

On the development of vowels in the Ugric languages and the problem of Proto-Ugric

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Proto-Ugric changes suggested by Sammallahti (1988: 500–501) and their evaluation

PU *ax > PFU > *oo > PUg *a: PU **naxli*- 'lick' > PFU **nooli*- > PUg **nalĩ*-

PU *äx > PFU *ee > PUg *ä: PU **näxli*- 'swallow' > PFU **neeli*- > PUg **nälĩ*-

PU *ix > PFU *i̯ > Pug *j: PU **nixli* 'arrow' > PFU > **nijli* > PUg **njli*

The idea that Proto-Uralic sequences of *a/ä/j and *x yielded long vowels in the Proto-Finno-Ugric stage has been convincingly refuted by Aikio (2012). Proto-Ugric *a and *ä as reconstructed by Sammallahti (1988) reflect Proto-Uralic *a and *ä as such, so there are no innovations here, retentions only.

PU *e > PUg *i (-i-stems): PU **pele*- > PUg **pilĩ*- 'fear', PU/PFU **neri* > PUg **niri* 'twig'

No evidence for *i in Hungarian (Hu *é* in *fél* 'fear' reflects PU *e in both -i and ä-stems, cf. **pesä* > *fészek* 'nest'). The change *e > *i might have happened in Proto-Ob-Ugric, but this is also far from certain.

PU *i > PUg *ĩ: > PU **nimi* > PUg **nĩmi* 'name', PU/PFU **miñä* > PUg **mĩñä* 'daughter in law'

This is an unnecessary intermediary; no common traces in the developments of PU *i in Ugric. *i > *ä is possibly a common change in Khanty and Mansi (Proto-Ob-Ugric), but further research is needed. The change *i > *ë* [e] late in Hungarian (see Abáffy 2003), visible in relatively late loans (Hu *betű* ← Turkic **bitiy* 'letter'); also conditioned changes like PU *wi- > Hu *ö*- (likewise visible in loans, Hu *özvegy* 'widow' ← Alanic **widæz*) show that *i was intact in Proto-Hungarian.

Some cases reconstructed with word-initial *i in Proto-Uralic (such as PU **ikä* > PUg **ĩkä*) rather reflect Proto-Uralic *je- (Pystynen 2015).

PU *ii > PUg *i: PU **siini* > PUg **sinĩ* > Hu *szén* 'charcoal' (~ North Saami *čitna*)

This change is based on one etymology only; the vowel-reconstruction remains unclear, but Hungarian *é* does not point to *i. No *ii can be reconstructed to Proto-Uralic, it is unclear what PU/Pre-Saami vowel Saami *e (> North Saami *i*) reflects here.

PU *a > *o after *p, *w: PU **pata* > PUg **pota* > Hu *fazék* 'pot'

No evidence for this change: Hungarian *a* regularly reflects PU *a but not *o in a-stems. The other examples mentioned by Sammallahti (PU **wanča* > > PUg **wonča* > Kh **wāč* 'root', **waja* > Ms **ūj* 'sink') show later, conditioned changes in Khanty and Mansi (cf. Zhivlov 2014: 124).

PU **o* > **a*: PU **ońca* ‘meat; part’ > PUg **ańca* ‘buttocks’

No evidence for this change, as the conditioned developments of Proto-Uralic **o* are different in Hungarian, Khanty and Mansi (see Zhivlov 2014: 124; the changes Hu *o* > *á*, Ms **o* > **ā* and Kh *o* > **ā* have to be independent).

PU **u* > PUg **u* in closed syllables before a nasal or a liquid followed by a sonorant: PU **lunta* > PUg **lunta* ‘goose’

PU **u* > PUg **ũ*: PU **tulka* ‘feather’ > PUg **tũlka* ‘feather’, PU **kuńci* > PUg **kũńci* ‘urine’ **kuńa-* > **kũńa-* ‘close eyes’

The developments of PU **u* in Hungarian, Khanty and Mansi are complicated, but the different reflexes do not correspond to the split Sammallahti assumes, as there are too many exceptions and some of the Ob-Ugric reconstructs are outdated (such as Proto-Khanty **kun-* ‘close eyes’ and **tuyəl* ‘feather’ in Zhivlov’s 2007 system of reconstruction vs. **kon-* and **toyəl* in Sammallahti 1988) and there is no need to reconstruct PUg **ũ*. Reflexes of PU **u* in Ugric require further research, but **u* seems to be retained in many contexts until Proto-Khanty, Proto-Mansi and Proto-Hungarian. Hungarian development **u* > *o* is late (Old Hungarian), so there is little evidence for shared Ugric developments here.

PU/PFU **uu* > PUg **u*: PU (?) **kuuli* > PUg **kulĩ* ‘hear’

Based on Aikio’s studies, the instances of long **uu* should rather be reflected as sequences of a vowel and the glide **w* (Aikio 2012: 241). Not all details are clear, but it is quite clear that the Ob-Ugric reflexes of words like ‘spurge’ cannot be derived from Proto-Ugric **kusi*, and no Proto-Ugric innovation can be assumed here.

PU **ü* > PUg **ũ*: PU **śũksi* > PUg **θũksi* ‘autumn’

“Orthographic” change (to follow the terminology of Zhivlov 2018). Everything points to **ü* having been retained until Proto-Khanty (**sũwəs*), Proto-Mansi (**tũksə* ‘autumn’) (in Zhivlov’s 2007 system of reconstruction) and Proto-Hungarian.

Reduction of the vowels in unstressed syllables (non-initial syllables): PU **peľi-* > PUg **pilĩ-* ‘fear’

No evidence for this, as PU **i* participated in morphophonological alternations with zero in Proto-Uralic already (Aikio 2022), and there is no evidence of **i* disappearing earlier in Ugric (the reflexes of both high and low Proto-Uralic vowels were still retained in Old Hungarian). PU **i* has been reconstructed as a reduced vowel by Kallio (2012), but there is no evidence of **i* being reduced in Ugric.

Proto-Ugric changes suggested by WOT

PU/PFU **o* > PUg **a*: PU **kota* > PUg **katə* ‘tent’, **ńora* > **ńarə* ‘poplar’ (WOT: 1043)

“Sporadic” change, based on outdated reconstructions.

PU/PFU *u > PUg o: PU *kuŋi 'moon' > PUg *koŋə (WOT: 1045–1046, 1049–1051)

Hungarian *u > o is a late change. The Ob-Ugric languages shows divergent reflexes corresponding to Hu u, o.

PU/PFU *u > PUg *a: PU *šurV- > PUg *sart-; PU *puwi > PUg *pawə (WOT: 1043–1044)

Sporadic change; based on two etymologies only, wrong reconstructions (Hu i in *irt* cannot reflect *a, reconstruction of *u in *puwi disputed (? PU *pawi)).

PU/PFU *a > PUg *o: PU *rakka- > PUg *rokkə-; PU *kaća > PUg *koća (WOT: 1046)

Probably wrong/uncertain etymologies. PU *rakka is an implausible etymology (the alleged Finnish cognate *rakas* is a Germanic loanword). The other alleged example, *kaća does not show regular reflex of any PU back vowel in Hungarian, Mansi points regularly to an old *a–a stem. (It is unclear whether Mansi *kūs and Hungarian hős are really related; Abondolo 1992 assumes a compound but this requires further research).

Merger of the PU stem-vowels in Proto-Ugric: PU *kala 'fish' > PUg *kalə; PU *kuŋi 'moon' > PUg *koŋə (WOT: 1041–1042)

Clearly different stem-vocalism in Proto-Khanty, Proto-Mansi and Proto-Hungarian, as noted by Sammallahti (1988) already (see Zhivlov 2014: 124 for reflexes of back-vocalic stems), the vowels certainly did not merge in Proto-Ugric.

PU *e > PUg *ä: *nele- > PUg *nälə-; *leme- > PUg *lämə (WOT: 1052)

This change is based on outdated reconstructions: *nele- and *leme- are outdated reconstructions (Aikio 2012 reconstructs PU *näli-, *lämi-). Reconstruction of PUg *e into words *nelmä, *leme is also partly based on outdated etymologies: *nelmä 'mouth' should probably be reconstructed as *nälmä (as in UEW), as only the Mansi reflex points to *e. The rest of the Ugric forms reflect *ä regularly, so no Proto-Ugric *nelmä (instead of *nälmä) can be reconstructed.

PU *a > *ä: PU *wajéV > PUg *wäjćə 'a kind of duc' (WOT: 1053)

This sporadic Proto-Ugric change is based on one uncertain etymology (Hu *vöcsök*) only: the alleged cognates outside of Ugric (such as Estonian *vais*, Komi *veš*) do not reflect PU *a regularly, so this etymology tells nothing of a possible Proto-Ugric change.

PU *i ? > PUg *e > Hu i: PU *ipsi > PUg *epsə 'smell' (WOT: 1055)

Nothing points to Proto-Ugric *e here: Hungarian *íz* has irregular z, but the *i*: *i* vowel and the Ob-Ugric reflexes point to *i, no need to assume *e here.

PU *ü > PUg *ö: PU *kütki- > PUg *kütə- or *kötə- 'tie' (WOT: 1057)

This change is based on outdated reconstructions of Proto-Khanty and Proto-Mansi, as both largely retained **i*. No evidence for **ö* in Proto-Ugric.

Proto-Ugric vocabulary in the UEW: examples of etymologies displaying irregular vowel-correspondences (potential loans/substrate words)

Hungarian *csira*, Mansi South (TJ) *ćürk̄i-t-* 'keimen, sprossen', East (KU) *śark* 'Keim', West (P) *śürk, śirk*, (LO) *śirka* 'Keim'; UEW: PUG **ćör̄z (ćör̄kz)* 'sprout, blastus, embryo; Keim'

Hungarian *gyökér* 'root', Mansi: South (TJ) *jük̄ār*, East (KU) *jēk̄.ər*, West (P) *jēk̄ər*, North (So) *jēk̄.ar* 'die Wurzeln eines umgefallenen Baumes'; UEW: PUG **jök̄kz-rz* 'root; Wurzel'

Hungarian *ló* 'horse', Khanty: East (V) *loy*, South (DN) *taw*, North (O) *law*, Mansi: South (TJ) *low*, East (KU) *lo*, West (P) *luw*, North (So) *luw*; UEW: PUG **luwz (lujə)* 'horse; Pferd'

Hungarian *nyerég* 'saddle', Khanty: E VK, Vkr *nöγər* 'Sattel' < PKh **nōγər*, Mansi TJ *näwr̄ā*, KU, P *nayər*, N *nač̄ir* < PMs **nāyr̄ā*; UEW: PUG **närkz* 'saddle; Sattel' (Zhivlov 2016)

Hungarian *szalu* 'axe for scooping', Khanty East (V) *suyəl*, South (DN) *soxət* 'Hohlbeil' < ? Proto-Khanty **sūyəl* ~ **sōyəl*, Mansi North (So) *sowli* 'Hohlbeil mit einem wendbaren Stiel' < ? Proto-Mansi **saylV* ~ **soylV*; UEW: PUG **sɨlkz (sɨlyz)* 'axe for scooping; Hohlbeil'

Hungarian *tegész* 'quiver', Khanty V *tüyət*, DN, O *tiwət* < ? PKh **tīyət*, Mansi KU *tāwət*, LM *täut*, So *tawt* < ? PMs **tāwət*; PUG **täjz-tz* 'quiver (on belt); Pfeilköcher am Riemen'; UEW: **täjz-tz*

Hungarian *tűz* (: *tűzet*), Khanty East (V) *töyət*, South (DN) *tiüt*, North (O) *tut* 'fire' < ? Proto-Khanty **tūyət*, Mansi South (TJ) *tāwə-t*, East (KU) *tōwt*, West (P) *tāwt* 'fire' < Proto-Mansi **tāwt*; UEW: PUG **tūjz-tz, tüwz-tz-* 'fire; Feuer'

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