Some questions on reflexes of -eu- in Slavic languages

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Abstract

The Slavic languages are traditionally believed to have (-j)u- as the result of the change of the proto-IE diphthong (-)eu- in the first syllable and, as a consequence, the elision of -j- with the palatalization of the consonants before: Ceu > Cju > Cu. Some scholars try to show examples of this palatalization, and some even try to reconstruct this prosthetic -j- as a Balto-Slavic isogloss. This reconstruction seems to be currently accepted. But when we start checking the list of all stems proposed to us to illustrate this sound change, we face some serious contradictions and difficulties that could make us call this description into question.

Keywords: phonology; etymology; Slavic; Balto-Slavic; reconstructions

1. Introduction

In this paper I would like to show some dubious moments of the traditional explanations of the change of -eu- in Slavic languages and to try to improve them by proposing alternative ones.

Slavic languages have a series of stems with the possible results of the change of -eu- in the first syllable. In all the other positions we have no possibility to distinguish -eu- and -ou-. For example, in Russian doždevik “raincoat” or nočevat’ “to stay overnight” look like the analogical forms (in doždevik -ev- may also be the trace of the u-stem if the Slavic *dŭždžǐ “rain” is from the proto-IE *dus-dju-).

And thus, the topic of the current paper is the change of the cluster -eu- in the first syllable in Slavic languages.

2. Checking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cluster</th>
<th>change</th>
<th>examples</th>
<th>comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>open syllable (-euV-)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-ev-</td>
<td>kl’ev’eta “slander” d’ev’at’ &lt; deveťi “nine” r’ev’et’ “to roar” “to cry”</td>
<td>sever “north” &lt; Proto-Slav. *sēverū &lt; IE *-ēu-</td>
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<tr>
<td>-ov-</td>
<td>novyi “new” slovo “word”, slovesnyj “verbal” zovu “I call”</td>
<td>slava “glory” &lt; IE *-ēu-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OldChSl rovo “I roar”, rovotū “they roar”, rovy “roaring”</td>
<td>revemū “we roar”; -ov- only in the back row</td>
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<tr>
<td>-īv-</td>
<td>Proto-Slav. *pľįvati “to spit”, *žįvati “to chew”</td>
<td>in Slavic languages ĕ drops or becomes e, u</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>closed syllable (-euC-)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#eu-, #jeu-</td>
<td>#ju, #u</td>
<td>_jug “south&quot; užin “supper&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>beu-</td>
<td>bl’u-, bu-</td>
<td>nabuxnut’ “to bulk up&quot; sobl’udat’ “to keep&quot; “to obey&quot; nabl’udat’ “to look on&quot; bl’usti “to observe&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pea-</td>
<td>pu-</td>
<td>pux “floss&quot; puxnut’ “to swell&quot; “bloat&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meu-</td>
<td>my</td>
<td>only mykat’s’a “to ramble&quot; smykat’ “to link&quot;, zamykat’ “to tail&quot;, “to round out&quot; (myčat’ “to moo”, is onomatopoetic)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>veu-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>deu-</td>
<td>dů, du</td>
<td>dupa, župa, žopa “ass&quot;; also, Cz. dupa, dial. d’upa duplo “hole in a tree&quot;; also Pol. duplo, dupla, dziuplo, dziupla d’ubat’ “to bite&quot;, “to take&quot; (about fishes); also Pol. dzióbać d’užij “strong&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>teu-</td>
<td>tu, tu</td>
<td>t’ur’a (?) “cold soup&quot; t’un’a, čun’a (?) dial. “galosh&quot; t’ukat’ “to haze&quot; “to bonk&quot; čop, čopik “rowl plug&quot;, Pol. ciupaga “walking stick&quot;, “chip ax&quot;, Ciupiki Pol. Ciurki čužoj “strange&quot; “foreign&quot;, čud’ “Estonian tribe&quot;; also, Novg. čuže, OChSl. štuždī, stuždī, tuždī, Bulg. čužd, Maced., Serbo-Croat. tuž, Slovene tuž, Cz. cizí, dial. cizí,</td>
<td></td>
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| *bleu-: bl’uju “I vomit"; bl’uš’ “ivy"; Bulg. dial. bjuvam “I vomit" |
| German borrowing bl’udo “dish" may reflect #bj- in the origin |
| pl’u- < *pjeu- or *pleu-: pl’uju “I spit", pl’uš’ “ivy" < *pjeu-; pl’uš’it’ “to batter", “to roll" < *pleu- |
| Bulg. dial. pjoska “flat-shaped ceramic vessel for alcohol"; pjuskam "I eat a lot", pijuvam “I spit" |

- only mykat’s’a “to ramble", smykat’ “to link", zamykat’ “to tail", “to round out" (myčat’ “to moo", is onomatopoetic) |

- delabialization |

- no *wWw- in IE |

- alternation of d’ and d |

- očútít’s’a ‘to find oneself somewhere’ < ot-jut- (the same root as in jútit’s’a ‘to huddle together’, ujut ‘coziness, home, comfort’)

- alternation of t’ and t |

- spelling štuždī, stuždī may express the fricative pronunciation in dialects like š’už(d)ī, š’už(d)ī
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>neu-</th>
<th>ňu</th>
<th>ňuxat’ “to sniff”</th>
<th>unique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>geu-</td>
<td>Žu</td>
<td>župa “district”, župan (but also gūpan &lt; *gūp-) “boss” žurit’ “to rebuke” (Slovene gurati “to harass”, Serbo-Croat gurati “to push” &lt; *gour-)</td>
<td>gjeu- (?): žuju “I chew”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keu-</td>
<td>Ču</td>
<td>čudo “wonder” (also, *kudo &lt; *kou-)</td>
<td>-kjeu- (?): čujato “to feel”, čub and čuprina”“wisp”, čurka “log”, čur “fen”, “keep away”, čeresčur “too much”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skeu-</td>
<td>Šču</td>
<td>ščupat’ “to touch” ščuka “pike” ščur “grosbeak”, “worm”, “rat” ščur’it’s’a “to squint”</td>
<td>or skjeu-?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xeu-</td>
<td>Šu</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>see seu-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zeeu-</td>
<td>Žu, Žu</td>
<td>žurčat’ “to murmur” ,” to bicker” (onomatopoetic) z’už’a “swine” (expressive) župel, z’upel (Psalterium Sinaiticum; the German borrowing?) “bugaboo” zuk dial. “sound”</td>
<td>zeeu-, geu-, gjeu-?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unclear</td>
<td>Žuk “beetle”, žužžata “buzz”, žuželica “desert beetle”, žučka “house-dog”, žut’ &lt; žud’ “horror”, “fear”, žukovina dial. “a finger ring”, “jewel of finger ring”, žučina “pothole”, žur “a kind of soup”</td>
<td>stems with initial Šu- have no clear etymology and are not related to stems with initial s-, some of them may reflect *sjeu- (šurin can be of the same origin as šit’ &lt; *sjū-)</td>
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<tr>
<td>leu-</td>
<td>l’u</td>
<td>l’ubit’ “to love”, l’ud’i “people”, kl’uć “key,” “well”, “fountain”</td>
<td>Bulg. dial. -ju: kjuč</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sleu-</td>
<td>sl’u</td>
<td>sl’uda “mica”, sl’una “spittle”, sl’uz “icing”, “overflow”</td>
<td>not sl’u-!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reu-</td>
<td>Řu, Ru</td>
<td>r’ujen’, rujen’ dial., obs. “September”</td>
<td>not Štr’u- in the last example!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
rutit’ dial. “to drop”, “to pour”,
r’utit’ dial. “to push”, “to throw”
r’uxa dial. “blind-alley”
br’uzga “growler”
br’uxo “belly”
r’ut’ obs. “to roar”, “to cry”
str’uk dial. “well”, “fountain”

3. Additional comments

3.1. Open syllables

In an open syllable, usually -e–v- is before a front vowel, -o–v- is before a back vowel (ěu > -ěv-, -a–v-).

Forms like revu or novejšij “the newest”, slovesnyj are formed by analogy with other forms having -e–v-, -o–v-, but see the word kl’ev’eta “slander” (it has the same stem as slovo “word”, but without satemization), and d’ev’at’ “nine” < devętį (of the same origin as novyj “new” with an abnormal change n > d).

The change -e–v- > -i–v- can be explained by the previous palatalized consonants.

3.2. Closed syllables

The clusters #eu-, #ou-, #au-, #jeu-, #jou-, #jau- can have the reflexes with or without #j-.

The clusters *leu-, *reu- are changed into l’u, r’u / ru without any traces of -j-.

The change neu– > n’u- is unique.

In case of *keu-, *geu-, *xeu-, *skeu- we can see quite a normal change into ču, žu, šu, sču without -j-. However, really only a few stems can be reconstructed as *keu- and *geu- and have cognates with the back row. All the other stems can be analyzed as *kjeu-, *gteu-, *zeu-, *seu-. If this is true, we can see that typical reflexes of *zeu- and *seu- are žu- and šu-, but for some cases:

- expressive and onomatopoetic stems (ž’uz’a, s’ukat’, s’us’ukat’);
- stems with possible alternation u / ou / eu (sju, zuk);
- župeľ, z’upeľ (ž’upeľ is possibly dialectal or archaic).

Thus, the change *seu- > šu, *zeu- > žu is regular in cases of lack of the related stems with initial s-, z-. If stems with initial s-, z- exist, then the change s > š is forbidden. This conclusion helps us to explain the palatalized s’ instead of š < sj in the series of pronouns descendant from s’i “this”: s’e and s’o “this”, “it”, s’ego (Gen. sing. masculine and neutral), s’đu (“to here”), all are from *sj- < protol. *ki-. At the same time, in some Slavic idioms there is the following change: s > š, z > ž or lack of phonetic distinction between them, for example, šizyj < sizyj “dove-colored” (Old Pskov idiom). In Polish exists a change of palatalized s, z, t, and d into hissing sounds. These changes can be linked.

The reflexes of *teu- > -t’u, *deu- > -d’u have three ways of being changed: depalatalization t’u– > tu–, d’u– > du–; change into sibilant or hissing (župa, žopa, čužoj, čop < čup, cudzy); preservation of t’u–, d’u– (t’ukat’, d’upa) and, as a variant, new palatalization (dziuplo, ciupaga).
Also, here we see irregular cases of -o- (high ö like ě?) instead of -u- in palatalized stems (possibly, archaic forms).

Taking into account the Bulgarian form čužd of it, we should deny transcriptions like ščužd or št’užd, spelling štužd; stužd may express the fricative pronunciation in dialects like s’už[d], šuž[d], by the way, three cases of such spelling may indicate the peculiarities of northern Russian dialects. Ciupiki and ciupaga in Polish may be the cognates to čop, čopik < čup, čupik in Russian.

Reflexes of *veu- are absent because of the lack of *w-w- stems in the proto-IE. Reflexes of *meu- are also absent in Slavic, or, as a variant, the cluster *meu- can be a case of the delabelization: (¬)myk’ < proto-IE *mũ-, *mũ-, *meu-, *mou-; this stem is unique. Reflexes of *peu- have not been found or this cluster has changed, like *pou- and *pou-, into *pu-: pux, puxnut’. All cases of pl’u- are the results of *pj(a/o/e)u- (pl’uju) or *pleu- (pl’uš’it’, pl’uxat’). The same is true for the reflexes of *beu- > bu- (nabuxnut’) and *pj(a/o/e)u- > bl’u-.

The change beu- > bl’u- is demonstrated by the word bl’udo “dish” and the stem bl’us-, bl’ud- in bl’usti, sobl’udat’, pl’udat “to respect”, “to observe”. The word bl’udo is a borrowing from one of the German languages and may reflect the secondary j- in that languages (something like *bjuda-, *bjoda-, see bjerk, björk “birch” etc. in the Scandinavian branch).

The etymology of the stem bl’us-, bl’ud- also is quite complicated. This stem appears only in Old Church Slavonic, and from here in Russian and Belorussian. In all the other Slavonic this stem doesn’t exist. This stem is bookish and does not belong to the basic word stock. The most widespread forms are sobl’udat’, nabl’udat’, then sobl’ust’i; perfective forms of nabl’ust’i and bl’ust’i are almost not used. It shows us the possibility that the forms sobl’udat’, nabl’udat’ are primary, all the rest are the examples of back-formation made by analogy: sobl’udat’, nabl’udat’ => sobl’ust’i, nabl’ust’i => bl’ust’i. In the middle position -b’- might be mixed up with -bj- and, in a result, changed into -bl’-, like, for example, verbl’ud “a camel” < vel’b’ud < vel’b’udu < *veliţbodă.<br>

(It is interesting to note that in Western dialects of Bulgarian we can see -j- instead of -l’- in all positions: bjuvam, bjuvam, buvoč, pjuska, pjoska, pjuvam and also jijak < l’il’ak ‘a lilac’. In the cases of *pj(e/o/a)u, *bj(e/o/a)u it looks like a preservation of -j-. Whether this -j- can be omitted in the real pronunciation?). Thus, even the stem beud- should be rejected as an illustration of the change *beu- > *bju- > *bl’u and *-eu > *ju- > *-’u.

4. Conclusion

In the open syllable -eu- is preserved like -ev- or -ov-, -ēu- like -ēv- or -av-, originally depending on row; -iv- appears after the palatalized consonants.

The brief study of various examples proposed to us to illustrate the change eu > ju > ’u in the closed syllables really doesn’t prove this assertion, and, in most cases, shows us just the opposite.

We have no real traces of this hypothetical prosthetic sound -j-. The real change is eu > ũ (possibly eu > ö > ŭ) and this interesting vowel influences the previous consonants in different ways. Some consonants in the position before ũ are changed by the standard rules, but the rules of changes of the other consonants depend on the various factors. These factors can really prohibit, cancel or modify these mutations. Also, we can see a connection between this distribution and some other phenomena in the Slavic languages. The further study of all these
phenomena is an upcoming trend, that could help us to understand grammatical and phonetic peculiarities better.