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Arm. *nnjem* 'to sleep'

by Daniel Kölligan

1. The etymology of Arm. *nnjem* is unclear,<sup>1</sup> Klingenschmitt (1982: 155) takes the form to be derived from a reduplicated onomatopoeic form *\*ninj-(e/o)-* for which he compares Ital. *ninnare* 'to lull' and *ninna nanna* 'lullaby'. As this is only a typological parallel without complete semantic correspondence a further investigation into the possible origin of *nnjem* is in order.

2. *nnjem* is attested from the earliest texts onwards meaning (a<sub>1</sub>) 'to sleep' and, by metaphor, also (a<sub>2</sub>) 'to be dead', cf.

(a<sub>1</sub>) Mt. 9.24 *zi oc' et'e meṛeal ē atjikd ayl nnjē*

*ou gār apéthanen tò korásion allà katheúdei*  
'because the maiden is not dead, but it is (only) asleep'

(a<sub>2</sub>) Mt. 27.52 *ew gerezmank' bac'an ew bazowm*  
*marmink' nnjec'eloc' srboc' yarean*

*kaì tà mnēmeía aneóikhthēsan kaì pollà*  
*sómata tôn kekoimēménōn hagiōn egérthēsan*  
'and the tombs were opened and many bodies of the  
deceased saints arose'

Besides the stative meaning of the present stem, *nnjem* has an ingressive meaning (b) 'to fall asleep' in the aorist, cf. *nnjeac'* which translates the Greek perfect *kekoimētai* 'has fallen asleep = is asleep':

Jh. 11.11 *yet aysorik asē c'nosa; Łazaros barekam mer nnjeac'; ayl ert'am*  
*zi zart'owc'ic' zna: Asen c'na ašakertk'n; TR, et'e nnjeac', apa apri. Ayl*

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<sup>1</sup> Not treated in Hübschmann 1897.

ŸS *vasn mahown nora asēr; noc'a aypēs t'owec'aw t'e vasn nnjelay k'noy asē.*

*Metà toùto légei autoís, 'Lázaros ho phílos hēmōn kekoímētai, allá poreúomai hína exupnísō autón.' Eīpan oún hoi mathētai autōi, 'Kúrie, ei kekoímētai sōthēsētai.' Eirēkei dē ho Iēsoús perì toù thanátou autoù. Ekeīnoi dē édoxan hōti perì tēs koiméseōs toù húpnuo légei.*

'After that he said to them: "Our friend Lazarus *has fallen asleep/is asleep*; but I will go and wake him up." His disciples said to him: "Lord, if he *has fallen asleep/is asleep*, then he will live." But Jesus was talking about his death, while they thought that he was talking about the *slumber of sleep*."<sup>2</sup>

The noun *ninj* 'sleep' is attested from the Bible onwards as well, translating Gk. *nustagmós*, cf.

Ps. 131.4+5 *t'e tac' k'own ac'ac' imoc', kam ninj artewanac' imoc', kam hangist iranac' imoc' minč'ew gtic' ztehi yarki teařn astowcoy yakoubay.*

*Ei dósō húpnon toís ophthalmóis mou kai toís blephárois mou nustagmōn kai anápausin toís krotáphois mou, hēōs hoù heúrō tópon tōi kurtōi, skénōma tōi theōi Iakōb.*

'I will (not) give sleep to my eyes nor *slumber* to my eyebrows nor rest to my limbs until I have found a place for the Lord, a tent for the God of Jacob.'

, cited in modified form in Agathangelos ch. 888:

*Č'tayr k'own ac'ac', ew oc' ninj artewanac', ew oc' hangist iranac'n, minč'ew hasanel i hangist Teařn*

"He gave no sleep to his eyes, no *respite* to his eyebrows, no rest to his limbs" [Ps. 131.4] until he attained the rest of the Lord.' [transl. Thomson (1976)]

<sup>2</sup> As the Arm. aorist does not imply that the state caused by the verb still holds at the time of speaking, the Arm. translator may have wanted to interpret Jesus' words as 'he has died (but may be brought back to life)' as against the perf. which would imply 'he is (irrevocably) dead (at the moment of speaking)'. Cf. Lyonnet (1933: 10f.) on the usage of *meřaw* vs. *meřeal ē*.

3. The fact that beside *nnjem* the noun *ninj* is attested from the Bible translation onward and that the verb has a 'weak' aorist in *-ec'i* makes it seem reasonable to assume that the latter is a denominal derivative. Word initial *ni-* could then be interpreted as the preverb *ni-* 'down', as seen in Arm. *nist* 'sitting place' < \**nisdo-* (: Lat. *nidus*, Ved. *nīḍa-*, OHG *nest* all meaning 'nest') and probably also *nstim* 'to sit down', if from \**ni-si-sd-e/o-* (cf. Klingenschmitt 1982: 129ff.). If, on the other hand, one takes the verb to be the original form with *ninj* as a back-formation, made at a time when the vowels of unaccented syllables were not yet reduced to schwa or zero, *ni-* could also be the reduplication syllable of a reduplicated thematic present of the type IE \**si-sd-e/o-* 'to sit down' (: Gk. *hízomai*, Lat. *sīdere*, *-ō*, Skt. *sīdati*, etc. from the root \**sed-*), which would lead to assume a preform \**ni-nC-e/o-*. In both cases, the underlying root would have the structure \**nVC-*.

4. Under the second assumption made in 3 one probable phonological context that would yield an Armenian form *-nj-* is that of a root ending in IE \**i*, thus \**ni-ni-e/o-*, which would give Arm. \**ninjelo-*, cf. for the context Arm. *mownj* 'silent' < \**munijos* (: Skt. *muni-* 'sage'), *řnjem* 'to wipe, cleanse, destroy' < \**g<sup>ub</sup>en-je/o-* (: Gk. *theínō*).<sup>3</sup> But of the two roots of the form \**nej-* cited in Pokorny (1959: 760) (the first of which also in *LIV* s.v. \**nejH-*) neither seems to be in any semantic connection with words meaning 'to sleep' (1. *nei-* 'to lead', Ved. *náyati*, Av. *naieiti*, Hitt. *nāi-*, 2. *nei-* 'to be lively, to shine', Lat. *nitēre*, *-eō* 'to shine', Welsh *nwyf*, Mr. *niab* 'vital force'). A preform \**ni-ni-e/o-*, though phonologically possible, is therefore less likely.

5. A different possibility is to assume that Arm. *-j-* did not originate in the context after a nasal, but in a cluster with preceding \**d<sup>b</sup>* as in the case of Arm. *měj* 'middle' from IE \**med<sup>b</sup>jo-* (: Ved. *madhya-*, Lat. *medius*, Goth. *midjis*, Gk. *mésos*, in Armenian via \**mejd<sup>b</sup>jos* with epenthesis of \**i*).<sup>4</sup> In this

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Schmitt (1981: 64f., 70).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Meillet (1936: 52) on *měj*. Other cases are less clear, Meillet (1936: 73) derived the loc.-gen.-dat. ending *-oj* as in *tehi*, *tehoj* < \**-od<sup>b</sup>iV-* and compared this with Gk. *-othi* in *éndothi* 'inside', *télóthi* 'in the distance', etc. ('type adverbial comparable à celui du grec *-othi*, dans *ouranóthi*.'), cf. also Olsen (1988), Clackson (1994: 61-68), Olsen (1999: 810f.), but the ending *-j* may have arisen from IE /*i*/ in the position after resonant as in *geřj*, gen. of *gewt* 'village' < \**uelijos*, cf. Matzinger (2005: 106-109). The origin of the imperative/subjunctive endings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person sg. and pl. in *-jir* and *-jik'*

case the root underlying *nnjem* would have the form *\*nVd<sup>b</sup>-* to which a *je/o-* stem was built: *\*-nVd<sup>b</sup>je/o-* > *\*-nVje/o-* > *-nje/o-*. The word initial *\*ni-* could under this assumption be interpreted as in 4 as a reduplication syllable, but since presents with both reduplication and *je/o-* suffix are not very frequent, this seems less likely than to assume that *ni-* is actually the IE preverb *\*ni-* 'down', which, as the example of *nstim* given in 3 shows, may still have been productive in pre-literary Armenian. In this case then, the underlying formation might be a stem *\*nVd<sup>b</sup>je/o-* > *nje-* [nəje-] (cf. *lsem* [ləsem] < *\*kluke-*, cf. Klingenschmitt 1982: 157) yielding verbal *\*ni-nje-* > *nnjem* [nənjem] or a nominal stem *\*nijo-/nujo-* whence *\*ni-nij-/ni-nuj-* > *ninj-* [ninj-] from which in turn *nnjem* (for the deletion of [i]/[u]/schwa in unaccented syllables cf. *owsowmn* [usumən] : gen. *owsman* [usman] 'teaching', *xndir* 'request' [xəndir] : *xndrem* 'to ask' [xəndrem], etc.).

6. If we now look for possible extra-Armenian connections of the still hypothetical root *\*nVd<sup>b</sup>-*, we easily chance upon both Lithuanian and Greek forms with a similar structure and the same meaning 'to sleep':

(a) Lithuanian has various derivatives that may all go back to a root *\*sneud-* or *\*sneud<sup>b</sup>-*: the *-je/o-* present *snáusti*, *snáudžiu*, *snáudžiau* 'to slumber, to doze, to be slow' (also *užsnáudžė* 'nodded off', Latv. *snaīst*, *snaīžu*, *snaīdu* 'to slumber, to sleep'), the *st-* present *snústi*, *snústu*, *snúdau* 'to fall asleep, to nod off, to slumber' and various nominal derivatives such as *snaudà* 'slumber, being slow', *snáudas*, *snaudālius*, *snaudžius* 'sleepy person' and *snūda* 'sleepy person', 'slumber, drowsiness' (cf. Fraenkel (1962: 852f.), Frisk (II. 239f.), García Ramón (1993: 40 fn. 11)).<sup>5</sup>

is unclear, Meillet (1936: 121) derived them from IE *\*-d<sup>b</sup>iV-*, i.e. the original ending of the imp. 2<sup>nd</sup> sg. *\*-d<sup>b</sup>i-* + an undefined vocalic element, Jasanoff (1979: 148f.) posited a syntagm of the type *\*b<sup>b</sup>ered<sup>b</sup>iōi h<sup>b</sup>id<sup>b</sup>i* 'go carry!' with *\*Vd<sup>b</sup>V* > *-r-*, while Klingenschmitt (1981: 40f.) takes them to be optative forms to roots with final resonant, e.g. *bar-ji-* (aor. *bar[e]-* 'beat') < *\*pr<sup>b</sup>-je-* with subsequent spread to other root types and restriction to the 2<sup>nd</sup> person.

<sup>5</sup> Under the assumption of a semantic change 'to snort' > 'to sleep' Fraenkel *loc. cit.* also connects OHG *snūden* 'to mock', orig. 'sniff, snort', cf. also *nasesnūden* 'to mock' (Notker, Isidor), *ūzsnūden* 'blow, breathe out, blow up' (Isidor) which is better taken to belong to IE *\*sney-* 'to flow' (: Gk. *né(v)ō*, fut. *neúsomai* 'to swim'), with *-t-* enlargement, germ. *\*snub-*, cf. Köbler (1993: 996), Pokorny (1959: 972): MHG *snudel*, *snuder*, *snūde* 'Schnupfen, cold', ON *snyðja* 'to sniff, scent', *snuðra*, *snoðra* 'id.'

(b) Greek has a verb *nustázō* which means 'to be/become sleepy, to doze', cf. also Hes. *nustaléon·hupnēlón* and the following examples:

Pl. *Symp* 223.d.6 *Taúta dē anagkazomévous autoús kai ou sphódra he-pomévous nustázein, kai próteron mèn katadartheín tôn Aristophánē, édē dē hēméras gignoménēs tôn Agáthōna.*  
 '[he told that], being forced to assume this and following him in this hypothesis only reluctantly, they became sleepy and first Aristophanes fell asleep, and, when day had already broken, Agathon, too.'

Ar. *Av*. 639 *Oukhì nustázein éti hóra 'stìn hēmín oudè mellonikiân / all' hōs tákhista déi ti drân.*  
 'It is no longer time for us to be drowsy and loiter like Nikias, but it's high time to do something.'

Pl. *Phdr*. 259a *ei oún ídoien kai nō katháper toús polloús en mesēmbriai mē dialegomévous allà nustázontas kai kēloumévous huph' hautōn di' argían tēs dianoiás diakatōs àn katagelōien.*  
 'Now if they saw the two of us not having a conversation at midday, but like most other people dozing off to sleep, charmed by their music because of the indolence of our spirit, they would justly laugh at us.'

Hp. *Epid*. 7.17 *ophthalmoí ... pléontes hóspēr tôn nustázontōn 'eyes floating like those of people falling asleep'*<sup>6</sup>

*nustázō* has traditionally been connected with either *neuō*, *neustázō* 'to nod, to incline the head' under the assumption of a semantic development 'to nod' > 'to fall asleep, to sleep' (cf. Schwyzler 1934: 349) or with the Lith. material given under a) (cf. Fraenkel (1962: 852f.), Frisk (II. 239f.), García Ramón (1993: 40 fn. 11)).<sup>7</sup> Against the first assumption, probable though it may seem from a semantic point of view (cf. also *infra*), speaks the fact that *neuō* and *neustázō* never indicate sleepiness in Greek,<sup>8</sup> but are, as García Ramón 1993 has shown, consistently used with the meanings 'make a momen-

<sup>6</sup> This seems to be the same idea as in Hes. *nustalōpiân·nustázein*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. also Schulze (1966: 376), Solmsen (1910), Bechtel (1914: 234), Georgacas (1958), Pokorny (1959: 978 1. *sneud(h)-*), Heubeck (1987: 236 fn. 46).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. also Solmsen (1910: 76).

tary movement, indicate (by nodding), agree/disagree, allow/disallow' (cf. García Ramón (1993: 40-44)).

If therefore *nustázō* is more likely to be related to Lith. *snaud-/snud-*, the common denominator would be a root \*(s)*neud/d<sup>h</sup>*- (cf. García Ramón *loc. cit.*, Pokorny (1959: 978)) meaning roughly 'to become sleepy, to doze, to sleep'. The Greek form might then be interpreted as stemming from the verbal adjective \**nud/d<sup>h</sup>-to-* > \**nustós* 'sleepy, tired'. The connection with Arm. *nnjem* would determine the root final consonant as \**d<sup>h</sup>*, since \**d<sub>i</sub>* yields Arm. *c*, cf. *anicanem* 'to curse, to condemn' < \**Hnejd-je/o-* (: Gk. *óneidos*, *oneidázō*), *becanim* 'to ride' < \**sed-je/o-*.<sup>9</sup>

With regard to *nnjem* it may be noted that the assumed formation with the preverb *ni-* 'down' has a parallel in Skt. *nidrā-* 'to fall asleep, sleep, slumber' (: RV *nidrā* f. 'sleep', pres. opt. *nidrāyāt*, class. *nidritá-* 'fallen asleep'), Iran. \**nidrā-* which is presupposed by the Armenian loanword *nirb* 'sleepiness' (cf. Hübschmann (1897: 204), Schmitt (1982: 449)) and Gk. *katbeúdō* besides earlier *beúdō*.<sup>10</sup>

7. It now remains to investigate what the original meaning of \*(s)*neud<sup>h</sup>*- may have been, for which two proposals are to be discussed: a. Solmsen (1910) connected Gk. *nustázō* with Lat. *obnubere*, *-ō* 'to cover', *nūbēs* f. 'cloud', Welsh *nudd* 'fog' and the Hesychian glosses *nuthōdes*: *skoteinōdes*, *nuthón-áphōnon*, *skoteinón*. For words covering a semantic range from 'foggy' and 'dark' to 'sleep' he cited Beloruss. *mrity* 'become foggy, dark; to slumber', Russ. *mar* 'fog; sleep', *morok'/moroka* 'darkness, fog, unconsciousness'.

Gk. *nustázō*, though, does not have connotations of 'darkness' or 'foggy', making the supposed semantic shift in this root from 'be foggy' to 'be tired' suspect.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Klingenschmitt (1982: 194, 196).

<sup>10</sup> The late Gk. *katanustázō* (2. c. AD, Poll. 2.67 *suneleîn blépharon tò katanustásai*, Alex. 286 *kataniástason* 'sleep!', Ael. NA 14.20 *kai autoís patdeuma tēn pbrouràn ékbein ou katanustázousi* '[the guardians] are taught to keep watch without falling asleep') is comparable as for the preverb as well, but may have been formed under the influence of *katbeúdō*.

<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Solmsen *loc. cit.* assumed a simplex *nubere*, *-ō* 'to veil' which since antiquity was used as *explanandum* for *nubere*, *-ō* 'to marry (said only of the bride)' as 'to veil oneself for the husband', cf. in this sense Ernout/Meillet (1951: 796) 'prendre le voile à l'intention du mari'. Kretschmer (1909 and 1910) argued against this, con-

b. As noted above, Schwyzer (1934: 349) assumed a semantic shift from 'to nod' to 'be sleepy', for which as parallel cases may be cited i) Engl. *to nod (off)*, e.g. in the meaning 'to sleep or fall asleep repeatedly':

*A man sits nodding on the shaft.* (J. Thomson, *City of Dreadful Night* IX. ii (1870/4))

meaning 'to fall asleep (inclining one's head)'

*Old men and women were nodding off to sleep upon the seats.* (V. Woolf, *The Voyage Out*, i. 4)<sup>12</sup>

ii) Germ. *nicken/einnicken* 'to sleep'/'to fall asleep':<sup>13</sup>

*Sie nicken noch alle; alle beherrscht noch der Zepter des sanftzwingenden Schlafs.*

'They are all still sleeping; the sceptre of softly forcing sleep is still reigning over them.' (Götz 2.169)

*auch wenn sie am abend lesen und zwischendurch einnicken und wieder aufwachen*

'although they might be reading in the evening and nod off to sleep from time to time and wake up again' (Goethe 52, 65)<sup>14</sup>

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necting Lat. *nubere*, *-ō* with Russian CS *snubiti*, *snublju* 'to make a match, to woe for s.b.' under a common root \**sneub<sup>h</sup>*- (cf. also Pokorny 1959: 977f., LIV s.v.).

<sup>12</sup> Examples taken from the OED.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. also the noun *Nickerchen* 'nap, short sleep'. Kluge/Seebold (2002) s.v. 'nicken' state that *einnicken* 'to fall asleep' is not related to *nicken* 'to nod', but goes back to MHG *nücken* with the same meaning (cf. Kluge/Mitzka (1963) s.v.) For the latter cf. e.g. 'to nod': *unde gingen unde nuckeden unde draweden* (Städtechron. 16.343.9) 'and they went and nodded (defiantly) and menaced', 'to fall asleep': *dī rede lāzz in nuckin* 'the speech made him fall asleep' Jeroschin 5734, and NHG *entnucken* 'dormitare': *mit sīszem schlaf entnucket* 'fallen into a sweet slumber' (H. Sachs I. 457), *wie nun der fürst entnucket kaum, fiel er in einen schweren traum* 'as soon as the prince had fallen asleep, he had an oppressive dream' (Spreng II. 522) (examples taken from Grimm's dictionary). *Nücken* might be related to ON *bnykkja* 'to snap, to grab s.th.' < Protogerm. \**bnukkija-* (IE \**kneug-*?), for which Lühr (1988: 353) reconstructs an original meaning 'to bend', from which 'to incline the head, to nod' > 'to fall asleep' may have developed. In late MHG or early NHG times *nücken* was felt to be the same as *nicken*, as the interchange between *ü* and *i* was frequent (cf. variant forms such as *Küsen/Kissen* 'cushion').

A Greek passage showing the close connection between the two concepts is Ar. *De somno et vigilia* 456b28–33:

*Sēmeion dè toutōn kai tà hupnōtiká· pánta gár karēbarían poiēi, kai tà potà kai tà brōtá, mēkōn, mandragóras, oīnos, aīrai. Kai katapherómēnoi kai nustázontes touto dokoúsi páskhein, kai adunatoúsin aīrein tēn kephalēn kai tà blēphara. Kai metà tà sitía málista toioútos ho hūpnos.*  
 ‘Soporific agents are a further proof of this. For all of them, liquid and solid alike (poppy, mandragora, wine, darnel), produce heaviness of the head. And people seem to be affected in that way when sinking into sleep or *nodding off*: they are unable to hold up their heads or eyelids. It is after meals, especially, that sleep of that sort comes on.’ [transl. Gallop (1996)]

One might of course translate *nustázontes* with ‘being sleepy’, but ‘nodding drowsily’ seems to make more sense in view of the explanation immediately following. That this meaning is a secondary influence of *neustázō* is less likely since the latter form never shows any influence from *nustázō*, i.e. it is not used with the meaning ‘to be sleepy’. It seems therefore that the verbs were not confused in Greek. Still, the possibility cannot be ruled out that the meaning ‘to nod’ developed out of ‘to be sleepy’, although the Germanic examples given above point the other way.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, while *nustázō* (nor the Lithuanian forms, for that matter) shows no traces of a supposed semantic shift from ‘foggy’ to ‘sleepy’, it may well have meant ‘to nod off to sleep’ in some instances. In the same way, IE *\*(s)neud<sup>h</sup>*- may have meant originally ‘to nod’.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Examples taken from Grimm’s dictionary.

<sup>15</sup> In view of this, *nustázō* designating only the downward movement of the head in AP 12.135 ... *kai gár edákrusen kai enústase kai ti katēphēs / ēblepe, khō sphinkktēis ouk émene stēphanos* ‘For he broke into tears and let his head hang and looked quite sad. And the wreath did not remain (on his head).’ might be taken to show this secondarily developed meaning. Solmsen (1910: 76) assumed an error in the transmission of the text for *eneústase* or that the author confused the two verbs (‘der Verfasser hat *nustázō* mit *neustázō* verwechselt.’)

<sup>16</sup> The counterargument given by Schulze (1966: 376) that *nustalōpiān· nustázein* (Hes.) speaks against a meaning ‘to nod’ for *nustázō* (‘schlaftrunkene Augen kann man haben, nicht aber ‘nickende’ oder ‘einnickende’) is only valid for this derivative: As a compound with *nústalos* (*geróntion*, *Com. Adesp.* 875, *-léon* Kock, cf. Hes. *nustaléon-*

8. To sum up: Arm. *nnjem* may be derived from a *-je/o-*present *\*ni-nud<sup>h</sup>-je/o-* ‘to be sleepy, to sleep’ which developed via *\*ninujem* to *nnjem* [nənjem]. The underlying root is IE *\*(s)neud<sup>h</sup>*- as attested in Gk. *nustázō* and Lith. *snústi*. Its original meaning may have been ‘to nod’ with a semantic development to ‘to fall asleep, to sleep’ which is paralleled by Engl. *to nod (off)* and Germ. *(ein)nicken*. The noun *ninj* would then be a back-formation to the verb.<sup>17</sup> Alternatively, one may assume a nominal stem *\*(s)nud<sup>h</sup>jo-* ‘sleep’ > *\*nowj*, prefixed with *\*ni-* giving *\*ni-nowj* > *ninj* from which the verb *nnjem* is derived.

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*hupnēlós*) as first member *nustalōpiān* would originally mean ‘to have sleepy eyes’: A *\*nustal-ōps* (whence *\*nustalōpiā* > *nustalōpiāō*) would be ‘someone with sleepy eyes’. This does not preclude, though, an original polysemy of the basic form *nustázō* <sup>1</sup>‘to nod’, <sup>2</sup>‘to be sleepy’.

<sup>17</sup> It is of course tempting to connect *\*(s)neud<sup>h</sup>*- with *\*neud-* and assume that *\*(s)neud<sup>h</sup>*- is an enlargement of the former or a former present stem in *\*-d<sup>h</sup>-*, but this must remain a matter of speculation.

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