AŚCARYA-, N. “MARVEL”

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1. The word āścarya- occurs for the first time in the passage Kaṭh. Up. 2.7 āścaryo vaktā kuśalo 'syā labdhā 'ścaryo jñātā kuśalānuśīṣṭah “Merveille qui l’explique et le possède, l’habile! Merveille qui le connaît, instruit par un habile!” (Renou). Here the word need not be taken as an adjective, as it may be the substantive used as a predicate. Although of unknown origin, it is evidently an Indo-Aryan word. As such it is likely to belong either to the class of verbals abstracts in -ya- of the type vrtrārtya- (Wackernagel-Debrunner, Altind. Gramm., II/2, p. 830), or to that of the adjectiva necessitatis of the type šrṣa-hṛṛyā- “was sich auf dem Kopf tragen lässt” (op. l., p. 793).

The earliest attempt at an explanation of the word is met with in Pāṇini 6.1.147, who mentions it among the words in which an s is supposed to have been inserted. Since this explanation fails to account for the meaning, Wackernagel-Debrunner, op.l., p. 829, took āścarya- as a formation like brahmacārya- (AthS.): “in ās scheint die Interjektion kl. āḥ zu stecken, danach wäre die ursprüngliche Bedeutung ‘ein Tun, zu dem man āḥ ausruft’”. To this Edgerton objected that, though the etymology is ingenious, “unfortunately it is not clear that this interj. ever connotes surprise (ordinarily either joy or annoyance)”. It cannot be denied, however, that this etymology has the merit of explaining the word as a specifically Indian formation instead of having recourse to such far-fetched connexions as that with OIcel. skars, n. “giantess” and Lith. kėras “magic”. The last word, indeed, belongs to kūriū, kūrī “to build” and shows the same semantic development as Skt. kṛtya- “act, deed, magic, enchantment”. The connexion of āścarya- with the Lithuanian word

1 Wackernagel-Debrunner, Altind. Gramm., II/2, p. 830.
2 JAOS, 75 (1955), p. 64.
4 This is evidently what Mayrhofer meant by his reference to kṛtyā- (Kurzgef. etym. Wörterb., I, p. 83).
leaves the exact mode of formation of *āscarya*- unexplained and disregards the fact that *āscarya*- unlike *kṛtyā*- etc., does not denote any kind of act. Wackernagel's etymology is however open to two far more serious objections than that raised by Edgerton. Firstly the Indian interjections are never used with *carati*, but always with the root *kṛ*-: cf. Rigvedic *ahkhaliṅkṛtyā*, *hūṅ-akṛṣṇot*, *hīṅkṛṣṇatī*, *kikirā kṛṣṇu*, *cīscā kṛṣṇoti*, and from the epics downwards *humkarotī*, *hūṅkāra-, hūṅkṛtī-, hāhā-kṛtvā, hāhākāra-, hāhākṛta-, etc. In the later language occur such formations as *aholābhakāra*- Mbbh. V. 131.25 "one who says 'aha! lābhaḥ!', who is content with a small gain". Secondly, this explanation is implicitly based on the assumption that Böhtlingk was right in positing a Sanskrit interjection *ās*, while it is evident that he was so only with some important restrictions.

2. From a lexicographical point of view we can distinguish two different interjections *āḥ* in Sanskrit – a fact, which was already duly recognized by the Indian lexicographers. The first denotes not so much a "recollection" (Monier-Williams, cf. "smṛtau, smarage" lex.), as rather the sudden recognizance of a fact, the Aha-Erlebnis. In this function it is more or less synonymous with *hanta*, *aye*, etc. and occurs in a triple form, viz. as *ā*, *āḥ*, and *āṁ*. In many passages two or three of these forms are handed down as variant readings of the manuscripts. Cf. *ā sa eṣa dharmāraṇyaṇivāsī saṅghilako nāma duṣṭaṇayabhikṣuḥ* Padmaprābh. 23.4 (v.l. *āḥ*), *vādavighaṭṭitenā 'nena bhavatavyam* 16.10 (v.l. *āḥ*), *ā saisā bhāṃḍirūṣenāyā duhiṭā kumudvatī nāma 28.1 (v.l. *āḥ*; cf. *aye*, *iyam sā*... Mṛcch. I.53.1), *ā, ayaṁ tāvad vṛķṣavāṭikāpaṃādvārenā 'tikrāmati* 35.9, *ā, tasya mālata-kādātśayāngrāhāvinaya ātmaśāntakām utpādayati* "I see, his misbehaviour in violating the messenger of Mālatikā... makes him selfconscious" 21.12, *ā, devaṇṇa roditi* 41.19 (v.l. *āḥ*), *ā, yathaivaṃ... vāyuḥ paryupāste* 37.1 (v.l. *āḥ*), *vīcintya* *āṁ*, *idam yajñopavitāṃ pramāṇasūtraṃ bhaviṣyati* Mṛcch. III.15.2, *āṁ, idam tāvad asti mama ca X.17.1, (dhyātvā) ā, tasmāṃ eva surāpane vismṛtām iti tarkayāmi* Mattavilāsaprābh. 10.9, (cirāt *smṛtvā* *āḥ*, asti janasthāne pañcavati nāma godāvarītaṭodeṣaḥ Mahāv. V.9.2, *āḥ*, *divaukaso 'pi rājaviruddham anumodante* I.42.3 (v.l. *āha*!), *ā... preṣito... rathaḥ Abhiṣekeṇa*. VI.11.2, *ā, atra ca samīpaghose mama vayasyo nandagopaḥ prativasati* Bālacar. I.18.4, *ā asty etan nimittam* Uttarar. I.2.12, *āṁ, atti khe edaṁ* III.12.12, *ā, asty etat Pratijñāyaug. II.9.3, *āṁ idam Mudr. II.10.3, Mṛcch. IX.34.6, *āṁ evvaṁ* Mṛcch. II.0.10, *ā, evam etat Pādatā-