

Macc, Cailín and Céile – an Altaic Element in Celtic?

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1. The substratum theory has been so compromised by numerous fantastic speculations (Basque, Uralic, Altaic, Kartvelian, Hamito-Semitic, etc.), that the problem itself has become a *perpetuum mobile* of Celtic and Germanic studies. Yet, what Kenneth Jackson said about the Picts could be applied to the inhabitants of Old North and Central Europe, too: “The people of Scotland before the coming of the Celts must, after all, have spoken *some* language ...” (Jackson 1955: 152).

1.1. In Celtic languages (both Continental and Insular) we can find words with uncertain etymology which presumably represent loanwords from other language-families. One can see the traces of the pre-Indo-European substratum of Central and Western Europe, “an original non-Celtic/non-Germanic North West block” according to Kuhn (1961). But we may suppose that this conclusion is not sufficiently justified. This problem can have many different solutions, and we may never be in a position to resolve it definitively.

Celto-Germanic ‘horse’?

For example, in both Celtic and Germanic, a special word for ‘saddle horse’ is used, which is not attested in other Indo-European languages. We mean the root **mark-os*:

Celtic – OIr. *marc* ‘horse,’ MÍr. *marcach* ‘rider,’ MW *march* ‘horse, stallion,’ Bret. *marc’h*;

Germanic – ON m. *marr*, f. OE *mearh*, ME *mare* (< **marhī-*), MHG *Marah* > *Mähre* ‘horse, mare,’ OHG *marahscalc* ‘groom,’ etc.).

This word was also known in Continental Celtic. The same root is attested in the Galatic term *trimarkisia*, which means a special group or set of three horse-riders (a chieftain or nobleman with two attendants). In his *Description of Greece*, Pausanias (II c. A.D.) remarks that the Galatians use a special word for ‘horse’ which is unknown in Greek:

[9] The muster of foot amounted to one hundred and fifty-two thousand, with twenty thousand four hundred horses. This was the number of horsemen in action at any one time, but the real number was sixty-one thousand two hundred. For to each horseman were attached two servants, who were themselves skilled riders and, like their masters, had a horse.

[10] When the Gallic horsemen were engaged, the servants remained behind the ranks and proved useful in the following way. Should a horseman or his horse fall, the slave brought him a horse to mount; if the rider was killed, the slave mounted the horse in his master’s place; if both rider and horse were killed, there was a mounted man ready. When a rider was wounded, one slave brought back to camp the wounded man, while the other took his vacant place in the ranks.

[11] I believe that the Gauls in adopting these methods copied the Persian regiment of the Ten Thousand, who were called the Immortals. There was, however, this difference. The Persian used to wait until the battle was over before replacing casualties, while the Gauls kept reinforcing the horsemen to their full number during the height of the action. This organization is called in their native speech ‘trimarcisia,’ for I would have you know that *marca* is the Celtic name for a horse (Pausanias 10, 19, 9-11).¹

The same element *marc-* is attested in local Gaulish names, such as *Marco-durum* ‘Horse-gate’ (?), *Marcomagus* ‘Horse-valley’ (DAG: 221), *Marco-lica* ‘horse-stone’ (?), Spain; Delamarre 2003: 217). Compare the Gaulish proper names *Marcomarus*, *Marcosena*, *Marcomani*, *Marcus* (?), the king’s name in the Tristan legend), *Marcula*, etc. Consider *Ambio-marcis* (dat.pl.), a “Matronen-name” (Schmidt 1957: 123). Furthermore, a plant-name *callio-marcus*, glossed as *epo-calium* (‘latine equi ungula uocatur’), may be relevant here. A figurative meaning of the same word is presumably attested in the Gaulish inscription of MARCOSIOR – MATERNIA (RIG II-2: L-117), which can be translated either as ‘puisse-je (te) chevaucher les organes maternels’ or ‘puisse-je être chevauché par Materna’ (RIG: 328). In both cases, the metaphorical use of the word (here ‘to copulate’) demonstrates that the word is well-rooted in the language. But we have to note that the Common Celtic word *mark-o-* does not represent a basic term for ‘horse,’ but has the specific meaning of ‘saddle horse’.

Continental Celts, especially the Gauls became “famous for their prowess in horsemanship. These horsemen are *equites* ‘knights’ (a word used by Caesar – T.M.). After the Roman occupation of Gaul, Gaulish cavalry troops became a distinguished feature of the Roman Army and served widely in the Empire” (Ross 1970: 71). Strabo also remarked that “Although they [the Celts and the Germanic peoples] are all naturally fine fighting men, yet they are better as cav-

¹ Lit. The Celts call the horse – a *markan* (acc.).

alry than as infantry, and the best of the Roman cavalry is recruited from among them” (Strabo 1924: IV, IV, 2).

But the saga-material of the Insular Celtic tradition has a different attitude towards horse-riding. In the Irish tale *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (“The Destruction of Da Derga’s Hostel”) we meet three red horsemen, riding red horses. They are messengers of the Other World: “though we are alive, we are dead”. In the original text, these sinister non-mortal beings are called ‘*triar marcach*’ (TBDD: 288), just the same term used by Pausanias. In the Middle Welsh tale (mabinogi) “Pwyll Lord of Dyved” the hero sees ‘a woman riding a great pale horse,’ Rianon – a woman deity, a messenger from the Other World (cf. the same motif in the Ossianic legend – Niam-cinn-óir, a queen of Tír-na-nÓg, riding a white mare). We should also consider a famous image of the Germanic god Odin riding a horse on his road to Hell (cf. the figure of *Mars Corotiacus*, Mars as a horseman from Early Britain (Ross 1993: 244). We could presume that the horse-riding tradition was not familiar to Common Celtic society and this practice was borrowed by the inhabitants of Western and Central Europe later, *after* the migration of part of the Celtic tribes to the British Isles. But the borrowing of the practice presumes the borrowing of the term, as well.

According to Pokorny, the word **mark-o-* represents a Celto-Germanic isogloss, conserved in these two branches of IE languages “a North-West-IE linguistic community” (Ellis Evans 1981: 241), and a presumed IE root is **marko-* (IEW: 700). But Antoine Meillet assumed that this word was an early loanword in Germanic and Celtic from an unknown source (Meillet 1926: 229). This idea was developed by T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov, who had seen in it a borrowing from an Altaic language (or dialect). Indeed, Celto-Germanic **mark-* has parallels with Altaic **morV-* (Mong. *mörin*, Kalm. *morin* ‘horse’; cf. Russ. *merin* ‘old horse, gelding,’ a late borrowing from Mong., cf. also Chin. *ma* < **mra*, Tamil *mā*). Gamkrelidze and Ivanov explain this borrowing by early contacts of IE tribes with Altaic tribes. Moreover, they propose that this represents evidence of early migrations of IE tribes from the East to the West through Asia Minor (Гамкрелидзе (Gamkrelidze), Иванов (Ivanov) 1984: 939). But why in this case should this word be preserved only in Celtic and Germanic, that is in West IE languages? Maybe it would be more logical to qualify **mark-* as a “Wanderwort” of eastern origin that established itself in Celtic and Germanic alongside the inherited PIE word for ‘horse’ **(h₁)ekʷ-os* (Matasović, internet database)? That is, this word was not transported to Europe by IE migratory tribes, but was adopted in Central Europe by IE speaking tribes (Celts and Germans) from some Asiatic people, speaking Altaic and practising horse-riding.

We mean the Scythians (and Sarmats) who came from Central Asia in the seventh century B.C., crossed the Caucasus and appeared in northern Iran and Asia Minor. Scythians may not have been Indo-European, but a mixture of nations of Central Asia, including some Turkish and Altaic elements. Their language, though remaining Iranian, carried a lot of borrowed non-Indo-European features. The Scythian language influenced many tongues of Asia and Europe,

including Slavic, Thracian, Baltic, and Iranian. Actually, there was no single Scythian language, but this classification is used when speaking about all Scythian and Sarmatian dialects existing on the Black Sea's northern shores from the seventh to the fourth century B.C. The early, more archaic forms of this speech can be regarded as Scythian, while the later forms were spoken by Sarmatian tribes.

Scytho-Sarmatian tribes are known to have been good horse-riders, and it is natural that they should have brought to Europe the name for the 'saddle-horse,' as well as the famous 'animal style' of decorative art known in Scandinavia, Russia and Ireland. It is generally assumed that the nature and the extent of borrowing depend entirely on cultural relationships in history. As Edward Sapir pointed out, "one can almost estimate the role which various peoples have played in the development and spread of cultural ideas by taking note of the extent to which their vocabularies have filtered into those of other peoples" (Sapir 1921: 193). This pre-I.E. borrowing can be explained by the late spread of horseback riding to Europe (in contrast with chariot traction).

At the same time, we have to note that if our idea of the Scythian origin of the word **mark-* is right, we are then dealing only with indirect contacts, maybe via Galatians, because this word was well-rooted in Celtic *before* Romanization and before Scythian and Sarmatic tribes moved to Europe in the second to third century A.D.

In his book *Germanen und Kelten*, Helmut Birkhan proposes another source of borrowing of the word **mark-* in Germanic and Celtic: the influence of the Thracians, stating that Thracians had a typical "horse-riding culture". He identifies the element *mark-* in Thracian anthroponyms (Birkhan 1970: 393-402). Being an IE tribe, the Thracians conserved in their language and culture the elements of the pre-IE population of the South of Europe.

The Indo-Europeanization of Europe did not mean total destruction of the previous cultural achievement, but consisted in an amalgamation (hybridization) of racial and cultural phenomena. Linguistically, the process may (and must) be regarded in a similar way: the Indo-Europeans imposed an idiom which itself then adopted certain elements from the autochthonous languages spoken previously. These non-Indo-European (pre-IE) elements are numerous in Greek, Latin, and arguably, Thracian (Paliga 1986: 27).

In 400-100 B.C. the region of the Balkan Peninsula was a zone of tribal and linguistic mixture. Anyway, the wandering character of our word is now admitted by many scholars and only the strict source of borrowing remains the subject of discussion.

2. Loanword ~ Wandering Word ~ Isogloss?

2.1. As Edgar Polomé has said, “in the case of correspondences restricted to Celtic and Germanic, there are always four possibilities that need to be investigated:

- a. the terms represented either a common regional innovation in a marginal area of the Indo-European territory or the localized survival of an archaic term lost elsewhere throughout the Indo-European linguistic area (isogloss);
- b. the terms have both been taken over from a same third source – be it a pre-Indo-European (“substrate”) language or a less well-documented Indo-European language in their vicinity;
- c. the Celtic term was borrowed by Germanic;
- d. the Germanic term was borrowed by Celtic” (Polomé 1983: 284).

Of course, the history of the name of the saddle horse represents, according to Polomé, case b. (in our terms: Altaic source → Scythian/Thracian → Celtic → Germanic?). Could it be a case of source a. above? Presumably not. But at the same time we have to remember that both IE languages and Altaic languages derive from the proto-Nostratic language, that is they belong to a hypothetical language super-family to which, as some linguists suppose, a large number of language families of Europe, Asia and Africa may belong.

2.2. The advocates of this theory suppose that all these language families have descended from a common ancestor, the so-called Proto-Nostratic language. Proponents of the Nostratic hypothesis have assigned various language families to the Nostratic super-family. However, there is general agreement that one include, at a minimum, the Indo-European, Uralic and Altaic languages. Following Holger Pedersen (1903: 535-561), V. M. Illich-Svitych (1971) and A. Dolgopolsky (1964; 1986), many advocates of this theory have also included in the Nostratic macro-family the Afro-Asiatic languages, the Inuit-Aleut family and possibly some others (Starostin 1989). Now a representative grouping would include the Afro-Asiatic, Kartvelian, Indo-European, Uralic, Dravidian, Altaic, and Inuit-Aleut families. The Sumerian and Etruscan languages, regarded as isolates, are thought by some linguists to be Nostratic languages, as well.

However, the Nostratic hypothesis does not enjoy wide acceptance among linguists. Some of the methodology used in its support has been criticized and most scholars remain undecided.² While this theory did not make much headway

² However, in 1913 Morris-Jones wrote: “As Latin, which is the parent of the Romance languages, so Aryan itself must be derived from some remote ancestor, and it is improbable that it is the only descendant of it which survived. Sweet, by a comparison of the pronominal and verbal forms of Aryan and Ugrian, has made out a strong case for supposing that the two families are allied; ... On the other hand, Möller, in his *Semitisch und Indoger-*

in the West, it became popular in the Soviet Union (now in Russia, especially in Moscow), and in the USA (by Joseph Greenberg and others). If we compare the process of Indo-European reconstruction, assuming that all the languages in question must have stemmed from one proto-language, with the hypothetical reconstruction of proto-Nostratic, we must come to the simple idea of ‘high-level’ parenthood. Many languages really have been shown to be related to other languages, forming large families similar to Indo-European. It is thus logical that the family tree could converge at a more remote point and that some language families could be more distantly related to one another.

Theoretically, and only theoretically, IE **mark-* and Altaic **morV-* may be represent an isogloss, preserved only in a few daughter-languages (in our case, Celtic and Germanic). Of course, our suggestion is a fantastic one because we know that the domestication of the horse and its use as a means of transport can be dated to about 2500 B.C. In the Kurgan hypothesis, the domestication of the horses is dated as early as 4500 B.C., cf. also Hamp’s suggestion that the horse was domesticated by Indo-Europeans³ tribes around 6000 B.C. (Hamp 1990). But really the domestication of the horse does not necessarily mean that it was also used for riding. “Sometimes there is evidence as to how horses were used. The animal is relatively common on some Gaulish settlements ... On such Gaulish habitation sites, horses were killed young, probably for *food*”.

The use of horses for riding, which allowed warriors to cover ground very fast, transformed methods of warfare. Owning horses – then and now – involved a certain level of wealth, since feed and maintenance were relatively costly. This led to social division, between those who could afford to keep and ride horses and those who could not ... There can be no doubt that the introduction of horse-riding had an enormous impact on civilization (Green 1992: 29, 66).

According to the Nostratic theory, however, the splitting of this family is dated to ten thousand B.C. Thus, it is certainly impossible to reconstruct a common word for ‘horse’ in proto-Nostratic and, even more so, we are also unable to reconstruct the word for ‘horse’ in proto-IE, especially for the riding horse. The case of the ‘horse’ is rather simple, because of the archaeological and cultural evidence which helps linguistic reconstruction⁴. Names of plants, natural phenomena, emotions, parts of the body and social terminology represent more complicated material.

manisch (1907), has compared the consonant sounds of Aryan in detail with those of Semitic ... and claimed to have proved their derivation from a common source” (Morris-Jones 1913: 2).

³ According to many different hypotheses, the Indo-European language group apparently originated around 4500 B.C., and only the location of the proto-IE *Urheimat* remains a subject of discussion.

⁴ Of course, we understand that the names of Indo-European, Altaic and Uralic ‘horse’ deserve a special investigation. We have taken this example only to demonstrate the general problem of non-IE parallels in Celtic and Germanic.

For example, take the word for ‘ice’ in Celtic and Germanic (OIr. *aig*, gen. *ega*, W *ia*, MCor. *iein* gl. *frigus*, Corn. *yeyn* ‘cold,’ Bret. *yen* ‘cold,’ OIsl. *jaki* ‘ice,’ all having a proto-form **jegis*), which Vendryes supposed to be “un mot spécialement celto-germanique” (LEIA-A: 28). This has parallels not only in Hitt. *ega-*, *agan* ‘ice,’ *ekuna* ‘cold’ (IEW: 503), but also in Finn. *jää*, Hung. *jég*, Liv. *jej*, Mord. *jej*, *ej*, Lapp. *jiegñâ*, Vogul. *jöänjk*, also meaning ‘ice’ (going back to proto-Uralic **jeng-*). Given this parallel, Julius Pokorny pointed out that “there is no doubt that there exist very old connections between the British Isles and the eastern Baltic countries” (Pokorny 1960: 236). Adding the Germanic material, we could suppose an early borrowing from Uralic languages. According to Pokorny, this was “an Upper-Paleolithic substratum” of an unknown Arctic race which may have been of Uralic origin. But why is the same word also present in Hittite?

The similarities in the form of the word and in its meaning in two (or more) languages can be explained as an isogloss *or* a borrowing when we are dealing with contact languages. In non-contact situations it definitely represents an isogloss. For example, OIr. *dligid* ‘has a right, must’ and Russian *dolg* ‘duty, debt,’ as well as Goth. *dulgs* represent a supposed Slavonic (LEIA-D: 108) or Celtic (Lehmann 1986: 97) loanword, but the root itself is conserved only in Celtic and Slavonic (IEW: 271-72?) and, thus, can only be considered an isogloss.⁵

The same holds for OIr. *slóg*, *slúag* ‘army’ (cf. also W. *llu* ‘army,’ Gaul. tribe *Catu-slugi* ‘armies of the battle’) and Russian *sluga* ‘servant’ (also Lith. *slaugà* ‘to serve’) (LEIA-R,S: S-137; “nur in keltisch und balto-slavisch” (IEW: 965).

It stands to reason that if we examine the lexicon of any of the Germanic (and Celtic, too – T.M.) languages, we will find a considerable number of terms without known etymology (Polomé 1990: 276).

Each term, however, has its own history. It may be a wandering word of unknown origin, as for example the name for ‘cat’ or ‘berry’ (OIr. *smér*, Lat. *morum*, Russian *smorodina* ‘currant,’ etc. (LEIA-R,S: S-141), or a new wandering word of known origin, such as *sugar*, *ginger* or *tea*, which can be traced back to Bronze Age Mediterranean trade. To be labelled ‘a wandering word,’ the term must be found in numerous contact and non-contact languages.

⁵ Polomé supposes that Goth. *dulgs* ‘debt’ can hardly be a loan from Celtic as OCS *длѣгъ* ‘debt’ is not a loan from Germanic, but a term inherited directly from Indo-European on account of its intonational pattern, as Meillet had already shown in 1908 (cf. Meillet 1922: 21). Max Fasmer (Fasmer 1953: 359) stresses the derivation of Goth. *dulgs* OIr. *dligid*, OCS *длѣгъ* from a common IE source, and decisively rejects borrowing of the Slavic term either from Germanic or from Celtic. Pokorny (IEW: 271-2) reconstructs an IE root **dhlgh-* ‘debt, obligation’ under which he brings the Germanic, Celtic and Slavic words” (Polomé 1987: 222). If Goth. *dulgs* really represents a direct IE derivation, it is a very representative example, because we know this word only from the work of Wulfila.

2.3. If the term is attested only in proto-Germanic or proto-Celtic it automatically qualifies as a borrowing from a pre-Indo-European ‘substratum’ of Northern Europe. But, as Polomé pointed out, “When dealing with pre-Indo-European ‘substrate’ in northern Europe, the major problem is that there is absolutely no direct evidence of the language of the populations that the speakers of Indo-European dialects encountered upon their penetration into the area” (Polomé 1990: 272). We suppose other problems arise here, and the most important of these is, as Alfred Bammesberger has put it, that “We do not know how many members of the IE language family ultimately died out without leaving any direct traces” (Bammesberger 1994). By the ‘members of the family’ we understand not only ‘languages,’ but also some small dialectal branches of the big ‘language tree’ which faded, broke off and died, maybe together with precious traces of ‘lost’ IE roots.

For instance, Pokorny gives the IE root **bhoundhi-* ‘victory’ based only on Celtic material (OIr. *búad*, W *budd*, PN *Boudicca*) and a supposed Germ. LN *Baudi-hillia* ‘Siegeskämpferin’ (IEW: 163). But can we view this as an early continental borrowing from an unknown pre-IE language of Northern Europe?

On the contrary, OIr. *becc* /begg?! ‘small’ (W *bychan*, Bret. *bihan*), a word without etymology, could not be considered a loanword (?), but, as Polomé assumes, “the localized survival of an archaic term,” i.e. of an IE-Altaic isogloss (cf. Tuv. *biča*, Karag. *bic’ä*, Jakut. *byčyk*, Mong. *biči* ‘small’).

A Nostratic root *biČa* is attested in many Altaic languages, but preserved in only one branch of the IE family (cf. also Uralic forms: Veps. *piču* ‘small,’ Karel. *picukkani* ‘very small,’ etc.), and in the wider Dravidic material in Иллич-Свитыч (Illich-Svitych) (1971: 178). Cf. also OIr. *col* ‘violation, incest’ and Mong. **kul-g-* ‘thief,’ which Eric Hamp supposed to be a Continental Celtic borrowing from an unknown substratum dialect (Hamp 1974: 199). Consider OIr. *ésce(a)/éisce* ‘moon’ and Lapp. *aske* ‘moon, the god of the Moon,’ as well (Voren, Manker 1962: 119). The list of these parallels could be continued.

The Nostratic hypothesis relies on an application of the comparative method, involving systematic sound-and-meaning correspondences between the constituent families. The Nostratic voiceless affricate *Č* gives /sk/ in the IE languages, and not /k/ or /g/ (e.g. the verbal suffix *-Či* > IE *-sk-*, cf. OIr. verbal present stem *nasc-* ‘bind’ < **nedh-sk-*, etc.). That is, if the OIr. word for ‘small’ was indeed derived from the Nostratic root *biČa*, it would give the form **besk-* and not *becc*.⁶ The Nostratic **Č* gives *-kk-* only in the Dravidic languages (cf. Malayalam *pīcca* ‘small,’ Tamil *picca* ‘short,’ etc.). What do we want to demonstrate by this example? We want to formulate two main ideas:

⁶ The relationship between Goidelic and British forms is also disputable. Rudolf Thurneysen supposed that Brittonic forms derive from a word with a voiceless geminate *-kk-* (“perhaps the influence of some other word has been operative here” (Thurneysen 1946: 93)).

1. The direct derivation of a word from a Nostratic root must be based not only on its meaning correspondences and obvious phonetic similarities, but also on a strict system of phonological correlation.
2. We do not know how many members of the Nostratic super-family ultimately died out without leaving any direct traces.

That is, taking into account the similarity of our *becc* with Altaic (Uralic) data, we could presume that it may really be a loanword from an unknown, extinct Nostratic language, in which Nostratic **b* gives -b and **Ć* gives -kk.

3. Old Irish ‘macc’?

3.1. Returning now to the problematic etymology of the famous Old Irish *macc*, we must begin by rendering the meaning of this term precisely in different contexts and text traditions.

3.1.1. Ogam inscriptions

In Ogam the form MAQQI (MAQI, MACI, gen. with old case ending -ṛ) is at first sight used as a kind of cliché or formula introducing the patronymic name. But this solution derives rather from the comparison of Ogam names with the traditional Irish name-system. Damian McManus pointed out that “MAQQI- does not denote a filial relationship to the second element – often a dependent genitive of a divine name or the name of a tree or a word associated with a trade – probably with the original meaning of ‘devotee’ or the like (McManus 1991: 109). He proposes to distinguish MAQQI-X names from the patronymic MAQQI X type. The first appear in inscriptions (e.g. MAQI-CAIRATINI AVI IN-EQAGLAS, etc), but an inscription like X MAQQI Y also can be interpreted as ‘(the grave) of X, of MAQQOS-Y’ and not ‘(the grave) of X, of the son of Y’. Compare here the Gaulish constructions with the idionym and the genitive (possessive) form of the parent’s given name: Doiros Segomari, Martialis Dannotali, etc. (see Lambert 1995).

The same meaning (‘devotee’) is presumably preserved in numerous later constructions and technical expressions of the type of *macc báis*, *mac bronn*, *macc eclaise*, *macc óige*, as well as of its metaphoric use in *macc alla* ‘echo’ (lit. ‘son of a cliff’, (C)DIL-M: 6-7).

3.1.2. Glosses and the Christian Context

In the language of the Glosses *macc* is usually used in its ‘strict’ sense and glosses Lat. *filius*, in particular in the phrase *Macc Dé* ‘Christ’ or in the set expression of *Athair ocus Mac ocus Spirit Nób*. We have to note that in general

the influence of Christianity is clearly responsible for the special attitude towards children in Early Irish culture and their high legal status. This influence had in some aspects changed the primary meaning of earlier basic Celtic kinship terminology inherited from proto-Indo-European society or/and borrowed from pre-Indo-European inhabitants of Europe.

3.1.3. Early Irish Law

In the Irish Law-tracts, we suppose that the term *macc* has two different meanings:

1. a *son*, a male heir: in such phrases as *macc béo-athar* ‘son of living father,’ *macc té* ‘warm son’ (‘subject to proper controls’), *macc úar* ‘cold son,’ etc. (see Kelly 1988: 80-81). Cf. also the title of the legal tract concerning the rules of inheritance, *Maccshlehta*. Cf. also *leth díri cach gráid túaithe fora mnaí 7 a mac 7 a ingin* “a half-honour-price of every member of the lay grades for his wife and his son and his daughter” (Binchy 1941: 5:126). The person denoted as *macc-1* has no age (like ModIr. *mac*, Engl. *son*, Russian *syn*, etc.), but is generally young.
2. a *child*, a person with neither legal responsibility, nor any right to independent legal action, a young person. In this meaning, the term *macc* can be applied to the female child, too, (i.e. a child between baptism and the age of seven years).

e.g. In the tract *Bretha Crólige*, the term *maccothrus* ‘sick-maintenance of children’ is applied both to the small boys and girls (Binchy 1938: 40).

Ní dligther fothud a thige do neoch céin mbes maice “It is not due hospitality to a person, who is in its childhood” (Binchy 1941: 3:77).

Asrenar laneraic ... im maccailig na díulta cailli “the full payment... for a young nun who has not renounced her veil” ((C)DIL: M, 9).

Maccléirech ‘young cleric’ and *maccaillech* ‘young nun,’ etc.

The person denoted as *macc-2* has no gender (like OIr. *lenab*, Engl. *infant*, *child*, Russian *rebenok*, etc.), but is generally a male.

3.1.4. Early Irish Narrative Tradition

In the saga material, in the annals, in the learning tracts, etc. we find, of course, many different meanings of the word *macc*:

1. The “strict” sense of ‘son’ or ‘male descendant’ (*cethri meic ... tri ingena* “four sons and three daughters”; ... *no co rucad mac no ingen duit ond uair sin* “Since then neither son, nor daughter has been begotten by you” (SMMD 1927: 10); *maicc Israhel* “the sons of Israel”; *mac duine* “mortal man,” lit. “son of a human being”; *Fergus mac Róich*, etc.);
2. ‘boy, lad’ (*Mac bec doringni in gním sin ...* “A little *boy* who performed that exploit ...” (TBC 1970: 25, 915); cf. *Romoch duit-siu sain, a meic bic ...* – “*Cían lim-sa di shodain, a máthair,*” *ar in mac bec*. “It is too soon for you, my *son*” – “I think it long (to wait) for that, mother,” said the little *boy*” (TBC 1970: 21). Cf. also *maccoím* ‘a boy, lad’ (from childhood to the arm-bearing age).
3. In composites and in further derivations of ‘child, young person’ (cf. for instance *macbarat* ‘child’s clothes,’ *maccles* ‘juvenile feat,’ *banmacc* ‘daughter,’ *maccrad* ‘children’ (in particular of boys?), etc.).

Joseph Vendryes formulated the conclusion that “Il est d’ailleurs à noter qu’en plus de sa valeur de nom de parenté, il a aussi le sens ‘jeune garçon’; il est donc à la fois l’équivalent de latin *filius* et *puer*” (LEIA-M-N-O-P: M-2). We could add the sense of ‘child’.

But which meaning is the primary one, ‘son,’⁷ ‘boy’ or ‘child’?

3.1.5. Gaulish and Brittonic data

We could say that Middle Welsh texts give us the same complex of meanings of MW *mab* (OW *map*). That is, it has the “strict” sense of ‘son’ in patronymic names and in the law tracts (cf. OIr. *macc ingor* ~ MW *mab anwar* ‘undutiful son’ (Binchy 1956: 228), and the meaning ‘boy, child’ in narrative tradition. E.g.: ‘*Paham,* *heb yr Efnissyen, ‘na daw uy nei, uab uy chwaer, attaf i?’ ... A chyodi y uynyd, a chymryt y mab erwyd y traet ...* ““Why does my nephew, the *son* of my sister,’ said Efnissyen, ‘not come to me?’ ... He rose and took the *boy* by the feet ...” (BUL 1961: 14).

The title of the collection of medieval Welsh tales, the *Mabinogion*, is also connected with the same word.

It has been generally accepted that the term *mabinogi* is based on the word *mab* ‘child, boy, son’ (sic! T.M.), and that it was used like the French *enfances* in the sense of a story about (a hero’s) childhood ... More recently, however, Eric Hamp has rejected this ex-

⁷ The problem of the semantics of OIr. ‘son’ is very complicated, because of the fosterage institution in medieval Irish society. Cf. the use of *daltae* ‘foster-child’ in the sense of ‘son, daughter’ in the Modern Irish dialects. But we suppose, this practice is rather late and does not prevent the reconstruction of Common Celtic kinship terminology.

planation, arguing instead that the term is a collective noun based on the stem **mapono-* and that it originally meant material or doing pertaining to (the family of) the divine *Maponos* (W *Mabon*) (Mac Cana 1977: 24).

The Welsh personage Mabon uab Modron (from the *mabinogi* “Culhwch ac Olwen”) is connected with the Irish ‘young god’ Macc Óc (O’Rahilly 1946: 516-17) and at the same time derives from the Gaulish god *Mapon-os*, a Celtic Continental deity of Roman time often linked to Apollo, just as his mother *Modron* is derived from *Matrona*, an eponym of the *Marne* River (Olmsted 1994: 380-381; Калыгин (Kalygin) 2006: 109). The théonyme *Mapon-os* represents a typical formation of divine names with the “individualizing n-suffix”⁸ (for numerous examples of Celtic names see Stüber 1998: 94 ff.). The name of the god *Maponos* is attested in the Chamalière inscription (Lambert 1979: 146-151) and represents the idea of a ‘divine youth’. Cf. also NP *Mapodia*, *Mapinius*, *Mapillus*, etc. and a NL *Mapo-riton* in Britain.

Thus, we could assume that the primary meaning of CC *maq^wo-* is rather ‘a young person, a child’ and not ‘a son’.

3.2. As the Russian linguist Sergej Kullanda noted,

The traditional reconstruction of the original meanings of the Indo-European words commonly treated as kinship terms leaves a number of linguistic and historical phenomena unexplained. A reinterpretation of this reconstruction */.../* suggests that the etyma in question were not kinship terms but classifiers of age-sex groups (Kullanda 2002: 89).

We could add that the comparison of the reconstructed proto-IE system with kinship systems of archaic societies permits us to suggest that age-stratification precedes sex stratification. Anyway, the system “children – males/females – old people” remains intact to this time in many traditional cultures. We do not know precisely what stage of sex/age stratification can be reconstructed for the proto-IE society.

The Russian linguist Oleg Trubachev in his investigation *The History of Old Slavonic Kinship Terminology* supposed that early IE society could be compared with an indigenous Australian tribe called Aranta, which not only did not know special terms for ‘son’ and ‘daughter,’ but did not understand the difference between man and woman (Трубачев (Trubachev) 1959: 197). At the same time, Gamkrelidze and Ivanov give fifteen IE terms of kinship. We do not know, where the truth really lies, but we suppose that the Common Celtic society would already have had a considerably developed system of kin stratification and presumably would have known the word for ‘boy, son, offspring,’ the IE **sūnus* (cf. OIr. *suth*). Some social changes, which cannot be discussed here,

⁸ Cf. “Ce nom **Makw(kw)onos* signifie “le garçon,” “le fils,” avec le suffixe *-onos/-ona* fréquent dans l’onomastique” (Lambert 1979: 146).

provoked innovations in the vocabulary and thus IE **sūnus* was ousted by the **maqwos* of unknown origin.

3.3. ‘maqu-os’ and the Problem of Etymology

Goidelic and Brittonic data give us the obvious proto-Celtic form **maq^wq^w-os* (in Britt. without a geminate), which has no sure IE etymology (“The IE etymology proposed here is rather uncertain for semantic reasons,” according to Matasovič in his internet database). Among different suggestions we may quote three main views:

1. the term is connected with Germanic **māghu-* ‘son’
2. the term has a specific etymology connected with the idea of growth
3. the term represents a loanword from an unknown non-IE language.

The first view has a considerable following and in its turn diverges into two main branches:

- a. The direct derivation from IE **maghos, maghu-* (IEW: 696) ‘Knabe, Jüngling’ (may be connected with IE **magh-* ‘force’). From this root, Pokorny derives such Germanic terms as OE *māga* ‘son,’ Goth. *magus* ‘young man, servant,’ ON *mōgr* ‘son,’ Runic *mag-* ‘son,’ Goth. *mawi* ‘girl,’ OHG *magad* ‘young woman’ (> *Mädchen*), etc. Cf. also Av. *mayava-* ‘unmarried’.

Without any doubt, this root resulted in many Celtic forms: Gaul. *Magu-* ‘youth, slave, vassal’ in NP (cf. Ellis Evans 1967: 221-22; Schmidt 1957: 235; Delamarre 2003: 214); W *meudwy* ‘hermit’ (from **magus dēwī* ‘servus Dei’); Corn. *maw* ‘servant’, OIr. *mug* (gen. *moga, u-stem*) ‘slave, servant,’ as well as the abstract name *macdacht* fem. ‘youth’ (Corn. *magteth*, Bret. *matez* ‘servant-girl’).

As Vendryes presumed, “dans le cas de l’irlandais, on peut croire au mot *macc*; pour le brittonique, le rapport avec *mab* ‘fils’ n’apparaît pas” (LEIAM, N, O, P: M-3). We must add that the semantic correlation between ‘boy, child’ and ‘servant’ is universal. Cf. Russian *rebenok* ‘child’ and *rab* ‘servant, slave’ (from IE **orbho-* ‘verwaist, Waise,’ (IEW: 781-782); cf. also Goth. *arbi* ‘das Erbe,’ OIr. *orbe* ditto, but Goth. *arbaiPs* ‘Arbeit’ and Lat. *orbus* ‘orphan,’ Arm. *orb* ditto), and Akan *abofa* ‘child, servant’ (Popov 1981: 95).

Pokorny reconstructs the Common Celtic proto-form (“Koseform”) as **maggwos* (?). Szemerényi in his *Studies in the Kinship Terminology of the Indo-European Languages* shares this opinion and proposes the interesting idea that OIr. *macc* derives from the “syncopated **magu-ko-s* (> **mag^wkos*)” (Szemerényi 1977: 19).

Cf. “Die Entwicklung dürfte demnach etwa folgendermassen verlaufen sein: 1. **maghu-o-*, i.e. **magwo-*, → **makwo-* verschärft (in gall. GN *Maponos* sowie in akymr. korn. breton. *mab*, vielleicht in keltiber. *Magui-aesus*) mit anschliessender semantischer Differenzierung von **maghu-*, kelt. *magu-* ‘Knabe, Jüngling’ → irisch ‘Sklave’ und **makwo-* ‘Knabe’ → ‘Sohn’; 2. **makwo-* → **makwkwo-* geminiert (in Ogam Gen. Sg. *maq̄qi, maqi*, altir. *macc*); 3. *magu* → *mug* im Irischen.” (Schmidt 1979: 121).

In Goidelic, the geminate has an expressive character (?) and *-k-*, as we understand it, has a diminutive meaning (cf. Russian *malčik* ‘boy’ < *malec* + *īk* < *mal* ‘small’). It is, however, difficult to represent a pure athematic suffix *-k-* at this late stage in the development of Celtic. “There seems to have been a progression from an athematic **-k-* and a thematic **-ko-* suffix ... to suffixes of the shape *-Vko-*. The vowel in question, usually either *-ā-* or *-ī-*, was probably in origin the stem-vowel of the base, which was resegmented as part of the suffix, leading to the spread of enlarged suffixes” (Russell 1990: 12). Thus, the word in Common Celtic would rather have had the form of **maghuk-* (cf. Szemerényi), and the syncopated form with the short thematic *-o-* of the stem does not seem to be justified (?).

- b. The reconstruction for both Germanic and Celtic of an old, pre-Verner form with voiceless labiovelar **kʷ-*. Cf. the Celto-Germ. proto-form supposed by Prokosch **makw-os* (Prokosch 1939: 23). Hamp also proposed a hypothetical pre-Verner reconstruction based on the vocalic divergence in IE **mēk-/mek-/mæk-ú-* (Hamp 1990 b: 297). The primary meaning of this supposed IE root **mVk-* remains obscure. And, more importantly, what should we then do with the other roots given by Pokorny?

The second view involves proposing etymologies connected with Gr. *μάκρος* ‘big, long,’ Lat. *macer* ‘meagre,’ etc. (cf. Matasovič, internet database).

Vendryes rejects all proposed etymologies and supposes the term to be “un mot nouveau, qui ne remonte pas nécessairement à l’indo-européen” (LEIAMNOP: M-2). But what language or language family had he in mind?

If we compare again our term with Nostratic material in general, we could consider such words as Altaic **mūko-* ‘male, boy’ and Dravidic **mayl* ‘child’ (in particular, Tamil *maka* ‘child, son, boy’). Cf. also Ogamic MUCOI ‘descendant’ which may be of the same origin. The phonetic and semantic similarity is evident, but again we cannot be sure whether we are dealing with a loanword or a direct derivation from Nostratic **mVkv*. Could it be anything else? We propose a compromise. We consider CC **maqʷ-* to be a borrowing from the hypothetical pre-IE Nostratic language of North-Central Europe, probably supported semantically by Celtic derivations from IE **maghu-* ‘fellow, unmarried,’ which presumably earlier also had the meaning of ‘son,’ conserved in Germanic.

4. Céile

In the Ogam inscriptions, both CELI (gen. sg. of PI **cēlias*, *yo*-stem) and MAQQI are used for the specification of the name, and we do not know the precise meaning of this word ('companion,' 'kin,' 'client,' 'servant,' 'relative by marriage,' etc.).

In the law tracts, the term *céile* means 'client', i.e. 'client of submission,' *dóerchéile* and 'free client,' *sóerchéile* (Kelly 1988: 29). In the eighth century, a new order of ascetic monks called themselves *Céli Dé* (Eng. *culdees*) 'companions of God' or, as Kathleen Hughes pointed out, "perhaps 'clients' or 'vassals of God'. As Prof. Jackson points out to me, the *céile* enters into a contract of *célsine* with a *flaith* or lord. The *Céile Dé* was the man who took God for his *flaith*, who entered into a contact of service with Him" (Hughes 1966: 173 fn. 3). Cf. Lat. *servus Dei*. Like *macc*, *céile* can also form a name *Céile Crist*, *Céile-Petair*, etc. (O'Brien 1973: 230).

In the saga material, *cé(i)le* has a wider meaning, i.e. 'fellow, companion, neighbour, husband, mate; a rival, an equal' and 'the other one' (cf. DIL). There are many such examples.

In Modern Irish, *céile* has approximately the same meaning ('companion,' 'the other one'), but adds the meaning of 'relative by marriage' (*fear céile* 'husband,' *bean chéile* 'wife,' *máthair chéile* 'mother-in-law,' cf. Dinneen 1927: 720).

In Welsh, the word *cilydd* has a similar meaning: 'companion, friend, relative, neighbor' and 'the other one'. Cf. "Irish *cāch a chéile*, the exact equivalent of *pawb i gilydd*, [which] is used in the same way" (Morris-Jones 1913: 306).

Thus, the parentship of Irish *céile* and Welsh *cilydd* is obvious, "though the vocalism of the latter, if it derives from **keilios*, presents a problem" (McManus 1991: 119). In Irish, we have a diphthong *ei* and in Brittonic, a long *ī*, and "Cela rend l'étymologie délicate" (LEIA-C: 53).

Vendryes supposed that this word was a derivation from the IE root **k'ei* 'liegen' (IEW: 539-540, as were OIr. *cōem* 'Liebe,' Goth. *haims*, OHG *Heimat*, ME *home*, Russian *semja* 'family,' etc.). The etymology proposed by Pedersen seems to be more logical. It is assumed to have come from IE **keleu-* 'wandern; Weg' (IEW: 554). Thus, the first meaning of **kelios* could have been 'a travelling companion, a concomitant' (cf. Ir. *séttig*). We are tempted to compare the Irish term with Russian *čeliad* 'servants in the house of the nobleman; members of a big family,' deriving from the IE root **k^vel-* 'drehen, sich drehen, sich herum-bewegen, wohnen' (IEW: 639-640). Cf. also OIr. *cul* 'chariot' or rather 'a wheel of the chariot,' Slav. *kolo* 'wheel,' but also Lith. *kelenas* and Russian *koleno* 'knee' ('generation'). Yet, if not only Irish but also Welsh had derived the term directly from the IE root, would it have had the form of **pelly-*?

In a similar way, as we have done with *macc*, we could compare OIr. *céile* 'friend, companion, servant' (W *cilydd*, Corn. *y-gyla* 'another,' etc.), with such Altaic words as Tung. **kēlu-me* 'person of the opposite moiety, brother-in-law, servant,' Orok. *kele*, Evenk. *kēlūme*, Even. *kēlme* (Starostin 1995: 220) and

Uralic terms such as Finn. *kylä* ‘home,’ Finn. *kyläinen* ‘servants, members of the family’ (Illich-Svitych 1971: 363). The supposed Nostratic root is **küilV*, and IE **kwel-* presumably derives from it. We thus explain the vocalism of the Celtic (Irish) diphthong by the re-interpretation of the long ‘tone’ of the original vowel.

We are not insisting that this word *is* a loan from an unknown Nostratic language (or Altaic?). We suppose that it really can have some direct IE derivation, but again the parallels with the Nostratic terms are obvious.

5. ‘caile,’ ‘calin’

In addition, OIr. *caile* ‘she-servant, servant-girl, maid,’ glossing *famula* (later *cailín* ‘servant’ or rather ‘young girl’) is another word without an etymology (“*étymologie inconnue*,” LEIA-C: 12). There are possible parallels with Kart. **kal* ‘woman, girl,’ Uralic **käly* ‘sister-in-law, girl, servant,’ Dravidic **kal-* ‘a woman of the opposite moiety, sister-in-law, servant’. The supposed Nostratic root is **kälV* with the meaning ‘girl; relative by marriage,’ the IE root is **g’ló(u)-* ‘sister-in-law’ (Lat. *glós*, gen. *glóris* ‘sister-in-law,’ Russian *zolovka* ‘sister of the husband,’ etc.).

6. Conclusion

First of all, we have to say that we were not dealing with the reconstruction of the Common Celtic system of kinship terminology. We understand, however, that this problem is very interesting and deserves closer investigation.

The essential aim of our present research was to attract the attention of linguists to the evident similarity between some Celtic words without established etymologies and some examples of Nostratic vocabulary. The separation of the Celts from the original IE community has been dated by glotto-chronology to about 3500 B.C. For this period, Kalevi Wiik proposes three broad linguistic locations in Europe: “Basque in Iberia, France and the British Isles, Indo-European in the Balkans and Finno-Ugric in the Ukraine and Scandinavia” (Wiik 2002: 290). We now propose the possible presence in central and northern Europe of another branch of the Nostratic super-family which did not leave direct daughter-languages, but which left vague traces in Celtic and Germanic. We suppose that a new approach to the old problem of a Pre-IE substratum in Europe would represent a useful way forward for future investigations.

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