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GREEK ΜΑΡΙΣ – A FORGOTTEN NAME FOR LONG PEPPER

The Greek word μάρης ‘long pepper (*Piper longum* L.)’ that is attested in the lexicon of Hesychius (μ 289) has not been the subject of any research to date. The author’s hypothesis is that it is ultimately of Indo-Aryan origin (cf. Sanskrit *marīca*- m. ‘pepper shrub’, *marīca*- n. ‘black pepper’, Pali *marica*- n. ‘id.’, Prakrit *maria*-, *miria*- m./n. ‘id.’, etc.). However, it is difficult to say whether the Greeks borrowed μάρης directly from a language spoken in India or via another Oriental language (perhaps Iranian; cf. Modern Persian *marīč* (*mareč*, *murč*) ‘pepper’).

GREEK ΜΑΡΙΣ – EIN VERGESSENER NAME FÜR LANGEN PFEFFER

Das griechische Wort μάρης ‚langer Pfeffer (*Piper longum* L.)‘, das im Lexikon des Hesychius (μ 289) belegt ist, wurde bislang noch nicht untersucht. Der Autor stellt die Hypothese auf, dass es letztlich indoarischen Ursprungs ist (vgl. sanskr. *marīca*- m. ‚Pfefferstrauch‘, *marīca*- n. ‚schwarzer Pfeffer‘, pal. *marica*- n. ‚ds.‘, prakr. *maria*-, *miria*- m./n. ‚ds.‘ usw.). Es ist jedoch nicht klar, ob die Griechen μάρης direkt aus einer in Indien gesprochenen Sprache oder über eine andere orientalische (iranische?) Sprache übernommen haben (vgl. npers. *marīč* (*mareč*, *murč*), Pfeffer‘).

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In Greek literature, pepper appears since the Classical period under the name *πέπερι*.¹ We know that the term could mean both ‘black pepper (*Piper nigrum* L.)’ and ‘long pepper (*Piper longum* L.)’, as described by Theophrastus in his *Enquiry into Plants* (HP IX 20.1; ed. S. Amigues):

Τὸ δὴ πέπερι καρπὸς μὲν ἐστὶ διττὸν δὲ αὐτοῦ τὸ γένος· τὸ μὲν γὰρ στρογγύλον ὥσπερ ὄροβος, κέλυφος ἔχον καὶ σάρκα καθάπερ αἱ δαφνίδες, ὑπέρυθρον· τὸ δὲ πρόμηκες μέλαν σπερμάτια μηκωνικὰ ἔχον· ἰσχυρότερον δὲ πολὺ τοῦτο θατέρου.

Pepper is a fruit, and there are two kinds: one is round like bitter vetch, having a case and flesh like the berries of bay, and it is reddish: the other is elongated and black and has seeds like those of poppy: and this kind is much stronger than the other.²

Occasionally, the long pepper is also called *πέπερι μακρόν* or *μακρὸν πέπερι* n.³, as well as *μακροπέπερι* n.⁴

The ancients knew that pepper originated in India. This is attested to by authors such as Dioscorides, who mentions it in his work *On Medical Material* (II 159; ed. M. Wellmann):

πέπερι δένδρον ἰστορεῖται φυόμενον ἐν Ἰνδία (...).

The pepper is said to be a tree that grows in India.⁵

Pliny the Elder writes a little more on the subject (NH XII 26; ed. C. Mayhoff):

Passim (*scil.* in India) vero quae piper gignunt iunipiris nostris similes, quamquam in fronte Caucasi solibus opposita gigni tantum eas aliqui tradidere.

But trees resembling our junipers that bear pepper occur everywhere (*scil.* in India), although some writers have reported that they only grow on the southern face of the Caucasus (*scil.* Indian Caucasus, i.e. Hindu Kush).⁶

Interestingly, the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* reports that the black pepper was imported from south-western India, while the long pepper came from north-western India.⁷

As for the etymology of *πέπερι*, it is a *communis opinio* that the word ultimately comes from the languages spoken in India.⁸ Its counterparts are well attested

¹ The oldest sources are: Hp. *Mul.* 1.34, 1.37, 1.81, etc. (this treatise is dated to the 5th/4th cent. BCE); Arist. *Poet.* 1458a16; Antiph. 275 (ed. R. Kassel, C. Austin).

² Translated by Hort 1916: 315.

³ *PME* 49; Dsc. II 159; Hsch. μ 289.

⁴ Gal. XI, p. 881.

⁵ Translated by Beck 2005: 159.

⁶ Translated by Rackham 1945: 19.

⁷ *PME* 49, 56.

⁸ See Frisk 1960–1972: vol. II, 508; Chantraine 1999: 883; Brust 2008: 527–537; Beekes 2010: 1173f.

in Indo-Aryan: Sanskrit *pippalī*- f. ‘berry; long pepper (*Piper longum* L.)’, Pali *pippala*- m. ‘pepper’, *pippalī*- f. ‘long pepper (*Piper longum* L.)’, Prakrit *pīpālī*-, *pīpparī*- f. ‘id.’, Gujarati *pīpar* f. ‘id.’.⁹ However, it is not certain from which language the name of pepper found its way into Greek. This is a *Wanderwort* that is also found in other Oriental languages, e.g. Sogdian *paδpaδ* ‘pepper’, Modern Persian *pīlpil* ‘id.’, Armenian *plpel* ‘id.’, Jewish Aramaic *pylpl*, *pīplā*, *pīlpaltā*, *pīlpaltā*, *pīrpaltā* ‘id.’, Mandaic *pīlpil* ‘id.’, Syriac *pelplā* ‘id.’, Arabic *fulful*, *filfil* ‘id.’.¹⁰

In the context of pepper, it is somewhat surprising that researchers have not yet paid attention to another Greek term for it, which is attested in the lexicon of Hesychius. The lexeme probably goes unnoticed because it occurs together with a well-known loanword. The complete entry is as follows (μ 289; ed. K. Latte, I.C. Cunningham):

μάρις· [τὸν] ἕξ κοτύλας. καλεῖται δὲ ὁμώνυμος καὶ τὸ μακρὸν πέπερι.

Maris: six *kotylai*. The long pepper is also called by the same name.

There are two homonyms here, the first of which is μάρις, -εως (nom. pl. μάριας, μάριας) m. ‘maris, a liquid measure (with different volumes)’. According to Hesychius, as well as Aristotle (*HA* 596a6-7) and Pollux (IV 168; cf. X 184), this unit is equal to 6 (probably Attic) *kotylai*, or about 1.6 litres, although some sources give a much higher volume for it, approximately 11 litres or even 33 litres.¹¹ The name of the measure, which appears in Greek sources from around 500 BCE¹², is originally Iranian, although it is not impossible that it entered Greek through the medium of Aramaic. As far as its etymology is concerned, the following forms are particularly noteworthy: Elamite *mar-ri-iš* ‘jug as a liquid measure (≈ 10 litres)’ (probably from Old Persian), Parthian *mry* ‘a liquid measure’, Official Aramaic *mry* ‘id.’ (probably from Iranian) and Armenian *mar* ‘id.’ (from Iranian).¹³

The noun μάρις as ‘long pepper (*Piper longum* L.)’ is not attested in other Greek sources and we do not know from which text it was taken by Hesychius. M. Schmidt (1863: 1013) included the entire entry in his *editio minor* of Hesychius, suggesting that the word was already present in Diogenian’s lexicon (2nd cent.

⁹ Monier-Williams 1899: 628; Davids 1921–1925: 460; Turner 1962–1966: 464; Mayrhofer 1956–1980: vol. II, 285f.; 1992–2001: vol. II, 133.

¹⁰ Iranian: Steingass 1892: 254; Gharib 1995: 271; Armenian: Bedrossian 1875–1879: 615; Semitic: Jastrow 1903: 1184; Drower-Macuch 1963: 371; Wehr 1979: 851; Sokoloff 1990: 431; 2002: 901, 905f.; 2009: 1203; *CAL*: s.v. *plpl*, *plplh*, *prplh*.

¹¹ Epiph. *De mens.* (ed. F. Hultsch) 83.18 equates it with 20 Alexandrian *xestai* (≈ 11 litres), while Polyae. IV 3.32 informs that it contains 10 *choes* (≈ 33 litres).

¹² It first appears in an inscription found in Persepolis (*IK Estremo oriente* 230).

¹³ For these forms, see Hoftijzer-Jongeling 1995: 693; Hinz-Koch 1987: 886; Gignoux 1972: 58; Bedrossian 1875–1879: 456. On the etymology, see Schmitt 1989; Brust 2008: 447–451; Beekes 2010: 906; Rosół 2013: 141f.; cf. Frisk 1960–1972: vol. II, 175; Chantraine 1999: 667.

CE)¹⁴, but this cannot be verified. We are also unable to determine the grammatical gender of this noun (masculine or feminine?). As regards the etymology of μάρις, the fact that pepper grows in India suggests that its name may have originated there. And indeed, in the Indo-Aryan languages we find similar lexemes, namely Sanskrit *marīca-* m. ‘pepper shrub’, *marīca-* n. ‘black pepper’, Pali *marica-* n. ‘id.’, Prakrit *maria-*, *miria-* m./n. ‘id.’, Gujarati *marī-* f. ‘id.’, Hindi *mirī*, *maric*, *miric*, *mirc* f. ‘id.’, etc. (Monier-Williams 1899: 790; Davids et al. 1921–1925: 524; Turner 1962–1966: 567; Mayrhofer 1956–1980: vol. II, 588; vol. III, 775; 1992–2001: vol. II, 321). This term for pepper has also been borrowed into other languages, e.g. Modern Persian *marič* (*mareč*, *murč*) ‘pepper’¹⁵ (from Indo-Aryan), Kyrgyz and Uzbek *murč* ‘id.’¹⁶ (probably from Modern Persian), Khmer *mrīc* ‘id.’¹⁷ (probably from Indo-Aryan)¹⁸; moreover, cf. similar forms in Dravidian: Tamil *miḷaku* ‘black pepper’, Malayalam *miḷaku*, *muḷaku* ‘pepper’, etc. (Burrow, Emeneau 1984: 434).

Based on the linguistic data, we can hypothesise that the name μάρις is of Indo-Aryan origin. It is possible that the word comes directly from a language spoken in India (cf. the Prakrit and Gujarati forms), but an intermediary cannot be ruled out. First of all, one may wonder whether the Middle Iranian form **marič* might not have been the source of μάρις (with the rendering of the foreign voiceless affricate *č* [tʃ] by the voiceless fricative in Greek). In terms of semantics, there is a slight difference between the Oriental words meaning ‘black pepper’ and Greek μάρις meaning ‘long pepper’. This is not a problem, however, because both species could be referred to by the same word, as πέπερι and its equivalents in Oriental languages show.

The above considerations lead to the conclusion that, in addition to the well-known term πέπερι (along with πέπερι μακρόν, μακρόν πέπερι and μακροπέπερι), the Greeks had μάρις for ‘long pepper (*Piper longum* L.)’, the sources of which can be found in the Indo-Aryan languages. We do not know whether the Greeks took the word directly from the people of India or perhaps via another language spoken in Asia (perhaps Iranian). Interestingly, μάρις has not been the subject of any research to date. The paper therefore complements both etymological dictionaries of the Greek language¹⁹ and, especially, M. Brust’s (2008) comprehensive book on Iranian and Indian words in Greek.

¹⁴ Note that this work was an epitome of a comprehensive lexicon consisting of 95 books by Pamphilus of Alexandria (1st cent. CE).

¹⁵ See: Steingass 1892: 1211.

¹⁶ See: Öztopçu et al. 1996: 109, 230, 349.

¹⁷ See: Headley et al. 1977: 772.

¹⁸ According to an unconvincing view, the Indo-Aryan words go back to Austroasiatic; see Mayrhofer 1956–1980: vol. II, 588; vol. III, 775; 1992–2001: vol. II, 321 (with further references).

¹⁹ See: Frisk 1960–1972; Chantraine 1999; Beekes 2010. It is likely that the word has not been included in these dictionaries, as it does not appear in the basic version of Liddell-Scott-Jones (1996); μάρις was added in the *Supplement* (p. 203).

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