ALFRED BAMMESBERGER

THE OPTATIVE OF THE SANSKRIT ROOT AORIST GAM-

[Skt. gam-yā- and gam-ā- can both be interpreted as ultimately reflecting the optative paradigm IE *ǧw̄m-yē-/ǧw̄m-ī-. But the weak alternant underwent considerable analogical reworking. There is no basis for assuming IE *ǧw̄m-oi-, let alone *ǧw̄m-ā-.]

(1) Beside (2, 3 sg.) gamyās, which is clearly shown by -yā- to belong to the class of athematic optatives, the Sanskrit root aorist gam- apparently also presents a thematic optative in (1 sg.) gameyam and (1 pl.) gamēma. The distribution of the two stems gamyā- and game- in Vedic has been dealt with by Insler, 1975: 8. At first sight these forms seem to require IE *ǧw̄m-yē-1 and *ǧw̄m-ōi-2 as starting points. Watkins 1969: 226 felt justified in adding yet a further item to the list of optatives built on the root *ǧw̄m-. On the basis of OLat. ad-venat he postulated a third optative in the shape *ǧw̄m-ā-. It will be our immediate task to examine whether the reconstruction of *ǧw̄m-yē-, *ǧw̄m-ā-, and *ǧw̄m-ōi- (Watkins, 1969: 226) as competing optative forms for the root *ǧw̄m- is valid.

(2.1) OLat. -venat must certainly be viewed in the context of the Italo-Celtic ā-subjunctive. Since Italic and Celtic merged subjunctive and optative into one category, it is impossible to know whether the modal suffix ā- originally belonged to the optative or the subjunctive system.

(2.2) Because of the productivity of the modal formation in ā-, OLat. -venā may have arisen at any time in early Italic. No matter what the ultimate origin of the Italic and Celtic subjunctive in ā-is, it would be extremely hazardous to postulate an Indo-European optative of the shape *ǧw̄m-ā- merely on the basis of OLat. -venā-. Under the circumstances, the reconstruction of IE *ǧw̄m-ā- must be rejected.4

(3) But the duality of Sanskrit gamyā- and gamē- does present a serious problem. In order to ascertain which of these forms is secondary and how it may have arisen we must take into account both the formation pattern of the optative in general and the actually attested forms of the optative paradigm of *ǧw̄m- in particular.

(4.1) For IE *g\textit{w}em- an athematic root aorist is unambiguously indicated by Skt.
(2, 3 sg.) agan < *g\textit{w}em-s, *g\textit{w}em-t, (3 pl.) agman < *g\textit{w}em-ment. (1 sg.) agamam can
therefore he safely projected back to *g\textit{w}em-m.\textsuperscript{5} Since athematic root aorists are
not normally the result of innovations, it is permitted to assume that the Sanskrit
paradigm was directly inherited from Indo-European.

(4.2) For an athematic root aorist the optative is expected to be formed by means
of the suffix *-\textit{y}e/-\textit{t}. Therefore \textit{gamyd-} as the strong alternant would seem to be
correctly shaped (7.).

(5.1) Morphologically the athematic optative regularly exhibits the zero grade of
the root preceding the mood maker (e.g. Skt. s-\textit{y}d-, root as- ‘be’). Therefore the
shape *g\textit{w}(e)m-\textit{y}e\textsuperscript{6} posited by Watkins (1.), which implies the possibility of the
root appearing in e-grade, would require a special justification.

(5.2) Fortunately the zero grade of the root *g\textit{w}em-, which is to be expected
for the athematic optative on theoretical grounds, is directly evidenced in one
Indo-European language where one would hardly expect to find a trace of it. Old
English \textit{cyme} ‘he come’, the securely attested optative of \textit{cuman} ‘come’, reflects a
Germanic preform *kum-\textit{t},\textsuperscript{6} whose root shape must continue the zero grade of
*g\textit{w}em-. It is debatable whether the immediate starting-point for Gmc. *kum-
should be set up as *g\textit{w}m- > Gmc. *kwum- > *kum- or *g\textit{w}m- > Gmc. *kw\textit{m}-
> *kum-, but both reconstructions clearly contain the zero grade of the root
*g\textit{w}em-.\textsuperscript{7}

(6.1) Since there is no way of explaining *kum-\textit{t} as due to an innovation, this
Germanic form provides reliable evidence for setting up the basic optative paradigm
as *g\textit{w}m-\textit{y}e/-\textit{t}. The paradigm *g\textit{w}m-\textit{y}e/-\textit{t} is fully in accord with the morphologic
rules of the athematic optative. It can therefore be safely postulated for the proto-
language. We may take it as our starting point in the endeavor to explain the
Sanskrit forms.

(6.2) The marker for the athematic optative alternated between -\textit{y}e- and -\textit{t}. It is to
be expected that a root-final resonant, which in the zero grade followed the root
initial consonant, was vocalized when it preceded the strong alternant -\textit{y}e-. For the
root *g\textit{w}em- the optative would therefore be phonetically realized as *g\textit{w}m-\textit{y}e/-
g\textit{w}m-\textit{t} in Indo-European.

(7) As soon as the paradigm for the proto-language is established in the shape
*g\textit{w}m-\textit{y}e/g\textit{w}m-\textit{t} we must ask what reflexes are to be expected in Aryan. One may