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THE TERMS FOR “FLOWER” FROM THE ALPS TO THE APPENNINES

Abstract

The Romanic (or Romance) area from the Alps to the Appennines shows five lexical types for “flower (i.e. the plant):” (1) Lat. *flōs*, *flōrem* ‘flower,’ (2) Lat. *rōsa* ‘rose’ (possibly due to the high occurrence in metaphorical expressions and in compound expressions and/or due to the dominance of the prototype and/or due to communicative-formal reasons), (3) Tyrolean (*t*)*schopf* ‘mop, tuft’ (due to social reasons in the form of everyday contact), (4) a derivate of Lat. **mattea* ‘cube, mace’ (cf. It. *mazzo* ‘bunch’) (due to the introduction of a new intermediate level in the taxonomic hierarchy), (5) pre-Latin/Celtic **bugion-* ‘blue flower’ (possibly due to the high occurrence in metaphorical expressions and in compound expressions and/or due to the dominance of the prototype and/or communicative-formal reasons).

1. Preliminary Remarks

1.1. I have chosen the zones which are traditionally known as Rhaeto-Romanic (or Rhaeto-Romance) and Upper Italian for a common study, because this area, albeit now (from a synchronic point of view) seen as comprehending linguistically individual zones, can be seen as an historical unit, with a higher degree of proximity in the regional idioms of earlier stages, which, among other things, is also due to a common Celtic influence (cf. Grzega 2001).

1.2. The reason for studying the terms for “flower (i.e. the plant)” is the fact that the etymologies of generic terms (in contrast to specific concepts) have so far seldom been studied.

2. Terms for “Flower”

2.1. Like all Romanic languages, the Cisalpine and Alpine dialects show daughter forms of Lat. *flōs* ‘flower, bloom,’ e.g. Val Badia *flu* ‘flower, bloom; the best,’ Livinallongo (Fodom) *flou* ‘flower, bloom,’ Gardena *flëura* ‘flower, bloom’ vs. *flëur* ‘bloom, prime (in a metaphoric sense) [only in *te l flëur di ani* ‘in the prime of life’]’ (according to Martini [1952: 430] vs. *floura* ‘flora, flower, bloom’ (at least according to Martini [1952. 430]), Fassa *fior* ‘flower, bloom, the best, white frost on fruit,’ Ampezzo *fior* ‘flower,’ Comelico *fióru*, Cadore *fiór*, Belluno *fiór*, Trentino *fiór*, Venetian *fiór*, Friulan *flôr*, *flòur*, *flùar* (EWD s.v. *flù*, AIS 1357, REW 3382, Faré, FEW III: 630-638). Some Ligurian dialects show initial *š-*, which is the local regular continuant of Lat. *fl-* (cf. Rohlfs 1966: 247). For the present-day use in Val Badia, Gardena and Livinallongo the ALD-I (Map 303) notes: “i tipi ‘*ciof*’ (ecc.) and ‘*flur*’ (ecc.) significano rispettivamente la “*pianta*” (ted. “*Blume*”) and la “*parte fiorita*” di essa (ted. “*Blüte*”).” Thus, we could already assume that some of the restrictions of the Latin word into the (Cis-)Alpine Romanic regions have to do with an influence from the neighboring Germanic dialects (cf. also infra).

2.2. The AIS map 1357 shows a number of instances in Friulan dialects, where *róze* or *róže* means ‘flower in general.’ So does the ALD-I (Map 303), which has the type *róza* ‘flower’ for Forni Avoltri, Pesàriis and Ampezzo. However, for the Friulan dialects Pirona/Carletti/Corgnali (1977: 898f.) give as the semantic range of *róse*: “Fiore, in genere, in senso piuttosto estetico che funzionale [...] rosa.” On the other hand, under the entry *flôr* Pirona/Carletti/Corgnali (1977: 325) note the following remark: “= Fiore. In senso pr[oprio] piú com[mune] *Rose*. Spesso le due voci si usano insieme: *Rosis e flôrs*.” Another instant of this generalization is listed in the AIS for Point 305 (Mareo). It should be mentioned, however, that the AIS dates from the first quarter of the twentieth century; in present-day Mareo *resa* means exclusively ‘rose;’ only in compound forms do we still find the generic meaning, e.g. *resa ghela* ‘marsh marigold,’ *resa dai capezineri* (aside from *flu dai capezineri* and *aster* ‘aster’ (Videsott/Plangg [1998], ALD-I: map 303, cf. also EWD s.v. *rösa*). Tests with my German and foreign students (mostly from Romanic countries) suggest that in several, maybe many parts of western Europe the rose is named as the prototypical flower. Can this have played any role in the designations for ‘rose’ and ‘flower’? The Indo-European names for the rose almost uniformly go back to one source, namely Lat. *rosa*, which was subsequently borrowed from one European language to another with the gradual cultivation of the plant. This means that the rose, although now the prototype of a flower, is comparatively young in Europe and could not have served for representing the entire category in ancient names. But extension from the names of other specific flowers seems rare, too. Buck (1949: 526f.) regards NGk. λουλούδι as a loan from Albanian, which itself could descend from Lat. *lilium* ‘lily.’ For Lithuanian *gėlė* Buck cautiously writes (1949: 527) “orig. applied to a particular flower?” [with a question mark]. A more exhaustive study on the names for ‘flower’ was written by Weijnen (1986). He observes that some generic terms stem from the names for the rose in Danish dialects (aside from *blomst*) and northern Finnish dialects and that the generic terms of the French Picardy go back to the violet (cf. also FEW XIV: 483). We may wonder whether such extensions (e.g. the same term for “roses” and “non-roses” or the same term for “violets” and “non-violets”) didn’t cause any dangers of miscommunication. First, it must be emphasized that Weijnen doubts that Dan. *rose* and Dan. *blomst* are really total synonyms anywhere, as *rose* rather connotes ‘cultivated plant;’ in other words: the extension must then also be seen under the influence of the introduction of a new, intermediate taxonomic level. The DW quotes a number of instances where G. *Rose* is applied to other kinds of flower. Marzell (IV, 1156) lists cases of extension of ‘violet’ to denote other cultivated plants with a pleasant scent. This holds true for the Picardy, too (cf. Weijnen 1986). Thus, it is primarily a conceptual recategorization by accident that brings the prototype into play secondarily and it is not the prototype *per se* that triggers off the lexical and conceptual change (cf. Grzega [in press b], where we also find a series of other instances connected with prototypicality). In other words: what has happened in the eastern Cisalpine regions is the following: (a) *rosa* is used metaphorically and in compounds to denote various kinds of flower resembling roses in one way or another (color, scent, form etc.) (triggered off by the aim to achieve expressivity or by onomasiological fuzziness?), (b) *rosa* has subconsciously become a term on a new intermediate level and finally on the generic level (the intermediate level being expressed by composite forms then), (c) the real, original rose(s) (the wild rose and the garden rose) must be named in new ways (e.g. “wild rose,” “garden rose,” “real rose;” AIS map 605 shows, amongst others, the types *rosa selvatica*, *rosulas*, *córñaras* and *spin(a)* for the wild rose). Due to the influence of Standard Italian and other European languages, however, the simplex *rosa* is nowadays used as a usual term for the

rose again.

2.3. A third type is connected with some of the Dolomitic Ladin valleys: Val Badia *ciüf* ‘flower, bunch, mop’ (vs. *ciüfa* ‘mop of hair’), Livinallongo (Fodom) *čov* ‘flower’ (vs. *čuf* ‘mop of hair, tuft of hair, tuft of grass’), Gardena *ciof* ‘flower, bunch of flowers’ (vs. *ciüf* ‘mop, tuft’), (Upper Fassa *ciof* ‘bunch of herbs or leaves, tuft of cotton,’ Lower Fassa *čuf* ‘mop of hair, plait, tuft of hair, bunch, flowering plant,’ North-East Italian type *ciuf(o)* ‘mop, tuft’). According to the EWD the Ladin forms meaning ‘mop’ are variants of It. *ciuffo* (also known in southern French regions), which is said to go back either to Langobard. *zupffa* ‘plait’ (REW 9632a, Faré, DELI s.v.) or to an expressive stem (FEW XIII: 377f., DEI s.v., Prati 1968: 288), the latter hypothesis being favored by the EWD. Another possible etymon is a pre-Latin, probably Celtic, **tūsta*, or *tūffa* (from late Celtic **tūθθa*), ‘mop, tuft’ (Grzega 2001: 249). According to the EWD the meaning ‘flower’ can be explained via the meaning ‘tuft, bunch.’ The distinction between two forms for the semantic range ‘mop, tuft; flower, bunch’ in all dialects except for Val Badia is noted, but not further dwelled on. Gsell (1989: 147), pointing at the formal distinction between ‘mop, tuft’ and ‘flower, bunch,’ rightly says that not all forms can go back to Tyrolean *(t)schopf* ‘tuft of hair, tuft of grass’ (Schatz 642) (a loan which resulted from the everyday contact with the Tyroleans) (apart from *(t)schopf*, there is also the similar sounding form *(t)schupp*). The semantic extension from ‘bunch’ to ‘flower’ is not as peculiar as Gsell thinks. It is also attested for French *bouquet* (FEW XV: 199), for Rhaeto-Romance (cf. below) and for Tyrolean *pusch* and its diminutive *puschl* (Schatz 122); actually, the semantic range in Ladin might then be viewed as a semantic loan from Tyrolean. The semantic development may be postulated as follows: (a) ‘tuft, mop’ > (b) ‘the [salient] bloom of a flower or the [salient] blooms of a bunch of flowers’ (metaphor) > (c) ‘bunch of blooms = bunch of flowers’ (synecdoche, i.e. a “part-of” relation [cf. Grzega in press a]; see also the parallel semantic range ‘flower [the entire plant]; upper part of the flower/plant’ in Lat. *flōs*, Fr. *fleur*, E. *flower* etc.) > (d) ‘flower [the entire plant]’ (synecdoche) (it is also imaginable that stage (c) was reached before (b)). The introduction of a formal distinction between the entire plant and the upper part of the plant will in part also go back to a conceptual loan from the adjacent Germanic dialect areas (this shows that apart from forms and semantic ranges, also world categorizations can be borrowed, as is also elaborated in Grzega [in press a]). Further on, in some Ladin valleys there was a secondary, folk-etymological blend of the Tyrolean type and the already mentioned North-East Italian *ciuffo*, which comprehended related senses (‘mop, tuft’).

2.4. Apart from *flūr*, AIS map 1357 records the isolated term *māć* for Point 5 (Domat/Ems in the Grisons), which today means exclusively ‘bunch of flowers.’ The HWR traces the word back to Lat. *māium* ‘May.’ Although there are no problems in formal respects, there seems no motivation for using the name of one particular month for flowers in general (many of which grow and bloom in other months). The Rhaeto-Romance word must rather be seen in connection with It. *mazzo* ‘bunch (of flowers),’ which is usually said to descend from Lat. **mattea* ‘club, mace’ (REW 5425) (cf., e.g., DELI). To understand the onomasiological innovation the AIS’s note that *māć* predominantly refers to garden flowers seems vital. Obviously, there was a communicative need to introduce a new intermediate level between the generic “flower” and the species “rose, violet, carnation etc.” (cf. also 2.2.). It may also be that speakers wanted to differentiate between “flower” and “bloom.” In the dialects of France it is a quite widespread phenomenon that “(garden) flower” and a specialized meaning are differentiated by the opposition between an inherited

form of Lat. *flōs* and the standard or re-Latinized form. However, it is easily conceivable that the differentiation is also drawn by choosing entirely different word-types.

2.5. Another isolated term for flower is recorded for Point 222 (Germasino, in the province of Como) of AIS map 1357: *bōž*. This term may go back to a pre-Latin, probably Celtic **būgion-* ‘blue flower’ (REW 1375a, Faré, Grzega 2001: 118, not listed in the LEI). (For the various possible results of Lat. *-gi-* in Upper Italian cf. Rohlfs [1966: 395]). The daughter forms of **bugion-* usually refer to the blue labiate and various variants of *Salvia silvatica*. But, considering that the name of the violet is used as a generic term in several dialects of Northern France and Germany (cf. 2.3.), the generalization of the names of other blue-colored flowers becomes less strange. One cause for the replacement of *fiór* by *bōž* may be that the former was too much associated with ‘fine flour’ (cf. AIS 256 P. 222: *fiór de hadínα*). And so the original “flower” term was more and more avoided, so that a prototypical flower could subconsciously, or semi-consciously, acquire more and more general meaning by accident (dominance of the prototype, onomasiological fuzziness). Prototypical flowers will be those that bloom in one prominent eye-catching color (red, blue/violet, yellow).

3. Conclusion

To conclude, we can make the following observations:

3.1. New names for “flower” in the areas from the Alps to the Appennines are reached through generalization of meaning/use (2.2., 2.5.), synecdoche (pars pro toto, totum pro parte) (2.3., 2.4.) and borrowing (including the phenomena of semantic and conceptual borrowing) (2.3.).

3.2. Possible forces for the lexical innovations are: a linguistic accident due to the prominence of a prototype (2.2., 2.5.) and/or onomasiological fuzziness (2.2., 2.5.), communicative-formal reasons (2.3., 2.5.), the creation of a new concept through a change in the taxonomy (2.4., 2.2.) (i.e. certain speech communities introduce intermediate (folk-)taxonomic levels between the generic name and the species, “cultivated” vs. “wild”—a distinction which can be found for other plants as well—or “with salient pleasant scent” vs. “non-salient scent, unmarked as to scent”), social reasons (everyday contact) (2.3.).

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first version received 15 October 2004
revised version received 1 December 2004