κάλλος and καλός

Καλός ‘beautiful, good’ still lacks a satisfactory etymology (Frisk 1960:766–7, Chantraine 2009:467–8, and Beekes 2010:626–7). This is primarily due to a reliance on reconstructed root semantics and phonological resemblance rather than independently observable derivational morphemes (e.g. van Beek 2013:307; Willi 2017:507–12).

The lexical family of καλός is characterized by root allomorphy between /kal-/ in the simplex and /kal:-/ everywhere else (e.g. καλλίων, κάλλιστος, καλλ-, κάλλος). Of all forms that employ the geminated allomorph, the s-stem abstract κάλλος ‘beauty’ is by far the most frequent. This prevalence suggests that the s-stem is the derivational input for the comparative, superlative, and compositive (cf. κήδος ‘care’ → PN Κηδι-κράτης: κήδιστος, κέρδος ‘gain, advantage’ → κερδίων: κέρδιστος, etc.).

Given the centrality of καλός and its abstract, it is reasonable to suppose that these two items constitute the inherited material around which the entire system was built. It is therefore probable not only that the root allomorphy was original in the preforms of καλός and κάλλος, but also that the variation originated in reconstructable morphological processes whose identification in the case of καλός only yield a root etymology.

As the Boeotian and Homeric forms attest (Ion. κάλλος, Boeot. καλός), the non-radical, pre-desinential material in the simple adjective consists of the sequence glide /w/ + thematic vowel, on the basis of which we may reconstruct a Proto-Greek *kəlivos. In the case of κάλλος, there are but two sequences that cause gemination: */[hl]o/ or */[hl]i/ (e.g. ἐλλ’ ‘young deer’: ἐλαιοζ ‘deer’, cf. Lith. ėlnis ‘id.’; e.g. ἀλλός ‘other’, cf. Lat. alius ‘id.’). While the former may offer a phonologically permissible preform, the latter is morphologically compelling, as the καλός family belongs to a class of lexemes characterized by the compositional substitution of i-stems and, on occasion, u-stems for the simple adnominal or substantive (e.g. κυδώς ‘glorious’: κύδος ‘glory’: κυδώνειρα ‘bringing men glory’; ἀργός ‘shining’: Aeol. ἀργεννός ‘id.’: ἀργικέρανος ‘with bright thunderbolts’; τανάς ‘outstretched’: τανύπελος ‘with flowing robes’; Ion. στενος ‘narrow’ < *στενός: TN Στενύκληρος ‘Narrow Lot’ [Hdt.9.64.2]).

Fundamentally akin to the compositional representation of a derived adnominal by its substantive (e.g. χρύσος ‘golden’: χρυσοθύρος ‘gold-throned’), this phenomenon has revealed that both i- and u-stem acrostatic abstracts are derived from thematic adjectives (e.g. *líyuk-ô- ‘bright’ [> Ved. rokā- ‘shining’] → *ló/éyk-i- ‘light’ [> Lat. lúcī clārō ‘in broad daylight’]; *bəh2-nor- ‘radiant’ [> Olr. bán ‘white’] → *bəh2-nu- ‘the radiant one/radiance’ [> Ved. bhāmī ‘beam of light’], etc. Nussbaum 2014a:235). Among simple thematics (e.g. ἀργός, λευκός, etc.), Middle Irish cel, which appears in the idiom tēt for cel ‘goes to concealment, i.e. dies’ (cf. OE hel ‘underworld’), provides evidence for an abstract *kel-ô- ‘covered/covering’ (cf. Ved. śárman- ‘protection’ < *kель-mnu ‘cover’). This formed an i-stem *kó/el-i- (< substativized possessive *kol-j-é-h2- ‘the covering (one)’ > Goth. halja, ON Hel, etc.), and a u-stem *kó/el-u- (< [1] delocativial *kl-eu-ô- ‘under-cover’ adj. > ON hlé ‘shelter’, OS hlēo ‘concealment’, OE hlēow ‘cover, shelter’ > PDE lee and [2] suffixally vrddhied *köl-eu-ô- ‘cover-like (thing)’ > Epic and Attic κολέων ‘sheath’).

These abstracts, by virtue of their meaning ‘covering’, developed the aesthetic sense ‘outward appearance, form’ (cf. oc-culure : color ‘hue, external form, lustre’ de Vaan 2008:126; Ved. vṛṇ̄̄oti ‘covers’: vāraṇa- ‘Farbe, Glanz, Herrlichkeit’ Grassmann 1996:1222–3). Based on the ameliorated sense ‘(seemly) form’, both *kó/el-u- and *kó/el-i- formed radical zero-grade possessives, *kl-u-ô- and *kl-î-ô- respectively, both meaning ‘shapely, seemly’ (cf. TB eikwe...
‘man’ < *ŋkʷ-ʊ- ‘mortal’ ← *nó/ék-ʊ- ‘death’, Campanile 1969; Ved. FCM tuvi- ‘strong’: tūyam ‘swiftly’ << *tuh₂-i-ʊ- ‘strong’ ← *tó/éy₂-i- ‘strength’). From the latter was formed the s-stem abstract *kḱ-l-i-ʊ/é -s > κάλλος (corresponding to *kḱ-l-ʊ- > καλός (cf. στεινός → τὸ στεῖνος [Nussbaum 2014b:235]).

**References**


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