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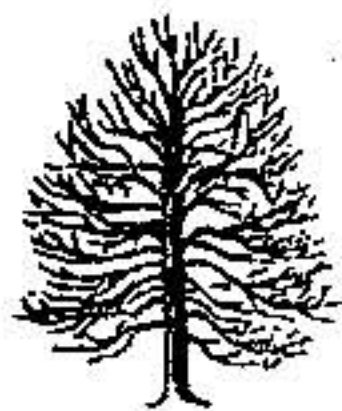
Studies in historical and Indo-European linguistics
presented to

Jay H. Jasanoff

by students, colleagues, and friends

edited by

Alan J. Nussbaum



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PIE **h₂esp-* ‘to cut’

H. Craig Melchert

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

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 *hašp-* is thus far attested only in Hittite context, with both Luvian and Hittite inflection: pres. 3 sg. *hašpati*, pret. 1 sg. *hašpaha*, 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, Puhvel (1991:233) argues that the verb is not a primary *verbum delendi*, but rather means ‘to handle, 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 *hašp-* with other verbs of destruction in no way argues against its having a similar meaning. Such redundancy is also well attested with other combinations: *nu URUKathariy[an] URUGa[zza]pann=a hašnik[ta] n=aš arha warnut* ‘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 Puhvel: ‘to handle, take care of’, in contrast with the case of *zinne-*, whose basic meaning ‘to finish’ is well established, although it is also used with (*kattan*) *arha* 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 Puhvel 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 *hašp-* 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 URUZihzini MU.8.KAM ēšta aniat n=at=kan wār(a)šta GIŠtiyēššar daiš n=[a]t=kan hašpadda n=aš URULihzinaz āppa iezzi* (KUB 33.66 + KBo 40.333 iii 3–6).²

1. For *ha-aš-pád-da* (KUB 33.66 + KBo 40.333 iii 5) see Groddek 1999:38. For all other attestations see Puhvel 1991:232–3.

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 *iezzzi* (NB with enclitic subject pronoun!) is not the verb ‘to make (one’s way)’, but rather a second precious Hittite example of the uncompounded form of **h₁ei-* ‘to go’ alongside pres. 3 pl. *yanzi* in KBo 22.2 obv. 7. The attested pres. 3 sg. *iezzzi* (/yetsi/) is an unsurprising backformation from the plural, replacing the historically regular but synchronically quite irregular **ezi* < **h₁éti*.

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 two middle clauses is also unquestionable: “He harvested them (nom.-acc. pl. neuter); he planted (lit. placed) a forest.”³ Although he correctly recognizes this sequence of harvesting and planting, Groddek (1999:40, 46) strangely interprets *aniya-* in its very general sense of ‘to carry out’ (“verrichtete Tätigkeiten”) and likewise assigns Puhvel’s alleged general meaning to *hašp-* (“verfuhr 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 Maṣat: *man apē A.ŠA terippi anier* “they would have planted those fields” (HKM 54:16–7) and *nu ŠA BELUMES TI NUMUN.HI.A ānneškeši* “while you plant/sow the seed of the lords” (HKM 55:21–2).⁴ 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 *aniat... wār(a)šta* the sequence *daiš... hašpadda* 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.⁵ We must conclude that the verb *hašp-* was the technical term for harvesting trees, just as *warš-* was that for harvesting grain. One obviously harvests trees by cutting them down, and I take this to be the basic sense of *hašp-*. 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 *arha-*.

The athematic Hittite inflection (*hašpun, hašper*) is not diagnostic for the original Luvian inflection. However, the appearance of pret. 3 sg. *ha-aš-pád-da* with unlenited ending alongside *ha-aš-pa-ti* and *ha-aš-pa-ha* 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).⁶ For a root-accented thematic verb we would expect consistent single consonant in the verbal endings (thus **ha-aš-pa-t/da*).

Luvian *hašp-* ‘to cut (down)’ points to a PIE verbal root **h₂/3esp-*, with the odds heavily favoring **h₂/3esp-* and most likely **h₂esp-*. 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, *GIŠtiyēšsar*, with Groddek 1999:40, is ‘Baumpflanzung’. Following Oettinger (2002:256) and Harry Hoffner (personal communication), I take *GIŠtiyēšsar* to be a figura etymologica in which *tiyēšsar*, derived precisely from *dāi-* ‘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 *GIŠwarhu(i)zma-*.

4. In this use *aniya-* can take as its object either the seed or the field planted: see Alp 1991:348 for references to further examples and also Ofitsch 2001:329–30. In our passage the transparent direct object has undergone ellipsis: “He planted/sowed (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 2002:256). In any case a field of stumps would have effectively deterred resettlement.

6. It is conceivable that the use of the sign *pád* was meant to express directly the absence of any real vowel and thus directly a form /haspta/.

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' *saxīs 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. Ernout-Meillet (1959:51) are characteristically succinct: "aucun rapprochement net." Walde-Hofmann (1938–54:1.73) endorse a derivation from a virtual **ap(o)-speros* 'rejecting' in the sense 'repellent', related to Latin *aspernor* 'to reject'. They compare Sanskrit *apa-sphūr-* 'that pushes away' and cite Latin *ab-horrere* 'to shrink from', also rarely 'to be abhorrent', for the meaning.

This derivation is unobjectionable in formal terms. For a Latin compound with the same structure of preverb, verbal root and thematic vowel one may compare *peruicax* (Accius) beside the more usual *peruicāx* 'determined, obstinate'. However, the presumed semantic development is highly implausible, despite the pleadings of Walde-Hofmann. Latin *aspernārī* and *spernere* 'to reject, disdain' reflect the PIE root **sperh-*, which meant 'to kick, lash out with the foot' (transitive and intransitive).⁷ Addition of the preverb **apo* 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 Scarlata 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 *aspernārī* are predictably exclusively sentient beings, people and animals (a rare exception like *honestās* '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 (*Agr.* 109) characterizes some wine as *asperum* 'sharp, sour', while Cicero (*De orat.* 3.99) uses *aspernārī* 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'.⁸

The semantic development of *asper* from **h₂esp-* '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 Germanic **skarpaz* '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', 'pungent' (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

7. See Rix 2001:585, but there is no justification for a PIE **p^h*, since the aspirated stop of Sanskrit *sphurāti* etc. may be attributed to the preceding **s*. For arguments that the final laryngeal is probably specifically **h₁* see Melchert 1994:80–1.

8. The semantic development of *ab-horrere* also offers no support for the Walde-Hofmann account of *asper*. As per Ernout-Meillet (1959:300), the sense 'to shrink from with fright' of *ab-horrere* 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* < **apo-speros*.

inherent, not due to anaptyxis (fem. *aspera*, nt. *asperum*), thus precluding a *ro*-derivative directly from the root (**h₂esp-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 **-Vro-*) 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 *tenuis* ‘thin’, their complete formal isolation leaves the source of the *-e-* obscure.

If one accepts the derivation of Latin *prosper* ‘successful, favorable’ from **prō-sph₁-ro-* (Schrijver 1991:93) via **prō-sparo-*, it is possible that this would have provided the basis for remodeling a **h₂esp-ro-* to **h₂esparo-*, whence *asper* (the cluster **-spr-* might have favored such a remodeling).⁹

Latin *liber* ‘free’ directly matches Greek *ἐλεύθερος* and reflects **h₁léudhero-*. Meiser (1998:107) likewise derives Latin *lacer* ‘torn’ from **lh₂k-ero-* and the cognate Greek noun *λακίς*, *λακίδος* ‘tear(ing); tatters’ from **lh₂k-id-*. However, it seems hard not to associate the form **h₁léudhero-* with the existence of a thematic present **h₁léudhe/o-* in PIE (see Rix 2001:248). It is therefore not clear that one should assume a form in **-ero-* for *lacer*, where there is no independent evidence for any thematic derivatives.

It seems assured that at least some Greek nouns in *-id-* reflect remade *i*-stems (Chantraine 1933:114). I therefore find it more economical to assume an original animate action/result noun **lh₂kí-* ‘tear(ing)’ continued by Greek *λακίς*, *λακίδος*, from which was derived a secondary adjective **lh₂ki-ró-* ‘torn’ which appears as Latin *lacer*. For an additional motivation for this choice see below.¹⁰ Whether one assumes **h₂esp-aro-*, **h₂esp-ero-*, or **h₂esp-iro-*, I believe that the meaning of Latin *asper* supports its analysis as a *ro*-adjective to the verb **h₂esp-* ‘to cut’ presupposed by CLuvian *hašp-*.

A second possible nominal reflex of **h₂esp-* ‘to cut’ is Greek *ἀσπίς*, *ἀσπίδος* ‘(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 (1979:1425–33). The *ἀσπίς* was made of several layers of leather, with or without an outermost sheath of metal (Snell 1979:1431), 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 *σάκος*, the other ancient Greek word for ‘shield’, which cannot be separated from Sanskrit *tvác-/tvacas-* ‘skin’.¹¹

It is in turn commonplace for 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 Jasanoff (2003:108–9) that the root was rather **speh₂-*.

10. One cannot entirely exclude the alternative account by Chantraine (1933:338) and (1968–80:615) by which *λακίς* is backformed from the verb *λακίζω* ‘to tear’ and *lacer* likewise from *lacerāre* ‘to tear’ (the true base of the latter being a neuter *s*-stem **lakos*). However, as noted by Ernout-Meillet (1959:335), the coexistence of *lacer* and the nasal-infix verb *lancināre* ‘to tear’ is reminiscent of *sacer*, *sancire* and suggests that *lacer* is a real *ro*-adjective.

11. This comparison must be retained, regardless of the problem in vocalism raised by the equally attractive equation of the Sanskrit with Hittite *tu(e)kka-* ‘body; limb’. For one discussion of this problem see Joseph 1988. It is also possible that Latin *scūtum* ‘shield’ is from the same root as Latin *cutis* ‘skin’ and Greek *σκῦτος* ‘hide, leather’: see Ernout-Meillet 1959:607 and Walde-Hofmann 1938–54:2.503 for this and the alternative of a loanword from Celtic.

corium, Greek δέρμα, English 'skin', etc. (see Buck 1949:200–1). I therefore suggest with all due reserve that Greek ἀσπίς, ἀσπίδος represents a remodeled *i*-stem action/result noun *h₂(e)spi- 'cutting/thing cut' in the specialized sense 'skin, hide', while Latin *asper* reflects a secondary *ro*-stem adjective *h₂espi-ro- 'cutting', both from *h₂esp- 'to cut' attested in CLuvian *hašp*-. The CLuvian verb thus enriches our stock of PIE verbal roots by one and may allow us to remove Latin *asper* and Greek ἀσπίς from their previous isolation.¹²

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12. Since a root *h₂esp- is by definition "enlarged", I also find attractive the suggestion of Brent Vine (personal communication) that Palaic *hašira*- 'knife, dagger' represents a substantivized *ro*-stem to the unenlarged root: a virtual *h₂es-*iro*-, likewise 'cutting, that which cuts'. The derivation of this word from *h₂esiro- (Eichner 1980:127 n. 30) and comparison with Latin *ensis* and Sanskrit *así*- 'sword' are problematic phonologically: for the Latin see Schrijver 1991:64 and for the Palaic compare Oettinger 1986:3418 and Melchert 1994:214. As Brent Vine reminds me, the pattern of *h₂es-/h₂esp- recalls that of *ues-/uesp- 'be clothed'. For the enlarged root *uesp- as the source of Latin *vesper* and Greek ἑσπερος see Katz 2000.

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