

Dariusz R. PIWOWARCZYK (Kraków)

A SHORT NOTE ON GREEK θήρ ‘BEAST’*)

Abstract. This article investigates a certain irregularity in the Greek sound changes, namely that associated with the Greek form θήρ ‘beast’, assumed to come from the sequence */ǵ^hu/ but treated exactly like the aspirated labiovelar. It is shown that the examples upon which this hypothesis was built are in themselves quite doubtful and even though more examples of this change can be found, they still remain insecure. The sound change is then neither confirmed nor falsified but certain phonetic details of its process are investigated.

1. The Greek form /t^hēr/ <θήρ> (gen. sg. /thērós/ <θηρός>) ‘beast of prey’ (Il. +) coming back to the PIE root */ǵ^hueh₁r-/ has /t^h/ <θ> in Anlaut in place of /k^h/ <χ> as expected from the sound laws. The regular development is evidenced in such examples as (Sihler 1995: 158, Rix 1976: 84):

Gk. /k^hḗn/ <χῆν> ‘goose’ from PIE */ǵ^hans-/, cf. Ved. *hamsá-* Lith. *žąsis*

Gk. /k^hḗō/ <χέω> ‘I pour’ from PIE */ǵ^heu-/, cf. Lat. *fundō*, *fūdī*, Ved. *juhóti*

Gk. /tḗk^hos/ <τείχος> ‘wall’ from PIE */d^heyǵ^h-/, cf. Osc. *feihúss* (acc.pl.), Lat. *fiŋō* ‘model’

2. Moreover, the other Indo-European languages present further evidence in favour of reconstructing the initial */ǵ^hu/:

- a) Lith. *žvėris*, remade to the *i*-stem (Smoczyński 2007: 795)
- b) Lat. *ferus* (Carmen Arvale, Naevius +), thematicized adjective */ǵ^huēr-o-s/ with pretonic shortening in front of a resonant (Schrijver 1991: 343) and with *-us* preserved probably under the influence of *fera* f., n.pl. ‘wild animal’ (De Vaan 2008: 215, cf. Lat. *uir* ‘man’ <*/uiH-ro/)
- c) OCS *zvěřī*.

* I would like to thank Prof. Wojciech Smoczyński (Kraków) for directing my attention to the irregularity of this form, to Marek Majer (Oslo) for providing me with the necessary articles and to Wojciech Sowa (Kraków) for comments on Greek dialectal forms. Needless to add, I am solely responsible for any flaws and errors.

3. Through this comparison we can safely reconstruct the PIE root $*/g^h_{ue}h_1r-$ ($*/g^h_{ue}r-$ after laryngeal-loss) and assume that we have an irregularity in the Greek reflex of the prehistoric form. Analogical explanation seems doubtful as there is no straightforward model connected to $/t^h_{\xi}r/ <\theta\acute{\eta}\rho>$ where we could have regular $/k^h/ <\chi>$ in Anlaut instead of the attested $/t^h/ <\theta>$. We have numerous similar forms in Greek like Attic $/t^h_{\xi}r\acute{\iota}on/ <\theta\eta\rho\acute{\iota}on>$ ‘wild animal’ (formally a diminutive of $/t^h_{\xi}r/ <\theta\acute{\eta}\rho>$) or the verb $/t^h_{\xi}r\acute{\iota}o\bar{o}/ <\theta\eta\rho\acute{\iota}o\bar{o}>$ ‘I make into a wild beast’ but they all seem to be derived from the root noun $/t^h_{\xi}r/ <\theta\acute{\eta}\rho>$. LIV²: 182 reconstructs the verbal root $*/g^h_{uer}-$ ‘krumm gehen’ on the basis of the Vedic forms *hvarate* ‘geht in Krümmungen’, *hvalati* ‘geht schief, strauchelt’ or YAv. *zbarant-*, *zbaramna-* ‘krumm gehend’, following Schindler 1972: 37-8 in connecting Greek $/t^h_{\xi}r/ <\theta\acute{\eta}\rho>$ to this root – ‘wildes Tier’ = ‘celui qui par nature va dans la position courbée’ < ‘krumm gehen’. However, the expected verbal basis is not found in Greek. In the past one possibility of explaining this irregularity of Greek phonetic development has been proposed, namely the treatment of the prehistoric sequence $*/g^h_{u}r$ as $*/g^h_{uh}/$, i.e. the aspirated labiovelar with its regular outcome in Greek, that is the dental $/t^h/ <\theta>$ before a front vowel as in $/t^h_{erm}\acute{o}s/ <\theta\epsilon\rho\mu\acute{o}\varsigma>$ ‘warm’ < $*/g^h_{uer}-m\acute{o}/$. However, this hypothesis was built only upon two examples, one of which is doubtful in itself (see 4. below), and thus should rather be omitted or at least expressed with due caution in works of pedagogical use where *communis opinio* is presented rather than disputable hypotheses.

4. The treatment of the sound in question as the aspirated labiovelar was mentioned as early as 1890 by Buck (with earlier works listed there).¹ Buck postulates that “ $\acute{k}u$ becomes $\pi\pi$, initial π before o-vowels, liquids and nasal, both vocalic and consonantal, but $\tau\tau$, initial τ before e- and i-vowels” and just as $*/g^h_{uh}/$ “becomes φ before o-vowels, etc., but θ before e- and i-vowels, so would $\acute{k}hu$ (Indo-Eur. $\acute{g}hu$) become $\varphi\varphi$, initial φ , and $\theta\theta$, initial θ respectively, and we have the explanation of $\theta\acute{\eta}\rho$ ” (Buck 1890: 214). This hypothesis, despite being based only upon a handful of examples (most of which are doubtful), is followed recently by Sihler 1995: 159-160² and Rix 1976: 93.³ They consider the development of the PIE dorsal followed by $/u/$ to be similar to the respective labiovelar, i.e. $*/g^h_{u}r = */g^h_{uh}/ > /p^h/, /t^h/, /k^h/$ and $*/\acute{k}u/ = */k^h/ > /p/, /t/, /k/$ depending on the context with gemination when in Inlaut. The only other example mentioned in connection with this particular development (and as proof of gemination in Inlaut) is the Greek form $/h\acute{\iota}ppos/$

¹ Most notably the opinion of Brugmann: “Aus $\acute{k}u$ entstand $\pi\pi$, das im anlaut zu π vereinfacht wurde” (Brugmann 1886: 292).

² “PIE $*/k^hw$ and $*/g^h_{hw}$ show a development in centum languages closely parallel to that of PIE $*/k^w$ and $*/g^w_{h}$. But in G the two distinct sounds $*/k^hw$ give a double consonant medially, while the unitary $*/k^w$ gives a single consonant” (Sihler 1995: 159).

³ “Die Folge Dorsal + $/u/$ wie Labiovelar (...), im Inlaut mit Gemination” (Rix 1976: 93).

<ἵππος> ‘horse’ from PIE */h₁ek̑u-o-s/. This form, in my opinion, is not clear in itself and should not be used in explaining other forms – the Greek /hi-/ in Anlaut still remains resistant to explanation alongside with the gemination of /pp/ (cf. NIL: 232). Besides, the form could also be connected to the PIE root */sek^u-/ ‘to follow’ (Gk. /hépomai/ <ἔπομαι>, Lat. *sequitur*, Skt. *sácate*) and not */h₁ek̑u-/ ‘swiftness’ (cf. the adjectives: Gk. /ῥkús/ <ῥκύς> and Skt. *āsú* ‘swift’) as usually assumed⁴ (see also De Vaan 2009 for a recent discussion and a new hypothesis).

5. If we look further for evidence of the development dorsal + /u/ in Greek we will find several forms in Greek dialects other than Attic and Homeric. Firstly, there is a form /p^hét/ <φῆρ>, attested in Hesychius as Aeolic, which would show the regular reflex of the labiovelar before a front vowel in this dialect (i.e. a labial, cf. Ionic (Homeric) /-t^hestos/ <-θεστος>, Aeol. (Boeotian) /-p^hestos/ <-φεστος> from */g^hed^h-/, Lejeune 1972: 83). Additional forms like /phêres/ <Φῆρες> (Aeol. in Homer), Thessalian <πεφειράκοντες> also exist. This would confirm the hypothesis that the initial sequence of */g^hu-/ was treated like a labiovelar. Secondly, there are forms like Boeotian <τὰ ππάματα> which are supposedly preserving PIE */k̑uā-/ as /ppā/ with the gemination similar to /hippos/ <ἵππος> (Buck 1955: 65, 127). But the problem here lies in the interpretation of the Boeotian orthography and it is not certain if the sound underlying the sign <pp> should also be a geminate. LIV² goes even further and reconstructs the root */k̑eh₂-/ ‘erwerben’ (only attested in Greek but not Ionic-Attic) using the Boeotian form to prove that the reconstructed root consisted of two phonemes */k/ and */u/, rather than a simple labiovelar */k^u/ (LIV²: 375). Lanszweert has tried to find similar patterns in Greek compounds with /pa-/ from */k̑uη/ (from the root */k̑(u)ōn-/ ‘dog’) like /pápūros/ <πάπυρος> ‘Papyrusstaude’ (‘Hundsweizen’) and /párnops/ <πάρνοψ> ‘Heuschrecke’ (Lanszweert 1994: 83ff.) but these examples seem doubtful (for one thing, they are attested late in Teophrast, cf. NIL: 438). Because of its high complexity and requirement of the use of the insecure dialectal material, I will leave the subject of the development of */k̑u/ sequence in Greek aside for now and concentrate on the */g^hu/ sequence only. I intend to treat the problem of */k̑u/ elsewhere.

6. There is one additional form which could prove the theory of the treatment of the */g^hu/ sequence in Greek like the labiovelar right. Namely, the Greek form /t^hélgō/ <θέλγω> ‘charm, beguile’ (Od. +) which is usually connected with Lithuanian *žvelgti*, *žvelgiù* ‘look, glance’ from the proto-form */g^huēlg-/ (cf. Smoczyński 2007: 795). But LIV² reconstructs */g^(h)uēlg^{(u)h}-/ and treats the corresponding Greek form as “semantisch unsicher und wegen Winters Gesetz lautlich problematisch” (LIV²: 170).

⁴ I owe this remark to Wojciech Sowa (Kraków) p.c.

7. As we have seen, there are more forms to be mentioned in connection with this irregularity of the Greek sound development than initially thought of but all of them present us with difficulties. However, if the above hypothesis is correct that at least */ǵ^hu/ is treated like the aspirated labiovelar and changes to /t^h/ before front vowels, let us investigate the phonetic probability of such a change. Kuhlmann 2003: 13, while discussing Aeolic historical phonology, writes: “Vergleichbar ist die Entwicklung von idg. *ǵ^huēr über urgr. *k^{wh}ēr zu lesb. φῆρ gegenüber jon-att. θῆρ ‘wildes Tier’”. We can inquire whether the sequence */ǵ^hu/ really merged with the labiovelar yielding the same result in Greek. Keeping in mind the relative chronology of sound changes we should assume that the prehistoric biphonemic */ǵ^hu/ sequence first lost its palatal element (the merger of palatals and pure velars in centum languages) and gave */g^hu/. Then, a typically Greek sound change occurred – the devoicing of the PIE voiced aspirates – changing */g^hu/ into Proto-Greek */k^hu/. After that, the glide */u/ degraded from being an independent phoneme into the appendix of the preceding */k^h/ sound and created the sequence */k^{hu}/ which in all probability was treated exactly like the Proto-Greek */k^{uh}/, e.g. in /t^hermós/ <θερμός> ‘warm’ < */k^uher-mó/ < */g^uher-mó/.⁵ For a parallel development consider also the Greek form /k^héō/ <χέω> ‘I pour’ from PIE */ǵ^heu-o-h₂/, showing the same development only with loss of the glide in intervocalic position, i.e. PIE */ǵ^heu-o-h₂/ > */g^heu-ō/ (palatals-velars merger) > */k^heu-ō/ (devoicing of voiced aspirates) > /k^héō/ (loss of the glide).

Dariusz R. Piwowarczyk
os. Szklane Domy 1/204
PL – 31-972 Kraków
[dariusz_piwowarczyk@yahoo.com]

B i b l i o g r a p h y

- Brugmann, Karl. 1886. *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen*. Vol. 1. Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner.
- Buck, Carl Darling. 1890. θῆρ, Latin *fera*, and the Greek and Latin representatives of Indo-Eur. initial palatals + u. *American Journal of Philology*. Vol. 11, no. 2 (1890). Pp. 211-216.
- Kuhlmann, Peter. 2003. *Sappho. Die größeren Fragmente des 1. Buches*. Dettelbach: J. H. Roll Verlag.

⁵ Consider the fact that the voiced aspirated labiovelar was devoiced, just like the ordinary voiced aspirate, despite having the secondary labialised co-articulation alongside with the aspiration.

- Lanszweert, René. 1994. Πάπυρος: ein mykenisches Schimpfwort?, in: *Indo-germanica et Caucasica. Festschrift für Karl Horst Schmidt zum 65. Geburtstag*. Edd. R. Bielmeier & R. Stempel unter Mitarbeit von R. Lanszweert. Berlin / New York. Pp. 77-96.
- Lejeune, Michel. 1972. *Phonétique historique du mycénien et du grec ancien*. Paris: Klincksieck.
- LIV². *Lexikon der indogermanischen Verben*. 2001. Ed. Helmut Rix et al. Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag.
- NIL. *Nomina im Indogermanischen Lexikon*. 2008. Edd. D. S. Wodtko, B. Irslinger, C. Schneider. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag.
- Rix, Helmut. 1976. *Historische Grammatik des Griechischen*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Schindler, Jochem. 1972. L'apophonie des noms-racines indo-européens. *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 67 (1972). Pp. 31-38.
- Schrijver, Peter. 1991. *The Reflexes of the Proto-Indo-European Laryngeals in Latin*. Leiden Studies in Indo-European 2. Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi.
- Sihler, Andrew. 1995. *New Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin*. Oxford: University Press.
- Smoczyński, Wojciech. 2007. *Słownik etymologiczny języka litewskiego*. Uniwersytet Wileński: Wilno 2007.
- De Vaan, Michiel. 2008. *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages*. Leiden: Brill.
- De Vaan, Michiel. 2009. The Derivational History of Greek ἵππος and ἰππεύς. *The Journal of Indo-European Studies*. Vol. 37, no. 1 & 2, Spring/Summer 2009.