

## The place-name Τουρκίς in Hispania Tarraconensis (Ptol. II, 6, 55)

## El topónimo Τουρκίς en la Hispania Tarraconense (Ptol. II, 6, 55)

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**Abstracts:** The recently published *Die vorrömische einheimische Toponymie des antiken Hispanien* surveys various hypotheses regarding the pre-history of the place-name Τουρκίς and does not come to any definitive conclusion. If in fact it is Celtic in origins, there are several possibilities for its linguistic analysis. The paper tentatively suggest its derivation from PIE *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-* ‘to swell, be strong’, a prospect which has already been considered on the level of root etymology, and furnishes the analysis with a possible morphological elucidation. The toponym is perceived as a derivative in *\*-k-* from this PIE root enlarged with *\*-r-*, therefore (descriptively) *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-r-*. This pattern is found in other IE languages, while in Celtic (and elsewhere) enlargement in *-n-* from the same *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-* are well attested. The reference to the meaning of the PIE root also allows us to deal with the semantics of the place-name, which is localised only roughly.

**Keywords:** Hispano-Celtic, toponymy, etymology, morphology, Celtic, Indo-European.

**Resumen:** En el recientemente publicado *Die vorrömische einheimische Toponymie des antiken Hispanien* se exponen diferentes hipótesis sobre la prehistoria del topónimo Τουρκίς, pero no se llega a ninguna conclusión definitiva. Si en realidad fuese de origen celta, existen varias posibilidades para su análisis lingüístico. El artículo sugiere tentativamente su origen en el PIE *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-* ‘hincharse, ser fuerte’, análisis que ya se ha planteado con anterioridad, y aporta, además, una posible explicación morfológica. El topónimo sería un derivado en *\*-k-* de esta raíz PIE ampliada con *\*-r-*, es decir, *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-r-*. Este patrón se encuentra en otras lenguas IE, mientras que en celta (y en otras lenguas) las ampliaciones con *-n-* a partir de la misma *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-* están bien atestiguadas. En cuanto al significado del topónimo, a partir de esa base, sólo se puede plantear algún acercamiento semántico.

**Palabras clave:** Hispano-celta, toponimia, etimología, morfología, celta, indoeuropeo.

**Recepción:** 02.03.2023 / **Aceptación:** 10.04.23



MLH VI: 701 provides a coherent and of necessity concise discussion of the toponym Τουρκίς in Hispania Tarraconensis. The place-name is attested solely in the *Geography* of Ptolemy (Ptol. II, 6, 55) and is tentatively associated with modern Turégano located some 25 km to the north-east of Segovia; for other localisations see a brief useful survey in García Alonso 2003, 307.<sup>1</sup> Due to the research of Professor J. L. García Alonso (2003, 307) on the text where the place-name is uniquely found, we cannot have any doubt regarding its spelling. Following García Alonso, Müller's suggestion that it corresponds to *Tuttia* mentioned in some manuscripts of Florus, which was corrected by the editors to *Clunia*, should be rejected. MLH VI: 701 takes Τουρκίς for a Hispano-Celtic place-name, but admits that its linguistic treatment remains difficult. A selected list of available interpretations is offered there, also including non-Celtic approaches, and none of them is marked as favoured. Considering that the territory of the Arevaci, with which the geographic name is associated, abounds with toponymy of Celtic linguistic origin (for that see García Alonso 2003, 301-10 and 2005), one should certainly admit the possibility that Τουρκίς is linguistically Celtic, too. However, this geographical position does not of course make the toponym linguistically Celtic by default. One may note in this respect that G. R. Isaac (2004, s.v.) sees in it a derivative of *\*tukri-*, apparently of unknown origins and therefore linguistic attribution, as it is neither commented upon nor is this component found in the lists of Celtic and possibly Celtic elements in Isaac 2004. Some other non-Celtic treatments of the name are also referred to in MLH VI: 701 and will be commented upon briefly below.

Nevertheless, a Celtic approach to Τουρκίς, as many academics maintain, is certainly reasonable, and it is noteworthy that the only critical remark that MLH VI: 701 allowed in the linguistic section of the entry Τουρκίς concerns the etymology offered in 1997 by Leonard Curchin. The remark does not contain further elaborations or arguments of whatever sorts, and bluntly states: “[u]nbrauchbare etymolog. Versuche”. Ironically, it is this suggestion by the Canadian scholar that prompted the analysis of the place-name presented here. In the article referred to in this entry of the sixth volume of *Monumenta Linguarum Hispanicarum*, L. Curchin (1997, 275) apart from various strategies of interpreting Τουρκίς — those quoted and those of his own — also considers the IE root *\*teu-* ‘to swell’ as a possible candidate for tracing its pre-history, and as it will be argued below this remains a very attractive possibility. Moreover, on the level of root-etymology it has already been considered in etymological investigations by J. L. García Alonso (2003, 307-8 and 2005, 97). Following A. Holder and W. Stokes, the Spanish scholar notes among his vast list of possible *comparanda* Irish *tón* ‘arse, buttocks’ and Welsh *tin* ‘a tail, a bottom’; for these words see also LEIA T-105-6. The words go back to Common

1 Due to the missing exact localisation of the place-name it is not discussed in Sims-Williams 2006 and DCCPN.

Celtic *\*tuknā* ‘back, bottom, arse’ according to Ranko Matasović (2009, 393), and so far its Continental Celtic congener has not been established. Matasović, *loc. cit.*, traces the Common Celtic form to PIE *\*tewH-k-* ‘swell’ referring to Pokorny’s collection of forms in IEW: 1080f., that is *\*tēu-* extended by *\*-k-* (IEW: 1081), with a considerable amount of parallels in other Indo-European languages, as English *thigh* or Old Prussian *taukis* ‘lard’.

Semantically, the etymon is certainly relevant as ‘strong’ is to be expected in place names, as a well attested Celtic place-name element *sego-* (DCCPN: 30) may easily remind us. The underlying PIE verb remains disputable and LIV refers both to *\*teuk-* ‘stark / fett werden, schwellen’ (LIV: 641) and *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-* ‘to swell, be strong’ (LIV: 639f.). It may be recalled that the reconstruction of PIE *\*teuk-* considered in many relevant publications is highly questionable. Thus, LIV: 641 supplies this head-form with a query, Rick Dersken (2015, 460) thinks that “LIV’s root *\*teuk-* ‘stark/fett werden, schwellen’ lacks a solid base”, while Johnny Cheung (2007, 400-1) notes that the Indo-Iranian forms traditionally analysed within this framework have “no certain IE correspondences”. This list of critical notes may be continued, but nevertheless a reference to the PIE root *\*teuk-* is still used in many recent reconstructions, as in that of the Celtic *\*tuknā* ‘back, bottom, arse’ referred to above. One should also note that Guus Kroonen (2013, 540) speaks of “[a] European word for ‘thigh, hip’” in his discussion of Common Germanic *\*peuha-* ‘thigh’ which he derives from “*\*teuHk-o-* (EUR)” alongside Baltic and Slavic words meaning ‘fat’. For the vocalism of underlying verb see also De Vaan 2008, 633 and the subsequent comments in Bichlmeier, Zimmer 2022, 246 fn. 87.

It should also be recalled that Matasović’s treatment of the Insular Celtic alleged *comparanda* to the Hispano-Celtic Τουρκίς deserves some adjustment. As Nicholas Zair (2012, 155) has reminded us once again, the approach presented there to the pre-history of Welsh *tin* ‘a tail, a bottom’ cannot go back to this proto-form: as Zair formulates, “British *\*-kn-* was not lost with compensatory lengthening, but became *\*-gn-* > *\*-in-*”; he refers to Middle Welsh *dwyn* ‘bring, lead, carry’ which unquestionably goes back to *\*duk-no-*. There are indeed some problems in positing the same configuration for Welsh *tin* ‘a tail, a bottom’ unless it contains a long *\*u* as sometimes considered, cf. *\*tūkno-* (LEIA T-105) or *\*tuHk-neh<sub>2</sub>-* (Kroonen 2013, 540); other explanations in Matasović 2009, 393 and note also De Vaan 2008, 633, Bichlmeier, Zimmer 2022, 247-48. Still, Celtic *\*tuknā* indeed underlines Irish *tón* ‘arse, buttocks’, and the etymon may be used to explain Welsh *twyn* ‘hillock, mound, knoll, hummock, heap; top (of hill, &c.), peak’ as well. The Welsh word was compared to Old Breton *tuhen* (*tuhen uhel* gl. *locus munitus*), see Fleuriot 1964, 324-5. Leon Fleuriot, *loc. cit.*, refers to the earlier literature where Irish *tugen* ‘mantle, coverlet’ has been considered, but does not quote the Goidelic form, as it is viewed nowadays as going back to *\*tog-i-na*, cf. *tuigithir* ‘covers’, see De Bernardo Stem-

pel 1999, 451. I suggest that Welsh *twyn*, Old Breton *tuhen* may reflect Celtic *\*tuk-n-*, and it may be remarked that semantically it provides a perfect match to Irish *tón* ‘arse, buttocks’ (‘hindquarters’, ‘podex’, ‘bottom’, ‘rear’ according to e-DIL), and generally the connection of words meaning ‘back’, also anatomically, with those designating hills is well-established. Thus, Old English *bæc* ‘back’ “is used in place-names of a ridge, varying in type from a low ridge in marshy ground to a steep escarpment” (Gelling 1993, 125), while “Old English *belg*, *bælg*, *bielg* ‘a bag, a sack’ in a transferred sense such as ‘rounded, bag-like hill’ or even ‘sack-like valley’” (Coates 2020, 63). The latter example is also valuable insofar as it contains hints at the possible semantic developments of the PIE verb synonymous with *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-* ‘to swell’, see below. Consider here also Lat. *tumor* ‘tumour, swollen condition, passion’ and *tumulus* ‘knoll, burial-mound’, for these see De Vaan 2008, 633, and the list of parallels may be continued easily. It is of importance that Welsh *twyn* ‘hillock, mound’, etc., is preserved in place-names of Wales. Thus, in Monmouthshire the village on the hill overlooking the river Wye is called *Pen-twyn*, lit. ‘top of the hillock’, and the hamlet on the side of a small hill is known as *Twyn-y-sirydd* ‘the sheriff’s mound’, see Owen, Morgan 2007, 380 and 480. The place-name *Twyn* is attested also in Carmarthenshire and is glossed as ‘hillock’, see Morgan 2022, 175, who also discusses *Twynllanan* ‘hillock at a small enclosure’. The same has been suggested for continuations of Old Breton *tuhen* in the toponymic landscape of Brittany, cf. Bernier 1967, 531.

Bringing together Irish *tón* ‘arse, buttocks’ and Welsh *twyn* ‘hillock’ allows us to see in Celtic *\*tuk-n-* a derivative of PIE *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-* ‘to swell, be strong’ extended with *\*-k-* and further with *\*-n-*; for suffixes in *-n-* in Celtic see a useful overview in De Bernardo Stempel 1999, 249-59. This possibility finds support in the *comparanda*, as continuations of PIE *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-* ‘to swell, be strong’ are found with different extensions, cf. the discussion of *\*tul-* found in ancient toponymy analysed as “*l*-Erweiterung zu idg. *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-* ‘schwellen’” (Scheungraber et al. 2014, 344), that of derivatives in *-lo-*, *-mo-* and *-ro-* in ancient Celtic hydronymy (Bichlmeier, Zimmer 2022, 246-48), or possible derivatives in *-r-* in Celtiberian (Wodtko 2000, 429).<sup>2</sup> For the interplay of semantics one may refer also to a range of meanings of Early Irish *cnocc* ‘lump, swelling, ulcer, hill, mound’. It is well attested in Irish toponymy, cf. *Knock* in Mayo and Clare, see already Joyce 1887, 361-2; for different etymological approaches to the Irish word see Matasović 2009, 211 and Kroonen 2013, 234. Among the reflexes of PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup>elg<sup>h</sup>-* ‘swell’ (IEW: 125-6, LIV: 73) we find Early Irish *bolg* ‘bag’, ‘belly’ or Welsh *bol* meaning ‘belly’ and also ‘womb’, ‘cavity’, ‘swelling’.

2 Irish *tulach* ‘hillock’ (already Joyce 1887, 389-90 for its usage in toponymy), although sometimes considered in this way, does not belong here and goes back to *\*talukā/i*, see Stifter 1998, 227; for Ir. *tul* see LEIA T-180-82. For difficult *Tuliassi*, *Tullium*, *Tullonium*, *Tullum* see DCC: 222-3, and for Celt.-Iber. *Tullos* Wodtko 2000, 420. These forms are irrelevant for the present discussion.

The verb is reflected in Gaulish, as in the tribal name *Belgae*, cf. also the place-name *Belginum* (modern Morbach-Wederath); see DCCPN: 9 and 71, for the underlying semantics — with a different verb! — cf. the ethnic name *Cavares* based on *\*cauaro-* ‘hero, giant’, to Celt. *\*kewaro-* < *\*k'euh<sub>1</sub>-* ‘swell, become rounded, grow’ (IEW: 592-4), see DCCPN: 14 and 96. PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup>elg<sup>h</sup>-* ‘swell’ is reflected also in the Welsh place-name landscape, as in Rhos-y-Bol ‘hillocky moor’ (italics are mine, for the explanation see Owen, Morgan 2007, 412). See the discussion of the interplay of meanings of the continuations of PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup>elg<sup>h</sup>-* ‘swell’ in Coates 2020, 63-4 where further examples and bibliographic references are provided,<sup>3</sup> and note *Twyn-y-boli* in Carmarthenshire containing reflexes of both *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-n-* and *\*b<sup>h</sup>elg<sup>h</sup>-* and glossed as ‘hillock at the swelling’ in Morgan 2022, 175. The same author also discusses the geographical name *Twynmynydd* ‘hillock near the mountain’ (with the second component *mynydd* ‘mountain’), which is semantically similar.

With this approach morphological aspects of this formation should be examined. It has been observed that derivatives of *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-* ‘to swell, be strong’ extended with *\*-k-* may further be enlarged, for example, by a suffix in *\*-n-* as seen in the Insular Celtic forms quoted above and, say, Lithuanian *táukinas* ‘fat’ and Common Slavic *\*tučbnō* ‘fat, rich’, for which see Dersken 2015, 460, cf. also Smoczyński 2007, 662. If Τουρκίς in fact belongs here it conceals *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-r-*, and in fact we find exactly this configuration among the examples J. Pokorny himself cites in this entry (IEW: 1081). Pokorny refers there to Greek Τεῦκρος, and indeed at face value it looks like an exact counterpart of the place-name attested in Hispania Tarraconensis. However, Τεῦκρος is not Greek in origin (see von Kamptz 1982, 332-3), and although its underlying form may in theory reflect PIE *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-r-*, this remains far from clear. Nevertheless, we do find the identical configuration elsewhere, as in Baltic, viz. Lithuanian. Apart from *táukinas* ‘fat’ mentioned above and *taukai* ‘fat’ normally quoted in discussions of PIE *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-*, we also find Lithuanian *taukrà* ‘fatness, fertility’ < *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-r-* (Smoczyński 2007, 662) and a number of similar formations are registered in the electronic dictionary of the Lithuanian language.<sup>4</sup> This data provides the exact parallel within this approach to the Hispano-Celtic place-name Τουρκίς. Therefore, among further derivations from the PIE base *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-* (< *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-*) alongside these in *-n-* represented by Welsh *twyn* ‘hillock, peak’, Ir. *tón* ‘buttocks’ (< *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-n-*, cf. also Common

3 For that discussion Welsh *tor* ‘belly’ (cf. Old Breton *tar* gl. *ventrem*, Fleuriot 1964, 311) and ‘swell’, as well as ‘breast, slope, flank, or side (of mountain, hill, &c.)’, also attested in toponymy (Owen, Morgan 2007, lxix s.v. *tor*<sup>1</sup> ‘slope, flank, hill’) may be relevant. Note also the semantic ambiguity of Ir. *cabhán* which denotes ‘hill’ alongside ‘cavity, hollow’ (cf. Joyce 1887, 401-2).

4 [www.lkz.lt](http://www.lkz.lt); I am grateful to Professor Grasilda Blažienė of the Institute of the Lithuanian language (Lietuvių kalbos institutas, Vilnius) for guiding me through this important resource.

Slavic *\*tučbnъ* and its Baltic counterparts) one may rather confidently postulate those in *-r-*.

The great A. Meillet (1967, 57-58) aptly maintained that “the etymologies of proper names are uncertain because of the two pieces of data whose value is established by agreement with the facts of other languages, meaning and phonological form, we can utilize only one: phonological form”. The semantic interpretation of the Hispano-Celtic place-name Τουρκίς if it goes to *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-r-* remains also far from conclusive. The situation in this particular case is even more difficult as the exact location of the settlement is conjectural, and therefore the topographic features which may be relevant for its semantic explanation are altogether lacking. Judging by Celtic *comparanda* (cf. Welsh *twyn* ‘hillock, peak’ < *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-n-*) the underlying *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-r-* also may point to the meaning ‘hilly (place)’ *vel sim.*, cf. also continuations of synonymous PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup>elg<sup>h</sup>-* ‘swell’ in Celtic toponymy noted above. Alternatively, the etymology of Old Irish *ith* ‘wheat, corn’, Old Cornish *yd gl. seges* and its other Celtic congeners, including Gaulish *\*itu-*, *\*ituo-*, also derived from the verb meaning ‘swell up’, viz. *\*peiH-*, LIV: 464, cf. IEW: 793-4 (see DCCPN: 21), may point to a different semantic approach, ‘fertile (place)’ *vel sim.* If indeed Τουρκίς is to be identified with Turégano (attested first in 1116 as Torodano), the latter is located on a rather flat area with small hillocks as Professor J. L. García Alonso kindly advises me. Therefore, two semantic interpretations - ‘hilly (place)’ and ‘fertile (place)’ — may be appropriate in case of this identification, too. Moreover, initial semantics of the nomination may not be based on topographic factors or references to the fertility of the area in view of a plethora of ancient Celtic place-names in *sego-* derived from the PIE verb with a similar meaning.

It goes without saying that this etymology of Τουρκίς as going back to *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-r-* with the subsequent semantic hesitance due to the loose identification of the settlement can only be tentative. Nevertheless it sounds more persuasive than other attempts to explain the place-name referred to in MLH VI: 701. Thus, comparisons with the Celt-Iberian (Luzaga) *ti-ke-r-s-e-bo-s* ignore discrepancies in vocalism, as has already been noted (cf. García Alonso 2003, 308), while enumeration of Τουρκίς alongside such geographical names of ancient Hispania as *Tucci*, *Tuci*, *Tugi*, *Iptuci*, *Ituci*, etc., lacks explanatory value and the chain may well be heterogenous in its origins and linguistic attributions. In fact, we may deal here with a “long arm of coincidence”, to use the elegant coinage of Patrick Sims-Williams (2006, 26); cf. Falileyev 2008 for a number of methodological issues pertaining to such an analysis. A reference to *\*teg-*, that is to IE *\*(s)teg-* ‘(be)decken’ (IEW: 1013-4, LIV: 589) may look at first sight promising. Its reflexes are well attested in Celtic, and also with the appropriate semantics, cf. Ir. *tech* (on Goidelic see Hughes 2015) or W. *tŷ* ‘house’ see, e.g., Matasović 2009, 376, which also allows to avoid certain tensions in the reconstruction of vocalism. Nevertheless, the *-κ-* of Τουρκίς, with this approach, remains unexplained properly (Celtib. *tekez* (Luzaga) does not

belong here), and the morphological pattern pertaining to the explanation of the place-name to my knowledge is lacking. A reference to PIE verbs not mentioned in MLH VI: 701 such as e.g. *\*(s)teuk-* ‘stoßen, schlagen’ (LIV: 640, IEW: 1032) does not look encouraging semantically nor (perhaps) morphologically. Therefore, the most economic interpretation of the place-name Τουρκίς is to see in it a continuation of PIE *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-k-r-* as also seen e.g., in Lithuanian *taukrà* ‘fatness, fertility’, and render it — rather neutrally — as a ‘hilly (place)’ or ‘fertile (place)’, or even ‘a strong place’.

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Alexander Falileyev

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