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*Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity. N, Řada klasická.*  
1996, vol. 45, iss. N1, pp. [21]-25

ISBN 80-210-1546-2

ISSN 1211-6335

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/113939>

Access Date: 28. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

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## GREEK λείριον.

Greek λείριον denotes (1) Madonna lily, *Lilium candidum*; (2) Polyanthus narcissus, *Narcissus tazetta*; (3) autumn narcissus, *Narcissus serotinus*. But as the first attestation is known the derivative λειριόεις "like a lily", used metaphorically by Homer in χροά λειριόεντα "lily skin" (Il. 13.830) or ῥόπα λειριόεον "their (= of cicades) delicate voice" (Il. 3.152).

Hypothetically, the Mycenaean proper name *re-ri-jo* (KN C 902.11) with an ambiguous interpretation (place name?, ethnical name?, personal name? — see Aura Jorro 1993: 242 for a detailed overview) can be of the same origin. The defective spelling of *i*-diphthongs is regular, cf. *re-ḡo-me-no* = *leik<sup>w</sup>omenoi* (Bartoněk 1987: 80). Chadwick 1973: 438 prefers the Cretan localization of this name against the connection with the name of the island Λέρος. Later (1976: 43) he concludes "it is likely to be a personal name". The derivatives of "lily" appear really in anthroponymy too, cf. e.g. Ποδα-λείριος (Il.).

Regardless of this speculative identification the etymology of λείριον remains open. The following list of comparanda does not pretend to be exhaustive.

(a) Latin *lilium* "lily" (Varro) is the most natural parallel to the Greek word. A direct borrowing is phonetically improbable, on the other hand the existence of the sequence *l-l* is rather enigmatic in Latin; one would expect the dissimilation *l-l* > *l-r*, cf. Latin *Aleria* < Greek Αλαλία (Meillet, MSL 15[1909]: 163). This change appears only in some Romance languages: Piemontic & Provençal *liri*, Catalan *lliri*, Spanish & Portuguese *lirio* (Meyer-Lübke 1935: n.5040). In *lilium* an independent borrowing from the same source as λείριον has been usually seen (Walde & Hofmann 1938: 801). Contrarily, the Greek origin of Latin *lirinus* (Pliny) is evident.

The Latin *lilium* becomes a migrating cultural word, penetrating directly or indirectly in most of European languages, cf. Albanian *lule* "flower" > Modern Greek λουλουδι; Old Icelandic *lilja* "lily"; Old English *lilie*; Old High German *lilia* f. (8th cent.) represents a reinterpretation of the Latin plural *lilia*; cf. further *lilio* m. (10th cent.) and *lilie* (12th cent.). The Slavic name of "lily" is borrowed from Old High German, first of all probably in Old Polish *lilija*, *lelija* (> East

Slavic and Lithuanian) and Old Czech *lilie*, *lilijě* (> Old Church Slavonic *lilija* "lily, flower", attested only in *Besědy* of 13th cent., notorious for bohemisms).

(b) Hittite *alēl-* n., dat.-loc. *alili* "flower, bloom", coll. *alalassar* "meadow" resembles the Greek & Latin names of "lily" (cf. Benveniste, BSL 50[1954]: 43), but it hardly represents their source. In the case of a borrowing the semantic generalization "lily" > "flower" is natural, cf. Albanian *lule* "flower" < Latin *lilium* or Gothic *blômans* "flowers", used as the equivalent of Greek κρίνα "lilies" by Wulfila (Math 6.28). It would be also difficult to explain why Greek does not preserve the *a-* appearing in Hittite, if the initial vowels are so "popular" in Greek. Collecting various Mediterranean parallels (plus Estonian *lill*), Puhvel 1984: 32–33 sees here an "international culture word".

(c) The origin of Greek and/or Latin "lily" has been also sought in Egyptian (18th dyn.) *hrr.t* "flower", Demotic *hrry*, Coptic (Sahidic) *hrēre*, (Bohayric) *hrēri*, (Fayumic) *hlēli* id. (Wb III: 149; Vycichl 1984: 310), cf. Lagarde 1887: 21f (Coptic > Greek), Littmann 1924: 13 (Egyptian > Greek), Worell 1945: 67 (Coptic of Fayum > Latin). Vycichl 1990: 94f proposes the vocalization *\*hārīr-a.t*, connecting the Egyptian "flower" with the Semitic root  $\sqrt{hrr}$  "to burn". Satzinger (June 1996, p.c.) reconstructs a different development of the vocalism: *\*hVrūrVt* > *\*hārūrə(?)* (New Kingdom) > *\*h(ə)rērə* (c. 700 BC) > Coptic *hrēre* (c. 250 AD). If the change *ū* > *ē* could be dated yet before the time of Homer, it is perhaps possible to imagine the borrowing *\*hrērə* > *\*ῥηρι* > *\*ληρι-* (cf. ληρίος 'λειρώς by Hesychios) > *\*λειρι-*. But the hypothetical continuity from the Mycenaean period diminishes a probability of the Egyptian origin. The semantic difference supports this conclusion (cf. b). Let us add that lily together with crocus represent the most favorite vegetable motives of the Cretan decorative art in the 2nd mill. BC (Meillet, MSL 15 [1909]: 163).

(d) Sometimes also the following Berber plant names have been compared with the Greek, Latin and Egyptian words: (North Berber) Kabyle *ilili* "rhododendron", Sus, Ksurs, Mtugga, Iznacen, Šenua *alili*, Tazerwelt *alili*, Izayan *alidji*, Rif *ariri* "oleander" (Laoust 1920: 484, 503), (South Berber) Tuarog of Ahaggar *élel*, Taitoq & Ghat *ilel* "oleander", cf. Woelfel 1955: 134 and Vycichl 1984: 310. On the other hand, Schuchardt 1918: 26 saw here a borrowing from Latin. It is more probable for Snus *lulluš* "little flowers, young plants", Šenua *alelluš* "a plant with the flower of violet" (Laoust 1920: 471–472), where Vulgar Latin *\*lilius* (> French *lis*, see Meyer-Lübke 1935: # 5040) represents a hopeful source. The Berber denotations of "rhododendron" & "oleander" together with Seghrušen *alillu* "flower" (cf. Sardinian *lillu* !) have the closest counterpart in Oromo (East Cushitic) *illilli* "flower" (Cohen, BSL 31[1930]:38; later incorrectly quoted as "Hamitic" - see e.g. Walde & Hoffmann 1938: 801!).

(e) There are more flower names of the type *IVIV* in various languages among Atlantic and Himalai, but their common origin is doubtful.

Basque *lili* means not only “lily” & “flower”, but also “flower of maize”, “walnut”, “chestnut”. It is borrowed more probably from Latin than from any later Romance source.

Lithuanian *lielis* “spearwort, *Ranunculus lingua*”, *lielius* “water crowfoot” (Mann 1984–87: 673 compares them with Greek λείριον).

Estonian *lill* “flower” (Huld 1984: 88 sees in this and other similar plant names a migrating culture-word).

Modern Persian *lâla*, *lâleh* “jede wildwachsene Blume” (Lagarde 1887: 21f; quoted after Schrader & Nehring 1929: 11, who reject this Greek-Persian comparison).

Burušaski *lilio* “violet” and Šina *lilo* (Lorimer 1938: 250; Lopelmann 1968: 788 finds the Basque-Burušaski connection “unklar”).

Dravidian *\*alli* “a water plant”, e.g. Tamil *alli* “water lilly, *Nymphaea lotus*”, Telugu *alli* “*Nymphaea alba*” (DEDR # 256).

Besides the possibility of the cultural diffusion (Basque, perhaps some of Berber words - see d) the most probable solution seems to be an “elementary relationship” of originally onomatopoeic words (cf. Mann l.c.).

(f) Fraenkel 1962: 330 assumes a dissimilation *l-l* > *l-r* in Homeric λειριόεις, adding yet the gloss of Hesychios λειρός: ὁ ἰσχνός καὶ ὠχρός, to compare the hypothetical *\*leil-* with Lithuanian *leilas* “schlank, dünn, biegsam, geschmeidig, gelenkig”. Frisk II: 101 sees in λειρός a natural derivative of “lily”, i.e. “lilienweiss, -zart”.

All these far-reaching comparative attempts can be overcome by a proof of the continuity of the word λείριον from some pre-Greek substratal language of the Aegean region.

There is at least an indirect witness of the presence of a hypothetical source of Greek λείριον in the language of the Linear script A. The sign Ψ of the Linear script B with the syllabic value *re* (n. 27 in standard numeration) has the exact counterpart in the identical sign n. 22 of the Linear script A (cf. Gelb 1982: 96–97; Gordon 1981: 781 prefers the reading *le* in that Linear A texts which have to be written in a Northwest Semitic language). A similar sign Ψ known from the Cypriotic syllabary has the syllabic value *ri* (Jensen 1969: 132).

The form of the sign is too stylized to recognize safely what it depicts. The continuity in a development of Cretan syllable scripts gives a chance to find a more realistic depiction in some of more archaic Cretan scripts.

Really, among 45 various signs of the famous Disk of Phaistos the sign n. 37 (the numeration follows Jensen 1969: 130) can be identified with “lily”, similarly the sign n. 39 with “crocus” (Ipsen, IF 47[1929]: 3, 25, 40). If the “lily”-sign from the Disk of Phaistos represents a predecessor of the *relle*-sign of the Linear script A & B, it is probable to expect not only a similar phonetic value but also a presence of the word *\*ReiR(i)-* or *\*ReR(i)-* “lily” (*R = r/l*) in one of

pre-Greek languages of Crete. Similarly Neumann, *Glotta* 36[1957]: 156 & 40 [1962]: 51–54 connects the Linear B sign n. 30 *ni* depicting “figue” and the practically identical Linear A sign n. 24 (cf. Gelb 1982: 96–97) with the Cretan gloss \**νκύλεον* “species of figue” (Hermonax). Schwartz 1981: 787, 789, 799 identifies a counterpart to the “figue”-sign also in the sign n. 36 of Disk of Phaistos.

Borrowing the word for “lily” from the language which did not distinguish *r* & *l*, Greek dissimilated the sequence \**R-R* > *l-r* (cf. Lejeune 1972: 151) while Latin *lilium* represents perhaps an independent borrowing from the same source, mediated by another language (Etruscan ?).

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