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## The Spitzer Manuscript and the Mahābhārata

In this volume which celebrates the scholarly achievements over his long life of Professor Dieter Schlingloff, I take as the starting point for my contribution something which links his interests in the Buddhist manuscripts and art of Central Asia and mine in the Sanskrit epics: the undoubtedly early, though regrettably fragmentary, *parvan* list for the *Mahābhārata* found in the Spitzer manuscript (SHT 810), a Sarvāstivādin philosophical manuscript from Qizil belonging to the Kuṣāṇa period. This list, another list found in the *Harivaṃśa* and the *sub-parvan* names contained in the colophons of some manuscripts of the *Mahābhārata* (late as these colophons are) are more useful than the often-quoted *parvasaṃgraha* list in the second *adhyāya* of the *Mahābhārata* for an understanding of the text and its history. My aim in this article is to examine the process of growth of the *Mahābhārata* on the basis of these items of evidence.

The original notice concerning the list occurring in the Spitzer manuscript was given by Dieter Schlingloff (1968 and 1969) and he drew attention to its significance for the development of the text of the *Mahābhārata*, noting specifically the absence of the *Virāṭaparvan* and the *Anuśāsanaparvan*, as well as the limited number of *parvans* listed between the *Bhīṣma* and *Śānti parvans* and also, probably, following the *Āśvamedhikaparvan* (Schlingloff 1969: 335). The first of these points has been underscored by Eli Franco when he comments (2004: 10): “The *Anuśāsanaparvan* is missing in the list and was probably not yet part of the epic. The *Virāṭaparvan* is also most probably a later interpolation. These facts are worth repeating as *Mahābhārata* specialists such as Madeleine Biardeau still believe that the epic was composed by a single person.”

It does indeed seem that this evidence has to a large extent been ignored by epic specialists for a long time. I myself referred to it, but only briefly, in my own survey of the epics (Brockington 1998: 131-2) and I am aware of just two remarks on it subsequently: Alf Hiltebeitel has raised a series of objections to its cogency (2005: 459, n. 15), whereas James L. Fitzgerald has broadly accepted it (2006: 271-2, esp. n. 17). Hiltebeitel indeed issues something of a challenge: “No *Mahābhārata* scholar using the find as evidence of a once-shorter text (see Brockington, 1998, 131-132; Fitzgerald in press, 1, 24 and nn. 17 and 19) has tried to explain what kind of ‘*Bhārata*’ it would have been with the odd assortment of units mentioned. With

such uncertainties, notions that the *Virāṭa-* and *Anuśāsana-Parvans* would not yet have been extant (Schlingloff, 338; Franco, vol. 1,10; Brockington and Fitzgerald as cited) must be taken *cum grano salis*.” James Fitzgerald has provided an outline of his answer in his remarks (2006: 270-272) and my own response to that specific issue is contained in the present article. In fact, however, a number of my comments in *The Sanskrit Epics* (1998: 140-158) do address the issue of the extent of the *Mahābhārata* at different periods, though not directly at the date of the Spitzer manuscript’s list. Let me begin with that date itself.

Eli Franco, in his recent detailed study of the Spitzer manuscript, on palaeographic grounds tentatively dates it around the second half of the third century CE (2004: 32-33). Soon afterwards, he reported the <sup>14</sup>C dating of the manuscript by Dr Feistel at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin giving a calibrated date of 130 CE but noting that “individual testing results varied between CE 80 and 230”. He adds that “I can easily accept the later <sup>14</sup>C date of 230, but am somehow reluctant to accept the calibrated date of 130 without further evidence” (Franco 2005: 109). Whichever of these dates is taken, it is relatively late in the total period of growth of the *Mahābhārata* that is usually accepted. This makes all the more intriguing its relationship to a list of the *parvans* contained within the *Harivaṃśa* (*Hv* App. I.40.109-138) and to the list in what is commonly termed the *Parvasaṃgrahaparvan* (*MBh* 1.2.33-71). The first point, however, that I wish to make is that the dating is that of the manuscript itself and is merely the *terminus ante quem* for the text that it contains, while the list itself could have been taken from an earlier text. Indeed, the logic of its inclusion here to some extent points in that direction (the text is, after all, basically a Sārvāstivādin philosophical work). So, while accepting the force of Franco’s arguments about the manuscript itself, I would suggest that the list may reflect the position of perhaps as much as a couple of centuries earlier than the manuscript.

The list in the Spitzer manuscript seems distinctly earlier than that in the *Harivaṃśa*, to which Schlingloff already drew attention for comparison, although there are some interesting commonalities and their length – the number of items they contain – is similar. The *Harivaṃśa* list is in fact probably rather earlier than its location at App. I.40.109-138 might suggest. The Introduction to the Critical Edition (*Hv* I: xxx-xxxi) indicates that the reason for its non-inclusion in the constituted text is its absence in Ś1 but this assertion is contradicted by the stronger evidence of the apparatus to the passage itself, which starts by noting that Ś1 inserts it after *adhyāya* 114 (whereas other manuscripts place it after App. I.42B) and includes singular readings attributed to Ś1.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Horst Brinkhaus has argued that App. I.40 should be included as part of the kernel of the *Harivaṃśa*, following *adhyāya* 114 and bringing the shorter *Harivaṃśa* text to a close (Brinkhaus 2002: 160-1, 172).

The *parvasaṃgraha* list at *MBh* 1.2.33-71 must, of course, in its present form be later than any of the items included in it (which includes both the *Harivaṃśa* and even its *sub-parvan*, the *Bhaviṣyaparvan*) and in any case, as the equivalent of a modern contents page, it would have been the last item to be written. I am in agreement with Alf Hiltebeitel that – by the period when this list was compiled –

<sup>1</sup> The whole passage is in fact lacking in M1 and M3, which are of much less significance, as well as in T3 (missing from 99.21 onwards) and G2 (missing from 110.21 onwards).

the *Mahābhārata* was a written text. I am also strongly inclined to place it later than the list in the *Harivaṃśa* for the reasons just given, while its much greater length suggests that the interval between them may well be substantial. One point that is particularly interesting about this list is the extent to which those manuscripts which give *sub-parvan* names in their colophons, diverge from it – and the allocation of the names by the Critical Edition editors – in their naming of the *sub-parvans*, both in the names used and in the *adhyāyas* that they designate (these data are taken from the CE apparatus and rely on the completeness with which the evidence is reported there). For example, the *parvānukramaṇī* and *parvasaṃgraha* of the list (*MBh* 1.2.34ab<sup>2</sup>) are found as *adhyāya* names only and the *sub-parvan* is named instead for both as *pauloma* (or in one manuscript *pauṣya*). Again, not only is the name *sambhava* used as the major parvan name in many S manuscripts but in several of those which use it only as a sub-parvan name it also covers what others call *aṃśāvatarāṇa* (or that some name *aṃśāvātāra*), the *ādivaṃśāvatarāṇa* of the *parvasaṃgraha* list.<sup>3</sup> Given that these manuscript colophons are undoubtedly later than anything included in the text by a considerable period, this divergence in the use of names suggests very strongly that the *parvasaṃgraha* list was not regarded within the tradition as particularly authoritative, in marked contrast with the weight given to it by the Critical Edition editors.<sup>4</sup>

Let me now return to the Spitzer manuscript's list. The second item is almost certainly *pauloma*. At least, no one has yet suggested any more plausible completion of *-loma* nor can I find one among any of the names in the various manuscripts, still less the *parvasaṃgraha* list. Indeed, since several manuscripts use the name *pauloma* for all the first twelve *adhyāyas* of the *Ādīparvan*, there might theoretically be a case for suggesting that the numerals precede the items they designate and so it is the first name; however, this goes against both the standard pattern and the usage elsewhere in the manuscript, so it can be discounted. But the issue of which name preceded *pauloma* is completely open, in the light of the evidence from the manuscript colophons.<sup>5</sup> The likeliest candidate is *aṃśāvatarāṇa* (to use the name attested in the colophons), for it seems plausible that something corresponding to the summary of the story now found in *MBh* 1.55 and the genealogical data of the next five *adhyāyas* should have formed the opening of the narrative at some stage in its development, to be followed by the story of Pulomā (*MBh* 1.4-12).

There must then have been four names between *pauloma* and *āranyaka*, since they are numbered 2 and 7. The most likely candidates, in my opinion, are *sambhava*, excluding the *upākhyānas* subsumed within it by the Critical Edition, so broadly *MBh* 1.89-123 and perhaps more specifically the narrative of Śaṃtanu, Satyavatī and Bhīṣma in *MBh* 1.91-95 that van Buitenen suggested as the likely beginning of the narrative (van Buitenen 1973-78: I, xvi); *draupadīsvayaṃvara*, which in several

<sup>2</sup> This line is in fact omitted in several manuscripts, making their status still more suspect.

<sup>3</sup> The nearest to the *parvasaṃgraha* name is *vaṃśāvatarāṇa*, found in the colophon of 1.59 in *Ñ1* only.

<sup>4</sup> See for example *MBh* CE vol. 1 p. 281 (on the lack of attestation of *ādivaṃśāvatarāṇa*) or vol. 8 (*Udyogaparvan*) pp. 495 (“The Parvasaṃgraha does not authorize ...”) and 546. The employment and distribution of *sub-parvan* names in the manuscript colophons warrants a separate study.

<sup>5</sup> Schlingloff's suggestion of *ādīparvan* is based on the major *parvan* name and there is no clue from the manuscript fragments (Schlingloff 1969, Franco 2004: 323).

manuscripts is used also to designate what others call *draupadīvivāha* (the *vaivāhīkaparvan* of the *parvasaṃgraha*), again excluding the *upākhyāna* and other secondary matter (the major part therefore of *MBh* 1.174-191); *sabhā*, covering much of *MBh* 2.1-11 (for which the names used in manuscript colophons are successively *sabhākriyā*, *lokapālasabhākhyāna* and *sabhāvarṇana*); and *rājasūya*, comprising the older parts of *MBh* 2.12-42 (excluding the *jarāsaṃdhavadha* and the *śiśupālavadha*; see Brockington 2002) and a shorter version of the dice games in *MBh* 2.44-72 (divided in manuscript colophons, as in the *parvasaṃgraha* list, into *dyūta* and *anudyūta*).<sup>6</sup> The six names of the Spitzer manuscript list preceding the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* constitute in fact a longer list than that in the *Harivaṃśa* which has just *ādau*, *āstike* and *sabhāparvaṇi* (at App. I. 40. 109 pr./20\*\*pr., 112 pr. and 114 pr.), although some manuscripts add in *paulome* (21\*\* pr.). However, although the Southern manuscripts begin their numbering again with the *Āstīkaparvan* (i.e. at *MBh* 1.13) and in Sukthankar's view this "seems to have preserved a valuable reminiscence of the time when the epic began with the *Āstīkaparvan*" (*MBh* CE: I, 987), van Buitenen's view that "much of the first book, notably *The Book of Āstīka*, must be later additions" (1973-78: I, xxiii) is considerably more likely.

Another possibility, though one which in my view is considerably less likely, is that the first three names in the list are *saṃbhava*, *pauloma* and *jatugṛha* (continuing then as above with *draupadīsvayaṃvara*, *sabhā* and *rājasūya*). It is worth noting again that the Southern manuscripts use the name *Sam̐bhavaparvan* for the whole of the *Ādīparvan*, so its use for whatever portion of the passages on origins once formed the beginning of the epic is plausible. The main merit of this alternative is that it would allow for the separate naming of the *jatugṛha* episode, as might be expected from its centrality to the narrative in both providing a motive for and exemplifying the hostility between the cousins. However, this name (with its variants *jātuṣa* and *jatugṛhadāha*) is used in manuscript colophons only from 1.129 to 1.138, rather than for the longer passage 1.124-138 designated by it in the Critical Edition, so the desirability of the episode being individually named should not be overestimated.

The name following *āraṇyakaṃ* in the Spitzer manuscript begins with *a* or *ā*, for which the most obvious candidate is Schlingloff's first suggestion of *āraṇeyam̐*. It is worth noting at this point that the *Harivaṃśa* list has *āraṇyake* at 115 pr. and *āraṇyakaparvam̐ āsādyā* at 116 pr. but that many manuscripts have *araṇīparvaṇi* (or another variant incorporating *araṇī-*) instead of the second. The names *āraṇīya*, *araṇītharaṇa* and *āraṇeya* are found in manuscript colophons for the passage *MBh* 3.295-299. So this designation for the last part of the third major *parvan* is well attested and presumably old; the only argument of any significance against its inclusion in the Spitzer manuscript list might be its relative brevity, although it is quite possible that it was once applied as well to some of the preceding material which leads up to it. Schlingloff's alternative suggestion (not, however, taken up in his

<sup>6</sup> The *sub-parvan* names used in those manuscript colophons that include them are *rājasūyasattra*, *rājasūyamantra*, *rājasūyārambha* or just *rājasūya* for 2.12-18 and 30-32, also in several for 34-42 as well. [Hereafter, I shall normally use the most frequent form alone, without listing variants.] Alternatively, but rather less probably, the name *dyūta* might have been used for this second part of the present major *parvan*.

tabular presentation) is *ājagara*, a *sub-parvan* name from the middle of the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* found in both the *parvasaṃgraha* list and the colophons of 3.174-178 in many manuscripts; however, this episode of the boa who reveals himself as Nahuṣa is more tenuously related to the main narrative than the final episode of the *yakṣa* to whom the Pāṇḍavas are led by the deer with the brāhman's fire-drill in its antlers.

Hiltebeitel, however, has suggested that this initial *a/ā* conceals an alternative name for the *Virāṭaparvan*, which is not otherwise named in this list – *ajñātavāsa*, “widely used” to describe the *Virāṭaparvan* – or else *abhimanyuvivāha*, the name used in many manuscripts for its last two *adhyāyas* (Hiltebeitel 2005: 459 n. 15). Hiltebeitel's second suggestion of *abhimanyuvivāha* (the *vaivāhikaparvan* of the *parvasaṃgraha*) can quickly be dealt with: logically, since it follows *āraṇyakam* immediately in the list but designates just the last two *adhyāyas* of the *Virāṭaparvan*, it excludes the major part of that book (for which other names are much more obvious), thus producing the result which Hiltebeitel seeks to avoid.

How “widely” *ajñātavāsa* was used to name the *Virāṭaparvan* seems open to question. The colophon of one manuscript (T2) does have the *adhyāya* (not *sub-parvan*) name *ajñātavāsamaṃtra* for *MBh* 4.3 and the colophon of another single manuscript (B4) has the *adhyāya* name *dhaumyaśikṣā ajñātavāsaprasthānam* for *MBh* 4.4; also, in their colophons to the entire *parvan*, D6 and D9, and probably also D7 and D8, list among the *vṛttāntāḥ* of the book *ajñātavāsaḥ*. The situation is not greatly different if we look at the text, especially when “unrecognised”, *ajñāta*, is the most obvious term to describe the condition imposed. In the *Ādiparvan* summaries we find *yatra praviśya nagaram chadmabhir nyavasanta te* (1.2.131ab) and *ajñātam ekaṃ rāṣṭre ca tathā varṣaṃ trayodaśam* (1.55.40cd); at 2.66.19ab = 2.67.10ab, the Pāṇḍavas are to spend the thirteenth year unrecognised in society (*trayodaśam ca sajana ajñātāḥ parivatsaram*); similarly *virāṭanagare gūdhā avijñātaś cariṣyatha* at 3.298.18cd, *channavāsārtham udyatāḥ* at 3.229.28d, and *ajñāyamānaiḥ* at 5.1.12b[l.v.] are also all couched in slightly variant phrasing; only *ajñātavāsaṃ vatsyantāḥ* at 3.299.1c uses precisely the term *ajñātavāsa*. Even in the *Virāṭaparvan* itself, there are only eleven occurrences of *ajñāta*, just three of which are in *ajñātavāsa* (*ajñātavāsam uṣitā* at 4.1.1c and 66.10c, *teṣāṃ na tāvan nirvṛtaṃ vartate tu trayodaśam | ajñātavāsam ...* at 4.42.4); this contrasts with the twenty occurrences of forms from  $\sqrt{\text{chad}}$ , predominantly *channa*, relating to the Pāṇḍavas' concealment within the book (including *channavāsinaḥ* at 4.25.11d; cf. *channavāsārtham* at 3.229.28d above).<sup>7</sup>

A more helpful approach to the inclusion of any *Virāṭaparvan* material is that of James Fitzgerald in relation to the next, the ninth, name in the Spitzer manuscript's list, *<ni>ryyāṇam*, when he suggests that the word may not designate the *abhiniryāṇaparvan* of the *parvasaṃgraha* list (used, mostly in the form *abhiniryāṇayātrā*,

<sup>7</sup> There is a significant number more forms from  $\sqrt{\text{chad}}$  within the book used in other contexts, including one where *bhasmachannam ivānalam* is used of Yudhiṣṭhira being appeased by Virāṭa (4.64.6d). It should also be noted that the instance of *ajñāta* at 4.66.25d, included in the total given above, is the reading of the N manuscripts only; the S manuscripts have a substantially different passage, in which the nearest equivalent is *prachannarūpaveṣatvāt* at 4.1144\* 37 pr. Also, for the sake of completeness, the occurrence of *ajñātavāsa* once alongside *Virāṭaparvan* in the Old Javanese paraphrase should be noted (see *MBh* V: xiii).

for *MBh* 5.146-156 in the manuscript colophons) but “could refer to the Pāṇḍavas’ leaving the forest, or their finally acquitting the terms of their wager with the Kauravas, or their ‘disappearance,’ or the setting out of the Kaurava army on the cattle raid against the Matsyas ... .” This means that it “could refer to some narrative element of an early version of what we now find in the *Virāṭaparvan*” (Fitzgerald 2006: 271 n. 17). This suggestion certainly deserves to be taken seriously, especially since, in the form in which it is made, it is compatible with the obvious lateness in language, metre and style of the extant *Virāṭaparvan*, while making some provision for the Pāṇḍavas’ year unrecognised in society, which from references in other books was integral to the narrative from an early period. On the whole, though, I would prefer to stay with Schlingloff’s identification of this as the *abhiniryāṇa* of the *Udyogaparvan*, despite the attendant problem that this involves its transposition with the *bhaga<vad>yāna*, the tenth name in the Spitzer manuscript list. In terms of the narrative as we currently know it, their natural sequence is *bhagavadyāna* first and *abhiniryāṇa* second; this is not simply the transposition of relatively independent material as in the case of my suggestion above that *aṃśāvatarāna* (or possibly *saṃbhava*) preceded *<pau>loma*, so it is of some consequence.<sup>8</sup> However, scribal transpositions are by no means unknown,<sup>9</sup> perhaps aided here by the similar endings of both names.

The name *bhagavadyāna* is applied in the manuscript colophons to *MBh* 5.70-137 and in some is extended to 138-149 also. Originally, it probably lacked the various sub-units that the manuscript colophons identify separately – *mātalivarānveṣaṇa* (5.96-103), *gālavacarita* (or *gālavopākhyāna*, 5.104-121), *yayātipātana* (5.118-121) and *vidulā-putrānuśāsana* (5.131-4) – and so it would have corresponded more nearly in length to the other units identified so far, although it may have included some part of the *saṃjayayāna* (applied in many manuscript colophons to 5.22-37 and in some also to 46-64) and *yānasam̐dhi* (5.65-69, and in D2 also most *adhyāyas* between 5.46 and 5.64).

Since *bhīṣmaparvvaṃ* follows the numeral 10 immediately in the Spitzer manuscript’s list, it must be the eleventh item, although the name on its own gives no clues as to the extent of the book at this period and, in my view, the whole *Bhagavadgītāparvan*, 6.14-41, would not yet have been present (Brockington 1998: 146-148; cf. also von Simson 1969). Equally, since the next fragment preserved reads *<śā>nt<i>parvvaṃ 15*, there must have been three names intervening.<sup>10</sup> The most obvious, indeed almost inevitable, candidates are the present *Droṇa*, *Karṇa* and *Śalya parvans*, although again we cannot know for certain just how much of each was included at this period. One slight qualification to this is that the third name might have been that of the *Gadāparvan*, the second of the two main constituent

<sup>8</sup> But the current order is not sacrosanct: James Fitzgerald comments (personal communication), “It is also conceivable that the contents of this putative *niryāṇa parvan* and this *bhagavadyāna parvan* were sufficiently different from those we have today, such that there is no problem of narrative sequence between them.”

<sup>9</sup> See for example the comments on the *Harivaṃśa* list below (although some of the transpositions there are authorial rather than scribal).

<sup>10</sup> It is one of the major advantages of this list that its numbering of the items allows such statements about the extent of the gaps. The standard objection that an *argumentum ex silentio* does not prove anything has only limited validity for a numbered list.

parts of the present *Śalyaparvan*, if Bhīma's fight with Duryodhana took precedence over Śalya's defeat as the main event of the narrative.<sup>11</sup> If these three were indeed the names, then the present *Sauptika* and *Strī parvans* were not listed.

Although on this evidence most probably all four of the "battle books", the *Bhīṣma*, *Droṇa*, *Karṇa* and *Śalya parvans*, were present in some form, their mere naming in no way guarantees their present extent. Here my earlier arguments (Brockington 1998: 145-150) are still just as relevant; I will not repeat them in detail but simply summarise their implications. Within the *Bhīṣmaparvan* – to identify merely the larger units – the cosmographical episode at 6.6-13, a large section around the *Bhagavadgītā* (from 6.16.21 to 42.1; cf. von Simson 1969) and the *Viśvopākhyāna* (61.30-64.18) should all be regarded as belonging to the process of expansion, reducing the bulk of the book by around a third immediately. Within the *Droṇaparvan* there is evidence of expansion in a slightly different pattern of formulaic *pādas* and the avoidance of hiatus but there are no clear criteria for determining how much or little beyond the obvious core in Droṇa's installation as *senāpati* (broadly 7.1-15) and his death (broadly 7.155-165) was present at any given period. With regard to the *Karṇaparvan*, its editor for the Critical Edition, P.L. Vaidya, suggested that its first two *adhyāyas* were added later (*MBh* 10: 676-7), which would apply in fact to the first five *adhyāyas*, and Walter Ruben suggested that the insults directed at Karṇa by Śalya in 8.27 constitute a caricature of the *Bhagavadgītā* relationship between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna (Ruben 1941: 221); beyond these obvious passages, there is some evidence of expansion, including the fact that the *Karṇaparvan*, as Hiltebeitel has noted, "is the only war book with *upākhyānas* built into its structure" (2005: 486; my inference is not of course one that Hiltebeitel himself would draw from this evidence), as well as its forming a single *parvan* in both the list of 100 and that of 18 *parvans*. Within the *Śalyaparvan*, the *Tīrthayātrāparvan* (9.29-53 in the CE, 9.34-53 in manuscript colophons) should certainly be regarded as later; as implied above, the core elements of this book are Śalya's defeat (designated as *śalyavadha* only in the colophon of 9.16, although the events leading up to it are narrated in the first sixteen *adhyāyas*) and Bhīma's smashing of Duryodhana's thigh with his club (the *gadāyuddha* of both manuscript colophons and the Critical Edition headings to 9.54-64).

I turn next to the presumed absence of the names of both the *Sauptika* and *Strī parvans*. There has been a natural tendency to interpret the *Sauptikaparvan* in eschatological terms (e.g. Biardeau 1981, Hiltebeitel 1972-73, Hiltebeitel 1976: 312-335, Katz 1985) and alternatively or additionally in sacrificial (e.g. also Tieken 2004: 10-16) and devotional, specifically Pāñcarātrin, terms (Katz 1985). These approaches all have some value in the interpretation of its meaning and purpose but the last in particular suggests the book's relative lateness (on a par with the

<sup>11</sup> A considerable number of manuscripts in fact divide the book into two distinct *parvans*, ending the *Śalyaparvan* after 9.28. Many manuscripts use *gadāyuddha* (occasionally *gadāparvan*) as the *subparvan* name for 9.54-64, with a few using that or *gadāparvan* sporadically before then for 9.29-33, 35, 37-40, 42 and 53. Three manuscripts (Ś2 K1.3) combine the names, as either *śalyagadāparvan* or *gadāśalyaparvan*, in their designation of the complete *parvan* in their post-colophons after 9.64. It is also worth noting that in the manuscript colophons *tīrthayātrā* (and variants *rāmatīrthayātrā*, *haladhara-tīrthayātrā*, *baladevatīrthayātrā*, *balabhadratīrthayātrā* and once *lāṅgulitīrthayātrā*) are used only for 9.34-53, not from 9.29 as in the CE.

*Nārāyaṇīya* in the *Śāntiparvan*), while a likely reason for its insertion can be found in Kṛṣṇa's prediction of the birth (and bringing back to life) of Parikṣit, actually narrated in the *Āśvamedhikaparvan*. There is an appropriateness to the presence of the basic content of the *Strīparvan* – the lamentations of their wives and mothers over the fallen warriors – as an epilogue to the dramatic events of the “battle books” which makes it plausible that a nucleus is early, even though much of this short *parvan* is clearly secondary; possibly this even briefer nucleus was once appended to the *Śalyaparvan* or prefaced the *Śāntiparvan*, thus explaining the absence of the name from the list in the Spitzer manuscript.

At this stage it is helpful to return to the *Harivaṃśa* list, which also has the *Śāntiparvan* as the fifteenth name, though no doubt coincidentally. The *Bhīṣmaparvan* is the sixth in its list and so it has a longer list between the *Bhīṣma* and *Śānti parvans*: *droṇaparvaṇi*, *karṇaparvaṇi*, *śalyaparvaṇi*, *gadāparvaṇi* (at 129 pr., replaced by *sauptike parvaṇi* in 29\*\* pr., read by the southern manuscripts), *strīparvaṇi*, *aiṣike* (at 131 post., omitted by several manuscripts). There are two points in particular to note: while including the *sub-parvan* name for the second half of the *Śalyaparvan*, the list places the second part of the *Sauptikaparvan* after the *Strīparvan*, not before, and it lacks the name of its first part. There is therefore a definite transposition from the current order in the majority of manuscripts; it need not therefore surprise us unduly if the Spitzer manuscript's list transposed *niryāṇa* and *bhagavadyāna*.<sup>12</sup> However, efforts were made at some point to “rectify” this situation by substituting 29\*\* for 1.129 in the southern manuscripts and also in some only by omitting 1.131, unless we regard the absence of this line as the more original state, in which case there was no reference to either part of the present *Sauptikaparvan*. The *Harivaṃśa* list does, though, definitely include the *Strīparvan*, in contrast to the Spitzer manuscript.

Both lists then have the *Śāntiparvan*, although there is of course no evidence in either as to its extent. On the one hand, there is a possibility that something corresponding to the *Strīparvan* (or at least to its core) was subsumed within the *Śāntiparvan* of the Spitzer manuscript's list and on the other hand there is a definite probability – approaching certainty – that it had not reached its present vast extent. The much shorter passage consisting of its first forty-five or so *adhyāyas* that Muneo Tokunaga has been pointing to as the original nucleus seems a definite possibility, while another would be the next stage of development that he has suggested: the inclusion of a shorter discourse on *rājadharma* by Bhīṣma, corresponding to 12.56-58, before Yudhiṣṭhira's consecration rather than after, where it is now located (Tokunaga 2002 and 2009).

Neither of the two lists then includes the *Anuśāsanaparvan*, since they both pass straight from the *Śāntiparvan* to the *Āśvamedhikaparvan*, although some southern

<sup>12</sup> This raises the question of whether there might once have been other narrative sequences in circulation than that known from our extant mss. I am indebted for this point to James Fitzgerald, who commented (personal communication) “To my mind, the *aiṣika parvan* does make more narrative sense following *strī*, and the encounter of the Kaurava women with the three desperadoes from the *sauptika* slaughter (in 11.10) does suggest that the *aiṣika* episode is yet to come. The HV order makes better sense than the Pune order and I suspect it refers to an actual version of the *MBh* that had this order.”



manuscripts of the *Harivaṃśa* “remedy” the omission by inserting 30\*\* (*anūsāsanike* ...). The absence of the *Anūsāsanaparvan* in both lists is fully in accord with what I consider to be its late inclusion within the *Mahābhārata* on grounds of both language and subject matter.<sup>13</sup> I would not, however, exclude the possibility that the substance of the final two *adhyāyas* of the present *Anūsāsanaparvan* (the *svargā-rohaṇikaṃ parva* ... *bhīṣmasya* of the *parvasaṃgraha* at 1.2.65cd, following *parva* ... *anūsāsanikaṃ* in ab) formed the conclusion of an originally much shorter *Śāntiparvan*, to which the first few verses of *Mbh* 12.47 could once have provided a lead-in.

The inclusion of the *Āśvamedhikaparvan* in the Spitzer manuscript list indicates that its nucleus at least is old. I have previously suggested that the book as a whole is relatively late, pointing to the small number of \* passages and the degree of self-reference to the text (Brockington 1998: 153). However, I also then noted that it is dominated by the *Anugītā*, which appears to be an insertion within a much shorter text, since 14.62 in effect resumes from the end of 14.8; this would eliminate not only the *Anugītā* (14.16-50) but also the preceding Saṃvarta-Indra episode and both the Uttanka episode and Kṛṣṇa’s narration of the battle that follow it, leaving a significantly more coherent text which could on the whole be earlier.<sup>14</sup> This lends weight to Christopher Minkowski’s generally convincing suggestion recently that “the main narrative of the Mahābhārata moves from disrupted royal sacrifice to violent weapon-sacrifice to completed royal sacrifice” (Minkowski 2001: 176; cf. also Feller 1999), that is, from Yudhiṣṭhira’s *rājasūya* in the *Sabhāparvan* via the battle books to Yudhiṣṭhira’s *aśvamedha* in the *Āśvamedhikaparvan*.

To the extent that they may imply that the *Ādiparvan* and the last four *parvans* are secondary, since they lie outside this main narrative, Minkowski’s arguments are at variance with the even more recent arguments put forward by Herman Tieken for these last four *parvans* as well as the *Sauptikaparvan* forming part of “a grand design underlying the story as a whole”, which includes the prediction of their content much earlier in the narrative (2.11.61-69), on the basis “that ultimately the Mahābhārata deals with, and is shaped by, the endless nature of the sacrificial cycle” (Tieken 2005: 6, 9). Tieken’s arguments are indeed based on the sacrificial imagery to be found throughout the text but they differ significantly from those of Minkowski (to whose article, incidentally, he does not refer, although he is aware of earlier work by him), returning in fact to the much older ideas of Held about sacrifice and potlatch (Tieken 2005: 36-46; Held 1935). They may provide a rationale for the inclusion of these *parvans* in the developed text but they do not establish their presence from the beginning.

The *Āśvamedhikaparvan* is the last name extant in the Spitzer manuscript list. From its position in the list it is clearly number 16 (although the units figure is now lost) and there is naturally a strong temptation to conjecture that there would have been two more names originally to bring the number up to the total of 18, so widely

<sup>13</sup> Another indicator of its ambiguous status is that the colophons of several mss give *Śāntiparvan* as the *parvan* name, no doubt reflecting an intermediate period when it was subsumed within that book, before it was separated out from it.

<sup>14</sup> We may note that the formulaic *ataḥ paraṃ pravakṣyāmi*, which occurs almost exclusively in the *Āśvamedhikaparvan*, is in fact limited there to the *Anugītā*, suggesting a quite distinct origin for it.

significant as a number within the *Mahābhārata* (and later the Purāṇic) tradition. Schlingloff suggests that the gap between *āśvamedhikam* 1<6> and the mention of *khileṣu*, which precedes the unfortunately fragmentary indication of the extent of the text in *śloka*s,<sup>15</sup> probably did contain two names, while recognising that it may have contained more than two (Schlingloff 1969: 335); the possible number is obviously dependent on the dimensions of the palm leaf but there are insufficient clues to determine these. Rather than indulge in what would essentially be speculation as to which names might have been there, I would only add two remarks: that the balance of probabilities is strongly against all four names having been included and that we should not be too influenced by the number 18.

On the other hand, the *Harivaṃśa* list does contain the names of all the last four *parvans* (*āśramanivāse* 135 pr., *mausale* 136 pr., *mahāprasthānike* 137 pr., and *svargaparvaṇi* 138 pr.) before ending with *harivaṃśasamāptau* at 139 pr., corresponding to the *khilas* of the Spitzer manuscript. What should particularly be noted, however, is that the list in the text totals 19 excluding the *Harivaṃśa* (or even 20 or 21, if either or both of the insertion of *paulome* in 21\*\* pr. and the addition of *araṇī* through the variant reading for 116 pr. are accepted into the total).<sup>16</sup> While this total is close to the favoured 18 for the major *parvans*, it is not that figure and there are several additions to and omissions from the standard 18 *parvan* list. Nor does it have any similarity to the *parvasaṃgraha* list of 100 minor *parvans* (indeed, its total of 20 including the *Harivaṃśa* is precisely one fifth as long as that list). Sukthankar's suggestion (1944: 202 n.1) that the longer list was the older – based on the claimed identity of most names in the shorter list with the first in the relevant book in the longer list – could even be the reverse of the truth. What the *Harivaṃśa* list does clearly indicate is that the inclusion of these four *parvans* was earlier than the inclusion of the *Anuśāsanaparvan*.

Is there anything that can be determined about the history of these last four major *parvans*? Until more detailed linguistic and stylistic analysis of the *Mahābhārata* has been undertaken than is yet the case, any suggestions must remain largely subjective. In his listing of the constituent parts of his “main *MBh*”, James Fitzgerald includes “most of the events of the *Āśramavāsikaparvan* (including the *putradarśana*) and the *Mahāprasthānika* and *Svargārohaṇika parvans*” (Fitzgerald 2006: 270-271). These certainly have a coherence as a kind of epilogue to the main narrative but I suspect that they are indeed just that, composed at a later date like the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* to satisfy audience curiosity about what comes afterwards. With regard to the *Āśramavāsikaparvan*, the presence of a *phalaśruti* at

<sup>15</sup> This figure for the number of *śloka*s in the text immediately follows its mention of the *khilas* and so must relate to the *Mahābhārata*: *sarvvasya ślokā[gram] .. .. | .. .. (s)r(a)m ekaṃ ṣaṣṭīś ca saha(s)r*. The latter part is clear enough as 60,000 but the prior part is more open to conjecture, although the layout and the *ekaṃ* mean that the most likely reading is 1,000.

<sup>16</sup> The fact that there are minor variants for two of the names – *prasthāne* in 31\*\* or *prasthānike* in 32\*\* and *svargārohaṇike* in 33\*\* – does not affect the position. Additionally, the four mss which omit l. 131 containing *aiṣīke* (T1 G3-5), thus both regularising the order and reducing the names by one, are part of a larger group (T1.2 G1.3-5 M2.4) which adds *paulome* at 21\*\* pr. and so they too in fact have 19 names in total. These same mss are also part of the same larger group which replaces *gadā* with *sauptike* by substituting 29\*\* for 1.129. Their scribes are evidently concerned to reproduce more nearly what by then was no doubt the standard list.

15.41.26-28 suggests complications in its textual history, short as the text is. Fitzgerald's listing omits the *Mausalaparvan*, which in its concentration on Kṛṣṇa and the Yādavas in some sense anticipates the *Harivaṃśa*, however complex the relationship in detail. But the *Harivaṃśa* does appear in both the Spitzer manuscript (as *khileṣu*) and the *Harivaṃśa*'s own list. So does this imply that the *Mausalaparvan* should also appear in both? It is a possibility but equally the question arises as to just what constituted the *Harivaṃśa*. If we accept the suggestion by Horst Brinkhaus that the core of that text consisted of a world history from creation up to the dynasty of the *Mahābhārata* heroes (Brinkhaus 1990 and 2002: 159), then the concentration on Kṛṣṇa and the devotional aspect are secondary developments. But the *Mausalaparvan* raises many fundamental religious questions, as Phyllis Granoff has observed (Granoff forthcoming).<sup>17</sup> It seems reasonable therefore to link it more with the developed *Harivaṃśa* than with its core and it may be possible to see its origin in Gāndhārī's curse at *MBh* 11.25.40-41, which is in effect a prediction of the events narrated in it and so perhaps the starting point for the elaboration of the narrative. Gāndhārī's curse specifically included Kṛṣṇa's death but the curse of the sages angered by the Yādava youths' attempted trick (*MBh* 16.2.9) just as specifically excludes Kṛṣṇa (and Balarāma) – a discrepancy which Granoff notes for its theological implications but which has textual implications too. The *Mahāprasthānika* and *Svargārohaṇa parvans* must really be considered as a unit but, in relation to the latter, the fact that its final *adhyāya* repeats several verses from what was once the opening of the *Ādiparvan* (18.5.34-36,38-39ab = 1.56.26,28-29.33.19ab) reveals that it is one of the latest passages in the epic.

Finally, the list in the Spitzer manuscript ends with *khileṣu*, which must refer to some part at least of the present *Harivaṃśa*. Brinkhaus has suggested as its kernel “roughly the *adhyāyas* 1-10; 20-23.121 and 114. In addition to that, we have to include the well-attested CE appendix I,40, which originally followed immediately after *adhyāya* 114” (Brinkhaus 2002: 160-161). This or something close to it may well have been what is meant by *khileṣu* in the Spitzer manuscript.

The lengths of the units suggested above as being intended by the names in the Spitzer manuscript list vary between a minimum of five and a maximum of nearly fifty *adhyāyas* for those where a length has been indicated. These extremes are much less than with either the major *parvans* of the Critical Edition, which range from a mere 3 *adhyāyas* in the *Mahāprasthānikaparvan* to the vast 353 *adhyāyas* of the *Śāntiparvan*, or the *sub-parvans*, which range from 1 *adhyāya* (for example, the first three: *Anukramaṇī*, *Parvasaṃgraha* and *Pauṣya*) to 186 for the *Mokṣadharmaparvan*, but they are still substantial. While there is a general assumption, not usually made explicit, that the subdivisions of any given text were originally of roughly equal length, this should not be raised into a dogma. In any case, with the smallest of the units suggested above the point was also made that names might well have been used to designate a somewhat larger amount of text, since the major episode might have subsumed one or more minor ones. Thus the likely lengths actually range from the teens to around fifty *adhyāyas*, a degree of variation which seems

<sup>17</sup> Apart from this article (which probes the theological issues raised by its narrative through to an Oriya version) and some discussion by Tieken (2005), the *Mausalaparvan* has been little studied. I am most grateful to Professor Granoff for sending me an advance copy of her article.

plausible for a fairly early stage in the growth of the *Mahābhārata* as we now have it in the Critical Edition.

The evidence of the list found in the Spitzer manuscript is thus in my view not only compatible with but also valuable evidence, albeit incomplete evidence, for the shape of the text at the earliest date for which we have any testimony. In conjunction with another rather later list found in the *Harivaṃśa* and the *sub-parvan* names contained in the colophons of some manuscripts of the *Mahābhārata* (late as these colophons are in the history of the text), it is substantially more useful than the over-rated *parvasaṃgraha* list (*MBh* 1.2.33-71) for an improved understanding of the text of the *Mahābhārata* and its history.

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