

THE INDO-EUROPEAN THIRD PERSON PLURAL VERBAL SUFFIX

In this paper it is suggested that the original form of the Indo-European third person plural verbal suffix was *-(e/o)N and that the nasal element which appears in this suffix was originally a deictic particle with 'there and then' signification.

The development of a third person plural verbal suffix was probably rather late in the evolution of the present-aorist system of the Indo-European language since "the system of verb endings clearly points to an earlier period in which there was no verbal inflection for number... For the dual and the plural endings are obviously defective. We cannot reconstruct endings in these two numbers which are as well supported as are those of the singular, except for the third plural" (Lehmann 1974: 201). This third person plural desinence is traditionally reconstructed as *-(e/o)nti (primary) and *-(e/o)nt (secondary). In this paper I wish to present some new observations about the origin of this suffix in the earlier stages of the Indo-European language.

In the first place, I believe that the original form of the Indo-European third person plural ending was *-(e/o)N (N = m or n). "The historical existence of such *-N-terminated verbs is argued by Schmalstieg (1974c: 190): 'The Greek 3rd pl. active imperfect épher-on is usually considered cognate with the Sanskrit form ábhar-an. It is usually assumed that in these forms a final *-t has been lost both in Greek and Sanskrit, but the assumption is unnecessary. Both forms could reflect final *-oN, i.e., the thematic vowel plus the plural marker *-N. Likewise, it is usually thought that the OCS 3rd pl. aorist ending encountered in (id-)o 'they went' reflects Indo-European *-ont. Again the assumption of a final *-t is unnecessary. An Indo-European final *-oN would

have passed to Proto-Slavic **-uN* which could have developed either into **-ǔ > ǔ* or *-ǔ = -ǔ*. In this case the latter variant was chosen. (See Schmalstieg, 1971, 139-140). Similarly, the Gothic 3rd pl. secondary ending *-un* may reflect IE **-u* without a final **-t*.¹ Schmalstieg (1976: 25) additionally argues that 'the older verbal ending **-oN* is preserved ... perhaps in the Lith. nom. pl. pres. act. participle in *-a*, if this is an etymological 3rd pl. as Cowgill, 1970, suggests' and that 'the same thing seems to be true for the Tokharian B 3rd pl. *palk-em* (*pälken-ne*) ... the 3rd pl. ending *-en(-)* could be derived from Indo-European **-on(-)*' (1977a: 295)" (Shields 1980). Elsewhere (Shields 1980) I have argued that the problematic Oscan-Umbrian third person plural secondary ending *-ns* derives from a contamination of this archaic suffix **-N* and a verbal suffix in **-is*, cf. Lat. *-is-ti*. "It is, then, unnecessary to posit a verbal 3rd pl. secondary ending **-nt*. One may posit the earliest form as **-N*, possibly originally functioning merely as a plural marker ...' (Schmalstieg 1974b: 4). Thus, I maintain that only the primary third person plural ending (**(e/o)nti*), which results from a contamination of the old ending **(e/o)N* and the third person singular primary suffix **-ti*, shows the formant **-t*, 'while the secondary ending of this suffix retains into the dialects the original form in **-N*' (Shields 1978a: 135)" (Shields 1980). Of course, the contamination of the **(e/o)N* suffix and **-ti* served to hypercharacterize the third person function of the former desinence and to extend the primary/secondary dichotomy to the third person plural.

Now although Schmalstieg (1974c: 190) proposes that the nasal element of the third person plural ending is a non-singular formant,¹ I would like to suggest that this was not its original function. Instead, I believe that it may represent an original deictic particle with some sort of 'there and then' signification, which only later came to be reanalyzed as a non-singular marker.

1 On the development of the dual and the plural from a general non-singular category, see Shields 1977: 61-70 and Schmalstieg 1977b: 129-141.

Watkins (1962: 90-106, 1969: 49-50) argues that the third person function in the Indo-European verbal system was originally indicated by the suffix *-ǵ. He says: "Der funktionale Status der 3. Person also zéro- oder Nicht-Person hat die allgemeine sprachliche Tendenz zum formalen Ausdruck durch ein zéro-Zeichen zur Folge; das bedeutet, dass in der gegebenen syntaktischen Funktion des Prädikats eine Nominalform als Verbalform mit 3. Sg.-Endung ǵ (zéro) aufgefasst werden kann: Nomen *nek^Wt → 3. Sg. Verb *nek^Wt-ǵ" (1969: 49). Watkins (1962: 102-103) further maintains that a deictic particle *-i 'hic et nunc' was frequently combined with various verbal endings, including the third person desinence *-ǵ: "When we speak of a 3 sg. zero ending as in dhas-ǵ, this does not exclude the further presence of some element or component which is non-personal in nature. One common such element in Indo-European was -i, the deictic particle of the hic et nunc. This particle was freely combinable with the personal endings, as in -m/-mi, -t/-ti, -nt/-nti. We know furthermore that the free combinability of this particle existed down through the period of the formation of the individual dialects, since these show divergent utilizations of -i. It has been suffixed to the perfect endings -a -tHa -e in Italic -ai -tai -ei > Lat. -ī -(is)tī -ī(t). The same occurred independently in the Hittite hi-conjugation: -ha -ta (*-e?) → -hi -ti -i. In Slavic the same change -a → -ai is attested in 1 sg. vědě. We know as well that IE -i was combinable with a 3 sg. zero ending as is proved by the Greek thematic 3 sg. present -ei < -e + i, where -e is simply the thematic vowel. The Hittite hi-conjugation 3 sg. -i may also contain deictic -i suffixed to a zero ending. The deictic -i alone, suffixed to the bare root with zero ending, occurs finally in a very archaic category in Indo-Iranian: the 3 sg. aorist passive. The most archaic form of this class in the Rig Veda is jāni 'was born', which shows the absence of the secondary vṛddhi as in jani." The motivation for the addition of this particle to verbal forms is described by Safarewicz (1974: 52): "The function of the element -i was to strengthen

the formation in which this element appeared ... It may be supposed that by means of strengthening the indicators of the person in the present tense these endings gave it the meaning of actual present tense, that is to say, the present tense in a precise meaning." Such specification was necessary since the early Indo-European verbal system itself "was based upon the opposition of aspectual character," with the present-aorist system expressing action and the perfect system expressing state of being (Safarewicz 1974: 51-52). Thus, "in PIE, tense and the time of action were not indicated by means of verbal affixes. Indications of the time of the action were given by means of particles or adverbs or were implicit in the aspects of the verb forms" (Lehmann 1974: 139). Markey (1979: 65) also emphasises that spatio-temporal relations were chiefly expressed by such deictic elements in Indo-European when he says: "At an early stage of Indo-European deictic markers constituted the formal indication of the grammatical categories expressing time, place and person." It was only "in late PIE" that "features of tense became predominant," with tense distinctions coming to be expressed inflectionally (Lehmann 1974: 189-190). On the basis of Watkins' analysis of **-i*, it would seem that inflectional tense markers could have their source in deictic elements.

I believe that a similar deictic particle **-N* was also combinable with this third person suffix **-ǵ*. The existence of such a deictic particle is suggested by a number of data. First of all, just as the deictic particle **-i* is attested in the locative case² (loc. sg. **-i*: Skt. *-i*, Gk. *-i*, Lat. *e*; loc. pl. **-si*: Gk. *-si*), so there appears to have been an Indo-European locative formation in **-N*, attested in locative forms like Skt.

2 The close connection between tense and locative constructions has been recently emphasized by Traugott (1978: 371): "It has been suggested by many linguists that at least some subparts of the temporal system of language are locative in underlying structure ... I assume the correctness of this argument."

kaláyām and OP schisman, cf. Gray 1932: 192.³ "A similar element -i(n) [perhaps a contamination of *-i and *-N--K.S.] is found in Skt. and Av. loc. types like a-sm-ín, a-hm-i, a-hm-y-a, and in Homeric ablatives, instrumentals, and locatives (both sing. and plur. without distinction of form) in -phi(n) < *-bh-i(n): abl. sing. melathróphin, plur. osteophín; instr. sing. bíēphin, plur. theóphin; loc. sing. eskharóphin, plur. ikrióphin. Here, too, one must place Dor. emín, tín, Boeot. hein < *sefin, Lesb. ammi(n), ummi(n), Attic hēmín, humín" (Gray 1932: 192-193). A related nasal locative suffix is perhaps found in Hitt. kedani and Sanskrit adverbs like idánīm, tedánīm, cf. Josephson 1967: 137-138. Likewise, a similar construction is described by Brugmann (1911: 181): "Umbrisch. Neben tote, Akerūnie, auch -em: Acersoniem, totem-e (mit -e(n) 'in')." ⁴

Moreover, I believe it to be significant that *-N is also found in the genitive case as well, specifically in the genitive plural suffix *-ōN (stem vowel + *-N, cf. Schmalstieg 1974c: 189): Gk. -ōn, Skt. -ām, Lat. -um. That this suffix originally had nothing to do with number distinctions is demonstrated by the fact that in Hittite it continues to be used in both singular and plural function. As Kronasser (1956: 104) says, "Eine Eigentümlichkeit des Heth. ist es, dass der Plural keine voll ausgebildete Flexion aufweist und z.T. die Endungen des sg. verwendet, wie umgekehrt der g. pl. -an im sg. vorkommen kann (Labarnan)." Now Lyons (1971: 388-395) points out that there exists an intimate semantic and formal connection between the genitive and the locative in many

3 schisman "occurs in the expression...: en schisman ackewijstin Krixtianiskan astin... 'in this evident Christian affair'. Endzelins, 1944, 120, objects that elsewhere in the Old Prussian texts there is no living locative case"; and because of this fact he argues that the form "may be a misprint for *schismau in which case the word would be in the dative singular" (Schmalstieg 1974a: 132-133). The nature of this form is thus subject to various interpretations.

4 The *-u element appearing in the locative case (loc. pl. *-su: Skt. -su, OCS -xъ, Lith. -su; loc. du. *-ous: Skt. -ōs, OCS -u) would also appear to be an original deictic particle. Thus, Hirt (1972: 11-12) says: "Erweitert haben wir u in l. ubi 'wo', l. u-ti 'so', aw. ulti, Gr. ē-úte 'gleichwie', ai. u-tā 'auch sogar'. Aus dem Gegensatz von i-bi und u-bi ergibt sich wohl die Bedeutung 'hier' und 'da' für i und u."

languages, including non-Indo-European ones. Similarly, Clark (1978: 117) concludes: "The existential, locative, and possessive constructions examined in the present sample of languages are related to one another in word order, in the verbs used, and in their locative characteristics." It is this close relationship between the locative and the genitive which probably accounts for their identity of form in the dual of Indo-European (*-ous: Skt. -ōs, OCS -u). Because the genitive and the locative share this common form, Kurylowicz (1964: 200) concludes: "The paradigm of the dual suggests an original identity of the gen. and the loc., i.e. a prehistorical stage attested in neither the sing. (-s, -i) nor in the plural (-ōm, -su/-si)." The original identity of the two cases in Indo-European is also perhaps suggested by the fact that the genitive case has residually retained a secondary locative function, which Brugmann (1904: 438) describes as "Der Gen. von räumlichen und zeitlichen Begriffen." Thus, the existence of a deictic particle *-N in Indo-European seems quite plausible.

It is important to note that I have argued elsewhere (1979) that Indo-European possessed a genitive suffix in *-i as well as in *-s and *-N. This suffix is attested in the o-stem genitive ending generally reconstructed as *-sio (Skt. -sya, Avest. -he, Hom. -io < *-o-sio), which, I believe, represents a contamination of the genitive markers *-s and *-i with the thematic vowel. Tocharian also attests a genitive desinence in *-i. Thus, Krause and Thomas (1960: 105) note that a genitive suffix "-i tritt in beiden Dialekten bei Verwandtschaftsnamen auf -r auf: A pācri = B pātri (N. A pācar, B pācer); entsprechend A mācri [B mātri], pracri [protri] ... " Die Genitivendung -i findet sich in beiden Dialekten ferner in einer Reihe von fremden Personennamen, z.B. B Mahākāśyapi (N. -e) [A Kāśyapi, N. Kāśyap]... " Krause and Thomas (1960: 59) also point out that one etymological source of AB -i is -oi, as in the case of "Toch. i aus idg.*-oi in der Endung des N. Pl. der Deklinationsklasse V wie A koñi [B kauñi] 'Tage'." In Shields 1979 I further argue that the problematic

Gothic genitive plural ending -ê and the Italo-Celtic genitive singular desinence -i are also to be derived from an o-stem genitive construction in *-i. (See Shields 1979 for details.) Thus, the parallels between the deictic particle *-i and *-N in terms of their function in the Indo-European language are striking indeed.⁵

If Brugmann (1911: 311) is correct that "vielleicht sind alle Demonstrativa einmal deiktische Partikeln, also indeklinabele Wörter gewesen," and if this same deictic nasal element is present in "die n-Demonstrativa *no-, *eno-, *ono-, *oino-, *aino-" (cf. Skt. anâ-, OCS onъ, Lith. anâ-s), then it would seem that the original meaning of *-N was 'there and then' since "die Grundbedeutung der n-Demonstrativa ist eine Jener-Deixis gewesen" (Brugmann 1911: 335-336), although the semantic distinction between *-i and *-N apparently became blurred in later stages of the language, as their semantically undifferentiated co-occurrence in the locative case implies.⁶ What I am ultimately suggesting, then, is that early Indo-European possessed a present verbal construction in *-Ø-i and a non-present (past) verbal construction in *-Ø-N. The problem that remains is simply to determine how the latter formation came to express the third person plural function.⁷

As I implied earlier, I believe that a specifically non-singular inflectional category was a rather late development in Indo-European. Hirt (1934: 23) thus writes: "Eine besondere flektierte Form für den Plural demnach ursprünglich nicht notwendig." He

5 Obviously the occurrence of -u in the genitive (-locative dual attests to the use of locative deictic elements as markers of the genitive case.

6 As would be expected, the original semantic value of the demonstrative stem *i- (nom. sg. masc. *i-s: Lat. is, Go. is, Lith. jis), which probably bears an etymological relationship to the deictic particle *-i, was 'this' (Brugmann 1911: 333).

7 Of course, the formation *-Ø-i was limited to secondary functions in later stages of Indo-European and in the period of dialectal development.

feels that this fact is demonstrated by a number of dialectal phenomena. For example, "die neutralen -i-Stämme gebrauchen als Plural im Aind. den Singular. aparatí, asthūrí, jāmí, bhūrí, śámi, surabhí, máhi (AV.)" (Hirt 1934: 24). Similarly, "in diesem Fall haben wir auch zwei Fälle im Europäischen, nämlich l. tot und quot. Vgl. tot tam valida oppida, quot calamitates" (Hirt 1934: 24). In addition, Lehmann (1974: 263-264) argues that the non-singular category was late in emerging not only in the verbal system but also in the nominal system as well: "The number system is defective in substantival as well as in verbal inflection ... Number accordingly was not consistently applied in late PIE and the early dialects in accordance with natural reference. Subsequently application became more regular, and number congruence was carried out for both substantives and verbs ... The late development of the number system in the noun is also clear from the lack of parallelism between forms of the dual, for which only three forms developed, and the forms of the singular and plural."

Now I believe that the specialization of the verbal formation in *-ǫ-N in non-singular (plural) function, after this category had begun to emerge, was largely a result of the nature of the congruence system of Indo-European. The importance of congruence in Indo-European was what actually led to the development of a third person plural verbal suffix in the first place. As Lehmann (1974: 202) says: "Only the third plural [verbal desinence--K.S.] , as indicated, can be posited for an early period of PIE. The development of precisely third person forms to express number supports the assumption that the number category was used for congruence." The congruence system of Indo-European has been characterized by Fodor (1959: 34) as "assonance-like motion"; that is, phonologically identical formants appeared on the lexical items participating in a syntactic relationship governed by congruence. (See also Shields 1978b: 197-208.) As far as verb/subject agreement was concerned, the original *-ǫ suffix marking third person in the verb was paralleled by a nominative case

suffix in *-ǝ, the original exponent of this case, cf. Kurylowicz 1964: 199. It is interesting to observe that before *-t(i) became the marker of the third person (singular) function, *-s(i) was apparently the desinence of the third person in Indo-European. Thus, Watkins (1962: 105) says: "The classical Indo-European 2 sg. ending -s(i) represents the old 3 sg. ousted from 3 sg. to 2 sg. by the encroachment of a newer 3 sg. -t(i) ... The rigid paradigmatic structure for the three persons of the singular, -m(i), -s(i), -t(i) belongs only to the latest period of Common Indo-European, and was completely achieved only after the separation of the dialects." The occurrence of *-s as a third person marker is historically attested. It is clearly seen in "Tokh. A pālkās (present tense), and Hitt. pāiš 'gave' and dāiš 'put' (preterit)" (Schmalstieg 1976: 24). Also to be included here are such Indo-Iranian forms as Skt. bhūyās 'he should have been', dhās 'he put' and Old Persian aiš 'he went', akunauš 'he made' (Watkins 1962: 90-93). Of course, there eventually developed a nominative case ending *-s in Indo-European which largely replaced the older *-ǝ formant, cf. Kurylowicz 1958: 613. In Shields 1978b: 202-208, I argue that there was an intimate connection between the appearance of *-s as a third person verbal suffix and the appearance of *-s as a nominative suffix, due to the fact that the Indo-European congruence system was at this time primarily based on assonance.⁸

One of the earliest non-singular markers to emerge in Indo-European was a suffix in *-N. "Traces of *-N as a non-singular marker can be seen in certain Tocharian nominative plural forms: AB riñ 'cities'; B pyapyaiñ, A pyāpyañ 'flowers'; A yukañ 'horses'. Moreover, all Tocharian A nominative-accusative dual nouns end in -n, while Tocharian B shows -ne as a marker of this nominal function. In Shields 1977: 61, I propose that the nasal in certain Sanskrit nominative-accusative neuter plural

⁸ See Shields 1978b: 199-202 concerning the gradual replacement of "assonance concord" by the type of congruence seen in later stages of Indo-European and in the dialects themselves.

substantives like bhúvanāni 'worlds', śúcīni 'bright ones', and vásūni 'possessions' is not analogically introduced from the n- and nt-stems but is this same non-singular affix. In addition, the o-, i-, and u-stem nominative-accusative dual endings *-ō, *-ī, and *-ū are derivable from *-oN, *-iN, *-uN, according to Schmalstieg (1973: 147-151)" (Shields 1978a: 135). Further evidence for the existence of a non-singular desinence *-N in Indo-European is provided in Schmalstieg 1973, 1974c, 1976, 1977b and Shields 1977, Forthcoming a, Forthcoming b. Because of the phonological identity of the verbal formation in *-ō-N and the substantival plural formation in *-N and because the two stood in a relationship typically governed by assonance-like motion, the verbal construction became reinterpreted as marking the third person non-singular (plural). When *-N assumed this new verbal function, it lost its association with tense, a fact demonstrated by its inability to combine with other personal markers in a manner comparable to *-i. Nevertheless, as time passed, the third person non-singular marker *-N spread from the third person to other persons of the verb (2nd pers. du.: Skt. -tam, Gk. -ton; 2nd pers. pl.: Hitt. -teni). The motivation of this extension was probably a combination of the tendency identified by Benveniste (1971) for the third person to impose its form on other members of a paradigm and the attempt to hypercharacterize other suffixes as non-singular. At this juncture the primary value of *-N in the verbal system was that of non-singular, its indication of the third person being a secondary function.

It is thus clear that the origin of the Indo-European third person plural verbal suffix is intimately related in a very complicated way to other syntactic and morphological subsystems of the language. I believe that its appearance must be viewed in connection with the expression of spatio-temporal relations, the nature of the congruence system, and the slow evolution of the syntactic category of number.

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Povzetek

INDOEVROPSKA GLAGOLSKA KONČNICA ZA 3. OS. PL.

Končnica za 3. os. pl., ki se običajno rekonstruira kot *-(e/o)nti oz. *-(e/o)nt, naj bi se prvotno glasila *-(e/o)N. Nazalni element, ki ga vsebuje, naj bi bil prvotno deiktična partikula s pomenom "tam in tedaj". Primarna končnica *-(e/o)nti naj bi nastala po kontaminaciji končnika *-(e/o)N in primarne končnice za 3. os. sg. *-ti. Sekundarna končnica naj bi ohranila svojo prvotno obliko *-(e/o)N, rekonstrukcija elementa *-t po avtorjevi interpretaciji ni potrebna.