

1. Inflectional vocalic pieces in Latin verbal morphology: a synchronic and diachronic analysis

Andrea Calabrese
University of Connecticut

This paper will look at the historical development of reconstructed VP-shell and actional/aspectual formatives from Proto-Indo-European (PIE) into Latin. Thus, on the one hand, it will look at the outcomes of formatives such as **-eye-* characteristic of causatives, the **-ye* of denominatives, the **-eh₁-* characteristic of statives, and, on the other, at the outcomes of actional/aspectual formatives like **-e*, and **-ye-*. These formatives developed into the Latin root-adjacent vocalic pieces *-ā-*, *-ē-*, *-ě-*, *-ĩ-*, *-ī-*. The pieces *ā-*, *ē-*, *ī-*, developed from VP-shell elements. Thus, the *-ā-* conjugation developed mostly from denominatives in **-ye-* whose bases were the nominal stems of the *-ā-* (<**-eh₂-*) declension: */-ā-/* < **-eh₂-ye* (with loss of the intervocalic glide, subsequent merging of the vowel sequence and eventual reanalysis of the resulting piece as a *v⁰-derivative*): e.g., *curāmus* ‘cure’ (cf. *curā* ‘cure’). The *-ē-* conjugation developed mostly from the stative suffix *-ē-* (<**-eh₁-*) and from causatives in **-eye-* (with *o*-grade of root): */-ē-/* < **-eh₁-*; e.g., *sedēmus* ‘we sit’ (<**sed-eh₁-*; cf. *sīdo*, **si-sd-* ‘I sit down’), */-ē-/* < **-eyē-*, e.g., *monēmus* ‘we warn’ (<**mon-eye-*). The *-ī-* conjugation developed mostly from denominatives in **-ye-*, */-ī-/* < **-denominative *-yē-*, e.g., *fīnīmus* ‘limit’ (cf. *fīnis* ‘end’), but also from original stems in **-ye-*: *venīmus* ‘come’ (<**g^wen-ye-*). *ě-*, *-ī-*. The pieces */-ě-/* and */-ĩ-/* developed from actional/aspectual **-e*, **-ye* (*legimus* < **leg^y-e* ‘collect’; *capio* < **kap-ye-ti* ‘takes’).

I will argue against recent proposals by Bertocci and Pinzin (2020, 2021), who hypothesize that all these elements preserved their functional status in their development from PIE to Latin so that */-ā-/* and */-ī-/* are functional elements in the VP shell whereas */-ě-/* and */-ĩ-/* (as well as */-ē-/* in Bertocci and Pinzin’s analysis) are actional/aspectual markers. In contrast, I will support Aronoff’s (1994) original hypothesis that all root-adjacent vocalic pieces in Latin are simply ornamental elements. I will show how Latin root-adjacent vocalic pieces lost semantic specificity and were bleached in meaning due to their disparate etymological sources; for example, */-ā-/* did not develop only from the denominative sequence **-eh₂-ye* but also from de-adjectival factitive with the suffix **-h₂: novare* ‘to renew’ from *novus, nova, novum* ‘new’, and even possibly from a root-final laryngeal as in the case of primary verbs in */-ā-/*, which do not have a clear etymology: *amāre* ‘to (make) love’, *arāre* ‘to plow’, *volāre* ‘to fly’, *cubāre* ‘lie down’, *flagrāre* ‘to glow’ (note the semantic inhomogeneity of these verbs, which can be transitive, intransitive and also unaccusative). I will propose that this bleaching finally led to a major reanalysis of Latin morphophonology. Inflectional consonantal pieces were reinterpreted as exponents of functional nodes and inflectional vocalic pieces as exponents of ornamental nodes. This will lead to a radical theoretical simplification of Latin verbal morphology. The analysis of the development of the PIE formatives into Latin will require a detailed investigation of the morphosyntactic structure of the PIE verbal forms and specifically of the PIE VP-shell. The original status and the development of the *v⁰-formatives* will be of crucial importance in the analysis. It will be shown that they don’t need to be phonologically overt. The consequences of this fact will be explored.

References

- Aronoff, Mark. 1994. *Morphology by itself: Stems and inflectional classes*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bertocci, Davide & Francesco Pinzin. 2020. Two kinds of verbal roots in Latin: Evidence from thematic vowels and word-formation processes. *Lingue antiche e moderne* 9: 23-56.
- Bertocci, Davide & Francesco Pinzin. 2021. Morphology in action: some issues in the formation of the Latin perfect. In *Linguisticae Dissertationes. Current Perspectives on Latin Grammar, Lexicon and Pragmatics*.

Selected Papers from the 20th International Colloquium on Latin Linguistics (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain, June 17-21, 2019), 13-32. Madrid: Ediciones Clásicas.