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FROM PĀṆINI TO PATAÑJALI AND BEYOND

DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS MOTIFS
IN SANSKRIT GRAMMAR

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From Pāṇini to Patañjali and beyond: Development of religious motifs in Sanskrit grammar

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Pāṇini's grammar of Sanskrit, besides being a wonder in linguistics, is also deeply embedded in the Vedic tradition. Many ideologies and mythologies developed over the span of hundreds of years in the continuing tradition of Pāṇinian commentaries. More attention has been paid to Pāṇini's grammar as a grammar, than its cultural and religious background, and in my presentation today, I wish to focus on this cultural and religious background. In reviewing the connection of the Pāṇinian grammar with religious traditions, we shall begin with the consideration of the status of Pāṇini's grammar as a Vedāṅga text. The word 'Vedāṅga' suggests that it is a branch of knowledge considered to be crucial for a proper understanding, recitation or ritual application of the Veda. Many questions of historical significance arise with respect to this characterization of Pāṇini's grammar. Who accepted Pāṇini's grammar as a Vedāṅga text and at what time? Was this the first and/or the only grammar qualified for this status? What did this status do to the grammar itself, and what did this status of Pāṇini's grammar do to the traditional interpretation of Vedic texts? Finally, we need to deal with the question of how Pāṇini's grammar assumed the status of being a quasi-Vedic text itself. This takes us to the consideration of the emerging mythologies concerning Pāṇini and Patañjali, and the impact of these mythologies on the interpretation and the transmission of Pāṇini's grammar.

To begin our discussion, let us recognize that, contrary to the assumptions of modern linguistics, the Sanskrit tradition did not believe in the notion of historical change for language, and especially for Sanskrit, the divine language par excellence. Pāṇini's "target language" has no reference to time, though, from our modern historical perspective, we can say that his grammar covers Sanskrit usage from all historical phases known to him. For him, it is one and the same language which does not change in time but may manifest differently in different domains of usage, temporal, geographical and literary. The main division of these domains is between the domain of *chandas* "the Vedic texts" and the domain of *bhāṣā* "colloquial usage," and yet there is no recognition that the Vedic usage refers to the past and that *bhāṣā* refers to the present. These domains are further subdivided. The domain of *bhāṣā* is

subdivided into a great many regional domains, the major divisions being the dialects of the Udīcyā “northern” and the Prācyā “eastern” regions. Pāṇini’s generic rules refer to Sanskrit at large, while the domain-specific rules refer to the usage as noticed within those domains. Thus, one needs to recognize that the generic rules in Pāṇini apply to the language of the received Vedic texts as well as to the contemporary colloquial usage of Sanskrit. The domain-specific Vedic rules cover only those usages which are deemed to occur within the Vedic domain. However, to get a full picture of Pāṇini’s coverage of Vedic usage, we need to combine his generic rules with the rules specifically given for the domain of *chandās*.

The Pāṇinian tradition clearly regards the Aṣṭādhyāyī “Grammar in Eight Chapters” as a Vedāṅga “a branch of knowledge essential for the study of the Veda.” In fact, late commentators like Nāgeśabhaṭṭa say that Pāṇini’s grammar is the only grammar which has the status of being a Vedāṅga, because this is based on the Veda (*śruti*), i.e. the Śivasūtras. These are fourteen strings/lists of Sanskrit sounds, each ending with a consonant that is supposed to be an end-marker. Here are these 14 Sūtras:

1. *a i u Ṇ*
2. *ṛ ḷ K*
3. *e o ṅ*
4. *ai au C*
5. *ha ya va ra Ṭ*
6. *la ṅ*
7. *ṅa ma ṅa ṅa na M*
8. *jha bha ṅ*
9. *gha ḍha dha Ṣ*
10. *ja ba ga ḍa da Ś*
11. *kha pha cha ṭha tha ca ṭa ta V*
12. *ka pa Y*
13. *śa sa sa R*
14. *ha L*

These Śivasūtras are a form of Veda (*śruti*) because they are believed to have been directly received from the drumbeat of God, i.e. Śiva, who was engaged

in his cosmic dance.¹ This belief also raises several interesting historical issues. When did this notion of Pāṇini's grammar being a Vedāṅga arise? Was this notion always based on the same grounds? Was Pāṇini's grammar the first grammar and/or the only grammar to deal with Vedic usage?

One can say that Pāṇini's grammar is the oldest surviving grammar that deals with Vedic usage. However, this does not mean that no pre-Pāṇinian grammarians had dealt with the language of the Veda. We of course know that the Padapāṭhas "recitation with separated words" prepared by scholars like Śākalya are the first grammatical analysis of the words of the Vedic Saṃhitās "recitation with connected words," and it is clear that these were known to Pāṇini. The Prātiśākhya, phonetic descriptions of various Vedic Saṃhitās, as we have them seem to be post-Pāṇinian reworkings of some ancient traditions which must go back to a period before Pāṇini, and often their statements are near-identical with those of Pāṇini. However, even within the strictly narrow field of grammar, it is clear that there were at least a few pre-Pāṇinian grammarians who had dealt with the language of the Veda. Consider, for example, P.7.3.95 (*tu-ru-stu-śamy-amaḥ sārva dhātuke*). An option term, *vā*, continues into this rule from the previous rule P.7.3.94 (*yaño vā*). Thus, by P.7.3.95, we optionally (or preferably, as Kiparsky 1979) get the augment "i" for the consonant-initial *sārva dhātuka* affixes after roots like *stu*, and we get the optional forms *stauti / stavīti*. However, Pāṇinian commentators have preserved a rule of Āpiśali, a pre-Pāṇinian grammarian, which runs as: *tu-ru-stu-śamy-amaḥ sārva dhātukāsu cchandasi*.² This rule of Āpiśali is almost identical with Pāṇini's rule, except that it has an additional condition *chandasi* "in Vedic texts," telling us that according to Āpiśali these alternative forms occur only in Vedic texts. This provides us an important clue. It shows beyond dispute that some pre-Pāṇinian grammarians like Āpiśali had already begun to deal with the language of the Veda in their grammars. Thus, there is reason to believe that in ancient India there were a number of different grammars which were eligible to be called Vedāṅga, and Pāṇini's grammar was only one

1 Laghuśabdenduśekhara, pp. 16-18.

2 Mimamsak 1963, pt. 1, p. 46.

among them. However, in the course of time, all the pre-Pāṇinian grammars were lost, except for a few quotations in later works, and Pāṇini's grammar came to be viewed as the sole representative of Vedāṅga-Vyākaraṇa. This is largely due to historical circumstances.

While Pāṇini's grammar covers the language of the Vedic texts as well as the colloquial language that was contemporary to Pāṇini, there is no indication in Pāṇini's grammar that describing that language of the Veda was his primary purpose. In contrast, Patañjali, the author of Mahābhāṣya who came a few centuries afterwards, claims that the main purpose of Pāṇini's grammar was to assist the proper preservation, interpretation, and application of the Vedas.³ The term *rakṣā* refers to the preservation of the Vedas. Patañjali says that only a person who knows grammar can properly preserve the Vedic texts from further mutilation, misinterpretation, and misapplication. The term *ūha* refers to the modification made to a mantra to fit a new ritual context. For example, if an original Vedic mantra addressed to Agni reads: *agnaye tvā nirvapāmi* "To you, O Agni, I make this offering," and if we are asked to recontextualize this mantra for an offering to Sūrya, then we must be able to produce the modified mantra: *sūryāya tvā nirvapāmi* "To you, O Sūrya, I make this offering." Such a linguistic modification of the received Vedic texts requires a functional ability in both the language of the Veda and the colloquial language, which could not be naturally taken for granted by the time of Patañjali. The study of grammar was viewed as a tool to acquire this ability. This linguistic ability was indeed crucial for the proper interpretation of the received Vedic texts as well as for their proper ritual application. Removal of doubts is said to be an important function of the study of grammar. Here, the story cited by Patañjali goes as far back as the Brāhmaṇas and the prose Saṃhitās of Yajurveda.⁴ This is the story of the improper use of the word *indraśatru* by the demon Tvaṣṭā. Tvaṣṭā wanted to have a son who would kill Indra, and toward that goal he performed a sacrifice making the request: "May I have a son who will kill Indra." In making this request,

³ *rakṣohāgamalaghvasandehāḥ prayojanam*, Mahābhāṣya [Kielhorn edn.], Vol.I, p. 1.

⁴ Bronkhorst 1991, 77-78.

he should have used the word *indraśatrú*, a Tatpuruṣa compound accented on the final syllable: “Indra’s killer.” However, the ignorant Tvaṣṭā did not know his grammar and made a mistake and pronounced the word with the *udātta* accent on the initial syllable, *indraśatru*. This then became a Bahuvrīhi compound and came to mean: “He whose killer is Indra.” Thus, a son, Vṛtra, was born to Tvaṣṭā, and Vṛtra was killed by Indra. This story is very ancient and illustrates how the natural pronunciation of accents had become already problematic by the time of the late Vedic prose literature. Patañjali cites this story to support his argument that the study of grammar could enable a person to avoid such a mistake. However, the emphasis on the protection and preservation of the Vedas as the primary purpose of the grammar is a relatively new development in the tradition of grammar.

Pāṇini looks at the original Vedic texts (mostly Vedic Saṃhitās) as *ārṣa* ‘coming from the seers, the Ṛṣis.’ However, he looks at the linguistic items inserted into the Padapāṭha by authors like Śākalya as *anārṣa* ‘not coming from the Ṛṣis.’ For instance, Śākalya’s *Padapāṭha* inserts the word *iti* after a separated *pragr̥hya* item such as the dual form *agnī*. Pāṇini refers to this *iti* inserted by Śākalya by the term *anārṣa*.⁵ Thus, Śākalya was not a Ṛṣi for Pāṇini, but an Ācārya. The term *ācārya* is the generic term used for all the contemporary and previous authorities cited by Pāṇini. Kātyāyana and Patañjali refer to these citations of teachers as *ācārya-nirdeśa* “reference to a teacher.”

We may explore this distinction between a Ṛṣi and Ācārya a little further. At first glance, and especially in view of the late Sanskrit usage of these terms, this distinction may seem inconsequential at best. However, this is an important distinction for the late Vedic and Sūtra texts. The Gṛhyasūtras and Dharmaśāstras make an important distinction between Ṛṣis and Ācāryas. The Ṛṣis are the ancient seers of the Vedic Saṃhitās. The Āpastambīya Dharmaśāstra⁶ says that Ṛṣis are no longer born in the world, because of the transgression of moral rules by the contemporary generations. The Ṛṣis possess special

5 P.1.1.16: *sambuddhau śākalyasyetāv anārṣe*.

6 Āpastambiyadharmasūtra 1.2.5.4: *tasmād ṛṣayo varesu na jāyante niyamātikramāt*.

spiritual powers (*tejoviśeṣa*). On the other hand, the Ācāryas are the learned teachers of the later contemporary generations. They are learned and respectable, and yet human and fallible. The Āśvalāyanagr̥hyasūtra (3.4.2-3) provides separate lists of the Ṛṣis and Ācāryas. In making an offering of water as part of the ritual called Brahmajajña, the Ṛṣis are bracketed with the Vedic Devatās “divinities,” while the Ācāryas are bracketed with the Pitṛs “ancestors,” and there is a ritual transition in the middle indicated by the switching of the position of the sacred thread. One has to accept the linguistic facts of the texts coming from the Ṛṣis without question.⁷ On the other hand, one may disagree with the Ācāryas. We should note in this context that the list of the Ṛṣis in the Āśvalāyanagr̥hyasūtra includes only the seers of the hymns in the Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā. It does not extend to the authors of the Brāhmaṇa-texts. Names like Aitareya and Kauṣītaki are found in the list of Ācāryas, which also includes the name of Śākalya, the author of the Padapāṭha for the Ṛgveda. However, this list of Ācāryas does not as yet include Yāska and Pāṇini. It is only in later periods, that the first rule of the Aṣṭādhyāyī and the first line of the Pāṇinīya-Śikṣā get included in the recitation of Brahmajajña. This is a later extension seen in the practice of the Brahmajajña among contemporary Brahmins, but this was not known to the author of the Āśvalāyanagr̥hyasūtra.⁸

The beginning of the quasi-Veda status for Pāṇini’s grammar, or at least parts of it, is already seen in the Vārttikas of Kātyāyana and the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali.⁹ Kātyāyana’s argument suggests that even if a compound like *vīrapuruṣa* could not be justified on the grounds of common logic, it can be justified on the basis of Pāṇini’s specific formulation. Here we see the view that the authority of Pāṇini’s direct wording transcends the authority of common logic, especially if such authority of direct wording leads to the derivation of a desired usage. This authority of Pāṇini’s wording is derived from

7 *ḍṛṣṭānuvidhiś ca chandasi bhavati*, Mahābhāṣya [Kielhorn edn.], Vol. I, 55.

8 I participated in the renewal of the sacred thread ceremony for many years in Pune. The Brahmajajña is part of this ceremony, and I heard the recitation of the first rule of Pāṇini’s Aṣṭādhyāyī during this ceremony.

9 Kātyāyana’s Vārttika 22 on P. 2.1.1: *na vā vacana-prāmāṇyāt* “(this problem) may not be there, because of the authority of Pāṇini’s words.”

his being an Ācārya whose behavior (*ācāra*) is authoritative. Kātyāyana explicitly makes an argument based on the behavior of the Ācārya.¹⁰ This is carried further by Patañjali in painting a vivid image of Pāṇini authoring his rules:¹¹ “Pāṇini, who was authority incarnate, sat in a pure location facing the east with the sacred Darbha grass in his hand and produced his rules with great deliberation. It is impossible that even a single letter is meaningless. There is no question of a whole rule being meaningless.” For Patañjali, Pāṇini’s rules are like *chandās*.¹² With this claim, he tries to explain away certain irregularities in P.1.1.1. Patañjali does not directly call Pāṇini a Ṛṣi. At the explicit level, Pāṇini is still an Ācārya. However, statements like *chandovat sūtrāṇi bhavanti* “Pāṇini’s rules are like Vedic texts,” clearly elevate Pāṇini’s status to that of a Ṛṣi and his grammar is on its way to becoming an *ārṣa* text. When it comes to the Śivasūtras, Patañjali is not yet familiar with the story of Pāṇini receiving these Sūtras from Śiva. However, Patañjali already calls them *akṣara-samāmnāya* “sacred collection of sounds,” and says that this is a *brahmarāśi* “collection of Brahman,” and that one attains the fruit of having studied all the Vedas by studying these Sūtras.¹³

It is in Patañjali’s Mahābhāṣya that we find a full-blown discussion of many of these issues. Here we shall look at the main points. First, Patañjali seems to keep up the distinction between the categories of Ṛṣi and Ācārya. The story of the Ṛṣis named Yarvāṇastarvāṇaḥ is introduced using the past perfect verb *babhūvuḥ*:¹⁴ “In ancient days there were sages named Yarvāṇastarvāṇa, who had directly perceived the dharma, who realized both this and the yonder,

10 *ācāryācārāt saṃjñāsiddhiḥ*, Vārttika on P. 1.1.1, Mahābhāṣya [Kielhorn edn.], Vol. I, p. 38).

11 *pramāṇabhūta ācāryo darbhāpavitrapāṇiḥ śucāv avakāśe prāṇmukha upaviśya mahatāyatnena sūtrāṇi praṇayati sma / tatrāśakyam varṇenāpy anarthakena bhavitum / kim punar iyatā sūtreṇa /*, Mahābhāṣya [Kielhorn edn.], Vol. I, p. 39.

12 *chandovat sūtrāṇi bhavanti*, Mahābhāṣya [Kielhorn edn.], Vol. I, p. 37

13 *So ’yam akṣara-samāmnāyo vāksamāmnāyaḥ puṣpitaḥ phalitaś candratārakavat pratimaṅḍitoveditavyo brahmarāśiḥ / sarvavedapūnyaphalāvāptiś cāsyā jñāne bhavati /*, Mahābhāṣya [Kielhorn edn.], I, p. 36.

14 *yarvāṇastarvāṇo nāma ṛṣayo babhūvuḥ pratyakṣadharmāṇaḥ parāparajñā veditaveditavyā adhiḡatayāthātathyāḥ .../*, Mahābhāṣya [Kielhorn edn.], Vol. I, p. 11.

had come to know what is to be known, and had understood the true nature of things as they are.” These are ancient sages of the golden age of *purākalpa*¹⁵ “prior age”. They remain authoritative and yet are not to be mixed up with what happens *adyatve* “these days.”¹⁶

On the other hand, Patañjali’s discussion of the Śiṣṭas “normative speakers of proper Sanskrit” on P.6.3.109 (*pr̥ṣodarādīni yathopadiṣṭam*) seems to refer to an idealized and yet a contemporary community of social and linguistic elites.¹⁷ Words with irregular derivations like *pr̥ṣodara* are nonetheless taught/used by the Śiṣṭas, as far as Patañjali is concerned.¹⁸ As the word *śiṣṭa* is derived from the root *śās*, Patañjali’s implicit linkage between *upadeśa* “teaching” and [*anu*]śāsana “ruling” is apparent here.¹⁹ However, Patañjali shies away from directly identifying the Śiṣṭas as grammarians, saying that it would become a circular definition if the grammar were based on the usage of the Śiṣṭas and if the Śiṣṭas were themselves grammarians.²⁰ With this concern, Patañjali defines the Śiṣṭas by referring to their residence (*nivāsa*) and conduct (*ācāra*). The Śiṣṭas live in the region of Āryāvarta, the region to the south of the Himālayas,

15 On the other hand, see Wezler (2001, pp. 218-9) on *babhūvuḥ* in Nirukta 1.20: “To say it in other words, the passage at issue explains the origination of the dichotomy between the *sākṣātḥṛtadharmāna ṛṣayaḥ* and those called *asākṣātḥṛtadharmans* by putting it into a temporal sequence, but this does not imply, and certainly does not mean (because this could clearly contradict an easily observable fact) that the two classes of Brahmins cannot and do not exist side by side at a given later period of time.” In the Nirukta passage, one recognizes a sequence of generations, while in the Mahābhāṣya account of Yārvāṇastarvāṇa, one notices no such immediate generational sequence. Here, the counterpart of the Ṛṣis is rather the Asuras who made mistakes in utterance and were defeated by the gods. Thus, the Ṛṣis and the Asuras seem to refer to a mythical time and space.

16 Patañjali’s characterization of these sages as *pratyakṣadharmāṇaḥ* seems like a paraphrase of Yāska’s *sākṣātḥṛtadharmāṇaḥ*.

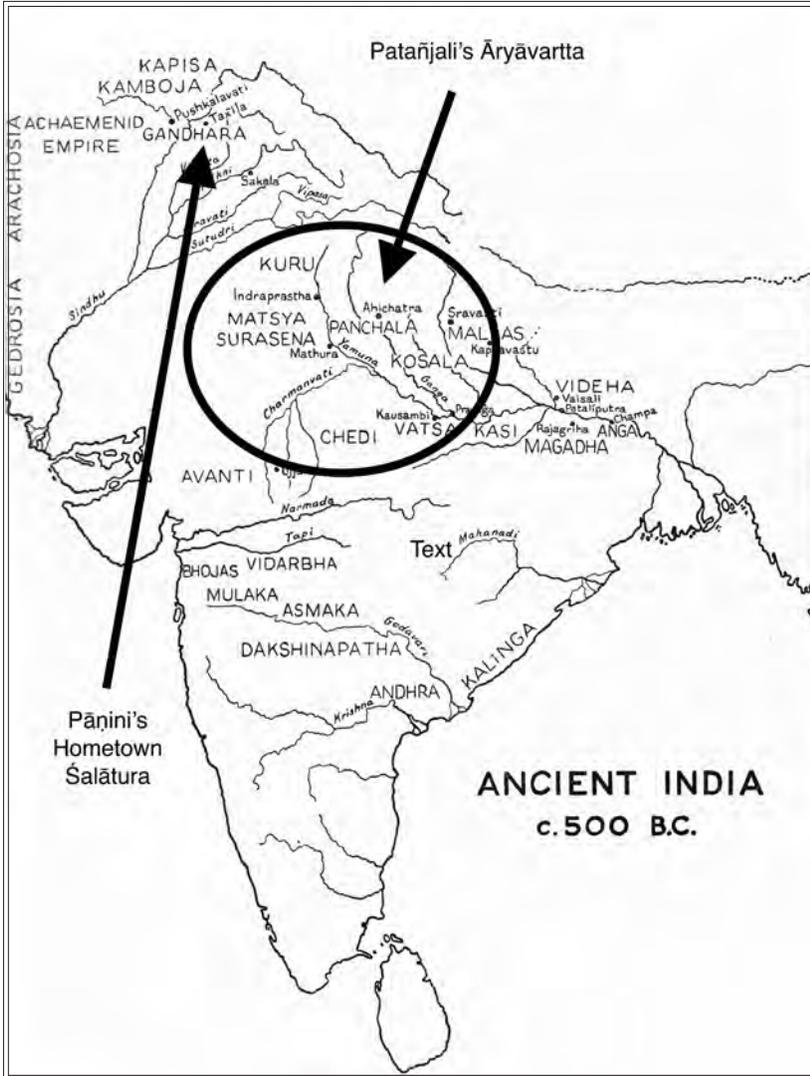
17 This is like the idealization of the Sadashiv Peth area of Pune as the home of the elite form of Marathi.

18 *kaiḥ punar upadiṣṭāni? śiṣṭaiḥ*, Mahābhāṣya [Kielhorn edn.], Vol. III, p. 174.

19 For an important usage, see: *eṣa ādeśaḥ, eṣa upadeśaḥ, ... etad anuśāsanam*, Taittirīya-Upaniṣad 1.11.4.

20 *yadi tarhi śāstra-pūrvikā śiṣṭiḥ śiṣṭipūrvakaṃ ca śāstraṃ tad itaretarāśrayaṃ bhavati*, Mahābhāṣya [Kielhorn edn.], Vol. III, p. 174.

north of the Vindhyas, east of disappearance of Sarasvatī and west of Prayāga.²¹



Āryāvarta

²¹ *prāg ādarśāt pratyak kālakavanāt dakṣiṇena himavantam uttarena pāriyātram, Mahābhāṣya* [Kielhorn edn.], Vol. III, p. 174.

The Śiṣṭas living in this region are the Brahmins free from greed, storing only a potful of grain and becoming experts in some branch of learning without any worldly motivation.²² Limaye (1974, p. 563), Olivelle (1999, intro, p. xxxiii) and others have pointed out how Patañjali's description of the Āryāvarta and the conduct of the Śiṣṭas almost echoes the wording of many Dharmasūtras. The Śiṣṭas of Patañjali, like the Śiṣṭas of the Dharmasūtras, are an idealized contemporary community, the prime source of authoritative knowledge of dharma and the dharmically approved behavior, including the usage of Sanskrit. They are not the Ṛṣis of *purākalpa*, the imagined golden age.²³ Could they possibly be authors of grammatical or other sciences? Indeed, they could be. However, Patañjali, with his desire to avoid circularity, says that one can use the Aṣṭādhyāyī to identify the Śiṣṭas who are using the proper language as defined by the Aṣṭādhyāyī without studying it. Then he learns other usages from such Śiṣṭas. How do the Śiṣṭas speak proper Sanskrit without ever learning it from a grammar? Patañjali says that this must be either their intrinsic nature or grace of a divinity.²⁴ Such a Śiṣṭa is indeed not a grammarian but miraculously speaks grammatically perfect Sanskrit without learning it from a grammar. Thus, Patañjali has created this idealized Śiṣṭa who must be looked up to by grammarians, but himself is not (or need not be) a grammarian. Yet, it is his *upadeśa* "usage" that validates the use of words like *pr̥ṣodara* that have irregular derivation. Thus, for Patañjali, the term *upadeśa* must refer to the usage of the Śiṣṭas, rather than any technical grammatical teachings composed by the Śiṣṭas.²⁵

22 *etasmin āryāvarte āryanivāse ye brāhmaṇaḥ kumbhīdhānyā alolupā agṛhyamānakāraṇāḥ kiñcid antareṇa kasyāścid vidyāyāḥ pāram gatās tatrābhavantaḥ śiṣṭāḥ*, Mahābhāṣya [Kielhorn edn.], Vol. III, p. 174.

23 Compare Āpastambadharmasūtra 1.2.5.4: *tasmād ṛṣyo 'vareṣu na jāyante niyamātikramāt*. See Wezler (2001, pp. 220ff) for a detailed discussion. However, also note that Āśvalāyanagṛhyasūtra (3.4.1-5) places gods and Ṛṣis together in the context of Tarpaṇa, in contrast with Ācāryas who are placed alongside the Pitṛs. In between the two Tarpaṇas, the performer is supposed to move his *yajñopavīta* from one shoulder to the other. This indicates more than a generational difference between Ṛṣis and Ācāryas.

24 *nūnam asya devānugrahaḥ svabhāvo vā*, Mahābhāṣya [Kielhorn edn.], Vol. III, p. 174.

25 This meaning of the term *upadeśa* is clearly brought out by the Kāśikāvṛtti on P.6.3.109: *yathopadiṣṭāni śiṣṭair uccāritāni prayuktāni tathāivānugantavyāni*.

Coming down now to Bhartṛhari's views as seen from the Vākyapadīya, the Vṛtti,²⁶ and the Mahābhāṣyadīpikā, we see some interesting and important developments. Here I will note them briefly.

1. The *itaretarāśraya* "circularity" argument brought up by Patañjali in his discussion of the notion of Śiṣṭa is completely lost in Bhartṛhari's narrative. He emphatically asserts that the Śiṣṭas are the grammarian-authors like Pāṇini who composed the Smṛtiśāstras like the Aṣṭādhyāyī.²⁷ We should note that Bhartṛhari's Mahābhāṣyadīpikā on the Mahābhāṣya on P.6.3.109 is not available to us and hence we do not know directly how he may have commented on Patañjali's argument of *itaretarāśraya* "circularity." However, this argument shows up nowhere in the Vākyapadīya, the Vṛtti, or the available portions of the Mahābhāṣya-dīpikā, and his emphasis on the authoring of the grammatical Smṛti by the Śiṣṭas goes in a direction opposite to that of Patañjali's argument of circularity.²⁸

2. The Śiṣṭa grammarians, including Patañjali, are clearly identified as Ṛṣis by Bhartṛhari.²⁹ The term *maharṣibhiḥ* "by the great Ṛṣis" used by Bhartṛhari is rendered by the term Śiṣṭa in the Vṛtti and in Vṛṣabha's Paddhati.³⁰

26 Here I do not wish to get into the question whether the Vākyapadīya and the Vṛtti are composed by the same or different authors. If the Vṛtti is not composed by Bhartṛhari himself, it was indeed composed by someone very close to him. I should also note that on some matters discussed here in this paper, the Vṛtti offers more alternative views than what one finds in the Vākyapadīya. One should also note that while the Vākyapadīya is an independent work of Bhartṛhari, the Mahābhāṣyadīpikā is a commentary on the Mahābhāṣya, and as a commentator, Bhartṛhari may be more constrained and restrained in giving a full expression to his own views, especially if they were to be somewhat different from those of Patañjali.

27 *tasmān nibadhyate śiṣṭaiḥ sādhutvaviṣayā smṛtiḥ*, Vākyapadīya 1.29.

28 Also see Helārāja on Vākyapadīya III, Vṛttisamuddeśa, verse 78, Iyer 1973, pp. 189-90: *dvidvidham hi śiṣṭair anuśāsanam prārabdham sākṣād upeyanirdeśena yathā nipātanam / upāyanirdeśānusāreṇa vā yathā vidhiḥ /*

29 *nityāḥ śabdārthasambandhās tatrāmnātā maharṣibhiḥ / sūtrāṇām sānutantrāṇām bhāṣyāṇām ca pranetrḥbhiḥ //* Vākyapadīya 1.23.

30 *yaiḥ pratyakṣadharmabhis tatra tatra ... sūtrānutantrabhāṣyāṇi praṇītāni tair eva śiṣṭair vyākaraṇe 'pi nityāḥ śabdārthasambandhā ity āmnātam /* Vṛtti on Vākyapadīya 1.23 (Iyer 1966, p. 63). Vṛṣabhadeva's comment (ibid, p. 51) *maharṣibhir iti śiṣṭaiḥ* follows the Vṛtti.

The Mahābhāṣya, for Bhartṛhari, is an *ārṣa* “text composed by a Ṛṣi.”³¹ Patañjali is a Ṛṣi and he is the foremost among the Śiṣṭas.³²

3. With the identification of Śiṣṭas as Ṛṣis, Bhartṛhari seems to move away from Patañjali’s dharmasāstric description of the Śiṣṭas and applies Patañjali’s and Yāska’s characterization of Ṛṣis to Śiṣṭas.³³

4. While the Śiṣṭas of Patañjali are an idealized contemporary elite community, for Bhartṛhari, the Śiṣṭa-Ṛṣis belong to the ancient golden age of *purākalpa* and have far superior abilities as compared to *us*, the contemporaries of Bhartṛhari.³⁴

5. A new emphasis, not seen in Patañjali’s Mahābhāṣya, begins to make its appearance in Bhartṛhari’s works, namely the centrality of what he calls *āgama* “received scriptural wisdom.” Aklujkar (1991) and Iyer (1982) have discussed what Veda and Āgama seem to mean to Bhartṛhari. Without going into broader issues connected with these notions, I would like to point out that Bhartṛhari is making a deliberate effort, perhaps a new one, to argue that ultimately all knowledge rests upon the foundation of Āgama.³⁵

6. The knowledge of the proper words one receives from the Śiṣṭas is also ultimately based on the Āgama, since the knowledge of the Śiṣṭas ultimately derives from the Āgama.³⁶ This almost removes the Śiṣṭas as an independent

31 Referring to the loss of the tradition of the Mahābhāṣya, Bhartṛhari says: *ārṣe viplāvite granthe...* VP 2.479.

32 *ayam ca ādiśiṣṭaḥ*, Mahābhāṣyadīpikā in Palsule 1983, p. 13.

33 Now the Śiṣṭa-Ṛṣis have the characteristics such as *sākṣātkṛtadharmāṇaḥ* and *pratyakṣadharmāṇaḥ*, Vṛtti on Vākyapadīya 1.23 (Iyer 1966, p. 63).

34 *jñānam tv asmadviśiṣṭānām ... sarvendriyam ... pratyakṣān na viśiṣyate /* Vākyapadīya 3.1.46.

35 While the Śiṣṭa-Ṛṣis may be *sākṣātkṛtadharmāṇaḥ* or *pratyakṣadharmāṇaḥ*, even their knowledge ultimately rests on the Āgama: *ṛṣiñām api yaj jñānam tad apy āgama-pūrvakam*, Vākyapadīya 1.30. Also see: *syuś ca tāvad āgamād eva pratyakṣadharmāṇaḥ*, Mahābhāṣyadīpikā (Abhyankar-Limaye edn.), p. 38.

36 *śiṣṭebhya āgamāt siddhāḥ sādhamo dharmasāadhanam* Vākyapadīya 1.27). While the verse refers to *śiṣṭebhyaḥ* and *āgamāt*, the Vṛtti uniquely foregrounds the Āgama:

source of knowledge,³⁷ and substitutes the Āgama in its place.

7. The emphasis upon Āgama as a new feature in Bhartṛhari is recognized by Abhinavagupta.³⁸

8. The term Āgama seems to have a graded meaning. The primary Āgama is the Śruti and Smṛti.³⁹ Then there are Āgamas that are directly based on Śruti and Smṛti (*śabda-nibandhana āgama*). Others are indirectly based (*aśabda-nibandhana āgama*).⁴⁰ But there are others that are not based on

tathā sādhasādhuvyavasthānam apy anavacchinnapāraparyam anabhiśaṅkanīyam yathāgamād eva siddham iti, Vṛtti on Vākyapadīya I. 27, Iyer 1966, p. 82. On this verse, Vṛṣabhadeva says that the Āgama is not qualified by the reference to Śiṣṭas. The words are known from the Āgama, and the Śiṣṭas simply say that these words lead to merit (*athavāgamād avicchinnā ye sādhasaḥ siddhāḥ te śiṣṭebhyaḥ sakāśāt dharmasādhanam iti siddhāḥ / na tu śiṣṭagrahaṇenāgamō viśiṣyate*, Vṛṣabhadeva's Paddhati on Vākyapadīya I.27, Iyer 1966, p. 82).

37 We do not have Bhartṛhari's Mahābhāṣyadīpikā on P. 6.3.109, and hence our understanding of how Bhartṛhari interpreted Patañjali's notion of Śiṣṭa is necessarily incomplete. However, the available materials seem to indicate that Patañjali looked upon his Śiṣṭas as an independent source of authoritative knowledge above and beyond what was found in the Aṣṭādhyāyī (cf. *nūnam ayam anyān api jānāti*, Mahābhāṣya on P. 6.3.109). On the other hand, Bhartṛhari has placed Āgama above the Śiṣṭa. While the Śiṣṭa of Patañjali does not learn proper usage from a grammar, Vṛṣabha on VP 1.135 (Iyer 1966, p. 222-3) says: *yathā tam eva ā pāṇinīyam sādhuprayogaṃ niyogena vyākaraṇam adhyānāḥ sādhuṃ prayuñjate / te vaiyākaraṇaiḥ śiṣṭā ity anumiyante /*

38 Referring to the verse *idam puṇyam idam pāpam ...* // Vākyapadīya I.40, Abhinavagupta says that this verse is provided by Bhartṛhari to strengthen the authority of the Āgama (*āgamaprāmānya-dārḍhyāya*, Īśvarapratyabhijñānavivṛtivimarśinī, Vol. III, p. 102, cited by Abhyankar-Limaye edn of Vākyapadīya, Appendix III, p. 204). For a discussion of other possible sources for this verse, including the Mahābhārata, and other ways of interpreting it, see Houben 1999, pp. 143ff.

39 On *āgamaḥ khalv api* of the Mahābhāṣya, Mahābhāṣyadīpikā comments: *pāraparyeṇāvichinna upadeśa āgamaḥ śrutilakṣaṇaḥ smṛtilakṣaṇaś ca* / (Abhyankar-Limaye edn., p. 8). Vṛtti on Vākyapadīya 1.41, Iyer 1966, p. 98: *tathavāyam śrutismṛtilakṣaṇaḥ sarvaiḥ śiṣṭaiḥ pariḡṛhita āgamaḥ* /. Also, Vṛṣabha on Vākyapadīya 1.133 (Iyer 1966, p. 212): *kaḥ punar asāv āgama iti śrutismṛtirūpatvād āgamaśya.../*

40 Vṛtti on Vākyapadīya 1.7 (Iyer 1966, pp. 28-29): *tatra kāścic chabdanibandhanāḥ smṛtayaḥ / kāścic aśabdanibandhanāḥ śiṣṭeṣu prasiddhasamācārāḥ* /. Vṛṣabhadeva comments: *yady api śabdo nāsti te tu śiṣṭas tān śabdān ācaranto dṛṣyante iti prasiddhasamācārāḥ* / (ibid, p. 28).

either Śruti or Smṛti, directly or indirectly, and these are termed as *anib-andhana* “baseless” and *pauruṣeya* “composed by a human author.”⁴¹

9. For Bhartṛhari, the real āgama is *apauruṣeya* “not composed by a human author.” His views are more like those of the Mīmāṃsakas, rather than like those of the Naiyāyikas.⁴² The *apauruṣeya āgama* “scripture not composed by human authors” overrides *pauruṣeya āgamas* “texts composed by human authors.”⁴³ Humans are fallible, while a true āgama is infallible.

10. Bhartṛhari insists that the real *apauruṣeya āgama*, though diversely transmitted⁴⁴ is of unbroken continuity.⁴⁵ The Śiṣṭa-Rṣis are merely links within this *avicchinna-paramparā* “unbroken continuous tradition.”⁴⁶ In this insistence on the unbroken continuous tradition of the Vedic āgama, Bhartṛhari’s views seem more dogmatic when compared with the frank admissions of loss of Vedic text-traditions found in the Dharmasūtras.⁴⁷

41 Vṛtti on Vākyapadīya 1.124 (Iyer 1966, p. 203): *sarvapravādeṣv āgamavākyānām prañetṛ-parigraheṇa pauruṣeyatvam abhyupagamyate / vedavākyāni tu caitanyavad apauruṣeyāni / tāny āgamāntarāṅgāni prañetṛṣu vicchinneṣv āgamāntarānusandhāne bījavad avatiṣṭhante /*

42 However, Helārāja does seem to propose Īśvara as the source of āgama. See Helārāja’s commentary on Vākyapadīya III. Jāṭisamuddeśa, verse 46 (Iyer 1963, p. 51ff).

43 Mahābhāṣyadīpikā (Abhyankar-Limaye edn., p. 257): *katham ca tad avikalpyam / apauruṣeyatvāt / ... yat pauruṣeyaṃ tat śakyaṃ vikalpayitum /* Also: Vṛṣabha on Vākyapadīya 1.124: *puruṣāṅgāni ca sāparādhatvād aprāmānyaṃ teṣāṃ / vedas tu caitanyavad avicchedād apauruṣeya iti pramāṇāni vedavākyāni /* (Iyer 1966, p. 203).

44 *eko ’py anekavartmeva samāmnātaḥ pṛthak pṛthak*, Vākyapadīya 1.5.

45 *caitanyam iva yaś cāyam avicchedena vartate / āgamas ...*, Vākyapadīya 1.41). See Houben 1997, pp. 331ff. for a detailed discussion of “Bhartṛhari on the Eternality of the Universe and Revealed Texts,” and how the VP and the Vṛtti treat diverse views on this topic.

46 *Śiṣṭācaritam avicchinna-paramparāyaṃ svacaraṇasamācāram ...*, Vṛtti on Vākyapadīya 1.43, Iyer 1966, p. 99. Also: Vṛtti on Vākyapadīya 1.29, Iyer 1966, p. 85: *tasmād anādīr gurupūrvakramāgatā śiṣṭānumānahetur avyabhicārā lakṣaṇaprapaṅcābhyāṃ paryāyair śabdavati cāśabdā ca smṛtir nibadhyate /*

47 *brāhmaṇoktā vidhayaḥ teṣāṃ utsannāḥ pāṭhāḥ prayogād anumīyante*, Āpastamba-dharmasūtra 1.4.12.10-11; *deśadharmajātidharmakuladharmān śrutyabhāvād abravīn manuḥ*, Vasiṣṭhadharmaśāstra 1.17.

11. The terms *nirāgama tarka* “logic not based on Āgama” and *śuṣka-tarka* “dry logic” seem to refer not just to explicitly non-Vedic traditions like Buddhism and Jainism, but also to those of Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika etc.⁴⁸ In this, Bhartṛhari’s usage is copied verbatim by Śāṅkara.⁴⁹

12. Why is this almost dogmatic insistence on continuous unbroken tradition of the Vedic *āgama* as the foundation of Sanskrit grammar found in Bhartṛhari?⁵⁰

13. The circumstances allow us to suggest that Bhartṛhari is engaged in the project of re-establishing the tradition of Pāṇinian grammar. Components of this project are:

- a. Making a claim for the status of Āgama for Vyākaraṇa
- b. Making a claim of unbroken continuity of the Vedic *āgama* in the face of the historical fact of a break in the tradition
- c. Relocating the Pāṇinian grammar squarely within a Vedic fold⁵¹, in view

48 Ṽṛtti on Vākyapadīya 1.30, Iyer 1966, p. 85: *ko hi anavasthitasādharmaivaidharmyeṣu nityam alabdhaniśca yeṣu puruṣatarkeṣu viśvāsaḥ*; Ṽṛtti on Vākyapadīya 1.127, Iyer 1966, p. 205: *yāvān anugamyamānas tarkaḥ svaśāstraṃ na bād hate tāvān anugantavyaḥ*; Ṽṛtti on Vākyapadīya 1.42, Iyer 1966, p. 99: *āgamacakṣuṣā vinā tarkānupātī kevalenānumānena kvacid āhitapratyayo dṛṣṭādṛṣṭaphaleṣu karmasv āgamam utkrāmya pravartamāno niyatam mahatā pratyavāyena samyujyate*; Ṽṛtti on Vākyapadīya 1.129, Iyer 1966, p. 209: *śabda evopadeṣṭā / tatsāmāthyam evānugacchanto vaktāro yogyaśabdānibandhanāyaiva vivakṣayā pravartante /...śabdaśaktirūpāparigṛhītas tu sādharmaivaidharmyānusārī sarvāgamopaghātahetutvād anibandhanaḥ śuṣkas tarka ity ucyate /*.

49 Śāṅkara’s Bhāṣya on Brahmasūtra 2.1.11: *tasmān nirāgamāḥ puruṣotprekṣāmātranibandhanās tarkā apratiṣṭhitā bhavanti, puruṣotprekṣāyā niraṅkuṣatvāt* (pp. 366-367).

50 Contrast his own description of how the tradition of Sanskrit grammar almost died out: *baiji-saubhava-haryakṣaiḥ śuṣkatarkānusāribhiḥ / ārṣe viplāvite granthe...* Vākyapadīya II. 479. The attackers of Patañjali are *śuṣkatarkānusārin*, a code word for non-Vedic. Also: *yaḥ patañjaliśiṣyebhyo bhraṣṭo vyākaraṇāgamah / kālena dākṣiṇātyeṣu granthamātre vyavasthitaḥ //* Vākyapadīya II. 480. The *vyākaraṇāgama* did almost become *vicchinna*.

51 *tasmād akṛtakam śāstraṃ smṛtiṃ ca sanibandhanām / āsṛityārabhyate śiṣṭaiḥ śabdānām anuśāsanam //* Vākyapadīya 1.43.

The Ṽṛtti on this verse squarely puts the grammatical tradition within the Vedic roots: *tasmād apauruṣeyam anatiśāṅkaniyam puruṣahitopadeśāya*

of the possibly uncomfortable fact that the almost lost Mahābhāṣya was discovered by the Buddhist Candrācārya, and that the Buddhists were making strong claims on Pāṇini (cf. Deshpande 1997).

- d. Supporting a Veda-based tradition of Sanskrit grammar and countering the rise of non-Vedic traditions of Sanskrit grammar.

It thus seems circumstantially very plausible that the doctrinal shift in Bhartṛhari, as compared with the views found in the Mahābhāṣya, was compelled by the specific circumstances of the near loss of the tradition of Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya, the role of the Buddhists in its recovery, and the claims the Buddhists were beginning to make on the Pāṇinian tradition.

The increasing use of Sanskrit by the Buddhists and Jains by this time may have created a new additional complicating factor that did not exist at the time of Patañjali. Thus, Bhartṛhari seems to be at pains to distinguish his grammatical tradition from other traditions, especially the non-Vedic ones. In spite of the well-known argument for Bhartṛhari's "perspectivism," we should note that the only perspective promoted in the Vākyapadīya and its Ṛtti is the *nityatva* "eternality" perspective for language.⁵² While the Mahābhāṣyadīpikā discusses these alternative perspectives, namely the eternality of language (*nityatva*) and the language as a product (*kāryatva*), the Vākyapadīya and the Ṛtti are firmly on the side of the eternality view of language and the Veda.⁵³ This firming up may have occurred in the context of

*pravṛttam āmnāyam pramāṇīkṛtya pṛṣodarādivac ca sādhuśabdaprayogeṣu
śiṣṭācaritam avicchinnapāramparyam svacaraṇasamācāram pariḡrhyā virodhe
ca sthitavikalpāni utsargāpavādavanti pūrveṣām ṛṣiṇām smṛtiśāstrāṇi pratikālam
dṛṣṭaśabdasvarūpavyabhicārāṇi pramāṇīkṛtyedam ācāryaiḥ śabdānuśāsanam
prakrāntam anugamyate / (Iyer 1966, pp. 99-100).*

52 Expressions like *nityāḥ śabdārthasambandhāḥ* (Vākyapadīya 1.23) and *anādim avyavacchinnām śrutim āhur akartṛkām* (Vākyapadīya 1.136) are given in the Vākyapadīya without competing alternative perspectives, while the Mahābhāṣya is still discussing the *nityatva* and *kāryatva* views without committing itself firmly to either (*yady eva nityo 'thāpi kārya ubhayathāpi lakṣaṇam pravartyam*, Mahābhāṣya [Kielhorn edn.], Vol. I, p. 6).

53 It may be noted that the Ṛtti on Vākyapadīya 1.23 explores various alternative explanations of the notion of *nityatva* but does not entertain the alternative of

Buddhist views of momentariness (*kṣaṇikatva*) of everything including language that were current. The defense of *nityatva* and *apauruṣeyatva* of the Veda as seen in Bhartṛhari, as well as in the tradition of Mīmāṃsā, is most likely occurring in the context of the Buddhist opposition as was suggested by Francis Clooney (1990). The Ṛṣi-fication of the grammarian-sages, including Patañjali, was only a small part of this project. The primary goal of the project seems to have been to bring the grammatical tradition squarely back into the Vedic fold by claiming āgamic foundations for it. We know rather very little about the actual circumstances of Bhartṛhari's life. However, he himself reports the recovery of the Mahābhāṣya by Candrācārya and the efforts of Candrācārya in re-establishing its tradition. The continued active interest of the Buddhists in the propagation of the Pāṇinian tradition indicated by the presence of eminent Pāṇinian Buddhist grammarians like Jinendrabuddhi, Dharmakīrti, Śaraṇadeva and Puruṣottamadeva was perhaps resented by the followers of the Vedic tradition to some extent, and Bhartṛhari's doctrinal shift may perhaps be an early response to such a rivalry. A possible indication of such a shift may be seen in Vākyapadīya II.482.⁵⁴ This verse seems to suggest that Bhartṛhari's guru, Vasurāta, received the tradition of the Mahābhāṣya as revived by Candrācārya, but in composing his Āgamasamgraha, he also incorporated his own philosophic tradition (*svaṃ darśanam*). One could say that he brought the recovered tradition of Sanskrit grammar back within the fold of his own *darśana*.⁵⁵

anīyatva of words, meanings, and their relations. In fact, it emphatically asserts that if words, meanings, and their relations were *anīya*, there would be no purpose in composing the grammatical śāstras: *tatra sūtrāṇām ārambhād eva śabdānām nīyatvam abhimatam / na hy anīyatve śabdādīnām śāstrārambhe kiñcid api prayojanam asti /*, Iyer 1966, p. 61. Vākyapadīya 1.28 shows that Bhartṛhari is willing to compromise by accepting *vyavasthānīyatā*, as opposed to *kūṭasthānīyatā*, but this is as far as he seems to be willing to go. One must admit at least a minimalist notion of *nīyatā*, but the doctrine of *anīyatva* is not admissible. This shows the limits he is willing to travel, so far and no further.

54 Vākyapadīya II.482: *nyāyaprasthānamārgāṃs tām abhyasya svaṃ ca darśanam / praṇīto guruṇāsmākam ayam āgamasamgrahaḥ //*

55 This emphasis on not crossing the boundary of one's own *śāstra* is seen elsewhere in the Vākyapadīya and the Vṛtti: *vedaśāstrāvirodhī ca tarkaś cakṣur apaśyatām / Vākyapadīya 1.127, Vṛtti: tatra yāvān anugamyamānas tarkaḥ svaśāstram na bādhyate tāvān anugantavyaḥ /* (Iyer 1966, p. 205). Vṛṣabha: *evam avasthāpīte āgamapramāṇye*

Thus, with the given circumstantial evidence, we are in a position to read between the lines of Bhartṛhari's work and are able to detect a historical situation of rivalry and cooperation between the Buddhist tradition and the Hindu-Vedic tradition. In certain ways, the situation in Bhartṛhari is comparable with what one finds in the work of Gauḍapāda, but that is a topic for another occasion.⁵⁶

Now, I will discuss the post-Bhartṛhari phase of emerging mythologies in the Pāṇinian tradition that have remained influential till today. These are the two prominent ideas, namely that Pāṇini received his Śivasūtras from Śiva and that Patañjali is an incarnation of the cosmic serpent Śeṣa, and that his authority exceeds that of Pāṇini and Kātyāyana and further that his is the final and supreme authority within this tradition.

At this juncture, we need to review the historical status of an important text, the *Pāṇinīyaśikṣā*, since this text is the main authority cited to justify the notion that Pāṇini received the so-called Śivasūtras from Śiva. It has come down to us in two major forms, one versified and the other in prose. The traditional Pāṇinīyas usually refer to the versified form by this name, while the prose form was brought to light by Swami Dayananda. Cardona (1976: 179ff.) has discussed in detail these two versions, their dates, authorship, and the different claims regarding them. Cardona (1976: p. 182) concludes: "In sum, I think the evidence available precludes one's considering with confidence, that Pāṇini composed either of the Śikṣā texts which have been attributed to him." As far as any direct connection with Pāṇini himself, I fully agree with Cardona's conclusion. However, this text and its evolution are important for our understanding of

tīrthikāntarakalpitasya ca tarkasyāprāmāṇye 'bhipretaṃ tarkāprāmāṇyaṃ kathayati - tarkaś cakṣur iti / ...tīrthāntaraprakalpitatarkaṃ vyudasya vedārthavyavasthāpakasya mīmāṃsāsthāpitasya śrutilingādeḥ prāmāṇyam udbhāvayati / (Iyer 1966, p. 205).

56 This feeling of rivalry may be compared with the oft-quoted critique of Amarasimha, the author of the famous Amarakośa, that he stole the whole Mahābhāṣya: *amarasimho hi pāpīyān sarvaṃ bhāṣyam acūcurat*. There is no known textual source for this quotation, and this is transmitted purely by the oral tradition.

the development of the Śaivite connection with the Pāṇinian tradition. As I have already said, the later commentators like Nageśabhaṭṭa cite the following verse from this text as a justification for believing that Pāṇini received his *akṣarasamāmnāya* “sacred list of sounds” from Śiva or Maheśvara:

*yenākṣarasamāmnāyam adhigamya maheśvarāt /
kṛtsnaṃ vyākaraṇam proktaṃ tasmai pāṇinaye namaḥ //*

“Salutations to Pāṇini, who taught the entire grammar, after receiving the sacred [14 sequences of] sounds from Maheśvara.”

It is important to place this verse at least in some relative chronology. We may begin by saying that no verse of the versified Pāṇinīyaśikṣā has been cited by anyone until the time of Bhartṛhari. There is no evidence that the portions of the versified *Pāṇinīyaśikṣā* connecting Pāṇini to the Śaivite tradition were known to Bhartṛhari or were part of the most ancient form of this text. There are, in all, three verses in the different recensions of the versified Pāṇinīyaśikṣā which refer to Pāṇini receiving his grammar or the *akṣarasamāmnāya* “sacred list of sounds” from Śiva. This is the verse cited by Nageśabhaṭṭa given above. This verse is found in three out of five versions of Pāṇinīyaśikṣā but has not been reconstructed for the oldest version or the critical edition of Manomohan Ghosh. The second verse is as follows:

*śaṅkaraḥ śaṅkarīṃ prādād dākṣīputrāya dhimate /
vāṇmayebhyaḥ samāhṛtya devīṃ vācam iti sthitiḥ //*

“Śaṅkara gave his own divine speech, collected from all literatures, to the wise son of Dākṣī [= Pāṇini]. This is a fact.”

This verse is found in four out of five versions of Pāṇinīyaśikṣā but is not found in the oldest Agnipurāṇa version.

*Trinayanam abhimukhaniḥṣṭām imām
ya iha paṭhet prayataś ca sadā dvijaḥ /*

*sa bhavati dhanadhānyapaśuputrakīrtimān
atulaṃ ca sukhaṃ samaśnute divīti divīti //*

“The diligent Brahmin who always recites this [sacred list of sounds] that directly emerged from the mouth of Śiva with three eyes, he attains wealth, grain, cattle, sons and fame, and achieves immeasurable happiness in heaven.”

This verse is found in four out of five versions of Pāṇinīyaśikṣā but is not found in the oldest Agnipurāṇa version. Thus, these verses do not go back to the oldest stratum of the Pāṇinīya Śikṣā, but they entered into this text at some point and are found in relatively late versions of this text that became popular with grammarians like Nāgeśabhaṭṭa.

How old is the notion that Pāṇini was inspired by Śiva? This story is found in relatively late texts such as Jayadratha’s Haracaritacintāmaṇi (ch. 27) and Rāmabhadradīkṣita’s Patañjalicarita. The fact that the story appears in the frame of the Kathāsaritsāgara (taraṅga 4, vv. 20ff.; p. 8) and is linked to the origin of Guṇāḍhya’s Bṛhatkathā is very significant. The same connection is seen in Jayaratha’s Haracaritacintāmaṇi (early thirteenth century A.D.). If this connection to the Bṛhatkathā is valid, then the story of Śiva having inspired Pāṇini may be as old as the Bṛhatkathā itself. S.N. Dasgupta (1962: 92-93) says: “to assign it [= Bṛhatkathā] to the fourth century A.D. would not be an unjust conjecture,” and he further (p. 93) points out that both Guṇāḍhya and Bṛhatkathā are closely connected to the Śaivite tradition. It would thus seem that the notion of Pāṇini having been inspired by Śiva may have developed in certain Śaivite communities around the middle of the first millennium A.D. It was originally, in all likelihood, independent of the Chidambaram mythology associating Śiva Naṭarāja with Patañjali incarnated as Ādiśeṣa. David Dean Shulman (1980: 122ff.) discusses extensively the complex relationships of Ādiśeṣa with various different south Indian Śaivite shrines, most of which have little to do with his character as the grammarian Patañjali. I have a suspicion that Bhartṛhari calling Patañjali

ādiśiṣṭa may have been later understood as referring to Adīśeśa, more like through a folk-etymologic connection. However, this identification is not critical to the connection of Ādiśeśa with Śaivite shrines. Eventually, in certain quarters, the story of Patañjali/Ādiśeśa watching Śiva Naṭarāja's dance was extended to include Pāṇini as a witness to the same event. This did indeed make Pāṇini and Patañjali mythically contemporay, as seen in the Kāśikā/Kārikā of Nandikeśvara. The early north Indian traditions recorded by the Chinese travelers do attest to the popular belief in the region including Śalātura that Pāṇini received his inspiration from Śiva, but they do not seem to be aware of the motif of Śiva Naṭarāja's dance. Even the verses found in the late versions of the Pāṇiniyaśikṣā, which refer to Pāṇini receiving his *akṣarasamāmnāya* from Śiva, do not make any reference to Pāṇini being a witness to the dance of Śiva-Naṭarāja. The same may be said about the accounts found in the Kathāsaritsāgara, Haracaritacintāmaṇi, Bhaviṣyapurāṇa, etc. (cf. passages cited in the introduction to the Nirnayasaṅgṛaha ed. of the Mahābhāṣya, vol. I).

Within the Pāṇinian tradition, the first author to refer to this story is Haradatta, the author of the commentary Padamañjarī on the Kāśikāvṛtti. Haradatta remarks about Pāṇini's extraordinary ability to see the entire infinite language:

“How can folks like us see all the target language? Perhaps not for folks like us, but such [an ability] is possible for the great sages who are superior to us. Or, for a person who is graced by God and so can directly see everything. In this context, the learned of the world remember: “Salutations to Pāṇini, who, having acquired the *akṣarasamāmnāya* from the Great Lord [= Śiva], narrated the whole grammar.” They call the *akṣarasamāmnāya* by the term *devasūtra*.”⁵⁷

57 Padamañjarī on Kāśikāvṛtti (Vol. I, pp. 8-9): *katham punar asmadādīnām sarvalakṣyadarśitvam? mā bhūd asmadādīnām, asmadviśiṣṭānām maharṣiṇām sambhavati / yaśya vā īśvarānugrahaḥ sa sarvam pratyakṣayati / atraiva hi laukikāḥ smaranti – yenākṣarasamāmnāyam adhigamya maheśvarāt / kṛtsnam vyākaraṇam proktaṁ tasmai pāṇinaye namaḥ // iti akṣarasamāmnāyam ca vyācakṣate devasūtrāṇīti /*

This is the first attestation within the Pāṇinian tradition of the story of Pāṇini being blessed by Maheśvara and receiving the so called Śivasūtras from him.

Haradatta does not seem to be citing this verse from the Pāṇinīyaśikṣā, but from a collection of verses of worldly wisdom. In fact, his work shows no awareness of any versified Pāṇinīyaśikṣā. The words *atra laukikāḥ smaranti* prefacing the cited verse seem to indicate a local tradition as its source. Haradatta is a south Indian author from the Chola area of Tamilnadu. His Padamañjarī begins with an express salutation to Śiva [cf. *sambāya sādaram ayaṃ vihitaḥ praṇāmaḥ*]. The Śaivite affiliation is also clear from the names of his parents, Padmakumāra and ŚrīAmbā, as well as from his own name, Haradatta “given by Śiva.” Here we have an explicit Śaivite connection from the south for the first time.

Kaiyaṭa does not explicitly show any awareness of Pāṇini receiving either his grammar or the Śivasūtras from Śiva. Additionally, Kaiyaṭa’s religious affiliation seems to be Vaiṣṇavite. His Pradīpa begins with a salutation to Narāyaṇa. His teacher’s name is mentioned in the initial verses as Maheśvara. In any case, Kaiyaṭa, coming from Kashmir, shows no awareness that Pāṇini received his *akṣarasamāmnāya* or his grammar from Śiva. However, he refers once to Patañjali by the term Nāganātha (ad Mahabhaya ad P. 4.2.92 [Motilal Banarsidass ed.], II: 430), and this shows his awareness of the motif of Patañjali being an incarnation of Śeṣa. Kaiyaṭa’s principle, *yathottaraṃ hi munitrayasya prāmāṇyam* (Pradīpa on Mahābhāṣya on P. 1.1.29; Vol. I: 217), provides an ordered hierarchy between the three grammarian sages. This principle says that the authority of the grammarian-sages increases successively, and it effectively peaks in Patañjali.

One wonders if there is a slight difference between the attitudes of Haradatta and Kaiyaṭa. Haradatta shows his awareness of Pāṇini being inspired by Śiva, but not that Patañjali is an incarnation of Śeṣa. Perhaps, this allows him

to develop a more complementary view of the three great sages of grammar. On the other hand, Kaiyaṭa knows the myth of Patañjali being an incarnation of Śeṣa, but not that of Pāṇini being inspired by Śiva. Perhaps this is what allows him to develop a more hierarchical view of the three grammarian-sages, placing Patañjali at the apex. This may have been further aided by his reliance on Bhartṛhari, who refers to Patañjali as the foremost among the *śiṣṭas* (cf. *ayaṃ cādiśiṣṭaḥ* [Mahābhāṣyadīpikā, 108]).

The incorporation of the verse *yenākṣarasamāmnāyam*, etc., into the metrical Pāṇinīyaśikṣā probably occurred by the middle of the second millennium A.D. It certainly occurred before the time of Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita and Nāgeśabhaṭṭa. For Śivarāmeṇdrasarasvatī, who lived after Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita, but before Nāgeśabhaṭṭa, it is beyond comprehension why Kaiyaṭa seems to call the author of the *akṣarasamāmnāya* by the title *sūtrakāra*. Śivarāmeṇdrasarasvatī says in his Mahābhāṣyasiddhāntaratnprakāśa.⁵⁸

“[With reference to the sound *a* listed in the Śivasūtra *a-i-u-Ṛ*], the question is whether the author of the Vārttikas is merely explaining the purpose of the sound *a* which is taught by Mahādeva [= Śiva] himself as an open (*viṛta*) sound, or whether Mahādeva taught it as a close (*saṃviṛta*) sound and that the author of the Vārttikas proposes that it should be taught, for certain purposes, as an open sound. Thus, [for Kaiyaṭa], saying, “Was the teaching done by the author of the Sūtras?” it is inappropriate to disregard [Mahādeva’s agency in teaching the *akṣarasamāmnāya*], since it is known from the verse of the Pāṇinīyaśikṣā, i.e.

58 (Mahābhāṣyapradīpavyākhyānāni, I: 120): *mahādevenaivātrākāro viṛta upadiṣṭas tasya vārttikakāreṇa prayojanamātram anvākhyaṃvate vā, vārttikakāreṇaiva mahādevopadiṣṭas tasya saṃviṛtasya vivrtopadeśaḥ saprayojanaḥ kartavyatayā bodhyate veti praśnaḥ / evaṃ ca “kiṃ sūtrakāreṇaiva vivrtopadeśaḥ kṛtaḥ” iti vadatā [kaiyaṭena] “yenākṣarasamāmnāyam adhigamya maheśvarāt / kṛtsnam vyākaraṇam proktaṃ tasmāi pāṇinaye namaḥ //” pāṇinīyaśikṣādau pāṇinīyasūtrapāṭhādau ca sarvaiḥ śiṣṭaiḥ paṭhyamānatvena purāṇaprasiddhatvena ca tadupekṣānaucityāt / aṣṭādhyāyādau kaiścit paṭhyamānatvamātreṇākṣarasamāmnāyasya pāṇinikṛtatvāyogāt / “vṛddhiśabdaḥ śāstrādau maṅgalārthaḥ prayuktaḥ” iti bhāṣyavirodhāt / mahādevasya sūtrakāratvena vaiyākaraṇair avyavahriyamānatvāc ca /*

yenākṣara . . . etc., which is recited by all learned scholars at the beginning of the Sūtras of Pāṇini and which is well known since ancient times. Just because the *akṣarasamāmnāya* is recited at the beginning of Pāṇini's grammar, it is not appropriate to view it as having been authored by Pāṇini. Such a view is contrary to Patañjali's statement in the Mahābhāṣya: "The word *vṛddhi* [in P. 1.1.1 *vṛddhir ādaic*] has been used at the beginning of the treatise for the sake of marking an auspicious beginning." Additionally, grammarians do not refer to Mahādeva by the title *sūtrakāra*, author of the Sūtras."

Nāgeśabhaṭṭa, the last luminary in the tradition of Pāṇinian grammar, shows the full blossoming of many of the notions which he inherited. He knows that the three Sages of the Sanskrit grammar were Munis. He knows the story of Pāṇini receiving his grammar, and especially the *akṣarasamāmnāya*, from Śiva. He also knows the story of Patañjali being an incarnation of Śeṣa. Introductory verses to many of his works refer to Patañjali in his appearance as a serpent.⁵⁹ He is indeed aware of Kaiyaṭa's maxim: *yathottaraṃ hi munitrayasya prāmāṇyam*. While commenting on this maxim, Nāgeśabhaṭṭa says that the later sage is likely to have known a wider usage of language.⁶⁰ If this progressively wider vision is purely through chronological succession, it does not explain why this process must end with Patañjali. In any case, it is clear that, among the three grammarian Munis, Nāgeśa shows the highest respect for Patañjali. At the very beginning of his Pradīpa, Kaiyaṭa takes up the question of why the *bhāṣyakāra* (= Patañjali) should explain the purposes of studying Sanskrit grammar.⁶¹ Commenting on this passage of Pradīpa, Nāgeśabhaṭṭa refers to all the three grammarians. While he refers to Pāṇini by name, and to Kātyāyana as *vārttikakṛt*, he refers to Patañjali by the honorific *bhagavān*.⁶²

59 *nāgeśabhaṭṭo nāgeśabhāṣītārthavicakṣaṇaḥ*, verse 2ab, at the beginning of his Uddyota on Mahābhāṣya [Motilal Banarsidass ed., I: 1]

60 *uttarottaraśya bahulakṣyadarśitvāt* [Uddyota on Mahābhāṣya, Motilal Banarsidass ed., I: 217]; also see Uddyota on Mahābhāṣya on P. 3.1.87 [*dhinvikṛṇvyor...*] [Motilal Banarsidass ed., II: 100].

61 *bhāṣyakāro vivaraṇakāratvād vyākaraṇasya sāksāt prayojanam āha* [Pradīpa on Mahābhāṣya, Motilal Banarsidass ed., I: 3]

62 Uddyota on Mahābhāṣya, Motilal Banarsidass ed., I: 3.

All these factors, and especially the divine origin of Pāṇini's grammar, are taken up by Nāgeśabhaṭṭa and woven into a powerful argument to explain the status and the authority of the rules of Sanskrit grammar.

The quasi-religious argument relating to the status of the Sivasūtras and the Aṣṭādhyāyī is presented most explicitly by Nāgeśabhaṭṭa in his Laghuśabden-
duśekhara. This is a commentary on Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita's SiddhāntaKaumudī. There, Bhaṭṭoji himself clearly labels the Śivasūtras as *iti māheśvarāṇi sūtrāṇi* "thus end the Sūtras received from Maheśvara." This indeed refers to verse 57 of the Pāṇinīyaśikṣā: *yenākṣarasamāmnāyam*, cited above.

Nāgeśabhaṭṭa takes up the question of why these fourteen strings of sounds should be called *samāmnāya*, since the terms *āmnāya* and *samāmnāya* are used only to refer to Vedic scriptures. This is answered by saying that since these are received from Maheśvara, they are indeed a form of *śruti* received by Pāṇini.⁶³ Nāgeśabhaṭṭa cites the above verse from the Pāṇinīyaśikṣā as his authority (*pramāṇa*) for this view. Toward this end, he interprets the word *ācārya* in the Mahābhāṣya, referring to the author of the *akṣarasamāmnāya*, as referring to Maheśvara Śiva, and not to Pāṇini.⁶⁴

The change in perception is even more vivid if we compare Nāgeśabhaṭṭa with Kaiyaṭa. On the Mahābhāṣya on the Śivasūtra (*a-i-u-Ṇ*), Kaiyaṭa says: "Is it the case that the author of the Sūtras himself used an open (vowel *a*), and the author of the *Vārttikas* is merely explaining the purpose, or is it that the author of the Sūtras did not use an open (vowel *a*), but the author of the *Vārttikas* is advocating such a use?"⁶⁵ It is clear that Kaiyaṭa believes

63 *nanu caturdaśasūtryām akṣarasamāmnāya iti vyavahārānupapattir āmnāyasamāmnāyāśabdāyor vede eva prasiddher ity ata āha -māheśvarāṇi / maheśvarād āgatānity arthaḥ, maheśvaraprasādālabdhāniti phalitam / evaṃ caivamānupūrvikā śrutir evaiṣā tatprasādāt pāṇinīnā labdhā*, Laghuśabden-
duśekhara, 16-18.

64 *laṅ-sūtre ṅakāraṇiśayācāryapavrttir jñāpayati . . . vyākhyānata iti ity ādāv ācāryapadena maheśvaraḥ / anubandhāś ca maheśvarakṛtā evety anupadaṃ sphuṭībhaviṣyati*, Laghuśabden-
duśekhara, 18.

65 *kiṃ sūtrakāreṇaiva vivṛtopadeśaḥ kṛto vārttikakāreṇa tu tasya prayojanam*

that the author of *a-i-u-N* is the *sūtrakāra*, i.e., Pāṇini. On the other hand, Nāgeśabhaṭṭa's Uddyota identifies this *sūtrakāra* unquestionably with Maheśvara Śiva.⁶⁶ It may be pointed out that what we may call a story or myth today, Nāgeśabhaṭṭa refers to by the word *aitihya* "traditional account." The progression of the religious sentiment in the arena of grammar is clearly visible in these reinterpretations.

Nāgeśabhaṭṭa also deals with a related problem created by the classification of the Śivasūtras as a form of *śruti*. On the Śivasūtra *ṅa-ma-ṅa-ṅa-na-M*, Patañjali rejects the necessity of having the final *M* (Mahābhāṣya [Kielhorn edn.], I: 35-36). If these Sūtras are indeed a form of *śruti*, how could one propose to remove an unnecessary element? Nāgeśabhaṭṭa says (Laghuśabdenduśekhara, 19) that this rejection of a portion of a rule is only with reference to its practical purpose, lit., "visible purpose" (*dr̥ṣṭārtha*), and not with reference to its unseen purpose (*adr̥ṣṭārtha*). This unseen purpose is explained by saying that the recitation of the Vedāṅgas by itself produces religious merit, like the recitation of the Vedas. Nāgeśabhaṭṭa extends the same argument to Pāṇini's rules and their rejection by Patañjali. He says that some rules have seen and unseen purposes, while some have only unseen purposes, and there are no rules which are entirely without a purpose.⁶⁷

This belief that the recitation of Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī as a Vedāṅga is a meritorious act and that for this purpose the text must be recited unchanged

uktam, athavā akṛta eva vivṛtopadeśo vārttikakṛtā kartavyatvenopanyasta iti praśnaḥ.
Pradīpa on Mahābhāṣya, Motilal Banarsidass ed., I: 64.

66 *sūtrakāraḥ maheśvaraḥ vedapurūṣo vā, yenākṣarasamāmnāyam ityādy aitihyād ity āhuḥ*, Uddyota on Mahābhāṣya, Motilal Banarsidass ed., I: 64; also: *ācāryeṇa* [Pradīpa], but contrast *śivo vedapurūṣo vātrācāryaḥ* [Uddyota on Mahābhāṣya, Motilal Banarsidass ed., I: 74].

67 *kiñcid dr̥ṣṭādr̥ṣṭārthavat, kiñcid chuddhādr̥ṣṭārthavat, sarvathānarthakaṃ na kiñcid iti tadarthaḥ / vṛddhisūtrasthe "varṇenāpyanarthakena na bhavitavyam" iti bhāṣyagranthe 'narthakatvam bodhyārtharāhityarūpam iti na niṣprayojanatvarūpānarthakyeṇa tatra tatra pratyākhyānaparabhāṣyāsaṅgatīḥ*, Laghuśabdenduśekhara, 20.

has helped preserve the text of the Aṣṭādhyāyī with relatively few changes through the centuries. The Veda reciters who are called Daśagranthī “reciters of 10 Vedic texts,” to this day, recite the four Vedas and the six Vedāṅga texts, including the Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini. Even though commentators beginning with Kātyāyana and Patañjali rejected the practical necessity of entire rules or parts of rules in the Aṣṭādhyāyī, the religious sentiment associated with the text helped preserve it relatively unchanged.



Nataraja, Chola period bronze, 11th century, Government Museum, Chennai, India



Patañjali: Chidambaram-Temple, East Gopura

Besides quoting the verse from the Pāṇinīyaśikṣā, Nāgeśabhaṭṭa refers to another text, i.e., the Kārikā (also called Kāśikā) of Nandikeśvara⁶⁸ (cf.

68 On shaky grounds, K. C. Pandey (1935: 592) considers Nandikeśvara to be “an older contemporary of Pāṇini.” Referring to the commentary of Upamanyu, Pandey (1954:49) narrates the following story:

“The sages, Nandikeśvara, Patañjali, Vyāghrapād and Vasiṣṭha, etc. contemplated on Śiva for inspiration. As an act of grace to them, Śiva appeared and struck his hand-drum (*ḍamaru*). The sounds, produced by it, symbolically presented the fourteen Sūtras. The Sūtras, found at the commencement of Pāṇini’s Aṣṭādhyāyī are articulate representations of the inarticulate sounds of Śiva’s handdrum. The sages, unable to understand the meaning of the Sūtras, approached Nandikeśvara for clarification. He (Nandikeśvara) expounded the meaning in Twenty-six verses, which constitute the text of the Nandikeśvara Kāśika (cf. *iha khalu sakalalokanāyakaḥ parameśvaraḥ paramaśivaḥ sanakasanandanasanatcumārādīn śrotṛṇ nandikeśapatañjalivyāghrapādvasiṣṭhādīn uddhartukāmo ḍamarunināda-vyājena caturdaśasūtryātmakam tattvam upadideśa / tad anu te sarve munīndravaryāś cira-kālam āśritānām asmākam tattvam caturdaśasūtryātmakam upadideśeti matvā asya sūtrajālasya tattvārtham nandikeśvaro jānātīti nandikeśvaram praṇipatya pṛṣṭavantas tatas teṣu pṛṣṭavatsu sa ṣaḍvīmśatikārikā-rūpeṇa tattvam sūtrāṇām upadeṣṭum icchann idam ācacakṣe*.)”

Basing himself upon this evidence, Pandey argues:

“The literary tradition, referred to in the preceding section recognizes Nandikeśvara to be a contemporary of Pāṇini. There seems to be some truth in this tradition. For, Patañjali, in his Mahābhāṣya, seems to refer to the interpretation of the system of sounds, represented in the fourteen Sūtras, by Nandikeśvara. For he talks of it as “Brahmarāśi.” This view seems to find support in the interpretation of Brahmarāśi as Brahmatattvam by Kaiyaṭa. But in the opinion of Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa, as expressed in the course of his commentary on the above, Patañjali had Nandikeśvara’s view in his mind. For, Nāgeśa definitely quotes the fourth verse of the Nandikeśvara Kāśikā.”

There is no reference to Śiva or to Nandikeśvara in the Mahābhāṣya, Bhartṛhari’s Mahābhāṣyadīpikā, or Kaiyaṭa’s Pradīpa. Pandey’s argument has very little value from a historical point of view. If his “literary evidence” has any historical relevance, not only Nandikeśvara would be a contemporary of Pāṇini, he would also be a contemporary of Patañjali, thus making ultimately Pāṇini and Patañjali contemporaries of each other. This makes little historical sense. The original verses of Nandikeśvara make no reference to Patañjali and Vyāghrapād, etc. They refer only to Sanaka, etc., and to Pāṇini. Upamanyu’s extension of the assemblage of sages to include Patañjali and Vyāghrapād clearly refers to the stories as they are connected with the Naṭaraja temple in Chidambaram, where there is a shrine dedicated to Vyāghrapād and Patañjali in the courtyard. These stories are later recorded in the text of Patañjalacarita of Rāmabhadradīkṣita. K.C. Pandey (1954: 51) dates

Uddyota on Mahābhāṣya [Nirnyasagara ed., I: 132]). This is a text which comes from the tradition of Kashmir Śaivism and is available with a commentary by Upamanyu. Its first verse, which is known widely in the late Pāṇinian tradition, narrates the story of Śiva playing his drum (*ḍhakkā*) fourteen times at the end of his dance. Through these drum-beats, he manifested the fourteen Śivasūtras in order to uplift sages like Sanaka spiritually.⁶⁹ This informs us that the Śivasūtras have a larger spiritual purpose than the merely grammatical use made by Pāṇini. The second verse says that the marker sounds at the end of each of these Śivasūtras are there specifically to facilitate the formation of Pāṇinian grammar.⁷⁰ The commentary of Upamanyu actually goes a step further and tries to explain even the so-called marker sounds in a non-grammatical fashion. For example, commenting on the tenth verse of Nandikeśvara, Upamanyu explains the Śivasūtra *r-ḷ-K* by paraphrasing each of the three sounds: *r parameśvaraḥ ḷ māyākhyām manovṛttim k adarśayat* “The great lord [*r*] displayed [*k*] manifestation of his mind called Māyā [*ḷ*].” Certainly, the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism does not wish to let any of the sounds of the Śivasūtras be without a spiritual purpose.

Upamanyu to “the close of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century A.D.” The text of Nandikeśvara’s Kāśikā itself cannot predate the general appearance of the Kashmir Śaiva texts, i.e., eighth century A.D. In reverse of Pandey’s argument, it seems to me that it is Patañjali’s characterization of the sounds of the Śivasūtras as *brahmarāśi* that allowed Nandikeśvara to further connect these sounds to a Śaivaite system. Professor Raffaele Torella, in a personal communication, comments: “I don’t remember seeing any reference to Nandikeśvara’s Kāśikā/Kārikā in any Kashmir Shaiva texts (even where one might most have expected to find it, like the Parātriṃśikāvivarāṇa or Tantrāloka, ch. III). In fact, the only reference to it that I am aware of is that by Nāgeśa. My impression is that this is not an old text (a forerunner of the Kashmiri Shaiva doctrines, as Pandey thinks), but a late one which rather presupposes the doctrines of the so-called ‘Kashmir Shaivism’ at a postexegetical stage (e.g., the first verse of the Spandakārikā is distinctly echoed by a verse of the NK.” I thank Professor Torella for his suggestions.

69 *ṛttāvasane naṭarājarājo nanāda ḍhakkāṃ navapañcavāram / uddhartukāmaḥ sanakādisiddhān etad vimarśe śiva-sūtrajālam*, Mahābhāṣya (Nirnyasagara ed.), I: 132.

70 *atra sarvatra sūtreṣu antyavarṇacacaturdaśam / dhātvarthaṃ samupādiṣṭam pāṇinyādiṣṭasiddhaye* [ibid.].

Thus, the Pāṇinian tradition as it has come down to us is firmly rooted in Pāṇini receiving the Śivasūtras from Śiva, and composing his grammar with this divine inspiration, and Patañjali being an incarnation of Śeṣa, and being seen as the ultimate authority within the Pāṇinian tradition. While generations of Sanskrit pandits have taken these beliefs as being foundational to their study and interpretation of Pāṇini's grammar, I hope to have shown that these beliefs arose diversely at a relatively late date and collectively took root within the Pāṇinian tradition most likely first in the region around the Śiva Naṭarāja at Chidambaram, and then spread across India. The supreme authority of Patañjali, as already seen in Bhartṛhari, was originally probably independent of his later identification as an incarnation of Śeṣa, but that identification certainly reinforced his supreme authority as seen in the works of grammarians like Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita and Nāgeśabhaṭṭa. Thus, the history of the Pāṇinian grammar came to be inseparably linked to a number of religious conceptions, and these conceptions perhaps helped the preservation and continued relevance of that grammar up to our own times.

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