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PROTO-INDO-EUROPEAN **tsel-* 'TO SNEAK' AND GERMANIC **stel-* 'TO STEAL, APPROACH STEALTHILY'

1. The Proto-Indo-European root for 'to creep, sneak' is traditionally reconstructed as **sel-* (Pokorny's 5. *sel-* 'schleichen, kriechen'), while Skt. *tsar-* is taken as a compound with an abnormal zero-grade of the PIE preverb **h₂ed-*, i.e. **h₂d-sel-*. This reconstruction is unsatisfactory for a number of reasons: (1) the zero-grade **h₂d* is practically unknown elsewhere and is totally *ad hoc*; (2) since the preverb **h₂ed-* is unattested in Indo-Iranian, we have to assume that the *Univerbierung* took place in PIE already, but at that early stage there were no preverbs, only loose adverbs, and it is difficult to explain how such a syntagm could have arisen; (3) the form **tsel-* is not restricted to Sanskrit and must be reconstructed for other IE cognates as well. Let us first discuss the evidence presented in Pokorny's dictionary.

2. Skt. *tsar-* 'to approach stealthily, sneak, creep up on somebody' is a relatively rare verb, attested since the RV. Its paradigm includes *tsáratī* pres., *atsār* aor. (ŚB *atsāriṣam* nonce), *tatsāra* pf., *upa-tsārya* abs. (ŚB). Further derivatives are *tsarā-* f. 'creeping up to' (MS), *tsāru-* m. 'a crawling animal (snake)' (RV 7.50.1), 'handle' (AVP 3.39.5+); *tsārín-* adj. 'sneaking' (RV+).

3. Bartholomae (1904: 1643, 1649f) connected two Avestan forms with Skt. *tsar-*, viz. YAv. *vāhrkāñhō srauuāñhauuō* nom.pl. (3V 18.65) and *zəmə ... upa.sr(a)uuatō* gen.sg. (3V 7.27). The meaning of these forms is unclear, but a connection with the root for 'to sneak' seems out of the question, since wolves and a harsh winter are in no way sneaking (see Gershevitch 1959: 183 and Klingenschmitt 1968: 157f. for a discussion).

A very likely Iranian cognate is the verb attested in the Pamir languages (cf. Morgenstierne 1974: 75): Sh. *sārd*, Yazgh. *sard* 'to creep, steal, sneak up to, lie in ambush, spy upon', Ishk. *surd* 'to creep, slink'.¹ Iranian *s-* then shows the reflex of **ts-*.

¹ Morgenstierne himself has proposed a different etymology, comparing Skt. *śaraṇá-* 'shelter', Lat. *cēlāre* 'to conceal', which seems much less attractive.

4. Arm. *solim* 'to crawl, creep; to move on smoothly, steal, glide' (Bible+), *solam* 'id.' (John Chrysostomos+); *solun* 'reptile' (Bible+); *sol* 'creeping' (nom. act.) in Łazar P'arpec'i (5th cent.), 'creeping' (adj.) in the Alexander Romance. Since Petersson (1916: 256), these Armenian words are connected with Skt. *tsā-rati*, under the assumption of the development **tsV-* > Arm. **sV-*, which seems uncontroversial.

5. The situation in Irish is rather complicated. Pokorny mentions *selige* (later *seilche*) m. 'turtle or tortoise; snail' and a more recent *seilide* 'snail' and two verbal nouns: OIr. *sle(i)th* f. (< **słtā-*) 'act of surprising a sleeping woman, having intercourse with her', the meaning of which incidentally has a close parallel in Sanskrit (AVŚ 8.6.8 *yás tvā svapāntīm tsārati* 'he (a demon), who surprises you (fem.) sleeping...'), and *intled* (= **ind-sleth*) f. 'snare, ambush; act of lying in wait, ambushing'.

These two verbal nouns were separated from *selige* by Loth (1907: 40), who rather connected them with MW *flet* 'deceit, trick' thus reconstructing initial **spl-*. This etymology was accepted by Vendryes (1974: 130) and Schrijver (1995: 436ff.). Loth further connected *σπλεκόω* 'future', Skt. *sprśāti* 'to touch', but Schrijver has shown that this etymology is unlikely and proposed OHG and OS *spil* 'game, play' (which themselves have no etymology) as possible cognates. This controversy can hardly be resolved, as both reconstructions of OIr. *sle(i)th* (with **s-* and **sp-*) seem formally and semantically cogent. OIr. *selige* must at any rate be related to our root. Its anlaut is totally ambiguous though: it can reflect **s-*, **ts-* and even **st-*.

6. Lith. *selėti* 'to lurk, sneak, prowl' (3sg. *sėla* / *sėli* / *selėja*), *sėlinti* 'to steal, slink, sneak, prowl; to waylay', *pasalà* 'deceit, deceitfulness', etc. The Lithuanian *s-* is ambiguous: it can represent both PIE **s-* and **ts-*, although there are no exact parallels for the latter development.

7. The other cognates, mentioned by Pokorny, are uncertain or improbable. The meaning of Gr. *εἰλί-* in *εἰλίποδας βοῦς* (Hom.) acc.pl. and in *εἰλίπενής* (said of ἄγρωσις 'dog's-tooth grass') is unclear, and the interpretation of *εἰλίποδας* as 'schleichfüßig' and *εἰλίπενής* as 'die sich schleichweise ausdehnende' has little to recommend itself. Alb. *shlligë* 'viper' is a variant of *sheligë* and does not belong here, see Demiraj 1997: 359.

8. It seems attractive to add PGm. **stelan-* 'to steal, approach stealthily' (Goth. *stilan*, ON, OFri. *stela*, OE, OS, OHG *stelan*) to the dossier of our root. In the oldest sources, the verb primarily has the meaning 'to steal', but on fur-

ther consideration the evidence seems to suggest that the notion 'to steal' may have developed from older 'to sneak'.

The meaning 'to sneak' is particularly prominent in reflexive use of the verb, viz. ON *stela-sk*, Dan. *stjæle sig* (ind), MHG *sich steln*, G *sich stehlen*, MLG *sik (weg) stelen*, MDu. *hem stelen* 'to sneak'. The wide distribution of this reflexive indicates that its use must be of an early date.

The same sense is furthermore retrieved from some active forms, cf. MDu. *stelen*, MoE *to steal (into)*, and in view of the lexicalized participles MHG *ver-stoln*, MDu. *verstolen* 'secretly', cf. also MoDu. *steels* 'sneakingly', this is likely to be an archaism. Additional proof of the seniority of the meaning 'to sneak' over 'to steal' comes from the Anglo-Frisian formation **stal-k-ōjan-*: OE *bi-stealcian* 'to stalk', OFri. *stolkens* 'hidden' (for the formation cf. *to talk* < **tal-kōjan-*), as it must be derived from the active verb.

PGm. **stelan-* has no generally accepted etymology, all extant etymological proposals being fraught with formal difficulties. A frequently mentioned idea is that **stelan-* is a conflation of Gr. *στερέω* 'to steal' and **helan-* 'to conceal' (Osthoff 1888: 460-1; Hellquist 1922: 872; Pokorny 1959-69: 1028), but this etymology is no more cogent than other suggestions such as Skt. *stená-* 'thieve' (Seebold 1970: 468-9), Lat. *stelliō* 'villain', *stolō* m. 'shoot, runner', MoIr. *slat* 'robbing' < **stlatto-* (Falk – Torp 1170; Franck – Van Wijk 1912: 663), Av. *star-* 'to sin', Gr. *ἀτάσθαλος* 'sinful' (Franck – Van Wijk). It has also been suggested that the word originates from a Pre-Germanic substrate language (De Vries – Tollenaere 1997: 695). Finally, **stelan-* has been tied to OIr. *tlenaid* 'to steal' by assuming an *s* movable for Germanic (Pedersen 1913: 649, also mentioned by Kluge – Seebold 2002: 879). This suggestion raises the question whether *tlenaid* must not be rather reconstructed as **tsł-neh₂-*. Since, however, the meaning 'to steal' originally was alien to the root **tsel-* and, consequently, must be assumed to have independently arisen in both Celtic and Germanic, it still seems preferable to maintain the generally accepted link of OIr. *tlenaid* with Lat. *tollō* 'to lift' < **tl-n-h₂-* (cf. Pokorny 1959-69: 1060-1), the more so as the formations are identical.

9. Connecting PGm. **stelan-* with Skt. *tsar-* presupposes that the initial cluster of the root **tsel-* was metathesized in Germanic. Unfortunately, this development cannot be supported by parallels, as there are no other clear instances of an initial cluster **ts-*. If Goth. *afskiuban*, OEngl. *scūfan* 'to shove' are related to PIE **k^(w)seub^h-* (Skt. *kṣubh-* 'to stagger, begin to swing, tremble', YAv. *xšufsqn* 3pl.pres.subj. 'to tremble'), it would show that PIE **k^(w)s-* develops into Germanic **sk-*, but the etymology is uncertain because of the deviating semantics.

We do encounter a metathesis in three-consonant initial clusters, cf. the development of PIE **psten-* 'teat' (cf. Av. *fštāna-* 'breast of a woman') into ON

speni, Kil. *spene*, and possibly of **psteiHu-* / **tspeiHu-* 'to spit' (Skt. *ṣṭhīv-*, Gr. *πτῖω*, Lat. *spuō*) into Goth. *speiwan*. This process shows that a sibilant always emerges word-initially in Germanic. The principle can even be maintained if one wishes to think that the triple clusters survived until the Proto-Germanic stage, so far as can be judged from the doublet *špewwu* ~ *štewwu* 'to spit' (< **spīwan-* ~ **stīwan-*) in the Swiss dialect of Visperterminen (Wipf 1910: §50, II).²

10. It seems plausible to assume that the PIE root **tsel-* originally was a compound with a nominal first part (of which only **t-* is left) and the aoristic root **sel-* 'to start moving' (Gr. *ἄλλομαι* 'to jump', Gr. *ἰάλλω* 'to stretch out, send out'; Skt. *sar-*_[1] 'to flow, run, hurry', *sar-*_[2] 'to extend', To.AB *sāl-* 'to arise, fly; throw').

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² It is of course also possible that *štewwu* has secondarily developed out of **spīwan-*.

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