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 Karin W. Tikkanen

## The PROTO-ITALIC QUESTION

### 1. Vocabulary

Differences in vocabulary:

Umbrian *Tabulae Iguvinae* vs. a Latin comparable text = 60 - 70%

Cf. Doric Greek (e.g. Gortynian Law Code) and Attic/Ionic = 15 - 20%<sup>1</sup>

Opposing lexical items with words concerning:

- habitation
- law
- organisation of the state
- kinship terms

Lat. *populus* vs. Osc. *touto*, Umbr. *tota*, Marr. *toutai* and Ven. *teuta*.

cf. Umbr. **puplum** (acc. sg.) “armed citizen body/army”<sup>2</sup>

Retention of one of two possible PIE stems (an opposition between profane and religious sets of words within archaic PIE.):

#### PIE words for “fire” and “water”

“fire”	*H <sub>1</sub> ng <sup>w</sup> -ni-	Lat. <i>ignis</i> , Ved. <i>agnis</i> , Lith. <i>ungis</i>
	*pūr-	Umbr. <b>pir</b> (abl. <b>pure</b> ), Gr. πῦρ, Hitt. <i>pa-aḫ-ḫur</i> , OHG. <i>fuir</i> , Eng. <i>fire</i>
“water”	*akwā- >	Lat. <i>aqua</i> , Russ. <i>Oká</i> (river name)
	*udōr- >	Umbr. <i>utur</i> (abl. <i>une</i> ), Gr. ὕδωρ (ὑδατος), Hitt. (ú)wa-a-tar, NHG. <i>Wasser</i> , Eng. <i>water</i>

<sup>1</sup> The Gortynian Law Code is a 5<sup>th</sup> century inscription from Gortyn on the island of Crete. The Cretan dialect formed part of the Doric Greek dialect group, together with Greek dialects from most of western and north-western Greece.

<sup>2</sup> The Sabellian/Venetic word < \*teutā is reminiscent of forms in Celtic (OIr. *tuath*, Cymr. *tud*, Bret. *tud*), Germanic (Got. *þiuda*, ONord. *þjóð*, OHG. *diot*) and Balto-Slavic languages (Lith. *tautà*, Lett. *tauta*), and may represent an archaic parallel (Untermann 2000: 779-781).

One language group shows retention, the other innovation:

*PIE kinship terms*

	“father”	“mother”	“brother”	“son”
<b>Latin</b>	<i>pater</i>	<i>mater</i>	<i>frater</i>	<i>filius</i>
<b>Osc.</b>	<b>patir</b>	<b>maatreís</b> (gen. sg.)	<b>fratrúm</b> (gen. pl.)	<b>puklum</b> (acc. sg.)
<b>Umbr.</b>	<i>pater</i>	<b>matrer</b> (gen. sg.)	<i>frateer</i> (nom. pl.)	<i>fel</i> (Lat. LW)
<b>SP</b>	<b>patereih</b> (dat. sg.)	<b>matereih</b> (dat. sg.)	---	---
<b>Ven.</b>	---	---	<b>v hratere.i</b> (dat. sg.)	---
<b>Gr.</b>	πατήρ	μήτηρ	φράτηρ	(υἱός)
<b>Skr.</b>	<i>pitár</i>	<i>mātár-</i>	<i>bhrtar-</i>	<i>putra-</i>

**Latin/Sabellian specific stems:**

- (1.1) Lat. *olle* > *ille*, Osc. **ulas** “he/that” (demonstrative pronoun)
- (1.2) Lat. *manus*, Umbr. **manuv-e**, Osc. *manim* “hand” (< \**man-*)<sup>3</sup>
- (1.3) Lat. *mandāre*, Osc. **manafum** “to put in the hand” (< \**man-dheH1-*)<sup>4</sup>
- (1.4) Lat. *portāre*, Umbr. **purtatu**, *portatu* “to bring” (< \**prto-*)<sup>5</sup>

**IE inherited stems with particular semantic function in Latin/Sabellian**

- (1.5) Lat. *dīcere*, Osc. **deikum** “say” (< PIE \**deyk-*, orig. meaning “show, point out”, cf. Gr. δείκνυμι)
- (1.6) Lat. *āra*, Osc. **aasa-** “altar” (< \**H2eH1-sH2-*, orig. meaning “hearth, fireplace”)
- (1.7) Lat. *fānum*, Osc. **fīsnú**, Umbr. **fesner** “temple” (diff. ablauting grades of \**d(e)H1s-no-*, orig. meaning “divine, holy”)

<sup>3</sup> Potential agreement with Germanic languages, e.g. OIc. *mund*, OHG *munt* “hand” (Untermann 2000: 450f., de Vaan 2008: 363f.).

<sup>4</sup> Denominative verb built to the stem \**man-* (in the preceding example) with a form of *d<sup>h</sup>eH1-* meaning “to make” (Untermann 2000: 448f.).

<sup>5</sup> Shared Lat./Umbr. derivation from an intens. verb (Untermann 2000: 616f.). PIE parallels concern only the primary verb, e.g. Skr. *pīparti* “to bring across” (de Vaan 2008: 482).

(1.8) Lat. **pax**, Umbr. *paše* “peace between deities and humans” (< *\*peH1k’-*, orig. meaning “make an agreement; fasten”)

## 2 Phonology

The phonemic inventories of Latin and the Sabellian languages mostly reflect straightforward retention of the PIE system.

*Changes reflected in both language groups:*

- loss of the PIE laryngeals (with subsequent compensatory lengthening)
- merger of palatal and plain velar stops to plain velars *\*k’* and *\*k > \*k*
- vocalisation of syllabic liquids *\*r, \*l > or, ol*
- loss of intervocalic *\*-y-*

None of these changes are strikingly innovative in comparison with other IE languages, and could in theory be independent changes of the separate languages, partly preserving or continuing tendencies already present within PIE.

*Stronger candidates for Proto-Italic*

### A. The voiced aspirated stops: *\*b<sup>h</sup>, \*d<sup>h</sup>, \*g<sup>h</sup>, \*g<sup>wh</sup>*

In initial position Latino-Faliscan and Sabellian exhibit an innovative change different from all other IE languages. In this position, voiced aspirated stops become fricativized, e.g. initial *\*d<sup>h</sup>-* and *\*b<sup>h</sup>- > f-*. In **all other IE languages** reflexes retain aspiration (e.g. eGreek) or voicing (e.g. Germanic), or both (e.g. Vedic), along with a distinction when it comes to place of articulation.

*PIE voiced aspirates *\*bh* and *\*dh* in word-initial position*

		<i>*b<sup>h</sup>rāter-</i> “brother”			<i>*d<sup>h</sup>h<sub>1</sub>-</i> “do; put, place”
<i>*b<sup>h</sup>- &gt; f</i>	Lat.	<i>frāter</i> (nom. sg.)	<i>*d<sup>h</sup>- &gt; f-</i>	Lat.	<i>faciat</i> ‘do’ (3sg.pres. subj.)
	Osc.	<b>fratrúm</b> (gen. pl.)		Osc.	<b>fakiiad</b> (3sg.pres.subj.)
	Umbr.	<b>fratrum</b> (gen. pl.)		Umbr.	<b>façia</b> (3sg.pres. subj.)
	Ven.	<b>v]hraterei</b> (dat. sg.)		Ven.	<b>vhagsto</b> (3.sg.perf.)
<i>*b<sup>h</sup>- &gt; p<sup>h</sup></i>	Gr.	φράτηρ (nom. sg.)	<i>*d<sup>h</sup>- &gt; t<sup>h</sup></i>	Gr.	ἔ-θηκ-α (3.sg. aor.)
<i>*b<sup>h</sup>- &gt; bh</i>	Ved.	<i>bhrātar-</i> (nom. sg.)	<i>*d<sup>h</sup>- &gt; dh</i>	Ved.	<i>ádhāt</i> (3.sg. aor.)
<i>*b<sup>h</sup>- &gt; b</i>	OEng	<i>bróðor</i> (nom. sg.)	<i>*d<sup>h</sup>- &gt; d</i>	OEng	<i>dón</i> (infín.)

In internal position the situation is rather different, with different reflexes in the languages involved.

In **Latin**, **voiced aspirated stops** became **voiced stops**,  $*bh > b$ ,  $*dh > d$ ,  $*gwh > v$  (apart from  $*g^h/*g^h > h$ ), whereas in **Sabellian** and **Faliscan** they all merged as the **voiced bilabial fricative** /β/ (apart from  $*g^h/*g^h > h$ ).

This suggests a conditioned change with a split distribution depending on the position in the word, in three stages: **devoicing** (in initial position only), followed by **fricativization** and **merger** of all stops to **labiodental pronunciation** (but for  $*g^h/*g^h$ ). Sabellian and Faliscan went through all three stages, with merger in all positions. Latin was only partially affected by the last stage, with complete merger only in initial position (cf. Stuart-Smith 1996, 2004).

*The PIE voiced aspirated  $*b^h$  and  $*d^h$  in word-internal position*

	PIE	Latin	Sabellian	Faliscan
$*-bh-$	$*-bh(y)os$	Lat. <i>-bus</i>	Osc. <b>-fs</b>	Fal. <i>CAREFO</i> (cf. Lat. <i>carēbō</i> )
$*-dh-$	$*medhyos$	Lat. <i>medius</i>	Osc. <b>mefiai</b> <sup>LOC</sup>	Fal. <i>EFILES</i> (cf. Lat. <i>aediles</i> )

### B. The labiovelars

A different set of instances at one point cited as indicative of a certain split between Latino-Faliscan and Sabellian concerns the **PIE labiovelars**. The PIE labiovelars are preserved in their most archaic form in **Latin**, as in the relative pronoun  $*k^wis > \text{Lat. } quis$ . **Venetic** agrees with Latin concerning the voiced labiovelar  $*g^w-$ . In **Sabellian**, on the other hand, the labiovelars were **labialised**.

$*k^wi-s, *k^wo-$ “who, what”	$*g^wem-$ “to come/go”	$*g^wiH_3-$ “live, be alive”
Lat. <i>quis</i>	Lat. <i>uenio</i>	Lat. <i>uīuus</i> , Ven. <b>vivoi</b> (dat.sg.)
Osc. <b>píis</b> , Umb. <i>poi</i> (nom. sg.) SP <b>svaipis</b> (cf. Lat. <i>siquis</i> )	Osc. <b>-bened</b> <sup>PERF.3.sg</sup> Umbr. <i>benus</i> <sup>FUT.II.2/3 sg</sup>	Osc. <b>bivus</b> (nom. sg.)

This split, sometimes known as the division between “**q-dialects**” (Latino-Faliscan, Venetic) and “**p-dialects**” (Sabellian), is found within other coherent language groups among the Western IE languages.

The **Celtic languages** present the same split as that between Latino-Faliscan and Sabellian: **Old Irish has *q*-reflexes** of the labiovelars, whereas **Welsh and Gaulish have *p*-reflexes**. Also, the **Greek dialects are all *p*-dialects**.<sup>6</sup>

This encouraged some scholars to posit a shared, pre-historic development, originating from a time when the speakers of pre-Welsh, pre-Gaulish, pre-Sabellian and pre-Greek were still cohabiting in the Central European regions (e.g. Alois Walde).

There is however clear evidence that the **labiovelars** were **preserved into the individual languages**.

In the Linear B script of Mycenaean Greek there is a distinct series of signs for voiceless  $*k^w$  in different vowel combinations: *qe*, *qi*, *qo*, *qa*, next to plain labial reflexes, proving that in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the sound  $*k^w$  was still distinct from the non-labial velar [k].

Secondly, the pan-Celtic loss of /p/ (approx. 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE) must antedate the change  $*k^w > q > p$ , since otherwise both sounds would have been lost.

### 3 Morphology

#### A. The nominal inflection

Retention is seen in the continuation of the three genders, masculine, feminine and neuter. Both language groups have also lost the inherited dual number.

#### Cases

Potential Proto-Italic renewing is found in the reduction of the number of cases and in some endings.

Of the eight cases attested in Sanskrit and reconstructed for PIE, the **instrumental** case was lost early on in both Latin and Sabellian, through **functional syncretism** with the **ablative** case.

For this new “double-case”, both language groups adopted the **specific *o*-stem ablative singular ending  $*-\bar{o}t > -\bar{o}d$** , which was reinterpreted as the pattern for the ablative singular ending *per se* and copied to the remaining vowel stem categories.

In the plural, in both language groups, the *o*- and  $\bar{a}$ -stem endings are built to the inherited **instrumental plural  $*-\bar{o}ys$** , where remaining stems use the **dat./abl. plural ending  $*-b^h(y)os$** . In Latin the locative case was eventually virtually lost and its

<sup>6</sup> In all varieties of Greek, the labial element was lost when the consonant was adjacent to [u] or [w] (e.g. Myc. *qo-u-ko-ro*, but later Gr. βουκόλος <  $*g^w ow-k^w olos$  ‘cowherd’) (Sihler 1995: 156).

Otherwise, the regular treatment of the labiovelars is that of an apical stop when followed by a front vowel, elsewhere a labial stop, e.g. τίς ‘who’ <  $*k^w is$  but ποῦ ‘where’, πόθεν ‘whence’ <  $*k^w o-$ .

There are however several instances of levelling in all varieties of Greek, in favour of labial reflexes, and the dialects do not always agree: in the Aeolic dialects, labials are sometimes found also before a front vowel, e.g. Lesb./Thess. πεμπε = πέντε <  $*penk^w e$  (Sihler 1995: 160, 164).

functions transferred to the ablative, although there are a few fossilized locative forms, mostly from the Latin 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> declensions. These forms continue the old locative in *-ī*, e.g. *domī*, *rūrī*, contrasting with plain case ablative forms for separation *-ō/e*.

- (1.9) Cic. *nat. deor.* 3,81 *Marius ... domī<sup>LOC.sg</sup> suae senex est mortuus*  
 “Marius died an old man in his own home”
- (1.10) Plaut. *Stich.* 29 *uirī nostri domo<sup>ABL.sg</sup> ut abierunt, hic tertius annus*  
 “It is three years now since those husbands of ours left home”
- (1.11) Ter. *Ad.* 45 *rurī<sup>LOC.sg</sup> agere uitam*  
 “to spend one’s life in the countryside”
- (1.12) Plaut. *Merc.* 586 *cras si rure<sup>ABL.sg</sup> redierit*  
 “If she comes back from the country tomorrow”

(A similar formation based on the pattern of the *o*-stem ablative singular ending appears independently in both Celtiberian and Avestan.)

### B. *The verbal inflection*

Both language groups have remodeled their verbal systems extensively in respect of PIE. Some of these new formations may signal mutual developments, others are language independent.

In both language groups, phonological developments have led to the grouping of all present stem formations into four conjugations, along with a small group of irregular stems, the former athematic inflection.

#### *The present stem classes in Latin and Sabellian*

1 <sup>st</sup>	<i>ā</i> -stem vowel	Lat. <i>multā-re</i>	Osc. <i>molta-um</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>ē</i> -stem vowel	Lat. <i>fatē-ri</i>	Osc. <b>fatī-um</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup>	root class	Lat. <i>dīc-ere, ed-ere</i>	Osc. <b>deik-um, ed-um</b>
4 <sup>th</sup>	<i>ī</i> -stem vowel	Lat. <i>audītum</i>	Umbr. <i>purtitu (fust)</i>

On the whole Latin and Sabellian show a **very high level of agreement** in the formation of the **present** tense stems (cf. table above).

Other apparent shared innovations within the verbal system:

- **The imperfect (?)**: Osc. **fufans** (3.pl) could be an imperfect (“they were”, to a stem *\*b<sup>hu</sup>H-*, cf. Lat. *fūit*). If so, this could indicate a shared Latin/Sabellian imperfect formation in *-bā-* (*\*-bhweH<sub>2</sub>-*). The interpretation of the Oscan form is however uncertain.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Osc. **fufans** is the only imperfect form identified, and it could also be a reduplicated perfect form with a suffix *-ā-* for pluperfect (Meiser 1998: 198f., Untermann 2000: 248, 251).

- **The present subjunctive.**

- In both language groups there was **functional merger** of the two PIE moods **optative** and **subjunctive**.
- A sequence of tenses with subjunctives marked for tense.
- In the present subjunctive in both language groups, there is alternation between **Lat. -ē-/Sab. -iā-** in the **1<sup>st</sup> conjugation** (with different degrees of contraction), and **-ā-** in the **remaining three conjugations**, both of which originate in the PIE subjunctive.
- The **imperfect subjunctive** is **-sē-**, e.g. Osc. **fusíd** to Lat. *forēt*.
- A shared deverbial suffix **\*-nd-** marking purpose or intent, the gerundive, e.g. Osc. **úpsannam** ‘to be carried out’ (**-nn-** < **-nd-**), cf. Lat. *operandam*.<sup>8</sup>

There are also some **important similarities** in the forms of the stem *\*H<sub>1</sub>es-* ‘to be’, contrasting with all other IE languages. Latin and the Sabellian languages had two different forms, at least in the singular, one with initial *\*e-* and one, apparently enclitic, without. In both language groups the primary marker *-i* in the ending was lost, contrasting with the Old Indic and Greek forms.

(1.13) 1<sup>st</sup> sg. Lat. *sum*, Osk. **súm** next to ALat. *ESOM*, SP *esum*, Osc. *esu*

(1.14) 1<sup>st</sup> sg. Lat. *sum*, Osc. **súm** (cf. Skt. *ásmi*, Gr. εἰμί)

(1.15) 3<sup>rd</sup> sg. Lat. *est*, Osc. **est, íst** (cf. Skt. *ásti*, Gr. ἐστί)

- **The reorganization of system of past tenses:**

Both Greek and Old Indic attest to a system of **two** past tenses, the **aorist** and the **perfect**, which were formed in different ways, e.g. Gr. ἔλιπον (aorist; augment + full grade stem) and Gr. λέλοιπα (perfect; reduplication syllable + *o*-grade stem).

Latin and Sabellian both have a simpler system, consisting of a “**(resultative) perfect**”, where one of the two available formations of the inherited PIE stems was preserved as the basis for the new “perfect” tense stem. This was an **independent process** in the two language groups, with few points of agreement:

- Lat. *dedit*<sup>PERF.3.sg</sup> and Osc. **deded**<sup>PERF.3.sg</sup> (old aorist)
- Lat. *dixit*<sup>PERF.1.sg</sup> (old aorist) vs. Umbr. *dersicust*<sup>FUT.II.3.sg</sup> ‘he shall have said’ < *\*de-dik-* (old perfect).

<sup>8</sup> This was formerly considered a Latin loan into Sabellian of late date. Meiser (1993) detects the *-nd-* morpheme in Sabellian names, e.g. **heírens** ‘the wished-for one’, **perkens** ‘the prayed-for one’, which indicates a somewhat older age, and Rix (1994: 28, note 23) suggests a derivation *\*-tno-*, a shared Latin/Sabellian innovation.

The systems of two alternative stems must therefore have been continued for quite some time, at least in Latin, and the finalization of the perfect system ought to have taken place fairly late.

### A late change: perfect stems of thematic or thematised verbs:

All languages have their own individually developed suffixes.

Lat. *-u/v-* morpheme, e.g. *amāuī*<sup>PERF.1.sg</sup>, **unknown** outside of the Latin domain.

Osc. *-tt-*, e.g. Osc. *prúfatted*<sup>PERF.3.sg</sup>

Umbr. *-nki*, e.g. Umbr. *combifiansiust*<sup>FUT.II.3.sg</sup>

There is **no specific Proto-Italic thematic perfect**. The fact that Oscan and Umbrian themselves do not agree completely is rather evidence of a very late finalisation of the system of thematic and thematised perfect formation. If so, the completion of the “new” perfect system as a whole might have been very late.

### Other late changes with differing end-results:

#### The infinitive ending:

Lat. *-se* (in *esse*) or *-re* (with rhotacism)

Sab. *-um*.

#### Simple future:

Latin has a suffix *-b-* in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> conjugations, *amābō*<sup>FUT.I.1.sg</sup>, *amābis*<sup>FUT.I.2.sg</sup>, and altering vowels *-a/ē-* in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> conjugations, *regam*<sup>FUT.I.1.sg</sup>, *reges*<sup>FUT.I.2.sg</sup>.

Sabellian has only **one future tense** formation, *-s-*, Umbr. *ferest*<sup>FUT.I.3.sg</sup>. “he will carry”.

#### Future perfect, built to the perfect tense stem:

Lat. *-(e)r-*, e.g. *fēcerit*<sup>FUT.II.3.sg</sup> (< *\*fēc-es-*).

Sab. *-us-*, *tríbarakattuset*<sup>FUT.II.3.sg</sup> “(he) shall have built”

All the same, the two tenses are formed in an exactly analogous way in both language groups, the future simplex to the present tense stem, the future perfect to the perfect tense stem. This could indicate that the two linguistic systems did, for a long time, develop in the same direction with similar changes, before the final establishment of the individual morphology.

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