

Ritual Speech in the Neo-Phrygian Funerary Curse *Formulae*¹

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Neo-Phrygian corpus² contains almost exclusively 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. This corpus has a strong *formulaic* character, as the basic formulation (leaving aside all the possible variations) of the Neo-Phrygian curse *formulae* runs as follows:

Ιος νι σεμουν κνουμανε κακουν αδδακετ τιττετικμενος ειτου

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

1.2. 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...*) is crucial in order to perform the speech 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*.

1.3. Curses can be included in the category of *declarations*, according to 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 curses can be understood as *supernatural declarations*, i.e. performative words that bring about the predicted harm through supernatural/divine power (Anfosso 2019: 7).

1.4. 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). Given the *contract act value* of funerary curses, merely *spoken curses* were not considered enough to fulfill this task: they had to be

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² The Neo-Phrygian corpus (1st–3rd centuries CE) consists of about 130 inscriptions written in the Greek alphabet (mostly published by Haas 1966: 113–128, followed by independent publications of the subsequent findings: 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; Labarre & Özseit, forthcoming); more than half are bilingual Greek-Phrygian, less than half are Phrygian monolingual, and some are ambiguous (i.e. impossible to state whether the language is Greek or Phrygian).

written, and more specifically, *inscribed directly on the stone* (monument or stele) in order to be effective (Anfosso 2019: 8).

1.5. 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 transmission phase, but testify to a desire of putting linguistic resources derived from oral ritual speech at the service of the new needs associated with writing (Akinvaso 1982). In this paper, therefore, I will focus on the following ones:

- a) The usage and meaning of the speech act verb $\tau\iota(\tau)\tau\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ (§ 2);
- b) The bilingual structure (§ 3);
- c) The binomial expressions (§ 4);
- d) The metre (§ 5).

2. Interpretation of $\tau\iota(\tau)\tau\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$

2.1. $\tau\iota(\tau)\tau\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ can be analyzed as the middle perfect participle of the verb $*\tau\iota\kappa-$, athematic and reduplicated, plus the preverb $\tau\iota-$. The participle is in conjunction with the verbal form $\epsilon\iota\tau\omicron\upsilon$, etymologically correspondent to PIE $*h_1\epsilon\iota\tau-\bar{o}d$, and identifiable as an imperative present 3rd sg. from PIE verbal root $*h_1\epsilon\iota\tau-$, ‘to go’, which represents a perfect parallel to the Greek imperative 3rd sg. $\dot{\iota}\tau\omega$, thus translatable as ‘let become!’ (Brixhe 2004: 64–65; De Lamberterie 2013: 40–41).

2.2. From an etymological point of view, I agree with Alexander Lubotsky (2004: 235–236), who reconstructs the origin of Neo-Phrygian $\tau\iota(\tau) <$ PIE $*d(\upsilon)is-$, ‘split, divide in two’ (LIPP, *s.v.*; the origin of $*dis$, ‘in two’ is due to the dissimilation of PIE $*d\upsilon\bar{i}-s$, ‘twice’), with devoicing of the initial dental voiced stop, so PIE $*d >$ Phrygian $/t/$. The semantic development of Phrygian $\tau\iota-$ would be the same of Greek $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha$ (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 $z\bar{a}-, z\bar{i}-$.

2.3. As for the etymology of $*\tau\iota\kappa-$, scholars have pointed out two different options, namely a derivation from PIE $*de\bar{i}k-$, ‘point, show’, or from PIE $*(s)teig-$, ‘sting, pierce’:

- Otto Haas (1966: 87–88) considered $\tau\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ derived from PIE $*(s)teig-$ (“lack of better”).
- Igor Diakonoff and Vladimir Neroznak (1985: 137–138) connected $\tau\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ to either PIE $*de\bar{i}k-$ 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 $\tau\iota\kappa-$ is related to PIE $*(s)teig-$.
- Alexander Lubotsky (1998: 420; 2004: 235), associated $\tau\iota\kappa-$ with PIE $*de\bar{i}k-$.
- Martin L. West (2003: 78; 2007: 333) expressed his preference for a derivation from PIE $*(s)teig-$.

2.4. If Neo-Phrygian $\tau\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ derived from PIE $*de\bar{i}k-$, with devoicing of the initial dental voiced stop, so PIE $*d- >$ Phrygian $/t/$, it would be cognate with the Greek words $\delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\eta$, ‘justice’, $\delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$, ‘to judge’, in particular, according to Alexander Lubotsky, $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha-\delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$, ‘to condemn’. However, etymologically, PIE $*de\bar{i}k-$ means ‘to show’, not ‘to judge’, which is a semantic development that Greek,

Latin and Germanic developed later, but which might not necessarily be shared by Phrygian. Indeed, as Saskia Peels (2016: 109) correctly points out, δίκη and its derivatives started to be included in the Greek legal terminology only in the 5th century BCE.

2.5. I personally prefer to connect τετικμενος to the Indo-European root **(s)teig-*, ‘sting, pierce’. In this case, the Neo-Phrygian verb **τικ-* 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*-mobile³ (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). Connecting the Neo-Phrygian form τετικμενος to PIE **(s)teig-* seems phonologically acceptable as well, taking into account the devoicing of the voiced stop PIE **g* > Phrygian /k/.

2.6. I think that the act of ‘piercing’ conveyed by the PIE root **(s)teig-* in Phrygian could be related to *black 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 Velizar Sadovski (2012: 335) explains very well, these are very old practices that are firmly rooted in the magical thinking of the Indo-European world and the Semitic Near East. As for the Graeco-Roman world, Christopher Faraone (1991: 173) carried out for the first time a specific study on “voodoo dolls”, mostly made of clay and lead, found in several archaeological sites in Egypt, Greece (in particular in the Kerameikos cemetery, 400 BCE) and the Middle East. The survey for the Graeco-Roman world has been recently updated by György Németh (2018) by adding the most recent pieces discovered in Germany, Great Britain, France, Romania, Moldavia, etc. (with bibliography). As for India, actual “voodoo dolls” existed as well: according to a counter-spell of *Kausika-Sūtra* 39, if one finds a charmed clay effigy, the Brahman pierces it “with a hostile eye and shoots [an arrow] on places [the effigy] has been wounded”. The effigy is explicitly said to be “made of clay” (12). Concerning the Roman world, Ovidius (*Heroides* 6, 93–94, and *Amores*, 3, 7, 27–30; 77–80) attests that also “voodoo dolls” made of wax and wool were used in black magic rites:

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

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

[...] *Num misero carmen et herba nocent,*
Sagave poenicea deficit nomina cera
Et medium tenuis in iecur egit acus? (30)

“Was I damaged by a spell and herbs? Or did a witch bind my name with red wax and drive fine needles through the middle of my liver?”,

³ 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-*, *nitikta-*, ‘sharp, pointed’. The adjectives *-tigmá* and *tikṣṇa*, ‘acute, pointed’, are used to characterize Indra’s weapon, the thunderbolt Vajra, in the *Rig-Veda* (e.g. 1, 130, 4; 7, 18, 18).

[...] *Quis te, male sane, inebat*
Invitum nostro ponere membra toro?
Aut te traiectis Aeaea venefica lanis
Devovet, aut alio lassus amore venis. (80)

“Who told you to lay yourself in my bed if you didn’t want to perform, crazy man? Either some Circean witch is binding you by piercing wool, or you come to me after wearing yourself out by having sex with someone else”.

2.7. The actual rite of piercing the “voodoo doll” can be accompanied by specific spells with *enumeratio* of the individual organs of the victim’s body, finally focusing on vital items, in particular the liver. The prescription of PGM, IV, 296-328 gives very precise indications concerning the position of the needles so that the spell is effective. The clay doll must be pierced with thirteen needles (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). 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. 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.

2.8. Concerning the PIE root **(s)teig-* in this context, in the PGM XVI, lines 15 and 64, the Greek verb *στίξαι* < PIE **(s)teig-* is used to describe the pierced victim’s heart, with blood gushing out of the wound. The same image (even if the verbal root is different) can be found in the *Atharva Veda Śaunaka*, 3, 23, 3, 3:

[...] *táyā vidhyāmi tvā brdī //*,

“[...] with that I pierce your heart”.

In Gaulish, PIE **(s)teig-* commonly means ‘to bewitch’, if it was correctly identified by Pierre-Yves Lambert (2003) in the Hospitalet-du-Larzac *defixio* (1st century AD) (RIG 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 passage in Neo-Phrygian can be reconstructable as ‘to be pierced (τετικμενος) through (τι)’, in the sense of ‘being the victim of a spell’, and therefore, simply, ‘accursed’.

3. Bilingual Structure

3.1. The examination of all the bilingual Neo-Phrygian funerary inscriptions of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD 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. no. 19: Ἀὐρ. 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:

no. 19: Ἰος νι σεμουν κνου|μανε κα[κον] <αδδακετ>
επιτετεικμενος ειτο[υ]

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

3.2. 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*. It was important to communicate 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 Bas (Nos. 33, 36, 48, 86, 99, 111) and *Ti- (comparable to Tarhunzas and Zeus (Lubotsky 2004: 230–231), Nos. 32, 33, 34, 36, 59, 60, 105, 108), invoked in Phrygian, would prove the only possible way to effectively protect the tombs of the deceased.

3.3. 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 Ancient Near Eastern world.

3.4. 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 bukezi / bukekiškižzi*, “then, he conjures in Luwian as follows”, or by *lu lūwili kiššan memāi*, “then, he says in Luwian what follows” (Starke 1985). 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

4.1. From our perspective, the most interesting part of the Neo-Phrygian curse *formulae* is surely the apodosis. In one of the most common variants, in particular, it is possible to isolate the binomial expression **με δεως κε ζεμελωσ κε**:

με δεως κε ζεμελωσ κε τι(τ)τετικμενος ειτου,

May he be accursed **among gods and men**.

4.2. The use of *formulaic binomials*, i.e., according to 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, δεως, ‘gods’ and ζεμελωσ, ‘men’, are in the same case (it is very likely that Phrygian -ως < *ōis, *ōisi, morphologically identifiable as dative, derives from a convergence of locative and dative, just as in Greek), they depend on the same preposition με, and they are connected by the copulative enclitic conjunction κε < PIE *k^{we}.

4.3. Moreover, they are arranged from the shortest (δεως) to the longest (ζεμελωσ), in accordance with Behaghel’s Law of Increasing Terms (Behaghel 1909), a fundamental rule in word order: “*So bildet sich unbewußt in den Sprachen ein eigenartiges rhythmisches Gefühl, die Neigung, vom kürzeren zum längeren Glied überzugehen [...] was ich [...] als das Gesetz der wachsenden Glieder bezeichnen möchte*”.

4.4. The pair ‘deities and humans’ (West 2007: 124–125) evoked in the Neo-Phrygian formulaic binomial δεως κε ζεμελωσ κε derives directly from Indo-European. In the worldview of the Indo-Europeans there was a primary opposition between the beings of Heaven, the deities, PIE *deiwós, and the creatures of Earth, the humans, PIE *dhéǵhom-/*dhǵhm-. The preservation of the Indo-European roots in Phrygian is remarkable: Neo-Phrygian dat. pl. δεως, ‘gods’ < PIE *d^hh₁so-; Neo-Phrygian dat. pl. ζεμελωσ, ‘men’ < PIE *(d^h)ǵhem-elo-, cf. Greek χαμαλός ‘low, located at ground level’ (but also, even if with another inflectional theme, Latin *humilis*, ‘low, humble’). The palatalization of the initial consonant in ζεμελωσ can be found in the words related to the root *(d^h)ǵhem- in the *satəm* group as well, namely in Indo-Iranian (cf. Avestan *zam-*, *zam-*) and in Balto-Slavic (cf. Old Slavic, *zemlja*, and in Lithuanian, *žẽmė*).

4.5. Exact etymological parallels of the Neo-Phrygian formulaic binomial δεως κε ζεμελωσ κε can be found in Vedic, Italic and Celtic:

a) In the *Rig-Veda*, e.g. 4, 54, 3, it is possible to read: **devésu** (< *deiwoisu) **ca Savitar mánuseṣu ca** | *tuwám no átra suwatād ánāgasah*, “Absolve us from guilt and free us from sin, O Savitar, in the same way, among gods and men”; another passage in 7, 46, 2, describes Rudra concerned about the fate of both human and celestial races, **kṣámtyasya jánmanas** [...] **divyásya**.

b) As for Latin, Quintus Ennius (239-169 BCE) uses the formula *diuomque hominumque* several times in the *Annales* (Skutsch 1985), always with reference to Jupiter (and not only to translate the Homeric phrase πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε): see, e.g., *Annales* 6, 203, *Tum cum corde suo diuom pater atque hominum rex* | *effatur*; 8, 284, *multorum ueterum leges diuomque hominumque*; fragments, 591 *hominoque diuomque pater, rex*; 592 *patrem diuomque hominumque*.

c) A Latin-Gaulish bilingual inscription (RIG II, 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: **TEUOXTONION**, **dēwo-χdonio-** (lines 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* [*scil. campum*].

5. Metre of the Neo-Phrygian Curse *Formulae*

5.1. Since the beginning of the 20th century, there have been several attempts to find a metric scheme in the Neo-Phrygian curse *formulae*. Research in this direction is consistent because curse *formulae* pertain to ritual speech, so, in principle, it would be appropriate to expect a metric structure. I will comment on the two most recent metric interpretations, i.e. Alexander Lubotsky’s (1998), and Martin L. West’s (2003), before proposing my idea.

5.2. 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 – ×), which would have deteriorated over time because the metric system was no longer understood. 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 presence of diphthongs. Taking into account these constraints, Alexander Lubotsky reconstructed the metric “proto-*formula*” in the following way:

ιος νι σεμουν κνουμανει κακουν αδδακετ 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”.

5.3. However, in my opinion, the “proto-*formula*” reconstructed by Alexander Lubotsky displays some problems.

- First of all, the most common variant in the curse *formulae*, that is, ιος νι σεμουν κνουμανει κακουν αδδακετ, has a sequence of only four dactyls. In fact, Lubotsky considers κακουν = *kakūn* < **kakon*; then, κνουμανει = *knūmānei*, because etymologically derived from the same root as the Greek verb κνύω, ‘scratch’, in the zero grade. In order to fill the hexameter, Lubotsky searches in the preserved Neo-Phrygian material to find a proper conclusion. The variant attested in the inscriptions 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 rare variant.

- Moreover, in order to get another short syllable in the apodosis, Lubotsky needs to separate τι from the participle τετικμενος. However, if τι- is actually a preverb, it would be more correct not to separate it from the verbal form.

5.4. 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, × × - U U - U ×), of the Greek pherecratean (τιτετικμενος ειτου, × × - U U - -), and of the iambic metron (ιος νι σεμουν, × -U -). 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 *Rig-Veda*. According to West’s reconstruction, therefore, the Neo-Phrygian “proto-formula” would fit perfectly within the framework of one of the Indo-European metric prototypes (4 + 8 (G), 8 (G), 7 (G ^)), as he reconstructed them in his 1973 paper:

- ιος νι σεμων → 4 syllables, “iambic monometron”;
 κνουμανει κακουν αδδακετ → 8 syllables, “glyconic” (G);
 δεως κε ζεμελωσι κε → 8 syllables, “glyconic” (G);
 τιπτετικμενος ειτου → 7 syllables, “pherecratean (or cataleptic glyconic)” (G ^).

5.5. The idea of detecting a metric structure directly inherited from Indo-European in the Neo-Phrygian curse *formulae* is surely very attractive at first glance. Moreover, the presence of the binomial expression δεως κε ζεμελωσι κε, which finds etymological and conceptual parallels in other Indo-European languages, would seem to be a rather striking evidence in this direction. However, at least as far as I know, Indo-Europeans did not have inscribed stelae to protect the tombs of their deceased from potential wrongdoers. Specific funerary curse *formulae* in this sense are attested in the Semitic Near East (e.g., in Ancient Egypt since the Old Kingdom Era (2686–2181 BCE), or in Phoenicia since the late 11th century BCE (cf. the sarcophagus of the Phoenician King Aḥīrōm)), not in the Indo-European world.

5.6. However, Alexander Lubotsky (2017) recently focused again on a Neo-Phrygian inscription, and I find his comments concerning metre very relevant. Indeed, he noticed that the punctuation marks on the Dokimeion inscription (W-11, Brixhe 2004: 7-26), 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 (Neo-Phrygian text after Lubotsky 2017: 428). In this case, it looks like we are dealing with an actual attempt to imitate the dactylic hexameter of the Greek funerary epigrams in Phrygian.

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

5.7. Lubotsky (2017: 2019) attributes this attempt of metric regularization to the “Phrygian aristocracy”. However, Dokimeion was not an originally Phrygian city (I recall that it was founded by General Dokimos approximately in 310 BCE), so I do not think that we can really speak of “Phrygian aristocracy” in this case. Moreover, the white marble stela with the engraved inscription is very sober, and it closely resembles Macedonian models (Brixhe 2004: 8–9, 26). It is possible that we are dealing with a case of mixed marriage between the new Hellenophone 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 (Brixhe 2004: 26), seem to suggest.

5.8. Alexandru Avram (2015: 213-215), for his part, also noticed an attempt at metric regularization in the Neo-Phrygian inscriptions engraved on the *bomos* of Nacoleia, datable to the 3rd century CE on a stylistic basis. Their commissioner is a member of a family related to the local priesthood of “Zeus of Brogimaros”, where Brogimaros is to be identified with the founder of the cult, in a rural village.

5.9. In general, the Neo-Phrygian inscriptions of the Roman Era are not the product of the Hellenized urban elite. The commissioners of these inscriptions were rural men, whose social position was not particularly distinguished, but who had enough money to build a tomb for their deceased relatives (Anfosso 2019: 4). In my opinion, these people perceived the metrical structure of the Greek funerary epigrams as a trait belonging to the high style of the highest social classes, to be imitated in the Phrygian epichoric language as well, in order to give a more refined look to the texts. 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.

5.10. I recall, in this respect, the Latin funeral 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 (no. 42 Warmington = CIL VI, 26192 = ILS 8398), 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 meritis ab coniuge |
gratia relatast.*

“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”.

5.11. Alexander Lubotsky’s (1998) and Martin L. West’s (2003) attempts to reconstruct a metric 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 metric analysis of the texts. Keeping that into account, it is very difficult, at least to me, to succeed in isolating metric forms that make sense. Even in the case of emulation or approximation of dactylic hexameters, technically we are still dealing with prose!

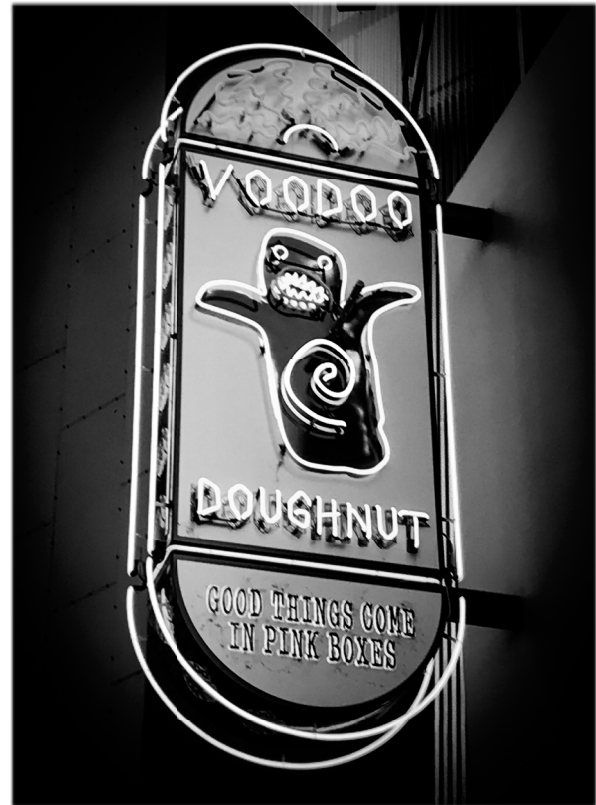
6. Conclusions

Keeping in mind my analysis throughout this paper in light of the features of *ritual speech*, it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

- As for $\tau(\tau)\tau\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$, ‘cursed’, the verb describing the speech act, I analyze it as the middle perfect participle of the verb $\tau\iota\kappa-$ < PIE $*(s)teig-$, ‘sting, pierce’ (LIV, s.v.). I think that the act of

‘piercing’ is related to black magic rites which prescribe harming someone by piercing a “voodoo doll” with sharp objects. The semantic passage in Neo-Phrygian is reconstructable as ‘to be pierced (τετιχμενος) through (τι)’, in the sense of ‘being the victim of a spell’, and therefore, simply, ‘accursed’.

- The characteristic bilingual structure of the Neo-Phrygian inscriptions, i.e. epitaph in Greek *vs.* curse in Neo-Phrygian, was intentional, as 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.
- The use of formulaic binomials in accordance with Behaghel’s Law of Increasing Terms, such as με δεως κε ζεμελωσ κε, is a rhetorical device meant to increase the solemnity of ritual speech. Etymological parallels of this formulaic binomial can be found in Vedic, Italic and Celtic.
- Concerning metre, in the best case the stoncutters were simply trying to reproduce the overall impression of the Greek funerary epigrams in dactylic hexameters in Phrygian. Imitating a metric structure, without actually possessing the technical skills required to master it, is a common feature among the lower social classes wanting to imitate the upper classes.



FYI: 'Voodoo Doughnut' in Hollywood, CA, has the BEST voodoo doll you could ever imagine: it's a voodoo doll shaped doughnut filled with raspberry jelly, topped with chocolate frosting, and stabbed through the heart by a pretzel stake! DELICIOUS!

Thank you for your attention!

7. References

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