



TOWARDS A CLARIFICATION OF THE HISTORY OF THE SLOVENE RIVER NAME *SOČA*

1. COMMON SLOVENE **SÓČA*

The immediate source of the Common Slovene river name **Sóč̑a* (= dial. (Natisone) *Só:ča*, Resian (Bila) *Sóča*)¹ may be unproblematically reconstructed as Slavic **Soč̑a*, regularly continuing an older **Sunc̑ā*. The original accentual pattern of this feminine noun cannot be recovered but such ambiguity is typical of the western and southern Slovene feminine *a*-stems with a long root vowel. It is likely that the name originally belonged to the immobile accentual paradigm I/1, so **Sunc̑ā* > **Sóč̑a* (> **Sòč̑a* > **Sóč̑a*), as is the case with, e.g., **Sóč̑b/bla* (Sotla) < **Suntu/ilā* and in clear opposition to the coherent group of river names with simple disyllabic structure *(C)₁VC₂ā-, which feature regular circumflexion and accompanying (in my view undoubtedly internally Slavic) lengthening of the originally accented vowel, e.g. **Zilā* < **Žilā*,² **Sauā* < **Sāuā*, **Drauā* < **Drāuā*, **Rabā* < **Rābā*, and perhaps *Γυά:να* < **Glāna* (< **Glanā?*) < **Glānā* (= **Glānā?*).³ The substitution of Slavic short **u* for Romance

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1 See Šekli (2008: 166), Steenwijk (1992: 310).

2 The reconstruction is based on the recently acquired dial. attestation *Zlī:ca* (Žabnice/Camporosso) – cf. the Italianised form *Slizza* – with regular vowel reduction in the paroxytonon, which clearly points to the diminutive **Zilīca* (AP *F*₁) ← **Zilā* (AP *b*).

3 Note here that the specifically Slavic accent shift known as the Dybo's Law must be chronologically posterior to the integration of the oldest core of pre-Slavic toponymic material. Consider in this respect a few truly unambiguous cases which show accent progression but were for one reason or another regularly exempt from the subsequent rule of accent retraction by Ivšić-Stang's Law, so that subsequent integration into the productive patterns as they existed after the operation of both uniquely Slavic accent shifts is unthinkable. Such are Sln. *Celje* < **Celjē* < **Celbje* < **Celijē* < **Kelēja* ← Rom. **Kelēja* with contraction-induced inhibition of subsequent accent retraction, and the category of AP *E* accentual units such as Čak. *Osòr* (Rom. **Āpsaru* → Slav. **Āsaru* > **Osòȓ*), Štok. *Mòsor* (Rom. **Más(s)aru* → Slav. **Māsarū* > **Mosòȓ*), Sln. *Celòvec* (< **Cy̑b/īlōmcy̑b* < **Ky̑līl(ay)u* ← Rom. **Ky̑lēl(ay)*), which by definition were incapable of subsequent accent retraction. I would also include here **Ūyd̑b̑n̑*, **Ūyd̑bna* > Common Slovene **Vid̑n*, **Vidna* with preserved quantity of the accented /i:/ throughout the paradigm. Note that Ter (Subid) *Vid'an*, Gsg *Vid'na* (quoted by Šekli 2009: 153) < **Vid̑n*/**Vidna* < **Ūyd̑b̑n̑*/**Ūyd̑bna* does not in fact point to AP *B* but rather points to **Ūyd̑b̑n̑*/**Ūyd̑bna* < **Ūī̑.dīnu*/**Ūī̑.dīnā* < **Ūī̑.dīnu*/**Ūī̑.dīnā* ← Rom. **Ūi/dīnu*. Note that the latter (mis)interpretation is in fact impossible even under an assumed generalisation of the /i:/ < neo-acute **y̑*/recent Slovene acute **i* from the nominative singular.

open **o* (= /ɔ/?) < VLat. **ō* (and subsequent development of the back nasal vowel **õ* for the accented tautosyllabic sequence **un*) is the theoretically expected outcome of phonetic adaptation before the rise of the new Slavic **o* from Proto-Slavic **a*. The regular substitution of the Romance affricate **c* ~ **č* (< **t* < **t̥*, **k̥*) in the earliest layer of Romance loans into Slavic, which predate the rise of the genuinely Slavic **c* by second and third palatalisation processes, is the corresponding Slavic affricate **č* (< **kʰ*).⁴ Note that this is the only theoretically expected outcome, neatly corroborated by a set of early loans into the type of Slavic idioms that do not coalesce the older product of the first palatalisation **č* with the palatal stop **t̥*, e.g. Čak. *Porëč* < **Poręčb* ← **Par'encu*, **Brōč* < **Bračb* ← **Br'acu* etc., including the above-mentioned dialectal Slovene forms.

The Slavic adaptation of the Romance prototype points to something like **'Sōncō* or rather and given the likely point of contact, **'Sōnc̣ō*. The morphological adaptation of the originally masculine name (as undeniably proved by the older sources) and its integration into the class of Slavic feminine *a*-stems is a fully systematised process, based on gender attraction of the premodifier to a feminine head-word in the underlying noun phrase (i.e. the onomastic model, for which see Šivic Dular 1998). A more serious point of disagreement between the Slavic adoption and the organic reflex of the hydronym as inferable from the contemporary Friulan outcomes *Lusinç* (standard form), dial. *L'Isùns* (Aquileia), *il Lusìns* (Flumisel/Fiumicello),⁵ however, lies in the fact that the Slavic form presupposes a source with early aphaeresis of the initial vowel. But Friulan – the contemporary form of the donor language – seems to have preserved no trace of such a variant. It is possible that the internal Friulan outcomes such as *Lusinç* & c. may go back to a later non re-analysable conglomeration of the Old Friulan masculine definite article *lu* (< **illum*) and a form such as **Sōnc̣ō* < **Sonṭō*, but it is equally likely that they simply reflect a sporadic case of vowel metathesis (in the case of standard Friulan variant in a form theoretically borrowed from the sonziaco Friulan with *u* < **ɔ*), or may even go back to a remodelled **Lu Z(ɥ)mč(ə)* for **Liz(ɥ)inč(ə)* = **L'IZ(ɥ)mč(ə)*⁶ < **Iz'ɔnṭō*. Note that *il Lusìns* attested in Flumisel/Fiumicello may speak in favour of the possibility that at least some of these forms may have undergone metathesis, granting that the expected outcome **L'Isùns* (with expected *u* < **ɔ*/__NT) would have undergone subsequent agglutination. Be that as it may, a pre-form with an anlauting (unaccented!) vowel, which seems to underlie the Friulan reflexes of the river name, cannot have been the source of the integration into Slavic as one would then expect Slavic ***Zqčā* – the process of sonorisation of intervocalic consonants in the precursor of Friulan, as is inferable from a number of transparent cases, predates the contact between the Romance and the Slavic idiom. It goes without saying that the attested forms

4 Pace Ramovš HG II §152, id. (1936: 27, 51), who proposes to start from ***Sq̣ía* (similarly Šturm 1927: 59–60, repeated in Furlan 2002: 33 and ESSZI s.v. *Soča*; sceptically Šekli 2008: 166).

5 For older attestations see Di Prampero (1882 s.v.) and Pirona, *Vocabulario friulano* (1871), who records *Lusinz* and (*L*)*isùnz*.

6 The bilabial element of the original diphthong is only preserved after labials, cf. *p̣unt* < **p̣ontə* vs. *frint* < **fṛində* etc.

also exclude the possibility of a specifically Slavic case of aphaeresis (cf. **Нунъ* for *Aenona*, on which see Schramm 1981: 58, 262, 307).

If the manuscript tradition is to be trusted, the first Latinised attestations of the trisyllabic variant are Cassiodorus' *Sonti fluenta* (*Var. epist.* I,18,10) and the famous prepositional phrase *super Sontium* (ib. I,29), reported in the early 6th century. All other attestations of *Sontius* which directly refer to the river, including the 8th-century account of Paulus Diaconus (*Hist. rom.* XV, 20, p. 214: *iuxta Sontium flumen, qui non longe ab Aquileia labitur*),⁷ may simply be reproductions of an established manuscript variant. Note that the entire corpus of the earliest literary attestations of the hydronym refers to or briefly recounts one and the same historical event with AD 489 as its indubitable terminus post quem. The question of the source of the variant *Sontius* thus cannot receive an easy answer, especially in the light of the fact that Cassiodorus, who presumably would have been aware of the organic, autochthonous name of the river, seems inclined to indiscriminate use of the original, four-syllabic *Isontius* beside the truncated variant (see *Cass., Chron.* p. 159, 1319-1321: *ad Isontium*, and cf. *gurgites Isontii* in *Paul. Aquilei.* (8th c.), *carm.* II,1,v.5). Since aphaeresis is not strictly speaking a sound change, it most often goes back to deglutination, normally resulting from the reinterpretation of morpheme boundaries. A putative *Sontius* could easily have been produced by deglutination in cases such as **de Esontio > *de Sontio* or through phonetic hyperinterpretation of *Isontio* as *i(n) Sontio* with VLat. *is-* < **ins* etc. None of this can be verified, however. Another, rather obvious and hence already proposed⁸ possible source of the alternative form *Sontius* is the contracted and presumably reinterpreted form of the place name *Ponte* (= Lat. abl.-loc. sg.) *Sonti(i)* (= Lat. gen. sg.), first attested in *Tabula Peutingeriana* at *segm.* III,5 as the designation of a Roman *mansio* (see Vedaldi Iasbez 1994: s.v. *Ponte Sonti*). From an underlying **Ponte Esonti(i) > *Pontesonti* the way to *Ponte Sonti* and subsequent extrapolation of *Sontius*, corresponding to the new genitival form of the river name, is easily envisaged. This scenario may be oversimplistic, however, since there can be no knowing whether the reported form of the place name is in fact organic or perhaps artificially (re)produced in transmission. It is noteworthy that the compiler of the *Tabula* seems to have had no notion of the actual river name, simplistically superimposing the *fl. Frigido* (III,5) on the lower course of the actual *Isontius* and ending it in a rather large lake (no designation) near *Aquileia*. This means that in the case of *Sonti* reported on the *Tabula* there would have been no source of possible (hyper?)correction. Note that Yordanes is the only author who treats the two components of the place name as independent units (*Getica* 57,292–293, p. 133: *ad pontem Sontii*), but this must surely be secondary. Both genitives *pontis Sontis* (*Fasti vindob. prior.* II,50, p. 317, 1. 490) and *ponte Sontis* (*Auct. hauniense* II,50, p. 317, 1. 490)⁹ clearly point to *Pons Sonti-*

7 For the attestations see Vedaldi Iasbez (1994: 109–110).

8 See Brusin (1924: 225–226), Niedermann (1931: 3ff.).

9 For the sources see Vedaldi Iasbez (1994, s.v. *(Ae)sontius/Isontius*).

Ponte=*Sonti*-,¹⁰ which was by that time quite evidently acquiring the status (limited to manuscript tradition!) of a dithematic toponymical unit.

It is perhaps worthwhile to stress the fact that every single testimony of the river's name, including the autochthonous Friulan outcomes, refers to the *lower course* of the Soča between Goriza and the Gulf of Trieste. The distorted image of the river system in this part of the Friulan plain typical of all classical geographers goes hand in hand with the fact that the upper course of the river was simply too insufficiently known to afford the right connection. While the *Frigidus* river must have been familiar even to an outsider due to its strategic position, the complicated net of tributaries dominating the (south-)eastern Friulan plain, starting at Sovodnje (Savogne dal Lusiñç/Savogna d'Isonzo) will have remained rather perplexing. There is all the reason to believe, however, that locally the correspondence between the river's name as handed down from prehistory and the entire stretch of its course was unquestioned. Since the contact of the incoming Slavs with the Roman-speaking population was not in fact limited to the south-western perimeters of the penetration wave (the contact area stretches from south to north in a more or less compact belt), the geographical parameters of this particular case of name-integration are nevertheless not determinable.¹¹

2. ROMANCE *V^z'ontó

The Friulan continuations of the pre-Romance source, viz. *Lusiñç/Lisùns*, are silent as to their ultimate origin. Due to vowel harmony¹² of unaccented *e ~ i* they are both

10 Pace Vedaldi Iasbez (1994: 113) there is no need to assume a syncopated Venetic *Sontis*. Rather the genitive singular *Sonti* (for *Sontii*) was interpreted as an *i*-stem in the process of disintegration of the original syntactic relationship between both members, complete in *ponte Sontis* = virtually gen. sg. to **Ponte-sonti*.

11 The case of *Sotla* < **Sǫtǫ/bla* (a tributary of the Sava in Eastern Slovenia) is most likely irrelevant for the question of the date and the source of the aphaeresis (similarly sceptical SVI II: 210–211 and ESSZI: 390 but cf. Furlan 2002: 33). Nothing is known of the history of this particular river name and the existing attestations are much too late to provide a better starting point than what can be inferred from the historical phonology of the contemporary forms. Slavic **Sá/úntu/ilā* points to **S'a'ol'untVIV* – a form that is not immediately transparent. If the vowel in the second syllable is the result of later (but pre-Slavic!) anaptyxis (cf. in this respect the likely case of Οὐιστούλα (*Ptol.*, *pass.*), see also Krahe 1964: 102–103), one could, e.g., think of an agent noun **syt-ló-* to PIE **sent-* ‘move, go’. On the other hand, the **t* could also be an integral part of the suffix such as **-tlo-* ~ **-tleH₂-* (note that **t* as the result of consonantal epenthesis in a **-n-l-* cluster is not at all likely in a voiced environment). Alternatively, we could be dealing with a complex suffix **-tú-* + **-lo-* to a verbal root such as **sneH₂-*, notably popular in the derivation of river names, but there is no knowing whether a putative tautosyllabic **ηH* would result in something like **an/on/un* in the particular linguistic system that generated our source. Note that both **Say-a²s²* and **Dray-a²s²* are likely to be more specifically Pannonian rather than just broadly Old European and that it may be important in this respect to note that the Pannonian reflex of (at least) the plain syllabic nasal is in fact **uN*.

12 I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Franco Finco for reminding me of this important fact of Friulan historical phonology.

derivable either from **Iz'ontjō* < **Īs'ontjō-* or **Ez'ontjō*, the latter from **Aīs'ontjō-*, **Oīs'ontjō-* or **Īs'ontjō-* (assuming **i* [– accented] > (**e* ~) **e* rather than **Iz'ontjō* < **Īs'ontjō-*, but neither of these developments is in fact demonstrable solely on the basis of Friulan historical phonology). The remaining alternative **Eīs'ontjō-* is problematic because the reflex of **ej* in a name integrated into Latin after the monophthongisation of the inherited **ej* is simply irrecoverable. If such a sequence were borrowed before the 2nd half of the second century BC, which in the case of Soča is in fact not impossible, and if it was identified with the long mid-high monophthongisation product of Old Latin **ej*, then it would merge with the latter and eventually be raised to **ī*. In unaccented position **ī* would retain its quality throughout the development towards Vulgar Latin. If, however, the integration post-dated the final raising, a non-autochthonous unaccented **ej* would probably either be preserved or join the VLat. unaccented **e*, depending on how late the borrowing was made. Due to the lack of instructive examples, these developments ultimately have to remain speculative. Note that if the 5th-century attestation *Isontius* (*Cass., Chron., v.s.*) can be taken at face value, however, this would provide a more solid argument for a direct development of unaccented **e* (~ **ē*) (< **aj*, **oj* and possibly **ī*) to **i* (which in turn would then be lowered to **e* if /_ \$V[+ low]).

The aphaeresis signalled by the resegmented *Ponte Sonti* in *Tabula Peutingeriana* may in fact point to a stage with a low front vowel in the anlaut. Such a putative *Esontius* = **Es'ontjō vel sim.* (the exact developmental stage of the auslaut is irrelevant here), which is more than likely to represent a stage older than the one reported by Cassiodorus, may also be reflected in the oldest attestations of the hydronym in the two epigraphical sources *Inscr. Aqu.* 1.96 = AE 1926, 108 and *Aquileia nostra* 1996, 109 = AE 1996, 695. As is known, both these sources refer to the originally indisputably dehydronymic river deity *Aesontius*.¹³ At least one of the inscriptions dates back to the end of the first century AD. If the sequence <AE> is the archaising graphic representation of the unaccented VLat. **e* (perhaps still an open front vowel at this stage), it would easily point to a source with an anlauting **aj*, **oj* and possibly unaccented short **i* (if subsequent lowering to **e* is assumed). If, on the other hand, the attested spelling reflects the only other possible phonetic reality, the source will have had an anlauting **aj*, with subsequent development towards **i* through **e*, possibly implicitly preserved in **Ponte Esonti(i)*. As the only truly unlikely source one should mention the long unaccented **ī* as this would have been reflected as **i* throughout.¹⁴

13 The masculine gender of the deity itself is of course dependent on the grammatical gender of the Latinised river name, which is the direct source of the transonymisation.

14 The famous ethnonym *Ambisontes* (*Plin., Nat. hist.* III.137, cf. *Ptol.* II.13.2 Αμβισόντιοι) is utterly ambiguous since the exact location of this Alpine tribe is still very much disputed (see Šašel 1972: 140–144, Šašel Kos 1997: 23–24 and *pass., contra*, e.g., Alföldy 1974: 68, Scherrer 2002: 32). Given the evidence of, e.g., *Ambarri* < **Amb-arar-o-* ← dehydronymic to **Arar-* (on the latter see K. Ihm, RE I,2 = 1894, pp. 1795–1796), it is clear that the *i* reported in the second syllable, should the name reflect a compound of **ambi-* and **Isont-* rather than **Sont-*, reflects the vocalic anlaut of the governed member, the auslaut of the preposition being regularly elided in such cases. However, it should be remembered that the name reflects a Latinate form of the ethnonym (not at all necessarily Gaulish since **ambi-* ‘around’ could just as easily have been produced in

3. PRE-ROMANCE **(a/o/e)is-o/a(-)nt-iã*

The correct etymological connection of the underlying hydronym with the PIE root (in modernised notation) **H₁e₁isH₂-* ‘kräftigen; antreiben’ (LIV²: 234) has already been proposed by Krahe (see Krahe 1953 s.v. and cf. Krahe 1964: 56, IEW: 299–301, Bezlaĵ SVI II: 204, ESSZI: 386–387 etc.). Both the name’s phonetic and morphological structure are transparently Indo-European and *unspecifically* so, meaning that neither of its outward features are diagnostic in terms of a specific linguistic affiliation.¹⁵ If one also accepts the likely connection of the morphological structure of the suffix with the (nearly suffixal) element *-antia* attested in numerous European river names, simple forward reconstruction would demand a straightforward feminine present participle formation **H₁isH₂-nt-iH₂-* (corresponding to the masculine **H₁e₁isH₂-ont-/*H₁isH₂-nt-’ or **H₁isH₂-ént-/*H₁isH₂-nt-’). There is no general consensus on the original ablaut pattern of the present active participle (amphikinetic?/hysterokinetic?), but it seems safe to assume, at least on grounds of the external comparative evidence, a zero grade stem for the feminine counterpart, although the generalisation of the full-grade root cannot be excluded *a priori* (cf. Gr. **φεκ-ατ-ια* < **υέκντ-iH₂-* or *ἔασσα* = Myc. *°e-a-sa*¹⁶ < **H₁és-nt-iH₂-* vs. Ilr. **uč-a-tī̃*, **sa-tī̃* etc.). Certain amount of caution should be exercised, however. The clearly transitive meaning of the root **H₁e₁isH₂-* as set up on the basis of the attested members of the averbo is as a present participle in its agentive meaning ‘the impelling, stimulating, invigorating one’ (the latter not in the sense of the otherwise acceptable and attested semantic motivation ‘nourishing’!) rather unsuitable for a river name. The usually assumed motivation such as ‘the quickly moving one’ *et sim.* is of course completely *ad hoc* and seems to be based more on our own projection of the naturally assumed possible qualities of a river than on any positive evidence.**

Sifting through the available comparative data, however, it immediately becomes apparent that the underlying transitive semantics of the root may be misleading, since they seem

any Venetoid linguistic system and nothing really tangible is known of the productive patterns in the formation of ethnic names in these languages), which is apparent at least from the fact that it has been integrated into the third declension. *If* the ethnic name reflects **Amb-ison-* and *if* it should turn out that the underlying hydronym indeed refers to the Soča river, the implicit underlying form **Isont-* is in fact the oldest available testimony of the pre-Romance pronunciation of the indigenous name. Most interestingly it would in fact point to an original **i*.

15 Contrary to some recent attempts to offer a dissenting view (see, e.g., J. B. Trumper, *Ce fastu* 82/2 (2006), pp. 151–169, *id.* in F. Finco (ed.), *Atti del secondo convegno di toponomastica Friulana*, Udine, 2007, pp. 279–326), there will of course be no need to invoke a specifically Celtic etymology. Not least for the reason that there can be no talk of a Celtic toponymical layer in this part of the Southeastern Alps and that the assumption of the process theonym → hydronym (even if external derivation is assumed after all) does not in fact represent the typologically unmarked pattern. Note that the putative pre-Romance etymon **ais-* (sometimes quoted as zero-grade **is-*) with the underspecified and rather random meaning ‘water’ or similar (cf. Frau 1978: 71 and repeated as a possibility in ESSZI: 387, see also DTFT: 438), proposed by a number of older authors (see SVI II: 203–204 for a useful overview) is of course nothing else but the inadequately interpreted **H₁e₁isH₂-* appearing across a wide range of European river names.

16 See Morpurgo Davies (1978) with bibliography.

to have been (rather inevitably) based on the conspicuously causative/factitive meaning of the attested formations. As nasal-infix presents Ved. *iṣ-ṇā-ti* ‘bring sb. in quick movement, spur’ (co-occurring with the rare active **-ie/o-* present *iṣ-ya-* ‘send’ = Av. *iš-īia-* ‘spur, set going’) and Gr. *iváō* ‘expulse, empty out’ (both regularly < **H₁is-né-H₂-/*H₁is-ṇ-H₂-*), together with the old extended forms in **-ie/o-* (**H₁is-ṇ-H₂-iéló-* > *iṣ-an-yá-* ‘stimulate, impel’, *iaíwō* ‘warm up, heat up’; cf. Ved. *grbh-ā-yá-* beside **g^hrbh-né-H-* in *grbh-nā-ti* etc.), carry a clearly derivationally motivated causative meaning (cf. in this respect the clearly causative Ved. *pr-ṇā-ti* ‘fills (up)’ as opposed to the originally fientive *Aktionsart* of the verbal root **pleH₁-* etc.). The same secondary causative function may also be unproblematically assumed for the reduplicated present **H₁i-H₁éiṣH₂-/*H₁i-H₁iṣH₂-* in Gr. **īha-* → *iáōμαι* ‘heal’ < **vivify, invigorate*’ (on the latter see García Ramón 1986), and of course the formal causative attested in Indo-Iranian.¹⁷ Quite expectedly, the only non-causative formations are the internally IIr. intransitive zero-grade present in **-éje/o-* (Ved. *iṣ-áya-* = Av. *iš-aiia-*) and the deverbative *o*-grade abstract noun **H₁oiṣH₂-o* > Ved. *éṣa-* ‘running (after)’ (cf. RVS V.66.3: *éṣe rathānām* as clearly opposed to other instances of *éṣa-* ‘searching (for)’ to *iṣ-* ‘seek’). Ved. *eṣá-*, however, which is multiple times attested as the epithet of *Vīṣṇu*, meaning ‘swift, quick’ (cf. RVS II.34.11, VII.40.5, VIII.20.3), may represent the participial agent noun **H₁oiṣH₂-ó-*, but it may just as well belong with Avestan *aēša-* ‘strong, potent’, which continues a possessive *o*-grade **H₁oiṣH₂-ó-* (in all probability a Gmc. **χραυα*-type adjective), completely parallel to the equally possessive derivative in *-ró-* as continued by Ved. *iṣi-rá-* ‘lively, active, strong’ = Gr. *ιερός*¹⁸ ‘holy ...’ < **H₁isH₂-ró-* and neatly preserved in a number of European hydronyms such as *Ἰσάρα* (*Strab.* IV,6,9), *Ἰσαρ(ος)* (*Ptol.* II,10,6), *Isara* (*Liv.* 21,31,4), Germ. *Isar*, Thrac. *Ἰστρος* (see Янакиева 2009 s.v.), on which see Bichlmeier (2012b: 29–37) and, recently, Repanšek (2015: 786). Lastly, the primitive feminine root-noun **H₁oiṣH₂-/*H₁isH₂-* continued by IIr. **iš-* ‘strength, vigour, invigoration, stimulation’ (cf. the abstract feminine noun **H₁oiṣH₂-éH₂-*, probably preserved in the ON denominative *eisa* ‘to rush’ < **H₁oiṣH₂=eH₂-iéló-*) and the *o*-grade abstract in *-mo-* (**H₁oiṣH₂-mo-* > Av. *aēšma-* ‘anger, rage’, Gr. *οἶμα* ‘rush, raging attack’) are silent as to the verb’s original voice, as are the possessive Caland adjectives. However, at least on the strength of the deverbative abstract *éṣa-* (and perhaps *eṣá-* if it represents its corresponding derivational pair) it is possible to suspect that the original meaning of **H₁eiṣH₂-* was indeed ‘to be/become (?) set in motion’ *vel sim.* and thus essentially intransitive. This would successfully account for the derived semantics (secondary semantic shifts included) and, most importantly, provide a suitable base for the active present participle **H₁isH₂-ṇt-iH₂-*, which very much parallel to the possessive feminine adjective **H₁isH₂-rēH₂-* could theoretically be pressed into service of an *Eigenschaftsname*, matched by the telling description *μέγιστος ποταμός* and *ὁ χεμίάρρου* as by Herodianus (*Hist. rom.* VIII.4.1/2).¹⁹

17 For the attestations see EWAia I: 271–272, García Ramón (1986), Gotō (1993: 128–133), Kel-lens (1995: 13), Werba (1997: 450–451).

18 On the internal history of *ιερός* < **-ero-* see Peters (1980: 325).

19 For the identification see Vedaldi Iasbez (1994: 112).

As anticipated above, the alternative starting point **Aīsontjō-/Oīsontjō-* is only explicable, however, if one starts from a possessive *denominal* derivative **H₁oīsH₂-éH₂-* (i.e. the Greek type **φονή* ‘manslaughter’). As already correctly interpreted by Krahe (1953: 119; cf. Greule 2007: 117 *et passim*), the North-Germanic parallel **Eisandi* is only indirectly comparable, seeing that the latter is in fact a deverbative participial formation to ON *eisa* < PGmc. **aīšōna* ‘rush forward’ (in turn built to the exact same deverbal abstract **H₁oīsH₂-éH₂-*). There is no positive proof, however, that a hypothetical possessive **-nt*-adjective **H₁oīsH₂-o-nt-* ← **H₁oīsH₂-éH₂-* would form its feminine in **-iH₂-* (or, for that matter, **-(i)eH₂-*). The case of clearly denominal river names such as *Albantia*, *Aquantia* etc. is ultimately indecisive in this respect: either the ubiquitous sequence *-antia* is interpreted as the reflex of the feminine form of the **-nt*-possessive, or – in avoidance of circularity – as a ready-made *toponymical* suffix, mirroring a virtual **-ntiH₂-* (cf. Repanšek 2015: 787).²⁰

The question is of course inextricably bound with the controversial problem of Old European hydronymy. It was silently assumed above that the *a*-vocalism of the theoretical starting point **H₁oīsH₂-éH₂-* necessitates the same vowel quality in the suffix and that this somehow dictates the realisation of the suffix *-iH₂-* as **-iā̃* <ia>, so that one would be inclined to start from **Aīsantiā̃*. The regular change of the short PIE **o* to short **a*²¹ and the realisation of the syllabic nasal **ŋ* as **an* (if **H₁oīsH₂-o-nt-* is assumed as the starting point, the change of **-o-nt-* to **-a-nt-* would of course be equally regular), paired with the likely (morphological) substitution of the biphonemic sequence **-iā̃* (or less likely **-iā̃*) for PIE **-iH₂-*, are all characteristic of the Old European system *if* defined as an actual linguistic stratum with the pertaining set of system-specific phonological and morphological transformations.²² Note that we are only forced to presuppose an underlying **Aīsantiā̃* in case the epigraphic attestation of river name, viz. *Aesontius**, is taken at face value. The same goes for **H₁(e)isH₂-ŋt-iH₂-* > **(E)is-ant-iā̃*, but only if one does not want to assume the tenuous possibility of the generalisation of the *o*-grade suffix (**H₁(e)isH₂-ont-iH₂-*). Any reconstruction that would start from an **-ant-iā̃*, however, must assume that the name must rather early on have passed through the phonetic filter of an idiom that typically preserved the PIE **o* intact. Given the areal distribution of the autochthonous linguistic systems in the wider region of South-Eastern Alps prior to the arrival of Gaulish, the only serious candidate is the Venetic complex. The integrated unit **Aīsantiā̃* or **(E)isantiā̃* would potentially be liable to renovation to **Aīs/(E)is-ont-iā̃*, but only under the assumption of possible interference from the autochthonous Venetic reflex of the present participle suffix **-o-nt-*. As no feminine forms of the (thematic) present active participle are attested in Venetic, however, the possibility of an assumed correspondence between **-ant-iā̃* and **-ont-iā̃* is impractical to test in any more or less direct

20 As is the case, for example, in North Germanic (see Greule 2007: 118, 121).

21 On the possible evidence of Νόαρος (*Strab.* VII,5,2; 12), if for **(s)nō-uo-* < **(s)noH₂-uo-* to PIE **(s)neH₂-* ‘baden, schwimmen’ (LIV²: 572–573), I would restrict this sound change to the system of short vowels (see Repanšek 2015: 785, ft. 22).

22 Such an approach is now tentatively advocated by Bichlmeier (e.g. 2012a, 2012b *et pass.*).

way. Feminine personal names such as *who.u.go.n.ta* (LVen., Es 85) are unelucidating. Although diachronically such names are based on a true deverbal active participle, they in fact represent a productive pattern of feminine motion and function synchronically solely as feminine versions of masculine names.²³ The form *Voltaronti*, attested at Ig (CIL III.3877), on the other hand, indirectly probably points to the preservation of the old shape of the feminine participial suffix **-ont-ī* at least for this peripheral dialect (see Stifter 2012: 258 and Repanšek *forth.*). Since the Venetoid linguistic system attested in the *ager* is in many respects more archaic than the more central Venetic, however, the latter might have innovated in the direction of **-ontīā*. Be that as it may, an equatable sequence **-ontīā-* would certainly have been provided by the system through the oblique cases of the feminine paradigm.

It must in any case be assumed, however, that should the hydronym belong to a layer of toponymy older than the one generated by Venetic, the auslauting sequence **-ant-īā* will eventually have been remade into a masculine **-ont-īo-* – a form that is indeed reflected by all the historical attestations of the river name, including its modern Friulan reflexes. Whether this process is intrinsically bound with the ultimate Latinisation of the name (**-ont-īā* > *-ontia* → *-ont-ius*) or should be recognised as the result of Venetic recharacterisation of **-antīā* is not unambiguously determinable either. It is true that a Venetic **-ont-īos* would result in the syncopated **-ont-is* > **-ont-s*, but any Venetic stem in *-(i)s* would still be interpretable as corresponding to the Latin *-ius*, not least for the fact that the oblique cases still regularly preserved the unsyncopated shape of the sequence **-īo-*. At least systematic masculinisation of feminine river names is well attested for Latin, while the possibility that the same could be claimed for Venetic is of course completely open to conjecture.

If contrary to the above the Old European stratum is rather perceived as a static network of the oldest, undifferentiated Indo-European toponymical heritage, Venetic historical phonology (and morphology, for that matter, but here the involved morphological patterns may have already become unproductive by the time of the first attestations, so that any potentially archaic trait is self-explanatory and useless for our purposes) should account for the pre-literary form of the name. In this respect only **H₁o_isH₂-o-nt-²* is the possible starting point, while the participial **H₁(e)isH₂-nt-iH₂-* is only conceivable as an alternative under the assumption of the generalisation of an *o*-grade suffix based on the masculine/thematic stems, for which no supporting evidence can be adduced, however. Note that a putative Venetic reflex **(E)is-ant-?* < **H₁(e)isH₂-nt-iH₂-*²⁴ is far less likely as a starting point, as one would then have to assume some secondary process through which the resulting vocalism in the suffix would have been analogically adapted to the shape of the masculine participial stem. Although, admittedly, this possibility is not at all unimaginable, it must remain for the time being impossible to prove. Needless to add, both in terms of the shape of the

23 Contrary to Lejeune (1974: 83), the possibility of a shared form of the present active participle for the masculine and the feminine in Venetic (as is the case in Latin) is virtually nil.

24 For Venetic **aN* < PIE **N* cf. *iiuva.n.t.s.* (Es 25) < **H₂iu-H₃ŋ-t-*.

final morpheme as well as the distribution of the inherited *-ont- vs. *-nt-iH₂- nothing decisive can be inferred from the available linguistic material.²⁵

Abbreviations

AP = accentual paradigm; Av. = Avestan; Čak. = Čakavian; Gr. = Ancient Greek; Lat. = Latin; Myc. = Mycenaean; ON = Old Norse; PGmc. = Proto-Germanic; PIE = Proto-Indo-European; Rom. = Romance; RVS = Ṛgvedasamhitā; Slav. = Slavic; Sln. = Slovene; Štok. = Štokavian; Thrac. = Thracian; Ved. = Vedic; Ven. = Venetic; VLat. = Vulgar Latin

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25 An original *-ont-(i)jo-, i.e. a deadjectival *jo-derivative (?) based on a *-nt-participle, however, does not seem to be a promising alternative either. The evidence for the existence of the category of deparicipial adjectives is in fact vanishingly small. The often quoted Ved. *sāhantya-* to **sāh-a-nt-* < **seḡh-o-nt-* ‘überwältigend’ is completely isolated and may just as well be analogical as has been suggested already by Hoffmann, see “Ved. *santya-* und ahd. *samfti*, ags. *sēfte*”, *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft* 23 (1968), 29ff. Note that the Celtic congener **Segontio-* may be due to the popularity of secondary and purely structural *jo-derivatives to nouns/adjectives with overtly agentive semantics.

On a side note and just to be exhaustive in the account of all the theoretical possibilities, one might also want to consider a deparicipial feminine abstract noun **H₁(e)isH₂-(o)nt-(i)ieH₂-* (cf. the popular Lat. (!) category of abstracts in *-ent-ia* < *-nt-). The meaning would of course be close to the one proposed for the deverbal abstract **H₁oisH₂eH₂-*, for which see above.

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Abstract

TOWARDS A CLARIFICATION OF THE HISTORY OF THE SLOVENE RIVER NAME *SOČA*

The etymology of the Slovene hydronym *Soča* (Standard Friulan *Lusìnç*, Italian *Isonzo*) was satisfactorily elucidated more than half a century ago. The overall idea that the river name goes back to a derivative of a Proto-Indo-European verbal root $*H_1e\grave{i}sH_2-$ is undoubtedly correct (the exact meaning of the root in question has, however, not been sufficiently corroborated) but the details remain hopelessly obscure. Given the contemporary reflexes of the underlying name (viz. Friulan *Lusìnç* ~ dial. *Lisùns* etc.) and the sometimes conflicting or not at all easily reconcilable historical attestations (spanning nearly a millenium), no consensus can in fact be reached about the exact formal means involved in the derivation of the original deverbative formation – a fact which results from the overall inconvenience of sheer wealth of combinatorial possibilities that go hand in hand with the general ambiguity of the phonology more or less directly reflected by the later reflexes of the name. The present contribution is an attempt at unifying all the reliable data at our disposal into a coherent picture that would bring a satisfactory answer as to the exact phonological and morphological make-up of the pre-historic source (alongside with the reconstructed meaning) and its subsequent history as it passed through the various linguistic strata.

Keywords: *Soča*, Indo-European hydronymy, Slavic, Romance, pre-Slavic substratum

Povzetek

PRISPEVEK K ZGODOVINI SLOVENSKEGA REČNEGA IMENA *SOČA*

Etimologija imena *Soča* (standardno furlansko *Lusìnç*, italijansko *Isonzo*) je bila sicer zadovoljivo razjasnjena že pred več kot pol stoletja. Ime je brez dvoma treba izpeljevati iz praindoevropskega korena $*H_1e\grave{i}sH_2-$ s sicer težje ugotovljivo prvotno semantiko, vendar se v poizkusu natančnega spremljanja zgodovinskega razvoja imena od njegove prvotne podobe do sodobnih kontinuantov (predvsem furl. *Lusìnç* ~ narečno *Lisùns*)

itd.) izkaže, da kopica bistvenih dejstev ostaja nerazjasnjenih. Splošna večznačnost fonetične podobe organskih kontinuantov, vključno s skupimi in težje pojasnljivimi podatki, ki jih ponuja skoraj tisočletje zelo sporadičnih historičnih zabeležb imena, je v neposredni vzročni povezanosti z množico verjetnih (in mnogokrat povsem teoretičnih) kombinatoričnih možnosti rekonstrukcije formalnih sredstev, vpletenih pri tvorbi izhodnega deverbativa. V prispevku se pod vprašaj ponovno postavlja vse relevantno in zanesljivo gradivo, ki bi, povezano v smiselno in kronološko prepričljivo izgrajeno celoto, utegnilo odgovoriti na vprašanje o natančni fonetični in morfološki podobi izhodne oblike (in posledično njenem prvotnem pomenu) ter pojasniti vse razvidne spremembe substitucijske narave, do katerih je zanesljivo prihajalo pri prehajanju hidronima skozi različne jezikovne sisteme.

Ključne besede: Soča, indoevropska hidronimija, slovanščina, romanščina, predslavonski substrat