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LINGUISTIC TYPOLOGY AND THE INDO-EUROPEAN PRONOMINAL STEM **ei-**

Abstract. In this brief paper it is proposed, on the basis of formal and typological evidence, that the Indo-European pronominal stem **ei* may be related etymologically to the root **ei-* 'go.'

Keywords: demonstrative, etymology, grammaticalization, Indo-European, typology

In Shields (2011), I emphasize that linguistic typology offers the historical linguist a valuable tool in evaluating the plausibility of reconstructions. In other words, it "can assist in assessing competing reconstructions" in the sense that "reconstructions which are typologically sound … should be more highly valued than competing reconstructions which … [are] not" (Shields 2011: 553). However, instead of limiting the number of potentially viable reconstructions, linguistic typology can at times actually expand their number by bringing to light heretofore unrecognized explanatory formulations for phenomena in particular languages or linguistic stocks. I want to illustrate this point briefly by considering a new, typologically-based etymology of the Indo-European pronominal stem **ei-* (cf. OLat. *eis* 'he,' Skt. *ay-ám* 'he,' OIr. *ē* 'they').

Of course, the Indo-European pronominal stem **ei-* combined with "alternative stems in **i-* (cf. Lat. *id* 'it') and **e-* (cf. Skt. gen. sg. masc. *a-syá*) to form a single paradigm in the proto-language itself (Szemerényi 1996: 206–207). The antiquity of these forms is emphasized by Mallory & Adams (1997: 458), who characterize the paradigm as "widespread and old in IE." Although demonstrative in origin (Beekes 1995: 201–202), this suppletive paradigm can be ascribed "weakly deictic" (i.e., 'that') and anaphoric (i.e., 'he, she, it') function (Sihler 1995: 391). In short, its deictic force was remote from 'here' and 'I.'

* I wish to thank the two reviewers of this paper for their helpful and insightful comments, even though I chose not to incorporate some of them so as not to broaden the scope of my proposal.

Now the stem-alternate **ei-* has commonly been viewed etymologically as a contamination of the demonstrative stems (or deictic particles from which the demonstrative stems arose, cf. Brugmann 1911: 311) in **e-* and **i-* (Mallory & Adams 1997: 458), a position which I myself have espoused (cf. Shields 1999: 28 and also Hirt 1927: 14). However, despite the reasonableness of this proposal, typological considerations raise the possibility of another interesting explanation of the origin of this pronominal stem.

In their book *World Lexicon of Grammaticalization*, a useful summary of processes pertaining to how various grammatical forms originate and evolve, Heine & Kuteva note that the verb *to go* can be grammaticalized as a "distal demonstrative" (2002: 159). Thus, for example, in South !Xun, a language of the Khoisan Family*, tòàh* 'go' has undergone this grammaticalization:

dzhàú-s-á tòàh
'the women there' / 'those women.'

Heine & Kuteva (2002: 159) do observe "that Archaic Chinese *ZHI* 'to go' has given rise to a proximal demonstrative ('this' …). This pathway is suggestive of a process whereby physical motion is used as a structural template to express location." Therefore*, to go* may perhaps be subject to grammaticalization as a demonstrative with varying degrees of deictic force, not necessarily distal deixis alone.

It is interesting to note that the root for the verb *to go* which is "practically universal in IE and old" and which "appears to have been the least marked verb of motion" (Mallory & Adams 1997: 228) is reconstructed as **ei-* (cf. Gk. *eîmi* 'will go,' Lat. *eō* 'go,' Ved. *éti* 'goes,' OLith. *eimi* 'go'). In light of the antiquity of this verbal root and the distal demonstrative form **ei-*, as well as the fact that Indo-European most likely underwent a preinflectional stage in its early period of development during which verbs lacked desinences (cf. Adrados 1992: 1),[1] it is quite possible that there exists an etymological connection between these forms mediated by way of a common process – grammaticalization. The newly

[1] On the so-called "new image" view of Indo-European morphology, see Shields 1982 and 1992. According to Adrados (1992: 1), "One should attempt to reconstruct not one sole type of Indo-European (IE., henceforth) without spatial or temporal definition, but three. The most ancient of those, IE. I (also called Protoindoeuropean or PIE.) would not yet be inflected. Then there would come IE. II, inherited by Anatolian, some of whose archaisms, though, would be preserved in other languages: in this type, there would already be inflexion, although merely on the basis of using endings and other resources, not the opposition of stems. Finally, the most recent phase would be IE. III, which is practically that of traditional reconstruction: in this type, stems were opposed to mark tenses and moods in the verb, the masc. and fem. genders, and degrees of comparison in the adjective."

grammaticalized demonstrative *ei- would have eventually become part of the suppletive paradigm which it shared with *i- and *e- because of its formal and semantic association with them. Although this proposal does not discredit the one which sees in the pronominal stem *ei- a contamination, it nevertheless represents a viable alternative theory.

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