

## CHAPTER NINE Social Honorifics and Titles

If we were to assume that an early ancestor was the source of the Don River names we would have to admit a profound influence. He certainly commanded tremendous respect.

But what kind of social order would know him over such wide areas? We normally consider that very ancient people were restricted to the immediate vicinity of their homes. We do not see them traveling or having commercial trade over wide regions. Until recently this view was held for people even of 3,000 years ago. Lately, as we accumulated more information, we came to recognize that widespread commercial traffic took place even in more remote times. If the names date from those olden days it means that common social mechanisms were present.

Because of the limited nature of the linguistic evidence we may hesitate to draw profound conclusions. Perhaps there are other ways to explain the name patterns. It should take more than phonetic similarities to convince us. But why has modern scholarship neglected this information? Was the neglect out of conscious intent? Or was it because there is no recognized relationship to other evidence — historical, archeological, or linguistic — no accepted method for viewing such information in broader perspectives? Or is it because, perhaps, they do not believe the old stories — do not accept that Adam was real? If the modern scholarly world viewed Adam's existence as illusion out of psychic aberrations, with the idea originating from people who think in myths, they would not look for an individual obscured by the mists of time. Then the place names are merely spurious phenomena unrelated to more discernible realities, or to other accumulated bodies of knowledge. But if one is receptive to the idea that Adam was real, that he must have had a profound influence, then this linguistic evidence begins to take on deeper meaning.

One could argue that the place names, even though demonstrating a pervasive influence, might, indeed, have derived from mythological folk tales and not from real persons. After all, it is the veneration that brings names into use, not the reality of the source. Adam is revered greatly today among Jews and Christians although they have no evidence other than the simple story in the Bible.

But what tradition would foster such respect? How did it come about? Why would it carry so strongly in phonetic similarity across geographical boundaries? The Greeks and Romans, intimately related in culture, did not use the same names for their mythological gods. Zeus and Hera were the Greek king and queen

of the gods but the Roman names were Jupiter and Juno. It seems more reasonable to assume origin in a cultural commonality out of some reality that remembered the actual names, and not out of mere mythological invention.

If we had only the river and place names we would not have a very strong argument. Fortunately we have much other evidence. It shows that, indeed, the common source was Adam; he was far more than mythological. He not only gave his name to the rivers and the lands; he also gave it to his descendants in their titles of social honor. The evidence is instructive.

### THE DON TITLES

Spanish men of high rank and nobility were addressed as *Don*. The title is used more commonly today as a matter of courtesy, but it was once restricted to a high class group as respect for their ruling authority. *Don Juan*, *Don Carlos*, and *Don Quixote* meant Lord Juan, Lord Carlos or Master Quixote. The title in Portugal is *Dom* with the n-to-m phonetic shift. In Sicily the title is still *Don* and came into the United States through the Sicilian underworld<sup>RHDEL,OED</sup>.

The female form in Spain is *Doña*; in Portugal it is *Dona*; in Italy it is *Donna*. The female form in Portugal has not seen the n-to-m phonetic shift.

In ancient Rome *Dominus* meant Lord or Master, just as the Spanish *Don* meant Lord or Master. Through the Roman conquests of the Iberian Peninsula linguists believe the Spanish *Don* and Portuguese *Dom* derive from the Latin *Dominus*. The Iberian female forms are thought to derive from the Latin female *Domina*. Numerous other words in Spanish and Portuguese can be traced without question to Latin; it is natural to assume the titles also came from Latin<sup>RHDEL,OED</sup>.

However, the clear phonetic identity with the Don river names now brings that traditional etymology into question. Other evidence also speaks against it.

Geoffrey Chaucer was an English poet of the fourteenth century who is well known in English-speaking countries for his *Canterbury Tales*. He was sometimes called *Dan* Chaucer, pronounced as *Don*. The title, or honorific, of *Don* is used yet today in English universities where it denotes senior fellows and tutors, those with superior knowledge and wisdom. The title is assumed to be colloquial, applied to anyone who is an adept. The *Oxford English Dictionary* does not offer an explanation for the origin of the honorific except to say it probably was borrowed from Spanish and Portuguese titles. No evidence is adduced to support this supposition.

The collegiate evidence is complicated by the title of *Dean*, as the *Dean* of a university or the *Dean* of a profession, someone expert in knowledge. The title is thought to derive from the French *decanum* and the Greek *deka* or *decanos*, someone who is the head of a group of ten. However, this supposed origin of the Dean title is far from clear. As admitted by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, whether viewed as Greek or Latin, the form of the word offers difficulties.

The vowel change from *don* to *dean* and the association with learned persons is not accidental. The various forms derive from a source that also explains the *don* and *donna* of the male and female, and the "a" prefix that changes *don*

to *adon*. All are explicitly related, as we shall see. The *Don* title is not limited to Spain, Portugal or England. It is used in France in Benedictine and Carthusian monastic orders where it was interchangeable with the pronunciation *Dom*. In Italy *Don* is also used as a title of address for priests<sup>RHDEL</sup>.

The same form can be traced through Europe for female applications, with the n-to-m phonetic shift. *Dam* or *Dama* was an ancient European title of a woman of high rank and nobility. We know the word today as *Dame*. We also use it more rarely as *dam*, the descriptive term for a female parent, both human and animal. It occurs also in the descriptive term for a young woman, a *damsel*. It is found in *Madam*, a combination of the maternal *ma* with *dam*, although traditional etymologies show it from the French *ma+dam* = my dame<sup>RHDEL,OED</sup>.

This brief survey shows that *don* and *dona* titles had a wide influence in Europe. However, the opinion of modern scholarship that the titles come out of Rome and the Latin language is seriously open to question. There is no evidence for the supposed borrowing of the university titles in England. This is merely a suggested hypothesis because there is no other traceable source. This hypothesis is cast into further doubt because *Dean* is so phonetically similar and used in close association in those same institutions. It would be more simple to hypothesize an ancient common source that diffused down into the various societies than to insist upon a borrowing from Rome.

#### DOM PREFIXES AND SUFFIXES

Investigation of *dom-* and *-dom* prefixes and suffixes adds to our information on this phenomenon.

Examples of English words with a *dom* prefix which come from Latin are:

*Domain* from *dominicus* = "of or belonging to a Lord or Master."

*Dominate* from *dominare* = "to rule, govern, lord over something or someone."

*Dominion* from *dominium* = "property or ownership of a lord."

These all come from Latin *dominus*; they are words that connote rulership and strength. We saw earlier that the Keltic *dun* also connotes strength but the word is not of known Latin origin.

Now consider examples of the *-dom* suffix in the Teutonic languages. *Christendom* and *kingdom* imply rulership, authority, sovereignty, or a condition of state. The use of *-dom* to denote royal or kingly dominion, and the jurisdiction of an elder or lord, is illustrated also in *Earldom* or *Dukedom*. The *-dom* suffix also appears in such modern English words as *freedom* and *wisdom*, a condition or fact of being free and wise.

Philologists propose that the Teutonic suffix *-dom* came from the Germanic root *do*. This root is found throughout the Indo-European languages as the Sanskrit *dha-*, Persian *da-*, Old Slavic *dete*, Lithuanian *deti*, and Latin *-dere*. It generally means to place, put, set or lay. The "m" suffix on the Germanic *do* follows similar inflections found in Sanskrit, Greek and Latin, illustrated by such English words as *hel-m*, *sea-m*, and *strea-m*. But the common connotations of the Teu-

tonic *-dom* and the Latin *dom-* cause us to ask if it is possible the Teutonic *-dom* came from a source other than the *do-m* verb. We shall look at this question again in the following chapter.

#### HEBREW CONNECTIONS

To show the antiquity of the *don/dom* forms I turn to Northwest Semitic and Hebrew. Abundant evidence shows that those languages long predate Rome and the Latin language, extending more than four thousand years into the past. If a *don* influence can be demonstrated in Hebrew it certainly did not come out of Rome.

*Dan* was a son of Jacob, a great-grandson of Abraham. He was the father of the Israelite tribe of Dan. In Hebrew his name is pronounced *Don*, with the same vowel intonation as the Spanish and English *Dons*. Literally it means to judge, someone expert in knowledge and wisdom. Note how closely this literal meaning parallels that of the European usage in the ruling Dons and the wise professors.

*Daniel*, the famous character of the Hebrew apocalypse, also carries the name *Don* but with the suffix *El*. Students of Near East antiquities know him as one famed for his expert knowledge and wisdom. Nebuchadnezzar called upon Daniel to solve the mysteries of his dreams; Daniel was promoted to high office because of his great intelligence and perspicacity. It seems hardly coincidental that the Hebrew *Don* and *Daniel*, denoting knowledge and wisdom, would have names phonetically similar to the European Dons who are also noted for their expert knowledge and wisdom.

Furthermore, Hebrew has the title *Adon*, which means Lord or Master. The close linguistic relationship between the European *Don* and the Hebrew *Adon* is clear. The phonetics and the meanings are the same. Even more, with an n-to-m phonetic shift *Adon* becomes *Adom*, and this is the Hebrew name for Adam. Thus we find a solid linguistic connection between *Adam* and the *Dons* of Europe. The close similarity in names, titles, and honorifics from Europe to the Near East Hebrew, in phonetics and semantics across widely divergent cultures, is impressive.

(Note: I postpone discussion of the accepted origin of the name *Adom* in Hebrew. I will consider this in a following chapter on *Blood and Fertility Myths*.)

One could suggest the Iberian *dons* and *doms* came from Hebrew. They are phonetically and semantically identical to the Hebrew: *Don* and *Dom* from *Don* and *Adon* rather than from Latin *dominus*. But would the influence be limited to these few forms? People would not borrow social titles unless there was a powerful social influence. Would the ruling classes of Europe borrow their titles from Hebrew people? And if from Hebrew, where the designations are used in general application, does this mean the Hebrew people, as a class, were of noble status? Otherwise, such transfer would take place only if the ruling classes transferred from one country to another, or had a common origin. If Northwest Semitic were

the source of the European Dons we would expect to see the Semitic influence in many other ways. But such influence is not recognized. If there were a common source it is unknown.

Furthermore, such supposed origins would not explain the Teutonic *dom* forms.

Even more, we cannot consider the social titles and honorifics in isolation from the *Don* river names. It is not reasonable to ignore the phonetic identity.

A suggestion that the titles came from the river names would be absurd; people do not acquire important social titles from the names for rivers. On the other hand the river names would not have come from the social titles; people do not name rivers after words for social position. Would we name rivers *Mister* or *Madam*. It seems far more reasonable that the river names and the titles both originate in some common personality in remote antiquity.

If we assume this common source was back in time, beyond known Indo-European and Semitic cultures, we have an explanation for the different forms among diverse people over wide geographical areas. The *don* tradition dominated all Caucasian people but different groups remembered differently as the groups diversified. Thus we have *don/dom* in western Europe, *-dom* in Teutonic, *don* and *adon* in Hebrew, and the ever-present *Don* rivers. Social customs, linguistic meanings, and phonetics drifted over time but the river names clung to the land.

Such thesis provides insight into the diffusion of the title and name phenomena: it was a vertical diffusion down through the generations as cultures drifted apart; it was not a horizontal diffusion from one contemporary culture to the next.

Further insight into this process is noted by the ancient restriction of the titles to a high social class, a nobility. The titles were mechanisms for great social respect; they did not originate out of mythological tales. They were used in everyday hard reality for maintaining order and due process in social intercourse where one class was superior to another. The titles carried from one generation to the next among that high social class. The origin would be in some remote ancestor who also carried that title. If a Don in Spain acquired his title through inheritance from his father, then his father must have acquired it from his father, and so on back through the generations to some remote ancestor who also carried the title Don.

This process implies a powerful social force from highly cultured groups, contrary to our prevalent notions of primitive savagery among our Indo-European ancestry. There must have been a coherent cultural refinement on a grand scale. Our modern godless anthropological views may be more primitive than the people they assay to define.

As John Philip Cohane quoted from an unidentified Scandinavian source:

Don was the one from whom, so saith antiquity, the pedigrees of our kings have flowed in glorious series, like channels from some parent spring.

A richer understanding of the Don phenomena is provided when we examine the conjugation of the Hebrew verb root don.

#### **A Technical Note**

Linguistic scholars use two elements in determining etymologies. The first is similar sounds; the second is similar meanings. Latin *dominus* and Spanish *Don* are thus tied together. Sometimes etymologies are obscured by less visible phonetic shifts. For example, Greek and Latin *pater* is equivalent to English *father*. The “p” to “f” shift is well recognized in the Indo-European languages. In order to confirm etymologies scholars resort to documentary evidence. They will use undocumented connections only if there is wide consensus within the academic community.

The present study reaches beyond this rigorous scholarly method. It demands a study of patterns. Such pattern study should not be less acceptable to linguists than to other branches of science. Patterns are used to yield great theoretical understanding about stars and galaxies. Patterns are used for demographic analyses and the allocation of social resources. Many other illustrations could be given. Through such disciplined process we all might obtain better understanding of our planetary past.