Grammatical Changes of *yád* 'which' and *átha* 'then' in Sanskrit Prose

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Sanskrit has been used for a long time, and therefore many grammatical changes have occurred in its history. In this presentation, we will discuss the grammatical changes of two words, *yád* 'which', and *átha* 'then'. We will investigate the instances with *yád* and *átha* in the early Sanskrit prose, mainly based on *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa of Mādhyandina Recension* (ŚBM), a ritual text written in prose around circa 7th – 6th century BCE which contains two chronological layers, namely older and newer. We will show that *yád* originally introduces relative clauses, and then *átha yád* or *yád* began to be used as a topic marker. After that, *átha* began to be used as a topic marker alone. At last, *átha* began to have the function of conditional conjunction. The changes can be summarized as follows.

Step I–Step II: *yád* was originally a relative pronoun, but by circa 7th - 6th BCE, in the older layer of ŚB, it had already obtained usage as an independent sentential adverb that introduces the topic of the verse. For instance,

(1) *átha*   ***yád***   *átra*   *bahiṣpavamānéna*   *stuvaté*.   (ŚBM 4.2.5.9)
  then   REL.   here   Bahishpavamana-INST.SG.   praise-PRS.3PL.
  And as to why they chant the Bahishpavamana here. (Eggeling 1885 vol 2: 309)

In this instance, no head nouns are found, so we cannot analyze it as a relative clause introduced by *yád*, and *átha* here is in its original meaning 'then'.

Step II–Step III: later, in the newer layer of ŚB, *átha* replaced *yád* in that function. For instance,

(2) ***áthā̍**ta*   *āvṛ́d*   *evá.* (ŚBM 13.8.1.17)
  ÁTHA-hence   order-NOM.SG.F   indeed
  Now as to the order of procedure. (Eggeling 1885 vol 5: 428)

Step III–Step IV: according to Speijer (1886:375), *átha* obtained another function as a conditional conjunction in Classical Sanskrit (from circa 5th century BCE), as in (3).

(3) ***atha*** *vā* dattabhogyena   dhanena   te   prayojanaṃ
  if   give-PP.-to be enjoyed   riches-INS.SG.   you-ACC.SG.   object-ACC.SG.
  tad   upabhuktadhanaṃ   karomi. (Speijer 1886:375)
  DEM.NOM.SG.   Upabhuktadhana-ACC.SG.   do-PRES.1.SG.

If you want riches which give enjoyment, I will make you (like) Upabhuktadhana.

The function of *átha* as a conditional conjunction may come from the use of topic markers. The change between topic to conditional is common typologically, as Haiman (1978) proposed that conditional clauses are topics with the logical method of explication. We argue that the same semantic change has occurred on *átha*.

References

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