

Suffixes from roots: the case of PIE $*-b^h o-$

It is generally admitted that some PIE suffixes originated from the reanalysis of second compound members, especially root nouns or primary thematic derivatives, see for instance $*-h_3ek^u-$, thematic counterpart $*-h_3k^u-o-$, vis-à-vis of the root $*h_3ek^u$ - ‘to see’ (Dunkel 2014, I: 202). The pan-Indo-European suffix $*-b^h o-$, is found mostly in adjectives referring to colors or visual appearance, as well as in substantives referring to animals (Brugmann 1906: 386-390). The most current hypothesis is the connection with the root $*b^h eh_2$ - ‘to shine’ (LIV²: 68-69). An alternative hypothesis, which is also old, is the connection with the root meaning ‘to become’, $*b^h ueh_2$ - in present-day reconstruction (LIV²: 98-101). The second option belongs to a scenario which ought to be drawn again: second compound member $*-b^h uh_2-o-$ with application of the νεογνώς-rule, then $*-b^h \mu\acute{o} > *-b^h \acute{o}$. The phonological rule $*b^h \underline{\mu}V > *b^h V$ is observed in several derivatives of the root $*b^h ueh_2$ - see for instance Gk. φωλεός ‘hole, lair’, Alb. *botē* ‘earth, world’, etc. It is also presupposed by some restructurings proper to this root, which led to the elimination of the expected full grade (II) $*b^h ueh_2$ - in several categories (Jasanoff 1997: 174, 180-182; Rix 2003: 365). This second compound member $*-b^h o-$ served first to make derivatives referring to the young of animals: ‘being issued from X’, further substantivized, type Gk. ἔλαφος. It was then reinterpreted, already at PIE stage, as meaning ‘looking like X’, simultaneously with the (quasi) merger of $*-b^h o-$ with $< *-b^h (H)o- < *-b^h h_2-o-$, the outcome of parallel compounds featuring $*-b^h h_2-o-$ as second compound member from the root $*b^h eh_2$ - ‘to shine’. The PIE existence of this parallel type is warranted by some nouns, especially by Lat. *albus* ‘white’, Gk. ἀλφός ‘dull-white leprosy’, Hitt. *alpa-* ‘cloud’, etc. PIE $*alb^h \acute{o}$ - will be traced back to $*al-b^h h_2-o-$ ‘shining exclusively [from any color]’, hence ‘white’, and ‘contrasting with the color [of the sky]’ > substantivized ‘cloud’. The root $*alb^h$ - vel sim. is a mirage. A link between the two major categories (color adjectives and animal names) lies in the fact that some animals were described by reference to colors. The facts point to the polygenesis of the suffix $*-b^h o-$, resulting in the blurred picture offered by the data. One will also reconsider afresh some etymologies. The form of Ved. *ābhva-* ‘monstrous’, subst. ‘monster’, presupposes the reintroduction of the genuine root in a second compound member, after the model of $*-gno-$ ($< *-gnh_1-o-$), or a relatively recent derivative from $*g-b^h uH-o-$, having the original meaning ‘being contrary to nature’. An additional support for the phonological rule in question will be found in Gk. φώς, stem φωτ-, ‘man’, the semantics of which is better accounted for as issued from $*b^h \acute{oh}_2-t- < *b^h \mu\acute{oh}_2-t-$ ‘human’ < ‘living being’, an acrostatic derivative from $*b^h ueh_2$ - ‘to grow’ [on earth], rather than from $*b^h eh_2$ - ‘to shine’ (pace Peters 1993: 101-106, see also Vijūnas 2009: 72-76).

Selected references

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