

***alhs** Runic: 𐌱 𐌿 𐌽 𐌶 Pronunciation: /'alxs/

noun · masculine · consonant stem

Meanings

1. temple, sanctuary; sacred enclosure or place
2. shelter, protected place; residence, settlement

Etymology

Probably from Proto-Indo-European **h₂lek-*, with the semantic development ‘protected, enclosed place’ > ‘sacred enclosure, sanctuary’. Cognate with Lithuanian *al̃kas* and Latvian *elks*, together pointing to a Baltic-Germanic **alk-* denoting a sacred or protected place. Its deeper origin is disputed. The same root is reflected in Ancient Greek ἀλέξω (*aléxō*), ἀλή (*alḗ*), and Sanskrit रक्षति (*rákṣati*) (Mallory & Adams 1997: 458; Pokorny 1959: 32; Šorgo 2020: 432). Mallory and Adams specifically interpret the Germanic ‘temple’ word as originally a ‘protected place’, connecting the Germanic and Baltic sacred-place terms with the PIE verb ‘protect’.

Kroonen (2013: s.v. **alh-*) instead reconstructs a non-Indo-European **alk-* and regards the connection with **h₂lek-* as arbitrary. Because the word is confined essentially to Baltic and Germanic and shows archaic root-noun inflection in Germanic, he suggests that it may have been borrowed independently into both branches from a local European substrate. Ringe (2017: 116) likewise avoids assigning the noun itself directly to PIE, deriving Proto-Germanic **alh-* from **post-PIE alk-* (‘sacred place’) and comparing Lithuanian *al̃kas*. Derksen (2015: 49–50, s.v. *alkas*) similarly regards substrate origin as possible for the Baltic forms. Most recently, however, Šorgo (2020: 432) argues that neither the limited Baltic-Germanic distribution nor the root inflection requires substrate origin. He judges derivation from **h₂lek-* as preferable.

Declension

Case	Singular	Plural
Nom.	alhs	alhiz
Acc.	alhƿ	alhunz
Gen.	alhiz	alhō
Dat.	alhi	alhumaz
Inst.	alhē	alhumiz
Voc.	alh	alhiz

Descendants

***alh** (Proto-West Germanic)

 ***al** (Old Dutch)

ealh, alh, alhn (Old English)

alah (Old High German)

alah (Old Saxon)

𐌱𐌿𐌺 (**alh**), 𐌱𐌿𐌺 (**alh**) (Proto-Norse)

𐌵𐌳𐌹𐍃 (**alhs**) (Gothic)

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