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A NOTE ON THE SLAVIC SUPPLETION SERIES *XODITI ~ *ŠЬDLЪ ~ *JЬDǪ "TO GO"

Abstract

*In this article, the suppletion of Slavic *jьdǫ ~ *šьdlъ is examined and the long-established connection between the latter and *xoditi revisited with the conclusion that the two forms may not be related after all. The bias giving preference in the reconstruction to the palatalisation of the initial *x- over other possible sources of PSl. š- and to the ruki rule change of *s > *š > *x over other sources of initial *x- in Slavic needs to be reconsidered.*

Key words
Suppletion; Slavic; reconstruction.

In Slavic studies, the conundrum of the suppletion in the verb "to go" is notorious. Etymologically, the least problematic – though certainly not un-problematic, is the form of the present *jьdǫ. The communis opinio (based on Kortlandt 1979) is that it goes back to the reanalysed PIE 2sg. act. impv. of the *h_1ei root "to go" with cognates all over the map (for the formation of athematic impv. e.g. Gk. ἴθι, Skr. *ihi*, Av. *idi* from PIE *h_1i-d^hi). This analysis makes sense on all accounts: 2sg. impv. is a key form in the paradigm (along with 3sg.ind.act.), the root is relatively weak (basically only a diphthong in post-PIE times) and reinforcing it by the re-analysis of the *h_1i-d^hi into *h_1id^h-i also makes good sense, seeing as the original PIE imperative was being replaced by the optative (with the *–i- marker) in BSl., which accounts for the length in PSl. *jьdi,* instead of **jьdь, one way or another.

On the other hand, the etymological relation of *xoditi and šьdlъ is far from obvious though irresistible to many. The reasoning is flawed in my opinion since important alternatives are disregarded once the abductive conclusion is reached, which goes as follows:

1) *šъd- is member of the suppletive paradigm of *jьdǫ "go" in the *l*-participle, the originally PIE pf. participle and the nominal derivation in *–st-[1]. The sup-

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[1] Czech *příští* „next" and Old Czech adv. *příštie*, have been analysed as derived from *xod as

pletion of the paradigm is the result of the phonological distance and irregularity of the relation between the two roots. (Note: as Gk. Ζεὺς ~ Διός show, synchronic suppletion can easily result from other sources than merger of two paradigms which is only the most frequent source of suppletion, not the only one). In other words, *jьdǫ lacks regular participles, *šьd- lacks a regular finite form.

2) As the next step in reconstruction, Slavic roots of similar semantics come to mind and are discarded one by one until the verb *xoditi and the noun *xodъ surface (well, maybe they are the first that come to mind which is part of the problem). They are semantically close enough to „go", indeed almost synonymous, and formally compatible on the diachronic level to a certain degree (at least *x-back vowel-d and *š-front vowel-d are). Note that since *jьd- is suppletive, it does *not* come to mind at all. It is part of the explanandum and invisible apparently as a possible explanans, though it is *close* (identical, but that is just a degree of closeness) to *šьdlъ semantically, and it even shares more phonological material with *šьd- than *xodъ does.

3) Therefore, the best way to account for *šьd- is to connect it to *xod and take counter-evidence as irregularity.

Not necessarily wrong, of course – the conclusion. Not the procedure leading to it.

PIE *h_1ei and its continuation in BSl. are still to the present the most general and least marked motion verbs and it is the easiest solution to treat them as such in BSl. Therefore the pairing with *xod- is peculiar and striking (NB the fact that "go" verbs usually exhibit some sort of suppletion cross-linguistically does not make the choice of the particular alternating verbal root obvious in retrospect).
This leads to the most problematic form, *šьd-. The original and missing finite form should have been something like *šeid- > *šīd- to allow for zero-grade *šid-, expected for *l*-participles. But no such verb is attested. On the other hand, the proper and attested participle of *xoditi is *xodilъ. There is no easy way to derive *šьd- from *xod. In the *e*-grade, which we would expect of the basic verb, either a present *šedǫ or more likely, seeing as it is suppletive to a present verb, an aorist *šědъ would be expected. In order to connect the two roots, either *-o- has to be derived from *–ь- or vice versa, or perhaps both from some third element. The –ь- could be accounted for by the change from (presumably) *e, but though this

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*pri-šьs-tьje, that is a *-t- derivation of the presumed zero grade *xid-. Note also that Polish *przyjście*, which Rejzek (2001:560) connects to the Czech etymon, is really a noun „coming, advent" parallel to OCS šьstъе or šьstvъе. Its distribution in Slavic suggests that it easily may be a new formation in OCS translating Gk. παρουσία „presence, coming", imported into West Slavic only later, thus based on morphological relations of *šьd- and *id- already established in the PSl. stage. Note that a pre-form *pri-šьd-stьje, without the early BSl. *TT > sT* dissimilation would yield exactly the same result as *pri-šьs-tьje.

line of reasoning is not without followers (Boryś 2006: 600–1), it is without good parallels.

The expected *l*-participle to the innovated Early PSl. *idom* "I go", the one replaced by *šьdlъ*, is *ʲidlo-* which would have given a putative Late PSl. *jьdlъ*. The *l*-participle to non-existent *šedǫ* would have been a Late PSl. *šedlъ*. One possible explanation is therefore that the two forms contaminated each other (which sounds strange, but consider such forms as Slovak *išiel* with the analogical *i-* from 1sg. *idem*) or were at least on the deep level triggers for analogy. The *i*-vocalism would go back to the *i* root, the *š* to the root *šed* (pace Kortlandt 1988: 394 *inter alios*).

Another possibility is re-examining the reasons for connecting the *š* in *šьdlъ* with *x-*. Had there been no *xoditi* to provoke a bias in favour of *x-*, it would have been natural and logical to examine all the possible sources of *š* in this position in Slavic. There is to my knowledge only one other possible source – the initial *š-* could go back to an earlier *sj*. A root *sjedʰ*, which would explain the form neatly, is unattested and perhaps suspect so that we're left only with the possibility that the two phonemes are not tautoradical[2]. A reanalysis of */-s jьdlъ*, along the lines of *sъn jemь > sъ němь* is tempting, but the candidates for the Auslaut *-s* at this stage are few: for pragmatic reasons only preverbs and particles would either form a compound or at least form a natural phrase that would be frequent enough to allow reanalysis of its components.

Some of the PIE preverbs with by-forms in *-s* survive in Slavic. *eǵ-s* is the source of PSl. *iz* "from, of", which nevertheless most likely comes from the asigmatic variant. *ūps* "up", which would have given *vys* and would be a good candidate is only found lexicalised in *vysokъ* "high". *ūd* "out", which also had a by-form *ūds*, survives only in the preverb *vy-*, not as a separate preposition. That is promising: *šьdlъ* would be from *vys-jьdlъ > *vysjьdl > *vyšьdlъ* reanalysed as *vy+šьdlъ*. The problem is that *uds* apparently gave Slavic *vъz*, not **vъs*. Such reanalyses are however frequent with other preverbs at this stage in Slavic.

As for *xoditi*, the only thing that can be said with certainty, is that it *does* mean "go" and that it *is* a Slavic root. Apart from problems of historical phonology of Slavic, there are difficulties in its reconstruction that are not without interest. I will reassemble the sequence somewhat to make the logical inconsistency more apparent. The steps are as follows:

1) There is the Gk. word ὁδός "road" which by internal reconstruction points to a Proto-Gk. (but not necessarily PIE) *sodós* which lacks cognates in Greek but is further analysable morphologically as belonging with other Gk. nouns of this structure like τομός to the large group of nomina agentis or actionis. This

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2   Or tautomorhic? Perhaps not worth the trouble of coining a term I have never needed before and may never need again.

particular derivative mechanism is of PIE origin and has parallels elsewhere. A hypothetical *sed „to do something that might result in a road or way" itself complies with the requirements to be met by a PIE root. Ergo we posit a PIE verbal root *sed. In most IE languages (probably in most languages anywhere), words for „road" are derivatives (if analysable at all) of verbs of motion („carry", „go", „ride" etc.) or cutting (less frequent, but still common, the road in the sense of a path for a vehicle which may have to be cleared of obstacles to allow passage, cf. German *Bahn*, Czech. *cesta*) and *sed is naturally reconstructed with the sense „go".

2) If there is already a PIE root *sed, as is the case, two explanations are possible. Original homonymy and original polysemy. Homonymy may explain why there is no *sed "go" attested outside the nominal derivatives. The homonymy of two semantic opposites ("move" vs. "assume/remain in a position" i.e. the aorist root *sed "sit down") is not likely to be long-lived: and that is exactly what we find. Which is obviously circular. Polysemy requires us to derive "go" (or in fact "road"!) from "to sit down". This is the line followed in LIV: 514.

3) For a root to make it to PIE (and for a word in Greek to be provably of PIE origin), a cognate is then required. The vocabulary of other IE languages is to be examined next. And that is where the otherwise obscure Slavic *xoditi comes to mind. LIV connects both Slavic *xoditi and Gk. ὁδός to *sed "sit down". For *xoditi, an iterative present of *sed cannot be ruled out, of course, with the meaning "usually sit" > "frequent" > "usually come and sit" though the semantic derivation is strained and the derivation to "come" > "go" > "a going" > "way", though possible step by step, makes it even less persuasive. (A causative, formed in the same way, is out of question).

There is much pleasure in reuniting two long lost relatives. The *s = *x equation presents no problem in general terms (the *ruki* rule), but the particular context is unfavourable. Initial *x- in Slavic can of course by derived by *ruki* rule from *Ks- and there are indeed a few examples of exactly this development, but not from *s- alone. But, almost uniformly in Slavic studies, the initial *x- of *xod- is regarded as the result of the *ruki* rule after preverbs ending in *-i, *-u and *-r. Why is that? The Greek cognate, obviously. The equation of *o = *o is perfect. So was the equation of *d - *d until Winter's contribution[3]. And both nouns are *o*-stems, though masculine in Slavic and feminine[4] in Greek.

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[3]   Regardless of whether one agrees with the validity of the law as formulated by the Leiden School, there is something funny going on before PIE (BSl.) mediae usually – but not in *sed. Note that the homonymic PIE *sed "sit" apparently does undergo Winter's lengthening in the root aor. *sědъ*. But here analogy might have played a role. (Note that Kortlandt op.cit. refutes the hypothetical *-d- present in *jьd- and other present forms on the basis of the absence of Winter's law lengthening.)

[4]   Rather denoting a *process* originally. The shift from „going" to „way" is frequent, e.g. Eng.

It is with the reconstruction of the initial *x- that the same blind spot appears as with the preference of *x over *sj in *šьdl above. The *ruki*-rule is not the only possible source for initial *x-, only the one best described and longest known (therefore the first candidate for explanation). I hypothesized earlier that a root of the shape *gʰedʰ could be behind the noun, which could be present in the original form of the OE *gædrian* "gather", Germ. *Gatte* "husband" and the comp. A deverbal noun of the shape *gʰódʰos "gathering" would provide a basis for a later *gʰodʰéje- "to form a gathering, to come to a gathering", from which of course the correct and expected *l*-participle is the well attested, though perhaps late, *xodilъ.

But *gʰ- does not regularly give Slavic *x-. Initial *x*- in Slavic is in most cases (apart from the very few PIE *Ks*- clusters) best explained as coming from an early (pre-palatalisation!) *sk- (in this case from *s*-mobile+*K*, which is productive in Baltic and Germanic) (Bičovský 2008) via *šk- > *šš- > *š-, which then merges with *ruki* *š (possibly elevating it from a mere positional variant of *s to the level of an independent phoneme long before PSl. *sj > *š.) *xoditi may come from some such root. But what is more important, it need not come from *sed at all.

The relation of *xoditi to *xodъ is difficult. The verb is either an iterative of the LIV *Ro-éje* type, or a later *jé*-denominative formation from *xodъ. The noun is either a derivative of the missing basic verb, just as *xoditi, or, which is very unlikely, a back-formation from the verb. If the noun is not derived from a verb, there is little room for further analysis. As to the verb *xoditi, it is difficult to see how an iterative could have been formed on the basis of a non-existent verb – so there must have been one (NB: it could be a case of the "perfect" vocalism of verbs like *mogǫ, but it is still a *jé*-stem). So there probably at one time was *ī "go" beside *šed "go (*vel sim.*)", the former reformed but for the infinitive on the basis of the imperative, the latter lost completely leaving the orphan iterative to taunt future etymologists.

To conclude, I really think the relation of *xoditi and *šьdlъ may be a phantom etymology and the result of an intuitive bias and abduction. The story is nice – but it is not necessarily true.

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way itself. Cf. Dočkalová-Blažek 2011. „Roads" are in general derived either from motion-verbs, or verbs of clearing/cutting especially for forest roads.

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