

## Towards a reconstruction of Proto-Italic

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The historical existence of a prehistoric language is best supported by its reconstruction, at least in relevant parts. In an old IE language the relevant part *par excellence* is the verbal system (cf. Bopp, Konjugationssystem). I will try to reconstruct the verbal system of Proto-Italic, first to show that such a language in all probability existed, and second to add a certain depth to the prehistory of Latin and Sabellian (= Osco-Umbrian). Besides, I will establish the demand that each historical explanation of a phenomenon of Latin or Sabellian has to respect the state of the phenomenon not only in Proto-IE., but in Proto-Italic, too. I shall restrict my argumentation to the categories of the dimensions ‘aspect / manner of action’ and ‘tense / mood’, that is: to the primary and secondary stems, without discussing every detail. The model of the PIE verbal system I start from is in the latter dimension the usual one and in the former that proposed in my Introduction to ‘LIV’ (‘2001<sup>2</sup>’); beyond the three generally assumed categories of primary stems (present, aorist, perfect), it contains a series of others, among which are two sigmatic stems of a desiderative.

In the present system, the first step in the direction of PIt. was the creation of a new imperfect. That was necessary because the augment and the /i/ of the primary endings were dropped, so that the injunctive, imperfect and some forms of the present indicative were identical. The new imperfect suffix  $-\beta_-$  of L. *am\_-b\_-s* was abstracted – pace Jasanoff – from the pluperfect singular *fu-β\_-* ‘had come to exist \_ was’ (O. *fu-fa-ns* ‘they were’). In a next step the desiderative was inserted as a future in the present system. The suffix was  $-s/so-$  after a laryngeal and  $-h_1s/h_1so-$  after a liquid or nasal; the /a/ that resulted from the laryngeal was replaced by the thematic vowel, as elsewhere in PIt. (O. *dide-t* ‘gives’ for *\*dida-* < *\*didh\_3-*); the thematic vowel was interpreted as part of the thematic present stem and the suffix as  $-s/-so-$  (O.U. *fu-s-t*, O. *ferē-s-t*). The subjunctive of this desiderative-future, which in PIt. (a) like all subjunctives, had got the potential function from the optative, and (b), like all thematic subjunctives, had generalised the suffix form  $-\_-$ , became an independent category of the PIt present stem. Its function was to express the potentialis and the irrealis; it was characterised by the combined suffix  $-s_-$  (‘subjunctive imperfect’: L. *es-s\_-s*, O. *fu-si-d*).

In PIt., the optative and subjunctive were in principle still different moods. Compared with PIE. there was a change in function: the potential shifted from optative to subjunctive, the volutative in the opposite direction. In the athematic present stems the suffix was  $j_-/-_-$  in the optative and  $-e/-o-$  in the subjunctive (OL. *s-i\_-d* O. *-s-ii-ns*; OL *es-e-d*), as in PIE; the originally athematic nasal presents to set roots show an  $-\_-$  < *-aha-* < *-eh\_2-e-* in the subjunctive (*\*tel-n\_-d* < *\*t\_l\_6-ne-h\_2-e-t* vs. ind. [2<sup>nd</sup>.pl.] *\*telnete* < *\*telna-te* < *\*t\_l\_6-nh\_2te*). In the thematic present stems the subjunctive normally has generalised the suffix  $-\_-$  the 2.3. sing. 2.plur. at the cost of  $-\_-$  (under the influence of the athematic optative?: *\*neu\_-j\_-s* : *\*neu\_-j\_-m* = *\*amaj\_-s* : *X*; *X* = *\*amaj\_-m*). The optative suffix had a form which resulted in Lat. and Sab.  $-\_-$ . The  $-\_-$ -subjunctives in Tocharian and Celtic are now recognised as products of the individual history of these languages; the Lat. and Sab.  $-\_-$ -subjunctives should be understood in the same manner. The  $-\_-$  could result from the PIE thematic optative suffix combination  $-o-ih_1-$  > *-oja-* > *-oa-* (as Cowgill saw, unfortunately retracting his finding); the older PIt

form was *-oja-*, the younger one *-oa-*, the suffix first *-ja-*, later *-a-*; in certain contexts /*oa/* contracted to /*\_/\_*/ already in late PIIt. (e.g. in groups of three vowels as in *\*moneoa-*, *\*g<sup>w</sup>enioa-*); this may have been promoted by the subjunctives with *-\_/\_*-suffix. In order to avoid the optative or subjunctive being identical to the indicative, present stems in /*\_/\_*/ and in /*\_/\_*/ used the same suffix for both moods, the former *-\_/\_* of the subjunctive, the latter *-\_/\_* of the optative. The total syncretism of optative and subjunctive, present in Latin and in Sabellian, is Post-PIIt: in Latin the forms of the two categories are kept distinct. For the new, syncretistic category, both branches used the optative forms. In Sabellian, the forms of the *-\_/\_*-subjunctive disappeared (except in the stems in *-\_/\_*, where they had optative function, too).

In this branch the subjunctive – optative syncretism was the only innovation versus PIIt in the dimension tense – mood. Latin was less conservative. It abandoned the sigmatic future, perhaps for the sake of avoiding confusion with the sigmatic aorist (which has disappeared in Sabellian). To express the future, Latin used the forms of the subjunctive wherever possible (*es-e-d*, *ag-\_-t*, *veni-\_-t*), that is, except in the stems in *-\_/\_* and in *-\_/\_*, where no forms of an independent subjunctive existed. For these stems, Latin created the new future in *-βe/o-* on the basis of the imperfect in *-β\_-*, using the model ipf. *\*es-\_-d* (<*\*es-(β)-\_-d* for *\*fu-β\_-d*) – fut. *es-e--d*. The new future is only Latin.

In the dimension of aspect/action the categories aorist and perfect were still distinct in PIIt, even if their signification became more similar to each other. The perfect expressed any state as a consequence of a previous act; not only the state of the subject as in PIE; it therefore could have been applied to all verbs. There are two arguments for the independence of the two PIIt categories: (1) If a verb is attested in the same primary stem in both branches, the present stem is structurally identical in over 90 %, the perfect stem only in 50 % of cases (Meiser). (2) In Sabellian the endings of the new perfect indicative continue those of the thematic aorist, in Latin mainly those of the perfect.

The OIt passive perfect was periphrastic as still in Latin and Sabellian (L. *terminata est* = O. *teremnatust*). In the active perfect stem of primary verbs PIIt continued inherited types, reduplication (OL. O. *deded*) and lengthening of the root (L. O. *\_m-*). For the active perfect of secondary verbs PIIt seems to have used periphrastic forms of various types. One possibility was the aorist of *fac-* ‘do, make’ plus the passive participle (*\*termen\_tom\_f\_ked* ‘he made limited’ > O. *\*termen\_tom* > *\*teremnatom* ‘I limited’, 3<sup>rd</sup> Pl. *teremnatens*); in another an aorist/perfect form of *fu-* ‘become’ was connected with an active present participle (*ambi-did\_f\_fust* ‘will have been surrounding’ > U. *andirsafust*). A third possibility (not the least), the combination of a present stem form of *es-* ‘be’ with the (non reduplicated) active perfect participle was, as I think, continued in the Latin *-u*-perfect (*\*port\_-wos\_s-s* ‘you are having carried’ > *port\_uis-t\_*; *-t\_* is the 2<sup>nd</sup> sing. perfect ending *\*-th<sub>2</sub>ai*). In this way the multiform Italic rules for the formation of the perfect in secondary verbs find a uniform explanation. The *-s*-perfect, the *-b*-future and the subjunctive imperfect of Latin are typical cases in which considering PIIt offers a chance to decide between several explanations based only on Latin.

Summary: The possibility of reconstructing the verbal system makes the existence of PIIt highly probable. PIIt imparts the prehistory of Latin with more depth of focus and its investigations with more criteria. It would be interesting to ask where this language was spoken; but this exceeds my competence.

## Table

## Present stem system

	indicative	injunctive	imperfect	future
PIE athematic	<i>h<sub>1</sub>es-ti</i>	<i>h<sub>1</sub>es-t</i>	<i>e-h<sub>1</sub>es-t</i>	---
thematic	<i>b<sup>h</sup>ere-ti</i>	<i>b<sup>h</sup>ere-t</i>	<i>e- b<sup>h</sup>ere-t</i>	---
PIt athematic	<i>es-t</i>	=	<i>fu-β<sub>-</sub>-d</i>	<i>fu-s-t</i>
thematic	<i>fere-t</i>	=	<i>fere-e-β<sub>-</sub>-d</i>	<i>fere-s-t</i>
Lat. athematic	<i>est</i>	---	<i>erat</i>	<i>erit</i>
thematic	<i>fert</i>	---	<i>fer<sub>-</sub>bat</i>	<i>feret</i>
Sab. athematic	<i>est</i>	---	<i>fufans</i> (3 <sup>rd</sup> pl)	<i>fust</i>
thematic	<i>feret</i>	---	??	<i>ferest</i>
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	subjunctive	optative	imperfect subjunctive	
PIE athematic	<i>h<sub>1</sub>es-e-t</i>	<i>h<sub>1</sub>s-ieh<sub>1</sub>-t</i>	---	
thematic	<i>b<sup>h</sup>ere-e-t</i>	<i>b<sup>h</sup>ero-ih<sub>1</sub>-t</i>	---	
PIt athematic	<i>es-e-d</i>	<i>s-i<sub>-</sub>-d</i>	<i>fu-s<sub>-</sub>-d / es-s<sub>-</sub>-d</i>	
thematic	<i>fer-<sub>-</sub>-d</i>	<i>fero-(i)a-d</i>	<i>fere-s<sub>-</sub>-d</i>	
Lat. athematic	<i>sit</i>		<i>esset</i>	
thematic	<i>ferat</i>		<i>ferret / ageret</i>	
Sab. athematic	<i>si, sins</i> (3 <sup>rd</sup> pl)		<i>fusid</i>	
thematic	<i>kahad</i>		<i>patensins</i> (3 <sup>rd</sup> pl)	

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