DEIS EQUEUNUBO – THE DIVINE TWINS IN ASTURIA

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1. The Votive Inscription from La Vid (Pola de Gordón, León)

In his excellent article F. Marco Simón (1999) analyses afresh the votive inscription found in La Vid (Pola de Gordón, León) in the ancient Asturia. According to the first editor José Avelino Gutiérrez González (1984: 117-120; 1985: 102-104), the text of the inscription reads as follows:

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1       DEIS E
        QUEUNUR(is)
        IULIUS
        REBURRUS
5       V.S.L.M
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In line 2 the last letter is preserved partially. It begins with the hasta and it resembles R or B. The earlier editors and scholars reconstruct the dative plural DEIS EQUEUNUR(is) 'to the Gods called EQUEUNURI' (Sanz Villa 1996: 114). After an autopsy in August 1996, F. Marco Simón (1999) proposed a new reading DEIS EQUEUNU(BO) against of an earlier imperfect reading: DEIS EQUEUNUR(IS). In his opinion, the votive inscription from La Vid contains the following text:

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1       DEIS E
        QUEUNU(BO)
        IULIUS
        REBURRUS
5       V.S.L.M
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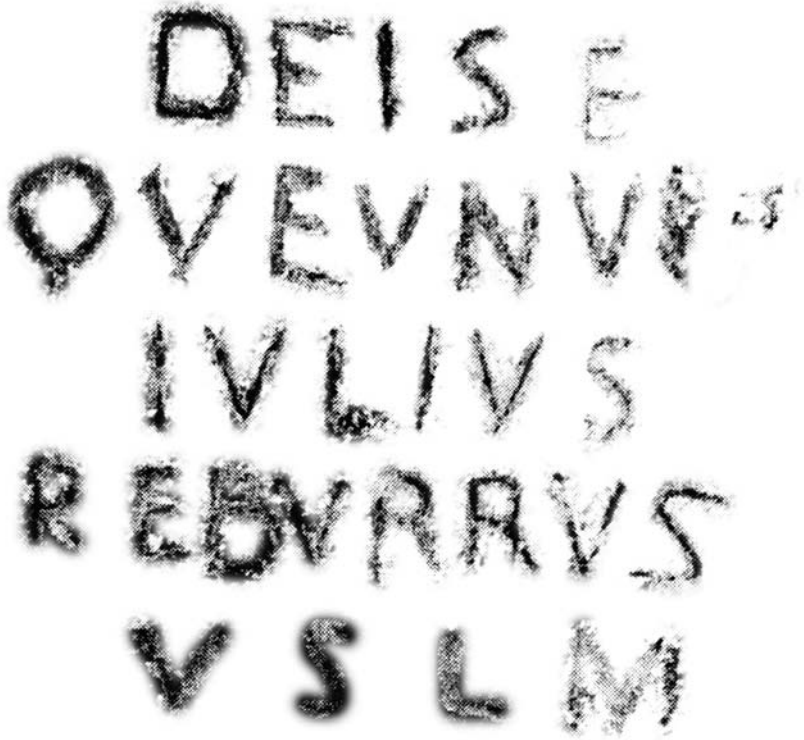
Fig. 1: The votive inscription by Iulius Reburrus.
Artistic reproduction based on Marco Simón (1999: 483)

2. The Form EQUEUNUBO: Discussion

According to F. Marco Simón, the form EQUEUNUBO contains the Hispano-Celtic dative plural ending *-bo(s)*, which is well attested in the votive inscriptions from Celtiberia and the North-West Hispanic area. After Prósper (2002: 287, 312) we may quote here the following examples:

1. ARABO COROBECICOBO TALUSICOBO (Arroyomolinos de la Vera, Cáceres).

2. LUCUBO ARQUIENOBO (Sta María de Liñarán, Sober, Lugo). It is a dedication to the Hispano-Celtic deities called *Lugoves* in plural (but usually *Lugus* in singular). The god *Lugus* was popular in Ancient Hispania (*cf*. Tovar 1982).

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3. LUCOUBU[S] ARQUIENIS (San Vincente de Castillones, Otero del Rey, Lugo). The forms in question are the Latin rendering of the above-mentioned local phrases (cf. Olivares Pedreño 2002: 88-89). The declensional endings of the Latin formula guarantee the interpretation of -BO as the Hispano-Celtic or Lusitanian ending of the dative plural.

4. MATRUBOS (Agreda).

The ending of the dative pl. *-bo* (< IE. dial. *-bhos* vs. *-bhyos*) appears also in some Gaulish inscriptions, e.g.

5. Gaulish ATREBO AGANNTOBO (dat. pl.) 'to the Holy Fathers' (< Common Celtic *patribos *yagantobos* < IE. *pə₂tr̥-bhos *yag̑n̥to-bhos*). It is highly probable that the dative plural form AGANNTOBO derives from Common Celtic *yagantos* < IE. *yag̑n̥tós* adj. 'worth of worship, adorable, holy', cf. Sanskrit *yajatá-* adj. 'worth of worship, adorable, holy, sublime', also m. 'moon' and 'name of the god Śiva' (lex.); Avestan *yazata-* adj. 'verehrungswürdig, anbetungswürdig' (Bartholomae 1904: 1279), MPers. *yazat*, NPers. *īzad* 'god', Ossetic (Digoron) *izæd*, (Iron) *zæd* 'deity; angel' (Abaev 1989: 290-291).

6. Gaulish ΜΑΤΡΕΒΟ ΝΕΜΑΥΣΙΚΑΒΟ (dat. pl.) 'to the Mothers of Nemausis'.

As regards the theonym EQUEUNUBO, we may agree with F. Marco Simón (1999) and J. M. Blázquez Martínez (2001) that it represents a compound form containing the Celtic and Indo-European name for 'horse' (Common Celtic *ekʷos* < IE. *ek̑wos*). The theonym in question represent a divine plurality or duality, as it is suggested by the Latin form DEIS and the Palaeo-Hispanic dative ending -BO. The commentators (Marco Simón 1999; Blázquez Martínez 2001) suggested convincingly that we have to do with the divine twin brethren.

It is obvious that the gods documented in the inscriptional sources as DEIS EQUEUNUBO must be related to the horses, cf. Celtic *ekʷos* 'horse', hence OIr. *ech* 'horse', OBret. *eb* id., Gaul. *epo-* (= Lat. *equus* m. 'horse') in many personal names, Celtiberian *equeisuique* (see Matasović 2009: 114; Witczak 2009: 157-159). The diminutive forms in Bryttonic (Welsh *epāwl*, Cornish *ebōl* 'foal') derive from Celtic *ekʷālos* 'small or young horse' (< IE. *ek̑wōlos*).

The strong connection with the horses is a typical feature of the Indo-European divine twin brothers, who are named *Aśvināu* in Vedic (their name derives evidently from OInd. *áśva-* m. 'horse' and IE. *ek̑wos*). Apart from the Horse-Goddess *Ek̑wonā* (f.), who is presented in the

Gaulish and Lusitanian pantheon (Gallo-Latin *Epona*, Lusit. *Iccona*, cf. also Myc. Gk. *po-ti-ni-ja i-qi-ja* 'the Lady of Horses', see especially Robbins Dexter 1990; Gangutia 2002; Kalygin 2006: 79-80), different Indo-European gods are related to the horses in weaker way than the divine twins. It seems to suggest that the Asturian gods are related to Vedic Aśvins and Greek Dioscuri.

The first part of the compound must derive from IE. **eḱwos*, most probably from the locative sg. form **eḱwei* 'on the horse'. The second part of the compound -UNU- is treated as unclear. In our opinion, it derives evidently from IE. **sūnús* m. 'son'.

The derivation of dat. pl. EQUEUNUBO from the archetype (Late IE.) **ekwei-sūnu-bhos* (literally 'to the sons [riding] on the horse') is perfect from the phonological point of view. The diphthong **-ei-* yields long **ē* both in Common Celtic and Lusitanian. Also intervocalic *-s-* becomes *-h-* and further it disappears regularly in the Insular Celtic languages (Thurneysen 1909: 130, id. 1946: 132; Lewis & Pedersen 1937: 17), as well as in Gaulish, e.g.

> 7. IE. **swesōr* f. 'sister' (cf. OInd. *svásar-*, Latin *soror*, Lith. *sesuõ* id.)> Common Celtic **swehūr* f. 'sister', cf. Old Irish *siur* f. 'sister'; Welsh *chwaer*, Old Cornish *huir*, Middle Cornish *hoer*, Breton *c'hoar* f. id. (Pokorny 1959: 1051); Gaulish (instr.-soc. pl.) *suiorebe* 'with the sisters' (Lambert 1997: 105-106; Matasović 2009: 364). The Gaulish form derives from Common Celtic **swehor-e-bi(s)* and IE. dial. **swesor-e-bhi(s)* or **swesr̥-bhi(s)*.

> 8. Early Celtic **esoks* 'salmon' (cf. Latin *esox* 'a kind of fish') > OIr. *eó* (gen. sg. *iach*) m. 'salmon'; MW. *ehawc*, Welsh *eog*, OCorn. *ehoc*, MBret. *eheuc*, Bret. *eoc* id. (Lewis & Pedersen 1937: 17; Matasović 2009: 119).

> 9. IE. **mesəlā* f. 'blackbird' (cf. Lat. *merula* f. id.) > Brittonic Celtic **mehalkā* f. 'blackbird'; MWelsh *mwyalch* f., OCorn. *moelh* (gl. merula), Bret. *moualc'h* id. (Lewis & Pedersen 1937: 17; Matasović 2009: 268).

It is highly probable that the intervocal spirant **-s-* was also lost in Celtiberian, as suggested by the following instance:

> 10. The genitive singular ending of the *o*-stem nouns in Celtiberian is represented by *-o*. In our opinion, it can derive from Celtic **-oho* and IE. **-oso* vs. **-osyo*, cf. OInd. *-asya*; Faliscan and OLat. dial. *-osio*; Venetic *-oiso*, Umbrian *-es*, *-eis* (< **-oiso* < IE. **-osyo*); Gk. Mycenaean *-o-jo*, Homeric *-oĩo* and *-oo*, Doric *-ω*, Attic *-oυ*. It is possible that the Celtiberian ending *-o* [evidently the long vowel *ō*] originated from the contraction of two short vowels [ŏ+ŏ]. The contracted vowel had to be different from the

reflex of IE. *ō, which appears as Celtiberian -u in the final position, as well as in Common Celtic (*ū in the final position, but *ā initially and medially).

Intervocal *-s- is lost also in Lusitanian, as it is documented by the following comparisons:

11. Lusit. LAEBO or LAEPO dat. pl. ('to the Lahes = Lares') < IE. dial. *Lās-e-bhos, cf. Lat. Lāribus, OLat. Lāsibus dat. pl. ('to the Lares'). This interpretation was first suggested by Witczak (1999: 69; 2005: 87, 262).

12. The Lusitanian adjectival suffixes *-aicos vs. *-aios (cf. the divine by-names TOIRAECO and TUERAEO attested in the parallel contexts) seem to be analogous to the Greek suffixes -αϊκός and -αῖος, cf. Θηβαϊκός and Θηβαῖος adj. 'Theban'. They derive from IE. *-āsikos and *-āsios, respectively (Witczak 2005: 267-268).

The term *sūnús m. 'son' (cf. OInd. sūnú-, Avestan hūnuš, Gothic sunus, Old Nordic sunr, OE. sunu; Lith. sūnùs, OChSl. synъ and so on) is not attested in Insular Celtic, though some related forms appeared both in Goidelic (cf. OIr. suth 'fruit, offspring' < Common Celtic *sutu- id.; Pokorny 1959: 913; Wodtko, Irslinger, Schneider 2008: 617; Matasović 2009: 359-360) and Bryttonic (cf. Welsh hogen 'Mädchen / girl' < Common Celtic *sukā; Pokorny 1959: 913; Wodtko, Irslinger, Schneider 2008: 617).

It is well known fact that the Indo-European names for 'son' and 'daughter' have been replaced in numerous West Indo-European (i.e. Italo-Celtic) languages (see Lejeune 1968; Hamp 1973). The words for 'boy' and 'girl' are also naturally used from the parents' point of view. Buck (1949: 105-106) demonstrate the change on the basis of the following examples:

13. Lat. fīlius m. 'son' (orig. 'their own', cf. Lydian bilis 'his own');

14. Lat. (g)nātus m. 'son' (liter. 'born in').

15. OIr. macc (o-stem m.) 'son', Ogamic MAQQI (gen. sg.) 'of the son', Irish mac, Welsh mab, Breton mab 'son' (Matasović 2008: 253-254), orig. 'boy, youth'.

16. Lat. filia, Venetic vhilia, Messapic bilia (dimin. biliuva), Alb. bijë 'daughter' (orig. 'their own').

17. Lat. (g)nāta f. 'daughter' (liter. 'born in').

18. Ogam *INIGENA*; OIr. *ingen*, Irish *ingheann* 'daughter' (orig. 'born in, native', cf. Lat. *indigena* f. 'native'; Matasović 2009: 157-158).

19. Welsh *merch*, Breton *merc'h* 'daughter' (orig. 'maiden, girl', cf. Lith. *mergà* f. 'girl'; Matasović 2009: 267).

Jordán Cólera (2004: 170-171) discusses the innovative character of Celtiberian family vocabulary, quoting:

20. Cib. *kentis* m. 'son', cf. OIcel. *kind* 'family, kind', German *Kind* n. 'child'.

However, the primitive Indo-European term for 'daughter' appears in the Continental Celtic languages (with residual traces also in Goidelic), as well as in some Italic dialects:

21. Celtiberian *tuateres* (nom. pl.) 'daughters', *tuateros* (gen. sg.) 'of the daughter' (Hamp 1996; Jordán Cólera 2004: 171), Gaulish *duxtīr* 'daughter', Old Irish *Der-* in some archaic forms (O'Brien 1956; Hamp 1975; Rubio Orecilla 1999-2000; Matasović 2009: 109-110); Oscan *fútir* 'daughter' (< IE. **dhuĝₐ₂tēr* f. 'daughter', cf. Greek θυγάτηρ, OInd. *duhitár-*, OChSl. *dъšti* f. id. and so on).

Also the original term for 'son' has been preserved for a time in the ancient Indo-European languages of the Hispanic Peninsula. Blanca Prósper (2005: 182) discusses the personal name EBURSUNOS, attested in nom. sg. in a Celtiberian tablet from Botorrita (K.1.3), saying that it can be treated as a compound meaning 'son of the yew / hijo del tejo' or 'son of the boar / hijo del jabalí' (< **eburo-sūnos* with an early syncope of the first *-o-* and the regular preservation of *-s-* after the liquid **r*). She abandoned this interpretatation, emphasizing that there is no evidence for the preservation of the primitive Indo-European name of 'son' in the Ancient Hispania (Celtiberian introduced an innovative term *kentis* m. 'son'), even if the personal name SUNUA is registered fifteen times in the western part of the Hispanic Peninsula (cf. Vallejo Ruiz 2005: 400-402). However, it is worth noting that the old name for 'son' could be preserved in some archaic names such as EQUEUNUBOS or EBURSUNOS, see especially Old Irish *Der-*.

It is therefore probable that the original Indo-European term for 'son' (IE. **sūnús*) was preserved in the Hispano-Celtic or Lusitanian linguistic area, at least at the teritory of the ancient Asturians. The attested non-Latin form EQUEUNU<u>B</u>(O) (dat. pl.) may be securily interpreted as 'to the sons (riding) on the horse'.

3. Conclusion

It should be concluded that the inscriptional phrase DEIS EQUEUNUBO had to refer to the Celtic (or Lusitanian) twin gods. The term EQUE(h)UNU seems a descriptive by-name of the Celtic divine twins, like Vedic *Aśvināu* (liter. 'two horse-like [deities]'), Greek Διόσκουροι (liter. 'Zeus' boys') or Etruscan *Tinascliniiaras* (liter. 'to the sons of [the sky-god] Tin').

We believe that the peculiar name of the divine twin brethren in the Continental Celtic languages should be reconstructed as *Alkoi* (see Witczak 1997). This name is perfectly attested in Tacitus' description of Germania (*Germ*. 43: "Among the Nahanarvali is shown a grove, the seat of a prehistoric ritual: a priest presides in female dress; but according to the Roman interpretation the gods recorded in this fashion are Castor and Pollux: that at least is the spirit of the godhead here recognised, whose name is the Alci (*nomen Alcis*). No images are in use; there is no sign of foreign superstition: nevertheless they worship these deities as brothers and as youths" – translation by Maurice Hutton [Tacitus 1914/1963: 325]). It appears also in the Lepontic and Gaulish personal names (cf. Lepontic *Alkouinos*, Gaul. *Alcovindos*, liter. '[who is] white like the Alci'), as well as in the Hispanic toponymy (cf. *Alcobendas*, a place name near Madrid, orig. *Alko-bendā[s]* 'hillock[s] of the Alci'). The Old Celtic name of the divine twins (Celtic *Alkoi*, Lat. *Alcī*) is undoubtedly related to that of the Siculian twin gods (Gk. Παλικοί, Lat. *Palicī*), whose origin was discussed separately (Witczak, Zawiasa 2004; 2006). Both these theonyms derive from the Indo-European archetype *Palikoi* (pl.) or *Palikō* (du.), cf. also a divine pair of *Pales* in Latin. The syncope of the short vowel -*ĭ*- seems a quite common process, whereas the loss of the initial *p*- is such a phonological feature, which appears exclusively in the Celtic languages. Thus the Celtic origin of the Alci is securely confirmed by the etymology of their own name.

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