The Old Phrygian word for ‘feet’: new readings in the ‘podas’-inscription (G-02)

Abstract: In this article, new readings are proposed for the Old Phrygian inscription G-02, which is famous for having been written next to a depiction of two feet, and for containing the sequence podas, which is commonly interpreted as denoting ‘feet’ and reflecting Proto-Indo-European *pod-/ped-. A careful examination of the damaged part of this inscription reveals the presence of a word petes, however, which is argued to be a better candidate for representing the Old Phrygian word for ‘feet’. Not only does this interpretation yield a better understanding of the composition of the inscription as a whole, it is also in accordance with the so-called Phrygian “Lautverschiebung”, which states that PIE mediae have become voiceless stops in Phrygian.

Keywords: Old Phrygian, Lautverschiebung, Indo-European linguistics, dedicationary inscriptions, divine feet.

During the 1953 campaign at Gordion, a large squared stone block was found that carries a rather extensive, complete Old Phrygian inscription, which was published two years later by its excavator, Rodney Young (1955). A noticeable feature of the stone is that it contains “deeply incised outlines of a pair of somewhat pointed shoes” (Young 1955: 10), cf. fig. 1–3.

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In the *Corpus des inscriptions paléo-phrygiennes* (Brixhe & Lejeune 1984: 85–87), the inscription has been given the number G-02, and is transliterated as follows:
A. agarṭioi : iktes : adoikavoi
B. iosoporokitis
C. kakoioitovo : podaska²

Especially the last word of line C has received the attention of linguists: it was Otto Haas (1969: 79) who first suggested that “[i]n podaska man ein Wort für “Fußspuren” vermuten [könnte]”, which then would refer to the feet that are depicted on the stone. Also Lejeune (1969a: 298; 1969b: 2214) calls it “évident” that the sequence podas refers to the depicted feet and compares the word to the Gr. acc. pl. form πόδας ‘feet’. In many handbooks nowadays, the identification of OPhr. podas as ‘feet (acc. pl.)’ and its connection with Gr. πόδας < PIE *pód-ms is generally accepted.¹

New readings

In the present article, I want to propose some new readings for line A of this inscription (the line that runs from the upper left corner of the stone to the right and bends around the drawing of the left foot), and discuss their possible consequences for the interpretation of the inscription as a whole.

In his publication of the inscription, Young remarks that the inscription “is complete […], although the tops of some of the letters along the upper edge have been abraded away” (1955: 10). And indeed, some of the letters of the first two words of line A miss their upper part.

In the case of the first word of this line, this does not hamper its reading too much. Young (1955: 10) transliterated the word as ΑΓΑΡỊΙΟΙ, remarking that “[t]he fifth and sixth letters lack their tops, but as long straight vertical bars remain they can have been only iotas or taus, probably one of each, though in what order there is no way of knowing”. According to Brixhe & Lejeune, the fifth letter probably was t, because on the squeeze of the inscription “on aperçoit nettement la partie gauche de la barette horizontale d’un t”. Although on the squeeze and the photograph of the inscription I do see the trace they refer to, it seems to me less likely that this trace belongs to this letter: it would be placed remarkably high (cf. fig. 4). Moreover, the trace would fall within the area that seems to be totally abraded (the area above the line in grey).

It therefore is unlikely that this trace really belonged to this letter. Instead I rather see traces of a horizontal bar to the right of the upper tip of the sixth letter, which possibly continues into the abraded part, cf. fig. 5.

If the interpretation of this trace as a horizontal bar is correct, it is rather the sixth letter that should be read \( t \), which would mean that the transliteration of the first word of line A should be \( agariṭoi \) instead of \( agartiōi \), as Brixhe & Lejeune have it.

For the second word of line A, consider fig. 6, in which I again indicated the lines of the letters in white, and the edge of the abraded part in grey.
We see that also the tops of the first two letters of this word have been abraded away. Nevertheless, most scholars seem to agree that this does not hamper their readings too much either, and they confidently transliterate the word as *iktes*. There indeed can be no doubt about the reading of the last three letters as *tes*. But the first two letters deserve a discussion.

The first letter of this word is generally read as *i*. Only Haas (1969: 78) has expressed some doubt on this reading and proposes an alternative reading *e*. Yet, since there are no good traces visible of any oblique bars, e.g. Brixhe & Lejeune state that the reading “*i* est indiscutable” (1984: 86). And indeed, since the only trace of this letter is a long vertical bar, reading *i* at first sight seems an obvious choice. Yet, there is a problem to it: the space that is left blank between the vertical bar of this letter and the vertical bar of its right-hand neighbor is much larger than the spaces that surround the other *i*’s of this inscription. For instance, the spaces surrounding the word-final *i* of *agariṭoi* are almost four times as small as this one.

To my mind, this remarkably large space precludes reading the letter as *i*. In order to account for it, we need to assume that this letter did not only consist of a vertical bar, but contained a horizontal bar as well, which then must have been attached to the upper tip of the vertical bar and pointed rightwards. In fact, I think that traces of such a horizontal bar may even be visible in the abraded part above the letter (cf. fig. 7, in which the traces are drawn in with a dotted line).

Whether these traces do or do not belong to such a bar, the presence of the large space between this letter and the one following it proves that it must have been present. This means that the first letter was not an *i*, but instead must have been a *g* (Γ) or, equally possible, a *p* (Π).

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2 Note that in Young’s drawing of this inscription as given above, the space in question is depicted much smaller than it in reality is, which undoubtedly has been the reason why the reading *i* was regarded as certain by so many scholars.
The second letter of this word is generally read as \textit{k} (Young 1955, and followed ever since). And indeed, we clearly see on the photograph of the inscription a vertical bar to the lower part of which an oblique stroke pointing downwards is attached, which could indeed form the lower part of the letter \textit{k}. There is some disagreement as to whether a second oblique stroke, which should point upwards, is visible as well: in Young’s drawing it is absent, indicating that he assumed that it was lost in the abraded part, whereas in Haas’ and in Brixhe & Lejeune’s drawing an upward stroke is indicated (cf. fig. 8–10).

![Fig. 8: Drawing by Young](image1)  
![Fig. 9: Drawing by Haas](image2)  
![Fig. 10: Drawing by Brixhe & Lejeune](image3)

On the photograph of the inscription we indeed find a scratch pointing upward at the position where Brixhe & Lejeune have drawn the upper stroke of a \textit{k}. Yet, this scratch can hardly have been an intended stroke: it seems to be significantly less deep than the downward stroke. Moreover, it ends at a much lower position in the line than the upward strokes of the other \textit{k}’s that are present in this inscription, which extend all the way up to the ruling. Cf. the following photograph of the letter (in which the alleged upwards stroke is drawn in with a dotted line) [fig. 11a], compared to the \textit{k}’s of \textit{adoi}k\textit{a}voi [fig. 11b] and \textit{kakoioito}vo [fig. 11c–d], respectively (the baseline and the ruling are indicated with white broken lines).

![Fig. 11](image4)

I therefore conclude that this scratch does not form the upper oblique, which means that, if this letter is indeed a \textit{k}, we would at best see its lower part only.

Yet, in fact, I do not think this letter was a \textit{k} at all. An important reason for this view is a phonological one. With the new reading of the first letter of this word as \textit{g} or \textit{p}, the word formerly read \textit{iktes} would now be \textit{gktes} or \textit{pktes}, with an initial
cluster consisting of three stops. Since such clusters are to my knowledge unparalleled in Phrygian, the reading of the second letter as $k$ can hardly be correct. I therefore want to propose to read the letter as $e$ instead: the combination of the vertical bar and a downwards oblique attached to its lower part certainly fits the shape of an $e$: $\xi$. In fact, if we look at the photograph of the stone having in mind the possibility that this letter is actually an $e$, we suddenly see that, apart from the oblique stroke pointing downwards that is attached to the lower part of the vertical bar, there is also a clear downward stroke that is attached to its middle part, and even the right part of a downward stroke attached to its upper part: cf. fig. 12, in which I have drawn in these strokes in white.

I thus regard the reading of this letter as $e$ as ascertained.

In sum, I conclude that the second word of line A, which thus far was read iktes, must instead be read either getes or petes: cf. fig. 13, in which the reconstructed parts are indicated with dotted lines.
Consequences

With the new readings proposed above, we arrive at the following transliteration of this inscription:

A. agariṭoi : g/petes : adoikavoi
B. iosoporokitis[x’]
C. kakoioitovo : podaskai

Do these new readings have consequences for the interpretation of the inscription as a whole?

Although a precise translation of the inscription cannot be given, there is broad concensus regarding its overall interpretation (cf. Brixhe & Lejeune 1984: 87 for a discussion): line A is interpreted as a dedication (in which adoikavoi is the dat. sg. form of a personal name), whereas line B and C form a curse formula (cf. the use of nom. sg. ios ‘who(ever)’ in line B and the use of the stem kako- ‘evil’ in line C). The exact interpretation of this curse formula is difficult. Since the Old Phrygian inscription P-04a contains a sequence kakuioi, Lejeune (1969a: 299) proposes to parse the word kakoioitovo (line C) as kakoioi + tovo, in which kakoioi would be a 3 sg. opt. form of a verb kakoie/o- that is identical to Gr. κακόω ‘to maltreat, to distress’. The form tovo could then, according to Lejeune (ibid.), be a gen. sg. form of the anaphoric pronoun to- ‘he, she, it’, referring back to ios ‘who’. As we have seen above, Lejeune assumes that the word podaskai contains an acc. pl. form podas ‘feet’ (~ Gr. πόδας), on the basis of which he translates line C as ‘may he have pain in his feet’ (1969a: 300).

In this way, Lejeune must assume that the feet depicted on the stone are an image of the feet of a possible future offender. This interpretation is improbable, however. From other inscriptions that are found on steles showing a depiction of feet or footprints, which can be found not only in Anatolia but in other Mediterranean regions as well, it is clear that these feet are always meant as a dedication. Either the deity to which the feet are dedicated is mentioned, or the name of the dedicator is given.

3 Cf. Petridou 2009: 85, with references.
4 Cf., for instance, the inscription published in Petridou 2009 (found in Pogla, Pisidia), which reads Ἀρτέμιδ[ι] τὸ ἴχνος κατὰ χρηματισμόν ‘This foot(print) [was dedicated] to Artemis at the command of a dream-vision’.
5 Cf., for instance, Inscr. Cret. III: VII, 4 (Itanos, Crete, 6th century BC), which reads Δηνίο τοίδε πόδες ‘These feet are of Denias’, or SEG 34: 43 (Thorikos, Southern Attica, 7th/6th century BC),
Also Lubotsky (2004: 232) regards Lejeune’s interpretation as “not very probable”, and even expresses his doubts regarding the identification of the word *podas* as ‘feet’. According to Lubotsky, in Phrygian a ‘Lautverschiebung’ has taken place, according to which PIE voiced stops developed into Phrygian voiceless stops: e.g. acc. sg. *tian ‘Zeus’ < *diēm*, gen. sg. *tios ‘Zeus’ < *diwos*, *bekos ‘bread’ < *bh̊hǵ-os, *knaik- ‘wife’ < *gʷneh₁ik*, etc.\(^6\) If this sound law is accepted, the word *podas* cannot go back to PIE *pod-* and therefore cannot be equated with Gr. πόδας ‘feet’.

Although I accept this argument and agree with Lubotsky that the word *podas* hardly can have meant ‘feet’, it would in my view also be strange if the feet that are so prominently depicted on the stone would be totally left unmentioned in the inscription: we know from similar inscriptions that usually a word for ‘foot’ or ‘footprint’ is used to refer to the depicted feet.\(^7\) Yet, I believe that the new readings as proposed above can elucidate this problem.

According to Lubotsky’s Lautverschiebung, we would expect the PIE root *pod-/*ped- ‘foot’ to have yielded Phr. **pot-/*pet-*, with a t. It is therefore intriguing that one of the possible new readings of the second word of line A is *petes*, containing the root *pet-. I therefore want to propose, with due caution of course, that the feet that are depicted on the stone are referred to by this word, *petes*, and that this word must be analyzed as a nom. pl. form (for the ending, cf. Gr. nom. pl. -ες).

If *petes* is indeed a nom. pl. form, how must the syntax of line A, *agariṭoi : petes : adoikavoi*, be analyzed? As we have seen, *adoikavoi* is generally interpreted as the dat. sg. form of a personal name (namely the one that is also attested on the Old Phrygian graffiti G-146 (…)dʰoi̯akovos (nom. sg.)) and G-153 (…)doikaṿ […), cf. Brixhe & Lejeune 1984: 87), and which then must have been the person to whom the inscription was dedicated. Some scholars have proposed to interpret *iktes* (as the word *petes* was formerly read) as another personal name,\(^8\) which would then stand in the nom. sg. case and denote the person that dedicated the inscription to *adoikavos*. Yet, such an interpretation is difficult: in other Old Phrygian inscriptions with a dedication containing the name of the dedicator (in the nominative) as well as the name of the person to whom the inscription is dedicated (in the

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\(^6\) Pace Lejeune 1979.

\(^7\) Cf. the Greek inscriptions cited in footnotes 5 and 6, which use either the word ἴχνος or the word ποὺς.

\(^8\) Cf. Neumann 1988: 15; Woudhuizen 1993: 11; Gorbachov 2008: 107\(^3\), the latter two comparing OPhr. *iktes* to the Lycian personal name ἵχττας, among others.
dative), the dedication contains a verbal form meaning ‘has erected’, e.g. M-01a
ates : arkiavai : akenanogavos : midai : lavagaei : vanaktei : edaes ‘Ates, the
arkiaevai- akenanogavo- erected (this) for Midas the ruler, the king’. In the present
inscription such a verbal form is missing. I therefore propose that we are in fact
dealing with a nominal sentence, in which agariṭoi, which can be interpreted as
the nom. pl. m. form of an o-stem adjective agarito-, forms the predicate to nom.
pl. petes ‘feet’. If agarito- is derived from the same verbal root as the Neo-Phry-
gian participle γε-γαριτ-μενο- ‘cursed, devoted’ (we could imagine, for instance,
that the initial a- of agarito- denotes the preverb at-), we may assume that the dat.
sg. form adoikavoi is dependent on agarito-, and that the line as a whole, agariṭoi :
petes : adoikavoi, can be translated as ‘(these) feet are devoted to Adoikavos’.

Now that we know that the word podas cannot mean ‘feet’, we may also have a
new look at the curse formula as present in lines B and C, iosoporokitis[.] | kako-
ioitovo : podaskai’. I see no reason to reject the generally accepted identifications
of ios (as nom.sg. of the indefinite pronoun ‘whoever’), kakoioi (as 3 sg. opt. form
of a verb ‘to maltreat’) and tovo (as gen. sg. of the anaphoric pronoun ‘he’), and
will use these as a starting point.

The crucial element for understanding the curse formula is the form tovo ‘of
his’. In Lejeune’s interpretation of this formula, it was thought to refer back to ios
‘whoever’, which means that the formula must be divided as follows:

protasis:  ios=oporokitis[.]
apodosis:  kakoioi=tovo podaskai

‘Whoever oporokitis[.], there will be maltreatment of his podaskai’.

This means that the sequence oporokitis[.] must contain a verbal form denoting
‘he does harm’ (or similar), and that podaskai’ must be an adverbial or nominal
word. As we have seen, Lejeune assumed that podaskai’ contained the acc. pl.
form podas ‘feet’, an interpretation that cannot be upheld anymore. Lubotsky
proposes to interpret the word as “derivative of the type *po(s)-d$\text{eh}_1$- (cf. Slavic
*pod$\text{b}$ ‘under’ < *po-d$\text{h}_1$-)” instead.

Yet, another possible syntactic interpretation of the curse formula is that ana-
phoric tovo does not refer back to ios, but rather to Adoikavos, the person men-

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9 Also Brixhe (2004: 61) assumes that podas is a separate word, and he suggests that the element
d$\text{ai}$ following it may have to be read as kan, and could then be compared to kan as found in line 9
of the Vezirhan inscription, which according to Brixhe, may function as an emphasizing particle.
tioned in the dedication. In this scenario, we would have to divide the formula as follows:

protasis: \( \text{ios}=\text{oporokitis}.^{[?]}} \) \( \text{kakoioi}=\text{tovo} \)

apodosis: \( \text{podaskai}^{[?]}. \)

‘Whoever will maltreat \( \text{oporokitis}.^{[?]}. \) of him, (he will) \( \text{podaskai}^{[?]}. \).

Since in this interpretation the verbal form \( \text{kakoioi} \) now belongs to the protasis, the sequence \( \text{oporokitis}.^{[?]}. \) cannot contain a verbal form anymore, but instead must contain an adverbial phrase (e.g. ‘in the future’) or an adjective or noun defining \( \text{ios} \) (e.g. ‘whatever evil person’) or an object of \( \text{kakoioi} \) (e.g. ‘this statue’). The apodosis would in this interpretation be formed by the word \( \text{podaskai}^{[?]}. \) only, which means that it must be a verbal form. Such an analysis may not be unattractive, since we could then analyze the form as consisting of a preverb \( \text{po}-(=\ \text{pos)?}, \) cf. Brixhe & Neumann 1985: 175–6), the verbal root \( \text{da}^{-} \)‘to place’ (< \*\text{d}_h\text{e}_h^{-})), a suffix \(-\text{sk}-\) (< PIE \*\text{-ske/o-?}) and an ending \(-\text{ai}?\). Exactly what kind of ending this would be remains elusive, however (also because the reading of the letters \(-\text{ai}\) is not fully ascertained), although we would expect \( \text{ios} \) to be its subject (since otherwise we would expect an acc.sg. form of the anaphoric pronoun \( \text{to}-\)). With regard to its meaning, I could imagine something like ‘he will be trampled upon’ (namely by the protective feet?).

Whatever be the right interpretation of the curse formula present in lines B and C of this inscription, I believe that the new readings for line A presented above shed an interesting new light on the dedication of this inscription, which has turned out to include the real Old Phrygian word for ‘feet’, namely \( \text{petes}. \)

References


