The emergence of converbs: The case of Indo-Aryan ŚAK- 'to be able to' plus gerund

This paper aims at showing the gradual interchangeability between gerund and infinitive in a particular construction with the Indo-Aryan verbal root ŚAK- 'to be able to' from Early Vedic (2nd millennium BC) to Late Middle Indo-Aryan (ca. 7th-8th century to XVI AD). Indeed, the infinitive and the gerund increasingly overlap during the history of Indo-Aryan languages. Although at the Old Indo-Aryan stage infinitive and gerund behave differently, in Prakrits, Pali and Apabraṃśa the gerund is commonly used for the infinitive and *vice versa*.

According to Speijer, the Sanskrit gerund in *-tvā* and *-ya* is the "petrified instrumental" of a verbal noun and, therefore, it is not declinable (Speijer 1886: 296). Whitney ([3]1896: 203) claims that a gerund is an indeclinable active participle, having indeterminate and prevailing past tense value (e.g. *kṛtvā* 'having done'). Additionally, gerund expresses a continuous action with an auxiliary like *as-* 'to be', *sthā-* 'to stay', *vṛt-* 'to exist'; since Epic Sanskrit, it could behaves like a *verbum finitum* (e.g. *tatra **gatvā** mahārāja balaḥ śvetānulepanaḥ* 'when Bala... **had gone** there' Oberlies 2003: 286).

Conversely, infinitive in *-tum* conveys aim and purpose in Old Indo-Aryan (Speijer 1886: 301), being also used as a complement with verbs of wishing, being able and so on.

In the first books of Rigveda[1] the verb *śak-* is used as an indipendent finite verb, while in the latest ones it seems to be no longer independent and occurs with an infinitive form:

[a] RV I, 10, 6b *sá śakrá utá naḥ **śakad** índro vásu dáyamānaḥ*
'He is the able one, and he **will be able** for us—Indra who distributes the goods'

[b] RV X, 2, 3 *ā́ devā́nām ápi pántʰām aganma yác **cʰaknávāma** tád ánu **právoḍʰum***
'We have followed the very path of gods **in order to be able to accomplish** whatever we could'

In Apabraṃśa the gerund is the preferred form in such construction:

[c] Bh. 145,8 *taho **āṇivi** sakko vi **asakkaü***
'Even I, **is unable to bring** him' (Singh: 1980: 154)

In fact, Late Middle Indo-Aryan seems to select the converbal construction with ŚAK-. The data collected in an extremely rich *corpus* scrutinize the main stages of a specific grammaticalization path and clearly demonstrate how an infinitive form could gradually blend into a converbal one.

References
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[1] Rigveda is the most ancient Vedic text and dates to the 2nd half of the second millennium B.C.

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