Phrygian *mekas* and the recently discovered New Phrygian inscription from Nacoleia

**Abstract:** The aim of the present paper is to argue for the interpretation of Phrygian *mekas* as an adjective meaning ‘great’ and inherited from PIE *méǵ-h₂-,* taking into account all its testimonies documented in the Phrygian corpus and accepting the theory of a Phrygian *Lautverschiebung*. Furthermore, through a new reading of the last lines of the recently discovered New Phrygian inscription from Nacoleia, where the accusative μεκαν can be read in agreement with the theonym Τιαν, a new interpretation of the apodosis of the New Phrygian inscription 25 is given. Finally, a comparison of the Phrygian and the Greek forms reveals a common innovation in the presence of the ending -s in the masculine nom. sg. despite the lack of the -λο- suffix in the Phrygian inflection of this word.

**Keywords:** Phrygian, Greek, Indo-European linguistics, Lautverschiebung

Recently, a New Phrygian inscription was published by Alexandru Avram (2015). As in other small corpora, this means that we have an interesting chance to revisit our knowledge of the Phrygian language. This New Phrygian inscription is written on a 3rd century AD altar found in Nacoleia (present-day Seyitgazi) erected by Brogimaros, a priest of the great Zeus (μεγάλου Διὸς ἁρήτηρ, as stated on face D). Its four faces present reliefs (face A the author of the dedication, B a bust of his wife, C a man similar to A and, finally, D his daughter) and the inscriptions are more or less readable (though faces C and D are badly worn). All of them (with the possible exception of C) are hexametric epigrams. Fortunately, face A, which contains the New Phrygian text (lines 5–12), is the best preserved, and on it we can read two Phrygian clauses. These New Phrygian texts, as well as the second Greek epigram on face B and perhaps the one on D, were written after Brogimaros’ death by his son. The first Phrygian clause (lines 5–8) is written immediately below the first Greek epigram, and is syntactically related to it. It explains that the parents (Brogimaros and his wife) placed a grave in a burial plot as a vow. The second clause (lines 9–12) was engraved below the relief and presents a typical New Phrygian curse against desecrators. All this information is taken from Avram’s publication. According to his edition and translations, the inscriptions read as follows:
Face A

Βρογιμαρος Ἐπικράτου
Διὶ Βρογιμαρου καὶ Κυρί-α εὐχήν, καὶ αὐτός ἐαυ-
tῷ μνημόσυνον. vac.
αινιουεβανδεδασσιννιπατρε-
ςσεμουνκορ[υ]μανη,σωςκη
gουμ ειε, καρπυς ειλικρινη εγρ-
υννου vac.

Relief
αινικος̣κακηναδδακετκορο-
[υ]μανη,σωςκηγουμειε,τιττετι-
[κ]μενοςειτου,ΕΙΚΑΔαυτονμεκα-

12 [ς?] αν Τιαν vac.

[Translation of the Greek text, l. 1–4:] “Brogimaroś, (Sohn) des Epikrates, für
den Zeus des Brogimaroś und für die Herrin aufgrund eines Gelübdes und
für sich selbst (als) Denkmal.” [First Phrygian clause l. 5–8:] und wenn die
Eltern dieser Grabparzelle das Grab geweiht haben, ihnen (selbst) und dem
Geschlecht, das daraus entspränge (?), (so soll) dem Nachfolger Reinheit
und Bodenfrüchten (bestimmt sein?); [Second Phrygian clause below the
relief, l. 9–12:] wer immer aber der Grabparzelle Böses antut, ihnen und
dem Geschlecht, das daraus entspringe (?), so soll er unter einem Fluch
wandeln (?) und vor (?) Zeus - - -”.

Face B

Εὐξάμενος πρὸς ἔπ-
ος ἱεραῖς ἐπαόιδαις ἐν-
γελάον vac. ἐγὼ vac. πάτρη τε
4 [γόν]οις μου, χεὶρ ὑπὲρ Ι-
[.]Α[.....]εχειν vac.

Relief

[ - - -]δακέδη(ν)ων μηγε-
[ - - -]ροιδάμαρτος Ο vac.

8 [ - - -]ΟΜωЄΙ δοξ’ Ἀριστo-
------- NEΠ -------
“Indem ich zu diesem Zweck meinen Wunsch durch heilige Beschworungen ausgesprochen habe und wobei ich mich meines Geschlechtes und meiner Kinder erfreue ...”

Face C

.Ο..ΜΕ - - - - - - - - -
νιός - - - - - - - - -
..Π.....Η - - - - - - - - -

4 γλυκερω[..]ΑΠΟ - - - - -

Relief

vac.

Face D

[...]ΕΝ[ - - ] θρόγιμα να. vac.

ρος ἐγὼ μεγάλου Διός

ἀρητήρ ἔνθαμεν vac.

4 ιεροῖς ἐνι vac. καρποῖς

Relief

ΜΗΠΟΣΑΝΑ - - Ο...

Οζ - - - - Α....Ε..Υ

Αζ.ΑΝ - - - - Α - -

8 .Ο....ΟΥ vac.

“... ich Brogimaros, Priester des großen Zeus, bleibe hier in gesegneten Bodenfrüchten.”

In the present paper I will focus on a particularly interesting sequence written in lines 11–12 of face A (see Figure 1). First of all, some epigraphical remarks must be given before embarking on a detailed discussion. The reading of the last alpha at the end of the line 11 is not at all clear. There is very little space for it, and today only a little part of this suggested letter remains. Indeed, it seems to be the beginning of an alpha, but this supposed stroke does not reach the damaged part of this line. Consequently, it is more likely an accidental stroke similar to the one above the delta in the same line. Moreover, the dubious restitution of the sigma at the beginning of line 12 is only suggested in light of the other testimonies of mekas; here, the surface of the altar is also damaged but no trace of any stroke

1 I was able to examine this inscription at its current location in the garden of the Eskişehir Archaeological Museum in early November 2015 (see Figure 1).
remains. Indeed, it seems that this last line of face A is not indented from the margin as the other ones since a little space was left blank at the beginning. Perhaps this peculiarity can be explained by considering that this part of the stone was already damaged by the time the text was engraved. Either way, this restitution also presents a problematic αν which has no parallel elsewhere. Finally, the result does not make any sense. In view of these remarks, I suggest the following reading:

... τιττετι-

[κ]μενος ειτου ΕΙΚΑΔ αυτον μεκ-

12 αν Τιαν vac.

With the exception of ΕΙΚΑΔ αυτον μεκαν, the sequence is common in the New Phrygian apodosis formulae: Τιαν, accusative of ‘Zeus’ (Lubotsky 2004: 230), τιττετικμενος ‘accursed’ (for both words see below) and ειτου ‘become’ < *h₁ei- ‘go’ 3sg imperative. The pronoun αυτον corresponds to Greek αὐτόν, and it is attested in both Old and New Phrygian. Also, following this interpretation, we have an adjective μεκαν in the accusative masculine singular which agrees with the pronoun αυτον and the theonym Τιαν. Of course, this means that I reject the common interpretation of mekas as a noun meaning something related to the monument (see below) and I follow the identification of mekas with Greek μέγας ‘big’. So, Phrygian μεκαν = Gr. μέγαν. Then, the meaning must be ‘the great Zeus himself’. We have a very good parallel of this description of Zeus on the same altar: the Greek μεγάλου Διός (in genitive) line 2 on face D. Moreover, this is not the only Phrygian sequence with a Greek parallel on the altar, since Avram suggests that the Phrygian καρπυς ειλικρινη (l. 7) may correspond to the Greek ιεροῖς ἐνὶ καρποῖς “ingesegneten Bodenfrüchten” from face D. Indeed, the collocation μέγας Ζεύς is not unusual in the Greek inscriptions from Phrygia (e. g. SEG 40, 1192 or MAMA V Lists III, 185, mid[5]).

Additionally, a possible parallel in the New Phrygian inscription 25² (from Uluborlu) can support this interpretation because its apodosis reads as follows: τος | νι δ[ιως ζ]ιμελως τι μεκα | Τ[η/ε] τιττετικμενος ειτου (‘may this one become accursed in the sight of gods (and) men by the great Zeus’, lines 3–5). Unfortunately, only Hamilton (1842: 490) was able to read it and his doubtful copy (see Fig. 2)

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2 The enumeration and readings of the Old Phrygian inscriptions (transcribed in the Latin alphabet) are given according to Brixhe & Lejeune 1984. On the other hand, the enumeration and readings of the New Phrygian inscriptions (in the Greek alphabet) are given according to the traditional enumeration developed from the works of W. M. Ramsay. In the case of the recent finds I use the one established by Ligorio & Lubotsky 2013: 182. Following the enumeration, this new inscription has to take the number 130.
is the sole testimony. Nevertheless, this is a very common sequence, with a few peculiarities.³ One of them is precisely the presence of μέκα, which, if it is indeed a dative which agrees with my restored Τ[ε/η], should in fact be *μέκαι, following the a-stem inflection (e.g., Old Phrygian Midai M-01a or New Phrygian μανκαί). Were there more letters in this inscription, or was its ending -i dropped, as often happens? See, for instance, New Phrygian 67 ιος | σα τι σκελεδρια or 112 ιος νι σα του μανκα, instead of σαι and μανκα (Brixhe 1978: 13–14, 19–20 and 1997: 51–52). ⁴ Another problem is the sequence τι after δ[ιως ζιμελως. It could be the same theonym in the dative commonly represented by Τι, Τιε or Τιη which appears in 67 α[τετικμενος στ | Τι αδειτου, 76 τιτετικμενος στ Τι αδει|του and 103 το[ς | μεζ̣ιμε̣λως τ Τιατιτικμενος|ειτου. But, if this is the case, what has happened to the sequence τ[--]τιτετικμενος? The easiest explanation is to interpret τι as a clitic emphatic particle present in both Old and New Phrygian inscriptions as τ, του, τι (Ligorio & Lubotsky 2013: 193), see, e.g. sin-t B-05, esai-t W-01b and, again, the New Phrygian 67 ιος | σα τι σκελεδρια. Furthermore, Τι for Τιε or Τιη only appears before a vowel (Lubotsky 1998: 415). Then, we can take τ[-- -] as the theonym, exactly in its common position immediately before the participle

³ On its variants see Lubotsky 1998, where the absence of the preposition με is shown not to be unusual; the same formula occurs, for instance, in 63 and 93.

⁴ It could be read as μεκαι Τ[ε/η] if we consider this to be a misreading of Hamilton’s (as occurs in the beginning of line 4, NIA for νι δ[ιως]) but in this inscription the ends of the lines match with word-boundaries (or at least syllable-boundary in lines 2–3 αβ/βαρετο).
In either case, Lubotsky’s reading (1998: 417) [δεως ζιμελως τι με κ’] differs from those of the other editors; however, it seems that he only wanted to avoid the word μεκα because the presence of a word with an architectural meaning did not fit in this apodosis. The same thing appears to have happened in Avram’s edition of the new text.

Finally, metrics cannot be used as an argument against the present reading of the new inscription. If Avram’s scansion was εικαδ αυτον μεκαν Τιαν, I also read three hexametric feet here: εικαδ αυτον μεκαν Τιαν. At present, we do not know how to scan εικαδ and in αυτον we can assume that the final -ν was not pronounced, as has been proposed by Brixhe (1978: 13–14, 19–20, and 2008: 75; this is common in Greek inscriptions, Brixhe 1987: 33–34). However, the scansion is very tentative and does not provide valuable information.

Unfortunately, εικαδ still remains incomprehensible to me, but it might be the reason why the theonym is in the accusative instead of the more common dative. Indeed, three of the four testimonies of Τιαν are due to the preposition ας used to express the agent: 14 τιττετικμενος ας Τιαν [ειτο]υ, 53 τιττετικμενος | ας Τιαν ειτου and 99 τιττετικμενος | ας Τιαν ειτου. Only 111 has a different motivation, although the context is still obscure: ις κε εγ | τοισινι κνουμαν Τιαν τε[-]|[-]μαρβο ιδετοι οινις. In any case, as Avram (2015: 212) has suggested, the punishment is expected to be executed by Τιαν, and so this may be an unknown preposition. Of course, we have the sequence αδ, which is known to be a preposition, but it takes the dative (see, for instance, the common sequences ατ Τιε / ατ Τιη, a variant of this preposition with the voiceless stop often lost by simplification of geminates) and cannot explain ΕΙΚ.

At this point, mekas requires an explanation. Avram (2015: 212 n. 82) and Brixhe (2004: 14) reject the previous identification of mekas with μέγας.5 According to

5 The first scholar to suggest this was Meister (1909: 317 n. 2) but he was not taken into account. More recently, Orel (1997: 27–28 and 444) suggested it again and interpreted the consonant change *-g-* > -k- as an effect of the laryngeal *h₂. He was followed more or less by Woudhuizen (2009: 187
Brixhe, this word has usually been interpreted as an a-stem noun related to an architectural element. However, if we consider all the testimonies, several remarks are in order:

P-03 vasous iman mekas | kanutieivais | devos ke mekas
P-04c iman ọlọitoro | ẹd&q̣e[s] mekas
M-05 apelan mekas tevanə[- - -]
G-111 [- - -]ọ mekas
G-147 [- - -] mekas tosk[- - -]
G-239 mekaįs [- - -]
B-05, l.5 vây niptiyıy ḏaker ḏakărų enpsatsu mekạ[- - -]qǝsiya..(?)
B-05, l.9–10 tubetiv oy ńęvos derálniv mekaș key | kovis ńbretoy
W-11 μανκα μεκας σας κυιν εν κε βιλατάδε|ναν νεκοινουν...
25 ... τος | νι διωσς ζιμεξως τι μεκα | T[ιε] τιτπεκικενος ειτου.

First of all, mekas appears near a noun in most instances: iman, devos, apelan, μανκα and, probably, T[ιε]. In other cases, the sequences are damaged or obscure and do not provide clear evidence. Secondly, we can assume that in most cases this proximity corresponds to agreement. Indeed, we know that iman (P-03)\(^6\) is a nominative singular (\(<*\-èn\)), as, probably, is devos (\(<*\-d\.os\) with an epenthetic -v-, according to Ligorio & Lubotsky 2013: 185; an exact parallel is Greek θεός ‘god’) and apelan (M-05, a personal name) and all of them are followed by the possible nom. sg. mekas. In B-05, Hämmig (2013: 143–144) has shown by a structural analysis that μεκας in line 9 probably works as an attribute of kovis, a nominative singular. Moreover, μανκα (W-11) is known to be a feminine in nominative singular (Brixhe 2004: 14 & 81 and Ligorio & Lubotsky 2013: 188); then, if I am right, it can be interpreted as another noun which agrees in the

\(^{6}\) Although the words of this inscription are more or less clear, its meaning remains a little bit obscure. Note that vasous is considered a personal name in the nominative (Ligorio & Lubotsky 2013: 188) as well as iman (usually used as an anthroponym although in B-05 it stands for ‘monument’ or ‘stele’) and kanutieivais (a title, demonym or patronymic only found in three inscriptions from Pteria always qualifying a man called Vas(o)us). The most economical way to interpret P-03 is to consider Vasous Iman a compound name (see M-03 | abas iman) followed by two adjectives (mekas kanutieivais) and coordinated with devos mekas by the conjunction ke: ‘Vasus Iman, the great, the kanutieivais, and the great god’. Unfortunately, the support, a stone block, does not provide any information on its purpose.
nominative singular with μεκας. The problem here is the pronoun σας, which would be expected to be a genitive singular. I think that this is why Brixhe considers it to be a genitive singular cluster complementing the substantive μανκα. Nevertheless, in view of what has been said, it is easy to accept here that this is the feminine nominative singular. So, instead of ‘the stele of this meka’ (according to Brixhe 2004: 14) we can understand it as ‘this big stele’. Indeed, it is described as a “grande stèle” by Brixhe (2004: 7); it is 145 cm high, 40.5 cm wide, and 18 cm thick and it contains the third longest Phrygian texts found to date. Consequently, the presence of the final -ς in the nominative feminine pronoun (PIE *seh₂) must be interpreted as an analogy based on masculine pronouns such as τος, κος, ιος, etc., if it is not a mere dittography in such a sequence: ΑΣΣΑΣ. Indeed, it is not the only surprising feature in this inscription regarding the pronoun σα, since in line 3 the dative φι σοροι appears instead of the expected φι σαισοροι (Brixhe 2008: 75). Additionally, I also assume that mekas agrees with both masculine and feminine. Finally, if this interpretation is not accepted, the well-known context of New Phrygian 25 makes no sense and the presence of this word on the pottery fragments is truly mysterious. According to this explanation, the correspondences in table 1 can be suggested.

Table 1. Comparison of the nom. and acc. sg. of the adjective ‘big’ in PIE, Phrygian and Greek

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PIE</th>
<th>Phrygian</th>
<th>Greek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nom. Sg.</td>
<td>*méג-h₂</td>
<td>mekas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acc. sg.</td>
<td>*mγ-éh₂-m</td>
<td>μεκαν</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Phrygian and the Greek nominatives present an ending -s which probably was absent in PIE. In addition, the Phrygian accusative form shows the same e levelling in the root from the nominative as Greek μέγαν. Thus the only difference between the two forms is the shift *-γ- > -κ-. This situation conforms perfectly to Lubotsky’s Phrygian Lautverschiebung theory. Indeed, the very well-known Phrygian word for bread is an exact parallel: PIE *bʰh₁ǵ-os > Phrygian βεκος (Lubotsky 2004: 233, following a previous identification by Panagl & Kowal 1983: 186). In both words, we expect vocalisation of the laryngeals and, as a result, an intervocalic

7 Despite the fact that in the New Phrygian corpus the dative σα occurs nine times (21, 42, 67, 81, 91, 94, 115, 124 and 129) while the more conservative σαι is attested only twice (35 and 69), the expected Old Phrygian a-stem dative is -α in the light of Midai (M-01 a) or avtay (W-01 b). However, W-11 is an inscription from the late 4th century BC which has been suggested to be testimony of “a Middle-Phrygian stage” (Brixhe 2008: 71).
voiced stop (preserved in Greek μέγας), which was later affected by the Phrygian **Lautverschiebung**. Other voiced stops which developed into Phrygian voiceless stops are the theonym 'Zeus' in acc. sg. Τιαν < *diēm (Greek Ζῆν), in gen. sg. Τιος < *dīos (Greek Διός, Διός) and in dat. sg. Τι, Τιε, Τιη < *diēi (Greek Δί, Δἰ), τετικμενος 'accursed' < *de- diákh- < (Greek δια- δικάζω 'judge', κατα- δικάζω 'condemn'), its common preverb τιτ < *d(y)is-, knai̯k- 'woman, wife'8 < *g̣ne̯h₂ik- (Greek γυνή, γυναικός) and nom. pl. petes ‘feet’ (G-02) < *pod-/*ped- (Greek πόδες, according to Kloekhorst's forthcoming new analysis).

According to the present analysis, a Phrygian word once again has a very close Greek cognate with a common innovation: the ending -s added to the nominative singular of *még-h₂. Because of mekas G-239 (interpreted as a dative plural in Brixhe 2008: 78 but perhaps an accusative plural < *-ans as ἡρατεῖς B-04 according to Brixhe 2004: 41–42; see also Brixhe 1996: 134 and Ligorio & Lubotsky 2013: 187), we can be sure that the suffix -λο- which appears in the Greek feminine (μεγάλη) and the oblique cases of the masculine and neuter (μέγαλο-) does not occur in Phrygian.

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**Bibliography**


8 Its recorded forms are nom. sg. knaı̯s HP-114 and knais B-07, acc. sg. κναίκαν 116, gen. sg. κναῖκο 116 (whose ending must be -as, as in τιος or oρουενος, with a loss of the final -s) and the dubious knaı̯ke ἰ HP-114, probably the nom. pl. knaı̯ke[s] (Brixhe 2004: 79–80).


