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Traditions of transgressive sacrality (against blasphemy) in Hinduism

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Deorum offensae diis curae
Crimes against the gods concerns the gods only
Tiberius Caesar Dīvī Augustī Fīlius Augustus (42 BC – 37 AD)

Where there is no belief, there is no blasphemy
Salman Rushdie *The satanic verses* (1988: 380)

Abstract

The following essay pursues the question whether a possible non-singular immigration-encounter-event between speakers of dialects of Indo-Aryan and (as maintained in this essay) speakers of dialects of Austro-Asiatic (mostly Munda) have not only left marks in the linguistic history of Indo-Aryan (analyzed in Zoller forthcoming), but also in the cultural and political history of North India. My argumentation will follow several lines of nested arguments, but the most general is this: Whereas in the Abrahamic religions of Christianity and Islam a combination of proclivity for expansionism plus proclivity for religious violence have led to a virtual eradication or at least a

subjugation of infidel traditions in the core areas of their religious/political powers (i.e. Europe and Middle East), this venture was less successful in case of South Asia. Thus the most salient aspect of this historical contingency is the fact that cultural historians – but also historical linguists – can see much deeper and much more unimpeded into the prehistory and early history both of the Indo-Aryan and the non-Indo-Aryan (= mainly Austro-Asiatic) North Indian world. The opposition between Abrahamic monotheists and Hindu 'infidels' manifests also in the contrast between the topics of blasphemy and transgressive sacrality. The former is typically associated with Abrahamic religions, whereas there is an abundance and great variety of examples of transgressive sacrality in Hinduism.

Keywords: Hinduism, Abrahamic religions, transgressive sacrality, blasphemy, religious impersonations, ecstatic warriordom.

Contents

1. Synopsis

This essay is an outcome of a prolonged engagement of the members of the South Asia section at the University of Oslo with the topics of transgression – more specifically transgressive sacrality – in Indian religions and, progressively more recently, with the topic of blasphemy. For obvious reasons, the topic of blasphemy has presently greater urgency than transgressive sacrality. However, since I argue that blasphemy and sectarian violence are peripheral and ephemeral – and in any case rather recent – phenomena in the history of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, whereas transgressive – in some circumstances also violent – sacrality is of great relevance especially in Hinduism, I opted for a more thorough analysis of transgressive sacrality in India. Nonetheless, the section following the synopsis (2. Theoretical backgrounds) does deal with blasphemy and how it differs from transgressive sacrality,[1] which then allows a more detailed exploration of the much more intricate cultural complex of transgressive sacrality in Hinduism. This section 2. comprises eight sub-sections, one of them dealing with the topic of intrinsic religious violence in Abrahamic religions (*2.3 Abrahamic religions and intrinsic violence?*).[2] For almost twenty years, this topic has kept an intensive (and still ongoing) academic controversy, running especially in Germany. I will present the main arguments of the controversy, which, in my eyes, are closely related with blasphemy matters.

Transgressive sacrality is integral part of a persistent current in Hinduism throughout its history. This is not true for blasphemy. Consequently, the topic of blasphemy – and the phenomenologically related topic of intrinsic violence in 'Abrahamic' religions – will occupy only a modest place in this essay. I will argue that blasphemy is conceptually dependent on an understanding of transgressive sacrality. Transgressive sacrality comprises two divisions: the division of ecstatic and violent warriorhood and the division of norm-violating forms of sexuality and eroticism. This essay deals mainly with ecstatic and violent warriorhood even though transgressive sexuality is also touched on. My historical points of departure are transgressive, frequently

[1] Several members of our South Asia section are presently preparing with other colleagues a volume on blasphemy in South Asian countries.

[2] I use this term only in a phenomenological sense and not in the sense of an allegedly essential unity of the three religious traditions.

youthful warrior bands and fraternities found in many ancient Indo-European societies, including (Pre-)Vedic India. As examples, I may name here just the Germanic Berserks and the Indian Vrātyas. Although usually these bands were led and inspired by a religious ideology that encompassed also different forms of super- and subhuman impersonation rituals, the (Pre-)Vedic Vrātya traditions notwithstanding exhibit some peculiar features, which are rarely known from other Indo-European ecstatic warrior tradition. In fact, right from the oldest documentations in Sanskrit,[3] the Vrātyas (and kindred ecstatic warrior groups) do not just represent warriorhood but rather warrior-asceticism or warrior-priesthood. Whereas other Indo-European warrior traditions are usually *only* marked by ritual animal impersonations (foremost wolf and dog impersonations), we encounter in the (Pre-)Vedic Vrātya traditions *in addition* different forms of superhuman impersonations and transformations, i.e. a strong tendency for the divinization of Indian warrior-ascetics.[4]

Thus, the constant current of transgressive sacrality in Hinduism manifests in the form of twin streams: There is evidence for animal impersonation continuing to contemporary India (see e.g. *4.33* and *6.1*) and there is ample evidence for divine impersonation (see e.g. *6.8*), for self-divinization (see *7.3*) and for impersonation of royal ancestors (see *5.4*) in certain currents in Hinduism. Hence, this essay pursues both ecstatic warrior traditions from the Vedas via the ancient warrior republics to present martial traditions locatable especially along the north-western fringes of the Hindu world in South Asia's high mountains, and – however, for reasons of space only briefly and superficially – more or less explicitly (or visibly) transgressive yogic traditions like Pāśupatas, Kāpālikas or Kashmiri monistic Śaivas (e.g. the *Trika* school). The ancient traditions of animal impersonation are reflected in India in two, rescpectively in three traditions:

- The tradition of wolf or dog impersonation. As much as I can see, immigrant Indo-Aryans have brough this tradition to India.

[3] Since this essay is not only intended for Indological specialists, I frequently use the term Sanskrit instead of the more accurate (but less known) term Old Indo-Aryan (OIA). Note also that explanatory footnotes inside quotes are by default mine, unless stated differently.

[4] The many animal avatars in Purāṇic Hinduism show that this is not perceived as an irreconcilable difference.

Therefore, the tradition was located during antiquity in northern India and has survived until the present only in some parts of Central India.

- The tradition of serpent impersonation appears to be indigenous, and there are quite many traces of connections with Austro-Asiatic cultures. Remarkably, serpent impersonation is now mainly found in South India.
- The tradition of tiger impersonation also appears to be indigenous. Traces for it are found in many places in India (including Nepal).

This essay concentrates in the first place on wolf or dog impersonation and in the second place on serpent worship and serpent impersonation. The topic of tiger impersonation will be treated only briefly.

Towards the end, we look at north-western bardic folk traditions using the example of the *Devapāla* "god defenders" who can be read as the wild alter egos of the highly civilized Brahmin. This topic will reconnect with the ancient Vrātya tradition, as in both traditions the pastoral image of the 'good shepherd' has been transferred into the religious sphere.

Analogous to the old distinction between Great and Little Hinduism, the above twin streams of wolf/dog and of serpent impersonation, which cover larger parts of this essay, nevertheless appear to be less important (as 'Little Hinduism') vis-à-vis the quite homogenous Sanskritic and Brahmanic component of Hinduism (the 'Great Hinduism'). And, in fact, ritualized and sacred forms of transgression were progressively displaced from the center of Hindu traditions towards its cultural and geographical peripheries. I explain this cultural marginalization in the context of an earlier and a later immigration of speakers of Indo-Aryan into India[5] (see on this thesis e.g. Parpola 2015, 2016, Rossi 2015: 100 and Hauer 1927: 277)[6] which is the basis for the theory of Outer and Inner Languages.[7] I further

[5] I use 'India' in this essay in the traditional sense of including the whole of South Asia and not the modern India defined by its present political boundaries.

[6] Note also Willem Bollée's conclusion in his article on ancient Indian sodalities after analysis of Vrātya, Malla, Buddhist and Jaina sources (1981: 191), "that the older waves of invaders, to whom the Vrātyas belonged, had taken possession already of Magadha before the bearers of Vedic civilization joined them."

[7] My forthcoming publication demonstrates the veracity of this old theory. The theory claims, to put it straight, that the New Indo-Aryan languages still display traces of two

postulate (again in agreement with the just-quoted authors) that the distinction between Outer and Inner Languages corresponds with religio-cultural differences. More precisely: The religious and social characteristics of the earlier arriving 'Outer Language Aryans' and their descendants differ from those of the later arriving 'Inner Language Vedic Aryans' and their descendants especially in two regards:

- Their religious specialists were/are not Brahmins but bard/shaman-like professionals, some of whom (the *Devapāla* "god defenders") maintain until today a tradition characterized by religious pastoralist imagery (e.g. they can be the 'herdsmen' of the deities) and also by practices of sacred transgression (enacted e.g. in carnivalesque religious rites), both of which resemble ancient Vrātya religious ideology (see *7.5*).
- They pursued (and occasionally still pursue) traditions of religiously motivated charismatic/ecstatic warrior practices like headhunting, which are still today celebrated in heroic ballads and in martial festivals especially in the Central and Western Himalayas (see e.g. *5.2*).

This first wave of Indo-Aryan speakers appears to have arrived in India between 2000 and 1700 BC, whereas the Vedic Indo-Aryans arrived between 1500 and 1200 BC (Parpola op. cit.). However, Vedic culture became dominant at the cost of its neighbors, including that of the predecessors of the Vedic people. The significant cultural differences between the two immigration waves can be summed up by quoting Asko Parpola's astute observation (2016: 322) that "… sexual intercourse and open bloodshed are avoided in most Vedic rituals …" (as against Indo-Aryan rituals in non-Vedic traditions). There is thus little surprise that martial and sexual transgressive practices of the non-Vedic Indo-Aryans were pushed into the peripheries of Vedic culture. By mobilizing Norbert Elias' notion of the 'civilizing process' (see *2.4*) I will demonstrate the very uneven pace in the course of civilizing in the peripheral and in the core areas of Hinduism.[8] A here very relevant

different Indo-Aryan language immigrations. Summaries of the theory are found in Zoller 2016a and 2016b.

[8] The internal differences in pace of civilizing are in India certainly much bigger than in Europe. This corresponds also with the differences in pace of modernization in the different Indo-Aryan languages. In north-western South Asia are New Indo-Aryan

brand of civilizing is demonstrated in Elias' analysis of "taming of warriors" under Louis XIV (see below p. 20) which transformed former quite independent warlords into servile courtiers.[9] Thus, this was a demilitarization operation accompanied by a form of eviration,[10] which deprived the former heroes of their sacred warrior charisma.[11] We see that using Max Weber's concept of 'religious charisma' (see *2.4*, *2.5*) can facilitate analysis and understanding of India's ecstatic warrior traditions. Indeed, "Weber compared the role of the state that seeks a monopoly of military violence within a given territory and the Church that aims at a monopoly of spiritual or symbolic violence in human society" (Turner 2003: 98).[12]

Neither ecstatic warriorhood nor shamanism/religious impersonation is now found in mainstream Hinduism, and together with them, the established traditions of religious transgression have been banished from the center of the religion. This, I suggest, may be related with the more recent appearance of blasphemy accusations on the part of certain Hindu circles. Thus, the marginalization of established

languages having preserved pre-Vedic linguistic features. There is nothing comparable in European languages.

[9] Bryan Turner describes a similar change of former famous Native Indian warriors into (show biz) celebrities (2003: 102).

[10] It needs hardly to be pointed out that male biological gender and masculinity are not the same even though they are closely related due to reasons of evolutionary biology. Thus, warrior women are only seldom documented in India's military history, yet there are also other cases besides famous Rani Padminī and Rani of Jhansi. In the Garhwali story of the hero Brahmdeo, his seven daughters fight the enemy instead of their weakened father (Oakley and Gairola 1935: 141f.), and the Middle Ages heroine Tilu (Teelu) Rautelī is, as a quick internet search can show, immensely popular in Uttarakhand. Another – in this case clearly historical –example is 17th Century Rani Karṇāvatī of Garhwal, in common parlance called '*Nactirany*' (*Nāk-kāṭī-Rāṇī* 'the nose-cutting queen')', who is mentioned in contemporary Mughal chronicles. She became famous for defending her kingdom against foreign invaders (Mughals), and it is rumored that she used to cut off the noses of her captured enemies. See also Maheshwar P. Joshi (2015: 154-55).

[11] See Bryan Turner (2003) on a description of the Weberian charismatic type of authority.

[12] Regarding 'spiritual violence' see below discussion (p. 24) on ideas concerning the intrinsic transgressiveness of the sacred and its inseparability from defilement (a tremendous concern in the history of Hinduism!). This perspective, which I share, is perhaps different from that of René Girard and his 'mimetic theory', according to which the 'problem' of (spiritual) violence, selection of scapegoats etc. found its only viable 'solution' in Christianity. For a critical evaluation of this theory from the perspective of Indian religions see Brian Collins (2014).

sacred/religious transgression has led to a re-contextualization of mainstream Hinduism (especially at the right end of the spectrum of political Hinduism) towards the spirit of anti-blasphemy law making as it has been practiced for a long time in countries where Christianity or Islam dominate.

The above adumbrated multiple traditions of transgressive sacrality in Hinduism indeed stand in stark contrast to the meagre traces of 'possession' phenomena[13] in the Abrahamic religions. This has much to do, I believe, with the fact that in the Abrahamic religions it is always clear who is who: who is God and who is man. For instance, in Christian theology man is *imago dei* 'an image of God', which, however, he is not in Islam where any claim towards divinity of a human being is precluded anyway.[14] It is evident, that even slight deviations from such hierarchy-establishing orthodox dogmas can easily provoke blasphemy accusations. Under the perspective of Weber's three pure types of legitimate authority – rational-legal, traditional and charismatic authority – developments towards political and religious monopolization enforced the withdrawal of the orb of charismatic authority. This means that Elias' process of civilizing is partly also a constriction on the plurality of forms of authority to the detriment of the charismatic. Coercing and cramming the charismatic-spiritual-sacred sphere into a rational-legal and merely traditional framework (or, what also can happen, pushing the charismatic into the underground) lead, I believe, to a hollow peace.

Blasphemy cases are, by nature, legalistic and tradition-bound strategies. Even though it would be too simplistic to argue that the bleaching out of a formerly sanctioned charismatic habitus from a specific culture is inversely proportional either to an increase in spiritual dullness and naiveté – as sometimes found, I believe, among modern Protestant theologians – or to an increase in religious legalism – as not infrequently found in Islamic cultures not least because the four schools of law in Islam are exercising unabated (partly even increased)

[13] They are nevertheless there, of course. I may just mention the Christian Pentecostals (who are not very transgressive) and Weber's study of the charisma of Judaic prophets (see below p. 22f.).

[14] I am aware that such pithy depictions obscure whole theological universes. However, the aim of this essay is not the *analysis* of God-man relationships in the Abrahamic religions but only an indication of the deep theological differences between these religions and Hinduism.

influence. The entanglement of blasphemy cases and violence faces us with the question regarding the universality of Elias' theory of civilizing, which, as I understand, is informed by a belief in general progress. Even though there is little doubt that military activities have abated in Europe during the past couple of centuries – despite several dramatic reversals –, people have also emphasized the unprecedented potential for self-destruction.[15] The odd liaison of blasphemy cases and violence is considered in the next section.

2. Theoretical backgrounds

2.1 Characteristics of blasphemy

In my opinion, the notion of blasphemy – at least within the geographical frame of India – remains poorly understood as long as its relationship with transgressive sacrality – so typical for the history of Hinduism – is not clarified. Thus, in this section I present characteristics of blasphemy and their similarities with and differences from transgressive sacrality. My remarks on the characteristics of blasphemy are largely informed by David Lawton's book (1993) with the same title (*Blasphemy*).

Even though blasphemy is quite similarly conceptualized in Christianity and Judaism, but somewhat different in Islam, I see it as an

[15] Elias' belief in general progress reminds one of the wishful thinking of many Western liberals that Western societies turn slowly away from traditions and towards greater respect for individual freedom and difference. The American political psychologist Karen Stenner confirms, on the one hand, an increase of tolerance in the West. However she also cautions that expansion of tolerance will embolden authoritarian individuals and political-cultural-religious movements to suddenly and intensively express themselves in ways that do not tolerate tolerance (2005, e.g. pp. 131 and 271f.). In her analyses and publications, Stenner concentrates on right wing authoritarian patterns in North America. Wikipedia defines the authoritarian personality thus: "Authoritarian personality is a state of mind or attitude characterized by belief in absolute obedience or submission to someone else's authority, as well as the administration of that belief through the oppression of one's subordinates." I may add here that "someone else" can of course refer to a human and a superhuman authority. And it does not need to be proved – because the realities are known to everyone – that the existence of the authoritarian personality is not limited to the right wing but also to the left wing and, currently especially pressing, to militant Islamism. All presented arguments confirm again the intimate liaison between the authoritarian character and blasphemy matters. Blasphemy's suppressing and censoring nature is the opposite to liberating and emancipating transgression.

intrinsic feature of all Abrahamic religions. In Christianity,[16] blasphemy is a mortal sin. "Its nature is rhetorical, more verbal than intellectual: blasphemy is form or sound …" (1993: 4f.) and is thus different from heresy, which is philosophical/theological. Blasphemy is the opposite of praise (see 1993: 2). "In the Christian tradition … linguistic profanation is regarded as the worst of all transgressions … the Jewish and Christian traditions are uniquely logocentric in imagining that the worst form of profanation exists in language …" (1993: 6). In British law, the four forms of criminal libel are blasphemy, obscenity, defamation and sedition.[17] Yet, the ultimate *banality of blasphemy* is highlighted by Lawton's following conclusion (1993: 202): "I have yet to find a single case of blasphemy that was worth bringing. All the cases known to me are either vexatious, or tyrannical, or they punish people who should have been helped … Blasphemy, however defined, does not murder or cause physical wounds, and if it does not incite them it should go unpunished." We see that Lawton shares the opinion of Tiberius.

We can also see now that blasphemy is the outcome of non-licensed (usually verbal) transgression. Stigmatizing s.o. as blasphemous calls for punishment i.e. violent action. Without intending to reify a difference between 'India and the West', I insist that the notion of blasphemy is – under the perspective of the longest part of the history of Hinduism – a rather marginal phenomenon.[18] Even though also in India performances of transgressive sacrality have tended to be associated with secrecy and malpropriety, their longevity and prevalence strongly suggest that they have always been perceived as an

[16] When using this term without further specification, I usually mean traditional Catholicism.

[17] In Western modernity, the notions of blasphemy and obscenity have become almost interchangeable. This can be seen, e.g., in the Wikipedia list "Category: Obscenity controversies in literature" which contains also a number of works of literature that are rather blasphemous than obscene, e.g. James Joyce's *Ulysses*. A telling example of the close affinity between blasphemy and obscenity/frivolity can be seen in an English treatise from 1706 against "Prophane swearing and cursing", which has been written, with practical directives, for exterminating the following vices: improper observation of Lords- and Fast-Days, closing of brothels and play-houses, banning of lewd and impudent women from public places as well as drunken people, etc. (1993: 11). Here we have a small but illustrative example for the working of Elias' concept of the process of civilizing.

[18] Which, however, does not minimize the considerable current importance of blasphemy matters in modern South Asia.

integral part of religion. It is certainly no coincidence that a book with the title *Criminal gods and demon devotees* (edited by Alf Hiltebeitel) deals *exclusively* with transgressive matters in Hinduism and not in Buddhism, let alone the Abrahamic religions. And it is also certainly no coincidence that for the term 'blasphemy' an equivalent in an Indian language can hardly be found. It is completely missing in the *Sanskrit dictionary* of Monier Monier-Williams and in the *Comparative dictionary of the Indo Aryan languages* of Ralf Turner. Interestingly, in Vaman Shivaram Apte's *Sanskrit Dictionary* one only finds *brāhmaṇa nindaka* 'a blasphemer or reviler of Brahmins'. Sanskrit *nindaka* is also found in *nindā stuti* as designation of a literary genre dealing with 'praise which involves reproof' but not with blasphemy. Indeed, among the participants in the highly transgressive Vedic *mahāvrata* ritual,[19] there is one participant called *apagara* 'reviler' or *ninditṛ* 'one who ridicules or blames or despises': "The *ninditṛ* takes upon him the impurity of (the one he reviles)" (Kuiper 1989: 207f.) which is already an example of one of the functions of transgressive speech and other acts in Indian religions, namely how to get along with impurity and associated violence, which are lurking in the vicinity of every religious activity.[20] Or in the words of Jan Heesterman, who analyzes the same sequence in the *mahāvrata* ritual, namely the dialogue of the "praiser" and the "reviler" (1962: 22): "The praiser says: 'These (sacrificers) succeeded, these have brought about welfare' … The reviler opposes: 'These (sacrificers) have brought about destruction[21] … these have brought about mishap' … the function of the reviler is to drive away the *pāpman*[22] of the sacrificers …, to purify them … The praiser then is supposed to place the *indriya vīrya*[23] in them … or food …" Commenting on the same text passage, Jakob Wilhelm Hauer reminds us, that the sacrificial place where this dialogue occurs, actually

[19] A good and comprehensible description of festival cum ritual is provided by Parpola (2015: 137ff.).

[20] One of the few and far between modern examples for blasphemy that can be found, namely Panjabi *kufar dā kalmā* 'blasphemy', means actually 'the infidel's confession of (the Muslim) faith' which looks somewhat blasphemous itself.

[21] Regarding Sanskrit *udvāsikārin* here translated by Heesterman as 'destruction', he comments (ibid.): "Although the word *udvāsikārin* is not completely clear, it is safe to assume that it refers to violence on the part of the sacrificers and we will not be far wrong in linking this with the well-known violence of the vrātyas."

[22] 'Evil, unhappiness, misfortune, calamity, crime, sin, wickedness'.

[23] 'The manly vigour, virility, semen virile of God Indra'.

represents the endless cosmic battleground of gods and demons (1927: 262f.). Once again, the fact that Indian languages do not have direct parallels for 'blasphemy' does not mean that blasphemy-like utterances would be unknown from Hinduism. They are there but they are just very differently understood, they fulfil very different functions (in tradition, not in modernity).[24]

On the other side, it is unmistakable that important strands of the Hindu tradition maintain an awareness of an inscrutable inseparability of the sacred, the peaceful and the pure on the one hand with the unholy, the violent and the impure on the other. This 'predicament' reveals itself also to the participants of the archaic *mahāvrata* ritual. Thus, the reviler uses blasphemy-like utterances in order to treat the dangerous aspects in the sacred ritual. Bryan Turner (2011: 86) notes: "There are linguistic, philosophical and theological arguments that we separate and distinguish violence from the sacred, but further reflection shows that this separation is unwarranted and historically complex."

For an assessment of this essay, it is crucial to understand that I differentiate between religious violence and religious violence in a similar way as I see a difference between blasphemy (now frequently seen as a litigable act) and blasphemy (experienced by some as a sacred move). The following pages are full of examples for religious violence in (mostly peripheral strands of) Hinduism, which, in my eyes, demonstrate the ultimate inseparability of the sacred and the dreadful. These phenomena contrast sharply with the present debates concerning the questions (a) 'are the Abrahamic religions intrinsically violent?' (see below *2.3*) or, more generally, (b) exists there in the first place something like 'religious violence'. Such discussions are without doubt informed by an "Elias" concept of civilizing: from primitive culture of violence (bad) to modern (mostly) western liberal culture of peacefulness (good). This kind of present mindset explains both the mixed reception of the Jan Assmann theory of an intrinsic violence in Abrahamic religions and a publication with the title *The myth of religious violence* (see Cavanaugh, 2009), which blatantly attempts to insinuate that critics of obvious and drastic cases of 'violence in the

[24] Consequently, it is certainly also no coincidence that Wendy Doniger-O'Flaherty uses in her classical study "The origin of heresy in Hindu mythology" the term blasphemy not a single time.

name of (an Abrahamic) god' cannot distinguish what is religious and what is something else (2009: 16f.).

2.2 Characteristics of transgressive sacrality

In his article *Transgressive Sacrality in the Hindu Tradition*, Sunthar Visuvalingam suggests the following definition:[25]

- One has to distinguish 'transgressive sacrality' in a religious tradition from the opposition of 'orthodoxy' versus 'heresy' because 'transgressive sacrality', though violating the interdictions and observances of the tradition in question, does not seek to replace the tradition.
- 'Transgressive sacrality' lays only claim to a higher level of spirituality without questioning the general validity of the orthodox tradition without, in fact, it cannot operate. For instance Bhairava, one of the most important deities in Kashmir Tantrism, is known on the one hand for his Brahmanicide and on the other hand, he is the *koṭvāl* 'chief police officer' of India's holiest city, Benares. It is the fifth head of Brahmā, representing the pure self-controlling Brahmin class, which was decapitated by Bhairava, but which, on the other hand, has also been identified as the head expressing Brahmā's incestuous desire for his own daughter Sarasvatī. Visuvalingam insists that this – rather than indicating a simple rivalry between Brahmanism and followers of a sect of Bhairava – actually "points to a central transgressive dimension hidden in the very heart of Brahmanism." From this, he concludes: "The point to be made here is that the symbolism of transgression is omnipresent and inescapable in the Hindu tradition, even when the fact is denied or absent. The transgressive aspects of the cult of the Mother-Goddess in her terrible forms like Kālī, Cāmuṇḍā, Chinnamastā, etc., are too well-known."

[25] http://www.svabhinava.org/TSHT-old/index.php (last accessed: 28.02.2019).

2.3 Abrahamic religions and intrinsic violence?

A publication (*Moses der Ägypter: Entzifferung einer Gedächtnisspur*)[26] from the year 1998 by the renowned Egyptologist Jan Assmann from Heidelberg University initiated a still ongoing and sometimes quite hefty controversy among specialists from different fields[27] because of Assmann's thesis that the monotheism of the three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) is intrinsically violent (e.g. Assmann 2014b: 36). [28] In the course of several publications,[29] Assmann refined and specified his original thesis from 1998. Here is not the place to present the whole controversy with all arguments in favor of and against his thesis. Overall, the thesis found acceptance and I too think that Assmann has made a valid point.[30] In other words, I think that his thesis helps to improve our understanding of the wide spread of blasphemy cases especially in Islamic countries and the traditional lack of interest in these matters in the history of Hinduism. I list now the most succinct arguments from Assmann and other writers in connection with the thesis.

> The so-called monotheistic religions are intrinsically violent; the so-called polytheistic religions are intrinsically peaceful (Assmann 2000: 69).[31]

[26] The book was translated into English: *Moses the Egyptian: The memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*.

[27] See in the list of literature at the end of the essay articles from the following authors (besides others) involved in that discussion: Jan Assmann, Bernhard Giesen, Daniele Dell'Agli, Marcia Pally, Markus Witte, Micha Brumlik, Peter Sloterdijk, Reinhard Schulze, Rolf Schieder. Almost all articles are in German.

[28] It seems that the controversy apparently did not cause strong echoes or reactions outside the German speaking countries, which may also be because the controversy was/is largely argued out in German language.

[29] All English translations of the following quotes in sub-section *2.3* originally in German are mine.

[30] Not surprising, the testiest opposition came from theologians like, for example, Rolf Schieder at the faculty of theology in Berlin (see list of literature). Daniele Dell'Agli, who defends Assmann's thesis, characterizes the strategy of theologians, Islamic scholars etc. as "Allusions or references to real existing alliances of religion and violence should be avoided as much as possible …" (2013: 1).

[31] Assmann suggests (2014b: 38f.) that 'monotheism' is basically an autonym, whereas 'polytheism' is always an exonym. I assume that he conflates here the use of technical terms with ideas of self-identity.

Assmann is aware (see e.g. 2014b: 36f.) that polytheistic religions are, of course, not seldom violent too. However, the innovation beginning with Judaism and continuing in Christianity and Islam was *violence in the name of God*. Still, he repeatedly qualifies his claim by insisting that acting out violence in the name of God is just a possibility but not a necessarily active mechanism inbuilt in the Abrahamic religions. A core term for Assmann's thesis is the so-called 'mosaic differentiation', which he defines again and again, e.g. thus (2014b: 38):

> What is meant is the distinction between true and false in the field of religion, which corresponds to a distinction that Parmenides, Plato and Aristotle, for example, have introduced into the realm of thought. It is based on an emphatic concept of truth, which implies the category of incompatibility. What is supposed to be true excludes everything that is incompatible with it. Thus, the worship of other gods and their images is incompatible with the idea of a true God. The distinction by no means excludes that other religions continue to worship other gods. Within the framework of a religion based on such a concept of truth, an orthodoxy unfolds which determines and erases what is wrong for one's own group. In essence, it is a violence that works inwardly and is directed against the defectors from within their own ranks.

This differentiation occurred during the so-called Sinai episode; that is the episode when the Jewish people dwelt for some time at the foot of Mount Sinai after their flight from Egypt and before their arrival in the Promised Land. This Sinai episode is found in the exodus narration of the Pentateuch. Assmann adds, however (2014b: 43), that the 'mosaic differentiation' wielded a significant religious/cultural impact only with the spread of Christianity through Europe, which led to the extermination of all paganism. Nevertheless, the famous sub-episode of 'The Dance Round the Golden Calf', which, according to the Bible, ended with the massacre of 3.000 Levites, is, according to Assmann (2014b: 45), the first 'historically' documented case of religiously motivated violence. Of course, nobody can know whether this episode from the Bible has an historical background or is of a fictional nature. Nevertheless, Assmann insists that the repercussions of this ancient difference are very relevant even today. He notes (2005: 19):

> The timeliness of these questions is obvious, because it is not the past as such, but the form of our memory that drives us around and orientates our actions. The return of religion that we have been experiencing for several decades is frighteningly linked to violence, threat awareness,

> hatred, fear, and the production of enemy images. Therefore, we cannot avoid the question of a possible connection between monotheism and violence.[32]

The German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, who unreservedly accepts the Assmann thesis, regards the Sinai episode as the primal scene of the old Jewish anti-mixing-policy (2013: 1), and he calls the covenant, which was made between the Jewish people and the only true God, a singularization contract (*Singularisierungsvertrag*, ibid. p. 2). He continues (ibid. p. 8):

> If there are really good reasons to speak of a group of eminent monotheistic religions and their problematic relation to the question of violence, this is because the basic structures of the Sinaitic constitution, if not in all respects, then at least in essential elements have passed on to the successor religions of Judaism, especially Christianity and Islam. The history of Christianity, like that of Islam, is to some extent understood as the migration of the Sinai schema through expansionary non-Jewish collective projects. It was only in these later re-stagings that the well-known massive releases of violence took place in and out (the religious community), which cloud the history of religion.

Whereas Assmann stresses only the religious violence that worked inwardly (in Ancient Israel), Sloterdijk has in addition pursued the same phenomenon in later times and in the present between the three monotheistic religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam (2007). However, it is also clear, as pointed out by the Old Testament scholar Markus Witte, that the Old Testament does not only reflect an ostracizing, jealous God but there are also plenty of different concepts of God, e.g. in the Song of Solomon (see also Assmann 2013: 3). More problematic, in my eyes, is Assmann's explanation of the difference between 'revelational religions' (like Islam) and 'natural religions' (like the Old Egyptian religion) (2014b: 49), a distinction originally developed in the age of Enlightenment. Even though also 'natural religions' can believe in the creation of the world through one highest god, Assmann claims (ibid.):

[32]A profound analysis of religious hatred under a psychoanalytic perspective has been done by Theodor Reik (a direct pupil of Sigmund Freud) in his book *Der eigene und der fremde Gott* (1925), pp. 220ff. (the essay 'Die Äquivalenz der Trieb-gegensatzpaare').

> Monotheism blew up this oneness of God and the world by sharply distinguishing between God and the world and emancipating God from his manifestations within the world and man from his symbiotic world-dependence. In this emancipation, I see above all the significance of the prohibition of images, which refers to the depiction of animals, and the associated command of the *dominium terrae*, which calls for subjugating the earth instead of worshipping it. Thus, the antithesis of monotheism is not polytheism but monism.

It seems quite clear that Assmann uses his term 'monism' as conceptually related with 'pantheism' and 'panentheism', concepts that differ radically from the types of Indian monism discussed in the course of this essay. In the religious world discussed in this controversy, it is always clear and unquestioned who is the creator (God) and who is the created being (man).

After the making of the Covenant in early Judaism, a main concern was the permanent danger of apostasy, which was perceived as a capital crime and which had to be expiated through death penalty. As is well known, this danger haunted also Christianity for many centuries. Whereas in Judaism, apostasy has long since become a non-issue, it continues to be virulent in Islam. Sloterdijk notes (2013: 9):

> Even today's Islam is virtually obsessed with the problem of apostasy (*ridda*), as witnessed among other things by a fatal judgment of the Fatwa Committee of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, the most respected institution of Sunni Islam, of 1978: According to this (committee), apostates are to be killed still today under certain circumstances as traitors to Allah. Moreover, more than ever these days Islam is struck by suspicion of real or supposed blasphemy.[33]

These observations of Sloterdijk support my claim made at the outset of this essay of a close relationship between the Abrahamic religions and the presently enormous number of blasphemy cases in a number of Islamic countries. These observations suggest in addition a phenomenological relationship between the intrinsic violence of the Abrahamic religions and the high number of blasphemy cases. In other words, accusations of blasphemy are also expressions of that intrinsic, yet tabooed violence. But then, how does this supposedly deep-sitting proclivity for violence in the name of religion go together with the

[33] On apostasy in Islam, see also Bernhard Giesen (2013: 3).

supposedly almost irresistible historical cline towards more and more civility?

2.4 Norbert Elias and Max Weber

For Norbert Elias 'civilization' was not an intrinsic quality of (western or other) societies, but the outcome of a long and slow increase in 'civility' (1939) which represented "the contingent outcome of socio-cultural and psychic change" (Pratt 2011: 221).[34] How precarious and always endangered he perceived this civilizing process is clearly expressed in his essay *The Germans* (1996 [1989]). [35] Whereas biological evolution is irreversible, social developments are not; here there is always the possibility of reverse de-civilizing developments.[36] In his magnum opus *The civilizing process*, he studied the history of manners in Western Europe from the late Middle Ages to the Victorian period, which he combined with the analysis of simultaneously occurring state formations. And he claimed "that there is a connection between the long-term structural development of societies and long-term changes in people's social character or habitus … In other words, as the structure of societies becomes more complex, manners, culture and personality also change in a particular and discernible direction, first among élite groups, then gradually more widely" (Kilminster and Mennell 2011: 26). Elias studied changing social attitudes with respect to fundamental human activities as eating, nose blowing, spitting, urinating, etc. and he concluded that in the course of time these activities were partly associated with feelings of shame and embarrassment and consequently disappeared from public space. Kilminster and Mennell note in addition "a similar civilizing curve can also be discerned in the development of social standards of self-restraint over resort to the use of *violence*" (op.cit. p. 27). This process was linked to state formation and the monopolization of the means of

[34] It is almost needless to say that Elias had not just few opponents. One of the most adamant was Hans-Peter Duerr (1988-2002). A short but poignant riposte to Duerr was written by Stephen Mennell and Johan Goudsblom (1997).

[35] See Mennell (1990) for a list of civilizing and de-civilizing 'distinctive features' in the fields of state formation and trade, culture and social habits, etc.

[36] Elias has repeatedly made it clear that even though the process of civilizing is a long-term structured development, it is "neither of an 'evolution' in the nineteenth-century sense of an automatic process, nor of an unspecific 'social change' in the twentieth-century sense" (quoted in Goudsblom and Mennell 1998: 126).

violence by the state. However, regarding the role of violence, Pratt remarks critically about Elias' main work that "it is to be regretted that he made so little reference to the punishment of offenders in his magnum opus, as a way of illustrating its historical development" (2011: 221) despite the obvious fact that "[a]t the beginning of the twentieth century, special institutions began to be opened for 'inebriates', 'habitual offenders' and the mentally deficient, with borstals for young offenders" (2011: 225f.). Pratt's criticism concerns only 'illegal' or 'antisocial' violence because in his *The Court Society* (1969) Elias subjected the question of 'legal' violence to a detailed investigation. Kilminster and Mennell observe on this work (2011: 25): "It is a sociological study of aristocratic society in France in the century and a half before the Revolution. The reign of Louis XIV (1643–1715) was particularly crucial in completing the process of the 'taming of warriors' and transforming some of them into courtiers devoid of independent military power and increasingly the creatures of the king." As will be seen further below, the theme of the "taming of warriors" occupies a central place in the present essay because the phrase means effectively, I claim, 'suppression of warrior charisma' (see my above synopsis). It will help us to understand the historical interactions between ancient great kingdoms and empires like that of the Indian Mauryas and the many small so-called Indian warrior republics, which I discuss further below (p. 51ff.).

As registered already above, Weber distinguished between three pure types of legitimate authority (see also Weber 1973): rational-legal, traditional and charismatic authority. In the present essay, we are only concerned with charismatic authority because only charismatic authority operates in transgressive sacrality. This type of authority is affect-related ("affectual") dedication to the person of the 'lord' and his gifts of grace (charisma), as there are magic skills, display or heroism, power of spirit and speech, etc. The one who commands these is the leader, and the one who obeys is the follower (see Weber 1973: 334). I discuss two types of charisma: warrior charisma (e.g. expressed in battle frenzy) and shaman-type charisma (e.g. expressed in spirit possession or 'taming of deities' [see below]). Regarding warrior charisma, Bryan Turner observes (2011: 248): "In many 'primitive societies', warrior charisma is also a form of spiritual ecstasy in which the warrior is transformed out of an earthly and profane role into a sacred domain …"

We will come across examples of transgressive sacrality from different periods of the history of Hinduism, which ideally can be interpreted as cases of brief de-civilizing events whenever such actions (e.g. spirit possession or battle frenzy) indicate a non-discriminability of sacredness and violence. The performers of these actions (shaman-type specialists and ecstatic warriors) are endowed with (divine) charisma. According to Weber, charisma represents always a challenge to established institutions and to the processes leading to a rise in civility and civilization. The examples discussed below will illustrate and confirm this assertion. Among the different modes of authority, charisma is rarely found in modern societies because it is Elias' civilizing process that has led to a gradual suppression of violence e.g. in the history from Medieval to Modern Europe. I have postulated above in the synopsis that a similar but more complex civilizing process must have shaped the history of Hinduism where one can observe a gradual shift of transgressive practices from the center of the religion to the cultural and geographical peripheries. In other words, the core areas advanced towards more civility whereas the fringe areas stagnated near 'the borders of barbarism'. The socio-cultural correspondence of these psychic changes is certainly state formation with its monopolization of the means of violence. The extent of state authority and monopoly of executive action in the course of state formations in South Asia developed certainly very differently – probably also with different velocities – from related processes in Europe,[37] and it hardly needs to be pointed out that even today large areas in different South Asian countries are not under the control of regular state authorities.[38]

Transgressive sacrality (and blasphemy, its dark and evil alter ego) is certainly close to 'barbarism', namely the hypothetical and usually invisible point of departure for the civilizing project. We

[37] But note that for example the degree of violence in terms of homicide was in Corsica much higher than in other parts of Europe at least until late 19th Century (Spierenburg 2001: 89). This shows the possibility of considerable cultural difference within one civilization, be it the West or India.

[38] For weak, incipient or even lacking state structures in more recent times in northwestern South Asia see (in the literature below) e.g. Fredrik Barth, George S. Robertson, Ruth Laila Schmidt and Mohammed Manzar Zarin, Are Knudsen, Lincoln Keiser and Jean-Claude Galey, and for Orissa (and Southeast Asia) see Burkhard Schnepel and Hermann Kulke.

therefore have now to look closer at connections between violence and the sacred.[39]

2.5 Max Weber and George Bataille

Even though different types of people embody different forms of charisma, Max Weber was mainly interested in religious charisma and there especially in the charisma of Judaic prophets. Thus, he writes about Saul that he was "seized by ecstasy and went around naked, spoke madly and for an entire day was in a faint" (Weber 1952: 98). Bryan Turner (2003: 99) generalizes Weber's observations on the religious charisma of ancient Judaic prophets with the following words, which are crucial for an understanding for the central theses of the present essay. He writes (ibid.):

> These forms of charismatic powers are by definition 'uncivilized' in the sense that this power is conferred on individuals as a result of the action of a divine force that cannot be easily controlled or cajoled. The early warlike charismatics were not in control of their actions and their

[39] In conceptual terms – not in historical ones – one could perhaps construct a tripartition between a theoretically 'entirely' civilized pole, described by fully functioning legal and traditional authorities – with charismatic authority having mutated into a cult of celebrities (Bryan Turner [2011: 82]: "In the world of popular entertainment, any trivial and mundane activity of celebrities has charismatic worth, but the contents of the original notion have completely disappeared. The contrast with the intoxicated fury of the charismatic warrior could not be more profound …") – and at the opposite end, a theoretically 'entirely' uncivilized pole defined by charismatic forces that continue to recreate themselves through sacred acts of violence. In-between these two poles one would find a preponderance of more or less 'profane' brigand bands and other roaming rabble. Indeed, this state of affairs seems to describe at least the earlier phases of the European Middle Ages (see Spierenburg). In South Asia, the situation was not better: In 1833, there existed 118 robber bands with altogether around 3.000 members (called *ḍakait* in Hindi) to the north and south of the Yamuna River. Even more feared were the thugs (Hindi *ṭhag* 'member of a secret gang of robbers and murderers') who operated both in North and in South India and whose antisocial activities, other than in case of the dacoits, did have some religious background (this and the following information is found in Falk [2002]). The earliest evidence for their activities is probably found in Hiuen-Tsang (ca. 630 AD) who was caught by thugs in order to have him sacrificed to Goddess Kali (he luckily escaped). According to Falk (2002: 30), the secret society of the thugs was fortunately shattered in the middle of the 19th Century within a short time by an unusually competent police officer with name William Sleeman. It is certainly not wrong to conclude – even though objections from the camp of postcolonial theorists must be expected – that Sleeman's meritorious work must have boosted India on its progress of civilizing.

> intoxication was an indication of their extraordinary powers. Charisma is always spilling out of the institutions that are designed to house and domesticate it. Charisma thus is always imagined as breaking through and disrupting human relations, bringing confusion, conflict and violence in its train.

I do not need to explain George Bataille's important contributions concerning an understanding of transgressive sacrality. Elisa Heinämäki registers accordingly (2009: 66): "All of Bataille's writing on religion takes ecstatic experience as the core of religion." She also argues (ibid.) that, for instance in contrast to Mircea Eliade, for Bataille the sacred or numinous is ambivalent: for him it is both repelling and attracting, [40] there is impure and pure sacredness, sacredness is associated with taboos[41] and the breaking of taboos.

Hugh Urban (1995) regards Bataille's philosophy on transgression as conducive for a better understanding of the *lifestyle* of the ancient Indian Śaiva sect of the transgressive Kāpālikas. [42] He interprets Bataille's discernment of the nature of the sacred as *intrinsically* transgressive and maintains (1995: 75):

> For Bataille, the sacred or ultimate reality is, in essence, a radical Otherness, alterity, or heterogeneity: the sacred is that numinous, awesome vitality and 'prodigious effervescence of life', which lies beyond the narrow limits of our ordinary world with its rational boundaries and conceptual categories. The nature of the sacred is what Bataille calls pure excess or expenditure, *dépense*, the spontaneous and free overflowing of life, which is like the Sun, consuming and expending itself without hope of any return. As such, the sacred is radically opposed to any kind of rational system or closed theory about the world: Bataille is the arch-enemy of idealist philosophers like Hegel,[43] who try to assimilate all otherness into a neat self-identical

[40] She writes (2009: 66f.): "For Bataille, the sacred is a fundamentally ambivalent force, a centre of alternating attraction and repulsion. Primarily, the sacred consists of a collection of forbidden, impure, excluded things that nevertheless possess an attractive force …" On Bataille's ideas concerning sacred transgressions see also Brittny Bacon (2003) and recall Rudolf Otto's concept of the numinous as *mysterium tremendum et fascinan*.

[41] That is, religious prohibitions and the emotion of fear.

[42] That is, 'those (wearing) human skulls (as begging bowls)'.

[43] On p. 83, Urban says that "Hegel had dreamt of assimilating all remainders, of devouring every remnant within his all-encompassing rational system" and he quotes Derrida (ibid.) who had observed that "religion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

> philosophical system, or to eliminate all difference negativity through the work of rational dialectic. On the social level, Bataille is also the enemy of sociologists and anthropologists like Mauss, who regard human society as a harmonious relationship of economic gift-exchanges … [R]ituals of sacrifice and sexual excess … violate the utilitarian values of society through non-productive excess, violence or pleasure; and both break down the normal social roles which divide human beings from one another … For Bataille, the supreme symbol of both sacrificial and sexual excess is none other than the headless body – the Acephalus.[44]

2.6 Taboo and its transgression versus blasphemy

Taboo, i.e. limit(ation), is intimately interlocked with transgression. Taboo has, as many say, a universal social basis.[45] Taboo is itself ambivalent "as the coalescence of the conflict between a desire and its refusal" (Lambek 2001: 2), in other words, between border and transgression. In religious terms, it has similarly been pointed out that the sacred cannot be kept separate from defilement (Steiner 1956)[46] and that negation and excess (border and transgression) are "the ultimate sacred act" (Taussig 1998: 361). *Amoral* transgression as found in modernity[47] stands in sharp contrast to blasphemy. The persecutor of transgressive acts, which he or she perceives as blasphemous, denies their creative and liberating nature and identifies them instead as evil. However, as Bataille has lucidly recognized, "evil is not transgression, it is transgression condemned" (1986: 127). Thus, this is the distinctive mark of blasphemy, namely the juridification and negative hyper-moralization of transgression, i.e. its condemnation as moral decadence. Whereas blasphemy cannot exist without transgression, the counter-argument does not pertain. Thus, in order to understand blasphemy, one first needs to understand *amoral*[48] sacred transgression,

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describes the effort to assimilate the remain[s], to cook, eat, gulp down, interiorize the remain[s] without remains (*le reste sans reste*) …"

[44] Not the headless body but the action leading to a headless body – headhunting, decapitation – will occupy us later in this essay (see *5.2*).

[45] The most common taboo is probably the incest taboo, which, according to Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969), forms the logical basis of society.

[46] This is also the centuries-old experience of the Vedic Śrauta sacrificers, as Jan Heesterman has shown (see below p. 39f.).

[47] On the concept of amoral transgression in the modern West, see its explication by the sociologist Chris Jenks (2013).

[48] In the sense of 'detached from moral valuation'. Note also previous footnote.

which, in the Indian context, is frequently collocated with purity questions. Blasphemy is the outcome of non-licensed transgression; it adverts to 'diabolic' or *immoral* charisma, so-to say, because the neutral and undivided amoral was rived into the opposition of virtuous/pious (moral) versus vile (immoral). However, stigmatizing someone as blasphemous calls for punishment through acts that are typically violent themselves. In juridical blasphemy cases, typically a charismatic crossing is answered by a legalistic counter-strategy. Unfortunately, such a strategy ignores the wise advice of Tiberius: *deorum offensae diis curae*.

2.7 Antinomianism

For an understanding of the history of transgressive violence in India, some words on the notion of antinomianism are not without avail. By definition, antinomianism is a view or attitude, which rejects legalism and laws – a main characteristic of blasphemy trials and one of the three Weberian main forms of charisma – and which is against social, moral or religious norms, i.e. against traditional charisma, the second of the three Weberian main forms of charisma. An example: From a Roman Catholic point of view, the claim that Christians are exempt from moral (Mosaic) law is a heretical doctrine. It is argued that the antinomian view that good works do not promote salvation in the same way, as evil deeds do not hinder it is wrong. In antinomianism, the conception of Christian liberty would run the danger of developing into unlimited licentiousness. However, from an antinomian point of view, the religious law of the Old Testament is outdated because of divine grace, spirit and (the Christian) freedom. In other words, there is an opposition between law and spontaneous spirit/revelation and epiphany: whereas one can see in the Abrahamic religions an ongoing effort to privilege law,[49] Indian tradition tried to maintain a balance between *smṛti* ('remembrance' but here understood as 'law') and *śruti* ('hearing' but here understood as 'divine revelation').

[49]Especially in Judaism and Islam, whereas in Christianity there was always also a strong impulse towards antinomianism. This Christian antinomianism certainly paved the way for enlightenment, secularism, postmodernism, etc.

2.8 India's progress in civilizing

Above in the synopsis I have argued that the displacement of sacred forms of transgression from the center of Hindu traditions towards its cultural and geographical peripheries was not so much an 'Elias progress of civilizing', but was rather effected by the slow *conversion* (i.e., not overcoming) of a 'martial' culture of the speakers of the Outer Languages by the somewhat different 'ritualistic' culture of the Vedic Indians. In this connection, an important topic is related with the 'true nature' of the ancient Indian Vedic or pre-Vedic Vrātya 'warrior-priest' (discussed below p. 45ff. in more detail). In Classical Indology, there exists for a long time an ongoing discussion whether the ancient Vrātya culture – which displays ample traits of transgressive sacrality – was different from the foundations of Vedic religion or not. Said differently, can one discover a difference between a Vrātya tradition ('Outer Languages') and Brahmanic culture ('Inner Languages'), which can be synecdochically summarized as a contrast between a *competitive* 'wolf/dog culture' associated with animal impersonation and death and a *hierarchical* 'cow culture' occupied with purity questions? Heesterman's theory on the classical Vedic Śrauta rituals, which I discuss below in more detail (p. 39f.), says that these rituals had historically developed out of pre-classical competitive and dangerous ritual cycles conducted by 'warrior-priests'. This theory is widely accepted in Classical Indology; however, there has been disagreement with regard to Heesterman's orthogenetic explanation for the derivation of the figure of the Śrauta yajamāna from the Vrātya warrior-ascetic. Instead of Heesterman's model of a pre-classical stage of Vedic religion/sacrifice with Vrātyas as important actors *historically followed* by the classical period (seen by many as *the* Vedic religion), there is an increasing number of critical voices advocating instead the model of *interference* between two different Indo-Aryan immigration waves with two different religious cultures. There is no doubt that the latter model is more adequate due to arguments presented below and not least, because there exists strong linguistic support (Zoller forthcoming). An important aim of this essay is to show that quite many 'pre-classical' traits in fact have survived into contemporary India, and thus have not really come under the influence of the process of civilizing. Here follows a small example to illustrate my point:

Rahul Peter Das claims (2002: 140) that God Kṛṣṇa belongs to the great tradition whereas the Bengali Dharma/Yama cult belongs to the little tradition. This is not wrong but it is more correct to say that Dharma/Yama belongs to the non-Vedic early Indo-Aryan religion. Geographically seen, Dharma/Yama cults (or worship) are found among the Dravidian speaking Ālu Kuṟumba tribe in the south Indian Nilgiri Hills and the Oraon tribe living at the Chota Nagpur Plateau in east-central India (R. P. Das 1983: 678, fn. 39), the now Indo-Aryan speaking Bhil tribe living in western India (R. P. Das ibid.), in the Kathmandu Valley (van den Hoek 2014: 83), and among Nuristani and Dardic speaking communities in Hindu Kush and Karakorum (see Buddruss 1959-61, Jettmar 1975). In addition, there are numerous parallels between Dharma/Yama and the South Indian god Aiyappaṉ who is also called Aiyaṉār (Tarma Cāstā [i.e. *Dharma śāstā*]) (R. P. Das 1987: 246). Whereas this deity is frequently god of the underworld, as in the Purāṇas, he was the highest god among the former Kafirs (Jettmar 1975: 66ff.) where he is called Imra but also Māra.[50] The latter designation corresponds with Sanskrit *māra-* 'death', and Georg Morgenstierne renders the term as 'god who kills or lets die'. [51] Interestingly, according to the Nuristani Prasun, Māra has also created the dogs (Jettmar 1975: 68) because the Old Indian Vrātya sodalities (as well as many other ancient Indo-European sodalities) were intimately related with death and with dogs (see below p. 45ff).[52] The geographical distribution of cults of this rather sinister deity looks almost like a circle around Madhyadeśa, the ancient core area of Vedic culture. A very similar encirclement of Madhyadeśa by the presence of hero stones (which are also not found in Madhyadeśa but in many places around it) has been described by Yaroslav Vassilkov (2012: 160). [53] And finally, my own conceptualization of the geographic

[50] Imra (*yama rājā*) displays a sound change of *ya-* > *i-* which is similar as in Avestan *Yima* 'the god who rules the dead' and West Pahāṛī Bangāṇī *jim raza* 'God of the dead'. The sound change of *a* > *i* is more typical for Outer Languages than for Inner Languages.

[51] Quoted in Jettmar 1975: 72.

[52] According to the Prasun, Māra had created the dog in order that it wakes up people, which is a more than distant reminiscence of its former ecstatic cultural role.

[53] See also Tripati (2006: 16) for a map showing the states from where hero stones and memorial stones have been reported. However, the map incorrectly does not show that hero stones are also known from Uttarakhand (see Kharakwal 1993) and from Nepal (see Dilli Raj Sharma 1997). See also the the table of contents in Settar and

distribution of Outer and Inner Languages looks again very similar like a circle around Madhyadeśa (see e.g. Zoller 2016b: 106).

3. Theoretical-(pre)historical aspects

In this section, I discuss transgressive sacrality mainly under the theoretical-(pre)historical aspects as outlined by Paul Treherne (1995). Treherne provides a theoretical analysis for specific European social developments between Neolithic and Iron Age, developments that help understanding the Indian data presented in this essay, and developments that partly continue to have a broad effect until today. The section consists of two parts: the first deals with the forthright individualism of an emerging warrior élite class, the second deals with aggressive (and transgressive) nakedness.

3.1 The beauty of the male warrior

Characteristic for the time under scrutiny was the development of a specific ostentatious lifestyle among an emerging warrior élite, especially concerning the evolution of new social and gender categorizations (creating distance and exclusiveness), and especially an awareness for the beauty of the male warrior. This was something new vis-à-vis the preceding Neolithic (and Chalcolithic) period, which was identified by *community* and *group identity* and lack of overt individualism – and it was androcentric[54] (Treherne 1995: 107f.). The new lifestyle was marked by three or four themes[55] (1995: 108):

Sontheimer's book *Memorial Stones* with many contributions on hero stones from different parts in India. Also there I cannot see an article on hero stones in the middle Ganges Valley. There seems anyway to exist a contrast between the western half of India with ample evidence and its eastern part with scant or no evidence. Besides this, Romila Thapar thinks (1981: 294) that hero stones are typically found in upland areas, near passes and in frontier zones, and in pastoral areas. However, they are quite rare in the large agricultural centres and the big river deltas. In other words, in areas with hero stones there is typically no control by regular armies and soldiership. Thapar anyhow regards the tradition of hero stones as a "substratum cult" (1981: 293).

[54] As is seen in drastically changing funerary customs. Note that the following page references in this subsection are all Treherne's.

[55] Which can be identified in graves.

- Warfare (new weapons)
- Alcohol (drinking vessels)
- Riding/driving (horse harness/spoked wheel vehicles)
- Bodily ornamentation

And, the new lifestyle with the four features led to the emergence of warrior bands and martial age sets (in India the Vrātya and the Yāyāvara, in Germanic traditions the *Männerbund* and the Berserks, etc.): "… from the mid-second millennium in much of Europe there was an explosion in metal ornaments designed to accentuate every part of the body and its movement … The spectacular preservation of woolen costumes from early Bronze-Age Denmark has given rise to a whole literature on 'Bronze-Age fashion' …" (1995: 110) which, I would argue, demonstrates the concomitant accentuation of the female body as well, as shown in the two reconstructions below which present how a young Bronze Age woman in Denmark must have looked like.[56]

Figure 1. Older reconstruction of dress of Egtved Girl[57]

Figure 2. Newer reconstruction of dress of Egtved Girl[58]

[56] Reconstructed according to the grave find of the Egtved Girl.
[57] Credit: 'Sagnlandet Lejre'.
[58] Credit: 'Sagnlandet Lejre'.

The rise of the new warrior élite class was paralleled by the emergence of monumental burial mounds (barrows, tumuli) at exposed places all over Europe. Such mounds were frequently topped by stelae (see 1995: 111, 124). Even though it seems that there are no comparable survivals of such edifices in (northern) India, there is at least indirect evidence for their former existence. S. Tripati (2006: 5) claims, "[t]he practice of erecting hero stones in India is very old. The Vedic texts refer to the erection of a monument for the memory of the dead person. The practice of erection of tumulus or mound with an attached post is referred in the *Satapatha Brahamana*." I assume that Tripati has the *śmaśāna* in mind which, in the time of the Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa (and probably earlier), denoted tumuli and mounds set up for the memory of the deceased, and was not, as in later times, just the term for 'an elevated place for burning dead bodies, crematorium'. However, as much as I can see, there is no clear evidence for the *śmaśāna* formerly functioning as memorial sites particularly for fallen heroes. On the other hand, Pema Dorjee has the following interesting to say about the historical background of Buddhist stūpas (1996: vii):

> Generally associated with Buddhism, stūpa had a pre-Buddhist origin. According to ancient tradition its other synonyms are *caitya* and *dhātugarbha* in Sanskrit … Literally stūpa denotes a made up heap of earth … It seems that the stūpa has its origin in the form of an altar (*cíti*) or a tumulus piled at site of a funeral pyre (*citā*) as some kind of memorial with a tree or a wooden post planted in its centre … the tree on it as *caitya-vṛkṣa* and the post as *caitya-yūpa*. The *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* speaks about circular (*parimaṇḍala*) and quadrangular (*catusśrakti*)[59] *caitya*s which were perhaps being raised traditionally as the memorials for departed personages of significant status … The term *dhātugarbha* refers to a construction serving as a repository of *dhātu*s or corporeal relics.

The above statements by Tripati and Dorjee make it unreasonable to claim that ancient India did not have parallels to the ancient European burial mounds for fallen heroes. The European mounds were frequently topped by stelae, apparently like the *caitya-yūpa*. However, these stelae are with virtual certainty genetically (art historically) related with Indian hero stones (see below p. 110f.). From Romila Thapar comes the following interesting reflection (1981: 311f.):

[59] Recte: *catuḥsrakti*.

> The setting up of the hero-stone echoes the burial practices of earlier times and yet it does not mark the place of relics from the cremation. To this extent it differs from the tradition of building tumuli to the dead in which their relics were enshrined as in some of the *stūpa*s and *caitya*s adopted in Buddhist ritual.

It is not surprising to see that the heightened risk of death for those élite warriors made them ask how to transcend death. Treherne argues that they did it *in* death – in the minds of the living (1995: 123), "[s]pecifically, through attaining excellence (ἀρετή) [60] and glory (κλέος)[61] in life, and especially in death, the subject would be preserved in two ways … First … the funerary monument … Second, in the epic songs of oral poetry …" (1995: 123).[62] On the same page, Treherne relates an important observation which is relevant also for the below discussion of a crucial scene in the Mahābhārata: "What gave this form of death its value, its necessity, was its contrast to that which was most nightmarish for the Homeric warrior, that which negated his one means of dealing with the anxiety of death: the mutilation of the corpse … At death, the body, to which the self remained connected, became the object for the actions of others. The corollary to care, mourning and funerary rites, was its disfiguration by the enemy …" This is exactly what made the death of Duryodhana, the leader of the Kauravas, such a tragic event whose repercussions are still visible in some contemporary Central Himalayan rituals (as we will see below p. 36 and 61). The discussion following below will demonstrate that Duryodhana was killed by disfigurement! Treherne continues (ibid.): "This accounts for the great concern for what happens to the corpse and the struggle over fallen bodies in Homer …" And this accounts, in a somewhat altered way, for the great concern of Himalayan heroes for the whereabouts of conquered enemy heads (see below p. 70f.). Treherne also clarifies the fundamental difference between an (ecstatic) warrior and a soldier (1995: 127f.): "… the body of the masculine warrior is experienced as a dark territory, a source of fear, which in battle is turned outward and

[60] In Old Greece, ἀρετή included fortitude and bravery.

[61] Sanskrit *śrávas* 'glory, fame, renown' which will also be discussed further down p. 68ff.

[62] Thapar has made a very similar observation with regard to the function of Indian hero stones. She writes (1981: 301) that after ritual treatment and consecration of a hero stone it "… became an object of worship and the hero was immortalized both in the stone and in the songs and ballads composed about him."

erupts in explosive energy[63] … [whereas] [i]n battle, as in training, the soldier emerges as a non-individual, his personal identity largely erased …" Treherne contrasts now the characteristics of the soldier explicitly with those of the warrior bands (1995: 128): "… this was not a force to be sublimated into rational, disciplined and anonymous murder (Elias 1994). Rather, war was a personal matter, an expressive act of beauty undertaken between individuals … And in the fray, the body of the individual warrior served as an 'heraldic device' on which were emblazoned the values which proclaimed his honour (τιμή) and in which the forces of ardour (μένος),[64] fear (φόβος), desire (ἐρος), and the warrior's frenzy (λύσσα)[65] were all invested …" Treherne concludes (1995: 128f.), "[i]n short, the ancient sovereign warrior of a bygone 'heroic age' cultivates a different aesthetic of body and violence to that of the modern soldier. This is the product of a different *life style*, one not only of risk and violence, but of luxury and excess[66] … seen in the valuable weaponry but also the bodily grooming and cu1tivation, an aesthetic, which presupposes a position of privilege … In turn, this *life style* is constitutive of a different form of self-identity than that of the modern soldier." Further below we will see that the "bygone 'heroic age'" is not bygone as long as widely assumed, at least not in the high mountains of South Asia.

3.2 Transgressive nakedness

Not many people are aware that *Gymnasium* is a borrowing from Latin *gymnasium* which itself is a borrowing from Ancient Greek *gumnásion*

[63] What this can mean shows the following quote from Jean-Pierre Vernant in his essay "A 'beautiful death' and the disfigured corpse in Homeric epic" (1992: 63): "When Achilles reappears on the battle field after his long absence, stark terror seizes the Trojans as they see him 'shining in his armour' … When Hektor himself catches sight of Achilles, on whom the bronze shines 'like flaming fire or the rising sun,' he too is terrified; he turns and takes flight …"

[64] This μένος, meaning 'spirit' and 'fury', is found in English 'mind' and 'mania' and has an exact morphological parallel in Sanskrit *mánas* 'mind (is always regarded as belonging only to the body, like which it is considered perishable)' and a semantic parallel in Avestan *hu-manah* 'with great pugnaciousness' (see Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen* [EWA]). Treherne quotes again Vernant (ibid.) who describes Achilles' μένος as it "bursts into flame above his head."

[65] See below (p. 50) the Old Greek word for 'warrior frenzy' λύσσα which derives < Proto-Indo-European (PIE) **luk*^{w}*-ya* 'wolfish behavior'.

[66] Cf. above p. 23f. Urban's discussion of Bataille's conception of excess.

'exercise, school', which derives from *gumnós* 'naked' because Greek athletes trained naked. Moreover, not many people are aware that the *Lyceum* was originally the sanctuary *Lykeion* at the gates of ancient Athens, dedicated to the god Apollo *Lykeius* ('the wolf slayer'). In the immediate vicinity of this, the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle maintained his school, which was thus also referred to as a *Lyceum*. This already suggests that in classical antiquity élite masculinity was associated with nakedness, violence and wolves.

Nakedness was a weapon among Germanic Berserks: "The nakedness of the Berserkers was in itself a good psychological weapon, because such men were naturally feared, when they showed such disregard for their own personal safety. In addition, the naked body may have symbolised invulnerability and was perhaps displayed to honour a war god. The Berserkers were thus dedicating their lives and bodies to the battle."[67] The following three figures show naked Berserks with swords and shields on the shorter Golden Horn. The horn was found in Denmark near Møgeltønder and dates to ca. 400 AD. Figure 6 shows the Finglesham buckle (District Dover) depicting the naked pagan God Woden ('fury') with spears, horned helmet, belt buckle.

[67] https://en.natmus.dk/historical-knowledge/denmark/prehistoric-period-until-1050-ad/the-viking-age/weapons/Berserkers/ (last accessed 28.02.2019).

Figure 3. Naked Berserks (1)[68]

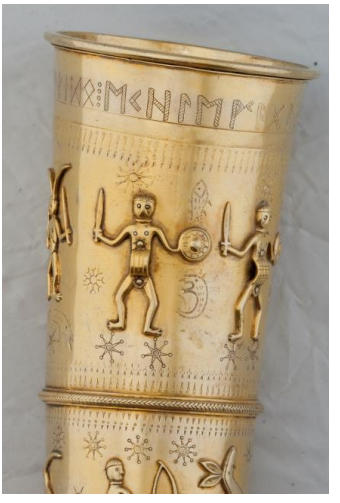

Figure 4. Naked Berserks (2)

Figure 5. Naked Berserks (3)

Figure 6. Naked pagan god Woden[69]

According to Michael Speidel (2002: 268f.), the fourth Century Franks, who were also followers of Wotan, thought, "a life that lacked deeds

[68] Figures 3, 4, 5 credit: Arnold Mikkelsen/the National Museum of Denmark.

[69] Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10873902. Enhanced grayscale image of seventh-century "shield on tongue" buckle, described in

was the greatest grief, while wartime offered the highest happiness." After the introduction of Christianity in 496, Berserkdom among them disappeared only very slowly, whereas in Ireland it continued until the Middle Ages. Norway's King Hákon the Good in 935 and in 961 came to the battlefield also as an armor-scorning warrior (Speidel 2002: 270):

> He threw off his armor
> thrust down his mail-coat
> the great-hearted lord,
> ere the battle began.
> He laughed with his liegemen

Here follows further evidence for transgressive nakedness in ancient and premodern ritual and combat: See below (p. 49f.) the naked youth in the Roman *Lupercalia*.[70] Kim McCone (1987: 43) refers to Tacitus' *Germania*, which mentions a difference between regularly armed knights and "naked or scantily dressed youthful foot soldiers who used missiles and who were placed before the army", and he refers to naked fighters in Ireland, usually aristocratic youth (1987: 45), who lived in the wilderness and who had broken all connections with their clans.[71] They formed warrior bands called *fian* and the members were called *féinid*. In the Old Irish saga *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* 'The destruction of Da Derga's tavern' there is a scene where three *féinid* practiced freebooting and 'were wolfing'. According to Speidel (2002: 264), the ancient Celts were famous for fighting naked, and in the battle of Telamon (225 BC) the *Gaesati* 'spearmen'[72] fought naked "for love of fame and out of daring" (2002: 268). He also reports on ancient Italic tribes who had Berserks or Berserk-like warriors in their armies "who fought naked, shouting, barefoot, flowing-haired, and often in single combat" (2002: 266). Before coming to the end of this section, I should

S.C. Hawkes, H.R.E. Davidson, C. Hawkes, 1965 "The Finglesham man," Antiquity 39:17-32.

[70] The word is certainly connected with Latin *lupus* 'wolf' but the exact derivation is unclear.

[71] This break of relationship with one's family of origin does not tell us whether this was compensated by joining a new 'family' in the realm beyond the ordinary commonness, even though this appears likely. Transgressive monistic Kashmir Śaivism uses permanently the Sanskrit term *kaula* 'relating or belonging to a family' (Sanskrit *kula* 'family'), which suggests that *kaula*s are members of a more fundamental 'family' than associates are of a biologically defined family.

[72] The term *Gaesati* 'spearmen' is formed with a PIE word for 'spear', which has a parallel in West Pahāṛī (see below p. 111).

add that famous representations of Greek art images of naked warriors are idealized and they are no evidence for a Berserk-like institution.[73]

It is quite striking that there do not seem to exist Indian parallels to the Germanic, Celtic and Irish naked Berserk-like warriors. The only interesting (and perhaps revealing) incident in this connection is the following concerning Duryodhana[74] in various Mahābhārata traditions (but apparently not found in the Critical Sanskrit Edition) in the morning of the 18th day of the battle: Gāndhārī tells her son to take a bath and then appear naked before her. She would then remove her blindfold[75] for a moment so that she could transmit her accumulated penance energy through her gaze on his body and make his body diamond-like (like a *vajra*). However, when Duryodhana comes out of the bath, Kṛṣṇa in the shape of Duryodhana's sister Duḥśalā,[76] dissuades him to appear completely naked before his own mother and advises him to cover his private parts and thighs with leaves. This he does, and this predetermines the way how he is killed at the end. It seems that overt nakedness in the Indian tradition is only possible in form of the 'completely de-erotized' naked ascetics (divine and human) as in Śaiva iconography perfectly depicted in form of the ithyphallic Lakulīśa:

[73] Cf. the helmeted young warrior, the so-called Ares: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ares_villa_Hadriana.jpg (last accessed 1.03.2019).
[74] Leader of the 'evil' Kauravas. Gāndhārī was his mother.
[75] Gāndhārī wore a blindfold from the day of her marriage until the end of her life out of empathy for her husband, King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who was blind since birth.
[76] In Hinduism, Kṛṣṇa has strong trickster-god features.

Figure 7. *Lakulīśa* holding an axe[77]

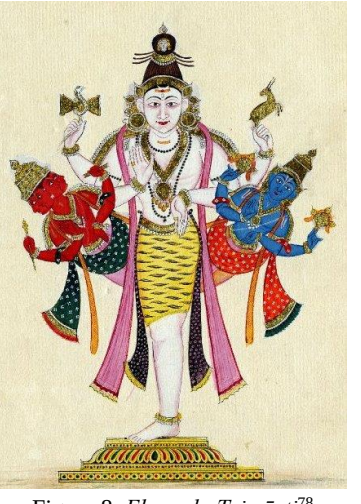

Figure 8. *Ekapada Trimūrti*[78]

Such de-erotized ithyphallic (or – as a synonym – one-legged) ascetic figures come close to the image of an *axis mundi*, but they also point to ancient ascetic practices of standing immovable over long periods. This is also said about a Vrātya warrior-ascetic in the Śaunaka recension of the Atharva-veda-saṃhitā (15.3.1) that he 'stood erect one year' (*sá saṃvatsarám ūrdhvó 'tiṣṭhat*) (see Dore and Pontillo 2013: 43, and Parpola 2015: 136). All this seems to suggest that even the earliest documentations we have about the ancient Indian warrior-ascetic

[77] Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. Sangameshvara Temple at Mahakuta, Karnataka, Early Chalukya dynasty, 7th century CE.

[78] Public domain: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ekapada_shiva.jpg. The designation Ekapada Trimūrti means 'One-foot triad of deities'. On the specific iconography of this deity see Bosch (1960: 207ff.). Frederik David Kan Bosch discusses there also the Vedic deity *aja ekapād* usually translated as 'one-legged goat' but since that deity is known as being associated with the sacrificial pole, Indra's spear and the *axis mundi*, I prefer, despite Mayrhofer (KEWA and EWA), to translate the term as 'the one-legged first uncreated being' with *aja* < *ajā́* 'not born' because of the deity's epithet *divo dharto* 'supporter of the sky' (RV X 65, 18). Interestingly, the deity is five times mentioned together with *ahi budhnya* 'serpent of the deep ocean', which seems to me to further support a cosmological interpretation. Bosch (1960: 208) provides an additional argument. He says that the goat is closely associated with the god Agni and in Vedic literature frequently identified with him: "As Agni, or his black-spotted column of fire, is often identified with the cosmic pillar or the stem of the cosmic tree, it is only natural that the black-spotted goat, congenial with him, also appears in the form of cosmic pillar."

bands, like the Vrātyas, show them in a phase of development where they have already removed themselves from ecstatic forms of warrior bareness (as briefly described above) and evolved into de-eroticized ascetic bareness as we know it best from the Jaina Digambaras and the Hindu Nāga ascetics. However, as in case of the impossibility of getting completely rid of impurity in the Vedic Śrauta ritual,[79] one wonders where the former erotic aspects of those warrior bands (which will be briefly discussed below) got to. Where are the unchaste eroticized yogis, the split-off alter egos of "Shiva [who] is permanently ithyphallic yet perpetually chaste" as R. C. Zaehner aptly remarked (1962: 113)? I suggest, these are the ancient Pāśupatas, Kāpālikas, Kālamukhas and similar antinomian and transgressive ascetic orders.

Harry Falk (2002: 35f.) thinks that the numerous hints at the special language of the Vrātyas can be summed up into the statement that their utterances must have partly consisted of senseless and ad hoc-created words. Compare this with religious practices found with the later Śaivite sect of the Pāśupatas whose origin and development is closely associated with above-depicted Lakulīśa 'lord with a staff'. In the Atharva-vedapariśiṣṭa 40, 1.11, which is called *Pāśupatavrata* (Bisshop and Griffiths 2003: 327), one reads:[80]

> *nivedya nirmālyagandhahārī hāsagītavādanādyupahārān*
> 1.11 Having presented the offerings of laughter, song, music etc.[81] bearing fragrances and the garland which has been worn [by the image]
> 1.12 … he worships …

Mudgha Gadgil and Ambarish Khare (2016: 199f.) quote from Marc Dyczkowski (1989: 22):

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[79] For what I mean, a small but typical example from Aitareya-brāhmaṇa (6.1.1): "The gods performed a Sattra [a great soma sacrifice] … they could not smite away evil" (*pāpman* 'evil, sin, etc.', quoted by Mucciarelli 2015: 84).

[80] According to the authors, this text belongs to the second half of the first millennium AD (2003: 324).

[81] [Bisshop and Griffiths:] PāSū [i.e. *Pāśupatasūtra*] 1.8: *hasitagītanṛttaḍuṃḍuṃkāra-namaskārajapyopahāreṇ opatiṣṭhet* 'He should worship with the offering of laughter, song, dance, bellowing, homage and muttering'. ◦*ḍuṃḍuṃkāra*◦ in this *sūtra* seems to be an emendation by the editor for ◦*huḍukkāra*◦. Sanderson 2002: 30 n. 32, lists a couple of passages from Śaiva sources which suggest that the intended vocalization is '*HUḌḌUṄ'* (*huḍḍuṅkāra*).

> When the Pāśupata yogi has developed a degree of spiritual insight (*jñāna*), his teacher permits him to practice antinomian behavior. At this stage of his spiritual discipline, he should act like a madman ignorant of right and wrong. Pretending to sleep, he snores loudly or rolls in the ground and talks non-sense. When he sees a beautiful woman, he should make lewd gestures at her. In this way he courts abuse in the belief that his disgrace will gain for him the double benefit of purifying him and his sins and gaining the merit of those who abuse him.

4. Primary data for transgressive sacrality[82]
First part: transgressive violence

4.1 Religion in ancient India

I follow to a large extent Jan Heesterman's theory, which he repeated in many publications (of course with much evidence from original textual sources), and according to which the common Vedic Śrauta rituals had historically developed out of competitive and dangerous ritual cycles conducted by 'warrior-priests'. For instance, he notes (1981a: 258):

> … between the wandering warrior and his descendant, the śrauta sacrificer, a decisive break occurred that radically changed the concept of sacrifice … The original concept involved an unending cycle of violence. It required the participants to set out from home and confront each other time and again on the place of sacrifice that, not unlike the Kurukṣetra of the epic war, 'the gods' 'the place of sacrifice', was in fact a battle ground. There the participants had to contend for the goods of life, as the gods and the asuras had done in their endless contest. The intention was, of course, to return in the end, rich in goods and honour, but the risk was commensurate.

And (p. 259f.):

> … the sacrificial scheme remained wrought with the awesome dangers of death and breakdown. No magical palliatives could change that. It was a cycle of violence that involved constant instability and insecurity. In order to change this ultimately self-defeating situation, the cycle

[82] I am aware of the gradual development of 'Hinduism' long after the end of the religious phase of 'Vedic religion' even though I include here 'Vedic religion' within 'Hinduism'.

> itself had to be broken and replaced by a radically different conception of sacrifice that would guarantee security and permanence. The cycle of violence was indeed broken by ruling out confrontation and contest on the place of sacrifice. And this was achieved by rigorously excluding the other, rival party from the ritual. But by excluding the other party the sacrificial ritual was desocialised … In fact, he [the ritualist] exchanges his dependence on the risky interaction with his rivals for the absolute discipline of the ritual. But then he is no longer a warrior contending with his likes, but a yajamāna in the classical sense peacefully sacrificing by himself and for himself outside society.

And:

> The pre-classical sacrifice is the arena of conflict and alliance, the field in which honour and position are to be won, the market for the distribution of wealth … Combining in itself all functions – social, economic, political, religious – sacrifice is the catastrophic center, the turning point of life and death, deciding each time anew … (Heesterman 1993: 2-3).

This dramatic transformation from pre-classic into the well-known classic Vedic ritualism is a perfect example for Elias' civilizing process. Remarkably, this drama was also expressed in form of a myth found in the Jaiminīya-brāhmaṇa.[83] It deals with the contest between Creator God Prajāpati and (his antagonist) Death who endeavored to perform rival sacrifices (Heesterman 1962: 20f.):

> Prajāpati conquered Death. Prajāpati's sacrificial "weapons" belonged to the normal Soma paradigma[84] … those of Death, on the other hand, consisted in singing, playing the lute, dancing and frivolous activities … It is to be noted that singing, playing the lute and dancing are characteristic of the mahāvrata[85] and of the vrātyas … Thus the victory of Prajāpati, who generally stands for the classical ritual doctrine in its fully developed form, signifies in fact the substitution of the systematized abstract forms of the classical ritual for the older ones. The classical Soma paradigma becomes more effective than the

[83] I take 'myth' and 'mythology', of course, *not* in its everyday use but in the way Claude Lévi-Strauss employed it, namely as a rational reflection of the human mind upon itself. In this, Lévi-Strauss followed the insight of Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss: "Every mythology is fundamentally a classification, but one which borrows its principles from religious beliefs, not from scientific ideas" (1963: 77-78). This definition makes it clear in addition, that myth is not just taxonomy, it is also ideology.
[84] Vedic ritual implements are also called *āyudha* 'weapon'.
[85] Note that this ritual was accompanied by several contests.

> cumbersome mahāvrata and its *utsanna*[86]rites. At the same time Death and its impurity which … originally held a more important and explicit place in the ritual, are disposed of … the texts still show clearly that actually the sacrifice is wrought with impurity and evil. The ritual copulation is still present, but only symbolically under the liturgical form of the pairing of sāman and ṛc[87] … Therefore … the sadas and the havirdhana shed where these actions take place, should be fenced off so that one should not see what in the words of SB. [Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa.] is a transgression … "that which is wrong, defective, of the sacrifice" … the pāpman [sin, guilt] of the sacrificer can be seen to be the evil of killing, the impurity of death.[88]

Clearly, we have here traces of a religio-cultural bifurcation: the Brahmanic religion is undergoing a kind of protestantization[89] by stirring out of sacrificial rites "singing, playing the lute, dancing and frivolous activities"[90] and, of course, by moving away from violent and aggressive behavior that was so typical for the Vrātyas. In Vedic

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[86] That is, rites fallen into disuse.

[87] That is, 'song' and 'stanza'.

[88]Basically the same idea of bringing to an end rivalry and competition is found in this myth in the Śatapatha- brāhmaṇa (II.1.1.8-10): Both the Devas and Asuras had sprung from Prajāpati. At that time, the earth was trembling between the two moieties. Once when the earth was close to the Devas, they said "… let us steady this resting place; and … we will exclude our enemies from any share in it" (quoted in Kuiper 1970: 109). Kuiper argues (op. cit. p. 130) that "[i]n India … it is clearly understood that the existence of the cosmos is founded upon a balance of the two contrasting powers of Upperworld and Underworld." This is certainly correct and it also means that the reformation leading to the Classical Vedic Śrauta ritual, which, according to Heesterman, was a change from the Vrātya warrior-ascetic to the Śrauta yajamāna (see above p. 40), was a partial abolition of this pattern of an eternal contest. However, Hinduism is a broad river and many of the remarkably archaic pre-classical religio-mythical patterns have – almost miraculously – survived until the present age, as we will see in the further course of this essay.

[89] No doubt, it was this 'protestant' variant of Vedic religion, which was revived in the 19th Century by Arya Samaj and similar groups.

[90] This difference between the 'protestant' representatives of the classical Vedic sacrifice and more flamboyant older traditions has, of course, been noted by a number of people. For instance, Elena Mucciarelli (2015: 89, 91) points to close relationships between Vrātyas and bards, i.e. their connection with music, dance and singing, respectively with *nṛtya-gīta-vādya* 'dance, singing and playing', and with figures like *māgadha* bards and the *gandharvas* who, in later epic poetry are celestial musicians or heavenly singers. However, note also that these *gandharva*s plus *kiṁnara*s 'mythical beings with a human figure and the head of a horse, celebrated as musicians' are actually part of Śiva's wild troupe (Parpola 2015: 141f.).

sources, the Vrātyas have been associated with impurity and guilt, whereas in the classical ritual there was great emphasis on keeping any impurity outside the sacrificial area. A main cause for impurity was the killing of a sacrificial victim: "That the sacrificial animal was originally killed in this way, by severing the head from the trunk seems also to be indicated by the frequent references in the ritual speculations to the 'cutting off of the head of the sacrifice' …" (Heesterman 1962: 19). However, later on the sacrificial victim was now killed through suffocation and in a (hiding) shed outside the sacrificial area (ibid.).[91] This again illustrates the strong concern of the Vedic Brahmin for keeping impurity and inauspiciousness at bay and thus to behave civilized.

According Geoffrey Samuel (2008: 116f.), the Vrātyas and their rather unorthodox traditions may have disappeared from the stage some time before the Buddha. This may or may not have been so. However, transgressive traditions associated with the Vrātyas, namely ritual "singing, playing the lute, dancing and frivolous activities" and a fondness for vanquishing enemies by cutting off their heads have not disappeared from the stage. They survived in parts of the Central and Western Himalayas, as I will show below p. 61ff. and p. 67ff.

4.2 The origin and etymology of bráhman

The oldest meaning of *bráhman* was, according to Mayrhofer (KEWA[92] and EWA), 'Formung, Gestaltung, Formulierung; formation, molding, formulating', which yielded *brahmán* 'former, poet, sacrificial priest' and *brāhmaṇá* 'Brahmin'. Attempts for clarifying the origin of the word have been very many and there is no space to recapitulate them here (see KEWA and EWA). Instead, I present here the only explanation, which I find useful and convincing: Mayrhofer (KEWA and EWA) reconstructs Old Persian **brazman*[93] on the basis of Iranian parallels to the Sanskrit lemma and therefore reconstructs Proto-Indo-European **b*(*ʰ*)*RÉǵ-men* which he, following older suggestions, compares with

[91] The victim was killed by a so-called *śamitṛ* 'slaughterer'. In my forthcoming publication, I show that the meaning 'kill' of the lemma is only found in Outer Languages (first wave of Indo-Aryan) of north-western South Asia, whereas in Sanskrit and Inner Languages it has always the meaning 'allay'. On this word see also Collins (2014: 137f., 165).

[92] *Kurzgefaßtes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen*.

[93] *-man* is a present participle.

Old Norse *bragr* ‘poetry’ and New Icelandic *bragur* ‘manner, way, custom, sound, poem, melody’. Michiel de Vaan quotes North Germanic *bragr* (1) ‘poem, poetry’, which is also found in several compounds like *bragar-háttr* ‘verse-form’ or *bragarmál* ‘poetic language’ (2002: 50). De Vaan quotes also North Germanic *bragr* (2) ‘model’, which is apparently used in the sense of ‘men or women are called *bragr*, who have more word-skill than others’ (2002: 51), and he argues (2002: 52) that the meaning ‘poem’ has probably developed from ‘model’ which is natural “if we assume that the poem was called the ‘display’ of a story, viz. the speaking out loud” (2002: 55). The here presented data and arguments make it very likely that a Brahmin was originally a bard. Thus, a Brahmin was originally the same as e.g. the Himalayan *Devapāla* “god defender”-bard. However, the ancestry of the *Devapāla* may rather be connected with the wave of earlier arriving Indo-Aryans and not with the Vedic latecomers. The term will be discussed again further below.

> Note: The term *bráhman*, which in Proto-Indo-European times possibly meant ‘model; poetry’, had in ancient India not only the well-known meaning of ‘one divine essence’, etc. but also, especially in Vrātya- and related circles, the meaning of ‘esoteric wisdom’.

4.3 Ecstatic warriors-sacrificers in the Vedas

According to Heesterman (1962, 1981a, 1993), in the Vedic period there were three similar types of ‘warrior-priests’: the Vrātya ‘a man of the mendicant or vagrant class’, the Yāyāvara ‘a vagrant mendicant, saint’ and the Dīkṣita ‘(one who is) consecrated, initiated into’. In the following section, we will concentrate on the Vrātya, an enigmatic figure despite a long history of research, which Heesterman already in 1962 characterized as “[t]he problem of the vrātyas is certainly one of the most-beaten tracks of Vedic studies” (p. 1). But before this, a few comments on the other two figures.

4.31 The Dīkṣita

The consecration rite (*dīkṣā*) for the sacrificer in a Vedic Soma sacrifice consists of several purification rites through which he becomes a *Dīkṣita*. After bathing, anointing, putting on of new linen clothes etc., the Dīkṣita is dressed in a black antelope skin, which symbolizes his

new birth as a god. However, looking at earlier pre-classical stages of this figure, Heesterman notes (1981a: 255):

> The dīkṣita, then, is originally a consecrated warrior setting out on a raiding expedition not unlike the ceremonialised cattle raid that forms part of the royal consecration (rājasūya) (cf. Heesterman 1978: 11). He strongly resembles the aggressive vrātya whose direct descendant he would seem to be (cf. Heesterman 1962:11-15).

In a later publication (1993: 176), Heesterman writes:

> The ultimate aim is to fight one's way through from contest to contest in which the goods of sacrifice must be won. For it is those goods by which one should "buy oneself free." But what is it that binds him and from which he must emancipate himself? … It is death. The *dīkṣita* … is a consecrated warrior whose consecration has vowed him to death …

4.32 The Yāyāvara and the Yātsattra 'continuous sacrifice'

Heesterman notes (1981a: 257f.):

> This cyclical pattern is still preserved in the so-called yātsattras, or mobile sacrificial sessions, where we see a band of trekking sacrificers under their leader, the gṛhapati, each time settling on a further advanced place of sacrifice … our search for the identity of the yāyāvara has shown him to be a proud and violent warrior bent on gain and conquest, the exact opposite of the non-violent detached renouncer … He is the direct ancestor of the śrauta sacrificer … It is not simply a superfluous statement of the obvious, when we are told that the yātsattra ends either with complete success or with the death of the leader and the loss of all goods … It is an all-or-nothing proposition. The yātsattra along the Dṛṣadvatī river[94] should even regularly end with what looks like ritual suicide by drowning in the waters of the river Yamunā where the final bath is to take place at the end of the long trek …

4.33 The Vrātya

David Anthony and Dorcas Brown report on a recently discovered site with remains of ritually killed dogs and wolves (2017: 134f.):

[94] This river flows through the Kuru kingdom (Raychaudhuri 1923: 5).

> At the Srubnaya-culture settlement of Krasnosamarskoe in the Russian steppes, dated 1900–1700 BCE, a ritual occurred in which the participants consumed sacrificed dogs, primarily, and a few wolves, violating normal food practices found at other sites, during the winter … the association between wolves, dogs, and youthful war-bands is widespread and well-known in comparative Indo-European (IE) mythology (see West, 2007 for an overview). Youthful male war-bands, often symbolized as dogs or wolves, are thought to underlie the IE groups designated as the *luperci* or *suodales* in Latin, the *kouros* or *ephebes* in Greek, *fian* in Celtic, *männerbünde* or *jungmannschaft* in Germanic, and *vrātya*s or *Marut*s in Indic … IE youthful war-bands were composed of adolescent … males, sons of aristocratic or elite families in Vedic, Celtic, and Latin sources … they could steal, raid, and take sexual license with women of other groups without the ordinary legal penalties … They were symbolically associated with death and symbols of death … They assumed dog or wolf names, garments, and symbols in Germanic, Latin, Vedic, [95] Iranian, Celtic, and Greek sources … In South Asia … oath-bound initiatory war-bands called Vrātyas were phased out and downgraded with the rise of the Brahmin caste…[96]

In his influential work, *Der Vrātya: Untersuchungen über die nichtbrahmanische Religion Altindiens* (1927), Hauer has made it clear that an orthogenetic explanation for the derivation of the figure of the Śrauta yajamāna from the Vrātya warrior-ascetic – defended e.g. by Heesterman (see below footnote 101 and p. 48) – is not the correct answer. In various places (e.g. 1927: 277, 311, 315) he shows that the Vrātya complex has a pre-Vedic Indo-Aryan origin (i.e. first immigration wave). There are many arguments to support this, one of which is the stark and probably also hostile contrast between the deified Vrātya in Atharva-veda XV, where he is regarded as the first cosmic

[95] [Anthony and Brown:] Michael Witzel, an authority on ancient texts of India and comparative mythology at Harvard University, agrees. Anthony and Brown have identified the first archaeological evidence in support of ancient Indo-European myths about young, warlike "wolf-men" who lived outside of society's laws, he says. https://www.sciencenews.org/article/sacrificed-dog-remains-feed-tales-bronze-age-wolf-men-warriors (last accessed 1.3.2019).

[96] White (1991: 95ff.) stresses several times the intimate connections between Vrātyas and dogs. Even though this can hardly be doubted, the evidence of primary sources he presents is quite thin.

principle whereas in other Vedic texts he is condemned as a "heretic" (1927: 311).[97]

Falk notes (2002: 33f.) that Vrātya disciples were called *śardha* 'band, troop'.[98] In fact, the divine Vedic Maruts were also called *śardha-*. According to McCone (1987: 45), the word Vrātya is derived from Old Indo-Aryan *vrāta-* 'a multitude, flock, assemblage, troop, swarm, group, host, association, guild' which itself is etymologically *not* connected with widespread *vrata-* 'ordinance, religious duty' even though it must have been repeatedly interpreted in this perspective.[99] According to EWA, the origin of Vrātya is unclear, but the Indologist Alexander Lubotzky is quoted there who had suggested connection with Vedic *vr̥nda-* *'herd' (itself a word of disputed origin but found in *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* [IEW] sub root *wer-* 'to bind'),[100] which is not implausible because *śardha-* as designation of the Vrātyas goes back to PIE **ḱerd^{h}-* 'herd, row'.[101] Falk adds (2002: 33f.) that the leader *sthapati* (or *gr̥hapati*) wore a (black) turban and black clothes and the band members wore red clothes.[102] The leader sat (during expeditions) on a hearse, which was drawn by a horse and a mule. According to Falk, he represented a dead person (2002: 35, 37),

[97] A fair account of the prolonged controversy on the 'nature' of the Vrātyas is found in Banerjea (1963: 81ff.).
[98] Derived from Sanskrit *ŚARDH* 'mock, bold, defiant, daring', therefore Monier-Williams gives also the meanings 'a (defiant or bold) host, troop'.
[99] Wendy Doniger (2010: 120) makes this wrong suggestion.
[100] Note also same word in Vr̥ndāvana, the celebrated site (town) for Lord Kr̥ṣṇa's biography, where Vr̥ndā-, however, is a byname of Rādhā, Kr̥ṣṇa's consort.
[101] Below I will show that there is additional support for this semantic interpretation of Vrātya in modern Outer Languages of north-western South Asia where one finds reflexes of Old Indo-Aryan *devapāla* 'god-defender' as designations of 'shamans' and other (low-caste) religious specialists (see Zoller 2014, 2016a and b), but who – parallel to the common *gopāla* 'cowherd' – are in fact 'godherds' or 'deity herds'. Thus they are actually neither shamans nor mediums but – using pastoral imagery – 'good shepherds' who tend to deities. In this way, they resemble the *sthapati* or *gr̥hapati* leader of the Vrātyas who is also the 'good shepherd' and who tends to his own 'herd, flock, troop'. The details of this pastoral imagery support the guess that – contrary to Heesterman's repeatedly maintained argument that the phenomenon of the Vrātyas ought to be orthogenetically derived from Saṃhitā religion – is not correct. The Vrātyas and related sacred-transgressive movements are characteristic for the first (martial) Indo-Aryan immigration wave and not for the later (ritualistic) Vedic immigration. Further arguments for this claim are presented below.
[102] I will return to these two colors at several places below.

however, I think, he represented Rudra, the divine archer.[103] The Vrātyas set out in spring for raids where they appeared very aggressive, they used obscene (ritual) language, but were also known for their free sexuality attitude.[104] They were accompanied by prostitutes and the Māgadha 'professional bard or panegyrist of a king'[105] (2002: 34). Yet, all Vrātyas had close associations with death, because according to the Jaiminīya-brāhmaṇa (JB.) (2.222), when they set out for a raiding expedition they "die as it were" (Heesterman 1962: 10).

On the caste status of the Vrātyas, Heesterman quotes (1962: 8) JB. 2.223, which says: "the vrātyas are deprived of brahman, for they are called rājaputras." And since they are neither Brahmin nor Vaiśya (PB.[106]), neither Brahmin nor Kṣatriya (JB.), he thinks they are "betwixt and between" (ibid.).[107] I compare this with the caste status of the modern *Devāḷ* bards in the Himalayas who are said to be neither inside nor outside the caste system (Zoller 2018: 484). Another revealing custom of the Vrātyas concerns their handling of sacrificial animals:

> According to Baudh ŚS.[108] 18.24:372.4 the vrātyas snatch away goats and cook the meat, which action is equated with the classical animal sacrifice … The use of the verb *pra-math* "to snatch away" suggests comparison with wolves snatching away goats and sheep and rending

[103] For instance, both *sthapati* and Rudra are equipped with a bow, for Rudra the Marut are his 'herd' whereas for the *sthapati* the other Vrātyas of his band are his 'herd'. Moreover, Parpola speaks of "[t]he *vrā́tyas* and *vrātīnas*, the raiding bands whose leaders personified Rudra" (2016: 326). If the Vrātya leader indeed impersonated Rudra, then this can be compared with a description of Odin (Wotan) in the 7. Section of the Ynglinga Saga titled "Of Odin's feats": "Odin could transform his shape: his body would lie as if dead, or asleep; but then he would be in shape of a fish, or worm, or bird, or beast, and be off in a twinkling to distant lands upon his own or other people's business."

[104] Aiskhrologia 'shameful or obscene language' was also practiced in sacred festivals in Classical Greece (Bremmer 2008: 263); Hauer (1927: 286, fn.87) refers to aiskhrologia as element in the Eleusinian Mysteries. Discussing the aiskhrological dialogues in the *mahāvrata* ritual, Hauer (1927: 263, fn. 35) mentions a Kafir practice where, during a festival on the Taska-day, boys and male youth "go from house to house shouting obscene abuse against the owners" (see Robertson 1896: 384). Similar ritual practices have also survived until today in different parts of the Himalayas and among the Kalasha (Cacopardo 2016).

[105] He is the same Māgadha who conducted ritual copulation during the *mahāvrata* rite.

[106] Pañcaviṃśa-brāhmaṇa.

[107] Even though it is not quite clear why they are not Kṣatriyas when they are rājaputras.

[108] Baudhayana Śrauta-sūtra.

> them, for which the same verb or its simplex is used[109] … this much is clear that the vrātyas did not kill the victim in the way prescribed by the classical ritual. The Naimiṣīyas, who … can be linked with the vrātyas, are said to "cut asunder" *(vi-cchid)* (JB. 3.332) the animals … originally the animal victim will have been killed at the stake, probably by severing the head from the trunk. This may as well have been the procedure followed by the vrātyas (Heesterman 1962: 31).

This resembles, of course, the formerly common religio-martial practice of headhunting in the Central and Western Himalayas, which will be discussed below p. 67ff. Notwithstanding the ostensibly rather weak relationships of Vrātyas with the above-mentioned Proto-Indo-European wolf and dog cults – Falk maintains (1986: 18) that in the Indian tradition there is just little evidence for such cults (he quotes the *Śatarudrīya* hymn and a line from the Vājasaneyi-saṃhitā [16.28], which reads *námaḥ śvábhyaḥ śvápatibhyaś ca vo námo*) – Günther-Dietz Sontheimer has also drawn attention (1986) to the ancient *Śatarudrīya* hymn (first found in the Vājasaneyi-saṃhitā) in which 'dog leaders', 'dogs' and 'lords of dogs' are mentioned. In addition, the Ekavrātya 'the only or supreme Vrātya' is once addressed as a dog in the Hiraṇyakeśīgṛhyasūtra.

In their introduction to *Vrātya culture in Vedic sources*, Tiziana Pontillo and Moreno Dore largely agree with Heesterman's theory of the reform of the Śrauta rituals, which brought about a change from a competitive moiety system to a system without competitors[110] and which changed the status of a Brahmin from one acquired by merit to one of inheritance. They disagree, however, with Heesterman's postulation of an orthogenetic explanation for the derivation of the figure of the Śrauta yajamāna from the Vrātya warrior-ascetic (2016: 5). Instead, "…we assume that the cause of the 'axial break-through' was a clash between two distinct branches of Indo-Āryan speakers. The culture of the most ancient of the two – overwhelmed by the emerging new and more durable Indo-Āryan system – may correspond to the later marginalized Vrātya tradition…" (2016: 9). The authors say that they

[109] [Heesterman:] See Baudh ŚS 18.45:398.4 … where Indra is compared with a sheep-robbing *(urāmáthi)* wolf.

[110] On the theory that the early Proto-Indo-European society was built upon moieties rather than functions see John Colarusso (2006). Parpola has alluded to a basically similar idea by suggesting that the late-PIE-speakers, identified by him with parts of the Tripolye cultures (ca. 4100-3400 BC), were in a moiety-like conflict (2015: 39).

got inspired by the theory of Inner and Outer Languages (they mention Hoernle, Grierson and Parpola) but they also differ from it insofar as they prefer the concept of "lateral areas": "…we assume that the peripheral areas to the northwest and northeast of the Indo-Gangetic plain may have been more successful than the middle part in keeping the most ancient Indo-Āryan culture alive for a longer time, i.e. they did not participate in the innovations that emerged in the more central areas." Referring to Indologists and historians of religion like Witzel, Bronkhorst and Samuel (p. 11), they note: "Albeit from different perspectives, they have all identified two different cultural matrices in the ancient Indo-Āryan sources." A quite similar position is expressed by Parpola who also speaks against a 'unilinear' view. He argues (2016: 322f.) that "… the 'vrā́tya rituals' represent the 'Atharvavedic' tradition that existed in the Indus Valley before the arrival of the Rigvedic tradition … The earlier Indo-Aryan speakers came to South Asia between 2000 and 1700 BCE … The Rigvedic Indo-Aryans came to the Indus Valley between 1500 and 1200 BCE…" These two assessments are very close to my own position[111] and we will see further below that in a "lateral area" like the Himalayas transgressive practices have survived into the present age which were otherwise assumed to have disappeared centuries ago.

4.4 Some parallel Indo-European youthful war bands outside India: wolf-impersonation, monocular vision

- *Wolf-impersonations*. During the Roman *Lupercalia* ('wolf festival'), a "dog … and a goat … were sacrificed and their blood was wiped on the foreheads of adolescent boys representing two aristocratic lineages. They consumed a feast and then ran naked around the base of the Palatine Hill … and striking women who desired to conceive with strips of the sacrificed goat skin … to impregnate them … The Lupercal cave, where the run began, was where the brothers Romulus and Remus, the mythical first settlers of Rome, were suckled by a wolf[112] …" (Anthony and Brown 2017:

[111] Parpola is not particularly interested in the question whether earlier and later immigration have left back traces in New Indo-Aryan languages and contemporary forms of Hinduism, even though he does discuss here and there data from contemporary Hinduism.

[112] On other ancient Indo-European 'wolf-men' as founders of city-states, see Kershaw (2000: 134).

136). And "… '[w]olflike' also described the berserk rage of the warrior in Greek, Germanic, and Celtic myths, a fury that could make them invincible and extraordinarily dangerous in battle …" (op.cit. p. 139). Note also that the Old Greek word for 'warrior frenzy' is λύσσα which derives < *luk^{w}-*ya* 'wolfish behavior'.

- *Sanskrit given names built with 'wolf' and Indo-European parallels*: Sanskrit *vṛkakarman-* 'acting like a wolf, wolfish; name of an Asura' is semantically and morphologically exactly same as the name of the founder of the Spartanian constitution Lykurgos "Wolfstätiger".[113] McCone points out (1987: 148) that Lykurgos was one-eyed. Sanskrit *vṛkājina-* "wolf-skin", 'name of a man' (Pāṇini 6-2, 165) corresponds semantically with Old Irish *luch-thonn* 'wolf-skin' (warrior epithet) and Old Norse *úlf-heðinn* 'wolf-skin' (personal name) (McCone 1987: 104) respectively *úlf-hamir* '(having) wolf-skin/-form' (McCone 1987: 106).

- *Monocular vision*: Indian Rudra and Germanic Odin both head a band of equals, which are definitely related with the world of the dead (Falk 2002: 27). On Odin's monocular vision see Kershaw (2000: 2ff.), and cf. Sanskrit *ekanetra* "one-eyed" ('a name of Śiva'). According to McCone (1987: 58f.), the mytheme 'blind in one eye' is perhaps also found in the name of the ancient Indian warrior republic *Kekaya* on which more below (see p. 55f.). Their name is possibly related with Sanskrit *kekara-* 'squint-eyed' and with the mythic Roman King *Caeculus* (Virgil's Aenid), which contains Latin *caecus* 'blind', and Gothic *haihs* 'one-eyed' (for more details see Kershaw).

[113] 'Wolfstätiger' can roughly be translated into English as 'one active as a wolf'. The form Lykurgos is the latinized form of the Greek name *Λυκουργος* (Lykourgos), derived from *λυκος* (lykos) 'wolf' (genitive *λυκου*) and *εργον* (ergon) 'work, deed'. In Greek legend, this was the name of a king who was driven mad by the gods because of his impiety. This was also the name of a Spartan legislator of the 9th century BC. Information taken from https://www.behindthename.com/names/usage/ancient-greek (last accessed 1.3.2019).

5. Primary data for transgressive sacrality
Second part: Indian warrior republics and modern warrior cultures

The historian K. P. Jayaswal distinguishes in the history of Indian states between monarchies and republics (1943). This raises the question whether this distinction could be correlated with later and earlier immigration of Indo-Aryans. A strict juxtaposition is certainly not possible; however, certain trends are quite discernible. The culture of the earlier immigration wave appears to have been characterized by martialness and competition, i.e. traits matching with the below-discussed egalitarian warrior republics. The later Vedic immigration wave aimed, as we have seen above, at eliminating competitiveness and impurity and introduced inherited priest function as a distinctive mark of the hierarchical caste system. The Rājā in close interaction with the Purohita became the fulcrum of Indian hierarchical monarchies.

Pāṇini's term for a republic is *saṃgha* or *gaṇa*.[114] Many of these republics were known as *āyudhajīvī saṃgha* (Pāṇini) or *śastropajīvin-saṃgha*s (Kauṭilya) 'warrior republics' or, more precisely, 'republics which observed the practice of arms or military art' (Jayaswal 1943: 33). These so-called warrior republics are not known from the earliest historical level – the *Saṃhita*s – but their first clear evidence is found in Pāṇini's *gaṇapāṭha*. Also this can be taken as a clue for the special association of the first Indo-Aryan immigration wave with republic-like egalitarian forms of social organization. That at least some of these warrior republics appear to have been founded by Vrātyas or Vrātya-like individuals is suggested by the fact that the republican Vr̥ṣṇis and the Andhakas are styled as Vrātyas in the Droṇa Parva of the Mahābhārata (141.15) (Raychaudhuri 1923: 73) and that Manu (in *Manusmr̥ti*) calls the Licchāvis and the Mallas as Vrātya Rājanyas[115] (Raychaudhuri 1923: 62, 64). Raychaudhuri comments (p. 62): "The great mediaeval Rajput families (though sometimes descended from foreign immigrants) were never spoken of in these terms [as Vrātya Rājanyas] … The obvious conclusion seems to be that the Lichchhavis

[114] On the use of the term 'republic' (also 'oligarchy'), see Thapar (2002: 147).

[115] Jayaswal (1943) speaks of a *Rājanya* group of republics. Note also that the Licchāvis had throughout their history a republican organization whereas the Mallas first had a monarchy and only later on introduced a republican system (Raychaudhuri 1923: 64f.). On the Mallas possibly continuing old Vrātya ways, see also Bollée 1981.

were indigenous Kshatriyas who were degraded to the position of Vrātyas when they became champions of non-Brahmanical creeds" (like Buddhism and Jainism).

Maheshwar P. Joshi (1989a: 92) writes on the topic of warrior republics that, "[a]ccording to the Classical writers, Chandragupta Maurya … organised his army out of the 'band of robbers'. These peoples have been identified with the members of the *āyudhajīvī saṃgha*. These different groups of peoples were mercenaries and had no particular territorial affiliation … These mercenaries were apparently organised in 'bands' as their subsistence depended on arms, hence the name *āyudhajīvī.* ('living by one's weapons; a warrior') … With the decline and downfall of the 'classical empire' and the 'empire states' these mercenary groups ('bands') organised themselves into 'tribes' … Since these people had comparatively less differential sociopolitical organization with almost no individual claiming superior ranking, the coins issued by them bear only their 'tribal' names."

Jayaswal lists on p. 375ff. the names of eighty-two Indian republics among which several have noticeable names, probably suggesting that they were *āyudhajīvin-saṃgha*s:

> 1. *Agra-śreṇi* is built with OIA[116] *śréṇi* 'line, row, troop' (CDIAL 12718) which is related with OIA *śreṇya* *'tribesman (?)' which is reflected in Dardic Shina *ṣīṇ* 'a Shina man' (CDIAL 12719).
>
> 16. *Chikkalin Nikāya*[117] — cf. OIA *chikkara, chikkāra* 'type of antelope'.
>
> 21. *Glauchukāyanaka* (quoted by Greek authors as *Glaukanikoi, Glausai*) — cf. OIA *GLOC* 'steal' (the republic was located south of Kashmir).
>
> 23. *Jālmani* — cf. OIA (lex.) *jālma* 'cruel'; the republic belonged to the Trigarta ṣaṣṭa confederation (Himachal Pradesh).
>
> 36. *Kukura* 'dog'(?) — the republic was probably located near the Western Vindhyas (Raychaudhuri 1923: 232); according to the

[116] Old Indo-Aryan.
[117] *Nikāya* here clearly in the sense of 'fraternity, association, group'.

Mahābhārata, they belonged to the warrior Andhaka-Vṛṣṇi confederation.[118]

63. *Sanakānīka* '(with) old faces'(?) — the republic was probably located in central India (Raychaudhuri 1923: 280).

65. *Śayaṇḍa* could be name of an animal ('lizard' or 'bird'? See EWA); location unclear.

79. *Vṛka* 'wolves'(?); location unclear.[119]

Other strange names in connection with warrior republics – seemingly stressing their martial character – are *ajakranda* 'ram-cry', *ajamīḍha* 'ram-fight' who belonged to the confederacy of the *Sālvas* (Mookerji 1943: 23), and the name of an eminent Lichchhāvi general *Sunakkhatta* which quite clearly derives < OIA **śunakṣatra-* "dog-rule". [120] Describing these republics, Jayaswal writes (1943: 169f.): "…they were always ready to take the field. *Bravery* was a point of ambition and honour amongst the citizens. As the *Mahābhārata* says, *equality* prevailed in the *Gaṇa*. This was naturally necessary. The more democratic an institution, the greater must have been the emphasis laid on equality … A great reason of their political strength was that a republic was *nation-in-arms*. The whole community was their army. They were a citizen army and therefore immeasurably superior to the hired levies of monarchies."

[118] Note that in the *Purāṇic Encyclopaedia* Vettam Mani lists seven different persons named *kukura, kukkura* (besides the state with same name). The Mahābhārata knows also a people named *kaukura* 'descendants of dogs'(?).

[119] This name is connected by some with the modern Virk Jatts. Note, however, that in the *Purāṇic Encyclopaedia* Vettam Mani lists seven different persons named Vṛka and two brothers with name Vṛkala and Vṛkatejas. 'Wolf' names must have been quite popular in ancient India.

[120] This suggestion is supported by the fact that there are several ancient Indian kings named Bṛhatkṣatra 'big rule'.

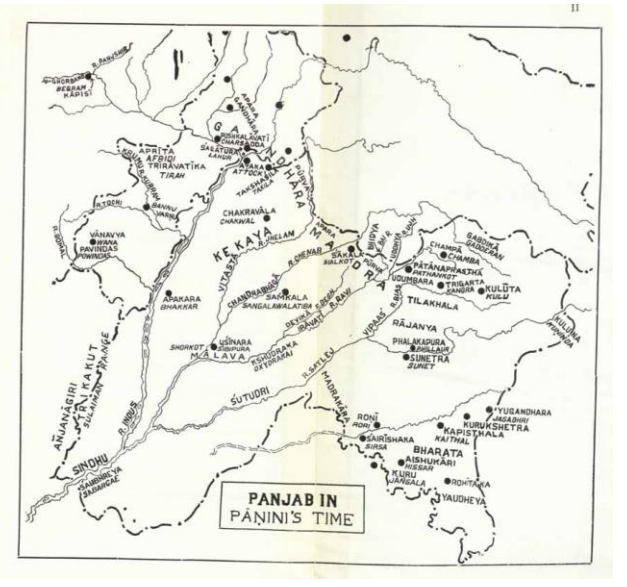

Figure 9. Indian warrior republics[121]

According to Jayaswal (1943: 148), some north-western republics survived the Maurya expansion and some new republics appeared during the following Śuṅga period (185 BC to 73 BC). However, it is remarkable that during and after the Śungas apparently a number of north-western warrior republics migrated towards Rajasthan due to pressure from the foreign rule of the Indo-Greeks and the Northern Śatraps. The Mahākṣatrapa Rudradāman I in the second century AD described them as "*rendered proud, as they were, by having manifested their title of heroes among all Kshatriyas*" and "*who cannot be subjugated*" (Jayaswal 1943: 148). This migration laid the foundation for the later unfolding of the famous warlike Rajput clans like the Chauhans. "Considering the power and long career in their new homes, the period 150 B.C. to 350 A.C. may be still considered a living period of Hindu republican polity. It was the period of rise of the Rajputana republics" (Jayaswal 1943: 155f.). The last traces of these republics disappeared by the end of the fifth century.

[121] Agrawala (1953).

5.1 Qualities of a warrior republic and the Mahābhārata

There is an ancient Indian warrior republic named *kekaya* (with derivations *kaikaya*, *kaikeya* 'descendant or leader of the *kekaya*'). The derived forms alternate perhaps (?) with *haihaya*.[122] If both lemmata are indeed just allomorphs, this would be very interesting, because an alternation *k-* ~ *h-* (or any alternation initial stop ~ *h-*) is extremely rare in Sanskrit. However, it is well-known from Munda languages and I have found quite many similar alternations in Outer Languages (see e.g. Zoller 2016b). The *kekaya* lemma is thus potentially an Outer Languages lemma. As pointed out above, the first clear reports about Indian republics are not found in the Saṃhitas but only around a millennium later in Pāṇini's *gaṇapāṭha*. I have argued elsewhere (e.g. in 2016b) that one precondition for the acceptance of the theory of Outer and Inner Languages is that Outer language features (including words) turn up in Inner Languages only from around the Middle Indo-Aryan phase. It is likely that at the time of Pāṇini also Middle Indo-Aryan was spoken. Above (p. 50) I have argued that *kekaya* is possibly related with Sanskrit *kekara-* 'squint-eyed', which appeared in Sanskrit also at a relatively late stage (Manu-smṛti). The republic was probably located in north-western Panjab between Gandhāra and the Vitastā River. "The Vedic texts do not mention the name of their capital city, but we learn from the Rāmāyaṇa that the metropolis was Rajagṛha or Girivraja (identified by Cunningham with Girjāk or Jalalpur on the Jhelam) … The king of Kekaya in the time of Janaka was Aśvapati who is probably identical with the king of the same name mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa as the father of Yudhājit and Kaikeyī,[123] and the grandfather of Bharata" (Raychaudhuri 1923: 26f.).

The *haihaya* (whether same with or different from *kekaya*) are e.g. mentioned in Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra (Raychaudhuri 1923: 75) and in the Vāyu- and Matsya-purāṇa. The Matsya-purāṇa (43. 48-49) mentions five branches of the *haihaya*s namely *Vītihotra*s, *Bhoja*s,

[122] This suggestion is e.g. found in EWA and was proposed by Kuiper (1965: 69). It is, however, somewhat problematic because traditionally, the *haihaya*s are located in the Narmadā Valley whereas the *kekaya* republic was certainly located further in the north-west. On the other hand, there is no doubt that both were (or both terms refer to) warrior republics.

[123] Kaikeyī 'woman of the *kekaya*' is the name of one of the wives of Daśaratha and mother of Bharata. Cf. Gāndhārī 'a princess of the Gāndhāris (esp. the wife of Dhṛtarāṣṭra)'.

*Avanti*s, *Kuṇḍikera*s or *Tuṇḍikera*s[124] and the *Tālajaṅgha*s[125]whereas other sources give slightly different lists (see Raychaudhuri 1923: 48, 76). On the aggressiveness of the *haihayas* see Vettam Mani (1975: 393), and the seemingly quite eccentric names of some of their divisions also point towards ecstatic warrior bands background. This is supported by the fact that, according to Vettam Mani (1975: 395), King Arjuna "Kārtavīrya was the pillar of the Hehaya dynasty." He was son of King Kr̥tavīrya who is said to have been member of the court of Yamarāja (Vettam Mani [1975: 431])!

Besides historical information regarding *kekaya*s, there is additional data in the Mahābhārata, which has frequently a strong mythological coloring: there are the hundred and the five Kekaya brothers who side with the hundred Kauravas and the five Pāṇḍavas respectively. The five brothers have 'Asura' names: Ayaḥśiras 'iron head', Aśvaśiras 'horse head', Ayaḥśaṅku 'iron rod', Gaganamūrdhan 'sky-skull', and Vegavat 'impetous' (or 'leopard', only lexicographers) (MBh 1,67). The camp of the *kekayas* used to have loud sound of song and slapping of palms, which their soldiers, engaged in dance and revelry, used to make (7,84). The *kekaya* brothers had red coats of mail, red weapons and red banners (7,10). They themselves were all of the hue of *Indragopaka* insects (i.e. a mix of red and black colors) (5,141). *Indragopaka* are ladybugs, i.e. they are red with black dots. All of the *kekaya* brothers had purple flags (5,57). The five brothers were borne by steeds of deep red hue. They were of the splendor of gold and had standards of the red hue, and were decked with chains of gold (7,23). The name of the commander of the *kaikaya* division was Ugrakarman 'fierce in action; violent'.[126] A conversation of a *kekaya* king and a Rākṣasa is also mentioned at MBh 12,76.

The great importance of the color 'red' in case of the *kekayas* strongly suggests that they were followers of Rudra whose name means, according to Parpola (2016) 'the red one'.[127] Besides his etymological arguments, Parpola also refers to the fact that Rudra is indeed connected

[124] Since there is OIA (lex.) *kira-* 'a hog', perhaps basically "crooked hogs" or "snout-hogs".
[125] Perhaps basically "having legs as long as a palm-tree".
[126] Cf. above p. 50 *vr̥kakarman-* 'acting like a wolf'.
[127] I support Parpola's interpretation against the previously more common interpretation of the name meaning 'crying, howling'. Since his argumentation is quite complex, I refer the interested reader to his article.

with other words for '(dark) red' in Vedic texts. Moreover, he calls our attention to the circumstance (2016: 326) that "[t]he *vrā́tyas* and *vrātīnas*, the raiding bands whose leaders personified Rudra, were also dressed in red turbans and red clothes (*lohitoṣṇīṣā lohitavāsaso*) when they performed their sorcery rites with the purpose of killing the enemy…" Also the favorite drink of Rudra is blood (2016: 328) and he is anyway "the blood-shedding god of war … the cruel deity of robbers, raiders, and hunters…" (ibid.).

Regarding the origin of Rudra as a deity, Parpola provides convincing arguments for a Dravidian ancestry (2016: 329f.). In early Old Tamil poems there is reference to a god named 'Redness' who is also called *Vēlan* 'Spearman' and *Ce-v-vēl* 'one holding a red spear'. Other names for this deity are Dravidian *Murukaṉ* and Indo-Aryan *Kumārá* 'youth', *Skanda* "attacker" and *Kārttikeya* 'the god of war who was fostered by the six *Kṛttikā*s (Pleiads)'. As many coin finds show, *Kārttikeya* was a kind of 'state deity' of the *āyudhajīvī saṃgha* of the Yaudheyas and, as noted by Maheshwar P. Joshi (pers. comm.), *Kārttikeya* "…figures as six-headed god in 'variety 3' of their coins (Allan 1936: 270-71)."[128] Moreover, Parpola refers to Albrecht Weber "…who had pointed out that the name Kārttikeya of the war-god is to be connected with the *kārttika*-month of the autumn, when the war expeditions were principally undertaken" (2016: 327). As a last point in this section on Rudra, I refer to Parpola's notice (2016: 323) on Rudra's epithet *Tryàmbaka* in the Ṛg-veda (7.59.12). Even though it had been clear for a long time that the epithet must mean 'possessing three mothers' it remained unclear who these three mothers could have been. Parpola refers to Stephanie Jamison (ibid.) who had pointed out that the *homa* 'fire oblation' called *Traiyambakahoma* "…has many elements in common with the horse sacrifice and the rites of the *mahāvratá* day. A mantra invoking three 'mothers' in the vocative (*ámbe ámbāly ámbike*) accompanies the entrance of the three other queens when the enacted copulation between the sacrificial victim and the chief queen is beginning." I wonder why Parpola did not point out that the names of the three "mothers" are almost identical with the names of the three sisters Ambā, Ambikā and Ambālikā, daughters of

[128] The republic of the Yaudheyas was located between Indus and Ganges Valleys. According to Sanskrit lexicographers, *yaudheya* means just 'warrior'. "The evidence of coin-finds shows that the Yaudheyas occupied an area which may be roughly described as the Eastern Panjab" (Allan 1936: cli).

a king of Kāśī in the Mahābhārata.[129] Can this all be taken as a hint for an old closer relationship between the martial Sanskrit epic and the war-god Rudra?

Coming back to the red and black 'ladybug colors': both are associated with the Vrātyas and with the *kekayas*. It looks as if these two colors – and not ochre – were the sacred colors of the early Indo-Aryans and of the warrior republics. In fact, this has continued into the present time. The Bangāṇī oral Mahābhārata, called *Pɔṇḍuaṇ*, opens with a scene where the Five Gods decide to set out on a pilgrimage to Lake Mānasarovar in order to create an immaculate lineage (the Pāṇḍavas). However, due to a ritual mistake, also the defective Kauravas come into existence later in the narrative (in fact, before the Pāṇḍavas). When the Five Gods get ready for the expedition, they discuss how they should proceed and they agree on dressing as drummers and bards, respectively as Yogis.[130] Then, it is said, the Five Gods put on red-colored clothes and black blankets (Bng. *ratɔ rɔ̃gailɔ, kaḷɔ kɔmailɔ* [Zoller 2014: 410]).

Raychaudhuri sees a connection between the Pandoouoi mentioned by Ptolemy as being settled in the Panjab (*Indian Antiquary*, XIII, 331, 349) and a Pāṇḍava "tribe" (1923: 279). And D. R. Bhandarkar (1919: 10) points to the astronomer Varāhamihira (6th Century AD) who had stated that there is a "tribe" called Pāṇḍu in Madhyadeśa. However, as much as I know, a *Pāṇḍu gaṇa* or *Pāṇḍu saṃgha* remains undiscovered. Yet, Raychaudhuri's conjecture has at least not been questioned by J. Ph. Vogel (1947: 123) who regards the equation of Ptolemy's Pandoouoi with a Pāṇḍava "tribe" or whatever as a possible interpretation. Even though Kuru land and Kuru people play a major role in the younger sections of the Vedas, Raychaudhuri notes that "[t]he early Vedic texts no doubt make no reference to the Mahābhārata, but they mention 'Itihāsas' (A. V. XV. 6. 11-12). It is well known that the story recited by Vaiśampāyana to Janamejaya was at first called an Itihāsa and was named 'Jaya' or victory, i.e., victory of the Pāṇḍus, the ancestors of the king…" (1923: 13). The Mahābhārata is in its core a thoroughgoing martial epic. I therefore

[129] Ambā's story is complicated and tragic, but Ambikā becomes mother of blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Ambālikā mother of Pāṇḍu. Note, however also Narayan Aiyangar who says that "Ambikâ, who, according to the Purāṇas, is the spouse of Rudra, is called Rudra's sister in the Taitt.-Sam. I. 8,6,1" (1901: 460) (Taittirīya-saṃhita).

[130] In a sense, this is the same or very similar in traditional Himalayan culture.

wonder whether the story was originally not associated with transgressive Vrātya culture and *āyudhajīvin-saṃgha*s (i.e. associated with the first Indo-Aryan immigration wave) and got only later-on woven into Kuru *itihāsa* and *vaṁśāvalī*. After all, Parpola observes: "The Mahābhārata (2, 23–29) and early northern Buddhist texts speak of the Pāṇḍavas as marauders over wide areas" (2015: 149). According to Parpola, the Pāṇḍavas were originally 'pale' Iranian equestrians who came to India around 800 BC where they spread widely even until Sri Lanka (2015: 145).[131] Pāṇini mentioned the name of the epic together with locations like Hāstinapura, persons like Arjuna and "Vṛṣṇi and Andhaka tribes" (2015: 146).[132] On p. 149, Parpola proposes for *pāṇḍu*, *pāṇḍura*, *pāṇḍara* 'white, whitish, yellowish, pale' borrowing from a Proto-Dravidian root **paḻ-*/**paṇḍ-* which "…implies that the appellation of the foreign immigrants as 'pale' may have originated among the local population in an area with a Dravidian linguistic substratum" (ibid.). Parpola reconstructs the meaning 'pale' from documented Tamil *paḻa*/*paṇḍu* 'old' (2015: 149) which I find not convincing. Moreover, there is no positive evidence for a particular Dravidian linguistic substratum in or around 800 BC Madhyadeśa.[133] According to EWA, the origin of *pāṇḍu* is unclear. Instead of borrowing from Dravidian, I suggest borrowing from an Austro-Asiatic language first into an Outer Language and from there in a late Vedic period borrowing into the Sanskrit of Madhyadeśa. However, before looking at the Austro-Asiatic evidence, here first examples of Sanskrit *pāṇḍú* 'white, yellowish, pale' (8051) used in Nāga names.

Parpola says (2015: 158) that in Buddhist Sanskrit texts, there are names of Nāga kings like Pāṇḍuka, Pāṇḍuraka, Paṇḍulaka and Paṇḍaraka, and Vogel points out the Nāga king Pāṇḍura mentioned in the Paṇḍara-jātaka 518 (1926: 141). Besides the obvious namesakes (King) Pāṇḍu and Pāṇḍavas, there is also Puṇḍarīkamukha 'an eminent serpent King' (Padma-purāṇa), there is a snake deity "Pundir Pundarik

[131] Parpola continues the 'Iranian origin' argument p. 148f. whose correctness I, however, doubt because of my own different arguments given right below.

[132] Which were actually *āyudhajīvin-saṃgha*s and not 'tribes' (the use of the term 'tribe' in connection with *āyudhajīvin-saṃgha*s has been repeatedly criticized).

[133] John Peterson notes (2017: 212) that the "…three North Dravidian languages, Brahui in Pakistan and Kurukh … and Malto in eastern-central India and in Nepal … are presumably the products of a migration from the Deccan of south-central India ca. 1,000 years ago to these regions…"

Rishi" in Himachal Pradesh with a temple in village Katheugi and "[t]he legend of Pundir Rishi also affirms his birth as a Naga from an earthen pot" (Handa 2001: 82), and in the Bangani Mahābhārata *Pɔɳḍuaɳ* there is a snake deity Puṇḍik/Pũḍir(ɔ) nāg who acts early in the oral epic as scout for the Five Gods on their way to Lake Mānasarovar (see above and Zoller 2014: 250f.).[134] There is also a Middle Ages royal lineage in Garhwal called "Pundir" (Oakley and Gairola 1935: 121). I wonder whether here also belongs the name of the town Pāṇḍukeśvar (in Uttarakhand on the way to Badrināth) where there is a sanctuary for Śeṣ nāg (Vogel 1926: 266).

Compare now: Munda Turi *pandu* 'white (hair)', dialectal Santali *põd* 'white', Kol and again dialectal Santali *põth* 'white' and Mundari *pundi* 'white'. There are perhaps also Mon-Khmer parallels, compare: Aslian Kensiu *paltaw* 'white' and Semelai *prntɔh* and *putih* 'white', Palaungic K'ala *pan* 'white' and U *pán* 'white'. The change of dental into retroflex consonants from Mon-Khmer (into Munda and from there) into Indo-Aryan is well-documented even though in case of this lemma the Munda forms have preserved the original dental pronunciation. Note, however, also with retroflex Munda Juang *paɳḍu buŋ* 'a species of snake, the spectacled cobra' and Munda Birhor *paːɳḍuː-biŋ* 'cobra'. That Indo-Aryan speakers of the early first immigration wave were perceived by speakers of Munda as 'pale' is certainly more plausible than the idea of the 'pale Iranians'.

Since, as pointed out above, Indian sources are silent with regard to the possible existence of a *Pāṇḍu gaṇa* or *Pāṇḍu saṃgha,* one wonders whether the above-mentioned Pāṇḍu "tribe" actually referred to a community that either worshipped the Pāṇḍavas as deities or even as divine ancestors of the community. This appears not implausible because Parpola (2015: 153) refers to a very early South Indian "Pañcavīra [five heroes] cult, that is, the worship of the five Vr̥ṣṇi or Yādava heroes…" and in an area west of Bangan "Pānch Nāgs" are worshipped (see below p. 105f.).

[134] I am convinced that neither the Purāṇic nor the Bangani snake name has anything to do with OIA *puṇḍarīka* 'a white lotus' (even though there is probably folk etymology at work in case of the Purāṇic form). A change of *a* > *u* is extremely common in Outer languages and is here demonstrated by the Baṅgāṇī alternation Puṇḍik ~ Paṇḍuk 'name of a Nāga'.

5.2 Thodā: A martial Mahābhārata game of the Khasha people

The preceding section has provided sufficient background information for a detailed understanding of a combative and potentially transgressive Mahābhārata game and festival, still celebrated in certain places in the Central and Western Himalayas. I present here a summary of the contents of an article on this game and festival (see C. R. B. Lalit). The article describes a traditional bow-and-arrow festival – together with its cultural background –, which is celebrated in irregular intervals in parts of eastern Himachal Pradesh and western Uttarakhand.[135]

Lalit begins (1993: 66) by clarifying that Thodā[136] is a unique game of the Khasha people. The Khasha are a "great martial race which once extended from Kashmir to Nepal" (ibid.). On p. 69 he explains that the Kaurava leader Duryodhana is worshipped in some villages in Dehradun District. "An image of his with broken knees[137] is placed in a village temple where his followers scorn the Pāndavas. The followers of Duryodhana call themselves Shāthi or Shāthir[138] … the followers of the five Pāndava brothers are called Pānshi or Pānshar.[139] The Shāthi and Pānshi divisions[140] were formerly bitterly hostile to each other and instances of *hār* and *dhār*; forcible abduction of married women and snatching of livestock, respectively, used to embitter their relations furthermore, which would culminate in the barbaric acts of *badla*, head-

[135] I had an opportunity to see the game many years ago.
[136] Cf. OIA **ṭhaṭṭh-* 'strike' (CDIAL 5490) and Bng. *ṭhoṭɔ* 'blow, stroke, bad surprise'.
[137] As pointed out already above p. 36, his thighs were broken in the Mahābhārata War, which led to his death. Note also William Sax (2006) who has observed that whenever the god possesses the medium of Duryodhana, it starts walking around in a hobbling way and propped by a stick.
[138] According to local traditions, there were not hundred but sixty Kauravas, therefore cf. OIA *ṣaṣṭí* 'sixty'. The *-r* in Shathir is genitive case ending.
[139] That is 'a collection of five'. The exact Baṅgāṇī pronunciations are *śaṭ(h)i* and *pãśi*.
[140] I.e. moieties.

hunting. Heads thus slain were buried underneath the Thāri[141] temple[142] and a count of the same kept, so that any shortfall of killings could be avenged on either side … Whenever there occurred the auspicious *'shānt' yajna* of a Pānshi Khondāi after an interval of 60-80 years, one member of the Khondāi was required to become Jogi, ascetic; and set out for head-hunting of the opposite Shāthi Khondāi.[143] He would either return with a head of a male member of the *boiri*, enemy; or perish.''[144] On the next page, Lalit points out that the tutelary goddess and the territory of the Khoond[145] are sacred for them and invaders are either killed or the Khoond is killed. Since the very many little kingdoms in that area were too small for their sovereigns to entertain regular armies, "[t]herefore they continued playing one Khoond against the other with a view to keep these chivalrous people under control and using them against any invading troops in times of necessity" (ibid.). On p. 71, Lalit explains that a *khūnd* could invite another *khūnd* for a thodā bow-and-

[141] Lalit explains (1993:70) that every Khondāi (i.e. a fraternity of martial Rajputs) has a separate *kuldevi* ('tutelary goddess'), known as *thāri, jāgā, thoir* (all three words just mean 'place') or *kāli* (this *kāli* is certainly not the famous dark goddess but possibly the female counterpart of Kāla alias Yama). For the complex religious background between Central Himalayan headhunting and female numinous beings having no personal names but usually are just called 'place' see Zoller (2007). Only in one case known to me from this region, this "*kuldevi*" has another name, namely Jhalimali (Oakley and Gairola 1935: 135), perhaps basically meaning "hot-tempered seizer" (cf. CDIAL 5352, 9910).

[142] There is a kind of *Sthala purāṇa* connected with the Bhīmā Kālī temple in Himachal Pradesh, which relates that Banasur's head, after it was decapitated by Kṛṣṇa, was buried below the threshold of the entrance to the Bhīmā Kālī temple: https://indiantourmate.com/2018/01/27/bhimakali-temple-sarahan-himachal-pradesh/ (last accessed 1.03.2019). Note also that the Gandhāran Kashmir Smast caves (correct actually Pashto *smats* 'cave') were dedicated to a goddess Bhīmā (Falk 2006).

[143] Does this not strikingly remind one of Heesterman's quote (above p. 44): "The *dīkṣita*, then, is originally a consecrated warrior setting out on a raiding expedition…"

[144]Again, this reminds one of the "all-or-nothing proposition" in connection with the ancient *yātsattra* (also above p. 44).

[145] The pronunciation in Bangani is *khūnd* 'martial warrior devoted to headhunting'. For more on the *khūnd* see Zoller 2007. A succinct definition is also found in Hans Hendriksen's *Himachali grammar* (1976: 35): "'man who in former times would kill a prominent man in another (probably hostile) village, cut off his head and bring it back to his village' (the head would be carried in procession through the village and buried and a stone pyramid would be erected over it: afterwards it would be object of worship)." In the Central Himalayan story of Hyunraj Mahara the following incident is described (Oakley and Gairola 1935: 135): "The Maharas cut down the whole army of Thorchand and Bhagchand and brought the heads home and offered them to their family goddess Jhalimali as a sacrifice." On Jhalimali see footnote 141.

arrow game in two ways: either friendly or as a challenge. In the latter case, a small group of *khūnd*s would creep up on the enemy *khūnd* village, would, among other things, place thorn bush twigs before the temple of the tutelary goddess, would then shout from a cliff the 'invitation' and then run away as fast as possible, etc.[146] As examples for the exuberant, gay and free atmosphere of this and other similar festivals – also witnessed by the author of this essay – Lalit points out (1993: 73) that "[m]any a *thodā* hero has contracted more than one marriages even though he might fail in supporting them"[147] and (1993: 75) "…liquor … is abundantly stocked for entertaining the invited Khoond, even if they be inimical … [and there is] liberal hospitality in the evening."[148] During the bow-and-arrow game, the Thathauri

[146] However, if the invitee takes up the 'challenge invitation' immediately and manages to catch the inviting person, he would, as a punishment, shave half the head on one side and half the moustache on the other. This looks like an ancient Indian way of punishment. In the Pali *Mahāvaṃsa*, which describes the (heavily mythologized) story of the colonization of Sri Lanka through the (Indo-Aryan) *Siṁhala* 'Lion people' one reads the following: King Siṁhabāhu wanted to appoint his son Vijaya as heir. However, the text continues, "Prince Vijaya was daring and uneducated; he committed most wicked and fearful things, plundering the people" (Parpola 2015: 151). Consequently, his father punished him and his companions and they "had to shave half their heads to signify their lawlessness, and boarded a ship" (Vassilkov 2015: 243). They sailed towards Broach (in Gujarat) and Sopāra (near Mumbay), but also there they upset the inhabitants with their "cruel, savage, terrible, and most dreadful deeds" including "drinking, theft, adultery, falsehood and slander" (Parpola 2015: 151). Both Parpola and Vassilkov are sure that Vijaya and his accomplices must have been some kind of Vrātya band. Their conjecture is correct because of archaeological evidence. Whereas the overwhelming number of hero stones depicts or, at least, relates to armed conflicts fought out on land (see, e.g., Settar and Sontheimer 1982), there exists a small number of hero stones illustrating maritime warfare (see Tripati 2006 with illustrations at the end of the article). Depiction of maritime warfare on hero stones can very likely mean: memorials for ecstatic warriors fallen in naval battle. The above-mentioned incident from the *Mahāvaṃsa* looks like a classic textual example for such an event. S. Tripati writes (2006: 1): "…the hero stones kept at Archaeological Museum, Old Goa, Goa (12th century AD) and Eksar (11th century AD) in Mumbai have the depiction of naval warfare. The Old Goa hero stones belong to the Goa Kadambas who ruled Goa from 950-1300 AD. The Eksar hero stones were depicted during the reign of king Bhoja of Malwa in 1020 AD. Similar type of hero stones with depiction of boat motifs datable to the 18th to 19th centuries AD has been reported from Aramda in Gujarat."

[147] A clear echo of the libertine lifestyle of the Vrātyas and related groups.

[148] Again, in Bataille's parlance, an atmosphere of excess. One of the four themes delineating the Bronze Age warrior élite was alcohol (above p. 29). Sanskrit *súrā* 'spirituous liquor, wine (in ancient times 'a kind of beer')' (CDIAL 13503) has modern reflexes only in West Pahāṛī (including Bng. *sūr* 'liquor'), Marāṭhī and Koṅkaṇī.

(*ṭhaṭhōri*) has to shoot and hit an arrow on the calf of the so-called Chulia who jumps up and down – showing his back to the archer – in order to avoid to be hit. Lalit explains (1993: 76): "…the players have to take care that no arrow is aimed at the delicate portion behind the knee. If one strikes there by mistake, it may be excusable, but intentional repeated hitting could cause bloodshed as members of wronged player's Khondāi might pounce upon the foul-player like hungry tigers and break or even chop off his head and resultant pandemonium that could convert the arena into a cesspool of blood." This thodā game, which is played on the festival of *biśu* (OIA *viṣuvánt* 'equinox') has in all likelihood something to do with the way of killing of Duryodhana, the leader of the Kauravas. Bhīma killed Duryodhana by unfair means, he crushed Duryodhana's thigh with a mace and kicked into the face of lying Duryodhana, both of which actions were a clear breach of the fighting rules then valid.[149] Thus, this whole festival

Vassilkov reports (2015: 237) that in the Vedic Sautrāmaṇi ritual, which has preserved a number of Vrātya-related features, "a few hairs of a wolf, a tiger and a lion were put in the cups of *surā* from which libations were made" which, in turn, provided the sacrificer with "vigour, the impetous rush of the wild beasts" (ibid.). Also Parpola underlines (2015: 109) that whereas the *deva* Indra drinks soma the *asura* Varuṇa drinks *surā*, and the "ritual drink of the PIE speakers" was honey-beer (*surām mádhu*?). He also (certainly correctly) suspects (2015: 128) that Vedic *soma* praise songs had replaced earlier *surā* praise songs.

[149](a) The perception of a homology between head and knee is suggested in the Central Himalayan story 'Kala Bhandari' (Oakley and Gairola 1935: 37ff.) about two suitors who both are beheaded before a marriage of one of them with beautiful Udaimala could take place: "Udaimala was left alone to bewail her fate. After weeping and crying she regained her courage and placed the head of Kala on her right knee and that of [the other suitor] Rupu on her left knee. She then mounted the funeral pyre and became *Sati*." Her practice deviates from the normal procedure a Satī had to follow: she was required to sit on the pyre with her dead husband's head in her lap (Thapar 1981: 304). I may add here that according to Thapar, the custom of Satī was, at least in its initial phase, closely related with warrior groups. Through her deed, she preserved the honor of the group and she was not regarded as a widow because she continued to be connected with her husband by going with him into death (Thapar op.cit.).

(b) In the Rājataraṃgiṇī 'Stream of kings', a history of the kings of Kashmir, written by Kalhaṇa in 1148 AD, there is a story (5. 354-413) about King Cakravarman (ruled for one year 936-37) who gets ensnared by two *Śvapacī* 'low-caste women who cook dogs' respectively two *Ḍombī* women 'members of a low-caste community of musicians and dancers'. Subsequently, in the whole royal court a total inversion of the distinction between pure and impure takes place (e.g., ministers wear clothes polluted by the menses of the Ḍombī women). Meanwhile the king has killed most of his vassals or liegemen except a few who now take revenge and kill him just when he is embracing

looks like a survival of the otherwise long-since disappeared pre-classical Vedic sacrifice in which two moieties competed for the head of the sacrifice (see above p. 42). Whereas the development from the pre-classical to the classical sacrifice was characterized by me as an Elias civilizing process, this did not happen in peripheral areas like the Himalayas. However, meanwhile a similar civilizing process has also reached those remote areas. Lalit concludes (1993: 78): "Now, however, except sporadic incidents of head-hunting, the *bishus* which were known for violence, are organized in an orderly form and *thodā* has turned into a disciplined sport."

A first summing up: An important thesis of the present essay – as stated repeatedly – refers to Heesterman's theory of pre-classical to classical Śrauta ritual, which was a transition from a tradition of community-conjoint sacrifice away into an ultramundane sacrificial universe. During the pre-classical phase, "…such ceremonies provided the arena for competition, conflict … and even violence … [V]erbal contests where originally the loser might literally lose his head as well unless he offered his submission in time, or chariot races and raids with equally high stakes" (Heesterman 1981b: 59). My thesis is that the transition from the pre-classical to the classical phase did not happen everywhere in Vedic and post-Vedic (i.e. Hindu) culture. The contest for the winning of the "severed head", which I read as a contest for the winning of (a container with) "ambrosia" continued − admittedly in peripheral areas − until the present age. Lalit's article testifies the enduring existence of contesting.[150] Therefore, it cannot be simply dismissed that the practice of headhunting, which continued into early modernity, had something to do with a contest for the winning of "ambrosia" (see next section *5.3* and especially Zoller 2007). I recorded in Bangan a short song, which succinctly describes the rationale of the deadly conflict between Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas (Zoller 2014: 49): the two moieties

one of the Ḍombī women. Rājataraṁgiṇī 5.412: "By his own wives, it is said, they had been instigated; they wantonly crushed with a stone the knees of the king when he was about to die." See also White (1991: 107f.) and regarding the Ḍombī as the consort in various left-hand Tantric tradition see Siegel 1981. As pointed out above in the introduction, the topic of sacred erotic transgressions has to be treated in detail in a separate publication.

[150] There are also other sources, see Zoller (2014: 13) with further literature.

compete for the possession (or control) of the 'world tree' (*Tree of Life*). See below Bhīma shaking down the Kauravas from the 'world tree':

Figure 10. Bhīma shaking the 'world tree'[151]

In Bangāṇī, this tree is called *ɔməri buṭi*, which most likely means 'tree of immortality' but which is interpreted by some Banganis as meaning 'mango tree'.[152] This (world) tree is, as I have shown, a central motif in the narrative of the *Pɔṇḍuaṇ* and comes into focus whenever a major change of plot in the epic is about to take place. Thus, for instance, when first Gāndhārī and later Kuntī draw near this tree, they throw with support of their boon (received from the Lord of the World) a golden stick into the tree and simultaneously sing a song, the first line of which reads *e meria ama borzɛṇa* (Zoller 2014: 255 and 415) and which most likely translates as 'hey, oh my immortal food (nourishment)'.[153] This translation is justified because both sisters then swallow the seeds, which were knocked by the stick. This is the precondition for their later

[151] Courtesy: Jyotindra Jain. The depiction stems from a 'painted scroll' from Gujarat; see below Literature. According to some folk traditions, Bhima's body is made half of silver and half of ruby.

[152] With *-ri* interpreted as possessive postposition.

[153] Again, some would argue that it means 'hey oh my mango food'. Yet I assume that the older form of this formula was *e meria amarɔ bozɛṇa* (with [not uncommon] rightshift of *-r-* and with last word corresponding to Sanskrit *bhojana* 'meal, food').

becoming pregnant. The competition for the "ambrosia" is repeated on the level of agonistic ball games −both still played in these parts of the Himalayas and several times described in the *Pɔṇḍuaṇ* as competitive ball games between Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas in the shadow of the branches of the 'world tree' (see Zoller 2014: especially 13).

The same mythic imagery of the strife for "ambrosia" is also documented in the sparser Mahābhārata traditions of Rajasthan (for some literature references see Zoller 2014: 49) and Gujarat. In the Rajasthani version, for instance, which I only know in summary, Bhīma plays ball with the Kauravas under a tree: first, he gets a bundle of *nitya bhojan* "ambrosia", which had been hung up in the branches of the tree. Then the Kauravas shoot the ball away and climb up the tree. Bhīma shakes the tree, and they fall all down and die.[154] This final statement, as if given en passant, is nothing else than a mirror image of the haunting message inscribed into the Bangāṇī *Pɔṇḍuaṇ* that our cosmos is an agonal contest between the living Pāṇḍavas/Devas etc. and the dead Kauravas/Asuras etc. This message, not found in the Sanskrit Mahābhārata with its quasi-secular anthropomorphism and quasi-historism, is nevertheless also found in yet another oral Mahābhārata tradition, namely in the Bhīlī Mahābhārata, where we read (Patel 2000: 86): 'The Pāṇḍavas are earth's first gods; all others are the men of the world of mortals.'[155]

5.3 Ecstatic heroes in the Bangani tradition

Around 150 years ago, Indo-Europeanists started to discover the traces of a common Indo-European poetical language. A widespread formula – important in the present context – is 'undying fame', reflected in Vedic *śrávas ákśitam* and Homeric Greek κλέος ἄφθῐτον (Vassilkov 2012: 158). The Vedic phrase is an isolated case, yet the concept continued e.g. into the Sanskrit Mahābhārata where one finds with

[154] See above depiction. In addition, the fact that in this short version both game ball and ambrosia are mentioned individually does not deny the quite self-evident fact that both are – in this very specific context – ultimately semantically identical.

[155] *Pāṇḍav pr̥thvī ke pratham dev haiṁ; śeṣ sabhī mr̥tyulok ke mānav haiṁ.* Note, however, that both according to *Pɔṇḍuaṇ* and Bhīlī Mahābhārata, the Pāṇḍavas have to be transformed into immortal gods. In the *Pɔṇḍuaṇ* this is achieved by Kuntī (see Zoller 2014: 49), but in the Bhīlī Mahābhārata by Draupadī (Patel 2000: 124).

almost same meaning *kīrtiḥ... akśayā*.[156] It is unclear how this formula 'undying fame' was continued into Post-Mahābhārata (oral or written) texts, even though it looks likely that the concept must have continued throughout the historical phase of the *āyudhajīvin-saṃgha*s and even thereafter. Yet, unfortunately, we do not have any texts attributable with certainty to one of these *saṃgha*s. Most likely, they cultivated oral traditions only, about which, sadly, we do not know anything. As I repeatedly pointed out above, transgressive martial traditions inherited from the Old Indian warrior bands and from the *āyudhajīvin-saṃgha*s continued their existence into the present age in various parts in the high mountains between eastern Afghanistan and Central Himalayas. This holds also much true for the Bangan region (in Uttarkashi District of Uttarakhand). My article from 2007 'Himalayan Heroes' describes the social organization of the Bangani *khūnd* 'martial warriors devoted to headhunting' and analyzes the religious background motivating this former practice.[157] The greatest Bangani hero was Jitu Jorian (*ʤitu ʤɔṛiaṇ*). He and his family flourished approximately around the beginning of the 19th Century (see Zoller 1997 for background information). The story culminates in the treacherous killing of Jitu and his father in an ambush. Jitu's story is still very much present in Bangan[158] and performed in different oral genres. One of the records we made in the late 1980 was a so-called *puaṛɔ* 'ballad'. This ballad has not yet been published, but it is transcribed and translated. I quote further below a few interesting passages. The ballad opens with the following song:

> Never was born during an age,
> Never had earth created for herself (a hero like you)
> O Jorian you regale yourself

[156] Here closely related are also the hero stones, which in Nepal and in Rajasthan are called *kīrtistambha* (see D. R. Sharma and Thapar).

[157] In the previous section (*5.2*), we saw that the harsh method of headhunting was spread over larger areas in the Central and Western Himalayas. Oakley and Gairola (1935) mention such incidents from the Central Himalayas on the following pages:
a) Beheading: 37, 41, 57, 65, 91, 114, 127, 135, 151, 152, 158.
b) (Re)capturing of severed heads: 53, 68-69, 117, 148, 162-163.
As a further variation on the theme, we find in some heroic ballads that after the battle the enemies' heads are piled up one upon another in a rectangular formation (*cãũrā* or *cabūtarā*). See Catak (1973: 248) and Upadhyay (1979: 201).

[158] I know present descendants of his family, which is based in the Bangani village Sarās, and I am informed of how much they cherish their ancestry.

With the song of fame of your clan
You have achieved *immortal fame*
O Jitu, son of Dalip Singh

What we translated as *immortal fame* (on which my language consultants strongly insisted) is literally this phrase: *tãĩ bāṛo tezū zɛ lāla* "you heated splendor red." This looks very different from Vedic *śrávas ákśitam* but there is no doubt that the ancient transgressive martial spirit – that must have characterized especially the speakers of the ancestor(s) of the early Outer Languages – has partly survived in these Himalayan regions.

Before I am going to underpin this claim with further quotes from the Bangani ballad, I want to add here that this very same inherited formula of 'immortal fame' has also survived in a Sanskrit text from the 11th Century AD – thus, chronologically speaking, roughly in the middle between ancient epic text and the modern Bangani ballad – namely in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* ('Ocean of the streams of stories') of Somadeva from Kashmir.[159] The *Kathāsaritsāgara* is not a martial epic, but a collection of legends, fairy tales and romantic folk tales. What is more, the ancient formula has just survived in the Buddhist *jātaka*-style pacifist-inspired story of Jīmūtavāhana (perhaps meaning 'carrying a thundercloud'?). Thus, it seems that the old warrior ethics could seep here and there through the thick varnish of Buddhist high morality. In the opening of the story (Kathās. 4.2.20-30) Jīmūtavāhana, son of a *vidyādhara* ('kind of divine magician'),[160] is described as *dāna|vīraḥ* 'heroically generous'. He knows "…that the things that exist in this world disappear in an instant *sthiraṃ tu mahatām ekam ākalpam amalaṃ yaśaḥ*" 'and only the spotless renown of the great is permanent and lasts as long as an eon.' This is definitely not Buddhist doctrine, it rather resembles above-discussed Classical Greek concept of ἀρετή (see above p. 31). Therefore, we find towards the happy end of the story also our inherited formula, here as *akṣaya yaśas* (between Khathās. 4.2.25 and 4.2.30):

tato '|kṣayeṇa dehena yaśasā ca virājitam
buddhv" âbhyanandat taṃ bandhu|jano Jīmūtavāhanam

[159] I regard the Kashmir area as belonging to the Outer Languages.
[160] The following English renderings and the Sanskrit punctuation are quoted from Mallinson 2009.

> ‘Then, having discovered that it was Jimúta-váhana shining forth with his indestructible body and [indestructible] fame, [161] his kinsmen welcomed him.’

The following few excerpts from the Bangani ballad are meant to demonstrate the survival of the ancient transgressive martial spirit (indeed very different from the romantic spirit of the *Kathāsaritsāgara*):

> He [Jitu] originated from a family of *khūnd*s, was a man from a 12-house-clan. Violence, shattering, slamming – he killed the breath of all heroes. Never ever did he forsake the addiction to fight.

An acquaintance of Jitu’s father, Dəlu, is Nāg Dev Phoṇḍaṭɔ.[162] He is cast in the same mold:

> Indeed, Phoṇḍaṭɔ is not at all concerned what he says, whom he kills, he doesn’t give a damn about the others.

However, the vizier of God Mahāsu [163] coaxes Dəlu into killing Phoṇḍaṭɔ or one of his family members. Dəlu sets out to kill his two sons Beṇī and Dharmcand who, at that time, stay at some distant fields in order to grow peas because all around are suffering from (regular) hunger (in spring time):[164]

> Like the *khūnd*s set out to cross over bridges and fords
> In the same way he killed the two
> He chopped off the heads of Beṇī and Dharmcand like waterpots.
>
> The trunks he left back, the heads he took along. In (the village of) Sarās he plays and dances, plays football with the heads.

The wicked vizier now reveals to Phoṇḍaṭɔ who had killed his sons. Following the advice of a Brahmin, Phoṇḍaṭɔ goes to upland village Bālca with a group of young fighters:

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[161] Note also Tawney’s translation (quoted in Vogel 1926: 183): “Then his relatives, seeing him with restored body and with undying fame, rejoiced in him…”

[162] The name of this hero seems to indicate a close relation with the realm of serpent deities. Compare the element Phoṇḍaṭɔ with Sanskrit (lex.) *phāṇḍin* ‘name of a serpent-demon’. Thus the hero’s name Nāg Dev Phoṇḍaṭɔ could be for now a single and provisional evidence for a human ‘serpent clan’ (i.e. a *nāgavaṃśa*) also in this part of India.

[163] Actually a fraternity of four royal (and quite martial) deities whose kingdom covers Bangan and its surroundings. See Zoller 2007.

[164] Traditionally a hunger season.

> "We'll go there unarmed. What needs to be done we do with our hands." (In the evening, it so happened that also nine men from Sarās [Dɔlu's village, and thus his relatives] had also arrived in Bālca). With clanking battle-axes, with an ample number of girls; they had halva and roasted meat, entrails and (roasted) stomachs (to eat). Thus, nine men have arrived from over there. Then one man went over to the nine men. They smoke a pipe together when he sees the battle-axes: "Oh my dear, respect, respect. These battle-axes are splendid! What battle-axes you have, oho, you have such lovely battle-axes!" He took one axe on his side, then another. When all nine are on his side, he gives a whistle:
>
> (As) water searches for the riverbed
> Phɔṇḍaṭɔ searches protection (in village Bālca)
> Upon the heights of Bālca
> Shines a hailstorm
>
> Phɔṇḍaṭɔ decapitated nine, like waterpots he cut them off. The trunks they left back, but they took along the heads, all the nine. In (village) Naukoṭ they played football (with the heads) when one said: "These nine heads, keep them well. As long as the head of Dɔlu has not been brought here I am not content."

These tough and ferocious acts should not be understood as survivals of an insufficiently civilized fringe group. The Greek Iliad ranks among world literature and yet it knows to delineate similar incidents. Above I had mentioned the greatest angst of the Homeric warriors, namely the mutilation of their bodies. Treherne describes the transformation from the Neolithic (and Chalcolithic) to the Bronze Age also in terms of revolutionary changes in funeral customs (1995: 112): "In contrast to the esoteric rites within the passage graves, the body was highly visible not merely to a select few, but to a host of onlookers during the ceremonies preceding burial, in which it was dressed and carried on a bier or coffin, and in the grave itself before the mound was raised (or later the pyre lit)…" This was (is) the hallmark of a good and beautiful, sometimes even glorious death. Yet, there is also the Greek term *aikia*, which means, "disgracing or doing outrage to the corpse" (Vernant 1992: 67), which also means that a combat between warriors could continue even after the death of the enemy. In case of the Himalayas, there was always the danger of reconquest of the captured head (see Zoller 2007 and Oakley and Gairola)[165] and in case of the Homeric

[165] The apparent reason was that for a corpse without head no funerary rites could be performed. This is described in the Central Himalayan story of 'Bhagdeo the Warrior'

heroes, there was always the danger of dirtying and disfiguring, or of dissecting the corpse: "Ajax, in fury, cuts the head of Imbrios from his delicate neck and hurls it like a ball … to roll in the dust … Hektor would like to impale Patroklos's head on a stake after having severed it from the neck…" (Vernant 1992: 71). Having taken the life of the enemy, what remains to be done is to destroy the warrior's beauty and, in case of the Himalayas, to steal its most precious piece.

In her article on hero stones, Thapar relates the following interesting observation with regard to the *śrāddha* ritual for ancestors and regarding the fate of a fallen hero who was immortalized through a memorial-stone (1981: 306 and 308):

> It is assumed that the ancestors are living in heaven, for the dead are nourished in heaven by the food given at the *śrāddha*. Such a concept would seem to conflict with that of a cycle of rebirth and reincarnation … Such rituals seem to reflect an early and continuing belief in heaven and hell … The firm faith in the belief that the hero lived in heaven after he died suggests the popularity of an alternative to the belief in reincarnation. This is particularly striking in the centuries A.D. when the doctrine of reincarnation was widely accepted.

Thapar's deliberations suggest two conclusions: (a) hero cults, promising undying fame, are mutually exclusive with the doctrine of reincarnation; (b) where there are hero cults (e.g. with hero stones or heroic songs), there is no belief in reincarnation. In 2007, I had written (p. 256): "In Bangan there is no traditional belief in reincarnation (other than recent importations)…" [166] The next sub-section deals with impersonations of historical kings in the Central Himalayas. Also here one can argue that where this is possible there cannot exist a belief in cyclical rebirth. Thus, also hero stones and impersonations of historical kings are examples of a pattern in Indian history, where traditions are not overcome, but shifted to the cultural and geographic periphery.

(Oakley and Gairola [1935: 63ff.]) where Bhagdeo first had to reconquer the head of his father before he could perform his funeral.

[166] These two contradictory religio-philosophical points of view regarding life and death might be presented more formally thus: Either memory and feeding (of a dead family member) → memorial structure (of a sculptured stone) → impersonation (as mental callback of a formerly living person). Or no elaborate culture of remembrance and instead doctrine of reincarnation (now as physical repetition of an individual). Thapar refers to attempts in various Indian texts at bridging the apparent contradictions (1981: 307f.).

5.4 Impersonations of historical kings in the Central Himalayas

The religious and political history of the Central Himalayas – here meant is the arena for the exposition of divinized Katyūri Kings (the dynasty ended around 1100 AD)[167] – is complex and only fragmentarily known, so that it is difficult to discover a guiding thread for a reconstruction of the tradition of impersonation of Katyūri kings, a tradition which is still alive. Nonetheless, it is very likely that we are again dealing with an archaic tradition. Analogue with the first cognizance of the *āyudhajīvin saṃgha*s not found in the Vedas but in the work of Pāṇini, V. S. Agrawala (*India as known to Pāṇini* [1953: 77]) notes, "[d]istinguished Kshatriya heroes had become objects of religious *bhakti* (IV.3.99) before Pāṇini's time, referring to the emergence of a popular cult of hero-worship." I suggest taking this information as yet another support for the theory of the distinction of (at least) two Indo-Aryan immigration events.

The origin of the Katyūri dynasty is contested, and the two main claims – they are either successors of the Kuṇindas or they are an outgrow of a Khaśa *grāma-rājya* – continue to be repeated in the relevant publications (see e.g. Maheshwar P. Joshi's pertinent publications, and Vasudha Pande [2014] and O. C. Handa [2002]). However, it seems not unlikely that the ethos of the dynasty was heroic. Kārttikeyapura, which was for the most time the capital of the Katyūrīs, was named after the popular war-god. Moreover, there existed close relationships between the kings and Lakulīśa Pāśupatism (also pointed out and discussed in detail by Nachiket Chanchani [2013] and K. P. Nautiyal [1969: 141ff.]). U. P. Shah has observed in connection with this sect that "[i]mages of Skanda-Kārttikeya, Aja-Ekapad, and of Sapta or Aṣṭamātṛkas were included from an early stage in the pantheon," which can be interpreted as a penchant for transgressive practices. Maheshwar P. Joshi's following observation is also instructive (2010: 228):

> Interestingly, some of the temples depict royal figures as ascetics … [that] they were undoubtedly venerable follows from the fact that their iconography is no different from those of the Pāśupata Āchāryas. Circumstantial evidence suggests that these royal figures represent Katyūrī kings and their queens, and that due to their patronage Lakulīśa

[167] Figures vary between 400/500 AD and 800 AD with regard to the beginning of this dynasty.

> Pāśupatism gained wide popularity in Uttarakhand Himalaya. While concluding, it would not be out of place to add that in Uttarakhand Himalaya the Katyūrī-s are deified and invoked during the Katyūrī-*jāgar* (spirit possession séance) rituals.[168] In the Katyūrī-*jāgar* spirits of deified Katyūrī-s and one Lākuḍa-vīra possess the devotees.[169] The characteristic attribute of Lākuḍa-vīra is a *sabbala* (crow-bar).

Joshi's observation suggests that (some of the) Katyūrī kings were not only patrons of Lakulīśa Pāśupatism, but were actively practicing members of this Śaiva denomination. His opinion is also supported by a plate below from the beautiful Jageśvar temple assembly:

Figure 11. Lakulīśa from Mṛtyuñjaya temple Jageśvar[170]

[168] Regarding the basic function of *jāgars*, Joshi gives the following apt definition (2014: 18): "The protection of territory and keeping it free from guilt and the intrusion of evil is relevant for both, house- and *dhuni-jagars*." I add here also Vasudha Pande's characterization of the professional musicians who are performing *jāgar*s (2014: 5): "The Das, accompanied by the Dholi-Damai were the professional bards whose occupation was to recite the ballads of folk heroes, kings, warriors and gods. The recitation of these songs was a religious event and was considered sacred. The recitation was often a night-long affair, sometimes stretching to 22 days for the *Baisi*s and involved the process of incarnation of the spirit of the person whose ballad was being sung in a medium."

[169] Elizabeth Cecil has found out (2014: 142) that the first documentation of the term Lāguḍi (as a variant of Lakulīśa) is found in the Skanda-purāṇa, which originated around 550–650 AD. Joshi adds (pers. comm.): "There are some unpublished Nāth manuscripts from Garhwal in which Lākuḍa figures as the Guru of Gorakhanāth, and he is also identified with Bhairava."

[170] Courtesy: Maheshwar P. Joshi.

Accepting the correctness of Joshi's assumption, a remark from Oakley (1905: 101) becomes comprehensible:

> The explanation they [the local people] give of the oppression of [the Katyūrī king] Bir Deo is that the Katyuris grew weary of dominion; being highly religious men, and longing for peace and retirement, they set about making themselves as unpopular as possible, so that the people would no longer wish to be ruled by them!

Although Handa regards Oakley's conjecture as "fantastic and illogical of course" (2002: 36), it seems that Oakley just followed a local transmission. Atkinson describes the end of the Katyūrīs thus (1882: [Vol. ii, Pt. ii] 831):

> At Taili Hāt in Katyūr we have a place known as the Indra Chabūtra; which consist of three separate platforms … [on one of which one finds] certain figures known as Katyūri Rajas, who are honoured by a festival every third year. Raja Dhām Dyau has a temple at Kanda in Sālam and there are several temples to Raja Brahm and Raja Dhām in parganah Pāli. These two were the last independent Rajas of Katyūr … their mother Jiya … [failed to educate them properly, thus] they [Brahm and Dhām] grew up cruel, tyrannical and profligate…

Perhaps because of continuing a sort of Vrātya ethos, the subjects of the last Katyūrīs hated them, and thus, ultimately, their enemy Bikramchand overran them. The complete royal house was exterminated and all its members (the brothers Dhām and Brahm, their six sons, servants, and the musician Khek Dās,[171] etc.) were thrown into the Ramganga River and thus denied a standard funerary ritual. No surprise all turned into *bhūt*s.

Besides the above-mentioned temples for Katyūrī kings, another aspect of this regional culture of remembrance are two forms of an oral tradition centering on Jiyā Rānī (or Maulā), a Katyūrī princess,[172] which is narrated in Doti (Far Western Nepal) as a so-called *Bhārat,*[173] whereas in Uttarakhand it is performed as a *Jāgar* (a religious vigil with

[171] Khek Dās is also the name of one of the mythical first four professional musicians (see below fn. 181). D. D. Sharma (2012: 341) claims that these professional musicians fulfilled during the era of the Katyūrīs a similar function as the ancient *Cāraṇa*s 'wandering actors or singers' because they were supposed to play at the outbreak of a battle a victory-announcing *ḍhol* 'large drum' or *nagāṛā* 'kettle-drum'.

[172] The following section is a summary of the contents (partly with direct quotes) of Maheshwar P. Joshi 2014.

[173] See below p. 95 the shortly discussed genre of *bharatha, bharthɔ.*

spirit possession séance). The narration from Doti is apparently full of fairytale motifs of the Aarne-Thompson type, and princess Jiyā Rānī is certainly to be identified with the historical Jiya, mother of Raja Brahm and Raja Dhām, just mentioned above. Joshi (2014: 13) notes:

> The DT [Dotiyali text] of the *Bhārata* of Maulā informs us that King Pirthāmadeu of Ajaimiryākoṭa (capital of Doti, Far Western Nepal) had seven queens, amongst whom Maulā was the chief queen. She had no progeny, therefore she went out on a pilgrimage and ultimately settled at Bāṅghāṭa, where she practiced austerities for years and prayed for a baby without being impregnated. While she was bathing there, her matted golden hair fell into the river and was carried far away by its current to a place where it was netted by the royal fishermen of Kumaon.[174] Taking it for gold, they presented it to the Kumaoni kings Sāladeu-Bisāladeu,[175] who at once noticed that it was a tuft of golden hair. Fancying that a woman with such hair ought to be beautiful, they ordered the fishermen to find her and bring her to them. The fishermen found Maulā at Bāṅghāṭa and forcibly took her to the Kumaoni kings who proposed to marry her…

This tale ends happily when Jiyā Rānī is reunited with Pirthāmadeu. During a Jāgar session in Kumaon, participants get possessed by Jiyā Rānī, Pirthāmadeu and their attendants. In this version it is said (Joshi 2014: 15) that Jiyā Rānī got abducted by *Turkī/Paṭhān*, i.e. Muslims,[176]

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[174] This motif of the golden hair floating down a river is known to me also from fairytales from North Pakistan.

[175] The names of these "Kumaoni kings" are certainly an echo formation and look suspiciously similar to the name of the medieval Rajasthani king Vīsaḷadeva (immortalized in the Rajasthani ballad *Vīsaḷadevarāsa* [restored and edited by John D. Smith]).

[176] Joshi remarks (2014: 18): "It may be added here that the Rohelā [also Rohilla] Muslims were much despised in Uttarakhand, owing to their iconoclastic activities and heterodox religious practices … That is why, despite traditional political rivalry and protracted wars between the chiefs of Kumaon and Garhwal, when the Rohelā Muslims occupied Kumaon and vandalized Brahmanical temples the Garhwali king came to the rescue of the Kumaoni king (Joshi 2012)." Interestingly, there is yet another version of the abduction (see D. D. Sharma 2012: 458), according to which the 'Turks and Ruhelas' kidnapped Goddess Vārāhī Devī from her temple in Devidhura in front of which annually a stone pelting festival is celebrated. She was later on extricated by a hero from the Kumaoni warrior family of the Lamgaṛiyās who is discussed again further down in this section.

at Chitraśilā near Kathgodam (District Nainital, Uttarakhand) but then was rescued by *nau lākh*[177] *Katyūrī*. Joshi adds (2014: 16):

> On the first day of the month of Māgha she took a bath in the Gaulā,[178] and arranged her *nau gaja* (nine yards) and *aṭhāra hātha* (eighteen hands, also equal to 9 yards) long golden hairs, one of which broke off and flowed to Kāṭhagodāma (some three kilometres from Chitraśilā). At Kāṭhagodāma seven Turk brothers, each riding a horse, were crossing the Gaulā … In the course of events the left eye of Jiyā's *Guru* pulsated. Taking it as a bad omen and anticipating danger, he asked Jiyā to go back. In the meantime, the seven Turk brothers arrived at Chitraśilā. The *Guru* directed Nisau Mahara, who had accompanied them from village Maharagāuṁ, to hide Jiyā. Nisau Mahara cracked a boulder with his dagger and Jiyā was hidden in the crack. However, Jiyā's hair remained exposed and the Turks detected it. They told the *Guru* to take the woman out so that they could carry her away. The *Guru* said that the woman was King Pṛthipāla's queen, that he had no right to give her to them, but that if her rescuer did not arrive within three days he would get her married to them … The *nau lākh Katyūrī* …arrived in time and rescued Jiyā Rānī.

I represent these incidents with their many details because the scene of Jiyā Rānī hiding in a rock is regularly enacted in a possession séance staged by 'low caste' professional musicians (see below).[179] Joshi adds (2014: 18f.):

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[177] This figure of 900.000 individuals is a standard expression found also elsewhere. For instance, the *Bhīlī Mahābhārata* speaks of the *nau lakh devī-devtā* (Patel 2000: 124). Note, however, Joshi's interpretation (pers. comm.): "In the Jāgar of Maulā, the Katyūrī-s (being *nau lākh*) possess large numbers of devotees … who wield daggers and swords (the *āyudha* attribute of the Katyūrī-s) in ecstasy. Among others, they also include the Śūdras."

[178] A river in Kumaon.

[179] Courtesy: Maheshwar P. Joshi. This photo has been published before in Joshi (2014: 37) with the following caption: "Guru Kaśmīrī group (from Bhaunikhal, Salta, District Almora) belonging to the Śūdra community [they call themselves descendants of Kaula Brahmins of Kashmir!], possessed by the Katyūrī spirits and driving daggers into the cracks of a rock across the Gaulā at Chitraśilā-Ranibagh, thus re-enacting the feat of Nisau Mahara, an attendant of Jiyā Rānī (Ranibagh Uttarāyaṇa annual fair, morning of January 14, 2012)." On p. 26 he writes: "The audio-visual representation of this aspect can be witnessed in the annual fair held on the occasion of the *Uttarāyaṇa* (*Makara Saṁkranti* = transition of the Sun into the zodiac sign of Capricorn [Makara] on its celestial path, mostly falling on January 14) at Ranibagh (District Nainital), where thousands of devotees of the Katyūrīs from different villages of Kumaon and Garhwal

Figure 12. Guru Kaśmīrī group possessed by the Katyūrī spirits

> … in Uttarakhand the *Jāgara* of Jiyā Rānī, also called Maulā, is performed exclusively as a spirit possession ritual under the priesthood of the Dāsa section of Śūdras … Spirit possession in Uttarakhand is predominantly a Dāsa (Śūdra community) vocation … It is enough to say here that one of their sections claims to belong to the Maheśvara *gotra* and another claims descent from the Āī Dāsa son of Brahmā and his consort Gautamī Devī.

In Garhwal, there is also a tradition that Brahmā and Gautamī Devī had actually four sons who were professional musicians (*Ḍholī*): Ḍholī Kālī Dās, Ḍholī Khek Dās,[180] Ḍholī Āī Dās and Ḍholī Jay Dās.

The intimate relationship between the professional musicians and the (martial) Katyūrī kings looks like a strange mélange of two different strands of North Indian cultural/religious history. Vasudha Pande (2014) has drawn a lucid and fitting description of the cultural/political pulling in of an old peripheral area into the Indian mainstream just from the 19th to the 20th Century. Consequently, this strange development comprises a crossing over of the inherited and prestigious role of the 'pastoralist of deities' and the subordinate role of the 'panegyrist of a Himalayan king'.

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assemble on the eve of *Uttarāyaṇa*, and hold the *Jāgara* of Maulā/Jiyā Rānī village-wise from dusk to dawn in a spectacular display of the spirit possession ritual…"

[180] Khek Dās seems to be a mythical figure, because he is also mentioned by Atkinson (1882: [Vol. ii, Pt. ii] 831) to have died in the holocaust of the last Katyūrīs.

The tradition[181] of the four bards is perhaps paralleled by the tradition of members of four Kumaoni lineages belonging to the military order (*Kṣatriya*s) participating in the annual stone pelting festival called *bagvāl* 'pāṣāṇ yuddh kā pūrvābhyās; rehearsal of a stone war'.[182] A description of the festival is found in Ram Singh (2002: 184-190). The festival was formerly celebrated in many places, nowadays it is observed only in three places on three different dates: in Devidhura (District Champawat on *Śrāvaṇ Pūrṇimā*), Bagwali Pokhar (on *Kārttika Pūrṇimā*), and Dwarahat (on *Viṣuvat Saṃkrānti*).[183] The four warrior lineages are collectively called *cār khām dyaukā*, which I interpret as 'four-pillar-royals'[184] with *dyaukā* perhaps deriving < **devakaula*[185] or *devakula* 'belonging to the *deva* family' in the following sense: In Kumaon existed formerly five (not four) antagonistic hereditary factions (lineages), the Mahara, the Phaṛtiyal, the Dev, the Dhek and the Karayat (see Handa 2002: 20), but in reality there was basically a dual moiety organization headed by the Mahara and their antagonists, the Phaṛtiyal.[186] The Dev were possibly descendants of the Katyūrī kings because each king of this dynasty had

[181] The information in the following paragraph stems from Maheshwar P. Joshi (pers. comm.) and from the books of Ram Singh, O. C. Handa (2002) and D. D. Sharma (2012).

[182] The historical background seems to be the ancient military technique of fighting with stone slings, executed by slingers. This technique was formerly widespread and also practiced in Karakorum societies (note e.g. Indus Kohistani *rhʌ̈ỹz*^{i} 'stone sling'; Kumaonī *khyūtār* 'stone sling' is connected with the verb *khyataṇ* 'to throw' which seems to derive < Sanskrit *kṣiptá* 'thrown' [CDIAL 3685]). D. D. Sharma (2012: 462) mentions a passage in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* (4.77), where king Raghu, when entering the Himalayas during his *digvijaya*, is attacked by local stone-throwing slingers, who thereby cause his retreat.

[183] Clips can be seen on the Internet e.g. sub 'Devidhura Bagwal'.

[184] Ram Singh interprets *dyaukā* as *devī bhakt* (2002: 189), perhaps because in case of the Devidhura Bagvāl the stone pelting takes place in front of the temple which is dedicated to Vārāhī Devī. However, Maheshwar P. Joshi clarifies (pers. comm.): "*Dyaukā* is a title denoting ritual status of these lineages, who are devoted exclusively to the '*kerā*' [magical/mystical circle] of Devī." This 'Devī' was formerly certainly a "female village power centre" (see p. 107ff. on this concept).

[185] According to Sanskrit lexicographers, *kaula* means 'of noble family'.

[186] These two moieties regularly celebrated a wild *Bagvāl* in which participants got regularly wounded or killed until it was prohibited by the British authorities in 1815 (D. D. Sharma 2012: 457).

the element *deva* in his name (a common Indian practice).[187] However, according to D. D. Sharma (2012: 458) the names of the four Kṣatriya families are Gahaṛvāl, Camyāl (Camliyā), Vālig (Vālik, Olik, Valgiyā) and Lamgaṛiyā. Nevertheless, also these four families belong to either the Mahara or the Phaṛtiyal lineage.

According to a stone-pelting-festival tradition in Garhwal (Chamoli District), the two moieties throwing stones at each other represent the Devas and the Dānavas (i.e. Asuras) (D. D. Sharma 2012: 460). This is yet another evidence for the fact that the traditional social moiety structures found in many parts of the Central and Western Himalayas are based on a cosmological philosophy, namely the eternal contest between gods and demons.

Describing the atmosphere among the participants of the festival, Ram Singh writes (2002: 190): "This is just a frenzy full of passion, excitement and devotion … seeing the contorted faces, the shivering limbs and [hearing] the gnashing of the teeth of the participants of the festival, the terribleness of the wars of bygone times starts dancing before one's eyes."[188] D. D. Sharma describes this atmosphere thus (2002: 459): "At that time, there is in the participating fighters such a terrific frenzy that they are not aware when they get wounded by the stones. They maintain that at that time there is within them the shivering/jerking of an unearthly, divine power."[189] There is little doubt that these two characterizations are actually descriptions of a kind of warrior frenzy, a warrior frenzy we have come across already a number of times, and on which we concentrate once more in the following section.

5.5 Warrior frenzy and etymology

Anthony and Brown observe (2017: 135): "Youthful war-bands are thought to have actually existed among later IE-speaking groups,

[187] However, note the actual Pahāṛī pronunciation in the name of the Katyūrī Raja Dhām Dyau. A similar form was borrowed into Newar *dyaḥ, dyo* 'god, deity, idol'.

[188] *yah ek unmād aur uttejanābharā bhaktimay āveśmātra hai … bagvālī … logoṁ ke thuthne, hāth-pair kāṁpne aur dāṁt kiṭkiṭāne lagte haiṁ, unheṁ dekhkar purāne zamāne ke yuddhoṁ kī bhīṣaṇatā āṁkhoṁ ke sāmne nācne lagtī hai.*

[189] *us samay ismeṁ bhāg lene vale raṇabāṁkuroṁ* [a Pahāṛī word] *meṁ yuddh kā aisā bhayaṅkar unmād hotā hai ki unheṁ pāṣāṇoṁ se āhat hone kī anubhūti hī nahīṁ hotī hai. unkā kahnā hai ki us samay unke andar ek alaukik daivī ūrjā kā prasphuraṇ hotā hai.*

although whether they go back to Proto-Indo-European (PIE) is debated … In Europe they seem to have been absorbed into the military retinues of increasingly powerful patrons and kings during the Iron Age … In South Asia, Heesterman (1962) and Falk (1986) found that oath-bound initiatory war-bands called Vrātyas were phased out … with the rise of the Brahmin caste, a process that had started already when the Rig Veda was compiled … leading to the eventual demise of the institution" (partly already quoted above p. 45).

Their conclusion regarding South Asia is overhasty not only because of modern Himalayan evidence. At the time of the Sanskrit Mahābhārata, the Brahmin caste was what it is today. Yet, the Mahābhārata does contain a remarkable amount of information about the continued existence of Vrātya(-like) traditions: The Kaurava Bhūriśravas criticizes Arjuna for his blind trust in Kṛṣṇa and his relatives because "Kṛṣṇa and his followers are *vrātyas*."[190] Vassilkov, having analyzed various *ślokas* in the Mahābhārata, concludes that Kṛṣṇa was the head of a group of young warriors: "His followers are of the same age … they practice wild orgiastic rites, drink wine and from time to time fall into the trance of 'battle madness' (*samaradurmada*: MBh. 1.211.9)" (ibid.). We see, the frugal lifestyle of the Brahmins in Classical India was not the only way of life.

The Proto-Indo-European verbal root for expressing 'battle madness' (or 'warrior frenzy') is **eis*- 'mad attack' or more accurate **h₁eis*- 'set in motion; move rapidly'. It is shared by Vedic, Iranian, Greek, Latin, and Germanic. Unlike Anthony and Brown, who are skeptical regarding mad fighting being a common Indo-European heritage, Speidel suspects (2002: 277) that the custom may have had its origins already in the 4th millennium BC. This claim is difficult to prove, but I think there is evidence that we are indeed dealing with a common Indo-European heritage. The Vedic reflex of PIE **h₁eis*- is *IṢ* 'throw, drive, set in motion' for which Turner in his CDIAL lists seven derivations (1966: 72), none of which is semantically even remotely related with 'battle madness'. Semantically comparable seems only *īṣant* '(adversarial) attacking' and perhaps *éṣa* '(the) rush; das Hineilen' and *eṣá* 'to rush', whereas the compound *manīṣā* 'reflection, wisdom,

[190] The translation of the whole MBh 7.118.15 *śloka* is this: "O Pārtha [Arjuna], how could you consider as the authority Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas, who are *vrātyas*, not distinguishing good deeds from evil deeds, and by their very nature worthy of blame!" (quoted by Vassilkov 2015: 232).

conception, etc.'[191] does not, according to Elena Mucciarelli (2015: 73), belong to the sphere of Vrātyas but to 'mainstream' Veda. The other languages are semantically clearer: Old Avestan *aēšəma-* 'fury, frenzy',[192] post-Homeric Greek *oἶμαι* 'stormy attack, rush', Latin *īra* 'anger', Old Nordic *eisa* 'storm along', etc. The quote from Dumézil shows that the association of this lemma with the specific meaning 'fury' with Rudra, Maruts, Indra only underlines its closeness to Outer Languages and early immigrating Indo-Aryans. Whereas the Sanskrit forms quoted by Turner have nothing to do with 'fury', we do find this in Bangani oral heroic literature where there is *ɔ̃śi* 'battle madness (warrior frenzy)',[193] even though the details of its derivation from OIA are not fully clear (dissimilated from *iṣitá* 'excited'?). In the just above-mentioned heroic ballad 'Jitu Jorian', Jitu's father sets out to kill Beṇī and Dharmcand. Underway, the 'battle frenzy energy' *ɔ̃śi* slowly wakes up in him:

> *ɔ̃śi bi na*[194]*ʤɔbɛ ūsɔrɛ*[195] / *ʤɔṛiaṇẽĩ*[196]*kɔṭhīkɛ lāyo khēṛi*
>
> frenzy when rises / Jorian nearer-and-nearer makes drive-somewhere
>
> 'When the battle frenzy rises (in) Jorian, he rounds up (his own people) nearer and nearer'

The Bangani linguistic (and cultural) evidence makes it clear that battle frenzy of ecstatic warriors is indeed a Proto-Indo-European heritage. Compare the following two locally and temporally widely separated descriptions of this type of frenzy. The first comes from a more recent

[191] But EWA gives 'geistige Erregtheit', that is 'mental excitement'.
[192] Speidel (2002: 277) quotes in connection of this lemma George Dumézil who had written: "Aēšma [to Zoroastrians] is one of the worst evils, and later, in the eyes of the Mazdaeans, the most frightful demon, who bodies forth the destructive fury of society. Yet it only personifies as something bad a quality that gives the Rig Veda, from the same root, an adjective of praise for the Maruts, the followers of Indra, and for their father, the dreadful Rudra: *iṣmīn* 'impetuous' and no doubt 'furious' … the Old Norse verb *eiskra* that describes the rage of the wild berserk warriors; hence we meet here a technical term of the Indo-European 'warrior bands'." Note also that the basic meaning of this Old Norse verb is 'howl or roar with rage' (Faulkes 2007: 47).
[193] In fact, Bangāṇī has two more terms meaning 'battle madness (warrior frenzy)': *mīr* and *gèrɔ*. They are discussed in Zoller forthcoming.
[194] *bi na* (Hindi *bhī nahīṁ*) are here not translated filler words.
[195] Derives < OIA *útsarati* *'rises' (CDIAL 1874).
[196] Ergative ending (present tense).

description from the Central Himalayas and deals with performance of heroic songs (Gairola and Barker 1917: 160):

> Such is the warlike spirit of these songs that the young folk who hear them become hypnotised, as it were, and begin to dance and perform extraordinary feats – such as uprooting trees, carrying huge weights, rushing into the burning fire, eating nettles, earth, etc.

The second describes Germanic Berserks (Speidel 2002: 253f.):

> Snorri Sturlusson in the *Ynglinga saga*, written shortly after AD 1220, defines berserks as mad fighters without body armor… "Woden's men went without hauberks and raged like dogs or wolves. They bit their shields and were strong like bears or bulls. They killed men, but neither fire nor iron hurt them. This is called berserksgangr." Berserk warriors thus scorned armor, willfully foregoing body armor. They also raged uncontrollably in a trance of fury. These two qualities define berserks…

5.6 The Himalayan Wild Hunt and contemporary dog cults

We have come across wild and violent (usually male) youth bands in many pre-modern societies. However, in the Indo-European context there seem to have existed some specific historical conditions, which have influenced the development of these associations. At the end of the Bronze Age, after 400 years of chariot dominance on the battlefields, that is, at the end of the thirteenth century, all of a sudden infantry overcame them. A fairly recent well-researched study has shown how this happened.[197] Chariotry always needed some infantry "runners" who kept up with the chariots to support them when it came to hand-to-hand fighting and to finish off the crews of disabled enemy chariots.[198] Such runners were daring elite troops, "those who bear the hand-to-hand-fighting, beautiful in appearance" (Drews 1993: 142). It turned out that if such "runners" could come together in sufficient number, they could defeat chariotry. There is historical evidence that such 'infantry' was brought to victory through the berserk mind.

[197] See Drews 1993, esp. pp. 135-163.

[198] A Vrātya Hymn of the Atharva-veda speaks of two forerunners (*puraḥ sarau*) and two footmen (*pariṣkanda*) running beside a chariot. The form *pariṣkanda* contains the OIA root *SKAND* 'jump, fall down, spurt out' and one wonders whether this *pariṣkanda* 'runner'is somehow responsible for the designation of the war god *Skanda* "attacker" (Parpola 2016: 329f.).

Reflexes and memories are typically found throughout the Indo-European world in the form of two cultural archetypes:

(a) The Wild Host, a band of warriors, often black figures on horse

(b) The Wild Hunt, the ghostly hunter and his dogs

For type (a), Parpola quotes contemporary examples from the Deccan (2015: 149f.): "Numerous iron tridents suggest a Śaiva religion. Martial traditions of Megalithic origin [199] continue in the Deccan, where horsemen accompanied by dogs worship Śaiva deities such as Bhairava, Khaṇḍobā and Birobā with tridents in yurt-like shrines." Parpola refers here to the work of Günther D. Sontheimer (see literature and right below). David Gordon White (1991: 104) refers with regard to the same religious complex to a Mallāri temple in the city of Ujjain where "devotion takes on the form of cynanthropism.[200] At the Mallāri temple there, devotees behave like dogs in every respect, barking and eating off the ground. The Mallāri cult remains strong in many parts of the Deccan, especially in Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. In it, one may glimpse survivals both of the Pāśupata tradition of feigned madness and dissimulation, and, going even further back, of the Vrātyas of Vedic tradition. Mallāri is himself closely identified with Mārtaṇḍa

[199] I do not consider here Parpola's ideas concerning this Megalithic culture and Pāṇḍava traditions.

[200] Except the endnote at the here quoted location (fn.75), the other endnotes within the quote from White have not been reproduced due to their big size. Thus here only a reproduction of a part of the original endnote 75: "The barking of *vāghya* dog-worshippers at the Daśaharā (Dasarā) festival recreates the nonsensical babbling of Pāśupata; Sontheimer, 'Mallāri,' p. 166. The uncontrolled trembling of the Pāśupata that constituted a portion of his *vrata* may have been related to the 'canine' affliction of epilepsy, *śvagraha*." Note also that *vāghya* is obviously a reflex of OIA *vyāghrá-* 'tiger', which points to 'tiger-impersonation'. There is indeed much evidence for such traditions described, e.g., for the Garo 'tribals' in Meghalaya by Francesco Brighenti (2017) and for the Kondh 'tribals' in Orissa (same author 2011). Vassilkov (2015) discusses the confusion between wolf, tiger and lion in ancient and Classical India. Besides White's 'dog-man' there was also the *puruṣavyāghra* 'tiger-man' (see Pontillo and Sudyka [2016] on the long-lasting use of warrior-lion imagery). It is thus very likely that when the first wave of Indo-Aryan speakers with their Vrātyas and their wolf/dog-impersonation traditions arrived in South Asia, they must have met upon very similar indigenous tiger-impersonation traditions (and serpent-impersonation traditions, as we will see in the third part of primary data below). This is probably one of the reasons that these transgressive religious practices could survive in India until the present age.

Bhairava, who is accompanied, in legend, by seven hundred dogs.[201] These dogs are his devotees, who were first transformed by Mallāri/Mārtaṇḍa Bhairava from tigers to humans, and then instructed by him to behave like dogs. On the ninth day of the Daśaharā festival, the *Vaggayyas*, the 'tiger dogs' of Mailār/Mallāri/Khaṇḍobā/-Mārtaṇḍa Bhairava, commemorate this mythic event, by which they helped Bhairava to defeat Malla, when they":

> "act and bark like dogs when pilgrims arrive … Formerly … they would run to their [begging] bowls, would howl and bark and quarrel amongst each other, and lie flat on the floor to eat like dogs … If food is offered into the bowls, they will fight like dogs trying to tear food from each other's mouth" (Sontheimer 1981: 8).

Further examples of survivals of Vrātya features among the *Vaggayyas* are mentioned by Ewa Dębicka-Borek (2015: 255): "…the *vaggayyas* wear long, black overcoats with the sun and the moon stitched on the back and the borders are decorated with a zig-zag pattern … whereas the *vrātyas* were dressed in similar black woolen garments with a golden and a silver ornament symbolizing the sun and the moon (Hauer 1927: 129)."[202] She compares also the long begging excursions of the *Vaggayyas* with the violent excursions of the Vrātyas who enforced hospitality (ibid.).[203]

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[201] See again above footnote 146 describing the 'Vrātya' Prince Vijaya and his companions who – I add this here – actually numbered 700 (Parpola 2015: 151).

[202] It is worth mentioning here that at the top of many Indian hero stones sun and moon are carved, which symbolize, according to Thapar (1981: 296), "the eternal character of the memorial", and she compares this with land grants from the same period (from the end of the first millennium AD onwards), which frequently state that the grant would last "as long as the sun and the moon endure" (ibid.).

[203] Kuiper compares (1970: 127f.) the Yogic and Tantric mystical human physiology of the two 'veins' (*nāḍī*) Iḍā and Piṅgalā which entwine the central 'vein' Suṣumnā along the spine and which are identified with moon and sun respectively. He further combines this 'triad' with the Vedic concept of the two birds sitting on either side of the world-tree (Ṛg-Veda I.1.164.20) in the same way as sun and moon are placed right and left of the axis mundi. On a thorough analysis of this "riddle-hymn", see now also Per-Johan Norelius (2016) who concludes that this hymn is a variant of a very widespread Indo-European and Eurasian myth of the world-tree and a drink of immortality. I may add here that the older capital of the Kauravas, Hāstinapura, is located at the banks of the 'left' Gaṅgā whereas the younger capital of the younger Pāṇḍavas, Indraprastha, is located at the banks of the 'right' Yamunā. Bosch, pointing out the same spacial difference (1960: 88), says that 'left' and Gaṅgā correspond with 'underneath' whereas 'right' and Yamunā correspond with 'above'. Bosch quotes here

For type (b), I present here the example of the Central Himalayan *ēṛi* 'hunters and huntresses'.[204] There is a class of 'fairies' rendered sometimes as *vanadeviyāṁ* 'forest goddesses' who are called *ēṛi*. The word can designate both an individual male being and a troupe of female spirits and it derives < OIA (lex.) *ākheṭika-* 'hunter' (cf. OIA *ākheṭa-* 'hunting' [CDIAL 1037]).

> The male *ēṛi* 'hunter': A description of his is found in Atkinson (1882: [Vol. ii, Pt. ii] 825f.) and presented here partly in summary and partly in quotes (added with some details from other sources): The hunter is a hideous forest deity with eyes on the crown of his head (i.e. at the upper back of his skull) and four arms holding a bow, arrow, trident and an iron rod. He rambles around only at night accompanied by the fairies (Pari) that dance and sing with him. "Their feet are turned backwards…" He is accompanied by his litter-bearers Sau and Bhau[205] and a cry of bell-wearing hounds.[206] From the hunter's mouth drops

Kuiper, which I reproduce here because it is very relevant for us and it was published at a rather obscure place. Kuiper says: "…in later texts the 'right-hand' Yamunā is called the daughter of the sun (*tapana-duhitar*) and that the 'left-hand' Gaṅgā is said to flow down from the moon on to Śiva's forehead. Now it strikes us that the ancient city of the Kauravas lies on the Ganges (and so is connected with 'moon', 'left' and 'underneath') and is called the city of elephants (Hastināpura) [Kuiper uses here a younger writing convention], the elephant being a typical animal of the underworld in Indian mythology, and that the younger city of the Pāṇḍavas was founded on the Yamunā, (thus being associated with the 'sun', 'right', 'above') and is called Indraprastha after the protagonist of the 'celestial phratry'. This clearly shows that the region of Kurukshetra encircled by the two rivers, and in a wider sense also Madhyadeśa, the 'middle land', was looked upon as the cosmic centre. In this connection it is worth mentioning that the sacred city Varāhatīrtha (MBh III 83, 18) or Lokoddhāratīrtha (III 83, 45) was situated here, that means that here the cosmic wild boar raised the first earth from the primeval waters so that here was thought to be the earth's navel." I may also refer here to Heinrich von Stietencron's detailed discussion regarding 'left' and 'right' in connection with Gaṅgā and Yamunā and the two 'veins' (1972: 113-27.) in which he stresses the fact that the 'veins' are actually thought to alternate from one side to the other.

[204] The following section is already published in a slightly different form in Bhatt, Wessler and Zoller 2014, p. 11ff.

[205] "Sau" may derive < OIA *śauva-* 'a multitude or pack of dogs, relating or belonging to dogs, doggish, canine' (from *śvan* 'dog') or < etymologically related *śvaka* 'wolf' (see KEWA), and "Bhau" may derive < OIA (lex.) *bhavana* 'a dog'.

[206] The "bell-wearing hounds" are mentioned here because the meanings of "Sau" and "Bhau" are no more understood. Note also that the fairies in the hymn presented in the second part of the Bhatt, Wessler and Zoller article are also accompanied by hounds, which clearly demonstrates their huntress nature.

> venomous saliva. Those people who hear the barking of the dogs are doomed, and those who see the hunter either die of fear or "are burnt up by a flash of his eye, or are torn to pieces by his dogs, or have their livers extracted and eaten by the fairies who accompany him."[207] But if someone miraculously survives the nightmare he will, as usual, be rewarded with the disclosure of hidden treasures. The hunter's "temples are found on hills and desolate tracts and are never met with in inhabited places. In the middle of such temples are set up tridents, which represent Airi [*ēṛi*] himself, and the tridents are surrounded by stones representing Sau, Bhau, the fairies, &c. But in some cases the deity and his followers are actually represented by carved images. The villagers worship him during the bright half of [the month of] Chait [for ten nights] … Those possessed with Airi are called Airi's horses or Airi's slaves (dungariya)[208] … They dye a yard of cloth in red ochre (*geru*)[209] and bind it around their heads … they allow no one to touch them, as they consider other men unclean … Kids are sometimes sacrificed, and a piece of red cotton stained in the blood of the sacrifice is set up as a banner near the sacred spot."[210]

We have here a clear and recent example for the ancient motif of 'The Wild Hunt, the ghostly hunter and his dogs' (ATU E501).

6. Primary data for transgressive sacrality
Third part: Serpent cults

6.1 Serpent worship and serpent impersonations

The most important differences in India between wolf/dog cults (including impersonation) and serpent cults (including impersonation) are the following:

- A very long history of snake worship and – most likely – also of snake impersonation contrasts with almost complete lack of sacred

[207] The last feature reflects a widespread custom in the high mountains of eating the still-warm raw liver of a just sacrificed or brought down animal.
[208] The translation 'slaves' is certainly not correct since "dungariya" clearly reflects OIA **ḍaṅgara*- 'cattle' (CDIAL 5524a).
[209] In the high mountains, fairies are very frequently associated with this color. However, the color may also point back to the *āyudhajīvin-saṃgha*s and even the Vrātyas.
[210] Also this seems to be evocative of the red banners of the Kekayas (see above p. 56.).

sites dedicated to divine/demonic wolves/dogs.[211] This is paralleled by the fact that only Nāga mythology knows much about the hidden kingdoms and mysterious worlds of the divine/demonic serpent races. As shown above, wolf impersonation had mostly a purely martial function and was, as much as I know, exclusively associated with men. Consequently, there do not exist/have not existed cults concentrating on she-wolves. Warrior frenzy (Old Greek 'wolfish behavior') and 'were-wolfing' has much to do with activities of loners, whereas divine/demonic snakes – even though many of them are equally hot-tempered and ireful – are strongly family-oriented; e.g. in the Western Himalayas they entertain large networks of extended families.[212] However, this should not divert attention from the aggressive and transgressive character of many of the Nāga deities in the Central and Western Himalayas, which are described in more detail in *6.5*.

- As is well known, Nāga deities undertake responsibility both for a balanced and functioning environment, and for the prosperity and fecundity of their devotees. Even though it is mostly the male Nāgas who are in the centers of religious cults, I may mention here just Manasā Devī – sister of Vāsuki, king of the Nāgas – who is immensely popular especially in the eastern parts of India.
- Probably related with the family friendliness of the Nāgas is the fact that – again different from wolf/dog cults – they usually have personal names. Quite many names will be discussed in this section, and they can be classified in several groups: names of Sanskrit origin, names of Austro-Asiatic (mostly Munda) origin,

[211] To my knowledge, the dog-*vāhana* of Bhairava is not particularly worshipped. There appears to be a "Channapatna Dog Temple" in Karnataka about which I have no detailed information, and there is a *khicā pūjā* 'worship of dogs' in the Newar community in the Kathmandu Valley (van den Hoek 2014) (cf. also West Himalayish *khvīca* 'puppy'). Note that the following general statements on wolf/dog cults do not take into account the relatively few modern survivals discussed above p. 84f. Whereas there is almost no proof for wolf/dog worship in India, the case with snakes is different, because Claudius "Ælian[us] is of special interest, as it testifies to the existence of real serpent worship – the cult of the live animal – in the Panjab during the fourth century B.C." (Vogel 1926: 2). As Gabriel Jones has shown (see 2010), this practice continued into the present age in India.

[212] This is also reflected in the many beautiful Nāga couple sculptures found all over India.

Nāgas named after the place of their residence, and unanalyzable names.

- Whereas transformations of men into serpents and serpents into men appear very easy and are amply documented (from Atharva- and Yajurveda onwards), this is not possible in case of wolves and dogs (wolves and dogs cannot change into men).
- Whereas 'wolfish behavior' was mostly (though not exclusively) a business of male elite warriors, snake cults always concerned broad sections of the population (including elites) and involved both its male and female members.

6.2. Prehistoric and early historic glimpses

Unfortunately, there is not much evidence for serpent worship in the Indus Valley Civilization. For instance, we know of a bowl depicting snakes and we know of a seal, apparently depicting adorers, protected(?) by upright cobras, and worshipping a divine(?) being.[213] The collocation of adorer and upright cobra reminds one strongly of much later depictions in Indian religions of sacred or divine beings protected by upright cobras behind them. Gabriel Jones (2010: 92f.) notes: "The prominence of snake imagery is by no means limited to potsherds; several Harappan seals also provide compelling evidence of prehistoric snake veneration … Unfortunately, between these prehistoric material referents, and the earliest comparable proto-historic ones a thousand years later, there is a significant gap in the material evidence…" I suggest to bridging this gap by looking into possible Austro-Asiatic language data because large parts of prehistoric North India were linguistically dominated by Austro-Asiatic languages (see Zoller forthcoming) and therefore it is not wrong to assume that vocabulary related to serpent deities is partly connected with the Austro-Asiatic language family. This will be investigated in *6.6*.

[213] For a depiction of the two artifacts see the academia.edu version of Jones (2010: 4f).

6.3 The myth of Kadrū and Vinatā: some roots and reflexes

The myth (as found in the Suparṇādhyāya,[214] in the MBh *Ādiparvan* xvi and in Purāṇas): There are Kadrū ('the tawny one', alias Aditi and Surasā 'she of good flavour', and personification of the earth) wife or daughter of Kaśyapa (or daughter of Dakṣa or of Prajāpati), and her sister Vinatā ('the bent one', alias Suparṇī, Śaunakī, and Śuṅgā, and goddess of heaven). According to the Suparṇādhyāya (containing probably the oldest version of the myth), Vinatā took on the shape of a female eagle (Suparṇī) and Kadrū the shape of a female snake (Nāgī). "At a sacrifice of the gods they commit a fault and Kadrū loses one of her eyes. Hence, she is called 'one-eyed' (*kāṇā*).[215] The two sisters marry the sage Tārkśya[216](Vogel 1926: 54). According to later versions, Kadrū and Vinatā received boons, wherefore Kadrū asked for thousand snakes to be born by her, and her elder sister Vinatā asked for two brave and brilliant sons and she gave birth to Aruṇa, the charioteer of the Sun god, and to Garuḍa, the carrier of Viṣṇu. A wager between the two sisters followed these births, which Kadrū won by fraud. She cursed those of her sons who had refused to participate in the fraud and they were thus destined to perish in Janamejaya's *sarpa sattra*. In any case, all these events laid the base for the eternal enmity between snakes and Garuḍa.

A modern echo of the Kadrū-Vinatā myth is found in the Kullu Valley. Handa (2001: 91) writes that the *Atthara karadu* from Kullu Valley were born in village Goshal and grew up in an earthen pitcher, called bhandal (i.e. *bhāṇḍal*, which cf. with OIA *bhāṇḍa* 'pot' and with above birth of Pundir Rishi from an earthen pot [above p. 60]). It is obvious that *Atthara karadu* reflects OIA *aṣṭáśa kadru* 'the eighteen

[214] This is a later Vedic text of Indian drama tradition, which mainly deals with Garuḍas famous feat of bringing *soma* (*amṛta*) from Indra's heaven to the Nāgas, but it also depicts the Kadrū-Vinatā contention.

[215] We will see below that monocular vision (or blindness) is not only associated with ecstatic Indo-European warriordom but also with fierce Indian serpent deities. Kuiper (1983: 32) compares Kadrū's monocular vision with born-blind father of the Kauravas, Dhṛtarāṣṭra (also name of a serpent deity), and his made-herself-blind wife Gāndhārī. Bosch observes correctly that the story of Vinatā and Kadrū somehow reflects the Deva – Asura complex, and he adds that this story is said to have taken place at the beginning of creation (*devayuga*) (Bosch 1960: 86).

[216] Yet another husband after Kaśyapa. However, in classical literature, the name Tārkśya is used to indicate Garuḍa.

Kadru(s)'.[217] Having acquired boons, Kadrū desired many descendants whereas contending Vinatā desired few but strong descendants and gave also birth, as already pointed out, to the great bird Garuḍa.[218] This myth resembles strongly the Bangani *Pɔṇḍuaṇ* story of Kuntī and her *sister* Gāndhārī[219] (see Zoller 2014 and below) and it resembles the birth of the Kauravas in the Sanskrit epic out of *ghee* pots.

> Note: OIA *kadru* means 'reddish-brown' and thus resembles the presumed basic meaning OIA *rudra* *'red' and the red color associated with Vrātyas, the Kekayas, the name of Vinatā's son Aruṇa, etc. In connection with the myth of Kadrū and Vinatā, I want to point out a small dynasty, not mentioned in the usual Sanskrit sources, which flourished in the late 3rd or early 2nd Century BC in a *janapada* in the Panjab foothills of the Himalayas (Maheshwar P. Joshi, pers. comm.).

[217] Hindi *aṭhārah* 'eighteen'. Vogel lists some of the names of these eighteen snake deities (1926: 257) who partly seem to have their names from the locality to which they are associated. See loc.cit. fn. 4.

[218] Garuḍa became, as is well known, the archenemy of the snakes. According to Mayrhofer (EWA), *garuḍa* is probably etymologically related with Sanskrit *garútmant* 'a "sun bird" also named *suparṇá*'. An association with the sun is also supported by the fact that Garuḍa's brother Aruṇa 'reddish-brown, tawny, red, ruddy' is the charioteer of the sun god. Falk has pointed out (1986: 25) that the peacock was the archenemy of the snakes and it was symbol for the overcoming of death. It is therefore possible that Garuḍa 'a mythical bird' originally designated a peacock. According to Parpola (2015: 186), it was – during the Indus Valley Civilization – the task of the peacock to carry dead people to the stars. For a Harappan illustration (painting on a funerary urn of the Late Harappan Cemetery H) depicting peacocks carrying dead people to the stars see Parpola (2015: 185). He has taken it from Stuart Piggott, *Prehistoric India to 1000 B.C.* (1950). On page 186 he describes a modern practice, which looks like a survival of perhaps very ancient customs: "At the funerals of the Dravidian-speaking Maria Gonds of Bastar in central India, wooden posts with rude representations of peacocks are set up next to the grave. In classical Hinduism, the peacock is the vehicle of Skanda, the successor of Vedic Rudra and the 'son' of Śiva, who in south India is connected with a snake cult. Śiva is called Nīlakaṇṭha, 'blue-necked,' because he drank the deadly poison created at the churning of the milk ocean, which threatened to destroy the world. The Sanskrit word *nīlakaṇṭha* also denotes the peacock, which is a blue-necked bird. Possibly the color of the peacock's neck was imagined to result from the peacock's habit of eating poisonous snakes." In this context it is certainly also remarkable that hero stones used to be adorned with peacock feathers and flowers, and during their ritual preparation, also peacock feathers found a use (Thapar 1981: 301f.). Moreover, Thapar observes (1981: 313) that among the scenes depicted on a hero stone "there is usually a bird, generally a peacock or a parrot" (the latter bird appears in South Asian fairytales frequently as a soul bird).

[219] In the Sanskrit epic, they are sisters-in-law. But note also that Kuntī's grandfather Āryaka was a *Nāga-rāja* (Vogel 1926: 73).

> The dynasty had the name *Kāḍa* and is only known through coin finds. On the few known coins, one clearly sees images of snakes (Allan 1936: xcii-xciii; 145-46, Pl. XIX 15-17). The name *Kāḍa* derives unproblematically < OIA *Kādraveya* (with dictionary meaning 'name of certain nāgas or serpent-demons supposed to people the lower regions'[220]). It appears quite likely that the *Kādraveya* were a Nāga-worshipping *āyudhajīvin saṃgha*.

Figure 13. *Kāḍa* coins with serpents[221]

As mentioned just above, I have shown (Zoller 2014: 182) that the motif of the controversy between Kadrū and her elder sister Vinatā in the context of the creation of progeny is reflected in the oral Bangāṇī version of the Mahābhārata in the controversy concerning the creation of a lineage between Kuntī and her elder sister Gāndhārī. In a nutshell (Zoller 2014: 35):

> For twelve years, Kuntī had worshipped the feet of the 'Lord of the World'. The boon, namely seeds of a tree for begetting children, is, however, obtained by Gāndhārī by fraud. Thereafter, Gāndhārī is made pregnant by different beings from the underworld and she gives birth to the Hundred Kauravas, first and foremost short-horned Duryodhana.

[220] Note especially *Arbuda Kādraveya* 'a serpent-like demon (conquered by Indra), a descendant of Kadrū therefore called *kādraveya* … said to be the author of RV x, 94'. In the Aitareya-brāhmaṇa (6.1.1) he is called *sarpaṛṣi*'serpent-Ṛṣi'.

[221] Cunningham (1891: 60 and 62, plate ii, object 21; see there also 22).

> However, Kuntī receives later the same boon and consequently, after being made pregnant by the gazes of various gods, gives birth to the Pāṇḍavas (including Karṇa).

The same story line with Kuntī and her elder sister is also found in a myth current in Kinnaur (Sharma Vyathit 1984: 31). In the *Bhīlī Mahābhārata*, the corresponding myth is this (Patel 2000: 37): The Seven Ṛṣis place a Triśūl in their *dhūnī* fire and perform penance for twelve years. During this time, Śiva-Śakti, in order to destroy the fruit of the penance, transforms into a kite. The kite sits on the top of the Triśūl, is then pierced by it and dies in the *dhūnī*. The Seven Ṛṣis note: "Wrongdoing has come into the world."[222] From the skeleton of the kite Gāndhārī was born and Kuntī from its flesh. Like in the Baṅgāṇī Mahābhārata, Gāndhārī and Kuntī are sisters and not sisters-in-law as in the Sanskrit version. Both 'folk-Mahābhāratas' have also preserved the apparently ancient motif of a connection beween the mothers of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas and birds.[223] This connection is also retained in a shamanic song from West Nepal (Maskarinec 1998: 292ff.) named 'Kadum and Padum event and Drongo bird story 1': The elder sister Kadum gets cheated of God's boon by her younger sister Padum; in the end, Padum gives birth to nine snakes (see above p. 91 the eighteen *karadu* snakes in the Kullu Valley) and Kadum gives birth to two eagles.[224]

Basically again the same story line, however in a different setting, is found in a myth about the birth of the popular serpent deity Gurū Guggā, where Queen Kācchal deceives her twin sister Queen Bācchal who had worshipped Guru Gorakhnāth for twelve years in order to get a boon for a child (see e.g. Zoller 2014: 44f.).

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[222] *saṃsār meṁ galat kām ho gayā*. This small scene illustrates again this tradition of Indian creation myths, which state that creation of the world involves creation both of life and death. Above (p. 58) I presented a scene from the beginning of the *Pɔṇḍuan* where "due to a ritual mistake [not only the perfect Pāṇḍavas but] also the defective Kauravas come into existence."

[223] However, in the *Pɔṇḍuan* Kuntī creates sparrows who then winnow grain, which she needs to feed the Seven Ṛṣis (Zoller 2014: 262).

[224] Kadum seems to be the same word as Kadrū, which would mean that in this song age and role of elder and younger sister were inverted.

6.4 Snakes and Pāṇḍavas

It does not seem unlikely that the ancient myth of Kadrū and Vinatā found resonance in (oral) Mahābhārata traditions that were/are to some extent separate from the written Sanskrit tradition. Thus, the striking similarities between the Kadrū-Vinatā myth and the scene of the Kuntī-Gāndhārī altercation raise the question of closer relationships between Nāga cults and Mahābhārata traditions, and especially of profound ties between Nāgas and Pāṇḍavas.[225]

Indeed, there do seem to exist long-standing relationships between snakes (snake deities) and the Pāṇḍavas. Already Pañcaviṁśa-brāhmaṇa (25,15) and Baudhāyana-śrautasūtra (17,18) describe a mythical snake sacrifice in which royal snakes in human form officiate, among them the Kings Janamejaya and Dhṛtarāṣṭra. As is well known, the Sanskrit epic was recited for the first time at Janamejaya's sacrifice and Dhṛtarāṣṭra is also the name of the father of the Kauravas (Parpola 2015: 146). With the above short discussion of Rudra's epithet *Tryàmbaka* in the Ṛg-veda, there is another hint for the considerable (though still quite obscure) antiquity of the epic.

Above we have seen that the Sanskrit name Dhṛtarāṣṭra designates both a Nāga (in the Vedic corpus[226]) and the father of the Kauravas. Interestingly, the name of the father of famous *Nāgī* Ulūpī (married to Arjuna) was Kauravya. Note also that Dhanaṃjaya is both the name of a Nāga and an epithet of Arjuna; Janamejaya ('causing men to tremble') is not only the name of the famous king, but is also quoted in a list of names of Nāgas in the Great Epic (Vogel 1926: 5); Abhimanyu is not only the name of the son of Arjuna and Subhadrā but also the name of a Nāga found in the Nīlamata-purāṇa, and Bhīṣma is not only son of Śantanu and Gaṅgā but also the name of a Nāga also found in the Nīlamata-purāṇa; the same holds for Yudhiṣṭhira. This series of identical names of heroes in the Mahābhārata and of eminent Nāgas possibly parallels the fact that Pāṇḍavas worshipped in the Central and Western Himalayas do sometimes have a Nāga 'core identity' (*Kernidentität*), as I have called it (Zoller 2014: 178). For instance, King Karṇa,[227] who has temples in the upper Tons Valley, is

[225] One might argue that Kadrū's thousand serpent children rather correspond with the hundred Kauravas and Vinatā's two (bird) children with the five Pāṇḍavas. Yet, there is plenty of evidence of a pattern of 'the five Nāgas' (see e.g. Vogel 1926: 262).

[226] But also in Buddhist literature, see Vogel (1926: 4).

[227] On Karṇa as royal deity see also Sax 2006.

identified with the Nāga deity Mūl Mahun Nāg, whose temple is found in village Bakhari in revenue district Karsog of Mandi in Himachal Pradesh (Handa 2008: 81).

It is remarkable to note that the area in the Central Himalayas where the *Pɔṇḍuaṇ* is performed roughly coincides with the 'kingdom' of (the four) Mahāsu (brothers) who are royal deities with a Nāga ancestry (see e.g. Zoller 2014) or, in the words of Handa (2001: 88), "[t]he cults of Pandavas and their rivals, the Kauravas, are popular largely in the area defined generally by the Mahasu cultic zone …" And it is remarkable that the Karkoṭa Empire (ca. 625 to 885 AD), which originated in the region of Kashmir, is named after Karkoṭa 'name of one of the principal Nāgas of pātāla' respectively Karkoṭaka 'a terrible serpent' who was born by just above-discussed Kadrū.[228]

One more aspect possibly throwing an analogue light on long-standing relationships between Nāgas and Mahābhārata heroes concerns common genres of oral performances dedicated either to the Mahābhārata heroes or to 'heroic' Nāgas. In the parts of Himachal Pradesh under our examination, there exists a genre called *Deva-Bharatha*, which is a "biographical account of a snake deity uttered by a diviner" (Handa 2001: 54, 58) and which, for instance, depicts the 'history' of a particular Nāga of his way from Kashmir to his present abode. It seems not far-fetched to me to argue that such a 'snake-deity-*Bharatha*' is the analogy to the *Pɔṇḍuaṇ* of the human/divine heroes, which in Bangāṇī is also called a *Bharthɔ*.

6.5 More details on mentality and physical characteristics of divine/demonic Nāgas

Paralleling above-quoted eccentric names of some of the *āyudhajīvī saṃgha*s and of some of their individual members, we find similar eccentric denominations in Sanskrit lists and other sources of divine/demonic *Nāga* deities and godlings (see *6.6*). There is little doubt that there always existed intimate relationships between such easily irascible serpent deities and warrior republics and warrior clans, and use of this kind of quaint vocabulary possibly served to signal the

[228] There is also Śarkoṭa 'name of a particular snake', which is why Mayrhofer (in EWA) points to possible Proto-Munda origin of the lemma. However, I cannot find any even only remotely comparable forms either in Munda or in Mon-Khmer. Thus, the lemma may ultimately rather stem from an Indian substrate.

radical nonchalant, despising and daring attitudes of their members. Since the North Indian Nāga world has strong linguistic connections with Austro-Asiatic languages, the thesis appears plausible that the first wave of martial Indo-Aryan speakers came in close linguistic and cultural contact with speakers of Austro-Asiatic languages. As has been shown above, the culture of first Indo-Aryan speaking immigrants was distinguished by the belligerent culture of Vrātyas and wolf impersonation. Even though there is no direct evidence, we can certainly presume that serpent (and tiger) impersonation were already widespread in northern India before the arrival of the Indo-Aryans. If it had not been so, it would be very difficult to explain the dense and archaic-looking serpent cults in the Central and Western Himalayas where now Indo-Aryan languages are spoken.

Regarding Nāga character traits, I quote now from several sources. Handa portrays the serpent deities as "fundamentally demonic and vengeful" (2004: 10) and under the tutelage of equally wrathful goddesses. Moreover (2001: 91), "[t]he native gods and goddesses of the western Himalayan region have strong suzerain identities and kinship ties" which means that "[u]nless there exist interclan relationships between them, these local deities have strong inter-cultic rivalries and are generally antagonistic to each other" (2001: 79). Due to their dangerous nature, the temples of the Nāgas are (traditionally) frequently located outside the villages, typically below Deodar trees. Here also Vogel's observation on a Vāsuki-nāg temple in the Bhadravāh area (Himachal Pradesh) (1926: 250): "Bāski Nāg, who is regarded as the presiding deity of the valley, has temples in the little town of Bhadarvāh … Bāski is supposed to have two brothers, Mehal Nāg and Svār Nāg. The latter, who is the youngest brother and who is much dreaded for his bad temper, has a temple near Chintā picturesquely situated in the midst of stately deodar-trees…" Or (p. 253): "At Kilār in Pāngī there is a shrine of Det Nāg; it is said that he was originally located in Lahul, and human victims were offered to him."

I wonder whether there is a connection between the irascibleness of many Nāga deities and their frequent physical handicaps. With regard to serpent stories from Lahaul (collected and published by A. Francke, but unfortunately very difficult to procure), Vogel observes about one of them (1926: 254, fn.2): "The present legend is interesting in throwing light on such names as 'the blind Nāga', the 'one-eyed

Nāga', the 'deaf Nāga' which are met with both in literature and folklore." There is a striking parallel in the mythology of the four divine Mahāsu brothers who have a Nāga ancestry. In their 'birth' story, which is part of a longer myth,[229] it is said that a Brahmin had to plough a field near Village Mahendrath in the valley of the Tons River with a plough of silver and a ploughshare of gold. This brought to light first Boṭhɔ Mahāsu (the eldest of the four brothers) who was hurt on his foot (by the ploughshare) and who became lame. Next emerged Pɔvasi, whose ear was pierced; he became hard of hearing.[230] Next emerged Bāśik, whose eye was pierced; he became one-eyed. Finally emerged Cālda; he remained unhurt. In the Bhūridatta-jātaka it is told how a Nāga has lost one eye in early childhood and how he then in later life had developed a very irritable temper; he was called Kāṇāriṣṭa (Vogel 1926: 156). In a Nāga legend from Kullu, which partially resembles the Kullu Valley version of the story of Kadrū and Vinatā (see above p. 90f.), it is again told how a Nāga lost one eye: "Kāṇā Nāg of [Village] Gośāl, perhaps in consequence of his bodily defect, is believed to be bad-tempered" (Vogel 1926: 256f.). Probably the same deity is called Gośāli Nāg and he is blind (*andhā*) likewise due to his being thrown into a fire (Rose 1911: 169). One wonders whether these 'fire incidents' can be compared with the incident reported in the Mahābhārata according to which the burning down of the Khāṇḍava Forest forced many snakes to flee into the Himalayas, which itself may be interpreted as foreshadowing the Mahābhārata *sarpa sattra* sacrifice.

6.6 Names of divine/demonic Nāgas

One of the longest list of Nāga deities is found in appendix B of the Nīlamata(-purāṇa) (NM)[231] (6th to 8th century AD) from Kashmir. My argument in this subsection is: Apart from unspectacular designations – like *akuṣṭa*, which corresponds with OIA (MBh, Hariv.) *akṛṣṭa*- 'name of a kind of Ṛṣis (lit. 'unploughed')' or like *aśvattha* 'the holy fig tree' (like OIA) – there are at least sometimes designations of Nāga

[229] There exists a fairly great number of publications in which this myth is presented, e.g. in Denzil Ibbetson, Edward MacLagan & H. A. Rose. 1911. *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and Northwest Frontier Province*.
[230] In the Kullu Valley in Tūnan District (Phāti) there is Jāru Nāg who is deaf. He became a deity after he and eight other snakes were thrown into a fire through which he became deaf (Rose 1911: 167).
[231] 1924: 12-15.

deities with all sorts of 'defective' or suggestive meanings or with names of other animals, which are easily recognizable from their OIA origin. However, many other words in this list are not of OIA origin, but I will suggest Munda ancestry in those cases where there are possible Munda parallels with words with 'defective' and suggestive meanings.[232] First, examples of words of OIA origin or with OIA parallels:

> *cikura* — OIA (lex.) *cikura* 'inconsiderate, rash; the hair of the head' (see EWA); *paṅgu* — OIA *paṅgú* 'lame, crippled in legs'; *maṭ* — OIA **maṭṭa* 'defective' (e.g. 'lazy, obstinate' etc.) (CDIAL 9723) and here perhaps also *mālākula* (cf. CDIAL 9915) built with OIA *ākula* 'confounded, confused, agitated, flurried'; *maṣaka* — cf. OIA *maśáka* 'mosquito'; *micchila* — cf. OIA *mithyā́* 'invertedly, wronly; falsely' (and probably with an MIA *-ll-* suffix); *mūṣakāda* 'mouse-eater' (?) (cf. e.g. OIA *māṣāda* 'bean-eater'); *lallusa* (and perhaps *llulloja*) — cf. OIA *lālitya* a.o. 'amorous or languid gestures' and OIA *LAS* 'flash, sport'; *vaṇṭhaka* — OIA lex. *vaṇṭha* 'crippled, maimed'; *varalī* — OIA lex. *varalī* = *varaṭā* 'type of gad-fly or wasp'; *vāṇḍa* — cf. OIA *vaṇṭa* 'tailless' and *vaṇṭha* 'crippled, maimed'; *vihaṅgama* — cf. OIA *vihaṅgama* 'a bird' and OIA (MBh) *vihaṅga* 'name of a serpent-demon'; *śaṭha* — OIA *śaṭha* 'deceitful; cheat, fool, idler'; in *śaṇḍmarka* the first syllable seems to be connected with preceding *śaṭha* and thus also with OIA *ṣaṇḍ(h)a* 'eunuch', and *-marka* is either connected with OIA *markáṭa* 'monkey' or perhaps more likely with OIA *márka* 'a demon presiding over various sicknesses of childhood'; *śamala* — OIA *śamala* 'impurity, sin, blemish, fault, harm'; *śalabha* — OIA *śalabha* 'grasshopper'; *śavala* — OIA *śabala* a.o. 'variegated, dappled; disfigured, disturbed' and in MBh 'name of a serpent-demon'; *śāṇyo* — possibly connected with OIA *śāna* 'whetstone' if not with lex. *śānī* 'a sort of cucumber or colocynth'; *hāluṣa* appears to be variant of OIA *kaluṣa* 'foulness, turbidness, dirt, impurity' and thus displays a *h-* ~ *k-* alternation which is characteristic for Munda and for Outer Languages;[233] *hilihāla* — cf. OIA lex. *hilihila-* 'sporting, dallying', *heṭhaka* — OIA (lex.) *heṭha-* 'vexation, obstruction, hurt, injury'.

[232] Note Vogel's assessments (1926: 250): "The Nāgs, who are nowadays worshiped in the Alpine Punjāb, have each a personal name, the origin and meaning of which are in most cases obscure."

[233] For Mayrhofer (EWA), the origin of *kaluṣa-* is not clear. This diagnostic alternation *h-* ~ *k-* is discussed in detail in my forthcoming book.

Notes:
(a) The much-shortened lists of the names of the thousand snakes born by Kadrū as found in the Purāṇas seems to completely consist of transparent Sanskrit terms (see Vettam Mani 1975: 363).

(b) Note also the very positive name of Nāgī Suchemi/Sochemi in Gilgit (Rose 1911: 170f.) whose name seems to derive < OIA (Varāha-mihira's Bṛhat-saṃhitā) *sukṣema-* 'great prosperity or comfort or peacefulness'.

Now suggestions for borrowings from Munda:[234]

khadara — cf. Sant. *khadra khodro* 'jagged, rough, uneven, coarse, unpolished, pimply, pit-marked'; *kheḍa* — cf. Sant. *kheḍea, khaḍea* a.o. 'hairless, scabby, emaciated' and *khaḍ* a.o. 'bare, leafless'; *kheḍis* probably same as *kheriś* — cf. Sant. *kherce muɳḍeɲ* 'be snappish, petulant, pout'; *garāṛal* — cf. Sant. *garal garal* 'raw, ugly-looking; mixed with blood, reddish (sore), red (complexion)'; *jhaḍūca* — cf. Sant. *ɟhadəʔc ɟhadəʔc* a.o. 'baggy; lagging behind; ill-fitting and baggy, as a Cabullee's garments;[235] worn in a slovenly fashion'; *dehila* — cf. Sant. *dehel dehel* 'rock slightly, shake, agitate slightly (fat people, women's breasts, udder of a fat cow or buffalo cow, mire); *dhukkar* — cf. Sant. *dhukəɽ* 'a cripple; twisted, cripple' (but possible is also OIA **dhukk-* 'tremble' [6820]); *dhaumya* — cf. Sant. *dhoma* 'a large piece, lump (especially of meat)'; *rakkāk* — cf. Sant. *rakɽɔʔk rakɽɔʔk* 'chattering, clacking, rattling, clattering' and (accidentally?) very similar to the NM form is onomatopoeic Khmer *rɔkhaak* 'sound of something loose, rattling sound'; *ledira* — cf. Sant. *ledhra* 'undersized with protruding stomach, bulging'; *lelihāna* — cf. perhaps Sant. *lelha* and Mu. *lalhar* both 'foolish, stupid, silly, ignorant'.

Notes:
(a) One name of a Nāga deity in the list is *devapāla* 'god-defender', which normally designates a human bard or shaman in the area (see the discussion e.g. p. 109ff.). Note also that there once existed a Nāga deity similarly named *gopāla* in the Kabul Valley (Vogel 1926: 257, fn. 3).

(b) Besides Nāgas and *Nārāyaṇ*s (for the latter see e.g. Zoller 2014: 181), there is a third class of snake deities called *Siṅgh* (Vogel 1926:

[234] Almost all parallels are from Santali. This should not encourage farther-reaching conclusions because Santali is by far the best investigated of all Munda languages (see Bodding and Campbell in the list of literature at the end). Note here also that in Austro-Asiatic studies (including Munda) linguistic primary data are usually presented according to the International Phonetic Alphabet. This is also done here.
[235] This refers obviously to traditional baggy garments of the Afghans (in Kabul).

263, Rose 1911: 140). According to Vogel, they have great power over milch cattle,[236] they are typically distinguished by colours like Hari 'green', Kali 'black' and Bhuri 'grey', and they are the servants of Vāsuki Nāga. I cannot believe that the denomination "Siṅgh" has anything to do with OIA *siṃhá* 'lion'. I therefore suggest comparison either with Mon-Khmer Mon *sùŋ* 'snake', Palaungic Lawa (Bo Luang) *saʔəïŋ* 'snake' and *saʔəɯŋ* 'snake', or with Bahnaric Tampuan *saŋkəir* 'fabled serpent (naga)' or with Proto-Mon-Khmer *[*b*]*saŋʔ* 'snake' as apparently reflected a.o. in Vietic Pong *siŋ* 'serpent, snake' and Tho *siŋ*[3] 'serpent, snake'. Here probably related is also Katu (An Diem) *ʃiŋ ʃia* 'snake' and Proto-Khasic **bsəŋ* 'snake', and perhaps also Bahnaric Halang *sḭ:ŋ bḭ:ŋ* 'sound of snake'.

6.7 J. Ph. Vogel's Nāga names (a selection, see p. 191)

Sometimes various qualities are expressed, such as: *ugraka* 'terrible', *āpta* 'apt', *sumana* 'kind', *karkara* 'hard', *niṣṭhurika* 'hard', *vr̥tta* 'round', *kr̥śaka* 'thin', *badhira* 'deaf', and *andha* 'blind', etc. Note also *piṇḍāraka* (in MBh 'name of a Nāga') who has a sacred pool in Kashmir (p. 226), his name appears also in Kalhana's *Rājataraṃgiṇī*, and the name may be related with OIA lex. *piṇḍāra* 'a beggar, religious mendicant; a buffalo-herdsman or cowherd'.

Note: According to traditional Indian lore, blindness can be caused by a snake's breath, but then it can also be cured by vapour from a cooked snake (Vogel 1926: 15f.). Moreover, if the shadow of a pregnant woman falls on a snake, it becomes blind (Rose 1912: 143). H. A. Rose has observed in addition (ibid.), that "[w]hen a snake is seen, say Sayyids and other Musalmáns of high class, one should say *bel, bel, bel*, and it will become blind." This spell is again a survival of Austro-Asiatic (Mon-Khmer, but probably not Munda) serpent lore: Aslian Semai *bʌlbɔl* 'to be blinded by light', Bahnaric Mnong *blaːw mat* and *bliew mat* both 'blind' (built with Bahnaric *mat* 'eye') and Tampuan *blɛɛl* 'blind', Bahnar *bəbool*, *bəbuul* 'not able to see much, almost blind', Pearic Chong *pʰol moat*, *pʰuːʔl moat* 'aveugle; blind'. There is perhaps a reciprocal relationship between blindness and invisibility, because in a hymn in the Atharva-veda it is described how sloughs are collected, apparently in order to procure invisibility when fixed to the eyes (Vogel 1926: 14).

[236] Snake deities get typically offered milk and there are many stories, which assert how such deities suck milk from grazing cows.

A few Nāga deities have names of other animals, e.g. *kuñjara* ‘elephant’, *aśvatara* ‘mule’, *tittiri* ‘partridge’, *khaga* ‘bird’, and *kukura* ‘dog’. But a considerable number are names of plants. “Foremost are those indicating the lotus … Other names indicative of vegetables are *karavīra* ‘oleander, poisonous!’, [237] *kuśmāṇḍa* ‘kind of pumpkin’, *vilvaka* ‘bilva - ægle marmelos’ and *bilvapatha, haridraka* ‘haridra - yellow sandal-tree or curcuma longa’, *śirīṣaka* ‘sirīsha - acacia sirissa’, *kardama* ‘a poisonous turnip’, and *bahumūlaka*” (Vogel 1926: 191).

Vogel notes in addition (ibid.) that Nāga names appear sometimes in pairs, e.g. Karkoṭaka-Dhanañjaya, Kambala-Aśvatara (‘blanket-mule’), etc. He also mentions a Dhem Nāg worshipped in village Dhemā in North Gujarat (1926: 269). However, this name may actually be compared with OIA lex. *dharmaṇa*-[1] ‘species of snake’ (CDIAL 6755) with reflexes in several NIA languages like Hindi *dhāman* ‘a large harmless snake’. Mayrhofer considers with question mark derivation < OIA *dhánvan*-[1] ‘dry soil, desert’ or < OIA *DHAM*[1] ‘blow, kindle’ because there is OIA *upadhmā́nī*- ‘female snarler; *Anfaucherin*’. However, borrowing from Munda appears more likely to me also because the lemma is attested neither in OIA nor in MIA texts: cf. Korku *dhamin* ‘a variety of snake’, Juang *dhamŋa bubuŋ* ‘rat snake, non-poisonous’.

Rose lists almost one hundred names of Nāgas in Chamba (1911: 151f.). They seem to be partly named according to the locality where they are found, but in many other cases the etymology remains unclear, also because Rose’s transcriptions tend to be underspecified. Another list of Nāgas in Brahmaur and Pāngi follows p. 152f. There perhaps notable is *Bujūru Nāg* which cf. with Santali *bujur bujur* ‘spillingly’ and *bujur* ‘to spill, let run out, glide, slip down; be born’.

6.8 Traditions of Nāga impersonations in South India: sarpam pattu, sarpam thullal, etc.

Vogel discusses a modern ritual in South Kanāra during which a serpent kneaded from rice or wheat flour is ritually cremated (1926: 274f.). This is done to propitiate the wrath of a serpent deity due to having killed a snake in a former life. The deity’s wrath manifests in leprosy, childlessness or sore eyes(!). Vogel continues quoting from the Malabar District Gazetteer from 1908:

[237] The orthography of this quote has been slightly altered by me.

> On the fourth day the funeral of the serpent-god ends with an entertainment to eight unmarried youths below the age of twenty; they are held to represent eight serpents, and are treated with the utmost respect. This curious symbolical ceremony evidently denotes penitence and amends for the supposed killing of one of the sacred creatures in a former life, and the temporary ascription of serpent-nature to the young men seems a trace of the very ancient and widespread idea of the transformation of men into serpents, and serpents into men, which appears almost extinct in Lower India.

In another

> …ceremony, called *Nāga-maṇḍala* … [t]he penitent gives a great feast to his castemen and unmarried youths, who are again supposed to personate serpents. In the evening bruised rice is scattered over a spot previously selected and the figure of a great serpent traced out in it. The figure is then worshiped, and a band of musicians summoned and well primed with toddy to sustain them in their work. They dress themselves in women's clothes and put on jewels,[238] drumming and piping go on furiously, and the leader imitates the deity, reeling and writhing about frantically, and at times uttering words which are devoutly attended to as though spoken by the deity; yet the musicians are low-caste people. The wild discordant music is often prolonged throughout the night.[239] In Kānara the persons supposed to be possessed by the serpent-deity are known by the title of Nāga-pātrī ('Vessel of the Nāga'). They are Brahmins and used to enjoy great repute. Disputes were referred to them for settlement, and their word was law. A summons from one of the Nāgapātrīs to a litigant was almost instantly obeyed. It appears, however, that the influence of these priests has considerably declined.

Here now Jones' more detailed description of a South Indian Nāga impersonation ritual (2010: 102ff.):

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[238] Can this be a small indication that also in former times serpent cults (including serpent impersonations) involved female actors? About the former rulers of Manipur in North-East India, Vogel reports (1926: 35): "Another instance of serpent origin is afforded by the ruling house of Manipur, a feudatory state situated between Bengal and Burma. The peculiar god of the royal family is a species of snake called Pa-kung-ba, from which the Raja claims descent. When it appears it is coaxed on to a cushion by the priestess in attendance…"

[239] [Vogel:] The rite described here with the inspired priest regarded as the mouthpiece of the serpent-deity, and the wild music produced by low-caste musicians recalls the similar customs in vogue at the Nāg and Devī shrines in the Western Himalaya.

The ritual performance of a *sarpam pattu,* or serpent song, by caste specialists … during major festivals and by special request by a patron, is also performed to 'assuage the wrath of the snake god'… and ensure good fortune in the coming year. This last is a distinctly south Indian elaboration on snake sacrifice, in that the song is both a propitiatory offering and a devotional gesture. Related to the *sarpam pattu* is the *Pampinthullal*, a ritual dance dedicated to the snake gods. Ordinary rice flour mixed with lime and turmeric powder and burnt paddy husk are employed, in all shades of red, white, black and ochre … to draw elaborately entwined snake figures on the ground. They are flanked by lamps and food offerings… such as milk, butter, and turmeric or rice powder … This type of ritual drawing is known as *kalam*, and is circumambulated by devotees, accompanied by prayers and music … Following the construction of the *kalam*, designated women, usually unmarried virgin women … of the sponsoring household, form a procession that, led by a *pujari* of high caste …, circumambulates three times around the *kalam,* dancing and whirling in emulation of the movement of the snakes, touching the *kalam*, and their foreheads, in orchestration with the music and recitation of mantras. This ecstatic dance culminates in the recitation of prayers at the *kavu* … which is a 'sacred spot set aside as the abode of the snake deity' … The most notable feature of the *Pampinthullal* is that as part of the circumambulatory dance, the young women 'chosen to represent the power of the serpent' … following a period of abstinence … will fall into trance states, said to be possession by the deity…, and utter sounds or words believed to be the 'words of the [snake] god' … At the close of the ritual, the women, still believed to be possessed by the deity, wipe the *kalam* completely away with 'fierce brushing of their hair'…

Figure 14. "Women get into trance state and believe themselves as snakes: Nagakalam or Sarpam Thullal"[240]

6.9 Nāga ancestry, kinship systems and life cycles

Whereas there is no evidence for wolf (or dog) ancestors in India, this is quite much so in case of Nāga ancestry. Jones, referring to William Crooke, mentions the *Nagbansi* Rajputs of Jharkhand, the Bais Rajputs of Uttar Pradesh, the Meitheis of Bangladesh, and the Mirasis of North India and Pakistan, all of whom are said to have descended from Nāgas. Vogel names in addition (1926: 34-35) besides the kings of Udyāna, "the dynasty of Kashmir which included the famous Lalitāditya (eighth century) among its scions, was asserted to descend from the Nāga Kārkoṭa. In later days the rulers of the neighbouring principality of Bhadarvāh (the 'Bhadrāvakāśa' of the Rājataraṅgiṇī) claimed descent from the serpent-King Vāsuki, who is still regarded as the guardian deity of the country, now a district of the Jammu-Kashmir State. The Rajas of Chhoṭā Nāgpur derive their origin from the Nāga Puṇḍarīka…" Also the famous Pallavas, who ruled the Coromandel Coast from the fourth to the middle of the eighth century claimed Nāga descent (Vogel 1926: 36). I may add here also Manikeśwarī (the goddess of Manikya), who is the clan deity of the Nāga kings (*Nāgvaṃśī*s) of Kalahandi in Orissa. In the southeast corner of the Central Provinces, there is the

[240] Courtesy: Vishnu M. Joshi.
See also http://vishnumjoshi.blogspot.com/2013/04/womens-get-into-trance-state-beleives.html (last accesses 1.03.2019).

feudatory state of Bastar, which is ruled by a Nāga dynasty. Moreover, most Gond chiefs in the same province also claim descend from a Nāgavaṃśa (1926: 36). Note also *naagbɔ:s* (Sanskrit *nāgavaṃśa*) as the self designation of a 'cobra' clan of the Munda-speaking Bonda people. The Dhāndhal Kāṭhīs are a cobra-worshipping subdivision of Kāṭhīs (scribes) in the Kāṭhiāwaṛ area (Saurashtra) (Vogel 1926: 269). It seems unlikely that Dhāndhal is not a borrowing from Munda, cf. e.g. Proto-Kherwarian ***ḍ(h)ɔ̀ŋḍɔ̀* 'kind of snake', Juang *ḍhɔnḍhɔ bubuŋ* 'a kind of non-poisonous water snake, the Checkered Keelback', Santali *ḍhɔŋḍ* 'kind of snake', Korku *ḍiŋḍu* 'water snake', pre-Mundari *ḍuŋḍu* 'kind of snake' etc.; in Mon-Khmer cf. also Aslian Jahai *dadɔ̃l* 'reed snake (Macrocalamus)'.

Regarding Nāgas and souls of ancestors, Vogel has noticed (1926: 20), that "[t]he benevolent household snake, according to Crooke,[241] represents the soul of some deceased ancestor which has taken up its residence there." Handa (2001: 56) reports similar observations, namely that in Himachal Pradesh deceased ancestors sometimes appear in dreams in the shape of snakes. And Rose notes (1911: 141), that "[d]ead men also have a way of becoming snakes, a fact which is revealed in a dream, when again a shrine must be built." He adds (p. 145) that there is a prohibition against giving milk to a dying man, as it will make him a serpent in his next birth.

There do not only seem to exist arcane ties between Nāgas, human souls and their liberation from the mundane world,[242] also the Nāgas themselves – at least those found in the Western Himalayas – may occasionally display peculiar ways of life. There are for instance divine/demonic Nāgas who hibernate like their real animal counterparts.[243] The following is a brief summary of a description found in Rose (1911: 145, fn.11), who quotes Emerson:

> In the remote tract called Tikrāl,[244] which lies near the source of the Pabur, the people were warlike and ferocious down to a century ago. Their country is subject to a confederacy of five gods, called the Pānch

[241] In the footnote Vogel refers to *Folk-lore of Northern India*, vol. ii, p. 133.

[242] "The practice of casting its skin suggested longevity or even immortality in the snake, an idea which can also be traced in ancient India…" (Vogel 1926: 14).

[243] Hibernating and brumating snakes are in India most certainly only found in the higher altitudes of the Himalayas.

[244] Upper valley of the Pabar River in Shimla District (Himachal Pradesh), adjacent to Bangan.

> Nāgs who hibernate during the winter, going to sleep at the first fall of snow and only waking up again at the Phag[245] … when they are aroused by their worshippers … A few days previous to the full moon two parties are chosen from the subjects of the god, each composed of from 8 to 10 men. One party represents the god's defenders, the other his awakeners … On that [appointed] day they arm themselves with a large supply of snow-balls … and at a given signal go into action, but whereas the god's supporters pelt his adversaries they are themselves save from attack and the other party must aim at the open window [of the room where the god is hibernating] … So if the throwers succeed as they usually do in placing a missile through the window the omen is considered most auspicious. They then leap and dance with joy, shouting that the god has risen from his bed … The spirit, refreshed and invigorated by the winter's rest, descends upon the diviner, who shakes and shouts under the full force of the divine afflatus … he foretells the future, prophesying what fortune will attend the rules of the neighbouring States, which crops will flourish and which fail, whether the herds and flocks will multiply, what domestic sorrows will befall his subjects, and in general whether the year will be a good or evil one…

Besides regularly undergoing hibernation, at least some Nāgas are known for suffering 'biological' ageing processes, in other words, when they have exhausted all their spiritual energy *tejas* 'heat, fire, splendor, brilliance'[246] (see Vogel 1926: 15) and become old, they need to be rejuvenated. Rose (1911: 146) writes about the Nāga deity Basheru in the Simla Hills:[247]

> During one of his festivals in spring the god is rejuvenated by being carried to his birth-place and there laid on his side so that he may be recharged as it were with the divine essence which still emanates from his natal soil. This process takes 6 or 7 hours, during which his bearers lie prostrate and his worshippers keep strict silence, but his musicians play…

Rose (ibid.) has recorded a similar report from the Sutlej Valley:

> On the Upper Sutlej a snake goddess gave birth to seven sons … if one of them has lost his vigour his followers bring him to Gunga [the dumb watchman of the sacred spring], and having obtained his consent, carry

[245] February-March.
[246] In fact, Nāgas are said to be *atitejas*.
[247] Alias Bashaharu Nāga (Handa 2001: 56), whose name also continues in the name of the former little kingdom Rampur-Bushahar.

> the god to the spring and lay him there in his litter, prone on his side. Such energy oozes from the fountain that in an hour or two he is reinvigorated for several years and can bestow blessings on his people until his strength runs down again.

The fate of aging, shared by humans and Nāgas, is also shared by (goddess-like) female numinous beings – shortly mentioned already above p. 62 (fn. 141) – who have their square sanctuaries without roof in many villages in the eastern parts of Himachal Pradesh and in Uttarkashi and Dehradun Districts of Uttarakhand. The designations of these sanctuaries and their divine female inhabitants is always translated as 'place', e.g. in Bangani language they are called *ʤāga* (Persian *jā'egāh* 'place').

Figure 15 Bangani *ʤāga* [248]

With regard to their designation ('place'), they can be compared with those Nāgas in the Central and Western Himalayas whose names are identical with the names of their residence (frequently a village) or who are simply called *nāg*. Note also that until today in Kashmir the sources of rivers are called *nāg*, most likely because these sources were perceived as residences of Nāga deities. The best-known example for this is Nīla Nāga whose abode is the spring of the Vitastā River, now

[248] © C. P. Zoller. Here one sees a Bangani *ʤāga*. In the middle of the *ʤāga* one can note a flat stone plate. Below the plate is a hole, called the 'mouth' of the *ʤāga*. During a *ʤāga pūja* (conducted in irregular intervals), the sacrificial items are placed in her mouth. Formerly, the conquered heads of enemies were placed there.

called Jhelum (see Vogel 1926: 33).[249] The somewhat enigmatic affinity between springs inhabited by Nāgas and the female village power centres called 'place' is substantiated by the Bangani belief that "[i]t is said that every *zāga* has an invisible connection with a spring, and that strong *zāga*s are even connected with several springs" (Zoller 2007: 250). It has been pointed out that certain Nāgas in the Central and Western Himalayas appear multiplied over extended geographical areas. For instance, there is Mūl Mahun Nāga whose name means, according to Handa (2001: 55, 60, 88), "the original Mahun Naga" because there are dozens of secondary Mahun Nāgas in the regions of Mandi, Shimla und Kullu. Regarding the term "Mūl", see also Zoller (2014: 181) where I suggest (with arguments) for Sanskrit **mūlanārāyaṇa* 'name of a local deity (?)' (CDIAL 10252) the translation 'spring serpent deity'.[250] Such a 'spring serpent deity' is networked on the one hand with his more or less numerous self-multiplications and on the other hand with his agnates and affines, and the non-kindred deities (who are by definition his enemies), but apparently also with the female village power centres through invisible water courses. This complex structure could be compared with a physical irrigation system consisting of many channels.

That these female village power centres (together with a host of autochthonous 'goddesses') are as fierce and as transgressive as many of the Nāgas can be deduced from the fact that their places of origin (natal places) are – as mentioned above – for safety reasons frequently far away from the villages (see Zoller 2014: 182). Handa claims (2001: 64): "The area east of Satluj is either dominated by innumerable autochthonous gods and goddesses of the demonic and violent disposition or by the cults of Bijat, Sirgul and Mahasu",[251] and before many of those 'goddesses' got thoroughly brahmanized their nature was thus (2001: 70): "These incomprehensible and unpredictable native goddesses have a strong predilection for animal sacrifice, and their lust

[249] The name of this serpent deity seems to be eponym of the above-mentioned title of the Sanskrit work from Kashmir, the Nīlamata or Nīlamata-purāṇa. Regarding formation and meaning of this title, cf. Sanskrit *gārutmata* 'coming from or sacred or relating to the bird Garuḍa'.

[250] On the *nārāyaṇa* class of serpent deities, see Zoller (ibid.).

[251] The four divine Mahāsu brothers, who have Nāga ancestry, are widely known for their militant and intrusive attitudes (this holds especially true for the youngest brother Cālda).

for blood can hardly be satiated." It is quite possible to attribute a spiritual kinship of these Nāgas with the (formerly) martial Khūnd warriors of Bangan and surroundings, because the latter's social system of headhunting (see Zoller 2007) was apparently very similarly structured as the above sketched kinship systems of the regional serpent deities.

By turning to life cycles of Nāgas and female village power centres we have seen just above that a Nāga in these parts of the Himalayas gets rejuvenated (recharged, so-to-say) by absorbing either the earth power of his natal place or the divine energy from a sacred fountain. By contrast, a *ʤāga* 'female village power centre' gets rejuvenated through sacrifices. The type of sacrifice, i.e. the number of items sacrificed to her, depends on the scale of strength attributed to her (Zoller 2007: 251): "The unusual thing about a *zāga-pūja* is that the *zāga* is not only strengthened and invigorated as in sacrifices to gods (with the result that she can be moved to do something). She is actually made young again; she turns into a baby. Thus within a couple of years she completes an entire life cycle and in the end becomes an old woman."

7. Primary data for transgressive sacrality
Fourth part: the 'Good Shepherd', Indian hero stones, and cosmogonic myths

7.1 Human pastoralists of gods and goddesses

The following is a summary with direct quotes of some results described in my publication from 2016a. I showed that besides the figures of 'priest', 'shaman' and 'medium' there existed and still exists also the (religious) figure of the 'herdsman' of divine beings (*devapāla* 'god defender') between Garhwal and Nuristan. This figure seems to correspond with the above-discussed Vrātya warrior bands whose members constitute 'herds' that are guarded by their leader, the *gṛhapati* or *sthapati*. I think it is worth considering the idea that the figure of 'the herdsman of deities (and men)' was an important religious specialist among the early wave of Indo-Aryans migrating into India. The figure would thus correspond with the Vedic Brahman whose etymology has been disputed intensively (see my short discussion above p. 42f.). The *devapāla* 'herdsman of deities' has possibly at least

an Indo-Iranian ancestry (see below). But note that over time the lexicon meaning 'god defender' has taken on various semantic modifications between Garhwal and Nuristan. Thus, in Bangāṇī and Jaunsārī *Devāḷ* mean 'bard of a deity and healer', in the Khaśālī dialect of Himachali *diala* means 'oracular priest' and in the languages of Dardistan and Nuristan the same word is usually translated as 'shaman'.

Vassilkov has published articles on the topic of Indian hero stones which have survived on what he calls "the periphery of the Hindu (Sanskritic) culture" (2012: 160), "…they form a kind of belt around the subcontinent" and "there are no 'hero stones' in Madhyadeśa … the cradle of Vedic (Brahminic) civilization" and they "could possibly represent one of the non-Vedic waves of Aryan migration to India" (ibid.). Hero stones – already discussed above in several places – are also found in many places in the Himalayas, e.g. the *vīrkhambha* or *kīrtistambha* as they are called in Western Nepal. In Gujarat and in Maharashtra they could be called *pālia*/*-pavāliyakhambi* 'stele of the defender' (Sanskrit: **(pra) pālakaskambha* 'stele of the guardian'). Vassilkov says (2012: 165): "The attribute of the hero, common to all branches of the ancient Eurasian tradition, is the shepherd's staff or crook." He further observes that such a shepherd's staff is never depicted on the *vīrastambha*s and he believes that in India the staff mutated to become the staff of the ascetics (*daṇḍa*). I cannot judge whether this is true or not, but in Old Greek this staff is called *χαῖος* which goes back to Proto-Indo-European **ǵhaiso-* 'dart; staff, stick'. In Sanskrit the reflex is *héṣas-* 'weapon' but for us more important is the fact that the lemma is reflected in the name of a Gaulish troupe called *gaisati*s (an agentive derivation < **gaiso-* 'spear' corresponding with Old Irish *gai* 'spear', and which was borrowed into Greek *γαίσος* and Latin *gaesum*) (McCone 2002: 44). Speidel writes (2002: 264, see already above p. 35): "Celts were famous for fighting naked. In the battle at Telamon in Italy, in 225 BC, they wore only trousers and capes, while their Gaesati spearmen in the forefront, to bluster, threw off even these. Like the Hirschlanden warrior, the Celts at Telamon wore golden torcs to dare the enemy to come and get these neckbands."[252] The Proto-

[252]Speidel (2002: 264): "Golden wristbands worn in battle by Germanic warriors had the same role…" These torcs can perhaps be compared with Sanskrit *niṣká* 'a golden ornament for the neck or breast', which was also worn by the ancient Indian charioteers (Singh 1965: 33) and, tellingly, by the Vrātya leader *gṛhapati*, as a line from the Pañcaviṁśa-brāhmaṇa shows: "A turban … a silver ornament (worn around the neck)

Indo-European word has also modern reflexes in western variants of Garhwali and in West Pahāṛī. Thus, there is Bng. *gèsɔ*, *gèslɔ* 'a stick used for driving cattle and for fighting',[253] Jaunsārī (Jaun.) *ghesli* 'a stick for killing', Deogārī (Deog.) *gesṛi* 'a stick for fighting' (Zoller 2015). In western Garhwal, the word is also used in hero songs, the so-called *hārul*. I quote now two lines from such a song about the hero Haku from Lakshmikant Joshi's book *Hārul: jaunsār-bāvar ke paurāṇik lokgīt* (2007: 46):

> *Leuśi ri ghesli kāṭe muṭeia ri chīṭi*
> *chiṭkāre muṭaia ri lai bheḍa pīṭi*
> '(Haku) cuts a fighting-stick from a Leushi tree (and) a stick from a Muteia tree,
> (and) he is killing the sheep [of his enemy] with the stick from the Muteia tree'

Coming back to the **(pra)pālakaskambha*: The first part of the word is also found in Sanskrit *pāla* 'defender' and with specialized meaning in *gopāla* 'cowherd'. Sanskrit *pāla* derives from the Proto-Indo-European root **pah*$_2$ 'to defend, protect'. Indo-Europeanists have found out that there existed once a common formula found in various Indo-European languages. The formula has reflexes in Sanskrit, but not word-by-word. Had there been a direct reflex it would have read *vīra-paśupā* or *paśu-vīrapā* 'protect men and livestock'. However, an indirect reflex is found in the Atharva-veda where *-pā* was exchanged with *-trā*, which has the same meaning. Therefore, there is the line *trā́yantām … púruṣampaśúm* 'protect men and cattle'. Thus, a deity is asked 'protect men and cattle'. One wonders now whether there could not have been a formula 'protect gods, men and cattle'. Even if this formula does not seem to have existed – and some would say that this sounds paradoxical – a very similar concept can be found between the western parts of Uttarakhand and the eastern parts of Afghanistan where we have reflexes of Sanskrit *devapāla* 'god-defender' (see above) but, as seen, with various meanings like 'bard of a deity', 'priest', 'shaman'. However, why do we have in north-western South Asia human 'god defenders' whereas

[*niṣka*] (all) that is (the equipment) of the Gṛhapati" (Caland's translation quoted in Mucciarelli [2015: 67]). Speidel (2002: 288, fn. 172) quotes from Dumézil's, *Mythes et Dieux des Indo-Européens*, 1992: 178f.: "[A]t the time of the Mahabharata, elite warriors wore golden arm rings, as did Indra and his warband, the dancing Maruts."

[253] With falling tone on first syllable reflecting former aspiration.

elsewhere it is always the other way round: it is the gods and fairies that protect the humans. The Italic/Roman version of the formula 'protect men and livestock', namely *uiro pequo salua seritu* was addressed to the god Mars and meant 'may he keep men and livestock save'. A comparable pastoral image of 'man' as 'cattle' or 'livestock' under the auspices of a god in the Śaiva philosophical tradition is the well known triple notion of *pati*, *paśu* and *pāśa*. Moreover, according to Vassilkov (2012: 173, fn. 15), referring to the famous "Vrātya" book of the Atharva-veda, "the leader of the Vrātya brotherhood, *sthapati* was perceived as the 'good shepherd' [Sanskrit *sugopā*] [254] for the community, that is why all its members could be viewed as his 'two-footed cattle' [Sanskrit *dvipad* as against *catuśpad*] [255] whom he 'grazed' and 'defended'." The Garhwali *dvandva*-like expression 'horses and cattle' (see above p. 87) reminds one of the Ṛg-vedic invocation to Rudra *mā́ no góśu mā́ no áśveśu rīriśaḥ* 'harm not our cattle, (harm) not our horses', and Vassilkov points out (2012: 174) that in the Ṛg-veda *gā́vo áśvāḥ* 'cows and horses' stands for the cattle in general, that is for *paśu*. However, in our Himalayan area the relationships are actually inverted: the priests and shamans of gods and fairies are in actual fact their 'good shepherds'. This is the background of *Devāḷ*. Vassilkov has repeatedly stressed that the non-Vedic Indo-Aryans with their martial culture were typically pastorals. These Indo-Aryans have obviously transferred the basic structure of pastoral economy into the religious sphere. In Uttarakhand, transhumance is still an important economic factor and the shepherds bring their animals to the alpine pastures in the summer months. These pastures are the realm of the fairies. And in Bangan as well as in many other areas in the high mountains of South Asia up to Nuristan fairies are described as divine herdswomen. In Uttarakhand, they tend herds of the Himalayan wild goat (*thiār*), and in Dardistan and Nuristan they tend ibexes and markhors. But we have seen that they have also their human 'livestock' in form of mediums called 'horses' or 'cattle' (p. 87), whereas the human 'shepherds' (the bards and shamans) have their divine 'livestock'. Finally, I need to stress the fact that in this pastoral imagery there is nothing derogatory: Sanskrit *paśu* is of Indo-European origin and etymologically connected e.g. with Latin *pecunia* 'money,

[254] My insertion.
[255] My insertion.

property, wealth' and in Dardistan and Nuristan a widespread word for livestock derives from Sanskrit *vasu* 'wealth, goods, riches, property'. The deities of Uttarakhand and other parts of the Himalayas invoked by bards and shamans are thus their wealth and riches.

As already mentioned, this religious concept of *devapāla* certainly goes back at least into the common Indo-Iranian period because structurally the same nominal compound as Sanskrit *devapāla* has existed in the Iranian Saka language attested from the ancient Buddhist kingdoms of Khotan and Tumshuq in the Tarim Basin where we find *mātṛvālai* which reflects unattested Sanskrit *mātṛpālaka-* 'defender of the mothers' (i.e. 'shaman or priest of the 'mothers'' [= fairies]) but which has been rendered in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit dictionaries as meaning *devapālaka*.

7.2 Ancient and modern Indian cosmogonies and myths of averted incest

The following long section discusses in detail one particular strand out of several traditions of creation myths found in Hinduism. Its mythological structure deviates quite clearly from 'mainstream Hinduism' creation myths and therefore it appears to have been part of a non-dominant transmission line. The reason for introducing here this non-dominant creation myth tradition is that it appears, at least in terms of religious philosophy, to be especially close to Vrātya religious monism. Consequently, the following section *7.3* will deal with Vrātya monism.

In his brief survey of Vedic and Purāṇic cosmogonies, Axel Michaels stresses their multiplicity and apparent lack of unity. The cosmogonies include concepts based on *sṛj* 'create', *mā* 'measure', *takṣ* 'manufacture'. According to his assessment, the concept of a demiurge appears relatively late, but incest myths are known from early Vedic times; dualism takes turns with monism. The world manifests from primeval 'seed', 'waters', 'egg' etc., but there are also theogonic myths with Prajāpati whose role as 'lord of creatures' increased during the Vedic period. During the Purāṇic phase, the creator roles of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva gain in prominence (all 1998: 296-300). Wendy O'Flaherty argues (1975: 33) that in Hindu tradition there are three main types of cosmogonies: through incest, through an oblation (a fire sacrifice) and through the dismemberment of a cosmic being. We thus certainly encounter in the history of Hinduism an amazing profusion of

cosmogonies. However, I want to recall here Kuiper's criticism that "the handbooks on Vedic mythology omit to state that we can distinguish two main stages in the process of creation" (1970: 98). The first and second stages are either called *ásat* 'the non-being' and *sát* 'being, that which is' (Kuiper 1983: 18) or the first stage is frequently expressed with phrases like "water, forsooth, was all this in the beginning" or "…from these waters this universe is born."[256] The first stage is also defined by the fact that a support (*pratiṣṭhā́*) or fixed base for the world is missing, which is established only in the second phase.[257] In other words, there is an ancient belief that the earth and the mountain(s) originally lacked a firm foundation and moved about until Indra fixed them (1970: 108): the first stage is (Kuiper quotes Ovid [1970: 103]) a *rudis indigestaques moles* 'a huge mass, formless and desolate' and an *instabilis tellus* 'an unstable earth'. Now in the second stage, as just alluded to and as explained in some Vedic myths, Prajāpati does find a support (*pratiṣṭhā́*). The second stage comprises various types of creation myths (with or without a demiurge, the former expressed e.g. in the Indra's slaying of Vṛ́trá myth), and a common Brāhmaṇa formula for the second stage is "these two worlds were together; they separated" (1970: 104, see also 117), which corresponds with already above-referred "[i]n the first period of the Devas *sát* was born of *ásat*."

The two worlds are typically heaven and earth or Upperworld and Underworld (1970: 124), and both constitute a pair of cosmic moieties (Kuiper 1983: 14). They are simultaneously kept apart and kept together by the Tree of Life, which thus is "the most striking symbol of the dual organization of the world and its inherent unity" (1970: 124). The dual structure of the world is expressed in different ways: the gods of heaven were later born than the demons of the underworld, they were like younger and elder brothers; the 'elder brothers' were thus closer to the first stage of non-differentiation, which is also marked by 'sleep' (i.e., the unconscious), whereas the Devas ('younger brothers') were "on this side of the Creation" (1970: 125). In ancient North India, at the beginning of every new year, the war

[256] These primeval waters are essentially identical with Amṛ́ta-Soma 'elixir of life' (Kuiper 1983: 29).

[257] On the other hand, Śat. Br. V I7,1,17 says that the waters are the foundation (*pratiṣṭhā́*) of the universe (see Bosch 1960: 53), but I take this as just a slightly different perspective.

between Devas and Asuras was renewed, which was reenacted on the social level by contests (1983: 17, 74).[258] Kuiper's further comparisons of these 'vertical' dualisms with the 'horizontal' dualism of two birds sitting in the World Tree (Ṛg-veda I.164.20), where moon and sun are located left and right of the World Tree (*axis mundi*) and with the Yogic physiology of 'left' Iḍā and 'right' Piṅgalā has already been mentioned above p. 86, fn. 203. As one additional point, I may add here that, according to Vedic myth, Prajāpati created the Devas with his right hand and the Asuras with the left. I am mentioning these details because I will discuss below some striking modern parallels.

However, before I can introduce them, I have to elaborate on Kuiper's important – but largely ignored – insight into the two main phases of creation in Hinduism. The following paragraphs present details and results of my article 'An Indian myth of the creation of death and life' (1999) supplemented with some additional data.

Before the beginning of my original article, there is a quote from the late medieval *Gorakṣa Vijaya* where during a conversation (*saṃvāda*) Goddess Durgā asks Śiva: "Why is it, my Lord, that thou art immortal, and mortal am I?" Her question does not, I suggest, express a deficient knowledge of gender issues but is intimately related to Kuiper's two main stages in the process of creation. However, whereas Vedic sources typically tend to emphasize creation of *life*, there is a seemingly different archaic tradition maintaining that the creation process always necessitates the creation of both life and death.[259] This is, however, different from the claim made by the Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad (1,2.1-7) that creation emerged from death:

> In the beginning there was nothing here at all. Death alone covered this completely, as did hunger; for what is hunger but death? Then death made up his mind: "Let me equip myself with a body *(ātman)*" … water sprang from him … Then the foam that had gathered on the water solidified and became the earth. Death toiled upon her. When he had become worn out by toil and hot with exertion his heat – his essence – turned into fire … etc. (Olivelle 1998: 37)

[258] These contests were in later times continued by the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas, as we saw above.

[259] On the other hand, the myth of the churning of the milk ocean makes it clear, that Devas do need Asuras in order to win desired treasures. In any case, famous Ṛg-Veda X 129 (Nāsadīya-sūkta) makes it clear that before creation neither death nor immortality existed.

In the tradition of creation myths I am going to concentrate on, creation is neither an instantaneous act nor is it self-contained. It consists of an accumulation of sub-creations, and it is not, as the English notion may suggest, the emergence of an Ens out of nothingness (*creatio ex nihilo*). It is, instead, a sort of transition from the state of 'neither non-existence nor existence' to the state of 'non-existence and existence'. I show this in my original article by analyzing around twenty contemporary myths (and a few late medieval ones) – all of which I regard as 'allomyths' of a basic creation mytheme – from the Indian Himalayas, Bengal and Assam, and from South India. The myths have no or only very few parallels in Vedic and classical Indian religious literature[260] and their wide diffusion speaks against 'folk level' traditions. My conjecture is that they spread and were preserved by itinerant ascetics, for instance the Nāth (Das Gupta 1969: 320) or Vairāgī Yogis, but also by the Sants. In its ideal form, i.e. describing the process from the unmanifest to the manifest, the mytheme consists of a 'tripolar' (1 to 3a) plus a 'bipolar' (3b to 4) component with one of the poles (3a-b) functioning as a connecting pivot point (see p. 117):[261]

[260] A very short and isolate example is found in the Mahābhāgavata-purāṇa 3.15-70 (see O'Flaherty 1981: 98).

[261] (a) A one-pointed arrow → symbolizes asexual creation (parthenogenesis, e.g. when parent and child are of the same [male] sex and when it is said that the "child" is a "shadow" or "phantom"or emerges out of a "pupil of the eye" of the "parent").
(b) When "parent" is male and "child" is female, there is sometimes sexual creation, which, however, then is typically allegorized or camouflaged. For instance, in a version from Himachal Pradesh (Zoller 1999: 218), the Lord besmears himself with sacred ashes, then rubs this off and forms a figure into which he breathes life: Mansā Devī steps forth. When she is twelve years old, the Lord impregnates her through his gaze and she gives birth to the Trimūrti.

> Incidentally, I may add here that the pattern of the myth from Himachal Pradesh is remarkably similar to the ancient Indian narrative of Agastya and Lopāmudrā (see e.g. RV I.179 besides story versions also in Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa and Purāṇas), which is perhaps a humanization (an inverted euhemerism) of an ancient Indian cosmogonic myth. In order to save his ancestors from perishing, this ascetic was requested to become father of a son. Since no woman could match his rank, he decided to manufacture a woman himself. In the Ṛg-vedic text, Lopāmudrā comes into being as *nirmitā* 'fashioned' (by Agastya) (see also Thieme 1963 and 1982: 415). She is then brought into the palace of the king of Vidarbha, where she grows up as the king's 'daughter'. Agastya comes and asks her hand in marriage to which the king only hesitantly consents. In due time the couple becomes parents of Dṛḍhasyu (= Dṛḍhadasyu). It is thus obvious that the topos of incest got

1st phase: Lord ([grand]father)$_1$ → (demiurge [father])$_2$ → Goddess *as* ([grand]daughter)$_{3a}$[262]
2nd phase: Same Goddess *as* (mother)$_{3b}$ ↠/→ Trimūrti (sons)$_4$

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camouflaged in this narrative. Since there is no knowledge about Dṛḍhasyu's pedigree and since also Agastya's ancestry is dubious, the narrative looks as if it was borrowed from some unknown source into the mainstream of the religious tradition.

Paul Thieme, in his discussion of the story of Agastya and Lopamudrā (sic) (1963) has apparently overlooked the partial overlapping of motifs of this story with the story of the hermit Jaratkāru and the snake-maiden Jaratkāru (alias Manasā Devī, the popular serpent goddess). In both stories, the extreme asceticism of the hermits endangers the 'survival' of their ancestors, therefore they are both 'forced' to marry and procreate a male descendant, and in both stories, the marital relationship between husband and wife is rather short and casual. The son of Jaratkāru and Manasā was the famous hermit Āstīka after whom the Āstīkaparvan in the Mahābhārata's first book (1.45-53) is named. It should be added here that the serpent goddess Manasā, sister of Vāsuki, is usually seen as the mind-born daughter (etymology!) of the Prajāpati Kaśyapa. Kaśyapa's two wifes, Kadrū and Vinatā, were the mothers of the serpent race and of Garuḍa (discussed above in *6.3*). The Āstīkaparvan comprises the following crucial events: curse of Kadrū, death of Parikṣit, birth of Āstīka, and Janamejaya's *sarpa sattra* (rather a snake holocaust than a normal *sattra*). It is said that during the pauses of this snake sacrifice the Mahābhārata was recited for the first time (Winternitz 1927: 372, fn.3). The intricate complex of Mahābhārata and the divine/demonic Nāgas was discussed above in *6.4*.

Back to parthenogenesis: An example for this is found in Bengal in the *Anādi-maṅgala*, which states, "Mahāmāyā [or Ādyā Śakti] was produced [not born!] from the left side of Dharma" (Das Gupta 1969: 314). Note that similar to the demiurge, also the Goddess sometimes tends to develop sinister character traits (Mahāmāyā 'great deceit or illusion'). In the South Indian myths of Murugan, analyzed by Don Handelman, Māyā is mother of the Asuras and thus personally separated from Pārvatī, the 'real' reflex of Devī (1987: 25), and in epic literature Brahmā creates a woman who is Death herself (O'Flaherty 1975: 37). Here we should also recall O'Flaherty's claim (1980: 28) that in Sanskrit literature one finds many references to "male unilateral creation," but that "it does not happen that some woman or goddess … becomes able to produce children all by herself." However, I question this statement since in the creation myth from Karnataka (Zoller 1999: 208f.), it is clearly said that since the Goddess cannot find a (male) partner, she gives birth one after the other to Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, which is thus a kind of enforced or at least involuntary parthenogenesis. Further below (p. 124) I quote a scene from the Devī Māhātmya in which Kālī emanates out of the Goddess' forehead also without male aid.

(c) A two-pointed arrow ↠ symbolizes overt sexual creation.

[262] Only in one myth from Bengal, it is implied that demiurge and Goddess are siblings (Zoller 1999: 217), which is certainly a reduction of the original structure.

The two components (phases) of the myth can be understood as mirroring each other in the sense that the first component comprises a bundle of allomyths in which the Lord desires incest with his 'daughter' (implicitly or explicitly for creating the world and progeny), whereas the second component comprises a bundle of allomyths in which the Goddess desires incest with a son of hers (for the same purposes). Despite the desire, it seems that in the Hindu mythological tradition there is very little evidence, if at all, for a fully consummated incest act. One example, however somewhat unclear, could be Matsya-purāṇa III.32-49 (Deppert 1977: 281, see there also p. 1), which describes how the *hermaphrodite* Brahmā desires his daughter who had come into existence after Brahmā's bisection into a male and female half. The (re)unification leads to the birth of Manu.

In world mythology, the concept of a highest hermaphrodite being is quite widespread, it is also found in Vedic literature: hermaphrodite Prajāpati is mentioned in Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa VI.1.2.1-13 where he unites with his 'daughter' Vāc 'speech' (Deppert 1977: 286ff.), Kāṭhaka-saṃhitā XII.5 says that Vāc was Prajāpati's second (half) (similar also Kāṭhaka-saṃhitā XII.7) (Deppert 1977: 289, 297). In the Vedas, hermaphrodite are also Ṛg-vedig Tvaṣṭā-Savitā-Viśvarūpa (Deppert 1977: 294-97) and Ātman in Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad I.4 who is said to be as big as a woman and a man (Deppert 1977: 290). The idea of a fundamental dual nature of the highest being is most succinctly expressed e.g. in the Ṛg-vedic Puruṣa-sūkta X, 90 "[f]rom him Virāj was born; again Puruṣa from Virāj was born" or in RV X.72.4 "Dakṣa was born of Aditi, and Aditi was Dakṣa's child." Deppert describes this type of 'incest' myth as 'reciprocal self-generation of the Great Parents, of the Great Father as son of the Great Mother, his daughter' (1977: 1).[263]

> Note: About the logical structure of incest myths, Sally Falk Moore makes the following here important observation (1964: 1312f.):
>
> > …mythological symbolism may either repeat or contrast with reality, as the case may be. The incestuous creation myths do both. In them one finds a literary reconciliation of the incest prohibition and incest itself, both pushed discreetly into the primeval past … if all men are descended from one couple, then every marriage is distantly and

[263] „… die wechselseitige Selbsterzeugung der Großen Eltern, des Großen Vaters als Sohnes der Großen Mutter, seiner Tochter."

> vaguely incestuous … In this way the myth metaphorically and economically states both the unity of man, and that marriage is a substitute for incest.

> Falk Moore rightly insists on the fact that if a myth uses the *language* of incest to make for instance a cosmogonic statement, this can also be interpreted as a metaphor. In her analysis of more than forty mostly cosmogonic incest myths from dozens of different peoples and from ancient and modern times, she notes that brother-sister incest myths are most widespread, whereas father-daughter incest myths are much less common, and mother-son incest myths are even less common than father-daughter incest myths.[264] There is only little evidence for mother-son incest in the Vedic corpus,[265] which may suggest an origin in traditions outside the Vedic corpus and mainstream Hinduism. Indian tradition does perhaps also deviate from the above-mentioned general tendencies in the sense that brother-sister incest myths are much less common than father-daughter incest myths. Both Indian father-daughter and mother-son incest myths have always a cosmogonic agenda, whereas I cannot see this perspective in types of brother-sister incest myths like that of Yama and Yamī.[266]

I believe that a simpler core idea underlying the here presented myth structure is already found in the Atharva-veda. Moreno Dore comments on statements found in this Veda (2015: 63): "Firstly, there is an entity as the starting point for the entire creation (Time, Brahmacārin, Skambha [cosmic pillar], etc.); secondly, *bráhman* is in a changing relationship with the first entity; and finally Prajāpati is the god from whom everything else emerges." Thus, from Prajāpati the cosmic evolution into this world starts to take place. In a number of cases, the

[264] Her figures are 34 : 7 : 3 (1964: 1311), but she emphasizes that these figures only indicate trends and not objective percental relationships. There may be a tendency for a correlation father-daughter incest myths and patrilinear descent and mother-son incest myths and matrilinear descent, but Falk Moore's data are not robust enough for stating this with certainty. Moreover, it certainly does not hold true for India where quite similar incest myths are found in the very north and the very south in quite different societies.

[265] Of course, there is God Pūṣán, the wooer of his mother and lover of his sister Uṣás (RV VI.55.4-5), and there are a few other instances, but they all seem to lack cosmogonic significance.

[266] See Shruti Pradhan (1990) for an extensive historical Marxist-oriented discussion with further references and parallels to the Vedic myth. However, Pradhan's understanding of the nature of myth is related to Friedrich Engels' speculations of the history of the family and is thus diametrically opposed to my own understanding.

border of the transition from unmanifest (e.g. void or primeval water) to manifest is marked by the emergence of an egg, hill, fixed earth, vortex turning into pupil (of eye), etc.[267] The two vectors of creation (see above p. 117) show that the Goddess is both daughter and mother. As daughter, she belongs to the unmanifest sphere, but as mother, she is responsible for the creation of the world. As daughter, she is (typically but not always) persecuted by the Lord or demiurge desirous for incest, but as mother, it is she who desires incest with one of the Trimūrti.

The demiurge is ambivalent and trickster-like and "is frequently the creator of the Goddess and … assumes in some versions the countenance of 'supreme death'… the Goddess is *ādi* 'a firstling', she is not *anādi*, 'beginningless', like the Lord of the Universe" (see Zoller 1999: 208). As mother, the Goddess in many variants of the myth desires an incestuous relationship with her sons (who try to avoid this, and thus no actual incest seems to have occurred) in order to create the world. As daughter, she may occasionally desire an incestuous relationship with her (grand) father, but then also in order to create the world. A clear example for the 'parthenogenetic' creation of the Goddess and her subsequent erotic desire for the Lord is found in the medieval Bengali Śūnya-purāṇa, which belongs to the Dharma and snake-goddess Manasā cults: In the beginning, there was nothing except *dhundhukāra* 'haziness' "… and in the infinite vacuum the Lord alone was moving in the great void having nothing but void as his support[268] … and in and through his compassion another personality of the name of Nirañjana[269] came out of him", he "however, had no hands and legs, – neither had he any father and mother, nor was he born of the seed and the ovum … This Nirañjana or Dharma then sat on the seat of compassion and passed full fourteen ages in the meditation on the Great (*bambha-jāna*)"[270] (Das Gupta 1969: 311f.). After a series of fatiguing

[267] This last variant is found, e.g., among Bhotias in Uttarakhand (Zoller 1999: 218f.). This image will be taken up again below.

[268] See below p. 128, fn. 287 on the divine roaming Vrātya.

[269] 'Spotless; void of passion or emotion'.

[270] Even a superficial look at the Śūnya-purāṇa shows its old Buddhist background. I wonder, however, whether "Great" is the appropriate translation for *bambha-jāna* and whether the term may originally rather have had the basic meaning "brahman-generating" (see sub CDIAL 9325 Prakrit *bambha* 'Brahman') which would compare with Hauer's observation (1927: 327, fn. 66) in connection with the ancient Indian Brahmacārin who is born out of bráhman and creates himself the highest bráhman.

deeds, the Lord cast off on water his golden sacred-thread, which metamorphosed into Vāsuki, then he took a little bit of dirt from his fingernail and put it on the head of Vāsuki. From this, the world was created. "By roaming about in the world the Lord became tired and began to perspire and from the sweat of his body was produced the Ādyā Śakti … In the meantime Ādyā Śakti grew young and from her youthful desires proceeded forth Kāma (Cupid) who was sent by Ādyā to the Lord" (1969: 313). According to Das Gupta (ibid.), the Lord put Kāma in an earthen pot in which he changed into poison. When Ādyā could not bear any longer her erotic feelings, she tried to commit suicide by consuming the contents of the pot. However, instead she became pregnant and gave birth to the Trimūrti who, however, were blind.[271]

June McDaniel represents this last episode from the Śūnya-purāṇa in a quite different way (2004: 246): "… Adya drank the seed of Dharma instead of poison, and that is why she became pregnant … Adya generated the god Kāmadeva … He went over to where Dharma was meditating and filled him with lust, and Dharma left his seed on a dish and put it into Adya's temple.[272] Adya mistook it for poison, and swallowed it. She promptly became pregnant, and gave birth to triplets in three different ways: Brahma came out by piercing the crown of her head, Vishnu came out through her navel, and Shiva was born in the natural way." These two versions of the Śūnya-purāṇa are clearly influenced by the myth of Kāma's incineration (*Madana-bhasma*) by Śiva. [273] Whereas the creation of the demiurge is always of the 'parthenogenesis' type, the situation is less clear in case of the Goddess as daughter. The above examples from Bengal have shown attempts for incest from both directions. In the variants known to me from the Indian Himalayas, the Goddess is always generated through parthenogenesis, but sometimes there are also sexual innuendoes: she is born out of the

[271] The disabledness of the Goddess' progeny is similar to the just-above mentioned disabledness of Nirañjana. It is also similar to the myth of Śiva's creation of Andhaka shortly discussed below (see p. 126) for which see Handelman's interpretation (2001: 219). Handelman interlocks cosmogony with petrification. Even though this theory is principally not wrong, it does not explain the birth of disabled progeny, which is rather due to unilateral (non-sexual) creation. In any case, this mythical tradition emphasizes the point of view that the creation of the universe does not start off with a pristine innocence, but, right from the beginning, with fatigue and guilt, with decline and death.
[272] Dharma's seed shedding is also mentioned in yet another version, see Maity 1966: 198f.
[273] In the standard Sanskrit Purāṇa version.

spirit or the mind of Nārāyaṇa (Zoller 1999: 217f.) or the Guru smears himself with ashes from his *dhūnī* fire.[274] This he rubs then off, forms it into a figure and breathes life into Mansā Devī. When she is twelve years old, he makes her pregnant with his sight (1999: 218). The ambivalent theme of ashes appears in a considerable number of the myths typically when the Three Gods refuse to 'marry' their 'mother'. Usually, she then burns them to ashes, but sometimes it is also the other way round (for such an example see 1999: 220).

My suggestion that this creation myth has been spread by ascetic orders, is supported by a special version found with the Kabir panth:[275] *Sat Puruṣ* 'the true being' creates six emanations, out of one emanates an egg, out of which emerges a terrible being named Nirañjan. A tortoise holds the material for the creation. A fight ensues between the tortoise and the demiurge. Nirañjan cuts off sixteen of the tortoise's heads, and the sun, the moon and the other necessary materials are set free. Now Sat Puruṣ and Nirañjan fall out with each other, the Lord cuts himself off, and Nirañjan is unable to continue the creation. Therefore, the Lord creates for him the *Ādyā* (*Śakti*). She gives birth to the Triad, and thereafter Nirañjan becomes invisible as well. The liberation of sun, moon and the other "material for the creation" echoes Indra's fight with the dragon Vṛtrá, which is a creation myth pertaining, however, to the second stage (Kuiper 1970: 98).[276] The message, that creation is always a creation of life and death, is found repeatedly in the Sant tradition, for instance in this couplet: (see Zoller 1999: 225):

> The yogi Nirañjan cast[277] the net,
> He spread the spheres of heaven and underworld, of life and death,
> and the three worlds

[274] According to Nāth traditions, the *dhūnī* fire pit represents the womb of the Goddess (see also White 1996 : 288f.).

[275] For more details see Keay (1931: 135–137) and Zoller (1999: 222f.).

[276] A modern reflex of the myth of the liberation of the sun is found in the oral traditions of the Nuristani Prasun people (see Buddruss and Degener 2016, story numbers 54 and 65). There the hideout is described thus: In the house of a Prasun hero is a waterfall with the moon to its left side and the sun to its right side. The liberation of the two Heaven's lights requires some killings but ultimately ends with the onset of human cultural history. This very myth is, in fact, very widespread in Asia (see Witzel 2005).

[277] Or: "O yogi, Nirañjan cast…" Note also that in the *Kabīr Granthāvalī* instead of Nirañjan one reads sometimes Yama. About the Bengali Nirañjan alias Dharma Rāja alias Yama, Frances Bhattacarya notes that he "is present both at the beginning and at

The incinerations of the Trimūrti, of Kāma Deva, sometimes also of the Goddess are clearly only found in the manifest universe, not in the unmanifest, where the Lord of the World resides. The sequence of life generation and life incineration – in some versions of the myth repeated several times,[278] and the motif of incineration occasionally varying with the Goddess killing herself through poisoning or self-decapitation because she is so desperate (see e.g. Zoller 1999: 219 and Sax 1991: 20, 22) – show both chain reactions in the unfolding of the world as well as the cyclical nature of unfolding and enfolding. It thus also reflects the eternal contest between Devas and Asuras (partly 'secularized' in the conflict between Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas). The ultimate 'sports' nature of this flip-flop movement – extremely abridged in the Ṛg-vedic Puruṣa-sūkta X, 90 (already quoted above): "From him Virāj was born; again Puruṣa from Virāj was born"[279] – is also suggested by White's interpretation of the underlying meaning of holy ashes (*bhasman*, *vibhūti*) in Hindu religion: "The connection between ashes and semen is made in Śaiva metaphysic for which the sole essence in the universe is Śiva's seed, which is identified with ashes, whence the cyclical necessity … to cyclically reduce the universe … to ashes" (2003: 14) and (p. 15) "…ashes are creative, even procreative, in the generation of new universes" and (p. 16) "…*bhasma* is itself – like the universe – subject to a sequence of purificatory processes that involve burning, flooding, and burning again." In sum, we could almost speak of the 'ashes of immortality'.

The incinerations of a divine being is usually caused by the deployment of a fierce (third) eye. This eye is usually connected with Śiva, even though also various forms of the Goddess are shown with a third eye. The origin of Śiva's third eye is usually explained with his incineration of Kāma Deva (*Madana-bhasma*). However, this is doubtful in my eyes, if I may say so. Among the myths analyzed by me (1999), it is said several times – however only in the South Indian variants – that Śiva got the eye from the Ādyā Śakti: "Kṛṣṇa … tells

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the end of a cosmic cycle, as also at the birth and at the death of individuals" (1994: 347); and, importantly, he deals with his devotees in an "ambivalent way" (1994: 353).

[278] An especially complex variant of this mechanism has been described and discussed by Handelman for the South Indian god Murugan (1987).

[279] Monier-Williams mentions that Virāj is a sort of secondary creator. Note also that in the Atharva-veda, Virāj is regarded as female, whereas in later sources, Virāj(a) has been confusingly identified with a whole bunch of deities.

Śiva (Rudra) to … ask from her, among other things, her third eye" (Zoller 1999: 209); Ādijambuvu,[280] who was born six months before the Kali Yuga, "…advises Śiva to ask her [Ellamma, Ādi Śakti] to give him her third eye" (1999: 210f.); when the Goddess has given birth to the Triad (as usual, an egg birth), Viṣṇu, who pretends to be ready to marry her, asks for her (third) eye "which he gives to Śiva" (1999: 211); on Śiva's request, Aṅkamma [Ammavaru] gives him her third eye (1999: 212). The quoted evidence shows that this fierce eye is, in a way, independent from its owners. This idea is supported by the above-mentioned myth from Karnataka, where "[t]he Ādi Śakti … puts her hand, in which is an eye of fire, on his [Brahmā's] head and burns him to ashes" and later, when Śiva, while dancing, holds his hand over his head, she, when imitating him, incinerates herself (1999: 208).

In the same way as the third eye has a life destroying function, it has also a life-engendering function, even though there are fewer examples for the latter. Compare the (perhaps rather ambivalent) following passage in the Devī Māhātmya in the episode where the Goddess emits from her forehead fierce Kālī (see Lyngar Einarsen 2011: 8):

> *bhrukuṭīkuṭilāt tasyā lalāṭaphalakād drutam* |
> *kālī karālavadanā viniṣkrāntāsipāśinī* ||
>
> From her forehead's surface having curved, contracted brows, quickly Kālī having a gaping mouth came out with sword and snare.

In this verse, no 'eye' is mentioned, but that this is intended is corroborated not only from the many visual representations of the Goddess with a third eye, but also due to the fact that an epithet of Pārvatī is *tryambakā* which corresponds with Śiva's epithet *tryambaka* 'three-eyed'.[281] According to Bengali Baul theology, the "Supreme in semen", who is Īśvara, resides in man either at the *sahasrāracakra* at the top of the head or at the *ājñācakra* between the eyes (Salomon 1991:

[280] The name may perhaps mean 'the primeval *jambu* tree', a tree that, according to Purāṇic mythology, stands in the center of the world on Mount Meru. Related is also Sanskrit *jambudvīpa* 'the central one of the 7 continents surrounding the mountain *Meru*'.

[281] Monier-Williams points out correctly that this term did not mean 'three-eyed' but meant "originally probably 'three-mothered' fr. the threefold expression *ambe ambike 'mbālike*…" The term was an epithet of Rudra, the Vedic predecessor of Śiva. See above p. 57f. my comments on *Tryàmbaka*.

272). Note also the following excerpt from a creation myth from Uttarakhand: "Viṣṇu is in *samādhi*, in Śeṣnāg's shade. Devī Lakṣmī is pressing his legs. Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśvar and Śakti are born from his eyes."[282] 'Viṣṇu in *samādhi*' is quite obviously a confusion since Viṣṇu would then be born from 'Viṣṇu's' eyes, and thus he actually corresponds with the Lord roaming in the 'Void' or the Parama Puruṣa. Also here nothing is said about a third eye, but in view of the above-mentioned examples of the impregnating gaze or sight of a male deity, also here a kind of third eye may be reconstructed. The scene from the Devī Māhātmya can be compared with the myth of Śiva and his 'son' (or rather emanation?) Andhaka.[283] The version from Śiva-purāṇa given by O'Flaherty (1973: 249) describes the engendering of Andhaka thus: "…[f]rom the touch of her [Pārvatī's] hand, Śiva's sweat of passion was shed. A drop of it fell into the fire [of the third eye] on his forehead, and it became heated. From it a child appeared, singing and dancing and laughing, wearing matted locks … the child was blind because of the darkness in which he was conceived…" The version from Rudra-saṃhitā given by Handelman (2001: 219) describes it thus: "The hands of the goddess were drenched in fluid born of passion [*madāmba*].[284] This fluid, heated by contact with the god's body and by the fiery eye on his forehead [Śiva's third eye], became a drop [*bindu*] that grew to an embryo [*garbha*], that turned into something not human…"

Differing from creation myths of textbook Hinduism where the Trimūrti is permanently busy with creating, maintaining and destructing the cosmos, in the here presented non-dominant tradition line of a multitude of creation myths the Trimūrti occupies a minor role. However, this multitude of creation myths is simply an expression of the one underlying myth of the immortal god and the mortal goddess. One can trace a development from hermaphrodite godhead to the reciprocal and transcendent accouchement of Puruṣa and Virāj to the first creation of the empirical cosmos of death and life as result of a

[282] I am very grateful to William Sax that he has allowed me to quote some of his unpublished notes on the present topic.

[283] Most versions tell that the Goddess covers with her hands for fun Śiva's eyes, which plunges the world into darkness. Interestingly, in the Vāmana Purāṇa it is Śiva's daughter – which must refer to Aśokasundarī – said to have kept his eyes closed (Mani 1975: 36). Andhaka means 'blind' and derives from *andha* 'blind, dark' which is semantically close to *kāla* 'black, of a dark colour, dark-blue'.

[284] I cannot find *madāmba* in the dictionaries, but assume it is the same as *madāmbu* or *madāmbhas*, which are the same as *mada-jala* 'the temple juice (of a ruttish elephant)'.

more thorough separation between God and Goddess (but incestuous desires can prevent a total disunion). In this drama, God remains largely transcendent/unborn and thus immortal whereas it is the fate of the Goddess to be born, to birth and to die.

I believe it is possible to abstract the mythological imagery of this tradition of creation myths and argue that the opposition of transcendence and immanence, which is constantly addressed in these myths, is nothing else than a paraphrase of the narrators' experience of the duality of the "I" as being simultaneously empirical and transcendent with the transcendental "I" embedded in the primal ground (the 'void'). This is a topic in many manifestations of transcendental philosophy, which typically has a strong tendency towards monism. We will see in the remaining three sections that the monistic tendencies, which are alluded to in above-discussed creation myths,[285] have their philosophical-mystical parallels in the ancient Indian Vrātya traditions and in medieval Indian Kashmir Śaivism. This rather hidden stream in the history of Hinduism has nonetheless had some perceptible influence on some folk traditions of the Central and Western Himalayas. This will be demonstrated in the last section. The connecting element between these historically widely separated traditions is that in the Vrātya tradition the Vrātya 'precedes the deities', whereas in Himalayan bardic traditions it is maintained that 'the bard is the guru and the deity is the pupil'.[286]

7.3 The Vrātya (and the Brahmin) as the Lord of the World

In common understanding, Brahmacārya is the first of four *āśrama*s (age-based stages), characterized by service to a guru, study, chastity, etc. However, Patrick Olivelle has shown (1973: 33f.) that prior to the construction of the concept of the four *āśrama*s, each *āśrama* was, in fact, a permanent (i.e. life-long lasting) state. A Brahmacārin was (or could be) in 'pre-classical' times a perpetual 'student'. Maybe this fact

[285] Therefore the necessity of presenting them here.

[286] Concepts like transcendental idealism, monism etc. have long since been regarded under the perspective of analytic philosophy and scientific realism as outdated thought experiments. Fortunately, it seems that philosophical and theological thinking is slowly undergoing a turn in the West. I can give here only one example for this new trend, however a striking (and very controversial) one, namely the 2012 publication by the American philosopher Thomas Nagel with the telling title *Mind and cosmos: Why the materialist Neo-Darwinian conception of nature is almost certainly false.*

has to do with the similarity of the Brahmin and the *Vrātya* in some of the Atharva-veda XV hymns.

Moreno Dore has observed (2016: 199) a social marginalization of Vrātyas in the Dharmasūtras versus their extolling in the Atharva-veda (already indicated above), and he points out (2015: 48) that the Ekavrātya and the Brahmacārin fulfilled a cosmogonic role versus Prajāpati who was otherwise in Vedic times the main divinity responsible just for procreation. Thus, in the first verse of the Vrātyakāṇḍa of the AVŚ, Prajāpati is mentioned only second after the Vrātya (see also Parpola [2015: 136] commenting on this sentence). Translation by Dore (2015: 66):

> *vrā́tya āsīd ī́yamāna evá sá prajā́patiṃ sám airayat*
>
> A Vrātya was there, just going around, he set Prajāpati in motion…[287]

Hauer (1927: 309, fn.28), however, prefers here the reading of the *Paippalāda* recension, which is (Vrātya) *agra āsīt* 'in the beginning was (the Vrātya)'. Here we have, of course, a very common Vedic phrasing of the type 'in the beginning there was the One', e.g. Taittirīya-upaniṣad 2.7.1: *asad vā idam agra āsīt* 'in the beginning was Not Being', etc. However, it is remarkable that here the subject of that phrase pattern is the Vrātya. This suggests that in the Vrātya tradition self-deification could occur, which may hint at a monistic religious outlook. Hauer quotes in addition (1927: 306f.) Jaiminīya- upaniṣad-brāhmaṇa III, 21, which says:

> *vrātyo 'sy ekavrātyo 'navasṛ̥ṣṭo devānaṃ bilam (a)vadhiḥ*
>
> You are the Vrātya, the Only (Supreme) Vrātya, uncreated,
> cave of the gods, the limiting point[288]

In the text, this Supreme Vrātya is further identified with Vāyu 'wind god' and Īśāna (Rudra). Hauer explains (p. 310) that there cannot be any doubt that there once existed a Vrātya mysticism with the Ekavrātya as the supreme deity. Moreover, in this tradition the Vrātya is, in a way, superior to the gods, in the sense that he is their chief, so

[287] A slightly different translation is found in a number of sources: "There was a roaming Vrātya. He roused Prajāpati to action." Found e.g. at http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/av/av15001.htm (last accessed 1.03.2019) and other websites.

[288] [Hauer:] Du bist der Vrātya, der Eine Vrātya, unerschaffen, die Höhle der Götter, der Grenzpunkt.

to say. Hauer notes (1927: 309) that after primeval Vrātya has entered the world of phenomena, he starts his cosmic courses, which are denoted with the verb *vi-cal-* 'to move about' whereas the powers and beings that follow him are denoted as *anu-vi-cal* 'to follow in changing place'.

Hauer's insight is confirmed by Dore who speaks of "the supremacy and preeminence among the gods" attained by the Brahmacārin and the Ekavrātya in their cosmogonic function as demiurges (2015: 48). He repeatedly makes clear this important point, e.g. when he states (2015: 65): "In the second and sixth hymns of AVŚ 15 the Vrātya is depicted as a leader for the gods. It seems that he has the role of the entity that exists before creation…" Another important verse is AVŚ XI,8,32:

> *tásmād vaí vidvā́n púruṣam idám bráhméti manyate* |
> *sárvā hy àsmin devátā gā́vo goṣṭháivā́sate* ||
>
> Then, indeed, who knows the man [púruṣa] thinks 'This is bráhman';
> because all the gods are seated in him, as cows in the stall

Dore explains (2015: 57): "In verse 32, to know man means recognizing that he is *bráhman* and that all gods are inside him. This imply [sic] the existence of a knowledge enabling man to recognize his divine essence, and is thus comparable to a Gnostic path." According to this Indian tradition, the Vrātya is (in possession of) ultimate reality, which also implies that none of the gods is above him and which also implies that Vrātya and Brahmacārin have even cosmogonic functions: "The poet repeatedly returns on the cosmogonic activity of the Brahmacārin. There are at least two important features that directly connect this figure with the Vrātya. The first of these concerns the fact that the extolled figure is put in first position as being the very origin of the cosmogonic act, even before both the *bráhman* and Prajāpati. The second feature pertains to the conquering of Indra's role…" (Dore 2015: 64).[289] Among a series of other quotes from AVŚ XV, Dore draws our attention also to AVŚ 11.5.7:

[289] His comparison with Gnostic traditions, which he repeats p. 61, is acceptable only with reservations. For me, this is different from Gnostic theology, but it appears to me that in these Atharvavedic propositions one sees, as pointed out above, the very first germs of monistic tendencies, which much later unfold and flourish especially in Kashmir Śaivism with its doctrine of the identity of 'I' and the cosmos.

> *brahmacārī́ janáyan bráhmāpólokáṃ prajā́patiṃ parameṣṭhínam virā́jam*
>
> The Brahmacārin generating the bráhman, the waters, the world, Prajāpati, Parameṣṭhin,[290] the virā́j[291]…

He comments (2015: 64): "The poet repeatedly returns on the cosmogonic activity of the Brahmacārin. There are at least two important features that directly connect the figure with the Vrātya. The first of these concerns the fact that the extolled figure is put in first position as being the very origin of the cosmogonic act … [W]hat should be noticed here is the inversion of the relationship between man and god. This is not merely an exaggeration that depends on the poet's enthusiasm but rather the evidence of a particular ideological background." Here the "pupil" (Brahmacārin) successively takes on the role of teacher, creator, etc. Dore adds (2015: 69): "The direct dialogue between the Vrātya and the gods points to the simultaneous presence of man and gods rather than to the presence of a priest who invokes some distant and silent god." Moreover (2016: 200), "…a different kind of relationship between men and gods is clearly depicted in the *vrātya* culture …" On the next page he remarks on AVŚ 11.5.2 "…a man is praised as a god among gods", and on the following page he notes: "The verse presents the Brahmacārin as a leader of gods, fathers, and *gandharva*s … he can even replace them [the gods], when he is described as the first born … and creator…"

The here sketched monistic tendencies are extraordinary ontological teachings because they emphasize man's (that is, the Vrātya's) preeminence with respect to a cosmogonic function vis-à-vis God or some gods. They are certainly transgressive and blasphemous not only for members of the Abrahamic religions but also for those who follow an 'orthodox' form of Hinduism. Therefore, here a few more words on Kashmir Śaivism and some of its transgressive practices.

7.4 Kashmir Śaiva monism and transgression

According to Gavin Flood (1989: 225), monistic Kashmir Śaivism refers to "the Tantric Śaiva traditions which revered a scriptural authority other than the orthodox Vedas, namely the Tantras and

[290] 'Standing at the head, highest, chief, principal', is repeatedly identified with Prajāpati.
[291] "Sovereignty, excellence or splendor', frequently personified as a type of demiurge'.

Āgamas, and which propounded a doctrine that ultimately there is only one dynamic reality of which the manifold forms of the universe are dreamlike projections." Or, more concise, in poetic Sanskrit from an eminent contemporary practitioner, M. M. Ācārya Rameshvar Jha (1905-1981) (see Sadananda Das 2018: 276):

> I extol the highest, supreme Lord, who is independent, non-dual. And consists in Consciousness, who is the form of one's own bliss and free from desire,[292] the great god Maheśvara in the form of one's own Self.[293]

Regarding transgressive matters in Kashmir Śaivism, (Reverend Dr.) John Dupuche asserts (2018: 198):

> In the Kula [Kashmir Śaivism] ritual, the guru, for all the importance attached to his role, is deemed to be less significant than the sexual partner (*dūtī* [Sanskrit 'female messenger, esp. procuress, go-between']) … This is because the Kula ritual comes from Ardhatryambakā, the daughter of Tryambaka, the founder of the non-dual (*advaita*) school who is also one of the manifestations of Śiva. On the model of the Ardhatryambakā, therefore, the *dūtī* brings the practitioner to the form of consciousness that lies at the heart of the Kula tradition, namely the sense of universality, which transcends the opposition of clean and unclean, outer and inner and so on.

Dupuche quotes (ibid.) Kashmir Śaivism authorities like Abhinavagupta, Kallaṭa and Jayaratha who all have endorsed the *dūtī*/*śakti*/*yoginī*'s superiority vis-à-vis the guru. Besides the well-

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[292] The kind of mystical state described here is very similar to what Indian creation myths say about the state before creation (which is the reason for above section *7.2*). Handelman and Shulman write (1997: 46f.): "The cosmic Self is identified with the encompassing entirety of the cosmos, so that nothing exists beyond this … this total absence of discontinuity in the cosmos … is akin to an extreme density of being. This thick density of the cosmic Self speaks to its lack of any sense of self-awareness and motivation, and to the nonexistence of otherness." Handelman and Shulman call also our attention to the fact that whereas stages in Indic cosmologies are continuous with one another – "[t]he principle of encompassing holism was a hallmark of Indic cosmology from its earliest formulations" (1997: 49) – whereas monotheistic cosmologies "invoke the absolute division and segmentation between the whole and its parts, between god and humankind" (1997: 46). This drastic 'cosmic' difference contains certainly one of the explanations why blasphemy is so widespread in Abrahamic religions but not in Hinduism.

[293] *anuttaraṃ paraṃ devaṃ svatantraṃ cinmayādvayam | nirāśaṃsaṃ nijānandaṃ vande svātmamaheśvaram ||*

known overcoming of Hindu core categories through transgressive religious practices, the Dupuche quote is striking because of the name Ardhatryambakā, which, as pointed out above, is related with Rudra's epithet *Tryàmbaka* in the Ṛg-veda 'possessing three mothers' (see above p. 57 and fn. 129, and p. 94), and which is possibly a hint for an Outer Languages transmission history. This is also supported by the following information given by Swami Lakshman Joo, who is generally regarded to have been the last authoritative guru of Kashmir Śaivism (1907 to 1991) in his double role as a mystic and a scholar (see Joo 2003: 91ff.): In the *Kaliyuga*, Lord Śiva taught the theory of *Bhairava Tantra* to Durvāsas Ṛṣi. Since the sage could not find a disciple fit for direct initiation, he created three mind born sons and one mind born daughter "for the upliftment of women" (2003: 92), who was named Ardhatryambakā. "As Kashmir Shaivism does not recognize women to be in a state of degradation, Durvāsā Ṛiṣi initiated her completely in the monistic thought of *Bhairava Tantras* … His daughter Ardhatryambakā's teaching is known as the Ardhatryambakā school of *Bhairava Tantras*. But as the continuity of the Ardhatryambakā school manifested itself secretly from one woman to another there is no history of this school in this *kaliyuga*" (2003: 90f.).

Lakshman Joo's statements regarding women confirm those voices quoted by Dupuche. The *dūtī* was of central importance for the transmission of the Kula tradition, and she was known not to teach with her 'upper mouth' but with her 'lower mouth' (her genitals, see Dupuche 2018: 199). Dupuche concludes his article with the concise formula "[w]isdom and excess go together" in Kashmir Śaivism (2018: 211). He explains that the Kula ritual practices are severe infringements of orthodox *dharma*, they are very transgressive,[294] yet they lead to freedom and empowerment, but their exercise is also dangerous: if understood wrongly, there will be, according to Abhinavagupta (ibid.), "absorption by a Piśāca demon". The ritual process of what Alexis Sanderson calls "Transgression … translated into transcendence" is squarely formulated in the *Ānandatantra* thus (see Sanderson 2011: 86):

[294] For details, see his article.

> The very substances which are said to be the cause of a man's downfall in the Vedic religion (*ārṣam*) become the means of accelerating his liberation in this System of the Left (*vāmaśāsanam*).

Elsewhere Sanderson notes this (1985: 202): "The women of this cult, his vehicle to power and the transmitters through sexual intercourse of esoteric gnosis … were the antithesis of the Brahmanical ideal of the docile dependent." In endnote 69 (p. 211f.) Sanderson lists the fears and prejudices of Hindu orthodoxy against *vāmaśāsanam*:

> As that which sustains the orthodox identity it assumes the form of the eight "demonic Possessors" (*graha*), so called because they conceal the true self (autonomous, unitary consciousness) beneath a phantasmagoric pseudo-identity, contaminating and impoverishing it with categories unrelated to its essence: obsession with caste (*jātigraha-*), Vedic learning (*vidyā-*), the social standing of one's family (*kula-*), with orthodox conduct (*ācāra-*), with one's body (*deha-*), one's country (*deśa-*), with conventional virtues (*guṇa-*), and material prosperity (*artha-*) … As that which holds the Brahman back from the path of power it is fear of loss of identity (*ātmasaṅkā-*), of participation in non-Vedic rites (*divyakarmaśaṅkā-*), of impure Tantric incantations (*mantraśaṅkā-*), fear of contact with the forbidden substances that are offered and consumed in Tantric worship (*dravyaśaṅkā-*), fear of contamination by untouchables in caste-promiscuous sexual rites (*jātiśaṅkā-*), fear of entering the cremation grounds and the other impure sites in which the cult of power is celebrated (*sthānaśaṅkā-*), fear of assault or possession by the forces that inhabit these sites and are handled in the Tantric liturgies (*bhūtaśaṅkā-, śarīraśaṅkā-*) and finally, fear of an alien taxonomy of reality (*tattvaśaṅkā-*) …

The above brief delineations, far from being an exhaustive characterization of monistic Kashmir Śaivism, should nevertheless suffice to back the thesis that there is probably a direct line from the transgressive Vrātya culture of ancient India with its monistic tendencies to monistic Kashmir Śaivism of early Middle Ages with its transgressive rituals.

7.5 'Monistic' and transgressive aspects among contemporary Himalayan bards

At least some of the professional musician communities in the Himalayas – among them certainly the *Devāḷ*s (see above p. 47) and the

*Aujī*s[295] – were formerly the main religious specialists, and not the Brahmins who arrived later. According to the *Devāḷ* Nilam Das, they are children of God Brahmā (Zoller 2014: 8). And according to the *Ḍholsāgar* 'Ocean of the drum',[296] the Aujī is the son of Brahmā and his wife Gautamī Devī (see Maheshwar P. Joshi 2011: 23f. and above p. 78f.). According to another myth, also told by Nilam Das (Zoller 2014: 11), the Lord of the World had two disciples who propped the heavy Yogic earrings of the Lord. They were told to become the first *Devāḷ*s. Thus, even though they are typically described as belonging to a low caste, there is evidence that in former times they held a central and high social position. I have been repeatedly told that they neither are members of the caste system nor are they untouchables and clearly, they are masters of divine beings and forces, and of carnivalesque festivals.[297] During religious festivals, which are conducted and controlled by these bards, they are frequently greeted by members of high castes with *namaskār* and obeisance. I have also been repeatedly told that they are the gurus and the deities are their pupils (*celā*) (Zoller 2014: 186). As explained above (p. 112), the *Devāḷ*s are the Good Shepherds of their deities, and as shown above, the ancient Vrātya culture was associated with pastoral vocabulary, and the Vrātya went ahead, whereas the deities followed him.

Above (p. 114) I have referred to Kuiper's observation that in Vedic cosmogony it is typically stated that a support (*pratiṣṭhā́*) or fixed base for the world is missing. In the sacred Bangani creation song *Iśɛ kɔ bɔkhāṇ* 'The prophecy of the Lord (of the World)'[298] the creation of the world is described thus (Zoller 2014: 393ff.): 'The Man without

[295] The term for this group of professional bards derives perhaps < OIA *abhivādya* 'to be respectfully saluted'.

[296] A medieval text, written in a mixture of Pahāṛī and Sanskrit and clearly influenced by Nāth yogi tradition. It deals with mystical aspects of the drum of professional 'low caste' musicians like *Aujī*s. This textual tradition is found in Uttarakhand. See Alter 2003.

[297] For instance, the five-day Bangani festival Ḍaknāćaṇ, during which the Bangani Mahābhārata called *Pɔṇḍuaṇ* is performed, is divided in two parts: the first two days have a solemn atmosphere, whereas the following three days air an indecent and partly lewd atmosphere. All performances, the solemn and the lewd, are carried out by the same *Devāḷ*s (see Zoller 2014).

[298] The song is performed during the first day of Ḍaknāćaṇ (see Zoller 2014 with transcription and translation of the text).

beginning is the Lord of the World'.[299] He creates the son Nārāyaṇ Devtā by pulling out dirt from his heart and throwing it down (2014: 396); he creates the world by 'pulling the world apart like (two) steamed rice pancakes' (ibid.). Nārāyaṇ Devtā is sent by the Lord of the World to measure out and carpenter a location where the just-created earth can be placed. This corresponds with the search for a *pratiṣṭhā́* in Vedic cosmogony.[300] Then, somewhat deviating from the preceding events, Nārāyaṇ Devtā places the earth on top of the World Pillar, the "Acacia catechu (tree) pillar"[301] which stands on the back of the kneeling giant named Kurum. While Kurum is kneeling in the Ocean of Immortality, the World Pillar is flanked by his two daughters Urma and Kurma.[302] In the course of time, the World Pillar gets thinner and thinner.[303] Nārāyaṇ Devtā tells the two sisters that then they should break the pillar. At the same time, he tells the 'Fish-God'[304] to splash ambrosia from the Ocean of Immortality at the trunk of the World Pillar in order to make him whole again.[305] The following depiction of the creation of the world is a visual representation of 'The prophecy of the Lord (of the World)'.

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[299] *ərnadi purkha Iśər Jəgərnāth*. Note above p. 120 the important conceptual difference between *ādi* 'a firstling', and *anādi* 'beginningless'. The prophecy of the Lord says about the Goddess: *upzi goi śibśəkti* 'Śiva-śakti originated' (*upzi* < OIA *útpadyate*'arises, originates' [CDIAL1814]) (Zoller 2014: 394).

[300] *Naraiṇ Debta nɔśi-goɔ ṭhilɛ məsrɛ kaṭdɛ* 'Nārāyaṇ Devtā went to measure and prepare a location' (Nārāyaṇ Devtā go-gone location to-measure to-cut') (Zoller 2014: 519).

[301] *khēr kɛ khɔ̃bɛ śɛ̃ dɛtri ṭikaieri* 'he put the earth on the *khēr* pillar' (*khadira skambha*) (Zoller 2014: 521). The original meaning 'Acacia catechu' has been forgotten. The wood of this tree is known to be very hard.

[302] Sanskrit *kūrma* means (a) 'the earth considered as a tortoise swimming on the waters' and (b) 'Viṣṇu's second incarnation (descent in the form of a tortoise to support the mountain *mandara* at the churning of the ocean'. Kuiper (1983: 32) points out in addition, "Kaśyapa (tortoise), a typical representative of the totality, has two wives." They are Kadrū and Vinatā, already discussed above p. 90ff.

[303] This may have something to do with the fact that below the lower end of the World Pillar is the world of giants, but this is not clear.

[304] *Mɔ̀hkuṇu*, only mentioned here one time.

[305] This small scene shows, besides many other similar scenes in the *Pɔṇḍuaṇ*, the trickster nature of this god.

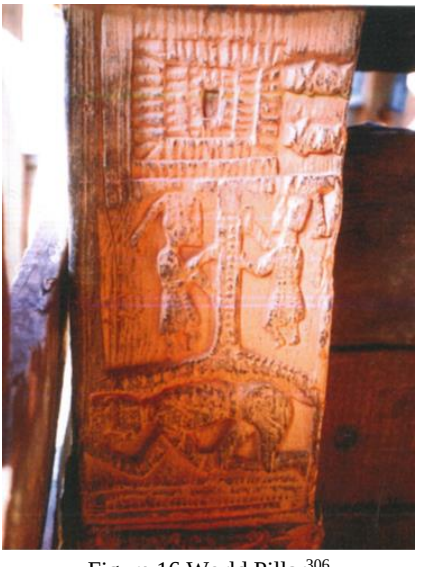

Figure 16 World Pillar[306]

7 Summing up

I have pointed out at the beginning of this essay (p. 16) that the spread of monotheist Christianity through Europe led to the extermination of all paganism (aside from some survivals at the level of folklore), and a similar statement holds true for the spread of Islam through Middle East, North Africa, etc. Both monotheistic religions endeavored also to expand into India, however during different historical periods and under very different socio-political conditions. There is no doubt that these religious expansions did not aim at including the Other, simply because Hinduism was yet another variety of paganism with infidels and heathens. That these expansions were not as successful as elsewhere had the effect that Hinduism could largely preserve its incredible multiplicity, and therefore Romila Thapar could assert that "India is a country of startling cultural survivals…" (1981: 295). Its unique

[306] © C.P. Zoller. This is a photo of a wood relief on a pillar found at the premises of the temple of God Mahāsu in Village Hanol (Dehradun District). One can see the kneeling giant with the World Pillar on his back, which is flanked by the two daughters of the giant.

combination of polytheism[307] and monism saved Hinduism from zealotic missionarism so typical for Christianity and Islam. Undeniably, monotheists are more fanatical than polytheists. It is the former who devote themselves to the persecution of blasphemy, heresy, apostasy, etc.[308]

A well-known criticism of Abrahamic monotheism has been articulated by the philosopher Sloterdijk (already quoted p. 17f.) in his book *God's zeal* (2009). Similar to Norbert Elias, he also sees Abrahamic monotheism engrossed in the process of civilizing, but he confronts its followers with this assertion (2009: 121): "[T]he civilizing process of the monotheisms will be complete once people are ashamed of certain statements made by their respective god." In chapter five he argues that the belief in a "personal" monotheistic God leads inexorably to belief in a monarch-like being who directs the lives of the believers with disastrous results because of "personal, ontological or noetic supremacism" (pp. 85-90). Sloterdijk does not go into certain historical developments that could partly contradict his claims, but he is especially interested in the epistemology of religious belief in monotheism, which he perceives as thoroughly negative. Thus he writes (2009: 22f.):

> At the start of the monotheistic chain of reaction we find a form of contract between a great, serious psyche and a great serious god. There is no need to dwell on his other qualities – his choleric temperament, his irony and his taste for thunderous hyperbole … One of the secrets of the summotheistic[309] alliance certainly lies in the satisfaction of believers that, by submitting to the highest, they can share in some part, however modest, of his sovereignty. Hence the pronounced joy at submission that can be observed among partisans of the strict idea of God. No one can take the step towards such a God without being

[307] It is well known that there were persecutions of Christians under the polytheistic Romans, but the few thousand Christians killed during three centuries are no comparison with the millions of mutual killings among Christians and Muslims in later periods.

[308] Communism and National Socialism are time and again explained as secular variants of monotheist dogmatism and thus were/are equally destructive. According to the philosopher Sloterdijk (2009: chapter seven), communism is the fourth failed form of monotheism in which 'god' was replaced by 'human' as source of authority.

[309] This term denotes the concept of an absolutely supreme, powerful, sole and otherworldly God.

> intoxicated by the desire to serve and belong. Quite often, resolute servants of the One are enraptured by pride at their own humility.

Submission, service, (pseudo)-humility paired with an offensive dynamics and an imperative of growth distinguishes much of the history of Christianity and Islam from the religious history of those – frequently little-known – strands in Hinduism that have been the topic of this essay.

The considerable length of this essay corresponds, if I may say so, with the noteable length of the cultures of Indo-European élite warrior bands following transgressive (and frequently sacral) traditions from the Bronze Age until the Middle Ages or, in peripheral areas of India, more or less until the present age. That is, we are talking about a period of more than 3.000 years. Compared against this, the period of legal blasphemy cases – around 200 years, more or less – looks ludicrously short (and, hopefully, will have remained, at the end, ludicrously short). Possible reasons for pursuing transgressive actions are, naturally, very diverse. Still, we could learn that many of those bygone warrior bands entertained close relationships with the sphere of death. They entertained these relationships because they aimed at transcending death (again through very diverse means, see above p. 31). And they aimed at transcending death by transgressing of and freeing themselves from social and emotional shackles. There is overwhelming evidence in a great number of sources for the very enthusiastic, exuberant and liberating spirit driving those bands. They don't "distinguish good deeds from evil deeds" (see above fn. 190), that is, they have contempt for ordinary moral standards: the Bangani hero Nāg Dev Phɔṇḍaṭɔ "is not at all concerned what he says, whom he kills, doesn't give a damn about the others" (p. 70). All this is completely different from blasphemy matters where there are only cases, which are – in the words of Lawton – "either vexatious, or tyrannical, or they punish people who should have been helped" (above p. 11), in other words, stories about threat, fear, resentment, small-mindedness and unfreedom.

I agree that this bygone world of ecstatic warrior bands is for most of us located behind an insurmountable wall. Yet, reporting Vrātya stories and Kr̥ṣṇa's transgressive adventures protects us against historical amnesia. Moreover, one cannot occupy oneself with questions related to the spectacular rise in blasphemy cases in many

countries in recent years without asking whether there are 'secular relatives' of theses cases. Since blasphemy has much to do – as clarified in the beginning of this essay – with freedom of speech, it is clear that the 'secular relatives' are enemies of freedom of speech. Who are these enemies? It appears as if in public discourse formulations of positions of ethics of conviction[310]are steadily on the rise – especially at the extreme ends of the political spectrum. This can be compared with contemporary forms of religious fundamentalism, and I would argue that both trends – which seem to be somehow intermeshed – endanger our freedom. One of the extremely rare cases known to me from the history of Hinduism where blasphemy in the sense of 'defaming a god' seems to be used is shortly discussed by Edeltraud Harzer (2015: 219). It concerns the Vrātyas who insulted the Wind God and another god (probably Rudra) and "as a result they have to put up with their miserable lot, namely, to live life as destitutes" (ibid.). The passage is taken from the Vrātyastoma passage from the Jaiminīya-brāhmaṇa. Reading it, I cannot avoid the impression that this is simply a case of Brahmanic vexation and botheration which did not have any perceptible impact on the further development of the Vrātya movement that, as we have seen, took mainly place at the fringes of the Vedic world.

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Abbeviations

ATU Aarne-Thompson-Uther classification system (see Antti Aarne)

AVŚ Śaunaka recension of Atharva-veda

Bng. Bangāṇī (West Pahāṛī)

[310] I mean this term in the Weberian sense of inflexible or even rigid political beliefs and dogmas.

Baudh ŚS. Baudhayana Śrauta-sūtra

CDIAL *A comparative dictionary of the Indo-Aryan languages* (Ralf Turner, see Literature)

Deog. Deogārī (West Pahāṛī)

EWA *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen* (Mayrhofer 1986-2001)

Hariv. Harivaṃśa

IEW *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Pokorny 1959)

Jaun. Jaunsārī (West Pahāṛī)

JB. Jaiminīya-brāhmaṇa

JY Jayadrathayāmala

Kathās. Kathāsaritsāgara

KEWA *Kurzes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen* (Mayrhofer 1956-80)

lex. Sanskrit lexicographer

MBh a Sanskrit version of the Mahābhārata

NM Nīlamata(-purāṇa) (see Kanji Lal, Ram Lal and Pandit Jagad-dhara Zadoo)

OIA Old Indo-Aryan

PB. Pañcaviṃśa-brāhmaṇa

PIE Proto-Indo-European

RV Ṛg-veda

Śat. Br.. Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa

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