

## Parva Grammatica

## Ἐλαύνω

In Lesson 14 (Greek) we met ἀπήλασαν (belonging to ἐλαύνω ‘to drive’, ‘to push’, ‘to forge (metal)’). The ind. aor. of ἐλαύνω is ἤλασα (ἀπήλασαν in the text). The imperfectum would be ἤλαυνον, fut. ἐλῶ, rarely ἐλάσω (Homeric ἐλάσσω), praes. perf. ἐλήλακα, praet. perf. ἐηλάκειν etc. (The list is not full).

The question arises how to interpret first ἤλασα (given that aorist always precedes morphologically and historically), and then ἐλαύνω.

The IE root will be \*h<sub>1</sub>elh<sub>2</sub>- ‘to drive’, ‘to move’, and this gives the Greek verbal root ελᾶ-. To understand this: “h<sub>1</sub>” (laryngeal 1) was an [h]-like guttural which left no coloration (no perceptible result), whereas “h<sub>2</sub>” (laryngeal 2) was another [h]-like guttural with coloration (result) [a]. What the original pronunciation of the “laryngeals” was, is disputed, however it is thought today to be certain that they were consonant-like sounds, and not vowel like “coefficients” as Saussure had assumed originally. Still the Saussurian principle is sound.

[e] in the root is the vowel reconstructed by Indo-European linguistics as the only phoneme existing in the protolanguage assumed. [e] as phoneme is not to be confused with phonetic variations that may have existed. Differences, however, between given vowel sounds were – in the very beginning – not phonemic. Thus, old reconstructions which reckon with an extended set of short and long vowels for the protolanguage, are today outdated.<sup>1</sup>

The issue is extended and is part of the so-called laryngeal theory which must be discussed separately.<sup>2</sup>

\*h<sub>1</sub>elh<sub>2</sub>- / ελᾶ- gave a number of nominal derivatives, in last instance even the international word encountered in English as “elastic”. It goes without saying that “ἐλασ(τ)- / ἐλασ/τ-” is found in Greek itself in numerous words, and even Modern Greek ελαστικός belongs here. This, however, is a re-migrant from French *élastique*, the source of which is (Greek-based) Neo-Latin *elasticus*.<sup>3</sup>

Ἐλαύνω runs parallel with ἐλάω (meaning the same), and for the first an \*ἐλαFv- is assumed (forms with “F”, digamma, are attested in various Greek dialectic contexts)<sup>4</sup>. According to Beekes, ἐλαύνω derives from a verbal noun which can be reconstructed as \*ἐλαFαρ-, and this is to be connected to ἐλάω.

Most scholars think that ἐλαύνω has no certain cognates. Armenian parallels, e.g., are rejected. Babiniotis is more conciliatory: he does not reject e.g. Latin *alacer* ‘brisk’, ‘active’, ‘lively’ as related, and even Lat. *ambulare* ‘to walk’ which gave French *aller*, is not – according to him – excluded (*ibid*).

Last but not least, Modern Greek ἐλα (‘come [on]/[here]!’, ‘come now!’) is most probably to be derived from the early forms of “ἐλαύνω/ἐλάω”.

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<sup>1</sup> However, for various considerations, there may be a departure from this principle, such as in the introductory work by Fortson (2010: 66–67). For the case, more study is suggested.

<sup>2</sup> See Beekes I 2010: 402.

<sup>3</sup> The complicated medieval processes need not engage us here. See for details Babiniotis 2010: 427.

<sup>4</sup> See Babiniotis 2010: 428.

## References

- Babiniotis  
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