Non-Compositional Preverb + Verb Compounds in the 
Rg Veda: 
Constructions, Idiosyncrasy, and Semantic Change

Several recent projects have examined particle verbs in Indo-
European corpora using a construction-based framework: the series 
on local particles in the Rg Veda by Hettrich, Schneider, and 
Casaretto (1991–ongoing) and C. Bozzone's recent dissertation on 
constructions in Homer (2014) are notable examples. Following 
these scholars, I use a construction-based approach to analyze Rg 
Veda preverb + verb constructions in which the meanings are no 
longer reducible to their constituent preverbs and verbs. I investigate 
semantic change along three axes: the axis of the verb (specifically the 
case of án + √mad, abhí + √mad, and ápi + √mad 'make someone 
else intoxicated'), the axis of the preverb (specifically the negative 
connotations and associations of párā 'forth, away'), and the axis of 
the construction type (specifically 'pseudoreversatives', in which the 
meaning of the preverb contradicts that of the verb, and the resulting 
compound verb is in some way the 'opposite' or the reversal of the 
simplex verb: ápa 'away, forth, off' + √vyā 'cover, envelop' = 
'uncover'). I will argue that this construction-based approach clarifies 
previously opaque complex verbs, refines the meanings of others, 
and reveals connections to cognate constructions in other Indo-
European languages.