

How Danish is Tivoli?

ROB RENTENAAR

LOOKING AT THE ENORMOUS AMOUNT of Tivolis H.F. Raup has discovered in the United States,¹ an European should almost think that life is only fun over there. On second thought he knows better, of course. It was only by means of hard working and thoroughly digging in telephone-directories, theatre-histories and other rather unusual toponymical sources that the author could produce a survey of the dispersal of the name Tivoli in America and the rest of the English speaking world. Regarding the *denotata*, it was clear that most of the Tivolis were theatres, cafes and restaurants, especially those with garden arrangements. Furthermore, Tivoli was used to denotate settlements, natural areas and even barbershops and beauty salons.

According to Professor Raup, the use of the name Tivoli for places of entertainment was derived from Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen. As for the settlements, he was less clear and thought also of the possibility that the name could have been introduced by Italian immigrants or by tourists. So he offered us two ways of finding an answer to the question of why we find the name Tivoli so largely spread in the United States and elsewhere: the Italian way and the Danish way. It is about the latter that I should like to make some remarks, because I think that there are not only several ways which lead to Rome, but also to Tivoli.

Thanks to Arthur Frommer's "Europe on 10 Dollars a day," every American visiting Europe knows that he ought to visit Tivoli Gardens when he is in Denmark. But tourism was a luxury for the happy few in 1843 when this Copenhagen pleasure garden was founded. So its fame should mainly have been spread by Danish immigrants. Unlike Sweden and Norway, the immigration from Denmark to the United States was rather scanty before the seventies of the previous century.² This is already a reason to throw some doubt upon the Danish origin of early Tivolis. When we look at the history of the Copenhagen Tivoli the case becomes even more complicated.

On the occasion of the centenary of this now world-famous entertainment garden, Carl C. Christensen wrote an article about Tivoli,

¹ H.F. Raup, "Tivoli: a Place-Name of Special Connotation," *Names* 22:1. (March, 1974), 34-39.

² K. Hvidt, *Flugten til Amerika eller drivkræfter i massevandringen fra Danmark 1868-1914* (Aarhus, 1971), 17-29.

its early history and its forerunners.³ From this it showed that Georg Carstensen, the founder of Tivoli, was not the inventor of the name. He simply stole it. Carstensen was a former second-lieutenant of the Danish army, who earned his living by organizing festivities with fireworks, music, dance, theatre-plays etc. The name for these performances was Vauxhall. This name was, just like Tivoli, a commemorative name, for it came from Vauxhall Gardens in London, a public garden with entertainment, founded by John Vaux in the beginning of the seventeenth century. Vauxhalls were rather popular in Denmark from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards. Some of them had even a more permanent character. The idea of a pleasure garden with fireworks, concerts, cabaret and all other kinds of amusement was therefore not so strange in Denmark. In June, 1841, a Danish newspaper wrote that two Copenhagen citizens had asked the king for permission to build "a public place of entertainment such as—under the name of Tivoli—is found near many other foreign big cities."⁴ Not earlier than September, 1841, Carstensen himself used the name Tivoli for the first time. In an announcement he invited the public to attend a "Vauxhall, Concert og Tivoli i Rosenborg Slotshave." In October of the same year, he applied for royal consent to found an entertainment garden in Copenhagen. He also mentioned its future name: "Københavns Tivoli og Vauxhall." It was under this name that the garden became known; later the Vauxhall—part of the name was slowly dropped. So only Tivoli was left; and that is still its name. We should notice clearly that, although the American tourist-guides call the place Tivoli-gardens, the Danes never made a compound with "garden" out of it. The interesting thing is, that they considered Tivoli in the beginning more as an appellative than later. In the earliest references to it we always find the definite article: the Tivoli. It was only after several decades that this was dropped. And still "a tivoli" is in Danish also the word for a fun-fair.⁵

The above mentioned quotation from 1841 makes it clear that Professor Raup simplified the matter too much by telling that Carstensen found the inspiration for the name of his park directly in the Italian town because of their similar traces. Of course, the former pleasure ground of the Roman emperors stood at the beginning of the line. But the notion of Tivoli as a place of amusement had already been included into the process of name-giving which Bach called "kulturelle

³ C.C. Christensen, "Tivoli og Vauxhall samt dets uden- og indenlandske forløbere," *Historiske Meddelelser om København* IIIe Række 5, 1943, 481-538.

⁴ "et offentligt Forlystelsessted, som—under Navn af Tivoli—forefindes ved flere større Stæder i Udlandet."

⁵ *Ordbog over det Danske Sprog*, XXIII, 1561-1562.

Strahlung” before it became adapted in Denmark.⁶

As far as we can see now the fame of Tivoli through western Europe was spread from Paris. A garden there, at the end of the eighteenth century, was called “Jardin de Boutin.” This garden was bought in 1796 by the brothers Ruggieri who were famous firework makers in their time. They made a public garden out of it, provided with entertainment, and changed its name into “Jardin de Tivoli.” This place became well known as a meeting point of young reactionaries during the period of the Directoire. It is unclear whether it was this garden or its successor which became a great attraction during the Restoration.⁷ Anyhow, “tout le monde” visited it, even, in 1815, the emperor of Austria, the czar of Russia and the king of Prussia.

It is unknown whether the Ruggieri brothers took their inspiration directly from the Italian town. Their name sounds rather Italian, so a direct taking-over could have been possible. We should not forget on the other hand that the second half of the eighteenth century was a period of intensified classicism with growing interest for Roman antiquity. The real Tivoli was at that time a dirty, poor and decayed place. But its name reminded the educated public of the times and splendours of Maecenas, Hadrianus, Horatius, Propertius, Catullus and Zenobia. So perhaps Tivoli in its metaphorical sense had reached France already before 1796. More about this problem could be said if we knew the oldest mention of Tivoli, a “maison de plaisance” in Saint Martin de Metz, about which now only is said that it dates from the eighteenth century.⁸

A famous place like the (Jardin de) Tivoli⁹ soon got its imitators. A “Hamburger Tivoli” was founded in Hamburg in Germany in the beginning of the nineteenth century, followed by a “neuer Tivoli” in 1826. A Tivoli was also mentioned in Berlin in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. A former property of the Jesuits in Brussels was transformed into a cabaret with the name “le Tivoli.” I do not know the exact date of this rather radical change, but I suppose that it has happened in the twenties or thirties of the previous century.¹⁰ In Brugge, also in Belgium, a pub called Tivoli was known from ca. 1840 onwards.¹¹ Scandinavian Tivolis were apparently inspired by the one from

⁶ A. Bach, “Die deutschen Ortsnamen” (*Deutsche Namenkunde*, Band II, 2) (Heidelberg, 1954), 418-419.

⁷ Christensen, *loc. cit.*, mentioned only one garden, but there were two subsequent places called Jardin de Tivoli, according to P. Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*, XV, 249.

⁸ M. De Bouteiller, *Dictionnaire topographique de l'ancien département de la Moselle* (Paris, 1874), 259.

⁹ Also the single form Tivoli was used; cf. Christensen, *op. cit.*, 485.

¹⁰ Cf. A. Henne and A. Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles III* (Bruxelles, 1845), 643; A. Bernaerts, and R. Kervyn de Marcke Ten Driessche, *Les noms de rues à Bruxelles* (Bruxelles, 1951²), 254.

¹¹ K. de Flou, *Woordenboek der toponymie XV* (Brugge, 1934), 938.

Copenhagen. So for instance "Lille Tivoli" in the same town, the other name for Nørrebroens Theater¹² and the three Tivolis which were founded in Stockholm in 1848 and 1850. A direct Italian origin can be supposed for the name of the castle Tivoli in Austria. This was built by fieldmarshal Radetzky (yes, the one of the march), who had made several campaigns in Italy and had ended as commander-in-chief of the Lombardian-Venetian kingdom.¹³

A clear indication that older Tivolis had not been inspired by the Copenhagen example can be found in the dispersal of the Dutch Tivolis. The contacts between Holland and Denmark go back as far as the early middle ages. Initially, those contacts did not develop in the most cordial sphere: marauding Vikings spread terror among the Dutchmen during more than two centuries. Later on, the military aspects of the Danish-Dutch relations fell more into the background. Commerce and culture were the main fields on which the two countries touched each other. The toponymical reflections of these contacts are rather scanty in Holland. It is actually impossible to detect any Viking influence on Dutch place-names.¹⁴ A peat-reclamation in Utrecht was called Demmerik (a. 1138 nova terra Denemarc). The name was perhaps given to indicate the remoteness of the place.¹⁵ From later periods we have some names showing Danish influence, but they were mainly confined to the western part of the country, where trade and shipping were concentrated. Several houses in Amsterdam bore the name Kopenhagen round about 1700.¹⁶ A country-seat in Renesse (Zeeland) was called Elseneur, after the Dutch name for Helsingør.¹⁷ "De Koning van Denemarken" was known as name for a pub in Amsterdam, Leeuwarden, Rhenen and Groningen.¹⁸

Compared with that, the dispersal of Tivolis in Holland was quite different. The oldest examples which I have found until now existed already at the end of the twenties of the previous century. Two of them were situated in Amsterdam¹⁹ and one in, and later near,

¹² Cf. a travel story from 1849 in *Meddelelser om Københavns Historie* 1962, 106.

¹³ C. Tillmann, *Lexikon der deutschen Burgen und Schlösser* II (Stuttgart, 1959), 1089.

¹⁴ M. Schönfeld, "Directe en indirecte Wikingerinvoeden in onze naamgeving," in M. Schönfeld, "Nagelaten opstellen," *Bijdragen en Mededelingen der Naamkunde-Commissie XVI* (Amsterdam, 1959), 11-44.

¹⁵ D.P. Blok in *Mededelingen van de Vereniging voor Naamkunde* 33, 1957, 24.

¹⁶ J. Van Lennep and J. Ter Gouw, *De uithangtekens in verband met geschiedenis en volksleven* (Leiden, n.d.), 145.

¹⁷ N.I. Visscher and Z. Roman, *Zelandiae Comitatus novissima Tabula*, 1655.

¹⁸ B. Verbeke, "De ouderdom van de huisnamen op grond van hun sociaal-economische dimensie I. Leuven" (unpubl. licentiate diss., 1969), 186. J.A. Feith in *Groningsche Volksalmanak* 1894, 9.

¹⁹ In 1828 a "Theater Tivoli" was founded in a garden outside the Leidsepoort; cf. H.C. Rogge in *Oud-Holland* 5, 1887, 199. Another one existed then probably already in the "Plantage." Rogge, *op. cit.*, mentioned also the "Theater Tivoli" of the widow Welker, a summer-theatre where concerts and theatre-plays were given. Unfortunately he gave no date. The name of this place was

Tilburg (Noordbrabant).²⁰ An early Tivoli was also the "Park Tivoli" in Utrecht which dated from 1840. The concerts given in that garden attracted a great audience every summer.²¹ On a map from 1865, a Tivoli is found in Rosmalen (Noordbrabant).²² A survey from 1874 mentioned Tivolis at Ubbergen (Gelderland) and Hulst (Zeeland).²³ In 1892 a "Tivoli-Wintertuin" was opened as a music-hall in Rotterdam.²⁴ The theatre "Park Tivoli" at Apeldoorn (Gelderland) had surely been founded before 1900.²⁵ Also from the nineteenth century dated the pub Tivoli which gave its name to a district of the town of Eindhoven (Noordbrabant) later.²⁶ In a survey from 1913, at last, Tivolis were listed at Hillegersberg (Zuidholland), Nieuwhelvoet (Zuidholland), Weesperkarspel (Noordholland, Zieriksee (Zeeland) and Zwolle (Overijssel).²⁷

It shows that several of the older Tivolis were situated in the southern part of the country where the orientation on Belgium and France was the strongest in the nineteenth century. Both the chronology and the dispersal of the names make it therefore more likely that the inspiration for the Dutch Tivolis came from the south. We may assume that Tivoli as a name for a place of amusement came to Holland from Paris. It is impossible to say whether it came directly or via Belgian examples. Only the younger Tivolis could have been named after the Copenhagen one, but this is in my opinion more theory than reality.

When we, now again, throw a look at the oldest American Tivolis, we may suppose that at least some of them were more from west-European than from north-European descent. Inspiration from England was not so probable, because of the rather monopolistic position of Vauxhall until deep into the nineteenth century. But the Tivoli Gardens which started in

"Badhuis" in 1820; cf. *Municipal Archives Amsterdam* (Wijkboeken 1820), wijk XV, fol. 43. In that year the owner, F. Welker, died. In 1826 we find C.M. van der Brugh, a fire-workmaker, as the owner. It was said that he had taken care for the illumination of the garden already before that time; cf. *Historische Gids van Amsterdam*, ed. H.F. Wijnman, II (Amsterdam, 1971), 248-249. I suppose that he had taken over the place from Mrs. Welker, which means that the name Tivoli had come into use before 1826. There appeared more Tivolis in Amsterdam in the course of the century.

²⁰ Information from the *Municipal Archives of Tilburg*, 19-08-74: a tea-garden, called "Tivol!" existed in Tilburg already before 1827. On the occasion of its transfer outside the town, in 1831, its pleasure-garden was mentioned explicitly.

²¹ F. Moesman in *Buiten* 1929, 466. J.E.A.L. Struick, *Utrecht door de eeuwen heen* (Utrecht/Antwerpen, 1968), 331.

²² J. Kuyper, *Gemeente-Atlas van Nederland, I Noordbrabant* (Leeuwarden, n.d.). The *Topographische en Militaire Kaart*, sheet 45 (ed. 1852) shows a building, but gives no name.

²³ S. Gille Heringa, *Aardrijkskundig handwoordenboek van Nederland* (Groningen, [1874]), s.v.

²⁴ Ch. A. Cocheret, *Openbare vermakelijkheden; een Rotterdams tijdsbeeld 1875-1925* (*Roterodamum II*) (Rotterdam, 1955), 46.

²⁵ *Apeldoorn en omgeving* (Deventer, 1903³), 12.

²⁶ J.A. Huisman in *Mededelingen van de Vereniging voor Naamkunde* 43, 1967, 107.

²⁷ M. Pott, *Aardrijkskundig woordenboek van Nederland* (Groningen, 1913³), s.v.

New York some time after 1840 could easily be a translation of the "Jardin de Tivoli" in Paris. The specific compound construction makes this even more likely. Two other Tivolis in New York, operating in 1858 and 1860, were famous as German beerhalls. Most of the German immigrants had left Germany via Hamburg. Could it not have been an appeal to the memory of the last beer they had drunk in the Hamburg Tivoli which had inspired a few of them to found a place with the same name in their new country? Actually, it is not earlier than Falk's Tivoli from 1872 which brings the Copenhagen pleasure garden within our horizon.

The semantic position of place-names is rather complicated. Both their origin and their function have been the subject of a wide range of studies.²⁸ With regard to the last point is clear that the first and foremost function of a place-name is to denote a geographical feature. For most toponyms, there the story ends. Some place-names, however, have a more exciting fate. Extra-linguistic developments of historical, cultural, military or other character can bring them into a kind of semantic recycling-process by which they can be used for various new purposes. Sometimes they are transferred into the area of appellatives by means of metaphors, metonymy, synecdoche etc., like Meander, the Vatican and Lyceum.²⁹ Others have been used again as toponyms on account of their specific metaphorical or commemorative content, like Siberia or Waterloo.³⁰

Returning to the relation between Tivoli and Denmark now, we have an interesting example of the many aspects which we can find in one single name. The Copenhagen Tivoli was named after the phenomenon "Tivoli Gardens" which flourished in several places in Europe. The "Jardin de Tivoli" in Paris had a central function in this development, both because of its age and of its fame. It was probably from here that the line went back to Italy. But Tivoli in Denmark was, as we have seen, not only the park in Copenhagen. Another meaning of *tivoli* was "travelling fun-fair." Its inspiration also led to the name of some game with a ball on a table.³¹ And at last all toponymical traces have disappeared in the meaning of *tivoli* as "noisy conduct, pleasure."

Bureau voor Naamkunde en Nederzettingsgeschiedenis Amsterdam

²⁸ See recently W. Van Langendonck, "Zur semantischen Syntax des Eigennamens," *Namenkundliche Informationen* 23, 1973, 14-24.

²⁹ C. Effergren, *Names of places in a transferred sense in English* (Lund/Cambridge, 1909), 16-41.

³⁰ See recently J. Field, "Compliment and commemoration in English field-names" (*Dacorum College occasional papers* I) [Hemel Hempstead, 1973]; R. Rentenaar, "Vernoemingen in de toponymie," *Mededelingen v.h. Inst. v. Dialectologie, Volkskunde en Naamkunde* 25, 1973, 11-15; R. Rentenaar, "Vreemdeelingen in de toponymie: opmerkingen over vernoemingen in Noord-holland," *Naamkunde* 7, 1975, 127-146.

³¹ The only mention of the "tivolispiel" and "kegeltivoli" which I have found in Holland until now was in a MS. from 1901 in the archives of the Evangelic-Lutheran Church at Groningen: cf. the *OED* (1933), s.v.