

Albanian *hundë* ‘nose’ and Faroese, SW Norwegian *skon* ‘snout’

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1. Albanian evidence for PIE reconstruction

Among Indo-Europeanists today, Albanian has acquired, at least unofficially, a discredited reputation as the more or less “useless” Indo-European language branch: it has allegedly retained all too little of the original lexicon, having replaced many everyday words with borrowings from (especially) Slavic, Greek, Latin, and Romance; many other innovations belong to the notoriously shadowy “Ancient Balkan” vocabulary; Albanian often exhibits odd phonological irregularities and aberrant derivational patterns; and Albanian lexemes in general are so short that “anything goes” in etymology, provided your semantic analysis is creative enough. In many cases, Albanian forms are mentioned merely to show the geographical representation of a given lexeme.

This reputation, I would argue, is based on a skewed perception of the actual state of affairs. It is true that we know comparatively little about the history of Albanian from its split from the Indo-European core until its earliest attestation, and the internal history of a language branch is indeed more difficult to uncover when the branch in question has few members or only a single one—Proto-Albanian must be reconstructed by dialect material and internal reconstruction (disregarding the poorly attested candidates for close relatives, such as Messapian). But Albanian has potential: a fair description would be to say that much of the lexicon can be defined not as obscure loanwords, but rather as unexplained. In other words, unheeded archaisms might be hiding even in the basic vocabulary, waiting for us to give it another try, applying today’s broader knowledge of PIE and the individual branches. One way forward, which is becoming more and more widespread, seems to be the inclusion, in Indo-European etymology, of evidence from even more peripheral languages and dialects. Peripheral, to be sure; but as it turns out, they may still be extremely relevant and provide crucial information about details in PIE reconstruction. This is at least the case with minor Eastern Iranian languages and Nuristani languages, and in recent years it has proven to be true not least of all in the case of Germanic dialects (cf. Kroonen

Forthcoming). This article is an attempt to solve an obnoxious etymological riddle by straightforward comparison of forms in peripheral languages.

2. Albanian *hundë* ‘nose’: previous proposals

It is indeed a nuisance for comparativists when lexemes from the very core of the basic vocabulary defy a generally accepted etymology. One good example is Albanian *hundë* ‘nose’. As a term for a body part, it belongs to the basic vocabulary par excellence. Hamp (1965:130) hinted at the initial *h-* as a potential clue to discovery: “It belongs to a list of very basic Albanian words in *h-* which have consistently resisted etymology.”

Since a well-known source of Albanian *h-* is PIE **sk-*, scholars have tried to search for possibilities among established roots in PIE or just lexemes in other Indo-European languages with this initial sequence. Meyer (1891:153–4) was perhaps on the right track by relating it to PALb. **skuna-* > Alb. *hu* ‘penis’ (Gheg *hú*, gen. *hūni*, Tosk *huri* ‘pole; limb’), Gk. κύνδαλος ‘peg’, and Skt. *skúndate* ‘spring forth’. Schmidt (1930:19) accepted Meyer’s etymology right away, and it is also embraced by Ölberg (1972) and reappraised by Orel (1998:152), who reconstructed for *hundë* a prestage **skun-tā*, derived from **skuna-*. However, this classical proposal has not won general acceptance because it suffers from the fact that some of the suggested cognates themselves have disputed etymologies. Beekes (2010:803) regards Gk. κύνδαλος as a substratum word.¹

Pedersen (see Tagliavini 1937:276) equated *hu* with Lith. *skujà* ‘pine needle’ instead, leaving *hundë* as simply unetymologized. Barić (1919) related *hundë* to Lat. *sentio* ‘to feel’ (via the meanings ‘sense’ and ‘smell’). Çabej (1953) connected it with Rum. dial. *hudă*, *hudră* ‘hole, crack’ (which would then be an “Ancient Balkan” loan of IE origin) and Skt. *kuhara-* m. ‘cavity’, suggesting an original meaning ‘nostril’. Hamp (1965:126) also prefers a development via ‘nostrils’, originally ‘entrances’, from a Proto-Alb. **hun-* meaning ‘(an) insert’, the base of the modern verb *hyj*, Gheg *hÿj* ‘to enter’ (of disputed origin). He rejects an otherwise formally possible derivative **skud-V-nt-* ‘projection’ (< **skeud-* ‘shoot’) because the Arvanitic dialect of Sophikó (Greece) has a crucial short vowel that rules out such a contraction. Huld (1984) envisages an Old Alb. metathesis of the PIE ‘nose’ word: **noh-* > **hon-* + the suffix *-tā*, ultimately from PIE **nas-* ‘nose’; but this would involve both suffixation, the as yet shady raising of **o > u*

¹ Cf. Kümmel (2010) on the relatively sparse occurrence of safe PIE roots containing the sequence *-ND-*.

before nasal (perhaps in *bungë* f., pl. -a, 'chestnut oak, *Quercus sessiliflora*, *Quercus petraea*'),² and a metathesis which may seem ad hoc, although not unprecedented: cf. the fact that Alb. *hobe* 'catapult, sling' seems to be a development of an originally dialectal *bahe* 'id.', a singularized plural of the archaic sg. *bahë*, a loanword from Common Slavic **bojъ* 'fight' (Orel 1998:14, 150).

3. The background of Albanian initial *h-*

Let us begin our own analysis by having a closer look at the different sources for initial *h-* in Albanian. Original *h-* is retained in loanwords from Slavic (e.g., Alb. *hitas* 'to hurry' < Common Slavic **xytati*, Alb. *hukas* 'to shout' < Common Slavic **hukati*)³ and Latin (e.g., Alb. *herë* 'moment of time, hour' < Lat. *hōra*). But in the case of *hundë*, there is simply no obvious candidate from any neighboring language (disregarding the aforementioned proposal by Çabej).

It cannot be excluded that Alb. initial *h-* sometimes reflects a PIE initial laryngeal. Hamp (1965) reconstructed **h₁* > Alb. *h-* (as in *herdhë* 'testicle' ~ Gk. ὄρχις id.) while all other laryngeals disappeared. This was heavily criticized by Ölberg (1972) and has never been widely accepted, although it is accepted by Mallory and Adams (1997:10); and according to Kortlandt (1998), **h_{2e-}* and **h_{3e-}* yield Alb. *ha-* (cf. also Demiraj 1997). Alb. *h-* may indeed show up in the position of an original laryngeal, e.g., Alb. (*h*)*ethe* 'fever' < PIE **h_{2e}id-s-* and Alb. *hut* 'empty, deserted' < PIE **h_{2u}-tjo-* (Goth. *auþeis* 'barren, desolate'). However, the very occurrence of a laryngeal is not assured in the material in question; and even if one insists on initial consonants in all PIE roots, the picture is blurred by a notorious tendency to insert a spontaneous *h-* before initial vowel in Albanian:

(*h*)*ark* 'bow' ← Lat. *arcus* id.

(*h*)*armë* 'weapon' ← Lat. *arma* id.

hokë 'joke, jest' ← Lat. *iocus* id. (note that secondary *-j-* and *-j-* in loanwords is regularly substituted by Alb. *-h-*, e.g., *krahinë* 'region, district' < SCr. *krajina*: cf. Rasmussen 1985)

2 According to Orel (1998:42), Hamp's reconstruction *bungë* < **bug-nā* finds support in *peng* 'security, pledge' < Lat. *pignus* (also Demiraj 1997:112–3), but this is not true if Lat. /gn/ was pronounced [ɲn] (see, e.g., Meiser 1998:52, 121 on the details). In that case Alb. *-ng-* is just the rendering of Lat. *-ngn-*, written ⟨gn⟩, with loss of the final nasal (by assimilation) in such a cluster.

3 See Svane 1992:256–7.

hikërr 'sour milk; buckwheat' ← an inner-Albanian derivative from *ikëj* 'to run, go (away)'

(*h*)*urdhe* f.pl. 'ivy' < PIE **urdʰo-* 'root, wort' (OE *word* 'thorn-bush')

(*h*)*urdhë* 'pond, pool' ~ Common Slavic **virъ* 'whirlpool'

The rare PIE onset cluster **ks-* regularly yields Alb. *h-* (cf. *ile huaj* 'foreign, strange' ~ Gk. ξέφυος id. and *hirrë* f. 'whey' ~ Skt. *kṣirá-* 'milk'). Again, there is no obvious candidate available. We are left, finally, with PIE **sk-* and **sk̑-*, which merge into Alb. *h-*, at least before a back vowel (also in Inlaut; see, e.g., Huld 1984:149, Matzinger 2006:78):

halë f. 'chaff' < **skol-je*_h (Goth. *skalja*, Lith. *skeliù, skélti* 'to hew; to split')

harb 'rudeness' < **skor-bʰo-* (OHG *scarf*, Latv. *skarbs* 'sharp, harsh')

helm 'poison'; disputed, but probably connected to OHG *scalmo* 'plague', W *claf* 'sick' (cf. Hyllested 2010:111–2)

hedh 'throw' ~ *hudh* 'hurl' < **skeu-d-* ~ **sku-d-* (ON *skjóta*) 'shoot; spring forward'

hënë, Gheg *hânë* 'moon' < **skand-* (Skt. *cándra-* 'moon', *ścand-* 'shine', Bret. *cann* 'moon'; Lat. *candeō* 'glow', Gk. κάυδαρος 'ember')

hi, def. *hiri*, Tosk dial. *hī*, Gheg *hī*, def. *hīni* 'ash' < *(*s*)*keniso-* (Lat. *cinis*, gen. *cineris* id., Gk. κόνις 'dust', Toch. B *kentse* 'rust' [sic] < **koniso-*)⁴

hije f. 'shadow' < **skh₂i-eh₂* (Gk. σκιά, Toch. B *skiyo*) ~ **skéh₂i-eh₂* (Skt. *chāyā*)

humb 'to leave, to lose, to spoil, to miss' < **sku-m-bʰ-*, nasal present to ← **skeubʰ-* (Lith. *skumbù, skùbti* 'to hurry, to hasten', Goth. *af-skiuban* 'to push away, to reject')

hurdhë, hudhër 'garlic' ~ Gk. σκόροδος id.

4 With PIE **e* > Alb. *i* either by umlaut from *-i-* in the following syllable (Orel 2000:145, de Vaan 2004:70–1) or in secondary consonant clusters such as oblique forms of *s-*stems (which are later contracted); cf., e.g., *vit* 'year' < **uetso-* < **ueteso-* (Hamp 1971:121–2). Meyer's (1891:152) reconstruction **skino-*, accepted by Tagliavini (1937:312), Huld (1994:74), and Orel (2000:131, 218), renders impossible the otherwise almost universally accepted equation with Gk. κόνις (with *o*-grade); Lat. *cinis* does not reflect original *i*-vocalism, but results from a vowel assimilation **keni-* > /kini-/ , as in *similis* (< **semilis*) 'similar, like'. Alternatively, if one prefers to avoid *s*-mobile on the basis of Albanian only, one could derive *hi* from Early Proto-Alb. **skūja* (~ Gmc. **skeuja-* 'cloud', NE *sky*) with Early Proto-Alb. *ū* > *i* (~ *y*) preceding *-(C)j-* (Orel 2000:11–2, cf. *shi* 'rain' < **sūja* ~ OPr. *suge* /su:je/ id., and *mizë, myzë* 'a fly', with dimin. suff. *-zë*, ~ ON *mý* id. < PGmc. **mūja-*); but then, in return, one would have to accept secondary nasalization of the vowel as in Gheg *sý* 'eye', *drú* 'wood'.

4. A new proposal

It seems to have escaped everyone's attention that several West Nordic languages possess words with almost identical semantics as well as a strong formal similarity to Meyer's reconstruction: Faroese *skon* f., *-ar*, *-ir* 'nose; snout; face; (colloq.) mug' has a counterpart in SW Nw. dial. (Hardanger, Vossemlål, Sogn, Nordhordland; cf. *Grunnmanuskriptet*⁵) *skon* 'snout, muzzle', but is otherwise a hitherto obscure and isolated word, not even represented in ON, let alone East Nordic or the rest of Germanic. There are two possible Germanic proto-forms:⁶

- (a) ~ ON **skōn* < **skanō-* (like Far. *lon* f. *-ar*, *-ir* 'longhouse' < ON *lōn* [~ NE *lane*] or *mon* m. < ON *mōn* 'mane')

—or—

- (b) ~ ON **skon* with *a*-umlaut of PGmc. **-u-* < PGmc. **skuna-*, **skunō-*

The latter finds support in the Mod. Icel. fem. nickname *skon(n)r*, because the Norwegian dialect of Vik i Sogn has a similar *skon* 'hag, poor woman' (Blöndal 1989), and the alternative would result in Mod. Icel. †*skön(-)*.

5 *Grunnmanuskriptet* (Norwegian 'Basic manuscript') is a manuscript dictionary from the 1930s (completed 1940) which was meant to be released as the first major dictionary of Norwegian in which both lemma and definition were given in Nynorsk. Entries were taken from other monumental dictionaries of Norwegian from that period by Ivar Aasen, Hans Ross, Steinar Schøtt, and others, but it does not contain all dialectal forms from minor dialectal dictionaries, which were meant to be added later. For various reasons, the manuscript was never published as a complete dictionary; but Dokumentationsprosjektet [The Documentation Project] at the University of Oslo has made the entire manuscript available in searchable electronic form (see under Vikør et al. 1998 in the References). It now serves as one of the basic sources for the twelve-volume *Norsk Ordbok* [Norwegian dictionary], edited at the University of Oslo, which is projected to be finished in 2014.

6 PGmc. **skēnō-* is not an option since this would yield Early ON **skōn*. In Late ON, *ō* merges with *á*, but not if it was nasalized, in which case it (often) merges with *ó*. Cf. for the whole train of events Proto-Norse **nahtu* > Early ON *nōtt* > Late ON, Mod. Icel. *nótt*. In Faroese too, nasalized *ō* would give *ó*, cf. ON *vōn*, pl. *vánir* > Far. *vón*, pl. *vánir*. Thus Far. *skon* with short *-o-* and the pl. *skonir* precludes a reconstruction **skēnō-*. The same is true for Nw. *skon*, as *Grunnmanuskriptet* cites the word with the vowel *ò*, which can go back to either ON *ō* (< PGmc. **a*) or *o* (< PGmc. **u*), but not to ON *á* or *ó*.

5. Finnish *kuono* and its relatives

Furthermore, Jorma Koivulehto suggested in 1982 (see Kylstra et al. 1991–2012:II.125–6) that the Germanic proto-form of *skon* (or an early reflex thereof) had been borrowed into Balto-Fennic, cf. Fi. *kuono* ‘snout, muzzle’, Est. *koon*, Votic *kōn* id. These forms together point to a proto-form **kōnV*, with secondary lengthening of PGmc. short **u*, as in Fi. *ruoste* (Est. *rooste*) and Karel. *ruosma* ‘rust’ (< *Balto-Fennic **rōsteh* and **rōsma* respectively)—but this is the only other example of such a lengthening; otherwise PGmc. **u* is substituted with a Fennic short vowel, mostly **u*, but sometimes **o* (see Kylstra et al. 1991–2012:I.xviii); examples:

**hurskas* ‘pious, devout’ (only in North Balto-Fennic; Fi., Karel. *hurskas*) < PGmc. **hurskaz*

**kulta* ‘gold’ (Fi. *kulta*, Est. *kuld*) < PGmc. **gulpa-*

**kuningas* ‘king’ (Fi., Est. *kuningas*) < PGmc. **kuningaz*

**lukko*, **lukku* ‘lock’ (Fi. *lukko*, *lukku*, Est. *lukk*) < PGmc. **lukōn-*

**multa* ‘humus, topsoil’ (Fi. *multa*, Est. *muld*) < PGmc. **muldō-*

**murkina* ‘breakfast’ (Fi. *murkina*, Est. *murgin(a)*) < PGmc. **murginaz*

**ruyis* ‘rye’ (Fi. *ruis*, Est. *rukis*) < PGmc. **rugiz*

**turβeh*, **turvas* ‘peat, turf’ (Fi. *turve*, Est. *turvas*, dial. *turv*) < PGmc. **turbaz*, **turbz*

**kotti* ‘bag; scrotum; uterus; trough, etc.’ (Fi. *kotti*, Est. *kott*) < PGmc. **kuōdan-*

**porđas* ‘degree, step, level; (pl.) stairs: staircase’ (N only; Fi. *porras*, Veps *pordaz*) < PGmc. **burđaz*

**sorta-đa* ‘to oppress’ (as a verb only in North Balto-Fennic; Fi. *sortaa* ‘to oppress’; Est. *sōđrd* ‘clearing; margin of a field’) < PGmc. **sturtjan-*

Secondary lengthening, however, does occur in Germanic loanwords with front vowel, cf. Fi. *viikko* < PGmc. **wikōn-* ‘week’ and *liikkiö* ‘ham’ < PGmc. **flikkija-*, and there is no doubt that *ruoste* and *ruosma* must be substitutions for PGmc. **ruste-* and **rusma-*, respectively. The three different outcomes are probably dependent on chronology rather than phonological conditioning. Thus, it cannot be ruled out that **kuono* comes from **skuna-*.

Nikkilä (see Kylstra et al. 1991–2012:II.125–6) connects the Fennic word with PGmc. **gōnō* (Mod. Icel. *góna* ‘snout, esp. of seal, shark, or wolffish’) < PGmc. **gōnō* instead, and this etymology is perhaps to be preferred, also since the *-o* in Finnish often substitutes for a Germanic *ō*-stem. This *-o*, however, can

also represent a Balto-Fennic suffix and is not present in all of the Balto-Fennic languages in either case. Both etymologies are in any case possible.⁷ I find Koivulehto's proposal that PGmc. **skuna-* (via 'muzzle') also stands behind Karel. *kynä* 'trough', Est. *küna*, Liv. *kinà* (Kylstra et al. 1991–2012:II.137) rather far-fetched.⁸

6. PIE reconstruction: formal possibilities

Now a PGmc. **skuna-* 'snout' obviously fits well with Proto-Albanian **skuntā* 'nose', even if there are different ways of accounting for the Albanian **-t-*. Considering the range of meanings of *hundë* ('nose; point, tip, summit; projection, overhang; promontory, headland, cape') it would make sense to maintain relationship with the 'shoot' root. Affinity with Lith. *skutnà* 'bald head' is formally possible since its expected Albanian counterpart would be exactly **hundë* (< **skuntā* < **skutnā*; cf. the metathesis in *bung(ë)* 'chestnut oak' described above in §2.). Since the Lith. forms and the underlying verb *skūsti* 'to shave, to peel' are most likely connected to Mir. *scoth* f. 'point, edge' < PCelt. **skutā*, it does not appear semantically impossible either. Note also the Hesychian gloss σκούτη, of similar shape, which is given the meaning κεφαλή 'head'.

It is also conceivable, however, that **skuntā* simply reflects the original order of nasal and stop. We know Germanic forms like OHG *scunten*, OE *scyndan*, ON *skunda* → NE *scoon* (→ *schooner*), *scun* 'fly forward' < PGmc. **skundjan-*, **skundōn-* 'drive forward', and these go back either to PIE **skundh-* or Verner variants of **skunt-*; when compared to Nw. dial. *skut* m. 'projection, overhang', ON *skúta* 'kind of ship; schooner' (→ OIr. *scúta*, NE *scout*, MDu. *scüte*), Lith. *skudrūs* 'fast', Skt. *códati* 'drive forward', it is clear that we must assert at least two root-variants with different stops, hence probably old extensions of an original root. Nasalized forms may represent generalized nasal presents. Alb. *hundë* cannot reflect a variant with a voiced stop, which would be lost in the position after a nasal, yielding †*hunë*.

I conclude that *hundë* is ultimately related both to *hu* 'penis' and *hedh* 'to throw' as originally suggested by Meyer (and followed by Schmidt, Ölberg, Orel,

7 Paul Kiparsky (p.c.) has reminded me that original mid vowels are lengthened in open syllables in Fennic languages; but as a regular development this takes place much earlier, on the way from Uralic to Fenno-Ugric or Fenno-Permian, and would hardly affect **-u-* in Germanic loanwords in Balto-Fennic, let alone a later Gmc. **-o-* after the operation of *a*-umlaut.

8 As an alternative, Skt. *kunda-* 'hole in the ground, pit, etc.' comes to mind, but this is a borrowing from Dravidian.

and partly Hamp), but this word-family cannot be safely established by internal reconstruction alone. It is Germanic **skuna-*, reconstructed on the basis of Faroese and Norwegian material, as well as possible ancient Germanic forms in Balto-Fennic, that have provided the clue.

Since a primary word for ‘nose’ is already known from most Indo-European languages, and since this word is known to be at least of PIE age (PIE **nas-*),⁹ it seems reasonable to reconstruct the meaning of **skun-o-*, **skun-to-* rather as ‘snout’ (i.e., ‘nose of an animal [as opposed to the human nose]’), preserved in Germanic and having replaced the original ‘nose’ word in Albanian only. Thus **skun-o-*, **skun-to-* would be of at least Northwest Indo-European age.¹⁰

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9 Details of the reconstruction vary, but everyone agrees about the existence of the etymon.

10 For more on the NW IE group, one may consult, among others, Huld 1998 and Oettinger 2003.

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