

## 'Of good mochel, and ryght yong therto' Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Book of the Duchesse* (li. 454)

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In the course of sifting through evidence for the position of Tocharian with respect to other Indo-European dialects, Hamp (1998:313) casts a jewel of a morpho-syntactic cognate equation upon comparative waters. His equation forms a footnote, without further ado, to a table that displays the incidence (+/- = presence vs. absence) of the dialectal Indo-European case enclitics *-bh(i)-* / *-m(e)-* (dative, ablative, instrumental). Either you see the inner beauty of the array immediately, or you don't. His one-liner (verbatim) is:

If fossilized in Arm. *merj* = Gk. *μέχρι*, Lat. *mox* = Ved. *maksú* :  
OIr. *moch* 'early'.

which assumes that the reader can gloss every dialect except Old Irish.

One misses Germanic and Tocharian components in the equation. First, however, some annotation (for those who can gloss Irish, but not the rest).

The equation's semantic common denominator is "approximation", in both time and space: 'soon' (in time) = 'almost, nearly' (in space), and, we may add, 'similarity' in comparison, as 'like, similar' denote approximation (of sameness or difference).

Arm. *merj* 'near, at' is a metathesis of \**merj* (preserved metathesized in the compound *merje-nam* < \**merji-anam* 'I draw nigh') < \**meġ(h)ri* > Gk. *μέχρι* 'to a given point, until, even so far as', usually with the genitive, but 'almost, nearly' formulaically with numbers ('nearly thirty years old'). *μέχρι* *οὐ* + genitive 'till (the time when)' = *οὐνεκα* + genitive. Homer attests *μέχρι* but twice (11. 13.143, 24.128) 'even to' and 'until (when) = how long' respectively.

Wulfila translates *μέχρι* with *und* 'unto, until, up to' (preposition with the accusative and dative) = OIc. *unz* (= Goth.

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*und es*) conjunction 'until' = OHG *unt-az*, MHG *unz(e)* preposition and conjunction 'until'. OIc. *till þess unz ~ þar til er* 'until (that)' (Goth. *und þatei*) = Modern Icelandic *þangað till*.

Latin *mox* 'soon' adv. (< \**moks* nom. sg. masc. (like *vix*?) or \**moksi* loc. sg.?) evolved semantically as:

'soon' > 'soon (afterwards)' > 'in the next place' > 'then', also in ranking (similar) values (in time): (Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* 11.41.96) *tenuissimum camelis, mox equis*. '... (first) camels, then horses'.

OIr. *moch* adj. 'early, soon'; adv. 'early, betimes', glossed by *māne* 'in the morning'; cf. *mó* 'soon', proverb *mos- 'id.*' < \**moks*; *mochacht* fem. *a*-stem 'earliness'; comparative *mocha* (*mucha*) 'sooner'; also contained in *mocheirge* 'early rising', continued by Bally Vourney's *mochóiri* [muxo:r'i:], thereby identifying the provenience of this lexeme in dictionaries of the modern language. Note, too, Middle Welsh *moch* adv. 'soon, early, quickly' with British *h* < \**ks*.

Vedic *makṣú* 'soon' (= Av. *māšu* adv. 'soon, as soon as') occurs only with plurals and is "reinflected": *makṣūbhis* (with lengthened final); also a combining form, e.g. *makṣūjvas* adj. 'having haste' and an adverb, oxytonic *makṣú* 'quickly, soon'.

Vedic *makṣūbhis* (= Av. \**mošubiš* inst. pl.) = Kuchean *omṣap* (beside *auṣap* with *u* from *m*) adv. 'more' in comparisons. This is probably a metathesis of \**mošāpi* < \**mok-su-pi* to Av. *mošu*; that is, locative plural *-su* + *-p(i)*, formationally comparable to the archaic and dialectal Lithuanian (southwestern speech islands of Zietala and Lazunai) adessive plural forged from the locative plural + *-pi*; see Senn (1966:94). The Kuchean comitative *-mpa* is a composite of locative *-m* + *-pa*. The fundamental sense of the rebuilt *mošu* would have been analogous to that of Engl. "sooner (A than B)". Metathesis aligned \**mošāpi* with Kuchean spatial adverbs: *omṣ(a)mem* (*auṣ(a)mem*) 'from above', with ablative *-mem*.

Here we recall Kuchean *omp* (*om(p)te*, *omtem*) 'there (about)', such that:

Toch. B *omp* = A *āmpi* 'both' = *ἀμφί* = Lat. *ambi-* = Latv. *abi* = Gaul. *Ambi-*: OHG *umbi*, Skt. *ubháu* < \**abháu*

and Mycenaean instrumental plural *-pi* = Homer's *-φι(v)*, instrumental - locative - ablatival genitive, both singular and

plural.

Congruent with areal tendencies, Tocharian employed analytic, rather than synthetic, comparative formations. It lacks IE *\*-y<sup>e</sup>/os-* and/or *\*-tero-* comparatives. As an instance of areal diffusion of analytic comparative operators, note that all Uto-Aztecan languages use Spanish *más* 'more', which totally eliminated presumably synthetic native strategies, no longer even reconstructible.

In addition to *omšap* 'more', Tocharian employed deverbative degree adverbs with the sense 'exceedingly' derived from IE *\*e-leu(-dh)-* and *\*ǵhe(n)d-*: Kuchean *olyapo* (A *lyatār*) to *lut* and Kuchean *satkai* to *kāt-k-* respectively; see Krause-Thomas (1960:171) for the unetymologized data. The compared form was in the ablative (*ablativus comparationis*): Kuchean *tumem omšap* (*olyapo*) 'more than that'. For 'soon, early', Sogdian, the region's quondam lingua franca, has *βr'k* (βr'k) = Av. *fraka-* (cf. Skt. *prātār* 'early, morning', *πρω*) = Yaghnobi *f'rāk* 'morning' > Toch. A *tāpārka* 'now' with prefixed definite *tā-*. Cf. Toch. A *opārka* 'at morn' with perlativ *-ā* in temporals. Toch. B *naus* / *A nes* 'earlier' to *no* / *nu* 'now' respectively are comparable to Sogdian *nwr*, Av. *nu* 'id.'.

Here, too, belong Hitt. *mekki-* 'much', common and neuter, and adv. *mekki* 'very', presumably locative singular.

The *\*meǵ(h)ri* that underlies the Armenian and Greek forms is the result of a shift of *u*-stem to *ró*-stem: *-(e)ú-* > *-(e/o)ró-*, e.g. Homer's *κρατύς* (4x) > post-Homeric *κρατερός*, a process that is complete in Tocharian: Kuchean *tapre* 'high, top' = Lith. *dubùs* 'sunken, concave, deep', so Hamp (1998:321) and Krause-Thomas (1960:52, 67, 68) before him. This points to *\*meǵ(h)u-* as a founding form, the nom.-acc. sg. neuter of which (*\*meǵ(h)u*), used adverbially, yields Gmc. *\*meku* (like adv. *felu* 'much'), the source of OIc. *mjök* (> *mjög* ca. 1250); just so *\*felu* > OIc. *fjöl-*, an intensive prefix communicating 'much, manifold'; *pace* De Vries (1962: s.v. *mjök*).

We may now delete the conventional wisdom of our handbooks that *\*meku* was formed to *\*felu*, a tidbit of oversight that apparently stems from Schulze (1908 = 1966:75, fn. 4).

In addition to meaning 'much, greatly' with verbs and 'very' with adjectives and adverbs, OIc. *mjök* also means 'nearly, almost', semantics that are continued yet today: OIc. *hann var dauðr mjök af kulda* 'he was nearly dead from ("at") the cold', with perfect sociative / locative semantics (*af*). Note the

Modern Icelandic formula *mjög samtímis* 'almost simultaneously', with a fossilized genitive adverb, the same syntax as required by *μέχρι*. Faroese lacks a corresponding form.

OIc. *mjök* ≡ ME *muche* (*miche*) 'much' < OE \**muci*/\**muca*, a locative in the protolanguage, and Chaucer's *mochel* (vs. *mechel*, *muchel*, *michel*, *mekel*, etc.) = *μεγαλο*.

Given IE *-m/-bh-* alternation and (residual) 'nearly, almost' semantics, OIc. *mjök* finds a morpho-syntactic counterpart in Germ. *beinah(e)* 'nearly, almost' (MHG *bī nā*).

Continuing to sift the evidence, Hamp (1998:325) sketches the development of Phrygian zeta. He cites Hesychius' lemma *Μαζευσ*, glossed as an epithet of Zeus among the Phrygians, which he says, surely correctly, points to \**mag-i-* as in Lat. *agnus*, *mag-is*, *maximus*, Osc. *mais*, *maimas*, Middle Irish *māl* = Gaulish *maglo-s*, and Toch. B *māka* / A *māk* 'much, great (in number)', to which we add Av. *maz-* and Sogdian *mz'yʃ(k)* 'big' < \**mazexak*; pace Diakonoff and Neroznak (1985:122), uncited by Hamp, with their *Μαζευσ* as 'the one who kneads (bread)', or Zeus as the Pillsbury Doughboy. Also with *a* vocalism in this lexeme is OE (*ge*)*mæc*, one meaning of which was 'similar' (glossed *similis*); that is, 'almost, nearly' (in comparisons). It is also negated (*ungemæc*) 'dissimilar'. These forms were homonymous with (*ge*)*mæc* 'fitting, suitable', cf. Modern Dutch *gemak* 'ease, comfort'. Residual semantics of approximation for 'much' are captured by formulaic *much like*, a bridge between \**meku* and (*ge*)*mæc*, which is no longer with us.

As a member of an ancient North European speech community, Germanic claims a slot in the Hampian equation.

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