

Postscript to *The Faroese Bird Names*

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DUNNA

In an article »Keltisk Indflydelse paa Færøerne« in *Tingakrossur* 1–2, 1902, Jakob Jakobsen drew attention to the similarity between Far. *dunna* 'domestic duck' and Sc. Gael. *tunnag* 'do', and concluded that the Faroese word was a borrowing from Gaelic. This explanation was, however, not generally accepted, other scholars preferring a Germanic etymology which saw a cognate in OE, OLG *dun(n)* 'dun'. In *The Faroese Bird Names*, 1961, pp. 12–14, I was able, on the basis of further evidence, to vindicate Jakobsen's view and demonstrate that his explanation is, in essentials, the correct one. Meanwhile, in a contribution to the forthcoming volume of *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung*, the philology of OE, OLG *dun(n)* will be found treated in detail; there is no doubt that this adjective has nothing whatever to do with Far. *dunna*.

A little more may be said about the position of Sc. Gael. *tunnag*. It is diminutive in form and cognate with Northern Ir. *tonnóg*, seen from H. Wagner, *Linguistic Atlas and Survey of Irish Dialects*, 1958, p. 48, to have been an East Ulster word, or at any rate to have survived there, for everywhere else in Ireland only *lacha* has been recorded.

In Antrim, *lach(a)* meant 'wild duck' (P. S. Dinneen, *Irish-English Dictionary*, 1934), a meaning which must have been general throughout East Ulster. In this connection, I was thinking in terms of possible Scottish influence in Northern Ireland. It seems, however, that the forms are best explained on the assumption that Ir. *tonn-* retains the primary vocalism, which was altered by raising of *o* to *u* (in association with the nasal) giving Sc. Gael. *tunn-*. It will not be irrelevant to mention the Manx evidence. As an Eastern Gaelic dialect, Manx usually agrees with Scottish, but in this case Mx. *tunnag* (the literary form) was heard from the last surviving speakers as *tonnag* (K. H. Jackson, *Contributions to the Study of Manx Phonology*, 1955, p. 39). It is known that Mx. *lagh* became attached to the teal, a wild duck fairly commonly met with round the Island (cf. P. G. Ralfe, *The Birds of the Isle of Man*, 1905, p. 168). Manx thus reflects the opposition *tunnag/lach* 'domestic duck/wild duck' characteristic of Scottish Gaelic and paralleled in Far. *dunna/ont*. Such facts do not, of course, affect the theory of the Gaelic provenance of Far. *dunna*, except for confirming the view that the word reached the Faroes from the Scottish (Hebridean) region. Our word may certainly be classed with Far. *kjallámur*, *køkja* and *drunnur*, which Chr. Matras, *Fróðskaparrit*, III, V, and VI, has shown to be loan words specifically from Scottish Gaelic, leaving no doubt that colonists from this area played a part in the settlement of the Faroes.

It goes without saying that *dunna* is the oldest witness to the Gaelic name, which judging from the silence of the *Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language*; *to-tu*, 1948, is absent from the medieval and early modern records.

HYPLINGUR

In *The Faroese Bird Names*, pp. 26–7, I discussed the etymology of *hyplingur* or *hiplingur* m. 'cormorant', in essence as follows. The name occurs outside the Faroes in

Orkney Norn *hiblin*. The earliest datable attestations in Faroese are from the 17th and 18th centuries: Resen 'hiblinger vel hyblinger' and Leem 'Høbling' which points to *hyplingur*. The Faroese evidence thus lends support to the etymology proposed by H. Marwick, *Orkney*, 1951, p. 205, where *hiblin* is interpreted as the 'hipped one'; we can postulate ON **hyplingr* from *-huppr* 'hip' with the suffix *-lingr*. The motivation for such a name would derive from the conspicuous white patch on the bird's flanks; it has parallels in Orkney Norn *lairblade*, *lairblading* from ON *lær* 'thigh', *blett* 'patch' and in Shetland Norn *white lorin*, i. e. *hwītlorin*, the same word as Norw. *kvitlāring* lit. 'white-thighed one'. Against this, however, an Icelandic name for the cormorant had to be taken into account. This is *hnuplungur* (known since the 18th century), which can hardly be anything else than a derivative of *hnupla* 'seize' — an allusion to the bird's voraciousness. Having now a satisfactory etymology for the Icelandic name and in view of the conservative character of the Icelandic language, one might be inclined to consider that the Faroese/Orkney form could possibly be a secondary corruption. But the nature of the information available precluded any firm decision.

I now see that I overlooked a piece of evidence very material to the case. A. W. Moore et. al., *A Vocabulary of the Anglo-Manx Dialect*, 1924, record *huplin* 'cormorant' and quote from an unnamed source: »Some we call hiplen and others we call shags. I think the huplies are shags in English, they are larger than the cormorants and in the breeding season have a white spot on their sides under their wings in the shape of an egg. The bird we are calling 'shag' at Peel they are calling 'huplin' at the south-side.« This entry is not entirely satisfactory as it stands, for beside *huplin*, the forms »hiplen« and »huplies« are used. Fortunately, the ms. from which the *Vocabulary* was printed is available at the Manx Museum, Douglas (M. 2267/8A H),

and reference to this shows that *huplin* is the only correct form, the others being errors made at the printing stage. The ms. entry is, quite exceptionally, rather different from the printed version and seems to reproduce more faithfully the Anglo-Manx idiom of the anonymous informant. The relevant passage goes as follows: »The bird they're calling 'shag' at Peel they're callin 'huplin' at the Southside. Huplins is bigger till cormorants, and in the breedin season they've a white spot on their sides under their wings in the shape of an egg . . .« We may ignore the confusion of the terms shag and cormorant (the former is commonly used indiscriminately for both species in the Isle of Man), but the information on the name '*huplin*' is explicit enough: the cormorant is meant, the shag does not have the tell-tale white patch.

Thus, from the Isle of Man, is a positive record of precisely the same name as is found in Faroe and Orkney. Though not attested until the publication of the *Vocabulary*, the Scandinavian name must nevertheless have reached Man some time during the period of Norse domination which lasted from the middle of the 9th century to the middle of the 13th. Before Norse ceased to be spoken on the island — at what date it became extinct we do not know — the word must have passed into Manx Gaelic and so the name continued in living use, though unrecorded. It survived the demise of Gaelic (moribund since about 1870) and then found its way into print as a term peculiar to Anglo-Manx. Its provenance was, to all appearances, unknown to the compilers of the *Vocabulary*; it seems to be the only example of a Norse bird name which survived as such in Manx.

The presence of this name so far from the Faroe-Orkney area leaves no doubt that the Faroese and Orkney Norn forms do, in fact, regularly continue an original Old West Norse name. Furthermore, the Manx form *huplin*, with radical *u*, points unmistakeably to ON **hyplingr*, with *Mx*.

u representing ON *y*, cf. Mx. *burling* 'sort of boat' (Ir. *buirling*) < ON *byrðingr*, Mx. *stiur* 'rudder' (Ir. *stiúir*) < ON *stýri*, but e. g. Mx. *gill* 'ravine' (Ir. *gil*) < ON *gil*. We can therefore conclude that Far. *hyplíngur*, not *hiplíngur*, is the etymologically correct spelling. We are in a position to accept Marwick's interpretation 'hipped one', since it is now evident that Icel. *hnuplungur* is nothing more than a popular perversion of Old Icel. **hyplungr*, a variant of **hyplíngr*, adduced by association with the verb *hnupla*.

MÁSI

ON *már* 'gull' survives to this day locally in Suðuroy as *mávur* 'herring gull' with a relic of the old genitive in *mósungi*, the name for the immature bird. Faroese otherwise uses *mási* for this bird, i. e. an *=s* derivative of the former word found also in Norwegian (and Swedish) *måse*. In Suðuroy the local form *mávur* is equated semantically with the more generally used word *mási*. Apart from this local survival in Faroese, ON *már* lives on in Icel. *máfur* and in Orkney Norn *maa* (*Faroese Bird Names*, pp. 42–43). It has left no record in Shetland Norn, but it was identified long ago, at least tentatively, in Engl. *fulmar* lit. 'foul gull' (cf. *Oxford English Dictionary*); this compound has a parallel in ON (Hallfreðarsaga) *fúlmár*. It has been shown (W. B. L., *British Birds*, XLVII, 1954, pp. 336–9) that Engl. *fulmar* was borrowed from Scottish (St Kildan) Gaelic *fulmair*, in which dialect the word is a loan from Norse. It has been further shown that St Kildan *mall* 'gull' represents ON *már* with local change of *r* to *ll*, a change which did not operate in the case of *fulmair* owing to the influence of the original *l* in the first element *ful-* (W. B. L., *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, x, 1963, pp. 53–55).

Thus we find ON *már* attested in Iceland, Faroe, Orkney and St Kilda; it has obviously been lost in Shetland Norn. We can now safely conclude that *már* was the original word for 'gull' in the old West Norse colonial area. Against

this background we may reconsider the Faroese names *mávur* and *mási*. Clearly, the former belongs to the oldest stratum, but the latter, though now dominant, appears as an intruder. We therefore feel entitled to regard Far. *mási* as a loan word from Norwegian.

ÓGVELLA

I have argued for the onomatopoeic origin of the name *ógvella* 'long-tailed duck' (*Faroese Bird Names*, pp. 10–11), thus implying that the Icelandic form *haferla* lit. 'sea wag-tail' is not the primary name but a secondary creation due to popular etymology. I have since had access to the material being collected for the projected *Tiernamenwörterbuch* of the Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin.

This material contains three names from German dialect which have connections with our Scandinavian name. The first is *Aulit*, from Schleswig-Holstein; this word is clearly identical with Older Danish *havelit* and will belong to the Danish substratum. The other forms, from unspecified localities, are *Auliek* and *Hauliek*, which can hardly be anything else than varieties of the first word. It would be possible, of course, to interpret the last as 'hau gleich', but such an interpretation would be secondary. Onomatopoeia is here primary.

The rich German material confirms, in a general way, the theory of the onomatopoeic origin of the name. In winter-time, the long-tailed duck visits the Baltic coast of Germany in large flocks. The bird is thus well known and has acquired many local names. Its raucous call is proverbial and regarded as a sign that spring is not far away. Such a bird is a popular visitor and has been given the familiar name *Klashahn*, containing the Christian name *Klaus*. The name occurs in many variations, one of which *Klasklasaudelitt* is reminiscent of the Scandinavian. Otherwise the German names for this duck refer mainly either

to the remarkable tail e. g. *Spitzschwanz*, or else to the remarkable voice e. g. *Pöler Nachtigall* – from the Island of Poel. These will be the two most general features about the duck likely to give rise to a name. In connection with the latter we may compare a Scottish Gaelic name for this bird: *lacha bhinn* ‘musical duck’, the sound of the ducks’ chorus being likened to the skirl of the bagpipes (cf. C. Fergusson, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, XII, p. 79).

PRESTUR

The use of Far. *prestur* lit. ‘priest’ as a name for the puffin *lundi*, known from Mohr’s Dictionary, was compared to a similar development in Icelandic (*Faroese Bird Names*, p. 79), cf. also Icel. *prófastur* lit. ‘archdeacon’ in the same sense. I omitted to mention a report in K. Williamson, *The Atlantic Islands*, 1948, according to which *lundi* had been used as a fisherman’s noa term for priest; no further particulars are given.

As for a possibly wider context for the entry of the puffin into holy orders, one might compare the French name for the species *macareux moine* and the scientific *fratercula* (also *mormon*).

Other names, purely Faroese:

PLI n. ‘gull chick’. Onomatopoeic, cf. *pli* ‘call of a gull chick’.

VENDINGARFUGLUR m. ‘stormy petrel’. A name from Hov: *vending* ‘change of currents’; the bird was said to be seen most when the current was changing (M. A. Jacobsen—Chr. Matras, *Føroysk-Donsk Orðabók*², 1961).

ÚRTAK

Omanfyristandandi grein bætir um ávísar samantøkur í *The Faroese Bird Names*, Færoensia V, 1961. Við at draga fram nýggjar upplýsingar

vísir høvundurin á, at *dunna* er tøkuerð úr skotsk-gæliskum, og at *ógvella* er eitt ljóð-orð. Framvegis verður millum annað sýnt, at *hyplingur* kann verða skilt sum avleiðing av fornnorrønum *huppr*, »huppur«, eftir staðnum á *hyplingi*, har *hyplingsblettur* er, og at *mási* er tøkuerð úr norskurum.