Vedic -tí- Abstracts: History and Prehistory

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Within the oldest layer of Old Indic texts, the Rig-veda (RV), most deverbative *-tí*-stem abstract nouns are accented on the suffix *-tí-* such as *matí-* f. 'thinking, thought' (root *man*) or *bhṛtí-* 'bearing, present, offering' (root *bhar/bhṛ*). Beside this majority, there are found a few nouns with leftmost accent (e.g. later Vedic *bhṛ́tiḥ*), which occur with increasing frequency in later Vedic texts, and whose significance is disputed. According to the currently dominant thinking on the prehistory of this suffix, the alternation of RV oxytones like *matíḥ* vs. later Vedic barytones like *mátiḥ* would suggest an erstwhile alternation of accent within a paradigm, crucially with accompanying ablaut alternations, viz. strong cases **mén-ti-* / weak cases **mn̥-téi̯-*. To get our attested distribution, there would be subsequent bidirectional, analogical levelings on an item-by-item basis (i.e. some nouns in some texts would reflect the accent of the strong cases, some the weak) and ablaut leveled everywhere. Representatives of this approach include e.g. Rix (1992:146), see recently Kim (2013:§3.5) (helpful overview of the question in Vine 2004). Against this approach, I will argue that we need to sort more finely the textual layers of Old Indic, from which a different picture emerges: we are dealing only with a diachronic change, from oxytone to barytone, as witnessed within the history of our texts (as noted already by Debrunner *AiGr*.2.2:631-632; similar conclusions are drawn by Martin Kümmel 2014).

By going through every case of barytone accented *-ti-* in the RV, as well as every case of fluctuation across Vedic texts, we will establish that the oxytones belong clearly to the oldest textual layers, the barytones creep in to the younger. From our reevaluation of the evidence, new questions in turn arise: Why do a few nouns remain oxytone into the later Vedic texts? And how should we understand the relative roles of phonology and the lexicon in these cases of lexical exceptions? Finally, how do we implement the diachronic change from lexically accented suffix *-tí-* to unaccented *-ti-*? The kinds and degrees of interaction between the lexicon and the grammar (in particular the phonology) in determining the labor of morphophonology has proven a major locus of research in diachronic linguistics (Bermúdez-Otero 2012), and we will explore how recent studies may throw new light on the problem of Vedic *-ti-/-tí-* stems, in line with recent assessments of the complex interaction of accent and ablaut in the proto-language (Ringe 2006:22, Weiss 2011:107-8).

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