BOOK REVIEWS

Jewish Personal Names: Their Origin, Derivation and Diminutive Forms. By Shmuel Gorr. Chaim Freedman, ed. Teaneck, NJ: Avotaynu, 1992. xv + 112 pp.

Los estudios etimológicos, que a tantos tientan y en que tan pocos descuellan (Fernández-Galiano 174).

Introduction

> Yiddish onomastics, and more specifically the study of Yiddish proper names, is one of the least developed branches of Yiddish linguistics. So far, there are neither general nor specific works dealing with the derivational system, historical evolution, or dialectal distribution of Yiddish personal names, or of Yiddish family names which are often derived from the former. What is even more of a handicap is the lack of reliable primary data, the prerequisite for linguistic analysis and explanation. (Stankiewicz 266)

Ten years later, the situation was no better:

> The book is a disappointment and can be recommended neither for the specialist nor for the novice.... The number of errors in citation and analysis is staggering.... There is no excuse for the inordinately large number of errors in citation and commentary.... Kaganoff is clearly unfamiliar with the methodology of historical linguistics, especially etymology.... We meet with a plethora of misspellings in the citation of every source language.... Kaganoff's linguistic naivete is clearly reflected in numerous formulations.... Mistranslations are widespread.... Kaganoff [lacks] sufficient familiarity with the materials and [is] without a clear understanding of the goals of Jewish onomastics.... The sparse bibliography provided as well as the claim that his two brief articles in *Commentary*... are 'standard reference works on the subject' (xiii) suggest that Kaganoff is ignorant of most of the relevant literature.... His book is a failure. (Wexler 1979:passim)

So wrote, with copious examples to support his judgments, the only serious reviewer of a small book on Jewish family names which the laity still holds in high esteem. Nothing has changed since then (Gold "Problems" and "Study"), as we will now see once again.

The publisher's claims

The publisher makes these claims for Gorr's booklet:

> No Jewish personal name book is like it!.... The late Rabbi Shmuel Gorr (1931-1988) was not only a scholar but, in the true rabbinical tradition, he was also a teacher. His work, *Jewish Personal Names: Their Origin, Derivation and Diminutive Forms*, reflects this philosophy. The structure of the book is unique. The names are not organized alphabetically, but by root name. All variants of the root name are shown together, with footnotes explaining how these variants were derived. Family names originating from personal names also are presented. Thus, the reader is educated as well as informed. Publication of this valuable book serves as a fitting memorial to Rabbi Gorr's many contributions to Jewish genealogy.

No one can gainsay the first claim, for this idiosyncratic and error-filled booklet is like no other. As for its structure, it is not unique: nesting of entries in dictionaries of given or family names is now common (Hanks and Hodges probably has the most nuanced classification). Gorr's booklet is actually retrogressive in that he gave all variants in each nest merely in alphabetical order instead of dividing them into categories, subcategories, etc. based on various criteria.[1] The fact that he called all variants "diminutives" (cf. his title) shows that he was unaware even of the elementary division of non-base forms of Yiddish given names into nicknames and expressive forms:

> The system of [Yiddish] personal names consists, then, of three distinct functional levels: (1) The base forms (or full forms) of proper names. (2) Nicknames (or hypocoristics), which are derived from the base forms. (3) Expressive (diminutive or affectionate derivatives, which are derived from full forms (1) or from hypocoristics (2). (Stankiewicz 269)[2]

With respect to the publisher's other claims, "all variants" should be "all variants listed." In point of fact, the booklet lists only a tiny percentage of Jewish given names and only a tiny percentage of their non-base forms. Almost every one of those few non-base forms is Ashkenazic and a majority of them are Eastern Ashkenazic. Hardly any non-Eastern-Ashkenazic Jewish names (whether Western Ashkenazic or non-Ashkenazic Jewish names) are given. Most of Gorr's etymologies are wrong. Almost all of his Yiddish spellings and Yiddish romanizations are wrong. Only a few family names are given and they are not well treated. Most of the publisher's claims are thus unjustified.

I began marking erroneous passages in this shameful booklet, but stopped after ticking off almost every line on the first page. Despite the reviewer's obligation to examine a work carefully before writing about it, I soon found myself turning the pages faster and faster, hoping that this rain of error would quickly stop. Not a single line in this pretentious booklet is impeccable and hardly a line is at least barely acceptable. Gorr, a genealogist, had no training in linguistics or any of the subfields relevant to Jewish given names.[3] Time, space, and patience permit only a few remarks.[4]

A Few Entries

Gorr gave only rabbinical folk etymologies of Hebrew given names, thus helping to perpetuate centuries of error. For example, Hebrew *pinechas* 'Phineas' has been folk-etymologized for hundreds of years as consisting of Hebrew *pi* 'mouth' and *nachash* 'snake.' Gorr dutifully repeated that erroneous explanation and expressed his inability to grasp it ("it is difficult to understand why parents would give such a name to their son," 29), but instead of giving the correct etymology, now well known in Semitic linguistics (this Hebrew name is derived from an Egyptian male name that was originally an Egyptian byname whose literal meaning is 'the Nubian'), he gave a folk etymology of his own, which, besides being erroneous, betrays astounding ignorance of even the basics of Hebrew:

> It seems to me that another breakdown of the name is also possible. *Pin* (face) and *chas* (compassion). It makes more sense to call a child the one with the 'compassionate face.' (29)

Hebrew *pin* means 'pin, tooth [of a wheel]; penis' (he thus confused the word with Hebrew *panim* 'face'). Hebrew *chas* is only the third-person masculine singular past-tense form of the verb meaning 'to spare, pity, have pity on' or the now archaic variant of the noun *chasa* 'lettuce.' The only logical interpretations which could be put on Gorr's cockeyed etymology are thus 'the pin had pity,' 'the penis had pity,' 'pin of lettuce,' and 'penis of lettuce.'[5]

At the Yiddish male given name *shneyer*, we read that

> there is much controversy about the etymological origin of this name. Suffice to mention two theories: One opinion claims it is two Hebrew words *Shnei Or* — Two Lights. The other maintains it is a corruption of Spanish *señor*. (35)

Aside from the fact that anyone writing on language who speaks of "corruption" doesn't possess even the fundamentals of basic linguistics, only armchair and cocktail-party etymologists are still locked in "controversy" over that name. Anyone familiar with serious literature on Yiddish knows that the name is ultimately derived from Latin *senior* 'elder' and is thus almost synonymous with the Judezmo male given name *boxor*, literally 'eldest son.'[6] Gorr knew all of the folk etymologies and created some of his own, but he was abysmally ignorant of the research literature.

The Yiddish female given name *frumet ~ frume* is derived from Yiddish *frume* (the feminine nominative singular form of Yiddish *frum* 'pious'), with the /t/ of the first variant being due to the influence of a dialectal German name or word for 'pious' ending in that phoneme (cf. the non-Jewish German personal name *Fromold ~ Frumold* and the non-Jewish German family name *Friemelt ~ Fröhmelt ~ Fröhmert ~ Frömelt ~ Frömert ~ Frömmert ~ Fromold ~ Frümelt ~ Vrumold ~ Vrumolt*, both of which point to /t/ as well). Gorr, however, proposed a new etymology. Since linguistics always keeps an open mind, let's look at his suggestion:

> Too many untrained people have surmised and guessed at the basis of folk etymology to interpret Jewish names. The damage caused thereby is that contemporary Jews who do want to have and use Jewish names have, through lack of knowledge, Hebraised them incorrectly. One example should suffice: The Jewish female name *Fruma* or its older form which still exists, *Frumet*, does not mean "a pious one." It is a female name adopted by Jews from medieval France and in its original form was *Fromentine*, a species of black grapes. The modern Hebraising to *Hassidah* is absolutely incorrect. The true meaning having been lost for hundreds of years, caused the mistake of misidentity of the name to occur. (x)

Badly worded as it is, no one can deny Gorr's first sentence. As for the rest, we would like to see evidence for a female given name **Fromentine*. Is it found among Jews, non-Jews, or both? In what language(s) is it found? In what places and at what times has it been used? What of the semantic problem with this suggestion? Although it would not be unusual were parents to call a child 'grape,' in allusion to its sweetness (cf. the Israeli Hebrew male given name *enav*, lit. 'grape'), why specifically 'black grape' and, even more specifically, why 'species of black grape'? Would not 'grape' have been enough?

Gorr probably came across English *furmint* 'grape variety grown in the Tokay district of Hungary and in other Hungarian wine regions,' found out that it was derived from Hungarian *furmint* 'idem' and that the latter word was derived from Middle French *fromenté* or *fourmenté* 'kind of grape,' and voilà — a novel "etymology."[7]

Gorr derived the Yiddish female given name *shprintse* from the Hebrew female given name *tikva* and tried to explain the connection between the two in this way:

> The name *Tikvah* is a popular Israeli female name, but there is no evidence that the Hebrew form was ever used in pre-expulsion Spain. It seems that the silent feelings of the Jews at that time were expressed in the local tongue and that the original name was indeed reduced to *Shprintza*. It was very popular among East European Jewesses.

Can you make sense of that? *Shprintse* has nothing to do with *tikva*. To set the record straight: The Western Yiddish female given name *shprints* and the Eastern Yiddish female given name *shprintse* are variants of a single name: the Western Yiddish variant is derived from the Middle High German female given *Sprinz*, which is derived from a Middle High German noun meaning 'female sparrow hawk.' The Eastern Yiddish variant is derived from the Western Yiddish one by hypercharacterization.[8]

Gorr derived the Yiddish female given name *paye* from the Hebrew female given name *puah* (78, where the Hebrew-letter original is mispointed). The phonological correspondences are again not in order, hence the etymology cannot be right. The Hebrew female given name *tsipora* (which has nothing to do with *puah*) is the etymon of the Yiddish female given name *tsipoyre*, of which *poyre* is the apheretic form. A pet form of *poyre* is *payerl* (that vowel change is seen in numerous other Yiddish diminutives, e.g., *hoyz* 'house,' *hayzl* 'little house'). *Paye* is back-formed from *payerl*.

Gorr's ignorance of Yiddish and of its history were shameful. To tally all of his mistakes on that score would be tantamount to rewriting most of the booklet. Among many other things, one would note his inability to distinguish German and Yiddish. His constant references to "Old High German" in connection with Yiddish show that he had no inkling of the elementary finding of Yiddish linguistics (known for over a hundred years) that the bulk of the German component of Yiddish goes back to Middle High German, not Old High German.[9] His claim that Russian is a source of "traditional Jewish names" (x, with no examples) bespeaks not even the barest acquaintance with the history of Jewish settlement on Russian speech territory and of Jews' contact, in other ways, with Russian. Often he used the term "Judeo-German," which no serious student of Yiddish has used for decades. One example of his confusion will suffice:

> *Zundel* German. Sönlein. "Sonny boy" — "Small boy." (48)

Obviously, the phonological correspondences are not in order, for German *Sönlein* will not yield Yiddish *zundl* (sic recte). This Yiddish name is derived from Yiddish *zundl*, which is a diminutive and

affective form of Yiddish *zun* 'son' (cf. *broyn* 'brown' > Yiddish female given name *brayndl* for the Yiddish pattern "base form + /d/ + diminutive suffix *-l*").

Skimming this booklet faster and faster, I could not help slowing down at page 56 because here Gorr listed a name which every other dilettante has misromanized and misetymologized too, the Northeastern Yiddish female given name *badane*. True to character, Gorr misromanized it ("Bodhana") and offered this:

> Ukranian. Hebrew. "God graced." Bod — God; Hana, from the Hebrew word Hannah — Grace. The *Bod* part of the name means *God* in Ukrainian. The *Hana* part is our well-known Hebrew *Hannah*, but the ה has been softened to ה, and eventually it has been elided. (56, 57)

Slavists take note. No longer are *Bogdan* and variants to be interpreted as wholly Slavic for 'gift of God.' To set the record straight: anyone who takes the trouble to ascertain that *badane* is used only in Northeastern Yiddish will realize that the spatial distribution of the name is a clue to its derivation: since Northeastern Yiddish has been coterritorial with Belarussian more than it has been with any other Slavic language and since Belarussian has a female given name *Bahdana* (with typical East Slavic akan'e and Belarussian reflection of Common Slavic */g/ as voiced /h/), it is clear that the only correct etymology is *badane* < *Bahdana*, with expected dropping of the preconsonantal /h/ and reduction of the word-final unstressed vowel to a sheva (romanized here by *e*).[10] Ukrainian is irrelevant to *badane*, as is Hebrew to *Bogdan* and related names.

Gorr also dabbled in Jewish family names, with the same disastrous results. We get an inkling of his incompetence from the few in this booklet. Only two of his many stumbles and fumbles will be noted here. Deriving *Wolpe* and *Wolper* from the Yiddish male given name *volf*, he again did not realize that the phonological correspondences were not in order (why /f/ > /p/?). These family names are actually detoponymicals (cf. *Volpa*, the Belarussian and Russian name of a town in Belarus, and Yiddish *volper* 'native *or* resident of that town').

The Ashkenazic family name *Redlich* is a straightforward reflex of German *redlich* 'upright, honest' (cf. the Ashkenazic family

name *Ehrlich*, with the same meaning), but Gorr derived it from the Yiddish female given name *rode* (335). Presumably, the missing link here is *redl* (a pet form of *rode*, but we cannot get from *redl* to *Redlich* by any recognized phonological or morphological change. Gorr, like all dilettantes, thought nothing of ignoring this or that part of a name if it suited his cockeyed explanations.

The extent of Gorr's fantasy was boundless, as we see from the following, which is a footnote to *meshl* (to be explained presently):

> In an article entitled "Jews in Ancient China — A Historical Survey," the author, Pan Guangdam, writes on page 200 (in the journal *Social Sciences in China*) in reference to a people in China in the medieval period, that they were known as "Disciples of *Moses*." He further states, "For them, *Moses* was only one of the chief founders and was called *Meshe* by the Jews according to the two inscriptions by Jin Zhong and Zuo Tang." Again on page 208, he writes, "... our orthodox master *Meshe* (*Moses*)...." This is an amazing discovery. That the ancient Jews of China, whose origin is still an open question with all the scholars on this subject, pronounced their *oi* as *ei*, should certainly have led these experts to the conclusion that the "Chinese Jews" hailed from a Yemenite background. If, as they claim, these Jews came from India, then surely their Indian migratory springboard was preceded by a Yemenite origin. In this case, the phonetics could probably have helped in solving the mystery. Jews from Aden, a southern Yemenite port, are known to have migrated north to Egypt, southwest to eastern Africa, and also to the west coast of India". (26-27)

Disregard Gorr's poor English and incomplete bibliographical reference. Consider only how naive he was: in Belarussian Yiddish, one of the pet forms of the Yiddish male given name *moyshe* 'Moses' is *meshl*. Having recorded that pet form (misspelling it in Yiddish and misromanizing it in transcription), but not knowing that it is limited to Belarussian Yiddish, and having come across that Chinese publication, he then leaped to Yemen (on what flight of Fantasy Airlines no sane person could know) and concluded that the K'aifeng Jews could be of Yemenite ancestry. To set the record straight: as Jewish historians know, the K'aifeng Jewish community was founded by Jewish merchants from Persia. Whether certain K'aifeng Jews also descend (wholly or partly) from Indian or

Yemenite Jews is not known and may never be known. In any case, someone in his right mind would not take a Belarussian Yiddish form as the springboard for a fantasy about K'aifeng Jews.

Gorr's knowledge of Hebrew was next to nothing. For example, having found certain [presumably female, presumably Yiddish] personal names containing a letter (tav) which must be interpreted as standing for /t/ (81) and wanting to derive them from the Hebrew female given name *rut* 'Ruth,' but knowing that in Ashkenazic pronunciations of Hebrew the tav of *rut* is pronounced /s/ and never /t/, he took the liberty of adding a dagesh to that letter in order that it stand for /t/. Not only is the tav of *rut* 'Ruth' undageshed in all Jewish languages (that alone would have been enough to deter any careful researcher from tinkering with spelling), but, as every beginning student of Hebrew knows, begedkefet (thus, tav too) is almost ALWAYS undageshed in word-final position (the name *rut* not being one of the few exceptions). Prudent investigators would have therefore abandoned that etymology and said "origin unknown," but Gorr knew everything and had decided beforehand what the derivation of those problematic names was. Only an unscrupulous person like him would not be averse to doctoring the facts if that suited his preconceived notions (see Gold, "Fiction," and "When Religion Intrudes" on another tinkerer in Hebrew etymology).

If it is not evident by now, let it be said that Gorr's knowledge of the ABC's of elementary linguistics and his ability to make statements in a form that linguists would understand and accept was nil. He spoke, for example, of "soft or weak letters," thus confusing sounds and their written representations, and of "aspirant *h*," thus confusing not only *aspirant* and *spirant* (the malapropisms in this booklet are a subject unto themselves) but also the letter *h* and the sound /h/. He made unfathomable distinctions (for example, what is the difference between "origin" and "derivation" in the title of his booklet?). Or, he was capable of fuzzy writing like "shuruk (oo) is pronounced by many Jews as I (ai), especially in Poland and Ukraine" (41), by which he presumably meant that in Southern Yiddish and in Southern Ashkenazic Hebrew, */u/ has been fronted and unrounded to /i/ or /ɪ/. Something written for the laity must either formulate technical statements in some easily understood way or, if technical symbols and terms are used, explain what they mean,

but Gorr did neither. His wording was often so amateurish that even a linguist couldn't make heads or tails of it (for instance, "The Old High German name *Anselm* was so close to the Yiddish diminutive *Ans(c)hel* that presumably German-speaking Jews felt at ease with *Ans(c)hel*" [5]).

For someone who was so proud of being a Jew (see Freedman's gushy introduction), it is curious that Gorr belonged to the Judaism-is-dead-and-buried school of historiography. Thus, for example

> This is one of the amuletic names. If a male child died soon after birth or very young, the next born male child was sometimes given the name *Alter* alone, or in combination with another name. The parents, in giving the name, expressed their prayer that the newborn child should live to be an *old* man. (3)

Yiddish-speakers still give the name.

Conclusion

Gorr gathered some valuable raw material, but since he was without a trace of anthroponymical, etymological or other linguistic ability, he did not know how to analyze it or present it. As poor a student of language as Gorr was, a second chance to redeem this record of folly and ignorance was missed when an "editor" no more linguistically trained than Gorr was chosen to ready it for publication. As it now stands, this booklet — Gorr's and Freedman's first foray into linguistics — shows incompetence on a grand scale and misleads more than it leads.[11] As Max Weinreich once said of Judah A. Joffe, *alts gevust, gornit farshtanen* 'knew everything, understood nothing.'[12]

"Popularity is hardly a measure of a [dictionary's] intrinsic merit" since "the response of the public at large" must be distinguished from "the approval of experts" (Malkiel 368). Lay reaction and scholarly reaction can thus be like night and day, as will probably be the case with this booklet, which is likely to get "rave reviews" (that is, puff pieces by the uninformed) from non-linguists. Lay people will naively believe whatever the publisher and other lay people say about it. Since the laity does not usually read linguistic

publications, it will probably not see this and any other serious reviews. Publishers, most of whom are bottom-line operators, often do not care about the quality of what they put on the market. If publishers do see experts' reviews, they usually ignore the critical ones. Reviewees often do too. Publishers are rarely willing to spend the money to withdraw shoddy works like this one from sale, have them revised by competent hands, and reissue them.

Anthroponymists often need genealogical information and genealogists often need anthroponymical information. That state of affairs, however, does not make an anthroponymist a genealogist (something which anthroponymists recognize) or a genealogist an anthroponymist (something which many genealogists do not recognize). As useful as an anthroponymist may be to a genealogist or vice versa, the training of one is entirely different from that of the other: anthroponymy is a branch of linguistics, whereas genealogy is a branch of information retrieval and local history.

Academics usually despise genealogy as a pursuit fit only for "proper little old ladies in comfortable, sensible shoes," appropriate, together with "Basics of Flower Arranging" and "How to Prepare Your Income-Tax Form," only for courses at community centers and the like. Yet it need not be that way and it should not be that way, for genealogy is an important activity. However, if genealogists want to gain the respect of linguists, they must recognize their own limits. Both fashion designers and human anatomists deal with the "same" area, the human body, but you wouldn't trust a fashion designer to write a treatise on human anatomy or an anatomist to design clothes. Why then trust a genealogist to write on linguistic subjects?[13] It is a matter as simple as *cognosce te ipsum* and *sutor ne supra crepidam*.

David L. Gold

Notes

1. For example, he used no geographic labels and thus failed to provide linguistically and genealogically important information like *hershl* (partly Southern Ashkenazic and partly Northeastern Ashkenazic), *leyzerke* (East Ashkenazic), and *meyshl* (Northeastern Ashkenazic).

2. That distinction was first made no later than 1925, though not in so explicit a way as Stankiewicz did: in Harkavy (525), the Yiddish names are divided into base forms and non-base forms, with the latter being divided into *opkirtsungen* (= Stankiewicz's *nicknames*) and *farkirtsungen* (= Stankiewicz's *expressive forms*).

3. Lest genealogists and other non-linguists misunderstand the words *linguist* and *linguistics*, let it be stated here that *linguist* is not used in this review in its lay sense of 'polyglot' but in its academic sense, 'specialist in linguistics,' and that *linguistics* means 'the scientific study of language.' Waiters who can take your order in any of sixteen languages are thus polyglots (and probably superficial ones) but they are not linguists.

It is not enough for someone who wants to be a linguist to accept that the word is not a synonym of *polyglot* or merely to proclaim that "my approach is scientific." Rather, one must also be INTIMATELY ACQUAINTED with that fund of knowledge known as linguistics, follow the procedures of investigation recognized in this field, and present one's findings in a manner acceptable to linguists.

4. Hebrew forms cited in this review are romanized according to the General-Purpose System of the American National Romanization of Hebrew and Yiddish forms according to the Standardized Yiddish Romanization, whatever the romanizations which Gorr, who was ignorant of both, may have used. Here and there, however, I have left Gorr's misromanizations (in double quotation marks) to illustrate how uninformed he was even of the basic mechanics of linguistics.

5. Pious Christians are no less prone than Jews to such fantasies. For example, Samuel Wilkinson, a Protestant missionary associated with the Mildmay Mission to the Jews (London, England), believed that *nesi rosh* 'chief prince' in Ezekiel 38:2 meant 'Prince of Rosh,' which he further interpreted to mean 'Prince of Russia' (Wilkinson [1905]).

6. Gold ("More" and "Part 2") give that etymology in detail, but "long ago" should not be interpreted as 1982 or 1983 nor should it be inferred that I discovered the correct origin of the name. Those two articles merely summarize and elaborate on an etymology which other researchers established decades earlier (likewise with respect to the present review: most of the etymologies given here have long been known in linguistic circles and were established by others).

7. Gorr later presented that etymology in a slightly different way:

> *Frommet*: Old provincial French. "A certain species of grape." Only through ignorance of the origin and meaning of the word was the mistake made to presume that the name meant in Yiddish "pious one." The mistake was further compounded by women in Israel who Hebracised their names from *Fruma* to *Hassidah* (pious one). Even today, some women have retained the older form *Frommet* or *Frummet*. There are some who claim that this name derives from the German word *Frohmut* ("joy" in German) and that it was a translation of *Simhah*.... This is highly improbable, as this name was used exclusively by woman, and *Frohmut* is masculine gender. (63)

Someone like Gorr should have thought twice before accusing others of "ignorance." What is "Old provincial French"? Yiddish has no female given name *"frome" or *"fromet" (those are misromanizations due to the influence of German *fromm* 'pious'). Gorr was right in rejecting the misetymology "Yiddish *frumet* < German *Frohmut*," but for the wrong reason. The fact that *Frohmut* is a masculine noun whereas *frume* is a female name is not what makes it unacceptable, as we see from countless instances where such crossovers have indeed occurred: *tamar* (a Hebrew female given name [whence the Yiddish female given name *tomer*] derived from a masculine noun), *hodes* (a Yiddish female given name derived from a masculine noun), *simkhe* (a once unisex but now female Yiddish given name derived from a feminine Hebrew noun), *Rosario* (a unisex, but mostly feminine, Spanish given name derived from a masculine noun), *Trinidad* (a unisex Spanish given name derived from a feminine noun), *Encarnación* and *Natividad* (unisex, but mostly feminine, Spanish given names derived from feminine nouns). Crossovers are not unusual (hence they require no explanation), for it is the *meaning* of the common noun, not its gender, which is the most important factor in its selection or rejection for use as a given name.

I thank John F. Mariani for information on *furmint*.

8. See Stankiewicz (280) and Gold ("Towards a Study" 145) on *-e* as the hypercharacterizer of Yiddish female given names. More examples of hypercharacterized Eastern Yiddish female given names are *toltse* and *trayne*, which are respectively derived from the Western Yiddish female given names *tolts* and *trayn*.

9. The only feature of Yiddish which any serious student of the language has suggested may be from Old High German is the stressed vowel change seen in Yiddish *bes-medresh* '[Jewish] prayer and study house; small Orthodox synagog,' *henekh* [a male given name], *khut-hashedre* 'spinal chord,' *rebe* 'teacher in a traditional Jewish elementary school; Khsidic leader,' *sedre* 'section of the Pentateuch assigned for a week's reading,' and *tevye* [a male given name] < Hebrew-Aramaic *bet-midrash*, *chanoch*, *chut-hashidra*, *rabi*, *sidra*,

and *toviya*, that is, in penultimately stressed bisyllabic words, final sheva causes reduction of the stressed vowel to /e/ (for the rule to apply to *toviya*, we have to insert a syncopated form into the etymological chain: *toviya* > *toyvye* > *tevye*; that is a reasonable step, since *toyvye* is found in many varieties of Yiddish, like Łagów Yiddish). *Henekh* < *chanoch* also illustrates /h/ < /x/ (Weinreich).

In at least one and possibly two cases, the change is found only in certain varieties of Yiddish. Eastern Yiddish has *sender* (a male given name derived from the Yiddish male given name *aleksander*), but Western Yiddish has *sander* (a male given name likewise derived from *aleksander* though without the vowel change). Yiddish has both *tashlekh* and *teshlekh* 'rite performed on the first day of the Jewish New Year in which a person shakes out his or her pockets over a running body of water as a symbol of washing away sins' (< Hebrew *tashlich* 'you will cast out'). Herzog (51) explains *teshlekh* as due to folk etymology (cf. Yiddish *teshlekh* 'little pockets'), but it could also be an example of the purely phonological phenomenon exemplified above.

All of the Yiddish words in question have protovowel 21 in the stressed syllable (that is, /e/, phonetically [ɛ]), except *henekh*, which has protovowel 25. I am at a loss to explain that exception.

10. Gorr was so ignorant of the ABCs of linguistics that he was unaware of even the elementary rule that an etymologist must work with the earliest known or reconstructed form and meaning of a lexeme (thus, since Belarussian /h/ and Ukrainian /h/ reflect Common Slavic */g/, it is not /h/ but */g/ that we must examine).

From the fact that Yiddish-speakers dropped the /h/ we may infer that they reinterpreted it as Yiddish /h/ (which is found at the end of a syllable) rather than as Yiddish /x/ (which is). That is, had Belarussian (or Ukrainian) /h/ had more friction than it actually did at the time of the borrowing, Yiddish-speakers would have probably reinterpreted it as their /x/, in which case the Yiddish name would have been **bakhdane* (*kh* = /x/). Thus, Ukrainian *hruba* 'oven, stove' > Eastern Yiddish *hrube* ~ *rube* but not **khrube*.

We may also note here the Belarussian family name *Bahdanovitsh* (which, if Russianized, becomes *Bogdanovitsh*). Its stem is the Belarussian male given name *Bahdan*.

11. It bears repeating that this brief review has dealt with only a small number of Gorr's countless errors and that he treated not a single name adequately.

12. This booklet has relieved me of the feeling that I was the only one whom Gorr importuned. Freedman speaks of Gorr's "eccentric character" and "his marathon telephone conversations" (vii). In his first telephone call to me, Gorr, without even identifying himself, announced pompously that "I have made a list of the 28,000 Jews who legally changed their names between 1921 and 1948 as recorded in the *Palestine Gazette*." My first reaction was to ask to what name and

address the gold medal should be sent, but I held back and responded courteously. He kept me on the line for an hour, "testing" my understanding of Jewish family names by asking me for the derivation of one after another. After the second or third name, it was clear that he was using as his "textbook" Kaganoff, which contains not a single correct or reasonably complete explanation of any Jewish family name. After trying in vain to explain to Gorr that Kaganoff's compilation was a farrago of error, I realized that like all other armchair and cocktail-party etymologists Gorr followed only one "rule:" "if *x* looks like or sounds like *y*, it must be derived from *y*."

To my good fortune, as often happens with Israeli telephones, we were cut off. I was relieved to be off the hook literally and figuratively, but Gorr called right back and kept me for another half hour. Towards the end, he "scored" my "exam," finding that Kaganoff could "explain more names" than I could. I tried to tell him that the worth of a researcher is measured not quantitatively but qualitatively (cf. the inevitably first reaction of the laity upon hearing that someone is a linguist: "How many languages does [s]he know?") and that because careful investigators are the first to admit their own ignorance, "of unknown origin" was preferable to Kaganoff's stumbles and fumbles. That effort too was in vain, for again Gorr said, "If you can't explain all these names and Kaganoff can, he's better than you." Fernández-Galiano (180) speaks of the dabbler's horror vacui.

13. Significantly, the impudence is never in the other direction: unless they are trained in genealogy, linguists do not write on that subject.

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Apellidos catalanes: Heráldica de Catalunya. By Augusto Cuartas. Madrid. Paraninfo. 1987. 336 pp.

The title of this book suggests that it deals primarily with family names and secondarily with heraldry, an impression reinforced by the front cover (which has *Apellidos catalanes* three times but *Heráldica de Catalunya* only once) and even more so by the spine (which has only *Apellidos catalanes*).[1] An examination of the contents, however, shows that the names chosen for inclusion are only those which have been borne by "noble" families and that the author's main interest is illustrating and describing their coats of arms.[2] Indeed, only a few of the family names included are etymologized (and then only in a primitive, unscientific way). The back cover strengthens our impression that the author's real interest is heraldry: here, the title of the book is given as *Heráldica de Catalunya: Apellidos catalanes*, and we learn that Cuartas is an "experto en heráldica." In essence, then, this is a work on heraldry, the major purpose of the family names being merely to make the coats of arms easily locatable. *Heráldica de Cataluña* would thus have been a more appropriate title.

The family names are given in two alphabetically arranged sections: the main section, revealingly entitled "Heráldica de Catalunya" and a shorter section, entitled "Toponímicos" (listing family names derived from place names). Why two sections instead of a single alphabetical listing were needed is not clear, especially since Cuartas sometimes forgets his own classification by listing certain detoponymical family names (like *Bellpuig* and *Dalmáu*) in the main section.

Looking at the number of names beginning with each letter of the alphabet, we reach a curious conclusion: more than half of the 824 entry heads in the main section and more than half of the 268 entry heads in the toponymical section begin with the first three letters of the alphabet (*A*: 133/76, *B*: 180/52, *C*: 185/68, *Ch*: 0/1,[3] *D*: 31/4, *E*: 63/17, *F*: 28/16, *G*: 41/19, *H*: 4/2, *I*: 3/0, *J*: 14/1, *K*: 0/0, *L*: 2/0, *Ll*: 21/4, *M*: 61/7, *N*: 5/0, *O*: 7/1, *P*: 21/0, *Q*: 3/0, *R*: 5/0, *S*: 4/0, *T*: 2/0,

U: 2/0, *V*: 8/0, *W*: 0/0, *X*: 1/0, *Y*: 0/0, *Z*: 0/0). Although we should not expect names to be distributed equally from letter to letter, it is odd that the numbers drop sharply after *C* (in both sections) and that in the detoponymical section they do not go beyond *O* (for which only one name is given). Is that sheer coincidence or a sign that Cuartas got tired after the letter *C* and decided to rush his work into print before finishing it?

In 1952, the Spanish Language Academy recommended that the diacritic in *dió*, *fué*, and *vió* (among other words) be omitted and in 1959 *dio*, *fue*, *vio*, etc. became official (Córdoba Palacios), yet in this book, published twenty-eight years later, the old spellings are used almost everywhere.[4] Besides clinging to those old-fashioned spellings, the author puts diacritics on words which do not need them (*cuál*, *cuándo*, *dónde*, and *quién* in non-interrogative contexts) and on one which (as Manuel Seco, of the Royal Spanish Academy, tells me) has never had a diacritic at all (*éllo*). For example, "nació en X, dónde obtuvo...," "Fulano, quién obtuvo...," el cuál...," "durante el siglo XIX, cuándo...," "el lugar del cuál se deriva se llama...," "linaje de Barcelona, el cuál fué...," "tuvo su casa solariega en *Coll de Nargó*, por lo cuál se llama *Coll*," and "por éllo, debemos...."

For certain names, the author adds a biographical note about famous bearers, yet none, so far as I can see, mentions anyone who gained prominence after World War I and even one person fairly well known before then is passed over in silence. For instance, at *Caballé* and *Casals* we find not a word about Montserrat Caballé or Pablo Casals (or Pau Casals, as he is known in Catalan). Perhaps they are not mentioned because they are unrelated to the "noble" families in question, but even if so, it is still curious that the name of not a single person who gained prominence since the end of that war is mentioned.

The biographical references are curious in another way too. Cuartas mentions King Canute of Denmark (at *Canut*), Clement of Alexandria (at *Climent*), St. Donat (at *Donat*), King Edmund of England (at *Edmon*), St. Peter (at *Pau* 'Peter'), etc. Does he really believe that people bearing those Catalan family names descend from those people or are in any other way related to them? If he does, he is naive. Whether or not he so believes, naive readers will. All of those many irrelevancies should never have appeared.

Examples of the author's genealogical naivete abound. At *Artur* we are told that the "noble" Catalan family bearing this name goes back to a relative of King Arthur:

> linaje antiguo de Catalunya, que llegó a ésta desde Gran Bretaña en el siglo VI y cuyo tronco fué aquel legendario Rey inglés llamado *Arturo*, uno de cuyos familiares fundó en la ciudad de *Gerona* la casa solar de los *Artur* catalanes.

Since King Arthur is mythical, anyone who could write such an absurdity cannot be trusted as a genealogist. Cuartas does, it is true, say that Arthur was "legendary," but he is probably using the word to mean 'celebrated' (as in "the legendary Babe Ruth") rather than 'mythical.' If, however, he really means 'mythical,' how can non-mythical people be related to mythical ones?

At *Arán* we read

> linaje antiquísimo de Catalunya, con origen hebreo, ya que su tronco fué *Arán*, hijo de *Taré* y hermano de Abraham, por lo cuál es un linaje bíblico, que dió nombre al *Valle de Arán* (Lérida) dónde poseyó su casa solariega.

Since King Ahab (d. 897 B.C.E.) is the earliest Biblical figure known for certain not to be fictional, foolish indeed is the genealogist or student of family names who takes *Arán* back to Haran (Genesis 11:29). Like all other armchair and cocktail-party etymologists, Cuartas follows only one "rule" in explaining a family name: "if *x* looks like or sounds like *y*, it must be derived from *y*" (Gold, "On the Study of Jewish Family Names").

At *Adám* we read

> linaje antiguo de Catalunya, con origen judío que tuvo en la ciudad de *Gerona* su casa solariega. *Adám* es en lengua castellana el nombre propio *Adán*, Padre del género humano, creado por Dios a su imagen y semejanza. Por lo tanto, el apellido catalán, muy típico y abundante por España y América hispana, denominado *Adám* es un linaje patronímico. *Adáms*, *Adáme* y *Adám* son el mismo linaje con grafías distintas.

If I read Cuartas right (his explanations are not models of clarity), he takes the Catalan family name *Adám* as indicating descent from the Biblical Adam.

I remark on non-anthroponymic matters like the misleading title, the odd arrangement, the weird spellings, and the outlandish genealogies because they reveal a disturbing idiosyncrasy and make us wonder whether the author has a firm grip on reality.

Turning to matters more directly related to names, we find that the author cannot always distinguish a family name and a vocabulary word. At *Abat*, for instance, we read that "*Abat* de origen judío, es un apellido típicamente catalán." The punctuation is faulty (a comma is needed after *Abat*), but no matter, the intent is clear. Catalan *abat* 'abbot' is indeed "of Jewish origin" (it goes back, through Latin and Greek, to the Jewish Aramaic word for 'father'), but that does not mean that any of the tokens of the Catalan family name *Abat* indicates Jewish ancestry. In fact, it's unclear to what "de origen judío" applies: the vocabulary word? the name? the "noble" family so named? two or all three of those?[5]

The back cover of this book says that "el dibujo del escudo de armas que encabeza un apellido, permite la confección de su propia heráldica, si su apellido figura como uno derivado del linaje de origen." Again the punctuation is faulty (delete the first comma), but this time the message is not so clear, as we will now see.

Family names fall along a continuum at one end of which are monogenetic names and at the other end of which are polygenetic ones. English family names like *Johnson* and *Taylor*, for example, are highly polygenetic (people who bear them descend from any of numerous people who were named *John* or who were tailors), hence sharing a non-monogenetic name with someone else is no guarantee that you're related. If, however, a family name is monogenetic, all of its bearers descend from a single person (the first to bear it), hence they are ipso facto related to one another.

Thus, the more a name is polygenetic, the less it is a sure indication of kinship. Since *Ballester* 'crossbowman,' for example, is a highly polygenetic name (any of thousands of crossbowmen could have acquired it), it tells us nothing about kinship and before any Ballesters can adopt the coat of arms given for it in this book, they must prove their connection to the Ballester line bearing it. The back

cover says that in somewhat vague language: "si su apellido figura como uno derivado del linaje de origen" = 'if your family name appears as one derived from the original line' (what is an "original line"?). Yet few people will probably read that passage, even fewer will understand it, and even fewer will take the time and trouble to determine whether they are related to the lines mentioned here. Most people will be content to find "their" family name in the book and proclaim that they have also found "their" coat of arms. A more carefully worded warning, placed in the front matter and not on the back cover, would have been helpful.

Lay users of the book are due more explanations too. Coats of arms are sometimes based on a folk etymology of a family name. A possible example may be the name *Ardit*, listed here with a coat of arms showing the now obsolete Spanish coin called an *ardit* in Catalan and an *ardite* in Spanish. Is the family name indeed derived from that coin name? If it is, are other tokens of this polygenetic name of that origin too? Or, is that merely a folk etymology?[6] The author never delves into the meaning or meanings of any family name, being content to dispatch that part of his work in one line or less. At the very least, he owes it to his readers to say that the explanation given for each name applies only to the token of it borne by the family whose coat of arms is illustrated and even then the explanation may be wrong.

Students of Jewish family names should use this book with utmost caution. Two examples will suffice. The polygenetic Italian Jewish and Sefardic family name *Crespi* could be derived from the Italian place name *Crespi*, from the Italian place name *Crespi d'Adda*, from Italian *crespo* 'curly-haired, frizzly haired,' or from the Catalan place name *Crespiá* (or two or more of those explanations could be right, in which case the relevant one would depend on the token of the name). Cuartas derives the non-Jewish Catalan family name *Crespi* from the place name *Crespiá*. His explanation may be right, but, in any case, someone looking for the possible meanings of *Crespi* as borne by Jews should not conclude from this book that the author's explanation is the only possible one for the Jewish name.[7]

Or, the Catalan family name *Blau* appears to be derived from Catalan *blau* 'blue.' The Ashkenazic family name *Blau* is derived from German *blau* 'blue.' The German and Catalan words happen

to be cognates, yet that no more makes the Ashkenazic family name of Catalan origin than it makes the Catalan one of German origin.

In sum, this book may have its heraldic value, but it is unreliable linguistically and genealogically. Llull 1989, Moll 1982, and treatments by other linguists should be preferred.[8]

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Notes

1. "Reviewing a dictionary means not only scrutinizing the lexical material which it provides, but also examining its front matter, back matter, covers, spine, jacket, and title, as well as the publisher's advertizing for it" (Gold, "R. of Joubert" 312).

2. True nobility is the nobility of the mind and of the heart, not meaningless titles like "duke" and "countess." Hence the quotation marks.

3. *Ch* and *ll* are counted as separate graphemes in Spanish. *K* and *w* are marginal in Spanish and Catalan.

4. In the few cases in which post-1959 spellings are used, they seem to be "misprints" (*dio* appears once and *fue* twice).

5. Cuartas says that 85 of the 824 lineages in the main section and 13 of the 268 lineages in the detoponymical section are of Jewish descent (at each of them he writes "tiene origen judío" or something similar).

6. At least three other explanations have been offered for *Ardit*: (1) 'valiant' (in which case the name would be cognate with English *hardy*), (2) from a male personal name derived from an adjective meaning 'valiant,' and (3) 'squirrel' (cf. Spanish *ardita* 'squirrel').

7. The explanation offered in Guggenheimer and Guggenheimer is, like most of the others in this book, impressionistic and erroneous: "Talmudic (Latin) proper name. Crispus or Crispinus."

8. Cuartas is wont to characterize many names as "very Catalan," "typically Catalan," "classically Catalan," "eminently Catalan," and "pure Catalan" (in the detoponymical section, almost every name is hyperbolically labeled in one way or another). Not only do we wonder whether the author has devised some unstated hierarchy for determining who is "more Catalan" and who "less," but those descriptions start to get annoying when practically every name is so characterized.

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Studies in Third Millennium Sumerian and Akkadian Personal Names: The Designation and Conception of the Personal God. By Robert A. Di Vito. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1993. Pp. xii + 327. US $20.

It is no doubt a sure bet that few teenagers now or in the recent past would read a comic book in which a character named True Brave is constantly torn between his mutually jealous girl friends My God Gave The Oath and True Icon (of Christ). But that is what Archie, Betty, and Veronica mean. Well, sort of. Jim, being James which is really Jacob, is Ya'akub-'ēl, 'May Yah protect;' Jack is John, or Yŏhānān, 'Yah has shown favor.' Let us not contemplate Godfrey and Godiva. Some old neighbors of mine had named their

children Joshua and Nathan intentionally after the Old Testament figures, because of their faith. What knowledge they had of these theophoric names' etymological explanations ('Yah saves' and 'He (i.e. god) has given') I can only guess, but I suspect they had little, if any. But it is a popular kind of activity: my wife Sherry has a coffee mug that says her name means 'princess.' (All these years I thought it was the anglicized spelling of Xerez, and now I must worry over what is in that cask of Amontillado).

This kind of etymologizing would let us find deep meaning in how names indicate parental or social attitudes towards supernatural beings or other topics, but we know (or I hope we do) that the displacement in time between the forms which show the divinity and the ones in use belies any validity in trusting etymologies deeply. But if we do return to names whose forms seem to reflect divine names more closely in some form, we still must wonder how intentionally such names were chosen. That is, though all names are chosen with intent — from Alexander to Joe Bob Jr. to Sunshine (all students of mine at one time or another) — how often are names reflecting divinities intentionally selected? We know that there are naming trends today, and so we suspect there were naming trends in the past; but were there trends of using names involving gods and goddesses?

Di Vito's book (a revised 1986 Harvard dissertation) lists a fairly large number of actual — not literary or mythological — theophoric personal names, which include either a generic term for or a specific name of a deity, all from an understudied period of only a thousand years. These are generally organized along J.J. Stamm's form-critical types, based on his *Die akkadische Namen-gebung* (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1939), but some subperiodization is made; unhappily, since the categories, names, and subperiodizations (as well as sources) are recombined into several lists, there is much duplication of information and thus swelling of progress. Though there are several appendices (two of them just to repeat Stamm's types), there is no index.

Here we find generic names like

My lord is my god	Mighty is my god
(The) god is a doctor	In (the) god trust
My lord is eternal	I seized the foot of my god
(The) god is a shepherd	It's the god!

and more specific names like

Sin is shepherd	(The) bosom of Ea
Sin is King of (the) Land	Ištar is mighty
Before Lama is my salvation	(A) god (indeed) is Illat!

We even find names to which we must pause for thought:

His shade is Dagan	(The) lord is my spouse
Amurru is like my god	(The) god is (the) family
(My) god is (my) canal-bank	My right hand is my god
(The) god is (a) wall	Mama is (a) mountain
Father has disappeared	Father's sister
Sister is my mother	His Father's sister
His mother's brother	Mother's sister
Hound/man (?) of the god	(The) lord is predator
He has been treated unjustly	(The) god for a second time (has given a child)
I am exhausted, my god!	Enough for me, Ištar!

Di Vito intends simply to see to what degree such names imply some concept of a personal god, one who takes "a personal interest in the individual and his fortunes, whom he worshipped in a private cult, and to whom he could turn with his immediate personal concerns" (2-3). To some degree, he also concerns himself with trends of naming, but mostly notes just a general movement from the general to the concrete. For the Sumerian evidence, he concludes that the names evidence this concept of a personal god "from the very earliest periods," though there is not enough evidence to tell if there was any differentiation between the sexes (120-22). The Akkadian evidence shows the same, but does distinguish between the sexes, with women having more "profane names" (260-61). In all, however, since a person had a whole pantheon of divinities, even if given a name specifying one particular deity, an "ordinary individual might in his lifetime invoke more than one god, or god-like being, as 'my god,' somewhat in the manner that various saints function simultaneously as patrons for the believer in Catholic piety without conflict or contradiction" (273).

Though the book is expressly intended for specialists and "those with broader interests in the study of the Old Testament or the history of religions" (xi), its extremely tight focus and mechanical procedure (do we have to be told twice that there are no form-critical types 43, "Unclassified and Uncertain"?) restricts it to a slow, detailed examination of the selected evidence only. That is, once the theophoric names are selected and considered in themselves, outside the whole naming tradition in both the real world and the world of imagination (which is often highly illuminating of how people think things ought to be), conclusions for a society at large are bound to be somewhat dubious. It is somewhat like estimating modern American religious sensibilities on the basis of only Old Testament names — Joshua, Nathan, and so on — without placing these in their context of all names. And can we tell to what degree the theophoric character was consciously employed? When John is named John, is it because (a) some significant relative was named John, (b) John is a common name, or (c) John means 'God has shown favor'? Curiously, the difference between deities used in names and those available for use is not examined: e.g., a quick scan of the Sumerian names shows only 56 gods' names in all; among the A's I found Aba, Alamuš, Alla, Amar-Sin, Anzudmušen, and Ašna, but I did not find a number of others I might have, following J.J.M. Roberts' *The Earliest Semitic Pantheon* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1972; pp. 167-68):

> Abih, Abra, Adad, Admu, Alim, Allatum, Alum, Amba, Amurru, Anat, An, Annum, Annunitum, Antum, Anunnaku, Anzu, Apollo, Apsum, Ašar, Ašhara, Ašratum, Aššur, Aštar-Kamos, Aštart, and Ayya

Why the names used, and not the others? Was there a trend, indeed? How does this affect the previous questions? These larger questions are excluded because of the nature of the evidence and the manner of procedure.

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The Ancient and Modern Names of The Channel Islands: A Linguistic History. By Richard Coates. Stamford (Linc.): Paul Watkins, 1991. Pp. 160. Hardcover $34.00. Paper $20.00.

Richard Coates (University of Sussex) includes, not out of British irredentism but "out of sympathetic interest,' among The Channel Islands "all the islands of the Gulf of St.-Malô as far west as Cap Fénel." The coverage makes this most recent and complete survey of all these names as full and practical as can be.

Coates copes well with the longtime efforts to match the place-names of this area with the ancient *Maritime Itinerary*. There have been 34 attempts to do this over the last three centuries. Coates wisely concentrates on the most recent and relevant, e.g., Kellett-Smith's *The Old Names of the Channel Islands* (1962) and Rivet and Smith's *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (1979). The study of the toponomy of the area is complicated not only by that *Itinerary* but also by old, famous, but unreliable onomasticons such as that in which William Camden says that *Sarnia* (properly *Sarmia*) is Guernsey. Camden's argument that *Caesaria* was a name reserved for ancient places of real consequence (such as those of that name in Cappadocia and Palestine) appears to be contradicted by Coates, who assigns *Caesaria* not to Jersey but to Sark. Jersey seems to deserve *Andium*, which is mentioned (as *Angia*) in the *Life of St. Marcouf* as the place where the better-remembered St. Helier lived. St. Helier was martyred on Jersey.

Coates gives us full coverage of the ancient and modern names in Latin, Celtic, and other tongues, with great precision. He consistently refers to maps and other historical documents to bolster his arguments. He finds more than thirty alternates for the name *Alderney*. He finds a Breton origin for *Barnouic*, a Scandinavian "steep isle" in *Brechou, Burhou* shrouded in much uncertainty. Even simple-looking names hold secrets: *Casket Rocks* are better as *Casquet*, Breton in origin. Coates questions Adrian Room's basing *Guernsey* on "a possible Scandinavian personal name *Gærn*, which is unknown to me." Coates argues convincingly for some new evidence about the name *Jersey* and sorts out "odd speculations" that have attached themselves to the name of *Les Minquiers*. He misses no island or islet and is extremely judicious in all his decisions. He even tackles the naming problems of rocks and reefs.

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