

Innovations and archaisms in Alanic loanwords in Hungarian
9.–10.2.2023, LingAW-CH-23, University of Zürich
Sampsa Holopainen, sampsa.petteri.holopainen@univie.ac.at
University of Vienna

Handout: Examples of possible “Iron” loans

Hu *i* or **i* ← Iron *i* (< Proto-Ossetic **ē* < Ir **ai*)?

Hungarian *fizet*, dial. *füzet* ‘to pay’ < Proto-Hungarian **fidε-* ← (?) Alanic **fid-*, Ossetic *fidyn* / *fedun* ‘to pay’

Sköld 1925, 55; Lushnikova 1990, 108, 204; Joki 1973, 261; Cheung 2002, 189; Christol 2019, 24; Róna-Tas & Berta 2011, 1332

Hungarian *i* seems to point to **i* in the donor language (an Alanic donor form with **i* is reconstructed by Christol 2019 and Róna-Tas & Berta 2011). However, Sköld (1925, 55) assumed a later change **e* > *i* in Hungarian but this would be irregular. On the other hand, the old (Pre-Hungarian) **i* regularly becomes *ë* (some Turkic loans show this development), so the retained *i* in this word is somewhat problematic. Hu dial. *ü* is probably secondary.

Note also that the etymology of the Ossetic word *fid-*, *fed-* is not quite clear; however, the regular background of *i* / *e* would be **ē* < **ai*. See Cheung (2002, 189) and Dragoni (2022, 156 f., 157 footnote 299) for discussion of the Ossetic etymology and its relationship to Khotanese *pīha-* ‘to pay’.

Hungarian *híd* (: *hida-*) ‘bridge’ < Proto-Hungarian **xīda* ← Alanic **xid* (?) < **xēd*, Ossetic *xid*, *xed* ‘bridge’ < Proto-Indo-Iranian **saitu* ‘bridge’

(Lushnikova 1990, 210; Joki 1973, 263; EWUng, 556 f.; Cheung 2002, 248; Christol 2019, 25; Róna-Tas & Berta 2011, 1332)

Proto-Hu **j* is usually explained by phonotactics (no front vowels were possible after **x-* in Proto-Hungarian). Also **e*, **ē* would have been impossible: one might also argue that this is the reason for the substitution **j* ← **ē* (so **xīda* ← **xēd*).

Hungarian *zsineg*, dial. *sineg* ‘cord, string’ < Proto-Hungarian **šinεg(ε)* ← (?) Alanic **šinag*, Ossetic *sinag* / *sujnag* ‘string, cord, thin rope’

(Sköld 1925, 40; Lushnikova 1990, 109, 257 f.; EWUng 1678; Helimski 2002, 109; Katz 2003, 307; Róna-Tas & Berta 2011, 1494)

The etymology is not completely certain due to the obscure background of the Ossetic word. Róna-Tas & Berta (2011) note that because *zsineg* is first attested in the 17th c., the idea of an old loan is dubious; however, the idea that *zsineg* is from *sing* due to lexical split is ad hoc (criticized by Katz 2003: 307). Influence from the unrelated *zsinor* has been suggested and this cannot be ruled out.

Hu *ü* ~ *ű* ← Iron *u* (< Proto-Ossetic **ō* < Ir **au*)?

Hungarian *bűz* ‘smell’ < Proto-Hungarian **bүүδ(V)* ← Alanic (?) **budæ* < **bōdæ*, Proto-Iranian **bauda-* ‘smell’ > Ossetic *bud* / *bodæ*

(Sköld 1925, 17–18; Bielmeyer 1977, 131; Lushnikova 1990, 194; EWUng 155; Kulonen 1993, 109; Róna-Tas & Berta 2011, 1331)

Hu *b* points to late loan, so Alanic would be the most plausible donor. Cheung (2013) suggests a possible Parthian origin (*bwd*) but no good parallels to Parthian loans are known. However, since there is some evidence of Hu *ü* from Iranian **a* next to labials, it cannot be ruled out that this could be an earlier loan (*füst* ‘smoke’ ← Ir **pazda-*, Helimski 2002, 109).

Hu *tölg* ‘oak’ ← Alanic **tulʒæ*, cf. Ossetic *tulʒ* / *tolʒæ*

(TESz III: 959; EWUng: 1540–1541; Róna-Tas & Berta 2011, 1336)

The Iranian origin of the Ossetic word is disputed (see Cheung 2002, 232; Róna-Tas & Berta 2011, 1336) but Proto-Ossetic **tōlʒæ* would be the regular predecessor of *tulʒ* / *tolʒæ*. The Old Hungarian forms with /*u*/ (see EWUng) probably point to earlier *ü*, so an Iron-type source would be a plausible solution.

Hu *o* < **u* ← Iron *u* (< Proto-Ossetic **ō* < Ir **au*)?

Hu *tol* ‘pull’ < Proto-Hungarian **tulV-* ← ?Alanic, Oss *tulyn* / *tolun* ‘drive, roll’

(Abaev 1965: 520)

The etymology is suggested by Abaev (1965) but not discussed in the recent presentations of Alanic-Hungarian contacts, but formally the etymology is

unproblematic. Hungarian *o* (< *u*) could again reflect Alanic (Iron) *u*. There are no other compelling etymologies for Hu *tol* (EWUng s.v. *tol*).

Other possible “Iron” features

Hungarian *ezüst* ‘silver’ < Proto-Hungarian **ezüšt(V)* ← Alanic **ævzeštæ*, Ossetic *ævzist* / *ævzeštæ* ‘silver’

(Sköld 1925, 20; Lushnikova 1990, 110, 186–188; Viredaz 2017, 36–41; EWUng, 346; Katz 2003, 305; Róna-Tas & Berta 2011, 1331–1332; Christol 2019, 27–28)

Katz (2003: 305) argues that the Hungarian word points to an Iron like donor with **ī* in the second syllable. However, this is not at all clear, as Hungarian *ü* does not clearly point to earlier **i*. It is possible that the donor was Digor-like **æzvestæ*, and the labial *ü* is due to labializing influence of **v*.

Hungarian *ravasz* ‘cunning; arch. fox’ < ? Proto-Hungarian **rovās* ← ? Alanic **robās*, Ossetic *ruvas*, *rubas* / *robās* < Iir **Hraupāca-*

(Róna-Tas 2011: 287, 1335; Róna-Tas 2017: 69; Palmér et al. 2019: 248)

Contrary to earlier views (see EWUng 1235–1236), Hu *ravasz* is not a reflex of PU **repāci* but a separate loan from Iranian, probably from Alanic. Róna-Tas & Berta (2011) reconstruct Alanic **rowasa*, but Iron *v* < *b* is a late development (Cheung 2002). The Hungarian vocalism would be difficult to explain from Iron *u*. However, the possibility of an earlier Iranian loan cannot be ruled out.

Hungarian *részeg* ‘drunk’ < Proto-Hungarian **rēsege* or **rēsege* ← Alanic **rāsug*, Oss *rasyg* / *rasug* ‘drunk’ < Proto-Iranian **frāsūka-* ‘swelled’

(Sköld 1925, 34; Joki 1973, 309; Lushnikova 1990, 109, 249; EWUng, 1257; Viredaz 2017, 32–36; Helimski 2002, 109; Róna-Tas & Berta 2011, 1338; Christol 2019, 23)

Sköld argued that this loan points to Iron donor, but reason for this remains unclear; the origin of Hu *ē* in the second syllable is not quite clear, but it does not point clearly to neither Iron *y* (< *u*) nor more archaic *u*. More research on the vowels in non-initial syllables of Alanic loans in general is needed.

Hu *szédër* ‘blackberry’ ← ? Alanic **zedyr*, Ossetic *zedyr* / *zeduræ*

(Abaev 1965; Helimski 2002; Róna-Tas & Berta 2011; Holopainen 2020)

Hungarian *ē* could point to *e* but the etymology is not quite certain. The word can also be a *Wanderwort* as assumed by Helimski (2002), as the Ossetic word does not have an Iranian etymology, and the relations between Iron and Digor are irregular, but the Ossetic origin would be the most probable source for Hungarian, rather than borrowing from some “Caucasian” language, as parallels of “Caucasian” loans are not known (Holopainen 2020).

Selected references

Абаев, Васили Иванович. 1958–1989. Историко-этимологический словарь осетинского языка I–V (Москва – Ленинград 1958–1989).

Абаев, Васили Иванович. 1965. К алано-венгерским лексическим связям. In: *Europa et Hungaria: Congressus Ethnographicus in Hungaria*, ed. Gyula Ortutay & Tibor Bodrogi (Budapest 1965), 517–537.

Bielmeier, Roland. 1977. *Historische Untersuchungen zum Erb- und Lehnwortschatzanteil im ossetischen Grundwortschatz* (Frankfurt am Main – Bern – Las Vegas 1977).

Cheung, Johnny. 2002. *Studies in the historical development of the Ossetic vocalism* (Wiesbaden 2022).

Cheung, Johnny. 2013. Ossetic language II. Ossetic loanwords in Hungarian. In: *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/ossetic-ii>

Christol, Alain. 2019. Ossète et hongrois: les emprunts scythiques. In: *Nartamongæ XIV* (2019), 16–31.

Dragoni, Federico. 2022. *Watañi lāntam: Khotanese and Tumshuqese loanwords in Tocharian*. (Diss., Univ. Leiden 2022).

EWUng = Loránd Benkő, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Ungarischen Sprache* (Budapest 1992–1997).

Helimski, Eugene. 2002. Zu den iranischen Lehnwörtern im Ungarischen. In: *Finno-Ugrians and Indo-Europeans. Linguistic and literary contacts*, ed. Rogier Blokland & Cornelius Hasselblatt (Maastricht 2002), 105–111.

Holopainen, Sampsa. 2020. Hungarian *szédër*, Ossetic *zedyr* ‘blackberry’ and some other berry names. In *Sampsa Holopainen, Juha Kuokkala, Janne Saarikivi & Susanna Virtanen* (eds.), *Ёмас сымың нёкве вёртур ётпост самың патум* (Helsinki 2020), 103–111.

Joki, Aulis J. 1973. *Uralier und Indogermaner* (Helsinki 1973).

- Kálmán, Béla. 1972- Béla Kálmán, Hungarian historical phonology. In: The Hungarian language, ed. Loránd Benkő & Samu Imre (The Hague – Paris 1972), 49–83.
- Katz, Hartmut. 2003. Studien zu den älteren indoiranischen Lehnwörtern in den uralischen Sprachen (Heidelberg 2003).
- Kim, Ronald. 2022. The higher numerals in Ossetic. In: *Studia Linguistica Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis* 139 (2022), 71–89.
- Kümmel, Martin. 2016. Einführung ins Ostmitteliranische. https://www.academia.edu/30130317/Einf%C3%BChrung_ins_Ostmitteliranische_Introduction_to_Eastern_Middle_Iranian
- Ligeti, Lajos. 1986. A magyar nyelv török kapcsolatai a honfoglalás előtt és az Árpád-korban (Budapest 1986).
- Lubotsky, Alexander. 2015. Alanic marginal notes in a Greek liturgical manuscript (Wien 2015).
- Lushnikova, Alla. 1990. Стратификация Ирано-Уральских языковых контактов (Diss., Univ. Moscow 1990).
- Munkácsi, Bernát. 1901. Árja és kaukázusi elemek a finn-magyar nyelvekben (Budapest 1901).
- Palmér, Axel et al. 2021. Proto-Indo-European ‘fox’ and the reconstruction of an athematic k-stem. *Indo-European Linguistics* 9, 235–263.
- Palunčić, Filip. 2013. On Ossetic metathesis. In: *Studia Iranica* 42 (2013), 23–41.
- Rasmussen, Jens Elmegård. 1989. Studien zur Morphophonemik der indogermanischen Grundsprache (IBS 55; Innsbruck 1989).
- Róna-Tas, András & Berta, Árpád. 2011. West Old Turkic. Turkic loanwords in Hungarian (Wiesbaden 2011).
- Róna-Tas, András. 2017. Vítás magyar etimológiák. Válasz Honti Lászlónak. – *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények* 113: 37–84.
- Schmidt, Gustav. 1927. Zur Frage der ossetisch-ungarischen Lehnwörter. In: *Finnisch-Ugrische Forschungen Anzeiger* 18 (1927), 84–113.
- Sköld, Hannes. 1925. Die ossetischen Lehnwörter in Ungarischen (Lund – Leipzig 1925).
- Sköld, Hannes. 1928. Ungarisch und tagaurisch. In: *Finnisch Ugrische Forschungen Anzeiger* 19 (1928), 1–12.
- TESz = Loránd Benkő, A magyar nyelv történeti etimológiai szótára I–IV (Budapest 1967–1992).
- Viredaz, Rémy. 2017. Trois étymologies ossètes: rasyg, ævzist, ærx^oy. In: *Studia Iranica* 46: 31–48.