

UDK 78.03/787

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***TO THE ORIGIN AND SEMANTICS OF THE TERM “HUSLY”***

*The Article deals with the study of genesis and importance of the aforementioned term, which is used for denoting neck-similar (cervical) and citro similar Chordophones of Psalms type. The question about the time of appearance of this term in written sources for denoting citro similar pagan Slavs tool has been studied. Its late origin as alternative name of the lyre-shaped ancient ritual instrument that was common after the baptism of Rus as well has been established. Its name could be preserved in the instrumental terms (and the popular vocabulary) of Ukraine and the Caucasus as a result of inter-contacts of proto-Slovenians with Scythian and Sarmatian world.*

*Keywords: Gusli, etymology, and semantics*

The etymology of the term “husla” (“husly”), which is used for denoting citro similar and cervical Chordophones of Slavic nations is not studied enough, and its origin and original meaning is interpreted ambiguously by the researches. To understand the genesis and dating period of its appearance in Slavic languages for denoting stringed instruments, Indo-European and Indo-Iranian parallels justified by the researches of common Indo-European origins of vocabulary stored in many nations of Europe and Asia should be involved. Regarding the time of occurrence of the term “gusla” the Russian organologist-medievalist R. Halayska believes that the Muscovites, “perceiving a variety of many-stringed musical instrument (helmet-type “husly”, of the Tatars, “kyslye” of the Cheremis, “hyuslye” of the Chuvash – *I.Z.*) from the converted peoples in Orthodoxy (non-Slavic – *I.Z.*) brought it with the name “husly” in Moscow lands” [5, p. 30-31]. This historical event dates from about the XII century. The eloquent in this regard is the fact that in the Russian lexicon, as in the Slavic group of languages in general, the term “husly” (“hously”) was polysemantic and

could mark either any stringed musical instrument [13, p. 405; 17, p. 70] or the concepts that were far from music. In the “Interpretation Dictionary” by V. Dal a word “huseľnyk” designated stacked in rows firewood [6, p. 409], and in the dictionary by Bpokhauz and Ephron an article about “huseľni mountains”, shore rock deposits of natural origin is contained [2, p. 923]. It should be noted that in ancient societies the names to a lot of instruments were given either by the number of strings (dichord, trichord, five-stringed), or similarity to outline of the respected totem or divinity (e.g. barbad - breast of a duck, a bird that was of great sacred importance in ancient myth-religious beliefs). Lack of ancient etymology of the term “husla” indicates that in the Slavic world it is of a more recent origin.

An interesting hypothesis of the term *husli* used to be introduced by O. Famintsyn [16, p. 237-239]. The scientist noted that the Finnish word “kantele” (with the root “kant”) can come from the German word “gans” (goose); according to the Academician Shyfner, the Finnish name of the kantele instrument (with a meaning “goose”) could have a more archaic Scandinavian-Icelandic source. The original etymology of the Slavic word “housle”, “husly”, which is preserved in the West Slavic languages, can be correlated with the word “goose”<sup>1</sup>.

O. Famintsyn explained his assumption with the fact that an instrument called “husly” known in the Lusatian Slavs Wendy (according to the article of the anonymous German author in 1788 of musical instruments Slavs). It was made from sternum of waterfowl, tying a piece of wood to it as a resonator and straining over her three strings (*d, a, e*) that were tuned by

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□ Let’s recall that a waterfowl (goose, swan) was a totem bird of many nations of the Iranian language family - the Scythians, Sarmatian or the nations in the ethno genesis of whose there is a powerful ancient Iranian layer - Hunt, Kazakhs and others.

pins located underneath. The Slavs of Bohemia also made a stringed instrument from goose sternum, tightening it over a few strings and producing sound through a bond [16, p. 238]. Its sound was like *helhotinnya* of the waterfowl. This information is correlated with simultaneous descriptions of the Asian *kobyza* of P.S. Pallas, who similarly described the sound of *kobyza* that reminded him a cry of a Swan) [9, p. 42].

To the opinion of O. Famintsyn the hypothesis of the origin of the word “husly” from “goose” is unconvincing. Perhaps, Famintsyn was wrong because there are Asian materials indicating that goose/swan was a totem bird of many tribes and nations of Asia, in the ethnogenesis of which there was an Indo-Iranian cultural layer. The image of the waterfowl (goose-swan) was embodied not only in the form of the instrument and its sound (i.e. *kobyza*), but also in the clothes and name of the epic cycles of Central Asian folk singers, that is, served as the basis of a single sacred complex associated with the bird-totem. In the Slavic languages the most ancient word “husly” meant “strings” or simply a “stringed instrument” [17, p. 70]. However, this term can be interpreted in more details through the ancient Slavic verb “buzz” to the sound of the strings. Thus, this “the object that is buzzing, that is, strings, was named as “hysl”, and a stringed instrument as a collection of stringed instrument strings - husly [16, p. 182, 238-239].

In our opinion, the etymology of the Slavic word “husly” shall be found in the Indo-European lexical sources. A Polish linguist Franciszek Slavskii believes that “the etymology of the Polish word *gęśle* reaches the *ancient Indo-European* onomatopoeic root” (my italics – I.Z.) [15, p. 62]. In the opinion of F. Slavsky, it comes from the verb *gundti*, which could be formed in the time of the Indo-European community. In the later Balto-Slavic transformation the word *gunsti* can be found, and in the ancient

Slavonic - *gosti* with a nasal pronunciation of vowel “o”. “Both words ... lead ... to the Polish form with soft consonants “t”, “i”, “s” - *goćs* [15, p. 62]. The same root is at the heart of the Polish words *gusta* (magic) and *guslarz* (magician). However, in the ancient Polish written sources the term *gęsle* to denote the first musical instrument happens only in the late XIV century, which may indicate its *borrowing from the Eastern Slavic world* (my italics – I.Z.) [15, p. 62]. Thus, the term “*husly*” in the Slavic languages for describing the already existing pagan stringed instrument could appear later.

In this sense the information that is found in written Slavonic sources of the second half of the IX century is important. In particular, in the ancient Slavonic translation of the Holy Scripture of the Eastern Slavonic Church, instead of the Latin word “*cythara*” and the Greek one “*kithara*” the words “**gusti**” and “**gudu**” are contained (*gusti, gudu*) [15, p. 62], but not “*husly*”, that confirms the thesis of R. Halayska about the *later Russians’ borrowing as the name and the instrument of a triangular shape from the peoples of the Volga region during the period of their Christianity*. This may indicate the fact that the instruments of the type of *husly* of Finno-Ugric and Tatar peoples represented in the church books of the century of Moscow realm.

For a long time the fact that the prophetic Boyan in the “Lay of Igor’s Warfare” *played husly* was considered as generally recognized among the researchers. However, in this literary monument of the XVIIth century *there was not a specific reference to the type and name of the instrument Boyan*. The term “*husla*” in its text is not mentioned “Boyan is not ten falcons, fraternity (fingers – I.Z.) in a herd of swans (strings – I.Z.) *puschashe*, but own *veschya persti* on he *alive strings voskladashe*; they themselves by the Prince Rokotahu”. There is not any name of the instrument and in the later

source – “Zadonschina” (XIV century), which states: “Let’s recollect the time of the first years, let’s praise veschaho Boyan, horazna hudtsa”. Let’s compare it with the word “hudu” in the definition of the Greek term “cittern” in the first Slavonic translation of the Scriptures of the IXth century.: “in Kiev that veschyy Boyan voskladsha horaznaya svoy persty on *alive strings*, poyashe by the Russian Prince of Glory” (my italics – I.Z.) [7, p. 11]. As it comes from the aforementioned quotes, an anonymous author of “Zadonshchina” remembering Boyan, used the information contained in the “Word”, and this could mean only one thing: he had no idea how the prophetic singer’s instrument was named, the name of which for ideological reasons (input of Christianity) was ignored by the author of the “Words”. About himself the author “Zadonshchina” wrote already *as about a huslyar*: “Az zhe pomyanu rezantsa Sofonyya, and voshvalyu pesnemy and *huselnymy buynymy slovesy* sego Grand Prince Dmitry Ivanovich ...” (my italics – I.Z.) [7, p. 25]. Let’s pay attention to the fact that in the aforementioned it deals with *strings as living creatures that may indicate the remnants of ancient pagan cults*. They are compared to the swans, which may indicate archaic pagan ritual functions of the instrument, which played a *prophetic* Boyan (that is, the magician) – a singer of ancient times, who, praising the acts of bygone days, used the “old words” (i.e. pagan epic legends - I.Z.). Many ancient peoples a waterfowl (swan, goose, and a duck) was considered a link between the world of gods, humans and ancestors, and the strings were the mediator, a sacred voice of the instrument, combining these worlds together. A swan was a totem ancestor and in Turkic peoples<sup>2</sup>. The name of the sister of the legendary founders of Kyiv - Princess Lybid<sup>3</sup>,

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<sup>2</sup>Chinhizhan also brought is sort from ancestors-swan [9, p. 38-44].

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may indicate such ideas in the environment of the Polyansky Slavs, and play on the ancient wrists of the XIIth century of the stories of pagan ritual rusaly, where women are represented in ritual robes embroidered with wide long (to the floor) sleeves, symbolizing the wings of a bird-swan.

In the context of pagan ritual functions of the instrument the interesting thing is an excerpt from a folk song recorded in the north of Russia, where the archaic features of the Russian epic of the Kiev cycle were preserved quite well: “Oh, the husly was floating in the blue sea, yes, and floated to the steep shore”, certifying the use of this instrument in the rites of worship to water, making a sacrifice to the water element. Let’s recall that Polyansky Prince Kyi, according to Constantine Bahryanorodny made rites of worship to water in the boat and, perhaps, to the sounds of husly. Novgorod Slavs made sacrifices to the lake Ilmen to the sounds of pagan string instrument – lyre-type husly that archaeologists still find during excavations of ancient Novgorod and the genesis of which is related to the instruments of peoples living in the territory of ancient Ukraine at 1 thousand B.C. (Before Christ). *Herein the main reason for ignoring the ancient Slavic pagan name of the instrument lies, as it was a ritual and was used by wise men and kobnykams in pagan rituals.*

Thus it becomes apparent that clearly delineated pagan semantics of the chordophone, on which Boyan played, prompted the author of the “Word” to avoid “pagan” name of the instrument of the prophetic singer as incompatible with the approval of a new Christian ideology. Perhaps that name could hide lyre-type chordophone (such as lyre-type husly), who could

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<sup>1</sup>Name of the sister of the founders of Kyiv (Sambatasa) Kyi, Schek and Horeb (Kuary, Melti, Horeana of the Armenian legend) appears only in the Slavic version of the legend described in “Tale of Bygone Years” (XI century). In the Armenian legend, set out in the “History of Taron” Ioanes Mamikonian (VII century.) there is not such a character.

inherit the older name “pantur” / “bandur” / “bandura” that deliberately was avoided in the Christian sources in Russia. For studying the primitive pagan name of the Boyan instrument you should refer to the instrumental terms of the genetically related peoples in the vocabulary of which ancient ritual terms could be preserved for denoting strings. A particular attention shall be paid to the “Scythian Five-String”, first mentioned by Julius Polydeuces (Pollux), who in the Scythian language was called “pandzhtor”. A linguist V. Abayev defined the chronological limits of the appearance of the terms “pandzhtor / fandyr / Pandur” as the Scythian-Sarmatian period in the history of Ukraine [1, p. 243]. In the ancient Iranian world the lexical elements “pandzhtor” / “fandyr” / “pandur” (based on the concept of “five-string”) designated the lyre-type instruments and Scythian angular harps with a horizontal resonator, whose shape resembled a bird waterfowl [11, p. 94]<sup>4</sup>. As a result of long inter-contacts and interferences of ancient Iranian and early Slav tribes (in terms of multi-ethnic Slavic archaeological culture), then - Antes tribes (whose genesis the historians associated with ancient Iranian world), the term ‘pandzhtor’, having lost its original semantics eventually adapted to the Slav grounds (as the lyre-type chordophone did) to denote a stringed instrument. And in the Slavic environment it acquired a later form of the noun in feminine – “bandur”<sup>5</sup>. Over time, the strengthening

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<sup>4</sup>Perhaps the mention of one of the types of the instruments from which comes the ethnonym “bandura” (by V. Abayev) is inserted in Kiev epic cycle “On Dobrynya Nikitich”, recorded in Russia from the narrator T. G. Ryabinin: “The lads Dobrynyushky Mykytyntsi at that difficult time had a rupturing bow and in the blunt end there were huselyshka yarovchaty (my italics - I.Z.).” [12]. The aforementioned quotation describes a musical instrument (“huselyshka yarovchaty”), consisting of a stick-strain-holder (bow) and resonant body made of sycamore - tree that does not grow in northern latitudes. In fact, here there is the description of the Scythian-Sarmatian design harp (Fig. 67). Taking into account the Iran-Slavic inter-contacts in the territory of Kiev Rus, the description may cover also the Slavic five-string instrument inherited from the Scythian-Sarmatian world.

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position of Muscovy kingdom (end of XIV-XV centuries), the ethnic name of the many-stringed instrument (pantur-banduras) and subsequently continued to exist and operate in the territory of ancient Ukraine (especially in folk, folk-professional environment). But because it was the name of a pagan instrument during the Christianization of Eastern Slavic South and North (Kyiv, Novgorod, Muscovy) it could be deliberately eliminated from the vocabulary of church and had no chance to get into the Christian written sources (although pagan lyre-type instrument already called “husla” existed for some time after the conquest of the Novgorod Republic by the Grand Duchy of Moscow, as evidenced by the relict forms of lyre-type chordophone, the same type of instruments of the XIII the century from the territory of Ukraine (Zvenigorodski gusla).

During the review of the semantics of the term “husla” an interesting thing is also a preservation of the words gusla, *guslele* in the Lithuanian language in the sense of “lived” as part of the Anthropogenic or Zoological body from which the strings were made [8, p. 111]. However, another term – “kantele” is used in the Lithuanian language for the definition of the citro-type instrument, the “invention” of which the Finnish-Hungarian epic tradition associates with the cultural hero of the Finnish epic *Vyaynemyaynenom*<sup>6</sup>. Perhaps that is why on the Slavic soil the term “husly” in the definition of the instrument is used only in the plural as the collective term of “string”, “a lot of strings/a lot of Psalter Tolkovy cores” (let’s compare “yako strings, syrech cores” according to the text of the Psalter Tolkovy of the XIIth century [4, p. 219]. It is interesting that in the ancient

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<sup>6</sup>The ancient reek civilization, having taken both the term itself, the instrument from the Iran world, could also facilitate its penetration in the Western Europe.

<sup>7</sup>The instrument was made from the jaws of sacred fish - pike Ning.



Ukrainian dictionaries of Baroque – “Lexis” of Lawrence (Zyzaniya 1596) and “Lexicon Slovenorosky” of Pamva Berynda (1627) – the medieval symbols of strings-cores for the definition of gusel disappear.

Let’s also pay attention to the fact that in the medieval Slavic sources “husli” is always mentioned along with “Psalms”. For example, in the Glossary of Psalter Tolkovy the term “husly” is interpreted as “psalter nine-stringed”. There is an interesting circumstance for us that even in the *XIIth century the term “husla” for the definition of the instrument demanded explanations that may indicate that in the traditional vocabulary it had another name*. O. Famintsyn brought his etymology of the verb “husty”, which was used in respect of the sound of the strings, and interpreted the word “husl” as a collective term when describing any stringed musical instrument [16, p. 238-239].

Equally revealing interpretation of the term “husl” appears in dictionaries- lexicons of the Ukrainian Baroque era. It is used in the singular for denoting the harp (“garphi”) and cytry, and not in the plural (“gusli” in the sense of “strings”) – in the “Lexis” of L. Zyzaniya and “Lexicon” of P. Berynda. In P. Berynda it is stated the following: “Hudets - harpist, one who plays the harp” (! – I.Z.) [10, p. 27, 28]. And further: “Husla – violin”, i.e. stringed instrument [10, p. 28]. This once again confirms the thesis of the artificial later origin of the term for denoting a many-stringed instrument. This tendency is observed in the later folk instruments of Slavs, including the fact that “husli” in the South Slavs was called not plucked string, but bow instruments. Perhaps for denoting the ancient pagan Slavs instrument the Christian written sources used the name of a separate element of its design - strings (from here comes the name of the instrument in the plural - husla, i.e. strings).

On the basis of the analysis of the chronicle sources, hagiographic, secular literature and ancient East glossaries one can submit a generalized description of the Eastern Slav husli of the XIIth century. cursory mention of it implies that it could be a “10-stringed psalter-type instrument with core strings, on which played clash” [4, p. 218]. Archeological sources of the XIth – the beginning of the XIIIth centuries certify the existence of only two types of instruments – lyre-type husli of vertical holding (with a hole in the upper part - the Old Slavonic pagan) and citro type instruments of horizontal holding without a hole (of kantele type, kyusle of Christianized peoples). In the manuscripts of the State Public Library of St. Petersburg (Russian Federation) (SPb., Q, XVI, 7 l. Pp. 7) it shall be read as follows: “Every vessel mousykyysky body narrates, in sosud tympan, in zhe **psalter**, in hudebny, in **husly**...” [4, p. 218]. This range of instruments presents very important information for us about the *crucial delineation with ancient Rus written of two different citro type instruments – psalter and husli*. The earliest mention of their differentiation we find in the “Word of Daniel the Exile” (XII century), where the instrument psalter appears next to the husli: “Rise, my glory, rise, Psalter and harp” [3, p. 244]. It is important that the *Western-European term “Psalter” did not mix with the term “husly”* which may indicate that already existing at the time the *differences* between these instruments - in form, by means of detention (and possibly play), the number of strings and so on. This assumption receives confirmation on the Polish lexical material. In the Psalms Pulyavskomu, psalom 56 (XV century) it is stated as follows: “Wstań, chwało moja, wstayń, żołtarzu i goszły, wstanę naswytanju” [18, p. 137]. In the ancient Western-Slav sources the term “zholtarzh” was designated as psalterium (Psalms) of a triangular shape [19, p. 74-76]. If in these texts the names of the psalter instruments / zholtazha

and husly are used as a metaphor in the context of praise, great, fame, singing songs, in quite another, *ritual function*, the Psalter near the husly is mentioned in the later eastern Slavic chronicles of the XIV century: “But asche plyasty or hudtsy or in, who ihrets pozovets na ihrische or to *which zborische ydolskoe* for a while, to vsi tamo tekut raduyusya”. And further: “... da edyn ot nych bayashe, a drougi in the *psalter*, and drougie in *husly* ...” (my italics – I.Z.) [14, p. 979].

Analysis of the ancient written and lexical sources shows that ***the term “husla” from the XXth century could affect both the instrument (without differentiation of its type - citra, lute, skrypytsya) and its strings (husla = cores = strings), and the process of playing an instrument (huslyty = to play). This certifies the later origin of the term “husli” used to refer to the medieval instruments.***

However, the ancient name of the instrument preserved in Ukraine, in the Caucasus and in the Iranian world (pandzhtor / Bandura) was carefully avoided because of its affiliation with the pagan culture of the world as being opposed to strengthening Russia Christian ideology Eastern Rite churches. Therefore, in written sources of the Kyiv, Novgorod Russia, and later Muscovy these instruments appeared under the later general name – “husli” (that is, stringed).

Hence, a medieval term “husly” has a very wide range of values, which are reduced to a single invariant - stringed musical instrument. Under this general term in the age of Christianization of Rus the chronicles hid the ancient name of the pagan ritual instrument (which the modern specialists in instruments conventionally define as the term of “lyre-type husla”), which remained almost till the XIIIth-XIVth centuries in the instrument kit of already converted to Christianity Slavs. This is indicated by the massive

destruction of pagan instruments, in ancient Novgorod. Later, approximately from the end of the XVth century, already in the territory of Muscovy, which subjugated Novgorod Russia, these instruments cease to exist as such that lost the ideological-ritual function. Their separate design features for some time are stored in another type of citres - vertically detained husla without a hole in the top - board / navicular. Eventually, under the influence of alien ethnic traditions the lyre-type husla of vertical holding completely disappear from iconographic sources as the instruments of the pagan environment, with which the Christian clergy was fighting. Gradually they begin to be put aside by the same type of the instruments of the horizontal holding of Finno-Ugric and Turkic-Tatar ethnic groups called "husli" ("kyuslye"), the cultivation of which is particularly stimulated by the missionary activity of the Eastern Christian church and the images of which are in the miniatures of the East religious illuminated books, for the purpose of conversion of these ethnic groups to the Eastern rite the church actively supported.

The origin and semantics of the term "husly" in the definition of the citro-type instruments evidence of its later genesis. This term that has a wide range of values, replaced the name of a more ancient lyre-type instrument (pantur-pandzhtor-banduras), which was one of the most important attributes of ancient Slavic pagan rites. In official sources the name of Kiev Rus was deliberately replaced by the general concept *husly*. As a result of the Christianization of Kiev, Novgorod Russia, and later Muscovy this term started to be used for the definition of stringed instruments.

This once again confirms the thesis of the artificial later origin of the term to denote a many-stringed instrument. This tendency is observed in the later Slavic folk instruments ("husly" in the South Slavs was called not plucked string, but bow instruments). It is probable that the definition of an

ancient pagan instrument of the Slavs the Christian written sources used the name of a separate element of its design - strings, hence comes the name of the instrument in the plural – husla that is strings.

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