

my* > ()ny* in Greek and Italic:
Common innovation, parallel development, or
fortuitous similarity?*

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The fact that the final *-m* of PIE **gwem-* is reflected as *-n* in Greek *baínō*, Lat. *ueniō*, and related forms has given rise to a number of different accounts, the most common of which explains the *n* as the result of some kind of assimilation. I review the various proposed accounts and argue that the similarity between Greek and Latin *n* is accidental. The Latin *n* results from analogical extension of the third singular root aorist form, in which *-n* results from sound change. The Greek *n* reflects regular sound changes connected with across-the-board palatalization in that language.

The putative Proto-Indo-European (PIE) present form **g^wmyō* ‘go, come’ is reflected as Greek (Gk.) *baínō*, Latin (Lat.) *ueniō* with *n* for earlier *m* (1a). In Italic, represented here by Latin, Old Latin (OLat.), Oscan (Osc.) and Umbrian (Umbr.), the dental nasal is also found outside the present (1b), as well as in certain non-verbal forms (1c). By contrast, in Greek it is limited to the present system of the verb.

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| (1) | a. | PIE | <i>*g^wmyō</i> > Gk. <i>baínō</i> , Lat. <i>ueniō</i> , ‘come’ ¹ |
| | b. | Lat. | <i>uēnī</i> , ‘came’ |
| | | OLat. | <i>ad-uenat</i> , ‘may he come’ |
| | | Osc. | kúm-bened , ‘he approached’ ² |

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¹ Via **g^wamyō*, **g^wemyō*.

² Boldface is used in transliterating Oscan and Umbrian forms written in the local alphabet.

- Umbr. *benurent*, ‘they will come’
- c. Osc. **kúm-bennieís**, ≈ ‘*conuentionis*; of the assembly’

Concerning the correspondence $*m : n$ several accounts have been proposed. One, going back to Thurneysen (1879), Brugmann (Osthoff & Brugmann 1879-1910: 2: note 207), Mahlow (1879: 63), and especially Osthoff (1884: 505-521), posits a sound change $m > n$ before y , which is either shared by Greek and Italic or at least a parallel innovation. With minor variations, this view has been accepted widely; see e.g. Brugmann & Delbrück (1886-1900), Brugmann (1902-04), Kieckers (1931), Buck (1933), Leumann, Hofmann, & Szantyr (1977), Sihler (1995) (with some reservations), Meiser (1998), Szemerényi (1999); and similarly, for Oscan-Umbrian, v. Planta (1892-97).

Kretschmer (1896) accepted $*my > (*ny)$ for Greek, but considered the change unlikely for Italic because of unshifted m in forms of the type seen in (2).

- (2) Lat. *gremium*, ‘lap, bosom’, *nimius* ‘excessive’, *dormio* ‘sleep’, etc.

Brugmann (1902-04) defended the change for Italic since in his view the sequence ni of *quoniam*, seen in (3), must be from earlier $*my$. For similar views, see Kieckers (1931: 133), Leumann-Hofmann-Szantyr (1977: 126), and Sihler (1995: 205-206). Under this view, the unshifted $-m-$ of examples like *gremium* reflects the fact that the suffix of these forms was $-iyo-$, rather than $-yo$.

- (3) Lat. *quoniam*, ‘since, whereas’ < $*quom-yam$

Jacobsohn (1904), on the other hand, explained the n of *ueniō* and *quoniam* as dissimilated vis-à-vis the labial onset $(q)u-$; similar views are found in Sommer (1914), Walde-Hofmann (1982), and Sihler (1994: 205) (with reservations).

- (4) $*k^w \dots m > *k^w \dots n$

- e. The *n* of Lat. *ueniō*, *quoniam*, and presumably of Osc.-Umbr. **kúm-bennieís** etc. results from ‘labial dissimilation’, see (4).

To these may be added another possible explanation, dismissed by Schwyzer (1939) without further discussion, namely that the *n* of Gk. *baínō* results from a sound change similar to that of *mj* > *mnj* in Modern Greek (Mod. Gk.), as in (8). This comparison appears to have been made first by Osthoff (1884); see further below.³

- (8) Mod. Gk. *mnja* < *mía*, ‘one (fem.)’

While not wanting to deny that other analyses are conceivable, I intend to show that the most plausible account derives Gk. *baínō* and *koinós* through a sound-change process very similar to the one in (8), which Schwyzer summarily dismissed. On the other hand, the Italic forms *ueniō*, **kúm-bened**, **kúm-bennieís**, *benurent* etc. reflect secondary generalization of the root-aorist third singular form, and *quoniam* has undergone labial dissimilation in the sequence ... *m* ... *m*.

Let me begin with the type Lat. *ueniō* (perf. *uēni*, OLat. *ad-uenat*), Osc. **kúm-bened**, Umbr. *benurent*. An account that considers the *n* of these forms to be an extension from the expected third singular form of the root aorist $*g^w en(-t) < *g^w em-t$ is the most reasonable on several grounds. First, given the cross-Indo-European variation in the mode of present formation of this root, seen in (9), it is likely that the root lacked a present stem in PIE (which instead was furnished suppletively by the root $*(e)i$, ‘come, go’ (as in Skt. *eti*, Lat. *ire*). The Latin present *ueniō* therefore may be a relatively late and independent innovation, a presentization, as it were, of the original aorist stem. (Abbreviations: Gmc. – Germanic, Lith. – Lithuanian, Toch. A – Tocharian A, Toch. B – Tocharian B in (9) below.)

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|------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (9) | | (Virtual) PIE source |
| Skt. | <i>gacchati</i> ‘goes’ | $*g^w m-ské-$ |
| Av. | <i>jasati</i> ‘goes’ | $*g^w m-ské-$ |
| Gk. | <i>baínō</i> , <i>báske</i> , ‘come’ | $*g^w m-ye-$, $*g^w m-ské-$ |
| Lat. | <i>ueniō</i> , ‘come’ | $*g^w m-ye-$ |

³ This transliterates Schwyzer’s use of symbols. As noted by an anonymous reviewer, a more accurate transcription would be *mña* (with palatal nasal).

Gmc.	* <i>k^weman/kuman-</i> , ‘come’	* <i>g^wem-e-/g^wm̄-e-</i>
Lith.	<i>gemù</i> , ‘am born’ (< *‘come out’)	* <i>g^wem-e-</i>
Toch. A	<i>kumnäs</i> , ‘comes’	* <i>g^wm̄-ne-</i>
Toch. B	<i>känmaṣṣārñ</i> , ‘they come’	* <i>g^wm̄-ne-ske-</i>

That this account is on the right track is suggested by the fact that the dental nasal *n* is found in the nonpresential forms of all of Italic, especially in the perfect. As is well known, these perfects in many cases reflect earlier aorists, with secondary length of the root vowel in Latin;⁴ see, e.g., Meiser (1998: 180-181) and Sihler (1995: 579). The assumption that the root aorist of PIE **g^wem-* did indeed survive in early Italic is supported by the fact that the Old Latin relic type *ad-uenat* is most plausibly explained as an original root aorist subjunctive (earlier optative); see, e.g., Leumann, Hofmann & Szantyr (1977: 573) and Meiser (1998: 184). We thus have good evidence that would support a pan-Italic generalization of third-singular-aorist *n* to the rest of the aorist or nonpresential system. And this root in final *n* could then be employed as the foundation for creating an innovated present, *ueniō*. Note that the present is limited to Latin and is not attested in Oscan-Umbrian. There is thus no evidence that would support the common assumption that Oscan-Umbrian forms such as **kúm-bened** owe their dental nasal to analogical extension from the present.

It is true that Osc. **kúm-bennieís** has been cited by v. Planta (1892-97) as exhibiting the change of *m* to *n* before *y*. However, this form may well be a secondary derivation from the root *ben-* abstracted from the non-presential system and thus, like the latter, ultimately based on the original third singular aorist.⁵

Lat. *quoniam*, of course, cannot be explained in this manner. We might therefore consider returning to Jacobsohn’s (1904) ‘labial’ dissimilation; see (4) above. It might be objected that *uīmen*, ‘withy, twig’, *uomis*, ‘plough share’, and *uomō*, ‘vomit’ provide counterevidence to this assumption. However, these words have original initial **w*, and the sound

⁴ Compare the short root vowel in Osc. **kúm-bened**, and Umbr. *benurent*.

⁵ In fact, derived nouns in Lat. *-ium*, *-ia* seem to regularly lack special consonant developments before *-y-*, which suggests an early generalization of the suffix *-iyo-* in nominal derivation (see note 6 below). Umbr. *gomía*, **kumiaf** ‘*gravidas*, pregnant’ may further suggest that this generalization was pan-Italic. In that case, Osc. **kúm-bennieís** would be highly unusual if it were indeed an original form in *-yo-*. Assuming that the form results from secondary extension of the root *ben-* found in the perfect system would avoid this complication.

change may have been restricted to contexts with original initial labiovelars. Moreover, as is well known, dissimilation is a notoriously irregular process.

Still, Jacobsohn's dissimilation process seems to lack clear parallels. I would prefer to invoke instead a nasal dissimilation, comparable to what we find in *tamen* (10); see also Leumann, Hoffmann & Szantyr (1977: 467), except that in the case of *quoniam* the dissimilation operates in the opposite direction. The directionality of dissimilation, however, can be explained as determined by formal or functional factors: In *tamen*, *tam* is semantically most prominent, in *quon-iam*, it is *iam*, especially after *quom* has changed to *cum* elsewhere.

(10) **tam-em* > *tamen*, 'nevertheless'

A possible parallel nasal dissimilation can be seen in Sanskrit (11) and (12), although the examples are not entirely uncontroversial:

(11) Skt. **tasmi-m* > *tasmin*
(LOC;SG;M form of *ta-* 'that')

(12) Skt. **-ām-ām* > *-ān-ām*
(GEN;PL form of *a-* and *ā-*stems)

Some scholars consider the final *n* of *tasmin* to be inherited and directly comparable to the Greek type *hámmi(n)* (see, e.g., Schwyzer (1939: 605) with references); others interpret the final *-n* as the zero-grade of the adposition **en*, 'in' (Wackernagel (1930: 501) with references). Given the formal parallelism in (13), I believe an analysis that derives the final *-n* of (11) from an earlier quasi-suffixal *-m* is better supported.

(13) Av. *ta'byā* : Skt. *tubhya-m* (R̥gvedic *tubhya*), 'to you'
Av. *yeṇhe* : Skt. *yasyā-m* 'in whom' (:LOC;SG;F)
Av. *aētahmi* : Skt. *(*e*)*tasmi-m* 'in that one' (:LOC;SG;M)

As for the genitive plural ending *-ānām*, the dissimilatory explanation (going back to Reichelt 1927: 67) competes with a plethora of different explanations, some of them comparing the form directly to the type Old High German (OHG) *gebōno* 'of gifts'; e.g. Wackernagel (1930: 69-71), Thumb & Hauschild (1959: 48), and Szemerényi (1970: 201), with

references. The most common analogical explanation has the *n* come from the *n*-stems; see, e.g., Szemerényi (1999: 185), who thus apparently disagrees with his earlier analysis. However, such a transfer would be difficult to motivate, since the *n*-stems have genitive plural forms of the type exemplified by (Skt.) *raj-ñ-ām*, with zero-grade of the stem suffix (or *ātm-an-ām* with “fake full grade”), rather than the long vowel of *devānām* and the like. On the other hand, the assumption of an earlier double ending finds support in the evidence for double endings such as those in (14). In the case of the genitive plural, generalization of the double ending at the expense of the simple one would be well motivated in the feminine **ā*-stems where it would help differentiate genitive plural (**-ām-ām* > *-ān-ām*) from accusative singular (*-ām*). Generalization to the other vowel stems would have to be assumed in any case to account for the *n* appearing in the sonorant-stem genitives: Skt. *-īnām*, *-ūnām*, etc.

- (14) Vedic Skt. *devās-as* ‘Gods’, (:NOM;PL;M)
 ṛt-su-ṣu ‘in battles’, (:LOC;PL;F)

What is relevant for the present discussion is that, just as in Lat. *quoniam* vs. *tamen*, the directionality of nasal dissimilation is sensitive to formal or functional factors: The *sm* of Skt. (locative) *tasmīn* is supported by dative *tasmāi*, ablative *tasmāt*, and therefore it is the final *m* that undergoes dissimilation. In the genitive plural, the final *m* is supported by the genitive plural ending *-ām* of the consonant stems, and therefore it is the first *m* which is dissimilated.

One apparent obstacle remains to the proposed explanation of *ueniō* etc. and *quoniam*, namely the fact that the preverb *com-* appears in the form *con-* before Latin words with initial semivocalic *i*, as in (15):

- (15) *coniunx*, ‘consort, wife’; *coniciō*, ‘unite’; *coniūratīō* ‘alliance’;
 etc.

However, the sandhi behavior of the preverbs *com-* and *in-* has undergone a fair amount of (generally convergent) regularization, such that in synchronically transparent formations, they have identical outcomes before following consonants. Thus, the productive sandhi form of *com-* is *con-*, too, before semivocalic *u*, as in the *conuentiōnis* of (1c), parallel to the *in-* of *inuentiōnis*. A more original form, however, appears to be *cōntiō*, ‘assembly’, without the nasal of the synchronically more transparent form.

Compare (16a) as well as the similar (16b) and (16c) which likewise suggest that the sandhi behavior in *conuentiō* is an innovation. See, e.g., Leumann, Hofmann, & Szantyr (1977: 226,559), with references. Kieckers (1931: 133) cites “Vulgar Latin” forms of the type *coiicit* = *coniicit*, ‘unites’; *coiux* = *coniux*, ‘consort, wife’; *coi(i)ugi* = *coniugi*, ‘conjoined’, which may perhaps exhibit the same early loss of *-m* before semivowel. The forms in (15) can therefore be explained as exhibiting productive sandhi and may thus be comparable to the type *conuentiō*, not to the archaic type *cōntiō*. (This is especially true if Kieckers’ “Vulgar Latin” *coiux* etc. should be archaisms.) Like *conuentiō*, they may therefore be innovations and thus cannot be used as independent evidence for a change of *m* > *n* before *y*.

- (16) a. Lat. *co-uentiō*⁶ > *cōntiō* ‘assembly’
- b. Lat. **co-uir-iā* > *cūria*
(a division of the Roman people)
- c. Umbr. *co-uertu*, **kuvertu**, ‘*convertito*, let him
(ex)change’

In addition to being, I believe, more plausible than the hypothesis that *m* changed to *n* before *y* in Italic, the present analysis makes it possible to explain the forms in (17) as reflecting original *-yo*-stems, rather than unnecessarily invoking suffixal **-iyo-* instead of the **-yo-* favored after a light syllable. Of these forms, at least *gremium* and *gomia* (and its relatives) are synchronically opaque and therefore difficult to explain as secondary derivatives with a synchronically productive suffix *-io-*.⁷

⁶ Attested in *senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus* (SCBacch.) as *coentionid*.

⁷ This case may, however, be weakened by the fact that no Latin nominal derivatives in *-ium*, *-ia* seem to exhibit special consonant changes before original *y*. Consider especially *ad-agium* vs. *aiiō* (which does exhibit the change of *-gy-* to *-jī-*). Other forms lacking such special developments include *acupedius*, ‘swift of foot’; *inedia*, ‘fasting’; *repudium*, ‘divorce, repudiation’; *naufragium*, ‘shipwreck’; *refugium*, ‘recourse, refuge’; and *rēgius*, ‘royal’; note also the suffix *-ārius* < *-ās(i)yo-*, etc. Perhaps, then, it is indeed true that the forms in (17), just like all other forms in *-ium*, *-ia* reflect an early generalization of the *-iyo-* suffix alternant at the expense of the *-yo-* alternant in nominal derivation. If correct, this conclusion would have interesting consequences for the interpretation of Osc. **kúm-benniéis**; see note 5 above. A fuller investigation of this issue, preferably combined with a reconsideration of the vexed problem of the Third vs. Fourth Conjugation split of the PIE *-ye/o-* verbs would be highly desirable—see, e.g., the discussion in Leumann, Hofmann, & Szantyr (1977: 568-569) and Sihler (1995: 537-538).

- (17) Lat. *gremium*, ‘lap, bosom’
 Umbr. *gomia*, **kumiaf**, ‘*gravidas*, pregnant’
 (hence Lat. *gumia*, ‘glutton, gourmand’)

Perhaps also:

- Lat. *praemium* < *prae-emium*, ‘profit, advantage’
eximius, ‘select, excellent’
vindēmia < *-dē-emiā*, ‘grape harvest’

Let us now return to Greek *baínō* and *koinós*. Following Schwyzer (1939), one might try to explain *baínō* in the same way as Lat. *ueniō*. However, the aorist and other nonpresential forms of the Greek verb are based on the parallel root **g^weH-* (or on totally different roots). Now, the *n* of *baínō* could still be explained as analogical to the root aorist if we assume that parallel to the aorist of the root **g^weH-* (*ébē* ‘came’), Greek preserved an aorist of **g^wem-* (**eben*) long enough to serve as the source for the dental nasal. However, while Italic provides clear and positive evidence for extension of third-singular-aorist *n* to all of the aorist or nonpresential system, Greek does not. We simply don’t know whether Greek ever had an aorist system based on the root **g^wem-* that could have served as source for an extension of *-n* to the present system. An account along these lines thus is entirely speculative. Deriving *koinós* from **kon* along the lines of (6) is likewise quite speculative, since it requires the gratuitous assumption that the form was created after the specifically Greek change of final *m* to *n*.

These highly speculative scenarios or assumptions can be avoided if we consider the dental nasal to result from a regular sound change very similar to the one dismissed by Schwyzer. The analysis I propose is in fact very similar in detail to the one Osthoff (1884) proposed for *baínō*, *ueniō*, etc.

But while Osthoff and Schwyzer were only able to point to the Modern Greek parallel in (8), and while Osthoff’s account is language-specific and does not relate the phenomenon to other similar developments within or outside of Greek, it is now possible to cite further parallels and to account for the phenomenon in question in a more comprehensive manner. The evidence and arguments are laid out in fuller detail in Hock (1986 [1991]: 133-134) and especially in Hock (2004, 2006). At this point, it suffices to present the brief summary below. The development of earlier *-my-* to Gk.

-in- can be explained as an (indirect) consequence of across-the-board palatalization of consonants before *y* along the following lines:

First, Greek has extensive evidence for palatalization before *y*, as in **skhid-yō* > *skhizō*, ‘separate’ and **phulak-yō* > *phulattō*, ‘guard’. Second, other languages with independent evidence for pervasive palatalization show that palatalized labials may develop into dentals or into labials followed by dentals, as in (18). Of these, (18a-c) present the clearest examples; in many other cases the resulting clusters undergo further simplificatory developments, as shown by the outcomes in (18d-e): (Abbreviations: pre-Slav. – Pre-Slavic, OCS – Old Church Slavic, PRom. – Proto-Romance, Rom. – Romansh, S. Ital. – Southern Italian, Fr. – French,)

- (18) a. pre-Slav. **leubyō* > **lyub^yō-* > OCS *lyubly^o*, ‘love’
 b. Lat. *sapiat* > PRom. **sap^ya* > Rom. *sapča*, ‘would know’
 c. Czech *p^yet^y* > *tet*, ‘five’ (see Andersen 1973)
 d. Lat. *sapiat* > PRom. **sap^ya* > **sapča* > Fr. *sâche*
 e. Lat. *sapiat* > > > S. Ital. *saccia*, *seccia*

As a matter of fact, in the case of the oral stop *p*, Greek exhibits an entirely comparable development; see (19).

- (19) **klepyō* > **klep^yō* > **klept^yō* > *kléptō*, ‘steal’

Though perhaps not quite as common, similar ‘dental-spin-off’ developments can also be observed after labial nasals in languages with pervasive palatalization; see (20) and, no doubt, also Schwyzer’s (1939) Modern Greek example cited in (8).

- (20) a. Slavic **zem^yā* > *zem^ya*, ‘earth’

- b. Lat. *vindēmia* > Rom. *vindemgia* ‘grape harvest’
 Fr. *vendange*
 S. Ital. *venneñña*

This evidence makes it possible to account for Gk. *baínō*, *koinós* as resulting from the sound change in (21). This development is similar to that proposed by Osthoff (1884), according to whom a palatal nasal was inserted between *m* and *y* as a ‘vermittlungslaut’ [transition sound]. But while Osthoff’s hypothesis was based merely on the parallelism of Modern Greek, the present account embeds the change within the independently established context of pervasive Greek palatalization, especially of other labial consonants, and explains the change as the result of crosslinguistic tendencies in the development of palatalized labials. Moreover, unlike Schwyzer’s (1939) preferred analogical account (based on the aorist), the present approach explains Gk. *baínō* and *koinós* without resorting to gratuitous assumptions about earlier stages in Greek phonology and morphology.

- (21) $*g^wmyō > *bam^yō > *bamn^yō > baínō$
 cf. $*klepyō > *klep^yō > *klepʰyō > kléptō$

Finally, the additional, specific developments relating intermediate $*bamn^yō$ to *baínō* are complex and must be viewed in the context of developments such as (22a). Following Danielson (1903), I account for these changes along the lines of (22b), which involves inter alia segmentalization of the palatalizing onglide (y) of palatalized $*yʀʀ(rʀ)$ to *y*, as well as sonorant cluster reduction (in this case, degemination). Note that, as in other languages, the segmentalization of the palatalizing onglide leads to the depalatalization of the sonorant cluster.

- (22) a. $*kharyō > khaírō$, ‘rejoice’
 b. $*kharyō > *kha^yʀʀyō > *khay(r^y)r^yō > khaírō$ [khayrō]

The form *baínō*, then, can be derived by the developments in (23):

- (23) $*bamyō$
 Palatalization/Gemination $*bam^ym^yyō$

Loss of triggering <i>y</i>	* <i>bam^ym^yō</i>
Dental insertion after palatalized labial	* <i>ba(m)^ym^yn^yō</i>
Segmentalization and depalatalization	* <i>baymnō</i>
Cluster reduction	<i>baynō</i> < <i>baínō</i> >

An explanation along the lines of (21) and (23) does not seem plausible for Italic. True, Umbrian and the Oscan dialect of Bantia have undergone fairly pervasive palatalization; but the rest of Oscan does not seem to have done so. Moreover, any possible evidence for palatalization in Latin is limited to medial voiced *d*, *g*, and *s* + *y* (as in *peior* < **pedyōs* ‘worse’, *maiior* < **magyōs* ‘bigger’, *eius* < **esyō* + genitive *-s* ‘his’) and the exceptional initial *dy* > *y* of *Iovis*, *Iuppiter*. It is not clear, however, whether these highly restricted developments should be considered examples of palatalization or of simple assimilation. The overall evidence of Italic, then, is markedly different from that of Greek, in not providing the precedent of pervasive palatalization which would motivate the account in (21) and (23).

If, as I hope, the arguments presented in this paper are on the right track, we must conclude that the Greek type *baínō* and the Italic type Lat. *ueniō*, *uēnī*, Umbr. **kúm-bened** are not likely to result from shared or parallel sound changes but instead result from very different developments—sound changes connected with pervasive palatalization in Greek, but analogical extension of root-final *-n* (< **-m-t*) from the third singular root aorist to the rest of the past-tense paradigm in Italic, and from there to the present system in Latin.

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