

The Vedic root *vr-* 'to cover' and its present

Summary: The original meaning of the Vedic root *vr-* is 'to cover'. The root is *aniṭ* and begins with a laryngeal. Of the two present stems, viz. *vr̥ṇóti* and *ūr̥ṇóti*, the latter originated in specific phonetic environment and practically eliminated the former in late Vedic.

1. The main topic of the present paper is the relationship between two present stems of the Vedic root *vr-*, viz. *vr̥ṇóti* and *ūr̥ṇóti*, but before we embark on the discussion of these presents let us first scrutinize the meaning of the root, its shape and etymology.

1.1 The meaning of the root *vr-*.

The finite forms of the root essentially display one of the two meanings in the R̥gveda (RV): 1) 'to cover' (with the preverbs *ápa* and *ví* 'to open, uncover, release, remove'), or 2) 'to stop, check'.¹ There can be little doubt that the meaning 'to stop' has developed from the basic meaning 'to cover' (cf. for a parallel *to cover a player* in sport terminology).² As is typical of derived meanings in general, the 'stop'-meaning has a more restricted use. First, it is almost always found in negated or interrogative sentences, cf. 5.55.7a *ná párvatā ná nadyò varanta vo* 'neither the mountains nor the rivers will stop you (Maruts)' or 5.32.9a *kó asya śúṣmaṃ táviṣim varāte* 'who will stop his impetuosity, his power?'.³ Secondly, the 'stop'-meaning is practically limited to the forms without preverbs (the only exceptions are the rare *prá-vr-* and *ní-vr-*) and to the middle voice (the most frequent forms with this meaning are aor. subj. middle *vārate* and the causative-factitive middle *vārāyate*).

It is further important that the Avestan root *var-* 'to cover' never shows the meaning 'to stop', which suggests that the latter is a specifically Vedic development. The Avestan root does have other derived meanings like 'to impregnate', 'to cover eyes, ears = to blind, to deafen'.

If we now look at nominal formations which are considered derivatives of this root, we see a bewildering variety of meanings. As an illustration of the *communis opinio* on the matter, I here give a list of nouns which are considered by Mayrhofer (EWAia) as cognate with our root (the division into semantic classes is mine):

1. 'to cover': *várman-* n. 'armour', *várṇa-* m. 'color', *vavrí-* m. 'covering, vesture',⁴ *ápāvṛti-* f. 'opening'. It seems likely that *vr̥trá-* also belongs to this semantic class. Its original meaning probably was 'cover', since the demon *Vr̥trá-* "covered" the

¹ Note that the second meaning is 'to stop, check' rather than 'to obstruct, hinder', which is often given in the dictionaries and handbooks.

² The original locus of the semantic change 'to cover > to stop' probably was the expression 'to cover the fire' = 'to stop the fire', cf. 1.116.8a *himēnāgnīm ghraṃsám avārayethām* 'you two have covered the fire, the heat, with snow', 5.73.5cd *pāri vām aruṣā váyo, ghṛṇā varanta ātāpah* 'your red birds (= horses) will stop the glowing heat from burning' (cf. Hoffmann 1967: 197), 8.73.8a *vārethe agnīm ātāpo* 'you two (the Áśvins) will cover (= stop) the fire from burning', AVP 1.44.1cd *sarvā viśasya dhāmāry, udnevāgnim avivare* 'I have extinguished all sorts of poison like fire with water'.

³ Similarly, in the nominal derivatives *á(ni)vṛta-* 'unstoppable', *dur-vārtu-* adj. 'difficult to stop'.

⁴ The meaning 'Versteck', given by Grassmann and taken over by Mayrhofer, is dispensable, see Geldner's translations.

waters, which were later "opened" (*ápa-vr-*) by Indra. After the monograph by Benveniste and Renou (1934), it has become customary to operate with the original meaning 'obstacle' for this word (and for its Avestan cognate *varəθra-*), but since we cannot reconstruct the meaning 'to obstruct' for Indo-Iranian verbal root *vr-*, this idea seems doubtful to me. Note further that Av. *varəθra-* also has the meaning 'shield', which often carries the idea of covering.

2. 'to stop': *vartár-* m. 'stopper', *arəo-vřt-* 'stopping the flood', *vártra-* n. 'dike' (AV+).

3. 'hole, imprisonment': *vavrá-* m. 'hole, pit', *valá-* m. 'cave, demon of the cave', *ūrvá-* m. 'reservoir, prison'; uncertain: *úlba-* n. 'membrane, surrounding the embryo', *bíla-* 'hole, pit'.

4. 'protection': *varūtár-* m. 'protector'⁵, *várūtrī-* f. 'guardian goddess', *várūtha-* n. 'protection, shelter'.

5. '(leather) strap': *varatrā-* (RV) f. '(yoke-)strap', *várdhra-* (AV+) m. 'leather strap, band', *vārdhrī-* (Br.+) 'leather band'.

6. varia: *vāraná-* adj. 'wild (?)', *vāra-* m. '(tail) hair'.

It is clear that groups 1 and 2 are derivatives of the root *vr-* 'to cover'. It is conceivable that at least some members of group 3 belong there too, but the forms like *úlba-* and *bíla-* make the whole group somewhat suspect of being borrowed from an indigenous language. As to the other groups, they are, in my opinion, not related to our root.

Group 4 shows a different root, viz. *varū-*, which goes together with a specific meaning 'to protect, guard', a meaning that is nowhere attested for the root *vr-*. The etymological connection of this group with Gr. *ἐρυσσαι* 'to protect' can hardly be doubted, which, at the same time, excludes any relationship with Skt. *vr-*, since the Skt. root begins with a laryngeal, as we shall presently see.

In order to derive group 5 from our root, we would have to pay a big price, viz. to posit two unique suffixes *-dhra-* and *-atrā-* and to consider a leather strap as something that covers or stops. Wackernagel-Debrunner 1954 and Mayrhofer (EWAia) are prepared to pay this price, but for me it is too high. It is further important that *varatrā-* is a late word in the RV, only attested in hymns of Atharvaveda-like character (3x X, 1x "Anhang"-hymn 4.57), and that the variation of the type *várdhra-/vārdhrī-* is far from regular. Words of this semantic category can easily be borrowed, and it is quite probable that here we are dealing with a loan word.

As to group 6, *vāraná-* is difficult to derive from *vr-* for semantic reasons. The explanation of *vāra-* by Thieme (1994: 324) as 'warding off (flies)' (following Yāska, Nir. 11.31) has a strong flavour of folk etymology. Moreover, the root *vr-* does not mean 'to ward off', which renders the idea even less probable. The old etymology connecting this word with Lith. *vālas* 'tail-hair' seems preferable to me.

⁵ Mayrhofer's rendering 'Abwehrer' is imprecise. The word always means 'protector'. Grassmann gives the meaning 'Abwehrer' only for 1.169.1b *mahás cid asi tyájaso variūtá*, which, however, can also be rendered 'you are the protector even from a great danger', cf. 7.20.1d *trātá na índra énaso mahás cit* 'Indra is our protector even from a great mischief'.

1.2 The shape of the root *vr-*.

The root is anit, cf. pres. *vr̥ṇóti* (for *ūr̥ṇóti* see below), *ta*-ptc. *vr̥tá-*, caus. *vār̥áyate* with a long vowel due to Brugmann's Law, and nominal derivatives like *°vr̥t-*, *vr̥ti-*, *vr̥trá-*, etc.

It is less well-known that *vr-* had an initial laryngeal, as follows from consistent lengthening of preceding short vowels. The evidence consists of three groups of forms:

a. The long augment in *ávar* 2sg. and 3sg. aor. (14x⁶ in the RV, 1x in the AV). The only apparent exception is 5.31.3d *ví jyótiṣā saṁvavrtvát támo 'vah*, where we should probably assume injunctive *var*, rather than *avar* of the Padapāṭha (Gipert 1997: 76).

b. Lengthening of the preverb in the *ta*-part. *ápā-vr̥ta-*, *ápī°*, *abhī°*, *pārī°*, *á-parī°*,⁷ *prā°* and in impv. aor. *ápā vr̥dhi* (5x in the RV). Further, we find lengthening in *ápāvrti-* f. 'opening'⁸ and in *hrādunī-vrt-*, if it means 'covered by hail' (or 'covering with hail') and belongs to our root (see Geldner ad 5.54.3c). Also the long reduplication in the pluperfect *ávāvarit̥*⁹ may be old. The AV adds *sampārivr̥ta-* and the gerund *prāvṛtya*.

c. Long scansion of *ví* in 1.62.5a *gr̥ṇānó āngirobhir dasma ví var* (cf. Gipert 1997: 76) and of *á-* in *ávrtā-* 'unstoppable' (in all its 7 occurrences). Also *suvinṛta-* (1.10.7a) must probably be scanned with long *ī* because otherwise there are three short syllables at the beginning of the line. It is peculiar that the preverb *ní* does not appear with lengthening in the Saṁhitā-text, cf. *nívrtam* (1.112.5a), *nívrtāḥ* (1.57.6c, 10.98.6b), but these forms stand after the caesura and are metrically ambiguous. On the other hand, *ánivrtā-* 'unstoppable' must be scanned with long *ī* in 3.29.6c.

Taken by itself, no single form with vowel lengthening is sufficient to demonstrate the initial laryngeal, but the cumulative evidence makes it clear that we must reconstruct the root as **Huar-*.

1.3 The etymology.

The etymology of *vr-* remains problematic, but the fact that this root contained an initial laryngeal considerably reduces the number of possible cognates. Neither Gr. εἰλῶω 'to enfold, enwrap', nor Gr. ἔρουμεν 'to protect', which are often connected with Skt. *vr-*, can begin with a laryngeal (cf. Peters 1980: 46f.), so that we can remove them from the list. From the semantic point of view, the best candidates are Lat. *aperīre* 'to open', *operīre* 'to close', Lith. *atvérti* 'to open', (*už*)*vérti* 'to close', SCr. *otvòriti* 'to open', etc. The acute intonation in Balto-Slavic seems to point to a root-final laryngeal¹⁰, but the first impression is deceptive. As Professor Kortlandt points out to

⁶ 1.113.13b *vy āvo* most probably belongs to the root *vas-* 'to shine'. Lubotsky 1997: 1336 must be corrected.

⁷ There is only one exception in the RV, viz. 7.27.2d *pārivr̥tam*, but it occurs in a metrically ambiguous position.

⁸ 4.20.8a *apavartár-* stands in a metrically ambiguous position after the caesura. The meaning and attribution of *ánapāvrt* adv. (6.32.5c, 10.89.3a) are not quite certain.

⁹ Note, incidentally, that this form is missing from the collection of Krisch 1996.

¹⁰ I used to consider this fact prohibitive for the etymological connection with the anit *vr-* (Lubotsky 1988: 87).

me, the Slavic root must be anit, as follows from SCr. *vráta*, Russ. (dial.) *vorotá* 'gate', which is identical with Lith. *vaĩtai* (2) 'gate'. The Standard Russian *voróta* has been generalized from prepositional phrases like **zá vorta* > *za voróta* 'outside the gate', where the Slavic progressive accent shift (Dybo's Law) was operative. The same shift is responsible for the acute intonation in the verb, which is hardly attested without preverbs, e.g. **závrēti* > **zāvrēti* (Dybo) > **zāvrēti* with the same secondary acute as, for instance, in SCr. *smřti* 'death' < **sǝmřti*. In a similar fashion, the circumflex of Lith. *vaĩtai* (2), Latv. *vārti* 'gate' indicates that the acute of the Baltic verb (Lith. *vėrti*, Latv. *vērt*) is likely to be secondary.¹¹

Of old, Gr. ἀείρω 'to lift, raise up, remove' (< PIE **h₂uer-*) has been connected with *vr-*, too (cf. also Knobloch 1980: 199f.). In spite of the fact that the meaning of the Greek verb does not exactly correspond to that of Skt. *vr-*, the two do have much in common. Note that *āpa-vr-* often has the meaning 'to lift, remove (the darkness, the perils)', and it is conceivable that the meanings have diverged through the centuries. At any rate, the formal match is perfect.

2. The two presents.

2.1 The root *vr-* has two presents in the RV, viz. *vrñóti* and *ūrñóti*, and their relationship has never been clarified.¹² When we have two competing forms in a language, it is always worthwhile to look at the actual occurrences and ask ourselves the question as to what extent these formations are complementary. The following table represents a synopsis of all forms of both present formations attested in the RV. Note that I have added the preverb *only* if it immediately precedes the verb (the reason for that will become clear presently).

| <i>vrñoti</i> (21x) | <i>ūrñoti</i> (31x) |
|---|---|
| ACTIVE | |
| pres. <i>prá vrñoti</i> | <i>ūrñoti</i> , <i>vy ūrñoti</i> , <i>abhy ūrñoti</i> <i>ūrñuthah</i> <i>apornutáh</i> |
| impf. <i>(apa-)ávṛnoḥ</i> ² , <i>(āpa-)avṛnoḥ</i> ⁴ <i>(āpa-)avṛnot</i> ⁸ | <i>aúrnoḥ</i> , <i>aurnoḥ</i> <i>aúrnot</i> , <i>aurnot</i> |
| inj. | <i>vy ūrñot</i> |
| impv. | <i>āpornu</i> <i>ūrñuhí</i> , <i>ūrñuhi</i> ² , <i>vy ūrñuhi</i> <i>órñuta</i> |

¹¹ Thus also Derksen 1996: 81f., who tentatively suggests that *vėrti/vērt* 'to pierce, string; to open, close' may originally have been two different verbs, viz. **uerH-* 'to pierce' and **uer-* 'to open/close'.

¹² Wackernagel (1896: 25) tried to dissociate the two presents by connecting *ūrñóti* with the root *r-*, which is unconvincing, since *vrñóti* and *ūrñóti* clearly mean the same and appear in identical formulae (cf. Oldenberg 1909: 68f.). Rasmussen's theory (1989: 22, 78) that *vr-* reflects PIE **ulH(u)-* and, accordingly, that *ūrñóti* is the original form does not explain (among other things) why *vrñóti*, which is in his view the young and productive formation, is moribund in late Vedic (see below).

ptc. *pravṛṇvántaḥ**apornuvántaḥ*², *vyūrṇván*, *vyūrṇvatī*²

MIDDLE

pres. *vr̥ṇvé**vy ūṇuse**apornute*², *ápornute*², *vyūrṇuté*, *vy ūṇute*²*vr̥ṇváte*, *vr̥ṇvaté*, *vr̥ṇvate*impf. *avṛṇvata*

impv.

próṇuṣva

ptc.

abhyūrṇvāná

This table shows that *vr̥ṇóti* has a more limited distribution: 1) it does not appear after the preverbs *ví* and *abhí*, and 2) it does not appear in those forms where the suffix has the anteconsonantal zero grade *-nu-*.¹³ If we leave the forms with *ví* and *abhí* out of consideration for a moment, we see that the two presents practically form one paradigm, which is especially clear in the middle: 1sg. *vr̥ṇvé*, [2sg. *ūṇuse*,] 3sg. *ūrṇuté*, 3pl. *vr̥ṇváte* / *vr̥ṇvaté*, impf. *avṛṇvata*, impv. *ūrṇuṣva*.

Since the root *vr̥-* is anit and its Avestan cognate is *vəṛənaoiti*, it is evidently *ūrṇóti* that is secondary and in need of explanation. The distribution of *vr̥ṇóti* and *ūrṇóti* suggests that *ūrṇóti* originated in the position after the preverbs *ví* and *abhí* and before the suffix *-nu-*. What we still have to do is to explain the overlapping forms and to find a phonetic explanation for the distribution.

2.2 The overlap is only found in the active: the four occurrences of the imperfect *aúrṇoh*, *aúrṇot*, and one occurrence of *ūrṇoti* do not conform to the distribution. We here witness the beginning of the analogical spread of *ūrṇóti*, which later completely ousted *vr̥ṇóti* in the Atharvaveda and practically eliminated it in the other Vedic texts.

While re-examining the overlapping forms, we see that the late hapax *ūrṇoti* occurs in the line 10.88.12d *ápo ūṇoti támo arcíṣā yán* 'he removes the darkness, when he comes with [his] ray' (of *Sūrya*), which is probably remodeled after a passage like 4.45.2c *apornuvántas táma ā párvīṛtaṃ* 'removing the covered darkness' (of *Aśvins*' horses). This explains at the same time the unusual form *ápo ūṇoti* with an added particle *u* in order to prevent contraction: the poet evidently needed an extra syllable.

As to the imperfect *aúrṇoh*, *aúrṇot*, it is hardly due to an accident that in every of its four occurrences it is used with the preverb *ví*, whereas the imperfect *avṛṇoh*, *avṛṇot* is 13 times found with the preverb *ápa* and once without a preverb. From the analysis of the passages it becomes clear that the imperfect *aúrṇoh*, *aúrṇot* is a secondary formation, created in order to match forms like inj. *vy ūṇot*. The dvipāda *virāj* line 1.68.10a *ví ráya aurnod dúraḥ puruṣūḥ* 'he (*Agni*), rich of cattle, uncovers

¹³ The *vr̥nu-*forms are very rare even in the later texts. I found in the VWC only three forms: two imperatives VS(K) 40.1.15 *apā vr̥nu*, TĀ 6.7.1 *abhi vr̥nu*, and *ápa vr̥nute* in the line *apo mahī vr̥nute cakṣuṣā tamaḥ* (SV[K] 1.303, 2.101; [J] 1.32.1, 3.10.3; TB 3.1.3.2), which is a variant of RV 7.81.1c *ápo mahī vyayati cáksase tamaḥ*. All other forms with *vr̥nu-* belong to the root *vr̥-* 'to choose, select', for which see below.

the riches, the doors' is evidently connected with line 1b of the same hymn *sthātūs carātham aktūn vy ūrnot* 'he uncovers the standing and the moving, [he removes] the nights'. A similar diction is reflected in 10.81.2d *vī dyām aurnon mahinā viśvācaksāḥ*. The other two passages are also interrelated, cf. 6.17.6c *aurnor dūra usrīyābhyo vī drlhā-* 'he (Indra) opened the doors, the strongholds for the cows' and 7.79.4d *vī drlhāsya dūro ādrer aurnoh* 'he (Indra) opened the doors of the solid rock'. The secondary character of the imperfect stem *aurnoh* is further indicated by the fact that in the latter passage, *aurnoh* must be scanned *a-ūrnoḥ*, in three syllables, which is the only case of a disyllabic scansion of *au-* in an augmented form. In other words, this is the injunctive *ūrnoḥ*, to which an augment is added.

2.3 How can we account for the proposed distribution from a phonetic point of view? Let us start with the observation that immediately after the preverbs *vī* and *abhi* we only find *ūrnoti*. This fact implies laryngeal metathesis:

$$*C_iHuC_2 > *C_iuHC_2 \quad (C_2 \neq i)$$

A similar metathesis is responsible for the alternations like *jīvati* : desiderative *jūjyūṣati* (ŚB) / *jijyūṣati* (AitB) 'to live' and *sīvyati* : *syūtā-* 'to sew', *dīvyati* : *dyūtā-* 'to play dice', *mīvati* : *°mūta-* (< **miūta-*) 'to push', *ṣṭhīvati* : *ṣṭhyūtā-* 'to spit', etc. The metathesis $*C_iHuC_2 > *C_iuHC_2$ did not occur in case of $C_2 = i$ (cf. *sīvyati*, *dīvyati*) because *u* was consonantal before *i*, as follows from Skt. *savyā-* 'left', *nāvya-* 'new', etc. (which is opposite to e.g. *śevā-*, *devā-*).¹⁴

Whereas $*\#Hurnauti$ yielded the expected *vr̥noti*, the laryngeal metathesis $*viHurnauti > *viuHrnauti$ led to the attested *vyūrnoti* (similarly, $*abhiHurnauti > *abhiuHrnauti > abhyūrnoti$).¹⁵

Since *vyūrnoti* and *abhyūrnoti* are verbal compounds, the metathesis in these verbs must be a comparatively recent phenomenon.¹⁶ At first sight, the non-syllabic

¹⁴ An analogous rule must have been operative in other languages, too. For instance, the Balto-Slavic root for 'to sew' (Lith. *siūti*, Latv. *šūt*, SCr. *šiti*) points to the reconstruction $*siuH-$, cf. especially Russ. *šila* and Latv. *šūt* with initial accentuation due to Hirt's Law (Kortlandt 1975: 3f.). This means that the rule $C_iHuC > C_iuHC$ must have preceded the other metathesis rule $CHi/uC > Ci/uHC$, which is posterior to Hirt's Law (cf. Russ. *pilā* < $*ph_1léh_2$ with final accentuation). Also Latin *movēre* indirectly points to the metathesized $*m(i)uH-$, as it contains a new full-grade to this root. Note that a metathesis in the opposite direction ($CiuHV- > CiHuV-$), assumed by Mayrhofer (EWAia II: 359), is phonetically implausible: the laryngeal tends to stand after the most vocalic element of the syllable, cf. $CHi/uC > Ci/uHC$.

¹⁵ Forms like *abhivṛta-* can easily have been remodeled.

¹⁶ It is tempting to assume that this metathesis rule was even operative on a synchronic level in the RV. This conclusion is suggested by 1.165.6c, 10c *ahām hy ūgró* 'For I (Indra) am the mighty one' with exceptional *ūgrá-* from $*h_1uHgra-$. The reason why the lengthening is only attested in this passage must be sought in the "close contact" between *h_1* and *uHgra-*, possibly due to the irritated intonation, with which Indra pronounces this sentence. Oldenberg's (1909: 161) explanation of the long *ū* by *kampa*, i.e. a specific accent combination, seems *ad hoc*, because it does not account for the unique character of this passage. Cf. also SV 1.36b = 1.1.4.2b *pāhy ūṣtā* (RV 8.60.9b *pāhy ūtā*), mentioned by Debrunner 1957: 172 and Strunk 1983: 20, n. 27.

If this explanation is correct, we may account for a few instances of the lengthened particle *ū*, viz. 4.6.11b *vy ū dhāḥ* (in the cadence), 4.51.2c *vy ū vṛjāsya* (beginning of the line). In the latter case, there was no metrical need to protract the vowel. Incidentally, more than half of the occurrences of *ū* is

-*nv-* in the participles *vyūrṇvān*, *vyūrṇvatī*, *abh'vyūrṇvānā* seems to indicate that metathesis was posterior to phonologization of the Sievers' variants,¹⁷ but since *ūr* very often does not trigger Sievers' Law (*ūrdhvā-*, *ūrvā-*, *dūrva-*, *pūrva-*, *pūrvī-*, *tūrvi-*, etc.), this fact can hardly be used for establishing a chronology.¹⁸

At any rate, the non-syllabic -*nv-* in *vyūrṇvān*, etc. is the regular reflex,¹⁹ which means that -*nuv-* in *apornuvāntaḥ* (1.190.6d, 4.45.2c) requires an explanation. I believe that this is a nonce formation, originated in 4.45.2c, i.e. the only passage with *apornuvāntas* in the family books. It is important that in pada d the poet uses the scansion -*uv-* in a totally irregular *tan"vānta(h)* (pada 2d is further repeated in 6b):

4.45.2cd *apornuvāntas tāma ā pārīvṛtam*
 s"vār nā śukrām tan"vānta ā rājāḥ
 "[Eure Wagen (und) Pferde fahren aus,] die ganz zugedeckte Finsternis
 aufdeckend, wie die helle Sonne den Raum durchziehend" (Geldner)

The creative poet of this hymn²⁰ has presumably coined *apornuvāntaḥ* after forms like impv. *āpormu* (for which see below), inspired by the rhyme formation *tan"vāntaḥ* in the next line.²¹

2.4 The distribution of *ūrṇu-* vs. *vrṇo-/vrṇv-* is strongly reminiscent of the present of the root *kr-* 'to make' in late Vedic, where the original class V present act. *krṇóti* —

found in the collocation *ū śú* (35x out of 61 = 83 - 22 repetitions), where the lengthening is regular (**u h,śú*). From there *ū* has spread to *ū nú* (10x). It is possible, however, that the remaining 16 instances are analogical, too, which would render metathesis unnecessary.

¹⁷ See already Seebold 1972: 201, who has proposed to restore these forms as **vivṛṇvān*, etc., assuming a fairly late chronology for the rise of the stem *ūrṇu-*. In later texts, we find *pary-ūrṇuvāta* (MS) and *vy ūrṇuvantu* (AV), but these forms may be secondary, built by analogy to the stems *prormu-*, *apormu-*, for which see below.

¹⁸ This does not detract from the fact that *ūr* may actually be late in many of these words (cf. Lubotsky 1997a).

¹⁹ The fact that RV 9.96.11c *āpormu* is "das einzige alte Beispiel für Weglassung von -*dhi* nach langer Silbe vor -*nu-*" (Debrunner 1957: 16) shows that the stem of the present *ūrṇóti* was considered "short" by the speakers.

²⁰ The creativity and skill of the poet of 4.45, belonging to the Vāmadeva family, appears from the virtuosity of his play with the syllables *vā/va* and *ma*, which form his "signature" as it were (for the principle of anagrams, which was discovered by de Saussure, see Toporov 1981).

²¹ The syllabic and non-syllabic variants of the verbal stem **ūrṇ(u)v-* after preverbs in -*a* are distributed in accordance with the school tradition in late Vedic: **ūrṇuv-* is found in the Atharvaveda (AVŚ *apornuvān*, AVP *prornuvanti*, *prornuvantu*), in the texts of the Maitrāyaṇīya school (MS, KapKS *prórṇuvātām*, KS *prórṇuvāthām*, KS and KapKS *prórṇuvāta*, KS *samprórṇuvāthām*), and in the texts of the Mādhyandina school (VS(M) and ŚB(M) *prórṇuvāthām*, ŚB(M) *samprórṇuvanti*, *āpornuvanti*), whereas **ūrṇv-* is used in the Kāṇva school (VS(K) and ŚB(K) *prórṇvāthām*, ŚB(K) *āpornvanti*) and in the Taittirīya school (TS *prórṇvāthām*, *āpornvāta*, TB *samprórṇvāthām*). Renou (1948: 39) writes about the distribution: "la forme n'indique par elle-même aucune tendance précise, car la non-résolution y est anormale, et l'adhésion de TS. va contre la pratique des Taittirīya". In my opinion, the fact that the non-resolution is atypical for the Taittirīyas rather pleads for the original character of this treatment. See further section 2.6.

middle *kṛṇuté* has become *karóti* — *kuruté*. The forms of the new present are distributed among two stems, viz. *karo-/karav-* and *kuru-/kurv-*. Admittedly, the parallel is not perfect, and the transformation of the *kṛṇóti* paradigm took place at a later stage, but it is clear that in both instances we find the same mechanism, i.e. a kind of vowel harmony. According to the convincing analysis of the *karóti* paradigm by Hoffmann (1976: 575ff.), the process started in the imperative, where the original *kṛṇu* has become **kṛru* and then *kuru*. In a similar fashion, *kṛṇav-* > **kṛrav-* > *karav-*, etc. Hoffmann (p. 584) has pointed out that there are clear examples of vowel harmony in Vedic, cf. **śrthirá-* > *śithirá-*, **mṛhur* > *múhur*, to which we can now add **durhṛṇā-* > *durhánā-* (Narten 1982: 140) and **Tvṛṣtar-* > *Tváṣtar-* (Lubotsky 1994: 96). These examples presuppose the following development: **mṛhur* [*mṛhur*] > [*múrhur*] > *múhur* with dissimilation of the first *r*, etc. If we apply these rules to our present, we expect **Hṛṇu-* to have been realized as [*Hūṛṇu-*], which led to **Hūrṇu-* > *ūrṇu-*.

2.5 It may be clear that the distribution of *ūrṇu-* vs. *vṛṇo-/vṛṇv-* found in the RV was prone to restructuring. The easiest and most drastic way was followed in the Atharvaveda. In this text, *ūrṇu-* (*ūrṇomi*, *ūrṇoti*, *ūrṇotu*, etc.) is the only present of the root *vṛ-*: there is not a single occurrence of *vṛṇóti* in the AV, except for Rgvedic repetitions (AVŚ 20.11.3, 20.69.2, AVP 6.1.8). The VWC reports two *vṛṇóti* forms from the AVP, but both are corrupt. AVP(K) 9.4.9ab reads *yusmān amittrā vṛṇutān*, *iṣmān apratijanā uta*, which Barret (1922: 112) reconstructs as *yusmān amittrā vṛṇutām*, *yusmān pratijanā uta*. The verb form *vṛṇutām* must no doubt be corrected to *vṛṇatām*²²: 'let the enemies choose you, and also the opponents!', cf. AVŚ 3.3.5ab *hváyantu tvā pratijanāḥ, prāti mītrā avṛṣata* 'let thine opponents call thee; thy friends have chosen [thee] against [them]' (Whitney). A similar correction is necessary in AVP 19.23.13d, where the Kashmir text gives *sarvā vo vṛṇutām vaśaḥ* (reconstructed by Barret 1940: 37 as *sarvā vo vṛṇvatām viśaḥ*). Here, too, we must read *vṛṇatām*²³ 'let all the people choose you', cf. AVŚ 3.4.2a **vām viśo vṛṇatām rāj'yāya* 'Thee let the people choose unto kingship' (Whitney).

In other Vedic texts, we witness a continuous decline of *vṛṇoti* in favor of *ūrṇoti*. Already in the Brāhmaṇas²⁴ we occasionally find *vṛṇute* which functions as a present to the root *vṛ-* 'to choose', cf. MS 3.9.8 (127,11) *vṛṇutē* (mss. *vṛṇúte*), JB 1.70, 3.88, GB 1.2.24 (4x) *vṛṇute*, KB 28.4 *pravṛṇute*, etc., and the process went on in the Sūtras and Upanishads: the present *vṛṇute*, which had become "vacant", as it were, was taken over by another root.

2.6 Another indication of decline of *vṛṇóti* is the peculiar formation *prórṇauti*, found twice in the Brāhmaṇas (MS 3.10.1 (129,10), ŚB(M) 3.8.2.16) and allowed by Pāṇ. 7.3.90 as an alternative to *prórṇoti*. There can be no doubt that *prórṇauti* is an analogical formation based on the inflection of verbs like *naúti*, *staúti*, etc., but its relation to the "normal" *prórṇoti* (AVŚ 15.1.8, TS 6.3.11.1 (2x), ŚB(K) 4.2.1.12,13;

²² This reading is now given in the Bhattacharya's edition (1997) of the Orissa version of the AVP.

²³ The Orissa text of book 19 is not yet available, but Arlo Griffiths, who is currently working on this book, kindly lets me know that his manuscript reads *vṛṇatām* in 19.23.13d, too.

²⁴ Not only since the Upanishads, as reported by Whitney (1885: 163).

4.8.2.11, TB 3.11.9.8 *prornotu*) remained unclear. To my knowledge, the only explanation which has ever been given is by Debrunner (1957: 157f.), who ascribes *prórṇauti* to a tendency to avoid *o...o*. This suggestion does not account for the distribution with *prórṇoti*, however.²⁵

I do not think that we have to invoke euphonic rules. The explanation becomes immediately clear once we have looked at the passages where *prórṇauti* is found:

MS 3.10.1 (129,9-10) "*ghṛtēna dyāvāprthivī prórṇuvātām*" *iti. ghṛtēnaivā dyāvāprthivī prórṇauti* "Let the heaven and earth be covered with ghee!" [With these words] he covers the heaven and earth with ghee.'

ŚB(M) 3.8.2.16 *átha vapām út khidati. táyā vapāśrápanyau prórṇauti. "ghṛtēna dyāvāprthivī prórṇuvāthām" iti ...* 'Then he extracts the omentum. He covers the *vapāśrápaṇī* (a fork for frying the omentum) with it. "O heaven and earth, be covered with ghee!" ...'

It is obvious that in both cases *prórṇauti* has been created as a corresponding active (transitive) present to the middle (intransitive) impv. *prórṇuvāt(h)ām* with the inflection of verbs like *stauti - stuvātām* as a model. Note that *prórṇauti* was only formed in those Vedic schools (Maitrāyaṇīya and Mādhyandina) which have adopted the syllabic variant *prórṇuv-* (see fn. 21). In the texts of the Taittirīya and Kāṇva schools, where the verb had the non-syllabic form *prórṇv-*, the proposed analogy could not arise, and the active form had the shape *prórṇoti*.²⁶

This account has some interesting consequences. The fact that the Vedic schools had different formations for the active present to *prórṇute* receives a natural explanation if we assume that there was no *prórṇoti* available in the system. In the RV, the active present is *prá vrṇoti*, but in the later texts this present disappeared and had to be formed anew. Secondly, it follows that the difference between *prórṇuv-* and *prórṇv-*, which is in general ascribed to the school mannerisms, was a linguistic reality after all.

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²⁵ Surprisingly, Debrunner refers to Wackernagel (1918: 403, fn. 1), who, however, does not discuss the relation between the two formations at all. Wackernagel only draws attention to the fact that in the imperfect we only find *praurṇot* (thus also Pāṇ. 7.3.91) vs. *anaut, astaut*, which he explained by the apparent avoidance of *au...au*. In view of the analysis of *prórṇauti* given below, Wackernagel's explanation is unnecessary.

²⁶ For instance, the Kāṇva version of the ŚB has the pair *prórṇuvāthām : prórṇoti* in the parallel passage (4.8.2.11).

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