CHRISTOS TZITZILIS

"PREFIXATION FOLK-ETYMOLOGY" IN BULGARIAN WORDS OF GREEK ORIGIN

Although the vocabulary remains the favourite domain of those who deal with the Greek-Bulgarian linguistic relations, there is still no special monograph on the problem of folk-etymology in the Bulgarian words of Greek origin. The first to deal with the problem of folk-etymology in Bulgarian was the Bulgarian scholar Ivan Šišmanov in his article "Prinos kăm Bălgarskata narodna etimologija". In this work he also discusses the alteration of some Greek loan-words in Bulgarian under the influence of other Bulgarian words. In M. F. Bajrova's book "Grăcki zaemki v săvremenija bălgarski ezik" there is a small chapter devoted to folk-etymology. In the present paper I'll deal with a kind of folk-etymology, which I called "prefixation folk-etymology". It is the phenomenon in which the first syllable or the first member of a consonantal cluster, which is at the beginning of the word, coincides fonetically with a prefix, and because of this coincidence it is considered as being a prefix and is substituted by another prefix or by the zero element (it drops). Thus, the Bulgarian verb *izkimasuvam*[1] 'test, try out' derives, as M. F. Bajrova correctly suggests, from the verb *dokimàsvam* ($<$Gr. $\delta o \varkappa \iota \mu \acute{\alpha} \zeta \omega$) 'test, try out' with the substitution of *do-* by the prefix *iz-,* because *do-* was erroneously considered as being a prefix.

I used on purpose the term "prefixation folk-etymology", which is a neologism, because I wanted to distinguish it from the phenomenon of the "folk-etymology in the prefixes", in Greek "παρετυμολογία στὶς προθέσεις". In this latter case the affected element is phonetically similar to the element which takes its place. In our case the folk-etymology takes place in two phases: In the first phase the folk-etymology changes "neither the form nor the meaning of the inducted element, although it is still present in the false relations of the lexical kinship". (In the terms of the Rumanian linguist Theodor Hristea[2]

---

1. M. F. Bajrova, p. 93.
2. Theodor Hristea, "Romanian Vocabulary and Etymology" in "Current Trends in Romanian Linguistics" ed. A. Rossetti and Sanda Golopenţia Eretescu, 1978, p. 233.

"latent folk-etymology"). In the second phase that part of the influenced word which is erroneously considered as being a prefix is substituted by another prefix. That means that the new element is not phonetically similar to the inducted element, but belongs to the same grammatical category.

The phenomenon of "prefixation folk-etymology" occurs in Bulgarian words of slavic origin: *dogani mi se*[3] ⟨ *pogani mi se, zavjàsuvam*[4] ⟨ *navjàsvam, zèmam*[5] ⟨ *vzèmam, izbikaljam*[6] ⟨ *obikaljam, iz-braštam*[7] ⟨ *obraštam, izbrăštam*[8] ⟨ *obrăštam*, in Bulgarian words of Albanian origin (cf. *zgikosam*[9] 'die' ⟨ Alb. *vdes* 'die') etc. In this paper I'll deal with the "prefixation folk-etymology" in Bulgarian words of Greek origin.

The words studied are arranged in alphabetical order:

vkèpsvam, kèpcvam

In the BER the verb *vkèpsvam*[10] 'touch, catch, get one's hands on' is described as of unknown origin. In my opinion this verb is connected with the verbs *skèpsvam* and *skèpcvam* 'take by surprise, take hold of, catch' which the compilers of RRODD[11] derive from the Gr. σκέπτομαι. If their position is correct, then the verb *vkepsvam* should come from *skèpsvam* with mutation *s-* ⟩ *v-*, because *s-* was thought to be a prefix.

The Bulgarian verb *kepcam*[12] 'hang up, catch on, patch up, carry off', which is described by the compilers of BER as a contamination of the verbs *kaptisvam* and *genósvam*, is evidently of the same origin. It comes from *skèpsvam* with the loss of the initial *s-*, which was erroneously considered as being a prefix.

vkrópcan

In the BER the word *vkrópcan*[13] 'a man who is always ready to yield,

3. *BER₁*, 405.
4. *BER₁*, 579.
5. *BER₁*, 633.
6. *BER₂*, 17.
7. *BER₂*, 18.
8. *BER₁*, 18.
9. *BER₁*, 627.
10. *BER₁*, 159.
11. *RRODD*, 457.
12. *BER₂*, 332.
13. *BER₁*, 160.

pliant' is described as of unknown origin. In my opinion it comes from *skropsvam* ⟨ aorist stem of the Gr. σκορπίζω, σκορπῶ 'to scatter, to disperse'. This proposal is confirmed by the existence of the verb *vkropsa se,* which is given by N. Gerov in the text "*vkropsalo li sa e, njama prokopsija ot nego*"[14]. The word *vkropsalo* in this text reminds of the Gr. dialect σκόρπιος 1) wasteful, 2) a man without method, order[15].

zrigòsvam

In the BER the verb *zrigosvam se*[16] 'recover, get over' is described as of unknown origin. This verb is related with the Gr. ἀναρραΐζω 'to recover, to get over', which according to N. Andriotis[17] has been preserved in Greek dialects in the form νιρραγώνω. So we have: νιρραγώνω ⟩ *niragosvam ⟩ *narigosvam,* with metathesis *i-a* ⟩ *a-i,* ⟩ *srigosvam* because *na-* was erroneously considered as being a prefix and was replaced by the prefix *s-,* which becomes *z* in front of *r.*

karp

The word *karp*[18] 'Helleborus cyclophyllus' derives, as the compilers of BER correctly suggest, from Gr. σκάρφη with the loss of the initial *s-* which was erroneously considered as being a prefix.

kalistir

The word *kalistir*[19] 'hoe, mattock' derives according to Skorčev's correct proposal from the Gr. σκαλιστήρι 'small hoe'.

kàncam, kàbzam

The verbs *kancam* and *kabzam*[20] 'dig' derive, as the compilers of the BER correctly suggest, from the aorist stem of the Gr. verb σκάπτω. The initial *s-* drops because it is confused with the prefix *s-.*

14. N. Gerov, v. 6, p. 55.

15. In Pilea, near Thessaloniki.

16. *BER*₁, 656.

17. N. Andriotis, *Lexikon der Archaismen in neugriechischen Dialekten,* Wien 1974, p. 103.

18. *BER*₂, 252.

19. M. F. Bajrova, p. 98.

20. *BER*₂, 226.

nalimisvam se

In the dialect of Elena is registered the verb *nălimisvăm să*[21] 'try to get up: *nălimisă da stani, ama ni mužé:* he tried to get up, but he couldn't. There is no doubt that the Bulgarian verb comes from *polemisvam(se)*[22], 'make efforts, take care of, 2) try to eat' ⟨ Gr. πολεμῶ in its meaning 'to strive, to try to do comething'. In this case the first syllable was confused with the prefix *po-* and afterwards was replaced by the prefix *na-*.

slisvam

In Bulgarian the verb *slisvam* means "amaze, astonish, stupefy, knock out" and *slisvam se* 'be dumb-founded, be taken aback'. Stefan Mladenov[23] in his etymological dictionary derives this verb from the Bulgarian prefix *s-* and the Greek verb λύομαι. This view has been adopted by A. Tahovski[24] and M. F. Bajrova[25]. Actually the verb *slisvam* comes from *zalisvam* (⟨Gr. ζαλίζω) 'make dizzy' with the mutation *za-* ⟩ *s-*.

stàsvam, utàsvam

The verb *stàsvam* 'reach' derives from the verb *ftàsvam* ⟨ aorist stem of the Gr. verb φτάνω. The initial *f-* is replaced by the prefix *s-*, because it was erroneously considered as being a prefix. As is known, other linguists have tried to explain the change *ftasvam* ⟩ *stasvam* in a different way. Some of them[26] believe that this change is a phonetic one, others think that it is a result of contamination[27]. I think that my proposal is confirmed by the existence of the verbs *utasvam* and *dotasvam* which, as the bulgarian linguist K. Kostov[28] has already proved, are from the verb *ftasvam*.

We should add that according to K. Kostov *stàsvam* derives from *ftàsvam* with the mutation *f-* ⟩ *s-* because *f* was confused with the prefix *f* (⟨*v*).

21. *BDial* VII, p. 98.

22. M. F. Bajrova, p. 143

23. Stefan Mladenov, *Etimologičeski i pravopisen rečnik na bălgarskija ezik*, Sofija 1941, p. 591.

24. A. Tahovski, *Grčki zborovi vo makedonskiot naroden govor*, Skopje 1951, p. 37.

25. M. F. Bajrova, p. 157.

26. B. Simeonov, Za substitucija na grăckija φ(φ) v zapadnite bălgarski govori. *BEz* 12/2, 1962, 20-25.

27. M. F. Bajrova, p. 158.

28. K. Kostov, Ošte po văprosa za prehoda *ftasvam* ⟩ *stasvam*, *BEz* 12/5 1962, 439-443.

stisvam

The verb *stisvam*[29] 'build' derives from its synonym *ftišam*, which is from the Gr. χτίζω with the mutation *h* ⟩ *f* in bulgarian. The change *f-* ⟩ *s-* is due to the causes described above.

treksvam

The dialect verb *treksvam*[30] comes from its synonym *streksvam* (⟨Gr. στρέγω, στέργω) 'agree, come round'. The initial *s-* drops because it is confused with the prefix *s-*.

trekjósvam

In the dialect of Strandža is registered the verb *trekjosvam*[31] 'to glaze a clay pot'. The Bulgarian verb derives from the Gr. *(ὀ)στρακώνω* 'to spread with lime mortar, to glaze' with the loss of the initial *s-*. This opinion is confirmed by the existence of the verb **tarkjosvam* which is given by N. Gerov[32] in the text:

tremče varosano
tremče tarkjosano

It is evident that the word *tarkjosano* means 'covered with lime mortar' and derives from the aorist stem of the Gr. *(ὀ)στρακώνω* with metathesis of *r* and the loss of the initial *s-*.

We should notice that the loss of the initial *s-* takes place in Greek words as well, but the causes which produce the two phenomena are completely different. In Greek the forms πιθαμή, βήνω come about from the juncture σπιθαμή ⟩ τὶς σπιθαμὲς ⟩ ἡ πιθαμή, σβήνω ⟩ τοὺς σβήνω ⟩ βήνω[33].

In some cases a new prefix is added to the verb which is formed after "prefixation folk-etymology" has taken place. So we have: φτάνω ⟩ *vtasvam* ⟩ *stasvam* ⟩ *do-stasvam*[34], δοκιμάζω ⟩ *dokimàsvam* ⟩ *izkimasuvam* ⟩ *za-iskimasuvam*[35]. This latter is described in the BER as of unknown origin.

---

29. M. F. Bajrova, p. 159.
30. M. F. Bajrova, p. 164.
31. *BDial* I p. 145.
32. N. Gerov, v. 6, p. 304.
33. Ch. Pantelidis, Προσθήκη καὶ ἀφαίρεσις σ πρὸ συμφώνου ἐν τῇ Ἀρχαίᾳ, Μέσῃ καὶ Νέᾳ Ἑλληνικῇ, *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher* 6 (1928) 401-431.
34. N. Gerov, v. 6, p. 102.
35. *BER₁*, 589.

After having examined all these words we should touch briefly on a theo-
retical problem: Is really the above-described phenomenon a kind of folk-
etymology? I think that the answer can not be negative, because it is produced
by the same causes and, what is most important, it has a similar mechanism
with the other kinds of folk-etymology.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BDial = Bălgarska dialektologija. Proučvanija i materiali, 1-11, Sofija BAN, 1962-1981.
BER = Bălgarski etimologičen rečnik t. I-II, Sofija 1971-1979.
M. F. Bajrova = M. Filipova-Bajrova, *Grăcki zaemki v săvremenija bălgarski ezik,* Sofija
         1969.
RRODD = Rečnik na redki, ostareli i dialektni dumi v literaturata ni ot XIX i XX vek, Sofija
         1974.
N. Gerov = N. Gerov, *Rečnik na bălgarskija ezik s tălkuvane rečite na ruski,* v. 1-6, Plovdiv,
         1895-1904.