

From Atlas and Hades to Peñalba de Villastar
and the Irish *Lebor Gabála*: on possible
Helleno-Celtic theonymic correspondences



Juan Luis García Alonso

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Institiúid Ard-Léinn | Dublin Institute for
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FROM ATLAS AND HADES TO PEÑALBA DE VILLASTAR AND THE
IRISH *LEBOR GABÁLA*: ON POSSIBLE HELLENO-CELTIC THEONYMIC
CORRESPONDENCES

ABSTRACT

In this paper I undertake a detailed study of the ‘Great Inscription’ from the Celtiberian sanctuary of Peñalba de Villastar, an open-air rock epigraphic text written around the turn of the era and discovered more than a hundred years ago (1908). The inscription, seven lines in the Celtiberian language, is written in the Latin alphabet. It seems to mention pan-Celtic Lug twice, along with other possible divinities. I propose some changes in the reading and interpretation of the text and suggest possible divine and theonymic connections both with Greek chthonic deities (Atlas, Telamon, Hades and Persephone) on the one hand, and, on the other, with Tailtiu, the mother of Lug and wife of Eochaid mac Eirc, last High King (*Ard Rí*) of the Fír Bolg, according to the *Lebor Gabála*.

1. THE CELTIBERIAN SANCTUARY OF PEÑALBA DE VILLASTAR

THE OPEN-AIR ROCK SANCTUARY of Peñalba de Villastar, in the south of the Spanish province of Teruel,¹ was discovered by Cabré in 1908, on an imposing cliff on the south-eastern border of what was once Celtiberian territory. It is set at an altitude of more than 1,000 metres above sea level and stretches over 1.5 km. The sanctuary is located at the highest point and dominates the access to the gorge of Vilella, on the upper course of the river Turia, the main access to central Spain from the Mediterranean coast.² All the inscriptions and engravings are carved on a cliff 20 m high that crowns the highest part of the mountain. Starting with the discoverer of the site himself, Cabré, a process of extraction of the most significant pieces soon began. Thus, the rock, a soft limestone, has been subjected to different extractions over the years. The idea was to preserve the most important pieces, but, in some unfortunate cases, today we only have photographs or drawings, as some of the pieces removed have since disappeared.³

¹Peñalba (‘White Rock’ in Spanish) is located in the municipality of Villastar, a village of 500 inhabitants, located 3 km to the NE of Peñalba. Teruel, the provincial capital, is 6 km further.

²In fact, this place is still today very close to the border between the provinces of Valencia (in ancient times of Iberian language and culture), on the one hand, and Teruel and Cuenca, of Celtiberian language and culture in ancient times, on the other. The closest point in the province of Valencia is 13 km away as the crow flies, while the closest point in the province of Cuenca is 25 km away.

³Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing exactly how much has been lost. In her extensive and meticulous doctoral dissertation, published as a book in 2009, Silvia Alfayé devoted a specific

We can identify there today more than 30 inscriptions, both in Palaeohispanic and Latin scripts. 19 of them (Beltrán et al. 2021: 142–51), dated between the end of the first century BCE and the beginning of the first century CE, use the Latin alphabet to write Celtiberian texts. But they are not alone. Apart from a handful of inscriptions in Iberian writing and perhaps Iberian language (see however Jordán 2019: 807) and different engravings, there are also a few inscriptions in Latin (around a dozen found so far).

Apart from animals (horses, deer or birds) Cabré soon identified an engraving with a figure which he associated with Hercules, but which would be linked to Lug by Marco Simón (1986: 749–50), although some years later he was not convinced (cf. Alfayé 2009: 97). The long arms to the left and right reminded him of the common epithet of Lug in Irish literature: Lug the Long-Armed (*Lámfada*). Be this as it may, it constitutes in any case a plausible, albeit secondary, indication of the presence of a Lug cult at the site.

Something similar could be said of another engraving, in this case unfortunately lost (we only have the drawing in figure 1), in which Marco Simón tentatively suggested that we could have a two-headed Lug, which would direct us to other hypothetical (but of course uncertain) representations of Lug, such as the peculiar collection of three-headed bas-relief sculptures of gods from Reims (Terrisse 1999), or the triple Corleck Head from Co. Cavan, in Ireland.⁴



Figure 1. A two-headed Lug?



Figure 2. Gaulish Cernunnos

However, following the discovery in Peñalba de Villastar some years later (Beltrán, Jordán and Marco Simón: 2005) of two Latin inscriptions mentioning a new divinity (*Deo Cordono* or *Cornuto Cordono*), Marco Simón now prefers

chapter of more than 30 pages (89–123) just to describing the state of this site, as well as to commenting on all the inscriptions and engravings found there over the decades.

⁴This Iron Age stone idol (precise dating is difficult, cf. Gleeson (2022: 20), but it may be first or second century CE), was found in Northern Ireland in 1855 at a site whose modern name is *Sliabh na Trí nDée* (the ‘Hill of the Three Gods’), see MacKillop (1998: 104). This place, from the early Christian period onwards at least, was associated with the Lughnasad celebrations, something which evidently does not prove that the authors of the statue several centuries earlier did in fact have Lug in particular in mind.

to relate this drawing⁵ to this new god, whom he and his team of course link (2005: 938) with the Gaulish Cernunnos.⁶

I believe, in any case, that the possible presence of a cult to a god comparable to Gaulish *Cernunnos* (figure 2) is not incompatible with the presence in the same sanctuary of a cult to Lug. Our Celtiberian pair of *Cornutus Cordonus* and *Lugus* may well have been two associated gods in their pantheon, as is not uncommon in other Celtic or Indo-European religions in general. Indeed, the plural *Lugoves* may refer to a pair of deities, as well as the two-headed image, perhaps with two names.⁷

2. 'THE GREAT INSCRIPTION'



Figure 3. 'Great Inscription' from Peñalba de Villastar

Of the 19 Celtiberian-language inscriptions of this sanctuary,⁸ all but one are formulaic and rather short.⁹ The exception is the so-called 'Great Inscription' (17 × 42 cm), which was situated at ground level (Beltrán – Jordán 2019: 270).

⁵Marco Simón (1986: 750–1, fig. 1) had previously suggested that the bicephaly in Cabré's drawing might refer to a duplication of the deity (linking it to the plural *Lugoves*) by succession (mature god/young god). In their later paper Beltrán, Jordán and Marco Simón himself do not explore the link of this god with Lug. In fact, they refer to the image known as 'Candelario's Janus', from Candelario (Salamanca), of which Marco Simón had stated a few years before (1997) that it belongs in a group 'inadequately interpreted as an expression of the Celtic Lug', with examples in different points of Hispania and other regions of the Celtic world, linking them, explicitly, with 'Cernunnos-type divinities'. The English (horned) ghost *Herne the Hunter*, known from Shakespeare's 1597 play *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, might be another cognate example, if not a modern made-up character.

⁶There are images of horned gods in different parts of Hispania, and elsewhere, but the authors highlight a Gaulish inscription dedicated to *Iovi Corn[uto]* or *Corn[iger]*, in a significant Roman *interpretatio* of a Gaulish deity.

⁷One could maybe think of the relationship of father and son or of the death and reincarnation of Lug and Cú Chulainn as a remote parallel.

⁸They have recently been collected, reproduced, edited and commented on (Beltrán, Jordán, Díaz and Simón 2021: 139–51).

⁹They reproduce, typically, personal names of, very likely, the attendees to the sanctuary (Beltrán, Jordán and Marco Simón 2005; Beltrán and Jordán 2019: 270).

Now kept in the Archaeological Museum of Catalonia in Barcelona,¹⁰ this inscription apparently links the place to a cult of Lug. Although, as we shall now see, there is no unanimity on this, for me, Lug does play a leading role in the text and is mentioned twice.

Interpreting this text, written around the turn of the era (cf. Marco Simón – Alfayé 2008: 521), is certainly a humbling experience for linguists. As Javier de Hoz eloquently expressed thirty years ago about his own analysis (1995: 22) of the inscription, ‘of course all these are mere possibilities which do not contradict either the grammar of Celtic languages or the parallels in inscriptions of the same type, but as long as they are forms not attested in other contexts, and therefore uncontrollable, they lack any value as serious attempts at interpretation’ (my translation). Although it has been known for over a century and has been the subject of specific studies by many scholars over the decades, few specific points have been widely agreed upon. This reflects the extent to which our knowledge of the Celtiberian language is limited and distorted by the fact that most of our texts are onomastic in nature. We are acquainted with the Hispano-Celtic naming systems and so we can identify place names, family groups, individuals and occasionally divinities. But when the text ceases to be formulaic and we move away from known structural patterns, we can only resort to etymological approaches on the basis of the reconstructed ancient Celtic lexicon and Proto-Indo-European grammar. The results are that we are unable to understand the text: if each author sees it so differently, it is virtually impossible to know who is right, if anyone (cf. Jordán’s cautious words (2019: 21), or Meid’s (2014: 12), speaking about Gaulish texts).

I cannot discuss at length all the proposals published to date, but I will point out which of those that I will offer now follow the hypotheses of other authors, which ones are totally new, and which are the most significant discrepancies and coincidences overall. I have taken into consideration the studies (in chronological order) of Cabré (1910), Lejeune (1955), Tovar (1955–6, 1959, 1973), Untermann (1977 and *MLH* IV), Schwertck (1979), Ködderitzsch (1985, 1996), Olmsted (1988, 1991), Eska (1990, 2006), Villar (1991), Meid (1993–5, 1994, 1996), Prósper (1994/5, 2002, 2022), De Hoz (1995), De Bernardo (2000, 2001, 2008), Jordán (2005, 2015, 2019: 878–99), and Koch and Fernández Palacios (2017).

3. THE TEXT

We will start from a transcription that is currently more or less consensual:¹¹

¹⁰I am very grateful to the curator of the Museu d’Arqueologia de Catalunya (Núria Molist) and its director (Jusèp Boya) for authorising the inspection of the inscription, as well as to Joan Ferrer i Jané for providing me with high-resolution photographs.

¹¹Evidently, some of the discrepancies in the respective analyses of the different authors have to do with their different readings from the start. A systematic critical apparatus, with all the readings suggested over the decades by different authors can be found in Jordán (2019: 879–80). Here I will only refer to particularly significant discrepancies.

ENIOROŠEI¹²
 VTA TIGINO¹³ TIATVNEI¹⁴
 TRECAIAS¹⁵ TO LVGVEI
 ARAIANOM ÇOMEIMV
 ENIOROŠEI EQVOISVIQVE¹⁶
 OGRIS OLOCAS TOGIAS¹⁷ SISTAT LVGVEI TIATO¹⁸
 TO+TAS¹⁹

All scholars have recognised two parallel sections, separated by the space roughly equivalent to half an additional line: lines 1–4 vs 5–7. Both sections begin with the same word, ENIOROŠEI. In both sections we read a dative singular LVGVEI, the first time preceded by TO, to be equated with the preverb *to* of Old Irish (see Stifter 2014). However, identifying the verb or verbs and the subject or subjects has proven more difficult.

LVGVEI takes us directly to the most pressing question surrounding this text: Is Lug worshipped here or not? Is this a possible testimony of a festival to be compared to the Irish *Lugnasad*?²⁰

ENIOROŠEI. Villar suggested reading this first line as a sequence of the Celtiberian preposition *eni* (< **h₁eni*), followed by the dative of an *i*-stem toponym. De Hoz, De Bernardo and Prósper supported this as the best explanation, and that was my own opinion over the years. That OROSEI, as it was read at the time, was the dative of a toponym could, in fact, be even more plausible considering that coins have appeared not far from Villastar²¹ on which, in Celtiberian Palaeohispanic writing, one can read **orosiz** [A. 86].²²

¹²I follow Tovar (1955–6: 161) in marking with a dot below the letters that are no longer visible today but were recognisable when the inscription was first discovered. See the discussion below concerning what I reproduce here as Š (this special S, with a diacritic, also appears in lines 3 and 5).

¹³Meid (1993–5: 348 and 1994: 32) reads TICINO.

¹⁴Gómez Moreno (1942: 13; 1949: 208), Schmoll (1959: 27), Untermann (1983: 121; *MLH* IV, 624), Lejeune (1955: 8), De Hoz (1995:18), Jordán (2007: 850) or De Bernardo (2008: 187) read TIATVMEI. Tovar (1955–6: 161) preferred to read TIATVNEI, though, the same as Meid (TIATVNEI, 1993–5: 348). Prósper (2002: 213) also prefers TIATVNEI. Jordán reads T+ATVNEI in 2019: 879.

¹⁵Gómez Moreno (1942: 13; 1949: 208), Lejeune (1955: 8), Schmoll (1959: 27) and Jordán (2007: 850) read ERECAIAS.

¹⁶Gómez Moreno (1942: 13) read EQVEIS · VIQVE, while Lejeune (1955: 8) and Jordán (2019: 879) read EQVEISVIQVE. Untermann (*MLH* IV, 624) and *BDHesperia* [TE.17.03] preferred EQVOIS-VIQVE, which is also my reading.

¹⁷Gómez Moreno (1942: 13) read TO · OIAS; Untermann (*MLH* IV, 624) and *BDHesperia* [TE.17.03] read TO · GIAS.

¹⁸Many authors read TIASO or TIASO: Gómez Moreno (1942), Tovar (1955–6), Schmoll (1959), Meid (1993–5 and 1994), Lejeune (1955), Jordán (2007), Untermann (1983; *MLH*) or *BDHesperia*. Jordán (2019: 880) reads TIATO. See below for my view in more detail, however.

¹⁹Many authors read TOGIAS: Gómez Moreno (1942; 1949), Lejeune (1955), Tovar (1955–6), Schmoll (1959), Untermann (1983), Meid (1993–5 and 1994), Jordán 2007, *BDHesperia* or *MLH* (more precisely, in this last case, TOGIAS). Jordán (2019: 879) reads T++TAS. See below for my suggested reading.

²⁰Marco Simón (1986); Alfayé and Marco Simón (2008: 285).

²¹The city which minted the coins has not been identified.

²²Apparently, the ablative case of the same toponym: /orosio/.

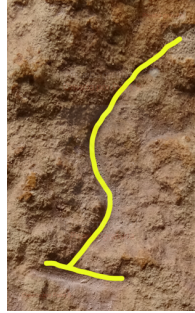


Figure 4. Š in ENIOROŠEI (line 1)

Figure 5. Š in ENIOROŠEI (line 5)

However, Carlos Jordán, who in recent years has detected that Celtiberian inscriptions in the Latin alphabet use a specific diacritic to represent different fricatives or affricates of the indigenous language, has discovered that the S of what was read at the time as ENIOROSEI does have this diacritic (a small horizontal stroke at the base),²³ so that the correspondence with the form **orosiz** in Palaeo-Hispanic writing would be lost, since we would expect it to be ****oroziz**, which is not attested. We would then have to reflect the presence of the diacritic in our transliterations. The method I have adopted is that of Jordan (2015 and 2019), so I transliterate this word as ENIOROŠEI. This procedure seems to have been more successful to date than Stifter's (2022) recently suggested transliteration with Š, although this idea reflects more closely the Celtiberian diacritic on the Latin letter S. One more option we see in Prósper, who, for her part, in the same year (2022) proposed transliterating it with what she calls 'barred <S>', with the idea of relating it to similar graphic phenomena known in Gaul.

It is possible, nevertheless, that ENIOROŠEI has a local sense somehow, even if it is not certain that it is a place name. Considering the characteristics of the location of the sanctuary and the cultic significance of the fact that these ceremonies were held at such heights (cf. the Lughnasad festivals held on high hills),²⁴ I am tempted to think that the local sense I am referring to could be the very location of the sanctuary on a mountain top.

Meid was the first (1993–5 and 1994), I believe, to relate this word to the Greek ὄρος, 'mountain'. The Indo-European pedigree of the term and whether it is attested in Celtic do not look very clear from the outset, although some Celtic cognates seem to exist. ὄρος in Greek is an *s*-stem verbal noun (meaning originally something like 'elevation') derived from the root **h₃er-* ('to rise, spring, stir') (IEW 326–8; LIV 299–301; Beekes 2010: 1109–10),²⁵ which is also

²³Figures 4 and 5 show this stroke. Less clearly in figure 5, but obviously there.

²⁴As MacKillop (1998: 274) puts it, 'Lughnasa and its counterparts provided a time for *horse-racing, horse-swimming*, and games of hurling. *Celebrants might enjoy climbing to the tops of nearby hills, both to pray and to gather bilberries.*' (My italics). Cf. MacNeill (1962: 79) or de Cléir (2017: 67 and 2022: 43).

²⁵The root is also attested in Sanskrit (*ṛṣvā*), 'rising up, high'.

the origin of the verb ὀρνυμι ('I rise'). The personal name Ὀρέστης literally means 'mountain man, highlander', perhaps from ὄρος followed by ἵστημι ('to stand') and -ης, a well-known anthroponymic formant suffix, etymologically meaning, therefore, 'he who stands on a mountain'. In fact, Thucydides (II, 80, 6) mentions an Epeirotic ethnic group called Ὀρέσται ('Highlanders').

Besides this, several Indo-European language families, such as Greek (ὄρρος), but also Germanic, Armenian, Hittite and, significantly, Celtic, have words meaning 'rump, tail, ass', which are often considered to be derived from a root with a laryngeal of a different quality: **h₁ers-*, **h₁ors-* (cf. *IEW* 336–7; *LIV* 241). This second formation is the one with which Old Irish *err* 'tail' (< **h₁ers-os*) seems to fit more easily. Beekes (2010: 1110) points out that this form is 'identical with the Germanic group of OHG *ars*, MoE *arse*, Arm. *or̄*, plur. *or̄-k* ('i-stem), and Hitt. *arra-* 'id', all pointing to IE **Hors-o-*, **Hors-i-*'. As for the precise colour of the laryngeal, Beekes suggests that the *e* in Old Irish *err* could be due, as he puts it, to "a secondary development" (2010: 1110), something, however, that he does not justify more thoroughly. If this idea is correct, he believes that *err* could be understood 'as enlargement of an s-stem **h₃er-(o)s-*' (on this formation see Stüber 2015: 105–7).

One of the main difficulties in situations like this, to be honest, when trying to determine the colour of a laryngeal in specific Indo-European roots or proto-languages, is that the phonetic results of the *o*-grade of **h₁e* and both the *e* and *o*-grades of **h₃e* coincide, appearing as **o* in many Indo-European languages, such as Celtic (Zair 2012: 19–20).

In sum, whether or not narrowly linked to Old Irish *err*, Celtiberian ENI-OROŠEI could perhaps derive from **h₃er-(o)s-* like Greek ὄρος. In any case, this is something not to be certain about, in my opinion.

The dative singular of both a full *e* or an *o*-grade formation of this root (**h₃er-* / **h₃or-*), suffixed with **(o)s-* as the Greek noun, could well be OROŠEI in Celtiberian, provided that in writing Š the Celtiberian author of the inscription was trying to reproduce a fricative sound susceptible to being represented with this letter (/z/?). We would have no way of knowing whether this would be the dative of an *s*-stem (like in Greek), an *i*-stem (like the ablative **orosiz** [A. 86] would suggest) or even a dental stem (with lenition).²⁶ But perhaps surprisingly, Š does **not** serve, in this variety of the Latin alphabet used in the eastern part of the Celtiberian territory, to write *everything* that in the Celtiberian script was written with sigma: a secondarily voiced intervocalic sibilant (/s/ > /z/ between vowels) is written with sigma (and not san) in the Celtiberian Palaeohispanic script: **alizos** [IR18] or **alizokum** [T1.2.2] (< **aliso-* 'alder', cf. Jordán 2019: 116). In other words, the Š/S distribution in this version of the Latin alphabet does not correspond faithfully to the sigma/san distribution in Palaeohispanic writing. In this same inscription, without going any further, in line 5, we can see that for a simple sibilant between vowels, supposedly voiced as well, this alphabet does not use Š but S: EQVOISVIQVE. Therefore, it seems that for

²⁶It cannot be ruled out, even, that the **orosiz** forms of the coins in the area [A. 86] represent a dissimilation with another fricative, which is very close, at the end of the word (the ablative ending *ō* or rather *θ*).

the /z/ of **alizos** or **alizokum** this ‘adapted’ Latin alphabet does not use Š. Therefore, the phonetic reality of the Š of ENIOROŠEI cannot be /z/. If /z/ was a separate phoneme in Celtiberian at the time, it seems that Š was not the letter used to represent it. And, even if /s/ simply had a voiced allophone in that context (we could read **alizos** or **alizokum** as an attempt at reproducing this allophone), Š was not used to represent it either, contrary to the practice that we seem to witness in Celtiberian script.

At any rate, all this is far from clear. Jordán is of the opinion that Celtiberian Š was intended to depict a voiceless fricative development of *-d (> *-ð > *-θ) (2013; 2015: 75; 2019: 126–9 and 2022; cf. also Simón and Jordán 2018). Celtiberian fricatives and affricates, their relation to dental stops and possible indications of the state of lenition in Hispano-Celtic have given rise to much scholarly debate in recent decades, especially following the contributions of Villar (1993 and 1995), with different authors²⁷ expressing quite different opinions in detail, although with remarkable progress towards a consensus on some important issues. Jordán (2019: 116–34) provides a good summary in this regard, but a recent and detailed article by Prósper (2022), which addresses this particular issue and provides new insights, makes it clear how many challenges this question still entails.

I do not claim to have my own answer to all the problems detected in relation to this point of Celtiberian phonetics and phonology reflected in different writing systems, which, in any case, would take me too far away of the present discussion. But I can say, however, that the inclusion of this diacritic, this improvement, so to speak, of the Latin alphabet, must indeed represent a conscious attempt to reflect a significant phonological difference (cf. Prósper 2022: 1ff). If the use of san in the Celtiberian script was intended to represent inherited /s/ in initial and final position, as well as in syllabic onset after voiceless consonants, there is disagreement concerning the nature of the intervocalic sibilant: we find what *seems*²⁸ to be the same phoneme sometimes written with san (**soisum** < *toisōm), sometimes with sigma (**kabizeti** < *kabi-s-e-ti). As for sigma, its use is more complex, as it most probably represents more than one phoneme. It seems to have been used for the lenited result of *d* and *d^h* in intervocalic and final position, as well as for *t* in final position. At the same time, sigma seems to have been used for an affricate or fricative sound that was the result of *-t(i)i-* (cf. Prósper 2014) and sometimes (not regularly) *-ti-*. Villar (1995) added to this the voiced results, perhaps allophonic, perhaps phonemic, of /s/ in certain voiced contexts (cf. Prósper 2022: 2–3), although this is not clear.

Without venturing any specific etymology, Jordán believes this word is the dative of a theonym, the name of the god to whom the dedication is addressed. In his words: “d’après ce qui vient d’être dit, nous pouvons proposer pour ENIOROŠEI les phases antérieures suivantes: *eniorodei, *eniorotyei, *eniorontyey

²⁷Untermann (MLH IV and 1999); Meid (2000: 17–24 and 2001); McCone (2001: 485–6); De Bernardo (2001: 328–31 and 2007); Prósper (2007b, 2013–14 and 2022); De Hoz (2018).

²⁸Of course, alternative explanations could be given for these etymologies; the apparent hesitations in spelling may be only apparent. Cf. Prósper (2022: 3).

ou **eniorogyei*” (2015: 89). This may be so, in which case the etymology in relation to the concept of ‘mountain’ is obscured, although, of course, not entirely impossible.

Prósper (2022: 12), admitting that, in her view, ‘no plausible etymology has ever been proposed for this strange-looking form’, offers some new and interesting options, although, as is very common in these cases, it is difficult to be sure of any of them. Explaining that this is a dative form of an *s*-stem creates difficulties with the writing system. But considering it to be the locative case of an adjective (as Prósper (2022: 12) seems to imply),²⁹ in my opinion generates syntactic problems: a noun as part of a prepositional phrase headed by ENI could be credible, but with a preposition we would not expect a locative, as she in fact points out. In my view it would be difficult to understand the adjectival value of the word,³⁰ unless she means an adjectival *origin* of the word, with, perhaps, a toponymic value. In any case, I fail to understand why this form would occur in the locative case.

We must have before us a *dative* form,³¹ most likely, after all, of an *i*-stem,³² a name (theonym, epithet or epiclesis of a deity), very likely of adjectival origins, built most likely with a **-nt-* suffix: **eni-h₁or-ont-*i*ei_t*³³ (‘to the one on the mountain top’). We should assume, maybe, that the dative ending of *i*-stems was **-iei* after all (Jordan 2019: 178),³⁴ perhaps for analogical reasons.

Our **(h₁)eni-h₃er-ont-is*, thus created, of adjectival origin, would be the basis for a theonym, an epithet or an epiclesis of a deity. The dative case generates the context for the process of lenition which we see reproduced in the local Latin script as ENIOROŠEI. What parallels could be adduced for this? What could the etymological ‘meaning’ be?

- We could consider Proto-Celtic **eni-stī*, ‘island’ (Old Irish *inis*, Middle Welsh *ynys*, Old Breton *inis*, Cornish *enys*), from Proto-Indo-European

²⁹Since *-i-ei* can hardly be a dative form (*-i*-stems have a dative *-ei*), and a locative would need no preposition to express location, the underlying form may have been **eni-(*φ*)oro(n)t-*i*-*ei**, the thematic locative of an adjective derived from **(*φ*)or-ont-*. In turn, this would be the present participle of a denominative **por-e/o-* that survives in OHG. *faran* ‘travel’, which would constitute a remarkable Celto-Germanic innovation. Alternatively, it could be the agentive derivative of IE **poro-* ‘causeway, path’ → **poro-t-*, which looks amazingly similar to L. *interpres* ‘go-between’, a compounded agent noun **enter-pore-t-*, from a noun **poro-* (cf. Nussbaum 2016: 290).’

³⁰TIATVNEI would also have to be the locative form of another adjective (formally complicated to justify), but on which noun would both of them depend?

³¹The sequence ENIOROŠEI EQVOISVIQVE (line 5) forces us to see it this way. Both forms, joined by -QVE, can only be dative. The first is from the third declension and the second from the thematic declension.

³²*S*-stems or *t*-stems would not produce the phonetic context that could justify the form we see. For other theoretically possible formations, with a **-dyei* or **-gyey* ending, I fail to find convincing morphological explanations. And simply thinking of a formation with the suffix **i-os* would generate the insurmountable difficulty that the dative would be **i-VI*, as we see in this same inscription (EQVOISVI-QVE).

³³Actually one of the forms considered, although not discussed, by Jordán (2015: 89).

³⁴Rather than postulating, alternatively, a fricativising capacity of an **-ei* (not **-iei*) ending on the dental stop, even without the participation of a yod.

*(*h*₁)*eni-sth₂-ih₂*, literally ‘that which stands in’ (Matasović 2009: 116).³⁵

- We could also think of Proto-Celtic **eni-fedo-* ‘position, place’ (Matasović 2009: 116), from where Old Irish *ined*, derived from PIE *(*h*₁)*eni-pedo-*, from **pedo-* ‘track, footprint’ (IEW 790–2; LIV 458), just as Hittite *pedan* ‘place’, Latin *peda* ‘sole’ or Armenian *het* ‘footprint, track’.
- We could finally adduce a reconstructed Proto-Celtic **enīk^w-o-s*, ‘face’ (‘that on which eyes are located’), which seems to be behind Old Irish *enech*, Ogam *INEQA-GLAS*, Old Welsh and Old Breton *enep*, as well as Old Cornish *eneb*. The Proto-Indo-European form reconstructed at its base, **h₁eni-h₃k^w-o-/eh₂* (IEW 775ff.; LIV 297), ‘which is convincing both formally and semantically’ according to Zair (2012: 261),³⁶ would also explain Sanskrit *ānikam*. Greek ἐνὺπιή, a very close formation, with a very similar meaning (‘look, face’), seems to have been formed on the full grade, however (**h₁en(i)-h₃ek^w-*). As for Proto-Greek **enīk^wā* (> ἐνίπιή ‘reproach, menace, threat’), it was derived in a very similar way, although, according to Beekes (2010: 427), from a different root: **h₁eni-h₂k^w-eh₂*. The ī in Greek ἐνίπιή could be understood as the result of the expected compensatory lengthening of the -i- in *eni* after the loss of the laryngeal, perhaps *h₂*, according to Beekes. In any case, this root has no clear commonly accepted explanation. I wonder, however, whether we could also have here *h₃* and not *h₂*, and thus a zero grade of the word for ‘eye’. The semantic development is not so difficult to grasp: ‘to be in one’s eye reach’ > ‘to be within sight’, ‘to keep an eye on’ > ‘to watch’ > ‘to look with suspicion’ > ‘to reproach’ > ‘to threaten’. This also seems to be Zair’s view (2012: 261).

Given these three parallels, would it be too far-fetched to think that ENIORÓSEI is a dative form, the phonetic result of something like *(*h*₁)*eni-h₃er-ont-jei?* Would it be possible to think that this (most likely) proper name (theonym, epithet or epiclesis) could mean, etymologically, something like ‘the highlander, the mountain dweller, the one who lives in the mountains, the one who lives on the top of the mountain’? A dative case, a dedication to a deity who was believed to live in the mountains or who was regularly honoured on a mountaintop, would in my view be initially plausible. In this case, the dative could be translated as ‘to the one who lives in the mountains, to the highlander’.³⁷ This is, incidentally, the exact same sense Meid defended for this specific word 31 years ago (1994). He also thought that this was an epithet of Lug and arrived at a translation which is roughly the same as mine: ‘Dem auf dem Bergewohnenden (...), dem Lugus’ (1994: 394) (‘To the mountain dweller (...), to Lug’).

³⁵Cf. Latin *insula* (**en-salā*), ‘that which is in the salt (sea)’ (reconstruction rejected by De Vaan (2008: 306), however).

³⁶Even if Matasović (2008: 115–16) prefers a slightly different reconstruction that I personally find less appealing: **h₁en-h₃ekwo-* > **enokwo-* > **enekwo-* (by vowel assimilation).

³⁷Although, of course, if it is a proper name, a theonym, the ‘translation’ would be a different one: ‘to Eniorontis’, as its etymological meaning would be another matter.

In sum, in my opinion ENIOROŠEI could be alluding to *Lug* himself, as an epithet, but it is not clear whether the etymology could have something to do with the idea of a mountain or not, although it should not be discarded completely.

VTA TIGINO TIATVNEI. Here we have a copulative conjunction (VTA) opening the line, followed by a genitive singular (TIGINO) and, finally, closing the line, the word TIATVNEI, a dative of a nasal stem. If ENI were really a preposition, TIATVNEI could be dependent on ENI and coordinated with ENIOROŠEI: TIATVNEI's meaning should therefore also be local. Perhaps it could simply refer to the site or the specific area where the sanctuary is located. But it looks as if ENI is not really a preposition: both names may then well be dative forms of two theonyms or epithets of just one deity (perhaps of *Lug*?).

As for TIATVNEI, I am not aware of any clear etymology if we read it like that. Prósper (2002: 222–3) tried hard to find an etymological explanation, offering different options. She points out that what she reads as TIASO (I will comment on this word below and give my own reading) is a passive participle in **-to-* of the same verb that she identifies in TIATVNEI. Both forms would stem from a base **tiat-*, of which TIATVNEI would be, for her, an infinitive in **-Vunei*, with late monophthongization from *-ou-* to *-ū-*. In TIASO we would have the phonetic result of the encounter of the two dental plosives (the final *-t* of the verbal stem and that of the suffix **-to-*), from which we would then have *-ss-*, later simplified into *-s-* or simply not reflected in writing.³⁸

However, it is perhaps possible to propose a correction in the reading that has been made of this word up to the present day. The letters *I* and *L* are graphically very similar throughout the text. The differences, under ideal circumstances, are clear, but the circumstances are far from ideal. Almost all the *I*'s begin at the top at a point slightly to the right of their lower part (cf. fig. 6).

However, the *L*'s that we have are more vertically oriented, and their upper point is more to the left than their lower point (figure 7) or at least its lower end tends to the right (figure 8). More importantly, the two clearest *L*'s in the inscription, the initial of the second mention of *Lug* (the *L* of the first mention of *Lug* is in a more damaged area) and the *L* of OLOCAS, have a common and very clear characteristic: two small strokes to the right and left, at their base, reminiscent of a Greek lambda. See figures 7 and 8.

It so happens that the second letter of what has so far been read as TIATVNEI coincides with a fracture of the inscription, possibly related to

³⁸As for the verbal base, it could have evolved, according to Prósper, from **to-yāt-*, a prefixed form of one of the following possible formations (in all cases with loss of the vowel of the Celtic preverb **to-* before initial **y-* or before a vowel): 1) either the variant **yāt-* of Indo-European **yā-* 'to go' (cf. *IEW* 296 or *LIV* 309–10) or of **yet-* 'to aspire, to address' (*IEW* 506–7; cf. *LIV* 313–14), 2) of **to-epi-at-* 'to go, to go to' (cf. Latin *annus* < **at-no-*, Old Indian *ātati*, Welsh *adeg* (< **atikā*), or 3) of **to-epi-pat-* 'to extend' (*IEW* 824–5; *LIV* 478–9). Indeed, one of these options that Prósper puts on the table may perfectly well be correct, but, in my view, the explanation is uncertain. This is also Jordán's opinion (2009: 897).



Figure 6.
I in ENIOROŠEI
(line 5)



Figure 7.
L in LVGVEI
(line 6)



Figure 8.
L in OLOCAS
(line 6)

the moment of its removal in Cabré's time.³⁹ For this reason, perhaps, it has never been read as I am going to suggest.

Because of the fractured rock this reading cannot be certain, for obvious reasons: there is a breakage right there. But if we look at the detail of this letter, with regard to the two characteristics of the letters *I* and *L* in the rest of the inscription, there is really nothing to preclude us from reading the second letter as an *L*, and therefore to read rather TLATVNEI. Two small strokes could *perhaps* even be distinguishable, left and right, at the base of the letter (the only section of it still visible). See figures 9, 10 and 11.

Paradoxically, though, there is another word in the inscription, which is very difficult to read, but which could help us here: the last word of line 6, interpreted in various ways (TIASO, TIATO...). As we have just seen, Prósper explicitly observed already (2002 and 2022; cf. also Jordán 2019: 897) that this word could be related to what has been read so far as TIATVNEI. Well, in figures 12 and 13 we can see how its second letter, one of the clearest, is written.

In my opinion, figure 11 represents an *L*, for the reasons adduced above: it is more vertical than the *I*'s, and shows two small strokes at the base, to the left and to the right. We could compare the *L* in OLOCAS (figure 14) with the one that could be read in TLATO (figure 15).

I have had an exchange of views on this question with my colleague Carlos Jordán, from the University of Zaragoza, possibly the author who has worked most on Celtiberian epigraphy and language in recent years (indeed, in recent decades).

³⁹Cabré was able to see it and draw it before the removal. He drew an *I*.



Figure 9. **TLATVN...** in TLATVNEI (line 2)

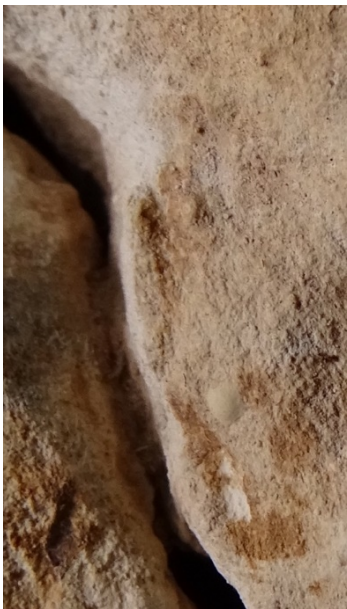


Figure 10.
L in TLATVNEI
(line 2)



Figure 11.
L in TLATVNEI
(line 2)

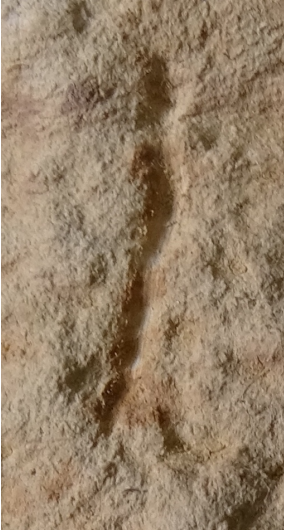


Figure 12.
L in TLATO
(line 6)



Figure 13.
L in TLATO
(line 6)

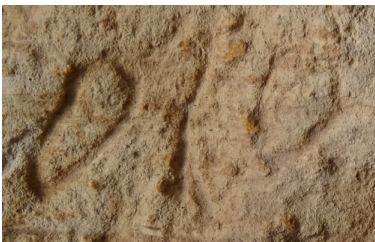


Figure 14. OLO in OLOCAS

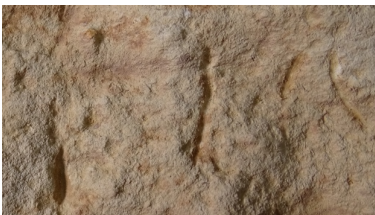


Figure 15. TLA in TLATO

We discussed these new readings of mine. As for TLATO, in this informal personal communication, he said to me that in his autopsies of the inscription (2005 and 2023) he had not noticed (or perhaps at the time he did not consider it relevant) the small stroke at the right hand side of the base of the letter which I suggest reading as L in TLATO. However, now, even if still not completely convinced, he told me, following my suggestion, that he would not rule out that this was a conscious stroke by the author of the inscription who may indeed have intended to write *L*, not *I*. In fact, he agrees that this suggested new *L* is very similar to the one we see in OLOCAS. However, he does not discard, either, the possibility that the small stroke we see is fortuitous. Nevertheless, after a new autopsy he performed in 2023, he tells me he would currently be in favour of reading T+ATVMEI, adding that he is now quite convinced of this.

That is, he returns to his 2005 and 2007 reading, also the one preferred by Gómez Moreno (1942: 13), Lejeune (1955: 8), Schmoll (1959: 7), Untermann (*MLH* IV, p. 624), De Hoz (1995: 18) or De Bernardo (2008: 187), as we have seen above.

Yet, let us not forget, other authors⁴⁰ over the years (as well as Jordán in 2017 or 2019) have preferred to read there an *N*, something, which, indeed, has certainly a clearer linguistic explanation, as Prósper (2002: 213, n. 1) points out. She argues that reading TIATVMEI⁴¹ would be against any ‘verosimilitud morfológica’, since ‘un tema en *-m- o, alternatively, en *-mi-, resulta virtualmente inexplicable.’⁴²

If we accept the reading TLATVNEI, as I would prefer, this word could be a Celtiberian deverbative nasal-stem noun⁴³ built on proto-Celtic **tlātos*, identical to Proto-Italic **tlātos* from Proto-Indo-European **t̥h₂tós*, zero-grade from the root **telh₂-* ‘support, carry, take away’ (*IEW* 1060–1; *LIV* 622–3; cf. De Vaan 2008: 329–30). **tlātos* is exactly the origin of the Latin perfect passive participle *latus*, a suppletive form for *ferō*, although its etymology links it originally to the verb *tollō*, *tollere*: its perfect, *tulī*, would end up also associated with *ferō*. Perfect *tulī* comes from a reduction of a reduplicated perfect *o*-grade (*tetuli*), of the same root (**tetólh₂e*). A perfect cognate for

⁴⁰Tovar (1955–1956: 161), Meid (TIATVNEI, 1993–1995: 348) or Prósper (2002: 213).

⁴¹Prósper relies, additionally, on a personal communication from F. Villar, who, after having personally performed an autopsy of the inscription, confirmed to her that he saw a letter *N* there “sin lugar a dudas”.

⁴²Of course, this last argument is not conclusive for the reading of the word, but in case of doubt, and doubt clearly exists, this is obviously something to bear in mind. There are many Celtiberian words with an ending in *-unei*, whether in Palaeo-Hispanic script or in the Latin alphabet. And, as far as I know, there are none in *-umei*. We have only one case (cf. De Bernardo (2008: 187 n. 32), in the Lead Tablet from Iniesta (cf. Lorrio and Velaza 2005: 1038) of a word ending in *-imei* (not *-umei*), perhaps a verbal form: *auzimei* – a verbal form, moreover, lacking a clear explanation. According to Prósper (2007a: 31–3), this word should rather be interpreted as an anthroponym or toponym. Jordán (2019: 206) considers this form to be a substantive (from **aw-d^heh₁-mey*), either a dative singular of an *i*-stem or a locative singular of an *o*-stem.

⁴³Even without considering this reading, Jordán (2019: 897) already stated that TIATVNEI, as he read in 2019, must be ‘un tema en nasal, de un *N*. **tiatu*, con el grado alargado generalizado’, also referring, in the same place, to the fact that ‘la lectura TIATO de la línea 6 facilita la relación etimológica entre ambas, como avanzaba Prósper, aunque no nos atrevemos a dar ninguna’.

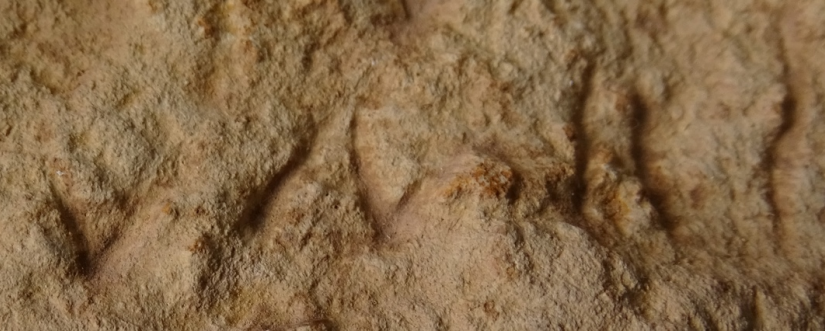


Figure 16.



Figure 17. VNEI



Figure 18. VMEI

Italo-Celtic **tlātos* is also Doric Greek *τλᾱτος* (Ionic *τλῆτος*), ‘steadfast’, also from **t_lh₂tós*.

In my opinion, this is also the Indo-European root to which we have to trace the name of the mythological character *Atlas* (Ἀτλᾱς, -αντος) that we know well thanks to Hesiod, despite Beekes’ (2010: 163) uncertainty and tentative association of it with a very hypothetical and undetermined pre-Indo-

European origin.⁴⁴ Beekes explicitly rejects ('clearly a desperate guess') the 'old interpretation' (cf. Chantraine 1968: 133–4) that considered that this word was built with **sm-* followed by the root **telh₂-*, concluding that 'it cannot to be expected that this ancient Titan carries an Indo-European name'.

However, in my opinion, Ἀτλας could perfectly derive from **η-tlh₂-nt-*, meaning, then, 'the one unable to endure', which can make sense thinking of the end of the Hesiodic myth (*Theogony* 517–20): he was a Titan condemned to sustain the weight of the heavens, until he collapsed because of his incapacity to *tolerate* it. Could *Atlas* etymologically mean 'the one that could not endure (eventually)?' Matasović (2009: 380) associates the root **telh₂-* with derivatives in Celtic like Middle Irish *tláith* (< **tlāti-*) 'weak, sick', Old Irish *tlenaid*. He derives a Proto-Celtic **talamū*⁴⁵ (< **telamū* < **telamōn*), 'earth' ('supporter'), from a full *e*-grade of the same root and a different suffix: **telh₂-mōn-*, and which is the origin of Old Irish *talam*. We could add (cf. Zair 2012: 81; Schrijver 1995: 187–8) Middle Welsh *tlawt*, Welsh *tlawd*, Gothic *þulan* (*LEIA* T-78; *LIV* 622–3). We could compare the Greek (Beekes 2010: 1446–7) doublet of τελαμών ('a strap to bear or support anything') and τλήμων, 'steadfast', this last one from the zero-grade (< **tllh₂-mōn-*).⁴⁶

The doublet *Atlas* (Ἀτλας) – *Telamon* (Τελαμών) could be quite significant in this respect: *Telamon* is a frequent epithet of *Atlas*, which we could interpret as a sort of alternative denomination, an epiclesis, of the same divinity, or as two different divinities secondarily associated with each other. *Atlas* and *Telamon* are two derivatives of the same Indo-European base. We will come back to this later.

In different Indo-European languages, what has come to be called a Hoffmann's suffix (Stüber 1998: 120–43), **-h₃en-* / **-h₃on-*, may be added to different roots in order to form possessive derivatives.⁴⁷ In Proto-Celtic in particular we have **-tiyū*, from **-ti-ōn*, with an analogical spread of the lengthened grade of the nominative to the rest of the paradigm (**-ti-ōn* < **-ti-on* < **-ti-h₃on-*). **-ti-h₃on-* seems to be an extension of **tis* with **-h₃on-*,⁴⁸ in a very similar manner to the development of the Latin suffix *-tiō* (genitive *-tiōnis*). And so, we get action nouns from verbal roots:

⁴⁴Atlas gave also his name to the island of Atlantis (Ἀτλαντὶς νῆσος) and, of course, to the Atlantic Ocean.

⁴⁵The first /a/ is due to the change now called Joseph's rule: vid. Joseph (1982); cf. Zair (2012) or Stifter (2017).

⁴⁶With a different suffix, we also have Latin *tellūs* 'earth' (< Proto-Italic: **telnos* < **tel(h₂)-nos*).

⁴⁷This suffix is known at least in Greek, Indo-Iranian, Albanian, Germanic, Italic and Celtic.

⁴⁸**-tiyū* may, at any rate, also be the phonetic result of an elongation of the same root simply with the individualising suffix **-on-*. The analogical extension of the lengthened grade of the nominative to the rest of the paradigm (**-ti-ōn* < **-ti-on*) would lead to the same end result and formally there is nothing in my opinion against it. However, for semantic reasons, it seems to me preferable to assume here the involvement of Hoffmann's suffix (cf. Stüber 1998: 120–43), although both options are perfectly possible, and therefore it is difficult to be certain (Stüber 2004; cf. Brugmann 1906: 294ff and Pronk 2015: 328).

*wid- ('to tell') + *-tiyū → *wissiyū ('telling, saying')

*sem- ('to pour') + *-tiyū → *santiyū ('outpour')

*men- ('to think') + *-tiyū → *mentiyū ('thought')

In Latin *-tiō* (also with analogical spread of the lengthened grade from the nominative) usually is suffixed to a participial form in order to generate a new noun: from *translātum*, for instance, supine of *transferō* 'to transport', the Latin language obtains *translatiō* 'a transport'. Following exactly the same procedure just seen with *wid-, *sem- and *men-, starting from the zero grade of the root *telh₂-*, i.e. *t_lh₂, if we add the suffix complex **-tiō* (*t_lh₂ + *-tiō) I believe we would expect something like ***tlāitiū* in Old Irish (cf. Middle Irish *tláith* < **tlāti-s*), a form that I feel is extremely close to the name of the Irish goddess *Tailtiu*,⁴⁹ Lug's mother or foster mother in the *Lebor Gabála*.⁵⁰ In my view, this is too close to be just a mere coincidence.

Zair (2012) recently addressed, in detail, the rather complicated question of the expected complex outcome of laryngeals in Celtic in different phonetic contexts.⁵¹ As for our particular problem now, having the close parallel of Middle Irish *tláith*, coming from **tlāti-s*, the result of a hypothetical Proto-Celtic form derived from **t_lh₂tiō* we would expect to have been Irish ***tlāitiū* (< **tlātiū*), whereas the form we have, *Tailtiu*, seems to have come rather from **taltiū*, which, with palatalisation,⁵² would have become **tailtiū* / *Tailtiu*. I am not sure, however, whether this relatively uncommon result⁵³ is to be attributed to undetermined phonological conditioning factors or to a specific analogy which I will discuss below. The etymological meaning of the name would be 'the one who brings support, the supporter, the provider', which makes perfect sense, if one takes into account the description of *Tailtiu* in Irish myth. She is credited with having cleared the land of the trees that prevented it from being used for agriculture and having thus ensured that humanity had a reliable and permanent source of food. According to the myth, she died of

⁴⁹According to early Irish tradition, (...) Lug himself established the festival to honour his foster-mother Tailtiu in Brega, modern Co. Meath; Lug also led the horse-raiding and martial arts contests.' (MacKillop 1998: 174).

⁵⁰Carlos Jordán (2001: 453; 2019: 168) considers that this same procedure was known in Celtiberian and served to create personal names applied to women, considering that in correspondence to the attested genitives *lukinos* [P4, II-1], *atinos* [P4, II-44] or *elkinos* [P4, III-28] we would need to assume that the respective nominative forms, not yet documented, should be **lukiu*, **atiu* and **elkiu*. Prósper (2015: 138–45) is not convinced, though.

⁵¹For the context that concerns us here, our challenge (Zair 2012: 69–89) is how to justify seemingly contradictory results for the sequence **CRHC(C)-*, which in some cases seem to have been **CRāC(C)-* (examples discussed in Zair 2012: 71–7) while in others they seem to have been rather **CRāC(C)-* (Zair 2012: 77–82), and finally, apparently, they sometimes showed, unexpectedly, **CaRC(C)-* (Zair 2012: 82–84). He then offers a tentative, hypothetical explanation of the phonological conditioning factors (2012: 89), aware, in any case, of their 'extremely speculative nature'.

⁵²Cf. McCone (1996: 115–20), who, speaking of certain types of analogic verbal inflection instances (which are not directly relevant here), points out that 'ā impeded palatalisation of a following consonant by an *i* / *i*' (p. 117). Having Middle Irish *tláith* (< **tlāti-s*), this is clearly of no concern for us now.

⁵³Although this is one of the three results recognised by Zair, he states (2012: 82) that 'since the development of **CRHC* to **CaRC*- is unexpected, there have been various attempts at explanation.'

exhaustion after this (*Atlas* also died of exhaustion), and her son *Lug* would be responsible for establishing a harvest festival and funeral games in her honour, the *Óenach Tailteann*, later known as the *Tailtin Fair*, which continued to be held as late as the eighteenth century (MacKillop 1998: 309–10, 395–6) at a place whose name is also related: Teltown (Irish *Tailtin*), in County Meath, a few km north-west of the Hill of Tara. Aspects of this festival survive to this day in the celebrations of *Lughnasadh*, which marks the beginning of the harvest season.

The unexpected resolution of the first syllable of the name could be due, perhaps, at least in our case, to an analogy or association with the word *talam*, ‘the earth’, considering that *Tailtiu*’s myths are reminiscent of a chthonic deity. Her story is strongly evocative of the pairing of *Demeter* (whose name probably (cf. Beekes 2010: 324–5) means, etymologically, ‘mother Earth’) and *Persephone* in Greek mythology.

Talam comes from the same root, as we saw, although, in this case, from the full *e*-grade and a different suffix (**telh₂-mōn-*). The different sound context triggers the phonetic modification known to us as Joseph’s law,⁵⁴ which justifies the first /a/ in the Irish form (cf. Greek τελαμών, from **telh₂-* (‘to bear’) + -μων (*-mōn*), ‘bearer, supporter’). As we suggested above, the doublet *Atlas* (Ἀτλας) – *Telamon* (Τελαμών) could indeed be quite significant in this respect. *Telamon*, a name with the full grade, is in fact a frequent epithet of *Atlas*, a name derived from the zero grade of the same root. We could also compare the name of *Glachtga*, a sorceress with whom *Tailtiu* is so closely associated in Irish literature that we might think of her as an *alter ego* or a local split of the same divinity (MacKillop 1998: 359). *Glachtga*’s name was attached to the Hill of Ward, also in County Meath, a few km west of Tara and a few km SW of Teltown. The three sites form a fairly regular triangle on a map, the three sides of which are between 18 and 24km long. *Glachtga* seems to derive also from **tlā-* (< **tl(e)h₂-*), followed by the Old Irish nominal suffix *-acht*.⁵⁵ This *tlacht*⁵⁶ so created would form then a compound with Old Irish *ga* (< **gaisos* < PIE **ghoyso-*, perhaps a Germanic loanword in Celtic; cf. Matasović 2009: 154). The compound seems to mean then, etymologically, ‘spear of the supporter > spear of the Earth’. The spear is taken as a metaphor for ‘lightning bolt’. The explanation of *Tailtiu*’s name has generated doubts for decades. Binchy (1958: 123–4), not fully convinced, follows Thurneysen’s (1936: 369) explanation according to which the idea of a deity would have sprung from the name of the place where the fair was traditionally held. Thurneysen indicates that an older form was actually *Teiltiu*, in his view a Brythonic borrowing (cf. Welsh *telediwl* (< **teletiw*), ‘well-formed, beautiful’). At any rate, the semantic content in relation to the idea of ‘supporting’ seems preferable to me, considering the

⁵⁴Cf. Joseph (1982), Zair (2012) or Stifter (2017).

⁵⁵This suffix originates in Proto-Celtic **axtā*, feminine form of the past participle of the verb **ageti* (< PIE **h₂égeti*), ‘to drive’ (> Old Irish *aigid*), cognate of Latin *agō*.

⁵⁶In Old Irish *tlacht* by itself means ‘covering, protection, hide, skin’ or even ‘clothing, garment, ornament’ (eDIL s.v. *tlacht*, accessed 12 June 2025). The semantic development we might assume is perhaps that it is the earth that sustains us or protects us.

attributes assigned to this divinity.

Be all this as it may, Celtiberian TLATVNEI is a dative singular of a very similar construction, although the suffix has a slightly different form. It could be traced back to $*t_lh_2t\text{-}\bar{o}\text{-}n\text{-}ei$ ($< *t_lh_2\text{-}t\text{-}h_3o\text{-}n\text{-}ei$, with an analogical spread of the lengthened grade from the nominative), probably a masculine formation (although not necessarily so), but very close to the feminine derivative $*t_lh_2 + *\text{-}tiy\bar{o}$, which *could* be the origin of Irish *Tailtiu*.

In TLATVNEI, the Hoffmann's suffix did not elongate $*\text{-}tis$, like Irish $*\text{-}tiy\bar{u}$ and Latin $*\text{-}ti\bar{o}$ ⁵⁷ but was added directly to the verbal adjective suffix $*\text{-}to\text{-}$, still without passive meaning.⁵⁸ We could compare the similar case of Greek $\piλοῦτος$ 'richness',⁵⁹ which, with the addition of $-\omega\nu$ becomes $\Πλούτων$, literally 'one who possesses richness'. It must be stressed, in any case, that what we see in Latin $\text{-}ti\bar{o}$ and Celtic $\text{-}tiy\bar{u}$ is **not** the only way to coin new words with a Hoffmann's suffix in Indo-European. In Greek we have $-\acute{\omega}\nu\eta$ (genitive $-\acute{\omega}\nu\eta\varsigma$), which can be added to a personal name to form a feminine patronymic: from Ζεύς [$\Delta i\text{-}$] + $-\acute{\omega}\nu\eta$ we get $\Delta i\acute{\omega}\nu\eta$, literally 'daughter of Zeus'. Similarly, in Latin we have a suffix $-\bar{o}na$ (genitive $-\bar{o}nae$), that can be used to form names or epithets of female deities. Although apparently similar, this does not seem to be the same formation we see in the name of the Gaulish goddess *Epona*, and similar Celtic names, which apparently has a short o : *Epōnā* (cf. Stüber 2004). These Latin, Greek and Celtic goddess names share, though, that they are *feminine* nouns of the first declension: the suffix is secondarily lengthened with $-\text{eh}_2$, which has this feminising capacity. We could compare what happens with Proto-Celtic $*ab\bar{u}$ ($< *h_2ep\text{-}h_3\bar{o}\text{-}n < *h_2ep\text{-}$ 'water'), 'river' and the Gaulish and British feminine $*ab\bar{o}nā$ ($< *h_2ep\text{-}h_3on + \text{eh}_2$). Celtiberian TLATVNEI is a third declension dative singular. The ending suffix is not secondarily elongated with eh_2 . If it were, we would have a first declension ending: $-\text{AI}$. However, of course, this does not mean that a form without the elongation with eh_2 cannot be feminine. $*ab\bar{u}$, Proto-Celtic for 'river', without going any further, was a feminine, as was its Old Irish descendant *aub*, also meaning 'river'.

In short, we could be looking here at a new reasonable etymology for the name of the goddess *Tailtiu*, something that had eluded us until now. And it would be very significant to relate the name of the Irish goddess, mother of *Lug* in the *Lebor Gabála*, with the form TLATVNEI of Peñalba de Villastar, which appears precisely in the line above the first of the two mentions of *Lug* (TO LVGVEI) in this very inscription.

The word preceding TLATVNEI in our text, **TIGINO**, is a genitive singular form, perhaps of a common noun, perhaps a proper name (place or personal name). If it is a personal name, although we have a rich collection of Celtiberian

⁵⁷As we saw above, from *translātum*, supine of *transferō* 'to transport', Latin obtains *translatiō* 'a transport'.

⁵⁸In Italic and Celtic, the verbal adjective suffix $*\text{-}to\text{-}$, secondarily, would be used for past participles with a passive value. But even in Latin we can find this same suffix originally not providing a passive meaning but forming adjectives with the basic sense of 'provided with': *iūs* ('law, justice') $> iustus$ ('lawful, just').

⁵⁹ $\piλοῦτος$ derives from $*plew\text{-}$ 'sail, flow', followed by $*\text{-}to\text{-}$ s, which served to form adjectives from verbal or nominal roots, with no passive meaning whatsoever.

anthroponyms, we must say that neither the form TIGINO nor the possible alternative reading TICINO are attested. If it really is an anthroponym, it would be strange if we did not know it.

The etymology could be related (Jordán 1998: 207ff) to a Celtic **tigerno-* ‘lord, master’ whose etymological provenance from **(s)tig-* ‘pointy, sharp’ (LEIA T-63; IEW 1016f.; LIV 592–3; De Bernardo 1999: 535–7) is not entirely clear to Matasović (2009: 378–9), who, moreover, is not convinced that the Celtiberian word can be related to it.

It is somewhat puzzling that what appears to be the same name or noun is mentioned, also in the genitive, in another of the minor inscriptions of Villastar⁶⁰ (Jordán 2019: 908–9; Beltrán et al. 2021: 148–9), a difficult one, in this case accompanying the adjective VERAMOM (‘supreme’, ‘highest’),⁶¹ an accusative (or a neuter nominative). Prósper believes (2002: 223 n. 20) that this adjective is nominalised, which makes perfect sense, but this inscription is not complete and there are doubts about the reading. Any analysis is therefore complicated.

Prósper (2002: 223) believes this is a toponym (perhaps the name of a river), bringing up the ancient name of Pavia, *Ticīnum*, and the river *Ticīnus* (today Ticino), a tributary of the Po from which it takes its name. For a river name, a link with **tēg-o-* ‘go’ (the Celtic zero-grade would be **tig-*) (Matasović 2009: 379) would be plausible and the zero-grade linked to the addition of the nasal suffix. Yet, if it is a place name, we could also consider the root **(s)tig-* ‘pointy, sharp’ we saw above, and perhaps think of it as a name for the mountainous region where the sanctuary is located: could this name mean something like ‘the peaks, the summits, the mountain range, the highlands’? Could we translate TIGINO TLATVNEI as ‘(to) the Supporter of the Highlands’?

That could be an interesting option. TIGINO could certainly be a toponym, but if the names of both inscriptions from Peñalba are the same, one could wonder whether it would make more sense to think of a personal name. However, we would not expect a person’s name in the genitive in a cultic inscription, but more probably in the nominative, as the person responsible for the act itself (cf. contemporary Latin or Greek divine dedications). Therefore, if, as I believe, TLATVNEI is a theonym or simply an epithet or epiclesis of *Lug*, TIGINO could perhaps be a genitive of the name of the father of the god/goddess, along the same lines known to us in Celtiberian personal onomastics. Its position in the text, though, would be unexpected: in the well-known Celtiberian onomastic formulas we find singular genitives providing the name of the father – but they follow the father’s name, they never precede it. In the Celtiberian onomastic formula, the genitive appears behind because it actually precedes the word ‘son’ (GENTIS), which often appears, albeit abbreviated, behind it (Jordán 2019: 907). Of course, if the noun on which the genitive depends is not the word ‘son’ (which does not appear here), but TLATVNEI

⁶⁰In this other text the editors (Beltrán et al. 2021: 148) prefer reading TICINO.

⁶¹VERAMOS seems a superlative (Beltrán et al. 2021: 145, 147 and 148) formed on **u(p)er*, and, accompanied by the word VIROS, as in VIROS VERAMOS, also in Villastar (MLH IV, K.3.18). It seems equivalent, with Celtic phonetics, to a Latin *Vir supremus*.

itself, then TIGINO could obviously appear before it. But then the connection with the personal naming system seems to fade away.

Be all this as it may, there is an additional, alternative possible explanation of the etymology of the name that is attractive to me, although I am perfectly aware of the fact that it is also highly speculative and far from certain. Matasović (2009: 376) considers that, besides Proto-Celtic **tegos* ‘house’, the origin of Old Irish *tech*, Old Breton *-tig* (second member of compounds), Old Cornish *ti*, Welsh *tŷ* (GPC IV: 3667), all derived from a full *e*-grade of a well-known PIE root **(s)teg-os* ‘cover, roof’ (IEW 1013; LIV 589), we could have forms coming from a lengthened grade of the same root: Old Irish *tí* ‘cloak’ (< **Proto-Celtic* **tīg-s* < **(s)teg-s*). I wonder therefore whether TIGINO could have been formed on this, adding a nasal suffix (cf. Matasović 2009: 378–9), giving the whole the meaning of ‘the covered / cloaked / hidden one’. Hades, the name of the god of the underworld in Greek myths, seems to mean, etymologically, ‘the unseen one’ (*Ἅιδης* < **h₂uid-*, Beekes 2010: 34). We could see parallels between, on the one hand, Greek Persephone, abducted by Hades under the Earth for half a year, to reappear in spring, when nature resuscitates and ensures, by allowing sowing, the survival of humans thanks to the future harvest, and, on the other, Irish *Tailtiu*, daughter of the Earth, who achieves human sustenance by clearing the forests and leaving the land ready for agriculture. Could TIGINOS be the Celtiberian ‘hidden one’, the Hades, the God of the underworld?

We could think of the name of the underworld in Old Irish myths: *Tech nDuinn* (literally ‘the House of Donn’), significantly formed on **tegos*, precisely, followed by *donn*, an Old Irish adjective meaning ‘dark’ (< Proto-Celtic **dusnos* < **dʰewh₂-s-n-os* ‘smoke’). Donn, ‘the king of the dead’, ‘the dark one’, is relatable to the Greek god Hades and the Hades, as the place where mortals go when they die, is relatable to *Tech nDuinn*.⁶²

I find equally significant a comment by MacCana linking Donn to a very ancient Celtic divinity, the god of the dead *par excellence* (MacCana 1970: 42), the god whom, according to Julius Caesar, the Gauls considered their common ancestor. Caesar (*Commentaries on the Gallic War* VI:18), calls this god *Dis Pater*, associating him with the homonym Roman god of the underworld (De Vaan 2008: 173–4), equivalent to *Pluto* and the Greek *Hades*. This is a very clear example of Roman *interpretatio*: what Caesar meant was that all Gauls claimed descent from a Gaulish god that he equated with the Roman *Dis Pater*.⁶³ Could

⁶²In the Greek myth (as narrated in Hesiod’s *Theogony* or in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, as well as in many later sources) Hades, with the permission of his brother, the supreme god Zeus, abducts Persephone and takes her as his wife to his Underworld kingdom where she remains for half a year each year. The ancient Greeks used the myth of Persephone to explain the origin of the four seasons. They believed that spring and summer took place during the months when Persephone stayed with her mother Demeter, who caused flowers to bloom and crops to grow in abundance. During the other months, when Persephone was to live in the underworld with Hades, Demeter showed her sadness by letting the earth become barren and covering it with snow, which gave rise to autumn and winter.

⁶³Identified with Pluto, in Rome *Dis Pater* adopted some of his mythological attributes, being one of the three sons of Saturn (Greek Chronos) and Ops (Greek Rhea), along with Jupiter (Greek Zeus) and Neptune (Greek Poseidon). In Roman mythology, *Dis Pater* – *Pluto* ruled the underworld

the first two lines of the inscription, ENIOROŠEI VTA TIGINO TLATVNEI, mean “To Eniorontis (‘the Mountain-dweller’) and to Tlato (‘the Supporter’), (son) of Tiginus (‘the Hidden one’)”?

We might finally recall that, on the Chamalières lead tablet, a Gaulish tablet of invocation to the divinity found in 1971 and written within a few decades of the Great Inscription from Peñalba de Villastar,⁶⁴ we read *andedion* and *anderon*, both words interpreted as plural genitives derived from the same Indo-European root: **ǵd^he* + **-dio-* and **ǵd^hero-* (*IEW* 771), respectively. The etymological meaning of this term would be something like ‘which is below, inferior’. The second formation is also the origin of Latin *inferus*, ‘which is below, infernal’, a term that we find in the name of the Roman *dii inferi* or ‘divinities of the underworld’, and of which we also know cognates in the Indo-Iranian languages (Delamarre 2003: 47). Both *andedion* and *anderon*, according to Lambert (1993: 150), refer to divinities of the Underworld; the prefix actually reappears in religious terms used by Insular Celts centuries later: Welsh *annwfn* ‘the Otherworld, the Underworld’ (< **ande-dubno-* ‘the world underneath’) or Old Irish *An-dé*, ‘the gods below’.

As appealing as this second explanation may initially seem, it is fair to acknowledge that the word order, with TIGINO appearing *before* (not *after*) TLATVNEI, makes it much less plausible if not impossible.

TRECAIAŠ. Despite some doubts in the past, the first letter is clearly a T to me. The upper horizontal stroke is undoubtedly visible (see figure 20). As for the final S, the diacritic in the lower part pointed out by Jordán is very clear (see figure 21), so that the form clearly cannot be a feminine plural accusative or a singular genitive, as has been thought for decades. Now this ending only allows us to think of a singular ablative or of a verb with a lenited dental ending.

At any rate, even before we all became aware of the new reading, the etymological explanations of this term did not entirely convince me. The most common (Lejeune, Schwertek) linked it to a Proto-Celtic **kag^yom*, ‘pen, enclosure’ (< Proto-Indo-European **kag^hyóm*, ‘enclosure’), from which Old Breton *cai*, Cornish *ke*, Welsh *cae* (< **kag^h-* *IEW* 518; *LIV* 342; Delamarre (2003: 97); De Vaan (2008: 123); Matasović (2009: 184)),⁶⁵ but this raises the question of why this word shows lenition and disappearance of the intervocalic -G- while in TOGIAS this does not occur (cf. Prósper 2002: 216). More importantly,

along with his wife, *Proserpina* (the Greek *Persephone*). As MacCana (1970: 42) puts it, ‘it may be significant that he should specifically mention Dis Pater, Roman god of the dead, for it is not unusual that the first man and father of mankind [...] should also be the first of the dead and lord of the underworld. And in point of fact Irish tradition provides a close analogue to the Gaulish Dis Pater.’

⁶⁴Chamalières is now dated (on this inscription see Meid 2014: 12ff.), with little precision or certainty, to some moment between the middle of the first century BCE and the middle of the first century CE, while the Great Inscription of Peñalba de Villastar must come from the last years of the first century BCE or the first years of the following century (Marco Simón – Alfayé 2008: 521).

⁶⁵The a-vocalism, as well as the distribution of the reflexes to NW Europe, points to the possibility that these words were borrowed from some non-IE language.’ Matasović (2009: 184).



Figure 20. TRECAIAŚ / TRECALAŚ

in addition to the etymological and phonetic problems, there is a syntactical problem. I see no way to fit a singular noun in the ablative case here. Therefore, it seems preferable to me to assume that what we have here is a verbal form.

The letter in figures 22 and 23, on the other hand, is not at all clear in my opinion. It has always been read as *I*, and that is certainly the impression it gives at first glance. However, to my mind, it is difficult to completely rule out the possibility of seeing a small stroke at the base, on the right-hand side, which could be an attempt to represent ‘the right foot’ of the *L* mentioned above. We can compare figures 22 and 23 with figure 12 and, especially, with figure 14 or with figure 15. Although it is unclear, I believe we should not discard this reading. Carlos Jordán, in personal communication, says that he does not perceive here the small line to the right of the base here, although he does not reject it in TLATO, as we mentioned earlier. For me it is considerably less clear, but not impossible.

With both TRECAIAŚ and TRECALAŚ, it seems we have a first element derived from Proto-Celtic **trē* ‘through, across’⁶⁶ (< PIE **terh₂-*), cognate with English *through*, Latin *trans*, as well as a Proto-Celtic **taras-* ‘across’ (IEW

⁶⁶An alternative analysis would be to see **tri-* as the first element, frequent in place names, such as the modern Tres Cantos (Madrid), the famous Celtiberian *Trikantam* from Botorrita, or many other cases, like the Galician islands called *Trileukoi* by Ptolemy (García Alonso 2003, s.v.) etc. This option is endorsed, without going into too much detail, by De Bernardo in her 2000 article, although she abandons it in 2006 for semantic reasons. However, in order to see the numeral here we would need to tackle the problem of the unexpected vocalism (we would expect **tri-*).



Figure 21.
S in TRECAIAS / TRECALAŚ

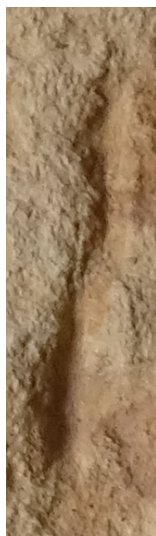


Figure 22.
I or L?



Figure 23.
I or L?

1074–6; *LIV* 633–4). With some problems,⁶⁷ this **trē* could provide the origin of the later Insular Celtic forms.⁶⁸

As for the analysis of the second part, if we read TRECALAŚ, it would be possible⁶⁹ to see here a derivative of the root **kelh₁-*, ‘to call, cry, summon, invoke’ (*IEW* 548–50; De Vaan 2008: 85):⁷⁰ Greek καλέω (Aeolian κάλλημι), ἐκκλησία, κλήσις, Latin *clamare*, *con-cilium* (< **kel-iom*), *calare* (‘to call, summon’), *clarus* (< **klā-ro-s* < **klh₁-ro-s*), *calendae* (< **kal-end-*). In Celtic we

⁶⁷As Matasović (2009: 388) puts it, ‘if **trāns-* first yielded **trās*, and if this was still a root-noun in PCelt., the dative sg. form **trās-ē* could have been contracted as **trāē* > **trē* after the loss of intervocalic **s* in Insular Celtic. Needless to say, this is just a speculation.’

⁶⁸From where Old Irish *tre*, Old Welsh *trui*, Old Breton *tre*, Modern Breton *dre*, Cornish *dre*.

⁶⁹Less convincing seems to me the alternative possibility to see here a word related to **kaylo-* ‘omen’, linked by Delamarre (2009: 197) to Old Welsh *coil(i)ou* [p] ‘omens, auguries’; Middle Welsh *coel* ‘belief, presage, omen’, Old Breton *coel* ‘haruspice, priest’, Modern Breton *koel*, Old Cornish *chuillic* ‘augur’. This follows a very interesting proposal by Schrijver (1991: 267f.), endorsed explicitly by De Vaan (2008: 80–1); in his words, ‘watching the flight of birds in a demarcated area of the sky as a form of divination played a prominent role in the religion of the Italic peoples. There are some indications that bird watching as a form of divination was practiced by the Celts, too.’ These Celtic forms could be considered to come from PIE **keh₂i-lo-* ‘whole, healthy’, ‘blessed with good omen’ (*IEW* 520 and 916–18; cf. *LIV* 347 (?**kejt-*), 360 (?**kh₂ejd-*) and 549 (?**skeb^H-*)). Cognates could be Latin *caelum* ‘sky’, Gothic *hails*, both the modern English *whole* (whose *w* in spelling is not etymological) and *holy*, as well as Balto-Slavic forms (cf. also De Vaan 2008: 80), etc. Delamarre ventures that ‘the first element of the toponym *Caeilo-briga* in Spain is probably also related’. As De Vaan (2008: 81) puts it, ‘possibly, *caelum* got its meaning in the augural sphere, as the “whole” in contrast with *templum* “the part”’. In fact, the etymology of *templum* leads to PIE **temh₁-* ‘to cut’, with an epenthetic *p* in Latin. Cf. Greek τέμενος (and τέμνω). This option would imply assuming a phonetic development leading to a geminate *L* simply not reflected in the writing. It is not impossible, in any case. It could also just be a failed attempt to write *IL*.

⁷⁰*LIV* (361) has it under the entry **kleh₁-*. De Vaan (2008: 85) has **kelh₁-* / **klh₁-*. Beekes (2010: 623) derives the Greek forms from **klh₁-*.

know of derivatives of **kalyākos*, such as Old Irish *cailech* or Welsh *ceiliog*, both meaning “rooster”.

TRECALAŚ could then perhaps be the third person singular of a verb with a secondary ending, which evolved from *t* to *θ* in final position in Celtic-Iberian. I propose that it is a radical (suffixless) athematic aorist (preterite) indicative form. We would have a verb with **trē* as a preverb and followed by *kalaθ*⁷¹ (< **kelh₁-t*),⁷² meaning something like ‘he summoned, he invoked, he dedicated’.

However, if we read TRECAIAŚ, the only etymological possibility I can think of is to consider that, ultimately, it derives from **keh₂-* ‘to wish, to love’ (IEW 515, LIV 343), which in Celtic (Old Irish *caraid*, Middle Welsh *caru*, etc., see Matasović 2009: 191) appears in zero grade and with the suffix *-ro-*: **kă-ro-* (< **kh₂-ro-*; cf., however, Latin *cārus*, < **keh₂-ro-*). But apart from the serious semantic problems that positing this root would entail, I do not see a plausible formation either. Which, indeed, does not mean that it does not exist.⁷³

TO LVGVEI. Most authors, with the notable exception of Carlos Jordán, have seen here a reference to the god *Lug*, who appears in the dative, preceded by **to* ‘to’, analysed by Matasović (2009: 381) as a dative preposition (Old Irish *to-*, *do-*, *do*; Old Welsh *di*, Old Breton *do*), even if, as he recognises, there are ‘no clear connections in other IE languages’. However, Stifter (2014: 14ff.) points out that there is no such a thing as a Celtic preposition **to*, since the Celtic preverb *to* is historically unrelated to the Old Irish preposition *do* ‘to, for’. In

⁷¹The *e* > *a* change in the first syllable is known as Joseph’s Law. Cf. Joseph (1982); Zair (2012); Stifter (2017).

⁷²Cf. Zair (2012: 58–9).

⁷³If we were to consider a verb formed on Proto-Celtic **-āti* (from which Old Irish *-aid* verbs, like *caraid*, derive), the resulting form would be an imperfect, and, even if the last vowel would fit, we would not be able to explain the presence of that *I* in TRECAIAŚ. **-āti* comes from **-h₂ti*, used in Indo-European to create factitive verbs from adjective stems. The corresponding secondary ending was **-h₂t*. But with this ending would not have here **kaiat* > **kaiaθ*, but rather something like ***(TRE)CAŚ* (< **kă + āt*). The presence of that intervocalic *I* in our inscription may lead us to think that we are dealing with a verb with that same verbal root **keh₂-*, but followed by the suffix **(e/o)-yéti*, which forms factitive verbs, although since it is used to form present stems, the addition of a secondary ending would result in an imperfect as well, which is impossible from the point of view of what would be expected in the inscription. We should rather have, moreover, ***(tre)kaiet* (< **keh₂-ye-t*). A reconstructed Indo-European verb **kéh₂-ye-ti* seems to have derivatives in Indo-Iranian languages (LIV 343; cf. IEW 515), that probably follow a Proto-Indo-Iranian **ka(h₂)-yati*, and therefore proposing such a formation would not be too far-fetched. The basically unsurmountable question that arises is how to justify a *preterite/aorist* value for a present stem formation with secondary endings (therefore, in theory, an imperfect). Luraghi et al. (2021) analyse in detail how Indo-Iranian created a specific formation to express the passive voice based on a present stem suffix with *-ia-* (Sanskrit *-ya-*, etc.), relating it to the stative PIE suffix **-eh₁-/-h₁-*, which would also be related to the ancient Greek suffix *-ē-*, which in Greek was used to create passive *aorists*. There would be relatable forms in Armenian and other languages of the family (see Hardarson 1998: 332–4). The idea of the existence of this specific suffix, accepted by many authors (LIV 25), is nevertheless explicitly rejected by Jasanoff (2002–3), after discussing it in depth. In short, I fail to find any of these possibilities plausible, even in strictly phonetic terms.

this inscription, in any case, TO seems to be functioning either as a preposition or as some sort of connector (Eska 2007: 189–90; Stifter 2014: 207).⁷⁴

Jordán argues in an article (2005), significantly entitled ‘chronicle of an announced theicide’, where he provides lengthy explanations of his viewpoint, that, in his view, LVGVEI is a *u*-stem verbal noun from the same root as the theonym with the meaning of ‘oath’, ‘consecration’ or ‘dedication’ (he adduces the Old Irish verbal noun *luige* (related to *luigim* ‘I swear’) and its Welsh cognate *llw* (the name of the god in Welsh is *Llew*)), but it does not actually refer to the god himself here. In order to reinforce his analysis, he points out that the numerous epigraphic occurrences of *Lug* on the Continent (Gaul or Hispania) are always in the plural, which would not be the case here. More importantly, the position of LVGVEI in the text, at the end of line 3, makes him think that this word cannot refer to the divinity to whom the cultic ceremony is addressed. In my opinion, however, none of the three main reasons invalidates the possibility that the god *Lug* is mentioned here. The most significant, in my view, is the third one, but it can be solved if we think that both ENIOROŠEI and (TIGINO) TLATVNEI or EQVOISVI(QUE), which occupy the first, focused positions in the text, may be epithets of the name of the god, and, therefore, anticipate the reference to the deity honoured.

ARAIANOM. I think this word is a neuter singular nominative or accusative adjective. It is a word that has generated many problems of interpretation.

At first glance it seems that it could be related to the root **h₂er-h₃*, ‘plough’ (IEW 62; LIV 272–3).⁷⁵ This is the origin, among other forms, of Greek ἄρῳ or Latin *arāre* ‘plough, till’, Latin *arātor* ‘ploughman, husbandman’, with derivatives in Celtic as well. Cf. Middle Irish *airím* and Welsh *arddu*, both ‘to plough’, Welsh *arddwr* ‘ploughman’, etc. Latin has *arātrum* ‘plough’ (with analogical *ā* from the infinitive *arāre*), whereas the Celtic cognate forms are derived from *arātrum* (< **h₂er-h₃-trom*): Welsh *aradr*, Cornish *aradar*, MBret. *arazr*, Middle Irish *arathar*, all with the same meaning. However, the formation is not clear, and I do not see how this word can be related to this root.

There is an alternative that I find much more appealing. Already more than two decades ago, De Bernardo (2000: 189) analysed this word as **are-yānom*, linking it to Welsh (with possible, not certain Irish cognates) *iawn*, ‘right(ness)’, ‘propitiation’ (Williams 1997), and translating it in this text as ‘lo justo’, an adjectival direct object of an omitted verb in the first part of the inscription (according to her analysis). Jordán (2005) basically accepted De Bernardo’s proposal in relation to this word, which he translated as ‘propiciatoria’, as a neuter adjective accompanying COMEIMV, the following word.

⁷⁴If TO is a preposition here, we wonder why LVGVEI, the dative it seems to accompany, is the only dative in the text that has a preposition. The other dative forms do not seem to need it. De Bernardo (2008), who also considers TO to be simply a preposition in the Celtiberian text, proposed a possible explanation a few years ago: forms with TO imply a complement to a verb of movement, and dative forms without a preposition are simply indirect objects, the recipients of the dedication.

⁷⁵Proposed by several authors in the past (Schwarteck was the first).

Williams had analysed all the etymologies of this word known to him published prior to his paper of 1997, eventually putting forward one of his own (1997: 1008): he related it to the root that we see in Latin *iūs* (older *ious*), *iuris*. This is derived from **h₂yéw-*, from **h₂ey-* ‘vital force, life’ (*IEW* 17–18), which is the origin of Latin *aevum* and *aetās* (< **aiwotāt-s*; cf. De Vaan 2008: 29), Proto-Celtic **ay-sso-*, **ay-to-* (Matasović 2009: 51) and finally Old Irish *áes*, Old Welsh *oit* ‘time, period’ and *ois* ‘age’, with similar forms in Breton, Cornish, Scottish Gaelic and Manx.

However, in my opinion, at least for this word in our inscription, there is another explanation of those reviewed by Williams that I personally prefer, even if that means going back almost 80 years: T. F. O’Rahilly’s. As Williams points out (1997: 1006–7), O’Rahilly (1946: 286–307) had linked Welsh *iawn*, ‘right, just’ as an adjective and ‘right, equity’ as a noun, not only with Breton *eeun* ‘right, just’ but also with Old Irish *án*, ‘fiery, bright, glowing, brilliant, splendid, delightful’ and *áine* ‘fieriness, speed’, which is exactly the name of the sun-goddess *Áine*. O’Rahilly linked all these forms to a Proto-Celtic **jānos*, that we must derive from the Indo-European root **yeh₂-* ‘to go, to go in, to enter, to ride, to travel’ (*IEW* 296, *LIV* 309–10, Rix 2001: 369 and Derksen 2008). **yéh₂-no-* is known in Proto-Indo-Iranian **yáHnam*, which is the origin of Sanskrit यान् (*yāna*). In Proto-Italic it was **jānos*, identical to the Proto-Celtic form adduced by O’Rahilly. This would be the origin of Latin *Iānus* or *iānuā*. Pokorny (1950) accepts deriving Welsh *iawn* from **jānos*, but rejects the connection with the Irish forms which he believes should be linked to the Indo-European root **ās-* (*IEW* 68–69),⁷⁶ which gave way to Latin *āreō* ‘to be dry’, *āridus* ‘dry, arid’ or *ārdeō* ‘to burn’.

I would not be able to decide who is right, O’Rahilly or Pokorny, as regards the connection of the Irish forms with the Brythonic ones, but in the case of our Celtiberian inscription I am inclined to the root accepted by both for Welsh *iawn*, which would give the word a sense of movement, among other reasons because it seems to be preceded by a preposition which would reinforce this idea: is ARAIANOM a Celtiberian derivative from the same root (**are-yeh₂-no-m*)? **φare* (< **φari* < **prh₂i* < **preh₂-* ‘before, in front’) (*IEW* 810–16; De Vaan 2008: 485–6) in Celtic (Welsh, Breton and Irish *ar*) can act as a preposition or as a preverb. It would seem we have it here. This word is usually found as *are* in Celtiberian texts. We would need to assume some phonetic development (rather than a morphological problem). We could compare the modern Spanish place name *Aravaca* (in the province of Madrid), formed on the Celtiberian ethnonym which our Latin sources give as *Arevaci*. I am taking this word as an adjective (neuter nominative) that I would venture to translate as ‘come here, met here, assembled, present’. The very word *present*, by the way, is formed with the same old preverb, in its Latin form, as the present active participle of the verb *prae-sum*, giving it the meaning of ‘present, existing, prompt or propitious’.

⁷⁶This is reconstructed as **h₂eh₁s-* by Rix (2001: 257–8), *LIV* 257–8 or De Vaan (2008: 49, 53, 58ff) but as **h₂es-* by Lubotsky (1985) and Schrijver (1991: 53–4).

COMEIMV. Like Lejeune, De Bernardo, Untermann and Jordán (cf. Jordán 2019: 897) I think that this word is a neuter singular nominative. De Bernardo thinks of a *nomen actionis*, a *u*-stem, **com-ey-mū* (< **kóm-h₁ey-mōn-*),⁷⁷ which she translates as ‘romería’, the word used in Spanish to refer to a journey or pilgrimage, especially one made for devotion to a sanctuary, as well as the popular festival with snacks, dances, etc., held in the countryside near a sanctuary on the religious feast day of the place. Untermann sees in this a neuter verbal abstract formed with the suffix **-mō(n)*, **-mōnos*, with the same root and basically identical meaning (**com-ey-mū*), similar to Latin *conventio* (Jordan 2019: 897). I suppose we could translate these last two words as ‘assembled congregation’. They are, in my opinion, the only nominatives in the whole inscription and thus the subject of the main verb of the text (TRECALAŚ).

ENIOROŚEI EQVOISVIQVE.⁷⁸ These two words go together, united by –QVE. EQVOISVI (< **ek^wois-ūi* < **ek^wosi-ūi* < **ek^wosi-ōi*) is the dative of an o-stem. Given that it is coordinated with ENIOROŚEI as is line 2, it could be a parallel, alternative denomination to TIGINO TLATVNEI, which occurs there. If above it was understood as a dedication to “the Supporter of the Summits”, here we could have another theonym, epithet or epiclesis, *Equoisos* with an ultimate lexical reference to horses. Interestingly enough, Taittiu’s husband, according to the *Lebor Gabála*, was *Eochaid mac Eirc*,⁷⁹ last High King (*Ard Rí*) of the Fír Bolg, whose first name has traditionally been linked to Old Irish *ech* ‘horse’, apparently sharing a lexeme with EQVOISVI.⁸⁰

OGRIS OLOCAS TOGIAS. In my opinion these three words are in the accusative plural and are the direct object that makes explicit the dedication mentioned in line 3. Thus, syntactically they depend on the verb TRECALAŚ, which would need to be understood here. As for the etymology of these terms, I find Prósper’s proposals (1994/5 and 2002) convincing:

- (i) **okrins* ‘mountains’, accusative plural of an *i*-stem,⁸¹ from **h₂ek-* (‘sharp’) elongated twice as **h₂ek-r-is* (*IEW* 21; *LIV* 261), which would result in

⁷⁷**kóm* is the preposition and preverb meaning ‘with, beside, near, by’ (*IEW* 612–13; De Vaan 2008: 128). **-h₁ey-* is the verbal root meaning ‘to go’ (*IEW* 293–6; *LIV* 232–3), which originates Latin *ire* (De Vaan 2008: 191–2) or Greek *εἶμι* (Beekes 2010: 388).

⁷⁸Marco Simón (1986) relates what he reads as EQVEISVI, to *Equos*, the ninth month of the Coligny Calendar and suggests a celebration on July/August, for which there would be parallels in the Irish *Lugnasad*.

⁷⁹See MacKillop (1998: 162).

⁸⁰Cf. Meyer’s ‘King Eochaid has horse’s ears’ (1903). See Doherty (2018). Pedersen (1909: 1. § 161) linked *Eochaid* (gen. *Eochada*), to an Ogamic anthroponym IVACATTOS, in relation to the word for ‘yew’ in Proto-Celtic. However, Bergin (1932: 11.142) and Hamp reject this connection, indicating that IVACATTOS (in Hamp’s words) “must remain one of the many unidentified Ogam names” (1953: 283 n. 3). MacKillop (1998: 162) suggests different etymological origins, all based on the word for horse: ‘horse-rider’, ‘fighter on horseback’, ‘horse of conquest’.

⁸¹This is the first analysis that Prósper offered (1994/5), but in 2002 she preferred to see it as nom. plural (< **okreyes*). As I said, I believe that these three words are in the accusative.

Proto-Celtic **okris*,⁸² Latin *ocris* ‘rugged mountain’ (from a Proto-Italic **okri-* ‘hilltop’) and *acer* ‘sharp’ or Greek *ὄκρις* ‘sharp edge’ and *ἄκρος* ‘high’ (Beekes 2010: 57).⁸³

- (ii) **(p)olkās* ‘cultivated lands’, from **polkā*, an accusative plural with Celtic loss of initial /p/ and with an epenthetic non-etymological /o/, is the explanation for the second word.⁸⁴ It is based on **pelk-*, **polk-* ‘turn, rotate’, **polkā* (< **pol(h₁)k-eh₂*) ‘turned’ (IEW 807), with derivatives in Germanic,⁸⁵ Balto-Slavic,⁸⁶ and more importantly, Celtic: Gaulish *ōlca* ‘arable land’, from where French *ouch* ‘arable land’. A Hispano-Celtic cognate, epigraphically documented as a place name,⁸⁷ was the ancestor of Spanish *huelga*, ‘fertile cultivated field’.
- (iii) **tog-yās* seems formed on IE **(s)teg-* (Schwarteck 1979: 189–90, followed by Meid or Prósper). Prósper (2002: 221) links it specifically to Old Irish *tuige* ‘roofing, thatching’ (as well as *to*, the Welsh, Cornish and Breton cognate), from **tog-yā* ‘roof’ (IEW 1013–14; LIV 589; De Bernardo 1999: 210; Matasović 2009: 376).⁸⁸

SISTAT LVGVEI. After the three accusatives, there is a significant problem with the syntax of the text. SISTAT is a singular verb without an apparent subject, followed by the name of the god again in the dative, now without a preposition.⁸⁹ Trying to fix this difficult syntax led Prósper to suggest (2002: 216–20) that we are, actually, confronting a plural form (< **SISTANT*), which is not impossible in epigraphic terms since there are abundant ancient Hispanic epigraphic examples where an *n* in coda position is not written; but this is extremely difficult to prove. Having a plural verb helped her to fit all the pieces

⁸²From which Old Irish *ochair* ‘edge’, *acher* ‘sharp, violent, fierce’ and *ér* ‘high, noble, great’.

⁸³We have several instances of Continental Celtic place names (some in Spain) going back to **ok-elo-*, a different formation on the same root, meaning ‘promontory’ (García Alonso 2003: s.v.; Sims-Williams 2006: 96ff.). Cf. IEW 18–22, De Vaan (2008: 424), Matasović (2009: 28) and Beekes (2010: 1066).

⁸⁴Already Schwarteck, supported by Ködderitzsch, and then Prósper.

⁸⁵Proto-Germanic **falgō* > Old High German and Old Saxon *felga*, Old English *fielg* ‘wheel rim’; Proto-West Germanic **falgu* > Old English *fealh* ‘barrow’, Middle English *falge*, *falwe* ‘arable land lying idle’. English *fallow*, Old Frisian *fallach* ‘arable land’. Cf. Kroonen (2013: 125).

⁸⁶Proto-Balto-Slavic **palsā* > Proto-Slavic **polsā* > Russian *polosā* ‘section of a field, strip’; compare with Lith. *plėšti* (-šiu, -šiau), Latv. *plēst* ‘to tear, pluck; to plow land for the first time’ < **pleh, K-ie-*). Cf. Derksen (2008: 411) and Kroonen (2013: 125).

⁸⁷As ‘*castellum OLCA*’ in an inscription from Rodeiro (Pontevedra), *CIRG* II, pp. 201–2, N. 84: ‘D. M. LVCILA VITALIS (CASTELLO) OLCA AN. XI.’

⁸⁸This also underlies Germanic forms like Old Icelandic *þekja*, or Old High German *dekchi*, as Prósper pointed out. We could also add (cf. Matasović 2009: 376) the Latin verb *tegō*, *-ere* (< **(s)teg-e/o*) ‘to cover’ and all its derivatives (De Vaan 2008: 608), among them *tectum* ‘roof, ceiling, dwelling’, *tegulā* ‘roof-tile’, *togā*, with Italic cognates. From **tego-* we also have Old Irish *teg* ‘house’, as well as *imthach* ‘a cover’ (*tuigethir* ‘to cover’ comes from **tog-yā*, cf. Matasović 2009: 376). In Greek (cf. Beekes 2010: 1393) we have *στέγω* ‘to cover, keep closed’, *στέγος* ‘covered, waterproof, clogged’, *στέγος* and *τέγος* ‘roof, house’.

⁸⁹Possibly because the syntactic relation is different here from what is the case with COMEIMV, with its preverb (De Bernardo 2008). Cf. Eska (1990 and 2006).

into her vision of the puzzle: the three previous words would be the subject of a verb in the plural. However, to me, these words should be taken as direct objects of TRECALAŚ (on the assumption that it was understood as implicitly repeated).

SISTAT is perhaps the only word that has enjoyed an almost unanimous interpretation (apart from Prósper's suggestion that this is a plural form): it is a third person singular reduplicated form of the verb **steh₂* 'stand' (*IEW* 1004–8; *LIV* 590–2), with a formation very similar to Latin *sistō* or Greek *ἵστημι*. To me this verb is an intransitive present subjunctive third person singular, with a desiderative value. Since we are dealing with a present tense, the desinence is of course primary, but it already shows here the loss of the inherited final *-i* that we still see in verbal forms written with the Palaeo-Hispanic semi-syllabary (**ambitiseti** [P2 A5], **auzeti** [P2 A10], etc.). The recent loss of this final *-i* is the reason why the now final *-t* does not yet seem to have suffered the effects of lenition (for the same analysis of this ending in this word, see Villar 1995: 30–3 and 36 and Jordán 2019: 220), contrary to what happened, as we saw above with TRECALAŚ, with forms with secondary endings (and therefore without the final *-i* since the beginning), in a similar process to that of prehistoric Latin (cf. Clackson – Horrocks, 2007: 22):

- Latin third person singular primary ending **-ti* > *-t* vs third person singular secondary ending **-t* > *-d*.⁹⁰
- Celtiberian third person singular primary ending **-ti* > *-t* vs third person singular secondary ending **-t* > **-ð* > **-θ*.

Aware of the difficulty of my solution, which is unprovable given the challenge posed by the text, and relating it to the fact, which I will discuss below, that there could be a different hand at the end of the inscription, I wonder whether there could be a syntactic break, though obviously not marked in the text. That is, that SISTAT TO LVGVEI is a kind of summary, a conclusion, of all that has gone before, but syntactically a separate sentence: 'May this (dedication / offering / monument) stand/remain/be in honour of *Lug*'.

TLATO / TOVTAS. I think that the last two words of the text were written by someone else. Some of the letters (A, T) look quite different from what we have seen in the rest of the inscription. We will never know, but it could even be that these last two words were added later.⁹¹

TLATO has historically been one of the most difficult words to interpret in the text, for two main reasons: because the reading is very unclear and

⁹⁰Later, in Latin, the third person ending *-t* became generalised in all types, so the language lost this distinction (Clackson – Horrocks 2007: 22).

⁹¹Apart from the specific shape of the letters, TLATO breaks the length of line 6, which was already longer than the previous ones, and the last word stands alone on a new line. In particular, the A in TLATO and the one in the following word have a more rounded shape, different from the rest of the A's in the inscription.



Figure 24. TOVTAS?

because the ending is difficult to understand. My proposal here, linked in some way to the reading TLATVNEI that I propose for the second line, opens up a hitherto unexplored avenue: that the last word in line 5 is not a singular genitive of an unidentified second declension noun, but a verbal form, and, in particular, a verbal form that would show a third person singular secondary ending **-to*, i.e. the singular form corresponding to the third plural **-nto* form recently recognised by Jordán (2019: 212–13) in the word **auzanto** [P4, 01], which Untermann (*MLH* IV, 408–12) had considered a possible *ā* subjunctive (**awdh-ā-nto*) and Jordán analyses as a middle voice radical athematic aorist indicative (**awdh₁-nto*). In my opinion, both options could be applied here, with the verbal root **tlh₂-* (discussed above) followed by the third person *singular* middle voice secondary ending in this case (**-to*). For reasons to do with the strange syntactic structure of the inscription itself (as far as we can understand it), I would be inclined to see it as a subjunctive, but it would be impossible to deny that Jordán’s hypothesis could also work phonetically here: **tlh₂-ā-to* and **tlh₂-to*. We could translate this word as ‘may he support, may he provide for’.

TOVTAS. The reading is not certain, but I think the last three letters are clear: *TAS*. The first one is also clear, although less so: *T*. The problem is with regard to the second and especially the third letter. But I think it is reasonable to posit an *O* for the second. The third is the most difficult one, but it is not impossible to appreciate (or almost imagine) a *V* here, at a slightly lower level. This would give us a plural accusative of a well-known feminine noun of the first declension: *TOVTAS*, from **tewtéh₂* (< **tewh₂-* ‘to swell’; *IEW* 1080–5; *LIV*

639–40), with well-known derivatives in Italo-Celtic (**toutā*; cf. De Vaan 2008: 625; Matasović 2009: 386), Balto-Slavic (**t(j)autā*’, cf. Derksen 2015: 461) and Germanic (**peudō*; Kroonen 2013: 540). In Celtic **toutā* is a feminine noun that means ‘people, tribe or tribal land’. Derivatives are Welsh and Breton *tud*, Old Irish *túath*, Gaulish and Celtiberian *touta*. I propose to translate this here as ‘the communities’.

4. TEXT AND TENTATIVE TRANSLATION

Fully agreeing with all those who, explicitly or implicitly, have refused to proceed to a translation of this text, and sharing with the most cautious of them that this exercise is dangerous, I offer here my reading of the text and put together a possible translation of the whole, as a modest attempt to fit the pieces together according to the analysis of the preceding pages, in the hope of perhaps having opened up some new possibilities of interpretation, but being aware that it is quite possible that we will never have a definitive answer to the many doubts that a challenge such as the one posed by this difficult inscription undoubtedly raises.

<i>ENIOROŠEI</i>	<i>To the Mountain Dweller</i>
<i>VTA TIGINO TĻATVNEI</i>	<i>and (to) the Supporter of the Highlands,⁹²</i>
<i>TRECALAŠ TO LVGVEI</i>	<i>to Lug the assembled congregation</i>
<i>ARAIANOM CQMEIMV</i>	<i>dedicated</i>
<i>ENIOROŠEI EQVOISVIQVE</i>	<i>To the Mountain Dweller and Horse-breeder</i>
<i>OGRIS OLOCAS TOGIAS</i>	<i>(dedicated) mountains, fields and houses.</i>
<i>SISTAT LVGVEI TĻATO</i>	<i>May it all be for Lug. May he support</i>
<i>TOVTAS</i>	<i>the communities</i>

5. CONCLUSIONS

Let me finally say that, in my opinion, Lug is indeed mentioned in this inscription. But we could also see another divinity, or an epithet or epicleris of Lug, in a name that seems very similar to that of Irish Tailtiu, mother of Lug and wife of Eochaid mac Eirc, whose name could also resonate among the white rocks of Villastar, in the form EQVOISOS (or EQVEISOS). The two ends of this bridge are separated by a thousand years.⁹³

We could speculate in many diverse ways to try to explain this. But, to my mind, what is most relevant is the fact that the very names of Lug and Tailtiu are linked in Irish myth: they are mother and son. And what could be a Celtiberian version of the same names seems to appear, in contiguous lines, in a Celtiberian text a millennium older. Since, in my opinion, TĻATVNEI is

⁹² “And (to) the Supporter, (son) of the Hidden one”??

⁹³ It is funny to think that, according to the *Lebor Gabála*, the *Fír Bolg* stayed in Iberia in their return trip from Greece to Ireland.

a masculine formation, I think that in this case it may simply be an *alter ego*, an epithet or epiclesis of the god Lug himself. We could wonder about ways in which this *alter ego* would have ended up becoming in the Irish myth the mother of the god. But to try to give precise answers would be even more of a stretch.

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JUAN LUIS GARCÍA ALONSO

Universidad de Salamanca