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THE GERMANIC WORD FOR ‘FLESHY PART OF THE BODY, CALF’: A NEW RECONSTRUCTION AND ETYMOLOGY

Two cognate groups of appellatives appear in the West Germanic languages: OE. *līra* m. ‘muscle, soft parts of the body’, E. *lire* ‘flesh, muscle, brawn’, MDu. *liere* f. ‘fleshy part of the leg, calf’ (< PGm. **līzán-*) and MLG. *liese* ‘thin skin’, LG. *liëse* f. ‘layer of fat around the kidneys’ (< PGm. **līsan-*). The words under discussion straightforwardly derive from the Proto-Indo-European archetype **lēh₁is-on-* (gen. sg. **leh₁is-n-ós*) m. ‘soft, fleshy part of the body’, which is closely related to the Proto-Indo-European adjective **lēh₁isos* (*o*-stem) ‘soft, lean (of meat)’, cf. Lith. *liesas* adj. ‘lean (of meat), thin, non-greasy, slim, skimmed, infertile’, Latv. *liēss* adj. ‘lean (of meat), thin, non-greasy, slim, infertile (of soil)’, Gk. *λεῖος* adj. ‘level, smooth, rubbed, well-ground’. Other nouns derived from the same adjective frequently denote ‘soft organs (of the body)’ in Indo-European languages, e.g. Latv. *liēsa* f. ‘spleen’; Hitt. *lēši* n. ‘liver’; Arm. *leard* ‘liver’; Toch. A *lyyā* (pl.) ‘parts of the body’, Toch. B *lyyāsa* (pl.) ‘members (of the body)’ (< PIE. **leh₁is-*).

In his *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic* Guus Kroonen (2013: 330) reconstructs the Proto-Germanic noun **lehizan-* m. ‘fleshy part of the body, calf’ on the basis of the following lexical data:

1.1. OE. *līra* m. ‘muscle, soft parts of the body’, E. *lire* ‘flesh, muscle, brawn’, MDu. *liere* f. ‘fleshy part of the leg, calf’.

Kroonen (2013: 330) provides the following comments on the suggested reconstruction:

“An etymologically problematic word. The reconstruction **ligizan-* (thus Pokorny IEW: 673) must be abandoned in view of MDu. *liere*. The material, in fact, straightforwardly points to a proto-form **līran-*. The alternative, **lehizan-*, can theoretically be connected to PGm. **lawiz-* ‘ham, thigh’, but only if this formation developed from **lok^w-es-* by Verner’s law, which is only one of many possibilities”.

It is necessary to state that Kroonen's reconstruction **lehizan-* is superfluous. The lexical material, given in section 1.1., clearly suggests the Proto-Germanic archetype **līran-* (m.) or perhaps **līzán-* (m.), if we take into account Verner's law. The latter alternative seems to be well-founded, as the lexical evidence can be supplemented by the following West Germanic data:

1.2. MLG. *liese* m. 'thin skin' (Teuchert 1972: 330) and LG. dial. (Brandenburg) *liëse* f. 'layer of fat around the kidneys' (< PGm. **līsan-* m./f.).

It is not unjustified to posit two related Proto-Germanic archetypes **līzán-* and **līsan-*, reflecting an old difference in stress. The same accentual differentiation can be found in other Proto-Germanic *n*-stem nouns, e.g.

2.1. ON. *heri* m. 'hare', Icel. *héri* m. 'id.', OSw. *heri* m. 'id.', Sw. *hare* m. 'id.', Nw. *hare* m. 'id.', Elfd. *eri* m. 'id.', ODa. *haræ* 'id.', Da. *hare* 'id.'; OE. *hara* m. 'id.', E. *hare* 'id.' (< PGm. **hazán-* m.) (Orel 2003: 64; Kroonen 2013: 223-224).

2.2. OFri. *hasa* m. 'id.', OSax. *haso* m. 'id.', MDu. *hase* m. 'id.', Du. *haas* c. 'id.', MLG. *hase* m. 'id.', OHG. *haso* m., G. *Hase* m. 'id.' (< PGm. **hásan-* m.) (Orel 2003: 64; Kroonen 2013: 223-224).

The alternation between **hásan-* (attested in West Germanic) and **hazán-* (in Anglo-Nordic) points to an originally mobile accentual paradigm: nom. sg. **hásō*, gen. sg. **haznáz* (Schaffner 2001: 528, 544-546; Kroonen 2013: 223) < IE. **kásōn* m. 'hare', cf. OPrus. *sasins* m. 'hare' (Derksen 2015: 564), W. *ceinach* f. 'hare', OInd. *śasá-* m. 'hare' (< Indic **śasá-* m.), Khot. *saha-* m. 'id.' (< Iran. **saha-* m.), MPers. *sahōg*, Pashto *sōe* m. 'hare', Yidgha *sīy* 'id.', Parachi *sahōk* 'id.' (< Iran. **saha-ka-* m.) (Bailey 1979: 423). Also Lat. *carō*, gen. sg. *carnis* f. 'meat' may belong to the same family of words, if it originally means 'hare's meat' (cf. the hypothetical paradigm of IE. **kás-ōn*, gen. sg. **kás-(e)nés* m. 'hare'). Undoubtedly, the same accentual paradigm should be suggested for the Proto-Germanic alternation between **līsan-* (in West Germanic) and **līzán-* (in Anglo-Dutch). In other words, the Proto-Germanic word for 'fleshy part of the body, calf' originally had mobile stress (nom. sg. **līsō*, gen. sg. **līznáz*).

It is obvious that the lexical data cannot confirm the suggested relation to Proto-Germanic **lawiz-* 'ham, thigh', cf. ON. *lær* n. 'ham, thigh', Far. *lær* n. 'id.', OSw. *lār* n. 'id.', Elfd. *lār* n. 'id.', OE. *lēow* n. 'id.' (de Vries 2000: 372; Kroonen 2013: 329), or to the Indo-European root **lek-* or **lēk-* 'Gliedermaßen', also 'biegen, winden, springen, zappeln' (Pokorny 1959: 673). Is there another possibility to explain the origin of the Proto-Germanic word for 'fleshy part of the body, calf'?

In my opinion, the Proto-Germanic word in question goes back to the Indo-European archetype **léis-on-* m. 'soft, fleshy part of the body' (< PIE. **léh₁is-on-*). It is evidently related to the Indo-European adjective **leis-o-s* 'soft, lean

(of meat)' (< PIE. **lēh₁isos*), attested securely in Baltic (cf. Lith. *liesas* adj. 'lean, thin, non-greasy (of meat, milk, animal), slim (of man), skimmed, infertile (of soil)', Latv. *liēss* adj. 'lean, thin, non-greasy, slim, infertile (of soil)' < Baltic **lēisas* < PIE. **lēh₁isos*; Smoczyński 2007: 351; Derksen 2015: 284), Greek (cf. Gk. *λεῖος* adj. 'level, smooth, plain, flat', metaphorically 'smooth, soft (of wind, words)', if from PIE. **lēh₁isos*), and perhaps in Slavic (cf. Pol. *lichy* adj. 'insufficient, inadequate, poor, miserable, meagre, mean, wretched, frail', Cz. *lichý* adj. 'lonesome, isolated, empty', Slovak *lichý* adj. 'deceptive, empty, incorrect; (dial.) poor, insignificant' < Proto-Slavic **lixъ* adj. 'insufficient, deprived of strength and health, dispossessed'; as proposed by Machek 1957: 269; Bańkowski 2000: 37; Králik 2015: 327). There are some expressions in the East Baltic languages which clearly show that the Baltic root **lēis-* can refer to the fleshy or soft part of the body, cf. Lith. *liesà mėsà* 'lean meat', Latv. *liesa gaļa* 'lean, fasten meat', Latv. *liesums* m. 'meat without fat' (= Lith. *liesumas* m. 'leanness, thinness'). What is more, the Proto-Indo-European root **leh₁is-* can also refer to soft internal parts of the body, e.g.

3.1. Latvian *liēsa* f. 'spleen' (< East Baltic **lēisā* f. < PIE. **leh₁is-éh₂*). A related word is also attested in Lithuanian *liešà, lieša*, dial. *lielaša, lielišà, lienešà* f. 'spleen's indisposition, twinge in a side, strong pain of stomach, gripes / nedomaganie śledziony, klucie w boku, ostry ból brzucha' (Smoczyński 2007: 350). It is not impossible that the Lithuanian word in question goes back to East Baltic **leila-lēišā*, literary 'great (i.e. swollen) spleen' (cf. Lith. dial. [Samogitian] *leĩlas* adj. 'great, large, big', Latv. *liēls*, dial. *leĩls* adj. 'big, great, large; adult, important') by means of haplology (and also the progressive dissimilation *l – l > l – n*). Undoubtedly, the Latvian word for 'spleen' was derived from the East Baltic adjective **lēisas* 'lean (of meat), thin, non-greasy' (cf. Latv. *liēss* adj., Lith. *liesas* adj. 'id.') by means of the usual accentual opposition.

3.2. Hitt. *lēši, līšši* (nom.-acc. sg. *le-e-ši*, dat.-loc. sg. *li-iš-ši*) n. 'liver' (Güterbock, Hoffner 1980: 72; Weeks 1985: 57–58; Tischler 1990: 54–55; Puhvel 2001: 97–98; Kloekhorst 2008: 525) probably represents PIE. **leh₁is-i* or perhaps **leh₁is-ə₂* n. 'soft organ (of the body)'. According to Puhvel (2001: 98), the Hittite word for 'liver' may be "an adjective originally qualifying a lost neuter cognate of IE **yek^wṛ(i)*". In fact, the Proto-Indo-European adjective **lēh₁isos* 'soft, lean (of meat)' is the best solution for Puhvel's excellent conjecture (see also 3.3 and 3.1).

3.3. Arm. *leard* 'liver' seems to contain **leh₁is-* in the initial part. In my opinion, it seems to represent a compound **leh₁is-jek^wṛt-* (originally 'soft liver').

3.4. Toch. B *lyiyo* (sg.) 'member' and Toch. A *lyyā* (pl.) 'parts of the body', Toch. B *lyyāsa* (pl.) 'members (of the body)' (Adams 1999: 567) should

apparently be derived from PIE. **leh₁is-ə₂s-* (nom. sg. n.) ‘soft member of the body’ and PIE. **leh₁is-ə₂s-ə₂* (nom. pl. n.) ‘fleshy parts of the body’, respectively.

The ample lexical evidence collected from a wide range of Indo-European languages clearly demonstrates that the West Germanic terms in question (namely OE. *līra* m. ‘muscle, soft parts of the body’, E. *lire* ‘flesh, muscle, brawn’, MDu. *liere* f. ‘fleshy part of the leg, calf’; MLG. *liese* ‘thin skin’, LG. *liëse* f. ‘layer of fat around the kidneys’) derive from the Proto-Indo-European archetype **léh₁is-on-* m. ‘soft, fleshy part of the body’.

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