

Some Reflections on the Chronological Problems of the *Mahābhārata*

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Although the authorship of the *Mahābhārata* [*Mbh*] has traditionally been ascribed to Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana Vyāsa, it is one of his pupils, Vaiśampāyana, who appears as the narrator of the main part of the great epic in its present form. On the occasion of the snake sacrifice (*sarpasatra*) celebrated by king Janamejaya, the disciple of Vyāsa recites the text of the epic as he once learnt it from his master. At this recital Janamejaya plays the role of an interlocutor who prompts the reciter by occasionally expressing his wonder at and putting questions about what he has just heard. The whole main part of the present text can, therefore, be looked upon as a dialogue between the sage and the king. This dialogue begins at *Mbh* I,55 and lasts almost without interruption through to the first half of XVIII,5, i.e. the chapter with which the entire corpus concludes.

The circumstances under which the recital takes place are described at some length in *Mbh* I,54. This preliminary chapter opens with a verse telling of Vyāsa's visit to the sacrificial site of Janamejaya, who, having undergone the consecration for the session of the snakes, is sitting surrounded by a number of priests, princes and other participants in the ceremony. At the arrival of Vyāsa, the king receives the sage cordially by paying due homage to him and then asks him to narrate the deeds of the Kurus and the Pāṇḍavas as well as the fatal battle fought by these princes. At this request Vyāsa commands Vaiśampāyana, who is sitting beside him, to narrate on his behalf the whole story of the enmity and feud of the royal clan. At the behest of the master the disciple instantly launches into the recitation. First of all, he gives a broad outline of the events which converge on the final catastrophe (I,55), and then extolls the greatness of the *Mbh* (56). It is only in *Mbh* I,57 that he enters into the main part of his narrative. This chapter begins with the account of the deeds of king Uparicara, who, being the maternal grandfather of Vyāsa, is to be reckoned as one of the ancestors common to both the Kurus and the Pāṇḍavas.

For all the complexity that we observe in the narrative scheme of the *Mbh*, the dialogue between Vaiśampāyana and Janamejaya shows such coherent unity that it almost looks like an epic within the epic if we leave a few intermissions out of account.

As for the present shape of the *Mbh*, however, the entirety of this long dialogue during the snake sacrifice is encased in a still longer one, held between the bard Ugraśravas and the sage Śaunaka, which takes place in the Naimiṣa forest during the twelve-year-long sacrificial session (*satra*) undertaken by the sage and his fellow ascetics. The circumstances in which they launched into the dialogue are related in *Mbh* I,4. According to the account given in this chapter, Ugraśravas, the son of Lomahaṛṣaṇa, one day drops in at the abode of the ascetics in the Naimiṣāraṇya. Being warmly received by the assembly of forest-dwellers, the bard offers to relate for them any ancient story that they may wish to hear. They ask him to await the arrival of their chieftain to whom he should make the same proposal directly. After a while

Śaunaka, who has just finished his rites in the fire cottage, joins the assembly and loses no time in initiating an intimate conversation with the guest.

With this introductory chapter begins the *Paulomaparvan*, which constitutes the fourth subsection of the First Book, entitled *Ādiparvan*. At the request of Śaunaka, the bard first of all gives a genealogical account of the Bhārgava clan to which the sage belongs. The rest of the minor *Parvan* consists of stories about the miraculous birth of Cyavana from Pulomā, the wife of Bhṛgu, as well as the adventures of their great-grandson named Ruru, from whom Śaunaka traces his descent. The story of Ruru ends rather abruptly with the last chapter of the *Paulomaparvan*. In the subsequent *Parvan* the topic of the dialogue shifts to Janamejaya's sacrifice.

As for the narrative contents of the *Āstīkaparvan*, it calls for our special attention that in Janamejaya's *sarpasatra* as described therein little room is left for such a time-consuming performance as the recital of the great epic. The events that unfold in the *Parvan* slowly but steadily build up towards the climax of the slaughter of snakes in the sacrificial fire and the hairbreadth deliverance of their king Takṣaka from death by Āstīka's asking a boon from the king. This sequence of events constitutes a coherent whole; except for the name of Vyāsa appearing in the list of participants in the *sarpasatra* (I,48,7–10), the whole story does not betray any link whatsoever to Vaiśampāyana's recital of the *Bhārata* epic, which immediately follows the *Āstīkaparvan* in the present *Mbh*. The story starts with a brief account of its own genesis (I,13,6–8) and concludes with two *phalaśruti*-like verses (I,53,25–26). This fact suggests that the *Āstīkaparvan* had originally existed as an independent *Itihāsa* or *Ākhyāna*, having its own history of transmission, before it was incorporated into, or rather placed before the bulk of the *Mbh*. The long discourse of the bard on the deeds of Āstīka comes to an end in the 26th verse of *Mbh* I,53. The remaining ten verses of this last chapter of the *Āstīkaparvan* are allotted to a brief talk between Śaunaka and Ugraśravas. In the narrative scheme of the present *Mbh* these verses (I,53,27–36) perform the quite important function of correlating two different levels or, to be more precise, integrating the recital of Vaiśampāyana into the still larger framework provided by the dialogue in the Naimiṣa forest. It is nowhere else but in these very verses that the great epic of Vyāsa is for the first time taken up as the topic of the dialogue by the pair of interlocutors.

Being much pleased with the Āstīka story, Śaunaka now manifests his profound interest in the epic composed by Vyāsa and urges the bard to recount the whole *Mbh* as it was once narrated during the pauses (*karmāntareṣu*) of Janamejaya's sacrificial session. With this request Ugraśravas joyfully complies, and the *Āstīkaparvan* ends with his words of compliance, which are immediately followed by the chapter (I,54) preliminary to the recital of Vaiśampāyana. As already observed, the chapter describes at some length how the disciple of Vyāsa began to rehearse the composition of his master in the presence of Janamejaya and other participants in the *sarpasatra*.

From *Mbh* I,55 onward up to the last chapter of the entire corpus the bard repeats ver-

batim the whole recital of the epic by Vaiśampāyana as well as every exchange of words between the reciter and the listener. As for the other dialogue held in the Naimiṣa forest, it opens with *Mbh* I,4 and is carried on without any kind of interruption until the very end of the entire work. As far as the formal narrative structure of the present *Mbh* is concerned, the *Bhārata* epic composed by Vyāsa and narrated by his pupil is incorporated intact into the outermost framework consisting of the said dialogue between Ugrasravas and Śaunaka.

On the origin of this double narrative structure of the *Mbh* one could propose a few different hypotheses. Several Western scholars seem to suppose that the structure derives from the ingenious conception of one single redactor or group of redactors, whereas others, most of whom are Indian scholars, believe the structure to have come into being as the result of a gradual process of enlargement, thinking that the formation of the one narrative framework historically precedes that of the other. As a third hypothesis, one could as well posit the former existence of two different textual traditions of the *Bhārata* epic, one being characterized by Vaiśampāyana's recital and the other by Ugrasravas' discourse, which were at some period restructured as one large corpus retaining still both of the frameworks as the higher and lower levels of narration.

Among these hypotheses the first one is quite untenable. I can hardly believe that the double narrative structure was originally devised by one single poet or compiler in a certain period. In the case of such a simultaneous establishment of both frameworks the two narrative levels would have interacted with each other with much greater frequency than one actually observes in the present epic text. According to the text of the Critical Edition, at least, the interaction of the two levels occurs only seldom within the main doubly constructed part of the *Mbh* (I,55–XVIII,5,5). It is only in II,46,4 and XV,42–43 that one attests the shift from one narrative level to another. As for these passages, the two chapters in the 15th Book are to be regarded as a later insertion.

We might, indeed, well imagine that those who participated in the formative process underlying the double structure were quite well instructed in the practical details and logical structure of the sacrificial session (*satra*). But on careful analysis of the relevant epic passages one can hardly detect any kind of such close analogical relationships between the narrative structure of the *Mbh* and the inner structure of the *satra*-sacrifice as Minkowski tries to demonstrate.

The validity of the third hypothesis cannot be exactly ascertained by us. The question, however, as to the existence or non-existence of the *Mbh* version in which Ugrasravas alone narrated the whole main part of the epic is not of direct importance for our discussion. In the present *Mbh* the dialogue held in the Naimiṣa forest does not practically concern any other part than the long prologue and the brief epilogue to the epic recital performed during the sacrificial session of Janamejaya. As for this prologue and epilogue, I can hardly deem it possible that they were transferred to their present position from some lost version in which the bard acted as the sole narrator. On the basis of these considerations, I hold it most natural

to think of successive stages of textual development which finally resulted in the establishment of the double narrative structure. It seems to me that the *Bhārata* epic had formerly been furnished with only one of the two overall narrative frameworks till another was appended to it at some later stage. On the formative process resulting in the double structure I expounded my own views last year in the article “Considerations on the Narrative Structure of the *Mahābhārata*.” For our present inquiry about chronological matters it suffices to give a brief outline of my theory, which can be summarized in the following manner. (Hereafter the two narrative frameworks characterized by Vaiśampāyana’s recital and Ugrasravas’ discourse as well as the two corresponding epic versions will be designated by the sigla V and U respectively.)

(1) Version V came into being earlier than version U. That is to say, prior to the consolidation of the double structure, there once existed a redaction of the *Bhārata* epic which had no other overall framework than the dialogue between Vaiśampāyana and Janamejaya.

Since this version in the course of its transmission must have been subject to several different kinds of textual alteration and enlargement, one cannot have any exact idea about its original shape, size and contents. Despite such uncertainties it seems reasonable to assume that this version approximately corresponds to that portion of the text of the Critical Edition which extends from I,54,1 to XVIII,5,25. I hold it almost certain that the original version began with the chapter introductory to Vaiśampāyana’s recital (I,54). The prose formula “*sūta uvāca*” which one finds at the outset of this chapter is undoubtedly a later insertion. Without any preliminary remark the initial verse of the chapter abruptly tells of the arrival of Vyāsa and his disciples at the sacrificial site of Janamejaya. The abruptness of this verse arouses our suspicion that it was originally preceded by several verses which were deleted afterwards. Most probably the deletion of these verses was carried out by the redactor who placed the Āstika story before the first chapter of version V. It is most likely that the deleted verses contained some narrative elements which were at variance with the general plot of the newly added *Itihāsa* of Āstika.

(2) The Āstika story was an independent text current among epic poets and reciters before it was incorporated into the *Mbh*.

A number of references to Janamejaya Pārikṣita as a prominent sacrificer in Vedic texts indicate that this ancient king was already a legendary figure among the Aryans when the *Bhārata* epic did not exist at all, or was still in a germinal stage of its gradual formation. One can easily imagine that the ancient tradition about Janamejaya Pārikṣita as a champion of Vedic ritualism became the nucleus around which a large cycle of stories gradually crystallized. In view of this possible variety of Janamejaya stories, it is not necessary to assume that the story about Janamejaya’s *sarpasatra* was from the very beginning associated with the recital of Vyāsa’s great epic. It rather seems probable that there were several different versions of the story about the snake sacrifice, of which only some

were connected with the epic recital, while others were not related to it at all. The charm against snakes included in the *Ṛgveda-Khila*, which alludes to Āstika's words at the end of Janamejaya's sacrifice¹, is totally silent about any kind of epic recital. As already mentioned, it is only after the conclusion of the *Itihāsa* of Āstika that the epic recital on the occasion of Janamejaya's snake sacrifice is taken up by the pair of interlocutors as the topic of their dialogue. On the other hand, the preamble to Vaiśampāyana's recital at the same sacrifice (I,54) does not say anything about the brahmin youth, let alone his deliverance of the snakes from the ritual slaughter. The tale of Āstika as related in *Mbh* I,13–53 represents only one of several different versions of the story about Janamejaya's *sarpasatra*. It seems to have been some other version of the story which was adopted by the compiler of version V as the general narrative setting for his own compilation.

- (3) The plan of the dialogue between Ugraśravas and Śaunaka is to be ascribed to the redactor who incorporated the Āstika story into the older version of the epic.

In adding the *Itihāsa* to version V this redactor intended to supplement the existing version with a detailed account of Janamejaya's *sarpasatra*. The portion newly added to the older version of the epic needed to be related by some other authoritative narrator than Vaiśampāyana. Under this necessity the same redactor created the dialogue in the Naimiṣa forest as the outermost narrative framework which was to encompass not only the Āstika story but also the entirety of Vaiśampāyana's epic recital. I do not hold it probable that in his redactory activities he was able to consult some epic version now lost in which Ugraśravas alone related the whole main story, although the possibility of the former existence of such a version cannot entirely be precluded. In any case, it is certain that the figure of Ugraśravas was not the original creation of the said redactor. Most probably he was so familiar with the bardic tradition that it was for him quite natural to put almost all the text of his redaction into the mouth of Ugraśravas, who seems to have been widely known as a legendary figure of the said tradition among literary circles of the Aryans.

- (4) It is to the same redactor that the authorship of the epilogue to the *Mbh* (XVIII,5,26–54) and the concluding part of the final chapter of the *Āstikaparvan* (I,53,27–36) should be attributed.

Both of these passages are quite indispensable to the coherence and continuity of the Naimiṣa dialogue. In the epilogue which immediately follows the conclusion of Vaiśampāyana's recital and continues until the very end of the entire corpus Ugraśravas gives a brief account of the events after the close of Janamejaya's sacrifice. No less important is the brief talk, consisting of those verses which are placed between the Āstika story and the preamble to the epic recital at the *sarpasatra*. Connecting Ugraśravas'

¹ *Ṛgveda-Khila* II,1,5ab (Scheftelowitz p.70).

recitation of the Āstika story to Vaiṣampāyana's recital, it performs the function of effecting a natural shift from one level of narration to another.

- (5) The tales about Śaunaka's ancestors such as Bhṛgu, Cyavana and Ruru, which constitute the main portion of the present *Paulomaparvan* (I,5–12), are a late interpolation made between the chapter prefatory to the Naimiṣa dialogue (I,4) and the *Itihāsa* of Āstika (I,13–53).

This interpolation was carried out by a late compiler who intended to incorporate into the *Mbh* some narrative material of the Bhārgava tradition. These tales of the Bhārgavas are, however, only loosely linked to the main plot of the *Āstikaparvan*. Perhaps it is to the same compiler that we should attribute the insertion of verses 27–30 in chapter I,53, because these verses refer to Śaunaka's satisfaction at having learnt the Bhārgava genealogy from the mouth of Ugraśravas. Anyway, it is almost indubitable that the general introduction to the Naimiṣa dialogue (I,4), though now presented as the first chapter of the *Paulomaparvan*, had originally no connection at all to the contents of the *Parvan* but was immediately followed by the start of Ugraśravas' recitation of the Āstika story (I,13).

- (6) *Mbh* XV,42–43 and a few other verses in which one observes the temporary shift from one narrative level to another are to be regarded as later interpolations.

The two chapters now included in the *Putradarśanaparvan* (XV,36–44) within the 15th Book mainly describe the scene of Vyāsa's invoking the spirit of the dead king Parikṣit at the entreaty of his son Janamejaya. One finds the whole description put into the mouth of Ugraśravas. This change of narrator was no doubt necessitated by the character of the narrative contents. It is quite evident that the incident which occurred during Vaiṣampāyana's epic recital at the sacrificial site could not be narrated by the reciter himself. This interpolation of the two chapters cannot be dated by us precisely. Neither in the *Parvasaṃgrahaparvan* (I,2) nor in the *Bhāratamañjarī* does one find any specific reference to Janamejaya's reunion with his dead father during the pause in the epic recital.

At two places in the Critical Edition, viz. II,46,4 and XVIII,5,6, one attests minor occurrences of Vaiṣampāyana's recital being interrupted by the emergence of Ugraśravas on the surface of the text. It seems that the original narrator of these verses was none other than the anonymous person who in I,54 related the circumstances in which Vaiṣampāyana inaugurated his recital of Vyāsa's epic. The prose formula “*sūta uvāca*” which one finds now placed before each of these verses could then be understood as a mere later insertion.

- (7) The discourse of Ugraśravas, which had formerly started with the Āstika story, was extended back by the author of the *Parvasaṃgrahaparvan* (I,2) to the beginning of his own composition.

When the Summary of the 18 Books which now makes up the second chapter of the

First Book was newly placed before the Āstika story, it became necessary to provide this additional portion with a narrative framework. Driven by this necessity, the author of the *Parvasaṃgrahaparvan* simply composed another scene of Ugraśravas' arrival at the Naimiṣa forest as the introductory passage to his Summary (I,1,1–14), presenting the whole text of the *Parvasaṃgrahaparvan* as Ugraśravas' discourse addressed to the Naimiṣa seers in general and not specifically to their chieftain Śaunaka. The author then seems to have paid little attention to several incongruencies which would inevitably ensue in consequence of such a perfunctory manner of redactorial manipulation. For modern scholarship the "double introduction" to the *Mbh* has been a puzzle². This puzzle cannot be solved unless we assume the enlargement of Ugraśravas' discourse which the author of the *Parvasaṃgraha* undertook without paying due regard to the general narrative scheme of the epic. There must once have existed an epic version in which the introductory scene of Ugraśravas' arrival at the hermitage (I,1,1–14) was directly followed by the main contents of the *Parvasaṃgrahaparvan*. In other words, the scene of his arrival did not belong to the *Anukramaṇīparvan*, as we see in the present text, but originally made up the initial passage of the *Parvasaṃgrahaparvan*.

(8) The addition of the first chapter entitled *Anukramaṇīparvan* should be dated to the final stage of the textual development of the First Book.

This addition was made even later than that of the *Parvasaṃgrahaparvan*. Probably the main portion of the *Anukramaṇīparvan* was at first simply placed before the verses relating Ugraśravas' arrival and was afterwards transposed to its present position between the same verses and the main part of the *Parvasaṃgrahaparvan*.

The third chapter, entitled *Pauṣyaparvan*, seems to have constituted a part, or rather the first half of an old independent *Ākhyāna* in prose. Probably it was the author of the *Parvasaṃgrahaparvan* who extracted this portion from the original *Ākhyāna* and added it to his own epic version as a kind of supplement to the story of Āstika related therein.

The dialogue of Ugraśravas and Śaunaka encompasses as a matter of formality, at least, the entirety of the current *Mbh*. At first glance, therefore, it seems as if the frame of the dialogue was elaborated by a certain redactor who intended to reshape or revise the existing epic version(s) after some carefully thought-out, grand-scale design. On closer examination, however, it has turned out that the dialogue was created for the purpose of fulfilling some marginal needs which concerned only a small section within the First Book. In the so-called double narrative structure within the main part of the epic one recognizes neither effective interaction nor systematic alternation between the two dialogic levels. Apart from the epilogue and the scene of Janamejaya's reunion with his dead father, the appearance of Ugraśravas on the surface of the text is almost confined to those chapters which precede the

² On the problem of the double introduction cf. Mehta 1973. With all the inadequacies of his theory Mehta is essentially right in supposing the former existence of an epic version starting with *Mbh* I,4.

start of Vaiśampāyana's epic recital. There remains thus little doubt that the dialogue in the Naimiṣāranya derives from the design of the redactor who incorporated the Āstika story to provide his newly added portion with a solid framework of narration.

Within the *Mbh* there appear two other prominent characters apart from Ugraśravas and Lomahaṣaṇa who are known by the epithet of Sūta. Karṇa, the brave warrior born from the same mother as the three elder Pāṇḍavas, is called Sūta or Sūtaja because of the humble origin of his foster parents. One can hardly find him associated with any kind of bardic activity. On the other hand, another Sūta, i.e. Saṃjaya, plays the highly important role of reporting all the events on the battlefield to his blind master Dhṛtarāṣṭra. One thus finds the main contents of the four Battle Books (VI–IX) put into the mouth of this charioteer, who is said to have been endowed with the power of clairvoyance by the grace of the sage Vyāsa.

The *Mbh* contains a fairly large number of references to the *sūta* as a social class³. In the majority of these references the word stands together with other nouns denoting groups of professional singers or reciters such as *māgadha* and *bandin*. In view of the fairly high frequency of the word *sūta* in the *Mbh*, as well as the important role of narrating all the action in the battlefield allotted to Sūta Saṃjaya, one would be inclined to conclude that the *Bhārata* epic had its genesis in some sort of heroic poetry engendered among those rhapsodists who belonged to the same class as Saṃjaya and Ugraśravas. Our above observations on the narrative structure of the *Mbh*, however, warn us against drawing any such hasty conclusion. Despite its apparent comprehensiveness, Sūta Ugraśravas' discourse is to be regarded by us as nothing but a secondary creation subsidiary to the more original setting. Vaiśampāyana, whose recital makes up the framework of the older version of the epic, does not belong to the mixed caste called *sūta* but holds obviously the highest social status as a brahmin ascetic. As to the question of the identity of those singers among whom the great epic assumed its most original shape, we should rather leave this open so long as no decisive evidence is available to us. For the present, at least, we cannot take it for granted that the *Mbh* originated in the bardic tradition of *sūtas*.

In a number of the *Purāṇas* the role of narrator or that of transmitting the original compilation called *Purāṇaveda* or *Purāṇasaṃhitā* is assigned to Sūta Romahaṣaṇa (Lomahaṣaṇa) the father of Ugraśravas⁴. We might conjecture that this important role assigned to a particular member of the *sūta* class was taken over from the enlarged version of the *Mbh*. On the other hand, some verses in the passage introductory to the Āstika story (*Mbh* I,5,1–6) hint that even before the consolidation of the Naimiṣa dialogue in the *Mbh* there had already existed an ancient tradition of a *sūta*'s narratorship of the texts called *Purāṇas*. To the question of whether Romahaṣaṇa's narration in the *Purāṇas* should be traced to the old tradition suggested in the said verses or whether it should be regarded as a mere imitation of the *Mbh*, we cannot give any definite answer. Be that as it may, it is not the narrative setting of the *Mahāpurāṇas*

³ On the *sūta* in general, Cf. Rocher pp.53–59.

⁴ Cf. Rocher pp.17,45, 232.

but that of the Supplement (*Khila*) to the *Mbh* known by the title of *Harivaṃśa* [*Hv*] which directly concerns our present study about the date of the great epic.

In the printed editions of the *Hv*, the whole text is divided into three parts, viz. *Harivaṃśa*-, *Viṣṇu*- and *Bhaviṣyaparvan*. This division is undoubtedly of quite late origin. P.L. Vaidya says that the division is not supported by the manuscripts he used in reconstructing the text in his Critical Edition. He abolished the separate *adhyāya* numbering of each *Parvan*, retaining only the indication of the relevant *Parvan* title, which he gave in the left corner of each right-hand page of his edition⁵.

The double narrative structure of the *Mbh* is carried over intact into its Supplement. At least, both of the *Khila* texts, viz. the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Bhaviṣyat* registered at the end of the Summary of the 18 Books (*Mbh* I,2,233), must have already been incorporated into the same narrative structure as the version of the *Mbh* which began with the *Āstika* story⁶. The outer framework consisting of the dialogue between Ugrasravas and Śaunaka encompasses the entire text of the *Hv*, whereas according to Vaidya's text the dialogue between Vaiśampāyana and Janamejaya constituting the inner framework comes to an end with the story of the combat between Kṛṣṇa and Bāṇa⁷.

The five chapters (*Hv* 114–118) which follow the *Bāṇayuddha* correspond to the *Bhaviṣyaparvan* in the Critical Edition. They must inevitably be outside the framework of Vaiśampāyana's recital because they narrate the genealogy of Janamejaya's descendants (114) and the sequence of events about the same king which occurred after the completion of his snake sacrifice (115–118). As a matter of course, the role of narrating these events could not be allotted to anyone else but the bard Ugrasravas staying in the Naimiṣa forest.

It almost goes without saying that the *Hv* attained its present shape and size only as the result of a gradual process of incorporating several heterogeneous texts. However divergent from one another the sources of these texts might have been, each of them had to be brought under the shelter of the double narrative structure of the *Mbh* at the time when it became a component of the *Hv* as the Supplement to the great epic. This state of affairs should always be borne in mind by us when we consider those problems which concern the text-historical formation and chronology of both the *Mbh* and the *Hv*.

The reference to the *Khilas* is made in the *Parvasaṃgrahaparvan*. The Summary of all 18 major *Parvans* in the second chapter of the *Mbh* ends with the following verse:

⁵ Vaidya p.IX. Cf. Brinkhaus 2002, p.158.

⁶ The explicit reference to the *Mbh* made in *Hv*1,7–8 (cf. Brockington p.313) suggests a kind of continuity between the *Mbh* and the *Hv*.

⁷ Within the text of the Critical Edition of the *Hv* one does not find any clear indication as to when and where the dialogue between Vaiśampāyana and Janamejaya which extends over *Hv*1–113 is held to take place. Two verses, viz. *Hv*1,7 and 113,81 vaguely hint that the dialogue was held sometime after the conclusion of Vaiśampāyana's recital at Janamejaya's *sarpasatra*. From these verses, however, one cannot determine whether or not Vaiśampāyana's extra-recitation of the 113 chapters was made at the same sacrificial site as his recital of the *Bhārata* epic.

*aṣṭādaśaivam etāni parvāṇy uktāny aśeṣataḥ/
khileṣu harivaṃśas ca bhaviṣyac ca prakīrtitam*// (*Mbh* I,2,233)

In the list of the 100 minor *Parvans* included in the same chapter one finds the same titles of the *Khila* texts as the 99th and 100th items:

*harivaṃśas tataḥ parva purāṇaṃ khilasaṃjñitam/
bhaviṣyatparva cāpy uktam khileṣu evādbhutaṃ mahat*// (*Mbh* I,2,69)⁸

These references to the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Bhaviṣyat* indicate that their inclusion in the supplementary part of the *Mbh* took place sometime between the establishment of the Naimiṣa dialogue as the outermost framework and its extension by the author of the *Parvasaṃgrahaparvan* up to the beginning of his own composition. This relative chronology of the *Khilas* is of utmost importance for our undertaking to assign approximate dates to both the older and younger versions of the epic, designated by us as V and U respectively.

Among several attempts hitherto made to elucidate the formation of the *Khila* texts, the most convincing is the theory which Brinkhaus put forward as a result of his meticulous examination of the ample data from the manuscripts and editions of the *Hv*. Perhaps here we need not enlarge on his rather intricate theory. It shall suffice to make a brief mention of that part of his theory which will serve our present purpose. Obviously Brinkhaus is the first scholar to have paid due attention to the verses cited above from the second chapter of the *Mbh*⁹. According to Brinkhaus, the *Harivaṃśa* registered in *Mbh* I,2,69,233 extended up to *Hv* 114 (the first chapter of the *Bhaviṣyaparvan* in Vaidya's edition), while the *Bhaviṣyat* referred to in the same verses consisted of *Hv* 115–118. The chapters on the marvelous deeds of Kṛṣṇa occupy the largest portion of the present *Hv*, so that it appears as though they represented the central theme of the work. Through Brinkhaus' research, however, this *Kṛṣṇacarita* has turned out to be nothing more than an insertion made during the process of the secondary development of the *Khila* texts¹⁰.

On examining the contents of *Hv* 115–118, one indeed perceives that the narrative account given in these chapters is not entirely free from incongruencies, but they can be regarded as forming an integral unity on the whole. The sequence of events which Ugrasravas relates in these chapters can be summarized as follows: Soon after the end of the *sarpasatra* Janamejaya undertakes to celebrate the horse sacrifice (*vāji-*, *aśvamedha*). During the preparatory period preceding the sacrificial performance he receives a visit from Vyāsa, and then the king gets involved in a long dialogue with the sage. Dilating on those matters which centre around the horse sacrifice, Vyāsa predicts that the rite which the king is about to celebrate will be spoiled by Vāsava (Indra) and end in failure on account of the wrath

⁸ The list of the 100 minor *Parvans* was only lately inserted into its present position in the second chapter. Originally it must have lain somewhere in the first chapter called *Anukramaṇīparvan*. On this transference of the *Parvan*-list cf. Tsuchida 2006, pp.24–26.

⁹ Cf. Brinkhaus 1990, pp.417–418.

¹⁰ Cf. Brinkhaus 2002, pp.159–164.

of the brahmins. Throughout his long discourse the sage lays stress on the irresistibility of destiny or time (*kāla*). He describes at full length the misery and disaster of the *kali* age, which has just set in. This prophesy of Vyāsa comes true, for Vapuṣṭamā, the chief queen of Janamejaya, is violated by Vāsava, who has entered into the carcass of the immolated horse. Infuriated at this ominous accident, the king lays a curse on Indra, saying that henceforward the *kṣatriyas* will no longer worship the god with the horse sacrifice. The anger of the king is directed also at the queen and the officiating priests of the sacrifice. Vapuṣṭamā is driven away from the harem, while the brahmins are prohibited from residing within his realm. Viśvāvasu, the king of *gandharvas*, then embarks upon bringing about a reconciliation. He gives a long speech in which he admonishes the king not to blame the god, the queen and the brahmins. He also emphasizes the power of destiny, which no living being can withstand. Deeply touched by the words of the *gandharva*, the king casts off his anger and becomes reconciled with both the queen and the priests. Thereafter he governs his kingdom as a pious monarch who never neglects to worship brahmins and celebrate sacrifices.

Bhaviṣyat as the title of the *Khila* text implies that the text contained some account of the “future.” Within *Hv* 115–118, however, all the deeds of Janamejaya are presented by Ugraśravas as past events. From the viewpoint of this bardic narrator, it is only Vyāsa’s long prophesy which concerns the “future” state of the human world. In this prophesy on the *kali* age, encompassing almost two whole chapters (*Hv* 116–117), one actually finds the constant use of verbs in the future tense. This observation renders it unlikely that Vyāsa’s discourse on the *kali* age is a mere later interpolation. It seems to have been due to the existence of this long prophesy that the whole text acquired the title of *Bhaviṣyat*. At least, this prophesy must have already occupied the central position within the *Khila* text when the Summary of the 18 Books in *Mbh* I,2 was composed.

According to Vyāsa’s prediction, mankind at large is doomed to fall into decline. In the last and worst of the four world-ages a number of natural disasters will befall the earth, and its inhabitants will have to undergo physical, mental and moral deterioration. They will no longer be able to abide by the law of *varṇas* and *āśramas*. Being devoted to gratifying their carnal, selfish desires, they will cast away the regular study of the *Vedas* and the proper practice of sacred rituals.

Some of the disastrous conditions of the *kali* age as described in the *Bhaviṣyat* seem to reflect the deplorable tendencies which its author witnessed in his own times. The allusion to the *śūdras* who will embrace the religion of the Śākyabuddha in *Hv* 116,15, as well as the reference to the Vājasaneyins who will teach the *brahman* in *Hv* 116,13, are quite interesting because they afford us some clues for forming a general idea of the period in which the *Khila* text came into being. These verses do not, however, suffice for us to form a conjecture about the date of the *Bhaviṣyat*. For this purpose we need to find some passage alluding to a real event which can be approximately fixed in a chronological table of the history of ancient India.

Such a passage is, in fact, found in *Hv* 115. In the latter half of this chapter (115,24–45), which precedes the discourse on the *kali* age, the sage and the king converse on the topic of the *aśvamedha*. Vyāsa predicts that Janamejaya’s celebration of the horse sacrifice will be spoiled by Indra and end in failure owing to the rage of the brahmins. The sage concludes this part of his speech by predicting that the *kṣatriyas* will never be able to perform the *vājimedha* so long as the earth lasts because the tradition of the sacrifice will be interrupted by the king himself:

*tvayā dhṛtaḥ kratuś caiva vājimedhaḥ paramtapa/
kṣatriyā nāhariṣyanti yāvad bhūmir dharīṣyati*// (*Hv* 115,35)

The king is much frightened by this gloomy prediction and entreats the sage to console him by allowing some possibility of restoring the celebration of the sacrifice in the future. In response to this entreaty the sage predicts that in the *kali* age the performance of the *aśvamedha* will be undertaken by a general of brahmin descent. The text of this prediction runs as follows:

*upāttayajño devebhyo brāhmaṇeṣu nivatsyati/
tejasābhyāhṛtaṁ tejas tejasy evāvatīṣṭhate*//39
*audbhido bhavitā kaścit senānīḥ kāśyapo dvijaḥ/
aśvamedhaṁ kaliyuge punaḥ pratyāhariṣyati*//40
*tadyuge tatkulīnaś ca rājasūyam api kratum/
āhariṣyati rājendra śvetagraham ivāntakaḥ*//41 (*Hv* 115,39–41)

The sacrifice carried away from the gods will remain among the brahmins. The energy taken away by the energy still abides within the energy¹¹. In the *kali* age some army commander, a brahmin of the Kaśyapa clan born from the earth, will restore the celebration of the horse sacrifice. In the same age, moreover, someone born in the same family will perform even the sacrifice of royal coronation like the god of death who will restore the white planet, O great king!¹²

These verses are of paramount importance for our present study because it is almost beyond doubt that they allude to the celebration of the horse sacrifice by Puṣyamitra who, as the founder of the Śuṅga dynasty, ruled over a vast area of northern India in the second century BC¹³.

In the Purāṇic text on the Śuṅga dynasty as reconstructed by Pargiter it is prophesied that the commander-in-chief, Puṣyamitra by name, will become king after having dethroned Br̥hadratha, the last monarch of the Maurya dynasty. Pargiter’s text on the Śuṅga kings is

¹¹ Apparently the second half of verse 39 implies that in consequence of Janamejaya’s failure in offering the *aśvamedha* the “energy” (*tejas*) of the sacrifice shall be taken away by the “energy” of the wrath of the priests and shall thenceforth be retained in the “energy” inherent in the brahminhood.

¹² What is meant by the fourth *pāda* of verse 41 is unclear to me. According to Nīlakaṇṭha *śvetagraha* is a public calamity (*utpāta*).

¹³ My outlines of Puṣyamitra and his *aśvamedha* are based mainly on the works of Raychaudhuri, Rapson, Smith and Filliozat.

based mainly on the relevant verses from the *Matsya*-, *Vāyu*- and *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*¹⁴. The contents of the *Hv* verses quoted just above are in general accord with what other textual sources tell us about Puṣyamitra. These important verses have not always been taken into consideration by scholars who in their works on the ancient history of India devote several pages to the period of Puṣyamitra and his successors. Raychaudhuri, on the other hand, who pays much attention to these verses, quotes *Hv* 115,40 at the beginning of his detailed account of the Śuṅga dynasty¹⁵.

The Purāṇic text records the names of nine other kings of the Śuṅga line. According to this genealogical account, the immediate successor of Puṣyamitra is his own son called Agnimitra.

Most probably the title or epithet of *senānī* or *senāpati* had already been conferred on Puṣyamitra by the last Mauryan kings on account of some distinguished military achievement and was retained by him even after his accession to the royal throne¹⁶.

Puṣyamitra's celebration of the *aśvamedha* can be ascertained as a historical fact on the evidence of the Ayodhyā inscription. The Sanskrit text inscribed on a flat stone slab at the foot of the entrance of the Samādhi of Bābā Sangat Bakhsh¹⁷ records that a ruler of Kosala, called Dhana(deva?), erected a house (*ketana*) in honour of a certain Phalgudeva¹⁸. This Dhana(deva) is a son or descendant of Puṣyamitra. In the same epigraphic text the latter is represented as the commander-in-chief who performed the horse sacrifice even twice (*dvir-aśvamedha-yājinaḥ senāpateḥ Puṣyamitrasya*)¹⁹.

Puṣyamitra's performance of the *aśvamedha* is alluded to also in one of Kālidāsa's plays. The fifth act of the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, namely, includes a scene in which Agnimitra, the viceroy of Vidiśā, reads aloud an epistle from his father Puṣyamitra. In this epistle the father reports on the course of events surrounding his celebration of the sacrifice, enjoining his son to attend the ceremony with his own principal consort. The passage from this message which directly concerns the horse sacrifice is cited below:

*yo'sau rājasūyayaājñādikṣitena mayā rājaputraśataparivṛtaṁ goptāraṁ vasumitraṁ
ādiśya saṁvatsaropāvartanīyo nirgalas turago viśṣṭaḥ sa sindhor dakṣiṇe rod-
hasi carann aśvānikena yavanānāṁ prārthitaḥ/ tata ubhayoḥ senayor mahān āsīt
saṁmardaḥ.....*

tataḥ parān parājītya vasumitreṇa dhanvinā/

prasahya kriyamāṇo me vājirājo nivartitaḥ/|| (Mālavikāgnimitra 5,15)

¹⁴ Cf. Pargiter p.30.

¹⁵ Raychaudhuri p.368.

¹⁶ Cf. Majumdar pp.92–93; Raychaudhuri p.371, n.5.

¹⁷ Sahni p.54.

¹⁸ According to Sahni (p.57) this Phalgudeva was the father of the lawful queen of the Kosala king.

¹⁹ Opinions of the scholars vary as to whether the sixth son or the sixth descendant of Puṣyamitra is meant by the words "*Puṣyamitrasya shashthēna*" in the inscription. In any case, one does not find any name beginning with the word *Dhana*- in Pargiter's list of Śuṅga kings.

I, having been consecrated for the *rājasūya* sacrifice, let loose a horse, free from all restraint, which was to be brought back after a whole year, and appointed Vasumitra as its defender, girt round with a guard of a hundred princes; the same horse, while wandering on the right (or southern) bank of the Sindhu, was claimed by a cavalry squadron of the Yavanas. Thereupon ensued a fierce battle between the two armies……

And then Vasumitra, the mighty bowman, having defeated his opponents, brought me back the excellent horse which was being forcibly carried off [by them].

The occurrence of the term *rājasūya* in this passage attracts our attention because in *Hv* 115,41 cited above Vyāsa predicts that a kinsman of the brahmin monarch who is destined to restore the *aśvamedha* in the *kali* age will celebrate the *rājasūya*. We can hardly deem it possible that Puṣyamitra celebrated both the *aśvamedha* and the *rājasūya* at the same time. Far more probable is that in composing this passage Kālidāsa did not distinguish between the two different types of the *śrauta* ritual which are both prescribed for rulers who aspire to attain to the status of universal monarch. No matter whence this confusion of the two different royal ceremonies might have arisen in the mind of the poet, the reference to the sacrificial horse being let loose for one whole year leaves us little room for doubt that the sacrifice undertaken by Puṣyamitra, though designated as *rājasūya* in Kālidāsa's text, was really the *aśvamedha*²⁰.

As to the caste-identity of Puṣyamitra, the textual sources do not entirely agree with one another. Pargiter's text on the *kaliyuga* dynasties says nothing about the caste to which Puṣyamitra and his successors belonged²¹, whereas in the same text Vasudeva, the founder of the Kāṇvāyana dynasty, is explicitly stated to be of brahmin descent (*dvija*)²².

According to a sentence in the *Harṣacarita* which describes the downfall of the last Maurya king, Puṣyamitra was a low-born general (*senānīr anāryo*)²³.

In several Buddhist texts Puṣyamitra is represented not as the founder of a new dynasty but as a descendant of the king Aśoka. Towards the end of the *Aśokāvadāna*, i.e. the 29th chapter of the *Divyāvadāna*, for instance, it is related how Puṣyamitra, being inspired by fervent zeal to attain eternal fame, destroyed Buddhist monasteries and slaughtered the monks at the instigation of a wicked court chaplain²⁴.

These sporadic indications of Puṣyamitra's non-brahminhood are outweighed by those

²⁰ One of the examples Patañjali gives in his discussion on the present tense runs: *iha puṣyamitraṃ yājayāmaḥ* (*Mahābhāṣya* vol.2, p.123, ll.3–4). The sacrificial performance alluded to in the sentence cannot necessarily be identified as one of his two celebrations of the *aśvamedha* as Sharfe assumes (p.153). The word-index compiled by Pathak and Citrao registers several other occurrences of Puṣpa-or Puṣyamitra in the *Mahābhāṣya*. As example of the use of causative verb-form the same grammarian gives a few sentences: *puṣyamitro yajate, yājakā yājayanti; puṣyamitro yājayate, yājakā yajanti* (vol.2, p.34, ll.1–2). From these sentences we can infer that the celebration of grand-scale *śrauta*-sacrifices was one of the most favorite activities of the first Śuṅga king.

²¹ Pargiter pp.31–32.

²² Pargiter p.34.

²³ *Harṣacarita* chap 6, p.50.

²⁴ *Divyāvadāna* p.282 (Cowell and Neil p.434).

passages in other texts which attest or allude to the brahmin origin of the Śuṅgas or Śauṅgas. Tāranātha, who records the fierce acts committed by Puṣyamitra (*rgyal bṣes*) in his persecution of the Buddhist order, holds him to have been a brahmin king (*bram zeī rgyal po*)²⁵. According to a rule laid down by Pāṇini in *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 4,1,117, the affix *aṇ* comes after the word Śuṅga if it means a descendant of Bharadvāja. This rule implies that there was a family of brahmins called Śauṅgas who belonged to the clan of Bharadvāja. This coincides with the statement in *Āśvalāyanaśrautasūtra* 2,6,13,2 that the Śuṅgas are Bharadvājas. The existence of the Śuṅgas or Śauṅgas as a branch of the *Bharadvāja-gotra* is attested also at several places in the *Gotrapravaramaṇjarī* of Puruṣottama²⁶. A certain Śauṅgīputra is mentioned in the *vaṃśa*-text at the end of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* as one of those who transmitted the esoteric lore²⁷.

The army commander (*senānī*) spoken of in the verse cited above from *Hv* 115 does not belong to the clan of Bharadvāja but is said to be a descendant of Kaśyapa. This discrepancy renders it quite difficult to specify the *gotra* to which the Śuṅga kings really belonged. As to their status as brahmins, however, there can scarcely be any doubt. It is, at least, certain that the notion of Puṣyamitra having been born in a priestly clan had already taken strong root among the Aryans by the time when the text of the *Bhaviṣyat* was composed.

For the initial word of the first *pāda* of *Hv* 115,40 Vaidya records in the critical apparatus several variants such as *audbhijjo*, *udbhijo*, *udbhido*, *udbhinno*, etc. The reading “*audbhido*,” which he prefers to others, is apparently taken from the text of the Śāradā manuscript. Another reading “*audbhijjo*,” adopted in the vulgate edition, is paraphrased by Nīlakaṇṭha as “*udbhidyā jāyata ity*”²⁸: “he is born after bursting forth [from the earth].” We can hardly reconstruct the original reading of the word on the basis of the given variants. It is, nevertheless, almost certain that the *senānī* in the verse is represented as someone who will come forth from under the earth, because almost all the said variants are to be identified as derivatives of the verb *ud √bhid*. This representation, curious as it seems at first sight, becomes explicable if we notice the close association of the word *śuṅga* with botanical concepts. The word as a common noun in the masculine means a kind of fig (*Ficus indica*), while the same word in its neuter form has the sense of the sheath of a bud, particularly that of the fig²⁹.

Śuṅga as the name of a dynasty does not occur in the drama of Kālidāsa. In the same work one finds the royal family named after the *bimba* plant. In *Mālavikāgnimitra* 4,14, namely, Agnimitra tells Mālavikā that civility (*dākṣiṇya*) is the tradition of his own clan of Baimbikas (*Baimbikānām kulavratam*). We could well imagine the former existence of a legend about a certain plant-born sage who was regarded as the eponymous founder of the

²⁵ Schiefner p.65.

²⁶ Cf. Brough pp.112,115,130,131,135.

²⁷ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, 6,5,2.

²⁸ *Audbhijjo* is a corruption which might be traced back to the Prakrit form *ubbhijjo*.

²⁹ Cf. *Chāndogya-upaniṣad* 6,8,3–6.

Śuṅga lineage. Apparently it is because of such supernatural origin assigned to the race of the *senānī* that in *Hv* 115,40 he has the epithet of *audbhida* or *audbhijja*. We know for certain, on the other hand, that there was a family of brahmins called Baimbikis. It deserves our special attention that according to the *Pravara* text of the Baudhāyana school the Baimbakayaḥ, just like the *senānī* who in the said *Hv* verse is styled *Kāśyapo dvijaḥ*, falls under the *gotra* of Kaśyapa³⁰.

According to Kālidāsa, the name of Agnimitra's father is not Puṣyamitra but Puṣpamitra. In the Purāṇic text on the Śuṅga dynasty both of these names are attested. It is the reading Puṣyamitra which Pargiter adopts in his reconstructed text. In *Yugapurāṇa* 71–72 a king named Puṣpaka appears in the line of four successive rulers of Puṣpapura³¹. According to Mitchiner, he may probably be identified as the founder of the Śuṅga dynasty³².

Of these two names of the first Śuṅga king, priority should undoubtedly be given to Puṣyamitra, which we should look upon as the authentic form on the evidence of the Ayodhyā inscription. Further evidence to be adduced for the authenticity of Puṣyamitra is the name Pūsamitta, which Bühler attests in the old Prākṛit *gāthās* quoted in some Jaina works. Obviously the form Puṣpamitra is nothing more than the outcome of some late attempt at deriving the name from *puṣpa* (blossom). This attempt seems to have been induced by the etymological association of Śuṅga and Baimbika with floral concepts.

In our discussion of chronological matters concerning Puṣyamitra we cannot but rely on the Purāṇic records of the *kaliyuga* dynasties. Although the figures given in these records may not be entirely unquestionable, we can draw from the Purāṇic data some conclusions which seem on the whole reasonable, even in the light of the evidence afforded by other sources. According to the prophesy found in the Purāṇic records, the kings of the Maurya dynasty will rule over the earth full 137 years and the subsequent reign of Puṣyamitra, which will start with his dethronement of the last Maurya king, will last 36 years. The Purāṇic account indicates that the establishment of Puṣyamitra's supremacy took place 137 years after the enthronement of Candragupta Maurya. It is known from Western sources that Candragupta or Sandrakottos was a contemporary of king Alexander the Great of Macedonia. Although one can hardly fix the exact date of his overthrow of the Nanda dynasty, we deem it highly probable that Candragupta's accession to the throne took place around the time of the death of Alexander in 323 BC. V.A. Smith, for instance, who fixes the date of Candragupta's enthronement at 323–322 BC, supposes that Puṣyamitra's reign began in 185 BC³³. The opinions of scholars show minor differences as to the chronology of the Śuṅga period. This diversity of opinions is due to the uncertainty of the date of Candragupta's accession, which each scholar fixes at

³⁰ Cf. *Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra* vol.3, p.449 (*Pravara* 41).

³¹ The name of the king reads *Puṣyaka* in Mankad's text of the *Yugapurāṇa*.

³² Cf. Mitchiner pp.62–63.

³³ Cf. Smith pp.206–207.

a different year³⁴. For our present inquiry, however, it is not necessary to establish the exact chronology of the Śuṅga dynasty. It would be sufficient for us to ascertain that the 36 years or so of Puṣyamitra's reign fall somewhere in the period from 190 BC to 140 BC³⁵.

There must have already been ample narrative material about Janamejaya Pārikṣita as a pious and prosperous king and a guardian of *śrauta* ritualism when his name was first incorporated into the genealogy of the heroes of Vyāsa's epic³⁶. For students of the *Mbh* it is a well-known fact that the names of Pāṇḍu and Pāṇḍava, though central to the main story of the epic, do not occur at all in Vedic literature, whereas Janamejaya and Parikṣit are referred to in a number of Vedic passages³⁷. In the two successive genealogies of the Paurava lineage, which make up *Mbh* I,89–90, the names of Parikṣit and Janamejaya are mentioned not only as the direct descendant of Arjuna Pāṇḍava but also among those kings who belong to older generations than the heroes of the main story. Presumably this duplication of one and the same figure is the result of secondary manipulation of the ancient source by some epic redactors.

In Vedic texts one finds that the name of Janamejaya Pārikṣita is closely associated with the *aśvamedha*. According to *Aitareyabrāhmaṇa* 8,21,1 the king, after having been anointed by Tura Kāvaṣeya, conquered the whole earth and offered a horse in sacrifice³⁸. In *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 13,5,4,1 emphasis is placed on the expiatory function of the horse sacrifice. This passage relates that Janamejaya Pārikṣita once celebrated the *aśvamedha* with Daivāpa Śaunaka as the officiating priest and thereby expiated all his sins, including that of killing a brahmin.

The motifs of Janamejaya's brahmin-slaughter and of his celebration of the horse sacrifice as an act of expiation are carried over into the ancient *Itihāsa* narrated in *Mbh* XII,146–148. This *Itihāsa* relates how Janamejaya, son of Parikṣit, after having been driven away by the whole class of brahmins from his own realm on account of his unwittingly committed sin of *brahmahatyā*, visits Indrota Śaunaka and entreats the *ṛṣi* to teach him how to atone for his grave sin. Śaunaka's discourse on the religious acts of expiation which ensues from the total

³⁴ According to Rapson (p.518), the murder of the last Maurya king by Puṣyamitra happened 137 years after the accession of Candragupta, i.e. in 184BC. On the other hand, Filliozat, who holds 313BC to be the most probable date of Candragupta's accession to the throne (p.123), supposes that Puṣyamitra's assassination of the last Maurya king took place 137 years later, i.e. in 186BC (p.123). Mookerji, who dates Candragupta's accession to 324 BC (p.96), says that Puṣyamitra ruled for about 36 years from 187BC until 151BC (p.97).

³⁵ Majumdar (pp.92–93) opines that Puṣyamitra had long been de facto king of Magadha before his dethronement of the last Maurya king.

³⁶ A general survey over the Janamejaya stories as related in the Vedic, epic and Purāṇic texts is given by Mitchiner in his work on the *Yugapurāṇa* (pp.51–52). On the Vedic and epic passage about the same king, cf. also Witzel pp.29–42. This article contains a number of important suggestions about the narrative structure and the date of the *Mbh* as well as on the epic genealogies. The investigations into the passages he indicates should be relegated to another opportunity.

³⁷ Cf. Brockington p.6.

³⁸ This statement is followed by a *yajñagāthā* which sings of the horse offered by Janamejaya. The same *gāthā* is also found in *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 13,5,4,2.

submission of the king to the sage constitutes the main theme of the *Itihāsa*. The whole story concludes with the verses which relate how Śaunaka administered the performance of the *vājimedha* for the benefit of Janamejaya, who had been released from sin and had returned to his kingdom. A similar story is narrated in the *Vaṃśānucarita* section of some *Purāṇas*³⁹. Janamejaya Pārikṣita, who figures in these Purāṇic verses, is not the great-grandson of Arjuna Pāṇḍava but one of his remote ancestors of the Paurava lineage.

It is of great significance that Janamejaya Pārikṣita as a descendant of the Pāṇḍava prince is also brought into connection with the celebration of the *aśvamedha* as well as with the quarrel with the brahmins. The acts of this Janamejaya, the grandson of Abhimanyu, are narrated in the Purāṇic texts of the *kaliyuga* dynasties. According to the *Matsyapurāṇa* version of the story, Janamejaya Pārikṣita was cursed by the sage Vaiśampāyana because of the partial favour shown by the king to Yājñavalkya and his fellow Vājasaneyakas⁴⁰. This Purāṇic passage alluding to antagonism between brahmins in general on the one hand and the Vājasaneyakas led by Yājñavalkya on the other is highly intriguing. In the discourse delivered by Vyāsa in *Hv* 115–117 on the disastrous condition of the earth in the *kali* age, the sage refers to the predominance of the Vājasaneyins⁴¹. According to the passage in the *Matsyapurāṇa*, the malediction of the brahmins brings about the general estrangement of the priestly class from the sacrificial activities of the *kṣatriyas*. Although Janamejaya is able to celebrate the *aśvamedha* twice with the help of the Vājasaneyakas, he is finally forced to abdicate from the throne on behalf of his son and successor Śatānīka and to enter into an ascetic life in the forest⁴². Some account of the discord between the same Janamejaya and the brahmins at the beginning of the *kali* age is found in *Yugapurāṇa* 37–39⁴³. According to these verses, the dispute was caused by the wrath of the king towards the brahmins and his own consort. The verses seem to have been composed under some influence from the Janamejaya story related in *Hv* 118. In *Arthaśāstra* 1,6,6 Janamejaya is listed among those monarchs who went to ruin owing to lack of self-restraint.

As already suggested above, the original figure of Janamejaya Pārikṣita had no specific relationship either with the Pāṇḍavas or with the Pauravas. Most probably it was only during the gradual development of the *Bhārata* epic that the king was brought into connection with the lineage to which the epic heroes belonged. In this process the original single figure of Janamejaya was split into two distinct persons, one being represented as the ancient king of the Paurava race and the other as the legitimate descendant of Arjuna Pāṇḍava. Even after

³⁹ Kirfel, Abschnitt 4, Kapitel 3, Textgruppe I, 15–20 (p.386).

⁴⁰ The verses narrating Janamejaya's dispute with the brahmins are not incorporated by Pargiter into his reconstructed text about the Paurava dynasty. He deals with them in Appendix III to the text (pp.86–88).

⁴¹ *Hv* 116,13

⁴² In the Purāṇic record about the Paurava dynasty of the *kali*-age the deeds and succession of the kings prior to Nicaṣu the great-grandson of Śatānīka are represented as past events. The future tense is used only from the account of king Nicaṣu onward.

⁴³ Cf. Mitchiner p.52.

this duplication both Janamejaya still retain some common characteristics. At least, most of the versions of the stories about the older and the younger Janamejaya contain the motifs of the dispute of the king with the priestly class and his celebration of the *aśvamedha*.

According to the above-mentioned accounts of Janamejaya in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*, *Śāntiparvan* and *Vaṃśānucarita*, it is by offering the horse sacrifice that the king purifies himself from the sins of offending or killing brahmins. Almost the contrary is the case in the Janamejaya story in the *Bhaviṣyat* portion of the *Hv*. It is, conversely, to the very performance of the *aśvamedha* by Janamejaya that the author of the *Bhaviṣyat* attributes the cause of his estrangement from the priestly class. Towards the end of *Hv* 118 the story as such comes to a happy ending through the reconciliation of the king with the banished brahmins. With all the reconciliatory acts of Janamejaya, however, the curse once uttered by himself in *Hv* 118,17 will unavoidably bring about the alienation of the *aśvamedha* from the *kṣatriya* class. Nor is it possible that the dark prophesy by Vyāsa made in *Hv* 115,35 about the decline of the regular performance of the *aśvamedha* will be left unfulfilled. In *Hv* 115,40, indeed, the same sage foretells the restoration of the *aśvamedha* in the *kali* age, but this restoration will occur in quite abnormal circumstances, for the ruler who is predicted to resume the interrupted tradition of the horse sacrifice will not be any such genuine *kṣatriya* prince as required by Vedic authority but an army commander of brahmin descent.

In Vedic ritual texts it is exclusively *kṣatriya* kings who are entitled to offer the horse sacrifice. In *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 13,4,1,2 the *aśvamedha* is clearly defined as the sacrifice for *kṣatriyas*⁴⁴. Similar statements are found also in several *Śrautasūtras*. In *Kātyāyanaśrautasūtra* 20,1,1, for instance, the sacrifice is designated as *rājayajña*⁴⁵. In view of these Vedic prescriptions and definitions one cannot but recognize the unlawful character of the *aśvamedha* predicted in *Hv* 115,40 to be celebrated by a brahmin general. This verse implies that the brahmins will arrogate to themselves the role of offering the horse sacrifice with the result that the *kṣatriyas* are to be excluded from the practice of their own rite until the end of the *kali* age.

The story of Janamejaya related in *Hv* 115–118 centres around his undertaking of the *aśvamedha* and the disasters which ensue from his failure to finish the rite properly. The most terrible disaster consists in the alienation of the *kṣatriya* class from the *aśvamedha*. This disaster, which one finds precisely formulated in Vyāsa's words in *Hv* 115,35, constitutes even the main theme of the whole story.

Viewed in the context of real history, it is certainly not until Puṣyamitra's celebration of the *aśvamedha* that the dire prophesy of Vyāsa in *Hv* 115,35 comes true. As already ascertained, the brahmin commander referred to in *Hv* 115,40 is none other than the first Śuṅga ruler, though the verse does not reveal his personal name. The performance of the *aśvamedha* by a non-*kṣatriya* monarch must have looked like an unprecedented, scandalous event to con-

⁴⁴ ...*kṣatriyayajñā u vā eṣā yād aśvamedhā iti*.

⁴⁵ See also *Lāṭyāyanaśrautasūtra* 9,9,1. Cf. Dumont p.7; Hillebrandt p.149.

temporaries. We might, indeed, well imagine the immense sensation the incident produced as well as the bitter controversy about its legitimacy or illegitimacy it evoked among orthodox Aryans. It appears to be the grave sense of crisis aroused by the recent historical event of Puṣyamitra's ritual undertaking that forms the key-note of the entire Janamejaya story related in the *Bhaviṣyat*, although it assumes the garb of an epic narrative about the remote past.

What the author of the *Khila* text tried to accomplish with his work seems to have been to offer some reasonable interpretation of the crisis viewed from his own historical perspective. As a matter of course, this perspective must inevitably be a mythological one provided by the Vedic and epic traditions as well as by the theory of four *yugas*. Having chosen Janamejaya Pāriṣita as the hero of his narrative, the author made this ancient king responsible for the catastrophe, i.e. the alienation of the *kṣatriya* class from the *aśvamedha*, suggesting that his failure in completing it was the distant cause for Puṣyamitra's appropriation of the *kṣatriya* rite. This narrative setting is a most appropriate one, because the figure of Janamejaya is, on the one hand, directly linked to the *Mbh* and, on the other, closely associated with the horse sacrifice.

The intrinsic connection between the *Bhaviṣyat* and Puṣyamitra's *aśvamedha*, on which I have tried to shed some light, is of utmost importance for our considerations on *Mbh* chronology. It is quite difficult to answer the question of whether or not the author of the *Bhaviṣyat* eye-witnessed Puṣyamitra's celebration of the horse sacrifice. What we can say with much certainty is that the *Bhaviṣyat* must have come into existence at a time when the sensation caused by Puṣyamitra's illegitimate ritual act had not yet died down but remained still fresh in the minds of the Aryans. Speaking in terms of a somewhat rough chronology, the *Khila* text seems to have been composed between the early Śuṅga and early Kāṇva period, i.e. c. 180–50 BC⁴⁶. (I am personally inclined to assign its date to the middle or late Śuṅga period.)

Since the so-called double narrative structure of the *Mbh* continues into the *Hv*, we are naturally led to the assumption that the *Bhaviṣyat* was composed later than the larger epic version provided with the framework of the Naimiṣa dialogue. We should, however, not entirely preclude the possibility that the *Bhaviṣyat* in its most original shape had existed as an independent text without being incorporated into Ugrasravas' discourse in the Naimiṣāraṇya before it was appended to the great epic as one of its Supplements. This possibility, if valid, would thoroughly discredit my theory of *Mbh* chronology. Nevertheless, this possibility seems to me unlikely. I rather hold it natural to suppose that the *Bhaviṣyat* was from the beginning designed as a continuation of the Naimiṣa dialogue. The text of this *Bhaviṣyat*, in its present shape at least, seems to be so inseparably bound up with the said dialogue that it is almost impossible to contemplate extracting its original portion from the narrative framework of Ugrasravas' discourse. The dialogue between Janamejaya and Vyāsa in *Hv* 115 is repre-

⁴⁶ The Purāṇic text prophesies that the Śuṅga dynasty shall last full 112 years (Pargiter p.33). According to Smith (p.215), the change from the Śuṅga- to the Kāṇva dynasty took place c. 73BC.

sented as something like a continuation or supplement of the epic recital at the *sarpasatra*⁴⁷. In this situation one can scarcely think of any other person than Ugraśravas as the overall narrator of the *Bhaviṣyat*, even in its earliest shape. Further, in *Hv* 115,9 and 118,17 Śaunaka is addressed by the narrator as the listener of his discourse⁴⁸.

In view of this state of affairs, I hold to the assumption that the composition of the *Bhaviṣyat* was preceded by the compilation of version U of the *Mbh*. It then follows that this longer version, as well as the double narrative structure of the *Mbh*, came into existence most probably before the middle Śuṅga period. In any case, it is extremely difficult to assign the date of the longer version to the post-Śuṅga period.

As already set forth above, the longer version with the Naimiṣa dialogue was compiled later than the shorter one, which had no other overall framework than Vaiṣaṃpāyana's epic recital. We have no means of determining by how many decades versions V and U were separated from each other in regard to their respective dates of compilation. It seems improbable that one compilation would have been made fairly soon after the other. It would be reasonable to assume that the interval between the geneses of both versions was more than one human generation.

My above considerations on the dates of the *Bhaviṣyat* and version U of the *Mbh* render it probable that version V, which began with *Mbh* I,54, was compiled before the end of the Maurya dynasty. As to the question of whether or not this older version of the *Mbh* is to be dated back even further to the pre-Maurya period, I will leave this open.

On the other hand, the references to the *Khila* texts in *Mbh* I,2,69,233 clearly show that the *Parvasaṃgraha-* and *Anukramaṇīparvan* (and perhaps the *Pauṣyaparvan* also) were added to version U of the *Mbh* even later than the *Bhaviṣyat*. This fact suggests that the so-called double introduction to the *Mbh* came into being only in the post-Śuṅga period.

My reflections made so far should be checked against other theories of *Mbh* chronology. I would like to leave this task for another occasion. In this article I have to be content to present my own theory, based mainly on the narrative structure, as one possibility of interpreting the textual and historical data about the *Mbh* and the *Hv*.

ABBREVIATIONS AND TEXTS

Arthaśāstra The Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra. Part I: Sanskrit Text and a Glossary. R.P.Kangle. Second Edition. Bombay 1969.

Aṣṭādhyāyī Pāṇinis Grammatik von O.Boehtlingk. Leipzig 1887 (Hildesheim · New York 1971).

Āśvalāyanaśrautasūtra The Śrauta Sūtra of Āśvalāyana edited by R.Vidyāratna. Calcutta 1989.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Hv* 115,11–14.

⁴⁸ For *śaunaka* in these verses Vaidya does not give any important variant. In the manuscript designated as K4, however, *Hv* 118,17d reads: *yakṣyantīti na kauśika*.

- Aitareyabrāhmaṇa* Das Aitareya Brāhmaṇa herausgegeben von Th.Aufrecht. Bonn 1879 (Hildesheim · New York 1975).
- Kātyāyanaśrautasūtra* The Śrautasūtra of Kātyāyana. Edited by A.Weber. Berlin 1859 (Varanasi 1972).
- Divyāvadāna* Divyāvadāna. Edited by P.L.Vaidya. Darbhanga 1959. [This edition is a reprint of the Divyāvadāna edited by E.B.Cowell and R.A.Neil (Cambridge 1886).]
- Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra* The Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra belonging to the Taittirīya Samhitā, 3 vols. Edited by W.Caland. Calcutta 1904–1913.
- Bhāratamañjarī* The Bhāratamañjarī of Kṣemendra. Edited by M.P.Śivadatta and K.P.Parab. Bombay 1898 (Delhi 1954).
- Mahābhārata* [Mbh] The Mahābhārata for the first time critically edited by V.S.Sukthankar. 19 vols. Poona 1933–1959.
- Mahābhārata with the Bharata Bhawadeepa Commentary of Nīlakaṇṭha edited by R.Kinjawadekar. 6 vols. New Delhi 1979.
- The citations of the Mbh verses are made from the text in the Critical Edition.
- Mahābhāṣya* The Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali, Vol.II. Bombay 1883. Third Edition revised by K.V.Abhyankar, Vol.2. Poona 1965.
- Mālavikāgnimitra* Mālavikāgnimitra of Kālidāsa edited by C.R.Devadhar. Delhi 1966 (Third Edition).
- Lāṭyāyanaśrautasūtra* Śrautasūtra of Lāṭyāyana. Edited by A.Ch.Vedantavagisa. Second Edition 1982.
- Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* The Śatapatha-Braāhmaṇa in the Mādhyandina-Śākhā edited by A.Weber. Berlin 1855 (Varanasi 1964).
- Harivaṃśa* [HV] The Harivaṃśa edited by P.L.Vaidya. 2vols. Poona 1969–1971.
- Harṣacarita* The Harṣacarita of Bāṇabhaṭṭa. Edited by P.V.Kane. Bombay 1918 (Delhi 1965).

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マハーバーラタ成立年代の考察

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大叙事詩マハーバーラタのおほよその成立年代を推定しようとする場合は、同叙事詩の叙述の枠組およびそれぞれの枠組を具へた傳本の形成の過程にも注目せねばならない。諸傳本の成立については次の諸段階が想定される。

- 一. ジャナメージャヤ王のサルパストラ祭場におけるヴァイシャムパーヤナによるヴィヤーサ叙事詩朗誦を枠とする傳本Vの成立。
- 二. ナイミシャ林におけるウグラシュラヴァスとシャウナカとの對話を枠とする傳本Uの成立。この枠は傳本Vにアースティーカ物語が附加された時に設けられたものである。
- 三. 現行ハリヴァンシャの一部を成すバヴィシヤトの編者による傳本Uの枠組の踏襲。
- 四. パルヴァサングラハパルヴァンが傳本Uに附加されたことによるナイミシャ林對話の「二重導入」の成立。

バヴィシヤトでは、婆羅門出身であつたとおぼしきシュンガ王朝開祖プシャミトラ王のアシュヴァメーダ祭舉行が暗示され、アシュヴァメーダ祭からのクシャトリヤ階層の疎外といふ未曾有の事態のもたらした危機感が全篇の主題となつてゐる。この危機感や興奮のいまだ醒めやらぬシュンガ朝中期後期がバヴィシヤトの成立時であつたと思はれる。とすればバヴィシヤトに先行するはずのマハーバーラタU傳本がシュンガ王朝期より後に成つたとは考へられない。U傳本は遅くともシュンガ朝初期中期には成立してゐたと見るべきであり、U傳本よりさらに古いV傳本はすでにマウリヤ朝時代には形成されてゐたと考へるのが妥當である。ただし、このV傳本の成立が前マウリヤ朝期まで遡るかいは定かではない。一方パルヴァサングラハパルヴァンなど現行マハーバーラタの初三章はシュンガ王朝期より後に順次追加されていつたはずである。すなはち「二重導入」は後シュンガ朝期になつてはじめて成立したと想はれる。

本稿では、もつぱら語りの枠組に留意して構想された大叙事詩成立年代論を提示した。本来は、ほかのさまざまなマハーバーラタ成立年代論をも吟味検討すべきであつたが、その作業は別の機会に俟たねばならない。