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## ΕΡΣΑΙ, ΠΡΟΓΟΝΟΙ, ΜΕΤΑΣΣΑΙ

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done survived, which was however identified in meaning with its morphological equivalent *fecerant*.

So little of early Latin survives that it is not easy to establish the existence of these separate forms of the perfect and aorist. But the contracted forms such as *duxti*, which occurs frequently in early Latin, imply that the elided vowel of *duxti* was short, while the absence of any instance like *perculsti*, *compulsti* is an argument in favour of the view that the corresponding vowel in the perfect was long. *Occisti* is not a proof to the contrary. *Caedo* in this

case has followed the instinct of the language in forming an aorist in *-si* instead of *cecidi*, which is the only reduplicated perfect with an originally long vowel in the penultimate.

In some such way as I have described the two tenses were fused, and the Latin perfect acquired a twofold character which makes it one of the difficulties of the language. I have spoken of the characteristic *i*, as peculiar to Latin, but the early and frequent form *ἀνώγει* suggests that the tendency to the insertion once existed in Greek in such forms as were destitute of reduplication.

FRED. W. WALKER.

### ΕΡΣΑΙ, ΠΡΟΓΟΝΟΙ, ΜΕΤΑΣΣΑΙ.

στείνοντο δὲ σηκοὶ  
ἀρνῶν ἢ δ' ἐρίφων· διακεκριμένοι δὲ ἕκασται  
ἔρχατο· χωρὶς μὲν πρόγονοι, χωρὶς δὲ μέτασσαι,  
χωρὶς δ' αὖθ' ἔρσαι.—*Od.* ix. 219—222.

EDITORS of the *Odyssey*, so far as I can discover, universally explain πρόγονοι, μέτασσαι and ἔρσαι as three different kinds of lambs or kids, πρόγονοι being early lambs (firstlings) and ἔρσαι late or very young lambs, while μέτασσαι form an intermediate class. One or two of the editors express a little surprise at finding πρόγονοι used in this way: Koch indeed remarks that we should rather expect πρόγονοι. μέτασσαι is generally connected with μετά, though some give μέσος or μετά and μέσος both, as if consonants were things with which philology had nothing to do. ἔρσαι all are agreed means 'dew,' and thence young ones'; and Aeschylus (*Agam.* 141 ῥόσοισι μαλερῶν λεόντων), and Sophocles (*Fr.* 62 ψακαλοῦχοι and ψάκαλον) are quoted for the same meaning.

Let us take the last of these three words first. Though whether we should write ἔρσαι or ἔρσαι is not certain, yet there can be no doubt that the word here is connected with the same root as the Homeric ἔρση (always, with one doubtful exception, trisyllabic). But the word has cognates much nearer in meaning in other languages. As examples of his relationship may be cited Latin *verres* = \*versēs, Brugmann, *Grundriss*, § 571), and Lithuanian *veřszis*<sup>1</sup> (*op. cit.* § 587).

<sup>1</sup> The very ingenious explanation of these forms given by my friend Dr. W. Streitberg in his Inaugural Dissertation (Halle 1888, see *Paul and Bräune's Zeitschr.* xiv. 2), and accepted by Brugmann, *Grundriss* i. p. 116, seems to me not absolutely conclusive. The constant assertion that *Cornelius* is older than *Cornelius* is certainly no strong support in the existing evidence, but in Lithuanian the form *veřszis* apparently does not occur.

Both of these words, like ἔρσαι here, betoken young animals. For *verres* being a young pig we have the authority of Varro (*R. R.* 2, 4. f.: *verres amniculi* and *semitres*: cf. also Hor. *Od.* iii. 22. 7). The Lithuanian *veřszis* means 'a calf': cf. Skt. *vřřhas*, 'bull.' The Latin and the Lithuanian words are very closely related. In Varro the form *verris* for the nominative also occurs, and Valerius Probus (see Forcellini, *sub voc. verrēs*) informs us that Cicero used *Verri* as the genitive (see also Bücheler-Windekilde, *Lateinische Declination*, § 50). The fuller form *Verrius* is preserved in the name of the grammarian Verrius Flaccus; and *Verris* is a form like *Cornelis*, *Caecilis*, *alis*, in early Latin. Thus Lat. *verrius*: Lith. *veřszis* = Lat. *verris*: Lith. *veřszis*. Whether *verrēs* is a corruption of the form *verris* I shall leave undecided; it is at any rate strange that this is the only Roman gentile name which does not end in *-ius*. If *verrēs* could be proved to be an original form the oblique cases of which have passed over to the *i*-stems, one might be led to conjecture a singular *Ἐέρσης* to this Greek form. That however is extremely unlikely, but there can, I think, be no doubt that the Greek, Latin and Lithuanian words are closely connected, even if the first is not absolutely identical with the other two. The original meaning would simply be 'young animal,' and then the different languages specialised the word in different senses, as has happened in so many other cases. Aeschylus' ῥόσοι and Sophocles' ψακαλοῦχοι μητέρες, with Eustathius' ψάκαλα· τὰ ἔμβρνα

καὶ τὰ ἄρτι δὴ γεγονότα, are imitations of the Homeric passage when the original meaning of ἔρσαι was no longer clearly understood.

Let us now return to the first of our three words, πρόγονοι. The use of the word for 'oldest lambs' (or kids) might perhaps be defended by πρόγονος, a 'stepson,' and L. and S. should therefore have put this meaning under that heading rather than along with πρόγονος, 'ancestor.' πρωτόγονος is confined to the *Iliad*, though occurring there several times in the required sense (as IV. 102, XXIII. 864); but προγενέστερος is common to both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. πρόγονος, however, is ἀπαξ εἰρημένον in Homer. Before deciding what meaning we should attach to it we must see how Polyphemus tends his flocks. When Odysseus arrives he finds the σηκοί packed full of lambs and kids. These σηκοί were pens specially constructed for the young ones—Eustathius on *Il.* xviii. 589: σηκοί δὲ μάλιστα οἱ τῶν νεογνῶν λέγονται (see A. Thaeer, *Philologus*, xxix. p. 604). When Polyphemus comes home later he drives into the cave πάντα μάλ' ὄσσ' ἤμελγε (238), but leaves the males outside (τὰ δ' ἄρσενά λειπε θύρηφιν). Whether we should read βαθείης ἔντοθεν αὐλῆς with Rumpf in 239, or let ἔκτοθεν stand is not material to the argument. In either case the males and females are separated. In 244 the ewes are milked, and her suckling (ἔμβρνον) is put under each of them after Polyphemus has got as much milk as he wants. Now these ἔμβρνα (ἔμβρνον and βρέφος, *Il.*, Ψ 266, seem to have exchanged meanings before the Attic period) must be the young ones which Odysseus found in the σηκοί on his arrival, else Polyphemus doubtless would have had very little return for his trouble in milking. From 308-9 we may gather that the lambs were again separated from their dams and confined by themselves during the night, for in the morning the milking is performed as before and the suckling placed under each. Next night, luckily for Odysseus, Polyphemus for some reason takes into the cave the rams as well (338-9); but still the ewes are kept separate from the sucklings, for next morning they bleat unmilked round the pens, and their udders are like to burst (439-440). The words μέμηκον ἀνήμελκτοι περὶ σηκούς must mean that the ewes are trying to reach their young ones in the pens and the reason is given—οὐθάρτα γὰρ σφαραγύντο; surely this gives a better and more natural sense than Ameis-Hentze's inter-

pretation (ed. 7) 'in den Hürden (Pferchen) umher.' Apparently only the rams and wethers go out of the cave with Odysseus and his men (425).

Thus it will be seen there is a well-marked tripartite division of the Cyclops' flocks all through. Is not this the division which is meant by πρόγονοι, μέτασσαι, ἔρσαι? The πρόγονοι are the ἄρσενες ὄες of 425, the word thus retaining its natural sense; the μέτασσαι are the θήλειαι of 439; and the ἔρσαι are those with which the σηκοί are crammed in 219, and which are thus equivalent to ἔμβρνα ('Sammelbegriff für Säuglinge,' Thaeer, *loc. cit.*).

There is absolutely nothing anywhere in the book to make against this interpretation. Even though ἔρχατο 221 be pressed, Rumpf's reading ἔντοθεν makes the new explanation as feasible as the old.

It remains to explain the form μέτασσαι. The ordinary explanation given by those who go beyond the mere guess μετά, μέσος is \*μετακ-αι (Osthoff, *Morphologische Untersuchungen* ii. 27), the stem being μετακ-, as in μεταξύ. This is phonetically perfect. My own idea—and I am well aware how very doubtful it will seem—is that μέτασσαι is the feminine of the present participle of μέτειμι (= μετὰ εἰμί, 'I am along with'), 'ewes with lambs at foot,' as our shepherds say. The feminine of the participle, as the weakest form of the root \*σητήα, becomes \*satia, \*sassa, \*άσσα: cf. Doric ἄσσα and Cretan ἰάττα (Gortyn Inscript. 8. 47). In these forms philologists consider that ε- and ι- have been borrowed from the strong forms of the verb (Gustav Meyer, *Griech. Gram.* § 20). We should certainly expect μέτασσαι as the phonetically correct form, but it may have followed the fashion of the greater number of the forms of the verb and thus have taken τ for θ. Moreover, if this part of the poem was originally in Aeolic, which is certainly not yet proved, there would have been no rough breathing.

Long after arriving at the above conclusions I found from Ebeling's *Lexicon* that my interpretation of μέτασσαι had been anticipated many centuries ago by Suidas, who explains the word as τὰ ἵπαρα πρόβατα. Thus, be the derivation of this word what it may, I hope I may claim to have established the correct meaning of μέτασσαι and its fellows.

P. GILES.