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Collectives in –ьje in Slavic

This paper refutes the received opinion that the Slavic collective suffix –ьje should be derived from a putative PIE suffix *–iyo–. It is argued that the suffix –ьje is a regular development of the PIE collective formant *–ey– / –i–, discovered by N. Oettinger (1995, 1999). Besides Greek and Hittite, this suffix was preserved in Slavic in its original function; moreover, Proto–Slavic appears to be the only Indo–European language where the suffix remained at least partially productive.

There was a primary nominal suffix –ьje in Proto–Slavic, used for deriving neuter nouns with abstract and collective meaning. This suffix is used to derive abstract nouns from adjectives, e. g. *veselьje* »joy« from *veselъ*, and it is especially productive in deriving abstracts from participles in *–l– and *–n–, e. g. *dělanьje* »activity« from *dělanъ* »done«. However, a large number of collective nouns are derived with this suffix from other nouns, e. g. OCS *kamenьje* »stones« from *kamy* »stone« (cp. Lith. *akmuō*, OCS *listvie* (Croat. *lišće*) »leaves« from *listъ* »leaf« (cp. Lith. *láiškas*), OCS *korenie* (Croat. *korijenje*) »roots« from *korenь* »root«.

The received opinion (Brugmann 1902–4: 188–9, Meillet & Vaillant 1934: 357–8, Sławski 1974: 86, Jurišić 1992: 52–4) is that the suffix –ьje can be derived from the putative PIE suffix *–iyo–, and this conclusion is reached on the basis of such parallels as, e. g. OCS *ustьje* »mouth (of a river)«: L *ōstium*, or OCS *sъnьje* »dream«: L *somnium*. However, this argument is rather weak on closer inspection.

To begin with, there was never a suffix *–iyo– in PIE. The shape of the suffix was actually *–yo–, and this suffix is reflected in Proto–Slavic as *–jь (e. g. in OCS *bělъ* »white colour« from *bělъ* »white«. Only in Old Indic do we find the disyllabic form –iya–; however, this form of the suffix is regular in nouns

derived from the feminine stems in *–ī–* < *–iH–* (Burrow 1973), but it was extended analogically to other stems as well. Thus, OInd. *–iya–* is actually derivable from *–iHo–*, and this suffix would have been reflected as *ь, rather than *ьje in Proto–Slavic.

Secondly, old PIE neuters with barytone accentuation became masculines in Proto–Slavic, as Illič–Svityč has shown (1963), e. g. *dhwórom »gate« (OInd. *dvā́ram*, L *forum*) > OCS *dvorъ*. Therefore, all of the putative cognates of Slavic derivatives in *–ьje–* would have to be oxytona, and in Old Indic we find that neuters in *–iya–* are, as a rule, never oxytona (Burrow 1973: 185).

Thirdly, the suffix *–(i)yo– is not used to form collectives in any other Indo–European language. If OCS *sъnьje* is indeed derivable from the same proto–form as L *somnium,* the specialization of collective meaning in Slavic would have to be accounted for.

The Baltic parallels of this Slavic suffix are not well established. Baltic languages form collectives with different suffixes (Ambrazas 1992), and those formations that might correspond to the Slavic collectives in *–ьje do not have collective meaning. Kuryłowicz hesitatingly suggested (1968: 156): »So ist es höchstwahrscheinlich der Typus *alkis, bėgis* dem slaw. *pitь'je gleichzustellen«. Lithuanian words such as *alkis* »hunger« and *bėgis* »act of running« are mostly masculines in *–io–*, but, as Endzelīns noted (1971: 90), at least some of them were originally i–stems. In some cases, a trace of the original inflexion is preserved, e. g. in Lith. *bėgė*, a by–form of *bėgis* with the same meaning. Lith. *bėgė* is most easily derived from PIE *$b^heg^w\bar{e}y$, an i– stem with the lengthened grade in the Nom. sg. In a similar manner, Lith. *ė́nis* »frost«, corresponding exactly to PSl. *inьje »id.« (Croat. *înje* etc.), is attested with genitives in both *–ies* and *–io,* i. e. as both i– and yo–stems. Not in a single case, to my knowledge, does a Slavic collective in *–ьje correspond to the Lithuanian stem in *–ys*. As is generally agreed, it is Lithuanian stems in *–ys* that are most straightforwardly derived from *–iyo– (*–iHo–), e. g. *ožys* »goat« < *$h_2eg'iH–o–$. Thus, the Baltic data teach us only that Slavic *–ьje cannot be from *–iyo–, and that Slavic collectives in *–ьje could, in principle, be related to some Baltic i–stems.

Therefore, I propose another origin of the Proto–Slavic collectives in *–ьje,* namely, the PIE collective suffix *–ey– / –i–. This suffix was discovered by Norbert Oettinger (1995) in Hittite, but with clear reflexes in other IE languages, especially in Greek, cp. the parallelism of Hitt. *haštāi* »bone« with G (Homeric) *ostéon,* both of which can be derived from PIE collective *h_2osth_1ey. This collective suffix is also hidden in some archaic formations of nouns denoting substances and cereals, e. g. L *mel,* G *méli* »honey« < PIE *$mel–i–(t)$, or G *álphi* »barley« < PIE *$h_2elb^h–i–(t)$ (Oettinger 1999). I have argued elsewhere (Matasović 2004: 60) that this suffix could be the source of the Luvian »motion–suffix« *–i–*, and of the PIE pronominal plural ending *–i (e. g. L *illī*, OCS *ti*, Lith. *tie* < PIE *to–i).

Already in PIE, the original suffix *–ey– was occasionally enlarged by a secondary thematic *–o–, e. g. in G *ornéon* »bird« < *h₃ern–ey–o–m, and it would be tempting to think that this development would fit the Slavic data as well. So, for example, PSl. *inъje would be derivable from *īneyom, with the change of *–ey– to *ъj–* before vowels[1], as in *treyes »three« (OInd. *trayas*) > OCS *trъje*. We would have to assume that old collectives in *–ey– were thematized in Slavic, as they occasionally were in Greek. On the other hand, although Lith. **é**nis could, in principle, represent the thematic proto–form *īneyom (remodelled as an i–stem), it could also be from the underived collective with Nsg. *īni and Gsg. *īneys. The loss of the neuter gender in Lithuanian meant that this form had to be adjusted to one of the existing masculine or feminine declensional patterns, but the vacillation between the genitives in *–io* (masculine) and *–ies* (feminine) shows that this word had been neuter in Proto–Baltic. This observation leads us a step further. The Slavic collectives in *–ъje could also be derivable from athematic neuter i–stems with the neuter nominative–accusative plural ending *–h₂: PIE *iHneyh₂ would have given Balto–Slavic *īneya, from which we would have *inъjo > OCS *inъje* quite regularly. The reflex of the word–final laryngeal as OCS *–o* (*–e* after *j*) is assured by the vocative *ženo* »woman« from *gʷenh₂ (cp. Nsg. *žena* from *gʷeneh₂)[2].

Therefore, Slovene *o–kôstje* < *ob–kostъje »skeleton« might be directly comparable[3] to Hitt. *haštāi* rather than to G *ostéon*.

The suffix *–ey–h₂ (or *–ey–o–) > *–ъje– was presumably inherited in some words, and then spread analogically to others, thus becoming productive. It could be original, e. g. in OCS *ljudъje* »men« (synchronically an i–stem, *plurale tantum* but originally a collective), cp. Lith. *liaudis* »people«, Proto–Germanic *leudi–[4] (OHG *liut(i)*, etc.); it might also be inherited in OCS *ovošte* »fruits« < *ob–vokt'ъje, (Croat. *voće*), cp. Goth. *us–wahsts* »growth« < PIE *h₂wog–s–ti–, but it is probably analogical in *kamenъje* »stones«, since no traces of an i–stem is found outside Slavic.

If the above inferences are correct, the collective suffix *–ъje* represents a remarkable archaism of the Slavic languages. The formation of collectives with this suffix has remained productive in Slavic, whereas we find only traces of such formations in other branches of IE languages.

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1   Of course, one also has to take into account that word–final *–m was lost in neuters (or replaced by the pronominal ending *–d) very early, perhaps even during the Balto–Slavic period (Kortlandt 1994), certainly before the raising of *–om to *–um (as in the accusative sg. of thematic masculines, e. g. *wlkʷom > OCS *vlъkъ* »wolf«. Thus, the direct proto–form of OCS *inъje* would have been *īnyo(d) rather than *īnyom.

2   Cp. Matasović 1997.

3   This assertion should be taken cautiously, because the initial *k– in Slavic is unexplained. It is even possible that OCS *kostъ* and Slov. *okostje* are from an altogether different etymon PIE *kosto– (OIr. *coss* »leg«, L *costa* »rib«, etc.), but even in that case the formation of the collective in Slovene would be parallel to the one in Hittite.

4   Kluge, s. v. *Leute*

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Zbirne imenice na –ъje u slavenskim jezicima

U ovom se članku pobija rašireno mišljenje prema kojemu je slavenski sufiks za tvorbu zbirnih imenica –ъje postao od navodnoga praindoeuropskoga sufiksa *–iyo–. Tvrdi se da je slavensko –ъje pravilno postalo od indoeuropskoga formanta za tvorbu zbirnih imenica *–ey–/–i–, što ga je otkrio N. Oettinger (1995, 1999). Osim u grčkome i hetitskome, taj je sufiks u svojoj izvornoj funkciji sačuvan u slavenskome. Štoviše, čini se da je praslavenski bio jedini indoeuropski jezik u kojem je taj sufiks ostao barem djelomice produktivnim.

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Ključne riječi: zbirne imenice, slavenski jezici, protoslavenski jezik, sufiksi, arhaizmi