing., Milan, Transpadana) [CIL, 5, 5998] are likely to be related, too, but not certain to be Celtic. They could go back to an Italic superlative **ōk-isVmo-* ‘swiftest’ and then would be related to Lat. *ōcior* ‘faster, swifter,’ and the superlatives *ōcissimus* and *ōxime* (Paulus ex Festo). On the other hand, they could also be treated as Celtic forms from IE **h₂ok-* ‘sharp,’ and then perhaps related to the hitherto obscure form OCIOMV, a day’s name in the Coligny Calendar.

I. Three examples of a PN MACRIMA (Montgenevre / Druantium, Alpes Cottiae; three dedications to a local divinity ALBIORIGI) are likely to go back to a Celtic or Italic superlative **makr-isVmo-* ‘longest / thinnest,’ from the same adjective as Lat. *macer*, Gk. μακρός, ON. *magr*.

J. An isolated PN LIVIMAE (dat. sing., Flavia Solva, Noricum) [CIL, 3, 5698] can be traced back to IE **(s)liyo-* ‘bluish’ forming the base of Lat. *līveō*, *līvēscō* ‘be / become livid’ and probably that of the gentile *Līvius*. It may consequently be Italic rather than Celtic, where the form is a noun and means ‘colour’ (cf. OIr. *lí*, etc.). Its Latin counterpart would of course be *līvidissima*.

In view of these examples, we are seemingly dealing with an areal process that covered most of Italy leaving out only Latin, a southern pocket exemplified by Palaeo-Italic Φολαισθμοσ in Tortora (that may be too early anyway) and the PN VOLTISEMAE in Noricum, which does not partake of the pan-Italic tendency to labial realization of a short unstressed vowel preceding a labial consonant (cf. Ven. *dekomei* from **dek̄m̄-(H)o-* ‘tenth’ in the Tavola d’Este).

²⁸ Some overlooked cognates of VENISTI are the pseudo-gentile VENISSIVS (Augusta Taurinorum, Transpadana), VENISO (Tabernae, Germania Superior) and VENISA (Pannonia Superior).

6. Early vowel syncope in the Celtic superlatives in **-isamo-*: the sequence *-s-is-*

In contrast, a number of early Celtic superlatives show a suffix *-samo-* with early loss of /i/, as shown by Cowgill [1970], and consequently presuppose a different input. In short, *-samo-* can be descriptively recovered from many forms but lacks etymological support, either in Celtic or in Italic. As repeatedly observed above, the suffix common to Italic and Celtic is **-is-ṃHo-*, whatever this means in dialectal terms. In my view, not only does Lat. *-issimus* owe the preservation of intervocalic *-s-* to the expressive nature of this kind of formations, but this may also be the case in Celtiberian, which is disputed, however. The matter will not be pursued here, since it is immaterial to my present point.

A context *-s-is-* is required for early Celtic loss of /i/ in Jasanoff's elegant account [Jasanoff, 1991, 172], which reunites such ICelt. superlatives as **oux̣samo-* 'highest,' **trexsamo-* 'strongest,' **īssamo-* 'lowest,' **messamo-* 'worst,' or **sāssamo-* 'easiest' and more or less explicitly posits a context-bound haplology caused by a root-final sibilant, although the last two cases are unclear.²⁹ We might be dealing with an exclusively ICelt. development, however, in which case it would be immaterial to the present discussion.

Therefore, I think it is advisable to bring to bear as many Continental Celtic cases of loss of medial /i/ as possible before deciding what can and cannot be described as a phenomenon of Common Celtic age. To my knowledge, there are three of them matching ICelt. forms.

A. Gaulish Οὐξισάμη seemingly continues an unsyncopeated form **uxs-isamo-* 'highest.' While Jasanoff may be right in regarding this form as analogical, the PIN *Usama*, VXAMA in Celtiberia is ambiguous and may equally go back to **uxs-amo-*, like MW. *uchaf* 'highest' (which, if old and then related to the continental forms, has analogically introduced the full grade of the root and presupposes **h₁e/oups-*). Note that the Hispanic form at least cannot possibly contain CCelt. /ou̯/ [pace Jasanoff, 1991, 172].

B. Jasanoff does not quote Gaulish MESSAMOBĪ 'with / for the lowest / worst' (Lezoux, Aquitania), which is in all likelihood identical to OIr. *messam*. In fact, this form underscores his ideas and speaks in favour of a CCelt. superlative **mess-isamo-*.

C. The best example of early syncope in this context attested in nearly all Celtic branches is OIr. *nessam*, Gaul. NEDDAMON 'closest, nearest,' if from **nezd-isamo-*, as claimed by Cowgill [1970, 132], followed by [Jasanoff, 1991, 172, 185], who compared Skt. *nediṣṭha-*, Av. *nazdišta-* 'nearest.' Still, the Sabellic forms O. *nessimas* 'nearest,' NESIMVM, NESIMOIS, U. *nesimeī* reviewed above (1.2.) seem to point to **ness-isVmo-* with inner-Italic loss of the penultimate vowel, which, by the way, is more favourable for Jasanoff's scenario for Celtic loss of /i/ in a sequence *-sis-*. If there has been loss of medial /i/ in Celtic, it must have taken place early enough to embrace Continental

²⁹ But note that **sāssamo-*, only preserved in MW. *hawsaf* 'easiest,' may be related to the secondary root **seh₂t-t-* > CCelt. **sāss-*, preserved in OIr. *sásaid* 'satisfy, assuage' and a number of Continental Celtic PNs [see Prósper, 2015].

Celtic, unless we favour the reconstruction of an archaic **ned-tamo-* [WOU, 493; Nishimura, 2005] or even **ne-sd-tamo-* (for Celtic, see K. McCone in [NIL, 600]). Irrespective of the credibility of these reconstructions, both are unlikely to explain both the Celtic and Sabellic forms, which is counterintuitive. Cowgill's reconstruction ran as follows: **nesd-ismmo-* > **netssm̄mo-* > **nessimo-* (which equally fails to account for the Italic vocalism).

A common form can only be linked to the Indo-Iranian material by assuming that a very early **nezd-isVmo-* yielded **neds-isVmo-* by metathesis at a stage previous (and perhaps common) to Proto-Celtic and Proto-Italic, with a regular subsequent assimilation to **ness-* which may have taken place at a later stage. This would neatly account both for the Early Celtic hapology or syncope and for the Italic sequence *-ssī-*, which came into being via **ness-izmo-* > **nessīmo-*, as observed above (1.2.).

7. **-isamo-* > *-ismo-* vs **-isamo-* > *-samo-*: in search of complementary contexts for vowel loss in Celtic superlatives

Conversely, many Continental names preserve the sequence *-isamo-* unchanged but none of them contradicts Jasanoff's rule, except Οὐξισάμη, which as we have seen may have been redone under the influence of other common superlatives:

- a) **seg-isamo-* 'most powerful' as SEGISAMA, SEGISAMONE;
- b) **trag-isamo-* 'fastest' in the RN TRAGISA[MVM RIV]VM (Noricum) [CIL, 3, 259] > *Traisen* (Austria);
- c) **bel-isamo-* 'strongest' in the Gaul. DN BELISAMAE, ΒΗΛΗΣΑΜΙ corresponds to the British PN BELISMICI which shows late syncope, and perhaps a latinized PN BELISSIMAE in Aquitania, as well as the British RN Βελίσσαμα in Ptolemy (II, 3, 2, the estuary of the Ribble in Britannia);
- d) **duen-isamo-* 'best' in the EN VENISAMORVM (gen. pl., Segusio, Alpes Cottiae, see [Prósper, 2016a, 136]) = Lat. *bonissimus*;
- e) **ϕlet-isamo-* is *mutatis mutandis* continued by a Celtiberian PIN *letaisama* > *Ledesma* (Salamanca, Soria, Rioja), as if from **pleth₂-is-mHo-* with analogical outcome of the laryngeal as opposed to western HCelt. BLETISAM(AM);
- f) **dag-isamo-* 'best' may be attested as Gaul. DAGISAMO (Châteaubleau tile, l. 8), if this is the right segmentation after all;
- g) **tur-isamo-* 'strongest' in such HCelt. PNs as TVRAESAMVS, etc., may go back to Celtic **tūro-* matching Skt. *turá-* 'strong' instead of expected **tūro-* from **tuH-ró-* 'swelling' for unknown reasons (comprising Dybo's Law, the putative existence of a different anṛt root, etc.). The change *-isamo-* >> *-aisamo-* is analogical and need not concern us here.

Judging by these cases, we have to reckon with an originally stressed suffix *-isamo-*, in which /i/ is not expected to undergo syncope, but medial /a/ is occasionally dropped. Some superlatives in fact only occur in syncopated form: the PN ATESMAE (twice, Alpes

Cottiae) might attest a derivative of the preposition *ate-*. The PN TALISM(V)S (Bregenz, Raetia) is the superlative of **tʰh₂-ó-* ‘most enduring or resistant’ (literally: ‘bearing, carrying’; probably preserved as such in the Gaulish compounded PNs in *-talos* [cf. Prósper, 2016a, 36]). The feminine PN BONISMA (Boucheporn, Gallia Belgica, lost) may be the superlative of Gaul. **bouno/i-* ‘favourable,’ and perhaps comparable to the PIN *Bonisana* (Callaecia), if it is a misspelling for †*Bonisama* (nowadays Borbén, Rav. 4, 43). The same probably applies to a city of the Baeturia Celtica (Baetica) transmitted by Appian (*Iberia*, 69) as Ἐρισάων, and in my view going back to **eφer-isamā* ‘westernmost.’ On the Gaulish PN CINTVSMVS see below. The FN ELGVISMIQ(VM) (gen. pl., Madrid) is also a superlative and the corresponding comparative is attested as a PN ELGVISTERI (gen., Zamora).

The evidence concerning the EN *Osismī* in Brittany is difficult to assess, since the transmission is only recorded with the classical authors. While the earliest testimony (that of Pytheas as transmitted by Strabo) gives Ὀστίμιοι, most Latin authors give *Osismī* (Mela has *Ossismicī*) and Strabo and Ptolemy Ὀσίμιοι; *civitas Ossismorum* occurs in the *Notitia Galliae*. On balance, this suggests that the old etymology which traces it back to a superlative of the preposition **posti* is right [cf. DLG, 243–244], but, since the medial /s/ of most sources cannot possibly be ignored, it may now be refined as follows: CCelt. **φost(i)-isamo-* ‘extreme, last,’ replacing the earlier form reflected in Lat. *postumus* underwent late syncope giving Gaul. **ossismo-*, and accordingly the Latin and Greek transmission is comparatively reliable. As in the case of CLVSSIMI above, this form failed to undergo syncope of medial /i/ between sibilants because that change took place early in Celtic, when the actual sequence preceding it was *-st-*.

The matter is further complicated by the fact that a number of Continental Celtic names show syncope of /i/, and not of /a/, even if they apparently do not fulfill the requirements, i.e. /i/ does not occur in a context *-s-is-*.

A. The Gaulish PN SAXAMVS, Lepontic *sasamos* can be traced back to **sāg-isamo-* ‘most inquisitive or audacious’ (cf. the Galatian EN *Tecto-sages*).³⁰

B. The eastern Gaulish PNs VENIXAMVS, VENIXAMA, which are attested at Emo-na / Igg, in present-day Slovenia, and elsewhere, possibly contain a medial /i:/, conceivably the product of a derivation **uénjā* → **uénj-iko-* > **uénjiko-*. The positive degree is attested in Gallo-Greek as ουενικοι [cf. RIG, 1, 279].

C. An inscription containing a single word RIXAMIS, a probably HCelt. DN in the dat. pl. which can be safely traced back to CCelt. **rēg-isamo-*, has recently been uncovered in Aroche (Huelva, the ancient Arucci, in the Baeturia Celtica) [cf. Bermejo, 2014]. In this light, the well known line by Martialis 4, 55, 16 *chorosque Rixamarum*, traditionally thought to be referring to a place in his native Celtiberia, is now more compellingly interpreted as another instance of the same DN by Gimeno Pascual &

³⁰ SAXAMI, SAXSAMI (Virunum, Noricum), SAXSAMI (Alesia, Lugdunensis), SAXXAMVS (Augustodunum, Lugdunensis), SAXXAMVS CINTVSMI FILIVS (Belgica / Germania superior).

Rothenhöfer [2012–2013, 437]. Its full match MARTI RIGISAMO (attested in Britannia and Aquitania) fails to show syncope or is an analogical innovation.

D. Conceivably, a similar process is responsible for a PN SALSAMI < **sāl-isamo-* (Milan), corresponding to a comparative formation SALISIVS (or superlative if from **sāl-is-to-*; Aquitania and a pseudo-gentilic in Apulia-Calabria). Unfortunately, the inscription is lost and this example cannot be invoked with any certainty (it could be explained as a misreading for SAXSAMI), but it is tempting to relate it to **sōl-is-* in OEng. *sētra* ‘better,’ *sēlest* ‘best’ and Lat. *sōlistimus* ‘very favourable’ [see Dieu, 2009].

The only trait these forms have in common (except the doubtful case of (d)), besides the fact that the stem ends up in a velar sound in the certain cases, is a long vowel of the root. As we are going to see, this might provide us with valuable information on the place of the stress in these formations.

8. Stress problems: what lies behind the CCelt. suffix chains

*-u-ko-, *-u-samo-?

It is an often overlooked trait of the Celtic languages that the initial *-i-* of a suffix is usually eliminated in the course of derivation when this suffix is attached to an *-u-* stem: This gives rise to synchronic derivatives in *-uko-*. In my view, this cannot be adequately explained as a case of morphological selection of a shorter variant *-ko-* to derive secondary adjectives from *-u-* or *-uo-* adjectival stems, but as the outcome of a phonetic process which originally involves a sequence *-u- + -iko-*. And this entails that the actual phonetic causes of the loss of the segment /i/ must be elucidated. Onomastic examples abound, cf. the DNs SVLEIS NANTVGAICIS in Hispania, the PN/DN FLATV CIA (Larzac), the epithets of MERCVRIO VISVCEO in Gaul and IOVI TARANVCO in Dalmatia, or the PN BITVCVS (Lugdunensis, Narbonensis, Britannia, etc.).

A possible confirmation of this sound change is to be found in some instances of the superlative suffix *-isamo-* when attached to *-u-* stems, in which medial /i/ is equally lost, but there can be no question of *-u-* stems somehow “selecting” a nonexistent (but occasionally invoked) variant *-samo-*.

The best example of such a superlative is of course **kintúsamos*, reflected in MW. as *cyntaf* ‘first’ and showing later syncopation in the Gaulish PN CINTVSMVS, etc. (note to this effect the divergent result of the superlative suffix in SAXXAMVS CINTVSMI FILIVS, Belgica / Germania Superior).

The PN OLVSAMI (gen. sing., Chartres) has been traced back to a superlative of **polh₁u-* ‘many’.³¹ Interestingly, the ablauting form **pelHu-* is found in the same text

³¹ Cf. the discussion by P.-Y. Lambert in [Viret et al., 2014, 38–39], where he compares it to OIr. *ollam*. In his linguistic commentary, D. Stifter [Viret et al., 2014, 58] analyses this word as a female PN derived from **ollo/u-* ‘great,’ to which a new superlative suffix *-samo-* has been attached. I disagree with this account for the reasons stated above. Finally, L. Repanšek [Viret et al., 2014, 67] posits a “secondary” **olu- + -(i)samo-*, where the loss of *-i-* is similarly unclear, and additionally pleads for an emendation into OLLISAMI.

in the PNs of a man and his father: ELVIO ELVCONIS (Novara, Transpadana). The original acrostatic abstract noun **po/elh₁-u-*, originally posited by Nussbaum [1998, 149 and fn.] (following J. Schindler) probably did not mean ‘many,’ but ‘big amount, plenty.’ Its strong stem **polh₁-u-* was possibly adjectivized in PCelt. as ‘plentiful, rich’ or ‘frequent, numerous,’ through semantic reinterpretation of predicative structures like ‘this is a big amount’ > ‘considerable, numerous.’

For both **kintúsamo-* and **olúsamo-*, the evolution from the only reasonably reconstructable forms **kintu-isamo-* and **polu-isamo-* to the attested ones must be ascribed to a Common Celtic realization of *-u-iC-* across morphological boundaries as *-újC-* > *-úC-* > *-úC-* (unless the variants **kintúisamo-*, **ólúisamo-* are independently justified) and in any event not to **kintu-ísamo-* and **polu-ísamo-*, contrary to usual belief (mostly based on intuition). On any account, the *-u-* stem cannot be inherited from PIE in these forms, since the comparative and superlative degrees of the IE adjective are noted for being based on the root and not on the positive degree.

9. A Continental Celtic suffix *-usso-* from **-ú-isto-*?

Finally, the original nucleus of the PNs containing a suffix *-usso-* as opposed to *-isso-* (< **-is-tHo-*) may be the product of a similar process.³² In fact, this type is characterized by reflecting the synchronic shape of the adjective, including the vocalic grade of the root. This is impossible to assess in dialectal terms, but since most of the examples come from Gaulish and are exclusively onomastic, we might speculate with the possibility that a small nucleus of them was actually formed on the model of earlier surviving archaisms in *-isto-* only after this type had been virtually ousted by *-isamo-* in the regular formation of adjectives. In this way, they progressively constituted a subsystem of names which the speaker could still parse in spite of the fact that they had virtually disappeared from everyday usage, as I have tried to show in the case with numerals [Prósper, 2016b].

Take, for instance, the PNs BERGVSSAE (Belgica, cf. also the DN BERGVSIAE, Lugdunensis), CINTVSSA, CINTVSSI (Britannia, Belgica), and OLVSSA (Britannia): on the most economical account, they should be traced back to archaic-looking superlatives like **bergú-is-to-*, **kintú-is-to-* and **polú-is-to-*, which are transparently built on the synchronic Celtic stem of the adjective, however.

In the first case we can draw the following path: the PIE superlative **b^hérǵ^h-is-tHo-* is attested in Skt. *barhiṣṭha-*, Av. *barəzišta-* ‘highest,’ and the EN *Bergistanī* (Catalonia, Livy 34, 16) of unknown, possibly Celtic dialectal ascription. Celtic has reintroduced the nom.-acc. stem, ultimately from PIE **b^hérǵ^h-u-*, **b^hǵǵ^h-éu-* somewhere

³² Alternatively, some of them may of course be analysed as compounds whose second member is *-sth₁ó-* ‘standing,’ with a substantival first member: cf. for instance BONVSSILLAE (Belgica / Germania Superior) which may literally mean ‘standing on a base’ (cf. OIr. *bun*), and then perhaps ‘staying firm, unwavering.’

down the line (Hitt. *parku*, Arm. *barjr* have generalized the oblique stem) and this form only survives in the PN BERGVSSAE. As contended above in 1.4., BERGIMO and HCelt. BERISAMO alternatively represent the early inherited IE form with suffix substitution, that is CCelt. **berg-is-amo-*.

In the case of OLVSSA, OLVSAMI the regular phonetic outcome is preserved, while a potter's name ELVSSIVS in Aquitania bears witness to the introduction of the weak *e*-grade **pelh₂u-* from other derivatives like **øelu-iko-*. Finally, ELVISSVS, ELVISSA in Noricum, if this PN is Celtic, have fully reintroduced the suffix *-isso-* in analogy to the derivatives of thematic formations. Interestingly, the independent testimony of ELVIMA (three times in Noricum, see above section 5) from **øelu-isamo-* points in the same direction: it must have been created after the accent system had been regularized and superlatives in *-ísamo-* were the norm (see below).

Of course there are many other examples of this evolution which would merit a separate study (note that we cannot rule out the possibility of some forms going back to a thematicized adjective in *-u-o-*): CACVSSONIS (Germania Superior), CACVSSO CACVONIS (Belgica) may go back to the adjective **keh₂k-u-*, of which a related form is attested in the nasalized formation Lith. *šankùs*, *šánkus* 'springing, agile' or **k₂ku-* 'gifted, firm, strong,' and then related to W. *pybyr* (if from **kek^u-ro-*, cf. [LIV, 322]). In the first case, we would find a very intriguing cognate in Germanic **hang-istaz* 'most agile' > 'stallion' (OHG. *Hengst*, etc.). Interestingly, there is another PN GANGVSSO in Belgica, on which Neumann [2008, 220] compares the PN *Gangulf* and remarks that it contains a Germanic base and a Gallo-Roman suffix. But, since Celtic areas attest a plethora of PNs CACVSIVS, CACVSIA, CACVRIVS, CACVNVS, etc., and Belgica is a Celto-Germanic buffer zone, we have to reckon with the intriguing but not demonstrable possibility that GANGVSSO reflects an originally Celtic superlative form **kankú-isto-* which should have given †CANCVSSO, but was "germanized" somewhere down the line after the model of Germ. *gangan* 'to go.' Villanueva Svensson [2017] has argued that the nasalized Baltic and Germanic adjectival forms ultimately go back to a thematic verbal adjective **keh₂-n-k-o-* 'which springs well,' in turn derived from a secondary, "north-IE" present form **keh₂-n-k-é-ti*. But the Celtic PN and the dialectal Lith. adjective *šakùs*, which in his view is a secondary form, besides the full-grade variant *šokùs*, speak in favour of the antiquity of the *-u-*stem **k(e)h₂k-u-*.

The PN MALVSSAE (dat. sing., Lugdunensis) could conceivably be derived from **malú-isto-*, in turn from **m₂h₂-u-* 'soft' with generalized zero grade of the root. An interesting variant form MELAVSSVS, MELAVSVS can be explained as follows: a collective form **melh₂-ōu-* (on this type see [Prósper, 2016a, 67–70]) gave rise to the Celtic thematic exocentric derivative **melāyo-*, of which the attested form is the regular superlative. The positive form is attested for the first time as MELAVVS in Pannonia [cf. RLSiscia, 353]. It is interesting to note that both these forms and the DNs MELOVIO and MARTI MELOVIO (Narbonensis) [cf. Christol, 1997, 280–282] can be traced back to a noun **mo/el(h₂)-u-* 'grinding' from which the adjective must in turn be derived. It is not certain

that we are dealing with different roots, and if this were not the case, the distribution of active ‘crusher’ vs passive ‘soft’ is unclear as far as onomastics is concerned, but can be explained if both MELAVVS and MELOVIO are originally denominative.

LITVSS(A)E (Pannonia) is a transparent superlative **φlitú-isto-* of **φlitu-* ‘broad,’ from IE **p₁th₂u-* in Gk. πλατύς, Skt. *prthu-* and its regular superlative *prathiṣṭha-*. The regular full grade is preserved in the well known case of Celtib. *letaisama*, western H Celt. BLETISAM[-], and in the earlier type **pleth₂-mHo-* (reflected in OIr. *letham* unless this form is innovative itself).³³

In the same vein, SANVSSO (Pannonia, dat.) could mean ‘most aloof, distant’ from an adjective **senh₁-u-*, **snh₁-eu-* in Skt. *sanutár*, adv. ‘far away’ (from **s(e)nh₁-u-tér*), *sanutya-* ‘foreigner’ and the Gk. (psilotic) preposition ἄνευ ‘without’ (ultimately from a locative **snh₁-ēu*). MATVSSI, MATVSSIVS (Lugdunensis) probably go back to **matu-* ‘good.’ CARVSSA may go back to **k₁kr-uo-* ‘curved, crooked,’ and then not be ultimately identical to CARISSA (< **karisto-* ‘dearest,’ like the H Celt. EN *Caristī*). LAGVSSA (Germania Superior) in my view goes back to the superlative of Celtic **lagu-* ‘small,’ while the insular counterparts are variously remade: the OIr. comparative form *laigiu* (from **lag-īos-*) and the superlative OBret. *laham* ‘least’ (from **lag-isamo-*) preserve the older formational pattern with elimination of the stem vowel *-u-*, while OIr. *lugam* presupposes an *-u-*stem.

10. Conclusions on the Celtic treatment of unstressed suffixes

On balance, these apparently disparate outcomes may be put down both to the place of stress and to the inherent phonetic instability of the sequences **-sis-*, **-CuiC-* and **-V̄Ki-*, and are amenable to a unified account. One could go even further and accept that *-isamo-*, like the relational suffix *-iko-*, was originally *always* a posttonic suffix like its components, comparative *-is-* and the inherited superlative *-amo-*, had originally been. This would mean that, at least for some time in Common Celtic, the forms containing *-isamo-* were preproparoxytone, the stress being placed in the fourth-to-last syllable nucleus, and those containing *-isto-* were correspondingly proparoxytone. This is, to begin with, logical since the suffix is expected to be posttonic in both the Indo-European variant form *-is-t(H)o-* and its successor, the secondary variant *-is-mHo-* common to at least Italic and Celtic. Additionally, it is the only reasonable way to explain the syncope posited by Jasanoff for the superlatives of stems ending in a sibilant: a sequence *-sīs-* was prone to syncope because the stress fell on the preceding vowel. Consequently, CCelt. a) **-V̄s-isamo-*, b) **-ú-iko-*, **-ú-isto-* and **-ú-isamo-*, and c) **-V̄C-isamo-*, respectively resulted in the following points:

³³ A pseudo-gentilic ARBVSSONIVS attested four times in Gallia Transpadana is in my view more likely to go back to an ancient compound **pare-busso-*, in turn from **p₁rh₂i-* + *b^hud^htó-* ‘very much awake’ or alternatively ‘well known.’ On Celtic **bussu-* from **b^hud^htu-*, cf. [Prósper, 2017b, 216–217].

a) the reduction and loss of a short vowel *-i-* when flanked by two sibilants (**-V̇sis-* > **-V̇ss-*);

b) the absorption of the glide (*-i̯s-* > *-ús-*; *-i̯k-* > *-úk-*) followed by its elimination because it was perceived as non-segmental — as a result of this, a descriptively “shorter” suffix *-samo-* arose;

c) the same as in (b) if a long stressed vowel preceded, and probably only if the stem terminated in a velar sound, favouring a process of palatalization and glide absorption that took place prior to fricativization (*-V̇k̥s-* > *-cs-* > *-xs-*).

Eventually, all the superlatives containing the allomorphs *-amo-*, *-tamo-*, *-samo-* or *-isamo-* became proparoxytone, either obeying new constraints on the position of stress or because the place of the stress in this particular formation was assigned to any vowel preceding the common recognizable sequence *-(C)amo-*. This entailed only a minor change, namely the attraction of the accent to *-i-* in the surviving forms with *-isamo-*, which preserved their original suffix, with the consequence that the following vowel /a/ progressively tended to be syncopated. In an area I have labeled as “Alpine Celtic,” the surviving forms containing *-isamo-* tended to be affected by an areal feature whose original locus is unknown, which covers the Sabellic languages and, *ex hypothesi*, Venetic, but excludes Latin, which has undergone fortition of the medial /s/, and the isolated instances of (non-Celtic) *VOLTISEMAE* in Noricum and Palaeo-Italic *Φολαισμοῦς* in the cippus of Tortora. All over this area, the vowel /a/ of the suffix *-isamo-* is weakened, but so is the medial /s/, with the result that a new suffix *-īmo-* arises that is phonetically identical in Italic and Celtic.

11. More overlooked Continental Celtic PNs: SIRVS, SIRO and their comparative forms

This PN is especially well attested in Pannonia, Noricum and Dacia.

SIRVS BROGIM/ARI F(ILIVS) (Drnovo, Pannonia Superior), SV[R]VS / SIRONIS F(ILIVS) (Drnovo, Pannonia Superior), AVRELIVS SIRO PRO SALVTE (Ptuj, Pannonia Superior), SPERATVS SIRONIS (Noricum).

The PN SIRVS has been cogently traced back to **seh₁-ro-* ‘long, late’ reflected in OIr. *sír* ‘eternal, lasting,’ MW. *hir* [see EDPC, 337]. It is a match of Lat. *sērus* ‘late, slow.’ Traces of its comparative and superlative forms are probably inherited, as shown by MW. *hwy* and OIr. *sía*, if they continue a secondarily enlarged outcome of **seh₁-is*, as per Jasanoff [1991]. This comparative form is not attested in Italic, unless one allows for the possibility that it somehow forms the base of Lat. *sinister* ‘left, adverse.’ The underlying idea is that the left hand is somehow slower or more awkward than the right (‘hidden’ or ‘shaded’ are believed to be the original meanings of the synonymous adjectives *laevus* and *scaevus*). **seh₁-is-tero-* ‘later, slower’ should have given Lat. **sīster(us)*; but, given its isolation, it could easily have fallen under the influence of the comparative form *minister* (itself refashioned and perhaps originally derogatory),

which is also attested in Oscan as *minstreis* ‘smaller.’ The actual proportion may have involved the nasal presents *sinō* and *minuō*.³⁴ This has the obvious advantage of accounting for the contrastive suffix of *sinister*, in principle to be found in words denoting spatial or temporal relations reducible to a “more – less” contrast. An apparently unnoticed Gaulish PN *SINISSEVS* (Lugdunensis and Germania Superior) and its variant *SENISSEVS* (Aquitania) are probably unrelated to *sinister*: they are related to Lat. *senior* and go back to **senistero-*, preserved in OIr. *sinsēr* ‘elder, ancestor.’

An indigenous PN *SEISSSEVS*, attested twice in Gallia Belgica, is likely to go back to **seh₁-is-tero-*, too.³⁵ We would expect †*SESSSEVS*, but a digraph <EI> is anyway unexpected in a Celtic name, and may simply mean that the postconsonantic form of the suffix *-is-* has been generalized for the sake of transparency. A potter’s name *SISSSEVS* (equally attested in Belgium) probably reproduces the vocalism /i:/ of the positive degree. Note that the PN *SISSVS*, etc., may go back to the original corresponding superlative **seh₁-is-to-*, where the vocalism would be equally analogical. Of course we must allow for the possibility that the enlarged root variant **seh₁-i-* has spread to the basic formations, so that, for instance, **seh₁-i-* has yielded **sīi-* and eventually **sīs-*. In line with M. Weiss’s arguments as described above in section 2, one is tempted to interpret U. *semu*, *sehemu*, a thematic adjective of unknown meaning accompanying a noun *persclu* ‘prayer’ (abl. sing.), as a superlative **seh₁-is-m₁Ho-* ‘longest’ or ‘latest’ (all the previous accounts, recorded by [WOU, 664], postulate an inherited stem vowel /e/ or /e:/, which is not satisfactory anymore). Were this true, *semu* would provide a full match of OIr. *siam* and MW. *hwyhaf*, on which see Jasanoff [1991, 177].

12. Conclusions

As we have seen, Pannonia and Noricum form part of a vast linguistic continuum in which an indeterminate number of Indo-European dialects was once spoken. To what degree our onomastic materials preserve the linguistic remnants of populations originally inhabiting the region and then spreading southwards is unknown, although it could help explain several forms which we may somewhat imprecisely label as Italic or, perhaps unduly, as Venetic. On a different, more conservative assumption, what we have is a patchwork resulting from the pooling of Gaulish populations sweeping into the Balkans from the West, Venetic peoples trickling northwards through the Alps and Illyrian peoples of uncertain ultimate provenance. Needless to say, this picture is devoid of any information about the time range of the events that led to it.

³⁴ Two examples of a PN *MEISTER* (Strasbourg, Germania Superior) probably mean ‘younger brother’; they go back to **meiH-is-tero-* ‘minor, lesser’ (cf. Archaic Gk. μεῖω < **meiH-jos-h₂*), have gone through a stage **mejistero-*, and may be either Celtic or Germanic. If Celtic, <EI> cannot be rendering a diphthong, and <ST> is a notable archaism. *MEISTER* instead of *MEISTERVS* reflects the Latin inflection in any event. The Pannonian PIN *Mestrianis* probably goes back to **meiH-is-tero-* or **meh₂-is-tero-*, but its dialectal ascription is unclear.

³⁵ An alternative **seg-istero-* [Delamarre, 2007, 164] is conceivable but cannot be substantiated.

This paper also has a methodological import. In more than one way, it constitutes a vindication of the role of onomastics in drawing the linguistic history of ancient Europe. It has focused on a number of usually neglected issues. First, it has pleaded for the convenience of using onomastics to test the linguistic situation of some geographic areas. This is also relevant for a correct assessment of the accepted etymologies of the appellative vocabulary of these dialects, as in the case of the PN MEITIMA and SP. *meitims*.

More generally, this work has contended that we need to follow the thread provided by names with clearly discernable patterns that complete our fragmentary information on a particular issue affecting the whole group of related languages, as we have seen in the case of the original stress of ancient Celtic superlative forms. The revealed regularities not only pave the way for new particular etymologies but also help to disclose the ultimate roots of some particular traits of the Celtic family as a whole.

Areal features are difficult to track down, and, consequently, often overlooked in the literature. Still, as we have seen in the case of the syncopated superlative forms *-isVmo- > -izmo- > -īmo-*, they facilitate a unified account of seemingly disparate phenomena, in that their identification provides fresh etymological explanations for particular names, saves us from resorting to unknown suffixes or unjustified sound changes, is crucial to gauge the degree of bilingualism of some regions and last, but not least, is potentially useful for the establishment of the chronology of sound shifts and the overlapping of unrelated dialects in contact areas. Needless to say, a sizable number of cases of convergence due to language contact in prehistory is often undetectable (bear in mind I have been discussing comparatively recent changes); it can seriously distort our perception of the actual genetic significance of linguistic affinities and, in sum, it can too often hamper the task of language subgrouping.³⁶

Appendix

Index of discussed names (in lemmatized form; PNs unmarked)

Celtic

ARBVSSONIVS	CINTVSSA	<i>Letaisama</i> PIN
BERGIMVS DN	CLVSSIMVS	LIVIMA
BERGVSSA	DAGISAMVS	LOVCIMA
BERISAMVS PIN	ELVCO	[?] MACRIMA
<i>Bonisana</i> PIN	ELVIMA	MALVSSA
BONISMA	ELVISSA	MATVSSVS
CACVSSO, GANGVSSO	ELVSSIVS	[?] MEISTER
CARISSA, CARVSSA	Ἐρισάνη PIN	MELAVSVS, MELAVSSVS
CINTVSMVS	LAGVSSA	MELAVVS

³⁶ See some reflections on this theoretical problem of comparative linguistics as applied to Italic in [Clackson, 2013].

MELOVIO DN	RIXAMAE DN	SIRVS
OCIMVS	SALISIVS	TVRAESAMVS
OLVSAMVS	SALSAMVS	VENIMA
OLVSSA	SANVSSO	VENISAMI EN
<i>Osismī</i> EN	SAXAMVS	VENISTVS, VENISSVS
REINIMVS DN	SEISSERVS, SISSERVS	VENIXAMVS
RIGISAMVS DN	SENISSERVS, SINISERVS	VXELLIMVS DN

Venetic

BVLESVS, VOLAESA
 MAEMA
 MEITIMA

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- DLG — Delamarre, X. (2003). *Dictionnaire de la langue gauloise*. Paris: Errance.
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ABBREVIATIONS

Languages

Arm.	Armenian	OCS.	Old Church Slavic
Av.	Avestan	OEng.	Old English
CCelt.	Common Celtic	OHG.	Old High German
Celtib.	Celtiberian	OIr.	Old Irish
Gaul.	Gaulish	ON.	Old Norse
Germ.	Germanic	Pael.	Paelignian
Gk.	Greek	Palaeo-U.	Palaeo-Umbrian
Goth.	Gothic	PGerm.	Proto-Germanic
HCelt.	Hispano-Celtic	PIE	Proto-Indo-European
Hitt.	Hittite	PItal.	Proto-Italic
ICelt.	Insular Celtic	PCelt.	Proto-Celtic
IE	Indo-European	Skt.	Sanskrit
Lat.	Latin	SP.	South-Picene
Lith.	Lithuanian	U.	Umbrian
MW.	Middle Welsh	Ven.	Venetic
O.	Oscan	W.	Welsh
OBret.	Old Breton		

Categories of names

DN	Divine name	PIN	Place name
EN	Ethnic name	PN	Personal name
FN	Family name	RN	River name

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**ИНДОЕВРОПЕЙСКИЕ ЛИЧНЫЕ ИМЕНА ПАННОНИИ, НОРИКА
И СЕВЕРНОЙ ИТАЛИИ: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЕ И ПРЕВОСХОДНЫЕ ФОРМЫ
В КЕЛЬТСКОМ, ВЕНЕТСКОМ И ЮЖНОПИЦЕНСКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ**

Данная статья посвящена некоторым частным проблемам этимологизации личных имен, засвидетельствованных в памятниках латинской эпиграфики, которые найдены в приальпийских областях, в особенности в Транспаданской Галлии, Венетии, Истрии, Паннонии и Норике. Автором отобраны имена с этимологическим сравнительным или превосходным значением, которые могут быть классифицированы как кельтские или италийские. На основе этимологического, ареального и историко-фонетического анализа этих форм в статье предпринимается попытка лингвистической атрибуции исследуемых онимов. В ходе анализа автор также предлагает объяснение различных и, по всей видимости, взаимоисключающих видов синкопы гласного, имевших место в галльских формах суперлатива. Такое объяснение основывается на гипотезе относительно последовательного изменения места ударения на разных этапах истории языка — до и после распада общекельтского языкового состояния. Помимо этого, проведенный анализ позволяет предложить новые интерпретации некоторых южнопицценских надписей, в частности надписи на стеле из Пенна-Сант-Андреа. Данное исследование имеет также методологическую направленность, так как демонстрирует важность изучения проприальных лексем, построенных в рамках явно различимой словообразовательной модели. Анализ подобного ономастического материала позволяет пролить свет на некоторые частные проблемы морфологии и фонетики целых групп родственных языков. В свою очередь, это делает возможным выдвижение новых этимологий и позволяет лучше понимать отдельные черты кельтских языков на ранних этапах их истории.

К л ю ч е в ы е с л о в а: италийские языки, кельтские языки, галльский язык, осский язык, умбрский язык, венетский язык, южнопицценский язык, личные имена, индоевропейская ономастика, индоевропейское словообразование, латинская эпиграфика.

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