

Verbal Adjectives and Participles
in Indo-European Languages

Adjectifs verbaux et participes
dans les langues indo-européennes

Proceedings of the conference
of the Society for Indo-European Studies
(Indogermanische Gesellschaft),
Paris, 24th to 26th September 2014

edited by
Claire Le Feuvre, Daniel Petit
and Georges-Jean Pinault

HEMPEN VERLAG
BREMEN 2017

The printing of this book was generously supported by the
École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris Sciences et Lettres

Le présent ouvrage a pu être publié grâce au soutien financier de
l'École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris Sciences et Lettres

Bibliografische Information Der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über
<http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

ISBN 978-3-944312-50-7

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Umschlaggestaltung: detemple-design, Igel b. Trier

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Papier

Printed in Germany

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THE SOURCE(S) OF INDO-EUROPEAN PARTICIPLES IN *-E/ONT-

H. Craig Melchert

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most glaring discrepancies between the grammar of Hittite (respectively Anatolian) and that of the languages of ‘Core Indo-European’ lies in the function of their respective participles formed with an *nt*-suffix. The former express an *attained state*: e.g., Hittite *akkant-* ‘having died, dead’, *adant-* ‘eaten’ or ‘having eaten’. The same is true of relics in other Anatolian languages, e.g., CLuvian *walant(i)-/ulant(i)-* ‘dead’ and Lycian *lāta-* ‘dead’ (NB not ‘dying’!). The latter have exclusively active and *processual* meaning: Tocharian A *eṣant* / B *aiṣṣeñca* ‘giving’, Sanskrit *bhindánt-/bhidánt-* ‘splitting’, Greek *διδούς/δούς* ‘giving’, Latin *ferēns* ‘carrying’, etc. I stress that the principal difficulty lies not in the diathesis, but in the contrast between process and state.

In Melchert (forthcoming) and in the oral presentation of Melchert (2014), I claimed that neither attested function can be derived from the other and hence that the attested participles reflect different specializations of a PIE verbal adjective that had not yet acquired the function of a true participle (similarly Kuryłowicz 1964: 167). The proposal met justified opposition, since it was entirely inadequate as stated. First of all, merely positing an original verbal adjective does not *per se* explain the path to the attested usages. Second, I distinctly implied that the alleged verbal adjective had quite vague and undefined semantics. This lack of specificity was convenient in allowing considerable latitude in deriving the very different attested meanings, but again lacked any explanatory power.

Furthermore, such semantic vagueness is decidedly not true of either of the putative parallels that I cited. First, PIE verbal adjectives in **-to-/-no-*, source of eventual past participles in multiple languages originally had possessive semantics: **m₁-tó-* ‘having death’, **k₁w₁n₁-tó-* ‘having holiness’, **pek^w-to-* ‘having ripeness/doneness’. See the characterization by Wackernagel-Debrunner (1954: 576): “dem der Verbalbegriff als *Eigenschaft*, Merkmal anhaftet” (emphasis mine–HCM), who were surely following Brugmann (1895: 93): “...daß durch sie eine Handlung als anhaftende Eigenschaft und Merkmal prädiziert sind”. Likewise, as argued in Melchert 2014: 206-7, the Luvo-Lycian past participles in *-Vmma/i-* ~ *-Vme/i-*, which again express an attained state, originated in possessive derivatives in **-o-* to neuter *men*-stem action/result nouns: **‘having the result of X’ = ‘having (been) X-ed’*; e.g., HLuvian /tatariyamma/i-/

‘(ac)cursed’ (attested in NSgC (LOQUI)*ta-tara/i-ia-mi-sa* at KARKAMIŠ A2+3 §24) could be built on the base noun seen in CLuv. *tatariyamman-* ‘curse’.¹

My own effort to derive both sets of *nt*-participles from a common ill-defined PIE verbal adjective must be regarded as a failure. There remains a consensus that the Core Indo-European and Anatolian *nt*-participles must somehow be reflexes of a single PIE suffix **-e/ont-*. I may cite as representative of the handbooks Tichy (2000: 95, section 13.3.0), Kloekhorst (2008: 184), and Fortson (2010: 181, section 9.35). Audience reaction to the oral presentation of this paper reflected the same strongly held conviction. I must insist, however, that I am unaware of any remotely convincing *step by step account* of just how the two very disparate functions can be reconciled; that is, exactly how one could have developed from the other, or how they can each be derived from a third *well-defined* starting point. Kloekhorst suggests that the **-e/ont-* suffix may have been indifferent to diathesis and then specialized differently in the two instances. That is quite possible, but as noted above, the far more important difference is that between process and state, and he does not even acknowledge this problem. Tichy merely asserts that as part of the restructuring of the verb in Anatolian the **-tó-* participle was replaced by that in **-e/ont-*. She offers no explanation of why or how a processual active participle was pressed into service to express an attained state.² In the absence of any plausible account deriving the Anatolian function from that of Core Indo-European or vice-versa, a new attempt is called for.

The Anatolian past participles in *-nt-* may be derived from an originally denominative possessive suffix **-e/ont-* (for the denominative status as older see already Brugmann 1906: 650). Attested Hittite denominative examples are clearly innovative and analogical to participles (*nadānt-* ‘having a drinking straw < *nada-* ‘reed; arrow’, *perunant-* ‘rocky’ < *perur/perun-* ‘rock’), but an original possessive adjective **b^hérǵ^h-ont-/b^hǵ^h-nt-* ‘high, having height’ from the root noun **b^hérǵ^h-/b^hǵ^h-* ‘height’ (seen in Avestan *bərəz-*) was reanalyzable as derived from the verb ‘be high’ (> Hitt. *park(iya)-*, both ‘rise’ and ‘raise’). The only attested Hittite participle is *parkiyant-*, but a *parkant-** is safely inferable. The category was then extended from “adjectival” roots indicating “property concepts”—which could refer to change of state and hence actions (note again the attested sense of Hitt. *park-*)—to other change-of-state unaccusative verbs (such as ‘die’), then to other unaccusative verbs (such as those of motion like ‘go’ and ‘come’), and finally to transitive verbs. In the case of transitive verbs in contexts with a specific object or patient (explicit or not) the meaning is patient-oriented, hence “passive” (*adant-* ‘eaten’). In generic use with no specific object

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- 1 I naturally cite this pair entirely for purposes of illustration. Once the use as a past participle became productive, speakers could and did form the participles freely directly from the verb, and no corresponding noun was necessary.
 - 2 The development of the Greek perfect middle participle in *-μένοϛ* into a past participle, eventually replacing *-τός* (see Chantraine 1926: 224-5), is emphatically not a valid parallel for such a process. The inherited PIE active perfect expressing an attained state survives in Greek only as an archaism. What is productive is a mediopassive perfect with passive and stative sense (Chantraine 1926: 70 and 87). It is because *ἔγραπται* meant ‘is written’ (describing a state) that *ἔγραμμένοϛ* meant ‘written’ (likewise expressing an attained state). There is no change here from a *processual* participle to a resultative one.

the meaning refers to the activity per se, hence subject-oriented and “active” (*adant-* ‘having eaten’).

The scenario just outlined is not viable for Core Indo-European processual participles with a sense ‘(in the act of) X-ing’. I believe the correct solution was already suggested by Oettinger (2001), which I adopt here with minor modifications. Their source is the PIE “individualizing” and substantivizing suffix *-e/ont-, an extension of *-e/on- with same function (the type of Latin *Catō* ‘the sharp one’ < *catus* ‘sharp’, Lycian *Xudalijē* ‘the nimble one’ < **xudali-* ‘nimble’, also attested as personal name). For both forms of the suffix see Solta 1958 (on the *nt*-stem especially 13-23) and for individualizing *nt*-stems in both Anatolian and Tocharian Melchert 2000: 59-61 and 68-70. Just as substantives in *-e/on- ‘the X one’ easily became adjectives (e.g. in Germanic weak adjectives), likewise substantives in *-e/ont- turn into adjectives (the type of Hittite *wargant-* ‘fat’, etc.). Thus as per Oettinger (2001: 311), a stem like **g̃érh₂ont-* ‘old’ (originally ‘the old one’ < **g̃érh₂-o-* ‘old’ seen in Armenian *cer* ‘old man’) was reassociated with the verb and became a participle. The same step-by-step extension took place from “property concept” roots to action roots as for possessive *-e/ont-, but necessarily with different semantics: ‘the X-ing one’ would have led to a consistently active sense. However, Oettinger’s explanation (2001: 308-9) of the *-t-* of *-e/ont-* as due to excrescence seems unlikely (the only word-final position in the paradigm would have been neuter nom.-acc. singular, hardly a suitable starting point for a reanalysis as an active participle). I assume rather extension of *-e/on- by the likewise individualizing/substantivizing *-(e/o)t-* suffix of the type of Latin *dīuēs*, *dīuit-* ‘rich’ < **‘the rich one’* < *dīus* ‘brilliant, radiant’.³

I therefore assert that the apparent “disconnect” between the functions of the *nt*-participles in Anatolian and Core Indo-European is a mirage: the two formations have different functions because they have distinct origins. They share the commonality that their attested use as participles reflects a reanalysis of originally denominative adjectives as being deverbative, starting in “property concept” roots where the distinction between noun and verb was not always a sharp one. However, the attained state meaning of the Anatolian *nt*-participles reflects their origin in exocentric possessive adjectives ‘having (the state of) X’, whereas the active processual sense of the Core Indo-European *nt*-participles shows their origin in endocentric derivatives ‘(the) X-ing (one)’.

[Addendum: I challenged above those who wish to derive the Anatolian and Core Indo-European *-e/ont- participles from a single source to offer an explicit plausible step-by-step account of how their very different functions may be reconciled. I am happy to acknowledge that in a joint paper presented at the Arbeitstagung “100 Jahre Entzifferung des Hethitischen – Morphosyntaktische Kategorien in Sprachgeschichte

3 For an alternative denominative origin see Neri (2001: 132, note 211): “...**dérk-/dṛk-* ‘Blicken, Blick’ → *-en-* Lok. Sg. **dṛk-én* ‘beim Blicken’ → hysterokinetisch flektierende *t*-Hypostase **dṛk-én-t-* ‘beim Blicken befindlich, einmalig blickend’ (> gr. Πινδ. δρακεῖς) → amphikinetisch flektierendes internes Derivat **dérk-on-t- / *dṛk-ŋ-t-* ‘prototypisch starrend, Starrer’ (→ δράκων ‘Schlange’).

und Forschung” at the Philipps-Universität Marburg on September 22, 2015, Hannes Fellner and Laura Grestenberger presented such an account, which I find entirely convincing. In brief, it exploits the fact that the intransitive “property-concept” roots of PIE had (or developed) both stative and change-of-state meaning. Speakers could thus associate the originally possessive *nt*-adjectives primarily either with states (leading to the attained state value of Anatolian) *or* with processes (leading to the processual value of Core Indo-European). For the full account I refer interested readers to the authors and the eventual proceedings of the conference.]

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H. Craig Melchert
UCLA