

CARAKA

English Summary of :

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SUMMARY

The earliest references to Yajurveda specialists called *Caraka(-adhvaryu/-ācārya)* are not unequivocal: While they might be understood as mentioning a (not necessarily homogeneous) group of roaming Yajurveda adepts and doctors of Vedic ritual (see 1.1.), the quotations from their texts and of their opinions on the ritual (3.), as preserved in the ŚB, are diametrically opposed to those of the White Yajurveda. These indicate that the Carakas represent a Yajurveda school lost to us until now (2.1.). Among the schools having come down to us, this Saṃhitā evidences the greatest degree of affinity to the Kāṭha school (incl. the Kapiṣṭhala-Kāṭhas), though it does not share with them completely identical texts nor ritualistic opinions. The Maitrāyaṇīyas and Taittirīyas have a lesser degree of affinity with the Carakas (2.4.1.).

In respect to some problems of the ritual the Carakas retain a more conservative view than the other YV Sākhās (2.4.1.). Their Saṃhitā, which seems to have been codified later than MS, as it exhibits (in addition) to a phonetic peculiarity known from MS, KS, see 3.4.2.) also a phonetic development which points to the influence on Caraka tradition by an early, not attested form of Prakṛt (3.4.2.), which comes close to a similar development in the Kapiṣṭhala-Saṃhitā the redaction of which is clearly late. Furthermore, a fragment probably taken from the Caraka-Brāhmaṇa (3.2.1.) can only have been composed shortly before the Upaniṣad period, just as the comparable fragments of the KāṭhB or VādhB. <p. 238>

During this period, and possibly earlier, the Carakas may have been in contact with the early school of medicine represented by the Caraka-Saṃhitā,

(not, however, with the surgical school of the later Suśruta-S., see 1.2. at the end.).

The Caraka school and its alleged redactor of the same name, who - according to Indian tradition - 'proclaimed' the Caraka texts, were well known to the early grammarians (1.2.). Ever since this time, they have habitually been mentioned as the first of the Black YV schools (2.3.; Anm.96). The last adherents of this Śākhā surviving in Mahārāṣṭra still refer to this fact in order to enhance their social position (4.5.).

While the Caraka Śākhā still was well-known to the commentators until the end of the first millennium (1.4.; 3.5.) there followed a retreat of the school to a few areas in Central India. This is matched by the evidence of inscriptions and copper plates (1.5.). During the last few centuries, the Carakas could only survive in some districts of Northern and Eastern Mahārāṣṭra and of Madhya Pradesh (Chhattisgarh). Their numbers have concentrated more and more at Nagpur where for the first time since the medieval period they were accorded some support by the Bhonsle dynasty. The retreat of this school has been accompanied by increasing loss of their written and oral traditions: Surrounded on all sides by the strong and expanding schools of the Black and White Yajurveda (4.3.2.) benefited by medieval monarchs, the Carakas were largely reduced to earning their livelihood as village astronomers. At the same time, rituals and texts of the Maitrāyaṇi and Vājasaneyi Śākhās were gradually taken over (4.3.).

As a countermeasure, the Carakas of Nagpur at length imported the traditions of the Maitrāyaṇīyas (in the Mānava subrecension) from Nasik and Nandurbar (4.3-2; 4-3.3.); which have been cultivated ever since.

However, there are a few indications that even today manuscripts and remnants of the oral and ritual traditions of the Carakas still survive (4.3.1; 4.3.3.). These have to be detected and preserved before they will disappear in a few years. The extensive notes on this school, with special reference to their texts (3.), their residential area and their clans (4.2.), published here are intended to help in this search.

While looking for the remnants of a Vedic school, one must pay special attention to the ritual handbooks compiled for the practical purposes of the priests. In these compendia (accented) *sūktas* taken from the Saṃhitās are usually found mixed with extracts from the Śrauta and Gr̥hya Sūtras, as well

as Paddhati- and Prayoga-like expositions. (In Kashmir, these R̥cakas even contain Br̥hmaṇa chapters taken from the KS, KathB etc.). It is fairly certain that as the result of a thorough search such handbooks will also turn up for the Caraka Śākhā. They could, for example, be detected in the unnoticed heaps and bundles of MSS which are 'pre- <p. 239> -served' by village astrologers as the heritage of their more learned ancestors.

Furthermore, during such investigations, one must take into account that even the lucky find of a single leaf is enough to prove the authenticity of the Caraka-Saṃhitā versus the works of other schools. While perusing Vedic MSS, and certainly while cataloguing them, one must pay a great deal of attention to scribal, phonetic, accentual and similar peculiarities: Many a rare Vedic text has been classified as a work of another Veda school.

The possibility is not to be excluded that in a few villages of, e.g. South Mahārāṣṭra, remnants of the oral tradition of the Caraka Śākhā may survive. (We were told to investigate the tradition at Ujani near Aurangabad, too.) Further, a possible survival of Caraka tradition in the adjacent parts of Madhya Pradesh (i.e. Chhattisgarh) and Andhra ought to be looked into. The Sirpur copperplate and the well-recorded emigration of Caraka families to Bilaspur (M.P.) indicate some areas where a search may be begun. In the same way, the Paippalāda school was found in the extreme West of Bengal and in Orissa where a few years ago one had heard only of 'sorcerers'.

In this connection, it may be useful to mention that remnants of the Kāṭha school, which is so nearly related to the Caraka Śākhā, may have survived in the border areas of Madhya Pradesh and Andhra, as well as in Orissa (see note 296). One ought survey the areas along the banks of the Godāvarī, Pengangā/Vaidarbhī (perhaps also those of the Narmada, 4.3.2.).

Perhaps Kapiṣṭhalas, too, survived in Mahārāṣṭra some 300 years ago (see note 297); this school is said to be found even today in Gujarat (4.3.2.).

The investigations described here must be regarded as an urgent task of Vedic studies. The lucky find of Caraka texts would complement - and change- our view of the early (Kṛṣṇa) Yajurveda considerably.

When investigating Vedic traditions, an inordinate amount of stress has, in my opinion, been placed on South India (where the tradition is more alive). However, the wide belt of territories, partly difficult of access, which extends between North and South India (i.e. with regard to the Yajurveda, between

Vājasaneyins and Taittirīyas), seem to have retained many old traits, though the Vedic schools still surviving have been pressed in upon by the larger Śākhās. Orissa furnishes a good example: The Vedic tradition of this state has hardly been investigated: Next to the Kāṇvas, who possess a separate tradition differing from that of other adherents of this school, the Rāṇāyanīyas who are said to possess MSS in some kind of notation of the Sāmavedic tones akin to South Indian norms, and of which a few MSS are said to have been bought by the Sanskrit University Library of Benares, there still survive the Paippalādins, believed to be extinct until the late <p. 240> Fifties. Even these last can boast of a living tradition of oral recitation. - In fact, all the more remote areas outside of South India (where relatively much has already been done) will have to be thoroughly investigated. This comprises parts of Mahārāṣṭra and Gujarat as well as Rajasthan, Kashmir, Nepal, Orissa and Assam. (Some of these areas will be treated in the following numbers of this series of articles).

In conclusion, the author wishes to express his hope that the information contained in the above article may lead some younger Vedic scholar to pursue this line of investigations through field work in India. As for himself, he here promises some articles in this series on other parts of India and Nepal, and hopes to present a first volume on the Veda in Kashmir in the monograph series attached to this journal.

(article concluded in Dec. '78/June '79)