

Linguistic evidence for the Indo-European and Albanian origin of Aphrodite

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Abstract. I consider the question of the source of the divine name Aphrodite, arguing that the etymology of the name indicates an Albanian and Illyrian origin. I first survey different etymological hypotheses and give reasons for rejecting them and then turn to motivating the Albanian sound changes necessary for taking the name to derive from Albanian sources. The historical and linguistic evidence will show that the Albanian phrase *afro dita* ‘come forth the day/dawn’ can be posited back to a Proto-Albanian **apro dītā* a reflex of Proto-Indo-European **h₂epero déh₂itis*. Modern Albanian *afro dita* refers to Aphrodite’s celestial origin. Aphrodite was first and foremost known as the planet Venus, which can only be seen during the dawn. Only Modern Albanian *afro dita* ‘come forth the day/dawn’ indicates this exact time when the planet Venus is visible in the sky. The celestial concept of Aphrodite was adapted by a Pre-Proto-Albanian group (Illyrians) from the Phoenicians, who first brought knowledge of the goddess to Europe.

Keywords. Aphrodite; Indo-European comparative mythology; Albanian; Proto-Albanian; Illyrian; Ancient Greek; Phoenicians; Aštarte; Venus; lenition

1. Introduction. The deity Aphrodite, known as ‘the goddess of love’ is recorded since the period of Ancient Greek in the form *Ἀφροδίτη*. There are also the attested variants *Ἀφοροδίτα* (Cypriot), and *Ἀφοροδίτα* (Cretan). The etymological connection to Greek *ἀφρός* ‘foam’ proposed by Kretschmer KZ 33 (1895: 267) has now been abandoned (see Beekes 2016: 179).

Athanassakis (2004: 41) also states that *ἀφρός* (aphrós) ‘foam’ may have nothing to do with Aphrodite. This etymology was derived from Hesiod’s *Theogony* where Aphrodite is called the ‘foam-born goddess’, but that appears to reflect a Greek folk etymology. Due to the fact that the name of Aphrodite is not attested in Mycenaean Greek (Bronze Age), the present consensus is that it may be derived from the Semitic name of the goddess Aštoret/Aštarte (Beekes 2016: 179).

The Albanian historian Çekrezi (Chekrezi) first noted the similarity between Aphrodite and Albanian *Afër dita* ‘near day or the morning star’ (Jacques 1995: 68). The reason that Albanian has been excluded as a possibility is due to the mysterious and unexplained origin of the Albanians themselves. In a recent study, however, by Hyllested and Joseph (2022), many shared innovations point to a subgroup consisting of Albanian and Greek. This also includes mythological connections such as *Zoj-z* ‘Albanian sky god’ ~ Greek *Ζεύς* < **d̥iēus*, as well as *Premtë*, *P(ë)rende*, the Albanian dawn-goddess, goddess of love and protector of women, which corresponds regularly to the Greek name *Περσέφαττα*, a variant of *Περσεφόνη*. Athanassakis (2004: 56) mentions Albanian and Illyrian as the likely origin of a few Greek deities such as *Nereus* and *Thetis*. New evidence from the historically isolated dialect of Malsia Madhe Albanian in northwestern Albania has also provided a key to previously obscure history of Albanian through the preservation of many Proto-Albanian elements and connections to an older predecessor family.

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Through comparative linguistic evidence it can be shown that Albanian *afër dita* ‘the day/dawn is near’, in its imperative form of *afro dita* ‘come forth the day/dawn’, is the direct origin of the name Aphrodite. The medial /f/ in the first element of *afro* ‘come near’ can be shown to be derived from a Proto-Albanian *p, thus, yielding the compound form of *apro dītā, which is also evident in Ancient Greek *Ἀφροδίτη*.

2. Previous etymologies of Aphrodite. In Hesiod’s *Theogony* Aphrodite is called the ‘foam-born goddess’. This etymology developed from the myth whereby Kronos with a sickle cut off the genitalia of Ouranos ‘the universe’; which fell to sea and out of the foam arose Aphrodite or ‘the foam-born goddess’ (Athanasakis 2004: 15-16).

- (1) The first element in Aphrodite was thought to be connected to Ancient Greek *ἄφρός* /ap^hrós/ ‘foam’.

Boedeker (1974: 12) points out that *ἄφρός* rarely referred to ‘sea-foam’. It is rarely seen in epic, used for extreme vitality and of the cosmic river Okeanos. Thus, the similarity of the first element to ‘foam’ is likely to be a folk etymology. Other scholars dealt with the origin of the second element in Aphrodite, ultimately positioning the name as a compound construction.

- (2) Kretschmer KZ 33 (1895) concluded that the second element is **όδίτη* ‘wanderer’, although it is not formally attested.
- (3) Maass (1911) also connected the first element in Aphrodite to *ἄφρός*, but the second element to an unattested **δίτη* ‘bright’, derived from the IE root **dei-* ‘shine’ (Boedeker 1974: 9).¹
- (4) Przyłuski (1934) also concluded that Aphrodite is a compound name. The first element *Ἀφρό-* he states must have been a goddess of vegetation and reproduction, whereas the second element he related to an unattested ‘Creto Phoenician’ sea goddess **Deti* (Boedeker 1974: 8).
- (5) Pisani (1930) gave the same etymology as Maass (1911) (*ἄφρός* + **δίτη*, where *δίτη* is from the Indo-European root **dei-* ‘shine’) but considers the Greek form to be derived from Pre-Indo-European and to have to do with a new Sky-god.

Pisani positions this based on the Ouranos story, where *Ἀφροδίτη* would mean ‘bright cloud’. However, Boedeker (1974: 12-13) points out that the difficulty with this is that *ἄφρός* never meant cloud or vapor in attested Greek.

- (6) Benveniste (1931) maintained that the Cretan variant *Ἀφορδίτα* cannot be derived from *ἄφρός*. The difference in the Cretan variant *Ἀφορδίτα* and Mainland Greek *Ἀφροδίτη* is the position of the rhotic and oral vowel (Cretan -ορ-, Mainland Greek -ρο-).

An explanation for the variant forms of Greek may be that they are two reflexes of **nhb-*, the Indo-European root for ‘rain, cloud’.² Boedeker (1974: 13) states that *ἄφρός* could be a thematic noun derived from thematic **nhbro-*. While *Ἀφρο/Ἀφορ-*, can represent the athematic zero-grade

¹ *Aphrodite’s Entry Into Greek Epic* by Deborah Dickmann Boedeker gives an adequate summary of the theories surrounding the name of Aphrodite.

² Reflexes include Indic *abhrá*, Avestani *awra*, and Latin *imber*.

of the root **nbhr*. With this theory, the two forms are related but not from the same proto-form. This would also imply that they could have different semantics, possibly one form meaning ‘cloud’ or ‘vapor’.

- (7) Witczak (1993) also proposed a compound etymology, stating that the name is originally an epithet of the planet Venus. The second element **-dītā* is derived from PIE **dih₂-*, and the first element he ties with Proto-Germanic **abar* ‘very’ and Proto-Celtic **abor* with the same meaning. He reconstructs an original **Ab^hro-dītā*, **Ab^hor-dītā* with the meaning of ‘very shiny’.
- (8) van Beek (2022) reconstructs **Ap^hγdītā* to provide a plausible meaning for morning star. The first element is posited from an adverb **h₂eb^hγ* reflected in the poetic Greek adverb *ἄφαρ* ‘swiftly, forthwith’. He also states that the plausibility of the etymology depends on whether the second element **-dītā* could reflect a zero-grade form of the verb *δέατο* ‘appeared’. It would explain the dialectal variation of **Ap^hγdītā* > *Ἀφροδίτη*, assuming a retention of the name with Epic **γ*, followed by a regular vocalization to -po- after a labial consonant.

Last is the Etruscan theory. Etruscan is a non-Indo-European language located in the central Italian peninsula that went extinct during the last century BCE.

- (9) Hammerström (1921) related Aphrodite to Etruscan *(e)prθni* a name of a high Etruscan office, which is thought to be related to Greek *πρύτανις* ‘title of a leading official’ (Boedeker 1974: 7)³

The failure of this theory is that Greek *πρύτανις* does not have a prothetic vowel seen in Etruscan *(e)prθni* or in *Ἀφροδίτη*. Hammerström also derives the terms from unattested terms for ‘king’, while *Ἀφροδίτη* would mean ‘Queen’ or ‘Mistress’ (Boedeker 1974: 7). This has largely been dismissed as Etruscan has borrowed *Apru* (a shortened form of Aphrodite) from Greek (see Takács 2010: 43).

3. Albanian/Illyrian theory.

3.1. LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE. WORD-INITIAL ALBANIAN /f/. The Albanian theory positions that the origin of the name of Aphrodite is from Proto-Albanian and ultimately Illyrian. The reason that this is posited back to the Pre-Proto-Albanian group of the Illyrians (1st-2nd millennium BCE), is that the construction of the name must have originated from a group that encompassed the geographic region of where the Modern Albanian language is spoken, it must have historically been in close contact with the Ancient Greeks, and it must have had close historical and commercial relations with the Semitic group of the Phoenicians. This is dealt with more in §4.

Deriving the name from the Modern Albanian form of *afro dita* ‘come forth the dawn/day’, entails a compound theory made up of those posited by Przulski and Pisani. The first term is the imperative *afro* ‘come forth/near’ and the second is *dita* ‘day’.⁴ This connection of Aphrodite to Albanian *afro dita* ‘come forth the dawn/day’ has not been apparent to Indo-Europeanists due to

³ Beekes (2016: 1243) considers the Greek term a close resemblance to the Etruscan form and Greek *πρύτανις* as Pre-Greek or belonging to an Anatolian-Aegean substratum.

⁴ Modern Albanian *afër* ‘close, near’ (dialectal *afër*) in its imperative form *afro*.

the unestablished origin of the Modern Albanian voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/, which is critical to the etymology of *afro*. In the word-initial environment the present consensus is that Albanian /f/ is derived from Proto-Indo-European (PIE) *sp-.

- (10) a. Albanian *farë/fara* ‘seed’ < Proto-Albanian **sparā* < IE **sporā*, cognate with Greek *σπορά* ‘seed’ (see Orel 1998: 93).
- b. Schumacher and Matzinger (2013: 233) position the changes as PIE **sporáh₂* > *frühalbanisch* (Proto-Albanian) Nom. Sg. **p^harā* > Standard Albanian *farë*.

Schumacher and Matzinger (2013) position an intermediate phase (**sp* > **p^h* > *f*). An intermediate phase is expected considering the period of transition for a Modern Albanian /f/ < PIE **sp* is over five millennia, and that the earliest attested Indo-European speakers in Anatolia are dated around the 19th century BCE (Mallory 1989: 24). Yet, the origin of the Modern Albanian word-initial /f/ is not being contested, but rather /f/ in a medial environment.

3.2. ALBANIAN MEDIAL /-f-/. Historically, Albanian has lost word-initial unstressed vowels through apheresis (11-13), preserving only word-initial stressed vowels (14-21). In examples (11-21), Modern Albanian will be used unless there is dialectal variation, in which case, the dialects of Gheg, Tosk, or Malsia Madhe will be specified.

- (11) Proto-Albanian **apa* > Modern Albanian *pa* ‘without, before’⁵
- (12) Proto-Albanian **awántha* > Gheg *vâth* ~ Tosk *vëth* ‘earring’⁶
- (13) Proto-Albanian **ōlenā* ‘elbow’ > Gheg *llânë* ~ Tosk *llërë* ‘forearm’⁷

When /f/ occurs in the intervocalic environment, and after an initial stressed vowel that has been preserved, there is evidence of lenition from a voiceless labial plosive /p/. More specifically in examples (14-15), Albanian /f/ shows evidence of lenition in the intervocalic position and when preceded by an unrounded vowel (also note PIE **d* > Albanian /ð/ intervocalically).⁸

- (14) PIE **h₂epero* > Modern Albanian *afër* ‘close, near’, *afro* ‘come close, near’⁹
- (15) PIE **h₂epo-t-is* > Modern Albanian *afat* ‘period, time, deadline’

This process is also evident with the Proto-Albanian voiced labial stop **b*, which lenites to a voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ in Modern Albanian. This development occurs in the same intervocalic environment and when preceded by an unrounded vowel (16).

⁵ Orel (1998: 307). Cf. Sanskrit *ápa* ‘away, off’, Greek *ἀπό* ‘from’, Gothic *af* ‘from’, Messapian *apa*.

⁶ Witczak (2016) “The earliest Albanian loanwords in Greek”.

⁷ See Fortson (2010: 451).

⁸ Lenition of PIE **d* > Albanian *ð* also occurs in the intervocalic environment. Jokl (1963) indicates that Albanian *dha* /ða/ ‘s/he gave’ < PIE **deh₃* ‘give’ likely formed in this way due to the augment *e* that preceded it. Likewise, Meyer-Lübke (*Idg. Anz.* II 184) cited in Orel (1998: 84) states that the irregular /ð/ in *dhjetë* /ðjɛtə/ ‘ten’ < PIE **dekmt* as explainable in the numerals 11-19, where **d* is preceded by a vowel (e.g. *një-mbë-dhjetë* ‘eleven’ literally “one above ten”).

⁹ PIE **h₂e* > Albanian *a*.

(16) Proto-Albanian **abula* > Modern Albanian *avull* ‘steam, vapor’ (cf. Messapian *atabulus*)¹⁰

When *-p-* is in intervocalic position and preceded by a rounded vowel, then the lips are primed for plosive release, and it does not undergo lenition (17-20). The initial unrounded Latin vowel in (20) was reanalyzed as a rounded vowel, blocking lenition from taking place.

(17) PIE **upo* ‘under’ > Proto-Albanian **upela* > Modern Albanian *ubel* ‘well’ (n.) (Orel 1998: 482)

(18) Proto-Albanian **upera* > Modern Albanian *upri* ‘group of peasants helping another in his farm’ (cf. Greek ὕπερος ‘pestle’ in Orel 1998: 487)

(19) Tosk Albanian *opingë* ~ Malsia Madhe Albanian *opâk* ‘traditional Albanian shoe’¹¹

(20) Latin *episcopus* > Albanian *upeshk* ‘bishop’ (Orel 1998: 487)¹²

Lenition in Albanian is confined to the intervocalic environment. A Modern Albanian term that appears to violate this shows evidence of a different historical form in Proto-Albanian. In (21) below, there is a clear blocking effect from the Proto-Albanian round vowel **-u-*. The round vowel appears to have been present until after lenition took place.

(21) Proto-Albanian **euper* > Modern Albanian *epër* ‘above’ (Orel 1998: 89).

Also note Modern Albanian *pa* ‘without’ < Proto-Albanian **apa* (see 11). The initial /a/ in **apa* dropped before lenition took place. If the initial vowel did not drop, then the Modern Albanian form should have been **afa* rather than *pa*. The change of lenition in Albanian can be summarized by the following formulation.

$$(22) \left[\begin{array}{l} + \text{consonantal} \\ + \text{anterior} \\ - \text{coronal} \end{array} \right] > \left[\begin{array}{l} + \text{consonantal} \\ + \text{anterior} \\ - \text{coronal} \\ + \text{continuant} \end{array} \right] / \# \left[\begin{array}{l} + \text{syllabic} \\ - \text{round} \end{array} \right] \text{ — } [+ \text{syllabic}]$$

¹⁰ Romanian *abur* ‘fog’ is cited as an early loan from Proto-Albanian and La Piana (*Studi* 99) and Schmidt (*KZ LVII* 14) compare Albanian *avull* to Messapian *atabulus*. (see Orel 1998: 12-13)

¹¹ Orel (1998: 306-7) cites this as a loanword from Slavic (cf. Croatian/Serbian *opanak* ‘sandal, shoe’). He does not cite the variant of Malsia Madhe *opâk* with the nasal vowel (see in Shkurtaj 2016: 238), which indicates that this is definitely not a Slavic loan. Nasal vowels do not surface in Slavic loan words. Tosk Albanian’s loss of nasal vowels and rhotacism of *n* > *r* in the intervocalic environment is thought to have occurred just before or during initial contact with Slavic (see S. Demiraj 2006: 101-2). A Proto-Albanian **âpâk*, would regularly lose nasalization in Tosk, segmentalizing into **openg* or with i-mutation the Modern *opingë*. The traditional Albanian shoe that is considered an Illyro-Thracian element (Gjergji 2005: 248), is made of leather and constricts the foot. The Albanian term can be confidently posited as a compound derived from *hap* ‘to open’ with loss of initial *h-*, and *ang* from IE **h₂eng^h*- ‘to constrict’; *hap* ‘to open’ + *ang* ‘to constrict’ > **hapang/k* > Proto-Albanian **âpâk* > Malsia *opâk* (*ang* also derives Albanian *angësht* ‘tight’ and *ankth* ‘nightmare’). This suggests an Albanian borrowing into south Slavic, as the term only surfaces in Albanian, Romanian, and the south Slavic Balkan states. Interestingly, Bulgarian *opinka* reflects the Tosk form *opingë*, the dialect of historical contact, whereas Croatian/Serbian *opanak* reflects the Malsia Gheg form *opâk*. A blend of two roots has also been proposed for English ‘bring’ from Germanic **bringan-* < **bher-enek* < **bhr-enk-* (in the *American Heritage Dictionary* s.v.), which Joseph (2011: 75) states “. . . may offer a glimpse at the formal mechanisms at the disposal of Proto-Indo-European speakers.” Hittite also contains serial constructions that use finite forms of the verbs *pai-* ‘to go’ and *uwa* ‘to come’, which agree with another finite verb that follows it in the same clause (see Hoffner and Melchert 2008: 324-329 for a detailed discussion).

¹² The variant *ipeshk* with an initial *i-* is a modern change (*u* > *y* > *i*). See Orel (1998: 197) for Proto-Albanian **krûpâ* > Tosk *kripa* ‘salt’ (Old Gheg *krypa*). Albanian /y/ > /i/ is a common dialectal change (see Gjiniari 1989).

3.3. PREVIOUS ETYMOLOGIES OF AFËR/AFRO. The etymology of *afër* ‘close, near’ in the *Albanian Etymological Dictionary* of Orel is from a Proto-Albanian **apsera*, a contamination of *aps*, a variant of **apo* reflected by Greek *ἄψ* ‘backwards’, and **apero*, a derivative of **apo* (see Orel 1998: 1). B. Demiraj (1997: 70-71) in *Albanische Etymologien* considered quite a few former etymologies which have also remained unclear to the present day. Jokl in *Studien* (103f) preferred a form of **a-fër* with **fer* a comparable cognate to Gothic *fera* ‘side’. Çabej (SE II) also considered the form of **a-fër* < **η-(s)per-*. The significant problem with these etymologies is that the environment in which the voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ occurs is not considered. Evidence shows that Indo-European **p* yields Modern Albanian /f/ when in the intervocalic position and preceded by an unrounded vowel. This is also evident with Proto-Albanian **b* > Modern Albanian /v/ in the same environment. The linguistic environment is crucial for this analysis and the facts have been misinterpreted in the previous reconstructions.

To summarize, the etymology of Orel for a Proto-Albanian **apsera* as a contamination of *aps-*, appears to be a forced etymology, which attempts to account for a Modern Albanian /f/ in the medial environment from a proto **sp*. Many steps are taken to account for an irregular change when the conditioning of Proto-Albanian **p* to Modern Albanian /f/ in the intervocalic environment and when preceded by an unrounded vowel is observable. With this evidence it is possible to posit the Albanian imperative *afro* ‘come close, near’ with a *-f-* from a Proto-Albanian **apro* a reflex of PIE **h₂epero*. This same derivation is evident in the cognates of Sanskrit *ápara* ‘posterior, later’ and Gothic *afar* ‘after’, which also have similar meanings.

3.4. ALBANIAN DITA. The second element in the origin of the name Aphrodite, I position as Albanian *dita* ‘day’. In the *Albanian Etymological Dictionary*, *dita* is derived from a Proto-Albanian *dītā* a reflex of PIE **déh₂ītis*. IE cognates include Sanskrit *dīti* ‘brightness, splendor’ and Germanic **tīdiz* ‘time’ (see Vasmer *Alb. Wortforsch.* 10-11, 40 in Orel 1998: 66). Modern Albanian *dita* meaning ‘day’ may reflect a semantic extension from Proto-Albanian. This analysis also fits well with the proposed meaning of **dīti-* in Joseph (2013: 5-6), where Albanian *sot* ‘today’ is posited as a derivation of **k’jā-dīti-*. Here **āmer-* is reconstructed as the word for ‘day’ in an ancient period of Albanian, which was displaced by **dīti-*. Judging by the cognate in Sanskrit *dīti* meaning ‘brightness’, the term in Proto-Albanian likely also meant ‘brightness of the day’. This would have levelled to the meaning of ‘day’ in Modern Albanian, where the ‘brightness/light’ originates. With the two etymologies of the compound terms analyzed, the Proto-Albanian phrase **apro dītā* ‘come forth brightness of the day/dawn’ can be taken as the source of Modern Albanian *afro dita* ‘come forth the day/dawn’.

4. Albanian *afro dita*, an Illyrian celestial concept from Phoenicia. The previous etymology positions *Ἀφροδίτη* as a celestial figure. In the Greek epics, she shares many functions with Eos and the Indic Dawn-goddess Uṣas (Boedeker 1974: 14). One of her oldest epithets *Ἀφροδίτη Οὐρανία* (the heavenly) suggests a celestial element originating as a sky deity. The chronology is significant in determining whether the goddess is Greek in origin. In the Iliad *Διὸς θυγάτηρ* ‘daughter of Zeus’ is the epithet used to highlight Aphrodite’s relationship to Zeus. It reflects the process by which Aphrodite, who originated as a celestial deity in Indo-European entered the Olympian family (Boedeker 37). The epithet *φιλομμειδῆς* ‘laughter-loving’ is later used to refer to Aphrodite’s new erotic character. When the Homeric and Hesiodic epics were composed,

Aphrodite's celestial origins were in large part replaced by the love goddess (Boedeker 17). Importantly, Aphrodite's name is not attested in Mycenaean Greek. Boedeker (3) points out that this may indicate that the writers of Linear B did not know of Aphrodite during the Bronze Age but reminds us that knowledge of Mycenaean Greek is limited. For this reason, the present consensus is that Aphrodite may be derived from the Semitic name of the goddess Aštoret/ Aštarte (see Beekes 2016: 179). The association with the sky appears to signify the oldest tradition and hence its association with Phoenician Aštarte.

4.1. APRO DITA AND THE PLANET VENUS. The clearest connection of Aphrodite to Albanian *afro dita* and Proto-Albanian **apro-dīta*, is the ancient association of the name with the planet Venus. Beaulieu (2003: 21, 104) states that the Ancient Semitic goddess Innana/ Ištar¹³ was worshipped in antiquity as the planet Venus, the morning and evening star. The association of Aphrodite with Ištar is because they both refer to the planet. The goddess Venus is the Latin counterpart of Greek Aphrodite, and the planet can only be observed in the early morning or in the evening. Albanian with the name *afro-dita* 'come forth the day/dawn' is the only language whose meaning provides the exact time when Venus is visible in the sky. This evidence suggests that the name form of Aphrodite is of Albanian and Illyrian origin and that the meaning is an Indo-European construction of the form **h₂epro-déh₂itis*.

4.2. THE ILLYRIANS AND THEIR CONTACT WITH THE PHOENICIANS. The Semitic connection with Albanian comes from the historical relationship of the Illyrians (Pre-Proto-Albanian groups) and Phoenicians. This begins with the legend of the Illyrian hero Cadmus. Cadmus was the son of a Phoenician King Agenor and brother of Phoenix and Europa. The story goes that his sister was abducted by Zeus, which brought him to Boeotia, in Greece. After a mythological battle ensued, he married the goddess Harmonia and had five sons, one of who was named Illyrius, founder of the Illyrians (Buxhovi 2013: 57). Wilkes (1992: 98-99) tells the legend of how Cadmus and Harmonia founded the towns of *Bouthoe* (modern-day Budva, Montenegro) and *Lychnidis* (modern-day Ohrid, Macedonia). Cadmus was king of the Encheleae tribe¹⁴ leading them to victory in battle, who according to the *Periplus of Scylax*, were also located north of the Illyrian Taulanti tribe.¹⁵ They were present around the river Drilon (modern-day *Drin* in Shkodër, Albania). This is also the area of the Illyrian Labeates tribe, who retained their separate identity into the early Roman period (see Wilkes 1992: 99). Some authors also cite the name of the Albanian town Phoenice as a reminder of the presence of the Phoenicians.¹⁶ Strong archeological evidence for the presence of the Phoenicians amongst the Encheleae and the southern Illyrians is found in many bronze axes (Albano-Dalmation or Skadar type), which could only be related to

¹³ The names Innana, Ištar, Aštoret, and Aštarte are used synonymously to refer to the same deity.

¹⁴ *Enchelei* is thought to have meant 'eel' or 'snake'. The legend of the Illyrians as serpent worshippers is also evident in the etymology of the term. Haarman (110) and Çabej (St. I 382-382), as mentioned in Orel (1998: 298), cite Modern Albanian *ngjala* 'eel' < Illyrian **engella*. In Ancient Greek *ἔγγελος* also referred to an 'eel'. Beekes (2016: 372) cites possible cognates in Latin *anguilla* and Lithuanian *ungurys* because of their reference to an 'eel', yet no IE pre-form can be reconstructed. For this reason, it is considered Pre-Greek by Beekes, which matches the timeframe of an early Illyrian origin through the story of the Encheles and Cadmus.

¹⁵ *Scylaxis Caryandensis Periplus maris ad litora habitata Europae et Asiae et Libyae*, GGM vol. 1, 15-96 (see Wilkes 1992).

¹⁶ Stipčević (1977: 41) cites Włodzimierz Pajakowski in *Starożytny Epir i jego mieszkańcy* (Poznań 1970: 102).

axes from the near East (see Stipčević 1977: 41).¹⁷ Cadmus is also known for bringing the Phoenician alphabet to Greece. The Greeks in fact called Cadmus *Φύσει μὲν βάρβαρος, νόμοι δὲ Ἕλληνα* ‘by nature a barbarian, but by custom a Greek’, because he was considered a hero of foreign origin (Bonfante 1941: 14, 19). Illyrian pirates and tradesmen also maintained strong commercial relations between Phoenicia and the Aegean Sea.

4.3. PHOENICIAN AŠTARTE. The Phoenicians had a significant impact on the Illyrians that bled through to Modern Albanian. Just as Cadmus, Aphrodite is traditionally connected with the Phoenicians, and Aštarte is a Phoenician goddess (Boedeker 1974: 5). On a krater from 325 BCE, Aphrodite is a female figure holding a mirror under a solar disk, while Cadmus slays a dragon. There is great historical significance in the fact that the deity is considered to be of Phoenician origin, so that her absence from Mycenaean Greek may well be significant. For in this period, the Phoenicians would have brought the concept of Aštarte and her place as the celestial Venus to mainland Europe. Following the legends of the migration of Cadmus, there is clear indication that the Illyrians and Greeks were the first to adopt Phoenician cultural or linguistic elements.

For the Albanian/Illyrian theory in question, the origin of the term plays a significant role. The direction that the IE construction of Aphrodite spread was from Illyria south to mainland Greece and then to areas of Cyprus and Crete where her cult worship was later seen. It is unlikely that the worship of Aphrodite spread from Cyprus to the rest of Greece during the Iron Age (1000 BCE) as there was only minimal contact. After this period her worship was well established in archaic Greek. The goddess’s name is not attested in Cypriot before the 4th century BCE (Boedeker 2-3). This would explain why the term is written in Ancient Greek as *Ἀφροδίτη*, with the aspirated voiceless plosive <φ> /p^h/. The mainland Greek *Ἄφρο-* reflects Proto-Albanian/Illyrian **apro*, the area which it bordered. Whereas the variants of Cypriot *Ἀφοροδίτα*, and Cretan *Ἀφοροδίτα* reflect borrowings from mainland Greece, where metathesis may have occurred in the first element (*Ἄφρο* > *Ἄφορο*). Greek <φ> /p^h/ is simply a borrowing from Illyrian **p*, which excludes the importance of how to account for the reflex of Greek <φ> in this specific term.

5. Conclusion. In this paper, I have considered the question of the source of the goddess Aphrodite, arguing that the etymology of the name points to an Albanian/Illyrian origin. The necessary steps to interpreting the different sound changes were given, along with the many different etymological hypotheses. The historical and linguistic evidence presents that the Albanian phrase *afro dita* ‘come forth the day/dawn’ can be posited back to Proto-Albanian **apro dītā* ‘come forth brightness of the day/dawn’, originally from Proto-Indo-European **h₂epero-déh₂itis*. The concept of Aphrodite as a celestial deity was likely adapted by the Pre-Proto-Albanian group of the Illyrians who borrowed the original concept from the Phoenician celestial deity Aštarte. Witczak (1993) saw Aphrodite as an epithet of the planet Venus and the most important aspect of Aphrodite’s Near-Eastern origin. The view of van Beek (2022) is that Indo-European etymologies for divine names are only acceptable if there is a direct formal correspondence to a similar deity (from another IE language) or if the name refers to an

¹⁷ Stipčević (1977: 41) cites the work of Radu Vulpe in “Les haches de bronze de type albano-dalmate et le règne de Cadmos chez les Enchélees”, *Istros* (1934: 44-59).

important characteristic of that deity. Boedeker (1974: 6) states that if Aphrodite is Indo-European in origin, the evidence for her inherited character must be linguistic rather than archeological, as there is no inherited Indo-European artistic or iconographic tradition. It is only in Modern Albanian *afro dita* that the source of the Indo-European construction of the origin of Aphrodite is evident. Modern Albanian *afro dita* ‘come forth the day/dawn’ indicates this exact time when the planet Venus is visible in the sky. From the evidence, I conclude that the name of Aphrodite is an Indo-European construction derived from the ancient Illyrians that passed on to Modern Albanian.

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