

### On Russian *meč*, Gothic *meki*.

Attempts to give etymologies of Russ. *meč* and Goth. *meki* 'sword' have given rise to a large literature. The following seeks to summarize this and to add certain comments.

The Slav. cognates of *meč* are listed by B. LJAPUNOV (1), E. BERNEKER (2), and M. VASMER (3): O.C.S. *měčь* and *mečь*, O. Russ. *mečь*, Russ. *meč*, gen. *mečá*, Ukr. *meč* and *míč*, gen. *mečá*, B. Russ. *meč*, Pol. *miecz*, Cz. and Sk. *meč*, U. Sorb. *mječ*, L. Sorb. *mjac*, possibly Polab. *méc*, Bulg. *meč*, Sle. *měč*, gen. *měča*, S. Cr. *mǎč*, gen. *mǎča*, Serb. C.S. *měčь*.

Reconstruction of a single Com. Sl. proto-form appears to be impossible. S. Cr. *mǎč* and possibly Ukr. *meč* require *\*měčь* (4), but Ukr. *meč* is most likely a secondary development through analogical levelling (5). Both O.C.S. *měčь* and *mečь* are attested, the former in Zo., Cloz., Ps., Mar., Euch., Suprl., and the latter in the last three of these mss. (6). According to P. DIELS (7) the grapheme <e> is used for <ь> 'mehr oder minder häufig' in Mar., Euch., and Ps., 'nicht selten' in Suprl. and Cloz., but 'seltener' in Zo., while <ь> is used for <e> 'zuweilen im Ps.' but 'nur in geringerem Umfange in Zo.'. This would suggest that *měčь* is the normal O.C.S. form, which would agree with S. Cr. *mǎč* and Serb. C. S. *měčь*, although VASMER mentions only *mečь*. G. SHEVELOV (8) sees the *\*měčь*-forms as probably "due to a relatively late folk etymology bringing together *mečь* with *měčati* 'throw, cast'", while BERNE-

(1) *Issledovanie o jazyke sinodal'nogo spiska 1-oj novgorodskoj letopisi* (= *Issledovanija po russkomu jazyku*, Vol. 1, Nr. 1), St. Petersburg 1889, pp. 65ff.

(2) *Slavisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg 1908-13, Vol. 2, pp. 29-30.

(3) (= FASMER), *Ėtimologičeskij slovar' russkogo jazyka*, Moscow 1967, Vol. 2, pp. 612-3.

(4) LJAPUNOV, p. 70.

(5) BERNEKER; cf. M. K. HRUNS'KYJ and P. K. KOVAL'OV, *Narysy z istoriji ukrajins'koji movy*, Lvov 1941, pp. 60-1.

(6) L. SADNIK and R. AITZEMÜLLER, *Handwörterbuch zu den altkirchenslavischen Texten*, Heidelberg 1955, pp. 55-6.

(7) *Altkirchenslavische Grammatik*, Heidelberg 21963, pp. 101-2.

(8) *A Prehistory of Slavic*, New York 1965, p. 169.

KER (citing H. PETERSEN (1)) and V. VONDRÁK (2) allow for a development of  $\text{ь} < \text{Slav. } e$ . The rare variant Ukr. *mič* (3), the consistent use of O. Russ. *mečъ*, especially in the Ostromir Evangelium (4), and the complete absence of oblique forms in Slavic showing a dropped *jer'* (5), however, point to \**mečъ* as the principal Com. Sl. form, beside \**mьčъ* as a variant.

Goth. *meki* is attested only in acc. sg. (Eph. 6,17); its known Gmc. cognates are Runic *makija* (2nd half of 3d c., A.D.), Crimean Goth. *mycha* ( $y = i$ ), O. I. *mčkir*, O. S. *māki*, and O. E. *méce*, *māce-*. The etymological connection by A. STENDER-PETERSEN (6) with \**makōn* 'knead' is unfounded, as is V. KIPARSKY'S contention (7) that O. E. *méce* does not agree with the other Gmc. forms (8). Reconstruction gives Com. Gmc. \**mækja-* ( $\text{æ} = \text{e}^1$ ).

V. THOMSEN (9) cites Finnish *miekka* 'sword', Estonian *mõk*, Votian *mōekka*, and Livonian *mōk*, *mūk*, which are borrowed from Gothic, most recently according to A. D. KYLSTRA (10). BERNEKER views Lith. *mėčius*, *-iaus* 'sword' (11) as a loan from 'Slavic'.

A large number of Caucasian forms with various meanings have been suggested as further cognates. G. SCHMIDT (12) cites Dido and Kapucha *mač'a* 'saber', Bagulal (= Kuanada) *mič'a* 'dagger', and Tindi *nīč'i* 'dagger' from the Avaro-Ando-Dido group of N.E. Caucasian (13). W. TOMASCHEK (14) cites Georgian *maχva* 'sharp, sword' from S. Cauca-

(1) KZ 38 (1905), p. 419f.

(2) *Vergleichende slavische Grammatik*, Vol. 1, 1924, pp. 61-2.

(3) LJAPUNOV, p. 70; B. HRINČENKO, *Slovar' ukrajins'hoji movy*, Berlin 1924, Vol. 1, p. 957.

(4) LJAPUNOV, pp. 66-8; I. SREZNEVSKIJ, *Materialy dlja slovarja drevne-russkogo jazyka po pamjatnikam*, St. Petersburg 1893-1912, Vol. 2, pp. 131ff.

(5) LJAPUNOV, pp. 65-6.

(6) *Slavisch-germanische Lehnwortkunde* (= Göteborgs Kungl. Vetenskaps- och Vitterhets-Samhälles Handlingar, 4. F., Vol. 31, Nr. 4), Göteborg 1927.

(7) *Die gemeinlavischen Lehnwörter aus dem Germanischen* (= AASF, Series B, Vol. 32, Nr. 2), Helsinki 1934, p. 139.

(8) But compare S. FEIST, *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der gotischen Sprache*, Leiden 1939, p. 352, and E. SIEVERS, *Angelsächsische Grammatik*, Halle 1893, § 91 f.n., with E. SIEVERS and K. BRUNNER, *Altenglische Grammatik*, Halle (Saale) 1951, § 62 f.n. 2.

(9) *Über den Einfluß der germanischen Sprachen auf die Finnisch-Lappischen*, Halle 1870, pp. 155-6.

(10) *Geschichte der germanisch-finnischen Lehnwortforschung*, Assen 1961, pp. 77ff. and 163.

(11) A. KURSCHAT, *Lithauisch-deutsches Wörterbuch*, Göttingen 1970, Vol. 2, p. 1383.

(12) Quoted by KIPARSKY, pp. 139-40.

(13) See B. GEIGER *et al.*, *Peoples and Languages of the Caucasus*, 's Gravenhage 1959, for the classification of the Caucas. languages.

(14) *Zeitschrift für die österreichischen Gymnasien* (1875), p. 533.

sian and Lezgian *maχ* 'iron', Udi *mex* 'sickle' from N.E. Caucasian. K. BOUDA (1) relates the above forms to Archi *mača* 'flint', Avar *gamač* 'stone' from the Avaro-Ando-Dido group and Circassian *məʒe* from N.W. Caucasian (2).

BOUDA and MENGES (3) agree that Osman (Turkic) *meč* is a relatively late Slav. loanword, probably from Russian.

FEIST (4) rejects connections with Lat. *mactō*, Ir. *machtaim*. Any relationship with Gk. *μάχαιρα*, *μάχομαι*, or Lat. *mucrō* (5) is also unclear (6).

The central problem has been the source of the form in Slavic. Gmc. origin, proposed by R. LOEWE (7), STENDER-PETERSEN, A. BRÜCKNER (8), and BOUDA, was rejected by BERNEKER and KIPARSKY because *ē*, as then posited for Goth. *meki*, should appear in Slavic as *ě* giving *\*měčь*. Caucas. origin is favored by KIPARSKY, MENGES, and SHEVELOV. The possibility that both the Gmc. and Slav. forms could stem from a third source was suggested early by BERNEKER and A. SOBOLEVSKIJ (9), and later, VASMER.

MENGES (10) discounts the Caucas. forms with *χ* as a source for the Slav. form, viewing a development of *χ* to *č* as improbable, and argues for Dido *mača*. BOUDA also rejects Dido because of its geographic isolation, and as VASMER notes, the stem vowels remain unexplained in any case.

The rejection of Germanic as the source of Slav. *\*mečь/mьčь* rests on the older view that Biblical Goth. *meki* had the long stem vowel *ē*, but neither the quality nor quantity of this vowel is clear, either in Biblical Gothic or other E.Gmc. dialects. J. W. MARCHAND (11) especially has stressed the possibility that vowel length was nondistinctive in

(1) *ZfslPh* 18 (1942), pp. 36-7.

(2) See N. TRUBETZKOY, *WZKM* 37 (1930), p. 83, and K. MENGES, *The Oriental Elements in the Vocabulary of the Oldest Russian Epos, the Igor' Tale* (= *Word*, Vol. 7, Monograph Nr. 1), 1951, pp. 37-8, for other possible cognates.

(3) Cf. preceding f.n.

(4) Cf. f.n. 8, p. 455.

(5) A. JURET, *Dictionnaire étymologique, grec et latin*, Macon 1942, makes this connection.

(6) Cf. A. WALDE and J. B. HOFMANN, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg 1938, Vol. 2, p. 5 but p. 117; J. B. HOFMANN, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Griechischen*, München 1949, p. 186; É. BOISACQ, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, Heidelberg 1950, p. 616.

(7) *KZ* 39 (1906), esp. pp. 315-6.

(8) *AfslPh* 42 (1929), p. 130 and 135.

(9) *AfslPh* 33 (1912), p. 476.

(10) *Oriens* 9 (1956), p. 92.

(11) *General Linguistics* 1 (1955), pp. 79-88.

Gothic (1). E.Gmc.  $\bar{e}$  certainly was raised to  $\bar{i}$  (2), although LOEWE is incorrect in concluding from this that Balkan Germanic must have provided the Slav. form. M. SAMILOV (3) correctly notes that MARCHAND'S vowel system for Gothic would make Com.Sl.  $*ocv\bar{e}$  < Goth. *aketis* (*akeitis* once in Mark 15,36) 'and perhaps even'  $*meč\bar{e}/m\bar{e}č\bar{e}$  < *meki* feasible. The essential point here is that Goth. phonology, once assumed to be understood, is now hotly debated, so that a reevaluation of the etymology is necessary in accordance with contemporary research in Germanic. In turn, the study of Gmc. loanwords in Slavic could have bearing on the current questions in Germanic.

If the etymology of  $*meč\bar{e}/m\bar{e}č\bar{e}$  as loan(s) from Germanic and KIPARSKY'S (4) contention that 'die Slaven gaben in nicht-auslautenden Silben die fremden Laute, besonders deren *Quantität* sehr genau wieder' are correct, then Slavic provides evidence for the phonetic shortening of long Gmc. vowels in E.Gmc. dialects. The claim that Goth. <ai> had a single, monophthongal value is still consistent with the etymologies Com.Sl.  $*xl\bar{e}b\bar{e}$  < Goth. *hlaifs*,  $*xl\bar{e}v\bar{e}$  < *hlaiw*, etc., although we must then assume that the Goth. vowel from Gmc. *ai* was phonetically long.

The similarity of the Caucas. to the Gmc. and Slav. forms cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence, however. TOMASCHEK, MENGES, and others have pointed to the Caucasus as a source for the root on the basis of its metallurgy. Bronze casting from the Near East had reached the areas to the south of Denmark by ca. 1,500 B.C. according to O. KLINDT-JENSEN (5), who also mentions that there are Danish swords of this period whose distinctive shape 'is ultimately derived from the slashing swords of the Near East'. G. VERNADSKY (6) indicates that Goth. swords are of an Alanic (Caucas.) type.

V. POLÁK (7) mentions possible Gmc.-Caucas. contacts and possible derivation of the Caucas. forms with  $\check{c}'$  from forms with  $k'$ , thus providing for agreement between the Gmc. and Caucas. forms at least with respect to their consonants. The hypothesis of early borrowing from Caucasian into Germanic and subsequent transmission from Germanic into Slavic would also help account for the specialized meaning 'sword' in the latter families as opposed to the diverse meanings 'sharp, sword, iron, stone' in Caucasian.

(1) Other Germanicists disagree; cf. T. VENNEMANN, *Language* 47 (1971), pp. 90-132.

(2) Cf. W. KRAUSE, *Handbuch des Gotischen*, München 1968, §§ 29, 33.1, and 55 f.n. 2.

(3) *The Phoneme Jat' in Slavic*, The Hague 1964, p. 96.

(4) Cf. f.n. 7, p. 455.

(5) *Denmark before the Vikings*, New York 1969, pp. 59ff.

(6) *Saeculum* 2 (1951), p. 368.

(7) *Listy Filologické* 70 (1946), p. 29.

Of course, MENGES (1) is quite correct in allowing for a process of borrowing and reborrowing in different epochs and in pointing to the difficulties that stem from the very early age in which swords, and presumably also terms for them, spread into Europe. Identification of an ultimate source of all the various cognates is likely to exceed the resources of linguistic methods (2).

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(1) Cf. f.n. 2, p. 456.

(2) Other literature : V. KIPARSKY, *Annali dell' Istituto universitario orient.*, Napoli, sez. slava I (1959), p. 21 ; V. MARTYNOV, *Slavjano-germanskoe leksičeskoe vzaimodejstvie drevnejšej pory*, Minsk 1963, pp. 217-8.