

Greek κῦδος, Vedic *śávas-*: the roots of power and authority

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Greek κῦδος is usually thought to mean ‘glory’, and etymologically connected (though often with some hesitation) only to the Slavic *s*-stem for ‘miracle’, e.g. OCS. *čudo*. The purpose of this paper is to present a precise analysis of the semantics and formulaic behavior of κῦδος in Homer and, on that basis, to argue for a different etymology: κῦδος goes with κύριος and with the Indo-Iranian group of Sanskrit *śávas-*.

My starting point is the observation (made by Fraenkel 1927: 383, Corlu 1966: 184-186, Benveniste 1969, but otherwise broadly neglected) that κῦδος cannot possibly mean ‘glory’ in various Homeric passages. Janda (2014: 245-275) has recently argued for a basic meaning ‘Ansporn’ (and etymological connection with Skt. *cod* ‘impel’), but his interpretation of the Homeric data is in my view rather eclectic. In establishing the semantic value of κῦδος in Homeric Greek, I will make use of the concept of functional synonymy, i.e. “the use of synonyms not so much for the sake of stylistic variation as for the sake of metrical diversity” (Bakker 2005: 22-37). I will argue, in part following Corlu (l.c.), that κῦδος is a functional synonym of κράτος by pointing at their highly similar (semantically interchangeable) use in formulaic contexts. Thus, κῦδος belongs to the *Wortfeld* ‘force, power’, rather than ‘fame, glory’.

On this basis, I will explore the likelihood that κῦδος is related, within Greek, to κύριος ‘having power or authority; lord’, which is in turn evidently related to Ved. *śūra-* ‘strong; hero’. Moreover, the meaning and use of Ved. *śávas-* ‘power, superiority, predominance’ appears to remarkably similar to that of κῦδος. These comparisons work phonologically if we accept that (pre-)PIE **d* developed to **h₁* in certain positions (cf. recently Garnier 2014 on what he has termed ‘effet Kortlandt’). In the final part of my paper, I will therefore consider possible conditionings of this development.

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