

The Paippalāda-Saṁhitā of the Atharvaveda

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INTRODUCTORY

1. What is the Paippalāda-Saṁhitā of the Atharvaveda?

[Recensions, Saṁhitās, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, ancillary literature]

The Paippalāda-Saṁhitā is the mantra collection of the Paippalāda recension of the Atharvaveda.

The Atharvaveda existed in nine recensions at the time of Patañjali, the author of the Mahābhāṣya commentary on Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī and belonging to the court of king Puṣyamitra in the second century BCE at Pāṭaliputra. Patañjali (Mahābhāṣya, Paspasāhnikā, vārtikā 7) states *navadhātharvaṇavedaḥ* 'Ninefold is the Veda of the Atharvans'. The ninefoldness of the Atharvaveda refers to its nine branches that is recensions. The Caraṇavyūhasūtra too, ascribed to Śaunaka and classed among the late sūtras of the early medieval period, in one of its versions (KSS 132: 47), speaks of nine types of Atharvaveda namely Paippala, Śaunaka, Dānta, Pradānta, Auta, Jāvāla, Brahmaṇalāśa, Kunakhī, Vedadarśa and Cāraṇavidya. In another version (Bolling-Negelein 1910:49.4.1) the names appear as Paippalāda, Tauda, Mauda, Śaunakīya, Jājala, Jalada, Brahmavada, Devadarśa and Cāraṇavaidya. Sāyaṇa (14th cent. CE), in the introductory part of his commentary on the Śaunaka recension of the Atharvaveda, enumerates the recensions as in the list of the Bolling-Negelein's edition of the Caraṇavyūha. There are also some other lists with variants, eg., in the oral Caraṇavyūha of the Odisha Paippalādas and in the Purāṇas, but the Sāyaṇa-Caraṇavyūha list is generally accepted.

Of the nine recensions the Saṁhitās only the Paippalāda and Śaunakīya recensions have come down to us.

The Paippalāda-Saṁhitā seems to have been the representative version of the Atharvaveda but it lost popularity sometime in the first millennium CE. A corrupt and mutilated manuscript of it was discovered in 1873. But a living tradition and complete and fairly correct manuscripts were discovered in Odisha by Durgamohan Bhattacharyya in 1959. The book has been published up to the eighteenth of its twenty kāṇḍas.

It is difficult to say if all the other recensions named in the lists had full-fledged Saṁhitāie mantra collection. Jayāditya reports in the Kāśikācommentary on Pāṇini1.3.49 'A Maudarecites (his Veda) just after a Paippalāda.' That means the Maudas too had their mantra collection. About the others we know little. They could have been variant collections of mantras or might have differed in ritual texts only. We do not know the actual position.

A mantra collection may have different types of recitation mode. Saṁhitā-pāṭha means that the words in the half-verses appear in sandhied form. There may be other modes of recitation like padapāṭhewhere the unsandhied words are separately recited. The AVŚ has also its padapāṭha but only the Saṁhitāof the AVP has come down to us.

By tradition a Veda consists of a mantra part and a Brāhmaṇa part. The latter includes Āraṇyaka and Upaniṣad too. The Paippalāda-Saṁhitā has no Brāhmaṇa work exclusively associated with it. The Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa is the common Brāhmaṇa of the AVŚ and the AVP. The Kauśika-Sūtra is a manual for domestic rituals peculiar to the Atharvaveda. The majority of its mantras are common to the AVŚ and the AVP but a few are exclusive to the AVP and also a few to the AVŚ. The common mantras as well as exclusive AVŚ mantras are cited by Pratiṅka that is indicatory initial words while the AVP verses are cited in full (*sakalapāṭha*). Most of the scholars believe that the Kauśika-Sūtra is primarily a ritual book of the AVŚ.

The AVP had its own domestic ritual treatises. The contents of these are of two categories *śāntika-pauṣṭika* or agreeable and *ābhicārika* that is distasteful. The latter consists of witchcraft material. The two are also referred to as *ātharvaṇa* and *āṅgirasa*. They are considered two aspects of the Atharvaveda. The gr̥hyasūtraof the Paippalāda-Saṁhitācalled Paiṭhīnasi-Sūtra is supposed to have consisted of agreeable material but no manuscript of that work has yet come to the notice of scholars. A few domestic ritual texts under the category of Āṅgirasakalpa exist in manuscripts and await publication. These consist of witchcraft material.

Certain ritual manuals dealing with only gr̥hya rituals like marriage, upanayana, nāmakaraṇaetc go by the name of Karmapañjikā. These are late paddhati works. Some of them have been published but none critically edited. A current Karmapañjikā of Odisha was done by

Śrīdhara. Another by Bhūdhara is current in the southern part of Medinipur. We do not know the relation between the various manuscripts of the Karmapañjikā.

Apart from those some Upaniṣads too claim affiliation to the AVP. Two of them, namely Praśna and Muṇḍaka, are relatively old; the Māṇḍūkya is early medieval and the others are even later. These last ones belong to a group termed 'Minor Upaniṣads' by modern scholars. Barring a few like the Allopaniṣad these Upaniṣads came into being before the tenth century CE.

Apart from those we have also many pariśiṣṭas dealing with ritual, astrology and kindred matter of the AV. Many of them deal with AVP matter. Most of the Pariśiṣṭas have been published but those belonging to the Odisha Paippalādas still await publication. One of them is known as Pañcakalpa.

2. The arrangement of the Paippalāda-Samhitā

The Paippalāda-Samhitā is, like the AVŚ, divided into 20 books of uneven size. It consists of 7837 mantras in 923 hymns. The AVŚ has 5977 mantras. But even of these about 900 verses of AVŚ 20 are taken from the Ṛgveda. So the number of independent mantras in the AVŚ turns out to be around 5000. It means that so far as independent AV mantras are concerned, the AVP has got 2800 to 2900 more mantras in it.

As with the Ṛgveda, the AVP verses are called ṛk in the manuscripts. The hymns are called *kāṇḍikā* (*sūkta* in the Ṛgveda and the AVŚ) and the books *kāṇḍa* (*maṇḍala* in the RV). The name *kāṇḍa* is common to the AVP and AVŚ. The first fifteen *kāṇḍas* of the AVP are called *caturarca* (*caturarcca* in the Odisha manuscripts) or *caturṛcakāṇḍa* 'the *kāṇḍa* with four ṛks in each *kāṇḍikā*', *pañcarcakāṇḍa*, *ṣaḍṛcakāṇḍa* and so on up to *aṣṭādaśarcakāṇḍa* that is the fifteenth *kāṇḍa*. This addition of three to the serial number of the *kāṇḍa* more or less correctly shows the average number of verses per *kāṇḍikā* up to the ninth *kāṇḍa* which is called *dvādaśarcakāṇḍa*. But, from the tenth *kāṇḍa* termed *trayodaśarcakāṇḍa*, the number of verses per hymn tends to be around ten or indefinite. That means from the tenth *kāṇḍa* the way of naming the *kāṇḍa* is just a convention without reflection of the actual average number of verses per hymn.

Apart from *kāṇḍikās/sūktas* hymns, one finds another grouping of mantras called *anuvāka* formed by many hymns. Up to the fifteenth *kāṇḍa* average five hymns make an *anuvāka*. The initial part of the sixteenth *kāṇḍa* has about five hymns per *anuvāka* but this number mildly increases subsequently so that we have 22 *anuvākas* for its 155 hymns. When the

consecutive hymns in the two saṁhitās tally the anuvāka divisions too tally. The anuvāka division mainly aims at convenience in svādhyāya - memorization by daily recitation of the Saṁhitā, but thematic unity too is sometimes found. Thus the sixth anuvāka of AVP 17 formed by 17.27 – 43 tells a single story.

The name arthasūkta is given to some long hymns in the ŚaunakaSaṁhitā. They have a unity of meaning. When such long hymns consist of narration with sequence of events there occurs another division called paryāya -- stages. The virāṭ hymns formed by AVP 16.133 - 135 (AVŚ 8.10-15) narrate a sequence of events. The hymns consist of six paryāyas in the AVŚ according to the Bṛhat-Sarvānukramaṇikā, an ancillary work of the AVŚ. Apparently the AVP has three paryāyas for them. The Vrātya hymns too consist of paryāyas in two anuvākas according to the Bṛhat-Sarvānukramaṇikā. The paryāyas are not marked in the AVP; otherwise the arrangements in the two recensions agree.

Apart from the above traditional division or grouping, Whitney-Lanman suggested another grouping which they named 'grand division'. They suggested three grand divisions for the first eighteen kāṇḍas of the AVŚ namely AVŚ 1-7 (≡AVP 1-5; 19-20), 8-12 (≡AVP 16,17) and 13-18 (≡AVP 18). Since AVŚ 6,7 appear as AVP 19,20 Whitney-Lanman's 'grand divisions' do not work with the AVP. Still, 'grand divisions' can be found with the AVP too.

While the first five kāṇḍas of the AVP more or less correspond to the first five of the AVŚ, the next ten that is 6 to 15 have no corresponding kāṇḍas in the AVŚ. These consist of a large amount of new material. The hymns of the first five kāṇḍas of the AVŚ are short and deal with miscellaneous subjects which are usually contained in one hymn. This is part of Whitney-Lanman's 'first grand division' which they extend up to AVŚ 7. Since AVŚ 6 and 7 appear as AVP 19, and 20, our first division ends at AVP 5. The next fifteen can be marked out first by their exclusive feature in that many of the hymns are exclusive AVP material and when they appear elsewhere they do not appear in the AVP grouping. Again, prose pieces appear in this part as in 9.20-21, 10.10, 11.16, 13.9 etc. Unlike in the previous division a single theme continues in consecutive hymns; it offers the rare picture of the landholder with the tiller working under him and comments on their relation. There is hardly any mystic speculation in this part. AVP 6-15 seem to consist of only domestic ritual material needed by the farmer.

Though the division spoken of above is not stated in traditional works, it seems that the above two groups had been set apart as distinct divisions even in traditional circles. This is known from the fact that among the Odisha manuscripts AVP 1 - 5 often come in a single volume

and 6 - 15 in another.

Kāṇḍas 16 and 17 corresponding to AVŚ 8-11 and 12 respectively could be regarded as the third division of the AVP.

The sixteenth is called kṣudrakāṇḍa. There is nothing conspicuous in the 155 hymns (1363 verses) of the sixteenth kāṇḍa that could explain the name *kṣudrakāṇḍa*. Far from being small (*kṣudra*) it is the longest kāṇḍa of the AVP with 1363 mantras in 155 hymns. The poems have an average length of 8 to 9 mantras. The material contents of the hymns more or less agree in the two recensions though they differ in arrangement.

Often there is a unity of idea in consecutive hymns, as in AVP 16.1 and 2 (=AVŚ 8.1 and 2). The corresponding AVŚ hymns are traditionally known as arthasūktas. Some of them like AVŚ 8.9 (AVP 16.18-20), AVŚ 8.10 (AVP 16.133-135), AVŚ 10.2 (AVP 16.59-62), AVŚ 10.7 (AVP 17.7-11) etc are cosmogonic; a few others are mystic interpretations of the ritual or useful hymns eg., against snakes and poisons -- AVŚ 10.4 (AVP 16.15-17). Such single long AVŚ hymns occur in the AVP as divided into many hymns of 10 verses plus one with the residue. AVŚ 10.4, for example, consisting of 26 verses occurs as AVP 16.15, 16 and 17 with 10, 10 and 7 verses respectively. There is one additional mantra in the AVP in this case.

Since such AVŚ hymns have unity of idea it is reasonable to infer that the original hymns have been divided into several hymns in the AVP. It is not impossible that this exercise had ritual employment in consideration.

The name kṣudrakāṇḍa could have been coined during the said exercise of hymn-size-reduction at the time of the redaction of the AVP as a 20 kāṇḍa mantra collection. This is, of course, speculation.

The 17th kāṇḍa is called ekāṇṛca. The name means 'the kāṇḍa with one hymn/anuvāka that has no ṛk'. This is true of the 17th kāṇḍa, its 6th anuvāka (17.27-17.43) being entirely in prose. This is also the oldest prose piece of the Vedic literature. It describes the myth behind a rigorous ritual called anaḍudvrata by which Indra regained his lost thunderbolt from Vṛtra and slew him. Curiously enough a sage named AhīnasĀśvatthi is said to have expressed his displeasure, after the ritual had been narrated, by terming it *kṛtyā* that is witchcraft. But he became wise not to censure its narration for the fear of losing his accrued merit.

The parallel kāṇḍā in the AVŚ is its twelfth one. This also has been termed ekāṇṛca in the Bṛhat-Sarvānukramaṇī, but unwisely so. For, the anaḍudvrata episode has been dropped from AVŚ 12. That the 12th kāṇḍa, which has no prose piece was still called ekāṇṛca points to the

origin of the name with the AVP hymn and the artificial nature of borrowing the name by the redactor of the AVŚ.

The eighteenth kāṇḍa makes for the fourth division of the AVP. It is called Mahatkāṇḍa. It has 663 mantras in 82 hymns. This Kāṇḍa corresponds to AVŚ 13 - 18. It stands unique in many ways. Unlike in the previous three divisions the contents and ritual employment of the mantras of AVP 18 or of its parallels in the AVŚ 13-18 are not of homogeneous character.

Judging by the character of the hymns and a comparison with the corresponding parts of the AVŚ the kāṇḍa may be divided into two parts. Hymns 1-56 correspond to the five AVŚ kāṇḍas 13 - 17 while the last twenty-six hymns correspond to the hymns of AVŚ 18 which are employed in funeral rites. The corresponding part of the AVŚ that is AVŚ 13-18, was determined by Whitney-Lanman to be its third grand division. Since the AVP hymns have been placed in a single kāṇḍa, regarding the corresponding AVŚ material as forming a single division seems justified.

Now, though we spoke of two parts of AVP 18, some statements in the manuscripts indicate that it consisted of three parts. At the end of the 56th hymn two Odisha manuscripts declare that this is the end of the second part of the Mahatkāṇḍa while the Kashmir manuscript and one Odisha manuscript declare the end of the Mahatkāṇḍa itself. No first part has been indicated in the manuscripts. We may just guess that the first 26 hymns of the Mahatkāṇḍa (AVŚ 14, 13) which are composed in verses formed its first part and 27-56 (AVŚ 15-17) which are in prose formed its second part. That two manuscripts declare the end of the kāṇḍa at 18.56 is another mystery. It seems to indicate that the last twenty-six hymns were not accessible to all the scribes. These hymns to the fathers were regarded as inauspicious by some. The final 26 hymns that is 18.57-82 are not noted in the manuscripts as the third part though that should be obvious.

The first fifty six hymns of AVP 18 corresponding to AVŚ 13 - 17 are of varied nature. Each of the corresponding AVŚ kāṇḍa has a unitary character, with a single theme dealt with in long hymns. (1) AVŚ 13 (=AVP 18. 15-26) termed Rohita is mystic glorification of the sun; (2) AVŚ 14 (=AVP 18.1-14) consists of marriage hymns many of which are also found in RV 10.85; (3) AVŚ 15 (=AVP 27-43) is mystic glorification of Vrātya; (4) AVŚ 16 (=AVP 44-53) is termed Prājāpatya and has employment in warding off evil; 17 (=AVP 54-56) termed Āditya consists of mystic prayers to various gods.

The Vrātya hymns (AVP 18. 27-43= anuvākas 5 and 6) are of enigmatic nature but have indubitable historical value. The hymns glorify Vrātya as a divine being. The Vrātyas look like a

nomadic ethnic group outside the Vedic fold. They have been conceived as a single divinity in the Atharvaveda. There is evidence that the Vrātyas were brought into the Vedic fold by special rites called Vrātya-stoma enjoined in the Tāṇḍya-Mahābrāhmaṇa. The liberal inclusive attitude to the Vrātyas reflected in the Atharvaveda and after it in the Tāṇḍya-Mahābrāhmaṇa, however, did not last in the medieval period. They were despised in the Dharmaśāstras.

Of the other hymns in this division, although each group has some ritual use, AVP 18.15-26 (AVŚ 13 Rohita) and AVP 18. 54-56 (AVŚ 17 Āditya) are just prayers. Later, such prayers have been called *atistutis* 'singing to the glory of the gods without particular ritual employment'.

The subject matter and ritual use of the other hymns have been told above. It will be interesting to note that the marriage hymns of AVP. 18.1 – 14, corresponding to AVŚ. 14 and RV.10.85, are used in the marriage ceremony among the Odisha Paippalādas.

The nature of the contents of the hymns change in the final twenty-six hymns that is 18.57 - 82 corresponding to the hymns of the eighteenth kāṇḍa of the AVŚ. Also known as funeral hymns, these hymns to the fathers, many of which occur also in the Ṛgveda (10.10, 14-18) and the 6th prapāṭhaka of the Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka, stand unique in the Vedic literature. Quite a few hymns like 18.57,58 (Yama-Yamī dialogue), 18.74 (cremation hymn) are of great literary value.

The nineteenth kāṇḍa is long consisting of 911 mantras in 56 hymns. It is next only to the 16th kāṇḍa (1363/155) in bulk. It is called ṛcakāṇḍa 'kāṇḍa with three-verse units'; so also its parallel 6th kāṇḍa of the AVŚ which is much smaller in size. There is a difference in the hymn structures of the two corresponding kāṇḍas in that while most of the AVŚ hymns actually consist of three verses, the AVP hymns are very long. 27 of them are made of 15 verses but many are longer, one of them consisting of as many as 24 verses.

The ṛca units of the kāṇḍa originated in ritual use. This is known from the fact that they are actually employed in units of three mantras. The practice is of Ṛgvedic origin. Many of its verses have been culled out from big hymns in triadic units for ritual employment.

The appearance of hymns, as distinct from mere ritual triadic units, in ṛca form ie in three verses, on the other hand, is peculiar to the AVŚ, mainly to its sixth book. But the three verse form of the hymns could not have been original to them. For the larger AVP hymns in which the AVŚ ṛca-hymns occur as parallels show unity of theme and meaning.

The same holds good for the 20th kāṇḍa too. It is called ekaracakāṇḍa that is to say the

kāṇḍa with one verse per hymn. Actually, of its 123 hymns 60 have one ṛk each. That makes about 49%. 30 are with 2 verses per hymn. 8 are ṛca hymns, 11 are caturṛca and the others are even bigger one having as many as 11 mantras. With 633 mantras in 65 hymns it has nearly 10 verses per hymn. Here too one sees the same difference between the AVP and the AVŚ as observed with the 19th kāṇḍa. That means while the AVŚ hymns are sized according to ritual employment the longer 10 verse hymns of the AVP exhibit thematic unity. Naturally, as in the case of the ṛcakāṇḍa, one concludes that the AVP represents the older hymn structure.

The following table shows the correspondence of the kāṇḍas of the AVP and the AVŚ with the number of hymns and mantras in each

AVP-AVŚ Kāṇḍa correspondence chart

AVP kāṇḍas with total no.of mantras	AVŚ kāṇḍas with total no.of mantras
1-5 (1902)	1-5 (1290)
6-15(1869)	X
16 (1363)	8-11(1269/2559), 12.5-10; also AVŚ 6.114-123 (16.49-51), 4.14.7-9,9.5.2.19-24.31, 33 ,35,37,38 (16.99)
17 (496)	12.1-4,10.7(304/2863=total of 12/cumulative)
18 (663)	13-18(963/3826) Both have the same amount of material but their counting methods are different
19 (911)	6(454/4280)
20 (633)	7(286/4566)
X	19(453/5019)
X	20(958/5977)
Total 7837	5977

The following is a kāṇḍa-wise break up of the AVP.

kāṇḍa	No.of hymns	No. of mantras	Total

1	112	483	
2	91	485	968
3	40	278	124 6
4	40	302	154 8
5	40	354	190 2
6	23	237	213 9
7	20	211	235 0
8	20	230	258 0
9	29	304	288 4
10	16	165	304 9
11	16	148	319 7
12	22	198	339 5
13	9	65	346 0
14	9	84	354 4
15 (I)		227	377
	23(510)		1
16 (II)	155(15 5)	1363(136 3)	513 4
17	55	496	563 0

18 (III)	82(137)	663(1159)	629 3
19	56	911	720 4
20 (IV)	65 (121)	633(1544)	783 7
Total	923	7837	

3. General nature of the contents of the AVP Samhitās; ritual connection and mystic element; useful for the householder and the mystic thinker both.

Scholars usually classify the Vedic compositions according to their ritual employment. We may do so for the AV too; for, theoretically, every mantra has a ritual use. But, as we told above, two groups of prayers in the AVP 18 namely 18.15-26 and 54-56, corresponding to AVŚ 13 and 17, cannot be related to rituals by the nature of their contents. This holds good also for many hymns of the 16th kāṇḍa which speculate on the nature of the Universe, the mystic principle running through it etc.

In fact the though ritual employment is a strong feature of the Vedic hymns, all of them cannot be claimed to be of ritual origin. This is true of the Ṛgveda, particularly of its tenth maṇḍala and also of the Atharvaveda, particularly of many hymns of the 16th and 18th kāṇḍa of the AVP and its AVŚ parallels. Cosmogony, Brahman as the all-encompassing supreme being, Vrātyas, treatment of peasant tillers, praying for harmony among members of the family, petty rituals and deadly witchcraft -- all these occur in the AV, particularly the AVP to give it an all-comprehensive nature reflecting the multi-facet character of Indian culture.

The Upaniṣadic idea of Brahman's universal existence is found very prominently in the Atharvaveda, particularly in the Paippalāda version. The AVP (8.9.10-11) stands unique in claiming that Brahman exists even in slaves, fishermen, Śūdras and women. Later philosophers have quoted this view while showing the all-comprehensive character of God. While these pray and aim at mystic realization, the sām̐m̐sya hymns (AVP 9.4 etc.) that pray for harmony in the family and the society exhibit altruistic love for human beings.

The occurrence of both mystic elements and matters of worldly interest is so marked in it that in the introduction to his commentary on the Śaunakīya Atharvaveda Sāyaṇa understands

the Atharvaveda as *aihiḱāmuṣmikaphala* 'useful both in this world as well as in the other world.'

4. Accentuation and metre

The Paippalāda-Saṁhitā was recited with accents in ancient times. On Pāṇini 1.3.49 Jayāditya, the author of the premier part of the Kāsikāvṛtti on the Aṣṭādhyāyī, states *anuvadate Maudaḥ Paippalādasya* 'The Mauda recites after the Paippalāda' indicating the svādhyāya of accented texts of the AVP. However, accentuation is very meagre in the available manuscripts of the Paippalāda-Saṁhitā.

The manuscripts of the Paippalāda-Saṁhitā, as told above have come from two regions of India-- one manuscript written in the Śāradā script was discovered in Kashmir in 1873. It was hopelessly corrupt and mutilated. Later better manuscripts, still followed and recited by Paippalādas, were discovered in Odisha in 1959 by Durgamohan Bhattacharyya. The Odisha manuscripts have no accent marks. Though the Kashmir manuscript (=K) is very corrupt some of its mantras are endowed with accent marks.

In K the marking of accents in the manuscripts is different from that of the Ṛgveda or the ŚaunakīyaAtharvaveda. The udāttas are marked with a stroke above the syllable, the dependent svarita with a dot below and the anudātta with a stroke below. The pracayas are not marked. The following is a specimen.

AVP 1.33.1a (RV 1.23.23a) āpodyānvacāriṣam is written as आपो अद्यान्वचारिषं. In the common system in Devnagari it should be written as आपोअद्यान्वचारिषुं...

The ancient metres of the Ṛgveda, triṣṭubh with 11 syllable quarter and jagatī with ten-syllable quarters will be available also in the Atharvaveda, but the eight-syllable quarter anuṣṭubh occurs more frequently here.

5. Existing oral tradition

A fast declining oral tradition still exists among the Paippalādas of Odisha but no regular svādhyāya comes to notice. The recitations are unaccented and only mantras in regular ritual use are remembered. The Kanchi-maṭha tried to revive the oral tradition; some Vedic pāṭhaśālās like the one at Badshi too are making attempts. However, in the absence of an accented text only a śloka-type recitation has been attempted till now. The accented text, however, can be retrieved and with help from reciters of the AVŚ and the RV a revival of the ancient svādhyāya can be

envisaged.

6. Commentaries and translations

Durgamohan Bhattacharyya's edition of the first four kāṇḍas had been furnished with comments in Sanskrit on difficult verses and words. Dipak Bhattacharya's comments in Sanskrit mainly concern the reconstruction of the authentic text. There are also some papers by Durgamohan Bhattacharyya and Dipak Bhattacharya reflecting on meanings and readings of selected mantras. Though a comprehensive translation of the AVP is not yet available, some individual kāṇḍas have been intensively studied in the West. Louis Renou's French translation of the new material of the first kāṇḍa with comments was published in the Journal Asiatique CCLII and CCLIII in 1964 and 1965. That was based on the first edition by Durgamohan Bhattacharyya. The second kāṇḍa was translated into German with exhaustive comments by Thomas Zehnder in 1999. That was based on the new edition. The fifth kāṇḍa was studied and translated into English by A. Lubotsky in 2002 and the sixth and the seventh by Arlo Griffiths in 2009.

7. The origin and history of the Paippalāda-Saṁhitā

The earliest external evidence of the date of the Paippalāda-Saṁhitā comes from the Nirukta. It cites two mantras from the AVP, namely, AVP 16.103.11 and 16.101.5 at Nirukta 12.37 and 12.38. That Yāska cites AVP 16.101.5 and not its parallel in AVŚ 10.8.9 which is marginally different, points to the fact that the AVP had reached the vicinity of Yāska in the first millennium CE. Yāska belonged to the northwestern parts of South Asia but the AVP did not originate in that part. There is evidence that the relatively late Kuntāpa hymns of AVŚ 10.127 had been composed in the Kuru region whose king Parikṣit is praised in AVŚ 20.127.8. This takes the latest additions to the AVŚ to the Kuru region in the early first millennium CE. This too cannot be the original home of the AVP. A most striking evidence of a definite place where some important hymns of the AVP were composed comes from its hymns against takman that is fever. The AV is all praise for the plant kuṣṭha (Saussurea Lappa, commonly known as kuṭh) which is said to destroy fever. The Atharvavedic descriptions locate the plant among the peaks of Himavanta that is the Himalayas. This must be the Western Himalayas that is present Himachal Pradesh. The plant kuṣṭha still grows in plenty in that region.

The exact place meant in the AVP should be the Manali region (32°16 N, 77°10 E). Local traditions of Manali point in that direction. The name is believed to have been derived from Manvālaya. Now, AVP 7.10.9 (=AVŚ 19.39.9 which is very corrupt) states the names of the

people who had found it so that it became a universal remedy: *yaṁtvāvedapūrvaaiḥṣvākyoamvātīvākuṣṭhakāśyaḥ/yaṁśāvasoyamāmātsyastenāsiviśvabheṣajaḥ*. According to this, the plant was found and made to be a remedy for all by the ancient Aikṣvāka, Kāśya, Śāvasa and Mātsya. These are people of the planes and the verse means that they had propagated the plant as a remedy in the planes. Now, since Ikṣvāku is a Manu in the Purāṇas, the hymn brings the discovery of kuṣṭha into connection with Manu who still lives in local traditions.

The bringing of kuṣṭha to the planes by Manu reminds one of Manu's descent after the great deluge (Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa-M 1.8.1). For, the story speaks of a golden boat that carried down the plant from the eternal aśvattha tree in heaven that is the abode of gods: AVP 7.10.6-8 AVP 7.10.6,7 *aśvatthodevasadanatrīyasyāmitodivi/tatrāmṛtasyacakṣaṇamтатаḥkuṣṭhoajāyata/sakuṣṭhoviśvabheṣajaḥsākāmsomenatiṣṭhati/...*

hiraṇyayīnauracaraddhiraṇyabandhanādivi/tatrāmṛtasya.../yatranāvaḥprabhramśanamyatrahim avataḥśiraḥ/tatrāmṛtasya.../ 'The aśvattha-tree is the seat of the gods in the third heaven from here. There came to sight the ambrosia, there the kuṣṭha plant was born. A golden ship with golden tackle moved upon the heavens. There came etc. On the spot where the ship glided down, where exists the peak of the Himavant, there came to sight etc.' The theme is repeated in AVP. 19.8.13 (AVŚ 5.4.5) where the course of the vehicle that had brought it down to the planes finds description: *hiraṇyayāḥpanthānāāsannaritrāṇihiraṇyayā/nāvohiraṇyayīrāsanyābhiḥkuṣṭhamnirāvahan/* 'The paths were golden, golden the oars, golden were the ships by which they carried forth the kuṣṭha.' This bringing of kuṣṭha to the planes is mentioned also in AVP 1.31.2 (AVŚ 5.4.8) *údarjātóhimávataḥsáprācyāṁnīyasejánam* 'Born in the north, from the Himavant you are brought to the people in the east.'

So a whole myth can be recovered from the Atharvavedic descriptions. The ship, the connection with Manu, the descent of the ship, the carrying of kuṣṭha to the east -- all these point to the myth being an early version of the flood legend that is found in many civilizations. This story is at least as old as the Akkadian version of it that is to say it is one of the oldest versions of the flood legend.

Most probably the story also shows that the origin of the Atharvaveda had close connection with the Western Himalayas. A reason for such inference is that the mountain connection of the Atharvaveda is found in some other hymns too. Cf., AVP 16.16.4 (AVŚ 10.4.14) 'This little girl of the Kirātas, she the little one, digs a remedy with golden shovels, upon the

ridges of the mountains.’ This acquaintance of the Atharvavedic poet with the high mountains was natural; they had to search for remedies in difficult places.

We told above that we find reference to king Parikṣit and to the Kuru region in the Kuntāpa hymn of the Śaunakīya Atharvaveda (AVŚ 20.127.7-9). Pāṇini 4.3.106 refers to Śaunaka and the chandas enunciated (prokta) by him meaning by all probability the redactor of the Saṁhitā. We do not hear much of the AVŚ after this. We find more references to the Paippalāda-Saṁhitā or to its mantras. It had spread to the North-West so that Yāska (N.12.37, 38) could cite AVP 16.103.11 and 16.101.5. Pāṇini refers to many words that are exclusive to the AVP. Patañjali who belonged to the court of king Puṣyamitra at Pāṭaliputra in the second century BCE knew the accented text of the AVP as the main Atharvaveda and was by all probability a Paippalāda.

Even as late as the sixth century Jayāditya states on Pāṇini 1.3.49 that the Maudas read their text like the Paippalādas. Among other contemporary references in non-Atharvavedic literature is to be included the mention of the name *Paippalādakam* along with *Kāṭhakam*, *Kālāpakam* and *Maudgalam* in Śabara’s commentary on Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra 1.1.27 and 2.4.8. Durga, the author of the R̥jvartha commentary on the Nirukta, recognized Yāska’s citation of AVP 16.103.11 and 16.101.5 as ‘occurring in Atharvavedicātman-prayer’ (*ātharvaṇaātmaṣṭautaviniyogaḥ*). Since the verses occur in the AVP only, he too must have known it as the main Atharvaveda. And the Brahmasūtra refers to AVP 8.9.11^{ab} in BS 2.3.43 which Śaṅkara cites and identifies as belonging to a recension of the AV. During this period the Atharvaveda survived in the Himachal Pradesh at least till the seventh century CE. For, an inscription of the seventh century speaks of a group of Atharvavedic Brahmins in the agrahāra Nirmāṇḍa that is present Nermāṇḍ about 32° north and 77° east in the Sutlej valley (right bank) in the Kulu district of the Himachal Pradesh.

The Paippalādas of Odisha existed there at least from the late medieval period. As for the Paippalāda-Saṁhitā of Kashmir, according to Jonarāja’s Rājatarāṅgiṇī, the Atharvaveda was taken to Kashmir by one Yuddhabhaṭṭa in the 15th century. Though we do not find any definite evidence of a pre-Yuddhabhaṭṭa Atharvaveda in Kashmir, some features of the birch-bark Śāradā manuscript of the AVP suggest the existence of some tradition behind it. If any pre-Yuddhabhaṭṭa Atharvavedic tradition did exist in Kashmir that might have been carried to Kashmir from Himachal Pradesh in the medieval period.

Some Vakaṭaka inscriptions too furnish evidence of settling Ātharvaṇa Brahmins. The Tirodiplates of Pravarasena II (443 CE) mention an Ātharvaṇa of the name of Vāruṇārya as the donee. The Śākhā name is not given. The Paippalādigoṭra and the Ātharvaṇacaraṇa of the donees are mentioned in the Basim Plates of Vindhyaśakti II (c.380-400; Shrimali 86). Paippalādi as a goṭra name occurs in the Goṭra list of the BaudhāyanaŚrautasūtra (Caland: 459). Having a goṭra name after Śākhā affiliation is interesting.

On the evidence of Mahidāsa's commentary on the Caraṇavyūha (KSS 132: 33), the AVŚ was current north of the Narmada and the AVP south of it. The Vākāṭaka kingdom grew around the Narmada, the dividing line between the spheres of circulation of the AVŚ and the AVP according to Mahidāsa. It is not impossible that the two branches of the Atharvaveda had lived around for some years before the Paippalādas moved South and the Śaunakins remained in the region to spread to the adjoining regions of Gujarat and Maharashtra. In the Thalner plate of Hariṣeṇa (between 450-495 CE; see Shrimali 1987: 38) the administrative division where the donation was made has been called Ānartapura (*ibid* 82). That was in Gujarat.

An interesting fact is the mention of Brahmins of the Padañcalagoṭra as donees in the Thalner plates of Hariṣeṇa (380-400 see Shrimali: 82). It is a variant of the name Patañjali by which the author of the Mahābhāṣya is known. Since the donees of the Thalner inscription belonged to the goṭra of the great grammarian it would not be surprising if they had been his descendants who had migrated to central India. Patañjali seems to have been a Paippalāda while the Padañcalas have been mentioned as Samavedins (*chandogasabrahmacāriyāri*). Still, they could have been Paippalādas in the past. For, change of Veda is not prohibited in the scriptures. It will mean that Paippalādas that included the descendants of the great grammarian had migrated to Central India. This is indirectly supported by the statement in the Vākyapadīya (2.487-489) that the Mahābhāṣya had been reduced to a mere text and recovered from the mountain in the Deccan by Candrācārya and others. Central India has mountainous tracts. Patañjali's descendants could have carried both the Mahābhāṣya and the Paippalāda-Saṁhitā to that region?

The reason for inferring that the Paippalādas had moved to Karnatak from Central India is that there is paleographic, inscriptional and literary evidence of the currency of the AVP from about 5th-6th century till the twelfth century in Karnatak. But at present there are no Atharvavedins in Karnatak. Obviously they moved. There is also inscriptional evidence (J.F.Fleet JBRRAS XVI) of settling Ātharvaṇa Brahmins in the Godavari deltas in Andhra in the sixth century. One may be

tempted to suggest that they had been Paippalādas hailing from Karnatak and that from there they moved further northeast to Bengal and Odisha. Some Paippalādas might have come directly from Karnatak with the Kadambas. Poverty and famine forced many of the Odisha Atharvavedins of Mayurbhanjto move further north to present Jharkhand.

Whatever its earlier history, the Paippalāda-Saṁhita lost its dominant position as the representative branch of the Atharvaveda in the medieval period. In the 14th century Sāyaṇa wrote his commentary not on the AVP but on the AVŚ. The predominance of Āngirasa that is disagreeable witchcraft material against which strong sentiments have been expressed in the Manu-Saṁhitācould have been responsible for its medieval decline. The rediscovery of the Pappalāda-Saṁhitāby Durgamohan Bhattacharyya gave new life to its research.

Dipak Bhattacharya 14.02.2015
Santiniketan

Abbreviations

AV Atharvaveda; AVP Paippalāda-Saṁhitā of the AV; AVŚ Śaunakīya-Saṁhitā of the AV; RV Ṛgveda; KSS Kashi Sanskrit Series;

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