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ON 'SUN' AND 'MOON' IN BALTIC AND SLAVIC

Dalibor Brozović has analyzed in interesting fashion (Baltistica 19 (1) 1983, 10–14) the incidence and semantics, and their implications of etyma for 'sun', 'moon', 'month', 'moonlight' as shown by the Baltic and Slavic languages in their European context. These notes are simply to amplify the reconstructions and their implications.

Brozović properly leaves the reconstruction for *луна* undecided (10) between **louksna* and **leuksna*. There is a possible problem of chronology here. This must be an ancient verbal noun, probably a revised neuter collective, in **-sn-ā* of the type discussed by Benveniste (Origines) and others¹. If this is the case, we might expect a vocalism **leuksna*, judging by Lat. *cēna* < **kertsnā*. In fact, Lat. *lūna* could be either **eu* or **ou*; but, keeping in mind Lith. *liáudis*, Slavic *l'udьje* = OHG *liuti*, with their trace of the front vowel after *l*, Slavic *луна* can be only **louksnā*. It will be recalled that A. Scherer has dwelt upon the recurrence of forms for 'moon' terminating in **-snā* (including Greek *σελήνη*). Therefore both on grounds that **-sn-ā* was at an early time a productive verbal noun formation and in view of the seeming formal productivity of **-snā* for terms for the moon, it seems very difficult indeed to show that **louksnā* did not have an independent motivation and history in a given case of interest. This in turn makes any decision difficult of the sort that most concerns Brozović's argument. These difficulties fortunately do not weaken Brozović's prudent statement (top of p. 12), but they should be borne in mind.

I do not think that we can decompose the etymon of *месяц* in any principled way to give the IE base **mē-* 'мерить' (10). I would refer here to the analyses of Beekes and myself of IE **meH₂not-*.² Moreover, even if this unusual and complex base were found to contain **mē-*, what possible modification will the obscure **-not-* entail?

¹ I have discussed the history of this heteroclite verbal noun formation in Baltic in an article on Baltic infinitives (in press).

² Journal of Indo-European Studies. Vol. 11. 1983. P. 379–382, in the last instance.

Certainly Brozović's conclusion (11) „слово *тёсёс* должно было иметь значение не только 'месяц', но и 'луна'" seems to me entirely correct and justified.

I think that throughout the discussion of 'sun' (esp. 13) the form of the etymon can be considerably refined. I have discussed this in detail, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 26, 1975, 97–102³. It must be the heteroclit **seH_auel ~ sH_aun- → suH_an-* (neuter); all formal aspects of these alternations are rule-governed.

We find, then, that a *nomen actionis*, apart from its own productivity in the grammar, can be semantically concretized at any time. Morphologically complex forms, when they agree in all particulars and when they agree in their distribution with many other features (as is not the case with Slavic and Latin), can be strongly diagnostic; in the present case of *луна*, characteristics of productivity deprive us of a strong argument.

Even in the case of such simple notions as 'sun' and 'moon', with their archaic, idiosyncratic morphology, we see that there is yet much work to be done.

³ Note that Albanian *yll* 'star' cannot belong to this etymon. Conservative dialects that preserve true *h-* in Albanian (and that not adjacent to dialects that drop *h-*, whereby hypercorrection may occur) never show *h-* in this word. Thus the etymon of *yll*, pl. *yljëz* must be somehow **ul-* or, more likely, **ulǵ(h)-*, never having shown **s-*, as I pointed out in *Evidence for Laryngeals* (1965). Huld (see *Basic Albanian Etymologies*. Columbus, Ohio, 1984. P. 132) has proposed the metaphor of 'spark', comparing OE *ysle*, etc. while this consonantism is acceptable, the form neglects the dental needed to account for the *-z*; note also that we may have in reality an absorbed syllable in the history of this word (cf. *pyll* 'forest' < **padūle* < Lat. *palūde-*). Remembering *žvaigždē* < **guois-diā* ((11th International Congress of Linguists. 1972. P. 1053), it seems to me that we have here old quasi-participles in **-do-* in a derived form (see my contribution to *Festschrift Seiler*, 1980), i. e. 'shining, twinkling' vel sim. In Albanian a suppletion of participles in singular and plural would suffice to explain the alternation: sg. **VI-(o)nt(s)*, pl. collective **VI-d-ia*. The identity of the base remains ambiguous.