Munus amicitiae
Norbert Oettinger
a collegis et amicis dicatum

herausgegeben von
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Beech Stave Press
Ann Arbor • New York
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viii
Hittite nai-, nē-, Sanskrit ni-, and the PIE Verbal Root *(s)neh₁-

ALWIN KLOEKHORST AND ALEXANDER M. LUBOTSKY

Ever since Hrozný 1917:29 n. 3, the Hittite verb nai-, nē-a(n) ‘to turn, to send’ has been etymologically connected with Skt. nī- ‘to lead’. The root of these two verbs is commonly reconstructed as *neih₁/3.¹ In the following, we will argue that this reconstruction cannot account for the formal peculiarities of the Hittite forms and that an alternative solution is called for. First, however, we will give a treatment of the semantics of both verbs.

1 Semantics of Hitt. nai-, nē- and Skt. nī-

In Hittite, the basic meaning of the middle verb nē-a(n) is ‘to turn (oneself) in a certain direction’:

(1) [(n-na-za-kan GUB-la)] nēja
‘He turns to the left.’ (KUB 42.99 i’ 9–10 with dupl. KUB 12.51 i 17)

(2) nu-ya-za-kan EGIR-pa nāiḥṣut ANA KURᵀᴹ-zA-ma-ya-kan anda lē uŋāši
‘Turn back; don’t come into my land!’ (KUB 41.17 ii 16–8)

The active verb nai-¹ means ‘to turn (something/someone) in a certain direction’:

(3) kēl meneššit duḫān kēl-a meneššit duḫān neǰanzi
‘They turn the one’s face in one direction, and the other’s face in the other direction.’ (KBo 6.26 i 36–8)

(4) n-әsta gašḫulugannin EGIR-pa neǰanzi
‘They turn the carriage around.’ (IBoT 1.36 iii 68)

When the object of nai-¹ is a human being, the verb can also be translated ‘to send’, a meaning that is easily derived from ‘to turn in a direction’:

Hittite nai-, nē-, Sanskrit nī-, and PIE *(s)neh₂

(5) āppa-/m-an-kan ZI-it ŪL nēanzi

‘They shall not turn/send him back of their own will.’ (KUB 23.72 rev. 23)

(6) man-kan *UTUS BELI-IA BELU kuinki parā naiti . . .

‘If you, My Majesty, my lord, were to send forth some lord . . . ’ (HKM 46 rev. 15–6)

Whenever nai- takes words like ‘strings’, ‘strands of yarn’, ‘cords’, ‘bracelets’, etc. as its object, it means ‘to tie (around)’, a meaning that must have derived from ‘to turn in a direction’ through an intermediate meaning ‘to wind, to twist’:

(7) nušan NAGGA tepu sigištaggai anda ḫulaliţiṣzi n-at-šan ANA BELUTIM kunni ANA QATT-ŠU GİR-ŠU nāi

‘He enwraps a piece of tin with a string and ties it around the hands and feet of the patients.’ (KUB 27.67 ii 34–5)

(8) EGIR-ŠU-maza 2 ḤAR.ŠUH₂ 2 ḤAR.ĠIRMEŠ nāi

‘Afterwards he ties onto himself two bracelets and two anklets.’ (KUB 12.51 i’ 22)

(9) nuNAkuynanna KÙ.BABBARH₂ ijanzi . . . n-aš-kan ANA GUµ. MAḪ UDU.ŠIR GÚ-si anda nejanzi

‘They make beads of silver . . . and tie these around the neck of a bull and a ram.’ (KUB 24.12 iii 12–5)

(10) nušmaš-šan ḤAR.SAG SA² SÍG.BABBAR taruppan GÛ-ŠUNU anda nejanza

‘A red headband with white wool braided into it is tied around their necks.’ (KUB 9.28 iii 11–3)

The reduplicated derivative of nai-, nanna/i-, usually has animals as its object, and means ‘to drive’. This verb is the original intensive/imperfective of nai- and therefore must originally have meant ‘to repeatedly turn back and forth’, i.e. ‘to lead an animal by constantly adjusting the direction in which it walks’.²

(11) nu ANŠE-in nannianzi

‘They drive a donkey.’ (KBo 22.2 obv. 7–8)

²Since nanna/i- often has multiple animals as its object, it may also have had a distributive meaning. The -ške/a-imperfective naiške/a- is attested in a few forms only, from MH times onwards, whereas nanna/i- is attested in OS texts already. This indicates that naiške/a- must be a new formation that is formed according to the synchronically productive pattern, whereas nanna/i- was the original imperfective of nai-.
(12) GU₄ AL₂ ANŠE.GİR.NA₄ ANŠE.KUR.RA₄ meksi nanniašeni

‘We are driving cattle, sheep, horses, mules and donkeys in large numbers.’ (KBo 12.42 rev. 7–8)

Occasionally, nanna/i- occurs intransitively, and then means ‘to drive, to ride in a vehicle’:

(13) INA₄ URU.IN₄ Ku[(nnū)] nannanbunj nu ḫaršī ḫarši udaš

‘I was driving to the ruins of Kunnū when a thunderstorm broke.’ (KBo 4.2 iii 40–1)

In Sanskrit, the verb ni- means ‘to lead, to guide’, but also ‘to conduct, to direct’, and is very often used with preverbs specifying the direction (‘to direct up, along, around, down, etc.’), which is also true of its Avestan cognate. For Proto-Indo-Iranian, we can reconstruct two idioms (cf. EWAIa II:19):

(a) ‘to direct, to drive a horse’: Skt. ásvam nayat (RV 8.17.15+) ∼ YAv. aspa ... naiinte (Yt 10.42) ∼ OP. asam frānayam (DB 1.87);

(b) ‘to bring (away) the fettered [captive]’: Skt. nayatā [2pl.] baddhām (RV 10.34.4) ∼ YAv. basta naiieiti (V 5.8), basta upanaiieni (Yt 9.18) ∼ OP basta anayatā (DB 1.82).

All these meanings are directly comparable to that of the Hittite intensive/imperfective nanna/i-, and therefore can be regarded as having developed out of the meaning ‘to (repeatedly) turn (somebody/something) in a certain direction’.³

The semantic connection between Hitt. nai-, nē- and Skt. ni- and its Iranian cognates is thus well-founded. Let us now look at the formal side of this etymology.

2 Hittite: the material

In Hittite, the verb under discussion shows active as well as middle forms. The oldest attested middle forms (from Old Hittite original texts) show the stem nē-: 3sg. pres. mid. nēa, 3pl. pres. mid. nēanda. The same stem is found in the OH attestations of the participle, nēant-. In MH times, a -i- develops between the é and the a, yielding 3sg. nēiā, 3pl. nejanta.⁴ Only in NH times do we find attestations of forms of the first and second person, which show a stem neiā- (1sg. pres. mid. nejähari, 2sg. pres. mid. neiāttati, 1sg. pret. mid. nejähhat), which is clearly secondary.

³In RV 6.75.6ab rāthe tēšhan nayatā vājinaḥ purī yātra-yātra kāmāyate suśāntih ‘Standing on the chariot, the excellent charioteer directs the prize-winning horses in front (of him) wherever he wishes’, the element of turning the horses is eminently clear.

⁴Note that in the course of time the OH long é is regularly shortened to e.
In its active forms, the verb is inflected as follows (for each form, the oldest attestation is given):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>pres.</th>
<th>pret.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sg. 1</td>
<td>neḥḥi (MH)</td>
<td>nēḥḥun (OH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>naitti (MH)</td>
<td>naitta (MH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>nai (MH)</td>
<td>naiš (MH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pl. 1</td>
<td>naiyani (MH)</td>
<td>neiayen (NH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>naištani (MH)</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>nēanzi (OH), neianzi (MH)</td>
<td>naičr (NH)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of these forms follow the pattern of the dāi/tiianzi-class, i.e. the bi-inflected class that in principle shows an alternation between stems ending in °Cai- (in sg. pres. and sg./pl. pret. forms) and stems ending in °Ci- (in pl. pres. forms), like pai-/pi- ‘to give’, dai-/ti- ‘to place’, etc.

Admittedly, not all forms of nai- fully fit the dāi/tiianzi-class, but most of these can easily be accounted for: the 1pl. and 2pl. pres. forms with the strong stem nai- are trivial replacements of earlier *niu/eni and *ništeni (compare, for instance, 2pl. pres. paraišteni ‘you blow’ << original *parišteni); the NH 1pl. pret. form neiayen, which replaces earlier *naiyen, shows a stem neia- that is clearly taken over from the NH 3pl. pres. form neianzi. The only truly problematic form is 3pl. pres. act. nēanzi with its nē-, whereas we would expect it to contain the stem ni- (*niianzi). Some scholars, the most notable of which is Jasanoﬀ (2003:197), regard the form nēanzi as an original form going back to *néih₁/₃nti, which would show that this verb reﬂects an *o/e- ablauting PIE “*h₂e-present”.

It is, however, highly questionable that nēanzi is old. In the three verbs that derive from nai-, namely nannai/i- ‘to drive’ (with reduplication), penna/i-/i ‘to drive (there)’ (containing the preverb pē- ‘thither’) and ūnna/i-/i ‘to drive (here)’ (containing the preverb ū- ‘hither’),⁶ the 3pl. pres. act. forms all show the stem ni- and not the stem ne- : nannianzi (not **namne(i)anzi), pennianzi (not **penne(i)anzi) and ünnianzi (not **ünne(i)anzi). According to Jasanoﬀ, this fact can be explained by assuming that in these forms “*-e-” was converted to *-i- (>-i/-i) by a sound law proper to internal syllables” (Jasanoﬀ 2003:118), e.g. *pē + nēanzi > *pēnnianzi > pennianzi. Yet, such a sound law simply did not exist in Hittite: for instance, *h₁póih₂uđeʰh₁mi yielded Hitt. pēhutem ‘I bring’ and not **pēḫutimi. Jasanoﬀ’s explanation therefore cannot be correct.

Since we see no scenario by which the stem °niianzi as attested in nannianzi, pennianzi and ünnianzi can be derived from nēanzi, these forms must in our view be original, and therefore prove that the paradigm of nai- itself originally contained a 3pl.

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¹Note that ai monophthongizes to e before h, hence the 1sg. forms in °Ceh².

²Cf. Kloekhorst 2008:145–7 for the reason why the derivatives nannai/i-/i, penna/i-/i and ūnna/i-/i inflect according to the mēna/i-class, whereas nai-/i inflects according to the dāi/tiianzi-class.
pres. act. form *nianzi as well. This means that the form nëanzi must be secondary. We assume that it was created by analogy with the participle, nëant-i, which contained the middle stem në- (note that in all Hittite verbs the stem of the 3pl. pres. act. form is the same as the stem of the participle). This replacement must not have taken place until the derived verbs nanna/i-, penna/i- and ûnna/i- had been created, i.e. in rather recent pre-Hittite times. Since the latter verbs did not have a middle counterpart (they are all three active only), their 3pl. pres. act. forms were unaffected and retained the original form with the stem ni-: nannianzi, pennianzi and ûnnianzi.

3 Root reconstruction: problems

As we have seen, the root of Hitt. nai-3, nē.\(^{a(p)}\) is commonly reconstructed as *neih\(_{3}\)-, which means that the middle forms nëa, nëanda would reflect *néih\(_{3}\)-a, *néih\(_{3}\)-nta, and that the active forms nái, *nianzi would go back to *néih\(_{3}\)-ei, *neih\(_{3}\)-énti.\(^7\)

Despite its wide acceptance, some details of this reconstruction are formally problematic. The largest problem is that, according to our present-day knowledge of the historical phonology of Hittite, a preform *néih\(_{3}\)-ei would not have regularly yielded Hitt. nái. Instead, we would expect that the diphthong *oi would in front of the laryngeal have undergone monophthongization to e (cf. e.g. héaues ‘rains’ < *h₂eih\(_{3}\)-e-).\(^8\) This means that the preform *néih\(_{3}\)-ei should have yielded pre-Hitt. */néʔ/e/, which in its turn (with morphological replacement of the 3sg. ending *-e by -i) should have yielded OH **/néi/, spelled **ne-e-i. Of course, one could argue that in the course of the prehistory of Hittite analogical pressure may have played a part in the development of the 3sg. form. For instance, since in the 3sg. form the diphthong *oi would regularly have been retained as a diphthong (*néih\(_{3}\)-th\(_{3}\)-ei > naitti), one could argue that by analogy with this latter form the diphthong in the 3sg. form may have been restored, yielding */nái/ > nái. Yet we would rather expect that in a paradigm in which both the 3sg. form (nëbhi) and the 3sg. form (**nēi) show a stem *nē-, it is rather the 3sg. form that would have been regularized, in this case to *nēttī. We therefore find it difficult to believe that the reconstruction of the strong stem of nai- as *neih\(_{3}\)- is correct.

Another problem regarding the reconstruction *néih\(_{3}\)-ei, *neih\(_{3}\)-énti is that the derivatives of nai-3, namely nanna/i-, penna/i-1, and ûnna/i-1, all show a geminate -nn-, whereas as we would etymologically expect a single -n-: e.g. *h₁ pói + n(o)ih\(_{3}\)- should have yielded **pēnai-/i-, not penna/i-1.\(^9\)

\(^7\)Thus e.g. LIV\(^{2}\) 450–1 (**ne-nōilH/-nūt\(\tilde{\imath}\)**); Kloekhorst 2008:399. Scholars who take the 3pl. pres. act. form nanna/i to be original reconstruct *néih\(_{3}\)-ei, *néih\(_{3}\)-nti (e.g. Jasanoff 2001:197). Although, as was argued above, the form nanna/i is likely to be secondary and the reconstruction of an -e-grade in the plural stem thus is unnecessary, we want to stress that the arguments that follow are independent of the question of which ablaut grade was original in the plural forms of this verb.


\(^9\)According to Melchert 1994:154, the gemination in nanna/i-, penna/i- and ûnna/i- is caused by a devel-
All this makes clear that the reconstruction *nóih₁/3-ei, *nih₁/3-énti is beset with problems and that we have to look for an alternative analysis of nai-.

4 Analysis of dái/tiånzi-verbs

As has already been mentioned above, nai- inflects according to the dái/tiånzi-class. Most members of this class have a good Indo-European etymology, and can clearly be analyzed as containing a stem that consists of a verbal root enlarged by an i-suffix. For instance, dái-/-ti- ‘to put, to place’ must contain the verbal root *ễdʰəni- to which an i-suffix is added; išpai-/-ispi- ‘to be satiated’ must contain the verbal root *spəh₁- + an i-suffix; etc.

The exact reconstruction of the ablaut patterns of these verbs has been a matter of some controversy. Although it is generally assumed that their weak stems (ti-, ispi-, etc.) contain the zero-grade of the root + *i- (ČéC-i-), the reconstruction of their strong stems (dái-, ispai-, etc.) was for a long time, and still is, debated. For instance, Melchert (1984:73; 1994:65) and Jasanoff (2003:102) reconstruct these strong stems as *ČéC-i- (ČéC-i-), whereas Oettinger (1979:46) reconstructs them as *ČéC-i- (ČéC-i-). But neither reconstruction accounts for a number of verbs belonging to the dái/tiånzi-class. For instance, the strong stem of the verb arai-/ari- ‘to (a)rise’, which must contain the root *h₂əri- as found in e.g. Gk. ἀρέμος ‘to stir, to rise’ (cf. LIV² 299), can reflect neither the structure *ČéC-i- (a stem *h₂əri- should have yielded **hɔri-, and not arni- as attested), nor the structure *ČéC-i- (*h₂ər-i- should have yielded **(h)ari-). Similarly, the strong stem forms of the verb h˘alzai-/h˘alzi- ‘to call, to scream’, which according to Puhvel (HED 3:63) contains the root *h₂let- as found in Goth. lafen ‘to call’, can reflect neither the structure *ČéC-i- (*h₂let-i- should have yielded **halezzi-, and not h˘alzai- as attested), nor the structure *ČéC-i- (*h₂lóz-i- should have yielded **házzzi-).

The honorand of this volume (Oettinger 1979:xxviii; 2004:400) was the first to argue that arai- and h˘alzai- should reflect *h₂röi- and *h₂ltoi- respectively, an analysis that was extended by Kloekhorst (2006) to all dái/tiånzi-class verbs. In this view, all strong stems in -ai- should rather be reconstructed as *CC-óɪ-, i.e. with zero-grade in the root and with o-grade in the suffix: dái- < *h₂óι-, išpai- < *spóh₁-, etc. This new category, *CC-óɪ/*CC-énti, can in this way be viewed as the “hí-conjugation variant” of athematic i-presents like Skt. kséti/ksiyánti < *tk-éti/tk-énti. ¹⁰

⁹⁰The ə in h˘alzai- < *h₂ltoi- was taken over from the weak stem h˘alzi- < *h₂let-i.

⁹¹ Cf. LIV² 644 n. 1 for this analysis of Skt. kṣa-y-.
5 New analysis of nai-

Within the dāi/tiānzi-class, the verb nai- has always taken a special position, since it was the only verb that, if one follows the generally accepted reconstruction *noih₃/*nih₃, does not contain an i-suffix, but the -i- of which instead was part of the root. But since the reconstruction *noih₃/*nih₃ cannot formally be correct, it is worthwhile to examine whether nai- can reflect a structure similar to the other dāi/tiānzi-class verbs.

If we apply the analysis *CC-oi-/*CC-i- to nai-/*ni-, we arrive at two possible reconstructions:

a) *Hn-(o)i- (similar to pai-/pi- ‘to give’ < *h₁p-oi-/*h₁p-i-, zai-/zi- ‘to cross’ < *h₁t-oi-/*h₁t-i-, etc.).

b) *nH-(o)i- (similar to dāi-/ti- ‘to put’ < *di₁h₁-oi-/*di₁h₁-i-, ishái-/isbi- ‘to bind’ < *sh₂-oi-/*sh₂-i-, etc.; note that mai-/mi- ‘to grow’ < *mh₂-oi-/*mh₂-i- shows that the sequence *RHV- indeed regularly yielded Hitt. RV-).

To our mind, the second structure is especially attractive, since it would directly account for the geminate -mn- in the derivatives nanna/i-, penna/i- and ūnna/i-, which can now be reconstructed as *ne-nH(o)i-/*h₁pói + *nH(o)i- and *h₂ou + *nH(o)i-, respectively.

In order to determine which laryngeal was present in *nH-(o)i-, we have to look at the middle paradigm of this verb.

6 New analysis of nē-a(rī)

If nai-/*ni- indeed reflects *nH-oi-/*nH-i-, this has consequences for the reconstruction of the middle paradigm as well. As we have seen above, the middle stem nē- is generally reconstructed as *nēih₁- or, with e.g. 3sg. nēa < *nēih₁-o and 3pl. nēanda < *nēih₁-nto. Yet since the active stem nai- cannot reflect *noih₃, these reconstructions cannot be correct either.

In view of the active paradigm *nH-oi-/*nH-i- there are in principle two possible reconstructions for the middle paradigm nē,a(rī). The first possibility is that the middle paradigm uses the same stem as the active paradigm, albeit with a different ablaut grade. This would mean that nē,a(rī) reflects *nH-ēi-, which automatically means that the laryngeal must have been *h₁: 3sg. nēa < *nh₁-ēi-o, 3pl. nēanda < *nh₁-ēi-nto. The second

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possibility is that the middle paradigm uses a different stem. Since there are in Hittite several verbs that show an active vs. middle pair in which the active stem is derived but the middle stem is underived (e.g. act. ūnaše/a-‘to clothe’ < *us-ī-dh₁/₁-₁₅ vs. mid. nē-ta₁(r₃)
‘to wear’ < *ūd-, act. ën(in)i-‘to end’ < *ti-₁(n-)h₁- vs. mid. nē₁du₁(r₃) ‘to cook’ < *tīh₁-, or mid. ar-ta₁(r₃) ‘to stand’ < *h₂₃r- vs. act. avai₁⁻/ari- ‘to (a)rise’ < *h₂₃r-(o)⁻-), we may assume that the middle stem nē- in fact consisted of the bare root *(s)neh₂- If so, we again need to assume that the laryngeal was *h₁: 3sg. nēa < *(s)neh₂-o, 3pl. nēanda < *(s)neh₂-nto.

Whichever reconstruction is the correct one (although we certainly prefer the latter), it is clear that the laryngeal must be *h₁. We can now reconstruct a root *(s)neh₂- with an active paradigm of the shape *(s)neh₂-o, *(s)neh₂-nto > Hitt. nēa, nēanda.

7 New analysis of Skt. nī- and its Iranian cognates

Our new analysis of Hitt. nai- and nē-n(r₃) has consequences for the formal interpretation of Skt. nī- and its Iranian cognates.

The Sanskrit root nī- ‘to lead, to bring’ attests the following formations in the RV: themeless perfect, both active and middle (nāyati, nāyate);¹⁶ sigmatic aorist, both active and middle (2pl. inj. act. naśṭa, 3pl. med. aneṣata, subj. act. nēṣat(i) and impv. neṣi); and perfect (nināya, 3sg. opt. ninīyā). Less important are intensive (ati-nenīyāmāna-), desiderative (2sg. ninīyaśi), and passive (niyāte), which do not look archaic. In Iranian, we also find a thematic present (YAv. naiieiti ‘to lead’, OP 3sg. impf. anaya, 3sg. impf. med./pass. anayatā ‘id.’) and a sigmatic aorist (OAv. 3sg. subj. act. naṣṣat).¹⁷

Because of our new interpretation of the Hittite forms, we assume that the IIr. zero-grade stem *nīH- (as attested in the Skt. ta-participle nitā- and YAv. aṣṭi-niti- ‘leading towards’, etc.) must have been the result of a laryngeal metathesis of *nh₁-i-C° to *nh₁-C°.¹⁸ The Skt. perfect (2sg. pf. ninētha, 3sg. pf. nināya) can now be reconstructed as *ne-nh₁-ōi-, and is thus formally identical to the Hittite intensive/imperfective nanna/i- < *ne-nh₁-ōi-. The IIr. thematic present and the aorist can now be reconstructed as PIE *nh₁-e- and *nh₁-e-s-, respectively, although it cannot be excluded that on the basis of the metathesized zero-grade *nīH- new full and lengthened grades have been created and that the present and aorist instead reflect IIr. *naiH-a- and *naiH-s-, respectively.

As seen above, the meaning of the IIr. root *nīH- ‘to lead’ is directly comparable to the meaning of the Hittite intensive/imperfective nanna/i- ‘to drive’ < ‘to repeatedly turn back and forth’. It therefore cannot be coincidental that the Skt. perfect nināya is

¹⁶Under the influence of *ūes- the original stem *uṣi/₁-₁₅ was in pre-Hittite analogically changed to *uṣi/₁-₁₅, which regularly yielded Hitt. /uṣé/₁-₁⁻, spelled uṣé/₁-₁⁻, cf. Kloekhorst 2008:1006–7.
¹⁷The forms apparently pointing to an athematic present (2pl. act. netū [RV 10.126.2] and 3du. impf. med. anītān [RV 1.121.5]) are late and most probably nonce.
¹⁸For other Iranian forms, see Cheung 2006:278.
¹⁹See Lubotsky 2011:110 for a discussion of this phenomenon.
formally identical to Hitt. *nanna/i-*, both reflecting *ne-nboi-*. We consequently assume that this intensive formation was the source of the Indo-Iranian verb.19

8 Other IE cognates: the root *(s)neh₁-

It is generally assumed that Hitt. *nai*-1, *ne*-d(r)i and Indo-Iranian *niH- have no other IE cognates. But our new reconstruction of these verbs has shown that they contain a root *(s)neh₁-*, which to our mind is identical to the verbal root *(s)neh₁-* that in *LIV* 571–2 is glossed as “spinnen”. This latter meaning cannot be the correct basic meaning of this root, however. Although in Celtic, Italic and Greek the root *(s)neh₁-* indeed can be used in the meaning ‘to spin’, this is not always the exclusive meaning: in Old Irish, the basic meaning of the verb *snúid* is rather ‘to twist, to bind, to tie’; and in Latin, the verb *neō* can also mean ‘to weave’ (only in Greek does the verb *néo* exclusively mean ‘to spin’). In Germanic, the verbal root *(s)neh₁-* is not used in the meaning ‘to spin’ at all, but only has the meaning ‘to sew’ (cf. OHG *nāen* ‘to sew’, PGerm. *nēplō* ‘needle’). Especially this latter fact is relevant: a meaning ‘to sew’ can hardly be derived from an earlier meaning ‘to spin’. The proto-meaning to all these verbs must instead have been ‘to turn, to twist, to wind’ (cf. Pokorny 1959:973, who glosses *(s)neh₁-* as ‘‘Fäden zusammendrehen, mit dem Faden hantieren’, daher ‘weben, spinnen’ und ‘nähen’’’). The meaning ‘to spin’ can easily be derived from this proto-meaning since spinning is the act by which one “draw[s] out and twist[s] the fibres of some suitable material, such as wool or flax, so as to form a continuous thread” (definition as given by the *OED*; emphasis ours). The meaning ‘to sew’ can be derived from this proto-meaning because sewing refers to the turning back and forth of the needle (the ‘turner’) by which the thread is sewn into the cloth. The meaning ‘to weave’ can likewise be derived from it because this verb refers to the turning back and forth of the warp thread into the weft.

Since the proto-meaning ‘to turn, to twist, to wind’ is exactly the meaning of the Hittite verb *nai*-1, which also takes ‘threads’, ‘yarns’, etc. as its object, there can to our mind be no doubt about the original identity of these verbs. The connection between Hitt. *nai-, ne- and Ilr. *niH- and *(s)neh₁-* is further strengthened by the fact that the latter also has forms with an i-suffix, i.e. *(s)neh₁-i-, cf. Lith. *nýtis*, Latv. *nīts* (‘(warp) thread’, and SCr. *nīt*, Russ. *nīt’* ‘thread’ < *nb₁-i-ti* (with laryngeal metathesis).20

9 More cognates: the root for ‘to churn’

In Indo-Iranian and Baltic, we find a root with the meaning ‘to churn’, traditionally reconstructed as *neiH-*, but considered unrelated to the Skt. root *nī- ‘to lead’ (EWAia

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19 Kümmel’s judgement of the Skt. perfect *nin‘āya* as a “Neubildung” (Kümmel 2000:282) was based on the idea that the original meaning of *nī- was ‘to lead, to direct’. In view of the newly found original semantics of this verb, ‘to (repeatedly) turn’, there is according to Kümmel (pers. comm.) no objection anymore against regarding the perfect (‘having turned someone in a certain direction’) as an old formation.

20 Skt. *nīvi- ‘piece of cloth wrapped round the waist’ (AV+) may also belong here and reflect *(s)nh₁-i-*.
Hittite nai-, nē-, Sanskrit nī-, and PIE *(s)neh₂

The most important forms are: Skt. náva-nīta- n. ‘fresh butter’ (KS+), nīta-miśrā- ‘not yet entirely made into butter’ (TB+); netra- ‘string by which the churning-stick is whirled around’ (Br.+); Khot. nīyaka- ‘fresh butter’, ń(y)e ‘buttermilk’; Shugni nay-, nī ‘to churn’, nīṁ-borg ‘churnstaff’; Yidga nīya ‘sour milk’; Wakhi ḫown ‘to churn’, etc.;²¹ Latv. sviestu nīt ‘to churn butter’, pa-nijas, pa-ninas ‘buttermilk’.

The main reason to regard the roots for ‘to lead’ and ‘to churn’ as unrelated was their apparent semantic incompatibility, but since churning denotes the action by which the churning-stick is repeatedly turned back and forth, while, as we have seen, the root for ‘to lead’ derives from an original meaning ‘to turn’, there can be no doubt that these forms belong to one and the same root.

More cognates: ‘snake’ and ‘sinew’

The word for ‘snake’ that can be reconstructed as *(s)neh₁-tr- (Lat. natrix, OIr. nathir, Goth. nadr, OLC. nadr, OHG nättra) has been connected with the root *(s)neh₁ before. Yet its original meaning was not ‘who spins round’ (thus de Vaan 2008:402), but must in view of our findings above rather have been ‘the one who turns back and forth’, referring to the undulatory locomotion of snakes, by which mode the body of the snake alternately flexes to the left and right in order to move forward.

Also the word for ‘tendon, sinew’ that can be reconstructed as *(s)neh₁-ur/n- (Skt. snīvan-, Av. snāmuṛa, Gk. νεᾶρον, Lat. nervus, Arm. neard, ToB šiavra) has been identified as a derivative from *(s)neh₁ before, and originally must have meant “thread” (compare Eng. thread that is derived from PGerm. *þrē- ‘to twist, to turn’).

Conclusions

We have seen that the Hittite verb nai-, nē- cannot formally reflect a root *neh₃, as is usually stated, but must be reconstructed differently: active nāi, *nianzi < *neh₁-oi-ei, *nh₁-i-enti; middle nēa, nēanda < *nēh₁-o, *nēh₁-nto. This means that also its Sanskrit cognate, nī-, must be reconstructed differently: present nāyati < *nh₁-ē-i-e; participle nītā < *niHtá- < *nh₁-tō- (with laryngeal metathesis), perfect nināya < *ne-nh₁-i-ē.

The basic root of all these forms is *neh₁-, which is identical to the root *(s)neh₁ that is usually translated as ‘to spin’. But on the basis of this new connection with the Hittite and the Sanskrit verbs, we want to propose the following semantics of the root *(s)neh₁-. When used intransitively (in the middle), its basic meaning was ‘to turn oneself in a certain direction’, when used transitively (in the active), its basic meaning was ‘to turn someone/something in a certain direction’ (both meanings are attested as such in Hittite). When the root had yarns or threads as its object, it meant ‘to twist back and forth, to twist, to wind’ (attested in Hittite and Old Irish). In some languages (notably the ones spoken in Europe) the meaning ‘to twist yarns’ developed into ‘to spin’ (Celtic,

²¹For more Iranian forms see Cheung 2006:279.
Italic, Greek), whereas in Germanic the meaning ‘to turn a thread back and forth’ was specialized into ‘to sew’ (i.e. ‘to turn back and forth the thread into a cloth’) and in Latin into ‘to weave’ (i.e. ‘to turn back and forth the warp thread into a weft’). The intensive derivative of this root, *ne-nh₁-oi-, had the meaning ‘to repeatedly turn back and forth’ and was especially used with animals as its object and then denoted ‘to lead an animal by constantly adjusting the direction in which it walks’, i.e. ‘to drive, to lead’ (attested in Hittite and Indo-Iranian).

Abbreviations


References


