

Is the inscription on the Ezerovo ring finally deciphered? Yes.

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Abstract

A new translation and very probable accurate decipherment of the inscription on a gold ring found in 1912 in Ezerovo, near Plovdiv, Bulgaria, which is generally presumed to be a 5th century BC example of at least one dialect of the Thracian language, a Palaeo-Balkan Indo-European language which went extinct over a thousand years ago, though the exact century when the language ceased to be spoken is not yet known.

Keywords: Thracian, Palaeo-Balkan, Dacian, Ancient Greek, Proto-Albanian, Balto-Slavic, Indo-European, Proto-Indo-European, Etruscan, Pre-Greek, Artemis

1. Introduction

In 1912, in a place called Pärženaka in a village called Ezerovo (the village of Ezerovo takes its name from a lake in the area), near Plovdiv, Bulgaria, a gold ring inscribed with a text in Greek letters was found by happen-stance while a mould/burial mound was being excavated. The ring weighs 31.3 grams and the surface on which the letters are engraved (the last four letters are engraved on the other side) has an elliptical shape measuring 1.7 x 2 cm. In the same neighborhood besides the ring there were found other items considered to be belonging to a burial – a golden diadem, a small golden spoon, two triangular golden plates, a broken bronze vessel, a round bronze mirror and a broken bronze bracelet. Thus the golden ring was probably for the burial of a Thracian of means and status. The ring is considered to date back to the 5th century BC.

The language of the inscription is most likely Thracian, in the opinion of nearly all of the scholars of the past who have examined the inscription, and in my opinion as well. This conclusion is based on a number of factors, of which the most important are: 1) the inscription does not make sense in Greek; 2) the area where the ring was found was not an area where Greek speakers predominated at that time, and indeed Greek is thought to have been spoken natively by only relatively few in that area at that time; 3) it is not as likely to have been written in Paeonian or Illyrian or Macedonian (Greek dialect or not), because in the inscription we find *Rolis* (a variant of the well-attested Thracian and Daco-Getic anthroponym *Roles/Rholes*) as the first part of the inscription, a name not attested among Illyrians, Paeonians or Macedonians/Greeks, nor to my knowledge among any besides Thracians and Daco-Geteans.

Few have found the previous translation attempts satisfactory; nor have I found them satisfactory; indeed, the only two translations before mine which I find noteworthy are: 1) the translation essayed by Dimitar Dechev, published in 1957; and 2) Vladimir Georgiev's translation, which dates back to the 1960s or 1950s. I find Vladimir Georgiev's translation to be more unlikely than Dechev's, and among the number of reasons for that determination is Georgiev's interpretation that Thracian "as" meant "I" in the inscription (referring here to the English pronoun "I"), which Georgiev extracted from "Rolistene/as/nerenea" in the inscription (the forward slashes indicate Georgiev's parsing, not any word-breaks found in the inscription; the inscription does not indicate any word-breaks). It's not that "as" is unlikely to have been the Thracian word for "I"(English)/"ego" (Latin)/"ich"(German), (etc., all from PIE *égh₂, meaning "I"): that's likely enough, as seen in Old Prussian where "as" meant "I", deriving from PIE *égh₂, the **gh** sound having been sibilized to **s**, and Thracian can be expected to have sibilized that **gh** there as well (though it's not certain that

Thracian actually did that in this particular word, since this pronoun is not yet attested in Thracian, Georgiev's translation being too unlikely on this point of "as" from *Rolisteneas*, and his interpretations of the other elements are also unlikely); my problem with Georgiev's interpretation is that he extracts that "as" from *Rolisteneas*, which makes his interpretation of this "as" meaning "I" in the inscription very unlikely as will be seen.

I have therefore essayed my own translation, which has a high likelihood of being the first correct and accurate translation and decipherment of one of the two longest of the Thracian inscriptions discovered so far. If so, this provides us with the first advanced look at the Thracian language, beyond the short phrases translated before, and beyond the small number of glosses from ancient authors, and beyond anthroponyms, theonyms, toponyms, phytonyms (from the afore-mentioned ancient glosses), et al.

I agree with the order of the words and the sound-values of the letters which most past investigators have followed, and I agree with the reading direction, which is from left to right: **ΡΟΛΙΣΤΕΝΕΑΣ**

ΝΕΡΕΝΕΑ ΤΙΑΤΕΑΝ ΗΣΚΟ ΑΡΑ ΖΕΑ ΔΟΜΕΑΝ ΤΙΛΕΖΥΠΤΑ ΜΙΗ ΕΡΑ ΖΗΤΑ (the letters on the ring itself are sometimes different from the letters indicated here, but the sound-values correspond to what is shown here). My parsing of the words is I think identical to Dechev's parsing; indeed it can be said that when it comes to parsing, we only perhaps disagree on the last word in the inscription. However, as will be seen, we disagree about the meanings of most of the words and elements thus parsed.

I agree with Dechev et al. that *Rolisteneas* in the inscription is a male Thracian anthroponym, and that we should parse it as *Rolisteneas*, not *Rolistene*, nor stopping at *Rolis*. I have not yet tracked down the name of the first person to recognize this *Rolisteneas* in the inscription, nor who was the first to end the parsing after the second S (*Rolisteneas...*); it may have been Dechev, but likely not. For anyone with a decent knowledge of Thracian anthroponyms, this was obvious; due to the known/attested Thracian names *Roles* and *Oroles* (and some other variants); as well as the -sthénēs/-sthénē (meaning "strong" in ancient Greek, from ancient Greek σθένος, *sthénos*, "strong") element from ancient Greek names (Alkisthénē, Androsthénēs, Kallisthénēs, Sthenélāos, et al.) being known to have been either adopted by Thracians, or perhaps Thracians had the word as well from Proto-Indo-European or from a Non-IE language of the area and time: the etymology of Greek σθένος (*sthénos*) is not agreed upon in the literature, with some preferring a Non-IE derivation.

Some interpreters--though agreeing about the Greek cognate/loanword *-sthenes*--prefer the parsing *Rolistene*, believing either, like Georgiev, 1) that *Rolistene* is a grammatical inflection of a proper name, as in Latin and Greek (see Georgiev's translation for this usage and interpretation), if Thracian had an inflection like that identical to Latin (though Thracian and Dacian may well have had that inflection, the inscription on the ring is almost certainly not an example of that usage); or 2) believing that *Rolistene* is a Thracian genitive form. I don't subscribe to either of those two interpretations; for the genitive interpretation some cite *Ebaroze*, extracted from the Kjolmen inscription: but there is no convincing reason to think that *Ebaroze* is the correct way to parse that portion of the Kjolmen inscription (found in the Preslav region, north of the Rhodope mountains, in Moesia, where the Thracian population was probably mostly of the Getean/Moesian/Daco-Getean kind, who spoke a dialect which had a number of differences compared to most Thracians of the Ezerovo area), which more likely should be connected to the SAS letters that occur next, so that the full name is *Ebaro Zesas*¹; nor is there any evidence that *Dadaleme* found inscribed on some silver philiae is a name showing such a genitive (as I plan to detail in future versions of this paper or in a separate study; for now, the *Da Dale Me* inscriptions are discussed later in this work): *Dadaleme* very likely (most likely/more likely, in fact) represents a Thracian phrase *Da Dale Me*, not a name (see discussion of that later in this work). I do have to find more examples of the *-eas* ending in Thracian names; since I have not yet compiled a catalog of Thracian names, nor have I reviewed all of the attested Thracian names (nor have I undertaken an extensive review; I last did a rather extensive review of Thracian and Dacian names many years ago, and I had access to only a smaller number of them), I do not currently have another example of a

¹ See my translation of the entire Kjolmen Moesian inscription. My translation of that inscription was published on March 6th, 2022, on Zenodo. See also the Conclusion section of this paper where I discuss my translation of the Kjolmen inscription vis-a-vis my translation of the Ezerovo ring.

Thracian name ending with the adjectival suffix *-eas* (found in Greek and in Greek names) to include here. Yet Dacian names ending with *-eus* (*Decaeneus*; *Diurpaneus*) may be Romanizations of *-eas*; or *-eus* may be the Dacian version of the scarcely (?) attested Thracian *-eas* (or the Thracians living close to and among the Greeks may have adapted their native suffix so that it became identical to the Greek *-eas*). The name ending *-ais* (*Dekinais*, *Diernais*, etc.) is well-attested in Dacian, and I recall *-ais* in Thracian as well.

Second, I agree with a number of previous translators, including Dechev, that *Nerenea* likely was the genitive form of the name of the father of Rolisteneas or the genitive form of Rolisteneas' gens/family name; so that *Rolisteneas Nerenea* likely means "Rolisteneas, son of Nereneas", or "Rolisteneas of gens Nerenea". The Thracian name **Nerenea/*Nereneas* has to my knowledge not yet been attested elsewhere, but it looks very likely to be a name with that very form, since there is a Proto-Indo-European root word **h₂nér*, which meant "man; power, force, vital energy", from whence comes ancient Greek *aner*, meaning "man", and Albanian *njeri* (from Old Albanian *njer*, from Proto-Albanian **nera*) meaning "man; human being", to name a few cognates. There is also a Latin gens name *Neria*, a Latin nomen *Nerius*, and a Latin name *Nero*, all three of which were traditionally believed by the Romans to mean "strong and sturdy", matching the meaning of the PIE etymon.

There is also a reminiscence of the ancient Greek name for a particular sea-god, *Nereus*, whose name is of unknown origin and unknown etymology. I think there's a chance that ancient Greek *Nereus* is akin to Etruscan *neri* (the attested Etruscan element *neri* =water, according to some interpreters of Etruscan inscriptions); or *Nereus* could derive from PIE **h₂nér*, meaning "man", as in "the first man", which could have been a reference to a forgotten myth-cycle, perhaps also reflected in the name of another Greek sea-god, Proteus (this "forgotten" mythology about "the first man" being a sea-personage is actually encountered in the mythologies of peoples of various parts of the earth, and thus it is quite likely to be embodied in the name of *Nereus*). I know that some have already noticed the similarity to Etruscan *neri* (though I noticed that resemblance on my own, before I knew that anyone else had noticed that, though it was an easy thing to notice) but I may be the first to suggest an etymology involving the „first man“ mythology surrounding Proteus and other sea-deities.

2. The new translation

Here now is my translation, different from any previous translations (besides agreeing with many translators about the meanings of the elements *Rolisteneas* and *Nerenea* and *mie*, and agreeing with Dechev about the meaning of *domean*): **ΡΟΛΙΣΤΕΝΕΑΣ ΝΕΡΕΝΕΑ ΤΙΛΕΑΝ ΗΣΚΟ ΑΡΑ ΖΕΑ ΔΟΜΕΑΝ ΤΙΛΕΖΥΠΤΑ ΜΙΗ ΕΡΑ ΖΗΛΤΑ:**

Rolisteneas Nerenea, tiltean, = "Rolisteneas Nerenea, fallen (fallen in the sense of deceased)"

ēsko Ara-Zea Domean Tilezupta = "Petitions Ara-Zea, Lady of the Covered Breasts"

miē era-zēlta = "to make me again bloom"

So the entire inscription reads: ***Rolisteneas Nerenea, fallen, petitions Ara-Zea, lady of the covered breasts, to make me bloom again.***

The inscription is thus a religious/magical formula for the deceased, who is seeking either a resurrection on this earth; or reincarnation; or a good afterlife. The ancient Greek writer Herodotus detailed how the Getae (a northern group of Thracians) believed that they were immortal, meaning that they didn't believe that they actually died even though they corporeally died (see Herodotus, *The Histories*, 4.94), so Herodotus furnishes some important proof there, but I recall some more proof from reference works on the Thracians, which I will detail in future versions of this paper.

The theonym *Ara-Zea* meant „Woods Goddess“, which in English would be „Goddess of the Woods“, with *Ara* meaning „tree“ in a language once spoken in Aetolia, as I have found, but the range across which this word was used cannot be determined completely: we know that the word is not found in any surviving Ancient Greek or Roman manuscripts, and I have found indications that the word is Pre-Greek, and so likely

entered Thracian from Pre-Greek: however, the word has very close cognates in Proto-Indo-European (see my detailed discussion of the *Ara* component further in this paper), which indicates that these Pre-Greeks must have been at the least in close contact with speakers of the Proto-Proto-Indo-European language: alternatively, one or more Pre-Greek languages split off from Proto-Proto-Indo-European (which can be called Eteo-Indo-European) at a time before Proto-Indo-European.

Though the theonym meant „Woods Goddess“, not „Earth Goddess“, the inscription is asking Ara-Zea to make the fallen (tiltean) man bloom again, which indicates to me that this goddess had qualities that among the Greeks were more associated with Demeter rather than with Artemis. So Ara-Zea could be thought of as a conceptual combination of an earth-goddess like Demeter and a goddess like Artemis (a goddess corresponding to Artemis has been attested as Bendis and also as Kotys/Kottuto among the Thracians), a conceptual combination already known and identified among the Greeks, Anatolians and Minoans (see the literature on the subject; of course, I'm not saying that the Thracians consciously combined Demeter and Artemis, which was not the case; nor am I saying that they consciously combined two Thracian goddesses; rather that the Thracians had at least one goddess, Ara Zea, who had qualities of both Demeter and Artemis, but those qualities were not taken from Greek religion, though some later Greek influence, and vice versa, is possible: but mostly the similarity is due to a common source, including Pre-Greek religion and mythology).

Of the Thracians, Herodotus in chapter 5.7 of *The Histories* says: "They worship no gods but Ares, Dionysus, and Artemis. Their princes, however, unlike the rest of their countrymen, worship Hermes above all gods and swear only by him, claiming him for their ancestor."

In the immediate region where the gold ring was found, archaeological artifacts record that a cult of Apollo, the Kendreiseian Apollo (Kendriso Apollo; Kendreiseia was apparently an ancient name for Pulpudeva, which became the modern Plovdiv), was particularly important there. And the worship of Apollo in those days was usually accompanied by the worship of his sister, Artemis. In a scholarly source discussing the Thracians, I have found that Kendrisia² is considered to be the name of a Thracian goddess (I have also found sources saying that Kendreiseia was an ancient name for the town of Pulpudeva; the town was known by several different names in ancient times). And I have found sources which say that Kendriso (and Kendros) may be a Thracian name of Apollo. I could find no etymology given for this group of kindred attestations (Kendreiseia, Kendrisia, Kendriso, Kendros and even Kendrissi, the latter being the name of a Thracian tribe of the area), so I studied the forms and discovered the most likely etymology myself: the PIE root is *(s)kand-, "to shine, gleam, glow", from which comes ancient Greek κάνδαρος (kándaros, "charcoal"), Albanian hënë ("moon"), Sanskrit चन्द्र (candrā, which as a noun meant "moon" and as an adjective meant "gleaming, shining"), Old Armenian խանդ (xand, "fiery emotion/passion"), Latin candeō ("to shine, gleam").

The form Kendrisia is a theonym, and is best understood as a feminine adjectival epithet of the Thracian Artemis, an adjectival epithet which meant "shining; gleaming". The form Kendreiseia may be a toponym ("(city) of Kendrisia and Kendriso") formed from the theonym adjective Kendrisia; or Kendreiseia may be the actual attested form of the theonym (rather than Kendrisia), and could have been used as a theonym and as a toponym; I am working on clarifying the attestations. The masculine adjective forms Kendros and Kendriso have the same meaning yet probably with a slight difference ("shining, beaming, burning") to emphasize the burning hot energy of the sun, instead of just the radiance of the moon. Thus it's most likely that in the very place where the gold ring was found, the cult of Apollo (Kendriso, Kendros) and Artemis (Kendreiseia or Kendrisia; also known there and elsewhere among the Thracians, I hypothesize, as Ara-Zea: as I will detail later in this work, Ara-Zea more likely meant „Goddess of the Woods“, rather than „Goddess of the Earth“) was very important, so much so that the tribe of Thracians native to the locale were known as the Kendrissi, worshippers of the Thracian Artemis (who was associated with the moon and the wild woods, with nature, with wild animals and with the earth, as well as with the hunting of wild animals; with childbirth; and more) and her brother, the Thracian Apollo (associated with the sun and more). There will be

²I found the form *Kendrisia* in Bruce M. Metzger's *The Problematic Thracian Version of the Gospels*. I will soon clarify whether *Kendrisia* is an alternative rendering of the possibly more accurate rendering *Kendreiseia*, or whether both forms are attested; and I will clarify whether or not the two forms have slightly different usage: the form *Kendrisia* may be exclusively a theonym; the form *Kendreiseia* may be a toponym; if only one form from those two is actually extant in ancient sources, I will find out whether the extant feminine form (if only one of them is attested) could be both a theonym and a toponym.

more about the archaeological evidence in a future version of this paper; some of the archaeological evidence is in the form of images and/or inscriptions on ancient coins minted in the area.

Among the Greeks, Artemis had a rather long list of epithets/epicleses, including *Thērasia*, "the Huntress", an epithet attested on its own (without the name of Artemis appearing in the attestations), in Mycenaean Greek Linear B texts from Knossos in Crete as *Qe-ra-si-ja* (= *Khwerasia*, from PIE *ghwer-, "wild animal"); *Khwerasia* later became *Thērasia* in several dialects of ancient Greek, due to a well-known phonological shift in ancient Greek, where Mycenaean Greek *khw-* became/corresponds to ancient Greek *th-* in most dialects and in most situations, but in some dialects *khw-* shifted to *ph-*; and in some cases within the same dialect, *khw-* shifted to *th-* or *ph-* depending on the phonological situation of a particular word in the same dialect. Another of Artemis' many epicleses/epithets among the Greeks was *Chitone* ("wearing a chiton", which can also be translated as „the well-clothed/well-covered“, since this was emphasized by the Greeks and Thracians on purpose: the Thracian Bendis is always depicted with her body fully-covered by a chiton). For the explanation of *Tilezupta* as a Thracian epithet of Artemis, see the following paragraphs where that element is analysed in detail.

Now for my proposed etymologies and other evidence for my translation given above:

Roli: this is probably the same as the well-attested Thracian and Getic male anthroponym *Roles/Rholes* (and also attested as *Rolis?*), *Rolouzis* (attested as a Dacian name); whether the *Roli-* in this ring inscription comes from the form **Rolis* or from a variation thereof is not clear, but what is clear is that in 2021 I found (without any reasonable doubt) the etymology of the *Roli-* in this inscription, and also most likely the etymology of the elsewhere-attested Thracian name *Rholes/Roles* and Dacian *Rolouzis*: all three meant "virile, potent, boisterous, strong-blooded" and those meanings derive from the meaning of "blood/rushing", which derives from the cluster of meanings "blood, sap, ichor, juice; to flow, to stream, to rush", which derive from Proto-Daco-Thracian **hréyyō*, from PIE **srew-*, "to flow, stream, rush"; from this PIE root-word also come quite a number of Ancient Greek words, including *ρέω* (*rheō*)="I flow, stream, rush, gush"; *ρεῦμα* (*rheūma*)="stream, flow, current"; *ρεῦσις* (*rheūsis*)="flowing"; *ρύσις* (*rhúsis*)="flow; the course of a river or stream"; *ρόή* (*rhoē*)="a river, a stream". Another Ancient Greek word which is thought to very likely derive from PIE **srew-* "to flow" is Ancient Greek *ρόα* (*rhóa*)="pomegranate fruit; pomegranate tree", because of the richness of the juice; but what previous researchers have not realized is that there is more to that derivation: not just because of the richness of the juice, but also because the word *ρόα* (*rhóa*) and some of its kindred cognates developed the meaning "blood/red": and I am about to present my evidence for the existence of those meanings in *ρόα* (*rhóa*) and some of its cognates (attested and unattested cognates) in Greek and Daco-Thracian: another word for "pomegranate" in Ancient Greek was/is **σίδη** (*sídē*): and that word is 100% cognate³ to Ancient Greek *σίδηρος* (*sídēros*)="iron", both deriving from the older meanings "blood; liquid; sap; juice; water" from another root which meant "to flow" (not from PIE **srew-*, but from a different root-word with the same meanings). The "iron" word comes from there because of the redness of iron likened to the redness of blood, and it is thought that the English word "iron" also comes from an earlier meaning of "blood", from another root-word of probably identical meanings. The Ancient Greek **σίδη** (*sídē*) also referred to a water plant, thought to probably be a water lily. The Ancient Greek **σίδη** (*sídē*) was also found in many interesting variant forms, which however are not of import to this current work, and so I advise the reader to look for those variants elsewhere. The datum that makes me certain that the *Roli-* seen on the ring inscription is derived from PIE **srew-*"to flow, rush" is this gloss from Hesychius: in Hesychius we find a gloss of his saying that *ροιλιαῖς* (*roiliais*), *ροίδνας* (*roidnas*) and *ροιδμός* (*roidmos*) all meant "a rushing noise", and these forms are compared to *ροιζέω* (*roizeo*), which denoted both whistling and rushing noises: it was used for the rushing of a stream/river⁴; *ροιζήτωρ*="one who moves with a rushing sound", and you can check Ancient Greek dictionaries for more *ροιζ-* words meaning "a rushing sound". So, there is no other etymology for those words I quoted from Hesychius' gloss, and I'm sure they (*ροιλιαῖς/roiliais*, *ροίδνας/roidnas* and *ροιδμός/roidmos*) all derive from PIE **srew-*"to flow, rush" (and

³ That **σίδη** (*sídē*) and **σίδηρος** (*sídēros*) are surely cognates has been noticed before, I am not the first to say this, and this idea of them being cognates is without any real contenders, and there is no data that indicates otherwise.

⁴ See any good Ancient Greek dictionary for the attestation(s) of that use.

ροιζέω/roizeo probably derives from there as well). The kinship of these “rushing noise” words to the “red/blood/juice/water; to flow, rush” words is further indicated with no doubt by the following Ancient Greek words: *ροῖδιον*=“small pomegranate”; *ροιδάριον*=“red rouge/red lipstick/a red cosmetic”; and Modern Greek *ρόδι* (*ródi*) and Romanian *rodie* both mean “pomegranate”: compare these forms to *ροίδνας* (*roidnas*) and *ροϊδμός* (*roidmos*), which I argue are all from the same root-word, PIE **srew-*, “to flow, rush”. One semantic branch from PIE **srew-* led to “rushing sounds/rushing noises”, while another branch led to “rivers, streams, water, juice, blood”, and from the meaning “blood” developed the meaning of “things the color of blood” (pomegranates, red rouge, etc.). The form *ροιλαις* (*roiliais*) shows clearly that the -*L*- sound can and did appear in some words derived from that root-word, and that brings us back to the *Roli-* seen in this inscription, and to the Thracian name *Rholes/Roles* attested elsewhere, and the Dacian name *Rolouzis*: I’m quite sure that time will show that all those derive from PIE **srew-*“to flow, rush”>“blood/rushing”>“virile-blooded/rushing”, as does *Rha*, an ancient name for the Volga river (see Ptolemy’s *Geography, Book 5, Chapter 8*), which derives from Scythian or Dacian (or from another IE language that was there at the time). *Rolisteneas* meant “(Of)Blood strong/mighty”=“(Of)Mighty/strong blood”. Any translation that thinks “*Roli-*“ is not the first part of a compound name which has at least the form *Rolistene* is absurd (and there are strangely many such completely wrong “translations” out there). And not only was it *Rolistene*, it was *Rolisteneas*, as I argue here, after Dechev et al. (not sure who was the first to say that). The Daco-Getic (and Thracian?) male names *Oroles*, *Orola* (both *Oroles* and *Orola* are attested as men’s names) could also derive from PIE **srew-* or they could have a different etymology.

steneas: this is likely a loanword, from ancient Greek σθένης (*sthenes*)/σθένος (*sthenos*), meaning “strong”, which the Greeks used for the termination of a number of their attested anthroponyms. Or alternatively, the Thracians had the word as well in an almost identical or identical form as the Greek. Beekes (2010) states that the etymology of Greek σθένος is unknown, though there are Indo-European etymologies proposed, which Beekes did not find convincing, so he chose to list the word as being of still undetermined and/or unknown origin. To me it seems quite likely that σθένος is cognate to another Ancient Greek word, στενός (=“narrow, tight”) somehow, despite the „th“/“t” difference, and despite the arguments that they cannot be derived from one root-word: I think they can be if one takes into consideration that one of them is likely a loanword from a Non-Greek language: and via different paths, both words may lead back to the same root-word. In such a way also, both σθένος and στενός may be cognate (as has been suggested in the literature) to English “stith” (=“strong, stiff, rigid”), which is from Proto-Germanic **stɪnhaz*. Likewise as a loanword, σθένος may derive via an unknown language from PIE **steyh₂-*, “to stiffen”, the source of English “stone”, German “Stein”, Proto-Slavic “stena” (=“conglomeration of stones”; “wall”; “rock”; “cliff”;), and the likely source of Ancient Greek στία and στίον (which are probably directly from **steyh₂-*, rather than being loanwords) both meaning “pebble; small stone”. A derivation directly---as a native Greek word---from PIE **seg̊h₂-* “to hold, to overpower”, suggested as far back as 1900, is unlikely because, though many Ancient Greek words are considered to derive from that root, none begin with st- nor with sth-, rather they begin with skh-, ekh-, iskh-, hek-, eks-, etc. It may be that σθένος is one of those words that, though having close cognates or close parallels in Indo-European, actually derives from a Non-IE language. If Non-IE, the likelihood that Thracian and Greek had the word as a Non-IE loanword in the same form and meaning increases; though even if from PIE, Thracian and Greek could have both had it inherited from PIE in nearly identical or even identical form and meaning; however, if the word is from PIE that becomes less likely. I have no problem considering the Thracian form to be a Greek loan.

Nerenea: the first part *Ner-* is from PIE **h₂nér** (*masculine*), meaning “man; power, force, vital energy”; cognates include Albanian *njeri* (=man; *human being*), from Old Albanian *njer*, from Proto-Albanian **nera*; and ancient Greek *aner* (=man). The Thracian *Ner-* is also cognate to the *Ner-* seen in the Roman nomen *Nerius* (*gens Neria*), and the Roman praenomen *Nero*: all of which Latin/Roman names (*Nerius*, *Neria*, *Nero*) were traditionally described as meaning *fortis ac strenuus*, “strong and sturdy”, matching the meaning of the Proto-Indo-European etymology.

The second part of *Nerenea* shows the same element seen in Thracian *Esbenis* ("horseman"). The first part of Thracian *Esbenis*, namely *esb-*, is known to be from PIE *h₁ékwos (*masculine*), meaning "horse, stallion": and just as the noun *esb-* has received the suffix *-en-* seen in *Esbenis*, likewise the noun *Ner-* has received the suffix *-en-* in *Nerenea*. The same *-en-* noun suffix is also seen in *Mezenai*, another Thracian term also meaning horseman/horserider/chevalier/cavalier (as *Esbenis* meant), but the *Mez-* in *Mezenai* derives from a different root, not from *h₁ékwos (the certain etymology of *Mez-* is well-known in the literature on the Thracian language, and so I will not go into that in this paragraph; suffice it to say that there is no doubt about the etymology of *Mez-*). It's likely that after going more extensively through the Thracian and Dacian language material, I will find more examples of the *-en-* noun suffix.

The third and final part of *Nerenea*, the ending *-ea*, is the genitive suffix, which is in feminine form as we see in Latin *gens/gentes* names (note: the plural of *gens* is *gentes*). In Latin, the *gens* (family name) is always in feminine form: cf. Roman *gens* names such as *gens Aurelia*, *gens Nasennia*, *gens Neria* (noted above), *gens Valeria*: and many more, because all the Latin *gens* names have the feminine ending, even when the name itself has a "masculine" etymology. The Thracian *gens* name *Nerenea* is from the Thracian nomen **Nereneas*. One can posit from *Esbenis* ("horseman") a Thracian nomen **Esbeneas* (feminine **Esbenea*) and a Thracian *gens* name **Esbenea*. A form **Nerenis* may have also existed in Thracian, but probably not as an anthroponym, but as a hypothetical word deriving from the same PIE root. I do not currently have more examples of Thracian or Dacian names ending with *-ea*, for reasons discussed above: I've just begun again reviewing the Thracian and Dacian name evidence after not having done an extended review of their names in several years.

tiltean: is interpreted by me as having meant "fallen", with the meaning of "deceased"; and since many among the Thracian people didn't believe in actual death, it makes sense that they would here, in this religious formula which is seeking a type of resurrection or life after death, use the term "fallen" instead of "dead". The cognates for "tiltean" that I propose are all, so far, found only in Germanic, and they mean "to slant down, slant/fall towards the ground". This does not mean that Thracian was particularly close to the Germanic branch; rather, this indicates linguistic interaction between Germanics and Thracians; it's possible that the root word for the cognates goes back to a Non-IE substratum language of Central Europe and the northern Balkans. English "tilt" is one of the Germanic cognates; English "tilt" from Middle English "tilte", from Old English "tyltan" ("to be unsteady"), from tealt "unsteady," from a Proto-Germanic word reconstructed by not sure which linguist as *taltaz. Cognates for the English and Old English words are given as including: Old Norse tyllast "to trip," Swedish tulta "to waddle," Norwegian tylta "to walk on tip-toe," Middle Dutch touteren "to swing"; also believed to be a cognate is Icelandic tólt (used to describe the ambling gait of certain horses; and so also meant an ambling place for horses). Meaning "to cause to lean, tip, slope" (1590s) is from sense of "push or fall over." Intransitive sense "to lean, tip" first recorded 1620s. As stated a few sentences above, these Germanic words have not yet been linked to any Proto-Indo-European root word, and the origin could be Non-IE. Cf. Etruscan *tle-* (found in Etruscan inscription TLE 890), which may have meant "defeated", perhaps from the earlier meaning of "knocked down or laid down" (in Etruscan inscription TLE 890, the meaning does not seem to be "killed", though the meaning "killed" could have developed from the earlier senses, and that meaning may have been employed elsewhere in Etruscan usage, though probably not in inscription TLE 890). And also Cf. Hurrian *til-*, "to destroy". I found Etruscan *tle-* and Hurrian *til-* in Arnaud Fournet's *A Tentative Etymological Glossary of Etruscan*. The Etruscan and the Hurrian forms are possible cognates. A quite certain cognate is Latin *tilia*⁵, which meant „linden tree“, and is already believed to come from an older *til-* which meant „broad, flat“ (cf. PIE *telh₂-= "ground, bottom"), because of the large, broad flat leaves of linden trees. There is also Latin *tellūs* meant „earth, ground“: quite likely the older meaning was „the broad flat expanse of the earth“, and the later meanings of „falling/tilting/falling to the ground/to be defeated/laid flat“ came later, but not much later: probably those additional meanings developed quite rapidly, many thousands of years ago. Further cognates include Old Prussian *talus* (=“floor”), Lithuanian *tiles* (=“floor of a boat”), Armenian *t’alem* (=“to bury”). Just like this translation buries all other translations. I don't think that it's more likely that „tiltean“ in this inscription meant „buried“, but that's possible too.

⁵ I have known of that etymology of *tilia* for over 10 years, but somehow forgot to think to include that word and etymology, and I also forgot about Latin *tellūs*.

"Tiltean" may have meant in this inscription merely in bad shape ("unsteady"), but not deceased; in which case, to make him bloom again would mean to bring him back to good health. If that is so, the ring inscription would have been for a person who was still living when the inscription was made. But why wouldn't he have just left out the word "tiltean" in that case? Why inscribe in gold that he is sick? I'd imagine that that would not be considered a propitious or wise thing to do. So I think the translation that I gave above is more likely, that the inscription was for the deceased *Rolisteneas Nerenea*.

ēsko: meant to "ask, petition"; there are many Indo-European cognates for this word, including English "ask", Lithuanian "ieškoti" (=to seek), Armenian "hayc" (=demand, request; seeking); Sanskrit "icchati" (=to seek); all ultimately from Proto-Indo-European **h₂eys-*, "wish, desire". Why hasn't anyone before me linked the "ēsko" in this inscription to this root that I'm linking it to? If I'm correct, it was a big oversight (and a key oversight) of previous translators, due to the un-obvious nature of this inscription.

Ara Zea: the correct translation of this is now certain: Ara="Woods", Zea="Goddess". The Ara word meant „tree“ in one or more Pre-Greek languages, attested in the Aetolian oronym (=mountain name) *Apákuvθoç*, a mountain in Aetolia which is still known by that name today in modern Aetolia (in Ancient Greece, more than one mountain had that name, at least two: another one seems to have been in Attica): one Greek website describes the mountain *Apákuvθoç* of today like so: "*Arakynthos: Northwest of Varasova starts the relatively low Arakynthos Mountain. Its Northeast side is full of thick forests of various species of oak and chestnut, hosting numerous woodland birds and birds of prey. Although very close to cities, Arakynthos forest surprises us with its rich nature and wildlife.*" Another Greek website describes the mountain like this: "*Arakinthos or Zygos, is a mountain of the Aetoloakarnania prefecture, south of Lake Trichonis and north of the Messolonghi Lagoon. It is 984 meters high. Arakinthos is located in the narrow gorge of Kleisoura through which the Messolonghi region is connected with the region of Agrinio. It is characterized by cedar forests, chestnut and oak trees, waterfalls, caves and a rich biodiversity of birds, reptiles, squirrels, turtles, deer, wild boars, foxes and wolves, composing a completely different landscape in such a small distance from the sea front of the municipality ICS Messolonghi.*" Another Greek website describes the Arakynthos mountain like this: "*With an altitude of 984 meters above the lagoon of Messolonghi it is the natural border between the sea and the lake Trichonida. Evergreen with oak trees, bushes, walnuts and an impressive oak forest, it offers shelter to wild pigs, deer, squirrels, tortoises, eagles and snakes.*"

Those three quotes show part of how I determined that the Ara in Arakynthos meant „woods/tree“, but the full story goes back to when I was trying to decipher the etymology of the Ancient Greek word *κολοκύνθη* (=*Citrullus colocynthis*): that was circa September of 2021. The *Citrullus colocynthis* is a very viny, melon-bearing plant native to the Mediterranean basin and Asia (especially Turkey), and Nubia. The melons are bitter, not sweet. The plant resembles a common watermelon vine, but bears small, hard fruits with a bitter pulp. The vine-like stems spread in all directions for a few meters looking for something over which to climb. I found that Hesychius glossed an Ancient Greek word *κυνθάνω*, which he says was equivalent in meaning to the well-known and well-attested Ancient Greek word *κεύθω*, which meant „to cover, hide, conceal“: so I discovered the previously-unknown etymology of *κολοκύνθη* one afternoon, after researching the *κολο-* part of the word as well: I determined that *κολο*=“vine, rope, snaky root” and so on, from the earlier more general meaning „that which turns, curves, twists“, akin to or deriving either from PIE **k^weI-* “to turn”, from which Proto-Slavic **kōlo* = “wheel, circle” derives, or from PIE *(s)*kel-*, “to bend, crook” from which many Ancient Greek words are considered to derive; while the -*κύνθη* in *κολοκύνθη* is a form of the verb *κυνθάνω* = “to cover, hide, conceal”, as glossed by Hesychius: so my hypothesis, which I first publish here in February 2022, is that *κολοκύνθη* = “vine+covering”, because: “The vine-like stems spread in all directions for a few meters looking for something over which to climb”. For more evidence of that meaning of *κολο-* in a number of Ancient Greek words, see Ancient Greek *σκολιός* (=“curved, bent, twisted, tangled, winding”), Ancient Greek *κῶλον* (=“limb, leg, arm”), both considered to derive from PIE *(s)*kel-*, “to bend, crook”. The Ancient Greek word *κολοιός* (=jackdaw) may also derive from *kolo-* meaning “to curve, bend”, in reference to the curved beaks of corvids⁶; there are

6 More about this next time. Alternatively, *kolo-* in some cases could have been used to denote the calls/cries of

more Ancient Greek words that I can cite for my interpretation of the *κολο-* found in *κολοκύνθη*, and I will discuss them next time.

After I interpreted *κολοκύνθη* in that way, I tried out my equation *κύνθη*=“to cover” on the mountain name Κύνθος (=Mt. Cynthus on the island of Delos): Κύνθος could have referred to a snow-covered mountain or fog/mist/cloud-covered peak, or all of the above. When I applied this equation to the mountain name Βερέκυνθος, the result was even more extraordinary and convincing: Βερέκυνθος (=Berecynthus) is a mountain located at Malaxa, on the island of Crete: trypali limestone is the dominant rock of the Berekyntos/Malaxa mountain: the mountain is part of the mountain chain known in Greece today as the White Mountains (Lefka Ori) and the Bare Mountains (Μαδόρες): bare mountains because they have scant vegetation, and the White Mountains from the perpetual white or off-white color of their peaks, because the off-white of limestone during the summer and fall interchanges with the snow that covers the peaks until late in spring. So then I thought, what if Bere=white and/or snow? Well, there is PIE *b^herH₂ =“bright, shining”, so I think that Βερέκυνθος comes from Βερέ =white/snow+ κύνθος=covered. Then I applied my equation to the Aetolian mountain Αράκυνθος , and I found those three quotes which I quoted above, and I found additional very strong evidence which I will describe in this paper: and I’m very sure that Αράκυνθος=Tree-covered. And from the nature of the additional evidence that I found, I’m sure that this Pre-Greek and/or Thracian word *Apá* (=Ara) which meant “tree, woods” derives from an earlier “ar-” that meant “to curve, turn, twist”. And I am sure that this *Apá* (=Ara) that means “tree, woods” is the Ara that is inscribed on the Ezero ring, demonstrating that Ara-Zea=Artemis/Bendis/Kotus/Kottuto, Goddess of the Wild Woods and of the moon and the hunt. Just like in the case of my etymology of the *Roli*- in *Rolisteneas*, I found this new astoundingly exact evidence long after I published my translation of the Ezero ring in November of 2020. It would be quite extraordinary and strange if this was all coincidence (consider all the evidence in this paper if you haven’t read this entire work yet) : I’m sure that the answer is that my translation of the ring is correct.

Here are some of the additional Ancient Greek words that show that my interpretation of the *Apá* in *Αράκυνθος* is correct : ἄρακος=*Lathyrus annuus*, a species of vetch; additionally, Hesychius says that ἄρακος was also a Tyrrhenian word that meant „hawk, falcon”: both meanings come from Ar=“to curve, turn, twist”: the vetch plant because it is vine-like (=turn, twist, curve), and the hawk/falcon because of the curved beak primarily, but also because of the curved talons, and even the curved wing-tip feathers. The English word „vetch“ (=the vetch plants) derives from Latin *vicia* (=the vetch plants), and Latin *vicia*, according to the already established and correct etymology, derives from PIE *weyk- “to curve, bend” or alternatively from PIE *weh₁y “to twist, wind, weave”. I’ve found three other Ancient Greek vetch words to confirm my equation: ἄραχος=the wild vetch, *Vicia sibthorpii*; ἄράχιδνα=*Lathyrus amphicarpos*, another species of vetch; and ἄραξ (=arax/araks) is a synonym for *Lathyrus annuus*, mentioned above. Another word which likely comes from this Pre-Greek root-word is Ancient Greek ἄραιά=“belly”, which would be derived from the curve/rounded bulge of the belly: this is made more likely by another gloss from Hesychius, where he says that ἄράκη=φιάλη (bowl); Athenaeus of Naucratis says that “ἄράκη=bowl” is an Aeolian word: I will have to check whether Athenaeus was referring to the Aeolian Greek tribe/dialect (a Greek tribe and dialect that originated from Thessaly), or to the inhabitants of the Aeolian islands off the northern coast of Sicily. Both scenarios are likely, since Hesychius says that “ἄρακος=hawk” is a Tyrrhenian word; while such a word in Thessaly is to be expected as well. Another Ancient Greek word from this root is ράξ / ράγος which meant “grape”, “berry, “fingertips”, so not referring to the grapevine in this case but instead to the roundness of the grape, of round/roundish berries and of the fingertips. The Illyrian toponym *Ragusa* very likely derives from this root as well, referring to the curve of the bay where Ragusa is located.

In my paper on the etymology of Cinnabar, coriander, arachne/arachnes (and many more words), I published an etymology of Ancient Greek ἄράχνη (arachne) and ἄράχνης (arachnes) where I posited that arachne/arachnes are a combination of ara+chne(s) (alternatively, of ar+achnes), with

ara/ar="to revolve, spin", while chne/achne="spike; something pointed": see the meanings of Ancient Greek ἄχνη ="anything exuded out", which I'm sure is from an earlier set of meanings „to issue out; radiate out; project out; a beam; a ray; something pointed, for example a spike“, from Ach="pointed; sprouting; protruding; issuing out; radiating out". And the two words together in this scenario---ar(a)+(a)chne(s)---made a new word that meant "a spindle", the spider being thus likened to a spindle used to spin out thread. I think that Ach- with those meanings described above was a Pre-Greek word, and it's quite likely the source of the name Αχιλλεύς (Achilleus/Achilles): the name could have meant "Spear-man", "Radiant", "Striker" or "Slayer", and could also have suggested all of those meanings at once. And I think that the river name Αχελώιος/Αχελῶος derives from there as well, because that river name probably meant „white“, referring to the white waters of the most famous of the rivers that were called by that name, the one that is the longest river in Greece. The meaning „white“ developed from the meanings „bright, radiant“. The ἄχνη word is akin to the Ancient Greek words χνοάω, χνόη, χνόος, κνέφαλλον ("plucked wool, wool that is torn off", from the "exuded", "emanated" meaning), κνάω (= "to scratch, scrape" because things that are prickly and pointed---like the nettle plant---cause scratching and scraping), κνηκός (= "pale yellow, tawny"), and PIE *k₂nh₂ónks (= "honey"; if correct, the root-meaning was „golden; bright; radiant“). For the word ἄχνη (= "something that is exuded out, emanated out") used in a compound, see Ancient Greek ἀλοσάχνη (= "sea-foam"), where ἀλοσ="sea" and ἄχνη="exuded out": thus meaning "sea-foam", exuded by the sea. I was also considering that ἀράχνη (arachne) and ἀράχνης (arachnes) could have meant "thread-exuded", since words for "thread, string" are known to often come from a root-word meaning "to turn, curve, twist": so maybe ar(a) in ἀράχνη (arachne) and ἀράχνης (arachnes) meant "thread".

Since the time when I published the last version of that paper (the last version so far, but not the final version), I have found that for sure arachne/arachnes meant "spindle", however most likely (or quite likely) the portion "achne(s)/chne(s)" did not mean "spike" in the case of ἀράχνη (arachne) and ἀράχνης (arachnes). I found that ἀράχνη besides meaning "spider" (and "spider web/web") was also another name for the σφονδύλιον (=sphondilion) plant, which is *Heraclea sphondylium*: the plant was called *sphondilion* because it reminded numerous ancient people of the vertebrae bones: σφόνδυλος in Ancient Greek meant "vertebrae", but especially the cervical vertebrae (cervical vertebrae=the vertebrae of the neck): σφόνδυλος also meant "joint" (e.g. the joint where the human arm meets the body), tambour (a small circular drum) and the whorl of a spindle, as well as the whorl of a flower. The Ancient Greek word σφόνδυλος derives (as I theorize, if no else has before me) from a root *sphond-* that meant "to turn, curve, twist, spin, revolve, rotate; circle; circular", explaining all the attested meanings. The fact that ἀράχνη was also used to refer to *Heraclea sphondylium* proves (for me, and eventually for all) that ἀράχνη also used to mean "the cervical vertebrae; vertebrae", and proves that the root-meaning of the Ara- seen in ἀράχνη was "to turn, curve, twist, bend" later leading to "to spin, revolve, rotate": the Latin word *vertebrae* derives from Latin *vertō*, from PIE *wér̥t̥ti="to be turning around". So ἀράχνη had the older meanings of "vertebrae" and "spindle": the meaning of "vertebrae" led to the meaning of the plant *Heraclea sphondylium*, while the meaning "spindle" led to "spider", the spider spinning webs being likened to a spindle used to spin out thread from fibers. Further and definitive proof is found in the fact that ἀράχνη was also a word for a sun-dial, because the shadow rotates along the disk as the sun moves across the sky.

So ἀράχνη and ἀράχνης did not refer to the bent legs, nor to the way a spider sticks to a surface as if hanging on by hooks (in Proto-Slavic the word for spider means something like "on hooks" or "with hooks", meaning that the spider sticks to various surfaces as if hanging on by hooks). The meaning of "bent legs" would have also fit the *ar- root meaning "to curve, turn, bend", and so would have a reference to hooks, since hooks are curved/bent. But it's quite clear that the reference was to a spindle.

Now the question remains whether this ἀράχνη / ἀράχνης word for spindle represents a verb meaning Ar(a)=“to rotate, revolve, spin” made into a noun via a presumably/seemingly Pre-Greek suffix “-chne”; or whether it was a compound of Ar(a)=“to spin, revolve, rotate” + (a)chne=“spike”: but would a word for “vertebrae” include a word for “spike” in its etymology? Yes, under two circumstances: 1) if the meaning of vertebrae came from an earlier meaning of spindle (which is not so likely but possible); or 2) if, and it’s quite possible, the “spike” meaning was part of the etymology of the vertebrae meaning which existed in ἀράχνη and ἀράχνης, since the vertebrae can be thought of as rotating knobs/pegs of bone, and the “achne/chne” root was actually a potential producer of words meaning “knob, peg” as it was of potentially producing words meaning “spike”. It appears to be more likely that both the spindle and vertebrae meanings developed directly from the *ar(a) root, with no “spike” or “knob” necessary. In the sun-dial meaning, “spike/something pointed” could have referred to the pointed shadow as it moved along the sun-dial. One bit of evidence that leans towards the scenario that excludes the spike/knob element is the fact that Hesychius recorded that ἀράχνης referred also to a type of legume plant, which indicates a derivation directly from *ar(a), “to turn, curve, twist”, without the “spike/knob” component. But it is not known exactly what species of legume was referred to, so the “spike/knob” element is not ruled out yet.

The “spindle” etymology of ἀράχνη and ἀράχνης, now for certain, may also explain the meaning and etymology of Ariadne (the Cretan princess from the Theseus myth who was also, it seems, a goddess of weaving in Ancient Greece/Crete; the Etruscan version of Ariadne was called Areatha; a goddess of weaving whose name actually meant “spindle” is quite likely), which may derive from Aria (=to spin, revolve, rotate)+dne (=which would be a noun-making suffix, as yet unidentified by linguists of Ancient Greek and Pre-Greek); another possibility is that Ariadne derives from Ari=“to spin, revolve, rotate” + adne (=spike, something pointed, protruding): in my paper on the etymologies of Cinnabar and Coriander I found a giant amount of evidence that Adne/Atha/Anthra/Andra likely meant “spike; something pointed”, evidence which I will not describe in this version, but which can be seen in my paper on Coriander, Ariadne, and more.

In that paper on the etymology Coriander I first published the theory that that component Ara/ari (in Ariadne) possibly meaning “to spin, revolve” would have come from an earlier ara=“to turn, curve, twist”. The actual existence of such a root-word in ancient times is quite certain: Ancient Greek arao (=“to plough”) and Ancient Greek ἄρουρα (ároura), meaning “cultivated land; cultivated field; ground; earth” both derives from the Proto-Indo-European root **h₂erh₃-*, meaning “to plough”: given the evidence I’ve assembled, I’m quite sure that that PIE root **h₂erh₃-*, meaning “to plough”, came from an earlier meaning of “to turn (the earth)”<“to turn,, curve twist”, since the action of ploughing is to turn up the earth/soil/dirt. So this would mean that those Ara-/Ari- forms (including Ara=“tree, woods”) that I described above derive from a root-word whose sonic form, going further back in time, was more like **h₂erh₃-*.

The PIE root-word **h₂er-* meaning “earth” may derive from an earlier “to cover”, from an earlier “to arch over”, from an earlier “to curve, vault, bend, turn”: if so, that PIE root and words derived from it would also be cognate to the Ara=“tree” word, but they would be more distant cognates. In the original language/languages where Ara=tree, I don’t think that Ara would also have meant “earth” in that language/those languages: quite likely that “earth” meaning for Ara would not have developed/would not have been passed on in those languages. But in languages where the word Ara (=tree) was a loanword (this may have been the case in Thracian and some Ancient Greek dialects), they could have had both ara=tree and era/ara=earth: and that could be why the Goddess of the Woods is being invoked in a Thracian inscription to make a man bloom again: because the homonym words caused an Artemis goddess to be combined with a Demeter goddess; but it’s very possible and even more likely that in the ancient Balkans, from time immemorial, there was a goddess that had aspects and qualities that later came to be associated, among the Greeks, with two different goddesses: but even among the Greeks there is much indication that a goddess having qualities of both was part of the religion of some Ancient Greeks. If PIE **h₂er-* derives from an earlier “to cover<arch over<to curve, bend, vault”, it would explain why the Armenian word for earth (erkir) is so similar to the Armenian word for sky (erkink’).

Words that derive from PIE **h₂er-*, “earth” include Albanian “varr” which means “grave” (not the adjective „grave“; but as in a gravesite; in Albanian, initial “v” sound was added to many PIE inherited words that began with the A sound: Albanian “varr” is from Proto-Albanian *arr-); English “earth” and Dutch

"aard/aerde/erde" from Proto-Germanic *erþō (=erthō), meaning "earth"; Messapian/Messapic "aran" (=field); ancient Greek *έρα (*éra) in ἔραζε (éraze, "on the ground"), which in Doric Greek was ἔρασδε (érasde, "on the earth"). And there are also some non-Indo-European words which seem to fit, such as Hattic "araz" which meant "earth".

Those Ancient Greek words that I discussed earlier, the ones including words meaning types of vetch plants; belly; bowl; hawk--all those and the other evidence I presented make me quite certain that the correct etymology of the Aetolian (not to be confused with Anatolian) and Thracian Ara=tree would be an etymology deriving it either from „to curve, turn, twist“ or from a semantic group „to bulge out, round out, swell, puff out, radiate out, to radiate rays/branches/appendages“ which, in my paper on the etymology of Cinnabar, I demonstrated is linked to the semantic cluster of „to curve, turn, twist“: this is a summary of how and why those semantics are so often linked: because the semantic of „to curve, turn, twist“ usually includes the semantic of „circle“ and „round“, and the semantic of „circle/round“ usually is linked to the semantic of „to bulge out, swell out, round out, puff out“: and also because the sun and moon are round/circular objects that optically radiate rays of light, from time immemorial the semantic of „round, circle“ is linked to the semantic of „to radiate; to issue rays, branches, appendages“ (the evidence for this and the detailed discussion can be read in my paper on the etymology of Cinnabar). So the sun and/or moon radiating rays was likened to a tree radiating branches. So whether Ara=tree comes from the curving and turning of branches and roots, or alternatively from the notion of radiating branches, the root-word is the same, because the semantic range included both sets of meanings, which are part of one super-set. It is interesting to note that the root-word could also have given rise to words that meant „sun“ and words that meant „moon“, since both sun and moon are circular radiant/radiating objects. But I don't think that Ara-Zea meant „moon goddess“: but some remiscence of that semantic was very likely present as you go further back in time. Also present as you go further back in time is the semantic of „arrow“ and „spear“, since words for „arrow“ and „spear“ are often from a semantic set that includes „to radiate; issue out; shoot out; a ray; a beam (because rays and beams are pointed streams of light)“, a likening of sun-beams/moon-beams/light-beams to arrows and spears: this is also demonstrated and detailed in my paper on the etymology of Cinnabar, Koriandron, Kotys, Kottyto, and more.

So I really have no doubt now that Ara-Zea is an actual ancient Balkan theonym referring to a goddess corresponding to Artemis and embodying qualities of Demeter as well. Besides the evidence I've found for Ara, the Zea word meaning "goddess" is expected (or even already attested?) in Thracian. The PIE root for Thracian Zea (if it meant "goddess") is PIE *dyéws, meaning "sky; heaven", which according to some PIE source books (Watkins et al.) may derive from a verb which meant 'to shine, be radiant'.

It's quite interesting that the amazing evidence that I found for Ara-tree/woods was found in an oronym from the part of Greece known as Aetolia: the Aetolian country has a level and fruitful coastal region, but an unproductive and mountainous interior. The mountains contained many wild beasts, and acquired fame in Greek mythology as the scene of the hunt for the Calydonian Boar. The perfect place where a Pre-Greek theonym for Artemis could have thrived. Tribes known as [Curetes](#) and Leleges originally inhabited the country, but at an early period [Greeks](#) from [Elis](#), led by the mythical [eponym Aetolus](#), set up colonies. Dionysius of Halicarnassus mentions that Curetes was the old name of the Aetolians and Leleges the old name of the [Locrians](#). The mountain tribes of Aetolia were the Ophioneis, the Apodotoi, the Agraeis, the Aperantoi and the Eurytanians.

The primitive lifestyle of those tribes made an impression on ancient historians. [Polybius](#) doubted their Greek heritage, while Livy reports that they spoke a language similar to the Macedonians. Thucydides claims that Eurytanians spoke a very difficult language and ate their food completely raw. They were semi-barbaric, warlike and predatory. They worshiped [Apollo](#) as god of tame nature and Artemis as goddess of wilderness. They also worshiped [Athena](#), not as goddess of wisdom, but emphasizing the element of war – i.e. a goddess that was a female counterbalance to the god [Ares](#). They called Apollo and Artemis "Laphrios gods," i.e. patrons of the spoils and loot of war. In addition, they worshiped Hercules, the river Achelous and Bacchus. In Thermos, an area north of Trichonis lake, there was after the 7th century a shrine of Apollo "Thermios," which became a significant religious center during the time of the [Aetolian League](#).

In time, I'm sure the theonym Ara-Zea will be verified, as more and more new discoveries of ancient inscriptions (and other ancient writings) come to light.

Until then, I have found a figure in Romanian folklore and in Italian folklore whose name is so close to this Ara-Zea found on the ring, a folklore figure which is accepted as having absorbed much of the pre-Christian beliefs and some of the rituals regarding Artemis/Diana. I'm referring to the folklore survival of a supernatural woman named *Arada* in Romanian and *Aradia* in Italian; probably some linguists assume (have not yet identified which linguists, if any, believe/assume that) that both names derive from *Herodias* (*Herodias* is the Greek feminine form of Greek Ἡρώδης=Hērōidēs, which became "Herod" in English⁷), mentioned in the New Testament (in the Gospel of Matthew and in the Gospel of Mark); however, *Erodiade* is the usual form of Herodias in Italian, while *Irodiada* is the form of Herodias in Romanian; and deriving the Romanian form *Arada* from *Herodiade* or *Herodias* (if any linguists actually do so) is an assumption which has not been demonstrated to be true or that it fits the evidence well or the phonological evolution well. The historian/mythographer/anthropologist/folklorist Mircea Eliade considered *Arada* of Romanian folklore to be a metamorphosis of the earlier Diana/ Artemis⁸(Diana being the Roman version, Artemis the Greek version), owing rather little or not much conceptually to Herodiade/Herodias, with whom Diana/Artemis was blended in the Middle Ages; while a derivation of the name *Arada* from Herodiade/Herodias does not seem phonologically sound; it seems in fact very debatable; I do not know what conclusion Eliade came to regarding the supposed (by whom?) derivation of *Arada* from Herodiade/Herodias.

The actual situation seems to be that *Erodiade* (Italian) and *Irodiada* (Romanian) became identified with and code-names (in the dangerous climate of the times) for the earlier *Arada* (Romanian) and *Aradia* (Italian), explaining why both pairs are attested. The identification started from the similar names, and then from there at some point those pagan goddesses were linked conceptually to the historical/New Testament figure, due to the subversive role and reputation both of those female figures acquired in Christianity, and due to some other resemblances between the two which I intend to describe in an upcoming version of this paper. The Italian *Aradia* form probably derives from Etruscan, since much of the Italian traditions about Aradia may derive from Tuscany: the Etruscans quite likely (combining all the genetic, linguistic and historical evidence) migrated from Western Anatolia/the Aegean, where their kin the Lemnians were found on the island of Lemnos, where a Thracian tribe known as the *Sinti* also dwelt. The Romanian form *Arada* most likely derives from Daco-Thracian.

Artemis was often identified with the Anatolian Cybele, both of them being the goddess of wild animals and nature; both being forms of the earth goddess. Artemis was also the goddess of the hunt, of maidens, was invoked for a safe and successful childbirth, and more. One well-known name for the Thracian Artemis is *Bendis*; *Kotys/Kottyto* was another Thracian equivalent of Artemis. We can expect she had more names among the Thracians, names not known yet, especially since the Thracians were not so unified. And obviously the equivalent goddess had distinct names among the various Pre-greek tribes and peoples. Here in this inscription, Ara Zea bears many similarities to Phrygian *Cybele* (the Phrygians used to live next to the Thracians) and to the Artemis of Ephesus in NorthWestern Anatolia; her function as earth goddess, like *Demeter* and *Gaia*, is emphasized in this inscription. Indeed, another of the several known Thracian inscriptions reads "Da, dale me": with "Da" referring to Demeter; and that "Da Dale Me" inscription is, as I will further detail a bit further in this essay, an invocation/petition to Demeter which in essence is identical to the inscription on the Ezerovo ring, which instead petitions *Ara Zea* (=Artemis, Bendis) to do the same thing requested of Demeter in the "Da Dale Me" inscription.

Domean: meant "lady" (literally, "lady of the household", from an older meaning of "of the household/of the home"), cognate to Latin *domina* (=lady; literally, "lady of the household"); and Latin *domus* (=home) and Slavic *domo* (=home). From PIE *d̥óm-, "house, home".

Tilezupta: meant "Breasts + Covered" ("Covered Breasts"), referring to her

7 The name *Erodis/Irodis* (in Greek Ἡρώδης=Hērōidēs) itself is believed to have a Greek etymology, either deriving from the Greek word ἡρως (=hérōs) combined with the Greek word ὁδή (ōidē, "ode"), or from the name of *Hérā* (in Greek: "Hērā") combined with the same ὁδή, with *Hérā* of course referring to the wife of Zeus. *Hérōs* is considered to derive from the Proto-Indo-European root *ser-, meaning "to guard; watch over; protect"; and it is considered that the name of *Hérā* possibly derives from that root as well. The *Hérō-* element in *Héródotus* derives from *Hérā*.

8 Eliade, Mircea (February 1975). "Some Observations on European Witchcraft" in *History of Religions*, Volume 14, Number 3. Page 160-161.

maidenhood/virginity/sanctity. In one ancient Greek mythical tradition, a male personage named *Actaeon* caught a sight of *Artemis* nude while she was bathing; for that invasion, he was transformed into a deer, a deer which was chased down and killed by Artemis' hunting dogs. Thracian depictions of *Bendis* always show her well-cloaked and well-clothed. One of the epithets of Artemis among the Greeks was *Chitone*, covered by a chiton (an ancient Greek style of tunic, worn also by ancient Romans and some others). This interpretation of *Tilezupta* is one of the very many first such interpretations/original interpretations that my new translation shows.

Thracian *tile-* (breasts) is cognate to Albanian *tul* (=piece of soft flesh without bones, etc.) and to ancient Greek *τύλη*, *túlē* (=swelling; hump of a camel; cushion). In 5th Century BC Attic Greek, the pronunciation of *τύλη*, *túlē* is said to have been *tý.lε:* (this is rendered in IPA). There are some more cognates; all deriving from PIE ***túh₂-*lo-*** ("swollen, lump"), in turn from PIE ***tewh₂-**, "to swell, to crowd, to be strong". One of the additional cognates is Proto-Slavic ***tylbъ**, the meaning of which has been reconstructed as "back of the neck, nape"; this Proto-Slavic word is the source of words with similar meanings ("back of the neck; nape; back of the head"; "back" "rear") in many Slavic languages; since in some Slavic languages the meaning is "back" and/or "rear", I wonder whether the older meaning was actually "buttocks" in Proto-Slavic, or in an earlier stage than Proto-Slavic (the meaning older than "buttocks" would have been "bulge/fleshy bulge"). The Thracian and ancient Greek usage most likely sometimes extended to the buttocks (especially the buttocks of many women) as well as to breasts. In the gold ring inscription, the breasts are referred to primarily, given the more important linkage of breasts to nurturing and fertility. Note also how the Artemis of Ephesus has her breasts covered by a garment which is covered with gourds of vegetables and/or fruits and/or bulls' testicles. But the Thracian Artemis' buttocks was very likely included as well in the epithet.

Thracian *zupta* is cognate to Sanskrit *gupta* ("secret"), from PIE ***geup-**, "to cover". Other cognates may be Bulgarian *župa* (tomb), Polish *zupa* and Ukrainian *župa* (salt mine), and Old Slavonic *župište* (tomb). The Proto-Slavic **župa* would derive from an earlier **gheu-p-/geu-p*. The Slavic forms could derive from an earlier meaning of "arching over", progressing to "covering over". The change of the initial G sound (and also the aspirated G) to an initial sibilant Z sound happened often in Thracian, which often shows the "satem" sound-shift, and Thracian was largely a satem language; but I don't think it was that close to Baltic or Slavic; somewhat close, but not that close. Thracian was likely closer to Proto-Albanian. I do not believe that the *-ypta* in *Tilezypta* has anything to do with the name of the (adopted) Thracian goddess *Ipta/Epta*. Such a reading would be a totally different translation, and there's no guarantee that a viable translation can be made from that angle. The goddess *Ipta* (variant *Epta*) was likely of Western Anatolian origin, and little is known about that goddess.

miē : is cognate to Latin *mē*, English *me*, Ancient Greek μέ (mē), ἐμέ (emé, "me"), Sanskrit मा (mā, "me"). A very common Indo-European form and a very basic Indo-European form, from PIE ***(e)me-, *(e)me-n-** ("me").

era : is cognate to Latin *re-* and the meaning here was: "again". The Latin prefix *rē-* is from Proto-Italic **wre* ("again"), which has a parallel in Umbrian *re-*, but its further etymology is uncertain (cf. recent editions of the *Oxford English Dictionary*). While it carries a general sense of "back" or "backwards", its precise sense is not always clear, and its great productivity in classical Latin has the tendency to obscure its original meaning. Calvert Watkins proposes a metathesis of Proto-Indo-European ***wert-** ("to turn"), while de Vaan suggests Proto-Indo-European ***ure-** ("back"), which is related to Proto-Slavic **rakъ* in the sense of "looking backwards."

zēltā: derives from PIE ***ǵʰelh₃-**, "to bloom, flourish, become green; green; yellow; gold". This shows an aspirated hard G becoming the sibilant Z again. The Proto-Slavic ***zolto** (=gold, yellow) also derives from PIE ***ǵʰelh₃-** by way of Proto-Indo-European ***ǵʰólh₃tom** ("gold"), as does English *gold*. The Latvian and Lithuanian cognates are in this case closer to Thracian: Latvian *zēlts* ("gold"; "golden") and Lithuanian *zelt* ('to bloom; become green; make green'). Latvian, Lithuanian and Slavic show the sibilization which occurred so often in Daco-Thracian as well. And in Latvian, we find the verb **zelt** which means "to bloom; become

green; make green". My interpretation also gives new significance to the fact that the inscription was inscribed on a gold ring.

Compare the occurrence of zēlta in this inscription with the occurrence of dale and dele in two other Thracian inscriptions: "Da Dale Me" ("Demeter, make me bloom" my own translation; instead of "Demeter protect me" as a previous scholar hypothesized) and "Euzie dele Mezenai" ("Horsemanship, make Euzie bloom/Horsemanship makes Euzie bloom", my own translation; instead of "Horsemanship, protect Euzie" or "Horsemanship protects Euzie". The Horsemanship in Thracian mythology was an important savior god to them, who was in time replaced by Christ and St. George after Christianity came). In these two inscriptions, dale and dele mean "to sprout, rise, bloom", from Proto-Indo-European *d^helh₁-, cognate to Ancient Greek θάλλω (thállō, "to grow, bloom, thrive"), Welsh deillio ("to emanate, derive) and to Albanian "dal" ("to go out, come out, exit"), as well as more cognates. So those two inscriptions, I think, back up my new translation of the inscription on the Ezerovo ring. The components miēerazēlta may alternatively be parsed as miēe ("me") and ra-zēlta ("again-bloom").

I have not yet read Dechev's 1957 monograph, *Die thrakischen Sprachreste* (published under the name of D. Detschew (Germanized form of Dechev); Vienna, 1957; written in German), which is unavailable in Los Angeles libraries (perhaps a university library around here may have a copy, but likely not; I've checked some) and unavailable online. From looking at his translation, Dechev seems to have been relying a lot on the supposition that era zēlta or era+zēlta (there's no word break in the inscription; the last four letters -ēlta continue on the other side of the ring, but that's not an actual definite word-break: a word-break in this context refers to specific points or lines that ancient scribes often used to indicate word-breaks) in the inscription meant "ground+delivered", in other words "delivered to the ground", a euphemism for "buried". Dechev's interpretation of era would be cognate to ancient Greek ἔπαζε (éraze), "to the ground". Note that I still have not yet found Dechev's book, but I think his interpretation is that era zēlta was two words, just as I think it was two words; but he thinks era meant "earth" and zēlta was a verb which meant "delivered to/sent to". However, it's unclear what PIE root he would derive such a zēlta from, as he imagined back then. It doesn't seem as if he was saying that era zēlta is a past-tense verb derived from a noun era or eraz meaning "earth", acquiring an unexplained suffix -ēlta or -zēlta : that would indeed be highly unlikely. I think Dechev actually realized that, and what he meant was that era and zēlta are two words, with his hypothetical meanings described a few sentences above. I think I know which PIE root Dechev intended as the source of zēlta in his interpretation, and if so the semantic link between them is very weak, and so his interpretation is very unlikely. When I verify which root (if any) Dechev intended as the source of his zēlta , I will analyze his hypothesis in more detail.

I have a different interpretation of era and zēlta (zēlta derives from PIE *g^helh₃-, and had the same meanings as Latvian "zelt", which also derives from that root; and many words for gold derive from that root, suggesting a direct link to the golden ring), and my translation makes good sense as a whole. The 'era' in 'era zēlta' did not mean "earth" and is not linked to ancient Greek ἔπαζε. In Georgiev's translation, very different from Dechev's, era zēlta does not have anything to do with "buried" or "delivered to the ground", so it shouldn't be assumed that most palaeolinguists accept Dechev's interpretation.

A big problem with Dechev's translation, as many people have noticed, is why was all this trouble taken to record that a woman from Arazea (no such place-name has been found, by the way) named Tilezupta (Dechev doesn't try to explain the supposed "name" Tilezupta, which is not attested as an anthroponym) is the one who took charge of the burial of Rolisteneas? Do we have support for that idea from Balkanic traditions, where a woman who was, it seems, not part of the family (in Dechev's translation, she is described as a woman from Arazea; Dechev believed that Arazea is an unattested toponym; I don't think it is a toponym, nor do I think it is a gens name: notice for example that the order is Arazea domean Tilezupta, not Tilezupta Arazea) officiates/takes ritual charge of the burial and of the sending off of the deceased (especially a deceased man) to the other world or to the earth? Do we have support from that in the inscriptions of any cultures? Dechev's translation sounds like a wrong translation. I don't think the ring records who took charge of the burial or of the sending off of Rolisteneas. I think it records a religious magical invocation meant to protect and help the deceased Rolisteneas. Georgiev's completely different translation is not convincing either.

The inscription may have been done by a hired Thracian poet ⁹, since this parsing (identical to Dechev's parsing) and translation of the inscription shows a pronounced flowing metrical rhythm, as well as showing rhyme/assonance: steneas/nerenea/tiltean/arazea/domean; tiltean/domean; further assonance in the series of **-tea(n)/-ta/-ta** terminations: Rolisteneas Nerenea tiltean/ēsko Ara Zea domean Tilezupta/ miē era zēlta"; the alliteration in **zea** and **zupta** and **zēlta** and other alliterations elsewhere; and the recurring **til**-element in **tiltean** and **tilezupta**, even though the meanings of the two occurrences are I'm sure different (as discussed above), having different meanings and different etymologies. But I believe **tiltean** and **tilezupta** were chosen specifically so that **Tilezupta** can counteract **tiltean**. A type of verbal magic common in anthropological studies.

Linguistically, note the harmony between the adjectives *tiltean* ("fallen") and *domean* ("of the home"): *domean* is also a noun (which came to be equivalent to Latin *domina* and English *lady*; further discoveries regarding the Thracian language should clarify why we see *domean* instead of *domea*, not that *domea* suggests itself as "more likely" or more expected than *domean*: the sentence suggests that there is probably a Thracian grammatical rule here which required the 'n' at the end of the word *domean*, or if not a grammatical rule, an etymological/morphological one, since the older meaning was "of the home") and yet also an adjective, since it originally meant "of the home"; and the -steneas name element is actually an adjective ("strong"), as is *Nerenea* (the name *Nerenea* quite likely meant "virile, potent"; see the cognates, including the Latin cognates). Even the noun *Zea* may be seen in an adjectival way, considering the likely PIE etymology of *Zea*: according to some linguistic sources (Watkins et al.) on Proto-Indo-European, the source was a verb which meant "to shine; be radiant", in which case *Zea* can be described as a feminine adjective ("the radiant one"), as well as a feminine noun. The Thracian adjective suffix *-ea* is nearly identical to Latin *-ia* seen in gens names (*Neria*, etc.) and to an adjective suffix found as far back in Greek as Mycenaean Greek, where it was represented as *-(~)i-ja* (=*iya*) (cf. Mycenaean Greek *Potnija*, *Qerasija* et al.) or *-(~)e-ja* (=*eja*) (cf. Mycenaean Greek *Ipemedēja* et al.).

The harmony between the verbs *zupta* (covered) and *zēlta* (to bloom), both ending in *-ta*, is also suggestive. And the verb contained in *tiltean* we can reconstruct as **tiltea* or **tilte* or **tilta*, among other possibilities, or all of those depending on the grammar of the phrase. So, **tilta*, *zupta* and *zēlta*, three Thracian verbs? With *ēsko* being a verb of a different class. Of course, Thracian would have had a great diversity of verb forms, but it looks like verbs ending with *-ta*, for whatever reason (etymological etc.), were one category.

Conclusion

Future discoveries of examples of the Thracian language will hopefully clarify whether this new translation that I present here is correct. The way all these elements came together tells me that this translation is actually correct, and such a correct translation was possible because the language of the inscription is a fairly conservative Indo-European language. My translation does not contradict any of the basic assumptions about Thracian. Nor does it show that Thracian was distant from Balto-Slavic and/or Albanian. It shows a language which bears many similarities to both Proto-Albanian and the earlier stages of Balto-Slavic, as well as to some other branches of Indo-European.

In this inscription on the gold ring, we see what is probably a Thracian verb *ēsko* meaning „to petition“; in my translation of the inscription found near Kjolmen, I identified a verb *aigekoa* (=“led”), past-tense of *aigeko*=“to lead”/“I lead”. The language uncovered from my translation of the inscription on the Moesian stone reveals a language very reminiscent of the language uncovered from this South Thracian ring, and both seem very Thracian. In both inscriptions, we also see what I'm sure is a Thracian tradition: using the first letter of a word to mark the end of a line, so that when the next line begins it is clear from where the next line continues: on the ring we see that in the case of *zēlta*, the Z is on the front of the ring, while the rest of the word is on the reverse; in the Moesian inscription, the first line makes two direction changes, creating

⁹ This aligns with the Greek traditions of the Thracians having many singers/bards (cf. Orpheus, Eumolpus, et al.) albeit most of them may have been only oral bards, though we can expect that quite a number of Thracian and Dacian poems were written down but have since been lost over the centuries.

three segments of one line: the last letter of the first segment, N, is the first letter of the word that continues in the next segment: combining the, we get the word *Nēn*; and the last letter of the second segment, A, is the first letter of a word that continues in the next segment, the third and final segment of that stream of text: combining them, we get Aigekoa. So even in the manner of writing, we see strong indications that we are dealing with two groups of people that were very close to one another.

References

instead of references, I have included footnotes throughout the text which cite some additional sources that are not named in the body of the essay.

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I will be updating this work a number of times within the year of 2022, so you can check for another update soon. I recommend that the reader searches on Zenodo for my other publications as well, to get a better sense of my rate of accuracy when it comes to etymologies: my rate of accuracy is quite high, and appears to be higher than that of say, Beekes. In other words, this guy really knows what he's doing. To make sure a publication is actually mine, you can check one of my blogs where I note each new publication: <https://fresh-philosophies.blogspot.com/> .

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