

# 1 Literary Evidence

## 1.1 The Vedic Literature

Almost all categories of Vedic texts contain references to the guardians of the directions in space. When it comes to the description of rituals, e.g. in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*, these are particularly numerous. Regarding the contexts in which an invocation of the directions and their overlords is crucial, the sphere of royal power and royal consecration has been prominent from the earliest times onwards. However, a consistent development towards the later directional *lokapāla* concept has not taken place in that sphere, and has therefore been largely left aside here.

### 1.1.1 Early Vedic Literature

In the *Rgveda*, the *Atharvaveda* and the *Yajurveda*, there is ample evidence for the number of directions. The latter two moreover contain many passages naming the presiding deity or deities. While certain tendencies and predilections can be discerned, the classifications often vary. Particularly noteworthy are the *Atharvaveda* hymn, later referred to as *āśāpāliyam* (AV I.31), which is addressed to the four directional guardians, and the two so-called *digyukte* hymns of the same text (AV III.26–27). The guardians' protection is also expressly asked for in AV XIX.17. In the *Rgveda* there are possible traces of a rudimentary development in the idea of overlords (*ādhipatis*) of the directions. Apart from rather abstract references to the directional guardians, an interesting visual concept is presented in TS I.8.7 c, where the various groups of gods, together with their leaders, have occupied their seats in the four main directions and in the zenith.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1.1.1.1 Origin and Symbolism of the Directions

In a somewhat later part of the *Rgveda*, the well-known Puruṣasūkta hymn (RV X.90.14), the directions are described as arising from the ears of the *puruṣa*. In another passage (RV X.121.4; cf. AV IV.2.5), they form both arms of a superior being. In later texts, there are references to both these notions.<sup>2</sup> In the same chapter, the directions are regarded as being born from the goddess Aditi (RV X.72.3), immediately after existence itself came forth. This stresses the elemental nature of the regions in the world system for which space is a natural precondition.

A highly interesting ritual aspect which throws light on their conceptual importance is the ritual “mounting of the regions” (*digvyāsthāpanam*), which is done with the desire to attain the heavenly state. Thus the directions are conceived as forming the entrance to the celestial region, from which the whole world can be mastered.<sup>3</sup> In connection with this, it has been maintained that, on a microcosmic level, “the regions (points of the compass) correspond to the covers of the embryo.”<sup>4</sup>

#### 1.1.1.2 The Classification of the Directions

The Vedic texts offer an interesting diversity in the numbers and positions of the classified directions, starting with the commonly mentioned four<sup>5</sup> or sometimes five<sup>6</sup> regions (*diś-*, *pradīś-*, or *āśā*) of the *Rgveda* and the *Atharvaveda*. It is obvious that the four

regions, which are rarely specified (except, e.g. RV VII.72.5), but without doubt represent the four main directions, predominate in the *Rgveda*, where the earth is also said to be four-cornered (RV X.58.3). This number further corresponds to the number of heavenly rivers or oceans which are envisaged as originating in the highest heaven<sup>7</sup>. In later Vedic scriptures, the number four as referring to the total number of directions appears less frequently.

Regarding the number five, which includes the central axis as a point or direction, “It has long been observed that the predominant role of the number five in the Veda (cf. *pāñca jānāḥ*, *pāñca kṛṣṭīḥ*, *pāñca carṣaṇīḥ*, *pāñca kṣīṭīḥ*) is due to the fact that the five points of the compass (*pāñca pradīśaḥ* [RV IX.86.29]) ‘represent in the Vedic scriptures the entire world.’ When five points are occasionally mentioned, that in the middle, where the speaker stands (*madhyatāḥ* RS.[RV] X.42.11), denotes the fifth.”<sup>8</sup> Five coordinates of space continue to appear in later Vedic texts (e.g. ŚB IX.4.3.10), the fifth point being the zenith, however. This concept is also rooted in the Yajurvedic tradition.<sup>9</sup>

The *Atharvaveda*, besides mentioning four or five directions, quite often refers to six directions<sup>10</sup> (including a “fixed region” or centre – *dhruvā dik*,<sup>11</sup> and the zenith – *ūrdhva dik*), which are generally governed by certain *ādhipatis* (see below).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also JB II.141 and other passages mentioned by KUIPER 1979: 57, referring to the *daivī sabhā* or *daivī samsād*.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. concerning the senses in the Vedānta philosophy, the directions preside over the ear (MONIER-WILLIAMS 1899: 167).

<sup>3</sup> TS I.8.13.1–2; MS II.6.10; VS X.10–14 (cf. ŚB V.4.1.3–7), and other passages quoted by HEESTERMAN 1957: 103. This rite is essential to the royal consecration, and is completed by a ritual which symbolizes the stepping down (*ibid.*: 196–199). In the ŚB, an explanation for the ascent of the regions has been provided: “it is the seasons, the year, that he thereby makes him ascend; and having ascended the seasons, the year, he is high, high above everything here” (ŚB V.4.1.8, after EGGELING). Most revealing is the statement in MS 4.4.4: *dīśo vāi svargō lokāḥ* – “the heaven is the quarters of space” (cf. ŚB VIII.6.1.4). In ChU III.13.1–5 the five openings of the heart, situated in the five directions and equated with particular deities and senses, represent the “doorkeepers of heaven” (*svargasya lokasya dvārapāḥ*).

<sup>4</sup> HEESTERMAN 1957: 38 (cf. 105). He continues: “The gods presiding over the points of the compass and the *rākṣases* driven off by them ‘from the regions’ seem to coincide with the embryonic covers, whereof they then represent between them the protecting and the opposing dangerous aspects.”

<sup>5</sup> RV I.164.42; VII.35.8; 72.5; X.19.8; 51.9; 58.4; 128.1. AV I.11.2; 31.1; II.10.3; XI.2.10; XII.1.4&55.

<sup>6</sup> RV II.13.10; IX.86.29. AV I.30.4; III.4.2; 20.5; VIII.9.15; XIII.3.6. VS XIV.13; XVI.64–66; XXII.24.

<sup>7</sup> LÜDERS 1959: 285–288. KUIPER (1975: 110) rather regards them as coming down from the central mountain which represents the *axis mundi*.

<sup>8</sup> KUIPER 1962: 148. RV X.42.11 (“Brhaspati soll uns von hinten und von oben, von unten vor dem Übelwollenden schützen, Indra soll uns von vorn und in der Mitte [...] einen Ausweg schaffen.” [after Geldner]) quoted by him does not enumerate all the directions but refers only to two coordinates on the horizontal plane and three coordinates on the central axis (!). Interestingly, Brhaspati remains associated with the zenith until Brahṃā is assigned to this position. If Indra’s position “in front” is interpreted as an eastern one, this may be a very early hint at the direction which is later regarded as undisputably his (at first quite rarely, as in AV XVIII.3.25). The centre has also sometimes been attributed to him in later texts, as in *VādhŚS* L61 (CALAND 1927: 173).

<sup>9</sup> E.g. TS V.5.8; VII.1.15; MS II.8.9; III.12.8; VS X.10–14; IX.32; XIV.13; XV.10–14. “The normal term for the zenith in the Yajurveda is *brhāvī dik* – ‘the high region’, perhaps with assonance of Brhaspati.” (KUIPER 1979: 57) Here also, KUIPER expresses his opinion that *dhruvā dik* (TS: *iyān dik*) denotes the nadir (see below).

<sup>10</sup> AV IV.11.1; 20.2; X.7.35; XIII.3.1. This division of space has perhaps been anticipated in RV VI.47.3.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. KUIPER 1979: 57. Imagining the “fixed”, solid earth, a reference to the nadir seems to be implied. However, the expression *avācī dik* (MS II.13.21) which definitely points to the nadir, occurs only rarely.

Of particular interest are the cases where seven directions<sup>12</sup> have been described. While one would naturally be inclined to count the cardinal directions, the centre, the nadir and the zenith, a “trackless” or probably “midway” (*vyadhvā*) quarter has been added to the fixed and the upward quarter in AV IV.40.1–7, which is also implied in AV IV.14.7–8. In the latter passage, most interestingly, the directions are described as being analogous to the bodily parts of a sacrificial goat<sup>13</sup>. The “trackless” quarter refers to *antāriḅṣa* (air space), which can be deduced from the fact that Vāyu presides over both.<sup>14</sup>

The classification of seven directions in AV XV.6.1–9 transcends our present-day notions about space and again shows that the directions were in ancient times closely related to the *lokas*, the particular spheres in space. The directions, called *dhruvā dīk*, *ūrdhva dīk*, *ūttamā dīk*, *brhatī dīk*, *pāramā dīk*, *nādiṣṭhā dīk*, and *ānāvṛttā dīk*, all seem to be lined up on the central axis and extend far into space, which is practically inconceivable. The last-mentioned region is associated with Aditi, a goddess, who is elsewhere (RV X.5.7) described as abiding in the highest heaven.

Further examples of different classification concepts include a mention of eight directions in the *Atharvaveda-Pariṣiṣṭa*.<sup>15</sup> According to LUDWIG (1888: 229, 231), RV I.52.11 and VIII.90.13 refer to ten directions. This cannot be proven, however. It is still interesting to note that ten directions, which already correspond to the latest development, are quite explicitly enumerated in AV V.10.1–7. The concept becomes perfectly clear in ŚB VI.2.2.34, VI.8.2.12,<sup>16</sup> and ṢaḍvB IV.4.

### 1.1.1.3 The Early Assignment of the Directions

Here again, F.B.J. KUIPER (1979) has done intensive research and has covered almost every aspect of early classification. According to his view, “In Vedic cosmogony [...] *ādhipati* is the specific term for a god or group of gods who, in the system of classification, have the function of protector(s) of one of the points of the compass. As such they exist as soon as the Cosmos arises from Chaos, for the world order is inconceivable without a system of classification.”<sup>17</sup> In his opinion, the assignment of particular groups of gods, the *vasus*, *rudras*, and *ādityas*, to particular directions in the *Atharvaveda* and other slightly later Vedic texts is closely related to this sequence, in which they have already been referred to in the *Rgveda*.<sup>18</sup> Thus, “The Vasus are always associated with the East, the Rudras with the South and, with rare exceptions, the Ādityas with the West” (*ibid.*), which implies a clockwise order. For the north, for the zenith, and, if at all mentioned, for the centre or nadir, the classification differs.

In tracing the antecedents of the later *dīkpāla* group, however, it is of particular interest to focus on the single deities associated with the directions. With rare exceptions, *e.g.*, where all the directions are allocated to only one god<sup>19</sup> or to the months of the year,<sup>20</sup> different individual gods or groups of gods generally preside over the directions. Often they are accompanied by a “defender” (*rakṣitī*), an “arrestor of arrows” (*hetinām pratidhartī*), or just “arrows” (*iṣāvah*). The position of a defender is never held by a main god, but is mostly assigned to serpents.<sup>21</sup> The terminology already indicates that a magical protection was being sought.

While some general tendencies in the assignment of the directions are obvious, such as the allotment of the east to Agni, the south to Indra, the west to Varuṇa, the north to Soma, and the zenith to Bṛhaspati, there is no consistency in the respective texts. Exceptions are ubiquitous. In the distributional tables, the evidence from the

*Atharvaveda* and from some Yajurvedic texts has been separately listed. For the sake of clarity, the mythical names of the directions as well as those of the defenders, listed by KUIPER (1979: 56–57), have been omitted here.

Single gods are quite often combined with a group of deities with which their relationship is not apparent at first glance. Some of the conventional combinations are Agni with the *vasus*, Indra with the *rudras*<sup>22</sup>, Yama, originally the first man who died, together with the *pitrs*, the deceased, and Bṛhaspati with the *viśve devāḥ*.<sup>23</sup> Since Varuṇa is regarded as the first-born *āditya* (KUIPER 1979: 39), his association with this group is only natural. However, the exchange of groups and other alterations in the classification system point to the fact that the assignment of the directions in the Vedic texts was subjected to priestly speculation and hardly reflected a living tradition. This is in particular indicated by the fact that Rudra, who is

<sup>12</sup> A well-known instance is RV IX.114.3, starting with *saptā dīṣo nānāsūryāḥ saptā hōtāra rtvijāḥ* “Seven are the directions, each with its own sun. Seven are the ceremonians and hotars.” (BRERETON 1981: 4) The first part is repeated in TĀ I.7.4, and an equation of seven regions with seven *hotrs* has been made in ŚB VII.4.1.20 and X.2.6.2–3. A mention of seven regions further occurs in ŚB IX.5.2.8. Another enigmatic case is RV I.22.16: *āto devā avantu no yāto viṣṇur vicakramē, prthivyāḥ saptā dhāmabhiḥ* “Von dort aus sollen uns die Götter helfen, von wo aus Viṣṇu ausgeschnitten ist durch die sieben Stätten der Erde.” (FALK 1987: 128) Although the term *dhāman* does not mean “direction” (GONDA 1967: *passim*, p. 42 commenting on this passage), some kind of solar symbolism is possibly shared by both passages, as the second passage may refer to the seven different monthly positions of the midday sun during a year (FALK *ibid.*).

<sup>13</sup> In this case it becomes obvious that *dhruvā dīk* denotes the centre.

<sup>14</sup> Vāyu governs the “midway” quarter in AV IV.40.6. He is described as *ādhipati* of *antāriḅṣa* in AV V.24.8 and TS III.4.5, cf. also J.R. JOSHI 1973: 234, 239, 241. In ŚSS VI.3.6 Vāyu shares this position with *vṛṣṭi* (rain). This passage refers to the same division into seven regions, the intermediate one explicitly being called *antarikṣa*, the lower one *prthivī* (earth).

<sup>15</sup> As in the following *Atharvaveda* passage, the intermediate directions are only treated collectively. In this case however, reference to the fear of particular perils in the different regions may have led to the omission of the fixed and the upper quarter.

<sup>16</sup> Regarding this passage, doubts about the general validity of the statement may arise as two verses before, the number of regions is only nine (ŚB VI.8.2.10).

<sup>17</sup> KUIPER 1979: 27. See also: 52–57. The term *ādhipati*, generally translated as “overlord”, is also used for deities presiding over certain realms, groups of beings or even abstract entities (particularly AV V.24; TS III.4.5). It is interesting to find such references combined with descriptions of the *ādhipatis* of the regions as in AV XV.14.

<sup>18</sup> “the order in which the three groups were enumerated was fixed ever since the Rīgveda. [...] The first question that arises is whether these fixed associations [with the directions] were due to the fixed order of the three groups [...] or if, inversely, the association was from the beginning a given fact and thus led to enumerating the groups in the order of the classification system. As far as I can see, the second alternative is correct” (KUIPER 1979: 47).

<sup>19</sup> In TS II.4.14 (cf. AV VI.98.3), different aspects of Indra govern the four main directions, while in TS V.5.7, only Rudra is addressed in five regions. The latter instance is similar to AV XV.5.1–7, where six directions plus the intermediate directions are assigned to seven different names of Rudra.

<sup>20</sup> AV 4.1–6 mentions two months respectively as guardians (*gopitī*) for each of the six directions. The only deity referred to is “Āditya” for the zenith.

<sup>21</sup> *E.g.* AV III.27; TS V.5.10.

<sup>22</sup> This seems to be confined to the *Yajurveda* (see table II) and can be explained on the one hand by Indra’s close association with the *maruts* (HAZRA 1981: 115–140), which are also called the *rudras*, and on the other hand by the rather habitual enumeration of gods, in which the *rudras* followed the *vasus* and Indra followed Agni. For the *rudras*, cf. ARBMAN 1922: 156–7: “Doch kennt [...] die spätvedische Literatur einen Begriff *rudrāḥ*, der sich nicht mit Rudras Scharen identifizieren lässt, nämlich jene Rudras, die im Ritual allein oder zusammen mit den Vasus [...] immer in gänzlich farblosen, schablonenmässigen Zusammenstellungen erscheinen. Diese Rudras haben mit Rudra nichts gemein, lassen sich aber ebenso wenig mit den Maruts identifizieren.”

<sup>23</sup> “The nature and the function of the *viśve devāḥ* are still obscure, although they were clearly connected with the idea of totality” states KUIPER 1979: 50. For a recent discussion of the encompassing nature of this group see BODEWITZ 1973: 87–89, n. 26.

**Table I** – Directional Guardians mentioned in the *Atharvaveda*

<i>Atharvaveda</i>	East	South	West	North	<i>dhruvā dik</i>	<i>vyadvā dik</i>	Zenith	Intermediate quarters
III.26.1-6	<i>agnī</i>	<i>kāma</i>	<i>āpa</i>	<i>vāta</i>	<i>oṣadhīḥ</i>	–	Brhaspati	–
III.27.1-6	Agni, <i>ādityas</i>	Indra, <i>pitrs</i>	Varuṇa, <i>ānnam</i>	Soma, <i>āsani</i>	Viṣṇu, <i>oṣadhīḥ</i>	–	Brhaspati, <i>varṣām</i>	–
IV.40.1-8	Agni	Yama	Varuṇa	Soma	Bhūmi	Vāyu	Sūrya	<i>brāhman</i>
XII.3.7-11	<i>agnī, dāmpatī</i>	Yama, <i>pitrs</i>	Soma	<i>pānka</i>	Aditi	–	–	–
XII.3.55-60	Agni, <i>Āditya</i>	Indra, Yama	Varuṇa, <i>ānnam</i>	Soma, <i>āsani</i>	Viṣṇu, <i>oṣadhīḥ</i>	–	Brhaspati, <i>varṣām</i>	–
XV.2.1-4	<i>ādityas</i>	<i>paśavāḥ</i> , etc.	Varuṇa	Soma	–	–	–	–
XV.14.1-5,9,12	<i>maruts</i>	Indra	Varuṇa	Soma	Viṣṇu	–	Brhaspati	Parameṣṭhī
XVIII.3.25-29	Indra, <i>maruts</i>	Dhātṛ, Nirṛti	Aditi, <i>ādityas</i>	Soma, <i>viśve devāḥ</i>	Dhartṛ	–	Savitṛ	–
XIX.17.1-10	Agni, <i>vasus</i> , Vāyu, <i>antārikṣa</i>	Soma, <i>rudras</i> , Varuṇa, <i>ādityas</i>	Sūrya, Prthivī, <i>āpa, oṣadhīḥ</i>	Viśvakarman, <i>saptaṛṣis</i> , Indra, <i>maruts</i>	Prajāpati, <i>pratiṣṭhā</i>	–	Brhaspati, <i>viśve devāḥ</i>	–

**Table II** – Directional Guardians mentioned in the *Yajurveda*

<i>Yajurveda</i>	East	South	West	North	Zenith	Centre/Nadir
<i>MS</i> II.8.9; <i>KS</i> XVII.8; <i>KapS</i> XXVI.7	<i>vasus</i> , Agni	<i>rudras</i> , Indra	<i>ādityas</i> , Soma	<i>maruts</i> , Varuṇa	<i>viśve devāḥ</i> , Brhaspati	–
<i>MS</i> II.13.21	Agni	Indra	Soma	Varuṇa	Brhaspati	Viṣṇu ( <i>avācī dik</i> )
<i>TS</i> I.8.7	Agni	Yama	Savitṛ	Varuṇa	Brhaspati	–
<i>TS</i> I.8.13	Agni	Indra	<i>maruts</i>	Mitra, Varuṇa	Brhaspati	–
<i>TS</i> IV.3.3	Agni	Indra	<i>viśve devāḥ</i>	Mitra, Varuṇa	Brhaspati	–
<i>TS</i> V.3.4	Agni, <i>vasus</i>	Dhātṛ, <i>ādityas</i>	Mitra, Aditi	Indra, Savitṛ	–	–
<i>TS</i> V.5.8	Agni	Indra	Savitṛ	Mitra, Varuṇa	Brhaspati	–
<i>TS</i> V.5.9	<i>vasus, rudras</i>	Yama, <i>pitrs</i>	<i>ādityas, viśve devāḥ</i>	Dyutāna Māruta, <i>maruts</i>	“the gods, whose chief is Indra, [...] below and [...] above”	–
<i>TS</i> V.5.10	Agni	Indra	Soma	Varuṇa	Brhaspati	Yama ( <i>iyam dik</i> )
<i>TS</i> VI.1.5	Pathyā Svasti	Agni	Soma	Savitṛ	Aditi	–
<i>VS</i> IX.35	Agni	Yama	<i>viśve devāḥ</i>	Mitra, Varuṇa, or <i>maruts</i>	Soma	–
<i>VS</i> XV.10-14; ( <i>ŚB</i> VIII.6.1.5-9)	<i>vasus</i> , Agni	<i>rudras</i> , Indra	<i>ādityas</i> , Varuṇa	<i>maruts</i> , Soma	<i>viśve devāḥ</i> , Brhaspati	–

traditionally associated with the north, never functions as a guardian of that direction in early classifications.<sup>24</sup>

The tables show that the traditions of the *Atharvaveda* and the *Yajurveda* differ to a certain extent. In both the Vedas, Agni and Indra quite regularly appear, on the east and on the south respectively. However, Soma and Varuṇa generally occupy the west and the north in the *Atharvaveda*, but tend to have exchanged positions in the *Yajurveda*, the latter often being conjoined with Mitra. Gods which are less regularly included, such as Savitṛ (west, north, or zenith) and Dhātṛ (south or north)<sup>25</sup>, often vary in their positions. The goddess Aditi seems to have a certain connection with the central parts of the coordinate system (*dhruvā dik* and zenith), but she is also found on the west. The few cases in which deities are confined to one region are Yama and the *pitrs*<sup>26</sup> for the south and Brhaspati for the zenith.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Admittedly, the numerous references to the north being Rudra’s direction generally come from later phases of the Vedic literature: *TS* II.6.6,5; *ŚB* I.7.3,20; II.6.2,5&7; V.4.2,10; IX.1.1,10; *ĀpDhS* II.2.4,6; *ĀpŚS* XV.11,7; *KauṣB* II.3. However, it can be assumed that this traditional association is older. The only mention of Rudra as the sole guardian of the north is made in a passage of the fragments of the *VādhŚS* (CALAND 1927: 173).

<sup>25</sup> The latter evidence comes from *ŚB* XIV.1.3,22.

<sup>26</sup> KUIPER 1979: 56, n. 183 proposes a taboo as “the main reason why the *Pitāras* are but seldom mentioned in the system of classification in connection with the region that is characteristically theirs.” However, the observation already made in the case of Rudra may also be applied here, viz. the general exclusion of folk beliefs from the ritualistic connotations of the directions. Regarding the latter, it is highly significant that he is treated separately in systems in which all the regions are exclusively ruled by him (cf. note 19).

<sup>27</sup> SCHMIDT 1968: 87–89 has argued for the priority of Savitṛ as guardian of the zenith (as in *AV* XVIII.3,29).

Regarding the whole situation from the point of view of the later development, it is interesting to note that in the *Atharvaveda*, with the rather regular assignment of the west to Varuṇa and the north to Soma, the later convention was already known. Yama has made his appearance in both the *Atharvaveda* and *Yajurveda* as being associated with the south. In the following development, he must have ousted Indra, who also quite regularly occupied this direction. The latter's shift to the east, which here occurs only once (*AV* XVIII.3.25), has not been initiated as yet. Viṣṇu for the centre or the nadir<sup>28</sup> still keeps some mythological connection with Ananta, who later guards the latter, and Bṛhaspati can be regarded as the precursor of Brahmā as guardian of the zenith. The intermediate regions have so far only been treated collectively. However, their mention shows that they had not escaped the attention of the early priests.

### 1.1.2 Evidence from the Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, Upaniṣads and Sūtras

The literary stratum consisting of ritual and philosophic texts of c. first millennium B.C., viz. the Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, Upaniṣads and Sūtras, witnesses the advent of the *lokapāla* concept, although it appears only in a later phase and even then sporadically. The main emphasis in the treatment of the directions is still placed on the continuation of the earlier traditions, however (see tables III–VI). In this period, the assignment of the directions to particular deities becomes much more lucid than before, which is due to the theological development reflected in the scriptures. The number of classified directions generally remains five to six, with the rare inclusion of the intermediate directions, to which groups of deities are often assigned<sup>29</sup>. Interestingly, these *avāntarādiks* are, in *ŚB* XI.1.6.27, associated with the *patnīsaṃnyājas*, i.e. offerings to the wives of the gods, e.g. Indrāṇī, Rudrāṇī, Śarvāṇī, and Bhavāṇī (*PGS* III.8.10). Thus it becomes clear that the substantially different treatment of the intermediate directions has not been resolved in the majority of the later Vedic scriptures. A few novel traits of directional classification will be introduced here. With all the emerging objects of classification, it is often extremely difficult to judge, when they were newly introduced, and secondly, whether they could have been the cause for a change in the traditional systems of directional assignment.

#### 1.1.2.1 The Tripartite World (*triloka*) and the Directions

Apart from the classification of the “powers of the sacrifice (metres, stomas, sāmans) and the forces which constitute between them the social cosmos (brahman, kṣattra, viś, supplemented by force and lustre)”<sup>30</sup>, the fundamental divisions of space, viz. the earth, the intermediate region, heaven<sup>31</sup> and “the quarters”<sup>32</sup>, are for their part assigned to the directions in a clockwise order, starting from the east. The divisions of the tripartite world and the directions, which – at least partly – penetrate these divisions and possibly even transcend them<sup>33</sup>, are thus invoked, always with a view to mastering them (*GONDA* 1966: 51–53). This highly complex system of spatial reference, which might already have been implied in the earlier Vedic tradition, largely accounts for the distribution of directional guardians. Thus, the most common order of Agni (east), Indra (south), Varuṇa (west) and Soma (north) can be easily explained by the fact that Agni is classified as a terrestrial deity, Indra as governing *antarikṣa* (together with Vāyu), and Varuṇa as an *āditya*, thus belonging to heaven by definition<sup>34</sup> (*MACDONELL* 1897: 43, 54, 88). Soma has ancient connections with the directions, a fact which qualifies him as their leader.<sup>35</sup> A conscious application of this dis-

tributional system, however, is only found in *ŚB* VIII.1.1.4–1.2.7 and 6.1.16–20, where Agni, Vāyu, Āditya and *dīśaḥ* – the directions (respectively, *yajña* – sacrifice) are assigned to the directions in a clockwise order. The contrast between this and other, often varying assignments further shows that this “multidimensional” system of spatial reference must not necessarily be presupposed in every single case. However, at this stage, the sequence implies a progress towards the concept of totality.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>28</sup> When *SCHMIDT* 1968: 87 states this as a general rule, he is criticized by *KUIPER* (1971: 283). According to the latter's view, Varuṇa is the supporter of the world axis *par excellence* (as in *RV* VIII.41.10). Kuiper continues: “Nowhere, however, is Viṣṇu said to support the *skambhā*-. He rather is the pillar, and his natural place would be in its middle, as the connecting link between underworld and upperworld.”

<sup>29</sup> *ŚB* I.8.1.40 assigns the *pitrs* to the intermediate directions, *ṢaḍB* IV.4 lists the *ādityas*, *rudras*, *maruts* and *vasus* as presiding over the same.

<sup>30</sup> *HEESTERMAN* 1957: 104. Cf. *VS* X.10-14.

<sup>31</sup> *E.g.*, as referred to by *DANDEKAR* 1979: 300, the fundamental threefold division with the respective presiding deities Agni (earth), Vāyu (*antarikṣa*) and Sūrya/Āditya (heaven), has been expressed in *RV* X.158.1. For the “three worlds” *bhūr* (= *prthivī*), *bhuvas* (= *antarikṣa*), and *svar* (= *dyaus*) see *WAYMAN* 1986.

<sup>32</sup> These four entities are often mentioned as being gained, in this succession, by the four steps of Viṣṇu, e.g. *TS* IV.2.1 a; *ŚB* VI.7.2.13-16.

<sup>33</sup> Here we touch on a complex problem which has to be tackled in a two ways. Firstly, it must be asked whether all known directions or only four are to be counted, and secondly, the real relationship between the *lokas* and the *dīśas* must be established. Another basic question concerns the principles of classification. Regarding the classification of four items, it has been stated: “The fourth element often represents something which on the one hand is added to a threefold totality and on the other hand includes the three preceding items” (*BODEWITZ* 1982: 47, cf. *HEESTERMAN* 1957: 34–37), and, “The fourth can, by its inherent numerical value, be heterogeneous, represent another concept and connect this in some way or other with the three” (*GONDA* 1976: 117). Although in most cases the number of directions has not been specified, according to *KLAUS* (1986: 27, 48–50) and *GONDA* (1976: 117) the (four) directions denote only the horizontal extension of the universe, without including the *lokas*. That the relationship between the divisions of the tripartite world and the directions is highly complex and somewhat paradoxical, has been summarized by *GONDA* 1966: 110, n. 17: “The quarters are said to be both inside and outside these ‘worlds’ (*ŚB*. 6.5,2,7), but elsewhere (7.3,1,13) they are in these ‘worlds’ (cf. 6.5,2,6), or between them [viz. heaven and earth] (7.3,1,27); 8,1,2,4 they are said to be ‘above everything here’ and at the same time to be identical with the *svarga loka* [heaven]; according to *ŚB* 6.5,2,22; 13,6,1,3 all this (universe) is as great as the *lokas* and the regions (*dīśaḥ*).”

<sup>34</sup> *E.g.* *GONDA* 1974: 220. However, Varuṇa never presides over heaven. An attempt to replace this god in the west by Sūrya, the ruler of the heavenly realm, had already been made in *AV* XIX.17.5, and Āditya takes this position in *ŚB* VIII.1.2.1 and VIII.6.1.18.

<sup>35</sup> *RV* IX.86.29: “Dein sind diese fünf Weltgegenden in ganzer Ausdehnung” (after Geldner). *AitB* I.14 relates how the gods and demons had fights in the four directions, the latter always being victorious. Then, “They contended for the north-eastern quarter; they were not conquered thence. This is the unconquered quarter [...] ‘Through our lack of a king they conquer us; [...]’ They made Soma king; with Soma as king they conquered all the quarters” (after Keith). According to *BODEWITZ* 1982: 50–51, the quarters and Soma/Candramas/moon, together with other members, share the fourth position in the cosmic classification. A more direct connection between them has been described by *GONDA* (1967: 74–75): “By performing the ritual act called *nigrābha* [...] the gods made Soma ‘consort’ (copulate) with the regions as his ‘mate’ (*mithunena*), his ‘loved resort’ (*EGGELING*: *ŚB*. 3,9,4,20). Here the question arises as to how the quarters of the universe could at the same time be spouse and dhāma [abode] of Soma.”

<sup>36</sup> This seems to be implied by the assignment of the *viśve devāḥ* (“all the gods”) and the dual deity Mitrāvaruṇau (cf. note 54) to the west or to the north. The zenith, by its very position, represents the totality. An interesting succession of heavenly strata is described in *KauṣU* I.2–3, where the deceased person has to pass successively through the worlds of Candramas, Agni, Vāyu, Varuṇa, Indra and Prajāpati, to reach the world of Brahman. With some modifications, it is possible to apply this succession to the system of directional classification, starting with the north, proceeding clockwise, and again touch the north (on a higher level) with Indra. Either both Prajāpati and Brahman have to be located in the zenith, or the latter has to be imagined above the other, or Brahman's world is here conceived of as transcending space. The cosmographical inconsistency lying in the fact that Agni is enumerated after Candramas has been noted by *THIEME* 1951–52: 33. Our interpretation would explain this succession. Curiously, comparing this succession with the known types of classification, it is also possible to start with Candramas/Soma on the south and proceed anti-clockwise, with Agni on the east, Vāyu on the north, and so on.

### 1.1.2.2 The Classes of Beings and the *varṇas*

The classes of beings are not entirely new objects of classification<sup>37</sup> and their assignment still varies to a certain extent. The *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* alone offers three different versions of their directional distribution. In the usual clockwise order, the gods, *pitṛs* and men are allocated to the east, south and west, respectively (*ŚB* I.2.5.17). The second version substitutes the serpents (*sarpa*) for the human beings on the west,<sup>38</sup> while the latter have been shifted to the north (*ŚB* III.1.1.6–7). In the third version, the gods and *pitṛs* again keep their positions, while “cattle” (*paśu*) comes on the west, “offspring” (*prajā*) on the north; the sacrificer (*yajamāna*) himself is referred to in connection with the zenith (*ŚB* XIV 2.2.28). From these concepts, which may well have been popularly accepted, it is not difficult to arrive at a valuation of particular directions. The north and the east were generally regarded as “positive”, while the south and the west were regarded as “negative” (cf. MOODY 1980: 80). The most prominent positive valuation often occurs for the combination of the north and the east, the intermediate direction of the north-east which has been characterized as the direction of gods and men.<sup>39</sup> The unrivalled positive quality of a direction which was practically excluded from the classificatory scheme (and complemented by the extremely negative association of the south-west, Nirṛti’s direction) may have formed one of the reasons for the eventual break-up of the four-plus-two scheme of spatial reference.<sup>40</sup>

The *varṇas* are also not entirely new objects of classification. The *VS* X.10–12 refers to the three superior social classes starting with the highest one in the east. Although the directions are not expressly mentioned in *ŚB* X.4.1.9 and *JB* I.68–69, Agni is recognized as the deity of the *brāhmaṇa*, Indra as the lord of the *kṣatriya* and the *viśve devāḥ* as governing the *vaiśya*, while no deity is associated with the *śūdra*.<sup>41</sup>

### 1.1.2.3 The Sacrificial Ground

Considering the overwhelming importance of the layout of the sacrificial ground<sup>42</sup> and the positions of the priests on the one hand and the directional classifications on the other, a close connection between the two should be expected. A high degree of directional determination in the ritual actions moreover provides innumerable hints as to the directional symbolism involved. However, the different levels of symbolism and the differing traditions both make the whole sphere of ritualism a difficult field of enquiry. Thus the layout of the sacrificial ground offers a safe starting point.

The three fires, *viz.* *gārhapatya* (west-circular), *āhavanīya* (east – square) and *dakṣiṇāgni* (south – semi-circular) through their distinct forms reflect connections with the divisions of the tripartite world (discussed under 1.1.2.1). The most common assignment is *gārhapatya* – earth, *āhavanīya* – heaven, *dakṣiṇāgni* – intermediate region, while the fire-less space on the north may stand for chaos or the “fourth world” (*ŚB* I.2.4.12–14).<sup>43</sup> During an interesting ritual, the *pañcedhmīya*, which is performed at the close of the *cāturmāsya* year, the *āhavanīya* fire is divided and pushed out to the four points of the compass, leaving a fifth fire in the middle.<sup>44</sup> This practice was meant to drive off the demons from the main directions.

Regarding the priests’ positions, it is generally accepted that they are symbolically connected with particular directions.<sup>45</sup> The assignment propagated in *ŚB* XIII (5.4.24; 6.2.18; 7.1.13) is: *hotṛ* – east; *brahman* – south; *adhvaryu* – west; *udgātṛ* – north. Some other instances of spatio-directional significance can only be speculated about: the *patni*’s (wife’s) seat on the south-west, which has been

discussed in connection with Aditi’s position,<sup>46</sup> the rubbish (*utkara*) heap on the north, which might bear an allusion to Rudra’s position.<sup>47</sup> Curiously, the north-east is characterized by aquatic symbolism, as the *prañitāḥ* water-pot is located there.<sup>48</sup>

A relationship between the directional guardians (*goptr̥s*) and particular areas in the elaborate sacrificial ground is established in the *Vādihūlasūtra* (table VI). Interestingly, the enumeration is anti-clockwise, and the three *lokas* are equated with the *vedi*, *uttaravedi*, and *uttaranābhi*. Thus they are excluded from any directional implication.<sup>49</sup> In descriptions of the *agnicayana* ritual, during which an elaborate altar of cosmographic significance is constructed, the

<sup>37</sup> An earlier stage of this classification is met with in *TS* I.6.5 d: Gods and priests (*rtvijah*) are allocated to the east, months and the *pitṛs* to the south, houses and cattle to the west, waters, plants and trees to the north and the sacrifice, the year, and the lord of sacrifice (*yajñapati*) to the zenith. Another passage from this text distributes the gods, *pitṛs*, men and *rudras* to the east, south, west, and north respectively (*TS* VI.1.1.1).

<sup>38</sup> A close relationship between the serpents and Varuṇa has been postulated by SHENDE 1948: 281 and JOHNSEN 1965–66: 260–261.

<sup>39</sup> *E.g.* *ŚB* VI.6.2.3. It is added that the gateway to heaven is also located here. Exceptionally, according to *TĀ* I.23, the men and the gods are both assembled in the zenith, while in *MaitrU* VII.6 the men share the nadir with relatively inferior beings (see table V).

<sup>40</sup> This is also corroborated by the exceptional assignment of particular deities or groups of deities to the north-east (table VI). On the material level, the importance of the summer solstice may have increased during this period, as advocated by FALK (1997: 87). The sunrise on the north-east announces the advent of the rainy season.

<sup>41</sup> The directional order “Agni – Indra – *viśve devāḥ*” occurs in *ŚB* V.5.1, while the *deva-less* character of the north is also known from *ŚB* VIII.1.2.4.

<sup>42</sup> Sketches are available in EGGELING 1885: 475; SEN 1978: plans 3–6; STAAL 1983: inside of the book cover.

<sup>43</sup> MOODY 1980: 83–87. The different order is highly significant with regard to the matters discussed under section 1.1.2.1, where the enumeration starts with “the earth” on the east (this is still maintained by THIEME 1966: 89). Then the sequence of the three *lokas* would start with the west and proceed anti-clockwise (see below). Exceptionally however, *antarikṣa* is represented by the – generally fire-less – space on the north: In *ChU* III.13.1–5 (table VI), Candra is allotted to the south, terrestrial and celestial gods to the west and east respectively, and a typical *antarikṣa* deity, Parjanya, to the north. However, a linear arrangement of “worlds” is favoured by *ŚB* VI.1.2.23, *antarikṣa* being represented by the *dhiṣṇya* fires which are situated on the central axis, between the *gārhapatya* (representing earth) and the *āhavanīya* (representing heaven). In any case, different interpretations may have existed side by side. For further reflections on the spatial symbolism of the sacrificial fires see SPARREBOOM/HEESTERMAN 1989: 119–123.

<sup>44</sup> HEESTERMAN 1957: 31–32, 37–39. It is likely that the object of this fivefold partition, the *āhavanīya*, symbolizes the identity of the directions with the heaven.

<sup>45</sup> In *ŚB* XII.8.2.36 it is stated that the officiating priests are [analogous with] the quarters. *JB* I.72 expresses the fact that particular priests are connected with particular deities, whose quarter they face. See BODEWITZ 1984: 43–45 on the southern position of the *brahmán* priest. A relationship between the priests and the directional guardians is established in the *diśām aveṣṭayaḥ* (HEESTERMAN 1957: 196), where it is striking to find “Mitra and Varuṇa” related to “both adhvaryus”.

<sup>46</sup> *ŚB* I.3.1.17.: “Let her not sit to the west of the sacrifice, with her face towards the east. For Aditi [...] indeed sits on the west [...] and this lady would, therefore, raise herself to her [...]. For this reason let her [the *patni*] sit somewhat to the south.” (after EGGELING) At the same time there is a definite – though rather complex – connection of the *patni* with Aditi and Varuṇa (*ŚB* I.3.1.12–16). Considering the significance of the south-west, it is a well-known fact that this direction belongs to Nirṛti (*ŚB* VII.2.1.8). The strongly negative bias of this goddess in that period, however, forbids any speculation about a possible symbolic connection with Nirṛti.

<sup>47</sup> Rudra, who is known to inhabit the north, is “most closely linked in myth and ritual to the remainder. He is the god *par excellence* known as *uccheṣanabhāga*” (SRINIVASAN 1983: 555, cf. 552–554). Elsewhere, the *raṅgas* are invoked at a domestic rubbish heap (*GGŚ* I.4.11).

<sup>48</sup> The north-east is clearly connected with water, which is also hinted at by the rite of setting up a water barrel in that position during the construction of a house (APTE 1954: 142). The symbolic character is described as decidedly female in *ŚB* I.1.1.18–21. Accordingly, the female water has to be placed north of the male *āhavanīya* fire on the east, “since the woman lies on the left (or north) side of the man” (after EGGELING).

<sup>49</sup> References to a practice of sacrificing in three different altitudes (ARMBAN 1922: 120) point to the same idea.

**Table III** – Directional Guardians mentioned in various Brāhmaṇas

Brāhmaṇa	East	South	West	North	Zenith	Nadir	Centre	Intermediate
<i>AitB</i> II.1-2	Aditi	Agni	Soma	Savitṛ	(Pathyā)	–	–	–
<i>AitB</i> VIII.14	<i>vasus</i>	<i>rudras</i>	<i>ādityas</i>	<i>viśve devāḥ</i>	<i>maruts</i> , <i>aṅgirasas</i>	<i>sādhyas</i> , <i>āptyas</i>	–	–
<i>JB</i> II.141	<i>vasus</i>	<i>rudras</i>	<i>ādityas</i>	<i>maruts</i>	<i>viśve devāḥ</i>	<i>sādhyas</i> , <i>āptyas</i>	Indra	–
<i>ṢaḍB</i> IV.4	Agni	Yama	Varuṇa	Soma	<i>sādhyas</i>	<i>pitr̥s</i>	–	<i>ādityas</i> , <i>rudras</i> , <i>maruts</i> , <i>vasus</i>
<i>ŚB</i> III.2.3.15-18	Agni	Soma	Savitṛ	Pathyā Svasti	Aditi	–	–	–
<i>ŚB</i> V.2.4.5	Agni	Yama	<i>viśve devāḥ</i>	Mitra, Varuṇa, or <i>maruts</i>	Soma	–	–	–
<i>ŚB</i> V.4.1.3-8	Agni	Indra	<i>maruts</i>	Mitra, Varuṇa	Brhaspati	–	–	–
<i>ŚB</i> V.5.1	Agni	Indra or Soma	<i>viśve devāḥ</i>	Mitra, Varuṇa	Brhaspati	–	–	–
<i>ŚB</i> VIII.1.1.4-2.7	Agni	Vāyu	Āditya	<i>dīśaḥ</i>	Candramas	–	–	–
<i>ŚB</i> VIII.6.1.5-9	Agni, <i>vasus</i>	Indra, <i>rudras</i>	Varuṇa, <i>ādityas</i>	Soma, <i>maruts</i>	Brhaspati, <i>viśve devāḥ</i>	–	–	–
<i>ŚB</i> VIII.6.1.16-20	Agni	Vāyu	Āditya	<i>yajña</i>	Parjanya	–	–	–
<i>ŚB</i> XIV.1.3.19-23	Agni	Indra	Savitṛ	Dhātṛ	Brhaspati	–	–	–
<i>TB</i> III.11.5	Agni	Indra	Soma	Mitra, Varuṇa	Brhaspati	–	Aditi	–

**Table IV** – Directional Guardians mentioned in various Āraṇyakas

Āraṇyaka	East	South	West	North	Zenith	Centre
<i>JUB</i> III.5.2.2	Indra	Īśāna	Varuṇa	Soma	Prajāpati	–
<i>TĀ</i> I.23	Āditya	Agni	Vāyu	Indra	men, gods, <i>pitr̥s</i> , <i>gandharvas</i> , <i>apsarases</i>	Pūṣan

**Table V** – Directional Guardians mentioned in various Upaniṣads

Upaniṣad	East	South	West	North	Zenith	Nadir
<i>BĀU</i> III.9.19-25	Sūrya ( <i>caḥṣus</i> )	Yama ( <i>yajña</i> )	Varuṇa ( <i>āpas</i> )	Soma ( <i>dīkṣā</i> )	–	Agni ( <i>vāc</i> )
<i>ChU</i> III.1-10	<i>vasus</i> , Agni ( <i>rohita</i> )	<i>rudras</i> , Indra ( <i>śukla</i> )	<i>ādityas</i> , Varuṇa ( <i>kr̥ṣṇa</i> )	<i>maruts</i> , Soma ( <i>paraḥkr̥ṣṇa</i> )	<i>sādhyas</i> , Brahman	–
<i>ChU</i> III.13.1-5	Sūrya	Candra	Agni	Parjanya	Vāyu	–
<i>MaitrU</i> VII.1-6	Agni, <i>vasus</i>	Indra, Soma, <i>rudras</i>	<i>maruts</i> , <i>ādityas</i>	<i>viśve devāḥ</i> , Varuṇa, <i>sādhyas</i>	Mitrāvaruṇau, <i>aṅgirasas</i> , Candramas	Śani, Rāhu, Ketu, <i>uragas</i> (serpents), <i>rakṣas</i> , <i>yakṣas</i> , men, etc.

regions are adequately referred to. Here it is significant that the “triloka”-symbolism, which seems to have originally been separated from the directional symbolism,<sup>50</sup> has to a certain extent been intermingled with it in *ŚB* VIII (table III).<sup>51</sup> At the same time, a transference of the directions from *antarikṣa* to heaven<sup>52</sup> seems to have taken place, but *dīśyā* bricks are still found in the third, *antarikṣa* layer (*ŚB* VIII.3.1.11–14). Another version of the complex symbolism of the “celestial” layer consists of the ten *prāṇas* on the east, four (directional) gods and six cosmic elements on the south, the ten directions on the west, and the ten months on the north (*ŚB* VIII.5.2.13). The altar, which often assumes the form of a bird

(*śyena* or *suparṇa*) oriented towards the east, clearly refers to the east as the region of the gods.

<sup>50</sup> “in the first, third, and fifth layers lie the three naturally-perforated bricks, representing the three worlds through which he [the sacrificer] will have to pass on his way to the fourth, invisible, world, the realm of immortal life.” (EGGELING 1897: XXII) Interestingly, the directions are symbolized by *dīśyā* bricks in the layer which corresponds to *antarikṣa* (*TS* V.7.5 c; *ŚB* VI.2.3.4).

<sup>51</sup> Here, *ŚB* VIII.1.1.4–2.7 belongs to the first layer of the *agnicayana*, the two other passages belong to the fifth layer corresponding to heaven.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. note 44, *ŚB* VIII.6.1.4.

**Table VI** – Directional Guardians mentioned in various Sūtras

Sūtra	East	South	West	North	Zenith	Nadir	Other Coordinates
<i>ĀśvGS</i> I.2.5-6 [B]	Indra	Yama; <i>pitrs</i>	Varuṇa	Soma; <i>rakṣas</i>	Brahman	–	–
<i>BhGS</i> III.13-14 [B]	Indra/Agni	Yama	Varuṇa	Soma	–	–	Centre: Brahman, Prajāpati; NE: <i>saptaṛṣi</i> , <i>sarvabhūtāḥ</i>
<i>GGs</i> IV.7.41 [B] (crit. ed.: IV.7.36)	Indra	Yama	Varuṇa	Soma	Brahman	Vāsuki	SE: Vāyu; SW: <i>pitrs</i> ; NW: Mahārāja; NE: Mahendra
<i>KauṣGS</i> III.10.6-8[B]	Indra	Yama	Varuṇa	Soma	Bṛhaspati	–	NE ( <i>aparājītā diśā</i> ): <i>maruts</i> , <i>aśvins</i> , <i>chandorṣis</i> ; SE: Agni; SW: Nirṛti (fem.); NW: Vāyu; NE: Rudra
<i>MGS</i> II.12.12-16 [B] (cf. <i>KāṭhGS</i> 44.11-16; <i>ViDhS</i> 67.15-20)	Indra	Yama	Varuṇa	Soma	–	–	Centre: Brahman
<i>MŚS</i> XI.7.1.7	Indra	Yama	Varuṇa	Soma, Kubera	Brahman	Ananta	SE: Agni; SW: Nirṛti (fem.); NW: Vāyu; NE: Īśāna
<i>PGS</i> III.4.14-17	Agni, Āditya	<i>ahar</i> , <i>rātri</i>	<i>anna</i> , <i>prāṇa</i>	Candramas, Vāyu	–	–	–
<i>ŚGS</i> II.14.6-7 [B]	Indra	Yama	Varuṇa	Soma	Bṛhaspati	–	Direction of the sun (?): <i>Aditi</i> , <i>ādityas</i>
<i>ŚŚS</i> IV.21.8-12	Agni, <i>vasus</i>	Yama, <i>pitrs</i>	Varuṇa, <i>ādityas</i>	Indra, <i>rudras</i>	Prajāpati, <i>viśve devāḥ</i>	–	–
<i>ŚŚS</i> VI.3.1-7	Sūrya, Candra	Yama, Mṛtyu	Mitra, Varuṇa	Soma, Rudra	Bṛhaspati, Indra	–	<i>antarikṣa</i> : Vāyu, <i>vr̥ṣṭi</i> (rain); Pṛthivī: Agni, <i>anna</i> (food)
<i>VādhŚS</i> 26c (CALAND 1927: 130)	<i>vasus</i>	<i>rudras</i>	<i>ādityas</i>	<i>viśve devāḥ</i>	<i>sādhyas</i>	<i>aṅgirasas</i>	–
<i>VādhŚS</i> 61 (CALAND 1927: 173)	Āditya ( <i>āhavanīya</i> )	Yama ( <i>mārjāliya</i> )	Aja Ekapād ( <i>gārhapatya</i> )	Rudra ( <i>āgnīdhṛīya</i> )	–	–	Centre: Indra ( <i>hotṛīya</i> )
<i>VārGS</i> XVII.6 [B]	Agni	Yama	Soma	Varuṇa	–	–	Centre: Varuṇa, Aryaman, Brahman

#### 1.1.2.4 The Senses

Another level of meaning, which is attached to the directional guardians in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* and in some of the Upaniṣads, is the microcosmic sphere of the senses or sense organs and other bodily faculties. It seems as if this kind of classification has – like the one mentioned under 1.1.2.1 – promoted the position of Vāyu, who was only sporadically included in the earlier systems. Here, Vāyu is the representative of *prāṇa*. Āditya or Sūrya is always associated with the eye, as Agni is with speech. The directions (*diśaḥ*) are related to the ear (*śrotam*). However, the classification of the senses does not seem to imply any strict order of enumeration and therefore exerts no influence on the spatial distribution of the deities.

#### 1.1.2.5 Double Assignment of Deities

In the literary stratum under discussion, the assignment of two deities for each direction<sup>53</sup> occurs more frequently than in the early Vedic texts. This phenomenon may be regarded as another harbinger of the subsequent break-up of the four-plus-two scheme of spatial reference. Whereas Mitra and Varuṇa, as the dual deity Mitṛavaruṇau, almost regularly occupy the north in the Yajurvedic tradition and appear as a complementary couple, a comprehensive “dualité unité”,<sup>54</sup> one Gṛhyasūtra (*PGS* III.4.14–17) and one

Śrautasūtra (*ŚŚS* VI.3.1–7)<sup>55</sup> offer a distribution of the deities, in which those gods who may be regarded as similar in some respects have been paired.<sup>56</sup> It may therefore be postulated that it was felt necessary to accommodate all the gods with claims to a particular position, the old classification systems proving too narrow for this task.

<sup>53</sup> Rare instances of double assignment can be observed even in earlier Vedic texts (cf. **tables I–II**), and a regular double assignment for the four main regions has occurred already in *AV* XIX.17.1–10.

<sup>54</sup> GONDA 1974: 208. “That this pair of gods was believed to encompass the whole twofold universe, is in view of their character and the importance of the Rta principle not surprising.” (*ibid.*: 207). Regarding their position, the author (*ibid.*: 192) admits that he is unable to find a reason for the northern position of this dual deity.

<sup>55</sup> GONDA 1974: 60–61 analyzes this passage and reflects upon it: “one is under the impression that the author, while coupling together powers which are more or less traditionally connected with the seven directions, consciously deviated from the more usual procedure which is characterized by the allocation of one single deity to every direction. [...] there can be no doubt that in his eyes these double invocations supplied a need, that they made the prayer more effective.”

<sup>56</sup> Some of these couples are still pairs of opposites (*ahar* — day, *rātri* — night) or tend to be complementary (Sūrya, Candra). However, Agni and Āditya, often compared for their brilliance, Soma and Rudra, who can both claim to rule the north, and most obviously, Yama and Mṛtyu, both connected with death, clearly consist of related deities.

### 1.1.2.6 The *bali* offering

In some passages of the Śrauta-, the Grhya- and the Dharmasūtras (marked with [B] on **table VI**) *bali* offerings to the guardians of the directions are prescribed. This popular rite was executed in the private sphere of the household and basically served the worship of deities in connection with particular *loci* in the house. An invocation of the directions was not always included,<sup>57</sup> but if it was, the “hosts of Rudra”<sup>58</sup> were another common recipient of oblations “in all the directions”. Interestingly, individual hosts (*anugāh*) have also been assigned to the traditionally known guardians of the directions (cf. *Manu* III.87), the almost invariable order being Indra – east, Yama – south, Varuṇa – west, Soma – north, Brahman – zenith. It is a somewhat misleading fact that the recipients of *bali* offerings are generally regarded as “divine powers of a lower order”.<sup>59</sup> In fact, particular deities or groups of deities (most prominently the *viśve devāḥ*) are worshipped with non-homa oblations, before offerings to other, lower classes of beings (*bhūta*) are made. Different traditions must have existed side by side, a fact which becomes obvious when the worship of ten guardian deities at a house construction (*GGŚ* IV.7.41) is compared with the expressly “silent” preparations of the ground in other texts.<sup>60</sup>

With regard to the development of the directional guardians, two important innovations can be observed in this popular rite, *viz.* the expansion of the number of guardians to ten, which occurs in a few cases, and the rather regular appointment of Indra as the guardian of the east.<sup>61</sup>

### 1.1.2.7 The Inclusion of the Intermediate Directions and the Incipient *lokapāla* Concept

The term *lokapāla* had hitherto been used as an epithet for single deities (e.g. *ŚB* XIV.7.2.24) and seems to have become a common term for the group of guardians of the regions or directions only subsequently. A rare instance of the latter meaning in this literary stratum is *ĀśvGP* II.7. This passage describes the *lokapāla-āvāhanam*, an invitation to the *lokapālas*, without mentioning any directions. However, the sequence Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirṛti, Varuṇa, Kubera, Īśāna implies the order known hereafter, with the exception of Vāyu being mentioned separately from the other guardians, together with Kṣetrapāla and Ākāśa. This passage also provides one of the earliest known iconographic descriptions of the group. There are no guardians for the zenith and the nadir,<sup>62</sup> but a substantial increase in the number of single guardians has taken place.

An inclusion of the intermediate directions can be observed in some of the prescriptions of *balidāna* (*KhGS* III.2.10; IV.2.21–22). Reference to particular connected deities<sup>63</sup> or an offering to such deities is still quite rare, however. One of these cases is *GGŚ* IV.7.41 (**table VI**), where the eight guardians of the quarters, Vāsuki on the nadir, and Brahman on the zenith are all offered *balis* on the occasion of the construction of a house.<sup>64</sup> It speaks in favour of the chronological priority of the group described here that the assignment of the intermediate directions differs from the later known order.<sup>65</sup> Ten guardians are named once more in *MŚŚ* XI.7.1.7. This passage, taken from the *Mānava-Grhya-Pariśiṣṭha*, forms a later addition to this text and seems to be one of the earliest references to the canonical group of eight directional guardians. The only deviations from the later system are the fact that Nirṛti is regarded as female, Soma and Kubera are sharing the north<sup>66</sup> and Rudra governing the north-east.

It may not be accidental that A.N. PANDE’s statements on the general nature of the deities in the Grhyasūtras, “the functional division of gods in the Grhyasūtras is of a thoroughly spiritualised and specialised nature” and “the general characteristics of gods [...] is that they pervade the different quarters, wearing armour, wielding strong bows and arrows, not winking the eyes and vigilant about the affairs of men” (PANDE 1958–59: 92; 131) seem to be most appropriate for the *lokapālas*. Their roots belong to this period.

<sup>57</sup> E.g. *ĀpDhŚ* II.2.3–4. A few directional references are made here (south: *pitrs*; north: Rudra), but there is no special worship of the directions. *PGŚ* II.9.3–10 may be regarded as a transitional form with a quite elaborate, but not systematic treatment of the directions. Interestingly, Vāyu is the only god referred to in connection with the outer regions; Brahman, *antariṣa* and Sūrya come in the centre, all gods and all beings on the north, Uṣas and the Lord of beings (Rudra?) further north, the *pitrs* on the south, and Yakṣma on the north-west. Incidentally, the latter, under the name of Pāpayakṣman, is also positioned near the north-west in the *vāstumāṇḍala* grid (*BṛS* LIII.45).

<sup>58</sup> E.g. *ĀśvGS* IV.8.22; *PGŚ* III.8.11. The close relationship of Rudra with all the directions is corroborated by his epithet *diśām pati* in the *Śatarudrīya* (e.g. *TS* IV.5.2 a). It has been stated in *ĀśvGS* IV.8.24 that the worship of the directions (*diśām upasthānam*) has to be performed at all sacrifices to Rudra.

<sup>59</sup> GONDA 1977: 563. *MDhŚ* II.70 and *TĀ* II.10.4 list the *bali* offerings among the five types of sacrifices and name the *bhūtas* as their recipients.

<sup>60</sup> *ĀpGS* VII.17, cf. *HGS* I.8.27. Significantly, *ĀpGS* VII.17.1 prescribes that the ground should slope to the south-west (!), while *GGŚ* IV.7.3, like many other texts, calls for a plot of land inclining towards the north or the east. The *bali* offerings in ten directions without any reference to deities could be regarded as a possible intermediary stage (*KhGS* IV.2.21–22).

<sup>61</sup> Exceptions appear in the *Vārāha-Grhyasūtra* (**table VI**) and in *KauŚS* VIII.3; L.3–5 and other passages, where *AV* III.26 and 27 (**table I**) are prescribed for *bali* worship. All these passages assign the east to Agni.

<sup>62</sup> As in the earlier types of classification of four, five, six, seven, etc., directions, the authors were able to choose whichever system suited the context. Regarding the *lokapālas*, eight was the favourite number. It is highly significant that one of the earliest references to *lokapālas* as a group of regional guardians in *AitU* I.1.4 lists eight members (Agni, Vāyu, Āditya, *diśah*, *ośadhi-vanaspatayaḥ*, Candramas, Mṛtyu, *āpas*), which are different from the group under discussion. The first four of them, however, correspond to the guardians of the four main directions in *ŚB* VIII.1.1.4–2.7 (**table III**). They are also included in a list of eight cosmic deities/elements given in *MṛP* 161.14 (Arka [Āditya], Soma, Vāyu, Hutāśana [Agni], *saṅgīla*, *antariṣa*, *nakṣatṛāṇi*, *diśo daśa*), and the first three (Agni, Vāyu, Āditya; supplemented by Prthivī, Antariṣa, Dyaus, Vāc, Prāṇa) recur in *JUB* I.1.1, where the eight mentioned principles are stated to contain everything in this world: *tā etā aṣṭau devatā: etāvad idaṃ sarvam* (*JUB* I.1.7.1, cited by KLAUS 1986: 28). It is again striking to find many members of this group (particularly of the two latter versions) shared by the eight *vasus*, as they are listed in *ŚB* XI.6.3.6 and *BṛĀU* III.9.3: Agni, Prthivī, Vāyu, Antariṣa, Āditya, Dyaus, Candramas, Nakṣatṛāṇi. These deities have been regarded by KIRFEL (1920: 5) as corresponding to the eight *lokas*.

<sup>63</sup> The case of *BhGS* III.13–14 is rather strange. In referring to the *bali* offerings to the directions, the intermediate regions have been labelled with the names of the later known guardians (respectively, Agni, Nirṛti, Vāyu, Īśāna), while in enumerating the directional guardians during two *pradakṣiṇā* rounds reference is made only to those of the main directions and to the north-east (here: *uttarapūrva*). Therefore, this passage seems to be corrupt. *KauṣGS* III.10.6–8 also seems to be in disorder, as the north-east is counted twice (first reference: *aparājītā diśā*, cf. *AitB* I.14). The emendation must have been made at an early date, as Nirṛti is still feminine, and Rudra takes the place of Īśāna.

<sup>64</sup> This passage has been quoted by BANERJEA 1956: 521.

<sup>65</sup> Significantly, Vāyu (Anila) on the south-east and the *pitrs* on the south-west are found in the same position in the *vāstumāṇḍala* grid (*BṛS* LIII.43–44). Mahārāja on the north-west and Mahendra on the north-east is somewhat mysterious. The former of these names may refer to Kubera (*TĀ* I.31.6: *Kuberāya Vaiśravaṇāya Mahārājāya namaḥ*). The grammarian Pāṇini, of about the 5th century B.C., according to V.S. AGRAWALA (1963: 361) mentions a deity Mahārāja without implying its identification with Kubera.

<sup>66</sup> It is interesting to find “king” Soma and “king” Vaiśravaṇa juxtaposed in *HGS* II.8.19.1.

### 1.1.2.8 Directional Assignment in the Later Vedic Period

The colours<sup>67</sup> and the trees<sup>68</sup>, two other new objects of classification, will not be discussed here, as in their cases the assignment varies considerably.

To summarize briefly, it has become apparent that the period under survey witnessed a considerable development in the conceptions of the directions, their guardians and particular associated components of the material world. It has also become obvious that the rigid system of ten directional guardians lies only one step ahead from here.

The diversity of the systems makes it quite difficult to sum up all the new traits of classification. The most significant development is the replacement of the old concept, still prevalent in the Brāhmaṇas, in which the main cosmic divisions are assigned to the five directions, starting with the earth on the east (continued: atmosphere, heaven, fourth world, and totality), by a new system which starts with heaven (Āditya, Indra<sup>69</sup>) on the east. This tendency is not entirely new however, as the *ādityas* have been assigned to the east before, in a few *Atharvaveda* passages (cf. **table I**). This distribution has now been adopted by some of the Āraṇyakas (**table IV**), some of the Upaniṣads (**table V**), and most of the Gṛhya- and Śrautasūtras (**table VI**). In the case of Āditya (or Aditi) ruling the east, Agni has sometimes been shifted to the south (*AitB* II.1–2; *TĀ* I.23). In the case of Indra ruling the east, however, Agni never occupies the south, which is instead, at least in the Sūtras, governed exclusively by Yama. Indra can be also found in the centre (*JB* II.141; *VādhŚS* 61). The variability in the positions of Soma<sup>70</sup> and Varuṇa is still considerable; this seems to come to an end in the rigid order prevailing in the sphere of the *bali* offering, however. Here again, there is a surprisingly high variability, this time concerning the intermediate directions. It has been pointed out before that the north-east, being of outstanding importance and regarded as invincible (*aparājita*<sup>71</sup>), was probably the first direction which called for an individual assignment. The south-west, due to an already existing tradition, was easily taken over by Nirṛti, who was still regarded as female. Rudra, who traditionally belongs to the north but is also known as *diśām pati* (master of the directions), justifiably deserves the most important direction, the north-east. The south-east, for which an occupation by Vāyu was not unknown,<sup>72</sup> seems to have quickly become the stable seat of Agni, who had been ousted from his place on the east. Sūrya/Āditya maintains the eastern position, which he had gained in some texts other than the Brāhmaṇas, only in the *vāstumaṇḍala* grid (*BrS* LIII.43). The zenith, which was almost invariably ruled by Bṛhaspati in the earlier Vedic texts and in the Brāhmaṇas, has now been handed over to “Brahman”, with only a few exceptions. Prajāpati also makes his appearance here (*JUB* III.5.22; *ŚŚS* IV.21.8–12).

It is fascinating to observe how a new eight-plus-two system of spatial reference has been created, in which some of the “old” guardians (e.g. Yama, Varuṇa, Soma) retain their positions, but which also makes room for some traditional assignments of deities (Nirṛti, Kubera<sup>73</sup>, Rudra) which had hitherto been excluded from the directional classification. Although the new system is known only from the later parts of the Ritual Sūtras, the intricate layout of the sacrificial ground and the complex nature of the ritual actions must have paved the way for an extension of the old coordinate system. The latter, which was not much more than an abstract succession of cosmic layers projected into space, was thus partly modified and supplemented by new members relating to the popularly existing traditions of directional symbolism. However, the dichotomy of direction (*dik*) versus cosmic region (*loka*) seems to have been retained.<sup>74</sup>

Now we are in a position to characterize in brief the diverse sources of origin of the ancient Indian group of eight or ten guardians of the directions in space: their ancestors are the *ādhipatis* of the directions in the *Yajur-* and the *Atharvaveda*, the increase of their number and their fixed assignment is owed to the Ritual Sūtras, while a tradition of eight *lokapālas* has been referred to by some of the Upaniṣads. This complex genesis of the group might have led to the fact that some irregularities regarding its composition continue to occur.

### 1.2 The Directional Guardians in the Epics (*Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*)

Contrasting with the rather speculative and schematic treatment of the directional guardians in the Vedic texts and later in the Śilpaśāstras, the epics and some of the Purāṇas contain the wealth of popular belief with all its mytho-cosmological, figurative and narrative aspects. The guardians’ treatment in the epics is discussed separately here, because a basic difference in the conception of the directional guardians prevails: their number is generally four and never eight.<sup>75</sup> The conception of four outer directions corresponds to the earlier Vedic texts. Similarly, the positioning of some of the guardians has not yet been completely fixed, so that a certain degree of variation occurs. Regarding this variation, it will suffice to refer to the table of “epic Lokapālas” published by E.W. HOPKINS (1915: 152).<sup>76</sup>

<sup>67</sup> In *ChU* III.1–10 the rays of the sun in the four main directions are described as having particular colours (cf. DAMAIS 1969: 77), which the respective deities enter. It is also interesting to find the mention of ants of seven different colours related to the seven directions known from *AV* IV.40.1–8 in *KauŚS* CXVI.3: *śveta* – east; *kṛṣṇa* – south; *rajata* – west; *rohita* – north; *babhru* – centre; *harita* – *vyadhva* (“trackless”); *aruṇa* – zenith.

<sup>68</sup> It is stated that the *aśvattha*, *plakṣa*, *nyagrodha*, and *udumbara* trees should be avoided on the east, south, west and north respectively of a building site, as they are sacred to Āditya, Yama, Varuṇa, and Prajāpati respectively, and seem to induce (unwelcome) manifestations of these gods’ powers (*GGs* IV.7.22–24 [crit. ed.: 20–22]). A directional significance of particular species of trees can be further inferred from particular ritual prescriptions mentioned by HEESTERMAN (1957: 31; 114). The only recurring assignment is that of *udumbara* – north.

<sup>69</sup> In the old classification, Indra is never assigned to heaven, but the new tendency of regarding him as Lord of the heavenly gods, has led to a shift in his position. For Indra – heaven see *JB* I.105.

<sup>70</sup> It is conspicuous that, in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, Soma/Candra occurs several times on the south, a position which is also found in the *Atharvaveda* (XIX.17.1–10). This move might be related to the symbolism expressed in the layout of the sacrificial ground, where the southern fire (*dakṣiṇāgni*) assumes the shape of a half-moon and is sometimes stated to signify the fourth world (*ChU* IV.12.1, cited by BODEWITZ 1982: 50).

<sup>71</sup> Cf. note 63. Also, e.g. *KauŚS* XVII.9. 22; XXXVIII.17.18.30.

<sup>72</sup> *GGs* IV.7.41, cf. also his position as “Anila” in the *vāstumaṇḍala* grid (*BrS* LIII.43). In the former text, the close association with Indra may be due to their common rulership of *antarikṣa*, which, in a deified form, is his neighbour in the latter instance.

<sup>73</sup> Dhanapati (Kubera) should be individually worshipped on the north according to *KauŚGS* III.10.16 and *ŚGS* II.14.17.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. note 62 for the classification of the guardians of the *lokas* without any directional reference.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. E.W. HOPKINS 1915: 149.

<sup>76</sup> For references see *ibid.*: 149–152, but unfortunately, the author does not refer to or give a list of the respective passages.

**Table VII** – Directional Guardians mentioned in the Epics

Direction (mentioned or implied)	Groups of <i>lokapālas</i> mentioned in the Epics				
East	Agni	Kubera	Agni	Kubera	Indra
South	Yama	Yama	Yama	Yama	Yama
West	Varuṇa	Varuṇa	Varuṇa	Varuṇa	Varuṇa
North	Indra	Indra	Soma	Soma	Kubera

Most conspicuous are the unrivalled positions of Yama in the south and Varuṇa in the west. Matters are somewhat obscured by the fact that the *lokapālas* are often mentioned as a group, without any reference to their status and without any directional assignment.

In some epic and Purāṇic passages, the guardians of the directions are literally brought to life. Detailed descriptions of their abodes belong to the sphere of mythic geography in the epics. Besides these vivid illustrations, the members of the *lokapāla* group also act as *dramatis personae*, though in a restricted way.

The composition of the group is not very different from the Vedic schemes (tables I–II). The positioning as expressed in AV IV.40.1–8 for the outer directions (table D), viz. Agni – east, Yama – south, Varuṇa – west, Soma – north, is found in the epics, as are other versions. A remarkable change, however, is the frequently occurring inclusion of Kubera who is described – as far as can be observed – only in the *MŚS* (XI.7.1.7) and probably as “Mahārāja” in the *GGŚ* (IV.7.41; table VI). He appears as guardian of the east or the north. Both Kubera’s installation in this position (attainment of *lokapālatva* – the status of a *lokapāla*) and his attainment of immortality are referred to in the *Rāmāyana* (7.3.17) and the *Mahābhārata* (3.258.15). Kubera is a rather ambivalent deity of a rather enigmatic origin. In the epics, he is closely connected with the *rākṣasa* demons. In a well-known passage in *ŚB* XIII.4.3.10, he appears as the lord of thieves and criminals. Subsequently, in the Purāṇas, his *yakṣa* (superhuman creature) aspect becomes his most prominent characteristic. Kubera’s inclusion can be probably explained by the infiltration of a prevalent popular tradition,<sup>77</sup> according to which he was a powerful king of immeasurable wealth in the north. In this position he is associated with Mount Kailāsa and the god Śiva, who resides there. The descriptions of his well-defined, but ambivalent characteristics are symptomatic of the clear, vivid concept of the world guardians and their domains contained in the epics.

The case of Kubera shows how a gradual evolution towards the later fixed order of directional guardians took place and elements from diverse cultural layers became involved in this process.

It is important to note that the residences of the four *lokapālas* are not yet conceived as being located on the world’s central mountain, but they are described as situated in their respective directions (tables VIII–IX).<sup>78</sup> This, with respect to their function quite logical setting of mythical geography has in the Purāṇas been superseded by the concept that the *lokapālas*’ abodes lie on Mount Meru, i.e. at the centre of the world.

### 1.3 Evidence from the Purāṇas

This large body of religious didactic texts contains, in our opinion, the most valuable clues to the genesis of the directional guardians as a popular group of cult deities. There is a surprisingly large degree of variation in the aspects and contexts in which the

**Table VIII** – *Lokapālas* and Associates mentioned in *Mahābhārata 2*

<i>Mbh</i> 2.8-11	East	South	West	North
<i>Lokapāla</i>	Śakra (Indra)	Yama	Varuṇa	Vaiśravaṇa (Kubera)
Attribute	<i>vajra</i>	–	<i>pāśa</i>	–
Consort	Śacī	–	Vāruṇī	1000 women
Residents (selection)	<i>maruts</i> , <i>sādhyās</i>	<i>pitrs</i>	<i>ādityas</i> , <i>daityas</i> , four oceans, rivers, directions ( <i>diśaḥ</i> )	<i>naras</i> , <i>guhnyakas</i> , <i>kinnaras</i> , <i>kimpuruṣas</i>

**Table IX** – *Lokapālas* and Associates mentioned in *Mahābhārata 5*

<i>Mbh</i> 5.54.105-109	East	South	West	North
<i>Lokapāla</i>	Śakra (Indra)	Yama	Varuṇa “ <i>gopati</i> ”	Dhanada (Kubera)
Residents (selection)	<i>sādhyās</i>	<i>pitrs</i> , <i>nairrtas</i> , <i>viśve devas</i>	Vāyu, Viṣṇu	Brahmā, <i>rākṣasas</i> , <i>yakṣas</i> , <i>gandharvas</i> , <i>nairrtas</i>

*loka-dikpālas* are mentioned. Perhaps due to the variability of parallel traditions and concepts, moreover representing different stages of development, their descriptions are to a certain extent incongruent. It is essential to the present study to observe the probably existing relationship between this variability and the diversity found in early *dikpāla* representations in art.

Taking information in particular from an exemplary survey of the *Matsyapurāṇa*, which contains numerous relevant passages, but also from other Purāṇas, the different contexts of *dikpāla* activity and relevance can be listed as follows:

- 1 The directional guardians act as warriors, who fight to uphold the moral order of the cosmos (e.g. *MtP* 133.64; 135.71; 135.77–78; 148.81–85; several passages in chapter 150; 153.208-219). Their presence as armed warriors and attendants of Śiva causes offence to Viraka, Śiva’s watchman, in *MtP* 154.570–572.
- 2 Their character as (minor) gods with limited power is emphasized in passages where they are described in a poor, defeated state (*MtP* 154.18–26; “*rudras*” are mentioned instead of *Īśāna*). Hiranyakaṣipu and other mighty demons are able to usurp the positions of the *dikpālas* and other deities (*MtP* 161.14–15; 177.58). Such a dangerous situation is finally resolved by the guardians’ return to their respective quarters: *lokapāleṣu sarveṣu dikṣu samyānavartīṣu* (*MtP* 176.41b).

<sup>77</sup> This hypothesis is supported by the Buddhist tradition, in which the protector of the north (Kubera-Vaiśravaṇa) is the only one of the directional guardians who conforms to the Brāhmanical version (cf. section 2.1.1).

<sup>78</sup> As an example, Varuṇa is repeatedly referred to as residing on the “sunset mountain” (*Rām* 4.41.38-39; *Mbh* 3.160.10–11). This is particularly interesting as elsewhere, this sovereign of the waters inhabits a subterranean palace (cf. KUIPER 1975: 115).

- 3 They are objects of worship, *e.g.* in the ritual of bathing at the time of a solar or lunar eclipse (*MtP* 67.9–15; Nairṛta is missing). During the consecration of divine images the *lokapālas* are worshipped and their banners hung in a *maṇḍapa* in the appropriate directions (*MtP* 264.21). Among several important ritual contexts are the sixteen *mahādānas*, “Great Offering” ceremonies, in which the *lokapālas* are regularly invited (*lokeśāvāhanam*, *e.g.* *MtP* 275.3), and the rituals in which particular substances are offered. In the latter ritual context it is prescribed that images of the eight *lokapālas*, made from precious metals, should be put in the appropriate places of a miniature model of the cosmos (*e.g.* *MtP* 83.18; 84.4). The description of the modes of worshipping the *lokapālas* (*lokapālābhipūjana*) is expressly mentioned in the summary of the contents of the *Matsyapurāṇa* (291.3b).
- 4 In the chapters on cosmography, the *lokapālas* appear together with their particular cities on the mountains surrounding Mount Meru (*MtP* 124.19–24). In this case, the number of directional guardians is only four (Indra, Yama, Varuṇa, Soma). The *Matsyapurāṇa* does not mention the cities of the eight *lokapālas* situated on top of Mount Meru, which most Purāṇas refer to.<sup>79</sup>
- 5 Some of the *dikpālas* make presents to the god Śiva on the occasion of his wedding (*MtP* 153.208–219; 154.487–490). Interestingly, the group of Manu Lokapālas (Indra, Agni, Yama, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Kubera, Sūrya, Candra<sup>80</sup>; cf. following section, p. 41)<sup>81</sup> has been referred to in this connection.
- 6 A group consisting mostly of *dikpālas* (*i.e.* the Manu Lokapālas with Pṛthivī substituting Kubera) with the particular functions of its members forms a model for the behaviour of an ideal king in *MtP* 226.2–11. Taking into account other versions of this group from other texts, the only passage in which the complete group of *dikpālas* is mentioned in the same context<sup>82</sup> is contained in *Liṅgapurāṇa* I.35.5–6. It is a remarkable fact that Soma and Kubera appear here side by side, thereby raising the number of divine regents to nine.
- 7 The guardians of the zenith and the nadir, Brahmā and Ananta/Śeṣa, are included in the list of ten “*dikpālas*” in *MtP* 93.52 (cf. 266.27–28; 274.50–51). Ten is the usual number of directions referred to in the Purāṇas (*e.g.* *MtP* 161.14). It is somewhat mysterious that an entirely different group of four directional guardians, also variously referred to as “*lokāpālas*”, “*dikpālas*” or “*diśāmpālas*”, occurs in the *Matsya* and in a number of other Purāṇas (cf. KIRFEL 1927: 229). The names of these guardians differ slightly from text to text. In the *Matsyapurāṇa* (124.94–96), they are called Sudhāmā Vairāja, Kardama Prajāpati, Hiraṇyaroṃa Parjanya and Ketumāna Rājasa. In a list of pious kings in *MtP* 143.38–39, some of their names are mentioned. Their installation as overlords of particular directions is described in most Purāṇas (*e.g.* *MtP* 8.9–11).<sup>83</sup> The abodes of this second *lokapāla* group are located in the centre of the Lokāloka mountain.<sup>84</sup> The Lokāloka mountain range is generally regarded as forming an outer ring around the inhabited world, and “in the centre” in this case could mean on top of the mountain ridge. Thus, these guardians may be the protectors of the very periphery of the world according to the ancient Indian tradition. No particular relationship can be traced between this group of directional guardians and the usual divine regents.

It has become obvious from the close study of the *Matsyapurāṇa* that the latter group of directional guardians, which was still varied

in its composition (particularly referring to the interchange of Kubera and Soma), was either already very popular, or it was intended by the authors of the work to increase its popularity among the worshippers. The variations occurring with respect to the attributes and the vehicles (**table X**)<sup>86</sup> can be interpreted as being indicative of a primary stage in the formation of the finally canonic group, still bearing testimony to the parallel existing traditions which must have contributed to its genesis.

Among the Purāṇic descriptions of rituals, the “offering of the *lokapālas*” in *Liṅgapurāṇa* II.43, is particularly worthy of note. It belongs to a different version of the sixteen *mahādāna* offerings than those enumerated in the *Matsyapurāṇa* (cf. *LiP* 2.28–44; *MtP* 274–298). In this case however, the regents are not symbolized by images but are represented by eight priests. The statement that the ritual was performed by those desirous of becoming an emperor indicates that it must have been more apt for the already more wealthy and powerful strata of the society.

Among the rare irregularities in the composition and the configuration of the *aṣṭadikpāla* group is the occurrence of Virūpākṣa as regent of the south-west in some texts (KIRFEL 1920: 95; cf. *VdhP* on **table X**) as well as an exceptional enumeration of deities in *Vāmanapurāṇa* 32.22–23. Starting from the east, the deities are here named as (clockwise, with intermediate directions): Vajrī (Indra), Vahni (Agni), Daṇḍanāyaka, Kubera, Pāśī (Varuṇa), Vāyu, Lakṣmāṃśu (Soma), Śiva (Īśāna). Kubera’s position in the south-west, the direction of the *rākṣasa* demons, is unusual. Daṇḍanāyaka may be Yama, as that particular name refers to Yama’s weapon, the rod (*daṇḍa*). It remains possible, however, that this name might describe a separate deity with a horizontal staff, here referred to as Daṇḍapāṇi (see section 2.5.10), who appears in a number of images. Another irregularity occurs in the mention of both Kubera and Soma for the northern position in *AgP* 56 (**table X**), a discrepancy which is symptomatic of a lingering uncertainty regarding the protector of the north, something which is also expressed in the sculptural art of the time (Bādāmi 3, see section 2.2.1).

Various attempts have been made to assign dates to the Purāṇas.<sup>87</sup> However, hardly any chronological indications are contained in them. As a general time bracket for the well-known

<sup>79</sup> See KIRFEL 1920: 95. It is quite reasonable to assume that the scheme of four *lokapālas* is the older version. In some Purāṇas, both versions exist side by side (*Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 5.16.29 and 5.21.7). The *aṣṭadikpāla* scheme must have developed from the older model, as the north is, in the older version, generally presided over by Soma (Kubera exceptionally occurs in the *Varāhapurāṇa*, see KIRFEL: *ibid.*).

<sup>80</sup> Agni, Sūrya and Candra are mentioned as being inherent in the eyes of Śiva (*MtP* 154.441).

<sup>81</sup> One may speculate that both Nairṛta and Īśāna, who are missing, are regarded as identical with Śiva himself. In the case of Īśāna this is clear, as he is alternatively called Śiva or Śāṅkara. For Nirṛti/Nairṛta it may be relevant to note that he is listed as the first of the eleven *rudras* (a group of deities closely connected with Śiva) in *MtP* 171.38.

<sup>82</sup> The supposed analogy between particular deities and the king is an often recurring subject in the early texts under survey.

<sup>83</sup> It appears quite logical that in this recurring passage which describes the coronation of Pṛthu and other divine kings, the directions are not distributed among the usual *lokapālas*, but are here entrusted with their primary domain of regency (Indra with the *maruts*; Yama with the *pitrs*; Varuṇa with the waters; Soma/Candra with medicinal herbs, etc.).

<sup>84</sup> *MtP* 124.94a: *lokapālāḥ sthītāstatra lokālokasya madhyataḥ*.

<sup>85</sup> (See table next page).

<sup>86</sup> Some further, particularly interesting instances of variation in the vehicles found in the *Matsyapurāṇa* are the occurrences of *vyāla* (snake) for Kubera (*MtP* 133.64) and horse for Varuṇa (*MtP* 174.13).

<sup>87</sup> The dates for all the known Purāṇic scriptures proposed by earlier authors have been compiled by L. ROCHER 1986: 133–254.

**Table X** – Iconographic specifications of *dikpālas* from various Purāṇas

Purāṇas	East <sup>85</sup>	South-East	South	South-West	West	North-West	North	North-East
<i>AgP</i> 51.14-15	Indra <i>gaja</i> (elephant)  <i>vajra</i> (bolt)	Agni <i>chāga</i> (he-goat)  <i>śakti</i> (spear)	Yama <i>mahiṣa</i> (buffalo)  <i>daṇḍa</i> (rod)	Nairṛta –  <i>khaḍga</i> (sword)	Varuṇa <i>makara</i> (mythical aquatic animal)  <i>pāśa</i> (noose)	Vāyu <i>mṛga</i> (deer)  <i>dhvaja</i> (standard)	Kubera <i>meṣa</i> (ram)  <i>gadā</i> (mace)	Īśāna <i>vṛṣa</i> (bull)  –
<i>AgP</i> 56.17-31	Indra  <i>gaja</i> (elephant)  <i>vajra</i> (bolt)	Agni  <i>chāga</i> (he-goat)  <i>śakti</i> (spear)	Yama  <i>mahiṣa</i> (buffalo)  <i>daṇḍa</i> (rod)	Nairṛta  <i>vāhana</i> – unspecified – [96.28: <i>khara</i> (donkey)]  <i>khaḍga</i> (sword)	Varuṇa  <i>makara</i> (mythical aquatic animal)  <i>pāśa</i> (noose)	Vāyu  <i>vāhana</i> – unspecified –  <i>dhvaja</i> (standard)	Soma also: Kubera!  <i>vāhana</i> – unspecified –  <i>gadā</i> (mace)	Īśāna  <i>vṛṣa</i> (bull)  <i>śūla</i> (spear/trident)
<i>MtP</i> 148.81 ff. (battle scene)	Devarāja (Indra)  <i>ratha</i> (chariot)/ <i>gaja</i> (elephant) –	Hutāśana (Agni)  <i>chāga</i> (he-goat)  <i>śakti</i> (spear)	Yama  <i>mahiṣa</i> (buffalo)  <i>daṇḍa</i> (rod)	Rākṣaseśa (Nairṛta)  <i>narayuktaratha</i> (“nara-chariot”)  <i>khaḍga</i> (sword) <i>mudgara</i> (hammer)	Jaleśa (Varuṇa)  <i>bhujagendra</i> (king of snakes)  <i>pāśa</i> (noose) <i>gadā</i> (mace)	Pavana (Vāyu)  –  <i>aṅkuśa</i> (goad)	Dhanādhyakṣa (Kubera)  <i>ratha</i> (chariot)  <i>gadā</i> (mace) <i>śakti</i> (spear)	–
<i>MtP</i> 260.65-261.23	Surarāja (Indra)  <i>mattavāraṇa</i> (infuriated elephant)  <i>vajra</i> (bolt) <i>utpala</i> (blue lotus)	Vahni (Agni)  <i>aḷa</i> (ram/he-goat)  <i>akṣasūtraka</i> (rosary) r. <i>kamaṇḍalu</i> (waterpot) l.	Yama  <i>mahiṣa</i> (buffalo)  <i>daṇḍa</i> (rod) <i>pāśa</i> (noose)	Nairṛta  <i>nara</i> (anthropoid)/ <i>narayuktavimāna</i> (“nara-chariot”)  <i>khaḍga</i> (sword)	Varuṇa  <i>jhaṣa</i> (fish)  <i>pāśa</i> (noose)	Vāyu  <i>mṛga</i> (deer)  <i>patāka</i> (flag) <i>dhvaja</i> (standard)	Kubera  <i>narayuktavimāna</i> (“nara-chariot”)  <i>gadā</i> (mace)	Īśā (Īśāna)  <i>vṛṣa</i> (bull)  <i>triśūla</i> (trident)
<i>VdhP</i> 2.104.42b-50a	Śakra (Indra)  <i>gaja</i> (elephant)  <i>vajra</i> (bolt)	Vahni (Agni)  <i>śukayāna</i> (parrot-chariot) –	– (Yama)  <i>mahiṣa</i> (buffalo)  <i>daṇḍa</i> (rod)	Virūpākṣa  <i>uṣṭra</i> (camel)  <i>khaḍga</i> (sword)	Varuṇa  <i>haṃsa</i> (goose)  <i>pāśa</i> (noose)	Vāyu  –  <i>(vāyumaṇḍala</i> – circle of air)	Kubera  <i>vyomayāna</i> (sky-vehicle) <i>gadā</i> (mace)	Īśāna  <i>vṛṣa</i> (bull)  –
<i>VdhP</i> 3.50 ff.	Śakra (Indra)  <i>gaja</i> (elephant)  <i>padma</i> (lotus) r. <i>aṅkuśa</i> (goad) r. <i>vajra</i> (bolt) l.	Vahni (Agni)  <i>śukayāna</i> (parrot-chariot)  <i>ḷvālā</i> (flame) r. <i>triśūla</i> (trident) r. <i>akṣamālā</i> (rosary) l.	Yama  <i>mahiṣa</i> (buffalo)  <i>daṇḍa</i> (rod) r. <i>carma</i> (shield) l.	Virūpākṣa  <i>uṣṭra</i> (camel)  <i>daṇḍa</i> (rod)	Varuṇa  <i>saptahaṃsa ratha</i> (goose chariot)  <i>padma</i> (lotus) r. <i>pāśa</i> (noose) r. <i>śaṅkha</i> (conch) l. <i>ratnapātra</i> (gem-vessel) l.	Vāyu  –  <i>vāyavāpūritavastra</i> (inflated cloth)	Dhanada (Kubera)  <i>nara</i> (anthropoid)/ <i>śibikā</i> (palanquin)  <i>gadā</i> (mace) r. <i>śakti</i> (spear) r.	Gaurīśvara  –  <i>akṣamālā</i> (rosary) r. <i>triśūla</i> (trident) r. <i>darpaṇa</i> (mirror) l. <i>indīvara</i> (blue lotus) l.

major Purāṇas, the first millenium A.D. is quite probable, but it is possible that subsequent changes have crept in. R.C. HAZRA (1940: 176-177) has tentatively assigned dates to most chapters of the *Matsyapurāṇa*. One interesting result of the attempts to date Purāṇa passages, which has some bearing on the development of the *aṣṭadikpāla* group, has been secured by HENSGEN (1958). The author, having noticed reference to some intricate details in the cosmic layout in Kalidāsa’s works, postulates that the cosmological passages of the *Brahmaṇḍa*, *Vāyu*, and *Matsyapurāṇa* predate the poet Kālidāsa (c. early 5th cent. A.D.). Incidentally, the passages referred to by HENSGEN<sup>88</sup> form a kind of textual bracket for the description of the abodes of the four *lokapālas* Indra, Yama, Varuṇa

and Kubera on the Mānasottara mountain in the *Matsyapurāṇa* (see above, no. 4). Thus, the concept of only four *lokapālas*, which is already known as the older one, also seems to belong to an early Purāṇic stratum, prior to the 5th century. Significantly, one century later, the earliest dated literary evidence for the *aṣṭadikpālas* occurs in Varāhamihira’s *Yogayātrā*, as will be shown in the following section.

<sup>85</sup> The directions are not mentioned in the texts, but they are implied by the sequence of the deities.

<sup>88</sup> See HENSGEN 1958: 162-163, where he refers to KIRFEL 1954: 135, *śl.* 74 ff.; 230, *śl.* 29 ff.

From the passages utilized in **table X**, those from the *VdhP* probably also belong to a particularly early stratum. The dates proposed by some authors vary between “A.D. 400–500”, “A.D. 450–650”, and “A.D. 600–1000” (ROCHER 1986: 252). Some interesting hints of a chronological priority lie also in the mention of an ancient (Kuṣāṇa period) form of Vāyu<sup>89</sup> and in the reference to unusual deities (Virūpākṣa instead of Nairṛta, Gaurīśvara instead of Īśāna) and unique vehicles of some of the guardians (Agni, Virūpākṣa, Varuṇa). A passage in the *Skandapurāṇa* (2.9.68–85, see A.B.L. AWASTHI 1976: 209–213) draws much material from the *VdhP*. Its posteriority can be deduced from the fact that the configuration of each deity, portrayed so elaborately in the *VdhP*, has been abridged in the *Skandapurāṇa*, so that, e.g. the nooses, formerly held by attendants of Yama and Virūpākṣa, respectively, are, in the *Skandapurāṇa*, assigned to these deities themselves.<sup>90</sup> In the case of the *VdhP*, it is somewhat unexpected to find that very elaborate descriptions of the directional guardians’ images<sup>91</sup> are contained in such an early text. Keeping in mind the aspect of “propagation” contained in the *Matsyapurāṇa*, however, this need not be surprising. In any case, it will be seen below that many of the features mentioned here did not succeed in gaining acceptance in art.

Finally, it is worth mentioning a chronological assessment of the late 6th century for chapter 51 of the *Agnipurāṇa* (**table X**), which was recently provided by an iconographical study of another group of deities, viz. the *navagrahas*, which are described in the same chapter<sup>92</sup>. Except for the omission of Nairṛta’s vehicle and Īśāna’s attribute in this passage, the characteristics of the *dikpālas* are standard and already conform to the canonical version.

#### 1.4 Other Early Texts

The designation “early” is here applied to texts which, as with the selected Purāṇic passages, can be rather safely dated before 1000 A.D.<sup>93</sup> Only a few of these contain iconographic descriptions (**table XI**).

The texts surveyed belong to various categories, and thus information about the directional guardians can be expected to be diverse. The political treaty *Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra*, which probably dates from the pre-Christian era, mentions four deities as the guardians of the city gates (*Arth* 2.4.17): Brahmā, Indra, Yama and Senāpati (Skanda). The directions are not specified, however. The well-known Nānāghāt inscription from c. the late first century B.C. includes the “four *lokapālas*” Yama, Varuṇa, Kubera and Vāsava (Indra). It has been noted by D.C. SIRCAR (1971: 239) that Indra and Dharma, the latter akin to Yama, have been invoked separately, indicating that “the identification of Dharma and Yama and of Indra and Vāsava may belong to a later date”. The sequence of deities seems to start with Yama in the south and proceeds in the usual clockwise order.

In this connection, however, it is relevant to note the occurrence of the relatively later group of *aṣṭadikpālas* in the particular texts, as well as to trace iconographic passages. The most important reference to a group of eight is contained in the *Manusmṛti*, which has been assigned to the period of B.C. 200 to A.D. 200. While in this text, the number of classified directions amounts to eight (e.g. 1.13), a group of eight deities which is not explicitly linked to them has been variously called “*lokapālas*” (*Manu* 5.96), “*lokeśas*” (basically synonymous with the former; *Manu* 5.97), and “*surendras*” (kings of the gods; *Manu* 7.4). The composition of this group does not exactly tally with the later established *aṣṭadikpāla* set (*Manu* 5.96):

Soma, Agni, Arka (Sūrya), Anila (Vāyu), Indra, Vitta (Kubera), Appati (Varuṇa) and Yama.

In this group, which is referred to as “Manu Lokapālas” (see section 2.4.1.3) in the present study, Nairṛta and Īśāna are replaced by Sūrya and Soma, the Sun and Moon Gods.<sup>95</sup> The group is referred to again in *Manu* 7.4 and 7.7, but in different orders. In *Manu* 9.303–311, Kubera is substituted by the Earth Goddess Pṛthivī. In other texts, the analogy between the king and certain deities, which is the underlying theme here, recurs,<sup>96</sup> but the group of Manu Lokapālas as mentioned in *Manu* 5.96 and 7.4 has not, according to our knowledge, been referred to anywhere else. In this context, there is only one interesting reference to a group of eight or nine “*lokapālas*”, corresponding to the directional guardians.<sup>97</sup>

An early version of the *dikpāla* scheme, contained in the renowned treaty on dance, the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, preserves the principle of allocating a number of deities and groups of beings to the eight directions, with Brahmā at the centre.<sup>98</sup> This order may be generally related to the versions contained in the Gṛhyasūtras (**table VI**).

Regarding iconographic passages, the two works of the author Varāhamihira (until 587 A.D.), the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* and the *Yogayātrā*, contain the earliest known rules for making images of the *dikpālas* (see **table XI**). While the *Yogayātrā* significantly describes the *dikpālas* in their respective regions, their images being carried on military standards (cf. A.M. SHASTRI 1964), it includes only few details about their appearance. The *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* also refers to the

<sup>89</sup> This description clearly conforms with the “running type” representation of Vāyu with dishevelled hair and an open mouth, holding an inflated cloth, which is known from early representations (see section 2.5.6). The omission of the mention of a vehicle also does not seem to be accidental.

<sup>90</sup> In the case of Yama, the attendant Kāla holds the noose in *VdhP* 3.51.7; in the case of Virūpākṣa, his consort Nirṛti carries the noose, according to *VdhP* 3.57.3. For the *SKP*, see 2.9.27.72–73.

<sup>91</sup> Nowhere else has such a fully detailed and even interpretative account of the directional guardians been made. The mostly four-armed *dikpālas* are minutely described, together with their vehicles and consorts, and in some cases, with their attendants. The second part of the account explains the symbolic meaning of the attributes, the vehicles, etc. The regent himself is always identified with an aspect of Viṣṇu, the consort with his wife Lakṣmī.

<sup>92</sup> S. MARKEL 1995: 165. The author observes “the fact that the verses (51:1,11–12) ascribe to Candra, Brhaspati and Śukra the ‘early’ iconographic features of the rosary and the water vessel, yet accord the ‘late’ attributes of the lunar crescent to Rāhu and a sword and, uniquely, a lamp to Ketu.” This description of Ketu’s lamp has been assigned to “*la partie ancienne*” by M.T. DE MALLMANN (1963: 4), dating to c. 6th century (*ibid.*: 10), while MARKEL prefers a late-6th century date.

<sup>93</sup> This time bracket roughly corresponds with the early phase of representation of the directional guardians.

<sup>94</sup> The directions are expressly mentioned only in the *Yogayātrā*.

<sup>95</sup> Some authors (e.g. J. DOWSON 1879: 180) have tried to force these deities, the sequence of which changes from passage to passage, into a directional scheme. In doing so they have assigned Sūrya to the south-west and Soma to the north-east. No corroboration whatsoever can be found in other texts or in the artwork of the period.

<sup>96</sup> On the divine functions and their royal analogies see also A.S. ALTEKAR 1949: 61–63.

<sup>97</sup> *Liṅgapurāṇa* 1.35.5–6; in this passage, a king explains that he himself holds the physical body of the eight, but in actual fact probably nine *lokapālas* (if Īśvara is understood as Īśāna): Indra, Agni, Yama, Nairṛta, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Soma, Kubera, Īśāna (?) – *aṣṭānām lokapālānām vapurdhārayate nrpaḥ / tasmādindro hyahaṃ vahniryaśca nī[r]ristaiḥ varuṇaścaiva vāyuśca somo dhanada eva ca / īśvaraḥ haṃ na sandeho nā vamaṅtavya eva ca //*.

<sup>98</sup> In *Nāṭ* 3.23–31, correspondence with the usual order lies in the positioning of Mahendra on the east, Vahni (Agni) on the south-east, Yama on the south, Varuṇa on the west, and Dhanada on the north. Unusually, the south-west has only a group of *nairṛtas*, and the north-west the seven winds (*sapta vāyavaḥ*), while Śiva is installed not on the north-east, but on the east.

**Table XI** – Iconographic specifications of *dikpālas* from various early texts

Early texts	East <sup>94</sup>	South-East	South	South-West	West	North-West	North	North-East
<i>Brhat-saṃhitā</i> 58.42; 57	Mahendra (Indra)  <b>dvīpa (elephant)</b> <i>vajra</i> (bolt)	–	Yama  <b>mahiṣa (buffalo)</b> <i>daṇḍa</i> (rod)	–	Varuṇa  <b>haṃsa (goose)</b> <i>pāśa</i> (noose)	–	Kubera  <b>nara (anthropoid)</b> –	–
<i>Hayaśiṛṣa-pañcarātra</i> 1.28	Indra  <b>Airāvata (personal elephant)</b> <i>vajra</i> (bolt)	Vahni (Agni)  <b>avi (sheep)</b> <i>akṣasūtra</i> (rosary) r. <i>kuṇḍikā</i> (pot) l.	Vaiśvata (Yama)  <b>mahiṣa (buffalo)</b> <i>pāśa</i> (noose) <i>daṇḍa</i> (rod)	Rakṣasām Pati (Nairṛta)  <b>ṛkṣa (bear)</b> <i>khaḍga</i> (sword)	Varuṇa  <b>makara (mythical aquatic animal)</b> <i>pāśa</i> (noose)	Vāyu  <b>mṛga (deer)</b> <i>dhvaja</i> (standard)	Yakṣeṣa (Kubera)  <b>nara (anthropoid)</b> <i>gadā</i> (mace) <i>śaṅkha</i> (conch)	Īśāna  <b>vṛṣa (bull)</b> <i>śūla</i> (spear/trident) r. <i>varadamudrā</i> (bestowing gesture) r. <i>kapāla</i> (skull-cup) l. <i>nāgapāśa</i> (snake-noose) l.
<i>Yogayātrā</i> 6	Mahendra (Indra)  <b>Airāvata (personal elephant)</b> <i>vajra</i> (bolt)	Agni – –	Yama – <i>daṇḍa</i> (rod)	Nirṛti [female!] – –	Varuṇa – <i>pāśa</i> (noose) <i>gadā</i> (mace)	Vāyu – –	Dhanada (Kubera) – <i>gadā</i>	Śūli (Śiva/Īśāna) – –

*aṣṭadikpāla* group,<sup>99</sup> but only mentions the iconography of four of them. It is difficult to decide whether this incomplete information is exclusively due to the fact that the works reflect an initial stage in the description of directional guardians. In the *Amarakośa*, a lexicographical work which probably also dates from the 5th century,<sup>100</sup> similarly only few of their characteristics are revealed.<sup>101</sup>

The *Hayaśiṛṣapañcarātra* is a religious text which probably dates from c. 800 A.D. It includes a complete description of the images of the “*lokeśas*”, as the directional guardians are called here. It does not mention the respective directions, as is generally the case in the early texts. While there are few exceptions to the descriptions known from the Purāṇas (**table X**), the text is extremely important in that it depicts Īśāna as four-armed, while the other members of the group are only two-armed. The text also contains a rare version of Nairṛta’s vehicle, which is a bear. This unique reference could explain some peculiar forms of Nairṛta’s vehicle in Central India (see section 2.5.4).

In summing up, perhaps also anticipating a comparison of the actual representations, it is important to note that the variation in the iconographic prescriptions of the first millennium A.D. seems to correspond more or less to the variation in the artwork of the period. It

would be futile to try to link a particular text to a particular image, but a few plausible connections and general tendencies can be recognized, as the number of relevant texts is relatively small. There remains no doubt that specialized ritual functions must have promoted the popularity of the directional guardians; their features were not generally very elaborately described. No mention will be made here of the colours of their skin and clothes, which have been referred to in a number of texts but are not relevant in the present context.

<sup>99</sup> *BrS* 54.4 and 86.75; it is a significant aberration that, contrary to the evidence listed on **table XI** where the respective guardian is Kubera, the north is allotted to Soma (called Indu) in both passages.

<sup>100</sup> C. VOGEL 1979: 309–310.

<sup>101</sup> The group of eight is enumerated in *digvarga*, lines 2b and 3a. A list of the guardians’ names, including also their wives, vehicles, etc. (elaborate only in the case of Indra), appears in the section *svargavarga*, lines 44–75a.