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Chassing a Daisy

Abstract

The words of a language are not a mere nomenclature. If read in the complexity they offer, they can also act as the eyes of a language; precisely those eyes through which the community of that given language perceived the world and expressed it by communicating. By complexity we intend to include in the study of a word not only its form or its signifier, but also its different meanings as semiotic variations and also what is known from myths, rites and everything that is inherited from the knowledge of peoples. This path, which is nothing more than a renewed revival of the old philological school "The Words and Things", this path of study was therefore followed in this essay dedicated to the "luledele" (daisy in Albanian), intent on correcting a lectio-fatilior in its interpretation, and bringing the Sun back to the center of the system, as already in other languages related to it.

Keywords: *Ethnolinguistics; Sociolinguistics; Albanian language; Daisy; Sun.*

Spring is here. The season is not only to be smelt, but also to be seen. One of its visible traces lies on the whitening of meadows by myriads of daisies that bloom all at once, as if a hidden god behind a tree trunk gave them permission to do so. The English have a proverb about the bond between daisies and spring: "It is spring when your foot steps on seven daisies at once".

The Albanian language offers several synonyms for this flower such as: *Lule Shqerra* (animal flower), *Lule Dele* (Sheep flower), *Bukurishte* (Beautiful), *Lule Kacidhe* (Kid's Flower or Money flower), *Lule Buke* (Bread Flower), *Lule Dhensh* (Animal flower). As may be noticed in the synonymic sequence, except for the forms, *bukurishte* and *lule buke*, both related with the aesthetic concept of the beautiful “*i bukur*” (beautiful)¹, almost all the other terms seem to be part of a Georgian sphere: *Lule Shqerra* (animal flower), *Lule Dhensh* (animal flower)², *Lule Kacidhe* (Goat or Money flower) - Tosk term related most probably with the word “*kaci*” meaning *kid* (goat under six months of age) and also *Lule Dele* (Sheep flower). It is a paradigm that seems to underline a georgic relationship between this flower and livestock. However, it is possible that the term *Lule Kacidhe* may not be related with the kid as animal, but it may refer to the term *kacidhe* as coin (money). The second hypothesis is reinforced by comparing Albanian with other Balkan languages. In Romanian for example, daisies are called *Părăluțe* or *Bănuși* (money and coins), in Bulgarian *Margaritka*, but also *Паричка* (translit: *paritska*) that also means coins (from Turkish *para*).

From a distributive point of view, referring to daisies as *Lule Dele* "Sheep flowers" has the largest diatopic spread, thus leaving other forms like *bukurishte*, *lulekacidhe* and *luledheshe* as peripherals. For this reason, we will consider the linguistic

¹ This Albanian language determinant corresponds with some synonyms of this flower in the Romanian language, such as *Floare Frumoasă* (Shq. *Lule e Bukur*; Eng. Beautiful Flower).

² In Vuthaj *Lule Dhesh*, with the loss of a nasal consonant as is normal for that area.

form "flower sheep" as the most representative in geography and use.

In this light it emerges that Albanian is exceptional with regard to other languages, which are distinguished for other meanings, other reference functions of the denomination of this flower, having nothing to do with livestock or animals. Is Albanian really an exception? In the absence of formal elements, let us address the substantive, content related elements in old and newer languages.

The scientific Latin name of this flower, part of the Asteraceae family, is *Bellis perennis* L., a name which Linæus adopted from classical *bellis –idis* (Pliny and Pseudo-Apuleius, as indicated in Genaust 2005³). Genaust would associate with Late Latin *bellus* 'beautiful', though André 1985: 35 is more wary on this score, however offering no alternative. Going further, by following a parallel ethnolinguistic research in several languages, according to ethnolinguistic criteria we will take into consideration the main myths and legends associated with this flower and the names it has.

As said before, its name in scientific Latin is *Bellis perennis*. According to one Latin legend this flower is the result of the transformation of *Bellis*, daughter of the god *Belus*, into a flower. One day while she was dancing with her fiancée, another god, the spring god madly in love with her, killed her fiancée, in front of her. The poor *Bellis*, avoiding to see the tragedy, closed her eyes and turned into a flower. But who is *Belus*, father of our flower? The *Theogony* narrates that he is one of the most ancient deities, though Herodotus' Ζεὺς Βῆλος (*Historiæ* 1. 181) might well be associated with an Afro-Asiatic *Ba'al*. Other scholars' claim relates- the name to the Indo-European root word *b^hel- "light, bright, white" (a root word that is not foreign

to Albanian, as we can mention bejkë/ belkë: white sheep or balo/ balosh: white dog). According to J. B. Trumper³, if we associate Βῆλος with the Gaulish Belenos (the old-man of the Celtic Belenos-Lugos-Maponos triad, in short the first group of the Dumézilian Indo-European Triad represented in the Greek tradition by Zeus, in the Latin one by Jupiter: the king-function, the sun and cosmic order) we might say that Belus represents the Sun itself. According to the legend, the Bellis flower must be the daughter of the Sun. Even Nordic mythology refers to this flower as daughter of the Goddess Austra, a pagan deity of Germanic origin, whose celebration coincides with the spring equinox and relates to the revival of nature. It is no coincidence that Éaster/ Éastre in Old English is related with the word “Easter”, and also our flower is part of this connection between the pagan Éaster/ Éastre and the resurrection Easter, since in French daisy is called Pâquerette, as in Catalan pasqüeta, or in some areas of German Switzerland it is called Österblume: Östare flower or Easter flower. In Romanian it is also called Floara Paștelui – Easter flower.

The association of this flower to the stars/light, is also found in Greek, where it comes up as Αστρουλάκη, Μαργαρίτα, or Λιμονόχορτο: the latter denomination evaluates as a distinguishing feature its yellow lemon color. Even In Serbian, its denomination continues to be linked to the colour and light by calling it Белка; the same as in Romanian, too, where one of its many names is Scânteioara - al. spark, spark.

Another famous legend in the North of Italy, an area influenced by Early Medieval Longobard occupation, is related with the shining of the stars. According to the legend at the dawning of time, the stars were not located in the sky but on

³ J.B. Trumper, *Some Celto-Albanian isoglosses*, Calabria 2019.

earth. And when someone tried to own them, they decided to go all the way to the sky, leaving only a part on the earth, there, in Val Sesia, transformed into flowerbeds of daisies. And this legend continues: Daisies close their petals at night so that they do not see the brightness of their divine sisters in the sky, for they miss them. The legend of the Piedmont valleys is within a botanical truth, because it is true that the flower's wreath is closed by night and opens in the morning.

This semantic reference is also offered to us in English in all its various documented historical periods, in which daisy comes out as Eye of Day, Old English *Dæges-éage*, Day's Eye, in Middle English *Dayesye*, in modern English as Daisy; all this chain of appellations in Albanian means more or less the Eye of the Day or the Eye of Light. Which brings us back to the connection of this flower to the Sun.

If we research our paradigm even further we will notice that in the same circle can be found Celtic languages as Welsh, from Middle Welsh *on-*, in which the daisy is called *Llygad y dydd*, that literally means Eye of the Day, though it has other names, too, such as *Asbygan* (a Middle Welsh Irish borrowing), or *Briallu'r dydd* (the Daylight's Primrose, from 1100, Late Ancient, early Middle Welsh). Also in Iceland this flower is again found under a name with solar reference because it is called *Solsetur* (sunset). This flower is found with the sun in her root name even in Lithuanian as *Sauluté*, that means "Sunset", a composition that is based in the term *Saul* - sun.

We are not mistaken, then, admitting that the connection of this flower to the Sun appears to be quite strong, like all the legacies inherited from pagan antiquity, in which the connection of man to nature was homogenous and very often totemic. There are reasons to believe that the legend of *Bellis*, daughter of the

god Belus (Sun) dates back a long time, since one of the varieties of Daisy, exactly the one that botany calls with the scientific term *Aster amellus* L., is called in folk French *Oeil du Christ*, the eye of Christ. It is possible that this term evolved during the period of the spread of Christianity (European evangelism) when Sun worship was replaced by the Christian Sun- Jesus Christ, often called the “Sun of Righteousness”. And, in fact, the Eye of Christ recalls much the English Daisy, Eye of the Day, or Welsh *Llygad y Dydd* mentioned above. Following the affirmations of Trumper, is very interesting to precise in this purpose that “in Welsh *Leucanthemum* spp. is *Llygad Llo* (calf’s eye): it’s not specific to calves as such but probably to the calving season around Easter”.

All this sunny symbolism about a daisy! Indo-European languages, distant or closer ones, testify the connection between the flower, the sun and light. Is it possible that only Albanian makes an exception? Is it possible that, this built system-structure with nucleus and peripheral elements, does not apply only for the Albanian language?

The geographical location of Albanian has been indeed between these other languages and connected with them. Referring to etymological studies in Albanian, observing the sun (*diell*), *Jokl*, *Çabej* and others note that the Proto-Albanian of the word *diell* (sun) must have been * *delwa* < IEW 246 **DEL-*, first thought to have been linked immediately with the ‘sun’ base (Pedersen), then taken by *Çabej*, *Pisani* and others to ‘shiny, bright’ and ‘bright colour’ base (Pokorny’s IEW 246)⁴.

In fact the root **delwa* is not strange for Albanian, if we recall the fire cresset that the highlander’s fires light on the ground for Christmas and Easter and that in Albanian are called *delina*.

⁴ E. *Çabej*, *Studime etimologjike*, Bleu III (C-D), Tiranë 2006.

According to the highlanders they are lit on the ground because of the belief that by doing this each of them gives more power to the biggest fire of the sky, also known as the sun. Delina and Diell (*Del). Furthermore we would like to draw attention to another form of the root (del) in Albanian, that is found in Dejkë, used in the Malësi e Madhe and that recalls the swift (*Apus apus* L.), seen when the spring sun arrives and winter comes to an end. It may be hypothesized that Dejkë derives from Delkë as Bejkë from Belkë.

Other traces of the Albanian protoform *delw- (< IE *DEL-) for Albanian "diell"(sun) are still to be found. This writing aims at becoming part of a wider research that through this hypothesis attempts to see the sun (Diell) in the lost memory of the Luledel, today called Luledele, and a 'brightness' (sun) image that runs throughout Europe.