Verba Docenti

Studies in historical and Indo-European linguistics presented to
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by students, colleagues, and friends

edited by
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The distribution of the Sanskrit -na/-na- participles is an unsolved problem. Whitney (1889:257f.) and Wackernagel-Dobrinmer (1924:268f.) only mention that the suffix -na- is predominantly found after roots in long vowels, in d and in velars, but give no explanation for this peculiar state of affairs.

In order to see the problem in due perspective, we must first of all realize that the spread of the -na- suffix is a Sanskrit innovation. In Indo-European, the suffix *-no-, among other functions, formed verbal adjectives, and this was inherited into Indo-Iranian, cf. Skt. śvāna- 'white, whitish', Goth. lītain 'white': Skt. anā 'to become white, light'; Skt. aukā- 'hot'; Skt. adā- 'wanting, deficient'; LAv. ātā 'deficient', Lat. amōna 'empty', OHG wana 'deficient'. Skt. anā 'to become exhausted, deprived of'; Skt. pārā- 'full', Av. pārma-, Goth. ūthi : Skt. jā 'to fill'. The Indo-Iranian verbal adjectives in -na- existed side by side with those in *-ta- (Skt. sāhā 'dry, dried out', LAv. lūhā 'dry?'; Skt. ānā 'to be dry'); *-na- (Skt. pārā- 'ripe, cooked', Khor. pāhn- 'ripe, cooked'; Skt. pān 'to cook'); *-na- (Skt. sāhā- 'small'; Skt. āpād 'to disperse', Av. ānām 'sharp'); *-a- (Skt. ānghū- 'quick', LAv. anām < *rwyum acc. sg. 'fast, quick'; Skt. āntā 'to hasten, to run'), etc. The Indo-Iranian suffix *ta- also belonged to this group, forming verbal adjectives with a passive resultative meaning (Skt. āntāvā- 'made'), if the verb was transitive, and non-passive resultative meaning (Skt. gatāvā- 'gone'), if the verb was intransitive. It is important to keep in mind that not every verbal root had a verbal adjective in Indo-Iranian, let alone one with the suffix *-na-.

This Indo-Iranian situation is rather faithfully preserved in Iranian, but in Sanskrit we encounter an increasing tendency to provide every verbal root with a full-fledged paradigm, including a verbal adjective. The most productive suffix was *-ta-, but it was involved in heavy competition with *-na-, and at some point had become synonymous with *-ta- in Sanskrit. This probably happened because *prHna- 'full' was analyzed...
as "froze" and thus considered analogous to a -nas participle. As we shall see below, *ptHnas- played a crucial role in the development of this category. The other Indo-
Iranian formations in -nas (stRNA-, *tRNA-, *dRNA-) have kept their original meaning, but
further remained peripheral.

2. Since the spread of -nas is an innovation, it is important to examine how the -nas
particless developed in the course of the history of Vedic. The first attestation of course
does not prove that the form had not existed before, but we get a good impression of the
dynamicsof the process.

In the family books of the RV, we find no more than seven different -nas-particless.
Next to the inherited prthvah, only stRNA- is solidly embedded there (1° III, 3° IV, 5° V, 7° X, stRNAbarhiti- "who has frozen the sacrificial grass V, X"), whereas prthv-adhina- "cut (around)" (VII, 8°, delocative "with uncurred wings") (a) "froze-nas-" (frozen), "froze-nas-" (frozen), all of which had the same shape in prthvah- (prthv-adhina-). Indeed, this means that the expansion most probably preceded vocalization of the
sequence prthv- in Vedic.

At the next stage, the -nas-particless were formed from the roots in a (pURN-dHna-), tRNA-, stRNA-, tRNA-, then tRNA-). Only in the later books do we find -nas-particless
derived from the roots in -dHna- (dHna-), -hina- (hina-), and in g- (g-
dHna-gyna-), but their creation was clearly dictated by special factors. For the four roots da, it was necessary to
disambiguate the original -nas-particless in -dHna- (dHna-). This was done in various ways: da to give introduced the stem of the present (dHna-); da to bind 'reversed the roots (ni-dHna-)
VIII", (ni-dHna-VII), presumably the poet of 8.10.21.14 did not like this form and created dHdina-instead, the same -nas-particless dHna- (8.7.10) was derived by the
poet from the root ad to cut, men. The long vocalism of dHna- 'abandoned' (10.34.10)
indicates that instead of using the -nas-particless jIndI- (VII, VIII), based on the
reduplicated present stem, the poet formed this participle on the basis of the passive
ident- "to be abandoned", which he had just put into his text a few verses before (10.10.14-15).

The root of dHna-gyna- 'not finished' (1.3.2.1) is extremely rare in Sanskrit. We
only have ana-prajjana- (AitB), ana-prajjana- (B) 'end of the warp' and dHna-pynana,(dHna-gyna- (TB) 'to finish the warp', Hoffmann (1928:173 = 1902:814) plausibly suggested
seeing in the TB forms hypersanskritisms for ana-prajna-. No cognates of the root are
known, but the Sanskrit sequence gyna- always reflects *g. We may of course assume that
prajjana- developed into prajjana- with the regular loss of d, but it is hardly a coincidence
that there are only three -nas-particless from the roots in vynas in older Vedic (i.e. before
the Sutas, where we find bhuna- 'broken', bhuna- 'worn', for buna see fn. 8), and all
three of them have *g in the root, viz. prajjana- (prajjana- (MS 6.3.6.78.17) 'dived', *vraja- 'strewn' (V) 'to be abandoned', which he had just put into his text a few verses before (10.10.14-15).

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roots in \(rH\) and those from roots in \(d\). As we have seen above, there were two crucial moments in the development of the \(-na-\) participles in Sanskrit: (1) interpretation of \(-na-\) as passive and thus synonymous to \(-ta-\), and (2) analogical spread of the suffix along formal lines: from roots in \(rH\) to roots in \(d\) and only later further afield. The first step is perfectly understandable, but the second one requires an explanation. There must have been a phonetic feature in common between \(rH\) and \(d\), otherwise this spread would be unexplicable. I believe this feature was glottalization. It is very probable that the three Indo-European laryngeals had merged into a glottal stop in Indo-Iranian (see already Polome 1972:244, Lubotsky 1981), while there is considerable evidence that Indo-Iranian had preserved the glottalic articulation of the unaspirated stops. Since I have discussed the issue on several occasions in the past, I simply refer to my earlier articles (Lubotsky 1981, 1994; for the glottalic theory in general see Kortlandt 1985).

It is therefore likely that \(rH\) and \(d\) were phonetically \([r?]\) and \([?d]\), or glottalized \(r\) and (pre-)glottalized \(d\). Since we are dealing with a fairly early period in the development of Sanskrit, preceding the RV or during the stage of its earliest hymns at most, it is conceivable that \(r\) was not yet retroflex, but dental, which would mean that \([r?]\) and \([?d]\) were phonetically even closer.

References


