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**Agriculture and Religion in Ancient India**

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**Agriculture and Religion in Ancient India**

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## **Dedication**

Dedicated to the memory of Lucy Bulliet, a remarkable friend and mentor.

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# **Agriculture and Religion in Ancient India**

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This project examines the religious conception of agriculture of the Vedic tribes as they transitioned from semi-nomadic pastoralism to an agriculturally-based sedentism in the Gangetic Basin. The basic thesis is that the Vedic peoples had a theology of agriculture that was sufficiently complex to both retain continuity through, as well as adapt itself to, the sedentary transition. This two-sided dynamic, which emerged directly from the close reading of the source texts, breaks down quite neatly into plowing material that demonstrates continuity and harvest material that demonstrates adaptation through discontinuity and innovation. This study examines those changes and continuities through the careful philological reading of select textual sources pertinent to the issue, beginning with the earliest Sanskrit text, the *R̥gveda*, which precedes the sedentary transition and reflects the milieu of semi-nomadic tribes in the northwest of the subcontinent in the Bronze Age. Examining the Vedic texts closely, the ancient conception of agriculture is shown to be predicated upon an analogy involving a reproductive complementarity between gods, humans, and animals, who cooperate to inseminate the earth and thereby produce food that sustains them all and therefore perpetuates the cosmos. The integrality of agriculture to the cosmic order enables a formalized association between Prosperity and Plow, allowing the plow to turn up an all-encompassing prosperity for those who ritually demonstrate this knowledge. This positive conception was carried through as the Vedic tribes transitioned to sedentism in the Gangetic basin during the early Iron Age.

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## List of Abbreviations

AAH	Asian Agro-History Foundation
AjĀg	<i>Ajitāgama</i>
ApŚ	<i>Āpastamba Śrautasūtra</i>
AŚ	<i>Arthaśāstra</i>
AŚGS	<i>Āśvalāyanagr̥hyasūtra</i>
AŚŚS	<i>Āśvalāyanaśrautasūtra</i>
AV	<i>Atharvavedasaṃhitā</i>
AVP	<i>Atharvavedasaṃhitā</i> (Paippalāda recension)
AVŚ	<i>Atharvavedasaṃhitā</i> (Śaunaka recension)
BṛhD	<i>Bṛhaddevatā</i>
BṛhPDh	<i>Bṛhatparāśarasaṃhitā</i>
BS	<i>Bṛhatsaṃhitā</i>
BŚS	<i>Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra</i>
EI	<i>Epigraphia Indica</i>
EWA	<i>Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindiarischen</i> by M. Mayrhofer
GDh	<i>Gautamadharmasūtra</i>
HG	<i>Hiranyakeśigr̥hyasūtra</i>
HDS	<i>History of Dharmasāstra</i> by P.V. Kane
Kap	<i>Kapiṣṭhalakāṭhasaṃhitā</i>
KauŚ	<i>Kauśikasūtra</i>
KKS	<i>Kāśyapīyakṛ̥ṣisūkti</i>
KP	<i>Kṛ̥ṣiparāśara</i>
KS	<i>Kāṭhakaṣaṃhitā</i>
KŚ	<i>Kātyāyanaśrautasūtra</i>

MahānU	<i>Mahānārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad</i>
MDh	<i>Mānavadharmasāstra</i>
MS	<i>Maitrāyaṇisaṃhitā</i>
MŚ	<i>Mānavasrautasūtra</i>
MW	<i>A Sanskrit-English Dictionary by Monier Monier Williams</i>
N	<i>Nirukta</i>
PG	<i>Pāraskaragr̥hyasūtra</i>
Rām	<i>Rāmāyaṇa</i>
ṚV	<i>Ṛgvedasaṃhitā</i>
Ṛvidh	<i>Ṛgvidhāna</i>
ŚāṅkhGS	<i>Śāṅkhāyanagr̥hyasūtra</i>
SV	<i>Sāmavedasaṃhitā</i>
ŚB	<i>Śatapathabrāhmaṇa</i>
ŚBK	<i>Śatapathabrāhmaṇa (Kāṇva recension)</i>
ŚBM	<i>Śatapathabrāhmaṇa (Mādhyandina recension)</i>
SMB	<i>Sāmamantrabrāhmaṇa</i>
ŚG	<i>Śāṅkhāyanagr̥hyasūtra</i>
ŚŚ	<i>Śāṅkhāyanaśrautasūtra</i>
TĀ	<i>Taittirīyāranyaṇa</i>
TB	<i>Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa</i>
TS	<i>Taittirīyasaṃhitā</i>
VāDh	<i>Vāsiṣṭhadharmasāstra</i>
Vait	<i>Vaitānasūtra</i>
VHDh	<i>Vṛddhahārītasamhitā</i>
VS	<i>Vājasaneyisaṃhitā</i>

VSK

*Vājasaneyisaṃhitā* (Kāṇva recension)

## Chapter 1: Introduction

There is no way to overstate the importance of agriculture in South Asia. This is as true for the ancient world as it is today. Yet, with the exception of a very few scholars,<sup>1</sup> it has been all but ignored as an independent research subject within ancient India. This is especially true for Sanskrit, which has both the earliest and the longest persevering textual corpus in the subcontinent, stretching back well over three thousand years, into the literal Bronze Age.

This project began with the intention to examine the religious conception of agriculture through the philological study of Sanskrit texts, from the earliest sources up to the medieval period, when a small but significant genre of didactic agricultural texts emerged, *kṛṣiśāstra*. During the process of research and writing, a chapter of that long story emerged as having sufficient merit and interest to deserve to stand alone in presentation, the sedentary transition. One of the many priceless treasures buried in the Vedic corpus is the documentation of an ancient people as they transitioned from semi-nomadic pastoralism to agriculturally-based sedentism, which anthropologists have long taken to be the basic foundation for the development of “complex society.”<sup>2</sup>

The basic thesis here is that the Vedic peoples had a theology of agriculture that was sufficiently complex to both retain continuity through, as well as adapt itself to, the sedentary transition. This two-sided dynamic, which emerged directly and unexpectedly from the close reading of the source texts, breaks down quite neatly into plowing material

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<sup>1</sup>Lallanji Gopal and Gyula Wojtilla, who have spent their careers working on agriculture in the Sanskrit corpus, are true pioneers.

<sup>2</sup>As a native Seattleite, I am happy to point out that the “exception proving the rule” in this case is the Native American tribes of the Pacific Northwest Coast, whose sedentary complex society was based not on agriculture but on the annual salmon runs. The parallel is so close that many tribes had a “first salmon” rite that answered to the “first fruit” rites common in agricultural societies.

that demonstrates continuity and harvest material that demonstrates adaptation through discontinuity and innovation.

Before exploring these two sides of this dynamic through the period of the sedentary transition, we first explore Ṛgvedic agriculture and its context in chapter two. The conception of agriculture in the *Ṛgveda* would remain as the root of the dual dynamic of continuity and adaptation that characterized the religious forms of agriculture through the sedentary transition. Agriculture was understood on the basis of a sexual analogy, as was common throughout the ancient world, but in the Vedic mind this analogy was characterized by an unusual degree of nuance and specificity. They conceived of a reproductive complementarity between the gods, humans, and animals, which operated in accord with cosmic order on a primordial pattern set by the gods. All together they cooperated to inseminate the earth; the plow was the phallus and the furrow was the womb, identifications which come directly from the texts. The plants cultivated, i.e., food, supported them all, including the gods themselves, through the grain offerings that were an integral part of Vedic ritual. In this way agriculture was seen both as an expression of the cosmic order and the means of its perpetuation.

The Vedic tribes of the Ṛgvedic period existed in contexts laden with agriculture, both geographically and linguistically. Geographically speaking, agriculture had already been practiced in regions of South Asia for thousands of years prior. Meanwhile the Vedic peoples' own linguistic ancestors, the Proto-Indo-Europeans, who spread out of Central Asia throughout most of Eurasia in the preceding millennia, had themselves practiced a semi-nomadic pastoralism, which also included a sedentary period during which a grain crop would be cultivated. We examine the geographic and linguistic contexts as they relate to agriculture in much more detail in the second and third sections of chapter two. In the fourth section, we make a close reading of “the agricultural hymn” of the *Ṛgveda*, RV 4.57,

where we first encounter the dual divinity Śunāsīrau, “Prosperity and Plow.” Together, Prosperity and Plow constitute an anthropomorphic deification of a formal association, which, as we will see, remains immensely important for the conception of agriculture through the sedentary transition.

In chapter three we turn to examine the Kṛṣi Sūkta, AVŚ 3.17, from several angles in turn. We begin with a close reading of the text, examining the language and content and, relying on the concordances and the annotations to previous translations, tracking the occurrences of all of the verses and *pādas* elsewhere in the Vedic corpus. The examination of these sharings allow us, in the next section, to view the Prosperity and Plow material across the *saṃhitās*. This in turn leads to the identification of other related verses. We are then able, using the typology developed by Stanley Insler, to compare the hymn as a whole with its somewhat divergent counterpart hymn in the Paippilāda recension, AVP 2.22. On that basis, we examine the history of their textual composition, concluding that they were only incorporated into their respective recensions only during the second redaction, probably due to early regional variation. Examining the textual composition of these and other related hymns allows us to see that the Prosperity and Plow constellation remained vital and productive throughout the period of the sedentary transition. Then in the third section of this chapter, we turn to instructions for the ritual employment of the Kṛṣi Sūkta as described by the *Kauśika Sūtra*. The ritual occurs at the first plowing of the season and the actions correspond to what is described in the hymn. The entire hymn is recited, but other speech acts are prescribed as well. There is a verse that is otherwise unattested, and a brief but intricately structured ritual dialogue that takes place between the sacrificer, who is holding a clump of earth moistened with the remnant from the oblation, and his wife. In the next section, we examine this ritual dialogue in great detail. It contains a unique version of a traditional Indo-European merism for agricultural produce, which indexes an all-

encompassing prosperity as the result of the plow, demonstrating another formalization of the Prosperity and Plow association that was anthropomorphically deified as Śunāsīrau. These diverse investigations into the Kṛṣi Sūkta demonstrate the continuity and the productivity of the plow material not only through the sedentary transition, but into the Sūtra period. For one who ritually demonstrates the understanding that agriculture operates through a reproductive complementarity between the gods, humans, and animals that perpetuates the cosmic order, the yield of the Plow can be all-encompassing Prosperity.

In chapter four we turn to examine the harvest material, which, in stark contrast to the plow material, is characterized by discontinuities and innovations over time, revealing how ritual and myth were used to adapt to the changes associated with the sedentary transition. The harvest was a natural locus for these adaptations because the most significant change to the practice of agriculture was the embrace of multiple harvests throughout the year, enabling a level of food security beyond even most other sedentary societies in the ancient world. Before we undertake a close reading of a range of texts that exemplify these diachronic changes to the harvest material, we examine several significant contextual issues that complexify the situation, namely that several overlapping and inextricable factors constitute the sedentary transition: the geographic shift into the Gangetic Basin, the time span of several centuries that must have transpired, and the social and cultural changes involved in abandoning semi-nomadic pastoralism to fully embrace an agriculturally-based sedentism. In the second section, we examine a passage in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, which demonstrates that the embrace of the multiple harvests throughout the year was mythically and ritually accounted for using the theme of including the Seasons in the sacrifice. The myth related describes how the *devās* were motivated to include the Seasons in the sacrifice by the *ásuras*' agricultural success; the *ásuras* here are most likely a non-specific mythic representation of sedentary indigenous agriculturalists,



who, as we now know, inhabited the Gangetic Basin long before the arrival of the Vedic peoples. Next, we turn to an Atharvavedic hymn, which was originally a harvest hymn but came to be remembered in the tradition as merely a hymn for crop fertility. The hymn, which we examine in both recensions, reflects a time when the still-trekking Vedic tribes would interact with the indigenous agriculturalists during the harvest. We also briefly consider three harvest-related hymns exclusive to the AVP, further demonstrating the disjunctures in the harvest material. Then in the fourth section we turn to examine the ritual innovations that represent the “final” adaptation to the multiple seasonal harvest associated with the sedentism in the Gangetic Basin. These are the Āgrayaṇas, the “First-Fruit Rites,” and the Cāturmāsyas, the “Four-Monthly Rites.” Both sets of rites occur in the *śrauta* system, and the Āgrayaṇa also occurs independently in the Atharvavedic tradition. The Atharvavedic treatment of the Āgrayaṇa demonstrates the discontinuities of the harvest material over time exceedingly well. The ritual instructions given in the *Kauśika Sūtra* do not incorporate that harvest hymn common to the AV tradition which came to be remembered as merely having the purpose of crop fertility, but instead incorporates other *mantra* material which either does not occur in the *saṃhitā* or does not pertain to agriculture, much less the harvest. In the *śrauta* Āgrayaṇa material however, we find a number of verses dedicated to the Seasons, and, in the Āgrayaṇa of barley, a verse describing a barley harvest on the banks of the Sarasvatī, which must be a remnant from past ages, prior to the sedentary transition. Turning next to the Cāturmāsyas, we examine the *śunāsīrīya-parvan*, which previous scholars had already determined to have been originally a separate agricultural rite. In it we find novel verbal formulae to accompany the offerings to Indra Śunāsīra. These notable formulae play with grammatical number to identify Indra with Śunāsīrau while simultaneously retaining the distinctness of their separate identities. Further, Indra Śunāsīra is described as working in concert with the

Seasons, demonstrating integration with the ritual and mythic innovations that embraced the sedentary transition.

The fifth chapter is the conclusion. The first section contains a detailed summary of the findings of the work. The second section, on the legacy of Vedic agriculture, briefly surveys some of the factors and dynamics that affected the religious conception of agriculture in the Sanskrit corpus after the sedentary transition. It is a highly abbreviated synopsis of the broader researches I made earlier in the development of this project. The final section then is a few concluding thoughts on the importance of the religious conception of agriculture relative to the sedentary transition.

## **Chapter 2: Vedic Agriculture: Introduction and Context**

### **2.1. Vedic Agriculture**

“Vedic agriculture” here refers both to the forms of agriculture practiced by the Vedic tribes throughout the Vedic period, as well as to the more directly accessible representations of agriculture in Vedic texts. The textual is our primary concern here, but of course context is the key to fuller comprehension of the text. The textual representations of agriculture may be distinct from actual practice in some cases due to several potentially overlapping factors. One such factor is the dramatic contextual changes that occurred over the rough millennium constituting the Vedic period, while the various sacred and ritual utterances constituting the texts of this oral tradition would be preserved from generation to generation. Another factor is that in some cases the texts may (and I argue do) reflect agriculture as practiced locally by non-Vedic peoples, with whom the Vedic tribes may have had a number of different types of relations (which also would vary dramatically with contextual change). Yet another factor rests in the nature of the texts themselves, which consist of hymns to the gods, myths, ritual, and a miscellany of other religious materials which are not primarily concerned with describing the realia of everyday conditions.

The Vedic period, roughly spanning the millennium from 1500BCE to 500BCE, saw enormous changes to the role of agriculture in society. By far the most radical change was the Vedic tribes’ transition from the semi-nomadic pastoralist lifestyle to agriculturally-based sedentism. This transition must have been a long process, taking several centuries as the Vedic “center of gravity” shifted eastward from the northwest of the subcontinent to the Gangetic basin. The transition to sedentism in general has been studied little, but the religious conception of agriculture throughout that process has not been directly studied before at all to my knowledge. It is natural to assume that the role of agriculture in the early Vedic worldview had some bearing on this transition, although only

as one of numerous probable factors including social and economic conditions which are largely unknown.

We will explore and attempt to reconstruct aspects of the Vedic conception of agriculture in this and the next two chapters. We will see that agriculture was analogized to reproduction in a nuanced fashion; gods, humans, and animals cooperate to inseminate the earth, which generates the food that sustains them all and thereby perpetuates the cosmos. As a magical enactment of cosmic order, agriculture could result in an all-encompassing prosperity, which might include wondrous and marvelous things far beyond a good crop. As we will see, these complex dynamics were highly formalized in several ways, and ritually actionable. This was especially true for the plow, which had several important ritual applications outside of the properly agricultural context. There is a constellation of material relating to plowing that remains stable and consistent over time through immense contextual changes. Harvest material on the other hand is marked by striking discontinuities that reflect the progressive transition to sedentism and changing social and economic conditions. Vedic agriculture, both in practice and in conception, was characterized by continuities and discontinuities that reflect contextual changes.

## **2.2. Context: Geographic and Agricultural**

We can turn now to consider the geographic context of South Asia as it relates to agriculture, a geography which the Vedic tribes both carried their own traditions into and increasingly adapted themselves to. Agriculture had been practiced in South Asia for thousands of years before even the oldest Vedic Sanskrit of the *Rgveda*. The earlier paradigm of (cereal) agriculture beginning in the ancient Near East and spreading out from there across Eurasia has since been altered in favor of a view encompassing

multiple independent sites of origination, including several sites in South Asia.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, certain aspects of plowing technology continue to seem to have originated and spread out from the Near East, such as the seeding-plow.<sup>4</sup>

Historically, agriculture in South Asia was developed and practiced according to the locally specific factors of climate and geography, as of course used to be the case everywhere. Broadly and over-generally, the northwest region has been characterized by cereal grain production in dry cultivation while the Gangetic watershed has been characterized by the wet cultivation of rice, although both wet and dry cultivation have been practiced together in the Gangetic basin since ancient times. The peninsular South has been characterized by rice cultivation in river valleys since the advent of iron, but preceding even that was the terraced cultivation of millets and pulses.<sup>5</sup> In terms of climate, the seasonal monsoon was and is the most striking feature. In many regions, both winter and summer crops would be cultivated in the same year, enabling a bountiful

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<sup>3</sup>For a recent overview of the archaeo-botanical evidence for multiple independent sites of origination, see Fuller 2006.

<sup>4</sup>See Jaan Puhvel's interesting study on the diffusion of plow technology as ascertained by philological methods in "The Indo-European and Indo-Aryan Plough: A Linguistic Study of Technological Diffusion" in *Technology and Culture* Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring, 1964), pp. 176-190.

<sup>5</sup>"Latest archaeological evidences reveal that the earliest cultivation in peninsular India would have started about the late phase of the new stone age, which can be dated in the first half of the second millennium BC. The people of the age started cultivation of the *ragi* [finger millet] and *bajara* [pearl millet] and probably pulses like green gram and horse gram, etc. The new stone age people started making terraces on slopes of hills for cultivation and domestic settlements. This was the first phase of primitive agriculture in peninsular India. The second phase of development of agriculture started with the introduction of iron technology, characterized by plough agriculture. In this stage of development there was the spread of rice cultivation in south Indian river valleys. In the third phase of agricultural development in peninsular India, the concentration of settlements in the river valleys grew with the result that harnessing of bullock to the plough and use of iron ploughshare gradually developed." H. N. Dubey 2008 "Agriculture in the Age of Sangam" in *History of Agriculture in India*: 415, edited by Lallanji Gopal and V.C. Srivastava, Vol. V Part 1 of the History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization series edited by D.P. Chattopadhyaya.

fertility that could support a large population and would provide a level of food security not available in places dependent on a single annual harvest of the staple crop (which was by far the prevailing situation globally for sedentary agriculturalists).

In the northwest, the Indus Valley or Harappan civilization, whose period of urbanization preceded the inward migration of the Vedic tribes by several centuries, was geographically circumscribed to the east precisely by the grain-rice frontier, separating it from the wet cultivation of the Gangetic basin. The full implications of this historically are not entirely clear, but a number of contextually important factors can be associated with this natural line of demarcation.

The eastern boundary of the combined Harappan domains skirts the western edge of the Rajasthan Desert. It was Walter Fairservis who first observed that this line is roughly coincident with the farming of wheat and millets. He says that there was “... a failure of the Harappan farmers to move into the middle and lower Ganges and adjacent areas when they were readily accessible. In fact, nowhere is the Harappan farmer known beyond the bounds of the wheat-millet-growing regions... The Harappan farmers and their local descendants had reached the end of their range.”<sup>6</sup>

It is clear that this line reached by the Harappans is one which reappears more than once in the subsequent history of India. That it seems to have an important coincidence with agriculture should not be surprising (Possehl 1988,16).

This line, this frontier of wheat and millet to rice, and of dry and wet cultivation, is evidenced by the contextual philological analysis of the earliest Sanskrit texts, although it does not appear to be mentioned as such.<sup>7</sup> The *R̥gveda* does not mention rice (Jamison

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<sup>6</sup>Possehl is citing Fairservis, W.A. (1961) *The Harappan Civilization: New Evidence and More Theory*, American Museum of Natural History. p. 30.

<sup>7</sup>Recent research has confirmed that rice was cultivated at some Indus sites as well, including some evidence for both wet and dry cultivation. According to Petrie, *et al.*: “The variation evident in different areas demonstrates that there was diversity in the types of multi-cropping practiced across the Indus zone,

& Brereton 2014, 6). And accordingly, scholarship as well as tradition place the composition of those most ancient hymns which compose the *R̥gveda* in that northwestern region. In contrast, the hymns composing the *Atharvaveda*, which is cumulatively considered the second oldest text, do mention rice, as do all of subsequent Vedic literature. In fact, rice would subsequently become the default staple used for offerings throughout the vast Vedic ritual system. The ritual system, in which rice or grain offering were absolutely integral, was of immense intellectual import in archaic and classical India, and was heavily theorized for millennia in Sanskrit literature. This theorization of ritual would characterize or influence many of the most important works in the contribution of South Asian literature to world thought. This theorization of ritual was apparent as early as the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, reached a metaphysical highpoint in the famous Upaniṣads, and even eventually became the focus of an entire formal school of thought or intellectual tradition, the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā. Nevertheless, the closest one seems to come to any mention of this situation, entailing the absence of rice in the *R̥gveda* and the associated the frontier line of wheat and millet to rice, seems to be the instructions commonly given in Vedic ritual texts that the prescribed offering could be made of either rice or wheat depending on the situation.<sup>8</sup>

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and suggests that a nuanced approach to characterising Indus cropping is desirable” (Petrie *et al.* 2016, 1501). See also Bates *et al* 2016. The issue of multi-cropping will be discussed further below as well, as it relates to the sedentary transition of the Vedic tribes.

<sup>8</sup> A good example is the *havis* oblation, for which Oldenberg elucidates the injunction as it pertains to the Sītāyajña in the *Pāraskaragṛhyasūtra* (2.17): “A rule has been given in the Śrauta-sūtra (KŚ 1.9.1: ‘Rice or barley, if a Havis [is prescribed]’) which shows that it is indifferent whether rice or barley is taken. Thus the sacrifice is free to elect the one or the other. At least this is the traditional meaning of the Sūtra. But possibly we had better understand it otherwise. The sacrifice should offer, according to Sūtra 3, rice or barley. Whether he has to take the one or the other, there can be no doubt, and the rule given above (Sūtra

### 2.3. Context: Linguistic and Agricultural

The linguistic heritage of the Vedic tribes was also an important conditioning factor for the conception of agriculture. Apart from the more obvious lexical and syntactic inheritance, aspects of traditional inherited poetics were instrumental in shaping the religious conception of agriculture, as we will see in detail in the next chapter, and the ritual efficacy of this inherited poetics depends upon the magical power of correctly formulated speech acts.

The Vedic tribes were speakers of a branch of the Indo-European family of languages called Indo-Aryan, of which Vedic Sanskrit is the oldest example extant in any bulk.<sup>9</sup> The typological schema of the branches of the Indo-European is historically useful -- the subsequent Indo-Aryan languages were by and large confined to the subcontinent and continued to reflect the phonological distinctions which differentiated that group. However, synchronically, the schema can seem misleading because Vedic Sanskrit's

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2) shows that rice should be cooked, if the ceremony is performed for a rice-field, and barley, if for a barley-field" (Oldenberg 1886, 333 fn. 4).

<sup>9</sup>Evidence has emerged from ancient Near Eastern archaeology of Indo-Iranian words and deity names in Mitanni and Hittite documents from Anatolia and Syria ca. 1400 BCE. Initially there was contention over whether the forms, which are cuneiform transcriptions of the names Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra and Nāsatya, belonged to the unattested ancestor, Proto-Indo-Iranian, or to a descendent, but Thieme has demonstrated that the language represents the Indo-Aryan branch, by showing that the list of deities in the Mitanni-Hatti treaty reflect specifically Vedic developments which can not be reconstructed for Proto-Indo-Iranian (= Proto-Aryan) (Thieme 1960: 316). Further, they all serve abstract social functions which relate them to treaties specifically, and are even listed together in the same order with the same function in Vedic sources:

In sharp contrast to the uncertainties, the discrepancies, and the contradictions that are created by summarily identifying the Mitanni list as a Proto-Aryan [i.e., Indo-Iranian] series, the actually given – not reconstructed – Vedic chain: *Mitrā-Varuṇā, Indra- ... , Āśvinā (= Nāsatyā)*, fits flawlessly together in form and function with the Mitanni one, when the treaty protecting actions of the different gods in the Veda, such as they are explicitly extolled by the Vedic poets, are taken to be the idea around which they are grouped. As treaty-protecting gods, who watch over truth and untruth and punish the breach of solemnly given pledges, they make sense as witnesses to the Mitanni treaties ... (Thieme 1960: 316).



closest relative, Avestan, belongs instead to the Iranian branch of Indo-European. Both the Indo-Aryan and Iranian branches, to which belong known natural languages, belong together in turn to the Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European. This nested structure is not entirely theoretical, as the Nuristani language belongs to the Indo-Iranian family without fully committing to the defining features of the closely related Indo-Aryan and Iranian branches.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the ideographic and conceptual separation of the Iranian family from the Indo-Aryan family, and so of Avestan from its close cousin Vedic, should and probably does represent the actual (pre-)historical separation of their ancestral predecessors as coherent speaker-communities.

Likely breaking off into the subsequent branches by the late fourth millennium BCE (Fortson 2010, 43), the Indo-Europeans (or Proto-Indo-Europeans) – meaning the speakers of the language ancestral to the attested and subsequent IE languages and families – are reconstructed as adhering to a mode of life known technically as semi-nomadic pastoralism. This mode of life generally consists in keeping livestock on seasonal courses of grazing with a sedentary period in which crops would be cultivated as well. For the ancestral Indo-Europeans this lifestyle has been reconstructed based upon the general philological analysis of the descendant languages and cultures, but the examination of vocabulary in particular has been of specific importance for the endeavor of reconstruction (Mallory & Adams 2008, 106-110). Numerous agricultural terms have

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<sup>10</sup>Although the Dardic and Nuristani (formerly “Kafiri”) languages were formerly grouped together, Morganstierne (1965) has established that the Dardic languages are Indo-Aryan, and that the Nuristani languages constitute a separate subgroup of Indo-Iranian (Elena Bashir, “Dardic,” in *The Indo-Aryan Languages* 2003, 822).

been reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European (PIE), and the consensus is that agriculture was not only known but also practiced by the PIE speaker-community.

The Proto-Indo-Europeans practiced agriculture and made use of various farming implements. A verb meaning 'to plow' is securely reconstructed, and several branches have similar words for 'plow' (the implement) that are probably inherited. We also know the words for some other farming tools, such as the harrow and sickle. Although words for grain, for threshing and grinding grain, and for some specific grains can be reconstructed (wheat, barley, and probably emmer and spelt), it is uncertain whether grains were cultivated by the Proto-Indo-Europeans; however, such cultivation is strongly suggested by the fact that grains have a prominent role in the mythology, folklore, and ritual practices of many IE traditions that can be projected back onto the proto-culture and that point to the importance of cereals for their livelihood. The PIE word for 'field' has descendants in most branches, and was a derivative of an equally widely represented verbal root referring to leading or driving cattle, which points to the use of draft-oxen in plowing. Slavic, Germanic, and Celtic have cognate words for 'fallow', indicating that their ancestors may have engaged in shifting cultivation; but we do not know if this is an inheritance from PIE, as it may also be a later, locally innovated term of these three geographically contiguous branches (Fortson 2010, 41).

Sometime around two thousand years later, the tribes of the Ṛgvedic period, representing the Indo-Aryan branch of Indo-European, practiced a form of semi-nomadic pastoralism as well, but known directly from textual evidence rather than from the (probably sound) philological reconstruction. Beyond source texts and philological reconstruction, attempts have been made to link the Proto-Indo-European and Indo-Iranian language communities to specific archaeological cultures. Despite certain methodological problematics, such as that one cannot expect a one-to-one relationship between a linguistic community and an archaeological horizon – i.e., single archaeological cultures often represent speakers of more than one language, and vice versa – the endeavor has nevertheless thrown light on several important Bronze age archaeological sites in Central Asia which seem to have a high probability of standing in

some connection to the linguistic communities ancestor to the extant language evidence.

The semi-nomadic pastoralism of the Ṛgvedic tribes is reflected in the original cyclical conceptual schema of *yoga* and *kṣema*; the term *yoga* indicated the nomadic period of the year while *kṣema* indicated the sedentary period during which agriculture would be practiced (Jamison & Brereton 2014, 6; 55).<sup>11</sup> The geographic area inhabited by the Ṛgvedic tribes, or, more precisely, known to the *Ṛgveda*, is the northwestern region of the subcontinent entailing areas of the modern nations of Afghanistan, Pakistan, as well as part of northwest India. This region is extremely highly significant historically, but for different reasons at different periods. As mentioned above, the ancient Indus civilization was located precisely there, reaching out to the wheat and millet line and no further, preceding the Vedic migration by just a scant few centuries. It was the region known famously for its “seven rivers,” its *sapta-sindhu*, its *hapta-hindu*. These very two cognate compounds, Sanskrit *sapta-sindhu* and Avestan *hapta-hindu*, are well-known for illustrating the regularity in phonological change and morphological closeness of relation between Vedic Sanskrit and Avestan, while also providing for the origin of the terms “Hindu” and “India,” which came west as the Greeks encountered India from the Persian context and perspective. This of course is corollary to Alexander's reaching ancient India, and is a regular feature of the historical narrative describing early “Western” encounters with India.

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<sup>11</sup> The sedentary period of *kṣema* most likely corresponded with the rainy season. The crop cultivated was almost certainly barley, which is mentioned more than a dozen times in RV (Wojtilla 2003, 43). Barley however is often over-generalized as a winter crop, which has led to some confusion in the timing of the *yogakṣema* cycle; as a short season crop with high drought tolerance it can be grown as either a summer or winter crop.

Geographically, the importance of the northwestern region is clear; it effectively shapes and defines the subcontinent's connection with the rest of Eurasia historically. Maritime contact and trade as well as the overland route to central Asia have been important characteristics of this region since at least the time of the Indus civilization (Kenoyer 1998, 96-97). Constituting the northern shore of the Arabian Sea, the area is residually affected by the annual monsoon, and is fashioned in relation to the ranges of mountains and Himalayan foothills which separate the South Asian subcontinent from the rest of Eurasia and which source the rivers draining the regional watershed. The historical region called Gandhāra was at one time a satrapy of the Achaemenid Persian empire, and Gandhārans are even depicted on the famous reliefs of the Apadana. The region of Greater Gandhāra (Salomon 1999, 3) extended through the contemporary national boundaries of India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Alexander's army had left a vivid and distinct Greek presence in this area following immediately upon the conquest of Achaemenid Persia. This same region would become a center of early Buddhism's spread into central and east Asia.

#### **2.4. Ṛgvedic Agriculture**

Long before Alexander, the Ṛgvedic tribes lived upon the rich alluvial plains of the northwest, migrating eastward and practicing semi-nomadic pastoralism. The single verse given above, ṚV 10.101.4, comparing the *kavīs* composing the sacred hymns to farmers hitching a plow, is somewhat atypical for the *Ṛgveda*, insofar as agriculture is actually rarely mentioned in the hymns. Aside from stray mentions such as that, one entire hymn of the *Ṛgveda* is devoted to agriculture, ṚV 4.57. It is a hymn dedicated to

Kṣetrapati, which translates as “Lord of the Field.” There is much of interest in the hymn for approaching an understanding of how agriculture figured into the worldview conveyed in the hymns, and at only eight verses in length, we can indulge in the full hymn as recently translated by Jamison and Brereton (2014).

*Ṛgvedasamhitā* 4.57 (Jamison and Brereton translation)

1. *kṣétrasya pátinā vayám hiténeva jayāmasi |  
gām ásvam pošayitnv á sá no mṛḷātīdṛśe ||*

By means of the Lord of the Field as if by a concluded (alliance), may we win what prospers the cow, the horse. He will be gracious to one such as us.

2. *kṣétrasya pate mádhumantam ūrmim̐ dhenúr iva páyo asmásu dhukṣva |  
madhuścútam ghr̥rtám iva súpūtam ṛtásya naḥ pátayo mṛḷayantu ||*

O Lord of the Field, as a milk-cow yields milk, milk out upon us a honeyed wave, dripping with honey, well-purified like ghee. Let the lords of truth be gracious to us.

3. *mádhumatīr óśadhīr dyáva ápo mádhuman no bhavativ antárikṣam |  
kṣétrasya pátir mádhumān no astv áriṣyanto ánv enam̐ carema ||*

Honeyed the plants, the heavens, the waters— honeyed let the midspace be for us. Let the Lord of the Field be honeyed for us. Without suffering harm may we follow after him.

4. *śunám vāhāḥ śunám nárah śunám kṛṣatu lāṅgalam |  
śunám varatrā badhyantām śunám áṣtrām úd iṅgaya ||*

Prosperity (be) the draft-animals, prosperity the superior men; for prosperity let the plow till. For prosperity let the straps be bound; for prosperity brandish the goad.

5. *śunāsīrāv imām̐ vācam̐ juṣethām̐ yád divi cakráthuḥ páyah |  
ténemām̐ úpa siñcatam ||*

O Prosperity and Plow, take pleasure in this speech here. When you have made milk in heaven, with it besprinkle this (earth) here.

6. *arvācī subhage bhava sīte vāndāmahe tvā |  
yāthā naḥ subhāgāsasi yāthā naḥ suphālāsasi ||*

Be inclined our way, well-proportioned Furrow. We will extol you, so that you will be well-proportioned for us, so that you will be well-fruited for us.

7. *indraḥ sītāṃ nī grhṇātu tāṃ pūṣānu yachatu |  
sā naḥ páyasvatī duhām úttarām-uttarāṃ sámām ||*

Let Indra lay down the Furrow; let Pūṣan extend her straight. Let her, full of milk, yield milk to us, summer after summer.

8. *śunām naḥ phālā ví kṛṣantu bhūmiṃ śunām kīnāsā abhí yantu vāhaiḥ |  
śunām parjanya mādhunā páyobhiḥ śunāsīrā śunām asmāsu dhattam ||*

For prosperity let our plowshares till through the earth; for prosperity let our plowmen advance with their draft-animals. Prosperity (let) Parjanya (be) with his honey and milk drinks. O Prosperity and Plow, place prosperity in us.

A number of features are clear initially because of explicit statements made in the hymn. The deity to whom the hymn as a whole is dedicated, Kṣetrapati, is seen as instrumental to successful agriculture. He is formally and elegantly implored to “milk out upon us a honeyed wave.” The pastoral imagery of milking and of herd and draft-animals recurs throughout the verses. This is significant but not surprising; pastoral imagery pervades the Vedas, especially the *Ṛgveda*, and is consistent with the semi-nomadic pastoralist way of life. A great deal of religious and poetic thought even in later tradition is centered upon cattle, which were the primary source of sustenance during the early nomadic periods and the primary economic unit long after as well. Agriculture, as we will see in increasing detail as we proceed, was fully integrated practically and conceptually into the pastoralist lifestyle and worldview; it was part of the seasonal lifecycle of the

herd animals as well as their human companions. Milk, *páyasa*, and honey, *mádhu*, are strongly associated with each other and, together, with prosperity throughout the hymn. The Lord of the Field is precisely the Lord of “Milk and Honey.” Milk and honey here are very clearly poetic and symbolic expressions of a specific concept of “prosperity,” *śuná-*, which is also a marked and recurring term in the verses. The English language trope of “the land of milk and honey” is sufficiently familiar to enliven this aspect of the R̥gvedic poetic ideology for us, and in fact that saying itself derives from a biblical description of the abundance of Israel as “the Promised Land” – “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3.17).

A number of deities besides Kṣetrapati are named or mentioned in the hymn: Indra, Pūṣan, Parjanya, and the “lords of truth” (*rtásya pátayaḥ*) of whom perhaps the Lord of the Field is one. Their cooperative activities are crucial to the agricultural endeavor, and the activities of agriculture would seem to draw upon or depend upon certain innate aspects or natural capacities of these deities. More specifically, the deities participated in the actual work being done by the humans and animals, Indra laying down the furrow and Pūṣan extending it straight (verse 7), while all factors and agents work together seamlessly towards the much-anticipated positive result, the milk and honey of prosperity (verse 8).

The *ṛṣis* were exceptionally gifted poets and their use of language is characterized by great sophistication; their audience was, after all, the gods. Their poetic sophistication with high-register language, their love of obscurity, and their use of intentionally oblique or riddling allusions all contribute to the difficulties involved in translating, or even just

comprehending, the hymns of the *Ṛgveda* (Jamison & Brereton 75-81). One of these difficulties lies in determining who or what constitutes the proper name of a deity, as opposed to, for instance, an essentially poetic anthropomorphization, a mere personification. This was an issue for ancient commentators and traditional discourse as much as for modern translators, and it pertains to this hymn in a number of ways. To some extent, the problem can surpass what is required to understand the sense of the hymn, and become a sort of theological dispute over and above the hymns. In some cases, Jamison and Brereton have translated but capitalized words in the fashion of names in which this particular dynamic of anthropomorphization occur, such as “O Prosperity and Plow” in verses 5 and 8, which translates the vocative dual *śúnāsīrau/ā*. Another case is “the Furrow,” which translates the word *śītā*. *Sītā*, of course, will become the proper name of Rāma's wife in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. This will be discussed in more depth below, but it can be noted here that the epic heroine's name is accounted for in Vālmīki's original telling by relating that she was found in a furrow as her father, King Janaka, was ritually plowing.

*atha me kṛṣataḥ kṣetraṃ lāṅgalād utthitā mama |*  
*kṣetraṃ śodhayatā labdhvā nāmnā sīteti viśrutā ||14||*

*bhūtalād utthitā sā tu vyavardata mamātmajā |*  
*vīryaśulketi me kanyā sthāpityam ayonijā ||15|| (Rām 1.65:14-15)*

“Now, one time, as I was plowing a field, a girl sprang up behind my plow. I found her as I was clearing the field, and she is thus known by the name Sita, furrow.

Sprung from the earth, she has been raised as my daughter, and since she was not born from the womb, she has been set apart as one for whom the only bride-price is great strength” (Rām 1.65:14-15; trans. Goldman 2005: 337).



It is not at all rare, though it is not at all necessary, that the name of a Vedic deity be the common noun for the associated object, such as the ubiquitous god Agni, whose name is the word for “fire.” Uṣas, “Dawn,” is another oft-cited example. Although it is clear that Sītā had attained a more pronounced and formal status of divinity in later Vedic and early Classical tradition as an agricultural goddess, to what extent the actual furrow being lauded and addressed in the vocative here in its earliest and isolated lexical attestation might constitute a solid religious personification over and above the poetic remains unknowable at present. Later tradition, such as in the *Bṛhaddevatā*, does grant the *sītā* in this hymn the formal status of *devatā*. Besides the capitalization, the translation skillfully preserves the somewhat ambiguous nature of the personification by using the feminine pronoun “her,” instead of “it,” referring back to (the) “Furrow.” Later Vedic references strongly associate Sītā with the term *páyas*, the “milk” of “milk and honey,” but it is a term which also has a broader semantic range at play in different contexts, including meanings of “rain,” and “semen.” The history of the figure of Sītā is related to changes in the cultural and religious roles of agriculture in important and specific ways.

The figure of Kṣetrapati himself, the Lord of the Field to whom the hymn is addressed, is shrouded in some obscurity. Sāyaṇa, the great 13<sup>th</sup> century commentator on the *Rgveda*, dispassionately relates the conflicting views prevalent on whether Kṣetrapati stands as independent deity, or serves as a title for an otherwise-named deity serving the function of Lord of the Field.

*vayaṃ yajamānāḥ kṣetrasya patinā devena || rudraṃ kṣetrapatiṃ prāhuḥ kecid agnim athāpare | svatantra eva vā kaścit kṣetrasya patir ucyate ||*

“We” refers to the sacrificers; “through the Lord of the Field” refers to a god. Some have said Kṣetrapati is Rudra, others Agni. Or it is said that Kṣetrapati is someone in his own right (Sāyaṇa on ṚV 4.57.1.).

Neither Rudra nor Agni are compelling identifications. As we will see in a later chapter, there is some evidence that Kṣetrapati was identified with Indra, at least in some cases. Regardless of such obscurities of identity and status, the hymn demonstrates that the gods were not only necessary for, but participated in, the activity of agriculture. The *ṛṣis* conceived and conveyed a cooperation between the gods, the humans, and animals for the sake and purpose of Prosperity, *śunām*. Prosperity was symbolically and poetically expressed by milk and honey, *pāyas* and *mādhu*. Prosperity, the summation of successful agriculture, is addressed in the vocative in an unusual *dvandva* compound, *śunāsīrau/ā*, “O Prosperity and Plow.”

Prosperity also draws together primordial cosmological elements: “Honeyed the plants, the heavens, the waters— honeyed let the midspace be for us.” These grand elements brought together in symbolic sweetness stand poetically for the whole universe and show that the prosperity of successful agriculture is the sign of its sanction as natural, wholesome, and felicitous. It not only fit into the cosmic order, it was an active demonstration of it.

This hymn shows not only that agriculture was highly esteemed in the R̥gvedic period, but that the gods themselves participated, cooperating with the men and animals to inseminate the earth. Plowing and seeding were conceived of as sacred ritual acts in harmony with the cosmos, and the Prosperity that was understood to come from these actions was the confirmation and substantiation of this understanding. It was a sacred

truth that the Plow turns up Prosperity, and we will explore this formal connection in much greater detail in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3: Prosperity and Plow

### 3.1. The Kṛṣi Sūkta, AVŚ 3.17

In this chapter we pick up the story of Prosperity and Plow in Vedic literature after the *Ṛgveda*. This will allow us to view that the greater complex of ideas, symbols, and images pertaining to the Ṛgvedic association of Prosperity and Plow became embedded in the complex formulations of Vedic ritual. This ritual embedding of agriculture naturally conformed to the specific characteristics of the Vedic ritualizing worldview and in turn conditioned it in very specific ways regarding the cyclicity and interdependence of “man and the universe.”

The greater antiquity of the *Ṛgveda* among the Vedic *saṃhitās* is very well-established, although the nature of the text, as a collection of subsequently-compiled hymns stemming from several generations of *ṛṣis*, betrays the complexity involved in dating and locating individual hymns and verses more specifically. There has been a considerable amount of work done to sort out these complexities for the *Ṛgveda*, but less so for the other *saṃhitās*;<sup>12</sup> the chronological sorting for post-Ṛgvedic Vedic material has by and large focused on specific texts – discerning chronological layers within specific texts, and determining the relative chronology between texts and groups of texts. The chronological development of Vedic ritual has been analyzed even less, and in fact

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<sup>12</sup>For the RV, Oldenberg's 1888 “Prolegomena” is the pioneering work on the structure and textual development of RV, with his “Noten” (1909, 1912) providing detailed commentary. The tradition itself has long recognized *maṇḍalas* 1 and 10 as later additions. See Jamison and Brereton 2014 (pp. 19-22) for an overview of scholarship on the RV, and see Jamison and Witzel 2003 for an overview of scholarship on the *saṃhitās* and later Vedic literature. See Witzel 1997 for the development of the Vedic canon. The progressive discovery of the AV Paippalāda recension (in Kashmiri then Orissan mss.) has already shed considerable light on the development of the AV tradition; see Insler 1998 on the topic of reconstructing an Ur-AV text.

depends in most points on establishing the chronology of the texts and textual layers, although tremendous contextual and societal changes occurred over the Vedic period. Nevertheless, certain developmental features of the rituals have emerged in scholarly understanding, sometimes out of general consensus, and sometimes out of specific research projects intentionally targeting ritual change or other changes in various religious formations.<sup>13</sup>

We turn now to another unique Vedic hymn which is crucial for understanding how agriculture was configured in the Vedic worldview at a particular moment, as well as across time in vast unwieldy chunks. The hymn is referred to as the Kṛṣi Sūkta, literally “the Agriculture (*kṛṣi*) Hymn (*sūkta*),” and it occurs in the Śaunaka *saṃhitā* of the *Atharvaveda* (AVŚ 3.17). The hymn incorporates some notable verses already familiar to us; it weaves in certain verses from RV 4.57, familiar from the last chapter, which demonstrated the constellation of images and ideas surrounding Prosperity and Plow. The Kṛṣi Sūkta elaborates upon these connections through rearrangement as well as the inclusion of other verses, which then may recur with or without further variation, in other *saṃhitās*. We will examine each of these verses in detail below. This extensive sharing, repetition, and variation is an important and well-known characteristic of Vedic verse, occurring all throughout the Vedic textual corpus. It of course reflects the oral nature of the compositions, but also it demonstrates the interrelation of speech and action,

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<sup>13</sup>This can be a controversial subject for modern scholars, and is further complicated by the fact that ritual change is often obfuscated by the traditional nature of the sources. Frits Staal's *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar* (1983), J. Heesterman's *The Broken World of Sacrifice: An Essay in Ancient Indian Ritual* (1993), and Stephanie Jamison's *Sacrificed Wife, Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India* (1996) are all seminal works on Vedic ritual which broach the subject of diachronic ritual change in some way with attention to these issues.

and the conception of the speech act as potent in the “magico-religious” Vedic worldview. As we will see, this hymn (AVŚ 3.17) is quite distinct from the ṚV hymn (4.57); it is employed in a specific ritual (at the outset of plowing), for which we have the *sūtra* containing the ritual injunctions, the *vidhi*. The hymn as taken as a whole is composite of *mantra* material related through subject matter to the nature of the ritual. In other words, the consideration of the hymn as an integrated whole relates to its ritual application. However, we shall turn afterwards to its ritual employment according the *Kauśika Sūtra* and see that other *mantras* are included in the same ritual.

#### AVŚ 3.17. The Kṛṣi Sūkta: Discussion and Hymn

Considering its patently composite nature, the hymn coheres as a whole remarkably well. This is a testament to the fluidity and dexterity of oral formulae in constituting verse and hymn adaptively but coherently. The hymn carries through the association of “Prosperity and Plow.” The dual compound *śúnāsīrau/ā* recurs and the term *śuná*, “prosperity,” retains its highly marked quality as repeatedly taking verse- and *pāda*-initial position.

The variants are presented by *pāda*. The concordances of Bloomfield and the update of Franceschini are heavily utilized here, as is the discussion of the hymn by Whitney accompanying his translation, as well as Zehnder's translation of AVP 2 (AVP 2.22, which we will examine below, contains several of the same verses as AVŚ 3.17). There are several distinct incidents (as well as variants) in other hymns for nearly every verse, but there is a larger pattern discernible of groupings of related agricultural material

recurring in specific places. The *pāda* entries below each verse, which show the parallels in other texts, are not accented. The translation I am presenting is tentative, and is experimental in places. Specifically, I have attempted to work with some of the variant and idiosyncratic readings peculiar to AVŚ or the AV tradition (i.e., where other *saṃhitās* have more well-established readings). Wherever I have felt my interpretation to be speculative on this basis or otherwise, I have provided annotation detailing the underlying issue(s).

We will examine some aspect of the Kṛṣi Sūkta in each section of this chapter. In this first section we will examine the hymn in detail, including the enumeration of other instances of each *pāda*. In the next section we will utilize those other instances to examine the textual history of the Kṛṣi Sūkta, which allows us to locate other hymns related to the Prosperity and Plow theme and trace its influence over time, remaining productive throughout the sedentary transition. In the third section of this chapter we will examine the ritual application of the Kṛṣi Sūkta according to the *Kausika Sūtra* and discuss both the close relation of the hymn to its ritual application as well as the changes that had occurred by the time of the explicit ritual instructions. Then in the fourth section of this chapter we will focus on the remarkable ritual dialogue given in the *Kausika Sūtra* and find a formalized instance of the Prosperity and Plow association using a development of an ancient Indo-European merism. The fifth and final section of this chapter provides a synthetic overview of the various aspects of the Kṛṣi Sūkta examined in the previous sections and summarizes how the methodologies integrate in order to provide an in-depth look at the Prosperity and Plow association through the Vedic period.

AVŚ 3.17.1

*sīrā yuñjanti kaváyo yugā ví tanvate pṛthak |*  
*dhīrā deveṣu sumnayau ||1||*

The poets hitch up the plows, they stretch the yokes across one by one, wise in eliciting favor among the gods.<sup>14</sup>

- a) *sīrā yuñjanti kavayo*: ṚV 10.101.4a; AVP 2.22.2a; VS 12.67a; TS 4.2.5.5a; MS 2.7.12a: 91.13; KS 16.12a; 21.14a; ŚB 7.2.2.4. Pratīka: *sīrā yuñjanti*: Vait 28.30; KŚ 17.2.11; ApŚ 16.18.5; KauśS 20.1; PG 2.13.3; BrhPDh 3.84.  
b) *yugā ví tanvate pṛthak*: ṚV 10.101.4b; AVP 2.22.2b; VS 12.67b; TS 4.2.5.5b; MS 2.7.12b: 91.13; KS 16.12b; 21.14b; ŚB 7.2.2.4.  
c) *dhīrā deveṣu sumnayau*: = *dhīrā deveṣu sumnayā*: ṚV 10.101.4c; AVP 2.22.2c (*sumnayau*); VS 12.67c (*sūmnayā*); VSK 13.5.6c; TS 4.2.5.5c; MS 2.7.12c: 91.14; KS 16.12c (*sumnayuh*); ŚB 7.2.2.4; Kap 25.3.  
also: *dhīrā indrāya sumnayā*: KS 21.14c.

This verse, as well as the next, both occur together in ṚV 10.101, which is “addressed to the priests of the sacrifice,” and “likens their ritual activities to various kinds of manual labor” (Jamison & Brereton 2014: 1560).<sup>15</sup> This verse compares the “poets” (*kavī*) to agriculturalists, specifically to grain farmers preparing to plow. The comparison takes the form of a direct statement: “the poets hitch up the plows.” That it is nevertheless a

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<sup>14</sup>For the problematic *sumnayau*, see Whitney as well as the variants listed here. Whitney thinks the reading °*yau* is corrupt. It is tempting to reject the °*yau* reading on the basis of the older (RV) and more well-attested *sumnayā*, although both AVŚ and AVP do have -*yau*, with some insistence from Sāyaṇa, who gives the options of a locative (of *sumnayau*) referring to the sacrificer or a dual indicating the draft animals. As Sāyaṇa first suggests, I am attempting in the translation to take it as a locative of a -*u* suffix formation, although differing by not taking it as adjectival (to the sacrificer) but as an action noun: “wise (*dhīrā*) concerning favor (“pleasing, appeasing”) (*sumnayau*) among the gods (*deveṣu*).” There is good evidence that *dhīra* can construe with a locative: *ṛtāvānaḥ kaváyo yajñádhīrāḥ* (RV 7.87.3c) “the sage poets, possessing the truth and insightful in the sacrifices” (assuming with the translation a locative interpretation of the compound here) (Jamison & Brereton 2014: 994); *gántāro yajñám vidátheṣu dhīrāḥ* (RV 3.26.6d) “the travelers to the sacrifice, wise at the ritual distributions” (Jamison & Brereton 2014: 498). Perhaps it is a pun here, applying one way to the *kavis*’ being *dhīra*, another way to the farmers’? At any rate, some speculation seems warranted for this *lectio difficilior* that is restricted to the AV variants of a widely utilized verse.

<sup>15</sup>The last half of the hymn then compares the preparation of *soma* with drawing well-water.



comparison, that it is not describing the poets literally preparing yokes and plows, is confirmed both by context and, significantly, by the immediate elucidation of the quality shared by the two objects under comparison, the *tertium comparationis*: “the insightful ones in search of favor among the gods” (ibid.).

Of AVŚ 3.17.1, Whitney notes “The verse seems to imply a hidden comparison of the poet's work with the plow-man's.”<sup>16</sup> As we have noted, there is nothing exactly “hidden” about the comparison, although granted it is not a formal simile but just metaphorical. However, when Whitney uses the phrase “hidden comparison,” contextually it here implies something more than its everyday sense; he is indicating the nature and status of the traditional homologies, the *bandhus*, wherein identifications are made between disparate things, which reveal the underlying structure in cosmic order, the knowledge of which empowers the knower in an esoteric “magico-religious” sense (e.g., *ya evaṃ veda*). This deeper level of homology is confirmed in this case given the new marked initial position and the ritual utility overall of AVŚ 3.17.1 (= RV 10.101.4).

AVŚ 3.17.2.

*yunákta śírā ví yugā tanota kṛté yónau vapatehá bījam |*  
*virājah śnúṣṭih śábhara āsan no nédīya ít sṛṇyāḥ pakvám ā yavan ||2||*

Hitch up the plows! Stretch out the yokes! Sow the seed here, in the readied womb! The bunch (*śnúṣṭih*) of the radiant (grain) shall carry an abundance for us. The sickles shall bring in the ripened (grain) near.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Whitney 1905: 115.

<sup>17</sup>The phrase *virājah śnúṣṭih* is unique to AVŚ (but see *pāda* entry for Zehnder's emendation of AVP 2.22.1c to *śnúṣṭiś*); the variants given in other texts may be preferable, but, attempting a translation here, I take *virājah* as a genitive of substance with *śnúṣṭih śábhara* as feminine singular. Importantly, the grain is only referred to obliquely, but the verb in *pāda* d, *ā yavan* (*ā* √*yu*), seems to be an intentional play upon *yava*, “barley.” The lexeme *śnúṣṭi*, the *lectio difficilior* unique to the AVŚ among the variants, does occur elsewhere, including a proper name (MW). Zehnder compiles some evidence for meaning a “small amount” perhaps a “handful” (Zehnder 1999: 68). Could it be onomatopoeic for bunching grain? The bunching of the ripened and cut grain-stalks, before winnowing and threshing, might compare (favorably) with the ritual bunching and bundling of other grasses (i.e., such as *kuśa* and *darbha*), which are not

- a) *yunakta sīrā vi yugā tanota*: RV 10.101.3ab (*tanudhvam*); AVP 2.22.1ab; VS 12.68a.; TS 4.2.5.5.a; MS 2.7.12a, 91.15; KS 16.12a; ŚB 7.2.2.5.  
= *yunakta vāhān vi yugā tanota*: AVP 11.14.4a.
- b) *kr̥te yonau vapateha bījam*: RV 10.101.3b; AVP 2.22.1b; 11.14.4b (*kṣetre* for *yonau*); VS 12.68b (*vījam*); TS 4.2.5.5b; MS 2.7.12b, 91.15; KS 16.12b (*kr̥to yoniḥ*); ŚB 7.2.2.5. (*vījam*). Pratīka: *kr̥te yonau*: Vait 28.32.
- c) *virājah śnuṣṭiḥ sabharā asan no*: AVP 2.22.1c (*śruṣṭiḥ*; however in Zehnder's translation of AVP Bk. 2, he emends to *śnuṣṭiḥ* here.).<sup>18</sup>  
= *girā ca śruṣṭiḥ sabharā asan naḥ*: RV 10.101.3c; VS 12.68c; TS 4.2.5.6c; MS 2.7.12c, 91.16.; KS 16.12c; ŚB 7.2.2.5.
- d) *nedīya it sṛṇyah pakvam ā yavān*: = *nedīya it sṛṇyah pakvam eyat*: RV 10.101.3d; AVP 2.22.1d; VS 12.68d; TS 4.2.5.6d (*āyat*); MS 2.7.12d (*āyat*), 91.16.; KS 16.12cd (*āyat*); ŚB 7.2.2.5.; N 5.28.

The second verse in the presentation of this hymn (their order being reversed in RV) takes up two of the verbs and their objects from the first verse (*sīra* + √*yuj*, *yuga* + *vi-* √*tan*) and adds a related third set, *bīja* + √*vap*, along with a significant locative phrase, *kr̥té yónau*, “in the prepared womb.” The sets *sīra* √*yuj* and *yuga vi-* √*tan* are something of a formal series and the juxtaposition of the etymologically related √*yuj* and *yuga* as respectively finite verb and then verbal object designate the series as naturally interrelated. The locative phrase in the second verse then, along with the third verb-object set, also gives a pairing, *yoni* + √*kr̥*. Semantically, the *kr̥té* takes up the verbal action of the preceding sets, while stylistically the *yónau* alliterates with the strongly marked derivative variations of √*yuj*. All this amounts to jumping up and down to emphasize the significance of the homology of sowing seed to insemination, and so of agriculture to

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cultivated for food use but very frequently employed in ritual (cf. Gonda 1985 *The ritual functions and significance of grasses in the religion of the Veda*).

<sup>18</sup>Zehnder's emendation is based on the AVP K reading *virājas suniṣṭis*, pointing out that for AVP 5.19.8b K has *ekasuniṣṭam* for AVŚ *ékaśnuṣṭam* (Zehnder 1999: 68).

sexual reproduction generally. While this may not come as a great surprise today, given the cross-cultural commonality in premodern worldviews of associating agriculture and sexual reproduction, as we shall see the instances of the association in the Sanskrit tradition are nuanced with a much greater specificity and complexity. One of the variant readings for *kr̥te yonau*, “solves” the homology through the same method which enabled it here, object/verb set-making and alliteration: *kr̥te kṣetre*, “in the prepared field” (AVP).

AVŚ 3.17.3.

*lāṅgalaṃ pavīravat suśīmaṃ somasātsaru |*

*ūd id vapatu gām āviṃ prasthāvad rathavāhanam pībarīm ca prapharvyam ||3||*

Let the spear-headed (*pavīravat*)<sup>19</sup> plow, with strap and handle well set, toss up a cow, a sheep, a chariot-cart with a platform,<sup>20</sup> and a lovely young lady.<sup>21</sup>

a) *lāṅgalaṃ pavīravat*: (TS, MS, KS, ApŚ, MŚ: *pavīravam*) VS 12.71a; TS 4.2.5.6a; MS 2.7.12a, 91.17; KS 16.12a; ŚB 7.2.2.11; Vait. 28.31; ApŚ 16.19.2; MŚ 6.1.5; Vādh 2.34a, 35.

= *pavīraḥ pavīravat*: AVP 19.51.12a.

b) *suśīmaṃ somasātsaru*: = *suśevam somapitsaru*: VS 12.71b; TS 4.2.5.6b (*somatitsaru*); AVP 19.51.12b (*somapitsalam*); MS 2.7.12b: 91.17; KS 16.12b; ŚB 7.2.2.11; Vādh 2.34b, 35.

c) *ūd id vapatu gām āviṃ*: KS 16.12c (*vapati*); MS 2.7.12c, 91.18; cf. TS 4.2.5.6c (*kṛṣati* for *vapatu*); RV 8.66.4b (*ūd id vapati dāsūṣe*); *tad ud vapati*: VS 12.71c; ŚB 7.2.2.11; Vādh 2.34c.

= *tad it kṛṣatu gām āviṃ prapharvīm ca*: AVP 19.51.12c.

d) *prasthāvad rathavāhanam*: AVP 19.51.12d (*pīvarīm ...*); VS 12.71e; TS 4.2.5.6e; MS 2.7.12d. 91.18; KS 16.12d; ŚB 7.2.2.11; Vādh 2.34e.

e) *pībarīm ca prapharvyam*: = *prapharvyam ca pīvarīm*: VS 12.71d; TS 4.2.5.6d; MS 2.7.12e, 91.18; KS 16.12e; ŚB 7.2.2.11; Vādh 2.34d, 35; also see the two

<sup>19</sup>See Wojtilla 2012; iron is still unlikely for the plowshare during this period.

<sup>20</sup>“This was a movable stand to hold the chariot. It was itself drawn by two draught animals, *rathavāhanavahau*, and had a draught-pole, *iṣā* (BŚS XII.14:107.3). It may be considered strange that a light, two-wheeled vehicle is transported on another car. Could a chariot, fit for battle or a race, not be driven to the scene of action itself? Of course, the possibility cannot be ruled out that this usage was just for the sake of adding more lustre to the stateliness of the chariot, which was, for this reason, delivered to the starting place of the race-course with due ceremonial pomp and circumstance. However, circumstantial evidence appears to suggest another, and very practical explanation: The race car was disassembled when not used” (Sparreboom 1985, 20-30).

<sup>21</sup>A *prapharvī* is more precisely a female adolescent (EWA II, 180), and so the adjective *pībarī*, “swelling,” likely refers to her maturing body.

entries above, the phrase *prapharvīm ca – pīvarīm* straddles *pādas* c and d in AVP 19.51.12.

The third verse does not occur in ṚV.<sup>22</sup> It indicates the vast productive power of the plow, *lāṅgala*, which, based on the several oblique adjectival qualifications,<sup>23</sup> seems to stand in comparison to the phallus regarding generative power and form. This corresponds to the furrow being described as womb for the seed, as we saw in the previous verse. The plow's creative power described here is all-encompassing; as Whitney glosses the sense of the verse: “let all these good things come as the reward of successful agriculture” (Whitney 1905: 116). The particular analogy to sexual reproduction is reinforced in the enumerative list as well; one of the things which might be “turned up” by the plow is “a lovely young lady:” *pībarīm ca prapharvyām* (and see variants above). The translations of Whitney and Keith are sufficiently dated to be exceedingly charming: respectively they see “a plump wench,” and “a fat blooming maid.” However, as far as I know, this verse has yet not been connected with the well-known epic episode where Sītā is “born” from the plow-furrow as King Janaka is plowing (cited in chapter two and see further below), which grants it the status of an enduring and adaptive theme, a folkloric motif. The final position in a list being marked, especially when modified by an adjective (which adds to the syllable count for the final item), is a stylistic feature of Indo-European tradition,<sup>24</sup> although in some variants in

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<sup>22</sup>See Whitney 1905 for a detailed discussion the text critical issues.

<sup>23</sup> The plow being described as “spear-headed” and having “strap and handle well-set” seems to allude to the form and fixity providing for the penetration of the phallus in the reproductive act; the analogy is further borne out by the context in both the previous verse mentioning the seed being sewn into the “womb” as well as the marvelous fruit of wondrous things resulting.

<sup>24</sup>This is an instance of Behaghel's law of increasing numbers, see Watkins 1995, 47.

other texts its position in the list is switched with *prasthāvad rathavāhanam*, “a chariot cart with a platform” (which is the only inanimate object in the list). The enumerative list is a merism, a traditional type of poetic figure which designates a category through its members. This will be dealt with in detail below, but for now it can be noted that the merism indexes a concept of Prosperity indicated by both animate and inanimate list members which are not crops at all but wonderful and desirable things.

AVŚ 3.17.4.

*indraḥ sītām ni grhṇātu tāṃ pūṣābhi rakṣatu |  
sā naḥ pāyasvatī duhām úttarām úttarām sámām ||4||*

Let Indra press in the Furrow (*sītām*), let Pūṣan defend her.<sup>25</sup> Let her, rich in milk (*pāyas*), flow for us year after year.

a) *indraḥ sītām ni grhṇātu*: ṚV 4.57.7a; AVP 2.22.5a; KauśS 137.19.

b) *tāṃ pūṣābhi rakṣatu*: ṚV 4.57.7b (*anu yachatu*); AVP 2.22.b.

c) *sā naḥ pāyasvatī duhām*: ṚV 4.57.7c; AVP 1.104.1c; 2.22.5c; TS 4.3.11.5c (*dhukṣva*); MS 2.13.10c, 161.13; KS 39.10c; SMB 1.8.8c, 2.2.1c, 17c, 8.1c (*duhā* followed by vowel); PG 3.3.5c (*dhukṣva*).

d) *úttarām sámām*: ṚV 4.57.7d; AVŚ 12.1.33d; AVP 1.104.1d, 2.22.5d; VS 38.28c; TS 4.3.11.5d; MS 2.13.10d, 161.13; KS 39.10d; ŚB 14.3.1.31d; SMB 1.8.8d; 2.2.1d, 17d; 8.1; PG 3.3.5d.

The fourth verse (AVŚ 3.17.4) is actually the first verse we have in this hymn that is common to the Ṛgvedic agricultural hymn proper we examined, ṚV 4.57(.7). Indra impresses the furrow as before, but here Pūṣan “defends,” *abhi-√rakṣ*, it, whereas before he “extended,” *anu-√yam*, it. Again we see agricultural prosperity associated with milk, with both *pāyas* and *√duh*. Several more of the verses from ṚV 4.57 will appear successively in this hymn, but *pādas* c and d of the next, fifth, verse (AVŚ 3.17.5), do not

<sup>25</sup>I'm following Jamison & Brereton 2014 for the use of the anthropomorphizing pronoun “her” here for the furrow.

appear in RV (variants of *pādas* a and b do occur). Nevertheless, the verse integrates seamlessly, both semantically and stylistically.

AVŚ 3.17.5.

*śunām suphālā ví tudantu bhūmim śunām kīnāsā ānu yantu vāhān |*  
*śunāsīrā haviṣā tósamānā supippalā ośadhīḥ kartam asmaí ||5||*

For prosperity let those with the good plowshare<sup>26</sup> break apart the earth! For prosperity let the farmers follow the draft-animals along. O Prosperity and Plow, pleased by<sup>27</sup> the oblation, make the plants fruitful for him.

a) *śunām suphālā vi tudantu* (VS, ŚB: *kṛṣantu*) *bhūmim*: VS 12.69a; MS 2.7.12a; 92.1; KS 16.12a; ŚB 7.2.2.9. Pratiḥka: *śunām suphālāḥ* KŚ 17.2.12; PG 2.13.4.

*śunām naḥ phālā vi kṛṣantu bhūmim*: RV 4.57.8a; TS 4.2.5.6a (*tudantu*); AŚ 2.20.4. Pratiḥka: *śunām naḥ phālāḥ* ŚŚ 3.18.4; ŚG.4.13.4. Cf. BṛhD.5.9.

*śunām phālo vinudann etu bhūmim*: AVP 2.22.3b; 11.15.4b.

b) *śunām kīnāsa ānu yantu vāhān* = *śunām kīnāsā abhi yantu* (AVP *kīnāso anv etu*; MS *kīnāso abhy etu*) *vāhaiḥ* (AVŚ, AVP, TS: *vāhān*) = RV 4.57.8b; AVP 2.22.3a; 11.15.4a; VS 12.69b; TS 4.2.5.6b; MS 2.7.12b; 92.1; KS 16.12b; ŚB 7.2.2.9. Cf. BṛhD 5.9.

c) *śunāsīrā haviṣā tósamānā*: AVP 11.15.4c (*vāvṛdhānā*); VS 12.69c; MS 2.7.12c; 92.2.

= *śunāsīrā haviṣā yo yajātai*: AVP 2.22.3c.

= *śunāsīrā havyajuṣṭim juṣāṇā*: KS 16.12c.

d) *supippalā ośadhīḥ kartam asmaí* = *supippalā ośadhīḥ kartanāsmē*: VS 12.69d; VSK 13.5.8d (*kartam asme*); MS 2.7.12d, 92.2.

= *supippalā ośadhayaḥ santu tasmai*: AVP 2.22.3d.

also: *supippalā ośadhayo bhavantu*: TB 2.7.16.4d.

AVŚ 3.17.6.

*śunām vāhāḥ śunām nāraḥ śunām kṛṣatu lāṅgalam |*  
*śunām varatrā badhyantām śunām āṣṭrām úd iṅgaya ||6||*

For prosperity let the draft-animals, for prosperity let the men, for prosperity pull the plow! For prosperity let the straps be bound! For prosperity the goad raise up!

a) *śunām vāhāḥ śunām nāraḥ*: RV 4.57.4a; TĀ 6.6.2a (*nārāḥ*). Pratiḥka: *śunām vāhāḥ* Rvidh.2.13.6. Cf. BṛhD 5.7.

b) *śunām kṛṣatu lāṅgalam*: RV 4.57.4b; TĀ 6.6.2b.

= *śunām vahatu lāṅgalam* AVP 11.14.3d.

<sup>26</sup>Whitney reads “the good plowshares,” but I think it is a *bahuvrīhi*, probably referring collectively to the subjects of the verbs in the *śuna* series.

<sup>27</sup>Lit. “dripping with” (MW: √*tuś*: “drip;” = √*tuṣ*, “be calm, satisfied”).

c) *śunaṃ varatrā badhyantām*: ṚV 4.57.4c; TĀ 6.6.2c.

= *śunaṃ varatrām ā yacha* AVP 11.14.3a.

d) *śunaṃ aṣṭrām ud iṅgaya*: ṚV 4.57.4d; AVP 11.14.3b; TĀ 6.6.2d.

The term *śuná*, “prosperity,” is highly marked in both the fifth and sixth hymns.

The morpheme *śuná* occurs as *pāda*-initial three times in AVŚ 3.17.5 (a: *śunám*, b: *śunám*, c: *śúnāsīrā*) and four times in AVŚ 3.17.6 (abcd: *śunám*, and note another, non-initial *śunám* in 3.17.6a). The association between Prosperity and Plow clearly remained lively and productive at this point. The phrase *supippalā ośadhīḥ* in AVŚ. 3.17.5c is notable; we will return to this phrase later in this chapter.

AVŚ 3.17.7.

*śúnāsīrehá sma me juṣethām |*

*yád divi cakráthuḥ páyas ténémām úpa siñcatam ||7||*

O Prosperity and Plow, take your pleasure in me as ever! That milk (*páyas*) which you have made in the sky, sprinkle it on this (earth) here!

a) *śúnāsīreha sma me juṣethām*: Prātīka: *śunāsīreha* Vait 9.27.

= *śúnāsīrāv imām vācaṃ juṣethām*: ṚV 4.57.5a; TĀ 6.6.2a; AŚ 2.20.4; N 9.41a.

Prātīka: *śúnāsīrāv imām ŚŚ* 3.18.4. Cf. BṛhD 5.9.

b) *yad divi cakrathuḥ payaḥ*: ṚV 4.57.5b; TĀ 6.6.2b; N 9.41b.

c) *tenemām upa siñcatam*: ṚV 4.57.5c; TĀ 6.6.2c; N 9.41c.

*tena mām abhiṣiñcatam*: ŚŚ 8.11.13f; SMB 1.7.5f. Cf. *tenemām upa*.

*tena mām abhiṣiñcāmi śriyai*: PG 2.6.11b.

also: *tenemām mañinā kṛṣim*: AVŚ 10.6.12c.

also: *tenāhaṃ mām abhiṣiñcāmi varcase*: (SMB omits *varcase*): ApŚ 6.14.7d;

SMB 1.7.3b.

The seventh verse continues the marked series with verse-initial *śúnāsīr(ā)* in the vocative. This verse is the same as ṚV 4.57.5, except with a variation in *pāda* a: “take pleasure in *me*,” rather than in “this speech.” Prosperity and Plow, *śúnāsīrā*, here caps off the long series of *śuna*-fronted *pādas* that ran through verses five and six.

AVŚ 3.17.8.

*śīte vándāmahe tvārvācī subhage bhava |*

*yáthā naḥ sumánā áso yáthā naḥ suphalā bhúvaḥ ||8||*

O Furrow, we praise you; O well-proportioned one, be coming near, so that you will be well-disposed towards us, so that you will be fruitful for us.

- a) *sīte vandāmahe tvā*: ṚV 4.57.6b; TĀ 6.6.2a; KauśS 20.10.  
b) *arvācī subhage bhava*: ṚV 4.57.6a; TĀ 6.6.2b. Pratīka: *arvācī subhage* VHDh 8.16.  
c) *yathā naḥ sumanā asaḥ*:  
= *yathā naḥ subhagāsasi*: ṚV 4.57.6c; TĀ 6.6.2c.  
d) *yathā naḥ suphalā bhuvah*: = *suphalāsasi*: ṚV 4.57.6d; TĀ 6.6.2d.

AVŚ 3.17.9.

*ghṛtēna sītā mādhunā sāmaktā viśvair devair anumatā marūdbhiḥ |*  
*sā naḥ sīte payasābhyāvavṛtsvōrjasvatī ghṛtāvat pinvamānā ||9||*

The Furrow is anointed with honey and ghee; she is sanctioned by the All-gods and the Maruts. O Furrow, turn towards us with milk (*payas*); (you are) invigorating, swelling as with ghee!

- a) *ghṛtena sītā madhunā samaktā*: (VS, MS, KS, ŚB: *samajyatām*): VS 12.70a; TS 4.2.5.6a; MS 2.7.12a: 92.7; KS 16.12a; ŚB 7.2.2.10. Pratīka: *ghṛtena sītā*: ApŚ 16.20.7.  
b) *viśvair devair anumatā marūdbhiḥ*: VS 12.70b; TS 4.2.5.6b; MS 2.7.12b: 92.7; KS 16.12b. (-*taṃ*); ŚB 7.2.2.10; TĀ 4.4.1b (-*taṃ*); JG 1.11b (-*to*).  
c) *sā naḥ sīte payasābhyāvavṛtsva*: = *asmān sīte payasābhyāvavṛtsva*: VS.12.70d; TS.4.2.5.6d; MS 2.7.12d, 92.8; KS 16.12d; ŚB 7.2.2.10.  
d) *ūrjasvatī ghṛtāvat pinvamānā*:  
= *ūrjasvatī ghṛtāvatī payasvatī*: AVŚ 3.12.2c; AVP 3.20.2c.  
= *ūrjasvatī payasā pinvamānā*: VS 12.70c; TS 4.2.5.6c; ŚB 7.2.2.10; TĀ 10.42.1c; HG 1.8.4c; 27.3c; MahānU 16.7.  
= *ūrjasvatīr ghṛtāvatīḥ payasvatīḥ*: AVP 8.18.3c.  
= *ūrjo bhāgam madhumat pinvamānā*: (ApŚ, KS 40.5b *sūnṛtāvat*) MS 2.7.12c: 92.8; KS 16.12c; 40.5b; ApŚ 16.34.4b.  
= *ūrjasvatīḥ payasvatīḥ*: TS 1.1.1.1; MS 2.8.14c: 118.18; 3.3.4: 36.6; TB 3.2.1.5.  
= *ūrjasvatī ca payasvatī ca*: MS 4.13.9: 212.3; TB 3.5.10.2; ŚB 1.9.1.7; ŚŚ 8.19.1.

The eighth and ninth verses (AVŚ 3.17.8-9) can be considered together. They are both addressed to the clearly anthropomorphized and possibly, certainly eventually, deified furrow, Sītā. The eighth verse is ṚV 4.57.6, with minor variations to the more archaic verb forms. Sītā is praised as *subhagā*, “fortunate,” or “well-proportioned,” and



beseched to be *sumánā*, “kind-hearted,” or “well-disposed,” and *suphalā́*, “fruitful,” “of good fruit or result.” There is a great deal of sibilant alliteration in the hymn overall, adding *sī(tā)-* and *su-* to the *śuná-* series of verses 5-8. Retrospectively, there were also alliterating sibilant phrases in verses two (*śnúṣṭiḥ śábhara āsan*) and three (*suśímaṃ somasátsaru*), although they are trifling compared to the relentlessly emphatic *śuná* series.

The ninth and final verse continues addressing Sītā, but is new to us, and does not occur in the RV. Sītā bestows milk and honey, *páyasa* and *mádhu*, which together were discussed as a trope signifying agricultural prosperity in chapter two. This verse enhances those associations with additional terms and images. “Ghee,” *ghṛtá*, occurs twice in the verse, once in verse-initial position, *ghṛténa*, “with ghee,” where it is one of two instrumentals belonging to the participle *sámaktā*, “anointed,” modifying the subject *sītā*, the other being *mádhunā*, “with honey.” Stylistically, the participle and two instrumentals are mirrored and contrasted with the participle *ánumatā*, “sanctioned” or “approved,” with *vísuvair devaiḥ*, “by the All-gods,” and *marúdbhiḥ*, “by the Maruts.” In the first *pāda* the two instrumentals are in the singular, in the second they are in the plural, but there is further nuance to the contrast because the second set of instrumentals work agentively with the past passive participle: “sanctioned *by*,” but the first two have the case for the sake of true instrument: “anointed *with*.”<sup>28</sup> At any rate, it is clear that ghee should be

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<sup>28</sup>Perhaps the agentive instrumentals could be supplied for both participles, or, to risk pushing it too far, one type of each instrumental could work with each participle, such that Sītā could be “approved by all the gods with ghee, and anointed with honey by the Maruts.” This would be a strained reading syntactically or semantically, however I raise the possibility here because in the ritual injunctions (which we shall turn to next), ghee is involved in the offerings (according to the commentary, the *āpupa*, a cake made from flour, is baked with ghee, see below), but honey, *madhu*, is not. The Maruts anointing with honey then could be

considered along with milk and honey as among the terms connected with the idea of agricultural prosperity through distinctly marked stylistic application. The fourth *pāda* suggests another such term should be included as well: *úrjas*, “sap,” “juice,” “vigour,” or “strength.” The term is only lightly emphasized here, in *pāda*-initial position of the last *pāda* in the last verse in the hymn, but a glance at the many extant variants reveals the term's close association with both *páyas*, “milk,” and *ghṛtá*, “ghee.”

Overall, there are several conclusions that can be made about the Vedic conception of agriculture on the basis of this hymn. The hymn confirms the various associations that configured the idea of agriculture previously in the Ṛgvedic worldview. That particular nexus of ideas was active in, as well as after, the Ṛgvedic period. This hymn elaborated upon several aspects of that conception: it indicated that the creative and productive power of the plow was conceived as relating to well-being most generally, that the act of sowing seed was analogized to insemination, and thus that the plow could even “turn up” a lovely young lady, a *pībarīm prapharvyām*, which may be seen as a thematic preconfiguring of the later, epic, Sītā's birth from a plow-furrow. The cooperation of animals, humans, and gods in agriculture is demonstrated throughout, and with verse five the plants, *óṣadhīḥ*, also now explicitly factor into the equation.<sup>29</sup> There is a notable omission. “The lord of the field,” Kṣetrapati, whom we met in chapter two as a primary figure instrumental to successful agriculture, does not appear in AVŚ 3.17. This

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an oblique reference to rain, with honey left out of the ritual as a sort of charm, to be replaced by rain. That is mere speculation, but the complex parallelism of the two participles with each a contrasting set of two instrumentals is intriguing.

<sup>29</sup>But see below on the phrase *supippalā oṣadhīḥ/-ayaḥ*.

is surprising because the first two verses of ṚV 4.57 are dedicated to him, as is that hymn overall according to tradition. AVŚ 3.17 shares over half of its verses with ṚV 4.57, and so this omission seems intentional. It may pertain to the ritually-based selection of *mantras* to compose the Atharvavedic hymn, but as we will see in the next section, there is a good chance that the geography of redaction factors in as well. It is an especially conspicuous void from the perspective of later history. In chapter two we saw Sāyaṇa in the thirteenth century reporting various theories on who exactly Kṣetrapati might be, whether a mere title for a more well-known god or “someone in his own right.” Indra and Pūṣan held onto their roles, but neither male divinity is strictly circumscribed to the agricultural context. Suffice it to say for now that there has been no mention yet of the later male figures associated with agriculture in some way, such as Balarāma, Baladeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, or Śiva, and no mention yet of the figure who would come to change the nature of Sītā's divinity, Rāma. The Vedic agricultural “pantheon” will be discussed throughout, but next we will turn to the significance of the distribution of the *mantra* material in other Vedic texts, and then to the ritual employment of AVŚ 3.17 according to the ritual injunctions, *vidhi*, of the *Kauśika Sūtra*.

### 3.2. Verse Sharing and the Question of a Kṛṣi Ur-Sūkta

We have already discussed the sharing of verses and *pādas* – with variants – between the Kṛṣi Sūkta (AVŚ 3.17) and ṚV 4.57. In this section we explore the other occurrences of the material from the Kṛṣi Sūkta across the Vedic corpus, which generally consists of shared verses in different hymns in other *saṃhitās*. This allows us both to examine the context of the shared material as well as survey related agricultural verses

which adjoin the shared verses but were not included in the hymns we have examined in full so far. This methodology traces out the development of the Prosperity and Plow material across the *saṃhitās*, which enables certain preliminary chronological and geographic observations to be made. Then we will use the surveyed materials to examine the textual development of the Kṛṣi Sūkta using the method developed by Insler, specifically considering whether there was an “Ur Kṛṣi Sūkta” predating the Śaunaka recension of the *Atharvaveda*.

The overall breakdown of the distribution of sharings with the Kṛṣi Sūkta is relatively simple despite the wide sprawl of parallel and variant readings across the many texts containing Vedic *mantra* material. The material from verses 1-5 and 9 are mostly evenly shared across the *saṃhitās* of the White (VS) and Black YV (esp. TS, KS, MS). The material from verses 6-8 does not seem to occur in the *saṃhitās* of either the White or Black Yajurvedic traditions, although some limited material does occur in the later *āraṇyakas*, *śrauta sūtras*, and *gr̥hya sūtras* belonging to those respective *śākhās*.

The verses and *pādas* shared across the Yajurvedic texts signify an important phenomenon. The majority pertain to a specific ritual employment, the plowing of the site for the famous *agnicayana* ritual, the piling of the fire altar.<sup>30</sup> This broaches an important topic, the incorporation of agricultural elements into non-agricultural rituals, most especially the ritual use of the plow, which as we will see carries certain particular significances. The sharing of verses 1-5 and 9 as a loose grouping of material used in the Yajurvedic *saṃhitās* pertains overall to ritual plowing in the *śrauta*, especially the

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<sup>30</sup>See Staal, *et al.*, 1983 for an extensive study centered on an actual performance.

*agnicayana*, rites. Most of the other instances of sharing and variation pertain to other ritual incorporations of plowing.

The grouping of material (AVŚ 3.17.1-5, 9) shared with Yajurvedic texts (not to mention ṚV) are employed in the ritual plowing of the earth before the construction of the *āhavanīya* in the *agnicayana*. For our present purposes, we give the text of the (Black Yajurvedic) *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, as initially representative of the shared *kṛṣi* material in Yajurvedic hymn material. Then, after a brief discussion of TS 4.2.5, we will return to the Atharvavedic Kṛṣi Sūkta (AVŚ 3.17) and examine its ritual use according the *Kauśika Sūtra*.

The shared agricultural material in the hymn is presented in bold type and Keith's translation is given for TS 4.2.5t, which is new to our survey of the *śunāsīra* complex.

#### **TS 4.2.5.**

- a) *sám itam sám kalpethām sámpriyau rociṣṇú sumanasyámānau | iṣam úrjam abhí saṃvāsānau sám vām mánāmsi sám vratá sám u cittāny ákaram ||*  
b) *ágne purīṣyādhīpā bhavā tvám naḥ | iṣam úrjam yájamānāya dhehi ||*  
c) *purīṣyās tvám agne rayimān puṣṭimām asi | śivāḥ kṛtvā dísaḥ sárvaḥ svām yónim ihāsadaḥ ||*  
d) *bhávataṃ naḥ sámanasau sámokasau || arepásau | má yajñám himsiṣtam má yajñápatim jātavedasau śiváu bhavataṃ adyá naḥ ||*  
e) *mātéva putráṃ prthiví purīṣyám agním své yónāv abhār ukhá | táṃ vísvair deváir ṛtúbhiḥ saṃvidānāḥ prajāpatir vísvákarmā ví muñcatu ||*  
f) *yád asya pāre rájasaḥ súkrám jyótir ájāyata | tán naḥ paṛśad áti dviśó 'gne vaiśvānara svāhā ||*  
g) *námaḥ sú te nirṛte vísvarūpe || ayasmáyaṃ ví cṛtā bandhám etám | yaména tvám yamyā saṃvidānóttamám nákam ádhi rohayemám ||*  
h) *yát te deví nirṛtir ābabāndha dáma grīvāsv avicartyám | idám te tát ví śyāmy áyuṣo ná mádhyād áthā jīvāḥ pitúm addhi prámuktaḥ ||*  
i) *yásyās te asyāḥ krūrā āsāñ juhómy eṣám bandhānām avasárjanāya | bhúmir iti tvā jānā vidúr nirṛtiḥ || iti tvāhám pári veda vísvátaḥ ||*  
k) *ásunvantam áyajamānam icha stenásyetyāṃ táskarasyānv eṣi | anyám asmád icha śá ta ityā námo devi nirṛte túbhyam astu ||*  
l) *devím ahám nirṛtiṃ vándamānaḥ pitéva putráṃ dasaye vácobhiḥ | vísvasya yā jāyamānasya véda síraḥsiraḥ práti sūrí ví caṣte ||*

m) *nivésanaḥ saṃgámano vásūnāṃ vísvā rūpābhí caṣṭe* ||  
*śácībhiḥ* | *devá iva savitā satyádharméndro ná tasthau samaré pathīnām* ||  
n) *sám varatrā dadhātana nír āhāvān kṛṇotana* | *siñcāmahā avaṭám udrīṇam vayám*  
*viśvāhādastam ákṣitam* ||  
o) *nískṛtāhavam avaṭám suvaratrám suṣecanáṃ* | *udrīṇam siñce ákṣitam* ||  
**p) *sīrā yuñjanti kaváyo yugā ví tanvate pṛthak* | *dhīrā devéṣu sumnayā* ||**  
**q) *yunákta sīrā ví yugā tanota kṛté yónau vapatehá bḥjam* | *girā ca śruṣṭiḥ sábhara***  
***ásan no nédīya ít sṛnyā pakvám áyat* ||**  
r) *lāṅgalam pávīravam suśévam sumatísaru* | *úd ít kṛṣati gām ávim prapharvayám ca*  
*pīvarīm* | *prasthāvad rathavāhanam* ||  
s) *śunám naḥ phālā ví tudantu bhūmim śunám kīnāsā abhí yantu vāhān* |  
*śunám parjányo mádhunā páyobhiḥ śunāsīrā śunám asmāsu dhattam* ||  
t) *kāmaṃ kāmādughe dhukṣva mītrāya váruṇāya ca* | *indrāyāgnāye pūṣṇā*  
*óṣadhībhyah*  
*prajābhyah* ||

“Wishes, O milker of wishes, do thou milk to Mitra and Varuṇa; to Indra, to Agni, to Pūṣan, to the plants, and to offspring” (Keith trans.).

**u) *ghṛténa sītā mádhunā sámaktā vísvair deváir ánumatā marúdbhiḥ* | *úrjasvatī páyasā***  
***pínvamānāsmānt sīte páyasābhyāvavṛtsva* ||**

The opening of the hymn (TS 4.2.5a-f) addresses Agni. Approximately the second third is the addressed (g-m) to Nirṛti, and in 4.5i,<sup>31</sup> Nirṛti is said to be a secret or intimate name for *bhūmi*, “the earth”: *bhūmir íti tvā jánā vidúr nírṛtiḥ íti tvāhám pári veda viśvataḥ*, “As 'earth' men know thee, As Nirṛti, I know thee on every side” (Keith). The next two verses, 4.2.5n,o, are variations of verses from RV 10.101 (verses 5 and 6), which is a hymn to the priests of the soma sacrifice and “compares their ritual activities to various kinds of manual labor, especially farm labor” (Jamison & Brereton 2014, 1560). These two verses compare part of the soma rite to raising well water. Then the hymn finishes off with the (mostly) shared verses related to plowing (p-u). Śunāsīrau, “Prosperity and Plow,” are invoked as before. Kṣetrapati again does not occur in the

<sup>31</sup>Or perhaps 'j,' which Keith seems to skip.

regrouping here, but, in contrast to AVŚ 3.17, his absence is not a surprise, given that it is not a field (*kṣetra*) being plowed but instead the site of an altar.<sup>32</sup> Sītā is given the honored position at the end of the hymn. Both TS 4.2.5t and u seem to be addressed to Sītā. Verse 4.2.5t is novel to the overall constellation as we have examined it so far. This hymn is a good example of the reintegration of *mantra* material into a Yajurvedic ritual hymn; several thematic threads are woven together into complex whole, but the constituents remain distinct and are further enriched by their mutual juxtaposition. There is redundancy, viewed across *saṃhitās*, but there is variation and novelty as well. In TS 4.2.5t, we have a “new” verse to add to the Sītā subset of the ṚV and AV agricultural constellation revolving around Śunāsīrau, “Prosperity and Plow.” The verse is important; in addressing Sītā as *kāmadughā*, “milking out wishes” (frequently an equivalent to *kāmadhenu*, the famous “wish-granting cow”), she is identified with the earth (which/who was just identified with Nirṛti). We will explore a number of possible reasons for such variation and apparent novelty in more depth below, when we examine the textual development of these materials as canonization and redaction occur.

Besides the extensive sharing between AVŚ 3.17 with the ṚV and the YV (represented here by TS), the Kṛṣi Sūkta also shares significant material with the Atharvavedic *Paippalāda Saṃhitā* (AVP). This is important but not surprising; as Insler (1998) demonstrated, the two recensions likely descend from a common, Ur-AV, ancestor compilation. For some parallel hymns, a prototype can be reconstructed (*ibid.*). AVŚ 3.17 shares the most with AVP 2.22; it shares three and half out of six verses. The

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<sup>32</sup>Although it is referred to as the *agnikṣetra*.

text of the whole hymn is given below; the unshared portions are given in bold, and only those portions are translated.

AVP 2.22

*yunakta sīrā vi yugā tanota kṛte kṣetre vapateha bījam |*  
*virājaś śnuṣṭiḥ sabharā asan no nedīya it sṛṇyaḥ pakvam ā yavam || 1 ||*  
*sīrā yuñjanti kavayo yugā vi tanvate pṛthag |*  
*dhīrā deveṣu sumnayau |*

***anaḍvāhaḥ puruṣā ye kṛṣanti lāṅgalaṃ phālaṃ sam anajmi sphātyā || 2 ||***

The oxen, the men, who plow, I anoint (their) plow (and) plowshare with abundance.<sup>33</sup>

*śunaṃ kīnāśo anv etu vāhāñ chunaṃ phālo vinudann etu bhūmim |*  
*śunāsīrā haviṣā yo yajātai supippalā oṣadhayaḥ santu tasmai || 3 ||*

***śunaṃ naro lāṅgalenānaḍudbhir bhagaḥ phālaiḥ kṣetrapatir marudbhiḥ |***  
***parjanya bījam irayedam hinotu śunāsīrā kṛṇutaṃ dhānyeha || 4 ||***

For prosperity (let) the men with the plow and the oxen (plow); (let) Bhaga with the plowshares (plow); (let) Kṣetrapati with the Maruts (plow)! Let Parjanya cast this seed with refreshment (*irā*, probably milk/liquid offering here)! O Prosperity and Plow make grain here!<sup>34</sup>

*indraḥ sītāṃ ni grhṇātu tāṃ pūṣābhi rakṣatu |*  
*sā naḥ payasvatī duhām uttarām uttarām samām || 5 ||*

***ud asthād rathajid gojid aśvajid dhiranyajit sūnṛtayā parīvṛtaḥ |***  
***ekacakreṇa savitā rathenorjo bhāgaiḥ pṛthivīm ety āpṛṇan || 6 ||***

He rose up, a winner of chariots, a winner of cattle, a winner of horses, a winner of gold, surrounded by generosity. Savitr, with the one-wheel chariot, goes filling the earth with portions of vigor.<sup>35</sup>

The new material in verse 2 (*pādas* d, e) has the men and animals cooperatively plowing, and the plow and share are anointed. The plowshare is said to be anointed with *sphāti* (*sphātyā*), “abundance” or “increase,” and this likely corresponds to a more literal

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<sup>33</sup>Zehnder gives: “Die Dichter schirren Pflüge an, sie breiten Joche aus, die weisen, bei den Göttern, bei dem frommen (Opferherne?). Die Ochsen, Menschen, welche pflügen, den Pflug, die Pflugschar versee ich mit Fruchtbarkeit.”

<sup>34</sup>Zehnder gives: “Zu Nutzen (seien uns) die Männer mit dem Pflug (und) mit den Ochsen, Bhaga mit den Pflugenscharen, der Herr des Feldes mit den Maruts; der Regen soll diesen Samen hier mit Erquickung voranbringen; Śuna und Sīra, schafft hier Getreide.”

<sup>35</sup>Zehnder gives: “Er is emporgestiegen, Wagen gewinnend, Kühe gewinnend, Pferde gewinnend, Gold gewinnend, von Überfluss umhüllt: Savitar geht mit dem einrädigen Wagen, die Erde mit Anteilen an Stärkung anfüllend.”



ritual anointing, such as we will see for the plowshare in later texts below.

The fourth verse is another beginning with the recurring *śunam*, “for prosperity.” Again it serves to pattern the relation between the participants in the act of plowing. Notably, Kṣetrapati does appear here (AVP 2.22.4), whereas we noted his conspicuous absence in AVŚ 3.17. It is notable that he is likely identified with Indra here, given that he is grouped with the Maruts in the instrumental (*kṣetrapatir marudbhiḥ*). His occurrence here is not due to sharing verses with ṚV which were not shared in AVŚ. The new verses are neither shared with AVŚ nor ṚV. It seems justifiable on this basis to eliminate the Kṣetrapati series in ṚV 4.57.1-3 from any reconstruction of the Ur-AV prototype hymn ancestor to AVŚ 3.17/AVP 2.22. Whatever reason AVŚ 3.17 does not include Kṣetrapati does not pertain to AVP 2.22; it does mention him, but not with the same verses as are combined with this material in ṚV 4.57.

This is somewhat confounding, because according to Oldenberg's analysis of ṚV 4.57: “It is possible that the first three stanzas formed a hymn belonging to the original collection.”<sup>36</sup> Its position in the fourth *maṇḍala* is precarious. It stands in penultimate

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<sup>36</sup>From the 2005 Paranjape and Mehendale translation of Oldenberg 1888, p. 188: (*Prolegomena on metre and textual history of the Rgveda = Metrische und textgeschichtliche Prolegomena*, Berlin, 1888). Oldenberg 1888 reads: “Die ersten drei Verse können ein der ursprünglichen Sammlung zugehöriges Lied gebildet haben” (198). Oldenberg's entry in his 1909 *Rgveda: Textkritische und exegetische Noten* elaborates along the same line:

4.57. 1-3 kann der ursprünglichen Sammlung zugehören. Dann Anhang von Sprüchen für die Feldbestellung; event. auch 1-3 mit diesen auf gleicher Linie stehend. Vgl. Bergaigne, *Hist. de la liturgie véd.* 23; Hillebrandt *Mythol.* 3,223. Letzterer sieht in dem Lied „eine Einheit, in der vv. 6.7 nicht von v.v. 5.8 ... zu trennen sind“. Gemeinsamer Ursprung und gemeinsame Bestimmung kann, sei es für das Ganze, sei es für 1-3 and 4-8, für wahrscheinlich gelten. Aber gewiß nicht was das Ganze oder auch nur 4-8 Einheit in dem Sinne, daß es für fortlaufende Rezitation bestimmt war (Vol. 1: 309-310).

Arnold 1905 concurs further, and adds an important observation, to which we shall return below. His entry reads:

position, but Oldenberg holds that 4.58 should be dropped, resulting in ṚV 4.57 standing as the last hymn of the original collection, but only permitted three verses (1-3, to Kṣetrapati). So the potential reconstruction of an Ur-AV counterpart to AVŚ 3.17/AVP 2.22 would have to be a separate and distinct hymn from the Ur-ṚV Kṣetrapati hymn (=4.57.1-3).

AVŚ 3 norm is 6 vs.

AVŚ 3.17	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
AVP 2.22	2ab	1		5	3bacd				
RV 4.57				7	8ab	4	5	6badc	
RV 10.101	4	3							
AVP 11					15.4ba	bc: 14.3ab			
AVP 19.51			12						
VS 12	67	68	71		69				7
TS 4.2.5.	5	5,6	6		ab: 6				6
KS 16.12:(234-5)	14,15	16,17	21,22		19				1,9
KpS 25.3:(112)	10,11	12,13			15				
MS 2.7.12:(91-92)	13,14	15,16	17,18		1,2				7,8

Also  
KS 21.14

cd used elsewhere

Table 1: AVŚ 3.17 Verse Sharing

Let us turn to a closer examination of the distribution of shared material, based on the methodology and typology developed in Insler 1998 for investigating the compositional history of the AV recensions. The first table compares AVŚ 3.17 with AVP 2.22 as well with the relevant ṚV and YV hymns. The second table then uses AVP as the baseline of comparison. Verses 1-3 and 5 of AVŚ 3.17 show the heaviest distribution.

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(4)57: 1-3. This hymn is not out of order, and by its analogy with the hymns to Bṛhaspati, Sadaspati, and Vāstoṣpati belongs to the Rigveda proper (p. 43).

This is clearly due to their incorporation into the *agnicayana* ritual, and all of these YV passages pertain to the ritual plowing of the altar site. Among these AVŚ verses (1-3,5), all but 3.17.3 are shared with AVP 2.22. Only two *pādas* of this *agnicayana* sharing subset is held in common with RV 4.57 (AVŚ 3.17.5ab=RV 4.57.8ab). Two verses however, are shared with RV 10.101; they are the only two agricultural verses in RV 10.101, comparing the *kavis* to farmers in a series of various comparisons for a hymn dedicated to the *soma* priests. That pair is also shared with AVP 2.22. Considering that the norm for AVŚ 3 is a six verse hymn, it seems clear that AVŚ 3.17.6-8 is supplementary to the six-verse configuration. Verses 6-8 are only shared with RV 4.57, and not with the YV *saṃhitās* nor with AVP 2.22. They are probably borrowed from RV 4.57, perhaps motivated by the prior commonality of RV 4.57.7-8ab. This would bring the hymn down to the expected verse count. However, AVP 2, containing the parallel verse (2.22), has a five verse hymn instead of six, and so it not immediately clear whether a potential Ur-hymn should count five or six verses. Let us turn now to the distribution using AVP 2.22 as a baseline instead of AVŚ 3.17. Note here that AVP 2.22.2 *pādas* d and e are not shared at all.

AVP 2 norm 5vs.

<b>AVP 2.22</b>	1	2abcde	3	4	5	6
AVŚ 3.17	2	abc=1	5		4	
RV 10.101	3	4				
RV 4.57			8ab		7	
AVP 11	14.4ab		15abc			
AVP 19.51						
VS 12	68	67	69			
TS 4.2.5.	5,6	5	ab: 6			
KS 16.12:(234-5)	16,17	14,15	19			
KpS 25.3:(112)	12,13	10,11	15			
MS 2.7.12:(91-92)	15,16	13,14	1,2	3,4		11,12

Also:

KS 21.14:(56).10-1

Also:

KS 38.14:(116).4-5

5cd used elsewhere

Table 2: AVP 2.22 Verse Sharing

Here we see that AVP 2.22 might approximate an Ur-hymn closely. Verses 1-3 and 5 are shared with AVŚ 3.17, and so may belong to an ancestor. Also, both AVP 2.22.4 and 6 have the same co-occurrence to recommend their inclusion, MS 2.7.12. In fact, MS 2.7.12 shares more verses with AVP 2.22 than does AVŚ 3.17, five compared to four. Two of those verses shared with MS, AVP 2.22.4 and 6, are not shared with AVŚ and so were not accounted for in the first, the AVŚ baseline, table. However it must not be forgotten that AVŚ 3.17.9 was also shared with MS (as well as VS, TS, and KS), but is not shared with AVP 2.22, and so its potential claim to stand in an ancestor hymn is as strong as either of the two verses exclusive to AVP/MS.

Regardless, there should be a reduction to five verses for the sake of its original incorporation into AVP 2. I would suggest verse 5 be omitted, despite its being shared with AVŚ. As we saw with the verses of RV 4.57 being taken into AVŚ 3.17 as a

supplement, AVP 2.22.5/AVŚ 3.17.4/RV 4.57.7 may have come into AVŚ 3.17 with that series, and, into AVP later, as its sixth verse inserted in penultimate position, likely because of its relation with RV 4.57.8ab in AVP 2.22.3. What then is the relation of the AV hymns to the RV?

<b>RV 4.57</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
AVŚ 3.17				6	7	8bacd	4	5ab
AVP 2.22							5	3ab
AVP 11				bc: 14.3ab				15.4ba
AVP 19.51								
VS 12								69
TS 4.2.5.								6
KS 16.12:(234-5)								19
KpS 25.3:(112)								15
MS 2.7.12:(91-92)								1,2
Other incidents								
AVŚ			20.143.8					
VS								
TS	1.1.14.2	1.1.14.3						
KS	4.15	4.15						
KpS								
MS	4.11.1		4.11.1					

cd common

Table 3: RV 4.57 Verse Sharing

Obviously, the distribution is much more sparse. As we noted above, the first three verses, addressing Kṣetrapati, do not occur at all in the two AV agricultural hymns. Kṣetrapati does occur in a different verse in AVP 2.22. Those three, which as we noted Oldenberg (as well as Arnold) considered may belong to the original form of RV 4.57, only occur in a scattered distribution of one or two of the three in each instance. It does not detract from Oldenberg's suggestion of 4.57.1-3 being original that it does not

reincorporate into subsequent composite-hymn compositions. In fact changes would be expected as the geographic center of gravity for Vedic shifts eastward in the Mantra period. Granted, RV 4.57 does have significant sharing with the two AV hymns, although the preponderance we saw to be later incorporations, augmented after AVŚ's initial organization. It is especially notable that only one verse (8) of RV 4.57 was incorporated into the plowing of the altar site in the *agnicayana* passages across the YV *saṃhitās*, while instead they all exhibit extensive sharing with AV in this case. Typically, series of AV/YV parallels are due to the respective borrowing of the RV hymn, and repeatedly the RV shows the material in both a more archaic and a more well-preserved form. There is no need to postulate a missing RV hymn to account for the AV/YV sharings here; RV 4.57 material is shared otherwise, and the AV/YV sharings might find their ancestor in the Ur-AV instead. But before we attempt a tentative reconstruction, we should examine MS 2.7.12, the importance of which was only signaled in comparison to AVP 2.22 specifically, through the two verses they share exclusively. We established that AVP 2.22 might be a close approximation to an AV Ur-hymn, but the MS passage lacks a verse included in AVP (2.22.5) and includes a verse shared exclusively with AVŚ (3.17.9).

For the sake of immediate convenience, I will number each verse of MS 2.7.12; this differs from the above citations, which, following Zehnder and the Concordance, indicate instead the page and line number. I will put the *ad hoc* verse numbers in parenthesis; this merely allows the sequence to stand out for our examination. The new material is given in bold type and translated.

***pūṣā yunaktu savitā yunaktu bṛhaspátir vo yunaktu |  
agnés téjasā sūryasya várcasā || (7)***

Let Pūṣan yoke, let Savitr̥ yoke, let Bṛhaspati yoke you (pl.), with the light of fire,  
with the splendor of the sun!

*sīrā yuñjanti kaváyo yugá ví tanvate pṛthak |  
dhīrā devéṣu sumnayá || (8)*

*yunákta sīrā ví yugá tanota kṛté yónau vapatehá bījam |  
gīrā ca śruṣṭīḥ sábhara āsan no nédīya ít sṛṇyāḥ pakvám áyat || (9)*

*lāṅgalaṃ pávīravaṃ suśévaṃ somapítsaru |  
úd id vapatu gám áviṃ prasthāvad rathavāhanam prapharvyāṃ ca pīvarīm || (10)*

*śunám suphālā ví tudantu bhūmim śunám kīnāśo abhy étu vāhaiḥ |  
śúnāsīrā havīśā tósamānā supippalā óśadhīḥ kartanāsmé || (11)*

*śunám náro lāṅgalenānaḍúdbhir bhágaḥ phālaih sīrapatir marúdbhih |  
párjanyo bījam írayā no dhinotu śúnāsīrā kṛṇutám dhānyāṃ naḥ || (12)*

***śúnāsīrā prákrṣatam kṛṇutám dhānyāṃ bahú |  
bhūmir íyam řtviyavatī táṃ phālā úpajighnatu || (13)***

O Prosperity and Plow, plow forth! Make much grain!

This earth here is now in its fertile time; let the plowshare thrust into it/her!

*ghṛténa sītā mádhunā sámajyatām víśvair devair anumatā marúdbhih |  
ūrjō bhāgām mádhumat pīnvamānāsmān sīte páyasābhyāvavṛtsva || (14)*

***úd yójanam antaryāmám īśām kṛgalyā(3)lyāṃ śávam |  
áṣṭrām táḍam pratīnāhá ubhé maṇḍūkyau yuje || (15)***

I hitch up (*úd ... yuje*) the yoking team (*yójanam*), the prop (*antaryāmám*), the pole (*īśām*), the *kṛgalyāṃ*, the *śávam*, the goad to strike (*áṣṭrām táḍam*), the two straps (*pratīnāhá*), and the two female frogs (? *maṇḍūkyau*).<sup>37</sup>

*ud asthād gojíd aśvajíd dhiranyajít sūnṛtayā párīvṛtaḥ |  
ékacakreṇa savitā ráthenorjō bhāgām pṛthivyā yāty āpṛṇán || (16)*

<sup>37</sup>This verse presents a number of difficulties, specifically with the unfamiliar terminology. Caland (1928) has translated this verse due to its citation in ĀpŚS; he assumes that the unknown terms are parts of a plow, which is justifiable given the context. He translates the ĀpŚS sūtra (16.18.4) thus (explaining that he is using the preferable MS variants for the verse): “Mit dem Verse 'Ich rüste mir das Gespann, die Stütze, die Deichsel, den zum Rade gehörenden Śava, den Stachel zum Schlagen, die zwei Verhüllungen und die beiden Froschweibchen' mach er Joch und Pflug bereit” (Caland 1928, 36). However, all of the known terms in the verse itself are common to the hitching up and driving of chariots and carts as well as plows (e.g., *yójana*, *īśā*, *áṣṭrā*, *táḍa*). Nothing specific to the plow occurs among the known words. In this verse as well as (17) and (18) following, there are a number of terms identified as substrate vocabulary. Here, *kṛgalyā* is one such, presuming it is related to the term *kṛgala* (Witzel 1999, 12). Chowdhury points out that *kṛgala* is glossed as *daṇḍa* in KauśS 43.1, and he does not hesitate to equate *kṛgalyā* with *kṛgala* (Chowdhury 1931, 67). The word *śáva*, usually “corpse,” which Caland’s translation relates to a wheel, is also problematic. There would not be wheels on the plows of this period, but it is not clear how he connected the term to wheel anyway. Unfortunately, those are not the only problematic terms in this verse; the *maṇḍūkyau*, which Caland translates as “die beiden Froschweibchen” (“both [female] frogs”), seems out of place as well. Although the “frog” is the name of a part of plow frame in English, I believe this is mere coincidence, and would not explain the dual in any case. This verse merits further study.

***imām indra hástacyutiṃ sácyutiṃ jaghánacyutiṃ |  
sásūtim indra ságdhitim ūrjaṃ sápitim útkṛṣe || (17)***

O Indra, (I plow up) this (earth), her hand moving (*hástacyutiṃ*), together flowing (*sácyutiṃ*), her love flowing (*jaghánacyutiṃ*); O Indra, I plow up (*útkṛṣe*) juice (*ūrjaṃ*), yielding fruit (*sásūtim*), a meal together (*ságdhitim*), a drink together (*sápitim*).<sup>38</sup>

***uṣṭārayoḥ pīlvāyor átho ābandhanīyayoḥ |  
sārveṣāṃ vidma vo nāma vāhāḥ kīlāpeśasaḥ || (18)***

Of the two oxen, and of the the two fat one (*pīlvas*) to be bound, we know the names of all of you, draft-animals decorated with biestings (*kīlāla*).<sup>39</sup>

***vī mucyadhvam aghnyā devayānā átāriṣṭa tāmāsaḥ pāram asyá |  
jyótir āpāma || (19)***

Be released, O unslayable bulls (*aghnyā*), whose path is the gods'! We have crossed over the end of that darkness; we have attained the light.

At first glance, MS.2.7.12.7-19 appears like a super-compendium of the agricultural verses we have been examining, as well as six we had not yet encountered. There is an opulent total of thirteen verses in this series, which greatly surpasses the already-excessive total of nine of AVŚ 3.17 (as placed in a book of six-hymn verses). This could be significant for a number of reasons; let us turn to its distribution table.

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<sup>38</sup>This verse is lovely phonetically, but is difficult to translate accordingly. I have taken poetic license particularly with two terms: *sácyutiṃ* “accompanied by seminal effusion” (MW); *jaghánacyutiṃ* pudendum flowing.

<sup>39</sup>Like verse (15), Caland has translated this verse due its citation in ĀpŚS: “Von den beiden Uṣṭāras und den beiden anzubinden Pīlvas, von euch allen kennen wir den Namen, ihr Zugtiere, die ihr mit Kīlāla geschmückt seid” (Caland 1928, 36). Both *uṣṭārayoḥ* and *pīlvāyoḥ* are *ad hoc* formations (from *uṣṭr* and *pīlu* respectively, see entries in EWA). For the substrate term *kīlāla*, “biestings,” see Witzel 1999, 4. The thought has crossed my mind that *uṣṭārayoḥ pīlvāyor* could be “camels and elephants,” their irregular forms being marked as normalizing them, sort of hyper-Sanskritizing them; this could accord with the verse saying “we know your names,” but then this would require *vāhāḥ* being taken generally and etymologically as “beasts of burden,” and would conflate the two distinct common meanings of the closely related terms *uṣṭr*, “camel,” and *uṣṭra*, “plow ox.”



(MS 2.7.12 verses numbered sequentially here)

MS 2.7.12	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)
AVŚ 3.17		1	2	3	5			9					
AVP 2.22		2abc	1		3bacd	4				6			
RV 4.57					8ab								
RV 10.101		4	3										
AVP 11			14.4ab		15.4ba								
AVP 19.51				12									
VS 12		67	68	71	69			70					73
TS 4.2.5.		5	5,6	6	ab: 6			6					
KS 16.12:(234-5)	18,19	14,15	16,17	21,22	19			1,9					
KpS 25.3:(112)		10,11	12,13		15								

Also:

KS 21.14:(56).10-1

Also:

KS 38.14:(116).4-5

b common

Table 4: MS 2.7.12 Verse Sharing

It is notable here that despite its apparently thorough and comprehensive scope the MS passage only shares half of one verse with RV 4.57. This distribution stands as a key in many respects for the textual history of the verses under consideration here, but it is also a sort of meditation on the nature of the process of canonization. The core shared verses are 8-12, and 14. Their patterning reveals a particular moment in the textual development of the material across the respective collections. MS 2.7.12 shares five verses with AVŚ 3.17, and five with AVP 2.22, but only three of those common to both AV recensions (MS 2.7.12.8-9,11). The distribution here especially highlights the agreement of AVŚ 3.17 with all the YV texts, over and above AV commonality. However, since both AV hymns had grown further since their initial incorporation into the collections based upon number of verses in the hymns (AVŚ 3: 6vs., AVP 2: 5vs.), it is probable that the sharings here may indicate earlier states of the AV recensions. With the five verses MS 2.7.12 shares with AVP 2.22, we can see a five verse Ur-AVP 2.22 that

was likely the composition at the time of its incorporation in AVP Book 2. As postulated above, AVP 2.22.5 (=RV 4.57.7) was probably added later as the sixth verse, due to the commonality of AVP 2.22.3ab/RV 4.57.8ab. For AVŚ, the sharing of five verses with MS here, of which only three are also common to AVP, seems to reveal an interesting intermediate state for AVŚ 3.17. We had already easily eliminated AVŚ 6-8 as a clear later borrowing from RV 4.57.4-6, and brought it to the expected six verse norm. But this left the discrepancy between the Ur-AVP Book 2 five verse norm and the Ur-AVŚ Book 3 six verse norm. MS 2.7.12 shares five verses with AVŚ, and they correspond closely but not precisely in ordering throughout the YV *saṃhitās*. These five verses likely constituted the pre-Ur-AVŚ 3.17.

So to clarify, MS 2.7.12 probably reveals a moment (and a place) where AVP 2.22 had its expected five verses (2.22.1-4, 6), and where post-Ur AV (?), pre-Ur AVŚ 3.17 had only five verses (3.1-3, 5, 9), yet to gain the sixth verse (3.17.4) which would be its count as of inclusion into AVŚ Book 3. Then subsequently verses 6-8 were incorporated, borrowed as a series from RV 4.57(4-6), based on already having shared AVŚ 4-5=RV 4.57.7-8ab. The implications of similar MS compilation hymns providing such other such windows into the textual development of parallel AV hymns, or even across the *saṃhitās* more broadly, are tantalizing for their prospects of clarifying the textual development and therefore history of the Mantra period in much greater detail through this or similar methodologies, although other cases need to be tested before any general conclusions could be made.

In the terms of Insler's typology, MS 2.7.12 gives evidence for AVP adding a

single verse (AVP 2.22.5) in the middle of the hymn: Insler's type 1(C), with the shared AVP 2.22.3ab/RV 4.57.8ab being the catenary link. For AVŚ 3.17 on the other hand, the received nine verses are first cut to the expected six easily, removing the series of three (Insler's type 2) which had been borrowed (AVŚ 3.17.6-8=RV 4.57.4-6), with the catenary link being the already shared AVŚ 3.17.4-5=RV 4.57.7-8ab. This brings us to the Ur-AVP level of AVP 2.22 (five verses), and seemingly just prior to the Ur-AVŚ collection, when AVŚ 3.17 only had five instead of the six verses that placed it into Book 3.

This implies that MS 2.7.12 was an intentional synthesis, but I believe this is the unavoidable conclusion even on the basis of the distribution table, and in fact coincides perfectly with what little is known of the development of the YV *saṃhitās*.<sup>40</sup>

Further though, it should be remembered that in MS we have a secondary application of the material in the sense that the verses only accompany ritual plowing for the site of the *agnicayana* fire altar, while the verses in RV 4.57, AVŚ 3.17, and AVP 2.22 coincide instead with the actual agricultural context of plowing. This may be the reason that the integrative MS 2.7.12 conspicuously does not share multiple verses with RV 4.57 – a functional differentiation. But there are a range of possibilities there; the bottom line is that MS 2.7.12 seems to define itself against RV 4.57, and tries to amalgamate every other verse pertaining to plowing except RV 4.57 – a scruple not at all shared by the two

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<sup>40</sup>“Thus a different system of ordering was selected: first, by the appearance of a Mantra in a particular ritual, and secondly, in the order they are actually employed. For each major ritual, thus, a separate small Mantra Saṃhitā had to be developed which, in most cases, is still found as a separate unit in the older YV Saṃhitās (MS, KS, TS)” (Witzel 1997, 271).

AV hymns. But the received text of MS 2.7.12 should be seen in this light as well. The very archaic depth of the core, which seems to reveal an Ur-AVP hymn and a pre-Ur-AVŚ hymn, cannot apply as a “whole” to the passage MS 2.7.12.7-19, to the core of which, like the AV hymns, additions were subsequently made. Clearly the *śunāsīra* complex continued to be productive well into the Mantra period, and this entailed significant geographic shift.

But why then do we still have such variation between the early forms of AVŚ 3.17 and AVP 2.22? If we accept the core of MS 2.7.12 as a lens without great distortion, they were only sharing three verses, and each had two more exclusive from one another.

According to Insler:

The second redaction must have taken place after the split into separate *śākhās*. Telltale signs for hymns taken in at that time are found when there are different versions of the same hymn in non-corresponding books with different verse count (1998, 20).

This is precisely the situation with AVP 2.22 and AVŚ 3.17. The core of MS 2.7.12 shows us the period of the second redaction; the timing corresponds to the second redaction (or closely prior) for AVP but probably just prior to it for AVŚ.<sup>41</sup> The Ur-AV (i.e., the first redaction) either did not include a corresponding hymn, or it was recast for the second redactions. To proceed further is significantly more speculative, but since AVP 2.22 and AVŚ 3.17 do share a core (three verses at time of second redaction, four shared in received texts), there must be the seed of some common tradition there. As Insler

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<sup>41</sup>This scenario corresponds with the chart of recensional activities for all the *śākhās* across time (a strictly relative and probabilistic chronology) as presented and discussed in Witzel 1997, 270-275 (chart on p. 273). In “approximate time” the initial MS redaction falls between the Ur-AV and the AVP recension.

explains: “This does not imply that such hymns or their underlying forms are younger, only that neither one of the variant versions belonged to the original canon of the Atharvaveda hymns” (1998: 19). Continuing to employ MS 2.7.12 as our window, let us examine the core according to its meter. The table presented below is not a metrical restoration by any means. The variants in the other texts are often metrically preferable, but overall the picture is fairly clear.

MS 2.7.12	pāda	syllables	meter	verses	AVŚ 3.17	AVP 2.22	RV 4.57	RV 10.101	AVP 11	AVP 19.51
(8)	8-8-8	24	ārsi gāyatrī	<i>sīrā yuñjanti kavāyo yugā vi tanvate pṛthak   dhīrā devēsu sumayā    (8)</i>	1	2abc		4		
(9)	11-10-11-12	44	triṣṭubh	<i>yunākta sīrā vi yugā tanota krte yonau vapatehā bḥjam   girā ca śruṣṭiḥ sābharā āsan no nēdiya it snyāḥ pakvām āyat    (9)</i>	2	1		3	14.4ab	
(10)	15-24	39	pathyāpankti	<i>lāṅgalam pāvīravam suśevam somapīsarū   ud id vapatu gām āvim prasthāvad rathavāhanam prapharvām ca pīvarīm    (10)</i>	3					12
(11)	11-11-11-11	44	triṣṭubh	<i>śunām suphālā vi tudantu bhūmim śunām kīṅśo abhy ētu vāhaiḥ   śunāsīrā haviṣā tōsamānā supippalā ośadhīḥ kartanāsmé    (11)</i>	5	3bcad	8ab		15.4ba	
(12)	11-11-11-11	44	triṣṭubh	<i>śunām nāro lāṅgalenānadūdbhīr bhāgah phālaiḥ śīrapatīr marūdbhīh   pārjanyo bḥjam irayā no dhinotu śunāsīrā kṛvūtām dhānyām nah    (12)</i>		4				
(14)	12-11-11-11	45	triṣṭubh	<i>ghrītena sīā mādhumā sāmajyatām visvair devair anumatā marūdbhīh   ūrjō bhāgām mādhumat pīnvamānāsmān site pāyasābhāvavṛtsva    (14)</i>	9					
(16)	8-12-11-11	41/2	triṣṭubh	<i>ud asthād gojid āsvajid dhiranyajit sūnṛtayā pāvīrvtaḥ   ēkacakraṇa savitā rāthenorjō bhāgām pṛthivyā yāty āpṛmān    (16)</i>		6				

Table 5: MS 2.7.12 Abstracted Core Verses with Types of Meter and Verse Sharing

There seems to be the heart of an old *triṣṭubh* hymn here. Overall it was distinct from RV 4.57 (sharing one hemistich), but similarly pertained to plowing and definitely belonged to the *śunāsīrā* complex associating Prosperity and Plow. It was probably not incorporated into the Ur-AV (first redaction), but two of its descendants were included in the second redaction as AVP 2.22 of five verses and AVŚ 3.17 of six verses.

However, the meter here shows that even the seemingly stable set of three verses shared between the AVP, AVŚ, and MS are not equal in status. In MS 2.7.12, both verses

(8) and (9) are shared with RV 10.101, but they do not match metrically. Verse (8) is in fact the very familiar verse comparing the farmers and the poets, with which we began our investigation. In *gāyatrī*, it does not match its complement, verse (9) in *triṣṭubh* (i.e., = RV 10.101.4 and 3 respectively). My guess is that MS 2.7.12(8) does originate with the composition of RV 10.101, and served as the poetic technique integrating its *triṣṭubh* complement into RV 10.101, which compares the work of the sacrifice to various kinds of labor and activity. Its *triṣṭubh* complement then, RV 10.101.3, may then have belonged originally to an actual agricultural hymn or series of verses. In other words, despite strong and early sharing in conjunction with its complement (9), MS 2.7.12(8)/etc. in *gāyatrī* lifts right out. It had been added to the AV/YV hymns, early or later, from RV 10.101, on the basis of its complement, which had probably been incorporated into RV 10.101 from an agricultural context. This fits the meaning of the verses; “yoke the plows!” belonged first to an agricultural hymn (or context), while “the poets yoke the plows” belonged first to the integrative hymn to the *soma* priests.

We are down to only two *triṣṭubh* verses then, MS 2.7.12(9) and (11), which are common to MS and both AV hymns. The other verses in the series are probably also older than the date of the MS 2.7.12 window. They are equally interesting in terms of content, which we will explore further below. The reasons for the discrepancy, of verses in the series exclusive to AVŚ or AVP, are probably geographic. The AVŚ recension occurred further east than AVP.<sup>42</sup> We would expect some amount of regional variation all the way

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<sup>42</sup>Witzel 1997 is conclusive on this point: “If one tries to locate these developments in time and space, it is helpful to note that PS [=AVP] itself indicates that it was composed in the eastern Panjab/Haryana area (just as KS, and the older AB), in other words, in Kuru territory. *PS, therefore, is a post-Rgvedic text of the*

back for agricultural verse, and so through tracing the sharings and additions to the Prosperity and Plow material across the *saṃhitās* we are able to see that the preservation of this traditional agricultural material across time and space coincided with production of new related material that was synthesized with the older; the theological association of Prosperity and Plow remained productive through the transition from semi-nomadic pastoralism to sedentism.

Finally then, is it meaningful to speak of an Ur Kṛṣi Sūkta? Yes and no. The Ur AV probably did not include a hymn comparable to AVŚ 3.17, ancestor to both it and AVP 2.22. Instead the cores of these received hymns were collected into their respectively appropriate books during the second redaction. However, both share significant material, some of which may have been parallel development, and some of which was part of an earlier core. Since each hymn at an early level had unique *trīṣṭubh* verses coherent to the series, it seems most likely that the ancestor hymn already had regionally differentiated hymns by the time of the first redaction – which may even have been the reason it(/they) was(/were) not included in the first redaction.

### **3.3. The Ritual Application of the Kṛṣi Sūkta (KauśS 20)**

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*Mantra period composed in Kuru land, under the Kuru kings*” (p. 279; emphasis original). He also notes that: “The ultimate redaction of PS, however, took place much later than this” (280). The Śaunaka recension (AVŚ), on the other hand, seems to lie relatively further east: “Their text contains some indications of having been transmitted in a country lying more to the east of Kurukṣetra, namely the land of the Pañcalas (eastern Uttar Pradesh, up to Kausambi/Allahabad/Kāśi). During its long history of oral tradition in the area, the text further deteriorated by *perseveration* and was finally redacted in this form (at an unknown time and at a so far unknown location) as what we now know as the Vulgate [i.e., AVŚ]” (ibid.).

Part of the importance of the Kṛṣi Sūkta (AVŚ 3.17) is due to its ritual incorporation, which we turn to now. The Śaunaka recension of the AV has a unique accompaniment in the *Kausika Sūtra* (KauśS). It hails from the late Vedic Sūtra period, several centuries after the Mantra period when the AV recensions occurred. The KauśS is recognized to be the oldest ancillary text of the AV traditions, clearly predating the *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* and *Vaitana Sūtra*. It is known as the *saṃhitāvidhi*, “the (text containing the) (ritual) injunctions of the (AVŚ) *saṃhitā*.” It is unique in terms of genre; it belongs with the *kalpa sūtras* (the *śrauta*-, *grhya*-, and *dharma-sūtras*) but alone among them treats of both domestic (the *grhya*) as well as the “magical” practices specifically associated with the *Atharvaveda*. Maurice Bloomfield published a critical edition based on the texts available at the time (1890). Willem Caland published a German translation of the “magical” portion (1900). Other portions have been translated as well.<sup>43</sup> The commentaries of Dārila and Keśava have now been published.<sup>44</sup> Julieta Rotaru and Shilpa Sumant are currently preparing both a new edition and a complete English translation of the *Kausika Sūtra*, including testimonia and commentary from unpublished manuscripts.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Notable examples include Gonda 1965 (covering KauśS 60-68, the *savayajñas*), Bahulkar 1994 (covering KauśS 25.1-32.27, the *bhaiṣajyāni*, “medical rites”), and Zysk 1985 (also covering medical rites, but including material from RV, AVŚ, and the *Rgvidhāna* as well as from the KauśS *bhaiṣajyāni*).

<sup>44</sup>Diwekar, Limaye, *et al.* (eds.) 1972. *Kauśikasūtra - Dārilaḥāṣya: critically ed. for the first time on the basis of a single codex which is reproduced by offset process*. Poona: Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapitha. And Keśava's commentary was published by Limaye, Dandekar, *et al.* (eds.) 1982. *Kauśikapaddhati on the Kauśikasūtra of the Atharvaveda*. Pune: Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapitha.

<sup>45</sup>Julieta Rotaru and Shilpa Sumant, “A New Edition and an Annotated Translation of the Kausika Sūtra,” in Hans Henrich Hock (ed.), *Vedic Studies: Language, Texts, Culture, and Philosophy*, (New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan and D.K. Printworld, 2014), pp. 162-176.



Scholars have long noticed the intimate relation between the hymns of AVŚ and the rites described by the KauśS. Bloomfield, who translated a broad selection of the AVŚ hymns for *Hymns of the Atharvaveda*, Vol. 17 of Max Muller's acclaimed Sacred Books of the East series, and who also edited (but did not translate) the KauśS, at one point explained:

... ; it shows also once more the inseparable relation between the hymns and the ritual, and the futility of carrying on the study of either without the aid of the other (Bloomfield 1896, 5, third footnote, '‡').

Jan Gonda, who focused on the KauśS for his study of the *savayajñas*, concurred and elaborated:

From the outset it has been completely clear to me that all the *mantras* quoted in the *Kauśikasūtra* should be translated in full, not only because most *pratīkas* are not intelligible by themselves, but also to bring on every page the truth home to the reader that *mantras* and *sūtras* belong together and are only intelligible when studied together. A considerable part of the misconceptions and mistranslations in the former translations of these sections and *sūktas* of the Atharvaveda are due to an imperfect familiarity of the part of the authors with the subject dealt with in the *sūtras*. Many *sūtras* remain, on the other hand, obscure without a thorough knowledge of the tenor and purport of the mantras, which prove to be almost always in perfect harmony with the ritual acts which they are to accompany and consecrate (J. Gonda: *The Savayajñas* 1965: 7-8).

Reflecting this connection, KauśS 20 prescribes the employment of the full Kṛṣi Sūkta (AVŚ 3.17), recited during the ritual coinciding with the first plowing of the year. The verbal actions in the hymn are performed in the rite described by the *sūtras*. Actions not described in the hymn are also prescribed. Other speech acts are prescribed as well; these happen to be of special interest here. There is a ritual dialogue between the sacrificer and his wife, and there is also another verse prescribed, which is otherwise unknown. Another interesting aspect is that farmers actually “participate” in the ritual

yoking and plowing; their work is part of the ritual and the ritual is part of their work, at the outset of plowing. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the later ritual use of the plow will often be undertaken exclusively by priests (even to the extent of building the plow with ritually gathered wood), while farmers have no role.

Above all, despite the well-noticed close relation between the hymn and the *sūtras*, it must be kept in mind that centuries separate the KauśS from the AVŚ (which of course was redacted as a whole some time after the composition of the individual hymns – in turn composed with oral formulae, which in some cases go back to the Indo-Iranian period or earlier.<sup>46</sup>). So, it is not unlikely that some changes may have occurred in the ritual. We will definitely see changes occur by the time of the commentators, Dārila (ca. 8<sup>th</sup> century<sup>47</sup>) and Keśava (ca. 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>48</sup>); we will see an example of such change in the next chapter. The recital of AVŚ 3.17 is prescribed in the first *sūtra*; it is referred to by its *pratīka* (a traditional abbreviation based on the first words): *sīrā yuñjanti*.

*Kauśika Sūtra* 20<sup>49</sup>

*sīrā yuñjantīti yugalāṅgalaṃ pratanoti* | 1 |

1. He (i.e., the priest) extends the yoke and plow with the hymn "*sīrā yuñjanti*" (AVŚ 3.17).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>See below, this chapter.

<sup>47</sup>Limaye *et al.* 1982, xxxv – xxxviii.

<sup>48</sup>Keśava is understood to have been a contemporary of the Paramāra King Bhoja (reigned ca. 1010-1055) (ibid.).

<sup>49</sup>I give Caland's translation in the footnotes and explain where my translation differs, but I follow him especially for application of the *paribhāṣa* rules and contextual points about the ritual, given that he translated the entire text excepting the *grhya* portion that constitutes the latter portion of the text.

<sup>50</sup>Caland has: "Dem Liede III.17 kommen (die folgenden Handlungen) zu. Joch und Pflug stellt er fertig;" he notes here uncertainty on the precise meaning of *pratanoti*, which I have translated as "he extends," whereas Caland takes it as "completes, sets up." Dārila however glosses it thus: *tanoti vistārārthaḥ* "The word *tanoti* has the meaning (here) of *vistāra* 'spreading, expanding.'" The plow does seem to be attached to the yoke at this point, but the yoke is not yet placed on the oxen, as we will see done in the immediately following *sūtras*.

*dakṣiṇam uṣṭāraṃ prathamam yunakti* | 2 |

2. He yokes the right bull first (whispering AVŚ 3.17.1).<sup>51</sup>

*ehi pūrṇakety uttaram* | 3 |

3. (He yokes) the left one with “Come, O Filler (*pūrṇaka*).”<sup>52</sup>

*kīnāsā itarān* | 4 |

4. The farmers (yoke) the others.<sup>53</sup>

*aśvinā phālaṃ kalpayatām upāvatu bṛhaspatiḥ* |

*yathāsad bahudhānyam ayakṣmaṃ bahupūruṣam iti* ||

*phālam atikarṣati* | 5 |

5. He brings over (*atikarṣati*) the plowshare (*phāla*) with the verse “Let the Aśvins make the plowshare ready, let Bṛhaspati favor (it), so that there will be a mass of grain, and a mass of men (both) free of disease.”<sup>54</sup>

*irāvān asi dhārtarāṣṭre tava me sattre rādhyatām iti pratimimīte* [*pramimīte*] | 6 |

Saying: “You are nourishing, O Dhārtarāṣṭri, let there be success for me in your (ritual) session,” he attaches (*pramīmā*) (the plowshare).<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Caland has: “Den rechten Stier spannt er (die Strophe III.17.1 flüsternd) zuerst an.”

<sup>52</sup>Caland has: “mit den Worten “Komme, Pūrṇaka” den. Linken.”

<sup>53</sup>Caland has: “Die Pflüger (spannen) die (vier) anderen (an);” he supplies that there would be four other oxen, yielding a total of six. Dārila is silent on the point, but Keśava does specify six: ‘*śunaṃ kīnāsā anuyantu vāhān*’ (AVŚ 3.17.5b) *iti pādēna hāliko ‘nyān caturo vṛṣabhān yunakti* | ‘*śaḍgavaṃ halaṃ*’ *iti vacanāt* | With the *pāda*: “For Prosperity let the farmers follow the animals along” (AVŚ 3.17.5b), the plowman yokes the four other oxen. (This is) due to the saying “the plow is that of which the the oxen are six.”

<sup>54</sup>Caland has: “die beiden Aśvins sollen die Pflugschare fertig machen, von Bṛhaspati ermuthigt, damit Überfluss von Getreide, Abwesenheit von Krankheit, Fülle von Männern da sei,’ mit diesen Worten holt er die Pflugschare herüber;” *pādas* c and d of the prescribed verse occur also in AVP 5.30.9 and 8.18.16, but the verse as a whole is not known elsewhere. My inclination is to read *ayakṣmaṃ* as an adjective “free of disease,” applying to both *bahudhānyam* and *bahupūruṣam*, sharing it as they share the prefix *bahu-*. Caland’s substantive interpretation is justifiable as well, but semantically at least the mass of men would be those free of *yakṣma*. The issue at stake is whether *yakṣma* is something that could affect grain. Zysk examines the occurrences of *yakṣma* in depth (1985, 12-17); he characterizes it as the “general, internal disease-demon,” but shows that its effects as described coincide with consumption/tuberculosis. It (*yakṣma*) also affects cattle according to the texts. Although there is indeed a bovine tuberculosis, to simply equate *yakṣma* with tuberculosis would be reductive; Zysk is sensitive to this in his characterization of *yakṣma* as a “disease-demon.” My speculative translation here, “a mass of grain, and a mass of men (both) free of disease,” is based off of my reading of the poetic syntax, and only unintentionally and after the fact as attributing some potential crop malady to the “disease-demon” *yakṣma* as well.

<sup>55</sup>Caland has: “reich an Erquickung bist du, Tochter des Dhārtarāṣṭra, bei deinem Sattrā möge es mir wohl ergehen,’ mit diesen Worten befestigt er (die Pflugschare) vorne (im Holze des Pfluges).” On *dhārtarāṣṭre*, see discussion below; I differ from Caland in taking the gender as necessarily masculine based on *irāvān*. Caland notes that *pramimīte* is probably the correct reading rather than *pratimimīte*: “Ich vermuthe, dass *pramimīte* zu lesen ist, vgl. Bū: *pratipramimīte*.”

*apahatāḥ pratiṣṭhā ity apūpaiḥ pratihatya kṛṣati* | 7 |

After having broken *apūpa* cakes against (the plowshare) with the words:  
"(Those) resisting are warded off," he plows.<sup>56</sup>

*sūktasya pāraṃ gatvā prayacchati* | 8 |

Having gone to the end of the *sūkta*, he gives (the plow) (to the farmers).<sup>57</sup>

*tisrāḥ sītāḥ prācīr gamayanti kalyāṇīr vāco vadantaḥ* | 9 |

They make three furrows running west to east, speaking auspicious words.<sup>58</sup>

*sīte vandāmahe tvety āvartayitvottarasmin sītānte puroḍāsenendram yajate* | 10 |

After reciting “*sīte vandāmahe tvā*” (AVŚ 3.17.8) when he lets (the oxen) turn back around (to the right), he makes a (fire) offering to Indra with *puroḍāśa* to the north at the end of the furrow.<sup>59</sup>

*aśvinau sthālīpākena* | 11 |

(He makes an offering) to the Aśvins with *sthālīpāka*.<sup>60</sup>

*sītāyāṃ sampātān ānayanti* | 12 |

They bring the *sampāta* (remnants of the oblation) into the (northern) furrow.<sup>61</sup>

*udapātra uttarān* | 13 |

(They pour) the remainders (of the *sampāta*) into a vessel (filled with water).<sup>62</sup>

*śaṣpahaviṣām avadhāya* | 14 |

After (also) putting in grass sprouts and *havis* offerings (into the vessel),<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Caland has: “nachdem er mit dem Worten: “vertreiben sind die Widersacher” Kuchen gegen (die Pflugshare) geworfen hat, pflügt er (unter Hersagung des Liedes III.7[sic 17]).” Keśava explains that AVŚ 3.17 is recited as the priest (*karṣṭṛ*) plows; this is consistent with the next *sūtra*, where it is said he finishes the recitation of the *sūkta*.

<sup>57</sup>Caland has: “am Schluss des Liedes angekommen übergibt er (den Pflug den Knechten);” and he notes here that the priest does indeed plow ritually before the farmers: “Der Brahman soll also so lange selber in sacraler Weise pflügen, bis er das Lied beendigt hat.”

<sup>58</sup>Caland has: “drei Furchen ziehen sie in östlicher Richtung, gute Worte redend.” Caland notes that Dārila gives examples of the auspicious words (*kalyāṇīr vāco*) such as: “möge es drauf regnen, möge vieles Korn aufkommen.” The examples Dārila gives are: *abhivarṣatu, niṣpadyatāṃ bahudhānyam, bhūyād ārogyam* “Let it rain, let a mass of grain come forth, let there be freedom from disease!”

<sup>59</sup>Caland has: “mit der Strophe III.17.8 lässt er (jedesmal wenn eine der oben erwähnten Furchen gezogen ist, die Stiere) sich (nach rechtshin) wenden und opfert dem Indra (in einem Feuer angelegt) auf einer unmittelbar nördlich (an der Furche) angrenzenden Stelle einen Opferkuchen (unter Hersagung des Liedes).”

<sup>60</sup>Caland has: “den Aśvins (opfert er daselbst) einen Pfannkuchen.”

<sup>61</sup>Caland has: “in die (nördlichste) Furche giesst er die Neigen (den Opferbutter).”

<sup>62</sup>Caland has: “in eine mit Wasser gefüllte Schale die späteren (Neigen).”

<sup>63</sup>Caland has: “nachdem er (auch) Graskeimen und Opfersubstanzen (Reis, Schmalz u.s.w.) darein gelegt hat; ...” Dārila specifies remnants from the *ājya*.

*sarvam anakti* | 15 |

He anoints the whole (plow).<sup>64</sup>

*yatra sampātān ānayati tato loṣṭam dhārayantam patnī pṛchaty akrkṣateti* | 16 |

The wife asks (her husband, the sacrificer) carrying a clump of earth (*loṣṭam*) from where he brings the *sampāta* (remnants of the oblation) "did you plow?"<sup>65</sup>

*akrkṣāmeti* | 17 |

"We plowed."<sup>67</sup>

*kim āhārṣīr iti* | 18 |

"What did you get?"<sup>68</sup>

*vittiṃ bhūtiṃ puṣṭiṃ prajāṃ paśūn annam annādyam iti* | 19 |

"Knowledge, prosperity, increase, progeny, livestock, (and) food, food to eat."<sup>69</sup>

*uttarato madhyamāyām nivapati* | 20 |

From the north he "sows" (*nivapati*) (the clump of earth) in the middle (furrow).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Caland has: "(damit) wäscht er den ganzen Pflug."

<sup>65</sup>Caland has: "von der Stelle, wo er die Neigen ausgiesst (also aus der nördlichsten Furche, Sūtra 12), nimmt er (d.h. Derjenige, zu dessen Gunsten die Handlung verrichtet wird) einen Erdklumpen und während er dieses thut, fragt ihn seine Gattin; 'habt ihr gepflügt?'"

<sup>66</sup>It should be noted here that the later commentator Keśava misunderstands the roles in the dialogue. This was noticed by in the edition of Keśava's *Kauśikapaddhati* by Limaye *et al.* (1982, 500): "The conversation takes place between the sacrificer and his wife. Keśava understands it differently." This is especially surprising given that the earlier commentator Dārila understood it correctly: *kārayitā | sampātītād deśād mṛtṭiṇḍam gṛhitvā dhārayati | dhārayantam patnī svāminī yajñasya pṛchati 'akrkṣata' iti | evam sampātānām ānayanakāle evaitat | bhinnakarṭṛtvāt | pūjyasya syād bahuvacanam ||* "(It is) the sacrificer (*kārayitṛ*; i.e., not the priest, *karṭṛ*). He holds a clump of earth after having picked it up from the spot where the *sampāta* remnant was poured. The wife, mistress of the sacrifice, asks him while he is holding (the clump of earth) "did you (pl.) plow?" This occurs right at the time of the bringing the *sampāta* remnants (and pouring them into the furrow). This is due to being a distinct role from the priest. The (second-person) plural (e.g., *akrkṣata*) should be used as an honorific. Keśava however gives (commenting on 20.16-19): *yatra sītā sampātītā tasmāt sthānāt mṛttikām patnī gṛhṇāti hastena | tata anyo manuṣyaḥ pṛchati 'kim āhārṣīh' | tato patnī brute 'vittiṃ bhūtim' iti* | "The wife takes a clump of earth with her hand from that place where the furrow was moistened with the *sampāta*. Then another man asks 'what did you get?' Then the wife says 'knowledge, prosperity (etc.).'"

<sup>67</sup>Caland has: "wir haben gepflügt' (antwortet der Gatte)."

<sup>68</sup>Caland has: "was hast du aufgenommen?' (fragt ihn wieder die Frau)."

<sup>69</sup>Caland has: "Erwerb, Gedeihen, Wohlfahrt, Nachkommen, Vieh, Speise, Nahrung' (antwortet der Gatte)."

<sup>70</sup>Caland has: "nördlich von der mittleren Furche streut er (der Gatte, den Sūtra 16 erwähnten Erdklumpen?) aus." Here Caland follows Dārila, who seems to want to have the clump of earth offered into the fire (*yajate*) to the north of the furrow, as previously. There are several reasons to believe this is not the case. One is that in that case it would be the sacrificer and not the priest making the offering. Another is that the force of the ablative suffix *-tāh* would be lost. Beyond these reasons is the ritual logic itself; it makes sense that the moist clump of earth should be "sown" into the furrow itself, as is probably reflected

*abhyajyottaraphālaṃ prātar āyojanāya nidadhāti* | 21 |

Having smeared the *uttaraphāla* (upper? plowshare), he places it down for the morning assembling (*āyojana*) (of the plow for use).<sup>71</sup>

*sītāsiraḥsu darbhān āstūrya plakṣodumbarasya trīṃs trīṃś camasān nidadhāti* | 22 |

Strewing *darbha* grass at the heads of the (three) furrows (*sītāsiraḥsu*) he sets down three (sets of) three (*trīṃs trīṃś*) *camasa* (offering dish or ladle, a wooden implement with a handle) of *plakṣa* (*Ficus infectoria*) or *udumbara* (*Ficus glomerata*) (i.e., three for each of the three furrows).<sup>72</sup>

*rasavato dakṣiṇe śaṣpavato madhyame puroḍāśavata uttare* | 23 |

The offerings are to be liquid in the south (furrow), grass sprouts in the middle, *puroḍāśa* in the north.<sup>73</sup>

*darbhān pratyavabhujya saṃvapati* | 24 |

He sows, having brushed back the *darbha*.<sup>74</sup>

The commentators consider the next two *sūtras* (20.25-26) a distinct but connected rite, for the well-being of the plow-oxen. Caland makes this explicit in his translation by a subheading; Bloomfield's edition presents them as a single passage, in

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in the term *nivapati*. The clump of earth now carries the import of the ritual dialogue between husband and wife, which is to say that in its being sown into the furrow, Prosperity itself, traditionally and magically represented by a meristic list of wonderful things, is being sown. Keśava, still thinking the wife is holding the clump of earth, continues not to be of any help here.

<sup>71</sup>Caland has: “Nachdem er die obere Pflugschar (mit dem in Sūtra 13-14 erwähnten Wasser) bestrichen hat, lässt er sie (auf dem Felde) liegen, damit sie (am nächsten Tage) früh zum (eigentlichen) Pflügen dienen könne.” He notes uncertainty in the precise significance of *uttaraphāla* here: “d.h. Den oberen Theil der Pflugschar? im Gegensatz zu Sūtra 15, wo der ganze Pflug gewaschen war (?)” Keśava glosses *uttaraphāla* with *lohaphāla*, “iron-” or less likely “copper-plowshare.” Dārila lists it in a long *dvandva* compound of pieces to be assembled, however there is redundancy in the list: *prātar dviṭīye 'hani yadāyojanam bhavati tadāyojanam halayugaphālayoktraraśmiphālottaraphālānām eva* | When there is the assembling (*āyojana*) (of the entire plow) on the morning of the second day, then the assembling is only of the plow (*hala*), yoke (*yuga*), plowshare (*phāla*), yoke-binding (tying the animals to the yoke) (*yoktra* = *yotra*; see Wojtilla 2012, 32), reins (*raśmi*), plowshare (again, *phāla*), upper-plowshare (*uttaraphāla*? Uncertain).

<sup>72</sup>Caland has: “aus den Kopf- (östlichen) Enden der Furchen streut er Gräser aus und stellt (darauf in den Furchen) je drei vom Holze der *Ficus infectoria* (*plakṣa*) oder der *Ficus glomerata* (*udumbara*) gefertigte Schüsseln.”

<sup>73</sup>Caland has: “(die Schüsseln, die er) in die südliche (Furche stellt, sollen) mit den Säften, (die) in der mittleren mit Graskeimen, (die) in der nördlichen mit Opferkuchen versehen (sein).”

<sup>74</sup>Caland has: “wenn er die Gräser (Sūtra 22) zurück- und niedergebogen hat, (sodass ihre Spitzen über jeder Schüssel zu liegen kommen,) wirft er (die Furchen) zu.”

accord with the numbering of the *sūtras*.

*sārūpavatsē śakṛtpiṇḍān guggululavaṇe pratinīyāśnāti* | 25 |

Having mixed lumps of cow dung in *sārūpavatsa* milk (from a cow with a calf, *vatsa*, of the same color, *sarūpa*) with bdellium (*guggulu*) and salt (*lavaṇa*) (accompanied by the recitation of AVŚ 3.17), he eats (the *sthālīpāka* with the rice cooked in said milk).<sup>75</sup>

*anaḍutsāmpadam* | 26 | || 3 || || 20 ||

(This is) required for (the well-being of) the plow-oxen.<sup>76</sup>

There is much of interest in this *sūtra* passage. The Kṛṣi Sūkta (AVŚ 3.17) is recited in full as the yoke and plow are prepared. The right and left draft-animals are yoked by the priest (20.2-3), while those behind the lead animals are yoked by the farmers (20.4), indicating the lead pair has a special ritual status. Like a chariot in ritual contexts (such as a race), the right horse is yoked first, then the left; this is considered to be the divine way, as opposed to the human, which is the reverse.<sup>77</sup>

After the yoking of the draft-animals, the fifth *sūtra* (20.5) prescribes a verse which does not occur in AVŚ. As a general rule, verses and hymns which do occur in the

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<sup>75</sup>Caland has: “In die Milch einer Kuh, die ein gleichfarbiges Kalb ernährt, mischt er Stücke Dünger (eines Stieres), Bdellium und Salz, bereitet (davon durch Hinzufügung von Reis u.s.w.) einen Pfannkuchen (, verrichtet das gehöhnliche Opfer bis zu den Abhyātāna-Spenden, bringt die Hauptspenden unter Hersagung des Liedes III.17 dar, giesst die Neigen des Schmalzes über den Pfannkuchen, während ihn die Person berührt, zu deren Gunsten der Zauber veranstaltet wird, spricht das Lied über dem Kuchen aus) und er (n.l. die oben gennante Person) isst (ihn).” Rotaru (2008) has translated this *sūtra* as well, in a study on applying the *paribhāṣas*, of which *āśnāti* here is one. She clarifies that *āśnāti* signifies that a *sthālīpāka*, “a rice gruel” (*contra* Caland's “Pfannkuchen”), should be supplied as the object. The rice is cooked in the *sārūpavatsa* milk mentioned in the *sūtra*. Rotaru's translation is: “With hymn 3.17 he mixes balls of [bull] dung in a [rice] boiled in milk from a cow having a calf of a similar colour with salt, [he besmears it with the dregs of the ghee oblation], [he consecrates it with the mentioned hymn], and eats [this boiled rice].”

<sup>76</sup>Caland has: “Dies ist der Zauber, wodurch die Pflugochsen gedeihen.”

<sup>77</sup>See the discussion in Sparreboom 1985, 31. A chariot would be raced with three horses, the third being a side-horse to the left, although Sparreboom reports that Kātyāyana describes a fourth horse also, “unyoked but fully harnessed.” The ritual plowing described here utilized a total of six oxen, according to Keśava (see note at *sūtra*); presumably the others followed the lead pair two by two.

AVŚ are cited by *pratīka*, others are cited in full, whether they occur in other *saṃhitās* or are unattested (or attested only later). This verse (which is found in AVP<sup>78</sup>) calls for the Aśvins to ready the plowshare: *aśvinā phālaṃ kalpayatām*, and for Bṛhaspati to favor it: *upāvatu bṛhaspatiḥ*. The request for Bṛhaspati's favor may then correspond to the desire for the accompanying recitation to be faultless and effective; Bṛhaspati is the “Lord of Sacred Speech”<sup>79</sup>. The second stanza calls for the desired result, “a mass of grain,” and “a mass of men” “free of disease.” The arrangement altogether is remarkable; the connection between the health of the food and the health of the people is made poetically by the sharing of *ayakṣmaṃ*, “free of disease.”<sup>80</sup> The verse is recited while the team pulls the plow. The moment is filled with gravity. There is high hope as well as great risk. It is a practical necessity to conform to and participate in the divine prototype of the action. Putting the plow to the earth was understood to be a powerful act of magic that could yield an all-encompassing prosperity if successful, but disastrous consequences if not. The factors recognized as coming together were the fundamental units of the cosmic structure, the gods, humans, and animals cooperating to elicit sustenance from the plants of the earth.

An unsourced verse is then prescribed while the plowshare is secured (20.6)<sup>81</sup>:  
 “You are refreshing/nourishing (*irāvān*), O Dhārtarāṣṭri, let there be success in my (ritual) session for you.” The name, otherwise unattested, is interesting. Caland took it as

<sup>78</sup>“The mantra is quoted from [AVP] 8.18.6, which has the same text” (Griffiths 2004, 58).

<sup>79</sup>Or “lord of the formulation, lord of the *brāhman*” (Brereton 2004, 330). For detailed discussion see Schmitt 1968.

<sup>80</sup>See note at the *sūtra* for a detailed discussion on the meaning and implication of *yakṣma* as a “disease-demon.”

<sup>81</sup>Caland's suggestion of *pramimīte* for *pratimimīte* must be correct; see note at *sūtra*.



“Tochter des Dhṛtarāṣṭra,” but that seems impossible because the gender must be masculine based on *irāvān*. MW does list it as masculine, but takes it to name “a serpent-demon,” presumably based on *dhārtarāṣṭrā*, a kind of snake. I think that the vocative is directed towards the plowshare, which is being fastened as the *mantra* is recited. The meaning here may just be “O Prince” (i.e., “son of the king”), addressed to the plowshare (*phāla*, masc., later neut.). However, Bloomfield questions whether it should be read as a vocative at all:

I do not believe with the Pet. Lex. and Caland that *dhārtarāṣṭre* is a vocative of *dhārtarāṣṭri* (Hap. Leg.), but rather a locative of the usual *dhārtarāṣṭra*: 'Rich in nourishment are thou; may I succeed at thy *sattra* in the land of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.' The land of Dhṛtarāṣṭra is used *boni ominis causa* for the land to be ploughed; the act of the plough is for the same reason assimilated to the *sattra* sacrifice (Bloomfield 1902: 508).

But the larger issue would then be the question of who is referred to in the second person (*irāvān asi ... tava me sattre*)? Based on context it seems it has to be the plowshare addressed, whether or not it is named *dhārtarāṣṭri* or whether it all just occurs “in the field of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.” On one hand, the *mantras* are pervaded by vocatives combined with the second person. On the other hand, *dhārtarāṣṭra* can mean a Kuru, (descended from *dhṛtarāṣṭra*, a recurrent proper name, but with the broader meaning “king,” “he whose realm is firm or secure”). I am more inclined to take it in the vocative as addressing the plowshare, given the second person, although I do not have a good suggestion for why the plowshare might be called *dhārtarāṣṭri*. Perhaps the sense of *dhṛtarāṣṭra* from which it's derived is “whose realm is firm (*dhṛta* or *dhārta*)” with “firm” referring to the earth. This would explain why the name occurs for *nāgas* and for a

kind of snake (*dhārtarāṣṭrā*), etc. There are many such terms for earth derived from  $\sqrt{dhr}$ , *dharā*, *dharani/i*, *dharitrī*, and so on, although these give the sense of “supporting” rather than “supported” as the passives would. So, I do believe *dhārtarāṣṭre* is in the vocative, and addressing the plowshare in its connection with the earth.

Sūtras 20.7 and 20.8 are an issue for the commentaries. KauśS 20.7 has the priest plow after having broken *apūpa* cakes against the plowshare, reciting a mantra, *apahatāḥ pratiṣṭhāḥ*, “those resisting (are) warded off.” Then according to 20.8 the priest finishes the recitation and then gives the plow to the farmers. Rotaru discusses the *paribhāṣa* rules at play here, which contextually supply “plow” as the object of the verb.<sup>82</sup> Rotaru notices that Dārila however is more concerned with which hymn is to be understood by *sūktasya pāram gatvā* “having gone to the end/completed the hymn.” Dārila, on 20.7, explains AVŚ 3.17.3 and following are to be supplied (*prayoktavyāḥ*) because of being primary (*pradhānatvāt*), i.e., most relevant or appropriate. The substitution is not simply a straightforward application of *paribhāṣa* rules; the phrase “*apahatāḥ pratiṣṭhāḥ*,” which is probably just an independent *mantra*, may seem like a *pratīka* for a lost hymn, assuming that is what Dārila is arguing against on the basis of the next *sūtra* (“having completed the hymn ...”). Either way, it may have had a general apotropaic function, reflecting the inherent risk involved in plowing, although on a purely speculative level, the phrase *apahatāḥ pratiṣṭhāḥ*, “those resisting (are) warded off” could perhaps refer to the weeds and roots with which the initial plowing of the season must contend and which the plowing serves to clear out for the sake of new grain seed.

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<sup>82</sup>See note at *sūtra*.

After the recitation of the hymn, the priest gives the plow to the farmers (20.8). The farmers then plow three furrows running west to east, while “speaking lovely words,” *kalyāṇīr vāco vadantaḥ* (20.9)<sup>83</sup>. The priest, standing north of the furrows, then makes a *puroḍāśa* offering to Indra, while, interestingly, reciting a verse to Sītā, or “Furrow” (*sīte vandāmahe tvā*: AVŚ 3.17.8 = RV 4.57.6, etc.). We have seen Indra in the role of impressing the furrow recurring since RV; later passages consider him the husband of Sītā, as we shall see. Then a *sthālīpāka* offering is made to the Aśvins (20.10), and the remnants of the oblation (*sampāta*) are brought into the furrow (20.12); the *sampāta* remainders are put into vessel (20.13) as well as sprouts and *havis* remnants (20.14). Then the priest anoints the entire plow (with the contents of the vessel) (20.15). Then there is the remarkable ritual dialogue between the sacrificer and his wife, in KauśS 20.16-19, which we will examine closely next. After the dialogue, the *darbha* grass is bent back, and seed is cast into the middle furrow (20.24). The two remaining *sūtras* in the 20<sup>th</sup> *kaṇḍikā* are a charm for increasing draft-animals; Bloomfield's edition does not seem to indicate the change in subject, but Caland's translation does, and so does the later commentator Keśava (11<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>84</sup>. Perhaps this cattle charm was performed at the start of plowing, which would explain its place here, although according to both Dārila and Sāyaṇa, it should also employ “*sīrā yuñjanti*” (AVŚ 3.17).

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<sup>83</sup>The examples given by Dārila are provided in the footnote at the *sūtra*.

<sup>84</sup>*kṛṣikarma samāptam | atha vṛṣabhalābhakarocyate* | The agriculture rite is completed. Now the (rite) causing increase of the bulls is related (Keśava after KauśS 20.24).

### 3.4. The Ritual Dialogue in KauśS 20.16-19

In this section we continue exploring the ritual application of the Kṛṣi Sūkta according to *Kauśika Sūtra* 20, which we examined in the previous section. Now we turn to examine in much more detail the ritual dialogue between the sacrificer and his wife given in KauśS 20.16-19, which, it would be good to remember, all occurs as the sacrificer is holding a clump of soil (*loṣṭa*) in his hand, moist from the remnant of the oblation (*sampāta*): “Did you plow?” “We plowed.” “What did you get?” “Knowledge, prosperity, increase, progeny, livestock, (and) food, food to eat.” The composition of the dialogue, even in translation, is striking. An abrupt question meets a blunt answer, and then another abrupt question yields a staggeringly immense answer. The brisk initial back-and-forth is perfectly well-suited to the exchange of husband and wife. The final answer indicates an all-encompassing prosperity, but, as a simple list, retains the pithy tone of the conversation. And the plain list in the terse exchange ends up being much more eloquent than an abstraction like “all the good things in life,” which so quickly becomes a cliché. The exchange is already rhetorically powerful, but the language itself reveals another layer of artistry, alliterative. I will cite the text twice, first emphasizing the vowel alliteration of **a/ā** (in bold) and i/ī (underlined), and then the (mostly) consonant patterns which form interlacing strings from **k**, **ṛ/r**, and **ṣ**, to **v/bh/p** and **t**, with a nasal grouping finally ending out the series, m/n/m.

**akṛkṣata? akṛkṣāma. kṛṇ āhārṣīr? vṛṭṭim bhūṭim puṣṭim prajāṃ paśūn annam annādyam.**

The k - ṛ/r - ṣ series terminates immediately before the final list, and marks the crucial transition in the dialogue:

**akṛkṣata? akṛkṣāma. kiṃ āhārṣīr? vittim bhūtim puṣṭim prajāṃ paśūn annam annādyam.**

The entire dialogue can be broken into pairs which alliterate with each other strongly but transition to the next pair through a phonological quality shared with (typically the first half of) the next coherent pair:

**akṛkṣata akṛkṣāma (kiṃ āhārṣīr)**  
**kiṃ āhārṣīr (vittim)**  
**vittim bhūtim (puṣṭim)**  
**puṣṭim prajāṃ (paśūn)**  
**paśūn annam (annādyam)**  
**annam annādyam**

This intricate phonological play ends up relaying the underlying meaning of the explicit exchange: the very vocables of *kṛṣi*, “plowing,” morph into those of *an nam*, “food,” through the dialectic of the ritual dialogue and forms a ring composition. There is another ring composition as well, when looking at the speech of the two together in the dialogue as a whole; the first two and last two words of the dialogue are etymological figures: *akṛkṣata akṛkṣāma, annam annādyam*. Obviously, the first pair is just a repetition of the exact same verbal form (sa aorist of  $\sqrt{kṛṣ}$ ) in second person (asking) and then in first person (answering). The context of ritual dialogue may be the key to utilizing such a natural feature of language use (i.e., asking/answering with same verb) as a structurally meaningful etymological figure. It is mirrored in *annam annādyam*, which constitutes the end of both rings, of the dialogue as a whole and of the enumerative list.

Ring composition is an ancient inherited IE structuring device of hefty import.<sup>85</sup> Brereton 1997 elucidates a complex recursive nesting in not only a similar context of ritual dialogue, but as the very structure of the ritual itself.<sup>86</sup> The ritual dialogue he treats, BU 3, nested in a frame story, is a *brahmodya*, which is the (sub?) genre Gonda associates with this very dialogue:<sup>87</sup>

Some words may be inserted here on occasional questions-and-answers of the *brahmodya* type, short dialogues of a fixed form which, while solving a problem or leading to the correct answer, were to elicit success. For instance, in an agricultural rite a farmer who is plowing ritually and his wife have to hold the following conversation, KauśS 20, 16ff.:  
 “Have you ploughed?”/ “We have ploughed.”/ “What have you ploughed (attracted, another meaning of the verb)?” / “Property, well-being, prosperity, progeny, cattle, food.” (Gonda 1977, 570-571).

Brereton clarifies and highlights the frequent nature of *brahmodyas* as verbal contests:

First, BU 3, like JB 1.258, is also a verbal contest, a *brahmodya* or *brahmavadya* (*brahmavādyā*). Such contests were a well-established part of the Vedic tradition. They appear in the middle of various of the more complicated Vedic rites as formal dialogues between participants in the rite, in which one asks questions,

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<sup>85</sup>“Aside from metrics a demarcative function is also served by the recurrence device known as ring-composition or framing: the beginning and ending of a discourse or complex utterance with the same or equivalent word, phrase, or sound sequence, which transforms the so bounded sequence into a set. This device, sometimes with more complex 'nesting' of recurrences, is widespread in archaic Indo-European traditions as a compositional technique” (Watkins 1997: 250-251). Watkins cites etymological figures in this usage as well.

<sup>86</sup>“The answer to the riddle of the sleeping dog focuses attention on the form of the Vedic sacrifice and suggests that something important is achieved when its form is understood. The Vedic sacrifice forms a ring, in which its end recapitulates its beginning. This is not a surprising shape for it to have since many rituals, both inside and outside of India, also show such a recursive pattern. But it is striking how completely the sacrifice can carry out a structural program of repetition and recapitulation. The Darśapūrnamāsa rites, for example, contain eleven offerings that are accompanied by recitations. The first five match the last five in reverse order; that is, the first offering parallels the last, the second the tenth, the third the ninth and so forth. The one unmatched offering is the *upāmsu* offering in the middle of the rite. The Vedic sacrifice, therefore, is a highly structured and precise composition” (Brereton 1997: 2).

<sup>87</sup>Gonda's translation is a bit loose here; Dārila regarded *vitti* as knowledge (*vittir vedārthavijñānam* | Regarding *vitti* in the meaning of *veda*, 'knowledge'), and this sense best conforms to the nature of the diverse items in the enumerative list, which is a merism for total prosperity (see below). For '*kim āhārṣīh*' he has “What have you ploughed (attracted, another meaning of the verb)?” He has conflated *ā√krṣ* with *ā√hr* here, which is understandable because it follows immediately the two instances of *√krṣ* and refers to their result, as well as alliterating with them (see below; all sibilant aorists).

usually about the fundamental nature of the sacrifice or of the world, and another answers them (Brereton 1997: 2).

The contest nature of *brahmodyas* is the feature which has drawn the most attention from scholars,<sup>88</sup> and as Brereton connects *brahmodya* to *brahmavadya*, contest seems to be the defining feature in the traditional conception of *brahmodya*. Our passage, between husband and wife (and a moist clump of earth), does not overtly seem to conform to this competitive theme, although certainly one could argue such is inherent in (or at least typical of) the marriage relationship. The riddle or enigma, the answer to which reveals or constitutes a fundamental truth or connection, is the other great feature of interest, and this does however characterize this dialogue. Thompson 1997 provides a useful attempt to characterize a typology based more on diachronic development than the synchronic traditional conception, which may then exclude this particular dialogue passage. BU 3, by contrast, is explicitly referred to as a *brahmodya* (Brereton 1997: 2, n. 3). Thompson, discussing other *brahmodya* passages, explains how the formal pattern of *brahmodya* is historically connected with broader compositional variations which can be referred to as “*brahmodya*-types” or “*brahmodya*-like”:

The explicitly dialogical *brahmodyas* of the *Vājaseneyi Saṃhitā*, involving an exchange of interrogation and response, and consisting either of riddling question along with corresponding answer, or of challenge and self-assertion, must certainly be related, as Renou has suggested, to a much broader, looser form of interrogation and response, which may usefully be called the *brahmodya* pattern. This pattern is a matter of a variety of interrogation sequences which, though they do not necessarily conform strictly to the typically fourfold pattern of the shorter riddling *brahmodya*, are nevertheless suggestive of the patterns and functions which we have identified as characteristic of *brahmodyas*: both the shorter riddling type (more regular metrically and syntactically) which reveals a

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<sup>88</sup>Besides Brereton 1997 and Thompson 1997, Renou 1949, Kuiper 1960, and Witzel 1987 are especially notable.

preoccupation with names, and the longer enigmatic type (closer to prose, perhaps) which is characterized by challenge, counter-challenge, and self-assertion. ... *Brahmodya*-like verbal contests were probably inherited from I.E. antiquity, some of which may have been in form very similar to that of the classical riddling type – though certainly there were other forms as well (Thompson 1997: 22-23).

The ritual dialogue here between husband and wife is probably one of those “other forms.” While there is no need to argue specifically against a contestive strain to this exchange, which is terse, but also matter-of-fact, it is more immediately productive to consider the relation between the husband and wife, especially in ritual contexts, more generally. As Jamison has explained, the wife is not just ritually significant, she is integral on a structural level to the entire ritual system.

One of the main technical requirements for being a Sacrificer is that he must be a householder (*grhastha*); he must be married. Not only that but the presence and participation of his wife is required at all the solemn rituals. Sacrificer's Wife (*patnī* in Sanskrit) is a structural role in ritual with particular duties and activities that cannot ordinarily be performed by anyone else. Though the treatments of (or rather references to) the Sacrificer's Wife in modern secondary literature tend to minimize the importance of her role, there is much evidence to suggest the opposite (Jamison 1996: 30).

Jamison sums up the thematic ritual roles accorded the wife as “the *domestic*, the realm of *sexuality and fertility*, and that of *hospitality and exchange*” (39). While Jamison explains that these thematic roles do often overlap and intertwine, the sexuality/fertility role in particular characterizes the role of the wife in this plow ritual quite aptly, conforming to as well as reinforcing the overarching analogy of agriculture to sexual reproduction. Further though, the wife has a specific ritual interest in the grain: “The grain for the offering cakes at an Iṣṭi is often threshed (*ava* √*han*), winnowed (*phalī* √*kr*), and ground (√*piṣ*) by the wife;” Jamison points out this ritual interest in the grain seems



to reflect “real-life householding tasks” (51). Aside from its definite but ethereal relation to the *brahmodya* as a formal type, the interplay of husband and wife in this interrogatory dialogue is more about reproductive complementarity than overt contest. The other primary qualification however, “in which one asks questions, usually about the fundamental nature of the sacrifice or of the world, and another answers them” (Brereton 1997: 2), pertains to this dialogue. The “riddle” of it is the very nexus of analogy we have been examining, the “open secret,” wherein plowing is intercourse with the earth and (for those who *ritually demonstrate* their understanding of this) the result is that the Plow turns up Prosperity (poetically and magically represented by an enumerative list of various fine and wondrous things).

To be clear about the dialogue, I have taken only the direct speech out from the *iti*-clauses in the *sūtra* “prose.” The base justification for such a treatment of the language here is that, like the *mantra* language, the dialogue is ritually efficacious, and reflects the potency of speech. No part of the direct speech in the ritual dialogue scans metrically. However, there is evidence of a relation with oral formula, given that there is a variant of a portion of the list, which occurs in AVP as a *pāda*: *vittim bhūtim puṣṭim paśūn* (AVP 5.35.1d—11d). Further though, a simple distinction between verse and prose is especially problematic in the context of *brahmodya*-like dialogues.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Notable recent studies demonstrating certain problematics of the basic distinction are Brereton 2006 and Witzel 1997. Brereton 2006 explicates non-metrical strophic structures in this context as instances of the phenomenon referred to as “rhythmic prose,” while Witzel 1997 traces early prosimetrical passages showing interweaving of verse and prose in ritual dialogues associated with contests at the New Year celebration. The various points of continuity and discontinuity of these related strands of scholarship with this dialogue in particular would merit a separate study. I will not argue that it is either prosimetric in some sense or that its interchange is strophic as rhythmic prose. It is clear enough that it is not simple prose in the sense of “ordinary speech.” According to Brereton: “Composition in styles that are neither quite poetry nor

The beginning and end of the enumerative list subset forms another, nested, ring. The beginning of the list is marked by the rhyming series *vittim bhūtim puṣṭim*, the last member of which takes us into the transitional alliterative series of initial surd labials *puṣṭim prajāṃ paśūn*. The final nasal series, gently foreshadowed in *paśūn*, is the etymological figure ending both rings, *annam annādyam*. This is even a recursive etymological figure; the second term, *annādyam*, is a compound formed from two iterations of the root  $\sqrt{ad}$  (eat), *anna* + *ādyā*, which in turn are both verbal participles morphologically (past passive and future passive/gerundive respectively) that are each in common substantive use with the same meaning: “food,” “(what is) eaten” (*anna*) and “(what is) to be eaten/edible” (*ādyā*). My translation of *annam annādyam* as “food, food to eat,” is an attempt to preserve something of the redundancy and verbal formation, but “food, food, food,” would be defensible on some level. However, the compound *annādyam* as a unit has the meaning of “food in general,” because *anna* can be used restrictively for the primary subsets of its semantic range; it is used for “food,” for “grain,” for “rice.” The same tendency can be seen in English: “corn” specifically meaning the New World cultivar of maize, is derivative of its original meaning of “grain” (which is remains acceptable in some places). And conversely, “bread” can be used more generally for food.

Apropos to this discussion is some of Calvert Watkins' work examining common Indo-European poetic and stylistic features. According to Watkins:

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quite prose has roots before the Indic tradition. ... [A]lready from very ancient times, Indo-Iranian composers did not have a simple choice between poetry and prose, but could create texts in a variety of forms” (Brereton 2006: 327 fn. 8).

The second connector figure is the merism: a bipartite noun phrase consisting of two nouns in copulative relation (A and B), two nouns which share most of their semantic features, and together serve to designate globally a higher concept C, i.e., to index the whole of a higher taxon C. Thus we find

barley (and) spelt (Hittite *ḫalkiš ZÍZ-tar*)

as a global indication of all cereals, and

grains (and) grapes (Hittite *ḫalkieš<sup>GIŠ</sup>GEŠTIN<sup>HLA</sup>*)

grain (bread) and wine (Greek σῖτος καὶ οἶνος/μέθυ)

for all agricultural products and alimentation.

-Watkins, C. (1995). *How to Kill a Dragon : Aspects of Indo-European Poetics*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 45.

It is clear that precisely this inherited IE stylistic feature is at play then in both *annam annādyam*, as well as just within the compound *annādyam* itself. We could then translate *annam annādyam* as perhaps “grain (and) food generally” (although this translation would, in this case, then eliminate the participial, morphological, and phonological redundancy of the etymological figure which I attempted to retain a trace of with the translation “food, food to eat”).

Watkins also has some comments on the enumerative list as a structural unit in IE poetics, which directly pertain to the speech of the ritual dialogue here as well:

What seems at first sight to be simple lists or enumerations may turn out to be artistically elaborately merisms, where phonetic figures of arrangement are all deployed. The notion of a solid (opposed to liquid) agricultural produce, as a higher taxon, may be expressed by the merism of the subcategories cereals and legumes. And each of these may in turn be represented by a merism of subcategories of each. Consider the traditional English round

Oats, peas, beans, and barley grow.

It is a masterpiece of the Indo-European poet's formulaic verbal art. Consider the order of the elements, which is anything but random. The two cereals *oats* and *barley* are distracted, positioned to frame the two legumes *peas* and *beans*. The latter are linked by the indexical labial stop and identical vowel /pi-/, /bi-/. *Beans* must follow *peas* in order to alliterate with *barley*. *Barley*, as the only disyllable comes last on the list, in conformity with Behaghel's law of increasing numbers.

The verb *grow* still surfaces in the underlying sentence-final position which it has occupied since Indo-European times. And *oats* must come first, to form a perfect phonetic ring-composition; the whole utterance, the seven-syllable poetic verse-line sentence begins and ends with the vowel /o-/: *oats, grow*.

This particular formulaic utterance now functions only to amuse children; its surface linguistic expression is of no great antiquity, though doubtless many generations, perhaps some centuries older than the present day. But in its essential semantics, formulaics, and poetics it could perfectly well have been periodically and continuously recreated on the same model, over the course of the past six or seven thousand years. We could have in this round ringing in our ears the transformation of the central merism of an Indo-European agricultural prayer, harvest song, or the like<sup>90</sup> (Watkins 1995: 47-49).

We may now add here another, and a strong, contender to his list of possible IE contexts for the merism, a ritual dialogue taking place during the first plowing. However, the merism in our enumerative list has *prosperity* on every level as the yield of the plow in the earth. With the phrase *annam annādyam*, where the second word is itself a merism in compound form, the list encompasses the movement from the specific to the general for produce: grain to food, or rice (to grain) to food, but that figure is itself only part of the greater merism of total prosperity indicated by “knowledge, prosperity, increase, progeny, livestock, (and) [the specific staple] food, [and the general category of] food to eat.”

From this perspective, we can return to AVŚ 3.17.3 (which of course is from the hymn recited during the same ritual as the dialogue), and see the same merism in the plow turning up “a cow, a sheep, a chariot-cart with a platform, and a lovely young lady,” *gām áviṃ prasthāvad rathavāhanam pībarīm ca prapharvyām*. Here the same indexing to

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<sup>90</sup>Watkins continues, and supports his contention with six cognate formulas for the merism in Homeric Greek, Avestan, Vedic Sanskrit, and Hittite (in addition to the English oats, peas, beans, and barley grow).

total prosperity is made, but this time without the explicit mention of (a) grain or food, which Watkin's saw as the seed of the inherited meristic formula. The omission here of grain/food among the good things coming out of plowing the earth is certainly marked, and of course is implied necessarily. It confirms that even this enumerative list without grain/food (in AVŚ 3.17.3) is a transformation of the same inherited IE formula, and so we now have two Vedic instances (KauśS 20.19 and AVŚ 3.17.3, etc.) of the same traditional merism in an enumerative list, with a unique extension of the indexed reference from food in general to total prosperity.

### **3.5. Kṛṣi Sūkta: Chapter Summary and Conclusion**

Thus far in this chapter we have examined the Kṛṣi Sūkta, AVŚ 3.17, from various different perspectives in turn. First we examined the hymn itself, verse by verse, examining the language in detail, semantically and stylistically, as a coherent unitary composition, and as pertaining to the complex of Prosperity and Plow. We examined the widespread variants for the verses of the Kṛṣi Sūkta across the *saṃhitās*, and we noticed already at the *saṃhitā* level the application of ritual plowing in non-agricultural ritual context. We then turned to explore some of the contexts for those variants in more detail. We examined TS 4.5a-u, in which the relevant verses were integrated into a passage describing the ritual plowing in the preparation of a site for the fire altar in the *agnicayana* ritual. We then examined AVP 2.22, the divergent but related counterpart hymn to the Kṛṣi Sūkta in the other Atharvavedic *saṃhitā*, of the Paippalāda *śākhā*. We used the typology developed by Insler (1998) to examine the textual development of

these hymns in the context he elucidated about the multi-staged redactional history of the AV *saṃhitās*; some hymns can be reconstructed to an Ur redaction of “books” organized by the number of verses in the hymns contained. We investigated the sharing of material using first AVŚ 3.17 and then AVP 2.22 as a baseline, and thereby discovered the particular importance of MS 2.7.12. Using it then as the comparative baseline, it seemed most probable that it served as a compendious survey of plowing verses not included in RV 4.57. We used the core verses of MS 2.7.12 as a window into the development of the AV hymns in relation to the RV and YV traditions at a specific moment in time. We confirmed for the specific case of AVŚ 3.17/AVP 2.22 that Insler's general principle, of counterpart AV hymns being placed in different books in their respective *saṃhitās* indicating incorporation during the second redactions, is valid here. We concluded the examination of the textual development of the AV *kṛṣi* hymns by speculating based on the evidence that prior to the second redaction, an early *triṣṭubh* core “Ur hymn” had already regionally differentiated into parallel hymns having both exclusive and shared material between them by the time of the first redaction, which we speculated further may have contributed their omission at that point. Next then we shifted our focus back to the received text of the Kṛṣi Sūkta (AVŚ 3.17), and examined its ritual employment according to its *saṃhitāvidhi*, the ritual injunctions contained in the *Kausika Sūtra*, a unique text of the *kalpa sūtra* genre which has both *grhya* material and the “magical” material particular to the AV tradition. The ritual described corresponded well to the Kṛṣi Sūkta, ritually orchestrating in detail the verses and oblations to accompany the agricultural procedure of plowing: from the yoking of the animals, the assembly of the

plow and share, cooperatively dragging the plow forth, and then finally impregnating the earth by sowing seed for future cooperative reproductive cycles connecting gods, humans, animals, plants, and the physical forces of nature (i.e., the gods, again). We took note that KauśS 20 also contained new *mantra* material, and an exceptional ritual dialogue between the sacrificer and his wife. With reference to the work of Calvert Watkins, we discovered in the ritual dialogue inherited meristic structures for indicating higher taxons of agricultural produce in a traditional, stylistically elaborated, enumerative list of its specific members. The characteristically Vedic elaboration of this traditional merism shifted the higher taxon indicated from the general category of food to a conception of total prosperity, as the result of the plow. The connection of Prosperity and Plow was very the gist of the answer the husband, holding a clump of soil moistened with the remnant of the oblation, gave to his inquiring wife in the form of a simple list: “knowledge, prosperity, increase, progeny, livestock, (and) food, food to eat.”

Overall, the examination of the Kṛṣi Sūkta from these various perspectives has demonstrated a number of points about the role of agriculture in the Vedic worldview of the Mantra period. The formal association of Prosperity and Plow remained productive as the thematic nexus for agriculture as the Vedic tribes transitioned geographically from the Northwest to the Gangetic Basin, and transitioned socially from semi-nomadic pastoralism to sedantism. That is one of the more important conclusions that must be drawn from placing the wide distribution of the *kṛṣi* verse material across the *saṃhitās* onto a plausible historical framework. Another important conclusion that emerges from the verse-sharings is that plowing had become an item in the greater repertoire of

traditional ritual. Perhaps and probably that had long been the case; regardless, we have extensive evidence for it already in the Mantra period. We saw that the analogy of agriculture to sexual reproduction was a recurrent theme, supported in numerous discrete instances in the verses. Turning then to another perspective, we saw that the ritual application of the Kṛṣi Sūkta according to the *Kauśika Sūtra* concurred and elaborated. It reinforced the reproductive analogy especially in the short ritual dialogue, through the very presence of the wife, and through the meristic reply indexing total prosperity through a list of the good things turned up by the plow. Agriculture was not divorced from ritual, or vice versa, in the early strata. In a broader theoretical perspective, ritual finds its proof positive in agriculture. It is the ultimate vindication of the analogical worldview (i.e., the poetic and the magical). The Plow results not only in food, but turns up all manner of wonderful things: a cow, a sheep, a chariot-cart, a lovely young lady, progeny, and even knowledge— or, to state the same differently, an all-encompassing “Prosperity.”



## Chapter 4: Harvest and the Sedentary Transition

### 4.1. The Harvest and Contextual Change

The nexus of Prosperity and Plow we have been examining needs to be kept in proper perspective. We have seen that the association between Prosperity and Plow was deified, poetically formalized, and ritualized, and thereby integrated into the Vedic worldview, but it is crucial to keep two observations in mind. One is that the plowing material would only be utilized once per year, presumably all throughout the early periods during which the Vedic tribes still trekked seasonally on the *yogakṣema* cycle. For the Ṛgvedic and the immediately succeeding periods, pastoralism was more significant than agriculture in terms of religious ritual and symbolism, and livestock was a more important source of sustenance. The second observation is that, although the Prosperity and Plow association does give us a relatively clear picture of how agriculture was conceptualized in “religious” terms, and although plowing often could have served to represent agriculture at large as a synecdoche, plowing is only a single facet of the agricultural process.

We can now turn to the harvest, but necessarily only with due consideration given to the import of the changes involved in the progressive transition to sedentism. The *Ṛgveda* does not contain any harvest hymns. For our present purposes, we can use plowing and harvest as two contrasting indices for the manner of agriculture's conceptual integration into the prevalent worldview conveyed throughout the development of the Vedic corpus.

As we have mentioned, there are several overlapping broad historical trends which contextualize the glimpses the Vedic corpus allow us into the shifting conceptual figuration of agriculture:

- The chronological transition from the Bronze Age (*R̥gveda*) to the Iron Age (Subsequent Vedic).
- The transition from semi-nomadic pastoralism to sedentism.
- The geographic transition (of the “center of gravity” of the Vedic culture specifically) from the Northwest region to the Gangetic Basin.

Each of these has its nuances and its caveats. These trends are merely generalizations in the broadest historical terms. Above all, it is crucial to remember that the texts afford us only small glimpses of moments scattered across lengthy stretches of time. The advent of iron, for instance, occurred before its adoption for the plowshare specifically. Overall, I hope to show here that while the Plow had become stabilized through the formality of its traditional association with Prosperity, remaining productive as a theological and ritual nexus all the way from the *R̥gvedic* to the *Sūtra* period, the cultural and conceptual role of the harvest was much more variable, and the associated changes reflect contextual adaptation more specifically.

These contextual adaptations of the harvest pertain to the ritual transformation made as the Vedic tribes transitioned from a single annual harvest (of barley during the *kṣema*, “settled,” period) to the multiple harvests of both the *rabi* (spring harvest, modernly often referred to as “winter crops,” such as wheat) and *kharif* crops (autumn

harvest, generally grown during the summer monsoon such as rice and millet).<sup>91</sup> In terms of textual chronology, this occurred primarily in the Mantra and Brāhmaṇa periods.<sup>92</sup> Here is it important to remember that the extant texts reflect only certain specific Vedic tribes at certain times, and some tribes made this transition earlier than others.

For the Vedic tribes during the earlier, semi-nomadic, periods, the harvest would occur during the sedentary *kṣema* period, before the (usually eastern or southern) annual trek. The transition to sedentism in the Gangetic Basin is associated with the adoption of the multiple staple grain crops that are produced by year-round cultivation, including rice (in wet-cultivation), millet, barley, and wheat.<sup>93</sup> By and large, these changes are observable in texts and ritual connected to annual periodicity, some of which we will explore further in this chapter.

#### **4.2. Agriculture and the Seasons in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa**

We can now turn to a passage in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (ŚBM 1.6.1.1-5/ŚBK 2.5.3.1-4) that reflects the sedentary transition to both *rabi* and *kharif* cultivation. The ritual adjustments were justified in mythological terms, and the theme in this particular passage is the changing role of the Seasons. This narrative passage involves the *devās* and *ásuras* as enemies vying over the Seasons, and the question of whether the Seasons should be included as a recipient of the sacrifice. The nature of the *ásuras* here is clearly

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<sup>91</sup>*Rabi* and *kharif* are just the modern terms in common use, Arabic loanwords hailing from Mughal times.

<sup>92</sup> Witzel 1995, 4-7.

<sup>93</sup>In fact TS 5.2.5.5 knows of seven kinds of crops, and BU 6, 3, 13 knows of ten. See Rau 1957, 25 for an enumeration with an attempt to identify them with modern botanical nomenclature (Rau was assisted by a botanist in plant identification).

that of the opponents of the gods. This conforms to Hale's seminal tracing<sup>94</sup> of the semantic development of the word *ásura*. As late and grammatically plural it indicates the primary rivals and enemies of the gods, as opposed to the earlier usage of “lord” in a sense not opposed to or exclusive of the gods. The term became increasingly interchangeable with *dasyus*, *dāsas*, *rakṣasas*. This development then supported a transference between the rivals of the *devás* mythologically and the human rivals of the Vedic tribes. As Hale explains:

There is never a clear distinction between history and mythology in Vedic literature, but as the period of the Aryan invasion drew to a close there was even less reason to refer to historical human enemies of the people. Thus the adevic *ásuras*, the human enemies of the Aryan people, who were described by the texts as enemies of the god Indra, became mythologized into a class of beings who opposed the class of beings called gods (Hale 1986, 181).

To be clear, I do not take the *ásuras* here as necessarily representing any *specific* human communities, just as a mythic representation of local “outsider” custom in such a way that Vedic authority could transition to embrace that custom. Negotiating such transition seems to fit the historical context of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* well. According to Witzel:

... by the time this portion of ŚB was composed [5.5.2.5.], the Kuru-Pañcālas no longer trek! – They now must have taken more to rice and barley<sup>95</sup> agriculture than before; cf, that ŚB speaks of villages (*grāma*) being close to each other, and that the king even can present land to Brahmins. This again indicates a certain gap between the composition of the older YV Saṃhitās and the (later) Brāhmaṇas (Witzel 1986, 28 n. 83).

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<sup>94</sup> Hale 1986.

<sup>95</sup>The intention must be rice and millet.

First I will give the text with Eggeling's translation of the Mādhyandina recension (ŚBM), which itself alone sufficiently demonstrates the association of agriculture with the Seasons as mythic entities. Then I will give the text of the Kāṇva recension along with my own translation, which differs from Eggeling's in a way that is significant for understanding the relationship between the *devás* and *ásuras* on this issue. Both interpretations of the passage demonstrate that the issue of the Seasons' share of the sacrifice is related to agriculture, however. The bracketed question marks, “[?],” in Eggeling's ŚBM translation are my own insertions, primarily indicating doubt on the referents of the pronouns.

*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (Mādhyandina) 1.6.1.1-5.<sup>96</sup>

ŚBM 1.6.1.1.

*rtávo ha vai devésu yajñé bhāgám īsire | á no yajñé bhajata má no yajñád antárgatástv evá nó 'pi yajñé bhāgá iti |*

“Now the Seasons were desirous to have a share in the sacrifice among the gods, and said, 'Let us share in the sacrifice! Do not exclude us from the sacrifice! Let us have a share in the sacrifice!’”

ŚBM 1.6.1.2.

*tád vai devá ná jajñuḥ | tá rtávo devésv ájānatsv ásurān upāvartantāpriyān devānām dviṣató bhrátrvyān |*

“The gods, however, did not approve of this. The gods not approving, the Seasons went to the *ásuras*, the malignant, spiteful enemies of the gods.”

ŚBM 1.6.1.3.

*té haitām edhatúm edhām cakrire | yām eṣām etām anuśṛṇvánti kṛṣánto ha smaivá pūrve vápanto yánti lunántó 'pare mṛñántaḥ śásvad dhaibhyo 'kṛṣṭapacyā evaiśadhayaḥ pecire |*

“Those (*ásuras*) then throve in such a manner that they (the gods) heard of it; for even while the foremost of the (*ásuras* [?]) were still ploughing and sowing, those behind them [?] were already engaged in reaping and threshing: even without tilling the plants ripened forthwith for them.”<sup>97</sup>

<sup>96</sup>ŚBM (1.6.1.1-5) is given with Eggeling's S.B.E. translation, and then is followed by the corresponding passage in ŚBK (2.5.3.1-4). At ŚBM 1.6.1.3, I have inserted Caland's proposed correction (1931) to Eggeling's translation.

<sup>97</sup>Caland comments upon the text here in his 1931 “Corrections of Eggeling's Translation of the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa”:

ŚBM 1.6.1.4.

*tād vai devānām āga āsa | kānīya in nv āto dviṣān dviṣatè 'rātīyati kīm v etāvanmātrām  
úpajānīta yáthedām itò 'nyathāsad íti |*

“This now caused anxiety to the gods: 'That owing to that (desertion of the Seasons), enemy (viz. the *ásuras*) seeks to injure enemy (viz. us) is of little consequence; but this indeed goes too far: try to find out henceforth how this may be different!’”

ŚBM 1.6.1.5.

*té hocuḥ ṛtūn evānumantrayāmahā iti kénéti prathamān evainān yajñé yajāméti |*

“Then they said, 'Let us invite the Seasons!' – 'How?' – 'Let us offer prayer to them first of all at the sacrifice!’”

Eggeling’s translation is problematic because it describes the same crop being plowed for (*kṛśántaḥ*) as having ripened without plowing or cultivation (*akṛśtapacyāḥ*) (ŚBM 1.6.1.3). My translation, which is speculative, seeks to ameliorate this inconsistency by understanding two groups, the gods and the *ásuras*, each having their own crops on different fields; the gods’ field was plowed, the *ásuras*’ crop was *akṛśtapacyá*. For clarity, my reading of the corresponding part of the ŚBK passage is as follows:

The former (*pūrve*, the gods) would go (*sma ... yānti*) plowing (*kṛśánto*) and sowing (*vápanto*), the latter (*aparé*, the *ásuras*) would follow (*sma ... anuyanti*) reaping (*lunáto*) and threshing (*mṛñantó*); the plants (*óśadhayaḥ*) were (*āsuḥ*) ripened without plowing/cultivation (*akṛśtapacyā*) for them (*ebhyāḥ*, the *ásuras*)” (from ŚBK 2.5.3.1, corresponding to ŚBM 1.6.1.3).

My interpretation envisions that the *ásuras*’ crop was harvested right after the gods' crops was planted, either because the *ásuras* were harvesting wild grain or that they had

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*té haitām edhām cakrire yām eṣām etām anuśṛṇvānti* “Those (*ásuras*) then throve in such a manner that they (the gods) heard of it”. This cannot be right, as the text had the present tense. The meaning is rather: “They reached that prosperity, which they (the men of present times) hear them to possess.”

Caland omits *edhatúm*, which was merely an oversight. As will be noted below, he does not discuss the corresponding ŚBK reading in relation to this issue.

actually plowed and sown but previously, at a time the Vedic's would consider out of season. There are a number of possibilities for why the *ásuras*' crop would be described as *akṛṣṭapacyá*, including that certain indigenous cultivation practices may not have included the use of a plow yoked to draft-animals, and so may not have been considered *kṛṣṭa* by the Vedic peoples. Regardless of the specific details, it is clear that the passage says the gods were motivated to include the Seasons in the sacrifice because of the *ásuras*' agricultural success.

My reading avoids the logical inconsistency of a single crop (as being both *kṛṣṭa* and *akṛṣṭa*) by differing from Eggeling's translation regarding the referents of pronouns; most importantly, I want to take *púrve* and (*á*)*pare* in both recensions as “the former (= the gods)” and “the latter (= the *ásuras*)” instead of his “the foremost of the (*ásuras*)” and “those behind them.” Although there are important differences in the passages, they (ŚBM and K) are sufficiently close that my translation of the ŚBK passage shows how I would read the referents in both. The changed reading results in an explicit contrast between the gods' plowing and sowing and the *ásuras*' reaping and threshing in different fields, which then motivates the gods to change their minds about including the Seasons in the sacrifice.

The compound *akṛṣṭapacyáḥ* “ripened without plowing/cultivation” is interesting. It could be taken to signify the apparent disparity in timing when another's harvest follows shortly one's own laborious sowing. Rau associated the term with *āraṇyā oṣadhīḥ* “wild plants,” but it is clear that grains specifically are referred to in these passages

(being reaped and threshed).<sup>98</sup> Another possibility is that it corresponds to the actual situation of the disparity of requisite labor between the *rabi* and *kharif* crops.

According to Maconachie:

The first requisite then in ploughing is that there should be plenty of it, and this holds good as a general rule though here and there special (mostly light) soils do best with comparatively little interference from the 'crooked stick.' But given this general maxim there are as will be seen wide differences of degree necessary for various crops: broadly speaking the spring crops need much more tillage than those of the autumn. The abundantly prolific power supplied by nature in the 'four months' of the rainy season renders unnecessary for most the Kharif crops, the unremitting toil wanted to make a successful Rabi (Maconachie 1890, *Selected Agricultural Proverbs of the Panjab*, p. 83).

We can now turn to the corresponding ŚBK passage. I have provided parenthetical remarks to clarify the pronominal referents both grammatically and semantically as necessary.

*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (Kāṇva) 2.5.3.1-4.

ŚBK 2.5.3.1.

*ṛtávo ha vai yajñé devéṣu bhāgám īṣiré 'stu no yajñá á no yajñé bhajatéti tád u ha devā ná jajñus té ha devéṣv ájānatsv ásurān upāvavṛtus té haitām edhatúm aidhanta yām eṣām anuśṛṇvánti kṛṣānto ha sma vāpantaḥ pūrve yānti lunānto ha sma mṛṇantó 'paré 'nuyanty akṛṣṭapacyā haibhyá ośadhaya āsuh ||1||*

The Seasons desired a share among the gods in the sacrifice. “Let there be a sacrifice for us! Share the sacrifice with us!” Yet the gods did not assent thus. Given that the gods were not assenting, they went to the ásuras. They (*té*, the Seasons) increased (*aidhanta*) that (*etām*) prosperity (*edhatúm*), which (*yām*, prosperity) they (men of present day) hear of (*anuśṛṇvánti*)<sup>99</sup> on their part (*eṣām*,

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<sup>98</sup>Rau's discussion of the term occurs in a context describing the gathering of foodstuffs: “Die Leute lebten von bebautem (*kṛṣṭa*) und unbebautem (*akṛṣṭa*) Lande' was auf ersterem wuch, war *kṛṣṭapacya* oder *grāmya*, das andere *akṛṣṭapacya* oder *āraṇya*; man unterschied also *grāmyā ośadhīḥ*, angebante Cerealien, und *āraṇyā ośadhīḥ*, d.h. Vor allem fruchttragende Bäume (Baumobst = *vṛkṣya*, *vānaspatya*), sowie wilde Getreidearten und Leguminosen” (Rau 1957, 22).

<sup>99</sup>Caland notes here the manuscript readings he has rejected in favor of the emendation *anuśṛṇvān* (footnote 7): “Uncertain'; -*ṇvāh*, -*ṇvantaḥ*, -*ṇvam* in mss.” According to his introduction, Caland considers *anuśṛṇvān* in ŚBK 2.5.3.1 to be an augmentless preterite (1926, 42). There he notes the ŚBM reading as well: “here [ŚBM] has the unaccountable present *anuśṛṇvanti*.” Nevertheless, he later (1931) corrects Eggeling's translation of *anuśṛṇvanti* to reflect the present tense, which I have emended the text here to reflect. It makes a difference semantically because the present tense at face value changes the agent to



of the *ásuras*). The former (*púrve*, the gods) would go (*sma ... yánti*) plowing (*kṛṣánto*) and sowing (*vápanto*), the latter (*aparé*, the *ásuras*) would follow (*sma ... anuyanti*) reaping (*lunáto*) and threshing (*mṛṇantó*); the plants (*ósadhayaḥ*) were (*āsuh*) ripened without plowing/cultivation (*akṛṣṭapacyā*) for them (*ebhyáḥ*, the *ásuras*).

ŚBK 2.5.3.2.

*tád u vai devánā́m átathā́sa kán̄tya ín nú táto dviṣán dviṣáte 'rāt̄īyed átha kíṃ tāvanmā́tram* ||2||

This was not agreeable to the gods. (They thought:) “Even because of something much lesser is an enemy hostile to an enemy. But how much more is this!”

ŚBK 2.5.3.3.

*té hocuḥ kathám idám íto 'nyathā́ syād íti té hocur ṛt̄ū́n evópa[ma]ntrayā́mahā́ íti té hocus t̄ā́n katham úpamantrayemah̄īti prathamā́n éva vo yajñéna yajā́mahā́ íty enā́n bravā́méti* ||3||

They said: “How could it be different from this?” They said: “We will invite (*upa[ma]ntrayā́mahai*, subj.) the Seasons.” They said “How should we invite them?” We must say (*bravā́ma*) to them: ‘We will sacrifice (*yajā́mahai*) to you first of all.’”

ŚBK 2.5.3.4.

*sá hovā́cāgn̄ir yán m̄ā́m̄ prathamā́m yájadhve kvà máma táto bhā́gáḥ syād íti té hocur ná tvā́m āyátanā́c cyavayeméti sá yád agnér bhā́gám abhiváyamā́nā́ agn̄ím āyátanā́n nác̄yavayan ná hā́yátanā́c cyavate yá evám etád véda t̄ā́n hā́gn̄ir upamantrayā́m cakr̄é té hocuḥ ká́m bhā́gám abhyéyā́méti* ||4||

Then Agni said: “Since (*yád*) you sacrifice to me first, where would my share be after that (*tátah*)? They said: “We would not have you move from your place.” Being called near to Agni's share (*agnér bhā́gám abhiváyamā́nā́*), they did not cause Agni to move from his place (*agn̄ím āyátanā́n nác̄yavayan*) – who knows thus does not move from his place. (Then) Agni invited them. They said: “What share would we obtain (*abhyéyā́ma*)?”

While both translations clearly indicate an association between agriculture and the Seasons, my different interpretation of the pronominal referents allows a more complex relation to emerge between the *devás* and *ásuras* in relation to agricultural practice: the *devás* are motivated to include the Seasons in the sacrifice by the *ásuras*' agricultural success. This is a mythological justification for the changes to ritual occasioned and

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“men of present day” instead of “the gods,” although I think both readings are compatible with *púrve* and *ápāre* in the sense of “the former” (as the gods) and “the latter” (as the *ásuras*). I think both Caland's omission of the syllable *-ma-* in his edition (ŚBK 2.5.3.3), and of *edhatúm* in his “Corrections” article are just accidental since he doesn't explain them.

necessitated by the transition to the multiple crops and harvests of the Gangetic Basin. By the time of the Brāhmaṇas, the *ásuras* had become above all the mythical enemies of the gods, yet I believe we can see here that on a mythological level they are representing outsider custom that had been incorporated into Vedic praxis, over centuries during the Mantra period when the transition to sedentism occurred and ritual changes accompanied.<sup>100</sup>

The Seasons, who are invited to the sacrifice by the gods in the passage because of the *ásuras*' agricultural success, hold an important place in the mythic and ritual changes that occurred as the Vedic tribes adapted to the sedentary crop calendar in the Gangetic basin. The conception of the seasons (*ṛtú*) is known to have undergone significant changes, and even following ritual formalization could be used casually as well as formally. The entry in VINS gives a concise but thorough overview,<sup>101</sup> highlighting especially the various reckonings at which the seasons are numbered:

**Ṛtu**, 'season,' is a term repeatedly mentioned from the Rigveda onwards. Three seasons of the year are often alluded to, but the names are not usually specified. In one passage of the Rigveda spring (*vasanta*), summer (*grīṣma*), and autumn (*śarad*) are given. The Rigveda knows also the rainy season (*prā-vṛṣ*) and the winter (*himā*, *hemanta*). A more usual division (not found in the Rigveda) is into five seasons, *vasanta*, *grīṣma*, *varṣā*, *śarad*, *hemanta-śiśira*; but occasionally the five are otherwise divided, *varṣā-śarad* being made one season. Sometimes six seasons are reckoned, *hemanta* and *śiśira* being divided, so that the six seasons can be made parallel to the twelve months of the year. A still more artificial arrangement makes the seasons seven, possibly by reckoning the intercalary month as a season, as Weber and Zimmer hold, or more probably because of the

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<sup>100</sup>This accords well with Hale's account of the *ásuras* in the Brāhmaṇas: "It should be noted how similar the conflict of the gods and *ásuras* is to conflict of the Aryans and the *dasyus*. In both cases the conflict seems to arise because the *ásuras* of *dasyus* have thing which the gods or Aryans want, such as land or wealth. Of course, in the case of the gods and *ásuras*, everything is put on a cosmic scale and ritualized. The gods take the worlds from the *ásuras* and not just the land of India, and the deciding factor in the conflict is often the proper use of some ritual" (Hale 1986, 171).

<sup>101</sup>Refer to the entry itself for the extensive annotations providing the textual citations.

predilection for the number seven, as Roth suggests. Occasionally the *ṛtu* is applied to the months. The last season, according to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, is *hemanta*.

The growth of the division of the seasons from three to five is rightly explained by Zimmer as indicating the advance of the Vedic Indians towards the east. It is not Rigvedic, but dominates the later Saṃhitās. Traces of an earlier division of the year into winter and summer do not appear clearly in the Rigveda, where the appropriate words *himā* and *samā* are merely general appellations for the year, and where *śarad* is commoner than either as a designation of the year, because it denotes the harvest, a time of overwhelming importance to a young agricultural people. The division of the year in one passage of the Atharvaveda into two periods of six months is merely formal, and in no way an indication of old tradition.

The geographic transition apparent in the changes to the traditional reckonings of the seasons has long been understood. The two equivalent ŚB passages we have examined highlight this complex transition as it relates to agriculture and reveals the contours of the traditional conception, involving relation to the seasons and the *ásuras*. Interpreting the (post-Rgvedic) *ásuras* as representing indigenous sedentary agriculturalists coincides well with the more recent view of settlement pattern which has emerged from archaeological research, supplanting an earlier, more naïve, view:

Of the two geographical regions of interest the Ganga Valley, prior to BC 1000, presents few difficulties of interpretation. In spite of the impression conveyed by some accounts (especially [ŚB] 1.4.1.14 ff) that the area was only brought under plough by advancing 'Aryan' tribes, archaeological research has shown that it was well-settled by the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC (Allchin & Erdosy 1995: 75).

This is a deeply significant point for our investigation. The interactions between the indigenous agriculturalists and the semi-nomadic Vedic tribes as they themselves transitioned to sedentism are shrouded in obscurity; the historical is couched in the mythical here, with ritual changes justified by narratives about the *devás* and *ásuras*, as we have seen. Using the *devás*, *ásuras*, Seasons and sacrifice as elements of a thematic

nexus, we can examine the sedentary transition as it pertains to the ritual modifications reflected in the texts. The harvest is one locus where we are able to trace significant changes. As the Prosperity and Plow theme remained a constant into and throughout the Brāhmaṇa period, the theme of harvest contrasts by successive discontinuities, which finally result in the formalizations of the Āgrayaṇa, “First fruits,” and Cāturmāsya, “Four-monthly,” rites. As we will see, these ritual formalizations were novel (occurring during the Mantra period just preceding the Brāhmaṇas) and pertained to the shifts in the agricultural calendar involved in the sedentary transition occurring in the Gangetic Basin.

#### **4.3. An Atharvavedic Harvest Hymn (AVŚ 3.24/AVP 5.30)**

Before we turn to the Āgrayaṇa and Cāturmāsya rites, we should first examine an Atharvavedic hymn which does seem to pertain to the harvest, although the tradition remembers and preserves it simply as a hymn for crop fertility. Like the Kṛṣi Sūkta (AVŚ 3.17/AVP 2.22), this hymn occurs in both the Śaunaka and Paippalāda recensions (AVŚ 3.24/AVP 5.30). It is also similar in that, being placed in different “books” organized by hymn length in the respective recensions, the hymns were included only during the second redaction. Unlike the Kṛṣi Sūkta however, none of the verses recur in wide dispersion throughout the other *saṃhitās*, and thus we lack the comparative perspective that enabled the detailed investigation into the textual development.

We will turn now to AVŚ 3.24, then proceed immediately to the distribution tables and to the AVP counterpart hymn, 5.30. The distribution tables clarify that the textual development of the counterparts is not nearly as complex as it was for the Kṛṣi Sūkta, and that the Ur AVŚ hymn in this case is easily reconstructable.

*Atharvavedasamhitā* (Śaunaka) 3.24

AVŚ 3.24.1

*páyasvatīr ośadhayaḥ páyasvan māmakaṃ vacaḥ |  
átho páyasvatīnām ā bhare 'hām sahasraśāḥ ||1||*

The plants are rich in milk, my speech is rich in milk, now I bring (the milk) of those rich in milk by the thousands.<sup>102</sup>

**a) *payasvatīr ośadhayaḥ*:** RV 10.17.14a; AVŚ 18.3.56a; AVP 5.30.1a; TS 1.5.10.2a; KS 35.4a (*payasvatīr āpa*); TB 3.7.4.7a; MŚ 1.4.1.5a; ApŚ 4.2.3,9; 9.17.1. Pratiśa: *payasvatīḥ* KauśS 21.1; 82.9. Cf. BṛhD 7.10.

**b) *payasvan māmakaṃ vacaḥ*:** RV 10.17.14b; AVŚ 18.3.56b (*payah*); AVP 5.30.1b; KS 35.4b

**c) *atho payasvatīnām*:** AVP 5.30.1c (*-vatām payah*).

also: *apām payaso yat payah*: AVŚ 18.3.56c; TS 1.5.10.3c; TB 3.7.4.7c; MŚ 1.4.1.5c.

= *apām payasvad it payah*: RV 10.17.14c; AVP 2.76.1c (*yat*); KS 35.4c (*yat*).

**d) *ā bhare 'hām sahasraśāḥ*:** = *ā harāmi sahasraśāḥ*: AVP 5.30.1d.

Whitney translates the second stanza as “of them that are rich in milk I bring by thousands.” His phraseology here seems contrived to preserve the original case relations; the problem does not occur in the AVP equivalent, where *payas* is given as the object, and so I have understood an elided *páyas* here. The importance of the pastoral imagery here is clear, as it was in the plowing material as well.<sup>103</sup>

AVŚ 3.24.2

*védāhām páyasvantam cakāra dhānyām bahú |  
saṃbhṛtvā nāma yó devás táṃ vayám havāmahe yóyo áyajvano gṛhé ||2||*

I know the one rich in milk who made the grain bountiful. We call that god who is named Saṃbhṛtvān, whichever is in the house of the non-sacrificer.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>102</sup>Whitney gives: “Rich in milk [are] the herbs, rich in milk my utterance (*vacas*); accordingly, of them that are rich in milk I bring by thousands.”

<sup>103</sup>The AVP reading *payasvatām payas* seems secondary to me, and there are several reasons for this. One is that the AVP reading elides the first person pronoun *ahām*, while *ahām* and *vayám* both occur with finite verbs in the next verse, and so seem to have a performative import for the ritual. Another reason the AVŚ reading seems preferable is that the middle voice seems appropriate, and its being followed by the subject *ahām* seems original. The AVP reading *āharāmi* has a roughly equivalent meaning to *ā bhare 'hām*, and preserves aspects of the phonetics of the phrase as a whole: *ā, ra/ā*, as well as the *-ha-* of *ahām*, belonging to the AVŚ phrase as a whole but not to the verb *ā bhare* alone.

<sup>104</sup> Whitney gives: “I know him that is rich in milk; he had made the grain much; the god that is “collector” by name, him do we call, whichever is in the house of one who sacrifices not.”

- a) *vedāhaṃ payasvantam*: = *ahaṃ veda yathā payaḥ*: AVP 5.30.2a.  
b) *cakāra dhānyam bahu*: AVP 5.30.2b.  
c) *saṃbhṛtvā nāma yo devaḥ*: AVP 5.30.2c.  
d) *taṃ vayaṃ havāmahe*: AVP 5.30.2d (*yajāmahe*).  
e) *yo-yo ayajvano gr̥he*: = *sarvasyāyajvano gr̥he*: AVP 5.30.2e.

There are several notable features of this verse. One is the mention of a deity who is specific to the harvest, Saṃbhṛtvān, which both Whitney and Lubotsky (for the AVP equivalent) have translated as “Collector.” As *páyasvantam* “rich in milk,” he made the crops abundant. The *páyas*, “milk,” association, connects this hymn thematically with the traditional Plow constellation we have examined in detail. I believe we find features of Saṃbhṛtvān described further below where a figure is referred to as “Hundred-handed” and “Thousand-handed” (*śátahasta ... sáhasrahasta*, vs. 5), which makes perfect sense as an image of the harvest. Sāyaṇa glosses *páyasvantam*, “rich in milk,” with *sāravantam*, “nourishing.” Sāyaṇa's comments on this verse are interesting (given in full in the notes<sup>105</sup>). He emphasizes the agentive nature of the name's morphology by restating it

<sup>105</sup>Sāyaṇa on AVŚ 3.24.2:

*payasvantam sāravantam devam ahaṃ veda jānāmi | sa devaḥ dhānyam vr̥thiyavādikam bahu cakāra adhikam sphītam kṛtavān | tathā saṃbhṛtvā saṃbharaṇaśīlah yatra kutrāpi sarvatra sthitasya sārāśasya madhukaravat saṃbhartā nāma etat saṃjño yo devas taṃ devam vayaṃ havāmahe stutibhir āhvayāmaḥ | saṃbhṛtveti | saṃpūrvād bhṛñāḥ 'anyebhyo 'pi dr̥śyante' (Pā. 3.2.75) iti kvanip | 'hrasvasya piti' (Pā. 6.1.71.) iti tuk | adhunā saṃbhartavyaṃ nirdīśati – [[]] yoya iti | ayajvanaḥ akṛtayāgasya dhanāḍhyasya gr̥he yoyo vr̥thiyavagohiranyādirūpaḥ padārtho 'sti | taṃ sarvam āhṛtya saṃbhṛtvā nāma devaḥ asmabhyam prayacchatu ity arthaḥ | ayajvana iti 'suyajorñvanip' (Pā. 3.2.103) | naṅsamāse avyayapūrvapadaprakṛtisvaratvam |*

The word *payasvantam*, “rich in milk,” means the *deva* is *sāravantam*, “nourishing.” The phrase *ahaṃ veda* means *jānāmi*, “I know.” The *deva* made (*cakāra*) the *dhānyam*, “grain,” meaning “rice, barley, and so forth,” (*vr̥thiyavādikam*) much/bountiful (*bahu*), meaning *kṛtavān*, “he made it,” *adhikam*, “abundant,” and *sphītam*, “thriving.” “We call that god” (*taṃ devam vayaṃ havāmahe*) means “we invoke (him) with praise” (*stutibhir āhvayāmaḥ*), that god who (*yo devas*) has this name: “Saṃbhartā,” “Collector” (*saṃbhartā nāma etatsaṃjño*; stem: *saṃbhartṛ*), like a (bee) honey-maker (*madhukaravat*), of the best portions placed (*sthitasya sārāśasya*), he is one whose conduct is gathering (*saṃbharaṇaśīlah*) anywhere and everywhere (*yatra kutrāpi sarvatra*) – thus he is called Saṃbhṛtvā, “Collector” (*tathā saṃbhṛtvā*; stem: *saṃbhṛtvān*). The name is actually “Saṃbhṛtvā” (*saṃbhṛtveti*; citing nominative with *iti*). Due to the prefix

with the common *-tr* suffix: *sambhartr*. He carefully explains the morphology of *sambhrtvan* according to the rules of Pāṇini, seemingly taking care to disprove that *sambhrtvā* could be a gerund (which would typically be formed with *-ya* when there is a verbal prefix).

Whitney notes that *pāda* d is defective; he suggests reading *taṃ-taṃ* (correlating with *yo-yah*), but notes uncertainty. Whitney has: “him do we call, whichever is in the house of one who sacrifices not” for *tāṃ vayāṃ havāmahe yoyo ayajvano grhé*; he then clarifies his interpretation: “That is, away from the service of the impious to that of us, the pious.” This seems to contrast with Sāyaṇa: “The meaning of the term *yo-yah* is (*yo-yah ... padārtho 'sti*) whatever object— rice, barley, cattle, gold, etc.

(*vrīhiyavagohiranyādirūpaḥ*.)” Whitney takes it as referring to the god “Collector,” while Sāyaṇa seems to be taking it to refer to “the things to be collected.” I have followed Whitney in my translation, but I admit uncertainty in the referent. What Sāyaṇa takes to be the final contextual meaning, stepping aside for a moment from the grammatical and semantic issues, is intriguing: “The meaning is that (*ity arthaḥ*) the god named Sambhrtvā, having taken all that (*taṃ sarvam āhrtya*), bestows it upon us (*asmabhyam*

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*saṃ* (*saṃpūrvād*) of the root *bhr* (*bhrñāḥ*) it is a *kvanip* formation (i.e., having *-van* suffix) [a prefixed gerund would end in *-ya* not *-tvā* according to Pāṇini] because of the rule Pā. 3.2.75 (*'anyebhyo 'pi drśyante'*) [which states that other verbs besides those ending in long vowels may take a group of suffixes including *-van*.] The affix *-t-* (*tuk*) is added to the root because of the rule Pā. 6.1.7. Now it indicates (*nirdīśati*) what should be collected (*sambhartavyam*). The word “*yo-yah*” (*yo-ya iti*): “In the house” (*grhe*) “of a non-sacrificer” (*ayajvanah*) means “of a wealthy person who has not made offering” (*akṛtayāgasya dhanādhyasya*)[.] The meaning of the term *yo-yah* is (*yo-yah ... padārtho 'sti*) those consisting of (/characterized by?) rice, barley, cattle, gold, etc. (*vrīhiyavagohiranyādirūpaḥ*). The meaning is that (*ity arthaḥ*) the god named Sambhrtvā, having taken all that (*taṃ sarvam āhrtya*), bestows it upon us (*asmabhyam prayacchatu*). The form *ayajvana* is formed according to the rule of Pā. 3.2.103 [allowing the preterite suffix *-van* for the root *yaj*]. It is in a privitive compound (*naṅsamāse*) because of being in the state having the original accent (*prakṛtisvara*) of an invariable prefix (*avyayipūrvapada*) [: *ayajvano*].

*prayacchatu*.)” The AVP equivalent (5.30.2e) for *pāda* e avoids the problematic *yó-yah* and instead has *sarvasyāyajvano grhe*, which Lubotsky translates as “in the house of every impious man.”

Who is referred to by *āyajvan*, “the non-sacrificing one”? The identity of the “non-sacrificing one” is still not clear historically. Sāyaṇa's interpretation could be compatible with the harvest raids which the Vedic tribes would conduct, but his interpretation seems to conflate what would be “collected” (rice, barley, cattle, gold) with the deity “Collector,” “collecting” those things from the non-sacrificer. As a class, the non-sacrificers have houses, in which some kind of transaction with “sacrificers” takes place, at harvest. These may well be sedentary agriculturalists with whom the still-trekking pastoralist Vedics regularly interacted, and some of whose customs became mythologized as belonging to the *ásuras*. Let us continue to the next verse with that possibility in mind.

AVŚ 3.24.3

*imā yāḥ pañca pradiśo mānavīḥ pañca kṛṣṭāyah |  
vṛṣṭe śāpaṃ nadīr ivehá sphātiṃ samāvahān ||3||*

These five directions, the five peoples, descendants of Manu, will convey abundance here like the rivers (convey) driftwood during the rain.<sup>106</sup>

**a) *imā yāḥ pañca pradiśaḥ***: AVP 5.30.6a; 11.15.3c.

also: *imā yā devīḥ pradiśas catasraḥ*: AVŚ 2.10.4a; AVP 2.3.3a. = *yā daivīs catasraḥ pradiśaḥ*: TB 2.5.6.2a; ApMB 2.12.8a (ApG 6.15.4); HG 2.4.1a.

**b) *mānavīḥ pañca kṛṣṭāyah***: AVP 5.30.6b.

**c) *vṛṣṭe śāpaṃ nadīr iva***: AVP 5.30.6d.

**d) *ihā sphātiṃ samāvaha***: AVŚ 3.24.5d (verse 5 below); AVP 5.30.6e (*samāvahān*).

also: *yatheha sphātir āyati*: AVP 5.30.5c.

<sup>106</sup>Whitney gives: “These five directions that there are, the five races (*kṛṣṭi*) descended from Manu (*mānavī*) – may they bring fatness (*sphāti*) together here, as streams [bring] drift when it has rained.”



This verse calls for *sphāti*, “abundance,” to be conveyed to the reciter from everywhere (“the five directions”) and from everyone (“the five peoples”). The term *kṛṣṭāyah*, sg. *kṛṣṭī*, is of special interest here in the agricultural context; there is probably an intentional play upon the etymological and phonological connection to  $\sqrt{kṛṣ}$  “to plow,” although the semantic development to *kṛṣṭī* as “people” was quite early and more roundabout than characterizing humanity as specifically qualified by agriculture.<sup>107</sup>

AVŚ 3.24.4

*úd utsam śatadhāram sahasradhāram akṣitam |*  
*evāsmākedam dhānyam sahasradhāram akṣitam ||4||*

(Pour) out a spring of a hundred streams, of a thousand streams, inexhaustible; just so (pour out) our grain, a thousand streams, inexhaustible.<sup>108</sup>

**a) *ud utsam śatadhāram*:** only here

**b) *sahasradhāram akṣitam*:** RV 9.26.2b; AVŚ 3.24.4d (below); AVP 5.30.4d; TĀ 10.67.2d.

also: *sahasradhāro akṣitaḥ*: AVP 5.30.4b; TĀ 10.67.2b.

**c) *evāsmākedam dhānyam*:** = *evā me astu dhānyam*: AVP 5.30.4c; TĀ 10.67.2c.

**d) *sahasradhāram akṣitam*:** same as b.

The “hundred” and “thousand” reckonings as representative of great abundance are used repeatedly in this hymn. The first verse of the hymn AVŚ 3.24.1, has *pāyasvatīnām ... sahasraśāh*, which I translated as “(the milk) of those rich in milk by the thousands,” and the next verse (AVŚ 3.24.5) has *śatahasta ... sahasrahasta*, “hundred-handed ... thousand-handed,” juxtaposing hundred and thousand together again as in this present verse (3.24.4). Monier Williams mentions this verse specifically in the definition

<sup>107</sup>The semantic development followed a path such as: furrow>boundary>bounded land>people/community living in bounded land; see EWA entry for *kṛṣṭī* and for full discussion Thieme 1968, which superseded previous scholarship questioning the relation of *kṛṣṭī* to  $\sqrt{kṛṣ}$ .

<sup>108</sup>Whitney gives: “As a fountain of a hundred streams, of a thousand streams, unexhausted, so this grain of ours, in a thousand streams, unexhausted.”

for the entry *ud*, as an example illustrating cases where a verb should be supplied with an independent verbal prefix. He has supplied the verb “pour,” in this case: “out (pour) a fountain of a hundred steams,” which I have followed. Whitney's translation, on the other hand, not only demurs from supplying a verb, but even omits translating the *úd* whatsoever. Both Monier Williams and Whitney translate *útsam* as “fountain.” I have opted instead for the noun “spring” for *útsam*. The deeper translation issue is whether “fountain” for *útsam* implies an architectural or ornamental structure, and whether that would be anachronistic for the hymn. “Fount” and “fountain” are used more widely in literary contexts in English, and perhaps would be acceptable on that count in translating *útsam* here. However, the AVP counterpart has an intriguing feature; *pāda* a of AVP 5.30.4 is a distinct variant: *yathā kūpaḥ śatadhāraḥ*, “just like ... a well of a hundred streams,” in Lubotsky's words. Having *kūpaḥ*, “a well,” in place of *útsam* suggests that *útsam* may well have indicated a physical structure of some kind here, and given the context of the simile, it could possibly be a reference to the adaptation of a natural source of groundwater, such as a spring, to irrigation (and thus, presumably, regional differentiation), although that is merely conjectural.

AVŚ 3.24.5

*śatahasta samāhara śahasrahasta saṃ kira |*  
*ḥṛtāsya kāryāsya cehā sphātīm samāvaha ||5||*

O Hundred-handed (one), gather up! O Thousand-handed (one), heap together (*saṃ kira*)! Bring here the abundance of what is made and of what is to be made!<sup>109</sup>

**a) śatahasta samāhara:** AVP 5.30.5a.

**b) sahasrahasta saṃ kira:** AVP 5.30.5b.

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<sup>109</sup>Whitney gives: “O hundred-handed one, bring together; O thousand handed one, pile together; of what is to be made do you convey together the fatness here.”

c) *kṛtasya kāryasya ca*: AVP 5.30.5d.

d) *iha sphātiṃ samāvaha*: AVŚ 3.24.3d (verse 3 above); AVP 5.30.6e  
(*samāvahān*).

also: *yatheha sphātir āyati*: AVP 5.30.5c.

This verse carries through the numerations of “hundred” and “thousand” that we have seen in the previous verses of the hymn. Here, they are each compounded with *hasta*, yielding the qualifications “hundred-handed” and “thousand-handed,” which, if they refer to one personification probably describe Saṃbhṛtvān. However, it seems possible that two complementary personifications may be referred to as well, given the mention in verse 7 of “two distributors” (in Whitney's translation). The question then turns on the two items in *pāda c*, *kṛtāsya* and *kāryāsya*, “what is made and what is to be made;” these probably correspond with the two verbal actions and adjectives for the agents, respectively “Hundred-hands” and “Thousand-hands.” Since the abundance “of what is made and what is to be made” is implored in the second person singular, “bring,” it is most likely that the “Hundred-hands” and “Thousand-hands” both refer to one individual, most likely Saṃbhṛtvān. As we will see, verse 7 does not have a counterpart in the equivalent AVP hymn. Regardless, this verse is clearly part of the original verse series constituting the hymn and is unified by mention of *sphāti*, “abundance,” as well as the numerical themes of “hundred” and “thousand.” Another verse may help to shed some light on this one; ṚV 6.48.15, to Pūṣan, likewise uses the numerations “hundreds” and “thousands,” with the same verb as used in *pāda b* here, *saṃ √kṛ*:

ṚV 6.48.15

*tveṣāṃ śārdho ná mārutaṃ tuviśvāny anarvāṇam pūṣānam sām yāthā śatā |*  
*sām saḥsṛā kāriṣac carṣaṇibhya āṃ āvir gūḥā vāsū karat suvédā no vāsū karat*  
||

“Turbulent like the troop of Maruts, powerfully noisy, without assailant – Pūṣan (I praise), so that **hundreds, thousands** (of goods) he will **heap together** from the settled domains. He will make the hidden goods visible; he will make goods easy for us to find” (Jamison & Brereton 2015).

The juxtaposition of “hundreds” and “thousands” with the same verb, *saṃ* √*kṛ*, which Jamison and Brereton translated as “(will) heap together,” may be sufficient to suggest that Saṃbhṛtvan and Pūṣan are related, or even possibly different aspects of one and the same deity.

Another intriguing relation here is the description of the “goods” being heaped together as coming from “the settled domains,” *carṣaṇībhyaḥ*. This is another hint that the semi-nomadic Vedic tribes would interact with indigenous sedentary agriculturalists, likely in the form of ritualized games and transactions, especially at harvest, as is common to the interactions between pastoralists and agricultural populations, often trading dairy and livestock for crops.

AVŚ 3.24.6.

*tisrō mātrā gandharvāṇāṃ cātasro grhāpatnyāḥ |*  
*tāsāṃ yā sphātimāttamā tayā tvābhī mṛśāmasi ||6||*

(There should be) three measures for the Gandharvas, four for the lady of the house; we touch you with the most abundant (lit. richest in having fat) of them. <sup>110</sup>

- a) *tisro mātrā gandharvāṇām*: AVP 5.30.8a.
- b) *catasro grhapatnyāḥ*: AVP 5.30.8b.
- c) *tāsāṃ yā sphātimattamā*: AVP 5.30.8c (*sphātir uttamā*).
- d) *tayā tvābhi mṛśāmasi*: AVP 5.30.8d.

This verse is not grammatically difficult but is obscure regarding the full sense of the context and referents. The measures spoken of, *mātrā*, are surely shares of grain, and

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<sup>110</sup>Whitney gives: “Three measures of the Gandharvas, four of the house-mistress; of them whichever is richest in fatness, with that one we touch you.”

almost certainly specific to the distribution of the harvest. It is not clear what role the Gandharvas play here, or who is to be “touched” with the most abundant measure (Saṃbhṛtvān?), but the touching seems to imply an unknown ritual context.

AVŚ 3.24.7.

*upohás ca samūhás ca kṣattārau te prajāpate |  
tāv ihā vahatām sphātīm bahūm bhūmānam ākṣitam ||7||*

'Piling In' and 'Piling Up' are your two agents of distribution, O Prajāpati, let them bring great abundance here, inexhaustible plenty.<sup>111</sup>

**Pādas a-d)** AVŚ only

As we will see in the tables below, this verse only occurs in the AVŚ recension, and was likely added there subsequently to the hymn's incorporation into AVŚ, as a verse in final position. The translation issues hinge upon the sense of the verbal derivatives in *pāda a*, *upoháh* and *samūháh*, which Whitney translated here as “bringer” and “gathered” respectively. The issue is that they are then referred to as *kṣattārau*, with an agentive *-tr* suffix which Whitney reflects with his translation “distributors.” The pair is then in *pādas c* and *d* beseeched to convey that abundance (lit. fat) here. Whitney's wording, “bringer (*upohá*) and gathered (*samūhá*) [are] your (two) distributors,” reads awkwardly and does not really convey what is intended; are the two derivatives here acting as proper names or mismatched verbal derivatives of some kind? Whitney avails himself of the agentive suffix of *kṣattārau* in translating *upoháh* as “bringer,” but why use it for *upoháh* but not for *samūháh*, for which he instead gives “gathered”? My translation, “Piling In' and 'Piling Up' are your two agents of distribution,” takes the two derivatives as *ad hoc* names for the specific verbal actions associated with the distribution of the harvest. I translate

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<sup>111</sup>Whitney gives: “Bringer (*upoha*) and gathered (*samūha*) [are] your (two) distributors, O Prajāpati; let them convey hither fatness, much unexhausted plenty.”

*kṣattārau* as “agents of distribution” instead of “distributors” in order to minimize implying agentive personification; the emphasis should remain on the verbal actions as such, “piling in” and “piling up,” which together form the ritually-affected larger work of (harvest) distribution. The two acts *constitute* the distribution, they *perform* it, and in this way are its *agents*, *kṣattārau*. The actions become agents in the imagination of the poet. Perhaps this is a somewhat speculative interpretation, but it accords well with the hymn's overall play with verbal morphology, and verbal prefix. The key units at play in the verses of the hymn are clear: 1) *ā √bhr̥*; 2) *saṃ √bhr̥* (i.e., the name *Sam̐bhṛtvān*); 3) *saṃ ā √vah*; 4) *ud*; 5) *saṃ ā √hr̥*, *saṃ ā √vah*; 6) *abhi √mr̥ś*, 7) *upa √ūh* (*upoháh*), *saṃ √ūh* (*samūháh*), *√vah* (dual imperative). Clearly the play centers around the prefixing and interchangeability of the roots *√bhr̥*, *√vah*, and *√ūh*<sup>112</sup> indicating that the verbal force is what is being marked both in the proper name *Sam̐bhṛtvān* as well as the two ritual actions under the ad hoc names (primary verbal derivatives) *upoháh* and *samūháh*, "Piling In" and "Piling Up."

There seems little doubt that the hymn was originally a harvest hymn specifically, and was accompanied by ritual actions which are no longer fully intelligible. Perhaps this loss had occurred early on and contributed to the preservation of the hymn as a more general hymn for crop fertility, as understood the *Kauśika Sūtra*<sup>113</sup> and its commentaries, and by Sāyaṇa in his 13<sup>th</sup> century commentary on the *Atharvaveda*. It also seems likely

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<sup>112</sup>The roots *√bhr̥*, "bear, hold," and *√vah*, "carry, convey," are often synonymous, while *√vah* and *√ūh*, "push, shove, remove," are closely related. As Whitney relays of *√ūh*: "Doubtless a differentiated form of *√vah*, from which in some forms and meanings it is hardly to be separated" (1885, 13). EWA concurs and cites further references.

<sup>113</sup>The *Kauśika Sūtra* employs the hymn for an abundant crop during sowing (21.1).

that this hymn pertained to the harvest as celebrated by the Vedic tribes before they had fully transitioned to permanent sedentariness and the multiple harvests of central north India.

Turning now to the distribution tables, we can compare the AVŚ baseline table and immediately proceed to the AVP counterpart, after which the AVP hymn will be examined briefly. The textual history here is much more straightforward than what we had examined for the Kṛṣi Sūkta.

AVŚ 3 norm is 6 vs.

<b>AVŚ 3.24</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
AVP 5.30	1	2	6	4	5	8	

Table 6: AVŚ 3.24 Verse Sharing

AVP 5 norm is 8 vs.

<b>AVP 5.30</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
AVŚ 3.24	1	2		4	5	3		6	

Table 7: AVP 5.30 Verse Sharing

The first table, showing AVŚ 3.24 as a baseline, reveals that, based on the six-verse norm in AVŚ 3, AVŚ 3.24.7 was a single verse added at the end of the hymn; this is supported by the content as the verse is the only one in the hymn to mention Prajāpati. The AVP baseline table on the other hand shows that AVP 5 had an eight-verse norm at the time of the initial redaction. Given that the initial compilation of AVP likely occurred before that of AVŚ, we are confronted by a possible loss of verse material from the hymn, to account for the smaller verse-norm between times of incorporation into AVP and then AVŚ. As noted above in the examination on the Kṛṣi Sūkta's textual history, the initial

compilation, or Ur-recension, seems to have occurred earlier and somewhat further west for AVP than AVŚ. We availed ourselves of that geographic change to postulate that regional differentiation may have been at play in the specific differences between the Kṛṣi Sūkta and its AVP counterpart, and noted that such regional differentiation could justly be expected for agricultural custom. As we turn now to AVP 5.30, we can notice in this vein that out of the three verses that AVP does not share with AVŚ (i.e., AVP 5.30.3,7, and 9), two (at least) mention specific ritual actions (3 and 9), while AVP 5.30.7 is partly obscure. The text is given in full, with Lubotsky's recent translations furnished for only the unshared verses in bold.

*Atharvavedasamhitā* (Paippalāda) 5.30. (text regularized from Lubotsky, Lubotsky translation.)

(eight verse norm)

*payasvatīr oṣadhayaḥ payasvan māmakaṃ vacaḥ |*

*atho payasvatām paya ā harāmi sahasraśaḥ ||1||*

*ahaṃ veda yathā payas cakāra dhānyaṃ bahu |*

*saṃbhṛtvā nāma yo devas taṃ vayaṃ yajāmahe sarvasyāyajvano gr̥he ||2||*

***yathā dyauś ca pṛthivī ca tastatur dharuṇāya kam |***

***evā sphātīm ni tanomi mayāreṣu khaleṣu ca ||3||***

“Just like Heaven and Earth stand still for the benefit of firmness, so I spread abundance in the grain-baskets and on the threshing-floors” (Lubotsky).

*yathā kūpaḥ śatadhāraḥ sahasradhāro akṣitaḥ |*

*evā me astu dhānyaṃ sahasradhāram akṣitam ||4||*

*śatahasta samāhara sahasrahasta saṃ kira |*

*yatheha sphātir āyati kṛtasya kāryasya ca ||5||*

*imā yāḥ pañca pradiśo mānavīḥ pañca kṛṣṭayaḥ |*

*sarvāḥ śaṃbhūr mayobhuvo vṛṣṭe śāpaṃ nadīr iveha sphātīm samāvahān ||6||*

***iha sphātir oṣadhīnām devānām uta saṃgamaḥ |***

***ihaivāśvinor astu dvāparāśvo ruhat ||7||***

“Let there be an abundance of plants, and the gathering of the gods, here of the Aśvins. ...” (Lubotsky).<sup>114</sup>

*tisro mātṛā gandharvāṇām catasro gr̥hapatnyāḥ |*

<sup>114</sup>Lubotsky notes on *pāda* d: “The whole *pāda* is incomprehensible to me (K. reads *dvāparasyo-ruta*). It is hard to reconcile *dvāpara-* (the third best dice throw, for which see Falk 1986: 131f.) with the context of the hymn. I suspect that *dvā*° is somehow related to *tisraḥ* and *catasraḥ* of the next stanza.”]



*tāsāṃ yā sphātir uttamā tayā tvābhi mṛśāmasi ||8||*  
*jyeṣṭhasya tvāṅgirasasya hastābhyām ā rabhāmahe |*  
*yathāsad bahudhānyam ayakṣmaṃ bahupūruṣam ||9||*

“We take hold of you [who belong] to the oldest descendant of Aṅgiras, with [our] hands, so that there will be abundance of grain, health and abundance of men” (Lubotsky).<sup>115</sup>

Verse three mentions both grain-baskets and the threshing-floors; neither of which figure into the AVŚ counterpart hymn. Lubotsky's treatment of the hymn thoroughly establishes the meaning of *mayāra* as “grain-basket,” citing and translating all the occurrences of the word, which only occurs in AVP. Both *mayāra*, “grain-basket,” and *khala*, “threshing-floor,” further confirm that the hymn pertains to harvest specifically. Both AVP 5.40.3 and 7 mention *sphāti*, “abundance<fat,” and accord thematically with the hymn overall (as well as with the Prosperity and Plow nexus). Establishing which verse of the three was added subsequently is made difficult by the obscurity of AVP 5.30.7. As Lubotsky explains, *pāda* d is largely unintelligible and the reading may be too corrupt to restore. Lubotsky notes that *dvāpara* is a designation for the third best dice, citing Falk 1986, but states his own opinion to be that the *dvā-* may relate to the *tisraḥ* and *catasraḥ* in the following verse. Lubotsky also notices that the dice-throw meaning seems out of context, but generally on this point I would add that harvest was probably an event for the still-trekking Vedic peoples at which ritualized exchange occurred, and games of chance and other types of competitions may well have accompanied. Even so, this only confirms the uncertainty of the reading, although Lubotsky's point that *dvā-* may connect with the *tisraḥ* and *catasraḥ* in the following verse could hold as well if the

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<sup>115</sup>ab: AVP only; cd: Kauś 20.5cd

connection were merely poetic device. AVP 5.30.9, the final verse, mentions holding the addressee (seemingly the same one as in the previous verse AVP 5.30.8=AVŚ 3.24.6: perhaps Saṃbhṛtvān, or Prajāpati, although the latter name only occurs in the AVŚ hymn). Pāda d is interesting because, although it does not occur in AVŚ itself, it occurs in the *Kauśika Sūtra* passage we already examined, entailing the rite to accompany the Kṛṣi Sūkta (AVŚ 3.17).

KauśS 20.5

*aśvinā phālaṃ kalpayatām upāvatu bṛhaspatiḥ |  
yathāsad bahudhānyam ayakṣmaṃ bahupūruṣam iti || phālam atikaṣati | 5 |*

He drags over (*atikaṣati*) the plowshare (*phāla*) with the verse "Let the Aśvins work the plowshare, let Bṛhaspati favor (it), **so that there will be a mass of grain, and a mass of men (both) free of disease.**"<sup>116</sup>

This an especially interesting instance of sharing because the stanza *yathāsad bahudhānyam ayakṣmaṃ bahupūruṣam*, "so that there will be a mass of grain, and a mass of men (both) free of disease," occurs in both plowing and harvest contexts and seems to be the only such oral formula in the extant material.<sup>117</sup>

As we will see in then next section, there is further harvest material belonging to the AVŚ tradition, in the Āgrayaṇa rite described in the *Kauśika Sūtra*, which helps to further demonstrate a general discontinuity in the harvest material over time as compared to the long-term stability of the plowing material (i.e., the Prosperity and Plow constellation).

<sup>116</sup>*Pādas* bc: AVP 5.30.9; 8.18.16;

<sup>117</sup>I differ from Lubotsky by taking *ayakṣmaṃ* adjectivally, and in reading the structure as implying the sharing of the adjective between the two substantives (both being compounded with *bahu-*) *bahudhānyam ayakṣmaṃ bahupūruṣam* "a mass of grain, and a mass of men (both) free of disease." See note above, on KauśS 20.5, for detailed discussion of *yakṣma*.

The AVP tradition also provides such evidence, in the form of hymns which occur there exclusively, do not share verses across *saṃhitās*, and pertain to ritual contexts that are otherwise unknown. Elizabeth Tucker’s recent article, “The Big-Bellied Heap of Indra” (2016), features just such a hymn, AVP 11.10-11 (i.e., redaction split the hymn into ten verses plus a four-verse supplement). The hymn “reveals an early agricultural ritual that does not appear to be documented anywhere else in Vedic ritual” (Tucker 2016, 303). It describes a pile of grain separated on the threshing floor for the consumption of Brahmins alone. This pile is called the *indrarāṣi-mahodara-*, “the big-bellied heap of Indra.” The separation of this pile from the rest is compared in the hymn to the removal of the tip of an arrow from a body, which Tucker interprets as the removal of evil or inauspiciousness from the harvest at large (ibid., 304).

Tucker, citing Renou (1946), draws attention to two other AVP hymns as well which feature Indra in an agricultural capacity, supporting Renou’s hypothesis “about the existence of an early Vedic tradition where Indra had become a god of agriculture, or at least had become equated with an agricultural deity” (Tucker 2016, 303). As we have already seen, Indra served a critical role in the agricultural context as early as ṚV 4.57 as well as throughout the Prosperity and Plow material. As we will see in the next section, he was also “equated” with Śunāsīrau formally through an involved play with grammatical number (totaling three together and at the same time totaling one, as grammatical subjects), in the verbal formulae accompanying offering in the *śunāsīrīya-parvan* of the Cāturmāsya. The other two hymns Tucker draws attention to are AVP 6.15

and 8.11; both in fact not only feature Indra in an agricultural capacity but also pertain to the harvest and reflect otherwise unknown ritual contexts.

AVP 6.15, recently critically edited and translated by Griffiths (2009), is a prayer to Indra in which the reciter seems to describe bringing home the yield of the harvest. It “belongs” to Indra and so serves to secure his blessing at its taking. It is largely repetitive, with each verse adding places from which the *ūrjā*, “nourishment,” has been taken, or describing how it has been processed (scattered, threshed, ground, cooked, etc.). We will sample only the first and last verse, with text and translation from Griffiths 2009:

AVP 6.15.1

*yaś ca bhūmā yā ca sphātir yorjā yo rasās ca te |*  
*harāmi śakra tām ahaṃ tvayā Prattāṃ śacīpate ||*

What opulence, and what abundance, what nourishment and what sap you have:  
that [abundance] I carry off, o Śakra, Lord of Power, granted by you.

AVP 6.15.9

*ūrjā yā te puruṣeṣūrjā vitte ca vedye |*  
*ūrjāṃ te sarveṣāṃ ahaṃ grhāṇāṃ brahmaṇā dade || 15 ||*

Your nourishment which is among men, your nourishment which is in the gain  
and in the future gain – I am taking your nourishment which belongs to the whole  
homestead by means of [this] spell.

The other verses give a multitude of locations from which the *ūrjā* has been taken, such as “from every field” (*kṣetrāt kṣetrāt*, vs 2), the threshing field, the grain basket, the cow-pen, etc., amounting to everywhere. Further, the nourishment is described as being taken from livestock as well, having been milked, churned, etc. Because of the prevalence of pastoral imagery for wealth and abundance, it is not immediately clear if these are literal or figurative characterizations; they may well be literal, but the precise details of the ritual context are unknown. If the ritual context or procedure relates to the

*indraráśi- mahodara-*, “the big-bellied heap of Indra,” in AVP 11.10-11, the hymn could be describing the carrying off of that portion reserved for Brahmins.

The third AVP hymn, 8.11, is dedicated to the threshing floor, *khala*, which is praised as an “altar increasing men” (*vediṃ manuṣyavardhanīm* 8.11.1d). The altar seems to have been considered a divine prototype for the threshing floor: “the ladles were the brooms” (*sruca āsan pavanīḥ*, 8.11.5a), “the *hotṛ* priests were the farmers, the lord of the sacrifice was the seed-givers” (*kīnāśā āsan hotāro bījadā āsīd dhaviṣpatiḥ*, 8.11.5cd). Indra is described as “bringer of the seed” (*indro bījasyābhyāvōdhā*, 8.11.2c), and implored to “release both full fists” and to “let benevolence flourish here” (*ihendra muṣṭī vi sṛjasva pūrṇāv iha saumanasaḥ sam ṛdhyatām*, 8.11.6ab). The Aśvins also take part; they are told to yoke the oxen of Bhaga and to bring the biestings of the earth (*bhagasya hy anaḍvāhau yuñjāthāṃ rāsivāhanau; adhā pṛthivyāḥ kīlālam ihā vahatam aśvinā*, 8.11.3). The threshing floor itself is described as “the bearer of men,” which “produces the clarified butter of the gods” (*bhartā manuṣyāṇām jaiṇe devānām ājyaṃ khalah*, 8.11.4cd). The hymn was most likely recited during the establishment of the threshing floor each harvest, given the frequent imperatives for the grain to be brought there.

There is much of interest in all three of these hymns exclusive to AVP, each of which pertains in some way to the harvest (11.10-11: separating out the pile for Brahmins; 6.15: bring the yield back to the homestead; 8.11: establishment of the threshing floor). For our purposes here, the most significant feature is that exclusivity and isolation. Unlike the harvest hymn which came to be remembered as merely a hymn for crop fertility (AVP 5.30=AVŚ 3.24), or, on the plowing rather than harvest side, the Kṛṣi

Sūkta, AVŚ 3.17 (=AVP 2.22), these three hymns are not even common to the broader AV tradition. They further demonstrate the discrepancies in the harvest materials that corresponds broadly to the sedentary transition.

#### 4.4. Āgrayaṇa and Cāturmāsya: Adaptations to Multiple Harvests

We can now turn to the Āgrayaṇa, the “First Fruits” rites.<sup>118</sup> The Āgrayaṇa rites are the primary harvest rites that were formalized as a systematic adaptation to the multiple staple crops throughout the year that the Vedic tribes could take advantage of as a result of the sedentary transition in the Gangetic basin. These rites, along with the Cāturmāsya to a lesser degree, stand as the culmination of the changes in harvest ritual that appear in the textual material as discontinuities corresponding to the complex transition from semi-nomadic pastoralism to sedentism, a transition which is itself inextricably linked to the eastward migration. There are versions of the Āgrayaṇa in the Atharvavedic tradition as well as the *śrauta*. Both are explicitly tied to the multiple harvests of central north India. It has already been established that the Āgrayaṇa (as well as the Cāturmāsya) belong to a group of rituals which developed during the Mantra period. According to Thite:

The Vedic texts have prescribed numerous sacrifices. It seems that the sacrificial institution was not a static phenomenon, it was rather a dynamic, changing and growing phenomenon. The Ṛgvedic period appears to be the creative period in which sacrifice was not institutionalised and codified properly. The ritual was comparatively simple and short. The Yajurvedic period was the classical period in the history of Vedic ritual. In this period the rituals like the establishment of fires,

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<sup>118</sup>Both the Āgrayaṇa and Cāturmāsya rites have recently been described ethnographically in David Knipe's *Vedic Voices* (2015). These invaluable descriptions are based on the contemporary practice of Brahmins in South India, and demonstrate the longstanding importance of these rites in connection with the agricultural calendar, although of course the contemporary descriptions cannot stand as primary sources for the ancient period.

Agnihotra, new and full-moon sacrifices, Cāturmāsya-sacrifices and other Haviryajñas, Agniṣṭoma, Vājapeya, Rājasūya, Aśvamedha etc. came into existence. In this period the ritual was systematically organised and institutionalised (Thite 1998, 253).

Unlike the Cāturmāsya, Thite does not mention the Āgrayaṇa specifically, but there can be no doubt that the specifics of the ritual injunctions could not pertain to the earlier semi-nomadic phase but depend on the multiple crops associated with the sedentism developed in the Gangetic plains. The *Śrautakośa* summarizes the rites at the successive harvests (of millet, rice, and barley) throughout the year succinctly:

A sacrificer is forbidden to consume new grains until he has offered them in the *āgrayaṇa*-sacrifice performed on a parvan-day. He should perform the *āgrayaṇa*-sacrifice of *śyāmāka* [millet] grains when they become ripe in the rainy season. In this sacrifice, he should offer to Soma *śyāmāka* grains cooked in milk or in water. He should give away a garment as *dakṣiṇā*. Optionally he should give *dadhimantha* or *madhumantha* or *madhuparka* or *madhugluntha*.

In the autumn, when paddy becomes ripe, one should perform the *āgrayaṇa*-sacrifice of paddy in which, according to Baudhāyana, a cake on twelve potsherds should be offered to Indra-Agni, cooked rice to Viśve devas, and a cake on one potsherd to Dyāvapṛthivī. ...

In the spring, when barley becomes ripe, one should perform the *āgrayaṇa*-sacrifice of barley. The divinities and the *dakṣiṇā* should be the same in the *āgrayaṇa*-sacrifice of paddy; the oblations should be made of barley instead of paddy. ...

According to some sūtra-writers, the *āgrayaṇa*-sacrifice of *śyāmāka* grains need not be performed separately; it may be combined with the *āgrayaṇa*-sacrifice of paddy (Śrautakośa 1958 vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 502).

We can turn now to the corresponding Āgrayaṇa, “first fruits,” rite in the (non-*śrauta*) Atharvavedic *Kauśika Sūtra*, which demonstrates both the aspects of discontinuity and adaptation that characterize harvest ritual as a result of the sedentary

transition. This permits us a direct comparison with the plowing rite we have seen described in the same text (KauśS 20). The Atharvavedic Āgrayaṇa rite is prescribed at KauśS 74.13-23, which, being in a later chapter primarily associated with *gr̥hya* rites, was not translated by Caland. Neither do we have extant the earlier commentary of Dārila for that portion. The later commentator, Keśava, is the only source covering the entire *Kauśika Sūtra*. This is particularly relevant because there are no *saṃhitā mantras* prescribed in the rite at all according to the *Kauśika Sūtra* alone; certain *mantras* are incorporated directly into the *sūtra* but they do not come from the *saṃhitā*. Keśava does supply certain *saṃhitā* verses to be used in the rite, but these verses are not specific to the harvest nor even to agriculture generally. They are secondary applications. This contrasts with the KauśS passage for plowing (KauśS 20) which we have already examined. It coincided with a specific hymn of the Atharaveda, the Kṛṣi Sūkta (AVŚ 3.17) and served to describe more fully the very actions referred to in the hymn as it is being recited in the ritual. The *mantra* material in the *sūtra* as well as that prescribed by Keśava are given in bold type.

Āgrayaṇa (KauśS 74.13-23)

*āgrayaṇe śāntyudakaṃ kṛtvā yathartu taṇḍulān upasādyā* ||13||

On the occasion of the Āgrayaṇa, having made the *śāntyudakam* (ritually purifying water), having obtained the grain according to the season,

For this *sūtra* Keśava prescribes the employment of AVŚ 19.68, a hymn of just one verse:

AVŚ 19.68

*avyasaś ca vyācasaś ca bīlaṃ ví syāmi māyāyā |*  
*tābhyām uddhṛtya védam átha kármāṇi kṛṇmahe ||*



“Of non-expansion and of expansion do I untie the aperture with magic;  
by those two having taken up the Veda, we then perform acts”  
(Whitney).<sup>119</sup>

*apsu sthālīpākam śrapayitvā payasi vā || 14 ||*

Having cooked the *sthālīpāka* in water or in milk, ...

Here Keśava prescribes another two verses to be used while cooking the offering  
(*sthālīpāka* = *caru*):

AVŚ 11.1.17-18

*śuddhāḥ putā yośīto yajñīyā imā āpaś carūm āva sarpantu śubhrāḥ |  
āduḥ prajāṃ bahulān paśūn naḥ paktaūdanāsya sukṛtām etu lokām ||*

“Let these cleansed, purified, worshipful maidens, the waters, beauteous  
ones, creep down to the pot; they have given us abundant progeny, cattle;  
let the cooker of the rice-dish go to the world of the well-doers”

(Whitney).

*brāhmaṇā śuddhā utā pūtā ghṛtēna sōmasyāṃśāvas taṇḍulā yajñīyā imé |  
apāḥ prá viśata práti grhṇātu vaś carūr imāṃ paktvā sukṛtām eta lokām ||*

“Cleansed with prayer (Brahman) and purified with ghee, shoots of Soma  
[are] these worshipful rice-grains; enter you the waters; let the pot receive  
you; having cooked this, go you to the world of the well-doers” (Whitney).

*'sajūr ṛtubhiḥ sajūr vidhābhiḥ sajūr agnaye svāhā | sajūr indrāgnibhyāṃ sajūr  
dyāvāprthivībhyāṃ sajūr viśvebhyo devebhyah sajūr ṛtubhiḥ sajūr vidhābhiḥ sajūh  
somāya svāhā' ity ekahavir vā syān nānāhavīmṣi vā ||15||*

There could be a single *havis* oblation or multiple oblations with the *mantra* “Hail  
to Agni, along with the Seasons, along with the Vidhās! Hail to Soma, along with Indra  
and Agni, along with the Sky and Earth, along with all the gods (or the All-gods), along  
with the Seasons, along with the Vidhās!”<sup>120</sup>

*saumyaṃ tanvac chyāmākaṃ śaradi || 16 ||*

In Autumn there he offers the associated *śyāmāka soma* offering.

*atha yajamānaḥ prāsitraṃ grhṇīte ||17||*

Now the sacrificer takes the *prāsitra* vessel.

*prajāpateḥ tvā grahaṃ grhṇāmi |*

<sup>119</sup>Whitney reads *āvya[ca]śaś* with Sāyaṇa. There are many unclear points, including whether *védam* here refers to “the Veda.”

<sup>120</sup>Most of these formulaic phrases (each beginning with *sajūh*) occur elsewhere, some widely, however this combination is unique to the KauśS (as is the phrase *sajūr agnaye svāhā*), and none of the other instances occur in the AVŚ or AVP. The phrase *sajūr ṛtubhiḥ*, which is repeated once here, repeats five times in some other passages. See the updated concordance for details on instances of each phrase.

*mahyaṃ bhūtyai mahyaṃ puṣṭyai mahyaṃ śriyai mahyaṃ hriyai mahyaṃ yaśase  
mahyaṃ āyūṣe mahyaṃ annāya mahyaṃ annādyāya mahyaṃ sahasrapoṣāya mahyam  
aparimitapoṣāya iti | 18 |*

(He says) “I take you as the ladle of Prajāpati; for wealth for me, for increase for me, for glory for me, for humility for me, for fame for me, for a full-life for me, for food (*anna*) for me, for food to eat (*annādyā*) for me, for a thousandfold thriving for me, for immeasurable thriving for me!”<sup>121</sup>

*atha prāśnāti |  
bhadraṇ naḥ śreyah sam anaiṣṭa devās tvayāvasena sam aśīmahi tvā |  
sa naḥ pito madhumāṃ ā viveśa śivas tokāya tanvo na ehi iti | 19 |*

Then he eats (the *prāśitra*), (reciting): “From the good you brought us to the best, O gods. Through you, O food, should we obtain you. You, O Drink (*pitu*), have entered into us who are sweet, come into our bodies, kindly, for offspring.”<sup>122</sup>

*prāśitam anumantrayate |  
amo 'si prāṇa tad ṛtaṃ bravīmy amāsi sarvān asi praviṣṭa |  
sa me jarāṃ rogam apanudya śarīrād anāmayaedhi mā riṣāma indo iti | 20 |*

He recites over the *prāśita*:  
You are this life; I speak the truth. You are at home (*amā asi*). You are entered into all. Push away old age and disease from my body. Be free of disease (*anāmaya edhi*)<sup>123</sup> so that I shall not come to harm, O Drop (*indo*).

*vatsaḥ prathamajo grīṣme vāsaḥ śaradi dakṣiṇā | 21 |*

The *dakṣiṇā* is the firstborn calf in summer, a garment in autumn.

*śaktyā vā dakṣiṇāṃ dadyāt | 22 |*

Or he could give a *dakṣiṇā* according to capability.

*nātiśaktir vidhīyate nātiśaktir vidhīyata iti | 23 |*

(A *dakṣiṇā*) beyond ability is not enjoined. (Really,)(a *dakṣiṇā*) beyond ability is not enjoined.

The *mantra* material given in the *sūtra* does not come from the *saṃhitā*, and the *saṃhitā* material given *post hoc* by Keśava (AVŚ 19.68, 11.1.17, 11.1.18) is not directly related to the harvest nor even to agriculture specifically. The Atharvavedic harvest hymn

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<sup>121</sup>cf. ŚāṅkhGS 3.8.2.

<sup>122</sup>cf. TS 5.7.2.4, ŚāṅkhGS 3.8.3, etc.

<sup>123</sup>See Bloomfield's ed. for this emendation.

(AVŚ 324=AVP 5.30) is not employed at all in the Āgrayaṇa, which in all sources pertains to the multiple harvests dependent on the transition to sedentism in the Gangetic basin. The disjuncture of the harvest versus the continuity of the plowing rite are especially apparent when comparing the respective passages in the *Kausika Sūtra*. For the plowing rite, hymn, *sūtra*, and commentary are all in accord, although additional *mantra* material is given in the *sūtra*. For the harvest rite of “first fruits,” however, the only harvest hymn in the extant *saṃhitās* came to be remembered as only a hymn for crop fertility and was not used in the Āgrayaṇa rite. The *Kausika* description of the Āgrayaṇa does prescribe its own *mantra* material, as it does for plowing, but employs no *saṃhitā* material at all. The commentator Keśava fills in this gap with other *saṃhitā* verses after the fact. The table below<sup>124</sup> summarizes the relationship, and clarifies the disjuncture in the harvest material:

	<b>Plowing</b>	<b>Single Harvest</b>	<b>Multiple Harvests</b>
<b>Samhitā</b>	AVŚ 3.17=AVP 2.22	AVŚ 3.24=AVP 5.30	none
<b>Sūtra</b>	employs the above	crop fertility function	unique <i>mantra</i> material
<b>Commentary</b>	elucidates	crop fertility function	supplies other <i>saṃhitā</i> verses

Table 8: Disjunction of AV Harvest Material vs. Plowing

There are numerous descriptions of the Āgrayaṇa (*iṣṭi*) in the Śrauta Sūtras as well, and these also evidence the discrepancy between the purpose and the liturgical content of the rite through the secondary application of verses which are not specifically

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<sup>124</sup> Table 8 does not include the three hymns exclusive to the AVP that were discussed in the previous section. They pertain to the single harvest category and only occur on the *saṃhitā* level.

harvest-related. Taking the *Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra* as an example, the verses utilized by and large pertain to the various common component procedures used throughout “the maze of *śrauta*.” The employment of the five *ājyāni* verses (used for laying the *ājyāni* bricks in the Agnicayana),<sup>125</sup> fifteen *sāmidhenī* (used for kindling the fire),<sup>126</sup> the five *prayājas* (invocations to the Seasons),<sup>127</sup> and the two *ājyabhāgas* called *vārtraghna*,<sup>128</sup> are common to all three possible Āgrayaṇa rites (*śyāmakā* “millet,” optionally having its own rite in the rainy season, or offered jointly with rice in the autumn). Additionally, each seasonal Āgrayaṇa has its own distinct primary offering (one of which will be discussed below).<sup>129</sup> Generally speaking, none of these are agricultural in any primary sense, but the five invocations to the Seasons (the five *prayājas*) are noteworthy, and so is one of the five *ājyāni* verses (TS 5.7.2f), addressed to the Seasons in total:

TS 5.7.2f

*grīṣmó hemantá utá no vasantáh śarád varṣāḥ suvitám no astu |*  
*téṣām ṛtūnām śatásāradānām nivātá eṣām ábhaye syāma ||*

Summer, winter, and spring for us,  
 Autumn, the rains be favourable for us;

<sup>125</sup>TS 5.7.2.d-h.

<sup>126</sup>One *sāmidhenī* verse is recited with each stick added to the fire, and the number varies. See TS 2.5.10.1.

<sup>127</sup>The five *prayāja* invocations:

TS 1.6.21 *vasantám ṛtūnām prīṇāmi sá mā prītáh prīṇātu |*

“Of the seasons spring I delight; delighted may it delight me” (Keith).

TS 1.6.2m *grīṣmám ṛtūnām prīṇāmi sá mā prītáh prīṇātu |*

“Of the seasons summer I delight; delighted may it delight me” (Keith).

TS 1.6.2n *varṣā ṛtūnām prīṇāmi tá mā prītáh prīṇantu |*

“Of the seasons the rains I delight; delighted may it delight me” (Keith).

TS 1.6.2o *śarádam ṛtūnām prīṇāmi sá mā prītáh prīṇātu |*

“Of the seasons autumn I delight; delighted may it delight me” (Keith).

TS 1.6.2p *hemantaśísirāv ṛtūnām prīṇāmi táu mā prítáu prīṇitām |*

“Of the seasons winter I delight; delighted may it delight me” (Keith).

<sup>128</sup>The two *ājyabhāgas* called *vārtraghna* are TS 4.3.13a and b (= RV 6.16.34 and 1.91.5 respectively as well as common recurrence in YV texts). They are non-agricultural, one dedicated to Agni and one to Soma.

<sup>129</sup>The *anuvākyā* or *puronuvākyā* and *yajyās* pertaining to the rainy season, autumn, and spring Āgrayaṇas are almost all addressed to Indra, Agni, Soma, the All-gods, and Heaven and Earth; a notable exception in spring is discussed below.

May we enjoy the favour and protection  
Of these seasons through a hundred autumns (Keith).

One way the embrace of sedentary agricultural custom was described was as the inclusion of the Seasons in the sacrifice. This is an apt characterization, considering that the ritual transition was registered in the seasonal rites of Āgrayaṇa and Cāturmāsya. We saw the connection between the Seasons and agriculture made specifically in the two versions of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* passage. We see in the next passage that the Āgrayaṇa is explicitly connected with the ritual change described as the inclusion of the Seasons in the sacrifice. The prose portion of TS which immediately follows the five *ajyāni* verses explains the importance of the verse addressing the Seasons (TS 5.7.2f).

TS 5.7.2k

*brahmavādīno vadanti yād ardhmāsā māsā ṛtávaḥ saṃvatsarā ośadhīḥ pácanty átha kásmād anyābhyo devátābhya āgrayaṇam nír upyata íti | etā hí tād devatā udájayan yád ṛtúbhyo nír váped devátābhyaḥ samádam dadhyāt | āgrayaṇam nírúpyaitā āhutīr juhoti | ardhmāsān evá māsān ṛtūnt saṃvatsarām prīṇāti ná devátābhyaḥ samádam dadhāti bhadrān naḥ śréyaḥ sám anaiṣṭa devā íty āha hutādyāya yájamānasyáparābhāvāya ||2||*

The theologians say, 'Since the months, the half-months, the seasons, the years cook [ripen, *pácanti*] the plants, then why is the offering of first-fruits made to other deities? The gods conquered these (plants); if he were to offer to the seasons, he would cause strife with the gods; having offered the offering of first-fruits, he offers these libations; verily he delights the half-months, the months, the seasons, the year; he does not cause strife with the gods. 'Better than good have the gods brought together,' he says, for the eating of the offering, to prevent the defeat of the sacrifice (Keith).

Keith translates *brahmavādīnaḥ* as “the theologians.” While not an ideal translation given the specific cultural implications of “theology,” it does accurately convey the sense of an expert or specialist in religious matters. The religious experts referred to here are discussing the same issue of the Seasons in the sacrifice that we encountered previously, but the angle taken is different in several ways. One is that the

*ásuras* are not mentioned, but the contentiousness of the matter is still apparent in the strife with the gods over sharing the sacrifice with the Seasons. Another difference is how the resolution of the issue is described; in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (ŚB) passages, the resolution is described as the inclusion of the Seasons in the sacrifice, but here, the “pleasing” of the Seasons at the seasonal Āgrayaṇas is described as a compromise: “he delights ... he does not cause strife.” A final significant difference is the linguistic context. Both this and the ŚB passages are Vedic *brāhmaṇa*-type prose passages,<sup>130</sup> but the ŚB passages are relating a narrative about the Seasons' role in sacrifice while this TS passage is not telling a story but discussing an issue occurring in the world, being discussed by experts – it is straightforward expository prose. They were two different approaches to deal with the same issue, to justify a ritual change that was a necessary adaptation to a changing context, namely the transition to the harvests of multiple staple crops occurring in different seasons of the year. The situation is one of a “theological” controversy being expressed in two texts in two different modes of discourse, expository prose (“theologians say”) and narrative (myth). This early theological controversy arose directly out of the ritual system's transition to the multiple harvests of the sedentary agricultural calendar in central North India.

There is a notable exception to the lack of specifically agricultural material in the verses employed in the seasonal Āgrayaṇas, but it is a case that conforms to the popular

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<sup>130</sup>The *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* (TS) is a *saṃhitā* of the Black Yajurveda, which is differentiated from the White Yajurveda by the inclusion of *brāhmaṇa*-type expository prose along with the hymns. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* on the other hand belongs to the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā* (VS) of the White Yajurveda.

maxim that “the exception proves the rule.” For the spring *āgrayaṇa* of barley, a particular verse pertaining to agriculture is used. According to Baudhāyana:

In spring, one should perform the *āgrayaṇa* sacrifice of barley. ... The rites (in connection with this offering) are similar to those to be performed in connection with the offering of the first fruits of paddy. This much only is different: The sacrificer should consume his portion with *etam u tyam madhunā samyutam* [TB 2.4.8.7] (Śrautakośa 505).

The verse referred to, TB 2.4.8.7, has a variant in AVŚ 6.30.1. Whitney discusses the verse briefly, noting it to be “wholly unconnected in meaning with the others” in the three verse AVŚ hymn, which is dedicated to the *śamī* plant, “for benefit to the hair.” Whitney combines the two variations of the verse to achieve a translation (given in the footnote) for which he does not hesitate to express his uncertainty at certain points.

TB 2.4.8.7

*etām ú tyám mádhunā sám̐yutam̐ yávam*  
*sárasvatyām ádhi manáv̐ acarkṛṣuḥ |*  
*índra āsīt̐ s̐r̐apatih̐ śatákratuḥ*  
*k̐n̐ás̐ā āsan marútaḥ sudānavah̐ ||*

AVŚ 6.30.1

*devā́ imám̐ mádhunā sám̐yutam̐ yávam̐*  
*sárasvatyām̐ ádhi manáv̐ acarkṛṣuḥ |*  
*índra āsīt̐ s̐r̐apatih̐ śatákratuḥ*  
*k̐n̐ás̐ā āsan marútaḥ sudānavah̐ ||1||*

The gods plowed this barley mixed with honey on the Sarasvatī in the presence of Manu; Indra of a hundred abilities was master of the plow; the munificent Maruts were the plowmen.<sup>131</sup>

Variants occur elsewhere, all secondary applications. Given the uniqueness of this

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<sup>131</sup>Whitney gives: “This barley, combined with honey, the gods plowed much on the Sarasvatī, in behalf of Manu (?); Indra, of a hundred abilities, was furrow-master; the liberal (?sudānu) Maruts were the plowmen” (Whitney). “Furrow-master” should be “plow-master;” perhaps Whitney confounded *sīra*, “plow,” with *sītā*, “furrow.” Whitney reads the TS *manáv̐* instead of the AVŚ *manáv̐*, as I have also done.

verse among the Āgrayaṇa materials as being explicitly agricultural, and given the geographic reference to the Sarasvatī, it seems a reasonable conclusion that this verse is probably a survival from before the changes associated with the Gangetic transition. This is further supported by the fact that the AVP only cites it in *pratīka*, “as if it had occurred earlier; but it has not been found elsewhere in the text” (Whitney). Its implied earlier appearance in the text probably indicates that a hymn had been lost, and this would accord with the discontinuities associated with the development of the seasonal Āgrayaṇas. The various references in the hymn accord well with the plowing material as well as with the Atharvavedic harvest hymn (AVŚ 3.24=AVP 5.30), which came to be remembered as a crop fertility hymn when the Āgrayaṇa was developed to ritually embrace the multiple Gangetic harvests and the Seasons were invited to the sacrifice, or at least suitably “pleased.”

Finally, we can briefly consider the Cāturmāsya, the “four-monthly” rites in relation to agriculture. Generally speaking, the rites occur once every four months, and there are three or four *parvans* specified, depending on the source text. At the *saṃhitā* level, only three *parvans* are consistently described (the *vaiśvadeva*-, *varuṇapraghāsa*-, and *sakhamedhā-parvans*), but throughout the Śrauta Sūtras four are described, however all four are described in the *saṃhitās* in connection with the Rājasūya (Bhide 1979, 182-183).

Bhide, explains:

Thus, it may be concluded that, according to some older texts like the TS, the MS and the KS the ŚP [*śunāsīrīya-parvan*] is included only in the Cāturmāsya sacrifices performed in the Rājasūya. But following the other texts, all the ŚS [*śrauta sūtras*] mention the procedure of the ŚP together with the other *parvans* of the Cāturmāsya sacrifices. These ŚS prescribe the Cāturmāsya sacrifices in separate chapters and include them among the seven *havis* oblations (Bhide 1979, 183).



The fourth, the *śunāsīrīya-parvan*, is the “odd man out” in a number of ways, besides being omitted from the *saṃhitā* texts (save for the Rājasūya). For one thing, a fourth period of four months would then exceed a full year, of course, although there are various different prescriptions for the period of time after the third *parvan* when the *śunāsīrīya-parvan* should be performed, which distinguishes it from the other *parvans*, all of fixed period. One of the possibilities is that there is a connection with the “thirteenth month” (*trayodaśa-māsa*), an intercalary month occurring every two or three years in order to synchronize the lunisolar calendar. Bhide as well as Einoo<sup>132</sup> advocate this connection with the thirteenth month, but this reflects its variable timing and how it exceeds the count of a full year without negating the clearly agricultural content and origin of the *śunāsīrīya-parvan* in particular. The name *śunāsīrīya* itself is the first hint at the agricultural dimension; it is a derivative of the important *devatā dvandva* we first encountered in RV 4.57, *śunāsīrā/au*, “Prosperity and Plow.” The derivative formation is used adjectivally to modify Indra (who was also encountered in the same RV hymn) and could thus be translated “Indra as relating to Prosperity and Plow.” Another sign of the *śunāsīrīya-parvan*’s originally agricultural nature is the sacrificial fee (*dakṣiṇā*) of twelve oxen yoked to a plow.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Bhide 1979, 188-190; Einoo 1988, 300-301: “Der Grund dafür, warum dem *Śunāsīrīya*-Opfer so verschiedene Zeitpunkte zugeschrieben werden, ist wohl der, daß dieses Opfer — welche ursprüngliche Bedeutung es auch immer habe — wenigstens im *Śrauta*-Ritual ‘auf den dreizehnten, den zur Ausglei- chung der lunaren und solaren Zeitrechnung bestimmten Schaltmonat bezogen wird’ (citing Oldenberg 1894, *Die Religion des Veda*, p. 442).”

<sup>133</sup>Six and twenty-four oxen are also acceptable, depending on the text. Bhide considers that the number twelve here may be symbolic of the year (Bhide 1979, 192). Cf. the ritual plowing of the site of the *āhavanīya* according to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*: “He yokes the right (ox) first, then the left one: thus it is

Bhide is clearly more concerned with a synchronic perspective of the ritual system; he mentions scholarly theories on the *śunāsīrīya-parvan* being originally a separate rite, and does not dispute that directly, but is more interested in viewing its integration into the Cāturmāsya as primary (synchronically):

Taking into consideration the nature of these deities in the ŚP, some scholars state that this parvan is a separate rite. In the introduction his work on Rājasūya, Heesterman says: 'Obviously the Śunāsīrīya was originally a rite connected with ploughing fertility, but has in Śrauta-ritual been abstracted into an iṣṭi, while the ploughing itself was translated into the ritual symbol of giving of a plough with twelve oxen as a gift to the officiating priests.' Similar conclusion has been drawn by Oldenberg. But one must clearly understand that the ŚP is a constituent part of the Cāturmāsya sacrifices. Keith also relates this parvan to ploughing and remarks: "The festival is followed by an offering to Śunāsīrīya, which is evidently an agricultural rite for ploughing, addressed to two parts of deities of the plough" (Bhide 1979, 187).

From the diachronic perspective, especially in considering the context of the sedentary transition, there is no reason to dispute the findings of the scholars who have seen in the *śunāsīrīya-parvan* an originally separate, agricultural, rite, and this accords perfectly with the various changes to agricultural ritual we have seen associated with the broad transitions occurring as the Vedic tribes transitioned from semi-nomadic pastoralism to the sedentary, multiple-harvest, agricultural calendar of the Gangetic Basin.

There is no specifically agricultural rite in the *śunāsīrīya-parvan*; it accords with the other Cāturmāsya parvans in terms of ritual procedure. However, there is distinct agricultural content in the verbal formulae prescribed to accompany the offerings to the deities of the parvan according to certain texts. The deities of the *śunāsīrīya-parvan* are

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(done) with the gods, differently in human (practice). It is a team of six oxen, or one of twelve oxen, or one of twenty-four oxen: it is the year (he obtains) as the consummation" (ŚBM 7.2.2.6., Eggeling trans.).

Vāyu, Śunāsīra Indra, and Sūrya, and the agricultural content occurs in the *puronuvākyā* and *yājyā* formulae for Śunāsīra Indra. According to Einoo (1988, 306), the ŚŚ (3.18.14-16) gives three sets of *puronuvākyā* (“invitation”) and *yājyā*, (“sacrificial utterance”) and the AśŚS (2.20.4) gives two, the second of which is the same as the third of the ŚŚ.

The first *puronuvākyā* and *yājyā* set for Śunāsīra Indra in ŚŚ reads (using Einoo’s presentation of the text):

*puronuvākyā*:

*indraś ca naḥ śunāsīrau imaṃ yajñam mimikṣatām |*  
*garbhān dhattam svastaye ||*

(Let) Indra (mix) and let Śunāsīrau mix this sacrifice for us.

(You two, Śunāsīrau), impregnate wombs for well-being!<sup>134</sup>

*yājyā*:

*yayor idam [viśvaṃ] bhuvanam āviveśa*

*yayor ānando nihito mahāś ca |*

*śunāsīrau ṛtubhiḥ saṃvidānā*

*indravantā havir idam juṣethām ||*

In both of you this (whole) world has entered, in both of you joy is deposited, and greatness. Śunāsīrau, in concert with the Seasons, together with Indra, enjoy this oblation.<sup>135</sup>

The *puronuvākyā* in the first set is clearly aimed at a fertility function. The *vākyā* praises the greatness of Śunāsīrau (Prosperity and Plow) in cosmic terms. The mention of them being in concert with the Seasons is especially notable and probably reflects an integration of the old Prosperity and Plow theology with the newer sedentary agricultural theology of the Seasons’ inclusion in the sacrifice. The grammatical number in the set is

<sup>134</sup>Einoo gives: “Indra, Śuna und Sīra sollen uns dieses Opfer schmackhaft bereiten! Gebet Ihr beide Leibesfrüchte zum Wohlsein!”

<sup>135</sup>Einoo gives: “In Euch beide ist diese gesamte Welt eingegangen; In Euch beiden ist die Freunde bereitgestellt und auch die Größe; Ihr beide, o Śuna und Sīra, in Eintracht mit den Jahreszeiten, zusammen mit Indra, nehmet diese Opfergabe gerne an!”

also of interest. The first line of the *anuvākya* has three grammatical subjects, Indra (sg.) and Śunāsīrau (du.), but with a dual imperative; the singular for Indra is suppressed and must be supplied. The second line, with no explicit subject, also has the verb in dual number, which clearly isolates Śunāsīrau. Then in the *vākya*, the dual is retained in the pronoun, *yayoḥ*, continuing the reference to Śunāsīrau as a dual. Then in the final two *pādas* Śunāsīrau is semantically reunited with Indra but the verb remains dual because Indra's presence is added adjectivally with the dual *indravantā*. This intentional play with the grammatical number is continued in the second set.

The second set for ŚŚ then reads:

*puronuvākya*:

*indrāya śunāsīrāya srucā juhutanā haviḥ |*  
*juṣatām prati medhiraḥ ||*

Offer the oblation with the ladle for Indra Śunāsīra. Let the wise one (i.e., Indra) be pleased with (the oblation).<sup>136</sup>

*yājyā*:

*prahavyāni ghṛtavanty asmai haryaśvāya bharatā sajoṣāḥ |*  
*indra ṛbhuhir brahmaṇā samvidānaḥ śunāsīrī havir idam juṣasva ||*

Together bring the oblations with ghee to him with the fallow horse.  
O Indra, in concert with the Ṛbhus and the sacred formula, possessed of Prosperity and Plow, enjoy this oblation!<sup>137</sup>

The *puronuvākya* of the second set begins with Indra and Śunāsīrau (*indrāya śunāsīrāya*) as did the *puronuvākya* of the first set (*indraś ca naḥ śunāsīrau*), but here *śunāsīra* has become an adjective for Indra and therefore is grammatically singular, which

<sup>136</sup> Einoo gives Caland's translation from ĀpŚS 8.20.5: "Opfert dem Indra śunāsīra mit der Kelle unsre Opfergabe; der weise Gott soll sie entgegennehmen."

<sup>137</sup> Einoo gives Caland's translation from ĀpŚS 8.20.5: "Bringet einmütig die mit Schmalz versehenen Opfergaben diesem mit falben Rossen fahrenden Gotte. Indra śunāsīrin, der du mit den Ṛbhus, heilige Wort einträchtig bist, nimm du dieses Opfer gerne an!"

contrasts with the expressed dual and suppressed singular verbs in the first set that construed arithmetically with Indra (sg.) and Śunāsīrau (du.) as subjects. This is certainly not all happenstance; the *vākyā* of the second set mirrors the *vākyā* of the first as well. The second set's *vākyā* has Indra in the singular, but united with Śunāsīrau through the use of the possessive suffix *-in*: *indra ṛbhubhir brahmaṇā saṃvidānaḥ śunāsīrī*, which inverts the situation in the first set, expressing the same relation in the dual number, using another possessive suffix, *-vant*: *śunāsīrau ṛtubhiḥ saṃvidānā indravantā*. Both also contain *saṃvidāna*, “in concert/harmony (with),” in the dual in the first set and singular in second, both construing with instrumentals. The purpose of all this play with grammatical number seems to be to identify Indra and Śunāsīrau as a unity while at the same time retaining the validity of their separate identities as discrete entities. This is especially interesting considering that the personified dual divinity of Śunāsīrau is itself dependent on their association with one another; the association of Prosperity and Plow is always what is divinized, not the discrete members so associated.

Then the third set for ŚŚ and the second set for AśŚS are RV 3.30.22 (*puronuvākyā*) and RV 10.160.5 (*yājyā*), which are both for Indra but are not specifically agricultural and do not mention Śunāsīrau in any form. However, it should be noted that RV 10.160.5 accords well with the *śunāsīra* material because *pāda* e consists of the formula *śunaṃ huvema* “for blessing we would invoke thee,” which “are the first two words of the Viśvāmitra clan refrain, found in most of the Viśvāmitra *triṣṭubh* Indra hymns (III.30.22, etc.)” (Jamison & Brereton 2014, 1642).

Turning then to the AśŚS, its first set has a unique formula for the *puronuvākyā* and

the *yājyā* is again RV 10.160.5. Again, to clarify, the AśśS only has two sets of *puronuvākyā* and *yājyā* in the *śunāsīrīya-parvan* as compared to the three of the Śś, and of those two, the second set is common to both texts (being also the third set for Śś). Here then is the *puronuvākyā* of the AśśS that we have not yet encountered:

*puronuvākyā*:

*indra vyaṃ śunāsīra me 'smin pakṣe havāmahe |*  
*sa vājeṣu pra no 'viṣat ||*

O Indra śunāsīra, we call you to my side here. When prizes (are set) he will help us.<sup>138</sup>

In this verse *śunāsīra* is merely adjectival to Indra, and there is nothing else specifically agricultural in the verse. The play on grammatical number to nuance their simultaneous relation and identity was a feature of the *puronuvākyā* and *yājyā* sets in Śś, but was absent in the sets in AśśS.

Overall, the *śunāsīrīya-parvan* of the Cāturmāsya sacrifices shows many signs of being a way to integrate aspects of older agricultural material into a new framework. It alone among the *parvans* performed at a four-month interval exceeds a full year and it alone among them has high variability it when it can be performed, both of which have supported scholars in connecting it to the intercalary thirteenth month that was used to harmonize the lunar and solar calendars, yet the connection is not absolute in that its performance is not required to take place in a thirteenth month or even a year with a thirteenth month. While it accords with the other *parvans* in terms of basic ritual procedure,

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<sup>138</sup> The translation of the last *pāda* is taken from the Jamison and Brereton (2014) translation of RV 1.81.1e. Einoo has *viṣat* instead of *viṣat*, and translates: “O Indra śunāsīra, wir rufen (dich) zu dieser meinen Seite. Er möge beim Wettlauf für uns tätig sein.”

there is no doubt whatsoever to its agricultural nature, and likely, origin. Unlike the other *parvans* it requires a *dakṣiṇā*, which should be twelve oxen yoked to a plow (or six or twenty-four, numbers representative of a full year). The *puronuvākyā* and *yājyā* sets given for Indra Śunāsīra in certain Śrauta Sūtras (ŚŚ and AŚŚS) contain important agricultural material as well. Indra Śunāsīra is described as being in concert with the Seasons, which, as we have seen, are a thematic nexus used for the ritual adaptation to the multiple seasonal crops associated with the transition to sedentism. Finally, in the *puronuvākyā* and *yājyā* sets of the ŚŚ an intentional play with grammatical number relates Indra to the association of Prosperity and Plow, emphasizing equally their unity or identity as well as their distinct separativity, which seems to fulfill a theological function of integration.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### 5.1. Summary

This project has focused on the Vedic tribes' religious conception of agriculture throughout the transition from semi-nomadic pastoralism to agriculturally-based sedentism. During the early semi-nomadic period the tribes would annually trek with their livestock for the better part of the year (the *yoga* period), but for the remainder of the year (the *kṣema* period), most likely during the rainy season, they would settle and cultivate a crop, which was most probably barley (*yava*). Over the span of a few short centuries, these semi-nomadic tribes spread further east, into the Gangetic basin of north central India, where they became sedentary and thus were able to cultivate multiple staple crops in different seasons throughout the year, enabling a higher degree of food security than was enjoyed by most other ancient agricultural societies. This is well-represented by the first-fruit rites (*āgrayaṇa*) which were developed at this time; depending on circumstances, up to three *Āgrayaṇas* could be performed each year, one for barley, one for rice (*vr̥thi*), and one for millet (*śyāmaka*). These of course are broad generalizations of overarching historical processes that pertain primarily to the Vedic “center of gravity” as represented in the extant texts. Several complex and overlapping dynamics are occurring as one progresses through the textual strata: chronological progression, geographic migration, as well as the transition of cultural life-way and social organization that occurred with the embrace of sedentism.

We began our close examination of the texts with the earliest Sanskrit text, the *Ṛgveda*, which is a Bronze age text composed by these semi-nomadic pastoralists in the Northwest of the subcontinent. We examined the geographic context of the *Ṛgveda* as well as the linguistic context in terms of relationship to agriculture; agricultural traditions were present millennia prior to the Vedic tribes in the northwest of the subcontinent, while the



Proto-Indo-European ancestors of the Vedic tribes in Central Asia had similarly practiced a semi-nomadic pastoralism which most probably included cultivation of grain during an annual sedentary period. One full hymn of the *Ṛgveda* is devoted to agriculture,

ṚV 4.57. This hymn was our first exposure to an immensely significant aspect of the Vedic conception of agriculture, the dual divinities Prosperity and Plow, *śúnāsīrau* (which are even presented as a grammatical dual, in a compound formation frequently used for dual divinities, the *devatā dvandva*). We saw that the gods themselves participated in agriculture. But we were able to further discern more nuance and complexity than the gods' participation alone; the gods, humans, and animals all cooperated, exhibiting a reproductive complementarity, resulting in the milk and honey of Prosperity. Given that sacrifices required cultivated grain, agriculture sustained the gods as well as humans and animals, and therefore perpetuated the cosmos. Agriculture was understood as an active demonstration of the cosmic order.

In chapter three we turned to examine the early conception of agriculture in much more depth. We examined a post-Ṛgvedic hymn in great detail, the Kṛṣi Sūkta of the Śaunakīya *Atharvaveda*, AVŚ 3.17. We looked at each verse in the hymn, and traced the usage of each verse and *pāda* throughout the Vedic corpus. These verses considerably elaborated the constellation of Prosperity and Plow that we were introduced to in the *Ṛgveda*. They revealed a nuanced analogy of plowing to sexual reproduction, with the Plow as phallus and the Furrow as womb. The result of this magical reproduction was understood to be much more than the crop cultivated, it was Prosperity, formally indicated by a meristic enumerative list of wonderful items that indexed an all-encompassing Prosperity. In some cases this included a beautiful woman being turned up by the Plow, prefiguring the epic birth of Sītā. Prosperity was also symbolized by milk and honey as in the *Ṛgveda*, and now ghee joined this symbolic trope. In the post-Ṛgvedic Mantra period, there was extensive

sharing of the *kṛṣi* material on verse level across *saṃhitās*, including in contexts which are not properly agricultural, such as the ritual plowing of the site of the fire altar for the *agnicayana*.

We then examined the hymn comparable to the Kṛṣi Sūkta (AVŚ 3.17) in the Paippilāda recension of the Atharvaveda, AVP 2.22. We used Stanley Insler's typology for tracing the compositional history of Atharvavedic hymns and applied it to the *kṛṣi* material, attempting to extend it to the variant groupings in other *saṃhitās* as well, which allowed us to see how “new” material from each text considerably expanded and enriched the Prosperity and Plow constellation. Several important conclusions came out of this systematic comparison. One is the importance of the Prosperity and Plow material for sedentary transition in the Gangetic basin. Another is that geographic differentiation likely explains why a hymn corresponding to AVŚ 3.17 and AVP 2.22 was not included in the Ur-AV. One surprising conclusion, which may have significance for the compositional history of the *saṃhitās* more broadly, is the unique importance of *Maitrāyaṇīya Saṃhitā* (MS). The MS, which seems to compile all the plowing verses not included in ṚV 4.57, and to reveal the state of the Atharvavedic *kṛṣi* verses that were included in their respective recensions only during the second redaction. It would be fascinating to see if the MS holds a similar importance for other corresponding hymns which were only included in the AV recensions during the second redaction, but there is no doubt that the mini-compilations of related verse materials in the Yajurvedic *saṃhitās* contain a neglected resource for the compositional history of the *saṃhitās* during the Mantra period.

We finished our examination of materials related to the Kṛṣi Sūkta with a close inspection of the ritual dialogue contained in the *Kauśika Sūtra* during the ritual at first plowing of the year which employs AVŚ 3.17. This “*brahmodya*-like” ritual dialogue, between husband and wife and a moist clump of earth, provides another example of a

meristic list indexing total Prosperity, as an answer to what came of plowing: “Knowledge, prosperity, increase, progeny, livestock, and food, food to eat.” Further, the Sanskrit of the dialogue is immensely rich in phonological and stylistic structures, including alliteration, etymological figures, and two overlapping ring compositions. We saw that it was a continuation of an ancient Indo-European merism for agricultural produce as elucidated by Calvert Watkins, who provided evidence for such a merism in a number of Indo-European languages, including Homeric Greek, Avestan, Vedic, Hittite, and indeed even in English. Watkins had speculated that an Indo-European agricultural prayer or harvest song may have been the original context for the merism, and our investigation was able to add a ritual dialogue during the first plowing of the year to the list of contenders. Our ritual dialogue, assigned by the *Kausika Sūtra* to a rite employing the Kṛṣi Sūkta (AVŚ 3.17), centers on the reproductive complementarity of husband and wife, and shows that to ritually demonstrate that one understands that plowing is intercourse with the earth allows the Plow to turn up Prosperity, represented by an enumerative list of wonderful things.

In chapter four, we transitioned from plowing material to the harvest. While the plow material had been stabilized through the formal association of Prosperity and Plow, there were numerous changes in the harvest material. We attempted to track these changes across three immense contextual shifts: (1) the chronological transition from Bronze to Iron age, (2) the transition from semi-nomadic pastoralism to sedentism for the Vedic tribes, and (3) the geographic transition (of the Vedic “center of gravity”) from the Northwest of the subcontinent to Gangetic basin. The thematic nexus we explored as registering some of these contextual changes involved the rivalry between the *devās* and *ásuras* and the issue of inviting the Seasons to the sacrifice. Specifically, we examined a passage in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* that related this story. The passage occurs in both recensions; we first looked at the Mādhyandina (ŚBM 1.6.1.1-5) with Eggeling's translation, and then the

Kāṇva (ŚBK 2.5.3.1-4), where I offered a fresh translation in order to reinterpret the pronominal referents. Both translations clearly show that the issue of the inclusion of the Seasons in the sacrifice was related to agriculture, but the reinterpretation allowed further clarity to emerge on the issue, namely that the *devās* were motivated to include the Seasons in the sacrifice by the *ásuras*' agricultural success.

The next item we examined was another Atharvavedic hymn (AVŚ 3.24/AVP 5.30). Tradition held it to be merely a hymn for crop fertility, but we ascertained through careful reading that it had originally been a harvest hymn, providing another example of how the theme of harvest was characterized by numerous disjunctures as compared to the thematic continuity of the plow material over time. The hymn seems to reflect a time the still-trekking Vedic tribes would interact with indigenous sedentary agriculturalists at time of harvest, which would account for its displacement after the Vedic tribes' own sedentary transition.

We turned to the Āgrayaṇa (“First Fruits) and Caturmāsya (“Four-monthly”) next, which are both seasonal rites tied to sedentism and the multiple harvests of Gangetic basin. These were developed in Mantra period, and were the culmination of the changes associated with harvest. We examined the Āgrayaṇa of the Atharva tradition in detail as explicated in the *Kauśika Sūtra* and one of its commentaries (the *paddhati* of Keśava), which allowed a direct comparison with the ritual injunctions with which we were familiar from the plowing material, incorporating the Kṛṣi Sūkta. The Atharvanic treatment of the Āgrayaṇa demonstrated well the diachronic disjunctures of the harvest material; although the rite was being described in the *saṃhitāvidhi* for the Śaunaka *śākhā*, the *mantra* material prescribed in the *sūtra* does not come from the *saṃhitā*! Keśava then prescribes further *mantra* material which does hail from the Śaunaka *saṃhitā*, but which does not even pertain directly to agriculture, much less the harvest. The corresponding *śrauta* materials

are similar in applying *mantra* materials which are not primarily agricultural, although notably including *mantras* praising the Seasons. These seasonal rites constituted the inclusion of the Seasons in the sacrifice, although traditions differed on whether or not that was considered proper “inclusion” or whether it was a compromise in which the Seasons were (merely) “pleased.”

There are two survivals of prior ages which help to demonstrate the dynamics as described here, one in the *Āgrayaṇa* and one in the *Cāturmāsya*. The first is a single agricultural verse utilized in the *Āgrayaṇa* of barley, which describes the barley harvest on the *Sarasvatī* (TB 2.4.8.7/AVŚ 6.30.1). The second is the non-ubiquitous fourth rite of the *Cāturmāsya*, the *śunāsīrīya-parvan*, which scholars had already identified as an originally separate agricultural rite. These instances, even as exceptions, help to show the changes that occurred in harvest-related material through the great transitions of the Vedic period.

## 5.2. The Legacy of Vedic Agriculture

The world only got more complex after the sedentary transition. A number of important dynamics arose over time to affect the way agriculture appeared in the Sanskrit corpus. We can outline a few of the most important of these dynamics very briefly. While some aspects of the early Vedic conception of agriculture remained deeply significant over the succeeding millennia, the civilization agriculture supported grew and changed in revolutionary ways.

In the late Vedic period, the *Dharmasūtras* assigned agriculture to the *vaiśya varṇa* generally, although several exceptions were made so that higher *varṇas* could also practice agriculture depending on circumstances. By the late Vedic period, agriculture had become merely one occupation among many, and was systematized as such. Later, the heirs to the late Vedic *Dharmasūtras*, the *Dharmaśāstras*, continued in this same vein. From a long

historical perspective this was an innovation in that such specialization of labor would not be expected for the early semi-nomadic period, when, during the sedentary *kṣema* period of the year agriculture would be practiced communally.

A number of related cultural changes occurred in the late Vedic period that affected the conception of agriculture in various ways. Around 500BCE the second urbanization was occurring, and asceticism was flowered along with it. The hugely influential concept of *ahiṃsā*, “non-harm,” had arisen along with heterodox traditions such as Buddhism and Jainism, marking a deep rift between ascetic and domestic modalities of Indian spirituality – with agriculture sitting squarely on the domestic side. A certain ambivalence towards agriculture accompanied the ascetic orientation, but that was also true for much else that was this-worldly while the other worldly was ascendant. The heterodox traditions figured in the background of these dynamics, emphasizing asceticism and *mokṣa*. A new goal of religious life had arisen underlying the ascetic strain, the perfect transcendence of the formless absolute.

The householder had the authority of the Vedic sacrificial system as a shelter and a refuge, but the farmer as a specific lifestyle was much more susceptible to the changing religious landscape. The ideal of the ascetic versus that of the farmer put the farmer at a great disadvantage in every way that mattered. Each of the three great characteristics of the ascetic contravened the farmer: the ascetic begged food, while the farmer actually produced it; the ascetic wandered while the farmer was dramatically dependent on a specific piece of land; and the ascetic was celibate while the farmer was not only likely a householder but also a reproductive expert who propagated (domesticated) plants and bred (domesticated) animals. Even further, the ancient conception of agriculture was that of a reproductive complementarity between gods, humans, animals to perpetuate the cosmic order, but now, with the rise of asceticism and the new goal of religious life being the perfect transcendence

of *mokṣa*, the cosmic order long perpetuated by agriculture was itself considered *saṃsāra* in the ascetic perspective.

By the classical period, specialized, technical discourses besides *dharmaśāstra*, such as those on statecraft (*arthaśāstra*) and on astronomy/astrology (*jyotiḥśāstra*) had developed significant authority claims over their respective aspects of agriculture. These discourses contained the precursors to *kṛṣiśāstra*, the minor medieval genre of didactic agricultural writings. In the *Arthaśāstra*, a unique early text on statecraft, a different type of discourse conditioned the image of agriculture as it appears in the Sanskrit corpus in significant ways. It is by this time subject to state-level bureaucratic regulation, which generally includes such things as taxation, market regulation, and irrigation system management, and may at time further involve forced relocation of agriculturalists, settlement of new areas, or redefinition of boundaries. The text reveals both private ownership of productive land as well as productive state lands. Another innovation as far as Sanskrit discourse is concerned was the inclusion of consideration of various types of commodity farming, whereas by and large only staple crops figured into Vedic conception of agriculture. Although the text depicts a normative idealization of the state, it is widely recognized as an extremely rich source of various realia. The *Sītādhyakṣa* (“Superintendent of Agriculture”) chapter both itself demonstrates and refers to outside specialist and technical expert discourse on aspects of agriculture, and this portion stands a definite precursor to *kṛṣiśāstra*, as a genre. Similarly, the *Br̥hatsaṃhitā* of Varāhamihira, one of the fundamental texts of *jyotiḥśāstra*, has portions that are also definite precursors to the later genre of *kṛṣiśāstra*, specifically a chapter on astrological meteorology and another chapter on the divinatory forecasting of the growth of crops. This specialist tradition of discourse was extremely important for establishing the theoretical dependence of agricultural success on the authority of Sanskrit discourse.

Early in the medieval period, the sparse genre of *kṛṣiśāstra*, didactic agricultural writings arose. This late development is a contrast with the otherwise often comparable Western classical canon, where such writings were early and held an important place, exerting influence all the way into the Romantic movement. In the Sanskrit corpus however, the topic of agriculture was awkward as śāstric genre, given its inherently localized nature in a form of discourse that is highly universalizing. Wojtilla (2006) points to historical change to explain the rise of *kṛṣiśāstra*, specifically the intentional spread of cultivated territories in the early medieval period. This is a cogent explanation, given the combined power of all the various forces opposing agriculture as well as the complexity of multiple factors constituting causation. But, there are further considerations. One such possible factor was the rise and proliferation of written genres in vernacular languages. Wojtilla in fact includes regional vernaculars in his definition of *kṛṣiśāstra*, which makes sense for his encompassing survey of agricultural writings but obviates the specific problematics for the nature of the genre in Sanskrit discourse specifically. While a great deal of work has yet to be done, didactic agricultural writings appear to arise in the regional vernaculars roughly contemporaneous to the *kṛṣiśāstras* in Sanskrit. Further, the Sanskrit texts are concerned to establish authority, so there may have been a motivation for Sanskrit not to be exceeded by vernaculars on an undeniably important topic of potential *śāstra*. Another such possible motivation was bound up with the question of audience and purpose, namely compositions aimed at rulers, as an adjunct to arthaśāstric discourse, with intention not only to instruct but to persuade about the crucial importance of agricultural matters for the state. This level of discourse would then accord with the elite nature of Sanskrit discourse as well as bypass much of the religious tension involved in the subject; effective statecraft necessarily has a this-worldly focus, and, understandably, the ascetic strain of religiosity has comparatively little influence on such discourse.



Meanwhile, in fact all throughout the history of Sanskrit, agriculture and ritual had a special relationship. In important ways, agriculture was ritual; it was understood according to ritual logic and aspects of agriculture had currency as ritual outside of the strictly agricultural context. The general conservatism of ritual is well known, and its importance for our consideration is that the ritual context served as a shelter and sanctuary for agriculture, preserving many of the ancient symbolic meanings and functions, guarding them from the tumult of the vast changes affecting the religious and cultural conception of agriculture otherwise. This was especially true for plowing, in and out of strictly agricultural contexts. As early as the Vedic period it had become an item in the traditional ritual repertoire. It was used to domesticate space and to invite well-being and prosperity. Ritual plowing was used for the construction of the fire altar, preparing the site for the building of a home, the building of a temple, even in funerary ritual to prepare the site where cremated remains would be buried. At the same time, ritual in properly agricultural contexts continued to permeate the annual cycles of plowing and harvest, with various rites and celebrations that would often be village-wide in scope. The richest descriptions of these are found in the *kṛṣiśāsta* texts, but they are attested in some form or another all throughout the post-Vedic periods.

### **5.3. Conclusion**

For our concluding thoughts, let us briefly try to imagine the human dimension of the sedentary transition. While the advantages of transitioning to sedentism, such as permanent dwellings and drastically increased food security, seem obvious to us, it is also important to consider that from the perspective of the Vedic peoples it was not merely an annual trek being left behind but an ancient and sacred traditional way of life that had been practiced by their ancestors for millennia. Confronted with this choice, which their

ancestors must have confronted before as well, they faced a very real dilemma. There are too many unknown circumstances to attribute the choice to become sedentary to any specific or quantifiable causes, which actual historical change usually eludes anyway. But we can add to those unknown causes and circumstances the conjecture that the existing religious conception of agriculture did not work against this process of a collective decision. Perhaps the idea that the Plow would yield an all-encompassing Prosperity could have played a role similar to the ideology of “manifest destiny” in the American westward expansion, a collective expression of hope and determination. Regardless, before, during, and after the sedentary transition they ultimately saw agriculture as a harmonious participation in the natural order, a reproductive complementarity between gods, humans, and animals which sustained and perpetuated the cosmic order. It seems to me, who admit my own bias, that this should be more than a mere footnote in the history of thought, and should stand shoulder to shoulder in significance with other ancient and traditional self-comprehensions.

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