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A Note on Hittite tāqa- 'steal'

The etymology of the Hittite mi-verb tāqa-, 3 sg. tāqezzi 'steal' is well-known: related lexical items outside Anatolian are Ved. tāyū-, stāyū-, Av. tāiū- 'thief', OCS taṣq 'I conceal', taṭa 'thief' and Gk. τηθομαί 'be in want (of)'. POKORNY refers these forms to a root *(s)taī- 'heimlich um etwas bringen, hehlen, stehlen'; most modern scholars would dispense with the long diphthong and write simply *(s)teh₂(i)-.

It has long been suspected that the final glide of roots in *-eh₃(i)- originated in the present, whence it was subsequently extended to other forms. Favoring such an interpretation is the fact that roots of this structure often have full- or zero-grade presents in *-ie/o- (cf. OSw. diā, Latv. dēju < *dēh₂(i)- 'suck'; Ved. syāt(i) < *seh₂(i)- or *eh₂eh₂(i)- 'bind') beside unextended aorists (cf. Ved. adhāt, āsāt): the present suffix here is presumably to be analyzed as *-i- followed by the thematic vowel. From a phonological point of view tāqa- could easily be explained as a formation of the same type, since *h₂ was regularly lost before *-q- in Hittite. A reconstruction *(s)teh₂ie/o-, however, would be morphologically unsatisfactory. Hittite is unique in typically showing athematic presents to "long-diphthongal" roots: the cognate of Ved. syāt(i) is 3 sg. iśhāi, 3 pl. iššišanzi, while OCS apējū 'I succeed' (< *apēh₃(i)-) is matched by 3 sg. īspāi, 3 pl. īspišanzi 'become sated'. I shall show elsewhere that this inflectional pattern is an archaism, and ultimately points to an IE type 3 sg. *teh₂(i)-e, 3 pl. *teh₂(i)-enti (or *teh₂(i)-dr). For the moment it is sufficient to note that the expected present of *(s)teh₂(i)- in Hittite would have been not 3 sg. tāqezzi, pl. tāqanzzi, but 3 sg. *taī, pl. *tīzanzi.
In fact, tā‘ezzi is not a form of the same type as Latv. dēju or OCS spejq at all, but an iterative-causative in *-eļe/o-. This is straightforwardly indicated by OCS tajq, the full paradigm of which (cf. 3 sg. taita, inf. taiti) is that of an i-present. Both Hitt. tāja- and Sl. *taji- can be derived without difficulty from an IE stem *(s)toh₂-i-eļe/o-; morphologically, the relationship of such a form to the root *(s)teh₂(i)- would be precisely the same as that of Ved. pāyāyatī 'causes to drink' (< *poh₂-i-eļe/o-) to IE *peh₂(i)- 'drink'. A further lexical item may thus be added to the growing list of Hittite verbs which have been shown to continue the IE iterative-causative category (cf. especially H. EICHNER, MSS 27, 5-44 (1969)). In the present case, moreover, the derivational isolation of tāja- and *taji- within their respective traditions and the absence of any otherwise reconstructable present for the root *(s)teh₂(i)- make it exceedingly likely that tā‘ezzi and OCS taita preserve intact a genuine IE form.