

Castalia:
Studies in Indo-European
Linguistics, Mythology,
and Poetics

Edited by

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Ritual Speech in the Neo-Phrygian Funerary Curse *Formulae*

Milena Anfosso

1 Introduction

The Neo-Phrygian corpus (1st–3rd centuries CE) officially consists of about 130 inscriptions¹ found in a small area in Central Anatolia, delimited by lake Eğirdir, lake Beyşehir, the northwestern tip of lake Tuz, and the following ancient cities: Dorylaion (Eskişehir), Kotiaion (Kütahya), and Ikonion (Konya). The inscriptions are written in the Greek alphabet of the imperial period.² More than half are bilingual Greek-Phrygian, less than half are Phrygian monolingual, and some are ambiguous. The deciphering of the texts is complicated because of our limited knowledge of Phrygian itself (as it is a fragmentary language whose attestations do not permit a coherent picture of its grammar and lexicon), in addition to the stonecutters' confusion between the round letters written in the Greek alphabet, and the segmentation difficulties connected to *sandhi* phenomena (namely assimilation and elision: see Brixhe 1999:293–313).

Despite the objective impossibility of a complete understanding of the Neo-Phrygian inscriptions, thanks to their Greek counterparts it is possible to state that all are fragments of funerary epitaphs. Almost all contain funerary curses publicly written on the gravestone by the owner(s) of the tombs (without concealing their identity), to warn any potential desecrators that evil would befall them if they should violate the grave in defiance of the prohibitions against doing so. The Near Eastern conception of the tomb as a *material object* and, therefore, as a *personal property* to be protected from any violation (Parrot 1939:9) played a huge role in this context.

1 The Neo-Phrygian inscriptions were mostly published by Haas 1966:113–128. Independent publications of the subsequent findings followed (see, e.g., Brixhe 1978:5–7; Brixhe & Waelkens 1981; Laminger-Pascher, 1984:35; Brixhe & Neumann 1985; Mitchell 1993:186; Brixhe & Drew-Bear 1997; Drew-Bear, Lubotsky, Üyümez 2008; Brixhe & Drew-Bear 2010; Avram 2015; Anfosso 2021:112–119). For an updated corpus (up to 2020) with transcriptions of all the Neo-Phrygian inscriptions, see Obrador-Cursach 2020a:525–613.

2 The epichoric Phrygian alphabet was abandoned after the Macedonian invasion of Anatolia (334–333 BCE); see *infra*, concerning the Dokimeion inscription.

The Neo-Phrygian corpus is in some respect redundant since it makes a strong usage of so-called *formulaic language*. By *formula*, I mean a set of words which appears to be prefabricated: that is, stored in long-term memory and retrieved whole at the time of use (Wood 2015:1–17). The basic phrasing (i.e., leaving aside all the possible spelling variations) of the curse *formula* in Phrygian runs as follows:

Ιος νι σεμουν κνουμανε καχουν αδδακετ τι(τ)τετικμενος ειτου

Whoever does any harm to this monument, let him be cursed.

Neo-Phrygian curse *formulae* against potential desecrators of the tombs are built with so-called “indeterminate” relative clauses (Yates 2014:5–6), where the relative pronoun in initial position refers to an entity which is indefinite and non-specific, i.e., “Whichever X does something bad to [inscribed object], [divinity] shall do something bad to X.” The fatalistic assumption that a tomb could be violated by someone in any circumstance may have influenced the syntactic construction of these curse protases.

The *formulaic character* of the Neo-Phrygian funerary curses pertains to *ritual speech* (Bax 2010:484–485). From a pragmatic point of view, the usage of specific verbs indicating speech acts or verbal activities (such as *ask*, *deny*, *beg*, *charge*, *wish*, etc.) is crucial in order to perform the *ritual act* itself, as the *ritual words* (*uerba concepta*) are considered identical with the *ritual actions*. In the case of funerary imprecations against grave desecrators, the speech act verb is *curse*, and the ritual action is *cursing*. Curses can be included in the category of *declarations*, according to John Searle’s model (1969:17): “Declarations bring about some alteration in the status or condition of the referred to object or objects solely in virtue of the fact that the declaration has been successfully performed.”

More precisely, Neo-Phrygian funerary curses can be understood as *supernatural declarations*, i.e., performative words that bring about the predicted harm through supernatural/divine power (Anfosso 2019b:7). Curses were meant to establish an automatic link between crime and penalty independently of socio-political institutions in case of violations, under the watchful eyes of metaphysical entities/deities, and through their direct intervention (Assmann 1992:53–54). One of the leading conceptions in Anatolian rural religiosity was the belief in the overseeing presence of the deities, what Stephen Mitchell (1993:187–195) refers to as “the rule of the gods.” It provided a sense of *juridical authority* that might have lacked outside urban contexts: indeed, curses were supposed to take over where laws were bound to fail or when

crimes remained undetected. As soon as the prohibition against grave desecration was transgressed (ἰος νι σεμουν κνουμανε κακουν αδδαχετ, “whoever does any harm to this monument”), the irrevocable punishment stated by the curse was expected to occur automatically by the intercession of the divinity (τι[τ]τετικμενος ειτου, “let him be cursed”). Given the *contract act value* of funerary curses, merely *spoken curses* were not considered enough to fulfill this task: they had to be *written*, and more specifically, *inscribed directly on the stone* (monument or stele) in order to be effective (Anfosso 2019b:8).

Whenever language is meant to produce specific effects on the world, several devices are put in place in order to increase its performative power. The rhetorical devices employed in the funerary curses are not merely a residue of an oral mission phase, but testify to a desire to put linguistic resources derived from oral ritual speech at the service of the new needs associated with writing (Akinaso 1982). In this paper, therefore, I will focus on the following ones:

- a) The usage and meaning of the speech act verb τι(τ)τετικμενος (§ 2);
- b) The bilingual structure (§ 3);
- c) The binomial expressions (§ 4);
- d) The meter (§ 5).

2 Interpretation of τι(τ)τετικμενος

Τι(τ)τετικμενος is the verb that characterizes the Neo-Phrygian funerary curse *formulae*. It can be analyzed as the middle perfect participle of the verb *τικ-, athematic and reduplicated, plus the preverb τι-. The participle is in conjunction with the verbal form ειτου, etymologically correspondent to PIE **h₁ei-tōd*, and identifiable as an imperative present 3rd sg. from PIE verbal root **h₁ei-* (LIV² s.v.; IEW s.v.), ‘to go’, which represents a perfect parallel to the Greek imperative 3rd sg. ἴτω, thus translatable as ‘let become!’ (Brixhe 2004:64–65; De Lamberterie 2013:40–41).

From an etymological point of view, I agree with Alexander Lubotsky (2004: 235–236), who reconstructs the origin of Neo-Phrygian τι(τ) < PIE **d(y)is-*, ‘split, divide in two’ (LIPP s.v.; the origin of **dis*, ‘in two’ is due to the cluster simplification of PIE **duí-s*, ‘twice’), with devoicing of the initial dental voiced stop, so PIE **d-* > Phrygian /*t-*/. The semantic development of Phrygian τι- would be the same of Greek διά (preverb and preposition), where the original meaning ‘in two’ became ‘through’, hence ‘from top to bottom’, and finally simply ‘very, thoroughly’ (cf. also Italic *dis-*, Old High German *za-*, *zi-*).

As for the etymology of *τικ-, scholars have pointed out two different options, namely a derivation from PIE **deik-*, ‘to indicate, show’ (LIV² s.v.;

IEW s.v.), or from PIE **(s)teig-*, ‘to sting, pierce’ (LIV² s.v.; IEW s.v.). Otto Haas (1966:87–88) considered *τετιχμενος* derived from PIE **(s)teig-* (“lack of better”). Igor Diakonoff and Vladimir Neroznak (1985:137–138) connected *τετιχμενος* to either PIE **deik-* or PIE **(s)teig-*; in their explanation, though, they seemed to incline towards this second option, without really explaining why. Vladimir Orel (1997:463) stated that Neo-Phrygian *τιχ-* is related to PIE **(s)teig-*, without further comments. On the other hand, Alexander Lubotsky (1998:420; 2004:235) associated *τιχ-* with PIE **deik-*. Martin L. West (2003:78; 2007:333) expressed his preference for a derivation from PIE **(s)teig-*. More recently, Bartomeu Obrador-Cursach (2020a:363) followed Lubotsky’s derivation from PIE **deik-*.

If Neo-Phrygian *τετιχμενος* derived from PIE **deik-*, with devoicing of the initial dental voiced stop, so PIE **d-* > Phrygian */t-/*, it would be cognate with the Greek word *δίκη*, ‘justice’, and its derivatives, in particular, according to Alexander Lubotsky (1998:420; 2004:235), *δια-δικάζω*, ‘to judge’. Considering the juridical value of the funerary curse *formulae* in the frame of the “rule of the gods” in Anatolia, as pointed out *supra*, such an etymology could be appropriate. However, originally, PIE **deik-* means ‘to show’, not ‘to judge’. This is a semantic development that Greek, Latin, and Germanic developed later, but it might not necessarily be shared by Phrygian. Indeed, as Saskia Peels (2016:109) correctly pointed out, *δίκη* and its derivatives started to be included in Greek legal terminology only in the 5th century BCE. Taking this into account, we would be dealing with a calque, i.e., a morpheme-by-morpheme translation from Greek into Phrygian (*δια-δικ-* = *τι-τιχ-*).

However, if we compare Phrygian funerary curses to Anatolian Greek funerary curses from Phrygia of the same time, we will see that the verb *δια-δικάζω*, ‘to judge’, is totally absent in their Greek counterparts: Greek translates Phrygian *τι(τ)τετιχμενος* with *κατηραμένος* (Strubbe 1997 nos. 175, 177, 193, 218) from *κατά-ἀράομαι*, literally ‘to call down curses upon’, and with *ἐπάρατος* (Strubbe 1997, nos. 4, 10, 41, 74, 79, 82, 90–100, 101–121, 123, 292, 359–367, 402) from *ἐπί-ἀράομαι*, literally ‘to imprecate curses upon’. Society in funerary curses is mentioned very rarely—if at all—and guilt as a moral value, or socio-political disasters, such as loss of a specific political status, are completely absent (Strubbe 1997:xix). To sum up, funerary curses in Anatolia under Roman rule, both in Greek and in Phrygian, are brutal: they explicitly intend to kill, to harm, to hurt as a revenge. The individual who caused any damage to the grave must be *universally accursed*.

Thus, in the frame of *ritual speech*, it seems preferable to me to connect *τετιχμενος* to PIE **(s)teig-*, ‘sting, pierce’. In this case, the Neo-Phrygian verb **τιχ-* would be comparable to the Greek verb *στίζω* < **στιγ-ιω*, ‘sting, prick, mark’.

The absence of /s/ at the beginning of the Phrygian form is not surprising, since we are dealing with the well-known *s-mobile.³ Connecting the Neo-Phrygian form τετυκμενος to PIE *(s)teig- seems phonologically acceptable as well, taking into account the devoicing of the voiced stop PIE *g > Phrygian /k/. Semantically, the act of ‘piercing’ conveyed by the PIE root *(s)teig- in Phrygian could be related to *magic rites* which prescribe harming someone by piercing a “voodoo doll” with sharp objects. The intended victim is supposed to suffer where the doll has been pierced. As explained by Daniel Ogden (1999:79–85), the usage of “voodoo dolls” destined to be twisted, pierced, bound, mutilated, or burnt, is firmly rooted in the *sympathetic* (or *imitative, homeopathic, analogical, illustrative*, etc.) magical thinking of both the Semitic Near East and the Indo-European world. Gestures are a possible option of this imitative *modus operandi*.

Daniel Ogden (1999:80–82) provided several examples of this kind of rites from the Semitic world. In ancient Egypt (around 2300 BCE), it was common to make wax or wood dolls representing the enemies of the Pharaoh as kneeling bound captives, to be distorted and then burnt. The existence of formalized curses is evident in fragments of clay pots and figurines inscribed with enemies’ names from the 19th/18th century BCE, to be smashed in order to break their power. The Babylonians had similar pre-battle rituals, with effigies of the enemy made from tallow and other materials intended to be twisted, distorted, and destroyed. The Assyrians used to burn effigies of demons, ghosts, and enemies according to ‘burning rituals’ called *Maqlû*.

Among the Indo-European populations, the Hittites used to flatten and melt clay or wax dolls (among other objects of various nature meant to be shattered, smashed or destroyed, see Ünal 1988:84), representing enemies to be restrained. The set of curses known as *Military Oaths* (CTH 427) is an Old Hittite text on two cuneiform tablets that describes a series of symbolic actions intended to represent the afflictions that should befall the oath-takers, should they break their word. It is interesting to note that many self-curses in the event of oath-breaking are accompanied by a ritual which involves figurines presenting with specific illnesses or meant to be smashed and destroyed (see, e.g., CTH 427, KBo

3 This “movable” prefix *s- appears at the beginning of some PIE roots, but it is absent from other occurrences of the same root (Southern 1999). In the case of *(s)teig-, outside Greek, the initial *s- is preserved in Germanic: from *stik-i, ‘sting’, we get Gothic *stik*, Old High German *stih*, Old Saxon *stiki*, Anglo-Saxon *stice*. On the other hand, Sanskrit provides other forms without initial *s-, such as a rare present with vocalism -e-, *tejate*, ‘to be sharp’, and an adjective in -to-, *tiktá-*, *nítikta-*, ‘sharp, pointed’. The adjectives °*tigmá-* and °*tíkṣṇa-*, ‘acute, pointed’, are used to characterize Indra’s weapon, the thunderbolt *vajra*, in the *Rigveda* (e.g. 1.130.4; 7.18.18).

6.34 III 12–23, a figurine representing a person with ascites, “full in its insides of water”; *ibid.*, III 24–29, a figurine thrown face down to the floor, to be trampled by the oath-takers’ feet).

Christopher Faraone (1991:173) carried out for the first time a specific study on clay and lead “voodoo dolls” in the Graeco-Roman world by collecting all the specimens found in Egyptian, Greek (in particular in the Kerameikos Cemetery, 400 BCE), and Near Eastern archaeological sites. György Németh (2018, with bibliography) has recently updated his survey by adding the most recent pieces discovered in Germany, Great Britain, France, Romania, Moldavia, etc. Clay “voodoo dolls” existed in India as well (Sadovski 2012:338): according to a counter-spell of *Kaśika-Sūtra* 39, if one finds a charmed effigy, the Brahman pierces it “with a hostile eye and shoots [an arrow] on places where [the effigy] has been wounded.” The effigy is explicitly said to be “made of clay” (12). The Latin poet Ovid (43 BCE–17/18 CE) attests in both *Heroides* (6.93–94) and *Amores* (3.7.27–30; 77–80) that “voodoo dolls” made of other materials, such as wax and wool (not preserved), were used in black magic rites:

Devovet absentis simulacraque cerea figit
94 *Et miserum tenues in iecur urget acus*

She places binding spells on people from afar, molds voodoo dolls out of wax, and pushes fine needles into their pathetic livers.

The rite of piercing the “voodoo dolls” was accompanied by specific spells with *enumeratio* of the individual organs of the victim’s body, finally focusing on vital items, in particular the liver, as pointed out by Ovid. The prescription of PGM, IV (Preisendanz 1973:64–180), lines 296–328, gives very precise indications concerning the position of the thirteen needles⁴ needed to pierce the clay doll so that the spell is effective. A perfect parallelism, even concerning the parts of the body to be pierced, can be found in the *Atharva-veda Śaunaka*, 3.25.3–6 (Sadovski 2012:340). Several *defixiones* in Latin, such as Audollent 1904, no. 135 (= Gager 1992, no. 80, or Gager 1992, no. 134 = CIL I² 2520), present detailed enumerations of all the conceivable constituents of the human anatomy (Versnel 1998:5–8) that must be cursed.

⁴ I.e., one in the head, two in the ears, two in the eyes, one in the mouth, two in the hypochondria, one in the hands, two in the sexual parts, and two in the soles of the feet.

The PIE root **(s)teig-*, ‘pierce’, as well as the act of ‘piercing’ someone’s body part (even if expressed through the usage of other roots in the different Indo-European languages), seem to be *specifically connected to magic* (curses, charms, rituals, etc.). For instance, in the PGM XVI (Preisendanz 1974:135–137), lines 15 and 64, the Greek verb *στιζω* < PIE **(s)teig-* is used to describe the pierced victim’s heart, with blood gushing out of the wound:

[...] *στιζαι την καρδιαν αυτ[ου]*, (15=64)
εκτηξον, και το αιμα αυτου εκ[θηλ]ασον φιλια, ερω[ω]τι, οδυνη

Pierce his heart, let it ooze, and suck out his blood because of love, passion, and pain.

The same image (even if the verbal root is different) can be found in another love charm from the *Atharvaveda Śaunaka*, 3.25.3d:

... *táyā vidhyāmi tvā hṛdí*

... with that **I pierce you in the heart**.

And the Hittite verb for ‘pierce’, *iškar-*, again in connection with the word ‘heart’, *kard-*, can be read in a violent curse from the *Treaty with the Gasgeans* (CTH 139.A, KBo 8.35 II 21–24):

[...] *GI.HI.A=KUNU=ma=kan āppa [n]āu*
nu šumenzan=pat ker=šemet iškarranian[du] // nu=kan mān
ling[āu]š šarradduma nu=za GU₄.HI.A=KUNU UDU.HI.A=KUNU
anduhšeš le haš[šanaz]i nu=š [m]aš=kan NIŠ DINGIR.MEŠ

May he [i.e., Zababa] turn back your arrows, and may they pierce your own hearts. If you break these oaths, may your cattle, sheep, and people not procreate. May these oaths strike(?) your children in their hearts. [l. Reichardt 1998:93]

In Gaulish, the PIE root **(s)teig-* commonly means ‘to bewitch’, if it was correctly identified by Pierre-Yves Lambert (2003) in the *Hospitalet-du-Larzac defixio*, dated back to the 1st century CE (RIG 2/2, L-98),

lunget-uton-id ponc ni-tixsintor sies

let her release whomever **they will have bewitched**,

and in the agent noun *an-digs*, based on the same root as *ni-tixsintor*, but with the negative preverb *an-*, ‘unbewitched’.

Thus, the semantic shift in Neo-Phrygian can be reconstructed as ‘to be pierced (τετιχμενος) through (τι) [as the victim of a spell/curse]’ > simply ‘accursed’.

3 Bilingual Structure

The examination of all the bilingual Neo-Phrygian funerary inscriptions of the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE allows us to extrapolate a “standard version” structured in the following way:

- a) At the beginning of the inscription there is an epitaph in Greek, an “unmarked” language, which states clearly the names of the deceased buried under the stele, of the people who built the tomb, and their family relationship:

E.g., Haas 1966 no. 19 (= Obrador-Cursach 2020a: 531 no. 5.1):
 Αὐρ. Τύραννος Παπᾶ καὶ Εἰρήνη | ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ
 ἑαυτοῖς ἐποίησαν | μνήμης χάριν

Aurelius Tyrannos Papas and Eirene, his wife,
 For themselves built in memory.

- b) Then, there is the proper funerary imprecation in Neo-Phrygian:

E.g., Haas 1966 no. 19 (= Obrador-Cursach 2020a: 531 no. 5.1):
 Ἰος νι σεμουν κνου|μανε κα[κον] <αδδακετ>
 ετιτετειχμενος ειτο[υ]

Whoever does any harm to this monument
 Let him be cursed.

The choice of Neo-Phrygian in the actual imprecations was intentional, as it was considered a *device to increase the force of the curse itself*: while the gods could be difficult, they could also be manipulated. Thus, one important strategy was communicating with the deities through so-called “code-switching with the gods” (as found in Love 2016), namely addressing the deities in their native

language, thus enhancing the chances of being answered. Fidelity to ancestral cults and traditional Phrygian divinities, such as Bas⁵ (Haas 1966 nos. 33, 36, 48, 86, 99, 111, 128) and, above all, *Ti-⁶ (Haas 1966 nos. 2, 3, 6, 7, 12, 14, 25, 26, 39, 44, 45, 50, 51, 53, 56, 57, 61, 62, 65, 67, 68, 70, 72, 73, 75, 77, 80, 85, 87, 92, 94, 97, 101, 102, 108, 112, 114, 120, 123, 127, 131), invoked in Phrygian, would prove the only possible way to effectively protect the tombs of the deceased.

This strategy is “condensed” in the Neo-Phrygian inscription Haas 1966 no. 96 (= Obrador-Cursach 2020a:549 no. 19.1), which features *code-switching*, i.e., a notable manifestation of bilingualism in which a bilingual speaker introduces a completely unassimilated word or phrase from another language into his speech.⁷ More specifically, in the inscription in question, the protasis (the “indefinite” relative clause) is in Greek, while the apodosis is in Neo-Phrygian. Thus, the code-switching in the inscription Haas 1966 no. 96 does not occur at a random spot of the funerary imprecation, but in the part where the ancestral gods are invoked in order to punish the potential violator of the tomb:

- 1 (GR.) Ὅς ἄν τούτῳ τῷ μνημείῳ κακῶς προσποιήσῃ ἢ τοῖς
- 2 προγεγραμμένοις ὑπεναντίον τι πράξῃ, (N-Ph.) με δεῶς κε
- 3 ζεμελωσ κε τιτετικμενος ειτου.

Whoever will damage this monument
or does anything against previous orders,
will be cursed among gods and men.

This specific type of bilingualism, where prayers, hymns or invocations are written in the sacred (dead or living) language, whereas the other para-textual elements are written in another, non-sacred one, usually the *lingua franca* of the time, is very common in ancient religious texts. It is possible to find several parallels in the Near Eastern world. The more obvious examples for the Anatolian area are the Hittite-Luwian bilingual magic texts, where the descriptive parts of the rituals are written in Hittite, but the spells are in Cuneiform Luwian, and they are introduced by *nu lūwili kiššan hukzi / hukkiškizzi*, “then, he conjures in Luwian as follows,” or by *lu lūwili kiššan memāi*, “then, he says in Luwian what follows” (Starke 1985:14; see, e.g., KUB XXXV 8 [p. 43]; KUB IX 31 [p. 53]; KUB XXXII 8 [pp. 118–119]; KBo XXIX 9 [p. 123], KUB XXXV 14 [p. 124]; KUB XXXV

5 On the Phrygian god Bas, see Obrador-Cursach 2017 and Anfosso 2021.

6 On the Phrygian god *Ti-, see Anfosso 2023.

7 On the role of this inscription in assessing the controversial status of Phrygian as a living language in the imperial period, see Anfosso 2019b:11–12.

43 [p. 144]; KUB XXXV 11–12 [p. 163]; KBo XXIX 25 [p. 225]; KBo XII 30 [p. 244]; KUB XXXV 7 [p. 366]; KBo XXIX 60 [p. 392]). However, the closest parallel from a chronological perspective would be the magic bilingual Greek-Egyptian spells included in PGM III and IV, where the contextualization of the spell is in Greek, but the spell itself is in Old Coptic Egyptian (Love 2016).

4 Binomial Expressions

In one of the most common variants of the Neo-Phrygian curse apodoses it is possible to isolate the binomial expression $\mu\epsilon \delta\epsilon\omega\varsigma \kappa\epsilon \zeta\epsilon\mu\epsilon\lambda\omega\varsigma \kappa\epsilon$ (Haas 1966 nos. 3, 4, 5, 7, 25, 39, 40, 63, 73, 93, 96, 112, 118, 121, 128, although with some orthographic variations):

$\mu\epsilon \delta\epsilon\omega\varsigma \kappa\epsilon \zeta\epsilon\mu\epsilon\lambda\omega\varsigma \kappa\epsilon \tau\iota(\tau)\tau\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma \epsilon\iota\tau\omicron\upsilon$

May he be accursed among gods and men.

The use of *formulaic binomials* (Watkins 1995:46; West 2007:99–100), i.e., according to Yaakov Malkiel (1959), “the sequence of two words pertaining to the same form-class, placed on an identical level of syntactic hierarchy, and ordinarily connected by some kind of lexical link,” is a rhetorical device meant to increase the solemnity of ritual speech, as it slows down the pace of the sentence. Here, $\delta\epsilon\omega\varsigma$, ‘gods’ and $\zeta\epsilon\mu\epsilon\lambda\omega\varsigma$, ‘men’, are in the same case, morphologically identifiable as dative,⁸ they depend on the same preposition $\mu\epsilon < \text{PIE } *me$ (LIPP s.v., cf. Greek $\mu\epsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}$), and they are connected by the copulative enclitic conjunction $\kappa\epsilon < \text{PIE } *k^ue$. Moreover, they are arranged from the shortest ($\delta\epsilon\omega\varsigma$) to the longest ($\zeta\epsilon\mu\epsilon\lambda\omega\varsigma$), in accordance with Behaghel’s Law of Increasing Terms (1909), a fundamental rule in word order.

The antithetic pairing “deities and humans” evoked in the Neo-Phrygian formulaic binomial $\delta\epsilon\omega\varsigma \kappa\epsilon \zeta\epsilon\mu\epsilon\lambda\omega\varsigma \kappa\epsilon$ to express the “universality” of the curse derives directly from Indo-European (West 2007:124–125). In the worldview of the Indo-Europeans there was a primary opposition between the beings of Heaven, the deities, PIE $*d\acute{i}-\acute{e}u-$ (IEW s.v.; NIL:70–71), and the creatures of Earth, the humans, PIE $*(d^h)\acute{e}ǵ^h-m-e/on-$ (IEW s.v.; NIL:87). The preservation of the Indo-European roots in Phrygian is remarkable: Neo-Phrygian dat. pl. $\delta\epsilon\omega\varsigma$,

⁸ It is very likely that Phrygian $-\omega\varsigma < *-\acute{o}is$, $*-\acute{o}isi$, derives from a convergence of locative and dative, just like Greek $-\omicron\iota\varsigma$.

‘gods’ < PIE **dʰh₂so-*; Neo-Phrygian dat. pl. ζεμελως, ‘men’ < PIE **(dʰ)ǵʰem-elo-* (with palatalization before a front vowel in Phrygian), cf. Greek χαμαλός ‘low, located at ground level’ (but also, even if with another inflectional theme, Latin *humilis*, ‘low, humble’).

Parallels of the Neo-Phrygian formulaic binomial δεως κε ζεμελως κε can be found, e.g., in Vedic, Italic, and Celtic:

- a) In *Rigveda* 4.54.3cd, it is possible to read: *devéṣu* (< **deḷmoḷsu*) *ca Savitar mánuṣeṣu ca* | *tvám no átra suvatād ánāgasah*, “O Savitar, thou shalt impel (i.e., in the future) sinless us among both gods and men here.” Another passage in 7.46.2ab describes Rudra concerned about the fate of both “human and celestial races,” *kṣámyasya jánmanah* [...] *divyásya*.
- b) As for Latin, Quintus Ennius (239–169 BCE) uses the formula *diuomque hominumque* several times in the *Annales* (Skutsch 1985), not only to translate the Homeric phrase πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε with reference to Jupiter: see, e.g., *Annales* 6.203, *Tum cum corde suo diuom pater atque hominum rex* | *effatur*; 8.284, *multorum ueterum leges diuomque hominumque*.
- c) A Latin-Gaulish bilingual inscription (RIG 2/1, E-2) carved on a boundary stone dating back to the 2nd century BCE found at Vercelli designates the land of a certain Acisius as follows in the Gaulish version: ΤΕΥΟΧΤΟΝΙΟΝ, *dēwo-χdonio-* (ll. 11–12). Michel Lejeune (1977:602–606) analyzed this *dvandva* compound adjective applied to *atom* or *atoš*, ‘field’ as “divine and terrestrial, mortal,” therefore “field of gods and men,” translated in the corresponding Latin inscription by the expression *communem deis et hominibus* [sc. *campum*].

A variant of the *formula* με δεως κε ζεμελως κε in the Neo-Phrygian corpus is με ζεμελως κε δεως κε (Haas 1966 nos. 6, 42, 92, 97, 113, 129), with inversion of the order of the members in the binomial expression. After a thorough inspection of the inscriptions that display this variant, it is possible to say that—at least by me—no evident patterns justifying this specific choice have been detected. Thus, the variant might have arisen in the transmission of the *formula* as a simple corruption of the most common version of the binomial by metathesis, i.e., a reversal of the traditional word order. However, as pointed out by Laura Massetti (per personal communication), another possible explanation could be provided by Behaghel’s Second Law (1909), which states that the element perceived as less important by the speaker, in this case, ζεμελως, ‘humans’, is placed before the more important one, i.e., δεως, ‘gods’, the actual agents of the curse.

5 Meter of the Neo-Phrygian Curse *Formulae*

Since the beginning of the 20th century, there have been several attempts to identify a metrical scheme in the Neo-Phrygian funerary curses (see West 2003:77–81, with refs.). As they are built with *formulaic language*, it would be appropriate to expect meter as one of the devices that foster their memorization and transmission, while increasing their performative power as supernatural declarations. For the sake of conciseness, I will comment only on the two most recent metrical interpretations, i.e., Alexander Lubotsky's (1998), and Martin L. West's (2003), before expressing my view on the matter.⁹

Alexander Lubotsky (1998) tried to trace back the variants that characterize the Neo-Phrygian curse *formulae* to a single archetype through the reconstruction of a “proto-*formula*” in dactylic hexameters (– U U – U U – U U – U U – U U – ×). A quantitative opposition between long and short vowels was lost in the Neo-Phrygian period, so syllables could be long only *per positionem*, and in the presence of diphthongs. Taking into account these constraints, Alexander Lubotsky reconstructed the metrical “proto-*formula*” in the following way:

ΙΟΣ ΝΙ ΣΕΜΟΥΝ ΚΝΟΥΜΑΝΕΙ ΚΑΧΟΥΝ ΑΔΔΑΧΕΤ ΑΙΝΙ ΑΤΕ(Α)ΜΑΣ / ΑΙΝ'ΑΤΕΑΜΑΙΣ
ΜΕ ΖΕΜΕΛΩΣ ΚΕ ΔΕΩΣ ΚΕ ΤΙΕ ΤΙ ΤΕΤΙΚΜΕΝΟΣ ΕΙΤΟΥ

And whoever does harm to this tomb or this monument,
let him be cursed by Ti- among men and gods.

However, in my opinion, the “proto-*formula*” reconstructed by Alexander Lubotsky displays some problems. The most common variant in the curse *formulae*, that is, ΙΟΣ ΝΙ ΣΕΜΟΥΝ ΚΝΟΥΜΑΝΕΙ ΚΑΧΟΥΝ ΑΔΔΑΧΕΤ, has a sequence of only four dactyls. Lubotsky considers ΚΑΧΟΥΝ = *kakūn* < **kakon* and ΚΝΟΥΜΑΝΕΙ = *knūmänei*, because etymologically derived from the same root as the Greek verb κνύω, ‘scratch’, in the zero grade. In order to fill the hexameter, Alexander Lubotsky searches in the preserved Neo-Phrygian material to find a proper conclusion. The variant attested in the inscriptions Haas 1966 nos. 112 and 120, ΑΙΝΙ ΑΤΕ(Α)ΜΑΣ / ΑΙΝ'ΑΤΕΑΜΑΙΣ, allows him to fill the gap, thus arriving at six dactyls. However, this integration seems rather artificial to me, because this is a very rare variant in the Neo-Phrygian corpus. Plus, the word order ΜΕ ΖΕΜΕΛΩΣ ΚΕ ΔΕΩΣ ΚΕ looks like a corruption by metathesis of the word order ΜΕ ΔΕΩΣ ΚΕ ΖΕΜΕΛΩΣ ΚΕ, which

⁹ Michele Bianconi (2023) recently presented his work in progress on Phrygian meter at the 32nd UCLA Indo-European Conference. We both independently agreed on the somehow unsatisfactory nature of these metrical interpretations.

is the most widely attested in the preserved Neo-Phrygian epigraphic corpus (με δεως κε ζεμελωσ κε: Haas 1966 nos. 3, 4, 5, 7, 25, 39, 40, 63, 73, 93, 96, 112, 118, 121, 128; vs. με ζεμελωσ κε δεως κε: Haas 1966 nos. 6, 42, 92, 97, 113, 129).

Martin L. West (2003) apparently recognized in the preserved Neo-Phrygian curse *formulae* a sequence of short verses, of the type of the Greek glyconic (δεως κε ζεμελωσι κε, $\times \times - \cup \cup - \cup \times$), of the Greek pherecratean (τιττετικμενος ειτου, $\times \times - \cup \cup - -$), and of the iambic metron (ιος νι σεμουν, $\times - \cup -$). These are very archaic verses in Greek, attested from the 7th to the 5th century BCE, which also find parallels in other Indo-European languages, namely the octosyllabic verses ($\times \circ \circ \circ \cup - \cup \times$), comparable to Greek glyconic, and the heptasyllabic verses ($\times \times \circ \circ \cup - \times$), comparable to Greek pherecrateans, of the *Rigveda*. According to West's reconstruction, therefore, the Neo-Phrygian "proto-formula" would fit within the framework of one of the Indo-European metrical prototypes (4+8 [G], 8 [G], 7 [G ^]), as he reconstructed them in his 1973 paper:

ιος νι σεμουν → 4 syllables, "iambic monometron";
 κνουμανει κακουν αδδακετ → 8 syllables, "glyconic" (G);
 δεως κε ζεμελωσι κε → 8 syllables, "glyconic" (G);
 τιττετικμενος ειτου → 7 syllables, "pherecratean (or cataleptic glyconic)"
 (G ^).

The idea of detecting a metrical structure directly inherited from Indo-European in the Neo-Phrygian curse *formulae* could appear very attractive at first glance. The presence of the binomial δεως κε ζεμελωσ κε, which finds etymological and conceptual parallels in other Indo-European languages, would seem to be a rather striking hint in this direction. However, there is no evidence for this metrical pattern in the more ancient Paleo-Phrygian corpus: so, why would a combination of such archaic and rare meters suddenly reemerge in Roman Phrygia? Moreover, Indo-Europeans did not have inscribed steles to protect the tombs of their deceased from potential wrongdoers. The earliest funerary curses are attested in a Semitic environment,¹⁰ i.e., by ancient Egyptian tombs of the fourth dynasty, around 2600 BCE (Assmann 1992:56–65, with refs.).

10 The most ancient funerary curses in the Indo-European world are attested in Anatolian languages in contact with Semitic civilizations, e.g., in Hieroglyphic Luwian (inscriptions dated between the 9th and the 7th centuries BCE, see Hawkins 2000, TILSEVET, KARKAMIŠ A18 h, SHEIZAR, KULULU 2), in Lycian (from the 6th to the 4th century BCE, see Schweyer 2002) and then in Lydian (in the 4th century BCE, see Payne & Wintjes 2016:82–86).

However, Alexander Lubotsky (2017) recently focused again on a Neo-Phrygian inscription, and I find his comments concerning meter very relevant. Indeed, he noticed that the punctuation marks on the Dokimeion inscription (W-11, Brixhe 2004:7–26), i.e., the oldest Phrygian inscription written in the Greek alphabet (late 4th/early 3rd century BCE), are used to divide the text into six verses of almost 17 syllables each. In this case, it looks like we are dealing with an actual attempt to imitate in Phrygian the dactylic hexameter that was used to compose the first metrical funerary epitaphs in Greek¹¹ (González González 2019:25). Here is the Phrygian text (after Lubotsky 2017:428 = Obrador-Cursach 2020a:524):

- (a) (1) μανκα μεκας σας κιυιν εν κε βιλταδε- (2) -ναν νεκ οινουν :
 (b) ποκραιου κη γλουρεος γαμενουν (3) σα σοροι ματι μακραν :
 (c) βλασκον κε τακρις κε λουν- (4) -ιου μροτις λαπτα ματια οινουν :
 (d) νικοστρατος (5) κλευμαχοι μιρος αιδομενου ματιν κισυις [:]
 (e) μο- (6) .κρος υιταν παρτιας πλαδε πορκορο οσ..- (7) -ρος παντης :
 (f) πεν(-)νιτι ιος κορο αν(-)δετουν (8) σουν ομαστα ομνισιτ ους¹²

Alexander Lubotsky (2017:429) attributed this attempt at metrical regularization to an initiative of the “Phrygian aristocracy.” However, Dokimeion (modern İscehisar, province of Afyonkarahisar) was not an originally Phrygian city: it was a “military colony” founded by General Dokimos approximately in 310 BCE, so I do not think that we can really speak of “Phrygian aristocracy” *stricto sensu* in this case. As Christian Marek (2016:195) explained very well, the Macedonian ethnic component was so strong that its members called themselves “Dokimeian Macedonians.” Thus, it would be more correct to say that we are dealing with a case of mixed marriage between the new Hellenophone Macedonian dominators and the Phrygophone natives, as the Greek anthroponyms present in the epitaph, Νικόστρατος (line 4) and Κλευμάχος (line 5), as well as the Anatolian name of Νικόστρατος’ daughter, Tatis (Zgusta 1964:496), attested by her epitaph in Greek (Drew-Bear 1985; Brixhe 2004:26), seem to suggest.

11 As noted by Marta González González (2019:36), the usage of the elegiac couplet (hexameter + pentameter) in funerary epitaphs goes back to the mid-6th century BCE, although it is hard to determine why funerary poetry got associated with it in the first place. Previously, funerary epitaphs were written in hexameters. We may perhaps attribute this to the influence and prestige of the epic poetry which mirrored the values of the subjects and commissioners of the epitaphs, i.e., the members of the local aristocracies.

12 The translation of this inscription is problematic, and the segmentation is unsure. On the interpretation of the last verse of the inscription, with a slightly different segmentation compared to Lubotsky’s one, see Obrador-Cursach 2020b.

Moreover, the white marble stele with the engraved inscription closely resembles Macedonian models (Brixhe 2004:8–9, 26). In any case, the commissioner of this inscription (probably Tatis herself?) saw the attempt at metrical regularization (despite the lack of a Phrygian poetic tradition, at least as far as we know) as a way to elevate the style of the epitaph, indirectly suggesting Phrygian equality vis-à-vis the new politically dominating Hellenophone in-laws.

Alexandru Avram (2015:213–215), for his part, also noticed an attempt at metrical regularization in the later Neo-Phrygian inscription engraved on the side A of the *bomos* of Nacoleia (modern Seyitgazi), datable to the 3rd century CE on a stylistic basis (Phrygian text after Obrador-Cursach 2020a:527–529, no. 2.2):

αινι ουεβαν δεδασσιννι πατρε-
ς σεμουν κορο[υ]μανη, σως κη
γουμειε, καρπυς ειλικρινη εγο-
υννου *vac.* (8)

αινι κος κακην αδδακετ κορο-
[υ]μανη, σως κη γουμειε, τιττετι-
[κ]μενος ειτου, εικ αδ αυτον μεκα-
αν Τιαν *vac.* (12)

The commissioner of the inscription in Phrygian is the descendent (probably the eldest son, depicted with a scroll in his hands on the *bomos*, see Avram 2015:213) of a family related to the priesthood of “Zeus of Brogimaros,” where Brogimaros is to be identified with the priest and founder of the local cult in question (Avram 2015:203–204). In general, the Neo-Phrygian epitaphs of the Roman Era are not the product of the Hellenized urban elite, but of rural dwellers who just wanted to commemorate their deceased relatives and to protect their tombs (Anfosso 2019b:4). In lines 4–8 of the inscription, Alexandru Avram (2015:214) detected a first attempt at metrical regularization, probably an elegiac couplet composed of a hexameter (αἰνὶ ουεβᾶν δεδᾶσσιννὶ πᾶτρῆς σεμουν κοροῦμᾶνῆ) and a pentameter (σῶς κῆ γουμειε, || κᾶρπυς ειλικρινη εγουνοῦ, although “der zweite Teil des Pentameters einen zusätzlichen (und störenden) Fuß aufweisen würde, κᾶρπυς”). Concerning lines 8–12, Alexandru Avram (2015:215) noticed that their metrical scansion is supposed to mirror that of the contemporary Greek inscription on side B of the altar (N.Phr. αἰνὶ κὸς κᾶκῆν ἄδδᾶκετ κοροῦμᾶνῆ, five feet, exactly like Gr. εὐξάμενος πρὸς ἔπος ἱεραῖς ἐπαιδαίς; N.Phr. σῶς κῆ γουμειε, τιττετικμενὸς εἴτου, five feet, exactly like Gr. νηελᾶον <γάρ?> ἐγὼ πάτρη τε [γόν]οις μου; finally, N.Phr. εικ αδ αυτον μεκαν Τιαν should reflect the incomplete Gr. χεῖρ ὑπὲρ I[.]A[.....]εχειν).

Alexander Lubotsky's (1998) and Martin L. West's (2003) attempts to reconstruct a metrical Neo-Phrygian "proto-formula" require too many manipulations of the texts attested by the inscriptions, and they do not lack a certain degree of arbitrariness. It must be emphasized that, beyond all the "proto-formulae" that can be postulated, too many elements in the Neo-Phrygian inscriptions, namely additions, variants, or simply errors of various kinds, are opposed to a coherent metrical analysis of the texts.¹³ Taking that into account, it is very difficult, at least in my opinion, to succeed in isolating metrical forms that make sense. However, in light of the Dokimeion and Nacoleia inscriptions, it is possible to argue that at least some Phrygians perceived the metrical structure of the Greek funerary epitaphs as a trait belonging to the style of the socially higher Hellenophone classes, to be imitated in the Phrygian epichoric language as well as a statement of social equality.¹⁴

The desire to imitate a metric structure in a given language without truly possessing the technical means of mastering its constraints is a frequent feature among the most humble classes of the population. As observed by Martin L. West (2003:84), "in lower-class Greek epitaphs we often find metrical formulae and clichés derived from real funerary verse but not successfully put together to make a properly metrical text." I recall, in this respect, also the Latin funerary epigrams of the late Republican and Imperial Era (from the 1st century BCE to the 3rd century CE) composed in a sort of emulation or approximation of dactylic hexameters. Again, the commissioners of these kinds of inscriptions were, in most cases, members of the lower layers of society, very often freed slaves. The funerary epitaph of Sempronia Moschis (Warmington 1940 no. 42 = CIL VI, 26192), found in Rome, and datable to the 1st century BCE, is a good example of "hexametric rhythm":

*Hic is illa sita pia frug. casta | Pudic. Sempronian
Moschis | cui pro meriteis ab coniuge |
gratia relatast.*

13 I totally agree with Michele Bianconi's (2023) statement that caution is needed since it is possible to get almost anything out of the material.

14 Michele Bianconi 2023 made the alternative proposal to divide the verses of 17 syllables of the Dokimeion epitaph in sequences of "Phrygian pentasyllables" and "Phrygian dodecasyllables," meters which, in his view, would account for most of the Neo-Phrygian formulaic material. In general, his proposal looks to me just as arbitrary as Lubotsky's (1998) and West's (2003) reconstructions of "proto-formulae". In light of the socio-linguistic context described *supra*, an imitation of Greek hexameters appears more justifiable to explain the textual features of the Dokimeion inscription.

Here rests the reputed Sempronia Moschis, respectful, honorable, chaste and modest, to whom thanks have been rendered by her husband on account of her merits.

6 Conclusions

The study of the rhetorical devices employed in the Neo-Phrygian funerary curse *formulae* that I have carried out throughout this paper has led me to the following conclusions:

- a) Τι(τ)τετικμενος (§ 2) means ‘accursed’ (cf. Greek *κατηραμένος*, *ἐπάρᾱτος*) and it is the verb that describes the ritual speech act. I have analyzed it as the middle perfect participle of the verb *τικ-* < ΠΙΕ **(s)teig-*, ‘sting, pierce’ (LIV² s.v.; IEW.), since I see the act of ‘piercing’ as originally related to black magic rites which prescribe harming someone by piercing a “voodoo doll” with sharp objects. The semantic shift is reconstructable as ‘to be pierced (τετικμενος) through (τι) [as the victim of a spell/curse]’ > simply ‘accursed’.
- b) The bilingual structure (§ 3) that characterizes the Neo-Phrygian inscriptions, i.e., epitaph in Greek vs. curse in Neo-Phrygian, was intentional in the frame of ritual speech (cf. Hittite-Luwian bilinguals, Greek-Coptic bilinguals, etc.). The fidelity to the ancestral language was perceived as the only way to effectively invoke the ancestral gods in order to protect the tombs from desecrators.
- c) The use of formulaic binomials (§ 4) in accordance with Behaghel’s Law of Increasing Terms, such as *με δεως κε ζεμελως κε*, is meant to slow down the pace of the sentence and increase the solemnity of ritual speech. Etymological parallels of this formulaic binomial to express the concept of “universality” in the Indo-European world can be found, e.g., in Vedic, Italic, and Celtic.
- d) Concerning meter (§ 5), it is very hard to detect a coherent metrical scheme in the Neo-Phrygian curse *formulae* because of the countless spelling variations in the texts and our complete ignorance of the Phrygian poetic tradition. In the most recognizable cases (e.g., the Dokimeion and Nacoleia inscriptions), the authors were simply trying to reproduce the overall impression of the Greek funerary epitaphs in dactylic hexameters (or, possibly, elegiac couplets) in Phrygian. Imitating a metrical structure, without actually possessing the technical skills required to master it (or a poetic tradition to refer to), is a common feature among the lower social classes wanting to imitate the upper classes.

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