SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE PADAPĀTHA OF THE RGVEDA*

Abbreviations

P. Pāṇinian sūtra
Pp. Padapātha
RV Rgveda
Sp. Saṃhitāpātha

The abbreviations for journals etc. are the ones explained in George Cardona’s Pāṇini, A Survey of Research, Mouton, The Hague-Paris, 1976, pp. 5–12.

1.1. In another article (Bronkhorst, 1981: 81; see also Bronkhorst, 1982) I have shown that the Padapātha of the Rgveda — composed by Śākalya according to Yāska’s Nirukta 6.28 — is older than the finally redacted version of that same Veda. This implies that the Rgveda known to Śākalya, on the basis of which he composed his Padapātha, had a form which was more archaic than ‘our’ Saṃhitāpātha, at least where it concerns details of sandhi.

This information is, by itself, of limited value, since it is exactly the details of sandhi which are largely absent from the Padapātha. Comparison of the text known to Śākalya with the finally redacted Saṃhitāpātha is therefore rarely possible, e.g., where we know how Śākalya wanted the words of his Padapātha to be joined together. We shall discuss one particularly revealing case. It has long been known that e.g. RV 1.164.8 Sp. dhīty agre and RV 1.20.4 Sp. viṣṭy akrata replace original dhīti agre and viṣṭi akrata; see, e.g., Wackernagel, 1896: 322; Kuiper, 1955: 256.

The Padapātha has dhīṭi/ AGRE/ and viṣṭi/ akrata/, and is therefore simply wrong. This does not, however, mean that the text which Śākalya had before him was wrong. A lucky coincidence enables us to reconstruct that text. Pāṇini’s grammar preserves a rule which says: “[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, i, u, ū, r, ō, ī, when a dissimilar vowel follows; and [if the earlier vowel is long,] a short [vowel comes in its place]” (P. 6.1.127: iko’savaro Śākalyasya hrasvaḥ ca [saṃhitāyām (72), ekaḥ pūrvarayaḥ (84), na (115), aci (125)]; cf. Bronkhorst, 1981: 84). With the help of this rule it becomes clear that the text of the Rgveda known to Śākalya read dhīti agre and viṣṭi akrata at the places indicated above. This case shows that Śākalya, even where he wrongly analyzed the text, knew this text in a form which was in many points more archaic than our Saṃhitāpātha.
1.2. We get immediate information about the text of the *Rgveda* known to Śākalya where the Padapātha does not give an analysis. This is the case in reduplicated verbs and certain compounds (as will be established below). It appears that Śākalya’s text showed no retroflexion of *n* and *s* where the conditioning sound occurs in the reduplication of a verb or in the earlier member of a compound. Our Samhitāpātha has almost throughout retroflexion in such cases.


As is well known, the Padapātha gives an analysis of the text of the *Rgveda* where this is indicated with the help of a *danḍa* (/) or an *avagraha* (*). I shall argue that the Padapātha analyzes only here, and not where this is not indicated by a *danḍa* or *avagraha*.

For this purpose we look at Sp. *nirnīj*. This is analyzed as Pp. *nīḥ`nīj* (*RV* 5.62.4 etc.). This same word often occurs in larger compounds. Since the Padapātha never uses more than one *avagraha* in the analysis of one compound, this word is now given as -nirnīj, without *avagraha*, and also without retroflex *n*. Instances are: *RV* 1.167.3 Sp. *hiranyanirnīj*, Pp. *hiranya`nirnīj*; *RV* 8.8.11 Sp. *sahasranirnīj*, Pp. *sahasra`nirnīj*; *RV* 5.57.4 Sp. *varṣanirnīj*, Pp. *varṣa`nirnīj*; etc. There can be no doubt that -nirnīj is the result of applying sandhi to nīḥ`nīj, and cannot be looked upon as an analyzed form. Applying sandhi to nīḥ`nīj did not, apparently, lead to retroflexion of the second *n*!

There is another group of cases which supports our view that the above examples are not to be considered the result of analysis. The loc. plur. ending *su* is as a rule separated from its stem by an *avagraha* in the Padapātha: Pp. *karma`su*, Sp. *karmasu* (*RV* 8.38.1 etc.); Pp. *mahat`su*, Sp. *mahatsu* (*RV* 1.81.1 etc.). Where, however, *s* is replaced by retroflex *ṣ*, no *avagraha* separates this ending from the stem, and retroflex *ṣ* appears also in the Padapātha: Pp. *śmaṣruṣu* (*RV* 2.11.17); *satuṣu* (*RV* 9.19.6); *viṣu* (stem viṣ; *RV* 1.45.6 etc.); *raṣmuṣu* (*RV* 1.134.4). The author of the Padapātha considered it apparently necessary to indicate the retroflexion of *s* in cases like *śatuṣu*, and in order to achieve this aim he went to the extent of deviating from his procedure of separating -su from its stem by an *avagraha*. In cases like *sisakti* he could have given retroflex *ṣ* without having to deviate from any procedure. That he did not do so makes it very probable that in his text these forms had no retroflex *ṣ*.

1.3. That even after Śākalya no full agreement had been reached yet about where