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Etymological problems between Indo-Iranian and Uralic

At least since Jacobsohn 1922, the high relevance of prehistoric contacts between Indo-European, especially Indo-Iranian, and Uralic has been well known. However, while Uralicists have worked extensively on this topic until today (cf. especially Jacobsohn 1934; Joki 1973; Rédei 1983; Katz 2003; Kallio 2004), it has got much less attention in Indo-European and Indo-Iranian studies, where the evidence of Uralic contacts is often neglected. Although Uralic evidence is regularly mentioned in the most recent etymological dictionary of Old Indo-Aryan (Mayrhofer 1992–2001), this is not the rule in other works dealing with the prehistory of Indo-Iranian. And indeed, one must admit that it may have been wise not to rely too much on such evidence. In recent years, the field of comparative Uralic linguistics has developed very much, and the reconstructions have changed considerably. Even the traditional internal classification of Uralic has been challenged (cf. Aikio 2006; Häkkinen 2009), and the result of all this is that older works can only be used with caution. E.g., Katz 2003 (cf. also Aikio & Kallio 2005) still builds very much on dating loanwords by alleged inner-Uralic nodes like Proto-Fenno-Ugric, Proto-Fenno-Permic etc. Since these nodes are now in doubt, arguments based on their existence have become problematic. All this leads to new interpretations that may have major repercussions for etymological research. Katz 2003 argued that most Ir. loanwords reflect “primary palatals“ as PU/PFU *ś so that we should reconstruct a palatal sibilant for Proto-Indo-Iranian (PII), since an affricate would have been taken over as such. This clashes with the current reconstruction of these PII and even Proto-Iranian sounds as affricates (cf. Mayrhofer 1989; Kümmel 2007; Lipp 2009; Lubotsky 2017). This reconstruction has been corroborated by the insight of Koivulehto (1999; 2001; 2007) that younger loans from Iranian in Uralic still reflect affricates that had already become depalatalized. If younger loans have an affricate, it is hardly possible that the older loans without depalatalization already had a sibilant. Thus it follows that the Proto-Uralic (PU) sound traditionally reconstructed as *ś must have been *č instead, although mostly continued as a sibilant (already Sammallahti 1988 had shown that a contrast between *ś and *č cannot be shown to be

old). Zhivlov (2014: 114 n. 3) has now also argued for this reconstruction on purely internal grounds. Perhaps even more important is the revision of PU vocalism in recent studies (Aikio 2012; 2015; Kallio 2012; Zhivlov 2014). The new reconstruction of **ćarwi* ‘horn’ (Zhivlov 2014; Aikio 2015) instead of **śorwa* (Rédei 1988) makes it much easier to derive it from a plausible PII preform, probably **ćrw-*. Far greater would be the impact of adopting the alternative reconstruction of vocalism as per Tálos (1987; 2015, cf. Abondolo 1998: 16f.), which would make PU vocalism (*i a u; ī ā ū ī ū* vs. Aikio’s and Zhivlov’s *i e a o u ü i*) much more similar to PII (*i ə a u; ī ā ū*): e.g., PU **ora* ‘awl’ would then be **āra* with the same accented vowel as its source **ārā* (Vedic *ārā-*), and there would be no need for either supposing a pre-PII loan from **órā-* or an unclear raising of the vowel of **ārā-* (the first would be excluded if the preform was **ēlā-* = Germanic **ēlō-* and not **ólā-*, for which there would be no exact comparandum in IE). The aim of my presentation is to look at these and other problems from the Indo-Iranian and Indo-Europeanist perspective and discuss their impact on etymology.

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