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Veda –Vedāṅga and Avesta between Orality and Writing
Illiteracy as a socio-cultural marker

(published in: *Travaux de Symposium International “Le livre. La Roumanie. L’Europe”*. Troisième édition — 20 à 24 Septembre 2010. Tomes III: La troisième section — Etudes Euro- et Afro-Asiatiques. Bucarest: Bibliothèque de Bucarest. 2011. Pp. 44-56.)

Brahmanism is a conservative ideology. It has been so from the time it had to find a place in the world for itself after the political unification of northern India by rulers — the Nandas and the Mauryas — who had no sympathy for Brahmanism and no need for its services. Brahmanism preserved for ever after the memory of the good old days, when its services were part of the structure of the state. The new empires had destroyed all that, and the Brahmins did not like it.

Not surprisingly, the Brahmins did not like the new political structures either. Nor did they like any of the new phenomena that accompanied them. The Nanda and Maurya empires had been centred in Magadha, right in the middle of the region where South Asia’s second urbanisation was taking place at that time. The Mauryan capital, Pāṭaliputra, was a large city, according to some the world’s largest city at its time.¹ Obviously, the Brahmins detested towns and cities. They said so explicitly when forced to talk about them. More often, they adopted a different strategy: they did not mention them, they did as if there were no towns and cities.² Where possible, they depicted themselves in a world that was no longer there. In this respect (and to avoid misunderstanding, let me add: only in this respect), their behaviour was not dissimilar to that of another group that was obsessed with the past: the National-Socialists of the Third Reich. In the House of

¹ SCHLINGLOFF, Dieter, *Die altindische Stadt* (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur / Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1969) 29 f.

² BRONKHORST, Johannes, *Greater Magadha* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2007) 251 f.

German Art in Munich, opened by Hitler in 1937, there were hundreds of paintings; not one depicted urban and industrial life.³

Brahmanical literature of the period concerned, then, presents an [45] image of an ideal world that no longer existed (even if we assume that it ever existed). However, the presentation of this imaginary world was not only meant to preserve the memory of an idealized past; its other, equally important, purpose was to shape the future in accordance with brahmanical wishes. It is in this period of transition that a new notion pops up in brahmanical literature, that of the brahmanical hermitage (*āśrama*). Brahmins are depicted as living in these simple yet idyllic places, dedicating themselves to their vedic ritual duties, reciting mantras in the process. These hermitages appear in the literature right at the time when also gifts of land to Brahmins — the so-called *agrahāras* — begin to appear in literature and in the epigraphic record. It only makes sense to connect the two institutions: The literary *āśramas* functioned as encouragement for rulers and others close to the centres of political power to provide Brahmins with *agrahāras*, an encouragement that became extraordinarily successful in subsequent centuries. As was to be expected, brahmanical literature never suggests that *āśramas* were an innovation. Quite on the contrary, literature presents us with the idea that *āśramas* had always been there. This illustrates the fact that Brahmanism, even where it innovates, never admits that it does so. Brahmanism projects the image of preserving the past, even in cases where historical scholarship can show that it doesn't.

Many other examples could be cited to illustrate Brahmanism's refusal to admit that it innovates, even if it does. I will mention only one more, which I take from a forthcoming article by Madhav M. Deshpande: "While the doctrine of karmayoga 'Yoga of (unselfish) Action' as taught in the Bhagavadgītā may be historically a new post-Vedic development, Kṛṣṇa, at the beginning of the fourth chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, asserts that he as God taught this doctrine to Vivasvān at the beginning of creation, and that very same doctrine, which was handed down by the tradition (*paramparāprāpta*, BG 4.2), had been lost after a long interval (*sa kāleneha mahatā yogo naṣṭah*). The next verse asserts that it is

³ WATSON, Peter, *A Terrible Beauty* (London: Phoenix, 2004) 311-312.

exactly the same ancient (*sanātanaḥ*) doctrine that Kṛṣṇa is now teaching Arjuna.”

It will be clear from these and other examples that Brahmanism made a concerted effort to project a certain image of Brahmins and the world they live in. This world was partly based on an idealized memory of the past, partly it represented the present interests of those Brahmins. The ideal Brahmin had no truck with the corruptions of modern life, [46] such as city dwelling, the use of debased dialects (i.e., of languages other than Sanskrit), and much else. Instead he lived (or presented himself as living, or as wishing to live) in a pure and idyllic *āśrama*, he used Sanskrit, i.e. the original and pure language, and of course, he was not involved in activities such as writing.

This, I repeat, was the idealized picture that much of brahmanical literature projects. It follows that this literature is a rather poor source for those who wish to study ancient India’s city life, or the languages spoken, or indeed the use of writing.⁴ If we can derive information about these matters from brahmanical literature at all, then in spite of the efforts made by its authors.

Early brahmanical literature, then, is not the most reliable source of information with regard to such matters, and the conclusion that there were no cities when one text was composed, or no writing when another one was composed, simply because neither cities nor writing are mentioned in those texts, is based on very shaky foundations indeed. It would be comparable to the conclusion, based on the absence of depictions of urban and industrial life in the House of German Art in Munich in 1937, that there were no cities or industrial life in Germany at that time. To repeat it once again, this absence is, in both cases, based on ideology, not necessarily on historical fact.

⁴ HOUBEN, Jan E. M., “Transmission sans écriture dans l’Inde ancienne: énigme et structure rituelle,” *Écrire et transmettre en Inde classique*, ed. Gérard Colas & Gerdi Gerschheimer, Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2009: 82 n. 9 states: “Falk (1993: 255) cite un texte qui montre de façon incontestable que le prêtre n’emploie aucun texte écrit comme ‘secours’: selon B[audhāyana] Dh[arma] S[ūtra] 3.9.8-9, quelqu’un qui a oublié un passage de la Saṃhitā (et le mot *apratibhāyām* veut vraiment dire que le passage ne vient pas à l’esprit) doit réciter un [autre] texte sacré ...” This passage reveals nothing about the use of writing at the time of its composition; it is in perfect agreement with our observation that authors made an effort not to refer to writing.

It is in the light of these considerations that we must study early brahmanical literature. We know for sure that Pāṇini was acquainted with the existence of writing (he mentions it), and that not long after him Aśoka left numerous inscriptions all over the Indian subcontinent. If we add to this the disinclination within the brahmanical tradition to refer to writing, all conclusions about the oral nature of extensive brahmanical texts from the succeeding period (such as the Mahābhāṣya and the Mahābhārata, both longer than the Ṛgveda) cannot but be considered shaky and probably based on the desire to grind an axe about the supposedly miraculous mnemonic skills of the Indians of that time (for which no parallels can be cited from the Indian present or from other cultures). What is more, it means falling in the trap laid by the brahmanical tradition itself. [47]

Since I have dealt with the theme of literacy and illiteracy in ancient India in a published article,⁵ I will, in the remainder of this lecture, concentrate on what we might call, tongue in cheek, the trap — or rather traps — laid by the brahmanical tradition. The brahmanical tradition (like most traditions) had a vision of its past. Since it succeeded in imposing itself on virtually all parts of the Indian subcontinent (and to some extent on regions in Southeast Asia), the brahmanical vision of the past came to predominate, replacing whatever other visions there may have been. Since most of our sources for the early period are brahmanical, very little remains of those alternative visions. Indeed, there are few sources that would allow us to put the brahmanical vision of the past to the test. It is therefore not surprising that modern scholarship has for a long time taken the brahmanical claims about the past for granted, and more often than not this vision can only be corrected by means of a detailed study of all sources, including the inconvenient ones. For most of its history, modern indological scholarship has not questioned the assumption that brahmanical religion and culture constitute the background for whatever other religious and cultural movements appeared in subsequent centuries. Tracing the vedic sources of this or that phenomenon had become, and to some extent still is, the obligatory first step in the study of all

⁵ BRONKHORST, Johannes, “Literacy and rationality in ancient India,” *Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques* 56(4), 2002: 797-831. See further the appendix at the end of this article.

features of Indian civilization. I will briefly discuss one example: the Indian theatre.⁶

The books and other publications that try to trace the origins of the Indian theatre to vedic literature probably fill a book shelf, if not more. It is yet clear that nothing like the classical theatre is referred to in vedic literature, and that all those scholarly studies are far from having created anything like a consensus. It is equally clear that north-western India underwent strong hellenistic influence, due to the presence on Indian soil of the so-called Indo-Greeks during a number of centuries. The fondness of these Indo-Greeks for the theatre is known; their cultural influence in other respects — most notably astronomy and sculpture — uncontested. Scholars yet continue their search for brahmanical antecedents, showing thereby that they have fallen in the brahmanical trap, the claim that the origin of all that is worthwhile in India has to be looked for in the Veda.

Not only modern scholars fell in the trap (if you allow me to continue using this expression). The Brahmins themselves accepted their idealized visions of the past, but this is hardly surprising. It is one [48] of the characteristics of traditions, all traditions, that they share a vision about the past, from which their followers derive a sense of identity. The fact that the Buddhists of North India accepted this vision is much more interesting, for at first sight there was no reason for them to do so.

Buddhism did not arise in brahmanized surroundings. This is clear from an in-depth study of its early sources and a variety of indications found there and elsewhere.⁷ Buddhism arose and developed for a number of centuries in largely non-brahmanical surroundings. For half a millennium it expressed itself in Middle-Indic languages different from Sanskrit, and its texts present us a society free from the brahmanical hierarchy into Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras. Sanskrit, the brahmanical language, was not used in inscriptions either during this period, indicating that the brahmanical influence at the court remained minimal.

⁶ BRONKHORST, Johannes, “Sylvain Lévi et les origines du théâtre indien,” *Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques* 57(4), 2003: 793-811.

⁷ BRONKHORST, Johannes, *Greater Magadha* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2007).

Some five hundred years after the death of the Buddha this changed in northern India. Sanskrit started being used in political inscriptions, references to the brahmanical organization of society became frequent and, perhaps most surprisingly, the Buddhists of northern India started using Sanskrit. These and other features suggest that Brahmanism had gained access to the royal courts. Buddhism, which at that time had to look after a considerable number of monasteries, needed royal support to fulfil its obligations. In order to obtain this support, it adopted Sanskrit.⁸

Buddhism did however more than adopting Sanskrit. Along with it, it adopted the brahmanical vision of society. The buddhist authors who expressed themselves in Sanskrit now depicted the Buddha himself as having grown up in brahmanized surroundings, and his father as a king who was surrounded by Brahmin counsellors and who performed sacrifices. In other words, Buddhism adopted a vision of its own past that was not only factually wrong, but invented by Brahmanism.

Consider Aśvaghōṣa's *Buddhacarita*, which may belong to the first generation of Buddhist works directly composed in Sanskrit. It describes the life of the Buddha before his enlightenment. The society, and indeed the family, into which the Buddha is born is, according to this text, completely pervaded by Brahmanical ideas and customs. Not only does his royal father receive Brahmins to pronounce on the greatness of his new-born son,⁹ he has the birth ceremony (*jātakarman*) carried out, and [49] performs Vedic murmurings (*japa*), oblations (*homa*) and auspicious rites (*maṅgala*) to celebrate the event, all this followed by a gift of a hundred thousand cows to Brahmins.¹⁰ Also later he pours oblations into the fire and gives gold and cows to Brahmins, this time to ensure a long life for his son.¹¹ He drinks soma as enjoined by the Vedas.¹² He performs sacrifices,

⁸ Most interestingly, Jainism at that same time and roughly in the same part of the subcontinent did not receive royal support and did not adopt Sanskrit; see Bronkhorst, forthcoming a.

⁹ *Buddhac* 1.31 f.

¹⁰ *Buddhac* 1.82-83

¹¹ *Buddhac* 2.36.

¹² *Buddhac* 2.37.

even though only such as are without violence.¹³ He has a *purohita*,¹⁴ described as “in charge of the sacrifices” (*havya...adhikṛta*).¹⁵ King Śreṇya of Magadha gives friendly advice to the Bodhisattva, counseling him to pursue the triple end of life (*trivarga*), viz., pleasure (*kāma*), wealth (*artha*) and virtue (*dharma*), i.e. the three Brahmanical aims of life. Māra, the Buddha’s arch-enemy who tries to prevent him from attaining liberation, calls upon him to follow his *svadharma*.¹⁶ King Śreṇya points out that performing sacrifices is his *kuladharmā* “family obligation”.¹⁷ These and many other examples show, not just that Aśvaghōṣa was familiar with Brahmanism, but that he and his readers situated the Buddha in fully Brahmanized surroundings.

Aśvaghōṣa’s *Saundarananda* paints a similar picture of the Buddha’s father. He here studies the highest Brahman,¹⁸ makes the Brahmins press soma¹⁹ which he drinks,²⁰ sacrifices with the help of Brahmins,²¹ and is said to be a follower of the Veda.²² The *Saundarananda* also emphasizes the martial side of King Śuddhodana, a side which easily fits into a Brahmanical world-view, less smoothly into a Buddhist one. We read, for example, that the king “favoured those who submitted to him [and] waged war on the enemies of his race (*kuladvīṣ*)”.²³ He “took away from his foes their mighty fame”.²⁴ He “dispersed his foes with his courage”;²⁵ “by his holiness he put down the army of internal foes, [50] and by his courage his external foes”.²⁶ “With the heat of his courage he reduced proud foes to ashes”.²⁷

¹³ Buddhac 2.49.

¹⁴ Buddhac 4.8; 8.82, 87; 9.1 f.

¹⁵ Buddhac 10.1.

¹⁶ Buddhac 13.9.

¹⁷ Buddhac 10.39.

¹⁸ Saund 2.12.

¹⁹ Saund 2.31.

²⁰ Saund 2.44.

²¹ Saund 2.35-36.

²² Saund 2.44.

²³ Saund 2.10.

²⁴ Saund 2.16.

²⁵ Saund 2.29.

²⁶ Saund 2.36.

²⁷ Saund 2.39.

As a further example I take the *Jātakamālā* of Āryaśūra, composed probably in the fourth century CE, in Sanskrit.²⁸ This collection expresses itself more than once critically with regard to Brahmanical ideas about statecraft, yet the ideal king in the *Jātakamālā* behaves in accordance with Brahmanical principles. This is best illustrated in those stories in which the Bodhisattva himself is king. In this elevated position he carries out deeds of great liberality and compassion, which move him forward on his path toward Buddhahood. A king, we learn from these stories, pursues, even if he is an exceptionally good king, the three Brahmanical aims of life, the *trivarga*,²⁹ i.e., virtue (*dharma*), wealth (*artha*), and desire (*kāma*). In case of adversity, he takes advice from the Brahmin elders headed by his *purohita*.³⁰ He has mastered the essence of the triple Veda and of Brahmanical philosophy,³¹ has competence in the Vedas along with its *Aṅgas* and *Upavedas*.³² And the result of his perfect rule is that the inhabitants of his kingdom are characterized by love for their own Dharma (*svadharmā*).³³ Once again we see that the ideal king, in the *Jātakamālā* as in the *Buddhacarita* and *Saundarananda*, is basically a Brahmanical king, one who follows Brahmanical norms and customs.

These texts composed in Sanskrit contrast with comparable literature composed in Middle Indic. I must be brief with regard to the Suttas of the Pāli canon. They often refer to Brahmins. But these Brahmins live, like everyone else, in essentially non-Brahmanical surroundings. The situation presented in the works of Aśvaghoṣa and Āryaśūra is different: here everyone, including the Buddhists, lives in surroundings that are largely Brahmanized, in the sense that a number of Brahmanical norms and values with regard to kingship and society are the rule.

Aśvaghoṣa's detailed description of the Buddha's father as an ideal Brahmanical king contrasts sharply with other contemporary [51] biographies of

²⁸ KHOROCHE, Peter, *Once the Buddha was a Monkey* (Chicago – London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989) xi f.

²⁹ Jm(V) p. 7 l. 8; p. 71 l. 1 = Jm(H) p. 10 l. 8; p. 97 l. 5.

³⁰ Jm(V) p. 70 l. 20-21; Jm(H) p. 96 l. 23: *purohitapramukhān brāhmaṇavṛddhān [u]pāyaṃ papraccha*.

³¹ Jm(V) p. 55 l. 4; Jm(H) p. 75 l. 4: *trayyānvīkṣikyor upalabdhārthatattva*.

³² Jm(V) p. 217 l. 7-8: *sāṅgeṣu sopavedeṣu ca vedeṣu vaicakṣaṇyam*.

³³ Jm(V) p. 45 l. 25; p. 55 l. 4 = Jm(H) p. 63 l. 20; p. 75 l. 5.

the Buddha. The *Mahāvastu*, for all its length, has very little to say about Śuddhodana's accomplishments as a king. And the *Lalitavistara* presents him as an ideal Buddhist king, without using any Brahmanical terminology.³⁴ Indeed, it would seem that Aśvaghōṣa has himself invented the elaborate descriptions of the ideal kingship of the Buddha's father, perhaps with the conscious purpose of glorifying Brahmanical notions.

Interestingly, the Sanskrit texts of northern Buddhism were the first to reach European scholars when buddhist studies were in their infancy, in the nineteenth century. Eugène Burnouf's *Introduction à l'histoire du bouddhisme indien* was arguably "the single most important work in the history of the academic study of Buddhism" (Lopez, 2008: 170). It laid the basis for Buddhist studies in the West, and through it subsequent European scholars were breast-fed, so to say, on the "Sanskritic" vision of Buddhism's past. Burnouf based himself in this regard on the *Divyāvadāna*³⁵ and other northern texts, and it is not surprising that he concluded that Buddhism arose in a completely brahmanized society. By the time earlier Buddhist sources came to be studied in depth, this "Sanskritic" vision of Buddhism's past had become deeply anchored, far too deeply to be easily modified. In other words, modern scholarship had once again fallen in the Brahmanical trap, this time through the intermediary of the Buddhists of northern India.

Let me at this point admit that my terminology so far has been somewhat disrespectful and potentially misleading. To the best of our knowledge there were no consciously laid Brahmanical traps. But the examples discussed do show, I believe, that there is much in Brahmanical literature that may lead us astray in the historical investigation of ancient India, whether consciously invented for this purpose or not. As historians, we are obliged to be aware of this, and do what we

³⁴ Lal(V) p. 17 f.

³⁵ BURNOUF, E., *Introduction à l'histoire du bouddhisme indien* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1844/1876) 144: "... j'ai cru que je devais exposer les résultats que m'a donnés la lecture attentive des six cent soixante et quatorze pages du Divya avadana. Je ne crois pas trop m'avancer en disant que si l'on n'y doit pas trouver une exposition tout à fait complète du Bouddhisme, on y verra au moins l'histoire fidèle de ses premiers efforts, et comme le tableau exact de son établissement au sein de la société brâhmanique."

can to avoid the pitfalls that Brahmanical literature presents us with. On no account are we excused to join the Brahmanical camp in glorifying a past that probably never existed. This is, as it seems to me, a worthwhile reflection when studying Veda -Vedāṅga between Orality and Writing.

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With this in mind, let us return to the question of writing in the early Brahmanical texts. Writing is as a rule still not mentioned in Brahmanical texts that were yet composed well after writing had become wide-spread in India, even in Brahmanical circles.³⁶ This is true of the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra*, better known as *Manusmṛti*. Olivelle (2005: 24-25) has argued that this text dates from the 2nd to 3rd centuries CE, and further research confirms that this may indeed be its date.³⁷ At this time writing was used, also by Brahmanical authors. And yet, the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* only refers to writing as it was used in certain legal documents, never as the means by which it itself had been laid down.³⁸ Few would conclude from this that the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* was a text that had been composed and was handed down only orally. The text simply continues the tradition of pretending that important Brahmanical compositions had no truck with writing. Similar things could be said about the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*, whose chronological relationship to the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* remains obscure. This text, too, refers to written evidence in judicial proceedings, but to no other contexts in which writing had its place (as, presumably, in composing and studying the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*).

Appendix on Pāṇini and writing

³⁶ Saraju Rath informs me that the earliest surviving depiction in sculpture of a Brahmanical scribe occurs in Nagarjunakondi and dates from the third century CE.

³⁷ BRONKHORST, Johannes, *Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, forthcoming), Appendix to chapter III.3.

³⁸ HOFER, Denise, *Le Brahmanisme face à l'écriture* (Lausanne: Université de Lausanne, 2009).

Hartmut Scharfe's recent book *A New Perspective on Pāṇini* (2009) contains a passage whose relevance for the question of Pāṇini's acquaintance with writing justifies it to be quoted at length (pp. 69-71):

Many of Pāṇini's rules are formulated so dense that it is not easy to see how they could be pronounced, let alone be understood and applied. ... VII 2 5 ... *hmyanta-kṣana-śvasa-jāgr-ṇi-śvy-editām* ... must have been recited slowly: *h-m-y-anta* ... to be understandable. In VI 1 3 ... *na ndrāḥ saṃyogādayaḥ* ... similarly *n-d-rāḥ* must have been recited very slowly. Difficult would also be the distinction of two nasals in VII 2 115 *aco ṇṇiti*.

What may be difficult becomes virtually impossible when two stops are involved. In III 4 107 Pāṇini wanted to teach that personal endings beginning with /t/ or /th/ receive an augment /s/ (*su'*); but [53] a genitive dual **t-th.oḥ* would have been more than difficult to pronounce. Rule III 4 107 therefore appears as *suṭ tith.oḥ*. In VIII 2 38 he referred to a suffix beginning with /t/ or /th/ instead with *tath.oḥ* ... In VII 2 104 ... *ku tih.oḥ* ... Here again **t-h.oḥ* would be difficult to pronounce let alone be understood properly. None of the endings referred to in III 4 107 (viz. *-ta*, *-tam*, *-thas*, *-tham*) justifies the 'ti' of Pāṇini's sūtra, nor do the endings referred to in VII 2 104 (*ku-taḥ*, *ku-tra*, *ku-ha*). If the /i/ in III 4 107 (*ti-th.oḥ*) and in VII 2 104 (*ti-h.oḥ*) do not represent an /i/ in the object language (i.e., Sanskrit), they could be tags, bound to vanish as the Sanskrit words emerge. They would have been marked with a nasal pronunciation that was subsequently lost. No unwanted forms would result, since no tag /i/ is taught except in connection with roots. We would have a vacuous application; the commentators explain the insertion of /i/ as *uccāraṇārtham* "for the sake of pronunciation".

But this explanation would not be acceptable in other cases, e.g. in VI 1 71 *hrasvasya piti kṛti tuk* ... The augment /t/ is tagged with a ^k which indicates that the /t/ is added at the end of the root. But what is the status of /u/ in *tu^k*? It is not a valid sound of the word in the object language (i.e., Sanskrit), and it cannot be a tag because of unwanted consequences. A tag " indicates that a stop denotes its whole class, i.e. *tu* denotes /t, th, d, dh, n/, except when it is a suffix: I 1 69 *aṇ-udit savarṇasya cāpratyayaḥ*. Since *tu^k* is not a suffix, we would get the undesired form *sarva-jith*, *sarvajid*, etc. along with the correct *sarva-jit*. The correct form of Pāṇini's sūtra should be *hrasvasya piti kṛti t^k*.

In the aorist form *apaptat* "he fell" Pāṇini did not recognize the reduplication of the root \sqrt{pat} ; he assumed an infix /p/ (i.e., *apa[p]tat*) that is tagged with an ^m to mark it as a infix: VII 4 19 ... *pataḥ pu^m* ... Again, *pu* would include not only /p/, but also /ph, b, bh, m/ which is not desired. The correct form of Pāṇini's sūtra should be *pataḥ p^m*.

In Pāṇini's sūtra III 1 108 *hanas ta ca* ... the correct form should be *hanas t ca*. It is obvious, I think, that *hrasvasya piti kṛti tk*, *pataḥ pm* and *hanas t ca* would be difficult to pronounce and even harder to understand

— or to apply correctly. But with slow and careful recitation and proper explanation the listener could grasp the meaning of the rules.

As is clear from Scharfe's last sentence, he proposes that a number of Pāṇinian sūtras were initially not pronounced as they are now. [54] To explain the present form of these sūtras, he suggests that the process of writing them down at a later time is responsible for the distortions. This is not however true for all of them: some unpronounceable sūtra have survived in their original shape: *hmyanta-* ..., *... na ndrāḥ* ..., *aco ṅṅiti*.

Scharfe is convinced that Pāṇini composed his grammar orally, without the help of writing. If one considers the option that it may not have been composed orally,³⁹ another explanation for these noteworthy features becomes possible. In that case one may consider that Pāṇini wrote all these sūtras in their unpronounceable shape, so that none of the difficulties and possible confusions pointed out by Scharfe presented themselves, because unpronounceability would not be an obstacle.

However, Pāṇini's grammar would also be recited, not least because Brahmanism came to cultivate the image of a tradition independent of writing. And the relative weight given to the recited version of the text may then have turned the oral text into its orthodox version, in spite of the contradictions and potential confusions that could result from this.⁴⁰

This way of viewing the matter frees us from the obligation to postulate that early recitation of Pāṇini's grammar was particularly slow and careful. The supposition that Pāṇini could write unpronounceable sequences such as *tk*, *pm* and *tca* poses no problem once we assume that he could write *hmyanta*, *na ndrāḥ* and *aco ṅṅiti* (which we have to if we believe that Pāṇini used writing for composing his grammar).

³⁹ Note that Michael Witzel, in his contribution to the conference, proposed a connection between the making of Padapāṭhas (of which at least one, that of the *Ṛgveda*, is older than Pāṇini) and writing, without however going quite to the extent of suggesting (as I had done in 1982; see also 2002) that the Padapāṭha of the *Ṛgveda* was actually its written version.

⁴⁰ Scharfe adds a further example on p. 114: a short *a* is added to four of the five roots enumerated in P. 7.2.57 *kṛta-cṛta-cchṛda-trḍa-nṛtaḥ*. For Scharfe this short *a* is a non-phonemic sound, for us a sound that the exigencies of recitation added, and which subsequent tradition came to look upon as authoritative.

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Abbreviations:

Buddhac	Aśvaghōṣa, <i>Buddhacarita</i> , ed. and transl. E. H. Johnston, Calcutta 1935
[55]	
Jm(H)	Āryaśūra, <i>Jātakamālā</i> , ed. A. Hanisch, Marburg 2005 (IndTib 43/1)
Jm(V)	Āryaśūra, <i>Jātakamālā</i> , ed. P. L. Vaidya, Darbhanga 1959 (BST 21)
Lal(V)	Lalitavistara, ed. P. L. Vaidya, Darbhanga 1958 (BST 1)
Saund	Aśvaghōṣa, <i>Saundarananda</i> , ed. and transl. E. H. Johnston, Oxford 1928-32