

The “*sū” family. The complex relationship between the verbal root *seuH- and the pronominal stem *sue-.

Roots with the (primary or secondary) meaning ‘to give birth’ or ‘to beget’ are often used in the IE languages as a derivational base for words denoting kinship relationships. Some of them are productive throughout the whole language family (e.g., **ĝenh*₁- > Ved. *jā-* ‘child, family’, Lat. *germānus* ‘blood relative, brother’, Gr. γένος ‘family, kin’, *NIL* 139ff.), while others are only attested as such in one (e.g., **h*₂*ens-* > Hit. *ḥaššātar* ‘family, offspring’, CLuw. *ḥamša/i-* ‘grandchild’, cf. Kloekhorst 2008: 319) or a few branches (e.g., **b*^h*er-* > Goth. *barn* ‘child’, Latv. *bērns* ‘child’, Ved. *bhāryā* ‘wife’, *NIL* 18).

seuH-* ‘to give birth’ (originally probably ‘to be/get full (pregnant)’, as per Oettinger 1979: 159, 298) is one of the oldest roots of this type. The proto-form **suH-nu-/suH-ju-* ‘son’ (e.g., Av. *hunus*, OCS *synъ*, Gr υἱός, Toch. A gen.sg. *seyo*, *NIL* 686ff.) is commonly acknowledged to be its derivative. Some scholars, however, believe that this form was not the only kinship term originating from the root **seuH-* and possessing a PIE status. Szemerényi (1977: 32-47, 65-7, 96) postulates an ancient nominal form “sū-*” with a hypothetical meaning ‘everything that was born > (extended) family’, which, according to him, might have been preserved in the proto-forms **suésor-* ‘sister’ (e.g., Gr. ἑορ ‘(female) relative, daughter, niece’, Arm. *k’oyr*, Lat. *soror*, OIr. *siur* *NIL* 680ff.) and **suékur-* ‘parents-in-law’ (e.g., Ved. *śvaśrū*, ‘mother-in-law’, NPers. *xusrū* ‘id.’, OE *sweger* ‘id.’; Gr. ἐκυρός ‘husband’s father’, OLith. *šėšūras*) (a similar idea about a noun “**swe*” is presented in Benveniste 1969: 215). A more recent analysis of **suésor-* as derived from the root “**swe*” in the meaning ‘extended family’ can be found in Janda (1999: 320ff.).

In my talk I would like to discuss a possible connection between the verbal root **seuH-* and the pronominal stem **sue-*, and the semantics of the element **sue-* in the most ancient forms **suésor-* and **suékur-* (younger forms such as Lith. *sváinė* ‘wife’s sister’ or Rus. *своя́к* ‘wife’s sister’s husband’ are of less interest because the meaning of the element **sue-* in them is obviously ‘one’s own’ and these words are individual formations in separate IE branches).

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