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Proto-Indo-European verbal root incompatibilities analysed from a typological point of view:
the case of the Proto-Semitic verbal root constraints

Abstract

Traditionally, since Meillet (1935), Indo-Europeanists have noted certain rules and constraints that affected the reconstructed root structure of Proto-Indo-European. Something similar occurs in Proto-Semitic verbal roots, which are also restricted to a series of phonetic laws called 'root incompatibilities'. However, in Indo-European linguistics, these rules are different from the root incompatibilities traditionally applied to Proto-Semitic, because in the first case they were deduced from both the nominal and verbal system and affected only those roots with stop consonants, whereas in the second case, the root incompatibilities affected only verbal roots and were not restricted to stop consonants.

The aim of this lecture is to present a novel typological approach which applies the incompatibility root restrictions of Proto-Semitic verbal roots to these of PIE verbal roots, something that as far as I know has not been done before. As a result of this research, what can be observed is that curiously the verbal root incompatibilities of Semitic are also applicable to Proto-Indo-European verbal roots. In my opinion, these rules seem to be universal in character and should be considered as a tool of importance in the historical reconstruction and understanding of the genesis of the verbal roots from a historical point of view.

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