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FINDING PLINY'S EUMENIUM RIVER AND A BETTER SUITED MEANING FOR THE OPPIDUM EUMENIUM (AEMINIUM, COIMBRA)

Jorge M. SOBOTA

ISM Paris, France

Email: jmsobota@protonmail.ch

Abstract: *This article proposes a new etymology for the toponyms Eumenium (Aeminium, Coimbra) mentioned by Pliny the Elder in his Historia Naturalis and suggests within a reasonable degree of feasibility why they were denominated eumenium. In 2021, a recognized manuscript scholar shared with me his conviction that the suffix eu- in Eumenium had no meaning. This drew my attention to this subject, and in this article, I suggest that not only the prefix eu- but also ae-, u-, and ari- might possibly be nouns from a pre-Celtic PIE language, which, together with the attested Celtic word min(i)o, accurately describes the topography of the places bearing the corresponding toponyms. From this new perspective, it seems that the Celtic toponym Aeminium (Eumenium, Coimbra) would probably not be the rare radical *aimin-, meaning to attribute (plots of lands), as proposed by L. Curchin, but a hydronym. I raise the possible meaning of these ancient pre-Celtic suffixes eu-, ae-, u-, and ari-, putting this for further debate. Based on these first etymological findings and checking them with the present topography, the article suggests a solution for a 2,000-year-old historical riddle: the river Eumenium mentioned by Pliny the Elder. Most likely, it is the river Ceira, near Coimbra (Portugal). A lagoon may have formed in front of the town of Ceira during the rainy season (October-March), and it served as a fluvial haven from the fast river flows of the Mondego and Ceira rivers during the rainy season. If this is true, in Roman times and before that, Ceira may have been a significant regional logistic intermodal river port city serving Conimbriga and connected to the dense network of ancient roads in the region of oppidum Eumenium (Coimbra). This logistic hub would also attend to short- and long-distance river and ocean shipping via the Mondego River. This multidisciplinary article may raise interest in archaeological excavations in the places where these toponyms are situated. In this article, Eumenium is equivalent to Aeminium. The spelling variations are caused by the different origin of the manuscript family from which I have extracted these toponyms. However, this will not impact the conclusions in this article.*

Key words: *Eumenium, Arimino, Aeminium, Aemino, Minho, Ceira*



1. INTRODUCTION

This article presents a new perspective on the oppidum Eumenium (Coimbra, Portugal) as a secondary port on the Mondego River and Conimbriga as a primary regional oppidum linked to a significant river port close to the mouth of the Ceira River. However, to reach these conclusions, I had to start by suggesting a new etymology for the toponyms Eumenium (the oppidum and the river). The books from *Historia Naturalis* and Pliny the Elder bring us a wealth of information from Antiquity. The Celtic adjective *menio* is attested and widely recognised as being related to bodies of water. For this reason, when I was faced with the suggestion that the radicals *eu-*, *ae-*, *u-*, and *ari-* had no meaning, I sensed instead that the toponym Eumenium could originally have been composed of two words (*eu-menio*). But what would mean its prefix *eu-*?

This preliminary questioning led me to list several other ancient toponyms that bear some sort of what looked to me not only a prefix, but perhaps a noun attached to the adjective *menio*. After studying the subject, I suggest a first etymology for the radicals *eu-*, *ae-*, *u-*, and *ari-* in Celtic toponyms, which I propose are PIE nouns that can be linked to the radicals listed by Pokorny. Along the way from Pokorny PIE radicals to the Celtic toponyms that use those radicals, their semantics are always related to bodies of water. At the end of my research, I was able to suggest with a reasonable degree of feasibility where the river Eumenium is situated, by Pliny, and why a place on its banks could have had significant logistic importance as an intermodal node linking the existing roads and fluvial routes in the Coimbra and Conímbriga region. The findings from this article may lead to archaeological excavations in the places where the toponyms are, because there may be remains of fluvial ports and undiscovered stretches of Roman roads in these places.

2. METHODOLOGY

First, I worked to obtain as many copies as I could from the selected text in ancient manuscripts. I thank the libraries mentioned in this article for their patient help with my requests. From the copies of the manuscripts, I created a table with the different spellings of the toponym Eumenium ranked according to their known or estimated date of publication. Other attested ancient toponyms were added, which seemed to bear the radicals *ae-*, *u-*, and *ari-*. Subsequently, these toponyms were matched against each toponym's topography. Then, I discerned between the *eu(-)* toponyms that could be derived from Germanic languages and those that are clearly or most likely Celtic toponyms. Once a reasonably feasible etymology was clear, I applied it to the place where each toponym sat to cheque if the proposed etymology would match the topography of each place. Next, I focus on the toponyms Eumenium (the oppidum and the river) to explain their possible economic and logistic importance in Antiquity.

3. RESULTS

Roman and Greek authors mention the Iberian rivers Eumenium and Minio and other toponyms that might be etymologically related. The base sources for this part of the article are manuscripts from *Historia Naturalis* (77 to 79AC) by Pliny the Elder. The

manuscripts to which I had access attributed the name Eumenium to the Roman settlement of Coimbra and its nearby river. Other manuscript families mention these two toponyms as Aeminium, from which Detlefsen (1904) sourced its German translation and Rackham (1961) its English translation. I did not study *all* existing manuscripts. This paper does not deal with the studies of manuscript families, which are very complex and rendered books with several pages. Here in this article, it is not relevant if the word attached to the prefixes *eu-*, *ae-*, *u-*, and *ari-* is spelled *-menium*, *-minium*, *-minio*, *-miniu*, or similar, for the reasons discussed later in this article.

I analysed the different spellings of the oppidum and river Eumenium in the selected text in the manuscripts I could investigate: "*A Durio lusitania incipit. turduli veteres, paesuri, flumen vagia, oppidum talabrica, oppidum et flume eumenium, oppida conimbriga...*" and "*...ab Durio Tagus c.c. interveniente Munda.*" [Mayhoff, K. (1906), 4:47], two of which are reproduced in Figures 1 and 2 below as manuscript samples.

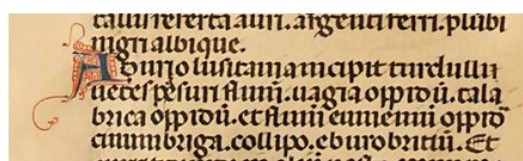
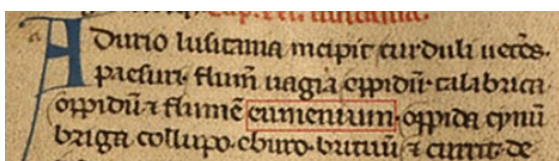


Figure 1. Ms R.I.5 f.36 Bologna, 1300. *Eumenium*

Figure 2. Ms V-I-14 Italy, 13-14th C. *Eumenni*

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I found that the earliest spelling in the manuscripts I could obtain is Umenium. It appears in three manuscripts, the first one is the MS871 (year 830, possibly from France), which is the oldest I could obtain a reproduction of and is among the very first to survive to present times. In the manuscripts I investigated, the Eumenni (year 830) spelling starts much later than Umenium, which is mentioned around 400 years later in the 14th-15th Century in MS V-I-14 and Eumenium in Ms R-I-5, both from Italy. The spelling Umenium exists in Ms Vat. lat. 3861 (unknown date), which is from northeastern France. Finally, starting with the first printed edition, Eumenium prevails up to the present, while Umenium disappears from most, if not all, recent publications. Table 1 shows the chronological order of appearance of this toponym in *Historia Naturalis*, according to spelling.

Table 1. Chronology of the manuscript and printed versions and Eumenium spellings

Manuscript Versions				
Code	Year	Origin	Archive	Spelling
MS871	830		Staatsbibliothek Heidelberg	Minius, Umenium
Ms V-I-14	13-14 th Cent.	Italy	El Escorial	Minius, Eumenni
Ms R.I.5	1300	Bologna	El Escorial	Minius, Eumenium
Ms. Lat. 6805	14 th Century	-	Bibliothèque Nat. de France	Minus, Eumenium
Ms J.I.24	c.1400	-	Biblioteca Univ. di Torino	Minius, Eumenium
Ms Clm 11301	1459	Munich	Staatsbibliothek Bamberg	Minius, Eumenium
Vat. Lat. 3861			Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana	Minius, Umenium
Pal. Lat 1559	15 th Century		Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana	Minus, Umenium
Printed Versions				
Editor	Year	Origin	Archive	Spelling
Tomas de Blavis	1491	Venice	Smithsonian Libraries USA	Minius, Eumenium
Johannes de Spira	1469	Venice	Natural History Museum UK	Minus, Eumenium

In short, the “French” Umenium spelling chronologically precedes Eumenium, which was mostly used in Italy. The first printed versions of *Historia Naturalis* were published in Italy and thus preserved the spelling Eumenium. The English translations of *Historia Naturalis* mostly use the spelling Eumenium. The first significant information in “...*oppidum talabrica, oppidum et flume eumenium, oppida conimbriga...*” [Mayhoff, K. (1906), 4:47] is that Pliny tells us that there is an oppidum and a river, both named Eumenium. The oppidum Eumenium has received frequent attention from scholars, and in Portugal it is known mostly as oppidum Aeminium. Oppidum Aeminium derived into the present-day city of Coimbra, which adopted its name from the oppidum and city of Conímbriga situated on the other bank of the River Mondego, after the latter was destroyed by the Goths in the end of the 6th Century. Curchin suggests that the denomination of the oppidum *Eumenium* (or *Aeminium*) could come from *Aeminium*, from the Celtic root *aimin (PIE ai-), which he recognises as rare, and would mean “to attribute”. To attribute what? Lands for settlers, he proposes [Curchin, L. 2007, p.133]. Curchin cites Portus Aemines (France), which is the port of Cassis between Toulon and Marseille, as another possibly related toponym. The Portus Aemines in France could have been a settlement where plots of land were *attributed* (*aimin) to settlers.

However, Pliny states that the other name of the Limia (Lima) River was Aeminus [Mayhoff, K. (1906), 4:35], and here again pops up the prefix *ae-(minius)*, but this time in a river from Gallaecia. If I follow Curchin, the Aeminus River was named so because it had settlement(s) on its banks. However, the name of a *settlement* is usually a regional toponym, and the Aeminus (Limia, Lima) river is not a regional river. It is 108 km long from its source in Galicia until its mouth at Viana do Castelo (Portugal) in the Atlantic Ocean. How could one settlement on its banks name the whole of that long river? If this happened, where is located that settlement? Also, there is no notice that the Aeminus River (Limia, Lima) was known by having numerous settlements in its banks along its trajectory. From this angle, the *aimin (to attribute) proposition raises more questions than answers. In my opinion, the denomination Aeminus would not come from one or several settlements close to that river but rather describe one of the Galician-Portuguese river's most evident characteristics, such as the Douro (dwr, dark), the Ana river (Guadiana, *am, an, meaning water, river) and many more. I believe that the prefixes that precede the toponyms ending in the Celtic word *-min(i)o* (-mino, -mines and latinized into -menium) and related words could perhaps have a meaning. Therefore, I must split the related toponyms in this way: Ae-minius, Eu-menium and so forth. When doing so, it immediately stands out the words *minius* and *menium*. For this reason the etymological solution for Eumenium (Coimbra) and Aeminus (the river Limia, Lima) would not be the unattested reconstructed Celtic radical *aimin (to attribute), but the attested Celtic hydronym *mino*, Latinized to *minium*.

With regard to the etymology of *mino*, it is a Celtic word. Curchin discards the substantive **moino-* “swamp” proposed by Villar and Prósper and proposes the adjective *gentle* (PIE **mei* with extension n) [Curchin, L. 2008]. In this article, I take ahead from Curchin's *min(i)o* (*gentle*). I see two groups of Portuguese, Galician, French, and Italian hydronyms:

Group 1–Simple Word Toponyms: on the Galician border with Portugal, the river Minho (<min(i)o). In the digitised archives of the Kingdom of Galicia (years 569-1238) there are a few spellings of Miniu, but the spelling Minio prevails. In Brittany, there is the place of Le Minio (Pontivy), situated on a bend of the river Le Blavet. In addition, La Ville Minio (Saint-Servant) is a row of houses on the banks of the river l'Oust. There is Ménio (Pontcuel) on the side of a lagoon [Rozenzweig, L. (1870), p.179]. This lagoon was much bigger back in 1756 according to the Carte de Cassigny and was connected to the nearby river Le Pontcuel. In France, Les Menéos (notice the plural) at the commune of Saint-Lyphard are two small lagoons in the middle of a cultivated field. These hydronyms have “*min(i)o*” (*gentle, placid*) waters.

Group 2 – Compound Word Toponyms: the oppidum of Eumenium (Coimbra) is cited as Eminio, Iminio, or Iminius in coins minted by Visigothic kings [Alarcão, J. (2008), p.29] and as Eminio in the Itinerarium Antoninus dated c. 4th Century [Parthey, G. and Pinder, M. (1848), p.200]. As already mentioned, the Limia (Lima) River (Galicia and Portugal) was also named Aeminus by Pliny [Mayhoff, K. (1906), 4:35] and [Curchin, L. 2007, p.133]. Portus Aemines (Cassis) is situated between Toulon and Marseille. If it is not an *aimin (to attribute lands), it could be *ae-mines*, which means that there should be a “*min(i)o*” (*gentle, placid*) body of water around there. Indeed, I find the Vallat des Brayes, which is a short creek that crosses the seaside town of Cassis to reach the Mediterranean Sea. In its final couple of kilometres close to the beach, it cuts a former swamp, now dry, or so it seems from topography and the lack of urban constructions and streets in that place. When that swamp had water, it was for sure min(i)o (*gentle, placid*) water, and from it, in my opinion, came the second part of the name Ae-mines. The same was true for the city of Rimini (Emilia Romagna), which in Roman times was Ariminum, founded by the Senones Celts at the mouth of the river Ariminus (presently river Marecchia) [Gaffiot, F. (1934), p.188]. These two last toponyms are probably a latinisation of Celtic Arimino. Is the Marecchia a “*min(i)o*” (*gentle, placid*) river? Indeed, it is. It has near zero flow during summer but does not completely dry up. It stays much like several connected stagnant water puddles until the next rainy season. During the rainy season, the Marecchia is a raging torrent, but in the dry season, it is indeed a placid (min(i)o), swampy river. We now focus on the first word of the compound word toponyms from Group B, with possible meanings for *eu-*, *u-*, *ae-*, and *ari-*. Here again, I split those words into three groups:

Meaning of the nouns eu- and u-. Bascuas proposes that the hydronym Eume is derived from the adjective **um-*, from PIE **wegw-* (*humid, wet*) [Bascuas, E. (2002), p.229]. The name of this river is spelled Eume in 714 [Fernández de Viana y Vieites, J. et al. (1996)]. Later as Heume (1261), there is the related toponym (Pontes de) Heumy (1274), which should be the present-day town of Pontedeume (A Corunha, Galicia). There is also the toponym Porto de Sam Pedro de Hymya, mentioned in the year 1261 as follows: “...*como uay endereyto ao Ryo do Heume ende por esse Ryo ao Porto de Sam Pedro da Hymya. ende áá cabeça de Monte Meao.*” [Martínez Salazar, A. (1911), cap.13, p.34] and [Martínez Salazar, A. (1911), cap.27, p.66]. Moralejo lists other rivers such as the Umia (Ría de Arousa, Galicia), Omaña (León), Humanes (Madrid), and Homine (Burgos) [Moralejo, J.J. (2007), p.224]. Curchin explained the name of the Umana River from the Tabula Peutingeriana with the Old Irish *umae* (*copper, bronze*)

and pointed it to the **em* radical [Curchin, L. (2008), p.26]. This river source is in the Alps and is a tributary of the Pò river [Miller, K. (1916), p.392]. Would the Umana River name stem from **um-* (*humid, wet*)? I believe so. In France, **um-* may have originated the toponym Ultra-Eum (Champagnat, Creuse department), which was mentioned as mansas (resting houses for travellers, fortified houses) in 1281: “*mansas en villas de Ultra-Eum...*” [Hemmer, H. (dactylographed text, not published)]. The river Homem (Portugal) is also derived from **um-* and I believe it is etymologically related to the other hydronyms in this item. Also in France: Le Grand-Laume (Comelle in the Loire), formerly named L’Homme (1508), is 200 meters away from the brook La Grande Noue; Puits-de-l’Aume (Bouin) is a water source [Ledan, B. (1902), p.224] and Aumé-Le Min (Frégéac) is a water mill [Quilgars, H. (1906), p.6]. There is the toponym Deume (Sigean), which seems to be related but is not: Stagnum quod dicitur Decimus (844) > Ad stagnum Decimam, Decimum (1235) > Etang d’Eume (1763) > Étang de Deume (1781) [Sabarthès, A. (1912), p.117]. The Étang d’Eume is now a mostly dry swamp used as saline, very close to the mouth of the river La Berre on the vast Étang de Bages. In the Occitan language, the word *deume* means the 10% tithing (*dîme, dízimo*) that was charged over the harvest [Pégorier, A. (2006), p.169]. This matches the earliest name of the place (Stagnum Decimus). However, I could not discern why a salty marine swamp would be related to tithing. Except for Deume (Sigean), the other hydronyms seem to be descended from **um-* and related to Galician-Portuguese hydronyms such as the river Homem and Eume. The PIE **um-* hydronym extends far and wide until France and is not restricted to Portugal and Galicia. I propose that **um-* (*humid, wet*) --> *eume* could also be a candidate for Eumenium (<**eum-menio?*) and Umenium (<**um-menio*).

Meaning of the noun ari-. However, **um-* could not have been derived into Ari-(minius), the Marecchia river. Pokorny suggests that *ari-* could have been derived from the PIE radical **a₁uer-*, which is a verb meaning *to submerge* [Pokorny, J. (1959). v.1, p.80, c]. We have seen in this article that the Marecchia River is almost dry during summer. It has a flow of 11m³/s in summer, becoming much higher from December to February. The last big flood was on 16th May 2023. During 3 months per year, the Marecchia can be defined as a big torrent that overflows and *submerges* (**a₁uer-* > *ari-*) its banks, while during the rest of the year it is a *min(i)o* (*placid*) river.

Meaning of the noun ae-. Depending on the manuscript, the oppidum and river Eumenium were both mentioned as Aeminium. We also have Aeminus (Portugal), the other name of the river Lima (Limia), mentioned by Pliny the Elder. Celtic toponyms beginning in *ae-* are very rare [Curchin, L. (2007), p.46], to the point that some believe it is a copyist error in the manuscripts [Andreotti, G.C. et al. (2007), p.41, 141] and [Moralejo, J.J. (2007), p.267]. However, Curchin lists one epigraphy found at Conimbriga that mentions the (civ)itas Aeminiens(ium) (CIL 02, 05239 p.817, 1031) [Curchin, L. (2007), p.46]. Therefore, the spelling Aemin- exists, but it is a very rare find considering that the epigraphy database holds 427.501 epigraphies. Henrich Singer, in his translation of the Summa Decretorum, mentions that the other name of the city of Nevers (France) is Aedunum: “...und statt des Bischofes von Bologna wird hier der Bischof von Nevers (Nivernium, Aedunum) als Beschuldigter bezeichnet.” [Singer, H. (1961), Introduction, p. XXXIX]. However, the Archives Départementales de la Nièvre could not find any mention of Aedunum related to Nevers's city. I could not find other sources from which Singer could have taken this information. Aedunum seems to be a

mistake by Singer. As we have seen, another possibly related toponym is Aemines (France), which is currently the Mediterranean town named Cassis (Bouches-du-Rhône). Research on other toponyms that bear the *ae-* prefix gave me no results. Could *ae-* be related to the PIE root **au(e)-* which means “wet”? According to Pokorny “**au(e)-, auent- could have derived into Hisp. Avo, Span. Ave, A[v]o-briga], and in France, Gaul. Aveda > Prov. Aveze (Gard), Avisio portus (Alpes-mar.)*” to which I add the Ave river in Portugal (Vila do Conde). However, all descendants of **au(e)-* listed by Pokorny retained the “v”. This was not the case for the toponyms Aeminius (river), Aeminium (Coimbra), and Aemines (Cassis). In short, the nouns *eu-* and *u-* could have been derived from PIE **wegw-* (*humid, wet*), the noun *ari-* from PIE **auer-*, which is a verb meaning *to submerge*, and the noun *ae-* would also be a hydronym, but I could not find its PIE root in the sources I accessed in my research. Coupled with the Celtic adjective *min(i)o*, they would mean *gentle water* or *placid water*.

Toponyms eu- in northern France and England. I conducted a very brief investigation about these toponyms. In the historic evolution of the French toponym Longeau (Amel-sur-l'Étang) close to Luxembourg, we see that the non-Latin “awa” superposed the Latin “aqua”: Longawa (707) > Longa-Aqua (1127) > Longe-Aue > Longe-Ewe (1249) > Longeau (1656) > Longeaux (1749) [Liénard, F. (1872), p.132]. Another three toponyms *Aue* are also derived from *awa* and are situated close to the German border. In England, there are the rivers Evenlode (Gloucestershire) and Yeo (Devon), whose mediaeval name was Eowa, and the stream Eowa (Tadmarton) in Oxfordshire. However, the river Yeo (Somerset) was formerly denominated Nymet and Nemet [Dowden, K. (2000), p.135], which is clearly the Celtic *nemeto* (sacred woods). Yeo probably derives from Germanic Eowa and is not a Celtic or pre-Celtic word. Also, there is the city of Eu (Ville d'Eu, Seine-Maritime) on the banks of the river La Bresle. Here we have the historic evolution of Eu: Auvae (9th Century)>Aucia or Auga (9th Century)>Aucum (12th Century) [Beaurepaire, François de. (1979), p.75-76]>Ou (1140-1150)²⁹-->Eu [Adigard des Gautries, J. (1952), p.141]. The town of Eu took its name from the river, which is now named Bresle, but in the 12th century it was called Ou: “...*Oceanique littus usque ad Aucum flumen, quod vulgo dicitur Ou...*” [Orderic, V. (1852), p.396]. In all preceding cases, these toponyms in England and northern France seem to have an etymology in the Germanic *awa, ewe (water)*, possibly derived from the Proto-Germanic **aujō (pântano)* or **ahwō- (river, body of water)*. *Awa* and *ewe* are cognate to Latin *aqua* and originated the Old High German (OHG) *aha (river)* and Old English (OE) *ea (stream)* [Kroonen, G. (2013) p. XXXIII and 7). They are not etymologically related to the *eu-, ae-, u-,* and *ari-* nouns from the Iberian Peninsula, Mediterranean France, and Northern Italy, which were attested in Greek and Roman manuscripts. Taking into account the preceding information, we now approach the toponyms Eumenium (oppidum and river) to cheque if the suggested etymology for Eumenium (*gentle water, placid water*) holds water (pun intended) when matching it with the topography of the places where those toponyms are situated.

Finding the river Eumenium. The oppidum Eumenium (Aeminium) sits in the city of Coimbra. However, where could be the river Eumenium? Pliny informs us that “*A Durio lusitania incipit. Turduli, veteres paesuri, flumen vagia, oppidum talabrica, oppidum et flume eumenium, oppida conimbriga...*”. Again, it seems that the city and the Eumenium River are close to each other. The oppidum Eumenium is Coimbra.

Would the Mondego River be the Eumenium River? Pliny helps clarify things: "...*ab Durius Tagus c.c. interveniente Munda*". His description is probably based on an ancient portolan. These navigation guides were drafted to keep at hand valuable information about trade routes, trading ports, and towns where the ship captain could purchase and resell goods at a profit. Aside from the Vouga river, which Pliny named Vagia, the only navigable river between the Douro and the Tagus, of sufficient commercial significance to make the author of a long-distance portolan mention it is the Mondego. Therefore, the Munda River would be the Mondego River, and for this reason, the Mondego River is not Pliny's Eumenium river, which he says is situated close to the oppidum Eumenium (Coimbra). The Roman Forum of the Oppidum Eumenium (Coimbra) is situated under the Museu Nacional Machado de Castro in that city. The only other significant river near it, aside from the Mondego, is the Ceira, which discharges into the Mondego 3.8 kilometres upstream from the oppidum Eumenium. The 100-km-long river Ceira would be significant enough in size and water flow to be listed into a portolan, from where Pliny the Elder would source information about the Eumenium river. However, on checking the topography of the Ceira river basin close to its discharge into the Mondego, I can see that this river can be much more than a mere navigation reference mentioned by Pliny. The Ceira River has a floodplain of nearly 1 km diameter near its mouth in front of the town of Ceira, where it meets the river Corva (Dueça). I see in that place a possible ancient (seasonal?) lagoon at 25–27 m above sea level (masl) connected to the river Mondego at 22 masl during the flood season (October-March) through a short stretch of the river Ceira. That hypothetical ancient lagoon fed by the river Ceira would be the *min(i)o* (*gentle water, placid water*) that originated that river Celtic name Eumenium (river Ceira), (Figure 3).

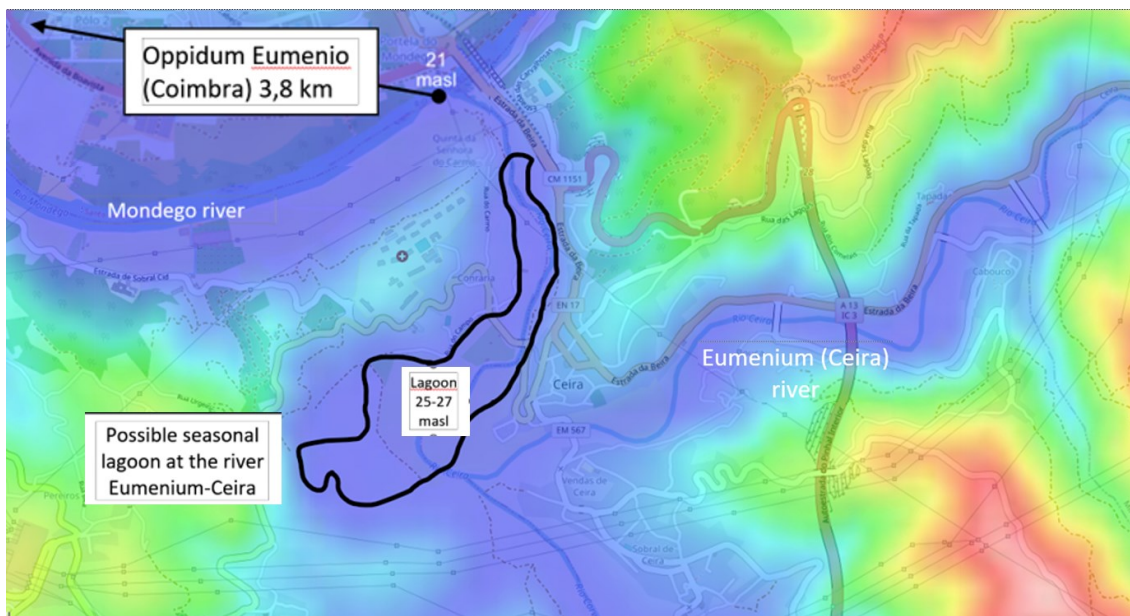


Figure 3. If it existed, the lagoon at the Eumenium River (Ceira River) would have approximately this extension when flooded during the rainy season from October to March. It would be the “*min(i)o*” (*gentle, placid*) water lagoon that names the Eumenium River (Ceira).

The mouth of the Ceira River on the Mondego is at 21 m above sea level (masl),
 while the lagoon has from 25 to 27 masl.
Base map © ESRI Deutschland, publication authorised annotations by the author.

Why was the oppidum denominated Eumenium (Aeminium)? But did the oppidum Eumenium take its name from the Eumenium (Ceira) river? It does not seem likely. The oppidum of Eumenium is 3,8 kilometres from the proposed Eumenium (Ceira) river and lagoon. The oppidum Eumenium would rather have taken its denomination from a topographic feature closer to it. As I suggest, Eumenium would mean *gentle (min(i)o) water (PIE *um)*, then there should be such a placid body of water close to the oppidum Eumenium. Let's check the place. The ruins of the oppidum sit on top of a 106-masl hill. Half of the hill is surrounded by a lower area, which is currently named the Baixa quarter. Topography can change radically over 2,000 years. However, presently, the Baixa seems to me like a basin that collects the pluvial waters coming from the steep higher ground around it. The altitude of the Mondego River at that point is around 18 masl, whereas the Baixa ranges from 23 to 30 masl. I hypothesise that Baixa formerly was a marsh or lagoon whose deepest place in present-day topography seems situated approximately at the corner of Rua da Louça with Rua da Gaia (23 masl). The Baixa would be the *min(i)o (gentle water, placid water)* body of water, perhaps a marsh or a lagoon, that named the Oppidum Eumenium (Coimbra), (Figure 4).

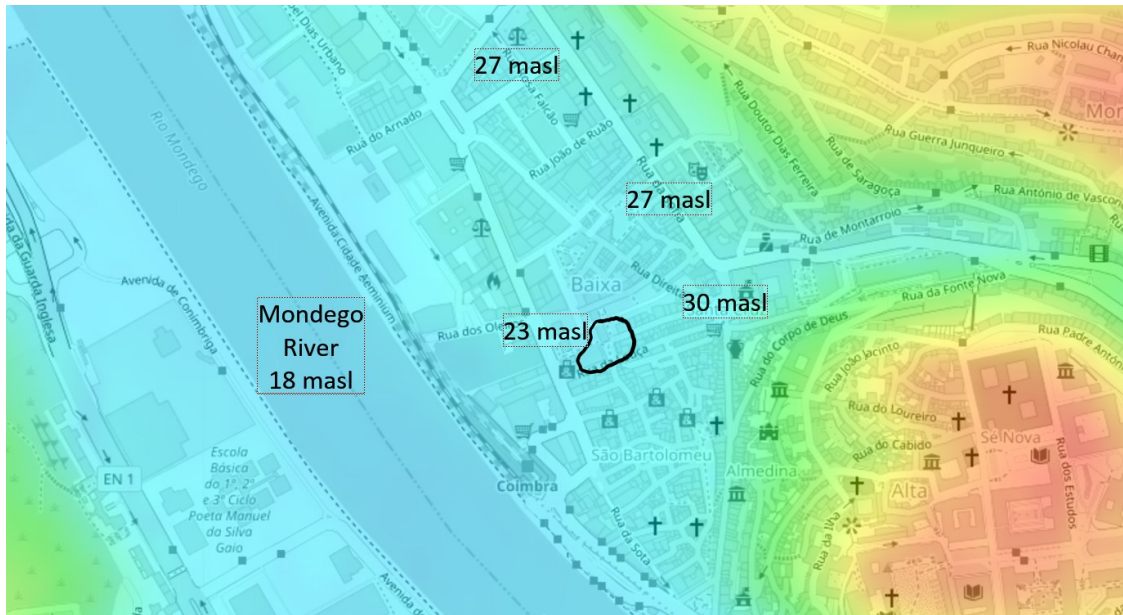


Figure 4. the proposed marsh or lagoon (eu=water + min(i)o=gentle, placid) that could have denominated the oppidum Eumenium. If it existed, its deepest part would be at Rua da Louça with Rua da Gaia, as marked above.

The lagoon could be larger during the flood season (October-November).

Base map © ESRI Deutschland publication authorised, annotations by the author.

4. CONCLUSIONS

By investigating and suggesting a new etymology for the toponym Eumenium (oppidum and river), this article adds a new perspective on the subject and may indicate new places where there could be archaeological remains, namely at the city of Ceira. I hypothesise that Ceira was a significant regional logistic and trade hub, connected by land to the oppidum Conímbriga and to the very important Estrada da Beira. This road

connected the Lusitanian coast at the mouth of the Mondego River to Ciudad Rodrigo (Mirobriga?) in Roman Hispania.

Pre-Celtic PIE Nouns. Contrary to what some believe, the particles *eu-*, *u(e)-*, and *ari-* may have a meaning. They would be nouns descended from PIE *wet* (**um-*) and *water* (**auēr-*). Coupled to the Celtic adjective *min(i)o* (*gentle, placid*) in the semantic proposed by Curchin, these pre-Celtic nouns derived into toponyms that existed in a wide area from Portugal to France and Northern Italy. The nouns that precede *min(i)o* seem to be pre-Celtic. The first two would add to the toponyms listed by Curchin and others concerning the existence of a pre-Celtic PIE language layer in Northwest Iberia (Galicia, northern Portugal). In addition, I propose that the attested toponyms in France bearing the radicals *eum-* and *aum-* are probably from PIE **um-*. If this is true, it poses a question about the geographical extension outside the Iberian Peninsula of that pre-Celtic PIE language layer.

Pre-Celtic vs. Germanic toponyms. While the northwestern Iberian (Galicia and Northern Portugal) radicals *eu-* and *u-* seem to originate from that pre-Celtic PIE language, similar toponyms in Hauts-de-France, Belgium, and England are most probably derived from Germanic *awa*.

The Eumenium River. Pliny the Elder never travelled to Lusitania. He gathered information about it from third parties, which he mentions in detail in the introduction to his books. Significantly, when describing the Tagus River, Pliny listed every distance in stadia with very good accuracy, to the point that in another article I was able to find the island that was below Santarém (Scallabis, Mōron, in Portugal) in the Tagus River. However, Pliny does not mention distances in his description of Eumenium and the Mondego River. Therefore, he most certainly sourced the information about the Tagus from a portolan, but while writing about the Mondego and oppidum and river Eumenium his information is generic, it seems not from a portolan. The Eumenium river mentioned by Pliny is probably the Ceira river because there is no other commercially relevant river closer to the oppidum Eumenium (Coimbra), (see Figure 5).

The Ceira lagoon. During the flood season (October to March), a lagoon possibly formed in front of the city of Ceira. This *eu-min(i)o* (*gentle water, placid water*) lagoon probably attributed the name Eumenium to the river Ceira. Short- and long-distance river and sea trade ships would navigate up the Mondego River and into the lagoon, where they would dock and trade their goods. If it existed, the Ceira lagoon would be a very good place to anchor ships of all sorts and sizes, protected from the strong currents of the river Mondego and the river Ceira (Eumenium) during the flood season.

The Ceira lagoon. An ancient intermodal trade hub? If the seasonal Ceira lagoon and the river port existed as I suggest, they were probably connected to the Estrada da Beira. The ships docked in the lagoon at the port of Ceira would easily transfer their cargo to other smaller river ships that navigated upstream of the Eumenium River (Ceira) and to other land transportation going through the Estrada da Beira. This important Roman road connected the Lusitanian coast (Buarcos, at the mouth of the Mondego river), passed through the oppidum Eumenium (Coimbra), where it crossed

the Roman road from Porto to Lisbon, and went to Ciudad Rodrigo in Hispania (see Figure 6).



Figure 5. The city of Conimbriae (Coimbra) c. 1640, *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, v.5, fol.4, Georg Braun, Van der Krog series, 1640 (5th. ed.), published with authorisation from the Stanford University, David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries

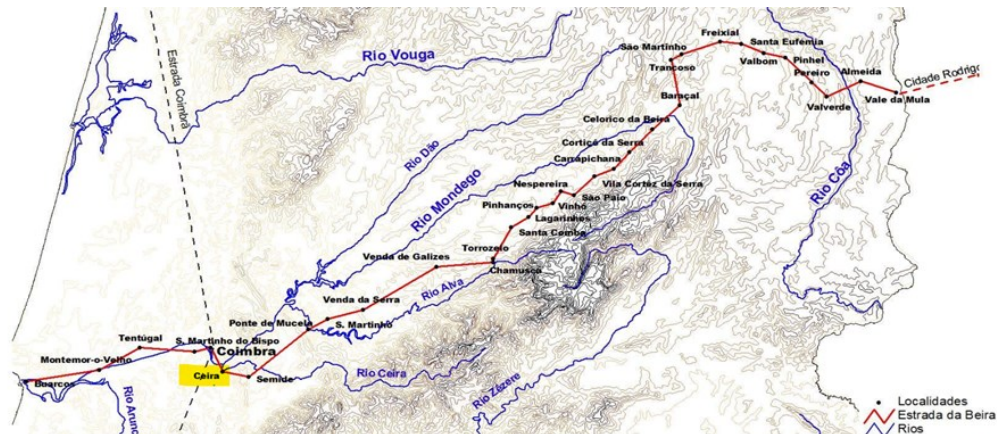


Figure 6. The Estrada da Beira (red line), an important Roman road linking the Atlantic coast in Lusitania to Hispania [Monteiro, H. (2012), p.79, map 12]. The Roman road from Porto to Lisbon (dashed black line). Ceira (yellow highlight). The Estrada da Beira at Ceira could be an important multimodal hub linking land, oceanic (cabotage), and fluvial trade

The present Ponte de Coimbra (Coimbra Bridge) was built over an ancient Roman bridge. In a radius of 10 km from the oppidum Eumenium (Coimbra), there were at least 10 bridges crossing rivers and connecting several roads and the Estrada da

Beira in Medieval times [Monteiro, H. (2012)]. Some of these bridges were built by the Romans. Until recently, fluvial cargoes could navigate up the river Ceira until Porto da Raiva [Soutinho, P., personal communication (email) 16th May 2023].

The marsh that named Oppidum Eumenium (Aeminium). The river Ceira (Eumenium) lagoon is 3,8 kilometres far from the oppidum Eumenium (Coimbra) and in my opinion could not have denominated that oppidum too. If this is true, then there should be another body of water with *eu-min(i)o* (*gentle water, placid water*) close to the oppidum. We will hardly know how the topography was in the place 2.000 years ago. However, taking into account the local present topography, I propose that there was a marsh or lagoon in the Baixa quarter. That Baixa quarter *eu-min(i)o* (*gentle water, placid water*) marsh or lagoon denominated the Eumenium oppidum that was on the top of a hill 600 metres away from it. When mentioning the oppidum Eumenium in their communications, the ancient natives would probably refer to the *fort of the marsh* or the *fort of the lagoon*.

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