

Rismag Gordeziani (Tbilisi)

GREEK WORDS OF UNKNOWN ETYMOLOGY DENOTING SEA

The Greeks' attitude to sea, which played an important role in their lives, is manifested at a linguistic level as well. There were four basic terms in ancient Greek that referred to sea: ἡ θάλασσα, τὸ πέραλος, ὁ πόντος, ὁ ἄλς. To this is added a formative Ὠκεανός which to a certain extent has the meaning of the 'world river'.

Scholars are certain about the Indo-European etymology of ὁ πόντος and ὁ ἄλς.¹ As concerns the other terms, their etymology is considered unestablished. I share the opinion of the researchers who assign them to the non-Indo-European Pre-Greek world. I believe that like hundreds of the so-called Pre-Greek formatives, they too imply reference to the Kartvelian languages.²

τὸ πέραλος denoted sea, but evidently, it referred to an open high sea, beyond the territorial waters.³ R. Beekes finds unjustified H. Frisk's attempt to associate it with the Indo-European stem *pelh₂ 'to spread out'⁴ and favors the assumption on the Pre-Indo-European origin of the formative.⁵ I believe that it could be associated with the Kartvelian pel- stem

¹ Cf. GEW, DELG, EDG.

² Regarding Kartvelian-Pre-Greek linguistic encounters see Furnée E. J., *Vorgriechisch-Kartvelisches. Studien zum ostmediterranen Substrat nebst einem Versuch zu einer neuen pelasgischen Theorie*, Leuven 1979; Furnée E. J., *Paläokartvelisch-pelasgische Einflüsse in den indogermanischen Sprachen*, Leiden 1986; Gordeziani R., *Pre-Greek and Kartvelian*, Tbilisi 1985 (in Georgian); Gordeziani R., *Mediterranea-Kartvelica*, vols. I-IV, Tbilisi 2007-2008 (in Georgian).

³ Cf. LSJ, 1356.

⁴ GEW.

⁵ EDG.

denoting 'open, open to the full'.⁶ M. Chukhua reconstructs the common Kartvelian archetype as *bel- with the meaning of openness, bareness, opening. He goes even farther and relates it to the common Nakh stem *b-el 'open, open eyes/unlock, uncover'. Consequently, he does not rule out reconstruction of the stem to the common Caucasian level.⁷

It is difficult to argue whether in Pre-Greek the element αγ- is a derivative affix or a root element.⁸ If the relationship that I suggest is acceptable, it can be assumed that the element was used to derive a nominal form from the bel-/pel- stem. In my opinion, a similar element can be observed in Georgian derivation as well: cf. common Kartvelian *kad- 'preaching, promising' and *kad-ag-i 'preacher, proselyter'. Consequently πέλαγος could be understood as 'open, opener'.

Scholars' attention has long been attracted by the term θάλασσα which can often be found already in the Homeric epics. Scholars unanimously admit that the etymology of the word is unknown.⁹ Hesychius attests the gloss δαλάγχα, which he believes to be of Macedonian origin and semantically identical with θάλασσα. As E. J. Furnée so rightly notes, we should not necessarily believe Hesychius and consider the term Macedonian.¹⁰ On the other hand, scholars unanimously observe the interchange of stems θαλ-/δαλ- which must be indicative of the Pre-Greek origin of the term.¹¹ The ending of the gloss -αγγα, as well as the of Greek term -ασσα can be considered a derivational inflexion. In this case, we face the question of semantics of θαλ-δαλ- itself. In this regard, the most acceptable hypothesis was offered by A. Lesky, who in 1974 published a special article called θάλασσα.¹² A. Lesky paid attention to the fact that out of the four terms referring to sea, two, ἄλις and πόντος are masculine, one πέλαγος is neuter, and only θάλασσα is feminine. In A. Lesky's opinion, the Homeric epics and other Greek sources allow for the conclusion that only ἄλις and θάλασσα can be regarded as the terms having the meaning of saline water. He considers numerous contexts where ἄλις and θάλασσα are interchangeable exactly with this function, while πόντος and πέλαγος never appear in this context. A. Lesky comes to a conclusion that the ancient Greek lan-

⁶ Chukhua M., *Ibero-Ichkerian Comparative Grammar*, Tbilisi 2008, 508f (in Georgian).

⁷ Chukhua M., *op. cit.*

⁸ R. Beekes believes that the element is a Pre-Greek suffix (GED, XXXIV).

⁹ Cf. GEW, DELG, EDG, WKE, 195.

¹⁰ WKE, 195.

¹¹ EDG.

¹² Lesky A., *Thalassa*, *Hermes*, 78, 1947, 258 ff.

guage found to the Pre-Greek feminine word $\Sigma\lambda\alpha\sigma\sigma\alpha$ meaning 'saline water, sea' a masculine equivalent $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\varsigma$ derived from its own organic stem meaning 'salt', and used them as absolute synonyms. Hence, it is quite natural to assume that the stem in question $\Sigma\alpha\lambda(\alpha)\text{-}/\delta\alpha\lambda(\alpha)\text{-}$ - contained a seme close to 'salty, saline', from which, with the help of some Pre-Greek derivational inflexion, was derived a term referring to sea and having the meaning 'saline water'.¹³ I believe that this Pre-Greek stem can be associated with the Kartvelian linguistic world. Recently, M. Chukhua has reconstructed to the common Kartvelian level an archetype *dal-a meaning curds, curdled milk, buttermilk. In his opinion, this stem has a regular correspondence in common Nakh *dur←*dwor meaning 'salty, saltiness', which enables reconstruction of the stem at the common Caucasian level.¹⁴ Evidently, at the common Kartvelian level too its basic meaning must have been 'saltiness, salinity', which can possibly be indicated by one of the meanings of the Svan stem $d\grave{a}r\text{-}/d\grave{a}\text{ʒ}r$ 'salted rennet of swine or calf used for curdling'.¹⁵ If so, we can presume that in the Pre-Greek language that had the stem meaning 'saltiness, salinity', the latter was used to derive a term referring to sea that entered the Greek language.

The term $\text{\textcircled{O}}\kappa\epsilon\alpha\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ likewise noteworthy. Like in mythopoetic thinking, Oceanus, at least in ancient Greek epics, is the personified world stream, the world river that runs around the universe. In Homer, it gave birth to all gods and objects (*Il.*, XIV, 201, 245-6). In the Homeric epic, Oceanus and sea are different in several points: sea is a water space, more or less confined and surrounded by continents, through which men navigate to get in touch with one another. Sea-shores are basically inhabited by real peoples. We may assume that the sea in Homer refers to the Mediterranean. Contrary to this, Oceanus is the world river that is beyond the limits of the sea and flows around the earth. Having crossed it, one finds oneself among mythic peoples and lands: the Ethiopians, Harpies, Gorgons, Cimmerians, etc. Consequently, the Oceanus always returns back, i. e. into itself.¹⁶ Despite individual attempts, its etymology is considered unknown. R. Beekes finds it Pre-Greek, which is suggested by the attested parallel forms $\text{\textcircled{O}}\gamma\acute{\eta}\nu$, $\text{\textcircled{O}}\lambda\gamma\epsilon\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$, $\text{\textcircled{O}}\lambda\gamma\eta\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$.¹⁷ According to E. J. Furnée, it has the free interchange of κ/γ typical of the Pre-Greek.¹⁸ To deter-

¹³ Lesky A., op. cit.

¹⁴ Chukhua M., op. cit., 314

¹⁵ Topuria V., Kaldani M., Svan Dictionary, Tbilisi 2000, 199 (in Georgian).

¹⁶ Cf. DNP.

¹⁷ LSJ; EDG.

¹⁸ WKE, 124.

mine the etymology of the formative, first of all we should pay attention to the semantics of its attested stem. In this respect, I find noteworthy an attribute of Oceanus attested in Homer ἀψόροος (cf. Germ. 'in sich zurueckfliessend'; Eng. 'returning into itself').¹⁹ Consequently, it can be presumed that the meaning of Ὠκεανός is associated with circulation, continuous rotation/revolution of the world river, flowing back into oneself. Evidently, here we could also consider the gloss ὠγένειος 'old, eternal'. If there really is any relationship between these two stems, we could presume that its semantics at the same time implied the meaning of turning back and of oldness and eternity. R. Beekes reconstructs the hypothetical Pre-Greek archetype *ū-kan.²⁰ I believe that this stem must be related to the one intensely used in old Georgian - u>an-/u>uan-, which, taking into consideration the interchange of w/u in the stem, must be connected with the earliest stage of the history of Georgian language.²¹ Bearing in mind the Mingrelian u>oxole 'back, on the back side', I believe that we could also speak of the Georgian-Zan archetype. From this stem are derived on the one hand u>unkceva 'turning away, returning, going back', u>uana 'back, at the back', u>an 'behind' and on the other hand u>uni 'eternal, everlasting', u>uniti 'eternal, from the very beginning', 'u>uniti u>unisamde 'for ever and ever'.²²

The above suggested etymologies of the terms whose origin has so far been believed to be unknown completely fit into the context of the Kartvelian-Pre-Greek hypothesis presented in E. J. Furnée's and my works.²³

BOOK ABBREVIATIONS

DELG = Chantraine P., Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: histoire des mots, Paris 1968-1980.

DNP = Der neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike. Das klassische Altertum und seine Rezeptionsgeschichte, eds. H. Cancik and H. Schneider, Stuttgart 1996-2003.

EDG = Beekes R., Etymological Dictionary of Greek, Leiden 2010.

GEW = Hjalmar Frisk, Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch, 3 vols., Heidelberg 1960-1973.

LSJ = A Greek-English Lexicon, compiled by H. G. Liddell and R. Scott; revised and augmented throughout by H. S. Jones..., Oxford 1977⁹.

WKE = Furnée E. J., Die wichtigsten konsonantischen Erscheinungen des Vorgriechischen. Mit einem Appendix über den Vokalismus, Den Haag 1972.

¹⁹ LSJ, 1677.

²⁰ EDG.

²¹ Gamkrelidze T., Machavariani G., The System of Sonants and Ablaut in Kartvelian Languages, Tbilisi 1965, 49 (in Georgian).

²² A Comprehensive Georgian-English Dictionary, London 2006.

²³ Cf. Note 2.