FROM 'AMBASSADOR' TO 'WHISKY': A NOTE ON CELTIC ELEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY POLISH VOCABULARY

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1. Introduction

This note discusses elements of Celtic origin present in contemporary Polish vocabulary. Polish did not have any direct contacts with the Celtic languages, however, some elements of Celtic (i.e. Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, Breton) origin entered it via other languages, especially English and French. Additionally, several early borrowings from Continental Celtic spread through Latin, and subsequently the Romance languages, to other languages, including Polish, thus becoming internationalisms of Celtic origin. For the purpose of this note all such indirect borrowings will be referred to as 'Celtic elements in Polish vocabulary'.[1]

Section 2 of this note presents the more recent borrowings from Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh and Breton, whereas section 3 lists the ancient Celtic elements which found their way into Polish (and numerous other modern languages).

2. Celtic elements in Polish vocabulary

This section lists the items of Celtic origin present in Polish vocabulary. All of them are mentioned in *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego PWN* (Dubisz 2004), however only one of them, i.e. *menhir*, is identified as Celtic in origin, in other instances the entries point to the English, French or Latin sources. Interestingly, the recent dictionary of English borrowings in Polish (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 2010), mentions the Celtic origin of *klan*, *kromlech*, *pled*, *slogan*, *torys*, *whisky*, other words from the list below are either considered as English (*pled*), or absent from the dictionary.

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[1] Ancient Celto-Slavic linguistic connections are investigated in Stalmaszczyk & Witczak (1995), and Falileyev (1999-2000; 2001-2002). For a discussion of Celtic influences upon English vocabulary, see Stalmaszczyk (2005; 2009), and the references therein. Zabrocki (1963), Evans (1981), and Hickey (1995) discuss early Celto-Germanic linguistic contacts.

Every headword is followed by short explanation in Polish, the English or French equivalent (as given in the dictionary), and the Celtic source word (with appropriate meaning):[2]

bard 'celtycki poeta i pieśniarz dworski; poeta, piewca, wieszcz' < Fr. *barde* (< E *bard* 'a tribal poet-singer' < Sc.G *bàrd* 'poet, rhymer');

biżuteria 'wyroby z metali szlachetnych i drogich kamieni; kosztowności' < Fr. *bijouterie* 'jewellery' (< Fr. *bijou* 'jewel' < B *bizoù* 'jewelled ring' < B *biz* 'finger');

dolmen 'grobowiec z okresu neolitu zbudowany z pionowo ustawionych głazów, przykryty płaskim blokiem kamiennym' < E *dolmen* (< Fr. *dolmen* 'a prehistoric stone monument', most probably a French neologism based on two Breton words: *taol* 'table' + *maen* 'stone');

druid 'celtycki kapłan i wróżbita' < Lat. *druides* (< E *druid* 'ancient Celtic priest' < OE *dry* 'magician, sorcerer' < OIr. *druí*, pl. *druid* 'magician');

drumlin 'podłużny, niewysoki pagórek pochodzenia lodowcowego' < E 'a mound of glacial gravel' (< Ir. *druimín* 'low ridge, slight elevation < diminutive of *druim* 'back, ridge, hill');

flanela 'tkanina wełniana' < Fr. *flanelle* (< E *flannel* 'a woven cloth of wool' < W *gwlân* 'wool');

klan 'wspólnota rodowa' < E *clan* 'a group of people with common descent' (< Sc.G *clann* 'children' < OIr. *cland* 'offspring' < Lat. *planta* 'plant, sprout', cf. W *plant* 'children');

kromlech 'krąg z pionowo ustawionych bloków kamiennych' < Fr., E *cromlech* 'a prehistoric monument' (< W *cromlech* < *crom* f. form of *crwm* 'bowed, arched' + *llech* 'flat stone');

menhir 'pionowo ustawiony blok kamienny' < B *maen* 'stone' + *hir* 'long' (cf. E *menhir*, Fr. *menhir* 'a single upright stone monument', this word is, similarly to *dolmen*, a French archaeological neologism);

pingwin 'ptak o czarno-białym upierzeniu, zamieszkujący Antarktydę' < G *Pinguin*, E *penguin* (< W *pen* 'head' + *gwyn* 'white');

pled 'wełniane kraciaste okrycie' < E *plaid* 'a rectangular garment; a woollen scarf' (< Sc.G *plaide* 'blanket');

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[2] Simplified etymologies used throughout this note are based on appropriate entries in MacLennan (1925), Onions (1966), Vendryes (1959-1996), and Lambert (1994). I disregard here proper names such as e.g. *Irlandia* 'Ireland', and derived forms, e.g. *osjaniczny* 'Ossianic' (< Pol. *Osjan* < E *Ossian* < Sc.G *Oisin*), or words such as *kambr* 'Cambrian' and *dewon* 'Devon'.

slogan 'hasło reklamowe; oklepany frazes' < E *slogan* 'an attention-getting phrase; a war cry' (< Sc.G *sluagh-ghairm* 'a war cry of a clan' < *sluagh* 'army' + *gairm* 'shout, cry');

torys 'członek partii konserwatywnej' < E *Tory*, pl. *Tories* 'member of the Conservative Party; earlier: an Irish outlaw' (< Ir. *tóraí* 'pursuer, hunter', *tóir* 'pursuit');

whisky 'wódka wytrawna produkowana ze spirytusu zbożowego' < E *whisky* (< Sc.G *uisge beatha* 'water of life'; E *whiskey* < Ir. *uisce beatha* 'water of life').

It is sometimes difficult to assess whether the given borrowing is ultimately of Irish or Scottish Gaelic origin. As can be seen from the above list, eight Polish words have their origin in these two languages: *bard*, *druid*, *drumlin*, *klan*, *pled*, *slogan*, *torys* and *whisky*. The word *clan*, so characteristic of the Celtic social organisation, is in fact an early Latin loan in Irish, with Latin /p/ changing into Old Irish /k/: Lat. *planta* > OIr. *cland*.[3] Another well-known Celtic internationalism, *whisky* (Sc.G *uisge beatha*, Ir. *uisce beatha*) is an example of loan translation from Latin *aqua vitae* 'water of life' (cf. Polish *okowita* id.). Welsh contributed four words: one simple lexeme *flanela*, and two original Welsh compounds: *kromlech* and *pingwin*.[4] Breton contributed (through French) three terms: *biżuteria*, *dolmen*, and *menhir*, though the later two are in fact French archaeological neologisms.

Of the 14 above listed items, 4 belong to specialised terminology (*dolmen*, *drumlin*, *kromlech*, *menhir*), further 4 retain their broad Celtic associations (*bard*, *druid*, *klan*, *whisky*), whereas the remaining 6 items have undergone considerable semantic changes already in the intermediate languages and their Celtic origin is visible only to specialists. Additional Celtic items may be found in Polish texts dealing with archaeology, geology, religion, mythology and folklore, these lexemes, however, cannot be treated as borrowings but rather as citation forms, or highly specialised terminology, e.g.

brehon 'sędzia starodawnego prawa' (< E *brehon* 'a judge in early Ireland' < Ir. *breitheamh*, id.);

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[3] Irish possesses also a later variant of this borrowing, with preserved /p/: Ir. *planda* 'plant'.

[4] This is not to claim that English borrowed a Welsh name for the penguin, most probably this term underwent some shift from the name of a bird with a white head (Great Auk?) to a different bird discovered by the sailors in the New World; cf. also the W name *penddu* 'black-headed gull'. For a recent discussion of the etymology of this word, cf. Thier (2007).

corgi 'walijska rasa owczarka' (< E *corgi* 'a Welsh breed of dog' < W *corgi* < *cor* 'dwarf' + *ci* 'dog');

esker 'oz; akumulacja lodowcowa' (< E *esker* 'a ridge of gravel left after a glacer' < Ir. *eiscir* 'a ridge of mounds, or mountains; a glacial ridge');

geis 'klątwa, zakaz' (E *geis*, *geasa* 'a taboo, an act of prohibition' < Ir. *geis*, pl. *geasa* 'a taboo, a bond, solemn injunction');

karn 'kopiec z kamieni' (< E *cairn* 'pile of stones' < Sc.G *càrn* 'heap of stones');

kelpie 'konik morski, zły duch wabiący jeźdźców' (< E *kelpie* 'a malevolent water spirit' < Sc.G *cailpeach* / *colpach* 'a colt; a heifer');

ogam (also *ogham*) 'rodzaj pisma alfabetycznego zaświadczonego w inskrypcjach' (< E *ogam* / *ogham* 'ancient Irish alphabetic system' < Ir. *ogam* / *ogham* < OIr. *ogum* / *ogom*).

3. Ancient Celtic elements in Polish

Ancient contacts between Celtic and Germanic tribes resulted in a number of Celtic borrowings in the Germanic languages,[5] similarly, the contacts between Celts and Romans resulted in Celtic borrowings in Latin (and Romance languages). Such words can be attested now in various languages and they belong to the earliest strata of Celtic internationalisms.

At least the following Polish lexemes can be classified as 'ancient Celtic elements in Polish': *ambasada* 'embassy', *ambasador* 'ambassador', *biret* 'biretta' (probably also *beret* 'beret'), *bryczesy* 'breeches', *budżet* 'budget', *garota* 'garrotte', *gladiator* 'gladiator', *kamizelka* 'waistcoat' (possibly also *komża* 'surplice'), *kareta* 'carriage' (and related forms: *karoca* 'coach', *karoseria* 'car-body', *karuzela* 'carousel'), *lanca* 'lance', *rzesza* 'Reich', *wasal* 'vassal'.[6] A detailed discussion of these items falls outside the scope of this note, however, a brief presentation of two words – *ambasada* 'embassy' (and the related form *ambasador* 'ambassador'), and *budżet* 'budget' – may show their history in relation to their Celtic origin.

The word *ambasada* 'embassy' is an 18th century borrowing from French *ambassade*, which comes from Italian *ambasciata*, borrowed from Old Provençal *ambaisada* 'office of ambassador'. The Provençal form was derived from Medieval Latin *ambactia*, which in turn comes from Old High

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[5] On Celto-Germanic contacts, see Zabrocki (1963), Bednarczuk (1988), Evans (1981) and Hickey (1995).

[6] Due to lack of a complete etymological dictionary of Polish it is not possible to verify the etymologies of all the above mentioned items. It is interesting to note that Bańkowski (2000) in most cases does not consider the Celtic etymologies of the discussed words.

German *ambaht* 'officer, official' (cf. Gothic *andbahts* 'servant', and modern German *Amt* 'office' and *Beamter* 'civil servant').[7] The ultimate source is Gaulish *ambactos* 'dependant, vassal'.[8] The Polish word *ambasador* 'ambassador' comes from (Middle) French *ambassadeur*, from OF *embassator*, from Lat. *ambactus* 'vassal, servant', again ultimately from Gaulish *ambactos*. It is interesting to note here the related, now obsolete, Welsh word *amaeth* 'husbandman, serf', and the contemporary Welsh form *amaeth-* 'agriculture; cultivate; farm', which displays semantic specialisation of the original Celtic term (cf. also MidW *amaeth* 'ploughman', Evans [1994]: 27). Additionally, the Old English forms *ombiht* 'herald; office; officer' (cf. Bammesberger 1989: 172), and *ambiht*, *ambeht* 'servant' derive from Germanic **ambahta-*, and ultimately from Gaulish *ambactos*. As noted by Serjeantson ([1968]: 56) the word is common in OE, both as an independent word and in compounds, and in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* it corresponds to the Latin terms *minister* and *discipulus*.

The second item to be discussed in some more detail is the word *budżet* 'budget'. According to Mańczak-Wohlfeld (2006: 20) this word is one of the oldest Polish borrowings from English, attested for the first time in 1792. Polish dictionaries note that this word derives from the English form *budget*,[9] MidE *bouget* 'leather pouch; wallet', which in turn comes from OF *bougette*, dim. of *bouge* 'leather bag'. Usually the ultimate form is given as Lat. *bulga* 'leather bag'. This etymology omits the Celtic origin of the discussed form which can be reconstructed as Gaul. *bulga* 'bag' (cf. MidIr. *bolg* 'bag', Ir. *bolg* 'bag, pouch; belly', MidW *boly* 'bag; belly', W *bol* 'belly, stomach', B *bolc'h* 'flax pod'). This item shows the complexity of semantic changes across centuries and languages. A most interesting continuation of this old word was noted by Michael Traynor in the dialect of Donegal, where one of the meanings of *budget* survived as 'a travelling tinker's bag for holding the implements of his trade, hence a tramp's bag' (Traynor 1953: 39).[10]

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7   For a brief discussion see Hickey (1995: 97-98). The Gothic noun *andbahts*, the verb *andbahtjan*, and the derived noun *andbahti* have several occurrences in Wulfila's *Bible*, cf. the searchable text at Wulfila Project (http://www.wulfila.be/Corpus/Find.asp), where the word is translated as 'minister/to minister'.

8   For details, see Lambert (1994: 186) who observes that French *ambassade* "est un mot qui a voyagé". As noted above, also the word *vassal* (Pol. *wasal*) is of Celtic origin.

9   The contemporary – financial – meaning of the English word *budget* dates from c. 1733.

10 *Cf.* also Scots *budget* 'a workman's wallet' (Warrack 1911 [2002]: 72).

4. Conclusion

This note has briefly discussed the Celtic elements in Polish vocabulary. In all cases these are indirect borrowings, referred to as 'Celtic internationalisms', which entered Polish mainly through English or French. Further studies are required to give precise etymologies of the presented lexemes and to find possible additions to the above (admittedly incomplete) list.

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Language names

B	Breton	MidIr.	Middle Irish
E	English	MidW	Middle Welsh
Fr.	French	OE	Old English
Gaul.	Gaulish	OF	Old French
G	German	OIr.	Old Irish
Gmc.	Germanic	Pol.	Polish
Ir.	Irish	Sc.G	Scottish Gaelic
Lat.	Latin	W	Welsh
MidE	Middle English		

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