Remarks on the Origin of *Gerundivum* and *Gerundium* in Latin and Umbrian

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Abstract

This article presents some remarks on the origin and characteristics of *-nd-* forms in Latin and Umbrian, *gerundivum* and *gerundium*, based on examples from the Umbrian Iguvine Tablets. The author recalls that the *-nd-* forms in Umbrian are not borrowings from Latin and that these forms may have a common ancestry. He claims that the semantic characteristics of *gerundivum* and *gerundium* are as important as phonetic ones, particularly with regards to the origin of the *-nd-* forms. He suggests that the semantic variability of the examples from the Iguvine Tablets is parallel to that known from Latin. He also claims that because there is no reason to suggest a direct borrowing, the evolution of the *-nd-* forms in Latin and Umbrian could be convergent. Moreover, the author suggests that Umbrian examples shows that there is broader semantic continuum as regards the semantic content of *gerundivum*, and that the existence of the continuum may indirectly support the hypothesis of the primacy of *gerundivum*.

Keywords: gerundium, gerundivum, Umbrian language, Latin language, Iguvine Tablets

Abstrakt

Artykuł prezentuje uwagi dotyczące pochodzenia i własności form z sufiksem –nd-, *gerundivum* i *gerundium*, w języku łacińskim i umbryjskim, w oparciu o materiał umbryjskich tablic iguwińskich. Autor przypomina, że formy z sufiksem –nd- nie są w języku

umbryjskim pożyczkami z języka łacińskiego i że formy te w językach italskich mają najprawdopodobniej wspólne pochodzenie. Autor twierdzi, że własności semantyczne *gerundium* i *gerundivum* są równie istotne dla wyjaśnienia pochodzenia tych form jaki ich własności fonetyczne i stwierdza, że zróżnicowanie semantyczne przykładów z tablic iguwińskich jest porównywalne do zróżnicowania przykładów łacińskich. Autor twierdzi również, że skoro nie ma podstaw do zakładania bezpośredniego zapożyczenia form, ewolucja form z –nd- w języku łacińskim i umbryjskim mogła zachodzić konwergentnie. Co więcej, autor twierdzi, że przykłady z języka umbryjskiego wskazują na istnienie szerszego niż się tradycyjnie ujmuje kontinuum semantycznego możliwych użyć *gerundivum* i że istnienie tego kontinuum może pośrednio wspierać hipotezę prymarności *gerundivum* nad *gerundium*.

Słowa klucze: *gerundium*, *gerundivum*, język umbryjski, język łaciński, tablice iguwińskie

1. *Gerundium* And *Gerundivum* – an Outline of the Problem

The question of the origin of *gerundivum* and *gerundium*, hereinafter referred to as the *-nd-* forms, and the related issue of primacy of one of the forms over the other, has been one of the foremost unresolved questions relating to Latin syntax for almost a century and a half. An innumerable amount of interpretations of these forms from the historical perspective have been proposed to date. Researchers from outside the field of classical philology have also provided their insights on the issue. Nevertheless, despite enthusiastic claims that the problem has finally been solved, appearing periodically every dozen years or so[1], we are no closer than ever to arriving at a universally accepted answer to this question (cf. i.e. Bednarski 1992, Miller 2000, Jasanoff 2006). Finally, the effective isomorphy of both *-nd-* forms serves to hinder the efforts at interpreting this structure rather than make them easier.

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[1] i.e. Safarewicz 1967, 234: *Pentti Aalto przekonująco wyjaśniła rozwój gerundivum z gerundium*. M. Weiss (Weiss 2009, 443−444) says that *the category of the gerundive is a common Italic innovation*. (...) *A number of archaic and isolated forms in Latin suggest that the gerundive was originally just a verbal adjective* (...) where he follows J. Jasanoff (Jasanoff 2006).

A form analogous to the Latin *-nd-* forms can also be found in other Italic languages – particularly in Umbrian and Oscan. In Umbrian this form underwent assimilation from an oral vowel into a nasal one and is realized as *-nn-*, *-n-*, or *-mn-*. The scarcity of comparative material has seemingly caused researchers to give little attention to the Umbrian forms. The Umbrian *–nn-* is mostly mentioned in literature as a sidenote to a review of analogous Latin forms (e.g. Miller 2000, 307), and only rarely as an argument in a discussion on the forms' history.

Moreover, in both cases the main point of interest for researchers was the phonetic evolution of the *-nd-* suffix, seen as the key to explaining the structure. However, I would like to point out the extraphonetic aspects of the issue, because in my opinion it is not the phonetics, but the semantic content that is of crucial importance in explaining the issue at hand – especially given that a suffix in the form present in the Italic languages is rarely present in other Indo-European languages, if not entirely unique (cf. ie. Risch 1984, 157–185). The *-nya-* clitic in Sanskrit, related, as in the Italic languages, to various additional modal values, is especially noteworthy here (Haspelmath 1987, 8–11)[2].

For the time being let us return to the *-nd-* forms and the issue of defining them. Already at this stage there appear some wide-ranging differences of opinion between researchers – especially in the case of *gerundivum*. Each definition simultaneously becomes an opinion on its nature and origins, but even a brief comparison of definitions suffices to define the primary research questions and axes of controversy. They are the following:

– in the majority of definitions *gerundivum* is designated as a type of verbal adjective or corresponding participle, which presupposes that *gerundivum* has attributive characteristics.[3]

– as a matter of course, it is traditionally referred to as *participium futuri passivi*, and sporadically also as *participium praesentis passivi* –[4]although ascribing the quality of passiveness to it (Beekes 1995, 278) is questionable[5]; the other axis of controversy concerns linking the *-nd-* forms with expressing any grammatical tense or aspect

[2] Bauer claims that the *-nd-* forms may have Pre-Indoeuropean ancestry (Bauer 2000, 38).

[3] Menge says that *gerundivum* can function both predicatively and attributively (Menge 2000, 730), however, Safarewicz claims that the predicative characteristics might be only derivative in the case of *gerundivum* (Safarewicz 1967, 234).

[4] At least in some cases, cf. Kirk 1947, 293 (*A few gerundives have the value of present participle),* 300, 301; Otrębski, Safarewicz 1937, 557;

[5] The *gerundive* cannot be functionally passive, because it does not imply any change of the valency of a verb (Miller 2000, 293).

(B. Bauer suggests a primary opposition of perfective *–to-* forms and imperfective *–nd-* forms (Bauer 1993, 65−66), although I claim that this hypothesis does not seem to be supported by empirical data – the *-nd-* forms are insensitive to the perfective-imperfective and transitive-intransitive oppositions, but sensitive to the active-inactive/personal-impersonal opposition).[6]

– finally, defining by pointing towards *notio necessitatis* as the main distinguishing feature – the axis of controversy here is the extent to which various modalities are expressed through the use of *gerundivum* (e.g. Bednarski 1992, 309; Sihler 1995, 626).

In consequence, the adoption of any of these definitions-interpretations dictates the method by which the entire structure is interpreted. The aforementioned scantiness of Umbrian material in turn results in all of the *-nn-* forms being examined through the lens of the Latin forms and their definition being narrowed most commonly to that of a verbal adjective, with no reference to the modal component. In the third part of this paper I shall relate the other designated intepretations of the Latin *-nd-* forms to the Umbrian *-nn-* forms.

2. *Gerundium* And *Gerundivum* – the Question of Primacy

Three principal potential paths of origin are proposed for all of the *-nd-* forms. The first variant assumes that it is *gerundium* that is primary in relation to *gerundivum*, the second that *gerundivum* was the prior one, while the third assumes that both forms arose independently from each other, and subsequently underwent secondary assimilation. Presently it is the first one that has the most adherents, although the other two (especially the one positing *gerundivum* primacy) possess strong arguments in their favour, and it seems that researchers are still far from achieving any sort of relative unanimity on this issue.

According to a popular hypothesis by K. Strunk, *gerundium* as the primary form in relation to *gerundivum* initially occurred in a periphrastic structure with a logical object in paratactic relations (Bednarski 1992, 303−304) – whereas the syntactic agreement is the reason it began to be interpreted adjectively:

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[6] Cf. Safarewicz 1950, 85. It is worth noting that the Latin perfective *-to-* has the same origin as the Greek *-to-*, that can be found in *gerundivum* -- like *adiectivum verbale* in *-tos*.

mihi agitandum est vigilias
1. lack of agreement between the grammatical subject and the *-nd-* form with regard to gender and number
2. the interpretation of *agitandum* as a nominal form, i.e. *gerundium*.

id mihi faciendum est
1. agreement between the grammatical subject and the *-nd-* form with regard to   gender and number
2. nominal *gerundium* is reinterpreted as adjectival *gerundivum*.

Martin Haspelmath approaches the issue of *gerundium* and *gerundivum* from a singular perspective. He convincingly argues that it is essentially one and the same form, and that *gerundium* could be considered merely an exceptional case of *gerundivum,* being a nominalized *neutrum* of the attributive form of *gerundivum* (1987). His point of view is indirectly supported by theories which strip *gerundivum* of any modal value and liken it to *gerundium* insofar as its primary semantic content is concerned. For example, Neschke represents the generative approach when he says that "the relation this form has to a main clause is in each case determined by the structure and semantics of the main clause" (Bednarski 1992, 306–308). On the other hand, Jay Jasanoff, in a recent paper (2006, 6), claims that *Proto-Italic adjectives of the "*sekwondos-type" were evidently the starting point for the emergence of the classical gerundive.*

Some also point out, with which I personally agree, that *gerundivum* was a carrier of modality, and that a whole continuum of aspect-tense-modality forms can be constructed out of the meanings expressed through the use of this form. I believe that *gerundium* is simply one end of such a continuum, an end that is of an entirely propositional character.[7] Those applications of *gerundivum* which are interpreted as attributive (*spes potiendorum castrorum)* would be considered intermediate forms in this model. In contrast to *gerundium* these applications are, in my opinion, never entirely devoid of modal undertone. In this approach *gerundivum* would be the primary form. I believe that given the (strongly backed by archaic Latin texts) assumption that there is a continuum of modality (and that the so-called attributive *gerundivum* has modal undertones) it is easier to assume that *gerundium* could be a syntactically reinterpreted *gerundivum* stripped

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[7] A morphological marker can be a carrier of many modal meanings (Palmer 2001, 18).

of its modality, than it is to assume that the opposite situation is true, namely that the mo-dality-devoid *gerundium* could after reinterpretation have given rise to a form possessing a wide continuum of various modal undertones.

III. -NN- Forms in Umbrian

The principal text written in Umbrian, the Iguvine Tablets, is also the only one that is rela-tively complete (7 out of 9 parts), coherent and lengthy. The sample from the Iguvine Tablets contains only ten examples. The text of the Iguvine Tablets is supposed to have been created in the period ranging from the 3 r. to the 1st century BCE, a relatively late period in which the language might have already been under strong influence of Latin (where the Latin con-quest of Italy only took place at the turn of the 3 r. century BCE). It is however worth noting that it is a sacred text – it is not uncommon that the language of such documents tends to be more conservative; every aspect of it evolves more slowly (Baldi 2002, 219). It can there-fore be assumed, with some caution, that Latin influence was less present than in the other styles of the language, and that the language of the tablets represents earlier rather than later stages of its development. On the other hand, the scantiness of material contained in the tablets, as well as the scantiness of other comparative material, does not allow for determining a strict chronology for the text and its constituent parts. Likewise, the limited sample size of the texts does not restrict their semantic interpretation – even a form that only appears once in the sample can be safely assumed to have been intended to be at least passively intelligible, and therefore to have at some stage functioned in the living language (the primary function of the text was not a poetic one, therefore the possibility that poetic value inspired a one-off appearance of some meaning need not be taken into account).

The examples are listed below (ordered according to words employed, not the order in which they appear in the text; the text and its Latin translation are provided after New-man 1864):

IIa
Umbr. *Catel asâcu pelsanns* [=*pelsamnos*] *futu*.
Lat. *Haedus ad aram comburendus esto.*

An ambiguous case – the modal undertone (*necessitas*) may be the consequence of *imperativus,* but that does not exclude the possibility that *gerundivum* could be used together with *imperativus* in order to strengthen a command.

Vb

Phrases occurring twice in an identical context, as an interjection.

Umbr. *pelmner sorser*

Lat. *comburendae* + [an unrecognized word in gen. sing.; a remnant?]

Gen. indicates that it might be a mental shortcut, *causa comburendae*. Complete syntactic agreement, attributive *gerundivum*, which can be interpreted propositionally ("because remnants were burned"), but the context would seem to suggest that a modal interpretation is more likely ("due to remnants which are to be burned", "because remnants are to be burned").

VIa

Umbr. *poei angla asseriato eest, esso tremnu serse*

Lat. *qui alites observatum ibit, (se) ipsum flectendo retrorsum*

Umbr. *sue anclar procanurent, esso tremnu serse*

Lat. *si alites procinuerint, (se) ipsum flectendo retrorsum*

Two identical cases – regular *gerundium* of the kind found in Latin

VIa

Umbr. *ocrer pehanner*

Lat. *arcis piandae* (*causa*?)

Umbr. *popler anferener et ocrer pihaner*

Lat. *populi recensendi et arcis piandae* (*causa*?)

Umbr. *ocrer pehanner pacâ*

Lat. *arcis piandae causâ*

VIb

Umbr. *pusi ocrer pihanner*

Lat. velut arcis piandae (causa?)

An example of the syntax of agreement. Attributive *gerundivum* which can likewise be interpreted in two different ways.

This small, repetitious sample of ten examples provides the equivalents of all the basic functions of the *-nd-* forms in Latin: *gerundivum* in a periphrastic construction with a likely modal undertone (deontic modality, strong *obligatio*), so-called attributive *gerundivum* with a possible modal undertone, and regular *gerundium* with propositional characteristics. This diversity of forms found in such a small sample suggests that the range of possible applications was most likely of similar breadth to that known to appear in Latin of a comparable period (i.e. before the range of modality of these forms was narrowed in the literary language of the age of Cicero).

A hypothesis stating that the *-nd-* forms were adopted from Latin was proposed very early on the basis of phonological data, and was equally early (in the early 20th century) discarded as unlikely, also on a phonological basis (Horton-Smith 1897, 449).[8] On the grounds of semantics its likelihood is also limited – borrowed structures almost never achieve a range of applications in the borrowing language that is as wide as the one they have in the language from which the borrowing took place. It has furthermore been postulated that the structure was subject to strong Latin influence. However, I previously assumed a relatively early creation of the Iguvian Tablets – the conquest of Italy only took place, as I said, at the turn of the 3 r. century BCE – far too early to speak of absolute dominance of Latin on the Apennine Peninsula.

However, taking into consideration the correspondence of Latin and Umbrian forms, it seems most adequate to postulate convergent development of both forms – in similar social conditions in a roughly parallel time period the hypothetical *-nd-* form (regardless of whether it was *gerundium* or *gerundivum*) was realized with a similar range of meanings. The influence one language might have had on the other could only serve to strengthen this effect, but was not a prerequisite for its presence.

The adequacy of Latin and Umbrian forms from a relatively early period warrants an assumption that such forms in Umbrian also constituted a part of a broader continuum, which indirectly supports the claims the *gerundium* is a variant of *gerundivum* – the derivative forms may consist of the part of a broader continuum of applications of form, from which the derivation could take place (cf. Safarewicz 1967, 235). The aforementioned adequacy does not however provide any degree of support for claims of *gerundium* primacy, and neither could it be construed to contain any traces of the proposed syntactical reinterpretation of the primary *gerundium*-employing structures.

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[8] J. Jasanoff (2006, 1–2) says that *gerundivum* [*must*] *have been a creation of the Proto-Italic period*.

Furthermore, it should be stated that the fact that variation on the level adequately relative to that found in Latin is present in this small sample of Umbrian texts does not support the idea that *-nd-* forms were originally imperfective, as postulated by Bauer (1993, 65−66). Neither do these forms have a meaning pertaining strictly to the future – any futuric undertone which may be present is merely the consequence of deontic modality.

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