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Loki, Locus, Eurylocus

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In the spring of 2016, the Danish national broadcaster Danmarks Radio aired a delightful podcast series in twelve episodes entitled *Den nordiske Odyssé*. The podcast, which was inspired by Felice Vinci's *Omero nel Baltico, saggio sulla geografia omerica* (1995; *Homer in the Baltic, an essay on Homeric geography*), took the listener on a meandering journey round the Nordic world. Vinci's main claim is that the Homeric poems play out in Northern Europe rather than the eastern Mediterranean world, and he identifies Troy with Toija in Southern Finland, Odysseus's Ithaca with Lyø in the South Funen Archipelago, Calypso's island Ogygia with the Faroese island of Stóra Dímun and so on. In the podcast, which buys into Vinci's theory, reporters visit many of the sites identified by Vinci and talk with the people who live there today about local history and, of course, Odysseus. It was Odysseus that brought me to the podcast, but it was voices, accents and stories rarely heard on Danish radio that held my interest through most of the series.

Vinci is not the first person who has been convinced, and has attempted to convince others, that Odysseus visited Northern shores in the course of his famous journey. At the turn of the eighteenth century, the Norwegian clergyman and prolific amateur historian Jonas Ramus († 1718) argued with great conviction that the island of the sorceress Calypso, Ogygia, on which Odysseus spent seven years, was identical to the island Hinnøya in Northern Norway (the island on which Harstad is now situated). Ramus's main claim was that Odysseus and the Scandinavian god Odin were one and the same person. Furthermore, according to Ramus, Calypso and Odysseus were the progenitors of the line of the Earls of Hlaðir (see Wellendorf, 2014). Ramus's elaborate argument required monographic treatment, and in 1702 he published *Ulysses et Otinus Unus et Idem* (Odysseus and Odin; One and the same). In later editions of the work (1713 and 1716), Ramus expanded his argument and added supplementary materials. Ramus adduces various types of evidence to support his claim. In addition to a geographic component, in which the places visited by Odysseus en route from Troy to Ithaca are identified, Ramus also takes linguistic evidence into consideration. In the second edition of the monograph, he has rewritten most of the tenth chapter, excising some materials and adding among other things an eight-page alphabetic list of 104 Norwegian words that he believes to be of Greek origin or affinity. The fifth page of this list has been reproduced here.

In the time that has passed since Ramus's days, comparative linguists have shown that Greek and Norwegian are indeed related through their common Indo-

Kreimte og Heste/ screare, κρέμματα screo,
κρέμμα screatus.

Laaſ/ malus, nefarius, a λοχάω infidior;
hinc in Edda Islandica **Loſe/** qvi
& **Leipte** a Lapitha Phorbantis fi-
lio Centauro; Lochus enim voca-
tur filius Forbauta **ſetunſ**; Idem
Lochus doli fabricator habetur;
Vid. Gundm. in Lexico Isl. conf.
qvæ ſupra cap. 9. dicta ſunt de Eu-
rycloco.

Lagna fatum a λάχη ſeu λάχῃ, ſors.

Lampe/ Lampas, λαμπάς.

Lat/ Piger, a λάττης ſervus

Leſuer/ relinqvo, **Leſninger/** reliqvæ, a
λείπω.

Leppe Bandet/ lambere a λάπτω

Let/ levis a λεπτός tenuis

Linn/ Dan. **Lør/** λίνον

Løg/ Dan. **Lue/** φλόξ, φλόγος

Loſe/ ſolvere, λύσαι

Maane/ Luna, μήνη

Mad/ Norv. **Mat** cibus, Gr. ματῆύη epu-
lum, μάτῳ pinſo

Ma.

European heritage. In a number of cases, current etymological thinking therefore supports the items on Ramus's list, although a very different explanatory model is used. A few examples of such cognates are *liin* ('flax') which is indeed held to be cognate with Greek *línōn* ('flax'), as Ramus asserts, and *maane* ('moon') which is held to be cognate with Greek *ménē* ('moon'). Other terms on Ramus's list are loan words deriving from Greek through intermediary languages, such as *lampe* ('lamp') from Greek *lampás* ('torch'). The Norwegian-Greek wordlist also contains some more dubious entries, such as the derivations of *lat* ('lazy') from *látrēs* ('worshipper'), *mad* ('food') from *mattúē* ('a dish') and *máttō* ('knead') and *log* ('flame') from *flóx* ('flame').¹

Ramus already had some experience compiling word lists. In 1697, Matthias Moth, a senior civil servant and a pioneering lexicographer, had sent letters to the bishops of the realms of the Danish king asking them to contribute to a great lexicographic project by, among other things, compiling lists of words used in their dioceses.² The bishops forwarded the request to their subordinates. Ramus dutifully compiled a list and sent it to Copenhagen where it is now kept in the Royal Library (GkS 733 II fol. nr. 11). This list, which is dated 1698, is held to count among "the most important linguistic relics from the 17th century" (Indrebø, 2001: 324) ("dei viktugaste målminni frå 1600-talet"). Ramus himself was less satisfied with his work and complained in a note that he did not have sufficient spare time to devote to the work and concluded his list with the Wellerism "det gjør monn at musen pisser i havet" (ed. Kolsrud, 1956: 20), still current in Norwegian in the form "alle monner drar sa musen og pisset i havet" ("everything counts, said the mouse, and peed in the sea").

The lists of 1698 and 1713 have different purposes, but a dozen words appear on both lists. One of the more interesting of these is the adjective *laak*. He renders this with Latin *malus* ('bad') and *nefarius* ('wicked') and derives the name of the mythological character Loki from this adjective. He furthermore explains that Loki, Latinized variously as Lokus, Locus, and Lochus, is the same as Eurylocus (i.e. Eurylo-chus), a source of bad advice in Odysseus's crew, and expresses the hope that he will be able to deal with this in greater detail on another occasion (ed. Kolsrud, 1956: 14). In his monograph on Odin and Odysseus, he returns to this topic and expands on the etymology of Loki's name by deriving *laak* from Greek *locháo* ('lie in wait for, ambush').³ With reference to Guðmundur Andrússon's *Lexicon islandicum*, Ramus identifies Loki, who, he states, is also known as Leipte, son of Farbauti the Gi-

¹ All these etymologies, with the exception of the one for *mat*, can also be found in Guðmundur Andrússon's *Lexicon islandicum* (1683: svv.) which Ramus knew.

² Moth's dictionary never made it into print, but it is now available online along with scholarly literature and additional materials at <http://mothsordbog.dk/>. For a recent discussion of Moth's project in English, see Considine, 2014: 80-92.

³ Modern etymological dictionaries consider *laak* cognate with Greek *lagarós* ('weak') (see De Vries, 1961: sv. *lacr*, *lacr*; Kroonen, 2013: xvii).

ant, with Lapithas the Centaur, son of Phorbas.⁴ But while Guðmundur Andrússon refers his reader to the more traditional identification of Loki with Odysseus (from *Gylfaginning*), Ramus, whose main point is that Óðinn is Odysseus, prefers to see Loki in Eurylocus. In Chapter 9 of his treatise, Ramus explains that the name of Eurylocus has been shortened by the loss of the first syllables, just as other words of foreign origin often are abbreviated in this manner.⁵ Furthermore, he lists similarities between Loki and Eurylocus (mainly their propensity to give bad advice) and compares the episode in which Eurylocus persuades Odysseus's starving crew to eat the cattle of the sun god Helios on the island Thrinacia (Homer, *Odyssee* 12, 339-352) to the incident that introduces the story of the abduction of Iðunn in *Skáldskaparmál*, in which Loki and two other gods unsuccessfully attempt to cook an ox. As further evidence, Ramus etymologizes the name of Helios's island Trinacria (more commonly Thrinacia) as *treis ákrai* ('three peaks') and connects it with the three rocks on top of which, according to *Gylfaginning*, Loki was bound.

One may admire Ramus's theory for its explanatory power, the originality of its combinations and the audacity of its willingness to undermine the foundations on which it builds (neither Snorri nor Homer nor anyone else before Ramus had been able to uncover the elaborate deceit of Odysseus). He takes care to adduce various kinds of evidence in support for his main claim, but in many ways his work has more in common with the medieval etymologizing that can be found in the frame narrative of *Gylfaginning* than with the scholarship of his day. In his *Nogle betenkinger om det Cimbriske sprog* from 1663, Peder Syv, who later collaborated closely with Moth, had warned against the etymologizing method used by Ramus:

Vi kunne jo saa længe forandre oordene med bogstavenes tilsættelse, fratagelse, forvexling at endogsaa Hebraisk, Grædsk, og Latin kunne henføres af Laplændsk, det Danske af Tyrkesk, fordi Karga og Krage eller af Amerisk for Lam og Lam ere eens. Saa udtyder een nu det Grædske af det Danske, nu tvert om igien [...].
(Syv, 1917: 197-198.)⁶

For a long time we could change words by adding, removing or rearranging letters so that even Hebrew, Greek and Latin could be derived from Lappish, and Danish from Turkish because Karga and Krage are similar, or from American because of Lam and Lam. Thus one in one instance derives the Greek from the Danish and in another instance the converse [...]. (My translation)

⁴ This equation, which Ramus takes over from Guðmundur Andrússon, contains a number of inaccuracies: Leipte is not listed as a name of Loki in any of the standard sources (although ms U of the *Prose Edda* contains the variant name Býleiptr for Býleistr, a brother of Loki (Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, 34), but Guðmundur may of course have used a yet to be identified source. Furthermore, Phorbas is normally said to be the son, not the father of, Lapithes, and the Lapiths fought centaurs but were not themselves centaurs.

⁵ He gives *pistil* from *epistola* ('epistle') and *Postula Kyrkia* from *Apostula Kyrkia* ('Church of the apostles') as parallel examples.

⁶ Syv's criticism of the apparent arbitrariness of much etymologizing is traditional and echoes Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (1.6.32).

Ramus, like many other before him, operated with this inherited method where additions, subtractions and the rearrangement of letters were permissible in determining the origin and original meaning of a word. Yet, it would be unfair to direct Peder Syv's criticism of inconsistency towards him. He has a clear thesis and pursues it with great energy and consistency. It obviously takes him in a different direction from modern scholarship, but he was not after all a man of our time.

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