

THE ETYMOLOGY OF GERM. *FUNKE* 'SPARK'

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1. Germ. *Funke* (OHG *funcho*, *-ko*, MDu. *vonke*; ME *funke*, *fonke*;¹ on MHG *vanke* see below) is in all recent handbooks explained as derived from the word for 'fire' seen in *Feuer* etc., which is now reconstructed as **peh₂-ur*, gen. **ph₂-uen-s*. This etymology seems superficial to me: it identifies the root with the nearest form found, without much concern about the formation of the word and the relevant material. As to the latter, Kluge-Seebold does not even mention the English forms.

I think that the connection with 'fire' is improbable for several reasons. Firstly, the related languages that have this old word for fire show only few derivatives from its stem. Secondly, West Germanic, where the cognates of *Funke* are found, does not have the stem in *-n* (**fun-*); as this is found in Gothic and North Germanic, West Germanic may have had it, but the situation is no support for the theory. More important is the suffix. PIE hardly knew a suffix **-g(o)-* (cf. Meid 1967: 211), so there was probably no inherited material to make this word. Germanic does have a *k*-suffix, but our word does not fit in the categories of words where it is found (names of animals, plants, and persons; best would be a diminutive; see Meid 1967: 214). Decisive, however, is that the word has cognates that make the derivation impossible.

2. There is a MHG form *vanke*; German dialects have *fanke* (OED s.v. *funk*). Seebold rightly points out that this form, with *o*-vocalism, is not to be expected from the paradigmatical ablaut of 'fire', and considers "bloße Lautwandlung".

However, there is good support for this form. Van Wijk, who is so often more informative than De Vries, points to a verb, evidently cognate with our word, MHG *venken*, *vengen* 'kindle', MDu. *ont-fenken*, *ont-fengen* 'kindle, make glow, take fire'. The Middle Dutch word is well attested, and had derivatives: *ontfenger*; *ontfenginge*; *ontfengsel* which means 'incense'; see Verwijs-Verdam s.v. *ont-fengen*. WNT gives both *venken* and *vinken*. The latter, mainly attested in the south of the Netherlands, means 'to glow, smoulder; to kindle'.

¹ Modern English has three words *funk*; see OED. The first, 'spark', may continue the Old English word. On the two others, 'strong smell' and 'fear' see Barnhart.

In Dutch, the word is widely attested in the form *veinzen* (see WNT s.v. *veinzen* II). The word has variants *venzen*, *vinzen*, *vunzen* and, with loss of the *-n-*, *veizen*, *veuzen* (normalized in *veunzen*). There are several derivatives. The verb means 'burn slowly without flame, smoulder; take fire'. It is explained from **venk-s-en* > *vensen*, a known *s*-formation, or from assibilation of *venken* (De Tollenaere 1957: 156). The word is not mentioned in any etymological dictionary (nor is *venken*, *vinken*), with the exception of the recent dictionary by Van Veen.

The word *venken* (from which *veinzen* must derive) goes back to **fank-jan* (because the sequence *-enC-* yielded *-inC-* in Germanic). As to *vinken*, I am not sure whether it is a variant of *venken* or perhaps directly represents **fenk-*. **fankjan* is a causative in form; the verbs have both transitive and intransitive (= causative and non-causative) meaning, but these may easily have merged.

This means that a form **fank-* < PIE **pong-* is well attested and must be accounted for. The verb rather presupposes a primary verbal root, than that it is a denominative. A form **pon-* cannot have been taken from the word for 'fire', as was already noted by Seebold. I shall discuss the word for 'fire' at the end, in section 8.

3. When looking in Pokorny (1959) my attention was drawn to **speng-* (p. 989), e.g. OE *spincan* 'to spark', as it resembled Dutch *vonk*. All handbooks now only give the etymology with 'fire' for Funke. Only Van Wijk gives (forms of) this root as a possible explanation of *vonk* etc. — The handbooks give E. *spunk* as a cognate of *spincan*, but this word appears to have a quite different history.²

Beside *spincan*, the forms from the root **speng-* are the following (Pok. 989). Lithuanian has the verb *spingiu/spingiù*, dial. *spingu*, 3 sg.

² E. *spunk* has the meanings 'spark, touchwood' (XVI c.), 'fungus on trees' (XVII c.); (Sc.) 'match' (XVIII c.) and 'spirit, mettle'. The word is now considered a loan from Irish (or Gaelic) *spón(g)c*; thus the New Shorter Oxf. Eng. Dict. 504; Klein 1966/67 s.v.; Barnhart 1988 s.v. We find the same meanings with the Celtic word, see e.g. Vendryes s.v. *spóngc*: 'éponge, amadou, étincelle, d'ou courage'. The Celtic word is a loan from Lat. *spongia*, which itself comes from Greek σπογγία. The meanings 'touchwood' and 'fungus' are explained by the fact that certain fungi were used as touchwood. We find this mentioned several times in connection with the Dutch words *vonk*, *venken* and *veinzen*. The words *vonk en vonkhout, vonkelhout, veinshout* (-hout = 'wood') mean (also) 'tinder'. It is stated, e.g., that normally one makes "vonckhout van Swammen, dat zijn Boom fungi" (: from *zwammen*, that is tree fungi), 1675; see WNT s.v. *Vonkhout*. Cf. Germ. *Zunderschwamm, Feuer-schwamm*. - E. *punk* has comparable meanings: 'rotten wood, or a fungus growing on wood, used for tinder; touchwood, amadou' (OED s.v.). It is now assumed, however, that this word is a loan from Algonquian; Klein s.v., Barnhart s.v. - On E. *funk* see n. 1.

spìngi, *spìngi*, *spìnga* 'light weakly, flicker' (*sping-* < **spng-*). We have to assume that the acute accentuation (*-ìn-*) is old, which is confirmed by Latv. *spīgana* 'mirage, dragon, witch', *spīgulis* 'Johanneswürmchen' (a glow-worm) and *spīguluôt* 'shimmer, sparkle'. The acute is caused by the Winter-Kortlandt law. This states that a short vowel before a PIE voiced unaspirated stop (*b*, *d*, *g*) is lengthened and receives acute intonation; and that a vowel + resonant before these stops gets an acute but is not lengthened, e.g. **-eng-* > *-éng-*. In this way, the accentuation proves that the Lithuanian *g* continues PIE **g* (in itself it could also be **g^h*). Latv. *spuôga* '(reflected) image', *spuôgât* 'gleam' have **spong-*. Lith. *spaņgas* 'seeing unsharp, half blind' has been connected too (Fraenkel s.v. *spangÿs*), but the circumflex accent (and the meaning) may prove that it is not cognate. Lith. *speņgti*, Latv. *spìegt* 'to sound' (Pok.) is not cognate because of the circumflex and the meaning.

This root **speng-* easily explains Germ. *Funke* from **pñg-*, and MHG *vanke* from **pong-*. We only have to assume an *s*-less variant, which is unproblematic. The root, then, must be noted **(s)peng-*. Note that the two ablaut forms just mentioned are also the two attested in Baltic.

4. We may now take a look at other possible cognates.

Lith. *spindëti* (3 sg. *spìndi*), Latv. *spīdēt* (*spīdēt*) 'gleam, shimmer' reminds strongly of *spingëti*. Latv. *spuôdrs* points to **spond-*.³ If this word group is not a Baltic innovation, it suggests an analysis **(s)peng-*, **(s)pen-d-*.

5. Gr. φέγγος 'light, splendour' has been connected with our root as a variant **(s)pheng-*. A *ph-* is now impossible, and the form **b^heng-* required by the Greek form cannot be connected with our root. The Greek word should, because of form and meaning (nothing points to original 'spark'), be kept apart.⁴

³ These words have nothing to do with Skt. *spandate* etc. 'toss, quiver' ('zucken, zappeln') in Pok. 989. — Connection with Gr. σπινθήρ 'spark' (mentioned by Fraenkel) is difficult, not only because of the Greek *-i-*, but also because of the *-dh-*, for we now know from the acute accentuation of the Baltic words that they had *-d-* (cf. section 3 above). The instances of *i* mentioned in Schwyzler 351 are probably not relevant as they all have *i* before stop (κίρνημι etc. are analogical). The forms σπινθρίς, ἄρνηξ also rather point to a non-IE word.

⁴ Gr. πᾶνος 'torch' can only represent **peh₂-no-*. This is reminiscent of the 'fire' word, but as there is no other word with the root **peh₂-*, the analysis is very doubtful. The variant with φ- may be after φαεινός, φᾶνός but the one with πτ- may point to non-IE origin. It is not allowed to posit a root **speg-* to connect Germ. *Spuk*

6. There are other roots, that resemble ours in structure, that have the same meaning:

Pok. 987 (*s*)*pelg-* : Latv. *spulģuôt* 'gleam, sparkle', *spilģans*.

ibid. (*s*)*pleng-* : MDu. *vlinken*, NHG *flinkern*.

ibid. (*s*)*plend-* : OLith. *spléndziu*, *splendėti*; Lat. *splendēre*.

Pok. 997: *spe/org-* : OE *spircan*, *spearcian* 'sparkle', MHG *sparke*.

ibid. *sprong-* : MDu. *spranke* 'spark'.

The general structure of these forms is (*s*)*peRd/g-*, (*s*)*pRend/g-*. Such variants are found in every language, especially when words have an expressive character, which may also be the case with words for 'to sparkle'. I shall not further discuss these words here.

7. The forms of the root **(s)peng-* behave in a perfectly Indo-European way, but the limitation of the root to Germanic and Lithuanian might suggest that the root is not of PIE origin. The forms with *-n-* in section 6 might perhaps be just expressive variants, but the *-n-* may also point to a non-IE language; compare for this 'prenasalization', often found in Germanic, recently Kuiper 1995, 68ff. Of course, once words were adopted in IE languages, they may have been subject to the ablaut rules (of IE origin) of those languages.

If the root is non-IE, one might reconsider the case of $\sigma\pi\lambda\upsilon\eta\rho$ (note 3). Interchange *d/dh* is often found in words suspect of being loans, and *e/i* may also be due to its non-IE origin. But the Greek word rather looks like a word of the substratum language in Greece.

8. I shall now discuss the Germanic words for 'fire'.

Hittite *pahhur*, *pahwenas* shows that the PIE inflection was **péh₂-ur*, gen. **ph₂-uén-s*.

The essential Germanic facts can be presented as follows:

Goth.	OIc.	OHG	OS	OFr	OE
<i>fon</i>	<i>fúrr</i>	old <i>fuir</i> , <i>vugir</i>	<i>fiur</i>	<i>fior</i> ,	<i>fýr</i>
<i>fun-in-s</i>	<i>fun-i</i>	later <i>fiur</i>		<i>fiur</i>	

OIc. *fúrr* derives from **fūr*, which must evidently be explained from **ph₂ur*, the old nominative with generalisation of the zero grade of the root. The sequence laryngeal - *u* underwent metathesis; see Schrijver 1991, 535.⁵ Old English has the same form but with umlaut (which is also found in OIc. *fýrr*).

'ghost', a connection which is semantically also far from evident. — I have no opinion on OPr. *panno* 'fire', which has been connected with the word for 'fire', see Pok. 828.

⁵ A good instance of this metathesis is further Germ. *Schauer*, OHG *scūr*, OE *scúr*,

The OIc. nom. *fun-i* derives from **fun-ōn*, an *n*-stem nominative built on the stem *fun-*. Gothic too made a new *n*-stem nominative, but analysed this stem as *fu-n-*, and thus created **fu-ōn*, which apparently became *fōn*. (One might also think that *-un-* in *fun-* was seen as the zero grade of the suffix (*-un-* < *-n-*, which must originally have occurred in the paradigm, cf. Greek φρασί, **(bhr)-n-si*); this would give nom. **f-ōn* directly.) - Whereas the length of the *u* in Gothic *fun-* is not certain, the *u* of OIc. *fun-* is short. This presents a difficulty. It is evident to derive it from **ph₂un-*, the PIE form with introduction of the zero grade for *-en-*, i.e. gen. sg. *-n-os* for **-en-s*. This is the replacement of the old proterdynamic inflection by a hysterodynamic form. This is a frequent process, e.g. Sanskrit already has *-n-ah* against Avestan GAv. *-əng*, LAv. *-qn*, both from **-an-s* < **-en-s*. Now we would expect that this form gave **fūn-* in Germanic, as the metathesis occurred also in pretonic position (Schrijver 1991, 535). However, Dybo's rule explains the form. This rule states that a long vowel before resonant (in Germanic) was shortened in pretonic position; in our case: e.g. gen. **fūn-as* > **fun-ás*. On this rule for Germanic see also Schrijver, 351-6 and the conclusion 356f. (Schrijver also has an instance, where, as in our case, a long vowel due to metathesis is shortened by Dybo's rule, p. 536.)⁶ As the metathesis implies the existence of the laryngeals as separate phonemes, *Hu* > *uH* must have preceded the development *uH* > *ū*, which was earlier than Dybo's rule: Schrijver 357. So we arrive at the chronology:

- 1) metathesis: e.g. *Hu* > *uH* etc.
- 2) long vowels from short vowel + laryngeal: *uH* > *ū* etc.
- 3) Dybo's rule: shortening of pretonic long vowel before resonant.

Note that Schrijver did not use the word for 'fire' in his material (for both rules). So it constitutes a fine confirmation of his conclusions.

As the stem form *fun-* is found in Gothic and in North Germanic, it is probable that this form originated in Proto-Germanic (note that Dybo's rule operated in Proto-Germanic), which therefore had the following paradigm:

PGm. nom.	<i>*pHur</i> >		<i>*fūr</i>
gen.	<i>*pHun-é/ós</i> >		<i>*funi/az</i> (> <i>*funs</i>)

Problematic are the OHG forms. They seem not to be simple umlaut forms, as the result of umlaut is first written in the 10/11th century,

OIc. *skúr* from **skh₁jur-*, cf. OCS *sěverь* < **keh₁uer-*, Lith. *šiąure* where the acute points to **keh₁ur-*.

⁶ Another instance is the stem *sun(n)-* 'sun' from **sh₂un-* (cf. Gr. ήέλιος < **seh₂uel-*).

and then as *iu* (Braune-Mitzka 1967, 53). Seebold (Kluge s.v. *Feuer*) explains OHG *fiur* from WGM. **fewur*, but this is impossible because the root had h_2 (**peh_2-*), so that only *a*-vocalism (Gm. **a*, **ō*) can be expected. He further assumes that *-ui-* in *fiur* denotes long *ü*. The problem is, however, where the *ü* may have come from. Lehmann 1986, 120b, assumes that *-e/axu-* (i.e. PIE **-e/oh_2u-*, I suppose) gave Gmc. [u:] or [y:]. This is incomprehensible as both these constellations yield *-au-* in PGM., e.g. Goth. *nauþs* < **neh_2u-ti-*, cf. ORuss. *навъ*, Latv. *nâwêt* (with acute from laryngeal in **neh_2u-*), Lith. *nõvyti* (with circumflex due to metatony). Winter 1965, 192 and Rasmussen 1989, 76 n. 10 assume a form **fuuir* which has its *-i-* from **fuuin-*. As the origin of this form Winter notes **pXwen-*. In my opinion this form would have given PGM. **fawen-*, with vocalisation of the laryngeal.⁷ Rasmussen derives it from **ph_2uuen-*, which is probably a Lindeman form (*Cu-* in monosyllables becomes *Cuu-*).⁸ I am not sure that this can be a realisation of **ph_2uuen-*: I expect vocalization of the laryngeal; also it seems rather improbable that this form was preserved down to West Germanic. I would rather derive it from **puHen-*, with metathesized **puH-*, and with restored *-en-* (after h_2 one would expect *-an-*, unless the form was made at a date when the laryngeal or its reflex did not colour any longer).⁹ This stem form would be a locative stem, of a hysterodynamic word. However, I see no certain evidence for a collective in *-ōr-*; and a collective of 'fire' is not to be expected. So it must be *-uēn-* of the prōterodynamic pattern normal for neuters, seen in Hittite. If one assumes, however, that this pattern was replaced by **ph_2u-n-é/ós*, as it seems we must (see above on the PGM. paradigm), the origin of a form with *-en-* becomes doubtful. I also find a

⁷ There are of course only few other forms with *CHu-*. Goth. *fawai* 'few' could be from **ph_2uo-*; cf. Lat. *paucus* and Gr. *παῦρος* < **peh_2u-*. However, all the forms could also have **ph_2eu-*. A further instance may be the Runic name **sawilagaz** (Lindholm). If this form is derived from the root for 'sun', it must be **sh_2uel-*. Thus Antonsen 1975, 37. (I would analyze **sawila-ga-*.) For Latin Schrijver (1991, 597) assumed this sequence in *caurus* 'north-west wind' < **kh_1uer-*; for the word see note 5.

⁸ Rasmussen tries to avoid assuming metathesis, but as this is found on a large scale from Sanskrit to Celtic, the principle is quite acceptable.

⁹ Thus Av. gen. *xvəng* 'sun' comes from **suan-s*, but in GAv. the form is dysyllabic, which implies **suH-an-s*. — There is no reason to assume that the coloring by the laryngeals did not cross a morpheme boundary. As in other similar instances a morpheme boundary does not stop a phonetic development; but a morpheme (before or after such a boundary) may have been restored analogically to its original form (here *-en-* for *-(h_2)an-*).

replacement of **fūr* by *fuir* rather difficult as this form does not fit into any existing category. So the existing explanations are not satisfactory.

The oldest form is *fuir*, which was probably disyllabic because of the notation *vugir*, and we have to explain this form first. I would prefer a phonetic explanation as the relevant forms are limited to German and Frisian. I would e.g. consider the possibility that umlaut was due to the following -r. Also **fūr* may have been realized disyllabically, as [fu^ər, fu^ɪr] (e.g. Dutch *vuur* may be realized as [vu^ər]). I may also point out that gen. **fun-iz* would have had umlaut (as in the root nouns). However, words of the type OHG *scūr* 'Schauer' do not show such a development.¹⁰

Perhaps, then, *fuir* must indeed be explained through a kind of analogy typical for this word. We cannot, however, use old PIE forms that had -*en-*, but we have to start from the PGM. paradigm reconstructed above. I suggest that the gen. **funs* was first reshaped into **fu-in-s* (as supposed by Seebold), i.e. by removing the zero grade form and replacing it by a full grade form as in the *n*-stems. This would imply that -*en-* had become -*in-*, which is not certain; see e.g. Boutkan 1995, 72ff. From here the nominative **fūr* may have been replaced by **fuir*. This would provide a simple origin for the *i*, from a Germanic paradigm, in accordance with the fact that the relevant forms are only found in a part of West Germanic.

As to the forms with -*iu-*, Winter proposed that rare /uy/ was replaced by /iw/. It is simpler to assume that *iu* indicates the early development of an *ü* in this form (thus Seebold).

Returning to our problem, we see that there is no evidence for forms with -*on-* in the inflection of 'fire'. Therefore it seems excluded that *Funke* contains the stem of 'fire'.

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¹⁰ Unexplained is 'Scheuer, Scheune', OHG *sciura* beside *Schauer* from OHG *scūra*. See Franck 1909 = 1971, 39 (either old ablaut, or *sciuria* > MLat. *scuria* which influenced the German word; both not attractive).

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