



Studi e Ricerche

Ricerche sull'Oriente



Unveiling the Atharvaveda

*Mapping the Cultural and Linguistic
Peculiarities of a Vedic Text*

Edited by Marianna Ferrara and Duccio Lelli



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*To Marianne S. Oort
and Werner F. Knobl,
dearest friends
and faithful companions
of many Vedic adventures.*

*svasti vah p̄rāya tamasah
parastāt (MuṇḍU 2.2.6)*

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Marianna Ferrara

Abbreviations of Sanskrit Works

Abbreviations

A	<i>Aṣṭādhyāyī</i>
AB	<i>Aitareyabrāhmaṇa</i>
ĀpMP	<i>Āpastambamantrapāṭha</i>
ĀpŚS	<i>Āpastambaśrautasūtra</i>
ĀśvŚS	<i>Āśvalāyanaśrautasūtra</i>
AV	<i>Atharvaveda</i>
AVPariś	<i>Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa</i>
BhārŚS	<i>Bhāradvājaśrautasūtra</i>
BĀU	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad</i>
BaudhGS	<i>Baudhāyanagrhyasūtra</i>
BaudhŚS	<i>Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra</i>
ChU	<i>Chāndogyopaniṣad</i>
DrāhŚS	<i>Drāhyāyanaśrautasūtra</i>
GautDhS	<i>Gautamadharmasūtra</i>
GB	<i>Gopathabrāhmaṇa</i>
JB	<i>Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa</i>
KapKS	<i>Kapiṣṭhalakāṭhasaṃhitā</i>
KāṭhGS	<i>Kāṭhakagrhyasūtra</i>
KātyŚS	<i>Kātyāyanaśrautasūtra</i>
KauśS	<i>Kauśikasūtra</i>
KS	<i>Kāṭhakasaṃhitā</i>
KV	<i>Kāśikāvṛtti</i>
LāṭŚS	<i>Lāṭyāyanaśrautasūtra</i>

M	<i>Mahābhāṣya</i>
MaitrU	<i>Maitrāyaṇopaniṣad</i>
MānŚS	<i>Mānavaśrautasūtra</i>
MBh	<i>Mahābhārata</i>
MS	<i>Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā</i>
MuṇḍU	<i>Muṇḍakopaniṣad</i>
PārGS	<i>Pāraskaragr̥hyasūtra</i>
PB	<i>Pañcaviṃśabrāhmaṇa</i>
PS	<i>Paippalādasamhitā</i>
Rām	<i>Rāmāyaṇa</i>
ṚV	<i>Ṛgveda</i>
ṚVKh	<i>Ṛgvedakhilāni</i>
ŚāṅkhŚS	<i>Śāṅkhāyanaśrautasūtra</i>
ŚBM	<i>Śatapathabrāhmaṇa</i> (Madhyandina rec.)
ŚB	<i>Śaḍviṃśabrāhmaṇa</i>
ŚS	<i>Śaunakīyasaṃhitā</i>
SV	<i>Sāmaveda</i>
TĀ	<i>Taittirīyāraṇyaka</i>
TB	<i>Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa</i>
TS	<i>Taittirīyasaṃhitā</i>
VādhŚS	<i>Vādhūlaśrautasūtra</i>
VaikhŚS	<i>Vaikhānasaśrautasūtra</i>
VaitS	<i>Vaitānasūtra</i>
VārŚS	<i>Vārāhaśrautasūtra</i>
VP	<i>Vākyapadīya</i>
VS	<i>Vājasaneyisaṃhitā</i>
VSM	<i>Vājasaneyisaṃhitā</i> (Madhyandina rec.)
Vt	<i>Vārttika</i>
YV	<i>Yajurveda</i>

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Introduction

Beyond the veil of “magic”: new perspectives on the *Atharvaveda*

Marianna Ferrara, Duccio Lelli

This volume represents a first attempt to explore the *Atharvaveda* from beneath the veil of a century of scholarship, prompted by the aims of the project within which it took shape, namely the PRIN 2022 project (“Progetti di Rilevante Interesse Nazionale”) entitled “Entangled Chronotopes: Language, Power, Bodyscapes and Religion in the First Ten Books of the *Śaunaka Atharvaveda-Saṃhitā* [ŚS]” (PI Tiziana Pontillo, University of Cagliari). The project involved five Research Units (Cagliari, Genova, Milan, Pisa, and Rome) and focused on the translation of selected books from the *Śaunakīya* recension of the *Atharvaveda*, with particular attention to the role of the body.

From the outset, this focus was understood by the research group as a whole not merely in anatomical or descriptive terms, but as a way of approaching the body as a culturally mediated field through which language, ritual practice, and forms of knowledge are articulated. Building on this framework, the project collectively adopted language as a heuristic device for mapping both real and imagined objects, institutions, ritual practices, and structures of power across the Vedic milieu, thereby enabling the articulation of semantic, cultural, and epistemic dimensions within the text.

On this premise, the project investigated how linguistic and ritual practices, social hierarchies, bodily representations, and religious imaginaries interacted within historically situated configurations of space and time. It is within such configurations that Atharvavedic ritual took shape, spanning everyday and private concerns, public and politically relevant contexts, the mainstream tradition associated with the Ṛgvedic and Yajurvedic *corpora*, and its margins, where alternative practices could elicit both efficacy and fear.

Rather than treating these dimensions as discrete domains, the Rome Research Unit approached them as mutually constitutive elements within a dynamic and historically situated network of meanings. From this perspective, attention was directed not only to what the texts say, but also to the logics and conceptual frameworks through which they construct relationships between bodies, environments, and systems of knowledge.

The aim was to move beyond the long-standing view of the *Atharvaveda* as marginal or anomalous within the Vedic canon and to reconsider it as an authoritative *locus* for exploring the dynamics of authority, normativity, healing practices, political symbolism, and cosmological speculation in early India. It is well known that Atharvavedic studies have undergone a significant turning point with the rediscovery of the *Paippalāda* tradition, which has enabled a reconsideration of the *Atharvaveda* not as peripheral, but as a key site for observing processes of knowledge production and cultural negotiation. The present research thus sought to continue along this trajectory.

Within this framework, the Research Unit at Sapienza University of Rome was coordinated by Marianna Ferrara (Associate Professor of History of Religions), whose research focuses on Vedic ritual traditions, the interplay between politics and religion, and gender approaches to religion. The work of the unit greatly benefited from the significant scholarly contribution of Duccio Lelli, Postdoctoral Research Fellow (2024–2025), whose research interests encompass Vedic studies, the *Atharvaveda*, and Indo-European linguistic and mythological connections. The convergence of these complementary perspectives – on the one hand, ritual and religious practices, and on the other, linguistic and comparative approaches – provided the intellectual framework for the International Workshop “Unveiling the *Atharvaveda*: Mapping the Cultural and Linguistic Peculiarities of a Vedic Text,” held at Sapienza University of Rome on January 30–31, 2025. The workshop brought together all the Research Units involved in the project, along with other international scholars, and the present volume constitutes the outcome of this collaboration.

The workshop was based on the premise that the *Atharvaveda* exhibits distinctive features within the Vedic corpus, particularly in its conceptualizations of the body and its role in ritual practice. In this respect, Atharvavedic texts often engage with the vulnerabilities, imperfections, and precarious conditions of human existence – both physical

and, at times, existential, in relation to the human place in the universe – through forms of expression that may appear strikingly direct or “visceral” when compared to other Vedic materials.

Such characteristics have long contributed to shaping its reception in modern scholarship, where the *Atharvaveda* has frequently been interpreted through categories such as “magic”, “spell-book”, or “sorcery”, thus placing it under a persistent “veil of magic”, often emphasizing materiality, the body, the performative dimension of recitation, and explicitly harmful practices. While these interpretations have highlighted important features of the Atharvavedic *corpora*, they have at times overshadowed other dimensions – political, poetical, psychological, and philosophical – that have more recently come to the fore.

At the same time, recent scholarship has increasingly highlighted the importance of linguistic features that further contribute to the distinctiveness of the *Atharvaveda*, which has long been overshadowed by its comparison with the *Rgveda*. These studies have shown that its relationship with the so-called “mainstream” Vedic tradition is more complex and nuanced than previously assumed, thus calling into question rigid oppositions between central and marginal forms of Vedic expression. It is against this background that the workshop brought together national and international scholars who, by engaging with the multiple facets of the *Atharvaveda*, brought to light further aspects of its distinctiveness, confirming the sustained scholarly interest in this text.

Building on these developments, the volume is divided into three thematic sections – *Linguistics*, *Lexicon*, and *Ritual* – which reflect the main research axes of the project and collectively aim to illuminate the textual, semantic, and performative dimensions of the *Atharvaveda Samhitā*. These sections are not isolated domains but complementary perspectives reflecting a shared concern with the ways in which language, body, social organization, and ritual practice shape and organize experience within the cultural horizon of the Atharvavedic healing tradition and the political context of early forms of sovereignty.

The first section explores key linguistic features of the Atharvavedic *corpora*, situating them within the broader history of Vedic language. The contributions examine verbal morphology and grammatical reflection, including insights derived from Pāṇinian analysis (Maria Piera Candotti and Tiziana Pontillo), syntactic structures (Davide Mocchi), discourse organization (Massimo Vai), and the interaction between metrical and prose materials (Oliver Hellwig). Particular attention is

devoted to the interaction between metrical and prose materials, as well as to the distinctive features that characterize Atharvavedic language in comparison with other Vedic *Samhitās*.

The second section focuses on lexical and semantic analysis, investigating key terms and semantic fields within the Atharvavedic recensions and in comparison with the Ṛgvedic tradition. The contributions examine the etymology of specific lexical items (Alexander Lubotsky), the semantic range of key terms across Vedic texts (Duccio Lelli), and lexical domains related to healing and cosmology (Kristen de Joseph), as well as enmity and social organization (Matteo Macciò and Rosa Ronzitti), thereby showing how the *Atharvaveda* brings together a richly stratified constellation of semantic and cultural scenarios.

Finally, the third section turns to ritual practices and religious representations, examining the Atharvavedins' role in shaping ritual authority, Brahmanical identity, and the bodily construction of both the individual and the community. The contributions explore mythological figures and semi-divine beings (Robert Leach), ritual contexts related to childbirth and their textual parallels (Roland A. Pooth), the role of Atharvans and Aṅgirasas within ritual traditions (Paola M. Rossi), and the ritual codification of socially disruptive emotions, such as jealousy and envy, in Atharvavedic texts (Marianna Ferrara).

By situating Atharvavedic materials within an interdisciplinary framework, this volume has sought to highlight the features that mark the *Atharvaveda* as a distinctive text within the Vedic tradition. Its originality does not lie in the fact that its putative authors engage with the negotiation of power, order, and religious authority – issues that are central to the Vedic tradition as a whole and that place the *Atharvaveda* fully in line with other Vedic collections. Rather, these themes emerge here according to distinctive logics, shaped by the centrality accorded to the body and to its vulnerability, within a vision of order that must nonetheless be preserved from collapse.

The inquiry thus returns to the body from which it set out, now with a broader perspective that shifts the focus from the *Atharvaveda*'s perceived unconventionality to its richness, beyond the interpretative veil that has long obscured its conceptual and cultural richness.

PART I

LINGUISTICS

1. What can Pāṇini teach us about the Atharvavedic usages of the perfect tense?*

Maria Piera Candotti, Tiziana Pontillo

Abstract

The present work is based on the 107 occurrences of the indicative perfect occurring in Books 1 and 4 of the *Śaunakīya Atharvaveda*. These have been taken as a sample to advance a new hypothesis on what may be identified as the two most general features in the use of the perfect in these Vedic sources. Alongside the non-dynamic feature that has already been highlighted (even though with varying degrees of emphasis) in contemporary scholarship, we propose to add a nominalising feature. Both traits work in synergy; they are common to all our occurrences and could, if confirmed in other sources, help us overcome the extreme fragmentariness in the description of the uses of the perfect that characterises contemporary description of the perfect. This assumption is mainly based on some extremely interesting observations proposed by Louis Renou in 1925 and on some information provided by Pāṇini's grammar in particular on a new interpretation of the term *parokṣa* used in A 3.2.115.

Keywords

Atharvaveda language; Perfect indicative; *Parokṣa*; Pāṇini.

* This paper is the result of a joint work discussed and shared by both authors. However, Maria Piera Candotti is responsible for §§ 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and Tiziana Pontillo for §§ 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10. All translations are the authors' unless otherwise noted. The present work is partly based on study material shared with Roland Pooth and Davide Mocci on the *Śaunakīya Saṃhitā* Books 1 and 4. In fact this contribution is part of the "Entangled Chronotopes: Language, Power, Bodyscapes and Religion in the First Ten Books of the *Śaunaka Atharvaveda-Saṃhitā*" project, funded by the European Union (Next Generation EU, Mission 4, Component 1, CUP F53D23008030006). Our thanks to Frank Köhler for his suggestions and improvements.

1. What temporal reference for perfect forms in the Vedic language?

In the spectrum of the time-honoured assumptions regarding the reconstruction of the function of the Indo-European perfect, its lexical aspect or *Aktionsart* has often been underlined by projecting what is partially found in Indo-Aryan and Greek evidence onto the prehistoric phase. In particular, according to Kiparsky (1998, p. 29) “Sanskrit presents a classic case of the evolution of aspect to tense. [...] For Proto-Indo-European, the aorist and perfect are reconstructed as purely aspectual categories, with respectively perfective and stative value.”¹ On a theoretical level, the latter category indicates a condition of the subject, when no change occurs, i.e. nothing “happens”, and it is conceived as an antonym of “dynamic”. However, it is hard to find a description of these two categories neatly recorded in the language in terms of clear oppositions and, despite several extensive and excellent works devoted to the perfect in Indo-Iranian, such as that by Kümmel dating back to 2000, some questions remain open.

As is well known, Vedic perfect usages have been classified according to several categories². Sometimes the number of distinctions and sub-categories scholars have assumed over time in order to explain the usages of the Vedic perfect seem to be almost incompatible with the

¹ As regards the proto-Indeuropean perfect, Lazzeroni (2016, p. 8, with reference to Di Giovine 1996, pp. 270–271) clarifies how the perfect must specifically be interpreted in terms of *Aktionsart*, what is also called “lexical aspect”: “il perfetto non codifica un aspetto, bensì lo stato del soggetto conseguente al compiersi di un processo (‘resultativer Stativ’ nella definizione di Kümmel), una *Aktionsart*, dunque (‘naktostatische Aktionsart’: Kümmel, 2000, p. 680), dello stesso tipo del causativo, dell’intensivo e del desiderativo.”

² Here we have omitted several other patterns of research that are far from our present line of inquiry. For instance, one important line of research on the perfect has traced the middle and the perfect back to a single mediopassive diathesis as opposed to an active diathesis. In particular, Renou (1925, pp. 14–15) noticed that perfect active forms are sometimes associated with middle present forms, as in RV 10.107.8: [...] *nā bhojā mamrur* [...] *nā vyathante* ‘les libéraux ne meurent point [...] ils ne subissent ébranlement’, where ‘le parfait marque l’état actuel; le présent l’entrée dans cet état’. On the other hand, since some scholars (see e.g. Renou 1925, p. 10; Berrettoni 1976; Strunk 1977) pointed out that some Greek or Indo-Iranian verbs lack any form of the perfect, defectiveness seemed to be able to offer an interesting key to understanding the more ancient aspectual value of the several verbal stems, particularly that of the perfect. We decided to concentrate on a single track of research, which the linguistic material under examination seems to illuminate better.

actual common functioning of a real language³. For instance, Kümmel (2000, pp. 66–82) even distinguishes seven types of Indo-Iranian perfect and uses Vedic examples to illustrate them all. The first two types come under the common label of *Perfekt als Aktionsartkategorie des erreichten Zustand*. “The lexikalisierte Perfektopräsens” (1) is the designation of very common verbal forms such as *veda* ‘he knows’, *pupośa* ‘he is rich in’, where the relevant relationship with the prior action respectively denoted by its verbal base, i.e. ‘to see’ and ‘to flourish’ has been, so to say, crystallised (Kümmel 2000, pp. 69–70). In this category the scholar also includes the perfect verb forms *āha*, *āhuḥ* ‘he says, they say’ whose paradigm is largely defective. The second category is the so-called “naktostatische Perfekt” (2) which indicates a state attained by the subject as the result of a prior verbal action (Kümmel 2000, p. 66). Within a syntactical perspective, a nactostative perfect corresponds to a present tense and can also be used as such in a general way⁴. The third-person singular perfect indicative forms *jāgāra* ‘he is awake’ in ṚV 5.44.15 and *bibhāya* ‘he is frightened’ in ṚV 5.83.2 are two examples of the many selected by Kümmel (2000, p. 67). From a synchronic point of view, most of the nactostative perfect forms have to be regarded as independent verbs because they only exist in a derivative relationship with other verbal forms from the same root. There are nevertheless rare cases where Kümmel points out an opposition between the meaning conveyed by perfect and aorist forms deriving from the same root. Among Kümmel’s examples, we find the perfect form *iyāya* (from *i-* ‘to come’) in opposition to the aorist form *aiṣīt*; the perfect *āpa* (from *āp-* ‘to obtain’), in opposition to the aorist *āpat*, but it is clearly stated that this contrastive usage is no longer fully productive in the Vedic language (Kümmel 2000, p. 70). Besides these two categories with Aktionsart values, Kümmel identifies four other categories which come under the general label of “Tempuskategorie mit Vergangenheitsbezug”, a temporal category (i.e. no longer aspectual) with some reference to the past⁵. The different kinds of reference to the past are described

³ See Jamison (2002, p. 352) on the categories established in Kümmel (2000): “One sometimes feels that the author is drawing functional distinctions only because he is capable of conceptualizing them, not because they can be discerned in the textual materials we have.”

⁴ Also this second category is restricted by Kümmel to a specific list of verbal bases.

⁵ Kümmel (2000, p. 71) considers that the hint of the past derives from the resultative aspect of nactostative: “Solange diese Handlung impliziert war, also zumindest

as follows. Category (3) is constituted by the perfect which denotes an extended present tense, i.e. “das Perfekt der erweiterten Gegenwart” in Kümmel’s words (2000, pp. 72–73). In this case, the preterite action has not been completed but is still ongoing in the present time. This “extended present” in the Vedic language can be further clarified by adverbial expressions such as *purá* ‘before’, *nūnám* ‘now’ or *śásvad* and *satrá* ‘always’ (as already noticed e.g. by Delbrück 1897, p. 214). Kümmel (2000, p. 72) translates the relevant selected stanzas placing special emphasis on when the action is performed, that is both in the past and in the present⁶. Moreover, in line with Delbrück (1897, pp. 214–215), Kümmel singles out “Das comprehensive Perfekt” (4) as a use of the perfect that aims to summarise the entire past up to the limit of the present with the omission of the feature “lasting in the present”⁷. Kümmel’s (2000, pp. 75) “Resultativperfekt” (5) is used to convey the result of the designated past action which is still evident in the present state of the agent⁸. Finally, “Das nichtresultative Perfekt” (6) is used when an action is almost solemnly enunciated as a matter of fact without a resultative value but rather as something more generally relevant to the present⁹. In addition to these six early-Vedic types, a seventh category, characteristic of young Vedic prose, sanctions a preterital and narrative use of the perfect.

All in all, one of the most important assumptions about the early Vedic perfect maintained by many scholars is that it often has a pres-

mitverstanden wurde, war es aber möglich, den Fokus vom resultierenden Zustand in Richtung der vergangenen Handlung zu verschieben; dieser Vorgang läßt sich als resultative Metonymie bezeichnen.”

⁶ One of the selected examples is RV 8.67.16: *śásvad dhí vah sudānava āditya ūtibhir vayám | purānūnām bubhujmāhe ||* ‘O munificent Ādityas, indeed we always have benefited from your help.’ Cf. transl. Kümmel (2000, p. 72) “Denn immerfort haben, ihr guten Geber, Ādityas, durch eure Hilfen wir früher und jetzt Nutzen.”

⁷ See e.g. RV 2.27.14ab: *adite mitra varunotā mṛṇa | yád vo vayám cakṛmā kác cid āgaḥ ||* ‘Aditi, Mitra and Varuṇa, forgive us if we have (so far) caused you any offense.’ Cf. transl. Kümmel (2000, p. 73): “Aditi, Mitra und Varuṇa, verzeih, wenn wir euch (bisher) irgendein Unrecht getan haben!”

⁸ See e.g. RV 1.145.1a: *tám prcchatā sā jagāmā sā veda |* ‘Ask this one! He came (and now he is there), he knows.’ Cf. transl. Kümmel (2000, p. 75): “Diesen fragt! Der ist gekommen (und jetzt da), der weiß es.”

⁹ See e.g. RV 5.32.7cd: *yád iṃ vājrasya prābhṛtau dadābha víśvasya jantór adhamām cakāra |* ‘When, by brandishing the club at him, he defeated him, he made him the lowest of all the creatures.’ Cf. transl. Kümmel (2000, p. 73): “Als er [Indra] ihn [den Dämon Danava] beim Schleudern der Keule geschädigt hat, hat er ihn niedriger als jedes Geschöpf gemacht.”

ent-time reference or that it extends through the past, including the time of the utterance. Some scholars (see e.g. Hoffmann 1967, p. 160; Kümmel 2000, p. 78) even assert that the perfect indicative is never used with a purely past time reference in early Vedic, while Dahl (2010, pp. 344–347) emphasises that this assumption “runs into the difficulty that the Perfect indicative in some case seems to be compatible with pre-hodiernal and remote past reference times.” Dahl (2010, pp. 348; 366) for instance reflects on the following clause:

(a) RV 10.55.5d = ŚS 9.10.9d

adyā mamāra sā hyāḥ sám āna

Today he has died. Yesterday he was still fully breathing¹⁰.

and considers the hapax perfect form (*sám*) *āna* as a piece of evidence that a genuine past time can be expressed by the perfect indicative in Vedic sources. Nevertheless he (2010, p. 361) also points out that this same hymn is found in the *Śaunaka Atharvaveda Saṃhitā*, which means that it belongs to a relatively late layer of the *Rgveda* corpus. Kümmel (2000, pp. 96–97) also considers the hapax (*sám*) *āna* derived from the verbal root *an-* ‘to breathe’ as a neologism, created as an alternant form to the elsewhere attested present and aorist forms which have the same durative value. On the other hand, Jamison (2002, p. 352), underlines “the influence of poetic devices and rhetorical pressures in the choice of morphological forms” and analyses this perfect form as “a nonce formation directly inspired by its semantic opposite, *mamāra* ‘died’ in the same Pāda.” Nonetheless, we wonder whether a slightly different perspective should be adopted for this example. More specifically, we propose an analysis of these two perfect forms (*mamāra* and

¹⁰ Cf. Kümmel’s translation (2000, pp. 96; 370): “Heute ist er (der Mond) gestorben – so hat er gestern noch geatmet.” The whole RV stanza reads as follows: *vidhūṃ dadrāṇāṃ sāmāne bahūnāṃ yūvānāṃ sāntam palitō jagāra | devāsya paśya kāvyam mahitvādyā mamāra sā hyāḥ sám āna ||* ‘The solitary (moon?) running in the crowd of many (stars?) – though he was young, the gray one swallowed him – behold the poetic skill of the god in his greatness. (In simple language): today he died; yesterday he was (still) utterly breathing’ (transl. Jamison, Brereton 2014, p. 1465). In fact, Jamison (ibid., p. 352) explains that “the form does not owe its momentary existence to the structural pattern of the formations belonging to the root (a feature, as it were, of ‘langue’), but to rhetorical impulse in the immediate context (‘parole’).” As far as the accent of *mamāra* is concerned cf. Elizarenkova 1995, p. 259: “If the speaker perceives even a slight degree of contraposition between the simple sentences that make up a complex one, that feeling entails the appearance of the accent in the verb of the first sentence.”

āna) which goes beyond the contrast between the present and past categories¹¹ and instead takes advantage of the opposition between dynamic and non-dynamic verbal expressions. We are thus advancing the hypothesis that these two perfect forms work as a sort of qualifying word, used as a predicate noun, with respect to the subject, i.e. the moon, which today is ‘the one which has died’ i.e. a “new” moon and yesterday was still a “waning” moon, namely ‘the one which breathed’. This is in line with what Renou (1925, p. 25) ascribed to the perfect indicative form, by defining it “une forme de représentation et non de description”. In other words, these two phrases with *mamāra* and (*sām*) *āna* seem to be equivalent to two nominal clauses, rather than describing a verbal action with all its perceived factual details.

Here we aim to reflect upon this assumed “nominal facies” of several Vedic perfect forms to try and show how this may even be of help in overcoming the problematic dichotomy between present and past time references for the perfect forms. We will first focus on some discussed RV examples before turning to the analysis of the occurrences of perfect forms in two allegedly archaic books of the *Atharvaveda* which will allow us to put our hypothesis to the test.

2. Rediscussing some RV examples with an alleged past time meaning

Let us try to tackle this problem by returning to what Dahl pointed out, especially (2010, pp. 344–347) in his reflection on cases of the perfect form that coexist with an imperfect or aorist form, such as in the following stanza. In his opinion the perfect form seems to be compatible with a past time reference rather than conveying a present tense (Dahl 2010, p. 349).

(b) RV 2.15.1

prā ghā nv āsya mahatō mahāni satyā satyāsya kārāṇāni vocam |
trīkadrukeṣv apibat sūtāsyaśyá máde áhim índro jaghāna ||

¹¹ Moreover, it is evident that the pure verbal form in itself is not sufficient to express time, since the temporal opposition between the two clauses relies on the two adverbs of time.

I now announce the great deeds of the great one, the real deeds of the real one. He drank of the (soma) juice in the Trikadrukas¹². In his inebriation Indra smashed the snake.

Although the perfect indicative form *jaghāna* denotes a situation in the remote, mythical past and hence has more or less the same temporal reference as the coordinated imperfect form *apibat*, Dahl recognises that this does not mean that there are no other relevant differences between the two forms in such a context. He is also well aware of the fact that several other scholars consider that perfect and imperfect always convey a different discourse function¹³, even though, all too often, no alternative specific label is advanced for these examples of the perfect that coexist with imperfect and aorist, i.e. it seems that this diversity is stated almost apodictically.

Furthermore, on the basis of the fact that existential and universal quantified adverbs such as *sādā* ‘always’, *śśvat* ‘continuously’ are used far more frequently to modify perfect indicative forms than imperfect or aorist indicative ones, several scholars have pointed out that the perfect indicative is the regular expression of habituality in the past in early Vedic¹⁴. Nonetheless, if we do not limit our analysis to a single sentence but consider the whole hymn in which this stanza appears, we realise that the perfect form *jaghāna* (*mimāya*, *tasthuḥ*, *pipeṣa*, *jaghantha*, *vivide*: stanzas 3, 5, 6, 9) is closely associated to a refrain repeated eight times as the last *pāda* of stanzas 2.15.2–9, which also resumes the action of smashing Vṛtra; namely:

(c) ṚV 2.15.2d=3d=4d=5d=6d=7d=8d=9d
sómasya tã máda índraś cakāra

In his inebriation due to Soma Indra realised these deeds.

It is tempting to consider this refrain with the perfect form *cakāra* and the similar antecedent with the perfect form *jaghāna* as something radically different from the enunciation of a dynamic action (with attention to all its perceived factual details). Rather, those verbal forms enunciate the sheer occurrence of that action that frames the character, labels

¹² i.e. in the three Soma vessels or among the Maruts, according to Jamison, Brereton 2014, p. 422.

¹³ See e.g. Hoffmann 1967, p. 160; Kümmel 2000, p. 77.

¹⁴ See e.g. Renou 1925, p. 23; Kiparsky 1998, pp. 33–35.

him once and for all, and somehow “freezes” him in the role of Vṛtra’s slayer and in the image of the hero who accomplished this exploit. In our opinion this category of the frozen image of an action that qualifies the agent might also explain the coexistence of present forms with a perfect in the following stanza cited by Kümmel (2000, pp. 72–73) to show a special case of the present perfect when the preterite action is not completed, but is still ongoing in the present, namely the so-called “extended present”¹⁵:

(d) ṚV 2.28.4cd

ná śrāmyanti ná ví mucanty eté váyo ná paptū raghuyá párijman ||

These [streams] do not get tired nor do they stretch out, like birds they keep on flying swiftly all over the place¹⁶.

The notion of the continuous action of rivers is at the core of this hemistich according to Kümmel (2010, pp. 72–73). If we consider the whole stanza, we can nevertheless see a more complex pattern at play: in the previous hemistich Varuṇa is said to be the one who first emitted (*aś-jat*) waters and this action projected into a mythical past is expressed by an imperfect form. The first two verbal forms following the aorist are present indicative and are at variance with the final perfect indicative form *paptuḥ* which conveys a permanent feature of the rivers, envisioned as “flying birds”. Nevertheless, this feature is not established outside a temporal frame, it has a precise beginning when the water first sprang forth, mentioned by means of the imperfect form. The opposition between the perfect form and the two present indicative forms, which both convey the two durative actions, seems to depend on the fact that the latter are not built upon a fixed frame of simile.

This use of perfect as denoting a characterisation of the agent also recalls what Di Giovine (1990, p. 82 fn. 171) noted for the perfect in Greek and sometimes in Vedic (e.g. in four occurrences of *mimāya* in ṚV 1.164.41; 3.53.15; 3.55.13; 10.27.14 from the verb *mā-* ‘to bellow’) whereby the perfect conveyed a quality of the animal, i.e. ‘that which bellows’, rather than the description of the cow’s vocal action.

¹⁵ “Als eine Art Sonderfall des präsentischen Perfekts könnte man es bezeichnen, wenn die präteritale Handlung nicht abgeschlossen ist, sondern in der Gegenwart immer noch an-dauert. Es handelt sich dann um die ‘erweiterte Gegenwart’.”

¹⁶ Cf. transl. Kümmel 2000, p. 72: “Diese [Ströme] ermüden nicht noch spannen sie aus, wie Vögel fliegen sie [immer schon] schnell in ihrem Umlauf.”

3. The role of past in the characterisation of the agent: occurrences selected from ŚS 1 and 4

Let us now analyse a sample of ŚS occurrences, selected from the whole survey of Books 1 and 4 of the allegedly most ancient books¹⁷. These books were chosen merely because, within the context of our Project (mentioned above in fn. 1), their analysis and re-interpretation was assigned to our two research units. A table containing the whole list of occurrences with relevant classifications has been included. We will start by testing the hypothesis that in early-Vedic most occurrences of the perfect still retain a strong aspectual connotation characterised by a non-dynamic feature. This understanding of the action conveyed by perfect forms – not seen in its unfolding but simply in the fact that it has occurred – is the one that allowed us, for instance, to account for the uses of the imperfect and the perfect in (b) in the previous passages. Let us now analyse some telling examples.

In the following stanza the perfect form *tasthiṣe* whose understood subject is *ākṣyam*, i.e. the eye ointment mentioned in stanza 1, coexists with two phrases with the present *as-*.

(1) ŚS 4.9.2

paripāṇam pūruṣāṇām
paripāṇam gāvām asi |
āśvānām ārvatām
paripāṇāya tasthiṣe ||

You are an overall protection for men, you are an overall protection for cattle. You are the one who stands for the sake of an overall protection of horses and steeds.

We have translated it as “you are the one who stands” which means “the one who stood up and stands” for the sake of protection: as compared to the previous present copula, the perfect seems to refer to a kind of past solemn assignment (hinted at in the previous stanza where the gods are described as the givers of the medicine)

¹⁷ See Witzel 1997, p. 281: “Taking all of the preceding into account, it seems to be the case that ŚS 1–5, 8–12 = PS 1–15, 16–17 are the two older sections. They form the core of the Atharvaveda texts dealing with sorcery and speculation and can be dated ad quem with the introduction of iron (1200 B.C.). In fact, they agree in general with Mantra period language. However, AV 13–18 = PS 18, may be, – at least in part, – of a slightly later age, that of the later Saṃhitā period (TS), or even that of some early Brāhmaṇas such as the older parts of AB.”

at the origin of the current function¹⁸. While the present copula simply states the fact that the eye ointment is a form of protection, the perfect clause adds the information that it also offered protection in the past, that it was designated to do so. Thus, the phrase with the perfect seems to play the role of a qualifier for the understood subject and in this function it can easily alternate with a nominal clause, as if it were a nominal form rather than a verbal one. If we wish to stick to Kümmel's categories, we can frame this analysis of perfect as "non-resultative perfect", where the characteristic result in the present is replaced by a more "general relevance for the present". The perfect thus serves to emphasise a past action as currently important, so that it sometimes seems to be "used almost" solemnly (Kümmel 2000, p. 77; cf. Renou 1925, p. 41). For instance, in the following stanza, Agni's role is associated with three past actions conveyed by three perfect forms that constitute a label for the god and encapsulate his prestige forever in the present.

(2) ŚS 4.6.1

*brāhmaṇó jajñe prathamó
dāśasīrṣo dāśāsyaḥ |
sá sómaṁ prathamāḥ papau
sá cakārārasāṁ viśám ||*

The Brahman-knower – the ten-headed, ten-mouthed one – is the one who was born as first. He (the sacrificial Agni) is the one who first drank Soma, he is the one who made the poison sapless (= harmless) [for himself].

In the following three occurrences of the perfect indicative forms, the role of Vena seems to analogously be epitomized by them, while a couple of imperfect forms in the same passage are actually used to depict a dynamic verbal action.

(3) ŚS 4.1.3–4

*prá yó jajñé vidvān asya bāndhur
viśvā devānāṁ jánimā vivakti |
brāhma brāhmaṇa új jabhāra mādhyān
nīcāir uccāiḥ svadhā abhí prá tasthau ||*

¹⁸ ŚS 4.9.1: *ēhi jīvāṁ trāyamāṇaṁ párvatasyāsy ākṣyam | viśvebhīr devāir dattāṁ paridhīr jīvanāya kām ||* 'Come here, defending life! You are the eye ointment coming from the mountain, given by all the gods as an enclosure just for life.'

*sá hí diváh sá prthivyá rtasthá
mahí kṣémanṁ ródasī áskabhāyat |
mahān mahí askabhāyad ví jātó
dyāṁ sādma párthivaṁ ca rájah ||*

The one who (= Bandhu = Vena) was born as knowing [it (= Brahman)], [he who is] the connection (= Vena) with this (= Brahman), recounts all the births of the gods; he [is the one who] carried Brahman up out of the middle of Brahman; he (= Vena) [is the one who] advanced downwards, upwards according to his intrinsic law. For he (= Vena) belonging to the heaven, (he) belonging to the earth, standing in the *rta*, upheld the two great worlds (namely earth and heaven), as his resting place. Once born (*jāta*) as great, he (= Vena) upheld the two great [worlds] separating [them], the heaven as [his] seat and the earthly space.

Sometimes the perfect form of *bhū-* is used as a midpoint between the dynamic verb and copula. In the following stanza a main clause with a second-person singular imperative verbal form *ā vaha* is combined with a causal clause with a second-person singular perfect indicative form *babhúvitha*.

(4) ŚS 1.7.1
*stuvānám agna ā vaha
yātudhānam kimīdinam |
tvām hí deva vanditó
hantā dāsyor babhúvitha*

Bring the sorcerer Kimīdin here, (who will be) announcing himself then, O Agni, because you, O god, are one who has become the revered slayer of the foreigner.

Here the perfect is used to introduce a habitual and stable property characterising the subject, i.e. of god Agni, rather than to refer to a past event that happened prior to the reference time of the imperative in the main clause¹⁹. The action of slaying the foreigner may take place many times, but the title of slayer was obtained once and for all.

Nevertheless, this example differs from the previous one, because the verbal base *bhū-* simply accompanies the phrase which conveys the characterisation of the subject (*vanditó hantā dāsyor* ‘the revered slayer of the foreigner’), while the verbal form *tasthiṣe* alone conveys at least a portion of the final characterisation.

¹⁹ Cf. transl. Whitney 1905, p. 7: “thou hast become slayer of the barbarian”.

As regards the assumed meaning conveyed by the perfect forms here analysed, it is noteworthy that Renou (1925, pp. 24–25) considers the perfect tense as the verbal form that expresses the past in the most general and least specific way. The scholar maintains that the reason why a poet chooses the perfect form is that he is focusing on the present state resulting from the evocation of the past, in order to create a representation more than a description of the action performed by the eye ointment. Renou also emphasises the fact that such a structure is found with great frequency in the *Atharvaveda*²⁰.

The fifth stanza analysed here has been classified as a riddle. The whole stanza can be better understood if we start from the second-person plural imperative form *brūta* ‘say, respond!’.

(5) ŚS 4.11.5 ~ PS 3.25.4

yāsya nése yajñāpatir ná yajñó
nāsya dātése ná pratigrahītā
yó viśvajid viśvabhīd viśvākarmā
gharmāṇ no brūta yatamās cātuṣpāt ||

[If one says:] Neither the giver, nor the one who accepts is master of the one of whom neither the lord of sacrifice is master nor the sacrifice. Respond to us: “the hot drink” which is the one who conquers everything, bears everything, realizes everything, which is that which is quintessentially endowed with four feet.

In other words, the first hemistich may be read in the following manner: ‘If one asks you (pl.): “Who is the one of whom neither the giver nor the one who accepts is master”, you should answer: “the hot drink”’. The definition of *gharma*, i.e. the key for solving the riddle, uses two verbal clauses with the same perfect form (*īse*) and a nominal clause with three noun predicates alongside each other. The three segments that make up the definition list the qualities of the hot drink. There is no trace of a dynamic action in the perfect forms. Once again, the verbal form *īse* is equal to a nominal clause: ‘he is master of’.

²⁰ See Renou 1925, pp. 7; 24–25: “en un certain sens il s’agit donc d’une variante du présent, mais c’est un présent qui noterait le fait actuel en tant que résultante, non en tant que procès duratif, et qui porterait en lui de façon implicite le fait passé qui l’a provoqué.” ; “Le parfait est la forme qui exprime le passé de la façon la plus générale et la moins déterminée [...] Mais ce qui contribue à le fixer dans ces formules est que le poète dirige son attention sur l’état actuel qui résulte de l’évocation du passé : c’est une forme de représentation et non de description. [...] Ce type de phrase est surtout fréquent dans l’Atharvaveda.”

An analogous riddle structure is used in the renowned hymn ŚS 4.2 that in great part matches ṚV 10.12. The perfect forms are again used to define the characteristics of the god the devotees are looking for as the most suitable recipient of their devotion – see below (11) and (12).

Again, it is Renou who singled out a special structure involving the perfect which also appeared in several of the passages from the *Atharvaveda* texts we examined, including the just quoted stanza.

Un type de phrase fréquent, et dans lequel le parfait est à peu près constant, est celui où la proposition, introduite par un relatif neutre ou indéfini, par une conjonction *yadī, yāt, yāthā*, exprime un fait qui se situe dans le passé d’une façon indéterminée [...] il suffit que la proposition secondaire présente si peu que se soit le caractère d’indétermination pour que le parfait y apparaisse. [...] C’est dans ces formules des hymnes magiques, qui étaient vraisemblablement d’un type archaïque et traditionnel, que s’est conservé, en védique l’emploi du parfait le moins éloigné de l’usage primitif. [...] Le parfait se trouve 259 fois après le relatif (ou une forme issue du thème du relatif) dans l’*Atharvaveda*. (Renou 1925, p. 24)

The following simple charm is another good example of a perfect form introduced by a neuter relative pronoun working as a subordinating conjunction.

(6) ŚS 1.10.3 = PS 1.9.3
yād uvákthānrtam
jihváyā vṛjināṃ bahú |
rājñas tvā satyádharmaṇo
muñcāmi vāruṇād ahám ||

If you have told a crooked lie many times with your tongue, I release you from the King, from Varuṇa, whose laws are true.

The first-person subject declares that he is able to release the interlocutor from the risk of being caught by Varuṇa who punishes liars and also clearly explains that no matter how many times the liar may have told lies, how or even exactly when he did so, he will in any case release him. It is noteworthy that the clause introduced by *yād* does not describe the action of lying as a process, but places it in a past characterised by indeterminacy, as if it were merely stating that the interlocutor is a liar.

In all the examples seen so far the perfect form expresses a relevant categorisation of the agent in the present time: the eye ointment in (1) is described in the present of the ritual action as characterised by the fact that it has been a means of protection since time immemorial, Agni in (2) is the first born, first drinker and so on; the person who is a liar in (6) asks for mercy from Varuṇa and so on. The past time is never expressed in the examples of this paragraph. It is instead implied in the derivation of the meaning of the characterising action itself²¹ which is presented as having a temporal dimension: in the already discussed examples Agni is not characterised (in the present) as drinking Soma, but as having been the first drinker of it.

4. Focusing on the verbal moods associated with perfect forms: the perfect epitomizing the conditions for the dynamic action

Our analysis of this structure with a relative pronoun has allowed us to single out a recursive association of moods and tenses involving the perfect in ŚS books 1 and 4. This led us to realise that clauses with a perfect form introduced by relative pronouns – often neuter forms used as subordinating conjunctions – are frequently followed by an imperative, injunctive or optative form. In fact, even though (3) is also a specific kind of text, namely a riddle, it actually contains this very structure.

(7) ŚS 4.7.7 = ŚS 5.6.2 = PS 6.11.2

<i>ánāptā yé vaḥ prathamā</i>	past participle (nominal clause)
<i>yāni kármāṇi cakrírē </i>	perfect
<i>vīrān no átra mā dabhan</i>	injunctive
<i>tād va etát puró dadhe </i>	present

For this very purpose I put this [= spell] forward: [namely] that now they – whichever excellent ones among you are unequalled²², whatever deeds were performed [by them] – may not harm our heroes!

²¹ Here we extend Kümmel's notation (2000, p. 70) on most nactostatives to the entire category of perfects. About nactostatives Kümmel noted that they are only in a derivative relation with the other tenses and modes of the same root ("die nur in derivativer Beziehung zu anderen Verbalstämmen der Wurzel stehen").

²² Lit. "who cannot be reached", thus peerless, unequalled.

The spell itself is preceded by two relative clauses where indeterminacy prevails: “whatever deeds are or were performed by them any-where and anytime”. This epitomizes the conditions at stake with reference to the wish expressed. It goes almost without saying that the action expressed by the perfect is not seen in its dynamic aspect as the indeterminacy itself suggests. Another interesting feature is that here the perfect is not used to characterise the agent but rather the object of the action.

Once again, in the following stanza, the imperative form alone conveys the action as a process.

(8) ŚS 1.28.3 = ŚS 4.17.3 ~ PS 5.23.3

<i>yā śaśāpa śāpanena</i>	perfect
<i>yāghāṇ²³ mūram ādadhé </i>	perfect
<i>yā rāsasya hāraṇāya jātām</i>	
<i>ārebhé tokām attu sá </i>	perfect + imperative

The one (f.) who cursed with curses, who held wickedness for (her own) root, who took hold of a (new)born child for seizing the sap – let her eat her own offspring!

In our opinion, the indeterminacy of the three relative clauses is the crucial feature which justifies the use of the perfect instead of another past tense.

(9) ŚS 1.33.1 ~ PS 1.25.1

<i>hiraṇyavarṇāḥ śúcayaḥ pāvakā</i>	past participle (2 relative clauses)
<i>yāsu jātāḥ savitā yāsv agnīḥ </i>	
<i>yā agnīm gārbhaṁ dadhiré suvárṇās</i>	perfect (1 relative clause)
<i>tā na āpaḥ śāṁ syonā bhavantu</i>	imperative

The gold-coloured, bright and purifying ones, in which Savitṛ was born, and in which Agni (was born), which (pl.) continue to carry Agni as an embryo, the well-coloured ones – let those waters become healing and cosy for us!

Here three qualifying words (*hiraṇyavarṇāḥ śúcayaḥ pāvakāḥ*) are used in parallel with a relative clause including a perfect form. All four of them together characterise the agent, i.e. the waters, and together make up the subordinate part of the stanza, whose main clause contains the imperative *bhavantu*.

²³ **yā vāghāṇ* (Lubotsky 2002, p. 82).

The renowned riddle in ŚS 4.2 ends with a question conveyed by an optative form and this verbal form is the only one that denotes a real process, namely the action of paying homage to a god.

(10) ŚS 4.2.1

<i>yá ātmaḍā baladā yāsya víśva</i>	
<i>upāsate praśiṣaṃ yāsya devāḥ </i>	present indicative
<i>yò 'syéše dvipádo yás cátuṣpadaḥ</i>	perfect
<i>kásmāi devāya havíṣā vidhema </i>	optative

To which god should we pay homage with the oblation? To the one who gives [his] life, who gives [his] strength? To the one whose precept everyone abides by, whose [precept] the gods [abide by]? To the one who is the master of the biped and the quadruped?

This stanza includes five relative clauses which define the potential god to whom the poet wonders whether he should pay homage. The perfect form *īše* is used in parallel with *upapadasamāsas* (*ātma-da-*, *ba-la-da-*) used as qualifiers in nominal clauses introduced by relative pronouns and even with a relative clause with a present indicative form (*upāsate*).

But the perfect seems to be such a strong instrument of nominalisation and subordination that it can also recur in contexts that lack an explicit relative and yet hint at a hierarchical relationship between the two main clauses. In the following stanza, taken from the same hymn ŚS 4.2, the pattern is very similar, even though there are no relative clauses.

(11) ŚS 4.2.7

<i>hiraṇyagarbhāḥ sám avartatāgre</i>	imperfect
<i>bhūtāsya jātāḥ pátir éka āsīt </i>	past participle + imperfect
<i>sá dādhāra prthivīm utá dyāṃ</i>	perfect
<i>kásmāi devāya havíṣā vidhema </i>	optative

To which god should we pay homage with the oblation? In the beginning, [this god] developed as the golden embryo; after being born, he was the sole lord of creation. He is the one who holds Earth and Heaven firm.

The contrast between the two imperfect forms (*avartata* and *āsīt*) and the perfect form *dādhāra* is extremely interesting. The first of the former two in fact conveys a dynamic action carried out by the god whom the

poet identifies as the beneficiary of the planned homage, the second a well-determined function in progress, obtained by the god at a specific time, i.e. when he was born. The discontinuity of the third clause is not only marked by the perfect form which defines the god and assigns him a status ('He is the one who holds Earth and Heaven'), but also by the initial pronoun *sá*, which indicates a clear break.

The same pattern is repeated in the following two stanzas:

(12) ŚS 4.8.3

<i>ātīṣṭhantaṃ pāri viśve abhūṣaṃ</i>	present participle + imperfect
<i>chrīyaṃ vāsānaś carati svārocīḥ </i>	present
<i>mahāt tād vṛṣṇo āsurasya nāma-</i>	nominal clause
<i>ā viśvārūpo amṛtāni tasthau </i>	perfect

All went around [him] who was standing close – to honour him; dressed in splendour, he moves around radiating his light; great is the name/the fame of that bull of a lord; dazzling with all colours he is one who stands close to immortal [worlds].

(13) ŚS 4.8.4

<i>vyāghró ādhi vaiyāghre</i>	
<i>vī kramasva díśo mahīḥ </i>	imperative
<i>viśas tvā sárva vāñchantv</i>	imperative
<i>āpo divyāḥ páyasvatīḥ </i>	

As a tiger on a tiger's skin, walk towards the great cardinal points: let all communities want you; [let] the divine waters rich in milk [want you]!

Stanza (12) lists a series of concrete details which allow the observers to select the right candidate for the Rājasūya. The perfect is only used in the last *pāda* where the definition of the chieftain candidate takes place, passing through the polyptoton *ātīṣṭhantaṃ ... ā ... tasthau* which means that the one who is close to the community (*viś-*), who assists them, will then be close to the immortal world. This is a leader's prerogative and is how he manages to reach heaven. Stanza (13) with its two imperative forms signifies exactly which actions take place on the basis of the mentioned prerogative of their chieftain. The two imperatives express an invitation to the leader and the community respectively to act in a specific time and space.

Analogous examples are represented by (14) (15) and (16). In (14) we actually find a relative conjunction in the subordinate clause which

is however characterised by an imperfect form, while the perfect appears in one of the two main clauses.

(14) ŚS 1.25.1 = PS 1.32.1

<i>yád agnir āpo ādahat pravísya</i>	imperfect
<i>yátrākṛṇvan dharmadhṛto námāṇsi </i>	imperfect
<i>táttra ta āhuḥ paramāṇ janítram</i>	perfect
<i>sá naḥ saṁvidvān pári vṛṇgdhi takman </i>	perfect participle + imperative

Where the law keepers paid homage (lit. made bows) when Agni burned the waters after having entered them, there²⁴ – they say – is your ultimate birthplace. Thus, recognising us, You O Fever²⁵, spare us!

The two imperfect forms describe an action carried out at a precise time and in a precise place without any hint of indeterminacy. The perfect form *āhuḥ* on the other hand conveys an action which is repeated many times. Together with the perfect participle it constitutes a condition, a *de facto* state of affairs, as is clearly shown by the participle *saṁvidvān*. The action conveyed by the imperative form *vṛṇgdhi* is based on such a state of affairs.

(15) and (16) must be read together in order to fully appreciate the shift from the aorist and imperfect forms to the perfect immediately before the imperative:

(15) ŚS 4.14.1

<i>ajó hy āgnér ājaniṣṭa śókāt</i>	aorist
<i>só apaśyaj janitāram āgre </i>	imperfect
<i>téna devā devātām āgra āyan</i>	imperfect
<i>téna rōhān ruruhur médhyāsah </i>	perfect

Indeed the billy-goat has been born from the heat of the fire, it saw in the beginning the one who begot himself. Through it in the beginning the gods came to god-like status. Through it, those fit for the sacrifice ascend the ascents.

²⁴ i.e. at that place and time, at that moment.

²⁵ This is our attempt to render the implicit anaphoric function of *sáh* that takes up *t[e]* [...] *paramāṇ janítram*. Although *táttra ta āhuḥ paramāṇ janítram* is formally a principal, its role is therefore subordinate to the imperative phrase.

(16) ŚS 4.14.2

<i>krámadhvam agnínā nākam</i>	imperative
<i>úkhyān hásteṣu bíbhrataḥ</i>	
<i>divás pr̥sthām svār gatoṁ</i>	
<i>miśrā devébhīr ādhvam </i>	

Step towards the firmament through the fire, bearing in your hands
those [fires] being in the pot; after coming to the back of the sky, [i.e.]
the sun, sit mingled with the gods

In (15) we find a sigmatic aorist (*ájanīṣṭa*), referring to something that happens in the ritual context, and two forms of the imperfect, whose past time reference is well-defined due to the repeated adverb *ágre*, followed by a single form of the perfect. The latter signifies the prerogative of the wise man, i.e. of the virtuous sacrificer who – as a rule – has access to heaven, so that in the following stanza the imperative form is an invitation to actually do what he is allowed, i.e. to step toward the firmament. In (16) the imperative form *krámadhvam* accomplishes the usual syntactic pattern we are focusing on here.

The shade of indeterminacy in examples (8), (9) and (10) is in fact quite common and has already been pointed out, e.g. by Renou (1925, p. 24). But, in actual fact, this is not the distinctive feature of the use of the perfect but rather a consequence of it being used to indicate the factual conditions for the development of the dynamic action often expressed in the imperative or in other non-indicative ways. Although rarer, in our data there is no lack of relative clauses with specific meaning. We have already seen a case of this in (3). In (17) the perfect indicative form is introduced by a relative pronoun and, as usual, the characteristic of the subject conveyed by the perfect constitutes the precondition that allows the action conveyed by the subsequent imperative to come about, but indeterminacy is not part of the passage. The relative pronoun refers to two individual gods, explicitly mentioned in the same stanza.

(17) ŚS 4.25.1

<i>vāyóḥ savitúr vidáthāni manmahe</i>	present
<i>yáv ātmanvād viśátho yáu ca rákṣathaḥ </i>	present + present
<i>yáu víśvasya paribhū́ babhūvátus</i>	perfect
<i>táu no muñcatam āmhasaḥ </i>	imperative

Of Vāyu, of Savitar we are honouring the assemblies: you two who enter and who defend what is endowed with *ātman*; you two who

have become the ones who encompass the all — do you free us from anguish!

In the analogous structure in (18), the relative pronoun clearly refers to the powerful rice mess called *brahmaudaná*.

(18) ŚS 4.35.3

<i>yó dādhāra prthivīm viśvábhojaṣaṃ</i>	perfect
<i>yó antārikṣam āprṇād rāsena </i>	imperfect
<i>yó ástabhnād divam ūrdhvó mahimná</i>	imperfect
<i>ténaudanénāti tarāṇi mṛtyúm </i>	subjunctive

That which sustained (and sustains) the all-nourishing earth; which filled the atmosphere with sap; which, uplifted, established the sky with might – by that rice mess let me overcome death.

(19) is extremely illustrative since it has three relative clauses, all containing the third-person plural perfect form *cakrúḥ*, which precede a main clause with an imperative form of a transitive verb whose patient is denoted by a plural noun, namely an *upapadasamāsa*-, whose right-hand constituent is a root-noun derived from the same verbal base (*kṛtyākṛt*-). In other words, this noun in the main clause seems to be equivalent to the relative subordinate clause with the perfect form.

(19) ŚS 4.17.4 ~ PS 5.23.6²⁶

<i>yāñ te cakrúr āmé pātre</i>	perfect
<i>yāñ cakrúr nīlalahité </i>	perfect
<i>āmé māṃsé kṛtyāñ yāñ cakrús</i>	perfect
<i>táyā kṛtyākṛto jahi </i>	imperative

By means of that which they made for you on an unripe vessel by means of that which they made on that which is red and blue, by means of that witchcraft they performed on the unripe flesh, kill the witchcraft-makers!

Finally, let us draw attention to the following example where the usual relative clause with a perfect form followed by an injunction does not

²⁶ In the PS parallel there are only two and not three relative clauses with the third-person plural perfect form of *kṛ*-.

refer either to the agent or to the patient, but merely to an instrument that will allow the agents to carry out the action of reaching heaven.

(20) ŚS 4.11.6

<i>yéna devāḥ svār āruruhúr</i>	perfect
<i>hitvā śārīram amṛtasya nābhim </i>	
<i>téna geṣma sukṛtāsya lokāṃ</i>	injunctive
<i>gharmāsya vraténa tāpasā yaśasyávaḥ </i>	

May we – who are desiring glory – go to the world of merit by means of that by whose means the gods, after quitting their body, ascended to the sun, to the navel of non-death, i.e. by means of austerities, by means of the observance of the hot drink!

The perfect form *āruruhúr* contributes to defining the means by which the agent of the injunctive verbal form, i.e. the first-person plural *geṣma* carries out the action of reaching heaven.

5. Different degrees of lexicalization

Our analysis of the meaning conveyed by the occurrences of the perfect indicative in Books 1 and 4 of the ŚS also led us to realise that these 107 forms show a line of continuum from the unquestionably lexicalised usages of the perfect up to the less lexicalised ones, a continuum based on the relevance of the past action conveyed by the etymon in the construction of the meaning output of the perfect form. We came up with three main categories on the basis of these premises:

- A Derived perfects: when the action of the etymon does not correspond to the action conveyed by the perfect.
e.g. ŚS 4.11.5: *yāsya néše yajñápatir ná yajñó* ‘[of the one] of whom neither the lord of sacrifice is master nor the sacrifice’.
- B Altered perfects: The action in the etymon is modified (mostly from dynamic to stative/ copula) in comparison with the action expressed by the perfect.
e.g. ŚS 1.7.6: *asmákáarthāya jajñiṣe* ‘you were born for our business’²⁷.

²⁷ This seems to be a mirror-image process to that highlighted by Lazzeroni (2016, p. 18) in his reflection on the use of modes in the perfect when he points out that a stative construct can take on an ingressive (i.e. dynamic) value when declined according to non-indicative modes (among which subjunctive with future value): “*Tizio è vecchio* designa uno stato permanente, *a poco a poco anche Tizio sarà vecchio*, se il futuro non ha valore anticipatorio (v. sopra), ha valenza ingressiva: essere = divenire.”

- C Simple perfects. The action of the etymon is the same as the action expressed by the perfect.
 e.g. ŚS 1.28.3: *yā śaśāpa śāpanena* ‘she who has cursed with a curse’.

This is definitely a fresh perspective on the perfect indicative forms and we are persuaded that this classification can actually help us in accounting for the specific semantic content of the perfect form versus the present. Our three categories largely match Kümmel’s categories, namely A matches his *lexikalisierte Perfektopräsens*; *naktostatische Perfekt*, B, the *naktostatische Perfekt* and *Resultativperfekt*, and C, the *Perfekt der erweiterten Gegenwart*; *comprehensive Perfekt* and *nichtresultative Perfekt*. However, our categories also make it possible to account for these different shades of meaning using a single criterium, namely that of the role of the past in constructing the verbal meaning in the perfect tense.

The following table also summarises two other important distinctive features in the occurrences analysed. First of all, we recorded the syntactic role played by clauses that contained the perfect forms, that is whether they were main or subordinate clauses introduced by relative pronouns or subordinating conjunctions derived from them, also including cases where the value of the relative items is that of indefinite relative pronouns. We also singled out the main clauses that play a role comparable to that of subordinate clauses due to the semantic and logic function they convey with respect to another contiguous clause. Finally, we reconstructed the immediate verbal context in such a way as to show not only the numerical relevance of the interplay of the perfect forms with the present and nominal forms of the verb but also the relevance of its position in the vicinity of a non-indicative mode (49 times)²⁸.

LEGENDA

M = Main clause

sub M = Main clause with an almost subordinate function

R = Perfect introduced by a relative pronoun (/conjunction)

RI = Perfect introduced by a relative pronoun with a relative indefinite value + indeterminacy

A = Derived perfects

B = Altered perfects

C = Simple perfects

²⁸ Both features are amply discussed in § 4.

Nr.	Occurrence	Time/mode context	Syntax	Lexicalization of the past
1	1.2.1 <i>vid-</i>	perfect + perfect +	sub M	A
2	1.2.1 <i>vid-</i>	imperative.	sub M	A
3	1.3.1 <i>vid-</i>	perfect + subjunctive +	sub M	A
		imperative.		
4	1.3.2 <i>vid-</i>	perfect + subjunctive +	sub M	A
		imperative.		
5	1.3.3 <i>vid-</i>	perfect + subjunctive +	sub M	A
		imperative.		
6	1.3.4 <i>vid-</i>	perfect + subjunctive +	sub M	A
		imperative.		
7	1.3.5 <i>vid-</i>	perfect + subjunctive +	sub M	A
		imperative.		
8	1.7.1 <i>bhū-</i>	imperative + perfect.	sub M	B/C
9	1.7.6 <i>jan-</i>	imperative + perfect +	sub M	B/C
		imperative.		
10	1.8.4 <i>vid-</i>	perfect + imperative.	RI	A
11	1.10.3 <i>vac-</i>	perfect + present.	RI	C
12	1.12.1 <i>vi-kram-</i>	subjunctive + perfect.	R	C
13	1.12.3 <i>ā-viś-</i>	imperative + perfect +	R	B
		imperative.		
14	1.13.3 <i>vid-</i>	imperative + present +	M	A
		perfect + present.		
15	1.16.2 <i>adhy-āh</i>	perfect + present.	M	A/C
16	1.16.3 <i>sah-</i>	present + present + perfect.	M	A/B
17	1.24.1 <i>as-</i>	nominal clause + perfect +	M	C
18	1.24.1 <i>kṛ-</i>	perfect + perfect + aorist +	M	C
19	1.24.2 <i>kṛ-</i>	aorist.	M	C
20	1.25.1 <i>āh-</i>	imperfect + imperfect +	M	A
		perfect + imperative.		
21	1.27.3 <i>dhṛṣ-</i>	aorist + perfect + nominal	sub M	C
		clause.		
22	1.28.3 <i>śap-</i>	perfect + perfect + perfect	RI	C
23	1.28.3 <i>dā</i>	+imperative.	RI	C
24	1.28.3 <i>ārambh-</i>		RI	C
25	1.29.1 <i>abhi-vṛdh-</i>	perfect + imperative + aorist.	R	C
26	1.32.2 <i>vid-</i>	perfect.	M	A
27	1.33.1 <i>dhṛ-</i>	nominal clause + perfect +	R	B/C
		imperative.		
28	1.33.2 <i>dhṛ-</i>	nominal clause + perfect +	R	B/C
		imperative.		
29	1.33.3 <i>dhṛ-</i>	nominal clause + perfect +	R	B/C
		imperative.		

30	ŚS 4.1.3 <i>jan-</i>	perfect + present + perfect +	R	B
31	ŚS 4.1.3 <i>ud-bhṛ-</i>	perfect.	sub M	C
32	ŚS 4.1.3 <i>sthā-</i>		sub M	C
33	ŚS 4.1.6 <i>jan-</i>	present + perfect + present.	M	B
34	ŚS 4.2.1 <i>īś-</i>	nominal clause + present + perfect + optative.	RI	A
35	ŚS 4.2.2 <i>bhū-</i>	perfect + optative.	RI	C
36	ŚS 4.2.5 <i>ah-</i>	nominal clause + perfect + optative.	RI	A
37	ŚS 4.2.7 <i>dhṛ-</i>	imperfect + imperfect + perfect + optative.	M	C
38	ŚS 4.6.1 <i>jan-</i>	perfect + perfect+perfect.	M	B
39	ŚS 4.6.1 <i>pā- (pibati)</i>		M	C
40	ŚS 4.6.1 <i>kṛ-</i>		M	C
41	ŚS 4.6.2 <i>vi-sthā-</i>	nominal clause + perfect + aorist.	RI	B
42	ŚS 4.7.7 <i>kṛ-</i>	nominal clause + perfect + injunctive + present.	RI	C
43	ŚS 4.8.1 <i>bhū-</i>	present + perfect + present + imperative.	M	B/C
43	ŚS 4.8.3 <i>sthā-</i>	imperfect + present + nominal clause + perfect.	M	C
45	ŚS 4.9.2 <i>sthā-</i>	present + perfect.	M	C
46	ŚS 4.9.3 <i>vid-</i>	present + perfect + present.	M	A
47	ŚS 4.10.2 <i>adhi-jan-</i>	perfect + present.	R	C
48	ŚS 4.10.6 <i>adhi-jan-</i>	present + perfect + present + injunctive.	M	C
49	ŚS 4.10.7 <i>bhū</i>	perfect + present + present + imperative.	M	B
50	ŚS 4.11.1 <i>dhṛ-</i>	perfect + perfect + perfect + perfect.	M	B/C
51	ŚS 4.11.1 <i>dhṛ-</i>		M	B/C
52	ŚS 4.11.1 <i>dhṛ-</i>		M	B/C
53	ŚS 4.11.1 <i>ā-viś-</i>		M	B
54	ŚS 4.11.5 <i>īś-</i>	perfect + perfect + nominal clause + imperative.	R	A
55	ŚS 4.11.5 <i>īś-</i>		M	A
56	ŚS 4.11.6 <i>ruh-</i>	perfect + injunctive.	R	B/C
57	ŚS 4.11.9 <i>vid-</i>	perfect + present + perfect.	R	A
58	ŚS 4.11.9 <i>vid-</i>		M	A
59	ŚS 4.11.11 <i>ah-</i>	perfect + perfect + nominal clause.	M	A
60	ŚS 4.11.11 <i>upa-vid-</i>		R	C
61	ŚS 4.11.12 <i>vid-</i>	present + present + present + present + perfect.	M	A
62	ŚS 4.12.7 <i>saṃ-śṛ-</i>	perfect + perfect + subjunctive.	RI	C
63	ŚS 4.12.7 <i>han-</i>		RI	C

64	ŚS 4.14.1 <i>ruh-</i>	aorist + imperfect + imperfect + perfect.	M	B/C
65	ŚS 4.14.4 <i>vi-tan-</i>	present + present + perfect.	R	C
66	ŚS 4.15.10 <i>bhū</i>	perfect + imperative.	R	B
67	ŚS 4.16 1 <i>vid-</i>	present + present + perfect.	M	A
68	ŚS 4.16 2 <i>vid-</i>	present + present + present + perfect + perfect.	M	A
69	ŚS 4.17.1 <i>kr-</i>	present + perfect.	sub M	C
70	ŚS 4.17.3 <i>śap-</i>	perfect + perfect + perfect +	RI	C
71	ŚS 4.17.3 <i>ā-dhā-</i>	imperative.	RI	C
72	ŚS 4.17.3 <i>ā-rambh-</i>		RI	C
73	ŚS 4.17.4 <i>kr-</i>	perfect + perfect + perfect +	RI	C
74	ŚS 4.17.4 <i>kr-</i>	imperative.	RI	C
75	ŚS 4.17.4 <i>kr-</i>		RI	C
76	ŚS 4.18.5 <i>kr-</i>	aorist + perfect.	RI	C
77	ŚS 4.18.6 <i>kr-</i>	perfect+ perfect + perfect +	RI	C
78	ŚS 4.18.6 <i>śak-</i>	perfect.	RI	C
79	ŚS 4.18.6 <i>śr-</i>		RI	C
80	ŚS 4.18.6 <i>kr-</i>		RI	C
81	ŚS 4.19.7 <i>saṃ-bhū-</i>	perfect + imperative.	M	B
82	ŚS 4.20.3 <i>ā-ruh-</i>	present + perfect.	sub M	B/C
83	ŚS 4.23.5 <i>ji-</i>	imperfect (causative) + imperfect + perfect + imperative.	R	C
84	ŚS 4.24.2 <i>ā-ruj-</i>	nominal clause + perfect + nominal clause + imperative.	R	C
85	ŚS 4.24.5 <i>śri-</i>	present + present + perfect + imperative.	R	C
86	ŚS 4.24.6 <i>jan-</i>	perfect + past participle + past participle + aorist + imperative.	R	B
87	ŚS 4.25.1 <i>bhū-</i>	present + present + present + perfect + imperative.	R	B
88	ŚS 4.25.2 <i>anv-aś-</i>	nominal clause + past participle + perfect + imperative.	R I	C
89	ŚS 4.27.6 <i>rch-</i>	perfect + present + imperative.	R	B
90	ŚS 4.28.4 <i>ā-rabh-</i>	perfect + aorist + perfect +	R	C
91	ŚS 4.28.4 <i>īś-</i>	imperative.	R	A
92	ŚS 4.30.5 <i>ā-viś-</i>	present + present + perfect.	sub M	C
93	ŚS 4.30.8 <i>sāṃbhū-</i>	present + perfect.	M	B
94	ŚS 4.31.3 <i>ā ruh-</i>	imperative + imperative + perfect + subjunctive.	M	C

95	ŚS 4.31.5 <i>vid-</i>	imperative + present +	M	A
96	ŚS 4.31.5 <i>ābhū-</i>	perfect + perfect.	R	C
97	ŚS 4.32.2 <i>as-</i>	perfect (copula in nominal clause) + present + imperative.	sub M	C
98	ŚS 4.32.5 <i>hīḍ-</i>	present + perfect + imperative.	M	C
99	ŚS 4.34.5 <i>ā-viś-</i>	nominal clause + perfect + present + imperative + imperative.	M	C
100	ŚS 4.35.2 <i>pac-</i>	imperfect + imperfect + perfect + subjunctive.	R	C
101	ŚS 4.35.3 <i>dhṛ-</i>	perfect + imperfect + imperfect + subjunctive.	R	C
102	ŚS 4.35.4 <i>āp-</i>	nominal clause + nominal clause + perfect + subjunctive.	R	C
103	ŚS 4.35.5 <i>bhū-</i>	perfect + present + nominal clause + subjunctive.	R	B
104	ŚS 4.35.6 <i>sam-bhū-</i>	perfect + perfect + nominal clause + subjunctive.	R	C
105	ŚS 4.35.6 <i>bhū-</i>			B
106	ŚS 4.37.1–2 <i>han-</i>	perfect + perfect +	sub M	C
107	ŚS 4.37.1–2 <i>jhan-</i>	imperative.	sub M	C

All in all, 54 perfect indicative forms are included in a main clause and 52 in a relative subordinate clause (24 of which are characterised by the indeterminacy commonly conveyed by a clause introduced by an indefinite-relative pronoun). However, it is also true to say that 18 of the 54 main clauses play a subordinating role in the terms explained above. The verbal forms we have labelled as “simple perfects” are prevalent, with 54 occurrences, 14 are “altered perfects”; these two categories involve a wide range of different verbal bases, while there are 24 occurrences of “derived perfects”, whose verbal bases are exclusively *vid-*, *ah-*, *īś-*. It is not always easy to decide whether an occurrence belongs to category B or category C since it may be hard to establish the basic synchronic meaning (beyond the etymological meaning), which would allow us to confidently draw a boundary with the meaning assumed to be altered in the form of perfect.

Therefore, the unique alteration of meaning conveyed by the perfect with respect to the primary meaning of the base is that resulting from its nominalising effect on verbal expressions. The sole shared

point we can single out in the ŚS 1 and 4 usages of the perfect tense (instead of the present or other past tenses) seems to be the non-dynamic trait of the verb which accounts for the role it plays at the time of utterance as a feature of one of the actants.

6. The evidence in Pāṇini's and Vedic data

In the second part of this paper we will concentrate on Pāṇini's work to see whether it can help us in better understanding the meaning and function of the perfect. The relationship between Pāṇini and the Vedic texts has long been a topic of controversial debate and goes beyond the scope of this paper²⁹. We are nevertheless convinced that, with due diligence, Pāṇini provides valuable evidence for the interpretation of Vedic linguistic data provided that we move beyond an approach that limits itself to checking which textual layer (and closed set of texts) best responds to Pāṇinian rules. From Deshpande 1985 onwards, it has generally been accepted that the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* was intended to account for a specific linguistic repertoire as a whole: this repertoire (strongly influenced by the religious and ritual dimension in which the author was immersed) included both forms with archaic or archaizing features, typical of the *Samhitās* (and marked by domain delimitations of use such as *chandasi*), and features contemporary to the author which are described by all the rules not specifically restricted to a certain domain. In any case, the language described by the grammar is on the whole a late-Vedic language³⁰; with the exception of anything that is marked as archaic and applied to a restricted domain, the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* is a grammar accounting for a productive competence and specifically for the linguistic competence required to perform the activity of being an officiant, with what follows: selecting, memorising, and possibly adapting Vedic texts to several ritual contexts. The next part of our paper will concentrate on the most general rule concerning the perfect, leaving the occurrences strictly restricted to the domain of *chandas* for future study.

²⁹ For an incomplete but updated overview of the bibliography see Candotti, Pontillo 2022, § 1.1.

³⁰ It is well known that, for example, aorist forms and accentuation are taught without domain limitation.

7. The perfect as a preterite category in Pāṇini

As is well known, the general structure governing the description of preterite tenses in Pāṇini (excluding some purely Vedic facts which we will discuss in a forthcoming publication) is based on three main semantic traits. Most formations (verbal and non-verbal) with preterite value are taught in the sense of the past tense with no further specification:

A 3.2.84: *bhūte* ‘When a past time is to be conveyed.’

The teaching of the aorist tense also falls under the same constraint:

A 3.2.110: [*bhūte*] *luṅ* ‘When a past time is to be conveyed the LUN̄ (aorist) endings occur.’³¹

The imperfect and perfect are instead taught as semantic subsets created by either one (for the former) or two (for the latter) specific semantic conditions:

A 3.2.111: [*bhūte*] *anadyatane laṅ* ‘When a past time not reaching the present day is to be conveyed, LAN̄ (imperfect) endings occur.’³²

A 3.2.115 [*bhūte*] [*anadyatane*] *parokṣe liṭ* ‘When a past time not reaching the present day which is out of perception is to be conveyed, LIṬ / perfect endings occur.’³³

As far as the general structure is concerned, we can therefore say that Pāṇini clearly places the perfect within the preterite category, more specifically in that of preterites that have no relation to the present tense. Moreover, he also identifies it with the specification *parokṣe* lit. ‘out of perception’, a term to which we will return below (§ 7). Within

³¹ The specific aorist-bases are constructed upon this abstract frame by affixation in the group of rules beginning with A 3.1.43 [*dhātoḥ*] *cli luṅi* ‘After any verbal base and before LUN̄ (aorist) endings, the affix CLI occurs.’ → *asīcat*. CLI is a cover term for all the affixes forming aorist stems.

³² Since no specific stem-formation affixes are taught before imperfect affixes, the default present affixes apply.

³³ The reduplication is accounted for by A 6.1.8: [*ekāco dve prathamasya* 6.1.1] [*ajāder dvitīyasya* 6.1.2] *liṭi dhātor anabhyāsasya* ‘After any verbal base without a reduplication syllable and before LIṬ (perfect) endings, two syllables come in the place of the first syllable of a monosyllabic verbal base or in the place of the second syllable of a verbal base beginning with a vowel.’

a purely semantic perspective, rather than opposing the aorist, the perfect is thus constructed in comparison with the imperfect. This interpretation makes the domains of the imperfect and the perfect mutually exclusive sets: the aorist therefore does not apply in the domain of application of either the imperfect or the perfect and similarly the imperfect does not apply in the domain of application of the perfect. These rules have traditionally been interpreted against the background of the relationship between a general rule and a specific rule, which then found a concise description in Joshi, Kiparsky (2005) who postulated an implicit meta-rule favouring the maximisation of interactions between rules, stating that if a rule can bleed or feed another rule it will³⁴. Nevertheless, precisely while analysing the reciprocal interactions between the three aforementioned rules, Kiparsky (2009, p. 38) actually notes that the determination of whether the general rule is blocked by the specific rules in the case at hand is a “thorny” question. While he gives no reason for this difficulty, he goes on to state that “[a]ccording to the normal principles of interpretation of Pāṇini’s grammar, the competition between three incompatible morphological elements should induce blocking. The perfect should block the imperfect, and the imperfect in turn should block the aorist”, and adds that “[s]everal specific formulations of Pāṇini’s rules also presuppose such a blocking relation”³⁵. In fact, what at first sight seems a sharp and clear picture is complicated by the presence of a meta-rule that allows the optional application of conflicting rules specifically in the case of primary affixation. The different subsets of abstract endings are in fact taught under the provision of metarule A 3.1.94 *vā ’sarūpo ’striyām* which states that the affixes under this heading apply optionally (i.e. alternate with the affixes taught in a general way) provided that they do not have the same form and that they are not affixes for deriving feminine stems³⁶. This would imply

³⁴ Joshi, Kiparsky 2005, p. 4: “The way to maximize *siddha* relations is to apply rules in whatever order yields a result that is different from the result of applying them simultaneously. In other words, rules apply in that order in which they interact as much as possible (which maximizes feeding and bleeding).”

³⁵ Rules with the co-ordinative particle *ca*, for example, as in A 3.2.116 *haśaśvator lañ ca* ‘in co-occurrence with the particles *ha* and *śaśvat* also LAN̄ (imperfect) endings occur [in the meaning of a general past]’, show that a specific tool is necessary in order to grant the optional application of two rules (in the example, of the rules teaching aorist and imperfect endings) since the blocking would otherwise apply.

³⁶ Kiparsky 1979, p. 27: “The rule stipulates that special rules (*apavādas*) between 3.1.94

that the different subsets of preterite endings (imperfect aorist and perfect) were optional, i.e. that in addition to the perfect forms, the aorist and imperfect forms were also in use in the *parokṣe* semantic domain, while, in the *anadyatane* domain, the aorist could be used alongside the forms of the imperfect. This is undoubtedly an unwanted outcome and Kātyāyana already proposed that the application of A 3.1.94 is prohibited in the case of the substitutes of abstract subsets of verb endings.

M II p. 79 l. 26 vt. 6 *ad* A 3.1.94
prayoge cel lādeṣeṣu pratiṣedhaḥ [6]

If the criterion lies in the usage then it is necessary to teach a prohibition in the case of substitutes for the abstract forms in LA.

And Patañjali (M II p. 79 l. 26 – p. 80 l. 2 *ad* A 3.1.94 vt. 6) comments on this Vārttika as follows:

prayoge cel lādeṣeṣu pratiṣedho vaktavyaḥ. hyo 'pacad ity atra luṇ api prāpnoti. śvaḥ paktety atra lṛḍ api prāpnoti. naiṣa doṣaḥ. ācāryapravṛttir jñāpayati na lādeṣeṣu vāsarūpo bhavātīti yad ayam haśaśvator laṇ ca ity āha.

If the criterion lies in (the idioms of) usage, then it is necessary to teach a prohibition in the case of substitutes for the abstract forms in LA. In the phrase *hyo 'pacat* 'yesterday he cooked (imperfect)' the LUN (aorist) could also be used³⁷; in the phrase *śvaḥ paktā* 'tomorrow he will cook' (periphrastic future) the simple future (LRṬ)³⁸ could also be used. There is no such defect; an act of the teacher makes it clear that in the case of the substitutes of the abstract forms in LA there is no optionality for the desinences having a different form and it is the fact that he says *haśaśvator laṇ ca* (A 3.2.116)³⁹.

and 3.4.117 are all optional, and specifically, all constitute preferred options (*vā*). That is, they do not block the general rules obligatorily but as it were preferentially: the general rules can be applied instead, although the special rules are preferred."

³⁷ The various tense-endings, substitutes of LA, are supposed to be different in actual usage since they come from distinct subtypes of LA. The aorist, taught by A 3.2.110 in the meaning of generic past, as already mentioned, could also be used in the specific meaning of a past that does not reach the present which is specifically (and preferably) taught for the imperfect in A 3.2.111.

³⁸ The rules involved are A 3.3.13: *lṛt śeṣe ca* 'LRṬ (future) endings occur in the sense of future when co-occurring with an action having as an aim another action and in the remaining cases,' and A 3.3.15: [*bhaviṣyati*] *anadyatane luṭ* 'LUT (periphrastic future) occurs in the meaning of a future action not extending to the present day.'

³⁹ Example discussed in footnote 35.

On the other hand, we consider that while it is true that the semantics of the three tenses is constructed with a increasing set of constraints, this does not entail that the three mentioned main rules are in a relationship of the general/specific kind. In fact, *bhūte* A 3.2.110), *bhūte anadyatane* (A 3.2.111), and *bhūte anadyatane parokṣe* (A 3.2.115) are three completely different meaning constraints which the speaker is supposed to take into account in selecting the desired tense affix without any possible overlapping.

This leads us to delineate the preterite system described by Pāṇini as already being constructed upon time constraints and characterised by a fundamental division between the generic past (aorist) and the non-actual past (imperfect and perfect), the latter further distinguished according to whether the action is *parokṣa* or not⁴⁰. Pāṇini does account for present or atemporal usages of the perfect but only in restricted domains. We will concentrate on these very general rules, while an analysis of the restricted rules will be dealt with in a future paper.

8. What is *parokṣa*? Patañjali establishes the traditional interpretation

The restriction *parokṣe* lit. ‘out of perception’ is thus crucial for understanding the productive dimension of the perfect. Since the term is very rarely used by Pāṇini, we are forced to interpret it also in the light of its possible technical usages in contemporary late-Vedic literature.

The traditional interpretation of the term (which finds partial support in several commentaries) considers that the locative limits its application to those cases of the non-hodiernal past in which the speaker has not directly witnessed the events he or she is narrating. This interpretation is commonly found in most well-known translations and studies of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*:

Böhtling 1887: “[...] Handlung, bei der man nicht zugegen war”.

Vasu 1891: “[...] unperceived by the narrator”.

⁴⁰ This description may well suit some stage of the preterital system – see, e.g. Dahl 2010, pp. 264 and ff. – but it is rather problematic for the later Vedic layers. See Kiparsky 2009, p. 38: “In post-Pāṇinian usage, the aorist can refer to any past event, whereas the imperfect and perfect are restricted as described above. Apparently, linguistic change has undone the original blocking relationship.”

Renou 1966: “[...] pur exprimer qqch) hors de la vue (du sujet parlant)”.
 Katre 1987: “beyond the perception of the speaker”.

This interpretation of the rule has also had a considerable effect on the interpretation of linguistic facts concerning the perfect. The most striking example is Renou, who dedicates an entire short chapter of his volume on the perfect to *Le parfait et l'expérience personnelle*. He begins by stating that in the most ancient Vedic literature,

Une distinction entre l'imparfait et l'aoriste, d'une part, et le parfait, de l'autre, [...] est que cette dernière forme est évitée là où l'on attend une première personne au cours d'une narration passée. (Renou 1925, p. 82)

Nevertheless, there are already several traces in the commentaries indicating that the term *parokṣa* was considered problematic for a number of reasons. In the wake of Kātyāyana's *vārttikas*, after discussing the phonic form of the term, Patañjali reflects on what is qualified as being beyond perception and in particular he considers four possible candidates: tense (*kāla*), verbal base (*dhātu*), the meaning of the verbal base (*dhātvartha*) or actants (*sādhana*). The first of these is discarded since it cannot descend by *anuvṛtti*. The second (which obviously descends from A 3.1.81) is likewise discarded because the opposition *pratyakṣa* vs. *parokṣa* is not relevant as regards the form of the words⁴¹. At this point Patañjali proposes a secondary meaning for the term *dhātu*, i.e. “meaning of the verbal base” i.e. the *kriyā* action.

M II p. 120 l. 7–10 *ad* A 3.2.115

śabde 'sambhavād arthe kāryaṃ vijñāsyate. parokṣe dhātau dhātvartha iti. kaḥ punar dhātvarthaḥ. kriyā. kriyāyāṃ parokṣāyām. yady evaṃ hyo 'pacad ity atrāpi liṭ prāpnoti. kiṃ kāraṇam | kriyā nāmeyam atyantāparidṛṣṭānumānagamyāśakyā piṇḍībhūtā nidarśayitum yathā garbho nirluṭhitaḥ.

Since [if *dhātu*] means a linguistic form, [the operation] is impossible, the operation must be understood considering that [*dhātu*] means a linguistic meaning: when a verbal base is beyond perception, i.e. when the meaning of a verbal base is beyond perception. And what is the meaning of a verbal base? Action. When an action is beyond perception. If this is so, then also in the sentence “Yesterday he cooked (imperfect)”

⁴¹ M II p. 120 l. 6–7 *ad* A 3.2.115: *dhātur vai śabdo na ca śabdasya pratyakṣaparokṣatāyāṃ sambhavo 'sti.*

one uses perfect endings. Why? What is called action is something which cannot absolutely be seen/perceived but must be inferred: it cannot be revealed once it obtains a material body as if it were an embryo which has been discarded⁴².

Patañjali thus rejects the possibility of reading *parokṣa* as a feature of the action, on the basis that an action can never be grasped as an action by direct perception precisely because it does not have the status of a material object. This is far from being an idle remark, made just for the sake of the argument, seeing that it is also asserted in almost the same words in the lengthy commentary on the term *dhātu* (A 1.3.1)⁴³. Overall, the whole argument we are discussing here is developed much more in depth under the above-mentioned *sūtra*⁴⁴. Now, the point is that, if an action is intrinsically beyond perception, its absence is not a useful feature to account for the specific usage of the perfect.

This leads us to the last possibility, namely that it is the actants⁴⁵ – provided that they are understood as material and perceivable entities – who must be out of perception in order to justify the usage of the perfect.

M II p. 120 l. 10–12 *ad* A 3.2.115

evam tarhi sādhanēṣu parokṣeṣu. sādhanēṣu ca bhavataḥ kaḥ sampratyaayaḥ. yadi tāvad guṇasamudāyaḥ sādhanam sādhanam api anumānagamyam | athānyat guṇebhyaḥ sādhanam bhavati pratyakṣaparokṣatāyāṃ sambhavaḥ.

If it is so, then [let us interpret] “when the actants are beyond perception”. What do you mean by “actant”? If an actant is a cluster of qualities, then the actant must also be inferred. Then the actant is something

⁴² A variant reading *yathā garbho 'nirluṭhitaḥ* has been suggested already by Kaiyaṭa. The meaning would be that an action is never perceptible exactly as an embryo not yet released from the womb. See Ogawa 2005, p. 104 fn. 6 and Cardona 1991, p. 453 fn. 47.

⁴³ M I p. 254 l. 15–16 *ad* A 1.3.1 vt. 2 *kriyā nāmeyam atyantāparidṛṣṭā. aśakyā kriyā piṇḍībhūtā nidarśayitum yathā garbho nirluṭhitaḥ. sā asāv anumānagamyā.*

⁴⁴ See Ogawa's (2005) dense monography on this topic.

⁴⁵ The actants are considered such a crucial element in the definition of an action that in the above-mentioned commentary on A 1.3.1 Patañjali names them as a means to infer an action from a substance: see M I p. 254 l. 17–18 *ad* A 1.3.1: *iha sarveṣu sādhanēṣu saṃnīhiteṣu kadācit pacatīty etad bhavati kadācin na bhavati. yasmin saṃnīhite pacatīty etad bhavati sā nūnam kriyā* ‘In everyday usage, when all the actants are in place, sometimes it is [fit] to say “he cooks” and sometimes it is not. That situation in which, once established it is fit to say “he cooks” that is the action.’

different from the quality⁴⁶: in this case there is the possibility of being both *pratyakṣa* and *parokṣa*⁴⁷.

The condition of being beyond perception is, moreover, completely disconnected from the temporal dimension. As the following examples show, an action can be *parokṣa* and have occurred in the distant past, in the near past or even outside a temporal dimension.

M II p. 120 l. 16–17 *ad* A 3.2.115

kathanjātīyakam punaḥ parokṣam nāma. kecit tāvad āhur varṣasatavṛttam parokṣam iti. apara āhuh kaṭāntaritam parokṣam iti | apara āhur dvayahavṛttam tryahavṛttam ceti.

Of what kind is then what is labelled as “being beyond perception”? Some say thus: *parokṣa* is what happened a hundred years ago. Some others say: it is what is separated by a mat. Some others say: also what happened two or three days ago.

To sum up, there are some interesting linguistic points that emerge from this long discussion. First of all we may notice that the speaker and the time of speech are the points of reference on which the preterite system in general and the perfect in particular are constructed. Moreover, the cognitive rather than linguistic dimension of the opposition between *pratyakṣa* and *parokṣa* in Patañjali’s discussion is extremely intriguing. This is a surprising gnoseological turn in the grammatical sphere since it may entail that it is not possible to linguistically signify action *qua* action. Such a position is unacceptable since Patañjali himself says (see note 46) that, once all the actants are in place (and perceivable), an action is specifically what makes one use a verb (like *pacati*) to convey the meaning of a process. As can also be seen in Bhartṛhari’s definition of *kriyā*, what is at stake here is the fact that verbal bases are capable of signifying something as being

⁴⁶ On a possible Sāṃkhya origin of this terminology see Wezler (1986) who does not quote our passage but cites M II p. 366 l. 26 *ad* A 5.1.119: *guṇasaṃdrāvo dravyam* and M II p. 200 l. 14 *ad* A 4.1.3: *guṇasamudāyo dravyam*.

⁴⁷ Interestingly, Patañjali (M II p. 120 l. 12–15 *ad* A 3.2.115) further specifies that only actants in the linguistic and restricted meaning are at stake here: it is not sufficient to see the rice water being thrown away after cooking and flowing along the road or to hear some typical sounds of water boiling to make an action *pratyakṣa* (*atha yadānena rathyāyām taṇḍulodakam dṛṣṭam katham tatra bhavitavyam. yadi tāvat sādhanēṣu parokṣeṣu papāceti bhavitavyam. bhavanti hi tasya sādhanāni parokṣāni. atha ya ete kriyākṛtā viśeṣāś cītkārāḥ phūtīkārāś ceti teṣu parokṣeṣu. evam api papāceti bhavitavyam*).

endowed with a sequence (*krama*) whether that sequence is directly perceptible or inferred:

VP 3.8.1

yāvat siddham asiddham vā sādhyatvenābhidhīyate |
āśritakramarūpatvāt tat kriyeti pratīyate ||

Whatever, be it brought to accomplishment or not⁴⁸, is expressed through the condition of having to be brought to accomplishment because of its being founded on a sequential form is understood as an action (*kriyā*).

As we have seen, the condition of being *atyantāparidrṣṭa-* is a crucial element in Patañjali's conception of *kriyā* but this does not however prevent him from considering the fact that language is capable of expressing an action conceptualised as an action even if it is not directly perceived as such. Therefore, Patañjali's difficulty in our passage seems to lie specifically in his interpretation of *parokṣa* with reference to the assumed incapacity on the speaker's part to perceive actions as such. This leads to the consideration of the condition of being *parokṣa* as being proper to all kinds of actions and thus of little use in identifying what is specific to an action expressed with the perfect. Patañjali's solution, as we have seen, is to shift the condition of being *parokṣa* to the actants⁴⁹.

9. Difficulties in dealing with *parokṣatā*: proposals of integration to/ modification of the text

Moreover, this interpretation of *parokṣa* as 'beyond the perception of the speaker' has raised some issues for grammarians. A first problem was already raised by Pāṇini⁵⁰ in the context of A 3.2.115 itself, re-

⁴⁸ Thus, even completely accomplished past actions may nevertheless be signified as actions.

⁴⁹ Significantly, KV *ad* A 3.2.115 accepts *dhātuvārtha*, i.e., the meaning of a verbal base, as that which must be characterised as being beyond perception.

⁵⁰ And the need for an integration or specific interpretation is also highlighted in the Kāśikā with almost the same words: KV *ad* A 3.2.115: *uttamaviśaye 'pi cittavyākṣepāt parokṣatā sambhavaty eva. tad yathā. supto 'haṃ kila vilālāpa* 'There may be the condition of being beyond perception also in the first person because of a distraction of the mind. For example: once fallen asleep I, so they say, began to blab.'

garding the usage of the first person of the perfect which should in fact not be possible within this semantic framework:

M II p. 120 l. 17–23 *ad* A 3.2.115

sarvathottamaḥ na sidhyati. suptamattayor uttama iti vaktavyam. supto 'ham kila vilalāpa. matto 'ham kila vilalāpa. supto nv aham kila vilalāpa. matto nv aham kila vilalāpa. athavā bhavati vai kaścij jāgarad api vartamānakālaṃ nopalabhate. tad yathā. vaiyākaraṇānāṃ śākaṭāyano rathamārga āsīnaḥ śakaṭasārthaṃ yāntaṃ nopalabhate. kiṃ punaḥ kāraṇam jāgarad api vartamānakālaṃ nopalabhate. manasā saṃyuktānīndriyāṇy upalabdḥau kāraṇāni bhavanti manaso 'sānnidhyāt.

The first person is realized nowhere: it is necessary to say that the first person of someone who is sleeping or is confused [is realized]: “asleep, it seems (*kila*), I blabbed”; “confused, it seems (*kila*), I blabbed”; “now asleep, it seems (*kila*), I have blabbed”; “now confused, it seems (*kila*), I have blabbed”. Or indeed it may happen that someone even when awake does not understand what is going on. For example: Śākaṭāyana sitting (lit. ppp) on the edge of the carriageway in the midst of the grammarians does not perceive the multitude of chariots which are going by. How can it be that even when awake one does not perceive what is going on? The organs of sense become causes in the perception of things (only) in connection with the mind: thus because of their lack of connection with the mind.

Moreover, already Kātyāyana proposed to integrate some teachings to the general rule concerning imperfect forms (A 3.2.111) in order to account for some *parokṣa* usages of it:

M II 119 l. 3 vt. 2 *ad* A 3.2.111

parokṣe ca lokavijñāte prayoktur darśanaviśaye.

Also in the meaning of something out of the speaker's view but very well known in the world and being within the speaker's range of sight.

which Patañjali (M II 119 l. 4–7 *ad* A 3.2.111 vt. 2) comments on as follows:

parokṣe ca lokavijñāte prayoktur darśanaviśaye laṅ vaktavyaḥ. aruṇad yavanaḥ sāketam. aruṇad yavanaḥ madhyamikām. parokṣa iti kim artham. udagād ādityaḥ. lokavijñāta iti kimartham. cakāra kaṭaṃ devadattaḥ. prayoktur darśana-viśaya iti kim artham. jaghāna kaṃsam kila vāsudevaḥ.

The imperfect must also be taught in the meaning of something out of the speaker's view but very well known in the world and in the range of

sight of the speaker: “The Greek besieged (imperfect) Sāketa; the Greek besieged Madhyamikā (impf.)”. Why the mention of “out of perception”? for cases such as “The sun just arose (aor.)”⁵¹. Why the mention of “well-known in the world”? for cases such as “Devadatta has made (pf.) a mat”⁵². Why the mention of “within the range of sight of the speaker”? for cases such as “Vāsudeva, they say, killed Kāṃsa (pf.)”⁵³.

Lastly, the *Kāśīkāvṛtti* requires an integration that accounts for the usage of the perfect in the context of absolute negation:

KV ad A 3.2.115

atyantāpahmave ca liḍ vaktavyaḥ. kaliṅgeṣu sthito 'si? nānaṃ kaliṅgaṃ jagāma. dakṣiṇāpathaṃ praviṣṭo 'si? nānaṃ dakṣiṇāpathaṃ praviveśa.

One should teach the perfect endings also in the meaning of complete denial. “Were you/ have you been among the Kaliṅgas? I have never been among the Kaliṅgas”; “Have you entered the southern path? I have never entered the southern path”.

10. The linguistic meaning of the opposition *pratyakṣa/parokṣa*: focus on the late Vedic technical literature

Recourse to the meaning of *parokṣa* as witnessed in the exegetical late-Vedic literature would allow us to solve not all, but at least a number of these issues. As is well known, the term is used, particularly within *nirvacana* literature, to indicate non-segmentable forms and meanings which cannot be analysed and broken down into lesser units of compositional meaning. Let us recall here the extremely well-known passage from the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*:

Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 6.1.1.2

yad ainddha tasmād indhaḥ. indho ha vai tam indra ity ācakṣate parókṣaṃ parókṣakāmā hí devāḥ.

⁵¹ The restriction *parokṣe* blocks the usage of the imperfect in cases where only the aorist is allowed as in the quoted example where the rising of the sun has been witnessed by the speaker.

⁵² The restriction *lokavijñāte* again blocks the usage of the imperfect in cases where only the perfect is allowed as in the quoted example where the action of making a mat is not well known.

⁵³ The restriction *prayoktur darśanaviṣaye* blocks the usage of the imperfect in cases where only the perfect is allowed as in the quoted episode of the killing of Kāṃsa by Kṛṣṇa which is outside the speaker’s range of sight. It is placed in a mythical past.

Since he kindled, then he is Indha: indeed Indha is called Indra in an opaque (out of perception) way, since the gods love what is beyond perception.

In *Nirukta* 9.20, the term *ulūkhalā* ('mortar') is commented in a passage, once again attributed to a *Brāhmaṇa*-text, with a syntax that is almost identical to the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* passage.

uru me kurv ity abravīt. tad ulūkhalam abhavat. urukaraṁś ca etat tad ulūkhalam ity ācakṣate parokṣena iti ca brāhmaṇam.

He said, "make me broad" (*uru kr-*). It became the mortar (*ulūkhara*): that which is the *urukara* 'action of making wide' is opaquely called *ulūkhala*: thus it is also said in a commentary.

Durga, *Nirukta*'s commentator, characterises the act of spelling out the meaning that is at the basis of the *nirvacana* activity as making analysable what was not:

Nirukta-vṛtti of Durga 121, 14–15

apihitasyārthasya parokṣavṛttāu atiparokṣavṛttau vā śabde niḥkṛṣya vi-grhya vacanaṁ nirvacanam |

A spelling out is the explanation (*vacana*) of a meaning which was concealed in a word whose formation is either beyond perception or totally beyond perception [obtained] after dragging out (*niḥ-*) and taking separately (*vi-*) [the meaning constituents].

It is interesting to note that, albeit in a different context, Yāska himself also uses the opposition between *pratyakṣa* and *parokṣa*, to create a threefold classification of the verses (*rc*) depending on whether the praises (*stuti*) are expressed indirectly (*parokṣa* lit. 'beyond perception'), directly (*pratyakṣa* lit. 'perceivably') or are addressed to oneself in the first person. The indirect expression of praise is characterised as follows:

Nirukta 7.1–2

tatra parokṣakṛtāḥ sarvābhir nānavibhaktibhir yuyjante prathamapurūṣaiś ca ākhyātasya. indro diva indra īśe pṛthivyāḥ. indram id gāthino brhat. indreṇa ete tṛtsavo vevīṣānāḥ. indrāya sāma gāyata. nendrād ṛte pavate dhāma kiṁcana. indrasya nu vīryāni pravocam. indre kāmā ayaṁsata iti.

Among them, stanzas [in which praise] is given indirectly are connected with any nominal ending and with the third person of the verb; e.g.

“Indra (nom.) is the master of heaven, Indra is the master of earth”⁵⁴;
 “Indra (acc.) loftily the chanters (have praised, *anūṣata* aor.)”⁵⁵; “with
 Indra (str.) these Ṛtsu are active”⁵⁶; “may you (pl.) chant the hymns
 to Indra (dat.)”⁵⁷; “no residence indeed is pure without Indra (abl.)”⁵⁸;
 “I will sing forth the heroic deeds of Indra (gen.)”⁵⁹; “in Indra the
 desires rest”⁶⁰.

The verses in which praise is instead directly expressed, that is ones where praise is directly perceivable, are characterised by the use of the second-person of the verb and the second-person pronoun in the vocative (*tvam iti caitena sarvanāman*)⁶¹, e.g. *tvam indra balād adhi* ‘you O Indra (were born) from strength’⁶² or *vi na indra mṛdho jahi* ‘O Indra, slay our enemies’⁶³. Moreover, Yāska highlights the fact that, in some verses, it is the praisers (*stotr*) who are directly addressed while the praised ones (*stotavya*) may not be acknowledged. He gives the following examples: *mā cid anyad viśamsata* ‘glorify (imperative 3rd person pl.) no one else (o friends)’⁶⁴; *kanvā abhipragāyata* ‘O Kanvas, sing forth’⁶⁵ and *upapreta kuśikāś cetayadhvam* ‘Approach o Kanvas, be careful’⁶⁶.

⁵⁴ ṚV 10.89.10.

⁵⁵ ṚV 1.7.1; ŚS 20.38.4; 47.4; 70.7; SV 1.198; 2.146.

⁵⁶ ṚV 7.18.15.

⁵⁷ ṚV 8.98.1; ŚS 20.62.5; SV 1.388; 2.375.

⁵⁸ ṚV 10.69.6; SV 2.720.

⁵⁹ ṚV 1.32.1; cf. ŚS 2.5.5.

⁶⁰ Untraced quotation, cf. Roth 1852 [1976], p. 100.

⁶¹ The sentence *tvam iti caitena sarvanāman* describing the second feature of direct praise does not merely signify that this is characterised by a second-person pronoun but rather, more specifically, that pronoun must occur in the specific form in which it is quoted i.e. nominative/ vocative. This matches well with the preceding statement that identified the occurrence of the name of the praised one in all endings as a specific feature of indirect praise.

⁶² ṚV 10.153.2; ŚS 20.93.5; SV 1.120.

⁶³ ṚV 10.152.4; ŚS 1.21.2; SV 2.1218; VS 8.44; 18.70.

⁶⁴ ṚV 8.1.1; ŚS 20.85.1; SV 1.242; 2.710. Indra as the praised one is quoted in the immediately following hemistich.

⁶⁵ ṚV 1.37.1: here again the praised one, i.e. the cohort of Maruts is expressed in the preceding verses of the same stanza.

⁶⁶ ṚV 3.53.11. Here it is only inferable that the one who is praised is the horse mentioned in the following hemistich introduced by the second-person plural imperative *pramuñcata*.

We thus actually have four ways of expressing praise namely (a) *ātmastuti*: (b) direct praise in which the meaning of the verbal base in the second person directly addresses the praised one, (c) partially direct praise in which the praiser is addressed in the second person and the praised is only mentioned, and (d) indirect praise in which the praised is mentioned without being addressed. As can be seen, the term *parokṣa* in no way indicates the absence or non-perception of a word signifying the praised one in c) and d): rather, the term indicates that the person being praised is only indirectly/ obliquely characterised as such. The real point is that the grammatical and syntactical structure of the sentence does not directly convey the fact that it is praise since the praised one is not expressed in the vocative and the verb is not in the second person⁶⁷.

We can summarise the above findings by saying that in the Late-Vedic technical literature the term *parokṣa* identifies different linguistic occurrences in which the meaning is not directly conveyed by the surface level utterance and in this sense the meaning is said to be beyond perception. Of course, this begs the question of whether this meaning of the term is applicable in our case. In what sense does the perfect convey an action in a way that is beyond perception, indirect, opaque?

11. An action not directly conveyed as an action

We are convinced that in A 3.2.115 Pāṇini does not feel the need to define the term *parokṣe liṭ* since he uses it with a meaning that corresponds to its meaning in the remaining technical Vedic literature. If the rule is interpreted in this way, it teaches to use the perfect to convey the meaning of a pre-hodiernal past action which, however, is not directly meant as an action, i.e. as consisting of a sequence (*krama*). Perfect forms are undoubtedly full verbal forms (*tiṅ* in Pāṇinian terms) but the meaning they convey is not that of an action as characterised by a sequence (*krama*), which is the prototypical form of an action. The relevant action is thus only indirectly expressed by the verbal form, just as the surface form *ulūkhala* ‘mortar’ only indirectly conveys the “real meaning” i.e. the mortar as the one which said

⁶⁷ The direct expression of praise does not mandatorily involve the use of a mode other than the indicative.

uru me kuru ‘make me broad’ and just as the verse *indro diva indra īśe prthivyāḥ* ‘Indra (nom.) is the master of heaven, Indra is the master of earth’ only indirectly conveys its real aim/meaning, which is to address praise to Indra. In all these examples the surface linguistic form does not account for the true nature of what they denote.

One wonders how an action can be conveyed in an indirect way and, conversely, in what sense the usage of full verbal forms may be considered as directly conveying this. In this regard, one cannot fail to recall how in the *Nirukta* there is an awareness of the fact that the action or condition (*bhāva*) can be expressed in two ways, either through a verbal form or through a more noun-like form:

Nirukta 1.1

tatra etan nāmākhyātayor lakṣaṇam pradiśanti. bhāvapradhānam ākhyātam sattvapradhānāni nāmāni. tad yatra ubhe bhāvapradhāne bhavataḥ pūrvāparībhūtam bhāvam ākhyātenācaṣṭe vrajati pacatīti. upakramaprabhṛtyapavargaparyantam mūrtam sattvabhūtam sattvanāmabhir vrajyā paktir iti.

On this point they indicate this defining characteristic of a substantive and of a verb: the verb has an event as its main meaning, while the substantives have an entity as their main meaning. And when both have an event as their principal meaning, an event developing from a former to a later stage is expressed with a verb: “he goes”, “he cooks”⁶⁸. An

⁶⁸ In this regard, here we do not follow Cardona’s 2019 proposal to which we refer for an updated presentation of the various elements and the bibliography cited therein. Cardona proposes a punctuation of the paragraph that renders *yatra ubhe bhāvapradhāne bhavataḥ* as an independent sentence which he interprets as meaning that where both (noun and verb) occur (i.e. in the context of a sentence) then it is the action that is the main element for both. Moreover, although it is not clear to us whether the two actions are interconnected, he attributes the syntagm *upakramaprabhṛtyapavargaparyanta-* to both verbal and nominal forms. The construction he proposes also finds support in numerous quotations adopted in later commentaries, as well as in the use of the syntagm in other contexts. However, we have chosen to disagree with him on this point and therefore remain with the punctuation and interpretation adopted first by Gode and then by Sarup. Lack of space prevents a full explanation of our reasons here, but let us advance three brief observations to justify our choice: a) Cardona states that the reading he endorses (which amounts to a reflection on the status of sentences) is perfectly consistent with the general argument of the paragraph. But the reading we selected (that is a reflection on the means of representing an action by means of a noun) also fits in very well with the assertion that nouns generally have essence as their main element; b) the choice of attributing *upakramaprabhṛtyapavargaparyanta-* to both nouns and verbs weakens the structure of the opposition between the two without adding anything significant to the definition of the verb c) the use of the dual to indicate a sentence is clumsy: if we stay with the fourfold division we should say that what characterises a sentence is the usage of the four types of words; and if we consider only the basic couple verb-

event embodied from the beginning to the end and having acquired the status of an entity is expressed with entity-names: “act of wandering”, “act of cooking”.

Let us recall that time constraints in Pāṇini’s system are not limited to full verbal forms but may also be conveyed by primary nominal derivatives, as shown by rules such as A 3.2.85 [*bhūte*] *karāṇe yajāḥ* that teaches to form the *upapadasamāsa agniṣṭomayājīn* ‘one who has performed a ritual with the Agniṣṭoma’ by adding the suffix *-in* after the verbal base *yaj-* in the meaning of an agent who has accomplished the action in the past. It is thus completely sound, in Pāṇini’s system, to equate a perfect form to a quasi-nominal form (with included past meaning) in which actions are conveyed not in their sequential dimension but as frozen entities⁶⁹. Analogously, an action mentioned through a perfect verbal form does not convey either its development in time or the role of the different actants, but the pure and simple fact that it has happened. In the first part of this article, we discussed the fact that in ŚS 1.7.6, for example, the action of being born expressed by means of a perfect form is not conveyed in its dynamic aspect but simply in its having happened in the past in order to create the condition in the present: *asmākārthāya jajñiṣe* ‘you were born for our business’. Similarly, the action of a fever penetrating the human body in ŚS 1.12.3 (*pāruṣ-parur āvivéśā*) is conveyed not as a sequence of actions (as the usage of a verbal form would suggest) but as an event leading to a result (the fever is everywhere).

If we accept this interpretation of the term *parokṣa*, we are however at the same time also obliged to admit that this meaning had probably already been lost by the time of the first commentators. This, on the other hand, might also justify the difficulties they encountered in accounting for the uses of the perfect. More particularly, within the proposed interpretation of *parokṣa*, the use of the first person would be possible even without the need for supplementary *vārttika*⁷⁰. Similarly,

noun there is no reason to consider that a kind of minimal syntagm was meant to represent the sentence in the *Nirukta*.

⁶⁹ Interestingly, as will be discussed in the second part of this research, some rules teach that the perfect verbal forms may be substituted, sometimes even preferably, by the corresponding perfect participles.

⁷⁰ The low frequency of the first-person perfect, frequently evoked by Renou, would in any case be justified given its adjectival dimension that is ill-suited to typical first-

it would not be necessary to supplement the Pāṇinian text to account for supposed *parokṣa* uses of the imperfect understood in the sense of the narrative imperfect that the speaker did not witness. In fact, having or not having witnessed the action is not what is at stake. Similarly, the use of the perfect in the case of negations, which so puzzled the authors of the *Kāśikā*, turns out instead to be perfectly consistent with the interpretation we propose: an action that is not performed but only mentioned in order to be negated falls perfectly under the category of the perfect.

12. Conclusions

At the end of this two-pronged approach to the perfect usages we thus wish to reiterate – limited to the evidence in the two books of the *Atharvaveda* analysed here – that what the different usages have in common (and which may constitute the trigger behind the speaker's choice to use the perfect) first of all is the non-dynamic representation of any action (and not only the ones expressed by inherently stative verbal bases). Such a non-dynamic representation is at the heart of the Pāṇinian description too, provided one accepts a late-Vedic interpretation of the term *parokṣa*. And it is precisely the relevance of this non-dynamic feature that makes the perfect particularly suitable in a series of contexts that we have tried to enucleate: 'nominal' use (§ 3) to characterise an actant by means of an action that characterises it, him or her, and an indefinite use to indicate an action that creates a precondition in the present (§ 4). As regards temporal reference, in our occurrences, the perfect always refers to the speaker's present tense or a dimension completely detached from the temporal context. This does not mean that the past tense does not play a role in the final construction of the verb, but that its role focuses on the derivation of the lexical meaning of the base. In the forms in which this meaning is completely lexicalised, as Kümmel has already pointed out, the colouring of the past tense is almost completely lost, but prior to these forms there are various gradations in which the past tense can be more or less perceptible at the level of the derivation of meaning.

person narrative contexts. Moreover, first-person perfects with a nominal value are possible, see, eg. RV 10.125.6 (*āviveśa*) and 8 (*saṃbabhūva*).

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