THE TOWN ON THE RIVER’S BEND:
DIACHRONIC TOponomastics UNDER THE LENS
OF HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY AND ETYMOLOGY

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Abstract: The town on the river’s bend: diachronic toponomastics under the lens of historical geography and etymology. This paper is a sample of application of Historical Geography and Etymology criteria to the study of Diachronic Toponomastics, evaluating possible connections between the Indo-European roots *yem-* / *jem-* and *am-* (*me-*) and the Etruscan stem *am-* through the analysis and reconstruction of the pre-Latin etymology of the Italian place name Imola (Imola is an important town located in Emilia-Romagna). The examination of plausible links between Indo-European (Italic and, especially, Celtic) and Etruscan (commenting on a hypothesis by Adolfo Zavaroni about the stem *am-*) in this area, in the specific field of Historical Toponomastics, could allow relevant considerations inherently in the notions of reuse and refunctionalization of roots pertaining to different languages and linguistic families in the (mainly Prehistoric or Proto-historic) toponymy of border areas. The place name Imola is, therefore, reconstructed through a convergent methodology that takes into account the possibility of different and heterogeneous influences in the naming process, always focusing the analysis also on data from Historical Geography and Landscape Archaeology. The conclusions (a plausible contact and alignment between Indo-European and Etruscan in a border area) of this paper could be relevant also in the field of Historical Semantics and in the re-interpretation of Etruscan stem *am-. The case of Imola is also an interesting opportunity to test the most relevant aspect of the New Convergence Theory (NCT, in Italian Teoria della Conciliazione) about the possibility, in border areas, of linguistic contacts and interexchange between Indo-European and other languages, according to the point of view of the mutual reuse and
refunctionalization, in the different systems of the various linguistic families (or languages), of word-roots and/or (loan)words

Rezumat: Orașul de la cotitura râului. O toponomastică diacronică prin intermediul analizei geografiei istorice și etimologiei. Lucrarea de față este un model al aplicației criteriilor din cadrul geografiei istorice și etimologiei în studiul toponomasticii diacronice, evaluând posibilele conexiuni dintre originile indo-europene ale termenilor *yem- / *jem- și a celor etrusce, prin intermediul reconstrucției și analizei etimologiei prelatine în contextul numelor de locuri din Italia. Este cazul localității Imola, un oraș important localizat în Emilia-Romagna. Evaluarea posibililor legături dintre cultura indo-europă (italiană și, în special, cea celtică) și cea etruscă (în considerare comentariile asupra ipotezei lansate de Adolfo Zavaroni cu privire la am-) în acest spațiu geografic, poate permite lansarea unor considerații relevante în contextul reutilizării și al refuncționalizării originii diferitelor familii de limbi din toponimia preistorică și cea proto-istorică. Numele Imola este reconstruct printr-un intermediul unei metodologi convergente, care ia în considerare posibilitatea prezenței unor influențe eterogene în procesul de denumire al localităților, concentrându-se asupra analizelor asupra informațiilor provenite din geografia istorică și din arheologia peisajului. Concluzia, generată de ideea unei legături plauzibile între cultura indo-europă și cea etruscă, este relevantă în contextul semanticii istorice, precum și în reinterpretarea conceptului etrusc am-

Key Words: New Convergence Theory; Indo-European roots *yem- / *jem-; Celtic; Italic; Umbrian; Etruscan stem am-; reuse and refunctinalization of word-roots and (loan)words; Imola; linguistic contact and alignment

1. INTRODUCTION

To my beloved wife, DuoDuo

This paper presents an attempt to etymologically reconstruct the remote origins of the place name Imola, studying this denomination according to an all-embracing point of view, starting from the Indo-European root *yem- / *jem- and analyzing the possibility of contacts between Indo-Europeans and Etruscans in the area of the inhabited center. The proposal of possible linguistic interexchange envisages the hypothesis of a semantic alignment between the Indo-European root *yem- / *jem- and the Etruscan stem am- or an analogy between the two bases and the Indo-European theme *am- (*me-). The aim of this short study consists, therefore, in highlighting the possibility of contacts and interexchange, in border areas, between different languages and linguistic families. The analysis presented
in this article points to a natural reuse and refuncionalization (by speakers in the area) of roots and/or (loan)words between the different linguistic systems involved in this process. The objective of this convergent dialectics is to elaborate and to provide a pattern finalized to return the right etymology of Prehistoric and Proto-historic place names. This methodology takes always into account data provided by Historical Semantics, Historical Geography, Historical Topography, and Landscape Archaeology, in order to find direct links and connections between the place names and the geo-morphology of the territory, interpreting Diachronic Toponomastics in an organic and coherent way.

2. THE TOWN

Imola (geographic coordinates 44°21’12”N 11°42’51”E) is an important Italian town in the Province of Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, situated along the ancient Via Æmilia, at the point where the Apennine valley of the Santerno river enters into the Po valley. The region was already inhabited in Prehistoric and Proto-historic times (between 8000 and 3000 years ago, during the Neolithic and the Metal Ages, but the origins of the settlement of the zone can be traced back to the Upper Paleolithic), long before the Roman conquest. The territory has been, in historical times, a border area characterized by Celtic, Italic (Umbrian), Etruscan, and Roman cultural influences.

3. THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE PLACE NAME

The current (highly questionable and, in a way, ‘volatile’) etymology\(^2\) of the place name Imola (Jômla in the Emiliano-Romagnolo dialect) derives the denomination from an unspecified Germanic anthroponym Imilo, crossed (without a valid historical-linguistic explanation in support of this hypothesis) with the name of Via Æmilia.\(^1\) In Roman times the official designation of the town (presumably located, as told, in another place than the original village) was Forum Cornelii (less common the denomination Forum Cornelium).\(^4\)

The ancient form of the Santerno river name, Vatreno, Latin Vatrenus / Vaternus, is a pre-Latin (Italic or, more likely, Celtic) hydronym, derived from the root *uat-\(^5\), ‘to bend’, ‘curve’ + *(s)reu- (from which, for example, the ancient Greek verb ἔω, ‘to stream’, ‘to flow’), and, in fact, it bends in the vicinity of a sandstone massif of prehistoric origins – between 5 and 2 million years ago – just outside the town of Imola. The hydronym’s etymological reconstruction sequence, therefore, could be the following, Vatreno < *Uat-

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\(^1\) These are the epistemological foundations of the New Convergence Theory (NCT, in Italian Teoria della Conciliazione) in the field of Indo-European Linguistics. Cf., e.g., Perono Cacciafoco, F., (2014), pp. 79-98.
\(^2\) Cf. DTI, (1990), p. 328, s. v. Imola.
\(^4\) The plausibly earliest mention of Forum Cornelii seems to date back to the Epistulae ad familiares (XII, V) by Marcus Tullius Cicero (I century BC).
\(^6\) Cf. Pokorny, J., cit., p. 1003.
re(u)-o → *Uat-re(u)-o → *Uat-re(u)-o → *Uat-re(u)-n-o(euphonic ‘n’) = *Uat-re-n-o > *Uatreno > Vatreno, Lat. Vaternus / Vaturnus (with change -tre- → -ter-), meaning ‘(flowing) bending river’. The later transformation Vaternus → Vaturnus → Santernus / Saternus (Santerno) could be explained on the basis of the assimilation of the river name to a Roman (but, in origin, Etruscan) gentilitial family name attested in that area, Santernus (CIL XI 6689), when speakers had already lost the original meaning of the same river name. Etymology, Historical Semantics, and hydro-geo-morphological analysis of the territory, with Historical Geography and Landscape Archaeology, converge in the explanation of this hydronym and we can safely assume that – if we don’t follow the unscientific and undocumented widespread reconstruction – the place name Imola is also pre-Roman. The local language immediately preceding Latin (and, therefore, pre-Latin) in the area was the Gaulish of the Boii, Senones, and Lingones. This was a language that, at its turn, was conceivably preceded by an Italic – specifically Umbrian – substratum. Anyway, the first official (written) attestation of the place name is Castrum Imolas\(^7\) (maybe a regular plural or, rather, an archaic / Celtic genitive also due to the form Castrum Imolae), reported by Paul the Deacon (Historia Langobardorum, II, 18) only in the VIII century AD. The subsequent spellings / writings Immola, Imula, Emola can be explained respectively as vulgarism\(^8\), cultism, and dialect form (in the Emiliano-Romagnolo dialect the Latin long stressed /e/ becomes /ɛ/).

The Dissimilatory Lateralization of Nasal Sequences, a Romance phonetic law, provides a simple passage /n/ → /l/ between Latin and Italian, for example wenēnum > veleno, ‘poison’, Bōnōnia > Bologna, Hieronymus > Gerolamo (Geronimo), ‘Jerome’. It is, however, subject to debate whether this is also true for /h/ when this comes after a /n/, because it is difficult to exactly understand if Gemolo (Saint’s name) may be derived from Gēminus (as stated in some Biographies, Gēmīlus is also attested as an alternative form, not in the meaning of ‘plaintive’, but as a variant of Gēminus, ‘twin’, ‘geminous’) or from Hiemulus or Gemmulus (forms attested for the same Saint’s name) or from other\(^9\).

It is necessary to consider that in Cisalpine Gaulish the initial word sequence /#je/- becomes /ɛ/-, assumed in (Vulgar) Latin as [i] (not a rounded high front vowel) and then equalized to the Latin phoneme /i/ (long). If the just-mentioned Romance phonetic law is valid, the only possible source – in this position (beginning of a word not followed by palatal consonants) – of the Italian accented /i/ would correspond to /e/ in the Emiliano-Romagnolo dialect. Therefore, a Celtic etymon of <Imola> would be very likely *Jemōnâ, ‘twin’ (Cisalpine Gaulish *Jmonå, female of *Jemono-s > Irish emon) has an antecedent with a different theme, that is always Indo-European, *jemoni). Unless this is not the equally regular corresponding form of ablauting / apophonic

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1 Vaternus in Martial, Epigrammata, III, 67; 2 Vaternus / Saternus in Pliny the Elder, Naturalis Historia, III, 120; Santernus in Frontin, Stratagemata, 3, 14, 3.
2 The pre-Roman place name Imolas (Imola), plausibly attested only during the Middle Ages (starting from the beginning of the VII century, ‘officially’ reported by Paul the Deacon – in his Historia Langobardorum, II, 18 – in the VIII century), may have been associated, originally, with a really ancient inhabited core located on the right bank of the Santerno (Vatreno) river (a possible ‘candidate’ is the village of the Monte Castellaccio d’Imola). There, the same river ‘bends’ near a sandstone massif.
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reduced radical degree, *imono-s (in this case *jemono-s would be ‘equable’ of emon, rather than its ‘equate’, therefore partially corresponding – but still regular – rather than totally corresponding). The *sena linked to the meaning of ‘twin’ may derive from the presence of more than one settlement (at least two), homologous and connected to each other, in the territory of Imola in Prehistoric and Proto-historic ages (for example, the Montericco and/or the Pontesanto localities and the Monte Castellaccio village). The inhabited center would have been, in such a case, a ‘composite’ human settlement.

*Jemonā is a secondary derivative of the Indo-European stem *yemo- (*yem-/*jem-), ‘twin’. If the Dissimilatory Lateralization of Nasal Sequences law was not working in the context of the nasal /m/-/n/, the Indo-European *yemo- would remain valid to explain the first part of the name, while the final part of the same name could be interpreted as the second element of the compound, always Celtic, *olā, ‘curve’, ‘turn’, ‘twist’, ‘bend’, ‘fold’, ‘loop’, ‘spiral’ (> Irish ol), from Indo-European *h3olah ← √*h3el-, ‘to bend’, or *holhah ← √*helh-, ‘to push in one direction’, ‘to move’, ‘to go’, a possible reference – as it appears self-evident – to the river Santerno (Vatreno) flowing in the territory of Imola and ‘bending’ near the town.

It should be noted that this Indo-European compound *yemo-h3olah, or *yemo-holhah, ‘twin curve’ (both forms become in late Indo-European *yemolā), would have produced even in the Italic *Jemolā that the Cisalpine Gauls adopted, regularly transformed in *Imolā, and that, at its turn, became, in Vulgar Latin, *Imola.

4. THE ETRUSCAN HYPOTHESIS: THE ADOLFO ZAVARONI PROPOSAL AND ITS EVALUATION

The Etruscan Hypothesis, proposed by Adolfo Zavaroni11, does not directly imply a reconstruction of the place name Imola, but a sort of interpretation of the *yem-/*jem-root that would be juxtaposed or, rather, entirely replaced by the Etruscan (*am- (< *H2e-mbh-, prefix + stem), changed in its semantics (not ‘to be’, but ‘twin’ and/or ‘curve’) and in its function and aligned to the meaning of *yem-/*jem-. The Indo-European root *yem-/*jem-, in fact, in this proposal, seems to be completely replaced, indeed, by *H2e-mbh- > *amb(h) > *am- = Etruscan am-.

Zavaroni’s reconstruction shows some epistemological problems and contraindications, because it is difficult to connect the Indo-European root *yem-/*jem- with the Etruscan am- and, even if it would be possible, the direction would start from Indo-European to Etruscan and not vice versa. The linguistic Prehistory preceding Indo-European seems to demonstrate the impossibility of a passage **/a/ > */ye/12. It may be useful to clearly repeat again that it could be difficult also to propose a derivation from the Indo-European *yem-/*jem- to the Etruscan am- but, theoretically, if they were linked, the hypothetical sequence would start always from Indo-European to Etruscan (also for chronological reasons).

5. INSIGHTS INTO THE ETRUSCAN HYPOTHESIS

It is relevant, anyway, to analyze some aspects of Zavaroni’s proposal, with all the hermeneutical precautions that have been just reported. According to Zavaroni, the Etruscan words *ame, amu(e) / amuke > amce* would not be related to a ‘hypothetical’ Etruscan verb (*am-* in the meaning of ‘to be’, as it is in accordance with the traditional reconstruction, but to a root expressing the *sema* of ‘to redouble’ and/or ‘pair’, ‘couple’. This, in principle, seems to link, in the reconstruction of the place name *Imola*, the Indo-European *milieu* with the Etruscan one, in a dialectics providing linguistic interexchange and contacts according to the interpretative key of reuse and refunctionalization of toponymic and hydronymic word-roots in an area (the ancient Emilia-Romagna) where Etruscan and Indo-European languages had to coexist, perhaps interpenetrating (at least within some limits) each other.

Alessandro Morandi has proposed an Indo-European stem for the words *ame and amce*, assuming that they are voices of the verb ‘to be’\(^{13}\). But it seems difficult to link the Etruscan *am-* with a root *es-* because it appears as unknown, in Etruscan, a hypothetical passage -s-m- > -m- either with lengthening of the preceding vowel or with redoubled consonant. The sm group, not uncommon, seems stable, in a language in which even *zn*, *sn*, *zr* > *sr* appear, at their turn, stable. In addition, the preterit *am(u)ce* < *es-m-ce* would have a -m- that could derive only from a first person (*mi*) or from a hypothetical Osco-Umbrian infinite *es-um*. In any case, the ‘sequence’ *ame, amuce, ama* does not justify, in itself, the automatic assumption of the meaning ‘to be’ (all these notations have always followed the specific analyzed proposal).

According to Adolfo Zavaroni, it is possible to hypothesize that *amce* is associated in particular with the words *puia*, ‘wife’, and *zilaθ*, a position / rank – in the Etruscan society – that involves more people\(^{14}\), because it means ‘*co-, iunctus, -a*’ (Zavaroni 2001, p. 288). The term *am(u)ce* may indicate, following this reconstruction, ‘to be united’, ‘to make a pair with’, ‘*co-*’. And this may be the explanation of the really frequent above-mentioned connection of *amce* with the words *puia*, ‘wife’, and *zilaθ*, magistracy, as discussed above, constituted by two or more persons. In extant inscriptions the word *ame* appears twice connected to *puia*, yet in most cases *ame* is a particle placed after the verb, where it seems to fulfill the same function of the Latin pre-verb ‘*cum*’, ‘*co-*’.

In the *Tabula Cortonensis* the words *eprus ame* could mean ‘*co-operantur*, ‘(they) sacrifice together’. Moreover, we have the testimonies of five occurrences of the particle *ama* connected with the word *ipa* (Zavaroni 2001, pp. 296-301). According to Adolfo Zavaroni, *ipa [...] ama* can be interpreted as ‘*simul [...] cum*’ = ‘*pariter [...] cum*’.

Further Etruscan words beginning with (*am-* seem to belong to the same root of *ame, amu(e)*. It is possible to mention, for example, *amthuras, amavunice, amnu, amniθ*. There is also a personage represented in several engravings on mirrors called *amuke*, a plausible echo of Greek *μυκος*. Nonetheless, *amuke* should have an Etruscan meaning.

The Indo-European root *ywem-l *yem-*, ‘to pair’, ‘to match’, ‘couple’, ‘to hold’, ‘to defeat’, ‘to geminate’, ‘twin’, has been used also in order to explain some Germanic words


as Gothic ibns, ‘eben’, Anglo-Saxon efn, enm, and Latin imitor, æmulus, for example. In Zavaroni’s reconstruction it could be replaced with a hypothetical root *mbh-, ‘united’, ‘pair’, ‘together’ > *H2e-mbh- (prefix + stem) > *amb(h)- > *am- > am-, that might also explain words as Latin amb-, Greek µπ-, Gaulish amb-. Moreover, this theme could be connected to Etruscan ame, amce, Latin amussis, amulettum, Amulus etc., together with words like Etruscan ipa and inpa, Umbrian ife, ifont, Falisanic efíles and Latin ip(see).

The comparison between the terms with stem amu- and those with stem ama- does not show significant differences. It could be plausible to hypothesize that amu- expresses more frequently ‘to be equal’, ‘to be similar’, and ama- ‘to join’, ‘to pair’, ‘to be companion / mate’, but other evidences of proof would be necessary. It is, in fact, even impossible to determine if amce, ‘joint’, ‘conjoint’, ‘united’, derives from amake or amuce.

Pokorny’s reconstruction the Latin geminus (that “hat wohl das g- von der Wurzel gem ‘greifen’, ‘zusammenpressen’ bezogen”) from the Indo-European root *yem- / *jem (l *iem-). Zavaroni (2001, pp. 296-97) proposes a derivation from *gm(0) + *H2mimo- > *gmnino- > gemino-. *H2mimo- would be composed by a stem *H2m- resulting from a *mbh- pre-nasalized consonant (using the symbology of André Martinet). Latin ambo, Greek µπο, Gothic baï, Lithuanian abï, Italian ambo, German beide are linked with some particles (that have the value of prepositions), Latin amb-, Greek µπι, Gothic bi, Gaulish amb-, Old Irish imb-, imm-, Breton am-. It is necessary to note, however, that the root *ambhi / *mbhi seems to have the original meaning of Latin par, ‘companion’, ‘consort’, ‘coupled’, ‘equal’, ‘at both sides’, ‘around’.

Gothic ibns, ‘eben’, Norse jafn, jamm, Anglo-Saxon efn, enm, Old High German eban are connected by Pokorny7 to the Indo-European root *yem- / *jem-, following the passage ibna > *imn nasalized init, while Norse Ymir, commonly understood as ‘Zwitter’, could come from Germanic *jumijaz < IE *iem(i)jós. According to Zavaroni, the stem *mbh-, ‘equal’, ‘joint’, could be attributable both to Germanic *ibna, *imna (Gothic ibns, ‘eben’) and to Germanic *ba- (Gothic baï and bi). The pre-nasalized initial *mbh- may assume a form *H2emh- > *amb(h)- that could explain the Latin amb-, Greek µπ- and Gaulish amb-15. *mbh- could also be considered as the root of other words. The Germanic *jotina- has been connected to the Latin imitor, imago, æmulor, whose original meaning is ‘make equal’, ‘make similar’. For this reconstruction to be valid, in Latin it would be necessary to assume a reduction *ambh- > *imbh- > *im- (it could be difficult to explain the diphthong in æmulor, perhaps due to the influence of æquus).

According to Zavaroni, if the fall of bh- to m- occurs in *imbh-, then a homologous ‘fade’ of bh- even in the parallel form *H2emh- > *ambh- > *am- > am-could be plausible. Through this hypothesis it should be possible to explain the etymology of some Latin words as well as the Etruscan ame, am(ace). In amussis, ‘level (useful for the Ein-ebnung)’, am- would correspond to the Germanic *ib-n-, ‘to equalize’ > ‘to level’. It would be possible to postulate Etruscan origins (< *amust-is) inherently in amussis. And it

7 Cf. Pokorny, J., cit., p. 505.
9 Cf. Pokorny, J., cit., p. 505.
10 According to André Martinet “Le même élément *mbhi apparaît dans le grec a-mphi avec un préfixe H2e- et, avec un degré zéro du préfixe, dans le vieil-anglais ymb (*H2e- mbhi). Dans le latin ambo, le -i a été remplacé par la finale -o du duel. Les équivalents germaniques d’ambos, supposent un degré vocalique plein *mhbi de la particule, qui est suivie, en germanique occidental, d’un élément démonstratif, d’où angl. both, all. beide” (cf. Martinet, A., [1987], p. 176).
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could be plausible to reconstruct from the stem (*)am- also amīta, ‘father’s sister’, and with this figure, in the Roman family, the brother’s wife and her children probably had a special relationship (Italian comare, ‘godmother’ < ‘cum matre’, ‘godmother’, for example, in christenings). Also the name of the mythical Amulius could be analyzed according to this interpretation. He is either the ‘uncle’ < Latin par, coniunctus, ‘cum patre’, Italian compare, of Romulus and Remo and/or the ‘pretending’ usurper. Therefore, amul-ētum would define the object that ‘simulates’ a person, from which one must not be separated, as if it was a sort of ‘double’ and secret ‘protector’. At the same time amœnus could derive from *ame-venos, ‘complacens’, or, alternatively, from the Etruscan amavun-, ‘to compensate’ (Zavaroni 2001, pp. 293-95). The Latin amīcus would be a synonym of the Latin par, ‘companion’, ‘partner’, ‘joint’, ‘equal’, and the original meaning of amāre would have had to be ‘be companions’, before shifting to indicate ‘to wish the company of (someone)’, then ‘to love someone’. The original sema of dēmum, dēmus < dē + amu- (or < dē + emu-), ‘precisely’, ‘exactly’, could be ‘away from the group’. At its turn, the ancestral meaning of iam < *e(i)-am would be ‘together with that’ > ‘at that time’. The stem *yem- / *jem- has been connected with redimiō (< *red + amīo), ‘sheaf’, ‘interlacement’, already by Pokorny. Through another vocalism, according to Zavaroni, it could be possible also to reconstruct omnes, ‘everyone’ < ‘those who are together’, ‘those who are united’. The same notion is showed by the Armenian amēn, amēn-ein that is connected to *sem- / *semo- “in eins zusammen, samt, mit”.

6. INDO-EUROPEAN/ETRUSCAN ‘CONVERGENCE’

We have just described, so far, the substance of Adolfo Zavaroni’s proposal. In order to try to analyze this position, without taking into account the ‘extreme’ interpretations of the same (the ‘not-existence’ of *yem- / *jem-), thoroughly considering the two roots, Indo-European *yem- / *jem- and Etruscan am-, and interpreting the second through the meaning proposed by Zavaroni, we can attempt to link the two stems in a convergent way, without one excluding the other. Inherently in the root *yem- / *jem- it could be possible to talk, in fact, about an Indo-European hereditary linguistic ‘coinage’ shared byItalic and Celtic. Even if the Etruscan am- was connected to *yem- / *jem-, the naming process of the place name Imola would concern only *yem- / *jem- and the derivation would be only fromItalic and/or Celtic, without (for chronological reasons) the intervention of Etruscan. Etruscan, in fact, would not be involved in any case in the naming process, because it would be too ‘recent’ for this kind of ‘coinage’ and ‘obsolete’, at this point, for a transmission to Latin. The right sequence of the onomastic composition of Imola should be 1) Indo-European ‘coinage’ → 2)Italic evolution → 3) passage through the Celtic, starting fromItalic (if the ‘coinage’ is not only and directly Celtic) → 4) passage inLatin, from Celtic. At the basis of – and before – Italic and Celtic we have to consider their common ancestor, the Italo-Celtic (Late WesternIndo-European), which was a regional Western Late Indo-European assuming the form of a singular collective linguistic

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19 Cf. Pokorny, J., cit., p. 505.
‘collector’. Before the Etruscan, on the other hand, in the area, the substratum was constituted by Italic and Celtic, from the already differentiated Italo-Celtic.

In any case, the Celtic ‘mark’ for Imola’s etymology, the Indo-European root *yem-/*jem- (*iem-), may have been associated, in the ‘sensitivity’ and perception of speakers of that time, to the Etruscan am-, if we accept the semantics of am- proposed by Zavaroni. The naming process would have been Indo-European – Italic and Celtic or only and directly Celtic –, but, through the semantic relevancy and similarity, the place name could have been ‘clear’ and ‘understandable’ also according to Etruscan.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The reconstruction of the etymology of the place name Imola offers an interesting opportunity to test the most relevant aspect of the New Convergence Theory (NCT, in Italian Teoria della Conciliazione) about the possibility, in border areas, of linguistic contacts and interexchange between Indo-European and other languages, according to the point of view of the mutual reuse and refunctionalization, in the different systems of the various linguistic families (or languages), of word-roots and/or (loan)words.

The territory of Imola, in Emilia-Romagna, was occupied by the Celts and the Indo-European ‘mark’, in local Toponymy, seems really strong. It is possible, however, to hypothesize, also in the naming process of the places of that area, an Etruscan influence (and/or sharing, and/or participation), due to the proximity of Etruscan towns and centers and to the mutual cultural, social, political, and economic relationships between Celts and Etruscan in that territory.

It seems plausible, therefore, if not to assume a sort of ‘double naming process’ of Imola (Indo-European and Etruscan) or the possibility of the presence of two names (Celtic and Etruscan) for the town, to postulate, at least, a natural common participation in the final fixing of the place name (and in the perception of its meaning starting from different roots – pertaining to different languages – similar and aligned in their semantics).

My Indo-European reconstruction of Imola takes into account also the analysis of hydro-geo-morphology of the territory and the evaluation of data from Historical Topography, Historical Geography, and Landscape Archaeology of that area, with the examination of the semantic developments linked to the root(s) involved in the naming of the place. In Zavaroni’s proposal the discretion (or arbitrariness) moments in the iūdicium are two, the lexical interpretation of the texts and the recognition of inter-linguistic segments (synonymous words in different languages) on which to reconstruct (and to build) the Historical Phonetics. The difficulties connected to the ‘Etruscan Hypothesis’ (certainly open to new developments) about (*am- = ’to pair’, that could imply relationships between Indo-European and Etruscan in a possible ‘common’ origin (naming process) of the place name Imola (*yem-/*jem- & *am- [*me-]), reside also in two facts: 1) the pre-nasalization, in Indo-European, is a highly hypothetical phenomenon, quite uncertain, so it is very difficult to base the ‘rewriting’ and the reinterpretation of a root on this linguistic postulate; 2) the interpretation of Etruscan texts and documentation is strongly debatable and

21 Cf., e.g., Perono Cacciafoco, F., (2014), cit., pp. 79-98.
absolutely not confirmed (Etruscan is still an undeciphered language, although some 
Scholars could disagree) and this is, with the current available philological bibliography, 
really an unbridgeable gap.

If Zavaroni’s semantic interpretation of the Etruscan (*am- was confirmed, 
without the elimination of the root *yem-/*jem-, it would be possible, in any case, to 
compare this stem with the same root *yem-/*jem- and this fact, as discussed earlier, 
would be an enormous breakthrough in the study of the naming process of Imola by 
considering it as the product of a natural common ‘participation’ or ‘perception’ (by Celts 
and Etruscans) in the final fixing of the place name. If we would accept Zavaroni’s sena 
‘cum’, ‘with’, for am-, moreover, the same Etruscan am- might be connected to the Indo-
European root *am- (*me-), in the meaning of ‘grab’, ‘seize’ < √*h2amh3-, ‘to proceed 
with vigor’, ‘to go forward’, ‘to catch’, ‘to grab’, ‘to seize’, ‘to firmly insist on something’, ‘to 
establish’, ‘to confirm by oath’, ‘to suffer’, from which the Latin amō23. The possibility of 
mutual linguistic contacts and interexchange in that specific area of Emilia-Romagna is, in 
any case, really high, and the probability of a double influence (and/or sharing, and/or 
participation) in the naming process of places appears plausible. The linguistic link between 
Celts and Etruscans in that territory seems to be reasonable also according to the evidence 
of cultural, social, political, and economic contacts between the two populations.

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The article, eminently focused on Historical Toponomastics and Historical 
Geography, has been written by the Author according to a convergent hermeneutic 
approach (according to the foundations of the New Convergence Theory - NCT) to 
Prehistoric European Toponymy and Hydronymy. It is part of a more all-embracing and 
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23 Cf. Pokorny, J., cit., p. 35.
COHASS, School of Humanities and Social Sciences - HSS, Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies - LMS, Singapore), that has been presented, on March 19, 2014, at the Nanyang Technological University (School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies) in a Seminar entitled Mapping and Visualizing Linguistic and Territorial Convergent Data: Imola and its Environment as a Case Study and at the XXV Congress of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS), Names and Their Environment, in Glasgow, on August 25-29, 2014.

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