VEDIC HINDUISM

by

S. W. Jamison and M. Witzel

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Introduction[*]

The Vedic period is the earliest period of Indian history for which we have direct textual evidence, but even with this evidence it is difficult to fix even imprecise chronological limits to the period, much less to establish absolute dates within the period. We tentatively suggest 1500-500 BCE as convenient limiting dates of the period,[1] the latter marking the approximate date of the codification of Sanskrit by Pāṇini and the transition from "Vedic" to "Classical" Sanskrit; the former perhaps approximating the beginnings of the Ṛg Veda, the earliest Indian text.[2] Since (almost[3]) all our evidence for Vedic India is textual, much more fruitful than defining the Vedic period by date is defining it by texts. For purposes of this work, we will define Vedic literature (and hence the Vedic period) as consisting of the earliest texts, the four Vedas proper, and texts based on them and the cult in which they were embedded -- the Brāhmaṇas and the Śrauta Sūtras, also including the increasingly speculative Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads, as well as the texts relating to the domestic cult, the Gṛhya Sūtras. The content of these texts is wholly religious (though "religion" more broadly

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[*] Composed jointly by both authors in 1991/2 and representing their then consensus. This text has subsequently been distributed in *samizdat* fashion to many students and colleagues as the volume for which it had been written did not speedily appear and in fact still has not appeared (as of Jan. 2003). Even a shorter version that is about to come out in an edited volume on Hinduism (hence our title, for which see see note 3) still is awaited some seven years after it had been written. -- We have left the text as it stood in 1992; some updating obviously is necessary now and will be carried out in due course. -- In the version distributed since 1992 most of the footnotes (by MW) had been excluded, however, all these have been kept and included here.

[1] For the beginning of the period, see the following note; for its end note that the earliest Buddhist texts in Pāli presuppose the Vedic literature down to the Upaniṣads, cf. now Gombrich 1992. Cf. below, n. 71. For the date of the Buddha, see Bechert 1972.

[2] According to recent archaeological research the disappearance of the Indus cities is determined at 1900 B.C.; on the other hand, the AV is the first text mentioning iron which was introduced in North India at c. 1100 BCE. The RV, which no longer knows of the Indus cities but only mentions ruins (*armaka, [mahā]vailasthāna*), thus could have been composed during the long period between 1990 and 1100 BCE. An ad quem date for the RV is provided by the mentioning of Vedic gods (Varuṇa, Mitra, Indra, Nāsatya = Aśvin) in the Hittite-Mitanni agreement of c. 1380 BCE. The RV, however, presents, for the greatest part, only a "snapshot" picture of c. 5-6 generations of poets and kings who lived closer towards the end of the period (cf. Witzel, forthc. a).

[3] Archaeology begins to provide some evidence now, especially for the Swat (RV Suvāstu) area in Ṛgvedic and post-Ṛgvedic times and for the North Indian plains from the Mantra period (Atharvaveda etc.) down to the Brāhmaṇas, in an area stretching from the Eastern Panjab and Kurukṣetra up to Allahabad (Painted Grey Ware culture), cf. Witzel, 1989, 1989b, and forthc. a,d.

defined than is modern custom). It may also be added that to call this period "Vedic Hinduism" is a contradiction *in terminis* since Vedic religion is very different from what we generally call "Hindu religion", - at least as much Old Hebrew religion is from medieval and modern Christian religion. However, Vedic religion is treatable as a predecessor of Hinduism.[4]

We owe the transmission and preservation of the texts to the care and discipline of particular religious, or better, priestly schools (or *śākhā*s). It should also be emphasized that both the composition and the transmission of the texts was completely oral for the entire Vedic period and some considerable time afterwards[5] -- hence the critical importance of the schools in their preservation. From the beginning the various schools were favored by particular tribes, and later on by particular dynasties. Due to their preservation in various parts of India, a fairly wide spectrum of religious thought of this early period has survived to this day, and we do not have to rely on the authoritative texts of a single school of thought.

Because of these circumstances we are in a reasonably good position to study Vedic Hinduism -- we have voluminous texts regarding the religion from various points of view: verbal material internal to the ritual, extremely detailed "handbooks" laying out ritual practice, exegesis of the ritual, both exoteric and esoteric, as well as various views of mythology. However, because of the means of preservation -- through schools at once orthodox and intellectual in bent -- we have little access to information about either heterodox or popular religious practices, but only to the orderly and cerebral system of an entrenched priestly class. We are also almost entirely bereft of information about secular (and indeed religious) history, or political and social matters and their relations to religion, except as filtered through a priestly lens, and as reported occasionally, often as asides, in their texts. Moreover, because we must rely on texts, our knowledge of Vedic religion is entirely verbal; we know nothing of the visual and iconographic aspect of Vedic religion, if such there was beyond the solemn enactment of the Śrauta and some Gṛhya rites.

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[4] There are, of course, many surprising continuities (see Gonda 1965). On the other hand, one can certainly not speak of an "eternal India" that always followed a form of the parātana dharma that differed only slightly from the later Epic and Purāṇic religion: see below on such gods as Viṣṇu and Śiva

[5] Until at least c. 1000 A.D., see for example, with regard to the AV, Witzel 1985; cf. O. von Hinüber 1989 on the introduction of the script in India (under the Mauryas) and the persistence of oral tradition among the Brahmins (1989:10).

Before we treat Vedic religion in detail, it might be well to give a thumbnail characterization. The religion of this (roughly) 1000-year period, though not static, is reasonably unified. From the very first, it shows a highly developed ritual, with particular emphasis on the power of the word. As the religion develops in the Vedic period, it moves in two superficially contradictory directions -- on the one hand to an increasingly elaborate, expensive, and specialized system of rituals; on the other towards abstraction and internalization of the principles underlying ritual and cosmic speculation on them. But the beginnings of both trends can be seen in the earlier texts.

I. GENERAL TREATMENTS

a. The texts

Any study of Vedic religion thus must begin with the texts. Fortunately, due to the care with which most of the texts were transmitted and to the last 150 years or so of intensive and painstaking philological work, we are reasonably lucky, in that most of the important texts exist in usable (though generally not, strictly speaking, critical) editions, that many possess careful translations[6] with, at least, minimal commentary, and that the vocabulary and the grammar (morphology and syntax) of the texts have been and continue to be subject to the scientific scrutiny that is a necessary precondition for even first order textual interpretation. Serious lacunae will be noted below.

A useful and detailed overview of Vedic texts can be found in Gonda's surveys (1975, 1977), and Santucci's brief outline (1976) gives a handy conspectus of text editions and translations (though omitting the Sūtras). A conspectus of the Śrauta Sūtras has been given by Kashikar 1968; for the Gṛhya

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[6] The remarks by W. Doniger, 1991, p. lxi sqq. on older translations of Manu tend more to justify her attempt at a new translation rather than to discredit the older ones. Note, for example, her insistence of translating, e.g. all the technical terms for coins, at 8.132ff., whereby a "straw" (*pala*, equalling 4 gold pieces!) is said to weigh an incredible 1.33 ounces or 37.76 grams. "Straw" simply appears as the first meaning in the Petersburg Wörterbuch and thus in Monier-Williams, while it is just a medieval, lexicographer's term, derived from the real life word *palāla*, *palālī* (AV) "straw". -- More seriously, Doniger translates even words like *karma* and *dharma* without indicating that it is the latter word that is rendered variously as "duty, law, justice, right, religious merit, religion" (cf. p. lxxvi). A reader will never know that the Sanskrit term *dharma* was intended. (More on the problem of translation see below, on *ṛta*, at the end of ch. I, with n. 30).

Sūtras, see Gonda 1980a; for the Dharma Sūtras s. Lingat, 1973; for the Śulba Sūtras s. Michaels 1978.

Before proceeding to a catalogue of the important texts, we should first discuss the categories of texts and their organization into schools. Vedic literature is ritual literature -- dividable into two major types: a) liturgical material internal to the ritual, used in performance. Almost all of the verse and some of the prose fits into this category. b) material about the ritual, external to its performance -- commentary in the broadest sense, almost entirely in prose.

The texts have traditionally been catalogued into Vedas (better: *veda-saṃhitā*s), Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, Upaniṣads, and Sūtras, in roughly that chronological order. The Indian tradition distinguishes between *śruti* ("hearing"), i.e. texts revealed to the Ṛṣis, the primordial Seers, and texts having human authors (*smṛti* "remembrance"). All texts from the Saṃhitās to the Upaniṣads are *śruti* while the late Vedic Sūtras are regarded as *smṛti*.

Because their traditional names sometimes misrepresent the type of text contained within, it is useful to speak first of text-type. The *veda-* (or *mantra* or *saṃhitā-*) text-type consists of collections of liturgical material, the *brāhmaṇa-* text-type of ritual exegesis. The *āraṇyaka*-text-type often develops the cosmic side of *brāhmaṇa* explanations into esoteric speculation about some of the more cryptic and secret of the rituals and generally has served as a catch-all for the later texts of the particular school involved. The *upaniṣad*-text-type proceeds further on this speculative path. The *sūtra*-text-type, in contrast, contains straightforward, often very elaborate and detailed directions for ritual performances, with little or no commentary.

However, from the point of view of linguistic development -- always a good yardstick for discovering the historical development of text layers -- we have to distinguish the following text layers which do not always coincide with the traditional division of Vedic texts given just now: 1. Ṛgveda (with as late additions, book 10 and also parts of book 1), 2. the so-called Mantra language (Atharvaveda, Ṛgvedakhila, the mantras of the Yajurveda etc., the Sāmaveda), 3. the expository prose of the Yajurveda Saṃhitā texts (MS, KS, KpS, TS), 4. the Brāhmaṇa prose (including the older portions of the Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads, as well as some of the earliest Sūtras), 5. the late Vedic Sūtras.

As was implicit in our discussion of oral transmission above, there is another important dimension in Vedic textual classification -- that of the theological schools or *śākhā*s (lit. 'branch'). Each school began as a set of adherents to a particular Veda in a relatively small area of northern India (becoming further splintered as time went on). In addition to transmitting its

Veda, the school spawned exegetical texts proper to that Veda, its own Brāhmaṇa, Sūtra, etc. On these schools, see especially Renou 1947; Tsuji 1970, Witzel 1987a.[7]

Let us begin with the key to the whole system, the four Vedas: Ṛg Veda, Sāma Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda.

The oldest and most important in Vedic ritualism, as to later Indian religion, is the Ṛg Veda (hereafter also RV). This is a collection (Saṃhitā) of ṛcs 'verses', forming hymns to be recited during ritual, praising various divinities. They were composed by a number of bards or bardic families, over a period of several hundred years, at the very least, as linguistic and stylistic evidence shows.[8] The ritual, as it appears in these hymns, is earlier and less developed than the "classical" one of the later texts, such as the Yajurveda Mantras and all of the Brāhmaṇas. The Ṛg Veda has come down to us basically in only one[9] extremely well preserved school, that of Śākalya, who analyzed the traditional text towards the end of the Brāhmaṇa period, apparently in Eastern India (Videha, N. Bihar). His grammatical analysis, in form of a text without any euphonic combinations (*sandhi*) has been transmitted as the RV-Padapāṭha.[10]

The standard editions of the Ṛg Veda are that of Max Müller 1849-1874, incorporating Sāyaṇa's medieval commentary (14th cent.),[11] and the more compact one of T. Aufrecht 1877. The standard current translation is that of K. F. Geldner 1951 (written already in the Twenties), into German, which supersedes earlier ones such as that of H. Grassmann 1876-77. There is also an almost complete French translation by L. Renou 1955-69, and the first volume of a Russian translation by T. Ya. Elizarenkova has recently appeared (1989). Unfortunately there is no complete modern English translation, though there are unsatisfactory and outmoded ones by H. H. Wilson (1888) which largely depends on the medieval commentary of Sāyaṇa, and by R. T. H. Griffith (1889-92). There are also useful translations of selected hymns, such as that of W. D.

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[7] Unfortunately, there is no progress (rather regress, with respect to Renou 1947, Tsuji 1970) in Rai 1990.

[8] Possible between c. 1900 BC. and c. 1100 BCE, see above, n.1. This time frame includes only the period of possible immigration and settlement in Northern and North-West India; parts of the RV may have been composed already in Afghanistan (on the *Sarasvatī = Avest. Haraxᵛaiti, etc.).

[9] The other two about which we know something more than just their names are the Bāṣkala and the Māṇḍukeya schools, see Scheftelowitz, 1906.

[10] Edited in Max Müller's RV (1849-74), and also several times in India as separate volumes.

[11] Cf. now also the earlier commentaries of the RV, ed. Vishva Bandhu 1963-66.

O'Flaherty 1981a and Maurer 1986 which includes much of the preceding scholarship. An up-to-date, philologically sound translation of the entire text, incorporating the grammatical and semantic progress that has been made in recent decades, would be extremely welcome.

Other important tools for Ṛgvedic researches include the invaluable (if somewhat out of date) Wörterbuch of H. Grassmann 1872-75, which lists all the occurrences of all but the most common words in the RV, with definitions, grammatical identification, and contextual information; the Prolegomena and the Noten of H. Oldenberg (1888 and 1909, 1912 respectively), one of the leading Western Indologists, E.V. Arnold's treatise on Vedic meter (1905), one of the first attempts to develop an internal chronology of the text, and also several of Bloomfield's reference works (Concordance, Repetitions, Variants, see below).

The Atharva Veda (AV) stands a little apart from the other three Vedas, as it does not treat the *śrauta* rituals, but contains magical (black and white) and healing spells, as well as two more large sections containing speculative hymns and materials dealing with some important domestic rituals such as marriage and death, with the *vrātya* (s. below), and with royal power.

There are two extant recensions of the AV, differing considerably from each other. Currently the more usable one is that ordinarily known as the Śaunaka recension (AVŚ, ŚS). The standard edition is that of Roth and Whitney (1856, corrected repr. Lindenau 1924). For certain sections, however, the Bombay edition by Shankar Pāndurang Pandit (1895-98) or the recent amalgamated edition by Vishva Bandhu (1960-64) has to be compared, notably in book 19-20. A nearly[12] complete English translation of this text exists by W. D. Whitney (1905), as well as a partial translation by M. Bloomfield (1897) that remains valuable, and a popular one by Griffith (1895-96). Whitney (1881) also compiled a complete word list, arranged grammatically, but it lacks the semantic and contextual information given by Grassmann's Wörterbuch for the RV.

The other, the Paippalāda recension (AVP, PS), was until recently known only in a very corrupt manuscript from Kashmir, which was heroically, though not too successfully edited by L. C. Barret, in a series of articles (1905-1940), save for one book done by F. Edgerton (1914). On this basis, Raghu Vira (1936-41) published the text from Lahore as well. The discovery of a much better version

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[12] It lacks only book 20 which almost completely has been taken over from the RV. Griffith 1895-96, however, includes a translation of this book and its difficult Kuntāpa hymns as well.

preserved in Orissa will now allow the Paippalāda version to take its proper place in the Vedic canon. However, only books 1-4 have been edited (D.M. Bhattacharyya 1964, D. Bhattacharya 1970). The editing and publication of the AVP based on both versions is an eagerly awaited event in Vedic studies. For preliminary studies on the history of the school, the archetype of all PS manuscripts, and on the oral tradition of the Orissa Paippalādins, see Witzel, 1985a,b; on editing problems see Hoffmann 1968a and 1979; for the relationship between PS and AVŚ, see Insler, forthc.

The Sāma Veda (SV) is the collection of chants, referred to as *sāman*s or 'melodies'. To each melody a variety of different verses can be sung; these verses are almost entirely extracted from the Ṛg Veda. The standard edition of the SV is that of Benfey 1848 of the Kauthuma (and Rāṇāyanīya) recension; see also Caland's 1907 edition of the Jaiminīya recension, which to some extent differs from the Kauthuma version in order and in content (cf. Parpola 1973). Because of its dependence on the RV, -- only 75 of its Mantras are not found in the RV -- an independent translation of this text is not particularly crucial. Nonetheless, several exist, e.g. that of Griffith 1893.

The Yajur Veda is a complex entity, consisting of several partly parallel texts, most of which mix mantras (i.e. *veda*-text-type) with prose commentary (*brāhmaṇa*-text-type). It is divided into two branches: the Black (Kṛṣṇa) YV (BYV) and the White (Śukla) YV (the WYV). It is the Black YV that contains the mixture of text types; the White YV contains only mantras, with its Brāhmaṇa separate. Yet it is generally considered -- see e.g. Caland, 1931b, pp. 132-133, cf. 1990, p.XIV) -- that this separation is secondary, that the mantras of the WYV were abstracted from a text that would have looked more like the BYV.

The White Yajur Veda, or Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā (VS), has two very similar recensions, the Mādhyaṃdina and the Kāṇva (VSK). The standard edition is that of A. Weber (1852), which includes the variants of VSK. A separate edition of the VSK has been prepared by D. Satavalekar 1983 and a new edition is in progress, prepared by the indefatigable B. R. Sharma (1988-). There is a rather unsatisfactory English translation by Griffith (1899). Its massive and important Brāhmaṇa is the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (ŚB), the 'Brāhmaṇa of the Hundred Paths' (after the number of its 'lessons'), also with two similar recensions, likewise Mādhyaṃdina and Kāṇva (ŚBM and ŚBK), whose mutual relationship is rather complicated (Caland, 1926, pp. 103-108, 1990 p. XIV). The one ordinarily referred to is the Mādhyaṃdina, edited by A. Weber (1855) and translated into English by Eggeling (1882-1900). The Kāṇva recension was

edited by Caland and Raghu Vira (1926-1939). There is no translation of the ŚBK, but it differs little in content and phraseology from ŚBM.

The Black YV is more complex. It exists in three major versions, parallel in great part, but often differing from each other in both phraseology and points of doctrine: the Taittirīya Saṃhitā (TS), the Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā (MS), and the Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā (KS), the latter two often agreeing with each other against the (obviously younger) TS. (There is also a fragmentary, and, as based on a very narrow tradition, somewhat corrupt fourth version, the Kapiṣṭhala Saṃhitā (KpS), very close to the KS.) The standard edition of the TS is Weber's (1871-2), of the MS von Schroeder's (1881-86), as also of the KS (1900-1910), while Raghu Vira edited the fragments of the KpS (1932). Mittwede's useful collections of suggested emendations to the MS (1986) and KS (1989) are important tools in understanding these sometimes corrupt texts, which are based (unlike TS which still is widely recited in South India) only on the traditions of Gujarat/N. Maharashtra and Kashmir. All these texts must have been preceded by an even earlier stage of brāhmaṇa style discussion, see Hoffmann 1969, apparently that of the lost Caraka school, cf. Witzel 1982, forthc. b.

Only the TS has been translated (into English, by Keith 1914).[13] Since MS and KS are generally fuller and more archaic in appearance than TS, translations of these two texts are badly needed. The prose of the brāhmaṇa portion of these texts is the oldest expository prose in Sanskrit, and its treatment of the ritual and narration of myths therefore extremely archaic.

Though the prose portions of the Taittirīya Saṃhitā serve as its primary *brāhmaṇa*, there also exists a Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa (TB) with additional commentary (and mantras), unfortunately an inferior text with no standard edition. There are the editions prepared at Calcutta (R. L. Mitra 1859), Ānandāśrama (V.Ś. Goḍbole et al. 1934), and the Mysore (Mahadeva Sastri and L. Srinivasacharya, 1908-13); the latter has some South Indian phonetic peculiarities. The TB has been partly translated (into English) in a series of articles by P. E. Dumont (1948-69). A late (c. Upaniṣad period) addition to the Brāhmaṇa is the fragmentary Vādhūla Brāhmaṇa (or Vādhūla Anvākhyāna), which usually is wrongly called Vādhūla Sūtra.[14] About two thirds of the fragments of this Brāhmaṇa text have been edited and translated into German

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[13] Not always reliably, however; see the review by Caland 1924.

[14] See Witzel 1975: The text contains large sections of Brāhmaṇa style discussion, the so-called Anvākhyānas, i.e. "additional Brāhmaṇas" added to the older texts of the Taittirīya school. The Sūtra, though lying at Utrecht since the Twenties, had remained virtually untouched until the edition of the first chapter by Sparreboom 1989.

by Caland 1923-1928. Neither the Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā nor the Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā has a surviving separate text called a Brāhmaṇa, though a collection of fragments of the original Kaṭha Brāhmaṇa, called Śatādhyāya Brāhmaṇa, is found in Kashmiri ritual handbooks and has been partially edited by von Schroeder (1898) and Surya Kanta (1943); cf. also Lokesh Chandra 1982, 1984.

The Ṛg Veda has two Brāhmaṇas, the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (AB) and the Kauṣītaki (or Śāṅkhāyana) Brāhmaṇa (KB), of which the Aitareya is the older and the more extensive. The AB was edited by Aufrecht (1879); the KB by Lindner (1887) and in its Kerala version by E.R.S. Sarma (1968). Both have been translated into English by Keith (1920).

The major Brāhmaṇas of the Sāmaveda are the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa (JB) and the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa (PB, or Tāṇḍya Mahābrāhmaṇa). The JB is an immense, unfortunately corrupt, and very rich text, that has not yet been sufficiently worked on (see Ehlers 1988). Caland (1919) edited and translated significant portions of it (into German), and added many passages in an English rendering in his translation of the PB (1931b), as did, to a lesser extent, Oertel in a series of articles (1897-1909). Only in 1954 did a complete edition appear (that of Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra), unfortunately still riddled with misprints and corruptions.[15] A carefully, and if possible critically edited version of the JB is greatly desirable.[16] There are several recent partial translations, e.g. H. W. Bodewitz (1973, 1990) of the Agnihotra and Soma sections, accompanied by detailed philological though not particularly pioneering commentary. W. Doniger O'Flaherty (1985) has translated some of the narrative portions, however, mostly a recapitulation of those translated by Oertel and Caland, with a Freudian commentary.[17] Tsuchida (1979) and Schrapel (1970) have translated parts of book 2. A complete, philologically grounded translation of the JB, would contribute mightily to our understanding of middle Vedic religion, but it may be premature to desire one without an accurate text.

The Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa, which is available only in unsatisfactory uncritical editions, presents fewer difficulties, but also fewer rewards than the JB.

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[15] A guide to the MSS has been given by W. Rau, 1988, and a useful compilation of emendations that have been proposed, by Ehlers 1989.

[16] E. R. Sreekrishna Sarma (Adyar, Madras) has begun a new edition in the early Eighties, based on new MSS from Kerala.

[17] And some basic misunderstandings of Indian sociology, (e.g. fear of the father in case of a mātula?!); the date assigned to JB (of 900 B.C.) is pure guesswork and definitely too early for the text as it stands now, especially for book 1,1-65. For further criticism see Bodewitz 1990:19-24.

For a preliminary critical reading of the text the old manuscript from Gujarat printed by Lokesh Chandra (1981) and Caland's remarks in his translation, referring to another old MS at Leiden,[18] are invaluable. The text has been translated and copiously annotated, with many valuable references to and partial translations of JB, by Caland (1931a). There are a number of other, minor "Brāhmaṇas" attached to the SV, most of which rather belong to the category of the Sūtras. Most of them have been edited by B.R. Sharma.[19]

The AV has a very late and inferior Brāhmaṇa, the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa (GB), critically edited by Caland's pupil D. Gaastra 1919. Its first part, in fact, presupposes the grammar of Pāṇini. However, this text which to a large degree quotes from other *brāhmaṇa* type texts, probably was nothing but an additional Brāhmaṇa (*anubrāhmaṇa*) of the Paippalāda school of the AV, which was, just like some other texts, incorporated into the Śaunaka school of Gujarat only during the Middle Ages (Witzel 1985a).

A collection of fragments of 'lost' Brāhmaṇas found in various medieval commentaries has been compiled by Batakrishna Ghosh 1947.

Āraṇyakas are found under this name only in the tradition of the Ṛgveda (Aitareya Ār., Kauṣītaki or Śāṅkhāyana Ār.), and Yajurveda (Taittirīya, Kaṭha Ār.). The SV and AV have no text named in this way. However, the Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa may, in part, be regarded as the Ār. of this Veda,[20] and the Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa plays the same role for the AV.[21] In addition, the first part of Kāṇḍa 14 of the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa, which deals with the Pravargya ritual (ŚB 14.1-3), may with good reason be called the Ār. of the Mādhyandina school of the White YV, for all three Ār. texts of the YV deal centrally with this ritual. Its performance and even its acquisition by learning is regarded as too

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[18] One may use, for the time being, the notes on two old Leiden MSS from Gujarat in Caland's translation PB (1931) as well as the facsimile ed. by Lokesh Chandra 1981, the proper use of which is explained by W. Rau, 1985; cf. Caland 1990, p. XXX, n. 35.

[19] Ṣaḍviṃśa Brāhmaṇa, ed. B. R. Sharma 1967, transl. W. B. Bollée 1956. -- The other SV Brāhmaṇas are in reality of Sūtra character: Sāmavidhāna, Ārṣeya, Devatādhāya, Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa (or Mantra-Br., a list of Gṛhya Mantras), Saṃhitopaniṣad- Br., Vaṃśa-Br.; most of them have recently been (re-)edited by B.R. Sharma, as are the Kṣudra Sūtra and Maśaka Kalpa Sūtra, which are Śrauta Sūtras preceding the Lāṭy. / Drāhy.ŚS. A good account of the literature of the SV has been given by Caland 1931a, updated by Parpola 1968; cf. also B.R. Sharma 1976.

[20] See Witzel 1977:145 for further discussion of the relationship between the Paippalāda and Śaunaka schools.

[21] There must have been another text, still known to Śaṃkara (c.700 CE), which began with *sarvam pravidhya* (cf. PS 12.19.5), see Witzel 1977:143sqq

dangerous to be carried out inside the village and has to be done "where the houses of the village cannot be seen any more." This points to the correct meaning of the designation Ār., from *araṇya* "wilderness" which curiously still eludes most modern Sanskritists though it was established long ago by Oldenberg (1915-6).[22] This oversight also clouds the understanding of the type of text the Ār. constitute. They are not, as medieval Hindu tradition asserts, the texts of the third stage in life, the Vānaprastha, but deal, quite in the fashion of other Brāhmaṇa type texts, with a particular ritual. In the case of the RV it is the Mahāvrata day of the year long Gavām Ayana and some other rituals.

Around this nucleus of dangerous and secret texts (Śaṅkara and others call this sort of texts Rahasya) are clustered various additions to the canon: the RV schools add their Upaniṣads (see below) and even a brief Sūtra style addition (in AĀ 5, by Āśvalāyana); the Taitt. school, similarly, begins with one of the eight special Kāṭhaka Agnicayana rituals,[23] adds two sections with death ritual as well as all of their Upaniṣads. As mentioned before, the White YV contains in its book 14 both the Ār. and its Upaniṣad, the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up. However, the last sections of this Up. contain various "strange" materials not expected in an Upaniṣad. P. Thieme is the first to have correctly understood the structure of this text.[24] The sections dealing with the procreation of particular types of sons, etc. belong to the last instructions of a Veda teacher to his departing student, similar to those, it may be added, that TU 1.11 = KaṭŚiUp. 11 present in a normative fashion.[25] The last sections of BĀU thus are of Āraṇyaka type and provide a frame surrounding the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. Its very name may signify this amalgamation: it is a Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka-Upaniṣad, a "large (text consisting of) the Āraṇyaka and the Upaniṣad" of the White YV, similarly to *Bāhv-ṛcyam* "the text consisting of many *ṛc*", the RV.

The Āit. Ār. has been edited and translated by Keith 1909; the Kauṣītaki or Śāṅkhāyana Ār. by V. N. Apte 1922 and Bhim Dev 1980 and transl. by Keith 1908. The Taitt. Ār. was edited by Rajendralāl Mitra 1864-72, Mahādeva Śāstrī and P.K. Rangācharya 1900-02, and in the Ānandāśrama Series by K.V. Abhyankar et al. in an often incorrect newly set reprint 1967-69 of the earlier

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[22] See now Sprockhoff 1981, WZKS 25, 28.

[23] Interestingly a very late, quasi Purāṇic one, see Witzel 1972:180 n.12; 1977:152; the others are found in the last parts of Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa (TB 3.10-12).

[24] In his lecture at Kyoto on accepting the Kyoto Prize in 1989.

[25] See above, n. 22, and cf. below, on Dharma Sūtra texts.

edition of 1897-98; book 2 of TĀ has been edited and translated into French by Malamoud 1977. The Kaṭha Ār. has been edited and translated into German by Witzel 1974.

Turning now to the Upaniṣads, we are faced with a dilemma regarding both the actual number of texts belonging to this category as well as their attribution to the four Vedas. There are standard collections, based on their usage in the medieval *advaita* and *āgamic* traditions of 10, 52 or 108 Upaniṣads, but the texts excerpted in Vishva Bandhu's Vedic Word Concordance amount to more than 200, 188 of which have been conveniently edited by J. L. Shastri 1970. The larger collections include even a text as late as the Allah Upaniṣad which is supposed to be a Śākta Upaniṣad. The standard edition, which contains many useful cross references and a word index but which is not a critical one, is that by Limaye and Vadekar 1958.

The Upaniṣads represent, apart from incidental topics where they overlap with the Āraṇyakas and apart from the final teachings, secrets and admonitions a student receives from his Veda teacher (see above), the early philosophy of India, especially that on the nature of the human soul, its fate after death, and its ultimate identity with *bráhman*, the force underlying the cosmos. Occasionally they also report mystical insights (e.g. BĀU 4.3., KauṣUp 1). Otherwise the speculations frequently take up a ritualistic topic and develop it into a discussion on the ultimate. These topics are often presented in dialogue form, and thus continue the tradition of discussion on ritual topics in the preceding Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas. The word "Upaniṣad", literally "sitting close by at the proper place", has found many interpretations, see Schayer 1925, Falk 1986b.

Usually the Upaniṣads are divided into three broad layers: the older prose Upaniṣads, the middle level of verse Upaniṣads and the later Upaniṣads some of which were composed only in the middle ages. The late Upaniṣads are traditionally attributed to the AV. -- The older Upaniṣads comprise the Bṛhadāraṇyaka (BĀU), Chāndogya, Aitareya, Kauṣītaki, Taittirīya, and Kaṭha Śikṣā Up.s as well as the Jaiminīya Upaniṣadbrāhmaṇa. To the second level belong the Kaṭha, Īśa, Mahānārāyaṇa, Kena, Śvetāśvatara, Muṇḍaka, Praśna, Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣads as well as four "new" texts, the Bāṣkala, Chāgaleya, Ārṣeya and Śaunaka Up.s.

Exhibiting the same type of mixture of textual levels mentioned above, some Upaniṣads are found incorporated into Saṃhitās (Īśa Up. in Vājasaneyi Saṃh. 40, Nīlarudra Up. in Paippalāda Saṃhitā 14), into Brāhmaṇas (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up.), and into Āraṇyakas such as the Aitareya Ār. or Taittirīya

Ār. (Taitt. Up. and Mahānārāyaṇa Up.). Names such as that of the Kauṣ.Up. reconfirm this: Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇopaniṣad or Jaiminīya Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa.

Many of the older Upaniṣads have recently been edited or translated again (in general, see Santucci 1976, pp. 49-69; we merely present here a selection from the more recent and important publications): the Bṛhadāraṇyaka (transl. in prep. by J. Brereton; ed. (accented) of Kāṇḍa 1 of BĀU (Kāṇva), Maue, 1976), Chāndogya (unpubl. ed. by Morgenroth, Diss. Greifswald 1953), Kauṣītaki (tr. Thieme 1951/2, Renou 1978, Frenz 1969), Taittirīya (tr. Rau 1981), as well as the little studied Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa (ed. and tr. Oertel 1895, new ed. in prep. by M. Fujii), and the newly discovered Kaṭha Śikṣā Up. (ed., tr., disc. Witzel 1977, 1979a/1980a).

From the Middle level, the verse Upaniṣads: Kena (tr. Renou 1943), Īśa (tr. Thieme 1965), Śvetāśvatara (tr. Rau 1964), Kāṭhaka, (tr. Rau 1971; disc. Alsdorf 1950); also Maitr. Up. (van Buitenen 1962), Maitri Up. (disc. Tsuji, 1977 = 1982: 52-67), Mahānārāyaṇa Up. (ed., tr. Varenne 1960), Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad, (tr. Rau 1965; disc. Salomon 1981); for the four "new" Upaniṣads, the Bāṣkala, Chāgaleya, Ārṣeya and Śaunaka, see ed., tr. by Belvarkar 1925, ed. and tr. Renou 1956b, disc. Tsuji 1982:68-104. All the other Upaniṣads, mostly attached, quite secondarily, to the Atharvaveda, belong to a much later, definitely post-Vedic period.

Until very recently, most of the Upaniṣads had been translated (Deussen 1897, etc.) following the commentary by Śaṅkara (c. 700 C.E.) and other medieval commentators, who regard these texts as the scriptures that underlie Advaita (and other medieval) philosophies and religious movements. As will be pointed out below, this is a wrong approach from the point of view of the development of Indian thought. The Upaniṣads are the secondary collections of a whole array of late Vedic teachers (see Ruben 1947) belonging to various Vedic schools; they do not form a single body of texts but represent multiple strands of tradition, often quite individualistic ones. Recent translations, and to some extent already Hume (1931), treat the texts with philological correctness, that is, at first as isolated texts and then in their relations to other Upaniṣads and the preceding Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas; see especially Thieme 1966, Rau 1964, 1965, 1971, 1981, Frenz 1969, Witzel 1979a-1980a.

As an addendum we mention the curious late Vedic text, the little studied Suparṇādhyāya (ed., transl. Charpentier 1920, cf. Rau 1967). It takes up a topic from the Epic tradition which goes in fact back to the YV tale of the contest of Kadrū and Vinatā. The Suparṇādhyāya does not present the tale in Epic but still in accented (pseudo-)Vedic language; also, the text still is composed in the

traditional *triṣṭubh* meter and not yet the Epic *śloka* (cf. below on M. C. Smith's study (1992) of the core of the Mahābhārata).

Finally, we turn to the Sūtras. The Indian tradition refers to these texts with the term Kalpa(-Sūtra) and regards them as post-Vedic, that is not as revealed texts (*śruti*) but as texts composed by human authors (*smṛti*), and as such, along with grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), meter (*chandas*), phonetics (*śikṣā)*, etymology (*nirukta*) and astronomy (*jyotiṣa*), not as belonging to the body of Vedic texts but to the "limbs of the Veda" (*vedāṅga*). From the point of view of content and language, however, these texts are closely allied to the preceding Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas. Indeed, N. Fukushima (*alias/a.k.a.* N. Tsuji, 1952) has shown that the Śrauta Sūtras are, by and large, based on the preceding Vedic literature of their particular school *(śākhā)*. -- As we cannot mention each text here by name, we refer to the table of Vedic texts given below and to the up-to-date and nearly complete list of editions of the Sūtras, of their often independent appendices (and of most other Vedic texts), as given by Kashikar 1968 and more completely by Gotō 1987, p.355-371.

Ṛgvedic texts	Sāmavedic texts	

| RV | | |
| Ṛgveda Saṃhitā (Śākala) | | |

(Bāṣkala Saṃhitā,	Sāmaveda Saṃhitā	
Māṇḍukeya Saṃh.,		
lost)	SV(K) = SV(R)	SVJ
	Kauthuma Rāṇāyanīya	Jaiminīya
	Śākha Śākha	Śākha

RVKh		
Ṛgveda Khilāni		
(Śākha unclear		
perhaps Māṇḍ.)		

AB KB	PB	JB
Aitareya-Br. Kauṣītaki-Br.	Pañcaviṃśa-Br.	Jaiminīya-Br.
1-5 old	(=Tāṇḍya-Br.,	
----------------	Mahā-Br.)	
6-8 new	ṢB	
	Ṣaḍviṃśa -Br.	
	(=TāṇḍBr.,26)	

AA KA		
Aitareya-Ār., Kauṣītaki-	ChU	JUB
contains: Ār.,contains:	Chāndogya-Up.	Jaiminīya-
	Brāhmaṇa	Upaniṣad-
Ait.Up. KU	MB	Brāhmaṇa,
Aitareya- Kauṣ.Up.	Mantra-Brāhmaṇa	contains:
Upaniṣad		Kena-Up.

SŪTRAS:	Maśaka-Kalpa Sūtra	
	Kṣudra Sūtra	
	Sāmavidhāna, Ārṣeya, Devatādhāya,	
	Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa (= Mantra-Br.),	
	Saṃhitopaniṣad- Br., Vaṃśa-Br.	

AŚS ŚŚS	LŚS DŚS	JŚS
Āśvalāyana- Śāṅkhāyana-	Lāṭyāyana- Drāhyāyana-	Jaiminīya-
Śrautasūtra Śr .S.	Śr.S. Śr.S.	Śr.S.

AGS KauṣGS, ŚGS	GGS/KauthGS/DGS/KhādGS	JGS
Āśv.Gṛhya- Kauṣītaki,	Gobhila- Kauthuma-	Jaiminīya.GS
sūtra Śāmbavya	Drāhyāyana- Khādira-GS	

VāsDhS	GautDhS	
Vāsiṣṭha	Gautama	
Dharmasūtra	DhS.	

| various Pariśiṣṭas | | |

Yajurvedic texts   **Atharvavedic texts**

MS	KS	KpS	TS	VS(M)	VS(K)	AV,ŚS	PS

Mai-	Kaṭha-	Kaṭha-	Taitti-		Vājasa-	Vāj..	Śau-	Paippalāda
trā-	S.	Kapi-	rīya S.		saneyi	Kāṇva	S.	S.
yaṇi		ṣṭhala			Mādh-	S.		(=vulgate)
Saṃhitā		Saṃh.			yandina	S.		
					(VS 40= ĪśaUp)			

-	KaṭhB	KpBr	TB		ŚB(M)	ŚBK		*Paipp.Br.
no	Kaṭha	only	Taitt.		Śatapatha	Śatapatha	-no text-	(lost)
text	Br.	one	1-3.9		Brāhmaṇa	(Kāṇva)		
		frag.	frag.	old		(Mādhy.)		
			TB 3.10 1-5		Eastern >	1- 7		
			-12 from		6-10 Western = 7- 12			
			KaṭhB.		11-13 add. < 13-15			
			VādhB					
			Vādhūla					
			Ānvākhyānas		------------------			

adopted <----GB

man-	KaṭhĀ		TĀ		14.1-3	= 16.1-3	Gopatha Br.
tras	Kaṭha-		Taitt.		= Āraṇyaka		mostly
in	Āraṇyaka		1-2 <				derived
MS			KaṭhB				from other
4.9			3-6 =Ār.				Br. texts
			--------				(Praṇava Up =
			7-9 = TU		14.4-9	= 16.3-	GB 1.1-16-30, is
			Taitt.		BAUM	BAUK	post-Pāṇinean,
			Upaniṣad		Bṛhadāraṇyaka-		as such later
					Upaniṣad		than KauśS)
			--------				
			10 = MNU				
			Mahānārāyaṇa-Up.		[Iśopaniṣad]		

MŚS	*KaṭhŚS		BŚS VādhŚS BhŚS ĀpŚS HŚS VkhŚS		KŚS		VaitS	*ĀgŚS-
VārŚS								
Mānava	(almost		Baudhā- Bhārad- Hiraṇ-		Kātyā-			Āgastya
Śrauta	compl.		yana	vā ja	yakeśi-		yana			Śr.S.
Sūtra,	lost)		Śr.S.	ŚrS.	Śr.S.		Śr.S.		(lost)
Vārāha			Vādhūla Āpastamba Vaikhānasa				Vaitāna S.	
Śr.S.			ŚrS	ŚrS	ŚrS				
			(uned.)		(very late)			

MGS	KGS/LGS		BGS *VādhGS BhGS ĀpGS HGS VkhGS		PGS		KauśS	*PaiṭhGS
VārGS			/ ĀgGS					
Mān.Vār.	Kaṭha/		Baudh.Vādh. Bhār. Āp. Hir. Vaikh.		Pāras-		Kauśika	Paiṭhī-
Gṛhya	Laugākṣi-		Āgniveśya		kara		Sūtra	nasi GS
sūtra	GS		GS GS GS GS GS GS		GS			(probably sur -
								viving in Orissa)

*Mānava-Dharma Sūtra	*Kaṭh. DhS	Baudh. DhS	Āp DhS	Vaikh DhS		
Manu-Smṛti	Viṣṇu-Smṛti	Vādhūla-Smṛti			Yājñavalkya-Smṛti	Sumantu-DhS (frag.)
Various Pariśiṣṭas						

LATE UPANIṢADS:

MU Maitr.-Upaniṣad	KU Kaṭha-Up.	MNU Mahānārāyaṇa-Up.		IŪ Īśā-Up.	various AV-Up.: Praśna, Māṇḍ.- etc. Upaniṣads

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Among the Sūtras we have to distinguish between the Śrauta, Gṛhya and Dharma Sūtras. In several schools, especially those of the Taittirīya branch of the Black YV, they are arranged in this order, in a large work that comprises all the three categories and a few further, smaller appendices, namely the Hautra, Pravara, Pitṛmedha, and the Śulba Sūtras. With the increasing spread of the Indo-Aryan tribes adhering to the Vedic orthopraxy of the Kuru-Pañcālas of the Haryana-Uttar Pradesh area, and with their impact on neighboring tribes (see below), the original, geographically limited group of Vedic ritualists spread all over northern India as well: as the texts indicate (see Brucker 1980, Witzel 1987a), from the Panjab to the borders of Bengal, and from the Himalayas to the Central Indian Vindhya mountains. These still are the boundaries of Vedic India given by Manu (see below). Consequently, the number of schools belonging to one Veda increased in line with the geographical spread, and we find a much larger number of Sūtras than of Brāhmaṇa texts belonging to each Veda. (Where this is not the case, as in the AV, schools have disappeared during the middle ages).

The Śrauta Sūtras deal, as their name implies, with the solemn ritual, generally in the same order as already found in the YV Saṃhitās. Their aim is to present the major rituals (the *prakṛti* of the Haviryajñas and the Soma ritual) and all of their variations step by step, in all necessary detail, along with the YV Mantras mumbled by the Adhvaryu, the SV melodies sung by the Udgātar, the RV verses recited by the Hotar, and the occasional AV stanzas recited by the Brahman priest, as they appear in the sequential order of each ritual. However, each Veda deals in its Sūtras almost exclusively with matters of its own, e.g. a YV text for the most part excludes actions and recitations of the RV, SV and AV priests. One has to take together the Śrauta Sūtras of all the four Vedas to get a complete picture of a particular ritual, and even then, this is not easy. Often it is only the medieval commentaries or the Paddhatis, detailed, real step by step descriptions, that solve the remaining puzzles.

The oldest among the Śrauta Sūtras, notably the Baudhāyana and the Vādhūla Śr.S., still present the materials in a language that shows little or no difference from the late Brāhmaṇas, such as the Śatapatha or parts of the Jaiminīya Br. In fact, the Baudh.Śr.S. even contains whole chapters that can be found in such texts as the JB or KB with little variation. At the other end of the scale are texts such as the Kātyāyana Śr.S. which is quite short, even if it does not yet attempt to be as concise as the grammar of Pāṇini; it also has a section of

general rules of interpretation (*paribhāṣā*) that have to be understood when interpreting the whole text.

There is not enough room to describe or discuss in detail all the texts belonging to the Sūtra category. We therefore refer to the appended table for reference. The bibliographical details and a short discussion of each text can be found in the survey by Kashikar (1968). Only a few Śrauta Sūtras have been translated, notably the encyclopedic Āpastamba Śr.S. of the YV (by Caland, into German, with many notes referring to other Brāhmaṇa and Sūtra texts, 1921 Göttingen, Amsterdam 1924, 1928), and into English: the Śāṅkhāyana Śr.S. of the RV (Caland 1953), large parts of the Lāṭyāyana and Drāhyāyana Śr.S. of the SV by Parpola 1968, 1969, and the Vaitāna Sūtra of the AV again by Caland 1910; other recent English translation of YV Śrauta Sūtras are those by Kashikar 1964, van Gelder 1963, Ikari & Arnold 1983, Ranade 1978, 1981, and Mylius 1967-1972-1971-1987.

The smaller and often independent chapters of the Śrauta Sūtras mentioned above may be characterized briefly. The Hautra Sūtras of the YV deal with the portion of the RV priest, recited during the ritual. The Pravara Sūtras give the hypothetical Ṛṣi ancestors of the *yajamāna* (see Brough 1953 and Narten 1985). The Pitṛmedha Sūtras deal with the rituals of cremation and burial (Kashikar 1964: 460-501; Śrauta Kośa Engl. Section). The Śulba Sūtras, finally, discuss the layout of the offering ground and the building of the complicated fire altars of the Agnicayana (see below). They are of special interest as they contain the earliest geometry of India; in addition, they are based on an independent development of the mathematical sciences that began from clear, and unusual, maxims (see Michaels 1978, 1983 for all further details of editions and translations; cf. Khadilkar 1974.)

The Gṛhya Sūtra do not deal with solemn rituals but with the rituals "belonging to the house" (*gṛhya*). These are by and large the various rites of passage, beginning even before birth with the "placing of the fetus" (*garbhādhāna*) and they end long after death, cremation, and burial, with the rituals of ancestor worship. In language and style they are similar to the Śrauta Sūtra of their respective school, and occasionally refer back to it, as Caland was often quick in pointing out (cf. Kleine Schriften, 1990, passim). Apart from the life cycle rites, the Gṛhya Sūtras include a few special rites connected with the seasons, such as the sarpabali (Winternitz 1888), ploughing, offerings of the first grains, etc., or other domestic topics such as house building, crossing a river, etc. Most of the Gṛhya texts have been translated by Oldenberg (1886, 1892); to be

added are e.g. Caland, Jaiminīya 1922, Vaikhānasa 1929, Dresden, Mānava 1941, Rolland, Vārāha 1971.

Many of these rituals, notably the rites of passage, are of considerable age, and often have correspondences with those of the closely related Iranian people (for example the introduction to the study of the sacred texts, upanayana or *kūstīk*) or even beyond that, in the rest of the Indo-European area. The Indo-European marriage ritual, for example, can be reconstructed to a large degree from the Gṛhya Sūtras but only with difficulty from the scattered materials found among the various European peoples. Occasionally we can trace the earlier stages of these rites before the Gṛhya Sūtras on the Indian side as well. Notably some of the mantras connected with the rites of marriage, death and upanayana can be found on the RV and AV (see below ch. 5).

The Gṛhya Sūtras usually follow the same plan, namely that of the sequence of life cycle rituals from conception and birth to death and beyond. However, the texts of the older YV schools (Kaṭha, Laugākṣi, Mānava) form a block that begins with the initiation to Vedic study. Just as is the case with the Śrauta ritual found in the Saṃhitā texts of these schools, this may reflect an earlier stage as it marks the beginning of the ritual life of a young male person, which seems a logical point of departure for this type of Sūtras. - Many Gṛhya Sūtras may be located in particular parts of northern India[26] (Ram Gopal 1959, cf. Witzel 1987a) as they mention the river along which their adherents live. Archaeology now confirms this fact: the early settlements were situated along rivers such as the Yamunā and Gaṅgā but not in the area between these rivers (their *doāb*).

The Dharma Sūtras form a natural continuation to the Gṛhya Sūtras. They deal with all aspects of customs, rites and beliefs concerning the persons (again, notably men) belonging to the three higher classes (*varṇa,* often wrongly called 'castes'), the Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya and the Vaiśya. They also deal with often quite ancient rules involving formal law (such as swearing an oath, see Lüders, 1917, 1944, Brown 1978, Narten 1971). In the later texts such in the Manu and the Yājñavalkya Smṛtis, even the rules for court cases and the duties of the king are dealt with. This difference in time is significant. The earlier Dharma texts usually are called Dharma Sūtras and still have a more or less clear link to a particular

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[26] Bühler (in his DhS transl., 1886, 1879, 1882) was not correct in locating some of the YV Sūtras in South India: Only the modern followers of these texts are found there while the texts still refer only to the north (for example to northern rivers such as the Yamunā). See now Ram Gopal 1959, Brucker 1980, Witzel 1987a

Veda school (see the table; for a discussion of the texts and their contents see Lingat 1973). Moreover, certain legal provisions in these dharma texts and their exact phraseology are also found in the earliest Vedic prose and provide evidence for a legal "code" of some formality even in this period (see Jamison 1991, pp. 217-221). Other comparatively old sections, "a Dharmasūtra *in nuce*", are those dealing with the teacher's last instructions on proper behavior (TU 1.11, KaṭhŚiU 11), given at the completion of Veda studies (Witzel 1980:78).

However, the later Dharma texts, called Smṛti, usually have given up this link and have evolved into texts accepted on a more general level, all over (northern) India. Bühler (1886) hypothesized that the Manu Smṛti had developed from an earlier but lost Mānava Dharmaśāstra or Sūtra which belonged to the Maitrāyaṇī school of the Black YV. This has not been found; his case can be sustained, however, by a similar development in the related Kaṭha school. Fragments of the lost Kāṭhaka Dharma Sūtra have been found in Nepalese manuscripts, but the Dharma text of this school survived only in the late Viṣṇu Smṛti, composed under Vaiṣṇava influence in Kashmir in the first few centuries C.E. Many Smṛtis, such as the Śaṅkha-Likhita ("the one written down"), are even later and generally belong to the first millennium C.E. Their earliest, but so far unused MSS. (c. 1000 C.E.) again come from Nepal. All the earlier Sūtras (including the sources of Manu) were composed orally, without the use of the script, just as the rest of the Veda.

The Smṛtis also differ from the Dharma Sūtras in that they contain a number of rules on certain particular topics that seem to contradict each other. Efforts to understand them by the historical development of the text or as interpolations are misguided. Doniger and Smith (1991:liv ff.) do not quite correctly describe the problem. "Manu", for example, merely sums up the positions current in his time as derived from various areas and schools. The procedure is foreshadowed by texts such as the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa or the Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra which discuss at length the various positions of schools referring a particular point; the procedure, in fact, goes back all the way to the early YV texts which frequently quote the various opinions of fellow "theologians" (*brahmavādin*). Manu merely leaves out the sources of these statements and does not offer a solution to these positions as they always can be justified in theological discussion. The Dharma Sūtras as well as Manu[27] have been translated by Bühler 1882, 1886, 1879 and Jolly 1880, 1889. Many of these topics as well as those from the preceding Śrauta texts can conveniently be

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[27] For the recent transl. of Manu by W. Doniger and B.K. Smith, 1991, see notes 6, 30.

looked up in the enormous *Mīmāṃsā Kośa* (1952-66). -- For the many appended texts of the four Vedas which are concerned with ritual, grammar, etc. (Pariśiṣṭas) one can consult Kashikar 1968 and Aithal 1991.

Research Tools

There are several critical research tools that pertain to all (or most) of Vedic literature. Bloomfield's *Vedic Concordance* (1906) indexes every Vedic *mantra* found in editions at the time,[28] and the passage(s) in which it occurs, allowing the researcher to trace the ritual usage of and commentary on virtually every liturgical utterance in the corpus. Bloomfield, Edgerton and Emeneau's *Vedic Variants* (1930-34), based on the collections of the Concordance, allows the development and variation of the language to be traced and the authenticity and relative chronology of particular mantras to be evaluated. The monumental concordances of Vishva Bandhu (1935-1965) list every occurrence of every word in the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas, with less complete coverage of the Upaniṣads and Śrauta, Gṛhya, and Dharma Sūtras. This allows lexical, grammatical, and a large variety of philological and cultural studies to be carried out on the whole Vedic corpus with far greater ease than before. In addition, a number of individual texts have concordances or partial concordances as part of their text editions, e.g. R. Simon's *Index verborum* to the KS (1912). For cross references one can compare, with great profit, Caland's notes in his translation of ĀpŚS, VaitS, PB, ŚŚS, his description of the Soma ritual (Caland-Henry 1906-7), etc.

The Vedic Index of Macdonell and Keith (1912) is a compendium of the information that can be extracted from Vedic texts on daily life, customs, technology, and personal and geographical names -- though it specifically excludes mythological and ritual names and terminology from consideration. Finally, there are some special dictionaries of Vedic ritual terminology (Renou 1954, Sen 1978), a word list of rare words and of those not listed in the dictionary of Monier Williams (i.e. in the two Petersburg Dictionaries) by Renou (1934-35), a list and discussion of words of the *mantra* language by A. Sharma (1959/60), and a useful if somewhat limited Vedic Dictionary by Surya Kanta 1981. The persevering Vishva Bandhu has published two little known collections of quotations from the *brāhmaṇa* and *upaniṣad* type literature, Brahmanic quotations (*Brāhmaṇoddhārakośa*) 1966 and Upaniṣadic Citations (*Upaniṣaduddhārakośa*) 1972, the consistent use of which allows one, to a large

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[28] It already includes KS, but not JB, ŚBK, BŚS etc.

measure, to argue from within the Brahmanical system of thought. The only handbook of both the solemn (*śrauta*) and domestic (*gṛhya*) rituals has been compiled by Hillebrandt 1897, and the Śrautasūtra texts as such have been described by Kashikar 1968. Present day Vedic recitation has been described by, among others, Staal 1961, Howard 1977, 1986.

The amount of space just devoted to text editions, translations, and purely philological research tools may seem excessive, but it should not be forgotten that a major barrier to the understanding of Vedic religion has always been the difficulty of Vedic language and expression. In fact, by no means all Vedic texts have been edited and even less have been translated. It is perhaps no wonder that, because many of the untranslated texts, such as MS, KS, JB, BŚS, have been neglected, often enough even by Sanskrit scholars, comprehensive research into Hindu and Vedic religion has suffered, and many interesting points, such as the mentioning of the Indo-Aryan immigration (BŚS) or the later fate of the Kuru tribe (JB), have escaped general notice.

The grammar of Vedic differs in important ways, especially in the verb, from Classical Sanskrit (cf. Renou 1952, Gonda 1971). Lexical items often have entirely different meanings and usually have entirely different connotations. The syntax, especially of the mantras, can be contorted and elliptical. Since we must rely entirely on texts, it is imperative that we interpret them correctly. But since we lack an unbroken native commentatorial tradition, -- we often have to rely on what can be gleaned from the parallel versions in the various schools -- much of this work of interpretation has fallen to modern philologists. Progress comes in very small steps -- a new understanding of the meaning of a word, the identification of a particular verb form, the elucidation of a syntactic construction -- but without it the broader work of interpretation to be discussed in the next sections could not be accomplished.

It is not possible to mention all those who have made or are making significant contributions in this philological area; we will make simply make reference to a few of the more prominent and productive of these scholars, e.g. H. Oldenberg (1967, repr. 1987), and the still active K. Hoffmann (1975-6, 1992), P. Thieme (1967 / 1984, 1991), and F.B.J. Kuiper (1983, forthc. 1992) -- whose shorter works are conveniently collected in their Kleine Schriften and similar volumes.

Further important articles on the Veda have been published by the Glasenapp-Stiftung (Wiesbaden / Stuttgart 1967ff.), in the collections of papers, the "Kleine Schriften", e.g. those of Hillebrandt 1987, Caland 1990, Lüders 1973, Oertel 1991, Neisser 1980, Simon 1979, Sieg 1991, Lommel 1978, Alsdorf 1974.

Other collections include: Lüders 1940, van Buitenen 1962, W. N. Brown 1978, N. Tsuji 1977, 1982, Heesterman 1985, Malamoud 1989. We especially miss a collection of the articles of M. Bloomfield and L. Renou (for the latter's bibliography see Renou 1968 and Tsuji 1982:390-423).

b. Philological work

This is the right time, however, to pause for a moment and reflect on the state of the art of text editions and translations. The shocking truth is that even for Vedic texts, not to speak of other Sanskrit texts, there hardly exists any truly critical edition. What we have are the generally reliable standard editions, largely of the last century, by European and American Indologists (Whitney, Bloomfield) which, however, in reality are editions with the *variae lectionis* more or less diligently recorded. They all lack a stemma of the MSS. In some cases, such as Roth-Whitney's Atharvaveda, it is extremely difficult to get even a vague idea of the distribution of the MSS at a certain passage. This "technique" no doubt was instigated by the commonly known fact that the written tradition of Vedic texts was and is remarkably inferior to that of the oral tradition. The latter has preserved, to this day with hardly a deviation, not only the exact wording of the text, but even the Vedic accents which had disappeared already at the beginning of our era. Surprisingly almost no editor has made use of this living tradition.[29] What we need, therefore, is a new, detailed study of the manuscript tradition of each text and school, and the salvaging, as far as still possible, of the oral tradition. Only then can suitable editions be prepared which must on the one hand make use of the text-critical method for the written tradition and on the other include and critically evaluate the oral tradition (cf. Howard 1977, 1986) as well, which is quite different by its very nature.

The same holds good, *mutatis mutandis*, for the interpretation of some of the texts. There is a consensus now that the Ṛgveda is not to be regarded as the simple nature poetry of a people at the dawn of civilization, but as based on a complex poetic and mythological code. However, the much less studied *brāhmaṇa* type texts still linger in a sort of limbo, as they were traditionally regarded by western Indologists as incoherent and boring. Some, notably K.

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[29] Exceptions are Śaṅkar Pāndurang Pandit (1895-98), Rajendralal Mitra (1864-72), and then, after a fatal lapse of more than half a century, during which much recitation vanished, E.R.S. Sarma (1968). For living traditions see now the short summary by K.P. Aithal 1991.

Hoffmann (1960 = 1992, p.709, and 1975/76 passim), have stressed that the *brāhmaṇa* type texts represent the earliest start of reasoned thought in India and are based on a strict logic (see also Lévi 1898, Oldenberg 1919, Schayer 1924, 1925), which is, however, based on the assumption that "similarity between two entities means identity" (Witzel 1979b, cf. B.K. Smith 1989). In addition to the "view from within" of these texts, facilitated by the very little used *Brāhmaṇoddhārakośa* (Vishva Bandhu 1966), we also are in need a much more detailed discussion of the realia of nature and culture of the period, initiated by W. Rau (1954, 1983), Sparreboom 1985, Klaus 1989, Jamison 1991 passim, to appear b). Good translations (and studies) are possible only when taking these factors into account. The interpretation of the religion and mythology (Jamison 1991, cf. Witzel 1984a) and of the history (Witzel 1989b, forthc. a,d) of the period has only begun.

The much read and interpreted Upaniṣads, surprisingly, mostly lack even a critical edition of the "*var. lect.*" type described above. In addition, the study of these texts has largely been based on the much later commentaries of Śaṅkara (7th cent. A.D.) and others. Time, place, religious and cultural setting of the commentators are almost as far removed from the authors of the Upaniṣads (c. 500 B.C.) as that of a well read, present day Western reader of the Upaniṣads. In addition, Śaṅkara and other medieval Advaita writers took the ancient Upaniṣads as a whole and used them as scriptural underpinnings for the monistic philosophy of their time.

The Upaniṣads, however, must be treated as texts embedded in their Vedic context. This has not been understood well by the Indologists who treat the Upaniṣads as a separate piece of literature, the philosophy of which somehow developed instantaneously. Some Vedic scholars have now noticed the necessity to steer away from the Advaita influence and have occasionally done so in their translations (e.g. P. Thieme's and W. Rau's recent translations of some Upaniṣads into German, see above). What we finally wait for is a detailed, extensive treatment of one Upaniṣad which spells out clearly these principles and shows their application. The new translations, such as the one of the BĀU in preparation by J. Brereton, will for the first time indicate what the Upaniṣads really have to say, their "original intent".

One item of importance for all translations from Vedic (or any other language belonging to a culture historically or geographically distant from ours) is translation method. This is especially true of the translation of certain words that signify a concept or a bundle of concepts that have no close equivalent in English or have to be circumscribed by a number of words

standing for concepts not closely related in English. The typical examples for Vedic are those of *ṛta* or *brahman* (see below), but the same problem exists, for example in the translation of French *liberté* or German *Freiheit* which have to be translated in English, according to context, either by *liberty* or *freedom*. For *ṛta*, however, neither *law* nor *order* nor *truth* will do, as the word signifies the carrying out, the creative power of active truth, something opposed to active untruth, lie, i.e. deceit, cheating. Geldner, in his RV translation, chose, according to context, a variety of words, while Thieme prefers to translate by using one and the same word (truth, *Wahrheit*), which, however, does not carry the same semantic spectrum in English or German as *ṛta*. A third possibility would be not to translate *ṛta* at all, leaving the uninitiated reader more puzzled than the two other choices do. We thus have to choose which method to follow and for which audience. The best solution with words as "difficult" as this one may be to translate idiomatically but to add the Sanskrit word in brackets.[30]

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[30] A feature not used by W. Doniger - B. K. Smith (1991), in spite of a discussion (p. lxxvi) of the problematic nature of translating such words as dharma or karma; cf. note 6, 27.

II. AN OUTLINE OF VEDIC RELIGION AND RITUAL

a. Overviews of Vedic Religion

A new general treatment of Vedic religion is badly needed, as those available are, at best, much out of date, and are often seriously misleading as well. The early, massive (3 vol.) work of A. Bergaigne, *La réligion védique* (1878-83) in fact, as the rest of its title indicates (*d'après les hymnes du Ṛg-Veda*), essentially limits its purview to the earliest text. It is, moreover, primarily concerned with mythology and should be discussed under that rubric. The work that remains the most useful treatment is probably H. Oldenberg's *Die Religion des Veda* (2nd ed. 1917, Engl. 1896). This is a balanced account, which is not too seriously influenced by the then prevalent nature mythology. Pioneering is the use Oldenberg makes of ethnographical parallels. He extracted Vedic religion from the sphere of the "classical" tradition. It is unfortunate that Vedic studies subsequently have disappeared from the view and the agenda of anthropologists. Yet Oldenberg's work nonetheless relies too heavily on the evolutionary concept of a still "primitive Vedic mind" preceding the evolution of the structure of our supposedly so much more developed mind. As Oldenberg put it: the *brāhmaṇa* type texts represent, after all, "vorwissenschaftliche Wissenschaft", pre-scientific science. As such, they are the fountainhead of Indian thought and sciences.

Also of utility is Keith's *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads* (1925), though marred, like most works of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, by an excessive reliance on the nature mythology paradigm. M. Bloomfield's *The religion of the Veda* (1908), actually a series of lectures, unfortunately displays a patronizing and superficial attitude to the subject, surprising in one who gave us so many useful research tools and penetrating insights into particular problems.

More recent treatment include Renou's brief but reliable discussion in Renou and Filliozat's *L'Inde classique I* (1947), Chap. V. "Le Védisme" (pp. 270-380) [translated and issued as a separate small volume, *Vedic India* (1957)], and Gonda's survey of 1960, which is sound if uninspired and still somewhat too reliant on the notion of the 'primitive mind'. Th. J. Hopkins' generally well balanced, if necessarily short *The Hindu religious tradition* (1971) is very useful as a general introduction. For certain aspects of Vedic religion cf. also Basham 1989, and for the Brāhmaṇas, Devasthali 1965.

b. Ritual

The central importance of elaborate ritual activity throughout the Vedic period cannot be overemphasized. However, it is also important to remember that our views of Vedic ritual are somewhat distorted by the chronology of the text-types that concern the ritual. It is only at the very end of the Vedic period, in the Śrauta Sūtras, that we have straightforward, detailed descriptions of ritual. This means that we have handbooks only for the latest form of the Vedic ritual, as it had developed from the Ṛgveda through its restructuring during the pre-Mantra period, some less pronounced developments in the time of the YV Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, and the early Sūtras.[31]

The earliest texts of the "classical" Vedic ritual, the *mantra* texts, are ritual internal, consisting of verbal formulations to be pronounced in the course of ritual performance. The context of ritual action in which they were used can only be inferred, often very dimly, from these formulations. The next level of texts, brāhmaṇic exegesis, assumes detailed knowledge of the ritual; the exegesis concerns itself with the function and meaning, often esoteric, of selected details of ritual activity or verbal expression, passing over the rest without comment.

It is thus difficult to know to what extent the rituals of these different times resembled or were identical to each other, how much they changed over time. In general, the highlighted ritual events of brāhmaṇic exegesis fit neatly into the more detailed picture found in the Śrauta Sūtras, but the evidence for the *mantra* period, and certainly for the Ṛgveda, is more difficult to evaluate. Although much of what characterizes middle and late Vedic ritual was undoubtedly there in the earlier period in some fashion -- given the presence of technical terms for particular priests, rituals, offerings, etc., already in the Ṛg Veda -- we cannot be certain that these terms meant the same thing in different periods or were arranged in the same system.[32] Moreover, there are some clear systematic differences between earlier and later ritual in terms both of practice and of beliefs, which will be discussed below

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[31] Falk (1988) indicates, on the basis of Pāli texts, that the development of the ritual did not stop with the Sūtras and that the accounts of Śrauta ritual in the Brāhmaṇas and even in the Sūtras are not complete, in spite of their pronounced aim.

[32] For example, see Geldner's discussion of ritual terms in the introduction to his translation to book 9 of the RV.

c. Ṛgvedic ritual and its forerunners

Early Vedic ritual can be compared not only with what follows it, but with what precedes it -- or, rather, it can be compared with cognate ritual tradition(s), and an attempt can be made to reconstruct the shared ritual system from which each of these traditions derived. Striking parallels to Vedic ritual and religion appear in ancient Iranian religion, as found in the texts of Zoroastrianism preserved in a language closely related to Vedic Sanskrit, namely Avestan.[33] Although Iranian religion seems to have undergone significant changes, especially the revolutionary reforms apparently led by the prophet Zarathustra, it still shows many remarkable similarities to Vedic religion: the poetic phraseology is often identical across the languages; there are identically named deities (e.g. Vedic Mitra, Avestan Miϑra); and the ritual foci are the same. In both the fire is the center of ritual activity (e.g. Narten 1986); in both the most highly valued oblation is an invigorating drink (of still debatable identity), Vedic *soma*, Avestan *haoma*. [The two words are historically identical, despite superficial appearance.] Moreover, even the types of texts preserved in Iran mirror those of Vedic India: the praise poetry of Zarathustra (in his Gāϑās) recalls that of the less personal Ṛgveda; the Yasna Haptaŋhāiti, a highly ritualistic text, is stylistically close to the non-metrical mantras of the Yajur Veda; in the later Avesta, a Brāhmaṇa-like passage has been preserved in Yasna 19-21; and the Nirangistān is a sort of Zoroastrian Śrautasūtra.[34]

Indeed, the most ancient purely ritual text in Avestan, the Yasna Haptaŋhāiti, shows traces of a triple division of liturgical speech exactly like that in Vedic and a consequent splintering of ritual functions reminiscent of Vedic. For a convenient collection of technical religious terms shared by Vedic and Avestan, see Hillebrandt 1897, p. 11. For connections between Vedic and Zoroastrian religion in general, see, e.g., Keith 1925, 32-36; Thieme 1957b [reprinted with changes in R. Schmitt 1968, 204-241].

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[33] We may add comparisons with the Roman October horse sacrifice, and similar accounts, even from the turn of this century, from the Altai; cf. further the widespread Eurasian fire rituals (cf. Witzel 1992).

[34] Actually, the similarities go beyond this: the text of the Zoroastrian hymns (Gāϑās) has been transmitted in what can only be called a Padapāṭha, with even more of the idiosyncrasies that mark this kind of text but in a much less pure transmission. And while the Yašts and parts of the Yasna correspond in character to Ṛgvedic hymns addressed to various gods, much of the Vīdēvdād reads like a Gṛhya or Dharma Sūtra.

Discussions of Ṛgvedic ritual itself are relatively rare and generally are purely comparative. Taking the reasonably clear descriptions of middle and late Vedic ritual as their starting points, earlier correspondents of this or that detail or ritual episode are sought, piecemeal, in the Ṛg Veda. Examples are the discussions of van Buitenen (1968) of the Pravargya or Gonda on the Sautrāmaṇī *mantra*s (1980). The only more sustained, if brief discussion of a "classical" Vedic ritual in the RV is that of the Soma ritual by Geldner in the introduction to book 9 of his RV translation (1951). Also commonly treated is the use or the absence of Ṛgvedic *mantra*s in the later ritual, see Renou 1962, Gonda 1978, Schneider 1971.

A certain amount of attention has been given to the purpose, function, and context of Ṛgvedic ritual -- for example, the theory of Kuiper's (going back in part to Ludwig and Hillebrandt) that "the oldest nucleus of the Ṛgveda was a textbook for the new year ritual" (1960, p. 222). This and other suggestions are briefly summarized and a new one proposed in H. Falk (to appear). Schmidt (1968) proposes connecting the morning pressing of the Soma ritual with the Vala myth and the New Year and the spring season and suggests a connection of the midday pressing with the Vṛtra myth and the rainy reason

However, as we have indicated, relatively little systematic work has been done on assembling the details of Ṛgvedic praxis. Hillebrandt 1897:11-17 contains a very brief but still useful survey of evidence for Ṛgvedic ritual, esp. ritual terminology (see also Keith 1925, 252-56, and Bergaigne, 1878; for the *āprī* hymns of the RV see L. van den Bosch 1985). Both Oldenberg (1889) and Bergaigne (1889) examined the structure of the RV for clues to its liturgical use in the ritual. But what is needed is a thoroughgoing study of the evidence, not only terminological but descriptive, if possible calibrated according to a rough internal chronology of the text and regional differences. Once we know what Ṛgvedic ritual was, we will be in a better position to hypothesize about its purpose (and about its successor, the "classical" Vedic ritual).

What actually can be found out for the Ṛgvedic period by painstaking study has been shown by Schmidt, 1973: in Ṛgvedic time, tying the sacrificial animal to the offering pole (*yūpa*) was followed by decapitation of the victim, while in the later "classical" ritual, the tying to the offering pole remained as a fossil element only. The animal was untied, led towards *(ā labh)* a place outside the sacrificial ground where it was suffocated (*śam*, "to pacify"). Heesterman (1967, 1985 *passim*) instead would reconstruct the same decapitation ritual from the later, YV evidence of tying and untying the animal (and only then killing it) and project this back to a prehistoric practice of his rather undefined pre-

classical period of Indian ritual -- which, however, can be shown to actually have been that of the Ṛgveda.

d. Classical ritual

In contrast to the sketchy and tentative treatment of Ṛgvedic ritual, "Classical" Vedic ritual -- the ritual constantly referred to by the Brāhmaṇas and exhaustively described by the Śrauta Sūtras -- has been abundantly studied. A general survey[35] is A. Hillebrandt's important *Ritual-Litteratur. Vedische Opfer und Zauber* (1897), which covers Gṛhya as well as Śrauta rites and offers almost a digest of the relevant Sūtras. It sums up the knowledge gathered by the turn of the century and is still a very useful - and the only - compendium. S. Lévi's *La doctrine du sacrifice* (1898) offers a first intellectual analysis stressing the regenerative function of the ritual; it was a critical source for the general, epoch-making work of Hubert and Mauss, "Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice" (1898).[36] The general works on Vedic religion mentioned above (Oldenberg 1917, Keith 1925, Renou and Filliozat 1947; Gonda 1960) also treat the rituals in much detail, and Renou 1954 offers a useful lexicon of ritual terminology, with abundant references to the Sūtras.[37] C.G. Kashikar (1968), one of the foremost ritualists in the footsteps of Caland, has summed up the formal aspects of the Śrauta literature in a handbook.[38] In addition, the introductions and notes to particular text editions and translations are often rich sources of detailed information about rituals and comparison of them across texts. For individual rituals, there are numerous monographic treatments, which will be referred to in what follows. The great Poona project of a *Śrautakośa* was intended as a collection of all available Mantra, Brāhmaṇa and Sūtra passages dealing with each of the Vedic rituals. The New/Full Moon and the Soma ritual have been published in Sanskrit, and in the accompanying English section a translation has been given of the relevant passages from the Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra (and other Śrautasūtra passages as far as they deviate),

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[35] Extensive surveys are those by Weber in *Indische Studien* X, 321 sqq., XIII, 217 sqq. and Eggeling in the introductions to his translation of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.

[36] Cf. also the long discussion in an unlikely source: Paul Mus, Barubuḍur. Esquisse d'une histoire du bouddhisme fondée sur la critique archéologique des textes, Hanoi 1935, pp. 79-121.

[37] Sen's Dictionary (1978) largely is an English translation of Renou 1954.

[38] Mylius has written a summary as well 1973:475-498.

but only of non-Mantra texts. Unfortunately the project seems to have ground to a halt after four volumes.

Although many scholars over the last century or so have contributed to our knowledge of Vedic ritual, one must be singled out: W. Caland, whose unequaled command of the massive amount of textual material and inspired ability to make sense of it is always evident in the awe-inspiring flood of his text editions, translations, commentaries, and treatments of particular rituals and ritual types. For a bibliography of his works see Caland 1990. Special attention should be drawn to the often long introductory chapters of his books where he gave some very useful discussions of the general structure and the details of the Vedic rituals, which go beyond their codification in Hillebrandt's *Ritual-Litteratur*. Caland combined a very detailed knowledge of the Vedic ritual in all its texts with a keen interest in the parallels of Vedic rites and customs in other cultures. He also was one of the first to stress the close interrelation and cooperation of all the four Vedas and their priests in the performance of a particular sacrifice. Both in breadth and in detailed knowledge of Vedic ritual, he remains unsurpassed.

Before we examine individual rituals, a brief general characterization of Vedic ritual will anchor our discussions. And the first issue we should address is what it lacks -- most notably a fixed place of performance. There were no temples or permanent structures devoted to Vedic ritual. Rather, a sacrificial ground was chosen anew for each performance according to certain characteristics required of its natural features;[39] it was prepared by careful measurement and demarcation, with different portions within that ground devoted to different functions. These were alluded to in the YV Saṃhitās, the Brāhmaṇa and Śrauta Sūtras,[40] but were only summed up and treated systematically in their appendices, the Śulba Sūtras (Michaels 1978).

Moreover, there is no evidence for icons or images representing gods or their attributes. Even the physical objects employed in the ritual -- cups, ladles, and so forth -- are newly made each time, without rich adornment or special craftsmanship, and mostly of archaic materials (wood) and in archaic fashion (e.g. pottery without wheel). One of reasons, besides the inherent archaism of ritual (artificially re-enforced in the case of some Śrauta rites, see Witzel 1981/2), was that craftsmen of the lower castes were not eligible to produce objects used in the rituals. Exceptions to this rule are found only with some of the more

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[39] See Caland 1990, p. 5, 450, 504.
[40] See, e.g. MS 3.8.4, KS 35.3, KpS 38.6, TS 6.2.6, cf. ŚB 2.10.4-25.

elaborate implements made of precious metals used in intricate and politically important rituals such as the Aśvamedha.[41]

The central physical focus of Vedic ritual is fire. The principal and central act of almost all Vedic rituals is the offering of various edible or drinkable substances into the fire. These rituals range from the simplest ritual, the Agnihotra or 'Fire Offering', the twice daily offering of milk (and similar products) into the fire, to the most elaborate of the śrauta rituals, such as the Agnicayana and Aśvamedha. The latter ones gain their complexity from the preliminaries to the offering and from the actions and words that lead away from it, as well as from the way they have incorporated many less complex Śrauta rites. The central act, the offering into the fire, is still the same.

The number of fires is the single, most overt technical criterion that distinguishes Gṛhya and Śrauta rites. The former have one fire, but Śrauta rituals require three (even when two rituals, such as the New- and Full Moon rituals, are substantially the same in their Gṛhya and Śrauta versions). (In some rites even a few more fires are required.[42]) These three fires are called the Gārhapatya ('Householder's Fire'), the Āhavanīya (the fire 'To be offered into', which functions as its name implies), and the Dakṣiṇāgni ('Southern Fire'). In order to perform Śrauta rites, one must 'establish' these three fires through a special ritual known as the Agnyādheya 'Establishment of the fires'; one who had done this became an *āhitāgni* (one 'Having established fires'). Technically a man belonging to any of the three Aryan classes, Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, and Vaiśya, which together constitute the so-called 'Twice Born', was eligible to establish the fires, after studentship and marriage.

Who are the participants in the ritual? First there is the Āhitāgni who actually causes the ritual to be performed; he is known as the *yajamāna* or 'sacrificer' (lit. 'one sacrificing on his own behalf'). This term is a little misleading, in that, though the Yajamāna receives the spiritual benefits of the ritual performance, he has little to do with the actual performance of the ritual (though for many rituals the Yajamāna must previously undergo an elaborate and sometimes arduous consecration (*dīkṣā*, cf. also below). For ritual performance he relies on a collection of priests, who receive from the Yajamāna in return a "priestly gift" called a Dakṣiṇā (for which see further below).

Priests fall into four main groups, distributed according to the four Vedas, and most Śrauta rituals require more than one priest, representatives of three or

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[41] For a list see Vādhūla Brāhmaṇa, Caland 1990:364-67.

[42] The Sabhya, Āvasathya, and the additional Āhavanīya fire on the eastern *vedi*.

four of the Vedas. (An exception is the daily Agnihotra, which needs only one, the Adhvaryu.) The priests of the Ṛg Veda, the Sāma Veda, and the Yajur Veda are responsible for the three types of sacral utterance that together form the verbal sector of Vedic ritual: the loud recitation of verses (ṛc) of the RV, the elaborate and very intricate singing of the melodies (sāman) of the SV, and the mumbling of the sacrificial formulas (yajuṣ) of the YV. The chief priest representing the Ṛg Veda is called the Hotar; that of the SV the Udgātar; that of the YV the Adhvaryu. The latter is also the performer of most ritual actions -- the preparation of the ground, the implements, and the oblations, the offering of the oblations, and so on. He and his helpers (Pratiprasthātar, etc.) therefore are the most prominent priests, and it is the schools of the YV that have produced the largest amount of texts, and not surprisingly, also the largest groups of followers, as can be observed in the medieval land grants made to Vedic scholars and priests and as still is the case today (Witzel 1986b, cf. Renou 1947).

The representative (or supposed representative) of the Atharva Veda is the Brahman. In Śrauta ritual the Brahman oversees the whole operation, mostly in silence, watching for slips and omissions and authorizing certain actions (see Bodewitz 1983, Renou 1949). He is not specialized in function, as the other priests are, and it is highly unlikely that he originally "belonged" to the Atharva Veda. Instead it is likely that this pairing was made secondarily, for symmetry and to provide a place for the Atharva Veda (and its adherents) in the śrauta ritual. This assignment probably reflects one of the major changes in the ritual.

The third set of participants is invisible, with the exception of the gods Soma and Agni, but not the less crucial for that fact. These are the gods, a selection of whom (varying according to the ritual) is invited to attend, offered a comfortable seat on fragrant (if somewhat hard kuśa) grass, entertained with praise and song, and given food and drink in the form of oblations: each offering in the fire is made to a particular god or set of gods, and they are urged to partake of it. The model of Vedic ritual is then that of a formal meal, ceremonial hospitality, offered to particularly worthy dignitaries. This has been stressed by Thieme 1957b, but it has hardly been observed that medieval and modern pūjā still follow this pattern (Witzel 1980a, p.37-39, Bühnemann 1988), with its main upacāras such as āvāhana, havana / stotra, visarjana, etc.

Vedic rituals are often classified according to the identity of their most important offering. The offering of this chief oblation will generally occur at the

exact center of the ritual, for Vedic rituals are bilaterally symmetrical,[43] leading up to and away from the climactic moment,[44] The simplest of the categories is that of the Haviryajñas, with oblations of vegetable and dairy products; also technically considered Haviryajñas are animal sacrifices, but it is convenient to treat these separately. And finally Somayajñas, with oblations made with the highly prized inspiring drink *soma*. This classification is very early; it underlies already the ordering of *mantra* collections in the YV Saṃhitās (MS, KS, TS, VS). First or second in these early Mantra collections are the two small Mantra Saṃhitās of the New and Full Moon and of the Soma ritual. The New and Full Moon sacrifice of cakes is the base pattern (*prakṛti*) of all food offerings (Iṣṭi rituals), while the simplest form of the Soma ritual (Agniṣṭoma, *adhvara*) is that of the more complicated Soma rituals, such as the Ukthya, Atirātra, Vājapeya. The offerings (*havis*) of vegetarian dishes or meat (*iṣṭi*) are "strewn" (*nir-vapati*), and those of liquids (*soma*, ghee) are "poured" (*juhoti*).

These oblations are not mutually exclusive. Animal sacrifices also include offerings of the other Haviryajña classes, and the Soma Sacrifice has both offerings of that sort and animal sacrifices embedded in it. Indeed, many of the basic actions and patterns of Vedic ritual are common to all the rituals or to large groups of them. In particular, certain rituals serve, as has been alluded to above, as the type or model of a group of variants. Moreover, rituals can be nested or embedded in other rituals, building larger and increasingly intricate ritual structures out of a collection of smaller, self-contained ritual units. (Hillebrandt 1897, 1987; Heesterman 1957, 1985; Staal 1982, 1983, 1990; Witzel 1987b, 1992, Minkowski 1991.)

e. The development of ritual

Reference has already been made to the pre-history of the Classical Vedic ritual as preserved in the Yajurveda Mantras and the various Brāhmaṇas and Sūtras. The major development took place towards the end, or rather after the Ṛgvedic period, during the linguistically defined "Mantra" period. The Śrauta rituals which were then shaped are the priestly elaboration of more simple rituals (partly preserved in the Gṛhyasūtras) of great antiquity.

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[43] For this feature, see Minkowski 1991, cf. Staal 1982, etc.

[44] Something already found in Ṛgvedic "guest worship of the gods" and still reflected in modern *pūjā*, see above ch. 2.b (as well as in the closely related Zoroastrian ritual).

As has been indicated, this elaboration was built on the principles of basic paradigm and variation. The two paradigms are the New and Full Moon ritual and the Soma ritual. Other Śrauta rituals were made to be variations of this scheme. The variations, smaller or larger, are always described (or referred to in the Brāhmaṇas) in relation to the basic set. Only the divergent parts are mentioned in the Sūtras (with the exception of the oldest, Baudhāyana).

The understanding of the development of ritual also is of importance for an understanding of the origins and the development of Vedic texts and schools. The post-Ṛgvedic period is characterized by the continuing stress of the importance of the Adhvaryu priests and their texts. But the myths make the Adhvaryus late-comers to the ritual; their prototype is the Aśvins.[45]

At some period following the RV, a number of Mantras from the RV and others from an unknown, separate priestly tradition were joined to form the corpus of the Adhvaryus, the main "acting" priests. Apparently, Ṛgvedic hymns had such a high prestige already that they were necessarily incorporated into the YV texts, to enhance the status of the Adhvaryu ritual. In a way, the Adhvaryus formed their own small Saṃhitās: Dārśapaurṇamāsa / Soma Saṃhitā and the rest of the rituals in separate small Saṃhitās constituting the Mantra portion of MS, KS, TS (cf. Oldenberg 1888). This goes hand in hand with the development of the Ṛgvedic *hotar* ("pourer (of ghee)" > "reciter of Ṛgvedic hymns." All of this restructuring of post-RV ritual necessitated a complex re-arrangement of texts, rituals, and priestly functions; it took place between the end of the Ṛgvedic period and the collection of the YV Mantras, as well as the emergence of early, but lost, Brāhmaṇa-like prose texts (K. Hoffmann, 1969), in Kurukṣetra under the early Kuru kings (like Parikṣit and Janamejaya Pārikṣita, see Witzel 1989b).

While the stage was set at that time and the YV Mantras, as well as the lost Br., composed, the ritual developed for a long time afterwards, all through the YV Saṃhitā and the Brāhmaṇa periods. It culminated with the reformulation of all rituals in Brāhmaṇa form in ŚB and, at about the same time, in Sūtra form in BŚS.

The general stages of this development can be followed; however, we know too little yet about its starting point, i.e. the Ṛgvedic ritual, and about the relative age of the various YV texts (e.g., the age of the Vājapeya section in MS, KS, TS, etc.), to allow the criterion of the development of ritual in the post-Ṛgvedic period to be used prominently in this investigation. It will be of more

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[45] The ideology behind this myth has to be treated in detail; cf., for the time being, Witzel 1987c, n. 103.

use in the future, when other parameters such as the several sets of dialect traits will have been worked out.[46]

f. The individual rituals

Now follows a brief catalogue of some of the principal Vedic rituals and their (usually descriptive) treatments in the secondary literature.

The initial establishment of the fire, the Agnyādheya mentioned above, has been recently discussed by Moody 1980, in great detail by Krick 1982, and more briefly by Heesterman 1989.

The Haviryajñas: many of these are regular observances determined by the rhythm of the year, and the movements of sun and moon. They mark the liminal points of these two 'stars' and the dangerous periods of time.

Agnihotra. This twice daily (early morning and evening) offering into the fire has received monographic treatment in Dumont 1939 and Bodewitz 1976. Though one of the most plain and unembellished Vedic rituals, which takes some 15 minutes, it comprises already about one hundred actions and is by no means a simple straightforward ritual any more. The same applies to its "meaning": While the magical guarding of the fire (as identical with the sun) overnight and its rekindling the next morning, effecting the rising of the sun, are at its center, a number of extraneous rites have been incorporated, such as an offering of milk to the Aśvins, the setting in motion of the heavenly waters of the Milky Way, of seed / milk for men / women, etc. (Witzel 1992). The usual wishes of a Vedic householder, such as sons, rain, cattle, superiority within his clan and tribe, living for the proverbial hundred years, and then finding his way to Heaven have been incorporated. There is no single "meaning" to this ritual any more, but the origins of its various parts often are discernible still. In trying to understand each Śrauta ritual, each of these elements and their history has to be traced, along with the origin and history of all of the *mantra*s involved (Witzel 1981/2).

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[46] It has to be noted that a proper procedure for evaluating the growth of the classical Śrauta ritual has not evolved yet; cf. for the time being, Witzel 1981/2, p.80 sqq. A proper procedure would include: (1.) the establishment of the nature of RV ritual viz. of its traces in the text; (2.) a separate study of the YV Mantras, the order and contents of which is often more archaic than that of the Br. portions; mutual influence of certain Mantras on each other; (3.) a comparison of the various YV Saṃhitā prose texts with the earlier material; (4.) a comparison of the mutual influences various rituals have had on each other, and (5.) a study of further developments in the Br.s and the early Sūtras (VādhŚS, BŚS).

Dārśapaurṇamāsa. This "New (and) Full Moon" sacrifice involves offerings every two weeks of the lunar month at the time of the new and full moon, and serves as the model for the class of rituals known as *iṣṭi*s. The classic discussion of this ritual is Hillebrandt 1879; cf. also the more detailed description by Rustagi 1981.

Cāturmāsyāni. "Four-monthly" or seasonal sacrifices: the Vaiśvadeva in the spring, the Varuṇapraghāsa in the rainy season, the Sākamedha in the autumn. A fourth one, the Śunāsīrīya, takes place around New Year. For these in general consult Bhide 1979, Einoo 1985 and 1988, cf. J. J. Meyer 1937.

Āgrayaṇa. "First-fruits" sacrifice. Offered at harvest, before partaking of the crop. For a brief treatment, see Lindner 1888.

There are numerous other *iṣṭi*s performed to attain particular wishes, known collectively as Kāmyā Iṣṭi or "Wish Offerings" and treated in great detail by Caland 1908.

Paśubandha. "Animal Sacrifice". Though this is technically a *haviryajña*, the actual killing of an animal or animals brings the danger of inauspiciousness (more than the equally dangerous "killing" of the Soma plant or the cutting of grass) and so requires additional ritual machinery and participants. The standard treatment of this ritual is Schwab 1886. The killing of the animal which took place by beheading at the offering pole (*yūpa*) in Ṛgvedic times (Schmidt 1973) has been replaced by ritually tying the animal to the pole and a subsequent "bloodless" suffocation outside the offering ground, as noted above.

Soma Sacrifices.

The model for Soma sacrifices is the Agniṣṭoma, a type of "One Day" (Ekāha) Soma sacrifice -- a somewhat misleading term, since all Soma sacrifices are preceded by some days of preparation as well as by the consecration (Dīkṣā) of the Yajamāna. However, the soma is pressed and offered only on one day, in a series of three pressings, the Prātaḥsavana ("Early Morning Pressing"), the Mādhyaṃdinasavana ("Midday Pressing"), and the Tṛtīyasavana ("Third [or Evening] Pressing"). The classic treatment of the Agniṣṭoma is Caland-Henry 1906-07. While the "meaning" of the whole ritual still is elusive, some of its subsections certainly refer to Ṛgvedic myth, e.g. the morning pressing to the Vṛtra myth and the midday pressing to the Vala myth (Schmidt 1968).[47] - One of the

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[47] Note that in Iran, too, the Daēuua Apaoša is slain at midday, by Tištriia, Yt. 8.26-8. cf. also Y 9.11 (Kərəsāspa and the dragon at midday).

important preliminary rites to the Soma sacrifice is the Pravargya, which involves the preparation of a hot milk drink for the Aśvins; it has been treated by Garbe 1880, van Buitenen 1968, also Rönnow 1929, and Kashikar 1972. Van Buitenen wanted to interpret it as a 'first' iconic rite, the three superimposed *pravargya* vessels representing a man, but this has cogently been denied by Kashikar 1972. Its meaning is elusive as that of many other rituals. Oldenberg (1917, p.448) connected it with the sun and the onset of the rainy season.

There are a number of variants on the One-Day Soma sacrifices, as well as multi-day types, some lasting up to a year, or indeed many years (at least theoretically). Sacrifices of 12 days or more are known as Sattras ("Sittings" or "Sessions"), which have the further peculiarity of having no separate Yajamāna. The priests themselves undertake the ritual for their joint benefit. On the Sattra, see e.g. Falk 1985.

A number of important and elaborate rituals incorporate Soma sacrifices and conform to their model. We mention here only the Rājasūya ("Consecration of the King") and the Aśvamedha ("Horse Sacrifice"), both of which have been extensively discussed. For the former see especially Weber 1893 and Heesterman 1957. The latter can only be performed by an eminent king, to consolidate and increase his power among the neighboring kingdoms. It is in essence an animal sacrifice (or set of animal sacrifices) with a horse as chief victim. But before the horse is slaughtered (with extensive ceremony), it is set free to roam at will for a year, with a large entourage to follow and protect it. The standard treatment of this ritual is Dumont 1927; for its development cf. also the practical Mantra collection (and discussion) by S. Bhawe 1939.

A ritual that stands slightly apart from the system just outlined is the Agnicayana ("Piling of the Fire Altar"). Rather than using the ordinary ritual ground, Soma sacrifices can employ a raised fire altar of bricks, the construction of which is the object of another extremely elaborate rite, which has generated much esoteric speculation in later texts. This ritual has been treated in a massive and extremely important recent work, including a videotape and film of a modern performance of the ritual, in Staal 1983. See also Rönnow 1929, Kolhatkar 1986.

In addition to these treatments of particular rituals, many works deal with features that are found in a number of rituals. E.g. -- particular priests: Mylius 1982, Bodewitz 1983, Minkowski 1991; -- particular physical objects, such as the Dakṣiṇā or 'priestly gift': Heesterman 1959, Malamoud 1976, Mylius 1979; -- particular events in ritual, e.g. the Dīkṣā or consecration of the sacrificer: Lindner

1878, Gonda 1965:315-462, Thite 1970; the Avabhṛta or 'final bath' of the sacrificer, which releases him from the Dīkṣā: Mylius 1976; or the Prāyaścittis or 'expiations' to be performed if a mistake is made in the ritual performance: Willman-Grabowska 1935, Gampert 1939, cf. Hoens, Śānti (1951). Gonda has devoted a number of studies to the texts of various ritual recitations (e.g. 1981a, 1981b) and to offerings and implements of the ritual such as rice and barley (1987) or grasses (1985).

Thus we have a daunting amount of primarily descriptive material about Vedic ritual. The word "descriptive" is not meant to denigrate or patronize the efforts of the scholars who have produced these works. Anyone who has attempted to approach the vast, unwieldy, allusive, and often enigmatic primary ritual texts knows how difficult it is to extract a clear picture of even a minor episode, and we must offer unrestrained thanks to those scholars who have sifted the often frustrating material and displayed it coherently. Nonetheless, it is true that there is a relative dearth of interpretive work making informed use of this wealth of first-order descriptions (with important exceptions, such as Lévi 1898, and the related Hubert-Mauss 1898). In particular, the structure(s) of the ritual, the interrelations of particular rituals, and their internal development (cf. Witzel 1981/2, Falk 1986a, 1988) deserve more searching attention than they have heretofore received. Though Thite 1975 assembles a useful collection of statements from the Brāhmaṇas about the meaning, origins, etc. of sacrifice, the level of analysis is rather unsophisticated.

In recent years the synchronic question has generally been framed by F. Staal's provocative but over-simple pronouncements about "the meaninglessness" of ritual (e.g. Staal 1979a,b; 1990), (contra, e.g. Penner 1995, MacDonald 1989: 9, B.K. Smith, 1989: 38sqq., Scharfe 1990, Bodewitz 1990: 7-9, Minkowski 1991, Witzel 1992), which have deflected attention from the more complex issues mentioned above. The main problem with Staal's approach is his refusal to view ritual on several, if not on many interpretative levels. However, if anything should be clear at the close of this century it is the fact that (a) ritual, like poetry, cannot be grasped by attributing its meaning to a single guiding concept and submitting it to a single "explanation". It is the art of the poet and ritualist to grasp several ideas, concerns, wishes or fears of mankind in the given form, whether a poem or a rite, and to give expression to it in such a way as to allow multiple interpretations, -- or in more mundane terms, as to cater to the many different tastes of various individuals and of the various groups in society.

There is another item in Staal's approach which needs some more discussion: When he speaks of "meaninglessness", one should not take this word

at face value. He has simply redefined, without telling us, the term "meaning." He does not characterize all ritual or a particular ritual, such as the Agnihotra, as having no meaning or as never having had any meaning (but does not say so expressly). He rather points out the lack of meaning of the various small constituent parts of a particular ritual, just like the various small melodic phrases that make up a particular song of a bird. But he overlooks the point that both ritual and bird song are a system of signs with a function outside this system. A nightingale has a song which differs somewhat from that of a crow. If some birds can vary their songs (as do whales), then such insertions have a function: they serve (at least) to identify the individual bird and its territory, not unlike the way we use personal names, which often do not have a meaning any more. In short, we cannot accept Staal's private redefinition of the term "meaning" - especially without his telling us so.

Just as the "meaning" of ritual has shaped recent discussion of the synchronic questions, diachronic questions have been shaped in response to Heesterman's equally provocative but over-simple theories[48] (see esp. the essays of various dates collected in Heesterman 1985) about the bloodily agonistic background of "Classical" Vedic ritual and its transformation into the (as he sees it) non-competitive machinery described in the Śrauta texts, neglecting, e.g. the social aspects of the increasingly difficult "ritual career" a sacrificer undertakes by becoming a *dīkṣita*. This approach views the development of the ritual too much in terms of a sudden revolutionary break-up of the old ritual rather than in terms of observable ritual development. Heesterman specifically does not identify his older ritual stage with that of the Ṛg Veda.

A general problem with his approach is the great stress put on a purely "deductive", but anecdotal method: Once the pre-classical ritual has been defined as agonistic and violent, every hint in the classical ritual is used to support the pre-conceived theory, -- instead of carefully if not tediously investigating the various strands and stages in the development of a particular ritual and, especially, the evidence we actually have for these stages: in extremely lucky cases from the pre-Vedic (Indo-Iranian) period, from the Ṛgveda, the Mantra texts, the YV prose and the Brāhmaṇas, and finally, the Sūtras (for this approach, see Witzel 1981/2, 1992, forthc. d). Surprisingly, a discussion of Ṛgvedic ritual is strikingly absent in all the recent discussions of the forerunners of "classical" Vedic ritual, as present in that of the Brāhmaṇa and Śrauta Sūtras, even though it is in the RV and in the Avestan texts that we have evidence for

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[48] For a (partial) critique, see e.g. B.K. Smith, 1989, p. 40-45.

the pre-"classical" ritual. The reconstruction of Heesterman's pre-classical ritual thus resembles one of the early Greek language made on the basis of the Greek dialects but neglecting the Homeric texts and Mycenean. Moreover, the basic differences between Ṛgvedic and later ritual are rarely addressed. Exceptions are H.P. Schmidt 1973, Witzel 1981/2. The reasons for the change largely remain undiscussed or are vaguely attributed to *Glasperlenspiel*-like activities of the Brahmin priests (Staal 1982, 1990). Or, as still so typical in the interpretation of ritual, myth and poetry, an explanation is sought in monocausal fashion, such as the exclusion of (overt) violence (Heesterman 1985).

Apart from the fact that violence always remains involved even in "classical" Vedic ritual, the stress rather seems to be on a wish on behalf of the priests to avoid pollution by killing, by blood and by death as such. This is gained not by the abolition of killing in sacrifice (even ChU still maintains that killing in ritual is not killing), but by "passing the buck". This is well expressed in the little studied myth of the cutting off the head of Atharvan (Witzel 1987b, n.103). The priests delegate the killing to outsiders; similarly evil and illnesses are sent off in all directions.[49] The actual reform of the ritual, however, has to be attributed to a combination of political, social, and religious changes (Witzel 1989b).[50]

Heesterman and Staal have, however, also drawn attention to the structure of the individual ritual. Staal (1982, 1990) describes the structure of Indian ritual, in the manner of generative linguists, as "trees". However, the ritual is rather built up of frames of "boxes." For example, Ved. *avāntaradīkṣā* means "the lower, inner consecration", i.e. the one which has been inserted into the normal consecration of the Soma ritual. For the framework structure of Vedic ritual see Heesterman 1957:64, Witzel 1984b, 1987b:410-13, 1992, Minkowski 1991: 25-29. This structure of ritual, as being composed of smaller and larger sets put together as to form larger units and on the other hand, the tendency to substitute a small set by another, has been observed and described already by Hillebrandt 1897, Heesterman 1957, Witzel 1986a; even Caland's overview of rituals in his translation of the Āpastamba Śrautasūtra (1924-28) stresses this structure.

Notwithstanding all the contributions mentioned above, the "meaning" and function of Vedic ritual as such still have not been explained sufficiently.

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[49] Witzel 1980c, p. 88 sqq.; cf. BŚS 2.5, and Kashikar 1969. Cf. also Heesterman, Brahman, Ritual and Renouncer, 1985, pp. 26-44.

[50] And cf. Witzel, forthc. a.

However, the recent discussion on the role of food in society and ritual (Rau 1957, p. 34f., Malamoud 1972, 1975, Weber-Brosamer 1988, B. K. Smith 1990, W. Doniger - B. K. Smith 1991, pp. XXII-XXVII, Wilden 1992) can serve as an initial contribution to this pursuit. Ritual has to be viewed not as a simple exchange (Mylius 1973, p.476 sq., Oguibénine 1985, 1988, Malamoud 1975, Wilden 1992) between human beings, the gods, ancestors, the primordial sages (*ṛṣi*) (Malamoud 1980), but as a rather more complicated exchange involving also the earlier generations of the gods and the more abstract levels of "powers" such as *ṛta, anna/annādya, ucchiṣṭa, śraddhā,* the exact nature of which, however, still needs to be described (cf. further below).

Other topics involving the place of ritual in the larger society have received relatively little attention. Various scholars have discussed the "elevation" or incorporation of "popular" rituals and elements into the Śrauta system (e.g. Arbmann 1922, Chap. IV, Rönnow 1929, Thite 1975, Chap. V), but somewhat circularly, as the grounds on which these elements are identified as "popular" are often unclear.

The relationship between the development of Vedic ritual and changing social and political structures is a promising field for further inquiry (see, e.g., Zimmer, 1879, p. 425-428; W. Rau, 1957, Falk 1986a, Witzel 1989b), again despite a high degree of inherent circularity: our data on social and political matters must be extracted for the most part from these same ritual texts. Nevertheless, due to the nature especially of the *brāhmaṇa* type texts, which mention such social features as "asides" or as popular maxims, conclusions can be drawn with a certain measure of assurance.

g. Domestic Ritual

The rituals of the Gṛhya (domestic) cult have been less thoroughly studied than Śrauta ritual. While Gṛhya ritual has attracted considerable interest in the last century and well into this one regarded, with a certain justification, as a sort of Indo-European compendium of old rites of passage and of other domestic rites -- relatively little work has been done in the past few decades.[51] After Stenzler's Gṛhyasūtra edition and translation (1864), a stream of

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[51] For statistics, see Mylius 1980. According to this investigation, especially the brāhmaṇa type texts and the Sūtras have been neglected, -- one should add the Mantra texts (AV, RV Khilāni, Sāmaveda) to this list-- while there is no dearth in RV and Upaniṣad studies.

publications dealt with the customs and rites of these handbooks. By the time Frazer opened the door to comparisons of ethnographical materials, even more interest was created. Scholars like Caland compared the customs of people all over the world --in the manner of his time fairly uncritically, but still useful as a collection of similar materials. Some general works exist, e.g. Apte 1939, as well as significant treatment in Hillebrandt 1897, and there has been some discussion, often superficial, about the relationship between Gṛhya and Śrauta ritual (see, e.g., recently B. K. Smith 1986). There is a summary and discussion of the *saṃskāra*s by Pandey 1957/1969; cf. also, for many of these aspects, the large work by P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, with an enormous wealth of information on all these (and other) topics. Gonda 1980a is a rich compendium of practices and beliefs primarily culled from the Gṛhya literature, though, due to its organization, this book is somewhat difficult to use. Much remains to be done in this area.

More work has been devoted to particular Gṛhya rituals, especially marriage and ceremonies relating to death. For marriage, see e.g. Apte 1978, Winternitz 1892, 1920; Zachariae 1977, 1989 passim, Tsuji 1960; for death Caland 1896, for ancestor worship Caland 1893, Winternitz 1890. Since the RV already contains hymns devoted both to marriage (10.85, also in expanded form in AV 14, PS 18.1-14) and to funerals (10.14-18, AV 18, PS 18.57-82) and as the Paippalāda Atharvaveda even contains some of the dialogue of the *upanayana* rituals, modeled on the verbal exchanges at the marriage ceremony, in the later part of its book 20, the question again -- and again not entirely resolved -- is how much the older and younger rituals share and how much has changed.

The RV marriage hymn is long and elaborate, but extremely obscure in many places and seems to be a composite of verses from different sources.[52] It is, of course, in large part, a recounting of the mythical origin and prototype of human marriage, in the marriage of the goddess Sūryā with Soma. Some of the little understood parts are puns, others are based on the --so far not understood-- identification of eating and sex. Though some features of the later Gṛhya ceremony are clearly present (the wooers, the mounting of the chariot), others are not mentioned (the circumambulation of the fire, the mounting of the stone, the gazing at the pole-star) -- some of which do already appear in the AV.

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[52] Compare also the often obscure (and "obscene") marriage hymn, sung in Vedic times at the performance of marriages (Vādh.S. 4.47 = Caland 1990 p. 458), which was actually part of the (lost) Kāṭhaka Mantrapāṭha, and is preserved in the Kashmirian Ṛcakas (Caland 1925: 292 sqq. as Sarasvaty-Anuvāka).

The funeral hymns clearly describe cremation, though in other parts of the RV burial seems to be indicated [cf. Keith, ERE XI, 842]. Satī seems not to have been practiced; in fact there is evidence for levirate marriage;　see Schmidt 1987.

Ancestor worship has been dealt with at length by Caland (1893)　who also wrote a comparison with the corresponding rituals of other Indo-European peoples, especially the conservative Lithuanians (Caland 1914). Nevertheless, the same materials still contain much that has not been used, e.g. for the emergence for the idea of rebirth (further see below).

For the other *saṃskāra*s so elaborately treated in the Gṛhya Sūtras and in later Hindu texts we have far less evidence in earlier texts. There is essentially no treatment in the RV of the ceremonies surrounding the birth of a child, though the AV does contain a few appropriate hymns, e.g. one on the occasion of the appearance of the child's first tooth --　not, interestingly enough, the occasion for separate treatment in the Gṛhya Sūtras. Other Gṛhya observances have received less attention, at least in a Vedic context, though the Saṃskāras (rites of passage, see Pandey 1957) are usually treated in general works on Hinduism.

Of the Saṃskāras one that receives occasional attention from Vedicists is the *upanayana* or 'initiation' of a young boy into studentship, since this event (and the consequent period of study) make him fit to establish the fires and perform the Śrauta rituals. The *upanayana* and subsequent studentship are passed over without mention in early Vedic texts [except for PS book 20 in its second, late part, ŚB 11, and TĀ 2, cf. also TU 1.11, KaṭhŚiU], though fully treated in the Gṛhya texts, and often the *mise-en-scène* of the Upaniṣadic dialogues, see Jolly 1897, Malamoud 1977. A detailed comparison of these materials has, as so much in the field, not yet been carried out. The final admonition on good behavior in adult life by a Veda teacher to his departing student is appropriately (cf. above, Thieme on BĀU) contained in the Upaniṣads (TU 1, KaṭhŚiU, see Witzel 1979a/1980a).

The special topic of the yearly return of the Veda student to his teacher has been discussed by Heesterman (1968a). In fact, students spent about half of the year away from "school" -- something that had not sufficiently been paid attention to until Falk published his book on the old Indian sodalities and on dicing games (1986, cf. also Bollée 1981). This aspect of a young man's life, the membership in a *Männerbund*, goes without comment in the Gṛhya texts, but may be reflected in some earlier Vedic texts. See again by Falk 1986a, and cf. also Wikander 1938, Heesterman, 1981, Bollée 1981. A picture of young Vedic men quite opposite to that of a Veda student emerges: the members (*vrātya*) of a

Männerbund live an independent life, away from home and trying to collect a starting capital of cattle by threat and extraction from their neighbors. The Kurus and Pañcālas seem to have exchanged their *vrātya*s; equally, the Jaiminīyas in their southern location sent their young men northwards to the Kurus and significantly not into the Dravidian South (Witzel 1989a:236). This sort of (ritual) partnership may also be reflected by the fact that Kuru and Pañcāla royal families have intermarried regularly.

The *āśrama* system of Manu and other Dharma texts by which men were divided into four age groups (*brahmacārin, gṛhastha, vānaprastha, sannyāsin*) is not found in earlier Vedic texts. However, we can distinguish (1) childhood, up to 7 or 8 years, basically a life outside the "ritual society" of the Twice Born, the *ārya*; (2) a period of study, beginning with the initiation (*upanayana*) and ending with the final bath turning the *brahmacārin* into a *snātaka* to whom the teacher gives final advice on proper behavior (Witzel 1979a-80a); this is interspersed with periods of roaming the country in young men's associations (*vrātya*); (3) the householder (*gṛhastha*) stage after marriage, ending at an undefined moment when the father hands over his power and his property to his sons (see W. Rau 1957: 43 ff., Sprockhoff 1979).

However, life in retirement is not yet termed, as later on, *vānaprastha*, simply because the old parents do not live in a copse (*vana*, see Sprockhoff 1980,1984) close to the village but continue to stay with their extended family, in an *antigṛha* (RV 10.95.4). The *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsin* concepts developed only when men, such as Yājñavalkya, began to leave their homes for homelessness (*pravrājika*, see Sprockhoff 1979, 1981, 1984, 1987). It is detailed in a ritual found in the Kaṭha Śruti Up and in an appendix to the Mānava ŚrS (Sprockhoff 1987). The fourth *āśrama*, that of the Sannyāsin, is of still later date (Sprockhoff 1976, 1979, Olivelle 1976-77). Cf. further, Winternitz 1926, Eggers 1929, Skurzak 1948, Olivelle 1974.

The religious, and indeed secular, life of women lacks systematic treatment in the Vedic texts, though she is of course mentioned in treatments of the *saṃskāras* that concern her (marriage and birth of a child). However, the wife of the sacrificer is an integral part of many Śrauta rituals, so that there are brief allusions to her scattered through the Śrauta texts. A collection of these passages and a systematic discussion of the sacrificer's wife is needed, and the portrait thus obtained should be compared with the mythological treatments of women's religious practice, e.g. that of Apālā, discussed recently by Schmidt 1987, Jamison 1991, cf. Winternitz 1889.

The role played by women in the Upaniṣads is usually overstated. It should be noted that women (Gārgī, Maitreyī) -- just like Kṣatriyas and kings, or even the son of a god, Bhṛgu, -- are inserted into the Brahmanical dialogues at critical points or when a special proposition has to be made, e.g. when introducing a particular new or striking theory. However, there also is clear evidence of female learned activity, such as at BĀU 6.4.17 with a special prescription of how to obtain a female Ṛṣi in one's family.

The division of society into the four *varṇa*s is attested from the late RV onwards: the three twice-born groups, *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya* (or *rājanya* in RV 10.90), and *vaiśya*, with the scorned and extra-systematic *śūdra* at the bottom. This "social charter", indeed the "first constitution of India" (Paul Mus), is contained in the puruṣa hymn (RV 10.90), which first proclaims its blueprint and provides, at the same time, a mythological basis for stratified society. Like many Vedic concepts, the image has held up until today.

The point of view of our priestly texts is, needless to say, without exception that of the Brāhmaṇas, though the king and his court, as the focus of so many rituals, assure the inclusion of Kṣatriya materials. Many of these are actually composed to discuss rituals meant to buttress the status of the lower and higher nobility and of the king. A Yajurveda text actually proclaims, with Marxist analysis before its day, that the Brahmins and Kṣatriyas (*brahmakṣatra*) exploit the rest. It is this interdependence and cooperation which allowed the two classes to dominate the others (Vaiśya and Śūdra) as well as the aboriginals, -- a matter that has not changed much until today. However, even given the prominence of the Kṣatriyas in ritual and in political life, the old theory that the Upaniṣads (and Buddhism) originated in the Kṣatriya sphere (e.g. Horsch 1966) has to be reexamined, taking into account the rather complex ethnic and political situation in eastern North India (Kosala and Videha, s. Witzel 1989a, n. 328).

Vaiśyas and Śūdras, and also representatives of certain artisans (*rathakāra*, Minkowski 1989), or the chief of aboriginal groups (e.g. *Niṣāda-sthapati*) barely figure in the Vedic textual material, except as occasional supernumeraries with small roles in certain rituals -- with the result, as noted early on, that we lack any real sources of information not only for "popular" religion, but even for the simpler observances of Kuru(-Pañcāla) "orthodoxy" that lack of wealth and influence would necessitate.

Finer social and occupational divisions within the great *varṇa*s are enumerated in the texts (e. g. Zimmer 1879, p. 425-428), but it is not clear what these divisions mean, how they affected the social and religious life of their

members, and, especially, to what extent they share features with the later caste system. For a discussion of the questions raised see for example R. Fick 1897, Senart 1927.

h. Ritual magic / Magical ritual.

In general, it is difficult and misleading to separate "magic" from other sorts of ritual activity.[53] The same system of homologies (to be discussed below[54]), the control of macrocosmic forces through microcosmic manipulation, that underlies the solemn ritual is also operative in the realm we might call in modern terms "magic". Nonetheless, it is sometimes convenient to keep the distinction, in part because magical procedures are often treated in separate texts. We will use "magic" in this work to refer to ritual activities that have private, well-defined ends -- to win the love of a woman, to cure an illness, to harm an enemy. The Kāmyā Iṣṭis discussed above fulfill this purpose inside the realm of Śrauta ritual, hence Caland's title for the work in which he treats them: Altindische Zauberei (1908).[55] Much of the Atharva Veda contains hymns that fit our definition, and the associated text, the Kauśika Sūtra (edited by Bloomfield 1889), provides descriptions of the spells in which these hymns were used. Unfortunately the Kauśika Sūtra is only partly translated (Caland 1900) and is often difficult to interpret; a complete translation would greatly enhance our understanding of this area of Vedic thought.

The recent complete publication (Limaye et al. 1982) of the medieval Gujarati Paddhati by Keśava, written in the Gujarat or Malwa Atharvaṇa tradition,[56] often helps to understand some of the more obscure terms

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[53] For a general discussion of "magic" and "religion" see e.g. J. Hubert, and M. Mauss, 1904. Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie, Année sociologique 6, 56 ff.; B. Malinowski. 1946, Magic religion and science, Boston; A. Lang. 1971. Magic and religion, London 1971; S. J. Tambiah, 1990. Magic, science, religion and the scope of rationality. Cambridge; cf. also B. K. Smith 1989, 36 sqq.

[54] See B.K. Smith 1989 who disregards the basic difference between a closed system such as that of Vedic (magical and mystical) thought and open ones, such as that of recent Western science, see R. Horton. 1973. African traditional thought and western science. Africa 37, 50-71, 155-87.

[55] Curiously, due to his fixation on a rather abstract nature of Vedic ritual, Heesterman simply denies the nature, if not the existence of these texts.

[56] Cf. also the (unavailable) Gujarati handbook Atharvavedaprayogabhānu by Ravishankar Dvivedi, publ. by the Vedagīrvāṇapāṭhaśālā, Ahmedabad, in four prakāśas; see Limaye 1982, p. xxix.

preserved in more recent sorcery (cf. Türstig 1980) and more texts are   expected from the Oriya Paippalādins. Also partly overlapping with the sorcery practices of the Atharva tradition is the Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa (see above).

The Kauś.S. is a virtual handbook of customs and beliefs of the Vedic period, but, as just noted, unfortunately little studied and somewhat inaccessible. The text contains, among common white and black sorcery practices, the many healing procedures and cases of *omina* and *portenta*, such interesting items as the use of lacquer for healing a wound, 28.5, or the common fear of crossroads, 26.30, etc. Then there are such eminently practical sorcery practices as finding a lost object, 37.4, or finding out what kind of wife a prospective bride will turn out to be, 37.7-12, or the expiation for the marriage of a younger brother before the older one, 46.26. There are remedies for such perennial male problems as grey hair 26.23, losing hair 30.8, 31.28, and other sorcery important for Vedic man, such as making someone impotent or a eunuch by burying a particularly unappetizing concoction (Watkins 1986).

Coming to some areas of Vedic life that hardly ever are mentioned in the texts dealing with the solemn ritual, we may note in the KauśS rules about spitting, 31.17 or drinking urine by someone who wishes to become rich 22.8-9, -- a procedure still found today to ensure long life. Slightly behind Indus civilization practice but more advanced than much that we note today is the use of a latrine 48.19.

Turning to psychic terrors, we note the occurrence of panic (*apvā*, cf. Hoffmann 1955, 1968b) 14.21 or possession by demons at 26.36; 27.5; 28.7,9; 29.27; 31.8, or more specified by a *piśāca* demon at 25.32 who causes epilepsy; cf. 28.12 about madness.

All such details can be followed up later on in books on dreams (e.g. Stuhrmann 1982, v. Negelein 1912), or in the Jyotiṣa literature. For Vedic magic in general, see Henry 1904, Stutley 1980. Much of the specifically medical lore has been treated by Filliozat 1975 and, with more emphasis on the Atharva Veda, by Zysk 1985. On the conception of the structure of organisms that underlies much of the medical literature see Jamison 1986, and for the development of embryos see Rolland 1972.

i. Recent developments

In India, an increasing interest in Vedic ritual can be observed since independence. Many public functions and ceremonies and related radio and television broadcasts now include Vedic chanting, and this is actively furthered

in South India through the employment of Vedic reciters (*vaidika*) at temples who recite their particular school texts in its entirety, a "lesson" per day (*vedapārāyaṇa*). Especially at Hoshiarpur and at Poona, many texts, translations and studies (including such massive undertakings as the Vedic Word Concordance and the Śrautakośa) have appeared. At Poona, again, special attention has also been paid to the actual performance of Vedic rituals. While the more simple forms, such as the Agnihotra and the Dārśapaurṇamāsa, are found performed reasonably often in various parts of India and Nepal (for a list of some 550 Śrauta sacrificers in South Asia during the last c. hundred years, see Kashikar and Parpola in Staal 1983, II, 199-251), the more complicated rituals are quite rare. The Soma ritual, for example, is regularly performed only in certain districts of Andhra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. At Poona a large Vājapeya rite was performed in 1955 (see report, Vājapeya Anuṣṭhāna Samiti, 1956). This was followed by a Pravargya (van Buitenen 1968). Due to the interest stirred by these rites among the -mainly- Dutch ritualists, J. F. Staal was able to help organize and film a large Agnicayana in Kerala in 1975 (and again in 1990). The first resulted in a feature film, some 30 video tapes and a large 2 volume book production with many photos (Staal 1983). Vedic recitation has increasingly been studied during the past few decades (e.g. by Staal 1961, Howard 1977, 1986, 1988a.b); earlier descriptions were given by Haug 1863, Felber 1912 (based on early recordings), Bake 1935.

III. DEITIES AND MYTHOLOGY

a. Vedic Mythology

Vedic mythology has attracted at least as much scholarly attention as Vedic ritual. The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw a number of comprehensive treatments, notably Bergaigne's *La réligion védique* (1878-83) mentioned above, Macdonell's *The Vedic mythology* (1897), and Hillebrandt's *Vedische Mythologie* (1927-29), as well as the extensive surveys in Oldenberg 1917, Keith 1925, and studies confined primarily to a single text, like that of Hopkins 1908. Though still indispensable for their detailed and stimulating engagement with the text (especially Bergaigne and Hillebrandt), these treatments suffer from overschematization and reliance on the nature-mythology paradigm then current. The felt necessity to assign each divinity to a natural force resulted in some extremely unconvincing solar, lunar, and netherworld deities. It is rather discouraging constantly to encounter, at the end of a stimulating and nuanced discussion fully utilizing the textual resources, the same shortcut taken: "X must then be the sun" and so on.

Nonetheless, the seminal nature of these works, particularly of Bergaigne's, should not be forgotten. Bergaigne's announced method of "complicating the ideas by simplifying the vocabulary" -- i.e. by seeking the single semantic kernel of a word rather than allowing it a chameleon-like ability to change meaning according to context -- has had an immense influence on the more philologically inclined interpreters of the Veda to this day: Thieme, for example, adopts Bergaigne's statement as his watchword (see Thieme 1957a, p. 22). Moreover, Bergaigne's judgment of the Ṛg Veda as a verbally and poetically sophisticated, indeed deliberately obscure text, rather than the simple and rude effusion of a primitive people (as it has often been treated), has encouraged interpreters of many stripes to investigate the techniques and effects, the mysteries and flourishes of the Vedic poets. For an elegant and revealing appraisal (revealing also of the author) of Bergaigne, Oldenberg, and others, see Renou 1928.

The same overschematic tendency marks a more recent approach towards Vedic mythology, the Trifunctionalism associated especially with the French scholar G. Dumézil. For many decades Vedic has furnished much of the evidence for the "Trifunctional" analysis of Indo-European ideology, a theory that sees all aspects of the culture of the Indo-Europeans (and its daughter

cultures) as reflecting a social and ideological division into three major classes or "Functions": priest (1st Function), warrior (2nd Function), and, roughly, agriculturist (3rd Function). This division matches neatly the division of Aryan society in India into Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya (or Rājanya), and Vaiśya. In terms of mythology, most gods will be associated primarily with one function, and mythological events will represent aspects of the function(s) of their participants, e.g. strained or harmonious relations between the functions. The body of scholarly work on this subject is quite extensive; a sample might include Dumézil 1940, 1949, 1958a.

This approach has yielded a number of important insights into Vedic religion, but to use it as the sole interpretive paradigm requires serious distortion of the material. Though some gods and their exploits fit neatly into one of the three functions, others, including some of the most important (e.g. Agni and Soma), take an uneasy place or must be left totally out of account. The approach also risks an oversimple equating of socio-political and religious schemata.

Indeed, what is striking about the Vedic pantheon is its lack of overarching organization. Some gods are transparently "natural" -- their names merely common nouns, with little or no characterization or action beyond their "natural" appearance and behavior (e.g. Vāta, deified 'Wind'). Others are deified abstractions, again with little character beyond the nouns that name them (e.g. Bhaga 'Portion'). Others belong especially to the ethical and conceptual sphere (e.g. Varuṇa, Mitra), others to ritual practice (Soma, the deified libation). Despite their disparate affiliations, the divinities do not remain compartmentalized; gods of apparently different 'origins' are often invoked together and can participate together in mythic activity. Whatever the history and sources of this complex pantheon, it cannot be reduced to a single organizational principle, nor can certain members, that might not conform to such a principle, be defined as outsiders and latecomers, given that gods of various types have counterparts outside of Vedic. It is well to remember Kuiper's structural(ist) statement (1962 = 1983, p.43) on "the fundamental difficulty of understanding a single mythological figure isolated from the context of the mythological system."

Before proceeding to a discussion of individual deities and myths, it is well to understand how we know what we know about them. As usual, this is controlled by the texts, and, as usual, there is nothing straightforward about the sources of our knowledge. Our two main sources are the mantra texts, particularly the Ṛg Veda, and the prose texts of *brāhmaṇa* type. The poetic texts

are of course addressed to the gods we wish to learn about. Since both the targeted god(s) and the poet are intensely familiar with the divine attributes and exploits, the texts are deliberately allusive, scrambled, and obscure: shared knowledge is reformulated as celebratory art. As Thieme once proposed: Take Schiller's Ode to Joy and replace the word "joy" by another, and then let someone guess to whom the hymn is addressed!

In the prose texts mythological episodes are introduced to illuminate ritual detail. Though this purposeful employment probably compromises the integrity of the myths less than is sometimes supposed (e.g. by Oertel 1899, O'Flaherty 1985, esp. pp. 12ff.) it does mean that those portions of a myth are selected or emphasized that pertain to the ritual point (Hoffmann, 1968b). Thus, because of the fragmentary nature of our evidence, considerable effort is required simply to assemble and make coherent the relevant data. So, as with ritual, much of the scholarship on Vedic mythology (at least that not concerned with natural or functional identifications), has been essentially "descriptive" -- again a term used without pejorative connotation. For good or ill, many of the main 20th century currents in general mythological scholarship have passed Vedic by, e.g. the structuralism of C. Lévi-Strauss -- though Bergaigne's account of Vedic mythology as a system of binary oppositions and his rigorously synchronic approach seems "structuralist" *avant la lettre.*

One aspect that needs more attention is the possibility of a more structured arrangement of gods and their respective functions in a synchronic fashion, in the spheres of the gods and their ancestors, various other heavenly beings such as the Gandharvas, the Ṛṣis, the human ancestors (*pitṛ*), human beings, netherworld beings such as the Nāgas, and finally, demonic beings such as *rakṣas, kimīdin* and the universal force of destruction, Nirṛti. It may be seen that already in the Vedic period these beings are set in opposition to each other in the various levels of the universe, with typical functions attached. For example: why are there promiscuous extra-societal groups such as the Vrātyas on earth and their counterparts in heaven (*daivya vrātya, gandharva*), as well as in the netherworld (*nāga*s)? This concept obviously is in need of further elaboration.

b. The principal Vedic gods

Agni. The name of this god is identical with the common noun agni- 'fire', and there is little about this god that is not interpretable in the framework of

deified Fire, especially ritual Fire. It is important to note that Agni, along with Soma, is one of the few gods that are actually present and visible on the offering ground.

Indra, the most vividly realized Vedic god, embodies the powerful Aryan warrior. But his role as demiurge (pushing up the sky) and bringer of culture (by killing Vṛtra and opening the Vala) is equally important. See further below.

Soma, as already noted, is the deified *soma* drink, as well as the plant from which it is derived. Without drinking Soma, Indra could not perform the important killing of Vṛtra. The Ṛgvedic Soma has recently been discussed by Oberlies 1989, 1991.

The Ādityas or "Sons of Aditi", a group of divinities of fluid number, contains as core gods: Varuṇa, a stern but just king-figure; Mitra, Varuṇa's constant partner; Aryaman,[57] a more shadowy figure than Mitra and Varuṇa, though frequently joined with them. They are followed in enumerations by the still more vague but evidently popular Bhaga "share", a god of good luck, and Aṃśa "lot", a still more obscure figure. On the Ādityas, see further below.

The Aśvins are divine twins who perform miraculous cures and rescues.

The Maruts, a group of spirited youths, a sort of Männerbund, are often associated with Indra.

Pūṣan, a "pastoral" god of somewhat bizarre appearance and behavior, nonetheless protects and makes thrive many aspects of daily life.

Uṣas 'Dawn' is the most prominent goddess in Vedic and functions as the friend of poets. Other deified natural phenomena in this sphere include Sūrya 'Sun', rather "the male one belonging to the sun"; Dyaus 'Heaven, Sky' (or Dyaus Pitar 'Father Sky') and his consort, Pṛthivī 'Earth', who has complementary maternal characteristics; the Āpas 'Waters', an undifferentiated group of female divinities often called "divine ladies" (Narten 1971); Vāyu or Vāta 'Wind'; and Parjanya 'Thunder'. It is notable that, as in many Indo-European (and other) civilizations, fire is regarded as masculine and water a feminine deity, while the "elements" fire and water exist separately as grammatical neuters (*athar-, udr-/udn-*). This seems to be a very old notion.[58]

Certain gods are merely deified roles or concepts, like Savitar 'Impeller'. Some of these, like Tvaṣṭar 'Fashioner', acquire a certain amount of "personality."

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[57] Whose name means "arya-hood", an otherwise uncommon combination of an adjective with a primary suffix, indicating a rather artificial formation (as found also in some other Indo-Iranian words from the sphere of religion and society).

[58] See Witzel 1992, n. 68.

The two great gods of later Hinduism, Viṣṇu and Śiva, are not at all prominent in Vedic, though they do appear there. (Śiva under his name "Rudra", and under his epithets *ghora* 'terrible' or simply indicated by the taboo avoidance expression *asau devaḥ* 'that god'. The name "Śiva" itself of course originated as a taboo replacement epithet 'the kindly/auspicious one' (see KaṭhĀ 2.100). The process of the development of their later prominence is rather controversial. For example, Kuiper (1962) argues that Viṣṇu was more prominent in the Vedic conceptual scheme than the texts allow us to recover, more prominent even than Indra, as central mediating figure between the older Asuras and the younger Devas -- a theory that depends crucially on accepting Kuiper's views on the Asura-Deva rivalry (for which see below).

This list scarcely exhausts the Vedic divinities. Indeed it is not really possible to determine exactly how many gods there are, as a number of divine titles seem sometimes to be merely epithets of a particular god, sometimes to have an independent or quasi-independent existence. In fact, in the course of the Vedic period we must reckon both with conflation of two originally separate gods through the reinterpretation of one name as an epithet, and with sundering of a god and his epithet into two distinct deities.

Needless to say the literature on the individual gods is extremely copious. For example, for the not particularly prominent god Pūṣan, one can cite a number of studies devoted entirely to him (Siecke 1914, Atkins 1941, 1947, Dandekar 1942, Kramrisch 1942), as well as considerable other literature treating him in conjunction with other gods. Nonetheless, there are still important gaps. Our knowledge of some gods, especially the three principal Ādityas, has benefited from the intensive if sometimes acrimonious reassessment of their nature and function in recent decades, in reaction to the nature-mythology interpretation of them current in the beginning of the century. However, many others have not been so studied. Our information about them is inadequate and has been interpreted through obsolete schemata. Moreover, the relations among gods, especially gods of apparently different types, and between gods and their epithets, deserves restudy, in order to gain a clearer picture of the nature and development of the curiously mixed Vedic pantheon. See e.g. Schmidt 1968.

Rather than give an even partial list of the literature on each god, we will exemplify the trends in the study of Vedic mythology by concentrating on those gods that have been especially the subject of debate in recent years, namely the Ādityas, and on the god with the most narrative mythology, namely Indra.

The Ādityas, needless to say, participated in the interpretation of myths as a system of nature mythology during its heyday. In this paradigm, Mitra and Varuṇa were "celestial" gods, though each interpreter put a slightly different twist on this conception. For Bergaigne (1878-83, Vol. III, 110ff.), Mitra could be identified with the day, Varuṇa with night though in a brief but telling aside, he suggests that Mitra is also to be interpreted through the common noun *mitra* ('friend' for B.). For Macdonell (1897, 22-30) and for Keith (1925, 96-104), Mitra was the sun and Varuṇa the sky. Oldenberg (1917, 178-206, *inter alia*) saw Mitra as the sun, Varuṇa as the moon, and Aryaman as the planet Venus (and the other Ādityas as other planets), and Hillebrandt (1927-29, 2ff., 41ff. likewise thought Mitra the sun, Varuṇa the moon, Vol. II, 1-100). This baldly presented set of equations does not do justice to the subtlety (or lack thereof) of each scholar's discussion of these gods or the textual evidence, but does show what the "bottom line" inevitably was. In the words of Macdonell (1897, 27): "What conclusions as to the natural basis of Varuṇa can be drawn from the Vedic evidence which has been adduced?"

The first major challenge (though cf. Bergaigne's *mitra* 'friend' just mentioned) to this set of conflicting interpretations was that of Meillet 1907, who, with the French penchant for a social interpretation of religion, interpreted Ved. Mitra / Avest. Miϑra as deified 'Contract', in other words as an abstract social, rather than natural force. Though vehemently attacked by Hillebrandt in his second ed. of *Vedische Mythologie*, Meillet's article set the stage for a radical reinterpretation of all the Ādityas as belonging to the social and conceptual sphere -- even though there has not been general agreement as to their exact place there.

The most vigorous disputes have taken place between Thieme (esp. 1938, 1957a) and Dumézil (e.g. 1934, 1940, 1941, 1949, 1958b), a debate that has centered not only on the actual character of these deities but also on scholarly methodology and assumptions. Dumézil, of course, sees these gods as part of his tripartite functional schema, specifically as embodiments of sovereignty, of the First Function. Thieme, in his more rigorously philological approach, identifies the gods with social abstractions: Mitra as Meillet's 'Contract', Aryaman as 'Hospitality'. There have also been voices dissenting from both Thieme and Dumézil, notably Gonda (e.g. 1972), who returns to Bergaigne's view of Mitra as 'Friend'.

The third, and in many ways the most compelling of the major Ādityas is Varuṇa, and the reformulation of his nature also begins in some sense with Meillet 1907, who noted Varuṇa's association with the by now much discussed

word *vrata*, which he translated as '*loi, contrat*'. This connection has been pursued not only by Thieme (e.g. 1957a), who sees Varuṇa as the embodiment of 'True Speech', but by many others. Perhaps the most influential single work is the massive study by Lüders (1951, 1959), who sees Varuṇa as the god of oaths, but Schmidt's monograph on *vrata* (1958) has clarified in important ways the relations between Varuṇa and *vrata*.

An important alternative view, which has not met general acceptance, is that of Kuiper (e.g. 1964, 1975, 1983 passim), who considers Varuṇa the god of the netherworld, which becomes the sky at night,[59] and a member of the older group of divinities, the Asuras, who joined the Devas' party when they defeated the Asuras.

All three of these gods, as well as the minor Ādityas, have been recently subject to a searching reconsideration, in Brereton 1981. In the philologically motivated tradition of Lüders, Thieme, and Schmidt, Brereton redefines Mitra as the god of 'Alliances', Varuṇa that of 'Commandments', and Aryaman that of 'Customs', three types of relationships that bind men in society.

This brief sketch barely touches on the immense literature on even one set of Vedic gods; it is meant simply to illustrate the types of argument and evidence used to approach the problems presented by these divine figures. With the Ādityas one of our difficulties is precisely the fact that they are in many ways 'figures' -- that is, they have roles and attributes, but fairly little dynamic or narrative mythology. Thus one must study them through study of their characteristics, and especially through philological examination of the words that name these characteristics.

The situation is rather different with the warrior god Indra, who is the hero (and also villain) of numerous episodes, in which he displays both his unopposable physical power and, morally more dubious, his trickery. Thus, the study of this important god can proceed by methods more familiar in other

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[59] For a "naturalistic" explanation of this shift, which underlies the concept discovered by Kuiper, see Witzel 1984a: Varuṇa's home in or at the Milky Way moves from a rising point in the east, counter-clockwise around the north pole and sets in the west. The heavenly river of the night (the northern "ocean" samudra of AV 11.2.25), flows into the western one of the two oceans surrounding the world (*ubháu samudráu... yáś ca púrva utấparaḥ* RV 10.136.5, Avest. *ušastaire hənduuō ... daošastaire* Y 57.29; Yt 10.104) and becomes the netherworld river in day time (which in Epic myth, joins the Gaṅgā and Yamunā at their confluence at Prayāga). At night, Varuṇa accordingly is found at the top of the sky, holding up the world tree with its roots pointed upwards (RV, KU, cf. BhagGītā) and its branches pointed downwards, but he also is the lord of the ocean and of the netherworld (different from the one of Yama in later mythology).

mythological traditions: analysis of the narratives in which he appears, their structure and his relation to other participants.

By far the most important and often told of these stories is Indra's combat with and defeat of an opponent, Vṛtra, and the release of the waters confined by Vṛtra. This dramatic but richly enigmatic myth has been extensively treated from various points of view. For example, the Indo-Iranian background [Avestan has cognates both for the Indic name / characterization *Vṛtra* (= *vərəϑra*) and for the epithet Indra carries in the RV (*vṛtra-han-* 'smasher of Vṛtra' = *vərəϑragna-*] was explored by Benveniste and Renou 1934. Though previously viewed through the nature mythology lens as a myth about the opening of clouds and the coming of the rains, a number of more recent discussions treat the myth as an essentially cosmogonic exploit; see for example Brown 1942, 1965; Lüders 1951, pp. 183ff.; Varenne 1982; Kuiper 1983 passim, all with important differences in approach.

Other exploits of Indra have also attracted attention, though not as incessantly as the Vṛtra battle. The Vala myth, which in some ways resembles the Vṛtra myth, has been treated especially in Schmidt 1968. Nevertheless, even this well known myth can be taken up for a re-examination, notably on comparative grounds, which do not only include materials from the Indo-Iranian (notably Kafiri) and Greek (cows of Geryoneus, cf. Schmidt 1968) sphere, but also much more far-flung "versions" of a much older, general Eurasian stratum.[60] Such comparisons, certainly beyond the Indo-European sphere, have hardly been carried out though they can shed considerable light on certain of the more obscure aspects of Indian and Indo-Iranian mythology.

For other myths about Indra, see e.g. Lanman 1889, Bloomfield 1893, Oldenberg 1893 on Namuci; Sieg 1926, Schneider 1971 on the stealing of Soma from heaven; Oertel 1898 and Rau 1966 on the "misdeeds" of Indra; Dandekar 1979, p. 141-198 e.g. on Indra and Vṛtra; Dange 1980-81; Bodewitz 1984, Jamison 1991 on the Yatis and hyenas.

Without cataloging every mythic episode and its treatment in the secondary literature, we will make global reference to several scholars who collected and annotated a number of myths from a variety of texts, namely M. Bloomfield (primarily in his series "Contributions to the interpretation of the Veda"), H. Oertel (primarily in his series "Contributions from the Jaiminīya

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[60] As found, e.g. in the old Japanese mythology of the Kojiki (712 CE) as the Amaterasu - Susa.no Wo myth, and in variations in South-East Asia and North America; see Witzel, The myth of the hidden sun, forthc.

Brāhmaṇa to the history of the Brāhmaṇa literature"), and also E. W. Hopkins 1908.[61] Again, however, more is needed, particularly in confronting the fragments of mythology in the Mantra texts and the prose texts, in an effort to produce a coherent story (see Sieg 1902, Jamison 1991).

This brings us to our next question: to what extent do the mythologies of the RV, the mantra texts and the *brāhmaṇa* texts form a unity, partly obscured by the distorting effects of literary genre and religious purpose -- and to what extent has there been a real change in the conception of the deities and their exploits? This question is, of course, parallel to the one we asked about ritual in the two text types, and it is equally difficult to answer. Given the obvious differences in content, in genre, and in purpose between mythology as presented in the *mantra* texts and in the *brāhmaṇa* texts, some investigators have on principle excluded the later, prose material from comparison with the poetic evidence, while others (e.g. Sieg 1902, Jamison 1991) attempt to construct a unified picture from these different types of evidence, when they seem to reflect a similar underlying phenomenon.

On the one hand, most of the same gods are mentioned in both types of texts, and many of their characteristics and deeds are at least superficially the same. However, there are some important differences. In the general religious picture, the power of the ritual, the sacrifice, seems to have usurped some of the gods' power. Even in early Vedic men could use the ritual to manipulate or at least influence gods' behavior, as we will see; in the middle and late Vedic period the sacrifice is almost coercive and the gods subject to it -- though it does not seem to be the case that the gods are imprisoned by the sacrifice and completely controlled by it, as is sometimes claimed.

Moreover, there have been two obvious and important changes in the ranks of the deities themselves. First, the figure of Prajāpati ('Lord of creatures'), a very marginal figure in the RV, appearing only in late hymns, becomes in the prose texts the central creator god embodying the power of the ritual -- though he still lacks much personal definition. On this change, see e.g. Gonda 1984, 1986, 1989.[62]

Second, one of the most characteristic aspects of Brāhmaṇic mythology is the ceaseless rivalry between the gods (Devas) and their kin, the so-called Asuras.

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[61] For a list of recent literature see B.K. Smith 1989, p. 54, n. 12.

[62]   More recent collection with a Freudian commentary, see O'Flaherty's (1985) (re-)translation of JB myths, dealt with earlier by Oertel and Caland. Further collections include A. Hillebrandt 1921, K. F. Geldner 1911.

Perhaps hundreds of mythic episodes in Vedic prose texts begin with the sentential formula "The Devas and the Asuras were in contention". (On such formulae, see Jamison, to appear, a.) Yet in the RV the epithet *asura* is often used of some of the most respected of the Devas, e.g. Varuṇa and Agni, and in early Iranian religion the cognate word *ahura* is part of the title of the most august god in the pantheon, Ahura Mazdā 'Lord Wisdom'. The difference in treatment of the word *asura* in *mantra* and prose texts, the apparent emergence of a distinct group of supernatural beings, the Asuras, counterpoised to the gods, has been called, by Kuiper (1975, p. 112 [= 1983, p. 14]), "the central problem of Vedic religion", and has received considerable scholarly attention. (For full details of the history of the problem, see W. E. Hale 1986, Chap. 1.) For example, Kuiper himself believes that there is no real contradiction between the two textual levels: the Asuras were the primordial gods, challenged and ultimately defeated by the upstart Devas. Some Asuras joined the ranks of the Devas (the ones who receive both titles in the RV); others remained in perpetual opposition. Though such a scenario could encompass both types of evidence about the Asuras, it unfortunately finds very little support in the texts. A recent survey of the philological evidence, Hale 1986, while not producing a final answer to the question, gives us the means to achieve such a solution and to reject, as contrary to the textual evidence, a number of previous discussions of the issue.

It must not be forgotten that the fight between the Devas and the Asuras has its mundane counterpart in the Ṛgvedic opposition between the immigrating and spreading *ārya* tribes and the previous local inhabitants, the *dasyu* or *dāsa*; this opposition is later on, in the Atharvaveda and the *brāhmaṇa* type texts replaced by that of the *ārya* and *śūdra*.[63] Their opposition, in contrast to the automatically expected, not always voluntary cooperation in everyday society, is expressed frequently, most notably in the context of war and of the New Year ritual, at a time when the old order breaks down temporarily and chaos reigns among the gods and in society (cf. the Roman carnival). Vedic ritual tends to enforce the social role of *deva/asura* and *ārya/śūdra* precisely at these occasions (e.g. in the Mahāvrata rite).

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[63] On the compound name *śūdrārya*, which is a counterpart to *brahma-kṣatra* "Brahmins and noblemen" of the YV Saṃhitās, see H. Oertel, Zu *śūdrārya* "Arier und Śūdra" 1936-37, KZ 63, 249.

This leads to another important question that remains to be thoroughly explored, namely the relation between myth and ritual in Vedic. Although in the early period of Vedic studies, their intimate connection was not questioned, the sheer mass of material to be surveyed in each area generally guaranteed that in practice each was pursued independently. Hillebrandt's *Vedische Mythologie* (and to a lesser extent, in Bergaigne's *La réligion védique*) is exceptional in this regard, as it relies heavily on ritual materials. The perceived excesses of the "Ritualistic School" of mythology may have propelled this *de facto* separation into a matter of principle, and many recent students of one or the other explicitly see the myth/ritual mixture of the texts as tainting the purity of each strain. (Cf. e.g. Oertel 1899, O'Flaherty 1985, esp. pp. 12ff.)

Nonetheless, the intimacy of the two within this tradition (and not only the Vedic one)[64] cannot be denied: the existence of figures that are at once functioning parts of the ritual and divinities with a developed mythology (e.g. Agni, Soma); the recital of mythic episodes in liturgical context; the use of mythology to explain details of the ritual or the ritual itself; the embedding of ritual activity in mythological narrative -- all these point to a deep connection felt by the composers of the text (Hoffmann 1968). It seems time now to reexamine this connection without preconceptions, in order to distinguish true cases of secondary influence from organic and historical connections. Recent scholars who have worked on this problem, directly or obliquely, include Hoffmann 1957, 1970, Heesterman 1985 passim, Schmidt 1968, Falk 1984, Jamison 1991.

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64 See Witzel, The myth of the hidden sun, forthc., which contains some links illuminating the more obscure mythical allusions and ritual practices with regard to the Vala myth and the Mahāvrata ritual.

IV. The "Philosophy" of Vedic religion

a. Early Vedic

Perhaps the most obvious of the motivating ideas of Vedic religion is the Roman principle of "*dō ut dēs*", "I give so that you will give" (van der Leeuw 1920-21), or in Vedic terms: "give me, I give you" *dehi me dadāmi te*, TS 1.8.4.1, VS 3.50 (Mylius 1973, p. 476) -- that is: reciprocity. The ritual oblations and the hymns of praise that accompany them are not offered to the gods out of sheer celebratory exuberance. Rather, these verbal and alimentary gifts are one token in an endless cycle of exchanges -- thanks for previous divine gifts, but also a trigger for such gifts and favors in the future. Most Ṛgvedic hymns contain explicit prayers for the goods of this world and for aid in particular situations, along with generalized praise of the gods' generosity. This principle is so pervasive and so obvious in Vedic literature that it had seldomly been explicitly discussed in the secondary literature (cf. now Malamoud 1980, Weber-Brosamer 1988, Wilden 1992), and Heesterman's denial of the principle for Vedic (1985, p. 83 and passim) is rather unconvincing. But this comparative dearth of secondary literature should not conceal its importance -- or its application to other domains of Vedic thought.

The principle of mutual exchange is most clearly visible in Vedic in the terms *anna* "food", *annādya* "stored food, provision" which are used in a very peculiar way. In fact, *anna* is much more than actual food; it can stand for a variety of substances, especially those that are exchanged among men and gods. Thus a whole Upaniṣad (Taitt. Up. 3) can deal with "food". As often in India, the concept survives to this day and it has indeed been discussed by modern anthropologists, e.g. McKim Marriott, under the designation "code substance". It is the substance "food" which is given, altered, and returned, in short, exchanged; it functions as a code for the actual exchange.

Indeed old Vedic religion, like so many others, base their relationship between human beings, ancestors, and gods on proper exchanges. This has recently been studied, following Hubert and Mauss 1898, Mauss 1923-24, by Sahlins 1972. The old Roman *dō ut dēs*, however, is not altogether sufficient to express what happens in Vedic ritual. As Sahlins has noted, if one party gives a gift of a value of 100, the other party returns one of 50 - keeping the path open for future transactions. The same happens with the gods, usually in the context

of fire ritual. It is the fire (god Agni) who carries the offerings to the gods. Fire also transubstantiates the offerings; however, this does not simply happen, as Malamoud (1972) states in the wake of Lévi-Strauss, by a conversion from an raw, uncooked state into a palatable, cooked one. Instead, "food" is not only changed from a mundane substance into one which has different, perhaps divine characteristics, but its various consistent parts are split up as well, as already Vādh. Br. 4.19a notes (Caland 1928 [= 1990: 416ff]).

     As such, transubstantiated food can travel towards the gods in the form of smoke and aroma (medha) and is consumed by them. What remains here on earth is a gift by the gods who have tasted the offering while sitting at the sacred fire, soiled it by their spittle and rendered it consumable only to their socially inferior relations, the human beings: this is the remnant (*ucchiṣṭa*). It is not useless or thrown away as "soiled" food is apt to be. Instead, as especially AV extols in great detail, the "remnant" has enormous potential (cf. Malamoud 1972, Wezler 1978) in the peculiar social hierarchy that exists between men and god (*deva*), just as between wife and husband (*deva*), or between the people (prajā) and the king (*deva*). "Food remnants" of the deva are "palatable" to members of "lower" social rank: i.e. men, wives, subjects.

     The exchange of "food" takes part on the offering ground, the model of the universe. The gods, though they are believed, at another level of thought, to come to this earth for their sacrificial feast during a hospitable reception, actually partake of the food in heaven. At the same time, they leave (some of) the remains in heaven itself as *sukṛta, iṣṭāpūrtā,* "the well done", "offered and given away" substances. These await the *yajamāna* on his final approach to heaven, after death. Apart from this very obvious *ucchiṣṭa*, the gods also give other return gifts to men -- e.g. as rain, sons, food, -- the standard wishes of a Vedic Indian.

     These reciprocal relations between men and gods are mirrored also in the social relations between men -- e.g. between a poet and his patron. The poet bestows praise on the patron (and aids him in praising the gods) and expects material rewards in return, as is especially clear in the so-called Dānastuti or 'Praise of the gift', which ends some Ṛgvedic hymns, detailing the items the poet expects to receive for his work. Similarly, the priests who perform the ritual for the sacrificer (*yajamāna*) all expect their *dakṣinā* 'priestly gift' or 'fee', the exact nature of which is usually prescribed by the ritual manuals. As Heesterman and others have justly pointed out, it would be wrong to consider these rewards merely wages; however, it is equally misleading to see them as gifts freely

bestowed from the spontaneous gratitude of an overflowing heart. The gift (and usually its extent and nature) is mandated by the reciprocal system.

Other aspects of exchange are visible in the rules of hospitality (see e.g. Thieme 1957b) and marriage. Here, too, a certain amount of reciprocity is seen, as for example in the function of Aryaman as god of marriage: The underlying principle is the exchange of brides. The important term *śraddhā* [lit. 'place the heart (in/on)', and cognate to Latin *credō*], often misleadingly translated 'faith', originally referred to 'confidence' in the efficacy of the ritual, i.e. its ability to motivate counter-gifts, as Köhler (1948/1973) has shown. (See Köhler also for discussion of the abundant earlier literature on this word; cf. also Lüders 1924, Hara 1964, Hacker 1963, and the rather weak Rao 1971.)

The same sort of relationship and exchange is seen between men and the ancestors, as well as between men and the dead poets' society in heaven of the Ṛṣis. Both are "fed" by men with actual food offerings (*piṇḍa*), but in the case of the seers additionally with their own sort of "food", that is the daily recitation of their Ṛgvedic poetry. It should be noted that Vedic recitation is preceded by the actual mentioning of the name of the poet, not only to keep alive[65] his memory but also to supply him with "spiritual food". The circle, in this regard, would be closed by the release of "divine" inspiration (*dhī*) to latter day poets who want to compose "a new song" (*bráhman*) or a sorcery spell (*bráhman*) and who want to make truth work (**satyakriyā*).

The extraordinary power and prestige accorded to verbal behavior is another important aspect of Vedic thought that is visible from the earliest times. The very existence of the RV is a tribute to this notion -- the multitude of elaborate hymns directed to the same divinity, composed by a variety of bardic families, results from the belief that the gods were most pleased by "the newest hymn", as the text often tells us. The gods of early Vedic were not the mere dutiful receivers of a set liturgy that they became in the middle Vedic period, but -- as guests at their solemn ritual reception on the offering ground -- critical connoisseurs of poetic craftsmanship and virtuosity, just as the modern Hindu gods savor the *stuti*s and *stotra*s addressed to them in *pūjā* and other rituals. The

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[65] This also is necessary for reasons of ordering the RV: in a scriptless time, the masses of Ṛgvedic verses were ordered according to the poets' clans ("family books"), the deities and the length of the hymns, and, if necessary, the meter used. The mentioning of a poet's name (along with his father's or clan's name), and along with the deity and the meter allows one to pinpoint a hymn in the corpus, -- to this very day.

better the hymn, the greater the reward -- to the poet from the patron, to the latter from the god.

But what is most prized is not elegant verbal trickery, but rather the putting into words of a cosmic truth. This aspect of Vedic religion has been much discussed -- and much disputed -- especially in the last fifty years or so. The discussions have centered around two terms, *bráhman-* and *ṛtá-*. The neuter noun *bráhman-* is the derivational base to which the masculine noun *brahmán-* 'possessor of bráhman-' and ultimately brāhmaṇa-, the name both of the priestly caste and of the exegetical ritual texts. *Bráhman-* has been the subject of several searching studies by eminent 20th century Vedicists, e.g. Renou and Silburn 1949, Gonda 1950, Thieme 1952, Schmidt 1968. Philological examination of the Ṛgvedic passages seems especially to support the view of Thieme that *bráhman* refers originally to a "formulation" (*Formulierung*), the capturing in words of a significant and non-self-evident truth.[66] The ability to formulate such truths gives the formulator (*brahmán-*) special powers, which can be exercised even in cosmic forces (see Jamison, 1991, on Atri). This power attributed to a correctly stated truth is found in the (later) "*satyakriyā*" or 'act of truth', seminally discussed by W. Norman Brown (1941, 1963, 1968), which is in fact already found in the RV and has counterparts in other Indo-European cultures (see e.g. Watkins 1979). Such formulated speech (*bráhman*) must be recited correctly, otherwise there is danger of losing one's head (as explained in the *indraśatru* legend TS 2.4.12.1, ŚB 1.6.3.8), and it must be recited with its author's name.

In the prose texts the emphasis has shifted slightly from this correct formulation, as freely composed poetry has been replaced by rote recitation in the liturgy. But its influence is still to be discerned in the great stress laid on correct pronunciation of the ancient verses[67] and especially on correct knowledge. 'He who knows thus' (*ya evaṃ veda*) about the hidden meanings of the ritual or the homologies it encodes has access to greater power and greater success than one who simply has the ritual performed without this knowledge.

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[66] This usually is a (Ṛg-) Vedic verse but it also can be a sorcery stanza, as for example AV 2.2.1 = PS 1.7.1 *táṃ* (PS *ta[t]) tvā yaumi bráhmanā;* cf. already Oldenberg, 1919:476.

[67] There exists, in fact, a rather old and famous myth about it: As Tvaṣṭr wished to take revenge on Indra who had killed his son Viśvarūpa; he created the demon Vṛtra, but while wishing him to be an enemy and killer of Indra, he mispronounced "*índraśatru* "having Indra for his enemy" instead of *indraśátru* "Indra's enemy" (i.e. slayer of Indra); therefore Indra came and killed Vṛtra ŚB 1.6.3.8-10, cf. TS 2.4.12.1, 2.5.2.1-2, etc.

The power attributed to esoteric knowledge leads directly to the speculations found in the later parts of the Āraṇyakas and in the Upaniṣads.

The notion of *bráhman* is closely allied in early Vedic thought with the term *ṛta-*, which is a very difficult and controversial word. Continually celebrated in the RV and invested with the power to keep the cosmos functioning correctly, *ṛta* has been approached in two different ways. On the one hand, it is quite commonly translated 'cosmic order' or 'cosmic harmony'. This interpretation works rather well with its apparent etymology, to the root **h2er*, meaning 'fit together', but it requires that in the negated compound *an-ṛta-* 'untruth', and in the Avestan cognate *aṣa-*, usually rendered 'Truth', the word has undergone serious semantic narrowing. On the other hand it has been strenuously argued (esp. by Lüders 1944, 1951, 1959) that *ṛta-* means only 'truth', as in *anṛta* and *aṣa*, and that its cosmic ordering properties are indeed the province of an abstract 'truth', as conceived by Vedic culture. Insisting on a single translation for a cultural complex of such importance is no doubt a mistake (though in the tradition of Bergaigne's method discussed above); nonetheless, it is clear that an abstract yet active Truth is credited with power on the human (cf. *satya-kriyā*), divine, and cosmic planes.

Many words in Sanskrit as well as in other languages cannot be rendered by a single good translation of the term. The concept encompassed by ṛta is in fact quite similar to the equally untranslatable later Hindu *dharma*. Our modern usage of the word "truth" does not cover all aspects of the term *ṛta*. For example, when Varuṇa lets the rivers flow because of and with "truth" (*ṛta*) , then it does not make sense in English. Rather, *ṛta* is an active realization of truth, a vital force which can underlie human or divine action.

That a translation "active, creative truth, realization of truth, *Wahrheitsverwirklichung*," is indeed close to the meaning of the Sanskrit word becomes obvious if one investigates the antonym of *ṛtá- / aṣa-*, i.e. *drúh- /* Avest. *druj-* which can easily be translated as "deceiving, cheating action, *(Be)-trug*" (cf. also the semantically slightly narrower Engl. *be-tray*). *Druh-/druj-* is active untruth, i.e. it indicates a lie that is actually carried out, a realization of untruth by pronouncing it and acting it out. English, German, etc. have no word expressing the combination of concepts carried by *ṛta-*. The rather bland 'Cosmic Order' fails to capture the nature of this power, but merely names the macrocosmic aspect of its results.

The common word for 'truth' in Skt. is *satya,* originally meaning "reality". Now it is interesting to observe that the blurring of distinctions already begins

with the antonym of "truth" - not, as expected, *a-satya* but *an-ṛta*, (perhaps, as *a-sat* is non-existence, chaos). Another contrast to *ṛta*, formed from the same root, seems to be *nir-ṛti*, the absolute disappearance of "active, creative truth, law, order" -- that is absolute destruction, effected in absolute darkness, with no food, drink, possibility of children, etc. (RV 7.104)

The force of "active truth" is readily seen in its specialized use, in the *satyakriyā* (Pāli *saccakiriyā*), alluded to above, i.e. "performing sorcery with truth" in RV and the Pāli texts or in the curses so frequently occurring in the Mahābhārata.

Within the well-ordered and creative realm of *ṛta*, the various forces are functioning according to the reciprocal exchange mentioned above. Its basis is the concept of *ṛṇa*, the "debt", better "obligation" that exists between men on this side and gods, ancestors and ancient poets on the other side (cf. Malamoud, 1980). This "primordial" obligation is based on the simple fact that human beings are the somatic descendants of the gods (via the eighth Āditya Vivasvant/Mārtāṇḍa and his son Manu, the ancestor of mankind). Therefore they have to take care of their ultimate ancestors, just as they indeed offer food *(śrāddha, piṇḍa)* to their direct somatic ancestors, the three immediate predecessors and a vague group of less immediate pitṛs. In this scheme, the primordial sages appear more like an afterthought. For the brahmins, however, the Ṛsis represent both (some of) their direct somatic ancestors and their spiritual ones: they are the creators of their spiritual knowledge, formulated in Vedic verse. All these groups (men, ancestors, seers, gods) therefore are tied together by a close net of obligational relationships, expressed by the term *ṛṇa* "obligation."

The restitution of *ṛṇa* is primarily accomplished in ritual (*yajña*) in which both "food" offerings (*anna*) as well as spiritual offerings (*bráhman*) are made in the form of speech (*vāc*), which must necessarily be true (*satya*) and which only in this way can have an effect, that is success in ritual. The whole procedure represents an eternal cycle which functions within the bounds of *ṛta*. In this process, various abstract and less abstract notions take part, e.g. the above mentioned *vāc, brahman, śraddhā, anna, ucchiṣta*. These seemingly disparate concepts are dealt with in some of the so-called speculative hymns of the RV and AV. All of them, however, have their fixed place in the system of relationships, based on "obligation" (*ṛṇa*), within the all-embracing realm of *ṛta*.

The only force outside of its effective area is *nir-ṛti*, the negative power of absolute destruction. As so often in Vedic thought, their mutual spheres of influence have perhaps to be conceived as concentric circles or frames. In the

AV and later on, Nirṛti has been made one of the presiding deities of the directions of the sky (cf. Kirfel 1920, p. 95). In this way, she is imminent in this world as well. Her 'representatives' certainly are so: all kinds of mostly invisible forces that hurt and damage mankind. The *rakṣas* "damages", fever (*takman*), revenge (*meni*), etc. They all act just like living beings, but have no apparent body, just like the later god Kāma "lust".

Indeed, as has been seen, the notion of reciprocity is not confined to sentient beings, but also informs the Vedic conception of the phenomenal world, in a system we might term "natural economy". In this schema, natural phenomena originating in heaven come to earth and nourish and are even transformed into other phenomena that ultimately make their way to heaven again, thus participating in a cycle in which nothing is wasted or lost (see Frauwallner 1953, p.49, Schneider 1961, Bodewitz 1973, p. 243ff.) For instance, heavenly water falls as rain to earth, produces plants (which are eaten by animals); both plant and animal products are offered at the ritual and thus ascend to heaven in the smoke of the offering fire, to become rain again. The system of identifications and transformations this cycle sets up contributed largely to the middle Vedic system of homologies we will discuss below.

The importance of reciprocity and the power of the word are ideas difficult to escape in early Vedic texts and appear in a variety of guises. However, more traditionally 'philosophical' issues are harder to approach in the RV. For example, Vedic cosmology and cosmogony have been intensively investigated, but it is difficult to produce a clear and consistent picture of either.

Certain elementary notions are clear: e.g. the universe is divided in the first instance into three worlds: earth, the "intermediate space" (*antarikṣa*, some now say "interspace"), and heaven; the gods dwell in heaven (and are etymologically connected to it); certain gods, e.g. Indra, are credited with cosmogonic activities -- finding the sun, separating heaven and earth, spreading out the earth, etc. Other notions are alluded to frequently but not particularly clearly -- features like the heavenly ocean, or events like divine incest (usually, but not always, between heaven and earth). There is no dearth of other such references in the RV, but this is perhaps our problem: there is an embarrassment of cosmological and cosmogonic riches, and constructing one picture from it requires rejecting another, often equally plausible one. The detailed and elaborate schemas of (e.g.) Lüders 1959, Varenne 1982, and Kuiper (earlier essays, collected in Kuiper 1983) all demonstrate skilled and suggestive use of the available Ṛgvedic hints, but all seem to be required, on the one hand, to ignore

large amounts of evidence that does not support their picture and, on the other, to be far more explicit about physical details than the RV seems to allow.

It might be that the early Vedic period was a time of ferment, with competing cosmological/-gonic paradigms from various sources. (Note the apt plural in Varenne's title, *Cosmogonies védiques*, 1982.) It is even more likely that, beyond the straightforward 'facts' on which there was agreement (like the three "worlds"), this intellectual area was a legitimate forum for speculation, and that the speculation was not aimed at producing a precise picture -- the exact number of the divisions of heaven or the exact location of the heavenly ocean, or to produce a precise "history" -- who created the earth, when, and how -- for this (as we like to think)[68] most unhistorical of people. The purpose of Ṛgvedic speculation was rather to signal in metaphorical and poetic terms the abstract relations among things. That these signals are sometimes contradictory is not surprising: the Vedic poets love paradox (of the type "the son begot the father", etc.), as Bergaigne long ago pointed out and so do their listeners, the gods, who are often said, in middle Vedic texts, to love the hidden (*parokṣapriyā hi devāḥ*).

It has often been noted that the so-called "speculative hymns" (see Renou 1956a), linguistically among the latest of the RV, are in great part cosmogonic, but the import of this has not been entirely grasped. If early Vedic religion had possessed a detailed, agreed upon cosmogony, speculation would not have been necessary -- or rather the speculation would have been based upon -- or have disputed -- the facts of this shared vision. Moreover, the speculations are often framed as questions ("who? what?) or as contradictions (the famed "in the beginning there was neither being nor non-being"), which would suggest that the composers had passed beyond what was commonly accepted, into the realm of the genuine unknown.

b. Middle Vedic: The power of ritual.

The system of reciprocity identified for early Vedic remained in force in the middle Vedic period, notwithstanding a large amount of political and social change. At the beginning of the so-called Mantra period (see above, introduction) when the Kuru and Pañcāla tribes develop, in the Kurukṣetra-Haryana and Uttar Pradesh area, the ritual, too, was undergoing the restructuring described above. Nevertheless, the gods still are regarded as

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[68] For the evidence to the contrary, see Witzel 1991c.

nourished by sacrifice carried out by men, and they themselves have to offer (in Kurukṣetra, the *devayajana* "offering place of the gods") to sustain their ancestors, the *pūrve devāḥ,* as well as to support, just like humans, their own position.

Indeed, the ritual, which had been one step in the cyclic exchange of favors between men and gods, has become the compelling mainspring, to which even the gods are in some sense subordinate. When the ritual was restructured from its Ṛgvedic to its classical form and the earlier freely composed verse gave way to a set ritual liturgy of RV verses and other formulae, the verbal form most prized became ritual speech, specifically the triple division into *ṛc, sāman*, and *yajus* -- and the silence that is, in some ways, its divine counterpart (for silence, see Renou 1949, Brereton 1988).

So, it is clear that the elevation of the ritual in the middle Vedic period has affected every aspect of the religious and a large section of the social realm. In turn, the new power of the ritual derives from the strengthening of the system of identifications we discussed briefly above. The ritual ground is the mesocosm in which the macrocosm can be controlled. Objects and positions in the ritual ground have exact counterparts in both the human (i.e. microcosmic) realm and the cosmic realm -- e.g. a piece of gold can stand for wealth among men and the sun in the divine world. The recognition of these bonds of identification -- many of which are far less obvious than the example just given -- is a central intellectual and theological enterprise, the continuation of the 'formulation of mythical truths' discussed above. The universe can be viewed as a rich and often esoteric system of homologies, and the assemblage, manipulation, and apostrophizing of homologues in the delimited ritual arena allows men to exert control over their apparently unruly correspondents outside it. This "ritual science" is based on the strictly logical application of the rule of cause and effect, even though the initial proposition in an argument of this sort ("the sun is gold") is something that we would not accept.[69] Ritual Science received a seminal discussion by Oldenberg 1919 and also by Schayer 1925 and has frequently been treated since, e.g. in the most recent extensive

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[69] This has nothing to do, as B. K. Smith (1989, p. 37), assumes, with sympathetic or other (imagined) attitudes towards Vedic ritual and thought: simply put, the sun just is not gold, nor is the fire here on earth the Sun; the Vedic texts give monocausal reasonings for a particular effect where this normally is due to co-variation, i.e. several "causes". - For an incisive discussion of the topic of magical thought see R. Horton. 1973. African traditional thought and western science. Africa 37, 50-71, 155-87; cf. also R. Horton and R. Finnegan. 1973. Modes of thought: essays on thinking in western and non-Western societies. London.

treatment by B. K. Smith 1989; for references to other lit., see Smith 1986 : 95, n. 44.[70]

Notions of cosmogony have become simplified, after the chaotic questioning of the RV; the emergent figure of Prajāpati (see above) provides a focal point to which all questions of origin can be referred. Many Vedic prose stories begin "In the beginning Prajāpati..." Nevertheless, the old myths of origin survive as well: that of an origin of the world from the primordial waters, from a large egg (*hiraṇyagarbha*), as being brought up from the primordial ocean by a diving animal, a boar (later an incarnation of Viṣṇu).

Due to the large amount of middle Vedic texts, ideas of cosmology can be traced in much more detail and more successfully than in the older Vedic period (of the RV). However, just as in Ṛgvedic cosmology, no unified picture evolved. The sun is thought, in the standard view, as moving across the sky in daytime, setting in the west and moving underground to its rising point in the east. However, there also is a divergent, apparently more speculative and "learned" view (Sieg 1923) which holds that it has two sides, a bright and a dark one, and that it turns its dark side downwards in the evening, travels backwards across the sky during the night and turns down its bright side again in next morning in the East. Similarly, the minority view of the stars as being holes in a stone sky, illuminated by the light behind it (Reichelt, 1913) survives at least in one text (JUB 1.25, 4.5.1, see Witzel 1984a, n.104). For a recent appraisal of the Brāhmaṇa evidence for cosmology, see Klaus 1986.

An important point in middle Vedic thought is the problem of how to avoid evil (*agha, enas, pāpa*, on the last word, see Das 1984) and pollution. In fact, this wish, -- and not the avoidance of violence as such, as Heesterman will have it -- can be seen as the motivating force underlying much of the ritual reform that took place at the beginning of the period. The little studied myth of Indra cutting off the head of Dadhyañc illuminates the concern of the main acting priests in ritual, the Adhvaryu priests, of avoiding direct involvement in killing, as exercised by them in ritual. They fear pollution by *pāpa*, the "evil" of being stained with blood and being "touched" by death (cf. the concept of meni) but they do not object to killing and force as such. Rather they delegate these actions and substitute another person and avoid direct "contact".

The tale has become main myth of justification of the priestly class (Witzel 1987b, n. 103): The Aśvin, doctors and latecomers to the ritual of the

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[70] Add the work of the late A. Benke 1976, who investigates especially three level and five level homologies.

gods, become their Adhvaryu priests, after having gained the secret of the (cut off) head of the sacrifice. They did so after hearing about it from Dadhyañc, whose head they had replaced with a horse's head as to avoid his killing by Indra as punishment for divulging this secret. Indeed, in ritual, the killing of sacrificial victims is done outside the sacrificial ground by helpers, and it is not even referred to overtly. The animal is "pacified" (*śam*). This line of thought is in need of a detailed treatment.

c. Speculation in the Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads.

The speculation of the Āraṇyakas and also of the Upaniṣads follows in a natural and systematic development from what has been said above about the Middle Vedic period of the Brāhmaṇas and YV Saṃhitās.

First of all, as has been pointed out above, there is no inherent difference in content and style between Brāhmaṇa and Āraṇyaka texts: both deal with rituals, though the Āraṇyakas deal with the more secret rituals such as the Mahāvrata (in the RV) and the Pravargya (in the YV Āraṇyakas). Both rituals indeed are explained in the usual Brāhmaṇa style, which is perhaps most evident in Śatapatha Br. 14, which not only is part of the Brāhmaṇa itself but even is a text already referred to in ŚB 4 (Witzel, 1987b).

If we can indeed trace a development in "philosophy", then it is the gradual increase in importance of the idea of a second death and of retribution for one's action in this world (Schmidt 1968). These ideas occur only in late Brāhmaṇa passages (and mostly in the eastern parts of North India, e.g. *punarmṛtyu*, see Witzel 1989a). While ritual was believed to provide enough power to eliminate the evil incurred by killing (a fear noticeable already in the Ṛgvedic horse sacrifice), this concern now becomes more of a problem: every action has its automatic consequence and thus the killing of an animal produces "evil" ("guilt" is not appropriate, as it is a later, moral term applicable only to karmic concerns). Indeed, in the late Brāhmaṇas the concept of a reversal of fortune in the other world occurs several times.

In the vision of Bhṛgu, the son of Varuṇa, (ŚB 11.6.1) and at other locations (Schmidt 1968) there emerges the idea of a reverse world where animals devour humans; this created great fear in Bhṛgu, which must be indicative of what Vedic man felt at this point. In addition, the concept of a scale on which all of men's deeds are weighed after death is also found (in ŚB) for the first time (see below). These are new ideas, and the way at least one of them is introduced is indicative of their singularity: as a vision of Bhṛgu, the son of one

of the highest gods, Varuṇa. Apparently, this kind of framework is a literary device of introducing novel or important thoughts (cf. below on Kṣatriyas and women in the Upaniṣads).

In the late Brāhmaṇas and in the Āraṇyaka texts it still is by special rituals that one tries to eliminate the threat of a second death: "thus he 'beats away' the repetitive death (*punarmṛtyu*)." The idea still is that one wants to go to heaven unscathed, with a new unblemished body and remain there as long as possible before descending again to earth (MS 1.8.6, see below on rebirth). However, this development is a step on the way to the emergence of the idea of *karma* as first found in the Upaniṣads.

All of this may indicate that the ideas of second death (and recurrent rebirth), even of *karma*, are nothing but the gradual, but logical outcome of Brahmanical thought. One can see this gradual development quite clearly also in the case of the veneration of the cow (Alsdorf 1962, W. N. Brown 1978, D. Srinivasan 1979, Witzel 1991a).

The idea originated with some people, obviously fellow brahmins in Yājñavalkya's area, and slowly spread through society. Nevertheless, it is typical of the uneven pace of development in various groups of Vedic society that even in the last part of ChU, at 8.15, the Brahmanical author still felt it necessary to add a word about killing in ritual which he claimed not to be evil, in fact guilt-less, quite apparently even with regard to karma.

It is from such a background that the thinking of the Upaniṣads emerges. The authors of these texts furthered thought that, if not radically new, still involved a thorough rethinking of the existing premises. This can be observed in the development of the texts themselves: It is in the eastern territories of North India, referred to above, that we notice, for the first time, a thorough re-organization of the *brāhmaṇa* style texts (especially in ŚB), including a rethinking of many of the earlier "theological" positions; this region also saw the development of Sūtra style (with the very systematic, but still very elaborate Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra, still composed largely in *brāhmaṇa* language), while in the Aitareya school the first shorter Sūtra is developed (dealing with the Mahāvrata) (cf. Witzel, forthc. b).

The Upaniṣads are often treated as the beginning of a tradition, the founding texts of Vedānta philosophy (and, to much lesser degree, as the

necessary precursor to early Buddhist and Jain thought).[71] But it is at least as accurate to view them as the almost inevitable outcome of the intellectual development we have been discussing. The system of homologies, the mystical identifications, remain the intellectual underpinning of these new texts -- the identifications simply become more esoteric and more all-encompassing. Such questioning had been going on during the whole YV Saṃhitā and the Brāhmaṇa period, only it was more hidden, e.g. behind the statement "some say..." In fact, intellectual exchange was going on inside the schools and between them all of the time, as the frequent quotation of divergent views in the *brāhmaṇa* type texts clearly indicates. ŚB, especially, bears witness to this by habitually discussing various "solutions" to a problem.

Moreover, the ritual itself, though its actual performance seems less a concern, increasingly becomes the subject of similar identifications. On the one hand, the ritual becomes interiorized: non-physical counterparts are suggested for ritual actions and objects, so that the ritual can be performed entirely mentally (cf. the *prāṇāgnihotra*, Bodewitz 1973). Moreover, not only the simple objects used in ritual, but also whole sections of the ritual, particular recitations, and finally even complete rituals come to have cosmic counterparts (e.g. the horse of the horse sacrifice in BĀUK 1.1). This is accompanied by an increasing use of multiple identifications (A. Benke 1976). So, as the actual physical performance of the elaborate Vedic rituals seems to decline --at least with some part of the (Brahmanical) population-- the concept and structure of ritual spawn intense intellectual activity (including also among some Kṣatriyas and women, cf. Oldenberg 1915, Renou 1953a, Horsch 1966, Witzel 1989a).

The Upaniṣads then do not represent a break with the intellectual tradition that precedes them, but rather a heightened continuation of it, using as raw material the religious practices then current (Renou 1953a). What makes the Upaniṣads seem more different than they actually are from the Brāhmaṇas and even from the Āraṇyakas, which contain similar speculative and "mystical" material, is their style. The Brāhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas are authoritative in presentation; even the most advanced and esoteric speculation is positively stated, as an exegetical truism. The early Upaniṣads, with their dialogue form, the personal imprint of the teacher, the questioning and admissions of innocence -- or claims of knowledge -- from the students, seem to reintroduce

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[71] As far as culture and civilization are concerned, even the late Vedic Upaniṣads clearly precede the urban civilization as described in the Pāli texts. The Vedic texts do not mention towns (cf. Mylius 1969, 1970) and forbid entry into the country of Magadha to Brahmins while the Pāli texts speak of Brahmin villages south of the Ganges.

some of the uncertainties of the late RV, give the sense that the ideas are indeed speculation, different attempts to frame solutions to real puzzles.

Still, certain new doctrines emerge. The changing view of the late Brāhmaṇa authors on the fate of man after death (*punarmṛtyu*) has already been noted. These views have to be taken up in more detail now as they are closely linked with the emergence of the "classical" doctrine of rebirth, reincarnation and *karma*.

There is no lack, it is true, of studies on rebirth and reincarnation (Hastings 1909-1921, Kane 1962, Head and Cranston 1967, Horsch 1971, Werner 1977, O'Flaherty 1981b, Tull 1989, Göhler 1990 to name but a few).[72] Nearly all of them, however, fail to study these concepts in their proper setting, that is by asking: what happens, in the view of Vedic people, at conception, at birth, and at death to a human being?

It is interesting to note, and consistent with the system that all men are reborn within a cycle of eternal return already in the older Vedic texts. No one wants to escape this cycle, as one indeed wishes to do in later, post-Vedic Hinduism. We do not yet witness the concept of a *sannyāsin* who wants to leave the system. In fact, the ones who "escape" are precisely those who have committed some obvious actions that undermine this closed system: murderers of embryos, of the brahmins' cow, etc.: that is destroyers of the "line of progeny" (*prajātantu* TU 1.11, KaṭhŚiU 11) and of poetic inspiration (*dhī, dhenā*), the "cow" (*dhenu*) of the Brahmins. Such persons (in later language, the *mahāpātaka*) fall out of the system and drop into "deepest darkness", into the lap of Nirṛti. At this location outside the Vedic cosmos there is no food but only polluted nail clippings and drinks of blood, there is no light at all (a term for bliss: Kuiper 1964), and there are no sons: These persons are doomed to oblivion. The idea is nicely summed up in the well known episode (Mahābhārata 1.41) of Jaratkāru and his ancestors, who hang on a thin thread over a deep well and are threatened with falling into it if he does not produce a son who can carry out the required ancestor worship.

The concept of *karma*, however, is new. The texts themselves indicate this at least once when ChU 5.3.7 says that it was known only to the Kṣatriyas (but cf. BĀU 2.1.15, KauṣU 4.19), and in BĀU Yājñavalkya takes his fellow brahmin Jāratkārava Ārthabhāga 3.2.13 away from the discussion ground at Janaka's court to talk with him in private about *karma*. Apparently, the idea was not very

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[72] Cf. also: R. Morton Smith, Religion of India: death, deeds, and after, JOIB 15, 1966, pp. 273-30.

"popular" (pace O'Flaherty, 1981, introd.) at all, at first. This is apparent even in later texts, such as the beginning of the Bhagavadgītā which still defends the *kula-dharma* of a Kṣatriya family as the norm, in this case, the duty of a Kṣatriya to fight and kill. Precisely this point is stressed by a god, Kṛṣṇa, as to prompt Arjuna to action.

It is clear that by the late Brāhmaṇa / Āraṇyaka period a concern had developed that linked the older Brāhmaṇa concept of cause and effect with the newly expressed anxiety about another death after leaving this world, and the new (or only newly attested) fear of a "reverse world" with retribution for one's actions towards living beings. This sets the stage (H.-P. Schmidt 1968b) for the development of a consistent theory of automatic retribution in one's next life according to the actions (*karma*) undertaken in this one.

The idea that it was the Kṣatriyas who introduced this concept thus seems rather far-fetched. Nevertheless it has had and still has its adherents (e.g. Horsch 1966). As briefly indicated above, we rather have to see the introduction of the topic by a king, or the secretive conference by Yājñavalkya about its as literary devices (cf. Witzel, forthc. b) which indicate the importance of the theme for the late Vedic texts. Note also that the role a woman, Gārgī, plays in the Upaniṣads is quite similar: Women usually do not appear in such public assemblies of learned disputation. When they do so, they stand out as very special persons. For example, the other prominent woman in the later Veda, Maitreyī, is precisely the one of Yājñavalkya's two wives who had learnt Brahmanical lore, and therefore it is only to her that he speaks about eschatology (BĀU 4.5.15).

Similarly, the idea that it was the Jainas, the aboriginals, etc. who "invented" these ideas is, of course, nothing more than saying "we do not know" with other words (O'Flaherty, 1982). There simply are no early records of the Jainas and even less of the aboriginal inhabitants of Northern India.

Several factors thus come together and lead to a qualitative breakthrough, which results in the new karmic rebirth idea and in the assertion of the identity of the human soul[73] (*ātman*) with that of *brahman* (neuter) in such famous sentences as *tat tvam asi* (BĀU). Vedic thought quite naturally led to this stage, -- though the outcome was not necessarily the one we find in the Upaniṣads. Indeed, the Pali canon (Dīghanikāya 2) bears witness to a whole range of more or less contemporary points of view on the topics as treated in the early Upaniṣads.

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[73] On the soul, see among others Arbmann 1926-27, Narahari 1944, Bodewitz 1991.

The cycle of automatic rebirths (see above) is now broken for the first time: The ascetics of the time of the older Upaniṣads (e.g. Yājñavalkya when he "went forth into homelessness" BĀU 4.5.15) and the contemporaries of the Buddha strive for emancipation that frees them from the *saṃsāra* of rebirth (whether already connected with karma or not). Until this time, it was only the lot destined for felons who had committed severe offenses (see above). Now famous persons such as Yājñavalkya can leave home forever to strive for the knowledge of *brahman*. The traditional society quite consequently regarded them as socially "dead" once they had left, and did not allow for a return. The texts (Kaṭha Śruti Up., Mānava Śrautasūtra 8.25, an appendix, see Sprockhoff 1987) have a ritual of taking leave from home and all one's possessions while declaring non-violence to all beings and taking refuge with, indeed invoking the protection of the wild animals.

The question may be asked why this happened precisely at this moment, and in this area of Northern India (as the texts indicate, in the east of the Vedic area, in Kosala and Videha, N. Bihar). The breakthrough is similar to the ones which other major civilizations made at about the same time - even if the idea of an "axial age" is impossible due to severe incongruencies in the actual time frame.[74] Indeed, external influence is not likely, unless one posits some Iranian influence. After all, Zoroaster was the first who stressed the personal decision, made by individuals: one had to chose between "good" and "evil" and had to face a last judgment after death.[75]

The Kosala-Videha area was one of great mixture of peoples due to various movements of tribes and individuals, and consequently also of ideas (Witzel 1989a: 236). Furthermore, it was a quasi-colonial territo   ry of the more western, Kuru-Pañcāla based Vedic orthopraxy. It may very well be that even some later immigrants such as the Malla, or especially the Śākya, in fact are Iranian tribes.[76] If so, they may have brought with them some (para-

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[74] Buddha lived probably around 400 (not 563-483 BCE, see Bechert 1982) which puts him slightly later than the Sophistic and Socratean Greeks, and Zarathustra's age is much earlier by several centuries than the sixth century supposed by Henning; however, it cannot yet be absolutely fixed in time.

[75] This fact appears for the first time in a north-eastern text, ŚB 11.2.7.33, according to which the good and bad actions of a person are weighed. Other points are the name and the (originally) incestuous   customs of the Śākyas, and the kurgan form of the Eastern graves while the Vedic ones are square and about 3 yards high; cf. also the name of the Kuru king Balhika Pratipīya ("the Bactrian", see Witzel 1980c).

[76] See the preceding note; there has been a movement into the East by various tribes in the late Vedic period. Tribes mentioned as living in Kosala/Videha in the Pali canon still are

)Zoroastrian influence as well. It is not without interest that it is in the late ŚB that the idea of the weighing on a scale the good and bad deeds first occurs. In any case, the area was one of admixture of local Muṇḍa people (AB 7.18), of older Eastern Indo-Aryan settlers, and of various immigrants; it also saw a mixture of the older, para-Vedic Indo-Aryan religion of the East with the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of the new immigration of missionary Kuru-Pañcāla Brahmins of the west, coming at the invitation of such kings as Mahākosala and (Mahā)-Janaka of Videha (see Witzel 1989a). These developments and the emergence of large kingdoms such as those of Kosala and Magadha set the stage.

This area and time, we believe, supplied the ideal ferment for the meeting of ideas and the development of new concepts. Just as the break-up of the old tribal society of the Ṛgveda saw strikingly new developments in ritual and the emergence of the Brahmanical pre-scientific science of homologies, the new stratified and partly aristocratic, partly oligarchic society (not a "republican", as always is alleged, since Rhys-Davies 1911) of the East witnessed the emergence of many of the typically Upaniṣadic ideas described above.

It should also not be forgotten that it is at this time, around 500/400 BCE, perhaps slightly later than the early Upaniṣads[77] seem to allow, that the so-called second urbanization (i.e. after the Indus civilization) begins to shape Northern India. The Vedic texts hardly, if ever, speak about towns, - Brahmins indeed do not like the polluting social atmosphere of towns and rather prefer to live in the countryside where they can regulate their life properly and preserve their ritual purity in their own villages. The word for "town" (*nagara*, also: *nagarin*) occurs a few times only in late Vedic texts (Mylius 1969); the trend, however, continues: by the time of the Pali texts, cities are fully established, with rich merchants carrying out a long distance overland trade (witnessed in archaeology by the luxury article, the Northern Black Polished Ware), and brahmins live south of the Ganges in the formerly off-limits lands of Magadha and Aṅga.

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regarded as western ones in the Veda or by Pāṇini: The Malla are desert tribes (Rajasthan or NW Panjab); the Vṛjji are found in the Panjab in Pāṇini but appear in the east as Vajji in the Pali texts; the Licchavi and Śakya appear rather suddenly on the scene, only in the Pali texts.-- On the latecomers in the YV Saṃhitās, the Salva, cf. Witzel 1989a, p. 239, n. 333.

[77] See above n. 1.

V. The religious life: Personal and popular religious experience

As should be clear from the foregoing, we have fairly ample evidence from the whole Vedic period about religious institutions -- rituals, mythology, and widely held belief systems (such as *dō ut dēs* or the developing ideas about rebirth). But we have hardly touched on how these religious institutions affected or were experienced by individuals, or what, as it were, non-institutional, "popular" beliefs and practices were mixed, in the religious lives and consciousnesses of individuals, with those "official" ones we have discussed. The evidence for these questions is very scant and, for the most part, indirect, given as always the nature of our texts and their means of preservation.

Even for daily life, outside the narrow sphere of solemn (and brahmanized house) ritual, material can only be discovered accidentally, so to speak, between the lines. This has been done by Zimmer 1879 for the RV and the other Saṃhitās and has been continued by Rau 1957 and Mylius 1971-74 for the post-RV texts. A shorter treatment of the Brāhmaṇa period is that of Basu 1969, and Ram Gopal 1959 treats the Sūtras.

As for the specific questions raised above, we will briefly discuss what little we can glean about personal and popular religious experience.

a. Personal religious experience.

Although the hymns of the RV are attributed to individual poets, who indeed often speak in the first person and sometimes by name, the poet's persona in such cases is usually that of a generic figure. The individuality lies in the art -- the ingenious deployment of poetic devices -- rather than the emotional revelations of the poet. (Unlike Zarathustra, whose Gāϑās seem to use the former to the accomplish the latter.) The major exception is Vasiṣṭha, a/the bard of RV Maṇḍala 7, whose hymn sequence 7.86-89 speaks, not unlike Zarathustra, of a very personal relationship with Varuṇa -- whose friend he was and to whose celestial and blissful company (Kuiper 1964) he was admitted, until, for some reason unknown to him, he lost Varuṇa's favor. Of course, even in this apparently revelatory set of poems, we must be wary of misinterpreting a poetic and religious *topos* as direct personal experience. (This is, to some degree, also a danger with Zarathustra.)

Other aspects of personal relations with the gods are apparent in the very frequent appeal to the gods for help (*avas*, especially with *avase hū* "to call to ...one's help"). The question of Ṛgvedic prayer has recently been dealt with by Gonda 1989.

Visionary, mystical, or shaman-like experiences may be reported in other Ṛgvedic hymns (cf. Bodewitz 1991). Bharadvāja Bārhaspatya in RV 6.9.6-7 speaks quite extra-ordinarily not simply of a vision (*dṛś, paś, dhī*) but also of an acoustic experience: "Asunder fly my ears, asunder my eye, asunder this light which has been put into (my) heart. Asunder wanders my mind, pondering far away..." Strangely enough, this is an experience of God Fire, Agni, -- someone whom we would associate, in the first place, with vision (cf. now Insler 1989-90). There also is a vision of the Aśvins. Other experiences of gods include the possibly old Indo-Iranian topic of flying through the night time sky on a boat, reported in the RV and in the Avesta (Oettinger 1988); there is a somewhat similar experience of the shaman-like Keśin, RV 10.136. Indirectly, this kind of experience is also reflected in the self-praise of a small bird (RV 10.119) who describes touching heaven and earth with its wings.

It is important to remember, however, how rare such visionary passages are in the RV, even in the hymns devoted to Soma, the intoxicating or hallucinatory drink. Attempts to see early Vedic religion as shamanistic falter on the textual evidence.

The unalloyedly ritualistic focus of middle Vedic texts makes recovery of personal religious experience extremely difficult. However, the Kāmya Iṣṭi or "Special Rites" discussed above, performed for individual wishes, as well as the AV magical spells (and the associated rituals set forth in the Kauś.S., both also discussed above), give us some notion of the personal uses religious practice might be put to, the range of individual goals aided by ritual performance. We might also note that the priest-performer of the solemn Śrauta rituals has the option of furthering some of his own personal goals in the ritual. It is constantly stated in the Beāhmaṇa texts that the priest, if he wishes the *yajamāna* (who engaged him) to be worse, or better off, can secretly manipulate parts of the ritual to that end.

There is other middle Vedic evidence for personal religious experience, which has not been sufficiently exploited, namely the (semi-)mythological tales involving human protagonists in the various prose texts. O'Flaherty 1985 makes a start in this direction, but the categories into which she sorts these tales are rather crude, and she deliberately ignores the religious/ritual context in which they are set.

The more individual, questioning nature of the Upaniṣads, compared to the earlier Vedic texts, has already been discussed -- where it was also noted that many of the apparently "personal" features of the Upaniṣads are actually better interpreted as literary devices, *topoi* utilized to signal particular points of view.

Personal experiences of the gods or other types of supernatural experiences can only be deduced from such Upaniṣadic occurrences as the infernal visions of Bhṛgu, the son of the god Varuṇa(!, ŚB 11.6.1), or the visions of Yājñavalkya (about the dream state, BĀU 4.3), or KU about the way to Brahman (Thieme 1951/2). The Upaniṣadic experience as such is a separate topic, as it is situated right between Brahmanical "philosophy", i.e. logical argumentation in the mold of the earlier Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas, and straightforward "mysticism", as in the spiritual experience of an "intermediate" state (*sāndhya*, BĀU 43.) or a non-dualistic state (*tat tvam asi*).

b. Popular religion.

As we noted above, there is a certain circularity in identifying particular elements embedded in Vedic religion as "popular", since the texts in which they appear are uniformly brahmanical products. Such identifications may rather reflect our own notions of what is suitably serious and "high", rather than any real stratification in our sources. Nonetheless, there are some checks on these sources. On the one hand, one can collect the statements in *brāhmaṇa* type texts introduced by "they say". Many of them are popular maxims. Other common beliefs are hidden in the secondary clauses, the *tasmād* sentences of these texts. Examples are: Of someone who has died, people say: "it (the *prajātantu*, the line of progeny) has been cut off for him" (*achedy asya*, ŚB 10.45.2.13); or a popular saying has it that one cannot present people with silver as this would produce tears and bad luck (TS 1.5.1); or that termite mounds were regarded as the "ears of the earth" in whose presence one had to speak softly (JB 1.126). Cf. Rau 1977.

On the other hand, we can utilize texts that lie somewhat outside the Vedic frame. In addition to the Gṛhya and Dharma texts already discussed, wherever possible the Vedic materials should be compared with the slightly later evidence of the Pāli canon, which has many conceptual overlaps with the late Brāhmaṇas and the early Upaniṣads. In addition, the evidence of the older strata of the Mahābhārata, which are perhaps more easily accessible now through the work of M.C. Smith (1992), should be taken into account. According to Smith the older strata of the Mahābhārata reflect an early *kṣatriya*

dharma[78] based on alliances and keeping one's social obligations that is, incidentally, still reflected in the beginning sections of the Gītā with the concern for *kuladharma*. Brahmins and Brahminical concerns play, according to M.C. Smith, only a very minor role in the c. 2000 irregular *triṣṭubh* stanzas excised by her as the core of the epic. However, the role of truth, keeping one's oaths etc. accords well with the Ṛgvedic concepts discussed by Lüders and Thieme.

Such a comparison across the Vedic, Pāli and Epic texts is something that has, during the past decades, receded more and more from the horizon of scholars, due to the increasing specialization and compartmentalization of Indian studies. However, with regard to religion and culture in general this approach has to be revived as to arrive at a comprehensive picture of Vedic religion.

Even the solemn Śrauta rituals contain a number of elements that we might (quite possibly wrongly) construe as "popular": such items as horse chariot races and bow shooting at New Year,[79] public riddles, often involving sexual banter and even public intercourse of two "outcastes", a prostitute (*mahānagnikā*) and a Māgadha man, at the same rites, further singing and dancing at the summer solstice, etc.

Moreover, the "orthodox" belief in the transcendent power of the ritual in middle Vedic times seems to have been somewhat undercut, or supplemented by a continuing, indeed in part growing adherence to individual gods. One indication is the continuing popularity of Indra which is reflected in a large number of tales told about the heroic deeds, and even more so about his ability to change his shape at will, his trickery and his sexual adventures (Oertel, e.g. 1897, 1905, 1909, W. Rau, 1966; cf. O'Flaherty 1985 (and in Nagatomi 1979). His fame continues throughout the period and is still well reflected by his prominent and active position in the Pāli canon where he is called Sakka (Skt. < Śakra).

New gods also arise in this period, e.g. the rather colorless Prajāpati (cf. above; see Gonda, 1984, 1986, 1989), Śiva (developed from the horrifying lord of cattle, Rudra Paśupati), Śrī (in the appendix to the RV, Ṛgvedakhila 2.6), or Brahmā (masc.) from the abstract conception *bráhman* (ntr.), etc. Bhaga remains a

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[78] The old, simplistic and mistaken view of Horsch (1966) and others of Buddhism as a Kṣatriya "revolt" has been referred to above.

[79] Though these, too, have mythical, especially cosmogonical aspects; see Kuiper 1979, p. 137 and passim. In modern Nepal the new year festival in April (Caitra) is accompanied by the erection of a Indradhvaja (the "small Indrajātra") and horse races (*ghoṛe jātra*).

popular god of good luck whom one seeks far away (apparently in trade); "Luck is blind" (*andho hi bhaga*) says a proverb (KaṭhĀ 2.222).

Besides the fear and awe expressed of Rudra-Śiva, there is great fear of spirits of all kinds, Rakṣas, Piśāca, etc. or the early attested witch of the wilderness, Araṇyānī (RV 10.146). They have to be appeased or sent back to their origins. Sorcerers (Yātudhāna, Kaṇva, etc.) are feared and treated in the same way (see below).

We know very little about actual popular worship during this period. Occasionally we can gather some glimpses in the Gṛhyasūtras (and then, mostly from their later parts) and or the -often post-Vedic- appendixes to the Śrautasūtras. These contain sections dealing with the worship of particular gods, such as Rudra/Mahādeva/Īśāna, Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa, Śrī, Durgā e.g. in the Baudhāyana Gṛhyaśeṣasūtra or the Atharvaveda Pariśiṣṭa. The question in each case remains how old these appendixes are. In these little studied texts, we clearly see the emergence of post-Vedic *pūjā,* with its emphasis on the personal worship of a particular god of the pantheon. As has been mentioned briefly above, it should be stressed that this level of popular worship is a clear continuation of the Ṛgvedic guest worship offered to the gods (Witzel 1980a:37-39), a feature that has only been obscured but not eliminated by the elaborate Śrauta ritual. The function of *pūjā* as guest reception is essentially still known today, e.g. to Bengali country people, see A. Östör (1982).

A much neglected topic also is that of snake worship. First of all, it is difficult to draw a clear line between the concepts of snakes (*sarpa*) and the half-human *nāga*. These deities, subterranean counterparts of the heavenly *gandharva*, represent the other, chthonic side of humans after death (as opposed to the heavenly one, as *pitṛ*s). Famous persons such as Dhṛtarāṣṭra appear also as Nāgas. Just like the Gandharva/Apsaras they intermarry with humans. Both their roles have to be investigated in detail (see Witzel, forthc. c), especially when taking into account the concepts surrounding the cycle of rebirths before and after the Upaniṣad period.

Snake worship as such has been attested since the RV. While the word nāga occurs only from the AV onwards, snakes are mentioned already in the RV. They are feared, of course, because of their poison, and many legends and beliefs are connected with them. These, including many of the Vedic ones, have been collected by J. Ph. Vogel (1926). A special rite concerning snakes is the *sarpabali* (Winternitz 1888). The later Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads know of a special "science" (of snake charmers) dealing with snakes, *sarpavidyā*. It is interesting to record that many of the snake names occurring in the AV still are those of snake

deities in modern Bengal where the worship of a special snake deity, Manasā is prominent.[80] Others, such a AVP Śarkoṭa, survive in the name of Karkoṭa/Kārkoṭa,[81] one of the major Nāgas of Kashmir and Nepal.

The beginning of the worship of images is another mystery. Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya (c. 150 BCE) mentions them as having been sold by the Mauryas (5.3.99:429.3) but he thinks that they rather should have been treated *pūjārtha* "for worship". Another typical object of worship in later times, the various sacred trees (cf. J.J. Meyer 1937), are dealt with in the Pāli canon but hardly by the Veda. In late Vedic texts there are cases such as: fruit bearing and flowering trees are not to be injured (Vāsiṣṭha Dharmasūtra 19.11, cf. Manu 8.285); trees are to be worshipped, according to a late portion of the Viṣṇu Dharmasūtra 68.9. In addition, there exists, of course, the old Eurasian concept of a world tree (Laycock 1981), as well as its mundane counterpart, the offering pole (*yūpa*), and certain trees such as the *palāśa, parṇa*, or the *udumbara* (Minkowski, 1991 : 141 sqq.) are used in ritual. The Buddhist (and the Jaina) canon, however, have many passages on tree worship; in fact cutting down of such a *caitya* tree is regarded as an offense which was committed by only by detractors of the Buddhist order, such as the *ṣaḍvargika* monk Channa, to instigate unrest among the local people. This indicates, at least, that very shortly after the end of the Vedic period the villagers actively worshipped particular trees -- a fact still common in modern India in the case of such trees as the Pipal, which cannot be cut down but can only be transplanted. Female tree deities (Yakṣinī) who seem to overlap, to some extent, with the Vedic Apsaras some of whom inhabit trees, also occur regularly in the early Buddhist texts. This provides some idea of what was happening during the (late) Vedic period, but with hardly a trace in the Vedic canon. For this reason, too, the slightly later Buddhist canon in Pāli has to be compared constantly, certainly for the later Vedic period (see above).

Finally, we come to the problem of true heterodoxy in the Vedic period.[82] It is, of course, obvious that by 400 BCE several heterodox systems had developed, notably that of the Buddha and that of Mahāvīra. The two founders of Buddhism and Jainism, however, were not the only prominent

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[80] Cf. A.K. Banerji, Bānkurā, (Gazetteer of India, West Bengal District Gazetteers), 1968, p.219 sqq.

[81] The interchange between *ś/k* is found more often in Vedic texts and needs more study. It is not of Indo-European antiquity (the centum / satem split) but restricted to "foreign" (non-Indo-Aryan) words and seems to reflect a sound not easily reproducible by the speakers of Vedic; cf. *kīstá* and *śíṣṭa* (the "correct" Vedic form), etc.

[82] Cf. also Heesterman, 1968.

teachers of the time. Dīghanikāya 2 gives a good idea of the diversity of competing views. It is, certainly surprising that all these movements are recorded from the eastern part of N. India only. This may be due to the nature of our sources (the late Brāhmaṇa texts and most of the Upaniṣads come from this area). Nevertheless, one would expect some inkling of new ideas in more western texts such as PB or ChU. For their connections with the Upaniṣad literature see Horsch, 1966.

The problem has been briefly alluded to above; however, as has been stated, the cultural situation in the 'homeland' of heterodoxy, the Vedic East (Kosala, Videha) has not been understood well enough. The area was one with a constantly changing ferment of older and new tribes, various social systems, emerging great powers, etc. By the time of the Buddha (c. 400 BCE), wandering teachers of all sorts were normal appearances in the towns and villages of the East. We get a glimpse of the earlier stages of this phenomenon when Yājñavalkya leaves home (BĀU 4.5.15). This procedure takes up an older tradition of wandering about as a Veda student and Vrātya, as indeed the structure of the Buddhist *saṅgha* takes up some *vrātya* features: a rather amorphous group of (not always young) men with a leader, special dress, -- but not their bloody rituals. Both types of men traveled far away from their homelands, and if we may trust the BĀU and ŚB accounts of Yājñavalkya's travels in the Panjab, such traveling did indeed reach both the western and the eastern ends of Vedic India.

That the east indeed was different from the more central and western sections of Northern India can easily be noticed in the simple fact that in the east, graves were built that differed from what is described in the Vedic texts. While the Kurus and Pañcālas built small square grave mounds of about a yard high the "easterners and others(!)" are reported by ŚB 12.8.1.5 to have round graves, which the text interestingly calls *āsurya* "demonic". Such mounds have indeed been found at such places like Laurīya on the Nepalese border. These graves have a great similarity or are virtually the same as the later *stūpa* of the Buddhists (and the *kurgan* type grave mounds in S. Russia). There are a number of other indications of a differences in language and customs, such as dialects (Witzel 1989a), social structure etc. (e.g., the oligarchical states of the East, called "republics" by Rhys-Davies 1911, and following him, by all historians).

Little can be said about the religion of the aboriginal tribes that survived in Northern India before merging into the lower Hindu castes. The process of Sanskritization (Srinivas 1952) had been going on, at that time, as we witness already in the RV where some kings with clearly non-Indo-Aryan names were

being praised as performing proper Aryan rituals (cf. now Kuiper 1991). This continues throughout the mantra- and brāhmaṇa periods, for example by making the leader (*niṣādasthapati*, MS 2.2.4) of a local aboriginal tribe, the Niṣādas ("those residing at their proper place" instead of wandering about like the Āryas), eligible to perform the solemn Śrauta ritual. Even clearer is the evidence from the later (and eastern) section of AB: at 7.18 the Ṛgvedic(!) Ṛṣi Viśvāmitra, assisting the (eastern) Ikṣvāku king Hariścandra, adopts the local eastern tribes (*dasyu*), the Andhra, Puṇḍra, Śabara, Pulinda, Mūtiba "who live in large numbers beyond the borders" (*udantya*, just like the Vrātyas, JB § 74 : 1.197): *tā ete andhrāḥ ... ity udantyā bahavo bhavanti Vaiśvāmitrā dasyūnām bhūyiṣṭhāḥ*). Adoption has been a favorite type of inclusion since the RV.

Apart from this we get tantalizing glimpses of what may have been aberrant behavior, perhaps early Tantra, in the AB 7.13, cf. also the notions about the Gosava ritual. Compare, finally RV *śiṣṇadeva, mūladeva*. There is, however, no connection with the so-called Śiva on some Harappa seals (D. Srinivasan 1984). Nothing much for a connection with Vedic beliefs can be deduced from the few seemingly religious objects found in the Indus civilization. Notably the remnants of so-called fire rituals at Kalibangan may represent nothing more than a community kitchen.

ABBREVIATIONS

AĀ	Aitareya Āraṇyaka
AB	Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
Ait. Ār.	Aitareya Āraṇyaka
AO	Acta Orientalia
Ār.	Āraṇyaka
AV	Atharvaveda
AVŚ, ŚS	Atharvaveda, Śaunaka Recension
AVP, PS	Atharvaveda, Paippalāda Recension
BĀU	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
Br.	Brāhmaṇa
BŚS	Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra
BYV	Black (Kṛṣṇa) Yajurveda
ChU	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
ERE	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics
GB	Gopatha Brāhmaṇa
HR	History of Religions
IIJ	Indo-Iranian Journal
JA	Journal Asiatique
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JB	Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa
KB	Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa
KpS	Kapiṣṭhala Saṃhitā
KaṭhŚiUp	Kaṭha Śikṣā Upaniṣad
KauśS	Kauśika Sūtra
KauṣUp	Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad
KS	Kaṭha Saṃhitā or Kāṭhakam
MS	Maitrāyaṇi Saṃhitā
PAPS	Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society
PB	Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa
PS	Paippalāda Saṃhitā
Repr.	Reprint(ed)
RV	Ṛgveda
SV	Sāmaveda
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
ŚBM	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Mādhyandina recension
ŚBK	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Kāṇva recension
Śr.S.	Śrautasūtra
Taitt. Ār.	Taittirīya Āraṇyaka
TB	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
TS	Taittirīya Saṃhitā
TU	Taittirīya Upaniṣad
Up.	Upaniṣad
VS	Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā
VSK	Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā, Kāṇva recension
Vādh	Vādhūla
WYV	White (Śukla) Yajurveda
WZKS	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd-Asiens und Archiv für indische Philosophie (or WZKSOA)
YV	Yajurveda
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft

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