

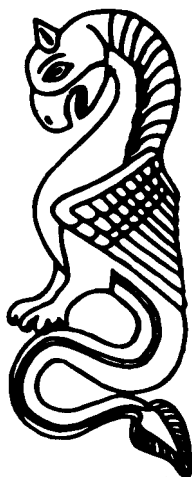
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OE. *WĒOFOD*, *WĪBED*, *WĪGBED*

It is generally accepted¹ that this word may be explained as a compound of an adjective corresponding to Goth. *weihs* 'holy' and either OE. *bēod* 'table' or *bedd* 'bed.' In this article I shall discuss the relationship of the different forms of the word found in the OE. dialects and point out its importance for the dating of the change of β to *b* initially.

There is no reason to assume (with Bosworth-Toller and NED.) that the forms with *-bed* are due to a later folk-etymology. Either Pr.Gmc. **βeuða-* 'table' or **βaðja-*—in its original sense of 'hollow'²—would well accord with our ideas of the Germanic heathen altar.³

It is clear that the *g* in *wīgbed* cannot be explained from a form corresponding to Goth. *weihs*; it can however well represent a Pr.Gmc. **wīγa-* standing in Verner's law relation to it; cf. the noun WS *wēoh* (acc. pl. *wēos*) : *wīg* (gen. sg. *wīges*) 'idol.'⁴

The development of the OE. forms may be indicated as follows:—

(i) Pr.Gmc. **wīχa-βeuða-* > **wīwχ-βeud* (with breaking) > early WS. *wīofud*, *wēobud* and generally, OE. *wēofud*, *wēofod* ME. *wēved*, with accent-shift—at an early date with Pr. E. *u* < *eu*⁵—in the second element and loss of χ ⁶ in the first.⁷

¹ E.g. by J. Bosworth and T. N. Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. *wigbed*; NED. s.v. *wewed*; F. Holthausen, *Altenglisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* s.v. *wīoh*.

² Cf. the gloss *bedde* 'agellus in horto' (E. Steinmeyer and E. Sievers, *Die althochdeutschen Glossen* iii, 716, 28); Mn. E. *bed* (in a garden); Mn. Norw. *bed* 'lie (of small animals)'; further the cognates Latin *fossa*; Welsh *bedd* 'grave'; Lettish *bedre* 'Grube, Gruft.' See A. Torp, *Nynorsk etymologisk ordbog* s.v. *Bed*; A. Walde and J. Pokorny, *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der indogermanischen Sprachen* ii, 17.

³ See J. Hoops, *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde* i, 71.

⁴ For Verner's Law in adjectives cf. Goth. *ganohs*: Mn. H.G. *genug*; Mn. H.G. *hoch*: Mn. Sw. *hög* and see F. Kluge, *Nominale Stammbildungslehre der altgermanischen Dialekte* §174.

⁵ See K. Luick, *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache* §266.2.

⁶ It is possible that the form *wifod* in Ru¹ (Mt 23, 18) may represent a Pr. Angl. **wīχ-βeud* with loss of χ after smoothing (Luick, *op. cit.* § 239), but it may also be explained as a mixture of *wībed* (see below) and *wēofod*.

⁷ Late OE. *wēofed* probably represents the earlier *wēofod* phonologically; it can hardly be regarded as a mixture of *wēofod* and forms with *-bed*.

(ii) Pr. Gmc. *wīχa-βaðja-* > OE. *wībed* (e.g. in Vesp. Ps. and Ru¹).

(iii) Pr. Gmc. *wīγα-βaðja-* > OE. *wīgbed* (in Lind. Rit. and elsewhere); cf. also the gen. sg. *wigbeddes* in Lind. (L I, II).

The form *wēofod* is clearly an obscured compound; the second element **-βud* has been separated from the word **βeud*. Moreover the only hypothesis upon which we can explain the form is that the accent-shift and the separation of **-βud* and **βeud* took place before the change of initial *β* to *b*. It is impossible to determine the actual date at which the accent in the diphthong was shifted; such accent-shifts are attested sporadically in the earliest Old English (particularly in obscured compounds such as *fultum* < **full-tāom* i.e. *full-tēam*) and after that more frequently. But the change can definitely be regarded as English (as opposed to West Germanic) and may not have preceded the literary period by very long.⁸ Further the form *wēobud* which, in view of its sporadic occurrence, is probably to be explained as due rather to direct analogy with *bēod* than to a separate line of descent in which an accent-shift took place *after* the change of *β* to *b*, shows that the separation of **-βud* and **βeud* cannot have preceded by very long the period to which the orthography of the oldest English texts may be assigned. It seems therefore that the change of *β* to *b* may be assigned to the Primitive English period.

The word *wēofod* is thus one reasonably certain point in the difficult problem afforded by the development of the Pr. Gmc. spirants *β*, *ð*, *γ* in the initial position. The usual view is that these spirants existed in the initial position in Primitive Germanic and that they became *b*, *d*, *g* at different periods in the different languages.⁹

The Germanic loan-words in Baltic Fennic and Slavonic and the Germanic names in classical writers afford us no evidence on this point.

⁸ Luick, *op. cit.* § 265.

⁹ W. Streitberg, *Urgermanische Grammatik*, p. 116; R. C. Boer, *Oergermaansch Handboek* §142. F. Kluge, *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie* i, 330 would postulate an initial *b* and *d* as early as Pr. Gmc. itself.

In Pr. Fenn. there was neither δ , γ nor d , g in the initial position; we should thus expect substitution of a Pr. Fenn. t for either δ or d (as in Finn. *taikina* 'dough': OHG. *teiginna*; Goth. *daigs* ON. *deigr*) and of a Pr. Fenn. k for either γ or g (as in Finn. *kulta* 'gold': Goth. *gulþ* OHG. *golt*). In the Germanic loan-words in Baltic Fennic p has in general been substituted for initial Germanic β or b (as in Finn. *palje*, pl. *palkeet* 'bel-lows': Goth. *balgs* ON. *belgr*). There are two possible explanations for this substitution: either, in the Germanic from which the words were borrowed the change $\beta > b$ may already have taken place; or, at the period of the borrowing the Pr. Fenn. β -sound may have been so far from the Germanic β -sound that one could not have been substituted for the other.¹⁰

In Pr. Slav. there was neither δ nor γ in the initial position and we should thus expect either Germanic δ or d to appear as Slav. d (as in Russian *duma* 'thought': Goth. *doms*) and either Germanic γ or g as Slav. g (as in O. Bulg. *gobino* 'abundance': Goth. *gabei*). The initial Ind. E. semi-vowel w (as in O. Bulg. *vezq* = Latin *ueho* OHG. *wëgan*) has in general given a labio-dental v in Slavonic, but a bilabial spirant (appearing, for example, in the North-Eastern Czech dialects)¹¹ and a semi-vowel (appearing, for example, in East Bulgaria¹²) are also attested.¹³ Here also there are two possible explanations why Pr. Gmc. initial β appears as b not v in Slavonic (as in O. Bulg. *bugz* 'armilla': OHG. *boug* OE. *bëag*): either, in the Germanic from which the words were borrowed the change $\beta > b$ may already have taken place; or, more probably, at the period when borrowing took place the Slavonic sound may have been so far from the Germanic β -sound that one could not be substituted for the other; if the latter explanation is accepted we have valuable evidence for the quality of the Slavonic

¹⁰ In view of the early date at which the borrowing took place the latter explanation seems the more probable and, if it is accepted, we have valuable evidence for the character of the Pr. Fenn. sound.

¹¹ A. Frinta, *Fonetická povaha a historický vývoj souhlásky "v" ve slovantštině*, pp. 26-7.

¹² L. Miletič, *Das Ostbulgarische*, pp. 82, 89, 155.

¹³ W. Vondrák, *Vergleichende slavische Grammatik* i, 374.

v-sound—it may well have had the semi-vocalic quality attested to-day in East Bulgarian.¹⁴

In Latin and Greek we should expect initial *b, d, g* to appear either for Germanic β, δ, γ or *b, d, g*. Further in later Latin *b > v* in some positions and there is confusion between *b* and *v* in the orthography. Nothing can therefore be concluded from sporadic spellings such as *Vatavi* for *Batavi* (cognate with Goth. *batiza, bota*, etc.)¹⁵

In Gothic¹⁶ there is no evidence for the pronunciation of the letters *b, d, g*¹⁷ initially; the conventional view—that they represent stops—is merely based upon the fact that the majority of the Germanic languages are usually considered to have stops in these positions.¹⁸

In Norse the little evidence that there is attests the completion of the change to *b, d, g* rather than the existence of the stage β, δ, γ . Thus it is assumed that the runes $\mathfrak{B}, \mathfrak{D}, \mathfrak{G}$ (usually transliterated *b, d, g*) represent β, δ, γ in the initial position in the early inscriptions;¹⁹ forms such as *kuþi* (= O.Icel. *goði*)—from Flemløse and Helnæs—and inverted spellings such as *warþ* (= 3rd sg. pret. ind. O. Icel. *varp*), *kaiba* (= acc. pl. O. Icel. *keipa*)—both from Eggjum (c. 700)—*-sba* (= O. Icel. *spá*) from Björketorp (8th century), afford evidence for the *b, (d), g* found initially in the later Norse languages.

In West Germanic there is no direct evidence for anything except initial *b* and *d*.²⁰ But in the case of the third spirant, γ ,

¹⁴ V. Kiparsky, *Die gemeinlavischen Lehnwörter aus dem Germanischen*, p. 287, comes to the same conclusion.

¹⁵ M. Schönfeld, *Wörterbuch der altgermanischen Personen- und Völkernamen* pp. xxiv, 45-47.

¹⁶ But the stop *b* is rendered certain for Crimean Gothic by spellings such as *boga* 'arcus.'

¹⁷ It has been suggested that the initial *k* in Goth. *Kreks* OE. *Cræcas* OHG. *Kriahi* < Latin *græcus* is due to the fact that the word was borrowed at a period when there was no initial *g*, only a γ , in Germanic. But there are other possibilities and the phonology of the word is too obscure for anything to be based on it. For literature see S. Feist, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der gotischen Sprache* s.v. *Kreks*.

¹⁸ M. H. Jellinek, *Geschichte der gotischen Sprache*, p. 35.

¹⁹ A. Jóhannesson, *Grammatik der urnordischen Runeninschriften* §§ 83, 89, 97.

²⁰ The spellings afford indirect evidence for the pronunciation *b, d* in the old literary languages of North and West Germanic. For, had the pronunciation been δ and not

there is more evidence; initial γ appears to this day in Dutch²¹ and in some Low German dialects,²² and—presumably on this evidence for there is no other²³—it is often assumed to have been present initially in OE. also.²⁴ Later in English²⁵ it changed to g as it has done in the majority of West Germanic languages.

With regard to the change of initial Pr. Gmc. β , δ , γ (sounds which, from all that we know of Grimm's Law, we must assume to have existed in Pr. Gmc.) to b , d , g , it therefore appears that we really have only two data: the appearance of γ in Dutch and Low German and OE. *wēofod*.²⁶

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d initially, one would expect a standard spelling with δ in ON. and OE.; had it been β and not b , one would expect a standard spelling with crossed b in OS., one with v in O.Fris. and occasional spellings with f in ON. and OE. (since in these last f was the normal spelling for the medial consonant in ON. *drifa* and OE. *drifan*). For the third sound there is little evidence of this kind; but, if a spirant had been pronounced, one would certainly expect a standard spelling with gh instead of g in Old East Norse.

²¹ See M. Schönfeld, *Historiese Grammatika van het Nederlands*, p. 20.

²² See A. Lasch, *Mittelniederdeutsche Grammatik* § 342A.

²³ It has been suggested (e.g. by F. Kluge, *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie* i, 841) that the alliteration of a Pr. Gmc. γ (before a back-vowel) with a Pr. Gmc. j in OE. poetry affords evidence that the spirantal character of the former was preserved into the OE. period. This cannot be regarded as safe evidence.

²⁴ E.g. by R. Girvan, *Angelsaksisch Handboek* § 214.2.

²⁵ The date at which the change took place is unknown, but as K. Bülbring (*Altenglisches Elementarbuch* § 487) points out, the spelling *galdes* for *caldes* in Ru¹ (Mt. 10, 42) would, if not an error, afford some evidence for the existence of a stop, not a spirant, in this dialect at this date.

²⁶ It has been suggested (R. Priebsch and W. E. Collinson, *The German Language* p. 46) that OIcel. *knésfótr* 'the bend of the knee' (beside *knésbót*) similarly preserves the spirant but the possibility of folk-etymology with *fótr* renders this inconclusive.