Tocharian Texts in Context

International Conference on Tocharian Manuscripts and Silk Road Culture
Vienna, June 25-29th, 2013

edited by

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HEMPEN VERLAG
BREMEN 2015
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The Tocharian η-preterite

There is no consensus regarding the origin of the Tocharian "η-preterite" (Class III). For a summary of the major competing analyses see Malzahn (2010: 208–214). I will contend in what follows that the Tocharian Class III preterite cannot be derived solely either from the "classical" sigmatic aorist (e.g. Ringe 1990 or Kortlandt 1994) or from a modified form of the η-aorist (Jasanoff 1988a and 2003: esp. 178 and 192–203). I will argue that the Tocharian Class III preterite reflects a merger of the two PIE aorist types cited.

According to Jasanoff (2003: 71), the oldest form of PIE η-present was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1Sg</th>
<th>2Sg</th>
<th>3Sg</th>
<th>1Pl</th>
<th>2Pl</th>
<th>3Pl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>R(6)-ηe</td>
<td>R(6)-θηe</td>
<td>R(6)-e</td>
<td>R(6)-me(?)</td>
<td>R(6)-θ(e)</td>
<td>R(6)-r(?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect</td>
<td>R(6)-ηe</td>
<td>R(6)-θηe</td>
<td>R(6)-e</td>
<td>R(6)-r(?)</td>
<td>R(6)-r(?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the sure archaism of perfect second plural *-e > Vedic -a (cf. Jasanoff 2003: 32), there is no justification for doubts about the original shape of the second plural ending, nor any basis for a supposed preceding laryngeal. The crucial fact is the peculiar identity of the third singular and second plural endings. As per Jasanoff (2003: 70 fn. 11), it is indeterminate to what extent specific endings in the present and imperfect senses were altered already in PIE, but the following is likely (cf. Jasanoff 2003: 89):

For the present third singular as also marked by the "hic et nunc" particle -i (contra Jasanoff 2003: 70–71) see likewise Kim (2005: 195), but this point is immaterial for what follows. Renewal of the second plural ending as *-e in the present/imperfect paradigm is also likely, but not strictly provable. For further arguments for renewal of the imperfect third singular as *-e-t see Jasanoff (2012a).

Jasanoff (2003: 151) sets up a very similar paradigm for the oldest form of the η-aorist, but I follow here his revised version (Jasanoff 2012b: 108):

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<td>R(6)-θηe</td>
<td>R(6)-e</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 I forgo any speculations about possible reasons for this match. What is important for my purposes is that its motivation is by any measure not remotely transparent, virtually excluding that it is an innovation.
For Hittite evidence supporting o-grade in the he-e-aorist and second plural (parallel to the strong stem with e-grade in the mi-conjugation root aorist) see also Melchert (2013: 142–143).

Per Jasanoff (2003: 178 and 2012b: 108), the paradigm above is renewed already in PIE as a "pre-sigmatic" *he-e-aorist:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1SG</th>
<th>R(6)-he</th>
<th>1PI R(6)-me-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>R(6)-he₂</td>
<td>2PI R(6)-te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>R(6)-et</td>
<td>3PI R(6)-ye</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This renewal reflects (per Jasanoff 2003: 178 and 192–203) a suppletive replacement of the original third singular by the corresponding imperfect third singular of a lengthened-grade ("Narten") s-present. He justifies this step on the basis of the unique match of the sigmatic form in the Tocharian and Hittite preterite third singular in an otherwise asigmatic paradigm, namely the Tocharian Preterite III and Hittite bi-preterite (Jasanoff 2003: 176–177):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TochA</th>
<th>TochB</th>
<th>CToch</th>
<th>Hittite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG prakwa</td>
<td>prekwa*</td>
<td>*prek-(ö)wa 'asked'</td>
<td>dāhmun 'took'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG prakāti</td>
<td>prekasta</td>
<td>*prek-(ö)sta</td>
<td>dātta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG praks</td>
<td>preksa</td>
<td>*prek-(ö)-s(ö)</td>
<td>dāṭti (&lt; *dās-ö)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PI prakāte</td>
<td>prekem</td>
<td>*prek-öme-</td>
<td>dāten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL *prakāta</td>
<td>prekas/preko*</td>
<td>*prek-ö-kā</td>
<td>dāten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL prāk</td>
<td>prekar</td>
<td>*prek-ār</td>
<td>dār</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I fully agree that such a match cannot be due to coincidence or independent creation, but it does not justify a quite unbelievable suppletion from a paradigm with no functional or formal point of contact: the imperfect of an s-present with e-grade and a consistent s-suffix (*prek-s-ö, *prek-s-s, *prek-s-t, etc.) versus a root aorist with majority o-grade, no s-formant and completely different endings in the singular (*dōh₁-he, *dōh₂-th₂, *dōh₁-et, etc.). If "repair" of the third singular ending was needed (to avoid a supposedly inconvenient near-homophony of active third singular R(6)-e and middle third singular R(6)-ö), far more likely solutions existed, above all the same renewal as assumed for the imperfect of the he-e-present: R(6)-er (see above). The claim that "it is still far simpler to operate with a single unexplained suppletion in the parent language than to assume two separate and unexplained suppletions, one in Hittite and one in Tocharian" (Jasanoff 2003: 179) wrongly assumes that such a suppletion is the only explanation for the matching irregularity.

A closer examination of the Tocharian Class III preterite and Hittite bi-preterite suggests an alternative. First, the Tocharian preterite is also sigmatic in the second plural. Since the ending *s₂d (alongside extended *s-sas, as per Malzahn 2010: 514 and 2011: 48–49) is "utterly obscure" (Jasanoff 2003: 176), it is thus prima facie an archaisms. It is true that the second plural ending *s₂d-sas is not confined to the Tocharian "s-preterite" (Class III), but the Tocharian first singular, second singular, and third plural for all preterites also reflect generalized he-e-aorist endings *he-e, *he₂, and *e(t) (Jasanoff 2003: 175–176). This pattern strongly points to the same source for the second plural ending. In particular, for the Tocharian Preterite III and Hittite bi-preterite: "In allstructurally significant details, therefore, the Hittite and Tocharian paradigms are identical." (Jasanoff loc. cit.).

Second, the Tocharian third singular ending requires something beyond the *s₂- and the Hittite ending may, but need not, continue a final *s₂t. On structural grounds, *s₂t may reflect the same renewal as in the he-e-present imperfect 3SG: *s₂ → *s₂t like *e → *e-t. One may therefore assume that the original he-e-aorist third singular ending was simply *s (thus already Watkins 1969: 54 and Yoshida 1993: 33–34), probably renewed already in PIE (though parallel) independent renewal cannot be entirely excluded): *s → *s₂t. The presence of an ending *s₂t just in the third singular and second plural of the he-e-aorist can hardly be a coincidence, since it matches the same peculiar distribution of the ending *e in the he-e-present and is equally unmotivated (see above with footnote 1).

Furthermore, not only Tocharian but also Hittite likely reflects the same peculiar distribution of *s₂ just in the third singular and second plural. A second plural ending with *s₂ is directly attested in bi-verbs in -i- and -u-: compare for pai- 'give' Pres2SG pasatti (OH/NNS), Pres2PI pīsenti (MH/MS), Inv2PI πίšenti (MH/MS); for dau- 'put' Pres2SG daūstitiu (OH/NNS), Pres2PI daūstien (OH/Os), for nai- 'turn' Pres2SG naūt (MH/MS), Pres2PI naūtien (MH/MS), Inv2PI naūten (MH/MS); for au- (Jasanoff): see Pres2SG ausiti (MH/MS), Pres2PI aūstien (OH/Os), Pres2PI aūsten (MH/MS). For further data see Kloekhorst (2008a). Per Jasanoff (2003: 120), the Hittite pattern is based entirely on an active "i-imperative" *neih-i-s-i (= Vedic nāṣi 'lead!') indirectly reflected in Hittite Inv2SG maM-nebi (2003: 184), whose -s- spreads first to the Inv2PI nebi (later remade as naistien), then to other bi-conjugation "i-presents". It next spread to the Pres2PI (based on the identity of Inv2PI and Pres2PI in Hittite), and finally to the Pres2PI. Such a scenario is not impossible, but it rests on a series of unverifiable steps. Most problematic for such an account are the older zero-grade forms pīsenti/i and uštien, for which the paradigm of nai- (with an allomorph of strong stem nai- versus weak stem nē-) provides no model (we expect either some trace of *pešenti/i and *u-ast-e-ni/i = /astien/i or only renewed pašten and astien). One should note that attested 2PI pīsenti is only late and obviously secondary due to the confusion of e/i before s in New Hittite. Jasanoff's derivation also requires that a feature of an entire class be based on the alleged pattern of a single verb, one which furthermore did not originally belong to the class (hence precisely the difference of weak stem nē-: *neih-i- versus stems in *Ch₁-Cy₁-< *Ch₂-Cy₂-< Ch₁-Cy₁-v> ).
Given the undeniable Tocharian evidence for *s in the second plural ending of the he-e-aorist, it is rather more likely with Kloekhorst (2008a) that the Hittite second plural ending was originally *sten(i) in all hi-verbs. His own formulation is unacceptably vague: “replacement” of *sten(i) by *ten(i) in verbs with roots ending in a consonant “took place in pre-Hittite times already, probably for phonotactic reasons: the Hittites could not easily cope with consonant clusters containing an interconsonantal -s-.” (2008a: 497). Does “replacement” refer to a phonological or morphological process, and what is the evidence for the alleged phonotactic difficulty?

Deletion of *s in an environment *-CVC- is clearly too broad: in addition to the ‘cut’ and ‘swallow’ and its possible relationship to TochA Preterite ‘sin’, ‘recognize’ (thus Rix et al. see below.

It is rather more likely with Kloekhorst (2008a) that the second plurals arteni and ārten in ar- ‘arrive’ cannot be phonologically regular from *ars-te-. Given pašt- ‘swallow’ < *pēhs-, a sequence *dēhs-te- could also hardly yield dāten ‘you (pl.) take!’. Kloekhorst (2008b: 865) assumes a preform *dēh-sten(i) with zero grade of the root, but the telic sense points to an original he-e-aorist, and Old Hittite/Old Script shows full grade in PrettPI dāwen and Inv2PI dātten. However, I know of no obvious probative counterexamples to regular loss of *s in a sequence of stop/h/i/s/stop: all attested examples could easily be due to analogical maintenance or restoration (takkäštakšita ‘wield, inflict’ < *tēks-iti) after the rest of the paradigm, likewise paḥ(h)ati etc. ‘protect’ after original singular paḥṣari(r), iteratives in *ṭāṭh-sake-i- with preserved *s- after stems in -F-ake-i-, then anaptyxis to -TTūkške-i-. Thus -ten(i) for *sten(i) is possibly regular in ak(ā)- ‘die’, takk-akš- ‘know’, tarañ(i)- ‘let go’ (weak stem *tren(ίh)2), wast- ‘sin’, watarašš- ‘command’, wawak- ‘demand repeatedly’, etc. Pace Kloekhorst (2008a: 497 and 2008b: 509), lā(j)- ‘let go’ is not necessarily an original hi-verb. It would be unsurprising if the phonologically regular second plurals in a few stems in -s- (*tärst-en(i), *kars-tien(i), *tisparsten(i)) plus *dāsten(i), being synchronically aberrant, were regularized.

I do not absolutely insist on the preceding scenario, and some other third account of the source of the attested *s in pītten(i) etc. is conceivable. What I do assert is that even if the regular Hittite second plural ending of the hi-conjugation was simple -ten(i) reflecting *-te-, the latter may be a trivial replacement not of *e in the he-e-aorist, but also of *s in the he-e-aorist, based on the corresponding mi-conjugation ending. On the contrary, the Tocharian aorist second plural in *-ad cannot be credibly explained as an innovation and must be an archaism continuing in my view PIE *-st-. I believe the combined facts of Hittite and Tocharian demand that we reconstruct for early PIE three aorists: (1) standard root aorists with R(ē) zero ablaut (with the strong stem in all but the third plural, as per Hoefmann (1968: 7-8), Hart (1980), Barton (1985), Jasanoff (2003: 83), et al.) and endings *-m, *-s, *-t, *-m(e), *-te, *-ent; (2) standard sigmatic aorists in R(ē)-s-R(ē)-s- with “acroastic” inflection and a suffix *-s-, and endings *-m, *-s, *-t, *-me, *-te, *-ent; (3) he-e-aorists with ablaut R(ō)/ē (with the strong stem in all but the third plural, per Jasanoff 2012b: 108 and Melchert 2013: 142-143) and endings *-hē, *-tēhē, *-s(i)-, *-me-, *-s, *-t(i) .

I assume that Hittite lost the sigmatic aorist as a category. The he-e-aorist is continued in the hi-conjugation preterite (with some original he-e-aorists secondarily forming bi-precipitates). It can hardly be coincidence that the one branch (Anatolian) that maintained the he-e-precipitates as a living category also preserved the he-e-aorists at the expense of the sigmatic aorists. On the testimony of Hittite, Anatolian also generalized o-grade of the root to the third plural (NB Pret3PI aker ‘died’ in Old Hittite/Old Script with the strong stem and see Melchert 2013: 142). In the second plural it either (1) extended the original ending with *-te(m) and remodeled present second plural *-ten(i) based upon it (partially reduced to -ten(i) by phonological change); or (2) it simply replaced aorist second plural *s- with *-te(m), just as it replaced present second plural *e with *-te(m).

I regard as an open and decidedly secondary question whether Hittite attests any relics of the sigmatic aorist. One candidate is g(a)neēs- ‘recognize’ (thus Rix et al. 2001: 168-169, also as an alternative Oettinger 1979: 199). However, given the evidence for a PIE root aorist (most notably Gk. ἐρωτάω) in a telic root where it is to be expected, assumption of a competing sigmatic aorist in PIE is unlikely (see the similar arguments of Har bardson 1993: 79 and 1994-95). For alternative analyses of Hitt. g(a)neēs- as an aorist see Jasanoff (1988b and 2001: 135-136), followed by Harbardson (1993: 79, a “Narten-present” *gehē-t-s, *gehē-t-s with a generalized strong stem in Hittite) and Kloekhorst (2009, *gehē-t-s, *gehē-s with a generalized stem word showing anaptyxis). For further discussion of Hitt. g(a)neēs- and its possible relationship to Tocha Preterite III khas- see below.

I have expressed above severe skepticism regarding the derivation by Jasanoff (2003: 120) of the -s- of Hittite hi-conjugation second person plural forms in -s-ē. However, I find compelling his arguments (2003: 182-184) that the peculiar Inv2SGM P nešbut ‘speak’ (intr.) is extremely hard to motivate except as modeled on a missing active Inv2SG *neš < *neH-si (for arguments against the alternative analysis of Oettinger 2007 see Jasanoff 2012c: 128-130). I therefore think that there is a fair chance that nešbut does indirectly reflect a sigmatic aorist subjunctive *neH-s-e/o-. For Jasanoff, of course, the root neH- originally formed a he-e-aorist that was only secondarily transformed into the “pre-sigmatic” aorist, but the semantics of the root and all reflexes in Hittite and elsewhere are also compatible with an original *he-e-aorist which stood alongside a (fully) sigmatic aorist. The attested hi-preterite in Hittite could easily be a back-formation from the hi-present.1 One must bear in mind that the crucial form Inv2SGM nešbut is first attested in a Middle Script text beside niḥbut, leaving its probative value less than entirely assured. I thus regard the existence of a sigmatic aorist

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1 The unusual vocalism of the weak stem neH- (Pres3PI nēḥ(y)an, Ptc nēḥ(y)an) reflecting *neH-s- actually tends to favor an original he-e-aorist, since as indicated above, Hittite eliminated e-vocalism in the he-e-aorist third plural, this argument cannot be viewed as compelling.
of *neiH- already in PIE and its inheritance into pre-Hittite as probable, but less than certain.

In Tocharian we find a very different and complex development due to the fatal merger of *a and *e into the Proto-Tocharian vowel represented here as *e. This change led to sigmatic and h2e-aorist paradigms with identical root vocalism (I assume that Tocharian generalized 3-grade in the sigmatic aorist active and 2-grade in the h2e-aorist to the third plural), but a difference in stem and endings: e.g. 1Sg *CeC-s-π vs. *CeC-h2e. The paradigm of the Preterite III indicative active cited above shows an h2e-aorist based entirely on the h2e-aorist (with 2PI *s- extended at some point to *sā after 1PI *mā or otherwise remodeled to *s-ā), but Tocharian A regularly and B partially show palatalization of root-initial consonants reflecting *C(C<s>)-: e.g. TochA 3Sg ḷakās, 3PI ḷakār ‘destroyed’, TochB 3Sg ḷauksa, 3PI huaksar ‘illuminated’. It is crucial to note that palatalization in Tocharian B is not confined to the third person: 1Sg ḷauksa ‘squeezed’, 1Sg peyķwa ‘burned’ (see further on palatalization in Preterite III Malzahn 2010: 200-205).

The sigmatic aorist is also likely reflected in the thoroughly sigmatic middle type shown by most Preterite III verbs (again illustrated by pārk- ‘ask’):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TochA</th>
<th>TochB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1Sg pārkāse</td>
<td>1PI pārkīsmāt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Sg pārkārôte</td>
<td>2PI pārkīsāc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3Sg pārkāsāt</td>
<td>3PI pārkīsānt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such a derivation is not contradicted by the appearance of a few asigmatic preterite middles from original h2e-aorists which show intrusive meaning versus their active counterparts: TochA Pret3Sg nakāt, Pret3PI nakānt ‘perished’ versus active 3Sg ḷakās, 3PI ḷakār ‘destroyed’ cited above.4

Likewise, since Indo-Iranian – like the rest of “Core Indo-European” – eliminates the h2e-aorist as a living category and shows replacement of standard root aorists of the mi-conjugation by sigmatic aorists (see Harðason 1993: 96-101), it is also entirely unsurprising that we find asigmatic optatives alongside sigmatic aorist indicatives, predictably with certain tell-tale features identifying them as ultimately deriving from h2e-aorists (see Jasanoff 2003: 184-188). The existence of such relics in no way requires assumption of a “pre-sigmatic” aorist.5

4 Their archaic status is reflected in their prehistoric*o-vocalism and intrusive (not oppositional middle) sense (see Jasanoff 2003: 180), but their lack of *s-’s entirely predictable from their h2e-aorist origins. For new arguments for *neiH- in particular as a h2e-aorist see Melchert (2012: 181-182).

5 Harðason (1993: 113-115) claims that the presence of asigmatic aorist optatives alongside sigmatic aorist indicatives is a secondary development of Sanskrit and that examples of sigmatic optatives in Avestan, Greek, and Latin prove that the aorist optative (active) was entirely sigmatic in PIE. However, his own arguments for the great productivity of the sigmatic aorist in “Core Indo-European” fatally undermine the probative value of the non-indic evidence, which may easily represent prehistoric innovations in the respective languages.

As for further evidence for the sigmatic aorist in Tocharian, Jasanoff (2003: 180-182) presents attractive arguments that Tocharian Class VIII Presents in *se-aro- are in origin subjunctives matching Class III Preterites. If so, they may continue sigmatic aorist subjunctives. However, pending a satisfactory account of the overall status of “s-presents” in PIE and their ablaut pattern(s), other scenarios remain possible (see the summary in Malzahn 2010: 429-432).

Before leaving Tocharian, I note finally that the outcome of the imperfect of a “Narten” s-present *gndhr-s-, *gndhr-s- ‘recognizes, knows’ (with trivially generalized strong stem) would have been effectually identical to that of the standard s-aorist, whence attested TochA Preterite III 1Sg ḷhāra, 2Sg ḷhurdsāt (for which see Malzahn 2010: 609-610 with references). That the matching present was (so far as we know) eliminated by the competing nasal present (Present VI knvna) would hardly be shocking. An acrostatic s-present *gndhr-s-, *gndhr-s- (Jasanoff 1998b) thus can account for both Hittite g(n)ems- and TochA Preterite III ḷhara, while the alternate account of the Tocharian verb in Kloekhorst (2009) cited above leaves the Tocharian counterpart unexplained.6

I must conclude by openly acknowledging that in positing a (fully) sigmatic aorist in early PIE alongside the standard root aorist and that of the h2e-conjugation I raise issues that I cannot begin to address adequately here. On systemic grounds, the sigmatic aorist should have functioned as a characterized aorist to atelic roots that formed root presents. But to standard root presents, h2e-presents or both? Answering this question is going to be challenging. Assignment of attested Tocharian Preterite III examples to the original sigmatic aorist or to the h2e-aorist is complicated by: (a) the productivity of the sigmatic aorist in Tocharian and “Core Indo-European” (more coexistence of attested s-preterites in Tocharian and sigmatic aorists elsewhere is not sure proof of PIE status); (b) the loss of contrast in Hittite between h2e-aorists and h2e-presents (the attested present and preterite of hy-conjugation verbs notoriously are based on the same stem); (c) the unreliability of assigning PIE verbal roots to root aorists or root presents based solely on lexical semantics (e.g., was *neiH- ‘turn’ telic or atelic?).

To whatever extent this question turns out to be answerable, I contend that the attested facts of Tocharian, Hittite and “Core Indo-European” can be accounted for without attributing to Proto-Indo-European a hybrid “pre-sigmatic” aorist created by an unmotivated and not remotely credible suppletion. As in other aspects of its grammar, Tocharian has in this case preserved some genuine archaisms (most notably the *s- ending of the h2e-aorist second plural), and the facts of Tocharian along with those of Hittite (Anatolian) do require significant revision to our model of the PIE verb. However, neither is Tocharian so archaic nor are the required revisions necessary to PIE grammar so radical as sometimes portrayed.

6 I find the assumption of independent creations in Hittite and Tocharian (e.g. Harðason 1993: 79) a serious violation of entity non sum multiplicanda.
References


