FIVE CELTIC TOWN-NAMES IN CENTRAL SPAIN

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Se proponen etimologías célticas para explicar los antiguos topónimos Attacum, Bravum, Centobriga, Ocelodurum y Sentica.

The author proposes Celtic etymologies for the ancient town-names Attacum, Bravum, Centobriga, Ocelodurum and Sentica.

The central plateau of the Iberian Peninsula boasted in antiquity many towns with Celtic names. Some of these, such as *Segobriga* and *Uxama*, have a transparent Celtic etymology; in less obvious cases, consultation of Holder's treasury (which must be used with caution) will usually reveal roots and parallels[1]. But there are others that have not been satisfactorily explained:

1.   *ATTACUM*. Forms: *Attacon* (Ptol. 2.6.57), *Attacc(ensis)* (*CIL* II 4189). Holder lists the name without offering an etymology; Schulten calls it Iberian, from the same root as the river *Atax* (Aude) in southern Gaul[2]. However, the Celtic personal name *Atto/Atta* occurs frequently in the epigraphy of Gaul and central Spain[3], and the suffix *-acum* (Latinized form of Gaulish *-acon*; the equivalent neuter

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[1]   A. Holder, *Alt-Celtischer Sprachschatz*, 3 vols. (Leipzig 1896-1907), hereafter cited as "Holder".

ending in Hispano-Celtic would be *-acom) is common in Celtic place-names in Gaul and Britain. *Att-acom therefore appears to be a Hispano-Celtic toponym formed from a personal name.

2. *BRAVUM*. Form: *Brauon* (Ptol. 2.6.51). Holder's gloss "Bovon?" is unnecessary[4]. Montenegro rightly points out that the root cannot be Latin, but his suggested parallel, Greek *brabeion* "victory prize", is fantastic[5]. Rivet and Smith derive the British toponym *Bravoniacum* from *bravon, *braun* "quern", alluding either to a quernstone quarry or to a place full of quern-shaped stones[6]. This should also be the root of Ptolemy's *Brauon* (Hispano-Celtic *Bravom*). The name might equally refer to a quern-shaped hill on which the town was situated.

3. *CENTOBRIGA*. Form: *Centobriga* (Val. Max. 5.1.5). Celtic *cento-/*canto-* means "hundred"[7], but "hundred-fortress" makes little sense. Nor is Schulten's explanation "Burg des Cento" very enlightening[8]: the name Cento is unknown in Spain. However, there is another Celtic root *cento-/*cinto-*, meaning "first" (Irish *cétne*, Breton *kent*, Welsh *cynt*, Gaulish names in *Cintu-*), from IE *ken-* "arise, begin"[9]. Thus *Centobriga* ought to mean "foremost fortress".

4. *OCELODURUM*. Forms: *Octoduron* (Ptol. 2.6.49), *Ocelo Duri* (*Itin. Ant.* 434.6, 439.10), *Ocelodorum* (Rav. 319.4). Schulten, followed by Tovar, retains Ptolemy's reading, on the grounds that *octo-* is good Celtic[10]. However, the element *ocelo-*, meaning "headland, promontory, spur" occurs frequently in Celtic toponymy, e.g. *Alaunocelum, Iulocelum, Cinctocelum*[11]. *Ocelus* is also attested as an indigenous theonym in Britain and Lower Germany, syncretized with Mars[12]. Moreover, though *octo-* may be Celtic, it is difficult to see how it could change to *ocelo-* in classical sources[13]; the likelier corruption would be for Celtic

2 Holder vol. I, col. 274; A. Schulten, "Attacum", *RE* II,2 (1896) col. 2153.
3 *CIL* XIII, Indices p. 26; J. Untermann, *Elementos de un atlas antroponímico de la Hispania antigua* (Madrid 1965) 63-64.
4 Holder vol. I, col. 622.
5 A. Montenegro Duque, *Historia de Burgos*, I (Burgos 1985) 246.
6 A. L. F. Rivet and C. Smith, *The Place-names of Roman Britain* (London 1979) 275-76. They do not cite our Spanish example.
7 Irish *cét*, Welsh *cant*, Breton *kant*, Hispano-Celtic *cantom* (Botorrita tablet, line A4), cf. Latin *centum*.
8 A. Schulten, *Geschichte von Numantia* (München 1933) 67.
9 9 H. Lewis and H. Pedersen, *A Concise Comparative Celtic Grammar*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen 1974) 192; D.E. Evans, *Gaulish Personal Names* (Oxford 1967) 179.
10 A. Schulten, "Octodurum", *RE* XVII,2 (1937) col. 1868; A. Tovar, *Iberische Landeskunde* II,3 (Baden-Baden 1989) 358.
11 Rivet and Smith, *Place-names* 246.
12 Holder, vol. II, col. 827.
13 There is a legitimate Octodurum in Switzerland, but in that case the sources (Caesar, Pliny, Ptolemy, *Itin. Ant.*, Rav., Tab. Peut., Not. Gall.) unanimously read "Octo-". Recollection of this Octodurum may have misled Ptolemy (or his copyists) in the spelling of the Spanish toponym.

ocelo- to become *octo-* by attraction to the Greco-Roman numeral. But while *Ocelo-* is to be preferred, I cannot support Cortés' view that Ptolemy's reading is a corruption of *Ocelo Duri*[14]. That form appears only in the Antonine Itinerary and seems to reflect popular etymology, deriving the toponym from the river Durius (some 19th century scholars went so far as to read *Ocellum Duri*, as if the name were completely Latin[15]!). Both Ptolemy and the Ravenna cosmographer suggest that the correct ending is *-durum* (**duro-* "fort"), attested as a Celtic suffix in such toponyms as *Boiodurum* and *Sorviodurum* in Upper Germany, *Brivodurum*, *Divodurum* and *Icciodurum* in Gaul, and *Mutudurum* in Celtiberia (*-um* being a Latinized spelling of Gaulish *-on*, Hispano-Celtic *-om*)[16]. The name should therefore be understood as **Ocelo-durom*, "promontory fort".

5. *SENTICA.* Form: invariably *Sentice* (Ptol. 2.6.49; *Itin. Ant.* 434.3; *Rav.* 319.8), but final -η in Ptolemy can represent *a* (e.g. *Cordube* in 2.4.9), and in the Antonine Itinerary the next line is "Salmantice", i.e. *Salmantica* in the locative; so the nominative form is probably *Sentica*. Holder relates this toponym to Old Irish *setig* "female companion"[17]; one could also consider Celtic **seno-* "old", whence Old Irish *sentu* "age". However, the likeliest derivation is Celtic **sento-* "path" (seen in toponyms *Clau-sentum, Gabro-sentum*; cf. French *sentier*) from IE **sento-* "go, travel; way", plus the toponymic suffix *-ica* as in British *Aesica*,etc. (cf. Old Irish *-ech*, Breton *-ek*)[18]. Thus *Sentica* should mean "trail place", i.e. road station, as befits its appearance in the itineraries.

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[14] M. Cortés y López, *Diccionario geográfico-histórico de la España antigua*, I (Madrid 1835) 225, followed by Holder and others (cf. Tovar, *loc. cit.*).

[15] E.g. P. Madoz, *Diccionario geográfico, histórico y estadístico de España*, XVI (Madrid 1850) 501; C. Fernández Duro, *Memorias históricas de la ciudad de Zamora*, I (Madrid 1882) 112.

[16] J. Whatmough, *The Dialects of Ancient Gaul* (Cambridge 1970) 563 (*s.v. -doro-*); A. Schulten, "Mutudurum", *RE* XVI,1 (1933) col. 979. On *-om* as the neuter nominative singular ending of *o*-stem nouns in Hispano-Celtic, see J.F. Eska, *Towards an Interpretation of the Hispano-Celtic Inscription of Botorrita* (Innsbruck 1989) 160.

[17] Holder, vol. II, col. 1501.

[18] Rivet and Smith, *Place-names* 309 (*sento-*), 242 (*-ica*); on the former, cf. J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern/München 1959) 908. The nominative **Gabrosentum* is reconstructed by Rivet and Smith from attested forms *Gabrosenti, Gabrocentio*. On *-ico/-ica* toponyms in Spain, see U. Schmoll, *Die Sprachen der vorkeltischen Indogermanen Hispaniens und das Keltiberische* (Wiesbaden 1959) 53; and on the use of this suffix in Hispano-Celtic ethnic adjectives, cf. Eska, *Towards an Interpretation,* 156-57.