Research Paper English

Toponamic of Scandinavian Reflected in the World's Oldest Place Names: A Brief Study

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ABSTRACT

Just before the old English period English developed contact with an important language, the Scandinavian, the contact began with the Danish invasion towards the end of the 8th century. This contact lasted for three centuries till the Norman conquest which brought French influence upon the English language the Danes were of Germanic race and spoke a language which very much like that their English cousins. Names provide evidence for language history in two main respects: firstly, as regards lexical and semantic content when first coined; and secondly as regards phonological and morphological development over the course of time .In this respect there is widespread agreement as to the extent to which evidence from names can be extrapolated to other areas of language .On the one hand ,both place names and personal names testify to areas of vocabulary and registers of language sparsely represented in other source; on the other,it is sometimes unclear whether these reflect ordinary language or specialized onomastic usage. Factors pertaining to the formation and transmission of names are in some respect unique, and will be outlined in this Paper besides a discussion of the main types of linguistic evidence preserved in the onomasticon.

KEYWORDS Scandinavian, place names, onomastics

Introduction:

Onmastics is the study of names, traditionally regarded as a sub-class of nouns having reference but no sense names occupy a special position within language is that they can be used without understanding of semantic content. Partly for this reason they tend to have a high survival rate, outlasting changes and developments in the lexicon, and easily being taken over by new groups of speakers in situations of language contact. Since most names originate as descriptive phrases, they preserve evidence for early lexis, often within areas of vocabulary in Scandinavian sparsely represented in other sources. Many place names, and some surnames, are still associated with their place of origin, so the data also contribute to identification of dialectal isoglosses. Moreover, since names are generally coined in speech rather than in writing, they testify to colloquial register of language as opposed to the more formal registers characteristic of documentary records and literary texts. Much research has been directed, towards establishing the etymologies of names whose origins are no longer transparent using a standard methodology whereby a comprehensive collection of early spellings is assembled for each name in order to trace its historical development .Changes over the course of time, often illustrating trends in non – onomastic as well as onomastic language the relationship between the two is not always straightforward ,however, since the factors pertaining to the formation and transmission of names are in some respects is unique .This Paper will discuss the main types of linguistic evidence preserved in names of various kinds ,and will also consider the relevance of this evidence to other areas of language.

Toponyms (place names)

Linguistic aspects of place names very often permit historical inferences about languages and the people who spoke them. A much – cited example is that of place names in England whose distribution and linguistic content reflect aspects of history .For example ,English place names which end in -caster , -cester and – chester reflect in Latin castra 'camp' (originally 'military posts ') borrowed into Old English as cester ,as in Lancaster ,Gloucester ,Chester ,Dorchester ,Winchester and so on .These provide information on the history of Roman occupation in England . The area with heavy settlement from Scandinavian during Old English times (called the 'Danelaw ' north and east of line running roughly from Chester to London) has over 2,000 place names of Scandinavian origin (see Map below) and these reflect the invasion and impact of Scandinavians in the history of England .The names of Scandinavian origin are recognized from linguistic elements of Scandinavian origin such as –by ,from Old Norse by 'settlement' ('village ,town'),as in Busby ,Derby ,Grimsby ,Kirby ,Rugby ; -thorp



Map Source: www.pinterest.com

from Old Norse porp 'village' as in Gunthorpe, Scunthorpe, Winthrop; and - waitel –thwaite ,from Old Norse pveit 'clearing ' as in Curthwaite ,Linthwaite ,Micklethwaite ,Seathwaite. This Distribution is seen in Map.In the region south of the Danelaw ,names with analyzable Anglo- Saxon (Old English) elements predominate, for example Old English –ham 'home'(used also in the sense of ' town ,village' as in hamlet) seen in places with the -ham ,as in Birmingham Buckingham ,Chatham, Durham, Nottingham etc.; and tun 'enclosure ,village ,farmstead' seen in the -ton of Arlington ,Kensington ,Southampton and so on .The evidence from place –name etymology shows that although today Xinkan speakers are relegated to very small area near the coast in southeastern Guatemala, in former times Xinken territory was much larger. This is demonstrated by place names found in the region which have

etymology in Xinkan but not in any other language. A few examples with their probably Xinken sources, are:

Ayampuc: ay- 'place of +ampuk 'snake '(Ayampuc is on snake –like ridge)

Ipala : ipal 'a' 'bath'(the volcano of Ipala has a crater lake)

Sanarate: s an – 'in,at' +aratak 'century plant'

The Origins of place –names

The names of most villages, towns and cities in England were coined during the Anglo – Saxon period from Old English or (in areas of Scandinavian Settlement) Old Norse .Others derived from the Celtic languages more represented in Scotland. Wales and Ireland, while survivals from pre –Celtic Linguistic strata are mainly found the names of large topographical features .The names of major rivers are among the most ancient toponyms, and parallels between British and European river -names appear to reflect a system of hydronymy in use on the continent and brought to Britain by pre –Celtic immigrants. These river -names preserve evidence for the earliest form of language spoken in the British Isles ,although it remains controversial whether this language was Indo – European the majority view or non – Indo –European. Even street names can be more than a thousand years old in the medieval parts of cities such as -Derby , London ,Nottingham and York.

The Structure of place –names

Most English settlement – names are made up of one or more usually two essentials indistinguishable or closely related to vocabulary words .Most represent a description of landscape feature or man –made structure "simplex "names Dean or Deane(OE denu 'main valley") ,Ford(OE ford ,'river – crossing ') in field -names and street names ,the generic is often a term for field or street in London ,Chancery Lane refers to the chancellor's office (ME chauncerie) and as in case of London < Latin Londinium ,based on Celtic root land 'wild ,bold '; Paris <Parisii (the names of a Gallic tribe) ; York < Jor –vik (a Scandinavian name containing vik 'small bay ')

The language of place names

Many place names are coined from terms also on record elsewhere .The most common element in English settlement names OE tun 'farmstead, village' occurs in hundreds of names , and some of those mentioned above in more than a hundred in number .The specific of Bagley is an unattested OE*bagga .the range of generics with which it combines ,including references to natural habitual and snares ,as in Bag Hill (OE hyll 'hill') ,Bagshot (OE sceat 'projecting land ')and Bawdrip (OE traeppe'trap') In sometimes in certain instances place –names support other types of evidence for word meanings .The Dictionary of Old English (Cameron et al .2008) tentatively suggests a meaning " 'churn ,or even 'dairy' "for three gloss occurrences of OE . A substantive use of OE brun 'brown' recorded as an occurrence within a riddle appears to refer to a brown animal.

Limitations and Cautions

So far, this Paper has considered only the various historical linguistic sources of information and how they might be applied to contribute to greater understanding of pre -history. All these things reflect historical events and connections .There is a large difference between speakers of the Indo – European languages in northern India and those of Iceland .Similarly ,Finno –Ugric languages are spoken by the western Caucasian Finns and the eastern .Similarly ,it is too frequently assumed in work seeking correlations between languages and genes that genetic classification of human groups may help answer questions about the classification of the languages .However ,the frequent expectation of a direct association between language and genes (the assumption of parallel) is incorrect .Work comparing findings in linguistics and human genetics needs to take seriously into account (1) that while a person has only one set genes (for life),a person can be multilingual ,representing multiple languages (2) that individuals (and communities) can abandon one language and adopt another ,but people do not abandon their genes or adopt new ones – language shift (language replacement) is a common fact of linguistic life.

Conclusion

In sum, the relationship between names and terminology is not straightforward, but this does not diminish the value of onomastic material in the study of historical linguistics .Although neither the initial formation nor the subsequent transmission of names directly parallel the glossary, the differences are themselves enlinghtening and reveal information unavailable from other sources .Handled with appropriate caution ,onomastic evidence provides insights which both supplement and extend those offered by other areas of verbal communication

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