Anatoly LIBERMAN (Minneapolis)

NEW ETYMOLOGIES IN THOMAS O. LAMBDIN'S
An Introduction to the Gothic Language

Abstract. In 2006 Thomas O. Lambdin brought out *An Introduction to the Gothic Language*. Every lesson is followed by vocabulary notes that include etymologies. Most of them were borrowed from well-known dictionaries, but a few are new. The paper contains comments on those etymologies.

Thomas O. Lambdin, a distinguished semitologist, whose 1971 *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* has been translated into several languages and whose introductions to Coptic and Classical Ethiopic, as well as studies of Pāṇini, all of them written about thirty years ago, are equally well-known, brought out in 2006 *An Introduction to the Gothic Language* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock), a textbook of approximately the same format as William H. Bennett's *An Introduction to the Gothic Language* (1980), except that it contains much more text material, shows little interest in historical grammar, and begins with sentences the author made up himself. Compilers of Greek and especially Latin manuals for grade schools often facilitate the first steps to beginners by composing short stories in those languages, but children do not study Gothic, while students are expected to go into it full tilt from the start. Lambdin's was clearly a bold experiment.

For someone who has dealt with Hebrew, Coptic, and Sanskrit, Gothic is an easy language, a mere dialect of Old Germanic, as Brugmann and Meillet would have called it, but it is still surprising to see a Gothic textbook authored by someone who has never published anything on Germanic. Another surprise is the fact of this book's appearance. As far as the preparation of college students is concerned, historical Germanic linguistics is a dying area in the English speaking world. So who will use Lambdin's *Introduction*, which, even though in a small way, competes with Joseph Wright's book, the numerous revisions of Braune's *Gotische Grammatik*, and Bennett's textbook? Did the publishers break even? WorldCat shows that only about twenty libraries bought the book. A new introduction to Gothic should have become a major event in Germanic

studies, but it seems to have passed unnoticed. Lambdin, a true polyglot, has written a most usable "handbook." However, my aim is not to review it. Every lesson is followed by vocabulary notes interspersed with remarks on etymology, as a rule, borrowed from Feist, Feist-Lehmann, and Pokorny; yet occasionally the author offers his own conjectures on the origin of Gothic words. It is only those conjectures that will interest us here.

   bandwjan 'to sign, indicate', from *bandwa* ~ *bandwo* 'sign, token'. Lambdin (referred to in what follows as T.O.L.): "Cf. O[ld] N[orse] *benda* (to bend; to beckon), Eng[lish] *bend*. Apparently two different P[roto]-G[ermanic] verbs, *bandyan (to bend, < **bandya-*, a band, as s[ome]th[in]g bent around sthg) and *bandwyan (to make a bandwa, i.e. a nod or hand-sign), have merged in ON *benda* …. Pokorny lists Gothic *bandwjan* under the root √*bhā* (to shine), but labels it questionable. The reasoning here, perfectly plausible, is that *bandwjan* is derived from I[ndo]-E[uropean] **bhānteye-* (approx.: to produce a manifestation). Without further close cognates, however, the etymology remains open. The derivation from √*bhendh* is my suggestion and seems to be the more plausible, especially in the light of the Old Norse forms" (315-316). ON *benda* 'to bind' and *benda* 'give a sign' are homonyms, so that reference to merger is not fully justified. Other than that, no procedure depending on the amputation of enlargements (extensions, determinatives) carries too much conviction, for the shorter the stub and the more general its reconstructed meaning, the easier it becomes to draw semantic bridges. I doubt that the existence of the Icelandic homonyms can be used as an argument in etymologizing the Gothic noun.

   bauan 'to live, inhabit'. Both *bauan* and *trauan* 'to trust' "may … be regarded as proper essive formes in IE, i.e. zero-grade of root + essive suffix: PG *būwē-* < IE **bhūwē-* < *bhwHh₁yé and PG **trūwē-* < IE **drūwē-* < **drwHh₁yé-*" (280). Laryngeals in reconstructed forms provide an illusion of depth but add nothing to the understanding of Germanic forms. *Essive*, a familiar term to a student of Finnish, is rarely used in Indo-European studies. An essive suffix refers to staying in one place or permanently occupying a certain position. T.O.L. does not comment on the origin of the suffix *-*we*- or its occurrence outside the two verbs in question.

   briggan 'to bring'. T.O.L. (313) repeats Brugmann's etymology: from IE **bhrenk-*, supposedly a blend of two roots: **bher-* 'to carry' and **enek-* 'to reach, attain' (cf. Engl. *bear* and *enough*, corresponding to Go. *bairan* and *ga-noh*). This etymology has found its way into our most authoritative dictionaries, and yet there is something fanciful about it, though it accounts for the weak preterit of a seemingly strong verb. Levitsky (*Etimologicheskii slovaŕ germanskikh iazykov* I: 123. Vinnitsa: Nova Knyha, 2010) treats *bringan as a nasalized variant of **bher-* 'to carry' and refers to the phonomorphological proportion

werg : *wring-*, *þerh-* : *þing-*, *steg-* : *sting-*. The existence of forms with the infix *-n-* needs no proof. It is the weak preterit of *bringan* that ruins every "regular" and otherwise sensible etymology.

bugjan 'to buy'. The verb has no accepted etymology. Some of those who tried to guess its original meaning pointed to the trading customs of the early Indo-Europeans ('to ransom a bride', and so forth); cf. ON *byggja* 'acquire a wife, marry'. T.O.L. says: "Semantics obscure but not unreasonable, depending on early Germanic bargaining practices. I think that a derivation from √*bhewgh 3* [in Pokorny] (enjoy) is equally likely, however, especially in view of Skr √*bhuj* in the meaning *to acquire and enjoy the use of, own, possess*" (261). *Nur vage Vermutungen*, as Jan de Vries used to say in such cases. Characteristically, *bride* is also a word of unknown origin.

eisarnein- 'made of iron'. T.O.L.: "… Pokorny takes it to the root √*eis* (to move swiftly or violently), but the wide semantic range of the possible cognates makes for little certainty. There is a possible connection with meteors and meteoric iron, a known source of iron for early societies" (298). He cites the New Egyptian word for 'iron' that means literally 'the metal from the sky'. A meteor certainly moves swiftly and violently. The problem with such ancient objects of material culture is always the same: the word may have come (here presumably to the Celts) from a distant source.

hazjan 'to praise'. T.O.L.: "… < PG **hazyan* < IE **kosyé-*, probably from √*kes* (to comb) + denominative suffix **-ye-*. Cf. A[nglo-]S[axon] *herian*. Although this etymology is not given in Pokorny, the transfer of meaning to that of *touch, caress, coddle* well attested in Slavic for the root could easily have been carried a step further in PG to *caress > encourage > praise* …. An equally plausible derivation from IE √*ḱens* (Skr √*çaṇs* to praise; Lat *censeo* to think, deem) has also been proposed" (297). See the most recent hypothesis on the origin of this verb (from **hisan*) in Yuri Kleiner "Praise and Honor (Gothic hazjan, Old English hergan, and Russian čestʹ" in: L. M. Bauer and Georges-Jean Pinault (eds.), *Language in Time and Space. A Festschrift for Werner Winter on the Occasion of His 80th Birthday*. Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs 144. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003, 233-240 (Russ. *čestʹ* means 'honor'). *Hazjan* seems to have been an elevated word, and its development from 'caress' is rather unlikely.

hugjan 'to think'. T.O.L.: "No IE source is given in Pokorny, but it seems reasonable to derive the Germanic root **hug* from IE **kwgh-* or *kwk-*, an extension in *-gh-* or *-k-* of the IE root √*kew* (feel, sense). *hugjan* would therefore be related to *hausjan* ['to hear'], which is from an *-s-* extension of this same root, and formally of the same pattern as *bugjan* …. The semantics are similar to that of IE √*weyd* (see *witan* ['to know']). For a particular extension of an IE root to be attested in only one subfamily is not unusual" (269). *Hazjan* and *hausjan*

have been compared several times in the past, but, as noted before, manipulating abstract roots opens the door to all kinds of unverifiable hypotheses, since extensions, unlike suffixes, are allowed to exist devoid of any meaning. If it can be admitted that Go. *(ga-)bruka* 'crumb' and *brakja* 'struggle' (obviously related to *brikan* 'break') are akin to OE *brōc* 'brook, rivulet', then *hug* may align itself with G. *(be)hagen* 'to please' despite its ties with ON *hógr* 'easy', and we return to the old etymology *hugs* – Sanskrit *śaknóti* 'can, is able'. 'Mind, thought' would in this case emerge as a product of 'ability'. However, the etymology of *brook* is unknown, while references to deviations (*Entgleisungen*) from the scheme of ablaut, though ably defended by Levitsky, always leave the impression that the game is played according to partially arbitrary rules.

 hlaifs 'bread'. Having discussed a possible connection between *hlaifs* and Go. *hleibjan* 'to help', T.O.L. adds: "As a second and even more remote possibility, I would suggest a derivation from an IE root **kleybh* as a variant of **gleybh* (to be sticky); **gloybhos* + **kloybhos* would originally have characterized the 'sticky dough'. A similar etymology has been suggested in Semitic for Hebrew *le´hem* (bread) = Arabic *lahm-* (meat)" (239). It has, and with some reason, been suggested that *hlaifs* is a Semitic, rather than an Indo-European word. According to Levitsky (op.cit., 266), *hlaifs* goes back to the root **(s)kel* with the syncretic meaning 'cut/tie/bend'. The root allegedly points to the form of a loaf as a *shaped* mass of bread baked in one piece. Be that as it may, *hleibjan* is of little help here, for its origin is also unknown. *Dunkler Herkunft* (Feist).

 infeinan 'to have pity, show mercy'. Since the verb lacks secure Germanic cognates, the chances of discovering its etymology are slim. In his book *Lingua e storia dei goti* (Firenze: G. C. Sansoni, 1964), Piergiuseppe Scardigli made a strong case for Germanic shamanism. He supported the traditional (in my opinion, wrong) idea that the god Óðinn hung on the world tree Yggdrasill (the obscure episode in question is told in the eddic song *Hávamál*) as part of his initiation (Scardigli's reference to Höfler should be disregarded, for Höfler spoke about the initiation of a member of a comitatus, not of a shaman) and argued that traces of shamanistic beliefs could be found in the vocabulary of Gothic. He assembled about two dozen Gothic words of unknown or highly disputable origin and such words as superseded their older Indo-European synonyms (like *aiþei* 'mother') and concluded that they pertained to the activities of a shaman. The words Scardigli marshaled in defense of his thesis go all the way from *midjungards* 'inhabited world' to *plinsjan* 'to dance', from *reiran* 'shake, tremble' to *talzjan* 'teach', and from *anaks* 'suddenly' to *siponeis* 'disciple'. It remains unclear why the actions of a shaman and a world view colored by shamanistic perceptions needed special words of unascertained origin, that is, by inference, borrowings and neologisms that had no ties with the rest of the vocabulary. Shamanism is not a religion, and as can be seen, *midjungards* and the rest were freely

used in the Gothic biblical text. Wulfila did not fear unwanted associations. One of the words Scardigli isolated was *infeinan* (p. 82; according to Lehmann, see *infeinan* in his revision of Feist [*A Gothic Etymological Dictionary.* Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986], it occurs on p. 68 of the German translation [*Die Goten: Sprache und Kultur*, translated by Benedikt Vollmann. München: Beck, 1973], which I did not consult). Lehmann mentions von Grienberger's etymology, dismissed without discussion by Feist, that the root of *infeinan* is *fijan* 'to hate', "with shift of meaning from 'become inimical to oneself' to 'conquer one's feelings'; he [von Grienberger] compares Lat *miseror* 'have pity' beside *miser* 'miserable'," and adds: "The etymology gains some credence from the association of *infeinan [that is, *infeinan**, for the infinitive has not been recorded] with shamanistic ritual" (p. 205, No. 117). I find it hard to understand where shamanistic ritual comes in and what the trance or any other part of it, such as a travel to other worlds, has to do with "becoming inimical to oneself." Elsewhere Lehmann limits himself to noncommittal references to Scardigli's book and refers to the book without comment (such references of the *see ~ see also* type are not particularly helpful, but they abound in the scholarly literature).

This is T.O.L.'s proposal: "… I suggest the following etymology: an inchoative verb formed on the participial adjective **fiyan-* < √*ply* (be fat; fatten, nourish). The form would be an exact parallel to *keinen* …. Neither Pokorny nor Holthausen gives an etymology for this word. I take the Gothic meaning of *showing mercy* from the notion of *nourishing, sustaining*, and the like" (316). *Keinen** 'to sprout' is itself an obscure word (Germanic without established congeners outside the group). Levitsky (op.cit., 318) derives *keinan* from the root **kī* 'to cut' (hence 'to sprout' and 'split'). The path from 'nourish, sustain' (for *infeinan**) to 'show mercy' does not seem easy to cross, and dealing with bare roots, as noted twice above, is a precarious procedure.

liban 'to live'. Feist calls the verb impermeable (opaque), *etymologisch undurchsichtig*. However, the existing etymologies are not so bad. T.O.L. adds a variation on an old theme: "If one accepts the possibility that IE labio-velars like g^w and k^w might sporadically produce labial reflexes in Germanic …, a connection with the IE root **leyk^w* (leave behind, remain) would appear promising, especially since this would very well suit the meaning of the non-suffixed verb *(bi)leiban* (remain), assigned somewhat unsatisfactorily by Pokorny to the root **leyp* (to smear, dirty). It may not be possible in the long run to maintain **leybh*, **leyk^w*, and *leyp* as independent roots. *LIV* [*Lexikon der indogermanischen Verben*], on the other hand, regards *liban* as the essive [!] of √*leyp* (thus **lyph₁yé-*) and *bilaif* (the only attested form of *beleiban*) as a perfect of the root verb; LIV assigns the meaning *kleben bleiben* to the root" (278). Levitsky (op.cit., 360) derives *liban* from the root **leib-*.

usdaudo 'earnestly' (**usdauþs** 'assiduous, eager'). The unresolved difficulty with *usdauþs* 'eager' is whether this adjective can be understood as 'undead'. From a morphological point of view, *usdauþs* looks absolutely transparent, but 'undead' would be such a strange way to describe someone who is full of life! It is also most unnatural to characterize positive features and phenomena (which are "marked") through negative ones. *War* called *unpeace* as in Icelandic (*ófriður*) makes sense, but not peace called "un-war." Therefore, etymologists tried to find a more reasonable solution. T.O.L. says that the *undead* etymology "assumes that the prefix *us-* has a negative force (rare, but possible) and that *daud-*, in addition to its normal meaning of *dead* … also means *listless, spiritless*, for which there is some support in Germanic. I would suggest as an alternate derivation *swift > assiduous, eager*, taking it to the IE base **dhowt-* √*dhew* (to flow, run) + suffix **-t-*. Cf. Skr. √*dhav* (to run), Gr. *θóoς* (swift). Cf. the semantics of *þiwi*" (300-301). T.O.L. means *þius** 'servant', usually understood as 'runner', from the root **tek^w-* 'to run'. The traditional etymology of *þius* has been called into question more than once.

wairs 'worse'. T.O.L.'s comment is short: "… < IE *wers (elevated, high). Cf. ON *verri*, O[ld] H[igh] G[erman] *wirsiro*, Eng *worse*; Skr. *varsīyas-* (higher), Russian *верх* [verkh] (top, summit). Semantics: higher > more extreme > worse" (306). Something has gone wrong here. The development from 'higher' to 'worse' would be as counterintuitive as calling someone full of life "undead." Even though the idea of connecting *wairs* with words for 'high; higher; elevation' in various languages is old, it has nothing to recommend it. Not a single Slavic etymological dictionary I consulted cites the cognates of *worse* in connection with *verkh* and the rest, and, in my opinion, they do not do so for good reason.

It takes years of fruitful labor and great courage to risk an inroad on a fortress like Gothic and even offer new or revised etymologies of several hopeless words. *Usdauþs* must have been Lambdin's motto throughout his adventure.

Anatoly Liberman
Department of German, Scandinavian and Dutch
University of Minnesota
9 Pleasant Street, 320 Folwell Hall
Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA
[aliber@umn.edu]