

Thracian *spínos* and its Indo-European cognates

IGNACY RYSZARD DANKA (University of Łódź, Poland)

Abstract: The Thracian term *spínos* originates from an archaic Indo-European Archetype **kwn̥Hos* denoting 'a (precious/useful) stone' and later 'a metal'. The author tries to demonstrate that it belongs to the neolithic relics in the Palaeo-Balkan and Indo-European vocabulary.

Contents: 1. Thracian *spínos* and its etymological explanation; 2. Lexical evidence for PIE. **kwn̥HOS*; 3. Phonological aspects of the Indo-European reconstruction; 4. The semantical stratification of PIE. **kwn̥Hos*; 5. Conclusions.

1. Thracian *spínos* and its etymological explanation

According to Aristotle, the Thracian word *spínos* denotes a kind of stone which blazes when water touches it (*phasi de ton en te Thrakē lithon ton kaloumenon spinon dialopenta kalesthai*:Arist Mir.Ausc.833a, 23). The etymology of the Thracian word was considered unclear until recently (cf. e.g. Duridanov 1976:17: "Njama tǎlkuvane", Neroznak 1978:54-55: "Nejasnoe slovo", Duridanov 1985:14: "Ohne Deutung bisher"). However, the researchers did not take into consideration that the initial Thracian cluster **sp-* may represent not only IE. **sp-* but also IE. **kw-* (Dečev 1960:165). If so, then it is conceivable to suggest an etymological explanation of the difficult Thracian item.

In an earlier paper, together with my colleague Krzysztof Tomasz Witczak, we suggested an etymological connection between the Thracian word *spínos* and the Baltic words for 'lead, *plumbum*' (Lithuanian *švinas*, Latvian *svins*) and Slavic ones (Russ.-ChSl. *svinici*, Russ. *svinéc*, Ukr. *sviněci*, Slovenian *svinac* < Psl. **svinīci* 'lead'). Moreover, we tried to collect exhaustive lexical data and reconstruct the Indo-European archetype of this archaic item, its original structure and meaning, and also to sketch its hypothetical history from the Neolithic Period onwards (Danka-Witczak 1992:83-91). After assuming that the

Thracian-Balto-Slavic terms seem to have equivalents in three other Indo-European stocks, namely in Iranian, Greek and Anatolian, we were able to suggest an Indo-European archetype **kwn̥Hos*.

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that the Thracian item is not a word without etymology. Moreover, it is a very archaic term, which not only belonged to the oldest part of Indo-European lexis, but also preserved the most primitive semantics.

2. Lexical evidence for PIE. **kwn̥Hos*.

In our research, connected with the new etymological and comparative Indo-European dictionary, one of the main principles has always been to reconstruct Indo-European lexical items rather than hypothetical doubtful roots. There is no need for justifying here such an approach. But the problem is how to discover the original meaning of a reconstructed protoword, keeping in mind the evolution the object denoted underwent in various epochs, beginning with the Stone Age, through Bronze and Iron Ages up to the cultures known from written history. The Indo-European tribes such as the Thracian became familiar with metals at a certain stage of their civilizational development, usually after the primary speech community had broken up into a number of subgroups, hence the names of metals are different in particular Indo-European languages. The Thracian *spínos* as well as Greek and Hittite equivalents retained the earlier meaning to the extent that originally IE. **kwn̥Hos* denoted a useful substance including mineral and metal (Danka 1983:184). The archaic character of the Indo-European word is motivated partly by its structure, which will remain unclear until we have accounted for the laryngeal presence, and partly by the lack of obvious derivation within the protolanguage¹, and lastly - by the geography of the word which has been found in at least 6 Indo-European subgroups.

In the Indo-European Lexicon Project the following lexical data have been collected that facilitate the reconstruction of the proto-Indo-European lexeme

**k^hw^hHos* 'a (useful) stone' > 'a metal':

Gr.Myc. *ku-wa-no*² 'bluish 'glass', Homeric and Attic *kúanos* m. 'the semi-precious stone lazurite, alpis lazuli; copper sulfate; copperas; dark-blue enamel, blue glass'³//Thracian *spínos* 'a kind of stone which blazes when water touches it'⁴

Hittite *kuwanna-*, also *kuwannan-* 'copper, a precious stone'⁴// Iranian **s(p)ana-* m. 'iron': Shughni *sepén*, Jidgha *rispín* (with an unclear *r-*), Wakhan *isn*, Sarikoli *spin*, Ishkashmi *šapūn*, Sanglichi *espin*, Orosh *sepín*, Munjani *yispín*, Sogdian 'spn 'iron', Chwarezmian *ispani*; Ossetic (*ä*)*fsán* 'an iron part of the plow; plowshare'; with the prefix **ā-*:OPers. **āsana-* m.'iron', Npers. *āhan*, Pehlavi *āsīn*, Samnichi *ōsūr*; with the element *hu-/hau-* 'good' in the sense of 'steel' (literally 'good iron'): Pashto *ōspīna*, *ōspana* 'iron, steel', Avestan *hao.safnaena-* adj. 'of steel', Sogd. 'spnyn adj. 'of iron' <Iran. **spanaina-* adj.⁵//Lith. *švinas* 'lead, zinc', Latv. *svins* 'lead'⁶//Rus. *svinéc*, Ukr. *svinéc*⁷, Rus.-Cs. *svinič*⁸, Slovenian *svinec* <PSl. **svinič* < **svinū* - 'lead'⁹

3. Phonological aspects of the Indo-European reconstruction

The researchers tried to connect the afore-mentioned words with each other⁶, but usually they encountered "major" difficulties of phonetic nature (to say nothing of semantic incongruities), which made it impossible to prove any affinities between the matched words. The fundamental shortcomings of the research done so far are related to the fact that no attempts have been made to overcome the phonological difficulties or to collect exhaustive evidence, while without a proper reconstruction and without extensive evidence, the existence of a protoword is highly unsubstantiated. No attempt has been made, either, to explain the mutual relationships between various meanings in respective Indo-European languages, although without proper semantic analysis the history of the Thracian and Indo-European lexeme seems uncertain.

The fundamental phonetic difficulty stems from the fact that some Indo-European languages exhibit apparently the *-an-* segment (e.g. Hitt. *kuwannaš*, Gk. *kúanos*, Iran. **spana-*), while others contains the *-in-* segments (e.g. Thrac. *spínos*, Lith. *švinas*, Latv. *svins*,

PSl. **svinič*⁷). It has not been noticed so far that both the *-an-* and the *-in-* variants may be derived as fully consistent continuants of the proto-Indo-European group **-^hnH-* (where H stands for a laryngeal consonant, most probably for PIE. **E*) in a position before a vowel. Such a duality remains in an obvious relationship with the disappearance of the laryngeal phoneme in an intervocalic position and occurs in absolute conformity with the way the phoneme *-n-* is realized before a vowel (cf. Greek *an-*, Avestan *an-* <IE. **n-* 'non-, -less' in an initial position before a vowel). Since no anomalies are observed in the continuation of the group IE. **k^hw-* (cf. Gk. *ku-*, Iran. *s/p-*, Hitt. *kuw-*⁷, Balt. *šv-*, PSl. *sv-* and Thrac. *sp-*⁸), the reconstruction of the homogenous Indo-European protoform **k^hw^hnos* m. (or better PIE. **k^hw^hHos*) appears to be fully plausible.

4. The semantical stratification of PIE. **k^hw^hHos*

Vjačeslav Ivanov (1977:231) considers the matching of the Balto-Slavic term for 'lead, *plumbum*' with the Greek-Anatolian "migrational" term for 'copper' and 'blue glass' dubious not only due to phonetic difficulties (which are illusory anyway), but also because of semantic discrepancies. The legitimacy of the latter argument is undermined by Ivanov himself who states that the technological affinity between lead (usually alloyed with tin) and copper could easily have arisen due to the knowledge and utilization of bronze (the alloy of copper and tin). Moreover, he acknowledges that relating tinted glass to this group of terms is not problematic at all because the technologies for producing both glass and metal alloys are similar, both requiring that a temperature level between 800 and 1400 degrees Centigrade be achieved. In other words, Ivanov demonstrates, against his own intention, that the words mentioned above may be considered as related to each other with no semantic reservations whatsoever. Nevertheless, not only do the semantic discrepancies need to be explained, but most of all original meaning of the reconstructed lexeme must be recreated.

In order to determine the original meaning of the proto-Indo-European lexeme **k^hw^hHos*, we have undertaken a semantic stratification of the lexical data. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The semantic stratification of PIE. **kwn̥Hos*

Indo-European stocks	a (useful)stone	(bluish) glass	a metal	a compound
1. Thracian	+			
2. Greek	+	+		+?
3. Anatolian	+	+?	+'copper'	
4. Iranian			+'iron'	+
5. Baltic			+'lead'	
6. Slavic			+'lead'	

As the above table shows, the lexicographic data indicates the existence of two basic meanings: (1) 'a metal' (namely: 'lead', 'iron', 'copper') and (2): 'a (useful) stone' (namely 'an ornamental stone', 'a mineral that reacts with water'). The mutual contradiction between these two meanings is only superficial. In another article (Danka-Witczak 1990: 319-324) we pointed out that an etymologist concerned with Indo-European languages, while undertaking the task of reconstructing the original meaning of a lexeme, ought to be aware of the long process of evolution that the signified object was subject to, spanning from the neolithic period throughout the bronze and iron ages up to the times from which written records have been preserved. Since particular Indo-European peoples were mastering metallurgy at a specific stage of their cultural development (that is, in most cases, long after their linguistic homogeneity had been broken), the fact that names of various metals often differ from one Indo-European language to another should not be surprising at all. What is more, the phenomenon of an Indo-European society's gradual transition from the use of stones to the use of metals could well have resulted in a situation in which certain tribes were still, technologically, at the stone-age level, while others, although contemporaneous to them, had already attained advanced knowledge of smelting and processing metals. As archeological research indicates the fact of metal tools (e.g. axes) having been precisely modelled on respective stone tools, we may presume that metal tools simply inherited the names of their stone antecedents with little or no modification at all¹⁰.

5. Conclusions

To sum up: both basic meanings (which do coexist in the most ancient, and in many respects most archaic language, that is Hittite) are genetically related to each other. Referring to the original state of things, the meaning of 'a (useful) stone' should be regarded as primary, while that of 'a metal' should be explained as a semantic specialization. The differences in the names of particular metals seem to indicate that specific meanings ('lead', 'iron', 'copper') are most likely

innovations made at the time when various Indo-European dialects (Balto-Slavic, Iranian, Anatolian) were developing independently of each other. The stimulus which fostered semantic changes must have come still at the time of Indo-European communicative homogeneity - an assumption that is corroborated not only by the perceived semantic duality, but most of all by the accentual contrast which is a secondary feature of semantic differentiation. This contrast takes the following form: those words which adopt the meaning of 'a (useful) stone' display the baritonic accentual paradigm (cf. Gk. *kúanos*, Thr. *spínos* < PIE. **kwn̥Hos*), while those that take on the meaning of 'a metal' conform to the oxytonic paradigm (Balto-Slavic **svínas* < Pie. **kwn̥Hós*), see Danka-Witczak (1992: 88,86). Most probably it is thanks to this accentuological contrast that the Hittite language could retain both meanings of a given word.

In the light of the above consideration it should be put beyond any doubt that the Proto-Indo-European term **kwn̥Hos* is of neolithic origin. Semantic analysis of the continuants of this archaic term enables us to reconstruct the metamorphoses which a given word was undergoing since the Neolithic age, as well as to observe that these metamorphoses resulted from disparate (and changing in time and space) conditions of the social and cultural environment. The Indo-European term in question, which originally possessed the meaning of 'a (useful or precious) stone' (and conformed to the baritonic accentual paradigm), during the period of transition from the stone age to the iron age adopted a different meaning ('a metal') and a contrasting, i.e. oxytonic, accentual paradigm. Within the Balto-Slavic languages the meaning of this word became specialized to signify 'lead'. The Iranian languages prefer the semantics 'iron' and 'steel', while Hittite attests the meaning 'copper' and 'a precious stone'. Only Thracian preserved a primitive meaning probably not far from that of the Indo-European ancestor form used by the Indo-Europeans. It is perhaps connected with the fact that the Thracians constantly occupied the territories that in the neolithic times were the homeland of the Indo-Europeans¹¹.

NOTES

1. The "coloured" derivation, referring to the Indo-European root **keu-* 'leuchten; hell' (Pokomy 1959:594), is a typical instance of "Wurzeletymologien".

2. Cf. Ventris-Chadwick (1959:399), Palmer (1968:432), and recently Kazanskene/Kazanaskij (1986:66).

3. It has usually been assumed that the Greek word was derived from some Mediterranean source (Chantraine 1970:593-594: "Emprunt. Mot de culture du bassin méditerranéen"), most probably from a Semitic one (as e.g. in Ventris-Chadwick 1959:399: "Non-IE loan-word. Cf. Ugaritic *ignu*, Akkad. *ugnu* 'lapis lazuli?') or possibly Anatolian (as e.g. in Palmer 1963:422: Luvian 'loanword', Gamkrelidze-Ivanov 1984:7102, 803). Halleux (1969), on the other hand, found the source of the Greek word in the Sumerian KÙ.AN 'metal of the color of the sky'.

4. As to the semantics of the Hittite word, cf. e.g. 'Kupfer, Kupferblau, Schmuckstein' (Friedrich 1952:122), 'cuiivre, pierre précieuse' (Laroche 1959:59). Gamkrelidze-Ivanov (1984:710), following P.Meriggi, quotes Luvian *kuwanzu-* with the meaning 'copper', but this equivalent is highly doubtful. Weitenberg (1984:292) assumes that the Luvian word in question is probably an adjective with the meaning 'schwer?, wichtig?', but elsewhere he cites Luvian *kuwanzu-* 'Kupfer' (Weitenberg 420, n.212).

5. For the Iranian evidence, see Morgenstierne (1927:12), Abaev (1958:481; 1963:203-207), Trubačev (1967:33-34) and Reczek (1985:22). It is worth mentioning that Abaev suggests connection between Iran **s(p)ana-* and Avestan *spanah-* 'holy, sacred' "po kul'tovym motivam".

6. In connection with this matter it may be useful to quote a few selected opinions. Both Boisacq (1916:527) and Preobraženskij (1958:979) hesitate whether the Greek term is related to Baltic and Slavic items. Trubačev is inclined to connect the Slavic and Iranian words, pointing out a difference of their root vocalism, Ivanov (1977a) claims that "the problem of the connection of Hitt. *kuwanzas* with Slavic and Baltic names for 'lead' (...) is phonologically difficult", while in another work (Ivanov 1977:230) he states what follows:

"Lithuanian *švīnas* 'lead', Latv. *svīns*, related to ORuss. *svinīč* and other Slavic terms for 'lead', cannot be derived from the same Indo-European protoform as Greek *kúanos* is".

7. Ivanov (1977:231) claims that matching the Balto-Slavonic words with the Hittite *kuwanzas* is impossible due to the lack of palatalization IE. **k* in Anatolian in a position before **u*. This argument is devoid of any legitimacy, however, because this "phonetic process" is a fiction concocted on the basis of Indo-Iranian borrowings such as: Hitt. *aššuwa-* 'horse', Hier.Luw. *asuwa-*, Lyc. *esbe* (<Indo-Iran. **asva-* m. 'horse' < IE. **ékwo-*, cf. Lat. *equus*, Gmc. **éhwaz* m. 'horse'). If the Anatolian words in question were vernacular, they would surely have retained the vocalism *e-* in initial position. This argument (and a few others which we are not mentioning here) enables us to reject Ivanov's reservations. If, on the other hand, palatalization is a phenomenon that did not occur in the pre-Anatolian language (Danka, 1983:169), then the only viable continuation of IE. **kw-* can be the Hitt. *kuw-*. Recently Craig Melchert (1987) has tried to prove the existence of a palatalizational process in the Luwoid group of Anatolian, but not in the Nesitic one.

8. See e.g. Gk. *kúōn* (gen.sg. *kunós*) 'dog', Avest. *spā* (gen.pl. *sunam*), pashto *spáy*, Npers. *sag*, Lith. *šuoš*, gen.sg. *šūns*, Latv. *suns* < IE. **kwōn*, gen.sg. **kunés* 'dog' (Pokomy, 1959:632-633).

9. In this article the abbreviation "IE." is consistently used with classic (new-grammatical) reconstruction, and the abbreviation "PIE." with reconstruction that takes into account the laryngeal theory. That is why I suggest the -RHV- notation (where: R-syllabic sonant, V-vowel, and H-reflects some proto-Indo-European laryngeal phoneme which had disappeared within the Indo-European area). I consider the new-grammatical notation -RRV- to be hypercorrect.

10. The problem of reconstructing the meanings of Indo-European lexemes is more extensively addressed in Danka-Witczak (1990:319-324).

11. The necessity of locating the Indo-European homeland at the Balkan Peninsula (especially in the basin of Danube) was expressed many times in my earlier articles and books (see especially Danka 1966; 1983).

WORKS CITED

Abaev, V.I., 1958. *Istoriko-etimologičeskij slovar' osetinskogo jazyka* [Historico-etymological Dictionary of the Ossetic language], vol.1(A-K), Moscow-Leningrad.

Abaev, I.I., 1963. "Ob iranskikh nazvanijahk stali" (On the Iranian names for 'steel'), *Izbr K 75-letju prof. I.I.Zarubina*, Moscow 203-207.

Boisacq, E. 1916. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, Heidelberg-Paris.

Chantraine, P., 1970. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots*. Vol.2, Paris.

Danka, I.R., 1966. *Problem praoczyny Indoeuropejczyków (The Problem of the homeland of the Indo-Europeans)*, *Rozprawy Komisji Językowej* TN 12, 1966, pp.83-122.

Danka, I.R., 1983. *Stanowisko języków anatolijskich w rodzinie indoeuropejskiej i ich wzajemne związki (The Position of the Anatolian Languages in the Indo-European Family and their Mutual Connection)*, *Łódź*.

Danka, I.R. - Witczak, K.T. 1990. "Some Problems of Indo-European Lexicography", in *Meaning and Lexicography*, ed. by

J.Tomaszczyk and B.Lewandowska - *Tomaszczyk (Linguistic and Literary Studies in Eastern Europe, vol.28)*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, 315-325.

Danka, I.R. - Witczak, K.T. 1992. *Balto-słowiańskie *švīnas 'ołów' a zagadnienie, odtworzenia budowy i znaczenia prototypu indoeuropejskiego [Balto-Slavic *švīnas 'lead' and the question of reconstructing the structure and meaning of the Indo-European prototype]*, *Acta BaltSlav* 21, 1992, pp.83-91.

Dečev, D., 1960. "Charakteristik der thrakischen Sprache", *LingBalk*, vol.2 147-214.

Duridanov, I., 1976. *Ezikát na Trakite (The language of the Thracians)*, Sofia.

Duridanov, I., 1985. *Die Sprache der Thraker (Bugarische Sammlung Band 5)*, Neuried.

Fraenkel, E., 1965. *Litauisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, vol.2, Heidelberg.

Gamkrelidze, Th.V.-Ivanov, V.V., 1984. *Indoeuropejskij jazyk i indoeuropejcy. Rekonstrukcija i istoriko-tipopogičeskij analiz*

prajazyka i protokul'tury (Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans. A Reconstruction and historical Typological Analysis of a Protolanguage and a Proto-Culture), Tbilisi.

Halleux, R., 1969. "Lapis-lazuli, azurite ou pâte de verre? A propos de *kuwano* et *kuwanoko* dans les tablettes mycéniennes", SMEA, vol.9 47-66.

Ivanov, V.V., 1977. "O proischozhenii nekotorykh baltijskikh nazvanij metallov" (On the origin of some Baltic metal-names), Baltistica, vol.13, (1) 223-236.

Ivanov, V.V., 1977. "K istorii drevnikh nazvanij metallov v juzno-balkanskom, maloazijskom i sredizemnomorskom arealakh" (On the History of Ancient Names of Metals in the South-Balkan, Near East and Mediterranean Areas) in: Slavjanskoe i balkanskoe jazykoznanie. Antičnaja balkanistika i sravnitel'naja grammatika (Slavic and Balkan Linguistics. Ancient Balkanistics and Comparative Grammar), Moscow 1977, 3-27.

Kazanskene V.P. - Kazanskij N.N. 1986. Predmetno-ponjatijnyi slovar' grečeskego jazyka: kritomikenskij period, Leningrad.

Laroche, E., 1959. Dictionnaire de la langue louvite, Paris.

Morgenstierne, G., 1927. An Etymological Vocabulary of Pashto. Oslo.

Neroznak, V.I., 1987. Paleobalkanske jazyki (The Palæo-Balkan Languages). Moscow.

Palmer, L.R., 1968. The Interpretation of Mycenaean Greek texts. Oxford.

Pokorny, J., 1959. Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch, Vol.1, Bern-München.

Preobraženskij, A.G., 1959. Etimologičeskij slovar' ruskogo jazyka (The Etymological Dictionary of the Russian language). Moscow.

Reczek, J., 1985. Najstarsze słowiańsko-irańskie stosunki językowe (The Most Ancient Slavic-Iranian Language Relations), Kraków.

Trautmann, R., 1923. Baltisch-slavisches Wörterbuch, Göttingen.

Ventris, M. - Chadwick, J., 1973. Documents in Mycenaean Greek, Cambridge.

Weitenberg, J.J.S., 1984. Die hethitischen u- Stämme, Amsterdam

Trubačev, O.N., 1967. "Iz slavjano-iranskikh leksičeskikh otnošenij" [On Slavic-Iranian lexical connection], Étunologija 1965 (publ.1967); 3-81.

