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On some names of days

A survey of the early history of our names of the days of the week has been presented by Gad Rausing (1995). He describes in an interesting way the mythological background of these names and shows that their distribution can be seen in the political context of the Germanic world of the Migration Period. A few points of his treatise ought, however, to be discussed.

Friday, fredag

In my paper on the same subject (Hermodsson 1970) I stated that the name *Friday*, German *Freitag*, Swed. *fredag*, being a translation of the Roman *dies Veneris*, is to be connected with the name of the goddess Frigg, the wife of Oden. Rausing rejects this derivation and says (p. 233) that the only possible candidate is Fröja, being "like Venus the goddess of love".

The etymology given by me is intrinsically not mine but appears in handbooks like Hellquist (1957) and others, though usually without an explanation of the historical linguistic background. So an explanation seems to be necessary and will show why the theory of Rausing does not hold.

At first should be stressed that the goddess Fröja, Freyja, belongs to the Northern mythology and cannot thus have been responsible for the English and German words which, on the other hand, cannot be separated from the Scandinavian forms. And if her name indeed had given rise to e.g. the Swedish name of this day it would of course have had the form **fröj(e)dag*. In Old Icelandic there existed in fact the form *frøjudagr*, obviously based on the name of that goddess but of very restricted use and without counterparts in the other North Germanic languages.

How then can the relationship between the words *Frigg* and *Friday*, *fredag*, be explained? The answer is that, though related, they are of a different dialect-geographical origin and show different stages of phonetic development. The Old Germanic form of the name was **Fria*, **Frija*, attested by references to this goddess in the Old High German Merseburger Zaubersprüche

(there called *Friia*) and in the History of the Lombards by Paulus Diaconus (there called *Frea*). The Western Germanic forms of the name of this day, German *Freitag*, Old High German *fritag*, as well as English *Friday*, show the same, original phonetic state of the name. In Northern Germanic the sound combination *ii* developed into *gg(j)*, cf. German *Ei*, Swed. *ägg*, and correspondingly the name of the goddess got the form *Frigg*. The name of the day as it appears in Old Swed. *friadagher* etc. thus had been imported to the North in its Western Germanic form.

As concerns the role of Fröja as a goddess of love, this property also and probably earlier characterized Fria, Frigg, as clearly shown by the etymology of the name. It is related to Swed. *fria*, Gothic *frijon* 'to love' and to Sanskr. *priyá* 'beloved' (whereas the name of Fröja is derived from another stem). In the poem Lokasenna of the Older Edda the god Loke blames Frigg for being "man-mad". So there is no doubt that she was an erotic deity. How the parts in the field of love were divided between Frigg and Fröja remains unclear, but obviously there was some overlapping.

Saturday, lördag

The generally accepted derivation of Swed. *lördag* from *laugardagr* 'day of washing, bathing' is questioned by Rausing (p. 233). He says: "... it seems rather peculiar to introduce such a mundane term among the divine names". One is very much inclined to agree with this opinion. To find a better solution is not easy, but Rausing makes an interesting attempt.

As the Roman god Saturnus, a rather evil mythological personality, has given his name to this day of the classical week, Rausing looks for a Norse god, having similar properties. He thinks the god Loke to be an appropriate candidate. But as this name cannot possibly lie behind *lördag*, Rausing chooses an alternate name of this god, *Lpðurr*, occurring in the Older Edda and in later Old Icelandic poetry. The existing forms *laugardager*, Swed. *lögardager* etc. then, according to Rausing, should be seen as

results of a process of "gradually deteriorating". The assumption of such a process is, however, not in accordance with generally accepted principles of linguistic development. Instead these forms might in this case be seen as secondly developed formations, derived from other linguistic material.

From a strict linguistic point of view the assumption of a development of *Lpðurr* to *lör* perhaps can be considered as possible. A phonetic assimilation could have taken place, resulting in a loss of the intermediate consonant (cf. Wessén 1955, p. 31), and *ρ* could have changed into *ō* in the position before *r* (Wessén, p. 23).

Other facts, however, speak strongly against this theory. It seems strange that the principal name of Loke was not used instead of this second name, appearing very seldom, only three times, in the Old Icelandic literature (see e.g. KLNLM, 10, p. 669), whereas the name Loke is attested numerous times. It is not even certain that the name *Lpðurr* refers to Loke (see the discussion by Ström 1956, p. 53).

Also one would expect the occurrence in Old Icelandic or elsewhere of a form **lpðurdagr* or the like, but there is no trace of such a word. In contrast, *laugardagr* etc. is abundantly used. Very significant is the fact that according to SAOB the form *lördag* is recorded in Swedish no earlier than 1620, so it is obvious that it must go back to *lögerdag*.

There are good reasons for Rausing to discuss the type *laugardagr*. It must be considered as being of later origin than the other names of the week. Also it can be supposed as having been developed in Christian times (cf. Hermodsson 1970, p. 184). People may well have taken baths and have washed their clothes already in pagan times, but the reserving of the day before the solemn Christian Sunday for procedures of cleaning and purification very probably was due to the influence of the church. Thus earlier than the word now known there may have existed in Northern Germanic an older term for this day about which we know nothing but which further hypotheses perhaps will elucidate.

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Några kommentarer till »En kritisk kommentar till Helena Knutssons avhandling 'Slutvandrat?' och till etnografiska analogier som ett slags episteme för arkeologiska kulturer» av Håkan Petersson

Vetenskapliga arbeten, och även doktorsavhandlingar, är ofta inlägg i den arkeologiska debatten. Det är därför mycket glädjande att även mitt arbete har gett upphov till debatt. I en stressande tid med allt fler publikationer, tidskrifter och andra diskussionsföra är det tråkigaste som kan hända en författare att aldrig

bli läst. Det näst tråkigaste är att bli felaktigt tolkad eller missförstådd. Men när en debatt uppstår, har den första rädslan lagt sig och den andra kan elimineras just genom debatten.

Mina kommentarer till Håkan Peterssons kritik av mina grunduppfattningar och tolkningar kommer att röra sig på två plan. Det