

THE PRE-CELTIC „DAKSĀ“ (WATER) IN BOHEMIAN PLACE-NAMES

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Doksy or *Doksany* appear four times as place-names in Bohemia (*Dux* in northern Bohemia also belongs to this group) which can be explained neither from Czech nor German. All of these places are situated next to ponds or rivers: Hirschberg in northern Bohemia (*Doksy* in Czech) is on the Hirschberger pond; *Doksany* is on the right bank of the lower Eger. One should also mention here the *Dosse*, a tributary of the Havel in northern Germany, once the home of the small Slav tribe of the *Doxani*. Another line of evidence can be pursued back to the Balkan Peninsula; in the Second Century B. C., a river in what is now Albania was called the „Ardaxanos“. One ancient source provides an explanation of this word: a Hesychast commentary of the Fifth Century A. D. suggests that *daxa* was the common term for „sea“ in the Epirus.

The Czech term for *Dux*, *Duchcov*, was based on a misunderstanding arising from the fact that the old *Doksany* had become unintelligible.

A tribe in the northern Epirus was called *Dexaroi* in the middle of the First Century B. C., which can be interpreted as signifying „people on the sea“. An etymological explanation of the word has yet to be found, but the ablaut *e : o* and the means of formation indicate that it is of Indo-European origin. Since *o* became *a* in these names while in Celtic the *o* was retained and since they spread beyond the once Celtic areas, one may conclude that a pre-Celtic term for „water“ is involved here. The word belongs to a group of Indo-European river names prevalent in southern Germany and reflecting the traces of smaller Indo-European pre-Celtic tribes which in a very remote age had established a connection from the Baltic to the Adriatic and Illyria. They were presumably tributary to the Celts and later to the Germanic tribes, but still managed to preserve their language over a longer period of time. In the Second Century A. D., Ptolemaeus mentioned a number of them, and their names were known to the migrating Slavs as late as the Sixth Century. Due to the retention of „ks“, which would not have been possible in this form if there had been an earlier assimilation into Slavic, one may safely exclude any hypothesis on the presence of Slavic inhabitants in the Sudeten lands prior to the Sixth Century A. D.