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Negated Participles in R̥gvedic Sanskrit and Proto-Indo-European*

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Abstract

In R̥gvedic Sanskrit present participles built to transitive roots regularly follow their corresponding finite forms in relation to argument structure. Of those participles whose argument structure differs from that of the corresponding finite forms (most often because they lack the ability to govern an accusative object), some may have originated as adjectives or may have become adjectivized. A particular group of present participles in the R̥gveda which tend to remain intransitive even when formed to transitive roots are negated participles, i.e. participles compounded with the negative prefix *á(n)-*. This is explained by assuming that the combining of a participle with the negative prefix was originally a process of adjectival derivation. Support for this hypothesis comes from a consideration of the two forms of the negated present participle of the verb \sqrt{as} ‘be’, namely *ásant-* and *ásant-*.

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Keywords

R̥gveda; Sanskrit; participles; negation; verb ‘to be’; transitivity

Introduction: Negated Participles in the *R̥gveda*

The negated participles¹ of the *R̥gveda* have never been the subject of detailed study; moreover, or perhaps hence, their status within the participial systems of R̥gvedic Sanskrit and Proto-Indo-European (PIE) has either been taken for granted (e.g. Wackernagel, 1928, v. 2, p. 287), or stated

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¹ By ‘participle’ I mean those adjectives traditionally termed participles which are derived

equivocally (so the regular definition in Krisch, 2006, v. 1: “Determinativkompositum / verbales Rektionskompositum ...”).

In Sanskrit participles are negated by means of combination with the negative prefix *á(n)-*. This is the only means of negating a participle: the independent negative particles *ná* and *má* are not used to negate participles, and in fact, besides a very few exceptions, can only be used to negate clauses (Delbrück, 1888, pp. 540–543).

There are 72 negative participial stems in the *R̥gveda*. Of these 61 can be called negated present participles; i.e. they are formed by attachment of the negative prefix to a participial stem which itself is derived from (or could be derived from) a verbal present tense stem.² The remainder are eight negated perfect participles,³ and three negated aorist participles;⁴ there are no negated future participles.

Given the relative lack of evidence for negated perfect and aorist participles, the following study will focus on present participles, though the conclusions drawn appear to be equally valid for negated perfect and aorist

from verbal tense-aspect stems, namely the Sanskrit active and mediopassive present, perfect, aorist and future participles; I do not include under this term other so-called participles such as the ‘past passive participle’ in *-tá-/ná-*, which is built to verbal roots.

² This number includes a few derived from denominative ‘participles’, e.g. *ádevayant-* ‘not desiring/worshipping the gods’ to *devayánt-* ‘desiring/worshipping the gods’, which are not synchronically or diachronically derived from verbal tense stems (cf. e.g. Tucker, 1988); however finite verbal forms could be back-formed from these denominative participles, so that in principle any denominative participle could have been synchronically analysed as derived from a verbal tense stem. Hence such forms will be included here, even clearly non-verbal forms such as *ádvayant-* ‘undivided’. Also included are various negated participles which do formally correspond to verbal present tense stems but also occur beside thematic adjectives which arguably they may simply be extensions of, their origin being therefore uncertain; so e.g. *ánaspapurant-* ‘not kicking/not refusing to give milk’ beside the positive participle *praspapuránt-* and finite forms such as (3.pl.) *sphuranti* to $\sqrt{\text{sphur}}$ ‘kick, throb’, but also the adjectives *ánaspapura-* ‘not kicking/not refusing to give milk’ and *ánaspapur-* ‘id.’. The isolated *ásinvant-* (beside *asinvá-*) is included on the assumption that it reflects an unattested present **sinóti* (cf. Mayrhofer EWA, v. 2, pp. 146–147). *acodáte* at 5.44.2b, usually analysed as the d.s. of the negative of *codánt-*, cannot be so treated due to its accent (it may perhaps represent a *t*-stem *a-codát-*, parallel to *a-sácát-* ‘without rival’; these forms may be secondary derivatives from participles, cf. Olsen, 1989, esp. p. 236). Also discounted is *áIVENAN* at 4.24.6c, which is better read as an absolutive *áIVENAM* rather than as a participle (so Gotō, 1987, p. 298 fn. 710).

³ *ákitivams-*, *ájaghanvams-*, *ádāsvams-*, *áprošivams-*, *ábibhivams-*, *ánavivams-*, *ávidvams-* and *ásācivams-*; two of these are built to perfect participles which are essentially substantivized, as evidenced by the derived superlatives *áviduštara-* and *ádāšūštara-*.

⁴ *ábrayāna-*, *ásridhāna-* and *áčetāna-*; all three forms are hapax legomena and morphologically difficult, and hence may all be nonce forms rather than genuinely derived from participles.

participles. We will begin with an overview of positive present participles, before considering their negative counterparts.

Positive Present Participles—Transitivity

In the language of the *R̥gveda*, as in other ancient Indo-European languages, present participles regularly share the argument structure of the verbal stems to which they are built. For example if finite forms of the verb regularly take accusative objects, corresponding participles will also, as in the following examples of finite and corresponding participial forms from the verbal root \sqrt{kr} ‘do, make’:

- (1) *jyótiṣ kṛṇoti sūnārī* (RV 1.48.8b = 7.81.1d)
 ‘The noble lady *makes* the light.’
- (2) *ūrdhvám ketúm savitá devó asrej* (RV 4.14.2ab)
jyótir víśvasmai bhūvanāya kṛṇván
 ‘The god Savitṛ has set his banner upright
making light for all beings.’

This is the regular and expected pattern. However participles do not always match their corresponding finite stems syntactically and semantically. Not infrequently, a present participle may be agentive but intransitive beside finite forms which are agentive and transitive.⁵ This intransitivity can have various reasons; it may be due to adjectivization, as apparently in the present participle *usánt-* ‘willing’ (ex. 4 below) beside finite forms like *váṣṭi* ‘desires (+ acc.)’ (ex. 3 below),⁶ or substantivization of the participle as seen in *sunvánt-* ‘presser of Soma’ with internalization of the object ‘Soma’ (ex. 6 below), beside the finite *sunóti* ‘presses (+ acc.)’ (ex. 5 below).

⁵ I use the term ‘intransitive’ here to refer to participles which never occur with objects and hence can reasonably be so labelled in contradistinction to transitive finite verbal forms. The term ‘absolute’ will be used for specific occurrences of an otherwise transitive participle which lack an object. This is not uncommon in the *R̥gveda*, but is distinct from ordinary uses of properly intransitive participles, such as *usánt-* discussed below, which never do and presumably never could be transitive.

⁶ So Wackernagel-Debrunner (AiG, v. 2:2, § 70b pp. 163–164). There may be an alternative possibility for this word, however: *usánt-* may never have been the synchronic participle corresponding to *váṣṭi*, but may rather have been an adjective in origin. That argument cannot be pursued here however, and it remains the case that several inherited participles have undeniably undergone adjectivization, e.g. *árbant-* ‘worthy’, beside *árbati* ‘deserves (+acc.)’.

- (3) *'adhvaryavaḥ sá pūrṇāṃ vaṣṭy āsīcam* (RV 2.37.1b)
 'O Adhvaryus, he *desires* a full draught.'
- (4) *evá no adyá samanā samānān* (RV 6.4.1cd)
uśānn agna uśatō yakṣi devān
 'Thus likewise for us today, to those same
willing gods, Agni, *willing(ly)* sacrifice.'
- (5) *tūbh'yéd eté marútaḥ suśévä* (RV 5.30.6ab)
ārcant'y arkāṃ sunvánt'y ándbaḥ
 'For you indeed these Maruts, very favourable
 sing the praise song and *press* the (Soma) juice.'
- (6) *gántāsi sunvatō grhām* (RV 2.41.2c)
 'You are one who goes to the house of the *Soma-presser*.'

Although the adjectivization or substantivization of participles (a development from which corresponding finite forms were, of course, inherently immune) is not infrequent, it is by no means regular. The situation is complicated in the *Rgveda* by the fact that some verbs have distinct transitive and intransitive meanings in the same finite forms, and by the frequent ellipsis of objects which are (or were intended to be) recoverable from the context. We could, for example, understand *sómam* as an ellipsed object in example (6) above; in this case however the very common use of *sunvánt-* as a substantive and with no expressed object, contrasting with equivalent finite forms, justifies us in assuming that the participle has undergone a secondary development to a substantive, and hence no object need be implied.⁷ However in other instances the evidence may not be so clear.

Positive Present Participles—Semantics

Present participles are, morphologically speaking, adjectives, and they can be used in all of the ways that adjectives can be used.⁸ However present participles can also be used in ways which other adjectives can not.

This fact was recognized already by Pāṇini, who specified the expression of the *lakṣaṇa* or *hetu* (roughly translatable 'characteristic' and 'cause/

⁷ At a later period Pāṇini (Aṣṭādhyāyī 3.2.132) recognized *sunvánt-* as a substantive rather than a participle.

⁸ On the uses of adjectives see Delbrück (1888, esp. pp. 69–71, 78–79); also e.g. Cantera (2005).

purpose⁹) of another action as functions peculiar to present participles in contrast to other adjectives.⁹

Space does not permit a detailed consideration of all the possible functions of present participles, but a few examples will suffice to demonstrate the range of possibilities of the present participles in contrast to other adjectives.¹⁰ Participles can express:

Simultaneity:

- (7) *kumārás cit pitāraṃ vādamānam* (RV 2.33.12ab)
prāti nānāma rudaropayāntam
 ‘A son bows towards his father *as he approaches,*
as he greets him, O Rudra.’

Contingency:¹¹

- (8) *ā vo hārdī bhāyamāno vyayeyam* (RV 2.29.6b)
 ‘I would nestle in your hearts, *when I am afraid.*’

Conjunction:

- (9) *mānmāni dhībhir utā yajñām ṛndhān* (RV 10.110.2cd)
devatrā ca kṛṇuhy adhvarām nah
 ‘*Make successful* our prayers and sacrifice through your thought,
 and make our offering (to be) among the gods.’

Cause (Pāṇini’s *hetu*):

- (10) *alātrṇó valá indra vrajó góḥ* (RV 3.30.10ab)
purá hāntor bhāyamāno vy āra
 ‘Unpiercable Vala, O Indra, the encloser of the cows,
 before being struck opened up, *(because he was) afraid.*’

⁹) Aṣṭādhyāyī 3.2.126—*lakṣanahetvoḥ kriyāyāḥ*.

¹⁰) The use of present participles to express ‘*hetu*’ has been dealt with by Knobl (2005); there is little or nothing specifically published on the other major functions of present participles in the *R̥gveda*, but compare the relevant sections in Speyer (1886, § 358–378, pp. 278–296) and Goodwin (1875, § 832–845, p. 333 f.) for comparable sets of functions found with participles in Classical Sanskrit and Ancient Greek respectively.

¹¹) For this term see Kortmann (1998, § 2.2.1, p. 465). In this function the participle specifies the temporal reference of the main verb, rather than the other way around.

Instrument:

- (11) *mahāṁ asi mahiṣa vīṣṇyebhir* (RV 3.46.2ab)
dhanaspīd ugra sāhamāno anyān
 ‘You are great, O buffalo, through mighty deeds,
 gaining plunder, O fierce one, *by overpowering* others.’

Notably, participles which have undergone adjectivization or which do not match their corresponding finite forms in transitivity (*uśānt-* etc. discussed above) are not found in these non-adjectival or ‘participial’ functions.

Negated Present Participles

We might expect negated participles to correspond to their positive counterparts in respect of both argument structure and semantic range, merely with the additional semantic feature [+NEG]. However negated present participles in the *Rgveda* differ both syntactically and semantically from the pattern we might expect for them.

Transitivity

Negated present participles do not differ from their positive counterparts in obvious ways, such as being patientive rather than agentive, nor are lexicalized negated participles found in the *Rgveda*. However they are almost never found with expressed objects, even when corresponding positive forms are; moreover in these instances it is neither necessary nor easy to supply an object. There are 61 negated present participles in the *Rgveda*, of which 35 occur only once each. Of the 61, roughly a little over half (36 by my count) are built to roots or stems which are inherently intransitive (e.g. passive stems), or for which there is no evidence of transitivity.¹² The finite stems and positive participles corresponding to the remaining 25 or so negated participles are either obligatorily transitive, or can occur in both transitive and intransitive constructions. In contrast the negated participles themselves almost all lack objects.

Several negated participles lack objects while finite forms are obligatorily transitive. The negated participle *ānapavyayant-* at 6.75.7d (ex. 12 below)

¹² I therefore include here those for which no finite or corresponding positive participial forms are attested, such as *āsinvant-*.

has no object, nor can an object easily be supplied; in contrast finite forms of \sqrt{vye} are always transitive, including the single finite occurrence of $\acute{apa}\sqrt{vye}$ (ex. 13 below). The exact sense of the negated participle is uncertain (see Geldner’s note, RV, v. 2 p. 177) because it is unclear how to take it with no object.

- (12) *avakrāmantāḥ prāpadair amitrān* (RV 6.75.7cd)
kṣinānti śātrūṃśr ānapavyayantaḥ
 ‘Trampling their opponents with their tiptoes,
 they crush their enemies *without withdrawing*.’
- (13) *āpo māhi vyayati cākṣase tāmo* (RV 7.81.1cd)
jyōtiḥ kṛṇoti sūndrī
 ‘She *removes* the great darkness for (i.e. to create) sight;
 the noble lady creates the light.’

The meaning of the hapax legomenon *āyatant-* is likewise difficult because active forms of \sqrt{yat} are always transitive and mean ‘array, line up (e.g. a battle line)’. The line is referring to two divine or heavenly entities which move according to a fixed, though separate, order (Heaven and Earth according to Sāyana; the Sun and Moon according to Renou, EVP 15: p. 57). The literal meaning of this participle must therefore be something like ‘not lining (themselves) up next to one another (but rather maintaining a fixed distance)’.

- (14) *āyatantā carato anyādanyad id* (RV 2.24.5cd)
yā cakāra vayūnā brāhmaṇas pātīḥ
 ‘The two go *in an orderly fashion*, each in another (direction),
 the directions which Brahmanaspati created.’

The single occurrence of the positive present participle at 5.48.5b is in contrast transitive; likewise finite forms like the 3.s. present *yatati* at 7.36.2d:

- (15) *jānaṃ ca mitró yatati bruvānāḥ* (RV 7.36.2d)
 ‘And, called Mitra, he *marshals* men.’

The other such negated participles beside which corresponding positive participial and finite forms are always transitive are *avyant-* and *āmardhant-*. It would be possible to argue that in all these instances we are dealing with an absolute use of what we would expect to be a transitive participle. However the combined evidence suggests rather that negated participles are intransitive formations, since the expected transitive use is never found.

For most other negated participles, corresponding finite or positive participial forms regularly, but not invariably, occur with expressed objects. Where they lack them, it is not therefore certain whether an object should always be supplied for finite / positive participial forms, or whether an alternative intransitive function should be accepted for the root / stem; consequently the interpretation of the negated participle is uncertain.

For example, finite forms and the positive participle *ghnánt-* to the root \sqrt{han} ‘strike, slay’ are usually transitive (exx. 16 and 17 below), but occasionally an object may be lacking (ex. 18 below). However none of the three occurrences of the negated participle *ághnant-* appear with objects (ex. 19 below, similarly 5.51.15c and 8.25.12a). This could be coincidental; however it fits the pattern already suggested that negated participles are regularly intransitive. The translations by Geldner (RV) and Renou (EVP) supply objects for the negated participles, but it is equally possible to interpret them intransitively.

- (16) *sá sátpatih śávasā hanti vṛtrám* (RV 6.13.3a)
‘That lord of beings *slays* with his might Vṛtra.’
- (17) *ghnán vṛtráni vi púro dardariti* (RV 6.73.2cd)
jáyañ chátvūrñr amitrān pṛtsú sáhan
‘*Slaying* opponents he breaks open cities,
conquering enemies (and) overcoming the hostile in battle.’
- (18) *ayám śṛnve ádha jáyann utá ghnánn* (RV 4.17.10a)
‘This one is famed as the conquering one and the *slaying one*.’
- (19) *vayám te asyám sumataú cániṣṭhāh* (RV 7.20.8cd)
syáma várūthe ághnato nṛpītau
‘May we be most acceptable in this benevolence of yours,
in the defence and protection of (you) *who do not slay*.’

Similarly, with 17 of the remaining 20 negated participles which lack objects it could be argued either that an object should be supplied, or that the participles simply happen to display absolute or intransitive uses of a stem which can be both transitive and intransitive. Taking all the data together, however, it is apparent that the lack of objects found with negated participles is not merely due to the optional omission of objects found throughout the *Rgveda*, but is in fact a systematic feature of the category as a whole.

It appears, therefore, that negated participles as a formation are distinct from their corresponding verbal forms, not merely in the addition of the

semantic feature [+NEG], but more fundamentally lacking the verbal property of transitivity. They are therefore not simply the negative equivalent of a positive participle but are, as a formation, something slightly different.

There are three potential counterexamples, negated present participles which could be argued to have an overt object, *ánavasyant-* (ex. 20), *ánaśnant-* (ex. 21) and *áminant-* (ex. 22). None of these, however, are as secure as they appear.

- (20) *yám sīm ákṛṇvan támase vipṛce* (RV 4.13.3ab)
dhruvákṣemā ánavasyanto ártham
 ‘He whom they made to dispel the darkness,
 (they) of firm foundation, *not unharnessing* in respect of their task.’

In contrast to the translation given above, Geldner (RV, v. 1 p. 433) treats the negated participle as transitive, governing the accusative *ártham*: “sie ... ihr Tagewerk nie einstellen”. However *ártham* would be a highly unusual object for *áva√sā* in the *Rgveda*, a preverb-verb combination which means ‘unharness, release’, and which when transitive takes semantically salient objects such as ‘horses’. Finite forms can also be intransitive however (e.g. 4.16.2a), and it seems better to take the negated participle in the same way here, with *ártham* an accusative of respect, as in the translation given above.

- (21) *táyor anyáh píppalam svād_v átt_y* (RV 1.164.20cd)
ánaśnann anyó abhí cākaśīti
 ‘Of the two the one eats the sweet berry,
 the other looks on *without eating*.’

The participle here could easily be interpreted as transitive by inferring the object from pāda *c*; although this is possible, it is not necessary, and the intransitive interpretation assumed here corresponds to that of Geldner (RV, v. 1 p. 231). Of the two occurrences of the positive participle one, at 7.67.7d, clearly has an accusative object while the other, at 8.5.31b, shares the object of the main verb.

- (22) *áminatī datv_{yāni} vratāni* (RV 1.92.12cd)
sūryasya ceti raśmībhir drśānā
 ‘*Not infringing* the divine ordinances
 she appears, visible with the rays of the sun.’

This passage (and the repetition of pāda *c* at 1.124.2a) is the best example in the *Rgveda* of a negated participle clearly governing an accusative object. It would be possible to argue that here again what we in fact have is an accusative of respect, e.g. ‘without infringement in respect of the divine ordinances’; however for the sake of argument we will follow the usual interpretation of this passage, taking it therefore as an exception to the rule proposed above. Even so, the three other occurrences of the same negated participle (at 4.5.6b, 4.56.2b, 10.88.13c) do not occur with expressed objects; it is possible to infer objects in all three passages, as Geldner does,¹³ but given the weight of the evidence in favour of inherently or primarily intransitive negated participles, it may be better to adopt an intransitive (or rather absolute) interpretation in these passages, ‘without infringement, without change’.

Taking all the evidence together then, it appears that almost all negated participles share an inability to govern accusative objects, in contrast to finite verbal forms and positive participles, which suggests, as stated above, that they are more (or less) than simply the negative equivalent of a positive participle. However at least one negated participle is transitive in some of its occurrences, suggesting that this distinction between negated participles and other verbal forms is not fully maintained in the *Rgveda*.

Semantics

In terms of their semantic range too, negated participles contrast with their positive counterparts in that they are rarely if ever found in the ‘participial’ functions discussed above, occurring rather in functions which are characteristic only of adjectives. The exact contextual function of a particular participle in a given passage is of course a largely subjective question; moreover this is not in itself positive evidence of a contrast between negated and positive participles, since purely adjectival functions are often found with positive participles; it is however consistent with the distinction so far proposed that negated participles lack certain features or semantic possibilities characteristic of non-negated participles.

¹³ At 4.5.6b Geldner supplies “die Satzungen” without comment; at 4.56.2b *rūpām* (“ihr Aussehen”) which occurs as an object of finite forms but notes *daivyaṇi vratāni* is also possible; at 10.88.13c he suggests inferring *vratām*, *dīśaḥ* or *rūpām*, or “im letzten Falle: unveränderlich”, this final suggestion being our preferred interpretation.

The best possible examples of negated participles with ‘participial’ function are the following.

- (23) ákriṣan kriṣan hárir áttave ’dán (RV 10.79.6c)
 ‘While both *not playing* and playing the golden one
 must eat without teeth.’
- (24) triḥ sma máhnaḥ śnathayo vaitaséno (RV 10.95.5ab)
^utá sma mé’ ^vyatyai pṛṇāsi
 ‘Three times a day you pierce me with your reed,
 and you fill me (with your seed even) *when I do not desire it.*’
- (25) ^vriṣaṇyan vīlayasvā vanaspatē (RV 2.37.3b)
 ‘Become firm *and fail not*, O Vanaspati.’

However *avyatyai* (ex. 24) could be taken adjectivally, ‘one without desire’; similarly *áriṣaṇyan* (ex. 25) could be taken adverbially, i.e. ‘unfailingly’ (a function found also with adjectives). If *ákrīlan* (ex. 23) must be interpreted temporally, as above, the influence of the immediately following positive participle *kriṣan* cannot be ignored.

Taking this together with the evidence regarding transitivity, it appears that negated participles lack two of the major features which distinguish participles proper from (the majority, at least, of) adjectives: the ability to govern an object, and the ability to occur in certain semantic relationships with the predicate of a clause. In other words the majority, but admittedly not all, of the negated participles of the *Rgveda* are better classed as adjectives, rather than as participles.

Comparative Evidence

The Sanskrit negative prefix *a(n)-* is etymologically related to the Greek negative prefix *á(v)-*, Latin *in-*, Germanic *un-* etc. and derives from PIE **n-*. For PIE, the traditional consensus is that the regular means of negating a present participle was by means of this negative prefix.¹⁴ From this perspective Sanskrit, both Classical and Vedic, directly continues the PIE state of affairs since, as stated above, Sanskrit *á(n)-* is synchronically the only means of negating a participle.

¹⁴ See e.g. Wackernagel (1928, v. 1, p. 282 f.; v. 2, p. 284 ff.); Delbrück (1893, § 175, p. 529 f.); Mayrhofer (EWA, v. 1, p. 35).

In contrast, in Ancient Greek a participle is negated by means of the negative particles μή or οὐ(κ/χ); synchronically at least participles cannot regularly be negated by combination with the negative prefix ἀ(v).¹⁵ Likewise in Classical Latin the synchronic negative of e.g. *patiens* ‘enduring’ is *non patiens*, whereas participles with a negative prefix are synchronically non-participial adjectives, e.g. *impatiens* ‘impatient’.¹⁶ These negated participles regularly share the transitivity of their non-negated counterparts, and can occur in participial functions. Traditionally, the Ancient Greek and Latin situation is thought to be a later development, while the PIE origin of the Sanskrit situation is supported by Greek ἀέκων etc. and by a few early Latin examples of apparently negated participles, e.g. *insciens* ‘ignorant’, *indicente* (abl.s.) ‘not saying’.¹⁷ However these Latin ‘negated participles’ are no more participial than *impatiens*: they are not transitive as finite verbal forms would lead us to expect (*sciens* itself is usually intransitive and has clearly become an adjective already in early Latin), nor are they found in participial functions. They are therefore best treated as derived adjectives.

Taking the evidence of these other Indo-European languages into account, we see that, for the most part, the negated participles of the *R̥gveda*, with their ‘adjectival’ lack of transitivity and lack of ‘participial’ semantic possibilities, correspond not to the periphrastic negated participles of Greek and Latin (such as *non patiens*) but rather to the Classical Latin adjectives such as *impatiens*.

¹⁵ The negative prefix is apparently attached to participles in a few cases. Ignoring those instances where the prefix is clearly part of the (usually deadjectival) verbal stem, such as ἀφρονῶν to ἀφρονῶ (not φρονῶ), the only cases known to me are ἀέκων (Attic ἄκων) ‘unwilling’, ἀεκαζόμενος ‘id.’, ἀνάρμενος ‘unequipped’, and ἀνομολογούμενος ‘not agreeing, not agreed’. The first three of these do not correspond to attested finite verbal stems: ἀέκων is the regularly formed negative of the synchronic adjective ἐκῶν ‘willing’, which may in origin be a participle since cognate finite verbs are attested in Indo-Iranian and Hittite (but see fn. 6 above), but there can be no proof that a negative was formed to this word before its reanalysis as an adjective; ἀεκαζόμενος is clearly related to the same family of synchronic adjectives and could in fact be derived from a deadjectival verb stem based on ἀέκων itself; ἀνάρμενος is the negative of ἄρμενος, traditionally analysed as a syncopated aorist participle beside the finite aorist ἦραρον, but synchronically, because of this irregular syncope, it does not correspond to the finite forms and is best treated as an independent adjective; this leaves only ἀνομολογούμενος, which must synchronically be the negative of ὁμολογούμενος, present mediopassive participle of ὁμολογῶ. The explanation of this single negated participle is uncertain: it may be that the positive participle had become adjectivized, but the verb itself can hardly be archaic since it is a denominative, so it is unlikely to reflect any kind of inherited formation.

¹⁶ Cf. Vester (1977, p. 273).

¹⁷ Wackernagel (1928, v. 1, p. 283; v. 2, p. 287).

The assumption that an inherited means of negating participles through the negative prefix was replaced in Greek and Latin with the periphrastic construction is not only unnecessary but in fact insupportable: the weight of the evidence from R̥gvedic Sanskrit, supported by Classical Latin, is that participles combined with the negative prefix are not synchronically negative counterparts of their positive bases, but rather non-participial (though participle-derived) adjectives.¹⁸

We can therefore reanalyse the comparative evidence in the following way. In PIE a participle compounded with the negative prefix derived a non-participial adjective, which could not share the syntactic and semantic possibilities of the simple participle. Whether a participle could be directly negated, perhaps by means of a periphrastic collocation involving an independent word indicating negation, as in Classical Latin and Greek, cannot be certain. The Greek and Latin means of negating participles may perhaps be inherited, but if so this PIE process must have been lost in Proto-Indo-Iranian (PII) times.

As stated above, however, in some passages a negated participle in the *R̥gveda* is best analysed as exactly that, a participle displaying the expected transitivity and/or participial functions, with the addition of the semantic feature [+NEG]. It appears then, that at a later, possibly Proto-Indo-Aryan,¹⁹ stage the possibility arose of forming genuinely negated participles by means of the negative prefix *á(n)-*, replacing the inherited means, if any. These were not derived adjectives but synchronically participles, able to

¹⁸) Note also that the accent of these ‘negated participles’ in Sanskrit is always on the prefix *á(n)-*; this is the only context (besides vocatives and some compounds) in which participles lose their inherent accent (cf. Knauer, 1885, esp. § 5, pp. 19–20).

¹⁹) The evidence of Avestan broadly supports that found in the *R̥gveda*. There are at most 39 words in the Avesta which could be interpreted as negated participles, most attested only once. Since this includes both Old and Younger Avestan, the evidence is both scarcer and more chronologically disparate than the RV evidence. There are only six negated participles in Old Avestan, none of which have objects. In Younger Avestan there are at most 4 negated participles governing objects beside 30 without; these four participles all also occur without objects in other passages: *aiiazəmna-* ‘nicht betend’ at Vyt.12 (vs. id. at V.18.5 without object), *əuuəraziiant-* ‘nicht wirkend’ at V.3.40 (vs. id. at V.18.5 without object), *asrauuaiiant-* at N.44, 41–45.6 (vs. id. at V.18.5, N.104 without object), *əuuiduuh-* at Vr. 22.2 (vs. id. at Y.31.12, 17 without object). From a functional point of view the evidence is of course subjective, but my general impression is that participial functions are not found with these Avestan negated participles any more than they are with the RV negated participles. The evidence for ‘participial’ negated participles in Avestan is therefore minor and late, which may suggest that the innovation of genuinely negated participles as opposed to derived negative adjectives took place independently in the two branches of Indo-Iranian.

function in the same ways as positive participles. The *Rgveda* presents both stages of development side by side, and therefore negated participles are formally ambiguous and can only be categorized on syntactic and semantic grounds. Classical Latin and Ancient Greek may then represent more closely the PIE state of affairs, while it is Indo-Iranian which has innovated.

ásant- and *ásant-*

Evidence in favour of the above proposed two-stage development of negated participles in Indo-Aryan is provided by a close examination of the negatives of the present participle *sánt-* ‘being’.

The *Rgveda* attests two distinct forms of the negative of *sánt-*: *ásant-*, the synchronically expected form, showing attachment of the negative prefix *á-* to the participial stem *sánt-*; and *ásant-*, synchronically irregular but diachronically explicable as a more archaic form of the negative, preserving a trace of the root initial laryngeal in the lengthening of the initial vowel. *ásant-* therefore reflects a PII **á-Hs-ant-* <PIE **ǵ-h₁s-(o)nt-*,²⁰ while *ásant-* is a later, perfectly transparent formation *á-sant-* created after the loss of the root-initial laryngeal. *ásant-* occurs only occasionally in the *Rgveda* and is not found in later texts, while *ásant-*, being synchronically regular, survives throughout the history of the language.

Most authorities recognise two distinct meanings of *ásant-/ásant-* in the *Rgveda* but do not correlate this with the existence of the two distinct forms. The expected and, due to its occurrence in famous cosmogonic passages, best known meaning, is ‘not being’; it is with this meaning that *ásant-* lives on after the *Rgvedic* period.²¹

In several passages, however, the same negated participle occurs in the context of speaking beside a derivative of the verbal roots \sqrt{vac} or \sqrt{vad} , in which case the meaning ‘false’ is required:

- (26) *ká ásato vácasah santi gopáh* (RV 5.12.4d)
 ‘Who are the protectors of the *false* word?’
- (27) *hánti nákṣo hánty ásad vádantam* (RV 7.104.13c)
 ‘He slays harm, he slays the one who speaks an *untrue* (word).’

²⁰ Granted that the position of the accent, and even the ablaut of the stem in PIE may be debatable.

²¹ The use of this negated participle in cosmogonic contexts is discussed by Brereton (1999, p. 250).

In the following verse, the negated participle in pāda *d* is set in opposition to the adjective *satyá-* ‘true’, while in pāda *b* the negated participle is opposed to its positive, *sánt-* which here, unusually, appears equivalent to *satyá-*:²²

- (28) *suviññānām cikitūse jānāya* (RV 7.104.12)
sác cāsac ca vácasī pasprdhāte
táyor yát satyám yatarád řjīyas
tád ít sómo ’vati hánty āsat
 ‘For the discerning man it is easy to distinguish:
 the *true* and the *false* words have competed with one another.
 Which of the two is true, which the more upright,
 that Soma aids; he slays the *untrue*.’

The first negated participle, in sandhi with *ca* ‘and’, is formally ambiguous since the combination could reflect *ca+āsat* or *ca+āsat*. In the following passage it may be possible that *āsatā* in pāda *d* contains the preverb *ā* (modifying the main verb *sacantām*, not the participle), meaning the exact form of the negated participle is again formally ambiguous.²³

- (29) *anirēna vácasā phalg,vēna* (RV 4.5.14)
pratītyena kṛdhúnātrpāsah
ādihā té agne kim ihā vadanty
anāyudhāsa āsatā sacantām
 ‘With a languid, feeble word,
 with deficient reply unsatisfied,
 what can they now say here, O Agni?
 Defenceless let them be accompanied by the *false* (word).’

My translation follows Renou (EVP, v. 13, p. 10) and (tentatively) Oldenberg (Noten, v. 1, p. 272) in interpreting *āsatā* as picking up the instrumen-

²² This is a unique occurrence of the positive participle *sánt-* having undeniably the meaning ‘true’; Geldner translates *sánt-* as ‘true’ or even ‘truth’ (wahr / Wahre) in some other passages, e.g. 6.27.2; however a translation ‘existent’ or even ‘good’ is to be preferred. In this context the use of *sánt-* to mean ‘true’ is best understood as an etymological play on words, creating an unexpected semantic combination by splicing together the positive and negative respectively from the etymologically related antonymous pairs *sánt-* / *āsant-* ‘(not) being’ and *satyá-* / *āsant-* ‘(not) true’. In later Sanskrit *sánt-* has a wide range of meanings, including ‘real, good, right, beautiful’, but not (to the extent that it does not overlap with the aforementioned meanings) ‘true’, for which *satyá-* is rather used.

²³ In both cases the padapāṭha reads the participle with a long vowel and this would seem to be the correct interpretation of both passages.

tal *vācasā* of pāda *a*. Alternatively it could be assumed that *āsataḥ śacantām* means something like ‘let them be accompanied by the non-existent’, i.e. ‘let them cease existing’ (cf. *āsann astu* below). Either interpretation may be correct, but the fact that neither the meaning nor the form of the negated participle can be proven renders this passage of limited value for the present discussion.

The only other passage containing the negated participles *āsant-* and *śāsant-* in the context of speaking is the following:

- (30) *āsann astu v āsata indra vaktā* (RV 7.104.8d)
 ‘Let the speaker of a *false* (word) be *non-existent*, O Indra.’

Here, there is a clear semantic difference between the two occurrences of the negated participle; the second, being a genitive dependent on *vaktā* ‘speaker’, clearly means ‘false’, but it would be ridiculous if the first participle also meant ‘false’, since the verse would then mean something like ‘let the speaker of a false word be false ...’. Rather, in conjunction with the imperative *astu*, the first negated participle must mean ‘let (him) be non-existent’.

On the basis of the passages discussed above, which constitute all the R̥gvedic evidence for *śāsant-*, Oldenberg (Noten, v. 1 p. 272) hesitantly suggested a semantic distinction between the two forms of the negated participle: *śāsant-* means ‘not being’ (“nichtseiend”) while *āsant-* means ‘untrue’ (“unwahr”).²⁴

This explanation fits the evidence perfectly: *cāsac* in 7.104.12b is ambiguous but does not therefore speak against it and clearly patterns with the other occurrences of *śāsant-* rather than *āsant-* (moreover as stated above the padapāṭha reads *ca śāsata*); the only apparently problematic passage is 4.5.14 discussed above which, as suggested by Oldenberg (and accepted by Renou), does in fact fit the proposed pattern by reference back to a word of speech earlier in the verse. *śāsant-* relies without exception on a derivative of \sqrt{vac} or \sqrt{vad} , i.e. it occurs only in contexts of speaking, where the notion ‘false’ is required, while the only unambiguous occurrence of *āsant-* in the above passages is the only one which cannot mean ‘false’ and which does not rely on a word to do with ‘speaking’.²⁵ Besides the above passages,

²⁴) A century later I came independently to this conclusion before discovering that Oldenberg had already suggested it.

²⁵) For an interesting discussion of the connection between ‘being’ and ‘truth’ in the

ásant- never occurs, while all other R̥gvedic occurrences of *ásant-* (6.24.5, 10.5.7, 10.72.2, 10.129.1, 4) occur in cosmogonic passages unambiguously meaning ‘not being’ and never in connection with words to do with speech, e.g.

- (31) *sató bándhum ásati nír avindan* (RV 10.129.4cd)
hṛdí pratīsyā kaváyo manīṣá
 ‘Searching in their hearts through inspired thinking,
 poets found the connection of the existent in the *non-existent*.’²⁶

This semantic distinction between *ásant-* and *ásant-* has, however, not been accepted by later translators of the *R̥gveda*. Geldner (RV, ad loc.) translates the negated participles as “falsche” or “unwahr(e)” at 7.104.12, 13 and 5.12.4d, but with “zunichte”, “Nichtigem” and “Nichts” at 7.104.8 and 4.5.14d, resulting apart from anything in an insupportable contrast between *ásata ... vaktá* of 7.104.8d and the parallel *ásad vácas / vādantam* of four / five verses later. Renou did not publish a translation of 7.104, but his translations and comments elsewhere emphasise the supposed etymological sense, even in the context of speaking: “*ásant* signifiait “nul” ou “irréel”” (EVP, v. 2, p. 81 fn. 3); “(la parole) sans réalité” (EVP, v. 13, p. 27, translating 5.12.4d); “(parole) inexistante” (EVP, v. 13, p. 10, translating 4.5.14); “*ásat* n’est pas le “néant”, mais l’annihilation due à la défaite orale, *ásat* et surtout *ásat* étant reliés en général à *vácas* ou à *vaktṛ*” (EVP, v. 13, p. 97, comment on 4.5.14). This last comment, however, misses the clear functional distinction between the two forms.

Oldenberg’s hesitancy in proposing the semantic distinction between *ásant-* and *ásant-* may in part be explained by the lack of morphological or phonological explanation for the synchronically aberrant long vowel

context of speech, see Kahn (1973, ch. 7, pp. 331–370); of the Greek verb εἶναι ‘to be’ he says (p. 369): “We speak of the verb as veridical only where there is some hint of the metalinguistic concept of truth, and this hint is usually conveyed by some comparison or contrast with an act of saying, thinking, seeming.” Aristotle’s definition of truth and falsehood (Met. 1011^b26, quoted by Kahn, 1973, p. 336 fn. 7) is fascinating to compare in this respect: τὸ μὲν γὰρ λέγειν τὸ ὄν μὴ εἶναι ἢ τὸ μὴ ὄν εἶναι ψεῦδος, τὸ δὲ τὸ ὄν εἶναι καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν μὴ εἶναι ἀληθές ‘for saying that what is is not, or what is not is, is falsehood, but (saying) that what is is and what is not is not, is truth’. Truth is an abstract quality of something, especially something spoken, which is directly related and derived from its conformity to reality. Therefore the use of an adjective derived from a participle meaning ‘being’ to express truth and falsehood is particularly appropriate.

²⁶ Translation from Brereton (1999, p. 250).

of *ásant-* before the development of laryngeal theory, leaving the distinction unmotivated. Understanding *ásant-* as the phonologically older form, however, it is possible to explain the distinction in the light of the non-participial origin of negated participles discussed above.

The earlier *ásant-* was not, historically, a negated participle as such but a derivative adjective formed from the PIE participle **h₂sónt-*. It was, effectively, the negative not of the participle but of the positive derivative adjective attested in Sanskrit *satyá-* ‘true’, and their parallel semantic development supports this.²⁷ At a later stage, when it became possible to create a negated participle by prefixation of (PII or PIA) **á(n)-*, *ásant-* was created with the expected meaning ‘not being’.

Conclusion

In this article I have demonstrated that, in the *R̥gveda*, present participles combined with the negative prefix, although traditionally analysed simply as negated participles, are in fact derived adjectives which are not, from a synchronic functional point of view, participles.

Moreover, I have shown that the comparative evidence of Ancient Greek and Latin supports the proposal that this situation is not an innovation of Indo-Aryan or Indo-Iranian, but can be projected back to Proto-Indo-European itself.

Finally, the recognition that *R̥gvedic ásant-* and *ásant-* are two distinct lexical items with different meanings, ‘non-existent’ and ‘false’ respectively, lends crucial support to this proposal, since in these forms, uniquely, the contrast between the older adjectival derivative and the younger negated participle is clearly preserved.

²⁷) The meaning of *satyá-* is at least of Proto-Indo-Iranian date, since Avestan *haiḍiia-* can also mean ‘true’, and is possibly of PIE date, if Goth. *sunja* ‘true’ is cognate (cf. Lehmann, 1986, p. 329). On this and other words for ‘truth’ in Indo-European languages see also Frisk (1936, esp. pp. 3–6, 16, 28). The replacement of *ásant-* by *ánrta-* as the regular Sanskrit antonym of *satyá-* was almost complete by the time of the *R̥gveda*: at an earlier stage the semantic difference between *ásant-* and *ánrta-* can be assumed to have been something like ‘not true’ versus ‘not right’ respectively; the tendency of words related to the latter form to become used in the sphere of truth is clearly paralleled by Avestan *aša-* ‘truth’. Late *R̥gvedic asatyá-* ‘false’, as also Younger Avestan *anhaiḍiia-* ‘id.’ are clearly later creations.

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