Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland

Essay Prize

1. A prize of £50 will be awarded annually for the best essay on any topic relating to the place-names and/or personal names of England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Man or the Channel Islands.

2. Submissions are invited from all students and other researchers. The prize will normally be awarded to those who have not hitherto had work in onomastics published.

3. Essays should be about 5,000 words in length.

4. Entries should in some way make an original contribution to the subject.

5. One copy of the essay should be submitted to the Secretary of the Society in clear typescript, double-spaced, and including a bibliography of source-material used and of books and authors cited.

6. Entries will be judged by a panel appointed by the Chairman of the Society, and may be considered for publication in *Nomina*.

7. Entries must be submitted by 31st May each year. Provided an essay of sufficient merit is forthcoming, the winner will be announced at the Annual Study Conference in the spring of the following year.

Entries should be sent to:

> The Secretary
> Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland
> Queen's Building Library
> University of Bristol
> University Walk
> BRISTOL BS8 1TR

Agent Formations in Roman British Toponyms

Eric P. Hamp
University of Chicago

Paul Russell has contributed an excellent study of Welsh suffixes of agent basing the analysis on their function.[1] I have based an analysis on Russell's results, employing criteria of function and form to consider the survival of inherited Indo-European formations among these agent suffixes.[2]

The suffixes which I have inspected in this manner are: *-wr* (< Welsh *gwr* 'man' < West Indo-European **u̯iros*, cf. Latin *uir*), *-hai* (Proto-Celtic **-sagi̯o-* 'doer' < 'seeker', which can be traced to European Indo-European), *-ydd* (Proto-Celtic **-ii̯o-*, at least in part < IE **-Hi-ó-*, cf. OEng. *secg* = Latin *socius*), *-iad* (< insular Celtic **-i̯ati-*, related to insular and Continental **-t-*,[3] < IE **-tH₂- ~ -teH₂-*, cf. Vedic *-ti-* [agentive], Greek *-t-ḗ-s* as in *hepétēs* 'follower', Mycenaean *e-qe-ta*); and the moribund or fossilized suffixes *-en-* (seen in the plural *ych-en* of *ych* 'ox'),[4] participial **-nt-* (in *ceraint*, pl. of *câr* 'friend, relative' < 'loving'), *-dd* (found in *bardd* 'poet' and cognate with Latin *-idus*, a vestigial participle), and there is the extinct o-grade masculine thematic made from verb bases, illustrated by the class of *tomós* in Greek (always oxytone originally) and recognizable in Welsh *gwar* = OIrish *gor* 'pious, dutiful' < **gʷhorós* 'warming', i.e. formed on the same base as Eng. *warm* and Greek *thermós*.

[1] Paul Russell, 'Agent Suffixes in Welsh: Native and Non-Native,' *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 36 (1989), 30–42.

[2] Eric P. Hamp, 'Welsh Agent Suffixes and Indo-European', *Studia Celtica*, 26/27 (1991–92), 12–14.

[3] See Hamp, 'Welsh Agent Suffixes', p. 13 for detail.

[4] Also Breton *oc'hen, ouc'hen*, OBret. *ohen*, OVannetais *ohein;* see E. P. Hamp, *Annual of Armenian Linguistics*, 7 (1986), 63–64.

We are not occupied in that study nor here with the borrowed Latin -tor (e.g. VOTEPORIGIS PROTICTORIS, genitive singular, mid-sixth century),[5] nor with -arius.

Over the past couple of decades and more I have studied numerous toponyms of Roman British Celtic provenance in order to clarify their morphology and semantics. I have recently summarized that work largely by publishing a list of my publications on that topic since 1965, indexing that list by alphabetic mention of the toponym.[6] As an indication of the immense value of toponyms, and a fortiori of names in general,[7] for the historical study of the grammar of a language, it will be interesting to note the evidence (from a time depth of two millenia) which the British toponyms are seen to furnish for the class of Welsh (and, by implication, Cornish and Breton) formations abovementioned. We find that we can adduce ancient examples for nearly all items in this class, and even one specimen, a precious rarity, that the medieval and modern language fails to furnish.

The Welsh agentive in -wr began with a nexus of adjective + gwr, the latter becoming lenited by a grammatical rule when the nexus came to be treated as a compound; later, agent forms have come to affix freely a 'clarifying' -wr. Note, productively, Welsh delw-dorr-wr 'iconoclast' and chwyn-ladd-wr 'herbicide', cited by Stefan Zimmer (IX Congrès International d'Études Celtiques, Paris, 1991). Such formations lead to ambiguous brawd-ladd and brawt-gar, and to gwin-gar 'oenophile', beside lleu-fer 'light', the last ultimately from IE *-bhr-t.[8] Thus old agentives with final elements terminating in an unextended root would become increasingly unclear phonetically through final-syllable reduction and loss, as we see e.g. with the non-agentive *Maglorīx 'Great-king' > Welsh Meilyr, or *Toutorīx

---

[5] R. A. S. Macalister, Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum, 2 vols (Dublin, 1945–49), I, 342 (no. 358); for the date, K. H. Jackson, Language and History in Early Britain (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 169.

[6] 'Some Toponyms of Roman Britain', Studia Celtica, 26/27 (1991–92), 15–20. I shall publish an updating to the list of my publications there in the near future.

[7] 'Alauno-, -ā: Linguistic change and proper names', Beiträge zur Namenforschungen, 10 (1975), 173–78.

[8] With the final element revocalised and derived as *-b(h)erV-. On such formations cf. E. P. Hamp, 'I. Vedic upa-bhr̥t-', Indo-Iranian Journal, 22 (1980), 141.

'People's-king' > Welsh Tudyr 'Tudor', genitive *Toutorīgos > Tudri.[9] A fine relevant example of this is the ethnic name *Delgouices 'dagger-fighters'.[10] Such formations would have been initial candidates for -wr, i.e. *'dagger-fighting man', etc.[11]

The growth of -hai would have been gradual and perhaps sporadic. We do not have examples from Britain, and perhaps the semantic development (from 'seek', which is cognate with *-sagi-, to 'do') shows that it took time and was later. But from Gaul we find Curmisagius 'beer seeker', and in graffiti the potter Deprosagi(los) 'food (or dinner) seeker, i.e. glutton (or diner?)';[12] the latter may be a half-way development, since the first element is probably an ancient verbal noun with hitherto unrecognized cognates in Albanian, Greek, and Breton.

To match -ydd < IE *-Hi-ó we must again turn to Gaul, where we find good examples in Ex(s)cingius / Escigius (in variant spelling). In a Gaulish name such as Cingetius we may perhaps find a hypercharacterizing -io- agentive if in fact the -(e)t- is the agentive (see below) and not a homophonous nomen actionis suffix. The same ambiguity or redundancy is seen in Zimmer's cig-ys-ydd 'carnivore'. It must be said, however, that the identification and analysis of correct and justified British forms in *-io- is a very difficult and unsatisfactory matter.

Related to the suffix -iad (Welsh llys-leidd-iad 'herbicide', dyn- 'assassin', tad- 'patricide', cited by Zimmer) we have the Gaulish tribal name Atrebat-es, seen in Arras and derived from the stem of Welsh athref. On a possible cognate in the British cognomen Andiatis see my note, 'Andiatis Again', (Studia Celtica, in press), following up my 'Andiatis' (Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, 35, 1988, 51–52). The precise suffix found in Ogam VELITAS (> OIrish filed 'of a poet [of high rank]') and Gaulish gobed-bi (instrumental plural) 'by smiths' is englobed in Bremet-on-.

---

[9] Cf. my study, 'British Celtic BRIGE and morphology', Studia Celtica, 26/27 (1991–92), 9–11.

[10] Hamp, 'Some Toponyms', p. 18.

[11] The fact that Gaul shows extremely few clear specimens of final -uiros (see D. Ellis Evans, Gaulish Personal Names (Oxford 1967), pp. 286–88) means only that conservation of the old finals made this addition as yet otiose.

[12] See Evans, Gaulish Personal Names, pp. 80–81 and 251.

We now pass in review early specimens of the moribund suffixes. The old IE *-en- is clearly to be found in *Brem-en-io-* 'roar-er', and it was feminized to produce the river name *Breamhainn.* This suffix seems still to be traceable in the Welsh river name *Ed-en* < *pet-en-;* cf. my 'Welsh and Cumbrian *Eden'* (*Studia Celtica*, in press). The thematization of this suffix appears to be what was specialized in Western IE as the marker of chiefs of social units: *brigant-ī-no-s* 'king'[13] and *Dumno-n-iorum.*

The participial agent *-nt-* is obvious in the tribal name *Brig-ant-es*, and also **Brig-ant-iā* > river Brent. I have no good clear example to offer for *-(e)do-.*

An ideal example of the *o*-grade thematic is the OIrish genitive plural ethnic *Fir Bolg* < **uirī bholghón.* This must then be secondarily thematized (and hence vocalized in *e*) in *Belgae* and in the Lepontic personal name PELKVI (dative singular). This ethnic name must have proclaimed 'the swellers, the puffers, the boasters, the proud.'[14]

Finally, we may note an ethnic name displaying a formation which we cannot instance from the modern language but which we retrieve gratefully from the ancients. I have pointed out that the ethnic *Selgooúas* (Greek transmission) is an accusative plural of an oxytone *-u*-stem;[15] the noun must be 'Hunters', and is perpetuated in the place-name Selkirk (Scotland).[16] This finds a comparandum in Indic

---

[13] Eric P. Hamp, '**brigantīnos', Études celtiques*, 23 (1986), 50–51.

[14] See Eric P. Hamp, '*bolg* "gap"', *Ériu*, 40 (1989), 181; 'Bouges, Boug(e)y, Bolg, Blatobulgium', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 44 (1991), 67–69; and 'Varia XLIX: The Morphology of Celtic *-sk-* adjectives', *Études celtiques*, 27 (1990), 186–89 (at pp. 188–89).

[15] Hamp, 'Some Toponyms', p. 19.

[16] This continuation of British *Selȝ-* as *Sel-* had seemed to me obvious, as will be seen from my mention of it in '*Goídil, Féni, Gŵynedd'*, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 12 (1992), 43–50 (at p. 48); but Oliver Padel kindly points out that the standard references seem not to share that view. Indeed, in W. F. H. Nicolaisen, Margaret Gelling and Melville Richards, *The Names of Towns and Cities in Britain* (London, 1970), p. 169, the derivation 'church of the Selgovae' is dismissed, without a reason being given. *Sele(s)chirche*, or *-kirke*, provides a compound and segment string in every way as valid and plausible as *Searo-burh > Saresbir'*. The interconsonantal spirant of *lȝ > lj* (cf. Jackson, *Language and History*, pp. 466–69) was simply absorbed in the transfer to English.

---

van-ú- 'assailant'. Elsewhere the clearest fate in IE of this stem-class, apparently another old-fossilized participle, is to be found in the oxytone *-ú*-adjectives, especially antonyms. For Greek, Buck and Petersen list about 35 attested representatives, including *barús, ōkús, hēdús, kratús, pakhús, platús, dasús.*[17] Bammesberger recovers about ten such adjectives.[18] Lithuanian has even made this class latterly productive by transferring to it the *o*-grade thematic oxytones. Thus we have *drąsùs* 'daring, bold': *drįsti* 'risk, dare': *drąsà, drąsùmas, drąsybė* 'courage'. But these adjectives as *ú*-stems originally called for zero-grade in the base.

Of course, we might expect in an onomastic corpus that agentives would be found more probably among personal or divine names than among toponyms. But in a way, for that very reason, our canvass of toponyms has given us an even sterner test of the value of the testimony of ancient documented names for the purpose of recovering the history and development of grammar in the case of linguistic periods that are less plentifully attested or that lie on a horizon that recedes from view with the elapse of time. This exercise is naturally greatly aided by our ability to draw on comparanda from elsewhere in an extended linguistic family. But for our present task the moral to be drawn is a somewhat different one: if agentives are more likely in personal names than in toponyms, this means that the morphological analysis must be done exactly, with precision, and with substantive information; careful attention must be paid to function as well as to form or shape. This is particularly true of *-wr, -ydd, -(ia)d, -en-, -dd,* and their antecedents; and it crucially counts with ethnica such as *o*-grade thematics, derived *e*-grade thematics (*Belgae*) and *-u*-stems.

Onomastics is simply a selected segment of grammar, which of course is a part of culture and society.

---

[17] C. D. Buck and W. Petersen, *A Reverse Dictionary of Greek Nouns and Adjectives* (Chicago, 1944), pp. 19–22.

[18] A. Bammesberger, *Die Morphologie des urgermanischen Nomens* (Heidelberg, 1990), pp. 261–63.