

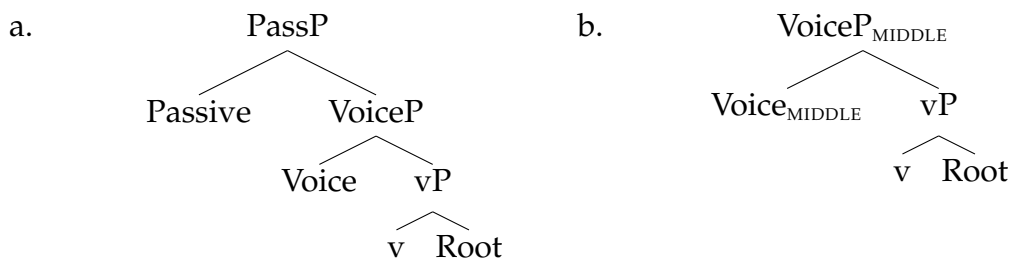
# Two types of passive? Voice morphology and “low passives” in Greek and Sanskrit

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## 1 Introduction

Fig.1 Two ways to go passive (Alexiadou et al. 2015)



Canonical contexts of non-active/“middle” morphology (“voice syncretism”, Embick 1998, 2004; cf. Kemmer 1993, Kaufmann 2007, Alexiadou and Doron 2012, Alexiadou 2013, Alexiadou et al. 2015):

- (1)
  - a. Anticausatives
  - b. Reflexives/reciprocals
  - c. Self-benefactives
  - d. Dispositional/generic constructions
  - e. **Passives (Mediopassives)**
  - Passive = one of the **canonical functions** of non-active inflection in Greek & Sanskrit → “**inflectional passive**”
  - ... but Vedic Sanskrit & Classical Greek also have a “passive” *suffix* that occurs closer to the root & co-occurs with inflectional Voice morphology → “**derivational passive**”
    - only in the present (Vedic) or aorist (Greek)
- (2) Vedic Sanskrit
  - a. *bhár-a-ti* (present act.) “carries sth.”  
 carry-IPFV-3SG.PRES.ACT
  - b. *bhár-a-te* (present non-act.) “carries (for) oneself” (NOT “\*is being carried”)  
 carry-IPFV-3SG.PRES.NACT
  - c. *bhri-yá-te* (present pass.) “is being carried”  
 carry-IPFV.PASS-3SG.PRES.NACT

- (3) Two types of passive, Vedic (A = “augment”; +past)

a. Inflectional (aorist)	b. Derivational (present)
<i>á-sto-ṣ-ta</i> A-praise-PFV-3SG.PAST.NACT “he/she was/got praised”	<i>bhri-yá-te</i> carry-IPFV.PASS-3S.PRES.NACT “he/she is/gets carried”

- (4) Classical Greek

- a. *é-lou-s-a* (aorist act.) “I washed (sth.)”  
A-wash-PFV-1SG.PAST.ACT
- b. *e-lou-sá-mēn* (aorist non-act.) “I washed myself” (NOT \*“I was washed”)  
A-wash-PFV-1SG.PAST.NACT
- c. *e-loú-thē-n* (aorist pass.) “I was washed”  
A-wash-PFV.PASS-1SG.PAST.ACT

- (5) Two types of passive, Greek

a. Inflectional (present)	b. Derivational (aorist)
<i>théin-o-mai</i> strike-IPFV-1SG.PRES.NACT “I am/get struck, hit”	<i>e-dú-thē-n</i> A-sink-PFV.PASS-1SG.PAST.ACT “I was sunk”

- Are there two different Voice heads in Vedic & Greek?
- Why is PASS restricted to a particular tense/aspect stem?
- Why does PASS co-occur with non-active morphology in Vedic but with active morphology in Greek?

## 2 Proposal

- Vedic & Greek have only *one* Voice head—Fig. 1(b)
- Their derivational passives developed independently out of stative/inchoative *v*'s via **reanalysis** → “**low PassP**”

## 3 Inflectional vs. derivational passives: Vedic

- Derivational passive takes **non-active** endings

- (6) Inflectional vs. derivational passives: Vedic

Properties	infl.	deriv.
Acc.obj. → nom.subj.	✓	✓
Demoted agent → adjunct NP, instr. case	✓	✓
Eventive	✓	✓

Inflectional: e.g., RV 1.77.5a-b:

- (7) *evá agnír gótamebhir (...)* *a-sto-ṣ-ta*  
 thus Agni.NOM Gotama.INSTR.PL A-praise-AOR-3SG.PAST.NACT  
*jātávedāḥ*  
 Jātavedas.NOM  
 “Thus has Agni, the Jātavedas, been praised by the Gotamas (...).”

Derivational: e.g., RV 9.81.12d:

- (8) *sāyudhāḥ sotṛbhiḥ pū-ya-te*  
 with.good.weapons.NOM.SG presser.INSTR.PL purify-V.PASS-3SG.PRES.NACT  
*vṛṣā*  
 bull.NOM.SG  
 “The bull of good weapons is purified by the pressers.”

#### 4 Inflectional vs. derivational passives: Greek

- Derivational passive takes **active** endings

- (9) Inflectional vs. derivational passive: (post-Homeric) Greek

Properties	infl.	deriv.
Acc.obj. → nom.subj.	✓	✓
Demoted agent → prep. + gen. case	?	?
Eventive	✓	✓

Inflectional: e.g., Homer, *Iliad* 6.56–7:

- (10) *ê soi árista pepoíē-tai katà oĩkon*  
 PTCL you.DAT best.NOM.PL do.PERF-3SG.NACT towards house.ACC  
*pròs Tróōn*  
 from/by Trojan.GEN.PL  
 “(So) were the best things done to you in your house by the Trojans?”

Derivational: e.g., Herodotus, *Histories* 1.87.1:

- (11) *eí tí hoi kekharisménon eks autoũ*  
 if anything.NOM.N him.DAT pleasing.NOM of self.GEN  
*e-dōré-thē* ...  
 A-give-V.PASS.3SG.PAST.NACT  
 “If anything pleasing had (ever) been given to him<sub>i</sub> by him<sub>j</sub> ...”

Problems:

- Greek “passive” *-(th)ē-* also found in statives/inchoatives, in Homer and up until Classical Greek
- *hupó* + gen. ‘from, under’, *apó* + gen. ‘from’, *ek* + gen. ‘out of’, *pará* + gen. ‘from’, *prós* + gen., dat. ‘from, by’, etc.

- Formally active unaccusatives can also express the agent/cause of the verbal event through with the same prepositions

→ The Greek derivational passive looks a lot more like an unaccusative/stative construction than its Vedic counterpart.

## 5 Analysis

- Spell-Out of NonAct (Alexiadou et al. 2015): **Voice** → **Voice[NonAct]/\_ No DP specifier**

- Based on Embick 1998, 2004
- (Non-)active morphology = sensitive to Voice[+/-ext.arg.]
- active morphology = “elsewhere” (also emerges when Voice is missing, e.g., in unaccusatives & statives, Kallulli 2013).

### 5.1 Greek: “pass” = v+Asp

**Proposal:** Greek *-thē-* realizes *v*+Asp (cf. Merchant 2015); is never selected by Voice

- *-(th)ē-* patterns as (anticaus./inchoative) verbal stem suffix

(12) Non-passive *thē*-aorists (a = “augment”, +past):

- e-krúph-thē-n* ‘I hid (myself)’  
A-hide-PFV-1SG.PAST.ACT
- e-phobé-thē-n* ‘I fled’  
A-flee-PFV-1SG.PAST.ACT

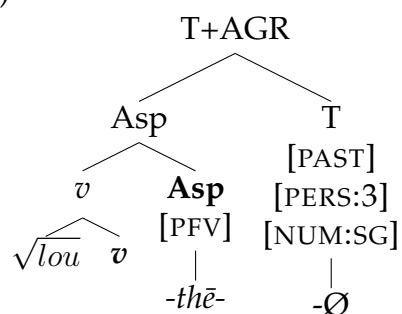
(13) *-thē-* in complementary distribution with other *v*’s:

- e-dú-thē-n* ‘I was sunk’  
A-sink-PFV.PASS-1SG.PAST.ACT
- dú-n-ō* ‘I sink (sth.)’  
sink-PRES-1SG.PRES.ACT

Fig. 2 Derivational passive, Greek

- Y e-loú-thē-Ø* (hupó X<sub>GEN</sub>)  
A-wash-PASS-3SG.PAST.ACT  
“Y was washed (by X)”

b.



- Origin of “passive” *-(th)ē-* : inchoative & stative formations

- Jasanoff 2004 proposes a (de)nominal origin (reanalyzed instrumental sg. nouns in \*-ē, cp. Ved. *guhā kṛ-/bhū-* ‘make/become hidden’, Lat. *ārē-faciō* ‘make hot’, etc.)
- No evidence that these denominal forms were ever alternating → they never had a Voice head

## 5.2 Vedic: “pass” = v

**Proposal:** Vedic *passive* -yá- realizes *v*

- never co-occurs with other stem-forming morphology
- never selects verbs with overt transitivizing morphology

(14) Vedic nasal-infix present and its passive

a. present act.	b. pres. pass.
<i>yu&lt;ná&gt;k-ti</i> ‘yokes’ yoke<IPFV>-3SG.PRES.ACT	<i>yuj-yá-te</i> ‘is being yoked’ yoke-IPFV.PASS-3SG.PRES.NACT

Vedic has two -ya- suffixes, 1. passive -yá-, 2. unaccented non-passive, intransitive -ya- (cf. Kulikov 2012)

(15) Vedic intransitive (non-passive) -ya-:

- active:** *kṣúdh-ya-ti* ‘becomes hungry’, *gṛdh-ya-ti* ‘becomes greedy’, *júr-ya-ti* ‘grows old, ages’
- non-act.:** *pád-ya-te* ‘falls’, *búdh-ya-te* ‘is awake’

(16) Intransitive vs. passive -ya-: minimal pair

a. intransitive -ya-	b. passive -ya-
<i>kṣī-ya-te</i> ‘perishes’ perish-IPFV-3SG.PRES.NACT	<i>kṣī-yá-te</i> ‘is destroyed’ perish-IPFV.PASS-3SG.PRES.NACT

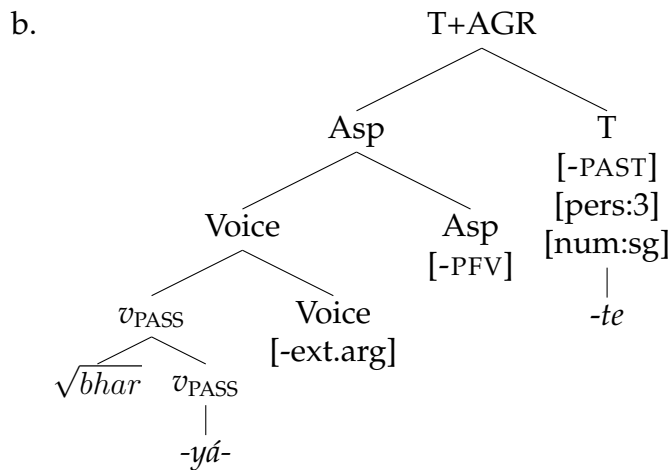
**Proposal: Diachronic reanalysis**  $v_{\text{BECOME-ya-}} \rightarrow v_{\text{PASS-ya-}}$

- Ved. -yá- < Proto-Indo-European (PIE) \*-jé/o-, function: stative, anticausative, often denominal/deadjectival
  - PIE \*-jé/o- was compatible with act. & non-act morphology:
- (17) a. *\*spék-jé-* ‘see, watch for’ > Ved. act. *pásyati* ‘sees’, Lat. act. *speciō* ‘I see’, vs. Gk. non-act. *sképtomai* ‘look around’  
 b. *\*mr̥-jé-* ‘die’ > Ved. non-act. *mriyáte* ‘dies’, Lat. non-act. *morior* ‘die’

... which suggests that Vedic  $v_{\text{PASS}}$  is selected by Voice

Fig. 3 Derivational passive, Vedic

- Y ( $X_{\text{instr}}$ ) *bhri-yá-te*  
carry-IPFV.PASS-3SG.PRES.NACT  
‘Y is (being) carried (by X)’

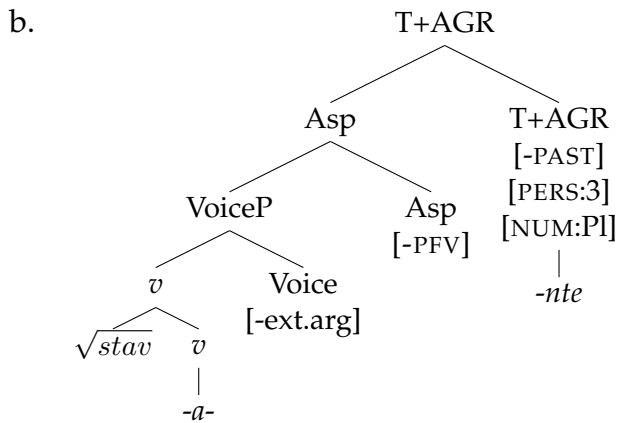


## 6 Conclusion & implications: two types of passive

- Vedic & Greek Act/NAct inflection = allomorphs of Voice<sub>(middle)</sub>
  - Non-active morphology marks the lack of an agent in Spec.VoiceP in different syntactic environments, one of which is the **passive**
  - **Inflectional passives** behave as such w.r.t. to applicable criteria in both languages (demoted agents, etc.)
- Vedic & Greek **derivational passives**:
  - A distinct verbal functional head, but unlike Alexiadou et al. 2015’s “high passive”
  - Vedic *-yá-* & Greek *-thē-* select roots, *not* transitive *v*
  - Both developed diachronically from stative/intransitive verbalizing suffixes → “**low passive**”
  - But they differ in whether or not they co-occur with the higher Voice head (Vedic: yes, Greek: no)
  - **Diachronic generalization**: eventive passives (analytic *and* synthetic!) develop from stative/inchoative constructions

## Appendix

- (18) Inflectional passive, Vedic (= Greek)
- a. Y (X<sub>INSTR</sub>) *stav-a-nte*  
       praise-IPFV-3PL.PRES.NACT  
       “Y are praised (by X)”



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