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VARIA ETYMOLOGICA: PHRYGIAN ETYMOLOGIES

Abstract. – The first etymological note should be seen in conjunction with our extensive elaboration of the close correlation of Burushaski (Brugaski) and Phrygian (see Čašule 2004, 2014, 2016). We compare and analyse the direct correspondence (both phonemically, morphologically and semantically) between the Burushaski verb *nias* ‘to go, to lead’ and the Phrygian word (epithet for the deceased) attested in a funerary inscription as **nijos* ‘~to lead’. We suggest further that the IE root **ni-* suffixed with **-ko* yields forms like Ancient Greek *nikos* ‘victor’ (represented in names) which do not have an accepted etymological interpretation but for which the Burushaski language may offer an explanation, as it has a very productive set of forms like *nik manas*, *nok manas* with a range of meanings like ‘tread carefully; recoil, jerk back’, ‘pull back and extend’ also ‘huddle together, cower’ which may point to a Phrygian origin of the Ancient Greek forms.

Furthermore, we propose a new etymology for the ethnonym *Graikos* ‘Greek’. It demonstrates that it is an old form, most probably an exonym, i.e. that it originates from a denomination given by neighbouring ethnoses which was widely affirmed by the Romans and the West. We give an overview of previous etymological explanations, and conclude, based on Brygian (Phrygian) evidence that it may derive from PIE **g̊her-* ‘short, little; child’, noting that the shift from ‘child’ to the name of a people is a rather common one in today’s languages.

Finally, we revisit the etymology of the oronym *Carpathian* which has been noted in Greek sources as *Karpathos* ‘*Oros* and considered of Thracian provenance; we suggest that the Burushaski (Brugaski) language can offer a more precise insight and etymology which implies Phrygian as the source of the name of the mountain.

1. Phrygian **nijos*

We should consider first the very productive Burushaski (Hunza and Nager) verb *ní-(as)* ‘to go (to a destination); to leave; to lead the way; go away; (of a wall) to collapse; die; (of generation, lineage) to die out’ (Yasin *né-*).¹ We can compare it with Phrg. **nijos* (from the

¹ Lorimer 277; Berger 303.

inscriptions) ‘an epithet of the deceased’ which has been derived from IE **nei-; *ni-* ‘to lead’ : OInd *náyati* ‘leads’.² The Burushaski verb is basic and rather productive and has a number of meanings in addition to ‘go’ and ‘lead’ which it shares more widely with other Indo-European developments. In particular its meaning of ‘go away’ > ‘die’ fits well with the Phrygian context (i.e. ‘the departed ones’) and the phonological match is direct. Berger considers it an original Burushaski word, and not an (old) loanword from Old Indian or Persian Dari. Buck (1949:711-712) notes from this root Sanskrit *ni-* ‘lead’, *netar* ‘guide’, Old Persian *ni-* ‘lead’ and possibly Old Irish *neath* ‘hero’ (see the entry in the etymological dictionary of Burushaski).³

My hypothesis in this brief note is that the stem **ni-* is contained and continued in another set of Indo-European cognates, with the suffix **k(o)* e.g. like Proto-Slavic **niknōti*. Slavic cognates include Czech *vzniknout* (‘to arise, originate’) and Macedonian *nikne* ‘sprout, appear’ also Serbo-Croatian *niknuti* (“to sprout, spring”).

We should add here the Burushaski forms *nik manas*, *niknik manas*, *nok manas* with a range of meanings like ‘to tread carefully; recoil, jerk back, contract’, ‘to pull back and extend’, ‘bent, flexed’ also ‘huddle together, cower’.⁴ Further cognates include Ancient Greek *νεῖκος* (neîkos, “quarrel, strife”) and Ancient Greek *νίκη* (níkē, “victory”), which do not have an established etymology (or as Beekes says, “do not have a good etymology”⁵) and their origin is uncertain. Beekes notes a possibility (which he thinks “semantically gratuitous”) that the Greek words may be of Proto-Indo-European origin and cognate with *νεῖκος* (neîkos) ‘quarrel, strife, feud’, Lithuanian *ap-nìkti* (“to attack”). He even entertains the possibility that it may be Pre-Indo-European.⁶

This analysis suggests strongly that these forms, from IE *ni-* and also *nik-* are originally Phrygian, from where they would have been borrowed into Ancient Greek. The question posed by Beekes whether these formations may be of Pre-Greek origin should also be taken into account. Furthermore, it is highly significant that we have a direct correspondence between the Phrygian and Ancient Greek anthroponym *Nikon* (Drew-Bear 388) and the Burushaski name *Niko* (Berger 504) which gives further credence to the hypothesis advanced in this arti-

² Diakonoff-Neroznak 1985: 126.

³ Čašule 2017: 201.

⁴ Berger 1998: 299.

⁵ Beekes 2010 (2016): Vol. 2:1021-1022.

⁶ Beekes (ibid.) excludes on (Ancient Greek) phonological grounds derivation from the IE stem **ni-h2k^wo-*, e.g. Sanskrit *nica-* ‘directed downwards’, Old Church Slavonic *nic* ‘downward’, Latvian *nicam* ‘down the stream’, which could point to its status as a loanword into Ancient Greek. There are many derived names like *Nikos*, *Nikola*, *Nicholas* etc. widely in the Indo-European languages’ onomasticon.

cle.⁷ The Burushaski language shares over 30 direct correspondences in personal names with the Phrygian, Ancient Macedonian and Ancient Greek onomasticon.⁸

We would like to reiterate the need to study more carefully the Burushaski material as it provides a deeper insight into the Ancient Balkan languages, esp. Phrygian and may improve Proto-Indo-European reconstruction.

2. Etymology of Γραικός [Graikos]

It is curious that we do not have an undisputed etymology of the ethnonym *Greek*, i.e. Γραικός [Graikos], Latin *Graecus*, although there have been many attempts to elucidate its origin.

The first use of *Graikos* as equivalent to Hellenes is found in Aristotle (*Meteorologica* I.xiv), but also in Hesiod; this may turn out to be a crucial piece of information, as it indicates that it is an old formation. Furthermore, considering Aristotle's (Ancient) Macedonian origin (although this is disputed), this mention most likely indicates how the Macedonians (and others, e.g. the Illyrians, Thracians, Brygians, Paeonians etc.) referred to the "Hellenes".

In regard to the Illyrian connection, Vasmer reiterates that Γραικός was "initially the name of a Greek tribe in Epirus, later on the border between Beotica and Attica" and further that "the Illyro-Epirotic tribes were responsible for this term becoming the general name for the Greeks and Hellenes"⁹ (on this also Kretschmer (1896:279), Fick (1890: 24, 292). Liddell-Scott (1968:358) state that it was "a local name for a tribe in West Greece, applied by the Italians to the Greeks in general". Frisk (1973: 323) mentions in this regard the "Dorians" as the intermediaries.

It is well known that many ethnonyms given to a people or an ethnicity are from their neighbours – in this case by the Ancient Macedonians (and of Brygian (Phrygian) origin), which is my claim in this article.

It is also somewhat curious that when Rome conquered Athens and Greece, it adopted the Ancient Macedonian (Illyrian etc.) reference *graikos* and not *Hellenes*. The best explanation and analysis so far I believe is the entry *graecus* in Ernout & Meillet,¹⁰ where they indicate

⁷ Very tentatively we should consider whether the Northern Phrygian place name *Nacoleia* and the nymph name *Nacole* can be also explained in this etymological analysis. Ramsay (1882: 119) notes that the Phrygian toponym does not have a satisfactory etymology [“the name is derived by Stephanus from Nacolos son of Daskylos, or from the nymph Nacole: it is difficult to assimilate it with any class of Asian or Greek names”].

⁸ see Čašule 2016: 64–65.

⁹ Vasmer (Фасмер) 1986 [1950–1958], I:455.

¹⁰ Ernout & Meillet (1932) Paris: Klincksieck, p. 412.

that *Graecus* is mostly used in the plural (which may be relevant if basically an ethnonym) i.e. *Graeci*. They consider it an ancient borrowing into Latin, together with the rarer *Grai* or *Graii* which is used in epic and poetic language. They indicate that “it is remarkable that the Latins used a very rare name in Greek literature to designate the Greeks, tardively attested instead of the normal and current form *Hellenes*”. Ernout and Meillet conclude the entry by saying that the ethnonym was borrowed through oral interaction, and most importantly: “that it may not originate from Greece”. The etymologists do not even make an attempt at an Indo-European explanation. A superseded etymology that appeared in the 19th century (not even considered by Ernout-Meillet) and cited by the Online Etymological Dictionary, was by the German classical historian Busolt, who derives it from *Graikhos* (inaccurately with *-kh-*) “inhabitant of Graia” (literally “gray,” also “old, withered”), a town on the coast of Boeotia, which was the name given by the Romans to all Greeks, originally to the Greek colonists from Graia who helped found Cumae (9 c. B.C.E.), the important city in southern Italy where the Latins first encountered Greeks. Under this theory, it was reborrowed in this general sense by the Greeks.” This is a rather weak etymological explanation.

We must ask ourselves: what are the possibilities within Indo-European, assuming that the etymon is Indo-European (it could still be Pre-Indo-European, as Ernout-Meillet seem to imply)? The Online Etymological Dictionary says further: “The Germanic languages originally borrowed the word with an initial “-k-” sound (compare Old High German *Chrech*, Gothic *Kreks* [see also Walde (1965:616)] which probably was their initial sound closest to the Latin “-g-” at the time; the word was later refashioned. From late 14c. as “the Greek language.” The meaning ‘unintelligible speech, gibberish, any language of which one is ignorant’ is from c. 1600. Meaning “member of a Greek-letter fraternity” is student slang, 1884”. It also notes the form *gregeis* “in the Middle Ages”.

Now, what is the root? The best candidate within Indo-European is **g'her-*: ‘short, little, small’ in Pokorny (IEW, 1959: 443) and elsewhere given as: **g'her-*, **g'hrei-* also with an -s- extension: **g'her-s-* or **g'hers-* (if we assume that the -s- is part of the root and not an extension). These are the Indo-European developments from this root: Greek *kheirōn* ‘worse’ (inferior), Old Irish *gair* (from *<*g'heri-s* ‘short’, also *garait* ‘short’, Middle Irish *gerr* ‘short’ Old Indian *hrasva* ‘minor, short, small’.¹¹

Perhaps the modern Burushaski language, [spoken in North Western Pakistan] which I have proven to be a direct descendant from

¹¹ Pokorny IEW: 443.

Phrygian (the original self-appellation is with B-, i.e. Brygian) (Čašule esp. 2004, 2014, but also 2016, 2017), can help elucidate and confirm this etymological explanation. We find the word *giryas* ‘small child, baby, infant’ (from < IE *g ‘her-yo-s-’) (Berger 1998: 159).

From this analysis we can surmise that *graikos* could have meant initially ‘short, small’, ‘child’.

I have been alerted by the scholar Idris Bulatbiev that it is rather common that a word for ‘child’ should become an ethnonym (exonymically). I quote: “Similarly V. Blažek brings together the ethnonym *Čech* with Kashubian *čèh* ‘boy, child, young man’.¹² Bulatbiev notes further that “It is interesting to note that he himself has collected dozens of examples of the ethnonyms the emergence of which corresponds to the semantic shift ‘birth/born/child > people > ethnonym’.

This gives further support to our proposal of Brygian (Phrygian) origin of the ethnonym in question.

Another, semantically less viable possibility may be a derivation from Proto-Celtic **gargo-* ‘rough’ > Old Irish *garg(o)* from PIE **garg’o-(?)* [Pokorny IEW 353] as in OChSl *groza* ‘horror, Arm *karcr* ‘hard’. This possibility would not require attestation from Burushaski, but conforms with Phrygian phonemic developments and (marginally) with the suggested semantics.

In Beekes’ Etymological Dictionary of Greek (Vol. 1 p.288), we have the entry *gru* (used usually with negation), which means ‘a small quantity’ which Beekes thinks is sound symbolic and importantly, the word is indeclinable which may point to a (substratal?) loanword.

In the next entry we find the word *grumea* ‘bag or chest for old clothes’ also ‘trash trumpery’ also ‘small fry’ which Beekes considers a “rare formation” and connects it etymologically to *gru* “perhaps as something small”. This may go back to the same root as in *graikos* – the semantics matches perfectly: ‘small’ i.e. could be derived also from PIE *g ‘her-’ ‘short, small,[child?], (Gk) ‘worse’ + the IE suffix *-ko identified in the form *graikos* by Frisk (1973: 323).

It is possible that the word entered Greek from Ancient Macedonian or directly from Brygian, hence *g-* and not *kh-* (there is a Paleo-balkan pattern of alternation, especially in the anlaut *k:g* (like in *Kras-tonia: Grastonia*, also in Thracian names...)). As noted above some linguists have suggested an Illyrian origin or rather Illyrian as an intermediary and Thracian cannot be excluded, but with the scarce attestation of these languages it would amount to speculation. It is also indicative as to the antiquity of the word that developments from PIE *g ‘her-’, as far as we know, appear at the IE periphery [apart from

¹² Blažek V. “On the etymology of the ethnonym Čexъ.” *Baltic-Slavonic studies* XIX. M., 2014. P. 116-133.

Greek and Brygian (=Phrygian) (via Burushaski, also known as Brugaski] in Keltic and Old Indian.

The Phrygian form (continued in Burushaski) gives strong support to our proposal that *graikos* derives from PIE **gher-* with the meaning ‘child’. Ernout-Meillet’s suggestion that it may be Pre-IE or non-Indo-European should be investigated further more carefully.

3. Etymology of *Carpathian*

The Carpathian mountains are an impressive mountain range that is at the northern part of the Balkan Peninsula which has played an important role in population movements from Ukraine and Russia and the Balkans.

According to BER (Bulgarian Etymological Dictionary) the Bulgarian and Macedonian word *karpa* ‘rock, cliff’ (dialectally found according to BER in the Macedonian Western dialects (Prilep, also throughout the West), Lower Vardar (Macedonian) dialects, in the Rhodopi mountains (n.b. where there are groups who have migrated from Western Macedonia) and in Strandža and in the Western Bulgarian (Pirin) dialects, like Bansko and in Samokov we find the plural *karpi* ‘mountains’ (BER, 1979. Vol. 2, p. 252).

Vladimir Georgiev (1958: 36) proposes a Daco-Mysian or Thracian origin and relates it to the geographic term *Karpathes* ‘*Oros* ‘Carpathian Mountains’ (noted originally as Thracian) and correlates it further to Albanian *karpë* ‘rock, big rock’. Mladenov St. (1941: 232) derives *karpa* from IE *(s)ker-p- ‘to cut’, and also correlates it with the Albanian word and with Swedish *skrefva* ‘(rocky) cliff’, German *schroff* ‘steep’.

I would like to propose an etymology from IE **kerp-*, **kyp-*, **krep-* ‘body, stomach’ (Pokorny 1959: 620) (Watkins 2000: 46: **kwrep-*) (Mallory-Adams 1996: 76: **kreps-*) with the following (wide) distribution in Indo-European: Old Indian *kṛp* ‘shape, beautiful appearance’, Avestan *k'hrp'm* ‘shape, body’, Middle Persian *karp* ‘body’, Old Irish *cri* ‘body, flesh’, Germanic **xrefiz* ‘stomach’, Old English *hrif*, *mid(h)rif* ‘diaphragm; belly, womb’. (The root is also found within the Nostratic comparisons in Semito-Hamitic (with a meaning of ‘internal organs, stomach’), Dravidian (with a meaning of ‘embryo, womb’) and Altaic (with a meaning of ‘stomach, abdominal fat’) (Illič-Svycí 1965: I:339). Thus, the semantic of *Carpathian Mountains* may indicate ‘beautiful mountain’.

The Burushaski (Brugaski) language, which we have proven to be a direct descendant of Phrygian (Brygian) (see Čašule 2017, 2018 and especially with a very detailed comparison and analysis in 2004, 2014 and more recently Čašule 2022) may offer a further point of proof

as in a large number of Paleobalkanic toponyms and glosses. Burushaski has the word *-qhurpat*, Ys dialect *-xurpet* ‘lungs’ (Berger 1998: 359, Lorimer 1938: 245) which we have traced to the Indo European root **kerp-* above (Čašule. 2017: 216-217).

Formally, phonemically and morphologically the Burushaski word matches the formation *karpathos* precisely and directly. At first sight the semantic latitude appears to be too big, yet note the semantic developments from IE **h₁eh₁tr-* which obtains a meaning both of ‘interior of body’ and ‘lung’ and in various Indo-European branches develops the meaning of ‘entrails’, ‘vein’, ‘heart’, ‘belly’, ‘abdomen’. within the various branches (Mallory-Adams, 1996: 17; 359), as is the case with **kerp-* above. [Compare also the semantics of Old Hebrew *qereb* ‘innards, abdominal cavity; the internal organs of the chest cavity’.]

Alternatively, if we consider IE **(s)ker-p* ‘cut’ as the source (as Mladenov, ibid.) this latter root is possibly also attested in Burushaski as *karpat* ‘quarrel, dispute’ (a semantic development as in Proto-Slavic **k'rpati* ‘steal, disturb someone’). From this root (without the enlargement) we have 18 derivatives in Burushaski, that is, it is very productive.

Moreover, the Latin word *corpus* ‘body’ which is relevant here (see above) is correlated further by Ernout-Meillet (1932:214) with Old Prussian *kermens* ‘body’ (with an enlargement) which then they compare with Slavic/(Srb) *crevo* ‘intestine; body’). Nevertheless, Ernout-Meillet conclude the etymological analysis with: “En somme, groupe obscure” (In summary, an obscure groupation).

We agree with the Bulgarian scholar and etymologist Vladimir Georgiev that the oronym *Carpathian Mountains* (*Karpathos* ‘*Oros*’) is of Paleobalkanic provenience, but not exclusively Thracian (or Daco-Mysian, in his classification of Upper Thracian), a language which still remains insufficiently researched.

We propose that the oronym is of Phrygian origin, as suggested by the close correlation with Burushaski, the direct descendant of Phrygian (Greek adaptation from the self-apellation: *Brygian*). It should be derived from the IE root **kerp-* ‘body, stomach; shape, beauty’ obtaining by extension the figurative meaning (as in Indo-Iranian) of ‘beauty’.

Thus *Carpathian Mountain* would have had the meaning of ‘beautiful’ (mountain, shape), i.e. *Beautiful Mountain*.¹³

¹³ Methodologically, we should perhaps add a caveat that some old oronyms may have several etymological possibilities and interpretations which could have been the result of “convergence” over time.

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