

Narratives as a medium for appealing to the royal court: A look into the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā*

Marion Rastelli

Introduction

There is ample evidence that Tantric communities not only strived to establish close relationships to rulers in order to gain support and patronage, they were also quite successful in doing so.¹ This is true also with regard to the Pāñcarātra tradition: here we can clearly observe a development from individual ritual worship for personal purposes in the earlier extant authoritative texts to emphasis on public temple worship for the sake of kings and the kingdom in the later texts from about the eleventh century onwards.² I will not, however, speak directly about this phenomenon here, but will rather examine a Saṃhitā, as the authoritative texts of the Pāñcarātra are called, that is quite peculiar in many aspects, namely, the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* (AS).

The AS is one of the best-known Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās in the West,³ mainly because of its comparatively extensive philosophical, theological and cosmological passages. It is less known, however, for its comprehensive sections dealing with rituals, *mantras*, *yantras*, and other matters expounding the ritual worship of Sudarśana, the discus of Viṣṇu in an anthropomorphic form with a varying number of arms. Ritual worship of Sudarśana is performed mainly for the purposes of a king, as, for example, for military purposes (see also BIANCHINI in this volume). It is neither a personal ritual performed indi-

¹ See, e.g., SANDERSON 2004 and 2009.

² For a more detailed exposition of this development, see RASTELLI 2006: 91–98.

³ The first monograph about the Pāñcarātra in a western language, published in English by SCHRADER in 1916, is devoted to the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā*. Another monograph on the same was published by MATSUBARA in 1994. There are also several shorter studies dealing with this text by other authors, the majority by BOCK-RAMING (1987, 1992, 2002).

vidually nor a public ritual, and usually it is performed not by the king himself, but by his personal priest (*purohita*, *purodhas*).

This means that the AS is a text that was composed, at least from its ritual point of view, for kingly purposes – more precisely, for personal priests in the office of a king – or to try to convince a king of the usefulness of employing such priests. One means of convincing a ruler to employ a personal priest for the worship of Sudarśana was to include narratives. Indeed, a comparably large number of narratives can be found in the AS. This paper will focus on these narratives and what they can tell us beyond the stories they report.

The historical background of the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā*

When was the AS composed? Most of the Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās are compiled texts. Again and again parts of them were revised, complemented, and perhaps abbreviated. This makes dating them extremely difficult since different passages can have different dates of composition. The AS has also been partly compiled from various sources.⁴ However, it has an overall systematic structure,⁵ which gives the impression of it having been reworked by a single final redactor, who gave the text a homogeneous appearance, at least superficially.

Today, scholars date the AS to between the eleventh and thirteenth century. One of the reasons for this is the heavy influence of Śaiva traditions visible in the text. According to Alexis Sanderson, it must have been composed after Kṣemarāja (1000–1050 CE) since it shows influences from him as well as other Kashmirian Śaiva sources.⁶ According to BEGLEY (1973: 27f.), the AS cannot have been composed much earlier than the twelfth or thirteenth century for iconographical reasons: there is no evidence of images of Sudarśana in the form described in the AS before the thirteenth century.

Both scholars agree that the AS was composed in South India. The reason SANDERSON gives are the Yajurveda *mantras* found in chapter 58 of the AS, which are presented in the version of the Vedic branch of the Taittirīyas, which is prevalent in South India.⁷ BEGLEY's (ibid.) argument is

⁴ See, e.g., the analysis of AS 5 by BOCK-RAMING (2002: 21–56), in which he demonstrates that the text of this chapter is based on various sources.

⁵ See also BOCK-RAMING 2002: 183f.

⁶ SANDERSON 2001: 36–38. See also SANDERSON 1990: 34, where he suggests the eleventh century as the date of the AS's composition.

⁷ SANDERSON 2001: 38. See BOCK-RAMING 1992: 82–85 for a detailed argumen-

that idols of Sudarśana in the form described in the AS appear only in South India.⁸

South India of the thirteenth century experienced a great deal of political turmoil. It was the period of the decline of the Cōḷas and the revival of the Pāṇḍyas. Struggles between the two dynasties gave opportunities to other major and minor rulers, such as the Hoysalas, the Cēras, the Kākatīyas, the Eastern Gaṅgas of Orissa, and the Telugu-Cōḷas, for gaining power through interventions and shifting alliances.⁹

Inscriptions from, for example, the Raṅganāthasvāmī Temple in Śrīraṅgam and the Varadarājasvāmī Temple in Kāñcī show that the Cōḷas, Pāṇḍyas, and Hoysalas, although being Śaivas or preferring Śaivism, often generously supported Vaiṣṇava temples as well. Also local rulers such as the Telugu-Cōḷas, who nominally acknowledged the overlordship of the Cōḷas, were influential and supported Vaiṣṇava temples. Further, these inscriptions frequently mention commanders and generals from the Hoysala army visiting the temples and giving donations.¹⁰ This means that on the one hand the Vaiṣṇava temples faced continually changing rulers who supported them but often actually preferred Śaiva traditions. On the other hand, the presence of military forces and their importance in deciding the shifting powers was something that probably could not be ignored in daily life. Against this background, it is no surprise that a text like the AS might emerge, a text that propagates the worship of Viṣṇu's discus for kingly and above all military purposes and, while explicitly teaching Vaiṣṇavism, is not particularly ill-disposed towards Śaivism.¹¹

tation why the chapters treated in AS 58 derive from the Taittirīya branch.

⁸ Apart from the AS there is also other evidence that Sudarśana worship was popular in South India in the thirteenth century. Veṅkaṭanātha, who is traditionally dated to 1270–1369 and who knew the AS (see RASTELLI 2006: 51), composed two Stotras to Sudarśana (BEGLEY 1973: 30–32). An inscription at the Raṅganāthasvāmī Temple in Śrīraṅgam dated to about 1274 records a donation to Sudarśana (ibid.: 69f.).

⁹ For a detailed description of the political situation in South India at that time, see NILAKANTHA SASTRI 1955: 365–444.

¹⁰ See HARI RAO 1976: 65–86, RAMAN 1975: 17–24.

¹¹ Apart from the use of the Kashmirian Śaiva sources mentioned above, there are several other indications of Śaiva influence in the AS; see, e.g., RASTELLI 2018.

The narratives of the AS

The AS contains many stories that in style and content remind one of Purāṇic and epic narratives. The Saṃhitā starts with the *śāstrāvatāra* story, the story of the “descent of the teaching” in chapter 1, which is characteristic of almost all Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās (and also of Śaiva Tantras).¹² There are several cosmological accounts, of which some have a narrative character (e.g., AS 11), and there is also a version of the story about the demons Madhu und Kaiṭabha.¹³

There are ten stories which I would like to examine in this paper. In these stories kings are the main protagonists. In nine of these stories, certain kings are in various forms of distress and finally receive a solution to their problem in the form of the six-syllable *sudarśanamātra*.¹⁴ In the tenth story, a king behaves badly and is punished by being destroyed by Sudarśana.¹⁵ In eight of the nine stories just mentioned, the king receives the *sudarśanamātra* from or with the help of a personal royal priest (*purohita*). It is often not the king who then performs a ritual with this *mantra*, but the *purohita*, who performs it for the king’s sake. Only one of these nine stories is antithetical: here, instead of a *purohita*, the king receives the *sudarśanamātra* with the help of the deity Kubera and from the goddess Mahālakṣmī.¹⁶ And in the story of the badly behaving king, no *purohita* appears at all. We will see that this is also significant with regard to the role of *purohitas* in the AS.

Thus, these stories have several similarities, in the sense that most of them have comparable structures and almost all illustrate the eminent importance of *purohitas* for kings. The function of most of them seems clear: they demonstrate that in any sort of difficulty in which a king might find himself, alone the *purohita* can help by using only a particular *mantra*, the *sudarśanamātra* as taught by the AS. Thus, they pave the way to the royal

¹² See OBERHAMMER 1994. For a translation of AS 1, see MATSUBARA 1994: 153–169.

¹³ AS 41. See BOCK 1987.

¹⁴ The wording of the six-syllable *sudarśanamātra* is *sahasrāra huṃ phaṭ* (AS 18.34–39b).

¹⁵ This story appears in the context of repelling such an enemy, concretely, the repelling of malevolent magic (*abhicāra*) (AS 42.8–40b), since the malicious king produces a female demon (*kṛtyā*) in order to destroy Kṛṣṇa; see below. Thus, it is also a story about solving a problem by means of Sudarśana.

¹⁶ For a translation of this story and a detailed study of its function in the AS, see RASTELLI 2015.

court for *purohitas* and strengthen their position there. What is special and important in these stories with regard to the topic of this volume is that they do not concern a standard Atharvavedic¹⁷ *purohita* trying to gain ground at the royal court, but a *purohita* who has, albeit strongly affiliated with the Atharvaveda,¹⁸ a Pāñcarātric background. Can these narratives provide evidence about the process of the Pāñcarātrins trying to approach the royal courts and the methods they chose for this purpose? Might they even provide evidence about the composer of the AS, about the Pāñcarātric *purohitas*, who were the primary target audience of his text, or about the rulers at that time, who can be seen as a kind of secondary target audience?

Let us look at the narratives more closely. Briefly, their contents are as follows:¹⁹

AS 33.24–100: King Mañisekhara, son of Durdharṣa(ṇa) and grandson of Pramaganda, reigns in Naicāsākha according to the *dharma*, i.e., the socio-religious order as taught in the Brahmanical scriptures. However, a demon (*mahāsura*) called Vikaṭākṣa and his offspring torment his kingdom and the whole universe. Since the demon cannot be easily defeated because of a boon that he has received from Brahmā, Mañisekhara asks his personal priest Kratu for a solution. Kratu tells him that the demon can only be conquered by Viṣṇu and advises him to take refuge with the god bearing the form of a discus, i.e., Sudarśana. Mañisekhara and Kratu go to the sage Durvāsas, whom they ask for a means for obtaining Sudarśana. Durvāsas gives them the six-syllable *sudarśanamāntṛa*. He says that by means of this *māntṛa* and with the help of the personal priest, the king can achieve everything he desires. Then Durvāsas tells them that God is present in the form of Sudarśana in Śālāgrāma on the bank of the river Sarasvatī²⁰. Mañisekhara and Kratu then proceed to Śālāgrāma. Mañisekhara has Kratu worship God in the form of the discus for a month. Then Sudarśana with eight arms appears, kills the demon, and disappears. Mañisekhara reigns again.

¹⁷ Personal priests of kings were traditionally Atharvavedins (SANDERSON 2007: 204–208), whose magic, healing, and invocation rituals were particularly suitable for kingly needs, even if this was sometimes only an ideal (WITZEL 1986: 47f.).

¹⁸ On the strong position of the *Atharvaveda* in the AS, see RASTELLI 2018.

¹⁹ For a more detailed description of the contents of the narratives, see SCHRADER 1916: 132–141.

²⁰ Actually, the famous place called Śālāgrāma is not situated on the river Sarasvatī, but is the source of the river Gaṇḍakī, see, e.g., MANI 1975 s.v. *śālāgrāma*.

AS 42.40c–82: Śrutakīrti, king of Saurāṣṭra who reigns in Bhadrāsālā and worships Sudarśana, wishes to conquer the world of the Gandharvas. However, this is not as easy as he thinks. He approaches his personal priest, who advises him to take refuge with Sudarśana. He should visualise Sudarśana with 64 arms in a big discus (*cakra*) with 64 spokes and recite his *mantra*. In addition, the priest teaches the king all weapon *mantras* (*astra-mantra*). By this means, Śrutakīrti is able to win the battle, whereupon he returns to Bhadrāsālā. Amazed by the power of Sudarśana, he asks his personal priest if he could also reach liberation from transmigration with the help of Sudarśana. The answer is positive, and the king, worshipping the sixty-four-armed Sudarśana every day, finally reaches the supreme abode (*parama pada*).

AS 43.21c–44.56: Indra, the king of the gods, is tormented by a demon (*dānava*) called Jalaṃdhara²¹. He consults the Maruts, and Vāyu advises him to send Bṛhaspati (who is the *purohita* of the gods; see SÖRENSEN 1904 s.v. Bṛhaspati) to Śaṅkara (i.e., Śiva) to ask for help. Bṛhaspati is sent to the Kailāsa mountain, where he meets and praises Śaṅkara. Then he tells Śaṅkara about Indra's problem. Śaṅkara agrees to kill the demon by means of the *sudarśanamāntra*. Bṛhaspati asks for the *mantra* and Śaṅkara gives it to him. Having gone to the Himālaya, Bṛhaspati recites the *mantra* and causes Sudarśana to appear. Sudarśana teaches him about his various forms. About Indra nothing more is reported.

AS 45: Kuśadhvaṇja, king of the Janakas, is afflicted by a “great delusion” (*mahāmoha*) that causes bodily pain and disturbs his memory.²² Initially he ignores his affliction, but then, when it torments him more and more, he approaches his family preceptor (*kulaguru*)²³ Yājñavalkya to in-

²¹ Jalaṃdhara is a demon that appears in the myth of Śiva as Jalaṃdhara-saṃhāramūrti. In this myth, the demon Jalaṃdhara is killed by means of the discus Sudarśana, which, in some versions of the myth, is later given to Viṣṇu; see GILLET 2010: 210–221.

²² In Yoga and Sāṅkhya, *mahāmoha* is one of five types of “unreal cognition” (*viparyaya*) (see, e.g., *Yogabhāṣya* ad *Yogasūtra* 1.8, Gauḍapāda's commentary ad *Sāṅkhyakārikā* 47). In AS 14.15c–17, *mahāmoha* is a term for the *nigrahaśakti* deluding the individual soul (*jīva*). Here, in AS 45, it is described as a kind of illness.

²³ In this paper I do not differentiate between *gurus* and *purohitas*, since I do not find that the AS differentiates clearly between the functions of the two. In the stories presented here, *gurus* and *purohitas* have the same function. Also in the following passage describing a *purohita*, no clear distinction between the office of a *purohita* and a *guru* is made: “Listen, if the king cannot perform [a ritual], a skilful personal priest should perform [it]. Only he is the king's entire property in effecting invisible

quire about the cause of this *mahāmoha* and its remedy. Yājñavalkya tells him that the *mahāmoha* is the result of a crime (*pāpa*): in former times, Kuśadhvaja had killed a virtuous king outside of a battle. Yājñavalkya proposes “mastering”²⁴ Sudarśana, because by means of his power the *mahāmoha* will be destroyed. Kuśadhvaja has a pavilion (*maṇḍapa*) constructed on the bank of the river Sarasvatī, in which Yājñavalkya performs a ritual in order to pacify (*śāntika karman*) the *prārabdha karman*, i.e., the

aims. (3) Acting according to the *dharma*, perfect with regard to Vedic learning, well-conducted, truthful, pure, well-born, free of self-conceit, patient, having a good memory, powerful, (4) knowing the divisions of space and time, an astrologer, unwearied, invincible, careful, bountiful, learned in polity, (5) knowing means and ends, a counsellor/one who has mastered the *mantras* (both meanings are possible and it is difficult to decide which one is meant), constantly sacrificing, free of desire, knowing fate, speaking kindly, belonging to the Veda, endowed with [the quality] *sattva*, a lord, (6) a devotee of Viṣṇu, an ascetic, knowing the rituals, eagerly engaged in rituals, faultless, wishing the acquisition of good and the abandoning of evil, generally esteemed by kings, (7) such a personal priest who is competent for [being] a *guru* for kings is difficult to find, because such a [personal priest] is able to keep back a stream of evils for kings. (8) Therefore only this [personal priest] is entitled [to use] the method of protecting kings. A king who has a *guru* of this kind can become a universal ruler (*samrāj*), (9) live long, be without enemies, healthy, [and] a slayer of hostile heroes. Indeed in his kingdom no pains such as drought etc. arise. (10) [If] the king would have a *guru* or personal priest who is different than that, [this] would undoubtedly be unfavourable for the king.” (AS 46.3–11: *śṛṇu rājā na cet kuryāt purodhāḥ kurutāt kṛtī | sa eva rājñāḥ sarvasvam adṛśārthopapādane || 3 dhārmikāḥ śrutisampannāḥ suśīlaḥ satyavāk śuciḥ | abhijāto ’nahaṃkāras titikṣuḥ smṛtimān vaśī || 4 deśakālavibhāgaññāḥ śāstradrṣṭir atandritaḥ | apradhrṣyo ’pramādī ca vadānyo nayakovidāḥ || 5 upāyopeyavin mantrī yāyajūko hy alolupaḥ | daivavit priyavādī ca vaidikāḥ sattvavān prabhuḥ || 6 viṣṇubhaktas tapasvī ca kārya-vit karmaṭho ’naghaḥ | hitāhitāptihānecchur nṛpāñām sarvasammataḥ || 7 īdṛśo durlabho rājñām gurukalpaḥ purohitaḥ | īdṛśo hi kṣamo rājñām aghaughavinivāraṇe || 8 ataḥ sa eva rājñām hi rakṣāvidhim athārhati | evaṃvidho gurur yasya sa samrāṇ nṛpatir bhavet || 9 dīrghāyur niḥsapatnaḥ syād arogaḥ paravīraḥ | avagrahādya jāyante pīḍās tadviṣaye na hi || 10 taṃ vinānyo bhaved rājño gurur vātha purohitaḥ | viparītaṃ bhavet tasya mahībhartur na saṃśayaḥ || 11*). See also the usage of the term *upādhyāya* in *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 10.66.27–28 in comparison to the other Purāṇic passages quoted in n. 40 and BIANCHINI 2015: 36 and 56f.

²⁴ Here the word *sādhana* is used (AS 45.32: *tatsādhane yatnaṃ kuruṣva*, “make an effort with regard to his *sādhana*”). *sādhana* is a religious practice by which a deity is worshipped and thereby subdued or “mastered,” in the sense that as a result the deity is at the devotee’s command. See for this practice RASTELLI 2000.

karman that is already active in the present life and has caused the *mahāmoha* in this case.

The following five stories in the AS should be considered a cohesive group. They are introduced in AS 48.3–8 by mentioning five kings who have reached their respective goals by means of a throne (*āsana*), a ring (*aṅgulīya*), a mirror (*darpaṇa*), a banner (*dhvaja*), and a canopy (*vitāna*).

AS 48.9–50b: King Muktāpīḍa, son of Suśravas, does not care for his kingdom but is only interested in women and drinking alcohol. As a consequence, his subjects fall from the *dharma* and demons overcome the kingdom. But the king still does not care. His ministers consult the personal priest (*purodhas*) and conclude that only the personal priest can help. He produces a throne that is furnished with a *yantra*²⁵ (of Sudarśana) according to the method of Vasiṣṭha and has the king sit on it. What follows in the text is a detailed prescription for a ritual serving various purposes.²⁶ After this ritual having been performed for a mere month, the story ends with all of the kingdom's enemies being destroyed by diseases and the earth again coming under the control of the king. Whether the king's desire for women and alcohol also disappears is not mentioned.

AS 48.50c–64b: In the town of Viśālā, a bodiless voice from the sky speaks to the mother of the virtuous King Viśāla, telling her that her son will die within four days. When she tells this to her son, he asks her not to be afraid and goes to the hermitage of Pulaha, who is a *purohita*. Having listened to the story of the incident, Pulaha gives Viśāla a ring bearing the *yantra* of Sudarśana. When the servants of Death (here called Kāla) come to take Viśāla's life, they are unable to come near him. Various weapons emerge from the discus and chase them away. Both the gods and Kāla are astonished that Viśāla has successfully conquered death.²⁷

AS 48.64c–109: One day, Sumati, son of King Sunīti of Śṛṅgāra, goes to a grove to hunt. In the grove he meets a charming young woman. Passionate about her, he becomes bewildered. The woman takes him to her home and later to the Nāga world. Having reached Bhogāvati, the capital of the Nāga world, she gives Sumati to Anaṅgamañjarī, daughter of the Nāga King Vāsuki. Anaṅgamañjarī wants to marry him, and also the amazed Sumati is ready to marry the beautiful princess. In the meantime, Sunīti's

²⁵ *yantras* usually consist of diagram-like drawings and *mantras* made present in them; see, e.g., RASTELLI 2003: 142ff. and especially for the *sudarśanayantra* pp. 148–151.

²⁶ This passage gives the impression of being a foreign body in the text.

²⁷ For a translation of this and the next story, see BIANCHINI 2015: 67–71.

father misses his son and asks his ministers to find him. Spies and messengers search for Sunīti but are unable to find him. The king is inconsolable and no longer eats or sleeps because of his sorrow. Then the king's personal priest (*purohita*) goes to his *guru* Kaṇva, who lives on the banks of the river Tamasā. Having heard the story, Kaṇva immerses himself in *yoga*, sees what has happened, and relates it to the *purohita*. He says that only by means of the power of Sudarśana it will be possible to bring Sunīti back, namely, with a mirror furnished with a *sudarśanamahāyantra*. The *purohita* goes back to the king and tells him everything. The king produces a mirror in the prescribed manner, places it on a chariot, and drives to the entrance of a cave that he has been able to find with the help of the mirror. He enters the Nāga world and fetches his son (magically?). Sumati and his wife come, the king lifts them into the chariot and wants to return with them to his own town. Vāsuki, the father of the princess, is angry about this and, supported by his army of snakes, asks the king to stop. The king asks the mirror to kill the snake army. Two weapons come forth from the mirror, one that puts the snake army to sleep and one that starts to burn the Nāga town. Seeing this, Vāsuki begs for pardon, gives the king jewels, the princess, and other Nāga women, asks him to withdraw the weapons and to go. The king agrees and goes home with his son, the Nāga women, and the jewels.

AS 49: King Citraśekhara, son of Uparicara, reigns in the town of Bhadravātī on the banks of the Sarasvatī. In former times, Uparicara, who had received a divine flying chariot from Indra, killed the demon Śaṅkukarṇa, who wanted to rob the chariot. After the death of Uparicara, Śaṅkukarṇa's son Amarṣaṇa wishes to avenge his father and beleaguers Citraśekhara's army and town. His aim is to kill Citraśekhara and to capture the divine chariot. A long-lasting battle between the two armies begins, but Citraśekhara is unable to defeat the demon. Reflecting on a solution, he thinks that he will only be able to gain victory with the help of Śiva's (*mahādeva*) grace. He decides to please him by means of mortifications (*tapas*) and leaves for Mount Kailāsa by means of the divine chariot, which he has inherited from his father. However, the chariot stops above Mount Mandara. Surprised, Citraśekhara walks around on the peak of the mountain. He meets a beautiful young man who turns out to be Kubera. Citraśekhara tells him everything that had happened, whereupon Kubera tells him that Mount Mandara is the abode of the almighty goddess Mahālakṣmī. It was she who stopped the movement of his chariot. Kubera tells Citraśekhara that he will receive all that he desires after seeing her. Kubera disappears, but one of his servants appears. The servant spends the night

with Citraśekhara and explains how to proceed towards where Mahālakṣmī lives. Having arrived there, Citraśekhara enters a gorgeous palace. In the centre of the palace he meets the magnificent Mahālakṣmī. He sings a long hymn of praise, which is composed in various meters. Having heard the hymn, Mahālakṣmī graciously tells him that she will fulfil his wishes. Citraśekhara tells her about his problems and she gives him a banner with the *yantra* of Sudarśana, telling him that she protects all who have taken refuge with her by means of Sudarśana's power. Citraśekhara goes back to the battle and kills the demon.

AS 50: This story is about King Kīrtimālin, the son of King Bhadrāśṛṅga, in Viśālā. Roaming once through his kingdom in the darkness in order to hear the conversations of the people, he meets a Brahmin who is immersed in *yoga* meditation on Sudarśana. The king desires to ask the Brahmin who he is, where he comes from, etc., but, being in deep meditation, the Brahmin does not notice the king and thus does not reply. The angry king wants to seize him, but the only result is that he is paralysed by the Brahmin's power. Surprised, he pays obeisance from all sides and appeases him with praises. Being appeased, the Brahmin awakes and tells the king about a place called Sālagrāma, where God Viṣṇu is present in the form of the discus. There he has mastered all *sādhana*s (see n. 24) by means of the power of Sudarśana, and now he is on the way to Puṣkara. The king pays homage to the Brahmin and conveys him to a Viṣṇu temple. The next day, when the Brahmin wants to leave for Puṣkara, the king asks him how he might achieve happiness (*sukha*), also hereafter. The Brahmin teaches him the six-syllabled *sudarśanamāntra* and other *mantras* belonging to it, such as weapon *mantras*, as well as its visualisation (*dhyāna*), worship, and *yantra*. The king wishes to give many gifts to the Brahmin, but the Brahmin refuses to accept them. The king insists on giving them to him, and finally they agree on the king giving them to other Brahmins. From that time onwards, the king reigns according to the *dharma*. One day he asks his ministers which countries, kings, etc. are under his control. They answer that the whole earth is under his control, but that the deities, Gandharvas, Asuras, and Nāgas do not serve him. Hearing this, Kīrtimālin also wants to conquer all these beings and asks his ministers for advice. They tell him that he will be able to conquer them easily because of his immense valour and because he has obtained divine weapons from the Brahmin. Subsequently, Kīrtimālin conquers the Nāga world as well as the Yakṣas, Gandharvas, Siddhas, and Vidyādharas. His next aim is to conquer the deities. He thus sends a Gandharva messenger named Manojava to In-

dra to ask him to send him the elephant Airāvata, his thunderbolt (*vajra*), and other things. Indra, confronted with this demand, laughs and tells the messenger that he will send Airāvata and the thunderbolt. The other things should be fetched by Kīrtimālin himself. Indra sends Airāvata and the thunderbolt, which arrive at Kīrtimālin's fortress and invisibly kill his army. This sudden death causes confusion. Kīrtimālin calls his personal priest (*purodhas*) and asks for advice. Reflecting upon what has happened, the personal priest assumes that it was caused by the anger of the deities. At that moment, the messenger arrives and confirms this assumption. The king consults the personal priest to find a means of revenge, whereupon he sends one of his divine weapons forth, which paralyzes Airāvata and the thunderbolt. Indra is angry and sends his dreadful army to Kīrtimālin's town. Seeing this, Kīrtimālin comes out of the town together with his army. In a first battle, the deities win. Being angry, Kīrtimālin sends further divine weapons forth, but Indra is able to ward them off. Kīrtimālin remembers that he has a chariot among the weapon *mantras* from the Brahmin. He has such a chariot produced (by the personal priest). It is endowed with the *sudarśanamahāyantra* and a canopy.²⁸ Then he sits down in the shade of the canopy and casts a *viṣṇucakra*, another weapon received from the Brahmin (see AS 34.14c–16), which kills the deities. The angry Indra also casts various weapons and finally his thunderbolt, but all these weapons disappear in the *viṣṇucakra*. Indra is surprised. He meets Kīrtimālin and asks why his weapons are now successful. Kīrtimālin explains that this success is due to the canopy. Indra and Kīrtimālin become friends.

AS 42.35–40b: The king of Vārāṇasī called Kāśīrāja worships Viśveśvara Mahādeva and produces a female demon (*kṛtyā*) in order to destroy Kṛṣṇa.

²⁸ These last two sentences are my interpretation of AS 50.112c–113: “Then Kīrtimālin, having become despondent, remembered the chariot that he has received from the Brahmin. Then he had it made in that way [as taught by the Brahmin (?)], bound by the *sudarśanamahāyantra* and equipped with a canopy.” (*tato nirvedam āpannaḥ kīrtimālī dvijottamāt || 112 labdham vimānaṁ sasmāra tat tathākārayat tataḥ | sudarśanamahāyantrāntritam savitānakam || 113*). These sentences are not easy to understand. No chariot was mentioned in the story before; AS 50.29–31 states that the king receives various *mantras* from the Brahmin. Indeed, AS 40.61ab mentions a chariot (*vimāna*) among the many weapons that are forms of God, as taught by the AS. Thus, we can conclude that the chariot given to the king by the Brahmin is in the form of a weapon *mantra*. This could explain why a chariot that the king has already received has yet to be produced, in the sense that it could have been produced through a quasi-magic ritual by using the appropriate *mantra*. SCHRADER (1916: 140) understands this passage in a similar way.

The female demon goes to Dvārakā to find Kṛṣṇa. As Kṛṣṇa becomes aware that the flying demon is approaching, he casts Sudarśana. The female demon flees, but the discus kills her and destroys Kāśīrāja and his town.

Names, places, and motives

In the following section I would like to examine the persons, places, and motives that appear in the stories (see also the table on pp. 360f.). Can we derive any information from them?

Let us first look at the names of the kings in the stories. Several of the kings' names are well-known from Vedic, epic, and Purāṇic Sanskrit literature.

The names Pramaganda, the grandfather of the main character Maṇisekhara in the story in AS 33.24–100, and Naicāśākha appear in a Ṛgvedic hymn, namely, in RV III.53.14. Here they seem to have a negative connotation. Indra is asked to bring the property of Prāmaganda and to subdue Naicāśākhā.²⁹ According to Sāyaṇa's commentary ad loc., Prama-ganda is the name of an offspring of Maganda, who was a usurer. Naicāśākha, according to Sāyaṇa, is the property of outcast (*patita*) people.³⁰ In the introduction to his *Ṛgvedabhāṣya*, Sāyaṇa simply states that Naicāśākha is a town and Pramaganda a king,³¹ which agrees with the story in the AS.

The main character of the story, Maṇisekhara, is described in a fairly positive way.³² However, being the child of a usurer and related to outcast

²⁹ RV III.53.14: *kim te kṛṇvanti kīkaṭeṣu gāvo nāśīraṃ duhré nā tapanti gharmām | ā no bhara prāmagandasya védo naicāśākhām maghavan randhayā nah ||*. “What do the cows do for you among the Kīkaṭas? They do not milk out the milk mixture; they do not heat the gharmā[=hot]-drink. Bring here to us the possessions of Pramaganda. Make the descendant of Nīcāśākha subject to us, bounteous one.” (Translation JAMISON & BRERETON 2014: 539).

³⁰ RVBh vol. 2, p. 435,1–6. In this interpretation, Sāyaṇa follows Yāska's *Nirukta* 6.32, from which he also quotes in the subsequent passage (see also CHARPENTIER 1930: 336).

³¹ RVBh vol. 1, p. 6,7f.: “In the same way the non-eternal meanings ‘that which is called *naicāśākha* is a town, that which is called *pramaganda* is a king’ are handed down.” (*tathā naicāśākhām nāma nagaram pramagando nāma rājā ity ete 'rthā anityā āmnātāḥ*.) CHARPENTIER (1930: 336) sees a contradiction between the two statements of Sāyaṇa. I think that this is not necessarily a contradiction: also an offspring of a usurer could perhaps be a king, and a town could perhaps also be seen as a kind of property.

³² AS 33.27–28b: “When this aforementioned Maṇisekhara had passed the first

people is perhaps a kind of karmic explanation of why a virtuous king is tormented by a demon.³³

Indra is the king of the gods and well-known (e.g., SÖRENSEN 1904 s.v. Indra).

Kuśadhvaṇa, the king of the Janakas in the story in AS 45, is known from the *Rāmāyaṇa*. He is the brother of King Janaka (Rām 1.69.1–2). Another link to King Janaka is found in his *kulaguru* Yājñavalkya, who is Janaka's teacher in the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* (e.g., BĀU 3.1.1–2).

King Viśālā from the story in AS 48.50c–64b and his town Viśālā are mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* and in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.³⁴ The father of King Citraśekhara, the main character of the story in AS 49, Uparicara, is well-known from the *Mahābhārata* (SÖRENSEN 1904 s.v. Uparicara).

The name Muktāpīḍa, appearing in the story in AS 48.9–50b, is mentioned in the Kashmirian chronicle *Rājataranṅiṇī*. SCHRADER (1916: 96f.) takes this fact as evidence for the Kashmirian origin of the AS. According to BOCK-RAMING (2002: 20, n. 6), Muktāpīḍa was the fifth ruler of the Karkoṭa dynasty (699–736 CE) in the *Rājataranṅiṇī*. It is unclear, however, if the king's name in the story is really inspired by the name of the Kashmirian king.

Versions of the story about the Kāśīrāja who worships Viśveśvara in Vārāṇasī appear in *Viṣṇupurāṇa* 5.34 ≈ *Brahmapurāṇa* 207, *Padmapurāṇa uttarakhaṇḍa* 278, and *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 10.66.³⁵

state [of human life, i.e., childhood], he was a hero who had a charming appearance, had obtained knowledge, [and] had subdued [his] enemies. When the illustrious one had reached manhood, he found a wife [called] Prācī.” (so 'py avasthām atikramya prathamām maṇiśekharaḥ | ramaṇīyākṛtiḥ śūraḥ prāptavidyaḥ paramtapah || 27 samprāptayauvanah śrīmān prācīm bhāryām avindata |).

³³ See DONIGER O'FLAHERTY 1980: 33–36 on the transfer of *karman* between parents and children.

³⁴ According to Rām 1.46.11, Viśālā is the son of Ikṣvāku and Alambuṣā; in Rām 1.44.8–12 his town Viśālā is mentioned. In MBh 3.88.22–23 Viśālā is identified with Badarī.

³⁵ This story could provide evidence for dating this passage of the AS. According to Peter Bisschop, a reference to the worship of Viśveśvara by a king in Vārāṇasī cannot be earlier than the twelfth century, since “the name of Viśveśvara as the central *līṅga* in Vārāṇasī is not attested before the twelfth century and represents a significant departure from the period preceding it” (personal information from Peter Bisschop to Robert Leach; see LEACH 2012: 156, n. 256). See also GUTSCHOW 1994: 194f. In the Purāṇa versions of the story, the deity is not called Viśveśvara but Maheśvara.

The names of kings I have not yet been able to locate in Sanskrit literature are Śrutakīrti, king of Saurāṣṭra (AS 42.40c–82), Sunīti (AS 48.64c–109), and Kīrtimālin (AS 50).

Let us now look at the names of the *purohitas*. Insofar as they are mentioned,³⁶ they are all famous sages who are also well-known from the epics and Purāṇas. For example, Kratu, Vasiṣṭha (see n. 36), and Pulaha are sons of Brahmā. Durvāsas is a son of Śiva, born of his anger.³⁷ Bṛhaspati is the *purohita* of the deities. Yājñavalkya was already mentioned above. He is also a well-known *ṛṣi* in the epics and the Purāṇas. Kaṇva is a *ṛṣi* that is known already in the *R̥gveda* (he composed its eighth *maṇḍala*) as well as in the epics and Purāṇas.³⁸

An interesting case, as already mentioned, is the story in AS 42.35–40b. This story presents no *purohita*, and thus it seems irrelevant with regard to the role of *purohitas*, all the more so since it follows a different scheme than the others. In this story, the king is punished rather than saved by means of Sudarśana. However, the non-appearance of a *purohita* is striking if we compare this story with its Purāṇic versions previously mentioned. In the Purāṇas, it is the son of a Kāśīrāja who worships Śiva because he desires a means for revenging his father, who has been killed by Kṛṣṇa.³⁹ In all three versions of the Purāṇas, the son worships Śiva together with a *purohita*.⁴⁰ It could be by chance that the *purohita* does not appear in the

³⁶ The stories AS 42.40c–82, 48.9–50b, and 50 do not mention the names of the *purohitas*. However, AS 48.16 mentions that the *purohita* uses a method taught by Vasiṣṭha (*vasiṣṭhoktena mārgena*), meaning that he stands in the tradition of Vasiṣṭha, who was the family priest of various kings, among others of the family of Ikṣvāku, see MONIER-WILLIAMS 1899 s.v. Vasiṣṭha. On the story AS 42.35–40b, see below.

³⁷ See, e.g., MANI 1975 s.v. Durvāsas. Durvāsas also appears in the *śāstrāvātāra* story in AS 1.

³⁸ For references to these sages in the MBh, see SÖRENSEN 1904 s.v. their names. For Yājñavalkya in a Purāṇa, see, e.g., AgniPur 16.8; for Kaṇva in a Purāṇa, see, e.g., BrahmaPur 26.10.

³⁹ The Purāṇas also report the prelude to this story: Pauṇḍraka Vāsudeva erroneously considers himself to be the god Vāsudeva and requests Kṛṣṇa, the actual god Vāsudeva, to give up his claim. In response, Pauṇḍraka Vāsudeva and his ally, the king of Kāśī (in the *Padmapurāṇa* Pauṇḍraka, Vāsudeva, and the Kāśīrāja are one and the same person), are killed by Kṛṣṇa.

⁴⁰ ViṣṇuPur 5.34.29 (= BrahmaPur 207.29): “Having learned that he has been killed by Vāsudeva, his son consequently pleased Śaṅkara together with a personal priest.” (*jñātvā taṁ vāsudevena hataṁ tasya sutas tataḥ | purohitena sahitas toṣayām*

AS's version, since it is a rather abridged version of the story. Given the general importance of *purohitas* in the AS, however, the *purohita* may also have been omitted from the story on purpose. In the Purāṇic versions, the *purohita* appears in a bad light. He helps a king who wishes to kill Kṛṣṇa and, above all, he does not succeed. It is possible that the AS's redactor did not want to present *purohitas* in this role and thus omitted the personal priest in this story.

Now let us examine the places mentioned in the stories. The place mentioned most often, namely three times, is the river Sarasvatī. Twice it is the place where Sudarśana should be worshipped: in AS 33.87 Sālagrāma is considered to be located on its banks,⁴¹ and in AS 45.37 a pavilion (*maṇḍapa*) for the worship of Sudarśana is constructed on its banks. In AS 49.2 Bhadravāṭī, the town reigned by King Citraśekhara, is situated on a bank of the Sarasvatī.

Two places are mentioned twice, Viśālā and Sālagrāma. Viśālā is Badarī (see n. 34), the well-known site, especially for a Pāñcarātrin, of Nara's and Nārāyaṇa's hermitage in the *Nārāyaṇīya*.⁴² In the AS, it is the town that is ruled by the Kings Viśāla (AS 48.50) and Kīrtimālin (AS 50.2).

Sālagrāma is one of the few places mentioned in the narratives that is described in more detail. This is the case in both passages in which it is mentioned. Sālagrāma or Śālagrāma is a place actually located on the river Gaṇḍakī, not the Sarasvatī. Unusual black stones, also called *śālagrāma*,

āsa śaṃkaram ||). PadmaPur *uttarakhaṇḍa* 278.15: "Having heard that his father has been killed by the Venerable Vāsudeva, Pauṇḍraka's son, called Daṇḍapāṇi, commanded by [his] mother Mṛtyu [and] requested by his personal priest, worshipped Śaṅkara by means of a sacrifice devoted to Maheśvara." (*tasya pauṇḍrakasya suto daṇḍapāṇir itīrito vāsudevena bhagavatā nihataṃ svapitaraṃ śrutvā mātṛā mṛtyunā samādiṣṭaḥ svapurohitenābhiyukto māheśvareṇa kratunā śaṃkaram iyāja*.) BhāgPur 10.66.27–28: "Having performed the cremation ceremony for the ruler, his son Sudakṣiṇa, having himself in view: 'I will revenge [my] father by killing his murderer,' worshipped Maheśvara together with [his] preceptor in supreme concentration." (*sudakṣiṇas tasya sutaḥ kṛtvā saṃsthāvidhiṃ pateḥ | nihatya pitṛhantāraṃ yāsyāmy apacitiṃ pituḥ || ity ātmanābhisandhāya sopādhyāyo maheśvaram | sudakṣiṇo 'rcayām āsa paramaṇa samādhinā* ||).

⁴¹ See n. 20.

⁴² The *Nārāyaṇīya* is not only the earliest extant Pāñcarātra text, but it also had a strong influence on the Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās, especially in their narrative passages, which borrow many motives from it; see GRÜNENDAHL 1997: 362–370 and, with a focus on the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*, RASTELLI 2006: 161–168.

are found there. Containing a fossil ammonite, they are considered parts of the discus Sudarśana and thus are sacred.⁴³ This explains why Sālagrāma is important for the AS. Everything present in Sālagrāma, including plants and stones, is considered to be marked by the discus:

Having assumed the form of a boar in the boar-*kalpa*, the venerable one, the supreme person, pulled the earth out of the ocean. Then the goddess Earth, who was exceedingly exulted, spoke to the God (78c–79): “In order to rejoice those who are fond [of you], you should dwell in a territory on the earth forever, O lord of the world, after having obtained a dear body.” (80) Thenceforth Keśava, to whom the goddess had spoken in this way, dwelled in the auspicious territory of the earth called Sālagrāma (81) with the body of Sudarśana, the glorious one, the venerable one, the one who is kind to [his] worshippers. Because of the majesty of the place, because of the compassion for [his] worshippers, [and] because of the request of the earth, Hari is always present there even today. The austerity that is performed in this place is multiplied thousandfold. (82–83) Human beings, animals, insects, and birds that die in this place are without doubt marked by the conch and the discus. (84) The venerable one, the lotus-eyed one who bears the body of Sudarśana is always present there, an ocean of good, auspicious qualities. (85) The human beings, deities, animals, trees, and mountains who live at his place are all marked by the seal of the discus. (86)⁴⁴ The unsurpassed place of Viṣṇu is called Sālagrāma. There the lord of the world in the form of the discus is always present. There everything that is immovable and moving is marked by the discus.

⁴³ See, e.g., MANI 1975 s.v. *śālagrāma*.

⁴⁴ AS 33.78c–86: *vārāhaṃ rūpaṃ āsthāya bhagavān puruṣottamaḥ || 78 ujjahāra bhuvam kalpe vārāhe salilāt tataḥ | tadāha paramapritā devaṃ devī vasuṃdharā || 79 priyārtham anuraktānām sadā bhūmaṇḍale tvayā | vartitavyaṃ jagannātha priyāṃ tanuṃ upeyuṣā || 80 evaṃ uktas tayā devyā tadā prabhṛti keśavaḥ | sālagrāmāhvaye puṇye nyavasanaṃ maṇḍale bhuvāḥ || 81 sudarśanavapuḥ śrīmān bhagavān bhaktavatsalaḥ | adyāpi deśamāhātmyād bhaktānām anukampayā || 82 bhuvāḥ prārthanayā tatra nityaṃ saṃnihito hariḥ | atra taptaṃ tapo yat tat sahasraguṇitaṃ bhavet || 83 manuṣyāḥ paśavas tatra krimayaś ca patitriṇaḥ | ye mṛtāḥ śaṅkha-cakrāṅkāś te bhavanti na saṃśayaḥ || 84 bhagavān puṇḍarikākṣaḥ sudarśanavapurdharaḥ | saṃnidhatte sadā tatra sanmaṅgalaguṇārṇavaḥ || 85 taddeśavāsino martyāḥ surāḥ tiryāṅca eva ca | taravaś cācalāḥ sarve cakramudrāṅkitāś tadā || 86.*

(19c–20) There, by merely entering [it], creatures are free of any blemish. There those who have given up their body reach supreme extinction (*nirvāṇa*). (21) A Brahmin who is born at that place is approved by the learned, by means of Sudarśana's power he has accomplished all *sādhana*s.⁴⁵ (22)⁴⁶

Other places mentioned in the AS's narratives include a second sacred place, namely Puṣkara, to which the Brahmin coming from Sālagrāma wanders (AS 50.23 and 26); the Himālaya, where Br̥haspati recites the *sudarśanamāntra* (AS 44.20); the river Tamasā⁴⁷ upon whose banks Kaṇva lives (AS 48.80); the town Bhadrāśālā of the Saurāṣṭra king (AS 42.41); and the town Bhadravāṭī of King Citraśekhara on the banks of the Sarasvatī (AS 49.2). Some places belong to beings other than humans, such as Svastika, the town of the Gandharvas (AS 42.46–50); the mountain Kailāsa, where Śiva resides (AS 43.21, 32–33); and Bhogavāṭī, the town of the Nāgas (AS 48.70, 83, 97). The town Śṛṅgāra of King Sunīti, whose son falls in love with the Nāga princess, seems to bear a symbolic name rather than that of a real place, since *śṛṅgāra* means “sexual passion.”

In conclusion, it is striking that all places, as far as they can be identified, are located in the northern part of India. As far as we can see, no place in South India is mentioned, although the current view is that the AS was redacted in the south. Not surprising is that several places that are considered sacred because of the presence of Viṣṇu or one of his forms are mentioned, including Badarī, Sālagrāma, and Puṣkara. Most of the places mentioned are known from the epics or Purāṇas.

At the end of this section, let us look at the problems the kings of the stories suffer from. Most often mentioned, namely in four stories, is the

problem of demons beleaguering and tormenting the king and his kingdom that cannot be conquered by ordinary military means.⁴⁸ If one considers

⁴⁵ See n. 24.

⁴⁶ AS 50.19c–22: *sālagrāma iti khyātaṃ viṣṇuśthānam anuttamam || 19 nityaṃ saṃnihitaṃ tatra cakrarūpī jagatpatiḥ | tatra cakrāṅkitaṃ sarvaṃ sthāvaraṃ jaṅgamaṃ ca yat || 20 tatra praveśamātreṇa jantavo vītakalmaṣāḥ | tatra tyaktaśarīrās tu yānti nirvāṇam uttamam || 21 tasmin deśe samutpanno brāhmaṇaḥ śiṣṭasaṃmataḥ | sudarśanaprabhāveṇa sādhitākhilasādhanaḥ || 22.*

⁴⁷ The river Tamasā is also mentioned in the epics; see MANI 1975 s.v.

⁴⁸ This problem appears in the stories told in AS 33.24–100, 43.21c–44.56, 48.9–50b (here the reason for the invasion of demons is the carelessness of the king), and 49.

these demons not real demons but demonised enemies and their troops, this was indeed one of the main problems faced by kings, especially if we consider the situation in South India in the thirteenth century (see above). This thus fits the ritual repertoire that is offered by the AS, because here too, the focus is on rituals for victory in battle (BIANCHINI 2015: 49–55, 60–62).

The other main aim of kings, mentioned in two stories, is not unrelated, since it is the counterpart of defence against enemies, namely, the conquest of further territories.⁴⁹ Other problems and aims, each mentioned once, are mental illness caused by a crime committed in a previous life (AS 45); the threat of death (AS 48.50–64b); the kidnapping of a prince (AS 48.64c–109); and liberation from transmigration (AS 42.40c–82). All of these were probably dangers or aims that were really feared or striven for by kings, indeed, in some cases not only by kings, but all human beings.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the AS, its narratives, and the historical circumstances of its origin, has led me to the following thoughts:

1) Why did the AS's redactor choose narratives as a means for convincing kings of the usefulness of worshipping Sudarśana?

The AS's redactor, if indeed he was a single person, was deeply learned. Just a few examples: He knew the philosophies of Kashmirian Śaivism and of the Rāmānuja school, philosophical concepts of language, classical Yoga, the Vedas, and, especially, the Atharvaveda.⁵⁰ He knew the Purāṇas and the epics and could imitate their literary style in a masterly way. The rich contents of the AS demonstrate to us that its redactor did not include narratives because he could not master more sophisticated texts. He chose narratives for two reasons: First, kings would certainly be more easily convinced by the practical usefulness of particular rituals than by philosophical or theological reflections. In order to communicate the use of, for example, a

⁴⁹ See the stories of AS 42.40c–82 and AS 50. Compare AS 29, which gives prescriptions for rituals for the purpose of the conquest of further territories, including the upper world (*ūrdhvaloka*) and the world of the Nāgas (*nāgaloka*).

⁵⁰ For the influence of Kashmirian Śaivism on the AS, see SANDERSON 2001: 36–38; for the influence of the Rāmānuja school, see, e.g., the mention of the concept of *śeṣa* and *śeṣin* in AS 52.6, which is a characteristic thought of this tradition (see CARMAN 1974: 147–157); for that of Yoga, see AS 31–32; for the influence of the Atharvavedic tradition, see RASTELLI 2018.

ritual for military purposes, a narrative would be much more appropriate than a theoretical tract. Secondly, narratives with a simple structure and entertainment value were an eligible means by which the author of the AS could approach kings, who were not unlearned persons but certainly more familiar with the Purāṇic and epic literature and their style than with philosophical or ritual texts.

2) What strategies are used in the narratives and for what purpose?

The main characters of the stories, mainly kings and personal priests, are often well-known persons from the epics and Purāṇas. The same is true of the places mentioned in the narratives. This means that the audience of the narratives most likely already knew these names and places before hearing the story itself. The listeners considered them historical persons and real existing places, since from the traditional Indian point of view the Purāṇas and epics were considered historical documents, describing events, places, and persons that once really existed.

One is more willing to believe a story about a person or a place that is familiar than a story about persons or places one has never heard of. Thus, to tell a story about characters or places that the audience is already familiar with increases its credibility. It improves the chances that the story will also be considered a report of a historical event. This is probably one reason the redactor of these narratives mentions particularly well-known persons and places.

In addition, using the names of famous persons achieves a further effect. The many famous kings who solved their problems by worshipping Sudarśana represent a very distinguished circle. The narratives insinuate to any ruling king that by worshipping Sudarśana he could also belong to this illustrious group. The same is true for the *purohita*. By relating a story like this, a *purohita* places himself into a row of famous sages, whereby he presents himself as being like one of them.

3) The AS is currently considered to have been redacted in South India. Nevertheless, the places mentioned in the narratives are located in India's northern region. One reason could be the one just mentioned: these are places known from the epics and Purāṇas, which increase the credibility of the story. However, a place in South India well-known to a southern king would fulfil the same function.

So there may be other reasons: Was this part of the AS perhaps composed in the north rather than in the south? However, the mere reference to places in the north is not sufficient evidence for this conclusion. Perhaps it

is precisely the emphasis on places in North India, especially sites that are classical places of Viṣṇu worship, which points to the fact that the AS was composed in South India. Did the AS's redactor emulate the North Indian traditions because he considered them an ideal? Or was it a wish of the kings at that time to take North India as an example, a wish that the AS's redactor tried to fulfil? Did the southern kings feel inadequate in comparison to kings in the north, wanting to be like them? Or were southern courts generally oriented to the North Indian religious and literary traditions, with the AS's redactor reflecting this orientation? There is inscriptional evidence that Sanskrit learning was highly valued in medieval South India. Inscriptions report on the promotion of, for example, Vedic schools, settlements for Brahmins, libraries, and other educational centres, and on the recitation of the *Mahābhārata* (MADHAVAN 2013: 105–139). Perhaps places known from Sanskrit literature received the same esteem as Sanskrit literature itself.

4) It is not possible to identify a particular historical king for whom the AS was composed. Indeed, it is probable that the redactor of the AS did not aim at a particular historical person. Considering the political situation in South India in the thirteenth century, a period when the ruling king could change any day, it would not have been wise to focus on a particular king. Thus, the target of the AS, that is, the target of the *purohitas* who acted according to the AS, were probably rulers in general. Their political distress at the time may have been considered an exceptional chance for promoting the Pāñcarātra.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Literature

Agnipurāṇa (AgniPur)

Śrīmaddvaipāyanamunipraṇītam Agnipurāṇam. etat pustakam ānandāśramasthapaṇḍitaiḥ saṁśodhitam. tac ca Hari Nārāyaṇa Āpaṭe ity anena (...) prakāśitam. Poona: Ānandāśramamudraṇālaya, 1900.

Ahīrbudhnyasaṁhitā (AS)

Ahīrbudhnya-Saṁhitā of the Pāñcarātrāgama. 2 vols. Ed. M.D. Ramanujacharya under the Supervision of F. O. Schrader. Revised by V. Krishnamacharya. Adyar: The Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1916, ²1986 (first repr.).

Ṛgveda (RV)

Die Hymnen des Ṛgveda. Ed. Th. Aufrecht. 2 vols. Berlin: Ferd. Dümmler's Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1861, 1863, Hildesheim, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1973 (repr.).

Ṛgvedabhāṣya (RVBh) of Sāyaṇa

Ṛgveda-Saṁhitā with the Commentary of Sāyaṇāchārya. Eds. V.K. Rajwade et al. 2 vols. Poona: Tilak Maharashtra University Vaidic Samshodhan Mandal, 1933, 1936.

Nirukta of Yāska

The Niruktam of Yāska Muni [in the Form of Nighaṇṭu Bhāṣya of Kaśyapa Prajāpati] with the Niruktavivṛti and Exhaustive Notes. Crit. ed. Mukund Jha Bakshi. New Delhi: Panini, 1982.

Padmapurāṇa (PadmaPur)

Mahāmuniśrīmadvyāsapraṇītam Padmapurāṇam. 4 vols. etat pustakam (...) Viśvanātha Nārāyaṇa ity etaiḥ mahatā paṛśrameṇa bahutarāṇi pustakāni melayitvā sapāṭhāntaranirdeśaṁ saṁśodhitam. Poona: Ānandāśramamudraṇālaya, 1893–1894.

Pāñcarātrarakṣā (PRR) of Venkaṭanātha

Śrī Pāñcarātra Rakṣā of Śrī Vedānta Deśika. Crit. ed. M. Duraiswami Aiyangar and T. Venugopalacharya with an Introduction in English by G. Srinivasa Murti. Madras: The Adyar Library, 1942.

Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad (BĀU)

In: *Eighteen Principal Upaniṣads*. Vol. I. (Upaniṣadic Text with Parallels from extant Vedic Literature, Exegetical and Grammatical Notes). Eds. V.P. Limaye and R.D. Vadekar. Poona: Vaidika Saṁśodhana Maṇḍala, 1958, pp. 174–282.

Brahmapurāṇa (BrahmaPur)

Sanskrit Indices and Text of the Brahmapurāṇa. Eds. P. Schreiner and R. Söhnen. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1987.

Bhāgavatapurāṇa (BhāgPur)

Bhāgavata Purāṇa of Kṛṣṇa Dvaipayana Vyāsa. With Sanskrit Commentary Bhāvārthabodhinī of Śrīdhara Svāmin. (Containing Introduction in Sanskrit and English and an Alphabetical Index of Verses). Ed. J.L. Shastri. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983, repr. 1999.

Yogabhāṣya (YBh) of Patañjali. See YSū.

Yogasūtra (YSū) of Patañjali

Samādhipāda. Das erste Kapitel des Pātañjalayogaśāstra zum ersten Mal kritisch ediert, von Philipp André Maas. Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2006.

Rāmāyaṇa (Rām)

The Vālmiki-Rāmāyaṇa. Crit. eds. G.H. Bhatt et al. 7 vols. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1960–1975.

Viṣṇupurāṇa (ViṣṇuPur)

The Critical Edition of the Viṣṇupurāṇam. 2 vols. Crit. ed. M.M. Pathak. Vadodara: Oriental Institute, 1997, 1999.

Sāṅkhyakārikā (SK) of Īśvarakṛṣṇa

The Sāṅkhyā Kārikā by Īśvara Krishna. Translated from the Sanscrit by H. Th. Colebrooke, also the Bhāṣya, or, Commentary of Gaudapāda; Translated, and Illustrated by an Original Comment, by H. H. Wilson. Bombay: Tookaram Tatya, 1887.

Secondary Literature

BEGLEY, W.E. 1973. *Viṣṇu's Flaming Wheel: The Iconography of the Sudarśana-Cakra*. New York: New York University Press.

BIANCHINI, F. 2015. *A King's Best Weapon. Sudarśana's Worship at the Royal Court According to the Ahirbudhnyasamhitā*. MA thesis, University of Vienna (http://othes.univie.ac.at/38142/1/2015-06-22_0846884.pdf, accessed March 15, 2018).

BOCK, A. 1987. Die Madhu-Kaiṭabha-Episode und ihre Bearbeitung in der Anonymmliteratur des Pāñcarātra. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 137/1, pp. 78–109.

BOCK-RAMING, A. 1992. Zum Gebrauch vedischer Mantras in den Schlußkapiteln der Ahirbudhnyasamhitā. *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 36, pp. 71–89.

2002. *Untersuchungen zur Gottesvorstellung in der älteren Anonym-literatur des Pāñcarātra*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- CARMAN, J.B. 1974. *The Theology of Rāmānuja. An Essay in Interreligious Understanding*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, Bombay: Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute (repr.).
- CHARPENTIER, J. 1930. Naicasakha. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 2, pp. 335–345.
- DONIGER O'FLAHERTY, W. 1980. Karma and Rebirth in the Vedas and Purāṇas. In: W. Doniger O'Flaherty (ed.), *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, pp. 3–37.
- GILLET, V. 2010. *La création d'une iconographie śivaïte narrative. Incarnations du dieu dans les temples pāñcarātra construits*. Pondicherry: Institut français de Pondichéry, École française d'extrême-orient.
- GRÜNENDAHL, R. 1997. Parallelen des Nārāyaṇīya und Anmerkungen zu seiner Wirkungsgeschichte. In: P. Schreiner (ed.), *Nārāyaṇīya-Studien*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp. 296–378.
- GUTSCHOW, N. 1994. Vārāṇasī/Benares: The Centre of Hinduism? A discussion of the meaning of “place” and space. With 6 figures and 5 photos. *Erdkunde* 48/3, pp. 194–209.
- HARI RAO, V.N. 1976. *History of the Śrīrangam Temple*. Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University.
- JAMISON, St.W. & Brereton, J.P. 2014 (transl.). *The Rigveda. The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- LEACH, R. 2012. *Textual Traditions and Religious Identities in the Pāñcarātra*. PhD Thesis. Edinburgh.
- MADHAVAN, Ch. 2013. *Sanskrit Education and Literature in Ancient and Medieval Tamil Nadu. An Epigraphical Study*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld.
- MANI, V. 1975. *Purāṇic Encyclopaedia. A Comprehensive Dictionary with Special Reference to the Epic and Purāṇic Literature*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- MATSUBARA, M. 1994. *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās & Early Vaiṣṇava Theology With A Translation and Critical Notes from Chapters on Theology in the Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- MONIER-WILLIAMS, M. 1899. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary. Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with special reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages*. New Edition, Greatly Enlarged and Improved with the collaboration of E. Leumann, C. Cappeller And Other Scholars. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995 (repr.).

- NILAKANTHA SASTRI, K.A. 1955. *The Cōḷas*. Madras: University of Madras, 1955 (rev. ed.), 2000 (repr.).
- OBERHAMMER, G. 1994. *Offenbarungsgeschichte als Text. Religionshermeneutische Bemerkungen zum Phänomen in hinduistischer Tradition*. Wien: Sammlung De Nobili.
- RAMAN, K.V. 1975. *Srī Varadarājaswāmi Temple – Kāñchi. A Study of its History, Art and Architecture*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications.
- RASTELLI, M. 2000. The Religious Practice of the *Sādhaka* According to the *Jayākhyasamhitā*. *Indo-Iranian Journal* 43/4, pp. 319–395.
2003. Maṇḍalas and Yantras in the Pāñcarātra Tradition. In: G. Bühnemann (ed.), *Maṇḍalas and Yantras in the Hindu Traditions*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, pp. 119–152.
2006. *Die Tradition des Pāñcarātra im Spiegel der Pārameśvarasamhitā*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
2015. Mahākālśmī: Integrating a Goddess into the Ahirbudhnyasamhitā. *Indo-Iranian Journal* 58, pp. 325–356.
2018. Considerations about Traditions Influential in the Ahirbudhnyasamhitā. *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques* 72/2, pp. 421–443.
- SANDERSON, A. 1990. The Visualization of the Deities of the Trika. In: A. Padoux (ed.), *L'Image divine. Culte et Méditation dans l'hindouisme*. Paris : Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, pp. 31–88.
2001. History through Textual Criticism in the study of Śaivism, the Pāñcarātra and the Buddhist Yoginītantras. In: F. Grimal (ed.), *Les sources et le temps. Sources and Time. A Colloquium, Pondicherry, 11–13 January 1997*. Pondicherry: Institut français de Pondichéry, pp. 1–47.
2004. Religion and the State: Śaiva Officials in the Territory of the King's Brahmanical Chaplain. *Indo-Iranian Journal* 47, pp. 229–300.
2007. Atharvavedins in Tantric Territory. The *Āṅgirasakalpa* Texts of the Oriya Paippalādins and their Connection with the Trika and the Kālīkula. With critical editions of the *Parājapavidhi*, the *Parāmantravidhi*, and the **Bhadrakālīmantravidhiprakaraṇa*. In: A. Griffiths and A. Schmiedchen (ed.), *The Atharvaveda and its Paippalādaśākhā. Historical and Philological Papers on a Vedic Tradition*. Aachen: Shaker Verlag, pp. 195–311.
2009. The Śaiva Age. The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism During the Early Medieval Period. In: Sh. Eino (ed.), *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, pp. 41–349.
- SCHRADER, F.O. 1916. *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Samhitā*. Madras: Adyar Library.

- SMITH, H.D. 1975, 1980. *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the Pāñcarātrāgama*. 2 vols. Baroda: Oriental Institute.
- SÖRENSEN, S. 1904. *An Index to the Names in the Mahabharata with Short Explanations and a Concordance to the Bombay and Calcutta Editions and P.C. Roy's Translation*. London: Williams & Norgate.
- WITZEL, M. 1986. Regionale und überregionale Faktoren in der Entwicklung vedischer Brahmanengruppen im Mittelalter. (*Materialien zu den vedischen Schulen* 5). In: H. Kulke & D. Rothermund (ed.), *Regionale Tradition in Südasien*. Heidelberg: Steiner-Verlag-Wiesbaden-GmbH, pp. 37–76.

Text passage	Name of king	Places mentioned
AS 33.24–100	Maṇiśekhara, son of Durdharṣa(ṇa), grand-son of Pramaganda	Naicāśākha, Sālagrāma
AS 42.40c–82	Śrutakīrti, king of Saurāṣṭra	Bhadraśālā, Svastika (city of Gandharvas)
AS 43.21c–44.56	Indra, king of the gods	Kailāsa (abode of Śiva), Himālaya
AS 45	Kuśadhvaṇa, king of the Janakas	Sarasvatī
AS 48.9–50b	Muktāpīḍa, son of Suśravas	
AS 48.50c–64b	Viśāla	Viśālā
AS 48.64c–109	Sunīti	Śṛṅgāra
AS 49	Citraśekhara, son of Uparicara	Bhadravātī, Sarasvatī
AS 50	Kīrtimālin, son of Bhadrāśṅga	Viśālā, Sālagrāma, Puṣkara
AS 42.35–40b	Kāśīrāja	Vārāṇasī, Dvārakā

Problem	Name(s) of helper(s)	Solution to problem
demon Vikaṭākṣa and his offspring torment all beings	<i>purodhas</i> Kratu, Durvāsas	<i>sudarśanamāntra</i> , worship of Sudarśana in Śālagrāma for one month
king wants to conquer the Gandharva world and be liberated from transmigration	<i>purodhas</i> (no name mentioned)	visualization of the 62-armed Sudarśana, recitation of his mantra and ritual worship
Indra is tormented by the demon Jalaṃdhara	Bṛhaspati	Śiva promises to kill the demon by means of the <i>sudarśanamāntra</i>
king is tormented by <i>mahāmoha</i>	<i>kulaguru</i> Yājñavalkya	<i>sādhana</i> of Sudarśana in order to destroy <i>prārabdha karman</i>
demons bring the kingdom under their control because it is neglected by the king	<i>purodhas</i>	a throne (<i>āsana</i>) with Sudarśana's <i>yantra</i> in which the king is seated, performance of a ritual
king will die within four days	<i>purohita</i> Pulaha	a ring (<i>aṅgulīya</i>) with Sudarśana's <i>yantra</i> chases death's servants away
son is kidnapped and taken to the Nāga world	<i>purohita</i> ; his <i>guru</i> Kaṇva	a mirror helps find the Nāga world and conquer the Nāga king
demon Amaṣaṇa cannot be conquered by the king	Kubera, Mahālakṣmī	a banner that helps kill the demon
Kīrtimālin cannot conquer Indra	brahmin, <i>purodhas</i>	a canopy with Sudarśana's <i>yantra</i> helps conquer Indra and gain his friendship
the Kāśīrāja attacks Kṛṣṇa by means of a <i>kr̥tyā</i>	no helpers mentioned	Sudarśana kills the <i>kr̥tyā</i> and the Kāśīrāja, and destroys his town