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UDC 807.5—541.2

GREEK *g^whoitos

P. Hr. Ilievski has related¹ Myc. *qo-te-wo* as a genitive to **Qo-te-u*, to later Greek φοῖτος, φοιτάω, -φοῖτης, ἡεροφοῖτης, φοιταλέος, and in so doing has settled the identity of the initial of this Greek stem in its relation to IE. The etymon of φοῖτος must then be **g^whoito-*. It is reasonable then to speculate on the prior pre-Greek history of such a complex configuration.

The shape of φοῖτος suggests a nominalization of the type of νόστος, κοῖτος, etc.,² a formation which was productive in Balto-Slavic in giving nomina instrumenti, e.g. *dlato* 'chisel', and as I have argued³ which was less successful in Latin, leaving however an important trace in the name of *Vesta*. Thus φοῖτος might earlier have meant something like 'a journey', or even 'a path'.

Since such formations had a limited productivity in earlier Greek, it might seem that a base **g^whei-* is called for. However, as Ruijgh has made clear, prehistoric Greek productively formed secondary *o*-grade ablauts in the presence of *a*-colouring laryngeals which might have been expected to yield *a*-vocalisms. Thus we may hypothesize **g^whaoi-to-*, formed in turn on a extended root **g^wHa-i-*.

If this is so, we are in the presence here of a frozen nominalization formed on a root shape extended in *-i- which in turn contained the familiar IE root **g^weHa-* = *g^wā-* well known in the Greek lexicon as βᾶ-.

Oct. 28, 1980.

¹ *Živa Antika* 29, 1979, 250.

² Apart from more specialist literature, see for example A. Meillet, *Introduction* 269.

³ *Ériu* 25, 1974, 253 ff.