

THE MAIN FEATURES OF HUNTING VOCABULARY IN OLD GREEK

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ABSTRACT

THIS PAPER LOOKS AT THE MAIN FEATURES OF GREEK HUNTING VOCABULARY. MORE PRECISELY, WE WILL FOCUS ON THE DIFFERENT DEGREES OF SPECIALIZATION OF THE HUNTING VOCABULARY IN OLD GREEK. FIRST OF ALL, WE WILL REFER TO THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORDS BY PROVIDING A SHORT CLASSIFICATION OF THE HUNTING TERMS (BORROWED WORDS, DERIVATES ETC.). ALTHOUGH WE DEAL WITH A TECHNICAL VOCABULARY, APART FROM THE DIFFERENT DEGREES OF SPECIALIZATION, WE COULD NOTICE THAT MANY OF THE WORDS DEVELOPED METAPHORICAL MEANINGS, ESPECIALLY IN THE EROTIC POETRY AND TRAGEDY. MOREOVER, WE HAVE IDENTIFIED A GENERAL TREND OF TERMINOLOGISATION, AS MOST OF THE WORDS, WHICH BELONG TO THE GENERAL VOCABULARY, TEND TO BE USED WITH A MORE SPECIFIC MEANING.

KEY-WORDS: HUNTING VOCABULARY, GREEK, GENERAL FEATURES, ETYMOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Despite the important role played by hunting in the Ancient Greek society, economy and culture, the Greek hunting vocabulary is a domain that has not been studied enough. Researchers have analysed its cultural and anthropologic aspects and its artistic representations (ceramics, mosaics etc.). On the other hand, there are only a few studies which discuss this domain from a linguistic angle, that refer to the hunting vocabulary, understood as the instrument that eases communication in a particular social and professional category. The most important of all is called *Quelques termes du vocabulaire pastoral et du vocabulaire de la chasse*², written by Pierre Chantraine. The author analyses the most representative hunting and pastoral terms, the relation established between these two lexical areas, the semantic and etymologic interferences, as well as the semantic evolution of the terms. We should mention another representative study in this field – called *Lexique choisi des termes de chasse* –, written by Édouard Delebeque, that accompanies the translation into French of *Kynegetikos*, Xenophon's Greek hunting treatise. Delebeque tries to explain the terminology used by Xenophon in his work in order to understand better the ancient realities. Moreover, his translation has a great deal of footnotes that explain the way some instruments work, describe ancient realities, customs and hunting techniques. To ease the comprehension of the text, Delebeque included a glossary of hunting terms used by Xenophon.

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² Pierre Chantraine, *Études sur le vocabulaire grec*, Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1956, 31-96.

From a bird's eye view, this is the main bibliography related to the Greek hunting vocabulary and, therefore, we consider that researchers should analyse this lexical area, as it can provide us with many interesting and useful details regarding ancient hunting in Greece or other parts of the world. Etymology, lexicology and semantics, as well as the comparison with other languages could make us understand better some facts, customs, occupations, cultural and economic aspects of the ancient society. Moreover, linguistics could complete the findings of other domains (e.g. history, archeology, arts, anthropology, history of institutions and mentalities etc.) that we already have related to hunting in Ancient Greece.

Apart from the content and all the information, these hunting texts can offer the reader a set of *realia* elements through a lexical and linguistic analysis also. All of these elements provide us a better understanding of the hunting expeditions, together with the techniques and instruments, a certain *forma mentis* of the ancient Greeks.

Therefore, we consider that hunting should undergo a linguistic investigation at least due to the following reasons:

(i) Due to the strong relationship between language (especially the lexis), on one hand, and the society and (material or spiritual) culture, on the other hand, through the close investigation of the hunting lexis we can get a set of precious information which would help us understand better this activity and its role in the ancient Greek society. This way we get access to information related to:

- different hunting instruments and their use, techniques, customs and interdictions etc.
- technical information and *realia* elements: equipment, its usage and manufacturing, specific techniques for the ancient hunting.

The texts contain many details of this type, but through a linguistic analysis of the lexis we can enlarge upon them.

(ii) All of these pieces of technical information can be seen through comparison, at a lexical level, from a diachronic / diatonic perspective. Through a diachronic perspective, we can compare the hunting techniques and instruments from the Greek Antiquity to other historical periods (before or even until nowadays). One can concur that the evolution of techniques and instruments was very slow until the Middle Ages; after this period there has been a certain diversification regarding the techniques and instruments, but not a significant one. One interesting direction is to follow the evolution in time of the vocabulary that refers to these instruments, techniques, concepts etc. Furthermore, the comparison to other ethno-linguistic and cultural spaces (Indo-Europeans, from Europe or the Middle East) offers us a lot of details related to the practice and performance of hunting at a very general level.

(iii) Having as a starting point the relationship between culture / reality and language, we can also emphasize the way in which the lexis reflects this encyclopaedic information (concepts and notions). We refer mostly to the lexicalization of some concepts, the degree of specialisation they cover, the relationship between lexemes, the richness and the lexical variety; the terminologisation and determinologisation, the development of metaphorical and connotative meanings. The shaping of a specialised lexicon or a certain terminology reflects the importance of hunting as a main activity in the social life of the Greek city-states. The introductory part of this paper concentrates on the stage of the existing bibliography referring to hunting, the premises and the key areas of study related to the domain, together with the usefulness of the research. We shall therefore try to draw the main features of the hunting vocabulary in Old Greek, taking into account the etymological repartition of terms and the syntagmatic relationships.

THE HUNTING CORPUS OF TEXTS

The corpus of texts we considered for this paper is made up of three texts which refer strictly to the hunting process: *Kynegetikos* (Xenophon)³ - 5th century BC, *Kynegetikos* (Arrian)⁴ - 1st century AD, *Onomastikon* (Iullius Pollux)⁵ - 2nd century AD. We have chosen these particular texts because we aimed to identify the denotative (hunting) meaning of the lexemes, and the technical texts emphasize this meaning precisely. Moreover, these texts belong to three distinct periods of time, which allow us a diachronic analysis of the hunting vocabulary.

THE ETYMOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF THE HUNTING VOCABULARY

The etymology plays a very special role in the lexical-semantic analysis of old Indo-European languages, Greek included, because it can offer details not only about the history of a word, but also about its meaning and its relationship with other lexemes from other languages. The vocabulary of Old Greek is mainly inherited from the common Indo-European language (i.e. words, roots, particles etc.). Furthermore, many words were formed on the Greek territory in order to name new socio-cultural realities, and to these 'borrowed' words we add the borrowings from the Aegean layer or other languages to which the Greeks had a direct contact.

Abridging the discussion to the lexical area emphasized here, we shall make the following mentions and classifications. From an etymological point of view we could easily identify the following situation: most of the hunting words (regardless of their lexical-semantic category) are of unclear or unknown origin. In most cases, the lexical elements that compose the vocabulary specific to hunting – names of nets and instruments, essential verbs (to hunt, to catch, to follow), words referring to game, coursing and catch - do not have an etymologic correspondent in other Indo-European languages. In most of the cases, they are built on unknown roots and even if there have been some explanations of justifications proposed, none of them is clear enough or even satisfactory. There are still some correspondences which can be identified, some compounding elements, suffixes and prefixes; the etymology is not traceable in all cases.

This situation is closer to a paradox as one might expect the hunting vocabulary to have a uniform representation in the Indo-European linguistic space. One might also expect that hunting, mainly practised by the Indo-European societies in the historical age, to have been also practised in the city-state period, and therefore represented at a linguistic level by a specific lexis, referring to actions, animals and game. However, after the fall of this ethno-linguistic community, there were no lexical hunting correspondences between the attested languages.

³ Xenophon's treatise is the first Greek text which describes ancient hunting, its instruments and techniques in the 5th century BC. Therefore, *Kynegetikos* represented the model for the whole hunting literature and texts that followed (Arrianus, Oppianus, I. Pollux etc.). Moreover, we think that *Kynegetikos* is the moment when the hunting vocabulary becomes stable from the semantic point of view.

⁴ Arrianus lived and wrote his works during the Roman Period, when writers used to imitate anterior, classical literary and linguistic models, especially the Ionic-Attic dialect. Arrianus' text could be considered a commentary of Xenophon's hunting treatise, which discusses once again this theme and tries to provide some personal opinions. The emphasis lays on breeding hounds, not on the description of hunting instruments and the activity itself. This remark is of great importance, due to the fact that imitating a (linguistic and literary) model means preserving the terminology used by Xenophon and not allowing the lexical and semantic evolution of the hunting specialised vocabulary. Arrianus is mainly interested in describing hounds and their breeding and omits significant details referring to hunting. All these considered, Arrianus takes the terminology from his predecessor and does not change it significantly. Thus, there are only a few lexical and semantic differences between the two texts.

⁵ Iullius Pollux is a grammarian who lived in the 2nd century AD. In one of his works, an encyclopaedic dictionary, called *Onomastikon* (around 180 AD) he describes hunting (V, 17-86). Xenophon's *Kynegetikos* was this time too the inspiring source for the description (instruments, techniques, participants etc).

Closely connected to the hunting terminology, there are the names relating to wild animals. Not only the general terms for 'game' or 'prey', but also the names of the species that compose the hunting fauna have an unclear etymology or have constituted the linguistic taboo (bear, fox, reindeer, boar etc.).

As we have already mentioned, most of the terms are of unknown origin and others were created on a Greek territory or based on different Indo-European roots. The Greek hunting lexis can be classified as it follows:

(i) Words taken from the Aegean layer or with an obscure etymology *diktyon* ('net', 'fishing net'), *arkys* ('small net'), *ichnos* ('footprint') etc.

We have included in this category all the sub-layer words, together with those of unclear etymology for which there have been found correspondences with other words, but not always satisfactory enough. It is also difficult to establish a reliable etymon, taking into account that the pre-Hellenic languages were never written. Beside the fact that we have to deal with words that refer to important issues in the conceptual frame of the hunting process ('footprint', different types of instruments), these are not common Indo-European words.

(ii) Words borrowed from other languages: *toxon* ('bow'), *xiphos* ('spear') etc.

We can also mention here the name of weapons and other objects taken from different populations, borrowed together with the object itself. There had been an Indo-European origin word in Greek to name the 'bow', but in time *toxon*, borrowed most probably from Scythes replaced the old word.

(iii) Words formed in Greek: *thēra* ('hunting, chase'), *agra* ('hunting, catch'), *enodia* ('net'), *pagē* ('trap'), *akontion* ('spear'), *probolion* ('short spear'), *kynēgetēs* ('hunter') and its lexical family.

This category includes words formed with old Indo-European elements (roots, suffixes, compounding elements) which can be also be traced back in other languages. However, even if they were formed in Greek, for some of them we can find correspondences with other languages (cf. Gr. *thēra* < *thēr*, an old Indo-European root < IE **ghwer-*, and Lit. *žvėres*, *zvěru*, Lat. *fērus*).

Applying a quantitative criterion, the most numerous group is represented by the words formed in Greek, based on inherited elements. Because of the reasons mentioned above, one would expect that the predominance of the inherited hunting vocabulary to be higher than the newly-formed words.

DEGREE OF SEMANTIC SPECIALISATION OF THE HUNTING LEVEL

As we deal with a lexis that refers to a particular and specific domain, its lexical units have a technical, specialised, specific meaning. Nevertheless, as in the case of other technical terminologies, terms have different levels of specialisation as a result of the interferences between the common (general) language and the specialised vocabulary, on the other hand. Terms permanently tend to leave their technical area and enter the general lexicon as they are frequently used by unspecialised speakers. Moreover, terms *stricto sensu* are created in order to name new objects and concepts.

In Old Greek, unlike the general tendencies of modern languages, where there is a continuous oscillation between the two semantic phenomena of terminologization and determinologization, we can observe a more salient tendency of terminologization. Most hunting-related lexical units belong to the common lexicon and tend to have a narrower, specific meaning, as a consequence of being used in specialised contexts (treatises, technical works etc.). However, evolution of the Greek language reveals the phenomenon of determinologisation, the opposite tendency. Some hunting terms (for instance, *arkys* or some

verbs such as *thereo*, *kynēgeteo*) lose their technical meaning and get other connotative and metaphoric meanings⁶.

From a semantic point of view and their specialisation level, hunting-related terms can be classified as follows:

(i) Technical terms, very specialised, which are used only in hunting-related contexts: *arkys* ('purse-net'), *ichnos* ('track'), *thēra* ('hunting, coursing'), *agra* ('hunting, catch'), *enodia* ('net'), *pagē* ('trap'), *probolion* ('short javelin'), *kynēgetēs* ('hunter'). These terms are mainly known and used by professionals (i.e. hunters) and exhibit properties such as monoreferentiality and precision.

(ii) Intermediate terms, bordering other fields and characterised by a high degree of terminologisation, but do not belong to the hunting vocabulary. For instance, *toxon* ('bow'), *xiphos* ('sword'), *akontion* ('javelin') – known by the most part of speakers.

(iii) General terms which are salient for their high frequency, but their hunting technical meaning is context-dependent (e.g. *diktyon*, the most general term which can name any type of net and whose hunting-related meaning is activated only in specific contexts).

The criteria and we took into consideration for the above classification were: frequency, their utterance in only specialised and hunting texts, the semantic features of the terms. The analysis of the occurrences correlated to the semantic content of the hunting terms, we can conclude that lexemes with a more general meaning are more frequent than the monosemantic ones, as they also belong to the common lexicon, used by most of the speakers. On the other hand, as expected, technical and monoreferential terms are less frequent as they refer to a specific concept and they are used by a particular professional category. These terms have a context-independent meaning, as they can activate their semantic feature /+cinegetic/ in any context. Hunting vocabulary is at the interface of the common language and the specialised lexicon. We mostly deal with lexical units that belong to the general vocabulary. Nevertheless, they are used by both professional hunters and common speakers and, this is how they became context-dependent terms.

Therefore, the lexical area under discussion was only partially a specialised terminology, due to the small number of lexemes with a technical and hunting-related terms. In most cases, only the context could explain the specialised meaning of a particular word. As we have already mentioned, some lexical units belong both to the general lexicon and the technical hunting vocabulary. This is the case of frequent and common verbs and nouns, with a wide sense, whose specialised meaning is only contextual. This is how we could explain the lexico-semantic inconsistency of different hunting texts (*cf.* Xenophon's and Arrianus' treatises), as well as the semantic shifts.

SYNTAGMATIC RELATIONS

In the following, we shall refer to the syntagmatic relations established within the Greek hunting lexis, more precisely we shall discuss the syntagms made up by a verb + noun (name of instrument). As we already know, terms are autonomous and independent only in dictionaries, glossaries or list and, therefore, the syntagmatic relations play an important part in describing the meaning and the semantic stability of a particular lexical unit.

In the syntagms /verb + name of instrument/ we could identify a series of verbs which mean 'fix up' (nets or traps), 'catch' or 'fall' (into nets or traps). First of all, we noticed in the corpus that there is a certain inconsistency of using the syntagms under discussion. Authors either use the same verb, but with different names of instruments (for instance, I. Pollux: *arkys*

⁶ Răzvan Bran, *Following the Greek 'hunter'. A diachronic overview of the Gr. kynēgetēs between terminologisation and determinologisation*, in Alexe M. și Chirimbu S., *Creație și Creativitate - SINUC 2012 - Conference Proceedings*. Bucharest: 2012.

+ *teinō*, and Xenophon: *arkys* + *histēmi*) or one author uses more verbs with the same name of instrument (Xenophon: *teinō* / *histēmi* + *diktyon*). In general, the verbs meaning 'fix', that select different names of nets and traps, are characterised by the semantic feature /+horizontal orientation/ (e.g. *teinō*), /+ vertical orientation/ (e.g. *histēmi*) or 'thow on' (e.g. *emballō*). On the other hand, the verbs that refer to the catch of the game are: *emiptō* 'fall' (into nets), *haliskomai* 'be caught' and *echō* ('catch, hold' the game). The first two verbs do not refer to a specific instrument, but on the other hand *echo* is usually related to *arkys* (a type of net).

In the syntagms /verb + name of weapon/, we could identify two general verbs, belonging to common vocabulary: *chrōmai* 'use' and *ballō* 'throw'. Authors mention in their hunting treatises two other verbs *akontizō* and *proballō*, which have a very clear meaning, as they can be related to *akontion* and *probolion* – two names of weapon used by hunters. That is why it is not necessary to specify the name of the particular weapon.

Thus, the selection of one or another verb, respectively, noun is not very limited or restricted. On the other hand, the meaning of some verbs is quite general, which can engender a great deal of possible syntagms. These syntagmatic relations have consequences on the specialised meaning of the hunting terms. That is why we could call these syntagms collocations of lexico-semantic associations between a verb and a noun, which not very restricted and stable, whose meaning is context-dependent. The verbs mentioned above have a general sense and the name of instrument, which are more specialised, give their contextual technical meaning.

FINAL REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

First of all, we would like to reiterate the importance of researching more the Greek ancient hunting from a linguistic, lexical and semantic perspective, because linguistics with its investigation methods could explain many details about this field. Apart from all the information provided by the ancient hunting texts, we would say that the essential role of hunting in the Greek society and economy was reflected in the lexicon as well.

We can conclude that, in Xenophon's time, Greek hunting lexic was not a specialised terminology as it is defined by modern linguistics. After investigating the corpus, the lexical material and all the classifications presented above, we could say that this semantic field, made up mainly by common words, had a limited degree of specialisation. The most representative specialised terms were nouns (instruments), as they had a context-independent meaning. The syntagmatic relations allowed synonymy and polysemy – two semantic relations which are not permitted within specialised terminologies as they can lead to confusion.

Many lexical units had a general meaning and belonged both to the common language and the hunting lexicon. This explains the connotative meanings, synonymy and polysemy engendered by some of the hunting terms (especially verbs), for instance in the poetry. Although the aim of this paper has not been to describe and discuss the connotative senses, there are a great deal of hunting-related words which had contextual metaphoric meanings.

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