

## AN ANCIENT (CELTIC) TOPONYMIC CRUX: THE ORIGINS OF THE NAME OF *BAD* *KREUZNACH - CRUCINIACUM*

**Antonia Maria POPP**

University of Zurich (UZH), Faculty of Philosophy, Institute for Comparative Linguistics, Zurich, Switzerland  
Email: [antoni MARIA.popp@uzh.ch](mailto:antoni MARIA.popp@uzh.ch)

**Francesco PERONO CACCIAFOCO**

Nanyang Technological University (NTU), College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CoHASS), School of Humanities (SoH), Linguistics and Multilingual Studies Programme (LMS), Singapore  
Email: [fcacciafoco@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:fcacciafoco@ntu.edu.sg)

**Abstract:** *Even though German toponymy is consistently studied, compared with the toponomastics of other regions, the origins of the names of many small towns are still either unknown or under-researched. The temptation, in explaining them, to just link all similar toponyms to each other, without the support of documented sources, is high. This paper aims at providing an investigation of the etymological origins of the toponym (Bad) Kreuznach – the ancient Cruciniacum – in South-West Germany through a Comparative Methodology approach and in the light of the assessment of the relations among the different linguistic groups living in the area throughout its history and prehistory, thus applying a toponymic stratigraphy approach. The article also highlights at least one possible paronymy for the place name, not only by isolating it, but also by investigating the implications that it could have on the perception of the place name by the people living in the area, and thus its indirect influence on the further historical development of the toponym. In former research, the toponym Kreuznach and other similar place names have been linked to supposed anthroponyms that have never been attested in history and which, because of their specific onomastic nature, have no links to geographical or hydro-geomorphological features of the local territory. This paper evaluates the validity of those old etymological practices, highlighting the importance of questioning former works in an attempt to promote further research to gather more knowledge about long-gone civilizations like the continental Celts, in Europe. Research on Celtic place names in Central Europe has often been mostly extensive, drawing conclusions for single cases starting from the analysis of toponymic macro-systems and producing, sometimes, questionable results. Conversely, through the application of an intensive research analysis focused on single specific*



*cases, like Kreuznach, it is possible to show the flaws in such practices and the validity of the epistemological approach according to which the study of Indo-European toponymy should be conducted mainly on a case-by-case basis, starting from the micro-systems to reconstruct the macro-system.*

**Key words:** German Toponymy, Kreuznach/Cruciniacum, Rheinland, Celtic toponymy, historical toponomastics

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Indo-European language family is surely at an advantage over the other families when it comes to linguistic resources. Indeed, Indo-European is historically one of the best researched language families and the reconstruction of proto-Indo-European is one of the big achievements of Historical Linguistic, made possible by the vast amount of linguistic sources for almost all the different Indo-European languages. Some of the Indo-European branches, however, are more ‘secretive’ to researchers than others. The Celtic layer could be in some cases considered one of those Indo-European strata that are hard to grasp in their entirety for Linguists due to the lack of available historical documents for some of their sub-branches. Despite the current state of the Celtic languages, pushed back to a small area at the rim of Europe, it is universally known that they used to be much more widely spoken in the Old Continent in prehistoric and proto-historic times, in areas nowadays belonging to France, Italy, and Germany, among others<sup>1</sup>. Thus, learning about Celtic peoples and their settlement dynamics is vital to understand the cultural and historic origins of large parts of Europe. Toponyms can be, sometimes, considered ‘linguistic fossils’ in the cultural landscapes, often preserving part of their possibly prehistoric forms and roots and, therefore, telling us unwritten stories about cultures and peoples, which would be, otherwise, lost<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, the toponyms of the ancient Celtic regions are a vital part of research on Celtic peoples, and toponymy can play a central role in the reconstruction of continental Celtic cultures. This work aspires to be an epistemological contribution to this field and proposes a reconstruction of a toponym in an archeologically confirmed ancient Celtic area in Germany.

German Toponymy is undoubtedly one of the more consistently researched fields in Historical Toponomastics<sup>3</sup>, but this, however, often leads scholars to accept theories and statements that come from a past of studies in Toponymy when the diachronic perspective and the idea of prehistoric etymologies for place names were under-rated and under-researched, originating paronymologies and, sometimes, simplistic explanations and naïve reconstructions. This paper deals with the origins of the place name *Kreuznach* and its more ancient version *Cruciniacum*, belonging to a town located in South-West Germany, in the *Nahe* Valley, and provides an accurate diachronic etymological reconstruction of the toponym. The *Cruciniacum* Medieval Latin denomination is the first attested form of the place name, from the first known source mentioning the settlement that developed, over time, in the modern town of

<sup>1</sup> Cf., among others, Cunliffe, B., (2003), *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Perono Cacciafoco, F., (2014), pp. 79-98.

<sup>3</sup> Cf., among others, Berger, D., (1999), *passim*; Bichlmeier, H., (2009a), pp. 3-63; Bichlmeier, H., (2009b), pp. 254-267; Krahe, H., (1949a), *passim*; Krahe, H., (1949b), *passim*.

*Kreuznach*<sup>4</sup>. The etymological reconstruction provided in this paper is relevant because it reveals the existence of at least one paronymology connected with *Cruciniacum*, shows the historical development of different linguistic and onomastic layers for *Kreuznach* (indeed, its toponymic stratigraphy), and questions the still widespread practice of listing toponyms under the umbrella of a toponymic system without a proper and accurate consideration and reconstruction of them on a case-by-case basis, to provide reliable and documented data and to encourage further research. In the light of the long archeological history that the area around *Kreuznach* is revealing to us, spread along over 6000 years<sup>5</sup>, the mission and the importance of Historical Toponomastics' studies in shedding more light on the linguistic and evenemential history of this territory becomes clear. This study would like to be a small, but relevant step in this long journey, updating a research that has been neglected for almost a century<sup>6</sup>.

## 2. CURRENT STATUS OF THE AVAILABLE RESEARCH

Despite the above described European-wide relevance of the toponymic history of place names from the former Celtic regions in Germany in general and in the cases of the toponyms of small towns like *Kreuznach* in particular, the currently available research is mostly 'dated' and published by German scholars in German and in region-focused Journals. This increases the need for more internationally available and recognized research and for the revision of many of those considerably outdated toponymic works. The last published study on the Celtic origins of regional toponyms in Western Germany is by Peter Honnen, in *Alltag im Rheinland*<sup>7</sup>. In the reconstruction of ancient Toponymy it should be always necessary to differentiate between extensive research, generally assessing groups of toponyms that are connected in some ways with each other, like through the fact of belonging to a toponymic system, and intensive research, which studies place names generally on a case-by-case basis<sup>8</sup>. Honnen, in his above-mentioned work, mostly summarizes the toponymic studies that have been developed before him and his analysis is, therefore, much more extensive than intensive, as he does not provide nor applies a specific approach on single cases. Through his work, however, it becomes clear that original historical sources are rare for the vast size of the *-acum* toponymic system, which *Cruciniacum* (the historical toponymic form of *Kreuznach*) supposedly belongs to. This offers the opportunity for an alternative etymological reconstruction.

Even though, as mentioned, German Toponymy is generally a more widely researched field, if compared with the Toponymy of other parts of the world, also because the local languages are documented much better and allow the reconstruction of proto-languages, sources for the analysis of the toponym of a small town like *Kreuznach* are still rare. This is true especially when it comes to pre-Roman times, even though the area has been inhabited by humans for over 6000 years<sup>9</sup>. Thus, it is not surprising that the most recent and extensive work on the toponym, developed by

<sup>4</sup> Cf. RIASLM, (1829- ), vol. 1, p. 288.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Guthmann, O., (1969), *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> The most recent available source on the name of *Kreuznach* is Kaspers, W., (1925), pp. 206-208.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Honnen, P., (2012), pp. 41-61.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Tent, J., (2015), pp. 66-67; Nash, J., (2015), pp. 233-236.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Guthmann, O., (1969), *cit.*, *passim*.

Kaspers<sup>10</sup>, is 94 years old. Wilhelm Kaspers has maybe been the most active Toponymist in the region, compiling works like *The -acum Toponyms of the Rheinland*<sup>11</sup>, but his research is more focused on whole toponymic systems and place names lists rather than on single cases thoroughly analyzed. He worked with the assumption that all toponyms that are part of a toponymic system formed with the Celtic suffix *\*-ākō-n* have been made up after anthroponyms<sup>12</sup> and, therefore, the main part of his work about toponyms belonging to this system is focused on the attempt to reconstruct these anthroponyms.

Another vastly influential researcher that should be mentioned in this section is Adolf Bach, a German Etymologist author, among other works, of the *Deutsche Namenkunde*, a comprehensive study of German Etymology in general, whose second part, *Die deutschen Ortsnamen*<sup>13</sup>, is focused on Toponymy (in his *Die deutschen Ortsnamen*<sup>14</sup>, almost one century earlier, also Ernst Wilhelm Förstemann dealt briefly with *Kreuznach*, but he did not provide relevant etymological reconstructions of the place name). Nevertheless, it is quite clear that, although Bach's work is extensive, there is no place in such a hermeneutic effort for intensive research on toponyms of small inhabited centers and villages. Because of this, the gap in the toponymic research dealing with place names on a case-by-case basis is evident. The extensive research on toponymic systems naturally includes single toponyms, but, while hastily considering possible different etymologies for each and every one of them, it produces widespread paronymologies. Conversely, it would be basically necessary that the existence and consistence of toponymic systems is unveiled and confirmed by intensive research on the single cases first, before getting to extensive conclusions about naming processes and settlement dynamics in prehistoric times<sup>15</sup>. Sources on the *Kreuznach* town's history are much more readily available than information on its toponym<sup>16</sup>. This paper mostly focuses on the different onomastic strata that have generated the town's place name in early history.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This paper tries to reconstruct the remote origins of the place name *Kreuznach* by applying Comparative Methodology and a toponymic stratigraphy approach. This approach takes into account the different linguistic layers generated by speakers inhabiting the area over time and gives reason of how and why an Indo-European reconstruction is possible and dutiful for this place name. Thus, to assess the different layers properly, an introduction to the history of the place is given in the first part of the following section. This overview is based on prehistoric and early historical sources and on the documentation of archaeological findings. Prehistoric times are, indeed, the possible initial diachronic layer for the origin of the place name, and the later development of the toponym is accessible through connections with collections of

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Kaspers, W., (1925), cit., pp. 206-208.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Kaspers, W., (1921), pp. 206-211.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Kaspers, W., (1921), cit., p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Bach, A., (1953), *passim*.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Förstemann, E.W., (1863), pp. 34 and 240.

<sup>15</sup> Cf., among others, Perono Cacciafoco, F., (2014), cit., pp. 79-98.

<sup>16</sup> Cf., for example, Fiedler, F., (1861), pp. 63-73; Guthmann, O., (1969), cit., *passim*; Hornung, S., (2008), *passim*; Senner, M., (2002), *passim*; Schmidt, F.W., (1861), pp. 1-120.

historical documents like the *Regesta Imperii*<sup>17</sup>, a project by the Mainz University documenting and digitalizing all the attested activities of Roman-Germanic kings.

On a second instance, the first part of the toponymic assessments of *Kreuznach* deals with the current place name and its transparent German meaning, even though this etymology is eventually shown to be a paretymology. The historical moment when this interpretation came about is later used to argue for different possible original forms of the toponym since its chronology could have had an influence on the development of the present form. Also, as side notes, a related founding myth is discussed, as well as the town's coat of arms, both effective examples of how big impact a long-held paretymology can have on the naming process and of how paretymologies, even if they do not directly lead us to the etymological origins of toponyms, are relevant indirectly to the field of Toponymy and in historical reconstruction and should always be discussed.

Afterwards, the actual old toponymic forms of *Kreuznach* are assessed and listed into a historical sequence (toponymic stratigraphy) to visualize the newer developments of the place name after its first attestation. This is, ultimately, helpful to find the original form possibly at the origins of the different variants. The reason for this is that *Cruciniacum*, even though it was a *vicus* during Roman times<sup>18</sup>, has never been mentioned by Roman sources. The first historical instance of the name *Cruciniacum* dates back to 819 AD, in a document about Louis the Pious, centuries after the Roman rule in the area had already ended<sup>19</sup> (other early attestations of the toponym are in documents from 823 AD<sup>20</sup> – another historical record about Louis the Pious, where *Cruciniacum* is mis-transcribed as *Truciniacus* –, 832 AD<sup>21</sup>, and 839 AD<sup>22</sup>). This makes the story of that version of the toponym a puzzle hard to solve, especially with the widespread approach by Toponymy scholars who often have Roman sources at hand, at least for bigger settlements in the area.

Subsequently, the current status of the toponymic research on *Kreuznach* is discussed and the possible Celtic toponymic system in *-acum* is described (and its implications for the development of the toponym are assessed). Moreover, some gaps in the former research on the toponymic system and, therefore, on several toponyms of the area, including *Kreuznach*, are analyzed, in order to evaluate the hermeneutic possibility of a presumably alternative etymological reconstruction. Henceforth, a plausible original (Latin) form of the toponym is highlighted by discussing different naming processes and ways of transmission to the German linguistic context with the outcome of the contemporary form of *Kreuznach*. Not only phonological factors, but also possible influences by the paretymology mentioned in the first section are considered according to a convergent approach to analyze this process. To complete the analysis, also toponyms for the same town from different languages, namely Yiddish and Greek, are assessed and explored in their implications for the development of the original toponym. Additionally, an alternative prehistoric etymological reconstruction is given, with the aim to fill the gaps of former research and based on the selected possible Latin form of the place name. The proto form is reconstructed by

<sup>17</sup> Cf., among others, RIASLM, (1829- ), cit., vol. 1, pp. 288 and 405.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Guthmann, O., (1969), cit., *passim*; Fiedler, F., (1861), cit., pp. 63-73.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. RIASLM, (1829- ), cit., vol. 1, p. 288.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. MB, (1829), p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Waitz, G., (1883), p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. RIASLM, (1829- ), cit., vol. 1, p. 405.

applying the Comparative Method and by using Indo-European sources like the *Proto-Indo-European Etymological Dictionary* by Julius Pokorny<sup>23</sup>, the *Dictionary of the Welsh language* published by the University of Wales<sup>24</sup>, and the *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic* by Ranko Matasović<sup>25</sup>.

## 4. ETYMOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION

### 4.1. History of the Region

Because of outstanding geographical features and very favorable climatic conditions<sup>26</sup>, the area of *Kreuznach* was populated at least from the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC and archaeological findings show that peoples lived in its territory ever since without interruption<sup>27</sup>. Before *Kreuznach* became part of the Roman Empire at around the year 0, Celts were living in a village next to the river *Nahe*. In this context, it is plausible to assume the presence of a mixed population of Celtic and Germanic peoples at that time<sup>28</sup>. After the annexation of the territory by the Romans, the *vicus* became part of a Roman supply route to *Mogontiacum (Mainz)*<sup>29</sup>. In the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century, a Roman *villa* was built, which visitors can still explore today in the Museum located on the top of the former archaeological site<sup>30</sup>. At the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Romans also built a *castellum* and, not much later, around 500 AD, the Franks took over and thus the area became prevalently inhabited by Germanic peoples<sup>31</sup>. The local languages, therefore, changed diachronically in the area, from proto-Indo-European (possibly proto-Celtic) to Celtic and Germanic languages, to Latin, and, then, again to a Germanic language, Frankish, and thus, later, to modern German<sup>32</sup>. Nowadays, the local linguistic variety shifts from the local dialect, a variant of the Rhein-Hessian dialects<sup>33</sup>, to a linguistic version that is closer to standard German among the younger generations<sup>34</sup>. The river flowing through *Kreuznach* is called *Nahe* (< proto-IE \**néhZ-uo-*, ‘where one can swim’ > proto-Germanic \**nauo-* > *Naha, Naba, Nauua, Nava* ~ Latin *Nava*), is 125 kilometers long, and is a tributary to the *Rhein*<sup>35</sup>. The *Nahe* River flows directly through *Kreuznach* and its course should be the same as in ancient times, as the Roman *villa* and *castellum* were located on the opposite sides of the river itself<sup>36</sup>.

### 4.2. The Cross

Every German speaker would ‘break up’ *Kreuznach* into *Kreuz-* and *-nach*, with *kreuz-* being completely transparent and meaning ‘cross’ and *-nach* being quite a

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Pokorny, J., (1969), pp. 935-938.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Thomas, R.J., (1967), pp. 613-614.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Matasović, R., (2008), s.v. \**ufo-menāko*; \**swant-āko*; \**durnāko*, among others.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Atzbach, O., (2000), pp. 13-36.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Guthmann, O., (1969), cit., *passim*; Fiedler, F., (1861), cit., pp. 63-73.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Guthmann, O., (1969), cit., pp. 5-7 and *passim*.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Schmidt, F.W., (1861), cit., pp. 1-120.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Hornung, S., (2008), cit., pp. 10-20.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Guthmann, O., (1969), cit., *passim*.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Keller, R.E., (1964), pp. 101-122.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Post, R., (2010), p. 51.

<sup>34</sup> Self-report by one of the authors, from *Kreuznach*.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Greule, A., (2014), p. 169.

<sup>36</sup> Self-report by one the authors, from *Kreuznach*; cf. Guthmann, O., (1969), cit., *passim*.

common suffix in German place names in the region. The poet Gustav Pfarrius wrote a poem on the legendary founding of *Kreuznach* in his *Das Nahethal in Liedern* in 1838, in which he links the town to a legend about a big, indestructible cross located on the top of a rock in an island rising from the waters of the *Nahe* River, which attracted the people who ultimately founded the town<sup>37</sup>. Crosses are also part of the town's coat of arms (Fig. 1)<sup>38</sup>.



**Figure 1.** *Kreuznach* Municipality's Coat of Arms

The lexeme *kreuz* (~ *crux*) is largely used in all the territories inhabited by German people<sup>39</sup>, even, for instance, in German diaspora areas of Central and Eastern Europe<sup>40</sup>. *Kreuznach* could be reasonably considered, therefore, as a name part of the 'cross' toponymic system in the Old Continent. However, there is no compelling reason for *Kreuznach* to be named after a cross. Other places from the German-speaking area, like *Kreuzlingen* in Switzerland, are actually named after religious landmarks like (in the *Kreuzlingen*'s case) a canonical monastery<sup>41</sup>. For *Kreuznach*, we find no historical references in the vicinity, neither a monastery nor a legendary cross comparable to what Pfarrius talks about in his poem. Eduard Schneegans tells that the cross should have been located on the river island as Pfarrius says because of an alternative Latin 'Greekized' form of the toponym, *Stauronesum*, meaning, in Ancient Greek, 'cross island' (*σταυρός* [*staurós*], 'cross', + *νήσος* [*nêsos*], 'island')<sup>42</sup>. However, that version of the name is attested in the late Middle-Ages<sup>43</sup>, much later than *Cruciniacum*, as seen in Table 1, and probably is based on the paronymological connection of 'cross' with other versions of the name. In the same way, the town's coat of arms is actually fairly 'new', with its first display dating back to the 13th century, and the symbols of the crosses represented on it should be derived from the name of the town itself<sup>38</sup>. Moreover, the oldest attested form *Cruciniacum* does not match linguistically with *crux* because of the vowel quantity reasons further explained in section 4.5 and, therefore, can truly not be the etymological source for the toponym.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Pfarrius, G., (1838), pp. 164-166.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Stadler, K., (1966), p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Cf., among others, Ehrlich, L., (1915), pp. 5-14; Nagel, S., (2005), pp. 1-7.

<sup>40</sup> Cf., among others, Crețan, R., (2000), *passim*; Crețan, R., (2007), pp. 45-56; Crețan, R., Frățilă, V., (2007), *passim*.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Nyffenegger, E., (2007), *s.v. Kreuzlingen*.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Schneegans, E., (1839), p. 112.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. GRS, (1611), p. 104.

### 4.3. *Kreuznach*'s 'Old Name(s)'

If the residents of *Kreuznach* are asked to talk about the origins of their town's name, many of them say that, back in Roman times, the toponym was actually *Cruciniacum*, which changed into *Kreuznach* later. This version is widespread in the area to such an extent that even the local thermal spring is called *Crucenia Thermen*<sup>44</sup>. This is also the version shared by the local Archaeological Museum *Römerhalle*, devoted to the Roman *villa*<sup>45</sup>. This is, of course, only the tip of the iceberg, since *Kreuznach* has a long list of names spread over its 'lifetime'. Table 1 shows some of the diachronic evolutions of the toponym through historical texts<sup>46</sup>.

**Table 1.** Some of *Kreuznach*'s Former Names

819	•	Cruciniacum <i>Louis the Pious (RIASLM, (1829-))</i>
832	•	Cruciniacum <i>Annales Bertiniani (Waitz, G., (1883))</i>
819	•	Cruciniacum <i>Louis the Pious (RIASLM, (1829-))</i>
882	•	Crutcinacha <i>Karl the III. (Kaspers, W., (1925))</i>
977	•	Kruzinacha <i>Otto the II.; (Kaspers, W., (1925))</i>
1065	•	Crucenacum <i>(Grässe, J.G.T., (1909); Kaspers, W., (1925))</i>

### 4.4. The *-acum* Toponymic System

The historical Latin (or Latinized) toponym of *Kreuznach*, *Cruciniacum*, ends with the suffix *-acum*. Not only the oldest attested forms of the place name appear with this suffix, but the ending is also reported in most of the later historical sources (Table 1). This fact is important, as it links the town to a well-known and vast toponymic system that ranges from France to Belgium and to the entire South-Western Germany, as seen in Figure 2. Toponyms of the *-acum* type are most frequent in the Rheinland (about 300 of them to be exact)<sup>47</sup>, but only on the left side of the *Limes* and, therefore, within the borders of the Roman Empire<sup>48</sup>. The area corresponds to the region occupied

<sup>44</sup> Self-report by one of the authors, from *Kreuznach*.

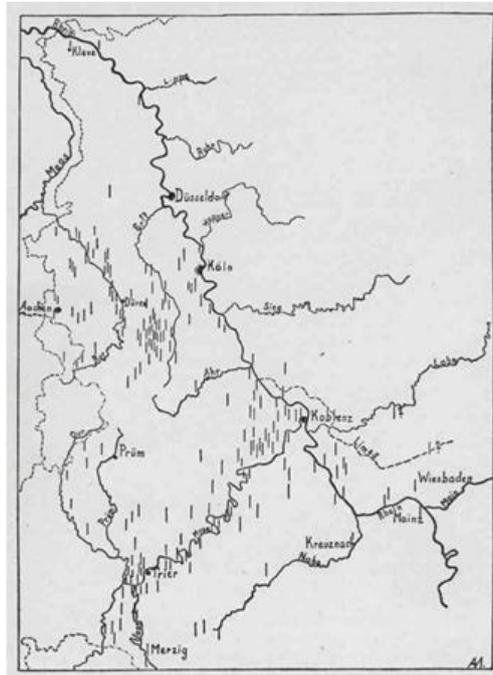
<sup>45</sup> Cf. Hornung, S., (2008), cit., *passim*.

<sup>46</sup> Complete sources for the names: RIASLM, (1829- ), cit., vol. 1, pp. 288 and 405; Waitz, G., (1883), cit., p. 22; Kaspers, W., (1921), cit., p. 207; Grässe, J.G.T., Benedict, F., (1909), s.v. *Crucenacum*.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Honnen, P., (2012), cit., p. 45.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Kaufmann, H., (1974), *passim*.

by the Celts that Caesar describes in the *De Bello Gallico*<sup>49</sup> and also includes the toponymic systems of *-magus* and *-durus*, which are also linked to the Celts<sup>49</sup>. The suffix *-acum* should come from the Celtic suffix *\*-ākō-n* and could mean something like ‘related to’ or ‘provided with’.<sup>50</sup> It is possible it was, therefore, a possessive suffix that was attached to an anthroponym, to ‘attribute’ a place to a specific person<sup>51</sup>. Indeed, for *Kreuznach*, the Celtic roots of the town itself are confirmed by archaeological findings that support the existence of a Celtic settlement before the Romans’ arrival<sup>52</sup>.



**Figure 2.** Map of the *-acum* toponymic system (from Bach, A., [1909], p. 66)

This, however, is not true for all the ‘*-acum* type’ places. For example, north of the Mosel no archaeological findings witness Celtic settlements<sup>53</sup>. Moreover, none of the *-acum* toponyms are mentioned by Caesar in any of his works. The first attestation of two of these names goes back to Tacitus<sup>54</sup>, but they are only *Mogontiacum* (*Mainz*) and *Tolbiacum* (*Zülpich*)<sup>55</sup>. Small towns like *Kreuznach*, as we have seen in section 4.3, have to wait even longer for their first mention in historical sources. Many of the 300 names composing the toponymic set are just attributed to the system because their contemporary German names end with *-ach* or *-ich* and, therefore, possibly match with the towns that had a confirmed *-acum* in the former versions of their toponyms. Additionally, most of the anthroponyms that are the supposed underlying etymological sources of the system are not safely documented and are just reconstructed on the basis

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Honnen, P., (2012), cit., p. 41.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Matasović, R., (2008), cit., s.v. *\*ufo-menāko*; *\*swant-āko*; *\*durnāko*, among others.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Kaspers, W., (1921), cit., p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Fiedler, F., (1861), cit., pp. 63-73; Guthmann, O., (1969), cit., p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Honnen, P., (2012), cit., p. 43.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Tacitus, (1931), *Histories*, IV, 15 and 79.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Kuhn, H., (1975), p. 394 (*Mogontiaci* and *Tolbiaci* are found in Tacitus’ *Historiae*, book 4, chapters 15 and 79, see note 54 above).

of the historical toponyms<sup>56</sup>. The original chronology and time of this toponymic system are thus not completely confirmed, as well as its Celtic origins. Nevertheless, scholars have found a possible solution that explains both those problems. Firstly, the *-acum* settlements were simply too small and unimportant to be mentioned by Roman historians and authors. They were attributed to only one man and his family, who owned maybe a *villa* and some lands, this explaining their comparably late appearance in historical documents<sup>57</sup>.

Secondly, the naming process for this kind of settlements was, over time, exported out of the Celtic main land by Celtic legionaries serving in the Roman army, who were given some lands after they had completed their service, resulting in a late expansion of the toponymic system under the Roman rule<sup>58</sup>. Thus, settlements like *Kreuznach* would have had the ‘original’ *-acum* names because Celts had been settling there for a long time before the arrival of the Romans, while the more northern *-acum* toponyms would have been founded in Roman times. If, however, all of this is true for *Kreuznach* in particular, we have to confirm that there is a Celtic anthroponym hidden behind the list of names from Table 1. Unfortunately, there are no historical records of a possible individual behind *Cruciniacum* and of his name, but, on the basis of the resulting German toponym, Kaspers (1925) attempted a very theoretical reconstruction of that name<sup>59</sup>.

#### 4.5. From Latin to German

A problem that has still to be solved is the transition from the oldest attested form *Cruciniacum* to the current *Kreuznach*. There are three main logical passages that could explain this:

1. the name came to be through a chain of phonological processes;
2. the name is a ‘translation’ of the (mis-)interpreted meaning of *cross*;
3. a combination of both.

The area of *Kreuznach* became Franconian (Germanic) after the fall of the Roman Empire, from 476 AD onwards. Thus, the attested ‘Roman’ names we have are actually too recent and must have been in use while *Kreuznach* was already inhabited by Germanic peoples. The texts mentioning them, however, are written in (Medieval) Latin, so we can assume that the names we have were somewhat different from the name that was actually used by the Germanic speakers. Kaspers states that, in order for the Latin *crucem* (< *crux*) to have an influence on the transition period, we would have to hypothesize a later founding of the town<sup>60</sup>. Consequently, he seems to ignore that, in order for *crucem* to influence the toponymic development, the word does not have to be the actual etymological source of the toponym. Indeed, a later arisen paretyymology, possibly together with the growing power of Christianity, could have had just as much if not more of an influence on the naming process. The connection of the toponym with the Christian symbol would have been prestigious and universally shared, and thus

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Honnen, P., (2012), cit., p. 46.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Kaufmann, H., (1974), cit., p. 33.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Derks, P., (2006), p. 103.; Kuhn, H., (1975), cit., p. 394.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Kaspers, W., (1925), cit., p. 208.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Kaspers, W., (1925), cit., p. 207; Kaspers, W., (1921), cit., p. 3.

possibly easily accepted and supported by the people. Moreover, historical sources support the age of the paronymological connection with *cross*. *Kreuznach*, as told, was also called *Stauronesum* (in Ancient Greek *σταυρός* [*staurós*] means ‘cross’) already in the late Middle-Ages and also later (in 1611<sup>61</sup>), showing the stability of the link to the meaning of *cross*. The same is true for the Yiddish name of the town, *Zelemochum*, which has been historically used by the Jews that lived there and roughly translates to ‘sign-town’, giving the local Jews the possibility to avoid mentioning the Christian symbol<sup>62</sup>. The name is still in use today by some members of the older generations<sup>63</sup>. How old this denomination is, it is not entirely clear. However, Jews have been living in the area since the Middle-Ages<sup>64</sup>, and that could be evidence of the fact that the paronymology is fairly old. If what reconstructed above is true, in order for Kaspers (1925)’ hypothesis of no connection with the meaning of *cross* during the ‘Germanization’ of the toponym to be correct, there must have been a period when the possible meaning of *cross* was lost after the end of the Roman rule. Then, that would have had to be ‘found’ again at a later time, as the name began to line up with German *Kreuz* or *Kruzifix* (< *crux*). This seems quite unlikely, indeed, also in a local, undocumented context. Moreover, the actual German word *kreuz* directly originated from Latin *crux*, starting at least from the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> century<sup>65</sup>, and, therefore, the name of *Kreuznach* could have just been Germanized alongside it and influenced by the same processes in the 9<sup>th</sup> century (see also Table 1).

Kaspers (1925), as said above, does not believe in the influence of a connection *crucem* > *Kreuz* and, thus, he links his reconstruction to an ‘original’ form of the toponym (supposing that the place name existed already at the beginning of the Roman rule and in Roman times, about 0-500 AD). His whole reconstruction is purely based on plausible phonetic processes. He states that the transition *c* > *z* is not possible, as there was no later Latin speaking population after the start of the Frankish rule around 500 AD. Conversely, the transition *t* > *z* is the more plausible, according to him. His reasoning is also built up on forms like the attested (in 882 AD) *Crutcinacha*. From here, the proto-form Kaspers reconstructs is *\*Crutinacum*, and the possible – unattested – Celtic (Latinized) anthroponym from which the proto-form would derive would be, according to the scholar, *\*Crutinus*<sup>66</sup>.

#### 4.6. Indo-European Etymology of *Cruciniacum*

Anthroponyms, however, are always an easy solution for Toponymists, because they do not need a concrete meaning and they can be a simple option to explain a place name, even when they are not attested. Indeed, if the ‘toponymic person’ is not attested, the related name is a sort of ‘linguistic ghost’. Especially in the case of the *-acum* toponymic system it is really easy, for scholars, to just include any toponym in the ‘anthroponomical’ category. If we accept the theory according to which a Latin name with an initial /c/ like *Cruciniacum* could have evolved into *Kreuznach* because of a phonetic development, over time, also influenced by the cross / *crux* paronymology, we

<sup>61</sup> Cf. GRS, (1611), cit., p. 104.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Senner, M., (2002), *passim*.

<sup>63</sup> Self-report by one of the authors, from *Kreuznach*.

<sup>64</sup> The oldest attested events involving a Jew in the area took place in 1283 (cf. Salfeld, S., [1898], p. 4).

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Kluge, F., (1891), *s.v. Kreuz*.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Kaspers, W., (1925), cit., pp. 207-208.

could attempt a new etymological reconstruction that is not based on an anthroponym, but that could reconstitute the Indo-European origins of the place name. This reconstruction is eminently based on the application of the Comparative Method and restitutes the historical phonetics and the remote origins of the place name. In the case of *Cruciniacum*, the suffix *-acum* is invariably from Celtic *\*-ākō-* (neuter *\*-ākō-n*), definitely. In Prehistoric Indo-European (proto-IE), it was quite probably *\*-ah<sub>a</sub>kō-(m)*<sup>67</sup>. Its function was, indeed, to ‘make up’ possessive adjectives, also with the aspect of nouns. Its meaning would have been ‘related to’ or also ‘provided with’ (so, almost a ‘possessive’), like in the Italian suffixes *-(i)ano* (e.g. *Ital-[i]ano*, ‘related to Italy’, ‘Italian’) and *-ato* (e.g. *barb-ato*, ‘provided with beard’). The Romanized (Latinized) place name is not transparent if Celtic is not considered and is the product of paretymology with the Latin word *crux*, *crucis* (singular feminine accusative *crucem*), ‘cross’. The Indo-European etymology and proto-form of the place name is *\*(S)krou-k-en-ĵ-ah<sub>a</sub>kō-m*, ‘territory (gender of the toponym neuter) of the small hills’. This is confirmed by Welsh *crug-yn*, diminutive of *crug*, ‘hill’<sup>68</sup>. The paretymology of *Cruciniacum* with *crux* is shown by the quantity of the /u/, short in *crux* (*crucem*) and long in the place name, coming from the diphthong /ou/, confirmed also by the German *exitus*, /eu/. Another quite theoretical connection between *-acum* and Latin *aqua*, ‘water’, is impossible again for the vocalic quantity. *Aqua* (< proto-IE *\*ak<sup>w</sup>- [ak<sup>w</sup>ā-]*) can definitely be connected with themes in /ākū-/ , but, in the case of *Cruciniacum*, *\*-ākō-* has the long vowel (indeed widely confirmed by all the Italian toponyms in *-àgo*, Provençal *-ac*, French *-y*, etc.), and is a theme in *-ō-* (as shown by the Latin inflection, according to the second declension and not the fourth declension), not in *-ū-*. With this, two elements out of three of the comparison *ākū-* ÷ *aqua* are missing. We can consider, therefore, both *crux* and *aqua*, for the root and the suffix of the place name, at the origins of paretymologies.

*Bad Kreuznach* is located on a hilly territory (Figure 3), where the hills have been part for millennia of the landscape of its area. This etymological reconstruction, therefore, does not only link the place name to its possible Indo-European origins, restituting and explaining its proto-form, but also takes into account the relation of the toponym to the hydro-geo-morphology and the landscape features of the territory of its related place, indispensable requirement in the reconstruction of the toponymic stratigraphy of a place name<sup>69</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Pokorny, J., (1969), cit., pp. 935-939.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Thomas, R.J. (1967), cit., pp. 613-614.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Perono Cacciafoco, F., Cavallaro, F., Kratochvíl, F., (2015), pp. 31-32.



**Figure 3.** *Crucenacum ad Navam*, ca. 1747, by Theodor Gottfried Thum (from the *Thesaurus Palatinus* by Johann Franz Capellini von Wickenburg<sup>70</sup>)

## 5. ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION

To provide etymological reconstructions like the one just developed is never easy and, in the case of *Kreuznach*, because of the absence of historical documents attesting any form of the toponym before 819 AD<sup>71</sup>, it is undeniable that there always will be different interpretations involved in this kind of studies. Moreover, even if we have written historical records of toponymic forms like the ones of *Cruciniacum* from 819 AD onwards, there will always be gaps in documentation and also in the exact knowledge of the linguistic layers of a local area. An attested written form does not give, at least not completely, phonological information. Consequently, it is almost impossible to know how a form like *Cruciniacum* was pronounced exactly by the local people, and this originates discussions on the phonological development of a name, as seen, for example, in section 4.5 on Kaspers' discussion about the palatalization of /c/.

Additionally, often the written and official language that is used for documentation in a specific time is substantially different from the language spoken by the local people. This is the case for *Cruciniacum*, since the oldest available sources are written in Medieval Latin<sup>71</sup>, while the language spoken by the local people in the time of the attestation was probably a variety of Frankish<sup>72</sup>. This might also result in a substantial deviation of the toponym between its written (in this case Latin) official form and the form used by the local inhabitants, which is not recorded. In the case of *Cruciniacum*, however, since the former rulers of the territory were the Romans<sup>73</sup>, the

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Capellini von Wickenburg, J.F., (1747-1752), f. 292v.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. RIASLM, (1829- ), cit., vol. 1, p. 288.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Keller, R.E., (1964), cit., pp. 101-122.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Guthmann, O., (1969), cit., pp. 41-61.

recorded written Latin form might actually be closer to the older Roman name for the settlement than the colloquial form used by local speakers in Roman times and later. What is interesting in the case of *Kreuznach* is the extreme difference in coverage of time that Toponymy lacks in comparison to Archaeology. Even though archaeologists confirmed people living in the area from the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC without interruption<sup>73</sup>, probably largely due to its geographic and climatic favorable conditions<sup>74</sup>, the toponym we are dealing with has never been traced back far over the year 0<sup>75</sup>. Of course, the settlement(s) that existed before that time also had a name and, if we connect it with the Roman ‘version’ *Cruciniacum*, that name would have had to be Celtic, derived from the proto-Indo-European proto-form *\*(S)krou-k-en-ĵ-ah<sub>a</sub>kō-m*, ‘territory of the small hills’. This reconstruction would give, therefore, a name to the pre-Roman settlement(s) unearthed and documented by Archaeology.

Even though we do not know much about naming practices of Indo-European prehistoric people, we know that they tended to name places according to the primary goods available in nature that were important to assure their survival or according to landscape features. Thus, a link to the geographic surroundings is vital to argue for the age of a place name. The area of *Kreuznach* was favorable to human settlements, as there was not much that was not available to prehistoric people. The soil was highly fertile, the *Nahe* River provided a water source, the surrounding rocks contained large amounts of ore, and there were salty and thermal springs in the close vicinity that are still in use today. Moreover, *Kreuznach* is located between two mountainous regions, namely the Soonwald and the North-Palatian mountains, protecting its territory against changing weather by catching the warm air and making wine-making possible in the entire region until today<sup>74</sup>. Thus, the ‘territory of the small hills’ would be a geographically plausible name, as the smaller hills set the region apart from the surrounding mountainous regions. However, other characteristics of the territory seem just as good candidates for naming the area, if not better according to those conditions, but they cannot be found ‘into’ the name of the place. This is one of the contributions to the study of prehistoric peoples given by Historical Toponomastics, the possibility to isolate and highlight the onomastic selection, by prehistoric speakers, in ‘choosing’ a characteristic of a territory ‘worth’ of being part of the name of a place belonging to that territory, a feature after which a place could be named, and, ultimately, was named.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

This paper provides, for the first time, an etymological reconstruction of the place name *Kreuznach* not based on the link to a supposed anthroponym. It takes into account the evolution of the historical phonetics of the toponym and explains the origins of pareymological interpretations. The restitution of a proto-Celtic form of the place name allows shedding some light on the remote prehistoric population dynamics of the area and thus provides additional, complementary information to former Celtic and Roman archaeological findings. Additionally, this paper gives, for the first time, a comprehensive linguistic explanation of why the connection of *Cruciniacum* with *crux*

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Atzbach, O., (2000), cit., pp. 13-36.

<sup>75</sup> The most extensive work on this is Kaspers, W., (1925), cit., especially pp. 206-211. However, Kaspers’ discussion is only aimed at the isolation of the supposed and unattested anthroponym from which the Roman toponym would derive and does not proceed further than that step in the etymological reconstruction process.

has to be a toponymic paretyymology, while still considering and exploring the effects of such a long held and stable paretyymology on the place name.

Moreover, the article's findings about the place name *Cruciniacum* show how the reconstruction of proto-Indo-European origins for European place names can unveil very remote linguistic stages and the prehistory of settlements which have not been researched in recent times<sup>76</sup>. Considering the actual size of the *-acum* toponymic system and thus the amount of toponyms that had a similar fate as *Cruciniacum*, this paper would like to encourage more research into single cases to unravel more details about the prehistoric settlement dynamics in the wide *-acum* region. The fact that a number of *-acum* place names are considered to be connected with anthroponyms, without reliable sources for the attestation and the real existence of many of those anthroponyms and without historical evidences of this link, shows that the possible findings from further case-studies could provide a better understanding of the naming processes in the *-acum* toponymic system and, ultimately, in Celtic and Germanic (Indo-European) Europe.

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<sup>76</sup> Cf., among others, Bichlmeier, H., (2009c), pp. 173-208.

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