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A note on Kashmir and orthodox Pāṇinian grammar*

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In an article that came out in 1983 I proposed the following translation for the first six of the ten verses¹ that are found at the end of the second Kāṇḍa of Bharṭṛhari's Vākyapadīya:²

When the Saṃgraha, upon reaching grammarians who in general liked abridgements and possessed little knowledge, had ceased to be studied, subsequently definite knowledge [regarding the Aṣṭādhyāyī] was not, according to [scholars] who did not use their intellect, to be found in the Mahābhāṣya, [a work] which had been composed by the guru Patañjali, thoroughly versed in different systems of knowledge, [the Mahābhāṣya] which is the basis of all sources of interpretational principles, which is unfathomable on account of its depth [but all the same] appearing shallow on account of its excellence.

When the work of the ṛṣi (Pāṇini), of which the defensive armour (*pratikañcuka*) [had been] the Saṃgraha, had been mutilated by Vaiji, Saubhava and Haryakṣa, because [in trying to understand it] they had followed their bare reasoning [not taking Patañjali's views as authoritative], the traditional knowledge of grammar — which, in the course of time, in the south, had fallen from the pupils of Patañjali, [and] existed [there] only in the form of the book (i.e., the Mahābhāṣya) — was made by Candrācārya and others, who followed the seed-like Bhāṣya, into a many-branched [tree] again, after they had obtained the [correct] traditional knowledge from the mountain-range (Himālaya?).

The interpretation that finds expression in this translation is based on the circumstance, pointed out in the 1983 article,³ that there is no evidence that Pāṇini's grammar was ever

* This note explores the possibility that Kashmir may have saved the now orthodox tradition of Pāṇinian interpretation. Since this is no occasion to chew the cud and repeat all the issues that have been raised in this connection, it can safely be accused of “self-serving eclecticism” (Aklujkar, 1991: 32 n. 13).

¹ Aklujkar (1978) is of the opinion that these ten verses were not written by Bharṭṛhari but by a student of his. I agree, but not for the same reasons. These are the concluding verses of the Vṛtti (so Aklujkar) which was probably written by someone different from Bharṭṛhari (here Aklujkar disagrees), perhaps one of his students.

² Bronkhorst, 1983: 392 ff. This is a translation of Vkp 2.481-486: *prāyeṇa saṃkṣeparucīn alpavidyāparigrahān / saṃprāpya vaiyākaraṇān saṃgrāhe 'stam upāgate // kṛte 'tha pātañjalīnā guruṇā ūrthadarśīnā / sarveṣāṃ nyāyabijānāṃ mahābhāṣye nibandhane // alabdhaḡādhe ḡāmbhīryād uttāna iva sauṣṭhavāt / tasmīn akṛtabuddhīnāṃ naivāvāsthita nīscayah // vaijisaubhavaharyakṣaiḡ śuṣkatarkānusāribhiḡ / āṛṣe vīplāvīte granthe saṃgrahapratikañcuke // yaḡ pātañjalīśiṣyebhyo bhraṣṭo vyākaraṇāḡamah // kālena dākṣīnātyeṣu granthamātro vyavasthitah // parvatād āḡamaḡ labdhvā bhāṣyabijānusāribhiḡ / sa nīto bahusākhatvaḡ candrācāryādībhiḡ punah //*. This is the text as it appears in Rau's critical edition, with one exception: verse 486 has *candrā*^o in Rau's edition, *candrā*^o here.

³ See further Bronkhorst, 2002; forthcoming.

neglected, but all the more that Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya was not considered authoritative during a certain period of Indian intellectual history.⁴ There is no need to take up this issue once again. However, in the 1983 article I too easily brushed aside the often discussed verse of Kalhaṇa's Rājatarāṅgiṇī (1.176) which, too, mentions both Candrācārya and the Mahābhāṣya. It is frequently understood to refer to a revival of Mahābhāṣya studies in Kashmir, most recently perhaps by Ashok Aklujkar in 1997, who states: "In Kashmir, there is a tradition, written down in the 12th century A.D., which tells us that the rulers of that region made attempts to revive Mahābhāṣya studies at three widely separated times." A closer inspection of the verse brings to light that this is not its only, nor indeed its most convincing, interpretation. Paul Thieme (1956: 20 [592] n. 48) arrived at something quite different. He accepted the following reading:

*candrācāryādibhir labdhvā deśāt tasmāt tadāgamaṃ /
pravartitaṃ mahābhāṣyaṃ svaṃ ca vyākaraṇaṃ kṛtam //*

and translated: "Candrācārya and others, after having received its oral tradition (its true traditional explanation) from that place, let start (brought to life) the Mahābhāṣya [again], and [Candra] made his own grammar." Thieme is aware of the variant *deśaṃ* for *deśāt*, which Vishva Bandhu's edition presents as the more common reading of the manuscripts.⁵ This would allow of the following translation (reading *labdhvādeśaṃ* < *labdhvā ādeśaṃ*): "Candrācārya and others, after having received instruction [and] its oral tradition (or perhaps better: after having received instruction, i.e., its oral tradition) from there, moved [the study of] the Mahābhāṣya forward, and [Candra] made his own grammar." Both interpretations suggest that the renewed study of the Mahābhāṣya took place in a region different from the one in which the tradition had been recuperated.

The question that poses itself in both these translations is: which is "that [place]"?⁶ Thieme had no doubts about the correct answer, stating, "'From that place' can, of course, only mean the Śiva [-temple], by which, according to Rājatarāṅgiṇī I 175, the preceding verse, King Abhimanyu crested the new town Abhimanyupura (... śaśāṅkāṅkāśekharaṃ viracayya ... abhimanyupuraṃ vyadhāt), that is: which he placed on a hill within or near the town." Having chosen this interpretation, he then continued: "The verse does not add anything relevant to what we know from Bhartṛhari, it has no particular historical interest ... : it contains nothing more than an attempt to interpret Bhartṛhari's *parvatāt* in majorem gloriam of the Śiva-temple founded by King Abhimanyu."

⁴ See also "Udbhata, grammarian and Cārvāka", elsewhere in this volume.

⁵ See also Stein, 1892: 9 n. 176.

⁶ Aklujkar (1991: 42 n. 40) accepts the reading *labdhvādeśaṃ tasmāt* and believes that *tasmāt* refers to King Abhimanyu. This is a strange belief — does it follow that Candra received instruction from the king himself? — but Aklujkar is more or less obliged to take this position in view of his conviction that an "ablative + *labh*" construction must refer to a person. This conviction has of course an effect on Aklujkar's interpretation of Vkp 2.486.

Thieme's conclusion depends essentially on an interpretation of the words (*deśāt*) *tasmāt* which is far from obvious. The preceding verse 1.175 primarily concerns the town Abhimanyupura, not the Śiva-temple with which it is crested. In other words, verse 1.176 may simply tell us that Candracārya obtained the oral tradition accompanying the Mahābhāṣya, perhaps in the form of instruction (*ādeśa*), from the town Abhimanyupura. Having obtained it from there, the text does not tell us where he made the study of the Mahābhāṣya move forward, nor where he composed his own grammar, but it seems licit to conclude that all this happened outside Kashmir. Kashmir, if we understand the verse in this way, was not in need of a revival of Mahābhāṣya studies, far from it. Quite on the contrary, Kashmir was the place where people like Candra, who wished to revive Mahābhāṣya studies elsewhere in India, would go because it was one, perhaps the one, region where this oral tradition was still alive.

Thieme was probably right in assuming that Kalhaṇa was acquainted with verse 2.486 of the Vākyapadīya: the two verses have too many elements in common (*candrācāryādibhiḥ, labdhvā, āgamaṃ, (mahā-)bhāṣya*) to assume coincidence. This does not necessarily mean that verse 1.176 contains nothing more than an attempt to give an interpretation to Bhartr̥hari's *parvatāt* that would add to the glory of King Abhimanyu. Indeed, if this verse refers to a town rather than a temple, it cannot contain such an attempt. In that case it is a complete riddle why Kalhaṇa should have added the verse, which is not at all required by its context. The least we can conclude from it is that, in Kalhaṇa's opinion, Bhartr̥hari's *parvatāt* allowed of such an interpretation that it would not contradict the idea that Candra obtained the oral tradition of the Mahābhāṣya in a town in Kashmir. In other words, Kalhaṇa would probably approve of the translation proposed above for part of Bhartr̥hari's 2.486: "after they had obtained the [correct] traditional knowledge from the mountain-range (Himālaya)". The word *parvata* can mean "mountain-range", and is sometimes specifically used to designate the Himālayan mountain-range.⁷ The daughter of the Himālaya, moreover, is called Pārvatī "daughter of *parvata*". The town of Abhimanyupura was situated in Kashmir, and therefore within the northern mountain-range. Everything obtained from there could be considered as coming from the mountain-range, *parvatāt*.

There is no compelling reason to stop here. We may have no evidence to prove it, but it is certainly possible that the Rājatarāṅgiṇī, in spite of the critical remarks that have been addressed at it, did record in verse 1.176 a historical memory that had somehow survived.⁸ It is therefore possible that Kashmir had played a key-role in the preservation of the commentarial tradition associated with the Mahābhāṣya, a commentarial tradition which was in due time to become the only orthodox tradition of interpreting Pāṇini's grammar. This tradition was then, according to verse 2.486 of the Vākyapadīya as interpreted above,

⁷ So, for example, at Mhbh 3.36.22: *himavantam ... parvatam*.

⁸ Note in this connection that Kalhaṇa used a wide variety of historical sources, among them "eleven works of former scholars containing the chronicles of kings", other literary works, founding inscriptions of temples, royal charters of land donations, copper plate inscriptions, and coins; see Kulke, 2001: 74-75; Kölver, 1971: 2 ff.

introduced among the southerners where only the book, i.e. the Mahābhāṣya, had survived, but not the commentatorial tradition.

This understanding of the word *parvata* in Vkp 2.486 is helpful in interpreting another part of the preceding verse Vkp 2.485. This verse tells us, as we have seen, that the traditional knowledge of grammar, in the course of time, in the south, had fallen from the pupils of Patañjali, [and] existed [there] only in the form of the book (i.e., the Mahābhāṣya). “In the south” translates *dākṣiṇātyeṣu*, lit. among the southerners. Aklujkar (1991: 24 n. 3) is of the opinion that “it is reasonable to assume that in most Classical Indian uses of *dākṣiṇātya* the reference would be to persons or objects of the Dakṣiṇā-patha”. However, this word is derived (by P. 4.2.98) from the indeclinable *dakṣiṇā*, which is formed by P. 5.3.36 in the meaning “nearby towards the south” (*anuvṛtti* of *adūre* from rule 35). Strictly speaking, *dākṣiṇātyeṣu* means therefore “among those who live nearby towards the south”.⁹ If we read this in combination with the interpretation of *parvata* as Kashmir, we can conclude that the Mahābhāṣya had survived only in the form of the book south of Kashmir, whereas the oral tradition was still alive in Kashmir.¹⁰ Candra lived to the south of Kashmir (if not, he would not have to recuperate the oral tradition of the Mahābhāṣya from Kashmir), but Vkp 2.485-486 do not tell us where exactly.

We know from an “index fossil” in the Cāndra-vyākaraṇa¹¹ that its author or authors lived several days travel west of Kauśāmbī. The index fossil does not tell us whether he (or they) lived south-west, north-west or just plain west of that town.¹² The information it provides clearly agrees with the assumption that Candra lived south of Kashmir.

What can we conclude from all this? We cannot conclude from it with certainty that Kashmir played a key-role in preserving the tradition of Pāṇinian grammar that came to be the only orthodox one. This possibility cannot however be excluded, and the surviving textual evidence provides some evidence in support of it. The importance of the role possibly played by Kashmir can easily be underestimated if one is not aware of the shape Pāṇinian interpretation could take in circles that neglected the Mahābhāṣya. Knowledge about these alternative ways is nowadays hard to get at, and we depend on some few fragments and other minor indications. The grammatical fragments of Udbhāṭa (Bronkhorst, 2008) are unusually clear examples of what Pāṇinian grammar could come to in the hands of those free-thinkers.

⁹ For details, see Bronkhorst, 2004: 50

¹⁰ This scenario satisfactorily answers all the critical questions raised in Aklujkar, 1991: 5.

¹¹ Vkp 2.486 does not say that its Candracārya is the author of the Cāndra-vyākaraṇa. Rājatarāṅgiṇī 1.176 states that its Candracārya composed a grammar; this allows us to deduce that in Kālhaṇa’s opinion the Candracārya of Vkp 2.486 was the author of the Cāndra-vyākaraṇa. Kālhaṇa was probably right, for the Cāndra-vyākaraṇa closely follows Patañjali and obviously accepts his authority.

¹² See Bronkhorst, 2002: 195 f. That same publication shows (p. 182 ff.) that the two parts of the Cāndra-vyākaraṇa, the Sūtra and the Vṛtti, were conceived of together, so that either they had one single author or two who worked together. See further Aklujkar, 1991: 29 f. n. 11.

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Abbreviation:

Vkp

Bhartrhari, Vākyapadīya, ed. W. Rau, Wiesbaden 1977