An Atharvanic hymn to night: text-critical and linguistic remarks on the interpretation of Śaunakīya 19.50 = Paippalāda 14.9*

Leonid Kulikov
Ghent University
Leonid.Kulikov@UGent.be

Abstract
This paper offers an analysis and a new translation of an Atharvanic hymn addressed to the goddess of Night, Rātrī, attested in both recensions of the Atharvaveda (AV), in the Śaunakīya, and in the Paippalāda. The translation is accompanied by a philological and text-critical commentary as well as an analysis of some linguistic features of the Vedic language of this period, such as the use of emphatic reflexive pronouns and the periphrastic progressive tense (usually disregarded in standard Vedic grammars).

Keywords: Atharvaveda, Vedic, hymn, emphatic reflexive, progressive tense

Introduction
The Atharvaveda (AV) is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating Vedic texts. On the one hand, it belongs to the oldest layers of the Vedic heritage, being, in its oldest parts, essentially contemporaneous with the younger parts of the earliest Vedic text, the Rgveda (RV). Furthermore, this collection of hymns and spells contains extremely archaic fragments of common Indo-Iranian and Indo-European magic and ritual knowledge as well as the earliest specimens of Old Indian philosophical and cosmogonic thought (see, for instance, Bloomfield 1899, which to this day remains a useful survey of the field). On the other hand, since it was canonized much later than the RV and even some younger Vedic texts of the Yajurveda school, the AV reveals numerous traces of relatively recent editorial work. This also explains its lesser degree of preservation as compared with the RV and some other Vedic texts. Accordingly, the study of the textual history of the AV remains one of the most vital issues of Vedic philology. In particular, the relationship between the two recensions of the AV, Śaunakīya and Paippalāda, is one of the most challenging topics for a Vedicist. The Śaunakīya, which is much better studied and has many translations, represents a more recent development within the Atharvavedic tradition, while ample evidence from the more authentic Paippalāda (which is therefore

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presumably closer to the hypothetical Atharvavedic archetype), originally only scarcely known from the Kashmir manuscript, has only recently become available to Indologists, thanks to the discovery of the much better-preserved Orissa manuscript tradition (see, in particular, Witzel 1985; for a general survey of research in the field, see also introductory chapters in Zehnder 1999 and Griffiths 2009).

Furthermore, although it is contemporaneous with the late Ṛgveda, the AV was probably not quite identical to the RV as regards its linguistic and dialectal basis: it exhibits several linguistic features quite different from both the language of the RV and the varieties attested in younger (middle Vedic) texts of the Yajurveda.

In this regard, book 19 of the Śaunakīya recension is of particular interest. This part of the Śaunakīya is borrowed almost entirely from the Paippalāda and, in many cases, helps us to trace editorial changes applied to the original Atharvavedic text. It also contains several important hymns testifying to new trends in the Vedic pantheon and religious system at the end of the early Vedic period.

This is also the case for a group of four hymns (AVŚ 19.49–52) dedicated to the goddess of night, Rātri (only once becoming the object of devotion in the Ṛgveda, in RV 10.127).

The present paper offers an analysis of an Atharvanic hymn addressed to the goddess of night, Rātri. The hymn is found in both recensions of the AV, in the Śaunakīya (AVŚ 19.50), and in the Paippalāda (AVP 14.9). In the Śaunakīya-Samhitā it concludes the group of the four Atharvavedic hymns (AVŚ 19.47–50) dedicated to Rātri.1 According to AV-Parīśīṣṭa 4.3–5, hymns 47–8 and 49–50 are thematically grouped into two “sense hymns” (arthisūkta; see Griffiths 2003: 5 f. and, most recently Rotaru (forthcoming)), applied in the ritual of worshipping night. The metre is anuṣṭubh: that is, stanzas normally consist of four octosyllabic verses or pādas (the number of syllables is indicated in brackets after each pāda).

In what follows I offer a new translation of the hymn on the basis of textual evidence available from both recensions, accompanied by a philological and linguistic commentary. In spite of its relatively short length (seven stanzas), this hymn offers valuable evidence for a study of the peculiarities of the language of the Atharvaveda, which exhibits both archaisms typical of the early Vedic period and some innovations peculiar to the end of this period and marking a transition to the later, Middle Vedic, stage of Old Indo-Aryan.

I will use the standard edition by R. Roth and W. D. Whitney (hereafter abbreviated as RW), the edition by Viśva Bandhu (for the Śaunakīya recension) and the edition by Bhattacharya (for the Paippalāda). Instead of providing a full critical apparatus (which can be found in Pandit (ed.) and Viśva Bandhu (VB) (ed.) for the Śaunakīya recension; while for the Paippalāda recension, Bhattacharya’s edition provides the necessary references to the evidence from both the Orissa (Or.) and Kashmirian (Kashm.) manuscripts). I will only note

1 For an analysis and translation of another hymn from this group, AVŚ 19.49 = AVP 14.8, see Kulikov 2009.
the most important unclear passages and discrepancies between the two recensions.


Śaunakīya 19.50 = Paippalāda 14.9: translation and commentary

**AVŚ 19.50.1 = AVP 14.9.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>abd: AVŚ 19.47.8abd = AVP 6.20.9abd</th>
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<tr>
<td>+āndham rāṭrī tṛṣṭādhūmam (+tīṣṭhādhūmam ?)</td>
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<td>(8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>aśīrśānam āhīṁ krṇu</td>
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<td>(8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>+aṣkṣyāu vṛkṣya nīr jah[p]y</td>
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<td>(8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>+ā +stēnaṁ drupadē jahi</td>
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O Night, make the tṛṣṭādhūma-snake (?) blind, headless [or: make the snake blind, breathless (?), headless]! Strike out the wolf’s (robber’s) eyes! Strike at the thief [bound] to the post.

a. Śaun. mss. āmḍha, ed. VB āḍha, Paipp. andham

Śaun. mss. tṛṣṭādhūmam, Paipp. Or. mss. tīṣṭhādhūmam, Kashm. tīṣṭādhūmam

c. Śaun. mss. aksāu, aksyāu, Paipp. aksāu, ed. RW +aṣkṣyāu

cd. Śaun. mss. nīr jahyās tēna tām, Paipp. Or. nīr jahyās tenam

d. Śaun. drupadē, Paipp. Or. mss. dupade, dupade, Kashm. nṛpate

ab: tṛṣṭādhūma-snake (?) [or: tīṣṭhādhūmam ?] – an unclear word, attested also in AVŚ 19.47.8 = AVP 6.20.9. Śaunakīya reads tṛṣṭādhūmam, Paipp. has tīṣṭhādhūmam (tīṣṭha dhūmam?). All interpreters understand this word as the epithet or name of a snake (thus rendered by Ludwig and Whitney; cf. also Griffiths 2009: 221: “the tīṣṭhādhūma snake”). The variant of this bahuvrīhi compound preserved in the Śaunakīya recension is translated as “mit dem gift[i]gen hauch” (Kuhn 1864: 132), “von beissendem Hauch” (Zimmer 1879: 180), “von widerlichem geruche” (Ludwig), “harsh-smoked (?)” (Whitney), “of pungent/poisonous smoke” (Griffiths).

The reading attested in Paipp. mss. (tīṣṭhādhūmam) appears semantically more attractive: this might suggest the emendation +tīṣṭhādhūmam. Assuming the meaning ‘breath’ for the word dhūmam- ‘smoke, vapour’ (cf. one of the glosses of the indigenous commentary nī[ṣ]vēśa-dhūma (visvēśa-dhūma ?) ‘vapour of exhalation’, which connects this epithet with the stinky breath of a snake), one might tentatively translate the compound in question as ‘(the one, whose) breath stopped’ – i.e.: tīṣṭhaddhūmam ... krṇu ‘make (the snake) breathless’.

d: thief [bound] at the post – this translation is convincingly substantiated by Griffiths (2009: 222), instead of Whitney’s rendering ‘cast the thief into the snare’. As Griffiths explains, drupadā- is “not a snare into which a robber
can be cast, but a post to which or a fetter in which he can be bound […] and then beaten”.

**AVŚ 19.50.2 = AVP 14.9.2**

>yē te rātrīy anadvāhas
+tīksṇāśṛṅgāh sūvāśāvah
	tēbhir no adyā pāraya-
-āti durgāṇi viśvāhā

b. Šaun. mss. tīksṇa°

Those draft-oxen of yours, O night, which are sharp-horned, very swift – with them make us today pass over [regions which are] difficult to traverse, [and please do so] always.

cd. The juxtaposition of adyā ‘today’ and viśvāhā ‘always, every day’ is apparently nonsensical. Some translators tried to find a reasonable interpretation by separating the time of causing the event and the time of caused event from each other (cf. for instance, Whitney: “do thou today pass us always […] over difficulties”; Sani: “facci oggi oltrepasare sempre i pericoli”), but this interpretation is hardly possible for a morphological causative (pāraya), which strongly implies the condition of the unity of time of the causing and caused events (see Wierzbicka 1975: 497). Ludwig suggested a different (but hardly more acceptable) solution, rendering viśvāhā as ‘everywhere’: “mit denen sollst du uns heute retten über alle gefahr und überall”. The problem can probably be solved by analysing the last request of this verse as containing a co-ordinating structure, i.e.: ‘today [and] always’ – as suggested by Elizarenkova (1976: 329): “… With them pass us today, Every day (pass) over dangers!” ‘Na nix ty segodnja perevezi nas, / Každyj den’ (perevozi) čerez opasnosti’.

**AVŚ 19.50.3 = AVP 14.9.3**

*rātrīm- *rātrīm āriṣyantas
	tārema tanuvā vayám

gambhirām āplavā iva

nā tareyur ārātayahā

May we ourselves (tanvā) cross night after night unharmed, [while our] enemies may not cross [it], like floats that do not (properly) float [will not cross] a deep [water].

a: *rātrīm- *rātrīm: According to Wackernagel (1930: 185 f.) and Bloomfield and Edgerton (1934: 79 f.), after the Ṛgveda, rātri- ‘night’ also occurs with the

2 Cf. Wierzbicka’s (1975: 497) explanation of this condition: “If John wounded Bill on Saturday as a result of which Bill died on Sunday, we could not say that John killed Bill on Saturday, nor that he killed him on Sunday. A sentence like ‘John killed Bill at the time ℓ’ implies that all the events involved took place simultaneously, and not successively”.

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short vowel stem (ṛātrī-). Note, however, that of eighteen occurrences of the accusative form in the Atharvaveda (AV), consistently transcribed in all editions as ṛātrim, in accordance with mss. readings and the Padapātha, the only three occurrences that appear in metrically distinctive contexts3 (AV Ś 19.49.5a; 19.50.3a; and 19.55.1a) are attested in book 19. All these occur in contexts where we typically expect long syllables (all – in the fourth syllable, shown in bold type), in accordance with the tristubh schemes (∪-∪-∪-∪ and ∪-∪-∪-∪∪∪-∪∪∪∪) and the two possible schemes for anūstubh stanzas: ∪-∪-∪-∪∪∪∪ (the standard pattern prevailing in the early Rgveda) and ∪-∪-∪-∪∪∪∪ (the innovative pattern, which becomes common in the late Rgveda and Atharvaveda; see e.g. Macdonell 1916: 438 and 439, with n. 5). The relevant passages run as follows: śivām ṛātrim +ah,yi sūryam ca (AV Ś 19.49.5a); ṛātrim ṛātrim ārisyantas (AV Ś 19.50.3a); and ṛātrim ṛātrim āprayātam bhāranto (AV Ś 19.55.1a). This means that we have good reason to read *ṛātrim in these three occurrences (and, accordingly, in all other cases); see also Kulikov 2010: 174, n. 1.

ab: tanvā is the instrumental singular form of the emphatic reflexive pronoun, or intensifier, tanū-, employed in adnominal usage (see Kulikov 2007b: 1416 f.) (cf. Russian ‘sam’, German ‘selbst’). The emphatic reflexive usage of this lexeme often poses problems in translation, and we should recall here the main conclusions of a series of studies on reflexive constructions and the expression of reflexivity in Vedic published within the last decade (Kulikov 2000, 2007b, Pinault 2001, Hock 2006, and, most recently, with some criticisms contra the first four, Hettrich 2010). tanū-, alongside its original meaning (‘body’), has two grammatical functions. First, it can be used as a reflexive pronoun (although, according to Hettrich, not completely grammaticalized), i.e. for the expression of co-reference with the subject (constructions of the type “Peter cured himself” or “Peter heilt sich”: the Agent and the Patient are referentially identical). Second, tanū- can be employed as an emphatic reflexive, or intensifier.4 One of the main functions of intensifiers is to signal that the referent “is to some degree unexpected in the discourse role or clausal role where it occurs” (Kemmer 1995: 57). This type can be illustrated by such usages as “Peter cured John himself / Peter heilte Hans selbst” (that is, without the help of a professional physician or someone else). Another subtype, called “adnominal”, singles out the referent from a set of items somehow related to it (cf. Mary ~ Mary’s children, Mary’s brother etc.; London ~ centre of London, London’s suburbs), as in “I prefer the surroundings of London to London itself” (note the ungrammaticality of “*I prefer Paris to London itself”; example from König and Gast 2006: 228 ff.). The two functions, i.e. reflexive proper and emphatic reflexive, or intensifier, can be expressed by two different forms in some languages – for instance, in German (sich vs. selbst) or Russian (sebja

3 By “metrically distinctive” contexts for the second syllable of this form I understand those where: (i) -m is followed by a vowel (that is, this syllable is not closed and therefore not necessarily long); and (ii) the metre requires either a long or a short syllable (i.e. is not indifferent with regard to the length).

4 On this function, see in particular, König and Siemund 1999, and König and Gast 2006.
vs. sam). By contrast, some other languages syncretically express them by means of the same form – as is the case with English (-self). Vedic exemplifies the latter type of language, using the same word, tanū- (and, in the later language, ātmán-), for both functions.

Although the reflexive function of tanū- is by no means a novelty, having been noted as early as Grassmann’s (1873) dictionary and, later, in Wackernagel’s grammar (1930)⁵ (though without due attention to emphatic and heavy reflexives of the type ‘sich selbst’), we still, and not infrequently, find inexact or confusing renderings of this word. For instance, RV 10.128.5c = AVŚ 5.3.7c mā hāsmahī praśajā mā tanūbhīr “let us not suffer loss in progeny, not in ourselves” is translated by Geldner (1951: III, 358) as “[n]icht möchten wir der Kinder noch des eigenen Leibes verlustig gehen”.

Returning to our Atharvavedic passage. tanvā must belong with the finite verb (tárema), as Whitney suggested in his comments, rather than with the participle in pāda a (as it is rendered in Whitney’s translation: “receiving no harm with ourselves”). The sense must be as follows: “May we ourselves cross [or: as for us, may we cross] ... (while our enemies may not cross...”).⁶ Both the personal pronoun vayám (which is not necessarily overt in Vedic, typically being dropped) and the intensifier tanvā are used to emphasize the opposition “we” ~ “our enemies”.

AVŚ 19.50.4 = AVP 14.9.4

yāthā +śyāṃkāh (śāmyākhaḥ?) prapātan (8)
+preyivān nānuvidyāte (8)
evā rātrī prā pātaya (8)
yō asmāṁ abhyaghāyāti (8)

As a [tiny] millet-seed (or: particle of śamī-wood?) that is flying away cannot be found (anymore), once it has gone away, – so, O night, make [him] fly away who is trying to harm us.

a. Śaun. mss. śāmyākhaḥ, ed. RW +śyāṃkāh, Paipp. śāmyākhaḥ
b. Śaun. mss. apavān, ed. RW + aparām, Orissa mss. predīvān (ed. Bhattacharya predīvān, crit. app. pre(ti →)divān), Kashmir ms. tedīvāṃ

a: [tiny] millet-seed (or: particle of śamī-wood (?)) +śyāṃkāh (śāmyākhaḥ?) – Ed. Roth/Whitney emends +śyāṃkāh ‘millet-seed’ (against the mss.), which perfectly fits the context. The reading śāmyākhaḥ, found in the mss. of both recensions, Śaunakīya and Paippalāda, is, however, not entirely impossible. The word śāmyākhaḥ ‘made from śamī-wood’ (Prosopis cineraria), attested in the Kauśika-Sūtra, might refer to a tiny particle of śamī-wood, which is used for producing fire (A. Lubotsky, personal communication).

⁵ For full references, see Kulikov 2007b.
⁶ Cf. the use of the emphatic reflexive in the Russian translation of this passage: “My-to sami da preodoleem ... a vot naši vragi ...”.
b: ... is gone away ... (preyivān) – Šaunakīya mss. read an unclear word (apavān), for which ed. Roth/Whitney emends aparrām ‘far, further’ (and this emendation is adopted in Ludwig’s translation). In his translation Whitney returns to the original reading, taking apavān as pres. participle of the verb āpar-vā and translating it as ‘blowing away’. Note, however, that the subject of the verb (āpa)-vā ‘blow (away)’, both in transitive and intransitive usages, is typically wind, air flow, etc., not the object being blown or driven (away) by a wind. Accordingly, the participle of the transitive verb āpa-vā ‘blow away; drive away by blowing’ can hardly be an epithet of the subject of this sentence (be it a millet-seed or a particle of śamī-wood). An entirely different reading (which, obviously, cannot be reconciled with the Šaunakīya version) is attested in the Paipp.: Orissa mss. read predivān, while in Kashmir ms. we have tedivām. A possible conjecture might be preyivān (= pra-šivān) ‘gone away’ (with the d/y confusion, quite common in Orissa mss.), i.e. a perfect active participle of prā-i (Werner Knobl, personal communication).

AVŚ 19.50.5 = AVP 14.9.5
āpa stenām +vāsomathāṃ
+goajām utā tāskaram
ātho yó ārvataḥ śiro
’ābhidhāya ninīṣati

[Keep] away the thief who steals clothes(?), and the robber running off cattle (cattle-lifter), but also [the one] who, covering [their = coursers’] head[s], tries to lead [away] coursers.

a: Śaun. mss. vāso, Paipp. Or. vāsomatham, vāsamathāṃ Kashm.

a: ... who steals clothes (?) (vāsomatham) – Pāda a is lacking two syllables in Šaun. mss. The heavy emendation suggested in ed. Roth/Whitney, āpa...avāsayas (in Whitney’s translation: “Thou didst make [the thief] stay away”) is unlikely. More plausible is the emendation suggested by Insler (1970: 147 f.) on the basis of the reading attested in the Paipp. (rejected by Whitney), +vāsomathāṃ: ‘clothing-stealing (thief)’ (with the final accentuation, in accordance with the agentive meaning of this compound); a similar reading (vāsamatham) was noticed for Paipp. already by Barret (1927: 248). A parallel emendation in pāda b, +gomātham (‘cow-stealing’), suggested by Insler on the basis of the Kashm. ms. of the Paipp. and in analogy with +vāsomathāṃ, is unnecessary. The reading gor ajām (ajā- is a derivative of the root aj ‘drive’) is quite possible in the context; and the compound go-ajam (the emendment suggested already in Whitney/Lanman’s commentary ad loc.) attested in the Orissa mss. of the Paipp. is even more appropriate in this passage (W. Knobl, personal communication), being perfectly parallel with the compound

7 Cf. also the compound vastra-māthi- ‘cloth-thief’ attested in RV 4.38.5a.
vāsomathā- and indirectly corroborated by the compound go-ājana- attested in the Rgveda.

cd: ...covering the head of a courser ... (ārvataḥ śiro ’abhidhāya) – i.e. slipping on a halter on the muzzle of a horse; thus in accordance with Whitney’s interpretation, against that of Insler (1970: 147–8), who believed that this phrase must refer to a thief hiding his face (i.e.: ‘covering [his] head’), rather than to covering the head of a horse with a halter.

AVŚ 19.50.6 = AVP 14.9.6

yād +adyā (adyā?) rātri subhage
vibhājanty āyo vāsu
+ tàd etád asmān bhōjaya
+ āthēd anyān +upāyasi

When, you, O fortunate night, will be sharing (or: will come sharing?) out wealth today, then make this [wealth] benefit us, and only then you will go to the others!

This stanza is discussed at length by Zehnder (2011: 59 f.), who offers the following translation: “Wenn Du heute, glückbringende Nacht, Gut verteilen gehst, so (* tàd) lass dieses (Gut) uns Nutzen bringen; und dann erst (* āthēd) magst du zu anderen hingeihen”. I essentially follow Zehnder’s interpretation.

a: adyā – Whitney explains the final length as sandhi with the preverb (i.e. adyā-á... āyo ‘you will come’), contra the Padapātha (Pp.) and ed. Pandit, which saw here a common metrical lengthening that is not very common in this metrical position, however (W. Knobl, personal communication). Accordingly, there are good reasons to adopt the reading attested in the Paippalāda (adya). āyo, taken by all translators as the subjunctive form of the verb i ‘go’ (or ā + i ‘come’), could be interpreted as a (semi-)auxiliary verb connected with the participle vibhājantī, to form a particular periphrastic formation that can be tentatively rendered as future continuous. Such periphrastic formations are quite common in the language of the AV.

c: Roth and Whitney’s conjecture + tàd (for yād, which must also be a secondary replacement, obviously responsible for the accent on bhōjaya) is very likely. The Paipp. version must be corrupt, also in Orissa mss. The causative bhrājaya-hardly makes any sense in the context (‘make shine’?), while bhōjaya- is attested from the AV onwards and perfectly fits the context.

d: and only then you will go to the others – A difficult pāda; the emendation of ed. Roth and Whitney: yāthedām + nāpāyati (‘that it [i.e. goods, riches] go not
away’) is unlikely. The Paippalāda version seems to preserve the original reading. The negative particle ná must result from misinterpretation of ‘athaed anān ... (→ yathēdam nā...). In contrast to pāda a, the subjunctive ayasi should be taken as a full verb (‘you will go (to the others)’), rather than as an auxiliary (‘you will be [making this wealth benefit (?)] (the others)’), since in that case the preverb upa will be unexplained.

**AVŚ 19.50.7 = AVP 14.9.7**

uṣāse naḥ pāri dehi (8)
sārvān rātṛy anāgāsah (8)
usā no āhne ā bhajād (8)
āhas tūbhyaṃ vibhāvari (8)

O Night, commit us undamaged, free from sins, to the Dawn; may the Dawn deliver us to the Day, the Day (back) to you, O multiply shining one.

a: Śaun. mss. pāri dehi, Paipp. pari dhehi

b: sārva- is rendered in accordance with the interpretation of this word as ‘whole, undamaged’ (cf. Lat. salvus; see Gonda 1955), rather than as ‘all’ (Whitney: ‘commit us all’, etc.).

d: The epithet vibhāvan- (vocative singular feminine form vibhāvari) ‘multiply shining, wide-shining’ (derived from the verb vi-bhā ‘shine out, shine widely, multiply shine’, where the preverb vi should probably be understood in the distributive meaning; see, for instance, Kulikov 2007a: 723) is common in the context of hymns to night (cf. AVŚ 19.49.6ab = AVP 14.8.6ab stōmasyā no vibhāvari ‘rātri rājeva joṣase ‘you will enjoy our prayer, O multiply-shining Night, like a king’, AVŚ 19.49.4d = AVP 14.8.4d purū rūpāṇi kṛṣṇe vibhāti ‘You make for yourself [i.e. you take] many forms, multiply shining’; see Kulikov 2009: 10 ff.) and may refer to the starry night-sky: multiply shining = shining with many stars.

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