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A King's Best Weapon

Sudarśana's Worship at the Royal Court
According to the *Ahīrbudhnyasamhitā*

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Preface

The present thesis explores the relationship between, broadly speaking, religious power and political power, instantiated in the idealized presentation of the royal court in a literary source belonging to the Pāñcarātra tradition.

The work in question, which I had read for one semester under the supervision of Doz. Dr. Marion Rastelli, is a medieval text known under the name of *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* (AhS). The AhS has been critically edited and has received considerable attention by modern scholarship. It was therefore possible, thanks to the efforts of a number of scholars, to start my research on a fairly solid textual basis, which included selected variant readings from as many as ten manuscripts, and on a number of valuable arguments concerning the date and origin of the work. Both facts are significant, considering the poor quality of many editions of Pāñcarātra works and that such works belong to anonymous sectarian literature, a genre naturally reluctant to be precisely localized in time and space.

More specifically, Dr. Rastelli has conducted significant research on a number of aspects of the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā*. She was kind enough to share with me her drafts of many as yet unpublished articles, most of which were instrumental in shaping my understanding of the work. Some of these articles explore aspects of the “construction” of a Pāñcarātra royal court, e.g. the descriptions of the court officiant and the role of the many narratives depicting the adventures of kings.

The present thesis builds upon her important contributions and attempts to include other aspects into the picture, which have so far received little or no attention. These aspects include: 1) a discussion of the power relations between the religious and political institutions exemplified by the hierarchy of king and court officiant; 2) the outlining of a specific ritual repertoire meant to meet royal needs; 3) the promise of certain benefits arising from such repertoire (including protection of the king’s person, attainment of victory in battle etc.); 4) the development of a theological/cosmological framework apt at supporting this system.

The presentation of selected textual passages will illustrate the above points. But behind such points a whole “system” can be recognized, implying that a careful strategy had been developed by the redactor(s) of the work, clearly in order to make their tradition more appealing to rulers. A central part of this strategy was stressing the fact that by adopting the cult presented in the work, the military needs of the king would have been met.

On this occasion of the end of my course of studies in Vienna, I would like to express my gratitude to those who kindly and patiently instructed me during my years at the “Institut für Südasien-, Tibet- und Buddhismuskunde” of the University. In particular I would like to mention those who helped me in improving this thesis. First of all I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Doz. Dr. Marion Rastelli, who generously shared with me her vast knowledge of the Pāñcarātra tradition and who wholeheartedly engaged in the supervision of this thesis.

My gratitude goes also to Prof. Karin Preisendanz for pointing out a number of inaccuracies in my translations and helping me to structure the thesis during our weekly meeting for the “Kolloquium zu Philosophie und Religionen Südasiens”. Among the other participants to the Kolloquium, I would like to especially mention Mr. Oliver Frey for his much appreciated insights into the issue of scientific writing and for his help with the technicalities of LaTeX programming.

A sincere thanks to Katherine Apostle and Dennis Johnson for proofreading the English of large parts of this thesis. The remaining mistakes are mine alone.

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Francesco Bianchini, June 2015

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research Question, Method, and Structure

Scholars have long since noticed that the *Ahīrbudhnyasamhitā*'s depiction of Sudarśana's cult¹ presents special links to the royal court and the institution of kingship². Rastelli has dealt with specific issues like aspects of Yantra worship (2003), the descriptions of court officiants (2012), and the content of the many narratives (2015)³. Needless to say, the present study relies heavily upon her observations. Nevertheless, some very important aspects of the relation of the *Ahīrbudhnyasamhitā*'s cult with the royal court have not yet received sufficient attention and a study which attempts to bring together the various aspects of the topic, including translations of extensive textual passages, is still a *desideratum*. The present thesis is meant to be a step in that direction.

What are the main aspects of the description of a Vaiṣṇava royal court in the work under discussion? Do such aspects build a meaningful whole? If yes, is it possible to discern where the emphasis lies and which are the main points on the redactor(s)' agenda? In order to answer these questions, a number of steps are necessary, which are mirrored in the structure of the present thesis.

The thesis consists of three main sections, which are represented by chapters two to four. The second chapter introduces the work *Ahīrbudhnyasamhitā* and

¹The word "cult" is used here and elsewhere in this thesis to denote the various elements involved in the worship of Sudarśana. Besides rituals and ritual agents, theology, iconography etc. are also implied by the definition. The word "cult" is therefore not used derogatorily but merely as an umbrella term.

²The most prominent examples are Schrader 1916, Begley 1973, and, more recently, Rastelli 2003, 2012, 2015.

³Besides her study of 2003 on Yantras and Maṇḍalas in the context of the Pāñcarātra, the other two articles have not yet been published. The present author had access to the drafts, which means that the page numbers given in this thesis are only provisional.

includes a summary of previous research, reflections on its date and place of origin, a description of its structure, and some introductory remarks on the work's contents.

The third chapter is dedicated to the presentation of selected texts of the AhS. The order of presentation is based on the system developed in section 2.4 «A System for Describing the Work's Structure». The methodology applied as well as various issues relating to textual criticism are presented in 3.1 «Method and Sources».

The texts are introduced, then the Sanskrit of the edition is reproduced along with its critical apparatus. A translation follows, provided, when deemed necessary, with exegetical notes. For simplifying the reference to selected texts in subsequent parts of the thesis, a *numerus currens* has been assigned to each of them.

The fourth chapter builds upon the previous one inasmuch as it is based on the primary sources presented there. The main function of this chapter is to identify and discuss the main categories of analysis. Such categories are identified in 4.1 «Introductory Remarks» as the major components of the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā*'s construction of its links with the institution of kingship. They are: descriptions of the court members; the ritual repertoire offered by the court officiant; the benefits arising from that repertoire; and the role of higher powers and divine agents. The benefits have been divided into two groups: 1) protection of the kingdom and the king's person, and 2) victory and sovereignty. The idea behind this division is to distinguish between defensive and aggressive aspects of the cult and to facilitate the identification of the one mostly stressed.

The «Conclusions» will address again the observations made in the above three sections and attempt to answer the research question.

The Appendices A and B present translations. Appendix A contains an extract from *Adhyāya* 48, covering two short narratives which recount of how King Viśāla and King Sunanda were helped by court officiants to solve their problems. Both of them illustrate uses of the Yantra (see the next section for some remarks on Yantras), which is the most powerful ritual device offered to the king and his entourage by the officiants of the cult. The two narratives are introduced in greater detail under 3.5 «Remarks on the Narratives».

The translation in Appendix B covers *Adhyāya* 39, which is devoted to the description of a ritual meant to fulfill any desire. The reader will thus be able to

approach two stylistically very different sub-genres of the AhS. For a description of the ritual see 3.4 «Rituals to meet Royal Needs».

1.2. On the Pāñcarātra Tradition

The present thesis will explore a Sanskrit work, the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā*, which belongs to the Pāñcarātra tradition.

In her article on the Pāñcarātra in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Rastelli writes: “The Pāñcarātra is a Hindu tradition that worships Viṣṇu as the supreme god. Its origins date back to the centuries before the Common Era, and still today it can be found in certain features of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition”⁴. A tradition called Pāñcarātra appears then to have had a considerably long history. The present thesis, however, considers a form of the Pāñcarātra which extends over a much shorter period of time. Since it is safe to assume that the final redaction of the AhS took place in South India around the 13th Century (see section 2.2 «Date and Place of Origin»), the early medieval developments of the Pāñcarātra are particularly relevant for the present discussion. The most important feature of early medieval Pāñcarātra is that its ritual system is a tantric one. The import of the terms “tantric ritual system” and “early medieval” will be addressed first. Selected aspects of the Pāñcarātra tradition and their relevance for the present study will then follow.

Tantra is considered here as a ritual system⁵ which makes large use of Maṇḍalas, i.e. graphic representations which serve as substrate for the deities which are invited during the ritual, and Yantras, i.e. diagrams which actually are not different from the deity itself⁶. Other procedures like the imposition of Mantras on the body (*nyāsa*) through ritualized hand gestures (*mudrās*) are another characteristic of it. This procedure results in the creation of a divine body fit for worshipping the deity. In the tantric context, Mantras are considered to be actual manifestations of the deity⁷.

Rituals in the tantric context tend to be portrayed as bestowing either supernat-

⁴Cfr. Rastelli 2011: 444.

⁵The following aspects of the Pāñcarātra ritual system are taken from Rastelli 2011 (p. 454ff.).

⁶For a detailed explanation of these terms in the Pāñcarātra context see Rastelli 2003.

⁷Cfr. Rastelli 2011: 453.

ural powers (*bhukti*) and subsequent liberation (*mukti*), or direct liberation itself⁸. The most distinctive complex ritual in the tantric domain is perhaps the ritual of initiation (*dīkṣā*), some variants of which were presented as bestowing liberation on the disciple undergoing it⁹.

Clearly, this is not a definition of tantrism, but a simplified characterization of its ritual system. Its advantage is that of bringing together under the same category forms of religion belonging to different traditions such as Śaivism, Buddhism, and Vaiṣṇavism¹⁰.

As for the label “early medieval”, it is here simply meant to indicate the period of time which goes from the decline of the Guptas in the 5th century CE to the conquest of northern India by the Afghan-Turkish Ghurids, completed around the 13th century¹¹.

The Pāñcarātra tradition, whose name’s origin is still unclear¹², is a complex historical phenomenon and as such elusive to clearcut definitions. Fortunately for the student, two recent articles by Rastelli (Rastelli 2011 and Rastelli *forthcoming*) cover respectively a general survey of distinctive features of the tradition and an introductory overview of its literary sources. For understanding the Pāñcarātra in relation to the larger context of the Vaiṣṇava traditions, Colas’ *History of the Vaiṣṇava Traditions* (2003) is a highly recommended reading. On the issue of the oldest medieval works of the Pāñcarātra being indebted to Śaiva sources see the chapter “The Decline of Vaiṣṇavism and the Rise of the Tantric Pāñcarātra Following Śaiva Models” in Sanderson’s *The Śaiva Age* (2009).

⁸Cfr. Rastelli 2011: 453.

⁹Cfr. Rastelli 2011: 454.

¹⁰Cfr. Sanderson 2009: 62 “The ritual system prescribed in the Pāñcarātra scriptures is remarkably close to that of the Śaiva Mantramārga in its repertoire, consisting principally of Maṇḍala initiation (*dīkṣā*), regular worship comprising Nyāsa, Pūjā, Japa and Homa, the periodic ritual of *pavitṛāropanam*, special rites of Mantra-propitiation (*mantrasādhana*), and image-installation (*pratīsthā*); and this proximity extends into the minute details of the procedures of these rituals and even to the production of Vaiṣṇava versions of such eminently Śaiva rites as the *vetālasādhana*”.

¹¹The dates adopted here, as well as the expression “early medieval”, are indicated in Sanderson 2009: 41. The AhS seems to have been redacted at the very end of this period.

¹²The name seems to be a derivative formation of an exocentric possessive compound whose basic elements are *pañca* (five) and *rātri* (night). Sanskrit sources present various explanations of the term and scholars have collected them and advanced theories of their own (for a survey of definitions see Smith 1964-1966 and Rastelli 2011 (p. 445ff.)). The present author fails to see conclusive evidence in the arguments known to him.

The mentioned studies have a considerably large scope, it will therefore be sufficient in the context of the present thesis to present only a few selected features of the Pāñcarātra tradition.

The main features of medieval Pāñcarātra directly relevant for the topic at hand are the following:

- The tradition's literary corpus *stricto sensu* is constituted by anonymous works considered to be the revelation of Viṣṇu or one of his aspects¹³;
- The ritual system described in such works shows a number of tantric elements¹⁴;
- Already the oldest works of the corpus show features resembling those found in more ancient Śaiva scriptures. Such features relate to ritual repertoire, Mantra-system and even theology.¹⁵;
- Most works of the corpus contain at least in some measure indications about a vision of the universe. This results in the possibility of speaking of a Pāñcarātra cosmology, theology, and soteriology¹⁶.
- The complex social aspects of the Pāñcarātra include: a ritual of initiation for entering the religion; a structured hierarchy of practitioners guided by the master (*ācārya*); the larger public dimension, which in later South Indian works prominently includes temple rituals and festivals¹⁷.

All of these aspects are relevant in the context of the AhS as well. For example, the fact that the AhS was presented as a revealed work makes finding a date for it more difficult, since the redactor(s) would have been careful in avoiding mention of historical contingencies (see 2.2 «Date and Place of Origin»). The fact that the ritual system presents tantric features can be used for increasing its appeal to the

¹³See Rastelli *forthcoming*, but the issues is addressed already in Rastelli 2011.

¹⁴A short characterization of such a system has been given above (p. 3).

¹⁵For a detailed description of such features cfr. Sanderson 2009: 62ff. The issue was already addressed by Sanderson in his *History through Textual Criticism* (2001).

¹⁶Important publications dealing with these aspects, and incidentally also with the AhS, are Bock-Raming 2002 and Matsubara 1994.

¹⁷Relevant in this regard is Rastelli's study of the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* (2006).

royal audience (see 4.2 «Ritual Repertoire and its Benefits»). A certain use of more or less transparent textual borrowings from Śaiva and other sources might throw light on strategies of apologetics (see 2.3 «Introducing the Work's Content»). Since Pāñcarātra works are religious works, attention has to be given both to the rituals presented as well as to the theology and cosmology supporting them, especially to the choice of deities populating the cult (see 4.3 «Divine Powers»). As for the social dimension, the AhS does not describe large temple rituals, but it shows nonetheless much awareness of political issues. Particularly telling is the hierarchical presentation of court members, the most prominent of which are naturally the king and the court officiant (see 3.2 «Kings and Court Officiants»).

Before proceeding to the presentation of the material, the next chapter will introduce the work *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā*. The reader already familiar with this work might still be interested in section 2.4 «A System for Describing the Work's Structure», since the arrangement of textual passages in chapter three follows the considerations made there.

2. The Work *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā*

2.1. Summary of Previous Research

The contributions by various scholars which have formed the present author's understanding of the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* deserve being listed at the very beginning of this chapter, before proceeding to lay the foundation necessary to understand the materials presented in the third chapter.

Schrader's Contribution • Friedrich Otto Schrader¹⁸ deserves special consideration here because of the importance of his pioneering work on the Pāñcarātra in general and on the AhS in particular. A critical edition of the AhS was realized under his supervision by M.D. Rāmānujācārya and published by the Adyar Library in Madras in 1916. His *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahīrbudhnya Saṃhitā* (also published in 1916) contains, among other material, a summary of the contents of the AhS (p. 99-146) which can prove to be of help to the student of the Pāñcarātra as well as to the more advanced researcher who would like to gain insight into the general contents of the work in a reasonably short time before proceeding to deeper enquiries. As can be expected, this section of the publication is also the one which best survived the signs of the time and the advancement of research. One short section of his 1916 study is devoted to the issue of date and origin of the work (p. 96-99). Why most of the arguments found there are today outdated is explained below in «*Date and Place of Origin on the AhS*» (2.2).

Schrader's description of the manuscript material related to the AhS (p. 94-95) is regrettably extremely succinct and the introductions to both the first and second edition of the AhS report only descriptions of the witnesses (in Sanskrit and English

¹⁸On Schrader's life some information can be found in the preface to Schrader 1983 (pp. v-ix).

respectively)¹⁹. What is missing is a description of the philological principles on which the critical edition was realized, the policies adopted and, most of all, a detailed description of the stemma, which the scholars were able to reconstruct. The few, ambiguous lines touching the topic of the stemma²⁰ are reported in their entirety below under «*Method and Textual Sources*» (3.1).

Theology • Significant attention has been devoted to the opening chapters of the AhS, which deal mainly with topics related to Pāñcarātra theology. After Schrader's pioneering work on the AhS' theology (1916), Matsubara (1994) has translated the chapters on theology (Chapters 1 to 7) into English and Bock-Raming (2002) has analysed some of them in connection to the older *Sāttvatasamṛhita*, tracing in particular the evolution of the *vyūha* conception²¹. He has also studied the closing chapters of the AhS (Bock-Raming 1992), which interpret the meaning of various Mantras in Pāñcarātra terms. Some of his conclusions are of great relevance for the issue of the place of origin of the work, as will be shown below.

Influences by Other Systems • One of the characteristic features of the AhS is the fact that the work draws on a number of different systems, thus establishing a real net of connections. Such connections are relevant in a number of ways, since they throw light on issues of dating, place of origin, purpose of redaction and apologetics.

Rastelli (2012) has written a still unpublished article dealing precisely with this issue. Particularly relevant for the purpose of the present research are the connections to the Atharvavedic *milieu*²², since the royal chaplains (*purohitas*) ideally came from that background²³.

The main influence is arguably that by Śaiva sources from Kashmir, as Sanderson (2001) has demonstrated²⁴. Terms employed in the description of *Śakti* and the

¹⁹Cfr. the First Edition (p. 15-16) and the Preface to the 2nd Edition (p. viii-ix)

²⁰Cfr. Schrader 1916: 94-95.

²¹Cfr. Bock-Raming 2002: 18-56.

²²Cfr. Rastelli 2012: 7-10.

²³Cfr. Sanderson 2007: 204.

²⁴The considerable amount of evidence adduced to this conclusion is presented in footnote 47, which covers several pages. Cfr. Sanderson 2001: 36ff.

account of the “unfolding of the letters of the alphabet”²⁵ are examples of such borrowings.

Oberhammer (2007) has studied some of the Viśiṣṭādvaita elements in Pāñcarātra sources including the AhS²⁶. Mumme too has devoted attention to these influences (Mumme 2007).

Rituals and Narratives • Rastelli (2003) has devoted much attention to the technicalities of Yantra worship in the AhS as well as to the description of the Daily Ritual in *Adhyāya* 28 (2005). More recently (2015) she dealt with the many narrative passages of the *saṃhitā*, presenting a paper at a conference in Vienna in February 2015 under the title “*Narratives as a Medium for Appealing to the Royal Court*”. She also prepared a useful grid offering an overview of the main characteristics of each story, including names of main characters (usually kings and court officiants), the kind of problems they have to face and how they eventually solve them²⁷. The results of her studies on the narrative passages will be dealt with below.

Iconography • A very substantial study by Begley (1973) has traced the iconographical evolution of the *sudarśanacakra* up to modern times. The final chapters deal with the tantric representations of Sudarśana and draw extensively on the AhS, offering also translations of some of the AhS’ passages describing the deity²⁸ and comparisons with descriptions from other, broadly speaking, coeval sources²⁹. This research was also able to furnish us with one of the strongest arguments for placing AhS in time and space (see «*Date and Place of Origin of the AhS*»).

Other Aspects and Contributions • Aspects pertaining to the Yoga of the AhS have been treated by Schwarz Linder in her PhD dissertation (2012)³⁰. The fact that the AhS includes some early descriptions of yogic postures (*āsanas*) has

²⁵Cfr. Sanderson 2001: 37.

²⁶He deals for instance with the *śaraṇāgati* formulas (AhS 37.30ff.) and the *śeṣa/śeṣin* terminology. Cfr. Oberhammer 2007: 46ff.

²⁷Cfr. Rastelli 2015: 8.

²⁸Cfr. Begley 1973: 73-74.

²⁹Cfr. Begley 1973: 75.

³⁰Relevant here is Chapter IV: “The Psycho-Physical Practices of the Yogin” (p. 203-217).

been noted i.a. by Mallinson (2011).

A Hindi translation of the AhS has been written by Malaviya (2007). The book contains also a very detailed synopsis in Sanskrit of the *saṃhitā*'s contents.

It should also be mentioned that Rastelli (2006) has written one of the most exhaustive summaries of arguments pertaining to the issue of dating the work, including detailed lists of quotations by and from the AhS³¹.

2.2. Date and Place of Origin

The following lines will attempt to explain the reasons why some scholars used to consider the AhS among the early Kashmirian Pāñcarātra texts and that recent studies have adduced instead strong arguments for both a later date and a South Indian final recension, if not actual origin, of the text.

It is necessary to mention right at the beginning that dating a text like the AhS (i.e. an anonymous composition of encyclopaedic character) entails confrontation with a major difficulty. As Bock-Raming rightly stresses in one of his recent works³², assuming that the text is a single unit means oversimplifying the facts and can lead to major errors of judgement. This is particularly likely to happen in the case of the AhS, since the text we now possess is a fairly uniform composition, both in style and structure³³. Nevertheless, especially the chapters at the end of the work are liable to be later additions and even many narrative passages or ritual descriptions could have been easily inserted as a block into the general frame of the work, after having been in some measure adapted by the redactor(s).

It may be useful for the purpose of dating to use the expression '(final) redaction' to indicate a text fairly similar to the one found in Schrader's critical edition. But the student should bear in mind that some of the textual material found therein might well be much older.

³¹Cfr. Rastelli 2006: 50-52.

³²Cfr. Bock-Raming 2002: 18ff.

³³Cfr. Rastelli 2012: 2 "Insgesamt ist sie jedoch systematisch strukturiert, was den Eindruck vermittelt, daß hier zumindest ein Endredakteur am Werk war, der dem Text einen zumindest oberflächlichen homogenen Anschein gab".

Arguments for an Early Date and Kashmirian Redaction • Perhaps the strongest argument for an early origin of the AhS is that a verse incorporated in this work is found in a slightly different version in Bhāgavata Utpala’s commentary on the *Spandakārika*³⁴, possibly dating from the 10th century and composed in Kashmir³⁵. If the argument were accepted, it may also be used for supporting the idea of a Kashmirian redaction of the AhS. However, the citation in Utpala’s work is not directly assigned to the AhS but generally to the Pāñcarātra milieu³⁶. This means that Matsubara’s conclusion that “Utpala must have been familiar with the Ahirbudhnya”³⁷ does not stand on firm ground, since the verse might just have been later incorporated into the *samhitā*³⁸. Once the argument has been thus relativized we are left with very scanty evidence for both early and Kashmirian redactions.

Schrader points out that the mentioning of ‘birch bark’ and ‘snow’ may be evidence for Kashmirian roots³⁹. The same would be the case with the name ‘Muktāpīḍa’, found not only in one of the many narrative passages of the AhS but also in the Kashmirian chronicle *Rājatarāṅginī*⁴⁰. These pieces of evidence are perhaps worth mentioning but far from providing any definite proof, since knowledge of such things could spread in a number of ways (also through literary sources) and virtually be found anywhere. If necessary at all, such passages could be explained as a deliberate strategy on the part of the redactor, who wished to give the text a North Indian garb, perhaps conscious of the fact that the roots of the Pāñcarātra are indeed connected to that area. But this assumption is still mere speculation.

³⁴This fact has been noted and discussed in Schrader 1916: 96; Matsubara 1994: 22-23; Sanderson 2001: 38 (footnote 48); Bock-Raming 2002: 19.

³⁵On the issue of rightly naming and dating Bhāgavata Utpala cfr. Sanderson 2001: 35.

³⁶Utpala’s text (as quoted in Matsubara 1994: 22) reads as follows:

*pañcarātre ’pi
prajñāprāsādam āruhya asocyah śocato janān |
bhūmiṣṭhān iva śailasthaḥ sarvān prajño ’nupaśyati ||*

He points out similar verses found in both Brahmanical and Buddhist literature (a fact which according to me does not strengthen the possibility of a direct quotation from the AhS) and then quotes AhS 15, 71cd-72ab:

*prajñāprāsādam ārūḍho vimuktaḥ sarvato janaiḥ |
bhūmiṣṭhān iva śailasthaḥ paśyan sarvān avasthitān ||*

³⁷Cfr. Matsubara id.

³⁸Cfr. Sanderson id.

³⁹Cfr. Schrader 1916: 96ff. The passages in question are AhS 26.75, 45.53 and 39.23.

⁴⁰Cfr. Schrader id. He points out Rājatarāṅginī 4.42 and Bock-Raming 2002: 20 (footnote 6) adds: “Muktāpīḍa heißt in der Rājatarāṅginī der 5., in der Zeit von 699-736 n.Chr. Regierende Herrscher der Karkoṭa-Dynastie”.

Another, more striking, aspect of the AhS' connection to Kashmir is the fact that it uses the terminology typical of famous non-dualist Śaiva exegetes from that region (see next section). Matsubara adduced the argument that the absence of the term *bhāgavata* in a sectarian sense may be taken as evidence of its predating Śāṅkara⁴¹. It is true that the term is not used sectarially in early sources, whereas it is virtually synonymous with *pāñcarātrin* in the writings of Yāmuna and Rāmānuja⁴². Nevertheless such terminological niceties should be considered primarily in the micro-context of the work. It seems plausible in the light of the strong Śaiva influences in the work that the term *bhāgavata* was deliberately avoided in order not to show an excessively sectarian attitude at a time where the term was already in use as signifying a very specific Pāñcarātra affiliation.

No other significative evidence in support of an early origin of the AhS is known to me.

Arguments for a Later Date and South Indian Redaction • In his seminal article published in 2001, Sanderson has adduced plenty of evidence in support of the fact that the AhS postdates Kṣemarāja, a Kashmirian author of the 11th century⁴³. Terminological parallels are clear and abundant but unfortunately there seems to be no clear-cut quotation of *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya* or other works by the famous pupil of Abhinavagupta⁴⁴ and this fact does not make the argument as solid as we wish it to be. However, the theoretical possibility of the AhS influencing Kṣemarāja seems to be ruled out by the fact that the text seems to draw on a whole Kashmirian Śaiva textual substrate, which includes many of the so-called revealed texts as well as Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka*⁴⁵.

One should be careful in jumping to the conclusion that the AhS is a later Kashmirian product since the last chapters of the AhS present Pāñcarātra glosses on Yajurveda-Mantras, identified by Bock-Raming as belonging to the Taittirīya re-

⁴¹Cfr. Matsubara 1994: 24ff.

⁴²Cfr. Colas 2003: 234ff.

⁴³Cfr. Sanderson 2001: 36ff.

⁴⁴Different is the case of the *Lakṣmītantra*. Cfr. Sanderson 2001: 36 (footnote 47).

⁴⁵The account of the origin of the alphabet seems particularly telling in this regard. Cfr. Sanderson 2001: 36ff.

cension⁴⁶. According to Bock-Raming this fact entails: “daß die Schlußkapitel der AhS im südindischen Raum verfaßt wurden”⁴⁷. The reason for this has to be looked for in the medieval distribution of brahmanical groups throughout the subcontinent. A quick look at Witzel’s map depicting this situation⁴⁸ clearly shows that the Taittirīya recension was strong in Kerala, whereas it was the Kathaka that was prevalent in Kashmir. Thus at least the last chapters of the AhS bear a strong connection to the South of India.

But perhaps the strongest argument for both a late and South Indian redaction comes from iconography. Although we do have a few multi-armed statues of Sudarśana from Bengal dated to the late Pāla period, it is a 13th century, bronze now in a private collection in Bombay which really seems to be the first image of the deity clearly associated with Pāñcarātra iconography⁴⁹. Begley observes that the order of the weapons matches the description of the Pārameśvarasaṃhitā⁵⁰. There is also a *ṣaṭkoṇa* behind the image, a feature highly charged with tantric symbolism. Surprisingly enough, no other images of this kind seem to have come to light so far which are prior to the 16th century⁵¹. But there is at least evidence of the existence of Sudarśana shrines in South India from at least the 11th century CE. Three early examples are found in the Madurai area, to which the famous shrine at Śrīrangam should be added⁵². An example of a temple entirely dedicated to Sudarśana can be found at Hampi, whose cult image was provisionally dated by Begley to the 15th or the 16th centuries⁵³. It should also be mentioned that the description of

⁴⁶Cfr. Bock-Raming 1992. Three strong arguments are adduced to proving this on page 84.

⁴⁷Cfr. Bock-Raming 1992: 85. Cfr. Sanderson 1991: 38.

⁴⁸Cfr. Witzel 1986: 41.

⁴⁹Cfr. Begley 1973: 66ff.

⁵⁰Cfr. Begley 1973: 67.

⁵¹Cfr. Begley 1973: 68.

⁵²Champakalakshmi (1981: 251) states: “The earliest known epigraphic reference to the shrine of Cakkarattālvār is in the Pāṇḍya inscriptions of Jaṭāvārman Śrīvallabha (close to the eleventh century A.D.) from the Citrarathavallābha Perumāḷ temple in Kuruvitturai in the Madurai district. [...] In the Kālamegha Perumāḷ Tempel in Tirumohur in the Madurai district, a shrine for Cakkarattālvār (Tiruvāḷi Ālvār) was set up in the reign of Jaṭāvārman Sundara Pāṇḍya (accession A.D. 1251). Two more shrines of Cakkarattālvār or Tiruvāḷi Ālvār are known to have existed during the period of a Tribhuvanacakravartin Kōnērinmaikoṇḍān (ninth year), one in the Kaḷḷaḷagar temple in Aḷagarmalai, Madurai district and the other in the Ranganātha temple in Śrīrangam (twentyfirst year)”. Details on the Tamil inscriptions are given in her footnotes on page 253. Quoted in Rastelli 2012.

⁵³Cfr. Begley 1973: 71. The image and the syncretistic temple complex surrounding it have been briefly described in Verghese 1995 and discussed in Rastelli 2012.

the sixteen-armed Sudarśana in Veṅkaṭanātha's (a South Indian scholar of the 14th century) *Ṣoḍaśāyudhastotram*, matches largely that of AhS 37, 7-17 and that of PārS 23, 39-48⁵⁴. Veṅkaṭanātha is apparently also the first one to quote directly the AhS⁵⁵.

One last thing to point out in favour of South Indian roots of the AhS is the fact that no manuscripts of the text seem to have survived either in Kashmir or Nepal⁵⁶. On the other hand, it has not been possible so far to identify technical terms of clear Dravidian origin or to extract a pattern from the very scanty descriptions of architectural details which could be linked to a specific South Indian style.

For a relative chronology it is important to note that the AhS refers to both the Sāttvata and the Jayākhyā⁵⁷.

Given the amount of evidence mentioned above, it seems reasonable to date some form of the AhS considerably close to that of its final redaction from the 11th to the 13th centuries CE and to restrict the place of its final redaction to the South of India.

2.3. Introducing the Work's Content

As mentioned in section 2.1, a summary of each one of the AhS' chapters, called *Adhyāyas*, can be found in Schrader 1916. The Sanskrit indexes of both the edition and the Hindī translation (Malaviya 2007) are quite detailed and can be used for general orientation.

The AhS' contents are peculiar in comparison with older Pāñcarātra sources (like the *Jayākhyā*, the *Pauṣkara* and the *Sāttvata*, forming together the famous "three jewels" of the tradition's literary corpus) inasmuch as unusually large sections are dedicated to theology and narratives⁵⁸.

The AhS is presented as the contents of a dialogue between Nārada and Ahir-

⁵⁴Cfr. Begley 1973: 75.

⁵⁵Unlike Veṅkaṭanātha, Varadaguru quotes a verse found in the AhS without mentioning this work. Cfr. Rastelli 2006: 50.

⁵⁶According to Schrader the oldest manuscripts are those preserved in Mysore and Kalale (1916: 94). The total number of MSs available for the first edition is nine, and all the MSs are from the South. A tenth South Indian MS has been used for the revised edition of Krishnamacharya.

⁵⁷Cfr. Rastelli 2006: 51 footnote 18.

⁵⁸Cfr. Rastelli 2012: 2.

budhnya, where the name “Ahirbudhnya” is used to refer to Śiva⁵⁹. The core of the dialogue is the revelation of the cult of Sudarśana, Viṣṇu’s discoid weapon. Sudarśana is presented as Creative Energy (*kriyāśakti*) and is thus connected to Lakṣmī, who is described as possessing the two kinds of energy, i.e. Creative (*kriyā*) and Material (*bhūti*)⁶⁰. The nature of the deity will be addressed again in greater detail in 4.3 «Divine Powers», using materials presented in the third chapter. Sudarśana is described as having an anthropomorphic form with usually either two, eight, sixteen or sixtyfour arms, among which the sixteen-armed form is the most frightful (*ugra*)⁶¹. Each arm carries one weapon, but the number of weapons described in the *saṃhitā* is far greater than sixteen. As many as four *Adhyāyas* (30, 34-35 and 40) are devoted to the description of over one hundred divine weapons (*divya-astras*), divided into defensive and offensive ones, which are said to have originated from Sudarśana himself⁶².

Sudarśana’s form as Yantra (described in *Adhyāyas* 23-27 and 36-37) can become a most powerful ritual device, which can be employed by the officiants for the benefits of the kingdom in a number of ways, as will be shown below. Rastelli writes: “A particular yantra is the *saudarśanayantra*, which is described in the Ahirbudhnya-Saṃhitā and, based on the Ahirbudhnya-Saṃhitā, also in the Pārameśvara-Saṃhitā. It not only contains linear diagrams and writings of mantras, but also pictorial representations of various deities. Furthermore, the writing material, which should be solid such as metal or stone, is covered with a yantra diagram not only on the obverse side but also, with a different drawing, on the reverse” (Rastelli 2003: 148).

Sudarśana’s Mantra is revealed in encoded form in *Adhyāya* 18. Its central constituent is *sahasrāra* (the one with thousand spokes) followed by the seed Mantras *hum phaṭ*⁶³.

Coming back to the general contents, the core of the work is embedded between an opening presenting theological/cosmological teachings and a closing section devoted to the explanations of Mantras in Pāñcarātra terms. Other topics addressed are

⁵⁹Cfr. Rastelli 2012: 4.

⁶⁰This paraphrases the following text: *lakṣmīr nāma dvidhā sā tu kriyābhūtivibhedinī | yā kriyā nāma saṃkalpaḥ sa sudarśananāmavān ||* (AhS 8, 30).

⁶¹Cfr. Begley 1973: 78ff.

⁶²Cfr. Schrader 1916: 124ff.

⁶³Cfr. Schrader 1916: 121.

those of the origin and power of Mantras (*Adhyāyas* 16-19), descriptions of ritual procedures (20-22, 28-29, 38-39 and 46-47) and Yoga (31-32). Very large sections, as already pointed out, contain a number of narratives (33, 41-45, 48-49) written in a plain Sanskrit which reminds the student of the style of some narratives found in the Sanskrit epic known as *Mahābhārata*.

It is also necessary to add here some remarks about the AhS' links with other sources and traditions, this being a basic characteristic of the work in question. The AhS is clearly a Pāñcarātra work, but it on the whole very open to other systems. First of all, as observed by Bock-Raming⁶⁴, it is particularly welcoming towards the Vedic tradition. Rastelli has pointed out that Atharvavedic elements are particularly prominent in the work⁶⁵. Three points mentioned by Rastelli regarding the AhS' connection to the Atharvaveda are relevant here: 1) Sudarśana's Mantra is said to have arisen from the Atharvaveda (AhS 20, 21-22); 2) entitlement to the Mantra follows initiation, performed either ritually or mentally, or an Atharvavedic ritual (AhS 20, 47-48b); 3) the peculiarity of the Atharvaveda is described as due to its emphasis on pacificatory and hostile rituals (AhS 12, 7-8)⁶⁶.

Furthermore, Śaiva terminology is applied in the description of Śakti and the origin of Mantras, as noted by Sanderson⁶⁷. The last major component of this broad intertextuality is the presence of elements typically associated with the Viśiṣṭādvaita school. Such elements have been studied i.a. by Oberhammer⁶⁸. One way to interpret this web of interconnections is to consider it as a way of enhancing the authority and respectability of the AhS⁶⁹.

⁶⁴Cfr. Bock-Raming 2002: 184.

⁶⁵Cfr. Rastelli 2012: 7ff.

⁶⁶All of these passages have been translated in Rastelli 2012.

⁶⁷Cfr. Sanderson 2001: 36ff.

⁶⁸Cfr. Oberhammer 2007. See above section 2.1.

⁶⁹For this and other possible explanations see Rastelli 2012.

2.4. A System for Describing the Work's Structure

The Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā comprises, in Schrader's edition, 60 *Adhyāyas* (meaning 'lectures' or 'readings' and roughly corresponding to "chapters") of variable length with a total of 3880 verses. It is thus relatively short in size.

From a stylistic point of view, different sections present considerable variety. For example, a highly technical language is used when dealing with Yantra worship but the Sanskrit of the narrative passages is generally plain, except when it is used at times to achieve poetical effects. In some cases the meter may also vary accordingly⁷⁰.

Despite peculiarities in content and variety of styles, the AhS shows a considerable degree of consistency⁷¹. Interesting in this regard is the function of the narratives, which illustrate in form of stories the principles expounded in the more technical parts of the work (see section 3.5 «Remarks on the Narratives»). Nevertheless, the structure of the central part of the text is quite puzzling, inasmuch as similar topics are treated in *Adhyāyas* disposed somewhat unsystematically. It is then useful to develop a more precise terminology for referring to the various sections of the work and their connections.

Sections and Subsections • Following the edition, it would seem that the AhS' main internal division was that into *Adhyāyas*. Nevertheless, considering only the *Adhyāyas* results in reducing large parts of the AhS to a mere puzzle, since *Adhyāyas* with closely linked structures and content might be intersected by other entirely different units. This phenomenon does not appear in the whole of the work, but interests mostly the central section. Already Schrader, when describing the content of such a section, had felt the need to group various *Adhyāyas* in order to achieve better clarity and coherence⁷². Since the central section is the one richest in material relevant to the topic at hand, it will be useful to work with broader and

⁷⁰See for example the description of Lakṣmī ad AhS 49, 55ff.

⁷¹Rastelli 2012: 2.

⁷²This he did for instance with the *Adhyāyas* dealing with Divine Weapons (*astras*), bringing together *Adhyāyas* 30, 34, 35 and 40 (cfr. Schrader 1916: 124), as well as on other occasions.

deeper structural categories.

Three large Sections can be identified, which we will label A, B and C. Section A (including 15 *Adhyāyas*) opens the work and deals mainly with theology, traditional schools of thought other than the Pāñcarātra, and some social aspects of religious life. Section C (10 *Adhyāyas*) closes the work. It, too, is quite coherent. It includes a large subsection on exegesis of mantras in Pāñcarātra terms and a closing part.

Section B is the largest (counting 35 *Adhyāyas*) and less structured one. In order to better describe its structure it is useful to speak of Subsections. Three Subsections could be identified: B₁, which introduces the Mantras, Yantras and rituals; B₂, the largest subsection dealing with a variety of subjects; and B₃, the shortest subsection, dealing only with narratives. The use of a Subsection B₃ is justified on the base that its five narratives, covering three *Adhyāyas*, form one unit, being part of a single long answer given to Nārada by Ahirbudhnya. Furthermore, illustrating with stories what has been explained is a way of sum up Section B and to glide to the final Section C.

Microsections and *Adhyāyas* • With the use of Sections and Subsections a bridge has been created between the whole of the work and the smallest units here considered: the *Adhyāyas*. However, other units could be identified between the Subsections and the single *Adhyāyas*. Such units will be called Microsections and have been applied only to the structure analysis of Section B. A Microsection is usually represented by a small group of adjacent *Adhyāyas* dealing with one topic. In some cases Microsections might correspond to single *Adhyāyas*, if these are found isolated.

The Microsections have been labeled as follows:

Microsection	Adhyāya
(Mantra)	<i>Adhyāyas</i> 16-19
(Ritual I)	<i>Adhyāyas</i> 20-22
(Yantra I)	<i>Adhyāyas</i> 23-27
(Ritual II)	<i>Adhyāyas</i> 28-29
(Astras I)	<i>Adhyāya</i> 30
(Yoga)	<i>Adhyāyas</i> 31-32
(Narrative I)	<i>Adhyāya</i> 33
(Astras II)	<i>Adhyāyas</i> 34-35
(Yantra II)	<i>Adhyāyas</i> 36-37
(Ritual III)	<i>Adhyāyas</i> 38-39
(Astras III)	<i>Adhyāya</i> 40
(Narrative II)	<i>Adhyāyas</i> 41-45
(Ritual IV)	<i>Adhyāyas</i> 46-47
(Narrative III)	<i>Adhyāyas</i> 48-50

As can be seen from the table, more *Adhyāyas* can be grouped together under a single unit. This single unit can then be labeled and subsequently numbered, if the same label applies to other units as well. For example, *Adhyāyas* 16 to 19, dealing with the unfolding of the letters (*varṇotpatti*), the extraction of the main Mantra (*mantroddhāra*) and various Ancillary Mantras (*aṅgamantras*), have been grouped together under the Microsection “Mantra”. *Adhyāyas* 28 and 29, describing in great detail respectively the Daily Ritual and a ritual procedure for conquering the quarters (*digvijaya*), have come under the Microsection “Ritual”. Since this label could apply to more sections, roman numerals were added.

The labels are meant to be intuitive and as general as possible, without ceasing to be meaningful. The most obscure is “Astras”: it refers to *Adhyāyas* describing various aspects of Divine Weapons⁷³ belonging to the main deity of the cult, including the Mantras necessary to deploy them and their appearance. “Yantra” refers to both technical descriptions and worship of diagrams infused with the presences

⁷³See 2.3 «Introducing the Work's Content».

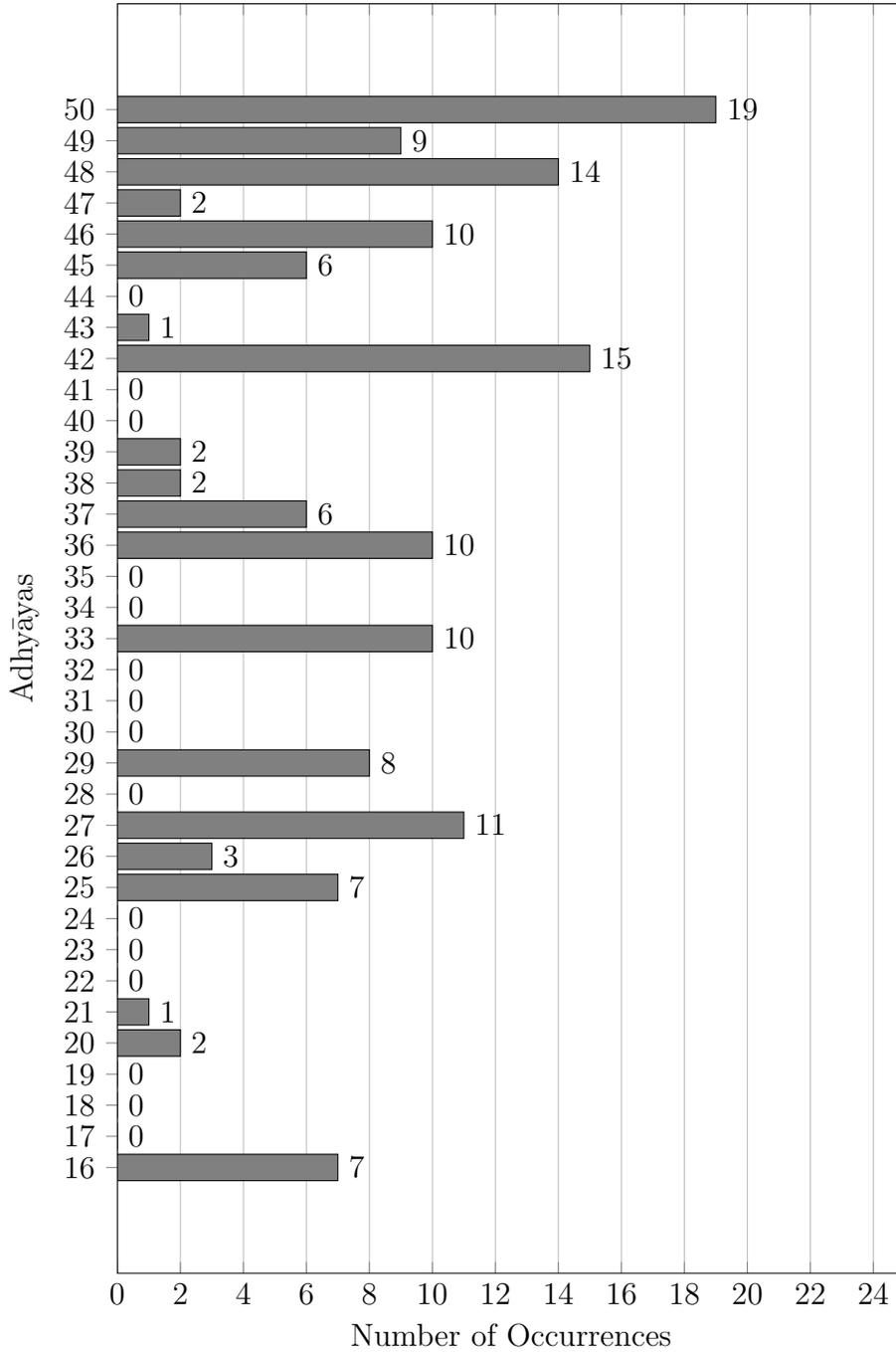
of various Deities⁷⁴. “Yoga” is used as a label for descriptions of various meditative postures (*āsanās*) and controlled breathing techniques (*prāṇāyāma*). “Narrative” is a label for those less technical Adhyāyas which are dedicated to stories and mythology.

One application of the Microsection is that they can ease analysis by making explicit certain structural features which would remain hidden if only *Adhyāyas* were considered. They can also be grouped together according to subject to form greater units.

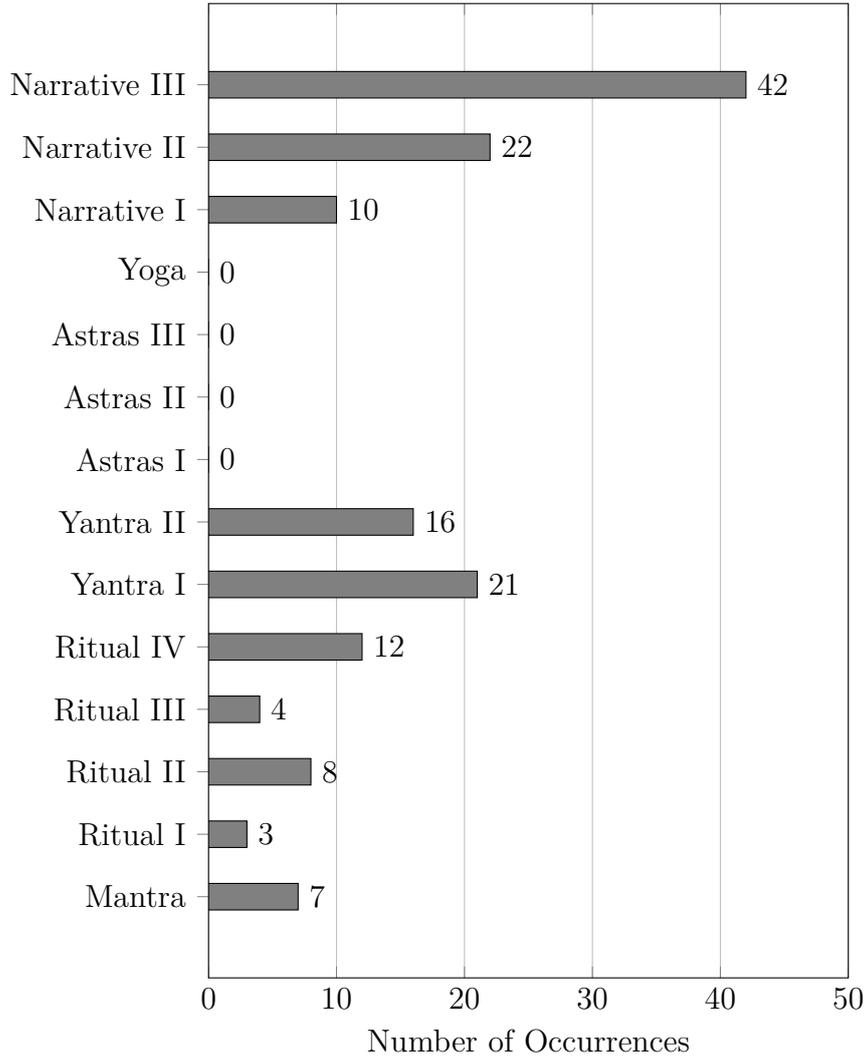
What follows illustrates a possible application of Microsections. The first table shows the number of occurrences of forms of the stems *rājan-* and *rāja-*⁷⁵ in single *Adhyāyas*.

⁷⁴See above section 2.3.

⁷⁵Occurrences when *rājan-*, indicating a king, is used alone or as the last member of a compound have been selected. Exceptions are *rājarthitena* (*Adhyāya* 20), *rājapurohitau* and *rājakārya* (*Adhyāya* 33), and *rājavyatirekena* (*Adhyāya* 46). The e-text was taken from the Muktabodha Online Database.

Occurrences of *rājan-* and *rāja-* in the Adhyāyas of Section B

The above table can be used to identify *Adhyāyas* with high occurrences of a certain term, but it fails to show that there is a broader context and that it is precisely this context which is more important for the purposes of analysis. Microsections can partly solve the problem, especially if we group them according to subject, as in the table below.

Occurrences of *rājan-* and *rāja-* in grouped Microsections under Section B

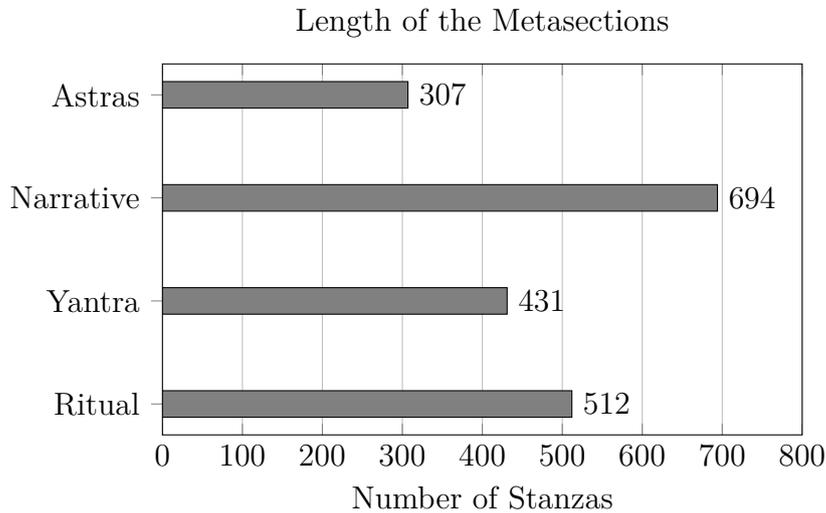
The table shows how rich the Microsections on narratives are in number of occurrences of the selected word. Microsection “Narrative III”, corresponding to the three closing *Adhyāyas* of Section B shows the highest number of occurrences.

Metasections • The main purpose of using Microsections is to eventually group them together in order to form more powerful models. For example, Microsections with roman numerals can merge into a bigger unit. Such a unit will not be limited by the *Adhyāya* structure, whereas a Microsection was. This new unit will be called “Metasection”.

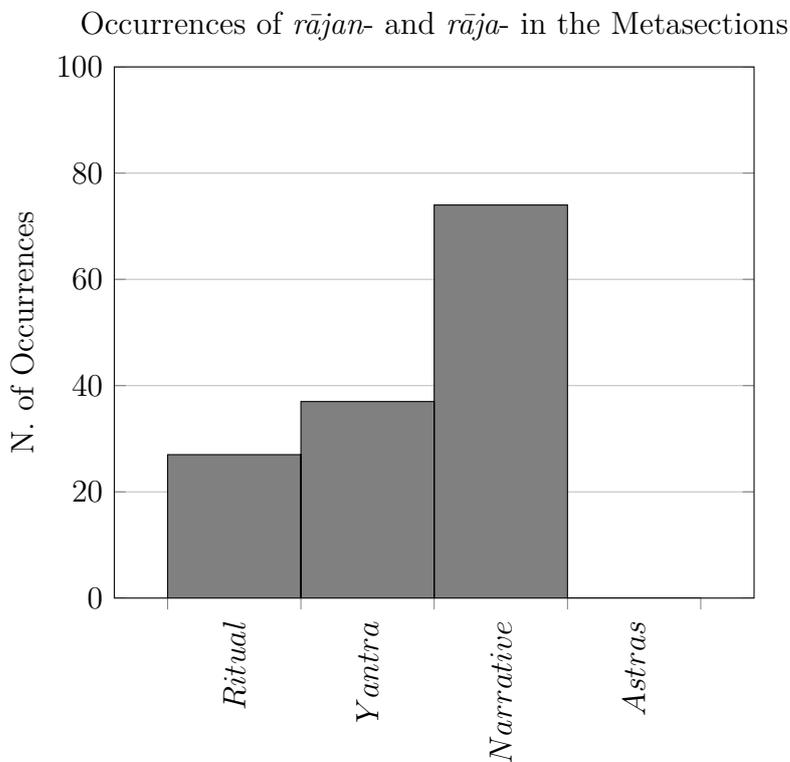
As many as four Metasections could be identified, running throughout Section B. Using the same labels and following the order they first occur in within the section,

they will be called “Ritual”, “Yantra”, “Narrative” and “Astras”.

Once Metasections are accepted as part of the structural analysis they can be usefully be applied. For example, a question like: “Does Section B devote more stanzas to narratives or rituals?”, could be answered by the following table.



Looking for occurrences of a certain term would now yield a more economic and perhaps even more telling result.



As can be seen from the table above, forms of *rājan-* occur more often in the narratives. But more interesting is to compare number of occurrences and length

of the Metasections. Even if the Metasection on Yantra is shorter than that on rituals, it still is richer in number of occurrences of the term *rājan-*. Furthermore, the Metasection of rituals covers a number of very different procedures (as we will see in the next chapter), whereas the Metasection on Yantra deals mainly with Sudarśana’s Yantra.

This is, however, just an illustration. The reader should be aware that *rājan-* is not the only term for “king” found in the AhS. Terms like *nrpa-*, *mahīpati-*, *mahībharṭṛ-*, etc. are also common. An in-depth analysis should consider all of these terms.

Criticism • It might be objected that both sections and labels in the system above were chosen somewhat arbitrary. Observations like the following might be adduced: 1) there are no special reasons to have Section B starting from the 16th *Adhyāya*; 2) there is no need to separate Yantras and rituals in the Microsections; 3) *Adhyāyas* 41 to 45 present too much variety to be simply labeled “Narrative II”; 4) Some *Adhyāyas* handle several subjects and not necessarily only one; etc...

A second possible criticism might relate to the actual usefulness of the structural divisions outlined above: 1) everyone who reads even a synopsis of contents of the AhS would be able to recognize links and continuities among different parts of the work and proceed accordingly; 2) the system is more complex than necessary; 3) the final result achieved with the Metasections is not so different from what Schrader had already obtained; 4) the use of Metasections conveys the false impression that Section B is just a mixed bundle of *Adhyāyas* without any order at all; etc...

It is true that the one structure proposed here is not the only possible one. But minor adjustments would be possible in special cases without having to give up the system in its entirety. Furthermore, it is surprising to see how such a schematic structure can be on the whole successfully applied to the AhS. *Adhyāyas* 42 to 46 constitute a good example for a section where the superstructure does not apply without difficulty. At the beginning of *Adhyāya* 42 a long description of calamities arising in a kingdom because of an enemy’s attack by means of black magic (*abhicāra*) is not part of the main narrative of the *Adhyāya*. The same applies to the description of the perfect court officiant in *Adhyāya* 46, quite separate from the rest

of the content (although still connected to the issue of ritual procedure). In fact, even *Adhyāyas* could be subdivided into smaller units and in rare cases such units would require special categories. Nevertheless, the system outlined above appears on the whole satisfactory. Some exceptions will be pointed out when presenting the passages and their translations in the next chapter.

Concerning the usefulness of the system, the advantage is that of using a specific terminology by which different sections of the work are clearly addressed, resulting in overall better orientation. More importantly, the system outlined above will be applied to the presentation of textual passages in the next chapter.

In conclusion, the best possible scenario would be to be able to reason diachronically and perhaps even to identify an “*Ur-AhS*” in order to answer questions like “How central were the royal court and the message sent to it in the “*Ur-AhS*?”. But this is unfortunately not possible at present. The use of Metasections should not erase the inner structure of the work, but merely point out larger connections. Since it cannot be denied that Subsection B₂ is the least coherent part of the AhS, Metasections can help structure one’s analysis.

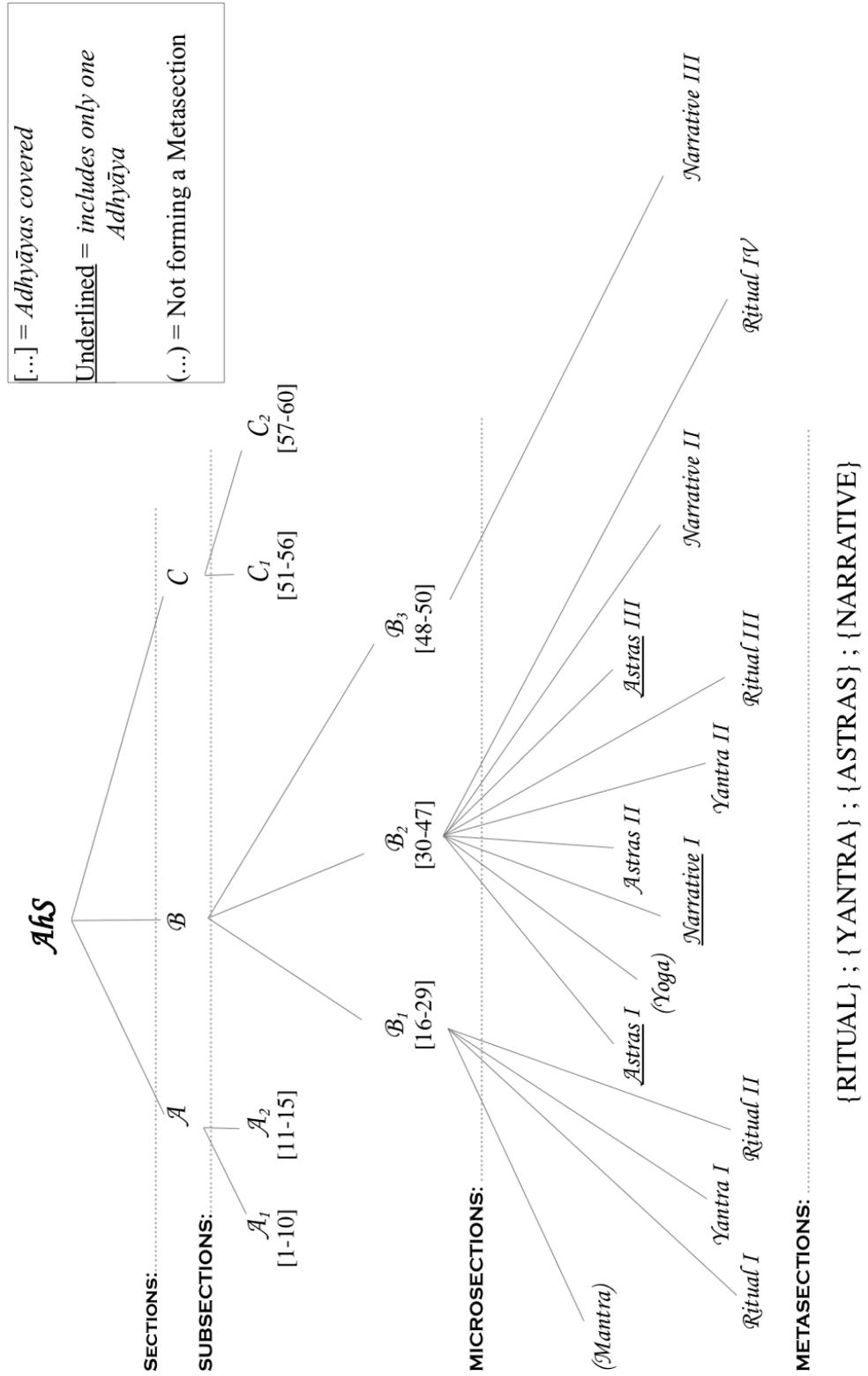


Figure 2.1.: Structure of the AhS

3. Selected Texts on Sudarśana's Worship at the Royal Court

3.1. Method and Sources

The present chapter is dedicated to the presentation of textual materials from the AhS. Its aim is to cover some Metasections running throughout Section B of the work, as explained above. The main Metasections selected are those on Yantra and Rituals. Since a study of the narrative passages has already been undertaken by Rastelli (2015), section 3.5 «Remarks on the Narratives» will offer a selective representation of the contents of the Metasection on Narratives. As for section 3.2 «Kings and Court Officiants», most of the texts selected are taken from *Adhyāya* 16, where the very first mention of kings is found. The texts deal with the hierarchy of kings and court officiants and can serve very well the purpose of an introduction to the topic. Other texts describing court officiants, found in various parts of Section B, have also been given here under 3.2 on account of the thematic relation to the contents of *Adhyāya* 16.

The texts presented here are selections taken from the various Metasections of the AhS which present materials relevant for the study of the links between Sudarśana's cult and the royal court. Passages directly mentioning member of the courts, the need for kings of adopting the cult and the many benefits which they would come to enjoy, have been given priority here. The reader should avoid coming to conclusions about the nature of the work as a whole before reading chapter four as well. In chapter four, the materials presented here will be ordered under various categories and supplemented with evidence from other textual passages. At that point only it should be possible to reach some more general conclusion about the AhS' depiction

of a Vaiṣṇava royal court.

The texts presented here are briefly introduced and assigned a *numerus currens*. The Sanskrit original is given first along with a reproduction of the edition's critical apparatus. An English translation follows, along with exegetical notes.

As for the textual sources, no attempt has been made at locating the various MSs and thus this research relies entirely on the critical edition printed by the Adyar Library (Madras) and the readings of the ten witnesses reported in its apparatus.

The only information about the stemma the present author was able to collect is Schrader's following description:

“The two oldest and best MSS. are those called E and D. The former is a Grantha MS. from Kalale in Mysore, the latter a MS. written in the Malayālam character and belonging to H.H. the Mahārāja of Travancore. E is more accurate than D. From E descend the four Melkote MSS. F to H, all of them written in Grantha characters and so completely identical that the common symbol F could be used for them. From D (or a similar MS.) descend C, A and D (in this order); C being the Adyar Library paper MS. in Grantha characters (with large omissions), A the Adyar Library palm-leaf MS. in Grantha characters, and B the Telugu MS. belonging to the Mysore Government. The badly damaged Tanjore MS. described in Burnell's catalogue could not be borrowed and was, on inspection, found to be not worth taking into account” (Schrader 1916: 94).

The issue of the stemma was taken up during the weekly “Kolloquium zu Religion und Philosophie” (SoSe 2015) under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Karin Preisendanz. With the professor's help, provisional stemmas based on the ambiguous description above were reconstructed as trees. Such provisional stemmas, however, failed to account for a number of variant readings reported in the apparatus and this led to the conclusion that additional data was needed. Regretful as this is, in the cases where the provisional stemma could not provide help and two sound readings — both of them metrical, grammatical and meaningful — were considered almost equally probable, the text of the edition was privileged and the reader notified

in a footnote. However, there are cases where the provisional stemmas based on Schraders's description do prove helpful and match the choice made by the editors (see Text 1 in the next section). The main point to keep in mind is that MSs E and D are placed by Schrader at the very top of the stemmatic tree.

Occasional use has been made of the Hindī translation by Sudhakar Malaviya⁷⁶ as well as of an e-text available on the database of the Muktabodha Indological Research Institute.

3.2. Kings and Court Officials

The main characters populating the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* are rulers and court officials. These two are presented in a highly idealized way, which makes it more difficult to discern actual historical implications. Divine power is always part of the picture and builds the link between rulers and officials.

A long passage in the Microsection on Mantras is quite telling in this regard and serves well as an introduction to the topic. The “*brāhmaṇa*”, a term which should be taken as including court officials, is expected to rely upon the king when it comes to deploying the Mantra's power. He is bound by royal authority and the king is portrayed as superior to him. This fact could be taken as part of the strategy aiming at making the scripture more appealing to rulers. The power under discussion is Viṣṇu's *mantramayī kriyāśakti*, which could be paraphrased as ‘Viṣṇu's Creative Energy in the form of Mantra’. The *kriyāśakti* is generally opposed in Pāñcarātra theology to the *bhūtiśakti* or Material Energy⁷⁷ and has been identified before in the *saṃhitā* with Sudarśana himself⁷⁸:

TEXT 1

Text :

16.12 *brāhmaṇo brahmayonisthaḥ svadāranirataḥ śuciḥ |*
adhikuryāt kriyāśaktiṃ viṣṇor mantramayīṃ parāṃ ||

⁷⁶See Malaviya 2007 in the bibliography.

⁷⁷For a discussion of these concepts based on the AhS see Schrader 1916: 30ff.

⁷⁸Cfr. for example AhS 8.30ff. See footnote 60 above.

16.13 *brāhmaṇo nānavaṣṭabdhāḥ tayā kāryam ihārhati |*
avaṣṭabhya tu rājānaṃ jagato'rthe tayā caret ||

16.14 *rājā hi paramaṃ bhūtaṃ sarvadevamayo vibhuḥ |*
kriyāśakter adhiṣṭhānaṃ vaiṣṇavyā bhagavanmayāḥ ||

16.15 *mūrdhato hi purā devo rājānam asṛjat prabhuḥ |*
mūrdhābhiṣiktas tenāsau sarvabhūtopari sthitaḥ ||

16.16 *dviḡuṇo brāhmaṇo rājā vedaśāstreṣu gīyate |*
yas tu taṃ dveṣṭi saṃmohāt sa harim dveṣṭi durmatih ||

- 16a *brāhmaṇo* (Ed.) — *brahmaṇo* (A B C J)

Translation :

‘A Brāhmaṇa — who is abiding in the source of Brahman, devoted to his own wife and pure — is entitled to Viṣṇu’s supreme Creative Energy (*kriyāśakti*) in the form of Mantra.

A Brāhmaṇa who is not supported may not act with it (i.e. the *kriyāśakti*) in this world. But he may perform with it for the good of the world, having first relied upon the King. For the King is the Supreme Being, he embodies all Gods and is all-pervading. He is the base of the Creative Energy (*kriyāśakti*) belonging to Viṣṇu, and embodies the Lord. Out of [his own] head indeed has God, the Lord, created the King in ancient times. Therefore does he have his head anointed and stands above all beings. The King is praised in Revealed Knowledge (*veda*) and Systematized Bodies of Knowledge (*śāstra*) as a double Brāhmaṇa (i.e. as worth twice as much as a Brāhmaṇa). If one is hostile to him out of delusion, that fool is hostile to Hari [himself].

Notes :

The expression *brahmayonisthaḥ* ‘abiding in the source of Brahman’ is one of the many qualities required of the Brāhmaṇa. It indicates his respectability and high status implying that he is not just a priest. Interestingly, the expression is found right after the term Brāhmaṇa, as if it were a kind of semantic explanation of it.

It is not a coincidence that the king is described as *sarvadevamayo* ‘embodies all Gods’ and *vibhu* ‘all-pervading’, for these concepts are typically found in relation to Viṣṇu himself⁷⁹. The effect reached by means of this formulation is therefore to build parallels between the king and the supreme deity.

The student of Indian religions might recall the Ṛgvedic *Purūṣasūkta* (X. 90) when reading *mūrdhato hi purā devo rājānam asrjat prabhuh* ‘Out of [his own] head indeed has God, the Lord, created the King in ancient times’. But in the *sūkta* it was the brāhmaṇa to have been created out of the head. This is another important hint at the superiority of the king.

The sentence *dviguṇo brāhmaṇo rājā vedaśāstreṣu gīyate* ‘The King is praised in Revealed Knowledge (*veda*) and Systematized Bodies of Knowledge (*śāstra*) as a double brāhmaṇa’ is not immediately clear. Besides, the presence of the variant reading *brahmaṇo* might tempt one to modify the text of the edition. The reason is that *dviguṇa* constructs with ablative and that *brahmano* could serve precisely this function. But a more careful look saves from committing this mistake. The original structure is ‘to consider A “B”’, where A is *rājan* and “B” is *brāhmaṇa*, preceded by an attribute. It is the passive voice of *gīyate* which then allows for the presence of three nominatives one after the other. As a last step, the expression *dviguṇo brāhmaṇaḥ* is emphatically placed in the first position. The text is therefore perfectly clear and the variant can be seen as a *lectio faciliior*. This matches Scharader’s considerations on the stemma, the variant reading being found only in lower branches of the stemmatic tree.

The passage goes on to state that true fortune will arise only if both the king and the brāhmaṇa work together. The following passage is interesting because it implies this idea and also because it uses the term *lakṣmī*, which in the context of royalty has special connotations. It means ‘wealth’ on the one hand but also, to

⁷⁹Cfr. Rastelli 2011: 452ff.

use the words of Malinar, “Herrschersglück”,⁸⁰, i.e. a ruler’s fortune, on the other. Lakṣmī is also the Goddess who personifies such aspects as is the case for instance in the story of Citraśekhara (*adhya*ya 49). The king Citraśekhara manages to solve his problems only through Lakṣmī’s favour⁸¹. She is also the base of both Creative Energy (*kriyāśakti*) and Material Energy (*bhūtīśakti*)⁸².

TEXT 2

Text :

16.20 *brāhmaṇe kevale lakṣmīr na vasaty atimārdavāt |*
atyaugryād bibhyatī kṣatre kevale necchati sthitim ||

Translation :

Lakṣmī does not dwell in the Brāhmaṇa alone, because of [his] excessive gentleness. Nor does She wish to remain in the Kṣatra alone (i.e. a member of the second social class to which also kings traditionally belong), being fearful of [his] excessive fierceness’.

Notes :

The structure of the verses forms a chiasmus. Note the double aspect of Lakṣmī as consort of the king and the brāhmaṇa on one hand, and as impersonal ‘fortune’ residing in the institutions of which a king and a brāhmaṇa are representatives on the other.

Further on in *Adhyāya* 16, a very important passage states that different kinds of rulers enjoy a varying degree of entitlement when it comes to the deployment of Viṣṇu’s Power. The higher and mightier the ruler, the more he is entitled. The terms for the various kinds of rulers are also found in inscriptions⁸³. The passage

⁸⁰Cfr. Malinar 1998: 534.

⁸¹For a summary of the story see Schrader 16: 138ff.

⁸²Cfr. AhS 8.30. See footnote 60 above.

⁸³In order to translate the terms more precisely, large use has been made of Sircar’s glossary (1966).

is relevant because it calls into consideration the historical contingencies and not only text-based or Pāñcarātra-based sets of data. Furthermore, explicit mention is made here of the public dimension of the cult. The deployment of Viṣṇu's power is a matter of relevance for the kingdom and its people, not a private matter:

TEXT 3

Text :

16.28 *cakravartī nṛpaḥ pūrvāṃ dvitīyāṃ maṇḍaleśvaraḥ |*

adhikuryāt kriyāśaktiṃ tṛtīyāṃ viṣayeśvaraḥ ||

16.29 *mahāmātro dvijātir vā yo bahvī rakṣati prajāḥ |*

imāṃ naiko naraḥ kuryād ekasmai mānavāya tu ||

- 28c *kriyāśaktiṃ* Ed. — *imāṃ śaktiṃ* (D); 29c *imāṃ naiko* Ed. — *imām eko* (B C E F J)

Translation :

‘A ruler who is a Universal Sovereign is entitled to the first, a Provincial Governor to the second and a District Governor to the third [level of] Creative Energy. [To the same are entitled] a chief minister or a twice-born, provided he is in charge of the protection of many people. No single man is entitled to [deploy] Her for [just] another man’.

Notes :

For translating the terms denoting the various rulers Sircar's *Indian Epigraphical Glossary* has been instrumental. Interesting are his notes on the term *mahāmātra*. He points out that Medhātithi, in his commentary to the *Manusmṛti* (IX, 259), glosses the term as “The Mantrin, Purohita and others” (Reported in Sircar 1966: 180). Thus, according to Medhātithi, the court officiant (*purohita*) too can be the referent of the term. However, there is no evidence for the conclusion that this is the case here. In fact, besides the terms themselves, the text does not contain any detail about such rulers, but the order in which they are

mentioned is clearly hierarchical, going from the more powerful to the lesser powerful ruler.

As for the terms *prathama*, *dvitīya* and *tr̥tīya*, meaning respectively 'first', 'second' and 'third', the present author was unable to find any technical connotation considering the *Adhyāyas* on theology of the AhS.

It should be also noted that the Apparatus reports the variant reading *imām eko*, where the negation is absent. If this reading were accepted, than the passage would come to mean that the limit imposed is that one should not use this power just for oneself, but that another person should be the one to benefit from it. The reading is therefore not only grammatical and metrical, but does also convey an acceptable meaning. The attempts of the present author to understand which one of the two readings is more likely to be a corruption considering the system of the Grantha script have not been successful so far. Besides, the stemmatic position of the reading is also unclear. A decision was made to follow the text of the edition, but the reader should be aware of this difficulty. I am thankful to Prof. Preisendanz for drawing my attention to this variant reading.

Some passages in the AhS have the function of praising the court officiant (*purohita*) and underlining his utmost importance for the king. Rastelli (2012) introduces the topic in the following way⁸⁴:

“Wie schon erwähnt, dienen die in der AS beschriebenen Rituale vorwiegend Königen und ihren Zielen. Diese Rituale werden meist aber nicht von diesen Königen selbst durchgeführt, sondern von ihren Hauspriestern für diese vollzogen. Die AS enthält eine Fülle von Erzählungen, die davon berichten, wie Könige in Notständen, z.B. wenn sie von Dämonen bedrängt waren, Übeltaten begangen haben oder ihr Königreich im Niedergang war, mithilfe des *sudarśanamātra* diese Not überwunden und neuen Erfolg errungen haben. Dies geschieht jedoch nicht direkt,

⁸⁴Rastelli (2012) has translated the main passages related to the Court Officiant.

sondern durch Vermittlung von Hauspriestern. Hauspriester sind es, die den Königen den *sudarśanamātra* als Mittel aus ihrer Not nennen und die entsprechenden Rituale für sie durchführen. Hauspriester sind hier also in einer sehr starken Position: Heil und Unheil der Könige hängt von ihnen ab. Entsprechend dieser Bedeutung bemüht sich der Verfasser der AS gleich an zwei Stellen, die idealen Eigenschaften eines Hauspriesters zu beschreiben. Dabei wird auch seine unabdingbare Notwendigkeit und seine Wichtigkeit für den König betont⁸⁵.

The perfect officiant can accomplish all sorts of ends for the king. He can help him achieve both personal as well as public benefits, as the following textual passage from the very beginning of *Adhyāya* 46 illustrates. The passage is preceded by a list of the qualities of the officiant. Mentioned are mostly moral qualities, like truthfulness, self-control, purity etc.; erudition is also a necessary requirement, as well as devotion to Viṣṇu and expertise in the performance of rituals⁸⁵.

TEXT 4

Text :

46.8 *īdrśo durlabho rājñāṃ gurukalpaḥ purohitaḥ |*

īdrśo hi kṣamo rājñām aghaughavinivāraṇe ||

46.9 *ataḥ sa eva rājñāṃ hi rakṣāvidhim athārhati |*

evaṃvidho gurur yasya sa saṃrāṇ nṛpatir bhavet ||

46.10 *dīrghāyur niḥsapatnaḥ syād arogaḥ paravīrahā |*

avagrahādya jāyante pīḍās tadviṣaye na hi ||

46.11 *taṃ vinānyo bhaved rājño gurur vātha purohitaḥ |*

viparītaṃ bhavet tasya mahābhartur na saṃśayaḥ ||

- 8d *aghaughavinivāraṇe* (Ed.) - *aghaughasya nivāraṇe* (A B E F)

⁸⁵A German translation of the larger passage, including the description of all the qualities, can be found in Rastelli 2012: 10.

Translation :

‘Such a Court Officiant (*purohita*) who is [himself] like a Guru to Kings is difficult to find. Such a one is verily capable of warding off the flood of misdeeds [and their consequences] for Kings. Therefore, he alone is able to perform the rituals of protection of Kings. He who has such a Guru [by his side] shall become a sovereign King, one with a long life, one free of enemies and diseases and a slayer of hostile heroes.

In his dominion there shall be no devastations such as droughts etc. If the King, in the absence of [such a capable] one, has a different (i.e. ordinary) Guru or Court Officiant [at his side], that Supporter of the Earth shall get the opposite [result] (i.e. unfavorable things), there is no doubt about that’.

Notes :

Particularly interesting in the above passage is the somewhat puzzling use of the terms *purohita* and *guru*. The first expression found is *gurukalpaḥ purohitaḥ* ‘a Court Officiant who is equal to a Guru’. Ad 9c the officiant is simply called *guru* and ad 11b again the two are separated in *gurur vātha purohitaḥ* ‘a Guru or a Court Officiant’. The question arising is the following: are they to be considered the same person or not? The last verse deals with officiants and gurus of an ordinary kind. At that level, it would appear that they are clearly distinct. But the officiant of Sudarśana’s cult has the qualities of a true guru, a truly competent preceptor, and can be considered as one. If this interpretation be accepted than it would mean that the redactor(s) deliberately chose to merge the two titles in order to enhance the status of their officiants. For other considerations concerning the roles of officiants and gurus see 3.5 «Remarks on the Narratives». Since, besides terminological choices on part of the redactor(s), the core of the matter lies in the ritual repertoire that is actually offered, the contents of section 4.2 «Ritual Repertoire and its Benefits» are also relevant here.

Another passage extolling the qualities of the court officiant is found towards the end of *Adhyāya* 33, in the context of the story of King Maṇiśekhara, at the end of the list the following statement makes once again clear how indispensable the officiant is to his royal employer:

TEXT 5

Text :

purodhā eva rājñāṃ hi dr̥ṣṭādr̥ṣṭārthasādhakaḥ ||
 33.76 *viśeṣeṇāsya devasya pratiṣṭhārādhanādiṣu |*
vaiguṇyam asya tat sarvam aparādhāt purodhasaḥ ||
tathā sādguṇyam asyaiva rājñāḥ kāryeṣu bhūpate |

Translation :

‘For only the Court Officiant accomplishes for Kings all seen and unseen aims, especially when this Deity is installed, worshipped and so on. Any defectiveness of his (i.e. of the King) is due to the faults of the Court Officiant, and similarly [every] excellence of the same King in [the performance of] rituals [depends on the Officiant], oh Master of the Earth!’⁸⁶

Notes :

The last verse can be obscure at first. What is meant by the king excellence in the performance of rituals is probably relating to his role as *yajamāna*, i.e. as sponsor of the sacrifice. It is the sponsor who gets the positive and, in case a mistake is committed, negative results of the ritual performance. This would imply that the king is not directly involved in the performance itself. But things are again not so clear. Certain rituals might normally require the king’s direct involvement. An interesting passage is found at the very beginning of *Adhyāya* 46, stating that if the king can not reach the pavillion for the fire sacrifice, the officiant should perform the ritual in his place (AhS 46, 3). However, definitive

⁸⁶For a German translation of this passage see Rastelli 2012: 10.

conclusions about the active role of the king would have to be reached on the base of more extensive evidence.

The textual passages presented have shown how in the AhS the king is praised first and placed above his officiant, thus making it clear that the context is precisely that of the royal court. But other passages emphasize the importance of the *purohita* as a necessary means to every accomplishment on part of the ruler⁸⁷.

Above these main human characters is the higher power identifiable with Sudarśana and his aspects. Different degrees of prestige among the human players correspond to more or less direct access to the power of the deity, as was exemplified by Text 3.

3.3. Yantra in the Service of the Court

The best and most powerful device offered to the king is definitely the Yantra, i.e. the deity's form as a diagram in which Mantras of various kinds are drawn (for more details see 2.3 «Introducing the Work's Content»). A special feature of Sudarśana's Yantra is that, as Rastelli explains (2003: 148), a second deity can be added on the reverse. In this case it is Narasiṃha⁸⁸.

The following passage mentions this combined Yantra⁸⁹ and the benefits in the form of far-reaching conquests which the maker of the Yantra shall achieve.

TEXT 6

Text :

sudarśanena yuktasya nārasīṃhasya yantrakam ||

⁸⁷It should be noted that *Adhyāya* 20, concerning the ritual of initiation (*dīkṣā*), begins with a description of the ideal master (*ācārya*).

⁸⁸For the importance of Narasiṃha in the Atharvavedic literature of Orissa see Sanderson 2007: 226. The special connection between Sudarśana and Narasiṃha in Orissan culture is noted in Eschmann 1978: 186. Deḃicka-Borek has studied aspects of Narasiṃha in a number of articles. In her article of 2011 she considers Sudarśana as well (cfr. Deḃicka-Borek 2011: 116).

⁸⁹For a visual example of this Yantra see Begley's plate number 64 at the end of the book.

25.21 *yaḥ kārayati tasyānyo loko vaśyo bhaved api |*
etallekhanamātreṇa sarvaṃ saṃpadyate nṛṇām ||

Translation :

‘He who has the Yantra of Narasiṃha joined with [that] of Sudarśana constructed shall conquer even the other world. Just by drawing this, men can attain everything’.

The AhS indulges at length in extolling the benefits arising from the installation and worship of the Yantra, as the following textual passages will illustrate. Special emphasis is given to benefits of a military nature, whereby the ruler can gain territory or win battles against his enemies (see Text 12 below). The apotheosis of this process is the attainment of sovereignty over the entire earth and even over celestial mansions (see Text 7 and Text 12 below). The Yantra can also help protecting the kingdom against black magic and annihilating all sorts of dangers which might threaten the people (see Text 14 below).

The second part of *Adhyāya* 26 is devoted to extolling the benefits of the Yantra. The following textual passage summarizes well the elements involved: the ruler needs help with his military projects; the officiant, or master (*guru*), as he is called in the following passage, should always be respected and remunerated with large masses of wealth; Sudarśana should be worshipped; the ruler will enjoy victory and sovereignty while the kingdom and its people shall live free of dangers.

TEXT 7

Text :

rājyārthī hṛtarājyo vā paribhūto ’thavā nṛpaiḥ ||

26.83 *saudarśanasya yantrasya pradātāraṃ guruṃ param |*
sarvebhyo hy adhikaṃ matvā tam abhyarcya mahādhanaiḥ ||

26.84 *tato nārāyaṇaṃ devaṃ puṇḍarikāyatekṣaṇam |*

śyāmalaṃ pītavaśanaṃ sarvābharaṇabhūṣitam ||

26.85 *ārādhayec caturbāhum ācāryeṇoktavidhānataḥ |*

taptajāmbūnadamayam maṇividrumacitritam ||

26.86 *sarvālaṃkārasaṃyuktaṃ kārayed yantram uttamam |*
etatkarāṇamātreṇa rājyam āpnoty anāmayam ||

26.87 *pratiṣṭhāpyārcayed etat sādaram sarvasiddhidam |*
tato bhūmim avāpnoti saptadvīpāṃ sapattanām ||

26.88 *vaśyā bhavanti satataṃ siddhagandharvadānavāḥ |*
trailokyarājyam akhilaṃ pālayaty avanītale ||

26.89 *abhicārāḥ parakṛtās cainam aprāpya bhṣitāḥ |*
praviśanti prayoktāram āpagevācalāhatā ||

26.90 *avagrahās ca naśyanti śatravo vidravanti ca |*
apamṛtyumṛgavyālacorarogādibhir bhayam ||

26.91 *na tasya rājye bhavati vidyate tatkule balam |*

- 89b *bhṣitāḥ* (Ed.) - *dīpitāḥ* (D)

Translation :

‘One desirous of a kingdom, one who has been deprived of it or one conquered by [other] rulers, after having paid respect with large masses of wealth to the supreme Guru, the giver of Sudarśana’s Yantra, considering [him] superior to all, should propitiate God Nārāyaṇa - who has large eyes like lotuses, is [of] dark [complexion], clad in a yellow garment, adorned with all ornaments and with four arms - following the rules given by the teacher.

He should have the supreme Yantra constructed out of refined gold, with decorations of gems and coral and with all [the necessary] adornments. Just by making this, he shall obtain territory free of disorders. Having [properly] installed it, he should respectfully worship this [Yantra] which bestows all accomplishments. Then he shall obtain land extending as far as the whole earth with [all of its] cities. Siddhas, Gandharvas and Dānavas will be subdued forever. On earth he will rule over the entire realm of the Three Worlds. [The demons born of] the aggressive magic (*abhicāra*) of [his] enemies, having failed to take hold of him, frightened will possess the performer [of the ritual], like a river[’s fury]

blocked by a mountain. Droughts will end and enemies will run away. In his kingdom there will not be dangers in the form of untimely deaths, wild animals, beasts of prey, thieves, illnesses etc. and strength shall reside in his lineage⁹⁰.

Although the ruler's military needs are placed at the center, the redactor(s) stresses that personal gain in the form of possession of wealth, a long life and freedom from diseases are also to be counted among the positive results of Yantra worship. Note to this effect the particular order in which the benefits are mentioned in the following textual passage. The context is that of the description of the *dhāraka* Yantra in *Adhyāya* 27. Rastelli described this kind of Yantra with the following words:

“Finally, a particular yantra that it related to the *saudarśanayantra* should be mentioned. This is the *dhārakayantra*, the ‘yantra of the wearer’, i.e., the wearer of the *saudarśanayantra*. The power of the *saudarśanayantra* is considered to be so great that a human being cannot wear it without additionally having a *dhārakayantra* [...]. The *dhārakayantra*'s most exterior part is the square earth maṇḍala with the seed syllable (*bīja*) of the earth on each corner and two Nāgas on each side. Within the earth maṇḍala is the fire maṇḍala having the shape of a hexagram with the fire seed syllable. The round wind maṇḍala with its seed syllable is within it, and within the latter, a wheel with ten spokes. Two syllables each of the *saudarśanamāntra* and the *nārasimhamāntra* are written on nine spokes, and on the tenth spoke, the word *hana*, ‘kill’”.

TEXT 8

Text :

rājā rājyaṃ jayaṃ bhūtim āyur ārogyam āpnuyāt ||
 27.34 *nityam arcayato rājñah saptadvīpavatī mahī |*

⁹⁰An English translation of part of this passage can be found in Rastelli 2003: 149.

samudravanā caiṣā viśvā vaśyā bhaviṣyati ||

- 34.c *samudravanā* Ed. — *sasamudravanā* (A B C E F)

Translation :

‘The King shall obtain territory, victory, wealth, a long life and freedom from diseases. A King who regularly worships shall conquer this whole earth, with her seven divisions and her garment of seas’.

Notes :

Conquest and victory occupy the first places in the above list of benefits, followed by wealth, a long life and physical health, in the way of a reversed climax. In other lists of benefits where *āyus* and *ārogya* are included, the order is different. In the context of the daily ritual, to cite just one example, the text reads *āyurārogyaviṣayabhūpradaṃ dhanadhānyadam [ārādhanaividhim]* (AhS 28, 1). Quite a different order! Therefore, the first verse does not merely represent a fixed formula. The order of the various elements might reflect the redactors’ intention to stress certain benefits. However, to reach any final conclusion, a comparative analysis of all the lists of benefits would be required.

The king alone is truly entitled to the Mantra and Yantra of Sudarśana. Nonetheless, ministers are also part of the picture. They can be instrumental, by means of their own faith and worship, in ensuring the welfare of their king, particularly in the presence of bad omens indicating that the ruler is in danger.

TEXT 9

Text :

27.43 *ayaṃ mantraś ca yantraṃ ca rājñām eva vidhīyate |*
sarvasādhāraṇārthāni mantrajātāni nārada ||

27.44 *etadabhyarcanaparā mantriṇo yasya bhūpateḥ |*
abhirakṣanti rājānam ariṣṭamukhato’pi te ||

Translation :

‘This Mantra and Yantra are prescribed for Kings alone. Oh Nārada, the collections of mantras serve all general purposes. If the Earth-Master’s ministers are engaged in this worship, they protect the King even in the presence of bad omens [indicating that his life is in danger]’.

Further on in what has been labeled as the second Microsection on Yantra, specifically in *Adhyāya* 36, a significant passage refers to the quick attainment of universal sovereignty (*cakravartitva*). Other members of the royal court are mentioned and a statement is made to the effect that all of them should engage in the worship of the Yantra. In this way, the entire court is supposed to be united under the banner of Sudarśana’s cult. The *Adhyāya* opens with a series of visualizations at the end of which the *mahāyantra* ‘Supreme Yantra’ is briefly described. Then comes the textual passage under discussion:

TEXT 10

Text :

tasmād abhyarcayed etad⁹¹ yo rājā bhaktisaṃyutaḥ ||
 36.25 *so’cireṇaiva kālena cakravartitvam āpnuyāt |*
rājā vā rājabhṛtyā vā mantriṇo vāthavā pare ||
 36.26 *rājñāṃ hitaiṣiṇaḥ sarve pūjayeyur idaṃ param |*

Translation :

‘Therefore the King who worships this [Yantra] being imbued with devotion will very quickly obtain Universal Sovereignty over the Earth. The King, his attendants or ministers or others, wishing the benefit of the King, should all worship this supreme [Yantra]’.

The alleged necessity of Sudarśana and his worship for rulers is taken to the extreme in the following verse from the 36th *Adhyāya*, which serves very well the

⁹¹The word ‘etat’ in the first verse is a substitute for *mahāyantra* (36, 22).

purpose of a summary:

TEXT 11

Text :

36.46cd *devam enam anārādhya na kaścij jāyate nṛpaḥ* ||

Translation :

‘Without the propitiation of this Deity there just can be no King’.

A detailed description of Sudarśana’s sixteen-armed form⁹² follows an interesting passage depicting a very compromised yet unexpectedly realistic military situation the king would hypothetically have to face. Once again, Sudarśana alone can grant the solution. The text is taken from the beginning of *Adhyāya* 37, which closes the Metasection on Yantras.

TEXT 12

Text :

37.4 *parair abhibhave prāpte rājñāṃ balasamanvitaiḥ* |

nagareṣu pradagdheṣu rājñāṃ vidrāvite bale ||

37.5 *uparuddheṣu bhogeṣu tattadviṣayavāsinām* |

pīḍyamāne parabalair itthaṃ rāṣṭre mahāmune ||

37.6 *sthitāv anupapannāyāṃ rājño ’vyucchinnavairiṇaḥ* |

kārayet ṣoḍaśabhujam sudarśanam avāritam ||

- 4c *pradagdheṣu* Ed. — *prabhinneṣu* (A B E F); 4d *rājñāṃ* Ed. — *rājye* (D); 4d *bale* Ed. — *balaiḥ* (D)

Translation :

‘When kings are overpowered by enemies with an army (or: by strong

⁹²For a translation of the full passage, a list of the weapons carried by this form of the deity as well as for confrontations with parallel descriptions found in other sources see Begley 1973: 78ff. Other forms of Sudarśana are mentioned in 2.3 «Introducing the Work’s Content».

enemies), when cities are burnt down and the Kings' army is driven away, when people in various districts do not have access to food [and other goods] — if the kingdom is thus oppressed by the enemies' army, oh Great Sage, and if in this inadequate situation the King's enemies are unimpeded, he should have a sixteen-armed Sudarśana constructed [and properly installed, for his power is] without obstacles'.

In case the multifarious benefits arising from Sudarśana's worship would not constitute a sufficient incentive, the royal audience is reminded further in *Adhyāya* 37 that any deficiency in the worship procedure shall result in devastating consequences. The textual passage is preceded by a long description of Sudarśana including both iconographical and symbolic aspects. After a short statement about the advantages of Sudarśana worship, the text reads:

TEXT 13

Text :

37.50 *evaṃ bahuvīdhai rūpāir upetaṃ taṃ sudarśanam |*
kṛtvā taṃ apratiṣṭhāpya rājāno mantriṇo'pi vā ||
 37.51 *vināṣṭasampadaḥ sadyaḥ paribhūtās ca śatrubhiḥ |*
arcanābhāvato rājyād bhraṣṭās cīram upadrutāḥ ||

Translation :

'Having had [an image of] Sudarśana with such various aspects constructed, [but] having not installed [the image properly], the Kings and ministers will at once lose [all their] wealth and be defeated by [their] enemies. Because of the absence of worship they will [eventually] be banished from the kingdom and persecuted'.

As was pointed out above («A System for Describing the Work's Structure»), some of the narratives present introductory passages. Such passages can be important because information about the way the redactor(s) perceives the outside

world is naturally less “hidden” by superstructures than in the narratives proper. The following is an example of this taken from *Adhyāya* 46. Ahirbudhnya points out all the bad omens as well as actual calamities which betray the fact that an enemy is performing an aggressive ritual (*abhicāra*) against the kingdom. Horses and animals start to perish, queens fall ill, a number of natural calamities threaten the population and unusual phenomena take place in the skies. Unable to counter the attacks of powerful enemies, the king is given to dreadful nightmares while his ministers fight among each others.

If the demoness born of the hostile ritual comes near the king, he shall fall dead on the spot:

TEXT 14

Text :

- 42.15 *lakṣyate lakṣaṇair etair nṛpāṇām ābhicārikī |*
vikṛtiḥ prastutākāle dāruṇā sarvagocarā ||
- 42.16 *akāṇḍa eva naśyanti vājivāraṇamantriṇaḥ |*
tīvrāmayaparītāṅgaḥ pīḍyate nṛpatiḥ svayam ||
- 42.17 *patanty aśanayas tasya viśaye ghoradarśanāḥ |*
alpasasyā vasumatī vinaśyanti gavāṃ gaṇāḥ ||
- 42.18 *bhavanti tasya viśaye punaḥ punar avagrahāḥ |*
tīvrāmayagrhitās ca mahiṣyas tasya bhūpateḥ ||
- 42.19 *prabhavanty ahivalmīkāḥ prāsāde dvāri maṇḍape |*
nīpatanti maholkās ca bhṛśaṃ bhīmasvanānvitāḥ ||
- 42.20 *mantriṇās ca virudhyante matsareṇa parasparam |*
rajanīyāṃ rājate bhīmam aindraṃ dhanur anabhrajam ||
- 42.21 *itastato vahnibhayaṃ nagare jāyate bhṛśam |*
praviśya garbhabhavanam kroṣṭāras cānivāritāḥ ||
- 42.22 *krośanti saṃdhyayor bhīmā dīptāyāṃ diśi visvaram |*
rundhanti nagaram rājñāḥ śatravo baladarpitāḥ ||
- 42.23 *kṛtyākṛtyam na jānāti svayam staimityam āsthitaḥ |*
svapne'pi paśyaty ātmānam muṇḍitam nīlavāsasam ||

42.24 *rathena gardabhayujā vrajantam dakṣiṇām diśam |*

ityādiliṅgair jānīyād abhicāram sapatnajam ||

42.25 *parābhicārajā kṛtyā rājānam praviśed yadi |*

tām dṛṣṭvā kṣipram evāsau vinaśyati na saṃśayaḥ ||

42.26 *putrāṃś ca mantriṇāś cāpi mahiṣīṃ nagaram tathā |*

jvālāmālāvilā kṛtyā sarvaṃ nāśayati kṣaṇāt ||

- 19a *prabhavanty ahi* (Ed.) - *prabhavanty api* (A B E F); 20c *rājate* (Ed.) - *jāyate* (D); 20d *anabhrajam* (Ed.) - *anabhrakam* (A B E F); 23b *āsthitaḥ* (Ed.) - *āśritaḥ* (A B E F)

Translation :

‘An abnormal modification (*vikṛti*) caused by a aggressive ritual (*abhicāra*) against Kings, occurring at the improper time, dreadful and all-reaching, is characterized by the these signs: Suddenly horses, elephants and ministers perish, the king himself suffers from a serious illness which has seized [his] body; terrifying thunderbolts strike his dominion; the earth produces less grains and multitudes of cows fall dead; his kingdom suffers again and again from droughts; the Earth-Master’s Queens are seized by serious illness; snakes and ants appear in the palace, at the main gate and in the pavilion (*maṇḍapa*); meteors fall violently making dreadful sounds; ministers fight with each other out of greediness; in the night a terrifying rainbow shines, even if there are no clouds; here and there in the city great danger arises because of fire; frightful jackals enter unimpeded the innermost of the temple and howl loudly at the [morning and evening] twilights, when the sky is lit up; enemies proud of their strength besiege the King’s [capital] city; [the King] is so deluded that he himself forgets the dos and don’ts; in a dream he sees himself with a shaven head and clad in a dark blue garment, travelling towards the southern direction on a cart pulled by a donkey; from such and other signs he should understand that the enemy is performing a aggressive ritual.

If the female Demon born of the enemy's aggressive ritual takes possession of the King, the latter would die on the spot just after having seen her, there is no doubt about that. [The King's] sons, ministers, chief Queen as well as the city itself, the Demoness, clad in a garland of flames, destroys everything in just a second'.

Notes :

The above is a very powerful description of bad omens and calamities linked to a ritual performed by an enemy to destroy the ruler. Particularly interesting is the king's dream. The southern direction towards which he is travelling is traditionally linked to death and is portrayed as the domain of Yama, the deity presiding over death. The other aspects of his vision can also be seen as signs of misfortune.

More puzzling are the phenomena connected to the sky, in particular the presence of a rainbow during the night and the expression *diptāyāṃ diśi*, rendered here as 'when the sky is lit up'. As for the first one, a parallel description was found in the *Viṣṇudharmottara* (*Khānda* 2, *Adhyāya* 136ff.) among other kinds of bad omens. This points to the fact that the idea must have been widespread, being the *Viṣṇudharmottara* a North Indian work composed after the second half of the 9th century⁹³ and thus coming from a very different cultural sphere than the AhS. As for the second expression, if the interpretation offered above is correct, the colour of the sky depends on the time of the day, i.e. the morning and evening twilights.

Once again it is the construction, installment and worship of Sudarśana that shall save the kingdom and the royal family.

Descriptions of this kind are not unusual in the literature concerning royal cults, as is the case with the *Netratantra* and the *Viṣṇudharmottara*⁹⁴, and this perhaps

⁹³The reasons for this dating are based on iconography, as explained in Sanderson's article "Kashmir", in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (p.105).

⁹⁴For bad omens in the *Netratantra* see Sanderson 2005: 262. As for the *Viṣṇudharmottara*, see the notes to the above passage.

indicates the need, on the part of rulers, of religious specialists and texts which could help read the messages of nature and contribute to creating the impression of safety in the mind of both rulers and subjects.

3.4. Rituals to meet Royal Needs

The Metasection on Ritual envisages a number of rituals which are presented in the AhS as specifically relevant to royal purposes. This special repertoire includes a ritual to aid the conquest of all directions (*digvijaya*, *Adhyāya* 29), a ritual to cure various illnesses (*roganivṛtti*, *Adhyāya* 38), a ritual to fulfill all desires (*mahābhīṣeka*, *Adhyāya* 39) and a pacificatory ritual (*śānti*, *Adhyāya* 47). Apart from these, the other two major procedures described in the *saṃhitā* are a ritual of initiation (*dīkṣā*, *Adhyāya* 20) and the daily ritual (here simply called *ārādhana*, *Adhyāya* 28). Although rulers are not explicitly mentioned in these two *Adhyāyas* as the main recipients or performers, the courtly context might still be evinced. Considering the initiation ritual for example, in the context of the proper use of the Mantra received during the ceremony, the civic and courtly dimensions are clearly stated. This implies that the recipient is meant to be a person belonging to the court:

TEXT 15

Text :

trailokyasyātha rakṣāyai bhuvāścakrasya vā kṛte ||
 20.51 *rāṣṭrasya vātha rājño vā rājamātrasya vā kṛte |*
bhāvāyaiva vidhiḥ kāryo naivābhāvāya karhicit ||

Translation :

‘The practice is to be performed for the protection of the Three Worlds, for the [welfare of the] earth, for the kingdom, the King or a Royal Officer. [It should be done] only for [their] good, never for evil [purposes].’

As for the daily ritual, the benefit in form of victory over enemies is stated among others right at the beginning⁹⁵. Towards the end of the *Adhyāya* it is stated that various celestial beings as well as humans will eventually fall under the control of the practitioner (*sādhaka*)⁹⁶.

The concept of sovereignty is taken up again in the same Microsection, this time as the central benefit arising from the ritual for conquering all directions.

A number of fire oblations is prescribed for each of the ten directions, starting from the east and proceeding clock-wise for the main directions, followed by the intermediate directions and the upper and lower directions. The higher the number of oblations, the further will the conquest advance. Each of the main directions is characterized by a colour, a form of the fire-pit, a material used as oblation and a specific kind of wood for lighting the fire. It is stated that the victorious king will eventually be received by the royal protectors of the directions, who will each grant him a gift. The features relating to the conquest of the four main directions are presented in the following table (Figure 3.1), along with reference to the relevant textual passages.

The aim of the ritual is stated right at the beginning:

TEXT 16

Text :

yadīcched vijayaṃ dikṣu sarvāsu ca mahāpatih ||
29.4 *ārādhana viśeṣais tu tattadvijayam āpnuyāt |*

Translation :

‘If the Ruler of the Earth desires [to attain] victory in all directions, he shall obtain it for each one of them by means of specific ritual procedures of propitiation’.

The AhS’ ritual repertoire also includes procedures to ensure benefits of a more private nature, such as curing various kinds of illnesses. In the following passage

⁹⁵Cfr. AhS 28, 1-2.

⁹⁶Cfr. AhS 28, 82cd-84.

	Colour	Fire pit	Oblation	Wood	King conquered	Gift	Reference in Adhyaya 29
EAST	White	Square	Bilva Fruits Soaked in Ghee	Bilva	Indra	Necklace (<i>hāra</i>)	AhS 4-18
SOUTH	Red	Half Moon	Red Lotuses	Khadira	Yama	Blacelet (<i>aṅgada</i>)	AhS 19-31ab
WEST	Variiegated Colours	Lotus	Karavīra smeared with Honey	Śamī	Varuṇa	Parasol (<i>chatra</i>)	AhS 31bc-43ab
NORTH	Yellow	Circle	Nandyāvarta Flowers	Udumbara	Soma	Chowrie (<i>cāmara</i>)	AhS 43cd-58ab

Figure 3.1.: Conquering the Main Directions

introducing how to cure fever, it can be observed that kings are mentioned first, followed by ministers and by the common people. In this way the redactor(s) manage to underline the fact that the king is the main intended recipient, without compromising the potentially universal utility of the rites⁹⁷.

The passage reads:

TEXT 17

Text :

38.20cd *jvarābhibhūte nṛpatau sacive 'nyajane 'thavā ||*

Translation :

‘If a King, a minister or a common person is overcome with fever...’

A similar order, with the king figuring at the head, is adopted when listing the beneficiaries of the *mahābhiṣeka* ritual to fulfill all purposes. The ritual includes the placement of Yantras, vases and fire pits, followed by a fire sacrifice (*homa*) and Mantra recitation (*japa*). The ritual concludes with the bathing of the candidate with the consecrated water of the vases (for a translation see Appendix B).

TEXT 18

Text :

39.4 *rājñāś ca mantriṇām caiva sarveṣām adhikāriṇām |*

padāt svasmād upārodhukāmānām paramaṃ padam ||

39.5 *anyeṣām laukikānām ca yat kiṃcid vāñchatām tathā |*

kāryaṃ mahābhiṣekākhyam karma sarvārthasādhakam ||

Translation :

‘The ritual procedure called Great Consecration, which is a means for

⁹⁷The same strategy was adopted in the Netratantra. Cfr. Sanderson 2005: 244 “[The Śaiva officiant] is presented as the performer of rites for the protection and prosperity of all members of society, but this wider constituency is generally mentioned only after the text has specified the king, his wives and their children, who are the principal intended beneficiaries and in many cases the only ones”.

the attainment of all purposes, should be performed for the King, for ministers and all those who are entitled and who wish to rise from their own position to the highest one. [It should also be performed] for the remaining ordinary people, whatever it is that they desire’.

The pacificatory ritual described in *Adhyāya* 47 closes the Metasection on Ritual. It is portrayed as instrumental for the protection of the kingdom and its prosperity⁹⁸. Interestingly, the apologetic strategy of mentioning ancient kings who had benefited from the practice is adopted here in much the same way as in the beginning of *Adhyāya* 48, where ancient kings are listed who had overcome various difficulties by means of Sudarśana’s Yantra⁹⁹.

The passage in question reads as follows:

TEXT 19

Text :

mahārājair mahābhāgaiḥ prayojyaṃ vyastajātibhiḥ ||
 47.6 *ādhyātmikādiduḥkhānāṃ trayāṇām api nāśanam |*
ādhināṃ cāpy aśeṣāṇāṃ nāśanam śubhalakṣaṇam ||
 47.7 *sarvārināśanam śāntaṃ mahāvijayakāraṇam |*
rakṣhaṇaṃ puṣṭikaraṃ sarvavaśyakaraṃ mune ||
 47.8 *paramāyuhpradaṃ puṇyaṃ pūrvair nṛpatibhiḥ kṛtam |*
ambarīṣaḥ śuko ’larko māṃdhātā ca purūravāḥ ||
 47.9 *rājoparicaro dhundhuḥ śibiś ca śrutakīrtanaḥ |*
kṛtvaitac cakravartitvaṃ purā prāpur amī nṛpāḥ ||
 47.10 *nirāmayā niḥsapatnā vistīrṇāmalakīrtayaḥ |*

Translation :

‘[This rite] should be employed by utterly glorious Sovereigns when they

⁹⁸Cfr. the short summary of this *Adhyāya* given by Schrader (1916: 132).

⁹⁹Cfr. AhS 48: 4cd-5ab. The kings mentioned there are Mukṭāpīḍa, Viśāla, Sunanda, Citraśekhara and Kīrtimālin. For references to kings of the same names in epic and Purāṇic sources see Rastelli 2015: 4ff.

are in distress — [for this rite] removes the three kinds of sorrow which begin with the one relating to oneself; causes the destruction of all afflictions; is marked by auspiciousness; destroys all enemies; pacifies (i.e. removes unwanted consequences of ritual mistakes etc.); is the cause of triumph; kills the Demons; brings about prosperities; subdues all; bestows the longest of lives; is meritorious; [and] was performed by ancient Kings.

Ambarīśa, Śuka, Alarka, Māndhātṛ, Purūravas, Rājoparicara, Dhundhu, Śibi and Śrutakīrtana — those Kings of old attained Universal Sovereignty after performing this. They became free of diseases and free of enemies. Their fame was widely spread and blameless’.

Notes :

As for the three kinds of sorrow, the student of Indian religions might recall finding the expression *duḥkhatrāya* in the famous first stanza of the *Samkhyakārikā*. The commentary *Māṭharavṛtti*¹⁰⁰ elaborates stating that the three kinds are *ādhyātmika* (relating to the self), *ādhibhautika* (relating to living beings) and *ādhidāivika* (relating to the “sky”). The first includes suffering caused by both mind and body, as feeling arising when separated from pleasant things or illnesses like fever etc. The second arises for instance when other human beings or wild animal are its cause. The third relates to suffering arising because of excessive heat, cold, etc. (See Sharma’s edition on page 3).

As for the list of kings, most of their names are found in one single passage of the Mahābhārata (XIII, 166), listing the names of sages and kings to be recited at the two twilights. A ‘Slayer of Dhundhu’ (Dhundhumāra) is mentioned instead of Dhundhu. Nevertheless, king Dhundhu is mentioned ad MBh XIII, 115.

More importantly, Śuka and Śrutakīrti are absent. The present author has not yet been able to find these names as unmistakably related to

¹⁰⁰The present author remarks are based on the text as found in the edition by Vishnu Prasad Sharma, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series, Benares 1922.

kings outside the AhS.

On the whole, it is safe to say that most of the kings are famous characters found in epic sources.

It should be clear by now that the AhS' ritual repertoire is not very extensive. One major ritual category is missing: that of calendrical rituals and festivals. The context is clearly that of the royal court and emphasis is placed on supporting the king on his military campaigns, fulfilling his desires as well as that of his ministers and solving incidental problems which may threaten both their persons and the kingdom itself.

3.5. Remarks on the Narratives

The main function of the narratives of the AhS is to illustrate the importance of Sudarśana's cult for king, usually in connection to the role of the court officiant. Useful summaries of the narratives have been given by Schrader (1916: 132ff.) and more recently by Rastelli (2015). Rastelli (2015) has synthesized the main aspects of each narrative in a table under the headings: name of king; places mentioned; problem (the king has to face); name of helper; and solution of the problem. Her research has shown that the names of kings as well as the places mentioned are usually taken from epic or Purāṇic sources and are traditionally linked with Viṣṇu¹⁰¹. The range of problems faced by kings is fairly wide, but the need for victory in battle, or against demons, is the most common *topos*¹⁰². The helpers are usually officiants, sometimes deities, and the problem is solved mostly by Sudarśana either in person or in his forms as Yantra and Mantra¹⁰³.

Despite the fact that the narratives' internal function is that of exemplifying while drawing on aspects of the cult already addressed elsewhere and that their contents are markedly mythological, their importance should not be underestimated. As

¹⁰¹Cfr. Rastelli 2015: 2.

¹⁰²Other problems faced by kings include illness (story of Kuśadhvaṅga, AhS 43, 21ff.) and impending death (story of Viśāla, AhS 48, 50ff.)

¹⁰³There are however stories where officiants are absent and Sudarśana is only at the background, as in the story of Citraśekhara, helped by Kubera and Lakṣmī,

Rastelli points out, the fact that the kings and places mentioned are famous have a direct bearing on how “appealing” the cult would be to potential patrons¹⁰⁴.

Although the kings and officiants mentioned in the narratives are not historical but literary figures, the present author was hoping to gain at least new insights about their functions and to subsequently build a typology which could throw light on them as historical agents as well. One of the main observations made so far regards the apparent presence of two classes of officiants in the stories. One kind of officiant is that present at the royal court, having direct access to king and ministers (as is the first *purohita* mentioned in the story of Sunanda, AhS 48, 64ff.). But some narratives depict another character, which appears to reside outside the court, for instance in a hermitage (as Pulaha in the story of Viśāla, AhS 48, 50ff.). This second character can be approached directly by the king or by the court officiant. The fact that the court officiant goes to him for help could imply that the latter is more powerful or more knowledgeable about the deity Sudarśana. One would therefore be tempted to separate the characters into the group of court officiants proper on one hand and powerful sages on the other. Unfortunately, two problems arise. First of all, the narratives do not present enough details about the characters to clearly identify and separate the kind of services they could offer. Secondly, the terms used to address them are not clearly distinct. For example, in the story of Viśāla (AhS 48, 50ff.), the king himself goes to the hermitage of Pulaha, who thus seems not to be present at the court. Nevertheless, Pulaha is called *purohita*, the same term commonly used for the officiant present at the court in the narratives¹⁰⁵. On the other hand, in the story of Muktāpīḍa (AhS 48, 9ff.) the officiant at the court is called both *purodhas* as well as *guru*, a term which we would expect to be linked to a sage or preceptor more than to an officiant¹⁰⁶. In the story of Sunanda (AhS 48.64ff.), the officiant present at the court, called *purodhas*, seeks the help of Kaṇva, who is performing asceticism on the banks of a river. Kaṇva is here called ‘[the officiant’s] own guru’ (*svaguru*), as could ideally be expected¹⁰⁷. Finally, in the story of Kuśadhvaṅga (AhS 45), the king goes personally to Yājñavalkya, who does

¹⁰⁴Cfr. Rastelli 2015: 6.

¹⁰⁵Cfr. AhS 48, 58.

¹⁰⁶Cfr. AhS 48, 13-14.

¹⁰⁷Cfr. AhS 48, 80.

not live in a forest but in his own palace (*mandira*). Yājñavalkya is called *guru* as well as *kulaguru* (family preceptor)¹⁰⁸.

Due to the paucity of descriptions concerning the functions of these characters and to the inconsistent use of their titles, it is very difficult to separate clearly the two categories of officiants. It is not unlikely that this difficulty is the result of a carefully thought strategy on part of the redactor(s) of the narratives, who wished to convey the idea of the respectability and relative independence of the cult's officiant.

Two narratives, the story of Viśāla and that of Sunanda (from the 48th *Adhyāya*) are translated under Appendix A, so that the reader might get at least an idea of this sub-genre in the AhS. The first narrative tells of how king Viśāla could escape death thanks to the help of Pulaha, a sage residing in a hermitage. The narrative is very short but it includes all the "ingredients" necessary to convey the message of how useful Sudarśana's cult can be to rulers.

The second narrative is more complex in structure. It tells of the adventures of a prince who married a Nāga girl and started living in the netherworld, forgetting about his family and duties. His father is in despair since he does not know why his son has disappeared. The court officiant visits his guru to find out about the whereabouts of the prince. After finding out his location the king sets off with an army to bring him back home. Eventually, he is successful.

In this story the illustrating function of the narratives can be appreciated. One example is that of the divine weapons (*divya-astras*) which have the power to cause the enemy to fall asleep (*prasvāpana*) or to burn down anything standing in their way (*āgneya*). The Mantras and the nature of these two weapons have been described in other *Adhyāyas*, but in the story of Sunanda they can be seen in action by means of a colourful description.

¹⁰⁸Cfr. AhS 45, 17.

4. Summary of Results and General Observations

4.1. Introductory Remarks

The main human characters populating AhS Section B are idealized representatives of court members, as illustrated by the above textual passages. These characters actually represent institutions more than individuals.

Rulers and court officiants are the main players on the AhS' stage, and considerable effort is devoted to stating that both ought to work together in order to secure the welfare of the kingdom¹⁰⁹. Naturally, the king is placed higher, for he is the potential client, whereas the court officiant is portrayed as indispensable to him¹¹⁰.

In this sense it can be stated that the AhS contains a very clear message to rulers, who are prompted to accept Sudarśana's cult for the benefits of the kingdom and themselves. But this message is far more complex than a mere statement about the importance of employing a qualified court officiant. The main elements of the AhS' message to rulers are: 1) the ritual repertoire offered by the officiant to his king; 2) the benefits arising from ritual performances; and 3) the theological aspects supporting the outlined system. These three elements will be analysed more deeply in the present chapter in order to point out their peculiarities. The way these elements form a meaningful whole which responds to a clear strategy on part of the redactor(s) will then be discussed in the «Conclusions».

¹⁰⁹See for example Text 1 and Text 2 above.

¹¹⁰See Passage 5 above.

4.2. Ritual Repertoire and its Benefits

The main “selling point” of the AhS is definitely Sudarśana’s Yantra¹¹¹, but the main rituals described in the *saṃhitā* are all, directly or indirectly, connected to the king and his possible needs.

As pointed out in section 3.4 «Rituals to Meet Royal Needs», this special repertoire includes a ritual to aid the conquest of all directions (*digvijaya*, *Adhyāya* 29), a ritual to cure various illnesses (*roganivṛtti*, *Adhyāya* 38), a ritual to fulfill all desires (*mahābhīṣeka*, *Adhyāya* 39) and a pacificatory ritual (*śānti*, *Adhyāya* 47). Apart from these, the other two major procedures described in the *saṃhitā* are a ritual of initiation (*dīkṣā*, *Adhyāya* 20) and the daily ritual (here simply called *ārādhana*, *Adhyāya* 28).

It is useful at this point to compare this list with the one presenting the ritual repertoire of traditional court officiants connected to the Atharvaveda¹¹². Sanderson (2005) has used this method to understand the position of the Śaiva officiants as described in a Kashmirian scripture called *Netratantra*. He quotes the following lines from the *Atharvavedapariśiṣṭas*, which state that the occupation of the court officiant includes:

“(1) rituals to ward off dangers and ills of every kind from the king and his kingdom (*śāntikaṃ karma*), some of them simple rites to protect the king’s person to be performed at various times every day, others much more elaborate ceremonies to be performed periodically, (2) rituals to restore his health and vigour (*pauṣṭikaṃ karma*), (3) rituals to harm his enemies (*ābhicārikaṃ karma*), (4) the regular and occasional rituals (*nityaṃ karma* and *naimittikaṃ karma*) required of the king, (5) reparatory rites (*prāyaścittīyaṃ karma*), and (6) postmortuary rites (*aurdhvadehikaṃ karma*) when the king or any other member of the royal family dies” (Sanderson 2005: 239)¹¹³.

¹¹¹For a general description see 2.3 «Introducing the Work’s Content»

¹¹²For the main links between the AhS and the Atharvaveda see 2.3 «Introducing the Work’s Content».

¹¹³The list is based on Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa 3.1.10: *yasyānykulopayuktaḥ purodhāḥ śāntika-pauṣṭikaprayaścittīyābhicārikanaimittikaurdhvadehikāny atharvavīhitāni karmāṇi kuryāt*.

The officiant outlined in the textual passage above is then primarily a priest, who takes care of minor ritual duties as well. For example, another duty of the atharvavedic officiant is the ritual preparation of the king's bed before he goes to sleep¹¹⁴.

A mere glimpse at the passage above is sufficient to notice that many ritual duties of the traditional atharvavedic officiant are not part of the AhS' repertoire. Annual festivals are not taken into account and rituals including minor personal services are poorly represented. The procedure for curing various illnesses (*Adhyāya* 38) could be seen as an exception. Interestingly, postmortuary and reparatory rituals are not covered by the AhS¹¹⁵.

This choice of repertoire could be motivated by the will of having the officiants engaged mostly with prestigious tasks which are particularly relevant to rulers. This consideration calls for a more detailed analysis of the benefits promised to rulers.

The benefits promised by the AhS to rulers adopting Sudarśana's cult could be divided into three categories: protection of the king; protection of the kingdom; and special advantages for the king (which include the attainment of sovereignty by securing victory in every battle). However, as the textual passages presented above have illustrated, the lists of benefits tend to address multiple aspects. This fact can be understood as an attempt on part of the redactor(s) to convey that Sudarśana's worship always entails a number of benefits. Nevertheless, the very order in which the benefits are listed can point out where the emphasis lays. This was the case with the list pertaining to the *śānti* ritual (Text 19 above), where the first benefit mentioned was freedom from any kind of sorrow (AhS 47, 6) and where victory over enemies was mentioned only after that.

Despite this situation and the need of considering each textual passage in its context (as was done above in chapter 3), some general remarks are still possible.

Clearly, the king' health and well-being are taken into consideration, as Texts 8,

¹¹⁴Cfr. Sanderson 2005: 250 and *Atharvavedaparīśiṣṭa* 4.3.1-4.5 and 6.1.1-6.2.8, quoted on the same page.

¹¹⁵Reparatory rituals are not entirely absent from Pāñcarātra scriptures addressing kings. *Samhitās* which include this kind of procedures are mentioned in Czerniac-Drożdżowicz 2003: 142ff.

9, 17 and 18 have illustrated¹¹⁶.

Nevertheless, the most striking aspect in the various lists of benefits is the insistence on victory in battle. The textual passages reported above, despite being only a selection, have illustrated how the theme of victory in battle is present in a number of different contexts and not only when it comes to Yantra worship or the *digvijaya* ritual.

Victory is assured both when defending the kingdom (see Text 12 above) or attacking in order to broaden one's dominion (see for example Text 12). In the second case, the ruler is guaranteed victory in all directions and the acquisition of the title of Universal Sovereign (*cakravartin*).

4.3. Divine Powers

The presence of Sudarśana as the central deity of the cult is not casual and should be seen as part of the complex strategy developed by the text's redactor(s) in order to gain the interest of rulers. To illustrate this fact, some aspects of Sudarśana connected to the issue of warfare and victory in battle, elements so prominent among the purposes for his worship, will now be pointed out.

It is important to notice the fact that Sudarśana's mythology depicts him as the personification of a weapon. As *āyudhapuruṣa*, he is known as the personification of Viṣṇu's discus (*cakra*), but by the time of the AhS, Sudarśana had risen to the status of an deity, albeit always as aspect of Viṣṇu. This fact is reflected in iconographical development¹¹⁷. As pointed out above, he is visualized as a deity with different numbers of arms, each form inspiring different aesthetic sentiments¹¹⁸, but it is significant that the worship of the particularly frightful sixteen-armed Sudarśana is prescribed in connection with difficulties arising from warfare (the textual passage referred to has been presented above as "Text 12")¹¹⁹.

Another important characteristic of the main deity of the cult is that he is the

¹¹⁶Benefits of this kind are also described in the context of Yantra worship ad AhS 26, 73 and in the context of the daily ritual ad AhS 28, 1.

¹¹⁷For an excellent survey of this iconographical (and theological) evolution see Begley 1973.

¹¹⁸See Begley's chapter "The multi-armed cult images of Sudarśana-Puruṣa" (1973: 65ff.).

¹¹⁹This fact has been already noted by Begley (1973:73).

holder of magical weapons (*astras*). In a description of the two-armed Sudarśana, the deity is described as *ādhāraṃ sarvaśaktīnām astrāṇām ca* (AhS 44, 24), i.e. ‘support of all powers and weapons’¹²⁰. As pointed out already, four *Adhyāyas* are dedicated to their description. In *Adhyāya* 30, the origin of such weapons, circa one hundred in number, is explained, and the names of the weapons are generally already known from the epics¹²¹. According to this description, different groups of weapons were born from various parts of the *sudarśanapurūṣa*¹²². The mantras needed to deploy them are listed (*Adhyāyas* 34 and 35) using symbolic encryptions which require technical knowledge in order to be understood. Finally, part of *Adhyāya* 35 and the whole of 40 are concerned with the description of their “true form” (*svarūpa*). Such form is said to be highly secret (Cfr. AhS 35, 3). The weapons are divided into offensive and defensive (*pravartaka* and *nivartaka*) and, as Begley observes, this reflects the ability of Sudarśana to destroy enemies on one side and protect the kingdom on the other¹²³.

For our purpose, the following statement is significant: *eṣāṃ darśanamātrena vinaśyanty arisainikāḥ* ‘Merely by their (i.e. the divine weapons) sight, the hostile soldiers will perish’ (AhS 40, 7cd). Thus, the text seems to imply that the weapons could be of actual use to those who mastered their powers. For the present purposes, however, it is sufficient to point out that magical weapons are manifestations of Sudarśana’s power¹²⁴.

After these considerations, there should be no doubt about the fact that Sudarśana is certainly appropriate as the central deity of a cult which places special emphasis on warfare and victory. Moreover, a clear connection is made between Sudarśana and rulers, in the textual passage *devam enam anārādhyā na kaścij jāyate nrpaḥ* ‘Without the propitiation of this deity (i.e. Sudarśana) there just can be no king’ (AhS 36, 46cd, see Text 11 above).

It is also telling that a deity like Narasiṃha¹²⁵ should figure largely in the AhS,

¹²⁰Cfr. Begley 1973: 67.

¹²¹A very similar list of weapons can be found in *Rāmāyaṇa* I, 26.

¹²²Cfr. Schrader 1916:124ff.

¹²³Cfr. Begley 1973: 79.

¹²⁴It is interesting to see how some of the narrative passages are meant to illustrate the power of such weapons. The story of Sunanda reported in Appendix A is an example of this.

¹²⁵On the importance of Narasiṃha in Orissa cfr. Sanderson 2007: 226. On his affinity with Śiva

side by side with Sudarśana himself. In fact, the Yantras of the two deities are to be combined in order to deploy an even stronger power (see Text 6 above)¹²⁶.

The Metasection on Yantra contains a number of references to Narasiṃha¹²⁷ and at the end of the text, three whole Adhyāyas (54 to 56) are dedicated to the explanation of his Mantra¹²⁸.

Begley synthesizes the role of Narasiṃha in this context with the following words: “It is not surprising that Narasiṃha, the most horrific of the *avatāras*, should be associated symbolically with the *ugra* sixteen-armed Sudarśana. By holding four *cakras* as weapon-attributes, Narasiṃha’s horrible powers of destruction are linked speculatively with the destructiveness of the “support of all weapons and powers”, the *sudarśanacakra* itself.

The last aspect of the AhS’ theology which should be pointed out here is the particular importance given to Lakṣmī as personification of Viṣṇu’s power (*śakti*). Lakṣmī’s connection to kingship and her symbolical connotations as a ruler’s wife, a ruler’s fortune, wealth etc. is a common *topos* in Sanskrit literature¹²⁹. In the AhS, Lakṣmī is the basis of both *kriyā* and *bhūti śaktis* (Material and Creative Energies)¹³⁰. The *kriyāśakti* is the basis of Mantras and of Sudarśana himself¹³¹. As such, Lakṣmī occupies a central position in the AhS’ theology. The textual passages taken from the opening of *Adhyāya* 16 and presented above (3.2) illustrate how Lakṣmī is an integral part of the description of the hierarchy of kings and court officiants¹³² and therefore of the “political” message of the AhS.

cfr. Eschmann-Kulke-Tripathi 1978: 104 (quoted in Rastelli 2012: 7) as well as Deḃicka-Borek 2011: 114ff.

¹²⁶On the general affinity between Narasiṃha and Sudarśana see Deḃicka-Borek 2011: 116ff.

¹²⁷For descriptions of Narasiṃha cfr. AhS 26.57 and 26.62ff., the latter has been translated in Begley 1973: 87. His Yantra, combined with that of Sudarśana, is also described in PārS 23.

¹²⁸On this mantra in Paippalādin materials see Sanderson 2007: 210. See also Deḃicka-Borek 2011: 109.

¹²⁹See in particular Malinar’s contribution to this topic, where these aspects are taken into consideration (1998).

¹³⁰See above 2.3 «Introducing the Work’s Content».

¹³¹See footnote 60 above.

¹³²See in particular Text 2 and 3 in 3.2 «Kings and Court Officiants». Also relevant in this regard is the story of Citraśekhara (AhS 49), where it is Lakṣmī, aided by Kubera, who helps the king to solve his difficulties in defeating a powerful demon. Rastelli is preparing a translation and an analysis of this important narrative.

5. Conclusions

The textual passages presented in chapter three, along with the observations of chapter four, have shown how kings and members of the royal court occupy a very prominent position in the AhS. Significant is not only the frequency with which they are mentioned, but also the variety of contexts in which they appear. Such “contexts” could be better identified by applying to the work the idea of thematic (Macro)sections.

Rulers were told that court officiants are indispensable to them, a specific ritual repertoire was developed to satisfy their needs and benefits of various nature were promised to them as a consequence of ritual performance as well as devotion to Sudarśana.

In chapter four it was observed that the ritual repertoire is specifically designed not to include less prestigious tasks as a way of emphasizing the status of the officiants of Sudarśana’s cult. As for the benefits promised, the insistence on success in warfare had to be noticed, as other scholars have already done before. Victory in battle was promised to rulers both when defending their kingdom or attempting to extend their dominion.

The AhS is not a ritual manual. First of all it is a religious text depicting Sudarśana’s cult. It was felt necessary to point out that a deity like Sudarśana, with its military symbolism, is most appropriate as the center of a cult emphasizing royalty and warfare. The redactor(s) themselves made this fact very clear in their descriptions of Sudarśana and his powers. But Sudarśana was aided by Lakṣmī and Narasiṃha in order to underline even more the cult’s links with the institution of kingship as well as its “military” nature.

These observations lead to the recognition that the various elements of Sudarśana’s cult do make sense as a whole. Theological and ritual aspects complement

and support each other in the AhS, to the extent that the reader cannot understand the work if both aspects are not considered in their mutual influence.

Nevertheless, there is another, more important factor. It is what the redactor(s) had in mind when composing the AhS. Clearly, the aim was to create a work which would be appealing to rulers, perhaps with the purpose of securing royal patronage for the tradition or of enhancing the status of the cult's officiants at the court.

The AhS depiction of Sudarśana's worship at the royal court can be seen as a carefully pondered literary effort which includes theological and ritualistic aspects with the purpose of winning the interest of the king. For this end special attention was given to meeting the specific needs of rulers and giving to the cult an attractive garb, which could stand out as an emblem of royalty and power.

A. Two Stories (AhS 48, 50cd-109)

A.1. The Story of Viśāla

(50cd-52) King Viśāla ruled the Earth along with its oceans and cities as a righteous one (*dharmātman*) and was living in [his capital] city called “Viśāla”. He was truthful, impartial, affectionate, chosen by fate, and affectionate towards the divine law. He was twenty years of age, a sustainer of Brāhmaṇas, attached to [his] people, firm when [facing] destiny, and devoted to the worship of ancestors.

(53-56) Oh sage, while he, who had lost his father during childhood, was living in this way, his mother heard an incorporeal voice in the sky saying: “In four days your son will be dead!”. Having heard this and other such things, she started to wail vehemently, full of sorrow. Hearing that, the attentive [son] asked his distressed mother: “Why are you crying?”. She, being repeatedly asked, truthfully told him the story. Hearing that, the noble minded replied: “Fear not!” He then set out for the hermitage of Pulaha.

(57-59) When he [finally] saw the sage, who was performing asceticism, [the king] bowed down and said: “[My] mother could hear an incorporeal speech [saying] so and so...”. Thus addressed the sage, the officiant, replied: “Wear this ring which is connected with the great Yantra of Sudarśana. Just by [doing] this, death shall vanish, no doubt [about it]”. Thus instructed, he accepted the ring and wore it.

(60-64ab) After Viśāla had worn that ring properly empowered with the Yantra, frightful servants, commanded by Kāla (i.e. Yama, the deity presiding over time and death), came close to him, unimpeded, in order to take [his] life. But they could not get to [his] side because of the ring’s power. As they, enraged and with

raised hands, had almost thrown their chains on him, from the main rim of the wheel [present on the ring], various weapons emerged. Being distressed by them, [the servants of Kāla] retreated completely in the same way they had come.

Then the gods, along with Kāla, became full of wonder: “He escaped death by means of Sudarśana’s power!”.

A.2. The Story of Sunanda

(64cd-65) Listen likewise about the might of the mirror, oh great sage. In old times a king named Sunīti¹³³ was living in the [capital] city called Śṛṅgāra¹³⁴. He was ruling over the earth at the end of the Tretāyuga¹³⁵.

(66-70ab) Having sacrificed to Indra, he was finally able to beget a son. The father gave him, who was growing day by day, the name of Sumati. Eventually that glorious [child] became a youth. He very quickly obtained learning and became skillful in the use of weapons. Once, in order to hunt, he came near an outer grove [and] there he saw an attractive woman. Never had he beheld [such a] one, young and beautiful, and so, love-sick, he lost his mind. Then she took Sumati to her abode. Having enchanted him with magic, she entered the Nāga-world¹³⁶.

(70cd-73) There they entered the beautiful capital of the Nāga king, Bhogavatī, and Ramā offered Sumati to Anaṅgamañjarī. As she saw him, she was overwhelmed with joy and chose Sumati as husband. He looked at that world, that city, that fascinating Nāga-girl, and he was astonished. So he married Anaṅgamañjarī according to the Gāndharva¹³⁷ way, and enjoyed [himself with her], completely forgetting all that he had, [including his] city, father, and family.

¹³³In the introduction to the circle of five stories of which this constitutes the third, the king was called Sunanda (AhS 48, 4). The apparatus reports that this verse was dropped in a branch of the text transmission. Later in the story the king is called Sunanda again.

¹³⁴The name of the city means ‘passion’, which is also a central theme of the story.

¹³⁵The Tretāyuga is the second of four cosmic ages which repeat themselves cyclically. From the first to the fourth, mankind witnesses a decline both in physical and moral conditions. The present age is considered to be the fourth one.

¹³⁶The Nāgas, whose name means ‘serpent’, are supernatural beings living in the netherworld. Their world is renown for its riches and said to be accessible from certain caves by magical means. Nāga-women are typically described as extremely beautiful.

¹³⁷This kind of marriage apparently required only the will of the couple.

(74-78) Meanwhile, the king came to know that his son had not come back. In all-haste he spoke to the ministers: “My one dear son, attained with difficulty, should be brought back here today itself. [Only] with him can I take food and today I shall not eat!”, such was his order. Having heard his words, spies, messengers, and other swift [operatives] were sent out by the ministers and spread in all directions. They went about looking for him everywhere: in all possible directions, corners, mountains, rivers, and ponds, then also in villages and cities, in temples and among Vaidikas, in urban space, wilderness and sacred sites. None of them had seen Sumati, and this they reported to the King.

(79-81ab) On hearing this, the ruler was overwhelmed with sorrow, kept lamenting, and did not eat or sleep, filled with great grief.

While the great king was thus afflicted, the court officiant went to his guru, Kaṇva, who was living on the banks of the Tamasā river. He then respectfully told him that story about the prince.

(81cd-91) Having listened to it, the sage entered deep meditation out of compassion and by means of yoga he saw what had happened to the boy. Then he came out of that state and told the [court officiant] the whole story: “In the Netherworld, there is an utterly charming city, Bhogavatī, where Anaṅgamañjarī, daughter of the Nāga-King Vāsuki of endless glory, was born. In time, she reached youth and became beautiful and lovely. [Vāsuki thought:] ‘I will get her married to a bridegroom she has [natural] longing for’. Understanding Vāsuki’s intent, her female attendants went hither and thither to find a suitable husband for her. [But] they could not find one. They went about in the Nāga-world and on earth as well looking for a bridegroom. There they saw the handsome Prince Sumati. They [went back to Bhogavatī and] spoke to her: “On Earth there is a prince who resembles the God of Love, worthy of you alone and equal to Indra in prosperity. But he cannot be brought here by means such as gentle words and the like”. Hearing this, she said: “Bring him here swiftly!”. Then she started worrying a lot, such was her desire to meet him. Her girlfriends, deliberating together, addressed Ramā, who was skilled in magic: “Enchant him with your magic and bring that handsome man here”. She, thus addressed, brought him [there] by means of magic. Sumati married her (i.e. Anaṅgamañjarī) and now he is enjoying himself there.

(92-96ab) Without the power of Sudarśana, there is no other way you can bring him back. I shall get him out with the help of that [power]. Make Sudarśana's Yantra into a mirror [adorned] with gold and bring him back without delay, according to the way I told you before". Having said this, again he started performing the most difficult of ascetic practices.

The court officiant left and [then] he revealed everything to the king. The king, who was utterly glad, constructed the Yantra-empowered mirror and then left eastwards on a chariot. Sunanda came to the entrance of a cave and was able to find it by means of the energy of the mirror. Having entered the Nāga-world, which has no rival, just like the Heavens, he was most astonished by looking at its riches. He entered the beautiful Nāga-capital Bhogavatī and the utterly child-loving [father] looked for his son. Sumati, accompanied by his wife, came out of the inner apartments in order to see his father, in the company of all the women like the God of Love. The King, the destroyer of enemies, put him along with the Nāga-girls on a finest chariot, and than set out for his own city.

(100cd-102)“One earth-ruler made your son in law and your daughter mount on a chariot from their own inner apartments. He is leaving!”. When Vāsuki heard this, he was furious and went out surrounded by the Nāga-army. As he saw that tiger-like king he shouted: “Hold on! Hold on! Where are you riding to, having abducted from here husband and wife?”.

(103-105ab) Sunanda heard this and stopped that finest of chariots. He then requested the mirror: “Destroy the enemy's army now!”. Thereupon the divine weapons 'Soporific' and 'Fiery'¹³⁸ came out in an instant. The 'Soporific' [weapon] entered [the lines of] the Nāga-army and made it fall asleep. The 'Fiery' weapon started burning down the city vigorously.

(105cd-109) When the Nāga-King saw this, he sought Sunanda's shelter: “I did not know about all this, oh mighty one, forgive me! Be peaceful by thinking what calamity this is for the women! Accept these precious jewels, oh glorious one, and also this girl and another thousand Nāga-women. Take them and please leave, once you have withdrawn the magical weapons!”. “So be it!” answered Sunanda, and he

¹³⁸The Sanskrit names of these weapons are *prasvāpana* and *āgneya*. For a general description of the divine weapons cfr. Schrader 1916: 124ff.

attentively withdrew the weapons. Thereupon, he took with him his son, a large number of jewels, and [many] excellent women, he bid farewell to [Vāsuki], and went [back] to his city, having accomplished his task.

B. The Ritual to Fulfill all Desires (AhS 39)

Nā : Oh Glorious One, tell me by means of which ritual action all diseases vanish and all enemies too, all purposes are accomplished, the world brought under control and stainless¹³⁹ power attained. Tell me, for you are omniscient.

AhB : Listen carefully to this secret, oh Great Sage. For if [this method] is employed [just] once, all purposes are attained. The ritual procedure called Great Consecration, which is a means for the attainment of all purposes, should be performed for the King, for ministers and all those who are entitled and who wish to rise from their own position to the highest one. [It should also be performed] for the remaining ordinary people, whatever it is that they desire.

In a temple of Vāsudeva, a park, a pavillon or a palace (*mandira*)¹⁴⁰ where the equal ground was purified and endowed with the eight auspicious things¹⁴¹ – having scattered there rice counted in nine measures and having placed down the Maṇḍala of Mahendra with Jasmine flowers on the external – one should place down the Yantra of Sudarśana in the middle, with fragrant flowers, according to the method explained, and in the middle of that the Suśobhana (?)¹⁴². [Again] in the middle of that the Mantra master (*mantrin*) should place down the supreme Yantra disk.

In front of that he should let [someone] bring, along with [the recitation of]

¹³⁹E reads *vipulā* ('extensive', 'abundant') in place of *vimalā*.

¹⁴⁰Ad AhS 29, 85 the same places, with the exception of the pavillon, are described as proper for all auspicious rituals (*śubhā kriyā*).

¹⁴¹For a list of the "eight auspicious things" (*aṣṭamaṅgala*) – which include a mirror, a full vase, a conch etc. – cfr. TAK I, 155.

¹⁴²One would expect to find the term *suśobhana* ('very beautiful') in the function of an adjective, but, due to the expression 'in the middle of that' (*tanmadhye*), the term appears to refer technically to a specific part of the Yantra or something placed on that. The present author has not yet been able to find other instances of this usage of the term *suśobhana*.

the Root-Mantra, the vase adorned with threads and the nine jewels. [The vase should be filled] with fragrant water¹⁴³, decorated with powder of sandalwood, aloe, camphor and saffron, scattered all around with unhusked rice grains, covered with pure linen, full of fragrant flowers and adorned with incense and lamps.

In the other direction, he should prepare the well-adorned vases and pits. He should install the decorated full vases in the eight quarters. Beginning with the “*ācakrāya*” Mantras and ending with the “*agniprākāraka*” [Mantras]¹⁴⁴, he should place them by means of [these] Mantras, starting from the east, and then worship each one of them.

[Starting from] the east of the vases, he should place the fire-pits all around. In the middle he should make a well-decorated pit characterized by a *prāsāda* (litt. “platform”)¹⁴⁵. In the eastern direction the pit should be square; in the south-eastern it should be triangular; in the southern it should be like a half-moon; in the south-western it should have the shape of a vulva; in the western it should be like a lotus; in the north-western octagonal; in the northern direction round; and in the north-eastern hexagonal.

He should employ Vaiṣṇava priests for [the performance of] the fire sacrifice in the eight directions. In the middle, the performer and Mantra master should offer oblations in the burning fire. For each one he should offer thousand and eight oblations. Mindfully he should offer in all directions with the Root-Mantra. After the fire oblation, the practitioner should worship the Deity in all vases, touch them and recite the Mantra with the name of the recipient included, for thousand and eight times according to rule. He should have the recipient rest while facing the

¹⁴³The printed text reads *gandhatoye*, whose syntactical function is unclear. In the translation the expression has been rendered on the base of the conjecture *gandhatoyam*, agreeing with *kumbham* in the accusative.

¹⁴⁴Clearly this Mantras have the function of protecting a certain area during the ritual. Mention of the *ācakrāya* Mantras appears to be very common in literature. One example for this kind of Mantras can be found ad *Agnipurāṇa* 306, 5 (the numbers refers to the edition in the Guruman-dal Series No. XVII, the *Adhyāya* is called “*nārasimhādīmantrāḥ*”). In Pāñcarātra literature they are found ad *Parāśarasamhitā* 15, 85 (Ed. Śrīraṅgam 2000) and ad *Sanatkumārasamhitā* 11.8 in the *brahmarātra* section (Ed. Adyar 1969). The *agniprākāraka* Mantras are mentioned less frequently. The only example of an *agniprākāraka* Mantra the present author was able to find comes from *Gāruḍapurāṇa* 16, 9ff. (edition by Rāmateja Pāṇḍeya for Caukhambā Vidyābhavan).

¹⁴⁵The expression *prāsādalakṣaṇa* probably denotes a fire-pit which includes a platform or a multi-layered enclosing structure.

Great Yantra on the seat [prepared for him].

Then, in the sound of kettle drums, conches and Kalaha instruments, being [mentally] quite, he should bathe him with the water of the vases starting from the east. Later, taking the well adorned full vase in the middle, he should consecrate [him] with that water and in the end the Mantra master should himself recite the Mantra.

The one who has all his faults removed by means of this consecration is like a sun which shines, freed from the obstruction of the cold season. For all desires are granted¹⁴⁶ to that blameless one. If the king is not present he should consecrate another person. Once the consecration has been completely performed by a noble person, what one desires is now in his hand, no doubt. The one who wants a long life shall attain it, the one who wants freedom from diseases shall enjoy that. He who desires wealth attains that; if it is cattle that one desires, then cattle; the one without sons attains a son; the one without qualities shall become excellent; he who wants a girl gets her; he who wishes conquer enjoys it; the one without position [attains] his own and the one who wants [a better] position [attains] the supreme one; the hungry attains a great quantity of food; the one desiring fame enjoys fame.

What need is there for many words? Whatever is in his mind, that thing is immediately attained, there is no need to doubt that.

The person who has been thus consecrated and has had his desires fulfilled should properly honour the performer with gold, many jewels, garments, garlands and unguents. He should give him a cow along with her calf as well as the remnant substance [from the sacrifice] and the paraphernalia of the consecration ceremony. He should also give him a bowl full of milk. He should please all the priests with gifts of gold and, [mentally] composed, he should satisfy other Brāhmaṇas according to his means.

¹⁴⁶The text reads *sarve tam anagham kāmā vṛṇate svayam*, which literally means ‘all desires grant themselves to that blameless one’.

Sigla and Bibliography

Sigla

AhS — *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā*

IIJ — *Indo Iranian Journal*

JOR — *The Journal of Oriental Research*

KSTS — *Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies*

SII — *South Indian Inscriptions*

PārS — *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*

TAK — *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa*

WZKS — *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens*

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Abstracts and Curriculum Vitae

Abstract English

The present MA thesis is devoted to the analysis of Sudarśana's worship at the royal court as depicted in the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā*, a medieval work belonging to the Pāñcarātra tradition.

The fact that the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* addresses kings in order to prompt them to adopt the worship of Sudarśana has long since been noted by scholars. Specific aspects of this tactic have already received some attention but an analysis which takes into account the links between ritual repertoire, benefits promised and theology is still a *desideratum*. The present thesis intends to be a step in this direction.

After introducing the work and proposing a new system for describing its structure, textual passages, many of which have not yet been translated into a European language, are presented and commented upon. Subsequently, the main characteristics of the ritual repertoire and its benefits are taken into account, pointing out how they are particularly designed to meet the ruler's military needs. The role of deities connected to warfare or royalty, like Sudarśana and Lakṣmī, is of major importance in underlining the cult's character. Ritual and theology therefore support and complement each other.

This fact can be seen as an attempt on the part of the redactor(s) of the work to win the interest of rulers and members of the royal court by presenting a cult which could stand out as a true emblem of royalty and power.

Abstract German

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit widmet sich der Untersuchung von Sudarśanas Verehrung am königlichen Hof, wie diese in der *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā*, einem mittelalterlichen Werk der Pāñcarātra-Tradition, dargestellt wird.

Die Tatsache, dass die *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* Könige anspricht, um diese aufzufordern, Sudarśana zu verehren, wurde längst im indologischen Bereich erkannt. Obwohl gewisse Aspekte dieser Taktik schon untersucht wurden, bleibt eine Analyse der Zusammenhänge zwischen Ritual-Repertoire, dessen versprochenem Nutzen und dem theologischen Hintergrund ein *Desideratum*. Die vorliegende Arbeit soll einen ersten Schritt in diese Richtung darstellen.

Nach einer Einführung in das Werk und dem Vorschlag eines neuen Systems zur Schilderung von dessen Struktur, werden Textpassagen, wovon viele noch nicht in eine europäische Sprache übersetzt worden sind, präsentiert und mit Kommentaren versehen. Im Folgenden werden die wichtigsten Merkmale des Ritual-Repertoires und dessen Nutzen näher untersucht. Dieses Verfahren wird zu der Beobachtung führen, dass diese insbesondere dazu dienen, militärische Zwecke von Königen zu unterstützen. Durch die wichtige Rolle von Gottheiten wie Sudarśana und Lakṣmī, die mit Kriegertum und Königtum verbunden sind, wird der Charakter des Kultes noch einmal unterstrichen. Das bedeutet, dass Ritual und Theologie einander unterstützen und ergänzen .

Diese Tatsache kann als ein Versuch der Textredaktor(en) betrachtet werden, um das Interesse von Königen und Hofmitgliedern zu wecken, indem erstere einen Kult präsentieren, der als wahrhaftes Symbol für Königtum und Macht betrachtet werden konnte.

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