ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF OXYTONE o-GRADE
ADJECTIVES TO -ú- STEMS

The ancient Indo-European oxytone -ú- stem adjective is well known. It made, by preference, antonymic adjectives. It must be an ultimate specialization in meaning of original deverbal, participial formations. The vocalism of such forms was, by rule, zero grade. Such ancient formations as *suādūr = suVHda -ú- must represent revocalizations motivated, perhaps, by the opaqueness engendered by a rule-generated *suHda -ú- → [su:du-]; note the revocalization seen in ávδάνω < *[su3-n-δ(η)-c]/ζ-.

The background of deverbal agentive adjectives of the form τομίζε is well understood. These were, by rule, oxytone thematics and o-grade. Thus we see a potential equation or convergence of deverbals in IE:

*φ - ú- “participial” = o - ò- “agentive”

In Baltic we see clear traces of the formation *φ - ú-; Lith. bingūs, and, with revised vocalism, platūs. But, compared with the ample supply of u-stems, such formations are rare. The notable fact of Baltic is the appearance of o-grade bases in -ú-stems: kartūs “bitter”, gajūs “lively, vivacious”, etc.; or even of pseudo-o-grade: saldūs “sweet” (: Eng. salt, Gk. ἅλς, Arm. ալ, Lat. sal, Welsh halen). These last examples, of course, constitute direct successors to the old antonyms.

---

1 Every standard handbook, as well as numerous monographs, recognizes the class and gives the essential facts, with supporting examples from Indo-Iranian, Greek, Baltic, less often Hittite, and with systematic transformations in Slavic, Latin, and Armenian.

2 This is one of the most interesting Indo-European correlations of semantics and form-class.

3 This has been shown on the basis of the Hittite material by Dr. Howard Berman in his University of Chicago dissertation on Hittite noun formation.


5 Indic svādū-, ṭδῦζ etc.

6 The standard handbooks recognize the class, but often with repetitions and narrowly selected examples.

7 [references to Skardžius, etc.]

On the other hand, some old u-stems have been thematized\(^9\): Lith. *leĩgvas* “light”\(^10\). Finally, some fresh u-stems have been created on older adjectives: *gajus* > *gaivus* “refreshing, vivifying”; “lively”.

Now if we turn to the fate of the IE class of τομός, F. Kortlandt has pointed out\(^11\) that it is difficult in Balto-Slavic to distinguish exact descendants of true old simplexes, i.e., of disyllables. However Hamp has claimed\(^12\) that a useful test for such formations lies precisely in the inventory of Baltic o-grade u-stems:

*lankus, lankstus* “flexible, pliant”; *laĩkas* “bow, hoop, rim”. We see that in this paradigm the oxytone o-grade u-stem has taken the place of the oxytone o-grade thematic τομός. Such deverbal formations have then had a further great success in Baltic:

*nemaruś* “nemirtingas, kuris nemiršta, kuris negali mirti”, etc.

To close the circle, we find deverbal quasi-participial u-stems in o-grade as virtual synonyms of *-rō- > -ra- ə-grade (Nullstufe) adjectives\(^13\):

Lith. *skaudūs* “sore, severe” : *skūras* and also *véikus* “quick” : *vikras* “nimble”
Gk. *βλαθύς* : *βλαθόρος*
Hitt. *tepu* : Skt. *daubra-*
Skt. *svādu-* : Toch. B *swāre*
Lith. *dubūs* : Toch. B *tapre*

And then in turn these -ra- stems, preserving their ancient oxytonicity, yield to the adjectival u-stem productivity:


---

\(^9\) On the IE rule for the vocalization of denominal (or nonverbal) thematic (the “deinos rule”), see IF, 1977, 82, p. 75–76, and my fuller discussion in a series of studies in press.

\(^10\) See my discussion of this and related forms, Études celtiques, 1975, 14, p. 461 ff.

\(^11\) Congress of Slavists, Zagreb–Ljubljana.

\(^12\) Rocznik slawistyczny, in press.

\(^13\) See my discussion of these formations, currently appearing in a Festschrift.