LATIN *SUPER*, HITTITE *ŠER*, AND THE INDO-EUROPEAN NUMERAL '7'

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ABSTRACT. Kenneth Shields, Jr. *Latin* Super*, Hittite* Šer*, and the Indo-European Numeral '7'*. Lingua Posnaniensis, vol. LIII (1)/2011. The Poznań Society for the Advancement of the Arts and Sciences. PL ISSN 0079-4740, ISBN 978-83-7654-140-2, pp. 83–86.

In this brief paper, it is argued that the initial *s-* found in the Latin and perhaps Greek reflexes of the Indo-European adprep *uper*(*i*) 'over, above' derives from blending with another adprep of the same meaning, *ser*(*i*). Evidence is also presented for the creation of another blend involving these two forms, *sep-*, which may underlie the Indo-European root for '7'. This latter assertion is strengthened by typological precedent.

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Among the adpreps traditionally reconstructed for Indo-European is **uper*(*i*) 'over, above' (cf. SIHLER 1995: 441; MALLORY & ADAMS 1997: 412; FORTSON 2004: 134), attested, for example, in Skt. *upári*, OIr. *for*, and Go. *ufar*. Latin and perhaps Greek, however, manifest reflexes of this form with an initial **s-* (Lat. *s-uper*, Gk. *h-upér*), the source of which is described by SIHLER (1995: 441) as "obscure" and, similarly, by BEEKES (1995: 222) as "unclear". Because Indo-European also clearly possessed adpreps in **(e/o)r* (cf. HIRT 1927: 13 and HAMP 1988) and **i* (cf. HIRT 1927: 11) and because deitic elements like these are frequently affixed to each other in order to reinforce weakening deictic force (cf. LANE 1961: 469), it seems reasonable to conclude that the original root of these forms was simply **up-*. In what follows I wish to provide an etymology for the source of the initial **s-* attached to this root in certain dialects and to consider the implications of this etymology for the original Indo-European root underlying the numeral '7'.

Now it is interesting that Hittite attests an alternative adprep with the same sense as **up–šer* 'over, above' (cf. FRIEDRICH 1974: 129), which ČOP (1970: 86) and MELCHERT (1984: 88, 1994: 183) reasonably derive from **sér*(*i*). In my view, the latter represents the well-known deictic particle (> demonstrative) **se/o* (cf. HIRT 1927: 13) with affixed particles, once again in **(e/o)r* and **i*. What I would like to propose is that the Hittite evidence can be construed as confirmation of the existence of doublet forms for the meaning 'over, above' at some early stage of development in the proto-language, with Indo-European Proper ul-

timately generalizing one doublet and Anatolian, the other.[1] However, at the point in time when these doublets existed, a blending may have taken place, yielding still another variant, *sup- (< *up(er) + *se(r)). It is this variant which, I believe, is attested in Latin and perhaps in Greek *super. I should point out that DUNKEL (1982–1983, 1992: 161–162) takes note of the frequent vocalic alternation *u ~ *o/e in particles (cf. *apu (OHG abu-h) ~ *apo (Skt. ápa) 'out of, from') and ascribes such alternation to suppletive processes, which would include blending.

If one accepts the possible blending of *up(er) and *se(r) to yield *sup(er), then it is also reasonable to consider another blending of these doublets, *sep (< *se(r) + *up(er)). I would suggest that indirect evidence for this blend lies in the well-known Indo-European root *sep- 'to honor, to hold in high esteem' (cf. Skt. sáp-, Avest. hap-, Lat. sepelīre < *sep-il-yo-). The original adprep *sep 'over, above' was simply lexicalized as 'to be above, to hold above', ultimately shifting to 'to honor, to hold in high esteem'. The lexicalization of adpreps in this manner as a productive word formation process in Indo-European has recently been emphasized by BOLEY (2006: 66), who asserts that some of "the roots of PIE" (e.g., *dhē- 'put': Skt. dhā-)) could possibly be "particle conglomerations" (e.g., *dhe: Gk. locative particle -the) The existence of an Indo-European adprep *sep- with the meaning 'over, above' sets up an interesting typologically-motivated argument regarding the etymological source of the Indo-European numeral '7'.

The origin of the traditionally reconstructed numeral '7' (*septm̥: Skt. saptamá-, Lat. septem, Gk. heptá, Go. sibun [without *-t-], Hitt. šiptam(iya)- 'a drink consisting of seven ingredients') is controversial. Many scholars (cf. GAMKRELIDZE & IVANOV 1995: 747 and BLAŽEK 1997: 20) endorse the view that it is ultimately a borrowing from Semitic languages (cf. Old Akkadian šabe), while some Nostraticists posit a common etymon for the forms of Indo-European, Semitic, and other groups (cf. BOMHARD & KERNS 1994: Etymology #188). Some recent theories which subscribe to a specifically Indo-European source include that of SCHMID (1989: 13–14), who sees the numeral related to a root *sep- with the original meaning 'to pull a team of horses together with hand and reins,' – a theory which CARRUBA (1999: 158n.11) rightly characterizes as "unwahrscheinlich", and that of BLAŽEK (1997: 21), who connects it to the root *sep- 'to honor, to hold in high esteem' (specifically, to the meaning 'the most honorable') because this would "correspond fully to the prominent position of the numeral '7' among Indo-Europeans" and thereby provide "semantic motivation" for the numeral, a semantic motivation which he considers lacking in Schmid's formulation. I find both of these theories useful in their identification of the element *sep- as the underlying root of the numeral. This is consistent with my own view (cf. SHIELDS 1985) that *sep is the root and that the elements *-t (which is not found in Germanic) and *-N (= n or m) are later non-singular affixes which were added to hypercharacterize the inherent non-singularity of the numeral itself. BLAŽEK (1997: 21) provides an especially convincing argument that *sep- was the original root when he points out that the ordinal *septm̥mo- can naturally be segmented into *sep- and *-tm̥mo-, a traditionally reconstructed suffix of the superlative

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[1] It is interesting to note that still another form for 'over, above' developed in Indo-European, specifically *eti (cf. Skt. áti, OCS otъ, Gk. éti) (BEEKES 1995: 221). Of course, there may have existed nuances in meaning among the different variants, but their fundamental similarities easily led to blendings and subsequent dialectal specializations.

(cf. Brugmann 1904: 322). However, I find these two Indo-European-based theories lacking in typological motivation. Quite simply, numerals do not appear to be derived in these ways.

The typological consistency of linguistic reconstructions provides a valuable tool in their evaluation (cf. Song 2001: 305). In short, a valid reconstruction should be in concert with established typological principles. According to Heine (1997: 19), "numeral systems across languages are motivated – that is, they are nonarbitrary". By far the most common "motivating factor" involves "the body part model", which has its basis in the use of body parts (e.g., hands, fingers, feet, toes, head) to count (Heine 1997: 19). That this model has relevance for the Indo-European numeral system is demonstrated by the widely accepted etymological connection between the numeral '5' (cf. **penkʷe*: Gk. *pénte*, Lat. *quīnqu*e, Skt. *páñca*) and the concept 'hand' (Gk. *púks* 'with the fist,' Lat. *pugnus* 'fist,' Gk. *pémpō* 'send' < 'lead on a journey' < 'take by the hand') (cf. Horowitz 1992; Gamkrelidze & Ivanov 1995: 746–747). Now within the body part model, numerals are, for example, "derived from domains of conceptualization that do not immediately relate to counting. The source concepts are: 1. Concrete items: 'hand', 'foot', and 'person' 2. Actions: 'seize', 'spare' 3. Location: 'above'. In addition, three arithmetic concepts are involved …:" addition, subtraction, and multiplication (Heine 1997: 19–20). What I would like to suggest is that, as the earliest Indo-European numeral system consisting of a small set of digits and a so-called "limit of counting" (cf. Menninger 1969: 15) gradually acquired more members (cf. Shields 1984; Justus 1988),[2] the Indo-European numeral '7' was created through the locational concept 'above', as in 'the one above', i.e., 'the one above six'. If the middle finger was the digit used to represent '7' in counting, then '7' was also literally 'the one above (in height)' the digit used for '6'. I find it significant that Blažek (1999: 199–200) and Kenter (2004: 13–14) amplify a proposal first made by Holmer (1966: 37), who relates etymologically the Indo-European numeral '9' (**newņ*: Skt. *náva*, Lat. *novem*, Go. *niun*) and the adprep **ĕnew* 'without' (Go. *inu*, Gk. *áneu*), thereby "providing typological parallels that support a subtractive origin for **newņ* = 'lacking (one finger)'" (Kenter 2004: 13). This theory, which stands in contrast to the popular but typologically unmotivated connection of **newņ* and **newo-* 'new' (Skt. *náva-*, Lat. *novus*, OLith. *navas*), i.e. 'the new number' (cf. Carruba 1999: 158–159), is fully consistent with and neatly parallels my view of the origin of '7' – both utilize components of the body part model, although one involves an additive process and the other, a subtractive one.

The etymologies of many Indo-European roots remain largely enigmatic. However, I submit this brief proposal as a means of continuing typologically-based discussion of this difficult topic.

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[2]　A primitive numeral system with just a few numbers and a limit of counting has been independently ascribed to Indo-European by Shields (1984) and Justus (1988).

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