

NEW LIGHT ON THE VERSE 112 OF THE KṚṢIPARĀŚARA

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The description of the plough in the Kṛṣiparāśara has been a puzzle for generations of Sanskrit philologists. What especially pained me was the disfunctional character of this description: among the eight essential parts the ploughshare was missing. The turning up of an until now unknown manuscript from The Library of Congress has brought a basic change: it contains the expected reading *phālikā* “ploughshare” for *pāśikā* an otherwise meaningful term “rope” that could have been adjusted to the context only by rather strained explanations.

The present paper throws light on the problems concerned in the textual tradition and offers a solution.

Key words: Kṛṣiparāśara, pāśikā, phālikā, paccanī, prājanī, plough, ploughshare, goad, The Library of Congress, Eugene Hotaling.

The special vocabulary of the *Kṛṣiparāśara* (KP), a treatise upon agriculture, has attracted the attention of philologists and lexicographers since its first publication in 1862. After the appearance of the critical edition and a reliable English translation (Majumdar–Banerji 1960) the number of enigmatic terms became a great deal less. Nevertheless the highly important passages bearing on the parts of plough remained problematic. It is mainly due to the presence of *deśī* words and the loose redaction of the work itself. No wonder that the learned brāhmaṇa Daśarathaśāstri who almost entirely incorporated the KP in his *Kṛṣiśāśana* omitted these passages and replaced them with the description of the *Brhatparāśarasamhitā* (Wojtilla 1993, p. 528). On the basis of this critical edition and one manuscript kept at the British Library (Ms Tagore 24. Cat. No. 6475) that was not taken into consideration by the editors I was able to interpret almost all of the terms in question (Wojtilla 1977). This interpretation is coherent as far as the readings of the critical edition and the above-mentioned manuscript go, however, the picture that emerged from the enumeration of the constituent parts of the plough seemed to me defective. I did not keep silent about my doubts saying that the enumeration of the eight parts by the author is ill-considered:

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an essential part, namely the ploughshare, was missing from this list (Wojtilla 1977, p. 251). What is strange, nobody before me and after me was baffled by this problem! I accepted the translation of the term *pāśika* in the sense proposed by Majumdar and Banerji who took over that of MW “a strap of leather on the plough” (MW, p. 623) and that of Ganguli “iron plates that fix the share to the *niryola*” (Ganguli 1932, p. 74) and also referred to the variant reading *pālika* “maintainer” (Banerji 1955, p. 17) with a remark that this form also does not lead us nearer to an apt solution (Wojtilla 1977, pp. 247–248). In the following years I succeeded to procure a copy of the *editio princeps* of KP (Ṭhākura 1862) which was not used by Majumdar and Banerji in constituting their text (cf. Gopal 1973, p. 151, n. 4). It is a pity that this edition also relies on that Calcutta manuscript which served as a basis of all used by Majumdar and Banerji. Consequently it gives the same reading. In a second study where I compared the data of KP with that of other texts I could but come out with my own interpretation saying that the term *pāśika* means “a rope that ties the shaft/handle to the head/plough bottom” (Wojtilla 1988, p. 330). It was more convincing than the translation offered by MW or Ganguli or even the rendering by Choudhary “a small piece of wood fitted on the top of the plough handle for an easy grasp” (Choudhary 1971, p. 151). The latest interpretations are the “rope of *niryola*” (Chowdhury 1992, p. 40) and taking *niryolapāśika* one word “handle” (Sadhale 1999, p. 55).

Research appeared to reach a deadlock and then unexpectedly a hitherto unknown manuscript turned up, a copy of which was sent me by Professor R. P. Das with the permission of A. W. Thrasher, senior reference librarian, Asian Division, The Library of Congress, Washington. The manuscript was deposited at The Library of Congress by the late Eugene Hotaling, former professor of education at Valley City State College in North Dakota. Its script is Bengali, the number of folios is 8, that is 16 pages, and there are 9 lines on each page. It bears the title *Kṛṣipaddhati* like the R. 15. 87 manuscript in Bengali script at the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge which dates from the end of the eighteenth century (Aufrecht 1869, pp. 25–27) and the manuscript 1274 (H. T. Colebrooke, Catalogue No. 3168) in Bengali characters of the British Library (Majumdar–Banerji 1960, Text p. iv). A pilot study on its contents revealed to me that the manuscript preserved a text that contains significant variant passages in comparison with the other manuscripts and the text constituted in the critical edition. What is revealing is its reading of the verse 112 where *phālikā* “ploughshare” stands for *pāśikā*! Similarly, it is noteworthy that the manuscript reads *prājanī* for *paccanī* accepted by Majumdar and Banerji. As a matter of fact *prājani* (with short -i-) is the common word for “goat” in classical Sanskrit (Wojtilla 1988, p. 338). Kuiper took *paccanī* as the Sanskritised form of *pācanī* and regarded it as the strongest evidence for a Bengali provenance of the work (Kuiper 1969, p. 215). I think that without the reconstruction of the whole manuscript tradition of KP it cannot be decided whether it is the older reading or not. After this the verse can be constituted tentatively thus: *īṣāyugahalasthāṇuniryolastasya phālikā | aḍḍacallaśca śaulaśca paccanī ca halāṣṭakam*, i.e. “pole, yoke, a strong piece of wood that is fixed to the *niryola* which is held by the cultivator while ploughing (*halasthāṇu*), shaft

(*niryola*) and its ploughshare (*phālikā*) | the inner pin of the yoke (*aḍḍacalla*) an extra piece of wood that tightly fixes the *niryola* to the pole (or less probably: the outer pin of the yoke) (*śaula*) and goad – (these are) the eight parts of the plough”.

This fatal error that has misled scholars since 1862 can be due to the ignorance of the scribes who had not even a touch of practical common sense and put there *pālikā* or even *pulikā* without hesitation. It is an open question whether Ṭhākura had used a manuscript where the form *pāśikā* stood or he emended any other one he had found wrong. Majumdar and Banerji seem to rely on the reading presented by the *Vaṅgavāsī* edition (Kāvyatīrtha 1915) which took over the reading from the *editio princeps*. This is why Majumdar and Banerji did not feel the need to put the former one on the list of text consulted. On the other hand the reading of the Library of Congress manuscript must be looked upon as genuine and cannot be attributed to a later emendation. It is curious that in the last hundred and forty years nobody dared to make a conjectural emendation. The great value of the discovery of this manuscript for international scholarship lies in its originality.

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