

NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

ΜΕΡΟΠΕΣ “GLITTER-ISH”

The word μέροπες is found several times in both Homer and Hesiod,¹ but there has been no agreement about its derivation. Mostly labeled “epith. de sens et d’origine obscur,”² it has been seen either as a derivation from μείρομαι³ or as a synonym of βροτός “mortal.”⁴

In Indo-European languages, there is a group of words with the common meaning of “splendid, shine, glitter.” Sometimes these words are used figuratively, “vibrating, shaking.”

1. Sanskrit *máric-* “beam of light” < **mer-* “shine,” “vibrate.”⁵
2. Greek μαρμαίρω “shine.”
3. Latin *merus* “pure, unmixed, mere.”
4. Russian *márebo*; Ukrainian *márevo* “shine, glitter.”⁶
5. Old English *á-merian* “make clear, put to proof.”

It is therefore natural to consider Greek μέροπες as meaning originally **“bright, shining”* and derived from the above root IE **mer-* “shine, glitter.”⁷

I wish to express my thanks to the Editor, E. Hamp, and J. Humphrey.

1. For the different contexts in which μέροπες occurs, see H. Koller, “Πόλις Μερόπων Ανθρώπων,” *Glotta* 46 (1968): 18–26.

2. Cf. H. Ebeling, *Lexicon Homericum* (Lipsiae, 1885), pp. 1068–69: “dubiae originis vocem composuit alii . . .”; A. Walde, *Vergl. Wortb. der Idg. Spr.* (Heidelberg, 1938), p. 689; J. B. Hofmann, *Etym. Wortb. des Griech.* (München, 1949), p. 198: “Herkunft unklar”; E. Boisacq, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Heidelberg, 1950), p. 628; A. Fick, *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 20 (1905): 172: “berücksichtigen wir, dass nach den oben angeführten Wörtern . . .”; P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1968), p. 687; H. Frisk, *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 2 (Heidelberg, 1970), p. 211; idem, “Zahlreiche Hypothesen,” *GEW* (Heidelberg, 1972), p. 152: “Ursprünglich Stammesname”; M. Bréal, *Mélanges de la Société Linguistique*, vol. 13, p. 105: “qui ont un visage d’homme, i-e. **mer-* ‘to die.’”

3. Hesch. s.v. μέροπες: διὰ τὸ μεμερισμένην ἔχειν τὴν ὅπα, ἤγουν τὴν φωνήν.

4. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος συνώνυμον, cf. *Cod. Havn.* 1971 as cited in *Etym. Magn.* 580, 21. See also Aesch. *Cho.* 1018: “niuno mai dei mortali . . .” trans. by M. Valgimigli and M. V. Ghezzi (Messina, 1947), p. 145; M. B. Mendes da Costa, *Index Etymologicus Dictionis Homericæ* (Lyon, 1905), p. 268; M. Leumann, *Homeriche Wörter* (Basilea, 1950), pp. 125–27.

5. J. Pokorny, *Idg. Etym. Wortb.* (Bern, 1959), p. 733.

6. M. Vasmer, *Russ. Etym. Wortb.*, vol. 2 (Heidelberg, 1955), p. 98.

7. For a further survey of its morphology, see E. Hamp, “Formations indoeuropéennes à second élément *-(H₀)k^w,” *BSL* 68 (1973): 77–92. Cf. T. G. Tucker, “Etymologies of Some Homeric Words,” *CQ* 16 (1922): 100–102. A semantic relationship was envisaged by P. Ramat, “Su alcune tracce del totemismo nell’onomastica greca: Gli etnici in -ΟΠΕΣ,” *RFIC* 90 (1962): 150–79, who focuses on the suffix, but not on the main IE root **mer-*.

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A poetic word used as an epithet of men, its meaning "glitter-ish, splendid" is most apparent in Hesiod⁸ where, followed by ἀνθρώπων, it seems to bear a semantic relation with χρύσειον [γένος] "the Golden Age";⁹ whereas in Homer it is used as opposed to ἐλέγχιστον "coward."¹⁰ Thus it may be seen as a *bahuvrihi*,¹¹ meaning "of glitter-ish aspect," like other similar compounds in Homer.¹²

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8. *Op.* 109–10 Χρύσειον μὲν πρότιστα γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων / ἀθάνατοι ποίησαν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες. See the translations by H. G. Evelyn-White (London, 1914), p. 11: "mortal men," and R. Lattimore (Ann Arbor, 1959), p. 31: "mortal people."

9. Cf. *Pl. Resp.* 468E, *Phdr.* 235E, *Cra.* 397E.

10. *Il.* 2.284–85 Ἀτρεΐδῃ, νῦν δὲ σε, ἄναξ, ἐθέλουσιν ἄχαιοι / πᾶσιν ἐλέγχιστον θέμεναι μερόπεσσι βροτοῖσιν.

11. A type of compound word, meaning "having the aspect of"; cf. Ramat, "Su alcune tracce," pp. 150–51.

12. See on this type of nominal composition E. Risch, *Wortb. d. hom. Spr.* (Berlin, 1937), pp. 166–70, 182–86.

SULLA PÈRE AND MITHRIDATES

Tradition from antiquity has handed down that Sulla came from a family that had been sunk in obscurity for several generations and that he himself had passed his youth in poverty.¹ Recently, however, doubt has been cast on this latter detail² and, at the same time, there have been attempts made to throw some light on the obscurer members of the Sullan family.³ The dictator's father has certainly not escaped these efforts at rehabilitation. More than twenty years ago E. Badian suggested he might have held a praetorship, although all our sources actually tell us about him is that he was married twice.⁴ F. Hinard has now gone further. Accepting the existence of the praetorship, he argues that the elder Sulla was a friend of Mithridates VI Eupator and thus, by implication, had held a promagistracy in Asia.⁵

It should be immediately pointed out, however, that the elder Sulla need not necessarily have held a praetorian promagistracy in the east in order to meet Mithridates. He might just as easily have served on someone else's staff and, in that capacity, there are a large number of offices he could have held, any one of which would have brought him into contact with the king.⁶

1. A view accepted and propounded most recently by A. Keaveney, *Sulla: The Last Republican* (London, 1983), pp. 6–12, and "Young Sulla and the *decem stipendia*," *RFIC* 108 (1980): 165–71, although even he argues for shabby gentility rather than outright penury.

2. L. E. Reams, "Sulla's Alleged Early Poverty and Roman Rent," *AJAH* 9 (1984): 158–74.

3. B. R. Katz, "Notes on Sulla's Ancestors," *LCM* 4 (1982): 148–49; L. E. Reams, "The Strange Case of Sulla's Brother," *CJ* 82 (1987): 301–5.

4. E. Badian, "Lucius Cornelius Sulla: The Deadly Reformer," *Todd Memorial Lecture* (Sydney, 1970), p. 5. Cf. *Plut. Sull.* 2.

5. This view was first advanced in Hinard's *Sylla* (Paris, 1985), pp. 21–22, and repeated in his "Marius: Sylla et l'Afrique," in *L'Africa romana*, ed. A. Mastino (Sassari, 1989), p. 86, n. 18.

6. For the governor's staff see, for example, A. H. J. Greenidge, *Roman Public Life* (London, 1901), pp. 322–24.