



**A History of Surnames of the British Isles, by C. L'Estrange Ewen. (London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd.) New York, The Macmillan Co., 1931, pp 352-365.** [Transcribed by John D. McLaughlin (*Lochlan at aol.com*) and David N. Ewing (*DavidEwing93 at gmail.com*).]

## Chapter XIV

### THE ETYMON AND ITS SIGNIFICATION

**Etymological Considerations.** Having traced out step by step the evolution of the surname from the personal description or address, examined the various processes of derivation, and gained an insight into the deceptive results of orthographic corruption, a possibly rash essay will now be made to reverse the operation, and taking a modern name, to attempt the exemplification of a method of working, whereby the geographical distribution, language, etymon, and original signification is discovered. By etymon is here meant the "true" or original form, that is, the primary word. At some more or less remote period all surnames have been words: of the four classes—characteristic and occupational were adopted words; local surnames were formerly words or place-names, themselves once either words or personal names + words; and genealogical surnames, with few exceptions, were personal names, also originally current words, sometimes of a bygone age.

Comparative philologists are able in most cases to strip such words of their grammatical adjuncts, and to lay bare the radical portion or root as it is called. It is not proposed in this chapter to attempt to discover the ultimate element, or to do more than trace a surname back to the original word, and to determine its meaning, a sufficiently difficult problem and one in which certainty is often elusive.

Possibly the most knotty questions will be found among names of the genealogical class, because the significations of some personal names had been lost even a thousand years ago. For a demonstration, the writer will take his own patronymic, formerly a personal name in Suffolk, in which county it was of at least the antiquity of the Domesday Book (1086).<sup>1</sup> The first step is to investigate the occurrences and distribution of the name in the ancient records of Britain and the continent, and the second is to determine the language of the original word, and its signification.

**Geographical Distribution.** Owen or Ewan was one of the kings of Britain during the Celtic occupation, according to the much discredited list given by Geoffrey of Monmouth, who flourished temp. Hen. I.<sup>2</sup> and the equally fabulous series recorded by Walter of Coventry (thirteenth century).<sup>3</sup> In A.D. 642, according to various Irish annals, the Britons, under their king Owen, defeated

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<sup>1</sup> Sudfolc, f. 440b.

<sup>2</sup> *The British History of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. By J.A. Giles, 1844, bk. iii, chap. xix p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> *Memorale Fratris Walteri de Coventria*, ed. by Wm. Stubbs (Rolls Ser. 58), vol. i., p. 7.

and slew the Scottish monarch, Domnall Breac, in the Battle of Strathcarn.<sup>4</sup> A seventh-century royal genealogy mentions a form of the name twice—Riderch map Eugein map Dunnagual map Teudebur map Beli map Elfin map Eugein map Beli.<sup>5</sup> In the reign of Æthelstane, the Strathclyde Britons joined with the Scots and Norsemen in an attempt to overthrow the English supremacy; but were defeated at Brunenberg, A.D. 937, and Owin, king of the Cumbrians, and Constantin, king of Scots, put to flight.<sup>6</sup> Owen is also called king of Gwent (Uwen Wenta cyning),<sup>7</sup> and is evidently the Eugenius *sub regulus* who in 931 attested a grant of King Æthelstan to the thegn Ælfric, of land at Watchfield (Berks); also appearing as a witness to further royal deeds, in one of which, by king Eadred to the thegn Ælfseige Hunlafing, gifting land at Alwalton (Hunts), he is called Wurgeat, and in another, a Saxon charter, Owen.<sup>8</sup> In A.D. 1018, the second year of Knut, king Malcolm entered England accompanied by Eugenius Calvus (the bald), king of the Strathclyde Britons (*rex Clutinensium*), gaining an important victory over the Northumbrians.<sup>9</sup> Owen probably died about the same time, as the Annales Cambriæ record under year 1015—Owinus filius Dunawal occisis est; the discrepancy in date being due, no doubt, to the Chronicler's error.

Beda, the Venerable, writing of a period four years before his own birth (673), mentions Owin of Lastingham (Yorks), who came with Queen Etheldreda from East Anglia.<sup>10</sup> The Rev. Dr. Stukely suggested that he was in all probability of native extraction, "for the Isle of Ely was possessed by the old Britons long after the Saxons had taken hold of England; as before was the case in Roman times."<sup>11</sup>

The names Owein and Ewen frequently occur in early Welsh poems; the *Book of Taliessin* mentions Owein mon (of Mona) and Owen ap urien; and the *Book of Aneurin*, Ewein vap eulat (the son of Eulad).<sup>12</sup> According to the Welsh triads it appears that the Roman emperor Maximus (fifth century) left a son in Britain called Owain ab Macsen Wledig, who was elected to the chief sovereignty of the Britons, and under whom Britain was restored to a state of independence, and

<sup>4</sup> *Annals of Tighernac* and *Annals of Ulster*. His name is variously spelt Ohan, Hoan, and Haan, the *h* being redundant. See *Celtic Scotland*, by W.F. Skene, vol. I, p. 250, and *Chronicles of the Picts and Scots*, by the same author, p. 68. See also *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, vol., i, p. 178.

<sup>5</sup> Additions to the *Historia Britonum* (*Chronicles of the Picts and Scots*, p. 15).

<sup>6</sup> Under the year 934 *Historia Ecclesiæ Dunhelmensis* (Symeon of Durham), Rolls Ser. 75, vol. i, p. 76. Under year 926 Eugenius Rex Cumbroram submits to Æthelstan at Dacre. *Willelmi Malmesbiriensis Monachi de Gestis Regum Anglorum*, edited by W. Stubbs (Rolls Ser. 90), vol. ii, p. 147.

<sup>7</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Rolls Ser. 23), vol. i, p. 199, col. i. Gwent was the name given to territory principally consisting of the counties of Monmouth and Glamorgan.

<sup>8</sup> Latin and Anglo-Saxon grants from *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*, by J. M. Kemble, vol. ii, pp. 203, 304; vol. v, pp. 199, 208.

<sup>9</sup> Symeon of Durham (cited above), vol. ii, p. 156. Professor Freeman calls him Eogan or Eugenius, and Dr. Skene (*Celtic Scotland*, vol. i. p. 394), Eugenius or Owen.

<sup>10</sup> *Ecclesiastical History of England*, bk. iv, chap. iii.

<sup>11</sup> *The History and Antiquities of the Conventual and Cathedral Church of Ely*, by James Bentham, 1812, p. 51 n.

<sup>12</sup> *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, ed. by W. F. Skene, who rejects the Welsh Triads, Hanes Taliessin, and Iolo MS. as all spurious, p. 23.

discontinued payment of tribute to the Romans.<sup>13</sup> A tenth-century manuscript states that in A.D. 811, Eugem filius Margetiud moritur<sup>14</sup> and the *Brut y Tywysogion* mentions Ywain ap Howel, who died in 987, and Owein uab Difynwal, slain in 989.<sup>15</sup>

Among the many Ewens of note may be noticed the alleged seducer of Thaney, the mother of St. Kentigern (St. Mungo, the patron saint of Glasgow, seventh century). In an anonymous fragment of the saint's biography, written in the twelfth century, he is called "Ewen filius Erwegende, nobilissima Brittonum prosapia ortus" (sprung from a most noble stock of the Britons);<sup>16</sup> elsewhere he figures as Ewen filius Ulien, and is evidently the Ywain ap Urien of Welsh records. Geoffrey of Monmouth calls him Eventus, and represents him as successor to his uncle Augusel, king of Albania (Scotland).<sup>17</sup> Numerous churches in England have been dedicated to a St. Ewen or Owen; Bristol, Gloucester, Hereford, Chepstow (Monm.), Lelant (Cornw.), Redruth (Cornw.), Bromham (Beds.), were all represented at one time, and there was also a church of St. Owen in Dublin.

In Irish annals the name frequently appears: Egon of Inbher, also called Eugenius de Ard-Inver, is said to have been living 1730 B.C.;<sup>18</sup> Eoghan More, King of Munster, was murdered A.D. 123; from another Eoghan More, slain A.D. 195, were descended the Eoghanachts or Eugenians; in A.D. 465 Eoghan, son of Nial of the Nine Hostages, died and was buried in Inis-Eoghain (island of Owen or Ewen now Inishowen), from which Eoghan descended the *Cenel Eoghain*.<sup>19</sup> Eoghan, bishop of Ardstraw, co. Tryone, is commemorated as a saint. Cawdor, a parish in the counties of Nairn and Inverness, was dedicated to St. Ewan and anciently called Borivon, properly Bar Ewan or Ewan's height.<sup>20</sup> The name, carried into Scotland by the Irish, became exceedingly common, where there was anciently a clan Ewen.

Medieval pedigree makers, with more zeal than accuracy, claimed to be able to recite the genealogy of the royal house of Scotland from Noah! Master Ralph de Diceto, dean of St. Pauls (twelfth century), hands on a pedigree showing William, king of Scots, 131<sup>st</sup> in descent from the famous ship-builder,<sup>21</sup> No. 21 in the royal lineage being Owan, who, if the genealogy were accurate, must have flourished considerably over 1,000 years before the commencement of the christian era; and No. 88 being Ewein, who may, perhaps, be identified as one of the early kings of Scotland, invented by over-industrious historians. A somewhat

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<sup>13</sup> *Essay on the Welsh Saints*, by Rice Rees, p. 107.

<sup>14</sup> *Annales Cambriæ*, p. 11. In other manuscripts, Owinus and Oweyn.

<sup>15</sup> Rolls Ser. 17, p. 22.

<sup>16</sup> Printed in *Registrum Episcopatus Glasguensis*, vol. i, p. lxxviii

<sup>17</sup> *British History of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, 1842, bk. xi, chap. i.

<sup>18</sup> *Ogygia*, by R. O'Flaherty, pt. iii, chap. iv.

<sup>19</sup> *Annals of Ireland by the Four Masters*, ed. by J. O'Donovan, 1851.

<sup>20</sup> *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, Art. Eoghan. In the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, ed. by D. Murphy, Eoghan is called Owen, bishop of Ardstrathy. The Bollandists have a memoir *De S. Eugenio vel Eogaino Episcopo Ardstrathensis in Hibernia*. Consequently Ewan = Owen = Eoghan = Ivon = Eugenius = Eogainus.

<sup>21</sup> *Radulphi de Dicelo Opera Historica*, ed. by Rev. W. Stubbs, M.A (Rolls Ser. 68), vol. ii, p. 35.

similar pedigree is given by a fourteenth-century chronicler<sup>22</sup>; wherein Ewan, 19<sup>th</sup> in descent from Noë, appears as grandfather of Neolos, king of Athens, whose son Gaythelos was the first king of the Scottish nation, and married Scota, daughter of a Pharaoh, being contemporary with Moses, who lived after the year 2015 B.C. and before 1075.<sup>23</sup> The greater part of these pedigrees must have been based on nothing more than oral tradition, and therefore cannot be relied upon for exact names or dates; nevertheless, for the present inquiry, they have a value in showing that in the twelfth century the personal name Owan or Ewein was recognized as being of great antiquity.

Boece, "the father of lies" (1526), mentions three Scottish monarchs named Ewen, as flourishing anterior to the christian era, and in this fiction he was followed by Guthrie (1767), Carruthers (1826) and others. These collectors of traditional and mythical narratives mention eight kings named Eugene or Eugenius, A.D. 360-763, Guthrie, with conspicuous enterprise, providing portraits of them all! Although sundry of these Ewens only existed in the imagination of their biographers, their inclusion in the list helps show that the name was recognized as one of the most ancient in Scotland. Several of these royal Ewens did actually flourish, and are mentioned as early as 1270 in the *Cronicon Elegiacum*.<sup>24</sup> Andrew of "Wyntoun also records:—

"Oure the Scottis the Kyng Ewan."<sup>25</sup>

"Twa yhere regnand Schyr Ewan  
As Kyng off Scottis endyt than."<sup>26</sup>

The name also appears in records of Pictish monarchs, but it must be noted that very considerable confusion between Scottish and Pictish kings occurs in the genealogies. In the *Annales Cambriæ*, under date A.D. 736, Ougen rex Pictorum obiit; in the *Annals of Tighernach*, A.D. 838, Owen mac Aongus is mentioned, which king is called Eoghane filius Hungus by Fordun, and is frequently mentioned in the ancient chronicles (A.D. 971 to 1317), under such names as Uven, Unen, Eogana, Coganan, Egganus, and Doganan.<sup>27</sup> According to Pinkerton, this Uven is a Gothic name,<sup>28</sup> but Chalmers,<sup>29</sup> and Garnett,<sup>30</sup> consider it to be a form of Welsh Owain; and that it is Celtic is very probable, since the sound value of *v* in early days was not unlike the modern *w*. The same form of the name is found in the ogmic inscription at Colbinstown, co. Kildare, if the transliteration of Macalister is correct.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Johannis de Fordun Chronica*, bk. v, chap. 1. *Historians of Scotland*, vols. i and iv.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. i, chap. viii.

<sup>24</sup> *Chronicles of the Picts and Scots*, ed. by W. F. Skene

<sup>25</sup> *Oryginale Cronykil of Scotland*, bk. vi, chap. i.

<sup>26</sup> Bk. vi, chap. ii.

<sup>27</sup> W. F. Skene cited above

<sup>28</sup> *Enquiry into the History of Scotland*, 1787, vol. i, p. 286.

<sup>29</sup> *Caledonia*, vol. i, p. 207.

<sup>30</sup> *Transactions of the Philological Society*, vol. i (1842), p. 120.

<sup>31</sup> See above, p. 36.

With regard to Anglo-Saxon records, practically nothing of the name has been seen, with the exception of the few cases of Welsh origin cited above. The *Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum* gives a reference to one Eowine, a moneyer in the time of Harold I, whose name is noticed on a coin in the British museum collection;<sup>32</sup> but the prototheme *eo* is rare in true O.E. names, and Eowine is probably a variant of Owine, just as Eowel is of Howel. Possible forms of this name are found in early Teutonic records: Förstemann cites: Awin, Avan, Aven, and Auin (fem.).<sup>33</sup>

Nordic records likewise yield barren results: Olaf Nielsen in *Olddanske Personnavne* mentions Ewen and Iwan, but has negligently omitted to say anything regarding them. Oinus *dacus* (i.e. *danicus*) was dispossessed of his land in Essex in 1066;<sup>34</sup> but Oinus may stand for the common Scandinavian name Odin, these two appellatives appearing to be interchangeable.<sup>35</sup> Under year 1170 Eoan is the name of a “Dane,” from the Orkney Islands, occurring in the *Annals of the Four Masters*.<sup>36</sup> Nothing more relevant to the discussion than negative evidence is to be gathered from Runic inscriptions, according to the list supplied by Professor Stephens.<sup>37</sup> R. Ferguson considered Owen to be of O.N. derivation,<sup>38</sup> and Lower gave O.N. *ovanr* “inexperienced” as the etymon of Oven,<sup>39</sup> but supporting evidence is entirely wanting; the names Owen or Oven not occurring in such lists as *Íslendinga Sögur* nor in any other of the rolls of early Nordic names. If Owen is derived from any old Scandinavian word, a more likely suggestion would be *úvindr* “foe,” “enemy;” it may also be noticed that the very common Icelandic name *Eyvindr* occurs in a great profusion of orthographic forms, such as *Evindr*, *Ewindr*, etc.,<sup>40</sup> which, if brought to Britain, might have become Ewin by apocopation; but, again, there is no evidence in support.

In distinction to its rarity in northern records, Eugenius (fem. Eugenia), the Latin form of Eugene, and also, according to some authorities, the equivalent to Eoghan (Gael.), Eochaid (Gael.), Owen (W.), and Ewen (Eng.), was common throughout Southern Europe at a very early date. The correct latinization of Ewen is *Evenus*, but Owen is often rendered *Audoenus*.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> W. G. Searle.

<sup>33</sup> In later years, in the Low Countries, the name approached more nearly to the English and Scottish form; A.D. 1326, Wouter Ywinssoen in Renwick (*Register op de Leenaktenboeken*, Sloet); 1423, Jan Ywaenssoen van den Berghe (Studiën, etc., Winkler); a seventeenth-century family spelt the name Uwens, which form may be found in London. In England, A.D. 1369, Simon Yweynson of Holbeach (Lincs.), Coroner's Roll 22, m. 2; 1638, Thomas Huynson or Hewinson, Herts. (Lent Assizes 35/80). I have also seen Owanson and Evanson. In Scottish records of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Ewinson, Hewinsoun, etc., are common.

<sup>34</sup> *Domesday Book*, vol. ii, f. 25.

<sup>35</sup> *Exon. Domesday*, ff. 3, 9b, and 16.

<sup>36</sup> Vol. ii p. 1185.

<sup>37</sup> *The Old Northern Runic Monuments*, 1866, vol. ii, p. 897.

<sup>38</sup> *English Surnames*, p. 244.

<sup>39</sup> *Patronymica Britannica*.

<sup>40</sup> *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* and *Islandske Annaler*.

<sup>41</sup> On the continent Audoen is often equivalent to Teutonic Audwin (O.E. Eadwine).

Homer, nearly 3,000 years ago, gave Evenus as the designation of three mythical personages;<sup>42</sup> Plato referred to a poet of the name, whom Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, in his Chronicle, places at the 30th Olympiad (460 B.C.),<sup>43</sup> and another is mentioned by Seneca (first century).<sup>44</sup> A Greek physician called Eugenius flourished some time in or before the first century after Christ, as one of his formulæ is quoted by Andromachus;<sup>45</sup> and between A.D. 300 and 850 twenty-nine bishops, ten martyrs, and four popes bore the same name.

The name in forms other than Eugenius or Evenus is also found on the continent at an early date; St. Ovan (Evantius) was the seventh bishop of Autun early in the fifth century;<sup>46</sup> St. Ouen or Ouein (Audoenus), archbishop of Rouen, an eminent biographer of the seventh century, who promoted the foundation of many monasteries and churches of St. Ouen, died near Paris, 683; the present church of St. Ouen, Rouen, was begun in 1318; and in France several towns and villages bear the name, the place-name St. Ouen giving the surname to one of the distinguished French families, who became settled in England.

With the Celts of Brittany the name was popular; among others, Alan, count of Brittany, had an uncle named Even (Linzoel), who was flourishing in 1027;<sup>47</sup> and Even, archbishop of Dol, died in 1081.<sup>48</sup>

This cursory dip into ancient history enables one to rule out entirely the possibility of Scandinavian or Teutonic origin for the name Ewen, and to express the opinion that the name is of great antiquity among the Celts, but whether they collected it from the Greeks or Latins or left it with them is not so transparent.<sup>49</sup>

**Views of Philologists.** With regard to the Celtic group, the name Ewen, in different orthographic forms, is found in Irish, Manx, Gaelic (Scottish), Welsh (Brythonic or British), Cornish, and Breton records. In England and Wales, in the majority of cases, Ewen and Owen have been derived, at least nine centuries ago, from British *Ywein*, and in Scotland and Ireland from Gaelic *Eogan*. Philologists have not had occasion to discuss the origin and signification of *Ywein*, but over 1,000 years ago the derivation of *Eogan* had received attention.

*Sanas Chormaic*, an etymological glossary of difficult words in the Irish language, with derivations from Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, was compiled by Cormac Mac Cullenain, king of Munster, prior to A.D. 905. The entry relating to *Eogan* is translated as follows:—

"Eogan or Eogen, i.e. eugen, i.e. greece: *ευ bonus* or *bonum* latine dicitur, *gen*, however, is from *γενεσις*, *γενεσις* autem generatio est. *Eo-gen*, then, is bona generatio."

<sup>42</sup> *Iliad*, bk. ii, 693; and ix, 557.

<sup>43</sup> *Apologia Socratis*, p. 20b.

<sup>44</sup> *Hercules Oetaeus*, line 501. Forte per campos vagus Evenos.

<sup>45</sup> *Dict. of Biog. and Mythology*, Art. by W. A. Greenhill.

<sup>46</sup> *Gallia Christiana*, by D. de Ste Marthe, 1728, vol. iv, p. 338.

<sup>47</sup> *Histoire de Bretagne*, by G. A. Lobineau, vol. ii, p. 116.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., I give some other examples in *Ewen of East Anglia and the Fenland*, p. 14, n. 6.

<sup>49</sup> The name of St. Eugenius frequently occurs on the coins of the emperors of Trebizond, the Greek legends giving the name in a variety of forms. (*Catalogue of the Coins of the Vandals*, by W. Wroth, 1911.)

The twelfth-century *Cóir Anmann* (Fitness of Names) follows on similar lines:—

"Eogan [referring to Eogan, the great, second century] was his name from parental origin, that is eo-genesis, i.e. good birth, for eo is *ευ-* bona, but genesis (*γένεσις*) is Eogan's generatio. Of Eo-gan, then, bona generatio is the analysis."<sup>50</sup>

"'Tis from this that *Eoganacht* is said of them (scil. his descendants), in virtue of the blessings which the men of Erin bestowed upon him for his hospitality and generosity towards them, and for rescuing them from the famine in which they were. From this (comes) *Eoganacht*, i.e. *bona actio*, i.e. a good act (it was) for him (Eogan) to save the men of Erin from starvation.

"Or *Eoganacht*, i.e. Eogan-icht, i.e. Eogan's protection to the men of Erin. Or *Eogan-necht*, that is Eogan's *necht*: *necht* 'children,' that is the seven *Eoganachts* are Eogan's children.

"Thence then had he the name *Eogan Mor* ('Great'), because he was great above every one, and (so were) his children and his kindred after him."<sup>51</sup>

The divergent views of modern philologists regarding this name is illustrated by the following extract from *Etymology of Gaelic National Names* (Macbain).

"EWEN, G. Eòghann (Dial. Eòghainn), M.G. *Eogan*, *Eoghan*, E. Ir., O. Ir., *Eogan*: \*Avi-gono-s (\**Avigenos*, Stokes) 'well-born, good' from \*avi, friendly, good, Skr. ávi (do.), Got. avi-liud, thanks, Lat. aveo desire, possibly Gr. *ευ-*; good (cf. here Εὐγενῆς, *Eugenius*), W. has *Eutigern*, *Eu-tut*, O. Br. *Eu-cant*, *Eu-hocar*, Gaul. *Avi-cantus*, Rhys (Hibbert Lectures, 63) refers Ir. *Eoghan* and W. *Owen* to \**Esu-gen-* Gaul. *Esugenus*, sprung from the god *Esus*. Zimmer regards *Owen* as borrowed from Lat. *Eugenius*. Cf., however, the *evo-* of Ogmic *Evacattos*, now *Eochaidh*. Hence *Mac-ewen*."

The asterisks (\*) denote hypothetical words.

Notwithstanding the opinions of the early Irish writers, one cannot help thinking that a simpler origin of the Scottish and Irish Ewen and Owen would be nearer the truth. Why should Eoghan, among all ancient Gaelic names, be singled out for derivation from the Greek?<sup>52</sup> In some cases Eogan may be the Greek Eugen, but so popular and widespread a name is much more likely to have originated among the ancient Celts, who lent it to the Greeks, if, in fact, both races did not obtain it from the common source of their origin. O'Brien, an eighteenth-century lexicographer, was strongly of opinion that the Irish never borrowed any part of their language from the Greeks, but, on the contrary, that the latter race derived a great part of their speech from the Celts.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to the above significations, the meaning of the name Ewen has been given as "kind-natured"<sup>54</sup> and "young man or youthful warrior"<sup>55</sup> and of Ewin

<sup>50</sup> The name Eugenius was also used by the Germans, who have the modern *Wohlgeboren*. (*Die Personennamen*, von A. F. Pott, 1859, p. 540.)

<sup>51</sup> *Irische Texte*, von Wh. Stokes und E. Windisch. 3 Ser. 2 Heft.

<sup>52</sup> I find nothing regarding Eoghan in *Die griechischen Personennahmen*, von August Fick, 1874.

<sup>53</sup> Preface to *An Irish-English Dictionary*, by J. O'Brien, 1768.

<sup>54</sup> *History of Clan Ewen*, by R. S. T. MacEwen, 1904, p. 30.

as "law-friend."<sup>56</sup> Owen is said to signify "lamb,"<sup>57</sup> "young warrior,"<sup>58</sup> "enemy,"<sup>59</sup> "unsheathed,"<sup>60</sup> "apt to serve or to minister,"<sup>61</sup> and Ouen "rich friend,"<sup>62</sup> Ivon or Yvon is said to mean "bow-bearer or archer,"<sup>63</sup> and Yves from which is derived Even, according to some authorities, "active or watchful."<sup>64</sup> Yet Ewen and Owen are the same name, and Ivon is sometimes an equivalent. The diversity of opinion shows that the determination of the etymon of the name is difficult and uncertain, and further investigation is necessary.

**Derivation.** The name under consideration is in such widespread use that it is quite possible the primitive form existed in more than one word-base; that one modern name (i.e. one orthographic or one phonetic form) may be derived from several roots is as certain as that several names may be derived from one root. The mother-tongue of the Indo-European languages is unknown; according to philologists the nearest approach to it is Sanskrit, which has preserved its words in the most primitive forms. The root of Skr. and Pers. *yuvan* "young," may well be one of the word-bases of Ewan, Owen, and even Hugh, Young, and other appellatives. For Celtic derivation it would be possible to suggest half a dozen words in Welsh or Gaelic which might be the origin of the name, such as W. *euain* "to be moving or wandering,"<sup>65</sup> *ewyn* "foam or froth";<sup>66</sup> Ir. *uan* "lamb,"<sup>67</sup> *iwyn* "outrageous,"<sup>68</sup> or Gael. *eigh*,<sup>69</sup> *eubh*, or *eugh* "a cry."<sup>70</sup> Yet another suggestion may be advanced: the bow and arrow is one of the most ancient devices of hunting or fighting known to man, its origin being lost in the mists of antiquity; yew being the favourite material for bow staves, the yew tree occurring wild over a large area of the northern hemisphere. It is possible, then, that the primitive word for yew, if any, is the source of some personal names. In English descriptions of later days there occur Bower and Bowman, from bow, and Archer, from arch (Lat. *arcus* "a bow"); in Welsh, Saethwr "archer;" the Norse has Skapti, originally a shaft maker, now Scapti and Scafti (cf. Scot. Shafto), and Icel. Bog-sveigr (bow-slayer). Is it not probable also that the Celtic races had a synonymous personal name? In Irish, Scottish, and Welsh place-

<sup>55</sup> *Irish Pedigrees*, by John O'Hart, 1881, p. 36. E. O'Reilly (*Irish-English Dictionary*) derives Eoghan from *eoghunn* "youth." See also C. M. Yonge (*History of Christian Names*, vol. ii, p 141), *og* "young" and *duine* "man."

<sup>56</sup> Hy. Harrison's *Dictionary*.

<sup>57</sup> C. M. Yonge, vol. ii, p. 140. W. *oen*, Ir. *uan* "a lamb," followed by T. G. Gentry, p. 46.

<sup>58</sup> I have mislaid this reference.

<sup>59</sup> *English Surnames*, by R. Ferguson, 1858, p. 244. O.N. óvínr O.E. *unwine* "enemy."

<sup>60</sup> *The Cymry of '79*, by Alex. Jones, p. 102.

<sup>61</sup> *Caledonia*, by Geo. Chalmers, 1807, vol. i, p. 207.

<sup>62</sup> C. M. Yonge, p. 249.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Zeuss and M. de Coston. See *Dictionnaire des Noms*, par Loredon Larchey, 1880.

<sup>65</sup> *Welsh and English Dictionary*, by Rev. Thos. Richards.

<sup>66</sup> *A Dictionary in Englyshe and Welshe*, by Wylyam Salesbury, 1547.

<sup>67</sup> J. O'Brien (cited above).

<sup>68</sup> Richards (cited above).

<sup>69</sup> *A Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* (Macleod and Dewar, 1853).

<sup>70</sup> *A Gaelic Dictionary*, by R. A. Armstrong, 1825.

names Gaelic and Welsh equivalents of the word "yew" have been identified,<sup>71</sup> and it is to be expected that it also appears in personal names, if not as "bower" or "archer," then as "yewer" or some other word of similar meaning.<sup>72</sup> It is not necessary that the word or resulting name should date from Aryan or Sanskrit period; it may have originated in Celtic days, and it is suggested that a modern name derived from an early Celtic equivalent of "yew" exists in the popular English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish appellatives, Ewen and Owen.

Of the Celtic languages, the Gaulish dialects were extinct by the sixth century, and suitable examples cannot be obtained for assistance in the derivation of the names under consideration; in fact, no one of the written records of the Celtic tongues is of earlier date than the seventh century. The oldest languages, Irish, Welsh, Breton, and Cornish, are divided into three periods—Old, Middle, and Modern, which are approximately dated 700-1100, 1100-1500, and 1500 to the present day. Irish occurs first in glosses of the eighth century; its dialect, Scottish Gaelic, not being found at all in the first period.<sup>73</sup> A few glosses provide the only examples of early Breton, and Welsh is scarce until the middle period, Cornish and Manx writings not being found until a much later date. All these languages are therefore known only in comparatively modern forms, being frequently very different from the original. Personal names also have not retained the same orthographic forms during the passage of thousands of years; in many cases a name has lost its original signification and acquired another; some names, perhaps, have now several meanings, and several names may have the same meaning. Giving full consideration to these peculiarities, the impossibility of finally and definitely fixing an etymology will be realized.

O'Hart has observed that down to the eleventh century every Irish name had some signification,<sup>74</sup> so that if Eogan or Eoghan is of Gaelic derivation, then both elements originally had some meaning, and if the first is not the same word as *iogh* or *eo* "yew," then its signification has been passed over by all the Irish glossarians. The followers of Cormac will consider this point to support the theory of a Greek etymon for the name.

Eoghan is used by the eminent Celtic scholar, Dr. Skene, and some other authorities,<sup>75</sup> as an equivalent of the ancient Irish name Eocha or Eochaid, which usage also does not fit in with the present suggestion that Eoghan is derived from *eo* "a yew," because Eocha or Eochaid (gen. Eachach) is said to be from

<sup>71</sup> Youghal, i.e. *eochaill* "yew wood" (*The Origin and History of Irish Names of Places*, by P. W. Joyce); Gleniur, i.e. *gleann-iuthair* "glen of yews;" Deniur, i.e. *dun-iuthair* "mount of yews" (Armstrong); Orwell, i.e. *lubhar-coille* "yew-wood" (*The Place Names of Fife and Kinross*), by W. J. N. Liddall; Ewenny, i.e. *ywenni* "yew trees" (John Walters, 1828).

<sup>72</sup> That "yew" is an equivalent of bow seems to be borne out by a comparison of Lat. *taxus* "yew" and Gr. *roeop* "bow."

<sup>73</sup> *The Book of Deir* (ninth century) is sometimes cited as containing some early examples of Gaelic, but it is not proved that they are not Irish.

<sup>74</sup> *Irish Pedigrees*, by John O'Hart, 1881, p. ix.

<sup>75</sup> Eogan, Eocha, Eocoidh, and Eugenius are equivalents in the opinion of Rev. Jas. Gammack (*Dict. of Chr. Biog.*, ed. by Dr. Smith, Art. Ewain). Dr. Skene (*Celtic Scotland*, vol. i, pp. 230, n. 2, 264, and 289) regards Cinel Eachadh, Cinel Eochagh, and Cinel Eoghan as interchangeable. In the Felan pedigree Eochaith is also called Eoghan Breac (*Irish Pedigrees*, p. 236). Eocho buide in *Flann Mainistreach* (1014-23) occurs as Ewyne (1280 Chronicle), and Euin (sixteenth century).

each or eoch “a steed,” and is rendered “a knight” or “horseman.”<sup>76</sup> But has the vocable been correctly divided into its components? Is not eochaíd rather eo cathaidhe “yew warrior” (O. Ir. *cath* “battle,” *cathidhe* “warrior,” cf. also *eo-chrann* “yew tree;”<sup>77</sup> and the placename Eochaill, “yew wood,” *eo* and *coill*, not *eoch* “horse” and *all* “great?” Another nominative form of the name is Eochu,<sup>78</sup> which occurs under year 494 in the *Annals of Ulster*, and under year 882 in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, and elsewhere. While Eochu is admittedly a plural form of each “horse,” surely in this case it is from *eo* “yew” and *cu* “warrior” (cf. here Donchu, “brown-haired warrior,” and Muirchu “sea warrior” or “sea dog”). Both Eochu and Eochaíd have the same genitive form.

Dr. Macbain states that ogmic Ivacattos is equivalent to Eochaíd, but *iva* is not very suggestive of “horse,” and is much more like various equivalents of “yew” (cf. D. *ifj* = OHG. *iwa* = MHG. *ewe* = G. *eibe* = F. *if* = Sp. *iva* = O. Fr. *iv* and ML. *ivus* “yew”). Professor Rhys considers *evo* equivalent to Lat. *aevum* “everlasting,” and that Evolengi of ogam inscriptions is compounded of *evo* and *leng*, and signifies “long-lived” or “he of the long life;” but although the common bestowal of fanciful names is not denied, is it not much more likely to be “long yew,” i.e. “he of the long bow?” Such an epithet could reasonably be applied to a person during his lifetime. The *cattus* of Evacattus, Ebicatus, and other names appears to be *catu* or *cat*, so common in Gaulish and Breton names, and signifying “battle” (W., Corn., and Bret. *cad*). Evacattus therefore appears to be etymologically the same as Eochaíd, and to mean, as above stated, “yew warrior.” It may be noted that, on the contrary, Dr. August Fick considers the Irish name Eachaíd to be equivalent to Gaulish Epidius (ep, epo “horse”).<sup>79</sup>

If, however, *eoch* is the first syllable, and does signify “a horse,” it is somewhat extraordinary that the fact is omitted by all dictionarists<sup>80</sup> with the exception of J. B. Bullet (1754), who gives *each*, *ech*, and *eoch* as equivalents for horse, his authorities being some ancient unspecified MSS., but without indicating the cases, and *eoch* may well be some other form than nominative. *Eoch*, according to O'Reilly, signifies “groaning” or “sighing,” otherwise neither *eoch* nor *eogh* is mentioned in any list of the Irish compilers. Even admitting *eoch* and not *eo* to have been the stem of Eochaíd, is it not probable that it has the

<sup>76</sup> *Irish Pedigrees*, pp. 36 and 229.

<sup>77</sup> *In cath catharda* (Irische Texte von E. Windisch, 4 (2), line 336, etc.).

<sup>78</sup> Nominative forms of Eochaíd are sometimes Eochaig, Eocach, etc. (Cf. *caidh* “chaste” becoming *caig* in Munster: O'Reilly.)

<sup>79</sup> That there are personal appellatives in which the word horse can be traced is shown by the numerous Sanskrit names with prefix *acva*, Greek with *ἵππ-*, *ἵππο*, and Gaulish with *ep* (e.g. *Eponnus* = Each-cenn); Namengrup en der indoermanischen Grundsprache in *Die griechischen Personennahmen* von August Fick, p. cxciv.

<sup>80</sup> I have referred to forty dictionaries and glossaries. According to O'Reilly, plural forms of *each* are *eich* and *eocho*, and accusative plural *eochu*. Yet in numerous Gaelic proverbs and quotations relating to the horse collected by A. R. Forbes (*Gaelic Names*, 1905), *eoch* is never used, not even in the plural. Forbes, however, mentions *ech* and *eoth* (perhaps a misprint), as well as *each* (pp. 9, 10), and states that *each*, *ech*, *eoch*, etc., come from the root *ah* “to hasten.” In the *Scottish Celtic Review*, pp. 106 and 198, Professor Windisch, writing on the “Laws of Auslaut in Irish,” mentions *eoch* (dative) for prehistoric *eq-o* Lat. *equo*, the nominative being *ech* (p. 198). *Ech* is also the form used in the *Brehon Law Tracts*.

same signification as *eogh*, and that both are merely forms of *eo* "yew?" (Cf. O. Ir. *iogh* "a yew," Armstrong.) Before Irish writers had any standard of orthography the letters *c* and *g* were interchangeable, as they have been in Latin;<sup>81</sup> and to the writer there is no more difference in the meaning of *eoch* and *eogh*<sup>82</sup> than there is between *loch* and *logh*<sup>83</sup> (Bullet, 1754, Manx *logh*, *loghan*) or *lach* and *lagh* "law"<sup>84</sup> (W. *lacha*, *laha*). Compare the interchangeability of M.W. *coch*, *cogh*, *goch*, and *gogh* (all nom. masc.) as they occur, for instance, in the *Record of Carnarvon*.

Having said that Owen is an orthographic form of Ewen, it may be further mentioned that, in Irish place-names, it is generally of distinct origin, signifying "river" (e.g. *Owenbeg*, "little river," and *Owenmore*, "great river"),<sup>85</sup> but like the personal name, the vocable *owen* is also equivalent to Eng. *ewen*; the Worcestershire river Evenlode being called in the fourteenth century *Ewenlode*,<sup>86</sup> and written in a Latin charter (A.D. 784) *Eouvengelad*.<sup>87</sup>

It is necessary to say a word about the name Evan, which, although of entirely different origin, has often been confused and even considered to be synonymous with Ewen and Owen. Evan is the Welsh representative, as John is the English,<sup>88</sup> of the Hebrew, Johanan, "grace of the Lord," appearing in early form as Yevan or Jevan, and becoming a popular Welsh appellative, with the spread of biblical knowledge, being certainly of much later origin than Eoghan or Ywein, which must have been in common use long before the days of Christianity.

Nothing is more uncertain than the derivation of personal names, as the opposing views of eminent scholars testify. The writer will therefore pronounce no dogmatic opinion regarding the origin of Ewen or Owen, but will merely record the impression, formed by a consideration of the cited facts, that Gaulish

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Macistratos for Magistratos, Leciones for Legiones, etc., on the Columna Rostrata, Rome, B.C. 230. In O. Ir. *g* occurs for *c* as early as the sixth century. See Mag for Mac, dat. sing. in the Clonmacnois inscription (*Christian Inscriptions*, ed. by M. Stokes, 1872, vol. i, p. 58).

<sup>82</sup> The pronunciation in Irish is not the same. The *c* aspirated by an *h* subjoined to it or a full point set over it carries the soft guttural or whistling sound of the Greek *X*, but the *g* in the middle or end of words, if aspirated is suppressed (J. O'Brien, 1832). The pronunciation in Gaelic is very similar.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *Loch Cé*, now *Lough Key* or *Kea*; also the names *Ua Locklann*, now *O'Loughlin*; *Mac Eochagain*, *Mageoghegan*; *O'Beachain*, *O'Beaghan*; *O'Ceallachain*, *O'Callaghan*; *O'Gaibhtheachain*, *O'Gaughan*. Cases of substitution of one letter for another are very common in Irish : C and G, Cannon and Gannon; G and K, Gilfoyle and Kilfoyle, etc.

<sup>84</sup> Pinkerton (*Enquiry*, etc.) has *agh* and *ach*.

<sup>85</sup> Exceptions occur such as Tyrone (Tyr-eoghain).

<sup>86</sup> Patent Rolls, 18 Edw. III, p. 409.

<sup>87</sup> *KCD.*, vol. i, p. 178.

<sup>88</sup> Lower cites the case of the name of a Welsh witness who appeared at the Hereford assizes about the year 1825. He was called John Jones, but he admitted that he also went by the name of Evan Evans. "This apparent discrepancy was explained to the Court by Mr. Taunton (afterwards Sir William Taunton, and a judge of the court of King's Bench), who stated that Evan is the Welsh synonym of John, and Evans that of Jones, and that John Jones might be called indifferently Evan Jones, John Evans, or Evans Evans, without any real change of name." (*Patronymica Britannica*, p. xxii.)

Evacattus and Ebicatus are equivalent to Irish Eo-chaid (not Eoch-aid), signifying “yew-warrior;” that Eoghan has practically the same meaning, being derived from an early Irish word meaning “yew” (the letters of the alphabet were named after trees, *I* being called *iogh* “yew”), that Welsh Ywein is akin to *ywen* “yew,” and that Breton forms of the name Ivon, Yves, Even, etc., are cognate and are derived from an early form of *iven* “yew.” From Eochaid, in later days, have been derived several modern Irish names, such as Iveagh, Haughey, etc., from the Irish Eoghan or O'Eoghain came Owen, and from Scottish Eoghan, Ewan, and Ewing. Cymric Ywein is now Owen in Wales, and Ewen, Ewens, and Hewins in England, Even in Brittany, Ouen and Huens elsewhere in France, Uwens in Flanders, and Euen in Germany. The cognate Breton name Ivo or Ivon has become Ivey in England, and Yves in France. In conclusion the probability may be repeated that, in many cases, names similar in orthography or phonetics, or in both, are derived from entirely different sources, and that names of widely different meaning at the present time may be derived from the same word-base.