Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies

Volume 24 (2017), Issue 1

Recent Studies on the Ancient Indian *Vrātya*

Kristoffer af Edholm

ISSN 1084-7561

http://dx.doi.org/10.11588/ejvs.2017.1.2316

Recent Studies on the Ancient Indian *Vrātya*

Kristoffer af Edholm (Stockholm University)

Introduction

That the ancient Indian *vrātya* continues to engage scholars, and rightly so, is demonstrated by two recent publications, both with Tiziana Pontillo (Cagliari University) as one of the editors. The first one is *The Volatile World of Sovereignty: The Vrātya Problem and Kingship in South Asia* (2015), the result of a three-year research project financed by the Regione Autonoma della Sardegna and coordinated by Pontillo. This book contains nineteen articles relating to the *vrātya* and Indian kingship.[1] It approaches these subjects from a broad, interdisciplinary perspective, using a wide range of texts and some visual art. The second book, *Vrātya Culture in Vedic Sources* (2016), contains nine scholarly papers presented at the 16th World Sanskrit Conference in Bangkok 2015. In this volume the authors try to "single out the specific features of the assumed vrātya culture, i.e. those facets which are not included in the core of the orthodox Śrauta culture … or which seem to intentionally be shown in a bad light" (2016:6). We have comparatively little material dealing directly with the *vrātya*; one of the aims of both volumes in question is to add to the list of sources Vedic passages not previously analysed from the *vrātya* point of view (2015:3; 2016:1-2). It is my intention to review the two volumes in context of previous reseach and to discuss a handful of the contributions. I will also mention a number of *vrātya*-related articles published elsewhere.

Previous research and theoretical framework of the present studies

The nature and origins of the *vrātya* ("the *vrātya* problem"[2]) have been discussed for more than a century.[3] It is not at all clear who the *vrātya* is, as some passages describe him in a cryptic manner (e.g. "the *vrātya* is not initiated but speaks like one initiated", 2015:310) and are open to widely different interpretations. In his translation of the Atharvavedic *Vrātyakāṇḍa* (*AVŚ* 15), "this unique and obscure Book" (1896:185)[4], Ralph Griffith expresses perplexity at the combination of human and divine elements in the *vrātya,* in what he calls a "hyperbolical glorification of the Vrātya or Aryan Non-conformist":

> It is hard to understand and I do not attempt to explain the idealisation and grotesquely extravagant glorification of the Vrātya or heretical nomad who appears at one time to be a supernatural Being endowed with the attributes of all-pervading Deity, and at another as a human wanderer in need of food and lodging. (Griffith 1896:199)

The Śrautasūtras tell us that a man who has led the life of a *vrātya* should perform the *vrātyastoma* ritual (see below) as purification. In later texts, such as the *Manusmṛti* (8.39, 10.20), *vrātya*s are men of the Āryan *varṇa*s (*brāhmaṇa*s, *kṣatriya*s, *vaiśya*s) who have not undergone Vedic initiation at the proper time and who do not keep the Vedic ritual observances.[5]

The Vedic term *vrātya* may come from *vráta* 'Schar, Truppe' (Mayrhofer 1996:597)

---

[1] "The work aims at postulating a fresh proposal for an alternative explanation of the *vrātya*-phenomenon correlated with the heterodox facets of Indian sovereignty." (Pontillo et al. 2015:1)

[2] Hauer (1927:1); Pontillo et al. (2015:1), etc.

[3] Already in 1962 Heesterman wrote that the "problem of the vrātyas is certainly one of the most-beaten tracks of Vedic studies. Each generation of Indologists has, since more than hundred years, contributed to its study … and still there seems to be scope for generations to come." (1962:1)

[4] W. D. Whitney (1905:770) writes: "In spite of its puerility and surface-obscurity, the book is not unworthy of a searching investigation". Cf. Hauer (1927:1-2).

[5] Remaining a *vrātya* results in loss of caste (*Manusmṛti* 11.68).

and/or may be related to *vratá* 'vow, religious observance' (Falk 1986:17, cf. Mucciarelli 2015:66-67, Ferrara 2015:316ff.). The term appears to designate a person standing, more or less, outside the brahmanic socio-ritual community. The "outsiderhood" of the *vrātya*s has been interpreted in different ways (cf. Horsch 1966:401-402, with ref.; Köhler 2015:358-359): as a non-brahmanic, Indo-Āryan cultic community – in symbiosis or conflict with Vedic religion; as a band of young men obliged to follow certain *vratá*s; or as evidence of an older, cyclical sacrificial system. *Vrātya*s appear as members of a troop performing a collective ritual (cf. below on *vrātyastoma* and *sattra*). The *vrātya* leader is endowed with vehicle, stick and bow; he wears black garment and skins, silver necklace, turban and long hair.[6] The importance of Rudra – the Vedic "outsider god" – in *vrātya* texts was early on noticed by scholars; the *vrātya*s are also associated with Indra and the band of youthful, warlike Maruts. Jarl Charpentier (1911)[7] detects in the *vrātya* the proto-Śaiva ascetic, and J. W. Hauer (*Der Vrātya, Untersuchungen über die nichtbrahmanische Religion Altindiens*, 1927) the member of an Āryan, non-brahmanic group, whose cult is centered round Rudra. A different interpretation is provided by Jan Heesterman ("Vrātya and Sacrificer", 1962), who approaches the *vrātya* "from within the brahmanic orthopraxy". He argues – resorting to ritual texts rather than *AVŚ* 15, which he considers to be relatively late – that the *vrātya,* rather than standing outside orthodox-brahmanic religion, represents a similar kind of liminal state, "betwixt and between", as the initiate (*dīkṣita*) in a somic sacrifice. The initiate and sacrificer (*yajamāna*), according to Heesterman, originate in the *vrātya,* as an archaic, pre-*śrauta* ("pre-classical") type of sacrificer.

The Rudraic connection, stressed by Charpentier and Hauer, is further pursued in Harry Falk's important monograph (*Bruderschaft und Würfelspiel*, 1986; with an additional article from 2002: "Vom Vorteil des Schreckens: Gesellschaft und Männerbund in Indien"), which relates the *vrātya* to Indian and other Indo-European wolfish/canine Männerbünde/sodalities. Others who view the *vrātya* in context of lycanthropic brotherhoods are Willem Bollée (1981), David Gordon White (1991) and Kris Kershaw (2000) (cf. Jamison & Witzel 1992:46-47; [8] Witzel 1995:17; Samuel 2008:238; Collins 2014:112ff.; Parpola 2016). Heesterman (1962:27, 30; 1993:178-179) mentions the Rudra-*vrātya* connection and traces continuity in the Rudraic aspect of the *brahman*, but he does not make much of it, in contrast to Hauer, Falk and Kershaw. The centrality of Rudra is down-played in the two new volumes edited by Pontillo et al. – with the exception of articles referring to the work of Günter-Dietz Sontheimer (1997). The article by Dore questions the notion that the relationship between the Atharvavedic *vrātya* and Rudra is central, stressing that of the *vrātya* and Indra instead (2015a:55).

Although the views of all the mentioned scholars are reflected in *The Volatile World of Sovereignty* and *Vrātya Culture in Vedic Sources*, it is arguably Heesterman who has had the greatest theoretical impact. A cornerstone in the present volumes is the idea that the formation of the *śrauta* ritual system (i.e. the "solemn" form of Vedic ritual) is the result of a reform[9] of a hypothetical, earlier organisation of ritual. This reform, "the outcome of a clash between different cultural matrices" (2015:2; similarly 2016:10), the editors of the 2015 volume suggest in the Introduction, could explain the significantly diverse attitudes toward the *vrātya* found in the *śrauta* texts, ranging from veneration (cf. Griffith above) to rejection. This view is mainly based on Heesterman's brilliant – but also problematic and criticised – theory of a

[6] On differences between the *vrātya* leader and the *vrātya* group (the latter hedonistic and dressed in red, the former ascetic and dressed in black) see Falk (1986:23ff.; 2002:38-39).
[7] Reviewed negatively by A. B. Keith (1913).
[8] *Vrātyas* are members of a Männerbund, who live an independent life away from home, in order to get a starting capital "by threat and extraction from their neighbors." (Jamison & Witzel 1992:46-47)
[9] This transition to the *śrauta* system would match the shift from tribal society to a more hierarchical, stratified type of society under Kuru hegemony (2015:3; cf. Thapar 1990; Witzel 1995:11-12).

pre-*śrauta*, cyclical form of sacrifice (see Stephanie W. Jamison's review of Heesterman's *The Broken World of Sacrifice* from 1996 for criticism[10]; cf. Falk 1986:190ff.). The reform theory is thought to explain the "otherwise incomprehensible axial breakthrough highlighted by Heesterman" (2015:2; cf. 2016:9; Heesterman 1985:5). Although this theory finds inspiration in Heesterman's works, it differs from from the latter with regard to the nature of transition from pre-classical to *śrauta*: Heesterman identifies the soma initiate as the direct successor of the *vrātya* ("the genuine predecessors of the śrauta sacrificer and dīkṣita", 1962:34) and imagines a development *within* Vedic society (although he thinks in terms of breaks and conflicting systems) from pre-classical sacrifice to the *śrauta* system, as well as from *śrauta* to interiorisation and renunciation of Vedic ritual, whereas the editors of the present volumes imagine a *clash* or *break* between two cultures, rather than a *continuum* (2015:2; cf. 2016:6; Pontillo 2016:208). In the 2016 volume the authors ask how the radical change (following Heesterman's theory) from the ancient pattern of achieving a high status (becoming *brahman*, ruler, etc.) by *merit* (i.e. as victor in competition) to one of *inherited privilege*, could happen if not "determined by some decisive historical fact". Therefore the authors assume that the cause of the breakthrough was "a clash between two distinct branches of Indo-Āryan speakers." (2016:9) These two contrastive cultures are the Ṛgvedic and that of the *vrātya*, the latter thought to represent an early wave of Indo-Āryan immigration (Parpola 1983, cf. 2016). The *vrātya* culture the authors have in mind is the Heesterman type of agonistic, mobile and militant society, characterised by a dualistic system of cyclical exchange and age-group system.[11] Traces of this alternative, Indo-Āryan society is thought to be found in e.g. the *Atharvaveda*, the *Ṛgveda* Maṇḍalas 1, 8 and 10 (Kāṇva and Aṅgiras hymns), *gāthā* verses and early Sanskrit epics, as well as in what Johannes Bronkhorst (2007) has termed the "Greater Magadha" cultural complex, from which Buddhism and Jainism grew (2015:2). The editors trace a *vrātya* "legacy" (2015:4) all the way from early Vedic texts up to medieval and later Indian culture.

The theory of "a clash between two distinct branches of Indo-Āryan speakers" stands in contrast to the theory of Heesterman, as well as that of Falk (1986). The latter follows Heesterman in seeing the development from the cult of the (*vrātya*) brotherhood/*communitas* to the *śrauta* ritual as a *continuum*, but, in contrast to Heesterman, Falk (1986:194) sees *śrauta* ritual as an adjustment to new socio-economical conditions, rather than men's wish to break the cycle of conflict and violence. Falk (1986:50, 191-192) criticises Parpola's theory on the existence of a pre-Ṛgvedic ("Atharvavedic"[12]) culture of *vrātya*-Āryans and a younger, Ṛgvedic soma cult. Falk points out that this is contradicted e.g. by the fact that the Maruts and Indra, who appear as prototypical *vrātya*s in several texts, belong to the Ṛgvedic – and thus also to the somic – tradition (more on this below).

Sovereignty and the apotheosis of the *ekavrātya*

Let us now look closer at some of the new publications, mainly those centered round the Vedic *vrātya*. The article by Monero Dore, "The Ekavrātya, Indra and the Sun" in the 2015 volume, explores – mainly in Atharvavedic material – possible connections between the

[10] Jamison & Witzel (1992:42 / 2003:87) criticise Heesterman's theories for being over-simple; he views the end of the old ritual as a sudden revolution, rather than as an observable ritual development. Heesterman sees non-competetive machinery in *śrauta* texts, "neglecting e.g. the social aspects of the increasingly difficult 'ritual career' a sacrificer undertakes by becoming a dīkṣita." Heesterman does not look to Ṛgvedic and Avestan texts – the truly *pre-classical* ritual texts. Further, violence is found even in classical Vedic ritual, although the priests try to avoid the pollution that comes from killing and shedding of blood (1992:43).

[11] Cf. Vassilkov (2016:186-187): Vedic culture emerged against the *vrātya* background, and "existed for centuries as islands in a sea of *vrātya* communities."

[12] "In my opinion, the 'vrā́tya rituals' represent the 'Atharvavedic' tradition that existed in the Indus Valley [2000-1700 BC] before the arrival of the Rigvedic tradition [1500-1200 BC], and the 'classical' Vedic ritual came into being when these two traditions fused together." (Parpola 2016)

vrātya (*AVŚ* 15, the *ekavrātya* "hymn"[13]) and two other early Vedic, ascetic figures: the *brahmacārin* (*AVŚ* 11.5) and the *keśin/muni* (*ṚV* 10.136). He also introduces into the discussion the enigmatic *ekavṛt* in *AVŚ* 13.4. Dore tries to identify a common ideology behind the triptych of Ascetic—God—Sun in these texts. The *vrātya* and the *brahmacārin* have previously been linked to each other by e.g. Hauer (1927:324ff.), Heesterman (1962) and Falk (1986:67ff.), but Dore does this from a new perspective and in a more detailed manner. All three figures (*vrātya*, *brahmacārin, keśin*) are identified with certain divinities (Indra, Rudra, Sūrya), described as sovereigns, possessors of esoteric knowledge and pursuing a mobile or wandering lifestyle. Dore discusses *AVŚ* 13.4, a hymn hitherto not given sufficient attention by scholars. This hymn, which, although it belongs to the *Rohitakāṇḍa*, never refers to its object as *rohita* ('the ruddy', usually interpreted as a name of the Sun), using instead the epithet *ekavṛt*, which Dore interprets 'the one towards which everyone turns; the unique' (2015a:43; cf. *AV-Paippalāda* 20.22.1 on p. 56). This epithet, along with *ekavrātya* or 'single *vrātya*' in *AVŚ* 15.1, express the idea of the ascetic's ascent to a state where he unites in himself the whole Vedic pantheon (2015a:57; "the conquering of the divine unity", 2015a:62). The goal is to become superior even to the gods (2015a:58, 61). Dore is tempted to attribute to this hymn the same ideology as that of the *ekavrātya* and *brahmacārin* texts. The beginning of *AVŚ* 13.4 and vs. 4 of the *keśin* hymn are so similar that they appear to be "virtually exchangeable", Dore writes. The poet begins 13.4 by alluding to the movement of an unnamed subject, who goes (*sá eti*) to the heavenly light (*svàr*) "as Savitṛ", which may refer to the Sun's movement and/or to the wandering ascetic (2015a:49). Similarly the *brahmacārin* hymn begins with mentioning the movement (*carati*) of the ascetic, as does the first *ekavrātya* chapter (*ī́yamāna*; cf. *cáraṇe cáran* in the *keśin* hymn). "Verses like these could represent the most ancient legacy of the *vrātya* culture", Dore writes. This view goes against that of Heesterman (1962), who considers *AVŚ* 15 to be a relatively late text and of lesser value than the brahmanic ritual manuals for the reconstruction of *vrātya* culture. The structural affinity of *AVŚ* 15.1 and the first *paryāya* of 13.4, Dore continues, points to them being "two different versions of the same composition" (2015a:54): the ascetic is here identified with the demiurge, with deities, and so on. Dore writes that the authors of the texts celebrating these ascetic figures "may have had the same concepts in mind and perhaps even shared a poetic heritage, a common ideology to which all of them refer." (2015a:62) This ideology is characterised by the role attributed to the knowledge attained by the ascetic, which gives sovereignty over all beings, even gods (2015a:58; cf. 2015b; 2016a; 2016b).

The texts discussed by Dore clearly contrast with the main bulk of older Vedic (especially Ṛgvedic) poetry by the way they celebrate ascetics, i.e. mortals divinised and empowered through asceticism. The subject merits further research, in particular the possible connection between these hymns/texts and the later Vedic and non-Vedic 'Asketendichtung' (Winternitz 1920; Horsch 1966), which is not mentioned in the article by Dore. I am thinking, for example, of the "wanderer's song" in the Śunaḥśepa legend (*AB* 7.15), which thematises royalty, asceticism and sacrifice. Indra and the Sun – two key deities in Dore's article – appear respectively as guide and paragon for the wanderer-ascetic. In the fifth *gāthā*, for example, the Sun is presented as the exemplary wandering ascetic. The name of the addressed prince, Rohita, is the same as that of the Sun (if the interpretation of Rohita as the Sun is correct, that is) in the royal hymn *AVŚ* 13.1, belonging to the same *kāṇḍa* as the hymn

[13] Dore refers to the *Vrātyakāṇḍa* as a "hymn" (2015a:33ff.), with verse[s] (2015a:56), composed by "the poet" (2015a:35; cf. Hauer 1927:308; 1958:27), but it should be noted that the text is entirely in prose, similar to that of the Brāhmaṇa texts, which it also resembles in style and content. Occasional rhythmical word sequences are "mere casual lapses into meter" (Whitney 1905:772). Jan Gonda, following Whitney (1905:471), refers to the *Vrātyakāṇḍa* as Atharvavedic "*brāhmaṇa* [type of] prose" (which is characterized by "typically *brāhmaṇa* constructions, an unmistakable monotony, and the use of some formal categories which are foreign to the Ṛgveda") in the form of "*paryāya* ('period' [or 'chapter']) hymns" (Gonda 1975:305).

discussed by Dore (cf. Proferes 2007:85ff.). The closeness of the divinised ascetic and the divinised king in some Vedic passages may be illustrated by this Atharvavedic stanza composed for the royal consecration: […] *chríyam vásānaś carati svárociḥ* / *mahát tád vṛ́ṣṇo ásurasya nā́mā́ viśvárūpo amṛ́tāni tasthau* // "Clothing himself in splendour [the king] goes about having his own brightness. Great is that virile name of the *asura*; having all forms he approached immortal things." (*AVŚ* 4.8.3) The ruler 'goes about', like the ascetics discussed by Dore, and is said to be *viśvarūpa*, which can be interpreted either as 'having all forms', which would fit the idea of the king (like the ascetic/*ekavrātya*) as an aggregate of (all) deities.[14]

Another connection between the *vrātya* and sovereignty, not explored in the 2015 and 2016 volumes, is the symbolism of the *āsandī*, the seat or throne prepared for the *vrātya* by the gods in *AVŚ* 15.3. The seat, we read, is made out of the elements of liturgical speech and various parts of the cosmos: *bṛhat* and *rathantara* are the two length-wise pieces, and so on. The *vrātya* ascends this seat. A similar throne is that of the king in the *AB's* description of the great royal consecration of Indra, made out of *bṛhat*, and other meters. This throne, supported by gods, the king mounts (*AB* 8.12; cf. 8.17). Another royal throne is that of the *mahāvrata* ritual in *JB* 2.25 (cf. Proferes 2007:88); again made of *bṛhat*, *rathantara,* etc., and supported by the gods; the Sun is said to be consecrated on this throne and then visit the four quarters. The latter act forms another parallel between the *vrātya* in *AVŚ* 15 and the Vedic king: the wanderings or symbolic steps in the directions of space (the royal conquest of the quarters, *digvijaya*), which precedes their respective enthronements.[15] These are just some of the connections between royal and ascetic figures in Vedic texts, a subject which could be explored in a future study.

A future study might also look in detail at possible "*vrātya* elements" in the Vedic *pravargya* ritual and the myths associated with it (cf. Hauer 1927:129-132; Falk 1986:26-27), such as the glorification of the *mahāvīra* figure/vessel. This is also for the contribution of Kyoko Amano in the 2016 volume, which looks at the ritual contexts of *sattra* myths in the *Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā*, whose background may be placed outside the central Yajurvedic communities. Amano discusses, among other things, the myth about how Agni, Makha, Vāyu and Indra performed a *sattra* (a collective Vedic ritual which for good reasons can be interpreted, in its "original form", as a *vrātya* ritual, 2015:69)[16] on the Kurukṣetra, to see who would first get success (*prathamá ṛdhnávat*) and share it with the others. Makha won and wished to keep the success for himself (against the *vrātya/sattra* principle of sharing the price). The other gods attacked him and Makha had to defend himself with his bow and three arrows. The story goes on to tell how Indra let some termites to cut through the bow-string, which led to Makha's head being cut off. This myth has parallels (slightly different) in e.g. the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*, where it explains the origin of the *pravargya*. Amano notes that probable "non-orthodox" aspects in the myth include the bow with three arrows, which is a *vrātya* attribute (2016:47). Further, the secrecy of the *pravargya* suggests that it may have non-orthodox origins. The article by Frank Köhler in the same volume likewise touches upon the relations between *pravargya* and *vrātya*s. As argued by Oberlies, the *pravargya* appears to

[14] Cf. the *brahmacārin* in *ṚV* 10.109.5, who "goes about, becoming a limb of the gods" (*carati ... devā́nām bhavaty ékam áṅgam*). Henk Bodewitz (1985:16-19), however, argues in relation to other passages that *viśvarūpa* could be referring to glitter, lustre, which is compatible with the ancient Indian concept of royal splendour (af Edholm 2017:45).

[15] Martin Wiltshire (1990:168-169) draws attention to the epithet "man of the four regions of space" for the solitary ascetic in the Pali *Khaggavisāṇasutta* in the *Suttanipāta*, which could also refer to a king: in the *punarabhiṣeka* (re-consecration ritual) the ruler wanders (*samcarati*) unoppressed through all the quarters, finding support in the world of Indra (*AB* 8.11).

[16] See Falk (1986:30-31) on similarities between *vrātyastoma* and *sattra.* Falk suggests that both *vrātyastoma* and *sattra* originate in the brotherhood/Männerbund; *vrātya* and *sattrin* were one and the same person, at different ritual stages (1986:31, 44).

have a Ṛgvedic predecessor in the *gharmá* ritual (cf. Houben 2000), which originally developed from an initiation ritual and, as such, has common origin with the orthodox *upanayana*.[17] The preparation for the initiation seems to have included learning poetry, which may also be connected to the *vrātya*'s lifestyle (Falk 1986:35-36; Oberlies 2012:153, 283ff.; Köhler 2016:172).[18] But there is no Ṛgvedic connection between *gharmá/pravargya* and *sattra*, Köhler writes (2016:173), and he questions Oberlies' hypothesis. A future study will have to balance these problems with the acknowledgement of elements in the Ṛgvedic *pravargya,* as well as in the *pravargya* of later ritual texts, that can be related to the ascetic, regal and solar symbolism that Dore (2015) connects with the Atharvavedic *vrātya*.

Ṛgvedic culture versus *vrātya* culture?

This leads us back to the question of the relationship between orthodox/Ṛgvedic religion and "*vrātya* culture". In his article in the 2016 *vrātya* volume, Dore explores the relationship between the gods Indra and Bṛhaspati. As shown by Hanns-Peter Schmidt (1968) the name of the Ṛgvedic Bṛhaspati was originally an epithet of Indra as lord of the *bráhman* (the sacred power/word). The connection between *bráhman* and *kṣatra* (Indra) is traced by Dore in passages from the *AVŚ*, such as 15.10 on the *vrātya* (2016a:191), and 11.5.7, where the *brahmacārin* is said to generate *bráhman* and be born as the demon-slayer Indra. According to Dore Indra's ambiguity and special relationship with Bṛhaspati reflects the *vrātya* as consecrated warrior (2016a:180). The divinised *ekavrātya* is "the protoype of the priest-king or consecrated-warrior" (2016a:192), i.e. Indra-Bṛhaspati, the pre-classical *vrātya* of Heesterman (1993:142[19]). A similar theme is explored by Neri & Pontillo (2016) in the same volume; they ask what it means "to become *brahman*" in Vedic and Pali texts. Neri & Pontillo argue that the *brahmabhūta* condition and the title *brahmán* ('sacred power-holder') originally denoted the status of one who occupies an outstanding position (*śreṣṭha*), supremacy of both the military and the sapiential kind, *by merit* and not by birth, which would place the origins of the *brahmabhūta* concept in the (Heesterman type of) agonistic "*vrātya* culture" (2016:146-148).

With Falk's critical remarks on Parpola's theory (1986:192, above) in mind, I wonder how one should view the existence of Ṛgvedic deities who apparently are connected with the *vrātya* type of sodality/*communitas*: not just the ambivalent "outsider god" Rudra[20], but the celebrated troop (*vrāta/gaṇa*) of Maruts too – and their leader, the "arch-Ṛgvedic" Indra, who has *vrātya*-like qualities in the *ṚV* itself (Schmidt 1968; cf. e.g. Wikander 1938:71; Kershaw 2000:213ff.; Falk 2002:36, 39, 63-65).[21] These *vrātya*-like deities appear not just in *ṚV* 1, 8,

[17] According to Oberlies (2012:153, 283ff.) the original/Ṛgvedic form of *pravargya* marks the end of the young men's initiation (the later *upanayana*) – the youths are identified with the divine ephebes, the Maruts – which takes place just before the monsoon in order to strengthen the Sun.

[18] At the same time, Köhler advices us not to take the etiological myth*,* which several texts specify as being the reason for establishing the *pravargya* in a *sattra*, as reflecting the true origins of the ritual. The connection between *pravargya* and the *sattra* may be a retrospective explanation given for the *pravargya,* the origin of which was at that time forgotten (2016:172).

[19] Heesterman refers here and in another publication of his (1985:78, 224) to Schmidt (1968), whose study is based on the *ṚV*, but Heesterman himself very seldom use *ṚV* passages to support his theory, as mentioned above. Heesterman differs from Schmidt in that he does not try to harmonise the shifting natures of Indra into a single "Priesterkönig", but instead emphasises "Indra's ambiguity and alternation between the two roles [of sacrificial patron and priest-poet]" (1985:224).

[20] On closeness of Indra and Rudra see Das (2000).

[21] As the *ekavrātya* moved to the east the troop of Maruts followed (*AVŚ* 15.14). The Maruts appear as prototypical (*vrātya*) *sattrin*s in post-Ṛgvedic texts (cf. *PB* 17.1.1). Thomas Oberlies (2012:339) writes that in wartime the Ṛgvedic Āryans had a monocephalic Herrschaftsstruktur, in which the leader was identified with Indra; this organisation "erinnert sich nicht zufällig an die der Vrātyas, die ein Leben des *yóga* führten." Cf. *ṚV* 10.34.12 (Gambler hymn): *senānír gaṇásya ... rā́jā vrā́tasya prathamó* "the leader of your army, the foremost

10 – the Maṇḍalas that may contain some *vrātya* influences, according to the authors – but in the Family Books as well. How well does this harmonise with the basic theory of Ṛgvedic and *vrātya* as "clashing cultures"?

This brings us to Köhler's 2015 article, which questions the use of the term "orthodox" with reference to the *ṚV*. We know that ritual changes and innovations took place within Ṛgvedic culture, and change of meaning is detected by Köhler in terms for 'poet'. The ritual offices of *uśíj* and *rebhá* seem to have become neglected at a time when *ṚV* poetry was still composed, in contrast to the growing importance of the *brahmán*. To this one could add, from an Indo-Iranian perspective, the case of *kaví*, investigated by Köhler in 2011, which is used in the sense of 'ruler' in Avestan (*kauui*) but 'poet' in Vedic. Köhler concludes that we should not think in terms of "heterodoxy" and "orthodoxy" for the Ṛgvedic period, for there was never really a fixed corpus of norms to differ from. The absence of the term *vrātya* in the *ṚV* may be due to it existing parallel to the Ṛgvedic and was considered unimportant - or "was not perceived to be different at all", Köhler suggests (2015:372), which contradicts the editors' view that Ṛgvedic and *vrātya* cultures stand in opposition. Köhler also represents a critical voice in his 2016 article.[22]

Lycanthropic warriors

With the exception of Köhler's 2015 article, reconstructed Indo-Iranian terminology and Avestan texts are not brought into the discussion in the reviewed publications. It might be of interest, however, to compare the Indian material and the theories of the reviewed volumes, with the ancient Iranian material. In the latter we find evidence of conflicts between rivalling cults: that of the "orthodox" worship of Mazdā, sprung from the religious "reform" of Zaraθuštra, and that of members of the *vrātya*-like, wolfish and violent Männerbund (Wikander 1938; Falk 1986:16).

In the 2015 volume, Yaroslav Vassilkov writes about animal symbolism of Indian warrior brotherhoods: in the Indo-Iranian and Vedic period warrior symbolism is concentrated in the wolf/dog, and in epic and later texts in the tiger/lion. Among other things, Vassilkov brings up the anthropomorphic Kernosovka memorial stone (2015:fig. 8.1-2) from 3rd millennium BC Ukraine, which depicts different kinds of weapons and what appears to be a werewolf (a man with tail, weapon in hand). The stone may have been raised in honour of a warrior belonging to an Indo-European, wolfish brotherhood. Recently, archaeologists David W. Anthony, Dorcas R. Brown and Anne Pike-Tay (2012, 2016) have sought to redress the criticism that we lack archaeological evidence that could support the scholarly reconstruction of Bronze Age Indo-European, lycanthropic brotherhoods. Basing themselves on recent findings of the Samara Valley Project (1995-2002), they argue that a wintery sacrifice of dogs and wolves took place 1900-1700 BC at Krasnosamarskoe, a Late Bronze Age settlement at Samara, Russia. The bones of at least 51 dogs and seven wolves were were fragmented, cut and split. At least one of the wolves was roasted. Standardised and non-functional chopping of dog-heads into 10-12 equal-sized pieces implies some kind of ritual butchery. They interpret this antinomian feast as a "transgressive act of liminality... In this case the passage was a transition to a status symbolized by becoming a dog/wolf through the consumption of its flesh." The authors point to previous studies on Indo-European, lycanthropic-canine Männerbünde, including the *vrātya*s. Dogs and wolves in Indo-European traditions typically

king of the troop". The Maruts appear in *vrāta*s/*gaṇa*s (*ṚV* 1.85.4, 3.26.6, etc.), Rudra being their father (*ṚV* 2.33.1, etc.).

[22] Köhler criticises a forthcoming publication by Pontillo, which attempts to find traces of the assumed first Indo-Āryan (*vrātya*) culture in *ṚV* 10.181 (referring to the *gharmá* ritual). Köhler writes that one should not assume that a certain idea, in this case that of a path for men to the gods' realm (*devayāna*), is alien to the *ṚV* and conclude that the few Ṛgvedic attestations of this idea must therefore be derived from outside, from *vrātya*s (2016:171).

signify death and war. Falk, Kershaw and others have identified the winter (the days around the winter solstice) as the time of (sacrificial) rituals among these Männerbünde, which fits well with the findings of wintery dog and wolf sacrifices at Samara (Anthony & Pike-Tay 2016).[23]

The contribution of M. P. Candotti & Pontillo in the 2015 volume, entitled "Aims and Functions of the Vrātyastoma Performances", is a detailed discussion of the *vrātyastoma* as the outcome of reformed brahmanic tradition. They adhere to Heesterman's theory of the original *vrātyastoma* as a ritual conducted by *vrātya*s in order to appoint a leader at the beginning of an expedition, and to redistribute the booty at the end of the same. The *vrātya* expeditions might originally have been a temporary institution of Indo-Āryan warriors and their clans, aiming for the prosperity for all members (2015:199) – expeditions usually directed against fellow-Āryans (2015:194f.; Witzel 1995:17-18). The warrior theme is continued in Marianna Ferrara's article, which puts forth the idea that the hostility toward the *vrātya*, and the negative features attributed to him, in some brahmanic texts, can be understood as representing an opposition between the brahmanised *kṣatriya* – dependent on a priest or *purohita* – and the ritually independent *vrātya* warrior (2015:321). Ferrara also suggests that there might be a link between the older *vrātya* warriors and Upaniṣādic "philosopher kings" (such as Janaka) achieving enlightenment on their own, royal *pratyekabuddha*s in early Buddhist and Jaina texts, as well as the Vedic traditions about Keśin Dālbhya/Dārbhya (the subject of two articles in the book from 2016, by E. Harzer and N. Kulkarni) as a ritually autonomous king of superior wisdom (2015:322-323).

In relation to the warrior theme mention must also be made of Pontillo's independent article "Droṇa and Bhīṣma as Borderline Cases in Brāhmaṇical Systematization: A Vrātya Pattern in the Mahābhārata" (2016) in the *Proceedings of the Fifth Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas*, in which the author brings together all occurences of the term *vrātya* in the epic, as well as passages "which, although not including the term *vrātya*, may perhaps be evaluated as evidence of a veritable ancient *vrātya*-context" (2016:205). It is argued that several of the heroes in the epic show characteristics of the *vrātya*[24] in "an age when kṣatriyas and brāhmaṇas do not yet represent definitively separate varṇas, but rather different roles played cyclically and ritually..." For example, The author discusses the episode in the first book of the *Mahābhārata* (*MBh*), when the warlike *brāhmaṇa* Droṇa directs the young Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas on an expedition against king Drupada, Droṇa's former friend. Pontillo argues that Drupada and Droṇa can be interpreted as former *vrātya* companions, expected to share everything. Drupada, having inherited his father's kingdom, refuses to acknowledge the poor Droṇa as his friend. Pontillo writes that the way the *vrātya*-type of heroes are presented in the *MBh* can be seen as the result of brahmanic propaganda for promoting the transition from the *vrātya* system to the "Brāhmaṇic Reform". If Pontillo's interpretation is correct it would help us better understand certain episodes in the epic, such as how Bhīṣma could know the identity of the mysterious stranger (Droṇa) arriving at Hastināpura, merely by the stranger's looks and supernatural skills (related to Bhīṣma by Arjuna). She suggests that Droṇa and Bhīṣma already knew each other because they were fellow *vrātyas* educated by another unorthodox warrior-*brāhmaṇa*, Rāma Jāmadagnya. Pontillo's study can shed new light on the epic figure of the *kṣatriya* who lives as an ascetic in the forest, wearing deer/antelope skin and matted hair, at the same time as he acts as a warrior

[23] Cf. Heesterman (1985:19).

[24] The theme has been touched upon in previous studies by Falk (1986:30 on Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, cf. Vassilkov 2016:187ff.), and Hiltebeitel (2001:129ff., 170-173 on Yudhiṣṭhira). G. J. Held (1935:291-293, 309-310) discusses the nature of the potlatch-type of "*sabhā* (men's hall) society" in the *MBh* and connects it with the *vrātya*s.

(Viśvāmitra, Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa, Karṇa, the Pāṇḍavas), as well as the *brāhmaṇa* acting as warrior (Rāma Jāmadagnya, Droṇa, Kṛpa, Kalkin).[25]

Knowledge, *dīkṣā* and regeneration

In her contribution to the 2015 volume, "Lost Speech: The Poetry of Sattrins", Elena Mucciarelli polarises the *vrātya*'s "bardic" or mystic-ecstatic knowledge (seen e.g. in his "stammering speech") with the visionary, strictly metric Ṛgvedic poetry. She agrees with Falk (1986:36, 44ff.) that poetry has a pivotal role in both *vrātya* texts and the *ṚV*, but attempts to show the differences in types of poetry (2015:72). Both types were appropriated by the developing brahmanic culture and included in the classical *śrauta* ritual, the result of a clash between two different "Weltanschauungen" (2015:93). Mucciarelli contrasts the *sattra* with the ordinary *śrauta* ritual, in that only the former allows for mishaps and mistakes (2015:83; cf. Falk 1986:35; Collins 2014:114-115). This view is also held by Heesterman, who stresses the supposedly "risk-free" nature of the *śrauta* ritual; it is not very convincing, however, since the fear of mistakes, the acknowledgement of inherent risks in rituals, and stories of interrupted or failed rituals, are found also in texts dealing with non-*sattra śrauta* sacrifices (cf. Jamison 1996; af Edholm 2016). Mucciarelli writes that in some *sattra*s it is the *secret knowledge* (cf. Dore above) that allows the ritual to proceed, rather than visionary skills, similar to the capacity to know and to answer riddles in the *vrātyastoma* (2015:87). She finds support in Paul Horsch's important work on Vedic *gāthā* and *śloka* literature, in which he links the *gāthā* verse/song to the *vrātya*, as well as to a special kind of knowledge (1966:215, cf. 130-131, 401-420). Mucciarelli gives several examples of this from the texts, one of them being *PB* 24.18 (cf. Candotti & Pontillo 2015:187-189), which deals with the over-night *sattra* lasting 61 days. This *sattra*, we read, was performed by the *daiva vrātya*s[26], with Budha as their leader (*sthapati*). They consecrated themselves without having begged king Varuṇa for a place of worship. Varuṇa took away from them the sharing of the sacrifice and knowledge of the *devayāna* (path to the gods). At that time there was neither juice in herbs, nor butter in milk, nor fat on flesh, nor hair on skin, nor leaves on trees, until the *daiva vrātya*s performed the ritual. Then three (ancient) *śloka*s are quoted, stating that there was neither butter in the milk (vs. 5; cf. Hauer 1927:87), nor fat in the flesh, until Budha undertook (*udayacchad*, cf. Caland 1931:621; Falk 1986:58) the *sattra*, and "attained the whole/all" (*sarvam āpnon*, vs. 6).[27] The last verse goes: *daridrā āsan paśavaḥ kṛśāḥ santo vyasthakāḥ / saumāyanasya dīkṣāyāṃ samasṛjyanta medaseti //* "Poor was the cattle, being meagre, (and) boneless, (but) at the *dīkṣā* of the son of Soma it was provided with fat." (*PB* 24.18.7, Caland 1931:621; cf. Horsch 1966:130)[28] The *brāhmaṇa* chapter ends by saying that the *vrātya*s undertook this ritual and attained complete prosperity/success (*sarvām ṛddhim*), and so does anyone who undertakes it.

According to Mucciarelli the quoted verse "evokes a powerful knowledge that can command fertility" (2015:88). She follows Horsch (1966:401, 405) in interpreting these three

[25] Cf. further Dore & Pontillo (2013), who attempt to relate the death of heroes (like Bhīṣma) on the "bed of arrows" to long-stalked plants in Vedic texts, and to ascetic *vrātya* figures such as Keśin Dālbhya. The connection between the warrior brotherhood and the bed of reeds has also been noted by Mary C. Smith (1991), to which she adds the motif of "male parthenogenic birth".

[26] i.e. '*vrātya*s of the god [Rudra?]', 'divine/celestial *vrātya*s', or '*vrātya*s aiming for heaven'.

[27] 6bc not metric; cf. Caland (1931:621); Falk (1986:58).

[28] Cf. *ŚBM* 11.4.2 on the secret dimension of the *agnihotra*: Śauvāyana, the *adhvaryu* of those who had Ayasthūṇa for their *gṛhapati* (in a *sattra*), said: "Surely this *sattra* is supplied with lean cattle (*kṛśa- paśu-*) and scanty ghee; and yet this one thinks himself a *gṛhapati*!" (11.4.2.18, Eggeling 1900:62) The *gṛhapati*, however, responded well and instructed Śauvāyana on how to multiply one's cattle and offspring, and take the sacrificer to heaven (11.4.2.20), which is also the typical goal in a *sattra*.

verses as "Bruchstücke/Fragmente der Vrātya-Spekulation"[29], i.e. "speculations on the structure and constitution of the universe" (2015:91). I agree with Mucciarelli that the fattening of *paśu* and invigouration of creation in the Budha stanzas can be compared with the concept of food (*anna*) and cosmic/bodily restoration in texts dealing with *sattra*s (2015:70-71, 90). Already Hauer (1933; cf. 1927:286ff.) refers to food being a cosmic force in *AVŚ* 15 (15.8.2; 14) as "*vrātya* speculation", and Bernhard Weber-Brosamer (1988:176ff.), in his analysis of *anna* in Vedic rituals, writes that "[e]in wesentlicher Beweggrund zum Sitzen eines Sattras scheint indessen gleichgeblieben zu sein: Der Wunsch nach Nahrung." (1988:178)[30]

Beside this possible *vrātya* theme of fertility/food in the quoted stanza (*PB* 24.18.7), I suggest that it also contains a reference to the idea of "becoming thin" due to the ascetic regime (fasting or dietary restrictions) undertaken during the initiation (*dīkṣā*) in *śrauta* rituals. As Falk writes (1986:57), *PB* 24.18 shows that "die Begriffe Vrātya, Sattrin und Dīkṣita untrennbar miteinander verbunden sind".[31] *Dīkṣā* makes one thin (*kṛśa,* the same term as in *PB* 24.18.7), but also fit for sacrice/pure (*medhya*): *yadā vai dīkṣitaḥ kṛśo bhavaty atha medhyo bhavati* "When the *dīkṣita* becomes thin he becomes [sacrificially] pure."[32] (*ĀpŚS* 10.14.9)[33] This is also related to the idea of *dīkṣā* as death and rebirth, and buying oneself off with the victim (*paśu*) on the fast day in the *paśubandha* (*Kauṣītakibrāhmaṇa* 10.3)[34]. The motif of the thin cattle becoming fat thus parallels the condition of the initiate. The idea of restoration through *dīkṣā* reappears in e.g. the early Āyurvedic compendium attributed to Suśruta[35], on the rejuvenation by soma, which apparently is based on the Vedic somic initiation, as noted by Dominic Wujastyk (2001:121).[36] At the same time there is a connection between ritual Vedic asceticism and fertility, since asceticism/heat (*tapas*) is often thought to

---

[29] According to Horsch (1966:406) the stanzas belong to Indraic mythology. *ṚV* 10.73.9 states that Indra placed milk in cows and plants, and 10.101, addressed to priests of the somic sacrifice, is attributed to Budha Saumya.

[30] The *mahāvrata* ritual, which is part of a *sattra*, is identified with *anna* (4.10.3-4). In *PB* 4.10.1 Prajāpati poured out himself in creation; the gods decided to make Prajāpati 'nourished' (*dhinavad,* √*DHAY* 'saugen, Muttermilch trinken', Mayrhofer 1992:776) by means of a great *vrata*/vow. "Was während eines Jahres reift, das trugen sie ihm zusammen und reichen es ihm ihn – das nahm er als vrata zu sich, das sättigte ihn (*tad enam adhinot*)." (Weber-Brosamer 1988:182) Speculations on the meaning of food (*anna* as the "first born of *ṛta*" and "immortality-granting agent") is also important in Vedic texts not connected to *vrātya*s or *sattra*s (Lopez 1997).

[31] The *vrātyastoma-sthapati*, we read in *BaudhāyanaŚS* 18.24, "lives according to the vows" (*vratāni carati*) of a *dīkṣita*: he lies down, abstains from meat, and is celibate (2015:200; Hauer 1927:106).

[32] The passage goes on to say that skin and bones should touch. Cf. *JB* on the 21-day *sattra*: the cold period of the year is bad, "mit mageren Kühen, mit mageren Männern [*kṛśaguḥ kṛśapuruṣās*]." (*JB* 2.356, Tsuchida 1979:44, 101)

[33] *pīvā dīkṣate kṛśo yajate yadasyāṅgānāṃ mīyate juhotyeva taditi vijñāyate* "Fett unternimmt er die Dīkṣā, mager verrichetet er den Gottesdienst; was von seinen Gliedern sich mindert, das opfert er als Spende." (*ĀpŚS* 10.14.10, 21.1.9, Caland 1928)

[34] Cf. Heesterman 1993:31-33 with ref. The victim (*paśu*) in the animal sacrifice is, in essence, the sacrificer (*AB* 2.11; *ŚBM* 3.3.4.21, etc.).

[35] *Suśrutasaṃhitā* Cikitsāsthānam (4).29 (1998:502-505). *Suśrutasaṃhitā* is the work of several hands, the oldest parts of which may date back before 250 BC.

[36] This text claims that he who wishes to overcome age and death shall be reduced to mere skin and bones during sixteen days of fasting, while living in a kind of hut or room with three walls round it, the first day spent on a bed of sacred grass, covered with a blackbuck skin. After the period of fasting his condition will change in a miraculous way, and the emaciated person will regain all that he lost - and more: he will, thanks to the soma, be extremly beautiful, radiant and all-knowing (Wujastyk 2001:121, 174-79; cf. Müller 1954). On the connection between ancient Indian asceticism and medicinal traditions such as the *Suśrutasaṃhitā* see Zysk (1998): both the physician and the itinerant ascetic wander about, are outside Vedic-brahmanic orthodoxy and receptive to new ideas. In the Vedic period the heterodox 'roving physician' (*cāraṇavaidya*) is considered impure by *brāhmaṇa*s, because of his journeys to non-Āryan lands and dealings with impure things (Zysk 1998:24). Only later do the *brāhmaṇa*s superimpose their own ideas and mythology on the heterodox material. This brahmanisation process reminds one of the scenario (re)constructed in the reviewed volumes, through which the *vrātya* tradition is incorporated into (and reintepreted by) the orthodox *śrauta* culture.

(accumulate the power to) generate rain and fertility (cf. Kaelber 1989:ch. 1). It is not explicitly said that the *daiva vrātya*s in *PB* attained *devayāna*, but in *PB* 17.1.10 success is combined with attaining divine status (cf. Candotti & Pontillo 2015:189). *JB* 2.221 similarly tells us that the *divya vrātya*s "ran the *vrātya* expedition" (*vrātyām adhāvayan*) with Budha as *sthapati*, targeting the *ekavrātya* position. "The god" (Rudra?) wounded their sacrifice and they did not learn the way to heaven. But then Prajāpati arranged the *vrātyastoma* for them; they performed it and learned the way to heaven, and so does anyone who runs the *vrātya* expedition (2015:191-193). Just as the *daiva vrātya*s in the *PB,* the *divya vrātya*s in the *JB* are first unsuccessful due to damage in the procedure; thanks to correct performance they acquire the knowledge of the way to heaven. The completion of the ritual is the prerequisite for attaining the goal. All three *śloka*s in *PB* 24.18 stress the powerful *action* or ascetic regimen – the effect of Budha's *dīkṣā* – rather than the "powerful knowledge" of the *vrātya*.[37]

The regeneration of the emaciated animal/initiate by ritual means should be seen in the context of the above-mentioned warrior brotherhoods, their yearly cycle and rituals. Falk (1986:28; cf. White 1991:98) points out that the initiation of Budha in the *PB* takes place when the cattle are lean, which probably refers to winter conditions, since *AB* 4.26.3 mentions Śiśira (January and February) as a time when the cattle become like wild animals, thin and shaggy. The time of Budha's initiation thus corresponds with that of canine/wolfish Männerbund rituals in other Indo-European cultures, as pointed out by Falk and Kershaw, and with the Samara Valley findings, mentioned above.

"Fictitious and bookish rituals"

The last contribution to be mentioned is that of G. U. Thite in the 2015 volume (cf. Thite 1996), which argues that the famous Vedic sacrifices *aśvamedha, rājasūya, sarvamedha, puruṣamedha* and *vrātyastoma* were never performed historically, at least not in the manner laid out in the Vedic ritual manuals. A major argument of his is that a performance of these grand sacrifices would give rise to numerous practical problems. The king may well have been sprinkled in the *abhiṣeka*, because this is realistic and practically possible, but not the whole series of rites in the *rājasūya*. Thite also points to the fact that there is little agreement on details regarding these ritual in Vedic and early epic texts respectively.[38] Many scholars "take everything mentioned in the Veda very seriously", but the world of authority and sovereignty of the Veda is "broken", since some of the rituals described are "merely fictitious and bookish" (2015:152). The title of Thite's article, "The Broken World of Sovereignty…", appears to refer to Heesterman's monograph *The Broken World of Sacrifice* (1993), in which the author considers the *śrauta* sacrifice to be the result of the dissolution of the cyclic-agonistic sacrifice and the division between the "real" world and the artificial ritual arena of the solo sacrificer. Whereas Heesterman "does ritual the justice of treating its content seriously - but, unfortunately, only in the distant and unrecoverable past" (Jamison 1996:104), Thite questions the seriousness of the Vedic grand rituals altogether. Thite brings attention to important questions as to the execution of the great rituals in ancient India. However, the existence of different opinions on how certain rituals are to be performed does not mean that they were never performed at all; most rituals change in the course of time, as seen in the

[37] Vss. 5-7: "Great (*mahī,* Candotti & Pontillo 2015:188-189 'mighty', but Falk 1986:57-58 thinks it refers to the Earth) was the *dīkṣā* of Budha"; "when Budha undertook the *dīkṣā*"; "at the *dīkṣā* of Soma's son". Cf. Hock (2016:110). According to Candotti & Pontillo the fact that reference in *PB* 24.18 is made to *dīkṣā*, and that the exclusion from *devayāna* is due to a ritual shortcoming, suggest "a typical Brāhmanic reorientation of a possible original Vrātya context" (2015:189).

[38] One striking example being the celibate Bhīṣma's alleged performance of no less than "thirty horse sacrifices" (*vājimedhāḥ*) in *MBh* 6.22.15 – an impossibility, if we are to follow the rules laid down in the Vedic manuals, since Bhīṣma was neither a king nor married (cf. discussion in Sharma 2009), whereas one needs to be a ruler with at least four spouses to be able to perform even a single *aśvamedha*.

Vedic and Purāṇic versions of *rājasūya* (Geslani 2012). Nor is a "bookish" sacrifice necessarily less interesting for scholars than a historically performed one, since even a purely theoretical ritual says much about the beliefs, ideals and aspirations of a particular culture (or at least the authors of the ritual texts). In that sense they are to be taken seriously. Also, the basic structure and function of the *aśvamedha*, for example, seems to be the same in epic and ritual texts;[39] the same can be said of the *rājasūya.* It is striking how strong the presence of the agonistic element and the element of risk are in these rituals, both in the Vedic manuals and the epics, despite great differences pertaining to chronology and genre between these two types of texts (af Edholm 2016). This element, it seems, did not end with Heesterman's pre-classical age.

Conclusion

Overall, the two volumes discussed above provide stimulating reading and are welcome contributions to a renewal of the study of the *vrātya* problem, in addition to the classical works by Hauer, Heesterman, Falk, and others. The volume from 2015 contains a useful index locorum and a general index. Not only can the present studies, with their broad perspective and focus on both well and less studied texts, increase our understanding of the *vrātya* and related ascetic/warrior figures, but also help us appreciate the complexity of Vedic culture and the in/validity of the concept of orthodoxy/heterodoxy at different times and places in ancient India. Although written for those who are familiar with Vedic and Indian culture, some of the questions raised by these volumes may be of interest also to the non-specialist, such as the topic of heterodoxy. Some basic theoretical assumptions in the books can, however, be questioned: the dualistic theory of a cultural clash between Ṛgvedic and *vrātya* cultures, and a radical axial breakthrough, the *śrauta* reform. A complex subject such as that of the *vrātya* allows for a plurality of interpretations.

Bibliography with Abbreviations

AB = Aitareyabrāhmaṇa: Haug, Martin. 1863. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇam of the Rigveda... Edited, Translated and Explained… I: Sanscrit Text...* Bombay: Government Central Book Depôt / London: Trübner & Co.

Amano, Kyoko. 2016. Ritual Contexts of Sattra Myths in the Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā. Pontillo et al. (eds.), *Vrātya Culture in Vedic Sources*, 73-87.

Anthony, David W. & Brown, Dorcas R. 2012. Midwinter Dog Sacrifices and Warrior Initiations in the Late Bronze Age at the Site of Krasnosamarskoe, Russia. Paper presented at the "Roots of Europe - Language, Culture, and Migrations" conference, December 12-14 2012, University of Copenhagen.

Anthony, David W. & Pike-Tay, Anne. 2016. Dog Days of Winter: Seasonal Activities in a Srubnaya Landscape. Anthony, David W. et al. (eds.), *A Bronze Age landscape in the Russian steppes: The Samara Valley Project*, Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press at UCLA, 373-384.

ĀpŚS = Āpastambaśrautasūtra: Caland, Willem. 1928. *Das Śrautasūtra des Apastamba*, aus dem Sanskrit übersetzt. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

AVŚ = Atharvaveda Śaunaka recension: Roth, R. & Whitney, W. D. 1924 [1966]. *Atharva Veda Sanhita*. Dritte unveränderte Auflage (nach der von Max Lindenau besorgten zweiten Auflage). Bonn: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlag.

[39] The letting loose of the horse for a year; the battle for the horse guarded by one or many princes; the sexual element involving the chief wife and the horse; and the symbolism of supreme rulership.

Bodewitz, Henk W. 1985. Yama's Second Boon in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens und Archiv für indische Philosophie* 29, 5-26.

Bollée, Willem B. 1981. The Indo-European Sodalities in Ancient India. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 131, 172-191.

Charpentier, Jarl. 1911. Bemerkungen über die vrātya's. *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 25, 354-388.

Collins, Brian. 2014. *The Head Beneath the Altar: Hindu Mythology and the Critique of Sacrifice*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

Das, Rahul Peter. 2000. Indra and Śiva/Rudra. Balcerowicz, Piotr & Mejor, Marek (eds.), *On the Understanding of Other Cultures: Proceedings of the International Conference on Sanskrit and Related Studies to Commemorate the Centenary of the Birth of Stanislaw Schayer (1899-1941), Warsaw University, Poland, October 7–10, 1999.* Studia Indologiczne 7. Warzaw: Warzaw Univ. Oriental Institute, 105-125.

Dore, Monero. 2015a. The Ekavrātya, India and the Sun. Pontillo et al. (eds.), *The Volatile World of Sovereignty,* 33-64.
--- 2015b. The Pre-eminence of Men in the Vrātya-Ideology. Leach, R. & Pons, J. (eds.), *Puṣpikā: Tracing Ancient India Through Texts and Traditions: Contributions to Current Research in Indology III.* Oxford: Oxbow Books, 48-73.
--- 2016a. The Path Towards Indra's Realm. Pontillo et al. (eds.), *Vrātya Culture in Vedic Sources*, 177-195.
--- 2016b. Men's Relationship with Gods in Vrātya Culture. Bindi, Serena & Mucciarelli, Elena & Pontillo, Tiziana (eds.), *Cross-cutting South Asian Studies: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, Delhi: DK Printworld, 199-223.

Dore, Monero & Pontillo, Tiziana. 2013. What do Vrātyas have to do with Long-stalked Plants? *Darbha, kuśa, śara* and *iṣīkā* in Vedic and Classical Sources. *Pandanus* (*Nature in Literature, Art, Myth and Ritual*) 7 (1), 35-61.

af Edholm, Kristoffer. 2016. Risk, förlust och oviss utgång i vedisk kungaritual [Risk, loss and unknown outcome in Vedic royal ritual]. *Chaos - Skandinavisk tidsskrift for religionshistoriske studie* 65 (1), 149-172.
--- 2017. Royal Splendour in the Waters: Vedic *Śrī́-* and Avestan *X^{v}arənah-*. *Indo-Iranian Journal* 60 (1), 17-73.

Falk, Harry. 1986. *Bruderschaft und Würfelspiel. Untersuchungen zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des vedischen Opfers*. Hedwig Falk: Freiburg.
--- 2002. Vom Vorteil des Schreckens: Gesellschaft und Männerbund in Indien. Das, Rahul Peter (ed.), *Geregeltes Ungestüm. Bruderschaften und Jugendbünde bei indogermanischen Völkern*. Bremen: Hempen Verlag, 27-42.

Ferrara, Marianna. The 'Implied Leader' and the Vedic Discourse on Sovereignty: Rethinking the Exclusion of the Vrātyas from Social Intercourse in the Framework of the Reading Process. Pontillo et al. (eds.), *The Volatile World of Sovereignty*, 300-330.

Geslani, Marko. 2012. *Śānti* Rites in the Development of the Purāṇic *Rājyābhiṣeka*. *Indo-Iranian Journal* 55, 321-377.

Gonda, Jan. 1905. *Vedic Literature*. A History of Indian Literature I. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

Griffith, Ralph T. H. 1896. *The Hymns of Atharva-Veda. Translated with a Popular Commentary. II.*

Benares: E. J. Lazarus & Co.

Harzer, Edeltraud. The Iniquitous Gift of Cows to Dālbhya. Pontillo et al. (eds.), *Vrātya Culture in Vedic Sources*, 89-101.

Hauer, J. W. 1927. *Der Vrātya. Untersuchungen über die nichtbrahmanische Religion Altindiens*. Kohlhammer: Stuttgart.
--- 1958 [reprint 1983]. *Der Yoga. Ein indischer Weg zum Selbst*. 3. Auflage. Verlag Bruno Martin.
--- 1933. Einige Bruchstücke der Vrātya-Spekulation. Stein, Otto & Gampert, Wilhelm *(*herausg.), *Festschrift Winternitz*, *1863-23. Dezember-1933,* Leipzig, 143-149.

Heesterman, Jan C. 1957. *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration: The Rājasūya Described According to the Yajus Texts and Annotated*. Disputationes Rheno-Trajectinae 2. Mouton: The Hague.
--- 1962. Vrātya and Sacrifice. *Indo-Iranian Journal* 6 (1), 1-37.
--- 1985. *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society.* Oxford/Delhi: Oxford University Press.
--- 1993. *The Broken World of Sacrifice: An Essay in Ancient Indian Ritual*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

Held, G. J. 1935. *The Mahābhārata: An Ethnological Study*. Amsterdam: Uitgeversmaatschappij Holland.

Hock, Hans Heinrich. 2016. "Vrātya Prakrit", Ritual Concerns or Anti-Vrātya Propaganda? *Aduruktavākyam* in its Broader Context. Pontillo et al. (eds.), *Vrātya Culture in Vedic Sources*, 103-115.

Horsch, Paul. 1966. *Die vedische Gāthā- und Śloka-Literatur*. Bern: Francke Verlag.

Houben, Jan E. M. 2000. On the Earliest Attestable Forms of the *Pravargya* Ritual: Ṛg-Vedic References to the *Gharma-Pravargya*, Especially in the Atri-Family Book (Book 5). *Indo-Iranian Journal* 25, 1-25.

Jamison, Stephanie W. 1996. Review of J. C. Heesterman, The Broken World of Sacrifice: An Essay in Ancient Indian Ritual (1993). *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 8 (1), 103-108.

Jamison, Stephanie W. & Witzel, Michael. 1992. Vedic Hinduism. www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~witzel/vedica.pdf (1/10 2017) (Partially updated, shorter version in Sharma, Arvind (ed.), *The study of Hinduism,* Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2003, 65-113.)

JB = Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa: Tsuchida, Ryutaro. 1979. *Das sattra-Kapitel des Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa (2.334-370) nach den Handschriften herausgegeben, ins Deutsche übersetzt und erklärt.* Doctoral diss., Philipps-Universität Marburg/Lahn, Marburg.

Kaelber, Walter O. 1989. *Tapta Mārga: Asceticism and Initiation in Vedic India*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Keith, A. B. 1913. The Vratyas. *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,* 155-160.

Kershaw, Kris. 2000. *The One-eyed God: Odin and the (Indo-)Germanic Männerbünde*. Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph 36. Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of Man.

Köhler, Frank. 2011. *Kaví im Ṛgveda: Dichtung, Ritual und Schöpfung im frühvedischen Denken.* Aachen: Shaker Verlag.

--- 2015. Orthodoxy in the Ṛgveda? Pontillo et al. (eds.), *The Volatile World of Sovereignty*, 356-375.
--- 2016. Traces of Vrātya-Culture in the Ṛgveda? On Ṛgvedic *dyútāna, devayáṅna*, Its Availability for Humans, and Its Alleged Relation to the Vrātyas. Pontillo et al. (eds.), *Vrātya Culture in Vedic Sources*, 159-175.

Lopez, Carlos. 1997. Food and Immortality in the Veda: A Gastronomic Theology? *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies* 3 (3), 11-19.

Mayrhofer, Manfred. 1992-1996. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen*. I (1992), II (1996). Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter.

MBh = Mahābhārata: 1999. *The Mahābhārata: Text as Constituted in its Critical Edition*. I-IV. Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

Mucciarelli, Elena. 2015. Lost Speech: The Poetry of Sattrins. Pontillo et al. (eds.), *The Volatile World of Sovereignty,* 65-98.

Müller, Reinhold F. G. 1954. Soma in der altindischen Heilkunde. Schubert, Johannes & Schneider, Ulrich (herausgeg.), *Asiatica. Festschrift Friedrich Weller*, Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 428-441.

Oberlies, Thomas. 2012. *Der Rigveda und seine Religion*. Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen.

PB = Pañcaviṃśabrāhmaṇa: Caland, W. 1931. *Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa*: *The Brāhmaṇa of Twenty-Five Chapters*. *Translated...* Bibliotheca Indica. Calcutta.

Parpola, Asko. 1983 [2001]. The Pre-Vedic Indian Background of the Śrauta Rituals. Staal, Frits (ed.), *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar. Vol. II.* 1st Indian ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 41-75.
--- 2016. *Rudra*: 'Red' and 'Cry' in the Name of the Young God of Fire, Rising Sun, and War. Gunkel, Dieter et al. (eds.), *Sahasram Ati Srajas: Indo-Iranian and Indo-European Studies in Honor of Stephanie W. Jamison,* New York: Beech Stave Press*,* 322-332.

Pontillo, Tiziana. 2016. Droṇa and Bhīṣma as Borderline Cases in Brāhmaṇical Systematization: A Vrātya Pattern in the *Mahābhārata*. Andrijanić, Ivan & Sellmer, Sven (eds.), *On the Growth and Composition of the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas: Proceedings of the Fifth Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas August 2008*, Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts & Ibis grafika, 205-246.

Pontillo, Tiziana & Candotti, Maria Piera. 2015. Aims and Functions of the Vrātyastoma Performances. Pontillo et al. (eds.), *The Volatile World of Sovereignty*, 154-215.

Pontillo, Tiziana & Bignami, C. & Dore, Monero & Mucciarelli, Elena (eds.). 2015. *The Volatile World of Sovereignty: The Vrātya Problem and Kingship in South Asia.* New Delhi: D. K. Printworld.

Pontillo, Tiziana & Dore, Monero & Hock, Hans Heinrich (eds.). 2016. *Vrātya Culture in Vedic Sources: Select Papers. A Panel of Veda and Vedic Literature, 16th World Sanskrit Conference, Bangkok, Thailand 2015*. New Delhi: D. K. Printworld.

Pontillo, Tiziana & Dore, Monero. 2016. Inquiries into Vrātya-phenomenon: An Introduction. Pontillo et al. (eds.), *Vrātya Culture in Vedic Sources*, 1-33.

Pontillo, Tiziana & Neri, Chiara. 2016. The Meaning of the Phrase 'To Become *Brahman*-' in Vedic and Sutta Piṭaka Sources. Pontillo et al. (eds.), *Vrātya Culture in Vedic Sources*, 117-157.

Pontillo, Tiziana & Sudyka, Lidia. 2016. Prominent Chieftains Depicted as Ferocious Wild Beasts. Bindi, Serena & Mucciarelli, Elena & Pontillo, Tiziana (eds.), *Cross-cutting South Asian Studies: An*

Interdisciplinary Approach, Delhi: DK Printworld, 268-308.

ṚV = Ṛgveda: Aufrecht, Th. 1877. *Die Hymnen des Ṛigveda*. I-II. Zweite Auflage. Bonn: A. Marcus.
van Nooten, Barend A. & Holland, Gary B. 1994. *Rig Veda: A Metrically Restored Text with an Introduction and Notes.* Harvard Oriental Series 50. Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies. Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press.

Samuel, Geoffrey. 2008. *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra: Indic Religions to the Thirteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

ŚBM = Śatapathabrāhmaṇa Mādhyandina recension: Weber, Albecht. 1855. *The Çatapatha-Brâhmaṇa in the Mâdhyandina-Çâkhâ... Edited*. Berlin: Ferd. Dümmler's Verlagsbuchhandlung / London: Williams & Norgate.

Schmidt, Hanns-Peter. 1968. *Bṛhaspati und Indra. Untersuchungen zur vedischen Mythologie und Kulturgeschichte.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Sharma, Ram Karan. 2009. Some Aspects of the Character of Bhīṣma in the *Mahābhārata*. Goldman, Robert P. & Tokunaga, Muneo (eds.). *Epic Undertakings*. *Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference Held in Helsinki, Finland, 13-18 July 2003. Vol. II*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 309-317.

Smith, Mary Carroll. 1991 [reprint 2007]. Epic Parthenogenesis. Sharma, Arvind (ed.), *Essays on the Mahābhārata*. Leiden [Delhi], 84-100.

Sontheimer, Günther-Dietz. 1997. *King of Hunters, Warriors, and Shepherds: Essays on Khaṇḍobā*. Edited by Anne Eldhaus et al. New Delhi: Manohar.

Suśrutasaṃhitā: Jādavjī Trikamjī Ācārya (ed.). 1998. *Suśruta Saṃhitā.* Krishnadas Ayurveda Series 51. Varanasi.

Thapar, Romila. 1990. *From Lineage to State; Social Formations in the Mid-first Millenium B.C. in the Ganga Valley*. Oxford/Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Thite, G. U. 1996. On the Fictitious Ritual in the Veda. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 77, 253-257.
--- 2015. The Broken World of Sovereignty with Special Reference to the Horse Sacrifice (Aśvamedha) etc. in the Vedic and Later Literature. Pontillo et al. (eds.), *The Volatile World of Sovereignty*, 138-153.

Vassilkov, Yaroslav. 2015. Animal Symbolism of Warrior Brotherhoods in Indian Epic, History and Culture. Pontillo et al. (eds.), *The Volatile World of Sovereignty,* 231-253.
--- 2016. The Mahābhārata and Non-Vedic Aryan Traditions. Andrijanić, Ivan & Sellmer, Sven (eds.), *On the Growth and Composition of the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas: Proceedings of the Fifth Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas August 2008*, Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts & Ibis grafika, 181-203

Weber-Brosamer, Bernhard. 1988. *Annam. Untersuchungen zur Bedeutung des Essens und der Speise im vedischen Ritual*. Doctoral diss., Albert-Ludwigs-Universität zu Freiburg im Breisgau. Rheinfelden: Schäuble Verlag.

White, David Gordon. 1991. *Myths of the Dog-Man*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

Whitney, William Dwight. 1905 [1962]. *Atharva-Veda Saṃhitā*. *Translated with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary.* I-II. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Wikander, Stig. 1938. *Der arische Männerbund*. Lund: Gleerupska Univ. Bokhandeln.

Wiltshire, Martin. 1990. *Ascetic Figures Before and in Early Buddhism*. Mouton de Gruyter.

Winternitz, Moriz. 1920 [reprint 1968]. *Geschichte der indischen Literatur. I: Einleitung, der Veda, die volkstümlichen Epen und die Purāṇas*; *II: Die buddhistische Literatur und die heiligen Texte der Jainas.* Stuttgart: K. F. Koehler Verlag.

Witzel, Michael. 1995. Early Sanskritization: Origins and Development of the Kuru State. *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies* 1-4, 1–26.

Wujastyk, Dominik. 2000. *The Roots of Ayurveda: Selections from the Medical Writings*. Translated and edited with an introduction. 2nd rev. ed. London: Penguin.

Zysk, Kenneth. 1998. *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India: Medicine in the Buddhist Monastery.* Indian Medical Tradition 2. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.