

[0434] A Frisian Supplement to Buck's Dictionary of Indo-European Synonyms?

1. One of the most eminent works in the field of lexicology is, without doubt, *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages* by the late American comparatist CARL D. BUCK (1866-1955)¹. We are here concerned with the rare (or even unique?) kind of etymological dictionary that, based on onomasiological principles, affords renderings of selected concepts in different members of a language family, interpreting them historically and semantically. In certain respects, but naturally on a very large scale, it may be said to correspond to a word-atlas with etymological commentary, though its author deliberately takes little recourse to linguistic geography.

1.1. For nearly 1150 concepts BUCK lists the equivalents of thirty-one ancient and modern Indo-European languages. The concepts are assigned to twenty-two semantic groups, like Parts of the Body (incl. Bodily Functions and Conditions), Sense Perceptions, Food and Drink/Cooking and Utensils, Agriculture/Vegetation, Possession/Property/Commerce, Law, Quantity and Number, Time, Spatial Relations (Place, Form, Size), etc.

1.1.1. In order to demonstrate such a word-group, we have for practical reasons chosen here the smallest, viz. Chapter 7: DWELLING, HOUSE, FURNITURE. It includes the following items: 7.11 DWELL, 7.12 HOUSE, 7.122 HOME (incl. AT HOME), 7.13 HUT, 7.14 TENT, 7.15 YARD, COURT; 7.21 ROOM, 7.22 DOOR; GATE, 7.23 LOCK (sb.), 7.24 KEY, 7.25 WINDOW, 7.26 FLOOR, 7.27 WALL, 7.28 ROOF; 7.31 FIREPLACE (HEARTH), 7.32 STOVE, 7.33 CHIMNEY; 7.41 FURNITURE, 7.42 BED, 7.43 CHAIR, 7.44 TABLE, 7.45 LAMP, 7.46 CANDLE. As a whole, this is, of course, a rather easy group to translate and not quite representative, since it comprises, with a single exception, concrete nouns only.

1.1.2. Each concept forms a separate article which is arranged as follows: first the equivalents of the various languages are listed in a synoptical table, followed by the etymological commentary of the different word-stems, frequently introduced by some general information and onomasiological-semantic notes.

1.2. The thirty-one Indo-European languages represented in BUCK's dictionary are: Classical Greek, Modern Greek; Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, Rumanian; Irish (Old and/or Middle), New Irish, Welsh, Breton; Gothic, Old Norse (Old Icelandic), Danish, Swedish, Old English, Middle English, New English, Dutch, Old High German, Middle High German, New High German; Lithuanian, Lett; Church Slavonic, Serbo-Croatian, Czech, Polish, Russian; Sanskrit; Avestan (Old Persian). Thus, of the Germanic languages the following are not represented: New Icelandic, Faroese, Norwegian, Old Danish, Old Swedish; Old Saxon, Middle and New Low German, Middle Dutch, Old and New Frisian.

1.2.1. It may be assumed that practical reasons as well as basic principles underlie the omission of Frisian and Low German. Neither is a national language; Low German has for hundreds of years not even been a literary language in the strict sense of the word, and Frisian did not develop a standard until the nineteenth century. Similar objections might have been raised against the adoption of Welsh and Breton, but whereas Germanic, in comparison with the other branches of the Indo-European language family, is rather over-represented in BUCK's dictionary, it seems quite just that the last remnants of the old-famed Celtic language should not be left out. Also the fact that one of BUCK's closest collaborators was an expert on Celtic certainly played a rôle, whereas there is some doubt whether he had the opportunity of obtaining local assistance with Frisian and Low German. He had in any case to restrict himself, in order to complete such a huge project at all.

2. Nevertheless, the complete absence of Frisian and Low German certainly is to be regretted, all the more as the 'missing link' between English and High German is only represented by Modern Dutch. It is surely beyond dispute that it would be a both useful and attractive undertaking to fill this gap. The prospects for its successful realisation are far more favourable today than at the time BUCK started and worked out his project. This holds good particularly for Frisian, and I shall here confine myself to the proposal of a *F r i s i a n* supplement, though I would of course very much welcome my suggestion being adopted for Low German and (Middle) Dutch as well.

2.1. A separate treatment of Frisian has the great advantage of enabling us to deal in detail also with the modern dialects of Eastern and Northern Frisia. As the specialist knows, these dialect groups are highly differentiated both in phonology and vocabulary, and, to a great extent as a result of influence from Danish, Low German and Dutch respectively, they naturally differ even more from each other and from West Frisian. A good illustration of this is provided by the Frisian words for 'knife': WFrís. *mêś*, EFrís. *s(o)aks*, NFrís. *knif*². A less transparent picture, which, apart from EFrís. *weyl* and *reth*, is due to divergent phonological development, is formed by the words for 'wheel (of a wain)': WFrís. *tsjil*, EFrís. *jool* (Saterland), *fjaul*, *weyl* (Harlingerland), *reth* (Wangerooge), NFrís. *fiil*, *fiilj* (coastal dialects), *wel* (Föhr-Amrum, Heligoland), *weel* (Sylt)³. The complexity of North Frisian vocabulary is, considering the limited area, almost unrivalled within Germanic languages: 'time' (= Germ. 'Mal') is rendered by *lop*, *mol* (Sylt), *feer* (Föhr), *gong* (Wiedingharde, the northernmost coastal dialect; < Danish), *tooch* (the other coastal dialects, Amrum, also Föhr), *moal* (Heligoland; *feer* obsolete), and besides there is the suffix *-sis* (Föhr-Amrum; = Goth. *sinþs*, OFrís. *sīth*); further examples are: *skyw* (Wiedingharde), *scheew* (rest of the northern coastal dialects), *taafel*, *tååfel* (the southern coastal

dialects), *taffel* (Heligoland), *boosel* (Föhr-Amrum), *ståål* (Sylt) for 'table'; *skiis*, *schiis* (northern coast), *skaið* (Sylt), *skaas* (Föhr), *skai* (Amrum), *leets* (southern coast), *leepel* (Heligoland) for 'spoon'; *säirk*, *seerk* (coastal dialects), *sjürt* (Sylt, Föhr-Amrum), *hemt* (Heligoland) for 'shirt' (for 'woman's undergarment' all dialects have retained the Old Germ. word *smok*, *smook*)⁴.

3. As has already been pointed out, the conditions for a successful realisation of our plan is today quite favourable both with regard to Frisian lexicography and etymology. In the last decades there has been much progress in both fields.

3.1. In the *Frysk Ynstitút* of the University of Groningen an excellent archive for a comprehensive dictionary of Old Frisian has in the course of time been built up, in which the man in honour of whose memory we have met to write this volume holds a great share. Old Frisian etymology has been promoted by W.J. BUMA, K. FOKKEMA, L.-E. AHLSSON, B. SJÖLIN, H.H. MUNSKES⁵ and many others. With great expectation, both Frisists and comparatists look forward to Professor D. HOFMANN's *Altfriesisches Wörterbuch*⁶, which will also provide etymological notes.

3.2. As for the historical phonology and etymology of West Frisian, which was hitherto a rather neglected field, the Danish Germanist Professor A. SPENTER recently achieved a decisive break-through with his thesis *Der Vokalismus der akzentuierten Silben in der Schiermonnikooger Mundart* (Kopenhagen 1968), a most thorough and discerning piece of scholarship. A little later Professor W.J. BUMA presented a first sample of an etymological dictionary of West Frisian⁷, and it is very much to be hoped that we shall gradually be supplied with further issues of this important work. Professor H.T.J. MIEDEMA of the University of Utrecht does a great deal of phonological and etymological work in West Frisian dialects, as for instance his recent study *De friese namen voor de dagen van de week*⁸, which will be of immediate use for the Frisian supplement suggested here. The same can be said for the present assistant of the *Frysk Ynstitút* in Groningen, Drs. T. HOEKEMA, who has much work on lexicography and dialect geography in preparation. Finally, the late Professor K. FOKKEMA and Professor K. HEEROMA ought to be mentioned here, whose significance for Frisian dialectology and etymological research surely needs no further introduction. West Frisian lexicography is as a whole well established, and the scholar who is going to make himself responsible for (Middle and) New West Frisian will probably find little difficulty in gathering his material.

3.3. The East Frisian dialects of Saterland, Harlingen, Wangerooge and Wursten, unequally well recorded and apart from that of Saterland now extinct, have not, as yet, been submitted to an exhaustive investigation of historical phonology and etymology, a point that should in fact act as a stimulus. And moreover we are fortunate to

have in P. KRAMER an excellent authority on the dialect of Saterland, who, though not a philologist by profession, has rendered most valuable work in Seelter lexicography.

3.4. As far as N o r t h F r i s i a n dialects are concerned we are quite well equipped both in lexicography, historical phonology and etymology, the foundation of which was laid by my revered teacher Professor E. LÖFSTEDT. Also his etymological investigations published in several issues of the *Niederdeutsche Mitteilungen* (since 1946) and culminating in his important treatise *Beiträge zur nordseegermanischen and nordseegermanisch-nordischen Lexikographie*⁹ will be of great use. We are also indebted to the late Professor P. JØRGENSEN of Copenhagen University for field work and investigations in various sections of North Frisian dialectology. As an assistant of the *Nordfriesische Wörterbuchstelle* of the University of Kiel during the 1950's Professor D. HOFMANN, who has endowed us with fundamental contributions in almost every field of Frisian philology, did devoted work in revising and editing a great part of the immense stock of word material stored there. The author has himself been concerned with field work and investigation during a greater part of the last fifteen years, especially within the island dialects, most of the results of which have not as yet been published.

3.5. Certainly it would not be fair to finish this short survey¹⁰ without referring to all those who have in the course of time brought together the enormous wealth of word material from all Frisian dialects, though it is not possible here to mention them all by name. Also we cannot fail to call to mind K. VON RICHTHOFEN, W.L. VAN HELTEN and TH. SIEBS, the founders of Old Frisian lexicography, grammar and etymology, and Frisian dialectology respectively (cf. note 3).

4. The short survey given above has, I think, made it fairly clear that we would be well prepared to tackle the project of a Frisian supplement to BUCK's dictionary of Indo-European synonyms. Still it goes without saying that a task of such complexity cannot easily be carried out by one scholar alone. At least three experts would be required, one for Old Frisian, another for West Frisian, and a third for North Frisian. This is not the place to draw up the guiding-principles for the project, as all the details must be discussed in due course by the scholars concerned.

4.1. After BUCK announced his project in 1929 twenty years elapsed until its completion. The Frisian supplement, I hope, will not take quite as long, but the main thing is that it will come at all. It would certainly form an essential contribution to Frisian philology, well suited to establish its position amongst the other Germanic philologies even in the wider scope of Indo-European.

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Notes

1. *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages. A Contribution to the History of Ideas.* By CARL DARLING BUCK. With the co-operation of colleagues and assistants. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London 1949,² 1965. XVII, 1515 pp.
2. For the interpretation of the word-geographical distribution cf. the author's paper *Nordische Lehnwörter und lexikalische Stützung im Nordfriesischen*, in *Verhandlungen des Zweiten Internationalen Dialektologenkongresses I* (= ZMF Beihefte NF 3) (Wiesbaden 1967), p. 41, and in *Nordfriesisches Jahrbuch NF 2* (1969), p. 309.
3. Cf. the author's paper *Die friesischen Wörter für 'Rad' ('Wheel')*, in *Kopenhagener germanistische Studien I* (in honour of Professor PETER JØRGENSEN), Kopenhagen 1969, pp. 35-84. Apart from the articles presented in the author's paper *Die Herkunft des Inselnordfriesischen im Lichte der Wortgeographie*, in *Philologia Frisica anno 1966*, Grins 1968, pp. 49-76, this is the first treatise, dealing at full length with all Frisian equivalents of a single concept or group of concepts on the lines of the supplement proposed here. But we are well aware that TH. SIEBS anticipated our project to a great extent, though mainly as to words common to all Frisian dialects, in his book *Zur Geschichte der englisch-friesischen Sprache* (Halle a/S 1889). This book as well as his main work *Geschichte der friesischen Sprache* (Strassburg 1901²) will, of course be freely consulted throughout our project.
4. Cf. the author's paper *Die Herkunft* etc. (note 3), p. 67., and for other examples of word-geographical differentiation in North Frisian dialects *Die sprachlichen Verhältnisse der nordfriesischen Insel Föhr* (in print).
5. H.H. MUNSKE, *Der germanische Rechtswortschatz im Bereich der Missetaten. Semantische und wortgeographische Untersuchungen. I. Die Terminologie der älteren westgermanischen Rechtsquellen* (in print). In this comprehensive onomasiological treatise the Old Frisian terminology plays a central rôle. Cf. also H.H. MUNSKE, *Angelsächsisch-altfriesische Beziehungen in der Rechtsterminologie für Missetaten*, in *Flecht op 'e koai, stúdzjes oanbean oan Prof. Dr. W.J. Buna ta syn sechstichste jierdei* (Grins 1970), pp. 40-52 and *Die Gliederung des Altfriesischen im Lichte der Rechtswortgeographie*, in *Stúdzjekonferinsje Frysk 1971* (Ljouwert 1971), pp. 48-63.- Another important work, similar in aim but different in approach, is G. LERCHNER, *Studien zum nordwestgermanischen Wortschatz* (Halle/Saale 1965). For a cognate study cf. note 9.
6. Cf. D. HOFMANN, *Die Erschließung des altfriesischen Wortschatzes*, in *Philologia Frisica anno 1969* (Grins 1970), pp. 100-114.
7. *Priuwke fan in Frysk ôfliedkundich wurdboek*, in *Us Wurk 18* (1969), pp. 1-52.
8. In *Naamkunde 3* (1971), pp. 36-49.
9. In *Niederdeutsche Mitteilungen 19/21* (1963/65), pp. 281-345, 22 (1966), pp. 39-65, 23 (1967), pp. 11-61, 25 (1969), pp. 25-39.
10. For a more detailed treatment of the subject see the author's critical survey *Friesische Dialektologie*, in *Germanische Dialektologie. Festschrift für WALTHER MITZKA/...* (= ZMF Beihefte NF 5) (Wiesbaden 1968), pp. 264-317, and BO SJÖLIN, *Einführung in das Friesische* (Sammlung Metzler, Stuttgart 1969).