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Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Iran & the Caucasus*, Vol. 3/4 (1999/2000), pp. 209-212

Published by: [BRILL](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4030785>

Accessed: 04/08/2012 06:41

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KURDISH ETYMOLOGIES

I

GARNIK ASATRIAN

Yerevan

1. **bī(h)n** “*smell, odour*”

Is derived from OIr. ***baud-na-** (***baud-**), with ***-d-(*-t) > -h-(-ø-)** in intervocalic position, a phonetic rule which is commonly shared by Kurdish and Baxtiari dialects, cf.: Kd. buhust “span”, Av. vitasti-, MP. bidast; buhur “ford” < ***wi-tar-**; gu/āhān “udder” < ***gau-dāna-**, Av. gaodāna-, Baxt. gūn, Baluchi gōdān; Baxt. ba/iĥig “bride, daughter-in-law”, Kd. būk (< ***bihuk**) < ***wadū-ka-**; Baxt. bahūn “tent” < ***wi-dāna-**, Bal. gidān, etc. (see in details: *Asatrian, pp. 75-76; Asatrian, Livshits, § V, 4, pp. 84-85; Vahman, Asatrian, p. 70*).

Kd. **bī(h)n** is formed *via* intermediate stages ***bōδn > *būhn**, with the narrowing of **-ū- > -i-**, again a common feature in Kurdish, Baxtiari and some other West Iranian dialects, cf.: Kd., Baxt. xūn/xīn, hīn, mū/mī; Kd. šūr/šīr “sabre”, rūn/rīn “butter”, xūšk/xīšk “sister” (see: *Asatrian, Livshits, § II, p. 83; Vahman, Asatrian, p. 85*).

The development of ***-d- > -h-** is attested also in Middle Persian (*Tafazzoli, p. 195*). However, Prof. A. Perikhanian suggests that it could be a Middle Median phonetic phenomenon, and the forms with this peculiarity in the MP and Parthian are mere borrowings from Median (*Perikhanian, pp. 115-117*).

Kurdish **bī(h)n** is by no means from Av. vaēnā- “nose” (*Tsabolov, p. 44*).

2. **bihīstin, bīstin** “*to hear, listen, hören, zuhören*”

Pres. stem **bihīs/z-**, **bihē**, past participle **bihīst**. This also, probably, comes from OIr. ***baud-** (with **-ta: *busta-**), cf. Av. baod- “to perceive, smell” (< Indo-European ***bheudh-** “wach sein, wecken, beobachten; aufmerksam sein, erkennen, etc.”. - *Pokorny, pp. 150-151*). The first result of the OIr. ***busta-** in Kurdish must have been ***bust-**, which then has developed to ***bīst-**, due to secondary lengthening of original short **-u-** and its normal narrowing to **-i-** (see *previous item*). The intrusion of **-ih-** before a long vowel and after initial **b-** is due to analogy with a large series of words with initial **bih-**.

Kurdish is unique among the Iranian languages in forming the verb “hear” from OIr. ***baud-**; it seems to have preserved the original meaning of the Avestic verb, which has been lost elsewhere in New Iranian.

3. **dāmārī, dēmārī** “*step mother, Stiefmutter*”

An exclusive North Kurdish (Kurmandji) form being, probably, a compound with **dā-** (due to contraction from **dīyā-**, fem. Izafe form of **dē** “mother”) and **-mārī**. The last has not an independent use in the language. Though it is not implied by the speakers as

a separate word, however, it seems to be a kinship term showing a relationship not by blood but by a later marriage. If we consider this term as meaning “step-mother” we would have a pretty decent etymon for it, i.e.: *māṡryā-, with *-ṡr- > -r-/-r- (p’ira “bridge” < *pṛṡu-, ār “fire” < *aṡr-, žār “poison” < *jaṡra-, (pis)-pōr “experienced shepherd” < *wisa(h)-puṡra-, etc.), a genuine Kurdish feature (see: *Asatrian, Livshits*, § VI, 4.2, p.86), and final -yā > -i, again a normal for Kurdish phonetic development (cf. kusī “turtoise” < *kasya-(pa)-, Av. kasyapa-, etc.). From the same OIr. form we have Paštō **maira**, **mara** id.

Belonging to the category of the so called “marked” lexemes, the Kurdish **māri** has gradually undergone the process of semantic fading. The vagueness of meaning was overcome by the tautologous introduction of **dē** “mother” as a redundant determinatus for **māri**, i.e.: **diyā māri** - “step mother”, becoming afterwards **dāmāri**, or **dēmāri**. This “strengthening” semantic device is one of the widespread linguistic universalias.

In Armenian Kurmandji **dāmāri** has become already a general designation of kinship relationship by later marriage, cf.: **bävē dāmāri** “step father”, **kuṛē dāmāri** “step son”, etc. However, the common formant of the step relationship in Kurmandji is the prefix **ziṛ-**, cf.: **ziṛ-dā(yk)** “step mother”, **ziṛ-bāb** “step father”, **ziṛkur** “step son”, **ziṛkič** “stepdaughter”, etc.

Kurdish **dē** (or **dāk**) “mother” is, probably, derived from OIr. ***dā-** < IE ***dhē(i)-** “to suck, (mutterlich) saugen” (*Rix, p.120*).

4. **hāvēn, hēvēn** “leaven, ferment”

Can be derived from OIr. ***ham-madu/a-ya-na-** (***mad-** < IE ***maḡ-** “to leaven, ferment”) by the *Ersatzdehnung* of the vowel in the first syllable, the transition of *-m- > -v- (in details: *Asatrian, Livshits*, § XIX, 2, pp. 95-96; *Asatrian, p.77*), and *-d- > -h- / -ø- (see above, N 1).

The IE (resp. OIr.) root can be traced in Skr. **mādhu-** “honey”, Arm. **macown** “yogurt”, Persian **māst** id., MP **maḡ**, Persian **mul**, **may** “wine”, etc.

5. **kōn** “tent”

Cf.: **kōn dānīn** (*vagirtin*) “to set up a tent”, **kōnē pīṛē** “spider’s web”.

May come from OIr. ***kau-na-** (***kau-** “to dig a hole, well”), perhaps, a sort of underground dwelling place as one of the oldest forms of housing.

6. **kūr** “deep, profound”

Probably, from OIr. ***kau-ra-**, which could normally yield **kōr** or **kūr**; the alteration of initial aspirated / non-aspirated **k-/k-** (as **ṡ-/t-**, etc.) is due to inner Kurdish phonetic developments and is etymologically irrelevant. There are also cognate forms in Manichean MP (**kwl** / **kōl** “pit, hole”) and in Baxtiari (**kūl**, **kīl** “deep”).

The reconstructed OIr. form is based on IE ***kau-l-** (***ku-l-**) “hole, etc.”; here also Skr. **kulyā** “Bach, Graben, Kanal” (*Pokorny, p. 537; Mayrhofer 1986, p.377*).

7. p'āšil(k), p'āxil “*armpit, breast, cuddle*”

These forms seem to be confined to the Northern dialects. They are suffixal formations with p'āš-, p'āx- stems. For the first one we can easily propose as an etymon OIr. *paxša- according to the common rule of the transition of the OIr. group -xš- to -š- (*Asatrian, Livshits, § X, 7, p.88*), cf. OInd. pakṣá- “wing, flank, side”. (From the same OIr. form within the whole of Iranian, we have, perhaps, only Ossetic faks “side”.) Long -ā- is due to compensatory lengthening.

As to the second form, it remains obscure as there is not any case of the preservation of -x- not only in -xš-, but also in -xm-, -xt- and -xšn- groups (*ibid., § X, 5,6,8*).

A parallel suggests itself with Russian pax “bosom, armpit”, which is, of course, very farfetched.

Other Iranian words for “armpit” go back to OIr. *kaša-, cf. Middle Persian kaš (cf.: *dast pat kaš kartan*), Sogdian ʾpkš /əpkaš/ < *upa-kaša-, etc.

8. pasārī “*feaces of small cattle*”

Is fairly derived from OIr. *pasu-sārya(-ka-), i.e. “excrement of sheep”, via *pas-sārī *id.* First component is, naturally, Kd. paz (obl. pēz) “sheep”, from OIr. *pasu-, IE *peku- (*on compounds with pasu- in Avesta see: Duchesne-Guillemin, pp.137-138*). As to the second part of the compound *sārya- (cf. Av. sairyā-), it goes back to IE *sker- “cacare, mist” and is traced also in Paštō sarā, Persian sargīn “cow-dung” (*Eilers, p.12, note 13*). Final -ī is from -ya, as in dāmārī (*see above, N 3*).

9. sīrik “*dandruff, scurf*”

From the same root: *sarya(ka-) (*see previous item*), via *sērik; long -ē- is due to i-Umlaut (*see: Asatrian, Livshits, note 4, p.100*), or, as a less possible variant - because of the epenthetic -i- in the OIr. form (i.e. *sairyā-).

10. rōv “*hair on the private parts of the body*”

From OIr. *rauma- (IE *reu-, *roumṇ-), with *-m- > -v- (*see above, N 4*); cf. OInd. rōman- “hair on the body of men and animals”, Classic Persian rōm(a) “Schamhaare” (*Mayrhofer 1992, p.470*).

11. zōtik, zūtik “*arse hole, anus, haemorrhoids*”

Cf. a Kurdish proverb: *p'ara didim, zōtik dardixim*, i.e.: “When I pay, I will do what I want”, literally: “I pay, (and) take out the haemorrhoids”.

One of the oldest archaic Iranian lexemes preserved in Kurmandji; it is apparently from OIr. *zada-, cf. Av. zaḍah - a daevic opposition to sraoni “back part”. Cognate forms in other IE languages are: Arm. jet, Greek χέξω “tail”, Skr. hadati “cacat”. IE etymon is *ghedos.

12. *zihā, zuhā, ziyā, ziwā* “dry”

Cf.: *zihā bān* “dry out”, *zihā kirin* “to dry out”.

Certainly, is from **zuta-(ka-)*. OIr. **zaw-* is also attested in Manichean Parthian *wzw-/wi-zaw-/* “die (of a plant); be extinguished, wither” (probably, from IE **ǵheu-* “verschwinden, umkommen”); cf.: *ʾwd wyzmryd ʾwd wzwd cw:gwn wʾr systg* “And withers and dies like a broken flower” (*AR VII, 12a*); *ʾwn bzm̄g wzrg ky wzwd tgnbnd* “O große Lampe, welche rasch erlosch” (*M6RI, 1-2.- MIM III, p.20*). On the transition of *-d-/-t- > -h- see above, N 1.

13. *ziviř-in* “to turn, return, sich umwenden, zurückkehren, sich umdrehen”

From **uz-wartya-* (OIr. **wart-*), with *-rt- > -r-/-r̄- (see: *Asatrian, Livshits, § IV, 3, p.84*). Cf. Sogd. (ʾ)zw(ʾ)rt- / (ə)zwart- / “to (re)turn” < **uz-warta-*, *ʾwzʾyrt- /əzwirt-*, Yaghnabi *ziwirt* “cause to turn” < **uz-wartya-* (< **uz-wartaya-*).

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