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UDC 807.5—541.2

### PREHELLENIC ἄχυρον

The cognates establishing an IE etymon for 'chaff, awn' have been recognized, but their exact relation has been missed.

OHG *agana* f. *ōn-* (with *agan-*, *agen-*, *agina*) has a rich set of Germanic relations: OS *agana*, MLG *agen*, OE *ægnan* pl., *egenu* sg., ME *agene* *a(g)unes aw(u)n* > Mod. E *awn*, ON *ogn* (also borrowed into Finnic), Goth, *ahana* acc. sg. Lloyd and Springer *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Althochdeutschen* (to appear) give a meticulous account of this etymon, which they reconstruct as *\*áhánō* < *\*ak'ona*. This has been compared to Skt. *asáni-*, Gk. ἄχων, ἄχρνη, ἄχανος, ἄχαννα, Lat. (Carmen Saliare) *agna* < *\*aknā*, Lith. *ašnis*, Czech *osina*, Serbo-Croatian *osje*. To this set has been also adduced the Greek ἄχνη, and this comparison has been claimed in two quite different directions. Ernout—Meillet *DÉLL* s.v. *acus*, following Kluge and Pedersen, have seen an IE *\*kh* behind the Greek *χ*; but such a solution, especially with a suffix in *-n-* immediately following, is today highly undesirable. Others have contrived the pre-form *\*ak'-s-nā* for ἄχνη, a phonetic solution that is mechanically unobjectionable, but which entails an overly complex and unmotivated morphology.

It now seems vastly preferable to associate ἄχυρον and ἄχνη as relics of an ancient *r/n-* heteroclite, the other reflexes *in-n-* summarized above being related wreckage of the *n-* state of the stem. This being the case, the *-vρ-* vocalism of ἄχυρον immediately calls to mind the Prehellenic („Pelasic“) stratum and language which I have discussed ŽA 31, 1981, 83—4 and 95—6. Moreover, this now offers a thoroughly acceptable interpretation for the *χ*: We have here *\*ak'-r* (→ thematized neuter), *\*ak'-n-* (showing an old collective underneath the feminine?).

Alongside this heteroclite there was also the neuter *\*ak'-os ak'-es-* attested in Lat. *acus aceris*, OHG *ahir ēher* > Mod. Germ. *Ähre*, OE *ēar* > Mod. Eng *ear* (of grain), Icel. *ax*, Goth *ahsa* (dat.).

The earliest traceable state of affairs should have been *\*H<sub>a</sub>ék'-r/n-* or *\*H<sub>a</sub>ék'-r/n-* and *\*H<sub>a</sub>ék'-es-*. The Prehellenic attestation turns out to be more than normally informative.