Etymologies

Author(s): Ernest Weekley

Source: *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Oct., 1911), pp. 471-475

Published by: [Modern Humanities Research Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3713282>

Accessed: 06-01-2016 19:20 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Modern Humanities Research Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Modern Language Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

ETYMOLOGIES.

BALINGER. I have spent a great deal of time on this word without coming to any conclusion, except that the accepted identification with 'F. *baleinier*, whaleman, whale-boat,' is probably wrong, although the two have been confused. There appear, in fact, to be three groups of medieval ship names which have got muddled, viz. Du. *bylander*, a coaster, whence probably F. *bélandre*, It. *belandra*, Sp. and Port. *balandra* (Jal), L.* *balenarius*, whence F. *baleinier*, Sp. *ballener*, Port. *baleeiro*, etc. (Körting, § 1167, Jal, s.v. 2 *baleinier*), and our *balinger*. The confusion between these is seen in the fact that the A.F. *balenger* of the Black Book of the Admiralty is wrongly rendered in each case *bilander* in the translation (temp. James II), while Froissart's normal *balengier* occurs in some MSS. as *ballener*. Jal devotes a long article to the word, and, while admitting the identity of E. *balinger* and F. *baleinier*, puts the connection with the whale very vaguely (s.v. 1 *baleinier*). For some years I have been in the habit of noting occurrences of the word in medieval texts and a comparison of some sixty or seventy instances has led me to the following conclusions:

(i) The word crops up in the fourteenth century and is obsolete c. 1600, app. superseded by *pinnace*.

(ii) The *-ng-* forms are essentially E. or A.F., though they occur also in O.F. writers dealing with E. naval matters (Froissart, Wavrin), and occasionally elsewhere.

(iii) The *balinger* was the smallest warship, the classification 'niefs, barges et *balengers*,' occurring repeatedly in naval documents, where F. texts usually have 'nefs, barges et *batels*.' It was chiefly for scouting duty.

(iv) The name was applied also to small coasting vessels and to tenders accompanying large merchant ships.

(v) No connection with whaling is ever suggested, nor have I found an E. *balener*, although '*baleen*, whale,' was a familiar word in M. and Tudor E.

(vi) The *-g-* was possibly hard, the normal Sc. form being *balingar* and the M.L. (Walsingham) *balingaria* as well as *balingeria* (Rymer).

What I regard as a possible etymology is suggested by the history of *boyer*, which corresponds to G. *Bojer*, used of small vessels in the North Sea and Baltic, and goes back to Du. '*boeyer*, genus navis' (Kilian). This is certainly related to Du. '*boeye*, G. *Boje*, bury,' but the reason for the name is obscure. In the '*Rooles d' Oleron*' in the Black Book of the Admiralty occurs *balingue* (var. *balinge*, *balingne*) in the sense of 'buoy' and also the verb *balingner* (var. *balinger*, *baligner*). Jal also quotes '*balingue*, buoy.' I propose therefore the proportion *balinger* : *balinge* :: *boeyer* : *boeye*. This *baling(n)e* is probably related to the mod. '*balise*, buoy,' of unknown origin (v. Du. *langer* and v. *balisagium*). It is *balingua* in the Catalan version of the *Rooles*.

CADGER. The N.E.D. has a verb *cadge*, with various senses connected with 'binding.' It is from M.E. '*caggen*, to bind,' which, as the N.E.D. says, cannot be connected with F. *cage*, to which the older etymologists referred *cadge*, *cadger*, in the 'peddling' sense. The N.E.D. suggests that '*cadge*, to peddle,' may be a separate word, and derives *cadger* from it. My object is to show that the *cage* etymology is very probably right for *cadger*. To begin with, *cadger*, recorded for 1450 (*cadgear*, Henryson), cannot very well be derived from the verb '*cadge*, to carry about as a pedlar does his pack,' which is not booked till 1607. It would rather seem that the verb is a back-formation (cf. *hawk* from *hawker*, *peddle* from *pedlar*). Leaving aside the dubious '*falconer's cadge*' of 1615 which has been copied by so many dictionaries, there is an authentic '*cadge*, panier' (N.E.D.). The verb *cadge* is especially Sc., and I imagine the *cadger* transported his wares on his back or in paniers slung on each side of his 'capel.' I cannot quote for O.F. '*cage*, basket,' but it has several senses approximating thereto, and its It. cognates *gabbia*, *gabbione* have both meanings. The following entries from Kilian's '*Appendix peregrinarum, absurdarum, adulterinarumque dictionum*,' seem, however, to prove this meaning: '*cagie*, cavea, cors (sic), cista, corbis dossuaria,' and '*cagiacord*, cestifer. qui caveam aut corbem portat.' Unless these words are borrowed from Sc., which seems unlikely, they must represent O.F. '*cage*, basket,' and, with suffix change, '*cagier*, *cadger*.' *Rippiet*, sometimes synonymous with *cadger*, is derived by the N.E.D. from '*rip*, basket,' a parallel formation.

DISCARD. Explained usually as from *dis* and *card*, hence 'to reject a card.' The N.E.D. compares O.F. *descarter*, Sp. and Port. *descartar* (Minsheu), It. *scartare* (Florio). It is, however, very doubtful how far these words originate from card-playing, though '*scartare*, to discard at cards' (Florio), may be a separate word from '*squartare*, to quarter' (Torriano). The view generally held (Schéler, *Dict. Gén.*, and see Körting, §§ 2123, 3476) is that there has been contamination between two separate words, and that It. *scartare* (whence G. *Skat*) and F. *écarter*, in the card-playing sense, belong to *carta*, while, in the general sense of removal, separation, rejection, we have to do with a L. **exquartare*. The O.F. *descarter*, quoted by the N.E.D., means in Godefroy, *écarter*, the only example being '...les Anglois...tueront grand nombre de François et les font *descarter*' (15th cent.). F. *écarter* occurs too early (12th cent.) for it to have been a card-playing word. The oldest record in E. for *discard* (c. 1580) gives it the meaning 'degrade, dismiss, cashier,' and this is the only meaning recognized by the L. dictionaries of the seventeenth century, from Holyoak (1611) onward and by Sherwood in his index to Cotgrave (1650). Cotgrave does not appear to recognize the 'card' sense of '*escarter*, to scatter, dissipate, dispartle; also, to *discard*; to set, or lay apart; also, to sheed, squatter, throw about, or abroad.' Sp. *descartar* has the general, as well as the special, meaning, and even It. *scartare* is used for *ricusare*, *rigettare* (*Voc. della Crusca*) by Davanzati (1529—1606), while *scartate* (Florio, Torriano) means 'ill compagnie,...such as are *discarded* from others.' Considering the early occurrence and meaning of O.F. *escarter*, it looks as if the 'card' idea had been forced into all these words by popular etymology. In the case of E. *decad*, used in 'card' sense, c. 1550, and meaning 'reject' (1605), the chronology is, however, reversed. Apart from the improbability of the general meaning of *discard* having been evolved from the special sense, and the impossibility of this having been the case with F. *écarter*, a formation from *ex* or *dis* and *carta* seems unnatural. Such a word should mean rather 'to remove from the card'; cf. *disburse*, *disfranchise*, *disgorge*, etc.

DISCUSS. The accepted theory is that this verb represents the L. past participle *discussum*, Englished as *discuss* (1340) and appearing in A.F. as *discussé* (1352). It would be more natural for the word to have entered E. through F. In the *Liber Albus* (p. 214) I find 'tieux costumes et usages serront *discuz* par les Mair et Aldermans, et ceo

avaunt juggement sur ceo rendue.' This *dis-cuz* appears to be the past participle of O.F. *descoure*, of which the *Dict. Gén.* (s.v. *discuter*) says that traces are found in O.F., though Godefroy gives for it only the meaning 'punish.' The formation in E. and A.F. of verbs from O.F. past participles is common. The verb *discusser* (*Liber Albus*, p. 219) is probably formed from *discuz* in the same way as 'arser, to burn' (*ibid.*, p. 267) from O.F. *ars*. The *Liber Albus* was composed in 1419, but the matter copied into it is mostly of much earlier date.

PALLET. In the sense 'helmet' or 'head-piece,' the N.E.D. has numerous examples, usually *pal(l)et(t)e*, from 1374 onward. It is also jocularly used for 'head.' It is referred to O.F. *palet*, which Godefroy explains as a dim. of 'pal, stake,' and for which he gives one example (1384) meaning 'helmet' and a later one in the sense of 'head.' The inclusion of this word under '*palet*, small stake,' seems to be an error. The analogy of *basnet* suggests that it is an E. adaptation of F. '*palette*, small bowl,' used specifically of the barber's bowl (the helmet of Mambrino) used for blood-letting, which is for O.F. *paelete*, dim. of *patella*. The D.G. quotes *paelette* (13—14th cent.). The fact that *palette* is not recorded in the sense of 'helmet' in F. is not a serious objection, as E. has 'mazer, (1) bowl, (2) helmet, (3) pate,' from O.F. '*masere*, bowl.' The second example in the N.E.D., 'a prevy palette... to hille here lewde heed' (1399), shows that the *pallet* was, like the *basnet* and *sallet*, a close-fitting steel cap. I conjecture that Godefroy's *palet* is a re-imported A.F. form; see Du Cange, *palettus*. The naming of helmets from humble utensils is a common phenomenon, e.g. in a will of 1411 (*Earliest English Wills*, ed. Furnivall) a knight bequeaths to his three sons a *basynet*, *palette*, and *ketel hatte* respectively.

STAY. The derivation accepted at present is from O.F. '*estayer*, to prop,' the transitive sense of checking, bringing to a standstill, having passed over to the intransitive (cf. *delay*). It is supported by the gloss. 'resto, obsto' in the Prompt. Parv., which explains *steyyn* (var. *staren*) as 'cesyn of gate.' The M.E. Dict. of Stratmann and Bradley gives only this example, with a pret. *staid* (Lidgate), so that the material necessary for really settling the etymology will not be available till the N.E.D. reaches the word. The old etymologists (Minsheu, Skinner) derived it from M.Du. '*staen* (now *staen*), to stand,' the connection with '*stay*, prop,' being apparently first suggested by Francis Junius. It is possible that both etymologies are to some

extent correct, but I wish to urge the claims of a third, viz. O.F. *ester*. This has been proposed before. The Century Dict. remarks 'By some derived from O.F. *esteir*, *ester*, *estre*, F. *être*, to be, remain, continue; but this derivation is on both phonetic and historical grounds untenable.' This is a cryptic utterance, suggesting that O.F. *ester* (*stare*) and *estre* (*essere*) are the same word. I do not know what the historical objections are. *Ester* is a very common word in A.F., and it would be curious if it had not passed into E. Nor are the phonetic difficulties very serious. It is well-known that a number of E. verbs of O.F. origin are derived from past participles (*issue*, *value*, *foreclose*, *forfeit*, *defeat*, *paint*, etc.). The O.F. past participle *esté(e)* is commonly used of a 'halt' or 'stay' (see Godefroy). Although F. -é usually results in E. -y (*bounty*, *city*, *ditty*, etc.) it appears that -ée often gives M.E. -eye. Behrens (in Kluge, *Geschichte der englischen Sprache*², 1899) quotes *contreie* (: *waye*) and other examples. Although this is now regularly reduced to -y, owing I suppose to the shifting of the accent, it would remain in a monosyllable; cf. *fay* (Gower), O.F. *fee*, L. *fata*, an exact parallel to *stay*, O.F. *estee*, L. *stata*. Past participles of neuter verbs used as abstract nouns are regularly in the feminine form (*allée*, *arrivée*, *sortie*, *venue*, etc.) in O.F. (e.g. *allee*, *demouree* in Joinville). I suggest therefore that our *stay* is this O.F. past participle, probably first used as an abstract noun and then as a verb (cf. *value*). One might also invoke the Eastern forms of the verb, *esteir*, *steir*, with past participle *estei(e)*, *stei(e)*, and such common A.F. spellings as *espeie* for *espee* (*French Chronicle of London*, *Liber Albus*, etc.). The present participle of *ester* is regularly in A.F. *esteaunt*, *esteiaunt*, which appears to indicate that the stem was felt *este-*, *estei-*.

ERNEST WEEKLEY.

NOTTINGHAM.