



HESYCHIUS

HESYCHIUS (Gk. Hēsýchios), Greek lexicographer from Alexandria, whose lexicon records a number of Iranian words (6th or possibly 5th century C.E.). Judging by his name, he was a Christian; more is not known about him and cannot be determined. In the history of Greek lexicography Hesychius is transitional between the Roman Imperial and the Byzantine periods. He is the author or, more exactly, the compiler of a voluminous, alphabetically arranged Greek lexicon. It is one of the most important and, with about 51,000 entries, the largest Greek lexicon preserved. Its title is given as *Synagōgè pasôn léxeōn katà stoicheîon* “Compilation of all words in alphabetic order”; that means that it is not confined to a particular author or literary genre, as are nearly all the works of his predecessors. In this lexicon are registered and interpreted rare and often unique poetic, dialectal, or foreign words that were used by some author (whether a poet or a specialized, technical author); in many cases they are not to be found in the literature preserved. Most of those rare words as well as their interpretations ultimately come from some literary source, passed on by the relevant scholia, glossaries, or explanatory writings. However, if no information is given about the source and the context of the word, all conclusions remain very uncertain.

The lexicon of Hesychius is preserved almost completely (only two folios being badly damaged) but just in one single paper manuscript with 439 folios, which is quite defective and very late, only from the 15th century (Codex Venetus Graec. 851, formerly Marcianus Graec. 622). The glosses are written continuously, the individual lemmata being marked, not by beginning on a



new line, but by a red initial letter. It was edited for the first time in 1514 in Venice by M. Musurus with his corrections and deletions. These were entered with thick ink in the manuscript itself (as if it were galley proofs) and thus often obscure the original reading.

The main source of Hesychius, as the author writes in his dedicatory letter to a certain Eulogius, is (apart from various glossaries and taking account of Herodian's grammatical rules) the Lexicon of Diogenianus of Heraclea Pontica (or an adaptation of it). The latter apparently is a revised extract of Pamphilus and thus ultimately is based on Hellenistic lexica. From this, Hesychius's dependence on earlier works and on the complex tradition of the Greek lexica become clear; only in exceptional cases can the philologist establish the sources from which a particular gloss stems. Hesychius's own achievement is the strict alphabetic arrangement of the material he gathered.

His original text, however, has been distorted in the course of the Byzantine tradition by numerous interpolations from other glossaries, especially the so-called Glossary of Cyrillus. In addition, as we see from the comparison with indirect evidence of the original Hesychius in the excerpts of a Vatican codex (Graec. 23), the *interpretamenta* or explanations of the lemmata often were drastically shortened; and most of the quotations added for illustration were deleted. By those interpolations and other changes made by the copyists, serious mistakes and nearly incomprehensible glosses came into being, as well as incongruencies in the alphabetical order.

Despite all those shortcomings the work is of great value even in its present state, mainly for linguistics, for it contains many words not attested elsewhere, although lacking their literary context. Those linguistic studies on the material found in Hesychius began after the publication of Schmidt, 1858-68, mainly with the aim of using those glosses as linguistic sources. The structure of the individual lemmata normally is such that a more difficult, i.e., less current, word needing an explanation is registered and equated with a (more) current synonym. Cases are not lacking, however, where such a rare word or 'gloss' (in the Greek sense of the word) itself is used as explanation: e.g., *brákes* "breeches" is glossed by *anaxyrídes*, which is also found as a lemma (and often is suspected of being Iranian in origin). Additional remarks sometimes are given concerning the origin of the word, its etymology, or the like—e.g., *árxiphos* (read: *árziphos*) "eagle, with the Persians" (*aetós, parà Pérsais*).

The lexicon contains a number of words of various ancient languages from



India to the Celts, among them many Iranian glosses characterized with an appropriate ethnic name as words used by Parthians, Persians, and Scythians (although not all words so marked really are of Iranian origin). In addition there are words of Iranian origin which are not associated with any ethnic name; they are a more interesting topic, though also more problematic. Finally, two words of Iranian origin are attributed to the Armenians (*kérta* “town”) and the “Asians” (*kérsa* “coin”) respectively, and Med. *spáka* “dog” (without an ethnic name) is taken from Herodotus (1.100.1). This material was noticed rather early by scholars, and it was treated in detail already by Lagarde (1866, pp. 147-242).

The glosses explicitly attributed to the “Persians” are diverse in many respects, above all with regard to age and reliability. For some of them Aeschylus (from whose *Persians* even several proper names found their way into the lexica), Herodotus, Xenophon, and other authors of classical times such as Ctesias can be made out as the source: *ággaros* “mounted courier” (cf. Huyse, 1993; Mancini), *athánatoi* “the Immortals” (q.v.), *akinákēs* “sword,” *artábē* (q.v.) a measure of capacity, *achánas* (acc. plur.) another measure, *dareikoí* (plur.) gold coins (see DARIC), *deúas* (acc. plur.) “the evil gods of the Magi” (cf. Av. *daēuua-*, OPers. *daiva-*), *kándys* a kind of garment (see CANDYS), *kyrbasía* a kind of headgear, *mágon* (acc.) = OPers. *maguš* “magus,” *Míthrēs* theonym (and *míthras* “sun”), *parasággēs* “farsang” (measurement of 30 stades), *pissátai* (probably to be read as *-âgai*, plur.) “leper,” *satrápai* (plur.) “satrap,” *síglon* (acc.) “shekel” (not of Iranian origin), *tiára* and *tiérēs* “tiara.”

Furthermore the following items are of importance: *abiátaka* (acc.) “remembering “ (as epithet of Artaxerxes II [q.v.]; cf. Parth. *aβyād*, Man. MPers. *ayād* “memory”); *árxiphos* (correctly *árzi-*) “eagle” (cf. Av. *ərəzifīia-*); *astándēs* “messenger, courier”; *gáza* “treasure, treasury” (and also toponym); *Zarētis*, seemingly a puzzling epithet of Anāhitā (i.e., “Artemis” for the Greeks); *kárda-kes* (plur.) “foreign mercenaries”; *mandýas* a kind of cloak; *naúma* “grass, herb”; *opastón* “supply” (= OPers. *upastā-*, according to Tolman, p. 237).

Words obviously borrowed into Greek only later are, e.g., *amazakáran* “to fight a battle” (cf. Huyse, 2002, pp. 217 f.), *Areimánēs* “Ahriman,” *artád-es* and *artaíoi* (both plur.) “the righteous” (cf. MPers. *ardā*), *bístax* (to be read *bítax*) “the second after the king” (cf. Parth., MPers. *bidaxš*; see Huyse, 2002, p. 207).

As typically “Parthian” words (cf. in general Huyse, 2002, pp. 202-6) are registered, among others (with some corrupted forms), the military terms



díphrag-es (plur.; perhaps a Greek word with Huyse, 2002, p. 203), *Ézakas* (acc. plur.; cf. *ibid.*, p. 204), *kórtēn* (acc.), and *paragōgás* (correctly *-gōdas*) for various kinds of Parthian garments; *sarábara* “loose trousers or leggings” (called Parthian s.v. [Gk.] *skéleai*, but Old Persian in origin, according to Brust, pp. 29 f.); *mazákis* (possibly *naz-*?) “spear”; *símōr* a kind of wild ‘mouse’ (perhaps the sable); *síra* “great”; and *tabêla* (*sic*) “drum.” Also the word *ársak-es* (plur.; see ARSACIDS), although defined as “the kings of the Persians,” clearly belongs here.

A number of glosses are explicitly connected with the “Scythians” (see Neroznak, p. 62; Christol, 1987; 1989, pp. 14-18); the most important source of them without doubt is Herodotus. They include: *ágly* “swan,” *adigór* “locust” (cf. Christol, 1987, pp. 219 f.), *ánor* “mind,” *Arti-mēasan* (acc.) “Aphrodite” (Herodotus 4.59.2), *Goitósyron* (probably to be interpreted as *Foit-*; acc.) “Apollo” (*ibid.*), *hippákē* “food made of mare’s milk” or “sour milk” (reshaped from Scythian **aspakā/ā-* according to Forssman), *kánnabis* “hemp” (Herodotus 4.74 f.) *kararyēs* (plur.) “covered wagons” (or sim.), *Koraxoí* a Scythian tribe, *melítion* (if read as *melygion*), “intoxicating drink made from honey,” *mésplē* “moon” (cf. Christol, 1987, p. 215; Bielmeier, pp. 434-40), *ormátai* “men-slayers” (seemingly based on *Oiórpata* [understood as *hoi ór-*], the Amazons’ name in Herodotus 4.110.1 and translated here with the same word), *pagaiē* “dog,” *Sákai* “Scythians” (cf. Herodotus 7.64.2), *sakyndákē* a Scythian garment, *sapérdēs* (not to be emended to *kap-*) a species of fish, and *tárandos* (better *-ndros*) “reindeer” or “elk” (therefore obviously at home more to the north). For other Scythian glosses the text handed down is corrupted (e.g., *abakēs*, *abí*, and *sánaptin* [acc.] “wine-drinker”), or they actually are (partly somewhat barbarized) Greek formations, that were only used somewhere in a Scythian context (e.g., *ábie*, *ephéstioi* “deserters,” and *thápsinon*).

There are also a number of glosses, without any ethnic name, which undoubtedly must be of Old Iranian origin: *azátē* “freedom” and *azétai* “the king’s nearest entourage”; *gándoma* “wheat” and *gándómēn* (acc.) “(wheat) flour” (see Huyse, 2002, p. 201); *danákē* a Persian coin (cf. Schmitt, 1991); *marikás* pet name for boys (cf. OPers. *marīka-*); *máris* a liquid measure (see Schmitt, 1989); *míttra* (and *métrra*) “headdress, diadem”; *parádeisos* (appearing as an entry as well as the gloss to Gk. *kēpos* “garden”) “enclosure, wild-life park”; *rhyndákē* a bird of a pigeon’s size; and *sparabárai* (plur.) “troops bearing wicker shields.”



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