THE ORTHOEPIC DIASKEUASIS OF THE RGVEDA AND THE DATE OF PĀÑINI*

ABBREVIATIONS

P. Pāñinian sūtra
RPr Rgveda-Prātiśākhya. The sūtra numbers both according to Mangal Deva Shastri's and Max Müller's editions are given.
RV Rgveda

1.1. The Rgveda is known to us in a form which is fixed down to the minutest details. It obtained this form as the result of a process which, in as far as it concerns details of sandhi etc., is known by the name 'orthoepic diaskeuasis'.

The main hypothesis to be defended in this article is that the orthoepic diaskeuasis of the Rgveda was not yet completed in the time of the Rgveda-Prātiśākhya, and ended when but one version of the Rgveda remained, i.e., probably with the disappearance of the Bāskala Śāṁhitā. (I do not take here into consideration the Kashmir Rgveda; see Bronkhorst, forthcoming.) The hypothesis contrasts with the currently held belief that the Śākhās of the Rgveda, as well as the Rgveda-Prātiśākhya, presuppose, and therefore postdate, the final redaction of the Rgveda (Renou, 1947: 21, 35; cf. 1960: 1–2, 10).

A decision procedure, on the basis of which we can choose between these two opinions, is provided by the following. We have some idea of the original form of the hymns of the Rgveda, since the present Rgveda often deviates from the metre in a way that can easily be restored by undoing the sandhi or other minor changes. If the Rgveda-Prātiśākhya stands somewhere in the process which began with the original form of the Rgvedic hymns, we may expect that at least some of the authorities who preceded the Prātiśākhya but took part in the same process, came out in defence of a form of those hymns which, at least in some cases, deviates from their present, and is closer to their original one. If, on the other hand, the Prātiśākhya belongs to a period which came after the orthoepic diaskeuasis, we may not expect such opinions on the part of those who took part in the development in which the Prātiśākhya participates.

1.2. The Rgveda-Prātiśākhya mentions the following authorities: Ānyatāreya¹ (3.22(208)), Gārgya (1.15(16); 6.36(412); 11.17 (629); 11.26(638); 13.31(739)), Pañcāla (2.33(137); 2.81(185)), Prācya (2.33(137); 2.81(185)); Māṣavaya (Intr. v. 2); Māṇḍūkeya (Intr. v. 2; 3.14(200)), Yāska (17.42(993)), Vedamitra

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(1.51(52)), Vyāli (3.23(209); 3.28(214); 6.43(419); 13.31(739); 13.37(745)), Śākaṭāyana (1.16(17); 13.39(747)), Śākala (1.64(65); 1.75(76); 6.14(390); 6.20 (396); 6.24(400); 6.27(403); 11.19(631); 11.21(633); 11.61(673)), Śākalya (3.13 (199); 3.22(208); 4.13(232); 13.31(739)), Śākalya sthavira (2.81(185)), Śākalya-pitr (4.4(223)), Śūravīra (Intr. v. 3), Śūravīra-suta (Intr. v. 3). Unfortunately, none of the opinions ascribed to these authorities in the Prātiṣākhyya has an effect on the metre of the hymns, be it positively or negatively. However, many of these authorities are mentioned elsewhere in the ancient, and not so ancient, literature, and opinions are ascribed to them which are not found in the Rgveda-Prātiṣākhyya.

Many of these other opinions, also, do not affect the metre, but there are some which do in a way that deserves our attention:

(i) Pāṇini’s Astādhyāyī contains the following rule: P.6.1.127: iko’svarne śākalyasya hrasvaḥ ca [saṃhitāyām (72), ekaḥ pūrvarayaḥ (84), na (115),3 aci (125)] “[In the opinion] of Śākalya, in connected speech (saṃhitā), no single [substitute] of what precedes and what follows [comes] in the place of [the vowels] i, t, u, ū, ṛ, ō, ī, when a dissimilar vowel follows; and [if the earlier vowel is long,] a short [vowel comes in its place].”

The translation here given follows the interpretation of the Kāśikā (except in so far as this is not possible in view of footnote 12). The interpretation may, however, be improved upon by understanding the word chandasi “in Sacred Literature” (Thieme, 1935: 68) in this rule, from the preceding one. Both the mention of the name “Śākalya” and the unusual kind of sandhi described support this. We may expect that this rule was (also) valid for the Rgveda.

The Rgveda in its present form is not in agreement with Śākalya’s rule. The earlier form of the Rgveda, on the other hand, agrees with it. E. Vernon Arnold (1905) makes the following statements about the original Rgveda. First: “Before dissimilar vowels final -i -i -u -a are regularly used with hiatus” (p. 76). Second: “The vowels -i, -u are regularly shortened when followed by dissimilar vowels, but there are many exceptions” (p. 135). Third: “Final -a, -ā are regularly combined with an initial vowel or diphthong following: and final -i -i -u -ā are regularly combined with similar vowels, that is -i or -i with either -i or -i, and -u or -a with either -u or -ā” (p. 72). These three statements are so close to the opinion ascribed to Śākalya in P. 6.1.127 that they are almost a translation of that rule.

(ii) Puruṣottamadeva’s Bhaṣāvytti on P. 6.1.77 contains the following line (quoted in Mishra, 1972: 30n, 32n; Mimāṃsaka, 1973: I: 26): ikāṇi yaṃbhīr vyavadhānam vyādīgālavayor iti vaktavyam/dadhyatra dadhy atra madhuvatra mādhv atra/ “It must be stated that [in the opinion] of Vyādi and Gālava there is separation of [the vowels] i, u, ō, l by [the consonants] y, v, r, l [respectively. Examples are] dadhi-y-atra [for dadhi atra, where we normally find] dadhya atra, madhu-v-atra [for madhu atra, where we normally find] mādhv atra.” The kind of