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Proto-Indo-European origins**

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## Agent noun polysemy in Celtic: the suffix *\*-mon-* in Old and Middle Irish and its Proto-Indo-European origins\*

### Abstract

The present paper gives an historical account of agent noun formations in *-mon-* in Old and Middle Irish, based on the Proto-Indo-European prehistory of this suffix. The patterning of agent nouns in *-mon-* in Irish points to a polysemy already inherited from the originally adjectival Proto-Indo-European derivatives denoting affiliation. This is supported also by polysemous nominalizations in Ancient Greek. Formations in *-mon-*, originally deverbally in Proto-Indo-European, came to be formally enlarged and functionally reinterpreted in Early Celtic, thus leading to the polysemy in Irish, with both deverbally and denominal *-mon-* formations designating professions, occupations and functions as well as instruments and even animals.

Keywords: PIE suffix *\*-mon-*, agent nouns, instrument nouns, development of poly-semy, Old and Middle Irish

### 1. The suffix *-mon-* in Old and Middle Irish

Celtic languages show, in contrast to Greek, Italic and Indo-Iranian, no traces of the well-known Proto-Indo-European (PIE) agent suffix *\*-ter-/tor-*. The formations to express agent meaning derive from other PIE suffixes, such as *\*-ti-* or *\*-(i)io-*, which latter is usually known to express affiliation. Additionally, in Old Irish (OIr.), there are agent nouns with the inherited PIE suffix *\*-mon-*. In Old and Middle Irish (MiddIr.) two variants of this suffix can be distinguished, namely on the one hand forms with NOM.SG *-am*, GEN.SG *-amon*, and on the other hand forms with NOM.SG *-em*, GEN.SG *-emon*. This is mainly due to the fact that, in its prehistory, the suffix *\*-mon-* has been enlarged twice on the way to Old Irish. First, in the period of Celtic, it became *\*-amon-*, yielding the Old Irish NOM.SG *-am*, GEN.SG *-amon*. Later a further enlargement led to the variant form *\*-ijamon-*, which is rendered as OIr. NOM.SG *-em*, GEN.SG *-emon* (for a detailed description of the development see below).

One of the best known paradigms of the inflectional stems in *-mon-* is OIr. *brithem*, GEN.SG *brithemon* ‘judge’:

\* This suffix has been described at full length by me in REMMER (2002–2003 and 2004). For a closer look on this suffix, its various lemmata and attestations, and for more details on the Indo-European background of this topic as well as the reference of secondary literature the reader is advised to these papers. The present paper, that has its focus on polysemy, refers to them generally without extra indication and citation. According to the usual practise in Indo-European linguistics I use the asterisk at the beginning of a linguistic form to indicate that it is reconstructed (rather than ungrammatical).

(1)	SG		PL
	NOM	<i>brithem</i>	<i>brithem(o)in, -ain</i>
	ACC	<i>brithem(o)in, -main</i>	<i>brithemna</i>
	GEN	<i>brithemon, -man</i>	<i>brithemon, -man</i>
	DAT	<i>brithem(o)in, -main</i>	<i>brithemn(a)ib</i>

It has to be noted that the NOM.SG (*brithem*) per se does not reveal the exact stem class. In order to attribute a form securely to the *-mon*-class, an oblique form of the paradigm is needed, e.g. the GEN.SG *brithemon*. However, in many cases this is hard to obtain, considering that many words are hapax legomena or attested only as glossations or in glossaries in the NOM.SG case. Further aggravating is the fact that already in the oldest texts of Old Irish this morphological formation was in decline and was productively used only by intellectuals such as jurists or clerics, especially for expressing professions. Among the texts that include vestiges of *-mon-* are the famous Old Irish glosses, as well as other clerical and juridical texts.

In popular language, however, the suffix ceased to be productive. The *n*-inflection of the existing words was partly dropped, yielding, secondarily, thematic stems in *\*-mo-*, and partly it was preserved. In some cases the *o*-inflection invaded only a part of the original *mon*-paradigm; this is still to be seen in the Modern Irish (ModIr.) successor paradigm of *brithem* ‘judge’: ModIr. *breitheamh* shows the new *o*-stem GEN.SG *breithim*, whereas the old *n*-stem is visible only in the NOM.PL *breithiúna*.

## 2. The suffix used for terms of occupation, professions, functions

Further examples in the semantic field ‘profession’, apart from the paradigm *brithem*, are OIr. *betham/bethem* ‘steward’, *cairem* ‘shoemaker, leather-worker’, *dáilem* ‘cupbearer, provider’, *fethem* ‘procurer, advocate’, *flaithem* ‘ruler, lord’, *luam* ‘steersman, abbot’, *medam* ‘judge’, *foídem* ‘messenger’ and MiddIr. *airem* ‘ploughman’. Not exactly a person obtaining a profession, but rather the bearer or holder of a function is expressed by the following Old Irish words: *dúilem* ‘creator, god’, *orb(b)am* ‘heir’, *mraithem* ‘betrayed, deceiver’ and *fechem/féchem* ‘one who possesses claims on or is under claims or obligations to another, law-agent, advocate; debtor’ (see below for the respective derivational bases).<sup>1</sup>

Interesting, but badly attested and therefore no sure examples, are the following forms: *cainim* ‘satirist’ (derived from the verb *cáinid* ‘reviles, rails at, reproaches’ or *canaid* ‘sings’), *clithem* (if ‘spearman’, derived from OIr. *cleth* ‘tree trunk, post, spear’), *meisem* or *mesam* ‘judge, arbitrator’ (from the verbal noun *mes(s)* ‘judgement’), *\*roem* ‘fighter’ (from *róe* ‘battle-field’) and *silem/silem* ‘sower’ (from *síl* ‘seed’ or *silid* ‘drops, flows; pours out’).

This morphology is also used in onomastics: both of the male personal names *Dáilem* und *Flaithem* are attested as *mo*-stems, but originally they clearly resembled the appel-

<sup>1</sup> The well-known word *ollam* ‘master-poet, holder of the top-position in the hierarchy of poet-grades’ (the ModIr. successor form *ollamh* meaning ‘professor’), superficially belongs to this group, inflecting likewise as a *mon*-stem. The *n*-inflection, however, must be secondary, and originally this word must have been a superlative with the ending *\*(s)amo-*. It obviously has been reshaped to fit into the group of agent nouns with the *mon*-suffix. It is irrelevant for this article whether *ollam* was an old and irregular superlative of *oll* ‘much, great’ (the expected form being an unattested *\*uillem*) or an archaic superlative of the root *\*uel-* ‘to see’, that is also used in *fili*, GEN.SG *filed*, the general term for ‘poet’, as I suggested in REMMER (2004).

lative *mon*-stems *dáilem* ‘cupbearer, provider’ and *flaithem* ‘ruler, lord’. The names \**Aithem* ‘avenger’ and \**Segam* ‘conqueror’ can be deduced from phrases where the name appears usually in the GEN.SG, as *cenēl nAtheman* ‘clan of Aithem’ and *Nia Segamain* ‘nephew of Segam’. The latter genitive form is additionally found in the archaic shape of an Ogam Irish inscription as SEGAMONAS.<sup>2</sup> From the saga title *Táin bó Regamain* (v. ll. *Regomon, Regamnai, Regomuin*) the personal name \**Regam* ‘ruler, governor’ can be deduced; it is probably built with the OIr. verb *rigid* ‘stretch out, rule, govern’, cognate with lat. *regere*, Old Indic *rāṣṭi*, all cited forms being derived from the PIE root \**h<sub>3</sub>reǵ-* ‘stretch out, straighten’.

As has been stated before, in the time of the Old Irish attestation the use of the suffix *-mon-* was in decline. However, it must have enjoyed a limited productivity in scholarly language, which is among others indicated by the juridical text *Bretha Nemed* with the personal name *Maram*. In the parallel text in Latin, the *Collectio canonum Hibernensis* the same person is called *Pelagius*, which in turn is an adjective latinized from Greek *πέλαγος* ‘sea’, synonymous with lat. *marinus* ‘mariner’. It has been pointed out that *Maram* is probably an Old Irish ad hoc calque on *marinus*, built with the agent suffix *-amon-* (BREATHACH 1984: 449).

In some of these forms the derivational bases are nouns: *brithem* ‘judge’ ← *breth* ‘judgement’, *betham/bethem* ‘steward, *maior domus*’ ← *biad, beth* ‘food’, *dúilem* ‘creator’ ← *dúil* ‘creature’, *fechem/féchem* ‘law-agent, advocate; debtor’ ← *fiach, fé(i)ch* ‘debt’, *flaithem* ‘ruler’ ← *flaith* ‘rule’, *orbbam* ‘heir’ ← *orbbae* ‘inheritance, patrimony’, *luam* ‘steersman’ ← *lu(a)e* ‘steering rudder’, *Maram* ← lat. *mare*. In other instances no noun can be discerned as the derivational basis, the suffix is rather attached to a verbal stem, respectively a verbal root: *fethem* ‘procurer, advocate’ ← *fethid* ‘to care for, attend to’, \**Segam* historically ‘overthrower’ ← *saigid* ‘reach’. And the following cases are ambiguous in respect of the nominal or verbal character of their derivational bases; next to these both a noun and a verbal stem is attested that could be the basis for a derivation with the agentive suffix: *airem* ‘ploughman’ ← *ar* ‘act of ploughing’ or *airid* ‘to plough’, *dáilem* ‘cupbearer, provider’ ← *dál* ‘share’ or *dáilid* ‘to pour out, portion’, *sílem/sílem* ‘sower’ ← *síl* ‘seed’ or *sílid* ‘drops, flows; pours out’. Putting it in a somewhat simplified way, it can be stated that the outcomes of *-mon-* in Old Irish and its younger prehistory made both deverbal and denominal derivations.

### 3. Animal terms

Apart from these professional terms for men or other rational beings, *-mon-* is used for the designation of animals. A number of forms are only attested in the NOM.SG, which, as already has been pointed out, is not decisive in respect of the stem class. However, one form is unambiguously a *mon*-stem, namely OIr. *glaidem* ‘wolf’, literally ‘howler’, being attested with its plural forms *gláidemain, glaidomuin* etc. Its derivational basis can be either the noun *gláed* ‘cry, loud howl’ or the verb *gláedid* ‘cries out, howls’. Also *legam* ‘(clothes)

<sup>2</sup> This name is built on the PIE root \**seǵh-* ‘overpower, get hold of, get control of’, seen also in continental Celtic names: *Segomāros, Segodūnum, Segomo*. The Ancient Greek heroic name *Ἐκτωρ* is likewise derived from \**seǵh-* and shares the lexical meaning with \**Segam*, differing from it only by another agentive suffix.

moth' can safely be attributed to the *mon*-class. The *n*-inflection is not visible in the attestation of the Old Irish word itself but in a few derivations (e.g. *legamnach* 'moth-eaten'; in Modern Irish the *n*-stem has been generalized with the NOM.SG *leamhan*, GEN.SG and NOM.PL *leamhain*). This insect name can be reconstructed as *\*leg-amon-* and is clearly related to the verb *legaid* 'melts, dissolves, is destroyed', cf. WATKINS (1962: 184 and the literature indicated there). An insect name *\*betham* is made likely by the plural form *bethamain* 'bees', the derivational base, however, remaining unclear.

The following words are not directly attested as forms with *n*-inflection: OIr. *toinnem* 'salmon' is probably a denominal derivation from OIr. *tonn* 'wave'. The form *sirem* 'tick, mite' might be among other possibilities a derivation from the verb *sirid* 'ranges, transverses, wanders through' attested in Middle Irish. OIr. *trichem/trechem* 'young pig, boar' lacks an obvious derivational basis within Irish. It could relate to a Celtic root *\*trek-* 'to run' and be reconstructed as *\*trekijamon-* 'runner'. Another possible etymological connection is OIr. *torc* (o m.) 'boar' that has been reconstructed as PIE *\*tʷork-ó-* 'cutter' and related to Avestan *θβərəsa-* 'pig' (with its verbal derivational base *θβarəs-* 'cut'). OIr. *trichem/trechem* would then go back to the zero-grade form *\*tʷr̥k-* of this PIE root *\*tʷerk-* 'to cut' that was supplied with the *-ijamon-* variant of the agent suffix. In that case it originally would have had the same meaning as its cognate OIr. *torc*, namely 'cutter'. The hapax form *braichem* 'stag' can be derived from MiddIr. *braich* (OIr. *mraich*) 'malt', the brown colour being the obvious naming motive of this animal.

A crucial form is OIr. *léom* 'lion', GEN.SG *leoman*. It is clearly a loan from Lat. *leō, leōnis*. This Irish adaptation appears in the Milan glosses (alongside with the expected variant *léo*, GEN.SG *leon*). It seems to have secondarily been turned into a *mon*-stem, which, in turn, is only reasonable and likely as long as there has been a clear group of animal names inflecting likewise, and as long as *-mon-* has been productive at forming animal names. Popular etymology cannot have played a role in this metamorphosis to a *mon*-stem, since the resulting form *léom, leoman* has no synchronic lexical meaning (in contrast to the true *mon*-paradigms *legam* 'moth', which literally means 'dissolver, destroyer', or *glaédem* 'wolf', literally 'howler'). To sum up, the combined evidence of *legam, glaédem* with transparent agent meaning on the one hand, *trichem* or *sirem*, where we have no obvious synchronic derivational base, on the other hand, and also *léom*, which is only a loanword transformed into the outer shape of a *mon*-stem, makes it likely that *-mon-* in Old Irish times had a specialization in forming animal designations (see above footnote 2 for a similar morphological assimilation to the *mon*-class in the field of profession terms).

#### 4. Instrument nouns and related categories

Another semantic field where *mon*-stems most likely became frequent are designations for tools: In Classical Modern Irish the masculine *o*-stem *ceram* 'plane, chisel, whetstone' appears. That this form originally must have been a *mon*-stem is made likely by some OIr. derivational forms; cf. for example the OIr. phrase *líá cermnae* 'stone (*líá*) for making something smooth, stone for polishing', with *cermnae* obviously being the GEN.SG of a derivation of the original *mon*-stem *ceram*. Further evidence is provided by the denominal verb *cermnaid* 'to lop, cut' and the agent noun *cermnaid* 'one who lops, trims (?), warrior'. The form *ceram*, thus, represents most likely an old *mon*-formation from the root of the OIr. verb *scaraid* 'separate', PIE *\*(s)ker-* 'shear, cut' (to be found in other Indo-European

languages, e.g. Old Indic *cárman-*, Avestan *carəman-* ‘skin, fur, leather’ etc.). It is, incidentally, also the root underlying the aforementioned agent noun *cairem* ‘shoemaker’, which is built with the *-ijamon-* variant of the suffix.

Other words, unfortunately, are less clear in respect of their origin. They are rather late hapax forms that are attested as NOM.SG, from which it does not become clear whether they are *mon*-stems: OIr. *rúam* ‘spade’ in theory could be a very old prototype form < \**reṷH-mon-* from the PIE root \**reṷH-* ‘dig up, open, tear, rip’, e.g. also to be found in Lat. *ruō* ‘turn up, root up, pull, tear up’.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise *fiam* ‘chain’ could be an older form < \**ueṷ(a)mon-*, but this can hardly be supported.<sup>4</sup> OIr. *airnem* ‘whetstone’ could be a *mon*-stem derived from a preform \**agrin(i)jo/ā-*, itself a derivation of PIE \**h<sub>2</sub>aǵro-* ‘field’, attested in Old Indic *ájra-* ‘field’. A form of this shape is actually attested by MiddIr. *áirne* ‘blackthorn, sloe’ < \**agrin(i)jā-*, originally meaning ‘from the field, belonging to agriculture’.<sup>5</sup> The form *airtem* (-o- m.) means a measure of length; it has been linked with OIr. *airet/eret* ‘length (of time or space), amount, quality’.

OIr. *genam* ‘sword’ is probably a derivation of the PIE root \**g<sup>uh</sup>en-* ‘to kill, strike’ (attested e.g. by Old Indic *hánti* ‘kill, strike’ etc.; Celtic forms are OIr. *gonaid* ‘slay, hurt’, Cymr. *gwanu*). Interestingly enough, besides *genam* appears the shorter synonymous form *gen* ‘sword’. Accordingly *gen* could be the original form of the word for ‘sword’ and could have developed an enlarged variant form with *-amon-* to become an instrumental noun of the *amon*-group (compare the case of *léom* among the animal words). It has to be noted that in this secondary enlargement no semantic shift is involved. The enlargement *gen* → *genam* is possible only if there has been a clear specific use of the agentive suffix for making instrumental nouns and a critical mass of lexemes with instrumental meaning belonging to this group.

Another probable instance of this development is OIr. *súainem* ‘rope’. Its inflection as an *n*-stem, respectively a *mon*-stem, is securely attested in the Milan glosses. The exact etymology is disputed, but the most likely proposal came from HOLGER PEDERSEN who compared Cymr. *hoenyn* ‘trap, net, cord, long hair of an animal’ < Celtic \**sogno-* (from the root \**seg-* ‘fasten to, attach to’). This base form \**sogno-* ‘cord’ is not actually attested in Irish (where it would have yielded /*súan*/), but it must have formed the basis of the Classical Modern Irish form *súanach* ‘coat’ and also of the form under discussion, OIr. *súainem* ‘rope’. As an explanation for the existence of these quasi-synonymous words OIr. *súainem* and Cymr. *hoenyn* it can be assumed that in the history or prehistory of Old Irish the reconstructed pre-form \**sogno-* ‘cord’ was secondarily turned into a *mon*-stem, i.e.

<sup>3</sup> See below for the development of the *amon*-variant out of the combination of a PIE laryngeal phoneme and the PIE *mon*-suffix.

<sup>4</sup> It is tempting to compare this word to Old Indic *véman-* n. ‘loom’ < \*(*H*)*uej-men-*, as JULIUS POKORNY did (1959: 1120f.), which would indicate that *fiam* was very archaic. But this can be disputed since \*(*H*)*uej-*, superficially being the lexical root of Indic *véman*, is not an inherited PIE root but rather a secondary innovation abstracted from a present stem \**H<sub>u</sub>-eje-* which is made from the root \**Hu-/Heṷ-* plus a present suffix *-eje-*. Taken all this into consideration, it is not very likely that *fiam* can be of the same origin as *véman-* (see REMMER 2004: 45f. for details).

<sup>5</sup> This word is found in the medieval etymological glossary of Cormac mac Cuileinnáin, king-bishop of Cashel: *cotis .i. airnem frisa melaiter erna*. Cormac obviously connects the word with OIr. *iarn*, ACC.PL *erna* N ‘iron’, which is phonologically not very likely but on the other hand not totally to be dismissed.

provided with the suffix *-mon-* (the *ijamon-* variant in this case) to make the form fit into the class of handicraft-tool words that had this suffix.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore in this semantic group we find two more pairs of this kind within Irish: *es(s)em* m. designates ‘a brace or strap used to fasten one yoke to another or the oxen to the yoke (in ploughing)’; close in meaning is a shorter word *eis* ‘fetter’. Alongside *drolam* (attested as an *o*-stem, however) ‘ring, loop, handle’ the synonymous *drol* (*-o-* m.) appears. Accordingly, there exists a group of pairs in the semantic field of instrumental nouns (*\*sogno-* ~ *súainem*, *gen* ~ *genam*, *drol* ~ *drolam*, *eis* ~ *es(s)em*, perhaps *airet* ~ *airtem*). The forms suggest that the Old Irish suffix variants *-em-/am-* < *\*-ijamon-/amon-* became morphologized as instrumental suffixes and could be attached to words designating tools to emphasize their meaning with no clear semantic shift being involved between basis and suffixed form. A similar thing seems to have occurred in the group of animal designations.

A possible instance of the use of *-mon-* in topographic field is OIr. *etham* ‘arable land’. Most likely it is derived from OIr. *ith* ‘corn’. It can also be modelled after the semantically close OIr. *mon*-stem *talam* ‘land’, which latter is one of the prototype forms of *-mon-*, being inherited from PIE times (see below). Further possible Irish examples of *-mon-* are *toirnem* ‘thunder’ (derived from *torann* ‘thunder’) *\*laissem* ‘light, source of light’ (from the verb *lasaid* ‘blazes, shines’). A further functional field, in which *-mon-* seems to have been used, are the personal names (see above).

## 5. The Indo-European origins of the suffix *-mon-*<sup>7</sup>

The forms mentioned so far point to polysemy of the agentive suffix *\*-mon-* in the history, or indeed prehistory, of Old Irish. But what can the historical development of the suffix *-mon-* say about the reasons or origins of this polysemy? It has to be pointed out that *-mon-* itself actually is an *-o*-ablauting allomorph of the PIE suffix *-men-*, and nouns with the suffix *-mon-* originally were derivational products from nouns inflecting with the suffix *-men-*. This morphological group of *men*-stems were neuter abstract nouns and action nouns. Inherited into Ancient Greek they form the well-known paradigms inflecting in NOM.SG *-μα*, GEN.SG *-ματος*, like *ῥεῦμα* ‘current, stream’ or *δῶγμα* ‘opinion, decision’. The following example illustrates in a somewhat simplified way this synchronic PIE derivational scheme with a paradigmatic pair built on the root *\*ǵnéh<sub>3</sub>-* ‘to know’:

- (2) PIE *\*ǵnéh<sub>3</sub>men(-)* → PIE *\*ǵnéh<sub>3</sub>mon(-)*  
 ‘knowledge’ N                      ‘having knowledge, knowing, the one who knows’

This derivation is made ‘internally’, which means that there is no external suffix or prefix or other morpheme that was attached to the basis. The derivational process rather consists in a change in the ablaut pattern and the accentual pattern.<sup>8</sup> The derivational products in *-mon-* are adjectives, the meaning of which is in an exocentric relation to the semantics

<sup>6</sup> This is all the more likely, considering that there existed the homonymous word *súan* in Old Irish meaning ‘sleep’. The universal tendency to avoid homonyms could have supported this development.

<sup>7</sup> The following outline is based on the research of HOLGER PEDERSEN, CARL MARSTRANDER, CALVERT WATKINS, and KIM McCONE. For a more detailed overview see WATKINS (1962: 182–185), McCONE (1995: 4), and REMMER (2002–2003: 173–181).

<sup>8</sup> In the cited example the change in the accentual pattern would be visible only in the weak cases.



of the derivational base, like ‘belonging to X, having X’ (relation, affiliation, possession). A stem in *-mon-* usually does not designate the base itself or a modification of the base but an entity with a relation to the base. The resulting adjectives are gendered and can be substantivized as masculine or feminine nouns.

In the daughter languages this original derivational process is usually lacking or exists only marginally: the suffixal allomorph *-mon-* has become an independent suffix in its own right. Compare, e.g., the Ancient Greek outcomes of the above described reconstructed PIE derivational pair:

- (3) Gk. *γνώμα* N ~ *γνώμων* M  
 ‘opinion, judgement’ ‘interpreter’

## 6. Semantic range of *-mon-*

In any case, the derivational products inflecting in *-mon-* can cover a broad semantic field, since affiliation (‘belonging to X’) is a very convenient but not a very precise way to express many semantic relations. And this must have been already the case in Proto-Indo-European times, considering the semantic fields in which *mon-* stems are found in Ancient Greek:

- (4) abstract nouns  
*κευθμών* M  
 ‘hiding place, hole’ (*κεύθω* ‘to cover, hide, conceal’)  
*τέρμων* M  
 ‘boundary’ (*τέρμα* N ‘boundary’)
- (5) adjectives (usually agentive in meaning)  
*ἴδμων*  
 ‘having knowledge of a thing’ (*ἰδ-* < \**uid-* ‘to see, know’)  
*μνήμων, μνάμων*  
 ‘mindful of, giving heed to, unforgetting’  
 (*μνάομαι* ‘to remember, be mindful of’)  
*τλήμων, τλάμων*  
 ‘patient, steadfast’ (*τλήναι* ‘to hold out, endure’)
- (6) substantivized adjectives  
*γνώμων*  
 ‘one who knows, examiner, interpreter’  
 (*γιγνώσχω* ‘come to know, perceive’)  
*ἡγεμών*  
 ‘leader’ (*ἡγέομαι* ‘lead’)  
*πλεύμων* (mostly PL)  
 ‘lungs’ < \*‘swimmer’, cf. *πλέω* ‘to sail, swim’<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Lungs, being the lightest part of the body, float in water.



- (7) animal names  
*ἰχνεύμων*  
 ‘tracker’ → ‘animal of the weasel-kind, mongoose’  
 (vb. *ἰχνεύω* ‘track out, hunt after’)
- (8) instrumental nouns, words for tools, artisanal expressions  
*στήμων*  
 ‘warp’ (in the upright loom – cf. *ἴστημι* ‘make to stand, stand’)  
*ἀρτέμων*  
 ‘foresail of a ship’ (*ἀρτέομαι* ‘make ready’)  
*τελαμών*  
 ‘strap’ < PIE \**telh<sub>2</sub>-mon-* ‘upholding, sustaining, carrying’  
 (*τλήναι* ‘holding out, enduring’)<sup>10</sup>

Accordingly, the suffix *-mon-* shares the same semantic and functional fields in Greek and in Old Irish: agent nouns, designations for animals and instrumental nouns.<sup>11</sup> This is a priori not to be expected, taking into account the complex development of the suffix *-mon-* from PIE to Old Irish: As already outlined at the beginning the suffix has undergone two enlargements resulting in the two variants of the suffix in Old Irish.

## 7. The development of *-mon-* from Proto-Indo-European to Old Irish

### 7.1. PIE *-mon-* > Celtic *-amon-*

PIE *-mon-* usually was directly attached to verbal roots, as in the case of \**ǵnéh<sub>3</sub>mon-* (> Gk. *γνώμων*). However, a group of PIE roots are of the shape CeRH, i.e. ending in a cluster consisting of a liquid sound (R) and a PIE laryngeal sound (H).<sup>12</sup> A noun of the shape \**CeRH+mon-*, with the suffix *-mon-* attached to a CeRH-root, would become Celtic \**CeRa+mon-* by sound law, since vocalization of *a* was the usual Celtic outcome of a laryngeal in this interconsonantal position. An early prototype form in Celtic, where *-amon-* was the direct outcome of a sequence \**CeRH+mon-*, is OIr. *talam* (*-n- m.*) ‘land’. Like its Greek cognate *τελαμών* ‘strap’ it is continuing PIE \**telh<sub>2</sub>mon-* ‘upholding, sustaining, carrying’ (the earth functions as the upholder of goods, crop).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Both *τελαμών* and the aforementioned *τλήμων* are *mon-*stems, built on the same root, but with different ablaut grades.

<sup>11</sup> In addition to that more parallel categories could be established, considering that Irish *etham* ‘arable land’, OIr. *talam* ‘land’ as well as Gk. *τέρμων* ‘boundary’ are topographic expressions. In both languages *mon-*stems are likewise used as personal names (compare the above-mentioned Irish forms *Dáilem*, *Flaithem*, \**Segam*, \**Regam*, \**Aithem* to personal names like Gk. *ἡγεμών*).

<sup>12</sup> Comparative reconstruction led to the assumption that PIE had three pharyngeal *h*-phonemes (termed *h<sub>1</sub>*, *h<sub>2</sub>* and *h<sub>3</sub>*). In most PIE daughter languages they vanished before attestation started, their only traces being the effects they had on their phonological surroundings. However, in the Anatolian languages of Indo-European they survived to some extent as independent *h*-sounds. Erroneously they were called ‘laryngeal’ sounds, a term that has been maintained until today.

<sup>13</sup> Other inherited prototype forms of *-amon-* are possibly the aforementioned *rúam* ‘spade’ (if < PIE \**reūHmon-* from the root PIE \**reūH-* ‘tear, tear open, rip open’) and *anna(i)n*, the plural of the Celtic word for ‘soul’, that goes back to a Celtic \**anamon-* < PIE \**h<sub>2</sub>enh<sub>1</sub>mon-* ‘having breath, breather’.

- (9) PIE \*CeRH+mon- > Celtic \*CeRa+mon-. The latter scheme was in turn metanalyzed as \*CeR+amon- leading to the new suffix shape -amon-.

At this stage the following nouns could have been formed from the respective roots:

(10)	PIE	*leg/ĝ-	>	Celt.	*leg-	→	OIr.	<i>legam</i>
		‘drip, dissolve’						‘moth’
	PIE	*seĝ <sup>h</sup> -	>	Celt.	*seg-	→	OIr.	* <i>Segam</i>
		‘overpower’						‘conqueror’
	PIE	*h <sub>3</sub> reĝ-	>	Celt.	*reg-	→	OIr.	* <i>Regam</i>
		‘stretch out’						‘ruler’
	PIE	*med-	>	Celt.	*med-	→	OIr.	<i>medam</i>
		‘measure’						‘judge’
	PIE	*(s)ker-	>	Celt.	*ker-	→	OIr.	<i>ceram</i>
		‘cut off’						‘chisel’
	PIE	*g <sup>h</sup> en-	>	Celt.	*g <sup>h</sup> en-	→	OIr.	<i>genam</i>
		‘strike, slay, kill’						‘sword’

## 7.2. Celt. \*-amon- > \*-iġamon-

By another metanalysis the Celtic -amon- became further enlarged: Being reinterpreted as a denominal suffix it could be attached to *i*-stem nouns. The resulting phonological sequence \*i(i)+amon- was taken to be a complex suffix \*-i(i)amon-. For example, from the verbal noun \*b<sub>ṛ</sub>ti- ‘carrying, judging’ a *mon*-stem \*b<sub>ṛ</sub>iti+amon- was formed, that in turn was reanalyzed to \*b<sub>ṛ</sub>it+iamon- / \*b<sub>ṛ</sub>it+iġamon- > OIr. *brithem*.

The following words were formed at this stage by attachment of -i(i)amon-:

(11)	<i>dál</i>	→	<i>dáilem</i>
	‘share, ration’		‘cupbearer, provider’
	<i>dúil</i>	→	<i>dúilem</i>
	‘creature’		‘creator’
	<i>fíach</i>	→	<i>féichem</i>
	‘guilt, debt’		‘creditor, advocate; debtor’
	<i>flaith</i>	→	<i>flaithem</i>
	‘rule’		‘ruler’
	<i>biad</i>	→	<i>bethem</i>
	‘food’		‘food-portioner, steward’
	<i>gláed</i>	→	<i>gláidem</i>
	‘howl’		‘howler; wolf’
	<i>mrath</i>	→	<i>mrraithem</i>
	‘betrayal, fraud’		‘betrayal, deceiver’
	<i>ar</i>	→	<i>airem</i>
	‘ploughing’		‘ploughman’

Finally, at some stage in the prehistory of Old Irish, the two variants of the suffix -mon- continued to coexist. Synchronically both were equally used both as denominal and de-verbal suffixes.

## 8. Conclusion

The historical survey of the suffix *-mon-* shows that – despite its various changes of shape and also functions (denominal, deverbal and both) – the semantic and functional fields covered by it in the end are surprisingly very similar to the semantic values of the outset. True, in Old Irish *mon-* stems are no affiliation adjectives anymore as they were originally in Proto-Indo-European. However, we find *-mon-* in the fields of agent nouns, instrumental nouns and also animal designations as suggested by the combined evidence of Old Irish and Greek. The various semantic functions of this suffix, i.e. its polysemy, have proven to be stable throughout the millennia.

### Abbreviations

ACC	accusative	MiddIr.	Middle Irish
Celt.	Celtic	ModIr.	Modern Irish
DAT	dative	N	neuter
F	feminine	NOM	nominative
GEN	genitive	OIr.	Old Irish
Gk.	Greek	PIE	Proto-Indo-European
Lat.	Latin	PL	plural
M	masculine	SG	singular

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