

185. CREMOSI

carnosi L
charmexini V
chremexi, cremexi VA
cremesi VL

cremesina R
cremosi F, L
ceriosi P

crimisi Z
quermesis FA, FB
vermaulz FB

Polo uses this word only once, and as the name of a costly textile woven in Bagdad. It is of course the same word as the French *cramoisi* (> Engl. *cramoisy*) and the Old French *cramosin* (> Engl. *crimosin* > *crimson*), which, like the French *carmin* (> Engl. *carmine*), go back to an Arabic *qirmizī* (< *qirmiziyun*), an adjectival form of *qirmiz*, «kermes». The *-in* of *carmin* is not easy to explain, but I do not believe that it is due to a contamination of *minium*, as is still stated by LOKOTSCH, No. 1219.

Although it has become customary in French to speak of the «kermes» as «cochenille», cochineal, this is an American insect, *Coccus cacti*, while the kermes is a kindred species, *Coccus ilicis*, living on an oak, *Quercus coccifera*, and during the Middle Ages was found in many parts of the Mediterranean area. Another insect, the *Porphyrophora Hamelii*, was abundant in Armenia and went also by the name of *qirmiz*. Both were used for dyeing purposes, and the Armenian one was exported even to India (cf. HEYD, II, 607-609; also LECLERC, *Traité des simples*, in *Not. et Extr.*, XXVI, I, 74-75).

The history of the word *qirmiz* has been attempted by various scholars, particularly by KARABAČEK (in *Mitteil. d. K. K. Oesterr. Mus. f. Kunst u. Industrie*, 1880-1881, VIII, 98-103), BERNEKER (*Slav. Etym. Wörterbuch*, 490-491), LOKOTSCH (No. 1219) and MARKWART (in *Ungar. Jahrbücher*, IX [1929], 92-94). Yet it still offers many obscure points for elucidation.

All agree that *qirmiz* is not a true Semitic word, and that it must be traced ultimately to the Indo-European word for «worm», Skr. *kṛmi-*, Pers. *kirm*, old Slav *č'rm'*; most authors derive *qirmiz* more precisely, either from Skr. *kṛmija*, lit. «born of a worm», or from its feminine form *kṛmijā*, taken as a noun. But *kṛmija* is an adjectival formation, and *kṛmijā*, as the name of the kermes (? or of the lac insect, *Coccus lacca*), is an unattested form known only from lexicographers. Moreover, one would expect the Indian term to have reached the Arabs through the Persians, and there is no reason why a Skr. *k-* should have given *q-* in Middle Persian. Finally, there is an Iranian form connected with, but not dependent on, *qirmiz*, and its final is quite different: Middle Persian *kalmīr*, (< **karmīr*), > Hebr. *karmīl*, Arm. *karmir*; Sogd. *karm'ir*; all meaning «red». This form does not seem to be an Iranian development, as was believed by MARKWART, but goes back rather to the Skr. *kṛmila*, as suggested by KARABAČEK. The *Mahāvvyutpatti* (No. 9173) registers *kṛmilikā* as the name of a red textile. KARABAČEK thought that the French *carmin* was derived from *karmīr*, which for reasons of geography and chronology is difficult to believe. It was also KARABAČEK's idea that the Sanskrit term must have referred originally not to kermes, *Coccus ilicis*, but to the lac insect, *Coccus lacca*; and this is quite plausible.