

NOTE: SLOVENE *ogljje* 'CHARCOAL' AND ENGLISH *ingle* 'FIRE'

The Slovene word *ogljje* 'charcoal' belongs to a well-established family of words in Indo-European, among them Vedic Sanskrit *áṅgāram*, Modern Persian *angišt*, Old Prussian *anglis*, Lithuanian *anglis*, Russian *ugol'*, Polish *węgiel*, all with the meaning 'coal' or, more primitively, 'glowing coal,' that is to say: fire preserved in the form of hot embers that are kept alive and then rekindled by blowing on the flame. But there is another kindred word-group belonging to the British Isles that has not been connected with *ogljje* and its cognates until now.

This group is first attested in a glossary of the tenth century as Old Irish *aingel* 'light, fire,' with the explanation *solus nó grianda nó fáilid* 'light, either sunny or joyous.'¹ In Modern Irish and Scots Gaelic the word has the form *aingeal*, in Manx the form *aile*.² But from Scots Gaelic, in the early sixteenth century, English borrowed the term as *ingle* 'fire,' a word abundantly attested in the northern British dialects and in the compound *inglenook* 'the nook or corner beside the hearthfire; chimney corner.' These affinities have been noted by Alexander MacBain in his etymological dictionary of Scots Gaelic,³ but have been ignored by Slavists. The earliest attested instance of the English word is from 1508, the very beginning of the Modern English period.

The English homonym *ingle* 'catamite' is not connected.⁴

Albanian has the word *thëngjill* 'coal, glowing coal,' which Vittore Pisani sought to ascribe⁵ to an Indo-European form with initial **k-*, but which Norbert Jokl had decades earlier explained as a loanword from the South Slavic **vqgǐlǐ*.⁶

In Modern Slovene *ogljje* has narrowed its meaning to 'charcoal,' so that France Bezlaj is misleading when he glosses the Baltic and Indic cognates with 'ogljje.'⁷ The Contemporary Slovene equivalent of 'coal' is, rather, *premog*. The wide distribution of the Indo-European etymon, from Vedic Sanskrit to Modern Irish, points to an origin in distant antiquity, when man had not as yet learned to make fire, but could only keep it alive in the form of glowing embers for future use. At the same time, for reasons that I shall set forth in detail elsewhere, I would deny any connection between this word and Slovene *ògenj*, Lithuanian *ugnìs* and Latin *ignis* 'fire,' which I ascribe to a later stage of prehistory.

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NOTES

1. Cormac's Glossary, *Sanas Cormaic*, ed. Kuno Meyer in *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts* 4 (1912) 8; Joseph Vendryès, *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien*, A (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies/ Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1959) A-36.
2. Heinrich Wagner, "Zum Manx-Wort für Feuer," *Lexis* 3 (1952) 133-34.
3. Alexander MacBain, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language*, 2nd ed. (Stirling: Eneas Mackay, 1911) 8-9.
4. The earliest quotation of *ingle* in this meaning is from Thomas Nashe's *Strange News* of 1592; another occurs in Ben Jonson's *Epicene* of 1609. Jonson employs the variant *ningle* in *The Case Is Altered* of 1598. Both forms were also used as verbs, as is attested in John Florio's Italian-English Dictionary *A Worlde of Wordes* of 1598, and in Giovanni Torriano's 1659 revision of Florio entitled *A Dictionary Italian and English*. Although the origin of this word is unknown, J.Z. Eglinton has suggested to me that the source is the homonym *aingeal* in Irish

and Scots Gaelic with the meaning 'angel', from Medieval Latin *angelus*, whence also Lithuanian *ángelas* and Slovene *angel*. The borrowing late in the Elizabethan era may have been facilitated by the earlier adaptation of *aingeal* to *ingle* 'fire', and the erotic connotations of the homonym gave *inglenook* itself the slang meaning 'female pudendum.'

5. Vittore Pisani, *Miscellanea Giovanni Galbiati III* [= *Fontes Ambrosiani XXVII*] (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli editore, 1951) 33.
6. Norbert Jokl, "Studien zur albanesischen Etymologie und Wortbildung," *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philosophisch-historische Klasse* 168.1 (1911) 105-06.
7. France Bezlaj, *Etimološki slovar slovenskega jezika II K-O* (Ljubljana: SAZU, 1982) 243-44.