A NOTE ON THE *-ô/-eu, *-ã/*-ãi/-i STEMS IN INDO-EUROPEAN.
A PROPOS OF A PAPER BY PAUL BROSMAN

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Los temas griegos en -ôs / -eu, -ês / -eu, -â / -ei deben interpretarse como derivados de antiguos temas indoeuropeos en laringal.

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1. Long Vowel Stems and Sonant + Vowel Stems.

I refer to a paper published by Paul Brosman («The Greek Nouns in -ôs and -eus», Folia Linguistica Historicica 15, 2004, pp. 1-19). Elaborating on previous ideas found in his and other scholars’ publications, he comes to propose that in Indo-European there were stems in diphthongs (both in -i and -u) which he takes to be the direct forerunners of the Greek stems of the above mentioned type, as well as of Latin and Baltic stems in *-êê, which alternate with -i and *-ã stems in several languages.

It has indeed been remarked that alongside those stems in long vowel there are variants – obviously in the same vowel grade – in which sometimes an -i (in Hittite also -*hi) and sometimes an -u is added. They are either variants in full (F) grade (-êi, -eu) or in zero grade (-i, -u). From this fact the conclusion can be drawn that they have originated from forms in a diphthong. Forms with long vowels would thus come from forms in diphthongs (with a long vowel + -i or -u). These forms must then be related to others in zero grade which resulted in forms in -i and -u – these were generally classed as independent declensions which include variants with long vowels (-ηi, etc.)

Providing examples of each case would take up too many pages and the facts are well known. Limiting myself to the cases analysed in Brosman’s last paper, I can cite a.o. the Latin variants fīdē / fīdiē-, the Greek words in *-os (πάτρως, μήτρως, γάλας) and their parallel forms in -u (lat. patruus, as well as the long series of Greek nouns in -ευς). To those one could add the Hittite forms in -a (only in N.-V.-Ac. n. plu.), but also in -ai and -i. A Nom. Sg. -i or -ī also exists in other Indo-European languages – it is clearly a zero grade.

However, we are not dealing only with F grade forms in *-ā, *-āī (also Hitt. *-ā́hi) vs. zero grade forms -i or F grade forms in *-ō, -eu vs. zero grade forms in -u. In Greek there are plenty of variants -η / -εω, whose distribution runs sometimes along dialectal lines while in other cases seems to be rather arbitrary (Πέρσης / Περσενίδα).

On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that when inflected these root-stems do sometimes receive desinences, and that the root-stems are not necessarily N. sg., but can also be V., or N.-Ac.-V. plu. or D. sg. (in -āī or -i e.g.)².

This whole set of forms has been frequently explained, as stated above, as having originated from forms in long diphthongs in -i an -u which may have sometimes lost those sonants. And long diphthongs are sometimes replaced by diphthongs with a short vowel + -i, -u. As I have explained, they are both variants of the F grade. And next to them we find zero grades with -i or -u.

Brosman had been preceded by the scholars he mentions who had similar views. But there are still some unresolved questions concerning the vowel colours and the forms with a difference in phonetics like *-ā / *-āī, *-ē / -eu or *-ō / -eu a.o. In other words, the phonetic problems remain open.

I should like to remind now that for many years I have been publishing books and papers – ignored by Brosman – in which I have tried to solve these problems. In my view, the original stems were laryngeal ones.

2. Why laryngeal stems? What kind of laryngeals?

First, it is important to remind the contribution of Hittite, and Anatolian in general, to this question. Besides -a < -ah, -ahi may also appear. This is the case of Luvian abstracts and collectives in -ahi(t) and the Lycian D.-L. sg. -ahi. The -i forms must be explained as derived from -hi.

The existence within the declension of old *-ä stems of alternating forms with *-äi and sometimes with the zero grade -i, -iy moves us to identify that laryngeal with a laryngeal with a palatal appendix, that is, *H

I think that this is the only way to explain such an inflection as that of Hitt. zahhāiats / zahhīyas. In other languages there is also *-ei. I have explained the duality of *-ã, *-ãi / -ei in the F grade as due to two variants of syllabification – in the first term, *-ã and *-ãi are the variants before consonant and before vowel, with secondary extensions. The -i declension has evolved from the zero grade, while the F grade outcomes tend to develop into forms in -ei (Gk. πολή / πολέι). To sum up, the inextricable mixture of F grades in *-ã and *-ãi, -ei next to zero grade forms in -i can only be accounted for as due to phonetic evolutions in which a *H, laryngeal is involved. The alternance *-ēi / -i is due to the presence of the *H, laryngeal, instead.

The data are easy to gather and they have been collected several times, but the various F grade forms in *-ã, *-ē, *-i and the zero grade form in -i can only be explained in phonetic terms. In this note I can only sketch this idea,

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4 On the alternance *h / *h see «Further considerations ...» cit., p. 237 ss. The laryngeal which was disappearing in Indo-European in general, was disappearing also in Hittite, but occasionally it was reinforced instead.
which has been further developed in my former studies.

The same thing applies to the alternance of F grades in *-ē, *-eu / zero grades in -u which I mentioned above, and also to the alternance *-ō, -eu / -u, which is precisely the subject of Brosman’s paper. In the first case, it is the *H laryngeal that is involved, while it is the *H laryngeal that plays a role in the second. No new phonetic explanation has been proposed and I think that my own explanations are still valid.

There were indeed secondary developments which led to the creation of several declensional types: in *-ā, -i; in *-ō, -u. Those declensions are obviously secondary and next to the forms with a long vowel we find forms with -i or -u. No other explanation has been proposed, as I can say.