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COMPOSITIONAL HISTORY OF PĀṆINI'S KĀRAKA THEORY

Резюме. В статье обосновывается гипотеза о текстологической неоднородности древнеиндийской грамматики Панини. В частности, обращается внимание на разительные несоответствия в грамматическом описании и терминологии, которые наблюдаются в сутрах, посвященных вопросу семантических ролей и падежей (прежде всего в секции *kāraḥ*, а также в других отделах). Разница в теоретическом подходе настолько сильная, что кажется логичным заключить, что имеющийся сегодня текст — результат наслоения теорий нескольких авторов.

Ключевые слова: древнеиндийская грамматическая традиция, Панини, текстология Аштадхьяи, семантические роли и падежи.

1. Introductory remarks

The question of philology, textual analysis and compositional history of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* has provoked long-standing debates among Pāṇinian scholars in the last decades. For a long time the opinion prevailed that Pāṇini's grammar has been perfectly preserved in its original shape, while any conjecture of textual stratification or interpolation hypothesis was rejected in advance. Though a critical analysis of the extant manuscripts is still lacking, many authoritative scholars have claimed that the received text is virtually identical with the original one, and that the manuscripts do not exhibit relevant variations (e.g. Renou 1969: 484). This uncritical philological approach falls perfectly within the "myths of Pāṇinian studies" recently discussed in an insightful paper by J. Houben (2003). However, already from a general point of view, the claim for textual integrity cannot be accepted: no text of Antiquity—not even in India—has preserved exactly its original wording, and Pāṇini's grammar would hardly be an exception. Moreover, from very ancient times many instances of textual corruption in the official text of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* have been observed by the indigenous grammarians (see Iyer 1983 for a collection of such cases), though this fact was scarcely

considered significant for the preservation of the grammar. The traditional scholars, indeed, have always been confident of their capacity to restore the original wording of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* on the ground only of the knowledge of *what* was described in it—i.e., the Sanskrit language—and *how* the description would be shaped in order to describe it perfectly. Since every change in the text of the grammar would lead to mistakes in the description of Sanskrit, it seemed to them a simple task to emend the possible errors and to restore the right description.

At the beginning of modern Pāṇinian studies only very few philologists (primarily F. Kielhorn) dealt with textual problems, mainly, but not only, from a methodological point of view; however, the common traditionalist view remained. Unfortunately, the most reliable edition of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* until now remains Böhlingk's translated edition, and little, if any, textual criticism has been made on the manuscripts. Therefore, scholars can mostly postulate secondary hypotheses regarding the compositional history of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* based on some extra-textual ground (cf. Aklujkar 1983: 1). More recently, in such papers as Bahulikar (1973), Birwé (1955, 1958), Butzenberger (1995), Joshi, Roodbergen (1983), Iyer (1983) and Keidan (2007) the dogma of textual integrity has been questioned, and several interpolations have been hypothesized; see also the criticism by Cardona (1999: § 2.1.2.3).

In the present paper I wish to apply the principles elaborated by preceding scholars (especially by Joshi, Roodbergen 1983). I shall attempt to reconstruct the compositional history of the syntactic sections of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, corresponding to the *sūtras* describing the formation of the simple sentence starting from basic semantic categories and the morphological inflectional classes expressing them, namely the *sūtras* 1.4.23 to 1.4.55 dealing with the definitions of *kāraka* categories, and the *sūtras* 2.3.1 to 2.3.73 dealing with *vibhaktis* 'case-from categories'. My main claim is that these sections of the grammar must be considered heavily interpolated, since several parts of them are so strongly inconsistent with one another from a theoretical point of view that they must be considered mutually exclusive.

2. On methodology

As a general principle, I have considered (following Bahulikar 1973: 80) the text of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* per se as the only relevant data, getting rid of all what we know from later discussions and comments made by ancient commentators and grammarians (which can serve, at most, as indirect evidence). Furthermore, I assume that Joshi and Roodbergen's (1983) criteria for the individuation of textual interpolations in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* are correct in essence, at least as a general guideline. These criteria are listed below in a lightly modified and expanded form. Thus, a rule may be considered possibly interpolated if:

- (a) it presents theoretical inconsistencies with other parts of the grammar;
- (b) it interrupts the logical order of the *sūtras*, inserting unrelated material in an otherwise homogenous thematic section;
- (c) it shows an inconsistent use of metalinguistic markers and terminology;
- (d) it presents discrepancies in phrasing, style and mutual disposition of the *sūtras*;
- (e) it is formally or theoretically paralleled by other ancient Indian texts and/or schools, e.g. parallelism between the *mīmāṃsāka* tradition and certain *sūtras* of the *kāraka* section suggested by Butzenberger (1995);
- (f) it prescribes unattested Sanskrit forms, e.g. the *sūtras* 2.3.57–60 dealing with case government rules that are unattested in Classical Sanskrit and found only in Prakrits, see Speijer (1886: 90);
- (g) it mentions unattested lexical meanings—and ones even totally unintelligible without the purport of later commentaries—as a condition for the application of a rule;
- (h) it is a *paribhāṣā* 'metarule of the grammar': such kinds of rules are mostly provided by later commentators, and only some of them entered the received text of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*;

- (i) it is considered, by the ancient scholarship, as a quotation from a *pūrvācārya* 'preceding author' or as an emendable rule;
- (j) it lacks a direct or indirect mention in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, being a later interpolation still unknown to this commentator when he composed his glosses; however, this argument is considered insufficient or totally inconsistent by some more traditional scholars (see Cardona 1976: 158).

For my concern here, the most important criterion of those listed above is the first one. My claim is that the theoretical contradictions within the sections dealing with *kāra*kas *vibhaktis* are so strong that we are forced to hypothesize a manifold authorship for them. This approach is not unprecedented. The most known example of the application of this criterion is Joshi and Roodbergen's (1983) hypothesis on the interpolated nature of the *taddhita* 'secondary derivation' and *samāsa* 'compounding' sections of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, both of which would have been added to the main text in a later period (at least later than the *kr̥t* 'primary derivation' section, which is claimed to pertain to the original version of the grammar). The major evidence for such a hypothesis is a theoretical one, namely a difference in the way the semantic conditions for the application of morphological rules are stated (see below for a detailed analysis).

3. The functioning of the *kāra*ka-device

Generally speaking, *kāra*ka categories roughly correspond to what today's linguists call *semantic roles* or, to some extent, even to the *macro-roles* (for these notions see Van Valin and Lapolla 1997: chap. 4). The *kāra*kas are six in number and have essentially semantic definitions, though the most important *kāra*ka, i.e. the so-called *karṭṛ* 'agent', could be considered, from a certain point of view, more similar to a syntactic entity, namely the subject, since it is defined as *svatantra* 'the independent one' (for a detailed discussion of possible modern equivalents for Pāṇinian syntactic categories in the light of modern Functionalism see Keidan forthcoming b). Besides the

karṭṛ, the other *kāraḥ* categories, listed in the traditional order, are: *apādāna* ‘source’, *saṁpradāna* ‘receiver’, *karāṇa* ‘instrument’, *adhikarāṇa* ‘location’ and *karman* ‘patient’. Each *kāraḥ*, it is taught, has many possible morphological expressions. Interestingly, the finite verbal terminations are considered one such possibility, but we are more interested here in the other possible expression, namely the nominal case-form endings called *vibhakti*. The latter are similar to our grammatical cases, except for the fact that their nomenclature is purely formal and avoids any semantic reference. The *vibhakti* terms are based on their serial number within the standard sequence of cases: *prathamā* ‘first’, *dvitīyā* ‘second’, *tṛtīyā* ‘third’, *caturthī* ‘fourth’, *pañcamī* ‘fifth’, *ṣaṣṭī* ‘sixth’ and *saptamī* ‘seventh’, corresponding, respectively, to *nominative*, *accusative*, *instrumental*, *dative*, *ablative*, *genitive* and *locative*. Each *kāraḥ* has a standard or “canonical” *vibhakti* realization: thus, the *karṭṛ* is taught to be primarily expressed by the instrumental case, the *karman* by the accusative, etc. Notice, however, that, besides a certain privileged status of *kāraḥ*’ canonical *vibhakti* realizations, there is no one-to-one relationship between *kāraḥ* roles and the *vibhaktis*: each *kāraḥ* may be expressed by more than one case-form; similarly, each *vibhakti* expresses several semantic functions, not even limited to *kāraḥ*.

Thus, Pāṇini’s most brilliant achievement in the field of syntax amounts exactly to this treatment of semantic categories as separate entities with respect to their morphological realization. Such a clear-cut differentiation of the two sides of the language—the plane of forms and the plane of functions—remains unparalleled in any other ancient grammatical tradition, and has been fully attained by western linguistics only in the last few decades, particularly, as far as the sentence arguments realization is concerned, after the formulation of the Deep Case theory by Ch. Fillmore (1968).

However, if we take into account not only the definitions of the *kāraḥ* categories, but also the other rules of this section, where the primary definitions are emended and enlarged, the situation changes: the separation between the forms and the functions becomes far less accurate and rigid. The general tendency in this respect was to identify the *kāraḥ* with their canonical *vibhakti* realization and, eventually, to replace

completely the former with the latter. This is what happened, according to Joshi and Roodbergen's (1983) analysis, to the *taddhita* section where the *vibhakti* terms are used as if they were equivalent to the *kāra*kas 'semantic roles', in order to indicate the semantic constraints on compound formation. In the *taddhita* section even the *vibhakti* terms seem to be disclaimed: instead, inflected pronouns are used in order to denote their own case-form category, and therefore the related semantic role, as a constraint to the application of certain secondary nominal suffixes.

It must be stressed that the abovementioned approaches to one and the same linguistic material—namely, the morphological coding of sentence arguments—are so antithetical as to induce the hypothesis of a possible difference in the authorship. The separation of the forms and the functions represents a revolutionary paradigm change in linguistics that should not be underestimated. A sudden abdication of this principle must be considered strong evidence for textual interpolation. Thus, my claim is that the present text of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* is to be analyzed in different theoretical strata put together only in a later period lying between Pāṇini's time and the earliest extant ancient commentary, namely the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali. Indeed, it seems impossible for one and the same author to have adopted so many contradictory positions inside one and the same grammatical treatise.

4. Theoretical layers in the syntactic rules of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*

What follows is a mere listing of the relevant theoretical layers. The listing itself does not imply very much regarding the relative chronology of the corresponding textual strata. However, the succession of the list entries is obviously not random, and could be taken as a preliminary approximation of the historical development of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.

The *first* and most "primitive" layer, which can be called the "proto-*kāraka* layer", corresponds to the *kāraka* terms in their "etymological" or "everyday" meaning. Already the ancient tradition considers them borrowings that Pāṇini inherited from some *pūrvācāryas* 'preceding authors' of whom

we know little. Genuine Pāṇinian terminology, indeed, is usually made of meaningless marks and abbreviations. The etymological meanings of *kāraka* terms vaguely recall the semantic definition of the relating *kāra*kas. Hypothetically, in a pre-Pāṇinian period, the *kāraka* terms were conceived as self-explanatory (as similarly the European case nomenclature), and were probably used for both semantic and morphological categories, i.e. semantic roles and grammatical cases, with no clear distinction yet between the two planes of the language.

The *second* layer corresponds to the standard *kāraka/vibhakti* framework. Pāṇini takes the pre-existing *kāraka* terms, gets rid of their “etymological” interpretation, gives them some abstract, clear-cut, but still semantic definitions, and puts them into correlation with *vibhaktis*. The latter are given their “numbering” names, and put into a special section of the grammar where all their uses are listed. Thus, the opposition between semantics and morphology is, for the first time in history, clearly stated and observed (notice that such level of sophistication has been reached by western linguists only in the second half of the 20th century).

Let us take as an example the definition of *karṭṛ* ‘agent’ (or ‘actor’, if we accept the view of *kāra*kas as macro-roles), which is qualified as *svatantra* ‘self-standing, independent’. This definition has generated long-standing debates among traditional Indian grammarians, but could simply be an attempt to provide a more general definition of this semantic role, going beyond the literal meaning of ‘doer’. Only with such a broadened definition could some peripheral semantic roles, such as experiencer (i.e., the one who experiences a feeling), be subsumed into the greater category of the macro-role. The *karṭṛ* is expressed by either *kṛt* ‘primary suffixes’, such as the suffix *-aka*, or finite verb endings, such as the 3rd person singular active *-ti*, or some *vibhakti* ‘nominal case-form’, primarily the *tṛtīyā* ‘third one’, i.e. the instrumental case, but sometimes also by the *ṣaṣṭhī* ‘sixth one’, i.e. the genitive case.

Soon after the establishment of the *kāraka/vibhakti* device the definitions of *kāraka* started to be emended and enlarged, partly because the original general and abstract sense of the primary definitions was not understood anymore. Thus, the degradation of the theory of *kāra*kas began. Initially this

process did not result in a change of the theoretical approach, since the *kāra*kas were still conceived as semantic categories, not yet fused with morphological ones. However, already Patañjali noticed that such rules were useless, since the additional semantic definitions could be metaphorically deduced from the primary ones. For example, at some point, the ancient commentators disregarded the real sense of Pāṇini's definition of *karman* as *īpsitatama* 'the most desired' (which, in its original formulation, was probably intended as something similar to what modern linguistics calls *undergoer* macro-role). They started to interpret this *sūtra* in its literal sense, thus implying an excessively restrictive characterization of this macro-role. Therefore two *sūtras* were added (1.4.50–51), in order to provide a better definition thereof (it was stated, e.g., that the undergoer happens also to be 'undesired'). It has been convincingly suggested by Butzenberger (1995) that this interpolation was made under the influence of the *mīmāṃsā*ka tradition and its terminology.

The *third* theoretical layer surfaces in those rules where the *kāra*ka categories are identified with corresponding canonical *vibhakti* realizations. At the beginning it was only an implicit tendency, and the *kāra*ka terms were still in use, though the distinction between semantics and morphology was being blurred. At this stage, given a certain primary semantic definition of a *kāra*ka, some rules were added where the semantic definition of a *kāra*ka was changed and/or the *kāra*ka category assignments underwent a modification depending on a certain case-form governed by some verb that had to be accounted for. On the contrary, within the standard *kāra*ka/*vibhakti* framework, all such cases would have been treated in the *vibhakti* section, simply as alternative expressions of a given *kāra*ka.

Let us analyze the *sūtra* 1.4.43 *divaḥ karma ca* as an example. It describes the fact that the verb *div* 'to gamble' can optionally code with the accusative—instead of instrumental—the argument corresponding to 'what is gambled with'. In the view of the standard *kāra*ka/*vibhakti* framework, it would be simply a case of alternative coding of a *kāra*ka, to be taught in the *vibhakti* section. According to the commentators, instead, the *sūtra* means that, with the verb *div*, what seems a *karāṇa*

may also be optionally classified as *karman*. The implicit reasoning here seems to have been the following. a) The instrument of an action is primarily classified as *karāṇa* by 1.4.42 *sādhakatamaṇi karāṇam*; b) the verb *div* exhibits an argument matching the semantics of the *karāṇa* category; c) the canonical *vibhakti* realization of the *karāṇa* is the instrumental case by 2.3.18 *kartṛkarāṇayos tṛtīyā*; d) the *karāṇa* argument of the verb in question, however, may also be coded by the accusative; e) the accusative case is taught to be the canonical realization of another *kāraka* category, namely *karman* by 2.3.2 *karmaṇi dvitīyā*; f) ergo, the semantics of an instrumental argument must be classified, limited to the verb *div*, as belonging to the category of *karman* instead of *karāṇa*. In other words, according to this new approach, whatever stands in the accusative case-form must be automatically considered a *karman*. Therefore, the privileged one-to-one relationship between a *kāraka* and its canonical realization brought about a complete fusion of these two planes of the language.

It may be noted that many of the *sūtras* pertaining to this theoretical layer also exhibit some of the features listed at § 2 above that substantiate their interpolated origin. Thus, exactly half of them are not mentioned in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*. The *sūtra* 1.4.38 uses a non-standard terminology: only here the term *upasrṣṭa* is used to denote a 'prefixed verb' (Sharma 1990: 249). *Sūtras* 1.4.34, 1.4.39 and 1.4.40 rely completely on otherwise unattested verbal meanings.

The *fourth* layer is the one to be found in the sections devoted to *samāsa* 'compounding', and in some other rules, where the *kāraka/vibhakti* distinction seems to be completely abandoned. While *kārakas* are not mentioned at all, the *vibhakti* terms are used here in order to express semantic functions totally undistinguishable from the corresponding morphological classes. Effectively, every *kāraka* is indicated by its canonical *vibhakti* realization. The *vibhakti* terms are used as such, or in composition with the word *arthe* 'in the meaning of'. Thus, the *sūtra* 2.1.37 *pañcamī bhayena* teaches the formation of compounds whose first member is intended in the sense conveyed by the *pañcamī* 'fifth case' (i.e. ablative), hence the *apādāna* 'source' semantic role (e.g. *caurabhayaṃ* 'fear of thieves').

The *fifth* layer is the one attested in the *taddhita* section as well as in some of the *paribhaṣā*sūtras 'meta-rules' of the grammar. Here, even the *vibhakti* terms are no longer in use. In order to refer to both semantic roles and case categories inflected pronouns are used: they indicate "iconically" their own case category, which, in its turn, refers to the corresponding semantic role (as in the preceding layer). A good example is that of the *paribhaṣā*sūtras defining the metalinguistic case-forms. Thus, *sūtra* 1.1.67 *tasmād ity uttarasya* defines the "left context ablative" (referred to as *tasmād* 'from that'); *sūtra* 1.1.66 *tasminn iti nirdiṣṭe pūrvasya* defines the "right context locative" (referred to as *tasmīn* 'in that').

Interestingly, this layer is paralleled in the western grammatical tradition. Inflected indicative or interrogative pronouns symbolizing the corresponding case-forms have been used as a descriptive and didactic means starting from Ancient Greek and Latin grammarians (see Belardi, Cipriano 1990: chap. III) up to modern times. Even today, the case-forms are sometimes taught as "answers" to some "questions", which the pupils are supposed to know by heart. Thus, B. Liebich (1886: 209, 215) glossed the *kāra*ka categories precisely in this way: «Das *karman* antwortet daher auf die fragen 'wen' oder 'was' und bei der bewegung auf die frage 'wohin'»; «Das *sampradāna* antwortet daher auf die fragen 'wem' oder 'für wen'», etc.

Regarding the post-Pāṇinian developments, it must be noted that the idea of a radical *kāra*ka/*vibhakti* distinction was often partly or completely disregarded within the grammatical schools which arose outside the strictly Pāṇinian tradition (see Butzenberger 1995: 54). For instance, in Candragomin's grammar, the *vibhakti* categories and terminology prevailed for both morphology and semantics (as in our fourth layer). On the other hand, in the *Kātantra* tradition a more etymological interpretation of *kāra*ka terms was restored (similarly to our first layer). For example, the *karman* is defined here by the *sūtra* 2.4.13 *yat kriyate tat karma* 'what is being done that is *karman*' (since the latter is a passive formation from the root *kṛ* 'to do'). Eventually, an intelligent synthesis of Pāṇini's *kāra*ka/*vibhakti* device is to be found in the *Saddanīti*, an indigenous grammar of Pāli. Thus, the *sūtra* 551 defines the

patient role as follows: *yaṁ kurute yaṁ vā passati taṁ kammaṁ* ‘what is done or seen is *karman*’. Here, the semantic definition of this meta-role is “demystified”, resulting simply in a summation of its most frequent components: the patient and the so-called *stimulus* (something that is perceived by our senses).

The question of authorship may arise regarding the different theoretical layers listed above. It must be noted that their theoretical “quality” is varying: the second layer seems to be the most complex and sophisticated, while the subsequent ones represent a continuous degradation of the original theory. So where should we collocate Pāṇini in this respect? Since we do not know much about Pāṇini’s dates (which is still an open question, notwithstanding all the hypotheses thus far proposed in this regard, see the “Introduction” chapter to Joshi, Roodbergen 1976), I feel justified in arbitrarily identifying his authorship with the abovementioned second theoretical layer, as homage to the great prestige Pāṇini has had through many centuries in Indian grammatical thought.

5. Possible causes of the interpolations

A grammar can change mainly for two reasons: the evolution of the language that it describes, or the evolution of the theoretical ideas regarding the description itself. Both these circumstances may have appeared in the case under consideration.

Thus, on the one hand, the passage from the first to the second layer, when the *kāraka/vibhakti* framework had been established presumably by Pāṇini, represented a revolutionary advance in the description. The subsequent layers might be at least partly explainable by an increasing misunderstanding of Pāṇini’s original ideas (already starting, for instance, with the supplementary semantic qualifications added to the second layer in order to clarify some *kāraka* definitions that no longer appeared intelligible).

On the other hand, the evolution of some important facts of language may also have played a role. Some grammatical phenomena that could be inexistent or excessively peripheral and therefore irrelevant in Pāṇini’s time, became more

pertinent in the subsequent periods. One such feature that strongly challenged the standard *kāra*ka/*vibhakti* device was the rise in Sanskrit of many subject-related phenomena, namely voice transformations and valency derivation. Now, an explicit delineation of the grammatical relations is completely lacking in the original *kāra*ka theory. However, the subsequent theoretical layers within the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, and even more some theories of ancient commentators, went clearly in the direction of a gradual and tacit rejection of the semantic-based *kāra*ka category in favour of a more syntacto-centric categorization similar, though not identical, to that of the grammatical relations (for a detailed account of how voice and derivation phenomena can explain grammarians' theory of the "agentness" of all *kāra*kas see Keidan forthcoming a). Furthermore, the later origin of the *taddhita* and *samāsa* sections of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, claimed by Joshi and Roodbergen (1983), may be substantiated if we think of the increasing importance assumed by compounding and secondary affixation in Late—i.e. post-Vedic—Sanskrit.

5. Concluding remarks

As pointed out by A. A. Zaliznjak (2007), the linguistic evidence can easily be underestimated or disregarded by non-specialists. Indeed, the hypotheses I suggest in the present paper might not seem persuasive to many traditional indologists and specialists in Pāṇini's grammar (as Cardona's critique against Joshi and Roodbergen's hypothesis shows). However, no linguist would deny that the distinction between semantic roles and case-form categories is such a revolutionary approach that a "backwards trip" would be virtually unimaginable for one and the same author. Therefore, I think that a theoretical stratification inside the received *Aṣṭādhyāyī* must be considered, unless a possible critical edition of its text, based on the collation of the extant manuscripts, would disallow such a hypothesis.

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Summary

The main claim is that Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* may be viewed as a result of several consecutive textual stratifications. Such strata are now primarily distinguishable on the theoretical basis, since there are some relevant dissimilarities in the analysis of the simple clause in different parts of the grammar. Particularly, the *kāra* section as well as some other parts of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* connected with the role/case-form distinction are taken into consideration. The radical paradigm change in categorization and terminology that is observable in these sections could be explained if a change in the authorship is also assumed.