

On the Etymology of the Greek and Phrygian Words for ‘woman’

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Greek γυνή, gen. sg. γυναικός and Phrygian *knays*, gen. sg. *knaykos* are both descended from what is traditionally reconstructed as the Proto-Indo-European word for ‘woman, wife’, **g^wenh₂*, which originally belonged to the proterodynamic declensional type: nom. sg. **g^wen-h₂*, gen. sg. **g^wn-eh₂-s*.

Some descendants in the various branches of Indo-European:

- Sanskrit *jani-* ~ *gnā-*,
- OCS *žena* (*ā*-stem), Old Prussian *genna* (*id.*);
- Proto-Germanic **kwenōn-* (*n*-stem);
- OIr. *ben* ~ gen. sg. *mna*;
- Luwian *wa-na-*;
- Arm. *kin* ~ gen. sg. *knoj* (but with nom. pl. *kanay-k*’);
- TocharianB *śana*.

The old assumption that the Phrygian reflex is *benā* (as argued by, e.g., Lejeune 1979) is untenable. There are no examples of labiovelars developing into bilabials in Phrygian, but rather the opposite: labiovelars apparently lose their labial element, as exemplified by Phrygian *ke* < **k^we* ‘and’. The majority of researchers of Phrygian now accept the Lautverschiebung (i.e. the devoicing of plain voiced stops) for Phrygian (see Lubotsky 2004), which is incompatible with the voiced character of the first stop in *benā*, and Brixhe and Neumann’s proposal (1985) that the voiceless stop in *knayk-* is due to neutralization of voicing before a nasal is likewise no longer relevant.

Proto-Greco-Phrygian

The close genetic relationship between Greek and Phrygian has long been recognized and the argument for a common Greco-Phrygian stage is extensively presented in Neumann’s *Phrygisch und Griechisch* (1988).

Some important common phonetic developments include:

- vocalization of inter-consonantal and word-initial pre-consonantal laryngeals:
 - **h_{1/2/3} / #_C, C_C* > **e/a/o*:
 - e.g. **h₁su-* ‘well’ > Gr. εὖ, Phr. *ev-*; **h₂nēr* ‘man’ > Gr. ἀνήρ, Phr. *anar*;
- vocalization of resonant and laryngeal clusters:
 - *CRH_{1/2/3}C* > *Crā/ē/ōC*;
 - e.g. **ǵlh₃ros* ‘yellow’ > Gr. χλωρός ‘green’, Phr. γλουρεος ‘made of gold’ (with regular **ō* > ου; an *ejo*-adjective of material)
 - *CRHV* > *CaRV*;
 - e.g. **ǵ^{hr}Hit-* > Gr. χάρις, Phr. *garit-*
- debuccalization of intervocalic and initial **s*:
 - *s / #_V, V_V* > *h*;
 - e.g. **seǵ^h-* ‘to hold’ > Gr. *ἐχ-, Phr. *eg-*

The latest stage of Proto-Greco-Phrygian had the following phonological features:

- an unshifted consonantal system (i.e. T ~ D ~ D^h), which develops differently in the two languages (to T ~ D ~ T^h in Greek and to T ~ T ~ D in Phrygian);
- vocalic resonants (which later vocalize independently);
- two series of velars: plain (merged from old pure and palato-velars) and labialized;
- at least one series of palatalized or assibilated consonants (*tʲ, *dʲ, *dʲ^h);
- no laryngeals.

The Phrygian and Greek data

Greek paradigm

nom. sg.	γυνή	nom. pl.	γυναῖκες
gen. sg.	γυναικός	gen. pl.	γυναικῶν
dat. sg.	γυναικί	dat. pl.	γυναίξι
acc. sg.	γυναῖκα	acc. pl.	γυναῖκας

Phrygian paradigm

nom. sg.	knays	nom. pl.	knayke(s)
gen. sg.	κναικο (?)	gen. pl.	
dat. sg.		dat. pl.	
acc. sg.	κναικαν	acc. pl.	

Oblique stem in Proto-Greco-Phrygian: *g^w(V)naik-

The Phrygian nominative knays

- Phrygian final clusters are reduced: nom. sg. *-vanak* 'king' < *vanakts, dat. sg. *vanaktey*; 3pl. perf. *δακαρεν* 'they have put' < *d^heh₁-k-ēr-ent.
- No instances of ***-VV̄T#* in Phrygian, only *-VV̄s*, thus:
- *knayks > knays
- The only remaining form without *-ik-* in Greek and Phrygian is γυνή.

Root vocalism

- The original Proto-Greco-Phrygian paradigm must have included forms both with and without a vocalic element in the root.
- Likely origin of alternation: *g^wnh₂V- > *g^wanh₂V- (Beekes 2010) against *g^wnh₂C- > *g^wnāC-;
 - only possible if what follows the laryngeal is a resonant;
 - in turn, resonant must be followed by a vowel and a consonant in different forms:
 - nom. sg. *g^wnh₂-RéC-(s) > *g^wnā-RéC-(s) ~ gen. sg. *g^wnh₂RC-ós > *g^wanRC-ós
 - The extension *-ik-* has the required *-R(e)C-* shape and, if ablauting, would produce the correct vocalism for the root.

Development of the Proto-Greco-Phrygian paradigm

nominative singular	genitive singular
<i>*g^wnh₂-iek-s</i>	<i>*g^wnh₂-ik-os</i>
↓ regular development ↓	
<i>*g^wnā-iek-s</i>	<i>*g^wən-ik-os</i>
↓ leveling of <i>*-ik-</i> and shortening of superheavy <i>*-āiks</i> ↓	
<i>*g^wna-ik-s</i>	<i>*g^wən-ik-os</i>
↓ spread of <i>*-a-</i> from the nominative ↓	
<i>*g^wna-ik-s</i>	<i>*g^wəna-ik-os</i>

Subsequent development in Phrygian and Greek

- Phrygian levels the root vocalism from the nominative:
 - Proto-Phrygian nom. sg. **knaiks* ~ gen. sg. **knaikos*.
- Boeotic βάνα, acc. pl. βανῆκας suggests a post-Proto-Greek development of the schwa;
 - **ə > υ* in γυνή, γυναικ- takes place in the same environment as Cowgill's law;
 - could Cowgill's law not have been operational in all dialects?

-ικ- from -ικό-?

Szemerényi (*apud* Lejeune 1961) proposed that the consonant stem γυναικ- originated as a secondary athematization of an adjective in -ικό-. This is unlikely, since:

- secondary athematization is much less likely than the reverse;
- no trace of ***γυναικός*, -ου, the oldest adjectives are Myc. *ku-na-ja*, Hom. gen. pl. γυναιῶν;
- **-iko-* is not known to be an adjective forming suffix in Phrygian and likely only emerged in Greek.

***g^wen-h₂ as an adjective**

- **g^wen-h₂* was originally an adjective formed with the suffix *-h₂* meaning 'pertaining to a woman, womanly'.
 - The same suffix and declension type is found in **meg^h-h₂* (gen. sg. **mg^h-eh₂-s*) 'great, big'.
- An original adjective explains the proterodynamic pattern and the different formations of the noun in branches of Indo-European:
 - Proto-Germanic nominalized it as an *n*-stem, Proto-Balto-Slavic as an *ā*-stem, most of the others substantivized the adjective (cf. Slovenian *ženska*, originally an adjective 'pertaining to a woman', later became the unmarked term for 'woman').

Greek nominative γυνή

- The replacement of *γ^wναιξ may perhaps be explained as a result of *g^(w)N > *η^(w)N development which produced an irregular sounding paradigm nom. sg. *[ɲ^wnaiks] ~ gen. sg. [g^wənaikos].
- The replacement nominative is most likely the feminine version of the adjective derived from the root *g^wen-, which triggered the replacement of the old h₂-adjective with new formations.

The origin of -ik-

- The ultimate origin of the -ικ-/ik- in Greek and Phrygian is most likely the -ieh₂-/ih₂- suffix found in the Old Indian *vrkīs*-type.
- As in Latin *-ix*, *-k-* is the regular development of a laryngeal before *-s#* (Olsen 2009).

Conclusion

Greek and Phrygian words for 'woman' and their corresponding declensions derive from a Proto-Greco-Phrygian noun *g^wnaiks, gen. sg. *g^wənaikos, which is itself an ih₂-suffixed derivation of the *vrkīs*-type to an original adjective *g^wen-h₂ 'womanly'. The Greek nominative γυνή was secondarily introduced into the paradigm to replace a nominative *γ^wναιξ.

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