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AN ETYMOLOGICAL NOTE ON GK. ὄκνος ‘SHRINKING, HESITATION’

Dedicated to the memory of my teacher Georgi T. Rikov

Abstract: The article examines the etymology of Greek ὄκνος ‘shrinking, hesitation’ and ὀκνέω ‘shrink from doing, scruple, hesitate to do something’, as proposed by G. T. Rikov, who connects them, on the one hand, with Goth. *aha* ‘mind, intelligence’, OHG *ahta* ‘intention, consideration, notice’, OE *eaht* ‘deliberation, council’, etc., and, on the other hand, with the derivatives of the Hittite stem *hatta-* ‘intelligent, wise’. On the basis of an analysis of the earliest attestations of these Greek words in Homer’s *Iliad*, we find that the original semantics of the Greek forms is ‘pondering, hesitating unwillingness or lack of readiness to undertake an action’. This supports the hypothesis of an etymological connection with the Germanic forms. The plausibility of the proposed connection with the Hittite lexemes depends on whether one accepts the phonetic change PIE **kt* > Hitt. *tt* as possible.

Keywords: etymology, ὄκνος, shrinking, hesitation, Greek, Hittite, Germanic

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