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A brief note on Hitt. *pukk-*, *pugga-* ‘to be hateful, to be repugnant, to be unpleasant’

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Keywords: *Indo-European etymology; Hittite; polysemy; semantic metaphor*

1. Introduction

The purpose of this contribution is to bring again to attention Kronasser’s etymological interpretation (see *infra*, Kronasser 1952–1953) of the Hittite verb *pukk-*, *pugga-* ‘to be hateful, to be repulsive, to be unpleasant’, placing it within a more recent interpretative model based on some theoretical assumptions of cognitive linguistics, to support the scholar’s first intuition which, according to the opinion here presented, was correct.

Some ancient linguistic expressions, in fact, reflect our conceptual schemes and therefore represent something which is “embodied”¹ and pre-exists with respect to language itself. The idea of embodied experience implies that we have a species-specific vision of the world, due to the unique nature of the human body. The theory of “embodiment” in particular, claims that “the structure used to put together our conceptual system grow out of bodily experience and makes sense in terms of it; moreover, the core of our conceptual systems is directly ground in perception, body movement, and experience of a physical and social nature” (Lakoff 1987: xiv).

Organisms do not simply occupy the space in which they live: they act upon the environment and transform the space in which they are inexorably rooted. To effectively interpret the way an organism is rooted in the environment, it is necessary to combine the ability to represent space with motor skills (Adornetti and Ferretti 2012: 157 ff.).

The recognition of an object would be entrusted to a “pragmatic” representation (the fact, for example, that an object can be *grasped* in a certain way²), rather than to a “semantic” representation of reality.

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¹ See in particular Lakoff and Johnson 1999.

² Cf. beyond the theoretical framework of cognitivism, Leroi-Gourhan 1964–1965.

Cognitivism, one of the most important movements in contemporary experimental psychology, supposes that the human mind operates as an active processor of the information that reaches it through the sensory organs. Having effectively taken over from behaviorism³, cognitive psychology developed in the 1970s, especially in the United States. The main strands of cognitive research focus on perception, memory, attention, reasoning and, above all, language, so much so that contemporary psycholinguistics can be said to be entirely of cognitive inspiration.

As is well-known, in the cognitive processes of categorization it is not so much the objective configuration of the referent that matters, but the way in which the speaker perceives and classifies it⁴: conceptual metaphor and metonymy therefore represent the processes through which categorical belonging and the prototype itself can be extended; the mnemonic capacity of man however broad is still limited, and a non-prototypical categorical system would always be superior to this capacity⁵.

2. The main etymological proposals concerning Hittite *pukk-*, *pugga-*

In Hittite, the verb *pukk-*, *pugga-* ‘to be hateful, to be repugnant, to be unpleasant’ is documented. We can find it in the following attestations:

- *pu-ug-ga-ru* (KUB 9.32 Vs. 22 [New Hittite]), *pu-ug-ga-ta-ru* (HT 1 III 33 [New Hittite]), *pu-uk-ta-ru* (dupl. KUB 9.31 III 39-40, *pu-ug-ga-ta-ru* (dupl. HT 1 III 32-33) 3 sing. imp. middle
- *pu-ug-ga-t[i]* (IBot 3.109 6) III sing. preter. (cf. Neu 1968: 143)⁶.

The main etymological interpretations trace this verb back to either PIE **bhewg(h)-* (IEW: 152, LIV: 85) ‘to bend, to flee’ (Kronasser [1952-1953], Oettinger [1976: 130]), or to **pūk-*, **pewk-* (IEW: 849) ‘hairy, with hairy tail’ (Wittmann [1964: 147]), or to **bhewgh₂-* ‘to bend, to flee’ (Hendriksen [1941: 53]). According to Puhvel (HED PE-PI-PU: 116) a variant **bhewk-* is equally conceivable, if we think, for example, of allotropic PIE roots such as **stebh-/steb-*

³ Unlike behaviorism (according to which the only possible object of a scientific psychology would be constituted by “manifest behavior”, observable only from the outside of the organism itself), Gestaltism (or “psychology of form”) defined its research object within and by means of the criteria of conscious subjectivity. Gestaltists influenced American psychology to a decisive extent, tempering its behaviorist instances, and opening it to an interest in perceptual processes. Both Gestaltists and cognitivists have accused behaviorism of simplism and reductivism, highlighting the non-automatic nature of many forms of learning taking place in daily life and in laboratory situations. Cf. also C. Sinha 2010: 1279, according to whom “prototype theory, which treats categorization in terms of goodness of exemplification and organization around central tendencies, and which is based upon interactive stochastic processing of micro-features, rather than a “checklist” of atomic macro-features, has obvious affinities with the Gestalt notion [...]. Gestalt psychology never died. It is alive, well, and living at a new address under the name of Cognitive Linguistics”.

⁴ Cf. Lazzeroni 1998: 17, according to whom noetic categories meaning linguistically were more and more complex than those attested in historical languages, languages which seem to retain the “broken remains” of once-coherent systems.

⁵ According to Tversky (1986), the reason for preferring a level of referentiality does not lie in the language, but rather in the cognitive abilities.

⁶ CHD (P: 371), on the contrary, interprets the form as Akkad. PU-UQ-QÁ-T[I] ‘buttocks’.

/step-, documented in forms as Ved. *stabh-*, OldEngl. *steppan*, Hitt. *ištapp-* ‘to plug up, to block’.

Among the Indo-European historical outcomes from PIE **bhewg(h)-* and **bhewgh₂-* ‘to bend, to flee’, we can recall Gr. φεύγω ‘to flee (from), seek to avoid’ (DELG: 1191 ff.; GEW: 1005-1007), φυγή ‘escape’, Lat. *fugiō* ‘to flee (from), seek to avoid’, Goth. *biugan* id. etc.⁷

Imagining a derivation from **pū̃k-*, **pewk-* ‘hairy, with hairy tale’, the cognate forms would be Goth. *faiuhō* ‘fox’ (literally ‘the one [which is] hated’), OHG *fuchs* ‘fox’, ONord. *fox* ‘fraud, treason’ etc.

The derivatives are *pukkant-* ‘hated, hateful’ and the causative *pukkanu-/pugganu-/pukkunu-* ‘create dissent, make hate, cause to be shunned’.

Tischler (HEG [P: 641 ff.]) underlines how, despite the various etymological proposals (which he accounts for in the discussion of the *lemma*), itt. *pukk-* has no convincing etymology. In his opinion, the connection with the PIE root **bhewg(h)-* ‘to bend, flee’ (cf. *supra*, Gr. φεύγω, φυγή, Lat. *fugiō*, Goth. *biugan* etc.) would be difficult to accept from a phonetic point of view, given the mismatch between the double spelling of *-kk-* attested in Hittite and the voiced stop reconstructed for the PIE root.⁸ Kloekhorst (2008: 681) is of the same opinion and finds the above hypothesis unlikely for the same reason.

Kronasser (1966: 14), however, several times expressed doubts about the status and regularity of *Sturtevant’s law*: «es fragt sich also, ob Etymologien abgelehnt werden können, weil die der Regel Sturtevant’s widersprechen [...] So meine ich, dass die Regel nicht als Richtschnur gelten kann».⁹ For this reason, he considered the connection of the Hittite word with the PIE root **bhewg(h)-* to be plausible: from a semantic point of view it would have been possible, in his opinion (ivi: 318), to trace a correspondence between the values conveyed by Hittite (‘to hate’) and by other Indo-European languages (‘to flee, bend over’ etc.), based on the observation that ‘one avoids/shuns those he hates’ (cf. Lat. *aversari* ‘get away’; ‘to despise’). The problem linked to semantics – which according to Kronasser does not exist – would have led scholars not to take this hypothesis seriously.

Oettinger (1976: 130), therefore, in order to explain the mismatch between the alleged original voiced stop and its double spelling in **bhéwg-o-rey* (or **bhug-ó-rey*) > *pukkāri*, imagines (as in the case of the verb *dukkāri* ‘it is important’ < **dhewgh-* ‘to be suitable, meet’) an analogical levelling on the homoteleutis *wakkāri* ‘it is lacking’.

Hendriksen (1941: 53) instead, to trace the verb back to **bhewgh₂-*, explains the doubling of the Hittite consonant as due to the cluster **-gh₂-* (for which see, in particular, Eichner [1973: 71, 96] and Melchert [1994: 76-77]): admitting **h₂*, in essence, ends up being the only way to explain the unexpected double spelling of /g/.

⁷ See *infra* for the phonological problem connected with the Germanic outcomes, which presuppose an aspirated voiced stop.

⁸ For details about *Sturtevant’s law*, i.e., the graphic-phonological correspondence, on one hand, between PIE voiceless stops and their intervocalic double spelling in Hittite, and, on the other hand, between PIE voiced/voiced aspirated stops and their intervocalic single spelling, cf. Pozza 2011, Pozza 2012, Kloekhorst 2014: 543ff., Kloekhorst 2016, and Yates 2019.

⁹ “So, the question arises whether etymologies can be rejected because they contradict *Sturtevant’s rule* [...]. So I mean that the rule cannot be used as a guideline”.

Wittmann (1964: 147) also argues that the comparison between Hitt. *pukk-* and Gr. φεύγω (based on the common derivation from the PIE root **bhewg(h)-* ‘to bend over, turn around’ and on the observation that «wen man hasst, dem weicht man aus»¹⁰ [Kronasser 1952–1953: 318]) would not be plausible, for the same phonetic reasons seen above. The scholar proposes, alternatively, the connection of the Hittite voice with Goth. *faúhō* ‘fox’ (literally ‘the hated one’), OHG *fuchs* ‘fox’, OldNord. *fox* ‘fraud, betrayal’ etc., a combination which, unlike the previous one, would fit perfectly within the provisions of the graphic-phonetic rule. However, this etymological proposal appears weak on the morphological side: the form *pukkant-* suggests a verbal derivative, while the name of the fox is a non-deverbal nominal form (*pukkant-* ‘hateful’, *pukkanu-/pugganu-/pukkunu-* ‘create dissent, make hate’).

3. PIE **bhewg(h)-* and the conceptual metaphor FLEEING IS BENDING (Esposito 2011)

In the context of the arguments set out so far, of particular importance is the hypothesis (Esposito 2011: 275) according to which it would be not necessary to postulate, as the main etymological dictionaries tend to do, two distinct PIE roots for **bhewg(h)-*, one with the meaning of ‘to bend’ (cf. Goth. *biugan*, Germ. *biegen* etc.), the other with the meaning of ‘to flee’ (cf. Gr. φεύγω, Lat. *fugiō* etc.), but a single polysemic root. According to the theoretical assumption that semantic change, though not predictable, is not arbitrary but motivated (Lakoff 1987: 107), the motivation for the change can be reconstructed by identifying the metaphors and conceptual metonymies underlying the language.

Thanks to the comparison which Esposito (*ibidem*) makes with the Semitic (which, as is well known, is not genealogically related to Indo-European and, therefore, would seem to offer proof of an underlying more general cognitive mechanism) it would therefore be possible to verify the semantic development ‘to fold’ > ‘to flee’ (cf. the biblical Hebrew idiomatic expression *pānāh ’ōreṗ* ‘to turn the nape’, which denotes the act of escaping). The semantic development by which PIE **bhewg(h)-* comes to describe, in Greek (φεύγω) and in Latin (*fugiō*), the act of ‘running away’, is based on the development ‘bend’ > ‘yield, surrender, submit’, encapsulated in the metaphor SURRENDERING IS BENDING ONESELF PHYSICALLY, clearly traceable in intermediate manifestations which describe a concrete action such as ‘bowing’, just as in Mod.Engl. *to bow* from OldEngl. *būgan* ‘to bow, to bend’, ‘to flee’ (Esposito recalls It. *sottomettersi* – literally ‘to put oneself under’ in the sense of ‘surrender’, as a fully transparent metaphor).

Therefore, according to the scholar, the conceptual metaphor FLEEING IS BENDING (ivi: 276), at the origin of the semantic development found in the Semitic and Indo-European documentation, would be able to provide further probative force in favor of the idea of an original polysemy of the PIE root **bhewg(h)-*:¹¹ from the act of ‘bending’ we shift to that of ‘yielding’ and ‘submitting’, and, finally, to the act of fleeing (think of It. *piegare* ‘bend’, *ripiegare* ‘retreat’). At this point, bearing in mind the Lithuanian outcome *būgti* ‘to be frightened’, it would be possible to

¹⁰ “If you hate someone, you avoid him”.

¹¹ For a similar reasoning, albeit relative to other PIE roots, cf. Pozza 2020.

imagine that also the Hittite verb *pukk-*, *pugga-* ‘to be hateful, repulsive, to be unpleasant, to be avoided’, which already Kronasser (1952–1953: 318) imagined attributable – in the context of a shift from the concrete to the abstract – to a polysemic root **bhewg(h)-*, characterized by the value and of ‘running away’ and ‘bending / turning’ (hence, among other things, ‘to save oneself’, cf. Avest. *bunjainti-* ‘to save, to save oneself, to free’), can be inserted in the lexical series just discussed because of the semantic shift (underlined by HEG P: 641) ‘to discard, avoid’ > ‘hate’ also found, as seen, in Lat. *aversari* ‘turn their backs, despise, feel aversion’.

What, however, appears particularly interesting, in my opinion, is the fact that Kronasser hypothesized, as a further possibility to semantically connect the Hittite verb with the lexical series in question, a semantic calque from Akkadian, a Semitic language with the which Hittite was always strongly in contact. Alongside the Akkadian word *zāru* ‘to hate’, it is also documented the verb *zāru* ‘to bend, to fold’, etymologically not connected with the first verb: it would therefore not be excluded that the two verbs could have been understood as a unit by the Hittites and that the Hittite verb *pukk-*, *pugga-*, initially indicating only the act of bending, has been semantically influenced by Akkadian and from that language has taken the double value of ‘to bend’ and ‘to hate’.

The original meaning would have been lost in Hittite or simply would not be (yet) documented. In any case, whether it was an independent development or a semantic calque from the Akkadian, the tracing of the form to the root **bhewg(h)-* remains plausible, even in the presence of some formal difficulties, easily overcome.

Several scholars¹², in fact, have considered the possibility of analogical processes to explain what in fact appears to be an alternation between the root-final voiced and voiced aspirated stop (the final aspirated stop is in fact reconstructed due to the German outcomes, which attest a plain voiced stop). Moreover, we also remind the hypothesis put forward by Puhvel (HED PE-PI-PU: 116), who reconstructs a basis characterized by different enlargements, **bhewgh-/bhewg-/bheuk-*, according to a not uncommon reconstructive procedure which, moreover, would in turn solve the graphic problem: “the consistent geminate spelling pointing to etymological **k* need not flout “Sturtevant’s rule”, nor require the crutch of a devoicing laryngeal suffix”. Finally, we also refer to the work of Pozza (2011) for further insights about the hypothesis that the phonetic “law”, not free from exceptions, was rather a graphic “trend” and that, therefore, the apparent exceptions may, instead, not create problems for the etymological reconstructions previously considered in contrast to the norm. This could be such a case.

Moreover, if we think about the case of semantic metonymy (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980) – namely the use of one entity to refer to another connected to it – we can observe that, unlike the conceptual metaphor – where the entities that come into contact belong to different conceptual domains – the two entities are within the same functional domain. In conceptual metonymy, in fact, the domains appear to be connected by a “pragmatic function”, which activate the metonymic process itself.

¹² See Benveniste 1969: 135–136, Oettinger 1976: 130 and Watkins 2000, s.v. *bheug-*. Cf. also LIV: 84 (footn. 8); 85 (footn. 3).

In fact, when we talk about an experience or an entity, we select a salient feature for our communication purposes. This means that, if ‘feeling aversion’ (or, in the specific case of some languages, such as Lithuanian, ‘being frightened’ – perhaps just as a result of having felt aversion) and ‘running away’ (therefore the ‘act of moving away’ with some haste from the place/entity for which fear, repulsion, etc. is felt) are conceived as two dimensions belonging to the same conceptual domain of ‘bending’ (an act which in any case presupposes a spatial distancing from the sphere of action of the person or thing from which one wants to move away, even if only by means of an initial (?) bending of one’s body, the first two values could also be conceived as manifestations of two different extensions of the more general (and physical) act of ‘bending’ according to a conceptual process of a metonymic type.

In sum, according to what was underlined by Esposito (2011: 276), the identification of the thought patterns underlying certain semantic developments enables us to assess the viability of a hypothesis of change and, in the specific case here presented, gives us the possibility of framing the Hittite verb *pukk-*, *pugga-* within such a semantic shift.

4. Concluding remarks

As noted above, Kronasser (1952–1953: 318) argued that the three PIE roots listed in IEW (**bhewg[h]-* ‘to bend’, **bhewg-* ‘to get free, escape’, **bhewg[h]-* ‘to free [oneself]’) were originally the same one, and that also the meaning ‘to save (oneself), to free’ (documented in Avestan, cf. *baog-*, *bunja-* ‘to save [oneself], to free’) could be traced back to a previous ‘to turn’ (= ‘to avoid a danger in order to save yourself’). The scholar, then, thought about a PIE polysemic root and a possible shift from the concretely perceptible sphere to the mental one (“[...] um einen Übergang von der sinnlich wahrnehmbaren Sphäre in die seelische Sphäre”)¹³.

From a strictly semantic point of view, in my opinion, the solution proposed by Kronasser (1952–1953) still remains the most convincing, especially if it is framed within the prerequisites offered by the conceptual metaphor (cf. above), which allow the Hittite verb *pukk-*, *pugga-* to be coherently placed within the etymological “system” also shared by other historical Indo-European languages documenting verbs indicating ‘to flee’ (as we have seen, then, also Lithuanian attests a verb connected with the idea of ‘being frightened’). Formally, it would be possible to further support the explanation already provided by the scholar (cf. above), while accepting, at the same time, his invitation to caution¹⁴ as far as Sturtevant’s law is concerned.

Conceptual metaphors and metonyms can therefore be useful when applied to cases of Indo-European polysemy and can represent a valid interpretative tool in support of the hypotheses proposed. In fact, it is not always obvious to imagine semantic shifts (which led to narrowings, extensions, worsening and improvements) capable of motivating the common origin of words drawn from different ancient Indo-European languages whose different semantic values did not make a common classification of forms immediate.

¹³ “A transition from the sensually perceptible sphere to the spiritual sphere”.

¹⁴ *Contra*, see Kloekhorst 2014 and Yates 2019.

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Abstract

The purpose of this contribution is to evaluate the Hittite verb *pukk-*, *pugga-* ‘to be hateful, to be repulsive, to be unpleasant’ that, according to the opinion here presented, would reflect our conceptual schemes, and to explain the semantic shift undergone by a polysemic PIE root **bhewg(h)-* ‘to bend, to run away’ taking into account some theoretical prerequisites of cognitive linguistics. Within this framework it is possible to confirm Kronasser’s etymological interpretation, also considering a further possibility, advanced by the scholar, of a motivation due to linguistic contact with Akkadian.