

## Relativization and Word Order in Old Irish and Vedic Sanskrit

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Relativization in Old Irish is a complex process. Anyone who has read the relevant sections in Thurneysen's *Grammar of Old Irish* will recollect the intricacy of the conditions for the use of nasalizing and leniting relative clauses, the special forms of the pronouns infixed in relative verbs, and the lack of complete relative paradigms of verbs. In all, there are six different ways of forming relative constructions in Old Irish, comprising the special relative forms in the 3-singular and the 1- and 3-plural of simplex verbs, the lenition of the root-initial segment in compound verbs, the non-marking of relative forms when the relativized item is a prepositional phrase, the special relative negatives, the prenasalization of a simplex verb, and a special infixed particle used after certain preverbs. Typical examples of these six Old Irish relative constructions are given in 1-8:

1. is óinfe **gaibes** buáid diib inna chomalnad (Wb. 11a4)  
'it is one man of them **that gets** victory for completing it'
2. **téte** 'who comes', **bertae** 'who bear, whom they bear'
3. is dia **ro-fitir** for serc-si lim-sa (Wb. 23a27)  
'it is God **that knoweth** my love for you'
4. tol cholno **for-CHANAT** (Wb. 20c20)  
'(it is) the will of the flesh **that they teach**'
5. ni duit-siu is mug is do día (Wb. 6bl4)  
'it is not unto thee he is a servant, it is unto God'
6. fri nech **na-deni** olc friut (Ml. 23c20) vs. ní-deni neuter (Sg. 63a17)  
'to one **who does not do** evil to thee' 'it does not make a neuter'
7. in tain **m-bís** (Wb. 17b3)  
'the time **in which he is**'

8. arin-d'epur (Thurneysen §492)  
'for **which** I say it'

Examples 1 and 2 show special 3-sg. and 3-pl. relative verb forms, found only with simplex verbs, and only when the relative is the subject. Example 3 contains the compound *ro-filir*; in itself, this form is ambiguous, and can be either relative or non-relative. Example 4 shows lenition of the root-initial stop of a compound verb. In example 5 the relativized item is a prepositional phrase, thus the verb has no special form and the structure is not marked as relativized. Example 6 exhibits the special negative used in relative forms. Example 7 shows a maximally short prenasalized relative clause. Example 8 contains the special form of the relative particle used after *ar*. The exact history of the relativizing particles (nasalizing and leniting) is not clear in all respects, nor is that of the relative verb endings. The latter clearly contain reflexes of a suffixed *\*-yo* (excepting of course the 3-sg. *-s* which must be an innovation replacing this *\*-yo*); as is shown by the Gaulish 3-pl. forms *dugiiontiio* 'who serve' and *toncsiiontiio* 'who swear' (presented in ex. 9), which manifestly contain *-yo* suffixed to otherwise complete verb forms, as well as by the development of the vowels in the endings of the 1-pl. and 3pl. forms (*-e < \*-yo*).

9. *dugiiontiio* (Alise-Sainte-Reine) 'who serve'; *toncsiiontiio*  
(Chamalières) 'who swear'

The lenited compound verbs are plausibly explained by positing an infixed relative *\*-yo* between the preverb and the verb. In the case of both simplex and compound verbs the inherited relative form occupies second position in the clause (see Watkins 1963: 24-29). The (pre-)nasalizing relative clauses use a particle (*s*) *an*, formally identical to the neuter singular of the article, which is the specifically Irish replacement of IE *\*tód*, the neuter anaphoric. Thus, as Calvert Watkins has shown in his "Preliminaries to a historical and comparative analysis of the syntax of the Old Irish verb" (1963), 'the great apparent formal diversity' of the Old Irish relative formation may be reduced to two basic types, one built on the postposed relative *\*-yo*, the other built on a demonstrative/anaphoric stem. This use of two different relative forms, one an inherited relative, and the other based on an anaphoric/demonstrative stem, is directly

comparable to the Homeric (and Ionic) Greek use of *hós* alongside *ho* as relatives. Although Watkins has succeeded in clarifying a number of the formal issues involved here, several questions remain open: Why was the relative form restricted to clause-second position? Why is the invariant *-yo* restricted to nominative and accusative functions? Why does Insular Celtic have reflexes of an uninflected postpositive *\*-yo*, while Celtiberian shows a potentially clause-initial inflected *ioś*, *iom* directly comparable to the Greek and Vedic Sanskrit use of *hós* and *yás* respectively? Although I cannot answer the last of these questions, I believe that I can offer partial solutions, or at least parallels, to the other two.

Watkins (1963: 29ff.3 has called attention to the formal parallels offered by relative constructions in Vedic Sanskrit to the Old Irish constructions containing reflexes of *\*-yo*. I would like to discuss some of these in more detail after giving a quick survey of relative constructions in Vedic Sanskrit in examples 10-16:

10. sóma **yás** te mayobhúva, ūtáyaḥ sánti dāsúṣe |  
soma which your delightful aids are for worshipper  
tábhīr no 'vitá bhava || (RV 1.91.9)  
with those our helper be  
'Soma, which delightful means of helping the worshipper are  
yours, with these be our helper'
11. **yás** túbhyam dāsād ... ,tāsmāi cikītvān rayīm dayasva ||  
who you would worship to him understanding wealth apportion  
'who(ever) worships you ... apportion wealth to him, you the  
understanding one' (RV 1.68.6)
12. apó devīr úpa hvaye, **yātra** gávaḥ pibānti nah. | (RV 1.23.18)  
waters gods prev. I invoke where cows drink our  
'I invoke the divine waters, in which our cows drink'
13. séd ugró astu ..., **yām** mártiyam ávātha | (RV 7.40.3)  
ptc.-ptc. strong let be which mortal you help  
'may that one be strong ... which mortal you help'

14. *prā vām avocam aśvinā dhiyaṃdhā, rāthaḥ svāsvo*  
 prev. your I praised Aśvins piously chariot well-horsed  
*ajāro yó āsti |* (RV 4.45.7)  
 ageless which is  
 'I have praised with pious intent your chariot which is ageless  
 (and) well-horsed, O Aśvins'
15. *yād agne divijā āsy, apsujā vā sahaskṛta |*  
 if Agni heaven-born are water-born or strength-produced  
*tāmm tvā gīrbhīr havāmahe ||* (RV 8.43.28)  
 that you with praises we invoke  
 'whether you are heaven-born, O Agni, or water-born, O  
 strength-produced one, we invoke you as that with praises'
16. *apām bīlam āpihitam yād āsīd,*  
 of waters opening covered since was  
*vṛtrām jaghanvām āpa tād vavāra ||* (RV 1.32.11)  
 Vṛtra slaying prev. that he opened  
 'since the opening of the waters was covered, slaying Vṛtra he  
 opened that'

In Vedic Sanskrit, the relativizer is essentially an adjective, as is shown by example 10: *yās* modifies *mayobhūvas*. The relative structure is properly correlative, with clearly delimited relative and main clauses; typically there is a resumptive pronoun in the resumptive clause, here *tābhir*. None of the restrictions on relativization established by Keenan and Comrie 1976 holds (see further Keenan 1985 on correlative constructions). In this type of construction, the function of the relativizer is to topicalize the noun it accompanies. Thus it is essentially cataphoric or annunciatory. If the relativizer is used by itself, then it can be pronominalized, as in ex. 11. Because the relative clause (RC) and the resumptive or main clause (MC) are each grammatically self-contained, they may occur in either order: RC-MC, MCRC; the latter order is seen in examples 12-13. The distribution of preposed and postposed relative clauses in Vedic Sanskrit is approximately equal, with a slight preponderance of postposed relative clauses (Avery 1881), though originally the relative clauses may have been more uniformly preposed, as in Hittite, although the latter use a different relative marker, cf. Haudry 1979 and Hettrich 1987 for discussion of the Vedic facts, and Held 1957 for the Hittite. A shift in the order of RC and MC entails a shift in the function of the relative and anaphoric elements: the anaphoric element

becomes annunciatory, while the relative element serves to add information about the coreferential noun (Holland and Ickler 1978). In both Vedic and Classical Sanskrit the usual position of the relative *yá-* (and of the conjunctions derived from it) is at the beginning of the clause in which it appears. In the Rigveda, however, the position of the relative is freer than in the later language. Some of this apparent freedom is due to the fact that the relativizer is an adjective and hence tends to accompany its noun. Another factor that plays a role here is the use of word order to mark definiteness: indefinite simplex relative forms tend to precede their nouns if these are in clause-initial position, while definite relative forms follow their clause-initial nouns (see Holland 1991). Some of the variability in placement of relative forms is illustrated in examples 14-16. In example 14 the relative adjective occurs after a sequence of adjectives. In example 15 the relative conjunction is indefinite, hence clause-initial in a preposed relative clause. In example 16 the relative conjunction is definite, hence postposed in a preposed relative clause.

The principal syntactic difference between reconstructed Indo-European (or Vedic Sanskrit for that matter) and Old Irish is the uniform verb-initial (or near-initial) word order of the latter. Indo-European itself and Vedic Sanskrit had a basic verb-final order which could be altered for specific pragmatic or textual reasons. The form of this alteration of the basic word order consisted in placing the most important word at the beginning of the clause, or as close to the beginning as possible if the clause opened with obligatorily clause-initial connectives. If the verb were the most important element in the clause, it, too, could be placed in initial (or near-initial) position. Thus, for simplex verbs, Old Irish appears to have generalized an old marked word-order pattern. In the case of compound verbs, matters are more difficult. Here I would like to turn to a survey of verb-fronting in Vedic Sanskrit, as illustrated by examples 17-27:

17. hváyāmi agním prathamām svastāye, hváyāmi mitrávaruṇāv  
ihāvase |

I invoke Agni first for well-being I invoke Mitra-Varuṇa here-for  
help

'I invoke Agni first for well-being, I invoke Mitra (and)  
Varuṇa here for help' (RV 1.35.1)

18. abhy āṛṣanti babhrávaḥ | (RV9.63.6)  
prev. flow brown  
'the brown ones flow along'
19. dáśad yó asmā áram sūktaiḥ | (RV 1.70.5)  
worship who him fittingly with verses  
'who worships him fittingly with verses'
20. yád udfrata ājāyaḥ (RV1.81.3)  
when prev.-rise competitions  
'when(ever) competitions arise'
21. yá ānayat parāvataḥ, sūnītī turváśam yádum | (RV6.45.1)  
who prev.-led from afar by good-leading Turvaśa Yādu  
'who led Turvaśa (and) Yādu here through good-leading'
22. yéna-atiyāthó duritāni vísvā || (RV 5.77.3)  
by which-prev.-you overcome difficulties all  
'by which you overcome all difficulties'
23. prá tán agnīr babhasat tigmājambhas, tápiṣṭhena śociśā yāḥ  
surādhāḥ |  
prev. those Agni devour sharp-jawed with flame glowing who  
good-gifted  
prá yé minānti váruṇasya dhāma, priyā mitráśya cétato dhruvāni ||  
prev. who infringe Varuṇa's laws dear Mitra's attentive solid  
'may sharp-jawed Agni who has good gifts devour with  
glowing flame those / who infringe Varuṇa's laws, the dear  
solid (laws) of Mitra the attentive (god)' (RV 4.5.4)
24. ví yó mamé yamyá samyatf mádaḥ,  
prev. which measured twin merging intoxication  
sākaṃvṛdhā páyasā pinvad ákṣitā | (RV 9.68.3)  
grown-together with milk makes swell imperishable  
'which intoxication measured out the merging twin (sisters)  
makes them, grown at the same time, swell with imperishable  
milk'
25. á yám prṇānti háribhir ná dhenáva,  
prev. whom they fill with yellow-gold like cows  
indrāya śūśām hárivantam arcata || (RV 10.96.2)  
to Indra strengthening song possessing yellow-gold sing  
'whom they are filling with yellow-gold (drops) like cows, sing  
to Indra a strengthening song, accompanied by yellow-gold  
(Soma)' or: 'containing (the word) hari'

26. *prá yábhīr yāsi dāśvāmsam áchā* (RV 7.92.3)  
 prev. which you go worshipper to  
 'by means of which you go forth to the worshipper'
27. *á yásmīn tasthaú surāṇāni bíbhṛatī sácā marútsu rodasī* (RV 5.56.8)  
 prev. which stands joys bringing with Maruts Rodasī  
 'on which Rodasī bringing joys stands with the Maruts'

Example 17 shows two instances of clause-initial verbs. Example 18 shows a fronted compound verb. Here the preverb forms a kind of boundary for verb fronting. There were two possible positions for preverbs in Indo-European and in Vedic Sanskrit: either clause-initial or immediately before a clause-final finite verb. When the preverb is clause-initial the finite verb is usually in final position, but may be fronted as in this example. In example 19, a clause-initial finite verb is followed immediately by a relative form; as Watkins points out, this collocation is comparable to the simplex relative verb forms of Old Irish. Example 20 shows a clause-initial indefinite relative conjunction followed immediately by a compound verb, while example 21 shows a clause-initial indefinite specific relative pronoun followed immediately by a compound verb. (We find out in the next line/clause that the one who led Turvaśa and Yadu is Indra.) In example 22 a definite relative form (in a postposed relative clause) is followed immediately by a fronted compound verb. The relative clause in example 23 clearly contains a definite relative form (in a postposed clause). Here the relative form is placed after the preverb, but with the finite verb immediately following. Watkins characterizes this example as showing "tmesis" of preverb and verb, and goes on to state that the verb 'is in such cases usually toward the end of its clause' (p. 29). It appears, however, that in a substantial number of cases the relative is inserted between the preverb and the immediately following finite verb. The remaining examples illustrate this word order pattern. Example 24 is particularly interesting in that it shows that a relative adjective can be separated from its noun (here *mādaḥ* 'intoxication') and incorporated into the preverb-finite verb sequence. The relative forms in examples 23 and 24 are nominative, while that in 25 is accusative. Finally, examples 26 and 27 show an instrumental and a locative, respectively.