Greek, Tamil, Hebrew, Latin and Sanskrit: ναῦς (naûs),
Navis and Navay Related with Navy and Ship in
Classical Literatures

Ποιημές, Πεντηκοντάρων, Σκάφη, Πλοίον, and ναῦς are the words used to
denote ship in ancient Greek literatures. Among these the word ‘ναῦς’ has
different forms like ναὸς, ναῶν, νέας, ναῦς, νήμων and νήμον etc.
Among these the word form ‘ναῦς’ become standardized. This word is also
seen in many ship related words like ναῦδετ (Ship’s cable), ναυπηγίαν (Ship
building place), ναῦλοχοι (Harbour), ναϊτας (Mariners), ναυβιάτης (Sailors),
‘ναυκλήρω’ (Captain), ‘ναυκληρίας’ (Expedition) and ναυβάτας (Army)
nαυσίκλυτοι (Men famed for their ships) and ναυσίπομπον (breeze that
guides the ships). It shows the dominance of this word which is used to
represent a particular ship over the other words that are used to denote
other types of ships. Resemblance of this word is also seen in the classical
literatures such as Latin, Tamil, Sanskrit and Hebrew. Among these the
classical literatures of Tamil language explains the root meaning of ‘Navay’
as metaphorically ‘the ship is like a tongue in the mouth’. Further, the
ancient literary sources of both Greek and Tamil ensures that the Greek
ships voyaged up to Tamil Nadu and so the word ναῦς used to represent ship
has dominance over all the other words that are related to ship.

Keywords: Greek, Latin, Navay, Navy, Sanskrit, Tamil

Introduction

Ship is a mark of development. It is a mark of scientific and sea trade
development. Ancient Literature provides information on the ancient
knowledge and life of ancient societies. There are different levels of
knowledge about any particular object. For example everybody knows about a
ship. The knowledge of a sailor differs from the knowledge of a lay man. The
knowledge of a naval architect differs from the knowledge of a sailor. Also, the
knowledge of an experienced sailor is more than the knowledge of a new
sailor. So, literature is a tool that highlights the level of knowledge acquired in
a particular field. In this way, ancient advancement of the Greeks on ships need
to be studied.

Scientific Approach – Ship in Greek Literature

Walking on the water is a dream of mankind. In the same way, floating on
water, flying in air were the dreams of mankind. Today, invention of aviation
and navigation has fulfilled this dream. The dream of flying in the air was
fulfilled only in later times. The ship came into existence in Greece from the
pre-historic era. It is difficult to pinpoint the inventor of the ship and so the
justification given by people of different countries appears very much true
from their perspective. The description available in the ancient literary sources of Greek, ensures the scientific way of building of a ship.

Wide as a man well-skilled in carpentry marks out the curve of the hull of a freight-ship, (250) broad of beam, even so wide did Odysseus make his raft. And he set up the deck-beams, bolting them to the close-set ribs, and laboured on; and he finished the raft with long gunwales. In it he set a mast and a yard-arm, fitted to it, (255) and furthermore made him a steering-oar, wherewith to steer. Then he fenced in the whole from stem to stern with willow withes to be a defence against the wave, and strewed much brush thereon.1 Meanwhile Calypso, the beautiful goddess, brought him cloth to make him a sail, and he fashioned that too with skill. (260) And he made fast in the raft braces and half-yards and sheets, and then with levers forced it down into the bright sea.

(Murray 1919)

Here the making of sailing ship is described in the same manner as that of present day sailing ship. This ensures the strong practical knowledge of the ancient Greeks in the field of ship building which is not an easy task. The building of a ship varies according to the purpose it is made. Hence the building of a war ship is different from that of a merchant ship or a passenger ship. To understand the development of the Greeks in the various types of ship building, there is a need to view the several names that are used for ships in ancient Greek language.

Names to Denote Ship

There are many words used to denote the ship in ancient Greek literatures. 

Πορθμίς
Πορθμίς is the word used to denote a ship.
Further in this reference the ship is mentioned as belonging to Κρησία – Cretan.

πλοῖον is a another word used to denote a ship.

Here this word used for ship is related to places such as Harpagus and Thrace.

Πεντηκοντέρων is another word used to denote a ship.

Here the reason for this name is related with the number of oars it has.

Σκάφει is an another word used to denote a ship.

Already it is known that the Greek word, Πεντηκοντέρων has been derived from the number of oars it has, that is fifty. Further, the word Σκάφει has been derived from the word used for digging, that is the ship having a specific shape to meet this purpose. Thus Πορθμίς, πλοῖον, Πεντηκοντέρων and Σκάφει are the words used to denote the ships in ancient Greek literatures as shown in the Figure 1.
Among the words present in the figure 1 for ship, the word ν*** has to be researched.

It is a form where the word starts with the letter ‘ν’ and the following letters vary. Thus there are many words to denote a ship.

νάς

νάς is another word used to denote a ship in ancient Greek literature.

ναῦν and ναῦς

ναῦν is the word used to denote ship in ancient Greek literature.

κάν τῶδε — δεινός γὰρ κλάδοιν ὀδείλειν And now an immense swelling
ναῦν
1380πρὸς γῆν, φοβός δ᾽ ἦν παρθένῳ [1380]
tέγξαι πόδα —
Eur. I. T.

Here this word is in singular form. Look at the word highlighted below and compare it with above mentioned word. If the letter ‘ς’ is used instead of ‘ν’ in the suffix, then it becomes plural.

Ἄσθιδας δ᾽ ἄγον
ἐξήκοντα ναῦς ὁ Θησέως
παῖς ἑξῆς ἐναυλόχει, θεᾶν
250. Παλλάδ᾽ ἐν μονόχοις ἔχον πτερο-τοίσιν ἀριμασαν θεῖον,
eὐδημὸν γε φᾶσα ναυβάταις.
(Murray 1913)

Theseus’ son was stationed at the head of sixty ships from Attica, having the goddess [250] Pallas set in a winged chariot drawn by steeds with solid hoof, a lucky sight for mariners.

(Homer 1913)

Hence the word form ναῦς is used to denote the ship in plural form. This word structure ensures the singular form has the letter ‘ν’ and plural form has the letter ‘ς’ in its suffixes.
The word ναόν is the another form seen to be used in ancient Greek literatures used to denote ship.


The Hellenes would not remain in place, but, springing upon the rowing benches of their ships, would seek, some here, some there...
(Smyth 1926)

Also, the word ναόν is used to denote ship in ancient Greek literature.

Chorus

May Zeus who guards suppliants look graciously upon our company, which boarded a ship and put to sea from the outlets of the fine sand of the Nile.
(Smyth 1926)

Also, the word νέας is the another form seen in ancient Greek literature to denote ship.

153. ἥδθεν δ' οἱ μὲν νέας ἐλκόμεν εἰς ἀλὰ διὰν κτήματα τ' ἐντιθέμεσθα βαθυζώνους τε γυναῖκας. Ody. Bk. 3.

but in the morning some of us launched our ships upon the bright sea, and put on board our goods and the low-girdled women.
(Murray 1919)

The word νεώς is the another form seen in ancient Greek literature to denote ship.

Helen

You must direct everything; only let there be winds in our sails to guide us, and a speedy ship.
(Coleridge 1938)

The word νεῶν is yet another word to denote ship.

335δυστ' ἀξίωσαν Περσικὸ στρατεύματι μάχην συνάψας ναόσιν ἐμβολαίς; Aesch. Pers.

how great was the number of the Greek ships which gave them confidence enough to go into battle with their armed prows against the Persian army?
(Smyth 1926)
νῆς

νῆς is the another word which is used to denote ship.

Χορός
πάτερ, φοβοῦμαι, νῆς ὡς ἀκόπτεροι
735 ἤκουσι: μῆκος δ᾽ οὐδὲν ἐν μέσῳ
χρόνου.

Chorus
Father, I am afraid. With what swift
wings the ships [735] approach! There
is not much time left.
(Smyth 1926)

νηών

νηών is the word which is used to denote ship.

Ἀσκός
Ἀιάς ἐπὶ πολλὰ θοῶν ἴκραν,
νηών
φοίτα μακρὰ βιβάς, φωνὴ δὲ οἱ αἰθέρ᾽ ἰκανὲν.
Hom. II. Bk.15.

[685] even so Aias kept ranging with
long strides over the many decks of the
swift ships, and his voice went up to
heaven,
(Murray 1924)

νηῳς

νηῳς is the word which is used to denote ship which is in plural form.

381 ἀλλ᾽ ἔπε, δερφ᾽ ἐπὶ νηῳς συνώμεθα
ποντοπόροισιν ἀμφὶ γάμῳ, ἐπὶ οὗ τοῖς ἐδόνωται κακοὶ εἶμεν.
Hom. II. Bk.13.

Nay, follow with us, that at the
seafaring ships we may make
agreement about the marriage,
for thou mayest be sure we deal
not hardly in exacting gifts of
wooing.”
(Murray 1924)

νῆςσιν

νῆςσιν is the another word which is used to denote ship in plural form.

346. ἀλλ᾽ Ὅδυσσεῖ σὺν σοὶ τε καὶ ἄλλοισιν βασιλεύσι
φραζεῖσθω νῆςσιν ἀλέξεται δὴ ὁ πιρ.
Hom. II. Bk. 9.

Nay, Odysseus, together with thee
and the other princes let him take
thought to ward from the ships
consuming fire.
(Murray 1924)

νέςσι

The word νέςσι is yet another form which is used to denote ship in plural
form.
46. ἦ τοιόσοδε ἐὼν ἐν ποντοπόροισιν νέασσιν πόντον ἐπιπλώσας, ἑτέρους ἐρήμας ἀγείρας, μιχθεὶς ἀλλοδαποῖς γυναῖς’ εὑετείς ἀνήγες ἐξ ἀπίθην γαῖης νυν ἀνδρῶν αἰχμητάνων 50

Hom. II. Bk. 3.

Was it in such strength as this that thou didst sail over the main in thy seafaring ships, when thou hadst gathered thy trusty comrades, and, coming to an alien folk, didst bring back a comely woman from a distant land, even a daughter of warriors who wield the spear, [50] (Murray 1924)

1 νῆσον
2 One more word νέασσι is used to denote ship in plural form.
3 ἐκπλους φιλάσσειν καὶ πόρους ἀλιρρόθους, ἄλλας δὲ κύκλῳ νῆσον Αἰαντος πέριζε: Aesch. Pers.

4 Here, a question arises whether these variant forms denote the same ship or different ships. It is hard to fully understand the mind of the ancient authors who have used these different variant words. With the help of Grammar it is tried to relate some of these variant words as shown in the Figure 2.

5 Figure 2. Grammatical Relations within the 'n***' word forms

6 ναὸν – Singular
ναοῖ (ναοῦ) - Plural

7 ναος (ναοῦ) – Ionic form of ναοῖ (ναοῦ)
ναποσ (ναποσ) – Doric form of ναοῖ (ναοῦ)

8 ναῦον (ναύον) – Plural form of ναοῖ (ναοῦ)
ναῦας (ναύας) - Ionic form, singular of ναοῦ (ναοῦ)
ναῦος (ναοῦ) – Singular of ναοῖ (ναοῦ), singular neuter of νῆσον (νήσου)
νῆσος (νήσου), νῆσος (νήσου) – Doric - connected with νῆσος (νήσου)
These explanations do not fully help in the understanding of these variant words. So the present day translators faces difficulty when translating these variant words.

**Ambiguity in Translation**

There are ambiguity seen in the translation of these words among different authors and by the same author.

νεώς - young

The standard lexicographical work of Liddell–Scott–Jones or LSJ mentioned ‘νεώς’ as to represent young, youthful and so on and ‘νεός’ means adjective singular masculine noun or adjective singular feminine noun in attic (Liddell 1940). And there is no meaning in this word to be related with ship. But the word ‘νεός’ has the meaning of ship in the translation of Iliad.

693. ὃς Ἐκτώρ ἠποτε νεὼς even so Hector made for a dark-prowed kypnophrópioν ἀντίος ἄξιας:

(Murray 1924)

Hom. II. Bk.15.

νεῶς – Boat, Ship

The Greek play writer Aeschylus used the words ‘ναῦς, νεῶς and νεόν’ in his play ‘Persians’. The reasons for the author using different words to denote ship is not detectable. In one place the word νεῶς is translated as boat.

καὶ μὴν παρ’ ἡμῶν Περσιδὸς γλῶσσης ῥόθος ύπνητιαζε, κοῦκέτ ἂν μέλλειν ἀκμή,

εὐθὺς δὲ ναῦς ἐν νη χαλκήρη στόλον ἔπαισεν ἢρξε δὲ ἐμβολῆς Ἑλληνική

εἰς πάντα ναῦς, κάποιθραίει πάντα

Φοινικῆς νεῶς κόρυμβ’, ἐπ’ ἄλλην δ’ ἄλλας ἠθύμεν ἄρον.

τὰ πρῶτα μὲν νων ἱσήμα Περσικοῦ στρατοῦ ἀντέχειν ὃς δὲ πλῆθος ἐν στενῷ νεόν

ἡθροίστ᾽ ἄρωγή δ’ οὕτως ἄλληλοις παρὲν,


Then from our side arose in response the mingled clamor of Persian speech, and straightaway the ships dashed together their bronze prows. It was a ship of Hellas that began the charge and chopped off in its entirety the curved stern of a Phoenician boat. Each captain drove his ship straight against some other ship. At first the stream of the Persian army held its own. When, however, the mass of our ships had been crowded in the narrows, and none could render another aid, [415]

(Smyth 1926)

Here the word ‘νεῶς’ is translated as ‘boat’ but in another place the same word is translated as ship.

305. πιθήμα κυδόνον ἐκ νεῶς ἀφήλατο: with a nimble bound from his ship.

Aesch. Pers.

(Smyth 1926)
Also, in the same play the same word ‘νηυσί’ is translated by the same
translator as ‘ship’ whereas in some other places it is translated as ‘temple’.

νηυσί

[810] restrained by no religious awe, they ravaged the images of the gods
and set fire to their temples.

(Smyth 1926)

This creates confusion in understanding the meaning of this word.

νηυσί - Seafaring Ships/ Swiftships/ Ships

The word νηυσί is translated as seafaring ships.

Nay, follow with us, that at the seafaring ships we may make
agreement about the marriage, for thou mayest be sure we deal
not hardly in exacting gifts of wooing.”

(Murray 1924)

In the same text, a translator translates this word differently in different places.

but he staying behind, even beside his
swiftships, would take and apportion
some small part, but keep the most.

(Murray 1924)

Here νηυσί is translated as swiftships but when other word forms occur
with this word, it is seen to be translated without adjective.

[685] even so Aias kept ranging with
long strides over the many decks of the
swift ships, and his voice went up to
heaven, as ever with terrible cries he
called to the Danaans to defend their
ships and huts.

(Murray 1924)

Here νηυσί is translated as swift ships and νηυσι is translated as ships. So
there arises a confusion in the meaning of the word νηυσι as whether it is a
ship or swift ship or seafaring ship. Here linguistics gives light among these
variant forms, ambiguity in singular – plural suffix and differentiation of
meaning.
According to the linguistic theory, when a word is borrowed from languages belonging to different families then it gives rise to variant forms in the borrowed language (Cannon 1999). In ancient Greek language this can be seen in the word form of ‘n***’ which is related with ship. In this word form except the first letter all the other letters have changed according to the linguistic theory on Loan words. Vowel alternations or vowel metathesis between ‘α’ and ‘ε’, vowel lengthening or vowel shortening between ‘ε’ and ‘ῆ’, ‘ò’ and ‘φ’, prothesis of ‘σ’ and reduplication between ‘έε’ and ‘σσ’ (Crystal 2003) are shown in Figure 3.

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1The pronunciation of words where the process of assimilation is phonetically incomplete will often vary, as in [ˌfoəi] or [ˌfwaɪ] for foyer and [ˌbuːlvaː] [ˌbuːˈlɪvə] [ˌbuːˈlɪvə], [ˌbuːˈlɪvə]d for boulevard
2Vowel alternations is a linguistic term where two vowels come together creating various types of coalescence by assimilating or deleting other vowels.
3Metathesis – is the transposition of sounds or syllables in a word or of words in a sentence like foliage > foliage, anemone > anenome, cavalry > calvary.
Vowel shift – is a sound change in a pronunciation of the vowel sounds Softened pronunciation of consonants
4Vowel lengthening is a linguistic term where a short vowel become long.
5Vowel shortening is a linguistic term where a long vowel become short vowel.
6Prothesis is the insertion of an extra sound or sounds in a word. This can be seen in some lexical items of borrowed language.
7Reduplication is a process of repetition whereby the form of a prefix / suffix reflects certain phonological characteristics of the root.
So according to the linguistic theory on loan words, the Greek word form 'να***' related with ship are not denoting various types of ships instead it is seen that at times the translators himself confuses one by using various form of words for a ship. Among these variants one word can be standardized. In linguistics it is called as standardization of spelling and standard orthography (Gove 1961).  

**Standardization of Spelling - ναος**

There are many word forms seen to be related with 'να***'. Among these the form 'ναος' has dominance over other forms in the coinage of words related to ship. In this way, let us observe the word used to name of the cable of a ship.

810. πόλον, Σιμόεντι δ’ ἐπ’ εὐρεὶτα πλάταν ἐσθάσει ποντοπόρον καὶ ναοδέτ’ ἀνήσατο προμνᾶν καὶ χερός εὐστοχίαν ἐξέβαλε ναόν, Ἀσομέδόντι φόνον: κανόνων δὲ τυκίσματα Φαιβίου.  
Eur. Tro.

Here the ship's cable is denoted with the word ναοδέτ. Thus the word form 'ναος' has dominance over other variants of 'να***'. This is also seen in situations of ship building.

460 ναυπηγίαν δ’ ὕσει τις ἀρμόζον ἁνήρ ὀυτω κυκλώσω δαλόν ἐν φασσοφόρῳ Κύκλωφος ὄχει καὶ συναυανό κόρας.  
Eur. Cycl.

Here the place of building a ship is called as 'ναυπηγίαν'. Also the word ναος has been used. This is the reason for the standardization of ναος among 'να***' word forms. More than that the word ναυπηγίαν is used not only in places where a special type of ship represented by the word ναος was build, instead it is seen to be used in all types of ship building. So the word ναος is not only standardized among the 'να***' form words, but also has secured dominance over the other words that are used to denote other type of ships in ancient Greek. It is also seen to denote harbour in some place.

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8Standardization of spelling is concerned with unifying underlying linguistic diversity in order to make the standard language. Standard orthography is the chosen spelling of a word out of the competing variants.
Harbour – ναύλοχοι

845 messegʰyos Ἰθάκης τε Σάμιοι τε παπαλάβεσσις. Αστερίς, οὐ μεγάλη: λιμένες δ' ἐνι
ναύλοχοι αὐτῇ ἀμφίδυμι: τῇ τὸν γε μένον λοχόωντες άχηιοί.

Od. Bk.4. (845) midway between Ithaca and rugged Samos, Asteris, of no great size, but
therein is a harbor where ships may lie, with an entrance on either side. There it
was that the Achaeans tarried, lying in wait for Telemachus.

This reference shows that harbours are denoted as ναύλοχοι using the word
‘ναῦς’. Thus the harbour which is a resting place for all types of ships is
denoted only with the word ‘ναῦς’. This shows the dominance of this word
over other words used to denote different type of ships.

λιπών δὲ λίμνην Δήλιαν τε χοιράδα, (845) Leaving the lake and ridge of Delos, he
κέλσας ἐπ' ἀκτάς ναυπόρους τὰς
Παλλάδος.

Aesch. Eum. Here as that of the word ναύλοχοι used to represent harbour, the ship-
frequented shores are also called as ναυπόρους with the word ‘ναῦς’.

In the same way the officials related with ship travel are also named using this
word ναῦ.

κυάνεον δ' ὀμματισὶ λεύσσων

With eyes flashing with the dark glare of
φονίου δέργμα δράκοντος,

a deadly dragon, attended by soldiers and
πολύναυτας.

mariners in great numbers, and speeding

Σύριον θ' ἄρμα διώκων,

his Syrian chariot
(Smyth 1926)

Aesch. Pers. Here the mariners are denoted by the word πολυναύτας which has the root
ναῦ. Even the particular officials are also named with this root word.

 Sailor

375. δεῖπνον τ' ἐπορσύνοντο, ναυβάτης τ' (375) prepared their evening meal, while
each sailor looped his oar about its thole-

τροπότο κόπτην σκαλμὸν ἀμφ' εὐθέρτων.

pin so that it fitted well. (Smyth 1926)

Aesch. Pers.

Here the sailors are denoted with the word ‘ναυβάτης’. In the same way,
the head of sailors are also named with ‘ναῦς’.

12
Captain, Commander

My children, you must be prudent. A prudent captain of your voyage was your reliable old father here with whom you came. (Smyth 1926)

Here the captain is denoted as ‘ναυκλήρῳ’. These usages show the dominance of the word ναύ in naming the officials. It is also seen to be reflected in the word used for wind energy.

Knowledge of Wind Energy

Before the invention of electric motors the movement of the ships were made in two ways as pulling and sailing. Long distance voyage by hand pulling, using oars is an exhausted work but the knowledge of wind or breeze make it easy.

Here the breeze that guides the ships is called as ναυσίπομπον with the word ναύς.

Expedition

Since you so exaggerate your kindness to me, I for my part think that Aphrodite alone of gods and mortals was the savior of my expedition. (Kovacs 1994)

Here expedition is denoted by the word ‘ναυκληρίας’ with the word ‘ναύ’. Also it is seen in words used for naval armies.

Shipborn Army

When the shipborn army sped forth for Ilium (Smyth 1926)
Army of Fleets

405 ναυβάτας θ’ ὀπλισμοὺς,
ἀγουσά τ’ ἀντίφερον Ἰλίῳ φθορὰν
βέβαιες ῥίμφα διὰ
πυλῶν ἀτλήτα τιλᾶσα: πολλὰ δ’ ἐστενον
τὸδ’ ἐνέποντες δόμων προφήται:

Aesch. Ag. 405

But she, bequeathing to her people the clang of shield and spear and army of fleets, and bringing to Ilium destruction in place of dowry, with light step she passed through the gates—daring a deed undareable.
(Smyth 1926)

Fleet

160 κινεῖται κωπήρης χείρ;
οἷ ἔγω, τί θέλουσ ἢ ποῦ μ’ ἡδη

Eur. Tro.

First Semi-Chorus

[160] The rower’s hand is busy?
Ah, woe is me! what is their intent? Will they really carry me away from my country in their fleet? (Coleridge 1891)

These references ensures the dominance of the word ναῦς on not only in war ships, but also for passenger ships.

Here the word ναυκληρίαν refers the passenger ship by using the word ναῦς. In the same way when the persons are portrayed for their ships the word ναῦς is seen to have occurred.

Phaeacians

(40) And as he went through the city in the midst of them, the Phaeacians, famed for their ships, took no heed of him, for fair-tressed Athena, the dread goddess, would not suffer it, but shed about him a wondrous mist, for her heart was kind toward him.

In this reference the Phaeacians are portrayed for their ship as ναυσικλυτοι which has the word ναῦς.
In this reference when the Phoenicians are portrayed for their ship the word ναῦς is found to be used.

Daughter of Dymas

20 ἡ δὲ ἀνέμου ὡς πνοὴ ἐπέσσυτο δέμνια κούρης, στὴ δὲ ἄρ’ ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς, καὶ μιν πρὸς μόθον ἐσπένεν, εἰδομένη κούρη ναυσικήτοιο Δύμαντος, ἢ οἱ ὑμνηκικὴν μὲν ἔπνεε, κεχάριστο δὲ θυμό. Od. Bk. 6.

In this reference when the daughter of Dymas is portrayed for their ship with the word ναῦς.

Thus in ship's cable - ναῦδετ, sailor - ναυβάτης, captain, commander - ναυκήρω, army of ships - ναυβάτας, harbour – ναυλόχοι and shipbuilding – ναυπηγίαν and in all these occurrences the form ‘ναῦς’ has dominance over the other words. This shows the standardization (Richard 1985) of the word ‘ναῦς’. As mentioned earlier it is not to be meant that the ropes, the harbours and the sailors belong only to ναῦς type of ship, but also to any type of ships like Πορθμίς, πλοῖον, Πεντηκοντέρον and Σκάφει, even though they are mentioned only with the word ‘ναῦς’. It shows that the dominance (Clark 1987) of this word ναῦς is not only over the word forms of ‘η***’, but also to the other words which denote ship in ancient Greek language as shown in Figure 4.

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9 Standardization as: “the process of making some aspects of language usage conform to a standard variety.
10 Pre-emption by synonymy: If a potential innovative word-form would be precisely synonymous with a well-established word, the innovative word is pre-empted by the well-established word, and is therefore considered unacceptable.
Figure 4. Dominant usage of ‘ναῦς’

Here the dotted line denotes the possibility of the other types of ships like Πορθμίς, πλοῖον, Πεντηκοντέρων, Σκάφει also may be denoted in the name of ‘ναῦς’. Thus the word ‘ναῦς’ has a broadened and dominant usage in the Greek language related with ship. Further, the reason for this domination also needs to be investigated. This dominance of the word ‘ναῦς’ is not only seen within Greeks, but is also seen to be extended beyond Greeks.

‘ναῦς’ in Other Languages

There are some words which has resemblance with the Greek word ‘ναῦς’ that can be seen in the classical literatures of other languages. Here it is noted that the foreign contact made through sea is found to be very hard task when compared with land. Without the development in the marine technology, it is not possible to maintain contact through sea. So with the word ναῦς, it is necessary to search the development of the society in the field of sea voyage.

Hebrew

Biblical Hebrew mentions many words for ship. Strong Hebrew No. 591. oniyyah אֱנִיָּה is the word used many times in Hebrew Bible to denote ship.

Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea and he shall be for an haven of ships ( אֳנִיּוֹת 'o-nî-yô-wt) and his border shall be unto Zidon
Genesis 49:13 Hebrew Study Bible, KJV with Strong's
(James 2017)
Apart from this there are some other words used sparingly and so that word may be derived from Hebrew No. 6716. tsiy צִי ,
And ships ( צים 'o-ṣîm) shall come from the coast of Chittim and shall afflict Asshur and shall afflict Eber and he also shall perish for ever
Numbers 24:24 Hebrew Study Bible, KJV with Strong's
These words do not have any resemblances with the Greek word ‘ναῦς’, except one word which is the strong Hebrew No. 5600 sephinah סְפִינָּה.

Then the mariners were afraid and cried every man unto his god and cast forth the wares that were in the ship (-navigation- bā’-o-nī-yāh) into the sea to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship (-navigation- has-sō-bi-nāh) and he lay and was fast asleep.

Jonah 1:5 Hebrew Study Bible, KJV with Strong's

In this the Hebrew ‘นāh’ has resemblance with the Greek word ‘ναῦς’ which is related with ship. This is the only one place of its occurrence in the Hebrew Bible. But there are more occurrences in Greek. This ensures that this word is borrowed from the Greeks by the Hebrews.

Latin

Latin literature began in 240 BC with the relationship of the Greeks. So it is normal that the Greek words enter in the classical literature of Latin language. Marcus Tullius Cicero who belonged to 106 BC - 43 BC used the word ‘navis’ to denote ship (Miller 1913).

“Si tabulam de naufragio stultus arripuerit, extorquebitne earn sapiens, si potuerit?" Negat, quia sit in iurium.

“Quid? dominus navis cripietne suum?” “No,” says Hecaton; “for that would be unjust.”

“Minime, non plus quam navigantem in alto eicere de navi velit, quia sua sit. Quoad enim perventum est eo, quo sumpta navis est, non domini est navis, sed navigantium.”

Cic. Off. 3.89. 23. ...... M. Tullius Cicero, De Officiis

Here the ship is mentioned as navi and the other forms are nāvis, navem and navim. Thus the Greek word ‘ναῦς’ has entered into the classical literatures of Hebrew and Latin. It is not only related with the word, but it also shows that the ‘ναῦς’ - ships travelled to these countries from the Greek land. These places are very near to the Greek land. There are chances of the ship ‘ναῦς’ which could have travelled to far of countries. So there is a need to
search in classical literatures of far of countries. One such classical literature is Sanskrit.

**Sanskrit**

Sanskrit is one of the classical languages having vast literary heritage. The earliest literature in Sanskrit language is the Rig Veda. This literature mentions about the ship.

*nāva*

The word ‘nāva’ is used to denote the ship in Sanskrit.

dviṣo no viśvatomukhāti *nāveva* pāraya | 7 O thou whose face looks every way, bear us past foes as in a ship.
apa ... || 8 As in a ship, convey thou us for our advantage o’er the flood.
sa nah sindhumiva *nāvayāti* parsā svastaye | 5 May his light chase our sin away.
apa ... || (Griffith 1896)

Rig Veda Book 1 Hymn 97.7,8.

Here the ‘nāva’ is metaphorically mentioned. In another place it is related with the strength of the chariot-pole.

viśeṣu hi tvā savaneṣu tuñjate | 2 In all libations men with hero spirit urge the Universal One, each seeking several light, each fain to win the light apart.
sa namanekam vṛṣamanvayaḥ prthak svaḥ | 3 As men who win with sacrifices Indra's thought, men who win Indra with their lauds. (Griffith 1896)
sanisyavaḥ prthak | 4 Bear us across the rivers like two vessels, save us as ye were yokes, naves, spokes and fellies. (Griffith 1896)
taṁ tvā *nāvaṁ* na pariṣṭiṣṭha dhūri dhīmahi | 5 Sharpen this song of him who strives his utmost, sharpen, God Varuṇa, his strength and insight;
indrāṁ na yajñāścitayanta āyava stomebhirindramāyavaḥ || 6 May we ascend the ship that bears us safely, whereby we may pass over all misfortune. (Griffith 1896)

Rig Veda Book 2 Hymn 39. 4

Rig Veda Book 8 Hymn 42
The nature of the river is also denoted with ‘nāv’.

The waters flowed according to their nature; he raided the navigable streams waxed mighty. (Griffith 1896)

Here the navigable streams is mentioned as ‘nāvyānām’.

The strong Bay Horses of the Sun thou stayedst: this Etaśa drew not the wheel, O Indra.

Thus the occurrence of ‘nāva’ in the Rig Veda is mainly related with metaphoric senses. Except these references no other references are available in the foremost literature called Rig Veda of Sanskrit. The available references also seen at a level of knowledge about the ship, but not at the level of own experience or developments in a way it was not their own posteriori knowledge. They might have acquired it from other people. The people using Sanskrit have relation with Tamil people. So there is a need to move to the classical literatures of Tamil.

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11 A Posteriori knowledge is knowledge that we get directly from our own personal experiences. Domain or Expert Knowledge - is deep knowledge about a particular domain or discipline. We might also call it expert knowledge. A person with domain knowledge is incredibly knowledgeable within their discipline but may just have general knowledge about everything else.

12 The Tamil people...
Tamil

The foremost ancient literature of the Tamil language called Sangam literature\(^{13}\) (Pugazhendhi 2021) highlights the advancement in the field of marine technology and organization of sea trade.

*Marine Technology*

Ships, light houses and structures of the harbour are some of them that are related with marine technology.

*Light House*

Light house is an important structure in the sea trade. It makes it easy for the navigator to identify the harbour or the shore. The Tamil Sangam literatures mentions about a structure of a light house in ancient Tamil Nadu coastal area.

346. After leaving the port behind, where there is a tall lighthouse with an unwoven roof that appears like a prop that supports the sky, a building appearing to be difficult to scale with ladders, with a bright flame that is lit at night that invites plying ships to the shore…

351. These lines pictures the ancient light house of Tamil Nadu (Schoff 1917)\(^{14}\). This light house invites many ships. The other structure which has resemblance with this light house is called as ‘Neer pearttrue’ means passing water symbols like present day buoys and beacons structured along the coastal shores at equal distance throughout the sea routes. The captain moved the ship by seeing its light.

356. fear-causing ship that moves as though ……., as the ship’s captain looks at the bright flames on the lights on the tall sandy shores and figures distances.

---

\(^{13}\)The first available literature called Sangam literature contains some poems that belonged to 1200 BC

\(^{14}\)There were lighthouses built of brick and mortar which exhibited flashing lights at night to guide ships to port.
This type of structure was also placed inside the harbour. After the identification of the harbour by the light house the ships approached the harbour or land. Near the harbour, the areas may be either shallow or sandy or rocky. So the safe navigable passage and the resting place of the ship should be indicated within the harbour. The symbols of the present day navigable limits are shown in the Figure 5.

**Figure 5.**

![Navigable Limit Symbols](image)

In the same way the indicators were made for the navigable passage and to indicate a navigable passage for a particular foreign ship to the parking area in the harbour.

315. a fire post called Vealvi where the person called Anthanar perform fires. It appears like the lamps called Othima lamp\(^{15}\) of Yavanars the foreigners that are on masts, that are like sky fish which denote the limits of navigable area to pass the ship.

This structure is figurized in the Figure 6.

\(^{15}\)Othi means instruct in Tamil, as the light instruct the sea way it is called as Othima lamp. (The hair is also called as ‘Othi’ because it instruct the age of a person.)
Figure 6. Ancient Structure of the Light House and Beacons

Here on the top, the lamp of the particular foreign country was placed to indicate their passage way into the harbour. This particular structure is called as Neer peantru means transfer of water limits. In the night time the officials called Anthanar lighted fire at the bottom of that structure. These references shows the organized structure of the harbours for the safety of the foreign ships (Warmington 1928)\(^{16}\) (Schoff 1917)\(^{17}\).

Types of Ships

Various types of ships are another milestone of development in that field. The Tamil Sangam literature mentioned many types of ships.

\(^{16}\)Literature tells us that traders in coral and pearls frequented Kaviripaddinam of the Chola Kingdom, and this town contained resident Greek merchants; similarly, a poet who visited Uraiur, the ancient Chola capital, speaks of coral and pearls together, with rare gems also, and as is shewn by the passage in the "Toy cart," jewellers' shops ….regularly sold coral

\(^{17}\)The Tamil poem Paddinappalai gives us a vivid description of a busy port of the Chola Kingdom, Kaviripaddinam,… The goods were stamped with the royal tiger stamp after payment of customs duty and then released to the merchants. Close by were settlements of the Yavana merchants, which name included not only Ionians or Greeks, but Graeco-Bactrians and Parthians.
This is one type of ship.

You are lord of the land where precious things come by sea through ships which enter ports without lowering their masts or sails and lightening their cargo (Kalam) that untrained men unload on the wide paths.

Puranānūru 30, Poet Uraiṉ Muthukannan Sāthanār sang to Chōlan Nalankillī (Tamil Virtual University 1995)

This reference highlights that this type of ship was related with cargo or merchant ships.

Vangam

This is another type of ship as that of Kalam.

after leaving to earn wealth on a fear-causing ship (Vangam) that moves as though the earth rises, splitting the stinking waves, sailing days and nights, swayed by fast winds, as the ship’s captain looks at the bright flames on the lighthouse on the tall sandy shores and figures distances.

Akanānūru 255, Mathurai Maruthan Ilanākanār (Tamil Virtual University 1995)

From these lines it may be inferred that this type of ship was related with cargo or merchant ships like Kalam, but comparatively bigger than any other ship and it looked like a moving big piece of land.

Navay

Another type of ship was called as Navay.

320…horses that were brought in splendid ships (Navay) by sea, navigated by captains, and fine goods that are to be sent to huge countries – all these are seen every morning again and again, and they bring prosperity to the seashore land.

Mathuraikkānji (Tamil Virtual University 1995)

This type of ship known as Navay were used mainly for import and export of war related substances.
Yet another ship was called as Thimil.

Thimil

………...and veers toward rows of small ships (Thimil),
used to greatly praise the beauty of our
shores with groves...

Thus this type of small ship or boat was related with fishing.

Ambi

Another small type of ship was called as Ambi.
a small ship (Ambi) in the ocean
that heartless fishermen ride, leaving from the shore
with dew, to hunt for sharks with sword like mouths.

Like the amphibians it can come to sea shore land areas. So it was called
as Ambi.

Thoni

Thoni type of ships were like Ambi.

Musiri of Kuttuvan with a gold garland.
where the ocean roars like drums, paddy traded for
fish is heaped on small ship or boats (Ambi) making houses and boats look
the same, and black pepper sacks heaped in houses make
them appear like the uproarious ocean shores, gold wares
from ships (Kalam) are brought to the shore by small ship or boats (Thoni)
through
backwaters, and the king gives precious things from
the mountain and ocean to those who come,….

This type of small ships or boats were used to bring the goods from the big
ships which cannot come near the shore due to its heaviness.

Thus the characteristic of the each type of vessel is shown in the following
Table 1.
Table 1. Types and character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Ship or Boat</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Kalam</td>
<td>Big ships, Merchant ships, Long distance travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Vangam</td>
<td>Big ships, Merchant ships, Long distance travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Navay</td>
<td>Merchant and war ships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Thimil</td>
<td>Small ship or boat used by fisher men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ambi</td>
<td>Small ship or boat to carry the goods from the big ships to the shore as big ships cannot touch the shore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Thoni</td>
<td>A small boat for carrying the goods from the big ships to the shore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus these ships are mentioned in the Tamil Sangam literature. Along with this the mastery over the movement of the wind was also mentioned.

O heir of a mighty man who mastered the movement of the wind and had his ships sail on the huge, full ocean!

Puranānūru 66, Poet VennikKuyathiyr sang to Chōlan Karikāl Peruvathān (Karikālan), (Tamil Virtual University 1995)

Thus the development made in the harbor makes it easy for the foreign ships to reach these harbours.

320. ships bring horses with white manes and wealth from the north to its shores..

Perumpanarrupadai (Tamil Virtual University 1995)

185. Swift horses with lifted heads arrive on ships from abroad, sacks of black pepper arrive from inland by wagons, gold comes from northern mountains, sandalwood and akil wood come from the western mountains, and materials come from the Ganges. Pearls come from the southern ocean and coral comes from the eastern ocean. The yields of river Kāviri, things from Eelam, products made in Burma, and many rare and big things are piled up together on 193. the wide streets, bending the land under.

Pattinappālai, Kadiyalur uruthiran Kannanar, King – Thiruma valavan (Karikālan) (Tamil Virtual University 1995)

For the import and export of goods, taxes were collected and seals acknowledging the payment of taxes were stamped on the goods.
1 131. limitless goods
2 for export come from inland and
3 imported goods arrive in ships.
4 Fierce, powerful tax collectors are
5 at the warehouses collecting taxes and
6 stamping the Chōla tiger symbols on
7 goods that are to be exported.
8 Warehouses are filled with unlimited
9 expensive items packed in sacks. They
10 137. lay heaped in the front yard.
11
12 Pattinappālai, Kadiyalur uruthiran Kannanar,
13 King – Thiruma valavan (Karikalan)
14 (Tamil Virtual University 1995)
15
16 Due to the technological development and organized structure, peoples of
17 different languages from far away countries came by ship and lived near the
18 sea shore of Tamil Nadu.
19 213. People from many nations with various
20 languages living together sweetly is like
21 the festivals of an ancient city, celebrated
22 together by enlightened people who have
23 lived with many groups of people and
24 have visited other faultless countries.
25 Kāvirippoompattinam is a place with
26 220. perfection and greatness.
27 Pattinappālai, Kadiyalur uruthiran Kannanar,
28 King – Thiruma valavan (Karikalan)
29 (Tamil Virtual University 1995)
30
31 The visitation of foreign ships which included the Greek ships to the Coast
32 of the Tamil land is seen in this poem of the Sangam Era.
33
34
35 Greeks Ships
36
37 One type of a seafaring vessel is called as ναῦς – naûs in the Greek
38 language. In the Tamil language one particular type of ship is called as Navay.
39
40 ‘ply where Chēran brings gold by ships (Navay).’
41 Puranānūru 126,
42 Poet Māṟōkkathu Nappasalaiyār
43 (Tamil Virtual University 1995)
44
45 Thus these ships were related with import.
46
47 320. go and rest in that seashore town, where,
48 ships (Navay) bring horses with white manes and
49 wealth from the north to its shores.
Here it is mentioned that the Navay type ship brought horses from the foreign countries.

75. ‘You captured the esteemed Sāliyoor town named for fine paddy, with the deep ocean as its moat, where swaying ships (Navay), surrounded by the ocean, with tall masts with flags on them, bring goods that bring great wealth and can be enjoyed by its citizens, looking like mountains surrounded’

Here it is mentioned that the Navay type ships had masts and flags.

172. In the sweet Puhār harbor, desirable flags are hoisted on masts of ships (Navay) gently swaying on the waves, anchored and appearing like male elephants that sway their sturdy posts.’

Here it is mentioned that the Navay type ships had masts and flags and their size were as big as huge elephants.

‘O heir of a mighty man who mastered the movement of the wind and had his ships (Navay) sail on the huge, full ocean!’

Here it is mentioned that the Navay type ships operated using sails and wind energy. Thus the ships from foreign countries were called as navay in Tamil. Moreover it is also related with masts and wind energy as that of ναûς in Greeks. It ensures that Navay type of ships are nothing but the ναûς of Greeks. It also ensures ancient sea trade of the Greeks with Tamil Nadu (Pugazhendhi 2020, 2021b).

Thus the Greek word ‘ναûς’ is seen in the classical literatures of Tamil, Latin, Sanskrit and Hebrew as shown in the Figure 7.
Figure 7. ‘ναῦς’ in Classical Languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>ναῦς</td>
<td>nau's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>நவய</td>
<td>nāvay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>navis</td>
<td>navis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>नावय</td>
<td>nāvay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>נַעַיָּה</td>
<td>has-se-pi-nah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here ‘na’ is seen in all the languages and the ‘v’ is seen in Tamil, Latin and Sanskrit languages. The English word Navy has similarity with Navay of Tamil and Sanskrit. It ensures the Greek word ‘ναῦς’ is derived from the word ‘Navay’. In other words ‘ναῦς’ is the loan shift\(^\text{18}\) of the ‘Navay’ and a apocope\(^{19}\) has taken place in navay while borrowing. the new entry of this word in ancient Greek made many word forms in ‘n***’. At the same time the word ‘ναῦς’ retains its dominance among these ‘n***’ forms. More than that this dominance is extended on other words used for ship in Greek. For example the ‘πλοιοῖς’ type of ship also named as ‘ναῦς’.

\(^{18}\)When foreign loans appear in a language as changes in the usage of native words, such changes are called shifts. As the borrower does not accept the donor’s words and the new cultural item, he adapts material in his own language.

\(^{19}\)Apocope is a linguistic term which refers the deletion of the final element in a borrowed word.
Here it is mentioned that ‘πλοίοις’ type of Greek ships had travelled to the
Mouziríς – Muziris,20 (Aubert 2015)21 harbour of Tamil Nadu. This is also
ensured by the ancient Tamil literature.
‘belonging to the victorious Pándiyán king with many tall,
fine elephants, who surrounded with uproar the wealthy
Musiri town of Chérán,
where, causing the huge, beautiful Sulli river’s white foam
to become muddied, the fine ships of the foreigners come
with gold and leave with pepper’

Akanānūru 149,
Erakkattur Thāyankannanār
(Tamil Virtual University 1995)

In this ancient Tamil text it is mentioned about Musiri (Μουζιρίς) the sea
port town of Chérán (Κηπροβότρου) and Pándiyán (Πανδίονος) as referred to
in the Greek text. Thus the passage in Tamil literature corroborates the Greek
text. More than that the Greek text mentions that the word ‘πλοίοις’ used to
represent the type of ships were anchored in Musiri (Μουζιρίς) of Tamil Nadu.

20 The most significant among the new evidence is the Muziris Papyrus, a Roman document
discovered in 1985, which records a loan agreement drawn in Muziris by a 2nd century
Alexandrian credit with a transmarine trader, signed by the main merchant, the financier and
a third person, the goods manager, probably a Greek stationed at Muziris across seasons. The
document containing a wide variety of information regarding the Mediterranean overseas trade
with the West Coast, particularly with Muziris, the major port to which ships from Berenike
had sailed, mentions a ship namely, ‘Hermapolon’ engaged in mercantile circuits between
Berenike and Muziris during mid 2nd century.
21 The Muziris papyrus contains on one side the terms of a financial arrangement between a
trader and a businessman for the transport by camels of luxury goods from an unspecified Red
Sea port, be it Myos Hormos, Leukos Limen, Berenice, or any other one, to Coptos:
This word for ship is not seen in the classical literature of Greek. Instead, Navay or ναῦς only seen to be mentioned in Tamil literature. This ensures the dominance of the word ‘ναῦς’ over all the other words to denote a ship as mentioned in Figure 4, including the dotted line. Here the ‘πλοίοις’ type of ships are mentioned as Navay or ναῦς in Tamil is a semantic broadening (Akidah 2013)\(^{22}\) of this word in foreign language. More than that Tamil also highlights the meaning of the Greek word ‘ναῦς’. In Tamil ‘na’ means ‘tongue’ and ‘vay’ means mouth. ‘Na + Vay = Navay’ means like a tongue in the mouth which denotes the ship metaphorically as in the Figure 8.

\textbf{Figure 8. Metaphoric use of Navay}

Like a Tongue
in a Mouth
= Navay
= Ship

The root meaning of ‘Navay or ναῦς’ as seen in the ancient literature of Tamil language and the development of organized marine trade and technology as seen in the ancient Tamil literature ensures the donor competence of the Tamil language connected with ship. The various word forms of ‘n***’ in ancient Greek, ensures that this word is a loan word in Greek and ensures that this word is borrowed from Tamil language.

\(^{22}\)Semantic change refers to semantic shift or semantic progression and involves changes in the usage of words to the point where its current meaning radically differs from its original meaning. Such change may take place over a period of time. For instance, the Greek word ‘demagogue’ originally meant ‘a popular leader’ but now refers to a ‘politician who panders to emotions and prejudice’.
The word ‘ναῦς’ is borrowed from Tamil Nadu which is very far away from Greek land. So it is not merely a foreign word but a mark of vast voyage to the other end of the world as mentioned in the ancient Greek work ‘The Periplus of the Erythraean sea’ (Wilfred 1912) shown in the Figure 9.

**Figure 9. Vast Sea Voyage from Greek Land to Tamil Nadu**

Thus the Greek word ‘ναῦς’ has become a symbol of pride and represents the vast sea voyage to the other end of the world in the pre-historic era. This is the reason for the word ‘ναῦς’ to have acquired dominancy over all other words related with ship in ancient Greek as mentioned in Figure 4.

**Conclusion**

There are many words like Πορθμίς, πλοῖον, Πεντήκοντέρων, Σκάφει and ναῦς in ancient Greek to denote ship. Among these ‘ναῦς’ has grown into varied word forms also. It ensures that this word is a borrowed in ancient Greek. Apart from this all the ship related words are derived from the word ‘ναῦς’. The foreigners denote all type of Greek ships only in the name of ‘ναῦς’. Thus this word is seen in Latin, Tamil, Sanskrit and Hebrew. It is not merely a word relation, but the proof for trade relation, that the Greek ships travelled to these far of places from Greek land. The Tamil language has the derived meaning of the Greek word ‘ναῦς’ as ‘the tongue in the mouth’ denoting the ship metaphorically. It can be derived that this word is borrowed from Tamil to Greek and that the word ‘ναῦς’ prevails over all other words in ancient Greek as a mark of vast sea voyage.
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