'These men also he sent back, calling them friends, and ranking them as allies, only adding the remark that the Celts were braggarts'.

(Arrianus. The Anabasis of Alexander (4)

While many attributes have been associated with the Ancient Celts, modesty is certainly not one of them. From their very first appearance in recorded history classical authors note their tendency for exaggeration and boasting. In 335 BC a Celtic delegation met with Alexander the Great on the Danube during armistice and alliance negotiations. Of this encounter we are informed - ‘And Ptolemaeus, the son of Lagus, says that on this expedition the Celti who lived about the Adriatic joined Alexander for the sake of establishing friendship and hospitality, and that the king received them kindly and asked them when drinking what it was that they most feared, thinking they would say himself, but that they replied they feared no one, unless it were that Heaven might fall on them’ (Strabo vii, 3,8; see also Arrianus Anab. I, 4, 6-8).

This supreme self-confidence is duly reflected in Celtic personal and tribal names, which tend to be particularly descriptive. Compare, for example, names such as Esumaro meaning 'He Who Is Great As (the God) Esus' (Ellis Evans (1967) = GPN – p. 449-450), Atepomarus - 'He Who Has A Very Great Horse' (GPN 52-53), Branogeni - 'He Who Is Born of the Raven' (McManus/1991:105), Cunorix = 'The Hound-King' (Wright/Jackson 1968), Sumeli (f.) – ‘Sweet as Honey’ (GPN:114-116; Matasovic 2009 = EDPC:163) or Catumarus (EDPC:195), whose name means ‘He Who Is Great in Battle’.
An analysis of Celtic personal names, and our increasing understanding of their meaning, strongly indicates that these names were not given at birth, but that the individuals received them later in life, probably as part of a ceremony to mark their passage to adulthood. Compare, for example, names such as *Curmi-Sagius* whose name literally means ‘He Who Seeks Beer’ (Mead 2005; see Balkancelts Κυρμιληνός article), *Nertomarus* = 'He Whose Strength Is Great' (GPN 223-228; see also EDPC 289), and *Caromarus* (f) = ‘Great Lover’ (GPN 61-62). A particularly descriptive personal name is the case of a Celt called *Bussumaros*, which is interpreted as 'He Who Has A Great Penis' (EDPC:84).

THE BRANOGENI INSCRIPTION

(Barnaveddoge, Ardee, Louth, Ireland; CISP (Celtic Inscribed Stones Project) = BAROG 1/1; Reading: McManus/1991, 105: 'BRANOGENI (raven' + 'he who is born of').

(On the significance of the raven in Celtic culture see 'Birds of Prey' article)

The invention of the ogham alphabet is dated variously between the 1st c. BC and 4th c. AD, and a period of writing on wood or other perishable material prior to the preserved monumental inscriptions needs to be assumed. By the 5th c. the use of "classical" ogham in stone inscriptions had spread from Ireland to Western Britain, the Isle of Man, and Northern France (see Mac Neill 1931, Carney 1975, McManus 1988, 1991).
CVNORIX | MACVSM/A | QVICO[L][N]E

Expansion:
CVNORIX MACVS MAQVI COLINE

Translation:
Cunorix (PN) son of Maqui Coline (PN).

= Hound-King, son of The Son of the Holly (Wright/Jackson 1968)

(The inscription is partly-Latinized Primitive Irish. The name Cunorix preserves the final x, which makes it unlikely that the inscription can be later than the loss of certain final consonants, including x, which is an early aspect of the loss or shortening of some final syllables about 500 (loc cit))
The Morvah Inscription from Cornwall, England

(CISP MADR1/1 - The stone is now in a field on a moor about 3km from Morvah – dated mid 6th c.)

ARIOBRA{N}{I} | CV{N}OVAL{I}FIL{I}

Expansion:
ARIOBRANI CVNOVALI FILI

Translation:
Rialobrani (*Rigalo-branos) son of Cunovali (*Cuno-ualos)

= Royal Raven, son of Valiant Hound

(Readings: Okasha, E. 1985, Thomas/1994:283 (Fig 17.5))
Kings of the World

Probably the most common Celtic name element was Bi- meaning ‘World’ (GOLD: Olr. bith [u m], W: OW bid [m], MW byd [m], BRE: OBret. bit, bet; CO: OC. bit gl. mundus, bys; GAUL: Bitu; Matasovic EDPC) which occurs in a multitude of personal and tribal names across Celtic Europe: Cf. - from Britain - Bitu[cus] (Catterick, N. Yorkshire – RIB II 2501.107); Bitilus (Bath, 175-275 AD – TS 78.1, 2); Bitupr[…] (Chesters, Northumberland – RIB II 2501.105); Bitucus (Cirencester, Gloucestershire – RIB I 108 = Duo Nomina – Fl[au]ius Biticus); Bitudacus (Leicester, dated AD 45-65 – RIB II 2501.108); Bitu[…] (York – RIB II 2494.111), etc. It also appears in the name of Bituitus, a King of the Averni tribe who fought against C. Fabius Maximus in Gaul (Bituitus – Livy (per. LXI. Eutrop. 4, 22 [from which Hieronym. chron. a. Abr. 1891 Vituitus); Brītītōs as Genetiv - Poseidonios, Athen. IV 162 d = FHG III 260, Strabon IV 194 - Brītītōs, Appian. Celt. 12 - Bītītōs), and in Celtic names such as Bitugentus (Dunaujaros, – RIU 05 1220) and Bitumarus (Alsoszentivan, – CIL 6 112) from Hungary.

The Celtic name M BITTIV on an inscription from a jug found at the ‘Roman’ cemetery at Poetovio in Pannonia (Ptuj, e. Slovenia) (after Egri 2007; see ‘Celtic Graffiti’ article)

In Dacia it is found in a Celtic inscription from Potaissa (Cluj, Romania – CIL, III, 917):

D. M. Aia Nandonis vixit annis LXXX, Andrada Bi[t]uvantis vix. anis LXXX, Bricena vixit anis XL… (Felecan 2010:69)

Over 300 examples have been recorded in Thrace, dating from the 3rd c. BC onwards (Detschew 1957:66, Georgiev 1977:68, Duridanov 1997: 131; 370 according to Felecan 2010:61; see ‘The Thracian Myth’ article). Particularly interesting are triple component names such as Βρειζενις Βειθσος from the Pizos site in Thrace (Detschew 1957:88) meaning ‘High Born of the World’. Also among the eastern Celts, a Celtic officer – Bituitus (App. Mith. 16, 3), is recorded in the personal bodyguard of Mithridates VI (See ‘Gallo-Scythians’ article). A Galatian Chieftain in 63 BC also carried the name Bitoitōs (Livy. Per CII).

In the territory of the Leuci tribe in Gaul, a 2nd-century inscription (CIL XIII, 4661; RG 4828) reads:
Apollini et Sironae Biturix Iulli f(ilius) d(onavit),

- ‘To Apollo and Sirona, Biturix, son of Jullus offered (this altar)’.

The Biturix inscription from Tranqueville-Graux. Musée d’Epinal (Vosges)

The personal name Biturix, composed of bitu- ‘world’, and -rix/-rig, ‘king’ (*rig- 'king' [Noun], GOlD: OIr. ri [g m], Ogam VOTECO-RIGAS, W: OW ri, MW ri [m] (GPC rhi), Gaul.-rix, Celtib. in Teiuo-reikis [PN] (K.6.1) from PIE: *(H)reg- 'king' (IEW: 855); Matasovic EDPC) is a common Celtic personal name literally meaning 'King of the World' (Delamarre 2003: pp. 76-77, 259-260). The latter element also forms the second component in Celtic tribal names such as the Caturiges, a Gaulish tribe in the Alpes Maritimae (Caesar, Bell. Gall. I 10,4). The name of the Caturiges tribe thus means literally ‘The Kings of Battle’ (Matasovic EDPC 8, GPN 243-249), -riges also forming the second component of tribal names such as the Gaulish Bituriges Cubi, and Bituriges Vivisci (DAG 148/153, GPN 248), who lived in the areas around Bourges/Berry, and Burdigala (Bordeaux) respectively.

Bituriges Cubi Bronze Issue

(CCCBM S152-9; Mid 1st c. BC - Eagle with spread wings facing, head left; punched circles/ solar symbols around, pentagrams to upper right and lower left)
One of the leaders of the Bituriges, *Ambicatus*, is mentioned in the founding legend of Mediolanum (Milan) by Livy, whose source is Timagenes. *Ambicatus* ruled in the days of Tarquinius Priscus (5th century BC). He sent his sister’s sons, Bellovesus and Segovesus, with many followers drawn from numerous tribes, to found new colonies in the Hercynian forest and in northern Italy, Bellovesus subsequently founding Mediolanum (Livius 5.34).

Particularly interesting in this context is an ogham inscription from the Isle of Man (CISP = ANDRS/1) dating from the 5th c. which also bears the name *Ambicatus* - ‘He Who Gives Battle All Around’, indicating a remarkable continuity in Celtic given names.

The *Ambicatus* ogham inscription from Castle Rushen, Isle of Man (5th c.)

Expansion: AMBICATOS MAQI ROCATOS
Translation:
*Ambicatos (PN) son of Rocatos (PN)*

(Reading = Jackson/1953, McManus/1991)

*Ambicatos suggests British influence on the name in vocalism of the first syllable (AM for IM - *Imbicatos being the Primitive Irish form). This influence has not extended to the -mb- which had become -mm- in British* (McManus/1991, 114; Ambi- = Proto-Celtic *ambi- 'around' [Prep]. GOID: Olr. imb, imm [Aspirating, +Acc.], W: OW im, MWam, BRET: MBret. am, em, GAUL: ambi-).

Thus, it would appear that in his brief meeting with them on the Danube in 335 BC the Macedonian king had little to offer the Celts. For what does one offer those who have no need for emperors or titles, a people who feared only that ‘the sky would fall on their heads’, and where each (at least in his own mind) was already ‘King of the World’?
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