

## The PIE Radical *\*t<sub>3</sub>-* Evidences from Mycenaean Greek Compounds

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, it aims at showing that the PIE root for the numeral ‘three’, commonly understood to be *\*tri-*, presents also a form *\*t<sub>3</sub>-*, being this the basis upon which two Greek words stem. Second, it intends to analyse the relationship between the two PIE numeral forms *\*t<sub>3</sub>-* and *\*tri-* from a chronological point of view. The focus of the paper will be on the etymological analysis of the Greek terms (observed both in Mycenaean Gk. and in their following and alphabetic Gk. attestations) in which a reflex of this root can be observed. Finally, iconographical and contextual evidences from the Bronze Age will be employed in order to crosscheck the linguistic reconstruction.

A reflex of an original PIE radical *\*t<sub>3</sub>-* can be supposed in two Mycenaean Greek compounds, although their traditional interpretation posits a different etymology. First, the Myc. word indicating the ‘table’, *to-pe-za*, */torpeza/*, and its alphabetic correspondent *τράπεζα* are commonly understood to be nominal compounds of the PIE roots of the numeral ‘four’, *\*k<sub>w</sub>(e)twr-*, and the substantive ‘foot’, *\*ped-* (with the final nominal suffix *\*-yH<sub>2</sub>*). From a semantic perspective, the term is assumed to mean ‘four-footed’, implying a word-formation apparently based on the number of the table’s feet (or legs), which is consistent with the modern standard of four-footed tables. However, some phonological elements invite to consider a different derivational hypothesis, i.e. that *to-pe-za* results from the form *\*t<sub>3</sub>-* of the PIE radical for ‘three’. Second, also for the Mycenaean compound *to-mi-ka*, */tormiska/*, which is commonly understood to reflect an original PIE *\*k<sub>w</sub>(e)twr-* in its first member, a different etymology can be put forward. Although this word does not show any direct alphabetic correspondent, some light on both its etymology and semantic interpretation is cast by a morphologically analogue compound *ti-ri-[mi-ka]*, */trimiska/*, ‘with three threads’ (cf. Gk. *τριμίσχον* and *τριμίτρος*), which shows the form *\*tri-* of the PIE root for ‘three’ in its first element. Thus, *to-mi-ka* has been understood to mean ‘with four threads’ on the basis of such a comparison and the interpretation of *to-* < *\*k<sub>w</sub>(e)twr-* for its first member. Nonetheless, the above-mentioned phonological difficulties in positing the correspondence PIE *\*k<sub>w</sub>(e)twr-* : Myc. *to-*, */tor-/*, suggest, also in this case, that the first element *to-* of the compound *to-mi-ka* stems from PIE *\*t<sub>3</sub>-*. In the light of such a reconstruction it can be put forward that *to-mi-ka* and *ti-ri-[mi-ka]* derive from two different forms of the same root for ‘three’ (*\*t<sub>3</sub>-* and *\*tri-* respectively), and share the same meaning ‘with three threads’. Likewise, similar considerations lead to propose that also *to-pe-za* witnesses the form *\*t<sub>3</sub>-* of the PIE root for ‘three’ in its first element, as mentioned above.

The presence of these two variants of the numeral ‘three’ radical in Bronze Age and Classical Greek attestations leads to consider them as two diachronic stages of the root, namely \**tr̥-* and \**tri-*. In Mycenaean, they appear in the first members of compounds sharing an analogue morphological structure, and also in equivalent lexemes. A comparison with other linguistic features of 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium Greek, such as the *o*-stem genitive singular endings (-*Xo* and -*Xo-jo*), can show how such a circumstance is consistent in this chronological phase. A further element to consider is that a couple of Myc. compounds, *ti-ri-jo-we*, /*triohwes*/, ‘with three handles’, and *qe-to-ro-we*, /*k<sup>w</sup>etrohwes*/, ‘with four handles’ (cf. Gk. οὐ̄ς), seems to crosscheck that PIE \**k<sup>w</sup>(e)twr* – and, what is more, in opposition with \**tri-* – appears to be represented in Mycenaean Greek with an initial *qe-*, /*k<sup>w</sup>e-*/. Finally, some archaeological evidences seem to add weight to such a reconstruction, testifying the usage of three-footed tables in Mediterranean and Near East areas during the Bronze Age. Particularly significant results a fresco from the Palace of Pylos probably representing the same three-footed tables noted in the Linear B tablets through the form *to-pe-za*. Furthermore, in Mycenaean texts two other typologies of tables are registered, namely *we-pe-za*, /*hwespeza*/, ‘six-footed’ (from PIE \**swe(k)s-*, ‘six’), and *e-ne-wo-pe-za*, /*e(n)newopeza*/, ‘nine-footed’ (from PIE \**H<sub>1</sub>neuǵ-*, ‘nine’), which seems to attest a pattern based on a three-footed constructive module for tables.

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