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## A. Vanagas. *Lietuvių hidronimų etimologinis žodynas.*

("Etymological Dictionary of Lithuanian Hydronyms"). Vilnius, "Mokslas", 1981. 409 pages. Hard covers. Dust jacket.

The hydronymy, the names of the bodies of water, belongs to the oldest, the most archaic layers of the lexicon of most languages. It is especially important in Indo-European linguistics since most of the Indo-European languages have preserved many basic roots for the names of the bodies of water: rivers, lakes, creeks, streams, even natural ponds. This has been observed already at the beginning of Indo-European linguistics, and hydronyms have always formed an important part of the investigation of various aspects of the developments of various Indo-European languages. But, for some reason or other, most of these investigations are scattered throughout hundreds and hundreds of articles, monographs, dictionaries, comparative grammars and other such works. There are, of course, various lists of these names of water bodies in one fashion or another, especially in books dealing with geographical, historical and administrative questions. Rarely one finds a full dictionary of hydronyms in one special publication. And even more rarely one finds a full etymological discussion of the whole system of the hydronyms of one language in one well-ordered work.

Therefore, it is very pleasant to see this dictionary under review here: it presents the total knowledge we have now concerning the origin of all Lithuanian hydronyms. To be quite frank, some people might say that it was too early yet to publish a full etymological dictionary of Lithuanian hydronyms since for several hundreds of these names their origin, their etymology is still not clear, in some cases, one cannot even guess. But we do not think so: here, in one book, in one place, alphabetically, we have all known scholarship on these problems gathered in dictionary form.

The reason why the hydronyms are so old, so archaic is really rather simple: once given, they usually do not change, unless some radical, directed renaming has taken place. And such radical, administrative renaming has not been known until recent times. And the terms, the basic words, the basic roots used in naming the water bodies, usually represent the ancient lexicon, ancient word-derivational, word-formational elements as well as archaic phonological structure, and it also shows, usually, ancient morphological elements. Water bodies were named by the speakers of those ancient times applying the various (usually very ancient) words which may express the very flow of water itself, or its color, or the temperature of water, sometimes even its taste. Various shapes of the water bodies, their configurations, their environment may be found reflected in these water names, the kind of fauna and flora in the area, the function of the water bodies, their belonging to some tribe, the kind of depth, etc., etc. Many a time, these ancient roots do change in the language through time, but, once used to name a body of water, they tend to survive, even though the new generations may have "forgotten" what the name originally may have meant.

Thus, for example, the names of the three major rivers of Europe, the Rhine, the Danube and the Volga, are all very ancient names, most probably still named in some early Indo-European dialect, but nobody knows the original meaning of the names of these three great rivers for sure, although there are, for each of them, many etymologies proposed, many hypotheses set up. The Rhine may have been named by the early Celtic people, the Danube by the early Thracians, or Dacians, the Volga may be of Baltic origin, but we are not sure.

With the Lithuanian hydronyms, we are on a little safer grounds, speaking generally: apparently, they are all, basically, Indo-European, Baltic, Lithuanian, in that "order", chronologically. But, since Baltic and Lithuanian have not undergone too many drastic changes in the course of several millennia, we think, then these Lithuanian hydronyms are a little easier to explain and to "understand." The reason for that, again, is rather simple: in this territory, apparently, ancestors of the Balts, of the Lithuanians have been living uninterruptedly for several thousand years. Thus, there were no such great upheavals as in Central/Southern Europe and other areas inhabited by Indo-Europeans.

Let us now take the several basic roots which, in Proto-Indo-European meant, basically, "to flow." The following roots are usually considered as having had that original meaning:

\**el-/\*ol-* 'to flow' (Baltic/Lithuanian: *alv-*, *alm-*, *aln-*, *alant-*, *als*).  
\**ser-/\*sor-* 'to flow, to swim' (Baltic/Lithuanian: *serm-*, *sern-*, *sert-*, *serv-*).  
\**er-/\*or-* 'to begin to move, to stir, to move' (Baltic/Lithuanian: *er-*, *ar-*).  
\**neid-/\*noid-/\*nid-* 'to flow' (Baltic/Lithuanian: *neid-*, *naid-*, *nid-*).  
\**pel-/\*pol-/\*pl-* 'to flow, to pour' (Baltic/Lithuanian: *pel-*, *pal-*, *pul-*).  
\**eis-/\*ois-/\*is-* 'to move quickly' (Baltic/Lithuanian: *veis-*, *vais-*, *vis-*).  
\**dreu-/\*drou-/\*dru-* 'to run, to hurry up' (Baltic/Lithuanian: *dreu/drev-*, *drau/drav-*, *dru-*).

All the above-listed ancient Proto-Indo-European roots are well represented in dozens and dozens of hydronyms given in this dictionary. We will cite just a few examples for some of these roots.

\**el-/\*ol-* (=alv-, alm-, aln-, alant-, als-): *Alanta* (river), *Almé* (river), *Alna* (river), *Alsa* (river), and many others, related or derived from these basic roots.

The author of this dictionary is very cautious: wherever there is any doubt, he marks it as an unclear, or at least a doubtful case. For example, concerning the river name, *Alšia*, he observes that the origin is not clear, although in the subsequent discussion it comes out that only one phonological consideration prevents him from deriving this river name from the same basic root as the one given above. The question here is why does one find the š, instead of the usual s. This, of course, is a very difficult question of Lithuanian phonology: where, exactly, did the inherited Proto-Indo-European (voiceless, strident) s become (palatal) š. I would be inclined to assume that either, in certain circumstances, the inherited s, after a palatal / became, first, palatized s, and then, later, š, or that the basic root may have had an extension with the (palatal) k' which would normally become š. But it is perfectly acceptable for an author of any etymological dictionary to be cautious because etymology is, like the late Professor Ernst Fraenkel (author of the great *Etymological Dictionary of Lithuanian*) used to say, "a very slippery field." All the complicated questions of historical phonology, morphology, word-formation as well as semantics have to be considered.

Many Lithuanian hydronyms of all types are derived from the basic roots \**pel-/\*pol-/\*pl-* (see above). On pp. 241-242, we see several dozens of hydronyms listed: from *Pala* (river) to *Palvasa* (river).

Reading this dictionary, one becomes aware of the fact that these hydronyms, with all their ancient roots, or at least most of them, reach far into the unrecorded past of the Baltic languages, perhaps, indeed, into the mysterious times of the Proto-Indo-European original homeland. It is true that more than one hundred hydronyms are "left" without any explanation, simply remarking that the origin is unknown, but that makes a very small percentage of the thousands of hydronyms whose origin is elaborately and properly explained.

This dictionary, without any doubt, will become a standard reference book for any linguist interested in "things" Lithuanian, Baltic, and, last but not least, Indo-European.

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