Disentangling the Vedic left periphery

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The Vedic Initial String/Left Periphery

• What is it?

• What patterns does it show?

• How should we analyse it?

• What are the consequences?
What is the Initial String/Left Periphery?

- As has long been observed, part of the Vedic sentence that exhibits the highest degree of syntactic regularity is the beginning, traditionally referred to as the “initial string”. (Exx. 1-3 from Lowe 2014: 6)

1. \textit{dyaúś ca tvā prthivī yajñiyāso nī hōtāram sādayante dāmāya}
   \textit{Heaven and you Earth praiseworthy down priest set for-house}
   “And Heaven and Earth, [and] the praiseworthy Gods set you as the house’s priest” (3.6.3)

2. \textit{utā vā yó no marcāyād ánāgaso ‘rāti vā máṛtaḥ sānukó vṛkaḥ}
   \textit{and or which, us, harm.SUBJ innocent, evil or mortal, eager wolf}
   “Or the evil mortal or eager wolf who would harm us, innocent as we are...” (2.23.7)

3. \textit{divyā āpo abhī yad enam āyan dītim nā śūškam sarasī śāyānam}
   \textit{Heavenly waters upon when him, came leather like dry pool.LOC lying}
   “When the heavenly waters poured down on him as he lay in the pool like dry leather...” (7.103.2)

4. \textit{prā vaḥ sā dhītāye naṣat}
   \textit{forth you it thought reach.INJ}
   “May it reach you for insight” (1.41.5)
### What is the Initial String/Left Periphery?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“NEXUS”</th>
<th>1 = Ī</th>
<th>2 = P</th>
<th>3 = ĩ/ī</th>
<th>4 = Ė</th>
<th>5 = Ī</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>dyaúś</td>
<td>ca</td>
<td>tvā</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>utá</td>
<td>vā</td>
<td>yö</td>
<td>no</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>divyā āpo</td>
<td>abhī yād</td>
<td>enam</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>prá</td>
<td></td>
<td>vaḥ</td>
<td>sā</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

ī = accented anything, P = clitic particle, ĩ = accented particle,
Ē = enclitic pronoun, Ī = stressed pronominal or preverb

à la Hock (1996)
What is the Initial String/Left Periphery?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Conj)</th>
<th>(Conj)</th>
<th>(XP)</th>
<th>(XP)</th>
<th>(Prvb)</th>
<th>(Dem./Rel.Prons)</th>
<th>(Pcls)</th>
<th>(Prons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ca</td>
<td></td>
<td>dyaúś</td>
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<td>tvā</td>
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<td>divyá āpo abhí yád</td>
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<td>enam</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>itthādhīr abhí yó</td>
<td>dāśema kāsyā</td>
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<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td></td>
<td>mã</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sū</td>
<td>naḥ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Lowe, 2014:14)

- In Generative Grammar, this area maps onto what is called the **Left Periphery**.
What is the Initial String/Left Periphery?

What is Krishnan saying

Left Periphery

Clausal information

Inflection information (tense)

Verbal & Nominal information
What is the Initial String/Left Periphery?

*Credo che domani, QUESTO, a Gianni, gli dovremmo dire*

C Top° Foc P Top° IP
“I believe that tomorrow, THIS, to Gianni, we should say”

*Credo che a Gianni, QUESTO, domani, gli dovremmo dire*

C Top° Foc P Top° IP
“I believe that to Gianni, THIS, tomorrow, we should say”

(Rizzi, 1997: 295-7)
What is the Initial String/Left Periphery?

• Implicit in all modern analyses of Vedic Sanskrit* is the equivalence of the initial string with the Left Periphery, to some extent. My own analysis builds on this equivalence.

• Some authors (e.g. Hale, 1996; Krisch, 2017) have hinted at a split-CP analysis – to my knowledge the initial string hasn’t been analysed in Rizzian cartography.

• As we shall see, I think it could explain a lot!

*bar perhaps Hock (1996)
What about clitics?

• That is the question!

• A key feature of the Vedic initial string are clitics that move to “Wackernagel Position”, sometimes referred to as “second position”

• Not unitary phenomena
  
  • WL1: Pronoun clitics (naḥ, vah, me, te etc.)
  
  • WL2: Clausal clitics (ca, vā, u etc.)

• Confusingly, WL2 occur earlier than WL1, cf. dyaúś ca_{WL2} tvā_{WL1} (Keydana 2011; Lühr & Zeilfelder 2011)
What about clitics?

- What characterises a clitic?
  
  “[C]litic ... is an umbrella term, not a genuine category in grammatical theory. Umbrella terms are names for “problems”, for phenomena that present “mixed” properties of some kind, not names for theoretical constructs.”
  (Zwicky, 1994: xiii, emphasis mine)

- Some characteristics of clitics:
  
  - Prosodically “deficient”, e.g. lacking a lexical accent
  - Restricted distribution, e.g. not allowed to occur sentence-initially (enclitics) or -finally (proclitics)

- Exceptions exist, but the interaction between these variables presents a conundrum: are clitic phenomena primarily phonological in nature, or syntactic?
What is the locus of the distributional constraints on clitics?
Clitic phenomena are phonological: Hock 1989-1996

- The initial string consists of a phonological template

```
“NEXUS”
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{1} & \text{2} & \text{3} & \text{4} & \text{5} \\
\hat{D} & (P) & \hat{P} & (E) & (\hat{D}) \\
\hat{X} &  &  &  & \\
\end{array}
\]
```

\(\hat{X}\) = accented anything, \(P\) = clitic particle, \(\hat{P}\) = accented particle, \(E\) = enclitic pronoun, \(\hat{D}\) = stressed pronominal or preverb

- All positions are optional, and all positions can “stack” except 1
- If all positions are all filled (rare) we get an alternation between accented and unaccented elements
- Syntax has no involvement – the template is enforced (?) at PF
Clitic phenomena are phonological: Hock 1989-1996

- Issues
  - Overgeneration: Preverbs never precede interrogative pronouns (Lowe 2014)
  - Phonology is moving clitics and non-clitics alike: what is the motivation for this claim? (Keydana 2011)
  - Unique?
Clitic phenomena are phonological: Keydana 2011

- Critical of Hock, but still believes Vedic clisis is 100% phonological
- The **accented** elements of the initial string fit into this syntactic template (2011: 112):

```
Hock 1  (Ñ)  -->  DfP
                Spec  Df'
                  Df'  CP
                  Df'  C'
                  C'  IP
```

Df = Discourse Function
Clitic phenomena are phonological: Keydana 2011

- Hypothesis:
  - WL2 follows first phonological word ($\omega$)
  - WL1 follows first phonological phrase ($\phi$)

- What constitutes a $\phi$ in Vedic? Keydana suggests we should follow Nespor & Vogel (2007:168, emphasis mine):
  "The domain of $\phi$ consists of a $\text{C[litic Group]}$* which contains a lexical head ($X$) and all Cs on its non-recursive side up to the C that contains another head outside of the maximal projection of $X$.”

- In this case, Keydana argues, the domain of the first $\phi$ of the Vedic sentence consists of the “lexical” head $C^0$, and everything to its left.

*a disputed phonological category intermediate between $\omega$ and $\phi$, consistently maximally of $\omega$ + clitics. Confusingly, however, a Clitic Group need not exhibit any clitics, in which case it overlaps wholly with $\omega$. 
Clitic phenomena are phonological: Keydana 2011
• Issues
  • This definition of $\phi$ does not, in fact, fit with Nespor & Vogel (2007: 168)
    “The intended interpretation of [this definition] is that in which only V, N, and A are considered lexical heads”
  
  • Even if we were to accept it, note that it is directly analogous to a syntactic definition
    “The null hypothesis [is] that clitic placement is a PF phenomenon” (Keydana 2011: 122)
  
  • Keydana essentially hypothesises that $\text{WL1 move to C}^0$. And he is not the first to do so...
Clitic phenomena are (primarily) syntactic: Hale 1987-2007

• Hale (1987) was the first to treat Vedic clitic phenomena within a Generative framework (then Transformational grammar). Updated & adapted in Hale (1996, 2007).

• Hypothesis:
  • WL2 are generated sentence initially and move to second position by Prosodic Inversion (PI) (Halpern 1995).
  • WL1 are generated within IP and move to $C^0$. Also subject to PI.
  • Hock’s position 5 is a FocP generated under CP (Hale 1996 only)
Clitic phenomena are (primarily) syntactic: Hale 1987-2007

(Hale, 1996: 177, adapted à la Hale 2007)
• Issues

  • FocP under CP was “provisionally” named and not returned to in Hale (2007). So far the only attempt to account for Hock 5.

  • Prosodic inversion à la Halpern (1995) not universally accepted as a possibility, but other options (e.g. Lowe, 2011, 2015) are available to prevent clitics from appearing sentence initially at PF.

  • Still no disambiguation between “wh-words”, demonstratives & preverbs.
More clitics than are dreamt of in your philosophy – Lowe 2014

• Still a primarily **syntactic** account of Vedic clisis

• Observation of the following patterns:
  - Relative pronoun *yád* has a different distribution from interrogative pronoun *kím* (e.g. the latter never follows a preverb in the initial string) → “wh-words” unhelpful category
  - *yád* patterns more closely with demonstrative pronoun *tád*

• Hypothesis:
  - *tád* is **optionally** enclitic (witness sandhi phenomena) → *yád* is **optionally** enclitic
    - Important: c. 70% of tokens are clause-initial, so non-clitic
    - Preverbs are optionally **proclitic**
More clitics than are dreamt of in your philosophy – Lowe 2014

• *tad* as enclitic
  • Undergoes **internal sandhi** (i.e. retroflexion) when appearing “late” in the initial string, suggesting it forms a ω with its neighbour (examples from Lowe 2014: 21-23)

(5) pári ṣyá suvānó akṣā īndur āvye mádacyutah
around that pressed_i flows drop_i in_sheep’s_wool moving_ecstatically
“That drop having been pressed flows through the sheep’s wool, moved in ecstasy”

(9.98.3)

(6) agnīṣ ū́ víśvā bhūvāni veda
Agni **those** all worlds knows
“Agnis knows all those worlds” (3.55.10)

• Occurs 12 times with “unambiguously prosodically independent word”
• 12 counter examples (10 if we discount disyllabic forms tāsmād, tābhir)
  • Lowe explains these as simply non-clitic occurrences of *tad*
• *yad* as enclitic
  • No sandhi diagnostics as <y> is always maintained
  • But positionally, *yád* is equivalent to *tád* because both can be preceded by preverbs, while *kím* cannot, e.g.

  (5) pári  ślā́yā  suvānṓ  akṣā́  índur  ávye  mādacyutaḥ
  *around that pressed* drops *drop* in _sheep’s wool_ moving _ecstatically_
  “That drop having been pressed flows through the sheep’s wool, moved in ecstasy”

  (8) rātāhavyaḥ  prā́ti  yāḥ  śāsam  īnvati
  *receiving-oblation in-return who.REL teaching advances*
  “…who, receiving the oblation, advances the teaching in return.” (1.54.7)

  (9) kō  dámpatī́  sāmanasá  ví  yūyod
  *who.INT married-couple shared-mind asunder separates.SUBJ*
  “Who would split up a married couple with a singular mind?” (10.95.12)
More clitics than are dreamt of in your philosophy – Lowe 2014

- Syntactic implications:
  - TopP maintained as in Hale (1996)
  - WL2 dealt with in PF (Lowe 2011, 2015)
  - Interrogatives in [Spec, CP] (sometimes relative pronouns)
  - WL1 in $C^0$
  - Some relative pronouns, demonstrative pronouns and preverbs in $C^0$, forming a clitic cluster with WL1.

(Lowe, 2014: 177)
• Issues
  • Internal sandhi ≠ (syntactic) clisis
    • Sandhi phenomena in RV are messy, but the kind of retroflexion monosyllabic forms of \( t\dot{a}d \) undergoes are found with verbs such as \( sth\ddot{a} \) and \( stu \), without correlating with movement to \( C^0 \)
  • \( y\dot{a}d \) does show some differences in distributions vs. \( t\dot{a}d \), such as regularly appearing before \( WL1 \), while \( t\dot{a}d \) in correlative clauses can appear after \( WL1 \):
    \[
    (10)\text{vīśvam sō agne jayati tvāyā, dhānam yās te dadāśa mártyah}\\
    \text{everything he, O-Agni wins with-you, wealth who, to-you has-given mortal,}\\
    \text{“He wins everything with you, O Agni, the mortal who has bestowed wealth upon you.” (1.36.4)}
    \]
    \[
    (11)\text{yō mártyah śīśite āti aktūbhīr, mā naḥ sā ripūr īśata}\\
    \text{which, mortal, sharpens through nights, NEG us this rogue rule.INJ}\\
    \text{“The mortal who sharpens [his weapons] through the night, let not this [man,] rogue [that he is,] rule over us.” (1.36.16)}
    \]
  • Later Sanskrit preverbs \( \rightarrow \) prefixes, but \( yad/tad \) \( \rightarrow \) full lexical words (to this day!), usually sentence-initial.
    • Is this expected?
The Disentanglement - Proposal


- The real troublemaker is the **relative pronoun**

- What happens next?
  - Confounding of movement $\rightarrow$ FocP vs. TopP
  - Simplification of initial string
The Disentanglement - Questions

- The test: a sentence containing...
  1. A topicalised XP
  2. A relative pronoun
  3. A preverb
  4. WL1
  ...?

- What motivates the Foc⁰ clitic cluster?

- Where did yad (*yo-) originate?
Consequences

• The relative pronoun in Vedic Sanskrit seems to find itself at a crossroads
  • It seems to have a distribution overlapping interrogatives and demonstratives
  • It is certainly (re)analysable as a clitic in many situations (?cf. Old Irish, Watkins 1963)

• What could this tell us about the situation in PIE?
  • The LP seems to “collapse” across the IE languages, usually allowing maximally one “topicalised”
    element – rare whenever there is “wh-movement”
  • Could this “collapse” be linked to the shift from correlative → “plain” relative clauses in other
    language families?


