PIGS IN LACONIAN

Abstract: In his lexicon Hesychios of Alexandria registered five Laconian names for ‘pig’. Three of them demonstrate specific dialectal features (e.g. the development of AGk. *θ to Lac. σ is attested in the name σίκα ‘pig’; the initial digamma [ϝ] is preserved in the following two glosses: βορθαγορίσκοι ‘piglets’ and γέωνα ‘female pig, sow’). The Laconian glosses in question are discussed philologically and etymologically. Whenever possible, both the original meaning and the motivation for change are explained.

The animal terminology of Ancient Greek is dominated by the standard dialects (especially by Ionic and Attic). The dialectal names, which appear in the well known Hesychian glossary, are usually omitted in the standard etymological dictionaries (e.g. in Boisacq, DELG; Frisk, GEW; Chantraine, DELG) and monographs.

In this paper we intend to discuss all the Hesychian glosses which belonged to the Laconian dialect of Ancient Greek and which denoted ‘domesticated pig’. In the lexicon prepared by Hesychios of Alexandria (5th or 6th c. AD) there are five Laconian glosses which demonstrate some ‘pig’ connotations:

1. βορθαγορίσκια | χοίρεια κρέα, και μικροί χοίροι βορθαγορίσκοι (βορθάκεοι cod. Marc.). Λάκωνες (HAL2: I 385, s.v. β-829; HAL2: I 335, s.v. β-822). See also όρθαγορίσκος · χοιρίδιον μικρόν (HAL2: II 774, o-1176). The latter form is quoted and explained by authors of the Greek etymological dictionaries.

2. βωλόρυχα [Latte βωλώρυχα] · τήν σύν. Λάκωνες (HAL1: I 408, s.v. β-1384; HAL2: I 355, s.v. β-1375). Not considered by Boisacq and Frisk, but quoted by Chantraine (DELG I 203) under the heading βόλος m. ‘a lump of earth, clod; land, ground, soil’.

4. πτελέα · σῦς ὑπὸ Λακώνων. ἦ ἐῖδος δένδρου (HAL¹: III 402, s.v. π-4186). Discussed under the heading πτέλας (‘wild boar’), but not explained.

5. σίκα · ὅς. Λάκωνες (HAL¹: IV 1, 28, σ-607). Not discussed etymologically, but mentioned by Frisk (GEW II 824) in his discussion of σῦς (‘pig’).

Our notes and remarks will refer to the derivational and etymological aspects of the relevant lexemes. We will be engaged in establishing the Common Greek (and Indo-European) etyma, their primitive semantics and eventually their dialectal distribution. Some details of their phonology will also reviewed. We turn now to the first Laconian name for ‘pig’.

1. The Hesychian gloss contains two cognate terms: Lac. βορθαγορίσκια denotes ‘piglet’s meal’ (= AGk. χοίρεια κρέα), whereas Lac. βορθαγορίσκοι (m. pl.) means ‘small piglets’ (= AGk. μικροὶ χοῖροι). A different gloss, attested in the Hesychian lexicon (HAL²: II 774, 0-1176): ὀρθαγορίσκος · χοιρίδιον μικρόν (‘sucking-pig’), demonstrates clearly that the initial graphem β- represents digamma (AGk. p- < IE. *w), i.e. the phoneme characteristic for the Doric dialects. The Laconian origin of the term ὀρθαγορίσκος is confirmed independently by Athenaeus (Deipnosoph. IV 139b, 140b). An alternative form ὀρθραγορίσκος (Pers., Stoic. 1.102) is also registered (Liddell, Scott 1996: 1248, 1250).

The Laconian term for ‘piglet / cochon de lait’, ὀρθαγορίσκος, is analyzed etymologically by Boisacq (DELG 1916: 712, s.v. ὀρθρος) on the basis of Athenaeus’ explanation according to which the term ὀρθαγορίσκος, developed from ὀρθαγορίσκος by the dissimilation of the liquids, denotes young animals exported for sale at dawn (Athen., Deipnosoph. IV 140b: ἐπεί πρὸς τὸν ὀρθρὸν πιπράσκονται), cf. Gk. ὀρθρὸς m. ‘day-break, dawn, cock-crow’ and ἀγορά f. ‘market-place’. Also Bechtel (1963: II 328) treats the ancient etymology as striking and indubitable, but he explains the Laconian term in question as a kind of “ein Scherzwort”. However, most linguists (beginning from Pisani 1958: 143) believe that the ancient etymology is in fact fictitious and the connection between ὀρθαγορίσκος and ὀρθρος is caused by the so called folk or popular etymology (see Frisk, GEW II 415; Chantraine, DELG III 1974: 818). Pisani (1958: 143) suggests that the Laconians derived their name for ‘piglet’ from the name of Ὀρθαγόρας, the first tyrant of Sicyon and the founder of a dynasty. Frisk (GEW II 415) qualifies Pisani’s explanation as noticeable (“Erwägenswert”).
According to our opinion, the Laconian term */:ορθαγορίσκος ‘sucking-pig’ represents a three-element compound. The initial component, which seems to denote the squeaking voice of piglets, originates from the verb όρθίάζω ‘to speak in a high tone; to shriek with loud wailings’ (cf. also όρθίασμα n. ‘a high pitch of voice’), the final one represents the diminutive suffix -ίσκος. The main element appears to go back to the Indo-European root *gor- ‘young animal, esp. piglet’ (perhaps of onomatopoeic origin), which is also attested in Armenian and Celtic, e.g. Arm. xoč-kor ‘piglet’ vs. koriun ‘young of an animal (esp. young lion)’ (Djahukian 1967: 189); OFr. gorre, Fr. goret ‘pig’, Burg. guri ‘piglet / Ferkel’, Catal. garri, Sp. gorriño ‘piglet, hog’ (< Gaulish *gorros), see Meyer-Lübke (1935: 325, No. 3820). In other words, the Laconian word in question means nothing other than ‘young squeaking piglet’. It should be emphasized that a fish was called όρθαγορίσκος “wegen des grunzenden Lautes” (Strömberg 1943: 69; Frisk, GEW II 415). Thus both the Greek name for piglet and the one for fish are motivated by a squeaking or grunting sound.

2. The noun βωλορύχα (corrected by Kurt Latte into βωλώρυχα) is undoubtedly a Laconian compound, containing two elements. The former of them represents βώλος m. ‘a lump of earth, clod; land, ground, soil’, the latter is derived from the Greek verb ορύσσω (Att. ορύττω) ‘to dig (the trench), to dig up; make a canal through; to bury’ (< IE. *H₃ruk- / *H₃ rug[h]-). In other words, it denotes an animal ‘digging the soil’.

The Laconian term in question may be treated as an innovative compound. However, it should be emphasized that the verbal root *H₃ruk- / *H₃ rug[h]- ‘to dig’ (Walde, Pokorny 1926: 353; Pokorny 1959: 869-870) creates some names for ‘pig’ in three different Indo-European stocks:

BALTIC: Latvian rukša ‘a digging pig / ein wühlendes Schwein’, also ruksis ‘young pig’, rukse and rucis, rucis ‘piglet’ (Sabaliauskas 1968: 179);

CELTIC: Old Irish rucht ‘pig’ (< Celtic *ruk-tu- ‘digger / Wühler’ (Pokorny 1959: 870; see also Stokes, Bezeniaberger 1894: 235; Walde, Pokorny 1926: 353; Vendryes 1974: R-50);

The Laconian term seems to confirm the well known observation that the Indo-European tribes classified pigs (also wild pigs) as animals digging the soil.

3. The third Laconian term γέωνα denotes evidently ‘female pig, sow’ (= AGk. ûς θήμεως). Kurt Latte, the well known editor of the Hesychian lexicon, suggested that the gloss in question is corrupted. According to his opinion, it can be related to another Hesychian gloss denoting ‘female pigs’: γρωνάδες · θήλεια εις ούς (HAL2: 392, γ-964). Mauricius Schmidt, an earlier editor of the Hesychian glossary, seems to be sceptical in the face of this possibility: “Probabiliter ad γρωνάδες retulit Kusterus, sed vix erat (?) quod in γρωνάς mutaret”. The actual existence of Hesychian γρωνάδες (f.pl.) ‘female pigs’ is confirmed by the Modern Greek diminutive form γουρούνι (n.) ‘pig’, which derives from Byz. Gk. γουρούνιν and further from the Ancient Greek archetype *γρώνιον (Andriotis 1990: 71). The development of γέωνα (f.) from γρωνάς seems doubtful both from the palaeographical point of view and the derivational one. It is therefore necessary to distinguish the Laconian gloss γέωνα as a separate term.

The primitive shape of the Laconian gloss may be reconstructed with the initial digamma (ϝ). It is possible to quote a number of glosses in the Hesychian lexicon, where digamma was replaced by gamma, e.g.

[3.1] γαδειν ■ χαρίσασθαι (HAL2: I 357, s.v. γ-19) derives from Proto-Greek *Fhαδειν eboev ‘to please, delight, gratify’ and IE. *swād-eye-se(n), cf. Lat. svavis adj. ‘sweet’, Skt. svādū- adj. ‘sweet’.

[3.2] γεαρ · εαρ (HAL2: I 365, s.v. γ-224) and γίαρ · εαρ (HAL2: I 376, s.v. γ-544) go back to Proto-Greek */ρέαρ and IE. *wesf (n.) ‘spring’, cf. Lat. vër n. ‘spring, springtime’. The second gloss in question seems to be of Boeotian origin (γίαρ = Gk. Boeot. Fίαρ).

[3.3] γία · ανθη (HAL2: I 376, s.v. γ-543) represents the Greek term *Fία (n. pl.) denoting ‘violets’ and secondarily also ‘flowers’, cf. Lat. viola f. ‘violet’.


If the initial γ- is an indication of digamma (f-), then the Laconian form can be derived from IE. *wēs-ōn- ‘fat animal’. This name seems to derive from the Indo-European term for ‘(animal) fat, grease, suet, brain, marrow’: *wesā (f.) and *wesmŋ (n.). This term is attested in five Indo-European subgroups:


DARDIC: Kashmiri was f. ‘marrow, brain’ (< Dardic *wasā, according to Turner 1966: 667, No. 11443).


The Laconian term for ‘sow’ belonged originally to the n-stems. It is uncertain, however, whether the lemma γέωνα is registered in the accusative singular (with the ending -α) or in a secondary nominative sg.

The n-stem forms are also attested in Middle Latin, Germanic, Sanskrit and the Iranian languages, cf. MLat. ueso, uesonis ‘polecat’; OHG. wiessa ‘polecat’, Luxemb. feis, West Flam. fisse, OFr. voisson ‘polecat, weasel’ (< West Gmc. *wesōn- m.); Skt. vasin- m. ‘otter’ (lex.); Kalasha bišun ‘marmot’, Khowar bišin ‘id.’ (as if from Dardic *vašini- ‘marmot’); Kati ušē ‘marmot’ (< Nuristani *vašin-); Ishkashim un-k ‘marten’, Sanglichi yūpek ‘id.’; Munjani wiŋ ‘marmot’ (cf. also Munj. xar-wiş ‘rat; hamster’, orig. ‘donkey’s marmot’, kárwun-giy ‘mole’, orig. ‘blind marmot’), Wakhi wināk ‘marmot’ (Stebligne-Kamensky 1999: 389), Yidgha wān ‘id.’, Tadjik dial. unduk, wunduk, wændek ‘marmot’, Old Wani mændek ‘id.’ (< Iran. *wahinaka- ‘marmot or a similar animal, esp. marten, rat, hamster, mole’). See also Burushaski ainɊq ‘marmot’ (usually treated as a borrowing from an Eastern Iranian source).


The semantic difference between the Laconian term in question and other Indo-European words is noteworthy. However, it is easily explainable on the basis of the original semantics: ‘fat (or fattened) animal’, as a sow is an excellent example of a fattened animal. Therefore the suggested semantic development of ‘fat(tened) animal’ to ‘female pig, sow’ is obvious.

4. According to Hesychios, the term πτελέα (f.) demonstrates two different meanings: ‘pig’ in the Laconian dialect (συς υπό Λακώνων) and ‘a kind of tree’ (εἴδος δένδρου) in the standard language. The latter sense (actually ‘the elm’) is attested as early as
in the archaic Mycenaean Greek dialect (14th c. BC), cf. *pe-te-re-wa* (KN So 894.1; So 4429.b) and *pte-re-wa* (KN Se 879.b; Se 880; 891.B; 892; 893; 5729; 7920; So 4429.b; So 4431; So 4437; 4440.b; 4445; 4448; 4449) = πτελέ/τα f. ‘elm, *Ulmus campestris* L.; elm-tree’s wood’ (Aura Jorro 1993: 165-166), see Attic πτελέα, Ionic πτελέη, Epidaurian πελέα ‘id.’. This term derives from IE. *(t)peléwâ* f. ‘a hydrophilous tree’, cf. Arm. *t'eli* ‘elm-tree, *Ulmus’*, Ossetic *fœrvœ* ‘alder-tree, *Alnus glutinosa*’ (Abaev 1958: 455-456), OHG. *félawa*, German *Felber* ‘a kind of willow, esp. sallow’ (Boisacq, DELG 820).

The Laconian term for ‘pig’ represents undoubtedly a different question, though Frisk (GEW II 610) and Chantraine (DELG III 946) are inclined to accept (both with a question mark) the connection of it with the noun πτελέα f. ‘elm, *Ulmus campestris* L.’. However, we must refer to Anc. Gk. πτέλαζας m. ‘wild boar’ (Lyc., Alex. 833), explained as κάρπος, ἄγριος χοίρος by an ancient scholiast, who informs us that this word was known to the Cilicians (παρὰ Κίλιξιν). Unfortunately, it is unclear whether the term in question was used by the Greeks in Cilicia, or perhaps by the non-Greek inhabitants of Cilicia. If the latter suggestion is correct, the name for wild boar must be treated as a borrowing taken from the Cilician language, whose filiation remains uncertain. However, the word πτελέα denoting ‘sow’ was registered by Hesychius as belonging to the vocabulary of the Doric Laconians, thus both words in question, used in Cilicia and Laconia, respectively, as well as in the literary language (only by Lycophron in his *Alex.* 833), seem to indicate their purely Greek origin.

The etymology of both words πτέλας (m.) ‘wild boar’ and πτελέα (f.) ‘pig’ is claimed as obscure (Boisacq, DELG 820: “Étym. obscure”; Frisk, GEW II 610: “unerklärt”). The relation to Lith. *kiaulė* (f.) ‘pig’ and *kuilys* (m.) ‘wild boar’, suggested by Fick (1890: 392), or to Sanskrit *kirih* (m.) ‘wild boar’ (lex.) and *kiryāṇī* (f.) ‘wild sow’, proposed by Prellwitz (1892: 265-266), is not accepted in the standard etymological dictionaries (cf. Boisacq, DELG 820; Frisk, GEW II 610-611; Chantraine, DELG III 946).

5. The gloss σίκα · ὑς. Λάκωνες is discussed by Neroznak (1978: 185), who believes that it was borrowed from a Paleo-Balkan source. He refers to Alb. *thi* ‘pig’ (< *si < IE. *sũs, cf. Orel 1998: 477) and also Finnish *sika* ‘id.’ and some Baltic forms. His way of thinking runs as follows:

“σίκα · ὑς ‘свинья’, ср. греч. σίαλος ‘жирная свинья’, *si-a2-ro* (Frisk, GEW, 699). Если ὑς является чисто греческим

Нерознак’s discussion explains little, as he does not take into account the well known phonological processes which appeared in the Laconian dialect of the Ancient Greek language. The term σίκα ‘пиг’ (Гк. θις), quoted by Hesychius as a Laconian gloss, contains the initial phoneme σ-, which goes back evidently to Ancient Greek *θ- (Buck 1955: 59). The Laconian use of σ for θ is confirmed by Aristophanes in his comedy Lysistrata and by numerous Laconian inscriptions beginning from the fourth century BC, e.g. Gk. Lac. ἀνέσηκε (= Att. ἀνέθηκε), Lac. σιώ (= Att. θεού). The Laconian form σίκα (< Greek Doric *θικά f.) cannot be separated from the Slavic adjective *dikъ ‘wild, savage’ (see e.g. HSorb. diki, džiki, Russ. дикий, Ukr. дикий, Pol. dziki ‘id.’, cf. also Lith. dūkas adj. ‘empty, hollow, idle, free; barren, sterile’, Latv. diks ‘id.’, Welsh dig adj. ‘angry, irritated’) and the Slavic names for ‘wild boar, wild sow’: Ukr. дикъ, Russ. dial. (Western) дик ‘id.’, Pol. dzik m. ‘boar, Sus scrofa L.’, dziki wieprz m. ‘wild boar’, dzika świnia f. ‘wild sow’ (Sławski 1952-1956: 204; Bańkowski 2000: 332; Boryś 2005: 144). The comparison of the Laconian and Slavic terms for ‘(wild) pig’ allows to formulate the following two conclusions: (1) the distribution of the Indo-European adjective *dhīkos was not restricted to the North-Western area, as a substantivized form appeared in the Laconian dialect of Ancient Greek. (2) the Laconian term gives strong evidence for initial *dh- (the Celtic and Balto-Slavic languages do not distinguish the reflexes of IE. *ḥ and *dh, and the North-Western data are ambiguous as to the primitive value of the dental phoneme). It is possible that Alb. dikē f. ‘desire, lust’ continues PAlb. *dīkā, being a substantivized feminine adjective related to Lith. dūkas and Slavic *dikъ (so Orel 1998: 65).
Conclusions.

Our analysis of five Laconian terms for ‘swine’ has clearly demonstrated that the Laconians preserved two Indo-European names: IE. *wes- ön- ‘fat animal’ (hence Lac. ἡφωνα f. ‘female pig, sow’), and IE. *dhikā ‘wild pig’ (hence Lac. σίκα f. ‘pig’). A different term *φορθαγορίσκος (‘piglet’) seems a Laconian innovation, perhaps of onomatopoeic origin. Also Lac. βωλόρυχα (or perhaps βωλόρυχα) ‘pig’ (liter. ‘digging the soil’) demonstrates a relatively recent character, though some Indo-European parallels may indicate a possibility of an older derivation. The primitive filiation of Cilician πτέλας (‘wild boar’) and Laconian πτελέα (‘pig’) cannot be determined with certainty.

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