

GOD IS NON-INDO-EUROPEAN

by Robert S. P. Beekes - Leiden

There is no etymology of god that is satisfactory, though it has been given much attention. Two roots are invoked to explain the word: **ǵheuH-* 'to call' (Pok. 413, to be read **ǵheuH-*, not **ǵhauə-*) and **ǵheu-* 'to pour' (Pok. 447).

Most scholars advocated the first root, as this looked semantically more attractive. Gmc. **gupa-* would continue **ǵhu-tó-* meaning '(the deity) summoned (to sacrifice)'. Feist gives 'Angerufenes oder Anrufung'. De Vries in his Old Icelandic and his Dutch etymological dictionaries also starts from this root and does not even mention the other. But in the work on Old Icelandic he adds: "eine Erklärung die dennoch nicht ganz befriedigt. Das geschlecht befremdet [the word is neuter, except when the Christian god is meant] und die Bedeutung ist ziemlich blass".

A major problem is that the root for 'to call' has a laryngeal, so that we would expect a long *u*, as in Skt. *-hūta-*. In former times one was not so strict on this point, as it seemed that a laryngeal in that position could be present or absent; Pokorny e.g. often notes CeC(ə)-. Before the acceptance of the laryngeal theory it was not seen, for example, that the laryngeal was regularly lost before vowel, as in Skt. *havate*. Nowadays this attitude is no longer acceptable. Nor can the short *u* be attributed to Dybo's law of pretonic shortening, as in Germanic this law operated only when the intervening consonant was a resonant (as Dybo noted himself; see e.g. Schrijver 1991, 351ff). (OIr. *guth* 'stem', with short *u*, will be due to Dybo's law; cf. Schrijver 1991, 525ff.) This was e.g. for Watkins (1974, 102 n. 5) reason to reject the etymology. Moreover, this root is not attested elsewhere in Germanic. This does not make it impossible that this one word contains this root, but it does weaken the etymology: that a word for 'god' was derived from this root as a specific development of Germanic.

Seebold, without further discussion, starts from the other root, that for 'to pour'; perhaps he rejected the above etymology because of the laryngeal, and then was left with the other root. He explains: "Ursprünglich also 'Giessen, Opferung', dann übertragen auf den Gott, zu dessen Ehre das Opfer stattfindet." This shift seems rather curious and

does not make the etymology very probable. In general this root was considered improbable. Feist: "Weniger ansprechend..."; Lehmann: "Less likely...". We saw that De Vries does not even mention this root as a possible source. Pfeifer, who prefers the other etymology, gives for this one the interpretation "das Wesen dem geopfert wird" but adds: "mit einem im Germ. allerdings nicht belegten Bezug auf das Trankopfer." Watkins (l.c.), citing Homeric χυτῆ γαῖα 'heaped up [h]earth, burial mound', suggests: "it is possible that the collective neuter **ǵhutóm* ... could refer to the spirit immanent in the heaped up hallowed ground of a tumulus - perhaps a kurgan, the characteristic Eurasian burial mound associated by archaeologists with the Indo-Europeans." This is of course very speculative. "Such speculation continues" writes Lehmann not really enthusiastically. Here again we have the further difficulty that the root 'to pour' does not occur in this form in Germanic; we only find here the enlarged root **ǵheu-d-*. Again this makes these speculations even less probable.

Therefore Hoad, understandably, has given up and just notes: "of uncertain etymology".

All proposals, then, are unconvincing and nearly impossible. I agree with Hoad, then, that we have to give up. This means, of course, that the word is a loan word, most probably from the substratum language(s) of Germanic. This was already considered by Feist: "Möglicherweise ist *gup* überhaupt kein Erbwort des Germanischen, sondern gehört es zu dessen vorindogermanischen Sprachbestandteilen." Seebold, remarkably, does not mention this possibility, but Lehmann ends: "*gup* may simply be a non-Indo-European word taken over from the earlier peoples in the Germanic area." This seems to me the right conclusion.

It is a complex problem whether the word had *p* with 'grammatical change' (from PIE *t*) or PGm. *d* from PIE **dh*. The dictionaries vary, without giving any explanation. The question is linked up with the reading of the abbreviation (the technical term is 'contraction', but I shall not use this term as it is so misleading in a linguistic text). And this discussion again is connected with an accentual question, which I shall discuss first.

It is apparently still generally believed among Germanists that the plural of neuter words had a different accentuation than the singular (e.g. Ebbinghaus 1961, 485). This is not correct. It is an old theory based on the comparison of e.g. νεῦρον : νευρά (which is fem. sg.). But such a system is not found in Sanskrit or Greek. It is supposed that Slavic continues the type in Russ. *slóvo* : *slová* (and vice versa in

seló : *séla*). This type of marginal mobility, however, is a Slavic innovation, as is known since the new interpretation of the Balto-Slavic accentuation which started with Stangs revolutionary work (1957). The Slavic mobility can no longer be used as evidence for the supposed IE mobility. Another argument was the difference in accentuation of Germanic (neuter) words, for which Ebbinghaus cites:

Goth. <i>kas</i>	:	Olc. <i>ker</i>
OHG <i>glas</i>	:	Olc. <i>gler</i>
OE <i>raesn</i>	:	Goth. <i>razn</i>

However, it cannot be demonstrated that this difference derives from a mobile paradigm; it may as well be due to different accentuation in the different languages. Relevant may be the following. None of these words has an etymology. On the first and the last word see Lehmann (the last word cannot come from the root **erə-/rē-* as the zero grade, **HrH-*, before consonant would give **ur-*). The other word has variants with long vowel (the dictionaries do not always agree) and the word is clearly related to Lat. *glaesum*. The variants cannot be of Indo-European origin (Pok. 429 **ghlǝ--* cannot give PGm. **gla-*: it gives **gul-*) and the word must be of non-IE origin; thus Seebold. So probably all these words are of non-IE origin, which might explain the hesitation in the accentuation.

The next problem is the abbreviation. Hench had argued that, though the abbreviation always had *p*, we have to read *d* in the oblique cases. This was confirmed by the fact that the nom. pl. was twice written *guda* beside once *gpa*; further *galiugaguda* is written in full. Hench's view was widely accepted. Then Traube objected that an abbreviation never contained a sound which did not occur in the actual form, so that we had to read the voiceless sound. This was accepted by some, notably Streitberg, who saw here the supposed accent difference of the singular versus the plural of neuters, which we have just discussed. This argument, then, must now be abandoned. Most scholars, however, relied on *guda* and regarded the matter as settled. In 1961 however, Ebbinghaus reconsidered the matter. He thinks Traube's objection very serious and suggested a new interpretation (for all abbreviations in the Gothic texts): "Der erste Teil, nicht variabel, repräsentiert die Bedeutung. Der zweite Teil besteht aus dem in der Flexion variablen Teil des Wortes ..." Now for 'god' he writes: "Das *p* ... repräsentiert nicht den variablen Teil des Wortes in der Flexion, sondern ... den nicht variablen 'Bedeutungsteil'." This is of course exactly what Hench said, and I find the contradiction that a in the inflexion varying consonant would belong to the invariable part

quite strange. So I don't think we are further than Hench, and I conclude that 'god' had its own system of abbreviation. - Now Ebbinghaus goes on (p. 485) to argue that in the genitive *gþs* must be read as **gups*, because: "der gesamte in der Flexion variable Teil des Wortes als 'Beziehungsteil' erscheint." (i.e. is rendered, written in the abbreviation). But let us look at the morphological consequences.

If we assume that the word belonged to one inflection type, the pl. *guda* proves a (neuter) *o*-stem, which implies *gudis*, (dat. sg.) *guda*. However, when Ebbinghaus is correct in assuming a gen. **gups*, this form would be a root noun. (The dat. *guda* must be an *o*-stem form.) Gothic has no neuter root nouns, but they did occur in Germanic; e.g. Krahe 1965 II 37. I would not completely deny the possibility of this heteroclitic inflexion, as the word was probably a foreign loanword (this is also Ebbinghaus' view, p. 486) and I think it possible that it was accepted as a root noun and became only gradually transferred to the *o*-stem inflexion. But this seems not very probable.

Now for the Proto-Germanic form of the dental. If we read **gudis*, there is no evidence for a voiceless dental (in pseudo-IE), though it could have had one. If we accept **gups* we must accept *p* (as if from PIE **t*). However, there is no reason why we could not read **guds*, so that the point remains uncertain. (For this form cf. *baurgs*.) The conclusion is that we cannot see whether Proto-Germanic had voiceless or voiced dental.

The substratum word, then, was **ghut-* or **ghudh-*. These forms may simply have been **gut-* or **gud-*, if Kuiper (1995, 67) is right in assuming that the many (pseudo-IE) voiced aspirates (like *gh*) just continue a substratum voiced sound (*g*). Voiced consonants of the substratum language were not identified with the PIE voiced stops, which were glottalized (*'g* etc.), as this sound was too different. They were therefore identified with the other voiced or lenis velar stops in PIE, the voiced aspirates, PIE **gh* etc. Thus the substratum word for 'god' may have been **gut* or **gud*.

Bibliography

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