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Hittite nasal presents

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Citation

Shatskov, A. (2017, October 25). *Hittite nasal presents*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/58877>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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<http://hdl.handle.net/1887/58877>

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Issue Date: 2017-10-25

Summary

It has been long debated whether the Hittite verbal system is a simplification of the Proto-Indo-European verbal system as it is reconstructed mainly on the basis of Greek and Vedic Sanskrit, or whether it reflects an earlier stage in which certain categories, e.g. the perfect, had not yet developed. In this thesis I discuss Hittite verbs and formations that contain or may contain a nasal infix as well as *nu*-verbs, in order to outline the development of these types from PIE to Hittite and establish the extent to which the Hittite nasal verbs are related to comparable formations in the other Indo-European languages. Since in Hittite the nasal infixed verbs are relatively numerous and *nu*-verbs are very numerous, one would *a priori* expect to find a significant number of direct correspondences with infixed and *nu*-stem verbs in other ancient Indo-European languages. This is, however, not the case: the amount of such correspondences is in fact limited. This suggests a protracted period of independent development of the Hittite verbal system. A significant difference between the Hittite nasal infix and the suffix *-nu-*, on the one hand, and their corresponding morphemes in Vedic and other IE languages, on the other, is that in Hittite these affixes belong to the domain of word formation rather than inflection, as is the case in Vedic.

Apart from treating the formal and etymological aspects of these verbs, this study also focuses on the semantics of the nasal affixes. In Hittitological literature they are often assumed to have a causative or a factitive meaning, but these functions do not cover the semantics of all the verbs with these affixes: there are infixed and *nu*-verbs that are clearly not causative, in fact there are even several intransitive *nu*-verbs. In this thesis it is therefore argued that the best solution to embrace the polysemy of nasal affixes is to assume that the underlying function of these morphemes is raising in transitivity.