

The Greek suffix -θ- and the Caland System

Andrea Santamaria (University of Bologna)

Via Zamboni, 32 – 40123 Bologna (BO), Italy

andrea.santamaria3@unibo.it

The present work addresses the distribution of the Greek verbal suffix -θ-, its connection to the Caland System and its development from the Homeric Greek up to the Byzantine period.

The presence of forms showing a Caland behavior in Greek was recognized as early as Wackernagel (1897), only few years after the related observations of Caland (1892; 1893) himself on Indo-Iranian languages. After more than a century of studies, Greek proved to match a high number of Caland suffixes attested elsewhere (cf. Ritsch 1974²: 66; Meißner 1998; Bichlmeier 2014). These suffixes commonly contribute to deriving adjectives (e.g. ἐρυθρός ‘red’ < **h₁rud^h-ró-*), nouns (e.g. ἔρευθος ‘redness’ < **h₁reud^h-e/os-*) and verbs (e.g. ἐρεῦθω ‘I make/become red’ < **h₁reud^h-eh₁-*). Among them, the suffix -θ- was tentatively associated with some Caland formations (e.g. Nussbaum 1976: 90 and Rau 2009: 152-153 fn. 80). Still, no definitive evidence was put forward in favor its attribution to the Caland System nor its behavior *vis-à-vis* the other Caland suffixes was clearly detected.

Since Benveniste (1935: 188-210), a suffix -θ- was recognized in a wide range of forms, such as adjective abstracts (e.g. πλῆθος ‘multitude, quantity’), *nomina agentis* (e.g. τένης ‘gourmand’), verbs (mostly θω-presents such as βρίθω ‘I am heavy’) and adverbs (e.g. μίνυθα ‘a short time’). The adjective abstract μέγεθος ‘greatness’ was analyzed as deriving a property concept adjective and would therefore speak in favor of a ‘marginal’ Caland **d^ho-* (cf. Nussbaum 1976: 90). On the other hand, few verbal forms such as λήθω ‘I hide’ were traced back to constructions employing the function verb **d^heh₁-* (cf. Hackstein 2002 and Schutzzeichel 2014). However, as a complete investigation of forms in -θ- and their Indo-European relatives is still pending, both the typology of derived stems and their position within the Caland System remain opaque.

Thus, the present work focuses on (a) the typology, from both a morphological and a semantic perspective, of stems showing a derivative in -θ- and their diachronic developments; (b) the Indo-European cognates of -θ- and the role they played within the Caland System. Accordingly, I argue for the following classes:

a) Verbs deriving property concept roots showing both other Caland formations and, sometimes, root aorists. This group is the oldest one. Moreover, a PIE suffix **d^h-* (perhaps ultimately traceable back to a grammaticalized **d^heh₁-*) with such roots would find parallels outside Greek (e.g. Gr. πλήθω ‘I am full’, Av. *frāda-* ‘thrive’ and Lat. *plēbēs* ‘common people’). Semantically, these verbs are commonly the inchoative member of a causative/inchoative alternation based on the opposition of derived stems (e.g. βρίθω ‘I am laden with’ : βριάω ‘I make strong’). Although such a typology of alternation was largely neutralized in Homeric Greek (cf. πύθω ‘I cause to rot’), it is revealingly traceable back to the Caland System.

b) Deverbal and denominal verbs in -θ- without Caland cognates and analogical to Caland forms in -θ-. In fact, up to the Byzantine period, new (inchoative) presents in -θω were mostly built on thematic stems either from *s*-stem nouns (e.g. τελέθω ‘I come to end’ : τέλος ‘coming to pass’) or *e*-graded presents (e.g. φλέγθω ‘I burn up’ : φλέγω ‘I burn sth.’). In Homeric Greek, few θ-aorists are opposed to thematic aorists (e.g. ἔσχθον : ἔσχον ‘I had’) and could therefore be directly related to the emergence of θ-passives.

c) Re-derived nouns. The vast majority are abstracts in -θεσ- analogical to μέγεθος. They are variously shaped from non-Caland property concept roots (e.g. ὄχθος ‘eminence’), verbs (e.g. κέλευθος ‘road, path’) or θω-presents (e.g. λήθος ‘forgetfulness’). Nevertheless, these nouns often belong to new ‘paradigms’ derived *einzelsprachlich* through suffixes previously employed within the Caland System (e.g. ἔσθος ‘garment’, ἑάνος ‘fine robe’ and ἔννυμι ‘I put clothes on another’). The same behavior is to be found for *nomina agentis* in -της and *nomina actionis* in -θη, which can partner with abstracts in -θεσ- too (e.g. ἐσθής ‘raiment’ and λήθη ‘forgetting’). Unsurprisingly, such suffixes were also employed to derive new adjectives from nouns in -θ- (e.g. λαθραῖος ‘secret’).

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