CHAPTER 9

Description of the Witnesses

Manuscripts (of the PVV, PV, and PVA)

$V_{zh}$

Zha-lu monastery, Vol. xii.1, no. 237 (Sāṅkṛtyāyana 1937: 33).

The manuscript is on paper and consists of “105 leaves of the size of 26½” × 2” [inches], each page containing 7 lines”, as we read in Sāṅkṛtyāyana’s description; there are approximately 170 akṣaras per line and each leaf has one string hole on the left-hand side, in the middle of a blank space which is four to five akṣaras wide and extends from the second to the fifth line. The manuscript contains the text of the PVV; fol. 16v of fols. 14v to 16v, which contain the texts edited here, has eight lines. Foliation numbers appear in the centre of the right margin of versos. Only one copyist produced the manuscript; he identifies himself in the colophon as Paṇḍita Vibhūticandra (likhiteyam paṃḍi vibhūticandren — fol. 105v4). The colophon then goes on to say that the manuscript contains the Vṛtti to the Vārttika composed by “śrī manorathanandi°”. The manuscript opens with the auspicious phrase namo mañjuśriye, preceded by a siddham symbol, typical of Buddhist manuscripts. The portion of text that I have examined contains a conspicuously low number of unintentional copying errors, and displays a careful application of sandhi according to consistent conventions. The manuscript is characterized by a number of texts in the margins (henceforth, marginal texts), which are corrections and glosses that Vibhūticandra himself inserted in the top and lower margins while proofreading the text. Evidently, he did so in stages, because upon occasion uninterrupted strings of akṣaras contain distinct, if unmarked, textual units, which happen to be contiguous because no blank space was left.

1 Distinctive features of the sources described in this chapter are based on the portion of the respective witnesses that contains the text(s) edited here.

2 Sāṅkṛtyāyana 1937: 33. See also Sāṅkṛtyāyana’s Introduction in V$_R$, p. iii, K$_R$, p. x (where he gives six to seven lines per page).

3 Sāṅkṛtyāyana (1937: 33, n. 1) provides a transcription in Devanagari of the beginning and end of the manuscript (respectively lines 2–6 and 7–9 in the footnote), thereby giving the impression that the two texts together constitute the beginning of the manuscript.

4 See Roth 1986 and Sander 1986.
Script and Palaeographic Features

Sāṅkṛtyāyana, who was the first to describe the manuscript, identified its script as Kuṭilā, but elsewhere also as Māgadhī, showing how problematic labels in Indian palaeography could be. The situation does not seem to have changed much in this regard. Proto-Bengali is an appellation for the script of our manuscript on which the scholarly community at present might agree. Based on Dragomir Dimitrov’s characterization of the Bengali scripts (2002: 29), Birgit Kellner has suggested the appellation “early old Bengali”. As observed by Florin Deleanu, Vibhūticandra’s handwriting shows features typical of palaeographic varieties younger than the script of the Śrāvakabhūmi manuscript, and of varieties of so-called proto-Bengali-cum-Maithili scripts; this “can probably be explained in terms of geographical proximity”. When it came to reading Vibhūticandra’s handwriting, I profited a great deal from the table of akṣaras of the Śrāvakabhūmi manuscript compiled by Yasuo Matsunami (1998).

In Vātb akṣaras generally appear separated one from the other, and written with regular strokes and a slightly rounded head.

The medial e and o are mostly written with a prṣṭhamātrā, but, not rarely, also with a stroke on the head of the glyph for the consonant sound. E.g., in bhā va sye śte ḥ | ya dye van, on fol. 1511 (centre, after the hole), sye is written with a superscript stroke, while śte and dye with a prṣṭhamātrā. The sequence ni rmo kṣo, on fol. 14v5 (centre, after the hole), displays the sign of medial ā combined with a prṣṭhamātrā for rmo, and with a superscript stroke for kṣo. A prṣṭhamātrā and wave-like sign on the head of the glyph for the consonant sound form the medial ai; e.g., nai, the thirteenth akṣara after the hole, on fol. 15v4, and yai in dr śte ḥ | ta nma yai ḥ sa ttva, on fol. 16v2 (left-hand side). Sometimes the sign that forms a medial ā or other medial vowels is not a vertical stroke, but

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5 Sāṅkṛtyāyana 1937: 33 and V, p. iii.
6 K, p. x.
7 See Dimitrov 2002: 29 and MacDonald 2005: xxiii. Lore Sander has more recently listed alternative criteria for naming scripts based on a historical overview of the different names of a single type of script (2007: 129). She has observed: “The success of a term depends largely on general acceptance and also on which publications are used by whom. It is quite clear, however, that it is only reasonable, indeed unavoidable, to term highly standardized scripts.” (ibid. p. 132).
8 For a history and assessment of the use of the term proto-Bengali, see Dimitrov 2002: 30–33, and MacDonald 2005: xxii–xxiv and n. 25.
9 Kellner 2010, n. 20.
10 Deleanu 2006 i: 57.