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A POSSIBLE SLAVIC ETYMOLOGY OF HUNGARIAN *KULLANCS* 'TICK'

Возможная славянская этимология венгерского kullancs 'клещ'

Данная статья посвящена этимологии венгерского существительного *kullancs* 'клещ (лат. Ixodes ricinus)'. Славянское происхождение слова было предложено лингвистами в XIX веке, однако в XX веке эта идея была отвергнута, что в основном было обусловлено фонетически. После краткого обзора истории исследования этого слова, в статье приводится аргументация в пользу того, что можно игнорировать, или, как минимум, считать незначительными, фонетические сложности, возникающие при сравнении венгерского слова *kullancs* с его славянскими эквивалентами. Таким образом, необходимо снова поднять вопрос о его славянском происхождении.

Ключевые слова: kullancs, клещ, венгерский, славянский, этимология, заимствования, фонетика, языковые контакты

According to Ferenc Papp's statistical analysis based on Géza Bárczi's etymological dictionary [SzófSz.], 9.36% of the roots contained in the Explanatory Dictionary of the Hungarian Language [ÉrtSz.] are of Slavic origin [PAPP 1967: 521]. Although no similar examination has been carried out since the release of the TESz. and EWUng., it is hardly probable that the more recent results of etymological research would give substantially different figures. This almost 10% is a large number, since these Slavic words are not much fewer than those of proven Finno-Ugric origin, while Turkic and German loanwords constitute each only about 5% of today's Hungarian vocabulary. Not only is this Slavic layer present in all fields of Hungarian language usage (*asztal* 'table', *tiszta* 'clean', *szabad* 'free' etc.), but these words have been adapted phonetically to such extent that an uninitiated native speaker would deem them an inalienable part of ancient Hungarian vocabulary. Though the connection of most of these words to their Slavic originals can be made quite evident by a simple comparison (e.g. *széna* 'hay' – Serbo-Croatian, Slovakian, Russian *seno*; *dolog* 'thing, work' – Slovenian, Russian *dolg*; *macska* 'cat' – Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, Slovakian *mačka*), Hungarian has some more obscure Slavic borrowings, too [cf. ZOLTÁN 2005], that have only lately been proven to be loanwords. This article aims to demonstrate that the Hungarian word *kullancs* 'tick' may also be one of these.

The Slavic counterparts of *kullancs* are Russian *клещ,* Belarusian *клешч*, Ukrainian *кліщ*, Polish *kleszcz*, Czech *klišt'*, Slovakian *kliešt'* and Slovenian *klòšč*. The phonetic resemblance between these and their Hungarian equivalent is remarkable, and though no regular correspondence can be established between the respective phonemes, the case should be examined more thoroughly before we dismiss it. Semantically, these words are a perfect match of one another, and, as will be shown

below, their phonetic discrepancies cannot be regarded as a proof that *kullancs* is not a borrowing from a Slavic language.

Neither a Finno-Ugric nor any other explanation has been proposed concerning the etymology of this word, but the idea to link it with the above mentioned Slavic forms is a relatively old one. GYARMATHI [1816: 41] was the first to compare it to Slavic *klests* (whereby he presumably meant Russian *клец*), then LESCHKA [1825: 121 under *kollants* and 131 under *kullants*] held it straightforwardly a Slavic loanword; he refers in both entries among various correct forms to a Polish one *klonsts* (=*kłąszcz*), which is wrong [SzlJsz. 875]; this fictitious Polish word was then adopted by DANKOVSZKY[1833: 560 under *kollánts, kullants*] who also believed that Hungarian *kullancs* is a Slavic loanword. But the related literature tells us that though the Slavic etymology of the word used to be accepted in the past, this point of view has faded since then – most of all because István Kniezsa rejected it. Géza Bárczi [SzófSz. 180] confidently deems *kullancs* a Slavic loanword because of Slovenian *klòšč*, though admitting that a Proto-Slavic *klǫ̀ščь* with a nasal vowel that can be reconstructed from *klòšč* is not attested. It is precisely this point that KNIEZSA [1941: 285–286] contests in his review of Bárczi's Magyar szófejtő szótár: according to him, this explanation of *kullancs*, originating from MIKLOSICH [1871: 33, cf. SZARVAS 1882: 269; 1886: 119], is 'completely wrong since Slovenian *klòšč* cannot go back to *klǫ̀ščь* (in every other Slavic language it is *klěščь*)'. However, he doesn't dismiss the possibility of a Slavic etymology because he adds: 'if the Hungarian word is indeed of Slavic origin, its *-n-* can only be some kind of supplementary sound'. This opinion is cited approvingly by NYIRKOS [1987: 159] in his treatise about inetymological consonants in Hungarian. Notwithstanding, the SzlJsz. [874–875] lists *kullancs* among the words of non-Slavic origin, declaring that 'its origin is unknown'. The entry states again that there is no real trace of a hypothetical Proto-Slavic *klǫ̀ščь*, and affirms that Slovenian *klòšč* is not enough to reconstruct a nasal vowel since, on the one hand, Slovenian *o* can originate not only from Proto-Slavic nasal *ǫ* but also from non-nasal *o* and, on the other hand, Slovenian *klòšč* is most probably a comparatively recent development formed by the blending of the original Slavic word for 'tick' with *klop* (cf. Russian *клоп* 'shield bug'), as BERNEKER [1908–1913: 517] assumed. Kniezsa makes no remark on the front-back difference between the vowels of the Hungarian and the Slavic words.

The judgement of the Hungarian etymological dictionaries in this regard is rather negative. TESz. [2: 665–666] mentions the possibility of a Slavic etymon, yet emphasizing that this is just a vague hypothesis. EWUng.'s opinion [1: 845] is quite similar, though it states that the word is of unknown origin and that 'a Slavic etymology is hardly probable because of the vowels' different place of articulation' („Herleitung aus dem Slawischenistwegen der unterschiedlichen Vokalharmoniekaumwahrscheinlich"). Both dictionaries agree that Slovenian *klošč* is a recent form that developed analogically to *klop*. ESz. [458] does not mention this detail nor the possibility of a Slavic etymology altogether – it only declares that the word is of

unknown origin. However, Gábor Zaicz, its editor-in-chief, had concluded in a previous study that in the case of our early vocabulary a -*cs* [tʃ] in final position of a word means it's a loanword [ZAICZ 1982: 59].

To sum it up, in order to link Hungarian *kullancs* to Slavic *клещ, kleszcz, kliešt'* etc. (< Proto-Slavic **klĕščь*), we must explain the following phenomena:

1. the insertion of a vowel in the initial consonant cluster *kl-*
2. the gemination of -*l-*
3. the insertion of an -*n-* before word ending -*cs*
4. the difference between Slavic front and Hungarian back vowels.

As we'll see below, it is possible to provide all these questions with an at least partially convincing answer.

1. The insertion of an additional vowel between two consonants to facilitate pronunciation is one of the three main methods Old Hungarian used to adopt when it had to deal with initial consonant clusters (the other two are insertion of an additional vowel before the consonant cluster and omission of one or two of the cluster's consonants). To name but a few of the numerous examples: *barack* 'peach' < Western Slavic *brosky*; *bolond* 'fool' < Slavic *blǫdъ*; *gerezd* 'segment, clove' < South Slavic *grezdъ*; *perec* 'pretzel' < Middle High German *brez(e)*; and some toponyms: *Balaton* < Slavic *Blatьnъ* 'muddy'; *Baranya* < Slavic *brana* 'gate'; *Trencsén* < Slavic *Trncin* [KESZLER 1969: 16–40]. Róbert Kenyhercz's updated volume about toponyms with initial consonant clusters gives a lot of other examples, from which 42 begin with *kl-* [KENYHERCZ 2013: 63, 84–85, 107–108, 130, 155–156, 208].

2. The gemination of a consonant, especially in intervocalic position, is a not much less common phenomenon in the history of the Hungarian language. Several consonants are affected by it and -*l-* is one of the most typical ones, mainly in the Eastern but also in some Western dialects [MNyT. 134]. Geminated forms appear as early as the 14th century (1270, 1285: *kelemes*~ 1342: *kellemes* 'pleasant'; 1231: *holo*~ 1315: *hollo* 'raven') and can still be heard by contemporary speakers: MNyT. gives forms like *halladás* 'progress', *Kellenföld* 'a district of Buda' and *elemi* 'elementary school', but an attentive ear can catch similar ones such as *nállad* 'at your place' (instead of *nálad*), *tőllem* 'from me' (instead of *tőlem*) and *tökélletes* 'perfect' (instead of *tökéletes*) even in 2018. Many of these geminates have stayed in the domain of dialectal or non-standard use (the above cited ones or *csallán* as opposed to *csalán* 'nettle', *szöllő* as opposed to *szőlő* 'grape' etc.), but a lot have made it to the standard language and become the one and only correct and official form of a word. This might have happened to *kullancs*, too, in the case of which TESz. [2: 665–666] and EWUng. [1: 845] cite two forms with a single -*l-*: *Kulanchs* from 1565 (the oldest attestation of the word) and *koláncstul* from 1835 (a relatively recent, suffixated form). Unless we consider these forms to be orthographic mistakes, they testify that the word *kullancs* did have an alternation between single and double -*l-*, and since gemination of intervocalic -*l-*'s is attested from the 14th century onward, it can't be decided which form was the original one. If the variant with a single -*l-* is the earlier one, something similar must have happened as with *kollár* 'wheelwright', another

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Slavic loanword with an almost identical phonetic structure where the single *-l-* of the Slovakian etymon *kolár* became *-ll-* in Hungarian [TESz. 2: 527].

3. KNIEZSA [SzlJsz. 874–875] and NYIRKOS [1987: 159] say that the *-n-* of *kullancs* is an 'inetymological supplementary sound' that cannot and does not need to be explained. Following SzlJsz., we can dismiss the possibility that it has Slavic roots since it has no traces in any Slavic language (there is no Slavic form with a nasal vowel or consonant).Therefore it has to be a later Hungarian development, whether the Slavic etymology is true or not. And this is by far not as inconceivable as one might think at first sight, since there are several parallel cases where a Hungarian word got a supplementary *-n-* in similar position without any palpable reason [cf. NYIRKOS 1987: 150–164]. Consulting TESz. at a few words with the same ending, we can find that the *-n-*'s of *bogáncs* 'thistle' [1: 321], *bakancs* '(hiking) boots' [1: 222] and *bilincs* 'handcuffs' [1: 301] are 'inorganic supplementary sounds' inserted at a later period (*bogáncs* was formed from *bog* 'tangle', *bakancs* from *boka* 'ankle', while *bilincs* is a loanword from Old Turkic and no Turkic form has an *-n-* in it). These *-n-*'s have no etymological roots, they are just there, exactly like in pairs such as *bogrács/bográncs* 'cauldron', *korbács/korbáncs* 'whip', *fakopács/fakopáncs* 'woodpecker' and *muslica/muslinca* 'midge'. Actually, the ending *-ncs* became so widespread in Hungarian that the language reformers of the 18th and 19th centuries even used it as a suffix to create words like *agancs* 'antlers' – probably from *ág* 'twig, branch' [NyÚSz. 1: 2; CzF 1: 41; TESz. 1: 100–101]. Moreover, an inetymological *-n-* was inserted before *-cs* and *-c* in the toponyms *Nőtincs* (older *Nőtics* < Slavic *Netyčъ*) and *Rohonc* (< Slavic *Orehovec*), while *Kelecsény*, *Szacsal*, *Becs*, *Debrecen* and *Daróc* also had secondary forms like *Kerencsény*, *Szancsal*, *Bencs*, *Debrencen* and *Daronc* [TÓTH 2004: 462–463]. Although this change was not as frequent as the interpolation of an *-l-* before another consonant [TÓTH 2004: 454–462], these examples demonstrate that the case of *kullancs* is not the only one in this regard. Furthermore, JANURIK's [2018: 5] proposition that *-cs* could be a word formation suffix in itself is also worth noting –and could open new ways for the analysis of this word –, though he doesn't provide any additional explanation about it and indicates with a question mark that this is just a conjecture.

Though these analogies are relatively convincing, there is one more way of explaining this additional *-n-* in *kullancs*, be it not less hypothetical than the previous one. The Slavic words meaning 'tick' originate from **klěsti̯o-*, a stem with the primary meaning 'to clench, to pinch' that gave, among others, Russian *клестить* 'to clench, to pinch, to squeeze' and *клéщи/клещú* 'pincers' [VASMER 1: 569; TRUBAČEV 10: 14 **klestiti*]. The consonant clusters *-sti̯-* (or *-stj-*) became *-šč-* in Proto-Slavic and were then either conserved or simplified in the various daughter languages (e.g. Bulgarian *-št-*, Czech and Slovakian *-št'-* or the spirantized Russian *-щ-* [cf. VAILLANT 1: § 17 and § 29]).The *-cs* of Hungarian *kullancs* attests that the etymon of this word must have been a Slavic form with *-šč* (compare Proto-Slavic **ščъrba*> Hung. *csorba*, Proto-Slavic **ščuka*>Hung. *csuka*), and it's possible that Hungarian native speakers compensated the simplification of this cluster they found too hard to pronounce with the insertion of an *-n-* (similarly to the much more

widespread phenomenon of compensatory lengthening). Though we don't have any parallel examples for this kind of compensation, this assumption would explain why all Hungarian sources have solely forms with an *-n-* while there is no Slavic etymon to be found that has a nasal.

4. Although the quality difference between the vowels of *kullancs* and those of its Slavic equivalents is the most problematic point of the word's Slavic etymology, this riddle can be unravelled too, at least to a certain extent. The corresponding entries of TESz. [2: 665–666] and EWUng. [1: 845] reveal that the word has another, quite early variant, *killincz*[1], dating from 1599, and a Csángó dialectal form, *kiliiǵ̌*, that goes back to reconstructed *killint'š'*. *Kiliiǵ̌* is adopted from CSŰRY [1939: 81] who, citing Hungarian *kolláncs* and *killincz*, Slovenian *klošč* and *klešč*, Czech *klišt'* and Rusyn *kl'išč*, and referring to MIKLOSICH [1871: 33], declares that the word is of Slavic origin. CSŰRY himself took *kiliiǵ̌* from WICHMANN's Csángó dictionary [CsángSz. 78] that sadly does not tell us anything else about the word, and so did the newer Dictionary of the Hungarian Dialect from Moldova [MMTSz. I/1: 503], giving the form *kilincs* (that is, a homonym of standard Hungarian *kilincs* 'door handle'). These latter forms are much closer to the Slavic words, especially to Ukrainian *кліщ* that is used in the neighbouring regions of Moldavia. Although, according to TESz., the Hungarian forms with back vowels seem to be the older ones and the connection between the variants with different vowel quality is obscure, these facts make the possibility of a borrowing much more likely and plausible.

Besides these forms, other quite interesting ones can be found in MTsz. [2: 60]: *paklincs* 'tick' (Kiskunhalas and Nógrád regions), *pakeléncs* 'shield bug' (Erdővidék region), and *pákullancs* 'tick' (Mátyusfölde and Tallós regions). The broad geographic distribution of these variants suggests that forms beginning with *pa-/pá-* were once relatively widespread in the Hungarian speaking areas; therefore they should by no means be regarded as some kind of local development but rather as remnants of a more extensive phenomenon. MTsz. doesn't reveal anything more if not that there exists another dialectal word meaning 'tick', *óvantag*, but that doesn't seem to bring us any closer to the solution. ÚMTsz. [4: 330] cites the forms *paklincs* and *páklincs*: *paklincs* was noted in Vác and in several places throughout the Great Hungarian Plain (Szentlőrinckáta, Hajdúnánás, Kiskunság, Csongrád, Ada) with the meaning 'sheep ked' (a brown fly that resembles a tick and blood-feeds on sheep), and *páklincs* in the village Hugyad in Nógrád county with the meaning 'a parasite of hens'. Both words refer to very tick-like parasites but not exactly to ticks – and as it will be shown in the next pages, this is not without a reason.

Though in the following argumentation we are going to assume that the above cited forms have one common root with *kullancs* and are only variants of it, it is important to keep in mind that this is not a certainty. In TESz.'sentry of *paklincs* [3: 63], *kullancs* is only mentioned with the warning that the connection

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[1] A glimpse at the primary source of this form reveals that here *cz* = *cs* [č]: „Mert nekem egyéb barátom ſohul nincz, / Hozzád en ugy ragazkodom mint killincz."
[https://rmk.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/RMK_I_309-310/?r=0&pg=4&pg=12&layout=s]

between the two words needs closer investigation – though TESz has no doubts that *paklincs, pakeléncs*, *pákeléncz, pakilincz* and their voiced alternatives *baglinc* and *baglinca* have the same origin (the transition between *p* and *b* is not without parallel examples in Hungarian). The main issue of TESz. seems to be that the earliest forms (1611: *pákeléncz, pakilincz*) mean 'shield bug', the meaning 'tick' is first attested only in 1789 (*paklints*), and in 1889 a third meaning appears: *baglinc, baglinca* 'fruit fly, midge'. TESz. doesn't know anything about the origin of these words, yet deems it evident that the three-syllable versions are the older ones (probably because they are attested earlier). EWUng. [2: 1099] says more or less the same, though suggesting that 'shield bug' is the primary meaning and the other two developed under the influence of *kullancs* and *muslica*. So all things considered, we know next to nothing for certain about the etymology of these words, but as they are very close to *kullancs, kalláncs, kolláncs, kulláncs* [cf. ÚMTsz. 3: 629] and also to *клещ, клешич, кліщ, kleszcz, klišt', kliešt', klòšč* both in form and meaning, we are going to presume that there is some kind of etymological connection between them.

The prefix *pa-*/*pá-* has good chances to indicate Slavic origin, since it exists in the Slavic languages and in a couple of Slavic loanwords in Hungarian too. Among these, standard ones are *pázsit* 'lawn' (< Slavic **pažitь*, from the verb *žiti*'to live') and its less common variant *pást* [SzlJsz. 406; TESz. 3: 139], *pók* 'spider' (<Slavic *pauk* < Proto-Slavic **paǫkъ* [SzlJsz. 428]), and *pózna* 'pole' (< Slavic **paǫzina* [SzlJsz.444]), but there are a few dialectal ones, too: *paszkodál* 'to pilfer' (< Slovakian *paskuda* 'dirt, filth' [SzlJsz. 396]), *pátyosz* 'fluff' (< Slavic **pačesъ* [SzlJsz. 405]), *pauz* 'rod used for fishing under ice' (<Serbo-Croatian *pauz* < *paǫzъ* [SzlJsz. 405]), and *pazsrák* 'gluttonous' (< Slovakian *pažrák*, from Proto-Slavic **žьrěti* 'to eat, to gobble' [SzlJsz. 407]). One of the most common Slavic words formed with this prefix is 'memory': Russian *námямь,* Polish *pamięć*, Czech *pamět'*, Slovakian *pamät'*, Serbo-Croatian *nàmêm̂*, Bulgarian *námem*. Vasmer's etymological dictionary [2: 308], though leaving aside the function of the prefix in question, traces the stem of this word back to Indo-European **mn̥tis*, a root with reflexes like Lithuanian *atmintìs* 'memory', Sanskrit *matíṣ, mátiṣ* 'thought, opinion, view', Latin *mēns, mentis* 'mind, intelligence', Greek *μνήμη* 'memory' and English *mind*. (According to Hadrovics [1976: 65–66], Hungarian *elmélkedik* 'to cogitate' and *emlékezik* 'to remember' originate from this Slavic stem, too.)Russian *námямь* 'memory' is the noun of *pómnить* 'to remember' (cf. Old Church Slavonic *pomьněti : pamętь*) –in the case of deverbal nouns, the prefix *pa-* normally doesn't bring about any change of meaning, it is merely a variation of the verbal prefix *po-*. István Kniezsa uses the term 'trivializing verbal prefix' for *pa-* when discussing the Slavic antecedent of *pázsit* [SzlJsz. 406], but this makes little sense in a stylistically neutral word like *námямь*. It is equally dubious if the *pa-* of *pazsrák* is a 'pejorative prefix' [SzlJsz. 407], since **žьrěti* 'to eat, to gobble, to devour' already has a pejorative overtone when referring to people. However, the case of *pa-* as a denominal prefix is completely different: nouns formed with *pa-* can indicate something very similar but not identical to what their original nouns mean, in other words *pa-* can convey a meaning as 'not real, false, fake'. For example, Russian *сын* 'son' and *дочь*

(stem: *дóчер-*) 'daughter' form their 'fake' variants with the prefix *ná-* to give *пáсынок* 'stepson' and *пáдчерица* 'stepdaughter', and so does *клен* 'maple', since the words *пáклен* and *нéклен* mean another kind of maple, the field maple; or Czech *klíč* 'key' that turns to 'picklock' when prefixed as *paklíč* [VASMER2: 297; VAILLANT 4: 757–759; KOPEČNÝ 1963: 160; BORYŚ 2005: 406; ESJS 11: 667 under the entry *po*; for a more detailed description of the Slavic prefix *pa-* see BORYŚ 1975: 13–67]. So the dialectal words *paklincs*, *pakeléncs* and *pákullancs* that can refer to other parasites than ticks ('sheep ked', 'parasite of hens', 'shield bug', 'midge') may originate from a Slavic form like *paklěščь meaning 'a parasite similar to a tick', a form that's not attested but that could have existed judging by the extensive geographical distribution and old age of its prefixation. Furthermore, two of these three dialectal Hungarian forms with the prefix *pa-* have front vowels, which brings them even closer to their presumable Slavic etymon(s).

It is possible that Hungarians borrowed a front vowel variant (or more) and the quality change was an inner development. This is what happened to *borotva* 'razor', that comes from Slavic *britva* [TESz. 1: 348–349] and that has an old-fashioned but living alternate version with front vowels: *bërëtva*. Here it is evident that the vowel quality change took place due to the word's mixed vowel structure (as far as their vowels are concerned, Hungarian words are either front, back, or mixed) and that the *ë*-s of the first two syllables turned to *o*-s under the influence of the word ending *a* (in Hungarian short *a* is pronounced like [ɒ], so its position lies even more in the back than in most languages).Maybe something similar happened to *kullancs*, too: the front vowels of forms like *paklincs*/*pakeléncs* shifted to the back under the effect of *pa-*, and then perhaps this vowel structure was transposed to some of the variants without *pa-*, which have since then overcome their front vowel variants and became the only standardized form of this word (perhaps also in order to dissimilate from the more frequently used *kilincs* 'door handle'). But it's equally imaginable that an earlier form that was closer to its Slavic etymons intermingled with a word unknown to us now, resulting in the ultimate form as *kullancs*.

In conclusion, we hope to have been able to show that the above described phonetic problems that led the main Hungarian linguists of the 20th century to reject the hypothesis that *kullancs* is a Slavic loanword are in fact not as compelling as to rule out this possibility. While seeing the difficulties of this assumption, we feel that the information we managed to collect rather supports this theory than refutes it, and would like to invite whoever's concerned with the history of Hungarian and with Hungarian–Slavic language contact to consider it again.

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