



Greek μέλω ‘dance and sing’ and Slavic **mlǔcati* ‘be silent’*

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ABSTRACT

It is argued that Greek μέλω ‘to celebrate a deity (with singing and dancing)’ originally meant ‘to appease a deity’ and is cognate with Slavic **mlǔcati* ‘to be(-come) silent’ < *‘to be appeased’.

KEYWORDS: Greek, Slavic, etymology, antiquity, worship

1. Gr. μέλω (H.+) ‘celebrate with song and dance, sing and dance’ is usually regarded as etymologically unclear, cf. Frisk (1960-1972: 204): «Ohne Etymologie», Beekes (2010: 928 s.v.): «No etymology»¹. Time and again the old and intuitively understandable idea that it is somehow related to **mel-* seen in μέλος ‘limb; song’ keeps reappearing. It is accepted e.g. by Diehl (1940: 92-93), who assumes a rather abstract basic meaning ‘division, structure’ (‘Gliederung’) to cover all aspects of Greek μέλω/μολπω-, and by Szemerényi (1954: 169-171), who proposes a basic root **mel-* ‘solemn recital’ enlarged with various elements, whose functions are notoriously undefinable, leading to **mel-p-*, **mel-d^b-* and **mel-g^(h)-*. Stokes (1901: 191) (quoted approvingly

* I would like to thank M. Schwartz (Berkeley), N. Sims-Williams (London), D. Schwemer (Würzburg), Th. Mendes Venturott (Würzburg) and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful remarks. All faults are of my own responsibility. Unless indicated otherwise, English translations of Greek texts are taken from the Loeb series (Harvard University Press).

¹ The root does not seem to have been found in Mycenaean (so far). It has been proposed that *mo-ro-qa* (KN C 954, Xd 7586, PY An 519, Aq 64, Jo 438) represents an earlier form of μολπή (cf. AURA JORRO 1985-1993: s.v.), but it is most likely the title of an official, «perhaps *mo(i)ro-kkwaš* ‘possessor of a share’» (cf. KILLEN 2024: 2.991) and it would show an unexpected spelling, if /*molkw^wā*/ were intended.

by Pedersen 1909: 1.94) took OIr. *-molor* ‘praise’ and cognates such as *molad* ‘praise (n.)’, Welsh *mawl* ‘id.’ to go back to a root **melp-* (with an early Celtic sound change **-lp- > -l-*), assuming a direct connection with the Greek forms («*molad* ‘preis’ (Cymr. *moli*) cognate with Gr. *μολπή*»²), but preforms such as **mōlo-* seem to be more likely³. The connection is still quoted in Chantraine *et al.* (2009: 658), who also points to PIE **mel-*, Hitt. *mald-* ‘to recite’ etc.⁴

2. Various authors have argued that ‘to sing’ is probably not the primary meaning of Greek *μέλω* and its derivatives. In most Homeric instances, *μελπ-* seems to evoke both singing and dancing, and in some cases singing does not seem to be necessarily implied⁵. As Diehl (1940: 92) discusses, in *Il.* 7.241 it is likely that Hektor’s ironic remark to Aias refers primarily to the image of dancing⁶:

- (1) *Il.* 7.241 οἶδα δ’ ἐνὶ σταδίῃ δηῖω μέλπεσθαι Ἄρηϊ.
 ‘And I know how in close fight to **tread the measure** of furious Ares’.

Maybe singing is not excluded here, but it is certainly not the only meaning. The same applies to the chorus in honour of Artemis:

- (2) *Il.* 16.181
 ...τῆς δὲ κρατὺς Ἀργεῖφόντης
 ἠράσατ’, ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδὼν μετὰ μέλπομένησιν
 ἐν χορῶ Ἀρτέμιδος χρυσηλακάτου κελαδεινῆς.

² Taken up e.g. by BOISACQ (1916: 625), and PAGLIARO (1951: 13): «sicura connessione con irl. *molaim* ‘lode’, *molad* ‘lode, elogio’ (cf. BOISACQ, p. 625)».

³ Cf. MATASOVIĆ (2009: 275) who tentatively assumes a connection with PIE **meld^b-* via a root noun **mōld^b-s > *mōls* from which the root form **mōl-* would have been generalized. THURNEYSSEN (1946: 95) assumes a geminate as the outcome of **lp-* in *-tella/talla* ‘there is room for’, Lith. *telpiù, tilpti* ‘to find room’; *coll* ‘violation (of a law)’, Lat. *culpa*.

⁴ Cf. on **meld^b-* also KÖLLIGAN (2018).

⁵ On the discussion about the meaning(s) of *μελπ-* in antiquity and Byzantine scholarship cf. BIELOHLAWEK (1922).

⁶ Cf. also DIGGLE (2021: 911 s.v.) referring to this passage: «(fig., of a warrior) dance —W.DAT. for Ares (i.e. fight in battle)».

Diehl *loc. cit.* takes this passage as evidence that μέλπ- can exclude singing («den Tänzerinnen im Chor der Artemis»), while Murray & Wyatt stress this aspect in their translation:

- (3) “With her [*sc.* Eumele] the strong Argeiphontes became enamored when his eyes had seen her among the **singing** maidens in the dancing floor of Artemis, huntress of the golden arrows and the echoing chase”.

Singing may or may not be involved in μόλπη in the scene in *Od.* 6.101 where it refers to Nausikaa’s and her friends’ ball play. As in *Il.* 7.241 it is clear that singing alone cannot be meant:

- (4) *Od.* 6.101 σφαίρη ται δ’ ἄρ’ ἔπαιζον, ἀπὸ κρήδεμνα βαλοῦσαι·
τῆσι δὲ Νηυσικαά λευκώλενος ἤρχετο **μόλπης**.
‘[They] fell to playing at ball, and whitearmed Nausikaa was leader in the **song**’.
(Murray & Dimock [Loeb])

Murray & Dimock add in a note: «They sing while tossing the ball to one another», which by being an addition to the text betrays its uncertainty. Schadewaldt (1958: 78) translates ‘Spiel’: «Und es führte unter ihnen die weißarmige Nausikaa das **Spiel** an».

The same ambiguity or polysemy seems to apply in *Od.* 4.19 and *Il.* 18.606 where μέλπω/μόλπη refer to the artistic presentation of both an αοιδός and two κυβιστητήρες:

- (5) *Il.* 18. 604-606/*Od.* 4.17-19 μετὰ δέ σφιν ἐμέλπετο θεῖος αοιδὸς
φορμίζων, δοιῶ δὲ κυβιστητήρε κατ’ αὐτούς,
μόλπης ἐξάρχοντος [v.l. -εσ] ἐδίνεον κατὰ μέσσους.
‘And among them a divine minstrel was **singing** to the lyre, and two tumblers whirled up and down through the midst of them, leading the **dance**.’; Schadewaldt: “unter ihnen **spielte** der göttliche Sängler und rührte die Leier, und zwei Springtänzer führten ihnen das **Spiel** an und drehten sich mitten unter ihnen’.

Μέλπηθρον ‘toy, plaything’ in *Il.* 13.233 surely is not meant to evoke the idea of singing dogs. Poseidon says to Idomeneus:

- (6) *Il.* 13.232 “Ἰδομενεῦ, μὴ κείνος ἀνὴρ ἔτι νοστήσειεν
 ἐκ Τροίης, ἀλλ’ αὖθι κυνῶν μέλπηθρα γένοιτο
 ὅς τις ἐπ’ ἤματι τῶδε ἐκὼν μεθήσῃ μάχεσθαι.
 ‘Idomeneus, never may that man any more return home from the land
 of Troy, but here may he become the **sport** of dogs, whoever in this day’s
 course of his own will shrinks from fight’.

Μέλπηθρον has mostly been interpreted as showing a semantic shift from ‘ball-dance’ or ‘ball-game’ to ‘plaything’ in general⁷. By contrast, Beck in the *LfggrE* starts from the meaning ‘singing/song with choral dance’ and states «thus the meaning should be *occasions* or *instruments for choral performance*, the picture being that [of] a group of snarling, scuffling dogs struggling over the parts (-α) of the corpse». In any case, in both interpretations ‘singing/song’ does not fit here, be it that one takes this as evidence for an earlier meaning (retained in the derivative), or as a development from one of the two senses just mentioned.

3. In his detailed discussion of this root, Pagliaro (1951: 13-19) argues that the earliest meaning we can grasp is ‘to celebrate, honour a divinity’⁸ and that singing and dancing were not part of the original lexical meaning of *μελπ-*, but were included in it by conversational implicature, due to the fact that ‘to *μελπ-*’ often enough or in most cases implied singing and/or dancing. A passage that is usually understood to show this meaning⁹ is *Il.* 1.430-487 in which Odysseus returns

⁷ Cf. the references given in the *LfggrE* (SNELL 1979-2010) s.v.

⁸ Cf. also SZEMERÉNYI (1954: 169), quoting Pagliaro, «the earliest meaning» of *μέλπω* is «‘to celebrate (in an eulogy)’», «But the middle form came to mean ‘a combined action of singing and dancing’ performed in honour of the divinity (Iliad), while later (in the Odyssey) it acquired the meaning ‘sing for (others to) dance’ (16 f.)». Also *LSJ* s.v. put ‘celebrate with song and dance’ first in the list of meanings.

⁹ Cf. PAPE (1914: s.v.): «durch Gesang und Tanz im Chore feiern, Ἐκάεργον, *Il.* 1, 474», *LSJ* s.v., MONTANARI (2014: 1308 s.v.): «celebrate with music, song, and dance *Il.* 1.474 ...», BAILLY (1935: 1247): «chanter, célébrer par des chants, *Il.* 1, 474», DIGGLE (2021: 911): «celebrate with song and dance – a god *Il.*, MID. sing and dance *Il.* hHom.; (fig., of a warrior) dance – W. DAT. for *Ares* (i.e. fight in battle) *Il.*».

Chryseis to her father «and after **propitiating** Apollo with prayer and sacrifice, returns with his ship to the Achaean camp near Troy» (Kirk *et al.* 1985: 98; my emphasis)¹⁰:

(7) *Il.* 1.472-474 οἱ δὲ πανημέριοι μολπῇ θεὸν ἰλάσκοντο

καλὸν ἀείδοντες παιήονα κοῦροι Ἀχαιῶν

μέλποντες ἐκάεργον· ὃ δὲ φρένα τέρπετ' ἀκούων.

‘So the whole day long the sons of the Achaeans **sought to appease the god with song**, singing the beautiful paean¹¹, **hymning** the god who works from afar; and his heart was glad as he heard’.

Schadewaldt:

‘Und den ganzen Tag **stimmten sie gnädig** den Gott mit Gesang und Tanz, Singend den schönen Heilsgesang, die Jünglinge der Achäer, **Feiernd** den Ferntreffer; der aber freute sich im Sinn, wie er es hörte¹²

A trivial interpretation of these lines might assume that nearly the same notion is repeated three times in a row, μολπῇ ‘with song (and dance)’, ἀείδοντες ‘singing’, and μέλποντες ‘singing (and dancing)’¹³; as an alternative, one might understand μέλποντες ἐκάεργον as taking up μολπῇ θεὸν ἰλάσκοντο in a tiny ring composition. This could imply that μέλω equals μολπῇ ἰλάσκομαι:

¹⁰ Cf. LATACZ (2009: 147): ‘Chryseis is returned to her father, and in addition Apollo is appeased with a ritual of atonement’ (‘Chryseis wird ihrem Vater zurückgegeben und Apollon zusätzlich mit einem Sühneritual besänftigt’). Sacrifice as a means of propitiation is of course found in many traditions, cf. e.g. AVŚ 19.3.4d *áva devānāṃ yaja hédo agne* ‘O Agni, remove the anger of the gods by (this) sacrifice’ (‘Pacify (*ava-yaj*), O Agni, the wrath (*bédas*) of the gods’ [WHITNEY 1905: 901]; MENDES VENTUROT, p.c.).

¹¹ The paean here is, as LATACZ (2009: 156) states, a ‘song of salvation, intended to appease Apollo and drive away the plague’ («Heilslied, das die Besänftigung Apollons und die Vertreibung der Seuche bewirken soll»).

¹² SCHEIBNER (1972): «Den ganzen Tag suchten sie den Gott mit Lied und Tanz zu versöhnen; schön sangen die Jünglinge der Achäer den Paian und feierten mit dem Lied den rettenden Gott. Der ergötzte sich, wie er es hörte». PAGLIARO (1951: 13) refers to the «uso omerico transitivo di A 474 μέλποντες ἐκάεργον dove assai difficilmente si potrà pensare ad un significato diverso da quello di ‘elogiare, celebrare’».

¹³ This was one of the reasons for Aristarchus to reject the last line as it seemed to form an ἄκυρος δισσολογία, cf. PAGLIARO (1951: 13-14); KIRK *et al.* (1985: 103) understand this as «a case of typically Homeric cumulation».

- (8) μέλω ‘to sing and dance (in order to appease)’ = μόλις ἰλάσκομαι ‘to try to appease with song and dance’

If so, μέλω- may originally have referred to the appeasement of a divinity by song and dance (usually accompanying a sacrifice) and gone through a semantic shift from ‘to soothe, to try to appease a deity with song and dance’ to ‘to sing/dance/play to a deity’ to ‘to sing/dance/play (to any audience or without an audience)’¹⁴.

4. A connection of μέλω- with the family of the Slavic words meaning ‘to be/to become silent’ has for obvious reasons not been considered so far: OCS *mlъčati*, well attested in the mss. Zographensis, Marianus, Assemanianus, Savvina kniga, Suprasliensis, etc. (cf. Sadnik-Aitzetmüller & Aitzetmüller 1955: s.v.), translates inter alia Greek σιωπάω and φιμώω, cf. e.g. from the Codex Marianus¹⁵

- (9) Matth. 26.63 ἰϛ̅ же **мл̅чаше**
 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς **ἔσιώπα**
 ‘But Jesus **remained silent**’.

¹⁴ Cf. also PAGLIARO (1951: 17) on *Il.* 7.241 and *Il.* 16.182 quoted supra: «In questi due casi sembra avere già prevalso il significato di danza sebbene nulla esclude che nell’uno e nell’altro caso alla danza si potesse accompagnare anche il canto. Comunque, si tratta sempre di una danza in onore di divinità, in cui il significato primario di ‘celebrazione’ è ancora presente». A comparable nexus of form and function can be seen in the Sumerian *diġir-ša₃-dab-ba*-incantations, i.e., ‘incantations for appeasing an angry god’, cf. LAMBERT (1974), JACQUES (2015), and GABBAY (2023) on *emesal*-prayers designed to calm the angry god(s) and on the *gala*-priest singing them, and the *er₂-ša₃-huġ-ġa₂* ‘laments for appeasing the heart (of a divinity)’ (‘Herzberuhigungsklagen’), cf. MAUL (1988), MAUL (2013), according to whom *ersahunga* were probably recited, not sung, but at least sometimes accompanied by a drum, p. 43: «Es scheint, daß »Herzberuhigungsklagen«, anders als andere Emesal-Gebete, nicht gesungen, sondern gesprochen wurden. Zumindest bisweilen wurde die Rezitation dieser Gebete, etwa durch den »(Klang) der bronzenen Kesselpauke (*lilis siparri*)« musikalisch untermalt».

¹⁵ With the usual confusion of *yers* common in this codex, cf. POLIVANOVA (2023: 95 [§ 155]): «взьми (48), взьми (53), взьми (56), вьзатъ (57); cf. also по томъ (8) and по томъ (9), and many others».

(10) Matth. 22.12 ι γλῶσσοῦ μου δροῦθε καὶ ὡς εἰσῆλθε εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ οὐκ ἔχετε ἐπιμύθη.

καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἐταίρε, πῶς εἰσῆλθες ὧδε μὴ ἔχων ἔνδυμα γάμου; ὁ δὲ ἐφίμωθη.

‘«My friend», he said to him, «how did you gain entrance here without a wedding garment?» The man was **speechless**’.

Mlъčati has been connected with OHG *mol(a)wēn* ‘tabere, to rot’¹⁶, Lith. *mūlkis* ‘dumbhead’, Latv. *mulkis*¹⁷, and/or with Gr. μάλακός and Arm. *metk* ‘soft’¹⁸. All these proposals have not found general acceptance, however, and e.g. *LIV*² 434 and Derksen (2008: 340) list **melk*^(u)- as limited to Slavic.

The Slavic stem formation in *-(j)a-* is taken by *LIV*² s.v. as going back to a stative form **mlk^(u)-eh₁-*. It is hypothesized here that the meaning ‘to be(-come) silent’ may hail from an earlier meaning ‘to be(-come) content, peaceful’ implying ‘not to protest, be(-come) quiet’ which may relate to the meaning assumed for Greek μέλω ‘to appease’:

(11) **melk^u-e/o-* ‘to appease’ > Gr. μέλω-ε/ο- ‘to appease by sacrifice, song & dance’

**mlk^u-eh₁-* ‘to be appeased’ > Sl. **mlъč-a-* ‘to be silent’

If, as per *LIV*² s.v., OCS (*iz-*, *u-*)-*mlъče* ‘became silent’ goes back to a root aorist, it might continue the original meaning and valency

¹⁶ Cf. TRAUTMANN (1923: 184); phonologically this is impossible, cf. also SPECHT (1934: 33): «Fraglich [...] auch wegen der Bedeutung». *EWAbd* 6.533f. takes the verb to be a derivative of a noun **mol(a)wi* ‘dust’ (cf. the adj. MHG *molwic* ‘dusty’, NHG *mollig*), in turn based on Gmc. **malwja-* (cf. ON *molva*, Goth. *ga-malwjan* ‘to grind’), PIE **melh₂-* ‘to grind’. This invalidates for this specific pair Slav. **mlk^u-* ‘to be silent’: OHG *mol(a)wēn* Trubačev’s otherwise interesting discussion of roots (or derivatives based on the same root) seemingly showing both meanings (Trubačev 1964), with intermediate meanings such as ‘to crumble, disappear, suffer’. In some cases this comes at the cost of assuming apparently functionless root extensions, e.g., Slav. **tajati* ‘to melt’ next to Lat. *tacere* ‘to be silent’. The best example seems to be Lith. *tilti/tilti* ‘to become silent’ beside OCS *tolēti, tolējo* ‘to rot, decay’ (Russ. *tleť, tleju*, etc.), which according to *ALEW* s.v. Lith. *tilti/tilti* are «formal leichter als semantisch zu vermitteln».

¹⁷ Cf. SADNIK-AITZETMÜLLER & AITZETMÜLLER (1955: 269-270), referring to Scheffelowitz.

¹⁸ Cf. TRUBAČEV (1974-2014: 21[1994]: 102-104).

of the root, which would seem to conflict with the Greek transitive present. Since there are no indications that Greek has innovated the active inflexion as an oppositional form to an earlier middle, i.e., mid. ‘to be(-come) silent’ > act. ‘to silence s.o.’¹⁹, it may be better to assume that the meaning of the intransitive forms was generalized in Slavic, probably before the root-final stop become an affricate, i.e., **mlbk-ē-* ‘to be silent’, whence OCS °*mlbk-nq-ti*, Pol. *milk-nq-ć* ‘to become silent’²⁰.

5. Apart from the general observation that ‘singing’ can be used as a means of appeasement, ranging from the lullaby to the deceitful song of the Sirens, encapsulated in forms such as Greek θέλω ‘enchant, bewitch, deceive’, Lat. *incantare* (calqued in Germ. as *einsingen*²¹), the following two examples are meant to show that the semantic shift assumed above between ‘to appease, to soothe’ (whence ‘to be soothed, to be silent’) and ‘to sing (in order to appease)’ may also be found in historical language data:

5.1. ON *gæla*, cognate with Goth. *goljan* ‘to greet’²², and probably OFr. *gēla* ‘to hunt, pursue’²³, means ‘to comfort, soothe, appease’²⁴, e.g. in

¹⁹ Rather the opposite development has been assumed cf. fn. 8.

²⁰ Even under the assumption of an original “labile” root ‘to appease/be appeased’ the (near) zero marking of the OCS root aorist and the Gr. thematic present would seem to conflict.

²¹ Cf. in Goethe’s *Erlkönig*: *Meine Töchter führen den nächtlichen Reihn / Und wiegen und tanzen und singen dich ein* ‘My daughters lead the ring-dance at night, they will cradle you, dance with you and sing you to sleep.’, in the *Faust* I.1506f. *Er schläft! So recht, ihr luft’gen, zarten Jungen! / Ihr habt ihn treulich eingesungen!* ‘He is asleep. Well done, you airy, tender boys, you have faithfully sung him to sleep.’

²² Lk 10:4 *ni mannahun bi wig goljaiþ*: καὶ μηδένα κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ἀσπάσησθε ‘Do not greet anyone on the road.’

²³ Cf. POKORNY (1959: s.v. *ghel*): «*gēla* ‘jagen’ eigentlich ‘das Wild durch Geschrei aufstöbern» (‘to hunt’, actually ‘to track down game by shouting’). Cf. in the Brokmer Law 217/218 *ef hir en mon flivth inna tsyureka and tha fivnd hine thevon gelath, al thet hi thenna bire nedwere deth, thet lidse gresfelle* ‘If a man flees into a church and his enemies pursue him there, whatever he does in self-defence will go unpunished’.

²⁴ Cf. CLEASBY *et al.* (1874: s.v. *gela*).

(12) Knýtlinga saga ch. 26 *Kunnum vér nú stórleika Knúts, at ekki mun hann goela mega með settarboðum*

‘«We know all about Knut’s pride», said the earl, «There’s no point in trying to **calm** him down with offers of peace»’.

(Pálsson & Edwards 1986: 53)

Gmc. **gōljan-* is built on **galan-* ‘to shout, sing, chant’, cf. ON *gala* ‘to sing’, OE, OHG *galan* ‘to sing, enchant’ (quasi **g^hol-e/o*: **g^hōl-īe/o*)²⁵. So both chronologically and derivationally, the meaning ‘to soothe, appease’ seems to be secondary to ‘to shout, sing’, maybe via ‘call out to s.o., greet, address friendly’²⁶. The form *goida* on the fibula of Frei-Laubersheim (Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany, ca. 520-60), probably to be read as *golida*, attested in the line **þk·dap·ina:goida**, is interpreted by Düwel & Nedoma (2023: 78) as meaning ‘gladdened’ (‘erfreute’) rather than ‘greeted’²⁷. This could be an intermediate meaning between ‘to greet, address (in a friendly manner)’ and ‘to soothe, to calm’.

5.2. Khwarezmian *fn-* ‘to sing’²⁸ is connected by Cheung (2007: 87) with the Iranian root **fraiH-* which he glosses as ‘to rejoice, ?to atone, [med.] please’, assuming (with a question mark) a semantic shift via ‘to praise, please with a song’ for the Khwarezmian form. It would correspond to the nasal present seen in Ved. *prīṇāti* ‘satisfies, makes rejoice’ and YAv. *ā-frīnāmi* ‘I wish someone something [wünsche jmdm. etw. an]’, showing regular loss of /r/ after labial, as argued by Schwartz (2005).

²⁵ E.g., Ps. Lamb. 57.6 *seo ne geherþ stemne galendra* ‘quæ non exaudiet vocem *incantantium*’ (cf. BOSWORTH 2014: s.v.), cf. KROONEN (2013: 164, 185). Beside these forms, there is Gmc. **gullōn-* ‘to shout, sing’ in Nw. *golla*, according to KROONEN (2013: 194) from **g^hl-néh₂*, serving as iterative to **galan-*, and the basis for the secondary strong verb **gellan-*.

²⁶ The root (not listed in *LIV²*) is probably **g^hel-*, cf. Arm. *gelgetem* ‘to sing beautifully, to quiver, to vibrate’, *gelgetank* ‘modulation, melody, trill, shake, quaver’ (probably showing a contamination of **g^hel-* and **uel-* ‘to turn’, Arm. *gelowm*), Russ. *galit* ‘to smile’, *na-galit* ‘to shout, sing’, *galit’sja* ‘to mock’, Russ. (dial.) *gal’ f.* ‘fun, laughter’ (cf. VASMER 1976: 254). Further connections are uncertain, e.g., Gr. χελιδών ‘swallow’ and κίχλη ‘thrush’ beside Dor. κίχλη and Hesych. ἴχλα κίχλα; ἴσπλα κίχλα.

²⁷ «>Dich erfreute Dathina [mit der Fibel]< oder >Dich, Dathina, erfreute [er, mit der Fibel]<». For other interpretations cf. e.g. LOOIJENGA (2003: 241) (‘greeted’), and KROGMANN (1978: 96), who reads *goida* and translates ‘[hat] die Zauber- oder Weiheformel gesprochen’ (‘spoke (the magic formula)’), comparing OE *gēn*, *gæn* ‘to lament, groan’.

²⁸ Cf. MACKENZIE (1971: 87).

However one reconstructs the original meaning of **preiH-*, it seems unquestionable that the meaning of the Khwarezmian form has developed out of an earlier meaning in the sphere of ‘to please, satisfy, appease’²⁹.

Taken together, these examples might thus show that a semantic shift is possible in both directions:

- (13) ‘sing’ → ‘appease’ : Gmc. **galan-/gōljan-* → ON *gæla*
 ‘please, appease’ → ‘sing’ : Iran. **frinā-* → Khwar. *fn-*

Greek *μελπ/μολπ-* would fit the second pattern, while the Slavic forms developed from ‘to be appeased’ into ‘to acquiesce, to be silent’³⁰.

More speculative would be the assumption that the apparently homophonous root **melk^u-*, reconstructed on the basis of *inter alia* OAv. *vī.mərəṇcaitē* (Y. 31.1) ‘destroy’, Ved. *marcāya-* ‘to damage’ and Gr. *βλάπτω* ‘to make stumble, damage’, could actually be the same root, if this meant ‘to impede’ originally³¹, cf. e.g. *Il.* 15.489 *Διόθεν βλαφθέντα βέλεμνα* ‘(Teucus’) shafts impeded by Zeus’, with a semantic shift from ‘to impede divine anger’ > ‘to appease’, etc. In Slavic, ‘to be hindered, inhibited (*sc.* in speaking)’ might have developed into ‘to be silent’. However, the distribution of meanings over stem-formations, e.g. Gr. **melk^u-e/o-* ‘to appease → to sing’ vs. **mlk^u-je/o-* ‘to impede’, would require further justification.

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²⁹ E.g. ‘to make oneself dear to someone > to satisfy, please s.o.’ or ‘to bring about a state of closeness to a person or god (the latter by ritual means, as a hymn) > appease, please > (finally) bring about a relationship of dearness’ (M. Schwartz *per litt. electr.* 25.01.2024) based on the idea that the verbal root **preiH-* goes back to the preposition **pre(h₂)i-* ‘close by’ (Lith. *priē*, Lat. *prae*, etc.).

³⁰ Conversely to *μελπ-*, Gr. *μείλια* (H.+) ‘propitiations, atonement, penalty’ and *μείλιχος* ‘soft, mild, friendly’ might belong to *μέλος* ‘song’, i.e., **mel-no-* → **mel-n-iō-*, cf. *μείλιχος* referring to utterances: Hes. *Th.* 84 *τοῦ δ’ ἔπε’ ἐκ στόματος ῥεῖ μείλιχα* ‘His words flow soothingly from his mouth’, Theogn. 365 *γλώσση δὲ τὸ μείλιχον αἰὲν ἐπέστω* ‘Let there always be sweetness on your tongue’.

³¹ On the meaning(s) of *βλάπτω* cf. BEEK (2017).

Abbreviations

- ALEW = HOCK (2020).
 EWAbd = LLOYD *et al.* (1988-).
 LIV² = RIX (2001).
 LSJ = LIDDELL *et al.* (1996).

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