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ME. *ISKED* 'LONGED.'

The verb *isk(en)* is recorded once, in the past tense, in the Cotton manuscript of *Cursor Mundi* (ed. R. Morris, E.E.T.S.) line 11848, and has not been recognized by dictionaries or grammars.¹ The word is clearly written in the manuscript; from the context its meaning is 'long' or some similar sense. The passage in which it occurs is part of the description of the last days of Herod and runs (11843-8):

His aun geing all fledd him fra,
 Bath seruands and sun alssua,
 His freindes all þai him fra fledd,
 Moght nan for stinck negh til his bedd,
 All þai fled fra him a-wai,
 And isked efter his enddai.

The last line appears as *And preyed aftir his endyng day* in the Trinity MS., and (with differences in spelling) in MSS. Göttingen and Fairfax.

The form *isked* might be regarded as a variant of *asked* (error or even dialectal form).² As to its being a genuine variant, no *isk-* forms for 'ask' are recorded in the *New English Dictionary* or the *English Dialect Dictionary*, and the verb occurs frequently in the form *aske* in the Cotton manuscript of *Cursor Mundi*.³ Another explanation of the form was suggested by Morris in his *Notes (Cursor Mundi I, p. xxxi ff.)*, *ad loc.*, who compared ME. *ziscen*. But the meaning of OE. *gūtsian*, ME. *ziscen*, *zissen* etc. is confined to the sense 'covet' (see N.E.D. s.v. *Yisse* v.) which would not be satisfactory here; and, although the loss of *ʒ* before *i* would not be abnormal, the representation of OE. *ts* by *sk* would be difficult to explain.

¹ I made a brief comment on it in *Saga-Book of the Viking Society* XI, 156.

² So apparently Kaluza in his *Glossary (Cursor Mundi III)*.

³ From the many references given in the *Glossary* it appears that *aske* in the sense 'request, demand' is followed by a direct object without a preposition, e.g. 7319 *þai ask now oþer king þan me*.

The vocabulary of the Cotton manuscript of *Cursor Mundi* has a very strong Norse element,⁴ and neither form nor meaning of *isked* presents any difficulty if we take it as a Norse loanword from *ýskja* 'to wish' (= OE. *wýscan*). In Old West Norse the form *ýskja* is rare,⁵ the usual form being *æskja*,⁶ a later formation from the noun *ósk* (= OE. *wūsc-*),⁷ but Old Danish has *ýskia* (beside *øskia*)⁸ and Old Swedish has *ýskia* (beside *öskia*).⁹ The use of the preposition in *isked efter* is paralleled by the Modern Icelandic construction *æskja eftir e-u* 'to desire something.'¹⁰

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⁴ Many Norse loanwords occur in the Cotton MS. and not in the other MSS., e.g. *clint sb.*, *lasce sb.*, *stair v.*

⁵ J. Fritzner's *Ordbog* (2nd ed.) s.v. *ýskja* has only one example: *Nú er sá dagr kominn, er vér höfum ýskt at koma skyldi*, taken from *Alexanderssaga*.

⁶ See A. Noreen, *Altisländische Grammatik* (4th ed.) §112, 1.

⁷ Professor Dickins kindly informs me that OE. *wūsc-* is found only in the compound *wūsc-bearn* and the personal name *Wūscfræa*, borne by two members of the Northumbrian royal house, the great-grandfather and the son of Edwin (who was killed in 633).

⁸ See J. Brøndum-Nielsen, *Gammeldansk Grammatik* §102.

⁹ See E. Hellquist, *Svensk etymologisk ordbok*, s.v. *önska*.

¹⁰ S. Blöndal, *Íslandsk-dansk Ordbog* s.v. *æskja*. Note also that where the Cotton MS. has the verb *wisse* 'wish' (according to the references given in the *Glossary*) it is used with the preposition *efter*; the verb *wisse* is apparently only used in rhyme.