

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF SOME EARLY SANSKRIT PASSAGES ALLEGED TO INDICATE DIALECTAL DIVERSITY*

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1.1 From at least the nineteenth century, it has been argued in western discussions of the history of Sanskrit that the passage in (1) shows that at an early period, the speech of northern (or northwestern) India was considered especially 'correct'. Some scholars find additional evidence for this conclusion in (2). Moreover, this evidence for 'correct' speech in the north is often contrasted with the one in (3) which – sometimes in combination with (4) – has been argued to establish a much less correct form of speech in the eastern area. Compare for instance the discussion and references in Macdonell & Keith (1912:1.87,168, 2.279-80), as well as Renou (1956:10, 103), Chatterji (1960), and more recently, Deshpande (1978).

(1) *tasmād udīcyāṁ dīśi prajñātarā vāg udyata (l) udañca u eva yanti vācam śikṣitum (l) yo vā tata āgacchati tasya vā śuśrūṣante...eṣā hi vāco dik prajñātā (Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa 7.6)*

'In the northern region, speech is spoken particularly distinct(ly). People go to the north to learn speech. Or if someone comes from there, they like to hear/learn from him... For this is known as the region of speech.'

(2) *ūdīcīm evā dīśam l pathyāyā svastyā prājānams (l) tasmād ātrottarāhi vāg vadati kurupañcālātrā (l) vāg ghy eṣā nidānena (Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa 3.2.3.15)*

'Through Pathyā Svasti they recognized the northern quarter/region. Therefore there speech speaks better, among the Kuru-Pañcālas. For she is really Speech.'

- (3) té 'surā ātavacaso he 'lavo he 'lāva itī vādantaḥ pārābhabhūvuḥ || tātrainām āpi vācam ūduḥ |
upajijñāsyāñ (l) sá mléchas (l) tasmān ná brāhmaṇo mleched (l) asuryā haiṣāvāg
(Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa 3.2.1.23-4)

'The asuras, deprived of (proper) speech saying *he 'lavo he 'lavaḥ* [instead of the correct *he 'rayo he 'rayaḥ* ¹] were defeated. At that time they spoke this speech, (which was) unintelligible. That is a barbarism. Therefore a brahmin should not speak like a barbarian. That speech is of the asuras.'

- (4) aduruktavākyam duruktam āhur...adīkṣitā dīkṣitavācam vadanti
(Pāncaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa 17.9)

'Speech that is not difficult they consider difficult...even though they are not consecrated, they speak the language of the consecrated.'

1.2 Now, taken by themselves, the statements in (1) and (2) might not appear to be particularly strong. However, they are supported by other evidence. This includes the fact that at a later time, the northwestern versions of the Mahābhārata and the Pāncatantra are considerably more conservative than the more eastern and southern versions. Moreover, the northwestern dialects and languages of Middle and Modern Indo-Aryan preserve Old Indo-Aryan features more faithfully than other, related languages and dialects. (For a good summary, cf. Renou 1956:10, 103. See also Lévi 1892, Thieme 1935, Hock & Pandharipande 1976.) The interpretation of these passages therefore appears to be quite certain.

1.3 The interpretation of the passages in (3) and (4) as indicating a less 'correct' pronunciation of Sanskrit in the east is much less self-evident and requires considerably more justification.

Several arguments can and have been advanced in favor of reading the passage cited in (3) as referring to eastern speech. (For further discussion and references, see Hock & Pandharipande 1976:127.)

These arguments center around the fact that one of the mistakes which the asuras made in addressing the gods lay in pronouncing an *l* where they should have used *r*, saying *he 'lavo he 'lavaḥ* instead of the correct *he 'rayo he 'rayaḥ*. (On this matter see especially Thieme 1955, as well as note 1 of this paper.)

Now, in Middle-Indo-Aryan, this *l*-pronunciation is characteristic of the eastern or 'Magadhan' dialect, a form of speech which in Sanskrit drama characterizes the vidūṣaka, a stereotypical fool, who although being a brahmin, cannot converse in Sanskrit.

Moreover, it is possible to point to independent textual evidence in early Sanskrit that this *l*-variety of Indo-Aryan held a relatively low prestige, as did the people from Magadha.

Thus the passage in (5) appears to support a significant relationship between the asuras and the easterners. And the association of a Magadhan with a whore in (6) suggests a fairly low view of Magadhans. (Note that the ritual act referred to in this Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa passage is not mentioned in the related Pāncaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa. As Caland (1931:xx-xxi) observes, '(p)erhaps the author of the PBr. found these rites too barbaric.')

- (5) tasmād yā daivyaḥ prajāś cātuḥśraktīni tāḥ śmaśānāni kurvaté 'tha yā āsuryāḥ prācyās tvad yé tvat
parimaṇḍalāni té
(Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa 13.8.1.5)

'Therefore those people who are of the gods make their burial grounds four-cornered, but those who are of the asuras, either the easterners or whoever, (make them) round.'

- (6) māgadham ca puṃścalūm ca dakṣiṇe vedyante mithunīkārāyanti
(Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 2.404)

'They make a Magadhan and a whore copulate to the south of the altar.'

Negative connotations of the *l*-pronunciation in early Sanskrit are suggested by the word *kalma*, an *l*-variant of *karma* 'action, deed', which however has the negative meaning 'ill-begotten deed'. Moreover, it is probably not by accident that the word *puṃścalī* 'whore (who runs after men)', derived from *puṃ(an)s* 'man' and the root *car/cal* 'more, run', is attested only with *l*. Interestingly, the passage in (6) contains a variant of the word *puṃścalī*.

With the support of this additional evidence, the dialectological interpretation of the passage in (3), thus, can be - and generally is - considered fairly well established.

The interpretation of the passage cited in (4) is far less certain, which may account for the fact that it is less commonly cited:

It comes from a description of the 'vrātya' rite and appears to indicate that the vrātyas did not speak proper Sanskrit. In fact, Chatterji interprets the term 'difficult speech' to refer to the complex consonant clusters of Sanskrit which in the Prakrits are simplified (as in Skt. *sapta* > MIAr. *satta* 'seven'). Underlying Chatterji's interpretation is a common assumption that the vrātyas were easterners (cf. e.g. apud Macdonell & Keith 1912:2.279-80, 343-4 and more recently, Horsch 1966, as well as Deshpande 1978) and that eastern

which exhibited the Prakritic process of cluster simplification (through assimilation) at a much earlier time than did the more western varieties of Old Indo-Aryan.

The connection of the vrātyas with eastern speech therefore can at best only be inferred. No overt reference to easterners is made. Moreover, the question of who the vrātyas are, whether they were defined mainly in terms of religion, or of caste, or of regional origin, has continued to elicit very different answers. Compare for instance the early sampling of opinions in Macdonell & Keith (1912:2.343-4). The present paper does not attempt to cast any new light on this question.

Instead, I propose to examine the cogency of the dialectological interpretation of the passages in (1) - (4) as indicating a less 'correct', more 'Prākritic' pronunciation in the eastern varieties of early Sanskrit. In the process, it will be necessary to examine a number of other passages from early Sanskrit that deal with related issues.

Let me begin with a closer look at the passage in (4): As example (4') below shows, it is taken from a longer passage dealing with the vrātyas. Now, while the exact significance of the additional textual material is not entirely clear (cf. Caland 1931: ad loc.), the material does suggest that the total passage refers not so much to linguistic features of the vrātyas' speech, as to certain ritually incorrect actions; and it is in that context that their speech is remarked upon. (This interpretation is reflected in the gloss of (4') which differs in some details from the one of the corresponding passages in (4).)

garagiro vā ete ye brahmādyam janyam annam adanty (l) aduruktavākyam duruktam āhur (l) adapḍyaṃ daḍḍena ghnantaś caranty (l) adikṣitā dikṣitavācam vadanti (Pāncaviṃśa-Brahmaṇa 17.9)

'They who eat foreign food (?) as brahmin food are eaters of poison. Speech that is not badly spoken they consider badly spoken. They go around punishing what/who is not to be punished. Even though they are not consecrated, they (dare to) speak the language of the consecrated.'

Further support for this reading comes from the parallel passage of the Jaiminīya-Brahmaṇa, given in (8), which explicitly states that the vrātyas use speech for ritually impure purposes.

vācā hy avratam amedhyam vadanti (Jaiminīya-Brahmaṇa 2.222)

'By means of speech they speak something not in accordance with religious duties, something ritually impure.'

The passage in (4) thus must be considered of dubious relevance for any dialectological arguments. Rather, it seems to be concerned with ritual purity or correctness in speech, a concern of much of Vedic literature.

2.2 In fact, also the passage in (3) can be argued to be concerned with ritual purity, rather than with differences in regional dialect.

First of all, there is no direct link between the passages in (3) and (5) or (6). The evidence for relating the asuras of (3) with the easterners of (5) or the Magadhan of (6) is entirely circumstantial. Moreover, outside the passage in (5), the Asuras are not normally associated with the east;² and there seem to be no passages linking the Asuras to the Magadhans.

Secondly, although there is evidence for some *l*-forms having negative connotations in early Sanskrit, many other forms with *l* for expected *r* do not, and a fair number appear in the sacred mantra literature. (Cf. e.g. early RV *rohitā*: later RV *lohitā* < PIE **rewdh* 'red'.) In fact, I have argued elsewhere (Hock & Pandharipande 1976, Hock Forthcoming [a]) that the change of *r* to *l* may have begun as a common Indo-Aryan innovation which outside the east, however, came to be associated with negative connotations and thus was aborted in mid-stream, especially in more puristic circles. The *l*-forms of the Asuras therefore may reflect simply a less puristic, more 'vulgar' pronunciation, not limited to any particular area.

That the passage in question is in fact concerned more with ritually correct speech than with dialectal features in the pronunciation of the Asuras is shown by the fuller context, given in (3') below

(3) ...devās ca vā āsurās cobhāye prajāpatyāḥ prajāpateḥ pitūr dāyām ūpeyur māna evā devā upāyan vācam āsurā ...l... tām devāḥ l āsurebhyo 'ntārāyams tām svikṛtyāgnāv evā parihṛtya sarvahūtam ajuhavur āhutir hi devānām sá yām evāmūm anuṣṭubhājuhavus tād evānām tād devāḥ svyākurvata té 'surā ātavacaso he 'lavo he 'lāva iti vādantaḥ pārābabhūvuḥ ll tātrainām āpi vācam ūduḥ l upajijnāsyām sá mléchas tasmān ná brāhmaṇo mleched asuryā haiśā vāg (Satapatha-Brahmaṇa 3.2.1.18-24)

Now, the Gods and the Asuras, both descended from Prajāpati, entered upon the inheritance of their father, Prajāpati. The Gods inherited mind, the Asuras, speech ... The Gods wrested her (=speech) from the asuras. Having obtained her and having enveloped her in fire, they sacrificed her as a burnt offering, for she is an offering of/for the Gods. Now, in that they sacrificed her with an anuṣṭubh verse, thereby they obtained her for themselves. The Asuras, [thus] deprived of (proper) speech, saying *he 'lavo he 'lāvah* [instead of the correct *he 'rayo he 'rayah*!] were defeated. At that time they

spoke this speech, (which was) unintelligible. That is a barbarism. Therefore a brahmin should not speak like a barbarian. That speech is of the Asuras.'

Finally, a famous passage of Patañjali's (cf. (9)), containing a near-quotation of (3), quite overtly argues for an interpretation of (3) as being primarily concerned with ritually correct speech, not with dialectal differences.

(1) te 'surāḥ | te 'surā helayo helayaḥ kurvantaḥ parābhabhūvuḥ | tasmād brāhmaṇena na mlecchitavai nāpabhāṣitavai | mleccho ha vā eṣa yad apaśabdaḥ | mlecchā mā bhūmety adhyeyaṁ vyākaraṇam || te 'surāḥ || duṣṭaḥ śabdaḥ | duṣṭaḥ śabdaḥ svarato varṇato vā mithyā prayukto na tam artham āha | sa vāgvajro yajamānam hinasti yathendraśatruḥ svarato 'parādhād iti || duṣṭān śabdān mā prayukṣmahūty adhyeyaṁ vyākaraṇam || duṣṭaḥ śabdaḥ || (Mahābhāṣya on Pāṇ. 1.1.1, Kielhorn ed. p.2.7-13).

'The Asuras: The Asuras, saying *helayo helayaḥ* [instead of the correct *herayo herayaḥ*¹] were defeated. Therefore a brahmin must not speak like a barbarian nor use incorrect speech. For incorrect speech is barbaric speech. Because we do not want to be barbarians, therefore we must study grammar. (So much on) the Asuras. Incorrect word: A word incorrect because of the accent or a sound, used wrongly, does not convey the (proper) sense. (Being) a thunderbolt of speech, it injures the sacrificer just as did (the use of) *indraśatruḥ* because of a wrong accent. Because we do not want to use incorrect words, therefore we must study grammar. (So much for) the incorrect word.'

Note especially the ritualistic concerns in the second part of the cited passage about incorrect words and their ability to injure the sacrificer.

In fact, the latter citation likewise hails back to the Vedic tradition and further attests to concern with the use of proper language in the ritual; cf. the passages in (10) and (11), especially the last sentence in (10). (Similar passage, occur at Taittirīya-Saṁhitā 2.5.2.1-2 and Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 2.155.) Moreover, in these passages it is a God, not the Asuras who, by mispronouncing a word, brings disaster upon himself or his offspring.

(10) tāto yāḥ sōmo 'tyāricyata tām agnā upaprāvartayat | svāhēndraśatruḥ vardhasva || itūndrasyāhainam śātrum ācīkṛṣad indrasya śātrum akarot tāthā vāk svayām evā vyait. (Maitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā 2.4.3)

'The soma that remained over from that, he (= Prajāpati ?) made over (in)to the fire/Agni, (saying) "Hail, grow to be *indraśatru*." He wanted to make him Indra's (victorious) enemy (i.e. *indraśātru* 'the defeater of Indra'), (but) he made him Indra's (defeated) enemy (i.e. *indraśatru* 'having Indra as his defeater'). Thus Speech itself failed.'

(11) sā tvāṣṭā cukrodha | kuvīn mé 'nupahūtaḥ sōmam ababhakṣad iti sā svayām evā yajñaveśasām cakre sā yō droṇakalāsē śukrāḥ pāriśiṣṭa āsa tām pravartayām cakārendraśatruḥ vardhasvéti ... || ... || ātha yād ābravīd indraśatruḥ vardhasvéti | tasmād u hainam indra evā jaghānātha yād dha śāsavad āvakṣyad indrasya śātrum vardhasvéti śāsavad u ha sā evēndram ahanīṣyat (Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 1.6.3.8-10)

Tvaṣṭṛ was angry (saying) "Has he indeed consumed my soma uninvited (by me)?" (But) he himself made a disturbance of the sacrifice (by saying) "Grow to be *indraśatru*." ... Now, because he said "Grow to be *indraśatru* (having Indra as (victorious) enemy)", "therefore Indra slew him (i.e. Vṛtra, Tvaṣṭṛ's son). Had he said "Grow to be Indra's (victorious) enemy," he (Vṛtra) would certainly have slain Indra.'

3.1. Even the interpretation of (1) and (2) is not quite as straightforward as often assumed. Far from offering independent evidence for the view that northern speech is more correct, they appear to be near-repetitions. For the passage in (1) is taken from a larger context ((1') below) which, like (2) attributes the correct speech of the northerners to the fact that the north is the quarter of Pathyā Svasti who, in turn, is Speech. The parallelism between the two passages becomes even more evident, if the fuller context of (1') is compared with the fuller context (2') (cf. below) from which (2) has been taken.

(1) prāyaṇīyena ha vai devāḥ svargam lokam abhiprayāya diśo na prajānūm tām agnir uvāca mahyam ekām ājyāhutim juhutāham ekām diśam prajñasyāmīti tasmā ajuhavuḥ sa prācīm diśam prajānāt tasmāt prāncam agnīm praṇayanti ... eṣā hi tasya dik prajñātā | athābravit somo ... sa dakṣiṇām diśam prajānāt eṣā hi tasya dik prajñātā | athābravit savitā... sa prācīm diśam prajānāt ... eṣā hi tasya dik prajñātā | athābravit pathyā svastir ... sodicīm diśam prajānāt vāg vai pathyā svastis tasmād udicyām diśi prajñātātā vāg udyata udañca u eva yanti vācam śikṣitum yo vā tata āgacchati tasya vā śuśrūṣante ... eṣā hi vāco dik prajñātā (Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa 7.6)

'The Gods having ascended to heaven by means of the first soma offering did not recognize the quarters. Agni said to them: "Pour one libation of butter for me. I will recognize one quarter." They poured a libation for him. He recognized the eastern quarter. Therefore they lead Agni around to the east... For that (=the east) is recognized as his quarter. Then Soma said ... He recognized the southern quarter... For that is recognized as his quarter. Then Savitṛ said... He recognized the western quarter... For that is recognized as his quarter. Then Pathyā Svasti said... She recognized the northern quarter. Now, Pathyā Svasti is Speech. Therefore in the northern region, speech is spoken particularly distinct(ly). People go to the north to learn speech. Or if someone comes from there, they like to hear/learn from him. For that is recognized as the quarter of speech.'

(2) āthaibhyaḥ pathyā svastīḥ prārocata | tām ayajan vāg vai pathyā svastir vāg yajñās tād yajñam apaśyamṣ tām atanvata || āthaibhyo 'gnīḥ prārocata | ... || āthaibhyaḥ sōmaḥ prārocata | ... || āthaibhyaḥ savitā prārocata | ... || ... || ūdicīm evā diśam | pathyāyā svastyā prajānamṣ tasmād ārottarāhi vāg vadati kurupañcalātrā vāg ghy eṣā nidānenodiciḥ hy ētāsyaī dik || prācīm evā diśam | agnīnā prajānamṣ ... || dakṣiṇām evā diśam | sōmena... || prācīm evā diśam | savitrā ... || (Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 3.2.3.8-11, 15-18)

'Then Pathyā Svasti appeared to them. They offered to her. Now, Pathyā Svasti is Speech, the sacrifice is Speech. Thus they saw the sacrifice and spread it. Then Agni appeared to them... Then Soma appeared to them ... Then Savitṛ appeared to them... ... Through Pathyā Svasti they recognized the northern quarter. Therefore there speech speaks better, among the Kuru-Pañcālas.

For she is really Speech. For the north is her quarter. Through Agni they recognized the eastern quarter... Through Soma they recognized the southern quarter... Through Savitr they recognized the western quarter...'

Moreover, it is interesting that in other Vedic texts, some of them considerably older, Pathyā Svasti, though likewise generally identified as Speech, is associated not with the north, but with the east, i.e., with precisely the region which on the basis of (3) and (4) has been widely considered to be characterized by inferior speech. Compare (12) and (13), as well as (14) which connects Pathyā Svasti with the sun, which in turn, through his mother Aditi, is linked to the east. (The corresponding passage in the Maitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā (3.7.1) does not specifically identify the quarters associated with Pathyā Svasti and the other deities, referring to each one as *imām dīśam* 'this quarter'.) Note, however, that none of these passages makes claims about the speech of the easterners that would be comparable to the ones in (1/1') and (2/2') concerning the speech of the northerners.

(12) pathyāṁ svastim yajatety abravīt tayā prācīm dīśam prajñāsyathety agnim yajatety abravīt tena dakṣiṇāṁ somam yajatety abravīt tena praticīm savitāram yajatety abravīt tenodīcīm... || vāk pathyā svastir pathyāṁ svastim yajati vācam eva tat sambharayati... (Kāṭhaka-Saṁhitā 23.8)

'He said "Sacrifice to Pathyā Svasti; with her you will recognize the eastern quarter." He said "Sacrifice to Agni; with him you will recognize the southern quarter." He said "Sacrifice to Soma; with him you will recognize the western quarter." He said "Sacrifice to Savitr; with him you will recognize the northern quarter." ... Pathyā Svasti is Speech. He sacrifices to Pathya Svasti. He gathers Speech together.'

(13) pāthyāṁ svastim ayajan prācīm evā tāyā dīśam prājanann agnīnā dakṣiṇa[m]sómēna praticīm savitrodīcīm...(Taittiriya-Saṁhitā 6.1.5.2)

'They sacrificed to Pathyā Svasti; with her they recognized the eastern quarter; with Agni, the southern quarter; with Soma, the western quarter; with Savitr, the northern quarter.'

(14) te 'bruvann aditim tvayemam yajñam prajānāmeti ... atho etam varam avṛṇīta mayaiva prācīm dīśam prajānāthāgninā dakṣiṇām somēna praticīm savitrodīcīm iti pathyām yajati yat pathyām yajati tasmād asau pura udeti, paścāstam eti pathyām hy eṣo 'hucaraty (Aitareya-Brahmaṇa 1.7.3-6)

pathyām yajati yat pathyām yajati vācam eva tat yajñamukhe sambharati (Aitareya-Brahmaṇa 1.8.11)

'They said to Aditi: "Let us recognize the sacrifice through you." Then she chose this boon: "Through me you shall recognize the eastern quarter, through Agni, the southern quarter, through Soma, the western quarter, through Savitr, the northern quarter." He sacrifices to Pathyā. In that he sacrifices to Pathyā, therefore yonder (sun, the son of Aditi) rises in the east and sets in the west; for he follows Pathyā ... He sacrifices to Pathyā. As to why he sacrifices to Pathyā, he thereby gathers Speech together at the opening of the sacrifice.'

This discrepancy between the passages in (1') - (2') and (12) - (14) might be considered to cast further doubt on the significance of the passages in (1) and (2). At any rate, the difference clearly is in need of an explanation

3.2. As it turns out, however, the most likely explanation may in fact favor the usual interpretation of (1) and (2):

As noted, while the passages in (12) - (14), some of them considerably earlier than (1) and (2), directly or indirectly associate Pathyā Svasti with the east, none of them states that the eastern quarter is characterized by superior speech; nor does the parallel Maitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā passage. The relatively younger passages in (1) and (2), then, appear to have innovated in two respects: First, by associating Pathyā Svasti with the north, and secondly, by stating that the northern quarter associated with Pathyā Svasti is also characterized by superior speech.

Now, given that this innovation could be accomplished only at the considerable cost of completely reorganizing the roles of the deities in the 'quarter-recognition myth', it is hardly likely that this was done without some special motivation. And although this motivation might perhaps have been ideological, connected with the rivalries between regionally different branches of the Veda, the evidence in the later language for more conservative speech in the north makes it more likely that the innovation and reorganization were motivated by a growing general realization of the conservative nature of northern speech. In this regard, notice especially the *udañca u eva yanti vācam śikṣitum* of (1/1'), which specifically refers to the fact that people (from other areas) go to the north in order to learn (proper) speech.

4. The results of the discussion up to this point can be summarized as follows: The passages in (1/1') and (2/2') probably furnish reliable testimony that, at least at a fairly late period, the northern area, i.e. what we would now call the northwest, was acknowledged to be characterized by more correct speech than other areas. On the other hand, the argument that the passages in (3) and (4) establish an especially 'incorrect', Prākritic speech for the east is not particularly cogent. Rather, the passages seem to attest to a concern with correct speech in the ritual, a concern which may address social, rather than regional differences in pronunciation. Moreover, as (10) and (11) show, this concern applies not just to the Asuras, but even to the Gods.

5.1 These findings are significant, since some linguists have (at least in part) based important claims concerning the development of retroflexion in Sanskrit and Middle Indo-Aryan on the alleged deviation of eastern speech from the 'correct' Sanskrit of the north.

The most common argument is that the development of Proto-Indo-European *l* (or *r*) plus dental to Sanskrit and/or Middle-Indo-Aryan retroflex (as in Goth. *kilþei*: Skt. *jaṭhara* 'womb', Lith. *kartus*: Skt. *kāṭuka* 'bitter', or the examples in (15)) is linked with dialectal differences in early Indo-Aryan; cf. e.g. Fortunatov 1891, 1900, Bartholomae 1894, 1896, Wackernagel 1896, Meillet 1903, Bloch 1919, as well as more recently, Chatterji 1960, Burrow 1972, Hamp 1983.³

(15)	Sanskrit	Middle Indo-Aryan	
	ḥṛta-	kaṭa-	'done'
	kiṛtti-	kiṭṭi-	'fame'
	artha-	aṭṭha-	'purpose'

What is important for the present purposes is that in some of the publications on this topic (among the more recent ones, note especially Chatterji), the development is attributed to an alleged greater tendency of the eastern Middle-Indo-Aryan dialects toward retroflexion in clusters where Sanskrit had *r* + dental. And this tendency is then commonly linked with the allegedly more deviant speech attested to by the passages in (3) and (4). That is, it is claimed that the Middle Indo-Aryan retroflex outcomes in (15) are attributable mainly to eastern speech, while the dental outcomes in (16) are from non-eastern speech. Moreover, if forms with such retroflex outcomes appear in Sanskrit, then these are attributed to borrowing from an eastern dialect.

(16)	Sanskrit	Middle Indo-Aryan	
	ḥṛta-	kata-	'done'
	kiṛtti-	kitti-	'fame'
	artha-	attha-	'purpose'

Now, as we have seen earlier, the testimony of the passages in (3) and (4) does not provide any cogent evidence for early dialectal diversity and for a more 'advanced', Prākṛitic development in the east. In addition, it does not furnish any direct evidence that might bear on the treatment of *r* + dental clusters.

Moreover, the early Middle Indo-Aryan evidence of the Aśokan inscriptions furnishes positive evidence that the propensity toward retroflex outcomes of *r* + dental clusters is not limited to the eastern dialects: As noted in Hock Forthcoming (a), throughout the Aśokan inscriptions we find a considerable mixture of retroflex and dental outcomes. However, two areas are most markedly inclined toward retroflexion. While one of these is the allegedly more deviant eastern region, the other consists of the northwestern dialects, i.e. the area considered to be most conservative. Compare the summary in Table I which is based on the evidence of the major Rock Inscriptions and taken from Hock Forthcoming (a).⁴

Sanskrit	Southwest	Northwest	North-Central	East
vart-	tt	ṭ(ṭ)	ṭṭ / tt	tt
kartavya-	tt	ṭ	ṭṭ	ṭṭ
(-)artha-	tth	ṭh (th) [thr]	ṭṭh / tth	ṭṭh
vardh/vṛddh-	ḍḍh/ddh	ḍh/dh [dhr]	ḍḍh/ddh	ḍḍh
kīrti-	tt	ṭ [ṭr]	ṭṭ	ṭṭ
(-)vṛtti-		ṭ	tt	
vṛtta-	tt	ṭ(ṭ)	tt	tt
vṛddha-	ḍḍh	ḍh (dh)	ddh	ḍḍh
ḥṛta-	t	ṭ [ṭr]	ṭ	ṭ
bḥṛta-	t	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ
*sṛta- (?)	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ
-sṛta-	t	ṭ	ṭ	
mṛta-		ṭ	ṭ	

(Notes: 'Southwest'=inscriptions mainly from Gimar; one example from Sopara; 'Northwest' = Shahbazgarhi and Mansehra; 'North-Central' = Kalsi; 'East' = mainly Dhauri, supplemented by Jaugada-ḍḍh/ddh etc. = 'retroflex and dental are both common'; ṭh(th) = 'retroflex is more common than dental'. For [thr] or [ṭr] see note 4 of this paper. Blanks indicate that no relevant attestation was found for the area in question.)

TABLE I: Middle Indo-Aryan reflexes of Sanskrit dental + [r/ṛ]

This of course does not exclude the possibility of dialectal explanations for Sanskrit or Middle-Indo-Aryan retroflex outcomes of *r* + dental clusters. However, proposals attempting to link these exclusively with the eastern dialects, under the assumption that the passages in (3) and (4) provide further evidence for a somewhat 'deviant' behavior of these dialects, cannot be considered cogent.

2.2 A more recent argument that has been based in part on the alleged dialectal implications of the passages in (3) and (4) is Deshpande's claim that retroflexion was not a feature of the original northwestern Rig-Vedic speech. Instead, he argues, it came into the text as we know it through mistakes in the later oral transmission and recitation. (277) These mistakes, in turn, were in his view due to the fact that the extant tradition of the Rig-Veda came into the hands of the Māṇḍukeyas, whose Aryan character 'is a matter of suspicion' (252), who had by that time settled in the eastern, Magadhan region (260) and who fought 'for the recognition of "new" or "more eastern" features such as retroflexion as a part of the orally transmitted Ṛgveda'. (261) From the Māṇḍukeya recension, which 'was perhaps somewhat "closer" to the original Ṛgveda' (261), the text eventually came into the hands of Śākalya, the final redactor of the text.

In support of his claim, Deshpande refers to the passage in (1), indirectly (through Chatterji 1960 and references to the vrātyas) also to those in (2) - (4), as well as to the passage in (17) below.

(17) atha hāsmā etat kṛṣṇahārito vāgbrāhmaṇam ivopodāharati || prajāpatiḥ prajāḥ sṛstvā vyaśramṣata samivatsarah || sa cchandobhir ātmānam samadadhāt || yacchandobhir ātmānam samadadhāt tasmāt samihitā || tasyai vā etasyai samihitāyai ṅakāro balaṃ ṣakārah prāṇa ātmā || sa yo haitau ṅakāraṣakārāv anusamhitam ṛco veda sabalām saprāṇām samihitām veda || ... || sa yadi vicikitset saṅakāram brāvānīṃṣ3 anakārāṃṣ3 iti || saṅakāram eva brūyāt || saṣakāram brāvānīṃṣ3 aṣakārāṃṣ3 iti || saṣakāram eva brūyāt || te yad vāyam anusamhitam ṛco 'dhīmahe yac ca māṇḍukeyīyam adhyāyam prabrūmas tena no ṅakāraṣakārā upāptāv iti ha smāha hrasvo māṇḍukeyaḥ || atha yad vāyam anusamhitam ṛco 'dhīmahe yac ca māṇḍukeyīyam adhyāyam prabrūmas tena no ṅakāraṣakārā upāptāv iti ha smāha sthvirah śākalyaḥ (Aitareya-Āraṇyaka 3.3.6)

Now Kṛṣṇahārita proclaims to him this speech-secret, as it were. Having created the creatures, Prajāpati, the year, collapsed. He put himself together with the meters. Because he put himself together with the meters, therefore it is the *samihitā* (lit. "put together" = sandhi or continuous text?). Of that *samihitā*, *ṅ* is the strength, *ṣ* is the breath, the self. Now, who knows these sounds *ṅ* and *ṣ* (and) the verses according to the *samihitā*, he knows *samihitā* with its strength and breath...Now, if one were to wonder, "Should I speak with *ṅ* or without *ṅ*?", he should speak with *ṅ*. If one were to wonder, "Should I speak with *ṣ* or without *ṣ*?", he should speak with *s*. The Younger Māṇḍukeya stated: "If we repeat the verses according to the *samihitā*, and if we recite our lesson in the fashion of the Māṇḍukeyas, then *ṅ* and *ṣ* are obtained for us." The Elder Śākalya stated: "If we repeat the verses according to the *samihitā*, and if we recite our lesson in the fashion of the Māṇḍukeyas, then *ṅ* and *ṣ* are obtained for us."

Deshpande, I believe correctly, takes this passage to refer to Rig-Vedic collocations like the one in (18), with retroflex *ṣ* and *ṅ* from dental *s* and *n*. His further interpretation,

however, is less cogent: He argues that the above passage indicates that there was a general choice or option between dental and retroflex sibilant and nasal in the actual recitation of the text. And he takes this variation to support the view that retroflex articulation was only beginning to come into the text through the Māṇḍukeya tradition of recitation.⁵

(18) *mó ṣú ṅah fromnā u su ṅah* (RV 1.38.6, 1.173.12, 3.55.2, 10.59.4)

Now, it is true that there is a certain amount of variation between dental and retroflex in the Vedic texts. Some of it constitutes what has been called 'spontaneous' retroflexion, that is the occasional substitution of retroflex for dental sounds, as in Rig-Vedic *atati* 'wanders' vs. later *aṭati*. While clearly problematic, this phenomenon is much too sporadic, applying one word at a time, to be significant for the regular and sweeping conditioned changes of retroflex to dental that are relevant for the present discussion. (For further discussion, see Hock Forthcoming [a] with references.) Most of the variation, however, is limited to external sandhi (across word boundary) and to similar sandhi phenomena in compounds. And as I have shown elsewhere (Hock 1979), this type of variation is a highly patterned variable-rule phenomenon à-la Labov, reflecting a gradual degeneralization of retroflex sandhi across word and compound boundary, such that the later the Vedic text, the more it degeneralizes external sandhi phenomenon of the type (18). (Even the classical language of Pāṇini, however, preserves traces of the variation, especially in compounds.) On the other hand, in internal sandhi, no appreciable variation can be found. (The only exception is a certain amount of variation suggesting that in Rig-Vedic times, *n*-retroflexion was still being extended into some environments - at the same time that it began to be degeneralized in external sandhi.)

Now, in order to begin to be degeneralized as early as the Rig-Veda, retroflex sandhi must in general have been introduced *prior* to the Rig-Veda. That is, the degeneralization of retroflex sandhi requires the assumption that retroflexion was fully present in the Rig-Veda, rather than introduced in the later oral transmission.

Moreover, note that the highly patterned nature of the degeneralization precludes the assumption that we are dealing with mistakes arising in the oral transmission of the texts. Such mistakes should have a much more random effect in any given text. At the same time, mistakes of this sort, if due to 'interference' from a chronologically later, 'eastern' and 'retroflexing' dialect, should either affect all Vedic texts to roughly the same degree

(if the innovation was later than any of the Vedic texts) or should lead to a greater frequency of retroflex forms in later texts (which presumably postdate the innovation and thus would be entirely composed in the new, 'retroflexing' dialect.). As noted, however, the degeneralization of retroflex sandhi operates such that later texts exhibit fewer traces of retroflexion in external and compound sandhi.

Finally, if retroflexion were indeed due to 'eastern interference', we would expect just about as much variation between retroflex and dental in internal sandhi as we get in external sandhi. As noted, however, internal sandhi variation is much more limited (at least in the earlier texts which still preserve a fair amount of retroflexion in external and compound sandhi).

Given that all the facts about the history of retroflexion in the Vedic texts are incompatible with Deshpande's conclusion, it is, I believe, preferable to read the term *samhitā* of (17) above as referring to the sandhi that appears in the 'samhitā' or continuous text, as opposed to the word-for-word text of the 'padapāṭha' in which sandhi is undone. The passage, then, can be interpreted as enjoining the use of sandhi forms like *mó śú nah* as they are found in the *samhitā* text, rather than their sandhi-less counterparts in the *padapāṭha* which, for all Rig-Vedic occurrences of *mó śú nah*, are given as *mó sú nah*, with dental *s* and *n*.

True, if this conclusion is correct, then we will have to assume either that the *padapāṭha*, generally attributed to Śākalya, existed in some form already at the time of the Younger Māṇḍukeya and that Śākalya's role was merely that of final redactor, or that the statement enjoining the use of sandhi forms had actually been propounded by Śākalya, but later was wrongly attributed also to the Younger Māṇḍukeya.

At present, it is not clear to me which of these two assumptions is preferable. However, this difficulty appears minor in comparison with the difficulties and doubts connected with Deshpande's proposal.

6. As in the case of the Vedic citations in (3) and (4), the passage in (17) thus does not provide any cogent evidence for dialectal diversification in early Sanskrit. However, given that the Vedic texts were mainly concerned with the correct performance of the ritual and the proper use of language within that ritual, the lack of any clear evidence for dialectal differentiation is not surprising.

The conclusion therefore must be that although early Sanskrit, like any natural language, no doubt exhibited some dialectal differentiation, evidence for that differentiation will have to be sought in terms of other data.⁶

NOTES

* Parts of this paper are appearing, in much condensed form, in Hock Forthcoming (a).

- 1 For this interpretation see Nāgeśa's commentary on the Mahābhāṣya passage in example (9).
- 2 In fact, elsewhere in the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa (9.2.3.2-3), the Asuras are associated with the south.
- 3 For recent discussions of the general issues and problems concerning Fortunatov's controversial 'Law', cf. Hock & Pandharipande 1976, Collinge 1985, and Hock Forthcoming (a).
- 4 The northwestern dialects frequently show orthographic clusters of dental or retroflex stop + *r*. It is not entirely clear whether these should be considered graphical variants of the retroflex stops or genuine clusters. They are given in parentheses in Table I.
- 5 Deshpande sees further evidence for his claim that retroflexion is a post-Rig-Vedic innovation in the following facts: As is well known, the retroflexion of *n* to *ṇ* is conditioned both by syllabic *r* and non-syllabic *r*, as well as by retroflex *ṣ*. The later phonetic text of the Pāṇinīya-Śikṣā accounts for this change by labeling all three sounds as retroflex. However, the earlier, Vedic phonetic texts of the Prātiśākhya generally classify syllabic *r* as velar, non-syllabic *r* as alveolar or post-dental, and *ṣ* as retroflex. At this stage of the language, then, *n*-retroflexion would be 'phonologically an unnatural process'. Deshpande himself is quick to realize that retroflex and alveolar require 'a somewhat similar manner of tongue-raising', that Patañjali recognizes an *r*-element (*raśruti*) in syllabic *r*, and that [one of] the Prātiśākhya characterizes *r* as [ṛṛ]. And he speculates that this close relationship between syllabic and non-syllabic *r* may explain that both of them can trigger *n*-retroflexion. However, he appears to feel that the articulatory differences between *ṣ*, *r*, and *r* are significant enough to suggest that at the time of the original composition of the Rig-Veda, the latter two sounds were not yet 'cerebralizers', i.e. triggers for *n*-retroflexion. Now, as I show elsewhere (Hock Forthcoming [b]), the Prātiśākhya classification of *r* as velar most likely refers to the fact that the vocalic elements in [ṛṛ], i.e. the [a]-vowels, at one time were classified as velar; the [r]-element, however, was described as articulatorily identical to non-syllabic *r*. (In that paper, I inadvertently failed to refer to Deshpande's discussion. I take this opportunity to make up for that omission.) Moreover, as I have argued in Hock 1979 (see also Hock Forthcoming [a]), it is possible to capture the generalization that retroflex *ṣ* and alveolar/postdental *r* and *r* all trigger *n*-retroflexion by classifying all three of them as [+ apical, -dental]. These alternative explanations cast doubt on the cogency of this argument of Deshpande's.
- 6 Cf. Hock Forthcoming [a] for a recent discussion.

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