

Four kings of Kent

In 54 BC (*de bello Gallico* 5.22) Caesar's naval camp was attacked by *Cingetorix*, *Carvilius*, *Taximagulus*, and *Segovax*, four kings of districts in Kent, upon the orders of *Cassivellaunus*. Little more is known of any of them as individuals.

Cingetorix

Cingetorix was a name also borne by a chief of the *Treveri*, a Belgic tribe living near the Rhine, whom Caesar encountered (5.3) just before invading Britain properly. It also formed part of *Vercingetorix*, who led the Gauls' revolt in 52 BC. These names are commonly likened to Old Irish *cing* 'warrior, champion' and *cingid* 'he steps' appropriate for a leader walking in front, but this does not necessarily imply Celtic speech since PIE **gheng-* 'to step, to march' had descendants in many language families. (The word king is probably different, being related to kin. C and G were well-nigh interchangeable on coins in that period.) The element *-rix* is often claimed to be diagnostic for Celtic speech, because of its vowel I, but actually it was just a conventional name element in the shadow of Latin *rex*. Elements with which *-rix* coupled in ancient names tend to have better parallels in later Germanic languages and its post-Roman usage was greatest among Germanic tribes.

Carvilius

Carvilius was a name borne by a *gens* (clan) in Rome for more than two centuries before Caesar. There seems to be no accepted etymology for that Roman name, but perhaps it came from PIE **gerbh-* 'to scratch, to carve'. In 54 BC it is unlikely that many British chieftains had sent sons to be educated in Rome, so presumably Caesar Latinised an indigenous name, possibly based on words for 'deer', such as Welsh *carv* and Latin *cervus*, derived from PIE **ker-* 'horn', like the *Carvetii* people.

Taximagulus

Taximagulus is often translated as 'badger prince'. This rests upon the word **taSKu-* (Katz, 1998) 'badger' discussed by Delamarre (2003:291-2), plus Celtic words for 'prince, chief, lord' (such as Welsh *mael* and Old Irish *mál*) derived via earlier forms like **maglo-* (seen in some inscriptions) from PIE **meg-* 'great'.

There is no inherent objection to a Celtic explanation of *Taximagulus*, and indeed the place name *Maglona* was well to the west, near the Irish Sea, but there is no really convincing argument why badgers particularly interested British princes. An analogy is drawn with later names such as *Brochmael* mentioned in Welsh and Breton genealogies, but *broc* in ancient names has many potential meanings. Besides 'projecting', the likely source of Welsh *broc* 'badger, Latin *brochus* and English brooch, they include 'fortified place', 'brook', 'rock', 'bridge', 'heather', 'inferior horse', and 'enjoyment'.

If we start afresh looking at all possible meanings of *Taximagulus*, *Taxi-* might come from several PIE roots: **tag-* 'to touch' probably did lead to 'badger' in *Tasciovanus*; **deik-* 'to show' led to English words such as teach, token, and edict; **tak-* 'to be silent' led to English words tacit and reticent; **tag-* 'to set in order' led to syntax and tactics; and Greek *ταχος* 'speed' seems not to have an agreed PIE root. Any of these could plausibly contribute to the name of an early ruler, with perhaps 'set in order' the best.

To explain *-magulus* two distinct PIE roots are candidates, which tended to collide, as later place names such as Maidstone and Maidenhead show. One is **meg-* 'great', which readily picked up an L, for example to yield Greek *μεγαλος* and English mickle. The other is **maghos* 'young person', which led to words such as maiden and to the Irish prefix *Mac-*,

and might easily pick up a *-ulus* suffix (which was not just diminutive) and move up in social status like the word knight.

Segovax

This name is sometimes reported as *Segonax*, presumably because lower-case u and n can be nearly indistinguishable in mediaeval handwriting, and because Greek [αυαξ](#) ‘king, lord’ (originally **wanax*) could have seemed a plausible name ending to a manuscript copyist or even to Caesar himself. [Segontiaci](#) were one of the peoples who sent embassies and surrendered to Caesar, so presumably *Segovax* was one of their leaders. SEGO or SEG or SE appears on [coins](#) found mostly in eastern Kent, often associated with the names of other known kings, *Tasciovanus*, *Cunobelinus*, or *Amminus*, where *Sego-* seems unlikely to be the name of a single individual or coin workshop. It is customary to translate *Sego-* as ‘victory’ by analogy with German [Sieg](#) and Irish [seg](#) ‘strength’, from PIE [*segh-](#) ‘to hold’, but PIE [*seg-](#) ‘to attach, to tack on’ may be better, as explained under [Segelocum](#) and [Segedunum](#), which are both water-side places. If correct, that idea would naturally place the *Segontiaci* in the Isle of Thanet.

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