

Gr. (ἀ)στεροπή, ἀστραπή

1. The etymology of these words has become relevant again now that PETERS (Untersuch. 208 n.160) has suggested that the forms without ἀ- are due to loss of  $h_2$ - in an end-stressed compound (the forms with ἀ- having reintroduced it from ἀστήρ). This view is taken over by MAYRHOFER, Idg. Gr. I 2. 5.2.1.2 and 5.2.2.8.

The forms found are the following:

στεροπή Hom.; usual in Ion.-Att.;

ἀστεροπή Hom.<sup>1)</sup>; less frequent;

ἀστραπή usual;

ἀστράπτω usual;

στράπτω Soph., A.R.;

στραπή EM;

στροπά· ἀστραπή, Πάφιοι Hes.;

στορπάν· ἀστραπήν Hes.; στροπάος epithet of Zeus in Tegea;

στροφαί· ἀστραπαί Hes., Zonar.

The forms στράπτω, "später belegte poetische Nebenform", and "dazu neugebildet στραπή" (FRISK) may be artificial forms which I shall not use (they would not change the argument).

2. The ἀ-/zero interchange constitutes a serious problem. The forms may in this respect be grouped as follows:

ἀστεροπή	ἀστράπτω	ἀστραπή
στεροπή		στροπά, στροφαί
		στορπάν, στροπάος

It is improbable that ἀ- was 'apocopated', in (a long form like) ἀστεροπή, as there are also  $a$ -less forms of the

shorter form (στροπά etc.). It is also improbable that the  $\acute{\alpha}$ - was added after  $\acute{\alpha}$ στήρ as we would expect it then rather in  $\acute{\alpha}$ στεροπή (which is less frequent than στεροπή) than in  $\acute{\alpha}$ στράπτω (where it is fixed).

3. The usual interpretation is that the word is a compound of  $\acute{\alpha}$ στήρ and  $\acute{\omicron}$ π- 'eye', or  $\acute{\omicron}$ πή 'opening'. I never understood the semantics of this interpretation: 'eye' or 'opening of a star' is hardly adequate to designate 'lightning'.

CHANTRAINE pointed out that we would expect  $**\acute{\alpha}$ στρασσω from a form ending in a labio-velar.

Nevertheless both FRISK, who sees a problem in the ablaut of  $\acute{\alpha}$ στράπτω (which he gives as a separate lemma), and CHANTRAINE accept the traditional etymology.

For the supposed Armenian parallels  $p'$ aylakn 'lightning' and aregakn 'sun' it is now assumed that they contain  $akn$  'source'. I think that this is wrong. I will discuss the forms in section 8.

4. The ablaut ( $\acute{\alpha}$ )στεροπ-/ $\acute{\alpha}$ στραπ-, στροπ- presents a problem. CHANTRAINE simply calls it zero grade, but FRISK finds it problematical: he expected -οπ- from  $*(\omicron)q^u$ . The ablaut must now be stated in terms of the laryngeal theory. I expect:

$$h_2ster-h_3ek^w-s \quad (\text{or } h_2ster-h_3k^w-s)$$

$$h_2str-h_3k^w-\acute{\omicron}s$$

The latter form, however, would have given  $*\acute{\alpha}$ στρωπ-. We must assume the normal treatment of the laryngeals, as this very archaic ablaut must date back to PIE or very early Greek. The only way I see to solve this problem would be to

accept that both laryngeals were lost, perhaps due to final stress, which would imply that a laryngeal in the first member of a compound and in the second member could fall at the same time. It would be the first instance of such a development. (I see also no possibility to assume that one laryngeal fell in one ablaut form, and the other in another, in order to explain άστράπτω.) Also, if this really happened, one wonders why the ά- was introduced in άστράπτω and not (or rarely) in άστεροπή (as pointed out in section 2).

More fundamental is the question whether this type of ablaut can really be expected. I know of no other instance of it.

PETERS notes  $*h_2str-h_3ok^w-éh_2$ , but in an  $\bar{a}$ -stem such an ablaut is extremely improbable. Nor does it solve the problems mentioned<sup>2)</sup>.

The etymology, then, can only be maintained by assuming a rather improbable ablaut and the also very doubtful assumption of the loss of two laryngeals.

5. The ablaut could easily be explained by assuming, not a compound, but a noun with a suffix  $-ep-$  (or  $-ek^w-$  if we neglect the objection against άστράπτω). Thus:

$$h_2stér-op-(m)$$

$$h_2str-p-(ós)$$

There are two objections. First, a suffix  $-ep-$  (or  $-ek^w-$ ) is extremely rare. Second, in this way we find no solution for the ά-/zero interchange. Therefore this solution too is improbable.

6. As an ultimum refugium one might separate άστεροπή from άστράπτω. However, the latter root form presents itself

the interchange  $\acute{\alpha}$ -/zero, for which an explanation would have to be found. After all, the identity in meaning and the similarity of form make this escape improbable.

7. KUIPER, FS Kretschmer 221, considered the word as non-IE. FURNÉE, Vorgriech. 159, pointed to the form  $\sigma\tau\rho\omega\phi\acute{\alpha}\iota$  (not mentioned by FRISK or CHANTRAINE) with unexplained  $\phi$ , which confirms non-IE origin. He pointed out that  $\acute{\alpha}$ -/zero, the anaptyctic  $\epsilon$ , the interchange  $\alpha/o$  and  $\pi/\phi$  can all be explained if we assume a loanword (159, 342, 373, 382). It could be formulated  $(a)st(e)ro/ap/ph-$ . Note that in both cases the disyllabic form has been generalized (not the mono- or trisyllabic one).

This, then, remains the most probable interpretation, as the number of improbable assumptions required to explain the words as IE is too large. It may be noted that another word for 'lightning',  $\kappa\epsilon\rho\alpha\upsilon\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ , seems to have IE antecedents.

8. MEILLET, Handes Amsorya 41 (1927) 757-762, interpreted *aregakn* as 'eye of the sun', pointing out that the conception of the sun as an eye is an Indo-European heritage; and *p'aylakn* 'lightning' as 'oeil de l'éclair', adding, "au moins littéralement". BENVENISTE, REArm.2 (1965) 5-19, argues that the words contain *akn* '(Fr.) ouverture, source, maille'. His only argument is that the plural is *-akunk'* (and not *aš'k'* as from 'eye'). WEITENBERG informs me that he thinks that this argument is not decisive, and that he is surprised that it was taken over immediately (e.g. R.SCHMITT, Gramm.klass.-Arm. 219; SZEMERÉNYI, Gnomon 43, 657). For compounds which certainly contain 'eye' do have *n*-stem inflection in the plural: *giš-akn* 'blear-eyed', acc.pl. *giš-akuns*; *š'ar-akn* 'bad-eyed', pl. *š'ar-akunk'*. Thus the only reason to

assume that it was *akn* 'source' disappears. And semantically the idea was quite improbable: 'source (ou jaillissement) de soleil' ("l'image est celle d'un foyer de lumière d'où jaillissent les rayons" is quite forced). BENVENISTE assumes the same word in *p'aylakn* and *kaycakn* 'spark, burning coals (σπινθήρ, ἄνθραξ)'. Here 'source' is even more strange, not to say impossible. For *aregakn*, then, we must certainly return to MEILLET's interpretation as 'eye', which is understandable and has parallels. As *areg* is a genitive, the form is an Armenian creation. It is much less clear whether *p'aylakn* contains the same word; perhaps it is a suffix, as JENSEN, *Altarm. Gramm.* § 87, thinks (for all the words). I think that *kaycakn* has the same element as *p'aylakn*, as there is a common semantic element (*p'aylakn* translates σπινθήρ in Sir. 42,22, which is normally translated by *kaycakn*). Only *ažber-akn* 'source' might contain *akn* 'source', though it remains rather strange to find the same element expressed twice. I would not exclude the possibility of 'eye' here; a source may look like an 'eye' (cf., on a larger scale, *Morskie Oko* 'Eye of the Sea', the name of a small lake in Southern Poland). In *diakn* (beside *di*) 'corpse' it seems impossible to find either 'eye' or 'source'. BENVENISTE suggests that *-ak-* came to function as a singulative. The observation that *diakn* and *kaycakn* occur predominantly as plurals does not really support this idea.

I do not know what to think of the fact that the plural of *p'aylakn* is often *p'aylatakunk'* (cf. the present *p'aylatakem*; MEILLET explained *p'aylat-* from a compound with *hatanel* 'to beat, slay', which seems not convincing to me).

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- 1) The indications in FRISK and CHANTRAINE suggest that it occurs in Homer only K 154 (where it is a varia lectio, which CHANTRAINE does not mention). It is found also N 242, E 386, and as a v.l. in A 184.
  - 2) Untersuch. 208 n.160.  $h_2str-h_3ok^w-\acute{e}h_2$  would result in **\*\*(\acute{a})σταροπη** (or perhaps **\*\*(\acute{a})στοροπη**). If he assumes that both laryngeals had fallen, it would have given **\*(\acute{a})στροπη**. In both cases (\acute{a})στερ- would have to be reintroduced from ἀστήρ, which is not a simple assumption.