Vepocunavos and Corieltauvi

Markey, T. L., Daphne Nash Briggs and Chris Rudd

The inscription reviewed here comes from a *"Vepo"* gold stater of the British Corieltauvi. It was recently found "in the Mansfield area of Nottingham" (see the attached images). The complete legend is **VEPO CNAVOS**. The second line of ABC 1944 and 1947 (same tribe, same period) can be read as **CVNAVO**, with a *V* and *N* ligature (note how the *N* on ABC 1944 and 1947 leans to the left to incorporate the *V*). Therefore, there is no doubt but what *cunavo* is the correct reading. This interpretation yields a composite name, *VEPOCUNAVOS*, found on a gold coin of the Corieltauvi, northern tribal neighbors of the Iceni, dating from ca. 30-40 AD.

The initial component of this name is **VEPO**-, representing Celtic *vepos*, which derives from **wek^wo*-, reflecting the widely attested IE root **wek^w*- that designated 'word, voice, to speak' (*IEW* 1135-1136); cf. Lat. *vōx*, Gk. ἔπος. In Celtic, *vepo*- is not only found in British, but also in Gaulish, as well as Galatian and Ogham Irish, and it is typically the initial component of compound personal names, e.g. Gaul. *Vepolitanos* 'he whose word carries far'; see Delamarre (2003: 313-314; 2017: 134-135).

British **CVNAVOS** is a Celtic hapax that appears to be a compound of **CVN** + **AVOS** with **CVN** for *cun*- 'dog'. Cf. Goidelic *con*- for 'dog, canine' as in the Irish hero's name *Conchobar* 'lover of canines, dog lover' with Goidelic lowering of original -*u*- to -*o*- before a syllable containing *a*. Note OIr. *Conchend* 'doghead' in the Irish annals with *Con*- < **cun-a*-. Onomastic usage of *cun*- was well established in Celtic, particularly hypocoristically as in Brit. **CVNIGNI** for **Cunignos* 'whelp'. The element **CVN**- for *cun*- (or *cun-o*-) has nothing to do with a supposed **CVN**- 'high'; see McClure (1910:55).

This segmentation of **CVNAVOS** isolates a second element -**AVOS**, which is not to be confused with OIr. *abann*, Wesh *afon* (*avon*), Bret. *aven* 'river (**abonā*) 'river' from an IE **ap*- / **ab*- 'waters' (in a religious sense), cf. Lat. *amnis* < **abnis*. Rather, the second component points to Celtic *auos* 'grandfather' as in Gaul. *An-auos* 'without a descendant', cf. Lat. *proavus* 'great grandfather' and see Delamarre (2003: s.v. *aua*) and (2017: Ch. 24: La souche **au̯o*- en gaulois : 'petit-fils' ou 'aïeul').

However, in Celtic **auos* (< PIE **h₂euh₂o*-) as 'grandfather' underwent a semantic shift to 'grandson' due to the widespread belief that the soul of the grandfather was reincarnated in the grandson; see Benveniste (1969:1.234-235). Just so OHG *enencheli* 'grandson' is etymologically a diminutive of OHG *ano* 'grandfather'. We may add that recently Olsen (2019:150-151) has contended that **h₂euh₂o*- referred to both the paternal and the maternal grandfather, whereby the **népōts* 'grandson' (Lat. *nepos*) of family B is identical with the nephew (sister's son) of the 'avunculus' of family A.

Significantly, what we have here onomastically is apparently a British Celtic colloquial use of *cun*- 'dog' as a hypocoristic prefix.

The semantics of *cunavos* are, however, not altogether clear, but would seem to mean 'puppy grandson' or 'grandson whelp', and therefore Vepocunavos seemingly signified 'Vepo's whelp grandson' or similar and thus the member of a third generation in a Corieltauvian dynasty.

It is reasonable to assume that the initial *Cori*- of *Corieltauvi* derives from IE **kori*- the composition stem of **koryo*- 'army' as in OIc. *herjann* 'Odin's byname as leader of the raging hosrt' < Gmc. **harjanaz* < IE **koryono-s*; cf. OIr. *cuire* 'army, troop'; see Delamarre (2003:125-126; 2017: 272-273). Moreover, as Benveniste (1969:1.113-114) convincingly argued with reference to related Gk. κοίρανος 'ruler, commander,' this is the person who

issues orders, lit. 'the voice of the army', so Vepos as commander … ***VEPO COR F*** = (possibly) *Vepogenus Coroti ci filius*. As a seemingly (archaeologically inferred?) loosely federated group, perhaps the Corieltauvi (cf. Gaul. *Vo-corii*, *Tri-corii*, *Petru-corii*) were not just one, two, three or four troops (armies, bands of warriors), but a major single military force.

Koch (2006: 1159) suggests that *Corieltauvi* should be emended as *Coriel*[*i*]*tavi* and thus reference the Gaulish goddess *Litavis* (*Litauis*, *Litavi* at Aignay-le- Duc and Mâlain, and onomastically as *Llydaw*). However, one questions the justification for this insertion. Are there supporting analogous instances of such syncope? A text must speak for itself and not be seasoned to taste. Tomlin's (1982-1983) reading (**[CIV|ITATISCORIELTAVVORUM**[…]]) of this tribal name's unique occurrence on a tile graffito archaeologically retrieved in 1965 from ancient *Tripontium* (in Churchover, Warwickshire) must be considered authoritative. We may now proceed to grammaticalize **CORIELTAVVORUM** as the genitive plural of *Corieltauvi* which may reasonably be segmented as *cori-el-tauvi* and securely interpret *cori-* as 'army'.

The next component, *-el-* , is surely the residue of Celtic **elu-* 'much, many, multitude', cf. OIr. *il* 'many', Goth. *filu* 'great, very much', OIc. *fjöl-* 'much, manifold' < Gmc. **felu-* < PIE **p(e)lh₁-u-* ; see Schrijver (1995: 187). Cf., further, W *El-* in names such as OW *Elguoret* in the *Liber Landavensis*.

This leaves the final component *-tauvi* (~ *-avi*) with <uv> for /w/ at a time when vernacular Latin was often pronouncing *V* as a fricative (sometimes actually written as <B>). This final component is obviously comparable to (M)W *taw-* (verbal noun *tewi*) 'silence', cf. OIr. *tó*, Mod. Bret. *taw* 'silence', and frequently in toponyms as chronicled by Delamarre (2003:293), perhaps predominantly quiet locations and border rivers (so Italy's fiume Taggia). (M)W *taw* derives from Celtic **tau(s)o-* < PIE **teh₂sws-*; see *IEW* 1056-1057, Matasović (2009: 373) and cf. Sw. *tyst* 'quiet' < Gmc. **þusti-*. Apparently cognate is Hitt. *tuhu(s)siyezzi* 'awaits' to Luw. *tuhusiya* 'to keep silent, quiet (?)' may derive from **tuHs-* as a metathetic variant of **th₂us-*, but Kloekhorst (2008: 894) is skeptical. Nevertheless, *LIV* (642-643) persists with PIE **th₂eus-* > **tu̯s* - ~ (perhaps a fudge factor) **th₂us-* > * *tuh₂s-* > * *tūs-*. Skt. *tūṣṇī́m* 'quietly' must indeed reflect **tuHs-*.

A plausible gloss for *Corieltauvi* would appear to be "the great silent host" of which *Vepos* as 'the word, the voice' would have been the speaker. We note that *Corieltauvi* is a 'triad' (*cori-el-tauvi*), and triadic thinking was particularly central to Celtic culture: the triquetra of plastic art and numerous appearances in literature and law, *The Triads of Ireland* and virtually countless other instances; see Fergus Kelly's account in his Sir John Rhŷs Memorial Lecture for 2003 (2004)

That a third generation ruler of the Corieltauvi --- yet another triad --- had the epithet *cunavos* referring to a puppy was not by chance, but a calculated oblique reference to canines and their licking as healing and the ruler as healer. Recall that *Conchobar* was a lover of dogs. Then, too, for example, dogs as healers surely played a role in the Gallo-Roman cult at Lydney Park, Gloucestershire. Indeed, the Irish *Audacht Morainn*, a *Speculum Principium* of advice to a king, tells us that *Is tre fír flathemon mortlithi márslóg márlóchet / di doínib dingbatar* (§ 12) 'It is through the ruler's truth that plagues, a great host, and great lightnings are warded off from people'. This is a triad of of woes in which OIr. *márslóg* 'host' glosses an OW *coriel* as contained in the tribal name analyzed here.

It is by etymologizing the scant verbal tokens captured on Britain's early coins that vistas of insight are opened on its time-shrouded culture.

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