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ETYMOLOGICAL FORMULA IN ONOMASTICS *

by

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Ever since the foundation of onomastics as a scientific discipline of humanities the problem of etymological explanation of names has been the main purpose of the onomastic research. So far, little has been done in the field of the methodology of research in this respect. The historical comparative method of etymologizing names was mechanically transferred from the field of appellatives with the ultimate purpose — to deduct *nomina propria* from corresponding *nomina appellativa*. The more recent trend in etymological research to include onomastic material in the general etymological dictionaries found its ardent supporters in theory as well as in practice. In this connection the sound and well motivated opinion of E. Eichler might be quoted from his article *Namenforschung und Etymologie in der Slawistik*, in *Wiss. Zeitschrift der Karl-Marx-Universität*, Leipzig, 13, 1964, pp. 379-381 :

« Nicht zufällig sind es gerade Bezlaj und Rudnyckyj, die für eine enge enge Verknüpfung von Etymologie und Onomastik einterten ; als Verfasser namenkundlicher Monographien haben sie schon früh die Bedeutung der Onomastik für die Erkenntnis des urslavischen Wortschatzes hervorgehoben. Im Wörterbuch[1] Rudnyckyjs werden nicht nor Orts- und Familiennamen aus der Sprache der Gegenwart, sond ern auch historische Belege aufgenommen. »

As in other fields of humanities and social sciences the concept of a working formula (model) becomes not only more and more necessary in methodological respect, but also more and more elaborated and advanced.

It was A. S. C. Ross who in 1958 raised the problem of etymological formula in linguistics. In his book *Etymology with Especial Reference to English*, London, 1958, he presented the following two models :

Case 1 : Loanwords (lwf.)
A_0 x_0 ['z_0'] ; lwf. By ['ʒ']

Case 2 : Genuine, inherited, words
(i) A_0 x_0 ['z_0'] <Ax (>Ai_1 [zi_1] ..., etc.)
and continuing th e latter according to each individual case (p. 37).

Ross' methodological innovation was met with caution and natural criticism. It was E. P. Hamp who relating to Ross' formulas observed in *Word*, 17, 101, that etymology consists

* Paper read at the Annual Convention of American Name Society in Chicago, III., December 30, 1965.

[1] *An Etymological Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language*, Parts 1-5, Winnipeg UVAN, 1962-1966.

« in the recitation either 1) of evidential correspondence-sets containing the form in question, or 2) of fair-probability sets leading to an outside (diffusional) source. »

Thus, according to Hamp, the etymology of a loanword is of the form :

$$A_0\ x_0\ [\text{'}z_0\text{'}] \leftarrow B\xi\ [\text{'}\zeta\text{'}]$$

For non-loans Hamp simplifies Ross' formula as well, and instead of his long and complicated system gives the following brief presentation :

$$A_0\ x_0 = A_1\ x_1 \ldots$$

Reducing Ross' etymological formulae to two, Hamp says, « That all evidential statements of genetic relationship are essentially of the form (2) » (p. 103).

In the U.S.S.R., the criticism of Ross' book appeared in an article of V. N. Toporov under the title *O nekotoryx teoretičeskix osnovanijax etimologičeskogo analiza*, in *Voprosy jazykoznanija*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Moscow 1960, pp. 55-56. Toporov rejects Ross' formula and, contrary to Hamp, does not offer any other solution of the problem. His main objection to the formula is its « young-grammatical » basis and non-inclusion of all factors influencing words, as, e.g. crossings, synonyms, « paronymic attraction », homonymous clashes, etc.

In a paper entitled *Slavic Etymologies Revised*, read before the Modern Language Association of America in Chicago, Ill., December 27th, 1961, the present writer gave a critical survey of the whole problem and stated, among others, that the basic theoretical requirement of an etymological formula is its universality. The methodological model for the work of an etymologist must satisfy with one statement all possible solutions of all languages concerned. One universal etymological formula is needed equally for Slavic as for English or French, for Eskimo, as well as for Sanskrit. In other words, it must depict not only the « axiomatic thinking » (Kurylowicz) of a linguist, but also give him a tool for his intellectual work.

One cannot speak here of obtaining etymology for a given word by means of a formula as through an algebraic equation or out of a formula for a chemical reaction (Hamp, p. 100). The etymological formula should be rather an ex-post formulation of the linguistic evidence on which the origin of a word is based. Confronting Ross' and Hamp's proposals with his own etymological practice, the author presented the following universal etymological formula for genuine as well as loan and foreign words :

$$Ax = \frac{CH\ [a + o + (a + o)\ d + s]}{A_1\ x_1\ A_2\ x_2\ A_3\ x_3 \ldots A_n\ x_n} < S$$

This formula is to be read as follows:

The etymology of the word x with its semantic contents in the system of the language A results from the genetic relationship [<] of the contemporary [C] and historial [H] materials comprising all the appellative [a] and onomastic

[o] formations with their derivatives [d] and the semantic sphere [s] confronted with cognates of the other related languages [$A_1 x_1 A_2 x_2 A_3 x_3$. ...] to the source [S].

In pursuing his research in this field, the author observed that there are several variations of this formula and characterized them in an article *Variants of the Etymological Formula*, in *Die Welt Der Slaven*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, September, 1963, Wiesbaden, p. 203 to 210.

Among several variants the onomastic variant of the formula was elaborated as follows :

$$AX = \frac{CHo}{A_1 X_1 A_2 X_2 A_3 X_3 \ldots A_n X_n} + CH\,[(o + a)\,d + s] < S.$$

In checking onomastic literature, especially dictionaries, the author found that there are several sub-variants of the onomastic formula, depending on material, attitudes, goals and methods used by onomatologists. As an example of the anthroponymic sub-variant the entries in *Dictionary of American family names* by Elsdon C. Smith (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1956) can be quoted. They usually offer (1) the contemporary spelling of names and (2) deduction of the name from its source. Thus on p. 3, under *Allison*, the following is stated :

« Allison, Alison (Scot. E.) — The son of Ellis (God is salvation), corruption of Allanson, q.v.; the son of Alix, a short form of Alister or Alexander (helper of mankind) ; the son of Alice (noble cheer), occasionally — masculine name. »

In X-Raying methodologically this entry we receive the following subvariant of the formula :

$$AX = Co_1\ Co_2 < S$$

« The author's name Smith is found on p. 199 : *Smith*, *Smithe* (Engl., Scot., Ir.) — The worker in metals. »

The model of this entry is the same as above. However, we find on the same page Du. *Smit*, *Smid*, *Smidt* with three different spellings. Thus, the formula will be as follows :

$$AX = Co_1\ Co_2\ Co_3 < S$$

On p. 190 the same name in German form is explained : *Schmidt*, *Schmitt*, *Schmit*, *Schmitz* according to the following model :

$$AX = Co_1\ Co_2\ Co_3\ Co_4\ Co_5 < S$$

In general, Smith's dictionary shows a tendency to distinguish the formal differenciation of names according to their spellings in various languages ; this causes the separation of entries depending on the language concerned, cf. *Rudnick*, *Rudnicki*, *Rudnik* being Polish forms of the same name as *Rudnyckyj* in Ukrainian (two different entries on p. 184).

As far as geographical names are concerned our formula helps to solve them etymologically in full provided that the respective historical material is available.

Let us illustrate this with a few examples taken from the most popular toponomastic dictionaries and special works in Great Britain, the United States and Canada.

Eilert Eckwall in his work *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1936, goes back into the history of each name referring to historical records. Thus, the toponym *London* on p. 288-9 is explained according to the following formula :

$$AX = CHo + Hod < S$$

viz.:

Co = *London*
Ho_1 = *Londinium* 115-17, Tacitus 4, IA
Ho_2 = *Londion* c.150 Ptolomy
Ho_3 = *Lundin(i)um* Ammianus Marcelinus
Ho_4 = *Lundonia* c. 730 Bede
Ho_5 = *Lundenne*, (on) *Lundene* 962 ASC
Ho_6 = *Lundres* 12 Fantosme
Ho_7 = *Lundin* 1200 Lay
Hod_1 = *Lundenburg* 457 ASC
Hod_2 = *Lundenceaster* c.890 OEBede.
S = *Londinium* which « is no doubt a derivative of a stem **londo-* (wild, bold), found in OIr. *lond* (wild). The immediate base may be a pers. name *Londinos* or a tribal name formed from the adjective. »

In Erwin G. Gudde's *California Place Names*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1960, a great variety of formulas are used. Thus, the entry *Agua* on p. 4 has the following sub-variant :

$$AX = Co < S + Cod\ (< S_1),$$

Cod being derivatives like *Agua Caliente Creek*, *Agua Caliente Canion*, *Agua Fria Creek* with reference to the origin (S_1) of additional elements of the main entry Agua.

The above sub-variant is applied in many other cases in Gudde's dictionary, viz. *Big* (p. 27-8), *Black* (29), *White* (344-5), etc.

In Canada the first etymological dictionaries of geographical names were compiled by R. Douglas, then Secretary of the Geographic Board of Canada in Ottawa. In one of his earliest publications in this field, in *Place-names of Prince Edward Island With Meanings*, Ottawa 1925, he employed a wide range of models based on the historical sources and informations gathered by the Geographic Board of Canada.

We find here the simplest etymologies of kind :

Bank . . . After a settler. Meacham, 1880, shows Wm. Banks resident here (p. 11).

Formula : $AX = Co < S$

along with more documented, viz. :

Courtain: island and shoal, Malpeque bay. Not *Curtain* of modern maps nor Little Bunbury. Speaking of the islands in the bay, de la Roque says : « To the west-south-west of the île aux Sauvages (*Bunbury*) lies a second isle,

which had been granted to the late monsieur Courtin, Priest and missionary to the Indians, from which fact it bears the name of île à Monsieur Courtin » (Canadian Archives report for 1905, Vol. 11, p. 150). The Abbé Courtin, a priest of the « Missions Étrangères » of Paris was sent from France to Québec in 1723. The following year he proceeded to Louisbourg to assist Antoine Gaulin who taught him Micmac. He returned to France in 1730, coming back in 1731 and wintering at Malpeque bay, where he ministered to the Indians after Gaulin's departure. He was drowned on the way to Louisbourg, according to a letter written by Lenormant de Mesy, June 30, 1732.

The sub-variant for this explanation will be as follows :

$$AX = Co\ Ho_1\ Ho_2 < S$$

where

Co = *Curtain*
Ho_1 = *Courtin*
Ho_2 = *Little Bunbury*
S = surname : Abbé *Courtin*.

Still more complicated is the etymology of the name Winnipeg in *Place-names of Manitoba*. Published for the Geographic Board by the Department of the Interior, Ottawa, 1933 :

Winnipeg : city ; Fort Garry, Hudson's Bay Co. fort, was the nucleus of the city of Winnipeg ; the name Winnipeg is first found on the title page of the *Nor'Wester* of 24 February, 1866 ; the previous issue is headed Red River Settlement, Assiniboia ; maps of 1870 show the « town of Winnipeg » ; post office opened in or about 1870 under the name of Fort Garry ; name changed to Winnipeg, May, 1876, when the city was incorporated.

Winnipeg : lake ; Indian name meaning « nasty water lake or sea or ocean lake ». T. David Thompson states more than once that the lake is called Sea lake from its size ; in the Jesuit Missionary Report sent home to France describing the happenings of the year 1640, there is a reference to the « Ounipigon » or « dirty people » so called because the word « ouinipeg », the name of the unknown sea from the shores of which they came, meant « dirty water » ; Jeremie (1720) refers to the lake as Michinipi or « big water » (p. 93-4).

The etymological sub-variant of the onomastic formula is as follows :

AX = Co Ho_1 Ho_2 Ho_3 Ho_4 Had < S and here :
Co = *Winnipeg*
Ho_1 = *Ouinipigon* 1640
Ho_2 = *Fort Garry* c. 1870.
Ho_3 = *Red River Settlement*
Ho_4 = *Michinipi*
Had = *ouinipeg* (dirty water)
S = Indian *ouinipeg* (dirty water).

So far, the most exhaustive, though popular, etymological dictionary of Canadian geographical names is the book by G. H. Armstrong, *The Origin and Meaning of Place Names in Canada.* Toronto, The MacMillan Company of Canada Limited, 1930.

The name *Québec* is explained in this book on p. 235 as follows :

Quebec : the oldest province of Canada, and its capital city, founded in 1608 by Champlain. The word Quebec is Indian in its origin and all authorities agree that its meaning is narrows, contraction, obstruction – « Where the river narrows ». Here is the narrowest place in the whole course of the St. Lawrence. The term is common to the Algonquin, Cree and Micmac languages and signifies the same in each dialect. Most of the early French authors spelled the word Kebec. Champlain wrote it Quebecq.

In the case of *Québec* the sub-variant of the onomastic formula is as follows :

$$AX = Co\ Ho_1\ Ho_2 < S$$

and here :

Co = *Quebec*
Ho_1 = *Kebec* (early French authors)
Ho_2 = *Quebecq* (Champlain), 1608.
S = Indian (Algonquin, Cree, Micmac) (where the river narrows).

It is evident from the above quotation that Armstrong paid attention only to the Anglicized form of the province and the city *Quebec* ; the French form *Québec* was left out in his book entirely. Also, quotations from early French sources (*Kebec* and *Quebecq*) were inadequately presented. This fact, as well as a number of others, prove that there is an urgent need for a serious work on an etymylogical dictionary of Canadian geographical names which would present not only full historical documentation for each name, but also would follow the aforementioned etymological formula *in extenso.*

Quod Bonum Felix Faustum Beatumque Sit !