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**ON THE NAMES FOR WEDNESDAY IN GERMANIC DIALECTS
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WEST GERMANIC**

Abstract

The article first groups the clearly etymologized Germanic names for Wednesday according to their motive (their iconym) and tries to describe the origin, or motivation, of the names' motive. The motives are "Woden's day" (a calque from *Mercurii dies*), "mid-week (day)" (from Ecclesiastical Latin and/or Ecclesiastical Greek—with a polycasual explanation concerning its origin), "[day] after Tuesday" (which reflects the attempt to avoid the name of the heathen God *Woden*). In addition, light is shed on a few unclear cases as well: (1) Old Frisian *Wērendei* seems to include the tribal name *Wernas*; (2) dialectal Dutch *wonseldach* may have been influenced by other day-names including the morph *-el-*; (3) Modern Low German dialectal and Dutch dialectal forms with initial *g-* may be founded on a Latinized scribal habit; (4) the interpretation of Southern German *guotentag* as "good Wednesday" is rejected on phonetic and prosodic grounds; (5) the Modern English forms, all of which show *-e-*, and dialectal Dutch *waansdei* seem to encompass the verbal stem *wēd-* 'to be mad, to rage' (some English forms may also have been influenced by the verb *wendan* 'to turn'), and the same seems true for Du.dial. *weunsdag*. From a theoretical viewpoint, the article underlines the importance of regarding secondary, which are the product of a new iconym, as a true type of onomasiological change, as these may reflect human thinking and cultural conditions and are not only the result of phonetic aberrations. On the other hand, it also shows that a number of etymological problems still remains to be unsolved.

1. Introduction

Whereas the year, the month and the day are objective measurements based on astronomic phenomena, the week is an arbitrary unit. It is therefore possible to carry out cross-linguistic studies only to a limited extent —especially if we investigate more ancient times. The Romans knew a nine-day week before they adopted the seven-day system from Jewish culture (the ecclesiastical system), which was combined with a planetary system. The precise origin of the seven-day week is still not entirely clear; a recent discussion is offered by Zerubavel (1985).

The weekday system and its Latin-Greek names were adopted by the Germanic tribes in the third to fifth centuries, at the southern border of the *limes* (by Alemannic tribes) and at the lower Rhine regions and were later brought further to the north up to the Scandinavian areas, too (Moser 1957: 678; Hermodsson 1969/1970: 184f.).¹ The two paths of borrowing are reflected particularly in two names: Saturday, with northern forms going back to Latin *Saturni dies* and southern forms going back to Greek, and Wednesday with northern forms originating in the Germanic *Wōdanes-dag* and southern forms originating in the Ecclesiastical Latin *media hebdomas* or the respective Greek equivalent.

A series of articles has discussed the names for the different days in the Indo-European and neighboring cultures, e.g. Greek (Thumb 1901), Roman (Gundermann 1901), Romance

¹ Kranzmayer (1929: 85) even thinks that it is possible that the first borrowings could already have happened on the Rhine in the second century.

(Meyer-Lübke 1901, Bruppacher 1948), German (Kluge 1895, Gundel 1938), Bavarian (Kranzmayer 1929, Wiesinger 1999), Celtic (Thurneysen 1901, Ó Cróinín 1981), Babylonian (Jensen 1901), Semitic (Nöldeke 1901), and other languages around the world, which adopted the seven-day system from the European culture (Brown 1989). Normally the weekdays are all treated together. This article, however, will exclusively be dedicated to Wednesday and its names in the Germanic language group. The reason for this is that some of its names, as was already shown in the preceding paragraph, show some interesting problems—linguistic-wise and extralinguistic-wise.

2. The various expressions for “Wednesday”

The standard expressions for Wednesday and the other week-day names in Germanic and other Indo-European languages are listed and commented on in Buck (1949: 1006ff.). The following sections will deal in more detail with both the standard and some dialect terms and the underlying motives of their formation. The Germanic forms will be grouped according to their iconym, as Alinei (e.g. 1997) calls it, i.e. their motive or their original semantic components. The notion of *iconym* must not be mixed up with the notion of *etymon*. The former groups OE *Wōd(e)nesdæg* and ON *Óðinsdagr* together, whereas the latter would not, since *Wōdan* and *Óðin* are different etymons. This does not mean, though, that the phonetic history will be neglected here. Just the contrary: the study of the phonetic developments will give a more profound insight in iconymic changes. In a second step, it will be asked what the cognitive basis for the selection of certain iconyms is, in other words: what the motivation for these motives is. This method does not only content itself to explaining the phonetic affiliation, but pays respect, more or less, to what the Austrian linguist Hugo Schuchardt called “la dame sémantique” at the beginning of the twentieth century. This will especially be crucial when the name of the new cultural gain (here: the seven days) is not simply adopted from the cultural community that serves as a model. The first four sections of this second chapter will deal with such questions. The last chapter will then go beyond the usual etymological and iconomastic studies. It concerns concrete forms that can be traced back to a certain etymon, but have not undergone the usual phonetic changes. As will be shown, some of these cannot be regarded simply as the result of mere irregular, deviant phonetic changes, but which reveal another, secondary iconym. In other words: they will have to be placed into the realm of what linguists call folk-etymology and (secondary) blends. Folk-etymological changes are normally not considered as onomasiological changes, since the etymon is said to stay the same. In my view, however, it is important to note that folk-etymology or the (secondary) crossing/blending of words shows that the iconym, which is essential in cross-linguistic onomasiological studies, changes. And these are processes which also need explanation.

2.1. Iconym: “Woden, name of the highest God” + “day”

MLG *Wōdensdach*²

Du. *Woensdag*³

OFris. *wōnsdei*⁴

OE *Wōd(e)nesdæg*⁵

2 De Vries 1971: 844; Falk/Torp 1960: 793.

3 De Vries 1962: 416; De Vries 1971: 844; Falk/Torp 1960: 793.

4 De Vries 1971: 844; Holthausen 1934: 403.

5 Holthausen 1934: 403

Icel. *óðinsdagur*⁶
 ON *Óðinsdagr*⁷
 OSwed. *odensdag*⁸, *opinsdagher*, *ōnsdagh*⁹
 Norw. Dan. Swed. *onsdag*¹⁰
 OFris. *Wōrnisdei*¹¹
 Du.dial. *Woenserdag*¹²; *Moensdag*¹³; *Wōngsdag*¹⁴

Motivation: Mercury was interpreted as Woden because they both share the feature of flying through the air and certain functions like the patronage for merchants and voyagers in the respective pantheons (cf. Betz 1962: 1568ff., particularly 1572f.; Hermodsson 1969/1970: 181f.; Strutynski 1975: 372 & 374f.; Eggers 1976: 137). The equation of the two gods already occurs in Tacitus' *Germania* (cf. Betz 1962: 1568ff.; Strutynski 1975: 364). The veneration of Woden is first attested in the seventh century in Southern Germany, but the god was obviously more venerated by the North Germanic tribes (cf. Betz 1962: 1568 & 1573ff.).

A number of forms cannot be the results of the regular sound processes. Nevertheless, they cannot be said to include other, new iconyms, but must be traced back to merely occasional sound changes or assimilation processes. The Old Frisian form *Wornisdei*, for instance, is the result of a frequently observed irregular change of $d > r$ in intervocalic position (cf. Hermodsson 1969/1970: 181, Miedema 1971: 43). The Dutch dialect form *Moensdag* (in the regions of Alphen, Dreumel, and Hedel) is special because of its initial. Kloeke (1936: 150) only gives the description “overgang van $w > m$,” but no explanation. It may be possible that the nasal character of the /n/ was transferred to the initial, which however kept the place of articulation. Or is it due to a paradigmatic assimilation process of the initials: $M - D - W - D > M - D - M - D$ (*maandag - dinsdag - moensdag - dondersdag*)? Another case of assimilation (triggered off by the term for Monday, again) can be suspected behind Fris.dial. *woansdei*, where the vocalism reminds one of *moandei* (cf. Miedema 1971: 44, 47f.).

As to *Woenserdag* and *Wōngsdag* Kloeke's interpretations can be shared. The first, attested in Kuinre, seems to be a hypercorrect spelling, since postvocal r is dropped in this dialect, as it is, for instance in *Zaterdag* (a good parallel!): “de r lijkt niet onverklaarbaar voor hen, die weten, hoe de r van *Zaterdag* in de mond der bewoners klinkt, of liever: niet klinkt” (Kloeke 1936: 150). For the latter Kloeke (1936: 151) asks, “analogie naar *Dingesdag*?” If we think of daynames being said in a row then assimilation processes like the one suggested occur in many languages, for instance in numerals: whilst for Indo-European we can postulate $*k^w et^w ores$ ‘four’ and $*penk^w e$ ‘five,’ the Germanic languages show retrogressive assimilation (E. *four - five*, MHG *vier - vüinv*), Latin progressive assimilation (*quattuor - quinque*); for IE $*néwn$ and $*dekm$ we have Russ. *девять* and *десять*, both with /d-/.

2.2. Iconym: “mid-week”

6 De Vries 1962: 416.

7 De Vries 1962: 416; Falk/Torp 1960: 793; Jóhannesson 1956: 1101.

8 Hellquist 1980: 548f.

9 Jóhannesson 1956: 1101.

10 De Vries 1962: 416; Falk/Torp 1960: 793.

11 Holthausen 1934: 403.

12 Kloeke 1936: 150.

13 Kloeke 1936: 150.

14 Kloeke 1936: 151.

(a) primary formations

ModHG *Mittwoch*, (Late)OHG *mittawehha*, MHG *mittewoche*¹⁵

MLG *middeweke*¹⁶

Du.dial. *Midswiek*, *Mitswîk* (only Schiermonnikoog)¹⁷

Fris. [metsvik], [məzvîk]¹⁸

Engl.dial. (Quaker English) *Mid-week*¹⁹

(b) secondary formations

MHG *miteche*, ModHG dial. *Mittag*, *Micktag*, *Mirichen*²⁰

Norw.dial. *mækedag*²¹

Before talking about the motivation of the coinage, I would briefly like to shed light on the items under (b). The form MHG *miteche* is the result of a slurred/weakened pronunciation of the original *-wehha* that is likely to have happened in other Germanic varieties as well. ModHG dial. *Mittag*, *Micktag*, Norw.dial. *mækedag* are thus only folk-etymological remotivations with a secondary attachment of the respective word for ‘day’ to the first syllable. The compound was originally a feminine noun, but in standard German as well as in most dialects the word has turned into a masculine in analogy to the other days of the week—except for a few dialects particularly in Switzerland (cf. Ott 1994: 404ff.). The development of *-tχ-* (in *mitche(n)*) > *-kt-* (*Micken*, *Micktag*) is not regular, but paralleled by other High German instances (e.g. MHG *dehein* < ModHG *kein* ‘not one’, cf. Kranzmayer 1929: 42, 48). *Mirichen* shows the frequent change of *-d-* > *-r-* in Bavarian dialects (cf. Kranzmayer 1929: 21f., 42).

Motivation of formation: Kluge/Seebold lacks an explanation in the case of the ModHG form and its cognates and merely describes that the expression “Woden’s day” was not borrowed the same way that most other names for the days were; the originally Jewish-Christian expression “middle of the week,” first attested as *mittewehha* in Notker (1022), was favored instead—according to Kluge/Seebold a loan translation from Greek to Mediaeval Latin to German:

“Bei der Übernahme der antiken Wochentagsnamen wurde der Tag des Jupiter oder in der germanischen Übertragung der Tag des Wotan [...] weithin vermieden zugunsten der ursprünglich jüdisch-christlichen Bezeichnung ‘Mitte der Woche’. So ml. *media hebdomas* nach griechischem Vorbild, und danach die deutschen Formen” (Kluge/Seebold 1995: 563).

What might be the explanation for this state, why does the name for Wednesday show a name that obviously belongs to a numeral naming system, but not the other day-names? And why should we depart from a mediaeval Latin or Greek form although such forms are not recorded in Latin nor Greek texts (cf. Bruppacher 1948: 131f.)? But some corrections and specifications are to be inserted here. First of all, other signs of a numeral system can be found in Germanic dialects too, though sometimes only rudimentary. In Modern Icelandic Tuesday and Thursday are *þriðjudagur*, the “third day,” and *fimmtudagur*, the “fifth day,”

15 Kluge/Seebold 1995: 563; Pfeiffer 1993: II,880; Ott 1994: 404ff.

16 Kluge/Seebold 1995: 563.

17 Kloeke 1936: 150.

18 Miedema 1971: 40.

19 Schröpfer 1979ff.: 470, 478.

20 Kranzmayer 1929: 41ff., 46; Ott 1994: 404ff.

21 Hellquist 1980: 548f.; cf. a. Seip 1957: 614. The form is a borrowing from German missionaries (cf. Frings/Nießen 1927: 302).

respectively. (The names for Sunday and Monday clearly go back to the planetary system. Friday is *föstudagur*, the “fastday,” and Saturday is *laugardagur*, “washday,” and the same iconym is born in the Old Icelandic synonym *þváttdagur*). As to German, the vast spread of a numeral term—*Mittwoch*—is unique; yet it should be underlined that some Bavarian dialects widely use the lexical type *Pfinztag* for ‘Thursday,’ surely a calque from Mediaeval Greek meaning ‘fifth day.’ A look across the borders of the Germanic dialects shows us that, albeit not recorded in Latin, a compound *media hebdomas* has to be reconstructed for some Rhaeto-Romance, Central Ladin, Corsican, Tuscan, Vegliotic, and Sardinian dialects (cf. Bruppacher 1948: 128, 133f.). For Greek, too, a name encompassing the morpheme for ‘mid, middle’ can be assumed from the fact that the Slavic languages as well as Hungarian have the lexical type *srěda* (originally ‘middle’), OCSl *srěda*. That this is a calque, and not an original formation, can be seen from the fact that the Slavic week starts on Monday, not on Sunday (cf. OCSl *vŭtorŭnikŭ* ‘the second = Tuesday [!],’ *čtvrŭtŭkŭ* ‘the fourth = Thursday [!],’ *pentŭkŭ* ‘the fifth = Friday [!]’). In such a 7-day-system not Wednesday, but only Thursday can be imagined as the middle day of a week (cf. Kranzmayer 1929: 76ff., Bruppacher 1948: 131).

As the existence of a coinage “mid-week” can thus be postulated in Cisalpine and Appenninic Romance dialects as well as in Ecclesiastical Greek, Bruppacher (1948: 132f.) rightly asks why such a compound was coined at all, since the common folk had *Mercurii dies* and the church *feria quarta*. Bruppacher proposes the hypothesis that a strong ecclesiastical personality feeling the unpopularity of *feria quarta* might have sought an alternative anti-heathen lexeme for the day of the capture of Christ; since the folk fancied the word *hebdomas* (which once had a much larger distribution, cf. Old Portuguese *doma* ‘week,’ Old Catalan *domeser* ‘weekly,’ Old French *domas* ‘weekly’), the construction *media hebdomas* seemed a good choice. Moreover, the reader shall be reminded again that the term might also have been incited by a Greek term. The problem of Bruppacher’s hypothesis, however, is that it lacks historical evidence. The peculiar distribution of *media hebdomas* may also suggest that *media hebdomas* even belongs to a very old layer.

Although the initial motivation for a coinage of the type “mid-week” remains beyond our knowledge, we now have to deal with the question why and how this formation was adopted in the neighboring Germanic dialects. Several hypotheses have been published on this matter:

1. Frings/Nießen (1927: 302) view the upcoming of *Mittwoch* together with the formation of *Samstag* ‘Saturday:’ according to them the areas of conquest and colonization at the Upper Rhine and south of the Danube altered the names of the days at the turning points of the week, viz. at the middle and at the end, adopting some form of Ecclesiastical Latin *media hebdomas* ‘mid-week’ and Ecclesiastical Greek *sámbaton* (σάμβατον). But why this should be he does not explain. Nor does he prove that there really ever was an alteration. Even today there has been brought no evidence that the southern regions ever knew a type *Wodenstag* (or *Satertag*).
2. Of course, it can easily be guessed that the name of the Germanic supreme god was avoided in the course of Christianization (e.g. Hermodsson 1969/1970: 185f.). This hypothesis is maybe the oldest explanation and has lately also been promoted by Bammesberger (1999: 5), who briefly comments that the Christian missionaries “took every means to push back the main god of the heathen pantheon.”

3. This view is not shared by Kluge though. Kluge (1895: 94) does not believe in the substitution of *Woden* because of its position in the Germanic pantheon, since in the Old High German baptismal pledge people had to renounce Woden, Tyr and Donar, and nevertheless Tuesday and Thursday have kept their heathen names, the Saxons have even kept the heathen name for Wednesday:

“Kaum dürfen wir glauben, daß die Missionare unsern alten Hauptgott Wôdan beseitigen wollten [...] Im altsächs. Taufgelöbniß mußten unsere Altvordern dem *Thuner endi Wôden endi Saxnôt* abschwören, aber trotzdem hat der Donnerstag seinen heidnischen Namen bewahrt, und so wird die Vermutung wohl nicht statthaft sein, daß man mit der Benennung *mittwoch* der Erinnerung an *Wôdan* hat vorbeugen wollen [...] das Christentum hat an dem Namen auf großen Gebiet keinen Anstoß genommen: obwohl der alte Sachse mit und in der Taufe dem Wôdan abschwören mußte, hielt sich der Name *Wôdanstag*.”

Bammesberger does not really delve into a discussion on the motivation for *Mittwoch*, but Kluge’s thoughts do not seem to be a good counter-argument to me. The Saxon situation only shows that the “replacement” was not necessary, the Southern situation rather confirms Bammesberger’s view: only Woden could not be dedicated a day because he was the highest Germanic god.

4. Another hypothesis was established by Betz (1962: 1571f.). He cites an extract by Tacitus in which he describes a struggle between devotees of Woden and devotees of Tyr, who agreed on making sacrifices for the respective god of the counterparty. The latter, the Hermundurs, won. This seems a quite plausible explanation.

5. Strutynski (1975: 379f.) suggests some sort of polycasual development:

“First, an attested ‘mid-week day’ in Greek and Roman tradition could have been part of the hebdomadary transmission to Central and Northern Europe. Second, evidence suggests that in these areas Tyr and Wodan were, as far as their followers were concerned, rivals for supreme power rather than just sovereigns. [...] Finally, there is again the possibility of Catholic influence effecting the change from a hypothetical *Wodnesday to ‘Mittwoch’, for the new religion could tolerate no competition from another sovereign god who had also survived, in a manner of speaking, the oldest of sacrifice off, and to, himself by hanging from a tree!”

6. To Strutynski’s points I would like to add that the “mid-week” formation was approaching the High German tribes from two sides: (1) from the Alps and (2) from the Gothic-Greek east. Actually, Kranzmayer (1929: 79f.) thinks that *Mittwoch* must be due to Greek rather than Romance influence, since all the other prototypical Bavarian names are also of Gothic-Greek origin: *Ergetag* ‘Tuesday’ < Go.-Gk. **arjō-* ‘[day of] the Greek god Ares;’ *Pfinztag* ‘Thursday’ < Go. **pinta-* < Gk. πεμπτη ‘five;’ *pheri(n)tag* < Go. **pareinsdags/paraskaiwē* < Gk. παρασκευή ‘day of preparation.’ Two objections may be raised against Kranzmayer’s argumentation though: (1) *Ergetag*, *Pfinztag* and *Pherintag* differ from *Mittwoch* in so far as the former are loan-words, whereas the latter is only calqued; (2) the vast supraregional victory of *Mittwoch* can only have been possible due to the influx of the construction from two sides.

7. Last but not least, I would like to point an interesting observation that Brown made in his study of day-names in 148 languages around the world. Based on an argumentation of more salient and less salient days, Brown (1989: 542) has found out that “[m]oving through the week from Sunday to Saturday the number of loanwords steadily drops until Wednesday, following which it steadily increases again. [...] Wednesday shows the most innovated terms, Saturday the fewest.” Brown (1989: 543) further comments on the five weekdays:

“terms innovated during an initial phase of contact are subsequently replaced by loanwords in an order whereby a native term for Monday will be the first innovated weekday label to be replaced by a loan, a native term for Friday will be the second, and so on, with a native term for Wednesday being last to be replaced by a loan. This interpretation accords with evidence discussed above suggesting that in early contact situations languages typically innovate terms for introduced items and only later, when bilingualism develops, replace such labels with loanwords.”

In sum: since not one prominent cause for the formation seems to suggest itself, a polycasual hypothesis of the aforementioned aspects is most likely to be favored.

2.3. Iconym: “mid-week day”

ModIcel. *miðvigudagur*²²

Motivation: cf. 2.2.

2.4. Iconym: “[day] after Tuesday”

- (a) ModHG dial. *Afterdienstag*²³ (*after* + *Dienstag*, which shows the god-name *Thingsus*,²⁴)
 (b) ModHG dial. (Bavaria) *Afterertag*²⁵ (*after* + *Ertag*, a Bavarian synonym for ‘Tuesday’²⁶)

Motivation: The formation is paralleled by the German dialectal word-types *Aftermontag* for ‘Tuesday’ and *Aftermittwoch* for ‘Thursday’ (Kranzmayer 1929: 40). A reason why exactly these week-day names show these “evasive forms” is not offered by Kranzmayer, but I would like to suggest the following. Whilst *Sonntag* “sun-day” and *Montag* “moon-day” were not really associated with gods, but rather with planets, this does not hold true for the three days following them. Therefore, the need to find non-heathen terms was only given in these. As to *Freitag* (OHG *frīatag*, MHG *vrītac*) the need was not as great either, since we may imagine an early folk-etymological association with the adjective *frei* ‘free’ (OHG *frī*, weak feminine form *frīa*, MHG *vrī*)

2.5. Unclear cases and cases worth discussing

2.5.1. OFris. *Wērnisdei*²⁷, *Wērendei*²⁸

Wērendei seems to comprehend the tribal morpheme *Wēren-* which also occurs in Germanic proper names (cf. G. *Wern(h)er*²⁹) and is, according to Holthausen (1934: 389, 381), related to the Germanic tribal name of the *Wernas* or *Wærnas*. In addition, this type may have been promoted by the Old Frisian verb *wera* ‘to defend, to fight against.’ *Wernas* could then also be the cause for *Wērnisdei*, if this form is not just due to an umlaut (cf. 2.1.).

22 Hellquist 1980: 548f.

23 Kranzmayer 1929: 40; Kluge 1895: 94f.

24 This is a co-name of the god *Mercury*, instead of *Tiw*, which forms the first part in *Tuesday*.

25 Kranzmayer 1929: 40.

26 Instead of *Dienstag* some Bavarian dialects have *Ertag*, which is most probably a borrowing from Gothic which includes the Greek godname *Ares* (and at the same time the name of the most important Bavarian missionary, *Arius*).

27 Holthausen 1934: 403; De Vries 1962: 416.

28 Holthausen 1934: 403; De Vries 1962: 416.

29 For the explanation of the name *Werner*, cf., e.g., Seibicke (1977: 328).

2.5.2. Du.dial. *wonseldach*³⁰

The insertion of *-el-* is not purely phonetic either, but what could have triggered off this form? I will attempt to establish one hypothesis. If we ask ourselves which Wednesday is the most salient one in the annual circle, a good candidate will be Ash Wednesday. In Modern Dutch this day is called *aschwoensdach*. Interestingly, the *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek* also lists the variant *aschelwoensdach* (MNW IX: 2745). In addition, the MNW (IX: 2735) also lists the items *Woedelmaendach* ‘Monday after Epiphany’ and *werkelday* ‘workday’. These forms may have motivated a morphonetic variant *woenseldach*.

2.5.3. ModLG dial. *Gudensdag*, Du.dial. *goensdag*³¹

The type *gudensdag* is worth discussing because of its initial. The eastern and southern borderline of LowG.dial. *Gudensdag* is constituted by a line running from the southern rim of the Rothaar mountains against the southern rim of the Teutoburg Forest and then down the River Weser, i.e. the old ecclesiastical province of Cologne, with a few records outside this area, which can be interpreted as borrowings³². There are also variants with <J->³³. Furthermore, two other forms can be detected: *chönsdach* (rarely)³⁴, *husdach* (rarely)³⁵, which may be considered folk-etymological remotivations. Du.dial. *goensdag* is found in East Flemish, Limburgish, Gelderlandish³⁶. Frings/Nießen (1927: 304) regard the initial *g-* as learned/Romanized, which shall later become the popular variant. This view is adopted by De Vries (1962: 416). Frings/Nießen point at the attested forms *gvalterus* (Trier 1172) and *galterus* (Mosel 1183) for the name *Walter*, the Langobard form *gwodan* and allude to the transmission of *Paulus Diaconus*, where *g-*, *gw-* and *w-* exist side by side. The center of expansion, according to them, was Cologne. The *w/g*-isogloss runs from the southwest to the northeast, parallel to the coast, crossover the Netherlands (cf. Frings/Nießen 1927: 304 for a detailed description). Sturmfels/Bischof (1961: 93) illustrate the historical alternation between <G> and <W> or <V> in three Middle and Low German toponyms: *Godesberg*, *Guthmannshausen*, and *Gutenswegen*. To my knowledge, no better explanation has been found so far. Frings/Nießen (1927: 304 ann. 1) also state that an influence from the respective words for “good” is possible. This seems less convincing. The Dutch form *goensdag* also reminds one of the Dutch family-name *van Goens*, which seems to go back to a toponym as well (cf. Ebeling 1993: 115). But the further connection is obscure.

2.5.4. ModHG dial. (Switzerland, Swabia) *guotentag*, *gütemtag*

Hermodsson (1969/1970: 183) claims that this form does not exist as a referent for Wednesday, only for Monday, but available records for both meanings are listed by Kluge (1895: 95). Kluge (1895: 91, 95) compares *guotentag* ‘Wednesday’ to *guotemtag* ‘Monday’ in South(west) German regions, first recorded in Swiss catechisms from the sixteenth century. Kluge derives it from the idiomatic expression (*der*) *guote montag* ‘the good Monday,’ attested in the works of Hans Sachs (1496-1576) and documents of the

30 Kloeke 1936: 150.

31 Kloeke 1936: 150ff.

32 Moser 1957: 827; Frings/Nießen 1927: 297ff.

33 Frings/Nießen 1927: 293.

34 Frings/Nießen 1927: 294.

35 Frings/Nießen 1927: 294.

36 De Vries 1971: 844.

same time. Kluge (1895: 91) interprets the term as a coinage by people who wanted to prolonge the weekend on Monday and compares the expression to the jocular expression *blauer Montag*, literally ‘blue [i.e. free] Monday.’ Kluge (1895: 95) proposes a similar explanation for the Alemannic *guotentag*, *guotemtag*. From this we can assume that Kluge postulated the following developments: (1) *gúotemóntag* > **gúotementag* > *gúotemtag*; (2) **gúote míttwéhha* ‘good Wednesday (“mid-week”)’ > **gúote míttich(e)* > **gúote míttag* (folk-etymological assimilation toward *-tag* ‘day’) > **gúote m(it)tag* > *guotemtag* > *guotentag*. However, as Kluge himself admits, the collocation **guote mitt(a)wéhha* is not attested (it may be suggested that the phrase, if it really existed, originally may have referred to Ash Wednesday—cf. *supra*). But, moreover, phonetic doubts may be raised against both hypotheses, too. It is hardly understandable why the unstressed *-e* in *guote* should have survived, but not *-on-* or *-it-*, which would most probably have kept a secondary stress in the further development. Although from a theoretical viewpoint a phonetic development *gúotemóntag* > **gúotemòntag* > **gúotmòntag* > **gúotmontag* > **gúotmentag* > **guotnemtag* (metathesis) > *guotemtag* (simplification) is possible, this would not fit with the unique supralocal and supraregional distribution and the chronological nearness or simultaneity with the supposed long form. Consequently, the explanation for *guotemtag* ‘Wednesday’ does not convince either so far. In addition, as already mentioned above, many Swiss dialects mostly still show feminine successors of an OHG *mitt(a)wéhha* (cf. Ott 1994: 404ff.). I cannot offer an alternative hypothesis, though.

2.5.5. ModE. *Wednesday* ['wenzd(e)ɪ]³⁷, dial.³⁸ ['wɛdnzɪ], ['wɛn˚zɪ], ['wɪnzɪ], ['wɛdnzɪ], ['wɛndɪ], ['wanzɪ]

Traditionally the particularity of the vocalism in the modern standard form *Wednesday* from OE *Wōdenes dæg* is either not taken note of or explained as going back to an Old English variant with umlaut. In the latter case, such a postulated form is then occasionally viewed together with Dutch forms showing umlaut and termed an Ingvaenism (cf., e.g. Kloeke 1936 and Miedema 1971). The problem is that there have been found no instances of a form *Wēdenes dæg* in Old English texts. Bammesberger has now been the first to revisit the phonetic problem and offer a completely new view.

According to Bammesberger (1999: 3), *Wednesday* cannot go back to a variant of *Wōden*, since “OE *Wōden* always exhibits the vowel *ō*. [...] nominal formations in *-en* of the type of *Wōden* either show *i*-umlaut or lack it.” It may be added that Old Norse, too, only has *Oðinn*, never *Øðinn*³⁹. Bammesberger therefore suggests influence from the Old English verb *wēdan* ‘to be mad, to rage,’ or, more precisely, the already very early attested present participle *wēdende*:

“it is suggested that at a stage in the transition of Old English to Middle English the divine name *Wōdnes dæg* was replaced by *wēdendes*. Originally *wēdende* may have been used attributively together with the name *Wōden* [.....] Present participle stems in *-nd-* were substantivized to a certain extent; the most obvious examples of this process are the nouns *friend* and *fiend* [.....] It is particularly worth noting that a form *wendesday* is attested for the thirteenth century. [...] the starting-point is posited as *wēdendes* (*dæg*), then we can assume that syncope led to *wēndes*; the further stages in the development were *wēndes* > *wendes* > *wendez* > *wenz* > *wenz*”

³⁷ OED s.v. *Wednesday*.

³⁸ SED No. VII.4.2. (to be found in the third part of the respective volumes)

³⁹ The OHG and the OS form do not help us here since umlaut of *o* is not yet reflected in spelling (cf. Krahe 1969: I,60).

(Bammesberger 1999: 4f.).

This interpretation is also fully convincing for most dialectal forms listed above. Bammesberger's interpretation is supported by the spelling as well, as the <d> from *wēdan* is still visible to the present day.

The interpretation does not fit equally well, however, for ['wɛdnzdɪ] and ['wɛdnzɪ] (maybe also ['wɛn°zɪ]?). These dialectal forms, which still show *-dn-*, as well as the modern spelling allow us to postulate a phonetic filiation that slightly differs from the one given by Bammesberger, namely: **wēdndes-* > **wednes-* > *wednz-* > *wenz-*.

In addition, the verb *wendan* 'to turn' may have had its share in the evolution of some of the forms, too, if we assume that the English like other speech communities saw Wednesday as the middle-day of the week, where the week coming from Sunday turns toward Sunday again. This seems true for the dialectal form ['wɛndɪ] and it seems especially true for the form *wendesdei*, attested in c. 1275. Bammesberger sees *wendesdei* in the line of the development assumed by him. According to the OED (XX: 75), this is the oldest *e*-form attested. But seeing that the next record of a form without the first *d* does not occur before c. 1425, it may be discussed whether it can really already have reached the second phonetic stage by that time or whether another word, namely *wenden*, had some impact on the shape.

Although the etymologies now seem clear, two decisive onomasiological problem still remain. (1) The lists of dialect forms in the SED show us the astonishing situation that not one single instance seems to go back to an Old English form with *-ō-* (save, perhaps, the form ['wanzdɪ]); on the other hand, the list of dialect forms in the OED show us the equally astonishing situation that there seems to be no single instance of *-ē-* in Old English. (2) If the "Christian missionaries [...] took every means to push back the main god of the heathen pantheon," as Bammesberger (1999: 5) suggests, why did they not eliminate the name at all and use a totally different construction (as in G. *Mittwoch*), since, after all, it may really be wondered whether the replacement of *Woden* by *wēdend*, which was a possible epitheton of the god, really would have erased all memory of the heathen god? One suggestion for these two problems may be offered here: The omnipresence of *-e-* in the modern dialects seem only explainable if we assume that *-e-* occurred (much) earlier in spoken language than in written language. This, however, also means that the process was started among the common folk and not initiated by the literate missionaries. The motivation for this reformation may have lain in a taboo of referring to the highest Germanic god by its real name. A "euphemistic" term may therefore have been created. Since this results at first sight basically in a different vocalization of the original word, the process reminds us a bit of the well-known example *Jehovah* in lieu of *Yahweh*, which was a revocalized coinage for the same taboo reasons.

2.5.6. Du.dial. *waansdi*⁴⁰

The Dutch dialect form *waansdi*, which is recorded for Tjummarum only, can to my knowledge not be accounted for on purely phonetic reasons. A folk-etymological reinterpretation or conscious reformation on the basis of *waan* 'delusion, madness' seems possible and would thus be similar to the evolution of *Wednesday* described above.

40 Kloeke 1936: 150.

2.5.7. Du.dial. *weunsdag*⁴¹

The umlaut in the Dutch form *Weunsdag* is historically hard to explain. Long vowels do not normally undergo *i*-mutation in Dutch (cf. Goossens 1974: 36, Vekeman/Ecke 1992: 34), unless for Eastern and Limburg regions (cf. Vekeman/Ecke 1992: 80). Kloeke (1936) is basically only interested in the geographical distribution of this type and views it, together with *Wednesday*, as the example of an Ingvaeonism. That *Wednesday* and *Weunsdag* cannot be dealt with together has already been illustrated under 2.5.5. As to the umlaut, Kloeke only says that phonetic variation is just natural in words that may go back to the fifth century at least, possibly to the third century. But it is hard to follow his thought when he says that the umlaut forms seemed to have protested against the rule that long vowels exhibit *i*-mutation in order to survive: “Juist vóór hun dood schijnen de Hollandse *eu* -vormen nog even te willen protesteren tegen de regel, da ‘in het Nederlandsch [...] lange klinkers nooit *i*-wijziging ondergaan hebben” (Kloeke 1936: 148f.). Moreover, this does not explain their formation in the beginning. The second thought, namely to see *Weunsdag* in the same light as *veugel*, *weunen*, *zeumer* and others, where *eu* may possibly be ascribed to *i*-umlaut, does not convince either.

The regular development of pre-Dutch *Wōdanesdag* or **Wōdinesdag* can only yield ODu. *wuodensdag*, MDu. *woedensdag*, ModDu. *woensdag* (cf. Goossens 1974: 37, 47, 96). In the Modern Dutch form *weunsdag* the *-eu-* can, from a phonetic viewpoint, only be explained in the following ways:

(1) ModDu. *ō* < MDu. *ō* < ODu. *ū*/ (i.e. stressed *ū* in free syllable; cf. Goossens 1974: 42f., 47) (we would have to look for a pre-Dutch root **wudin-* then);

(2) ModDu. *ō* < MDu. *ō* < ODu. *ū* before *r* + dental (cf. Goossens 1974: 42, Vekeman/Ecke 1992: 66f.) (we would have to look for a pre-Dutch root *wurd-*, *wurt-*, or *wurn-* plus *i*-umlaut, but then the loss of the consonant cluster would have to be explained);

(3) ModDu. *ō* < MDu. *ō* < ODu. *ē* (cf. Goossens 1974: 51) (we would have to look for a pre-Dutch root **we[d-* or **we[n-*).

As far as I see, however, no West-Germanic or Indo-European root seems to match with any of these three explanations. Therefore another hypothesis has to be searched for. Maybe one possible view is postulating an influence from MDu. *woeden* ‘to rage’ (MNW IX: 2735). It should be noted that in Middle Dutch *ō* is graphically represented as <o>, <oe>, <ue>, and, occasionally, <eu> (which later becomes the standard spelling for *ō*); MDu. *ō*, on the other hand, is graphically represented by <oo>, <oe>, or <oi> (cf. Vekeman/Ecke 1992: 85, Goossens 1974: 48). This means that the spelling <oe> was phonetically ambivalent. MDu. <woeden> could be read either as *wōden* (which would be the historically regular development) or as *wōden*. The MNW also lists the graphic variant <wueden>, which clearly indicates that the pronunciation *wōden* must have been current at least to some degree. The influence of the Middle Dutch verb *woeden* with *ō* on *Woedensdag* with *ō* can then be explained in the same way as OE *wēdan* ‘to rage’ influenced OE *Wōdenesdæg* (cf. 2.5.5.). It should be noted, however, that these influences took place independently and not in an Ingvaeonic *Sprachbund*.

3. Final remarks

Not all problems presented here could be solved. However, it seems important to have

⁴¹ De Vries 1962: 416; Kloeke 1936.

mentioned them in connection with some theoretical implications for diachronic onomasiology. Many of the unclear cases show secondary iconyms in their biography, sometimes by way of a process commonly called folk-etymology, i.e. remotivation based on the sounds, not on the concept. Other reformations need not have developed subconsciously, due to the lack of motivation of a form, but can also have been triggered off consciously by some sort of taboo (shown by the cases in 2.5.5. through 2.5.7.). The type of lexical replacement is then motivated by the phonetic similarity of the lexical items participating in the etymological play. At any rate, it is necessary to underline that folk-etymological processes as well as processes of the second type should be regarded as true cases of onomasiological change, since they may give insights in cultural motives and motivations.

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