

The construction “*kath’ holon kai meros*”.

Some thoughts on its emergence, diachronic development and comparative syntactic reconstruction

The pattern “X hit Y (Accusative) the shoulder (Acc. instead of ‘on the shoulder’)”, which has been designated as the construction of “whole and part”, is known in the history of research as a feature of Homeric language. After the replacement of the second accusative by a dative-locative form, this construction has moved, as it were, from the domain of living syntax to the realm of stylistic figures, thus constituting a case of frozen or fossilized syntactic pattern. (cf. Schwyzer- Debrunner 1950, Hahn 1954, Jacquino 1989, Luraghi 2008)

The linguistic-psychological explanation assumes an approximation of the object in two phases, according to which the major item is first presented and consequently a specific detail is focused upon –quasi epexegetically. A glance at comparable phenomena in other languages shows that similar patterns are sporadically evidenced both in Latin (e.g. Plautus) and at early stages of German. This talk attempts to interpret these hitherto neglected data and to integrate them in a reconstruction model of Indo-European syntax.