

Five romance etymologies

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FIVE ROMANCE ETYMOLOGIES

I. IBERO-ROM. *DE ROMANIA*, A NAUTICAL IDIOM.

Spanish and Portuguese have an adverbial idiom *de romanía* 'all at once', which has been in use since the 16th century¹. It belongs above all to the nautical terminology since it usually appears in such verbal expressions as Span. *caer de romanía*, Port. *amainar de romanía* referring to the sudden lowering of the sails². Corominas³, influenced particularly by the secondary meaning 'crestfallen', suggests hesitantly a derivation from *Romanía*, the designation of the Byzantine Empire in the period of Francocracy, as an allusion to the utter decline of that once glamorous state.

Although a secondary influence of that term is quite possible, another derivation seems preferable because of its simplicity. A Portuguese sub-variant reveals this different origin: *amainar de ramanía* found in the *Commentaries* of Albuquerque (IV, 8), in a description of events of 1513⁴. Precisely the same adverb is found in OFr. *de ramenee* 'with force, with momentum'. This occurs also in a variant minus the prefix *re-*: *amenee*; and both forms *de amenee*/*ramenee* appear in novels of chivalry such as the *Doon de Maience*, 13th c. (*de/pär amenee*)⁵, *Gaufrey*, 13th c. (*de amenee*)⁶, Jean d'Arras, *Melusine*, 14th c. (*de ramenee*)⁷. In these texts the idiom refers to swords or clubs rushing down on the adversary; e. g., in the *Melusine* quotation: Et aussi le coup qui descendit *de grant ramenee*

1. Corominas, III, 55. Moraes Silva, *Diccionario* (1889-1891), II, 740.

2. Moraes Silva, *Grande dicionário* (1949-1959), IX, 675.

3. A. Jal, *Glossaire nautique*, Paris, 1848, s. v. ramanía.

4. Jal, loc. cit. Cf. W. de Gray Birch, ed., *The Commentaries of the Great Afonso Dalboquerque*, Hakluyt Society, London, 1875-84, vol. LXIX, p. 41, fn. 2.

5. Godefroy, I, 257.

6. Tobler-Lommatzsch, I, 337.

7. Godefroy, VI, 577.

avec la force du bras de quoy il fut feru. Semantically, the French fighting term parallels the Ibero-Romance nautical expression applied to sails rushing down, and may, indeed, have been borrowed in the nautical environment.

OFr. *ramenee* is a nominal derivative of *ramener*, which in turn is a prefixed expansion of *amener*. This latter is used as a fighting term, implying some such development of meaning as 'to bring (a weapon) into play' to 'to bring down with force', e. g., *Merlin*, 13th c. : et lors *amainne* un caup de haut et le fiert¹.

In French the widespread Mediterranean verb *amainare* 'to lower the sails'², variously explained³, shows, in addition to the usual variant *ameiner*, also the variant *amener*, e. g., in the expression *amener les voiles* (since 1515)⁴. This French maritime term *amener*, with its monophthong, was perhaps influenced by our term *amener*.

2. SPAN. *RALEA*, A TERM OF HAWKING.

The cynegetic terminology of Spanish in the 14th century contains a term *ralea* with Portug. *relé*, 'prey of birds of prey'; through an intermediary stage of 'preferred kind of prey' there develops the modern meaning (so in *Don Quijote*) of 'kind, quality, ilk'. Corominas⁵ derives the word from OFr. *ralée* 'going', in the sense of 'catching a prey', a nominal derivative of OFr. *raler*, itself in turn a synonym of *aler* in the specialized meaning 'to rush toward the victim, of birds of prey'; the verb *aller à* 'to attack, to select a prey' is recorded⁶. This suggestion appears satisfactory, above all in its cultural connection with French hawking; but if the word is placed in a wider frame, a different derivation seems to evolve.

Since the same period, the 14th century, English possesses a verb with

1. Tobler-Lommatzsch, I, 338, s. v. *amener*.

2. H. and R. Kahane and A. Tietze, *The Lingua Franca in the Levant: Turkish Nautical Terms of Italian and Greek Origin*, Urbana, 1958, p. 281.

3. *FEW*, IV, 787; Corominas, I, 179; and, again, *FEW*, VI, 253, fn. 111.

4. *FEW*, loc. cit. P. Robert, *Dictionnaire*, I, 130.

5. Corominas, III, 982-984.

6. To Corominas' documentation may be added: *aler a* 'attaquer, choisir comme proie de chasse' in *Moamin et Ghatrif* [the 13th-c. Franco-Italian version of an Arabic treatise on birds], H. Tjerneld, ed., Stockholm-Paris, 1945, p. 308.

a like cynegetic use : *roil*, with the variant *rail*/*rале*. Its basic meaning is 'to roam, to stray'. Examples : *The Laud Troy Book*, a romance of about 1400¹ : 7432, Ther come two kynges in that batayle, / That saw Ector aboute *rayle* / As faucoun flies afftir drake. (Here, Hector's roaming about the battlefield is compared to a falcon's flight after a duck). In 1530, the Anglo-French dictionary by Palsgrave lists, probably as a cynegetic term, *I rayle*, defining it as 'I stray abrode ; je trace, je tracasse', with the illustration : he doth naught els but *rayle* here and there². In the early 17th century, the term appears in discussions of hunting in a *Booke of falconrie* : [the falcons] fall to *raling* or soaring quite away from them³ ; and in a *Treatise on Hawkes, and Hawking* : if thy hawke will not come, or not abide company..., or will *royle* or house⁴. The semantic variant 'to roll' of the verb *roil*⁵ indicates the derivation of the entire English group of congeners : it renders OFr. *r(o)oillier*/*raillier* < *RÖTICŪLARE 'to roll'⁶. The English word is surely related to the Spanish. English, to be sure, has borrowed the two main French variants, the primary, with *o*, *roillier*, and the secondary, with *a*, *raillier*. The French variant, hesitatingly explained by Wartburg⁷ through influence of *raier* 'to emit luminous rays'⁸, appears as early as the 12th century ; it seems to be the only one borrowed by Ibero-Romance. The basic meaning of the English verbs is 'to roam' ; this meaning is still found in modern French, e. g., in the Rouchi dialect around Valenciennes *rouier*⁹. This concept was applied to the circling of birds of prey. A parallel development is shown by RÖTARE > Middle Fr. *röder* 'voler (du faucon)'¹⁰. In a parallel nominal development, Span. *ralea*, Portug. *relé* derive from OFr. *railliee* 'circling of the birds of prey above their victim', with a secon-

1. J. E. Wülfing, ed. (Early English Text Society, CXXI-CXXII), London, 1902.

2. *NED*, s. v. rail, vb.5

3. *NED*, s. v. raling.

4. *NED*, s. v. roil, vb.1

5. *NED*, s. v. roil, vb.2

6. *FEW*, X, 506-509.

7. *FEW*, X, 509, fn. 12.

8. Cf. *FEW*, X, 23, s. v. radius, with fn. 7. Incidentally, this OFr. verb *raier* in the meaning 'ruisseler, couler, jaillir (surtout du sang)' may be the basis of Eng. *rail* 'to flow, gush (down), usually said of blood', characterized by *NED* (s. v. rail, vb.3) as of 'obscure origin.'

9. *FEW*, X, 506.

10. *FEW*, X, 497.

dary shift, in Ibero-Romance, to 'prey' alone. The Asturian variants *rallé/rellé/rellía* are the ones closest to the French basis.

3. THE STORY OF THE *TORTE*.

The widespread Western designation of bread or cake, *torte*, appears in the Vulgate with some such meaning as 'flat, round bread'. The cognates, Ital. *torta*, Roum. *turtă*, presuppose a 4th c. Latin pattern *TORTA*, with long *o*. This phonological feature is the starting point of the difficulties of derivation. Four main explanations may be mentioned: (1) Wartburg, following tradition, suggests a basis **TORTA* 'the twisted one', the fem. partic. of *törquere*. The vocalic quality is defended as a 'Romance drift toward shifting of *ö* to *ø* before syllable-final *r*.'¹ The weakness of this explanation, as Wartburg himself points out, lies in the fact that the implied vocalic change does not occur with the verb, and in particular not with the participle: the *Reichenau Glossary* distinguishes between *tortas*, the participle, and *turta*, the cake. — (2) Schuchardt posits a participle **TORTUS*, a supposed variant of *töstus* 'the toasted one'². The objection, in addition to the vocalic reconstruction, is that the participial change cannot easily be justified. — (3) Corominas constructs a Greek diminutive, *artídion*, from *ártos* 'bread', which in contraction with the article would have resulted in a form **törtídion*; supposedly a new Late Latin simplex **törtum*, formed from the former, led to a new plural **törta*, which, perceived as a singular, thus established our term³. As pointed out by Wartburg⁴, this hypothesis assumes too many unrecorded steps. — (4) Alessio associates it with Arab. *turda* 'pieces of bread in broth'⁵. This, however, seems semantically and historically questionable.

The chronology, meaning, and distribution of the earliest records may help to solve the problem. The term first appears in Greek. The Hellenistic grammarian Erotianus (1st c. A. D.) writes in a commentary to Hippocratean expressions: *ártos enkryphias* name used among the Attics for a bread consisting of oily dates, flour, and water; the name *enkryphias*

1. *FEW*, XIII : 2, 113.

2. *ZRPb*, XXV (1901), 490.

3. Corominas, IV, 511.

4. *FEW*, XIII : 2, p. 113, fn. 13.

5. *DEI*, s. v. *tórta*.

['the hidden one'] is quite properly used for bread baked by being hidden in hot ashes, usually called *tourta*¹. In the 4th century (that is, at the time of the first appearance of the word in Latin), a list of victuals recorded in papyri contains several instances of the variant *tourtion*². Two facts regarding these earliest records of the term are striking: that the *tourta* is prepared with dates, and that it was in use (as its appearance in the papyri indicates) in Egypt. Together, they imply Egyptian origin. Culturally, the borrowing would not be isolated: other Greek designations of bread and similar foods, recorded in the papyri, also come from Egypt³: *athéra* 'porridge of wheat', *kákis* 'kind of bread', *kylléstis* 'a bread of sour taste and pointed shape'⁴. Our Greco-Egyptian designation of the bread must have been borrowed by the Romans in Egypt, not later than the 4th century. It spread through Latin.

As etymon we suggest Egypt. *t-rth* 'baked bread'. It consists of the morphemes (the vocalisation of which is unknown) *t* 'bread' and *rth*, probably a participle, 'baked'. The loss of word final *h* in Greek is not surprising⁶: e. g., *Pth* appears in Greek transliteration as *Phtha* (in which the aspirates indicate a northern Egyptian dialect as the source of the Greek borrowing) but still in Coptic (where *h* and *ḥ* have coalesced) as *Ptah*. Egypt. *t-rth* has been, for a long time, part of the list of offerings and is recorded as such up to the Roman period⁷.

According to the Erotianus passage quoted above the *tourta* corresponds semantically to Grk. *enkryphias* 'bread baked in ashes'. The Latin equi-

1. E. Nachmanson, *Erotiani vocum hippocraticarum collectio cum fragmentis*, Uppsala, 1918, p. 26, l. 12. For the interpretation of the passage, cf. I. Kalleres, *Epetēris Hetaireias Byzantinōn Spoudōn* [Annual of the Society of Byzantine Studies], XXIII (1953), 694.

2. C. H. Roberts and E. G. Turner, *Catalogue of the Greek and Latin Papyri in the John Rylands Library*, IV (Manchester, 1952), p. 126-130, 137, 150. The penultimate accent according to Kalleres, *loc. cit.*

3. E. Mayser, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit*, I (Leipzig, 1906), p. 37.

4. Regarding this latter, cf. A. H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*, London, 1947, II, 228-229.

5. Thus, according to Professor Klaus Baer (of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago), rather than *ḥ-rth* as apud A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, Leipzig, 1926-63, II, 459.12.

6. According to Professor Baer.

7. W. Barta, *Die altägyptische Opferliste von der Frühzeit bis zur griechisch-römischen Epoche* (Münchener ägyptologische Studien, III), Berlin, 1963, p. 124 and 175.

valent of the latter is *subcinericius*; and this is how St. Jerome usually translates the Hebrew original, which appears in the Greek version as *enkryphias*¹. In one passage of the *Vulgate*, however, *Num.*, 11 : 8, the Greek term is rendered by Lat. *tortula*. In this passage the process of the baking of the *enkryphias* from manna is described : *Populus ... colligens illud frangebatur mola sive terebat in mortario coquens in olla et faciens ex eo tortulas saporis quasi panis oleati*². [The people gathered it (i. e., manna), and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it, and the taste of it was as the taste of a cake made in oil³.] This most primitive form of baking under hot ashes, directly or by means of a baking stone, a baking plate, or a baking pan, still survives in certain rustic areas of Italy, above all in Umbria and in the Trentino; and there, the product is called, precisely, *torta*⁴.

4. *TRIMODIA*, THE MILL HOPPER.

The mill hopper is a chute, in the shape of an inverted pyramid or cone, through which grain passes into the mill. In Romance, it is widely designated by variants of one term : Ital. *tramoggia* OFr. *tremuie* with Mod. Fr. *trémie*, Span. *tramoya*, Portug. *tremonha*. There is a traditional derivation, established by Meyer-Lübke⁵ and most recently reaffirmed by Wartburg⁶, from *TRIMÖDIA* 'a three-peck measure'. Corominas, returning to an older suggestion by Diez, posits, hesitatingly because of the morphological difficulties involved, a blending of *MÖDIUM* 'peck' with *TREM-* 'tremble', in view of the continued motion of the hopper⁷. Corominas objects to the basis *TRIMÖDIA* because of its semantic inadequacy and the lack of documentation : the shift from 'three-peck measure' to 'hopper', implicitly stimulated by a similarity of the shape of the two objects, cannot be traced back to Latin and is improbable to begin with : why just *three* pecks, which is too large anyway?

1. Thus in *Ge.*, 18 : 6; *Ex.*, 12 : 39; 3 *Ki.*, 19 : 6; *Ex.*, 4 : 12; *Ho.*, 7 : 8.

2. *Biblia sacra ... iussu Pii PP. XI ... edita*, III (Rome, 1936), p. 139.

3. Transl. from the King James version.

4. *AIS*, map 1007 FOCACCIA, points 546, 555, 564, 565, 583 (Umbria) and scattered in the northern dialects. For realia : P. Scheuermeier, *Bauernwerk in Italien, der italienischen und rätoromanischen Schweiz*, II (Bern, 1956), p. 186-190.

5. *REW*, 8906.

6. *FEW*, XIII (1965), 277; also *Rev. Ling. Rom.*, XXIX (1959), 253-256.

7. *IV*, 534-535.

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We should like to suggest the phonologically satisfactory TRĪMŌDIA once more as the etymon, although within a different semantic frame and supported by some documentation so far neglected. The meaning with which we start is 'adjutage', a tube or nozzle attached to facilitate or regulate or measure the discharge of water. Frontinus, the *curator aquarum* of Rome, who died in 103 or 104, uses in his description of the city's water system the term *modulus*, a derivative of *modus* 'measure' ¹, for the adjutage. Now *modius*, another derivative of *modus* ², used particularly in combination with numerical prefixes, appears with the same meaning 'adjutage' in a description, by the 6th c. Byzantine historian Malalas, of the water reservoir near Antioch, in Syria in the period of Hadrian (2nd c.) ³. In G. Downey's paraphrase: « The reservoir itself was equipped with a set of five adjutages or efflux pipes of different sizes (called the *pentamodion*, *tetramodion*, *trimodion*, *dimodion*, and *modion*) by means of which the rate or flow through the aqueduct leading to the city could be regulated. ⁴ » In Malalas' set of five sizes, the *trimodion* occupies the middle, as to its interior area and the width of its orifice. Since the adjutage and the hopper (or chute) are similar devices, the same term may easily have designated both. Thus, e. g., the medieval dialect of Hainaut has *tremuie*, the general designation of the hopper, in the specialized use of adjutage ⁵.

Since the Graeco-Syrian *mōdion* (and compounds), referring to Hadriatic institutions, is a borrowing from Latin, it may be assumed that Lat. *modius* 'adjutage' was already in use by the 2nd century as a designation of the hopper. The derivative MŌDIŌLUS, incidentally, survives in Sard. *moyólu*, in the same meaning, mill hopper ⁶. By the 4th century, we are reasonably assured that the term existed: the SItalian Greek dialects of Calabria preserve *trimodía* (and variants) 'mill hopper' ⁷: the

1. *De aquis urbis Romae*, I, 23-34, C. E. Bennett and M. B. McElwain, eds. (Loeb Class. Libr., 1925). Cf. *ibid.*, p. 365, fn. 2.

2. Walde-Hofmann. s. v. *modius*; Ernout-Meillet, s. v. *modius*.

3. Ioannes Malalas, *Chronographia*, Bonn, 1831, p. 278.

4. *A History of Antioch in Syria*, Princeton, 1961, p. 221.

5. *FEW*, XIII, 276.

6. M. L. Wagner, *Das ländliche Leben Sardiniens im Spiegel der Sprache*, Heidelberg, 1921, p. 42; and *DES*, s. v. *moyólu*. Further records for Sardinia: *AIS*, map 253 MACINA; Scheuermeier, *Bauernwerk*, II, p. 193 with phot. 288.

7. G. Rohlfs, *Lexicon graecanicum Italiae inferioris*, Tübingen, 1964, p. 511.

penultimate accent indicates Greek borrowing from Latin before the 5th century ¹.

We derived the meaning hopper from the meaning adjutage, yet Lat. *modius* is, of course, the designation of both a measure of wheat and the adjutage. As a matter of fact, *modius*, in this respect, parallels a Greek term so much, that this latter may have been the prototype which led to the semantic development of *modius*. The Greek term is *médimnos*, originally the designation of a measure of grain, varyingly defined in terms of *modii* ². In Magna Graecia, the term appears in the 1st c. B. C. as the designation of the adjutage, and is especially characterized by Diodorus Siculus as a regional expression used by the inhabitants of Sybaris on the Gulf of Tarentum ³. A record in the glosses demonstrates explicitly the closeness between the *medimnum* and our word: it defines the *medimnum* as *tria modia* ⁴, a lectio corrected by the editor to *trimodia* ⁵. If *medimnum* was the model, the transfer probably took place in Italy, with a secondary change from the adjutage to the hopper.

5. THE TRUSS OF A MAST.

The truss was originally a rope taken round the mast by which a yard was held to the mast in such a way that it could be hoisted or lowered at pleasure. The term is widely spread in the Mediterranean and, via Genoese mediation, in the northern navigation: e. g., Ital. *trozza* with Eng. *truss*, Fr. *trosse/drosse*, Catal. *trossa*, Span *troza* ⁶. The derivation is debated: Meyer-Lübke ⁷ suggests as basis Catal. *trossa*, which he considers a post-verbal noun from *trossar* 'to fasten' ⁸. Corominas questions this for chronological reasons ⁹: the term is recorded

1. G. Rohlfs, *Neue Beiträge zur Kenntnis der unteritalienischen Gräzität*, SB München, phil.-hist, Kl., 1962: 5, p. 162-163.

2. Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyklopädie*, s. vv. *médimnos*, *modius*.

3. XII, 10. 6 (W. A. Oldfather, ed. [Loeb Class. Libr., 1946]).

4. *Corp. Gloss. Lat.*, IV, 364. 30.

5. *Corp. Gloss. Lat.*, VI, 687.

6. Kahane and Tietze, *The Lingua Franca in the Levant*, p. 450.

7. *REW*, 8803.

8. The latter not from **TÖRTIARE*, as Meyer-Lübke assumes, but rather from **TÖRSARE* (G. Tilander, *Stud. Neophil.*, XVI [1943-44], 185).

9. S. v. *trojar*, fn. 3.

in Catalan in 1331 but as early as 1268 in Italian. Alessio¹ proceeds from Lat. *TORCA 'that which is twisted around' (a variant of recorded *torquēs*); it develops to OFr. *torche*, a metathetic variant of which, *troche*, is considered the immediate basis of the Italian forms. The difficulty here is that OFr. *torche/troche* belongs to another word, Lat. TRĀDUX, -ŪCE 'vine shoot'². This latter Latin word, via its Venetian variant *troza* and with transfer to the rope wound around a mast, is posited as the basis of the nautical term by Vidos³; he is seconded by Corominas⁴ and Wartburg⁵. Again there are chronological difficulties: the term appears in Venice in 1365 but in Genoa almost a century earlier, in 1268; and Genoa appears as the center of radiation with Genoese offshoots in Naples (1275) and, probably, England (1294)⁶.

But it is not only chronology which vitiates the derivation of the nautical expression from a vinicultural expression used metaphorically. A simpler solution would be to derive the technical maritime term from an existing one used in military terminology. We suggest starting from anc. Grk. *trochiá* 'rope turned around an object'. It is recorded as a term of mechanics, in the *Belopoeica* [On making missiles] by Philo Mechanicus (3rd-2nd c. B. C.) in some such meaning as 'strand wrapped, in regular turns, around the cross bars of the winches of a torsion engine'⁷.

As to the origin of Grk. *trochiá* 'rope turned around an object', it is relevant to consider a Greek synonym which is very similar in form: *trichéa*, used by Hero Mechanicus (2nd-1st c. B. C.)⁸ exactly as Philo Mechanicus used *trochiá*. The term *trichéa*, literally 'rope of hair', a

1. *DEI*, s. v. *tròzza*.

2. *FEW*, XIII, 155-156.

3. B. E. Vidos, *Storia delle parole marinaresche italiane passate in francese* (Bibl. dell'Archivum romanicum, 11 : 24), Florence, 1939, pp. 599-603.

4. *S. v. trojar*, fn. 3.

5. *FEW*, XIII, 157.

6. B. Sandahl, *Middle English Sea Terms*, II (Essays and Studies on English Language and Literature, XX), Upsala 1958, p. 120, fn. 3.

7. *Belopoeica · Excerpte aus Philons Mechanik*, H. Diels and E. Schramm, eds., Abh. Berlin Akad., 1919 : 12, p. 17. Cf. M. Arnim, *Index verborum a Philone Byzantio in mechanicis syntaxis libris quarto quintoque adhibitorum*, Leipzig, 1927, p. 83. For illustrations: Sir R. Payne-Gallway, *The Crossbow*, London, New York and Bombay, 1903, p. 293, fig. 199, A, B, C.

8. *Herons Belopoiika*, H. Diels and E. Schramm, eds., Abh. Berl. Akad., 1918 : 2, p. 46.

derivative of *trich-* 'hair', may have produced, under the influence of the adjective *trochiós* 'round', the oxytone *o* variant.

Grk. *trochiá* was probably borrowed by Latin in late antiquity and as **trochia* became part of the Vulgar Latin lexicon. As such it reappears in the 13th century.

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