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Wir bitten um Beachtung
The Gothic adverbial suffix -ba, as in ubila-ba ‘badly’ or hardu-ba ‘hardly, severely’, is isolated within Germanic (Feist 1939, s.v.). Moreover, attempts to link it with forms in other Indo-European languages have not been successful at finding a cognate that is both functionally and phonologically wholly satisfactory.

For example, Osthoff (KZ. 23, p. 93ff.) has linked Gothic -ba with the deadjectival feminine abstract noun suffix (IE. *bhā) found in OCS. ziko-ba ‘evil, badness’, whereas Krahe & Meid (1967, p. 139) have seen in -ba a reflex of an adjectival suffix *bhō- in Latin acer-bū-s ‘bitter’, Greek σπέρ-φο-ζ ‘firm; barreng. In each case, the functional motivation for a transfer from a nominal or adjectival formative to a productive adverbial use is lacking—in addition, it is not made clear in these proposals which IE case-form underlies Goth. -ba.

A better etymology from a functional standpoint is that adopted by Prokosch (1938, p. 265) connecting -ba with the IE. *-bh- cases, many of which serve a purely adverbial function (e.g. Skt. inst. pl. -bhīs, Arm. -vēk’ < *bhīs) and particularly with the related Greek suffix -φι (IE. *bhī) which, in addition to being a case-suffix (e.g. inst. l-φι ‘with force’ or loc. ὑφες-φι ‘on the mountains’; cf. Chantraine [1973, p. 244ff.]) also has a use as an adverbial formative in, for example, νόσ-φι ‘apart, besides’, λυχρ-φι-ζ (with secondary -ζ) ‘crosswise, sideways’, and πάμ-φι (< *πάντ-φι) ‘all in all, wholly’. However, the only possible *bh- form which could match up with Goth. -ba is the questionable reconstruction *bhō for the pronominal dative singular as in OCS. te-bē and possibly Latin ti-bi ‘to you’—Old Prussian tebbei and Oscar tfei, Umbrian tefei suggest a reconstruction *bheiti instead, which would not be expected to give Goth. -ba. Moreover, the connection with *bheiti is suspect functionally because the dative is a grammatical-relation case, not truly an adverbial case. Furthermore, Greek -φι in itself does not provide a good match for -ba because Gothic final -a and Greek final -t do not regularly correspond; for example, one would expect a final *-i to be lost in Gothic, as in 3 sg. nimiþ < *nēm-e-ti ‘takes’.

Considerations such as these led Feist (op.cit.) to declare regarding -ba that its ‘Ursprung [ist] dunkel’. What is needed, then, is an etymon for -ba which avoids the functional and phonological difficulties discussed above.

It turns out that there exists in Greek a form, apparently overlooked up till now, which provides a better match for Goth. -ba than the other proposed cognates. This is the particle -φα, an adverbial-forming particle which has heretofore itself been without a good etymology.1 It is found in the adverbial μεσ-φα ‘until; (in the) meantime’ and possibly also in the adjective πρόσ-φα-τος ‘fresh, recent’, if, as suggested by Schwizer (1939, 1, p. 630 n. 1; 1, p. 503 Zus. 2), this adjective presupposes an adverb *πρόσ-φα.

In order for Greek -φα to match up with Goth. -ba phonologically, one has to reconstruct a preform *bhā, or better, *bhāH₂ (< *bhēH₂), with final -a developing regularly to -a in final position in Gothic (cf. feminine ē-stem nominative singular -a e.g. gib-a ‘gift’ < *ā) and the Greek representing a generalization of a sandhi variant in which *-H₂ was lost in final position before vowel-initial words. This same development may be assumed for the IE. thematic neuter plural *-ā (< *-a-H₂ < *e-H₂; for *H₂, cf. the athematic neuter plural ending *-a₂ as in Skt. bhārant-ı = Greek φέροντ-α) seen in Vedic yug-ā, which gave -a in Gothic (e.g. waurd-a ‘words’) and -a in Greek (e.g. ζυγ-ά ‘yokes’)—in fact, the parallel between -φα/-ba and the neuter plural developments suggests that the *-a in *bhā is the IE. neuter plural ending used adverbially, as it is in Greek adverbs like πολλά ‘often’, μεγάλα ‘greatly’, σοφότατα ‘most wisely’, and Latin forms like multa ‘much’ or guia ‘because’. Thus a connection of Gothic -ba with Greek -φα is functionally satisfying and moreover does not require any ad hoc assumptions regarding the phonology—that-
ever accounts for the \textit{-a}: \textit{-x} correspondence in the neuter plural can account for it in \textit{-ba}: \textit{-φξ}.²

Further connections of the reconstructed adverbial suffix \textit{*-bhā}, however, are unclear. The identification of this form as a neuter plural makes the connection with the adjectival suffix \textit{*-bhō} attractive, though the long-recognized connection of neuter plurals with feminine singular abstracts means that the suffix in OCS. \textit{xelo-ba} cannot be excluded either. Still, one has to wonder why one of these particular suffixes should have come to acquire an adverbial use. Thus the link with \textit{*-bhī} (Greek \textit{-φί}) may be preferable, and the by-form \textit{μέ-φί} (LSJ. s.v.) for \textit{μέ-φξ}, if not a folk-etymological reformation of \textit{μέ-φξ} based on the suffix \textit{-φί}, makes it appear as if \textit{-φξ} and \textit{-φί} are to be connected. In that case, then, it may be necessary to admit that \textit{bhā} is an early contamination of the adverbial suffix \textit{*-bhī} with the neuter plural ending \textit{*-ā} (i.e. \textit{*-āH₂}), due to the adverbial function of the neuter plural. In any case, even though the question of further connections may never be resolved, this proposed equating of Gothic \textit{-ba} and Greek \textit{-φξ} at least provides an etymology for these two otherwise isolated formatives.

References


² It is possible that the \textit{-a} in Greek in thematic neuter plurals is a morphological substitution of the athetic ending \textit{*-a₂} for the expected thematic ending \textit{*-a}; in that case, then, it is still possible to recognize in \textit{-ba/-φξ} the neuter plural ending with language-specific morphological development giving Germanic \textit{*-ā} versus Pre-Greek \textit{*-a₂}.