

Innovations and archaisms in Alanic loanwords in Hungarian

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Research problem

- Many archaisms in the loans into Hungarian but also features that point to Iron (the more innovative dialect of Ossetic)
 - Several layers of loans? Some single etymologies show point innovations and archaisms
- The dialectal differentiation of Ossetic is assumed to have started at late mediaeval times at the earliest (Lubotsky 2015); the mediaeval Alanic closer to Digor (the more archaic dialect)

Research problem

- Methodology: dangerous to assume prehistoric dialects
- Methodology: prehistory, sound substitution; absolute and relative chronology of sound changes in both Hungarian and Alanic/Ossetic...
- Case study of a contact situation that involves secure etymologies; the dating relatively secure

Iranian loans in Hungarian: overview

- One or several layers of Alanic loans?
- Different layers of Iranian loanwords in Hungarian (the earliest Indo-Iranian loans acquired into Common Uralic or Proto-Uralic)
- Old Iranian, Middle Iranian loans: *ár* 'price' ← **arya*, *vásár* 'market' ← **vāčār* (< **wahāčarana*), *réz* 'copper' ← **rauda-* etc.

Iranian loans in Hungarian: overview

- The Alanic loans (ca. 20–30 loans) acquired in the East European steppe before the conquest of the Carpathian basin in the 9th century
- Different views on the exact time and place
- Alanic loans close to modern Ossetic in form and meaning: *egész* ~ *ægas* 'whole', *gazdag* ~ *qæzdig* / *ǧæzdug* 'rich', *méreg* ~ *marg* 'poison'

Research history

- Long research history (Munkácsi 1901, Sköld 1925, Joki 1973, Lushnikova 1990)
- Different views on the source dialect
- Sköld (1925): many loans closer to Iron
- TESz, EWUng: Alanic forms “with palatal vocalism”
- Little commentary on this is more recent sources (Helimski 2002, Cheung 2002, Róna-Tas & Berta 2011)
- Some remarks by Katz (2003)

Late Proto-Hungarian vowel system (? 10th c.) according to Kálmán 1972

i	ü	j	u
e /ë/			o
ε			
			a

ī			ū
ē			
ε̄			
			ā

Ossetic vowel systems: Digor (Cheung 2002)

i: {ij}				u
	i			
e		æ		o
			a	

Ossetic vowel systems: Iron (Cheung 2002)

i		y		u
e		æ		o
			a	

Vowel system of Alanic (Kümmel 2016)

i <l>		u <ou>
	a[æ] <α>	

? ī <l>		
ē <η, ε>		ō <ω, o>
		ā <ᾱ>

Archaisms (Proto-Ossetic ~ Alanic)

- **wi-* (only one certain example): *özvegy* 'widow' ← **wiδwæz* > Oss *idæz*
- Proto-Hungarian **δ* (> Hu *z*) ← Alanic **δ* (Sköld 1925; cf. Cheung 2002; Palunčić 2013):
 - *fizet* 'pay' ← **fiδ-* ~ **feδ-*, *gaz* 'reed' ← **γæδ*
- Hungarian *š* ← Alanic **š* (> Oss *s*):
 - *fésű* 'comb' ← **fæš-*
- No metathesis in *ezër* 'thousand' ← Alanic **æzræ*
- Different layers? Note words like *fizet* showing both archaism and innovation that

Many “ambiguous” loans

- Hu *egész* ← **ægas*, Oss *ægas* / *ægas*, *igas*
- Hu *méreg* ← **marg*, Oss *marg* ‘poison’
- Some loans borrowed from sources only attested in Digor, but more difficult to distinguish “Digor” features from archaisms
- Hu *legény* ‘young man’ ← ? **læqwæn* ‘man’ (Bielmeier 1977, 180–185)

Loans with "Iron" vocalism

- Hu *i* and **j* ~ Iron *i* < Proto-Ossetic **ē*
- Hu *u* ~ Iron *u* < Proto-Ossetic **ō*

Loans with "Iron" vocalism

- Hu *fizet*, dial. *füzet* ← Alanic **fēδ-* (or "Iron" *fiδ-*); Oss *fidyn* / *fedun*
- Easy solution: Hu *i* from "Iron" **i*
- Pre-Hu **i* regularly becomes *ë* (some Turkic loans show this development)
- Sköld 1925: **e* > *i* in Hungarian (not a regular change, few examples)
- How was Alanic *ē* realized? Perhaps Hu **i* was the closest phonetic equivalent

Loans with „Iron“ vocalism

- Hu *híd* (: *hida-*) ‘bridge’ < Proto-Hungarian **xidV* ← Alanic **xēd* (or "Iron" *xid*)
- **j* the only possibility? No front vowels after **x* allowed at the time of borrowing
- **j* ← **ē*?
- Again, an Iron-like form with *i* would be an "easier" solution
- The explanation by Sköld 1925: OHu *heed* > Hu *híd* is not possible

Loans with „Iron“ vocalism

- Hu *zsineg*, dial. *sineg* 'string, cord' ← Alanic ? **sinag* or **sujnag* (Oss I *sinag*, D *sujnag*)
- The Ossetic word of unknown origin
- Certainly did not have old e (unlike *fid-*, *fed*)
- Róna-Tas & Berta (2011) note that the word is first attested in the 17th century
- Ad hoc explanation: lexical split of *sing*
- Influence from the unrelated *zsinor*
- How would have Alanic **uj* be replaced in Hungarian?

Loans with „Iron“ vocalism

- Hu *tölgy* ‘oak’ ← ? Alanic **tułzæ*, Oss *tułz* / *tolzæ*
- The background of the Ossetic word is unclear (Cheung 2002: 128–129)

Loans with „Iron“ vocalism

- Hu *bűz* 'smell' ← Alanic **bōδæ* (or "Iron" **buδæ*) < Plr **bauda-*
- Looks like Alanic but can be also older
- Helimski's rule: *ű* from Plr **a* after labial consonants
- Few examples (*fűst* 'smoke' ← Ir *pazda-*)

Loans with "Iron" vocalism

- Hu *tol* 'push'
- Hu *tol* 'pull' < Proto-Hungarian **tuIV-* ← ?Alanic, Oss *tulyñ / 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 "Iron" features?

- Hu *részeg* 'drunken' ← Alanic **rasug*, Oss *rasyg*, *rasug* < Plr **frāsūka*
- Recently discussed in detail by Viredaz (2017)
- Sköld (1925: 34) notes that this has to be from Iron, but the reasons remain unclear: the open e does not fit *ï*, *y*, nor the more archaic (Digor) *u*. Perhaps assimilation and/or influence from vowel harmony.
- More research needed on non-initial syllables in general: some very clear words like *egész*, some secondary developments (*méreg*), many loans with problematic vocalism in the second syllable

Other "Iron" features?

- Hu *ezüst* 'silver'
- Katz (2003) argues that Hungarian second syllable points to Iron-like **ævzišt*, but this is not very convincing (the origin of *ü* is somewhat unclear and the non-initial syllable vocalism includes various problems in general).
- See Viredaz (2017) for a recent discussion of the etymology of the Ossetic word

Other „Iron“ features?

- Hu *ravasz* ‘fox’ Ossetic *ruvas* / *robas* < Ilr **Hraupāća-*
- Not inherited from Proto-Uralic **repäci* ‘fox’ (← Ilr) as has been assumed but separate borrowing, probably from Alanic (Róna-Tas & Berta 2011; Róna-Tas 2017; Holopainen 2019; Palmér et al. 2019)
- Alanic **rowasa* an ad hoc reconstruction (Róna-Tas & Berta 2011)
- *v* problematic; according to Cheung this is a very late development in Iron
- Hu *a* does not fit Iron vocalism (*a* usually < Uralic **a* or **o*)
- Earlier loan from Iranian? Cannot be ruled out

Problems with stem-vocalism

- Hu vocalic and consonantal stems (cf. Rasmussen 1989: 236–238)
- Possible chronological differences
- Some unclear cases; not clear correspondence of Ossetic (Digor) word-final vowels and the vocalic stems in Hungarian
- *ezër*: *ezre-*, old *ezëre-* ‘thousand’ (cf. Kim 2022), *méreg*: *merge-* ‘poison’
- *üveg* : *üvegët* ‘glass’ ~ Iron *avg*, Digor *avgæ*, *ezüst* : *ezüstöt* ~ Iron *ævzist*, Digor *ævzestæ*

Parallel evidence?

- Alanic loans in the eastern Uralic languages (Permic and Ob-Ugric) showing late innovations
- Old Komi *idög* 'angel' ← **idæwag* , Oss *dawæg*, *idawæg* 'divinity' < ? PI **wi-tāva-ka-* (Cheung 2002: 178)
- West Mansi *šjirii* 'sword' ← Alanic **čiry*, Ossetic *cirq*, *cerg* (Abaev 1958–1989 I: 325)
- The Mansi word quite clearly points to i in the donor language

Conclusions

- Almost all the Iron like loans can be explained also otherwise
- However, the most simple explanation would be to assume a dialect that was close to Iron
- An unattested dialect showing some of the (typologically common) changes that also happened in Iron?
- Proto-Ossetic vs. Common Ossetic: some innovations could have taken place in Iron and Digor parallerly after the split of Proto-Ossetic
- Several layers of Alanic loans?