

ABSTRACT

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The paper deals with selected texts from the Atharvaveda (esp. Paippalāda-AV) and several Yajurveda branches, used as mantras in various contexts of private ritual and especially of magic (e.g. healing incantations, *defixiones*, love spells, curses, oath formulae etc.). The first part of the talk analyzes stylistic and syntactic features of these texts, with a special regard to their respective performative contexts. The material concerned demonstrates how the study of the structure and form of the Atharvanic hymns (and their intra- and intertextual correspondences within the Veda) turns out to be seminal for our understanding of ritual pragmatics, especially for what concerns the question “how to do things with words” in Old Indo-Iranian liturgical practice – sacrifice, magic, prayer. The talk presents a chapter of a larger study of language of Indo-Iranian poetry, concerning especially the rhetorical figures of speech in the most ancient hymnal monuments, Veda and Avesta, in Indo-Iranian and Indo-European comparison. A further aim of this study is to make a systematic confrontation of Vedic with Gāthic and Young Avestan in this regard and to give a detailed account of the close relation of the two 'sister languages' also on *rhetorical* and *stylistic* levels, which have been examined so far sporadically and in a rather unsystematic way.

Continuing a series of studies of poetical phonology (results reported at the conferences of the *Societas Iranologica Europaea* in Ravenna 2003 and Rome 2005), word-formation (papers at the congresses of the *Society of Indo-European Studies* in Paris 2003, Cracow 2004 and Salzburg 2009), and phraseology (lectures at the *ISIS* conference in London 2006 and at the Leiden University in 2007-2009), the second part of the present paper analyzes structures of poetical syntax and gives a survey of the types of formation of complex *isocolon* sentences – that is, of syntactic constructions that consist of a more or less equal number of elements, arranged in stylistically marked, sophisticated constellations. Among them, two important stylistic phenomena of dialectically opposed character are discussed in this framework: the rhetorical *accumulation* of complete and similarly shaped sequences (*cola* and *commata*), which on syntactic level is called *disiunctio* in the Graeco-Roman rhetorical tradition (Quintilian) and comprises phenomena like e.g. parallelism, chiasm, anaphoric and epiphoric repetitions etc., and the stylistic *subtraction*, called *adiunctio* and comprising various forms of phrase shortening/economy like zeugma, syllepsis and common syntactic government (*apokoinou*). The systematization of these and other syntactic and stylistic phenomena is supported by highlights from a rich collection of relevant examples from the Atharvaveda (Paippalāda and Śaunaka), as well as from other Vedic and Avestan verse and prose texts.