The Sanskrit Aorist

Pāṇini designates *endings* of the aorist with the abstract suffix *lUṄ*, which apply in non-remote past time (as opposed to the imperfect, *laṄ*, which applies only to the more remote past, and the perfect, *liṬ*, which applies only to the non-witnessed past). Thus सुखमहम- ारं न िकिदवेिदषम् ‘I slept a pleasant [sleep], I wasn’t aware of anything’ (*Vedāntasāra*); अभू मपािदतफलो मे मनोरथः ‘[Today] my desire has become that of which the sweet result is fulfilled’ (*Abhijñānaśakuntala*). In Classical Sanskrit, however, the aorist can be a general past tense marker (i.e., it can apply to both the remote and non-remote past): cf. the common forms अभू ‘there was’ (root aorist), अवादीत ‘he said’ (*iṣ*-aorist), etc.

In Pāṇinian Sanskrit the aorist takes an ‘augment’ before the verbal root. Augmentless forms occur often in Vedic (as ‘injunctives’, best thought of as tenseless verbs); in Classical Sanskrit augmentless forms are limited to ‘prohibitives’ such as मा भूत ‘may it not happen’.

Before the aorist endings but after the verbal root, Pāṇini adds an aorist stem-forming suffix (*vikaraṇa*). The ‘abstract’ aorist stem-forming suffix is *Cli*, which is replaced under specific conditions by other stem-forming suffixes, which are responsible for the form of the various aorist stems.

The root aorist

Pāṇini actually teaches the root aorist as special a form of the *s*-aorist (see below) in which the characteristic *s* has been deleted after certain roots. This is because the root aorist shares with the *s*-aorist the 3pl. *parasmaipada* ending -*us* and the characteristic *vṛddhi* of the root vowel in the *parasmaipada*.

Whitney (§834) adduces *ātmanepada* forms of the root aorist are adduced and criticizes Pāṇini for only teaching the root aorist as *parasmaipada*. As noted above, Pāṇini does not teach the root aorist as such at all, and the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* does in fact account for the derivation of the forms that Whitney classifies as *ātmanepada* root aorists. (Pāṇini explicitly blocks *guna* in the *s*-aorist of certain roots, which in turn triggers the deletion of the *s* in the relevant forms, licenses several more root aorist forms in Vedic.) The root aorist is therefore formed by secondary endings (3pl. -*us*) added onto the augmented root

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1. भूते । ३ । २ । ८४ ॥ ‘in reference to the past’; तुढ़ । ३ । २ । ११० ॥ ‘the suffix *lUṄ*'; अनयतने लढ़ । ३ । २ । १११ ॥ ‘with reference to remote time, the suffix *laṄ*'; परोजे लिट । ३ । २ । ११५ ॥ ‘with reference to non-witnessed [remote time], the suffix *liṬ*'.
2. तुढ़लढ़लृढ़ुदा । ६ । ४ । ७१ ॥
3. विलुढ़ । ३ । १ । ४३ ॥ ‘*Cli* is added before the verbal suffix *lUṄ*'.
4. गातिस्थायुपाध्यायम्: सिच: परस्मैपेद व । २ । ४ । ७७ ॥ ‘[There is deletion] of *siC* before *parasmaipada* endings after the roots √गाः, √स्थाः, √वदा, √व्हाः, √पः, and √व्हाः’; विभाषा प्राधिकारिकः: । २ । ४ । ७८ ॥ ‘optionally after √व्ह्राः, √व्हे, √व्हा, √स्तोः’; मधे परस्मैपेदवाक्याः वृद्धादेवमिज़ेनिव्यो ले: । २ । ४ । ८० ॥ licenses several more root aorist forms in Vedic.
5. सिज्ज्यात्विविद्यमानः । १ । ४ । १०९ ॥ ‘[The ending *Jus* is substituted for the ending *JHI* after an *s*-aorist stem, after the imperfect of reduplicated verbs, and after the root *व्हैद*]; सिच वृद्धः परस्मैपेद व । ७ । २ । १ ॥ ‘there is *vṛddhi* of a root before the suffix *siC* and before *parasmaipada* endings’.
6. चिन्हवर्तयुपाध्यायम् । १ । २ । ११ ॥ ‘The endings of the precative and *s*-aorist, when *ātmanepada*, have
with vṛddhi in the parasmaipada, and onto the augmented root without guṇa or vṛddhi in the ātmanepada. Examples from √sthā ‘stand’ and √kṛ ‘do’:

| 1 | अस्थान | अस्थाच | अस्थाम |
| 2 | अस्थान | अस्थातम | अस्थात |
| 3 | अस्थान | अस्थाताम | अस्थाश |

| 1 | अविर्जि | — | — |
| 2 | अविर्जित | — | — |
| 3 | अविर्जित | अविर्जिताम | अविर्जित |

The sigmatic aorists

This term encompasses several types of stem with different formal properties. First to be mentioned here are those stems formed with the suffix siC. When the root to which siC is added is aniṬ, i.e., when no i intervenes between the root and the aorist ending, a paradigm results that is often called the s-aorist. But when the root to which siC is added is seṬ, i.e., when i intervenes between the root and the aorist ending, the iṣ-aorist paradigm results (discussed below).

The endings are the same as those of the root aorist, and—importantly—an i appears between the stem-forming suffix and the verbal ending when the latter consists of a single consonant.7 Like the root aorist, the root takes vṛddhi in the parasmaipada. In the ātmanepada, things are more complicated. Roots ending in a consonant generally lack guṇa (see √budh below), but roots ending a vowel generally have it (see √vij).

As noted above, Pāṇini deletes the s of this form in certain roots in order to derive the root aorist. But s is also deleted before endings beginning with dh, and—more generally—s is deleted in between any two consonants (excluding nasals or semivowels) in Sanskrit.8 This might sometimes cause confusion with the root aorist. Examples of the s-aorist are: √vij ‘conquer’, √vah ‘convey’, and √vas ‘live’ (parasmaipada) and √budh ‘be aware’ (ātmanepada):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>परस्मायपदम</th>
<th>आत्मायपदम</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 अजेष्ठम् अजेष्ठ अजेष्ठ</td>
<td>व्यजेष्ठ व्यजेष्ठ व्यजेष्ठ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 अजेष्टम् अजेष्ट</td>
<td>व्यजेष्ठ: व्यजेष्ठाम: व्यजेष्ठ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 अजेष्ठीत: अजेष्ठाम्</td>
<td>अजेष्ठ: व्यजेष्ठाम: व्यजेष्ठ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the diacritic K'; हस्वाद्रात। ८ । २ । २७ ॥ ‘[there is deletion of s] after a short base [and before an ending beginning with a stop consonant]’. Vedic forms like अक्षि and अक्षित are made possible by the aforementioned मत्र वस्त्रवायुद्वयाृत्तुड़िगममिजिनमी त्वः। २ । ४ । ८० ॥.

7 गातिसिद्धाभासूम्: सिच: परस्मायपदु: १ । २ । ३७ ॥, अस्तितिचु दुपक्षः। ३ । २ । ७६ ॥

8 धिर । हस्वाद्रात। ८ । २ । २५ ॥ ‘[there is deletion of s] also before an ending beginning with dh’; जलो जलि। ८ । २ । २६ ॥ ‘[there is deletion of s] after a root ending in a stop consonant and before an ending beginning with a stop consonant’.
The īṣ-aorist is just an s-aorist to seṬ roots (i.e., those roots which take the augment i before endings). The root is always guṇa in the ātmanepada, but some roots take guṇa and others take vṛddhi in the parasmaipada. Examples include 1sg. अस्ताविषम्, 3sg. अस्ताविष, 1sg. अस्ताविषम्, 3sg. अस्ताविष (parasmaipada), 1sg. अस्ताविष, 3sg. अस्ताविष (ātmanepada), and √pū ‘purify’:

Note that 8th-class verbs in these paradigms can lose their final nasal and take aniṬ endings: e.g., अत् or अतिन्त ‘he stretched’.

The siṣ-aorist is exclusively parasmaipada. It is formed when both iṬ (i.e., i) appears before the aorist stem-forming suffix and sAK (i.e., s) appears after the verbal root (e.g., a-yam-sAK-iṬ-siC- > ayamīṣ-). It is only made to भृ, भ्य, भन, and some roots ending in -ā. It is essentially a doubly-characterized īṣ-aorist. Examples from भ्यam ‘control’:

9आर्धदातुकस्यस्यक्षर: । ७ । २ । १५ ॥ ‘The augment i appears before an ārdhadhātuka suffix that begins with a consonant besides y’.

10Guna in the ātmanepada results from the fact that, in seṬ roots, the base to which siC always ends in iṬ and therefore never in a (real) consonant. Vṛddhi in the parasmaipada is the rule by iṣ-अष्ट्रीतः नविष: परस्मौपदेश: । ७ । २ । १ ॥ but guna is taught in भवत्स्या: ष्टाः नागस्याद्विवपदेशः । ७ । २ । १५ ॥ ‘[no vṛddhi] for roots that end in h, m, or y, क्षणेऽवसं, भ्याः, भ्याः, those ending in नि, नि, and श्वि, and those with the marker eṬ’.

11आनुवन्दर्मदधशवन्दवतलाएवेदाहामृतादिकतिपः द्वीति किदः । ६ । ४ । ३७ ॥

12यमरमनमां सकः । ७ । २ । ७३ ॥
Some historical background: the s-aorist is an Indo-European formation. In aniṬ roots, there was originally no i inserted between the s and the ending; thus, in the Ṛgveda, no forms like अवािहषम् are found. Instead, we get (e.g.) अभार् < a-bhār-s-t, अद्राक् < a-drās-s-t, अकान् < a-krān-d-s-t. In seṬ roots, however, the i—which is the reflex of a Proto-Indo-European laryngeal—appeared throughout the paradigm of s-aorists, and before consonantal endings of root aorists. Thus the aorist of √grah was originally a root aorist, as shown by 1sg. अगुहः (< *He-gʰrebʰ-H-m), 3pl. अगूढः (< *He-gʰrebʰ-ro). But because of the analogy between the 3sg. अगूढः (< *He-gʰrebʰ-H-t) and iṣ-aorists such as अपावीत्, the entire paradigm shifted to the iṣ-aorist around the time of the Atharvaveda (hence 1sg. अगूढः, 3pl. अगूढः). Later, the ending औः, औत् of the iṣ-aorist and erstwhile root-aorist to seṬ roots was carried over to the s-aorist as well.)

The sa-aorist is formed with the suffix Ksa to verbal roots of specific phonological shapes (i.e., those ending in s, s, s, or h, with the vowels i, u, or r preceding, so long as the affix iṬ is not present). This is a ‘thematic’ conjugation, because the thematic vowel a intervenes between the aorist suffix (s) and the endings of the verb. In certain cases, however, the entire suffix (sa) is deleted. From the verb √guh ‘hide’ (also showing the operation of Grassmann’s Law):

| परमेषपदम् |
| । अघुक्षम् अघुक्षाव अघुक्षाम अघुक्षि अघुक्षाविह अघुक्षामिह |
| । अघुक्षः अघुक्षतम् अघुक्षत अघुक्षाः अघुक्षायाम् अघुक्षायम् |
| । अघुक्षत् अघुक्षताम् अघुक्षन् अघुक्षतिः अघुक्षतायाम् अघुक्षात्तात् |

The a-aorist

Formed with the stem-forming suffix aṄ, this is sometimes called a thematic aorist (because a ‘thematic vowel’ intervenes between the root and the ending). The root does not undergo guṇa or vrddhi, except √dṛś and roots ending in -ṛ or -ṝ. Penultimate nasals are also dropped in a stem—a difference between the thematic aorist and the imperfect of thematic stems (contrast असिष, ‘he sprinkled’, imperfect, with असिः, ‘he sprinkled’, aorist).

13 शाखा इद्युपादान्निः कसः । ३ । १ । ७५ ॥ Note that √dṛś takes the aorist stem-forming suffix aṄ, as explicitly specified in 7.4.14.

14 तुम्भा दुहिजिधवृणामाक्षण्योऽदन्त्ये । ७ । २ । ७३ ॥ ‘There can be complete deletion [of Ksa] when it precedes an ātmanepada ending of the roots √duḥ, √dīḥ, √vīḥ, and √guh that begins with a dental consonant’.

15 त्रत्सो प्रदिइ गुणः । ७ । ४ । १४ ॥
The reduplicated aorist

There are two types of reduplicated aorists in Sanskrit. The first is taught by Pāṇini as a subtype of the a-aorist: in certain roots, a kind of infixation occurs before the aorist stem-forming suffix aN which can be analyzed as reduplication (i.e., pa-pt from √pat, and voc = va-vc from √vac), although Pāṇini himself does not call these forms reduplicated. This type is also Proto-Indo-European: cf. Greek εἶπον and Sanskrit avocam both < *He-RE-wkʷ-om:

The second type of reduplicated aorist, which is formed by the suffix CaN, is also thematic, but it follows the rules of reduplication taught for the desiderative (i.e., lengthen the reduplicating vowel if it would otherwise constitute a light syllable). This is the aorist formation that corresponds to the causative, and tenth-class verbs as well as √śri, √dru, and √sru obligatorily take this form. The example is √śri ‘cling to’ and √kr ‘do’ (in this case, the aorist corresponding to कारयित meaning ‘cause to do’).
The impersonal aorist

The stem-forming suffix $CiṆ$ produces a stem which (1) generally has $guṇa$ of the root; (2) takes no personal endings; and (3) is used either reflexively, passively, or to express a state (in a small number of roots, such as $√budh$, this form can stand in for the regular 3sg.). The qualifier ‘generally’ is necessary because suffixes marked with $N$ in Pāṇini trigger $guṇa$ of the root generally, but $vṛddhi$ when the root ends in a vowel.

Examples: अजनि ‘is born’, अकािर ‘is made’, अहािर ‘is carried’, अधािय ‘is set out’.

\[18\] अचः कमकतिर । ३ । १ । ६२ ॥ ‘[the suffix $CiṆ$ replaces $Cli$ in the third person singular] after a root ending in a vowel, in the sense of an agent which is also the object’; चिम्मावक्षमणोः । ३ । १ । ६६ ॥ ‘the suffix $CiṆ$ [replaces $Cli$ in the third person singular] in the sense of a state or the object’; चिणो लुक । ६ । ४ । १४॥ ‘after the suffix $CiṆ$, there is deletion [of the verbal endings]’

\[19\] अचो जिणति । ७ । १ । ११५ ॥