

VEDIC ROOTS AND THE “SONORITY HIERARCHY”

0 In a proposed paper we will focus on a sonority hierarchy in the formation of Vedic verbal roots, on a sonority hierarchy in Vedic verbal reduplication and on the sonority hierarchy as a principle affecting the further phonemic development of Middle Indo-Aryan.

1 Any Vedic verbal root is formed (besides the vocalic peak) by two segments, forming its pattern: **a root initial and a root coda**.

2 Our further aim is to describe the **patterns both of the root initial and root coda** according to the sonority scale. We assume for Vedic four sonority classes: stops (T), sibilant (S), nasal (N) and resonant (R), termed such here for the sake of simplicity.

2.1 A root initial is formed by the following clusters (besides cases where the root has no initial at all): *T-*, *S-*, *N-*, *R-*, *ST-*, *SN-*, *SR-*, *TT-*, *TS-*, *TN-*, *TR-*, *NN-*, *NR-*, *RR-*, *STR-*, *TSR-*, *TSN-*.

2.2 A root coda can occur through the clusters (besides a zero coda) *-T*, *-S*, *-N*, *-R*, *-TT*, *-TS*, *-ST*, *-NT*, *-NS*, *-RT*, *-RS*, *-RN*, *-RR*, *-RST*, *-RTS*.

2.3 As can easily be seen, the root initials are generally **mirrored** in the root codas, which is a major feature in patterning of OIA verbal roots:

initial	coda
ST-	-TS
SN-	-NS
SR-	-RS
TT-	-TT
TS-	-ST
TN-	-NT
TR-	-RT
NN-	–
NR-	-RN
RR-	-RR
STR-	-RTS
TSR-	-RST
TSN-	–

3 The **reduplication of the consonantal cluster onset** in OIA shows a different mechanism than the reduplication found anywhere else in the Indo-European family, since all other languages in which reduplication plays a role reduplicate the first left consonant in a cluster, while OIA respects the sonority hierarchy, since any two or three-consonant root initial is reduplicated with a consonant higher in the sonority scale, hence clusters of types *ST-*, *TS-*, *STR-*, *TSR-* and *TSN-* are reduplicated with *T-* only, not with a first member (the-first-takes-it-all principle), as is the case in Avestan or Greek.

4 The **Middle Indo-Aryan development of clusters** follows the principle of the sonority hierarchy since all consonants in a cluster are assimilated, in their sonority, to the consonant of the highest sonority present in a cluster: the OIA clusters *ST*, *TS*, *TR*, *TN*, *TN*, *NT* are realized as MIA *TT*; OIA clusters *SN*, *NS*, *SR*, *RS* as MIA *SS*, OIA *NR* and *RN* as MIA *NN*.

5 According to data above it seems that a sonority hierarchy could be one of organizing principles in the development of Indo-Aryan languages.

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