

# Three notes on the Gododdin<sup>1</sup>

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## *I. guannannon & gwananhon*

The word *guannannon* / *gwananhon* is attested three times in *Canu Aneirin*, that is in CA 436 *guannannon girth med guryt muihiam* ‘in return for the mead of Gwanannon, of greatest valour’, CA 919 *Gwananhon byt ved* ‘in Gwanannon is his grave’ and CA 829 *dreis gwananhon* ‘the oppressor of Gwanannon’. It is thus found in A and B<sup>2</sup> versions of the text, and judging by the translation of A. O. H. Jarman (1988, 28, 49 and 45), we are dealing here with a place-name. It was considered as such in major standard treatments of the *Gododdin* by I. Williams<sup>2</sup> and A. O. H. Jarman,<sup>3</sup> and slightly differently – but still as a geographical name – by K. H. Jackson.<sup>4</sup> Different views regarding interpretation of *guannannon* / *gwananhon* have been exposed also, and John Lloyd-Jones (1931–63, 613) lists it as a plural form of *gwanan* ‘battle, campaign’. His selection of the singular form of the noun is, however, based on misinterpretation of two lines of Welsh medieval poetry. The first of them is CA 981 *gwryt vronn gurvan gwanan arnaw*, and as I. Williams (1938, 305) noted, the verbal form *gwanan* here stands for *gwanant*. The second example Lloyd-Jones quotes is found in the line *Lluryglas gwanas gwanan a hawl*, but in the modern edition of the poetry of Einion ap Gwgon the word is provided with the capital initial letter and the editor prefers seeing here a place-name (Gruffydd 1995, 255 (text) and note on p. 267). For that R. Geraint Gruffydd also takes into consideration the next illustration supplied by Lloyd-Jones, who tentatively refers there to the last component of the place-name *Nant Bryn Gwanon*. In fact it corresponds to Medieval Welsh *Gwanan* (Stephenson 2016, 307–9). This example is isolated and purely onomastic, and therefore should also be removed.

Recently the whole problem was discussed by J. T. Koch (1997, 140), who noted that *guannannon* / *gwananhon* is used

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Ymddengys fel enw lle, cf. o ran ffurf *Trisantona*, hen enw’r afon a roes *Trent* yn Saesneg. Yn Gymraeg cawsid *Traeanhon*; a chredaf mai’r un enw yw *Trannon*, *Tarannon*, afon yn Sir Drefaldwyn, a red i Hafren’

(Williams 1938, 179). References to the quotation of the *Gododdin* are provided for lines in this edition (CA).

<sup>3</sup> ‘*Bancarw, Bryn Hyddwn, Eleirch Fre, Gwanannon* [...] were all probably places in the north, whether within or without Gododdin territory, but they have hitherto defied all attempts to locate them’ (Jarman 1988, xxxv–vi).

<sup>4</sup> ‘Gwananon is evidently a region, [...] it appears to be on the borders of Gododdin’ (Jackson 1969, 142). A similar approach is taken by Rowland 1995, 37–8, who places it beyond Gododdin’s borders.

always as a place of violence (*treis*) or death or burial (*bēð*). Possibly a cpd. of Celt.  $\sqrt{gwen}$ - ‘wounding, slaying, &c.’ and *ant*- ‘border’, hence ‘violence at the border(s)’. Alternatively, the second element may be cognate to OIr *néit* ‘battle’ < Celt. *\*nanti-*; see LEIA N-7. A place-name with Britt. *nant* ‘stream’ is also possible.

Listing his inventory of possibilities, Professor Koch opts, although tentatively, for the meaning ‘violence at the border(s)’, which is manifested in his translations of CA 436 as ‘[?] violence at the borders was payment for the mead’ and CA 829 ‘[there came] the violence of border fighting’. This interpretation has been considered highly plausible by P. Dunshea (2013, 97) in his most recent discussion of this form, who also observes that

[s]ince *Y Gododdin* is the product of a long and enormously complicated process of transmission, Koch is quite justified in keeping an open mind about the nature of place-names in the text. The gap between original composition and thirteenth-century manuscript is an enormous one, and it is almost inevitable that circumlocutions with a localised usage were misunderstood or marginalised by later generations. The testimony of the A text (assuming Koch is correct) suggests that *gwannannon* was still understood to have something to do with ‘frontiers’ some time after the first appearance of *Y Gododdin*.

It is very reasonable to agree with J. T. Koch on his formal treatment of the structure of the word, which is analysed as *guann-* & *annon* (resp. *gwan-* & *anhon*). A different parsing to segment reflexes of *\*uo-* (on which see recently Russell 2015), *\*-tiHon-* (Stüber 1998, 120–43) or the putative Br. *\*santōn-* ‘?path’ (discussed in conjunction with river-name *Trannon* (Mont.) in Owen, Morgan 2007, lxvi and 462) are unlikely. However, I should like to suggest a different interpretation of the first part of this alleged compound. Although a verbal noun *gwan* continuing Celt.  $\sqrt{gwen}$ - ‘wounding, slaying, &c.’ is indeed well attested and presents no problems from the viewpoint of Celtic historical linguistics (Schumacher et al. 2004, 366–7, for the recent discussion of some related verbal forms in *Canu Aneirin* see Schumacher 2017, 317–22, 327–9 and 356–64), instead the homonymous adjective *gwan* ‘weak, feeble’ may be identified as the initial part of the compound. The word has a perfect Celtic pedigree, cf. Old Cornish *guan* gl. *debilis* or Early Irish *fann* ‘weak, helpless’, and compounds containing adjectives followed by a substantive (*karmadhāraya*) are well known in Welsh, cf. *briwġig* ‘lacerated flesh’ or *deheubarth* ‘Southern Wales’, both already in the ‘Book of Taliesin’, see Zimmer 2000, 35–53. The same morphological model is known not only for appellatives, but for early toponyms, too. As O. Padel (2013, 12) summarises,

[n]ames composed of two elements are usually true compounds, having the qualifying element in first position as in the Germanic languages, for example Malvern ‘bare-hill’ (Wo), Candover ‘fair-waters’ (Ha), Lich(field) ‘grey-wood’ (St). These compounds stand in contrast with the name-phrases which provide the overwhelming majority of place-names in all the Neo-Celtic regions (Wales, Cornwall, Brittany, Ireland, much of Scotland, and the Isle of Man), and which have the generic element in first position, and the qualifying one second.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Cf. also: ‘there was a change in how place-names were made, in all the Celtic languages, in about the fifth to sixth centuries; the implication is that the type

of a name therefore provides some indication of when it was created. Exceptions to this principle, in both directions, are sufficiently well attested to make it

Following the analysis of the second component of the compounded form as suggested by J. T. Koch and thus seeing in it the word for ‘border’, we arrive then to the interpretation of *guannannon* / *gwananhon* as ‘weak border(s) *vel sim.*’

Border(s) are mentioned in the Gododdin on quite a few occasions, and notably various synonyms are used to denote them, cf. e.g., CA 590 *gododin stre stre ancat*, CA 862 (B) *icinim aphereym rac stre* (= CA 856 (A) *kynnif aber. rac ystre*), or CA 419 *ef diodes gormes ef dodes fin*,<sup>6</sup> and it is worth remarking that words *ffin* and (y)*stre* are of Latin origins (< *finis* and *striga*, Lewis 1943, 39 and 48). Certainly, the weak border is the place where violence with the neighbours normally takes place, and it leads sometimes to death and consequently burial. Thus, this interpretation operates in the same semantic sphere as was proposed by J. T. Koch, but the same underlying motivation comes from a different concept of the meaning of the word. Generally, weak border was a trouble for various tribes and nations in the times before the Gododdin was composed, and still is now, and strengthening of the borders reduces violence and keeps people alive. Apart from this universal explanation one should also take into consideration the fact that CA LXXIV contains a visible juxtaposition of *gwananhon* with the word for ‘borders’ (translation quoted from Jarman 1988, 131, bold script is added):

CA 912–23	Jarman, <i>Y Gododdin</i> , l. 698–709
Keint amnat am dina dy gell.	I sang a skilful song about the destruction of thy dwelling
ac ystauell yt uydei.	And the hall that was.
dyrlydei med melys; maglawr	It deserved mead, sweet, ensnaring,
gwrys, aergynlys gan wawr.	The attack on the champion’s court at dawn.
ket lwys lloegrwys lliwedawr.	A handsome gift to the hosts of the English,
ry benyt ar hyt yd attawr.	Too great a penance while their presence was allowed.
eillt wyned klywer e arderched.	A man of Gwynedd, his excellence will be known,
<b>gwananhon byt ved</b>	<b>In Gwanannon is his grave.</b>
savwy cadavwy gwyned	The steadfast war-avid one of Gwynedd,
tarw bedin treis trin; teyrned.	Bull of an army, violent in the conflict of kings
kyn kywesc daear kyn gorwed;	Before earth’s resting-place, before burial:
<b>but orfun gododin bed</b>	<b>The borderland of Gododdin is his grave.</b>

Nevertheless, the usual restrictions and caveats should be applied here, and the treatment of a fragment of an Estonian runic song related to Livonian settlement areas – example deliberately taken from non-Celtic and non-Indo-European tradition – will suffice for the illustration. Discussing the lines

Koda tee sina kuiva peale,	Build your house on the dry [place],
Saun tee Salatsi jõele,	make the sauna on the Salatsi River,
Rehi Riia uulitsale.	the threshing barn on a street of Riga

Kristi Salve (2016, 89) carefully observes:

dangerous if applied rigidly; but as a rough guide it remains useful’ (p. 12).

<sup>6</sup> Translated, correspondingly, as ‘at Gododdin’s frontier; the frontier was held’ (Koch 1997, 3) / ‘the border of the Gododdin, hand of the border’ (Isaac

2004, 145), ‘to strive with a chieftain before the boundary’ (Jarman 1988, 44) and ‘he drove out the enemy, he set a boundary’ (Jarman 1988, 28). For the rich vocabulary of borders in the Gododdin see Dunshea 2013, 93–5 with further examples.

It is obvious that the word *kuiva* (dry) has been used instead of the Koiva (Latv. Gauja) River, which would be an appropriate counterpart to the Salatsi (Latv. Salaca). It is impossible to establish afterwards whether the word was pronounced this way by the singer, or whether the writer misheard it, but apparently, it was not considered a place name [...] It is still quite likely that the Koiva river was the intended meaning, as the Salatsi is used in the parallel verse.

*Mutatis mutandis*, the same attitudes are certainly relevant for the discussion of this particular fragment of the Gododdin, and many similar passages of Early Welsh poetry as well. In this respect one may also recall that '[p]laces have become words, perhaps always were words' (Ó Coileáin 1993, 56).

The second part of the compound is identified by J. T. Koch as *ant-* 'border'. The word is not attested in Welsh or other Brittonic languages for that matter, and obviously was reconstructed on the basis of other Celtic and Indo-European idioms. Indeed, R. Matasović's *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic* contains two relevant entries, Common Celtic *\*anto-* 'border, limit' illustrated by Gaulish *antom* (inscription from Vercelli) and a number of onomastic examples, as the ethnonym *Anto-broges*, as well as *\*antono-* 'forehead', illustrated by OIr. *étan* gl. *frons* (Matasović 2009, 39). See Delamarre 2009, 66–7 for the collection of Ancient Celtic examples illustrating *\*anto-*. Our reconstructed etymon goes back to PIE *\*h<sub>2</sub>ento-* 'border' (cf. OInd. *ánta-* 'Ende, Grenze, Rand', cf. Dunkel 2014, 31), and therefore *\*ant-* segmented from *guannannon* / *gwananhon* adds to this rather meagre dossier of its continuations in Celtic. It should be noted, however, that for the reconstruction of Common Celtic *\*anto-* apart from onomastic evidence, interpretation of which is conjectural by default, the only appellative used is Gaulish *anto-*.<sup>7</sup> It is found solely in the bilingual inscription from Vercelli in the so-called Lugano script (ATOM, earlier seen also as ATOŚ), and the reading of the last letter has caused a number of difficulties, which do not concern us here. What is obvious is that the word corresponds to *finis campo* (dat.) of the Latin part of the inscription, and in this phrase, it is the equivalent of *finis*. This traditional and nowadays almost universally accepted approach to the analysis of the word provides an incredibly useful component for the etymological jigsaw. A different interpretation of the passage belongs to K. Witczak (2002, 104), who thinks that *anto-* of the Celtic part of the inscription corresponds to the second component of the Latin phrase *finis campo* in view of Armenian *and* 'field'. With this approach *guannannon* / *gwananhon* turns into 'weak field', and we are aware of Welsh field-names containing the adjective *gwan*, as *Arecoch gwan* in Caernarfonshire attested first circa 1840 (Grid Reference SH 77931 65399). However, following this line of analysis it should be stressed that then all the underlying semantic motivation of the occurrence of the appellative in the Gododdin is lost, and it resembles rather a toponym. Place-names with *gwan* are rare in Welsh as well as in the other Brittonic languages, but nevertheless they do occur. Commenting on Cornish *guan* 'weak' in local toponyms Oliver Padel (1985, 114) noticed that its 'meaning in place names is unclear; in some cases it may be a nickname', but such an approach would have been acceptable at least at face value. However, H. Martirosyan (2010, 72–7) has shown that Armenian *and* 'field' has a different etymology and is rather

<sup>7</sup> For Celtiberian *antos* (not considered by Matasović), formally compared with the attestation from Vercelli, see Wodtko 2000, 29, and Prósper 2011, 250–5 and 264–5.

related to the same set of words as Latin *antae* ‘square pilasters’ (on which see de Vaan 2008, 44–5) and although other opinions may be pronounced on the matter (cf. Dunkel 2014, 31), it should be acknowledged that not a singular language preserving PIE *\*h<sub>2</sub>ento-* has developed the meaning ‘field’ in the inherited word.

Therefore, ‘weak border(s)’ remains more promising as the interpretation of *guannannon* / *gwananhon*. Yet, the latter approach suggests seeing in it a place-name as has been advocated by scholars. If indeed we deal here with the otherwise unrecorded geographical name, there are different ways to analyse it. It is worth noting that it does not find any direct straightforward parallel in Brittonic onomastics. Breton *Gwantenn* may trigger certain associations, but it is in fact, as H. Ar Bihan (1997) has shown, historically connected with W. *pant*, *\*pantenn* > *\*(ar / ur) bantenn* > *\*uantenn* > *wantenn* > *gwantenn*. The river-name element *ant-* associated with the so-called ‘Old-European hydronymy’ discussed by H. Krahe and subsequent generations of scholars may also come to mind, but the component remains difficult and the concept of *Alteuropäisch* itself is not accepted by a number of modern scholars. A different word division within this approach seems itself more likely, taking the second component as W. *nant* ‘river, stream’ (cf. Gerald of Wales, IK 1.3 *Nant etenim rivus dicitur*). If the name contains W. *gwan* ‘weak’ as advocated above, it belongs to a group of geographical names containing *nant* preceded by an adjective, cf. Y Garnant ‘the rough brook’ and the place-name Nantgarw containing adj. *garw* (Owen, Morgan 2007, 160–1), note also hydronyms Nantgarw (Wmffre 2004, 1276), or the stream name *Dunant* in Montgomeryshire and place-name *Denant* in Pembrokeshire (*Dunant*, 1296), which most probably contains *nant* preceded by *du* ‘black, dark’ (see Charles 1992, 654). There are no unproblematic examples, at least to my knowledge, of river-names where the adjective meaning ‘weak’ precedes *nant* (on Hownant see Wmffre 2004, 1255), but its complete antonyms are well represented, e.g., by the second part of *Nant Gwynant* ‘valley of lively streams’ (Owen, Morgan 2007, 339), or by Ffernant, with *ffêr* ‘strong, valiant, lively’ (Charles 1992, 12) and Cadnant in Anglesey was explained by Ifor Williams as a powerfully flowing torrent, see Carr 2015, 86–7. The ‘tranquil’, ‘weak’ (cf. hydronym Ysig in Wales, on which see Wmffre 2004, 1298) or a number of ‘quiet’ rivers in Ancient Celtic (but see also a different view expressed in Isaac 2005, 204) looks like a relevant motivation for a river name.

Apparently, if *guannannon* / *gwananhon* is a place-name denoting ‘weak stream’ *vel sim.*, it deserves an attempt to localise it. Unfortunately, our knowledge of the geographical nomenclature of the ‘Old North’ is totally insufficient for any far-reaching conclusions, and a possible semantic motivation lying behind the geographical name allows for the multitude of geographical objects bearing it. One example will suffice. The settlement-name Οὐινδόγαρα mentioned by Ptolemy is localised in south-west Scotland near Irvine bay (see Rivet, Smith 1979, 501–2) indicated by him as Οὐινδόγαρα κόλπος, and its several interpretations are known. Most scholars have seen British ‘white’ (cf. Welsh *gwyn*, Old Irish *find* ‘id.’, Matasović 2009, 423) in the first component of this compounded name, but the analysis of its second part varies. W. J. Watson saw in it a cognate of Gaelic *gar*, *garan* ‘scrub’, A. L. F. Rivet and C. Smith suggested emendation to *-mara* ‘sea, lake’ or *-cara* ‘rock?’, and A. Breeze, who surveyed this earlier literature and was not satisfied with the analysis presented there draws attention to Irish *gairr* ‘shank’ as a possible related word, thus *Vindogara* ‘white shank’ (see Breeze 2002, 107–8 with further references). This approach, as the author admits, requires emendation of the Ptolomaic attestation to *Vindogaris* in view of the fact that the quoted Irish word is an *i*-stem noun, but as the text



of ‘Geography’ contains a number of obvious corruptions, this correction does not become exceptional. However, it is not necessary at all, as the Gaulish cognate of the Irish word is likely to be an *ā*-stem judging by the borrowed OFr. *gare* ‘leg’ < \**garrā* (see Matasović 2009, 152 for the difficulties pertaining to interpretation of Common Celtic \**garrV*- ‘calf of the leg, shank’).

For our purposes the treatment of Οὐνδόγαπα by G. R. Isaac (2005, 200) is important. First, in view of the attested spellings with -ὐαπα he suggests seeing in the final component of this compounded name -*uara* (to \**uaro*- ‘water, river’, cf. OIr *geir*, W *gwêr* ‘tallow’ < PIE \**h<sub>2</sub>ueh<sub>1</sub>-r-* ‘water’, DCPN: 33). Isaac maintains that forms with the initial gamma may be due to a scribal mistake and notes the possibility of having here two distinctive different names, the suggestion already commented upon in academic literature. Secondly, he aptly pays attention to the variant reading of the toponym as Οὐανδοῦαπα. In this case, he continues, the initial component *uando*- should be compared with W. *gwan* ‘weak’, and therefore the geographical name is interpreted as ‘weak river, stream’ *vel sim.* Results stemming from this analysis may be compared in turn with a possible etymology of *guannannon* / *gwananhon* and arranged in the following table:

components	meaning	<i>guannannon</i> / <i>gwananhon</i>	Οὐανδοῦαπα
initial	‘weak’	<i>gwan</i> -	<i>uando</i> -
Final	‘river’	- <i>nant</i>	-* <i>uaro</i> -

The diagram shows a remarkable semantic parallelism and partial etymological sameness between the place-name and the form in question, and, moreover, the location of Οὐανδοῦαπα / Οὐνδόγαπα in Ayrshire fits the narrative geographically – Aeron is mentioned implicitly in the text, as in CA 241, 824, 987 and 809; for the latter line see now Schumacher 2017, 357–8 and, generally, already Morris-Jones 1918, 76–7. Should we tentatively identify *guannannon* / *gwananhon*, which is then morphologically analysed as *gwan* & *nant*, to which the suffixal -*on* is added, with this settlement in the vicinity of Irvine bay in south-west Scotland? Unfortunately, there are some problems here which do not allow this rare possibility to localise another geographic object in *Canu Aneirin*. Isaac (2005, 200) follows H. Pedersen in tracing W. *gwan* ‘weak’ and the related words to the earlier \**uando*-. Nonetheless, the more common opinion now is that we should postulate a Common Celtic proto-form \**uanno*- ‘weak’, which is viewed as a \**sno*- derivative (see Matasović 2009, 402–3 and cf. de Vaan 2008, 653 for a similar explanation of Latin *vānus* ‘hollow, devoid’). Therefore, this identification, however attractive it may be, is not as clear-cut as seen at face-value.

Yet, a place-name built on the predecessors of Modern Welsh *gwan* & *nant(-on)* and located somewhere in the Old North could not be precluded. If so, all three fragments of the Gododdin where it occurs refer to one geographical location, unless there were several *Gwan(n)nantons* in the British North, which is unlikely. This is not at all evident from the text itself, and appellative usage of the noun looks like a better interpretation. Keeping to the same word-division of *guannannon* / *gwananhon*, Koch’s identification of the second component with OIr *néit* ‘battle’ (< Celt. \**nanti*- ‘battle, fight’, Matasović 2009, 283) also deserves some attention. In his analysis the compound would denote ‘a battle associated with wounding, slaying’ or something similar, depending on the morphological model ascribed to the word, and no doubt this is relevant for the context, too. If the first

part of it is connected with W. *gwan* ‘weak’, we arrive at rendering the compound as ‘weak battle’ *vel sim.*, which also may fit the contexts if the weakness refers to the incapacity of the *gwŷr y Gogledd* to fight the enemy, which results in deaths and burials.

It should be also taken into consideration that *Canu Aneirin* contains a remarkable amount of obsolete words and a number of hapaxes, including compounds, some of which will be discussed later in this paper. Their exact interpretation, taking into account several centuries of the transmission of the text and hence the problems summarised by P. Dunshea as cited above, is not always possible, and potential re-interpretations in the course of time, also in view of the mechanism of folk-etymology, should also be considered. Indeed, for literary texts the wonders of folk-etymology of geographical names on the one hand, and the toponymic universal of the change (or perception) of an appellative into (or as) a place-name on the other have been widely discussed (cf. e.g., Ashley 1985). These metamorphoses sometimes become exceptional and require a lengthy detailed analysis, otherwise it is impossible to explain, for instance, what turns Caieta the woman into a harbour in the Aeneid (Skempis 2014). There have been also attempts to summarise methodological difficulties in research of toponyms found in early (and not so early) texts, and as the already quoted K. Salve (2016, 89) addresses the problem discussing Estonian runic songs,

- a) The search may not yield the names that have been written in a very irregular way with respect to their orthography or perhaps even have been performed in a distorted way. On the contrary, the search results may also contain irrelevant words/toponyms. b) It is not always clear which place the toponym denotes – names with the same form can exist in both the Livonian areas and, for example, in Estonia. c) Sometimes one should first decide whether a word is a toponym at all or perhaps an appellative.

*Mutatis mutandis*, the same methodology with necessary amendments in details could be applied to the analysis of other pieces of literature in various languages, and the Gododdin is not an exception. Therefore, the analysis of *guannannon* / *gwananhon* is bound to be very tentative. The latter spelling of it is attested twice in the later stratum of the text (CA 829 and 919), and the former (CA 436) – in the most archaic layer, B<sup>2</sup>. The spellings *-nn-* and *-nh-* most probably point to the original *\*-nt-* > *-nh-*,<sup>8</sup> and this may be observed as the additional evidence supporting *\*-nt-* in the compound’s second part, which makes all candidates for the final element listed here eligible. Indeed, the plural form of *nant* ‘stream’ / ‘valley’ is attested spelled with *-nh-* in the Book of Taliesin (*nanheu*), and with the double *-nn-* elsewhere, see the collection of examples in GPC, s.v. Other candidates discussed here, that is *\*ant-* ‘border’ and *\*nant-* ‘battle’, are obtained from linguistic reconstruction, but nevertheless are expected to demonstrate similar reflexes. The spelling *guannannon* which is found in the most archaic layer of the text contains another double *-nn-* whereas the other two examples from the later stratum point to a single one. Taken at face value, it may strengthen the possibility that the second component begins with *n-*, and the combination was simplified later, which makes selection of *nant* ‘stream’ or *\*nant-* ‘battle’ preferable. However, this double *-nn-* may reflect the earlier *\*-sn-* which is posited for W. *gwan*, while some early Welsh examples

<sup>8</sup> On this set of matters see Sims-Williams 2003, 56, *Canu Aneirin* Sims-Williams 2016, 172 and Schrijver 2011, 34–5, and see further in the context of Schumacher 2017, 315 and 366.

demonstrate non-etymological *-nn* underlying the single *-n* (Schrijver 2011, 38), and then *\*ant-* ‘border’ remains an option.

As for the termination *-on*, it looks reasonable, with John Lloyd-Jones (1931–63, 613) although on different grounds, to consider it a plural marker. The ending is pertinent for the formation of plural forms of *n*-stem nouns (cf. Morris Jones 1913, 202–4 and see now Stüber 1998, 29–39), and thus – at least at first sight – may jeopardise this approach, as all candidates for the second component of the compound belong to different declinational models. Indeed, Welsh *nant* ‘stream’ / ‘valley’ is historically a *u*-stem, and moreover, its plural forms are well attested (*nentydd*, *naint*, (*prin*) *nannau*, *neintydd*, *nantau*, *nennydd*, cf. Nurmio 2010, 247). The reconstructed *\*nant-* ‘battle’ must belong to *i*-stems judging by early Irish evidence, and a different set of plural terminations is expected from this group of nouns in Welsh (cf. Morris Jones 1913, 200). The last reconstructed candidate, *\*ant-* ‘border’ judging by the *comparanda* must belong to *o*-stems<sup>9</sup> with a different set of plural endings assigned to it, but one may note that in many branches of IE various fluctuations in the stem formation of its cognates are known, e.g., it turns into a pan-Germanic *ja*-stem, and for the difficult Armenian parallel, if it indeed belongs here, both *i*- and *o*-stems are detected (Martirosyan 2010, 72). This is, nevertheless, not an insurmountable problem, as in Middle Welsh many nouns have more than one plural form and the selection of the ending may not correlate to their original stem-class. This phenomenon has been observed (cf. Morris Jones 1913, 198f.), and is now thoroughly studied by Silva Nurmio in her MPhil thesis (2010); the problem of analogical plurals particularly in Hengerdd is important for historical linguistics, cf. Padel 2013a, 124f. or Sims-Williams 2013, 86. The spread by analogy of the plural termination *-on* to nouns belonging to various stems in Welsh has been noted (cf. Morris Jones 1913, 202 or Stüber 1998, 29), and Nurmio (2010, 97–102 *et passim*) usefully discusses the evidence. In view, for example, of Welsh *aber* ‘river mouth, estuary’, plural forms of which are attested with terminations *-au*, *-oedd*, *-ydd*, *-on*, and *-i* (GPC, s.v. and Nurmio 2010, 131), it is not at all impossible that the ending typical for *n*-stems was used in the case of *guannannon* / *gwananhon*, the second part of which belongs to a different pattern in stem-formation. As an alternative, the word could be seen as a singular form, and the final part of the compound may be thought to contain the suffix *\*-on-*. The reflexes of the latter are found in Welsh, cf., e.g., *gwron* ‘hero’ (to *gwr*) attested already in the Gododdin (CA 764 *guron*), and the suffix has a decent Celtic pedigree and is found *inter alia* in Welsh and Breton *hinon* ‘(fair) weather’ (cf. W. *hin* ‘weather’), Welsh *Mabon* and Gaulish *Maḡonos*, etc.<sup>10</sup> The suffix is probably attested also in geographical names, and may be of different origins. Thus one may note in this respect the recent discussion of the Welsh hydronym (*Afon*) *Ieithon* (Rad.) in Owen, Morgan 2007, 201 and lxi, which is interpreted as a ‘talking river’ (to W. *iaith* ‘language, speech’), and a “noun suffix” *-on* is segment. There is no doubt that the semantic motivation of the hydronym finds plenty of parallels in naming Welsh rivers (e.g., Breuan (Card.), Charles 1992, 4–5, and for the historical perspective cf. DCCPN: 21, s.v. *labero*), while the explanation of the complete form may vary. It should be noted that the sg. form *\*ieithon* is not registered in GPC, and for W. *iaith* ‘language, speech’ (thus ‘bubbling, noisy river’) plural forms *ieithoedd*, *ieith(i)au*, and *ieithydd* are attested, see GPC, s.v., and Nurmio

<sup>9</sup> *N*-stem personal names belonging here are attested in Continental Celtic, Delamarre 2019, 67.

<sup>10</sup> See GPC, s. vv. *-on<sup>1</sup>*, *-ion<sup>1</sup>*, *gwron*, *hinon*, and cf. e.g., Sims-Williams 2007, 222–3. The formation seen

in W. *weithon* ‘now’ < (y) *waith hon* (GPC, s.v. *weithian*, etc.) is unlikely here.



2010, 227. In view of what is said above, the analogous plural formation is not completely out of the question, but *-on* could be a formative suffix, cf. e.g., the discussion of the river-name *Gwyddan* in Charles 1992, 13–14 and for the historical perspective Isaac 2005, 192. Generally, the second part of the compound looks identical with the proto-form reconstructed for OIr. *étan* gl., viz. *\*antono-* (Matasović 2009, 39), and hence the rendering of *guannannon* / *gwananhon* as ‘weak border’ receives additional support. Either way, the analysis of the word as (originally) appellative, singular or plural, still looks attractive.

## II. *Catraeth* or *catraeth* ‘*theatre of war*’, ‘*place of military action(s)*’ *vel sim.*?

The battle at *Catraeth* has been considered as the essential and amalgamating topic of the *Gododdin*, although different views have occasionally been expressed.<sup>11</sup> As it was summarised by Ifor Williams regarding the *locus*,

*Catterick* in Yorkshire preserves the same place-name as that which is represented by the Welsh form *Catraeth*, but the citadel or fort which bore the original name is best sited on the hill where Richmond castle now stands, i.e. above the cataract on the river Swale which gave the name.<sup>12</sup>

The ‘*Catraeth* legend’, as known, has become a commonplace in the lasting research of the *Gododdin* (cf. O Hehir 1988, 85–94),<sup>13</sup> but this interpretation raised objections by historians and archaeologists,<sup>14</sup> and not all linguists are ready to agree in tracing the suggested etymology of the place-name *Catraeth* which derives it from Latin *cataracta*. Thus, Eric Hamp (1993) among other options admitted a possibility that the place-name could denote ‘Battle-bank’, ‘-shore’, and therefore was a compound of Welsh *cad* ‘fight’, attested already in Old Welsh (OW *cat*, cf. OIr *cath* or OBr *cat-*, GPC: 374) and the Welsh borrowing from Latin *tractus*, that is *traeth* (Lewis 1943, 22). His other choice was to see in the second component the continuation of *\*-traɣto-*, which ‘may well appear in British instead of the Latin *traiectu*’, and thus ‘Battle-crossing’, looks rather optional. Twenty years later O. J. Padel (2013a, 137) summarised the problem: ‘*Catraeth*, if it refers to *Catterick*, comes probably from a British-Latin place-name *\*Cataracta* “waterfall”, although that would normally have been expected to give *\*Cadraeth*; but it sounds as if it came from Welsh *cad* + *traeth*, “battle shore”.’<sup>15</sup> Note that *Cataractonium* has been already attempted to be treated as Celtic, *\*catu-ra(c)t-ōn-ion* ‘(place of the) battle-ramparts’ by A. L. F. Rivet and Smith (1979, 303–4), who suggested seeing here *\*catu-* and *\*ratis*. They think that ‘*-racte* sometimes appears as a variant’ of the second component, and this point of view has been consulted in modern research, cf. e.g., Clarkson 1993, 17. It should be observed that the reconstruction of *-ō-* here has been challenged (cf. Hamp 1993), and the treatment of the second component is insufficient: see DCPN: 28 s. vv. *ratā/i-* ‘fern’ and *rāto/ā-* ‘earthwork, fortification’, and also p. 185 for *\*Ratiatum*, *Ratis Ins.*, *Ratum* and

<sup>11</sup> See e.g., Rowland 1995, 36.

<sup>12</sup> Williams 1968, xxxvii; for the full exposition of his views on the subject see Williams 1938, xxv–xxvi.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. already Evan Evans (1764, 68): ‘Aneurinos, in suo poemate cui titulus *Gododin*, refert se in bello juxta *Catraeth* sub-auspiciis Mvnyddawc Eiddin [...]’

<sup>14</sup> See a useful survey by Clarkson 1993, cf. Rowland 1995, 34–6, Koch 1997, xvii, Dunshea 2013, 84–6.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. already Padel 1998, 48. For various explanations of *-tr-* see Jackson 1969, 83 and references in Sims-Williams 2016, 172.

*Ratumagus*; also, *Ratiaria* quoted by Rivet and Smith as Celtic is most likely to be a Latin toponym (cf. Lat. *ratis* ‘vessel’), see Falileyev 2013, 74.

In the approach presented by Padel the next obvious step should be made keeping in mind Hamp’s suggestion. On top of the observation that ‘it sounds as it came’ from *cad* and *traeth*, one may venture a possibility of seeing in Catraeth (or *catraeth* for that matter) a Welsh compound containing these two elements. As P. Dunshea (2013, 101) observed,

[t]he breaking down of the name into *cad* (‘battle’) and *traeth* (‘shore’) is an extremely simple etymological deduction [...] This has always been overlooked because the great philologists of the past century have consistently reiterated that there are no linguistic obstructions to the identification of *Catraeth* with Catterick.

No doubt that Eric P. Hamp (1920–2019) was a great philologist, and the work of A. L. F. Rivet and C. Smith is appreciated by historians and philologists alike. Nevertheless Dunshea is totally correct in his claim that this approach should be revisited, although in the traditional framework of studies it may seem certainly ‘extreme’, as P. Sims-Williams (2013, 86) aptly characterised it. Particularly taking into consideration that some details of the (re-)analysis along these lines – both formal and semantic – should be investigated, a number of observations and tentative suggestions will be offered below.

From the point of view of historical linguistics this interpretation is unproblematic: the *-t-* of the form is an expected outcome of provection (cf. Morris-Jones 1913, 182), and various types of Welsh compounded words containing two nominal components are well known and have been surveyed in the monograph by S. Zimmer (2000). The semantics of the word, and therefore its assignment to a certain subgroup of nominal compounds, deserves further study, as well as its status – appellative or onomastic. Certainly, place-names with *traeth* (pl. *traethau*) ‘beach, shore, stand’ are known in the Welsh toponymic landscape, cf. *Malltraeth* ‘unwholesome strand’ and *Pentraeth* ‘end of the beach’ on Anglesey (Owen, Morgan 2007, 309 and 375). The corresponding outcome of the same borrowed Lat. *tractus* is attested in toponymy of other Brittonic languages as well as Irish, cf. Cornish *Gwendra*, or Ir. *Finntracht* (see Padel 1985, 223 with further references). The Welsh example from Carmarthenshire, the coupled *Gwendraeth fach* / *Gwendraeth fawr* ‘great / little (river of the) white beach’ is important because the name with *-traeth* is applied to the geographical object only partially associated with the sea shore, with which Catraeth, as traditionally argued for the Gododdin, never correlates. As H. W. Owen and R. Morgan (2007, 181) explain, ‘the name of both rivers derives from the sands of the river estuary now largely choked by sand and mud’. The component *cad* is also found in toponymy, cf. the river-name Cadnant (Anglesey, see Carr 2015, 86–7). Nonetheless, P. Dunshea (2013, 113) has suggested a different explanation according to which

*Traeth* (‘shore’) need not refer to a coastline; **it could also be used in a figurative sense, or to refer to a region** (as with Latin *tractus*). Accordingly it can be argued that ‘battle-shore’ **is a metaphorical description with no particular topographical identity**. Cf. GPC IV, 3543–4; Lewis and Short, eds., *A Latin Dictionary*, 1183; Williams ab Ithel, *Y Gododin*, 4–5.

This observation deserves two comments on the passages indicated in the quotation by bold script. First, it is not at all clear whether *W. traeth* is indeed attested – like Latin *tractus* – in the meaning ‘tract, region (of land; also of sea, air)’, which is ascribed to the latter in the Oxford Latin Dictionary (s.v. *tractus*, 7) quoted by Dunshea. The University of Wales

Dictionary defines the Welsh word as ‘beach, (sea)shore, strand, coast; estuary; ?region, area; also fig.’ (GPC, s.v. *traeth*), and the question marks supplied there are notable. The collection of examples illustrating the word, at least in its medieval attestations, does not contain any of its usages with that meaning, and the only exceptional case is provided by a quotation from the Book of Taliesin. It occurs in the phrase *dros traeth mundi* in ‘Preiddeu Annwyn’, and Marged Haycock (2007, 435 and 438), having tried to find plausible justifications of interpreting here *traeth* as ‘shore’, aptly refers to Lat. *tractus* ‘tract, extent’, and translates the fragment as ‘over the extent of the world’. Certainly, we deal here with a “macaronic” rendering of Lat. *tractus mundi* (cf. Zimmer 2006, 559), with the first word translated into Welsh, and the other being Latin and even retaining Latin genitive ending. Similar cases, also with the genitive sg. form of Latin *mundus* (cf. *les* (*leo*, *lew*) *mwndi* in a poem attributed to Dafydd ap Gwilym or *mwyndabl mundi* in the poetry of Ieuan Rhydderch), are attested in Welsh medieval poetry, see Falileyev 2017, 126–41 with further references. One may, therefore, question the authenticity of this example, as this semi-calque may be due to the partial loan-translation of the Latin set phrase. The Welsh word *traeth* is rendered by Latin *tractus* and *arena* in the seventeenth century glossaries, but the very nature of these sources, also considering the date of their compilation, precludes clear-cut generalisations. However, the data of languages closest to Medieval Welsh confirms this assumption. The so-called ‘Old Cornish Vocabulary’, the original of which is dated to c.1150 or the second half of the twelfth century (see Padel 2014, 174–5) contains Corn. *trait* (also a borrowing from Latin *tractus*) which is glossed by Latin *harena*. Oxford Latin Dictionary, s.v. (*h*)*arena* provides the following definitions of the latter word: ‘1. sand, 2. the beach, 3. The (sand-covered) arena in an amphitheatre, the scene of gladiatorial combats, etc.; b the activities, business, etc., of the arena. c (transf.) the scene of any struggle or dispute’. As we can see, the set of meanings of the Latin lexeme is very close to that of *tractus*, and for this investigation those listed under 3b and 3c are of importance.

Bearing in mind *traeth mundi* of the Book of Taliesin corresponding to Lat. *tractus mundi*, it is obvious that the Welsh compound *cad & traeth* finds many correspondences in Latin genitival phrases. The native W. *cad* ‘war, battle’ (for the etymology see Matasović 2009, 195 and cf. DCCPN: 14, for the examples from Ancient Celtic see Delamarre 2019, 199–201) may be rendered by quite a number of Latin synonyms, as for example *bellum*, and Lat. *tractus belli* (Tacit., *Annales* I, 15, 10) exactly corresponds – semantically and even partially etymologically – to W. *cad* and *traeth*. The word *tractus* in this Latin phrase is used referring to the duration of time (cf., similarly, *tractus mortis*, Tacit., *Annales* I, 15, 64), and sometimes the collocation is translated as ‘lasting war’, cf. also *tractare bellum* ‘to conduct war’ (Tacit., *Annales* II, 1.59; Liv. 5.12.7, etc.). However, taking into consideration semantic parallelism of Lat. *tractus* and (*h*)*arena*, one should pay special attention to the Latin set-phrase *arena belli* (also *area belli* etc.) ‘theatre of war’, well attested in Latin prose and verse, e.g., *Prima civilis belli harena Italia fuit* ‘the first arena of the civil war was Italy’ (Florus, *Epitom.* 2.13) or *coit area belli* ‘the field of war is contracting’ (Lucanus, *Phars.* 6. 60, cf. also *campus area & quasi arena belli* in a comment by Hugo Grotius on *area belli*). The Latin phrase *arena belli* vel sim. ‘theatre of war’ perfectly corresponds to the Welsh compound *cad & traeth*, and may be crucial for understanding of *Catraeth* of the Gododdin. Indeed, every single example of its usage in the text (see the collection presented in O Hehir 1988, 85–94) may be translated into Latin using this phrase. As for the genesis of the compound, the origins of *traeth mundi* based on Latin *tractus mundi* cannot but provoke attempting a similar explanation, also taking into consideration that

[t]he possibility that written Latin learning has played a concrete role in the creation of the text [of the Gododdin] is not new' (Isaac 2004, 150). Certainly, this observation should not be restricted by the Gododdin: as P. Sims-Williams (1991, 58) has shown, the phrase *penn cadoedd* in 'The Dialogue of Arthur and the Eagle' (*Ymddiddan Arthur a'r Eryr*), the earliest copy of which is preserved in the MS Jesus College 20 dated to c.1350–1400, recalls Lat. *dux bellorum*, and this list may be continued.

Following the second highlighted fragment in the quotation above from the article by P. Dunshea, it is possible to make a further step: *Catraeth* of the text may well be read as *catraeth*, and this is not a place-name at all. It may be tentatively suggested here that *catraeth* attested in the Gododdin is in fact the Welsh compounded appellative (< *cad* & *traeth*) and denotes 'theatre of war', *are(n)a belli*, 'place of military action(s)' *vel sim.*, and several considerations may be used in support of this hypothesis. First, linguistically speaking, it has been observed for some considerable time already that *Canu Aneirin* contains a notable amount of compounded hapaxes, and also with the component *cad* 'battle', as in CA 724 *cadyawr* 'battle', analysed as the combination of *cad* & *gawr* 'shout' (cf. Lloyd-Jones 1931–63, 89). Some of these compounds are rarely attested outside of the Hengerdd, as e.g., CA 335 *cadlan* 'battle, battle-field' (*cad* & *llan*) and in the poetry of the Book of Taliesin,<sup>16</sup> but also in a Welsh medieval proverb, see GPC s.v. Therefore, *catraeth* could be one of them, and it should also be taken into consideration that the semantics of compounds, including these with *cad-*, may develop in (pre-historic) time, as the example of *cadwent*, *cadwen* 'battle-field' teaches us: as J. T. Koch (2016, 171) reminds us, its second component *\*-uentā* did not originally mean 'field'; on that see also Sims-Williams 2007, 24 and fn. 132. Secondly, it has been already suggested that the various fragments of the Gododdin do not relate to a single battle (Isaac 1999, 147, cf. O Hehir 1988, 73–9), and hence *catraeth* of the text may refer not to a single geographically defined place, but rather have a generic meaning as suggested here. The warriors went not to the fort in modern Yorkshire, and questions have been posed for the validity or historical reality of such an enterprise, but to their theatre of military action, and those locations could be many. Instead of a single raid (rather than conquest), as J. Rowland (1995, 31–7) suggests, there could be many raids therefore. Grammatically, this interpretation would probably demand the definitive article placed in front of the compounded noun, but the conventions of this poetry do not require it at all, see recently on this set of matters Sims-Williams 2016, 174–5. Moreover, this approach explains Urien's much disputed epithet *Llyw Catraeth* in the Taliesin corpus.<sup>17</sup> Instead of the *Lord of Cataracta*, the place which is geographically quite a way from his domains and rather irrelevant for his own territories, *Princeps Catar(r)actae* turns into a 'Lord of the battle-field' which certainly fits the laudatory stratum of the poetry associated with him. It should also be taken into consideration that the compound has verbal resonances noted by O. J. Padel (1998, 48), and '*Catraeth* happily rhyming with the 3<sup>rd</sup> preterite of the verbs "to rear", 'to go', 'to do' (*maeth*, *aeth*, *gwnaeth*), with the adjective *ffraeth* 'ready, prepared', and the abstract noun for longing, *hiraeth*' (Haycock 2013, 18) was in fact a very useful part of the poetic jigsaw

<sup>16</sup> Williams 1968, 1 = I.20; on *god aran* which follows the word in the line see Russell 2015, 87. For the discussion of W. *cad* & *march* 'horse' see Rowland 1995, 16–18.

<sup>17</sup> Williams 1968, 9 = VIII.9; for various discussions

of this example along different lines see Sims-Williams 2013, 87. Note the reading of the fragment as *llyw can draeth* 'along the shore' by John Gwenogvryn Evans, for criticism and references see Morris Jones 1918, 86–7.

ruled by meters and rhymes that enabled the poet(s) to perform their craft more easily and more poignantly.

The reasons why appellative *catraeth* turned into the place-name Catraeth and is used as such in later poetry, and perhaps in some fragments of the later layer of the Gododdin itself, are not difficult to explain. We are dealing here with an appellative understood as a toponym, and examples of this phenomenon could be found in various cultures and languages at various historical times, including today. This is based, widely speaking, on metonymy, which turns a white house into the White House, or a *kremlin* ‘fortress’ into the Kremlin, and if *catraeth* is based – one way or another – on the Latin set-phrase ‘theatre of war’, ‘place of military action(s)’, *arena belli* vel sim., the compound may have been misunderstood or re-interpreted shortly after the composition of the core of the text. It has long been acknowledged that the references to Catraeth in the Gododdin, traditionally perceived as *locus*, considerably increase in the chronologically later text (cf. Dunshea 2013, 88–90, Sims-Williams 2013, 85 and note Owen 1978, 130 for the gradual development of the corpus in general) becoming a *leitmotif* of the A-text, and this may also be used as additional confirmation of this reinterpretation. It must also be remembered, as P. Dunshea (2013, 86) notes, ‘that *Catraeth* is not to be found on any maps, and in fact does not exist outside of this literary context’, and such an explanation of *catraeth* turning into *Catraeth* is therefore at least feasible. As Jenny Rowland (1995, 36) comments in her valuable paper on the target destination of ‘men of the Gododdin’,

Unfortunately for us, whether or not the battle had any strategic implications is immaterial to the poet’s purpose; both the preparation for and the fighting of the battle of Catraeth are viewed solely from the standpoint of individual heroism. At best we can say that perhaps Catraeth was their goal from the start, but it is equally possible that Catraeth was simply where the host happened to meet the English host which overwhelmed them. The latter supposition at least avoids straining the little information we have both from the text and from historical sources of the period in order to explain the location of the battle at Catraeth.

Given that the Gododdin has ‘dubious value as a source of historical detail’ (Owen 1978, 140), with the outlined approach *catraeths* turn into places where the hosts happened to meet, and there could be many of them.

The process underlying the development of the compound denoting ‘area of battle’ *vel sim.* into Catraeth to be placed by scholars of the Gododdin in modern Yorkshire finds perfect parallels in *guannannon* / *gwananhon* which is most likely to be the appellative meaning ‘weak border(s)’, but perceived – at least by certain scholars – as a place-name. Thus, the suggestion of P. Dunshea (2013, 102) ‘that *catraeth* and *guannannon* were virtually synonymous’ is indeed valid to the extent that they are contextualised as such in the Gododdin. It should be recalled that disputes on similar problematic instances in the Hengerdd still continue. Thus CA 750 *garth merin* was interpreted as a place-name (Williams 1938, 259), but K. H. Jackson (1969, 104) translates the phrase as ‘the battle-square of Merin, see further discussion in Koch 1997, 169. Fairly recently, in his unpublished paper offered to the XII International Celtic Congress (Aberystwyth 2003) Alex Woolf suggested considering *Rheged* not as a territorial geographical name, but as an epithet for Urien, i.e. *thy ged* ‘one of great gifts’; see further comments in Sims-Williams 2003, 135–6 and Haycock 2013, 33–4. This is a problem known to students of various Celtic literatures, as P. Dunshea (2013, 100–1) reminds us referring to Scottish Gaelic



sources. Certainly, many interpretations of early Irish data raise questions whether the alleged place-names should be in fact written with lower case initials (cf. Ó Coileáin 1993, 55–6), but all that is not restricted by literature in early Celtic languages. As noted above, it is a universal problem occurring worldwide. Indeed, Golgotha occasionally is perceived as a place-name, but in fact is the appellative for ‘grave-yard’ (‘place of skulls’) in Aramaic, and Leonard R. N. Ashley (1985, 18) commenting on this and other similar cases adds that ‘[t]here are other “places” in The Bible given names which have no known names at all.’ Within the framework discussed here *Catraeth* < *catraeth* of the Gododdin may belong to this category.

### III. *Aneirinnus id canebat*

The poet Aneirin, to whom the Gododdin is ascribed in the Cardiff I manuscript, remains a shadowy figure. All references to the bard in the text and later traditions have been examined carefully by Morfydd E. Owen, who concludes that the corpus associated with him ‘afford[s] little information regarding the poet, and the few factual descriptions must be suspect’ (Owen 1978, 140). As for historical perspective, it has become a commonplace in scholarship to relate Aneirin of the Gododdin to Neirin of the much quoted passage from the *Historia Brittonum*, *HB* 62: *Tunc Talhaern Tat Aguen in poemate claruit, et Neirin, et Taliessin, et Bluchbard, et Cian qui vocatur Gue[ni]th Guaut, simul uno tempore in poemate Brittanico claruerunt* ‘[t]hen Talhaearn Tad Awen was famed in poetry; and Aneirin and Taliesin and Bluchbard and Cian, known as Gue[ni]th Guaut, were all simultaneously famed in British verse’. Most scholars agree that the original form of the poet’s name is *Neirin* as preserved in the quoted text, cf. e.g., Morris-Jones 1918, 45, Williams 1938, xiv–xvi, or recently Koch 2006, 54, although *Aneirin* has also been suspected to be a correct form (Jackson 1982–83, 48–9).

The pre-history of the name remains a crux. Traditionally, it has been considered native, and some of its etymologies, as e.g., that connecting it with the W. adjective *eurin* ‘golden’, have long been abandoned.<sup>18</sup> As J. T. Koch (2006, 54), who is inclined to take the name without the initial vowel for the original form, summarises, ‘[o]ne possible derivation is from Late Latin *Nigrinus* ‘dark one’. An alternative Celtic etymology would involve a suffixed form of the Brythonic word corresponding to the Old Irish adjective *nár* ‘modest, shy.’ As is quite common with the analysis of personal names, there cannot be any certainty in the correctness of these derivations, see Sims-Williams 2003, 154–5 for important comments regarding the linguistic prehistory of (*A*)*neirin*. *Inter alia* Sims-Williams admits that a Vulgar Latin form of the name *Negrinus*, which is actually attested, would be a better candidate if the first path of the traditional explanation is chosen, and notes the paucity of Welsh personal names in *-in* which may jeopardise the second approach. To my knowledge, no one so far has ventured an approach which would allow tracing the form *Aneirin* directly to ancient sources. The reasons for that are clear: the inspection of the relevant collections (for that see Sims-Williams 2007, 61–5 with further references) draws our attention to a unique and difficult parallel in epigraphic records, which is, furthermore, attested very far away from the territory of Gododdin.

<sup>18</sup> For that see e.g., Morris-Jones 1918, 46; note its Latinisation into *Aneurinos* in early works, e.g., Evans 1764, 68.

The patronymic *Aneirinus* is known only from one inscription found near the modern village of Gigen, Pleven area, in Bulgaria. The standard modern edition of the inscription by B. Gerov (1989, 21), which is used for further discussions of the text, reads it as *Aneirinnus*, however (Iovi opt(imo) m[ax(imo)] / sacrum / Bassus Ane/irinni), with the final double *n*, cf. OPEL I: 53. Intriguingly, the inscription stems from the ancient city of Oescus in Lower Moesia, the name of which has been claimed to be linguistically Celtic on quite a few occasions, although there are no real grounds to reject its local provenance, see Falileyev 2013, 105–6. Nevertheless, a number of linguistically Celtic personal names are still associated with this location. Some of these attestations are not obliging, as for example *Arvernicus* (cf. the Gaulish ethnic name *Arverni*), found as a stamp on ware imported from a famous manufacturing area in (modern) Reinzabern in Germany, or a different stamp on imported *terra sigillata*, *Tarvus* (Falileyev 2013, 15 and 135). However, bearers of linguistically Celtic names certainly are found in Oescus, as the following inscription testifies (Gerov 1989, 32): *Ti(berius) Iulius Icci / f(ilius) Acutus Dup/liciariu[s al]ja Pansian(a) dom(o) Trever [v]ixit / ann(os) LX, mer(uit) ann(os) XXXVI, h(ic) s(itus) e(st). Heres f(aciendum) c(uravit)*. The diseased, whose father's name is Gaulish, moved to the Eastern Danube area from what is now known as Trier in the western part of Germany, a region known for a considerable number of linguistically Celtic names attested in Latin epigraphic records, for this attestation see Falileyev 2013, 78–9. The Continental Celtic data is very helpful for the analysis of Welsh personal names (cf. recently Falileyev 2019, 100–6), yet there are no reasons to suspect in *Aneirinnus* a Celtic anthroponym. It should be noted that in the area of Gigen in Bulgaria a number of personal and divine names in Latin inscriptions may indeed allow a Celtic interpretation (and in fact have been considered as such in the history of scholarship) even though they are most likely to be non-Celtic. See e.g., the edition of the corresponding inscriptions by B. Gerov (1989, 36 and 45) which contain personal names *Magio* and *Mammosa*, and Falileyev 2013, 88–90 for a discussion of them (and also of the divine name *Magutis* found there). Moreover, if it were so, *Aneirin* of the Gododdin could not be traced to the alleged Gaulish *Aneirinnus* found in ancient Oescus phonetically.

If it were a uniquely attested Latin personal name, there would be problems, although not, possibly, insurmountable, to see in *Aneirin* another borrowed anthroponym. However, there are reasons to doubt (or even to deny) the Latin origins of *Aneirinnus*, while a suggestion that a local (Moesian or Thracian) name was borrowed into Early Welsh looks like sheer madness. As it is most unlikely to be an epichoric name, nonetheless, the uncertainties of the pre-history of the Welsh (*A*)*neirin* make every attempt to elucidate it worthy of consideration, and this alleged parallel has been ignored in the studies. Although it is indeed tempting to consider this attestation from Moesia Interior in our search for the prehistory of (*A*)*neirin*, even tentatively, this parallel should be rejected nevertheless. As B. Gerov (1989, 21) suspected, *Aneirinni* of the inscription stands for *An(n)ei Ireanni*,<sup>19</sup> and this most probably correct interpretation is not noticed in OPEL I: 53, our basic collection of personal names in Latin inscriptions of the Roman times. Therefore, the alleged parallel to the Early Welsh name in fact does not exist.

<sup>19</sup> 'potest etiam *An(n)ei Ireanni* esse'; the interpretation is accepted by Dr Dan Dana, who also observes

(p.c.) that the line with BASSVSAN is damaged at the end, and the last line is very small.

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