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## Dissimilatory loss of *i* in Sanskrit

Alexander Lubotsky

1. There have been several dissimilatory processes in the historical development of Sanskrit. Only rarely do these processes have the character of a regular sound law like, for instance, Grassmann's Law. Usually, dissimilations are sporadic in the sense that it is impossible to determine the precise conditions. In his *Nachträge* to *AiGr. I* (277,34-41), Debrunner has presented a large collection of dissimilations and assimilations in Sanskrit, but his list of examples of dissimilatory loss of *i* is very modest and of uneven value.

Debrunner mentions three cases (p. 158), two of which are doubtful. The fact that Pāṇini (6.4.117) allows for *jahāhi* 2sg. impv., next to the regular *jahīhi*, need not to be attributed to dissimilation, and, at any rate, neither of the two forms is attested in Vedic. Also the feminine adjective *sapatnaghñī-* 'slaying the (female) rivals' is hardly due to dissimilation of *\*sapatnīghñī-*. Rather, this is the feminine form of the compound *sapatnahán-* 'slaying the rivals', as clearly emerges from the analysis of the formulas. At RV 10.174.5a, we find the formula *asapatnáḥ sapatnahā* in the masculine, which is turned into the feminine variant 10.159.5a *asapatnā sapatnaghñī*.

2. The third example of Debrunner, however, is of great importance. The regular and expected 2sg. pf. of  $\sqrt{i}$ - 'to go' is *iyétha*, which is only attested at the beginning of a line at RV 4.9.1c<sup>1</sup>, whereas after a short or long  $\check{a}$  we find *iyátha*. Debrunner mentions *kvèyatha* RV 8.1.7a ('where did you go?'), *néyátha* ŚS 8.1.10b ('you did not go'), *eyátha* ŚS 10.1.24a, 28b (= PS 16.34.4a, 9b) 'you have come here', to which we may now add *eyatha* at PS 16.52.2b and *pareyatha* at PS 1.50.1a ('you have gone away').

This distribution can only be explained by a dissimilation rule *\*CaiyaiC > \*CaiyaC*, which must have been operative before monophthongization of diphthongs. Especially *kvèyatha* and *néyátha* are important, as they show that the dissimilation is not only found in lexical items, but also within a sentence. This means that the poets still pronounced the diphthongs (*\*ai* and, by extension, *\*au*), so that monophthongization must at least be posterior to compilation of the AV. Moreover, Hoffmann's attractive suggestion (1976: 552-4) to explain the Yajurvedic mantra *śómsā móda-iva*<sup>2</sup> as a lento pronunciation of *śámsa mádeva* [śám̐sə m̐daiva] 'Recite! Let us both rejoice!' points to an even later, i.e. Yajurvedic, date of monophthongization.<sup>3</sup> Hoffmann himself tried to project this pronunciation into prehistoric times: "[d]ie lautliche Gestaltung des Opferspruches muß sehr alt sein, denn sie setzt noch die diphthongische Aussprache von *e* (in *madeva*) voraus" (p. 552-3), but this seems hardly credible to me. We also do not need to assume that the sandhi rules  $-\check{a} + i- > e$ ,  $-\check{a} + e- > ai$ , as well as the fact that the pluti of *e* is  $\check{a}3i$  (e.g. *ágnā3i* 'O Agni'), reflect "Nachahmung von älteren Vorbildern", as suggested by Hoffmann (op.cit., fn. 3).<sup>4</sup> See further below, section 5.

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1 *iyétha barhír āsádam* 'you have come in order to sit on the barhis'; this pāda is repeated in the SV and in the KS.

2 TS 3.2.9.5; also spelled *śómsā módaiva* in KB 14.3, ĀpŚS 12.27.12.

3 To the same conclusion may point the sacrificial exclamation *śrausaṭ*, which must be due to a lento pronunciation of *śróṣat* 'may he hear!' and the haplological reduction of *dātave vái* to *dātavái*, mentioned by Hoffmann, op. cit., p. 553, fn. 3.

4 Likewise, Hoffmann's (1976: 585) convincing explanation of Class V present of the root *kṛ-* 'to make' *kṛṇu<sup>o</sup>* > *\*kṛru<sup>o</sup>* > *kuru<sup>o</sup>*; *kṛṇóti* > *\*kṛróti* > *karóti* by a kind of "vowel harmony" presupposes that *-o-* at the time of the late RV still was *-av-*.

The late date of monophthongization has far-reaching consequences for the development of *\*azD > eD*, which must be anterior to the RV. As a matter of fact, an analogical zero grade *-e-* in the perfect of *CaC*-roots is not only already found in this text, but is clearly expanding. In the Family books, five roots show the analogical *e*-grade: *debh-* (*debhuḥ* I, IV, X); *bhej-* (*bhejé* VII, *bhejāte* VII, *bhejiré* VII, *bhejire* V, X, *bhejānāsaḥ* IV, X), *pec-* (*pece* IV), *śek-* (*śeka* V, *śekūḥ* X, *śekuḥ* IX, X), *sep-* (*sepuḥ* VI). In the late books, we find six more roots: *tep-* (*tepānāḥ* VIII<sup>2</sup>), *nem-* (*neme* I), *pet-* (*petathuḥ* I, VIII, *vi-petātuḥ* X; NB: next to *papt-* in the Family Books), *rebh-* (*rebhīrē* I; NB: next to *rarabh-* in the Family Books), *lebh-* (*anvālebhīre* X, *ālebhānāt* X), *śep-* (*śepé* I, X), *seh-* (*sehānā-* VIII, X; NB: next to *sāsah-* in the Family Books).

The secondary *e*-grade is usually explained<sup>5</sup> by an analogy to the perfect of *sad-* ‘to sit’ (*sasāda* / *\*sa-zd-* > *sed-*) and of *yaC-* roots (e.g. *yayāma* / *\*ia-im-* > *yem-*), but it is now clear that at the time of the RV, the latter group still contained an *-i-* and could not contribute to the rise of the analogy. In other words, the analogical spread of *-e-* in the weak grade of the perfect can only be attributed to *sasāda* / *sed-*. This seems unproblematic to me. The weak forms with *-e-* are very well attested for this common root (31× in the RV), and the motivation for introducing this weak grade is evident: most of the clusters *\*bhj*, *\*pc*, *\*śk*, etc. are phonotactically inadmissible in Sanskrit.

There is another case of secondary spread of *-e-* in Vedic, that is *dhetana* (VIII, X), 2pl. aor. impv.  $\sqrt{dhā}$ - next to the regular *dhātana* (VII). The source of the spread is of course the 2sg. impv. form *dhehī* which goes back to *\*d<sup>h</sup>azd<sup>h</sup>i* < *\*d<sup>h</sup>ad<sup>h</sup>zd<sup>h</sup>i* (Hoffmann 1956: 21 = 1976: 400). In this case, too, there is no need to assume early monophthongization *\*ai > e*.

What does this mean for the development of *\*azD* in Vedic? As is well known, Vedic short *a* was pronounced as shwa (Hoffmann 1976: 552-4). The loss of *\*z* would lead to compensatory lengthening of this shwa, so that *\*azD* [əzD] > *\*āD*. Because of this sound law, the long shwa became a phoneme and could then analogically spread to other environments. Only after monophthongization *\*ai > e* did /ā/ merge with *e*.

As is often the case with dissimilations, it is unclear whether dissimilation *\*CaiyaiC > \*CaiyaC* was regular. In the RV, we also find *śātavaneyé*, *paúruṣeyēṇa*, *turaspéye* where this dissimilation has not taken place or was later analogically undone.

3. Debrunner’s collection of examples of dissimilatory loss of *i* in Sanskrit can be substantially expanded. In the following, I shall present two cases already discussed in the literature (sections 4-5) and three new suggestions (sections 6-8).

4. Hoffmann (1976: 566, fn. 19) has explained *jāyānya-* (AV), name of a disease, as dissimilated from *\*jāiānija-*, a vṛddhi-formation to *jyānī-* /j<sup>1</sup>yānī-/ ‘damaging’, which is an attractive, although not compelling, etymology.

5. As Plath has convincingly argued (2000: 417), the R̥gvedic form *tujete* (1.61.14) must stand for *\*tujyete*. The text runs as follows: 1.61.14ab *asyéd u bhiyā giráyaś ca dṛḥhā dyāvā ca bhūmā janūśas tujete* ‘‘Out of fear of his birth the firm mountains and heaven and earth are put to panic’’. Class VI present (*tujánt-* ptc.act.) of the root *tuj-* only appears with active endings and means ‘to thrust, push’, whereas the required meaning ‘to be put to panic (flight)’ is conveyed by the passive *tujyáte*.<sup>6</sup>

It seems significant that the poet used *tujete* in the cadence, with the short vowel in the first syllable. This form must be nonce: the line is not formulaic, and dissimilation cannot be old because *-y-* would have been restored in the paradigm. This means that dissimilation occurred

5 Most recently, in Kümmel 2000: 19.

6 For a discussion I refer to Kulikov 2001: 81f. and 2005.

in the speech of the poet himself and, consequently, that he still pronounced the diphthongs \**tujjaitai*.

6. As is well known, roots of the type *sīv-* ‘to sew’, *dīv-* ‘to play dice’, *ṣṭhīv-* ‘to spit’, *mīv-* ‘to push away’, *srīv-* ‘to miscarry’ predominantly appear in zero-grade.<sup>7</sup> The rare full grades mostly show *-ev-*, cf. the following list, which is intended to be exhaustive as far as Vedic is concerned:

*sevanī-* f. ‘seam, suture’ (AitB, ŚāṅkhB)

*dévana-* n. ‘(place for) playing dice’ (RV 10.43.5), *adhidévana-* n. ‘id.’ (AV+)

*didéva* 3sg. pf. √*dīv-* ‘to play dice’ (AV)

*abhi-tiṣṭheva* 3sg. pf. √*ṣṭhīv-* ‘to spit, spit out’ (ŚB)

*sreváyant-* (RV 7.18.8), *śrevayāmi* (PS 19.10.12; ŚS 6.73.2 in a parallel passage reads *śrīvayāmi*), caus. of √*srīv-* ‘to miscarry’

*a-sremán-* adj. ‘being not a miscarriage’ (RV 3.29.13, 10.8.2; < \**srevmán-*)

*srévuka-* adj. ‘miscarrying’ (MS)

Nevertheless, there are also four cases of full grades with *-av-* and lengthened grades with *-āv-*:

*daviṣāṇi* 1sg.aor.subj. √*dīv-* (RV 10.34.5)

*á-maviṣṇu-* adj. ‘unflinching’ (RV 10.94.11)

*asrāvīt* 3sg.aor. √*srīv-* (JB 2.2)

*aṣṭhaviṣam* 1sg.aor. √*ṣṭhīv-* (GopB 1.2.7)<sup>8</sup>

Our handbooks (e.g., Narten 1964: 142; Mayrhofer, EWAia, s.v. *dīv-*, *mīv-*, *srīv-*; cf. also Rasmussen 1989: 117) explain the *āv-* forms as secondary full grades to \**dū-*, *mū-* < \**djū-*, *mjū-*, etc., where \**j* would have disappeared like in *sūtra-* n. ‘line, cord’ (AV+) to *sīv-/syū-* ‘to sew’. However, the \**j*-less forms \**dū-*, *ṣṭhū-*, *srū-* are unattested in Vedic, and, furthermore, the distribution is remarkable: the forms with *-āv-* are only found before *i* in the next syllable, while full grades with *-ev-* never occur in this position. Although the evidence is limited, it seems likely that we have to do with dissimilation, i.e. \**daiṣ-* > *daviṣ-*.

It is clear that *asrāvīt* and *aṣṭhaviṣam* can easily be formed in analogy to *daviṣāṇi*, but *daviṣāṇi* itself and *ámaviṣṇu-* seem to be old.

7. The root *yas-* ‘to cook, boil’ forms class III present, although it concerns a hapax *yayastu* 3sg. impv. (RV 7.104.2, an “Anhang” hymn). Next to this reduplicated present, we find in the RV a thematicized participle *yéṣant-ī-* (3.53.22),<sup>9</sup> which is an unusual situation. There are of course several thematic reduplicated presents in Vedic, but they all have *-i-* in the reduplication syllable, which is an old Indo-European formation, e.g., *sídati* ‘to sit’ < \**si-sd-e/o-*, *píbati* ‘to drink’ < \**pi-ph<sub>3</sub>-e/o-*, *tíṣṭhati* ‘to stand’ < \**sti-sth<sub>2</sub>-e/o-*, etc.

A key to this state of affairs may be provided by YAv. *yaēšiiant-ī-* f. ‘swirling, boiling’, which reflects a reduplicated present with the suffix \**-ia-* (\**ia-iš-ia-*). In Sanskrit, a

7 See further Lubotsky 2011.

8 The meaning of a quasi-hapax *niṣṭhāva-* (JB 3.121.6), an epithet characterizing an old man, is uncertain. If we accept Rau’s attractive suggestion (1980: 160f.) that it means ‘Sabberer’, or, with Miyakawa (2000), rather ‘Ausspucker’, then we have to assume that *niṣṭhāva-* is secondarily formed on the basis of the *s-*aor. forms like *aṣṭhaviṣam*.

9 In the later texts, the thematic present *yéṣati* lives on in the AV and TS (*yéṣati* PS 3.40.1c, *niryéṣati* TS 2.5.1.4; *yéṣant-* ŚS 4.7.4c = PS 2.1.3c, PS 20.19.10b). The AV further attests two occurrences of class IV present *prá yásyati* (PS(O) 9.28.3 = PS(K) 9.25.3; ŚS 12.5.31a = PS 16.144.2c; cf. Pāṇ. 3.1.71). These seem to be innovations based on RV 3.53.22 *práyasta-*. For a discussion of the passages see Kulikov 2001: 448f.

combination of reduplication and the suffix *\*-ia-* is only attested in the intensive middle (type *mar-mṛj-yá-te*), but there is a close parallel in Avestan (Kellens 1984: 194), where we find pres. *\*Hra-Hrš-ia-* derived from the root *rah-* ‘to be disloyal, unfaithful’: OAv. *rārəšiiēiptī* 3pl.pres. (Y 47.3), *rārəšiiqñ* 3pl.subj. (Y 32.11); YAv. *rārəšiiant-* ptc. (Yt 11.6).<sup>10</sup> It seems reasonable to assume that both stems, *yaēšii-* and *rārəšii-*, reflect Proto-Indo-Iranian intensives and that the type with the suffix *\*-ia-* was not originally restricted to the middle.

If YAv. *yaēšiiant-ī-* represents the older type, indeed, we must reconstruct Proto-Indo-Iranian *\*iaišia-* and explain Vedic *yéṣati* by dissimilatory loss of *i*.

8. The medial thematic participle *jéhamāna-* occurs five times in the Ṛgveda (once *vijéhamāna-*) and then disappears from the language<sup>11</sup>. No other derivatives of this root are known. In none of the Ṛgvedic passages, the meaning of *jéhamāna-* is absolutely evident, but we can agree with Gotō 1987: 156, who writes: “Zu den Belegen des ṛgvedischen Part. *jéhamāna-* scheint die Bedeutung entweder ‘keuchend, lechzend’ oder ‘den Mund aufmachend’ zu passen” and provides an analysis of all the passages which seems to confirm this conclusion.

Mayrhofer in EWAia I: 598 says about the etymology of *jéhamāna-*: “Nicht überzeugend erklärt” and then mentions in small letters: “Vielleicht zu got. *faihu-geigan* (belegt *°gais*) ‘Besitz begehren’ und (?) zu der Wurzel für ‘gähnen’, lat. *hiāre* usw. ...”.

The root structure of this Vedic participle is remarkable, but it can hardly reflect anything else than PIIr. *\*z<sup>h</sup>aiž<sup>h</sup>-* which must be a reduplicated formation. Since the meaning ‘to pant, gasp’ can be rendered as ‘to keep opening the mouth’, it clearly points to an intensive, which has a repetitive or frequentative meaning in Vedic (cf. Schaefer 1994). Also the reduplication is of an intensive kind, typical of roots containing *-i-* (*ce-kit-*, *de-diš-*, *ve-vī-*, etc.), which makes it indeed attractive to derive *jéhamāna-* from a PIE secondary root (an original *i*-present) *\*g<sup>h</sup>h<sub>2</sub>-ei-* ‘to gape’ (Lat. *hiāre* ‘to be wide open, gape’, *hīscere* ‘to open (the mouth)’, Lith. *žióti*, OCS *zijati*, 1sg. *zějo / zijajo* ‘to open (one’s mouth)’)<sup>12</sup>.

The intensive middle is either athematic in Vedic or is formed with the accented suffix *-yá-*, so that there are two types of participles: the athematic ones (*cékitāna-*, *ā-mémyāna-*, *vévijāna-*, *sársrāna-*, etc.) with accent on the reduplication syllable and those with the accented suffix *-yá-* (*nenīyámāna-*, *marmṛjyámāna-*, *coṣkūyámāna-*, etc.).

In order to explain *jéhamāna-* out of an intensive participle, we have two possible scenarios at our disposal. If the accentuation of *jéhamāna-* is old, it points to the first, athematic, type, so that we have to assume that thematicization is secondary. The expected form in PIIr., before vocalization of the nasals, would be *\*z<sup>h</sup>ái-z<sup>h</sup>(H)imHna-*, and the only assumption we need (which is admittedly *ad hoc*, however) that in this palatal environment *\*i* was dissimilated to *\*a*. The dissimilated *\*z<sup>h</sup>ái-z<sup>h</sup>(H)amHna-* would regularly yield *jéhamāna-*.<sup>13</sup>

10 Possibly, also pres. *\*Hi-Hiz-ia-* derived from the root *iz-* ‘to long for, desire’: OAv. *iziiā* 1sg.pres. (Y 33.6, Y 49.3), YAv. *iziiēiti* 3sg. In the latter case, we again find no suffix *\*-ia-* in Vedic, cf. *sam īhase* 2sg.med. (VS+) ‘to strive for, desire’. This might be yet another case of *i*-dissimilation.

11 KS 5.1:44.9-10 *jehāmānam* is clearly a mistake for *jemānam*, cf. v. Schroeder ad KS 32.1:19.5.

12 For details of the reconstruction, see Lubotsky 2011: 107f.

13 A different treatment of the root syllable in the intensive stems *nenīyámāna-* and *vevīyate* (from the roots *nī-* ‘to lead’ and *vī-* ‘to take hold of’, respectively) can be due to restoration of the root vocalism, which was impossible in the case of *jéhamāna-* since there were no related forms in Indo-Iranian.

Another option<sup>14</sup> would be to assume that the participle originally contained the accented suffix *\*-ia-*, that is *\*z<sup>h</sup>ai-z<sup>h</sup>(H)i-iá-mHna-*, although this explanation involves more intermediate steps: first, *\*-z<sup>h</sup>(H)i-iá-* must have developed into *\*-z<sup>h</sup>iá-*, then *-i-* was dissimilatorily lost and – since there descriptively was no *\*-ia-* suffix in this word any longer – the accent was analogically retracted to the reduplication syllable.

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14 This possible solution was suggested to me by Martin Kümmel during the discussion of my paper in Opava.