

31st Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference

Royce Hall, UCLA, Los Angeles, USA, November 2019.

The Phrygians from Βρίγες to Φρύγες: Herodotus 7.73, or the linguistic problems of a migration

Milena Anfosso

Concerning the Phrygian migration (ca. 12th century BCE), Herodotus (7.73) points out a bizarre name change. As long as the Phrygians lived in Europe with the Macedonians they were called Βρίγες; only after their migration to Anatolia they changed their name to Φρύγες. In the Greek sources, several ethnonyms related to the Phrygians and to their European ancestors/relatives can be found: Φρύγες (*Iliad* +), Βρίγες (Herodotus, Aelius Herodianus, Strabo, Stephanus of Byzantium), Βρύγες (Strabo), Βρύγοι (Herodotus, Strabo).

Gusmani (1958) and Detschew (1976) considered Φρύγες and Βρίγες etymologically related, attributing the initial consonants' difference to a regular phonological change PIE **b^h* > Greek /p^h/ <φ>, Thracian and Phrygian /b/, and defining the oscillation between /i/ and /u/ of the root vowel as a typical feature of Phrygian phonology. In my opinion, this view is untenable. First of all, these ethnonyms are not genuinely Phrygian forms, but Greek forms, i.e. *exonyms* (Jordan 2015: 163). Moreover, the outcomes of PIE **i* and **u* are stable in Phrygian, as well as in Herodotus' Greek. Thus, these ethnonyms must be analyzed separately according to their root vowel.

Keeping in mind the expected development PIE **b^h* > Greek /p^h/ <φ>, Thracian and Phrygian /b/, it is possible to state that the standard Greek ethnonym Φρύγ-ες designating the Phrygians, as well as the ethnonyms of the Thracian populations Βρύγ-οι and Βρύγ-ες, derive from the same PIE root **B^hrug-*. So, Brixhe (1993: 323; 2008: 777) assumed that the Phrygians must have called themselves **Bruges* before their migration. However, as far as we know, the root **B^hrug-* is not attested in the Phrygian corpus, so it can hardly be the Phrygian *endonym*. Instead, it must have been the *endonym* (Jordan 2015: 163) of one of the Proto-Phrygian tribes that shared the Balkans with the Greeks during the Balkan-Indo-European phase (De Lamberterie 2013: 42–50).

The ethnic equivalence between Φρύγες and Βρίγες is underlined also by Hesychios, in a gloss which adds another piece to the puzzle: Βρέκυν· τὸν βρίγα. Βρίγες γὰρ οἱ Φρύγες. Concerning Βρίγ-ες, Herodotus (7.73) explicitly states that he is reporting the *Macedonians'* point of view: ὡς Μακεδόνες λέγουσι. In my opinion, this is a clue to focus on the dialects of this region, more specifically on those of a small area including Pelasgiotis, Perrhaebia, and south-eastern Macedonia, which was, according to Hatzopoulos (2006: 49), the main contact zone between the Macedonians and the Phrygians before their migration. One of the characteristic features of the Thessalian dialects spoken in this area is the preservation of **w* <F>, also in the cluster **wr-*, which can be either preserved as <Fρ> or, as pointed out by Lejeune (1972: §185), fricativized as /vr/ <βρ>. In Macedonian as well <β> can represent /b/, /f/ and /v/ (Méndez-Dosuna 2012: 134). Thus, I think that the initial cluster of Βρίγες is not the outcome of PIE **b^hr-*, but of PIE **wr-*, which regularly survives also in Phrygian /vr/, but is not confused with /br/: cf. B-05, l. 4: *vebraṣ* vs. l. 5: *evraḍuṣ* (Brixhe & Lejeune 1984).

As for Hesychios' gloss Βρέκυν, in Byzantine Greek <β> represents regularly /v/. Surprisingly, it is possible to find exact parallels in the Paleo-Phrygian inscriptions (Brixhe & Lejeune 1984): W-01a *vrekun*, B-05, l. 3 *vrekan* (Brixhe 2004), possibly M-06 [v]ṛekun, hypothetically also HP-114 ṽṛ²ēkeṣ²?. In the light of the observations concerning the treatment of PIE *wr-, the ethnonym Βρίγες would be the Macedonian counterpart of what looks like the Phrygian *endonym* *vrek-*. Thus, it is possible to reconstruct an intermediate stage *wreg- > Macedonian Βρίγ-, Phrygian *vrek-*. The devoicing of PIE voiced stops is a common feature in Phrygian (still partially unexplained), so PIE *g > /k/ is unsurprising (Ligorio & Lubotsky 2018: 1823). Concerning the root vowel length, *vrek-* must contain *ě since PIE *ē and *eh₁ merged with *eh₂ as Phrygian /a/ (Ligorio & Lubotsky 2018: 1821). There is, however, a tendency to raise *ě in Phrygian, so this vowel can be represented indifferently by /e/ or /i/ (cf. *kubeleya* (B-01) vs. *kubileya* (W-04)). In Macedonian as well the raising of the medial vowels is very common. Thus, the supposed development from a common stage *wreg- > Macedonian Βρίγ-, Phrygian *vrek-* is consistent with Herodotus' assertion, Hesychios' gloss and the Paleo-Phrygian inscriptions.

In conclusion, the bizarre name change reported by Herodotus 7.73 can be interpreted as a “change of perspective”. Βρίγες would be the Macedonian *exonym* corresponding to the Phrygian *endonym* *vrek-*, assuming that the Proto-Phrygian *Wreg- tribe was one of those which actively took part in the migration to Anatolia. Φρύγες, on the other hand, is the regular development in Greek of the *endonym* of another Proto-Phrygian tribe named *B^hrug-. Herodotus (6.45 and 7.185) points out that, even in his day, a population named Βρύγ-οι, etymologically related to the *B^hrug- tribe, was still inhabiting Thrace. The Greeks adopted this ethnonym to refer to the Phrygians because originally the *B^hrug- tribe was geographically closest to them, even though other tribes, including the *Wreg- tribe, actually migrated to Anatolia. In other words, the Greeks transferred the designation for a peripheral component to the ethnic group as a whole (cf. French *allemand* for 'German'), and Φρύγες became the Phrygian *exonym*. This synecdochic transposition is in line with a common pattern for forming *exonyms*.

References:

- BRIXHE, Claude. 1993. “Du paléo- au néo-phrygien”. *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 137/2. 323–44.
- . 2004. “Corpus des inscriptions paléo-phrygiennes: Supplément II”. *Kadmos*, 43. 1–130.
- . 2008. “Phrygian”. *The Ancient Languages of Asia Minor* (ed.: WOODARD, Roger D.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 769–80.
- BRIXHE, Claude, LEJEUNE, Michel. 1984. *Corpus des Inscriptions Paléo-Phrygiennes*, vol. 1, *Textes*; vol. 2, *Planches*. Paris: Éditions Recherche sur la civilisation A.D.P.F.
- DETSCHER, Dimiter. 1976. *Die Thrakischen Sprachreste. 2. Auflage mit Bibliographie 1955-1974 von Zivka Velkova*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- GUSMANI, Roberto. 1958. “Studi sull'antico frigio: la popolazione, le glosse frigie presso gli antichi”. *Rendiconti dell'Istituto Lombardo, Classe di Lettere*, 92. 835–69.

HATZOPOULOS, Miltiades B. 2006. “Le parler des anciens Macédoniens d’après les découvertes épigraphiques récentes”. *La Macédoine. Géographie historique, langue, cultes croyances, institutions* (ed.: HATZOPOULOS, Miltiades B.). Paris: Éditions de Boccard. 35–51.

JORDAN, Peter. 2015. “The Endonym/Exonym Divide from a Cultural-Geographical Point of View”. *Challenges in Synchronic Toponymy. Structure, Context and Use* (ed. LÖFSTRÖM, Jonas, SCHNABEL-LE CORRE Betina). Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag GmbH. 163–80.

DE LAMBERTERIE, Charles. 2013. “Grec, phrygien, arménien: des anciens aux modernes”. *Journal des savants* 2013/1. 3–69.

LEJEUNE, Michel. 1972. *Phonétique historique du mycénien et du grec ancien*. Paris: Klincksieck.

LIGORIO, Orsat, LUBOTSKY, Alexander. 2018. “Phrygian”. *Handbook of Comparative and Historical Indo-European Linguistics* (ed.: KLEIN, Jared, JOSEPH, Brian, FRITZ, Matthias). Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. 1816–31.

MÉNDEZ-DOSUNA, Julián. 2012. “Ancient Macedonian as a Greek Dialect: A Critical Survey on Recent Work”. *Ancient Macedonia: Language, History, Culture* (ed.: GIANNAKIS, Georgios K.). Thessaloniki: Centre for the Greek Language. 133–45.