Verba Docenti

Studies in historical and Indo-European linguistics presented to
Jay H. Jasanoff
by students, colleagues, and friends

edited by
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Jay Jasanoff has made numerous and profound contributions to our understanding of the PIE verb and its manifestations in all of the major older Indo-European traditions. Unable at this moment to offer anything that would shed further light on the PIE verbal system as a whole, I perforce present to him as a modest token of esteem and gratitude evidence for a hitherto unrecognized PIE verbal root.

The Luvian verb haśp- is thus far attested only in Hittite context, with both Luvian and Hittite inflection: pres. 3 sg. hašpati, pret. 1 sg. hašpaša, pret. 3 sg. hašpadda beside pret. 1 sg. hašpun and pret. 3 pl. hašper.1 In all but one instance the contexts are military, and the verb is generally translated as ‘to destroy’ (e.g. Friedrich 1952:63 and Tischler 2001:46). However, Pušvel (1991:233) argues that the verb is not a primary verb of delendi, but rather means ‘to handle, to come to grips with, take care of, dispose of’. He claims that its military use is euphemistic, being either anticipatory or resumptive of true verbs of destruction like ‘to destroy, burn, kill’.

The examples in military contexts certainly permit such an analysis, but there is not one iota of positive evidence for such a reinterpretation. The co-occurrence of haśp- with other verbs of destruction in any way argues against its having a similar meaning. Such redundancy is also well attested with other combinations: nu URU<kathariya> URU<Ga>[eza]pamm = a bani[ka] na-at ar[pa warnu “he destroyed Kathariya and Gazzapa; he burned them down” (KUB 19.11 iv 35–6). Most crucially, there is no evidence anywhere for the primary sense assumed by Pušvel: ‘to handle, to care of’, in contrast with the case of sinmeš, whose basic meaning ‘to finish’ is well established, although it is also used with (kattan) arba to mean ‘to finish off, destroy’.

In any case, the core meaning of our verb is now assured by a new example not known to Pušvel that occurs in a mythological context. We are indebted for an edition of the text to Groddek (1999), who fails, however, to understand the sense of haśp- in the context and the immediate passage containing it. The text concerns the destruction of the city Lihzina by the Storm-god, who conquers it and kills the inhabitants. This action is followed immediately by: n = aš URU<zihsin MU.8.KAM ėšia ani ν.asList = kan wēr(a) ṣa G1Štuydak dātit n = [a]t = kan hašpadda n = aš URU<lihsinah ap̣pa aṣṣizzi (KUB 33.66 + KBO 40.333 iii 3–6).2

1. For hu-ali₂-d₂a (KUB 31.66 + KBO 40.333 iii 5) see Groddek 1999:38. For all other attestations see Pušvel 1991:333–3.
2. For the misspelling of the city name in the first occurrence see Groddek 1999:45. Contra Groddek (1999:46) the pres. 3 sg. form aṣṣizzi (NB with enclitic subject pronoun) is not the verb ‘to make (one’s way)’, but rather a second precious Hittite example of the un-compounded form of *h₂-ci-‘to go’ alongside pres. 3 pl. yumzi in KBO 21.2.1 obv. 7. The attested pres. 3 sg. aṣṣizzi (lyeṣizzi) is an unsurprising backformation from the plural, replacing the historically regular but synchronically quite irregular *zezi < *h₂-ezi.
The first and last clauses are quite clear: the Storm-god remains in Lihzina for eight years after its destruction and only then returns from there. (In the immediate sequel eight of his sons meet him on his way back.) The sense of the middle clauses is also unquestionable: "He harvested them (nom.-acc. pl. neuter); he planted (lit. placed) a forest." Although he correctly recognizes this sequence of harvesting and planting, Groddek (1999:46, 46) strangely interprets aniya- in its very general sense of "to carry out" ("verrichtete Tätigkeiten") and likewise assigns Puhvel's alleged general meaning to hasp- ("verfuhrt damit").

He thereby robs the passage of any coherent content. The unmistakable reference to harvesting grain and planting trees makes it clear that aniya- here also has its technical meaning of 'to plant/sow (crops/fields)', as is well attested in the Middle Hittite texts from Mašat: mana apē A.Ántepiššu anier "they would have planted those fields" (HKM 54:16-7) and nu ŠA BELAMEŠTÍ NUMUN.ḪI.Á annekenì "while you plant/sow the seed of the lords" (HKM 55:21-2). After destroying the city of Lihzina, the Storm-god, rather than sowing weeds over the site to underscore that it was never to be inhabited again, chose instead to plow the land and plant and harvest grain on it.

When we then learn that he in turn planted trees, we may assume that this was for the same purpose, and that in parallelism with anias... wār(a)šin the sequence dais... haśpadala refers to the planting and harvesting of a stand of trees, after which the Storm-god, having completed his mission, sets out to return home. We must conclude that the verb haśp- was the technical term for harvesting trees, just as wās- was that for harvesting grain. One obviously harvests trees by cutting them down, and I take this to be the basic sense of haśp-. The military sense of 'to slaughter, destroy' is a trivial extension—the use of 'to cut down' in the sense of 'to kill' hardly needs to be illustrated. As often in Hittite, the sense of total destruction can be reinforced by the preverb arba.

The athematic Hittite inflection (haśpu, haśper) is not diagnostic for the original Luwian inflection. However, the appearance of pres. 3 sg. ha-na-pu-da with unaccented ending alongside ha-na-pa-ti and ha-na-pa-la argues for an athematic mi-verb with variable spelling of the resulting consonant clusters (thus already Oettinger 1979:194 contra Laroche 1959:44 and Melchert 1993:65). For a root-accented thematic verb we would expect consistent single consonant in the verbal endings (thus *ha-na-pa-ti/da). Luwian haśp- "to cut (down)" points to a PIE verbal root *h₂esp₁₂, with the odds heavily favoring *h₂es₁₂- and most likely *h₂esp₁₂-. I know of no evidence elsewhere for verbal reflexes of such a root, but I believe there is one tolerably certain and one other

3. More literally, G13šigal, with Groddek 1999:40, is 'Baumpfanzung'. Following Oettinger (2002:236) and Harry Hoffner (personal communication), I take G13šigal to be a figura etymologica in which šigal, derived precisely from dāš- 'to place, set', refers, here as elsewhere, to a planted stand of trees. Oettinger (2002) argues convincingly that the Hittite word for a natural forest was G13šigal/gusuna.

4. In this use anius- can take as its object either the seed or the field planted; see Alp 1991:348 for references to further examples and also Oltisch 2001:739-90. In our passage the transparent direct object has undergone ellipsis: "He planted/towed (fields/crops)."

5. Although the text is not explicit, I assume that the two acts of planting and harvesting both took place on the same land, the former site of the city which had been plowed under, with the planting of trees following that of grain. This sequence may well reflect the notion of a progressive returning of the land to the natural sphere of the gods (for this sense of the planting of trees see already Groddek 1999:46 and Oettinger 2002:236). In any case a field of stumps would have effectively deterred resettlement.

6. It is conceivable that the use of the sign ūdā was meant to express directly the absence of any real vowel and thus directly a form /hasp/-.
plausible nominal reflex. The first of these is Latin asper. This adjective is used with a broad range of meanings: ‘sharp, jagged’ of stones (as in Ennius’ steīs asperīs), ‘rough’ of terrain or various surfaces, ‘prickly, bristling’ of plants or hairy coats, ‘sharp, bitter’ of tastes, and finally ‘severe, harsh’ or the like of human character and behavior.

The word is without a convincing etymology. Ehrhardt-Meillet (1959:31) are characteristically succinct: “aucun rapprochement net” Walde-Hofmann (1938-34:1.73) endorse a derivation from a virtual *ap(o)-sp-rus ‘rejecting’ in the sense ‘repellent’, related to Latin aspernōr ‘to reject’. They compare Sanskrit apa-sphūr- ‘that pushes away’ and cite Latin ab-horrēre ‘to shrink from’, also rarely ‘to be abhorrent’, for the meaning.

This derivation is objectionable in terms used. For a Latin compound with the same structure of preverb, verbal root and thematic vowel one may compare persicus (Accius) beside the more usual persicās ‘determined, obstinate’. However, the presumed semantic development is highly implausible, despite the pleadings of Walde-Hofmann. Latin aspernāri and spernere ‘to reject, disdain’ reflect the PIE root *spērh-, which meant ‘to kick, lash out with the foot’ (transitive and intransitive).2 Addition of the preverb *apa- added the notion of ‘away’, thus either ‘to escape’ or ‘to kick away, repel’, as reflected in the earliest Sanskrit attestations of the combination (for which see Grassmann 1964:1611 and Scarlatta 1999:670–1).

The more general sense of ‘to reject, disdain’ of the Latin verbs thus reflects an active, originally physical pushing away of an unwanted object. While pushing is no longer a necessary component of the meaning, the subjects of aspernāri are predictably exclusively sentient beings, people and animals (a rare exception like bonestis ‘integrity’ is obviously a mere figure for ‘men of integrity’). It is therefore inconceivable that (pre-) Latin speakers would have characterized inert inanimate objects like stones, terrain or wine as ‘rejecting’--an action these objects were quite incapable of. The fact that Cato (apr. 109) characterizes some wine as asperum ‘sharp, sour’, while Cicero (De orat. 3.99) uses aspernāri to express disdain for sweet (!) food and drink does not remotely prove that there was any semantic association between the adjective and verb, pace Walde-Hofmann. If there was any such association, it would in any case have been due to the notion that something asper was (to be) rejected (by people), not that it was itself ‘rejecting’.

The semantic development of asper from *hosp- ‘to cut’ is on the other hand straightforward. An adjective with the fundamental sense of ‘cutting’ can easily develop the range of meanings shown by asper. One may compare English ‘sharp’ from German *sharpa ‘cutting’ (PIE *sker- ‘to cut’), which in older English was used to mean not only ‘sharp’ but also ‘rough’ (used to translate Latin asper), ‘prickly’, ‘punget’ (of taste), and ‘severe, harsh’ (of people).

Latin asper ‘cutting’ may be analyzed in formal terms as a ro-adjective. The e of asper is

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7. See RiX 2001:186, but there is no justification for a PIE *h, since the aspirated stop of Sanskrit sphūrasi etc. may be attributed to the preceding *h. For arguments that the final laryngeal is probably specifically *h, see Melchert 1994:380–1.
8. The semantic development of abhorrēre also offers no support for the Walde-Hofmann account of asper. As per Ehrhardt-Meillet (1959:300), the sense ‘to shrink from with fright’ of abhorrēre is derived from that of ‘to shudder’, and the verb was originally intransitive. It never meant ‘to reject’. The rarer meaning of ‘to be repellent, repugnant’ was derived directly from the sense of ‘to be bristling’, thus with the very opposite semantic change as that claimed for asper < *ap-o-pers.
inherent, not due to anaptyxis (fem. aspēna, int. aspernum), thus precluding a *ro-derivative directly from the root (*bēesp-ro-). This fact in no way invalidates the basic analysis as a ro-adjective, but the ambiguity of medial e in Latin and the variety of “complex” ro-formations (i.e., of the shape *-ro-) make it difficult to determine the most plausible precise preform.

Latin medial e before r may reflect any prehistoric short vowel: see Meillet-Vendryes 1963:113–4, Sihler 1995:61–2, and Meiser 1998:68. If we look at other adjectives in Latin with inherent -er- for guidance, we find that miser ‘wretched, pitiful’ and tener ‘tender’ offer no help. Both are of doubtful etymology, and even if one accepts the connection of the first with maestus ‘sad, gloomy’ and the second with tendere ‘to stretch’ and tenere ‘thin’, their complete formal isolation leaves the source of the -er- obscure.

If one accepts the derivation of Latin prosper ‘successful, favorable’ from *prō-gra-, (Schrijver 1991:93) via *prō-spar-, it is possible that this would have provided the basis for remodeling a *hēesp-ro- to *hēesp-par-, whence asper (the cluster *-spa- might have favored such a remodeling). 9

Latin liter ‘free’ directly matches Greek ἐλευθερος and reflects *bélēdheros. Meiser (1998:107) likewise derives Latin later ‘torn’ from *bélē-kero- and the cognate Greek noun λαεις, λαειδος ‘tear(ing); tatters’ from *bélē-kid-. However, it seems hard not to associate the form *bélēdheros- with the existence of a thematic present *bélēdho- in PIE (see Rix 2001:248). It is therefore not clear that one should assume a form in *-ero- for later, where there is no independent evidence for any thematic derivatives.

It seems assured that at least some Greek nouns in -iδος reflect remade i-stems (Chantraine 1933:114). I therefore find it more economical to assume an original animate action/result noun *bélki- ‘tear(ing)’ continued by Greek λαεις, λαειδος, from which was derived a secondary adjective *bélki-ro- ‘torn’ which appears as Latin later. For an additional motivation for this choice see below. 10 Whether one assumes *bēesp-aro-, *bēesp-aro-, or *bēesp-aro-, I believe that the meaning of Latin asper supports its analysis as a ro-adjective to the verb *bēesp- ‘to cut’ presupposed by CLuvian haelp-.

A second possible nominal reflex of *bēesp- ‘to cut’ is Greek ἀνοῦς, ἀνοίδος ‘(round) shield’. For a very thorough and helpful summary of the evidence for this word and its meaning see the article by C. Calame and B. Mader in Snell (1979:14:25–33). The ἀνοῦς was made of several layers of leather, with or without an outermost sheath of metal (Snell 1979:14:31), and I propose that it was named after the chief material from which it was made: skin/hide. The most obvious parallel is that of ἀκοῖος, the other ancient Greek word for ‘shield’, which cannot be separated from Sanskrit tride-/tredas- ‘skin’.

It is in turn commonplace in words for ‘skin, hide’ to be derived from ‘to cut’: Latin

9. The Latin outcome obviously would be the same if one accepts the arguments of Jasnow (2003:118–9) that the root was rather *pēhr-.
10. One cannot entirely exclude the alternative account by Chantraine (1933:318) and (1968:85:615) by which λαεις is backformed from the verb λαισία to tear and later likewise from laeirav to tear (the true base of the latter being a neuter i-stem *laisos). However, as noted by Ernout-Meillet (1959:33), the coexistence of later and the nasal-infinitive verb lamiinare ‘to tear’ is reminiscent of lare, insanis and suggests that later is a real roi-adjective.
11. This comparison must be retained, regardless of the problem in vocalism raised by the equally attractive equation of the Sanskrit with Hittite tū(h)kam, ‘body; limb’. For one discussion of this problem see Joseph 1988. It is also possible that Latin sātus ‘shield’ is from the same root as Late Latin sati ‘skin’ and Greek kératos ‘hide, leather’; see Ernout-Meillet 1959:607 and Walde-Hofmann 1938:343–2.503 for this and the alternative of a loanword from Celtic.
corium, Greek δέρμα, English 'skin', etc. (see Buck 1949:260-1). I therefore suggest with all due reserve that Greek ἄρντος, ἄρντον represents a remodeled i-stem action/result noun *h₂r(e)sp. 'cutting/thing cut' in the specialized sense 'skin, hide', while Latin asper reflects a secondary m-stem adjective *hespi-ro- 'cutting', both from *hesp- 'to cut' attested in CLuvian hasp-. The CLuvian verb thus enriches our stock of PIE verbal roots by one and may allow us to remove Latin asper and Greek ἄρντος from their previous isolation."

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Harrassowitz.

12. Since a root *h₂esp- is by definition "enlarged", I also find attractive the suggestion of Brent Vine (personal communication) that Palalic h₂tštₚₚₚₜₚₜₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚₚportion. 

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