

**STUDIES ON
UNCOMPOUNDED
PERSONAL NAMES
IN OLD ENGLISH**

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Studies on uncompounded personal names in Old English by Mats Redin

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IN
OLD ENGLISH

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

BY

MATS REDIN

LIC. PHIL.

BY PERMISSION OF
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Preface.

Several critics have recently drawn attention to the tendency shown in the works of certain scholars to explain the first members of English place-names as OE personal names, without regard to whether the alleged name is recorded in OE or not¹. This "epidemic of eponymitis" is, of course, above all due to the fact that in England this question has not been made the subject of a systematic investigation, as it has been, for instance, in Scandinavia; on the whole English place-onomatology has chiefly resulted in county monographs, whereas works dealing with general problems are remarkably few. That, under such circumstances, the handy expedient of interpreting an obscure member as a personal name is often made use of, is the more excusable since a reliable OE name book is still lacking. The deficiencies attached to SEARLE'S *Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum* are but too well known².

It would seem, then, that both in order to increase our knowledge of OE personal nomenclature as such, and also for the sake of future research in the field of place-names, one of the most urgent desiderata of English onomatology is that the OE personal names should be subjected to a critical examination, and especially those names which are not of the dithematic type, such as *Wulfstan*, *Aelfric*, *Beadhild*. Names of the latter type are by far the more common and the more easily identified, even when they appear in ME or NE disguise³.

¹ SEDGEFIELD, *Place-names of Cumberland* p. XXVI, GABRIELSON, *Svensk Hum. Tidskr.* 1917 p. 146, BJÖRKMAN, *E. St. LII* p. 179, EKWALL, *Namn och Bygd* 1918 p. 176. Cf. also WYLD, *Place-names of Lancashire* p. 10, MAWER, *M. L. R.* XIV p. 233 ff.

² Cf. *Athenæum* 22. 1. 1898, p. 110, and *Gött. gel. Anz.* 1900 p. 778 ff. (E. SCHROEDER).

³ In OE there probably also existed a few names which, though compound, differ from the *Wulfstan* type. It might perhaps have been desirable to include those too in this treatise, but since they coincide formally with the dithematic names, I have omitted them here. Cf. *Socin* p. 210 ff.

The present work, however, forms but the first part of such an investigation of the uncompounded personal names in OE, inasmuch as it comprises only those personal names which occur independently. Thus place-names have not been taken into account. This considerable curtailment of the material must naturally give a partly incorrect idea of the names in question, but in order to obtain fairly reliable criteria for determining what really is a personal name in an OE place-name, it has been thought necessary first to examine from various points of view the nature of those names which are undoubtedly personal names¹.

¹ In this connection it will be appropriate to draw attention to a phenomenon which, as far as I know, has not been mentioned elsewhere. WYLD, *Place-names of Lancashire* p. 9 f., says: "In fact in many cases the OE place-names have hardly reached the stage of becoming full-blown compounds or place-names in our sense. They are mere designations of particular fields ditches, brooks, trees, walls, wells, and so on." As instances of such boundary indications he quotes from KCD 'the old wall', 'the withered thorn', 'the new enclosure', 'the old ditch', 'the old byres'. "Those, and thousands of others are place-names in the making." The correctness of this is confirmed in a striking way by the fact that in charters, dating from the whole of the OE period, we very often find that when such a 'place-name in the making' occurs twice in succession, the second time only the second member is repeated, e. g. (BCS:) ... *to þam haran stane, of þam stane* ... 356; *to þære caldan dune, andlang dune* ib.; *on þane blaean pyl, of þan pytte* 552; *to lytlan crundelle, of þam crundele* 756; *on þone langan þorn, of þam þorne* 903; *on þa haran apuldre, of þære apuldre* ib.; *on þa caldan dic, of þære dic* ib.; *on þa seocan aac, of þære æc* ib.; (KCD:) *on þone bradan mere, of þam mere* 751; *on þa niwan dic, of þære dic* 775. Now it is to be observed that this holds good not only of such boundary indications as those quoted by WYLD, but also of those in which a personal name is contained, e. g. (BCS:) ... *op Aefelmodes wudu, þonne suþ be wudu oð Eddes dene, of þære dene* ... 670; *on Wærmundes treow, of þam treowe* 756; *to Beorhtnapes stane, of þam stane* 879; *to Cynulfes treowe, of þam treowe* 1072; *on Wulfan dune, of þære dune* 120; *to Tatanberge, and of þane beorge* 708; *on Eobban slæd, of þam slæde* 903; *to Grimes dic, andlang dic* 985; *to Lulles beorge, of þam beorge* 1072; *on Duddes dene, of þære dene* 1121. It is obvious that we are not concerned here with real place-names but with indications made for the occasion. It seems desirable that investigators of place-names should notice the difference between such formations and stabilized place-names more carefully than has been formerly the case. In this work, however, I have not taken into account any instances in which the personal name forms part of a place-name, because it is often difficult to decide how 'full-blown' a place-name is. Sometimes it has certainly been rather tempting

Only native names are dealt with. Thus I exclude names which can be proved to be 1. Celtic, 2. Scandinavian, 3. Continental-Germanic, 4. Romance, 5. Scriptural or Classical. Thanks to the excellent inquiries of BJÖRKMAN and FORSSNER, the separation of Scandinavian and Continental-Germanic names has been easy enough¹; neither have the two last categories presented any difficulties. Concerning Celtic names, on the contrary, the non-Celtologist is in a rather awkward position. KEMBLE's invitation to students of Celtic philology to examine the occurrence of such names in OE² has hitherto fallen on deaf ears, and apart from a few short papers and scattered items in periodicals, there hardly exists any other guidance than HOLDER's *Alt-celtischer Sprachschatz*. Moreover, certain names may equally well be Germanic as Celtic³, and this is probably the case with several of those given below. Yet, whenever I have been unable to verify their non-English origin, I have included them here; to eliminate those which are undoubtedly Celtic will be a task for experts.

The nationality of the bearer cannot always be taken as an absolute proof of that of the name⁴.

Since my chief aim has been to investigate the historical nomenclature in OE, I have omitted the names of non-Anglo-Saxons mentioned in *Beowulf*, *Widsith* and the minor epic fragments, though they often appear in a genuinely OE form. For a true understanding of those names an extensive analysis of Germanic sagas is necessary⁵, and that does not fall within the range of this treatise; besides, the names in question have always attracted the keenest interest on the part of scholars. If they also occur as independent names in England they are, of course, discussed⁶.

to adduce such loose formations in support of an otherwise scantily recorded personal name, but since they are, after all, more properly treated of in connection with place-names, I have thought it best to leave them out altogether.

¹ As a rule names of this provenance are also excluded when they appear in an Anglicized form.

² KEMBLE, *Names* p. 102.

³ Cf. KLUGE, *Urgermanisch* p. 8, COLLITZ, *J. E. G. Ph.* VI p. 253 ff., WERLE, *Die ält. germ. Personennamen* p. 13, SCHÖNFELD p. XIII.

⁴ Cf. CHADWICK, *Heroic age* p. 42.

⁵ Cf. GRAPE, *Studier* p. 40.

⁶ A list of all these names is found on p. 175. — On the use of heroic names in England cf. BINZ, *Beitr.* XX p. 141 ff., CHADWICK, *Heroic age* p. 64 ff.

Some of the bearers of those names are real, historical personages, though they lived in pre-OE times, but this is exceedingly doubtful in the case of several of the persons met with in the earliest OE literature. Now it is certainly "unreasonable to take the view that characters should be regarded as fictitious, unless they can be proved to be historical"¹, but as an example of a personage who is much debated in this respect we need only mention *Hengist* to realise that, at least for one who is not a professional historian, it is impossible to decide where in the oldest parts of the Chronicle and the genealogies the boundary is to be drawn between historical and non-historical names. Some of the genealogical names, especially among the ancestors of Woden, are of a mythical nature, some are also found in Widsith or other Germanic epics. Yet, in order not to be guilty of partiality I have included all such uncompounded names, except, of course, names of gods (*Woden, Dunor*). In the summary given on p. 176 ff. those which are undoubtedly fictitious have, however, been left out; in the name lists these are denoted by square brackets. Such exclusions are made very sparingly.

As a *terminus ad quem* I have chosen 1066. The Norman Conquest, which radically transformed the Anglo-Saxon community, also brought about a thorough change in English nomenclature². This was, of course, not an immediate one, and we have no doubt to regard the majority of the names in Domesday Book as OE names, since the bearers of those belonged to the generation that had already got their names when William I. conquered England. Besides, most of the names in DB quoted below are taken from 'Ellis B', which comprises persons etc. entered in DB as holding lands in the time of King Edward the Confessor (and during later years anterior to the formation of the survey). An investigation into the OE stock of names cannot, therefore, neglect to take into account this very important document, though it was not written until 1086. As a rule the principle has otherwise been followed that only pre-Conquest sources are cited.

Real bynames of the type *Brihtric reada*, *Godric fine*, are not included, unless they also occur in independent use, e. g. (*Eadberht*) *Præn*. In those cases where a name, such as *Hwita*,

¹ CHADWICK, *Heroic age* p. 159.

² Cf. FREEMAN, *Norm. Conq.* V p. 556 ff.

Leofa, is also found as a byname, though referring to another person, this is mentioned.

Patronymics functioning as such are excluded.

Concerning the sources employed a few special remarks are necessary¹.

When the same charter is published in several collections, generally only one is quoted; thus for the time before 975 BCS and after that KCD². My intention is not, of course, to give a complete list of various readings, and therefore as a rule only those forms are included which occur in the main texts chosen by the editors. This holds good not only of charters but also of other sources.

As is well known, the OE charters are edited in a very unsatisfactory way³; the dating especially is unreliable and often obviously misleading. Even when the charters have been subjected to ME falsification, GRAY BIRCH leaves that unremarked, and a revision of the collections in this respect is urgently needed. This is, however, a task that requires a scholar's undivided attention, and in order not to be continually interrupted by detailed argumentations as to the age of documents, I have been forced entirely to desist from discussing those problems. Thus the editors are solely answerable for the dates given for every charter; often, particularly in the case of more doubtful forms, I have mentioned that KEMBLE stars the charter in question as spurious.

Of the numerous uncompounded names found on coins many are extremely difficult, not to say impossible, to decipher⁴. Since, however, the primary material has not been accessible to me, and, besides, as GRUEBER p. C has pointed out, "the right reading of the name upon a coin is more a question of epigraphy than of philology", I have had to rely on the conjectures of the experts, though I have now and then made some reservation with regard to their readings. Contrary to the charters, the OE coins are, as is known, 'edited' in an excellent way. In some cases below we

¹ See further Bibliography.

² Tables showing the corresponding numeration of documents are found in SEARLE p. 591 ff., BCS III p. XXIX ff.

³ A brilliant exception is NAPIER-STEVENSON's edition of the Crawford charters in *Anecd. Oxon.*

⁴ Good accounts of the names of moneyers and similar problems are given by KEARY p. LXXXII ff., GRUEBER p. XCVII ff.