

Book Review

Yūto Kawamura. *The kāraka theory embodied in the Rāma story. A Sanskrit textbook in Medieval India.* New Delhi: DK Printworld, 2018. ix+186 pages. ISBN: 978-81-246-0919-4. USD 27.35 (hardback)

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This small-format book with an ambitious and promising title derives from the Author's doctoral thesis from Hiroshima University. It is mainly devoted to the technical analysis of the *mahākāvya* poem composed by Bhaṭṭi, a court poet of king Śrīdharasena of the Maitraka dynasty in the kingdom of Valabhī, around the 7th cent. AD. The poem is commonly known as *Bhaṭṭikāvya* (i.e. 'Bhaṭṭi's poem'), and also as *Rāvaṇavadha* ('The Slaying of Rāvaṇa', after an episode from the great epic *Rāmāyaṇa*, upon which this poem is based). The peculiarity of the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* is that, besides telling a mythological story, it also belongs to the subgenre of *kāvyaśāstra*, poetical works illustrating some traditional *śāstra* 'science, doctrine' as presented in a specific treatise, regarded as its source text. In the case of *the Bhaṭṭikāvya* the *śāstra* that it illustrates is *vyākaraṇa* 'grammar', with Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* as its source text. Some sections of *the Bhaṭṭikāvya* also deal with poetics, but in those cases we do not know which source text is being illustrated, cf. Karandīkar (1982: xxxvi). Yet another section is dedicated to the use of Prakrit words in a Sanskrit literary work. To sum it up, we can recall Bhaṭṭi's own words when he says that his poem is "[...] a lamp to those whose eyes have language as their goal" (*Bhaṭṭikāvya* 22.33–4).

The book under review opens with a short "Foreword" by George Cardona (pp. iii–v), who presents the Author as a specialist in Pāṇini's grammar, spends a few words on the history of studies on the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, and offers a short overview of the content of the book. There follows a short "Preface" by the Author (pp. vii–ix). The main body of the book opens with the "Introduction" (pp. 1–52), followed by the main chapter named "Illustrations of the *kāraka* Rules" (pp. 53–112), and finally by two "Appendices" (pp. 113–140). An "Abbreviations and references" list (pp. 141–174), an "Index" (pp. 175–184), and a section of "Corrections" to the Author's doctoral thesis (Kawamura 2017) conclude the book. I start my review with a discussion of the central chapter "Illustrations of the *kāraka* Rules", which is the most informative and innovative part of the book; subsequently I will address the remaining sections.

The special focus of Kawamura's study consists in explaining the way Bhaṭṭi illustrates Pāṇini's notorious *kāraka* categories, roughly corresponding to what modern linguistics labels "semantic roles", or "theta-roles". The definitions of the *kāraka* roles is given in *sūtras* 1.4.24–55 in Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, while in the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* they are illustrated in verses

8.70–84 (depicting the scene where the demon king Rāvaṇa seduces Rāma’s wife Sītā). Kawamura’s approach, explained in a brief paragraph inappropriately called “Criteria” (p. 53), consists in quoting Pāṇini’s *sūtras*, together with their traditional explanation and examples, taken mostly from the *Kāśīkāvṛtti*, an authoritative commentary on Pāṇini’s grammar, from the same epoch as *the Bhaṭṭikāvya*. Then, Bhaṭṭi’s verses are quoted, translated, and commented upon in order to correlate them with Pāṇini’s rules to which they refer. As the Author observes (p. 28), Bhaṭṭi’s technique is altogether admirable, as he “[...] arranges words that are supposed to illustrate Pāṇini’s rules in accord with the order in which the rules are set forth in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, and with the order in which items that show conditions for applying the rules are enumerated therein”. Sometimes, however, the correspondence between Pāṇini’s rules and *the Bhaṭṭikāvya* wording is less straightforward. An attempt to clarify this correspondence in the section dealing with the *kāraka* roles is thus the main goal of the book under review, and also its most important achievement.

In presenting and explaining his data the Author constantly relies on two medieval commentators of the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, Jayamaṅgala (8–9th cent.) and Mallinātha (14–15th cent.), though, in my opinion, he does not always do so with sufficient critical assessment. For example, when the two commentators disagree in explaining a certain passage, the Author does not take a stand for either of the two, virtually abdicating his philological duties (cf. for example, his conclusion on p. 90: “In my opinion, both of Jayamaṅgala’s and Mallinātha’s interpretations are possible in each case”). But the Author’s observance of the canons of the Pāṇinian school of grammar is even larger than his confidence in the medieval commentators of Bhaṭṭi. Therefore, the primary audience of the book is limited to specialists in Ancient Indian grammatical tradition (*vyākaraṇa*), well accustomed to Pāṇini’s parlance and way of reasoning, and excludes a broader audience from appreciating the book. Furthermore, quite regrettably, the lack of references to modern linguistic theory and terminology in a number of passages, makes the book difficult reading for readers with a general linguistic background. In most cases, however, a general Indological background is sufficient for the reader.

In what follows, I would like to focus on an interesting case of ambiguity in the translation of Bhaṭṭi’s verses that fully illustrates the Author’s approach to the traditional authorities. On pp. 67–74, two alternative readings are proposed for *Bhaṭṭikāvya* 8.73–74, referring to *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 1.4.32–35. Consider, in particular, the following fragments (both descriptions refer to Rāvaṇa):

- (1) a. *ślāghamānaḥ* *parastrībhyas* *tatra-āgād*
praise-PART.PRES:NOM.SG.M alien.woman-DAT.PL there come-AOR:3SG
rākṣasādhipaḥ
demon.king-NOM.SG
‘There came the king of the demons, who flatters the women of others.’ / ‘There came the king of the demons, who flatters himself to the women of others’ (*Bhaṭṭikāvya* 8.73)
- b. *nihnuvāno* ’sau *Sītāyai*
hide-PART.PR:NOM.SG.M this:NOM.SG Sītā:DAT
‘The one hiding himself from Sītā’ / ‘The one hiding Sītā’ (*Bhaṭṭikāvya* 8.74)

For both fragments given in (1), the Author proposes two translations — the first can be considered “standard”, as it agrees better with the dictionaries, while the second is so unusual as to be considered “aberrant” — depending on the two versions of the argument frame suggested for the verbs *ślāgh* ‘to praise’ and *hnu* ‘to hide’ (the prefix *ni-* does not seem to affect the meaning of the verb). In (1a), according to the standard reading, the action expressed by the verb *ślāgh* is directed to the dative-marked argument (i.e., it is Rāvaṇa who flatters the women); according to the alternative, or aberrant, reading, the same verb is treated as a reflexive (in which case, it is Rāvaṇa who flatters himself to the women). Similarly, in (1b), with the verb *hnu* in the participial form, it is either Rāvaṇa who hides himself, i.e. conceals his real demoniac nature from Sitā (the regular construction), or, in the aberrant construction, it is really Sitā whom Rāvaṇa hides, perhaps, “from other demoniac beings” (p. 72). The latter is what I term the “pseudo-transitive” construction of *hnu*: here, the action is directed towards the participant corresponding to the dative-marked argument, as if it were a direct object. While the standard readings are those regularly expected in Sanskrit, it is the source of the aberrant readings, proposed by the Author, that is questionable, particularly, in case of the otherwise unattested and quite dubious pseudo-transitive construction of *hnu*. Pāṇini never alludes to such a possibility. His rule 1.4.34 is quoted in (2b); this rule is preceded by the corresponding heading *sūtra* 1.4.32, where the *kāraka* role called *sampradāna* ‘recipient’ is defined (2a).

- (2) a. *karmaṇā yam abhipraiti sa*
karman.INS.SG who.ACC.SG.M reach.3SG he.NOM.SG.M
sampradānam
sampradāna.NOM.SG.M
 ‘[The person] whom [one] wants to reach by the *karman*, is [to be termed] *sampradāna* ‘recipient.’ (Aṣṭādhyāyī 1.4.32)
- b. *ślāgha-hnuṅsthā-śapāñ jñīpsyamānaḥ*
ślāgh-hnu-sthā-śap know.CAUS.DESID.PASS.PART.NOM.SG.M
 ‘With [the verbs] *ślāgh* ‘to praise’, *hnu* ‘to hide’, *sthā* ‘to propose’, *śap* ‘to swear’, [the person to] whom the communication is delivered [is to be termed] *sampradāna* ‘recipient.’ (Aṣṭādhyāyī 1.4.34)

The attention of the grammarians commenting on this rule (for instance, *Kāśikāvṛtti* and subcommentaries on it) was captured, almost exclusively, by the form *jñīpsyamānaḥ*, a passive present participle from a desiderative made from the causative stem derived from the verb *jñā* ‘to know’, and, accordingly, to be translated as ‘the person whom someone wants to be caused to know’.¹ Apparently, Pāṇini used this form as a descriptive device to register the fact that all roots listed in the *sūtra* are, more or less, verbs of speaking construed with a dative argument referring to the person to whom a certain message is directed. Therefore, the appearance of *hnu* ‘to hide’ in this list is quite odd.

In order to establish the origin of the reflexive reading of *ślāgh* and of the pseudo-transitive reading of *hnu*, it is only natural to turn to the commentators of *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, Jayamañ-

¹ There are two possible readings of the passive desideratives in Sanskrit outlined by Kulikov (2012: 699–701), passive of desiderative and desiderative of passive (of which only the former is actually attested in Vedic). Here likewise we observe the former.

gala and Mallinātha. However, both mention only the standard readings, given under (1a) and (1b), as the Author confirms (p. 71, 74). Therefore, it is the post-Pāṇinian grammatical tradition that must be considered responsible for the introduction of the alternative readings. Now, Pāṇini's rule 1.4.34 is never mentioned in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* (the oldest commentary on Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, c. 2nd cent. BC) and, to our knowledge, it is commented upon for the first time in the *Kāśikāvṛtti* (c. 7th cent. AD). The latter is probably the starting point of the tradition that gives a major importance to the wordform *jñīpsyamāna* in interpreting this rule. As *Kāśikāvṛtti* explains, the person who receives the praise, the oath, the proposal, or from whom something is concealed, must be "caused to know", i.e. informed, about this action, as a condition for this rule to apply.² From the verb list, only *ślāgh* 'to praise' receives a detailed analysis in such respect: when this verb is used, we are told, the person who is praised must be made aware of this fact; otherwise s/he cannot be considered a *sampradāna* 'recipient'. Interestingly, this discussion is illustrated by examples with the verb *ślāgh* constructed with a direct object in the accusative referring to the person being praised. For the other verbs from the list no detailed explanation is given, but only a series of illustrative examples; the sentence exemplifying *hnu* is quoted under (3).

- (3) *Devadattāya hnu-te.*
 Devadatta:DAT hide-PR-3SG.MID
 'S/He hides from Devadatta' (*Kāśikāvṛtti* on *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 1.4.34)

Later grammarians indulged in an even more detailed discussion over the semantics of *jñīpsyamāna*. Haradatta in his *Padamañjarī* (12th cent.), commenting on the *Kāśikāvṛtti*, claims that, with the verb *ślāgh*, the praise must be performed *saṃnihita* 'in the presence' of the recipient, because otherwise s/he cannot be informed about the action of praising. The same idea is then extended to other verbs of the list, including *hnu*, glossed as *apalāpa* 'denial, concealing', which is especially odd. In order to reconcile the example from *Kāśikāvṛtti* quoted in (3) with these assumptions, Haradatta paraphrases it with the sentence under (4), where *hnu* is substituted by *apalap*, a transitive verb meaning 'to conceal', which therefore implies a pseudo-transitive reading also for *hnu*.

- (4) *saṃnihitam eva Devadattaṃ dhanikāder apalapati*
 present:ACC.SG indeed Devadatta:ACC wealthy.etc:ABL.SG deny-PR-3SG.ACT
 'S/He indeed conceals Devadatta from the creditors (lit. wealthy ones) and the like.'
 (*Padamañjarī* on *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 1.4.34)

This 12th century construction, effectively a typical "grammarians' Sanskrit" creation,³ represents probably the first occurrence and perhaps the source of the pseudo-transitive interpretation of *hnu*. Subsequently, however, Haradatta admits that some other scholars (*anye* 'others') interpret this verb differently, in such a way that Devadatta is informed about the concealment of something else.

² The loss of derivative semantics in many causative verbs is frequent in Late Sanskrit and in Prakrits: a causative derived from an intransitive became undistinguishable from a plain transitive, see Keidan (2014).

³ The term *grammarians' Sanskrit* was first coined by W. D. Whitney who wanted to highlight all his skepticism about the purity of Sanskrit taught by Pāṇini and his school, see Whitney (1884); cf. also Kulikov (2013).

The pseudo-transitive usage of *hnu* also leaked into the grammatical school of Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita (17th cent.), the author of *Siddhanta Kaumudī*, a rearrangement of Pāṇini's rules in thematic order: thus, in Jñānendra's *Tattvabodhini*, which comments on the *Siddhanta Kaumudī*, this verb is interpreted transitively. Eventually, this reading resurfaces in the contemporary translation of the Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* by Katre (1987: 85). On the other hand, no traces of the (pseudo-)transitive usages of *hnu* are found in the most authoritative editions, such as Joshi and Roodbergen's (1995: 107), and Sharma's (1990: 245).

This history of the syntactic usages of *hnu* within Indian grammatical tradition, briefly outlined above and extremely important for an adequate understanding of both Pāṇini's *sūtras* and the corresponding passage from the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, are completely neglected by Kawamura in his book. He slavishly follows the speculations of the grammarians on the various interpretations of *jñāpsyamāna-*, but it is only from a few obscure allusions in footnotes, that the reader can have a clue of why he considers acceptable a totally unnatural reading of *hnu*. The only possible reason for doing so is that the late Pāṇinian tradition postulates such a possibility, perhaps thanks to a misconstruction of *hnu* paralleled to a transitive verb (i.e., *ślāgh* used transitively). However, in accepting this reading, Kawamura disregards a number of important points: (1) the oldest commentators of the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* do not mention this aberrant use of *hnu*; (2) the pseudo-transitive *hnu* is also contextually problematic within the episode of *Bhaṭṭikāvya* where it appears; (3) it is Haradatta, who depends on *the Bhaṭṭikāvya*, not the other way round, therefore he cannot be cited as a corroboration of Bhaṭṭi's verses; and (4) no other examples of such constructions are found elsewhere in the Sanskrit corpus.

It is also interesting to note that in Vedic Sanskrit the prefixed verb *ni-hnu* means 'to make amends, to ask for forgiveness' and is constructed with a dative argument referring to the person whom the excuses are directed to. Given this usage, (*ni*)*hnu* turns out to be perfectly aligned with other verbs of speaking mentioned by Pāṇini in his rule. This fact — easily detectable from the Vedic literature and from the modern dictionaries — remains ignored by the commentators, and also by the Author.

I turn now to the additional sections of the book under review, the "Introduction" and the "Appendices". Both show little or no connection with the *kāraṅkas*, which are supposed to be the central topic of the book, according to its title. The "Introduction" is further divided, quite chaotically, into smaller sections. Here, the Author goes broadly along the lines of the "Introduction" to Karandikar (1982), with more focus on grammar, rather than on the historical context. Thus, a useful mapping of the grammar-oriented didactic verses of the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* onto Pāṇini's rules is given on pp. 11–14 and offers more details compared to a similar list found in Karandikar (1982: xxviii–xx).

The Author observes that there are no verses in the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* illustrating Pāṇini's *sūtras* that describe the *taddhita* affixes and compound formation. (To be precise, there are also other excluded rules, see the full list in Karandikar 1982: xxx–xxii.) According to the Author's opinion (p. 15), the reason behind this exclusion is that the verb has a pivotal position in Pāṇini's system of grammar, and therefore Bhaṭṭi was mostly concerned with verbal formations. Indeed, in contrast to the *ḥrt* affixes added directly to verbal roots (and effectively illustrated by Bhaṭṭi), the *taddhita* affixes use nominal stems as their starting forms; the same also holds for compounds. But this explanation is not fully convincing. First, the treatment of compounds in the Indian grammatical tradition is likewise verb-centric, since compounded nominals are paraphrased into whole clauses with finite verbs as predicates.

Second, I cannot help noting that some of the most influential specialists in Pāṇinian philology consider these same two sections of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* to be a later addition to Pāṇini's original text. There are a few motivations for such a radical claim. First, the *kāraka* terminology is totally abandoned in these two sections (see Joshi & Roodbergen 1983).⁴ Furthermore, they violate the principle of *anuvṛtti* 'inheritance between rules' (see Joshi & Bhate 1984: 252). At Bhaṭṭi's time – if we date him correctly – these supposedly interpolated parts of the grammar must have been already inserted into the canonical text of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*; they are, effectively, commented in the *Kāśīkāvṛtti*. We cannot rule out that a shorter version of the grammar, excluding the later additions, was also circulating at that time, and could have been used by Bhaṭṭi as the source text for his poem. However, the dogma of textual integrity of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* is still widely shared by the mainstream scholars of Pāṇini, cf. Cardona (1999: 112–140). This partly excuses the Author for not making any reference to the interpolation hypotheses.

The "Introduction" further makes a comparison of the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* with Bhaumaka's *Rāvaṇārjunīya*, another *kāvyaśāstra* illustrating grammatical rules, of uncertain date (pp. 22–37). Once more, this topic echoes a similar section in Karandikar (1982: xii–xiv). The Author advocates the superiority of the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* over the *Rāvaṇārjunīya*, at the same time addressing the contemptuous assessment of the former in Dasgupta & De (1947: 185). Thus, the *Rāvaṇārjunīya* is said to be of lower poetic quality and textually more desultory than the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*. The poetic superiority of the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* is further defended by quoting a late commentator's stance about the *kāvyaśāstra* poems, which "do not work if they possess poetic defects, because these defects would spoil the *kāvya* style [...]. They function only when this style is maintained" (pp. 26–27). In my opinion, however, discussing a literary text's poetic value is pointless unless some formal criteria are established in advance, which is not the case here. E.g. the Author contrasts the *kāraka*-related section of the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, entirely composed in *śloka* meter, with the corresponding passage of the *Rāvaṇārjunīya*, which alternates up to 13 different meters, which, according to the Author's personal feeling, leads to a "poetic flaw" (p. 24). However, if we consider the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* in its entirety, as many as 26 different meters have been counted by Karandikar (1982: xxv),⁵ which makes the preceding argument less convincing, since the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* presents even more variable meter than the *Rāvaṇārjunīya*.

Another unsubstantiated qualitative assessment of the poem made by Kawamura is his description of the presumed use of sound patterns in the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* (e.g., in the verses 8.76; 8.79; 8.81) for the sake of poetic embellishment. He claims that the repetition of certain consonants within one or two lines produces a "soft" or a "harsh" sound effect. For instance, the sibilants ś, ṣ, and s, as well as *k* and *kṣ* would be "harsh" sounds, while the nasals *ñ*, *n*, *m*, *ṃ*, and *ṁ* are said to be "soft" (pp. 81–82).⁶ How arbitrary and phonetically unsubstantiated this opposition might be is proven by the fact that the Author himself, on p. 82, footnote

⁴ Similar argumentation can be found in Bahulikar (1972); cf. also Keidan (2015).

⁵ For some reason, Karandikar does not mention the *śloka* meter at all.

⁶ To be more accurate, *kṣ* is better described as a cluster of consonants, not a simple sound; the Author, however, adheres to the traditional Indian view which describes this cluster as one sound simply because it is written with a simple character, rather than with a ligature. Furthermore, *ṃ* and *ṁ* are just two variants of romanization of the *anusvāra* diacritic of the Devanagari script, but certainly not two different "sounds", as the Author apparently suggests.

127, admits that “the sound *r* [...] can be considered either soft or harsh”. Indeed, no objective criteria are provided for distinguishing “soft” vs. “harsh” sounds. A reference to some Indian authority corroborating this non-obvious distinction would have been appropriate, but there is none. This whole argument is most likely based on an uncritical and simplistic reading of Lienhard (1984: 181–183), referenced in footnote 126, p. 81. Had the Author read what Lienhard says more attentively, he would understand that the sounds have no “soft” or “harsh” quality per se; it is the poet who arbitrarily uses certain sound effects for symbolically conveying the desired sentiment.⁷

The next section, “Bhaṭṭi, Kātyāyana, and Patañjali” (pp. 38–52) aims to demonstrate that, besides Pāṇini’s *Aṣṭādhyāyī* itself, Bhaṭṭi was also aware of later Pāṇinan scholarship, in particular, of the *Mahābhāṣya*. The discussion is essentially a traditionalist one. The conclusion is that Bhaṭṭi’s examples are consistent with some of Kātyāyana’s emendations to Pāṇini.

The two “Appendices” (pp. 113–140) concluding the book are totally unrelated to the main topic of the book and can be viewed as a separate study on their own. They deal with the acceptability of Vedic usage in non-Vedic literature according to two medieval authorities: Bhāmaha (7th cent.), who prohibits such usage, and Śaraṇadeva (12th cent.), who allows it. The *Bhaṭṭikāvya* is not even mentioned here, although that would have been appropriate since this poem is known for adopting lexical and grammatical archaisms from the Vedic language (see Lienhard 1984: 182, fn. 83).

In conclusion, I cannot help mentioning the poor editorial quality of the book, which sometimes makes it difficult to read. Sections lack any numbering, so the reader is never certain about the main topic of certain passages, since it is often not clear whether they continue a preceding topic, or start a new one. The presentation is sometimes very terse and non-explicit, which, in a few cases, obscures the logical connections between different passages. The reader is also hampered by the fact that the same type of numbering is used for two, and sometimes even for three (!) textual corpora, running in parallel: (1) the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* verses and specific words within such verses; (2) Pāṇini’s rules; and, inconsistently, (3) grammatical examples from the *Kāśikāvṛtti*. Moreover, identical parenthesized numbers, even within the same passages, often refer to different entries.

Despite all these critical remarks, the overall impression from Kawamura’s study is rather positive. It can serve as an introduction to a very difficult Sanskrit poem, hitherto not analyzed by a specialist in Ancient Indian grammatical tradition (*vyākaraṇa*), since earlier studies have only investigated it from the point of view of its textual history, literary qualities, or the religious beliefs of its author. Particularly useful is the word-by-word commentary on the correspondences between *Bhaṭṭikāvya* verses and Pāṇini’s rules, or parts of rules. The greatest merit of Kawamura’s work is making the *kārika*-section of *Bhaṭṭikāvya* available to the modern readers, especially those who have already some proficiency in the major classics of the Indian grammatical tradition (such as *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, *Mahābhāṣya*, and *Kāśikāvṛtti*). A more critical approach to the traditionalist views in the field of Pāṇinian studies, as well

⁷ I do not even mention the fact that Kawamura should have provided some statistical evidence supporting the claim that some sounds are repeated with a higher frequency than what results from a casual distribution. E.g., the above-mentioned “sound” *kṣ* appears four times in *Bhaṭṭikāvya* 8.76, containing also as many as 13 nasals: which one is frequent and which one is not? Do these figures diverge significantly from the average frequency of similar sounds in the rest of the poem verses?

as a greater methodological independence with respect to the existing works on the same topic, would have been appropriate, but are not essential.

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