

The Indo-European root $*b^h_{ueh_2}$ - ‘be, become’ between Latin and Sabellic: developments, semantic properties and paradigmatic distribution

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The present talk deals with the Italic (i.e. Latin and Sabellic) developments of the Indo-European root $*b^h_{ueh_2}$ - ‘be, become’. The paper has a twofold purpose: firstly, it points to examine the outcomes of the mentioned root in Latin and Sabellic: the investigation will pay special attention to the paradigmatic, semantic and morphological distribution of the $*b^h_{ueh_2}$ - outcomes, as well as to phenomena of suppletion; secondly, it points to draw from the analysis some general remarks concerning the formation of themes both in the Italic branch and in the broader context of Indo-European.

In the Italic branch two different themes (both attested in Latin and in Sabellic) are usually linked to the root $*b^h_{ueh_2}$ - ‘be, become’: $fū$ - (e.g. Latin perfect indicative *fui*) and $fū$ - (e.g. Latin subjunctive *fuas*, Sabellic perfect subjunctive *fuid*, Sabellic future II *fust*; LIV²; Pokorny): as is well known, $fū$ - poses formal problems, for its connection with the reconstructed root $*bh_{ueh_2}$ - can not be satisfactorily explained through a phonological development (LIV: 98-101, Meiser passim, Eichner: 213). Besides, in Latin and Sabellic these themes form part of the suppletive paradigm of the verb ‘to be’: they are associated with the forms yielding from the independent root $*h_1es$ - ‘to be’ (e.g. Latin and Sabellic *esum*, *sum* ‘I am’); still, the distribution of ‘ $*b^h_{ueh_2}$ - forms’ and ‘ $*h_1es$ - forms’ in the paradigm does not seem fully interpretable.

Starting from this basis, the paper will be structured as follows:

- 1) I shall minutely analyse the formal and semantic features of $fū$ - and $fū$ - in Latin and in Sabellic languages; I shall try to show: a) that the genesis of $fū$ - could be re-thought in morphological terms (as already suggested by Meiser, 221 and passim; Eichner); in detail, $fū$ - could be conceived as a new morpheme, namely a sort of ‘new’ root: it would have arisen from an apophonic process, that happened in the Italic branch; b) that several facts stimulate to recognise in $fū$ some specific semantic features, namely it would be marked from modal properties. It is to underline that Sabellic data offer meaningful elements for analysis, so they will be taken into special account.
- 2) I shall focus on the paradigmatic relationship (suppletion) between $fū$ -/ $fū$ - and $*h_1es$ - ‘to be’; in particular, I hypothesize that the paradigmatic distribution of these roots could be investigated by exploiting two tools: firstly, the analysis of the semantic features of each root/theme, secondly the notion of morpheme (Aronoff). At the same time, the semantic properties of the mentioned forms can give account of the morphologic strategies employed from Latin and Sabellic in the verbal inflection (e.g. the ‘creation’ of the Sabellic perfect indicative *fufens* ‘they where’, whose structure traditionally poses morphological and etymological questions (Untermann); the use/not-use of the Perfect reduplication for the root $fū$ - (Meiser)).
- 3) In conclusion, I shall shortly draw some general reflections from the proposed array. I argue that processes of this type (i.e. morphological formation of ‘new’ roots with specific modal features) could also concern other Latin and Sabellic forms (as well as other Indo-European varieties). Therefore, such a reconstruction suggests to reconsider some aspects of the word formation processes within Indo-European domain; in such a perspective, it seems useful to reflect upon the notion of ‘thema II’, proposed by Benveniste in his renowned essay on the root theory (1935).

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