

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO CELTIBERIAN ETYMOLOGY II\*

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### 5. Bot. III *albana* [K.1.3, 2]

In a paper delivered at the *XII. Fachtagung der Indogermanischen Gesellschaft* in Halle/Saale 2000 and published subsequently in two articles in *Die Sprache*, I argued that Celtiberian had undergone a dissimilation of clusters of non-homorganic nasals inherited from Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Celtic, i.e. *\*-mn-* > *-un-* and *\*-nm-* to *-lm-*.<sup>1</sup> As evidence for the latter I adduced a group of names containing *melm*<sup>o</sup> as first element in various formations and derivatives, which I explained as continuing the family of PIE *\*ménm̥* ‘mind, thought’. Another lexical item of Celtiberian may provide further, albeit indirect corroboration for this sound-change. The Proto-Celtic plural of *\*anman* ‘name’, continuing PIE *\*h<sub>1</sub>néh<sub>3</sub>m̥n̥*, was *\*anmanā*. This is attested in OIr. *anmann*<sup>2</sup> ‘names’, and, with a different type of dissimilation of *\*-nm-* > *\*-nu-*, in Gaulish *anuana* [L-98, 1a2] (cp. instr. pl. *anmanbe* [L-93, 2; 5]), ÖW. *enuen*, OBr. *enuen*, MidCorn. *hynwyn*, the British forms going back to a reshaped *\*anmanī*. Assuming my dissimilation rule is right, the expected outcome of this plural in Celtiberian would be *\*almanā*. This is enticingly close to the word *albana* in the short opening sentence of Botorrita III [K.1.3, 0-2] and, what is more, *albana* is immediately followed by the list of 254 names that make up the main part of the inscription. So *albana* could be a direct textual reference to the contents

\* A first ‘Contribution to Celtiberian Etymology’, containing items 1–4, was published in Stifter 2002. A version of ‘5. Bot. III *albana* [K.1.3, 2]’ was first presented at the 31. Österreichische Linguistentagung in Vienna in December 2003.

<sup>1</sup> Stifter 2001a: p. 131; 2002: pp. 64–68.

<sup>2</sup> As can be seen from the palatalised *m* of plural forms like *céimmenn* ‘steps’, OIr. basically had an *e* in the suffix of neuter *men*-stems. In *anmann*, the plural of *ainm* ‘name,’ this is not visible because the *a* in the first syllable and the cluster *-nm-* prevented the *e* of the suffix from palatalising the preceding *m*. It is frequently assumed that the *e* of the plural suffix continued directly the inherited full grade in the weak stem of PIE proterokinetic stems. But the Gaulish and British evidence (and the Celtiberian evidence, if *albana* also belongs here) point to a stem with *a*, which could be due to a zero grade of the suffix or to the effect of Joseph’s Rule. In Irish the new stem with *e*-vocalism could then have been created by levelling towards the stem allomorph of the singular where the *e* was partly inherited (in the genitive and dative/locative) and had partly arisen from *a* by regular sound-change (in the nominative/accusative).

of the inscription. So far only one suggestion has been made as to the meaning and etymology of this word. Javier de Hoz has proposed, ‘sólo a título de posibilidad remota’, that for *albana* ‘se puede pensar en una adaptación celtibérica del latín *album* en su sentido secundario de »listak«.<sup>3</sup> This explanation suffers from the fact that one has to assume the addition of a suffix *-ano/ā*<sup>4</sup> and the probable change in gender after the loan, both of which remains unmotivated given our little insight into Celtiberian derivational morphology.

To award greater credence to my own explanation of *albana* from assumed *\*almanā*, a few more assumptions have to be made and discussed. Two strategies are possible. One strategy is to follow Xaverio Ballester’s line of argument in his analysis of the spelling SALVANTICA on a *tessera hospitalis* from Mesa del Almendro (Sevilla).<sup>5</sup> Ballester convincingly traced it back to *\*Salmantica*, an adjectival formation underlying the modern placename *Salamanca*. As the ultimate cause for the spelling *Saluantica* for *\*Salmantica*, he identified the failure to phonetically distinguish between *m* and *b*, according to him a notable phonetic feature of several ancient languages of the Iberian Peninsula, perhaps even a shared phenomenon of a common Hispanian ‘sprachbund’. An example of this is the putative Iberian personal name *latubarē* [B.1.364], which probably reflects the vocative in *-e* of the Celtic name *\*Lātumāros* ‘being great in ardour’. Under this hypothesis, *albana* could simply be the spelling of *\*almanā* by someone for whom there existed no phonological opposition between *m* and *b*.

But there is also a more complex alternative explanation:

1. First of all, it might be assumed that in a development subsequent to the dissimilation rule *\*-nm- > -lm-* the *m* was weakened (‘lenited’) in this context to a fricative sound, probably [μ]. The letter *u* in *Saluantica* on the *tessera* from Mesa del Almendro could theoretically also stand for this sound.

2. In a next step, the lenited result of *m*, probably [μ], was confused with the lenited result of *b*, probably [β]. It would seem that—unlike possibly in the case of *Saluantica* in the Roman script—this sound could not be spelt with ↑ *u* in the Celtiberian script, as this was reserved for the vowel /u ū/ and the bilabial glide /u/.<sup>6</sup>

3. Point 2 naturally implies that prior to the confusion of the two sounds a rule of phonetic lenition had operated in Celtiberian that affected voiced stops including *b*. This is the least controversial claim, because there is good independent evidence to back this up. Most noteworthy is that PC *\*d* appears in Celtiberian as *ś* (= probably [δ]) intervocally and word-finally. For the voiced guttural stop, there is the example of gen. sg. *tuateros* and nom. pl. *tuateres* /duater-/ ‘daughter’, which continues *\*duyater-* < PC *\*dugater* < PIE *\*d<sup>h</sup>ugh<sub>2</sub>ter-*, the [γ] of which probably was lost between *u* and *a*. For

<sup>3</sup> de Hoz 1996b: p. 201.

<sup>4</sup> In the Celtiberian corpus, the sequence *-an-* is found, apart from *albana*, in ARAIANOM [K.3.3] (MLH §683), and in the names *Abana*, *Arancius*, *Auana*, *Balanus*, *Elanioca*, *Cadanus*, *tirtanos*, *turanicum* (MLH § 725), *uikanokum*, *litanokum*, *loukanikum*, *elkuanos* (MLH §726).

<sup>5</sup> Ballester 1999: pp. 218–220. The *tessera* was published by Remesal Rodríguez 1999.

examples of the confusion of *\*b* and *\*μ* in the Iberian Peninsula, which he calls ‘betacismo’ and which per se implies a lenited pronunciation of *\*b* in certain positions, I refer to Ballester (1999), pp. 219–220. More could be added, like, for example, the names *Abana* and *Auana* (cited in MLH § 725) that could be variant spellings of each other.

The consequence of these three assumptions is the existence side by side of allophonic variants *b ~ β* and *m ~ μ* and the possibility that in certain phonetic contexts the lenited allophones were liable to confusion. As long as lenited sounds exist only on the phonetic level, but have not become phonologised yet, these sounds are free to be spelt either with a letter representing the underlying (unlenited) phoneme or with a letter representing a more phonetic approximation. The orthography of a language in such a state, unless it is reglemented by strict orthographic rules like in the modern period, is prone to be unstable and inconsistent. The writing system of Celtiberian is witness to this: Lenited *d* is mostly written <z> in word-interior and word-final position, but <t> word-initially. But at least one scribe once extrapolated <z> as archigrapheme for /d/ and wrote *zizonti* = [diðonti] in Botorrita I [K.1.1, A-7]. On the other hand, in analogy to <k> and <b>, <t> could be transferred from word-initial position into the interior of words, as witnessed, for example, by *routaikina* on the *tessera* ‘Pellicer 8’,<sup>6</sup> which can only be sensibly interpreted as being ultimately derived from PC *\*roudos* ‘red’.<sup>7</sup>

The confusion of *β* and *μ* in certain contexts, or, in other words, the dissimilatory loss of the feature nasalisation of lenited *m*, has a parallel in Irish. The following comparison is meant to be strictly typological, and does not imply a genetic relationship, nor a perfect parallelism between the developments in the two branches of Celtic (indeed, the developments in Irish and Celtiberian discussed here go in opposing directions). Between the various stages from Early Old Irish to Modern Irish, the Irish language underwent a series of assimilations and dissimilations that eventually reduced the number of allowed permutations of nasals and lenited labial sounds in a syllable or word to a minimum of two, thereby achieving a maximum of polarised opposition to each other. It has to be stressed for the following discussion that until fairly late in the history of the Irish language the reflexes of *β* and *μ* were phonetically and phonologically distinct, as indeed they still are in Scottish Gaelic, and that therefore the spellings with *b(h)* and *m(h)* are significant. In Proto-Goidelic and still in Early Old Irish, all four conceivable permutations involving word-initial *m* and *n* and syllable-final (or forming the onset of the following syllable) *β* (lenited *b*) and *μ* (lenited *m*) were possible. The end-point of the development was reached when—apart from a few exceptions—word-initial *m* was only allowed with a following *β*, and word-initial *n* was only followed by *μ* later in the word. Schematically this tendency can be represented thus:

<sup>6</sup> Published by Almagro-Gorbea 2003: pp. 389–390.

<sup>7</sup> See KP pp. 715–717 for a more detailed discussion of structural implications of the Celtiberian writing system.

initial stage		intermediate stage		final stage
m—μ    n—μ	>	<del>m—μ</del> n—μ	↓    ↑	—    n—μ
m—β    n—β		m—β <del>n—β</del>		m—β    —

The most prominent example for the spreading avoidance of the sequence  $m-\mu$  is furnished by the reduplicated preterite and future stems of the S1-verb *maidid* ‘to break’. The regularly formed stems, underlying *memad-* and *memās-*, were replaced by dissimilated (underlying) *mebad-* and *mebās-* during the Old and Middle Irish periods. The Latin loan word *memoria* was adapted to Old Irish as *mebuir* ‘memory’. ModIr. *meamhair* and Sc. Gael. *meomhair* could owe their renewed labial nasal *mh* to a secondary assimilation to the initial *m* or could have arisen as erudite forms vis-à-vis Latin *memoria*. Other words that vacillate between *m* and *b* after *m*, but whose chronological order cannot always be so easily determined, are *mimasc/mibasc* ‘part of a spear; some sort of security’, *minmach/mínbach* ‘name of a plant’, *monmar/monbar* ‘murmuring’, *mormaer/morbair*<sup>8</sup> ‘a title’. It is significant that a frequent word like *mebul* ‘shame, disgrace’, which had  $m-\beta$  from the start, was never written *\*\*memul*.

$\beta$ , on the other hand, acquired the additional feature nasalisation if an *n* stood at the beginning of the word: This is evidently borne out by OIr. *nóeb* ‘holy’ (cp. Gaul. PN *Noibia*, *Noibio*) and *níab* ‘splendour, lustre’ that become MidIr. *náem* and *níam*. The negative prefix *neb-/neph-* (< \**ne-b<sup>h</sup>uo-*?) was likewise replaced by *nem-*. Other cases that seem to show the same development at the first glance are OIr. *claideb* vs. ModIr. *claidheamh* ‘sword’ (cp. MidBr. *clezeff!*) and OIr. *felsub* vs. ModIr. *feallsamh* ‘philosopher’. The change from  $\beta > \mu$ , however, is here not phonetically motivated, but is due to morphological analogy from the class of agentive nouns in *-em*. Again, like in *mebul* above, common words, which had the ‘desirable’ sequence  $n-\mu$  from the beginning, do not ever alternate this with ‘undesirable’  $n-\beta$ , e.g. *nem* ‘heaven’.

But, as can be expected for the rather complex interplay of developments described above, there are of course the odd cases that can only be explained as hypercorrect, i.e. inverse spellings, like once *mirmaili* for *mirbaili* ‘miracles’ (LU 3132) or once *nóbad* for *nómad* ‘9<sup>th</sup>’ (*Acall.* 3777). *maccóem* ‘lad’ is once written *maccaeb* (AU ii 82.16), as might be expected in view of the tendency laid out above, but here the pressure from the common adjective *cóem* ‘handsome’ was so strong that the dissimilated variant never gained ground. For whatever reason, the occasional variants *nonmhar/naonmur* and *deichenmhar/deichneamhar* were not able to oust the reflexes of *nónbor* ‘9 men’ and *deichenbor* ‘10 men’.

A name that never underwent the dissimilation of  $m-\mu > m-\beta$  is *Mumu*, gen. *Muman* ‘Munster’. This resilience against dissimilation may be ascribed to the assimilatory counter-effects of the surrounding *u*’s and of the following *n* of the inflectional stem. It can be observed in a number of cases that a word-internal *n* can exert a strong assimilatory force on a near  $\beta$ ,

<sup>8</sup> In *mormaer*, the second element was associated with *máer* ‘steward’.

which at the same time runs counter to the dissimilatory effect of an *m*: cp. the variants *menb* ‘something small’, *menbach* ‘fragmenary’, *menbaigid* ‘to break to pieces’ beside *menmaigid*; *muinbech* ‘deception’ beside once *muinmech*; *muinmer* ‘hemlock’ beside *minnbhear*.<sup>9</sup> In this category may also be mentioned *aimind* beside more frequent *oibind* ‘pleasant, delightful’, possibly a derivative of *oib* ‘beauty’. Some cases of *μ* instead of expected *β*, all loanwords, remain unclear, i.e. *carmocol* < Lat. *carbunculus* ‘carbuncle’, *cruimther*, Ogam Ir. QRIMITIR ‘priest’ < Vulg. Lat. *pre(s)biter*,<sup>10</sup> *promaid* ‘to test, prove’ < Lat. *probare*. But it can be noted that the last two items feature labial sounds in the beginning of the words.

Without going into any details, I want to note that Breton shows similar, but unrelated phenomena of dissimilation and assimilation of lenited *m* and *b* as Irish, but taking different directions; e.g. OBr. *nimer*, MidBr. *niuer*, *nifuer* with /*μ*/, but ModBr. *niver* ‘number’ with /*β*/.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps similar effects of nasal assimilation and dissimilation are responsible for the already Proto-Celtic development of PIE *\*nebhos* > *\*nemos* ‘heaven, sky’ (Gaul. *Nemesii*, OIr. *nem*, OW. *nem*, OBr. *nem*, MidBr. *(n)eff*, ModBr. *(n)eñv*), and for the Gaul. variants *Cobnertus*, *Counertus*, including apparently hypercorrect *Cobnertus* < *\*kom-nerto-* ‘having equal strength’. The existence side by side of each other of Gaul. *dubno-* and *dumno-* ‘world’ < PIE *\*d<sup>h</sup>ubno-* ‘deep’ does not necessarily imply that the labial sound in front of the *n* was lenited, because the same assimilation takes place in the beginning of the word—where lenition is ruled out—in the case of *mnās* ‘women’ < *\*bnās* < *\*g<sup>w</sup>néh<sub>2</sub>es*.<sup>12</sup> The case of Gaul. *-obno-*, *-omno-* etc. ‘fear’ is too unclear to be discussed here.

What this typological-comparative discussion finally boils down to is that a development of pl. *\*almanā* [al<sup>h</sup>manā] to *albana* [alβanā] ‘names’, where a nasal fricative *μ* loses its nasalisation by dissimilation against a following *n*, could be possible on typological grounds in Celtiberian.

## 6. Bot. I *ruzimuz* [K.1.1, A–11]

The final word of the first, non-onomastic part of Botorrita I, *ruzimuz*, has been interpreted as a 1<sup>st</sup> pl. verbal form, meaning something along the lines of ‘we proclaim’ or some other concluding remark for the preceding legal text.<sup>13</sup> This is unlikely for at least the three formal reasons that the

<sup>9</sup> Cp. also cases with word-initial *b*: *muimme* ~ *buimme* ‘foster-mother’; *bélbach* ~ *bélmach* ‘horses’ bit’ < *bél* + *-bog-*, root of *bongid* ‘to break’; *bithbinech* ~ *bithemnach* ‘criminal’.

<sup>10</sup> Cp. OW. *premer*. The word is discussed in *Sanas Cormaic* 211 and by McManus 1983: p. 46 fn. 60.

<sup>11</sup> Jackson 1967: pp. 587–643.

<sup>12</sup> The gen. pl. *bnanom* ‘of the women’, beside the acc. pl. *mnas* in Larzac [L-99, 1a1], is perhaps not an example of an ‘etymological’ spelling of *bn*, but may rather be due to a relatively recent contamination of the etymologically correct form *\*banom* < *\*g<sup>w</sup>nh<sub>2</sub>om*, cp. OIr. *ban*, with the stem *mnā-*, present in the remaining oblique cases, after the operation of the rule *\*bn* > *mn*. The form *(se)mnanom*, found in line 2a8, could then reflect a renewed, analogical application of the sound change.

<sup>13</sup> See the discussion in MLH V.1, pp. 309–310.

etymological \*s of the 1<sup>st</sup> pl. ending \*-mos(i) should be reflected by Celtib.  $\Lambda$  s, not  $\acute{z}$ ; that the vowel of the 1<sup>st</sup> pl. ending was, as far as can be seen from the other Celtic languages, \*o which should be reflected as such, not as u in Celtiberian;<sup>14</sup> and that the use of a 1<sup>st</sup> pl. subject at the end of a judicial or legal text that otherwise nowhere seems to use non-3<sup>rd</sup> person subjects would be quite unexpected and unusual for the genre.

Instead, the first part of the word *ruz-* looks exactly like what the zero grade of the IE root \**h<sub>1</sub>reydʰ-* ‘(to make) red’ would be expected to look like in Celtiberian, and the ending *-uz* looks like an o- or u-stem abl. sg. Apart from nominal formations,<sup>15</sup> Celtic continues the PIE essive/stative formation \**h<sub>1</sub>rudʰeh<sub>1</sub>ǵét<sup>h</sup>*<sup>16</sup> in the OIr. W2-verb *ruidid*, *ruidi* ‘turns red; flushes, blushes’, via the intermediate PC form \**rudīti*. This verb has the notable relatives Lat. *rubeō*, OHG *rotēn* ‘to be red’, OCS *rǔdĕti se* ‘to blush,’ Lith. *rūdĕti* ‘to turn brown, to rust’.

Derivatives in *-mo-*, normally abstract nouns, agent nouns or objects, were based directly on verbal roots in Indo-European, but could be added onto other suffixes in the individual languages.<sup>17</sup> It is therefore conceivable that in Celtiberian the suffix *-mo-* was added to the verbal stem \**rudī-*. This is probably after the model of the handful of cases where the feminine suffix *-mā-* had originally been added directly to roots ending in *-ī*, which had then been re-interpreted as stems; e.g., most notably, PIE \**kred dʰeh<sub>1</sub>-* ‘to put one’s heart’ > PC \**kreddī-* ‘to believe’ → \**kreddīmā* ‘belief’, in OIr. *creitem*, OBr. *critim*, MidBr. *criddiff*, MidCorn. *creisy*, *crygy*.<sup>18</sup> That *-mo-* and *-mā-* stems can go hand in hand is borne out by Lat. *animus* and *anima* ‘soul’ < PIE \**h<sub>2</sub>enh<sub>1</sub>mo/ā-*, which are virtually identical in meaning.<sup>19</sup> A case in Celtiberian of the latter abstract suffix, added not to a root, but—like in \**rudīmo*—to a verbal stem, is MONIMAM<sup>20</sup> ‘memory, remembrance’ [K.11.1; K.11.2; K.26.1], where *-mā-* was added to the causative stem \**monī-* < \**moneje-* of the PIE root \**men* ‘to think’. In both cases, \**rudīmo-*

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Eska (2004: p. 864), however, argues that there was a ‘strong tendency’ in Celtiberian ‘towards labialization of o to u when adjacent to a nonfinal labial’. In support of this rule he adduces *ruzimuz* < \**-mos* and dat. pl. *-ubos* < \**-obos*. *ruzimuz* is, as shall be demonstrated here, a very uncertain example. *-ubos* for \**-obos* need not reflect a regular sound change, but the replacement of \*o by u in the dat. pl. can rather be due to intraparadigmatic pressure from other oblique cases with Celtib. u like dat. sg. *-ui* < \**-ōj*, abl. sg. *-uz* < \**-ōd*, perhaps instr. sg. *-u* < \**-oh<sub>1</sub>*, gen. pl. *-um* < \**-ōm*, acc. pl. *-us* < \**-ōs* < \**-oms*, and potentially instr. pl. \**-uis* < \**-ōis*.

<sup>15</sup> For ‘red’ in Celtic see Stifter 2001c. In addition to the word discussed here, another probable derivative of PIE \**h<sub>1</sub>reydʰ-* in Celtiberian has recently come to light in the so-called *tessera* ‘Pellicer 8’ that bears the inscription *routaikina kar* (Almagro-Gorbea 2003: pp. 389–390). For the spelling of word-internal /d/ with <ɖ> see the remarks in the preceding chapter.

<sup>16</sup> LIV pp. 508–509.

<sup>17</sup> See the discussion in Schumacher 2000: pp. 125–126 with further literature.

<sup>18</sup> See Schumacher 2000: pp. 130–132 for more examples.

<sup>19</sup> Suggestion by Stefan Schumacher.

<sup>20</sup> This etymology entails the analysis of *monimam* as an accusative singular. I do not, however, rule out the possibility that *-mam* reflects PIE neuter \**-mṃ*.



and \**monīmā-*, the suffix *-mo/ā-* was added to a stem in *-ī-*, thereby giving evidence that in Celtiberian essives/statives in *-eh<sub>1</sub>je/o-* and causatives in *-eje/o-* inherited from Proto-Indo-European had already merged in a uniform class of *-ī-*verbs.<sup>21</sup> Under this analysis, OBr. *guomonim* ‘promise’ < \**uo-mon-ī-mā-* would—apart from the preverb—present a perfect equation with Celtib. *monimam*. But since verbal nouns in *-iμ* < \**-īmā-* became productive in Breton, the preform \**monīmā-* cannot be postulated with certainty for Proto-Celtic.<sup>22</sup>

The final sentence of the front side of Botorrita I goes:

*iom : tokoitoskue | sarnikiokue : aiuizas : kombalkores : aleites : iste : ikues* [or: *irues*] : *ruzimuz* [K.1.1., A.10–11]

By all scholars who produced full interpretations of the inscription, this has been taken to constitute some sort of concluding statement of the preceding legal or judicial instructions.<sup>23</sup> Eichner in particular has drawn attention to the structural and functional parallelism of this sentence to the concluding statement of the Latin inscription Botorrita II. This sentence goes:

QVOM · EA · RES | IVD(IC)ATAS(T · MAG)IS(T)RATVS · CONTREBI-ENSES · HEISCE · FVERVNT

‘When this matter was judged, these were the magistrates of Contrebia’ [Bot. II 15–16]

This is immediately followed by the names of the involved magistrates and lawyers, just like a list of fifteen *bintis*, magistrates of some sort, follows the sentence in Botorrita I. At least partially, the two sentences may be compared in their structure, although in all likelihood they do not exactly correspond to each other in their lexical, semantic and idiomatic constituents. The clause-initial conjunction Celtib. *iom* could be the equivalent of Latin temporal *quom* ‘when’. Etymologically, both are adverbially used masculine accusative singulars of pronominal stems, and both could refer to the temporal conditions under which a decision was made. *ea res* ‘this legal matter’ may find a correspondence in *tokoitoskue sarnikiokue aiuizas*, which seems to describe the matter of the legislation in a brief resumé. In an earlier article I argued that *kombalkez* in the opening sentence both of Botorrita I and IV is a verb meaning ‘decreed, decided’, perhaps a loan from Latin (*com*)*placet*.<sup>24</sup> Such a verbal interpretation of *kombalkez* suggests that *kombalkores* could also be a verbal form, whatever its exact analysis. I am inclined to see in *-res* a reflex of the IE 3<sup>rd</sup> pl. perfect ending, although the details are far from clear. While Lat. *iudicatast* expresses the matter of decision-taking in a passive construction, Celtib. *kombalkores* appears to express the same thing actively. It is true that the second halves of the two sentences do not apparently display a close resemblance in any way comparable to that of the first halves; but it must not be forgotten that partly this

<sup>21</sup> Cp. Schumacher 2000: pp. 76–77.

<sup>22</sup> MLH V.1, pp. 264–266.

<sup>23</sup> Eichner 1989: pp. 47–49; Eska 1989: p. 25; Meid 1993: pp. 68–73; de Hoz 1996a: p. 130.

<sup>24</sup> Stifter 2001b: pp. 103–104.

may be due to our insufficient knowledge of Celtiberian. However, it is not rash to surmise that this clause, too, refers to some aspect of decision-taking. Wherever a historical linguist leaves his purely linguistic and philological confines, he has to enter the area of speculation, especially where no additional historical or archaeological evidence is at hand. For the present discussion, I can only speculate what an ablative *ruzimuz* ‘from reddening/red colour’ could refer to in real Celtiberian life. Since, to my knowledge, no trace of red was found on Botorrita I and since the use of red colour on an engraved inscription is not likely, either, there is the possibility that the use of the term is metaphoric in the present context. That means that in other contexts the term could have been used, for example, in a concrete, instrumental sense ‘by/with/through red colour’, referring to some sort of validification or ‘rubrication’ involving actual red colour, for example, on papyrus or wood tablets. From such cases, its use could have been extended to a validification in a general sense, irrespective of whether red colour was really used. Another speculative alternative could be that ‘red’ referred to a particularly distinguishing colour of the magistrates mentioned in the following list, thereby transporting the important, validificatory subtext. The colour could either belong to a political party, being a party colour in our modern sense (cp. the use of colours in Roman chariot-racing to distinguish between fan-clubs), or it could be a colour of honour, just like purple was reserved for senators in Rome.

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