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## APOLLO – GREEK GOD

Armen Petrosyan

Apollo, who kills the serpent Python, in Indo-European context corresponds to the Indian serpent-slayer Indra. Paris-Alexandros, the killer of Achilles, seems to represent a human incarnation of Apollo, while Achilles, according to V.N. Toporov, is derived from the image of mythic serpent. Characteristically, the second name of Paris – Alexandros – etymologically coincides with the appellation of Indra *rakṣā nṛn*. On the other hand, Apollo is the closest match of another Indian god, Rudra: both are archers, whose arrows spread diseases, and also healers, gods of poetry, related to mole and mouse; both are gods of Männerbund, divine leaders of the community of young unmarried hunter-warriors; Apollo brings death to the camp of Greek-Danaans, while Rudra destroys the army of Danavas all alone (these names are etymologically related to each other); even the gods are afraid of Apollo, as well as of Rudra.

Thus, Apollo, as serpent-slayer, arrow-shooter, enemy of the Danaans, god of Männerbund, poetry, diseases and healing, god who the other gods afraid of, has Greco-Indo-Iranian roots (those languages constituted one group after the fragmentation of Proto-Indo-European), which makes the non-Greek etymologies of Apollo improbable.

The names of Troy and Ilion (Τροία, Ἴλιον/ Ἴλιος) go back to the toponyms Taruisa and Wilusa of the Hittite sources. The Trojan prince Paris, whose second name is Ἀλέξανδρος (Alexandros) has a historical prototype in the person of King Alaksandu of Wilusa, who sealed a treaty with the Hittite king Muwatalli II circa 1280 BC and thus lived for several decades before the date ascribed to the legendary Trojan War (see, e.g., Bryce 1999: 357-371; Latacz 2004: 73-100, 121-128). In the treaty of Alaksandu and Muwatalli the gods of Troy-Wilusa are evoked: the first is the thunder/ storm god of army, the name of the second is erased and the third one is Appaliuna (KUB 21.1 iv 27-28, see, e.g., Latacz 2004: 110). Alaksandu and Apaliuna have no analogues in the onomastics of ancient Anatolia. Obviously, they are the cuneiform renderings of the Greek Alexandros and Apollo (Ἀπόλλων < \*Apelyōn).

In the “Iliad” Apollo is the main defender of the Trojans and enemy of Achaeans. As Apollo Smintheus (Σμινθεύς ‘of mouse’), he is the local god of Troy. Once he helped the Trojans to build the defensive wall of Troy and his arrows spread plague to the Achaean camp in the “Iliad”. He is the most hated of the gods for Achilles (II. XXII. 15), who is killed by the arrow of Apollo (XXII. 359-360; the arrow from the bow of Paris was shot by the hand of Apollo, or he was killed by Apollo himself, or by Apollo, who took the shape of Paris, or by Paris, hidden behind the statue of Apollo). Thus, Apollo is the real killer of Achilles, as well as of his friend Patroclus and his son Neoptolemos (Losev 1957: 388-389).

Apollo is a serpent-slayer, who kills with his arrows the ‘serpent’ Python (Πύθων ὄφις – Callimach. Hymn II.100-101; Apollod. I.4.1), while Paris-Alexandros kills Achilles with the help of Apollo. Remarkably, V. N. Toporov (1986; 1990), considering the image of Achilles, concludes that it is derived from the mythological serpent, while his name represents a dialectal Greek or other

ancient Balkanic reflex of one of the variants of the Indo-European stem for ‘serpent, snake’ (cf. Gk. ἔχις, ὄφις)<sup>1</sup>.

Apollo	With his arrows	Kills ‘serpent’ Python
Paris	With Apollo’s arrow	Kills ‘serpent’ Achilles

Paris, to some extent, is the incarnation of Apollo with who he shares many common characteristics; shepherd, archer, etc (Tsivian 1999: 272-275). Paris’ sister Cassandra is also strongly tied with Apollo (she received a gift of prophecy from Apollo but rejected his love and was punished by him). She does her best trying to save Troy with her prophecies thus representing by herself the female hypostasis of Apollo, the god prophet, defender of Troy. It may be said that she is Paris-Alexandros’ namesake – she was worshiped as the goddess Alexandra in the Laconian town of Amykles (Paus. III.19.6), the famous center of the cult of Apollo<sup>2</sup>.

Ἀλέξανδρος means ‘protector of men’. Paris earned this name while still a child routed a gang of cattle-thieves. In this context Achilles’ epithet ῥηϊζήνωρ ‘destroyer of men’ is notable (Il. VII.228; XIII.324, etc). Apollo is known as the “defender of people” since the “Iliad” (Il.XX.79), while in the “Odyssey” (VII.64-66) he kills Achilles-Rhexenor’s namesake Rhexenor ‘destroyer of men’ without any reason. It can be said that on the divine level Apollo himself represented Alexandros, ‘protector of men’, i.e., this name as well as the functions corresponding to it characterized right him.

In India, the god Indra is the corresponding personage: in one of the hymns of the “Rigveda” (I.174.1), he is invoked to protect the men – *rakṣā nṛṇ*, which etymologically coincides with Alexandros (in Indo-European context: \*h<sub>2</sub>lek- & \*h<sub>2</sub>ner-). Thus, this is a formula characterizing both gods. Indra and Apollo have some other common characteristics: Indra is the adversary of the Danavas (a class of divinities), while Apollo is the enemy of the Greeks, which are called Δαναοί ‘Danaans’ (for the Danavas and Danaans see below); Indra kills the ‘serpent’ Vṛtra, leader of the Danavas, while Apollo kills the serpent Python<sup>3</sup> and the “serpentine” Achilles, the greatest hero of the Greeks.

Cuneiform Alaksandu is certainly a distorted cuneiform rendering of the Greek Alexandros, and this king of Troy, regardless of ethnicity of Trojans and ethnic composition of Troy / Wilusa, was apparently wholly or partly of Greek origin<sup>4</sup>. The question of the origin of the name Apollo is

<sup>1</sup> For the derivation of Achilles from the mythic serpent considerable arguments are adduced: demonic character of Achilles: cruelty, rage etc; chthonian origins of his ancestors; correspondence of several episodes of his biography with the fragments of the serpent-slaying myth, etc. For the Indo-European roots for ‘snake, serpent’, see Pokorny 1959, 43-45; for Gk. ἔχις, ὄφις: Beekes 2010: 489, 1134-1135.

<sup>2</sup> The name of Alexandra is attested in Mycenaean era as *a-re-ka-sa-da-ra* (My. V.659). It was used in theonymic function in Peloponnese, near old Achaean centers: apart from the cult of Cassandra-Alexandra, Alexandros was the epithet of Hera under which she was worshiped at Sicyon (Schol. Pind. Nem. IX. 30).

<sup>3</sup> Remarkably, this serpentine adversary of Apollo – Πύθων ὄφις has an etymological parallel in Indian mythology (ahi Budhnya, see Toporov 1976; Watkins 1995: 460-463).

<sup>4</sup> In pre-Achaemenian times only local community cults were known to the ancient Near East, and the personal names usually had some specific well-wishing meaning in the persons’ native language and in connection with their local cult, see Diakonoff 1984: 203, n. 135. From the Alaksandu treaty text it may be concluded that he took the throne “according

more complicated – several etymological suggestions have turnover in contemporary science (Frisk 1960: 124-125; Chantraine 1968: 98; for the Greek origin of the name, see Burkert 1975; 1985, 143-149; 1994; Nagy 1994; Kazansky 2005; for Luvian: Brown 2004; for non-Indo-European pre-Greek: Beekes 2003; for Hurrian: Blažek 2014). Based on the above observations, it seems more probable to envisage both Alaksandu and his god Apaliuna as having Greek (or close to Greek) origins. Indeed, if Apollo was not a Greek god, then how did he absorb the meaning of an alien to him Greek name of Alaksandu/ Alexandros, that made it his motto, his action plan when he was defending the Trojans (the subjects of Alaksandu), killed Rhexenor ‘destroyer of men’ and made Alexandra/ Cassandra a goddess of his circle? The Greek Alaksandu/ Alexandros, ‘protector of men’, is more likely to have Apollo as a Greek god, in a certain sense the eponym of his name, as his patron (cf. Watkins 1995: 149).

In the context of Indo-European comparative mythology, Apollo is the closest match of the Indian god Rudra: both are archers, whose arrows spread diseases, and also healers, gods of poetry, related to mole and mouse, etc (Gregoire et al. 1949: 127 seq., 148; Toporov 1977; Puhvel 1987: 134-135; by the way, mice are associated with the Trojan Apollo Smintheus, whose non-Greek origin may easier be supposed). There are other common specific characteristics of these gods: Apollo, like Rudra, is the god of Männerbund, divine leader of the community of young unmarried hunter-warriors (Greek *\*apelyā*, according to Burkert) (for Apollo and Rudra in this context, see Kershaw 2001, 187-190; 210 ff. et passim); Apollo brings death to the camp of the Greek Danaans, while Rudra destroys the army of Danavas all alone (Mahabharata XII. 166)<sup>5</sup>; even the gods are afraid of Apollo, as well as of Rudra (Kershaw 2001, 211). On the other hand, Apollo, as mentioned, as a god serpent-slayer, “protector of men” and enemy of the Danaans, corresponds with Indra.

Obviously, the image of Apollo, as serpent-slayer, arrow-shooter, enemy of the Danaans, god of Männerbund, poetry, diseases and healing, associated with the mouse, the god who the other gods afraid of, has Greco-Indo-Iranian roots (those languages constituted one group after the fragmentation of Proto-Indo-European), which makes the non-Greek etymologies improbable.

Thus, both the name and image of Apollo are, most probably, of native Greek origins. In Indo-European context Apollo’s best counterparts are the Indian god Rudra and Indra. As for the

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to his father’s word”, so probably not quite in accordance with the regular rules of succession. He might have been an adopted son or son of one of the concubines of his predecessor King Kukunu, see Latacs 2004: 117-118. Notably, Paris-Alexandros raised to adulthood by a shepherd and only then was recognized as the son of King Priam (cf. the similar legend about Cyrus, actual founder of the Achaemenid dynasty). Names of Priam (Paris’ father) and Paris are probably Luvian (Watkins 1986, 56-57), while the latter’s second name, like the names of his brothers and sisters (Hector, Deiphobos, Cassandra, etc.), is Greek. Theoretically, this could be an echo of a dynasty change.

<sup>5</sup> For the Danaans in this context, see Gindin, Tsymbursky 1995. In the “Avesta” the river Syr Darya is represented as Danu and the Scythians of Syr Daria are called Danavas. The ethnonym of the Greek Danaans, as in the latter case, may be explained as if their ancestors lived along one of the rivers called by the stem *\*Danu*, at the junction of proto-Greek and proto-Indo-Iranian areals, from the Don to the Danube (see also Sakellariou 1986). By the way, Danaya was the denomination of the Mycenaean kingdom in Peloponnese mentioned in an Egyptian inscription of the first half of the 14th century BC as *tnjw*, see Latacs 2004, 128-133, with literature. The transfer of mythological names to real objects and mythologizing real names are known ubiquitously, and the Greek Danaans certainly correspond with the Indian mythical Danavas. For the Indo-European parallels of the Danavas and Danaans, see Petrosyan 2007; 2010.

etymology of the name, in the context of the above, Burkert's interpretation seems to be the best one.

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