The ending of the PIE 2 sg. middle imperative

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To the student of the IE verb, the forms of the imperative in the daughter languages offer special challenges and rewards. Challenges, because imperatives everywhere are subject to frequently confusing “irregular” developments – sporadic shortenings, as in Eng. c’mer (for come here!), or Lat. fac ‘do!’, díc ‘say!’, dúc ‘lead!’ (for expected face, dicie, dúcē); sporadic lengthenings, as in Ved. bhrā ‘bear!’ (for bhāra) or śrāṣat hit. ‘let him hear’ (ritual cry; for śrōṣat); and unetymological particle accretions, as in Ved. gṛhā́ ‘seize!’ (i.e., *gṛhā (< *-gh₂) + na) or Lith. dūk(i) ‘give!’ (i.e., *dūo + ki). But there are compensating rewards. Owing to its functional isolation from other verb forms, the imperative is often the repository of significant archaisms. One need only think, e.g., of Balto-Slavic, where the imperative is the sole surviving reflex of the PIE optative, or of Anatolian, where a handful of “si-imperatives” like Hitt. paḫšš “protect!” are all that remain, in slightly disguised form, of the PIE subjunctive (see below).

Unlike the subjunctive and optative, which had distinct mood signs (*-elo- and *-j(e)h₂-, respectively), the PIE imperative was formally marked only by its endings, which partly overlapped with those of the indicative. In the second person, which alone will concern us here, the active forms are unproblematic. The 2 sg. had a zero ending in thematic stems (cf. *bhrē ‘bear!’; *pyt(₂)kšē ‘hsk!’), and either zero or *-dh₂i – presumably with some no longer recoverable difference of style or peremptoriness – in athematic stems (cf. *h₂iē and *h₂idhi ‘go!’, *kšā (*-nē?) and *kšuadhī ‘hear!’). There were no choices in the plural or dual, where the imperative endings were simply those of the indicative/injunctive (pl. *bhrētē, *h₂iētē, etc., du. *bhrētētom, *h₂itōm).

The middle presents a broadly similar picture; here too the plural and dual used the indicative/injunctive endings, while the 2 sg. had an ending of its own. But the form of this latter morpheme is unknown. The individual languages offer a bewildering variety of potential reflexes, the most important of which are tabulated below.¹
As even the most seasoned practitioner will observe, this is not an encouraging array of data for an exercise in the comparative method. Indeed, so radically dissimilar are the endings that occupy the 2 sg. middle imperative slot in the daughter languages that the PIE ending that stood in this position can fairly be called the most obscure desinence in the entire PIE verbal system.

Even a difficult body of data, however, can be approached in more and less promising ways. If there was a PIE 2 sg. middle imperative ending at all — and it is hard to see how there could not have been — then something of its original form should still be recoverable from the data set above. But how can we tell which of these endings preserve old material and which are completely new? One possible method would be to look for etymological clues, drawing on the fact that the middle had a common inner-IE origin with two other PIE categories, the perfect and the h2e-conjugation. In this way we might hope to "triangulate" the form of the 2 sg. middle imperative ending from its perfect and h2e-conjugation "cognates" — just as we might, e.g., (correctly) posit a 3 pl. middle ending *-re on the strength of the 3 pl. perfect in *-t̥ier. In practice, however, this approach is not helpful. The 2 sg. imperative ending in the perfect was *-dhi (cf. Ved. viddhi, Gk. ἴδιν 'know!', āvogāti 'order!', etc.), an import from the active. Nothing of interest can be gathered from the corresponding h2e-conjugation ending, which can provisionally be set up as *-dē.

Our only recourse, therefore, is to examine the attested 2 sg. middle imperative endings individually. The most obviously unoriginal member of the set is CToch. *-dr. Within the overall framework of Tocharian grammar, this

1 No notice is taken of Armenian, where the 2 sg. middle imperative (e.g., bevir 'be carried') is historically an active imperative (*-rr < *-dhi) built to the middle stem (bevir- < *-bher-).  
2 For the definition of this category see Jasanoff (2003, 64 ff. et passim).  
3 Cf. Jasanoff (2003, 105 ff.). The identification of *-d as the ending is based on the conjecture that Ved. sdr 'bind!', elyd 'cut!', etc. along with Hitt. t̥iyar 'put on!', were originally the 2 sg. imperatives of i presents *skh2(e)h2-ei, *ak(e)h2-ei, *dh(e)h2-i, etc.

ending (cf., e.g., A ppśār 'protect!', pāktār (= B pklar) 'sing!') is simply the active imperative in *-dr (A ← B -dr; Krause and Thomas's "class I") suffixed by the ubiquitous middle marker *-e. Nothing about the combination *-dr is old. The PIE particle *-r, originally the hic et nunc marker of the middle, was clearly not part of the formal expression of the imperative in the parent language, as can be seen from its non-appearance in the imperative in the other "r-languages" — Hitt. (h)ḥir, Latin (-re < *-sū), and Old Irish (t(he)). The *-dr of the active imperative, like the *-dr of the Tocharian subjunctive and preterite, is a generalized stem vowel, ultimately reflecting a vocalized root-final laryngeal.

Gk. -ẹo likewise creates the impression of being unoriginal. At first glance, the agreement of this ending with Lat. -re might seem to justify setting up a PIE 2 sg. middle imperative in *-so. But the value of the Greek : Latin equation is undercut for our present purposes by the fact that -ẹo is also the 2 sg. middle secondary ending in Greek, as it probably once was in Italic as well. Since, as we have seen, the non-singular second person imperative and secondary endings were identical in PIE (cf., e.g., Gk. 2 pl. act. -r, mid. -sore; 2 du. act. -rov, mid. -sorov, all with both functions), it would have been a simple matter for the 2 sg. indicative/infinitive ending *-so to be independently extended to the imperative in two daughter languages, replacing the unknown "real" ending and creating the illusion of a PIE inheritance. The agreement between the two classical languages, while interesting, is not robust enough to build on.

The third ending whose synchronic embeddedness suggests a late origin is OIr. -th(e), in Old Irish terms the 2 sg. imperative ending of the deponent inflection. In the synchronic grammar of Old Irish, -the [-the] is inseparable from the corresponding deponent present ending -ther [-thar], from which it differs only in lacking the historical hic et nunc particle -r (cf. 2 sg. pres. suideghther 'you put', impv. suidegthe, etc.). The detailed history of these forms is obscure. Etymologically, the 2 sg. present ending should have been *-h(he)ar [-har] < *-sor < *-thse + r, with unpalatalized -θ- (cf. Toch. A -t̥ar, Hitt. -t̥ar, -t̥a(r), -t̥a2, -t̥a3). The palatalization seen in -ther may have been generalized from the weak -r-verbs (Thurneysen's class A II), where palatali-
It is natural to wonder about the relationship, if any, between the *-\(\text{h}h\)u of the pre-Hittite middle imperative and the second element of the isolated Hittite form \(\text{e}h\text{u}\), the irregular 2 sg. active imperative of \(\text{e}h\text{u}\)wa, "come" (3 sg. \(\text{e}h\text{u}w\)i < -\(\text{h}h\)e \(\text{h}w\)it "goes"). The -\(\text{h}h\)u of \(\text{e}h\text{u}\) is a displaced preverb "hither, her", functionally if not etymologically equivalent to the -\(u\) of Hitt. 3 sg. \(\text{e}h\text{u}w\)i and the aw- of Luv. 3 sg. awtiw "comes".\(^{10}\) Despite the formal identity of the two -\(\text{h}h\)u morphemes,\(^{11}\) it is very doubtful that a particle with the lexical meaning "hither" -- and hence with first person deixis -- could have been specialized as an imperative marker of the second person. \(\text{e}h\text{u}\) cannot, therefore, be seen as the etymological "key" to *-\(\text{h}h\)hu, though this does not preclude the possibility that the two -\(\text{h}h\)u's, once in place, might have been secondarily felt to be the same by native speakers (see note 20).

The affinities of pre-Hitt. *-\(\text{h}h\)hu, in my view, were not in fact with \(\text{e}h\text{u}\), but with the corresponding Indo-Iranian ending *-\(s\)\(u\)ya. The claim of this paper is that the common source of pre-Hitt. *-\(\text{h}h\)hu and Ir. *-\(s\)\(u\)ya was a PIE ending *-\(s\)\(h\)\(w\)i\(a\)yo.

There was a time in the history of Indo-European scholarship when the reconstruction of a PIE ending with a cluster of three consonants might have seemed contrived or speculative. But the idea that all PIE inflectional and derivational suffixes were phonologically "simple" has long been obsolete; the coup de grace to this notion was delivered by Klingenschmitt's demonstration (1975, 159 ff.) that the present middle participle suffix -- the element traditionally reconstructed -- was actually a PIE formative *-\(m\)\(h\)\(w\)m\(a\). In general structure, a 2 sg. *-\(s\)\(h\)\(y\)o with Sievers variant *\(s\)\(h\)\(y\)yo would comport beautifully with the well-established 2 pl. ending *-\(d\)hi\(u\)ye (or *-\(d\)hi\(u\)go),\(^{12}\) and particularly well with pre-Gk. *-\(s\)di\(u\)ye, the

\(^{10}\) Cf. Oettinger (1979, 132) and Melchert (1994 passim), who assume that the -\(u\) of \(\text{e}h\text{u}w\)i and the -\(\text{h}h\)u of \(\text{e}h\text{u}\) are simply different morphemes. But attempts have been made to derive them from a common prototype.

\(^{11}\) Or more exactly, their formal equatability. The -\(h\) of \(\text{e}h\text{u}\), unlike the -\(h\) of -\(\text{h}h\)hu, is never written double, but *-\(h\)h would regularly have been lexted to -\(h\) after the accented root *\(h\)\(e\)\(r\).

\(^{12}\) *-\(d\)hi\(u\)ye, with *-\(e\), is likelier than *-\(d\)hi\(u\)yo. Favoring *-\(e\) are Hitt. *-\(d\)\(e\)\(h\)\(u\)\(m\)\(a\)\(i\) (Luv. \(d\)\(u\)\(w\)a\(r\)a\(m\)), and the supposed fact that "o-vocalism seems to be general in the middle endings" (thus Siiller 1995, 478). But the Anatolian endings (including -\(r\)-less *-\(d\)\(e\)\(h\)\(u\)m\(a\)\(i\)) go back to remade preforms in *-\(e\) or, while the alleged association of *-\(e\) with the middle voice holds only for the third person. Speaking for *-\(e\) are Gk. *-\(e\)\(t\)e, Toch. A -\(e\), and OIr. *\(h\)\(e\)\(l\) ("lter the two with palatalization), and the principle of the lectio difficillior, which favors the less "middle-looking" *-\(d\)hi\(u\)ye.

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signment of the ending seen in Gk. -iste. The reconstruction *-sh(u)yō will ultimately have to be judged by how well or poorly it accounts for the 2 sg. middle imperative endings that constitute our primary data. It cannot, however, be faulted a priori on grounds of phonological typology or morpheme structure.

In Indo-Iranian, the treatment of *-sh(a)yō would have been completely straightforward. The long Sievers variant would have given *-suye directly, whence Vedic disyllabic -su(a) (su) and Avestan disyllabic -huud (Suudā). Vedic monosyllabic -sava (sava) and YAv. -ṣaḥ reflect the short Sievers variant. Here the key phonetic development would have been the simplification of *-sh(u)yō to *-su(y) via "Saussure-Hirt's Law" - the inner-PES sound change by which laryngeals were lost in tautosyllabic sequences of the type *-HRA- and *-oRH-. In consequence of this rule, every IE language would have inherited the 2 sg. middle imperative ending in two forms - *-su(y) after light, and *-sh(u)yō after heavy syllables. Both variants are attested in Indo-Iranian. In Anatolian the only variant to survive was *-shu(y)u; it became the source, as we shall see, of pre-Hitt. *(b)hhu and Hitt. *(b)hnu.[1]

The unobvious, but in fact quite natural development of *-shu(y)u to *(b)hhu involved two independent steps, the loss of the final vowel and the loss of the initial *-s-. The shortening of *-shu(y)u to *(b)hhu was a case of discourse-linked apocope as in Lat. fac, dic, dic: a more or less exact phonetic parallel can be seen in Tocharian B, where the 2 pl. middle ending (imperative and pretetite) is -i < *-dhu < *-dhuṃ.[13] The more remarkable development - the disappearance of *-s- - must be viewed against the background of another innovation of Hittite, viz., the extraction of the 2 sg. active imperative marker -i from earlier *-si. Hittite, as well known, has an imperative ending -i, which is associated in a critical set of cases with roots in final -s-: e.g., ēsšt- (for *ēšt-) 'perform!', kārsā- 'cut off!', ēšt- 'settle!', and - most common by far - paḫš- 'protect!'. In Jasanoff (2003, 183) I explained these forms as reanalyzed "si-imperatives," i.e., haploglous 2 sg. subjunctives of the type familiar from Indo-Iranian (e.g., Ved. vāksyi "convey!" < *vēghs-s-pṛ; cf. Szemerényi 1966), Celtic (e.g., OIr. at-ré 'arise! < *-reg-s-pŚ-f; cf. Jasanoff 1986), and Tocharian (B pāklyyu, A pāklyyōs 'hear!' < *klēs-s-pŚ-f; cf. Jasanoff 1987, 94-106). From the point of view of a speaker of early Hittite, a form like paḫš- (3 sg. pres. paḫša(r)i) was segmentable as paḫš-i, with the -s- unambiguously assigned to the synchronic root paḫš- (historically a present stem "pehš-s-) and the -i interpreted as a desinenve. This allowed the -i to spread, first to verbs with a similar morphological profile (cf. kārsāli 'cut off' < 3 sg. kārsālārī; suški 'touch' < 3 sg. sušqār(i)), and then more generally (cf., e.g., ēstāni 'draw (water)', kūznī 'kill!', nāšī 'die!' ).[15] A close typological parallel, though on a smaller scale, can be quoted from Ved. Sanskrit, where the historical si-imperative jāṣi 'enjoy!' (< *jāṣi-m-; root jā-), was resegmented jāṣ-i, and the resulting "i-imperative" was extended to the morphologically parallel roots yurh- 'fight' (impr. yāḍhī) and budh- 'awake' (impr. bōḍhī).[16]

The process by which the middle imperative ending *-shu(yo)/*-shu[t] was replaced by s-less *-hu(yo)/*-hu[t] was parallel to, and partly connected with, the change of *-si to -i in the active. One of the commonest 2 sg. middle imperatives in Hittite is ēšu[t] 'sit (down)!' (root ēš-),[14] a sequence which, taken at face value, would have invited the parsing ēš-[h]u[t] for "correct" ēš-[h]u[t]. Another highly visible and ambiguous form is nešu[t] 'turn (trans.)' (later nāšu[t]; root nai- 'turn (trans. and intr.)'), built to the synthetic stem neš-[i]nai-; neš-[i]t is also important in a another respect: it is the medial "partner" of a lost active si-imperative *neši 'turn (trans.)!', the Hittite counterpart of the Ved. si-imperative nēṣi (nī- lezd) < PIE *nēṣi-s-pŚ-.[3] The relationship of nešu[t] (mād; nāšu[t]; mādsu) to neš- is due to the fact that of the two stems neš-[i]nai- and neš-[i]t are anything but normal: kārši- (kārš-; kārši-) is a hapax beside usual kārs-; hūt(y)iṣa- does not exist at all in OH Hittite, where the relevant stem form is athematic (cf. 3 sg. pres. middle hūt(y)iṣa). Even if the -i in these forms could have come from *-iye, Oettinger's theory would fail to account in sightfully for the special status of paḫši or the more general association of the imperative in -i with roots and stems in *-e-. See further below.

14 This account of the Hittite "i-imperative" is contested by Oettinger (2006: 44 ff.), who sees the locus of -i in the forms kārsī and hūtīi 'pull!. He takes these to be the phonologically regular imperatives (< *-iye) of the present stems kāršiya- (beside kārs-) and hūt(y)iṣa- (beside hūt-, hūṭi-). But it is hardly credible that kārsī and hūtīi go back to preforms in -iye; if they did, -i would also occasionally have been found - as it is not in the imperative of other, more normal verbs in -iya. The stems kāršiya- and hūt(y)iṣa- are anything but normal: kārši- (in the odd spelling kar-as-Ri-i-izzi) is a hapax beside usual kārs-; hūt(y)iṣa- does not exist at all in OH Hittite, where the relevant stem form is athematic (cf. 3 sg. pres. middle hūt(y)iṣa). Even if the -i in these forms could have come from *-iye, Oettinger's theory would fail to account in sightfully for the special status of paḫši or the more general association of the imperative in -i with roots and stems in *-e-. See further below.

15 As detailed in Jasanoff (2002).

16 The meaning is 'sit down' with the particle -ca, 'sit' otherwise.

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13 Contrasting with Toch. A -c < *-duhe or *-dhe - the latter possibly adapted from *-duhe under the influence of the 2 pl. active in *-te.

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15 As detailed in Jasanoff (2002).

16 The meaning is 'sit down' with the particle -ca, 'sit' otherwise.
formed transitive *ētī 'settle!' to be built to *ēdhut 'sit!' 17

*ēdhut and nēṣhut were not the only Hittite forms that would have supported the resegmentation *-shu2yo/*-s-hu[t] — *-s-hu2yo/*-s-hu[t]. The verbs 'sit,' 'stand,' and 'lie' pattern alike in many languages, including Hittite, where all three are represented by root deponents. Parallel to *ēs(a)* 'sit' is kišt(i) 'lies' (*PIE *-kei-; cf. Liv. 3 sg. cīvar, Ved. śīve, Greek kē-

17 *ētī can thus be described as an analogical *s*-imperative, built on the model of *nēṣi and other forms now lost, but not itself haplogemized from a subjunctive in *-s-ə-si.

18 How far back in time the 'twinship' reaches depends, inter alia, on the etymology of kišt. LVIV (184) compares kīṣ- with OS kērān 'turn (tr.)' (*geis- or *geis-), preferring this etymology to a connection with Ved. cestati 'moves' (*keis-). Neither comparison is impossible, but neither is compelling.

19 kišt(i) 'lie!' is apparently untested, but its existence can hardly be doubted.

20 To be sure, there was one respect in which the propagation of *-hūt in the middle would have been less straightforward than the spread of *-i in the active. The spread of *-i did not entail the suppression of an older form in *-s-, while the extension of *-hūt to a verb like iyan- 'march' would have meant the replacement of inherited *-iyan[ti] (vai sim.) by newer *iyan[ti]. Yet *-hūt did spread, possibly receiving further inductus from ēyu 'come!' (see above), which would have added to the acceptable 'fell' of *-hūt; and from *weṣhut 'wear!' (*weṣh-), another segmentally ambiguous form of the type of *ēdhut, nēṣhut, and kištut. It may be relevant that in the iterative in *-kišt(i)-, the replacement of a form like *skaštīt 'look!' by sēkštīt (aš-ga-ab-hu-ur KUB XIX 34, etc.) would have provided welcome dissimilatory relief from the awkward sequence [*skerx-].

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Oettinger 1979 = Norbert Oettinger, Stammbildung des hethitischen Verbums (= Erlanger Beiträge zur Sprach- und Kunstwissenschaft 64; Nürnberg 1979).


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