

KRZYSZTOF TOMASZ WITCZAK
 Chair of Classical Philology
 University of Łódź

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THREE CRETAN GLOSSES OF PRE-GREEK ORIGIN

Abstract: The author proposes Indo-European etymologies for three Cretan words attested in Hesychios' *Lexicon*. This material confirms (with some reservations) V. Georgiev's discovery of an Indo-European loan-word stratum in Greek.

Apart from the Pre-Greek Cretan place-names and the Minoan-Eteocretan inscriptions, our main source of knowledge of the non-Greek Cretan vocabulary is the lexical material preserved by Hesychios of Alexandria (VI century AD). Of the 50 thousands lemmata glossed by Hesychios, 224 may be Cretan. Some quarter of these are not Greek and some show connections with pre-Indo-European and pre-Semitic sources.

Raymond A. Brown (1985) reviews all the Hesychian glosses, trying to distinguish lemmata of non-Greek origin. He lists as many as 14 Cretan words, which remain „with no certain cognate forms” (p. 93). Among these items, I find at least three words belonging most likely to an Indo-European substratum, namely ἄχνυλα ‘(hazel-)nuts’, βήλα ‘wine’ and θρινία ‘grapevine’.

I would like to discuss them below.

I. Pre-Greek ἄχνυλα ‘nuts’

Brown (1985:77) classifies the Hesychian gloss ἄχνυλα· κάρυα· Κρῆτες (HAL α-8896) as „Non-Greek”, adding that „the Cretan word has no known etymology”. Though it is uncertain whether the gloss represents an *a*-stem feminine denoting ‘a kind of nut-tree’ (κάρυα) or rather a neuter plural meaning ‘nuts’¹, I believe that the word ἄχνυλα is comparable to the Germanic forms:

¹ The latter possibility is, of course, more probable for accentual reasons. Greek κάρυον *n.* denotes ‘any kind of nut’ (but ‘walnuts’ are called simply κάρυα). However, the arboreal term κάρυα *f.* ‘nut-bearing tree of various kinds’ is sufficiently attested in either Greek lexicon (see GEL 880–881) or toponymy (see PN Καρύαι *f.*, a place in Laconia with a famous temple of Artemis).

(A) Germanic **hnutō* (f.) ‘nut, walnut, hazelnut’, cf. ON. *hnut* f. ‘nut’, Icel. *hnut*, Dan. *nod*, Far. *not*, OSwed. *nyt*, *not(h)*, *nut*, pl. *nöt(t)er*, Swed. *nöt*, Norw. *not*; OE. *hnutu* f. ‘nut (fruit)’, usually in the compounds with *hazel-*, *pin-* or *wealh-*, ME. *hnute*, *nute*, *note*, E. *nut*; MDu. *note*, *nuete*, *noot* f. ‘nut (fruit)’, Du. *noot*, dial. *neut* f.; OFris. *not*, Fris. *nôt* ‘nut, kernel’; OHG. (*h*)*nuz* in the compound *haselnuzcherno* ‘kernel of the hazelnut’, MHG. *nuz* f., G. *Nuß* f. ‘nut (fruit)’.

Further Indo-European cognates are attested in two other Indo-European stocks (see Pokorný 1959:558; Dybo 1989:103–105):

(B) Celtic **knuwā* or **knudā* (f.) ‘nut(-tree)’, e.g. Mir. *cnu* f., Ir. *cnó*, *cnú* m. and f. ‘nut’, pl. *cná* and *cnoite*, dial. *kru*, *kro*; MCorn. *knyfan*, MBret. *knoen*, Bret. *kraouenn*, Van. *keneu*; W. *cneuen* ‘nut (fruit)’, pl. *cnau*.

(C) Latin *nux* (gen. sg. *nucis*) f. ‘nut-tree’, n. ‘nut’ (< **dnuk-* < IE. **knud-* by metathesis of the consonants).

Judging by the comparative linguistic evidence, the Pre-Greek word in question most probably originates from the Indo-European etymon **ə₂knud-* f. ‘nut-tree’ and n. ‘nut’ (whence nom. pl. neut. **ə₂knudə₂* ‘nuts’). The development of **d* > *l* is acceptable, as it occurs not only in Cretan onomastics (e.g. Myc. Gk. PN *da-wo* = Class. Cretan PN Λάος; Myc. Gk. *da-bu-ri-to-* = Class. Gk. λαβύρινθος), but also in the Cretan vocabulary (e.g. Cretan θάπτα f. ‘fly’ vs. Polyyrrhenian λάττα ‘id.’ < **daptā*)². The same process (**d* > *l*) is seen in other Indo-European languages e.g. in Anatolian, Italic or Iranian.

The consonantal shift of **k* > *kh* is suggested for the ‘Prehellenic Indo-European’ substratum.

II. Eteocretan βήλα ‘wine’.

The Hesychian gloss reads: ιβήνα· τὸν οἶνον· Κρῆτες· οἱ δὲ βήλα (HAL 1–123). Beside the Greek term *ιβήνα*, an addition of οἱ δὲ βήλα is listed. According to Brown (1985:61), it presumably means that „some Cretans used the term βήλα (= wine) instead of the more widespread ιβήνα”. Being unable to find obvious cognates, he concludes that βήλα „may be a pre-Greek survival”.

I think that βήλα was borrowed from the same stratum, to which we earlier included Cretan ἄχνυλα. As the consonant shift is a typical feature of this Indo-European stratum, I am inclined to connect Eteocretan βήλα ‘wine’ with Sanskrit *hālā-* f. ‘brandy’ and Thracian *žēlā* > *žilā* (transcribed ζήλας, ζέλας, later ζειλά,

² See Witczak (1995:21–22).

ζίλαι)³ f. ‘wine’ (as if from IE. **ghʷēlā* f.). This derivation is semantically impeccable. Also phonological aspects are acceptable⁴, as the letter ζ- may reflect Late Thracian *ž, which develops from Thracian *g (< IE. **ghʷ*) before a front vowel as the result of a secondary palatalization, cf. the ethnicon *Giridavienses* and PN Ζιριδάνα (< IE. **Gʷri-dhēgʷā* ‘upper city’, liter. ‘city on the hill’⁵).

III. Eteocretan θρινία ‘grapevine’.

The Hesychian gloss θρινία: ἄμπελος ἐν Κρήτῃ (HAL 9-757) has no convincing explanation. Furnée (1972:191, 392, 398) connects θρινία with two Greek expressions: τορνία σταφυλή (Poll. 6.82) and τόρνιος οἶνος (Hp. *Morb.* 2.47). He treats the alternation θ ~ τ as an evidence for a non-Greek substratum. Brown (1985:59) points out, however, that „the alternation of -ρι- ~ -ορ- is otherwise unattested and also the meaning of τορνία / τόρνιος is uncertain”.

In my opinion, Eteocretan θρινία and Greek τορνία (σταφυλή) are two close cognates derived from one and the same etymon **tr̥niyā*. Both are probably connected with Sanskrit *tr̥na-* (n.) ‘herb, grass’ and Khotanese *tt̥rra-* ‘grass’ (Emmerick 1980:167).

The Prehellenic Indo-European substratum may be characterized by a consonant shift (e.g. IE. **k* > χ, **t* > θ, **ghʷ* > β) and two other phonetical processes (IE. **d* > λ and **r* > -ρι-). I believe that it could be called „Pelasgian”, but I follow E. P. Hamp’s opinion that „Prehellenic Indo-European” belonged to the *centum* subgroup (and not to the *satem* division). In fact, the most credible etymologies by Georgiev are of *centum* nature, e.g.

(a) Pre-Greek („Pelasgian”) πύρυος m. ‘tower’ < IE. **bh̥rg̥hos* (sic!), cf. G. *Burg* f. ‘stronghold, castle’, OChSl. *brēg̥s* ‘bank, hill’, Alb. *burg* ‘mountain’ (see Katičić 1976:71–72, esp. n. 91).

In other words, I agree with E. P. Hamp’s opinion, expressed in a series of notes over the past decade, and more, in *Živa Antika* and elsewhere (see, e.g., Hamp 1983), that there is no reasonable evidence for the *satem* character of Georgiev’s „Pelasgian”. The Prehellenic layer, as indicated by phonological and lexical evidence,

³ The Thracian word for ‘wine’ contained the long vowel *ē (as Slavic ě), which became *i in the late period (as in late Greek) and was transcribed as ει and ι (see Velkova 1986:69–70; Duridanov 1994).

⁴ An alternative reconstruction of the Sanskrit and Thracian forms could be IE. **ghēlā* (Pokorny 1959:434). This archetype is suggested on the basis of Greek χάλις (m.) ‘sheer wine’ and Macedonian κάλιθος ‘vine’, which probably are not related to it. The short vocalism (ă) in both Greek and Macedonian differs from *ē in Sanskrit, Thracian and Eteocretan.

⁵ For the semantics and etymology of Thrac. *dēvā/dāvā* (‘hillfort, oppidum, city’), see Poruciuc (1995:275–276).

„reflects a North European IE substratum anterior to Greek in the Aegean” (Hamp 1990:191).

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