

# Onomastics as evidence of linguistic influence

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Onomastics as evidence of linguistic influence / Onomastika kao  
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## Summary

The topics discussed in this paper are the definition of onomastics, the problem of understanding what proper names are and how they can be distinguished. Two basic types, anthroponyms (names of people) and toponyms (place-names) are in the further text discussed in more detail. Prior to that, some relevant sources naming both personal and place names are stated. These sources are divided according to three periods: Old English, Middle English and Modern English period. The most important one is Doomsday Book which is the prime-source for Old English and early Middle English people and place names. After that, personal names and their development (or how they came into English language) are stated. They are also split in three periods. Cecily Clark and Richard Coates are the authors who wrote the most about English place-names and names of people and how they developed. Clark uses terms 'personal name', 'idionym', 'by-name' and 'nickname' when she addresses different kinds of people-names. The same terms are used in this paper. The first languages which had influence on what was to become English language were Latin and Celtic language. After them, North- Germanic tribes came and with them they brought their names. In the Middle English period, single idionyms were supplanted with combinations of family and baptismal names. Also, by-names became universalized. When place-names are concerned, they are also divided into the same three periods and they had been under the same influence as names of people.

Key words: onomastics, anthroponyms, toponyms

## Introduction

Baugh classifies English as a Teutonic language. He says that English language is a part of a group of languages where German, Dutch, Flemish, Danish, Swedish and Norwegian also belong. These languages have similar grammatical structure and many words in common. However, English language also has more than half of a vocabulary derived from Latin (some of it was borrowed directly and some through other languages (French, Romance languages)). Because of that, English language shares many words with other European languages that also borrowed words from Latin language (French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese).

This can be verified by observing the difference between Old English and Present-Day English which, according to Terttu Nevalainen, is most easily observed in lexis or, to be more specific, in the increase of borrowed vocabulary. Approximately seventy-five percent or more of Present-Day English vocabulary is made of loan words. This is the evidence of various foreign contacts and the growing demands made on the evolving standard language. “This is the period in the history of English when for the first time the vernacular extends to practically all contexts of speech and writing.” (Nevalainen, 1999:332) The names used to address people and places were also borrowed. The study of these names is called onomastics.

## **1. Onomastics (the definition of a name)**

In order to define onomastics, the term 'name' has to be explained first. George Redmonds defines names as "...special words that we use to identify a person, an animal, a place or a thing, and they all have a meaning. In many cases that meaning will lie concealed in the name's history, but in others it will still be transparent." (Redmonds, 2007: IX)

The term onomastics comes from Greek 'onoma' and it means *name*. Onomastics is thus the study of proper names. As William Bright (2003) points out, such study is carried out as part of some larger fields like linguistics, ethnography, philology, history, philosophy, etc. He, further on, discusses the term 'name' which, he says, people use when they refer to almost everything (e.g. "*Banana* is the name of the fruit."). As he notices, in this example, the word 'name' is almost synonymous with the word 'noun'.

People also use the term 'name' when they think of 'proper names' although there is a general category of names. Bright distinguishes two principal types of proper names: personal names or *anthroponyms* and place names or *toponyms* (other varieties also exist, such as *ethnonyms*- terms referring to nationalities or ethnic groups; and *glottonyms* – referring to languages). Of the ones mentioned, only anthroponyms and toponyms will be discussed in this paper.

Cecily Clark says that proper names are words without meaning; they make no sense because they have lost their meaning. They are words without connotation and are typically used to refer to individuals. She continues with the explanation that, before a descriptive formation becomes a 'name', it must be separated from its etymological meaning "in such a way that the sound-sequence, no matter how complex its structure or plain its surface-meaning, becomes a simple pointer"(Clark, 2005: 452). Further examples that Clark mentions are that no one expects to find oxen by the Oxford or that a person named 'Ginger' does not necessarily have the hair of the relevant colour.

However, Bright states that defining a proper name is not as easy as it may seem from the previous discussion. In the English language such words often appear in writing with initial capital letters but the same rule cannot be applied to spoken language. One thing which is also characteristic for proper names is that it is unusual for proper names to occur with articles (indefinite or definite).

Clark also mentions that proper names are often said to be 'names for individuals'. This, however, is quite false, because names, although they refer to individuals, do not denote individuals.

## 2. Source-materials

### **Old English**

Cecily Clark observed that the sources for early name-forms of people and places are more of a historic value than the onomastic one. These are mostly chronicles, Latinized administrative records, inscriptions, monumental and other. The sources which are of great use to onomastics for the Old English period are chronicles, Latin and vernacular, libri vitae, inscriptions and coin-legends, charters, wills, writs, other business records and Domesday Book.

She emphasizes that Domesday Book is the prime source for late Old English name-forms of people and places. It consists of two volumes which are of different standing. 'Little Domesday Book' deals with Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex and represents a redaction earlier and fuller than that of 'Great Domesday Book' which deals with the rest of the realm. About half of the material in the book dates to pre-Conquest times. The author points out that, at the orthographical level, these texts are unreliable. This is due to a few reasons: 1) not all the scribes used the traditional Old English orthography; 2) working conditions were unfavorable (name material cannot be predicted from context) which might have had as a result misreading, misunderstanding, miscopying or other mangling of the forms.

Clark mentions also two pre-Conquest confraternity-books from Durham Cathedral and Hyde Abbey which are used as rich sources of personal name forms. These books were constantly receiving additions (over the course of several centuries) and that resulted in dating of the strata. Also, the names often entered without the information regarding the rank or nationality of the bearers.

Additional evidence concerning personal and place names is found on all kinds of objects ranging from crosses and church walls to combs and rings.

## Middle English

The sources for the study of all kinds of names in Middle English consist of administrative records which means that, in this period, most name forms are at least perfunctorily Latinized. The main source of information here is also Domesday Book.

After this book, many series of governmental records followed, such as the Hundred Rolls, the many sets of Lay Subsidy Rolls and the Poll Tax Rolls. According to the author, such records covered the whole country in uniform style. However, none of it entirely survived and the individuals which have been listed were the ones liable to tax (probably heads of prosperous households). None of the tax rolls provides much information about women names and only a few gather some piece of information about the names of those that were poor. These records are best in localizing (to a village, large towns) and thus they give forms of all relevant place names. The rolls are in this way able to provide “a cross-section of personal name patterns, analyzable in geographical and/or socio-economic terms.” (Clark, 2006: 545)

The Middle English period is the earliest for which documentation is sufficient enough to enable the viewing of personal names when social status and geographical locations are concerned. Along with governmental records, other kinds of documents survived in this period. These are voluminous records from the various types of law-court (the King’s Bench, the coroner’s courts, etc.), the collections of *miracula*, etc. The most valuable of all of these are many local archives which date back to 1100 and even earlier.

The 13<sup>th</sup> century is the time when many series of the manor-court rolls detailing routine village business began. These local records provide the earliest extensive evidence for non-aristocratic English personal naming and authentic forms of place names (mostly those of ‘minor’ kinds). Sources like these are the earlier of the two Bury St Edmunds estate surveys and the late 13<sup>th</sup> century *Carte Nativorum* or ‘peasants’ charters’ from Peterborough Abbey.

## Modern English

Personal names have been recorded for the most part since 1538 in parish registers and “in the centralized and systematized General Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths, which was begun in 1837...”(Coates, 2007: 332) Written records by 1776 are not mainly consisted of the names of people of higher social status anymore (e.g. landlords, merchants, freeholders) but also contain names of peasantry and names of women.

When place-names are concerned, they were recorded in the same documents as personal names. They appear in these in their present orthographic form (or a form which is very similar to that of today). By this time, names of larger places were for the most part fixed and many fields and minor topographical elements are recorded and documented (e.g. street maps of larger towns).

There is a number of gazetteers and topographical dictionaries that provide name-sources and valuable topographical descriptions – Samuel Lewis’ *Topographical Dictionaries* (1830-1840); the *Parliamentary* (1847); the *Imperial* (Wilson 1870); Anderson’s *Book of British Topography* (1881); Hudson’s *Commercial Gazetteer* (1957) and others.



### 3. Personal names or anthroponomy

#### Old English

The tradition of giving names to persons, Clark states, comes from West-Germanic people. Their custom required that each individual should have a single, distinctive name.

She uses the term ‘personal name’ in her text when she wants to address an anthroponym but if the need for greater precision arises the term ‘idionym’ is a better option. In a case where a supplementary name of any kind is collocated with an idionym, Clark uses the term ‘by-name’. The term ‘nickname’, on the other hand, is used to denote “any characterizing term whether used as by-name or as idionym”(Clark, 2005: 456). These terms will also be used for the purpose of writing this paper.

The names given by West-Germanic people were not ready made but, instead, were made of ‘themes’ (words were formed from a list of existing themes). A single theme was used to make a ‘monothematic’ name but mostly, these themes were linked in pairs to make ‘dithematic’ names. These two themes were combined freely with usually no semantic connection between them (e.g. *Thorsten* > *Thor* + *sten* ‘stone’ – not meaning ‘the stone of the god Thor’). The best collection of these theme based names is Bede’s *Historia* which has about 200 names in it, two thirds of them being ‘dithematic’. The author exemplifies some of the Bedan name-themes which include names regarding nobility (*Beorht*-/*-beorht* – ‘radiant’; *Brego*- – ‘prince’; *Cyne*- – ‘royal’), national pride (*Peoht*- – ‘Pict’; *Wealh*-/*-wealh* - ‘Celt’), religion (*Ealh*- – ‘temple’), strength and valour (*Beald*-/*-beald* – ‘brave’; *Weald*-/*-weald* – ‘power’), warriors and weapons (*Beorn*- – ‘warrior’, *Dryht*- - ‘army’, *Ecg*- – ‘sword’) and battle (*Sige*- - ‘victory’). Examples of some dithematic names: *Beornfred*, *Peohthelm*, *Wigbeald*, etc.

Family-names in the modern sense did not exist in those times. Nevertheless, people wanted to show family and other relationships between themselves when forming an Old Germanic name. That is the reason for royal genealogies (e.g. the West Saxon sequence: *Cerdic*, *Cynric*, *Ceawlin*, *Cuða*, *Ceadda*, *Cenbeorht*, *Ceadwalla*).

A man’s name in Old English often shared an element with his father’s name (*Wulfstan* – *Wulfigu*), and less often an element with his mother’s name even though women’s names also participated in the permutation system; e.g. a daughter of king *Hereric* and queen *Bregoswið* was called *Hereswið*.

Names recorded from that period are mostly those of the upper-class men while names of peasants seldom appear in documents. Women names are also very hard to be found which makes the social stratification impossible to determine. However, after 900 upper-class naming became narrowly stereotyped. As already mentioned, the main source for name-forms of Old English and early Middle English period is Doomsday Book. The dithematic forms found in it concerning the name stock are based on eighty-two themes. Many of the names occur in it only once or twice except for *Ælfrīc*, *Godrīc*, *Godwine*, *Lēofwine* and *Wulfrīc*. The names written down in here all belong to landholders, although not all of them were great nobles. It also includes many short forms and a few non-heroic ones.

The peasant names, Clark notices, partly resembled those of nobles, “with ‘heroic’ dithematic names frequently borne by both sexes and with family-links marked by alliteration and theme-permutation”(Clark, 2005: 462). Among peasant name-patterns short name forms were quite frequent (e.g. *Hwīta* – ‘the white-(haired) man’).

### 3.1. Minor outside influences – Latin and Celtic influences

In the fourth and fifth century Germanic settlers came to Britain where they borrowed words from the language of the Romanized Celts. Celtic influences in these parts were not very strong because of which all they left was a large number of place names, a few personal names and a couple of common nouns. The usage of certain similar forms of Celtic personal names (*Cæd-/Cead-* > *Cedd*, *Ceadda*; West-Saxon *Cumbra* > Welsh *Cymbro*) indicates that they were held in honor when the other settlers arrived.

Besides Celtic personal names, other sorts of foreign names also appeared in pre-Conquest England. These names were introduced by church people and the native English people did not favor them. They were taken from the Christian tradition (Old and New Testaments, the Church Fathers, the saints).

### 3.2. Scandinavian influence

With the arrival of the Vikings around 870s, Scandinavian (North-Germanic) names were introduced into England. They were also made of ‘themes’ and some of these ‘themes’ remained similar to some Old English ‘themes’ (e.g. Scand. *Björn*-/ *-björn* - OE *Beorn*-). However, most cognates had become phonologically differentiated in the regular ways (Scand. *Odd*- - OE *Ord*-; Scand. *Ulf*-/*-ulfr* – OE *Wulf*-/*-wulf*). On the other hand, some frequent Scandinavian themes were completely different from Old English and foreign to Old English name-usage (e.g. *Freya*- - representing the old Scandinavian goddess; *Orm*-/*-ormr* – ‘dragon’; *Svein*-/*-sveinn* – ‘lad’). The Scandinavians were fond of names originating as characteristic nicknames such as *Forni* and *Gamall* (both meaning ‘old’), *Gaukr* (‘cuckoo’) etc. With this Scandinavian element becoming a part of Old English, attempts have been made to use it as a guide to cultural relationships between the two peoples.

Cecily Clark warns that assessing incidences of Scandinavian-influenced naming can be difficult. In the southern Danelaw the natives would recognize or partially recognize the Scandinavian forms and Anglicize the names concerned (Anglicization of inflexional patterns and often of the themes). This at times resulted in the production of forms identical with actual or potential Old English forms and because of that it is not easy to determine how much the late Old-English currency of forms like *Hereward* (*Hervarðr*) may have owed to hidden Scandinavian influence.

Scandinavian personal-naming in England differed somewhat from region to region. Clark divides Viking-age Scandinavian dialects into two main groups: west (Norwegian, Icelandic) and east (Danish and Swedish). Women’s names from that time and that social level were usually less scandinavianised than those of men. One of the possible reasons might have been that Vikings often came alone in these parts and then married Englishwomen as a way of securing title to English lands. In such marriages daughters were, more often than sons, named according to maternal traditions.

However, Scandinavian influence in these parts was not the crucial one which is affirmed by Robertson who says that although the Anglo – Saxons brought many words to Britain when they conquered it “the Old English vocabulary was, and remained, overwhelmingly Germanic.” (Robertson, 2005:148)

### 3.3. By-names

The term ‘by-name’ was already mentioned in this paper but without the proper definition and explanation. Cecily Clark defines them as: “the technical term for an element added ... to an idionym, for more secure identification.” (Clark, 2005: 469) They are divided into four categories: familial; locative (place of present or former residence of the bearer); honorific or occupational and characteristic (nicknames based on person’s appearance). In the pre-Conquest use of names, examples which fit into all these categories can be found.

The examples Clark mentions are: *dohtor* or *sunu* (used to show the family relationship), *cyning*, *abbudisse* or *biscop* (used to show terms of rank), *sē cōc* or *sēo dæge* (used when referring to trades). In Old English, many non-dithematic names were etymologized as nicknames (*Blæcca* – ‘the black (-haired) man’) and nicknames are a category of by-names.

### 3.4. Names of holidays

Wrenn explains how the word ‘Easter’ came into the English language. In early Old English time, many Christian Latin words entered the English language. Some of those words stayed there permanently. They were used for expressing new concepts. New meanings were given to these pagan words to express new Christian connotations. This can be observed by using the example of Anglo-Saxon great spring festival which was a symbol of revival of nature and life. With this festival, the Anglo-Saxon year began and goddess of dawn *Eastru* was celebrated. The festival was called *Eastron*. The missionaries took the name when they came to the island and the name stayed in the language in the form *Easter*. “For when the Christians came with their great festival of the Resurrection (called in Latin *Pascha*), it seemed so like the native *Eastron* that this word remained with an entirely new significance.” (Wrenn, 1954: 39)

## Middle English

People from the Old English period (in order to address themselves and each other) used a single distinctive name ('idionym') like *Dudda*, *Godgifu* or *Wulfstan* which were in some cases followed with by-names such as *sēo dæge* > 'the dairymaid'.

This is not the case with Present-Day English 'full name' which involves two components: the second one being inherited from the father and thus denoting a patrilinear family group and the first one referring to an individual within that group. The second part of full name in today's usage is the most important element for close identification. This was not the case in Old English usage where the idionym was the central part for addressing and identifying a person while every other addition was optional.

The Middle English system of names changes and the term 'idionym' is not appropriate anymore. This term is replaced by the term 'baptismal name'. Most of the population still used the Late Old English name system by the year 1100. The only difference was that by-names were more commonly used than before. "... but by ca 1450 a structure prefiguring the present-day one had been established, with hereditary family names in widespread use, though not yet universally adopted." (Clark, 2006: 552)

### 3.5. Baptismal names

This shift from single idionyms to combinations of family and baptismal names happened in most of the Western Europe. The possible cause for this could have been the general decline in the old Germanic custom of exchanging the conventional name elements with new idionyms. "What was crucial was the subsequent reliance not merely on the finite stock of set forms but largely on a very few disproportionately favored ones." (Clark, 2006: 552) In the early 11<sup>th</sup> century the practice of more frequent usage of by-names began because the individuals of similar idionyms had to be distinguished. However, the practical convenience, which was crucially important to bureaucracy also had a lot to do with the passing of by-names from older to new generations (usually from father to heir).

This process took a different turn in England because of the Norman Conquest which complicated everything. In a short time almost all pre-Conquest landholders had been replaced by foreigners (mostly Normans). Bishops and abbots who were newly appointed raised foreign conquerors into positions of prestige. Merchants from Normandy, France and Flanders came into many English towns. All these people brought with them their name fashions current in their homelands. This soon resulted (within a generation) in baptismal names (among peasantry and higher classes) which were characteristic of the settlers. The change influenced the English name system greatly because, by approximately 1250, the names borrowed from these foreigners had replaced all the pre-Conquest names like the Old English *Wulfstan* and *Godwine* with typically ‘English’ baptismal names which were reflexes of ‘continental’ ones like Alan, Alice, Robert, Susan and so on. The peasantry resisted these new fashions the longest. Few names of Old English origin were preserved and they were mainly the names of saints (Edmund, Edward, Cuthbert).

However, even though so many new names were adopted, there was no increase in variety. The natives, when naming their children, leaned more on the existing set of names and among them only few gained on popularity (names John and William made up almost a third of the total names in London in 1292).

Baptismal names became inadequate for an identification of an individual (be that for social, administrative or for legal purposes). Thus phrases specifying bearer’s genealogical, residential, occupational or characteristic terms were added to their baptismal names. These practices were known to English people even before the Conquest but they came to use in post-Conquest times. The ‘fashion’ of using by-names (territorial ones especially) next to baptismal names was the result of the Norman Conquest (the usage of by-names in the settlers’ homelands in Normandy, France and Flanders was widespread and it even had some tentative movements towards family naming).

By the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the baptismal name was widely used, even among the peasantry. The reason for this was the lord’s interest (who collected rents and taxes) to ensure that the individuals concerned were specified precisely and it was also in the individual’s own interest to be specified when it comes to his holdings, rights and inheritances.

The names present on the island before the Norman Conquest “had incorporated various strains reflecting aspects of the country’s social and political history” (Clark, 2006: 554). The West Germanic settlers who conquered the natives in the 5<sup>th</sup> century brought to the island a stock of name elements (themes) which mostly carried heroic meanings. The mixing

of these resulted in the production of both simplex ('monothematic') and compound ('dithematic') idionyms (they could be joined in endless combinations).

The Vikings, with their arrival, absorbed North Germanic naming customs and within a short time adopted it in places where they were settled. During this pre-Conquest period West Germanic naming customs also had an influence on the island. This was possible due to the immigration of clergy, merchants and nobility. Celtic styles also partly survived in some borderline areas (Cornwall, Cumbria). Even so, pre-Conquest usages have never been uniform or static.

The crucial development "was that there grew up during the 11<sup>th</sup> century a grossly disproportionate favoring of just a few out of the many name forms current" (as already mentioned) (Clark, 2006: 555). Thus, English personal naming has, with the beginning of the Conquest, already started changing.

### 3.6. New naming styles

The dominant naming styles in the 11<sup>th</sup> century were of the West Frankish origins. These names partly resembled native Old English ones due to the fact that they were also created from a set of 'themes' which were then freely combined. All the Germanic dialects did not have in common all the themes but some can be recognized in some of the names found in the records (e.g. OE *Wimund* – Scand. *Vigmundr*).

Some 'Norman' types of names (Scandinavian ones, handed down by the early 10<sup>th</sup> century Viking colonists) were not as easily distinguished from West Frankish ones. Also, some of these names in England were hardly distinguished from their Anglo- Scandinavian equivalents. A number of the names came from Ireland through Vikings due to the fact that the Vikings used Irish forms when constructing 'Norman' names. These names are: *Brian*, *Muriel*, *Neil*.

However, the main impact when it comes to naming styles did not come from minor and local influences previously mentioned but, instead, came from Christian tradition of taking names from Old and New Testaments. The origins of these names were different, often involving Greek or Hebrew. Still, such 'Christian' names were not favored on the island and

thus their great post-Conquest popularity may be completely based on the reinforced continental influences (the names in question are *John, Peter, Simon, Stephen, Thomas* and others).

### 3.7. Middle English by-names

By-names became universalized between 1100 and 1300. In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century records by-names hardly appeared. The exceptions to this were situations where individuals of the same idionyms had to be distinguished. In late 1200s cases in which baptismal names were unqualified were rare. This was due to several causes: 1. the attempt to reduce the appliance of only few baptismal names which were over-used and 2. the need for greater precision in identifying an individual “at a time when communities were expanding; growth of bureaucracy, and a consequent drive towards onomastic precision; and imitation of the new aristocracy’s customs.” (Clark, 2006: 567)

As previously mentioned, by-names can be divided into several different categories: a) familial ones (defining an individual by parentage or marriage); b) honorific and occupational ones; c) locative ones (referring to present or former place of residence); d) characteristic ones (‘nicknames’).

Of these categories, the one that is most often used is familial one. In early records, all kinds of relationships are mentioned (e.g. daughter/ son, wife/ widow, brother/ sister, father/ mother, *nepos* ‘nephew; grandson’, *cognatus* ‘kinsman’, *socius* ‘business partner’ or *serviens* ‘employee, apprentice’).

On the other hand, occupational names were characteristic of towns. Around 1100, there were approximately twenty-five occupations, some of them being bakers, horsemen, millers, priests, reeves, smiths, merchants, skinnners and goldsmiths. Some of these terms were Latinized, some were English and some French.

Middle English terms can be divided into several categories. One of the categories is the one in which simpler forms are inherited from Old English (e.g. *cok* ‘cook’, *herde* ‘herdsman’, *smith*, *webbe* < OE *webba* ‘weaver’, *wrighte* < OE *wyrhta* ‘craftsman’). Most of



these were derivatives or compounds. The agent- suffix *-er(e)/ fem. -estre ...* could be affixed to either (a) verbal bases (*bruere/ breuster* < OE *breōwan* ‘to brew’, *heuere* < OE *heāwan* ‘to hew’ etc.); or (b) substantive ones (*glovere* < OE *glōf* ‘glove’, *glasier* < OE *glæs* ‘glass’ etc.).

Middle English locative by-names (the ones meaning individual’s homes) can be divided into two linguistic categories: 1. toponymical (considering proper place names) and 2. topographical (specifying some feature of the bearer’s homestead). The ones that were recorded the earliest were toponymical by-names. The evidence of this is seen in the nobles taking names from their principal estates before 1066 and immigrants retaining designations of the places where they came from. Topographical by-names, on the other hand, indicate that the bearers have for some time been living at the place described in the name (‘at the cross’, ‘at the green’, ‘under the wood’, ‘at the kitchen’ etc.) thus implying that to be the most typical thing about the bearer. Examples of toponymical by-names: ‘Hathaway’ – a path across the heath, ‘Fieldhouse’ – lived in a house in pasture field, ‘Greenaway’ – a grassy path, ‘Croucher’ – lived near a cross, ‘Titchener’ – lived near a crossroads (OE *twicken* – ‘two’)

The final important sub-category of by-names is that of ‘nicknames’ (expressions which physically or morally characterize their bearers). Examples of these are: *the Rede/ le Rus/ Rufus* ‘the red haired’; *Rob. Hod* ‘hood’; *Th. Pecoc* ‘peacock’ etc.

A few examples of medieval by-names are mentioned also in Chaucer’s verses. These examples include characteristic French phrases such as: *beausire* (Richard Beusir), *pardee* (Henry Pardeu), *par amour* (Roger Paramurs) and *bel amy* (Peter Belamy)

### 3.8. Family naming

By-naming became universalized in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> century and made name styles of that period look almost modern. In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century, usage of by-names was not systematized yet. As already mentioned, the population relied on a few of the many baptismal names available which called for a solution in distinguishing between individuals who carried the same baptismal name (idionym). Beginning in 1066, members of the immigrant nobility and gentry started getting distinctive by-names which were adjoined to them with regards to their territorial possessions or as nicknames.

A Middle English name, in order to be viewed as a ‘true family name’ (in other words, onomastically hereditary) had to be carried on from a parent to an heir even after it ceased to be literally true. It also needs to be passed on all the other children of a family and then those children have to pass it on their children, this going on indefinitely.

The cases of first hereditary by-naming (family-naming) in England were noticed with Norman immigrants. This started when some Norman nobles began passing by-names from parent to heir (even before 1066). English settlers copied this custom and used it with either pre-Conquest continental by-names or new ones derived from English estates.

“...the decisive innovation in name custom seems to have been virtually accomplished by the mid- fifteenth century, with the shift of primacy from baptismal name (or ‘idionym’) to family name.” (Clark, 2006: 582)

### 3.9. Women’s names

In medieval English records women’s names are less adequately represented than men’s. They rarely amount to even tenth of the total in estate surveys and are even lower in numbers in tax-rolls rations.

Continental name fashions, as already mentioned, became popular on the island in this period. However, they were never static and the new widespread trend involved a rising popularity of ‘Christian’ forms. When women’s names are concerned, “two related generalizations are often made: (a) that they tended to be less stereotyped ... and (b) that they reflect the ‘Christian’ fashion both earlier and more extensively.” (Clark, 2006: 584)

Views such as these seem to have influenced the development of family naming. In today’s form, conventional family naming involves two independent practices: 1. the inheritance of a surname from generation to generation and 2. for a woman to receive her husband’s surname (family-name) upon marriage. A woman in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, if she was of a noble origin and an heiress, could have kept her family name and pass it to her sons. This custom ceased to be performed after the 13<sup>th</sup> century when husband’s family name was extended to his wife.

Among people of lower social status, the usage of family-name was slower to settle. Documents from the 13<sup>th</sup> century mention women as often as they do men “but perhaps proportionately more frequently by complex periphrases detailing family relationships...” (Clark, 2006: 586) Women (married or widowed) were identified in reference to their husbands.

Some women had independent styles of by-naming which were not connected with their husbands or their fathers. There is only a small number of them because women were rarely publicly defined by occupations of their own. Examples of these by-names are: *Juliana Selkwomman*, *Margeria le Goldescherste* etc.

## Modern English

### 3.10. Personal names

It was thought that the Modern corpus of English personal names was essentially that of the high Middle Ages. However, Richard Coates says that, although this was thought to be true for a few centuries, he has to disagree due to the fact that many names were introduced into the English name stock between 1485 and 1776 which became popular only in the later period.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, certain names from Old Testament were popularized among non-Jews by puritan pastors (names such as *Abraham*, *Aaron*, *Esther* or *Ruth*). Certain Latin and Greek names were also frequently used (revived in Renaissance and applied afterwards). Examples of these are: *Alethea*, *Caesar*, *Julia/-us*, *Lavinia*, *Paul* (gained its popularity because of New Testament rather than Latin origin) and *Virgil*. The intake of Greek, Latin and Italian names was “the source of the modern-day typical female name in –a. Some classical doublets for established names came into vogue, e.g. *Lucia* for *Luce*, *Lucy*.” (Coates, 2007: 340) The remnant of this is seen in today’s names (pairs of names) *Anne/Anna*, *Helen/Helena...*”

Literature was always a great source of new, innovative female names (e.g. Shakespeare’s *Juliet*; Swift’s *Vanessa*; Lovelace’s *Lucasta*; 18<sup>th</sup> century female names ending in –inda > *Belinda*, *Dorinda*).

With the arrival of the house of Hanover on the throne of England, the names which were favored by German royals became fashionable. Not all of these names were of Germanic origin “but the German connection accounts for the popularity, especially at first among the upper classes, of e.g. *George*, *Caroline*, *Charlotte*, and *Albert*.” (Coates, 2007: 340)

### 3.11. Personal-naming since 1776

The stock of names used in 1776 was still rather restricted and thus resembled the one of the late Middle Ages. Besides that, the custom of using Biblical names also survived until this time. These names replaced the names of saints who were non-scriptural and/or of dubious authenticity (e.g. *Bennet, Christopher, Catherine, Margaret* – very popular in medieval times).

In Elizabethan times, the fashion was to use surnames as baptismal names in order to mark connections of family or sponsorship (e.g. *Percy, Byron, Sidney, Scott, Wayne, Stuart, Keith, Leslie*, etc.). In the previous examples, all names stated are male names. However, the same can be applied to female names (e.g. *Shirley, Trac(e)y, Hayley, Kell(e)y*).

The 18<sup>th</sup> century was a time when defunct names started to be revived (this fashion reached its full vitality in 19<sup>th</sup> century). The main source for these names before 1840s are historical novels of Walter Scott (e.g. *Cedric* (mistakenly for *Cerdic*), *Guy, Nigel, Wilfred* (*sic* for *Wilfrid*)). Other revivals are *Arthur, Edith, Hugh, Maud, Alfred* and *Roger*. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the fashion was to give children neglected saints' names (e.g. *Bernard, Benedict, Edmund, Kenelm, Aidan, Mildred, Theodore* etc.)

A great number of names has been borrowed from other cultures (French *Josephine* and *Louise*; Danish *Karen*; Gaelic *Catriona* and *Fiona*; Russian *Natasha*). Some names have been supplemented with other forms of existing names (*Julia* for *Julie*; *Maria* for *Marie/Mary*; *Diane* for *Diana*).

Many baptismal names originated as pet-forms and with time gained a status of independent names (e.g. *Kate* (*Katherine*), *Jill* (*Gillian*), *Alec* (*Alexander*)). However, the opposite situations are also noted. Examples where pet-forms were extended and became independent names are: *Alison* (from *Alice*), *Marian/Marion* (*Mary*), *Janet* (*Joan/Jane*) etc.

Sexually ambiguous names were declared abandoned and the contact between male and female names by morphological means has been renewed (creation of female names by suffixation of female elements – e.g. *Thomasine* > 16<sup>th</sup> century *Tamsin*; *-ina* > *Georgina, Davina*; *-ette* > *Georgette*; *-a* > *Philippa, Roberta, Paula*).

Before the Stuart period, it was unusual for an individual to have more than one first name. For a man to have two names became usual only in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century double names were only common when women were in question (e.g. *Marry Anne, Anne (Anna) Maria, Mary Jane, Sarah Jane*). Regardless of their

etymology, they were treated as single names and these women would be addressed using the full form of the name.

### 3.12. Surnames

Hereditary surnames were most intensely created during the period of high Middle Ages. This process was finished by the beginning of our period.

English surnames have undergone only a slight change since 1776 and little has been added to English surname stock since then. “The adoption of a different surname to one’s inherited one involved taking a pre-existing one, usually at the behest of a relative bearing it, in order to come into an inheritance...” (Coates, 2007: 348)

All surnames are in their origin by-names. They can be divided into four main classes:

1. derived from true by-names - *Reid/Read* > ‘red (-haired)’; *Gildersleeve* > ‘golden sleeve’
2. derived from locations (local surnames) – (strictly metonymic) *Marsh, Green, Street*, etc.; (true place names) *Crawley, Sutton, Darbyshire, Ireland* etc.
3. derived from family relationships (surnames of relationship)– *Anderson, Wilkinson*
4. derived from occupational terms (surnames of occupation or office) – *Smith, Baker, Hayward, Coward, Reeve*

## 4. Names of places or toponymy

### **Old English**

#### 4.1. *England* and *English*

The origin of these names dates from the time of the Anglo-Saxon invasion. The Celts called Teutonic conquerors Saxons probably due to the fact that they had their first contact with them through the Saxon attacks on the coast. The name was accepted by Latin writers who started calling them *Saxones* and the land *Saxonia*. This was soon replaced by the terms *Angli* and *Anglia* because *Saxones* referred not only to the Angles but also to the Teutons generally. “Aethelbert, king of Kent, is styled *rex Anglorum* by Pope Gregory in 601, and a century later Bede called his history the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*.” (Baugh, 1957: 57) Soon terms *Angli* and *Anglia* become usual in Latin texts.

The same terms, *Angli* and *Anglia*, were not, however, used by the writers in the vernacular who always used the term *Englisc* (*English*). The origin of that word is the name of the Angles (OE *Engle*) which was used too generally. It was used to name all the invading tribes. The land and the people who lived there were called *Angelcynn* (Angle-kin or race of the Angles) which stayed the common name until after the Danish period. *England* (land of the Angles) started to take its place around year 1000. “The name *English* is thus older than the name *England*...” (ibid.)

#### 4.2. Changeable place-names

It is difficult to study place names because new people were coming to the island and occupying it. They did not always change the names they found there “but usually modified the pronunciation to resemble that of their own language.” (Ayers, 1986: 205) For that reason, the earliest forms of place-names had little in common with later forms of the name (e.g. *York* > *Eburacon* (the language of the ancient Britons) > *Eburos* (name of a man)). This word later (when Anglo-Saxon invaders came to the island) became *Evuroc* and then *Eofor*; the suffix *wic* (‘dwelling place’) was added to it. With the invasion of Danes, the name *Eoforwic* acquired the pronunciation *Iorvik* which eventually turned into *York*.

### 4.3. Old-English place-names

“Place-names begin as topographical and/or possessory descriptions of the sites concerned.”(Clark, 2005: 471) (e.g. *Barton* – OE *beretūn* > ‘arable farm’) This is also the case with English place-name elements which started as everyday words. The basic terms are divided into two categories, topographical and habitative.

Habitative terms are used when we want to address certain types of settlement (e.g. *hām* ‘abode’ which corresponds to ‘home’). Terms denoting buildings included *ærn* (used also as a common noun) and *bold/bōtl/bōðl*, the base for OE *byldan* > ‘to construct’. Latin loans with habitative meanings included *ceaster* > ‘camp’. Places having OE names in *-ceaster* were usually described as *civitas* and ones with names in *-burg*, as *urbs*- both Latin terms denoting places such as provincial capitals.

Some elements in names of places in Present-Day English are very similar to simple forms in Old English: *Chester* < *ceaster*; *March* < *mearch*; *Burgh/Bury* < *burg*. However, typical Old English place-names were usually compounds (e.g. *Beaconsfield* < OE *bēacnes feld*; *Oxford* < OE *oxena ford*).

Another way of naming place is by adding a suffix *-ing* to a personal name and thus forming a patronymic (e.g. *Tredinton* < OE *Treding tūn*). When pluralized, this patronymic gave a tribal name (e.g. *Hastings* < OE *Hæstingas*; *Finchingfield* < *Fincinga feld*). The *-ing* was added also to toponyms (*Stubbington*). This formations could also be pluralized (*Barking* < OE *Berecingum*).

### 4.4. Pre-English influences – Celtic

The study of Celtic place-names is difficult because settlers paid little attention to speech forms that they encountered and they adopted them into their own speech forms thus enriching them with strange, previously unknown sound-patterns.

Some British names for regions were known to the settlers before they arrived and thus they stayed unchanged (*Kent*, possibly *Thanet* and *Wight*) while others were unknown to them (*Lindsey* (*Lindesse*) > combination of the old Roman name of *Lincoln*, *Lindon* + a British suffix *-is* (also found in *Loidis*, *Leeds*)). *Kent* got his name from Celtic word *Canti* or *Cantion* (meaning unknown).



However, the origin of two Northumbrian kingdoms of *Deira* and *Bernicia* is known, their names derive from Celtic tribal names.

“... *Deira* (cf. Welsh *deifr*, ‘waters’) and *Bernicia* (Br *Briganticia*, from the tribal name *Brigantes*.” (Strang, 1976: 392) OE *Defnascir* (*Devonshire*) is a combination of the old tribal name *Dumnonii*, *Cornwealas* (‘the Cornubian Welsh’) and *Cumberland* (‘land of the Cumbri, British’) (cf. Welsh *Cymri*).

Some major towns from that period were known to them before settlement (e.g. *London*, *Dover*, *Lympne*, *Reculver*, *Richborough*), and others after it, such as *Winchester*, *Salisbury*, *Dorchester*, *Exeter*, *Cirencester*, *Gloucester*, *Worcester*, *Lichfield*, *Lincoln*, *Doncaster*.

Celtic elements can often be found in the names of major natural features, rivers, hills, forests etc. Examples of such places are: rivers *Trent*, *Thames*, *Dove*, *Leddon*, *Dee*, streams that have *Avons*, *Usk*, *Exe*, *Axe*, *Dover* and *Wye* –names. Baugh also mentions the words meaning ‘hill’ which are found in place-names like *Barr* (cf. Welsh *bar*, ‘top, summit’), *Bredon* (cf. Welsh *bre*, ‘hill’), *Bryn Mawr* (cf. Welsh *bryn* ‘hill’ and *mawr* ‘great’), *Creech*, *Pendle* (cf. Welsh *pen* ‘top’) and others.

Other specific Celtic elements appear, such as *cumb* (a deep valley) (e.g. *Duncombe*, *Holcombe*, *Winchcombe*), *torr* (high rock, peak) (e.g. *Torr*, *Torcross*, *Tronhil*), *pill* (a tidal creek) (e.g. *Pylle*, *Huntspill*) and *brocc* (badger) (e.g. *Brockholes*, *Borckhall*). A few Latin words such as *castra*, *fontana*, *fossa*, *portus* and *vicus* were also used in naming places besides the previously mentioned purely Celtic elements. These Latin words were passed on by the Celts to the English.

#### 4.5. Pre-English influences - Latin

The British people had contact with the Roman Empire on a couple of occasions. The first contact happened during the course of several centuries before the Anglo-Saxon invasion. In that period, a number of Latin words were introduced to the natives. However, there was not much cultural contact between these peoples and because of that not many Latin words were preserved from that time.

Today, there is a record of approximately 450 names that survived from this Romano-British period, most of which are preserved in their Latinized form but almost all are of Celtic

origin. The Romano-British names of the places survived until today mostly because they were modified. Modification went in such a way that the clipped forms of the names concerned were “adopted as specifics to Old English generics, usually to the loan-element –*ceaster* (e.g. *Exeter* < OE *Exanceaster*; *Winchester* < OE *Wintanceaster*). The original Latin word from which –*ceaster*/-*cæster* derived is the word *castra*.” (Clark, 2005: 479) A number of places in Roman Britain were used as seats of military garrisons (‘so-and-so camp’ (*castra*)): “and one of these, *Chester*, was for so long the garrison- town of a particular Roman legion that it came to be called *legionis castra* ‘the Legion’s camp’ and passed direct into Old English as *Legaceaster*.” (Wrenn, 1954: 38)

Compounds which consisted of British and Old English parts (this parts being near-synonyms) were not rare. Examples of such names are: *Bredon* < British *bre* ‘hill’ + Old English –*dun*; *Chetwode* > Welsh *coed* ‘forest’ + Old English *wudu*.

Only a few place names which are still in use are of purely Latin origin. E.g. *Lincoln* – a contraction of *Lindun Colonia*. Latin, when place names are concerned, mainly borrowed name elements to Old English. E.g. *camp* < *campus* ‘open ground’; *port* < *portus* ‘harbor’; *wīc* < *vicus* ‘settlement’. Names which involved these loan-elements are noted in districts settled after 600 and often near a Roman road and/or a former Roman settlement.

#### 4.6.Scandinavian influences

Vikings brought to England their own range of name-elements. The suffix which is still in use is *-by* meaning ‘settlement, of any size’. When they settled on the island, the Vikings adapted existing English place-names to suit their own speech-habits.

Most Scandinavian place-names belong to the time of first settlement in the Danelaw. “Fresh territorial divisions, administrative arrangements and coinage demonstrate the importance of the Norse settlement in official life, but our central concern must be with the number of settlement names, which shows the density of habitation.” (Strang, 1976:338) She mentions the same name-elements used in naming as Clark but she also adds some. These elements are: *-by* and *-þorp* forms, *booth* (‘a hut’), *lathe* (‘a barn’), *garth* (‘an enclosure’), *thwaite* (‘a clearing, meadow’); many nature-names - *bank*, *breck*, *fell*... Not all names

formed with the elements mentioned are of the same type. Some of them are purely Scandinavian while others are not.

Baugh (1957) lists the places which bear Scandinavian names. These places are: *Grimsby, Whitby, Derby, Rugby, and Thoresby* (all in all, around six hundred places ending in *-by* > the Danish word meaning 'farm' or 'town'), *Althorp, Bishopsthorpe, Gawthorpe, Linthorpe* (approximately three hundred of these ending in *-thorp* (village)), *Applethwaite, Braithwaite, Cowperthwaite, Langthwaite, Satterthwaite* (around three hundred ending in *thwaite* (an isolated piece of land)), *Brimtoft, Eastoft, Langtoft, Lowestoft, Nortoft* (about a hundred of these ending in *toft* (a piece of ground)). When all these places are counted, we can say that around 1400 Scandinavian place-names exist in England.

## **Middle English**

### 4.7. Major and minor place names

Place names are usually classified in two types of places: ‘major’ (names of regions, mountains, rivers, settlements) and ‘minor’ (fields, farms, manor-houses, bridges, brooks, landmarks, tracks, streets and city-gates). Thus, studies concerning Middle English place names fall into two categories: those which study relatively stable major names and those that study minor names whose development is at the beginning. Minor place name studies are further divided into those that concern field names (the land and cultivation) and the ones that concern street names (towns and trade).

### 4.8. Major place names

Most English names of settlements became established before the Conquest. However, some new place names were also created during the Middle English period. Examples of these places are: a) those that bear names of traditional Old English types (such places ending in *-ing*, *-ham*); b) those that have topographical generics (ending in *-bridge*, *-mouth*, *-ford*); c) places starting in specific *New-* (*Newborough*, *Newcastle*, *Newport*, *Newtown*); d) towns that received purely French names: *Battle*, *Beaulieu*, *Belvoir*, *Devizes*, *Egremont*, *Mountsorrel*, *Richmond* and others; e) towns that bore names transferred from foreign localities (*Caus*, *Baldock*).

#### 4.9. Minor place-names

“Field names form the largest and best-known category of rural microtoponym.” (Clark, 2006: 595) Regular Middle English terms for sections of field were: *furlong* (*furh* ‘furrow’ + *lang* ‘long’); *flat* (*flatr*); *shot* (OE *scēat*); *wang/wong* (*vangr* ‘field’). They are named according to their shape or position but they also include occasional transferences of the name of an access road or of some minor landmark (e.g. *Hiderfurlong*, *Middelfurlong*, *Middelwong*, *Brocfurlong*, the pejorative *Brembilfurlong*, *Rygweye*, *Appeltre*).

Further on, “between the medieval and the modern periods, field naming shows only a limited continuity, having been reshaped by the processes of ‘enclosure’...” (Clark, 2006: 599)

## Modern English

### 4.10. New place-names

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were the time when new elements were introduced in place-naming (almost all were borrowed from French). These elements entered into such constructions as *Lake, Mount, County, Port, Cape* (in contrast with the traditional English order –*mere, Hill/-hill, -shire, -port/-haven, -head/Point*).

The older place-name records show periodic importation of continental names. “But within England, transfer is not found irrefutably as a general place-naming strategy till late Tudor times.” (Coates, 2007: 354)

By the 18<sup>th</sup> century period, name-transfer has become institutionalized. Places which were newly founded (hamlets, farms, smallholdings) often bore names of foreign countries or of places in foreign countries.

### 4.11. New place-name elements

One of the borrowed suffixes is –*ville*. It came from French *ville* (‘town’) and it is probably the basis for French models like *Deauville*. The earliest use of –*ville* is in the names of (originally) select developments on the periphery of fashionable resorts (e.g. *Pittville, Pentonville, Cliftonville*).

Something similar happened with *town* (the usage of this can be noted from late eighteenth century). E.g. *Somers Town, Camden Town, Canning Town, Princetown, Kemp Town*, etc.

The word *village* is rarely found as a toponymic element. Few examples that do exist are: *(the) Park Villages, Botton Village* etc.

#### 4.12. Street-names

With the rapid expansion of towns in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century, “it was usual to find the tactics that had given rise to the previous generation of farm and smallholding names being used to name streets and terraces...” (Coates, 2007: 365)

Much of the land was in private ownership (aristocratic, private landholders). Thus it is not unusual to find a collection of streets which bore names of family, friends and other estates of the family or family seat of the owner. In London, this started to be used around 1700s but other examples can be found in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. These are names connected with the Dukes of Bedford, and those relating to the Dukes of Devonshire in nineteenth-century Eastbourne (Sussex).

The word *street* has, in the twentieth century, been supplanted by words *road*, *avenue*, *drive*, *way*, *gardens* etc. “Way is common for major thoroughfares, built to relieve traffic congestion, as in *Mancunian Way* in Manchester...” (Coates, 2007: 367)

## Conclusion

Onomastics is, as previously stated, the study of proper names. Proper names are words which are void of meaning and they are divided into two principal types: anthroponyms (names of people) and toponyms (names of places). The development of both of these types can be separated into three periods, the Old English, the Middle English and the Modern English period.

Anthroponyms have undergone a great change in English language. First names were made of themes. Later on, under the influence of Celtic and Latin languages and North-Germanic tribes, new name-forms were introduced. This was followed by the introduction of baptismal names in Middle English (idionyms were replaced). The baptismal names later became inadequate for identification and by-names came into use. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Normans brought with them their types of names. The Middle English period was also the time when family-naming became popular. The names in the Modern English period started to take their Present-Day form.

Toponyms have been under the same influence as anthroponyms. Celtic, Latin and Scandinavian influence is still obvious in name-places containing certain name-elements (Celtic > *Dover, Avons*; Latin > *-ceaster, port*; Scandinavian > *-by, -þorp*). In the Middle English period most major place-names were already established while minor place-names (of fields) were settled. The Modern English period is the time when some new French name-elements were introduced. During this period, streets also started to get their names.



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