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# 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-h<sub>2</sub>-*, 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  $\mu\epsilon\kappa\alpha\nu$  can be read in agreement with the theonym  $\tau\iota\alpha\nu$ , 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 - $\lambda\omicron$ - 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 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD altar found in Nacoleia (present-day Seyitgazi) erected by Brogimaros, a priest of the great Zeus ( $\mu\epsilon\gamma\acute{\alpha}\lambda\omicron\upsilon\ \Delta\iota\omicron\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\rho\eta\tau\eta\rho$ , 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:

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## Face A

Βρογιμαρος Ἐπικράτου  
Διὶ Βρογιμαρου καὶ Κυρί-  
α εὐχήν, καὶ αὐτὸς ἑαυ-

4 τῷ μνημόσυνον. *vac.*

αἰνι οὐεβαν δεδασσιννι πατρε-  
ς σεμουν κορο[υ]μανη, σως κη  
γουμ ειε, καρπυς ειλικρινη εγο-

8 υννου *vac.*

*Relief*

αἰνι κος κακην αδδακετ κορο-  
[υ]μανη, σως κη γουμ ειε, τιττετι-  
[κ]μενος ειτου, ΕΙΚΑΔ αυτον μεκα-

12 [ς?] αν Τιαν *vac.*

[Translation of the Greek text, l. 1–4:] “Brogimaros, (Sohn) des Epikrates, für den Zeus des Brogimaros 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 entspränge (?), so soll er unter einem Fluch wandeln (?) und vor (?) Zeus - - -”.

## Face B

Εὐξάμενος πρὸς ἔπ-  
ος ἱεραῖς ἐπαοιδαῖς ἐν-  
γελάον *vac.* ἐγὼ *vac.* πάτρῃ τε

4 [γόν]οις μου, χεῖρ ὑπὲρ Ι[-  
].[Α[.....]εχειν *vac.*

*Relief*

[ - - - ]λακεδοη(ν)ων μηνε-  
[ - - - ]ροιο δάμαρτος Q *vac.*

8 [ - - - ]ΟΜωΕΙ δοξ’ Ἀριστο-  
----- ΝΕΠ -----

“Indem ich zu diesem Zweck meinen Wunsch durch heilige Beschwörungen ausgesprochen habe und wobei ich mich meines Geschlechtes und meiner Kinder erfreue ...”

Face C

.O..ME - - - - -

υἱὸς - - - - -

..Π.....H - - - - -

4 γλυκερω[.]ΑΠΟ - - - - -

*Relief*

*vac.*

Face D

[...]ΕΝ[ - - ] Βρογµα- *vac.*

ρος ἐγὼ μεγάλου Διὸς

ἀρητῆρ ἔ[ν]θα μένω *vac.*

4 ἱεροῖς ἐνὶ *vac.* καρποῖς

*Relief*

ΜΗΠΟϚΑΝΑ - - Ο...

ΟϚ - - - - A....E..Υ

ΑϚ..ΑΝ - - - - A - -

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).<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> 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  $\alpha\nu$  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’ < \* $h_2ei$ - ‘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 Διὸς (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 ἱεροῖς ἐνὶ καρποῖς “in gesegneten Bodenfrüchten” from face D. Indeed, the collocation μέγας Ζεὺς 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 25<sup>2</sup> (from Uluborlu) can support this interpretation because its apodosis reads as follows: τος | νι δ[ιως ζ]ιμελωσ τι μεκα | Τ[ιη/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)

<sup>2</sup> 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.



Fig. 1. Detail of the bottom of face A, lines 9–12, where the second Phrygian clause can be read

is the sole testimony. Nevertheless, this is a very common sequence, with a few peculiarities.<sup>3</sup> One of them is precisely the presence of *μεκα*, which, if it is indeed a dative which agrees with my restored *T[ιε/η]*, should in fact be *\*μεκαι*, following the *a*-stem inflection (e. g., Old Phrygian *Midai* M-01a or New Phrygian *μανκαι*). 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 *μανκαι* (Brixhe 1978: 13–14, 19–20 and 1997: 51–52).<sup>4</sup> Another problem is the sequence *τι* after *δ[ιως ζ]μελως*. It could be the same theonym in the dative commonly represented by *Ti*, *Tie* or *Tη* which appears in 67 *α|τετικμενος ατ | Τι αδειτου*, 76 *τιτετικμενος ατ Τι αδει|του* and 103 *το[ς] | [νι με] ζ[ι]μελως α Τι ατιτικμενος | [ειτ]ου*. 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 *t*, *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, *Ti* for *Tie* or *Tη* 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

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> It could be read as *μεκα|ι T[ιε/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|βιπετο*).

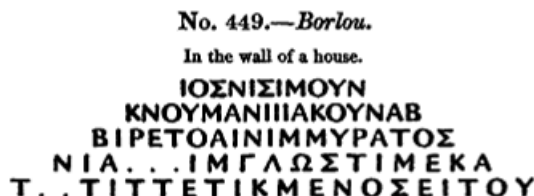


Fig. 2. Hamilton's copy (1842: 490) of the New Phrygian inscription 25

τιττετικμενος. In either case, Lubotsky's reading (1998: 417) [δεως ζ]μελως 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 εἰκάδ αὐτὸν μέκᾱ[ς?] ἄν Τιᾶν, I also read three hexametric feet here: εἰκάδ αὐτὸν μέκᾱν Τιᾶν. At present, we do not know how to scan εἰκάδ and in αὐτον we can assume that the final -v 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, εἰκάδ 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 τιττετικμεν[ος] | ας Τιαν ειτου and 99 τιττετικμενος | ας Τιαν ειτου. Only 111 has a different motivation, although the context is still obscure: ις κε εγ | τοιςινιοι κνουμαν Τιαν τε[-]|[-]μαρδι 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 EIK.

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

<sup>5</sup> 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 \*-ǵ- > -k- as an effect of the laryngeal \*h<sub>2</sub>. 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* | *kanutievaiš* | *devos ke mekas*

P-04c *iman olqitoro* | *edqe[s]* *mekas*

M-05 *apelan mekas tevanq*[- - -]

G-111 [- - -] *q mekas*

G-147 [- - -] *mekas tosk*[- - -]

G-239 *mekaiš* [- ? -]

B-05, 1.5 *vay niptiyay daker karatu enpsatus meka*[- - -] *asiya*..(?)

B-05, 1.9–10 *tubetiv oy nevov derqliv mekas key* | *koyis qbretov*

W-11 *μανκα μεκας σας κιυιν εν κε βιλαταδε|ναν νεκοινουν...*

25 ... *τος | νι δ[ιως ζ]μελωσ τι μεκα | T[ie] τιττετικμενος ειτου.*

First of all, *mekas* appears near a noun in most instances: *iman*, *devos*, *apelan*, *μανκα* and, probably, *T[ie]*. 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)<sup>6</sup> is a nominative singular (< *\*-ēn*), as, probably, is *devos* (< *\*de.os* < *\*d<sup>h</sup>so-s* 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 *koyis*, 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

and 211) and by Woodhouse (2006: 161). Although I accept this identification, I stress that I do not agree with their interpretations and explanations.

<sup>6</sup> 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 *kanutievaiš* (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 kanutievaiš*) and coordinated with *devos mekas* by the conjunction *ke*: ‘Vasus Iman, the great, the *kanutievaiš*, and the great god’. Unfortunately, the support, a stone block, does not provide any information on its purpose.

nominative singular with  $\mu\epsilon\kappa\alpha\varsigma$ . The problem here is the pronoun  $\sigma\alpha\varsigma$ , 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  $\mu\alpha\nu\kappa\alpha$ . 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 *mekā*’ (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  $-\varsigma$  in the nominative feminine pronoun (PIE  $*seh_2$ ) must be interpreted as an analogy based on masculine pronouns such as  $\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ,  $\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ ,  $\iota\omicron\varsigma$ , etc., if it is not a mere dittography in such a sequence:  $\Lambda\varsigma\varsigma\Lambda\varsigma$ . Indeed, it is not the only surprising feature<sup>7</sup> in this inscription regarding the pronoun  $\sigma\alpha$ , since in line 3 the dative  $\sigma\alpha$   $\sigma\omicron\pi\omicron\iota$  appears instead of the expected  $\sigma\alpha\iota$   $\sigma\omicron\pi\omicron\iota$  (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

	PIE	Phrygian	Greek
Nom. Sg.	$*méǵ-h_2$	<i>mekas</i>	$\mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\alpha\varsigma$
Acc. sg.	$*mǵ-éh_2-m$	$\mu\epsilon\kappa\alpha\nu$	$\mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\alpha\nu$ ( $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\nu$ )

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  $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\alpha\nu$ . Thus the only difference between the two forms is the shift  $*-\acute{g}- > -k-$ . This situation conforms perfectly to Lubotsky’s Phrygian *Lautverschiebung* theory. Indeed, the very well-known Phrygian word for bread is an exact parallel: PIE  $*b^h h_2 \acute{g}-os-$  > Phrygian  $\beta\epsilon\kappa\omicron\varsigma$  (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

<sup>7</sup> Despite the fact that in the New Phrygian corpus the dative  $\sigma\alpha$  occurs nine times (21, 42, 67, 81, 91, 94, 115, 124 and 129) while the more conservative  $\sigma\alpha\iota$  is attested only twice (35 and 69), the expected Old Phrygian  $a$ -stem dative is  $-a\iota$  in the light of *Midai* (M-01 a) or *avtay* (W-01 b). However, W-11 is an inscription from the late 4<sup>th</sup> 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. Τῖαν < \**djēm* (Greek Ζῆν), in gen. sg. Τιος < \**dijōs* (Greek Διός, Διφός) and in dat. sg. Τι, Τιε, Τιη < \**dijei* (Greek Διί, Διί), τετικμενος ‘accursed’ < \**de-dik-mh<sub>1</sub>no-* (Greek δια-δικάζω ‘judge’, κατα-δικάζω ‘condemn’), its common preverb τιτ < \**d(y)is-*, *knaik-* ‘woman, wife’<sup>8</sup> < \**g<sup>u</sup>neh<sub>2</sub>ik-* (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<sub>2</sub>-h<sub>2</sub>*. Because of *mekaiš* G-239 (interpreted as a dative plural in Brixhe 2008: 78 but perhaps an accusative plural < \*-ans as *hṛateraiš* 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 (μέγλη) and the oblique cases of the masculine and neuter (μέγαλο-) does not occur in Phrygian.

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<sup>8</sup> Its recorded forms are nom. sg. *knays* HP-114 and *knais* B-07, acc. sg. *κναικων* 116, gen. sg. *κναικο* 116 (whose ending must be -os, as in *τιος* or *οπουεος*, with a loss of the final -s) and the dubious *knaykē*? HP-114, probably the nom. pl. *knaykē*?[s] (Brixhe 2004: 79–80).

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