

Elwira KACZYŃSKA
 University of Łódź

ON THE ETYMOLOGY OF LITHUANIAN *lėžti*

In his etymological dictionary of the Lithuanian language prof. Wojciech Smoczyński (SEJL, 348) treats the Lithuanian verbs *lėžti*, *lėžtu*, *lėžau*¹ ‘to remit (of frost); to quiet down (of a slaughtered piglet)’ and *atlėžti* (also *atlėšti*) ‘to diminish, remit (of frost); to grow warm (of weather); to quiet down (after a ferment)’, trans. ‘to soften (soil)’ as remaining without etymology (“Bez etymologii”). In my opinion, the Lithuanian verb(s) in question cannot be separated from the Celtic and Germanic verbs denoting ‘to drop, drip, melt, leak’, e.g. OIr. *legaid* ‘melts, melts away, destroys, perishes’, MW. *dilein* ‘to destroy, chase away’ (< Celt. **dī-legnā-*), MW. *lleith* adj. ‘wet, moist’ (< Celt. **leg-to-*); ON. *leka* ‘to leak, pour out in drops’, E. *leak*, G. *lecken* (IEW, 657; LIV², 397). The verbal root in Lithuanian demonstrates a long vocalism which can be explained as a Narten root ablaut (PIE. **lēǵ-* < **leǵ-*) or as a secondary lengthening in Baltic before the voiced stop (Winter’s law).

It is obvious that the Indo-European verbal root had to denote a weather phenomenon connecting with growing warm in the early spring time (‘to remit (of frost); to grow warm(er); to thaw; to melt; to drop, drip, leak’), cf. also Lith. *atlėšys* m. ‘thaw’ (< Baltic **at-lėž-s-*), also *ātlyža* f. ‘id.’ (with a secondary zero-grade of the root **lēǵ-*).

Julius Pokorny (IEW, 657) reconstructs the root **leg-* (on the basis of the centum languages), whereas Martin Kümmel (LIV², 397) hesitates whether the root in question contained a velar voiced stop (PIE. **g*) or a palatal voiced one (PIE. **ǵ*). The Lithuanian verb *lėžti*, if related, allows us to reconstruct PIE. **leǵ-* ‘to drop, drip, melt, leak; thaw’.

¹ Erratum in SEJL (*editor’s note*).

REFERENCES

IEW – Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* 1–2, Bern, München: Francke, 1959.

LIV² – Helmut Rix (Hrsg.), *Lexikon der indogermanischen Verben*. Zweite, erweiterte und verbesserte Auflage, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2001.

SEJL – Wojciech Smoczyński, *Słownik etymologiczny języka litewskiego*, Wilno: Uniwersytet Wileński, 2007.

Elwira KACZYŃSKA

Department of Linguistics and Indo-European Studies

Faculty of Philology

University of Łódź

Lipowa 81

PL-90568 Łódź

Poland

[aradaina@gmail.com]