
[84] *Constituent-order in Sanskrit bahuvrīhi compounds. Do all the modern and ancient interpreters actually look for the qualifier?*

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The most recent inquiries on Sanskrit compounding assume that the structure of an exocentric compound involves an external (almost null) head affixed to (and being in a specific relation with) the matching endocentric compound (Kiparsky 1982:139; Gillon 2007:3; Lowe 2015:74 n.12; 102). Thus, a transfer of the relation between the constituents and their order from a tatpuruṣa to a matching bahuvrīhi is taken for granted, despite the rarity of synchronic occurrences of these supposed pairs (Renou 1961:114). Modern and ancient interpreters in fact contrast karmadhārayas, made up of two co-referential constituents, i.e. a qualifier and a qualificand, with bahuvrīhis, in an attempt to understand “where” the “adjective” (including the verbal adjective in –ta) occurs (Bopp 1827:318-320; Wackernagel 1957:302ff.). They concentrate on the fact that the qualifier unexpectedly occupies the right slot in bahuvrīhis (unlike in karmadhārayas), this qualifier being represented both by a past participle (putra-hata- “whose son/-s has/have been slain” PB 8.2.4; 19.3.8; KS 12.10 instead of hatá-putra TS 2.4.12.1, ŚB 12.7.1.1) and by a nominal stem conveying the sense of a locative case (e.g. vájrahasta- “having a thunderbolt in hand” RV 8.24.24 instead of the expected *hásta-vajra-). In a diachronic perspective, Wackernagel (1957:302-3) considered the occurrence of a past participle in the second slot of a bahuvrīhi as the fruit of mere irregularity, which was secondarily re-interpreted as an exception due to the optional transitive sense of a group of these participles. He explicitly mentions a list of compounds, appended to rule 2.2.37 in Pāṇini’s grammar, which traditionally teaches the optional use of specific past participles as first or second constituents in bahuvrīhis, e.g. taila-pīta- and pīta-taila- “who has sipped sesame oil”. As for the locative, Whitney (1889:507) and Wackernagel (1957:279) analogously seem to be dependent on Pāṇini’s commentators (Vārttika 3 ad A 2.2.35 “[...] a noun conveying the sense of locative is placed second when it combines with a noun denoting a weapon”), but they are also aware of Bopp’s attempt (1827:320 n.3) to re-align the discussed irregularity to the common constituent-order with a qualifier placed first (śūlahasta-: “nicht die Lanze in der Hand habend, sondern Lanzenhändig”). Nonetheless, Pāṇini’s relevant rules (A 2.2.35-7) might not have targeted the position of the qualifier. The present paper aims at recovering their original content to the history of linguistics, with a consequent re-appraisal of the relationship of authoritative modern linguists with their sources, especially the indigenous Sanskrit grammars.