

ROBERT S. P. BEEKES

„Out, Death-Demons; the Feast is over!“

1. Two etymologies have been proposed for κήρ ‘doom, demons of doom’. The first derives the word from the root of κερáιζω ‘destroy’. The root, also in Skt. *śṛṇāti*, is disyllabic, **kerh₂-*. This creates a difficulty in the case of a root noun. FRISK says that it does not, referring to ERNOUT-MEILLET s. v. *cariēs*, but there it is stated that one hesitates to connect our word because of the disyllabic root. From **kērh₂-s* one would expect **κηρα-ς* (cf. γῆρας < **gēr_h₂-s*; which is a neuter *s*-stem, but this is irrelevant for the phonetic development). The laryngeal would only disappear before vowel, as in πῶλος < **pōlH-o-s* (the laryngeal is seen in PGm. **fulan* < **p_lH-on*, Goth. *fula* ‘foal’). This means that κήρ can hardly be explained along these lines.

LEE (1960/1) thought that the etymology just discussed did not account for the element of ‘fate, lot’ which the word has, and instead derives it from the root of κείρω ‘cut’, following CRUSIUS. However, nothing points in this direction (the article is rather unclear and unorganised) and CHANTRAINE rejected it. NILSSON (1967, 222) explains the notion ‘fate, lot’ as secondary.

2. It seems that both etymologies are doubtful if not impossible. A more serious problem is that the form with long α cannot be explained in either way. The evidence for κᾶρ is not extensive but reliable enough. The form is found in Alcaeus (38 L.P.) and in Alcman (88 P.). The form Κᾶρες is also found in Hipparchus ap. Stob. (Eclog. IV 34, 81(sic); best is O. Hense, vol. iii p. 983), where a v.l. has Κῆρες. Recently an Aeolo-Doric inscription was found that has Κᾶρ ἔκτεν θανάτου (Ambracia, vi/v B.C.; BCH 116 (1992) 599 a. 602). Further Hesychius has the gloss Κᾶρ· θάνατος. Also, there is the aphorism θύραζε Κᾶρες, οὐκέτ’ Ἀνθεστήρια ‘Out, Death-

Demons, the Anthesteria are over!" with a variant reading Κῆρες, which shows that the word was regarded as another form of Κῆρες.

There is an old interpretation that Κῆρες had a quite different meaning, 'Carians', i.e. the slaves, who were often Carians. This interpretation makes sense as far as slaves were often admitted to feasts, enjoyed certain liberties but only for the duration of the feast. BURKERT objects (1997, 252) that in Attica slaves were mostly Thracians or Getans. VAN DER VALK (1963, 419) comments that this explanation may go back to Didymos and Demon who give „more often over-subtle and mostly incorrect explanations, ...to show their wits by the ingenious explanations they gave.“ To me, it is clearly an aetiological explanation, invented to explain the word Κῆρες. (Note BURKERT's remark „die erstaunliche Behauptung es habe je Karer in Attika gegeben.“) This proves at the same time that the form Κῆρες was original in the text. VAN DER VALK (1963, 420 n. 2) suggests that the reading Κῆρες came in the text through popular etymology. I think that the Carian interpretation could only arise if the original text had Κῆρες.) I conclude that the Carian interpretation can be thrown in the waste-basket.

The suggestion has been made that the form with α could have arisen from an old inflexion Κῆρ, gen. *Καρ-ός. I rejected this possibility in 1977: there is no evidence for the type, and it is not expected. So this explanation can safely be forgotten.

3. The word, then, has no reliable IE etymology, and the variant with long α cannot be explained. The solution is quite simple: the form with ᾱ is the original form. Then the word must be non-Indo-European, and so probably Pre-Greek. Note that NILSSON had already remarked (1967, 222) that „die Keren nicht aus den Vorstellungen der Oberschicht hervorgegangen, sondern ihrer ganzen Art nach weit urwüchsiger sind.“ In this view the η can be easily explained: it is the Ionic-Attic η from long α. Apparently, this Ionic-Attic form spread widely over Greece: κῆρ- is found in Pindar and in the choir-songs of the tragedians. On the other hand, the aphorism shows that the old form had long been preserved. Both assumptions seem quite possible.

As to the non-Indo-European origin of the word: I do not accept roots **kar-* (PIE had no phoneme *a*, with a lengthened grade *ā* beside it, in my view). POKORNY gives only one root **kār-*, Gr. κηρός, which means ‘wax’ (p. 532), but there is no evidence for an *ā* in this word; CHANTRAINE writes: „le vocalisme *ē* etant assuré pour κηρός.“ Further the form κήρινθος ‘bee-bread’ shows that the word is probably also Pre-Greek. Of course, a word for ‘wax’ is irrelevant for the etymology of κήρ. So there is no IE etymology for the word, and we should rather expect a Pre-Greek word.

4. A further question is provided by the glosses καριῶσαι ἀποκτεῖναι and ἐκαρίωσας ἀπέκτεινας H. (beside κηριοῦσθαι ἐκλήττεσθαι and κηριωθῆναι ὑπὸ σκοτοδίνου ληφθῆναι, both H.). Here CHANTRAINE notes „où l’*α* doit être bref“. I see no basis for this interpretation; if CHANTRAINE assumes that a long *ā* would have become η, this is refuted by Κᾶρες etc. FRISK is more careful: „...zeigen *α*, das indessen...eine Reduktionsstufe enthalten kann, s. unten.“, where he refers to the explanation with the presumed gen. *Καρός. As this is to be rejected, I see no evidence for a short *α*. FRISK clearly means that he assumes a long *α*, and I think that this is the best assumption. (As I think that the word was Pre-Greek, a short *α* is perhaps possible, as we know nothing about possible ‘ablaut’ in this language.)

5. There is no agreement on the interpretation of the aphorism. CRUSIUS, in 1884, impressed by anthropological research in Europe, concluded that the Κῆρες were the Souls of the Dead. BURKERT (1997, 251) says: „immer wieder gibt es Totenfeste, wo die Toten eingeladen, bewirtet und zum Schluss wieder verjagt werden.“ But this has not been generally accepted. The problem is that „gemeinhin bei den Griechen die Totenseele keine Keren, die Keren keine Totenseele sind“ (BURKERT *ib.*). BURKERT tries to reconcile the views (including the text with Κᾶρες = Carians) as ‘foreign elements’. Essentially the same is the view of BREMMER (1983, 113 - 120): „No convincing arguments have hitherto been adduced in support of a connection of the Keres with the souls of the dead“ (p. 115). „They are all representatives of a demonic, non-social, and unstructured world who are absent in normal times“ (p.118).

Both authors should have mentioned that they thus reject the statement of Photius (s.v. μιὰ ἡμέρα): ...ἐν ᾧ δοκοῦσιν αἱ ψυχαὶ τῶν τελευτησάντων ἀνιέναι (almost identical Hesychius). This was done explicitly by GANSZYNIEC (1947, 113): the statement „est postclassique, peut-être même byzantine.“ His article is further dated as it was not yet known that Kares and Keres are just two forms of the same word. I have no solution for this problem, which lies outside my field of competence.

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