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## THE HUNGARIAN AND SLAVONIC BACKGROUND OF BASHKIR *týraž* ‘WASP’\*

**Abstract.** This article offers a critique of Árpád Berta’s paper (2001) in which the author contends that the Bšk. *týraž* word for ‘wasp’ originated (via the Volga Bolgharian) from the Hung. *darázs* id. The present author attempts to point out the weak points in this interpretation, and proposes, instead, the PSlav. *\*dražь* as the source of the Hungarian and the Bashkir words for ‘wasp’. Thus, the article augments our knowledge of the possible Slavonic origin of the Hungarian and Bashkir words, and provides further details in support of the etymology presented by András Zoltán (2010; 2011).

### 1.

A Festschrift published in honour of András Róna-Tas includes an article written by Árpád Berta, in which the author discusses the Bashkir self-designation name *bašqört* (in comparison with the tribal name *bašgirt* ~ *bağgird* &c. known from Arabic sources dating from around the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>1</sup>), and the Hungarian word *magyar* (Berta 2001). The article is an attempt to prove that the tribal names

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\* The present article had already been submitted for publication when I received the off-print of Prof. András Zoltán’s (Budapest) article on the etymology of the Hung. *darázs* published in *Studia Slavica Hungarica* (Zoltán 2010), in which the author also mentions the Bashkir word and offers a similar etymological solution to that discussed in my paper – with certain differences. Even though it is for the most part encouraging to see that two scholars have reached very similar conclusions independently, I decided nevertheless to withdraw the present article from publication. I sent a draft to Prof. Zoltán and informed him of my decision. However, Prof. Zoltán encouraged me to publish my work despite the unusual situation. With his encouragement I therefore decided to publish the current paper. I would like to thank Prof. Zoltán for his generosity and understanding.

<sup>1</sup> In the early Muslim sources Hungarians were often referred to as one of the various Turkic tribes. For a concise overview of these sources and other variants of the tribal name see e.g. Zimonyi (2001).

and the hypothetical Turkic etymon of Hung. *magyar* were constructed according to the same semantic pattern – presented earlier in Berta (1997). Furthermore, in the final third of the paper, the author contended that the Bšk. *tŷraŷ* ‘wasp’ originates from the Hung. *darázs* id. – via the Volga Bolgharian. This was intended not only as evidence in support of the close relationship between the Magyars and the Bashkirs, but even as “the first indication that historical linguistics may be a useful means to prove that a Hungarian common noun may have found its way from the language spoken by the Hungarians of Julianus into the Turkic language of the Bashkirs prior to the Mongol period” (Berta 2001: 42–43). Even though Berta presented his idea with some reservations, we fail to share the same degree of enthusiasm as Berta with regard to this etymology. The present paper, hence, aims to highlight those dubious aspects of such an interpretation, and instead to associate an already existing (but not widespread) etymology of the Hung. *darázs* with the origin of its Bashkir counterpart.

## 2.

First of all, the Bashkir word *tŷraŷ*, as adduced by Berta, is attested in this form in Zajnullina (2001: 104) and Agišev (1993: II 344), both in the meaning of the Russ. *шершень*. On the other hand, in RBškS (952, s.v. *шершень*), we find Bšk. *traš* (*mpau*), which can obviously be treated as a result of a *tŷraŷ* > *tŷraš* change in which the final *-ŷ* became devoiced in accordance with Bashkir phonotactics. The lack of a reduced vowel in the first syllable seems to be merely a result of the orthographic representation of the loanword.<sup>2</sup> The modern form should rather, in our opinion, be considered to be *tŷraš*, which does not rule out the existence of the Bšk. *tŷraŷ* in dialects or as an older variant. This alternation is supported by the fact that the elder generation pronounces the word today as *traž* or, which is even more surprising, as *draž*.<sup>3</sup> We could not find any of these forms in BškRS 1958 and 1996.

Berta’s (2001: 42–43) etymology can be summarized as follows: the word-final *-ŷ* in the Bashkir word inevitably points to its non-native origin since the fricative *ŷ* did not originally exist in Bashkir. Thus, according to Berta, the Bashkir word is etymologically related to the Hung. *darázs*, and the borrowing must have been from Hungarian to Bashkir, rather than in the opposite direction. This also explains the unvoiced (strong) *t*- in the word-initial position. Finally, in order to elucidate the appearance of the high, reduced vowel in the Bashkir word, Berta

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Bšk. *транса* ‘shingle’ in RBškS (186) noted as *тыранса* in BškRS (1958: 561).

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Gizela Doniec, M.A. (Kraków/Nantes) for her linguistic remarks regarding the pronunciation of the Bashkir word today (and in the last few decades) by the members of different generations.

assumes a Volga Bolgharian mediation, since in Chuvash the historical \**a* is represented either by *u* or *y*.

Unfortunately, Berta does not explain the origin of the Hungarian word.

There are, in our opinion, several weak points in this etymology. First of all, what has been said about [ž] should be applied to the [ž] in the Hung. *darázs*, too. This fact, if not supported with other data, obviously, does not rule out the possibility of the Bashkir word being adopted as a borrowing from Hungarian. However, it is generally accepted that the phoneme [ž] appeared in Hungarian (as used in the Carpathian Basin) no earlier than in the Old Hungarian period (i.e. in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century at the earliest) as a result of the increasing number of Latin, Italian and, above all, Slavonic loanwords. Consequently, the sound was not present in the language used by the Hungarian tribes when they might have had contacts with the Bashkirs or the Volga Bolgharians.

It is true that archaeological data support the existence of a certain group of Magyars living in the Kama River region from around 900 A.D. until the Mongol invasion in the mid 1230s (see, e.g., Fodor 1982a: 263-273; 1982b: 46-60), but we cannot say anything certain about their language or, even more so, about the sound ž. In other words, what we can assume with regard to their language suggests that this sound did not exist in that period: firstly, they must have inherited the Proto-Hungarian set of consonants (without [ž]) and, secondly, they were predominantly surrounded by speakers of languages, in which this sound was missing, too.

Moreover, it is generally accepted that the influence exerted by the Magyars on the Turkic tribes surrounding them was much weaker than that exerted by the Turks on the Hungarian tribes. Such an example would be an isolated one. On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the Hungarian word cannot be explained as a Bashkir loanword either: this would raise the problem of the *-a-* in the first syllable, since a Bšk. *-ǰ-* would have yielded PHung. *-y-* > Hung. *-i-* (see also below). Additionally, it would be difficult to interpret the initial *d-* in the Hungarian word, and also the presence of the Bšk. *-ž* in the form noted by Berta would remain obscure.

Moreover, let us add that we could not find the word attested in Chuvash – Ašmarin's, Egorov's and Fedotov's dictionary lacks forms like \**tyraš* or \**traš*. All we found is Čuv. *săpsa* 'wasp; dial. hornet' (Ašmarin XI 267).

### 3.

However, the phonetic similarity between these two words remains conspicuous, and we agree with Berta (2001: 42) that it is somewhat difficult (although not actually impossible) to believe that this is pure coincidence. The question remains: if the Bashkir word is not a Hungarian loanword, which other language can serve

as a link between (or a source for) these two languages? Let us attempt to answer this question below.

In an article recently presented at a conference held in Cracow, András Zoltán (2011) discussed a number of methodological aspects of Slavonic etymologies suggested for a new etymological dictionary of Hungarian. In this paper he emphasized the need to revisit some of the Slavonic etymologies which have been previously unjustly refuted. Among other things, he raised the question of the origin of the Hung. *darázs*. According to him, the idea of connecting it with the reflexes of the Proto-Slavonic stem *\*dražiti* ~ *\*draziti* ‘to annoy, to irritate’ (ĚSSJa V 104) should not be dismissed, as was done by the authors of SzófSz (48), TESz (I 595) and EWU (245) – in the latter two works just because Kniezsa (1955) did not agree with Dankovszky’s (1833: 228) idea of linking the word with Cz. *draždil* ‘something annoying, something irritating’ (see ČNS 304, s.v. *dráždič* ‘instigator, agitator’), and did not include the word in his work. According to Zoltán (2011: 262-263) the Hung. word *darázs* can be explained as a result of a back-formation from the Hung. *\*darázsol* ‘to annoy, to irritate’, in the same vein as Slav. *\*pražiti* ‘to roast’ > Hung. arch. *parázsol* id. → Hung. *parázs* ‘ember’ or SSlav. *\*vražiti* ‘to work magic’ > Hung. *varázsol* id. → Hung. *varázs* ‘magic’ (see e.g. EWU 1118, 1607, respectively).

Such an etymology of the Hung. *darázs* sounds convincing. It goes without saying, however, that the same scenario cannot be assumed for the Bšk. *týraž*, given that we have no Bashkir verbal stem, or other supporting material, similar to the Hung. *parázsol* or *varázsol*.

Still, the idea of deriving the Bashkir word from a reflex or a derivative of the Slav. *\*dražiti*, is tempting for several reasons. First of all, there are a number of Slavonic names of insects similar to ‘wasp’ which are derived from verbs meaning mostly ‘to buzz, to drone, to hum, to make a low continuous noise’ or ‘to sting, to stab’. The validity of the semantic relationship between the meanings ‘to sting, to stab’, ‘to buzz’ as well as ‘to annoy, to irritate’ on the one hand, and a wasp-like insect, on the other, does not seem to be in any doubt, cf.:

PSlav. *\*bъčela* ‘honey bee’ ← PSlav. *\*bučati* ‘to make a low continuous noise’;

PSlav. *\*bqkъ* ‘horsefly’ ← PSlav. *\*bqkati* ‘to make a low continuous noise’;

PSlav. *\*čъmelъ* ‘bumblebee’ ← PIE. *\*kem-* ~ *\*kom-* ‘to buzz, to hum’;

PSlav. *\*šfšenъ* ‘a stinging insect; hornet’ ← PIE. *\*(s)ker-* ‘to stab, to sting’;

PSlav. *\*trqтъ* ‘a buzzing insect; drone’ ← PIE. *\*tren-* ~ *\*dhren-* ‘to buzz, to drone’.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, the Slk. dial. *hargaláš* ‘hornet (?)’; a general name of a stinging insect’ (Rocchi 1999: 27), or more precisely, its origin in Hung. dial. arch. *ergellés* ~ *argalás* ‘annoyed’ (TESz II 786) serves as an attested semantic parallel for our argumentation.

Secondly, if one assumes a direct borrowing from an Eastern Slavonic language, there is no need to search for a mediating language in order to explain the phonetic features (-*ŷ*-) of the Bashkir word. Also, the final -*ž* would then gain a convincing explanation.

To explain the Bšk. *týraž* as a Slavonic loanword, we would, in fact, need a PSlav. or PESlav. (ORuss.) *\*dražь* as an etymon. Such a form, however, seems never to have been reconstructed (see e.g. Miklosich 1886: 49, s.v. *drag-*; ÈSSJa V 104, s.v. *\*dražiti*, SłPrasł IV 213-215, s.v. *dražiti*, Derksen 2008: 115-116, s.v. *\*drā-žiti*) because of the lack of such forms as *draž* in this meaning in the existing Slavonic languages.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, a *\*dražiti* → *\*dražь* derivative could be postulated *per analogiam* to:

PSlav. *\*bōkati* ‘to make a low continuous noise (about insects, cattle, birds)’ →  
PSlav. dial. (WSlav.) *\*bōkь* ‘something that utters a low continuous noise; horsefly’ (SłPrasł I 352-353; 353).

We are aware of the fact that this analogy does not have the value of proof. However, the example of PSlav. *\*bōkati* → PSlav. dial. *\*bōkь*, increases the probability of such a reconstruction, especially if one bears in mind that this word is a -*ь* active past participle form (which tended to be used as an adjective; for PSlav. see Stieber 1979: 185; for OCS. see Birnbaum 1997: 94; for ORuss. see Obnorskij 1953: 198; Matthews 1967: 111), thus a number of similar examples can easily be presented.

The early contacts between the Slavs and the Turkic tribes – back in the Old Russian period – give credence to this supposition (for a concise description of these contacts see e.g. Menges 1951: 1-14).

Moreover, assuming a PSlav. *\*dražь*, and postulating it as the etymon of both the Bashkir and the Hungarian word solves the question of the Bšk. -*ŷ*- and Hung. -*a*- in the first syllable. As is well known, both languages tend to avoid word-initial consonant clusters in loanwords. In Hungarian the epenthetic vowel is usually the short equivalent of the vowel of the subsequent syllable, cf. Hung. *darab* ‘piece’ < Slav. *\*drobь* ‘small objects’ [cf. OHung. (1305) <dorobus>, EWU 224; see also below], Hung. *barát* ‘1. monk; 2. friend’ < Slav. *\*bratrь* ‘brother’. In the Turkic languages, in turn, the epenthetic vowel in such a segment is usually a high, non-labial vowel, the already mentioned Bšk. *týransa* ‘shingle’ (BškRS 1958: 561) <

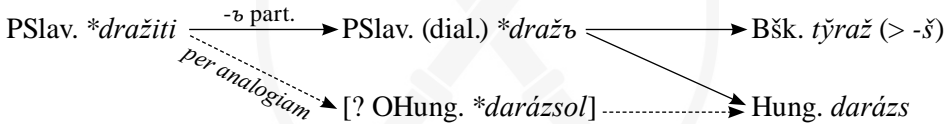
<sup>5</sup> In our case, a Russian record would be most desirable; unfortunately the greatest Russian historical (Sreznevskij, SRJaXI-XVII, SRJaXVIII) and dialect (SRGPa, SRGZ, SRNG, SSRNG, and also ÈSRZJaS) dictionaries do not attest it. South Slavonic forms such as Slvn. *draž* ‘1. stimulus; 2. attraction’ or Cr. and Serb. *draž* ‘grace, charm, attraction’ should not be linked with the word in question for these are reflexes of a different stem, namely *\*doržь*.

Russ. *дранка* id. being a good example. The difference between the two adaptation processes was also raised by Helimski (2000: 434 [= 1988]), who – in a very convincing manner – explained the high, non-labial vowel *-i-* (< PHung. *-y-*) in the Hung. *király* ‘king’ with Turkic mediation. Had the word been loaned from SSLav. *\*kralъ* id., we would justly expect Hung. *\*karály* – as is the case with so many other examples (see Keszler 1969: 16-38; Helimski 2000: 433 [= 1988]). Thus, the Hung. *-a-* and the Bšk. *-ǰ-* would in this case be expected by all means.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4.

Even though the etymology of the Hung. *darázs* presented by Zoltán (2010; 2011) sounds convincing – especially against the background of the two supporting examples – we think that the idea of explaining the word directly by a Slavonic etymon (< *\*dražъ*), and not as a result of a back-formation from a Hung. *\*darázsol*, should not be entirely neglected. An analogical example of this is, for instance, the already mentioned Hung. *darab*, which is not treated as a result of a back-formation from Hung. *darabol* (cf. Kniezsa 1955: 147-148) either, even though it would fit in well with the PSlav. *\*pražiti* > Hung. *parázsol* → *parázs* pattern. Finally, we would even venture to say that there is also no strong need to reconstruct a Hung. *\*darázsol*, since, in light of the word pairs *varázsol* : *varázs* and *parázsol* : *parázs*, the Hung. *darázs* could also have developed on the basis of the PSlav. *\*dražiti*.

Our argumentation can be summarized in a general sketch as follows:



#### Symbols

- \* = reconstructed form
- = derivation
- > = borrowing; phonetic development

<sup>6</sup> There are also sporadic examples of low epenthetic vowels in the Turkic languages, cf. e.g. Ott. (1680) *goroş* ‘grosz’ < Germ. *Grosch* id., but this is far from a common way of simplifying word-initial consonant clusters in these languages (see Stachowski 1995: 177).

### Abbreviations

**Bšk.** = Bashkir; **Cr.** = Croatian; **Cz.** = Czech; **Čuv.** = Chuvash; **Hung.** = Hungarian; **OCS.** = Old-Church-Slavonic; **OHung.** = Old Hungarian; **ORuss.** = Old Russian; **Ott.** = Ottoman; **PHung.** = Proto-Hungarian; **PIE.** = Proto-Indo-European; **PE Slav.** = Proto-East-Slavonic; **PSlav.** = Proto-Slavonic; **Russ.** = Russian; **Serb.** = Serbian; **Slav.** = Slavonic; **Slk.** = Slovak; **Slvn.** = Slovenian; **SSlav.** = South Slavonic; **WSlav.** = West Slavonic. || **arch.** = archaic; **dial.** = dialectal; **part.** = participle.

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