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## Laconian βοῦα 'Band of Boys' as a Collective Noun

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### Abstract

In his lexicon, Hesychius of Alexandria gives the following Laconian gloss: βοῦα-ἀγέλη παίδων. <Λάκωνες> ("boŭa: a band of young boys. Laconians"). This term is confirmed by epigraphical data from Sparta, see especially βο(υ)ἄγός, later βο(υ)ἄγός m. 'leader of a young boys' band at Sparta' (IG V.1.257; 283; 292; etc.). The author explains the registered lemma from etymological and morphological points of view, accepting A. J. van Windekens's etymology according to which the Laconian term βοῦα f. is related to the Lithuanian *gauja* f. 'flock, pack, herd, bunch, band, gang'. She reconstructs the Indo-European *nomen collectivum* \*gʷóǵǵā f. 'herd, pack, band', originally 'herd of cows, cattle' (← IE. \*gʷóǵus f./m. 'cow'), adding other reflexes taken from Latin and Indo-Aryan and Balto-Slavic languages, e.g. Latv. *gauja* f. 'crowd'; Skt. (Pāṇini) *gávyā* f. coll. 'cow-herd'; Vedic *gávyam*, *gavyám* n. coll. 'herd of cows'; Oriya *gāba* 'cattle', also 'a cow'; and so on.

### Keywords

Ancient Greek; animals; collectives; etymology; Laconian dialect

## 1. Introduction

Hesychius of Alexandria wrote a lexicon of literary, rare or dialectal words before the end of the fifth century AD. He registered many Old Laconian and Late Laconian terms. Three of them are connected with the Spartan education of young boys:

1.1. βουῖα· ἀγέλη παίδων. <Λάκωνες> (HAL β-865; Latte 1953: p. 336; Cunningham 2018: p. 453) “*boûa*: a band of boys. Laconians”.

1.2. βουαγόρ· ἀγελάρχης, ὁ τῆς ἀγέλης ἄρχων παῖς. Λάκωνες (HAL β-867; Latte 1953: p. 336; Cunningham 2018: p. 453) “*bouagór*: leader of a flock or herd; boy-leader of a band of boys. Laconians”.

1.3. συμβουάδ<δ>ει· ὑπερμαχεῖ. Λάκωνες (HAL σ-2307; Hansen 2005: p. 370) “*sumbouád-ei*: [he] fights on behalf of [his *boûa*]. Laconians”.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that these lemmas are related to each other. The term βουαγόρ represents a Late Laconian form, demonstrating the rhotacism of -ς in the final position (Lazzeroni 2006: p. 85).<sup>2</sup> The agent noun in question has also been attested many times in some epigraphical texts from Laconia in four clearly related forms: βουαγός, βοαγός, βουαγόρ and βοαγόρ (*IG* V.1.257.1; 283; 292.6; 294.1; 305.6; 307.4; 312.4; 523; see Mitchell 1984: pp. 131, 133; Adrados 1994: p. 736; Liddell & Scott 1996: p. 323; Montanari 2003: p. 415).

Below I quote one of the Spartan inscriptions of the second century AD (*IG* V.1.307; Schwyzer 1923: p. 34; Buck 1955: p. 271; Pisani 1973: p. 103; Bartoněk 2015: pp. 134–135):

Κλέανδρον | ὁ καὶ Μῆνιρ | Καλλιστράτω | βουαγόρ ἐπὶ | πατρονόμω | Γοργίππω τῷ <Γοργίππω> | νικά'αρ μῶ'αν Ἄρτέ | μιτι Βωρσέα ἀνέση | κε

“Kleandros, called also Menis, Kallistratos’ son, leader of young boys’ band, offered for Artemis Ortheia, having won in singing (in a musical conquest) in the time of performing office of *patronomos* by Gorgippos, the son of Gorgippos” (my own translation; cf. Kaczyńska 2014: p. 66).<sup>3</sup>

- 1 Many dictionaries (e.g. Frisk 1960: p. 255; Chantraine 1968: p. 188; Liddell & Scott 1996: p. 1677) record the Hesychian gloss συμβουῖαι· συνωμόται (Schmidt 1862: p. 95), however, a new edition of the Hesychius’ lexicon gives a different reading: †συμβόται†· συνωμόται (HAL σ-2306; Hansen 2005: p. 369).
- 2 Numerous Laconian glosses, registered in the lexicon by Hesychius of Alexandria (5th c. AD), demonstrate the Late Laconian rhotacism, e.g. [1] Lac. ἀκκόρ· ἀσκός. Λάκωνες (HAL α-2434; Latte 1953: p. 87; Cunningham 2018: p. 115), cf. Gk. Hom. ἀσκός m. ‘skin, hide’, especially ‘wineskin’; [2] Lac. βιώρ· ἴσως, σχεδόν. Λάκωνες (HAL β-645; Latte 1953: p. 328; Cunningham 2018: p. 442) < Gk. Doric \*βίωρως, cf. Gk. Attic ἴσως adv. ‘equally, in like manner’; [3] Lac. καλλίαρ· πίθηκος, παρὰ Λάκωσι (HAL κ-469; Latte 1966: p. 401), cf. Gk. Att. καλλίας m. ‘tame ape’; [4] Lac. πάσορ· πάθος. Λάκωνες (HAL π-1062; Hansen 2005: p. 50), cf. Gk. Att. πάθος m. ‘experience; misfortune, calamity; state, condition; emotion, passion’; [5] Lac. πίσσορ· πίθος. Λάκωνες (HAL π-2362; Hansen 2005: p. 115), cf. Gk. Hom. πίθος m. ‘large wine-jar’; [6] Lac. σίαόρ· θίασος. Λάκωνες (HAL σ-565; Hansen 2005: p. 286), see Gk. Att. θίασος m. ‘bacchic revel, rout; religious guild, confraternity; company, troop’; [7] Lac. σίορ· θεός. Λάκωνες (HAL σ-705; Hansen 2005: p. 294) < Old Laconian σίός m. ‘god’ (Bartoněk 2009: p. 200), cf. Gk. Hom. θεός m. ‘god, deity’; [8] Lac. τίρ· τίς. Λάκωνες (HAL τ-989; Hansen & Cunningham 2009: p. 53), cf. Gk. Hom. τίς ‘who?’.
- 3 The English translation given by Antonín Bartoněk (2015: p. 135, No. 103) runs as follows: “Kleandros and Menis, son of Kallistratos, the commander of the band of boys under the leadership of Gorgippos, son of Gorgippos, a victor in singing [“in Muse”], dedicated to Artemis Ortheia”.

Two inscriptional forms, βουαγός and βουαγός, preserve final -ς and therefore are archaic or Old Laconian, whereas two other ones, namely βουαγός (βουαγός), have an innovative character and belong to the Late Laconian dialect. From the morphological point of view the Laconian appellative βου(υ)αγός, Late Laconian βου(υ)αγός m. ‘leader of a band of boys in Sparta’ represents a compound formation, containing the specific (probably local) appellative βουᾶ f. ‘band of boys’ (attested only in the Hesychian lexicon) in the first part and the agent noun αγός m. ‘leader, chief’ (Liddell & Scott 1996: p. 14; Montanari 2003: p. 62) in the second one.

In my article I would like to explain the origin and etymology of the mysterious Laconian term βουᾶ f. ‘band of the Spartan boys’, synonymic to the well known Ancient Greek appellative ἀγέλη, Doric ἀγέλα f. ‘herd, flock (of horses, cows, pigs or birds); shoal (of fish)’, also ‘a band in which boys were trained (in Crete and Sparta)’ (Willets 1969: p. 162; Davaras 1989: p. 2; Link 1994: p. 23).

## 2. An overview of existing explanations of Lac. βουᾶ f. ‘band of boys’

Four different etymologies have been proposed for the Laconian term in question so far. I present them below in the chronological order.

The first explanation was proposed by Bernhard Laum (1924: p. 11), who assumed that the term Laconian βουᾶ, denoting a kind of the competition for the Spartan boys, goes back to \*βουῶᾶ<sup>4</sup> < \*βουσοᾶ<sup>5</sup> and finally to the Proto-Greek archetype \*βου-σοῶᾶ f. ‘driving away cattle’, cf. Gk. σεύω ‘to hunt, chase; drive away; hurry away’ (Liddell & Scott 1996: pp. 1591–1592) < IE. \*k<sup>w</sup>̥<sub>1</sub>yeu- ‘sich in Bewegung setzen’ (Pokorny 1959: p. 539; Rix 2001: pp. 394–395).<sup>6</sup> This derivation was regarded earlier as impossible by Friedrich Bechtel (1923: pp. 368–369), as the geminate -σσ- cannot be lost in Laconian. Accepting Laum’s etymology, Paula Währmann reaches an alternative conclusion that Lac. βουᾶ may represent “ein Hyperarchaismus” (see Kretschmer & Währmann & Kroll & Vetter 1929: p. 242). Pierre Chantraine connects the Laconian term in question with Gk. βοῦς ‘cow’, but following Bechtel’s position he ignores Laum’s explanation. Finally he says as follows: “Un rapport avec βοῦς est plausible, mais par quelle dérivation?” (Chantraine 1968: p. 188). Also Beekes rejects this explanation on the basis of a phonological premise (“original σσ would not have disappeared [in Laconian]”).

The second etymology was suggested by Albrecht von Blumenthal (1930: p. 9). In his opinion, Lac. βουᾶ is an Illyrian word, related to Gk. φυή, Dor. φυά f. ‘growth, stature;

4 The term βουῶᾶ ‘a group of young people’ in the *Etymologicum Magnum* (208.6; 391.19G) represents a corrected form by Hemsterhuis, cf. Adrados (1994: p. 746, s.v. βουσοᾶ). According to Mitchell (1984: p. 132), βουῶᾶ “may be a mistake for βουᾶ rather than from βουσοᾶ”.

5 An artificial form βουσοᾶ f. ‘flock, herd, children’s group in Sparta / grey, agrupación infantil en Esparta’, created on a wrong etymology, is introduced to the fourth volume of *Diccionario griego-español* (Adrados 1994: p. 746, s.v.).

6 See also the Ancient Greek causative verb σοέω (as if from IE. \*k<sup>w</sup>̥<sub>1</sub>yeu-*éiō*), cf. OInd. *cyāváyati* vb. caus. ‘to cause to move, shake, agitate’ (Monier-Williams 1999: p. 403).

substance', also 'prime of age'. This etymology is commonly rejected by linguists for semantic reasons, cf. "semantisch unbefriedigend" (Frisk 1960: p. 255); "hypothèse en l'air qui ne va pas pour le sens" (Chantraine 1968: p. 188); "This is semantically improbable" (Beekes 2010: p. 229).

According to Arthur James Beattie, Lac. βούα f. 'band of boys' is related to Gk. βοή f. 'a loud battle-cry', as the Homeric phrase βοὴν ἀγαθός was "used frequently of the Spartan Menelaus in the Iliad (II 408 etc.);" (Mitchell 1984: p. 132, quotes Beattie's opinion as a personal communication). The third explanation is nothing more than a guess.

The fourth etymology, not mentioned in Beekes' dictionary, was suggested by Albert Joris van Windekens (1986: p. 48), who following Chantraine in connecting Lac. βούα with Gk. βούς proved that the above-mentioned connexion is indirect ("rapport n'est qu'*indirect*"). In his opinion, the Late Laconian term βούα f. 'band of boys' is closely related to Lithuanian *gaujà* f. 'flock, pack, herd, bunch, band, gang' and goes back to an Indo-European protoform derived from IE. *\*gʷōus* m./f. 'cow' with the original meaning 'herd, horde / troupeau, horde'.<sup>7</sup> He correctly stresses that the suggested relationship is perfect from the semantic point of view ("La concordance sémantique est complète"; Windekens 1986: p. 48).

Our short overview of existing explanations of Lac. βούα clearly demonstrates that the three former etymologies should be rejected for semantic, phonological or formal reasons, whereas the fourth explanation, though probably requires some additional comments, seems highly plausible.

### 3. A new interpretation of Lac. βούα as a *nomen collectivum*

None of the researchers have noticed that the Ancient Greek word βούα f. 'band of boys', attested in the Laconian dialect, may represent a collective form. The comparison of the Laconian word in question with Lith. *gaujà* f. 'flock, pack, herd, bunch, band, gang' allows to put a new hypothesis, according to which both terms are reflexes of an Indo-European collective noun, derived from the oblique root *\*gʷou-* (nom. sg. *\*gʷōus*) m./f. 'cow' by means of the "collective" suffix *\*-iā* (< PIE. *\*-ieh<sub>2</sub>*). There are many instances demonstrating a high productivity of this suffix in the Indo-European languages, including Ancient Greek, e.g.

3.1. Gk. Att. φράτριᾶ, dial. (in Chios and Tenos) φάτριᾶ f. coll. 'brotherhood; people of kindred race, tribe, clan' (Liddell & Scott 1996: p. 1953); Lith. *brotija* f. 'circle of the most faithful friends' (with the progressive dissimilation of *r - r > r - ø*); Old Slovenian *bratria*, Old Serbian *bratnja*, Old Russian *братня* f. coll. 'brotherhood', Old Polish *bratrze* f. coll. 'brotherhood, brothers' (< Proto-Slavic *\*bratnja* f. coll. 'brotherhood'); Toch. A *pratri*

7 The Indo-European archetype *\*gʷōiǵ*, which van Windekens reconstructs, cannot be accepted. Such a protoform could only represent a dual form, cf. Gk. Hom. ὄσσε du. 'two eyes' < PIE. *\*h<sub>3</sub>ekʷiǵ* 'id.', cf. Lith. *aki* du. 'two eyes', Pol. *oczy* pl. 'eyes' (< PSI. *\*oǵ* du. 'two eyes'). The dual form is completely doubtful in the case of a collective name with the meaning 'herd of cows, cattle'.

'brothers' < IE. *\*bhrātriyā* f. coll. 'brotherhood' (Pokorny 1959: p. 164; Witczak 2016: pp. 126–130) < PIE. *\*b<sup>h</sup>reh<sub>2</sub>-tr-ieh<sub>2</sub>* (Derksen 2008: p. 60; Matasović 2014: p. 145).

Accepting the proposed derivation of Lac. βούα f. 'band of boys' from IE. *\*g<sup>u</sup>ou* 'cow' (as suggested by P. Chantraine and A. J. van Windekens) we should reconstruct the Indo-European collective noun *\*g<sup>u</sup>oujā* f. 'herd, pack, band', originally 'a herd of cows, cattle'. Moreover, we are able to indicate some further reflexes of the original collective formation. Firstly, the Lithuanian word *gauja* f. (4 AP) 'flock, pack, herd, bunch, band, gang / troupeau, horde' has a close equivalent in Latvian *gauja* f. 'crowd, a lot of (people); multitude' (Fraenkel 1962: p. 140; Derksen 2015: p. 166). Wojciech Smoczyński derives the East Baltic appellatives in questions from the verbal root *\*gau-* 'to obtain, receive' attested in Baltic: Lith. *gauti* 'to receive, obtain', Latv. *gaūt* 'to catch, try to obtain, receive', OPrus. *pogaūt* 'to receive' (Smoczyński 2007: p. 164). Rick Derksen quotes two different derivations of Lith. *gauja*: the first follows Smoczyński's explanation, the second treats Latv. *gauja* as a "cognate with the word for 'cow' (→ Latv. *gūovs*)" (Derksen 2015: p. 116). In my opinion, the latter etymology is semantically better founded than the former one. Why? The East Baltic forms cannot be separated from the Sanskrit collective noun *gāvya* f. 'a cow-herd' (Monier-Williams 1999: p. 351), which is registered by Pāṇini's work (IV 2.50).

I am convinced that the Baltic words, as well as the Laconian term βούα and OInd. *gāvya*, go back to the Indo-European protoform *\*g<sup>u</sup>oujā* f., which represents a collective noun (*nomen collectivum*) with the original meaning 'cattle, herd of cows' and is etymologically motivated by the Indo-European nominal root *\*g<sup>u</sup>ou-* f./m. 'cow'. The Baltic and Greek languages demonstrate the following semantic change: 'herd of cows, cattle' (an original meaning attested in Sanskrit) > 'flock, herd' (in Lithuanian) > 'pack or crowd of animals' (in Lithuanian only) > 'crowd of people, band, gang' (in both East Baltic languages) > 'band of young boys' (in Laconian). The above-mentioned development may be additionally confirmed by the Modern Greek material. It cannot be excluded that the intermediate meaning 'crowd of people' (registered both in Latvian and Lithuanian) appears to be preserved in the name of Bova (Gk. Βούα), denoting the "Zentrum der griechischen Dörfer in Kalabrien" (Rohlf's 1964: p. 91). If the suggested connection is correct, then my hypothesis on the collective character of the Greek, Sanskrit and Baltic forms finds additional confirmation.

It is worth emphasizing that Sanskrit *gāvya* f. 'a cow-herd' is not an isolated formation in Indo-Aryan. The collective noun *gāvya* (also *gavyām*) n. 'cattle, herd of cows' has been attested in some hymns of RigVeda (RV I 140.13; V 34.8; VII 18.7; IX 62.23) (Monier-Williams 1999: p. 351), as well as in modern Indo-Aryan languages, e.g. Oriya *gāba* 'cattle', also 'a cow' as the effect of a singularization of the old collective form (Turner 1966: p. 219). Collective formations (of neuter gender) ending with *\*-jom* seem to be parallel to these in *\*-jā* (of feminine gender), as it is demonstrated by two cognate formations, well attested in the Indo-European protolanguage: *\*bhrātrīā* f. coll. 'brotherhood' and *\*bhrātrjom* n. coll. 'id.'.

3.2. The latter archetype is reflected by OInd. *bhrātryam* n. 'brotherhood, fraternity' (Monier-Williams 1999: p. 770); Russ. dial. *братъ-тя* n. coll., BRus. *братрия* n., Ukr.

браття n. 'brotherhood, brothers' (< PSl. East. \*bratŕje n. coll. 'brotherhood', earlier \*bratŕje) and perhaps even by Toch. A *pratri* 'brothers' (Witczak 2016: p. 129).

The lexical data, mentioned earlier (see 3.1), clearly demonstrate that the former archetype is firmly attested in Greek, Baltic, Slavic (and probably in Tocharian). In other words, the Indo-Aryan forms for 'cattle, herd of cows' (e.g. OInd. *gávyam*, *gavyám* n., Oriya *gāba*) are evidently related to the feminines (with a collective meaning), attested in Greek (Lac. βούα), Indo-Aryan (Skt. *gávyā*) and Baltic (Lith. *gaujà*, Latv. *gauja*).

#### 4. The phonetic development of IE. \*g<sup>h</sup>óǵiā to Lac. βούα

The semantic development of IE. \*g<sup>h</sup>óǵiā f. 'herd of cows, cattle' to Lac. βούα f. 'band of boys' is explained in section 3. Here I discuss the phonetic development of IE. \*g<sup>h</sup>óǵiā in Ancient Greek.

Generally, it is possible to suggest that IE. \*g<sup>h</sup>óǵiā f. yields Common Greek \*βόφιā. The internal digamma \*ǵ is lost in most Ancient Greek dialects, including Laconian, e.g. Late Lac. Κλέανδρορ (< Proto-Greek \*Κλέφανδρορ). The secondary form \*βόιā develops regularly to Doric Greek βοιā and further to βόā in the Laconian dialect, cf. Late Lac. Βωρσέα (< Old Lac. Φωρθείαι, cf. Gk. Att. Ὀρθεία dat. sg.). The loss of glides \*ǵ (Gk. ǵ) and \*ǵ (Gk. ι) in the internal (especially intervocalic) position is perfectly attested in Laconian (Mitchell 1984: pp. 658, 710).

In my opinion, the development of βόā to Late Laconian βούα completely agrees with the common change of o > ου in numerous Modern Greek dialects. The long vowel ω [ɔ:], which alternates with ου in Late Laconian (Lazzeroni 2006: pp. 86–87), is usually rendered as ου [u] in Tsakonian, the modern continuation of the Laconian dialect of Ancient Greek (Liosis 2014: p. 447), e.g. Tsak. γρούσα f. 'tongue' < Lac. γλώσσα f. 'id.'; Tsak. ούρα ['ura] f. 'hour' < Lac. ὥρα; Tsak. καού [ka'u] 'to call, ask invite' < Lac. καλώ; Tsak. καού(ρ) [ka'u(r)] adv. 'well' < Late Lac. \*καλῶρ 'id.' (Witczak 2015: p. 82). Also the short vowel o [ɔ] in the neighbourhood of a labial stop commonly gives ου [u] in Tsakonian, e.g. Tsak. τ'ούμα ['thuma] n. 'mouth' vs. Anc. Gk., Mod. Gk. στόμα n. 'id.'; Tsak. πούα ['pua] m. 'foot' vs. Mod. Gk. πόδι n. 'id.'. It is highly probable that Late Laconian βούα represents an earlier form βόā. It is worth emphasizing that the Laconian inscriptions demonstrate not only Late Laconian βουᾶγῶρ (or βουᾶγός), but also an earlier variant βουᾶγός.

#### 5. Remarks on the accentuation of Lac. βούα

Some researchers suggest that the circumflex attested in the Hesychian lemma βούα is false. It is a common opinion expressed by two authors of etymological dictionaries of the Ancient Greek language, cf. "l'accentuation doit être fautive" (Chantraine 1968: p. 188; Windekens 1986: p. 48 repeats the same phrase). In fact, the Greek language lost a differentiation between the long and short vowels as early as in the first century

BC. Generally, the Ancient Greek accent has been preserved until today, but both its melodic character and the primitive distinction between the circumflex, the acute and the grave were completely lost two thousands years ago. Of course, Greek grammarians of the late ancient times, like e.g. Hesychius of Alexandria, apply the traditional rules of the classical accentuation. The final -α after phonemes other than ε [ε], ι [i], ρ [r] in the Attic dialect, as well as in the Hellenistic koiné, was always treated as a short vowel. It is obvious that the Greek grammarians recorded dialectal words according to the standard principles. This is why the circumflex in the Late Laconian gloss can be questioned. However, the place of accent in the initial syllable is relatively certain. The barytone accent is also attested in Pāṇini's work (IV 2.50: *gávya* f. 'a cow-herd'). In other words, there is a completed accentual and formal agreement between Lac. βούα and Skt. *gávya* (both go back to IE. \**gʷou̯iā* f.). However, the attested Lithuanian stress (the 4<sup>th</sup> accentual paradigm in the literary language) seems to indicate an alternative variant with the oxytonic stress (as if from IE. \**gʷou̯iā́* f.). Is it possible to suggest two oppositional accents for the same collective noun?

It cannot be excluded that the observed accentual differentiation is caused by a crossing between two alternative types of accentuation of the Indo-European collectives. The situation in RigVeda seems similar. The Old Indic collective noun *gavyam* n. 'herd of cows' demonstrates not only the barytone stress: *gávya* (RV I 140.13; V 34.8; IX 62.23), but also the oxytone one: *gavyám* (once in RV VII 18.7), as recorded by Monier-Williams (1999: p. 351). It should be noted that the feminine collective noun \**bhrátriā* seems to demonstrate a barytone accent (cf. the lexical data recorded in 3.1),<sup>8</sup> whereas the cognate neuter formation \**bhrátrióm* (3.2) appears to have an oxytone stress, cf. also OInd. (RV) *bhrátrám* n. coll. 'brotherhood, fraternity' (Monier-Williams 1999: p. 770). This is why it is possible to put a tentative hypothesis that the Indo-European feminine collective derived from IE. \**gʷou̯-* 'cow' was stressed initially (i.e. IE. \**gʷou̯iā* f. coll.), whereas the cognate neuter collective finally (i.e. IE. \**gʷou̯ióm* n. coll.). Of course, this situation might lead to creating forms with a secondary accentuation, e.g. Vedic *gavyám* turns into *gávya* under the influence of Skt. *gávya* f. coll. 'a cow-herd'. If my explanation is correct, then the 4<sup>th</sup> accentual paradigm in Lithuanian must be treated as a secondary phenomenon.

## 6. Slavic and Latin-Romance reflexes of the collective noun \**gʷou̯iā*

Above I demonstrated that the feminine noun \**gʷou̯iā* is attested in three Indo-European subgroups: Baltic, Greek and Indo-Aryan. In these subgroups a collective meaning was generally preserved. Note, however, that the Oriya term *gāba* demonstrates not only a collective meaning ('cattle'), but also a singulative one ('a cow') (Turner 1966: p. 219). Below I would like to discuss further possible cognates that completely have lost their original collective sense.

8 It should be emphasized, however, that most Greek collectives demonstrate an oxytone stress (Schwyzer 1939: p. 469).



The South Slavic languages demonstrate two cognate forms, which, in my opinion, remain in an etymological relation to Lac. βoῦα, namely Serbo-Croatian *gúja* f. 'snake, viper', dial. (western) 'ascarid, *Ascaris lumbricoides* L.', dial. also 'epilepsy', Bulgarian (dial.) *зѣя* 'viper'. The Slavic terms seem to derive from Proto-Slavic *\*guja* f. 'snake, viper' (Trubačev 1980: p. 168). The Proto-Slavic archetype may be treated as a primitive *nomen collectivum* with the original meaning 'a crowd of snakes (or vipers)'. The Proto-Slavic origin of the Serbo-Croatian and Bulgarian forms, as well their possible relationship to the East Baltic forms, is sometimes questioned by the reason of narrow geographical range and a different meaning (so Sławski 2001: pp. 299–300). In fact, the local distribution of the South Slavic equivalents theoretically may indicate a substratum borrowing (perhaps from an Illyrian or Dalmatian *\*gaujā*).

It is not impossible that Latin *bōva*, also *bōa* f. 'snake, especially water snake' and a number of Italo-Romance forms, e.g. Italian dial. (Piemontese) *boa* 'worm, caterpillar / Wurm, Raupe', (Val Sessia) *bova* 'id.', (Mailandish) *boa* 'fog stripes / Nebelstreifen', perhaps also a diminutive form *bovolo* 'snail / Schnecke' (Meyer-Lübke 1935: p. 110, s.v. **bōva** "Schlange"), derive from the Indo-European collective name *\*g<sup>u</sup>ouīā* f. as well, cf. a similar development in Lat. *ōvum* n. 'egg' (< IE. *\*ōuīóm* n. 'egg', cf. Gk. *ὄvν* n. 'id.'). Of course, the Latin term *bōva* f. cannot be treated as an inherited term by the reason of the initial phoneme *b-*. However, the development of *\*g<sup>u</sup>* to *b-* is typical of Osco-Umbrian, as well as Celtic. Many animal names (both wild and domesticated ones), attested in the Latin vocabulary, were probably borrowed from the Osco-Umbrian languages, especially from the Sabinic one, e.g. Lat. *bōs*, *bōvis* m. f. 'cow' (← as if from Sabinic *\*bous* < IE. *\*g<sup>u</sup>ous*); Lat. *bufō* f. 'toad' (< IE. *\*g<sup>u</sup>oudhōn*, cf. OInd. *gōdhā́*, also *gōdhikā-* f. 'a kind of lizard, iguana'); Lat. *burdō* or *burdus* m. 'hybrid of a stallion and a female donkey, hinny' (< IE. *\*g<sup>u</sup>ordhōn* or *\*g<sup>u</sup>ordhos*, cf. OInd. *gardabhā-* m. 'donkey, ass', Toch. B *kerapo* 'ass, donkey'); Lat. *lupus* m. 'wolf' (< IE. *\*luk<sup>u</sup>os* m. 'id.' by a Sabinic mediation); Lat. *ursus* m. 'bear' (< IE. *\*i<sup>u</sup>tkos* m. 'id.' by a possible Lucanian mediation,<sup>9</sup> cf. Gk. *ἄρκτος* m. 'bear').

The striking connection of the South Slavic and Latino-Romance forms seems to demonstrate a special semantic development from 'herd of cows' (in Indo-European) > 'pack of wild animals' > 'crowd or bundle of snakes' and further (as a result of a supposed singularization) to 'a snake' (in Latin and South Slavic) and 'a viper, a worm, a caterpillar, an ascarid' (in Italo-Romance and South Slavic).

## Conclusions

In my paper I have analysed the Laconian term βoῦα f. 'band of boys' from the viewpoint of the Indo-European etymology and word-formation. The detailed and careful investigations presented above lead to the following results:

1. Having presented four different explanations for Lac. βoῦα suggested so far, I reached the conclusion that Albert Joris van Windekens (1986: p. 48) gave a correct

9 Cf. Varro's words (*Ling.* 5.100): *ursi Lucana origo, vel, unde illi, nostri ab ipsius voce*; see also Maltby (1991: p. 656).

etymology of the Laconian word, comparing it with Lith. *gaujà* f. 'flock, pack, herd, bunch, band, gang'.

2. Close equivalents are to be found not only in Lithuanian, but also in Latvian *gauja* f. 'crowd, a lot of (people); multitude' and Sanskrit *gávyā* f. 'a cow-herd'. It cannot be excluded that Latin *bo(v)a* f. '(water) snake', SC. *gúja* f. 'snake, viper', Bulg. dial. *зѣя* 'viper' are related as well.

3. The comparison of the Laconian term βoῦα f. 'band of boys' with its possible equivalents, attested in Balto-Slavic, Indo-Aryan and Italic languages, strongly suggests a derivation from an Indo-European nomen collectivum *\*g<sup>h</sup>óuǵā* f. 'herd of cows, cattle' (← IE. *\*g<sup>h</sup>óus* f./m. 'cow'), see especially Sanskrit *gávyā* f. coll. 'a cow-herd'.

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