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The etymological history of the Greek loanword *liqen-i* ‘lake’; sound developments, analogy and ghost forms

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Schweizerischer
Nationalfonds



The Albanian Language
in Antiquity

Contents

- The word *liqen* ‘lake’:
 - in Modern Albanian
 - in the etymological literature
 - in early literature and dictionaries
 - in Gustav Meyer’s Etymological Dictionary of Albanian (1891)
- Conclusion

Modern Albanian

- *liqen-i* (m.): [li'cɛn], [li'c̣çɛn], [li'tʃɛn]
- In the south, we also find *gjol(l)-i* (m.) 'lake'

	SG		PL	
	INDEF	DEF	INDEF	DEF
NOM	liqen	liqen-i	liqen-e	liqen-et
ACC		liqen-in		
GEN e/i	liqen-i	liqen-it	liqen-eve	liqen-eve
DAT				
ABL			liqen-esh	

Etymological literature

- Schuchardt (1867: 490): < Latin *lacuna* ‘cavity, pond’
- Miklosich (1871: 34): < Latin *lacus* ‘lake’
- Meyer (1891: 234):
 - mixture of Latin *lacuna* + *lagoena* ‘wine vessel’
 - mentions other forms: Geg *liqenë* (f.), Tosk *lëqyer* (m.)
- Thumb (1909: 15):
 - *liqenë* (f.) < Ancient Greek λεκάνη ‘basin’
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- Jokl (1915: 34):
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Etymological literature

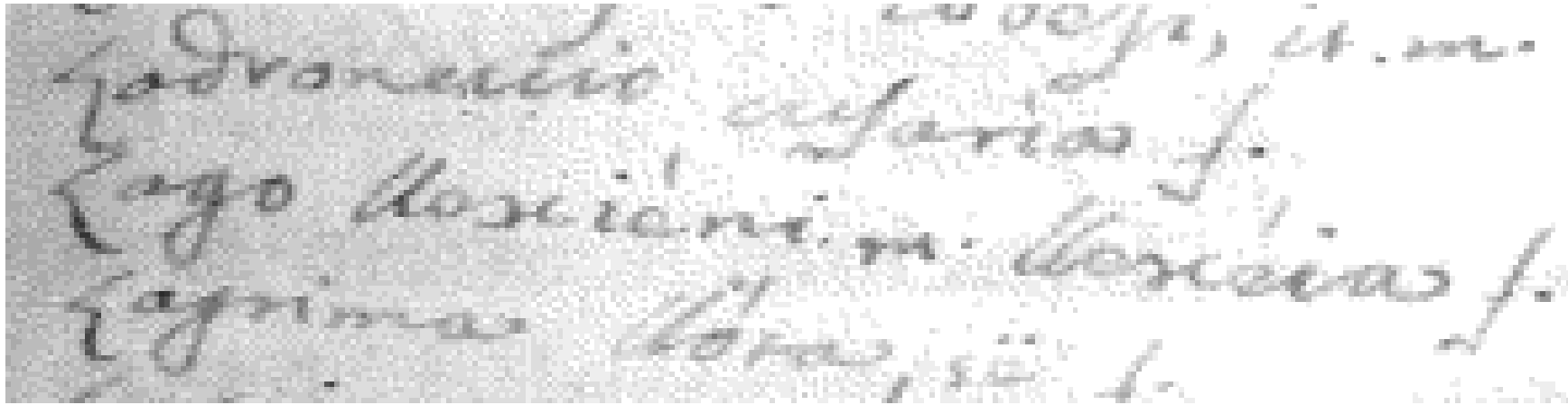
- A few short notes about the prehistory of *liqen*:
 - Two possible sources mentioned: λεκάνη (*lekánē*) ‘basin’ and λεκάνιον (*lekánion*) ‘small basin’,
 - Both work well phonologically.
 - The form λεκάνη (*lekáni*) still exists in Modern Greek and has acquired a geographic sense ‘body of water’,
 - E.g. Λεκάνη της Μεσογείου ‘Mediterranean Sea’
 - Pape (1842: 17):
 - λεκάνιον used by Aristophanes and Xenophon (5th-4th c. BCE).
 - New diminutive λεκανίδιον (*lekaníðion*) used by e.g. Julius Pollux (2nd c. CE).
- Conclusion: λεκάνη is the more logical source, but not from Ancient Greek, as it didn’t mean ‘body of water’ yet!
- Proposal: the source is Early Medieval Greek λεκάνη (*lekáni*) ‘body of water’, borrowed before the Albanian umlaut and palatalizations from around 700-800 CE.
- Result: the word was borrowed before the split of Geg and Tosk (800-1100 CE).
- In a nutshell: at some point in the early history, after the umlaut, palatalizations (**lekáni* > **leqéni*), this word was reanalyzed as a SG.DEF.M **leqén-i*, based on which a SG.INDEF.M **leqén* was formed. This form later lost its final **-n*, the vowel was lengthened and unaccented vowels were weakened: **leqén* > *lëqē*.

Early attestations

- Buzuku (1555): ‘(lions’) den’
qi liberoi Danielë ën liqenit së luanjet. (fol. 60v)
‘who freed Daniel from the lions’ den.’
- Budi (1618):
posikūr një lëqē plot me akullë (DC 144.6)
‘just like a lake full with ice’
- Bardhi (1635: 45):
Lacus – Lekiee (modern orthography: *lëqē*)
- Bogdani (1685):
gjithë ujetë ndë lëqē (Intr. xxix.)
‘all of the water in the lake’

Early dictionaries

- Chetta (1763) (Italian-Arbëresh dictionary):



Lago llekièni m. llekéja f. (modern orthography: *leqèni, leqéja*)

- Xylander (1835: 241):

(λεκιέκ), See, m.

-> read: (*lleqèk*); did he read Chetta's form as <llekièki>? Doubtful!

- Von Hahn (1854: 59):

(λεκjëκ), λjëκjëν-ι, geg., der See

-> read: (*lleqèk*), *leqén-i*

Early dictionaries

– Kristoforidhi (1868-1879): Geg and Tosk translations of the Psalms, followed by the New Testament

Psalm 114:8

G *i cilli bãni gurinë **lëgene** ujënash, edhe shkrepin' e shkambit bunime ujënash.*

T *i cili bëri gurrë **liqere** ujërash, edhe shkrepn' e shkëmbit burime ujërash.*

'who turned the rock into **pools** of water, and the flint into springs of water.'

Luke 8:23

G *Edhe ata tue lundruem, e muer gjumi, edhe sdripi nji thëllim ere **ndë lëqent** ...*

T *Edhe ata tek ishinë dyke lundruarë, e zuri gjumi. Edhe sbriti një thëllim ere **ndë lëqert** ...*

'And they were sailing over there, and he fell asleep. Suddenly a storm came **on the lake** ...'

– Kristoforidhi (1904: 202): Geg *liqé-ni*, PL *liqénj-të*
Tosk *lëqé-ri*, PL *lëqénj-të*

Early dictionaries

- Dozon (1879):
- Source: Kristoforidhi
- Clearly full of mistakes:
 - instead of <ly> (<l> doesn't exist in his spelling!)
 - <k> instead of <ky> (cf. <kyéni> for *qeni* 'the dog')
 - <e> instead of <œ> for ě
 - Accent on the first syllable
- Expected following his spelling: <lyœkyér>

- Weigand (1914: 161):

- See m. *gjoll-i*; N *liqé-ni*

Lyéh, lyé, aboyer : lyéou kyèni, le chien a aboyé. — Cf. sb. layati. Lyéhœtœ, V. lyétœ. Lyehònœ, accouchée; lyehonè-a, les couches. — gr. λέχος. Lièker, pl. e, Kr., lac. Lyekoimt, secouer, balancer. Lyekoœrœ, peau, cuir, outre ;

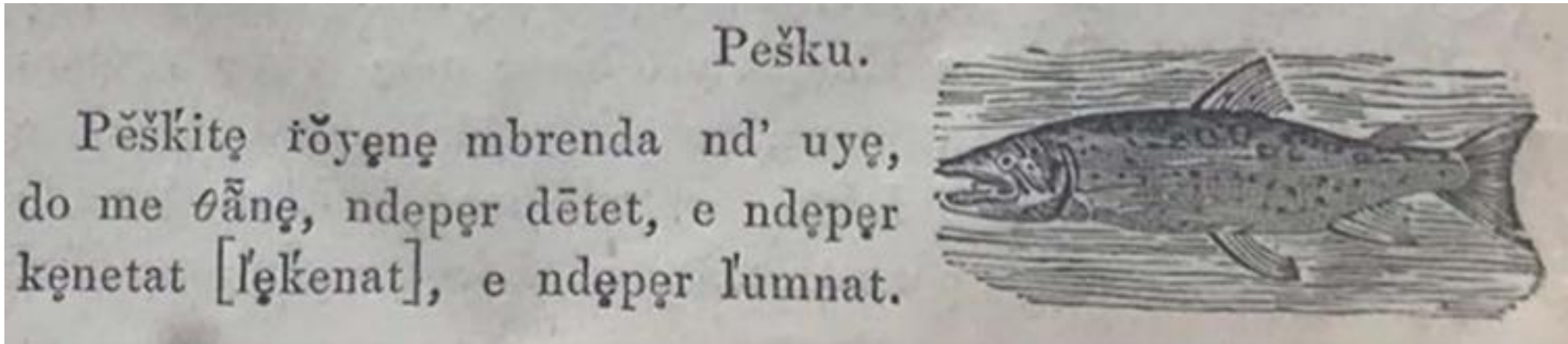
Gustav Meyer's strange forms

- Etym. Dictionary (1891: 234): “Endlich geg. *l'éké-ni*, to. *l'ékér*, *l'éküer* m. ‘See’, geg. *l'íkene* f. ‘See, Teich’ Krist.,”
- Observations:
 - For Geg, he mentions the indefinite *lëqé* ‘lake’, and the definite *lëqéni* ‘the lake’
 - For Tosk, he mentions the indefinite *lëqér* ‘lake’, and an undefined form *lëqyer*
 - He also mentions an extra feminine Geg form *liqenë* (taken seriously by Thumb, Jokl, Çabej, Ölberg)
- Questions:
 - What does *lëqyer* represent?
 - Where did he find a feminine form *liqenë* in Geg?
- Methodology:
 - Follow the sources
 - In this case: “Krist.” should refer to Kristoforidhi, but which of his many works and what page?
 - Another possible tool: other publications of Meyer.

Gustav Meyer's *liqenë* (1)

- Etymological remarks on Albanian nouns (1883: 304):
 - *lëqena* Krist. Alf. g. 21
 - *lëqere* Krist. Alf. t. 22
- Idea: while writing his Etymological Dictionary in 1891, Meyer interpreted his remarks from 1883 as follows:
 - Geg: *lëqenë*, PL *lëqena* (cf. *vajzë* 'girl', PL *vajza*) -> feminine!
 - Tosk: *lëqer*, PL *lëqere* -> masculine!
- *Abetār Škip* (Kristoforidhi 1872):
 - Page 21: no word for 'lake'
 - Bibliography of Meyer (1883: 264): the *Abetār* has 30 pages.
 - Reality: 32 pages.
 - The first two pages just include the Albanian alphabet. Maybe Meyer neglected these?
 - In this case, Meyer's page 21 should correspond to page 23 in reality.
 - What do we find on page 23?

Gustav Meyer's *liqenë* (1)



– In modern orthography:

Peshku. Peshqitë rrojënë mbrenda nd' ujë, do me thënë, ndëpër dëtet, e ndëpër kënetat [lëqenat], e ndëpër lumnat.
'The fish. The fishes reside in water, that is to say, throughout the seas, and the swamps **[the lakes]** and the rivers.'

– Observations:

- The word is between brackets, so it probably wasn't part of Kristoforidhi's original train of thought.
- The word is between two other words for bodies of water, both of which have a plural in *-at*.

– Conclusion: this form was probably influenced by *kënetat* and *lumnat*.

Gustav Meyer's *liqenë* (2)

- However, this is not the only possible source for Meyer's form *liqenë*.

Psalm 107:35

G *Băn shkretinënë **lëqenë** ujënash, edhe dhën' e thatë vruime ujënash.*

T *Bën shkretëtirënë **liqere** ujërash, edhe dhen' e thatë, burime ujërash.*

'He turns the desert into **pools** of water, and dry land into springs of water.'

- Observations:

- Geg form with -ë next to Tosk form with -e.

- The form *lëqenë* could be analyzed as follows:

- PL.INDEF of *lëqen* (cf. *punëtor* 'worker', PL *punëtorë* 'workers').

- SG.DEF of *lëqe*. But: translation 'he turns the desert into the pool of water' makes no sense.

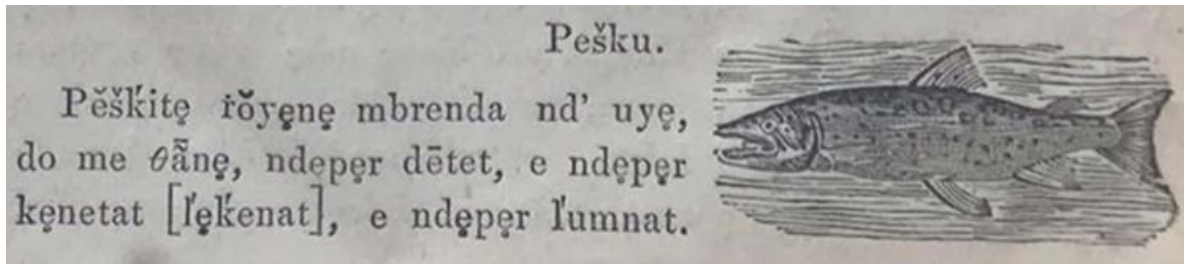
- SG.INDEF feminine 'a lake'. Geg translation: 'he turns the desert into a pool of water'.

- Kristoforidhi made a mistake and should have written *lëqene*, just like in Psalm 114:8 (see slide 7).

- Conclusion: Probably a mistake (should have been *lëqene*), but Meyer might have taken it too seriously.

33 Băn lūmēnatę tę škretę, eđe vruimeł e ūyēnavet tę θatę.
34 Δēnę ki bān rōmę, tę ngēłmētę, pę tę keken' e atūneve ki
35 rinę nd' atę. Bān škretinęnę **lękenę** ūyęnaš, eđe đēn' e θatę
36 vruime ūyęnaš. Eđe atiē vę tę rinę tę ūnęšimitę, eđe ngręfinę
37 kūtete pę tę ndęñunę: eđe mbielin' āra, e vęnę vęneštę, eđe

Gustav Meyer's *liqenë*



33 Bãn lūmenatę tę škretę, eðe vruimeł e ũyęnavet tę θatę.
34 Δēnę ki bãn rōmę, tę ngēłmętę, pęr tę keken' e atūneve ki
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37 kūtete pęr tę ndęñunę: eðe mbielin' āra, e vęnę vęneštę, eðe

- Problem for both possibilities:
 - The attested forms point to *lëqenë*, not *liqenë*.
 - Possible solution: Kristoforidhi's dictionary (1904) was published posthumously. Maybe Meyer was in contact with Kristoforidhi or saw an earlier version, based on which he “corrected” the Geg form to *liqenë*.
- Conclusion:
 - It is not entirely sure where in Kristoforidhi's work *liqenë* appears.
 - Meyer must have made a mistake in analyzing Kristoforidhi's work somewhere.
 - The form *liqenë* must be a ghost word (i.e. it never existed).

Gustav Meyer's *lëqyer*

- Meyer's other strange form: Tosk *lëqyer*.
 - (1891: 234): “Endlich geg. *l'éké-ni*, to. *l'ékér*, ***l'éküer*** m. ‘See’, geg. *l'íkεnε* f. ‘See, Teich’ Krist.,”
- First thoughts:
 - If a SG.DEF form of Geg *lëqé* is given (*lëqéni*), then maybe *lëqyer* represents the Tosk SG.DEF form?
 - Most probably not. This formation of definite forms does not exist in Albanian.
 - Is it a PL.INDEF of Tosk *lëqér*?
 - Possible model: SG *déré*, PL *dyer* ‘door(s)’ >> SG *lëqér*, PL *lëqyer*?
 - Probably not, he should have specified “PL” as opposed to the Geg forms.
 - Alternative form of *lëqer*, i.e. it also represent a SG.INDEF form?
 - Only attestation, so is it a mistake?
- Methodology:
 - Follow the sources!
 - Main sources (Meyer 1891: VII):
 - Von Hahn (1854) -> Geg
 - Dozon (1879) -> Tosk -> This is where to look!

Gustav Meyer's *lëqyer*

- Meyer (1891: 234): *l'ékér*, ***l'ëküer***
- Meyer (1883: 304): “t. *l'ëker* (bei Doz. falsch *lièker*)”

- So, he was aware of Dozon's mistake in 1883!
- Reminder: Dozon should have written <lyœkyér>

- Idea:
 - Meyer reconstructed this, just like I did
 - Or: Dozon sent out a correction that reached Meyer
 - Meyer wrote something like <lyœkyer> in his copy of Dozon (between 1879 and 1883)
 - In 1891, he erroneously copied <Lièker, Lyœkyer> as “*lëqér, lëqyer*”.

- This is just a reconstruction based on the literature. Other scenarios / details possible!

- Conclusion:
 - Very probable that Meyer made a mistake in interpreting Dozon's erroneous form.
 - In other words: *lëqyer* is probably a ghost form and never existed.

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Conclusions

- *liqén-i* < older Geg *lëqē*, *lëqéni* < **lëqén*, *lëqéni* < **lekáni* < Early Medieval Greek *λεκάνη* (*lekáni*) ‘body of water’
- In the current time of digitalization, many interesting things about Albanian etymology can be found!
- The great Albanologists like Meyer, Thumb, Jokl, Çabej, Ölberg etc. made very important steps, but weren’t always right.
- What I’ve presented here are also just steps toward unraveling the actual history of *liqen*.



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Faleminderit për vëmendjen!

A keni pyetje?