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THE LOSS OF *G BEFORE *M IN PROTO-SLAVIC

This paper proposes a new sound rule for Proto-Slavic, according to which *g (from PIE *g, *g^w, *g^h, and *g^{wh}) was lost before *m. This development was posterior to Winter's law and the merger of voiced and aspirated stop in Slavic. The operation of the rule is illustrated by new etymologies of four Slavic words: *ama, *jama 'hole, pit', *tēmę 'sinciput', *mažb 'husband, man', and *remy 'leather belt'.

1. Introduction

The treatment of Proto-Slavic *g before *m is unclear according to the standard handbooks of Slavic historical phonology.¹ Of course, we know that *g is preserved before *n (cf. OCS *ognь* 'fire' < PIE *ngni-, cf. Lat. *ignis*, Skr. *agní-*), but the development before *m and *n need not have been identical. Indeed, in this paper we shall offer a number of new etymologies showing that *g was lost before *m, but after the operation of the so-called "Winter's law" (Matasović 1995), by which vowels were lengthened before voiced stops in closed syllables (cf. PIE *h₂eg^wno- > Lat. *agnus*, Gr. *amnós*, OCS *agne*, *jagne*).²

¹ Cf. Meillet 1934: 141: »Il n'a pas d'exemples valables du traitement de *k, g*, devant *m*«. Bräuer (1961: 205) states that »Vor Sonorlauten (*n, m, l, r*) sind die Gutturale meist erhalten oder sekundär eingeführt«, but does not give any examples for *gm.

² For somewhat different accounts of Winter's law see, e.g., Dybo 2002, Derksen 2007, Kortlandt 2009.

2. Proto-Slavic *áma, *jáma

Proto-Slavic *áma, *jáma ‘pit, hole’ (OCS *jama*, Russ. *jáma*, Ukr. *jáma*, Cz. *jáma*, Slk. *jama*, Pol. *jama*, Croat. *jàma*, Slov. *jáma*, Bulg. *jáma*) has no etymology, as acknowledged by Derksen (28). The connection with Gr. *ámē* ‘shovel’ (IEW 502, ESSJa I: 70–71, Snój 234) is impossible both formally (Slav. *a* cannot correspond to Gr. short *a*) and semantically. The meaning of the Slavic etymon is ‘pit, hole’ in all of its reflexes (in some languages, e.g. in Ukr. and Pol. there is the additional meaning ‘grave’, which is secondary). The development from ‘shovel’ to ‘hole, pit’ is quite improbable, and one must note that the meaning of Gr. *ámē* is not altogether ascertained, especially in the early documents (DELG 72). It is certainly an instrument for collecting or gathering, and in later Greek it means ‘bucket’. Formally, it is derived from *amáō* ‘to reap, mow, collect, gather’, and the etymology of this verb is quite unclear: it has been both derived from *sem- (Lith. *semiù* ‘gather, collect (water)’) and related to Skr. *ámatra* ‘vase’, neither of which is completely satisfactory.³

Even less convincing is the connection of PSl. *áma, *jáma and OIr. *úaim*, *úam* ‘cave, den, boar’s lair’ suggested by LEIA U–7; as argued in Matasović 2009: 302, PIE *(y)eh_{2/3}m- would give OIr. **ám rather than *úam*, and there is a better etymology deriving this OIr. word from PIE *h₁ew-n- (Gr. *eûnis* ‘deprived’, Arm. *unayn*).

I would like to propose a new etymology for this difficult word. It is possible to derive it from PIE *h₁og-meh₂, where the root is PIE *h₁eg- ‘to lack’ (IEW 290), cf. Lat. *egeo* ‘to need, be needy’, *egestas* ‘indigence, necessity, want’, OIc. *ekla* ‘lack’, OHG *eko-rōdo* ‘only’, ToAB *yāk-* ‘to neglect’. The initial *j-* in Slavic is, of course, prothetic, as in Croat. *jànje* ‘lamb’ < *agne, cf. Lat. *agnus*). It is also conceivable that we are dealing with an old middle participle (*h₁og-mh₁n-eh₂) from the same root, with the assimilation of *mn > *mm > *m after the loss of the inter-consonantal laryngeal (Matasović 2008: 295–396). The same development is seen, e.g., in PSl. *pismo ‘letter’ (Russ. *pis’mó*, Croat. *pismo*, etc.) < *pik’-mh₁no-, cf. OCS *psati* ‘write’, Lith. *piēsti* ‘draw’, Gr. *poikilos* ‘spotted’ (Tijmen Pronk, p.c.).

The only problem with this etymology is the semantic development, but this is not insurmountable; the meanings ‘hole’ and ‘lack’ are often connected metaphorically, cf. Croat. *rupa u proračunu* ‘hole in the budget’ = ‘lack (of money) in the budget’. The development in Slavic could have been from ‘lack’ to ‘emp-

³ The current *communis opinio* seems to be that the etymology of *amáō*, as well as of *ámē*, are unknown, especially since the meaning of the latter word is not quite certainly established (Beekes 82).

tininess’ and then to ‘hole, pit’, which is what we find in the reflexes of this etymon. The first step of this development can be observed in Latin, where we find (post-classical) *egestio*, *-ōnis* (f.) ‘a carrying out or off, emptying, voiding’.

3. Proto-Slavic *těmę

Proto-Slavic *těmę ‘sinciput, top of the head’ (Russ. *témja*, *těmeni*, Cz. *těmě*, *temeno*, Slk. *temä*, Pol. *ciemie*, Croat. *tjěme*, *t̃ime* (Vrgada), Slov. *téme*, Bulg. *téme*) does not have a persuasive etymology. The connection with the verbal root found in Proto-Slavic *tęti ‘chop, cut’, (Snoj 757, Skok, s.v., Derksen 492, IEW 1062, cf. Russ. *tjat* ‘beat’, Cz. *títi* ‘cut’, Pol. *ciać*, Lith. *tinti* ‘whet’, Gr. *témnō* ‘cut’) is improbable both semantically and formally. The Slavic acute in the first syllable might be regular, since the root ended in a laryngeal, but the lengthened grade (implied by *ě) is completely unexpected (we would expect *tęmę rather than *těmę). On the semantic side, I find the development from ‘a cut’ to ‘a line on the top of the head’ to ‘sinciput’ quite improbable.

A far better etymology is at hand if we derive PSI. *těmę from PIE *tegmen- ‘a covering’, from the root *(s)teg- ‘cover’ (IEW 1013, cf. Gr. *tégos* ‘roof, house’, Lat. *tego* ‘cover’, *tegulum* ‘roof’, OIr. *tech* ‘house’, W *to* ‘roof’, OHG *decchen* ‘cover’, *dah* ‘roof’). The vowel was regularly lengthened before *g by Winter’s law, and the acute on the first syllable is expected. After Winter’s law, *g was lost before the nasal, so we have the following development: *tegmen > *tégmę > *těmen > *těmę. The Slavic form has a partial correspondence in Lat. *tegmen*, *tegimen* ‘cover’. If our etymology of *jama, presented above, is accepted, the two examples actually support each other and show that *gm > PSI. *m. From the semantic point of view, I believe the development was from ‘a covering’ to ‘roof’ (cf. the similar semantic evolution in Gr. *tégos* ‘roof’, OHG *dah* ‘id.’ and W *to* ‘id.’) and then to ‘ceiling, top’ and ‘sinciput, top of the head’.

4. Proto-Slavic *mažь ‘man’

The etymological treatment of PSI. *mažь ‘man, husband’ (OCS *mažь*, Russ. *muž*, Cz. *muž*, Pol. *maż*, Croat. *mūž*, Bulg. *māž*, etc.) in etymological dictionaries of Slavic is not satisfactory.⁴ Although a connection with Skr. *mānu-* ‘man’,

⁴ See, e.g. ESSJa XX 158–161, Derksen 330, Vasmer II: 169f., Snj 418, Machek 385, IEW 700. Etymological connection with PSI. *mađo ‘testicle’ (Croat. *múdo*, Russ. dial. *mudó*) is semantically nice but formally impossible, while Machek’s derivation from *monъš (corresponding to Skr. *manu-*) with loss of ъ and the change of *š > ž contradicts everything we know about regular Slavic sound developments.

OHG *mann* ‘id.’ seems promising at first sight, a proto-form such as *mong^(w)-yo- appears quite ad hoc, especially since the suffix *g^(w)-yo- is otherwise unknown in Slavic nominal derivation. Pointing out the parallelism with the suffix in Lith. *žmogùs* ‘man’, which appears to be somehow derived from *žmuõ* ‘id.’, does not help, either, since the exact derivation of the Lithuanian word is unknown.⁵ An alternative etymology, explaining the formation of both *žmogùs* and *mažь, would clearly be welcome.

I believe we have to start from two different PIE etyma, which influenced each other in the pre-history of Balto-Slavic. The first one is the PIE word for ‘man’, *d^hg^hemōn / *d^hg^hmn-os, which is preserved in Lith. *žmuõ*, Acc. *žmùni*.⁶ This PIE word, which is also reflected in Lat. *homō* (< *hemō) and OIr. *duine* (< < *gdonyo- < *d^hg^hom(n)yo-, cf. EDPC 156), and Goth. *guma* (< *gumōn, cf. Kluge 538), is itself derived from the root *d^hg^hem- ‘earth’ (Gr. *khthōn*, Hitt. *tekan-*, OCS *zemlja*, etc.). We have to assume that Lithuanian generalized the zero-grade of the root from the oblique cases, and the full grade of the suffix from the nominative, hence the regular derivation *d^hg^hmōn > *žmuõ*. The long *ō is preserved throughout the Lith. paradigm, and -o- (e.g. in Nom. pl. *žmōnēs*, which forms the suppletive plural to *žmogùs* ‘man’) was generalized from the cases where it had been unaccented. Lithuanian generalized the word-initial ž- from the position before vowel (i.e. from the nominative *d^hg^hemōn), since PIE *g^h should have been regularly depalatalized before *m followed by a back vowel (Matasović 2005, cf. Lith. *akmuõ* ‘stone’ < *h₂ek^hmōn, Skr. *ásman-*).

We suggest that the other PIE etymon which is reflected in the BSl. words for ‘man’ is *mog^hus ‘servant’ (cf. Goth. *magus* ‘boy’,⁷ OIr. *mug* ‘servant’, MW *meu-dwy* ‘servant of god, hermit’, cf. EDPC 274). A BSl. reflex of this word would have been *magu-, and this may have been influenced by *džmān- (the precursor of Lith. *žmuõ*) to form the analogical *džmāgu-, from which Lith.

⁵ Smoczyński (790), while acknowledging that the formation is unclear, speculates that -gu- might be a variant of the suffix -ku-, which is common in anthroponymy, but this is not convincing.

⁶ The accusative form is probably metathesized from *žumnin, with the expected reflex of the syllabic *m in the first syllable in Balto-Slavic (Matasović 2004, see also Smoczyński: 790). It is also possible that the accusative *žmùni* is due to the analogy with *šùni* ‘dog’, which is regular.

⁷ Av. *maḍava-* ‘unmarried’ (apparently not **mayava-* as quoted in Pokorny and Bartholomae) is a special problem. The connection of Av. *maḍava-* and PIE *meg^h- ‘be able, can’, proposed by Mallory & Adams 2008: 205, is just a conjecture, and not a very probable one (OCS *moga*, *mošti* shows that the root should be reconstructed as *meg^h-, i.e. with non-palatalized velar). If, on the other hand, the Avestan word is related to Goth. *magus*, OIr. *mug*, etc., then we should reconstruct PIE *mog^hu- (rather than *mog^hu-) and assume that the velar was depalatalized in Balto-Slavic (perhaps regularly before *w followed by a back vowel, with subsequent analogical spread?).

žmogùs would have developed. On the other hand, in Slavic, *gmān- (with regularly depalatalized *g^h- before a resonant and a back vowel) and *magu- merged as *gmāngu- which regularly⁸ simplified the initial cluster to *māngu-;⁹ a yo-derivative (perhaps originally a possessive adjective) *mānžya- then yielded the attested reflexes of *mažь quite regularly. The proposed developments may be represented in the following manner:

1. *madžu- : *gmān- / *džmān-: Balto-Slavic
2. *džmāgu- : *džmān- (Baltic): *gmāngu- > *māngu- >> *mānžya- (Slavic)

A special problem is presented by Lith. *māžas* ‘little’ and PSI. *mēzimьсь ‘little finger, pet’; these words are usually derived from the PIE root *meg^h₂ ‘great’ (Lat. *magnus*, Skr. *māhi*, Gr. *méga*, etc.); although not impossible, this etymology is semantically unconvincing, relying, as it does, on ‘ironical’ meaning reversal (‘big’ > ‘small’). Moreover, the root for ‘big’ should be reconstructed with the voiced root-final stop, so we would expect the first vowel in Lithuanian *māžas* to be lengthened by Winter’s law, if it were actually from *mog^h₂o-. I believe it is preferable to derive both *māžas* and the Slavic words for little finger from the same root as PIE *mog^hu-; the development form *mog^h- to Lith. *maž-* is regular, and PSI. *mēzimьсь must contain the lengthened grade from the same root (PIE *mēg^h-). The similarity between the roots *meg^h- ‘small’ and *meg^h₂- ‘big’ is either accidental, or due to some unrecoverable Early PIE developments. A trace of the root noun *mog^h- (actually, the locative plural thereof) is probably preserved in Lat. *mox* ‘soon’, MW *moch* ‘soon’, Skr. *makṣū* ‘quickly’ < PIE *mog^h-su.¹⁰

Finally, we must account for Skr. *mānu-*, *mānuš-*, Av. *manuš-* < Ilr. *manu-, *manuš- and OHG *mann*, Goth. *manna*, OE *man*, *mon*, OFries. *mon* < PGerm. *manōn, *mann-. The PIE form cannot have been *monu-, because the Skr. word does not show the operation of Brugmann’s law,¹¹ so Skr. *mānu-* must be

⁸ See below on the probably parallel development in Germanic.

⁹ The Proto-Slavic form could also be from the stem of the Acc. sg. (*gman-), or the oblique cases (*gumn- >> *gmun-), since the attested forms in Slavic (all from *maž-) could be derived from all of these stems.

¹⁰ Semantically this is much preferable to De Vaan’s (391) derivation of Lat. *mox* etc. from the root *meg^h,- ‘great’. An adverb meaning ‘soon’ is more likely to be from an expression meaning ‘in a little (while)’ than ‘in a great (amount of time)’.

¹¹ In the case of the u-stem (Skr. *mānu-*), it is possible that the short vowel was generalized from the oblique cases (*monw-) where the first syllable was closed, so that Brugmann’s law did not apply. This is difficult, however, in the case of the s-stem *mānuš-*, which would have to be a recent formation (but note that Avestan also has an s-stem *manuš-*).

from *menu-, perhaps from the root *men- ‘to think’ (Skr. *mányate*, OCS *mъniti*, Lat. *mens*, *mentis* ‘spirit’, LIV 391). The Germanic form might be from the same root (from the o-grade *mon-), but Kluge (538) derives it quite persuasively from *gman-ōn (i.e. from the same root as in Lith. *žmũo*, Lat. *homō*, etc.). The word-initial *m would have been the result of simplification of the initial consonant cluster *gm-, parallel to the one observed in Slavic (*gman- > *man-).

5. Proto-Slavic *remy, remene ‘(leather) belt’.

PsI. *remy, *remene ‘(leather) belt’ (OCS. *remykъ*, Croat. *rěmēn*, Pol. *rzemyk*, Russ. *reměn*, CZ. *řemen*, ULus. *rjemjeň*, etc., cf. Vasmer II: 510f.) does not have a satisfactory etymology. It looks like an ordinary *men-stem, so it may be inherited, but it is unknown from which PIE root. The only parallels are found in Germanic, cf. OHG *riomo* ‘belt’, OE *rēoma* ‘id.’, etc. As Vasmer (o.c.) correctly notes, the Slavic forms cannot be Germanic loanwords, because we would expect PsI. **rjumy, **rjumene rather than *remy, *remene. We propose now to derive both Slavic and Germanic forms from *regmen- < *Hreg^{wh}men-. The Germanic forms are from PGerm. *rewmōn, but this can be quite regularly derived from the oblique stem *Hreg^{wh}mn- (T. Pronk, p.c.) since *g^{wh} yields *w between vowels in Germanic, and *m was syllabic between *g^{wh} and *n (i.e. the development was *Hreg^{wh}mn- > *reg^wumn- > *rewumn- > *rewmn-, and the Nom. sg. *rewmōn was rebuilt analogically). Further connection is possible with Gr. *eréphō* ‘cover’, *órophos* ‘cover, roof’ (for the semantic connection cf. Gr. *himás* ‘belt’: *himátion* ‘cloak’); the PIE root would have been *h_{1/3}reg^{wh} ‘encompass’? Note that the usual etymology connecting *eréphō* and the Slavic and Germanic words for ‘rib’ (Russ. *rebró*, OCS *rebro*, Bulg. *rebró*, Pol. *rzebro*, Cz. *řebro*, ULus. *rjeblo*, Croat. *rěbro* vs. OHG *rippi*, ON *rif*, Eng. *rib*, see e.g. Beekes 456, Vasmer II: 500) is less convincing from the semantic point of view. Another possibility is that both the Germanic and the Slavic words for ‘belt’ were borrowed from some pre-IE substratum language of Europe.

6. Conclusion

The four etymologies presented here show that *g was lost before *m in Proto-Slavic. If these etymologies are accepted, we can further conclude that Winter’s law operated before *g (from PIE *g^w and *g) was lost before *m (*tegmen > *tēme, *h₁ogmeh₂ > *áma, *jáma). The loss of *g before *m occurred after the merger of voiced and aspirated stops in Balto-Slavic, because PsI. *g from PIE *g^h and *g^{wh} was lost as well (*g^hmōn > *gmān >> *mažь, *(H)reg^{wh}men- > *remen-). In Baltic, it appears that *g was preserved before

*m, but there are few reliable examples. Lith. *augmuõ* ‘plant’ is probably an inherited formation going back to *h₂ewg’-men- ‘increase’ (cf. Skr. *ojman-* ‘power’, Lat. *augmen-tum* ‘increase’).¹² If that is correct, we can conclude that *g was lost before *m in Slavic, but that it had been preserved in Balto-Slavic. This is in full accordance with the fact that the voiceless velar, *k, was preserved before *m in Balto-Slavic, as evidenced by Lith. *akmuõ* ‘stone’ < *h₂ek’mōn, cf. Gr. *ákmōn* ‘anvil’ (the Slavic forms of this word, like OCS *kamy*, Russ. *kámen*’, Cz. *kámen*, Croat. *kāmēn*, etc., must be derived by metathesis from *keh₂mōn, cf. also OE *hamer*, OHG *hamar* ‘hammer’).

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¹² Skardžius 1941: 294.

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Ispadanje *g ispred *m u praslavenskome

Sažetak

U ovom se radu predlaže novo glasovno pravilo u praslavenskome, prema kojemu je *g (od ie. *g, *g^w, *g^h i *g^{wh}) nestalo ispred *m. Ta se promjena odvila nakon djelovanja Winterova zakona i stapanja zvučnih i aspiriranih okluziva u pretpovijesti slavenskoga. Djelovanje je navedenog pravila potvrđeno novim etimologijama četiriju praslavenskih riječi: *ama, *jama 'rupa, jama', *tjeme 'tjeme', *mažь 'muž' i *remy 'reman'.

Ključne riječi: praslavenski, glasovni zakon, Winterov zakon, suglasničke skupine
Key words: Proto-Slavic, sound law, Winter's law, consonant clusters