THE PROXIMATE ETYMOLOGY OF 'MARKET'

Etymologists of English differ about the route by which the word *market*, which obviously goes back ultimately to Latin *mercatus*, came into the language. For example, besides *N.E.D.* and its offspring—including the fourth edition (1951) of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*—Kluge and Lutz,[1] Skeat,[2] Weekley,[3] Wyld,[4] Miss Serjeantson,[5] Holthausen,[6] and modern editions of Webster,[7] all trace it through a hypothetical northern French *market* (specified as hypothetical only by Kluge-Lutz and Skeat). On the other hand, Holthausen elsewhere[8] derives the Old English word directly from Vulgar Latin *marcatus*. Bosworth-Toller gives the O.E., O.Fris., O.Icel. and O.H.G. words as 'all from Latin *mercatus*'. The new edition of the Funk and Wagnalls dictionary[9] similarly refers the modern word directly to the Latin, though without seeking to account for the *a* in the first syllable.

There is a similar disagreement among etymologists of other Germanic languages when they discuss the English word. The Grimm-Heyne dictionary,[10] having traced German *Markt* directly to Latin, adds: 'Ein ags. selteneres *market* in *gearmarket*...so wie ein altnord. *markaðr*...sind dagegen in keinem falle unmittelbare entlehnungen aus dem lateinischen, sondern kommen zunächst aus dem hoch- und niederdeutschen gebiet.' Seiler, however, concludes:[11] 'Die Nebenform mit *a markât*, welche zuletzt den Sieg behalten hat, deutet auf gallischen Ursprung, vgl. frz. *marché*, engl. *market*.' Van Wijk,[12] describing Dutch *Markt* as 'ontleend via't Rom. uit lat. *mercatus*', adds: 'ags. *marcet*...wordt uit't Pic. afgeleid.' Falk and Torp,[13] s.v. *Marked*, agree: 'Das dänische wort ist wohl aus dem mnd. entlehnt, das anord. am ehesten aus dem. ags., das wieder das wort aus dem afrz. (pikard.) *market* hat.'

The German *Markt* is commonly classed among loan-words introduced through commercial relations between Romans and Germans, as by Grimm-Heyne, Maurer and Stroh,[14] Priebsch and Collinson.[15] Kluge-Götze[16] say: 'in ahd. Zeit entlehnt aus gleichbed. lat. *mercatus*', but add: '*a* aus lat. *e* ist schon auf rom. Boden entwickelt, vgl. frz. *marché*.' The Dutch word is similarly treated, as by Kluyver-Lodewyckx-Heinsius-Knuttel:[17] 'In den Oudgerm. tijd ontleend aan lat. *mercatus*..., dat in de volkstaal ook *marcato* was geworden.' Van der Meer comments[18] that 'das *a* wohl auf romanischer Vermittlung beruht'.

[1] *English Etymology* (Strassburg, 1898).

[2] *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (4th ed., Oxford, 1910).

[3] *Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (London, 1921).

[4] *Universal Dictionary of the English Language* (London, 1932).

[5] *History of Foreign Words in English* (London, 1935).

[6] *Etym. Wörterbuch der englischen Sprache* (3rd ed., Göttingen, 1949).

[7] *New International Dictionary of the English Language* (2nd ed., London and Springfield, 1934). Earlier editions (e.g. 1907) took the other view.

[8] *Altenglisches etym. Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1934), and also *Vergleichendes und etym. Wörterbuch des Altwestnordischen* (Göttingen, 1948) s.v. *markaðr*.

[9] *New 'Standard' Dictionary of the English Language* (New York and London, 1949).

[10] Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, sechster Band bearbeitet von Dr Moriz Heyne (Leipzig, 1885).

[11] *Die Entwicklung der deutschen Kultur im Spiegel des deutschen Lehnworts* (Halle, 1905), II, p. 98.

[12] *Franck's Etym. Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* ('s-Gravenhage, 1912).

[13] *Norwegisch-Dänisches etym. Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1910).

[14] *Deutsche Wortgeschichte* (Berlin, 1943), I, p. 63.

[15] *The German Language* (2nd ed., London, 1946), p. 265.

[16] *Etym. Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (11th ed., Berlin and Leipzig, 1934).

[17] *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* ('s-Gravenhage and Leiden, 1913).

[18] *Historische Grammatik der niederländischen Sprache* (Heidelberg, 1927) § 6, Anm. 2.

The opinion of the majority thus seems to be that the English word was borrowed from French, though the German and Dutch word came directly from Latin, modified by a vowel-change which is variously attributed to Vulgar Latin and to Romance.

In an excellent article lately published[1] Miss F. E. Harmer shows that the earliest recorded appearance of *market* in English is in the compound *gearmarkett*, which 'appears casually in a charter relating to the religious foundation dedicated to St Mary at Stow in Lincolnshire, which was drawn up, as it would seem, about 1053–5, or possibly a little later, and very probably before the Norman Conquest'. The uncompounded *market* occurs in a writ in the name of Edward the Confessor; but this is a late compilation, and 'the appearance of the term *market* in this text cannot safely be used as evidence of the use of the word in England in the Confessor's reign'. Miss Harmer further notes the occurrence of the compounds *iârmarchit, jârmarkat, jaermarket* in O.H.G., O.S., and M.Du. respectively, and speaks of 'the hybrid *gearmarket*, composed, on normal lines, of Anglo-Saxon *gear* and the foreign loan-word *market*'.

No form *market* seems actually to be recorded in French until long after this. The first appearance of the word noted by the dictionaries is apparently *marchet* in the Oxford manuscript (MS. Digby 23) of the *Chanson de Roland*, l. 1150. The manuscript is now generally dated in the second quarter of the twelfth century.[2] Forms with -*k*- are quoted by Godefroy from the fourteenth century; but of course it is reasonable to suppose that they existed in the north at the relevant time. The word itself presumably existed in French from Gallo-Roman times onwards, and its comparatively late appearance is no doubt due to the lack of early vernacular texts.

More remarkable is the fact that, if the English word did come from French, it is the only word ending in -*et* from Latin -*āt*- which has survived unchanged into modern English. In early M.E. forms ending in -*eð* are familiar: *carited* in the Peterborough Chronicle s.a. 1137 is probably the best known, *nativiteð* is frequent in the same manuscript, *plenteð* occurs in *Genesis and Exodus* and *cariteþ* in Orm. A group of such words—*bountith* (-*eth*, *bonteth*), *dainteth, poortith*—survived in Scotland until the nineteenth century: *The Scottish National Dictionary* marks *dainteth* as obsolete, and of *bountith* says 'probably now obsolete'. All these forms, borrowed at a later date than *market* can have been, have been ousted by variants without final consonant. *Market* is on quite a different footing. *N.E.D.* records a spelling *markyth* in the fifteenth century, *marketh* in the sixteenth; but the meaning of these is uncertain. Scots has such forms as *merkat, mercat(e)*, presumably learned re-formations, from the fourteenth century onwards.

The word is recorded, in the form *merkati*, in O.H.G. as early as the eighth century, glossing *nundina(s)* in MS. St Gall 911. It occurs again in a tenth-century manuscript of the same gloss, and four times, in the various forms *marcât, marchato, marchito*, glossing *in mercato*, in twelfth-century manuscripts. The compound *iarmarchat(a)* appears first, glossing *nundinas*, in two Vienna manuscripts of the tenth century, and, with some minor variations, in nine others dated from the

[1] '*Chipping* and *Market*: a lexicographical investigation' in *The Early Cultures of North-West Europe* (*H.M. Chadwick Memorial Studies*) (Cambridge, 1950), pp. 333 ff., esp. p. 350.

[2] See Samaran's introduction to the facsimile published by the Société des Anciens Textes Français (1933), p. 30.

eleventh to the thirteenth century.[1] Apart from glosses, *iârmércate* occurs in Notker's translation of Boethius *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, II, 13.

In O.S., *marcat* is recorded in Trier and Carlsruhe (St Peter) manuscripts, both generally dated in the tenth century, glossing *pandocium* and *forum* respectively. The Carlsruhe manuscript has also *iarmarket*, glossing *nundinem, mercimoniam*.[2]

It thus appears that *merkat-* was borrowed very early into O.H.G., and that forms with *a* in the first syllable—showing a combinative change that was evidently widespread, though not consistently carried through and of uncertain date, in Romance languages[3]—were established in both O.H.G. and O.S. considerably before they appear in any English document.[4] It is more striking that the first occurrence in English, the compound *gearmarkett*, is also forestalled in both these continental Germanic languages. C. T. Carr[5] records these compounds under the head 'Parallel and independent formations in the West Germanic languages'; and so, of course, they may be. At any rate, the first element of *gearmarkett* has been adapted to the O.E. form. But in view of the dates it seems reasonable to think that the compound may have come into English ready-made, from one of the Germanic languages. Toller, from his citation of O.H.G. *iár-marchit* in the B.-T. *Supplement* s.v. *geár-market*, would seem to imply this view.

If this were so, the compound would not be a 'hybrid' from the *English* point of view, except in the modification of *gear-*; not, anyhow, a new compound of English *gear* and Norman French or Picard *market*. And if this is the true explanation of *gearmarkett*, it seems likely that *market* itself—as Grimm-Heyne supposed—came into English from a Germanic language rather than from French. This would best account for the persistence of the form.

Some details of the later history of the word may be not without significance. Existing dictionaries, of course, do not give precise enough information to make final conclusions possible, and the labour of searching sources would be out of proportion to the probable value of the results. But, accepting the data in *N.E.D.* as sufficient indication of the main outlines, it is noteworthy that, although 'merchant' appears in the forms *marcha(u)nd, marcha(u)nt* in the thirteenth century, there are no early forms of 'market' with *-ch-*. (*Marchet* is given as a sixteenth-century spelling, but without quotation.) *Merchet*, and later *marchet*, have the distinct sense of 'a fine paid by a tenant or bondsman to his overlord for

[1] Steinmeyer and Sievers, *Die althochdeutschen Glossen* (Berlin, 1879). References are given in Grimm-Heyne, and in Gröger, *Die althochdeutsche und altsächsische Kompositionsfuge* (Zurich, 1911), p. 367.

[2] Gallée, *Altsächsische Sprachdenkmäler* (Leiden, 1894), p. 281; *Vorstudien zu einem altniederdeutschen Wörterbuche* (Leiden, 1903); Holthausen, *Altsächsisches Elementarbuch* (2nd ed. Heidelberg, 1921) §§ 19, 20.

[3] M. K. Pope, *From Latin to Modern French* (Manchester, 1934) § 496, places the lowering of *e* to *a* in *marchie*, later *marché*, among 'isolated instances...in the Gallo-Roman period'. It is described as 'perhaps a dialectal pronunciation' by Ewert, *The French Language* (2nd ed., London, 1943) § 34, and similarly by Schwan-Behrens, *Grammatik des Altfranzösischen* (11th ed., Leipzig, 1919) § 84 Anm. On *marcá, marcat*, etc. in Italian

dialects cf. Rohlfs, *Historische Grammatik der italienischen Sprache* (Bern, 1949) § 130; and on other examples Meyer-Lübke, *Grammaire des Langues Romanes* (Paris, 1890) I, § 366. The forms *marcatus, marcadus*, as well as *marcadantes*, are frequent in early Carolingian charters, e.g. of Pippin 753, 759, and Carloman 769 (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Diplomata Karolinorum*, Tom. I); but *mer-* forms are regular in later charters.

[4] Miss Harmer suggests the influence of the frequent use of the term *mercatus* in grants by Carolingian kings and emperors, and their successors, to German beneficiaries. (See *Mon. Germ. Hist.*)

[5] *Nominal Compounds in Germanic* (St Andrews University Publications XLI, 1939), p. 131.

liberty to give his daughter in marriage'. On the other hand, 'merchant' never appears with medial -*k*- or -*c*-. *Mar*- forms are usual up to the fifteenth century. (*Mercandise,* abnormal in two ways, is quoted once from Robert of Gloucester.) Yet *merchant* (which *N.E.D.* gives as a fourteenth-century form, though without quotation) has prevailed. These facts suggest that in English no close association between 'market' and 'merchant' has ever been felt, despite the example of French *marché, marchand.*

Miss Harmer, who kindly read a first draft of these notes, and to whom I am indebted for several valuable suggestions, adds the following remarks: 'It is easy to understand how a foreign term like "gearmarket" could be applied to a gathering to which foreign traders resorted—they might have brought the term with them. The native term seems to have been *geares cieping* ("*Chipping* and *Market*", loc. cit. p. 351). But the fact that the compiler of the Stow charter expects the term *gearmarkett* to be understood without further comment shows that the word was current. One wonders why it was ousted in time by the word "fair". Is it too fanciful to suppose that the very numerous grants of *mercatus* and *feria* after the Conquest may have contributed to the victory of these two terms?'

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