

On the PIE ‘Quasi-Serial Verb’ Construction: Origin and Development

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§1 A PIE Serial Verb Construction?

[1.1] In several ancient Indo-European languages, we find evidence for an imperatival construction in which two verbs—one a verb of motion (V_1), one semantically unrestricted (V_2)—are (i.) identically marked for person, tense, and number and (ii.) monoclausal, as confirmed by prosodic or syntactic evidence, e.g. (1) Latin, (2) Vedic, (3) Greek, (4) Classical Armenian, and (5) Hittite:

- (1) *age abduce hasce intro quas mecum adduxi, Stiche.*
‘Go take these (people) I’ve brought with me indoors, Stichus.’

(Pl. St. 418)

- (2) *idám te ánnam yújyam sámukṣitam*
tásya á ihi prá dravā píba
‘That appropriate sustenance (which has been) poured out,
come run drink of it!’

(RV VIII.4.12d)

- (3) ἄλλ’ ἴθι οἱ νέκταρ τε καὶ ἀμβροσίην ἐρατεινὴν
στᾶξον ἐνὶ στήθεσσ’, ἵνα μὴ μιν λιμὸς ἴκηται.
‘But go pour nectar and lovely ambrosia into him,
in [his] breast, so that hunger will not reach him.’

(Il. 19.347)

- (4) *ert’ c’oyc’ zanjn k’o k’ahanayin*
‘Go show yourself to the priest.’

(Lk. 5.14)

- (5) *īt=war=ašta pargamuš ḪUR.SAG^{HI.A}-ašaš šāh*
‘Go search the high mountains.’

(KUB 14.10+ 24-25)

[1.2] Vedic, Greek, and Hittite material discussed most recently by Hock (forthcoming; cf. Watkins 1975), who argues for uniting the type in (1-5) with the ‘hortative’ constructions of the type in (6-8) and a small set of Hittite asyndetic expressions, e.g. (9-10):

- (6) *ā ihī vāṃ vimuco napād*
āghṛṇe sām sacāvahai
 ‘Come, [O] child of release,
 O glowing one, **let us two accompany each other.**’

(RV VI.55.1ab)

- (7) ἄλλ’ ἔπευ Ἀλκαθόωι ἐπαμύνομεν, ὅς σε πάρος γε
 ‘But **come along, let us help** Alkathoos, who once (nursed) you. . .’

(Il. 13.465)

- (8) *uwatten*^{URU} *Nēša paiwani*
 ‘Come, **let us go** to the city of Nesa.’

(KBo 22 Vs. 15)

- (9) *nu=wa=za azzikandu akkuškandu*
 ‘Let them **eat [and] drink.**’

(KBo 3.1 Vs. II 13-14)

- (10) *nu ŪL tarḫuzzi ḫāšī*
 ‘He [was] **unable to open** (*lit.* ‘is not able–opens’) [it].’

(KUB 17.10 I 33 Vs. II)

[1.3] On this basis, Hock (forthcoming) reconstructs a Proto-Indo-European SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTION (SVC)

§2 What is a Serial Verb Construction (and What is Not)

[2.1] SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTION is typically applied to a sequence of verbs which belong to a single clause, describe a single event, and share one set of morpho-syntactic features (cf. Aikhenvald 2006:1), e.g. (11-12) from Tetun Dili (East Timor, Austronesian):

- (11) *lori hahaan bá!*
 take food go
 ‘Take the food over there!’

(cf. Hajek 2006: 241)

- (12) *abó lori tudik ko’a paun*
 grandparent take knife cut bread
 ‘Grandfather used the knife to cut the bread.’

(cf. Hajek 2006: 241)

[2.2] A problem? (6-8) do not exhibit morpho-syntactic feature agreement; unproblematic for Hock (forthcoming), since (1-10) all reflect (to varying degrees) grammaticalizations of original PIE SVC—but is this necessary?

[2.3] Evidence for monoclausal analysis non-probative for (6-9), each of which may be simple asyndeton; while (10) is certainly monoclausal, it resembles the other structures *only* in this respect (no motion verb!), and is virtually isolated in the language, thus probably better treated as a separate, Hittite-internal development

- In (6), note *hapax* accent on du. nom. *vām*, hence non-clitic; the omission of quotative particle *wa(r)* in (9) is only suggestive (likewise for KUB 24.23 II 17, Hock's best ex. of the type in (8)); Ved. *hanta* and Gk. *ἄγε*, though historically imperatives, frequently function synchronically as particles, and so cannot be reliable diagnostics of monoclausality

[2.4] But are (1-5) SVCs? Show strict grammatical agreement and monoclausality (cf. §3, below); but two objections (cf. Aikhenvald 2006:45-46):

- i. Though serialization with verbs of motion may be the most frequent type, productively verb-serializing languages rarely (if ever) have SVCs *only* with verbs of motion
- ii. SVCs occur freely in every person/tense/number/mood, while the IE constructions are morphologically restricted to the imperative

Restrictions like (i.) and (ii.) are grounds for Aikhenvald (2006:45-46) to reject an SVC analysis of 'double verb' constructions like the English *go get* construction

[2.5] If not SVCs, then what? Consider the Eng. *go get* construction, termed by Pullum (1990) the QUASI-SERIAL VERB construction (QSV); QSV consists of two monoclausal verbs, the first either *come* or *go* (and for some speakers, *run* or *hurry*), both either imperative or else a form identical to its base, i.e. the uninflected form used in the infinitive, subjunctive, and constructions with *do*/modals, or the null-inflected non-3rd s. simple present forms, e.g. (13-14):

(13) **Go tell** the Spartans, thou that passest by... (= ὦ ξείν', ἀγγέλειν Λακεδαιμονίαις)

(Hdt. 7.228, trans. W.L. Bowles)

(14) I must **go seek** some dew-drops here.

(W. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, II.1.14)

- Generally on the English QSV, see Zwicky (1969, 1990, 2012) and Pullum (1990); for a recent attempt at syntactic analysis, see now Bjorkman (2009)

[2.6] According to Zwicky (2003, 2012), this restricted distribution (as well as other properties) owe to imperational origin of QSV; original sequential imperatives were reanalyzed as single "prosodic, syntactic, and semantic units. . . the resulting construction was then extended from the imperative to other uses of the base form, and then to homophonous finite forms."

- Zwicky (2003, 2012) contends that this development accounts for the INFLECTION CONDITION—viz. the fact that any overt sign of inflection on either verb makes the construction ungrammatical for most speakers—the INTERVENTION CONDITION—viz. the inadmissibility of complements to V_1 —and a strong usage preference for face-to-face conversation, manifest in an elevated relative frequency of imperatives in textual corpora

[2.7] I will argue for a similar unitary reanalysis of imperatival constructions already in Proto-Indo-European— viz. a PIE QUASI-SERIAL VERB construction—reflected in (1-5); in §3, I will survey the Indo-European evidence for QSV; then in §4, I will discuss the genesis of QSV and attempt to motivate its further productivity in Classical Armenian and Hittite

§3 The IE Evidence for QSV

§3.1 Latin

[3.1.1] Evidence for QSV in Latin fairly limited; however, several compelling exx. in Plautus adduced by Fortson (2008), e.g. (15-16):

(15) $\text{— } \overline{\text{—}} \text{— } \overline{\text{—}} \text{— } \text{— } \text{— } \text{— } \overline{\text{—}} \text{— } \cup \text{— } \cup \times$
*Quid faciam? Cave respexis, **fuge, operi** caput*
 “‘What am I to do?’” “‘Take care not to look back. Run cover your head!’”

(Pl. *Most.* 523)

(16) $\overline{\text{—}} \text{— } \text{— } \text{— } \text{— } \text{— } \text{— } \text{— } \text{— } \text{— } \cup \times$
***age** abduce hasce intro quas mecum adduxi, Stiche*
 ‘Go take these [girls] I’ve brought with me indoors, Stichus.’

(Pl. *St.* 418)

[3.1.2] In each case, prosodic evidence confirms the monoclausality of both imperatives: in (15)—despite editor’s punctuation—the QSV occupies a position which is metrically licit only because it forms a single prosodic domain (cf. Fortson 2008: 41); similarly in (16) metrically requisite *brevis brevians* ($\check{a}g' \check{a}bd-$, not $^X\check{a}g' \bar{a}bd-$) is licensed only within a single prosodic unit (*op. cit.* 200)

- In (15), QSV patterns with a regular set of exceptions to LUCH’S LAW, which militates against an iamb in the penultimate foot; this sequence is admissible only in a polysyllabic word or a word preceded by proclitic or other prosodically deficient elements such that together they form a single prosodic domain (cf. Fortson 2008: 37-41); the initial pyrrhic ($\cup\cup$) in (16) requires IAMBIC SHORTENING (*brevis brevians*); since this process occurs primarily in unstressed iambic sequences, either within a word or a prosodic group that includes clitic or other weakly stressed elements, its application to QSV suggests analysis as single prosodic unit with stress assignment *ag-abducere* (cf. Fortson 2008: 200); Latin also attests left-dislocation of object of V_2 , if Pl. *Men.* 638 *eam ipsus i roga* adduced by Luraghi (1993) is allowed to stand, but the text is very problematic

[3.1.3] A number of similar expressions; though (17) is not metrically probative, it occurs as a fixed phrase 5x in early Latin:

- (17) *id erit adeundi tempus. nunc **agite ite** vos.*
 ‘That will be the time to proceed. Now **get going**, you [both]!’

(Pl. *Pers.* 469)

[3.1.4] However, QSV is restricted grammatically to 2nd impv. and semantically to verbs of motion; no Latin evidence for a productive SVC in other person/tense/number/mood

§3.2 Vedic

[3.2.1] Direct evidence for QSV from position of clitic and non-clitic arguments associated with non-motion verb (cf. Hock 2002, forthcoming); in (18-19), the object of the non-motion verb (V_2) precedes the motion verb (V_1); in (20-21), V_1 hosts a pronominal clitic which is an argument or belongs to an argument of V_2 :

- (18) *sumāṅgalīr iyāṃ vadhūr*
*imāṃ **samēta páśyata***
 ‘This bride is of good omen.
Together come behold her.’

(RV X.85.33ab)

- (19) *idāṃ te ánnam yújīyam sámukṣitam*
*tásya **ā ihi prá dravā píba***
 ‘That appropriate sustenance [which has been] poured out,
come run drink of it!’

(RV VIII.4.12cd)

- (20) *bhákṣa **ā ihi mā ā viśa***
 ‘O food, **come enter me.**’

(TS III.2.5.1)

- (21) ***ehi me** prāṇān ā roha*
 ‘**Come ascend to my** breaths.’

(ŚŚ II.17.1, ŚG V.1.2)

[3.2.2] As in Latin, QSV grammatically and semantically restricted to 2nd impv., V_1 = verb of motion

§3.3 Greek

[3.3.1] Hom. Gk. supports the Vedic situation; in (22), V_1 hosts pronominal clitic (oi) associated with an argument of V_2 ; continuation in Cl. Gk. guaranteed by (23), where clitic argument of V_2 hosted by V_1 ; in (24), nominal object of V_2 undergoes movement left of V_1

- (22) ἄλλ' ἴθι οἱ νέκταρ τε καὶ ἀμβροσίην ἐρατεινὴν
στάξον ἐνὶ στήθεσσι, ἵνα μή μιν λιμὸς ἴκηται.
 ‘But **go pour** nectar and lovely ambrosia into him,
 in [his] breast, so that hunger will not reach him.’

(Il. 19.347)

- (23) ἴθι μοι ἔξευρε καὶ τὰ τοῦ μάντεώς τε καὶ μαντικῆς
 ‘**Go find out** for me also those (which) are of the seer and the seer’s art . . .’

(Plat. Apol. 538e.2-3)

- (24) τὸν δὲ δὴ βελτίους ποιοῦντα **ἴθι εἶπέ** καὶ μήνυσον αὐτοῖς τίς ἐστίν.
 ‘**Go proclaim** [their] improver and reveal to them who is.’

(Plat. Apol. 24d.6-7)

[3.3.2] Per Yates (2011, forthcoming), possibility of further (very limited) extension to non-imperative modality in Hom. Gk., viz. ‘transformation’ of QSV βάσκ’ ἴθι ⇒ βῆ δ’ ἴμεν(αι); this process potentially reflected in relationship between (e.g.) (25) and (26):

- (25) “**βάσκ’ ἴθι**, Ἴρι ταχεῖα, Ποσειδάωνι ἄνακτι
 πάντα τὰδ’ ἀγγεῖλαι, μηδὲ ψευδάγγελος εἶναι.’
 ‘**Go forth**, swift Iris! To lord Poseidon
 bring word of all these things, and do not be a false messenger.’

(Il. 15.158-9)

- (26) βῆ δ’ ἴμεναι διὰ δώμαθι, ἴν’ ἀγγεῖλειε τοκεῦσι,
 πατρὶ φίλωι καὶ μητρὶ· κηχῆσατο δ’ ἔνδον ἐόντας
 ‘**She set out** through the halls to bring word to her parents,
 her dear father and mother. And she found them within.’

(Od. 6.50-1)

[3.3.3] Otherwise, same grammatical and semantic restrictions on QSV as Vedic and Latin

§3.4 Classical Armenian

[3.4.1] In addition to imperative QSV (27), Classical Armenian admits indicative SVCs, each verb identically marked for person/tense/number and in every case contiguous, e.g. (28-31); these structures found in both biblical and non-biblical literature; motion serialization—either with intrans. ‘go/come’ or trans. ‘bring/take’—is the predominant type

- (27) **ert’ c’oyc’** zanjn k’o k’ahanayin (= Gk. ἀπελθὼν δεῖξον σεαυτόν)
 ‘**Go show** yourself to the priest.’

(Lk. 5.14)

- (28) **ert’ay vačarē** zamenayn inč’ zor owni (= Gk. ἀπελθὼν πέπρακε)
 ‘He **went–sold** everything which he owned’

(Mt. 13.44)

- (29) *aṙin gnac'in zna* (= Gk. ἀπήγαγον αὐτόν)
 ‘They **took–went** him’

(Mt. 13.44)

- (30) *aṙnow acē zna satanay i leārn mi barjr yoyž* (= Gk. παραλαμβάνει αὐτόν)
 ‘Satan **took–led** him onto a very high mountain.’

(Mt. 4.8)

- (31) *zglowxn Sanēsanay meci t'agaworin ekin berin aṙajī ark'ayin Hayoc'*
 ‘The head of Sanesan, the great king **they went–brought** before the king of the Armenians.’

(Buz. 3.7 p.32)

- Examples from Kölligan (2012) and J. Klein (p.c.); note that same Armenian expression in (27) also renders Gk. ὕπαγε σεαυτὸν δεῖξον at Mt. 8.4 and Mk. 1.44; as J. Klein has pointed out to me, the strict contiguity in Arm. rendering of Greek with intervening object confirms its status as the same syntactic type as the demonstrably monoclausal indicative exx. in (28-31); also, cf. discussion in [4], below

- [3.4.2] While (27-28) are technically ambiguous (due to strong tendency for motion verb-initial), (29-30) are evidently monoclausal: (29) shows V_2 (*aṙin*) separated from its object (*z-na*) by V_1 (*gnac'in*), and in (30), both verbs share a single object (*z-na*); in (31), the nominal object of V_2 (*berin*) occupies the position left of preceding V_1 (*ekin*)

§3.5 Hittite

- [3.5.1] As in Armenian, morphological restriction to 2nd impv. does not obtain in Hittite; we find, rather, emergence of a productive structure—the so-called ‘phraseological’ construction—with both V_1 and V_2 identically marked for person/tense/number; lexically restricted to derivatives of **h₁ei-* ‘go’ (*pāi-*, *uwa-*, *it(ten)*, *eḫu*), e.g (32-34):

- Generally on the ‘phraseological’ construction, see now van den Hout (2003, 2010) (cf. *GrHL*: §24.31-42); I retain this terminology because I make no explicit synchronic claim about the syntactic analysis of the Hittite ‘phraseological’ construction, for which see Koller (2013); his synchronic analysis is not irreconcilable with my diachronic claim and in fact, may be the correct approach for PIE

- (32) *īt=war=ašta pargamuš HUR.SAG^{HL.A}-ašaš šāḫ*
 “‘**Go search** the high mountains.’”

(KUB 14.10+ 24-25)

- (33) *ta=kkan paizzi^{LÚ}L[UL- (dupl. ^{LÚ}tarašīyan)] šipanti*
 ‘And he **goes–consecrates** the *t*-man.’

(KBo 17.43 I 8-9)

- (34) $n=uš=apa$ *wezzi zin[nai]*
 ‘She will **come–destroy** them.’

(KUB 1.16 II 24)

- [3.5.2] Monoclausality of (32-34) is demonstrated by cliticization of particles (*-ašta*, *-(k)kan*, *-apa* respectively) associated with V_2 to V_1 or to the clausal conjunction immediately preceding it; in (34), the pronominal clitic object (*-uš*) of V_2 (*zinnai*) also attaches to clause-initial conjunction
- [3.5.3] Possibility that ‘phraseological’ construction could reflect inherited QSV runs counter to proposal of van den Hout (2010), who argues that the Old Hittite evidence for the construction is non-probative, hence likely to be an inner-Hittite innovation; however, Hock (forthcoming) has demonstrated that this claim is problematic on two grounds:
- i. (33) is a syntactically unambiguous ‘phraseological’ construction in OH (OS)
 - ii. ‘phraseological’ construction regularly found in NH copies of OH texts, e.g. (32) and (34); yet it is wholly unclear what would motivate a copyist to introduce this structure, nor are there known examples of such an addition; much more likely: it was there already in the OH originals
- [3.5.4] With ‘phraseological’ construction established for OH, it becomes possible to add likely (though non-probative) examples like (35):

- (35) $nu \bar{it}^{DUTU-i} DİŞKUR=ya$ *mēm[(i)] ški* $^{DUTU-aš} DİŞKUR-aš$ *mān uktūreš*
 ‘**Go speak** to the Sun-god and the Storm-god: “As the Sun-god [and] the Storm-god are eternal ...”’

(KBo 17.1 Rs. III 5-6)

- [3.5.5] Likely, then, that the ‘phraseological’ construction was present but relatively infrequent in OH, then became productive in the later stages of the language

§3.6 Overview

- [3.6.1] At the earliest stage of each language, Latin, Vedic, Greek, Armenian, and Hittite attest a SVC-like syntactic structure containing two identically-marked 2nd person imperatives—the first a verb of motion—within a single clause
- [3.6.2] Armenian and Hittite exhibit an equivalent indicative structure productive in every person/tense/number
- [3.6.3] This evidence sufficient to reconstruct a Proto-Indo-European QUASI-SERIAL VERB construction only in the imperative with V_1 = verb of motion; two questions then remain:
- i. What is the origin of the Indo-European QSV?
 - ii. How do we explain the emergence of productive indicative structures in Armenian and Hittite?

§4 The Indo-European QSV: Synchrony and Diachrony

§4.1 The Origin of Indo-European QSV

[4.1.1] Proposal: Begin with asyndetic sequential imperatives; frequent use of initial ‘come/go’ in this deictic-exhortative function (no directional complement) in close nexus with second imperative leads to analysis as a single construction, a lexical idiom with one open slot; within this construction, semantic weakening of motion verb drives prosodic reanalysis as single clause

- ▶ Essentially this starting point was proposed for the Hittite ‘phraseological’ construction by Dunkel (1985); for the view of ‘double verb’ constructions in the first place as lexical idioms, cf. Aikhenvald (2006:45-46) and Zwicky (2012); that semantic weakening takes place *within* particular constructions is emphasized by Bybee (2005); V_1 likely in process of weakening either to marker of spatial orientation (cf. (11), frequent in historical development of SVCs) or temporal sequentiality (cf. van den Hout (2003) on the ‘phraseological’ construction)

[4.1.2] At this stage—represented by e.g. Vedic (20-21), Greek (22), and Hittite (34)—this lexical idiom treated prosodically as a single clause; pronominal clitics associated with V_2 are hosted by V_1 in their expected syntactic positions

[4.1.3] With emergence of imperative fronting as norm in core PIE, strong tendency for imperatives to be contiguous; in this configuration V_1 likely undergoes prosodic reduction, as cross-linguistically common in verb-serializing languages and reflected directly in Latin (15-16)

[4.1.4] Lastly, contiguous structures of schema [$V_1 V_2 CL_2$] analyzed as single prosodic and syntactic units; perhaps on model [CONJ. $CL_2 V_1 V_2$]*—*e.g. Hittite (34)*—*permissible extraction and left-dislocation of non-clitic arguments, viz. [(CONJ.) OBJ₂ $V_1 V_2$]] evident in Vedic (18-19), Cl. Gk. (23), and Armenian (31); this development likely only late PIE

§4.2 The Development of Indo-European QSV

[4.2.1] In English, extension of QSV from imperative facilitated by homophony of the imperative and the base form of the verb; similarly, are there identifiable factors motivating productivity of QSV in Armenian and Hittite (vs. Latin, Vedic, Greek)?

[4.2.2] In Cl. Arm., transition from QSV to productive SVCs has gone furthest, e.g. not only subject-sharing in SVCs, but also object sharing in (30); as Kölligan (2012) points out, similar SVCs frequently found in neighboring Syriac, e.g. (36):

- (36) a. Arm. *č’ogaw xełdec’aw*
 ‘He **went–hanged himself.**’
 b. Syr. *w’ezal xnaq napšeh*
 ‘He **went–hanged himself.**’
 c. Gk. ἀπελθὼν ἀπήγατο
 ‘Having gone off, he hanged himself.’

[4.2.3] Given that Syriac is a language with verb serialization, and well-known tendency for SVCs to diffuse, very possible that inherited QSV developed into semi-productive verb serialization under influence of Syriac

- ▶ cf. Aikhenvald (2006:52): “Verb serialization as a grammatical mechanism tends to diffuse. . . Languages with SVCs tend to form areal clusters.”

[4.2.4] This scenario—rather than *ex nihilo* emergence of SVCs—recommended by strict contiguity in Armenian SVCs—a featured shared with English QSV, as well as many verb-serializing languages (cf. Aikhenvald 2006: 37)—but not with Syriac; could be explained as generalization of late PIE imperative-fronting pattern also evident in Latin (15-16) and (indirectly) English (13-14)

- ▶ Contiguity is frequent, but intervention is admitted, e.g. Mt. 14.12; see Muraoka (1997:80)

[4.2.5] The Hittite situation somewhat less clear; one possibility is the scenario suggested by Koller (2013), who argues for ambiguous structures like (37) as locus of reanalysis, where subject clitic (=aš) could belong to either verb:

(37) *t]=aš paizzi* ^{LÚ.MEŠ} *MEŠEDI-an pēran tiezzi*
 ‘He goes–steps in front of the bodyguards.’

(KUB 20.12+ 2-3)

[4.2.6] Could reanalysis of subject clitic as belonging exclusively to V_2 be triggered by possibility of a paradigmatic verb of motion V_1 hosting V_2 clitics in imperatival QSV? If so, QSV would fall together with newly-reanalyzed indicative structures as nucleus of emergent ‘phraseological’ construction

- ▶ Significantly, reanalysis did not occur in Hittite with other (unaccusative) verbs which take subject clitics, e.g. *ar-* ‘arrive’, *iya-* ‘go, march’, *tiya-* ‘step’

§4.3 Summary: QSV in Proto-Indo-European

[4.3.1] First, semantic weakening of V_1 in QSV drives prosodic reanalysis as single clause, whence the possibility of V_1 hosting V_2 clitics; this prosodically unitary stage—evident in Homeric Greek, Vedic, and Hittite—secure for high-node PIE

[4.3.2] In late PIE, prosodic treatment of contiguous, fronted imperatives drives syntactic reanalysis, at which point nominal arguments of V_2 can undergo movement left of V_1 ; this syntactically unitary stage—evident in Classical Greek, Vedic, Latin, and Classical Armenian—secure for core PIE

[4.3.3] Extension of QSV to non-imperatival modalities—evident in Hittite and Classical Armenian—occurs within these individual languages

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