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Sigmatic and asigmatic long vowel preterit forms

On various occasions I have argued that sigmatic and asigmatic long vowel preterit forms originated from monosyllabic lengthening in Proto-Indo-European (e.g. Kortlandt 2010: 125-137, cf. already Wackernagel 1896: 66-68). This view has generally been disregarded or misrepresented (e.g. by Strunk 1985: 497[11], McCone 1991: 69, Jasanoff 2004: 175, cf. Kortlandt 2007: 108, 2009: 85) until Kümmel's recent article (2012). According to my view, lengthened grade was originally limited to the 2nd and 3rd sg. active forms of both the sigmatic and the root aorist injunctive. I have claimed that the original distribution was essentially preserved in the Vedic sigmatic aorist injunctive, but not in the corresponding indicative, where lengthened grade was generalized, e.g. 1st sg. *jeṣam* vs. *ajaiṣam*, 1st pl. *jeṣma* vs. *ajaiṣma*, also *śramiṣma* vs. *atāriṣma*. In the root aorist, lengthened grade was preserved e.g. in Tocharian B *śem* 'came' < *$g^w\bar{e}m$-, *lyāka* 'saw' < *$l\bar{e}\acute{g}$-, Latin *vēnit*, *lēgit*, Gothic *qemun*, Albanian *mblodhi*, Greek *ἔσβη* '(the fire) went out' < *-$g^w\bar{e}s$-, Vedic *āraik* 'left' < *-$l\bar{e}ik^w$- (cf. Kortlandt 2007: 154-156, 2010: 136).

Kümmel (2012) disregards the possibility of an apophonic difference between injunctive and indicative forms, in spite of such obvious instances as 3rd pl. *kranta* vs. *akrata* and *ranta* vs. *ārata* (cf. already Meillet 1920: 202-205), also *naśan* vs. *ākṣiṣur* (for *āśur*) and *naśanta* vs. *āśata*, and of course 1st sg. *jeṣam* vs. *ajaiṣam* and 1st pl. *jeṣma* vs. *ajaiṣma*. Starting from the presupposition that the active forms of the sigmatic aorist always had a lengthened grade root vowel, he has to explain away all contrary instances. These include 1st sg. *jeṣam*, *yoṣam*, *stoṣam*, *vadhīm*, 1st pl. *jeṣma*, *śramiṣma*, 2nd pl. *aviṣṭa(na)*, *grabhīṣṭa*, *raṇiṣṭana*, *vadhiṣṭa(na)*, *śnathiṣṭana*, 2nd du. *aviṣṭam*, *kramiṣṭam*, *gamiṣṭam*, *caniṣṭam*, *cayiṣṭam*, *mardhiṣṭam*, *yodhiṣṭam*, *vadhiṣṭam*, *śnathiṣṭam*, 3rd du. *aviṣṭām*. Lengthened grade is found only in 1st sg. analogical *rāviṣam* (*ru-* 'break'), 2nd pl. *naiṣṭa* (but ĀpŚS *yoṣṭa*), 2nd du. *yauṣṭam* (but ĀpMB *yoṣṭam*), *tāriṣṭam* (beside 1st pl. ind. *atāriṣma*), analogical *yāviṣṭam* (*yu-* 'unite'), and 3rd pl. *yauṣur*, *jāriṣur*, all of which can easily be analogical. It appears that there is no real counter-evidence to disprove my view.

Kümmel easily dismisses all dual and plural forms belonging to *iṣ*-aorists as irrelevant because "this type depends on the 2nd and 3rd sg. root aorist of seṭ-roots exhibiting regular full grade" without explaining why they did not adopt the characteristic lengthened grade of the sigmatic aorist. Note that we regularly find lengthened grade in the *iṣ*-aorist in the indicative forms 1st pl. *atāriṣma*, 3rd pl. *atāriṣur*, *apāviṣur*, *amādiṣur*, *arāṇiṣur*, *arāviṣur*, *avādiṣur*, *asāviṣur*. Kümmel points to "the many post-RV forms like AV *vākṣur*, *srāṣṭam*, YV *yauṣam*, *yauṣma*, *hauṣam*", which actually suggest spread of the lengthened grade from the indicative to the injunctive in post-RV times.

Having dismissed the *iṣ*-aorist as irrelevant without solving the problem of its root vocalism, Kümmel is left with the 1st person forms *jeṣam*, *yoṣam*, *stoṣam* and *jeṣma*, for which he states that "it is rather difficult to be sure about the interpretation of such forms as injunctives". Following Hoffmann, he interprets *jeṣam* and *jeṣma* as precatives. The reason for this interpretation is evidently the absence of lengthened grade (cf. Hoffmann 1967a: 254 and 1967b: 32). Hoffmann also points to the parallel use of the optative elsewhere. This does not offer a compelling argument, especially

because it requires special pleading for the vocalization of the precative, which is actually attested in the form *jīyāsam* (cf. Hoffmann 1967b: 33). The interpretation as precatives must therefore be abandoned. "It is quite conceivable that *jeṣam* and *jeṣma* were later interpreted as precatives in the post-Rigv. texts" (Insler 1975: 15²⁶). While Kümmel translates RV 10.156.1 *téna jeṣma dhánaṃ-dhanam* as "with him let us win every prize", Insler translates "with him shall we win wealth upon wealth", which is surely preferable.

There can be little doubt that *stoṣam* is an injunctive, not a subjunctive (cf. Narten 1964: 277, Hoffmann 1967a: 253, Tichy 2006: 311). I have argued that there is a subtle semantic difference between 1st sg. injunctive and subjunctive forms which is to some extent comparable to the one between "I shall" and "I will" in standard British English (2010: 126) and that the subjunctive "presents the will to achieve a situation as part of reality, and thereby suggests that its accomplishment may be beyond the subject's control" (2010: 131). Kümmel cites only the first half of this sentence and objects that "most importantly, it does not presuppose that the subject can control the accomplishment of the action". This is exactly what I said in the second half of my statement, which Kümmel omitted in his quotation! He also claims that for indicating the will or intention of the subject, Vedic uses the future. This is simply false because the future is a tense, not a mood: it depicts an activity which is aimed at the accomplishment of a situation (cf. Kortlandt 2010: 141) and does not denote any desire (except by implication). It must be regretted that Kümmel ignores the non-German scholarly literature on the thematic inflexion (e.g. Meillet 1922, 1931, Renou 1932, Watkins 1969, Kortlandt 1979a, 1979b, 1983, Beekes 1981). Kümmel does not deny that *yoṣam* is an injunctive.

In an important but totally neglected article (1988), G.M. Anciferova has shown that Narten presents are a recent development in Vedic. (I am indebted to Dr Michiel de Vaan for drawing my attention to this publication.) She points out that the athematic present of the root *stu-* is secondary and that the oldest paradigms of this root are the thematic middle present *stavase, stavate, stave, stavamahe, stavante, stavanta* and the active subjunctive *stavā, stavat, stavāma, stavatha* (Anciferova 1988: 290-294). In my view, both of these paradigms represent thematicizations of Proto-Indo-European **steuo*, which served as both the 3rd sg. form of the original stative and the 3rd pl. form of the thematic present (cf. Kortlandt 2010: 95 and 399-403). The only lengthened grade forms of this root in the Ṛgveda are the injunctive *staut* (7th maṇḍala) and the imperfect *astaut* (10th maṇḍala). What was the model for their creation? I think that it was the monosyllabic form of the root aorist injunctive, which appears to have been preserved in the indicatives RV *akrān, asyān, āraik, acait, aśvait, adyaut* (cf. Kortlandt 2010: 136). "Diese Formen sind nicht nur im RV. isoliert, sondern haben auch späterhin nicht zur Bildung weiterer aktiver *s*-Aoristformen der betreffenden Wurzeln geführt" (Narten 1964: 18). This is remarkable because the *s*-aorist became productive in Vedic: "Nachṛgvedisch breitet sich der aktive *s*-Aorist auf eine größere Anzahl neuer Wurzeln aus" (ibidem). Kümmel confuses the issue by lumping the relevant material together with earlier and later sigmatic aorist forms. He does not explain the isolated character of the relevant forms in the oldest texts.

The remaining question is: why was the lengthened grade eliminated from the Indo-Iranian root aorist? When the central Indo-European languages created an imperfect by substituting secondary for primary endings in the present system, the vowel alternation in the root aorist injunctive became an isolated phenomenon. Since

word-final *-t/d had been lost after an obstruent in non-Anatolian Indo-European (cf. Kortlandt 2010: 40), the 3rd sg. ending of the root aorist was zero after an obstruent (as it was in the sigmatic aorist) but *-t/d elsewhere (as it was in the imperfect). This evidently sufficed to preserve the lengthened grade in the aorist paradigm of the roots *krand-*, *syand-*, *ric-*, *cit-*, *śvit-* and *dyut-* when it was eliminated elsewhere. The lengthened grade of the root aorist has also been preserved in Tocharian B *śem* 'came' < *gʷēm-, *lyāka* 'saw' < *lēǵ-, Latin *vēnit*, *lēgit*, Gothic *qemun*, Albanian *mblodhi*, Greek *ἔσβη* '(the fire) went out' < *-gʷēs-, and perhaps in Celtic and Balto-Slavic (cf. Mathiassen 1974: 63-105).

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