

DATE AND AUTHORSHIP OF THE *ĀTMABODHA*

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Abstract

The article examines the authorship and dating of *Ātmabodha*, a popular philosophical poem that, in a popular and poetically imaginative manner, expounds on the main teachings of the Indian philosophical school of Advaita Vedānta. Although traditionally attributed to the renowned philosopher Śaṅkara (8th century), the article presents arguments for placing the work several centuries after Śaṅkara. In addition to the state-of-the-art stylometric method, the General Imposters Framework, which does not recognize *Ātmabodha* as Śaṅkara’s work, *Ātmabodha* also does not meet Hacker’s colophon criterion. The paper places particular emphasis on instances of post-Śaṅkarite doctrinal and terminological developments in *Ātmabodha*, specifically in the comprehension of the concept of ignorance, alongside the introduction of later terminology and concepts. The available evidence suggests a tentative dating of the work between the 11th and early 14th centuries.

KEYWORDS: Authorship, General Imposters, Śaṅkara, Advaita Vedānta, *Ātmabodha*, stylometry

Introduction

Ātmabodha or ‘Awakening of the Self’ is a concise philosophical poem consisting of 68 verses that outline the fundamental teachings of the Advaita Vedānta philosophical system. *Ātmabodha* is traditionally attributed to Śaṅkara, a renowned teacher of Advaita Vedānta from the 8th century.¹ The popularity of the work is evident from the number of preserved manu-

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1 For dating Śaṅkara, see Harimoto (2016), who narrows down the time of composition of the *Brahmasūtra-Bhāṣya* to the period between 756 and 772.

scripts, with around 450 recorded in the *New Catalogus Catalogorum* (NCC vol. 2, pp. 51–54).

Numerous manuscripts of *Ātmabodha* are accompanied by commentaries. The catalog of Sanskrit manuscripts GDV records four manuscripts of *Ātmabodha* (nos. 2057–2060),² which include both the text and a commentary (*vyākhyā*) attributed in the colophons to the “Citsukha’s disciple” (*citsukhasiṣya*). Since Citsukha lived in the late thirteenth century³, if these colophons are accurate, they provide a *terminus ante quem* for *Ātmabodha* in the early fourteenth century, when this unnamed disciple of Citsukha could have lived and composed this commentary.

Alongside Citsukha’s disciple’s commentary, there is a highly dubious commentary (Ṭīkā) attributed in the colophons of manuscripts to Padmapāda, a disciple of Śaṅkara. This simple commentary is quite different in style from the highly complex, polemical, and philosophically sophisticated *Pañcapādikā*, the only work confidently attributed to Padmapāda. Additionally, the *New Catalogus Catalogorum* (vol. 2, pp. 51–54) records a small number of preserved manuscripts (only 9), which is unexpected for such a well-known author, making this work reasonably considered a pseudepigraph.⁴

There is a commentary (Ṭīkā) on *Ātmabodha* traditionally attributed to Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (16th century). However, this Ṭīkā also appears to be a spurious work;⁵ it is interesting to note that five manuscripts attribute this same commentary to Śaṅkara himself in their colophons (NCC, vol. 2, p. 54).

There are also two anonymous and undated commentaries known as *Prakāśa* and *Subodhinī*, as well as undated commentaries by Advayānanda, Brahmānanda, Kṛṣṇānandāśrama Svāmī, and Raghunātha Sarasvatī. Rāmānanda Tīrtha’s commentary is dated to the 17th century. *Bālabodhinī* by Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, *Bhāvaprakāśikā* by Bodhendra (pupil of Gīrvāṇendra), Bhāsurānanda’s commentary, *Dīpikā* by Advaitānanda Tīrtha can be dated to

2 No. 2057 is recorded in EIP, Vol. 1, Sec. 2, p. 477 (no. 768.10.13).

3 Cf. EIP, Vol. 1, Sec. 2, p. 476.

4 The commentary on *Ātmabodha* attributed to Padmapāda can be found in the collected *prakaraṇas* of Śaṅkara, *Shri Shankarabhagavatpada’s Prakaranadvadashi* (Varanasi: Mahesh Research Institute, 1981, pp. 487–502).

5 I would like to express my gratitude to Gianni Pellegrini for bringing this to my attention: Sanjukta Gupta (2006) does not count this Ṭīkā among the works of Madhusūdana. According to Pellegrini, based on his own experience with reading Madhusūdana, the *Ātmabodha-Ṭīkā* is not genuine. The prose style appears to be different; the work lacks typical *maṅgalas* used by Madhusūdana, and the coherence of the arguments is questionable, a view shared by Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharya who edited the text (1961).

the 18th century, while *Dīpikā* (also *Ṭikā* or *Prakāśikā*) by Viśveśvara Paṇḍita and *Ṭikā* by Dayāśamkara to the 19th century.⁶

The popularity of the *Ātmabodha* is evident from the numerous printed versions of the text. Puranam Venkata Narayana Krishna Sastri edited and published *Ātmabodha* in Madras in 1840, marking the first printed Sanskrit edition. Since then, the Sanskrit text has been published in approximately fifty editions. EIP (vol. 1, pp. 266–268) records 20 translations into English, German, French, and Polish.⁷ Before the first printed Sanskrit edition in 1840, an English translation was completed by J. Taylor (1812) using manuscripts.

Ātmabodha was included in the first-ever printed collection of Śaṅkara's works, *Sri-Sankaracharya's Miscellaneous Works* (Mysore 1898–1899), at the beginning of the fourth volume. Subsequently, it appears in *The Works of Sri Sankaracharya* (Srirangam, 1910), in Volume 15. It also found its place in the *Complete Works of Sri Sankaracharya in the Original Sanskrit* (Madras 1981–1983) in Volume 2, as well as in *Minor Works of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya* (Poona, 1952), and *Shri Shankarabhagavatpada's Prakaranadvadashi* (Mt. Abu & Varanasi, 1981). This inclusion in all complete works of Śaṅkara affirms that the tradition accepts Śaṅkara's authorship unanimously.⁸

In this article, I use a version of the text printed in Volume 15 of *The Works of Sri Sankaracharya* (Miscellaneous Prakaranas vol. 1, pp. 57–66, Vani Vilas Press, Srirangam, 1910). The same text was used in the stylometric experiment.

However, this widespread popularity, easy accessibility, and broad circulation of the work were not accompanied by a corresponding representation in Indological scholarship. While there is some material available in the secondary literature about the doctrines presented in *Ātmabodha* (e.g., Balasubramanian 2000 and Veezinathan 2000), the issue of authorship has not been thoroughly discussed. Belvalkar (1929, 226), in his comprehensive assessment of numerous works attributed to Śaṅkara,⁹ deems *Ātmabodha* to have a “fairly satisfactory claim to Śaṅkara's authorship”. Balasubramanian (2000, 231–232) explicitly advocates the thesis that it is an authentic work of Śaṅkara because Padmapāda, Śaṅkara's direct disciple, composed a commen-

6 The information about the commentaries is a combination of NCC, vol. 2 and EIP, Vol. 1, with dating based on EIP, Vol. 1.

7 Cf. EIP, Vol. 1, Sec. 1, pp. 266–268. Additionally, there is a Croatian translation by Čedomil Veljačić (1958, 303–311), which is not included in EIP.

8 References for Śaṅkara's collected works were taken from Reigle 2005.

9 According to Belvalkar (1930, 241), about 435 works are ascribed to Śaṅkara in manuscript colophons. Belvalkar based his research on Aufrecht's *Catalogus Catalogorum*, but a similar study conducted on the more extensive *New Catalogus Catalogorum* would undoubtedly significantly increase the number of works attributed to Śaṅkara.

tary on it. This would be a valid argument if there were no doubts about this commentary. Balasubramanian’s interesting discussion, highly skeptical of the ‘Western’ obsession with historiography, suggests it is not the authorship that is important, but rather the spiritual message and impact of the work. In this context, Balasubramanian cites the example of Pseudo–Dionysius, whose true identity is unclear, but which played a significant role in the history of spirituality in Western civilization.

While this approach is legitimate, this paper will follow a different path, examining *Ātmabodha* from a historical perspective, focusing less on its spiritual significance and impact and more on placing the work in the historical context of the development of the Advaita Vedānta philosophy. From the perspective of a historian of philosophy and philosophical ideas, it is crucial to establish the dating and authorship to reconstruct the history of the development of ideas and philosophical doctrines. Śaṅkara’s pseudepigraphs contain numerous later concepts, and this could potentially be important for gaining a better and more precise insight into how, in which circumstances, and in what ways these ideas evolved.

1. *The philosophical content of the poem and the structure of its text*

Ātmabodha is certainly closer to the original Śaṅkara’s doctrine than some other Śaṅkarite pseudepigraphia.¹⁰ The doctrine of non–dual Vedānta is expressed in simple words with many vivid examples. The style significantly differs from the polemical style of the *bhāṣya* commentary found in Śaṅkara’s commentaries on the *Brahma–Sūtras* and principal Upaniṣads; opposing views are not discussed and criticized but, with the power of poetic imagination, the fundamental teachings of Advaita Vedānta are conveyed in a simple and widely understandable tone.

Ātmabodha begins with the teaching of liberation (*mokṣa*), which can be attained only through knowledge (*bodha*), not action, because knowledge is in opposition to ignorance. Ignorance (*avidyā* and *ajñāna* in *Ā*) obscures the Self (*ātman*) like a cloud obscures the Sun (*Ā* 2–4). The idea that action cannot remove ignorance runs through Śaṅkara’s original works.¹¹ A

10 In *Ātmabodha*, for example, there is no mention of *māyā* ‘illusion,’ which, unlike in Śaṅkara, becomes a frequently used philosophical concept in later Advaita Vedānta. It is typical for Śaṅkara’s pseudepigraphs to extensively utilize the concept of *māyā*, as seen in works like *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, commentaries on the *Śvetāśvatara–Upaniṣad*, *Sanatsujātīya*, *Viṣṇusāsaśranāma*, etc.

11 When the paper refers to “original” works of Śaṅkara, it primarily denotes works that can reasonably be considered Śaṅkara’s. The commentary on the *Brahma–Sūtras* is a semi-

typical example of the discussion on action and knowledge can be found in *Brahmasūtra–Bhāṣya* 3.2.21, where Śaṅkara compares liberating knowledge of *brahman* with any valid means of cognition, such as action playing no part in, for instance, perception. We perceive something without any conscious action or decision to do so. The framework of the idea that knowledge is the only way to eliminate ignorance is actually exegetical and part of the discussion with the Pūrva–Mīmāṃsā and thinkers who endorse *jñānakarmasamuccayavāda*, the teaching that the combination of ritual act and knowledge leads to liberation, with the Bhedābhedavāda school being the most prominent. For Mīmāṃsakas and Bhedābhedavādins injunctions for sacrificial action contained in the Brāhmaṇas encourage sacrificial action leading to liberation. In Advaita Vedānta, it is ignorance that binds the soul, and the knowledge contained in the Upaniṣads, not ritual action, is what will liberate it.¹²

After the assertion that only knowledge removes ignorance, *Ātmabodha* continues with the description of the embodiment, which is actually illusory, like a dream (Ā 6);¹³ it appears real, but when knowledge arises, it disappears. Like mistakenly perceived (e.g., in conditions of poor visibility) silver disappears when we realize that it is actually mother-of-pearl (Ā 7).¹⁴ Like a man disappears when we realize that it is actually a post (Ā 45), like a snake disappears when we realize that it is actually a rope (Ā 26). In reality,

nal work that defines Śaṅkara as both the author and the philosopher. The commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka–Upaniṣad* is explicitly attributed to Śaṅkara in Sureśvara's (direct disciple of Śaṅkara) sub-commentary (verse 6.5.25). Sureśvara also composed a sub-commentary on Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Taittirīya–Upaniṣad*. Additionally, there are numerous other historical, terminological, and doctrinal peculiarities discussed in previous Indological scholarship that further affirm the authenticity of the commentaries on other older Upaniṣads (except the *Śvetāśvatara*) (e.g. Marschner 1933; Mayeda 1967; 1967–8; Andrijanić 2020a; 2020b) and the *Bhagavad–Gītā* (Mayeda 1965a), as well as the *Upadeśasāhasrī* (Mayeda 1965b).

- 12 Examples of discussions on knowledge and action in the context of liberating knowledge can be found for instance in the important exegetical–epistemological discussion on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka–Upaniṣad* 2.4.5/4.5.6 in Śaṅkara's *Brahmasūtra–Bhāṣya* 1.1.4 and in his commentary on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka–Upaniṣad* 1.4.7; 2.4.5/4.5.6 and 2.5.
- 13 The idea that the world is like a dream is present in Śaṅkara's works, but less frequently. In the *Brahmasūtra–Bhāṣya*, it seems that the external world is not explicitly compared to a dream anywhere. However, such a comparison is found in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka–Upaniṣad* 1.5.2; 2.4.12; 3.5.1, etc. In *Brahmasūtra–Bhāṣya* 2.2.17, the knowledge in a dream is compared to other illusory perceptions like a mirage, where the object is lacking. In the same paragraph, the example of a pillar is mentioned, as in Ā 45. Cf. also *Gauḍapādīyabhāṣya* 2.38, 3.11, 4.26.
- 14 This simile is used in Śaṅkara's authentic works, although not so often; cf. introduction to *Brahmasūtra–Bhāṣya*; *Brahmasūtra–Bhāṣya* 1.1.4; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka–Upaniṣad* 1.4.7; 1.4.10; 3.5.1; 4.4.6. Cf. also *Upadeśasāhasrī* 2.2.55 and in other works.

the man and the snake do not disappear because they never existed, much like the phenomenal world.

Starting from Ā 10, the text explains the teaching of *upādhis*, which are illusory limiting adjuncts imposed on the Self. The teaching on *upādhis* ‘limiting adjuncts’ is presented in a simple language but, as far as it seems to me, consistent with Śaṅkara’s original works. In Ā 11–13, the text lists the ideas superimposed on *ātman* (Ā 11) that arise through the association with *upādhis*: five elements (gross body), ten organs (five organs of action and five cognitive), *manas* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), and five *prāṇas* (vital airs).¹⁵ When the *ātman* reflects in the cognitive organs like an object in a mirrored reflection (Ā 17),¹⁶ or like the blueness of an object that makes a crystal appear blue (Ā 15), then it seems that the *ātman* is active. However, it is inactive, like the moon is motionless, even though it appears to move in turbulent water (Ā 22). One other comparison likens how people wrongly attribute cognitive activity to the *ātman* to the mistaken attribution of the blue color to the sky (Ā 21). The *ātman* is also compared to a lamp that illuminates objects around it but cannot be illuminated itself (Ā 28–29); the *ātman* is the very nature of cognition, just as light is the inherent nature of the Sun (Ā 24). The illusory reflection of the *ātman* in the cognitive organs gives rise to the notion “I know (*jānāmi*)” (Ā 25).

Such examples are very apt and effectively illustrate the idea of the *ātman* as the foundation of all perception; most of them are well-attested in Śaṅkara’s works.

Ātmabodha 15–16 categorizes the five “sheaths” (*pañcakośa*)¹⁷ described in the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.1–2.5 also as limiting adjuncts. Śaṅkara’s commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtras* (1.1.12–1.1.19) provides two interpretations. Initially (from BSBh 1.1.12 to the first part of 1.1.19), he claims that the fifth self, which consists of bliss (*ānandamaya*), is actually the self (*ātman*). However, in the last paragraphs of his commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtra* 1.1.19, he changes his stance and asserts that all five are limiting adjuncts,

15 In the Upaniṣads (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 6.1; *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 5.1), but also earlier (cf. *Ṛk-Saṃhitā* 10.90.13), a list of five *prāṇas* or cognitive powers (speech, sight, hearing, mind, breath) is elaborated. Already in the *Āraṇyakas* (cf. *Aitareya-Āraṇyaka* 2.3), another set of five *prāṇas* (*prāṇa*, *apāna*, *vyāna*, *samāna*, and *udāna*) is mentioned as the five vital airs regulating various bodily functions such as digestion, excretion, inhalation, exhalation, and circulation. Given that the mind has already been mentioned, it is likely that in *Ātmabodha* 13 reference is made to this second set of *prāṇas*.

16 The comparison with a mirror in the same context can be found, for example, in Śaṅkara’s *Upadeśasāhasrī* 1.18.115–116 or 1.18.87.

17 In the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*, they are not sheaths (*kośa*) but selves (*ātman*). Śaṅkara interprets these selves as sheaths (*kośas*) in his commentary.

and the true Self is beyond all of them. This second interpretation is found in Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* itself.¹⁸

After describing the *ātman* and how characteristics are wrongly attributed to it, from verse 30 onwards, the text introduces a particularly important soteriological aspect into the overall picture. The notion introduced at the beginning of the text, emphasizing that only knowledge can dispel ignorance, is elaborated in detail here. Simply put, four great statements (*mahāvākyaṇi*) from the Upaniṣads contribute to true knowledge: “That’s how you are” (*tat tvam asi*, *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 6.8.7–16); “I am *brahman*” (*ahaṃ brahmāsmi*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 1.4.10); “*brahman* is knowing” (*prajñānam brahma*, *Aitareya-Upaniṣad* 3.3) and “*brahman* is this *ātman*” (*ayam ātmā brahma*, *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad* 2).¹⁹ In the same stanza, it is announced that *brahman* is known through the *via negativa*, systematically negating attributes following the formula *neti neti* (not ..., not...) from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*.²⁰ *Ātmabodha* verses from 31 to 37²¹ thus describe what *brahman* is not, although numerous positive attributes are also ascribed to the highest *brahman* such as eternally liberated (*nityamukta*) (Ā 34), omnipresent²², always equal to everything (*sadā sarvasama*), perfect (*siddha*) (Ā 35), incessant bliss (*akhaṇḍānanda*), truth, knowledge, infinite²³ (Ā 36).

Verses 38–59 describe the spiritual practice of the *yogin*, the method of meditating on *brahman*, and the state of bliss that arises through realization. When the wise person directly intuitively (*anubhāva*, Ā 46) that everything is only *ātman/brahman*, limiting adjuncts (*upādhi*) dissolve (*vilaya*), and he enters Viṣṇu like water in water, air into air, and light into light (Ā 52–53); he sees the entire world in his own Self, he understands that there is nothing but *ātman* (Ā 48). In verses 54–64, *Ātmabodha* describes *brahman* as the absolute, formless, and sizeless, something that, once realized, leaves nothing else to be known. A series of examples and metaphors are presented to illustrate the nature of *brahman*, such as the light of the sun, or the one

18 Cf. Andrijanić 2017, 119–129, where it is argued that the interpretation that *ānandamaya* ‘the Self consisting of bliss’ is the *ātman* is an older interpretation that Śaṅkara transmits as a concession to the tradition of commenting on the *sūtras*, but his true understanding is that all five sheaths are limiting adjuncts.

19 In fact, neither the term nor the concept of *mahāvākya*, very common in Advaita Vedānta, appear in Śaṅkara's authentic works.

20 Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 2.3.6; 3.2.11; 3.9.26; 4.2.4, and 4.5.15.

21 It is also worth noting that in some editions a verse from *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad* 2.1.3. is inserted between 32 and 34. For instance, it is found in the Sanskrit text of the widely distributed Nikhilananda's translation.

22 The text actually states that, like ether, Brahman permeates everything from within and without (*ākāśavatsarvaṃ bahirantargato*).

23 The words *satyaṃ jñānam ānantam* ‘truth, knowledge, infinite’ are actually a quote from the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.2.

that permeates everything like butter in milk, or like fire permeates a heated bronze ball. These descriptions of *brahman* exhibit a balance between positive and negative attributes, like verses 31–37. *Brahman* is described as non-dual (*advayam*), without parts, and complete (*pūrṇa*).

Verses 54–57, describing *brahman*, follow the same structure and conclude with the refrain *tad brahmety avadhārayet* “realize that to be *brahman*,” urging the realization of *brahman*. However, verses 58 and 59 then follow without any apparent connection to the previous four. After these two, verses 60 and 61 again contain the refrain *tad brahmety avadhārayet* and follow the same structure as 54–57. As these two stanzas lack substantive connections with the surrounding text, it is possible to conclude that verses 58 and 59 are interpolations within six verses of the same structure and theme. It is also possible that these formulaic verses with the refrain (54–57 and 60–61) are interpolated in *Ātmabodha* itself. Verses 58–59 can be part of the original structure as they are aligned with verses around 54–57 and 60–61. It is not impossible that the entire text is a compilation of different smaller poems. Indeed, verses 54–57 and 60–61 are formally and thematically coherent, and if separated, they could represent a small hymn of six stanzas dedicated to the formless and omnipresent absolute, *brahman*. This is conceivable, but the claim that the entire *Ātmabodha* is a compilation of smaller works is more difficult to sustain, mainly due to some degree of consistency of content and doctrines presented. The overall structure is less coherent and systematic, but some main features may be discernible; the work begins with a description of *ātman* as the foundation of knowledge, continues with a discussion of the ways to realize it, and concludes with a description of the state of realization that is imbued with descriptions of that state and the nature of *brahman* itself. In this last part, terminologically, there is a shift from calling the absolute “*ātman*” in the first part to predominantly calling the absolute “*brahman*” in the second part. In stanzas 1 to 53, the term “*brahman*” appears five times, and from 54 to 68 it appears 14 times. The term “*ātman*” appears 39 times from stanzas 1 to 53, and only three times from 54 to 68, actually all three times in stanzas 65–68. In fact, the term “*ātman*” does not appear from stanzas 51 to 64 at all, precisely in the part where the term “*brahman*” appears in large numbers.

Nevertheless, in the absence of stronger philological or manuscript evidence, speculations about the structure of the text should be approached tentatively. This is particularly important given that the shift in concepts could be interpreted as a transition from epistemological themes in the first part of the poem (*ātman* part) to metaphysical and ontological themes in the second part (*brahman* part). What can be more conclusively addressed about the poem is the question of verifying Śaṅkara’s authorship, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

2. *Authorship of the Ātmabodha*

In Andrijanić and Bąkowski (2023), the state-of-the-art stylometric method, the General Imposters framework, is applied to the corpus of prose texts traditionally attributed to Śaṅkara. The method appears to be quite reliable when applied to Sanskrit philosophical texts of undisputed authorship. In fact, it has accurately verified the authors of 32 out of 40 undisputed philosophical works composed in Sanskrit, meaning the method was successful in 80% of authorship verifications.²⁴

The General Imposters method²⁵ first converts literary works into numerical vectors by transforming words into numeric values representing the frequency of their occurrence in the text. In that sense, the text is represented by sequences (vectors) of numbers that represent the relative frequencies of occurrence of each individual word. Then, utilizing a statistical distance measure, it computes the distance between the texts. In this case, the Cosine Delta²⁶ distance measure was used as it proved to be the most reliable measure (Andrijanić and Bąkowski 2023). In this experiment, the same corpus of imposters was used as in Andrijanić and Bąkowski (2023). This whole corpus consists of 63 texts from 36 different authors belonging to different Indian philosophical schools who write in Sanskrit. As the General Imposters method relies on the relative frequency of words, all Sanskrit sentences were segmented into words, and sandhi was resolved and normalized using the automatic Sanskrit segmentation method text developed by Hellwig and Nehrdich (2018).²⁷

In the next step, the General Imposters algorithm selects a random sample of 10% of relative word frequencies (in the work being assessed, in this case, *Ātmabodha*) and compares whether the sample is statistically closer to the frequencies of the same words in the candidate text (in this case, a work that is undoubtedly Śaṅkara's) or randomly chosen frequencies of the same words in the corpus of works that cannot be Śaṅkara's (the so-called imposters). In each iteration, the disputed and candidate subset is compared to one half of the imposter set. This process is repeated in 100 iterations, and authorship is verified by the number of iterations in which the disputed work

24 This doesn't imply that the conclusion was wrong in 20% of cases; rather, the algorithm refrained from making a judgment in two cases and was incorrect in four cases.

25 All calculations in this paper are made by the function `imposters()`, a part of the `stylo` package (Eder et al. 2016), an open source stylometric script written in the statistical programming environment R (cf. Eder 2018).

26 Cosine Delta distance measure is developed by Jannidis et al. 2015 and Evert et al. 2017. In these papers, it is also demonstrated that this measure produces very good results compared to other distance metrics.

27 For the implementation of the Hellwig and Nehrdich method, I would like to express my gratitude to Jacek Bąkowski, who segmented the entire corpus.

was closer to the candidate or imposters. The result (from 0 to 1) indicates a proportion of iterations where the disputed text is closer to the set of candidates than to the imposters set. If it is more often closer to the candidate, the authorship is verified; if it is more often closer to imposters, it is not. A special statistical method also estimates the percentage of iterations in which the disputed work must be closer to the candidate for the verification to be positive.²⁸

Two setups were applied to *Ātmabodha*. In the first, four certainly authentic works of Śaṅkara were taken as candidates: the prose commentaries on the *Brahma-Sūtras*, on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-* and *Taittirīya-Upaniṣads*, as well as the prose part of the *Upadeśasāhasrī*. The result turned out negative for Śaṅkara’s authorship, with a score of 0, meaning that in none of the 100 iterations was *Ātmabodha* closer to Śaṅkara than to the Imposters. The second setup considered the metrical part of the *Upadeśasāhasrī* as a candidate. This choice assumed that authors may use words differently in metrically demanding works than in prose works. However, even in this setup, the result was 0, indicating that the authors of the metrical part of *Upadeśasāhasrī* and *Ātmabodha* are different.

Such a result, however, must not be considered a final verdict, but rather a call for a more detailed historical–philological analysis. In this regard, I would rely on two methods. The first method entails Hacker’s analysis of manuscript colophons, while the second method involves examining whether concepts and doctrines of Advaita Vedānta developed after Śaṅkara are present in *Ātmabodha*.

According to Hacker’s analysis of manuscript colophons (Hacker 1947, revised in 1978), works attributed to “Śaṅkara–bhagavat(–pūjya[–pāda])” in manuscript colophons are more likely to be considered authentic than those attributed to “Śaṅkara–ācārya,” which indicates potentially suspicious or more recent works. Hacker (1978, 10) has already analyzed 10 *Ātmabodha* colophon records in manuscript catalogs. One is attributed to Śaṅkarabhagavat, one to Śaṅkarabhagavatpāda, and eight to Śaṅkarācārya. To Hacker’s analysis, we could add *Ātmabodha* manuscripts cataloged in GDV, among which manuscripts with numbers 2052 and 2057 (p. 691–692) bear

28 For details on the method and technical information, see Andrijačić 2020a and 2020b, as well as Andrijačić and Bałowski 2021 and 2023. For a general description of the method and its applications, see Kestemont et al. 2016, Koppel & Winter 2014, and Potha and Stamatatos 2017. For the application of the method, along with examples of codes, in the statistical environment R, where the tests in this article were performed, see <https://computationalstylistics.github.io/docs/imposters> (last accessed on January 11, 2024).

the title Śaṅkarācārya. Manuscripts 2055 and 2056 have only “Śaṅkara”, and colophon information is not recorded for the others.²⁹

Although there are many more colophons recorded in available catalogs, these 12 attributed to Śaṅkarācārya are sufficient to conclude that *Ātmabodha* does not meet Hacker’s colophon criterion.

In the second part, I will focus on un-Śaṅkarian terminological and doctrinal features because it seems to me that they are, due to their later development, sufficient for a final negative assessment of Śaṅkara’s authorship of *Ātmabodha*.

Firstly, it is important to note that *Ātmabodha* consists of only 68 verses, so there is a lower likelihood of finding sufficient material in it that could indicate later terminological development. Nevertheless, a few noticeably clear indications can be found in the text. A comprehensive and detailed overview of typical doctrinal and terminological features that distinguish Śaṅkara’s *Brahmasūtra–Bhāṣya* from his disciples and later Advaita Vedānta was extensively elaborated by Paul Hacker (1950). Sengaku Mayeda added some additional features to Hacker’s method in a series of articles.³⁰ The concepts of *nāmarūpa* ‘name and form’ and *māyā* ‘illusion’ analyzed by Hacker in *Ātmabodha* are not present, but the concept of *avidyā* ‘ignorance’ is, where the later terminological development is clearly discernible.

Hacker correctly observed that for Śaṅkara *avidyā* ‘ignorance’ is not a metaphysical entity. Hacker (1950, 255–256) notes that Śaṅkara never uses positive attributes with the concept, and he highlights the terms *anādi* ‘beginningless’ and *anirvacanīya* ‘inexpressible’ as typical attributes of *avidyā* in later Advaita Vedānta, which are never found in works that are certainly Śaṅkara’s. The terms *anādi* and *anirvacanīya* present an important argument against attributing *Ātmabodha* to Śaṅkara, as both appear as attributes of ignorance in verse 14. In that verse, *avidyā* is in *Ātmabodha* clearly a metaphysical principle. Moreover, *avidyā* is identified as a cause (*kāraṇa*), which is also typical of later Advaita Vedānta, where, after Śaṅkara, there is a tendency to define *avidyā* as the cause, particularly as the material cause of the universe (cf. Hacker 1950, 255). In the same verse, ignorance is metaphysically designated as *upādhi* or a limiting adjunct superimposed on *ātman*, contrary to Śaṅkara’s usual understanding of *avidyā*. In Śaṅkara’s original works, ignorance (*avidyā*) has more of a psychological meaning; it is an affliction (*kleśa*) of the cognitive apparatus, rather than a metaphysical concept.

29 I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer who pointed out that the NGMCP (Nepalese German Manuscript Cataloguing Project) Descriptive Catalogue contains Nepalese manuscripts that attribute *Ātmabodha* to *-bhagavatpādācārya*, where we have both *-bhagavadpāda* and *-ācārya*.

30 See e.g. Mayeda 1965a in the bibliography.

In later Advaita Vedānta, two powers of ignorance are distinguished: the power of dispersion (*vikṣepa-śakti*) and the power of concealment (*āvaraṇa-śakti*). These aspects of ignorance do not appear in Śaṅkara's original works. The word 'dispersion' (*vikṣepa*) can be found alongside the word *avidyā* in verse 37, where it is stated that the realization 'I am *brahman*' destroys the ignorance which is a dispersion (*avidyā-vikṣepa*). Although there is no direct teaching on the dual nature of ignorance in *Ātmabodha*, the use of the word "ignorance" as an apposition to the word "dispersion" likely presupposes the already developed doctrine that dispersion (*vikṣepa*) is one aspect of ignorance.

One important argument supporting the thesis that *Ātmabodha* was composed after Śaṅkara is the relatively frequent use of the later term *saccidānanda*, meaning 'existence-consciousness-bliss,' as a positive definition of *brahman*. Hacker (1950, 267) also remarked that Śaṅkara mentions the blissful (*ānanda*) nature of *brahman*, very often used in later and modern Vedānta, only when the text he is interpreting mentions it.³¹ Thus, the appearance of *brahman*'s blissful nature (if it does not appear in the context of the commentary) reduces the possibility of Śaṅkara's authorship. In *Ātmabodha*, however, both the *ānanda-nature* of the *brahman* (Ā 36, 40, 41, 57, and 58) and the phrase *saccidānanda* 'existence-consciousness-bliss,' (Ā 24, 49, 56, and 64) occur as a designation for the Supreme *brahman*. The first datable use of the term and concept of *saccidānanda* in Advaita-Vedānta appears in the work of Sarvajñātman, *Samkṣepasārīraka*, dating to the 11th century.³² This also establishes a *terminus post quem* for the *Ātmabodha*. We can add to this the already mentioned concept of *mahāvākya*, the four great statements from the Upaniṣads, which appears in Ā 30 but is never found in Śaṅkara's authentic works.

Concluding remarks

Apart from the fact that the rather reliable stylometric method General Imposters does not verify it as Śaṅkara's work, *Ātmabodha* exhibits several

31 Cf. Mayeda 1965, 186, as well as Ingalls 1952, 7.

32 Regarding Upaniṣadic texts, for example, in the 60 older and younger Upaniṣads translated by Deussen, the concept of *saccidānanda* appears in only one, in the *Nṛsiṃhatapanīya-Upaniṣad*, though the exact date of this relatively obscure Vaiṣṇavite text dedicated to Nṛsiṃha, an incarnation of Viṣṇu in the form of a man-lion, remains unknown. The term also appears in Śaiva, as well as various Vaiṣṇava texts, so it is possible that it may appear even before Sarvajñātman or even Śaṅkara, but at this moment, I am not aware of such a text that is dated. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for the comment on the possibility of an earlier appearance of the concept.

characteristics of the later development of Advaita Vedānta doctrine and terminology.

To determine authorship, it is important to distinguish evidence such as doctrinal differences from the historical development of the meanings of individual terms and concepts. For example, if the text of disputed authorship defines *brahman* as bliss, it may indicate that the author is not Śaṅkara, but this is not definitive evidence. *Brahman* was defined as bliss even before Śaṅkara, as seen, for instance, in the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.4.1 or 2.5.1. Therefore, it is not impossible that Śaṅkara may have used this designation for some reason. However, if concepts like *saccidānanda* ('existence, consciousness, bliss') or *mahāvākya*, which developed and took shape after Śaṅkara, appear in the text or if typical later Advaita technical terms like *anādi* and *anirvācyā* ('beginningless' and 'inexpressible') are used as attributes of ignorance, this provides a much stronger argument against Śaṅkara's authorship than mere doctrinal differences.

Therefore, the *terminus ante quem* could tentatively be set in the 11th century, while the *terminus post quem* could be determined in the early 14th century when an unnamed disciple of Citsukha composed a commentary. Also, an additional argument for dating the composition of *Ātmabodha* before the 14th century could be that it relatively conservatively adheres to the traditional teachings of Advaita Vedānta, without signs of later inclusivism when elements of Yoga (Pātañjalayoga, as well as Hāṭhayoga) were integrated into the system, as seen, for example, in *Aparokṣānubhūti*, another well-known Śaṅkarite pseudepigraphical work.

Supplementary Material

All additional material needed to recreate the Imposters experiment can be found at: <https://github.com/JacekBakowski/stylometry/tree/main/papers/2022-otao>.

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*Sažetak***ĀTMABODHA: VRIJEME NASTANKA I AUTORSTVO**

IVAN ANDRIJANIĆ

U članku se propituje autorstvo i vrijeme nastanka *Ātmabodhe*, poznate filozofske pjesme koja na popularan, ali i pjesnički imaginativan način razlaže glavna učenja indijske filozofske škole Advaita Vedānta. Iako se *Ātmabodha* tradicionalno pripisuje velikom filozofu Śaṅkari (8. stoljeće), u članku se iznose argumenti koji govore u prilog tezi da je djelo nastalo nekoliko stoljeća nakon Śaṅkare. Osim suvremene stilometrijske metode General Imposters Framework, koja ju ne prepoznaje kao Śaṅkarino djelo, *Ātmabodha* također ne zadovoljava Hackerov kriterij kolofona. U članku se stavlja poseban naglasak na doktrinarne i terminološke osobitosti u *Ātmabodhi* koje pripadaju vremenu nakon Śaṅkare. Osobit je primjer shvaćanje pojma neznanja, uz uvođenje kasnijih termina i koncepata. Dostupni dokazi upućuju na to da bi djelo moglo datirati iz vremena između 11. i ranog 14. stoljeća.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: autorstvo, General Imposters, Śaṅkara, Advaita Vedānta, *Ātmabodha*, stilometrija

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