

## Β Α Τ Ρ Α Χ Ο Σ

A large number of variants is known for this word. While we clearly cannot at present reach certainty, it is certain that we can reach greater clarity than the standard handbooks offer. The facts are well known<sup>1</sup>, and need only be recalled here in summary.

Attested are: Att.—Ion. βάτραχος, Ion. βάθρακος (generally agreed to show metathesis of aspiration), Ion. βότραχος, βρόταχος; βράταχος (notable as a personal name at Halicarnassus); Cypr. βρούχετος (generally agreed to be contaminated by βρυχάομαι); βύρθακος; βλίταχος (correctly viewed by Chantraine as a compromise with such other forms as βλίχανος, which must originally mean simply 'slimy' vel sim.); and the Hesychian gloss βρύτιχοι· βάτραχοι μικροὶ ἔχοντες οὐράς. The Bova *brúthako* etc. can readily be classed with the last and with βύρθακος. It has been supposed that βρύτιχοι has undergone contamination with βρώω, but in view of the other forms that is not at all evident. Certainly Romanian *broatec* and Albanian *bretk* must be borrowed from βρόταχος; these northerly attestations are important in supporting the variant set with first syllable *rho*, and are too frequently overlooked in the standard accounts.

Serious past accounts are of two sorts. J. B. Hofmann, *Etym. Wb.* 1950, p. 34, suggests summarily „wenn aus \*βράθ(ρ)αχος, viell. ahd. *kreta*, *krota* Kröte“. The trouble with this reconstruction is that it is so rich as to allow for any possibility; it has simply and mechanically incorporated all features at all points. On the other hand, Chantraine has the *rho* original in the second syllable, and the rare variants as showing anticipation; he concludes (p. 170) „La forme originelle doit être βάτραχος. This smacks of voting flatly for the majority. All the accounts see a large rôle for tabu and folk etymology; without contesting the real and valid possibility of such facts, particularly in such a word, it must always be remembered that such an argument is an easy refuge from ignorance or perplexity.

If we are to write the variant vocalisms observed in the first syllable there is only one systematic way, and that in two phases.

<sup>1</sup> Liddell and Scott s. v. βάτραχος, βρύτιχοι; Hj. Frisk *GEW* s. v. βάτραχος; P. Chantraine *DELG* 169 (much the richest, most precise, and most judicious reference); I. Fischer, *Revue roumaine de linguistique* 19. 1974, 515—16.

First we must segregate in *o/a* from those those in apparent [u]. Then we must recognize that the *o/a* alternation can be perceived in an orderly manner only in the immediate presence of *ρ*.

This means that βράταχος and βρόταχος should be variant developments, on known lines, of \*βγταχος; then βάτραχος and βότραχος should reflect metathesis of the *rho*.

Accepting the conflation cited above for βρούχετος and βλίταχος, we then have as relatively original βύρθακος and βύρτιχοι. Two views are now possible: Either these represent deviant developments of a relative to \*βγταχος, or else they are simply different forms developed from \*burthVko- ~ \*brutVkho-. I am inclined to favor the latter view, particularly since this looks like a borrowing ultimately from some unknown source.

I suggest therefore that the earliest reachable state for our etymon embraces two phonetic shapes, \*bγtakhos and \*bγtVko- (with aspiration impossible to assign uniquely).

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