

DR. WOLFGANG UTSCHIG'S BIRTHDAY GIFT
FOR RUTH AICHLMAYR NOV. 11TH 2008

DR. WOLFGANG UTSCHIGS GEBURTSTAGSGABE
FÜR RUTH AICHLMAYR
11. NOVEMBER 2008

LE DON À ANNIVERSAIRE POUR RUTH AICHLMAIR
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Ort widar orte, ecg and ord

A Phrase from the Old High German
“Hildebrandslied”
and about its Connections to Old English
and to other Germanic Heroic Poetry

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W o l f g a n g U t s c h i g

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The author of the following article wants to express his affectivity to the former colleague RUTH AICHLMAYR, an English and Geography teacher in Munic, on the one hand a typical Bavarian lady, but on the other hand an untypical one, but at any case loud and clear a Munic Kid in her speech and in her feeling and in her mind, now retired, but still strongly in action travelling round about the world in specific geographically fulfilled tours. How would it be possible to grant her a more personally seeming birthday present? Thus the author found out it to be rather well to write an article about a topic, where he is able to meet with that named girl. He cannot meet her for instance overseas in spite of being a Magister Artium of geography and having been teacher of this subject, too, because he is a wife's husband and a father of a young ex-soldier and university student, a house-owner and last not least an owner of a Mercedes-Benz car. Thus he has to take more notice of other and of expensive duties. Esteeming RUTH AICHLMAYR as an English teacher he now writes in the foreign language represented by her, although this named birthday kid last year refused to correct the author's highly interesting, but rather long and also English-written composition about the Reichsstadt Regensburg's jurists, because as a Munic Kid she thinks by far more in Wittelsbach categories and not in those ones of the Holy Roman Empire. The author thinks RUTH AICHLMAYER to not have read this booklet, not at all. She saw the sum of pages and at once she put away these papers, once for ever, because she then gave preference to leave her house to visit the Hofbräuhaus Beer Garden for there eating roast pig and drinking one or two glasses full of dark wheat beer. Therefore this year she is allowed to get only a short English-written gift. The even named meal is the typical board of a Munic Kid. But how the author could hit her spiritual interest and taste? So he thought a kind of a mental coming together would be possible on the wide field of the history of the Germanic languages. As an English teacher RUTH AICHLMAYR studied the Old English language and the author of this unimportant small birthday gift studied Old High German as a teacher of German language and literature. He did also Gothic and Old Nordic, and so he decided to write about a very highly interesting phrase he found in the mentioned Hildebrandslied and about some connections from there to Old English and to other Old Germanic po-

etry. RUTH AICHLMAYR knows the Hildebrandslied. Each older German Gymnasium's leaver knows this piece. Thus it's possible to enter now this poem once in the midst of it. A longer repetition really is not necessary.

In this named very old heroic poem a Teutonic, maybe a Gothic warrior-father gets forced to fight by lances and swords against his warrior-son, who doesn't know him, because the old one long ago left his home, his wife and his little child following his lord abroad. The son doesn't believe his father to be before him now probably on a horse and he calls this other warrior in front of him telling lies. Therefore Hildebrand decides to give a gold present to his son, but the young man refuses to take this worthy gift, golden *wundana bauga* (ae. *beags*) and he answers in following manner:

“Mit geru scal man geba infahan ort widar orte!”

Modern German:

„Mit dem Speer soll man Gaben empfangen, Spitze an Spitze!“

This message's meaning now exactly translated into modern English:

„One has to accept gifts only by taking them from the giver's weapon top across his side only by the top of one's own sharp weapon.“

It's a proverb having a special juristic meaning. But we don't know the exact one. The speaker thinks of a ceremony which would oblige him to keep peace if he takes the gold present (golden rings) by the top of his sword. From old Scandinavian poetry it's a well known custom to all them, who read such literature. But the son, Hadubrand, in this situation is forced to think of the battle starting between the two armies (OHG: *“Untar heriun tuem”*), maybe only after quite a short time. His order is to be a good example-fighter. He has the function to demonstrate a shining example for the other warriors of his tribe or nation behind him. It's possible that the result of this duel already stands for the expected battle's result. It's a kind of an ordeal. Thus he feels himself forced to decline and he injures his father by invectives. Then a furious combat is starting; both champions are heroes.

In the Old English piece “Malden” the wild Danes invade the country telling the English, they would keep peace, if they would get gold from the last ones. But the hero Byrhtnoth denies this proposal answering them:

“Us sceal ord and ecg ær geseman grim gudþlega ær we gefol sylton.”

Modern English:

*“We only may become reconciled to each other (and give gold),
if we at first had grim fighting games together by tips and edges”*
(that is to say if the Danish would be able to beat this speaker’s men).

One more an example of this discussed phrase in Beowulf V. 1549:

“wið ord and wið ecge ingang forstod.”

Look precisely! Here OE *wið* doesn’t mean „with“, because the word corresponds to OHG *widar* = „against“. This *wið* < Germanic **wi-þi* = “adverse, untoward” is related to Latin *vitium* = “defect, drawback”. Originally it has been an accusative adjective used as an adverb and lost the former having had ending like OLG *wither* similar to *north* < *norther*, because *wither* and *widar* both indicated directions, too, that is to say motion’s directions. - The last whole sentence now in modern English:

“She kept from the doorway against peak and cutter.”

Here you see the phrases OHG “*ort widar orte*” and OE “*ord and ecg*” to be very similar. The Teutonic tribes had a common Germanic poets’ language. Common, too, was the special warrior’s sarcasm, a sometimes cruel kind of humour always demonstrating the own intrepidity.

Because, so the author thinks RUTH AICHLMAYR to be rightly a little proud of having did some Old Germanic studies, that is to say Old English language exercises. Thus she has had a special kind of spiritual provenience as worthy as her substantial Munic provenience. Now her are given still Old Nordic equivalents to her: There existed the Old Icelandic proverb:

„Ógn er í oddi“

Modern English:

“The top of a sword owns a horrible magic.”

Because a sword’s top was said to have had much powerful charm for those heroes in Germanic poetry it always appears in alliterations, because these alliterations originally got thought to be full of a magic strength, too.

And in Old Danish the idiom existed:

“Mæth od æth og.”

Modern English:

“By a weapon’s top and a cutting edge” (= by use of force).

The same idiom is known from Old West Nordic (= Old Norwegian) and the author also likes to cite it here:

“Með oddi ok eggju”

And Old Frisian:

“Meth egge and meth orde”, and also:

“Mith egge ief orde.”

Now each one may see that the two formulas OHG *“ort widar orte”* and OE *“ort and ecg”* are common phrases in Germanic heroic poetry designating a soon outbreak of a fight by cold steel. They liked very much these fights, a really rather dangerous kind of sports for them. The Champions (Beowulf is one of them, too, he does also example fights or ordeals for his lord) wanted to get richly gold and worthy appreciations from their lords and finally to become very famous. They didn't want to be sportsmen, they wanted to be heroes. Then they would live after their death in a building of their chief god in the heaven, a big hall called Valhalla, together with the Valkyries, and they would have much fun with these girls drinking mead together with them and getting carnal knowledge of them, too, after having had always new and splendid fights for their chief god in the realm, which means as well a death's one and such a one of an eternal further on living and fighting until the end of the whole world. A strong and a brave man once had been able to get such a hero by paragon fights. Thus Teutonic warriors' wishes had been. The Regensburg Wallhalla is a similar, but quite a peaceful institution in a classically Greek exterior. The people inside of it (their busts and names) became inhabitants there because of their spiritual achievements for nation and mankind and because of their mental sharpness, too, which enabled them. These human beings are dead, but their names are still glorious on earth. *Sophie Scholl* was the last one who got allowed to come in there, by permission of the Bavarian parliament.

On a birthday one shall not want to talk together by *“ecg and ord”* or by *“ord against ord”* but only in friendship, especially on such a one of a Munic Kid. One may have still more festive days each summer in beautiful weather meeting RUTH AICHLMAYR in the Munic Hofbräuhaus Beer Garden and there you can dispute Germanic etymology problems with her by sharp thinking, that is to say by *“ecg and ord”* of your skull, if she wants, but often she doesn't wants what another one is wanting to consider at the moment. She often insists on her own head, with some inobservance. Then she is not interested in seeming like-minded, but always inconspicuously. The same date means the beginning of carnival and so we want some fun.

This small and unimportant article became written because the author thinks this short old Germanic study may be as well a little more interesting for RUTH AICHLMAYR as also esteeming her, too, because she had taught English language and literature and had studied also some Old English. Germanic language history is a subject connecting the both ones, the birthday kid and the author, whose birthday soon will follow, each year not taken in account by RUTH AICHLMAYR. Sincerely, he really doesn't wish to excel by ancient language knowledge, but it's his pastime to occupy his mind with such topics. It's true, he prefers still more the history of the Reichsstadt Regensburg and other historical themes, but RUTH AICHLMAYR does not like all that. That's the reason why she didn't marry a historian. But why she did not marry a geographer? Only a little is known about RUTH AICHLMAYR. Therefore it's time not to linger on but to continue these etymologies at once. The author still cites the following ones: OHG *ort*, OE *ord*, Swedish *odd* = "top, prick, point" and only German "location", < German. **uzda* = "top". There exists an Indo-European root meaning "ear, spike".- OHG *ecka*, OE *ecg* = "top, ear, instrument with a sharp cutting edge, harrow". Hereto exists an Indo-European root **ak-*, **ok-* = "sharp" as in Latin *acer* and in English *ear*, too. Therefore it may be possible, that both the two words together originally signified the same or very similar things, an alteration of words, for a strong conjuring of persons opposite to a wished behaviour, that is to say at last for forcing them to fight against challengers by cold steel. Quite originally the words *ort* *widar ort* and *ord* and *ecg* might have been a magic spell for grain ears, but today we don't understand it, because it became absolutely forgotten. Due to the grain ears one may suppose that in a very far past there existed a magic formula to enforce ears to fight against soil infertility demons by their long beards. The rest of such a sentence later got used for gauntlets which should force to take up a fight between heroes with lethal weapons.

The author wanted to communicate all that he reported here in his birthday gift for RUTH AICHLMAYR, because the Hildebrandslied now occupied him almost lifelong. It still occupies him, in spite of or because of the great sum of publications about this piece. There are always still new compositions and books about it. He has time and interest to read such scientific publications since he has retired and he wants to publish these results sprang up by the sharply operating *ecgs'* and *ords'* lobes in the brain of his skull. He hopes to amuse RUTH AICHLMAYR by all that on her birthday, which is an important day, not a fools' day, and so they should equate it not only with carnival's beginning but also with a day of some thought-provoking.

