

Book Review

Leonid Kulikov. *The Vedic -ya-presents: Passives and intransitivity in Old Indo-Aryan* (Leiden Studies in Indo-European 19). Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2012, xxix + 994 pp., €252,00 or \$336.00 (Hardback), ISBN 9789042035225

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DOI 10.1515/jsall-2016-0005

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This monograph goes back to a 2001 dissertation from Leiden University, but compared to the original version (which the reviewer happens to know and have used before), it is greatly enlarged and improved.

It treats one of the most productive present stem classes in Old Indo-Aryan, the so-called *-ya*-presents, classified as either class IV presents or passives in Classical Sanskrit grammar. The main focus is – as the title indicates – on the Vedic development of these verb stems. As the treatment in Sanskrit grammar already suggests, this stem formation has more than one function and more than one type of paradigmatic behavior, and it also has two different accentual types, barytone (accented root) and oxytone (accented suffix). Functionally, they tend to be used as passives and/or anticausatives, but not uniformly. While the stem type as such is certainly inherited from PIE, it is clear that they became productive in the said functions in Indo-Iranian and in Vedic. They are therefore especially interesting for the makeup of the Vedic verbal system in general, as they interact with other formations of the “passive” complex, such as the passive aorist.

The book starts with an introduction, containing preliminaries about the morphological characteristics, principles of the syntactic and semantic analysis (especially of voice and transitivity), the corpus and its evaluation, and the structure of the following main part.

In the main part of the book (pp. 39–680), the *-ya*-presents are treated individually in a survey. Their attestation, function and paradigmatic integration are discussed both synchronically and diachronically, ordered according to the criteria of voice (middle/active) and accentuation (suffix/root/fluctuating). This is always done in a meticulous and careful way, with a respectful but critical discussion of previous accounts. In most cases, previous research is confirmed, but sometimes it is shown to need correction. E.g., the interpretation of *yābhyamānā* RVKh. 5.22.3 as non-passive by Hoffmann (1976: 570f.) cannot be upheld, as the author shows (pp. 488–493): The form must be a real passive and

therefore should be corrected to ⁺*yabhyámānā*. In general it is shown that the correlation of suffix accent and passive function is quite robust in Vedic; also the apparent exception of *vacyāte* ‘moves’ receives a possible explanation as a passive ‘is directed’ to a causative ‘directs’ (pp. 222f.). In many cases, the thorough investigation leads to a better understanding of the facts; e.g., the discussion of the roots ²*dā-* ‘to bind’ and ^{3/4}*dā-* ‘to cut’ (pp. 663–674).

After this exhaustive treatment of the individual verbs, a general synthesis follows (pp. 683–764) that gives a systematic analysis of the *-ya*-presents from various perspectives: morpho-phonological classification, semantics (and syntax), transitivity alternations, paradigmatic properties, *-ya*-presents and other passives, diathesis fluctuation, and a diachronic overview. Also here, the discussion is well-informed, distinguishing empirically based statements from more speculative ideas. Especially in the diachronic part, the author refrains from drawing rash conclusions while always mentioning possible paths of explanations. One main result here is that while *-ya*-presents in general probably have more than one origin, the most salient and productive distinction between suffix accent and root accent in middle intransitive *-ya*-presents is considered secondary and probably an Indo-Aryan innovation (while the passive type as such is clearly of Indo-Iranian origin). This is supported by the fact that the paradigm of *-yá*-passives appears to be defective in the earliest texts (pp. 733ff.), where they are confined largely to the present proper and participle.

The Appendices (pp. 767–796) contain a selection of post-Vedic *-ya*-presents, a treatment of the passive of quasi-denominal verbs and an overview of verbal formations that show passive usage. An impressive bibliography of 126 pages and indices (*verborum*, *locorum* and *rerum*) complete the volume and facilitate its use. I have not found any really problematic errors. In the discussion of Vedic *púrýá-te* ‘grow full’ (pp. 406–412), one misses mention of the possible Iranian cognate, Khotanese *pīr-* which could speak for an older formation. An obvious typo is *yj* for *jy* in *áva-pṛyjāte* on p. 593.

To sum up: This book is an indispensable tool for Indo-Aryan, Indo-Iranian and Indo-European linguistics, providing reliable information about the individual verbs as well as the overall system. It has improved our knowledge considerably and will help to do so in the future.

Reference

- Hoffmann, Karl. 1976. Ved. *yabh*. In Hoffmann, Karl. *Aufsätze zur Indoiranistik*; hrsg. von Johanna Narten, Bd. 2, 570–574. Wiesbaden: Reichert.