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Some Ancient Shared Metaphors in the Balkans

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Konspekt: Tek afiksi mohor *as-*, si dhe tek format e lidhura në mënyrë semantike gjetkë në shqipe e gjetkë në Ballkan, ekziston një vazhdimësi qysh nga periudha parahistorike e deri në atë historike, e disa përdorimeve të lashta metaforike tepër të rëndësishme.

Albanian is especially rich in markers for negation. Besides the indicative negators *s'* and *nuk* 'not', the modal negator *mos* 'not', and the free negative utterance *jo* 'no',¹ there are two further negators with the form [as]: a free word *as* meaning 'and not, nor' and a compound prefixal negator *as-* that occurs mainly with pronominals and similar words, as in *askush* 'no one', *asgjë* 'nothing', etc. Although free *as* and prefixal *as* are considered by some scholars (e.g. Meyer 1891) to be related as to their origin, a different approach to their relationship and etymology has been proposed in Joseph 2002b. In particular, I take them to be separate and distinct etymologically, with free word *as* being a combination of the connective *a* 'or' plus the indicative negative *s'*, and the compound negator *as-* having a more ancient, and, as it turns out, a more interesting, pedigree.

The starting point for the etymology of prefixal *as-* advocated here is Pedersen's (1900) linking of free word *as* with Ancient Greek *ou* (*ou*) 'not', and Cowgill's (1960) demonstration that *ou* reflects a Proto-Indo-European (PIE) metaphorical negative phrase **(ne) ... Hoyu k^wid* 'not; not ever', composed of the negative marker **ne* (elided, as in vernacular French *pas* from *ne ... pas*) together with the word for 'long life' (**Hoyu*, as seen in Sanskrit *áyu-*) and an emphatic element (from the PIE interrogative/indefinite stem, **k^wid*). The historical phonological changes required by such a derivation present no obstacles to this account, since **o > a*, loss of **-yV*, **k^w > s*, and loss of the final syllable **-id* are all regular developments that have clear parallels elsewhere in the development of other Albanian words.

Still, a refinement to Pedersen's and Cowgill's reasoning and conclusions would seem to be in order. Specifically, I prefer to see the PIE metaphorical phrasal negation in question surviving not in the free negator *as*, which, as noted above, can derive simply from *a* 'or' plus *s'* 'not', but rather in the other negator with the shape [as] in Albanian, the prefixal compound negator *as-*. The main reason for looking to a form other than the free word *as* for the continuation of **ne ... Hoyu k^wid* has to do with semantics. That is, deriving the free word from this PIE phrase requires a difficult leap in the semantic development of *as* from originally meaning just 'not' to the attested meaning 'and not'; if the free negator *as* derives from **(ne) ... Hoyu k^wid*, it is not at all clear where the connective meaning 'and', so much a part now of *as*, would come from.

This new derivation of prefixal *as-* and its separation from *as* deserve fuller attention as to various details of phonology and semantic development entailed thereby.² Still, if these proposals can be assumed here to be correct, then various other consequences that would follow from them can be explored.

In particular, this derivation of prefixal negator *as-* means both Albanian and Greek share a metaphor involving 'long life' in negation, specifically as a shared retention from the presumed PIE ancient metaphorical usage. Interestingly, other echoes and extensions of IE 'long life' phraseology can be found in the present-day Balkans, centering on, but not limited to, Albanian. There are four such relevant lines of evidence, outlined below.

The first echo is to be seen in the Albanian noun *jetë* 'life'. This is a borrowing from Latin *aetas* 'life, lifetime' (with some reanalysis, as argued by Hamp 1968)), a word which itself is connected with the 'long life' stem *Hoyu (so Ernout & Meillet 1939: s.v.). More significantly, even though *jetë* means simply 'life', it nonetheless reflects — or perhaps, more realistically speaking, renews — the more specific ancient 'long life' semantics in its occurrence in the phrase *përjetë* 'forever', literally "for-life",³ the nominal derivative from that, *përjetësi* 'eternity'.

Second, continuing with uses of *jetë*, I suggest that the Albanian phrase *për (në) jetë të jetëve* 'for all eternity' is noteworthy. This phrase is literally "for a life(time) of lifetimes", and has a structure, with a nominal form in one case repeated in the genitive, that is reminiscent of the phraseology of Old Persian is *xša:yaθiya xša:yaθiya:na:m* 'king of kings'.⁴ It provides a link to the occurrence of the semantics of 'long life' in negation through the emphatic 'ever'-based Albanian negative expression *kurrën e kurrës* 'never at all; not in a million years', which literally is "the-never of a-never" and structurally consists of a nominalized adverb in the accusative case repeated in the genitive case (here singular). Interestingly, Modern Greek has a similar expression, *poté ton potón* 'never at all', literally "never of-the nevers", with a nominalized adverb repeated in the genitive case. Thus the Albanian phrase matches this Modern Greek expression semantically. Structurally, however, since the Greek expression has the repeated form in the genitive plural, it actually matches the form of the Albanian *për (në) jetë të jetëve*, bringing the *Hoyu word more directly into the mix via meaning and form.

Third, a further Balkan angle on 'long life' can be seen in the Modern Greek greeting *γεια σου* (*geia sou*) [ja su], which is also used as a drinking toast. This phrase contains the Modern Greek noun *geia* [ja] 'health', so that *geia sou* is literally, "health to-you" (or "(to) your health"). *Geia*/[ja] derives from Ancient Greek *ὑγείαν* (*hygeian*) 'health/ACC', and thus is connected (ultimately) to *υγιής* (*hy-gie:s*) 'long-lived; healthy'. In the analysis of Weiss 1994, *hy-* in *hygie:s* derives from *Hyu-, a reduced-grade form of *Hoyu-; thus this Modern Greek greeting and toast is indirectly part of the 'long life' nexus.

Finally, returning to Albanian, the greeting *tungjatjeta* 'hello', is also relevant here. Like Greek *geia sou*, it too is used, dialectally, as a toast in drinking. Literally *tungjatjeta* is "may the life be lengthened", deriving, that is, from *të u ngjattë jeta* (so Newmark 1999: s.v.). The verb in this expression is *ngjat(o)-*, a causative/factitive based on the adjective *gjat-* 'long'. Thus not only is *jetë* involved in this expression, but through the overt juxtaposition of 'long' and 'life', it contains a union of the semantics of the metaphor underlying *as-*.

Wishes for long life and expressions linking length with life are not at all surprising given the universal human condition of limitations on life-span.⁵ One need only look at expressions like German *für's Leben* 'for ever', literally "for life" for non-Balkan parallels to Albanian *përjetë*. Still, there is a striking occurrence within the Balkans of apparent retentions from PIE usage. Thus one faces here the typical Balkanological problem of trying to distinguish possible universals of development from both contact-induced developments and inherited properties. In the case at hand, despite the potential for universalist explanations, one can see in Albanian *as-* and semantically related forms elsewhere in the language and elsewhere in the Balkans a persistence — throughout prehistory and into the historical period — of some remarkably old metaphorical uses, with the clustering of these uses in Greek and Albanian possibly being due to mutual reinforcement of inherited features

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¹ The element *jo* has other uses, most notably as a constituent negator with adjectives and nouns (e.g. *jofetar* 'nonreligious', *jomarksist* '(a) non-Marxist'). Similarly, *mos* actually does far more than just mark nonindicative negation, as it is used in certain tentative questions, as an independent one-word prohibitive utterance (i.e., 'Don't!'), and in other functions as well; see Joseph 2002a for discussion of the range of functions for *mos* in its Balkan and Indo-European contexts.

² I develop this account of *as/as-* in some detail in Joseph (Forthcoming), based on Joseph 2002b.

³ Though some dictionaries give this as two words (*për jetë*), I follow Newmark (1999: s.v.) in treating it as one word.

⁴ And there are even biblical echoes to be noted, perhaps; cf. Revelations 17:14 'Lord of lords, King of kings'.

⁵ And note the use of 'health' in greetings, as in English *hail* (though such uses in Indo-European languages could reflect an inheritance, of course).