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THE BALTO-SLAVIC WORD FOR ‘CRANE’
AND ITS COGNATES

Abstract. Balto-Slavic *gerHōu, obl. *gerHu- from Indo-European *ǵerH₂ōu,
*grH₂u- beside *gerH₂-H₁ēn, *grH₂-H₁n- reflected in other languages.

Keywords: Balto-Slavic; Indo-European; etymology; crane.

On the basis of Lith. gérvė, Latvian dzẽrve, Prussian gerwe, Czech žeráv,
Serbo-Croatian žërav, and Latin grūs I reconstruct Balto-Slavic *gerHōu, obl.
*gerHu-, from Indo-European *ǵerH₂ōu, with depalatalization before *r in
*grH₂u- (cf. Meillet 1894; Steensland 1973), with laryngeal metathesis in
Latin grūs (cf. Schrijver 1991, 246). Gąsiorowski objects (2013, 57) that
the metathesis is unexpected after a syllabic segment. The objection is invalid,
as is clear from Vedic grīṣmā- ‘summer, hot season’ < *gʷrH₂-i-,
agrū- ‘virgin, unmarried woman’ < *ngʷruH₂- < *ngʷrH₂-uH₂-, Greek βγιθύς
‘heavy, oppressive’ < *gʷrH₂-i- (Lubotsky 2011, 110). Baltic created a
nom. sg. form in *-ē on the basis of the oblique cases of consonant stems,
e.g. Lith. žemė, īpė, sāulė, gilė, mūsė, pelė, gérvė, OPr. semmē, ape, saule, gile,

Czech žeráv and Serbo-Croatian žërav show the expected long reflex
of posttonic *ō in Slavic. The stressed short vowel in Slovene žerjav and
S/Cr. žerav was evidently taken from the regular acute suffix -avъ, cf. Slovene
lokāv, rjav, S/Cr. lūkav, ‘shrewed’, rjav ‘bad’. The S/Cr. variant ždrål reflects
*ždrāvъ, with *žv- < *že- in the end-stressed forms (cf. Kortlandt 1985b).
Contrary to Gąsiorowski’s claim, there is no evidence for such forms as
**žeravъ (a) or **žeravъ (b) beside the only correct form *žëravъ (c), which
continues the original acc. sg. form of Balto-Slavic *gerHōu. Gąsiorowski’s
objection that the expected acc. sg. ending would be *-ōm (2013, 57) is
invalid because the attested form (Old Russian žeravъ < *-ōuim) was evidently
adapted to the vocalism of the nom. sg. form. His misunderstanding of the Slavic material ("a hard-to-explain non-acute vowel in the second syllable" of S/Cr. žērāv and "there is a neoeacute [...] in Cz. žeráv" because "the old circumflex yields a short vowel" in Czech) is clearly the result of Jasanoff’s misleading theories (on which see Kortlandt 2004; 2005; 2009). There is no evidence for Gąsiorowski’s reconstruction of a compound *gerH₂ō-H₂aui- from which Lith. gérėvė and Latin grūs are derived by haplology and irregular syncopes.

Elsewhere (1985a, 121) I have drawn attention to the coexistence of derivatives in *-u- and *-Hn-, e.g. Lith. šiūvas ‘grey’, mulūvas ‘reddish’ beside Russian sērna ‘roe deer’, Latvian mēlns ‘black’, Prussian sirwis, Greek μελᾶς, also Lith. važnas ‘raven’ (for *važvas) beside vārna ‘crow’, Latin corvus, cornīx. In the word family of ‘crane’ we similarly find Latin grūs < *grH₂us beside Greek γέρωνος, γέρην < *gerH₂-H₁(e)n(os), Middle Welsh garan < *g(e)rH₂-H₁(e)n(os) (cf. Schrijver 1995, 79f.), Old English cran, Middle High German kran < *grH₂-H₁n(os) with vocalization of the suffixal laryngeal, perhaps vocalization of the radical laryngeal in Old Saxon krōn (cf. Kroonen 2011, 307f.). The expected cognates of Greek γέρην, γέρωνος and Latin grūs in Armenian are *ker, *kērn (with restoration of the initial velar) and *krūh (before the metathesis at stage PA 15 of Kortlandt 2003, 31), acc. sg. *krukn < *gruH₂m (with oralization of the laryngeal, cf. Kortlandt 2003, 57f.). If *kērn was reanalyzed as the acc. sg. form of a monosyllable *kēr (with analogical lengthened grade), the attested form kṛunk < *kiрукn (with metathesis, cf. Gąsiorowski 2013, 62) may be a contamination of the two words.

**BALTŲ-SLAVŲ ‘GERVĖ’ IR ATITIKMENYS**

**Santrauka**

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