

Vedic *vidh-* and the Evidence for Archaic Root Aorist Optative and Participle Forms
Adam Catt (Kyoto University)

Thieme (1949:36f.) first proposed an etymology of the root *vidh-* in which he argued that this root was secondarily abstracted from certain root aorist forms of the preverb + verb collocation *vi-dhā-* ‘distribute’. Thieme’s ideas were later supported and expanded upon by Hoffmann (1969), and the views of these two scholars on this issue are now widely accepted.

Hoffmann argued that the 1pl. optative form *vidhéma* should be traced back to a Pre-RVic ** $\underline{u}i-d^h\acute{a}H-iH-ma$* , a form which—minus the preverb—ultimately stems from a PIE root aorist optative ** $d^h\acute{e}h_1-ih_1-me$* . As shown by Greek root aorist optatives of the type $\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\mu\epsilon\nu$ < PIE ** $d^h\acute{e}h_1-ih_1-me$* , this reconstruction with full grade root + zero grade optative marker is justified for late PIE (Hoffmann 1969:5, 1968, Jasanoff 1991, 2009:49f.). In Vedic, however, root aorist optatives built to laryngeal final roots were all rebuilt with a sequence *-eyā-*: ex. *stheyāma* ‘stand’ [1pl.] ← pre-Vedic **sthéma* < PIE ** $st\acute{e}h_2-ih_1-me$* (cf. Greek $\sigma\tau\alpha\acute{\iota}\mu\epsilon\nu$). In Hoffmann’s scenario, a Pre-RVic root aorist optative **vidhéma* (< ** $\underline{u}i-d^h\acute{a}H-iH-ma$*) escaped being regularly rebuilt to **vidheyāma* because it was analyzed synchronically as a thematic aorist optative to a new root *vidh-*, i.e., ** $\underline{u}id^h(H)-\acute{a}-iH-ma$* .

Turning now to the aorist participle *vidhánt-*, we note that Vedic roots in *-ā* (< PIE laryngeal final roots) typically show a long vowel when forming a root aorist participle: exx. *pānt-* from the root *pā-* ‘drink’, *sthānt-* from the root *sthā-* ‘stand’. If, as Thieme and Hoffmann argue, *vidhánt-* derives from *vi-dhā-*, we would thus expect **vidhānt-*. To explain the irregular short vowel in *vidhánt-*, Hoffmann appeals to the fact that root aorist participles to roots not ending in *-ā* show zero grade of the root: exx. *gm-ánt-* (root aorist of *gam-* ‘go’), *kr-ánt-* (root aorist of *kar-* ‘do’). Additional evidence adduced from root aorist participles such as OAv. *dantō* (to the root *dā-* ‘do, place’) and Gk. $\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$, $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ‘placing’ show that zero grade of the root was also likely the norm for laryngeal final roots in PIE. Hoffmann (1969:4f.) argued that the extraction of *vidh-* from *vi-dhā-* took place at a time before the RV when an old zero grade root aorist participle **vi-dhánt-* still existed. Similar to the scenario posited for *vidhéma*, a pre-Vedic root aorist participle **vi-dhánt-* is assumed to have escaped secondary lengthening to **vi-dhānt-* because it was analyzed synchronically as a thematic aorist participle to a new root *vidh-*.

If Thieme and Hoffmann’s ideas about the origin of *vidhéma* and *vidhánt-* are correct, these forms provide important evidence that root aorist optative and participle formations to laryngeal final roots still preserved their archaic vocalism up to a time preceding the attestation of the RV. This has important implications for our understanding of how root aorist optatives and participles formed to laryngeal final roots developed from Proto-Indo-Iranian to Vedic.

In this talk, I draw from multiple lines of evidence to show that Thieme and Hoffmann’s proposal that forms such as *vidhéma* and *vidhánt-* reflect archaic root aorist forms of *vi-dhā-* must be abandoned. Furthermore, I show that Thieme and Hoffmann’s ideas about the origin of the root *vidh-* need refinement and modification. I argue that *vidh-* was not abstracted from *vi-dhā-* within Indo-Iranian but that it goes back to an independent root that already existed in PIE, as shown by cognates in Latin and Tocharian. This root is ** $h_1\underline{u}id^h(h_1)$* - ‘divide, distribute’, which itself most likely goes back to an original compound ** $d\underline{u}i-d^h(e)h_1$* - ‘place in two, divide’ in which the first member of the compound was incorporated into the root (Lubotsky 1994:204). At least in Indo-Iranian, the root *vidh-* built only thematic aorists, and the optative form *vidhéma* and participle *vidhánt-* are to be interpreted as such both diachronically and synchronically—they are not relics of archaic forms. Finally, I discuss in detail the semantics, syntax, and suppletive relationships of *vidh-* in the RV and argue that the apparent meaning ‘distribute’ for *vidh-*—a meaning which is often used to support an etymological connection with *vi-dhā-*—is difficult to motivate when compared to other semantically and syntactically similar verbs.

- HOFFMANN, Karl. 1968. Zum Optativ des indogermanischen Wurzelaorists. In Johannes Heesterman, Godard Schokker, and Vadasery Subramoniam, eds., *Pratidānam: Indian, Iranian and Indo-European Studies Presented to Franciscus Bernardus Jacobus Kuiper on His Sixtieth Birthday*, 3–8. The Hague: Mouton [= *Aufsätze zur Indoiranistik*, vol. I, 1975, 245–250. Wiesbaden: Reichert].
- HOFFMANN, Karl. 1969. Vedisch *vidh, vindh*. *Die Sprache* 15, 1–7 [= *Aufsätze zur Indoiranistik*, vol. I, 1975, 238–244. Wiesbaden: Reichert].
- JASANOFF, Jay. 1991. The Ablaut of the Root Aorist Optative in Proto-Indo-European. *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft* 52, 101–122.
- JASANOFF, Jay. 2009. Notes on the Internal History of the PIE Optative. In Kazuhiko Yoshida and Brent Vine, eds., *East and West: Papers in Indo-European Studies*, 47–68. Bremen: Hempen.
- THIEME, Paul. 1949. *Untersuchungen zur Wortkunde und Auslegung des Rigveda*. Halle (Saale): Niemeyer.