

YĀJŅĀVALKYA IN THE ŚRUTI TRADITION OF THE VEDA

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Yājñavalkya, 'the descendant of Yajñavalka',¹ is generally considered to be the most prominent exegete of the later Vedic period,² and is often acclaimed as the most outstanding propounder of the mystical doctrines of the Upaniṣads.³ His teaching has been studied and discussed in a number of publications, some of which (especially those coming from India) hail him as one of the giants of ancient Indian philosophy.⁴

However, as far as Yājñavalkya's own personality is concerned, most of these studies present a picture of considerable confusion. Understandably enough, attention has always been concentrated on the teachings which figure under his name, and great effort has been spent on the evaluation of its impact on later schools of thought, but the presentation of his personality as a man and a teacher bears no proportion to the actual place which he occupies in the texts.

It will, therefore, be useful to collect all the available material pertaining to Yājñavalkya's personality, irrespective of the doctrines ascribed to him, and to explore it in view of the cultural and sociological data contained therein. Such an attempt can be trustworthy only if

¹ Rather than 'Yājñavalkya', as V.I. 2.189 explains it; cf. PāṇGP. 4.2.111. It is noteworthy that neither the name of his father nor of any of his ancestors has been preserved by the Vedic tradition.

² Cf. Gonda, HIL Vol. I, Fasc. 1. Wiesbaden 1975, p. 353, and others.

³ E.g. Walter Ruben, *Die Philosophen der Upanishaden*. Bern 1947, p. 177ff.

⁴ 'Yājñavalkya the renowned sage of ancient India is the hero eponymous whose majestic figure looms large in the whole field of the V.S. and its Brāhmaṇa; he champions the cause of the white Yajurveda school against the Black Yajurveda school. Only in the five books from the sixth to the tenth of the ŚB. occurs the name of the teacher Śaṅḍilya to the exclusion of Yājñavalkya.' Jogiraj Basu, *India of the Age of the Brāhmaṇas*. Calcutta 1969, p. xviii. For further studies on Yājñavalkya see Vedic bibliographies.

the texts are allowed to speak for themselves as much as possible. Consequently, certain tempting questions which have often been dealt with will have to be left unanswered – such as where did Yājñavalkya come from, etc., simply because the texts give no information. That is why most of the existing studies on Yājñavalkya and his teaching(s) will have to be left out of consideration.

It is noteworthy that, in spite of the importance of the teachings ascribed to Yājñavalkya, they have been preserved in no other Vedic school but that of the White Yajurveda and, within that school, in no other text but the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa, and even there only in Books (*kāṇḍas*) 1 to 5 and 11 to 13,⁵ and in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad, which forms the concluding part of ŚB. His appearance in the Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa and two quotations in the Śāṅkhāyana-Āraṇyaka have a limited value, as will be shown later, while the teachings ascribed to him in several late post-Vedic Upaniṣads are irrelevant to our purpose.

There can be little doubt that, at the time of the redaction of ŚB., Yājñavalkya had already been, for a considerable time, an authority of the past. As to his historical authenticity, very little, if anything, can be adduced as tangible evidence. While the features of his remarkable personality are still prominent in the preserved records, the date of his life and the place(s) of his activities were a matter of a bygone era. Naturally, the later the texts are, the more the information and details which are supplied. Nevertheless, even in the latest accounts of his activities, the picture is extremely fragmentary. As a result, all the information about his ideas and personal characteristics collected from the texts, has to be viewed as a conglomeration of a floating mass of *dicta* and discourses, ascribed to him by tradition and handed down in the Yajurvedic schools (and even there not quite unanimously). To these schools Yājñavalkya was first and foremost an authority on subtle points of the ceremonial worship, whose views were original and important enough to be preserved and quoted, no matter how unconventional or even questionable they might have seemed to later generations of Vedic exegesis. Perhaps it was primarily the strength as well as the uniqueness of his arguments that guaranteed their oral transmission

⁵ The contention of V.I. 2.189 n. 1 that 'there are no references to Yājñavalkya in Books v-ix' is as inaccurate as the following statement that 'the fame of Yājñavalkya revives in Books x-xiv.'

from generation to generation until they were finally embodied in the Vedic corpus. The philosophical speculations ascribed to him in BU. are of a different character, and in many respects do not agree with the picture presented by ŚB.

Yājñavalkya's statements and doctrines preserved in ŚB. fall into two categories of a markedly different character. In Books 1 to 4 several times, in Book 11 twice, and in Books 5 and 13 once in each, he is quoted *ad hoc* with his views on various points of the sacrificial ritual. These are concise, brisk and totally unrelated pronouncements made (supposedly) by Yājñavalkya either alone or in the company of a few fellow-priests. None of these *dicta* contain anything but his name; moreover, some of them are not even ascribed to him by one of the two schools of the White Yajurveda.⁶

The situation is totally different in Book 11, which is just a supplementary continuation of the first five books.⁷ Here, in Chapters (*adhyaayas*) 3 and 6 (out of eight), Yājñavalkya appears three times in the company of King Janaka of Videha and a number of brahmins, with whom he competes for the recognition of superiority in the knowledge of the ritual and its esoteric meaning. None of these stories is referred to in the rest of the work, and nowhere else in that vast compendium is he associated with those rivals. These narratives were taken over by JB. and they appear again in BU., even though to a far lesser extent than is generally believed and, what is more important, with completely different contents in BU. Moreover, only in BU. do we hear about the existence of his two wives as well as about his authorship, not only of BU. itself, but also of the white (*śukla*) sacrificial formulas (*yajus*).

Another notable fact is that, while being known to the authors of ŚB. as 'Yājñavalkya' only, he is several times named 'Vājasaneyā' in both JB. and BU.

In spite of Yājñavalkya's doubtless fame and, contrary to the current belief that his authority was conclusive,⁸ the texts show a variety of opinions. His views are, in fact, sometimes challenged, at other times,

⁶ The frequency of case forms in which Yājñavalkya's name occurs in ŚB. is indicative of the character of the quotations: it occurs 22 times in nom., 9 times in voc., twice in acc. and loc. each, and only once in ins., while dat., abl., and gen. do not occur at all.

⁷ See ŚB. tr. 5, pp. xiii-xiv.

⁸ So e.g. Winternitz, HIL 1.193 and elsewhere.

doubted, and once or twice even rebuked, though never ridiculed in the way in which he sometimes treated his opponents. In several cases the Brāhmaṇa manifests an amazing degree of objectivity.

The distribution of passages concerning Yājñavalkya in ŚB. (and JB.) may be arranged as follows:

1. Individual pronouncements: 1.1.1.9; 3.1.21; 26; 9.2.12; 3.16; – 2.3.1.21; 4.3.2; 5.1.2; – 3.1.1.4; 2.21; 3.10; 8.2.24; – 4.2.1.7; 6.1.10; 8.7; – 5.5.5.14; – 11.4.2.17; 3.20; – 13.5.3.6.
2. Discussions with other brahmins: 1.1.1.7–10; – 12.4.1.9–10.
3. Private talks with King Janaka: ŚB. 11.3.1.2–4 ≠ JB. 1.19–20.
4. Talks with King Janaka and other brahmins: ŚB. 11.6.2.1–10; JB. 1.22–25; ŚB. 11.6.3.1–11 ≠ JB. 2.76–77.

The study of passages under 1. and 2. poses several problems. The first is to find out how much of a quotation can be ascribed to a particular person. Certain formal criteria can help in some cases, but more than once we are left with what amounts to guesswork. Secondly, it is impossible to establish to what extent the opinion under discussion was in accordance with the view of the school that preserved it, and/or to what extent such a discussion was left to a particular teacher or depended on circumstances. The preferences of later ritualists do not have to be identical with the choice of their predecessors.

From the formal point of view, the passages relating to Yājñavalkya do not show any signs of editorial adjustments. For instance, we may suppose with a fair amount of certainty that Yājñavalkya's views were accepted whenever they are quoted at the end of a discussion, thereby ending a paragraph or a chapter, but even then we cannot be sure whether the student was expected to follow the advice quoted last or not. In some cases the text endorses Yājñavalkya's pronouncements explicitly; sometimes the approval becomes implicit from the context; at other times there is no context. Sometimes it seems that his views were preserved on account of their uniqueness rather than their acceptability while, at other times, they were borne out by an older tradition. The text may neither comment nor take sides when a view of another teacher follows that of Yājñavalkya. It also happens that his words contradict the preceding opinion, but the text continues with another teacher's exposition of quite different problems. In one case his opinion is left without comment even though the text acknowledges that it is in contradiction to the words of the Ṛgveda. Last but not least, an occasional absence of the enigmatic particle *iti*, which normally termi-

nates the quotation, makes it difficult, if not altogether impossible, to decide how far the quotation actually goes (ŚB. 2.4.3.1; 11.4.2.17).

In one case, ŚB. 13.5.3.1ff., the meaning is absolutely clear. It concerns the offering of the omenta (*vapānām homaḥ*), and the text presents the views of Satyakāma Jābāla (1.), the two Saumāpa Mānuntavyas (2.), Śailāli (3.), and Bhāllaveya (4.), whose views are introduced by *iti ha smāha*, as well as of Indrota Śaunaka (5.), who is introduced by *iti* alone. Unlike any other passage concerning Yājñavalkya, the text continues in the same paragraph: 'This, then, is what these have said, but the established practice is different therefrom' (*etad aha teṣāṃ vaco 'nyā tv evāta sthitiḥ*) (5.). 'And then Yājñavalkya said' (*atha hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ*) (6.), and his view is not disputed.

A reverse situation occurs in ŚB. 11.4.2.17, where not only *iti* is missing, but the text, after quoting Yājñavalkya, continues with another story in the same paragraph (the division into paragraphs is, of course, often quite arbitrary): 'As to this /point/, Yājñavalkya said, "When, after making an underlayer /of ghee/, and cutting portions (from the sacrificial dish), he bastes them (the oblations) /with ghee/, then, indeed, he satisfies them; and they (the oblations) being satisfied, the gods fill /for him/ gold cups." Now Śaulvāyana was *adhvaryu* to those who had Ayasthūṇa for their *gṛhapati*' (i.e. *yajamāna*).⁹

Two more passages are somewhat irrelevant to our purpose, but illustrate what was said before. In ŚB. 2.4.3.1, which deals with the 'Offering of first-fruits' (*āgrayaṇeṣṭi*), Kahoḍa Kauṣītaki spoke about it (*tad u hovāca kahoḍa kauṣītakiḥ*) (1), followed by Yājñavalkya (*tad u hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ*) (2)¹⁰ who supplied Kahoḍa's ritual instruction with a lengthy mythical account, evidently invented by the author and ascribed to Yājñavalkya in order to give a traditional support to that point of ceremonial. Yājñavalkya's narrative, however, is not rounded off by an *iti* in the following paragraphs.

The only quotation of Yājñavalkya in Book 5 may be of the same

⁹ *tad u hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ: yad vā upastāryāvadāyābhighārayati tad evaināḥ saṃtarpayati tāsāṃ saṃtṛptānāṃ devā hiraṇmayāṃś camasān pūrayante 'yasthūṇagṛhapatināṃ vai śaulbāyano 'dhvaryur āsa. ŚB. 11.4.2.17.*

¹⁰ In most cases the stock phrase 'as to this /point/, however, Yājñavalkya said' (*tad u hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ*) introduces a new idea that implies, at the same time, an objection to what was said immediately before; cf. Bertold Delbrück, *Altindische Syntax*. Halle 1888, repr. Darmstadt 1968, p. 501.

origin. ŚB. 5.5.5.14: 'And, indeed, one may also practice magic by this /offering/; for it was thereby that Āruṇi bewitched Bhadrasena Ājātaśatrava: "He knocked him down quickly, indeed!" thus Yājñavalkya used to say.'¹¹ True, Uddālaka Āruṇi is said to have been the teacher of Yājñavalkya according to BU. 6.3.7, but that is of little consequence in this case, as a Bhadrasena Ājātaśatrava does not appear anywhere else in the whole Veda.¹²

A careful analysis shows, among other things, that at the time of the redaction of ŚB., no authority was so great as to be exempted from a critical evaluation, sometimes even by his own school. Yājñavalkya's position is exceptional only in the sense that his views were neither explicitly rejected, like those of other teachers ('this, however, one should not do so' *tad u tathā na kuryāt*, ŚB. 1.1.1.10, or 'let him not heed it' *na tad ādriyeta*, ŚB. 3.8.2.25), nor recommended, though this occurred less frequently in the Brāhmaṇas.¹³

It has to be pointed out, however, that none of these considerations applies to the stories of Yājñavalkya's discussions with King Janaka and some fellow-teachers which are recorded in Book 11 as well as in JB. and BU. Both the style and the contents of these narratives are in every respect much more in agreement with similar accounts scattered throughout the oldest Upaniṣads. The gap between Yājñavalkya's quotations in ŚB. and those preserved in BU. is a significant feature of Yājñavalkya's 'biography'.

Finally, the passages ascribed to Yājñavalkya often diverge from the bulk of ŚB. in their vocabulary. Sometimes their language contains certain common words used in an unusual sense, or words which are

¹¹ *atho hainayāpy abhicaret. etayā vai bhadrāsenam ājātaśatram aruṇir abhicāra: kṣipram kilāstṇuteti ha smāha yājñavalkyaḥ.* ŚB. 5.5.5.14. Eggeling's translation 'Quick, then, spread (the barhis)!' is not correct; cf. Caland, WZKM 26, 1912, p. 122. As to the differentiation between the roots *stṛ-* 'to spread' ('ausbreiten') and *str-* 'to knock or bring down' ('niederstrecken') see Johanna Narten, *Die sigmatischen Aoriste im Veda.* Wiesbaden 1964, p. 278ff., as well as MSS 22, 1967, p. 57ff., and Strunk, MSS 17, 1964, p. 91ff.

¹² Eggeling's suggestion that he is 'apparently the son of Ajātaśatru, King of Kāśī, who is mentioned as having been very proficient in speculative theology, and jealous, in this respect, of King Janaka of Videha' (ŚB. tr. 3.141 n. 1) is a specimen of diligent, but somewhat unproductive speculation.

¹³ Cf. ŚB. 11.4.2.1: 'Now, in this respect, some /people/, thinking themselves competent (clever), ...let him do so...' 2.: 'Let him do it in this way' (*tad dhaitad eke kuśalā manyamānā... na tathā kuryāt.* 1. *itham eva kuryāt.* 2.)

extremely rare in the Veda. Some of these words are not attested anywhere else in the Brāhmaṇas, others are not registered in any other śruti text and, in some cases, in any other Vedic work including those of the voluminous *smṛti* exegesis. Thus, in spite of the lack of historical evidence, Yājñavalkya's individuality is best documented by his language.

As far as Yājñavalkya's 'human portrait' is concerned, little can be learned from the dispersed *dicta* on various points of specific ritual practices. Yet, they are interesting for other reasons. Thus, e.g., during a discussion about the beneficial effect of the anointment,¹⁴ while the *adhvaryu* (the performing priest) anoints the eyes of the *yajamāna* (the patron of the sacrifice rather than 'the sacrificer', as is usually translated), "Sore, indeed, is the eye of man; mine is sound", so spoke Yājñavalkya' (*arur vai paruṣasyākṣi, praśān mameti ha smāha yājñavalkyaḥ*), ŚB. 3.1.3.10. The text agrees with him: 'Weak-eyed, indeed, he was, and the secretion of his eyes was pus; he now makes his eyes sound by anointing them.'¹⁵ Here, in a quotation of six words, Yājñavalkya uses two words which do not appear anywhere else in the Veda: *ān-arus* mfn., the basic form of which, viz. *ārus* itself, is extremely rare and is otherwise not used about eyes,¹⁶ and *pra-śām* (ind.?), the derivation of which is not quite clear.¹⁷

All the passages quoted so far have had little practical value for our purpose. All the rest, however, can be pursued with profit. In the first category of quotations, which come entirely from the first three books of ŚB., Yājñavalkya appears as a respected authority. Contrary to the stories of his contests for cows at the court of King Janaka in Book 11, here he strives for excellence in the performance of his duties as a sacrificing priest who leaves the desire for material possessions to others:

ŚB. 1.9.3.16: 'He looks up /with the words/, "Self-existent are you, the best ray of light!" The sun, indeed, is the best ray of light, and therefore he says, "Self-existent are you, the best ray of light!"

¹⁴ 'Man is sore... and whatever he gets anointed that becomes rid of soreness' (*arur vai puruṣaḥ... anarur evaitad bhavati yad abhyañkte*), ŚB. 3.1.3.7.

¹⁵ *durakṣa iva hāsa pūyo haivāsya dūṣikā te evaitad anaruṣ karoti yad akṣyāv ānakti*. ŚB. 3.1.3.10.

¹⁶ Cf. AV. 5.5.4 and GB. 2.3.1; its three compounds, viz. *arus-cit*, *arus-pāna*, and *arus-srāṇa* appear only once each.

¹⁷ For a detailed discussion see Narten, SII 5/6, 1980, p. 161 & n. 27.

“But I say, ‘You are bestowing brilliance: give me brilliance!’” thus Yājñavalkya used to say, “for at this indeed the brahmin should strive, that he be *brahma-varcasin*” (enlightened by *brahman*, glorious).

Aupoditeya,¹⁸ on the other hand, said, “He indeed will give me cows, /therefore I say/ ‘You are bestowing cows, give me cows!’”

Thus whatever wish he (the *adhvaryu*) desires, that wish is granted to him.¹⁹

Another authoritative opinion is expressed in ŚB. 2.3.1.21, where Yājñavalkya explains that the *agnihotra* must not be looked upon as a mere *havis* sacrifice, but as a cooked (domestic) sacrifice (*pāka-yajña*). His opinion is not contested.

In ŚB. 1.3.1.26 Yājñavalkya rejects the practices of other sacrificers and one text agrees with him. ŚB(K). differs from ŚB(M). only in that it ascribes to him the whole passage; that is the most common difference between the two recensions of ŚB.:

ŚB. 1.3.1.26: ‘He then looks down on the butter. As to this some make the *yajamāna* look down. Yājñavalkya, however, said /in reference/ to this, “Now why do they themselves (the *yajamānas*) not become (act as) *adhvaryus*? Why do they themselves not recite when far higher blessings, so to speak, are prayed for? How can these /people/ possibly have faith in this here?” Whatever blessing the officiating priests (*ṛtvijas*) invoke, that is for the *yajamāna* alone; therefore the *adhvaryu* should accordingly look down on it.’²⁰

Similarly, ŚB. 3.1.1.4–5 ascribes to Yājñavalkya words which sum up the image of an ideal teacher of his time:

4. ‘Now Yājñavalkya spoke, “We went to choose a place of worship for Vārṣṇa. Sātyayajña then said, ‘This whole earth, indeed, is divine; wherever on it one may sacrifice /for anyone/, after enclosing /and consecrating/ it with a sacrificial formula (*yajus*), there is a place of worship.’

¹⁸ Kāṇva text reads Tumiṅja Aupoditeya Vaiyāghrapadya.

¹⁹ *sa udīkṣate; svayambhūr asi śreṣṭho raśmīr ity eṣa vai śreṣṭho raśmīr yat sūryas tasmād āha svayambhūr asi śreṣṭho raśmīr iti. varcodā asi varco me dehīti tv evāhaṃ bravīmīti ha smāha yājñavalkyas tad dhy eva brāhmaṇenaīṣṭavyaṃ yad brahmavarcaśī syād ity uto ha smāhaupoditeya eṣa vāva mahyaṃ gā dāsyati godā gā me dehīty evaṃ yaṃ kāmāṃ kāmāyate so ’smāi kāmāḥ samṛdhate. ŚB. 1.9.3.16.*

²⁰ *athāyam avekṣate; tad dhaikē yajamānam avakhyāpayanti; tad u hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ: kathaṃ nu na svayam advaryavo bhavanti kathaṃ svayaṃ nānvāhur yatra bhūyasya-ivāśīṣaḥ kriyante kathaṃ nv eṣām atraiva śraddhā bhavātīti yāṃ vai kām ca yajña ṛtvija āśīṣam āśāsate yajamānasyaiva sā tasmād advaryur evāvekṣeta. ŚB. 1.3.1.26.*

5. It is, however, the officiating priests that constitute the place of sacrifice: where brahmins who have studied, are learned and wise, perform the sacrifice, there is firmness; that /place of worship/ we consider /to be/ the nearest /to the gods/, so to speak.”²¹

The picture of ideal brahmins who acted as officiating priests in those times has all the necessary ingredients: they must be brahmins who have studied the sacred lore by listening (*śru-*) to the teacher (and are, therefore, *śuśruvāṃsas*), who are well enough versed in it to be able to repeat (*anu-vac-*) it to their pupils (and are, thereby, *anūcānas*) and, having understood (*vid-*) it, are considered to be learned or wise (*vidvāṃsas*). All these qualities pertain solely to the study and knowledge of the scriptures and to the performance of the established ritual.

The dialectic of which the teachers of the ritual availed themselves is vividly transmitted in ŚB. 1.1.1.7–10. The point under discussion concerns the question whether the *yajamāna*, after having performed the *agnihotra* on that day, should fast or accept food and, if the latter, of what kind. The opinions of three authorities are quoted:

ŚB. 1.1.1.7: ‘Now then on eating and non-eating (fasting). As to this /point/, Aṣāḍha Sāvayasa was of the opinion that the vow was just non-eating. For, to be sure, the gods see through the mind of man. They know that he is entering upon this vow, /and thinking/ “He will sacrifice to us tomorrow morning”, all the gods betake themselves to his house, and remain waiting for food (*upa-vas-*) in his house; that is *upavasatha* (passing the night without having had a meal in the evening).

8. Now it would be unbecoming, if one were to eat first while the men (staying with him as his guests) have not eaten; how much more (would it be so), if one were to eat first while the gods (staying with him as his guests) have not eaten; therefore one should not eat /at all/.

9. Yājñavalkya, on the other hand, said to this, “If he does not eat /at all/, he thereby becomes a worshipper of the Fathers; and if he does eat, he eats before the gods /have eaten/; let him, therefore, eat just what – when eaten – is /as if/ not eaten.” For those offerings that they (the gods) do not receive, that is eaten /as if/ not eaten. When he eats, therefore, he does not become the worshipper of the Fathers, and by

²¹ *tad u hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ: vārṣṇyāya devayajanaṃ joṣayitum aima tat sātyayajño 'bravīt sarvā vā iyaṃ pṛthivī devī devayajanaṃ yatra vā asyai kva ca yajusaiva pariṅghya yājayed iti. ŚB. 3.1.1.4.*

ṛtvijo haiva devayajanaṃ; ye brāhmaṇāḥ śuśruvāṃso 'nūcānā vidvāṃso yājayanti saivāhvalaitan nedīṣṭhatamām iva manyāmaha iti. ib. 5.

eating of that, of which they do not receive the offerings, therefore he does not eat before the gods /have eaten/.

10. Let him, therefore, eat only what grows in the forest (i.e. wild), be it forest (wild) plants or the fruit(s) of trees.

As to this, moreover, Barku Vārṣṇa used to say, “Cook beans for me, because they (the gods) do not receive offerings of these.” This, however, one should not do so, for pulse serves as an addition to rice and barley, and he just increases the rice and barley by means of it. Let him, therefore, eat only what grows in the forest.²²

The whole passage is a good example of ritualistic speculations which occupied the minds of the sacrificing priests. Yājñavalkya’s authority is clearly accepted in this case.

The term *vṛkṣya* n. ‘fruit(s) of trees’, however common it may seem, is not found anywhere else in the Veda.²³

An even more engaging story is found in ŚB. 12.4.1.9–11, which has its parallel version in JB. 1.58–59.²⁴ It deals with the problem of what to do if one’s *agnihotra* cow were to sit down while being milked.

ŚB. 12.4.1.9: ‘Now they say, “If anyone’s *agnihotra* cow were to sit down while being milked, what rite and what expiation would there be in that case?” Well, some make her get up with a formula (*yajus*) /like/: “The divine Aditi has risen”; Aditi, namely, is this /earth/, thus saying, “It is this /earth/ we thus raise for him.” “She has put life into the lord of sacrifice”, thereby saying, “It is a complete lifetime we thus put into him” (i.e. the *yajamāna*). “Giving Indra his share”, thereby saying, “It

²² *athāto ’śanānaśanasyaiva; tad u hāṣāḍhaḥ sāvayaso ’naśanam eva vratam mene, mano ha vai devā manuṣyasyājānanti ta enam etad vratam upayantaṁ viduḥ prātar no yakṣyata iti te ’sya viśve devā gṛhān āgachanti te ’sya gṛheṣūpavasanti sa upavasathaḥ. ŚB. 1.1.1.7.*

tann evānavakṣiptam; yo manuṣyeṣv anaśnatsu pūrvo ’śnīyād atha kim u yo deveṣv anaśnatsu pūrvo ’śnīyāt tasmād u naivāśnīyāt. ib. 8.

tad u hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ: yadi nāśnāti piṭṭṛdevatyō bhavati yady u aśnāti devān aty aśnātīti sa yad evāśitam anaśitam tad aśnīyād iti yasya vai havir na gṛhṇanti tad aśitam anaśitam sa yad aśnāti tenāpiṭṭṛdevatyō bhavati yady u tad aśnāti yasya havir na gṛhṇanti teno devān nāty aśnāti. ib. 9.

sa vā āraṇyam evāśnīyād; yā vāraṇyā ośadhayo yad vā vṛkṣyam; tad u ha smāhāpi barkur vārṣṇo māśān me pacata na vā eteṣāṁ havir gṛhṇantīti tad u tathā na kuryād vrihiyavayor vā etad upajam yac chamīdhānyam tad vrihiyavāv evaitena bhūyāmsau karoti tasmād āraṇyam evāśnīyāt. ib. 10.

²³ PW quotes in addition KŚS. 2.1.13 v. 1., but neither Weber’s edition of KŚS. nor VWC s.v. gives it.

²⁴ For a detailed study and translation of this passage see JB. tr. 182–7.

is Indra's power we thus put into him." "And to Mitra and Varuṇa." Mitra and Varuṇa, indeed, are out- and in-breathing, thus saying, "It is the out- and in-breathing we thus put into him." At this offering he should give away that /cow/ to a brahmin whom he does not intend to visit,²⁵ arguing, "It was, indeed, after seeing the *yajamāna*'s suffering, the evil, that she sat down: thus we fasten the suffering, the evil, on this /officiating priest/."

10. Yājñavalkya, however, said to this, "Surely, the cow gets lost to them as to the faithless ones, and they smite the offering with trouble. He should rather proceed in this way: He should make her get up by pricking her with a stick." As it, indeed, also happens in daily life that as one drives about /in a cart/, his horse, or his mule, or his ox yoked /to the cart/ collapses, and he completes the journey he wishes to accomplish by urging that /animal/ on by means of a stick or a goad, even so one attains that heavenly world which he desires to reach by urging her (the cow) on by means of a stick or a goad.²⁶

The discussion is concluded by Āruṇi (ib. 11): "Let him therefore think, 'Unable to bear my superiority and greatness, she has sat down; I shall become superior!' Let him keep her to himself; thereby he takes glory (prosperity, fortune) to himself", thus spoke Āruṇi.²⁷

²⁵ JB. 1.58 limits this expiation: 'they give her away to a brahmin whom they will not visit for a year' (*tām... brāhmaṇāya dadati yaṃ saṃvatsaram anabhyāgamiṣyanto bhavanti*).

²⁶ *tad āhuḥ: yasyāgnihotrī dohyamānopaviṣet kiṃ tatra karma kā prāyaścittir iti; tām haṅke yajuṣoṭthāpayanty ud asthād devy aditir itīyaṃ vā aditir imām evāsmā etad utthāpayāma iti vadanta āyur yajñapatāv adhād ity āyur evāsmiṃs tad dadhma iti vadanta indrāya kṣṇvato bhāgam itīndriyam evāsmiṃs tad dadhma iti vadanto mitrāya varuṇāya ceti prāṇodānau vai mitrāvaruṇau prāṇodānāv evāsmiṃs tad dadhma iti vadantas tām tasyām āhutyām brāhmaṇāya dadyād yaṃ anabhyāgamiṣyan manyetārṭiṃ vā eṣā pāpmānaṃ yajamānasya pratidṛṣyopāvīkṣad ārtim evāsmiṃs tat pāpmānaṃ pratimuñcāma iti vadantaḥ. ŚB. 12.4.1.9 ≠ JB. 1.58.*

tad u hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ: aśrad-dadhānebhyo haibhyo gaur apakrāmaty ārtyo (v.l. ārttyo) vā āhutim vidhyantītham eva kuryād daṇḍenaivainām vipiṣyotthāpayed iti tad yathavādo dhāvayato 'śvo vāsvatara vā gadāyeta balivardo vā yuktas tena daṇḍaprajitena (v.l. ~prajitayā) tottraprajitena (v.l. ~prajitayā) yaṃ adhvānaṃ samīpsati taṃ samaśnuta evam evaitayā daṇḍaprajitayā tottraprajitayā yaṃ svargaṃ lokaṃ samīpsati taṃ samaśnute. ib. 10 ≠ JB. 1.59.

²⁷ *tad vidyāc chremānaṃ me mahimānaṃ adhārayamānopāvīkṣac chreyān bhaviṣyāmīti tām ātmny eva kurvītātmany eva tac chriyaṃ dhatta iti ha smāhāruṇiḥ. ŚB. 12.4.1.11.*

The use of *á-śrad-dadhāna* and of the verb *vi-piṣ-* in this sense is very rare in the Brāhmaṇas.²⁸

ŚB. 4.6.1 contains a discussion of three teachers on the way how – or whether at all – to press the *soma*. Their opinions are introduced with the same phrase, viz. *tad u hovāca*. They are Rāma Aupatasvini (7), Buḍiḷa Āśvatarāśvi (9), and finally Yājñavalkya, who differs from them and in support of his view, quotes ‘thus was declared by the ṛṣi’ (*ity ṛṣiṇābhyanūktam*)²⁹ (10), i.e. RV. 7.26.1. This is the only example of its kind.

Similarly unique, but in reverse, is ŚB. 2.5.1.2 on the question of original beings (*prajās*) created by Prajāpati: “He created a third /race/”, they say (*tṛtīyāḥ sasṛja ity āhuḥ*); Yājñavalkya, for his part, declared them to be of two kinds only, but of three kinds they are according to the ṛc’ (*etā ha nv eva dvayīr yājñavalkya uvāca trayīr u tu punar ṛcā*). As already mentioned, the disagreement is merely stated, not disputed.

This is not the only case where Yājñavalkya’s views were considered to be too speculative. Thus, concerning the question of the two cups of soma juice (*grahau*), ŚB. 4.2.1.7: ‘Also Yājñavalkya said, “Should we not rather draw them for the deities, since that is, so to speak, the sign of conquest?” In this, however, he merely speculated (*mīmāṃsām cakre*), but he did not practise it.’³⁰

A similar, but even more diplomatic example appears in the same book, ŚB. 4.6.8.7: ‘He leads forward the king (*soma*). That *āgnīdhṛīya* fire has been raised (elevated) and then they take one fire-brand each (from the fire at the hall-door) and return to their respective *dhiṣṇya* hearths. “They who do so”, Yājñavalkya used to say, “hit with those

²⁸ *á-śrad-dadhāna* ‘faithless’ occurs otherwise only in JB. 1.43: ‘if any in this world offer the *agnihotra* without knowing thus and sacrifice without faith’ (*ye vā asmin loke ’gnihotram (a)juhvato naivaṃvidō ’śraddadhānā yajante*), see JB. tr. p. 107 n. 20. This is parallel to ŚB. 11.6.1.1. The other quotation comes from JB. 2.384 (*áśraddadhānā ayakṣata*).

vi-piṣ- occurs in ŚB. 4.1.5.2,5 about pelting someone with clods, and in ŚB(K). 3.1.10.1 about creatures seeking to crush someone. This corresponds to ŚB(M). 2.3.3.1 which reads *saṃ-piṣ-*.

²⁹ The phrase simply means ‘so it stands in the sacred text’.

³⁰ *api hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ: no svid devatābhya eva gṛhṇīyāmāḥ vijitarūpam iva hīdam iti tad vai sa tan mīmāṃsām eva cakre net tu cakāra*. ŚB. 4.2.1.7. *no svid* can be interpreted differently; see Eggeling 2.279 n. 3. The usage of the two voices of the verb *kṛ-* is worthwhile noticing.

fire-brands on them.” This is one way’ (*etan nv ekam ayanam*).³¹ And the text continues (ib. 8): ‘Then there is this second /way/’ (*athedaṃ dvitīyam*). No other comment is added. It is, indeed, noteworthy that Book 4 of ŚB. contains altogether three *dicta* of Yājñavalkya out of which one is in agreement with RV., while the other two are treated with disapproval.

Finally, a good example of the language used by the officiating priests in a professional dispute is preserved in ŚB. 3.8.2.24–25:

24. ‘Having offered, he bastes first the omentum, then the clotted ghee. Now, the *caraka-adhvaryus* (wandering teacher-priests) baste first the clotted ghee, /arguing that/ the clotted ghee is the breath. As to that, a *caraka-adhvaryu* cursed Yājñavalkya for doing so (i.e. basting first the omentum), /saying/, “This *adhvaryu* has shut out the breath; the breath will depart from him!”

25. But he (Yājñavalkya), looking at his arms, used to say, “These arms are hoary – what in the world has become of a brahmin’s word?” Let him not heed that...’ (i.e. the objection of the *caraka*).³² The verb *anu-vyā-hṛ-* in the sense ‘to curse’ is by no means rare in the Brāhmaṇas, although the curses and abuses become more frequent and expressive only later, during the verbal contests for material gains.

The last three remaining single pronouncements of Yājñavalkya recorded in ŚB. are the most interesting ones. They are both unusual and original, and they afford a glimpse of Yājñavalkya’s personality, very much in contrast to the record of BU.

Two of them preserve Yājñavalkya’s opinion of women, to whom he obviously did not take too kindly. ŚB. 1.3.1.21 discusses a point of ritual. If it were carried out as some teachers believed it should be, the *yajamāna*’s wife would consort with other men: ‘Yājñavalkya, however, said to this, “Let it be so as it has been prescribed for the wife; who would care whether his wife consorted with other men”’ (*tad u*

³¹ *rājānaṃ praṇayati; udyata evaiṣa āgnīdhṛīyo ’gnir bhavaty athaita ekaikam evomukam ādāya yathādhiṣṇyaṃ viparīyanti tair eva teṣāṃ ulmukāiḥ praghnantīti ha smāha yājñavalkyo ye tathā kurvanti etan nv ekam ayanam. ŚB. 4.6.8.7.*

³² *huvā vapāṃ evāgre ’bhighārayati; atha pṛṣad ājyaṃ tad u ha carakādhvaryaḥ pṛṣad ājyaṃ evāgre ’bhighārayanti prāṇāḥ pṛṣad ājyaṃ iti vadantas tad u ha yājñavalkyaṃ carakādhvaryaḥ anuvyājahāraivaṃ kurvantaṃ prāṇaṃ vā ayam antar-agād adhvaryuḥ prāṇa enaṃ hāsyatīti. ŚB. 3.8.2.24.*

sa ha sma bāhū anvavekṣyāha: imau palitau bāhū kva svid brāhmaṇasya vaco babhūveti. na tad ādriyeta... ib. 25.

hovāca yājñavalkyo yathādiṣṭam patnyā astu kas tad ādriyeta yat parah-puṃsā vā patnī syāt).³³ Again, the term *parah-puṃsā* adj. f., however regular it may sound, does not occur anywhere else in the Veda or, if we are to rely on PW, anywhere else in Sanskrit.³⁴

The other instance sounds equally genuine, though in this case the Kāṇva text does not mention Yājñavalkya, and even in the Mādhyandina version it is hard to decide how much of the preceding phrase can be ascribed to the speaker.

ŚB. 1.9.2.12: 'When he offers to the wives of the gods, he shuts /the fire/ out from the view on the eastern side, for the gods wait as long as they do not offer to the *samiṣṭayajus* (offerings), /thinking/, "This now he must offer to us!" Thus he conceals /this offering/ from them. "/Therefore/ human females here wish to devour apart from a man, so to speak' – however many /they may be/, so many /let them be/", Yājñavalkya used to say' (doubting that there were so many).³⁵ It seems that Eggeling either translated from a different text or misunderstood the whole passage.³⁶ Equally wrong is his contention (4.369 n. 5) that the form *jighatsanti* 'eat greedily, swallow their food' is not meant disrespectfully and that it can be compared with the parallel use of *asniyāt*, ŚB. 10.5.2.9, and *asīśiṣet*, ŚB. 3.1.2.1. The latter concerns a *yajamāna* who, before performing the rite of consecration (*dīkṣā*), may not eat, if he does not care to eat, and it is, therefore, irrelevant to this

³³ Cf. I.S. 10.83 n. 3. Eggeling's doubt (1.76 n. 2) 'as to whether this last scornful remark is really to be assigned to Yājñavalkya' is quite baseless in view of the indigenous tradition.

³⁴ PW's interpretation 'die sich am Ehemann nicht genügen lässt', repeated by MW ('dissatisfied with her husband'), remarkably differs from pw's 'aus dem Kreise der Männer entfernt', repeated by J. Wackernagel, *Altindische Grammatik* II,1, pp. 111 & 314.

A similar formation, *parah-puruṣa* 'higher than a man,' seems also to appear only once in Sanskrit, viz. in ŚSS. 17.1.16.

³⁵ *sa yatra devānām patnī yajati; tat purastāt tiraḥ karoty upa ha vai tāvad devatā āsate yāvan na samiṣṭayajur juhvatīdam nu no juhvatv iti tābhya evaitat tiraḥ karoti tasmād imā mānuṣyaḥ striyas tira ivaiva puṃso jighatsanti yā iva tu tā iveti ha smāha yājñavalkyaḥ*. ŚB. 1.9.2.12. It is most probable, but not quite certain that Yājñavalkya's words begin with *tasmād*. Unfortunately, the Kāṇva text does not mention Yājñavalkya, but merely says, 'hence women also here swallow their food apart from men' (Eggeling 1.259 n. 1).

³⁶ 'and accordingly Yājñavalkya says, "Whenever human women here eat (they do so) apart from men". Cf. Whitney's remark: 'It appears here and there as if Prof. Eggeling (unless he is careless in his citations) had a slightly different text before him from the published one', in *JAOS* 11, p. cxxxv.

case. The former, on the other hand, provides evidence that *jighatsanti* was meant disrespectfully. The situation is similar, but not the same:

ŚB. 10.5.2.9: 'Therefore he (the husband) should not eat food in the presence of /his/ wife; for from him (who does not do so) a vigorous son is born, and she in whose presence /he/ does not eat food, bears a vigorous /son/.³⁷ Here, as in many other instances, *aś-* applies to the eating of men, while *ghas-* in 1.9.2.12 is used of women.

The verb *ghas-* appears seldom in the Brāhmaṇas and it has the sense of devouring rather than of simple eating. Only in ŚB. 10.8.1.10 does it refer to human beings, but ironically, as it is used about students who feed on different kinds of food out of ignorance. Otherwise, it applies mostly to supernatural beings like gods (TB. 2.6.15; 3.6.11, 15), Fathers (*pitaras*) (TB. 2.6.3; ŚB. 12.8.1.8), Prajāpati's offspring (*prajā*) (KB. 5.3 = GB. 2.1.21; similarly ŚB. 2.5.2.1, in order to explain the term *praghāsa*), and a *puruṣa* devouring a *puruṣa* (JB. 1.42). On the feeding (German 'fressen') of animals and greedy persons see PW s.v. and cf. the well-known warning of Urvaśi addressed to Purūravas: 'Let not the cruel wolves devour you!' (*mā tvā vṛkāso aśivāsa u kṣan*), ṚV. 10.95.15.

The next quotation is the most unique one. It concerns a lengthy discussion during which various reasons are given why a consecrated *yajamāna* should not eat the meat of a cow or an ox. It ends with an argument that is not altogether clear:

ŚB. 3.1.2.21: 'Were one to partake of an ox or a cow, there could be, so to speak, an eating of everything or, so to speak, destruction; such a one indeed would be likely to be born again as a strange being, /as one who has/ ill repute such as, "he has expelled an embryo from his wife, he has done evil."³⁸ The following passage, on the other hand, is perfectly clear: 'Yājñavalkya, however, said to this, "I, for one, eat it, provided that it is juicy (fleshy)" (*tad u hovāca yājñavalkyo 'śnāmy evāhaṃ aṃsalaṃ ced bhavatīti*).

The word *aṃsala* occurs three more times in the Veda and, even though Eggeling's translation 'tender' seems most appropriate here, it

³⁷ *tasmā jāyāya ante nāśnīyād vīryavān hāsmāj jāyate vīryavantam u ha sā janayati yasyā ante nāśnāti*. ŚB. 10.5.2.9. The root *ad-* and *ghas-* stand side by side in e.g. ŚB(K). 4.1.2.1 and 5.8.3.5.

³⁸ *etat sarvāśyam iva yo dhenvanaduhayor aśnīyād antagatir iva taṃ hādbhutam abhijanitor jāyāyai garbhaṃ niravadhīd iti pāpam akad iti pāpī kīrtiḥ*. ŚB. 3.1.2.21. It could also mean 'to him something strange might happen'. See Oertel, KZ 65, 1938, 68f.

has the meaning 'fleshy, strong, stout' elsewhere (*māṃsala*, *balavat*, VWC).³⁹ The Brāhmaṇa ends the discussion without comment, but from the quotations in Book 11 it becomes evident that Yājñavalkya, like the other sacrificing priests of his time, was a beef-eater.

The material contained in Book 11 of ŚB. and the corresponding passages in JB. might be characterized as the birth of the Yājñavalkya legend, i.e. it represents a transition from the isolated and impersonal remembrances to the 'classical' record of BU. full of previously unknown details. Yet, it was the stories of King Janaka of Videha and his disputes with Yājñavalkya and other brahmanic teachers which captivated the imagination and almost caused plain facts to fall into oblivion.

As in the case of Yājñavalkya, the figure of King Janaka was subject to numerous speculations as well as to attempts to assess his rôle in the development of some of the basic ideas of Upaniṣadic thought. This is not the place to elaborate on that problem. Suffice it to say that, as far as ŚB. is concerned, Yājñavalkya's encounters with Janaka are of no real historical relevance, but provide a remarkable assortment of pieces of data which may yield important information of cultural significance. King Janaka is as much a stereotype in these stories as Yājñavalkya, which ought not to be surprising: 'the Father of Videha' may be, in the end, a concept not far away from the idea of 'King Brahmadatta of Benares' in the Pāli Jātakas though, of course, literally it corresponds rather to 'il Papa di Roma'.

There are altogether not more than three independent accounts of Yājñavalkya's meetings with Janaka in ŚB., with corresponding passages in JB. Yājñavalkya is still presented as an expert on sacrifice and its salient problems, but now he competes both for recognition and material gains.

ŚB. 11.3.1.2 ≠ JB. 1.19: 'Now, as to this, Janaka of Videha once asked Yājñavalkya, "Do you know the *agnihotra*, Yājñavalkya?" "I

³⁹ 'The hind-part is /part of/ the animal, and fat is /sacrificial/ essence; thus he supplies it with the /sacrificial/ essence; but if it be juicy (fleshy), then it has itself obtained the /sacrificial/ essence' (*gudo vai paśuh; medo vai medhas tad enaṃ medham upanayati yady u aṃsalo bhavati svayam upeta eva tarhi medhaṃ bhavati*). ŚB. 3.8.4.6. The meaning is equally clear in the other two passages: JB. 2.270 mentions a gandharva who is *ugra*, *balin*, *aśma-ghātin*, and *aṃsala*, and TB. 3.4.17, when dealing with the 'sacrifice of a man' (*puruṣa-medha*), says: 'to Agni (he offers) a stout man' (*agnaye 'msalam (ālabh-ate)*).

know it, O King”, he said.⁴⁰ And Yājñavalkya explained it to the king. “You know the *agnihotra*, Yājñavalkya; I give you a hundred cows”, he said.⁴¹ The conversation does not continue, but verses are quoted in support of Yājñavalkya’s explanation. Again, as in many previous cases, the compound *dhenu-śata* ‘a hundred cows’ appears only twice in *śruti* texts: in the passage quoted here as well as in ŚB. 11.6.2.4, which is concerned with the same subject (see further), and in JB. 2.151, where a desire for a hundred cows as a sacrificial gift (*dakṣiṇā*) is expressed.⁴² It is significant that both the Kāṇva version and JB. read ‘a thousand’ (*sahasra*) without specifying of what.⁴³ Without going into details it can be surmised that, if these numbers are to be taken seriously at all, they can hardly represent their real numerical value, but rather something like a ‘large’ and ‘extremely large’ number, respectively. Again, if such were the gifts of the Vedic rulers (who were often no more than petty chieftains) to their favourite teacher-priests, and there is little reason to doubt that, it is very improbable that such large herds of cattle were intended for milking only.

In a solitary quotation at the end of a Brāhmaṇa, King Janaka offers Yājñavalkya a thousand in appreciation of his knowledge of a certain sacrifice (*iṣṭi*) called *mitra-vindā*, lit. ‘acquiring friends’:

ŚB. 11.4.3.20: ‘Now, it was Gotama Rāhūgaṇa who discovered this /sacrifice/. It went away to Janaka of Videha and he looked for it among the brahmins versed in the *aṅgas*, and found it in Yājñavalkya. He said, “We will give you a thousand, Yājñavalkya, in whom we have found that *mitravindā*.”’⁴⁴

The term ‘a brahmin versed in the *aṅgas*’ (*aṅga-jīd-brāhmaṇa*) does not appear anywhere else in the Veda. It should be perhaps read *aṅga-*

⁴⁰ *tad dhaitaj janako vaideho yājñavalkyaṃ papracha vetthāgnihotraṃ yājñavalkyā3 iti; veda samrād iti.* ŚB. 11.3.1.2. JB. 1.19 has only *vedeti hovāca*.

⁴¹ *vetthāgnihotraṃ yājñavalkya dhenuśataṃ dadāmiṭi hovāca.* ib. 4.

⁴² *atho āhur dhenuśatam evāsyā nānāvatsam dakṣiṇā syād iti.* JB. 2.151. The compound occurs also twice in the Vedāṅga, while a compound *dhenu-sahasra* is known only from ViṣṇuSm. 20.47, where it refers to a calf finding its mother among a thousand cows (*dhenu-sahasreṣu*).

⁴³ *taṃ hovāca vetthāgnihotraṃ yājñavalkya namas te 'stu sahasraṃ bhagavo dadma iti.* JB. 1.19. *sa hovāca namas te 'stu yājñavalkya vetthāgnihotraṃ sahasraṃ dadāmiṭi.* Kāṇva.

⁴⁴ *tāṃ haitāṃ gotamo rāhūgaṇo vidāṃ cakāra sā ha janakaṃ vaidehaṃ pratyutsasāda tāṃ hāṅga-jīd-brāhmaṇeṣv anvīyeṣa tāṃ u ha yājñavalkye viveda sa hovāca sahasraṃ bho yājñavalkya dadmo yasmin vayaṃ tvayi mitravindāṃ anvavidāmeti.* ŚB. 11.4.3.20.

vid, as this form occurs in VāsDhS. 3.20 and BDhS. 1.1.8, and it seems that it was also the reading of Sāyaṇa (cf. ŚB. p. 898 notes). It seems more likely that it refers to the limbs of the sacrifice than to the later Vedāṅgas, as Eggeling (5.66 & n. 1) understands it.

The following two stories illustrate the nature of the competitive discussions (*brahmódya*) among the teachers or of the teachers with a king, who often arranged them and took an active part in them, sometimes even outwitting famous brahmins. These discussions consisted in questions and answers, either in ritually fixed verses or in a free, improvised speech.⁴⁵ They were mostly of a purely speculative character and their aim was to gain recognition and material rewards rather than knowledge. The means to attain that goal was to outwit (lit. 'out-talk', *ati-vad-*) the opponent rather than to convince him by the strength of the arguments. In the following passage, even Yājñavalkya was beaten in a dispute by King Janaka from whom he had to receive instruction:

ŚB. 11.6.2.1: 'Now, Janaka of Videha once met the brahmins Śvetaketu Āruṇeya, Somaśuṣma Sātyayajñi, and Yājñavalkya, who were travelling (driving) about.⁴⁶ He asked them, "How do you each of you perform the *agnihotra*?"⁴⁷ Then each of them explains his own method. The king, however, is not quite satisfied, not even with Yājñavalkya whose reply he appreciates most:

4. "“You, Yājñavalkya, have inquired most closely into the *agnihotra*; I will give you a hundred cows”, he (the king) said. “But not even you /know/ either the uprising, or the progress, or the support, or the contentment, or the return, or the renascent world of those two (libations of the *agnihotra*).” With these words he mounted his chariot and drove away.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Cf. H. Oldenberg, Zur Geschichte des Wortes *brāhman*, in Kleine Schriften. Glasenapp-Stiftung 8.1.2. Wiesbaden 1967, p. 1136f. For bibliography and a detailed analysis of these passages see JB. tr. p. 62f.

⁴⁶ The verb *dhāvayati* has been sometimes explained in a somewhat fanciful way (Thieme etc.). For a well-balanced account see H. W. Bodewitz, Vedic *dhāvayati* "to drive". IJ 16, 1974, pp. 81–95.

⁴⁷ *janako ha vai vaiḍeho brāhmaṇair dhāvayadbhiḥ samājagāma śvetaketunāruṇeyena somaśuṣmeṇa sātyayajñinā yājñavalkyena; tān hovāca: katham-katham agnihotram juhutheti.* ŚB. 11.6.2.1.

⁴⁸ *tvam nediṣṭham yājñavalkyāgnihotrasyāmīmāṃsiṣṭhā dhenuśataṃ dadāmiṭi hovāca; na tv evainayos tvam utkrāntiṃ na gatim na pratiṣṭhām na tṛptim na punarāvṛtīm na lokam pratyutthāyinaṃ ity uktvā ratham āsthāya pradhāvayām cakāra.* ib. 4.

It is clear from this passage that Yājñavalkya's excellence consisted in his minute scrutiny (*mīmāṃs-*), i.e. in his skill in speculative examination and interpretation of the ritual. It is the same activity for which he was criticized in one of the earlier books of ŚB. (4.2.1.7), where the actual performance of the ritual was given priority.

The competitiveness of the discussion is well documented in the following paragraphs:

5. "They said, "Surely, this royal fellow (*rājanya-bandhu*) has out-talked us: come, let us challenge him to a *brahmodya!*" Yājñavalkya said, "We are brahmins, he is a royal fellow: if we were to vanquish him, whom should we say we had vanquished? But if he were to vanquish us, people would say of us that a royal fellow had vanquished brahmins; do not think of this!" They approved of his words. But Yājñavalkya, mounting his chariot, drove after /the king/. He overtook him, and he (the king) said, "Is it to know *the agnihotra*, Yājñavalkya?" "The *agnihotra*, O King", he replied.⁴⁹

The verb *ati-vad-* 'to be superior in dispute' refers to eloquence as such, i.e. 'to outtalk, outwit' by the volume of speech, and sometimes merely of sound. It occurs predominantly in the later Brāhmaṇas.

King Janaka explained the proper *agnihotra* to Yājñavalkya (ib. 6–10), and the text continues:

10. "Now, Yājñavalkya granted him a boon. He (the king) said, "Let mine be /the boon of/ questioning you when I choose to do so, Yājñavalkya." Because of that Janaka was a brahmin.⁵⁰

There can hardly be any question of Janaka becoming a real brahmin (in such a case one would expect the verb *babhūva*), but rather that he was equal to brahmins in knowledge and had the right to dispute with them at his own discretion.

The word *kāma-praśna* is again unique and occurs elsewhere only in BU. 4.3.1, which refers to the same occasion. It goes without saying

⁴⁹ *te hocuḥ: ati vai no 'yaṃ rājanyabandhur avādid dhantainam brahmodyam āhvayāmahā iti sa hovāca yājñavalkyo brāhmaṇā vai vayaṃ smo rājanyabandhur asau yady amuṃ vayaṃ jayema kam ajaṣṣmeti brūyāmātha yady asāv asmān jayed brāhmaṇān rājanyabandhur ajaṣṣid iti no brūyur medam ādṛghvam iti tad dhāsya jajñur atha ha yājñavalkyo ratham āsthāyānupradhāvayāṃ cakāra taṃ hānvājagāma sa hovācāgnihotraṃ yājñavalkya veditū3m ity agnihotraṃ samrād iti. ŚB. 11.6.2.5.*

⁵⁰ *tasmai ha yājñavalkyo varaṃ dadau sa hovāca kāmapraśna eva me tvayi yājñavalkyāsad iti tato brahmā janaka āsa. ib. 10.*

that the right to begin a discussion by asking questions put the participant of a *brahmodya* into an advantageous position.

The other story of the same sort follows immediately in ŚB. 11.6.3.1–11. It occurs in a slightly modified form in JB. 2.76–77, and reappears with a widely extended framework and different contents in BU. 3.1.1–3.9.28. There can be no doubt that the ŚB. version is the oldest one, but even there the marks of a late origin are unmistakable. The birth and growth of the Yājñavalkya legend can be followed by a simple comparison of the three versions:

ŚB. 11.6.3.1: ‘Janaka of Videha initiated a sacrifice accompanied with numerous gifts /to the priests/. Setting apart a thousand cows, he said, “He who is the most learned in sacred scriptures, brahmins, shall drive away these cows.”⁵¹ Only the first sentence is common to all three versions. After that, JB. and BU. supply further information: JB. 2.76 ≠ BU. 3.1.1: ‘There the Kuru-Pañcāla brahmins assembled.’⁵² That is a major innovation, because Yājñavalkya is nowhere associated with Kuru-Pañcālas in ŚB. But even as far as ŚB. is concerned, this is the only passage in which Yājñavalkya is connected with an explicit gift of a thousand cows.

BU. 3.1.1 has more details: ‘And in this Janaka of Videha there arose a desire to find out which one of those brahmins was the most learned in the sacred lore. So he set apart a thousand cows; to the horns of each of them ten measures (*pādas*) (of gold?) were fastened.’⁵³ The term *brahmiṣṭha* has been replaced by another superlative, viz. *anūcānatama*, which is even less common and appears elsewhere only in AiĀ. 1.2.2 & KŚS. 22.4.7.⁵⁴

ŚB. 11.6.3.2 continues with an episode that sounds like a historical anecdote: ‘Yājñavalkya then said, “This way /drive/ them!” They (the other brahmins) said, “Are you really the most learned in sacred lore

⁵¹ *janako ha vaideho bahudakṣiṇena yajñeneje. sa ha gavāṃ sahasram avarundhann uvācāitā vo brāhmaṇā yo brahmiṣṭhaḥ sa udajatām iti.* ŚB. 11.6.3.1 ≠ JB. 2.76. *etā vo...* could also mean ‘these are yours, brahmins...’

⁵² *te tad u ha kurupañcālānāṃ brāhmaṇā abhisamājagmuḥ.* JB. 2.76.

tatra ha kurupañcālānāṃ brāhmaṇā abhisametā babhūvuḥ. BU. 3.1.1.

⁵³ *tasya ha janakasya vaidehasya vijjñāsā babhūva: kaḥ svid eṣāṃ brāhmaṇānām anūcānatama iti. sa ha gavāṃ sahasram avarurodha; daśa-daśa pādā ekaikasyāḥ śṅgayor ābaddhā babhūvuḥ.* BU. 3.1.1.

⁵⁴ *bharadvājo ha vā ṛṣiṇām anūcānatamo dīrghajīvitamas tapasvitama āsa.* AiĀ. 1.2.2. – *apetaprajananā sthaviṛās tadākhyās teṣāṃ yo nṣamsatamaḥ syād dravyavattamo vā-nūcānatamo vā tasya gārhapate dīkṣeran.* KŚS. 22.4.7.

among us, Yājñavalkya?" He replied, "Reverence be to him who is the most learned in sacred lore: we are but desirous of /these/ cows."⁵⁵

JB. 2.76 agrees with ŚB., except that it calls him Vājasaneyā and reads: 'this way /drive/ them, my dear!' (*arvācīr etās somyeti*). His mockery of the brahmins is unmistakable: by claiming the cows in advance Yājñavalkya made it clear that he considered himself to be superior. His frank admission of his desire for nothing but cows, however, does not agree with the picture of his aspirations drawn from earlier passages in ŚB.

ŚB. 11.6.3.3 & JB. 2.76 continue: "Then they said /to one another/, "Which of us shall question him?" Vidagdha Śākalya (or 'the shrewd Śākalya') said, "I".⁵⁶ JB. adds: 'they appointed him as their leader and went /away/' (*taṃ ha puraskṛtyeyuḥ*). Both texts continue: 'When he (Yājñavalkya) saw him, he said, "Have the brahmins made of you a firebrand-remover?"⁵⁷ In ŚB. Śākalya does not reply and starts to question Yājñavalkya, while JB. adds: "'If I am by that /appointment/ a firebrand-remover, I shall certainly ask you."⁵⁸

The whole scene is rearranged with more details in BU. 3.1.2: 'And he (Janaka) said to them, "Venerable brahmins, let him who is the most learned in sacred scriptures among you drive away these cows." But those brahmins did not dare. Then Yājñavalkya said to his own disciple, "Drive them away, dear Sāmaśravas!" And he drove them away. But the brahmins were enraged: "What! Does he mean to say that he is the most learned in sacred scriptures among us?"

Now there was Aśvala, the *hotar* of Janaka of Videha. He asked him, "So it is you, Yājñavalkya, who is the most learned in sacred scriptures among us?" And he (Yājñavalkya) replied, "We bow to the most learned in sacred scriptures: we are but desirous of /these/ cows!"

⁵⁵ *sa hovāca yājñavalkyo 'rvācīr etā iti te hocus tvam svin no yājñavalkya brahmiṣṭho 'sī* iti; *sa hovāca namo 'stu brahmiṣṭhāya gokāmā eva vyaṃ sma iti*. ŚB. 11.6.3.2.

⁵⁶ *te hocus: ko na imaṃ prakṣyatīti; sa hovāca vidagdhaḥ śākalyo 'ham iti*. ŚB. 11.6.3.3.

⁵⁷ *taṃ ha pratikhyāyovāca (pratikhyāyāntam, JB.): tvam svic chākalya brāhmaṇā ulmukāvakṣayaṇam akratā*3 iti. ŚB. 11.6.3.3. The idea is, of course, to be someone's cat's paw, as already suggested by Max Müller, but the picture of removing burning charcoal from a fire makes better sense than that of extinguishing it ('a thing for quenching the firebrand', Eggeling 5.115). For coals becoming extinguished the verb *upa-śam-* is used in ChU. 2.12.1. BU. 3.9.18 has *aṅgārāvakṣayaṇa*.

⁵⁸ *sa hovāca: yadī tenolmukāvakṣayaṇam smaḥ prakṣyāmo nvai tvām iti*. JB. 2.76.

Thereupon Aśvala, the *hotar*, began to question him.⁵⁹ From then on the story in BU. takes its own course.

The information obtained from this passage has no historical value. Neither a *hotar* of Janaka by name Aśvala nor a disciple of Yājñavalkya called Sāmaśravas appears anywhere else in the Veda. Moreover, the idea of one man driving away a thousand cows is singularly absurd. Nevertheless, it is useful to be reminded that a 'student of sacred lore' (*brahma-cārin*) was primarily a cowherd, who served his master, guarded his house and cattle (ŚB. 3.6.2.15), took care of the fire (ib. 11.5.4.5), brought fire-wood at night (ib. 11.3.3.1), and did all his teacher's bidding (*ācārya-vacas*): 'having made himself poor, so to speak, and become devoid of shame, be begs alms.'⁶⁰

The story found in the Brāhmaṇas has the form of a dialogue. The 'shrewd' Śākalya questions Yājñavalkya on the number, nature and powers of the gods, in decreasing number from three hundred and three and three thousand and three, to the one god. Yājñavalkya answers all his questions except the last one:

ŚB. 11.6.3.11 ≠ JB. 2.77: 'He (Yājñavalkya) said, "You have gone on questioning me beyond the deity, beyond which there must be no questioning: you shall die before such and such a day, and not even your bones (body, JB.) shall reach your home!" And so, indeed, did he (Śākalya) die; and robbers carried off his bones (body, JB.), taking them for something else.⁶¹ Wherefore let no man decry anyone, for even /by/ knowing thus, he becomes superior.'⁶²

A 'deity beyond which there must be no questioning' (*anatipraśnyā devatā*) does not occur anywhere else in the Veda except here and in BU. 3.6.1 (see further). The word *pari-moṣin* 'robber' is extremely

⁵⁹ *tān hovāca: brāhmaṇā bhagavanto yo vo brahmiṣṭhaḥ sa etā gā udajatām iti. te ha brāhmaṇā na dadhṛṣuḥ. atha ha yājñavalkyaḥ svam eva brahmacāriṇam uvācātāḥ saumyodaja sāmaśrava (~vā3, M.) iti. tā hodācakāra. te ha brāhmaṇāś cukrudhuḥ katham (katham nu, M.) no brahmiṣṭho bruvīte. atha ha janakasya vaidehasya hotāśvalo babhūva. sa hainaḥ papraccha: tvaṃ khalu no yājñavalkya brahmiṣṭho 'sī3 iti. sa hovāca: namo vyaṃ brahmiṣṭhāya kurmo gokāmā eva vyaṃ sma iti. tam ha tata eva praṣṭum dadhre hotāśvalaḥ. BU. 3.1.2.*

⁶⁰ *ātmānaṃ daridrīkṛtyeva ahrīr bhūtvā bhikṣate. ŚB. 11.3.3.5.*

⁶¹ After the cremation, the bones were collected and placed in an earthen vessel which was buried. According to the commentary, the thieves mistook the urn for a receptacle containing gold or some other valuable substance.

⁶² *sa hovācānatipraśnyām (vai) mā devatām atyaprākṣiḥ; puretithyai (puraitāvātithyā, v. 11. purotāvātithyā, puretāvātithyā) marīsyasi (martāsi) na te 'sthīni (śārīrāṇi) cana gḥhān prāpsyanīti. sa ha (tad dha) tathaiva (tathaivāsa. sa ha tathaiva) mamāra; tasya*

rare,⁶³ while *apa-hārin* does not occur anywhere else. Similarly, *upa-vādin* is found only here and in ChU. 7.6.1,⁶⁴ though the verb *upa-vad-* is fairly common.

Apart from passages parallel with ŚB., Yājñavalkya is quoted once more as Vājasaneyā in JB. 2.229, which is but a quotation from ŚB. 2.5.1.5.⁶⁵ Equally uninteresting are the other two references found in ŚĀ. 9.7 and 13.1, as both are but transcripts from ŚB.⁶⁶

Yājñavalkya's appearances in BU. may be arranged under similar headings as in the case of ŚB.:

1. Individual pronouncements: 1.4.3.
2. Discussion with King Janaka and other brahmins: 3.1.1 – 3.9.28.
3. Private talks with King Janaka: 4.1.1–7; 4.2.1–4; 4.3.1 – 4.4.25.
4. Discussion with Maitreyī: 2.4.1–13; 4.5.1–15.
5. Quotation in the 'lineage' of teachers: 6.3.7–8; 6.5.3.

The main bulk of material related to Yājñavalkya has been preserved in four conversations which form 'The Book of Yājñavalkya' (*yājñavalkīyaṃ kāṇḍam*), the central part of BU., in Chapters (*adhyāyas*) 3 and 4. There is neither any logical sequence in the arrangement of the disputes, nor is Yājñavalkya presented as a historical figure. The contents of the discussions and the gradation of the importance of the ideas expressed in them obviously determined the arrangement of the dialogues in which Yājñavalkya is conceived as a great sage of the past, beyond the reach of memory, who is an undisputed authority. The outcome of his discussions with King Janaka, other learned brahmins, and even with two women, is a foregone conclusion: his opponents are totally defeated, and sometimes mercilessly and surprisingly harshly humiliated. And yet, in spite of such a stereotype which served as a

hāpy anyan manyamānāḥ parimoṣiṇo 'sthīni apajahrus (tasya hāpahāriṇo 'nantareṇa śarīrāny apajahrur anyan manyamānāḥ). tasmān nopavādī syād uta (tasmād u ha nopavadet) hy evaṃvit paro bhavati. ŚB. 11.6.3.11 (JB. 2.77). Delbrück, op. cit. p. 528, suggests that *paro bhavati* could be understood as 'he becomes one of the other side, or shore', i.e. he dies, but he himself doubts such an interpretation.

⁶³ BU. 3.9.26 (= ŚB. 14.6.9.38) is a parallel passage; otherwise only in ŚB. 13.2.4.2; 4, and TB. 3.9.1.3; 4.

⁶⁴ 'then the small people who are quarrellers, abusive, and slanderers' (*atha ye 'lpāḥ kalahīnaḥ piśunā upavādinah*), ChU. 7.6.1. It occurs again in MS. 4.3.9, and in BŚS. 18.26:9.

⁶⁵ *tā ayaṃ vāyuḥ pavamāna āviṣṭa iti vājasaneyāḥ.* JB. 2.229 ≠ ŚB. 2.5.1.5 where, however, the name Vājasaneyā does not occur as it was used by JB. in a generic sense of the author of ŚB.

⁶⁶ See B. Keith in JRAS 1908, p. 374.

framework for fostering Upaniṣadic speculations, Yājñavalkya's personality remained original both in ideas and in language.

Contrary to ŚB., there is only one independent pronouncement ascribed to him in the whole BU. It concerns the doctrine of the primeval Self (*ātman*):

BU. 1.4.3: 'He (*ātman*) caused that very self /of his/ to fall into two /parts/: from that husband and wife arose. Therefore Yājñavalkya used to say, "Here, the two of us are like a half-fragment." Therefore this space is filled by a woman.'⁶⁷ The interpretation is not without difficulties, and the quotation is not related to any other pronouncement ascribed to Yājñavalkya. The compound *ardha-bṛgala* (~*vṛgala*, ŚB.) does not occur anywhere else in the Veda.⁶⁸

BU. 3.1.1–3.9.28 contains a description of a great *brahmodya*, which was organized by Janaka, and during which Yājñavalkya successively defeated eight opponents. They are called the Kuru-Pañcāla brahmins (3.1.1), but one of them is a woman, Gārgī Vācaknavī (3.6.1 & 3.8.1–12).⁶⁹ This is followed by Yājñavalkya's private talks with King Janaka (4.1.1–4.4.25). The information obtained from these stories is of little value and credibility. The questions and answers follow the established pattern and agree with other Upaniṣadic speculations. After Yājñavalkya's rejoinders, each of the questioners 'remained silent' (*tato ha... upararāma*). One of them, Uṣasta Cākrāyaṇa, when not quite satisfied with his reply, asks for a more detailed explanation and complains: 'This has been explained /by you/ as one might say, "This is a cow", "this is a horse."⁷⁰ The monotony of the procedure is interrupted by Gārgī Vācaknavī,⁷¹ who asks Yājñavalkya about the ultimate

⁶⁷ *sa imam evātmānaṃ dvedhāpātayat; tataḥ patīś ca patnī cābhavatām. tasmād idam ardhabṛgalam iva sva iti ha smāha yājñavalkyaḥ. tasmād ayam ākāśaḥ striyā pūryata eva.* BU. 1.4.3 (= ŚB. 14.4.2.5).

⁶⁸ The common translation is 'this one's own self is like a half-fragment', i.e. *sva* is taken for *ātman* (*svasya ātmani*, Śāyaṇa). However, it was observed already by O. Böhtlingk, *Sanskrit-Chrestomathie*, Leipzig 1909, p. 398, and repeated recently by V. P. Limaye & R. D. Vadekar (ed.), *Eighteen Principal Upaniṣads*, Vol. I., Poona 1958, p. 185, that *sva* is more likely a finite form of the verb *as-*.

⁶⁹ They are: Aśvala (3.1.2–10), Jāratkārava Ārtabhāga (3.2.1–13), Bhujyu Lāhyāyani (3.3.1–2), Uṣasta Cākrāyaṇa (3.4.1–2), Kahola Kauṣītakeya (3.5.1), Gārgī Vācaknavī (3.6.1), Uddālaka Āruṇi (3.7.1–23), again Gārgī Vācaknavī (3.8.1–12), and Vidagdha Śākalya (3.9.1–26).

⁷⁰ *yathā vibrūyād asau gaur asāv aśva ity evam evaitad vyapadiṣṭam bhavati.* BU. 3.4.2.

⁷¹ 'the daughter of Vacaknu' (talkative?); both the name and its origin are unknown; cf. I.S. 10.118, and V.I. 1.226.

world-ground, viz. about the explanation of a popular theory that ‘all this world is woven, warp and woof, on water.’ When she presses on too much with her question, Yājñavalkya warns her not to question further: ‘He said, “Gārgī, do not question too much lest your head burst asunder. You are questioning too much, indeed, about a divinity about which further questions are not to be asked. Do not, Gārgī, over-question!” And after that Gārgī remained silent’ (BU. 3.6.1).⁷² The phrase about the head ‘bursting asunder’ (usually translated as ‘falling off’) is often used on similar occasions in the Upaniṣads.

Gārgī is followed by Uddālaka Āruṇi, who is described as father and teacher of Śvetaketu in ChU. 6, but who plays a much more modest rôle here. He uses the same warning when he addresses Yājñavalkya: “‘If you, Yājñavalkya, drive away the *brahma*-cows without knowing that thread and the Inner Controller, your head will burst asunder” (BU. 3.7.1).⁷³

The reappearance of Gārgī and her eulogy on Yājñavalkya after Uddālaka is an incongruous interpolation, even though the matter under discussion is more important than the previous one. It shows, however, that the Yājñavalkya legend was already in full bloom:

BU. 3.8.1: “Then Vācakovā said, “Listen, venerable brahmins, I shall ask him (Yājñavalkya) two questions. If he answers me these, not one of you will defeat him in /this/ *brahmodya*.” “Ask, Gārgī!”

2. And she said, “As a son of a powerful man (a noble youth) of the Kāśis or of the Videhas might rise against you, having strung his unstrung bow and taken in his hand two arrows that pierce through the enemy, even so, Yājñavalkya, have I risen against you with two questions: answer me these!” “Ask, Gārgī!”⁷⁴

⁷² *sa hovāca: gārgī mātīprākṣiḥ; mā te mūrdhā vyapaptat (vi~, M.); anatipraśnyāṃ vai devatām (~āḥ, ~āḥ, M.) atipṛcchasi; gārgī mātīprākṣīr iti; tato ha gārgī vācakovā upararāma.* BU. 3.6.1.

⁷³ *tac cet tvam yājñavalkya sūtram avidvāṃs taṃ cāntaryāminam brahmagavīr udajase, mūrdhā te vipatiṣyatīti.* BU. 3.7.1.

⁷⁴ *atha ha vācakovā uvāca: brāhmaṇā bhagavantaḥ; hantāham imaṃ (yājñavalkyaṃ, Mādhy.) dvau praśnau prakṣyāmi, tau cen me vakṣyati, na vai jātu yuṣmākam imaṃ kaścid brahmodyaṃ jeteti (tau cen me na vivakṣyati, mūrdhāsya vipatiṣyatīti, M.). pṛccha gārgīti.* BU. 3.8.1.

sā hovāca: ahaṃ vai tvā yājñavalkya yathā kāśyo vā vaideho vograputra ujjyaṃ dhanur adhijyaṃ kṛtvā dvau bāṇavantau sapatnātivyādhinau haste kṛtvopotiṣṭhed evam evāhaṃ tvā dvābhyāṃ praśnābhyāṃ upodasthām; tau me brūhīti. pṛccha gārgīti. ib. 2.

The story continues in this unusually pompous style which is completely out of tune with the rest. After her question has been answered, Gārgī continues:

5. “Salutation to you, Yājñavalkya, because you have solved this question for me. Prepare yourself (lit. ‘hold yourself’) for the other.” “Ask, Gārgī!”⁷⁵

Finally, after her second question has been answered, Gārgī bursts into unrestrained praise, quite atypical of all the other participants’ reactions:

12. “Venerable brahmins, you might consider it a great thing if you escape from this /man/ by /merely/ making a bow /to him/. Not one of you will defeat him in /this/ dispute (*brahmodya*).” And after that Vācakanvī remained silent.⁷⁶

The last participant is Vidagdha Śākalya, known already from ŚB. and JB., who asks (ib. 9.19): “Yājñavalkya”, said Śākalya, “what is the *brahman* you know that you have outtalked the Kuru-Pañcāla brahmins?”⁷⁷ The verbal contest becomes very lively, but Yājñavalkya treats him exceptionally haughtily. At one moment during the discussion, he calls him *ahallika*, most probably a dirty word otherwise unknown in Sanskrit (an idiot?), in any case an abuse totally undeserved, as Śākalya did not ‘over-ask.’ It is clear, as P. Deussen (op. cit. p. 429ff.) has shown, that this was the original story, and that the preceding discussions were inserted later. The conclusion is, however, an unfortunate mixture of the Brāhmaṇa element and the Upaniṣadic curse:

BU. 3.9.26 concludes the discussion with Yājñavalkya’s question about ‘the person taught in the Upaniṣads’ (*aupaniṣada puruṣa*): “If you do not explain him to me your head will burst asunder!” Śākalya did not know him, and his head burst asunder; and robbers carried off his bones, taking them for something else.⁷⁸ Not content with that, in

⁷⁵ *sā hovāca: namas te ’stu yājñavalkya, yo ma etaṃ vyavocaḥ; aparasmāi dhārayasveti. pṛccha gārgīti.* BU. 3.8.5. BU(M). omits *astu*.

⁷⁶ *sā hovāca: brāhmaṇā bhagavantah; tad eva bahu manyedhvam (manya~, M.) yad asmān namaskāreṇa mucyedhvam (mucyādhvai, M.); na vai jātu yuṣmākam imaṃ kaścid brahmodyaṃ jeteti. tato ha vācakanvay upararāma.* BU. 3.8.12.

⁷⁷ *yājñavalkyetei hovāca śākalyah; yad idaṃ kurupañcālānāṃ brāhmaṇān atyavādīh, kiṃ brahma vidvān iti.* BU. 3.9.19.

⁷⁸ *taṃ cen me na vivakṣyasi, mūrdhā te vipatiṣyatīti. taṃ ha na mene śākalyah; tasya ha mūrdhā vipapāta; api hāsya parimoṣiṇo ’sthīny apajahrur anyan manyamānāh.* BU. 3.9.26.

the zeal to demonstrate Yājñavalkya's complete sovereignty, the author(s) ascribed to him some rather unnecessarily boastful words:

BU. 3.9.27: 'Then he (Yājñavalkya) said, "Venerable brahmins, whosoever among you wishes /to do so/, question me; or you may all question me; or I will question him of you who wishes /to be questioned/; or I will question all of you." Those brahmins, however, did not dare.'⁷⁹ In spite of this, Yājñavalkya then interrogates them in seven stanzas (*ślokas*) and gives himself answers about the real nature of *brahman*.

The story is followed by three dialogues of Yājñavalkya with King Janaka.

BU. 4.1.1: 'Janaka of Videha was giving audience. Then Yājñavalkya approached him. He said to him, "Yājñavalkya, for what purpose have you come? Do you desire cattle or subtle (hair-splitting) questions?" "Both, indeed, Your Majesty", he replied.'⁸⁰ Yājñavalkya then discusses the views of six teachers,⁸¹ and finds the explanations of each of them to be 'one-legged' (*ekapād vā etat*), BU. 4.1.2-7.⁸²

2. "Let us hear who told you what." "Jitvan, the offspring of Śilina, told me that *brahman* is speech." "As one might say who had a mother, a father, a teacher, so did the offspring of Śilina say that *brahman* is speech, for he might have thought, 'What can one have who cannot speak?'"⁸³

However self-evident the phrase 'as one might say...' sounds, its

⁷⁹ *atha hovāca (ha yājñavalkya uvāca M.): brāhmaṇā bhagavanto yo vaḥ kāmāyate sa mā pṛcchatu, sarve vā mā pṛcchata; yo vaḥ kāmāyate taṃ vaḥ pṛcchāmi (~āni, M.), sarvān vā vaḥ pṛcchāmi. te ha brāhmaṇā na dadhṛsuh.* BU. 3.9.27.

⁸⁰ *janako ha vaideha āsāṃ cakre. atha ha yājñavalkya āvavrāja. taṃ hovāca: yājñavalkya, kim artham acārīḥ paśūn icchann anvantān iti. ubhayam eva samrād iti hovāca.* BU. 4.1.1.

⁸¹ They were: Jitvan Śailini, BU. 4.1.2, Udaṅka Śaulbāyana (3.), Barku Vārṣṇa (4.), Gardabhivipita Bhāradvāja (5.), Satyakāma Jābāla (6.), and Vidagdha Śākalya (7.), who seems to have been Yājñavalkya's chief opponent.

⁸² The comparison is used by Satyakāma Jābāla when he instructs his pupil Upakosala: 'Even as a one-legged man walking, or a chariot proceeding with one wheel, suffers injury, even so his sacrifice is injured' (*sa yathāikapād vrajan ratho vaikena cakreṇa vartamāno riṣyati, evam asya yajño riṣyati*). ChU. 4.16.3.

⁸³ *yat te kaścid abravīt tac chṛṇavāmeti; abravīn me jītvā śailiniḥ: vāg vai brahmeti. yathā māṭṣmān piṭṣmān ācāryavān brūyāt tathā tac chailinir abravīd vāg vai brahmeti; avadato hi kiṃ syād iti.* BU. 4.1.2. R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, London etc. 21975 (repr.), p. 127 n. 1 draws attention to the fact that the active *brūyāt* is here taken as if it were the middle voice, which is a late epic usage.

vocabulary is unusual: *mātṛmat* occurs only here and in an obscure passage in AV.;⁸⁴ *ācāryavat* appears once more in ChU., though not in such a matter-of-course meaning,⁸⁵ while *pitṛmat* is found nowhere else in the Upaniṣads, even though it is frequent in both the Saṃhitās and the Brāhmaṇas, but only in reference to the Fathers (*pītaras*).

Each paragraph is concluded with the same phrase: “I will give you a thousand with a bull /as large/ as an elephant”, said Janaka of Videha. Yājñavalkya replied, “My father thought that one should not accept /gifts/ without having instructed.”⁸⁶

This is the only passage in which Yājñavalkya’s father is mentioned, though not named. The next story is short, and Janaka is even more reverent:

BU. 4.2.1: ‘Janaka of Videha, approaching reverently from his cushion,⁸⁷ said, “Salutation to you, Yājñavalkya, instruct me!”⁸⁸

The instruction is duly imparted and the text concludes:

4. “Indeed, Janaka, you have reached /the state of/ fearlessness (safety),” thus spoke Yājñavalkya. Janaka of Videha replied, “May fearlessness come to you, Yājñavalkya, to you, Venerable Sir, who make us know fearlessness. Salutation to you: here are the Videhas, here am I /at your service/. ”⁸⁹

The last account in this category of passages represents the final stage in the gradation of ideas expressed in the previous discourses. The framework of this part of the work corresponds to the importance of the contents.

⁸⁴ ‘An enjoyable vessel that was deposited in secret became manifest in enjoyment for them that have mothers’ (tr.) (*bhūyīṣyaṃ pātraṃ nihitaṃ guhā yad āvir bhoge abhavan mātṛmadbhiḥ*). AV. 12.1.60.

⁸⁵ On the contrary, Uddālaka Āruṇi stresses to Śvetaketu the need for a teacher: ‘even so here on earth one who has a teacher knows...’ (*evam evehācāryavān puruṣo veda...*). ChU. 6.14.2.

⁸⁶ *hasty-ṛsabhaṃ sahasraṃ dadāmiṭi hovāca janako vaidehaḥ. sa hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ: pitā me ’manyata nānanuṣīṣya hareteti*. BU. 4.1.2–7.

⁸⁷ The exact meaning of *upa-ava-sṛp-* is difficult to assess, as it occurs nowhere else; cf. ‘descending from his cushion and approaching,’ Hume, against ‘verliess sein Polster und kam auf den Knien heran,’ Deussen.

⁸⁸ *janako ha vaidehaḥ kūrcaḍ upavasarpān uvāca: namaḥ te ’stu yājñavalkya; anu mā śādhīti*. BU. 4.2.1.

⁸⁹ *abhayaṃ vai janaka prāpto ’siti hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ; sa hovāca janako vaideho ’bhayaṃ tvā gacchatāḍ yājñavalkya yo no bhagavān abhayaṃ vedayase; namaḥ te ’stu: ime videhā ayam aham asmi*. BU. 4.2.4.

BU. 4.3.1: ‘Yājñavalkya came to Janaka of Videha. He thought, “I will converse with him.” Then, as once Janaka of Videha and Yājñavalkya discussed together at an *agnihotra*, Yājñavalkya granted him (the king) a boon. He (the king) chose to ask whenever he wished. He (Yājñavalkya) granted it to him. Hence it was the king who asked first.’⁹⁰

This is, of course, a reference to ŚB. 11.6.2.1ff., but with a slight modification in favour of Yājñavalkya. In the original story, it was the king who explained the meaning of *agnihotra* to Yājñavalkya, and it took place not in the course of a discussion, but at Yājñavalkya’s own request, as he was unable to match Janaka’s previous questions. Now, on the contrary, several times during Yājñavalkya’s exposition, the king simply says: “I will give you, Venerable Sir, a thousand” (*so ’ham bhagavato sahasraṃ dadāmi*), BU. 4.3.14, 15, 16, 33, and begs for further instruction. In the end Yājñavalkya realizes that he has told the king too much: ‘At this /moment/ Yājñavalkya became frightened: “This intelligent king has driven me out of every corner (or ‘to extremities!’)” (ib. 33).⁹¹ Strangely enough, nothing happens and Yājñavalkya continues to answer the king’s questions. Towards the end of the discourse, Janaka exclaims: “I will give you, Venerable Sir, the Videhas and also myself as slaves!” (ib. 4.23).⁹² This is a long way from the original story where, at the same point, ‘Janaka was a brahmin’ (ŚB. 11.6.2.10).

The distance between earlier records connected with Yājñavalkya and the time when the ancient sage became a symbol of the highest achievements of the Upaniṣadic era is very vividly illustrated by the story of his discourses with one of his two wives, about whom no mention is found anywhere else, concerning his intention to leave his family in search of higher spiritual goals and, even more so, of his authorship of the entire collection of ‘white sacrificial formulas’ (*yajus*). None of these ‘facts’ can be traced elsewhere.

The story of Yājñavalkya’s two wives is preserved in two slightly

⁹⁰ *janakaṃ ha vaidehaṃ yājñavalkyo jagāma; sam enena vadiṣya iti; atha ha yaj janakaś ca vaideho yājñavalkyaś cāgnihotre samūdāte, tasmai ha yājñavalkyo varaṃ dadau; sa ha kāma-praśnam eva vavre, taṃ hāsmāi dadau; taṃ ha samrād eva pūrvaṃ papraccha.* BU. 4.3.1.

⁹¹ *atra ha yājñavalkyo bibhayāṃ cakāra: medhāvī rājā sarvebhyo māntebhyo udarautsīd iti.* BU. 4.3.33.

⁹² *so ’ham bhagavate videhān dadāmi mām cāpi saha dāsyāyeti.* BU. 4.4.23.

different recensions, in BU. 2.4.1–14 and 4.5.1–15, and has been already discussed in detail elsewhere.⁹³ The second version is more elaborate and contains information of which no mention is made in the first and, most probably, older account.⁹⁴ Some striking differences are found especially in the opening paragraphs of the two versions:

BU. 2.4.1: “Maitreyī,” said Yājñavalkya, “I am, indeed, about to depart from this place; look, let me make a /final/ settlement for you and that Kātyāyanī.”

BU. 4.5.1: ‘Now then, Yājñavalkya had two wives, Maitreyī and Kātyāyanī. Of the two, Maitreyī was a *brahma*-discourser, Kātyāyanī had just a woman’s discernment in that respect. Now Yājñavalkya was about to commence another mode of life.

2. “Maitreyī,” said Yājñavalkya, “I am, indeed, about to go forth from this state (of a householder?); look, let me make a /final/ settlement for you and that Kātyāyanī.”⁹⁵

Maitreyī, being keen on philosophical problems, asks Yājñavalkya for an explanation of the supreme Self (*ātman*) and the highest value in human life, after which the sage walks away. Kātyāyanī, who had ‘just a woman’s discernment in that respect’, is never mentioned again afterwards. She was probably thought of as having been in charge of Yājñavalkya’s household which must have been, at least for those times, an establishment of considerable size – provided we are prepared to accept the hints of large royal donations bestowed on Yājñavalkya as any sort of historical evidence. Maitreyī, who is believed to have been one of those learned women who took an active part in the Upaniṣadic discussions and is later named among the holy teachers of old (ŚGS. 4.10 and ĀśvGS. 3.4.4) also appears only in this story.

⁹³ Ivo Fišer, *The Two Wives of Yājñavalkya in the Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*. Añjali. *Papers on Indology and Buddhism*. Univ. of Ceylon, Peradeniya 1970, pp. 97–101.

⁹⁴ Cf. also P. Deussen, op. cit. p. 481. It is, therefore, more than surprising that both versions have been translated in exactly the same words by E. Röer, *The Twelve Principal Upaniṣads*, Vol. II, Adyar, Madras 1931, pp. 236 & 374.

⁹⁵ *maitreyīti hovāca yājñavalkyah; udyāsyān vā are 'ham asmāt sthānād asmi; hanta te 'nayā kātyāyanyāntaṃ karavāṇīti*. BU. 2.4.1.

atha ha yājñavalkyasya dve bhārye babhūvatur maitreyī ca kātyāyanī ca. taylor ha maitreyī brahmavādinī babhūva, strīprajñaiṣva (~prajñeva, M.) tarhi kātyāyanī. atha ha yājñavalkyo 'nyad-vṛttam upākarīṣyan, BU. 4.5.1.

maitreyīti hovāca yājñavalkyah; pravrajīṣyan vā are 'ham asmāt sthānād asmi; hanta te 'nayā kātyāyanyāntaṃ karavāṇīti. ib. 2.

There are subtle changes in Yājñavalkya's attitude towards her in the two versions:

BU. 2.4.4: 'Yājñavalkya said, "Ah, verily, being dear to us, you say what is dear. Come, sit down, I will explain to you. But while I am expounding, do try to think attentively of it."⁹⁶

BU. 4.5.5: 'Yājñavalkya said, "Though, indeed, lady, you have been dear to us, you have /now/ increased your dearness. Well then, lady, I will explain it to you. But while I am expounding, do try to think attentively of it."⁹⁷

The same applies to the final passage in which the second version is more elaborate:

BU. 2.4.13: 'Then Maitreyī said, "In this, indeed, you have bewildered me, Venerable Sir..." Then /Yājñavalkya/ said, "Certainly I am not saying anything bewildering. This, indeed, is enough for understanding."⁹⁸

BU. 4.5.14: 'Then Maitreyī said, "In this, indeed, Venerable Sir, you have caused me to reach utter bewilderment. Indeed, I do not understand it (*ātman*)."⁹⁸ Then /Yājñavalkya/ said, "Certainly I am not saying anything bewildering."⁹⁸ In this version he continues to make his explanation clearer and adds (ib. 15): "Thus you have the instruction given to you, Maitreyī. Well, such, indeed, is immortality." Having said so, Yājñavalkya departed.⁹⁹

The story, as preserved in both versions, does not give much scope for speculation about Maitreyī's learnedness and her active part in the discussion. She is, beside Gārgī Vācakanvī, the only other 'learned' woman known to the old Upaniṣads. They are both brought into connection with Yājñavalkya, but only at the time of the fully de-

⁹⁶ *sa hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ: priyā batāre naḥ satī priyaṃ bhāṣase; ehy āssva vyākhyāsyāmi te; vyācakṣāṇasya tu me nididhyāsaveti.* BU. 2.4.4. M. adds *bravitu bhagavān*.

⁹⁷ *sa hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ: priyā vai khalu no bhavati satī priyam avṛdhat (avṛtat, M.); hanta tarhi (khalu, M.) bhavaty etad vyākhyāsyāmi te; vyācakṣāṇasya tu me nididhyāsaveti.* BU. 4.5.5.

⁹⁸ *sā hovāca maitreyī: atraiva mā bhagavān amūmuhat... sa hovāca /yājñavalkyaḥ, M./: na vā are 'haṃ moḥaṃ bravīmi; alaṃ vā ara idaṃ vijñānāya.* BU. 2.4.13.

sā hovāca maitreyī: atraiva mā bhagavān mohāntam āpipipāt (āpipadat, M.); na vā aham imaṃ (idaṃ, M.) vijñānāmi; sa hovāca /yājñavalkyaḥ, M./: na vā are 'haṃ moḥaṃ bravīmi. BU. 4.5.14.

⁹⁹ *ity uktānuśāsānāsi maitreyi; etāvad are khalv amṛtatvam ity hoktvā yājñavalkyo vijahāra (pravavrāja, M.).* BU. 4.5.15.

veloped Yājñavalkya legend. Her involvement in a *brahma*-discourse with her husband may have something to do with the fact that there is nowhere any suggestion that Yājñavalkya had any children, as is the case with other famous teachers in the Upaniṣads. Moreover, Maitreyī is characterized only as a *brahma*-discourser, and only in the later version of the story. Thus, even in the latest Vedic period, nobody believed that she had studied the sacred lore in the traditional way (*śuśruvas*), or that she was learned (*anūcāna*) like the brahmins of that period; in fact, these two words have no feminine in the Veda.

Finally, Yājñavalkya is quoted as one of the teachers of old in the 'lineage' (*vaṃśa*) of teachers, even though, strangely enough, not at the end of the text most concerned with him, as has been already mentioned. He is named as a pupil (*antevāsin*) of Uddālaka Āruṇi (BU. 6.3.7) and the teacher of Madhuka Paiṅgya (ib. 8). Uddālaka is also named as his teacher in another lineage at the end of the whole BU., but there Āsuri is given as his pupil (BU. 6.5.2–3). And it is there that we are told (ib. 3): 'these white sacrificial formulas (*yajus*) which come from Āditya (the Sun), are declared by Yājñavalkya of the Vājasaneyi school.'¹⁰⁰ To make more out of these data than merely to state them would mean to plunge into pleasant, but totally unwarranted speculations.

¹⁰⁰ *ādityānīmāni śuklāni yajūṃṣi vājasaneyena yājñavalkyenākhyāyante*. BU. 6.5.3. Nevertheless, the contention that he is mentioned 108 times in BU. (J. Gonda, op. cit. p. 353), might lead to a misunderstanding – there are, of course, not 108 stories about Yājñavalkya.

ABBREVIATIONS

1. Texts

AV.	Atharva-Veda-Saṃhitā
AV. tr.	AV. trsl. W. D. Whitney, HOS 7–8, 1905; 2nd Indian repr. 1971
ĀśvGS.	Āśvalāyana-Gṛhya-Sūtra
RV.	Rg-Veda-Saṃhitā
AiĀ.	Aitareya-Āraṇyaka
KB.	Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa
KŚS.	Kātyāyana-Śrauta-Sūtra
GB.	Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa
ChU.	Chāndogya-Upaniṣad
JB.	Jaiminiya-Brāhmaṇa
JB. tr.	JB. trsl. H. W. Bodewitz (JB. 1.1–65), Leiden 1973
TB.	Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa
PāṇGP.	Pāṇiniya-Gaṇa-Pāṭha
BU.	Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad
BDhS.	Baudhāyana-Dharma-Sūtra
BŚS.	Baudhāyana-Śrauta-Sūtra
MS.	Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā
VāsDhS.	Vāsiṣṭha-Dharma-Sūtra
Viṣṇu-Sm.	Viṣṇu-Smṛti
ŚĀ.	Śāṅkhāyana-Āraṇyaka
ŚGS.	Śāṅkhāyana-Gṛhya-Sūtra
ŚB(M/K).	Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa (Mādhyandina/Kāṇva)
ŚB. tr.	ŚB. trsl. J. Eggeling, SBE 12, 26, 41, 43, 44 (Eggeling 1–5)
ŚŚS.	Śāṅkhāyana-Śrauta-Sūtra

2. Secondary sources

Gonda, HIL	J. Gonda (ed.), <i>A History of Indian Literature</i> , Wiesbaden 1975–
HOS	Harvard Oriental Series, Cambridge, Mass.
IJ	<i>Indo-Iranian Journal</i> , The Hague
I.Ś.	A. Weber (ed.), <i>Indische Studien</i> , Berlin-Leipzig
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> , New Haven, Conn.
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i> , London
KZ	‘Kuhns Zeitschrift’ = <i>Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung</i> , Göttingen
MSS	<i>Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft</i> , München
MW	M. Monier-Williams, <i>A Sanskrit-English Dictionary</i>
PW	O. Böhtlingk – R. Roth, <i>Sanskrit-Wörterbuch</i>
pw	O. Böhtlingk, <i>Sanskrit-Wörterbuch in kürzerer Fassung</i>
SBE	<i>Sacred Books of the East</i> , Oxford
SII	<i>Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik</i> , Reinbeck
V.I.	A. A. Macdonell – A. B. Keith, <i>Vedic Index</i> 1–2, 3rd Indian repr. 1967
VWC	Vishva Bandhu, <i>Vedic Word-Concordance</i> , Hoshiarpur
Winternitz, HIL	M. Winternitz, <i>A History of Indian Literature</i> , Calcutta 21972
WZKM	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i> , Wien

