ALBANIAN THIKE ‘KNIFE’

In the volume of essays *Languages and Areas: Studies presented to George V. Bobrinskoy* (Chicago 1967) 66--9, I struggled to find cognates and an Indo-European background for the obviously inherited Albanian *thike*, which is the ordinary word for a knife. I was exploring, without finding anything anything conclusive, the possibilities of Indo-Iranian. It seemed to me then, and it still does, that Indo-Iranian assures us of an etymon *kikā ‘sand, gravel’; I preferred then, in consideration of *sitā- = Lat. catus etc., to trace this to *ko-ka, a zero-grade of *ko- (= *k’eH₆), rather than to *ki-kā. I further discussed the problems and limitations of the Albanian vocalism and of a suffix in -k-.

Beside Skt. śāga, Mod.Pers. sān, Lat. cōs ‘whetstone’ and Skt. śilā ‘crag’, it seems best to regard *kikā ‘gravel as *ko-ka. But a much more direct solution for Alb. *thikē now seems possible.

It is understandable that Gustav Meyer and Norbert Jokl never considered comparing Vedic (RV) śikvan-, śikvas- (AV) śikvá since Grassmann glosses the first two ‘stark, tüchtig’. However, Wackernagel (AiG II, 2, 903 §720b) glosses them ‘schnittend, beifführend’. We may then extract the base *šik- with the approximate meaning ‘sharp blade’.

In discussing this question with me may late colleague J.A.B. van Buitenen further called my attention to *šikhā ‘tuft of hair, crest, point, tip, border, knife-edge, arrow’1. I suggest that we have here a direct comparison with the Albanian. The aspirate of *šikhā may be analyzed like that of pánthās, thiśhati, rátha- ( Lat. rota); in fact, as in pánthās, we may have here a duplicate representation of the Indo-European laryngeal both in the aspirate consonant and in the long vowel. We may therefore reconstruct *šikhā as *šik-H₆. This then would be a laryngeal-suffixed form with a base matching that of *šikvan- *śikvā-.

In point of fact, this laryngeal-suffixed form may well have an exact correspondent in the feminine Alb. *thikē. The normal reconstruction for the latter would be *k’kā or *keikā. If we choose the latter it may be re-expressed as *keikeH₆ schematically. Thus *šikhā and *thikē differ only by ablaut. The indic word would be an old ablauting noun *śik-(e)H₆; the Albanian would represent a guna stem (perhaps by the same rule as was productive in Baltic and Slavic) *keikeH₆, corresponding to Skt.

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1 Note too Pāli *sikhara ‘peak, point or edge of a sword, crest’, *sikhā ‘point, edge, crest’.
2 For *k we may equally have *k’w.
pánthā, Av. panta. If we reason further, following the paradigm that jánilgnā- once had, we arrive at a possible nominative *kēik-\(H_a\) and an oblique (e.g. genitive) *kik-e\(H_a\)-os. Such paradigms would immediately account for the ablaut in the base seen in *kikā and kēikā, as well as the aspirate consonantism and the stem-class.

This leads us to a root *kēik- or *kēik\(^W\)-, hitherto unrecognized for Indo-European\(^3\).

Povzetek

ALBANSKO THIKE "NOŽ"

Albansko thike "nož" se v prispevku primerja s sti. šikha "čop las, greben, konica, rob, noževo rezilo, puščica" in oba leksema izvaja iz ievr. sklanjatvenega vzorca leksema z laringalnim sufiksom z verjetnim imenovalnikom ednine k'ēik-\(H_a\) in s stranskosklonsko, npr. rodbiniško obliko *k'ik-e\(H_a\)-os. Albanski leksem z možnima izhodiščima *k'ikā in *k'ēikā lahko predstavlja polno stopnjo k'ēik-e\(H_a\), staroindijski pa ničto *k'ik-(e)\(H_a\) in z aspiriranim soglasnikom in dolgim soglasnikom tako kot sti. pánthās kaže na dvojno zastopanost ievr. laringala. Primerjava odkriva novo ievr. osnovo *k'eik- ali *k'eik\(^2\), ki se ohranja tudi v ved. škvan- škvas- "stark, tuchtig" (Grassman), "schnitzend, beilführend" (Wackernagel).

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3 See my discussion of the descendants of this etymon, Lingua 34, 1974, 229 ff.