



A COMPARATIVE LENS ON ΚΡΑΤΥΣ ΑΡΓΕΪΦΟΝΤΗΣ: MEANING, ETYMOLOGY AND PHRASEOLOGY*

ABSTRACT

Greek κρατύς and cognates (κράτος, κρατερός, etc.) are related to Vedic *krātu-* ‘resolve’ and Avestan *xratu-* ‘[guiding] intellect’. The cumulative phraseological evidence supports this etymological proposal: in at least ten cases, Greek personal names and phrasemes exhibiting a cognate of κρατύς (that is, κράτος and compounds with first member κρατ[α]ι-) combine with terms whose Indo-Iranian linguistic cognates are joined with Vedic *krātu-* and Avestan *xratu-*. Furthermore, Indo-Iranian expressions, in which Vedic *krātu-* and its compounds are referred to a god as attributes, are structurally comparable to Greek κρατύς Ἀργεΐφοντης. Since Ἀργεΐφοντης is likely to reflect ‘shining (cf. Greek φαίνω) with whiteness/brightness (ἀργει-), it is possible to identify Vedic phraseological matches for the Greek formula, namely expressions in which Vedic *krātu-* and its derivative *krátumant-* combine with the notion of ‘shining widely’, Vedic *vi-bhā* (Vedic *bhā* being a linguistic congener of φαίνω). The phraseological correspondence between Vedic *krātu-* ... *agni-* ‘Agni, [endowed with] resolve’, and κρατύς Ἀργεΐφοντης ‘Argeiphontes, endowed with superior might (κράτος)’ may be added to the dossier of common phraseology which the Greek god shares with the Old Indic fire-deity.

Keywords: κρατύς Ἀργεΐφοντης; κράτος; *krātu-*; *xratu-*; Hermes; Agni; Greek myth; Greek linguistics; comparative linguistics

1. INTRODUCTION

Greek κρατύς is an epithet of Hermes commonly attested in the formula κρατύς Ἀργεΐφοντης (*Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Homeric Hymns*), which always covers the verse-ending sequence $\cup \cup - \cup \cup -$, for example *Il.* 16.181–2:

Φύλαντος θυγάτηρ· τῆς δὲ κρατύς Ἀργεΐφοντης
ἠράσατ', ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδὼν μετὰ μελλομένησιν

[Polymele,] daughter of Phylas: the *kratus Argeiphontes* fell in love with her, when he spotted her with his eyes among the singing maidens.

Not only does κρατύς regularly occur in a fixed expression, but it is also joined with an epithet of opaque etymology and semantics. It follows that any possible explanation of the etymology and meaning of κρατύς must deal with Ἀργεΐφοντης too.

In this article, I review synchronic interpretations of κρατύς and its Greek and Indo-European (= IE) congeners (§§2–5). I then focus on what Greek cognates of κρατύς share with Indo-Iranian terms: Vedic *krātu-* ‘resolve’ and Avestan *xratu-* ‘[guiding]

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intellect'¹ (§§6–7). After discussing the semantics and etymology of Greek Ἀργεῖφόντης (§8), arguing that it means ‘shining with/in whiteness/brightness’, I propose that κρατύς Ἀργεῖφόντης matches (a) Vedic collocations of the type [krātu-/sukrātu-/kavikrātu- – AGNI], that is, poetic expressions of relatively free word order, in which the term *krātu-* and its compounds (for example *sukrātu-*, *kavikrātu-*) are referred to the fire-god Agni, and (b) Vedic collocations of the type [krātu-/krátumant- – *vi-bhā*], that is, poetic expressions of relatively free word-order, in which the term *krātu-* or *krátumant-* combines with the verb *vi-bhā* ‘shine widely’.

2. GREEK ΚΡΑΤΥΣ AND ITS GREEK CONGENERS

The following Caland-derivatives are part of the same word family as κρατύς:²

- The thematic adjectives κραταῖός (probably built on the first compound member κραται-, on which cf. n. 5) and κρατερός (displaying an *-ero-*suffix), meaning ‘mighty’, ‘strong’, for example *Il.* 13.345 δύο Κρόνου υἱε κραταῖώ ‘the two mighty sons of Cronus’, 1.25 κρατερόν δ’ ἐπὶ μῦθον ἔτελλε ‘he laid upon him a stern command’.
- κράτος,³ neuter *s*-stem (Ionic κάρτος, Aeolic κρέτος),⁴ meaning ‘superior power/victory’, for example *Il.* 6.387 τείρεσθαι Τρῶας, μέγα δὲ κράτος εἶναι Ἀχαιῶν ‘the Trojans were sorely pressed, and great victory rested with the Achaeans’.
- Att. κρείττων/κρείσσων (Ionic κρέσσων, Doric κάρρων), κράτιστος/κάρτιστος (comparative and superlative), ‘more/the most powerful/victorious’ or ‘better/the best’, for example ὅπότερος δὲ κε νικήσῃ κρείσσων τε γένηται ‘whoever wins and becomes the most powerful/the best’ (*Il.* 3.71).
- κρατι-/καρτι- (first compound members), for example the man’s name Καρτιδάμας (Thera).⁵

¹ So P.O. Skjærvø (transl.), *Zoroastrian Texts*. Handout for use in ‘Early Iranian Civilizations 102’ (Divinity School no. 3663a, 2007).

² ‘Caland’s Law’ is a rule of morphological replacement, according to which *ro*-adjectives take an *i*-suffix when they appear as first compound members. Since the rule extends to an entire set of suffixes, ‘Caland System’ designates the stems and morphemes participating in this series of morphological replacement. Cf. A.J. Nussbaum, ‘Caland Law and the Caland System’ (Diss., Harvard University, 1976).

³ Cf. J.L. Breuil, ‘Κράτος et sa famille chez Homère: étude sémantique’, in M. Casevitz (ed.), *Études homériques. Séminaire de recherche sous la direction de Michel Casevitz* (Lyon, 1989), 17–53, at 25.

⁴ As noted by J. Rau, *Indo-European Nominal Morphology: The Decads and the Caland System* (Innsbruck, 2009), 118 n. 16, the zero-grade in the *s*-stem κράτος reflects an extension of the zero-grade from the adjective (κρατύς) to the adjective abstract (κράτος), since adjectives are generally taken as the derivational basis for all the Caland formations.

⁵ For the men’s names with a first member καρτ(α)ι-/κρατ(α)ι-, cf. F. Bechtel, *Die historischen Personennamen des Griechischen bis zur Kaiserzeit* (Halle a.d.S., 1917), 256. The origin of the first compound member κραται- (or καρται-) is debated. According to G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans. Concepts of the Hero in the Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore, 1999), ch. 5, §31, κραται- is a contamination of κρατι- and καρτα-, on the basis of which κραταῖός was built. C. de Lamberterie, *Les adjectifs grecs en -us*, 2 vols. (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1990), 1.343 suggests that κραταῖός was secondarily formed on an archaic feminine of κρατύς, κραταιά (cf. Hom. μοῖρα κραταιή). Furthermore, the first compound member κραται- reflects an artificial form influenced by κραταιή, by means of which unmetrical compounds, such as κρατίπεδος, were adapted to the Greek hexameter. T. Meissner, *S-Stem Nouns and Adjectives in Greek and Proto-Indo-European. A Diachronic Study in Word Formation* (Oxford, 2006), 70–1 reconstructs **krath₂u-* as underlying

- καρτύνομαι ‘prepare for superiority = *krátos*’ (Nagy [n. 5], 5 §25, n. 51), for example ἐκαρτύναντο φάλαγγας ‘strengthened the ranks’ (*Il.* 11.215).
- κρατέω ‘be strong, prevail, win’ (Hom.), also underlying the Pindaric compounds with first member κρατησ-; cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 10.16 κρατησίπους ‘winning by feet (in a race)’, matching ποσσί ... κράτεσκε ‘he excelled in running’ (Pind. *Nem.* 3.52; cf. also *Pyth.* 10.23).

All these terms belong to the semantic field ‘strength, might, power, superiority’; hence κρατύς looks like meaning ‘mighty, powerful’ or possibly ‘superior’.

3. POSSIBLE MEANINGS OF ΚΡΑΤΥΣ WITHIN GREEK

Since antiquity κρατύς has been interpreted as a synonym of κρατερός/κραταιός, for example

Σ ε 49c Pontani

κρατύς] ὁ ἰσχυρός BHINPITY / κρατερός Yh / κραταιός DIFXS / ὁ δυνατός ὁ Ἐρμῆς Me

kratus: the strong / **strong** (*krateros*) / **mighty** (*krataios*) / mighty Hermes.

Physical-strength sense is not normally predicated of Hermes,⁶ a god commonly described as a resourceful character, who overcomes enemies thanks to his wiles (αἰμυλομήτης ‘of spell-binding wiles’, *Hom. Hymn* 5.13, etc.).⁷ Thus the might designated by κρατύς is more likely to denote Hermes’ cunning intelligence than his use of brute force. A scholium on the *Odyssey* associates κρατύς with the semantic field ‘intellectual superiority’ (ε 49.b Pontani):

κρατύς] ὁ φρονιμώτατος

kratus: the **most sagacious**.

Perhaps κρατύς was glossed in this way because it applied to a god full of guile. Nevertheless, the semantic nuance ‘intellectual superiority’ overlaps with the meaning of the Indo-Iranian congeners of κρατύς, Vedic *krātu-*, Avestan *xratu-* (cf. §4). Let us now look more closely at the semantics of these terms.

κρατύς on the basis of the feminine κραταιή and the first compound member κραται-. The etymological tie between κρατύς and Vedic *krātu-*, Avestan *xratu-* (see §5 below) speaks against this reconstruction: the Indo-Iranian terms exhibit no reflex of *-h₂-* (laryngeal 2), which regularly causes aspiration on voiceless stops in Indo-Iranian.

⁶ Epithets belonging to the semantic field of war apply to Hermes only as the god ‘who watches/protects boundaries’; cf. A. Kuhle, *Hermes und die Bürger: Der Hermes kult in den griechischen Poleis* (Stuttgart, 2020), 48–102. J.L. García Ramón, ‘Espace religieux, théonymes, épiclèse. À propos des nouveaux textes thébains’, in I. Boehm and S. Müller-Celka (edd.), *Espace civil, espace religieux en Égée durant la période mycénienne* (Lyon, 2010), 73–92, at 88 argues against the warlike character of Hermes, despite the existence of Mycenaean *e-ma-a₂ a-re-ja* = ^h*Ermā^hāi Areiāi* ‘Hermes Areias’ in PY Tn 316 (thirteenth century B.C.E.) v.7. Indeed, although a helper of Ares (cf. *Il.* 5.385–91), Hermes does not seem to be a warlike god. J.M. Macedo, ‘Hermes *a-re-ja* (PY Tn 316): a new interpretation’, *Kadmos* 55 (2016), 67–82 argues that Mycenaean *a-re-ja* reflects */aleiāi/* (dative) ‘defence’; such an epithet applies to Hermes as a helping deity, who protects from potential danger.

⁷ For Hermes as god of deceit, see P.J. Finglass, *Sophocles Electra* (Cambridge, 2007), 507–8.

4. INDO-IRANIAN COGNATES OF GREEK ΚΡΑΤΥΣ: VEDIC *KRĀTU-*,
AVESTAN *XRĀTU-*

κρατύς resembles two Indo-Iranian words: Vedic *krātu-* ‘resolve’ and Avestan *xratu-* ‘guiding intellect’, central terms in the Old Indic and Iranian poetic corpora. Both Vedic *krātu-* ‘resolve’, ‘will’⁸ and Avestan *xratu-*, ‘purpose’,⁹ ‘guiding intellect’ denote intellectual force directed towards achieving a certain goal.¹⁰ In particular, Vedic *krātu-* seems to allow its possessor to obtain success and victory; for example

RV 5.35.1a–b

yás te sādhiṣṭhó á’vasa , indra krātuṣ tām á bhara

Your resolve to help that best brings success, Indra, bring that here.

For this reason, *krātu-* is described as *sānasi-* ‘bringing gain’ (RV 10.140.4d) or *jaitra-* ‘bringing victory’ (10.36.10c). It is also associated with the notions ‘strength’ (1.81.4a–b), ‘(over)power’/‘victory’ (cf. 6.12.4c *vanván krátvā nārvā* ‘he ... winning like a steed with its determination’) and ‘leadership/sovereignty’ (for example 4.21.2c–d *yásya krátur vidath.yò ná samrāt , sāhvān* ‘whose resolve, conquering and victorious like a sovereign king making ceremonial distributions’). In Avestan, *xratu-* is a form of intellectual energy or will which has a guiding role and allows someone to possess a certain type of knowledge or vision;¹¹ cf. Y. 49.6b–d *yā vā xratōuš xšmākahiiā ā.manahhā / ərəš vīcidiiāi yaθā.ī srāuuaiiaēmā / təm daēnəm yā xšmāuuatō ahurā* ‘to tell me what [the concerns] of your *xratu-* [guiding intellect] are to let me discern truly with the energy of your [adherent] how we might make heard the view/religion of one such as you, o Lord’.¹²

Both Indo-Iranian terms are associated not only with the notions ‘intellect’, ‘knowledge’, ‘comprehension’ but also with ‘power’, ‘strength’ (Vedic *krātu-*), ‘superiority’ (both Vedic *krātu-* and Avestan *xratu-*). The latter conceptual association manifests itself in Vedic passages where *krātu-* designates the distinctive quality of a winner, leader, or sovereign, and Avestan passages where *xratu-* is identified with Ahura Mazda; cf. Vr. 19.1h–i *xratūm vīspō.vīδuuāñhəm yazamaide / yim ahurəm mazdqm* ‘we sacrifice to the all-knowing *xratu-*, which is Ahura Māzda’.

⁸ On the semantics, cf. K. Rönnow, ‘Ved. krātu-. Eine wortgeschichtliche Untersuchung’, *Le Monde Oriental* 26–7 (1932–3), 1–90.

⁹ Cf. C. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Strassburg, 1904), 535–7; A. Ahmadi, ‘Avestan *xratu-*’, *Iranian Studies* 47 (2014), 903–13.

¹⁰ Cf. L. Renou, *Études védiques et pāṇinéennes* IV (Paris, 1958), 47: ‘required quality: the capacity of understanding, which immediately precedes an act of creation ... the disposition of one’s spirit towards the action ... the purposeful planning and will of an action’ (my translations).

¹¹ Rönnow (n. 8), 56: ‘*xratu-* has the main role’ as ‘the capacity of a human being, through which a person puts himself at the service of good or evil, and the driving force of his actions’ (my translation).

¹² Translation based on H. Humbach and K. Faß, *Zarathushtra and his Antagonists. A Sociolinguistic Study with English and German Translations of his Gāthās* (Wiesbaden, 2010).

5. GREEK ΚΡΑΤΥΣ, VEDIC *KRATU-*, AVESTAN *XRATU-*: ETYMOLOGY, DERIVATION AND PHRASEOLOGY

An etymological connection between κρατύς, Vedic *krātu-* and Avestan *xratu-* was proposed by Curtius¹³ and supported by Strunk.¹⁴ The relationship between the terms was most convincingly reconstructed by Nussbaum through a standard pattern of internal derivation:¹⁵ an adjective κρατύς ‘possessing superiority’ (ultimately reflecting an adjective with an alternance **krétu-/*krṛṛéu-* and generalized zero-grade of the root) is internally derived from a substantive **krótu-/*krṛétu-*, continued by Vedic *krātu-*, Avestan *xrātu-* ‘resolve, guiding intellect’. I propose that the Greek and the Indo-Iranian terms derive from a root **kret-* meaning ‘become superior’. Consequently, the three words should be kept apart from the root **(s)kert-* ‘cut’ underlying Gothic *hardus*, Lithuanian *kartùs* ‘bitter’,¹⁶ since this root and the Indo-Iranian terms display an incompatible word-structure: in a root like **(s)kert-* the resonant sound *-r-* follows the root-vowel, but Vedic *krātu-* and Avestan *xratu-* must be traced back to a root in which the resonant sound *-r-* precedes the vowel. A semantic and comparative phraseological analysis of the Greek and Indo-Iranian terms will provide further support for the proposed etymology.

Vedic *krātu-* and Avestan *xratu-* share collocations with their Greek congeners (κρατύς, κραται- and κράτος). This means that the verbal elements of all listed phrasemes show clear interconnecting links. The following matches can be identified:

- (a) [PUT/SET (**d^heh₁-*) – SUPERIORITY/MIGHT/RESOLVE (**kret-*): Greek [τίθημι – κράτος], cf. *Il.* 1.509–10 ἐπὶ Τρώεσσι τίθει κράτος ‘give superior power/victory to the Trojans’, matches Vedic [*dhā – krātu-*]; cf. *RV* 1.123.13b *bhadráṃ-bhadraṃ*

¹³ G. Curtius, *Grundzüge der griechischen Etymologie* (Leipzig, 1873), 184. Accepted by H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1960–72), 2.9; P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: histoire des mots* (Paris, 1968–80, new edn 2009), 579; R.P. Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* (Leiden and Boston, 2010), 1.773.

¹⁴ K. Strunk, ‘Semantisches und Formales zum Verhältnis von Indoiran. *krātu-/xratu-* und Gr. κρατύς’, in C. Toll (ed.), *Monumentum H.S. Nyberg* (Teheran / Liège / Leiden, 1975), 2.265–96, at 289 = *Kleine Schriften* (Innsbruck, 2005), 1.367–98, at 396, arguing that κρατύς is a feminine abstract in *-tu* and the formula κρατύς Ἀργεῖφόντης reflects a type βίη Ἡροκλείη, meaning ‘magische Kraft argeiphontisch’ or ‘magische Kraft Argeiphontes’ or ‘magische Kraft des Argeiphontes’ (‘magic force [κρατύς] argeiphontic/Argeiphontes/of the Argeiphontes [Ἀργεῖφόντης]). However, oxytone stems in *-tu* are usually feminine abstracts, displaying a long *-ū-*, e.g. feminine γραπτύς ‘scratching’ besides γράφω ‘write, scratch’ (cf. É. Benveniste, *Origines de la formation des nomes en indo-européen* [Paris, 1935], 71–2), whereas Greek κρατύς (masc.) shows no trace of a long vowel.

¹⁵ A.J. Nussbaum, *Two Studies in Greek and Homeric Linguistics* (Göttingen, 1998), 147.

¹⁶ É. Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris, 1969), 2.71–83 proposes an etymological link between κρατύς and Gothic *hardus* ‘hard’; cf. de Lamberterie (n. 5), 1.323–55, who argues for the IE root **(s)kert-* ‘cut’ as underlying the terms. However, Gothic *hardus*, together with other Germanic words for ‘hard’, may reflect **kort-ú-*: K. Strunk, ‘Gr. κρατύς und germ. *χάρδus. Nachtrag zu einer fragwürdigen Etymologie’, *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft* 34 (1976), 169–70 = *Kleine Schriften* (Innsbruck, 2005), 1.399–400. L. van Beek, ‘The development of the Proto-Indo-European syllabic liquids in Greek’ (Diss., Leiden, 2013), 117–57 contends that κρατύς ‘impetuous’ (?) derives from IE **kret_h1-* ‘loose’, proposing a further word-equation between κρατερός and Vedic *śithirá-* ‘loose, flexible’. But assuming Vedic *śithirá-* goes back to IE **kret_h1-* ‘loosen’ implies that **h₁-* caused aspiration on unvoiced stops in Vedic, which is far from certain, *pace* A.M. Lubotsky, ‘The origin of Sanskrit roots of the type *sīv-* ‘sew’, *dīv-* ‘play dice’, with an appendix on Vedic *i*-perfects’, in S. Jamison, H.C. Melchert and B. Vine (edd.), *Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Indo-European Conference* (Bremen, 2011), 105–26, at 115.

- krátum asmāsu dhehi* ‘place ever more auspicious resolve in us’. Ir. *dātā xratōuš* (Y. 50.6, cf. also [*xratōuš* – (*nī*.)*dadaŋ*] in Y. 32.14a) is ambiguous: Avestan *dātar-* may correspond to Vedic *dhātár-* ‘creator’ or to Vedic *dātár-* ‘giver’, since Proto-Indo-Iranian **dh-* and **d-* merge in Avestan *d-*.
- (b) [GIVE (**deh*₃-) – SUPERIORITY/MIGHT/RESOLVE (**kret-*): Greek [κράτος – δίδωμι],¹⁷ cf. *Il.* 11.319 Τρωσὶν δὴ βόλεται **δοῦναι κράτος** ‘for [Zeus] will give superiority [in battle]/victory to the Trojans’, overlaps with Vedic [*dā* – *krātu-*], for example RV 8.62.7a *devāḥ ānu krátum daduḥ* ‘all the gods **conceded** heroism and **resolve** [to you]’.
- (c) [BEAR/BRING (**b^her-*) – SUPERIORITY/MIGHT/RESOLVE (**kret-*)] underlies the man’s name Φερεκράτης (*IG* I³ 1192) and the collocation [φέρω – κράτος], cf. *Il.* 13.486 αἶψα κεν ἢ ἐ **φέρουτο μέγα κράτος** ‘then at once would he win [‘bring’] great **victory**’. From a formal point of view, the Greek collocation is comparable to Vedic [(*ā-*)*bhar* – *krātu-*], cf. RV 7.32.26a *indra krátum na ā bhara* ‘Indra, **bring** your **resolve** to bear for us’, and to Avestan [*auua.bar-* – *xratu-*], cf. *Yt.* 17.2e–f *uta hē āsnəm xratūm / auua.baraiti vārəma* ‘and she **bestows** inborn **guiding thought** at will upon him’ (Skjærvø [n. 1]).
- (d) [INCREASE (**h₂ueks-*) – SUPERIORITY/MIGHT/RESOLVE (**kret-*)] occurs as [ἄέξω – κράτος] in Greek; cf. *Il.* 12.214 σὸν δὲ **κράτος** αἰὲν **ἄέξειν** ‘he should ever **increase** your **might**’, which partly corresponds to Avestan *uxšne xraθβε* ‘to **increase** *xratu-* (*Vidēvdāt* 4.45e). Furthermore, since Vedic *vardh* and Greek ἄέξω share a variety of collocations,¹⁸ Vedic [*vardh* – *krātu-*] provides a further comparandum; cf. RV 8.62.10b–c *út tvām út táva krátum / bhúrigo bhúri vāvrduḥ* ‘they have **increased** you and your **resolve** many times, o you of many cows’.
- (e) [GREAT (**meǵh₂-*) – SUPERIORITY/MIGHT/RESOLVE (**kret-*)] underlies Greek [μέγα – κράτος] and [μέγιστον – κράτος],¹⁹ cf. *Il.* 6.387 **μέγα** δὲ **κράτος** εἶναι Ἀχαιῶν ‘**great victory** rested with the Achaeans’, *Il.* 2.118 τοῦ γὰρ **κράτος** ἐστὶ **μέγιστον** ‘for his **power** is the **greatest**’. Both collocations have Avestan comparanda, namely the Young Avestan possessive compound *aš.xratu-* ‘whose *xratu-* [(guiding) intellect] is great’ or ‘highly endowed with *xratu-*’; cf. *Y.* 31.9 *θβῃ ā gəuš tašā aš.xratōuš* ‘also the fashioner of the cow, **highly endowed with** *xratu-*. Moreover, Young Avestan *aš.xratu-* matches the collocation [*xratu-* – *mazaŋt-*]; cf. *Y.* 62.4f–g *xratūm pascaēta masitəm / mazāŋtəm apairi.āθrəm* ‘**guiding thought** in my inner ear[?], / large, **great**, [and] *non-erring’ (Skjærvø [n. 1]). As pointed out by Schindler,²⁰ Young Avestan *aš.xratu-* ultimately reflects

¹⁷ The collocation [κράτος – ἐγγυαλίζω] ‘handle overpower/bestow victory in the hands of’ (*Il.* 11.192) is a variant of the same collocation.

¹⁸ L. Massetti, ‘Phraseologie und indogermanische Dichtersprache in der Sprache der griechischen Chorlyrik: Pindar und Bakchylides’ (Diss. Cologne, 2019): http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebook:CHS_MassettiL.Phraseologie_und_indogermanische_Dichtersprache.2019, 73–4, 135–6, 154–6.

¹⁹ *IG* II² 1006. The man’s name Μενεκράτης (Hecat.) might also belong to the same group. As García Ramón points out to me (personal communication), σθένος was synchronically perceived as a term whose semantics partially overlapped those of κράτος; cf. Hsch. α 2546 Latte–Cunningham ἀκρατές: ἄσθενές ‘*akrates*: without strengths (*sthenos*)’. In the light of this synchronic equation, μέγα σθένος (Hom.), μεγασθενής (Hes. and inscriptions), ἐρυσθενής (Hom.) are partial synonyms of the Greek collocations and compounds mentioned above.

²⁰ J. Schindler, ‘Zur avestischen Kompositionslehre: *aš-* ‘groß’’, in G. Cardona and N.H. Zide (edd.), *Festschrift for Henry Hoeningwald on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Tübingen, 1987), 337–54, at 341–2.

- **mḡh₂-kret-*, while the superlatives *aš.xraθbastama-* and *xraθβišta-* (Y. 1.1, Yt. 13.80) are built on the model of *aš.aojastama-* ‘the very strong’ and *aojišta-* ‘the strongest’, which are attested in the same context as *aš.xraθbastama-*; cf. Yt. 10.141c–e *aojištanqm asti aojištəm ... bayanqm asti aš.xraθbastamō* ‘among the ones possessing the greatest strength, he is the stronger ... among the gods he is **the one who is most endowed with *xratu-***’.²¹
- (f) [SUPERIORITY/MIGHT/RESOLVE (**kret-*) – MIND (**men-*)] underlies the man’s name Κραταμίνης (Thuc.), which Nagy (n. 5) juxtaposes to [κρατερόν – μένος]; cf. Il. 7.38 Ἐκτορος ὄρωμεν **κρατερόν μένος** ‘let us rouse **the mighty spirit** of Hector.’ Both Vedic *krātu-* and Avestan *xratu-* are joined with derivatives of IE **men-* ‘think’, as the following examples make evident:
- RV 4.33.9b *abhi krátvā mánasā dīdhyanāḥ* ‘reflecting on it **according to their purpose and with their thought**’;
 - Y. 48.3c–d *vajhδuṣ xratūm managhō yā xšnəuuīšā gəuščā uruuānəm* ‘(by whom) you may satisfy **the intellect of good thought** and the soul of the cow’ (Humbach – Faiß [n. 12]).²²
- (g) [FOLLOW (**sek^h-*) – SUPERIORITY/MIGHT/RESOLVE (**kret-*)] is attested once in the shape [POWER_{nom.} – FOLLOW_{mid.} – X_{dat.}]; cf. Tyrt. fr. 4.9 West δήμου τε πλήθει νίκην καὶ **κάρτος ἔπεσθαι** ‘victory and **power are to accompany** the mass of the people.’ The etymological congeners of Greek κάρτος and ἔπομαι occur in two Indo-Iranian collocations: the Avestan verb *hac* ‘follow’ (cf. Vedic *sac*, Greek ἔπομαι, IE **sek^h-* ‘follow’) is constructed with a subject *xratu-* [*xratu-* – *hac*_{mid.}]; cf. Yt. 10.107a–d *nōiṭ mašīm gaēθīm stē / masiā hacaitē āsnō xratuṣ / yaθa miθrəmcit mainiiaom / hacaitē āsnascit xratuṣ* ‘no material man in existence **is endowed with** [lit. **followed by**] greater **insight** than that which supernatural Mithra **is endowed with**’.²³ Vedic *krātu-* is the direct object of Vedic *sac* ‘follow’ in the collocation [*sac* – *krātu-*_{acc.}]; cf. RV 1.156.4a–b *tām asya rājā vāruṇas tām aśvinā / krātuṃ sacanta* ‘that **resolve of his** [of Visnu] **does king Varuṇa follow**, that do the Aśvins’.²⁴
- (h) [SHINE (**b^heh₂₋*) – SUPERIORITY/MIGHT/RESOLVE (**kret-*)] underlies the male names Φανοκράτης (IG II² 478, Attica)²⁵ and Φασικράτης (IG II² 2332, Attica), with first members to Greek φαίνω ‘shine’ and collocation [κάρτος – (ἐκ)φαίνω] ‘make shine power/victory’, cf. Pind. *Nem.* 4.68 δῶρα καὶ **κράτος ἐξέφαναν** ἐγγενὲς αὐτῷ ‘[they] **made shine** for him their gifts and his race’s **power**’. Significantly, the same IE roots occur in the Vedic collocation [*krātu-*_{instr.} – *vi-bhā*] ‘widely shine by resolve’; cf. RV 6.68.9c–d *māhivrataḥ, krátvā vibhātīy ajáro ná śocísā* ‘here is the one of great commandments [who] **radiates by his resolve, like unaging [fire] with its flame**’. The type [X_{nom.} – *vi-bhā* (WIDELY SHINE) – A_{instr.}] matches the type [A_{nom.} – *vi-bhā* (WIDELY SHINE)] within Vedic; cf. RV 1.92.11d *cákṣasā ví bhāti* ‘[the maiden] radiates forth with the eye’ and 9b *cákṣuḥ ... ví bhāti* ‘[like] an eye shines forth’.²⁶

²¹ The collocation [*krātu-* – *brhánt-*] (RV 1.2.8c) is an additional partial match for [μέγας – κράτος], since Vedic *brhánt-* appears in similar collocations as μέγας in Greek; cf. Massetti (n. 18), 118–19.

²² Cf. Yt. 1.26, 28.1, 31.11, 32.4, 45.2, 46.18, 48.3.

²³ Transl. I. Gershevitch, *The Avestan Hymn to Mithra* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959). Elsewhere *hac* is constructed with no direct object and is thus understood as ‘be in harmony’; cf. Y. 45.2c–e.

²⁴ [*sac* – *krātu-*_{instr.}] is found in RV 1.145.2d.

²⁵ Additionally, Φανοσθένης (IG I³ 182) partially matches Φανοκράτης.

²⁶ Massetti (n. 18), 134.

- (i) [SUPERIORITY/MIGHT/RESOLVE (**kret-*) – (CONQUERING) FORCE (**g^hei-*)] lies at the basis of several Greek phraseological binomials; cf. νικήσαι **κρατερήφι βίηφι** ‘win by means of **powerful strength**’ (Il. 21.501); the couple Κράτος and Βίη ‘*Kratos* (Might) and *Biē* (Force)’ (Hes. *Theog.* 384–5); the compound κρατησιβίον (Pind. fr. *Isthm.* 16* S–M) ‘victorious in strength’.²⁷ The same IE roots figure in the Vedic collocation [*krātu-* – *jaitra-*] attested in RV 10.36.10c.
- (j) [FIND/OBTAIN – SUPERIORITY/MIGHT/RESOLVE (**kret-*)] underlies Greek [ἐξευρίσκω – κράτος] ‘find [that is, obtain/gain] superiority/victory/triumph’, cf. Pind. *Isthm.* 8.5 καὶ Νεμέα ἀέθλων ὅτι **κράτος ἐξεύρε** ‘because at Nemea he **gained triumph** in the contests’. Vedic [*ved* – *krātu-*_{acc.}] and *kratuvīd-* ‘finding resolve’ (RV 9.44.6)²⁸ semantically overlap the Pindaric *iunctura*;²⁹ cf. 1.42.7c *pūṣann ihā krātum vidah* ‘Pūṣan, here you will **find the resolve**’.

These numerous phraseological matches among Greek congeners of κράτος, Vedic *krātu-* and Avestan *xratu-* provide strong support for the etymological connection between these terms.

6. VEDIC *KRATU-* ... *AGNI-* AND GREEK ΚΡΑΤΥΣ ΑΡΓΕΪΦΟΝΤΗΣ

In all cases presented so far, Vedic *krātu-* and Avestan *xratu-* are substantives. Therefore, their collocations are mostly comparable to those of the Greek substantive κράτος. However, the Indo-Iranian terms are occasionally used as adjectives, just like κρατύς in Greek. Such Indo-Iranian phrasemes are structurally comparable to Greek κρατύς Ἀργεΐφοντης.

Specifically, while, in the Avestan corpus, only Ahura Mazda is identified as *xratu-*,³⁰ Vedic *krātu-* occurs as an attribute or an appellative of three Vedic gods:³¹ Agni (RV 1.77.3, 3.11.6, 6.9.5), Soma (9.86.43, 107.3) and Indra (10.104.10). Moreover, possessive or verbal compounds of *krātu-* mostly apply to the same divinities:

- (i) *sukrátu-* ‘having a good/strong resolve’ applies twenty-three times to Agni, sixteen times to Indra and eleven times to Soma.
- (ii) Indra is often described by means of compounds with a second member *-kratu-*: *śátakratu-* ‘having a hundred resolves/victories’ (sixty-seven times), the *hapax eirēmena* Vedic *ámitakratu-* ‘of unmatched resolve’ (RV 1.102.6a), *avāryákratu-* ‘of unobstructable resolve’ (8.92.8c), *avīharyatákratu-* ‘of un-deflectable resolve’ (1.63.2c), *ṛjukrátu-* ‘of straight resolve’ (1.81.7b), *sambhrjákratu-* ‘of concentrated resolve’ (1.52.8a), *vṛśakratuḥ-* ‘of bullish resolve’ (6.45.16c).

²⁷ W.J. Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar* (Berlin, 1969), s.v. κρατησιβίας.

²⁸ The superlative *kratuvittama-* is found in RV 9.108.1b.

²⁹ S. Scarlata, *Die Wurzelkomposita im Rgveda* (Wiesbaden, 1999), 482 points out the construction [*vásu-* – *ved* – *krātu-*_{instr.}] in RV 2.13.11b.

³⁰ Cf. Vr. 19.1h–i, Yt. 1.7h–i.

³¹ H. Grassmann and M. Koziaka, *Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda* (Wiesbaden, 1996⁶), 353–4 specify fifteen possible meanings. According to J.G. Pinault, ‘Le substantif épithète dans la langue de la Rik-Samhitā’, in E. Pirart (ed.), *Syntaxe des langues indo-iraniennes anciennes (Actes du Colloque international organisé par l’Institut du Proche-Orient Ancien, Sitges [Barcelona], 4–5 mai 1993)* (Sabadell, 1997), 111–41, at 121, as an epithet, *krātu-* equates the adjectives *krātumant-* ‘provided with resolve’.

- (iii) Soma is most commonly the referent of the epithet *kratuvid-* ‘finding resolve’ (see §5.j above). Moreover, he shares with Agni the epithets *ádrptakratu-* ‘of undistracted resolve’ (RV 8.79.7b) and *kavikratu-* ‘having a *kavi*’s [poet]’s resolve’ (9.9.1c, 25.5c, 62.13c).
- (iv) Agni is once described as *ádrptakratu-* ‘of undistracted resolve’ (RV 6.49.2b), *ádbhutakrátu-* ‘having unerring resolve’ (8.23.8a), *kratuvid-* ‘finding resolve’ (10.2.5c, see §5.j above) and *várenyakratu-* ‘whose resolve is worthy to be chosen’ (8.43.12b). Additionally, the epithet *kavikrátu-* ‘having the resolve of a *kavi* [wise poet]/a poet’s purpose’ applies to him seven times (1.1.5). Finally, Agni is directly compared to *krátu-*; cf. *durókaśociḥ krátur ná nítyah* ‘whose blaze is beyond domestication like one’s own will’ (1.66.5a).

Since the semantic palette of *krátu-* ranges from ‘power/strength’ to ‘mental power, resolve, superiority’ to ‘intention [of sacrificer and receiver of the sacrifice]’, it is not surprising that the term and its compounds ultimately refer to Indra, a deity mostly celebrated for his heroic achievements, and to two deities who are primarily involved in sacrifice, Agni and Soma. Given the common characteristics that Agni and Hermes share,³² I submit that Vedic collocations with the structure [*krátu-/sukrátu-/kavikratu-* – AGNI] are partial matches to Greek κρατύς Αργεΐφόντης.

7. THE ETYMOLOGY OF GREEK ΑΡΓΕΪΦΟΝΤΗΣ

The epithet Αργεΐφόντης, the object of intensive scholarly debate concerning both its etymology and its meaning,³³ provides further support for this comparison, since it may be interpreted as a suitable epithet for an IE fire-god, whose prerogatives were partly inherited by Hermes. As explained by Koller,³⁴ the form may reflect an analogical metrical adaptation of *Αργεΐφάων or *άργεΐφάων, resulting from a univerbation of *άργεΐ φά(Φ)ων ‘shining/brilliant with/in whiteness/brightness’. Koller’s interpretation may be supported in the light of Vedic *bhārjika-* ‘shining with/in whiteness/brightness’ or, possibly, ‘whose whiteness/brightness is shining’.³⁵ This epithet exclusively belongs to the Old Indic fire-god Agni (RV 1.44.3, 3.1.12, 14, 10.12.2) and is built with the same lexical material as Αργεΐφόντης: IE **b^heh₂-* (*bhā-* cf. φάων, -φόντης) and **h₂erǵ-* (the second compound member *-rjika-* contains IE **h₂rǵi-* [cf. **h₂erǵesi-* being represented as άργεΐ- in Greek] and IE *-h₃k^uo-* ‘white-appearance’).³⁶ This correspondence suggests further possible phraseological comparisons, namely between κρατύς Αργεΐφόντης and

- (i) the Vedic collocation [*krátu-/sukrátu-/kavikrátu-* – AGNI] (cf. §6.iv);

³² For Hermes as inheritor of an IE fire-god’s prerogatives, see L. Massetti, ‘Hermes and Hestia revisited: Hermes άκάκητα and the funerary fire’, in S. Jamison and B. Vine (edd.), *Proceedings of the 31st Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference, Los Angeles, November 7–8, 2019* (Bremen, 2021), 197–213.

³³ L. Massetti, ‘άργεΐφόντης ... πῦρ άμαρύσσων: a poetic etymology?’, *QUCC* 128 (2021), 11–27, at 21 n. 2.

³⁴ H. Koller, ‘Αργεΐφόντης’, *Glotta* 5 (1976), 211–15; M. Janda, *Elysion. Entstehung und Entwicklung der griechischen Religion* (Innsbruck, 2005), 75–84.

³⁵ Cf. L. Massetti, ‘Hermes Αργεΐφόντης and Agni *bhārjika-*’, *IF* 127 (2022), 131–50.

³⁶ P. Thieme, *Untersuchungen zur Wortkunde und Auslegung des Rigveda* (Halle a.d.S., 1948), 40 n. 2.

- (ii) Vedic syntagmas in which *krātu-* is joined to *bhā*, namely [*krátumant- – ví-bhā*], [*krātu-instr. – ví-bhā*] (cf. §5.h). The collocation [*krátumant- – ví-bhā*] applies to Br̥haspati's power;³⁷ cf. *bṛ̥haspate áti yád aryó árhād , dyumád vibhātī krátumaj jáneṣu* 'Br̥haspati! That which will be worth more than what belongs to the stranger, [that which] **will radiate** among the peoples **with brilliance and purpose**' (RV 2.23.15a–b).

Although Vedic [*krātu-instr. – ví-bhā*] is not predicated of Agni, the collocation occurs in the framework of a 'fire metaphor'; cf. *ayám yá urvī mahinā máhivratah , krátvā vibhātī ajáro ná śociṣā* 'here is the one of great commandments who **radiates** through the two wide [worlds] with his greatness and **by his resolve**, like unaging [fire] with its flame' (RV 6.68.9c–d).

8. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the present study may be summarized as follows:

- (a) κρατύς means 'mighty, superior'. This meaning pairs well with Ἀργεῖφόντης 'shining with whiteness/brightness'.
- (b) The phraseological match between Ἀργεῖφόντης and Agni's epithet *bhārjika*-supports the proposed interpretation for Ἀργεῖφόντης. At the same time, *krātu-* and compounds (*sukrátu-*, *kavikrátu-*, etc.) apply to Agni, while κρατύς pairs with Hermes (Ἀργεῖφόντης).
- (c) The notion of prominence/might/superiority is connected with the prerogative of visibility and shining light in Greek—cf. male names Φανοκράτης, Φοσικράτης [κράτος – (ἐκ)φαίνω] (Pind. *Nem.* 4.68)—and in Vedic: cf. [*krátumant- – ví-bhā*] and [*krātu-instr. – ví-bhā*]. At the same time, these same phrasemes are partial formal matches to the formula κρατύς Ἀργεῖφόντης.

This semantic and linguistic examination sheds light on the conceptual background to one particular trait of the god Hermes. The comparative data change how we look at the formula κρατύς Ἀργεῖφόντης. However, the linguistic and phraseological analysis allows us to recover the semantics of κρατύς in a manner consistent with what we know about Hermes within Greek culture. The quintessential cunning god, Hermes is *mighty/superior* because he is endowed with purposeful resolve; as proved by a variety of mythological episodes, the Olympian is a most efficient helper thanks to his proactive thinking (cf. §3 and n. 7). The results of the study additionally suggest that Hermes might have inherited this distinctive prerogative from an IE fire-god: this hypothesis demands verification through an in-depth study of further IE comparanda, which I intend to pursue elsewhere.

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³⁷ Br̥haspati is sometimes identified with Agni (e.g. RV 1.38.13): A.A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology* (Strassburg, 1897), 102.