Who Are the *abhiyuktas*?
Some Problems in *Mimāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.27

Tomonari Yūki

**Previous Studies and Problems**

Sūtras 1.3.24–29 in Jaimini’s *Mimāṃsāsūtra* (*MS*) comprise a section titled *Vyākaraṇādīptikaraṇa*, which literally means “the section on grammar.” The main concerns of this section are as follows: (1) Is there a distinction between correct speech (*sādhu*) and incorrect speech (*asādhu*)? (*MS* 1.3.24); (2) If this distinction exists, then where does it come from? (25–26); (3) How can one acknowledge this distinction? (27); (4) Why can the meaning of speech be understood not only when it is correct but also when it is incorrect? (28–29).

I cannot say that this *MS* has been sufficiently examined yet, but I need to mention some studies. First, in 1933, Jhā produced a complete translation of Śabara’s *Bhāṣya* (*ŚBh*) on the *MS*. Harikai 1975a (in Japanese) is a short treatise on Kumārila’s *Tantravārttika* (*TV*), on the same section. This work considers the mechanism between the use of correct speech and the reward for it. Cardona 1999, a book review of Houben’s study on Bhartṛhari’s *Vākyapadīya*, concisely outlines Śabara’s argument. These studies by eminent scholars are helpful in order for us to understand the broad structure of arguments, but several problems remain unsolved in terms of the detail. In this short paper, We examine one of these problems: the meaning of the words *abhiyukta* and *abhiyoga* in the argument on *MS* 1.3.27.

The word *abhiyukta* appears in the *ŚBh* on *MS* 1.3.27: *tatra tattvam abhiyogaviśeṣāt syāt*. The term *abhiyoga* in this sūtra is closely connected with this word. The previous studies mentioned above interpret these terms as follows:

*abhiyoga* (*viṣeṣ[ā]t*) in *MS* 1.3.27: Jhā 1933: “through close attention.”¹ Harikai 1975a: omits. Cardona 1999: “the special authority of the learned”;² “The property of being learned (*abhiyoga*)”;³

*abhiyukta* in the *ŚBh*: Jhā 1933: “be prone to close attention”; “those who give close atten-

--- 1133 ---
Who Are the abhiyuktas? (Y. Tomonari)

(70)

tion”; “people who have given this close attention.” 4) Harikai 1975a: “learned people (abhiyukta) who had studied the grammatical definition (laksana) repeatedly.” 5) Cardona 1999: “the authoritative learned (abhiyukta) speakers who institute restrictions, that is the tradition of grammarians.” 6)

While Jhā 1933 understands the meaning of abhi + √yuj as “to give close attention,” Harikai 1975a and Cardona 1999 render it as an attributive: “learned.” However, the latter requires an object—certain people to whom it refers—whereas the former does not necessarily need an object in order to be understood. How can we interpret these words more precisely?

**MS 1.3.27: tatra tattvam abhiyogaviśeṣāt syāt**

This question leads us to yet another and yet more important question about the tradition of grammar. Let us begin with the ŚBh on this sūtra which is short enough to be shown in its entirety. 7)

Q: Then, there are no means by which one could understand whether certain speech is correct.
A: (Jaimini, the author of the MS) says, “One can.” Indeed, people who are abhiyukta aim to reach their purpose. What is more, those who are abhiyukta have an uninterrupted oral tradition (of correct speech), and, far from forgetting it. It is obvious that anything that is handed down without interruption is never corrupted. Hence, when people who are abhiyukta advise, “this word form is correct,” that very word form must be accepted as a correct one.

As mentioned above, the main concern here is the means by which one can acknowledge the distinction between correct and incorrect. The words gauḥ, gāvī, goṇī, gotā, and gopotālikā, all of which mean “cow,” are typical examples of these kinds of arguments. 8) Every instruction for distinguishing between these terms comes from the people who are abhiyukta. They say that, of these word forms, only gauḥ is correct. Therefore, one can understand that only gauḥ is correct.

Accordingly, we might interpret MS 1.3.27 as follows:

At this point, the fact of whether or not a certain item of speech is correct is learned from a certain abhiyoga.

Now, are we to interpret the word abhiyukta as an adjective, such as “learned”? Briefly glancing at the ŚBh, both of these interpretations are possible. However, the latter rendering may be clearer, as far as we can ask what kind of knowledge these learned or abhiyukta
people have. Previous studies have unanimously given us the answer that it is the knowledge of Paninian grammar. It is true that this answer is in accord with the circumstances surrounding Paninian grammar through the ages. However, the problem here is slightly more complicated.

Commentators' Interpretation

Why has this section of the MS been known as Vyākaraṇādhiśīrṣa? This is one more question about this argument. It is curious that we never find the term vyākaraṇa in MS 1.3.24–29 or in this section of the ŚBh. The word sāstra, found in MS 1.3.24 is the only synonymous word that we see in this section. Of course, we can assume that, at least in this section, this word has exactly the same scope with the word vyākaraṇa, and this makes sense. However, the word vyākaraṇa appears several times before this section in the ŚBh, it is therefore questionable why it does not appear here.

The use of the word vyākaraṇa in this context was taken into account by later commentators such as Kumārila. In his reflections on these sūtras in his TV, he interprets the word abhiyoga as follows: Hearing a repetition of the grammatical definition (lakṣaṇa) brings about an abhiyoga. By the means of this abhiyoga, one obtains the knowledge of the things other than those that need to be defined (lakṣyāntara). This (process) is a particular abhiyoga.

It is obvious that Kumārila here has a vārttika phrase in Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya (MBh): lakṣyalaksāne vyākaranam, in mind. The interpretation of the compound abhiyogaviśeṣa in Harikai 1975a relies upon this argument.

On the contrary, Prabhākara, in his Brhadā (B), does not interpret the sūtra itself. In the conclusion of his argument on abhiyukta, he simply states, "thus no one can disagree with the tradition (smaraṇa) of the abhiyukta people."

A famous Naiyāyika, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, is another scholar who has been involved in this series of arguments. In the sixth chapter of his Nyāyamaṇjarī (NM), Jayanta quotes the ŚBh and offers a short comment which seems to be a clear paraphrase of TV's argument shown above.

Indeed, in this section of the NM, he quotes substantially from Mīmāṃsaka works including the ŚBh, TV, and B.

Vācaspati Miśra interpreted the word abhiyukta as referring to the names of grammari-
ans such as Indra, Pāṇini and so on.\(^{18}\)

Considering these statements, it seems valid enough that the words *abhiyoga* and *abhiyukta* in this context must be connected with the science of grammar. Therefore, the interpretation of *abhiyukta* shown by Harikai (1975a) and Cardona (1999) is reasonable on the ground of these interpretations.

**Why Does the ŚBh Not Refer to the Tradition of Pāṇinian Grammar?**

One problem remains. Why does the ŚBh not refer to the tradition of Pāṇinian grammar in this section? We can find some clues for solving this problem in the ŚBh ad MS 1.3.10, which precedes this *Vyākaranādhi Karana*.

*MS* 1.3.10 and the related ŚBh passage constitute a topic known as *Pikanemādhi Karana*. The outline of this section is as follows: we find some barbaric (*mleccha*) words, such as *pika, nema, tāmarasa*, or *sata*, in Vedic scriptures, despite the fact that these words are unusual among Āryan people. How can one then decide the meaning of these words?\(^{19}\) The opponent asks whether one should analyze these terms by means of Vedic vocabulary (*nigama*), Vedic etymology (*nirukta*), and grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), or whether one should accept the word according to its barbaric usage.\(^{20}\) He himself answers as follows:\(^ {21}\)

Hence, one should analyze the term by virtue of Vedic vocabulary, etc. This is how Vedic vocabulary can be of use. Add to this, as far as meanings of the words are concerned, only the *śiṣṭas* or intellectual elites have *abhiyoga*, while others do not.

It is noteworthy that the word *śiṣta* is employed to describe those who have/do not have *abhiyoga*, which can be translated as “expertise.” As a past passive participle of \(√śās\) (to teach), *śiṣta* literally means “educated,” but it is usually a noun referring to intellectual elites. So are people who are *abhiyukta* the same as *śiṣṭas*? We find another statement worth noting in the following section:\(^ {22}\)

ŚBh ad MS 1.3.10: On the other hand, the opponent said that *śiṣṭas* have expertise in the meaning of words. To this, we answer that barbarians have more expertise (*abhiyuktatara*) in rearing and catching birds.\(^ {23}\)

Now we can see that the scope of the word *abhiyukta* is larger than that of the word *śiṣṭa*. In my humble opinion, this is why Śabara does not refer to the tradition of grammar in the *Vyākaranādhi Karana*. The word *abhiyogaviśeṣa* in MS 1.3.27 seems to literally mean “expertise in a particular subject.” In this sense, the synonymous interpretation of later schol-
ars is right, however, Śabara does not use the term *vyākaraṇa* because it is quite natural to think that the word *abhiyukta* here was normally concerned with Vedic vocabulary, Vedic etymology, and grammar in Śabara’s era. In addition, in *MS* 1.3.10, the word *abhivyukta* directly qualifies *śiśṭas* as experts in the meanings of the words (*śabdārtha*), so we had better not interpret this word as solely referring to grammatical expertise.

**Conclusion**

We have now considered the words *abhivyoga* and *abhivyukta* in the light of commentaries and other references to them. It is generally agreeable that these words have a close relationship with the tradition of grammar (especially Pāṇinian grammar). However, the *ŚBh* seems to prevent us from making a clear decision in this area. In order to understand this fully, thorough research is needed into the usage of these words and the difference between the scope of *abhivyukta* and of *śiśṭa*.

---

**Notes**

1) Jhā 1933, p. 114. 2–4. Jhā further paraphrases this with brackets as follows: “[or, “through the application of certain general principles”—acc. to *Tantravārttika*].” See n. 13 below. 2) Cardona 1999, p. 102. 3) Cardona 1999, p. 102, n. 80. 4) Jhā 1933, p. 114. 8–15. 5) Harikai 1975a p. 338. 19–20: “文典の定義 (lakṣaṇa) を反復学習し文典に熟達した人 (abhivyukta).” 6) Cardona 1999, p. 102, n. 80. 7) *ŚBh* ad *MS* 1.3.27. 8) Cf. *MBh* I. 5.12–22. 9) The word *śāstra* can mean both śruti and smṛti. 10) Cf. *ŚBh*, p. 224. 4, etc. 11) Cardona 1999 (p. 102, n. 80) gives the *TV* and Someśvara’s *Nyāyasudhā* as examples of such commentaries. In addition, Prabhākara Miśra’s *Bṛhaī* also uses the word *vyākaraṇa* repeatedly in this section. 12) *TV*, p. 278. 20–21. 13) The term *lakṣyāntara* is obscure but not explained. 14) See *MBh* I. 12.15–27. Cardona 1983, pp. 667–670 (850), Joshi and Roodbergen 1986, pp. 173–177. 15) B, p. 145. 2–3. This sentence expresses the same idea as the *ŚBh*, which says: *avismaraṇam upapamnam*. The word *smaraṇa* here seems to have the same scope with the word *smṛti*. 16) *NM*, vol. 2, p. 251. 14–16. 17) See Harikai 1975a and Tomonari 2010. 18) *Nyāyavārttikatātparyātyākā*, p. 1182. 21–22. For background information to this argument, see Harikai 1975b, p. (77). 19) *Pīka* means a cuckoo (*kokila*), nema means half of something (*ardha*), *tāmarasa* means a lotus (*padma*), and *sata* means a wooden receptacle with hundreds of holes (*dārumayaṃ pāṭrām parimāṇḍalam satacchidram*). 20) *ŚBh*, p. 224. 4–5. 21) *ŚBh*, p. 225. 1–2. 22) *ŚBh*, p. 226. 2–4. 23) See Jhā 1933, p. 101. 36–40. 24) As far as I have found in my research, the word *vyākaraṇa* is used in a particular connection with these words in the *ŚBh*. Cf. *ŚBh* ad *MS* 1.2.49.
Abbreviations and references


(This work was supported by Grant-in-Aid for JSPS Fellows Grant Number 13J01600.)

(Key words) Mimāṃsāsūtra, Śābarabhāṣya, Pāṇinian grammar, abhiyukta, śiṣṭa

(JSPS Research Fellow)