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# PĀŅINI, VARIATION, AND ORTHOEPIC DIASKEUASIS\*

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#### Abstract

The Kāṇva redaction of the BĀU revises the text in the direction of a form of early Classical Sanskrit similar but not identical to that described in the Aṣṭādhyāyī. The fact that it also favors the variants introduced by  $v\bar{a}$  in Pāṇini's optional rules provides an independent piece of evidence for my proposal that  $v\bar{a}$  in the Aṣṭādhyāyī means "preferably".

Is Pāṇini's grammar prescriptive or descriptive, or perhaps both at the same time? The answer determines, among many other things, how we should render  $v\bar{a}$  and  $vibh\bar{a}s\bar{a}$  in his optional rules. If the grammar is prescriptive, these terms can mean "preferably" and "marginally". If it is purely descriptive, then only "frequently" and "rarely" are appropriate translations. In  $P\bar{a}n$  ini as a Variationist (henceforth PV) I suggested that both translations are equally valid, on the grounds that the Aṣṭādhyāyī is at the same time a faithful record of the usage of a community of *śist*as, and part of a project to canonize that usage as correct, meant to be binding on all users of the language. Devasthali (1983), however, objected that the idea of "better" or "worse" usage is "foreign to the ancient Sanskrit grammatical works and grammarians", because they do not deal with incorrect apaśabdas, only with sādhusabdas – the correct words of the divine language. Recently Scharfe (2009: 46) has given an interesting twist to Devasthali's point that makes it even sharper. He notes that Pānini's disfavored (vibhāsā) options include some attested Vedic usages, which are necessarily sādhu in virtue of the very fact that they occur in the sacred texts. He concludes that  $v\bar{a}$  and  $vibh\bar{a}s\bar{a}$ are better interpreted just in a statistical sense: "it is therefore preferable to speak

\* This article was omitted from the Festschrift for Johannes Bronkhorst because of an editorial mishap in the production of the volume. I am grateful to Maria Piera Candotti for reading the proofs and to Robert Gassmann for agreeing to publish it on short notice in this journal. I hope Johannes will accept it as a reminder of our discussions in Pune 35 years ago, and as a small token of my admiration for his profound contributions to Sanskrit studies.

of more commonly or rarely used forms without passing a value judgment on them."

The argument is cogent only as long as we concede its presupposition. I would like to challenge it. The ideology of the eternal immutable Vedas is itself not fixed. It must be relativized to a particular period, which began some time after the various redactions of the Vedic texts were consolidated and normalized. This process certainly did not happen overnight, nor could it have been a oneman job. It was the result of systematic editorial efforts by many generations of scholars. These scholars' editorial activity – the orthoepic diaskeuasis to which Bronkhorst (1981) devoted an illuminating study – would necessarily have involved making judgments of relative grammatical acceptability. They were the only available principled grounds for choosing among variant readings in a text. The modern historicist perspective on restoring original texts did not exist in the tradition. Sanskrit scholars did not even think of Vedic as a precursor of the classical language, so a fortiori they would not have dreamed of differentiating between older and more recent forms of the Vedic language. They surely had the notion of a corrupt vs. authentic reading in a Vedic text, but lacking philological methods they must have selected among variants on the basis of their synchronic judgments of relative grammaticality. This meant exercising precisely the kinds of preferences and dispreferences that P marks with  $v\bar{a}$  and  $vibh\bar{a}s\bar{a}$ . Later, as Scharfe and Devasthali rightly note, these became unthinkable, and the grammatical intuitions on which they are based were in any case no longer available, which is why the original purport of  $v\bar{a}$  and  $vibh\bar{a}s\bar{a}$  was erased from the tradition.

There are good reasons to believe that the development of Sanskrit grammar culminating in the Aṣṭādhyāyī took place during the period in which this editorial activity was in progress, and that there was interaction and even overlap between the two scholarly communities. This can be concluded from the similarities between the grammarians' phonological rules and those of the Prātiśākhyas, from the fact that some of the grammarians that Pāṇini cites (such as Śākalya), and some grammarians that followed him (such as Kātyāyana) also played a role in fixing the Vedic canon. If the Prātiśākhyas use a different descriptive technique, it is because they serve a different purpose, not because they are remnants of some pre-scientific empiricist stage of the grammatical tradition. They are a concurrent but not wholly independent strand of development. It follows from these considerations that Pāṇini himself must have been familiar with the idea of relatively

In Bronkhorst's words (1982), "it is not correct to ascribe an awareness of linguistic development to the ancient Indian grammarians."

preferred and relatively dispreferred expressions, both in secular usage and in the Vedic domain. This much already implies that the notion of "better" or "worse" usage cannot have been entirely "foreign to the ancient Sanskrit grammatical works and grammarians". As Bronkhorst (1982) notes, against that background the translations 'preferably' and 'marginally' are most natural.

In fact, these considerations go further than just allaying the doubts that Devasthali and Scharfe have expressed. The period of editorial activity into which the construction of the Aṣṭādhyāyī falls provides a context for, and indeed explains, the extraordinary attention it gives to grammatical options, and its concern for adjudicating between them, not only in ordinary language, but even in the Vedic rules of the grammar.

When I read Caland's preface to his edition of the Kāṇva recension of the Śatapatha Brāhmana (1926), referred to henceforth as C, with its listing of the many differences between the Kāṇva (K) and Mādhyaṃdina (M) recensions, I was immediately reminded of the points of usage addressed by Pāṇini's optional rules. It is as though the editorial decisions that divided these recensions come from the same milieu as the Aṣṭādhyāyī. A closer look at the material shows that K tends to agree more with Pāṇini's usage than M does. A preliminary collation of this material with Pāṇini's grammar leads to three specific mutually supporting conclusions.

- (1) When one of the recensions has a downright un-Pāṇinian expression, it is usually M, with K having the Pāṇinian one.
- (2) When one version uses an option that Pāṇini characterizes as Vedic by restricting his rule to chandasi or mantre, it is nearly always M, with K using the one sanctioned by Pāṇini for general usage.
- (3) When one of the recensions agrees with  $P\bar{a}nini's$  dispreferred ( $vibh\bar{a}s\bar{a}$ ) option, it is usually M, with K having the preferred ( $v\bar{a}$ ) option.

It is not a matter of relative antiquity of the recensions: as Caland (p. 85) notes, the older variant is sometimes found in K, sometimes in M. The language of K is just closer overall to that of Pāṇini. How should this finding be interpreted? It is well established that Pāṇini himself did not know of the White Yajurveda tradition. And Pāṇini's grammar was in any case not mechanically imposed on K, for there are many cases where both recensions diverge from the Aṣṭādhyāyī. At least one possible conclusion we are left with is that the K recension was compiled in an area whose dialect shared significant features with that of Pāṇini, by editors who

were familiar with the grammatical tradition, but worked independently of Pāṇini's grammar.

Another small clue to the special connection between the K recension and the grammatical tradition is K's use of nominal inflection of 3.Sg. present forms in Abl. rasayateh, vakteh, where M instead uses the nouns vacas, rasa (at BĀU 4.3.23 ff.). The hypostasizing of 3.Sg. verbs as nouns probably originates as a technical device of grammarians and ritualists (as in Pāṇinian rules like 6.1.108 nityam karoteh). This usage was presumably put into the K text by the scholars who edited it.

A relation between the K recension and the grammarians would have several interesting implications. If  $P\bar{a}nini$ 's preferences tend to agree with a particular textual tradition, then they were not just idiosyncratic, they were shared by a community of other speakers. The fact that they are not consistently imposed on the text suggests that the editorial decisions were based on linguistic intuitions and not on the implementation of grammatical rules. These things both point to a period when Sanskrit still exhibited the kind of dialectal and idiolectal variation that is the natural state of any spoken colloquial language. Moreover, the correlation between the tendency to observe the obligatory rules and the tendency to prefer the  $v\bar{a}$  variants provides a measure of independent support for proposal of PV that  $v\bar{a}$  and  $vibh\bar{a}s\bar{a}$  in  $P\bar{a}nini$ 's optional rules express respectively a preference and a dispreference for the variant they introduce.

Here are some representative cases illustrating these observations, with no claim to completeness. First, cases showing how K tends to conforms to  $P\bar{a}nini$ 's obligatory rules where M violates them.

## (1) Differences with respect to Pāṇini's obligatory rules

- a. K neuter u-stems in -uni (*vāstuni*, *keśaśmaśruni*), M -au (*vāstau*, *keśaśmaśrau*, C 38). K follows the obligatory rule 7.1.73 *iko 'ci vibhaktau*.
- b. K Acc. śriyam, M śrīm (C 38). K agrees with P 6.4.77 aci śmudhātubhruvām yvor iyanuvanau, pre-empting 6.1.107 ami pūrvah.
- c. Fem. -ā vs. -ī (C 39-40): K -ā in trayastriņse, M trayastriņsyau (Fem.Dual) 'thirty-third' (-ā by 4.1.4), K parimūrņā, M parimūrņī 'decrepit (cow)' (P requires -ā, 4.1.54 is inapplicable because the word has initial accent, 7.1.4.14 parimūrņā), K parivṛttā, M parivṛttī (4.1.54 inapplicable because it is not a bahuvrīhi), K catuṣpadī according to 4.1.8 and 6.4.130, vs. M catuṣpadā (but pañcapadā in both). Unclear is K baddhavatsī M baddhavatsā 'a cow whose calf is tied up' (-ī by 4.1.20?).

- d. K dak*ṣinasyām, uttarasyām*, M dak*ṣināyām, uttarāyām* (C 42). K follows P 7.3.114.
- e. K *nilayām* cakre, M nililye (C 44). P 3.1.36 requires the periphrastic perfect, as in K.
- f. K grasta, M grasita (C 46). K agrees with 7.2.15 yasya vibhāṣā (since 7.2.56 udito vā gives grasitvā).
- g. K parigrāha, M parigraha (C 50). K agrees with P 3.3.47 param yajñe (the suffix GHaÑ requires vrddhi).
- h. K visphulinga, M visphulinga. P 8.3.111 sāt padādhyoḥ requires -s- here, as in K.
- i. K dakṣiṇe, M dakṣiṇāḥ. K agrees with P 1.1.34, which requires -e (PV 83–84).
- j. K vipalyeti, M viparyeti. K extends the -l- beyond P 8.2.19.
- k. K ulūkhamusalena, M ulūkhamusalābhyām (C 49). P 2.4.6 jātir aprāṇih requires the singular.
- 1. With respect to the change of n to n after r in compounds and after preverbs (C 36), K tends to follow Pāṇini. K vrīhiyavānām is Pāṇinian, M vrīhiyavāṇām is not, conversely K rathavāhaṇa is Pāṇinian (8.4.8), M rathavāhaṇa is not. K pariniviṣṭa is correct as opposed to M pariniviṣṭa (P 8.4.17 allows ni- to undergo this process only after certain roots, viś not among them). K pramiṇāti is regular (P 8.4.14), vs. M pramināti. Also regular are paryāṇayanti, parihaṇāni (P 8.4.22), pariṇivapet (P 8.4.17), prahiṇoti (P 8.4.15). Exception: K pranāśayati, vs. regular M praṇāśayati.
- m. K vavāma, M uvāma 'vomited'. Pāṇini allows only vavāma (this root not is not among those listed in 6.1.15-16 as undergoing saṃprasāraṇa).
- n. K upariṣadya, M uparisadya (C 37). A complicated case: the suffix LyaP shows that upari is treated as an upasarga, in which case Pāṇini 8.3.66 forces -ṣ-. On the other hand, the treatment of upari as an upasarga is itself un-Pāṇinian.
- o. With respect to voice, K's usage is more Pāṇinian, judging from the BĀU examples collated by Fürst: K 3.1.8 atinedante 3.2.13 cakrāte, 4.3.1 ūdāte, 4.4.2 rasayate, 4.4.15 jugupsate, 5.4.18 kurute, vs. M atinedanti, cakratuh, samūdatuh, rasayati, vijugupsate, karoti. These roots are either intrinsically middle (anudāttanitah) or middle voice is required by 1.3.14 or 1.3.72. Conversely K 4.5.1 upakariṣyan, 5.12.1 viśanti, vs. M upakariṣyamānaḥ, viśante (udāttet).
- p. In the other direction, M's gerundive form avanegyam is correct (P 7.3.52), as opposed to M's avanejyam (C 37).

Where Pāṇini restricts a rule to apply only chandasi, K often shows the general form where M has the chandasi form. This raises the question what chandas 'metrical text, hymn' means as a technical term in grammar. Thieme (1935: 67 ff,) proposes a specialized meaning "Saṃhitā text", i.e. Rgveda, Atharvaveda, Sāmaveda, and Yajurveda, as distinct from yajus, *brāhmaṇ*a, etc., and a generalized meaning "sacred literature". In Pāṇini's rules 6.1.209–210 chandas is contrasted with mantra. The avoidance of chandas forms in K suggests that chandas in Pāṇini was meant (or was understood) in the narrower sense as "Saṃhitā text".

## (2) Differences with respect to Vedic rules

- a. K has Nom. dyāvāpṛthivyau (1.4.1.26 etc.), M has contracted dyāvāpṛthivī. Similarly, K has trayyaḥ, aryaḥ, tāvatyaḥ, janvaḥ, M has trayīḥ, arīḥ, tāvatīḥ, janūḥ. For Pāṇini, K's forms are obligatory outside of chandas, where M's contracted forms are preferred by 6.1.106 vā chandasi.
- b. K uses the oblique stem *śiras* 'head', M has *śīrṣ*an- (C 38), which Pāṇini 6.1.60 *śīrṣaṃś* chandasi restricts to chandas.
- c. Loc.Sg. usually K -i, M -ø, e.g. *ātmani*, *ātman* (C 38). P 7.1.39 restricts the -ø (luk) ending to chandas.
- d. K paraphrases M's Vedic -tavai infinitives with other, synonymous constructions (C 47). P 3.4.9 restricts -tavai to chandas.
- e. K replaces perfects of desideratives and intensives by periphrastic forms (C 48), as prescribed by P 3.3.35 amantre, which excludes Brāhmaṇas: K apācikramiṣām cakāra, M apācikramiṣat 'wanted to run away'.
- f. K dugdhe, duhate, *śerate*, sa*m*vidrate, M duhe, duhre, *śere*, sa*m*vidre (C 43). P 7.1.41 restricts the M forms to chandas.
- g. Kāplutya, Māplūya. P 6.4.58 restricts the M form to chandas.
- h. K akṣyau, M akṣiṇī. P 7.1.77 restricts the M form to chandas.
- i. Exceptions: K several times uses -tos infinitives with *purā* and *ā*, where M has a regular noun, e.g. K *purā* vaptoḥ, aitasmād hotoḥ, M purā vapanāt, aitasya homāt. P 3.4.16 allows the -tos infinitives only in chandas (and with a few roots, including hu but not vap).
- j. K āvam, M āvām (C 42). 7.2.88 only requires the long vowel in the bhāṣā 'colloquial language'.
- According to THIEME (1935: 67 ff.) mantra is a cover term for rc 'Vedic stanza' and yajus 'sacrificial formula in prose'.

In view of the K's tendency to modify the text in a generally Pāṇinian direction, it is interesting to check out how it handles the facts covered by Pāṇini's optional rules. If  $v\bar{a}$  means "preferably" and  $vibh\bar{a}s\bar{a}$  means "preferably not" (na  $v\bar{a}$ , 1.1.44), i.e. "marginally", then K ought to seek out those options which Pāṇini introduces with  $v\bar{a}$  and avoid the  $vibh\bar{a}s\bar{a}$  options, as well as those tagged with  $v\bar{a}$  plus na continued by anuvrtti. This is indeed what we find.

## (3) Differences with respect to optional rules

- a. In -ti-stems K has Dat.Sg. avaruddhaye, guptaye,  $\bar{a}gataye$  vs. M avaruddhyai, guptyai,  $\bar{a}gatyai$ , also Gen.Sg. anumateh, dhenoh vs. M anumatyāḥ, dhenvai (C 37). Pāṇini favors K's ghi inflection over M's  $nad\bar{i}$  inflection: 1.4.7 śeṣo ghy asakhi vs. 1.4.6 niti hrasvaś ca [5  $v\bar{a}$ ] [4 na] [3  $nad\bar{i}$ ] (PV 48 ff.)
- b. In -ī-stems K has Dat.Sg. śriye against M śriyai (C 37). The same preference applies.
- c. K nearly always has *prāk* for M's *prācīna* (C 50). P 5.4.8 introduces -*īna* as a disfavoured (*vibhāṣā*) option (PV 22).
- d. K has gerundive -ya over M's -tavya in the compound -udyam, M vaditavyam 'to be said' (C 48). By P 3.1.94 vāsarupo 'striyam, KyaP from 3.1.106 vadaḥ supi kyap ca is to be preferred to tavya by 3.1.96 tavyattavyānīyaraḥ (PV 27 ff.). K hāryam M kartavyam 'to be done', K prāśyam M prāśitavyam 'to be eaten'; K's usage preferred by 3.1.124 rhalor nyat. A reverse case in K hartavyam M karyam.
- e. K girati, M gilati (C 37). M's usage is marginal by 8.2.21 *aci vibhāṣā* (PV 169).
- f. K ayatayamani, M ayatayamni. Deletion of the vowel in the Loc.Sg. of -an stems is marginal by P 6.4.134 *vibhāṣā niśyoḥ*.
- g. K *adarśam*, M *adrākṣ*am. P 3.1.57 *irito vā* makes K's aN the preferred option after roots marked with diacritic IR.
- h. K *adya gopāyati*, M *adya gopāyiṣ*yati. For the proximate future, Pāṇini 3.3.6 prefers the present tense as in K.
- i. K (5.6.7.4) Pl. ajāvayaḥ 'goats and sheep', M. (4.5.5.4) Sg. ajāvikasya. M's singular is marginal by 2.4.12 vibhāṣā vṛkṣamṛgatṛṇadhānyavyañjanapa-śuśakunyaśvavaḍavapūrvāparādharottarāṇām.
- j. The opposite in K sādhu, M sādhvī: -ī- preferred by P 4.1.44 voto guṇa-vacanāt (PV 111).

In some cases, K 'hypermodernizes' the text, imposing a normal classical Sanskrit form even more advanced than the one allowed in the Aṣṭādhyāyī.

## (4) Hypermodern forms

- a. In K *ṛksāman*, M *ṛksāma* K uses the regular form. Although M's irregular alternant is provided for in the *nipātana* rule 5.4.77, K ignores it. Cf. K *āyatayāman*, M *āyatayāma*, where K uses the regular form.
- b. K once replaces the weak stem dat- 'tooth' by danta (C 39), which is standard in classical usage, though dat- is listed in the *nipātana* rule 6.1.63.

How did this affinity between Pāṇini and the Kāṇva recension of the Śatapatha Brāhmana arise? Pāṇini does not register the peculiarities of either recension, in the way that he carefully records noteworthy forms from the Kaṭha and Maitrāyanī Saṃhitās in his *nipātana* rules (Schroeder 1895). Noting this lacuna, Thieme (1935) reaffirmed Goldstücker's (1861) conclusion that Pāṇini did not know the White Yajurveda tradition.

It looks as though the Kāṇva and Mādhyaṃdina recensions are modernizations of an earlier Yajurveda which has not survived, but which was closer to the extant version of the Black Yajurveda, particularly the Kaṭha and Maitrāyanī Saṃhitās. Perhaps Pāṇini knew this lost text; it would be one candidate for the source of the untraced mantra and chandas forms cited in Pāṇini's nipātana rules. The Kāṇva recension in particular has been revised in the direction of a form of early Classical Sanskrit rather close to that described in the Aṣṭādhyāyī, apparently with ambitions to be the standard version, claimed to be purāṇaprokta (Vt. on 4.3.105),³ and reputedly spread through every part of India (sarvadeśeṣu vistṛtā, according to the Caraṇavyūha, Schroeder, p. XXIV). It must be one of the later products of the intense linguistic activity which led to the fixation of the Vedic śākhās with their attendant padapāṭhas, prātiśākhyas, and other editorial apparatus. As such it gives us another small glimpse into the grammarians' workshop, and helps us understand why variation was such a central issue for them.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Kielhorn's preface to Vol. II of the Mahābhāsya, reprinted in Vol. Ill, p. 16.

## Postscript

Added in proof: In her Text and Authority in the older Upaniṣads (2008), which came to my attention after this article was written, Signe Cohen argues that the Mādhyaṃdina recensionof the BĀU is the oldest extant Upaniṣadic text, and that the Kāṇva recension is a later revision of it (p. 94–98, 287). Her conclusion is based on the cases discussed above under (10), (2c), (2j), (3a), on instances of subjunctives in M where K has optatives or indicatives, and on a K emendation in BĀU 4.3.1 (not treated in my article). However, in (2j) and (3a) it is actually K that has the older forms, not M. The BĀU is undoubtedly old, but Caland seems to be right that the relation between its two recensions is not simply one of chronological priority.

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