

***Malamuk* – A (West) Frisian loanword in Greenlandic** ***Malamuk* – un mot groenlandais emprunté au frison occidental**

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Résumé de l'article

Au cours des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles, les Frisons et les Hollandais étaient majoritaires dans les pêcheries de chasse à la baleine du détroit de Davis. Ils commerçaient également avec les Inuit et ont contribué au développement d'un pidgin groenlandais, qui a été utilisé par les trois groupes en tant que langue commerciale. En dépit de contacts interethniques intensifs, on ne trouve pas de trace des langues frisonne et néerlandaise dans le Groenlandais moderne, à l'exception du mot *malamuk* «fulmar». En outre, des formes similaires sont également attestées dans diverses langues germaniques. Bien que l'origine étymologique exacte de ce mot et l'itinéraire précis par lequel il a été adopté en groenlandais ne soient pas complètement résolus, il ne fait aucun doute que les équipages des baleiniers frisons et néerlandais furent à l'origine de sa diffusion.

Notes de recherche / Research notes

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Au cours des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles, les Frisons et les Hollandais étaient majoritaires dans les pêcheries de chasse à la baleine du détroit de Davis. Ils commerçaient également avec les Inuit et ont contribué au développement d'un pidgin groenlandais, qui a été utilisé par les trois groupes en tant que langue commerciale. En dépit de contacts interethniques intensifs, on ne trouve pas de trace des langues frisonne et néerlandaise dans le Groenlandais moderne, à l'exception du mot *malamuk* «fulmar». En outre, des formes similaires sont également attestées dans diverses langues germaniques. Bien que l'origine étymologique exacte de ce mot et l'itinéraire précis par lequel il a été adopté en groenlandais ne soient pas complètement résolus, il ne fait aucun doute que les équipages des baleiniers frisons et néerlandais furent à l'origine de sa diffusion.

Abstract: *Malamuk* – A (West) Frisian loanword in Greenlandic

During the 17th and 18th centuries the Frisians and the Dutch were dominant in the whaling fisheries of the Davis Strait. They also traded with the Inuit and contributed to the Greenlandic pidgin that both parties used as a trade language. Despite intensive interethnic contacts, there are no traces of the Frisian or Dutch languages in modern Greenlandic, with the exception of the word *malamuk* 'fulmar.' In addition, similar forms are also attested in various Germanic languages. Although the exact etymological origin of this word and the precise route by which it ended up in Greenlandic have not been resolved completely, it is beyond doubt that Frisian and Dutch whaling crews were its point of entry.

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Introduction

Fulmarus glacialis (sometimes also *Procellaria glacialis*, colloquially known as *Fulmar* or *Fulmar petrel*) is an Arctic bird, once very common but today less so. With a population of 120,000 to 200,000 pairs its status is now considered stable in Greenland (Birdlife International 2009). The most common name in English is fulmar.

One of the bird's names obviously has the same origin in Greenlandic, Danish, and Dutch: *malamuk* (also *malamooq*), *mallemuk*, and *mallemok* respectively. The word has also penetrated into German sources on the Arctic (as *mallemuck*, see Naumann 1897-1905, vol. 12: 12 for sources), into English (*mollymawk*), and, with obvious reference to Antarctic fulmarine petrels, into Afrikaans (*malmok*). In Denmark, it is officially called *mallemuk*, whereas Dutch ornithologists prefer the name *Noordse stormvogel* (lit. 'Northern storm bird'). As it is an Arctic bird, not often seen in the Netherlands (Peterson et al. 1991: 30), and as the name has a Greenlandic sound, one would expect *malamuk* to be a Greenlandic word borrowed into Dutch. It would have then spread into other languages of marine nations, perhaps after the Dutch had been in contact with Greenlanders in the late 17th and early 18th century. However, closer scrutiny suggests the opposite route, i.e., from Dutch to Greenlandic, specifically from varieties of (West) Frisian.¹

Composition and etymology

An Eskimo origin of the word *malamuk* is not very likely, since it is not attested in any other Eskimo language than Greenlandic, and since it is limited to some regions of Greenland. There is a proper aboriginal Greenlandic word for fulmar, *qaqulluk*, which is similar to the names in other Eskimo languages and whose Proto-Eskimo source is reconstructable (Fortescue et al. 1994: 287).

Many etymological dictionaries (e.g., van Wyk 2003, for Afrikaans) claim that the word *mallemok* is from Dutch. It would be a compound of *mal* 'silly' (or rather the inflected form *malle*) and *mok*, which would mean 'silly seagull.' Indeed *mal* is a common Dutch word for 'silly' and occurs as *mâl* or *mal* in Frisian, including Frisian spoken on the islands. But the second part of the compound *mok* 'seagull' is not at all common in Dutch, and in fact limited to the Frisian-speaking area of the Netherlands and the formerly Frisian-speaking part of North Holland called West Friesland. Although this geographic range suggests a Frisian etymological origin of *mok*, as also claimed by Blok and Ter Stege (1995), the authoritative dictionary of the Frisian language suggests that it was borrowed from Dutch after 1800.² The word seems to occur mostly in Hollandic varieties of Dutch influenced by a Frisian substratum. It is attested in West Frisian (Pannekeet 1984) and might also occur on the Frisian islands

¹ In this article we have used the term "Frisian" for the West Frisian language of the Frisian branch of the West Germanic language family. Furthermore, we have used the term "West Frisian (dialect)" for the Hollandic dialect of Dutch known in the Netherlands as *Westfries*.

² See Wurdboek fan de fryske taal (2009), under entry *mok*.

Terschelling and Ameland, where Dutch and Frisian have strongly influenced each other since the 16th century (Jansen and van Oostendorp 2004: 31).

The possibility cannot be excluded that *mok* has a direct etymological relationship to an earlier Scandinavian form that may have diffused southward during the Hanseatic period. The *Svenska Akademiens Ordbok* mentions *måk(e)* ‘gull’ as a Swedish dialectal form related to Norwegian *måke* and Danish *måge*. More research is necessary here.

Whaling context

The compound word *mallemok* must have emerged in the context of the Spitsbergen whaling expeditions by Dutch and Frisian islanders in the early 17th century. The subsequent Danish whaling expeditions to the same region may have led to its adoption by Danish as well. The fulmar’s behaviour explains its name *mallemok*; it would flock around the whalers as if the latter were whales and thus a source of food scraps, thereby making themselves easy to kill. Perhaps the earliest attestation in English is from the 1694 English translation of Martens’ book on Spitsbergen (Llewellyn 1936: 100; Narborough et al. 1694: 95). Martens writes the following:

His Name is given him, because he is so silly or mad (which the Dutch call *Mall*) to suffer himself to be so easily killed, whereunto is put the word *Mucke*, which signifies a Gnatt, because they are as numerous as Gnatts; so that the Name *Mallemucke* signifieth as much as silly Gnatts, or mad Gnatts (Martens in Narborough et al. 1694: 95).

Note that the etymology that Martens (1675: 69) provided in the original German edition suggests that he interpreted the second part of the compound, *Mucke*, as a word meaning ‘midge’ or ‘gnat’ (cf., Dutch *mug*, German *Mücke* ‘mosquito’), which is what the English translator apparently understood. Although one might in that case expect the spelling *Mücke*, the word has been attested in writing without the umlaut diacritic as late as in the Older New High German period (late 17th century to 18th century). It is not clear what Martens otherwise could have thought it meant, unless he was aware of the possible Frisian origin. It appears that Cranz (1770: 115) also adopted this interpretation. The explanation given in Anderson (1747: 205), which links *mok* to an old German or Dutch pejorative word meaning ‘sluttish woman,’ is not likely.

There are many similar reports from the whaling era on the fulmar’s behaviour. For example, O’Reilly (1818) writes about the *mallemuck* that:

Stupid and fearless, they will approach near enough to be killed by the stroke of a boat-hook or oar, if tempted by a piece of blubber or other fat ; and, after being stunned and taken into the boat, on recovering ever so little, if their favourite blubber be within reach, they will greedily swallow it (O’Reilly 1818: 139).

In 18th-century Dutch sources on whaling (notably Zorgdrager 1727 [1720]: 354) the meaning of the word *mallemok* was extended to certain members of the whaling

crew who during the process of flensing a whale used *mokhaaken* ‘mok-hooks’ to strike and kill the fulmars that landed on the carcass. These formed part of the ingredients for a stew called *poespas*. A purely Dutch alternative, *mallemeeuw* ‘crazy gull,’ is also encountered. The word *mallemok* went out of Dutch use in the 20th century, but in the northern and western parts of the Netherlands *Mallemok* survives as a proper name for boats, restaurants, potteries, and so forth.

Greenlandic pidgin

After the Little Ice Age made whaling in Spitsbergen more difficult at the end of the 17th century, expeditions went to the Davis Strait, where the whalers also bartered with the Greenland Inuit. In fact, the area attracted ships for the sole purpose of trade (Dekker 1975b). The trade involved language contact that resulted in pidgins based on Greenlandic and European languages. Dutch trade with Greenlanders has been documented fairly well in a series of publications by the Dutch historians Dekker (1974, 1975a, 1975b, 1976, 1977, 1979a, 1979b) and Leinenga (1995). These articles furthermore show that the trade was dominated by Frisians from the Frisian islands of Terschelling and Ameland. The famous Danish linguist Rasmus Rask speculated that there was a Dutch-Greenlandic trade language in that period. He writes: “The Dutch had, due to their strong trade in the country, brought about a language that was a mixture of Greenlandic and Dutch, with which both parties knew quite well to make do” (quoted in Thalbitzer 1916: 248, our translation).

Although the former existence of a Dutch-Greenlandic pidgin is likely on the basis of various contemporary reports, only sparse fragments have been documented. In the very few sources of Greenlandic pidgins in colonial times some Dutch words occur (van der Voort 1996, 1997).³ No Dutch words from those times have become part of the Greenlandic language, with the probable exception of *malamuk*.

Malamuk in Greenlandic

There is no entry for *malamuk* in the dictionary by Samuel Kleinschmidt (1871), the famous grammarian of Greenlandic. Kleinschmidt apparently did not regard the word as belonging to the language. The dictionary does include the native word: “*kakugdruk*, a mallemuk. Is used both for the white species as for another one with a black back [...]” (Kleinschmidt 1871: 122, our translation).

However, the word *malamuk* does occur as an entry in Schultz-Lorentzen’s (1926: 99, 157) Greenlandic-Danish dictionary (also as *malamooq* or *malemooq*), as well as in Jonathan Petersen’s (1951: 94) monolingual Greenlandic dictionary, where it is listed as a loanword. Furthermore, Kjer and Rasmussen’s dictionary (1893: 352) includes the word *malamuk* as a North Greenlandic regionalism, and the modern Danish-

³ Note that no word meaning “fulmar,” be it *mallemok* or other, is attested in any source of Greenlandic pidgin.

Greenlandic dictionary by Gade Jones and Petersen (2003: 496) mentions *malamuk* for the region between Kangaatsiaq and Uummannaq. This is precisely the region where most whaling-induced interethnic contacts took place. It can therefore not be a coincidence that the soccer club founded in 1979 in Uummannaq bears the name *F.C. Malamuk*.⁴ Its logo shows a fulmar standing on a soccer ball.

Fulmar and the Inuit

There is not only a connection between whaling and the word for fulmar. There is also a connection with the proliferation of the bird itself. As mentioned above, butchering of whales attracted fulmars in such numbers that they were considered a nuisance. In addition, when a wounded whale escaped it would often die later and, floating to the surface or washing ashore somewhere, would attract flocks of fulmars. Therefore, the onset of the whaling era also brought a general increase in the fulmar population in the Davis Strait. Certain parts of the Arctic, such as Hudson Bay, became frequented by the fulmar only after the arrival of Western whalers in the early 19th century (Fisher 1984[1952]).

In some varieties of the Inuit myth about the origin of the sea mammals, Fulmar is an important character, either as the rejected suitor of Sea Woman (from whose cut-off fingers the sea mammals originated) or as a meat-sharing partner of Sea Woman's father. In traditional Inuit culture, the fulmar was associated with springtime, and the changing conditions for hunting and trade. When European whalers started to frequent the Davis Strait, fulmars became more numerous in the region. Consequently, in the changing culture of the Inuit they became associated with whaling and interethnic trade, and some varieties of the origin myth were extended to include Westerners (Sonne 1990).

Conclusion

The Frisian word for the fulmar is *mâllemok*, also *stoarmmok*. Why would the Inuit and Danes borrow a Frisian or West Frisian word, for a typically Arctic bird? Most likely because its appearance in huge numbers was closely connected with whaling activities, which the Dutch and Frisians dominated in the 17th and 18th centuries. Fulmars would congregate wherever the whalers operated, in expectation of the spoils. Furthermore, they would follow wounded whales and flock around carcasses that floated on the water or washed up on the shores after being lost by whalers. They would sit on the whale carcasses and not let themselves be chased off, thus becoming in turn a common, and easy, food source for whalers. It is easy to imagine the whalers using a word meaning "crazy gull." The frequency of its use must have led the Inuit to adopt the form *malamuk* through the language of trade.

⁴ See web site: <http://www.malamuk.gl/>.

The arguments for a (West) Frisian origin are historical and linguistic. First, Frisian-speaking traders from Ameland and Terschelling dominated the trade with the Greenlanders; also whalers and traders from Amsterdam hired Frisians. West Frisians were likewise active in the whale trade. Half of the Dutch crew in Leinenga's (1995: 135) sample were Frisian islanders and West Frisians. Second, the word *mok* for a seagull is not general in Standard Dutch; it is limited to Frisian-speaking areas, especially the islands and Northern Netherlands.

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