



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Book Review : S. Scarlata, Die Wurzelkomposita im Rg-Veda Kulikov, L.I.

Citation

Kulikov, L. I. (2005). Book Review : S. Scarlata, Die Wurzelkomposita im Rg-Veda. *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia*, 6, 126-130. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/16512>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)
License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)
Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/16512>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY
Centre of Oriental Studies

Acta Orientalia Vilnensia

2005
Volume 6, Issue 2
Published since 2000

Vilnius University Publishing House
2006

SALVATORE SCARLATA. *Die Wurzelkomposita im R̥g-Veda*, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1999, x+816 pp. ISBN 3-89500-112-0, Cloth, € 138

This voluminous book of more than eight hundred pages (which the author archly calls “Büchlein” in the preface, p. vii) represents a slightly revised version of Scarlata’s Ph.D. dissertation presented at University of Zürich in 1998. It offers a complete description of the compounds based on root nouns (that is, nouns built directly on the root, without using any nominal suffix(es))¹ attested in the oldest Vedic text, the R̥gveda (RV). In fact, the range of formations discussed in the book is not limited to root nouns but includes a good many suffixal nouns which are relevant for the study, in particular, a number of nouns in *-van-*.

The book consists of a short introduction, the vocabulary of roots attested in root nouns, and two summarizing chapters.

The introductory chapter, “Einleitung” (p. 1–11), offers a short survey of the literature dealing with root nouns, which mostly amounts to extensive quotations from the relevant parts of Wackernagels’ and Debrunner’s *Altindische Grammatik*, vol. II/1–2 (1905: 174–187; 1954, 1–47). Another author amply quoted by Scarlata throughout the book is Jochem Schindler (especially his unpublished PhD thesis (1972a)). The next sections of the chapter briefly characterize the scope, composition and methods of the study.

The largest part of the book, “Lexikon” (p. 13–709), contains 218 alphabetically arranged lemmata. Each lemma opens with a short information about the verbal root in question, followed by an analysis of compounds based on the corresponding root noun.² The discussion of each compound opens with its translation and textual references; for stems attested less than 5 times all corresponding RVic passages are quoted in full. The author further describes the meaning of the compound and

¹ Including root nouns with *-t*-extension, such as °*jí-t-* ‘winner, winning’ and °*kṛ-t-* ‘maker, making’, which clearly belong together with root nouns in the strict sense of the word.

² Unfortunately (though in accordance with the title of the book), Scarlata excludes from the analysis the non-compounded root nouns. Thus, the lemma °*vāc-* (p. 469–473) deals with all compounds based on the root *VAC-* ‘speak, talk’, such as *pravāc-* ‘declaration’, *satyavāc-* ‘speaking the truth’, etc., but excludes the simplex (non-compounded) root noun *vāc-* ‘speech’ from the material. Instead, the simplex root nouns are discussed in one of the concluding chapters, on p. 724–731 (see below).

characterizes its syntactic type in terms of case relations between the verb (from which the root noun in question is derived) and the noun manifested in the first member of the compound. Then this syntactic characteristic is explicated (under the heading “S[yntagma]:”) by means of constructions made from these verb and noun. Thus, the compound *śatru-hán-* ‘killing the enemy’ instantiates the commonest accusative (“akkusativisch”) type and can be explicated by such constructions as RV 4.41.2 *sá hanti [...] śátrūn* ‘he kills the enemies’ (p. 693); the compound *divi-jā-* ‘born in heaven’ belongs to the locative type, cf. RV 10.88.10 *diví devāso agním ājījanan* ‘the gods have produced Agni in heaven’ (p. 137). In addition, for some compounds Scarlata describes remarkable morphological features, discusses the most important fragments of their paradigms and their etymology. Concluding the analysis of compounds, the author lists competing formations (under the heading “K[onkurrierende Bildung(en)]:”), i.e. synonymous compounds derived from the same verbal root. For example, competing formations of *ṛta-jā-* ‘born in/from the (cosmic) Order’ includes *ṛte-jā-* and *ṛtá-jāta-*; the list of competing formations of *nidhā-* ‘net’ contains, among others, such compounds as *nídhātu-*, *nídhāna-* and *nidhí-*. Finally, under the heading “F[unction]:” the author indicates the function of the compound in question: nomen actionis, infinitive, nomen agentis, etc. (see below). Lemmata are concluded by summaries and additional remarks (Z:).

It is hardly possible to discuss even a minor part of this voluminous “Lexikon” within a short review. In general, the lemmata are written with a laudable accuracy and scrupulousness and contain a good many valuable observations and findings. I will confine myself to a short critical remark. It seems that a more attentive analysis of some aspects of the syntax of verbs under discussion could help the author to avoid a number of inaccurate or erroneous interpretations. For instance, Scarlata consistently translates *tanū-* in compounds of the type *tanū-N* as ‘body’ (‘Leib’). In fact, in some of its occurrences *tanū-* is employed in the emphatic reflexive function, meaning ‘self’.³ Thus, RV 8.79.3 *tvám soma tanūkṛdbhyo dvēṣobhyo ’nyá-kṛtebhyaḥ urú yantāsi várūtham* should be translated as ‘You, o Soma, give the broad protection from the evils committed by [our]selves and by the others’, rather than as ‘Du, Soma, bietest für die, die {deinen} Leib (= dich) zubereiten, weiten Schutz vor den von anderen bereiteten Feindseligkeiten. Du spannst einen breiten Schutzschirm auf’ (p. 73). Likewise, the author disregards the reciprocal function of the preverb *ví-*⁴ and erroneously explains the semantics of the compound *vívāc-* ‘disputierend, streitend; Wechselrede, Disput’ as bahuvrīhi or “Determinativkompositum” going back to the meaning ‘deren Reden verschieden sind’ (p. 472). In fact, the actually attested

³ For details, see Kulikov, 2000.

⁴ Noticed already by Delbrück, 1888, (p. 243); for a detailed analysis of *ví*-reciprocals, see Kulikov, 2002.

meanings of *vívāc-* can be readily explained as based on the reciprocal verb *ví-vac* (with the middle inflexion) ‘discuss with each other, contest on smth.’ (cf. RV 6.31.1 *ví toké apsú tánaye ca sūre avocanta carṣaṇáyo vívācaḥ* ‘the tribes contested (lit. contested contests) on seed, waters and offspring, on the sun’).

The first summarizing chapter, “Auswertung” (p. 711–51), opens with the full alphabetic list of root nouns attested in compounds. The author further discusses the formal similarity between compounds and corresponding syntagmas, cf. *havir-ád-* (RV 10.15.10) ‘eating the oblation’ ~ RV 2.1.13 *devā havír adanti* ‘the gods eat the oblation’. In the next section, Scarlata illustrates the productivity of root noun compounds with such analogical series as *aśva-dā-* ‘horse-giver’ – *aśva-jít-* ‘horse-winner’ – *aśva-vid-* ‘horse-acquirer’ – *aśva-sā-* ‘horse-winner’ : *go-dā-* ‘cow-giver’ – *go-jít-* ‘cow-winner’ – *go-vid-* ‘cow-acquirer’ – *go-sā-* ‘cow-winner’ : *hiranya-dā-* ‘gold-giver’ – *hiranya-jít-* ‘gold-winner’; etc. The next section, “Die W[urzel]K[omposita] und die ihnen entsprechenden Simplicia” (p. 724–31), briefly discusses the semantic and syntactic features of non-compounded root nouns (consistently excluded by Scarlata from the material dealt with in the lemmata) as compared to the corresponding compounds. The chapter concludes with two classifications of root nouns, viz. (i) according to the types of root structure⁵ and (ii) according to the functions of root nouns.

The classification of functional types divides root noun compounds into two major classes, verbal substantives and verbal adjectives. The compounds of the former type mostly have preverbs as the first member and split into abstract nouns (which include *nomina actionis* and infinitives) and concrete nouns (*nomina rei actae* and “konkretisierte N[omina] act.[ionis]”). As Scarlata points out, “[e]ine [read: *ein* – LK] formaler Unterschied zwischen den Nact., Inf. und den Nrei act. ist im RV nicht mehr feststellbar. Die Bestimmung und Differenzierung muss anhand des Kontextes erfolgen, ist somit von der Interpretation der betreffenden Textstellen abhängig und in vielen Fällen diskutabel” (p. 734–35). Cf. *ni-śád-* ‘sitting down’ (Nact. or Inf. – in the dative form *ni-śáde* ‘(in order) to sit down’); *pra-búdh-* ‘waking (up)’ (Nact.; also employed as *nomen agentis*); *vi-dyút-* ‘flash, lightning’ (“konk. Nact. und vielleicht auch Nag.”); *sam-ídh-* ‘ignition, fuel’ (Nact.; Nrei act.). The class of verbal adjectives consists of *nomina agentis* (cf. *vṛtra-hán-* ‘destroying the obstacle, killing Vṛtra’) and *nomina patientis* (cf. *deva-śrút-* ‘heard/audible by the gods’),⁶ which can also be classified in

⁵ When dealing with the main root structures, the author rightly notices that “*TET*-Wurzeln haben die Schwundstufe aufgegeben und zeigen nur noch *Tāt/TāT*, wobei jede der beiden Ablautstufen innerhalb eines Paradigmas verallgemeinert werden kann” (Schindler, 1979, 59f.). However, Scarlata’s explanation of the fact that the *TET* root stems generalize the full or long grade, originally attested only in strong cases (“[d]ies mag damit zusammenhängen, dass zufälligerweise (?) schwache Kasus ungleich seltener belegt sind als starke”, p. 733), is unconvincing.

⁶ The author draws attention to the fact that both types are derived from active verbal roots; passive roots do not exist, save one possible exception, the verb *JAN-* / *JĀ-*. The evaluation of the

terms of case relation between the corresponding verb and noun: accusative, locative, instrumental, etc.

In the second summarizing chapter, “Rück- und Ausblick” (p. 753–72), the author touches upon a number of diachronic issues related to root nouns and root noun compounds. First, he refers the readers to Schindler’s (1972b) reconstruction of two formal types of ablaut (that is, the root grade alternation attested in strong vs. weak cases) in Indo-European root nouns: (I) $\acute{o} \sim \acute{e}$ (in nomina rei actae and nomina agentis) and (II) $\acute{e} \sim \emptyset$ (in nomina actionis and nomina agentis derived from verbs of state). Briefly discussing the old theory about the origin of root noun compounds from bahuvrīhis (e.g.: *vr̥tra-hán-* ‘destroying the obstacle’ ← ‘the one whose strokes are directed against the obstacle(s)’ (?)), Scarlata does not rule out their genetic relationships but denies the identity of these two types (“[t]rotz der Ähnlichkeiten und der denkbaren Verwandtschaft der zwei wohl ältesten Typen der idg. Komposition, den B[ahu]V[rīhi] und den v[erbalen] R[ektions]K[omposita], ist eine Gleichsetzung unangebracht”, p. 758). The author argues that both stem compounds (cf. *ṛta-jā-* ‘born in/from the (cosmic) Order’) and case compounds (cf. *ṛte-jā-* id.) can be posited for Proto-Indo-European.

Finally, Scarlata briefly discusses a number of issues of the evolution of root noun compounds, in particular, the co-existence of agentive and patientive nouns derived from the same root (cf. the compound of the agentive/accusative type *soma-pā-* ‘drinking Soma, Soma-drinker’ as opposed to the patientive/instrumental compound *indra-pā-* ‘drunk by Indra’). He explains these two semantico-syntactic types as due to the topicalisation of the object or subject in corresponding syntagmas (*indrah sómam pāt* ‘Indra drinks Soma’ etc.).

The book concludes with a bibliography and two indices (an index of RVic passages and an index of forms discussed).

Scarlata’s monograph offers an excellent survey and analysis of the root noun compounds, their morphological, syntactic and semantic features and systemic relationships. The reader will find here a comprehensive discussion of a number of problematic forms and difficult passages from the RV. This encyclopedia of the R̥gvedic root nouns can be recommended for all Sanskritists and Indo-Europeanists, as well as for all those interested in the general theory of word formation, and should be on the desk of any scholar of the R̥gveda.

meaning of this root as (inherently) passive is based on a widely spread misunderstanding which is probably due to the fact that this verb is rendered as (morphologically) passive in the main languages of the European indology: ‘be born’, ‘geboren werden’, ‘être né’, etc. – which does not suggest its passive meaning in Sanskrit (cf. also its non-passive translation equivalent in Russian, ‘roždat’sja’). For details and discussion, see Kulikov, 2001.

REFERENCES:

Delbrück, Berthold, 1888. *Altindische Syntax*, Halle a.S.: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses.

Kulikov, Leonid, 2000. "RV 1.120.11: a note on the Vedic reflexive", in *125 Jahre Indogermanistik in Graz. Festband anlässlich des 125jährigen Bestehens der Forschungsrichtung "Indogermanistik" an der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz*, ed. M. Ofitsch and Chr. Zinko, Graz: Leykam, 231–38.

Kulikov, Leonid, 2001. "Between passive and reflexive: The Vedic presents with the suffix -ya-", in *Making sense: from lexeme to discourse. In honor of Werner Abraham at the occasion of his retirement*, Groninger Arbeiten zur germanistischen Linguistik (GAGL) 44, ed. G. van der Meer and A. G. B. ter Meulen, Groningen: Center for Language and Cognition, 13–20.

Kulikov, Leonid, 2002. "Tipologičeskie zametki o morfoložičeskom reciproke v vedijskom sanskrite" [Typological remarks on the reciprocal verbs in Vedic Sanskrit], in *Jazyki mira. Tipologija. Uralistika. Pamjati T. Ždanovoj* [Languages of the world. Typology. Uralic studies. Memorial volume for T. Ždanova], ed. V. A. Plungian and A. Ju. Urmančieva, Moscow: Indrik, 276–99.

Schindler, Jochem, 1972a. *Das Wurzelnomen im Arischen und Griechischen*, Ph.D. dissertation, Würzburg.

Schindler, Jochem, 1972b. "L'apophonie des noms-racines indo-européens", *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 67: 31–38.

Schindler, Jochem, 1979. Review of J. Kellens, *Les noms-racines de l'Avesta* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1974), *Die Sprache* 25: 57–60.

Wackernagel, Jacob, 1905. *Altindische Grammatik*, Bd. II/1: Einleitung zur Wortlehre. Nominalkomposition, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Wackernagel, Jacob, Albert Debrunner, 1954. *Altindische Grammatik*, Bd. II/2: Die Nominalsuffixe, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Leonid KULIKOV, Leiden University; Universität Göttingen