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The Ṛgvedic Religious System and its Central Asian and Hindukush Antecedents

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§0 Introduction

Our knowledge of Ṛgvedic religion is limited by the circumstances of the production, early collection, redaction and transmission of the texts. They were composed by and for (male) poets/priests (*brahmán*) and their *aficionado* mundane and divine audience. Conversely, the ṚV rarely treats the wishes and aspirations, the problems and trials of 'common' Vedic man in straightforward fashion. We therefore rely on the fragmentary direct information provided by, and on obscure hints culled from, the poetic texts. It always remains difficult to ascertain how much of the later materials can be projected back into the Ṛgvedic period.

Because of the fragmented and sketchy nature of our information, what is generally missing in modern interpretation is a view of the Vedic religion as a *system* that includes mythology, ritual, customs and beliefs which permeate the life of a Vedic Indian (OBERLIES 2001: 7). Other religions, whether those of the great early civilizations or of modern tribal communities, are built on such *inherent* conceptual systems (and rituals). It would be very surprising if only the Ṛgveda would prove to be an exception from this general trend (KUIPER 1983, 1979: 45 sq.; OBERLIES 2001: 8). Still, both due to increasing specialization and the fragmentary nature of our materials, it is not unusual to find statements indicating that there was no major overarching Ṛgvedic world view yet.

Instead of the many important detailed but atomistic studies of the past century a new, fuller description would proceed in a concerted, systematic way (using metalinguistic terminology), and would indicate in how far and in which

way the various deities, demi-gods, demonic powers and other forces make up a fairly coherent conceptual system (§3).

Close comparison with Iranian, Indo-European, Nostratic, Eurasian mythologies will greatly assist in establishing some of the seemingly obscure but ultimately *widespread common* parameters and motifs that underlie Ṛgvedic mythology and ritual. If we try to build up a scheme based on the Indo-Iranian and Indo-European relatives of Ṛgvedic religion, we can succeed to a certain degree, but what to do, e.g., with the Ādityas/Asuras? Simple back-projecting cannot be allowed. The same is true for ritual: The horse sacrifice is IE, but the discrepancy between the Irish king's and the Indian queen's 'participation' is obvious (PUHVEL 1987: 267–76). The following paragraphs contain a sketch of some of the diachronic developments, their likely locations, the several subsequent synchronic systems built on them, and finally, the stage codified in the Ṛgveda, i.e., a look at Ṛgvedic religion as a system.

§1 Diachronic developments

As we can observe even within the c. thousand years of development of Vedic religion — not to speak of later Hinduism — a religion is never static but is constantly evolving due to a number of influences, some internal, some external. Internal pressures include those of changes in habitat, economy and society, such as the constant upward influence or upscale movement of sections of the lower classes; they also include *some* system-immanent, built in internal contradictions of a given *weltanschauung* (HEESTERMAN's 'inner conflict of tradition', 1985), and the gradual realization, by whatever processes or (vested) interests, of such contradictions.

The mechanics of such developments have recently been analyzed in a paper that covers much of the early cultures of China, India and Europe (FARMER *et al.* 2000). It is important to realize that local intellectuals, thinkers, priests and philosophers constantly discover certain contradictions (which may not bother most people most of the time) and seek for a solution, in other words, try to establish a new system. This often involves thinking 'outside the box', as was already well described for African religion by GLUCKMAN (1944), by now more than half a century ago. We can observe such discussions even in the Ṛgveda ('is there an Indra?' RV 2.12.5, 8.100.3; cf. 10.82.7, RUBEN 1961: 20 sqq.). Frequently, contradictions are resolved by syncretistic amalgamation of various competing deities, or by positing 'higher' levels of truth or insight

(FARMER *et al.* 2000, and cf. below § 3).

External influences can obviously be due to trade, immigration or invasion of outside peoples, or by the movement of the bearers of the religion in question into a new area of settlement and subsequent developments of amalgamation, syncretism and priestly justification conditioned by the new surroundings.

Like any other facet of human culture after the African Eve, Ṛgvedic religion neither was static nor without history. It has a prehistory that dates back all the way to IE formations (and beyond). It also includes some of the local (Indus) beliefs as well as several layers of those picked up 'along the way' — from a hypothetical Hr. steppe homeland (wherever exactly situated), via the general area of the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC) and the Afghan mountains to the Greater Panjab. So far, these various *layers* of influences have hardly been listed and they certainly have not been discussed in historical fashion, at least not in detail. This will be attempted in the following sections.

§1.1 Indo-European background

By necessity, we must begin¹ with reconstructed Indo-European (IE) religion. It is well known that only a few IE deities can be firmly reconstructed by linguistic means. Some, such as 'Mother Earth' (DUNKEL, 1988/90, 1991/3, OBERLIES 2000: 373 n. 32), are based more on typology than on linguistic reconstruction of common IE words (but see n. 6). Nevertheless, a number of deities, and what is perhaps even more important, a series of generations of the gods or of successive ages, an opposition between two sets of deities and even some common rituals can be reconstructed. It is perhaps best to sum all of this up briefly in the form of a table. This is partly informed by KUIPER 1975, 1979, 1983, DUNKEL 1988/90 and OBERLIES 2000; it also includes, for the sake of some Eurasian comparison, traditional Japanese myth, as codified by c. 700 CE.²

¹ One can go back beyond that, though not really by linguistic means. It would be very difficult, for the moment, to reconstruct the religion belonging with the Proto-Nostratic language except for some vague notions such as 'spirit', etc. However, there now is another track available, that of comparative mythology (WITZEL 1990a, 2001: 53–57). This is based on comparison of *complete systems* of myth, not just of random individual myths, and allows to construct a well-structured pan-Eurasian, indeed Laurasian mythology (i.e., one that includes the Americas). These comparisons will be mentioned below, when appropriate.

² The Kojiki was composed in Old Japanese, collected from 682 onwards and written down in 712 CE, in a mixed *kambun* style (with some Chinese characters expressing not Jpn.

'ages' IE	Greek	Vedic	Eurasia: Japanese	
1. 'non-being'				
CHAOS / waters: m. salty:: f. sweet / [GIANT/EGG/DIVING for earth]				
DARKNESS	chaos	asat	Kamurogi/-romi?	
ASEXUAL				
*sal-, *wetōr- (neuter 'elements' in IE)	hudōr	salila- : udan-	seven entities, asexual > sexual pairs	

'being'		sat		
SEXUAL				
2.	HEAVEN: D.P.	Zēus Patēr	Dyaus Pitar	Izanagi/Izanami
3.	GIANTS: ↑ *worun(n)os Kronos ↓ < >	Titans: Uranos, Kronos, Zeus, Eos	Asura, ³ Pūrve Devāh, ⁴ Varuṇa	Tsuchi.no Kami 'mundane deities'
4.	'GODS': *deiwo-dīwos sunus, nepōth ₁ , dhugh ₂ tēr / Herakles	Deva: Indra, Uṣas / Trīta	Deva: Indra, Uṣas / Trīta	Ama.no Kami: 'heavenly deities' Susa.no Wo/Tajikara; Amaterasu (Sun) etc. Tsukuyomi (Moon)

(5.) HUMANS: *mr̥tyo, *dghmo	brotos (homo)	martya, manuṣya	hito	
*Menu, *Yemo?	Deukalion & Pyrrha (cf. *Yemos/Romulus) in Germanic)	MANU (cf. Mannus/Ymir in Germanic)	JIMMU (1st ruler) (2 brothers, Ko. 1.42 fishing : hunting: Ho-deri : Ho-wori)	

words but just Jpn. syllables); it is based on oral tradition transmitted by bards (*katari-be*) that goes back several centuries, as indicated by the mentioning of Beimihi/Himiko (**pimiko* 'the august child of the sun', of 238/9 C.E) in the history, written in the Wei period (220–265 CE, Wei-chih/*Gishiwajinden*). The Nihongi, or more correctly Nihon Shoki, of 697/720 CE is written in Chinese. I am aware of YOSHIDA Atsuhiko's DUMÉZIL-inspired theory (1962, and later) that Jpn. myths are related to IE ones and ultimately derive from Scythian models (cf. now also S. LITTLETON, in MAIR 1998). However, the early mentioning of Himiko and the description of contemporary Japan in the Wei history (often based on the still earlier records of the Later Han, from 57 C.E. onwards) argues against such late (4th cent. CE) intrusions of 'foreign' myths. — Japanese myth, situated at the other end of the Eurasian land mass, is quoted in the sequel as just *one* representative of Eurasian myth.

Several points are of importance. There is a vague, undefined and unordered beginning, as found time and again in the various mythologies of Eurasia: chaos/*asat*/darkness, male/female waters or a primordial ocean, the universe derived from two halves of an egg or from a dismembered primordial giant, or an animal diving into the ocean and bringing up the earth.⁵

This is followed by the emergence of the ordered cosmos (*sat*), evolving over several 'ages' (as in Greek, Indian, Meso-American myths) or generations of deities, all defined sexually, and in terms of family relationship. The primordial deities (Father Heaven/Mother Earth)⁶ have two sets of children, the 'demonic' Titans (Kronos etc., the Germanic Giants, Jpn. 'mundane deities') and the 'Olympian' gods (Zeus, Valhalla Æsir gods, Jpn. 'heavenly deities').⁷ A variation of this theme are the gods of Asgard and Vanheim: Æsir/Vanir, or the Asura/Deva, two moieties in constant competition who nevertheless also cooperate.

Both groups do not only act in similar fashion, they also intermarry. Importantly, they act, just as human brothers and cousins would behave (Ved. *bhrātṛvya*, cf. the Kaurava/Pāṇḍava cousins) when it comes to dominance and inheritance (e.g. Manu's sons and Nābhānediṣṭha). Thus, the gods of the 'Titan' and 'Olympian' ages are not really from different generations, but the Olympians take over and either kill or disperse the 'Titans', which is perhaps clearest in Vedic India, where the Devas and the Asuras are in constant competition. This primordial deed is re-enacted at winter solstice by collapse of time and society (Mahāvratā, 'carnivals', etc.) where the two moieties of so-

3 Cf. the name of *Ess*, the highest god of the Ket Yenessians, in Siberia and his destructive wife Xosadam; cf. the *Āsi*, lords of the forest, mountains of the Buryat Mongolians; Tunguse *buga*; note also Ilr. *rtā* > Kott (Yeneseian) *art'a* 'true'.

4 Or: *Sādhyāh*; for them and the *Pūrve Devāh* 'the earlier gods', see KUIPER 1979, appendix.

5 In India this is a boar (PS 6.7, KS 8.2, cf. also TS 7.1.5.I, TĀ 1.10.8, ŚB 14.1.2.11), while the standard animal in North Asia and North America is the musk rat or a diver bird. The substitution by a boar seems to go back to pre-Vedic ideas (as seen in Andaman mythology, see RADCLIFFE-BROWN 1922, and Andaman archaeology, CAMPBELL 1988: 122 sq., cf. §1.6.). Finnish mythology (Kalevala) unites several of these themes in its introductory section (primordial ocean, diver bird, split primordial egg).

6 OBERLIES (2000: 373, n. 32) denies the IE age of 'Mother Earth' as the wife of Heaven, but see below on ṚVKh 5.5.5 and cf. the Polynesian myth quoted in n. 65.

7 These concepts are perhaps best seen in ṚV 3.38 (a hymn later assigned to Indra): the androgynous 'older bull' (*vṛṣabha*) Asura (cf. Iranian myth), the 'great hoary' bull, gives birth to/creates the world; he is in part identified with Heaven and Earth (Rodasī), who were later separated; the (*younger) bull, Heaven/Sun, is also called Asura Viśvarūpa (cf. §1.2 on the dragon Viśvarūpa); Mitra and Varuṇa (?), the grandsons of Heaven, reign, served by the wind-haired Gandharvas.

ciety clash, after which order is reestablished (WITZEL 1997a, 1997c; below, §1.5.5).

The gods, notably the Sun deity, are the ancestors of humans, who are in many respects the opposite of the deities: they are mortal (*mart(y)a* : *amṛta*, *manuṣya* : *deva*), eat and drink different food (*surā* : *soma*, mead, *ambrosia*, *sake*) and have a somewhat different language (GÜNTERT 1921, ELIZARENKOVA 1995, WATKINS 1995) that is in part used by IE poets.

Superficially, one could perceive many of these deities as 'gods and goddesses of nature': heaven, sun, dawn, sons of heaven, lightning, wind, earth, ocean, rivers, etc.⁸ However, even these 'gods of nature' are not simple natural forces as imagined about a hundred years ago. The deities had acquired, in PIE and even in pre-PIE times, their own 'personal' biographies, as seen in a number of more or less inter-connected, common IE myths.

For the present purpose it is important to note that there is a heroic demiurge deity, a son of Father Heaven, who pushed up the sky (see n. 61), brought the (female) sun light from a cave and killed the dragon to make life possible on earth (a deity variously represented by Indra, Zeus/Herakles, Thor, and Susa.no Wo⁹). There are myths of primordial incest between twins (Yama/Yamī; Izanagi/Izanami) or siblings (Indra and Uṣas, Amaterasu and Susa.no Wo), and by Father Heaven and his daughter Dawn. The leader of the present gods¹⁰ killed his father and, as Indra/Trita, Herakles, Susa.no Wo, killed various Titanic monsters such as the Dragon. Primordial incest of deities leads directly to the emergence of humans, Yama/Yamī : Yima/*Yamī > Jam/Jai in Iran, cf. Deukalion and Pyrrha in Greece, Izanagi/Izanami in Japan; or due to incest prohibition, indirectly via Yama's brother Manu (cf. Germ. Mannus), or by the symbolically enacted incest of Amaterasu and Susa.no Wo (Kojiki 1.15).

Humans must worship their direct ancestors — always three (*tritopátōres*) — and their indirect ones, the three generations of gods (Titans included as third generation), and they must offer food and drink to them. Such rituals include the use of sacred fire (Rome, Greece, India, Japan),¹¹ and the use of a

8 There also is the old opposition between a male fire and a female water deity (WITZEL 1992, appendix); it is again echoed in Japan (though minus grammatical gender).

9 Laurasian deities, in this case, include Susa.no Wo (Japan), Toko 'the pole' (Polynesia), etc. His 'opponent', the cave, is called Vala and Jpn. Iwato, where the R̥gvedic Dawns/cows and the Jpn. Sun Goddess Amaterasu reside; cf. n. 39.

10 The Jpn. counterpart, Izanami, just dies and is supposed to be buried in Awaji.

11 Often identified with the fire in the Sun (see RVKh 5.5.8), that must first be brought to humans (Prometheus, Kagu-Tsuchi.no Kami etc., Kojiki 1.8) — the opposite takes place

heavenly drink (**medhu*, mead/*ambrosia*, *soma*, *sake*, *kava*). Animal sacrifice is typical for much of Eurasia, not just of sheep, goats, cattle but also of the new prestige animal, the horse (PUHVEL 1987, 267–76). This is offered in a ritual which was found in Ireland, Rome, India, and still recently, with the Altai Turks.¹² Ritual is accompanied by elaborate verse and prose texts (*mantra*, Jpn. *norito*), composed and carried out by members of a special class, the traditional poets/priests (*kavi*, O.Irish *fili*) and by bards (the later *sūta*, Jpn. *katari-be*), both of whom make use of traditional poetic devices (SCHMITT 1968; Jpn. *kake kotoba* 'Šleša', *makura kotoba* 'ornamental epithet', etc.). Other classes include the nobility and 'the people' (*viš*, cf. DUMÉZIL).

All of this is testimony to a PIE (if not Eurasian) complex of religion, myth and ritual, partly reflected in society (clans, moieties, classes), that must be localized in the original homeland of the tribes speaking PIE. They lived, as their vocabulary indicates, in a temperate zone with 'cool climate' animals and plants (MALLORY 1989), somewhere along the bee-supporting interface of the Eurasian steppe and forest (Taiga) belts, perhaps in the Volga-Don area. This ancient PIE religious complex is reflected by those of the various individual IE peoples, including the Indo-Iranians of Iran, Nuristan and India. Against the background briefly sketched here, various innovations and reworkings of the PIE system, often due to local influences, can be detected, analyzed and described.

§1.2 Central Asian steppe innovations

There are a number of items in Vedic as well as in Avestan/Old Persian¹³ and Nuristani religion that cannot be found in the reconstructed PIE one. This is not always due to lack of materials. One would expect that a group of deities like

in India where fire (just like the cows of the Paṇis) is stolen (*pra math*) by Mātariśvan for the gods (RV 3.9.5) and for Manu, see KUIPER 1983 [1971].

12 As late as c. 1900 CE, by suffocation (WITZEL 1997a: 395, n. 15); as residue in Japan note the *ema* 'horse picture' tablets offered at Shinto shrines. Horse sacrifice replaced old Siberian bear sacrifices (e.g. with the Ainu) and dog sacrifices (for which see D. ANTHONY, excavations in the Samara Valley, west of the S. Urals: <<http://users.hartwick.edu/iaes/Russia.htm>>), or the more 'southern', common goat/sheep sacrifices (e.g., at Mehrgarh), or the Mediterranean/Indian bull sacrifice (cf. §1.6, PUHVEL 1987: 275).

13 Many vestiges can also be discovered with the North Iranian people, the Ossetes; on the impact IE religion had on the Caucasus, see the work by DUMÉZIL, summarized by CHARACHIDZÉ (1987), and that of TUIE (2000), which helps to distinguish such data from the traditional ones of the mountain regions of the Pyrenees, Alps, Pamirs.

the Indo-Iranian *Asura (Ved. *Asura*, *Āditya*) and the god and drink **Sauma* (*Soma*, *Haoma*) would appear *somewhere* in one of the many other IE religions, but they do not.

The geographical and ecological background is this: the temperate homeland area of PIE speakers is divided by a broad stretch of steppes and deserts of the Ural-Kazakh-Uzbek area from the settlement areas of Vedic speakers in the Greater Panjab and that of the W. and E. Iranians in Greater Iran. The Asura concept appears both in the Indo-Aryan and the Iranian religions (and at least some of its deities also in Nuristan); we must assume that this is an *innovation* that took place somewhere between the Taiga and Greater Iran.

The Iir. Asuras (Ved. *asura*, Avest. *ahura*) are, for the most part,¹⁴ different from the gods of the third generation of gods, the demonic Titans, who appear in the Vedas as Tvaṣṭṛ and his son, the three-headed dragon Viśvarūpa, etc. Instead, they are a particular group of deities that (in part) overlap with other gods ('of nature'), both those of the second and especially of the fourth 'generations'. Both in the Veda and in Iranian, they constitute a narrower group of 7 or 8 (later 12) deities; note the 7/8 Kalash Devalog (*dewalók*).

The *terminus ad quem* for the group is the Iir. unity around c. 2000 BCE¹⁵ and the date *ante quem* is that of the attestation of Varuṇa, Mitra, Indra in the Mitanni documents of Syria/Iraq at c. 1380 BCE. The development of the Asura group of deities can have taken place anywhere in the northern steppes, such as in the Ural (Sintastha/Arkaim) complex or further south, close to or even in the BMAC area. The Ural area is a priori more likely as *all* of the Iranians have Asuras: for example, the Scythians must have transmitted their god **baga* to their northwestern neighbors, the Proto-Slavs (**bogu*). It would be very difficult to let Bhaga be invented in the greater BMAC area and then let him be transported back, all the way to the Ukraine (cf. n. 18).

The group of Asura deities has been studied repeatedly during the past century (BRERETON 1981). However, it is necessary to take a brief look at them in the present context. To begin with, it is obvious that they form, other than the old IE 'gods of nature', a group of *social* deities, a feature that has been

14 A few Asuras of the RV are ambiguous, such as Varuṇa (KUIPER 1979), and note some 'gods of nature' among the Asuras: Dyaus, Savitr, Agni, Pūṣan, Soma, Rudra, *vīrāḥ = divaḥ putrāḥ* RV 3.53.7, and even the *Asura* Pipru and his forts 10.138.3; — Devas from among the Ādityas: Mitrāvaruṇā 7.36.2, Mitrāvaruṇā *devau* 8.25.4; Varuṇa, Mitra, Bhaga 5.42.1, cf. 8.27.20, even Indra 1.174.1; note: *adevāḥ* Asurāḥ 8.96.9, but Asura + *deva* 10.82.5. See also n. 24.

15 Approximately, the time of the invention of the chariot: note *ratha*, *rathin*, *rathesṭha* and their Mitanni, OIr. counterparts (WITZEL 1999b: 34, 2001b).

stressed for long (MEILLET 1907). Some words belonging to this complex, notably *Arya-man*, clearly are artificial formations. Indeed, their Indo-Iranian line-up immediately confirms this:

Ved.	Mitanni	Iran.	Nur/Kalash	meaning/acting in
Varuṇa (~ ṛta)	Uruna	— (~ aša)	—	? (active truth: <i>ṛta</i> ; <i>oath</i>) cosmic order UNIVERSE
Mitra	Mitra	Miθra	-/a-mitrá disobedient	agreement, contract <i>mitra</i> , n. 'contract' TRIBAL LEVEL
(Dhātṛ)	—	(dātar 'ordainer')	—	('ordainer, creator', as Āditya only in MS 1.6.12, HOFFMANN 1975/6: 424)
Aryaman	—	Airiiaman	(Wushum? Shomde? / Sajigor?)	'Arya-hood', guest friendship, marriage <i>arya</i> 'hospitable' CLAN LEVEL
Bhaga	—	bağa	Bagisht? < <i>bhāgya</i> -?	<i>bhaga</i> , n. 'share' wealth, luck FAMILY LEVEL
Aṃśa	—	(āsa 'party')	<i>onshái</i> ? 'lot'	<i>aṃśa</i> 'lot' FAMILY (?) LEVEL
Dakṣa	—	(daxš)	—	'cleverness' PERSONAL LEVEL
Vivasvant Mārtāṇḍa born from a 'dead egg'	—	Vīuuar'hant gaiia marətan (Gayōmart)	—	SUN DEITY, ANCESTOR of all <i>ārya</i> lineages
Indra	Indara	Indra	Indr/Indr, Varen(dr); Giwish, Munjem; Māndi / Mahandeu	'the strong one'? Son of Vivasvant, King of Gods
Yama	—	Yima	Imra (< <i>yama-rāja</i>) (Māra)	Son of Vivasvant, ancestor of humans, first mortal being.
[Manu	—	—	—	first human]

Indra figures only marginally in this list (HOFFMANN 1975–6: 424 sq.), but he marks the bifurcation of the present gods (Yama, Indra) and humans (Manu). The human ancestor is either Manu (India) or Yama (Iran), and this is reflected in the one found with the Germanic tribes, Mannus (NW Germany) vs. Ymir

(Iceland).¹⁶ However, the names and position in the pantheon of figures as Indra, or his Greek representation Hera-klēs (< **k'lews*)/Zeus are not universal in IE or Eurasian — even if their function is (Thor, Susa.no Wo).

The list of personifications given above seems to reflect human society very closely. A 'universal' chief (if existent at all at that time) may reflect the (preeminent) lord(s) of the large settlements of the Ural 'land of towns',¹⁷ with aspirations of general fame (**k'lews*, *śravas*) and respect. This position is followed by the tribal leader, aided by Mitra, who is not only in charge of agreements but also of the large pastures (Avest. *vouru.gaoiiaoti*, Ved. *urugavyūti*) — the very wording points to flat steppe lands and rather not the narrow pastoral strips along river banks (BMAC) or the mountain meadows (Tien Shan/Afghan highlands). Notably Miθra, guarding the pastures and herdsmen, is also a war god in the Avesta.

Further, Aryaman, who needs not only to be received as a guest, but more importantly as guarantor of another important exchange, that of brides: one had to marry outside one's clan (Ved. *gotra*). Significantly, both Miθra and Airiiman have been kept in (or reintroduced into) the Post-Zarathuštrian pantheon. Aryaman functions at the level of the *śreṣṭha svānām*, or clan leader (ZIMMER 1985).

More important still is Bhaga who has become a god of personal fortune in post-R̥gvedic culture (Kathā 2.222: 88.15 *andhō hi bhāgah* 'luck is blind'; cf. also MS 1.6.12 about *jana* and *bhaga*). In Iranian, the term has developed in various ways: while it is rare in Avestan (Y 10.10, 70.1; Yt 7.5; V 19.23 *bagō.dāta*) where the designation for 'deity' is the theological one (*yazata*), it appears in Old Persian in the meaning 'god', apparently in a quote from Mede (*aniyā bagāha*, but note also DNa,b1 *bagā vazraka Auramazdā*); it is kept in MP as *bay* 'god'. In Sogdian, however, *bay* has become the general designation for 'lord' (like Engl. *Lord* 'god, nobleman'), and even for 'Mr.'. The word must also have been present in Northern Iranian as it has been taken over, fairly early, into Proto-Slavic from Scythian, and, to be sure, in the general meaning of 'god', as found in Sogdian and Mede.¹⁸ It also has been taken

16 Cf. also the dichotomy between Remus (*Yemos?) and Romulus (PUVEL 1987: 289) and the killing of Remus, cf. that of the primordial giant Puruṣa/Ymir and later Indian derivatives (§1.7).

17 Note also the interaction between Sintashta/Arkhaiṃ and the BMAC, according to recent archaeology, see HIEBERT and SHISHLINA (in MAIR 1998), FRANCFORT 1999, TOSI & CATTANI 2002.

18 The sound changes are regular: ProtoSlav. *a* > *o*. There must have been the old IE meaning in Slavic as well: O.Slav. *bogat'* 'rich', Russian *bogatyi* 'rich'; cf. RÉDEI 1986: 56; however, note KATZ 1981 (see next note).

over, fairly early (note the nom. in *-s-*) into Uralic: Mordwinian *pakas* 'good luck' is probably directly derived from Iir. or OIA (RÉDEI 1986: 56).¹⁹

The rest of the list is not so easily attributable to levels of society. *Aṃśa* seems to reflect family wealth and Dakṣa personal cleverness, while *Vivasvant* represents the descent of *ārya* human lineages from the Sun deity, via *Yama* or *Manu*.

While these names and functions can be reconstructed for Iir., their rather old age is also attested to by the appearance of *Asura* in Uralic, both east and west of the Urals, where the word *asura* is reflected in old loans both in the meanings 'lord' and 'rich'.²⁰ This is further supported by the fact that the old Iir. dichotomy is seen as *Ess*: *Xosadam* with the *Ket* (W. Siberia, an old remnant language family perhaps related to Macro-Caucasian and Sino-Tibetan, *Mother Tongue* IV 1998).²¹ Both the word and the concept must have been taken over from the neighboring Indo-Iranians, long before the area came to be dominated by Iranian speakers.

In short, the whole Indo-Iranian sphere and its neighboring areas have several old reflections of the word *Asura* and of the *Asura* group of deities: the whole belt from the Ukraine to the Urals and W. Siberia contains hints or direct attestations of the old *Asura*. Necessarily, the **Asura* : **Daiva* distinction must also be old. It was developed with Iir. speakers in the Northern Steppes, from where it spread, early on and in various forms, to their northern neighbors, the Uralic, *Ket* and then to the Slavic peoples.

What exactly was the old dichotomy that could be taken over so early on into Uralic/*Ket*? Or, to be more specific: what is the background of the dichotomy (KUIPER 1979: 6 sqq., 46 sqq., 1983) of the *Asura* and the *Deva* group? Such moieties are already seen in PIE and even in Eurasian religion (Olympian gods: *Titans*; *Æsir*: *Vanir*; *Ama.no Kami*: *Tsuchi.no Kami*). They presuppose an altogether different background than the (supposed) R̥gvedic dichotomy and the obvious *Brāhmaṇa* one, seen by scholars about a hundred years ago: a split between the Iranian and Indian schemes of things:

Ahura 'god(s)' : Daiva 'demons' :: Asura 'demons' : Deva 'gods'.

19 Complicated by the fact that Finno-Permian (in the old loan, Mordwinian *paz*, *pas*, *pavas* 'god') also has **pakas(e)* 'god' (RÉDEI 1986: 55); note KATZ (1981: 28) who thinks of an already PIE **bhāgos* 'god'.

20 Mordwinian *azor(o)* 'lord', Wotyak *uzir*, *uzor* 'rich', Syryenian *ozir* 'rich', Wogul *ātər*, *ōtər* 'chieftain', see RÉDEI 1986: 44.

21 Cf. also the Buryat Mongolian female *āsi* gods of the forests/mountains, the *yz* of the Gilyak; note the primordial competition, between two figures, with the Uralic, Altaic and other (east) Siberian peoples.

Rather, we should think in terms of a dynamic, non-static scheme:

[[**Daiya*: {{ Heaven and his children, Titans, 'New Gods': Indra Rājan²² }} :: **Asura*: new deities: Varuṇa *Medhā*/ Rājan, Mitra, Aryaman, etc., further: demons of fertility, etc. }],

that is, with a *partial* overlap of the new *Asura deities and some of the older *Daiva deities (as is still clear from the Ṛgveda, see n. 14). Both groups separate and line up on opposite sides during the breakdown of order at winter solstice,²³ as Devas and Asuras.²⁴ It is at this moment that Varuṇa makes his cross-over from the Asura group to the Deva group (KUIPER 1979: 46 sqq. for the ṚV, 1979: 92 for the Epic; cf. KUIPER 1983, OBERLIES 2001: 8–9; note the Kalash god Balumain §1.5.1,3,5), to allow the re-establishment of an ordered universe and society (in OBERLIES' terms, the change from *yoga* to *kṣema*).

This entails abandoning, in certain cases, a 'static' view of the universe, the gods, and of mythology (cf. below §2); instead, a different view is more appropriate, one that is informed by the contemporaneous view of the *cyclical* nature of the year and of ritual.

[Deva: New Gods, Varuṇa ←]--: {Asura: Mitra, Aryaman, Demons of fertility? etc.}

In this scenario, Zarathustra's stress on the opposition between *daēuua* :: *ahura* (*mazdā*) is not as surprising as it generally is made out to be, and the reason for

22 Note the character of Indra as 'visitor' god from the outside, especially at New Year; see §1.5.1, 6 on the Kalash god Balumain.

23 Do the other two 'chiefs' (*rājan*), Soma Rājan and Yama Rājan, represent the (mythological and cosmographical) locations 'up' on the mountain and 'below' in the netherworld? Cf. however WITZEL 1984: 228 sqq. for a non-static view of such locations, and their movement from the daytime situation to the night time one and back to the daytime one; note RV 1.35.6, and the reflexes of this concept in Nuristani (JETTMAR 1975: 52–54) or Jpn. myth (Kojiki 2.50.8–11).

24 The exact membership of both groups at this point in time must be determined, as far as possible, by further research. To make a start, according to some Ṛgvedic classifications and sub-groups:

[Deva: (Viśve Vasu: Savitṛ; Aditi; note: Varuṇa, Mitra, Aryaman!), {Rudras: Rudra, ...}, <Ādityas: Mitrāvaruṇā, Bhaga, Indra ... >]:

[Asura: ('nature' gods: Dyaus, Divaḥ Putrāḥ, Savitṛ, Agni, Pūṣan, Soma, Rudra), {Rudra: Pipru}, <Ādityas, 7+1: Varuṇa, Mitra, etc.>].

For the overlaps visible here, note the 'shift of alliance' by Varuṇa (KUIPER), cf. n. 14.

the absence of Varuṇa in his scheme is obvious: Varuṇa has been included, unnamed, among the *daēuua*, leaving the field to the *ahura*(s), especially his *alter ego*, Ahura Mazdā. Further, the moiety division at the time of Solstice echoes Zarathustra's stress on liminal time, the 'final turning point': Y 43.5 *uruuaēṣē apāmē*, Y 51.6 *apāmē aṅhūṣ uruuāēṣē*, cf. Y. 30.9, 44.19, note *dūraē.uruuēsa* (of stars, WITZEL 1984: 257, n. 90, 272) Y 46.3–4, of winter Y. 51.12 (and of the year N. 44; cf. also Y 46.1–3); other terms are taken from horse races (at year's end): Y 33.5 *auuaṅhāna* 'unharnessing, rest' (NARTEN 1982: 51 sq.). All of the terms have been used in his scheme of individual decision making (reflecting that of Varuṇa's surprising move over to the 'good guys', KUIPER 1979: 31 sqq., 1983). In post-Ṛgvedic times, the emphasis on choice at the time of solstice was destressed and the two groups of divine equals (and relatives) are simply represented as being in perpetual conflict — just as are the *ārya* :: *dasyu*, *ārya* :: *śūdra*²⁵ — with the Devas pushing the Asuras back to the fringes of the 'civilized' Vedic world — for the time being.

The ancient scenario is still vividly reflected in the present day Kalash (Hindukush) rituals of the Chaumos (*cawmós* < **cāturmāsya*?) festival of winter solstice: the visitor god Balumain (*baḷimain* < **balamahendra*?) is received by the Devalog (*dewalók*) of the western Chitral valleys, and an intermingling of the two moieties (male/female) in divine and human society follows,²⁶ (discussion, §1.5.5).

In sum, the new IIr. *Asura concept of gods of universal and social 'law and order' (with the sun and the stars as all-seeing spies, cf. DUNKEL 2001: 330 sqq.) and the underlying rule of the active force of truth (Ved. *Ṛta*/Avest. *Aṣa* 'Wahrheitsverwirklichung') was developed in the Northern Steppes, close to the Uralic and Ket peoples; it was built on the older IE (and Eurasian) dichotomy of two groups of deities. Time and location thus are clear: c. 2000 BCE, in the wide steppe belt comprising, among others, the 'land of cities' (Arkheim, Sintashta). In any case, we do not have to look for a BMAC origin of the concept. We can only speculate about the internal reasons among the

25 Note that this set-up of society perfectly reflects the divine one: the Śūdras are part of society, but outside of it at the same time, just as the Ṛgvedic Asuras are part of the Deva group, but also outside of it. Both divine as well as both human groups (partially) join and intermingle at New Year (see §1.5.5) and in Vedic ritual during the Mahāvratā (contest of Brahmin and Śūdra, see ĀpŚS 21.9.9–12).

26 A good impression of this festival, described by JETTMAR 1975, 1987, can be gained at <<http://www.site-shara.net/photoalbum/chawmos/html/sarazari.html>>. For other related rituals in Nepal see WITZEL 1997c: 520–532; note that the Vedic winter solstice *Indradhvaja* festival (KauŚS 140.2, on *prauṣṭhapada śukla 8*) has been transferred to the New Year in Spring (Nepali) and Fall (Newar); details in KUIPER 1979: 132 sqq.

tribes speaking IIr. that led them to adopt the Asura group of personified, abstract deities. The strong stress on social aspects ('agreement, guest friendship, share, lot' and a common ancestor) points to the necessities of a tribal, semi-pastoral society, in the process of quick expansion eastwards across the steppe belt (see several discussions in MAIR 1998).

By a careful comparison inside and outside IIr., further items that have entered the IIr. and therefore Ṛgvedic religion can be pinpointed as well, both in time and space.

§1.3 Soma's origins

The sacred drink of the Indo-Iranians, **Sauma* (Ved. *Soma*, Avest. *Haoma*, OP. *Hauma*) must have been acquired in the same general surroundings, or to be more precise, in the territories close to the high mountains of Central Asia: somewhere between the Altai and the Himalayas, between the Elburz and the Pamirs. The area can be narrowed down further.

A connection with high mountains is made in all the IIr. myths connected with **Sauma*. For example, Aṃśu/Soma/Haoma is brought (stolen) by an eagle/falcon (*syena*) from 'the mountain'. This is not just mythology,²⁷ rather, it is supported by the remark that the best Soma grows on the (high) mountains (Hōm Yašt = Y 9; 10.3–4, ṚV 1.176.5, 5.36.2, etc.), especially so on Mt. Mūjavant (ṚV *maujavata* 10.34.1, AV *mūjavant* 'Mūjavant people' (WITZEL 1980: 87 sq., 1999b: 3sq., 2000a: n. 23). In the Indian and Iranian context, that would mean somewhere in the high Himalaya, Pamir, and Hindukush mountains. The Vedic designation *Mūja-vant* 'having Mūja' is reflected by Avestan *Muža*, a country that was apparently close to Indo-Aryan territory; note the *Muža* man *Daštāzñi* Yt 13.125, with *-agni-* lexically unusual in Iranian. The name is retained, even today, in the Turkic designation of one of the highest mountains in the area, Muzh Tagh Ata (24,767 ft./8.120 m), and in the nearby river Muzh Kol, found just east of the border of Tajikistan, in the Kirghiz and Sariqoli (Saka) lands of westernmost China (WITZEL 1999a, 2001, STAAL 2001, THOMPSON 2001); another Muzhtagh is found some 50 km northeast of Skardu (N. Kashmir).

²⁷ On the motif of the mountain/primordial hill see KUIPER 1983, 1979: 17, cf. p. 107 for *Mandara* (as inverted hill); myths about the origin of plants and deities on the high mountains/Himalaya can be added from the AV. As for birds, note Greek Paropanisos ~ Paropamisos < Iran. **parā upari-saina* (Akkad. *paruparaesanna* = O.P. Gandāra; Avest. Y 10.11, Yt 19.3 *upāiri.sāena*; *uparišyena* svarga loka JB 3.66; EWAia I 221, II 662), 'even birds cannot fly to the abode of Viṣṇu' ṚV 1.155.5; see §1.4. for the Bactrian eagle hero.

The post-Ṛgvedic Soma ritual contains a strange episode (e.g. ĀpŚS 10.27.6–8) where the new Soma has been bought from outsiders; the sellers then are 'rewarded' by a heavy beating. Soma, stemming from the high mountains,²⁸ far to the north of the Vedic Panjab, had to be imported and bought by bartering.

Such data are supported by the reports in Vedic texts about the physiological effects of Soma juice (NYBERG 1995, see now HOUBEN and THOMPSON in *EJVS* 9) — if the plant indeed is some form of *Ephedra*. Though this plant grows all over the steppes, from Kazakhstan and Xinjiang to the Panjab, its most potent form is found not in the plains but in the high mountains (necessarily, the difficulty of access giving rise to many substitutes, KUIPER 1984; see now HOUBEN in *EJVS* 9).

The very name of the plant further supports the 'foreign' origin of Soma: **Sauma* is obviously derived from *su* 'to press out', but its original name seems to be **ank'u*: Ved. *aṃśu*, Avest. *aṣu*, Tochar. *ankwaṣ*, Chin. *yāngkui* (WITZEL 1999a, 2001, THOMPSON 2001, cf. LUBOTSKY 2001, THOMPSON in *EJVS* 9, 2003; note also the variety *Ephedra Sinica*, *ma huang*). In addition, there is a cluster of Central Asian words connected with myth and ritual (LUBOTSKY 2001: 303–5) such as those in *-*rwa*: *Ath-arva(n)*, *Gandh-arva*, *Ś-arva* (cf. also *Paṭh-arvan*, *k-arva* 'mutilated'?), or in *-*ig*: **uḥ-ig* Avest. *Usig*, ṚV *Uśij*, cf. *ṛvij*?, *vaṇ-ij*, and **bhiš*, **bhiš-aḥ*, **bheṣ-aḥ-a*: *bhiṣaj/bheṣaja*, *baṣaza*. All of these represent a cluster of words with a clearly non-IE origin that has entered both the Vedic and Avestan corpus at an early, probably (Common) IIr. date. They belong to the large group of Central Asian words that have recently been identified in both early Iranian as well as earliest Vedic (WITZEL 1995a: 101–3, 1999b: 58–60, LUBOTSKY 2001²⁹). We must assume, thus, a sacred drink, a ritual and a group of specialized priests that were imported into IIr. ritual and myth somewhere in western Central Asia, perhaps close to the Tien Shan/Pamir mountain chains.

Given the 'foreign', high mountain origin of **Sauma*, it should not surprise that there are clear traces that **Sauma* has replaced an older IE ritual and mythical drink (OBERLIES 2000: 377 sq.). This is the one made of fermented honey, i.e. mead (**medhu*, Skt. *madhu*, Gr. *ambrosia*, THIEME 1952: 5–15). Indeed, just as the Greek *ambrosia* was brought by an eagle from 'the

²⁸ Some details about the high snow mountains (ṚV *Himavanti*), which can be seen from the north Indian plains, are known to the plains people, note e.g. (then as now) herb collecting Kirāta girls in AV 10.4.14.

²⁹ LUBOTSKY (2001: 306) is not entirely sure about the underlying substrate language and its location; see, however, WITZEL 1999b: 58 sqq., and the preprints (1998, 2001 b).

mountain', so was its substitute, the Ṛgvedic Soma (OLDENBERG; HOUBEN in *EJVS* 9). Otherwise, Soma has fairly little mythology, though in the ṚV a lot is made of its heroic and warlike characteristics (OBERLIES 1999).

Clearly, the IIr. **Sauma* legend is another adjustment of older IE patterns, in the present case a substitution for the original PIE drink of immortality, mead. As so often, the older IE pattern is still very visible in the Ṛgveda (like Thor's and Indra's stone weapon), where the bitter Soma juice is called *madhu* 'sweet, mead' (note the use of *pīyūṣa* and *kīlāla* 'biestings' cf. Bur. *kilay*, Kalash *kirē'r*', Khowar *kīlāl*, Shina *kirari*, WITZEL 1999a: 3).

In order to locate the IIr. speaking tribes that took over this Central Asian mountain drink, we have to look at a location in the steppes, from Kazakhstan (Sintastha etc.) southwards. The cluster of newly acquired foreign words in IIr. is centered around agriculture and settled life (WITZEL 1995a: 103, 1999b: 58–60, LUBOTSKY 2001: 307), but it also includes some of the foreign words that are more or less connected with the Soma ritual: *ulūkhala*, *rjīṣin*, *karotara*, *camriṣ*, *musala*, *indu*, *camū*, *pīyūṣa* (KUIPER 1955). This makes it perhaps more likely that the take-over of **Sauma* took place in the southern regions of Central Asia. Note also that the Saka are divided by the Persians into the general *Saka tigraxauda* 'Saka with the pointed (Phrygian) cap' and the *Saka haumavarga* 'the Soma twisting, collecting (?) Saka'.³⁰

Archaeologists have tried to find evidence of **Sauma* as Ephedra in Central Asia (SARIANIDI in *EJVS* 9) but this has met with little substantiation so far. We will know with certainty only when all purported remnants have been finally analyzed (cf. NYBERG 1995, but see now HOUBEN et al. in *EJVS* 9). We have to take a look at the few steppe, cattle herders' stopping places in N. Bactria/S. Tajikistan that have been found and excavated so far (DANI & MASSON 1992) in order to get a better idea of the Indo-Iranians of the period. Early interaction with the BMAC (2400–1600 BCE) is now archaeologically attested, for example at Merw (TOSI & CATTANI 2002); this is best visible at c. 2000–1800 BCE (FRANCFORT 1999: 455). A Soma-like ritual may be represented by the remnants of libation rites (see now SARIANIDI in *EJVS* 9) and in finds of inverted ritual vessels discovered in the BMAC (SARIANIDI 1992: 34) and even in much later periods, such as at Ai Khanum.

According to linguistic and literary data therefore, and to some extent also according to archaeological data, it is clear that a Bronze Age Central Asian **Sauma* cult was taken over by the Indo-Iranians and integrated into their re-

30 If *vṛj* means 'turn around, twist, tear out from the ground'; differently, HOFFMANN 1976: 612, n. 6, who suggests: 'homa-Pflanze um das Feuer legend'; cf. further EWAia II 517.

ligion and rituals. It was integrated so well, and to such an extent, that neither the Avesta nor the Ṛgveda allow, at first sight, to assume 'foreign' origin — were it not for the fact that all other, western IE peoples did *not* have a **Sauma* ritual (for *Ephedra* finds in Xinjiang see Mair 1998: 70, 127). For all the subsequent early IIr. cultures the **Sauma* ritual was central to their religion, even for the newly converted(?) Zoroastrian Persians.³¹

In sum, we can observe Soma as an ingredient to Ṛgvedic religion whose intrusion can be pinpointed in time (c. 2000 BCE) and space (southern part of Western Central Asia, close to Muzh Tagh Ata). It has added considerably to the richness and texture of Ṛgvedic religion and poetry (OBERLIES 1999).

Other possible influences of this period and area cannot be discussed here for want of space; attention has to be drawn, for example, to the complex of fire rituals, altars and bricks (IIr. **iṣṭi*–; STAAL 2001), to which some more strange, prefixed words for 'brick' can now be added: Kalash *kh-iṣṭi-poktá*, cf. Shina *d-iṣṭik*, Burushaski *d-iṣṭik*, Marathi *v-ṭi* (WITZEL 1995a: 103, 1999a: 58, LUBOTSKY 2001: 311).

§1.4 BMAC or Para-Bactria?

The localization and time frame of further IIr./OIA religious developments depends in part on how the Proto-Indo-Aryans/Proto-Iranians are related to, or interacted with the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC). Did contact take place only by 'passing through', by vague acquaintance, or by personal, intensive contact and interaction: for example as horse/camel traders, as soldiers, and subsequently as local lords of BMAC castles (*pur*, *vara*)? (Note MALLORY's *Kulturkugel* model, in MAIR 1998).

We have already seen that the IIr. invention of the Asura deities, the social gods of Law and Order and of the universal force of *Rta/Aṣa* was a steppe development. Was this 'intermediate' stage of IIr. religion also influenced by a reaction to the BMAC culture, with its agricultural villages and fortresses, aligned along desert streams?

Luckily, there are a few items that lend themselves to comparison and provide some insight into the extent both populations and religions were in

31 Actual Haoma mortars have been found at Persepolis. Other intoxicants in the Hindu Kush include notably wine, some rhubarb, mead, and even the Afghan/Afridi *hum* bush (< **haoma*) which is used as snuff and against fever (GELDNER ṚV transl., introduction to book 9: 2); similarly in the Kalash area, where the *sámani* (< **sumanas*) bush, growing in the high valleys, is used in making chewing tobacco.

contact. These are the three motifs of the primordial dragon guarding and inhibiting the waters, the dragon-slaying hero, and the divine eagle. As briefly indicated above, all these motifs were already of IE origin: the dragon as primordial guardian of productive forces or of riches, the divine hero as his slayer, and the eagle as the general messenger bird that also brings the sacred drink (mead). Many of the similarities between the IE and BMAC motifs, however, are due to the general, underlying paradigms of Eurasian myth, found from Ireland to Japan and beyond; they may differ in details as they represent local variations.

Aspects of the myth are met in Greek myths of Herakles who slays various monsters (and finds the cows); for Slavic cf. the fight with *Veles* (cf. Avest. *Vara*, Ved. *Vala*, and for Nuristani, 'the house near heaven', §1.5.4); for Germanic, Sigurd's killing of the 'worm' (cf. Thor's and Tyr's killing of the giants), and for Japanese, Susa.no Wo's killing the 'eight-forked' dragon, *ya-mata.nō orochi* (cf. n. 9, 39).

In the BMAC area, these motifs have evolved into a typical, local variety, such as the scaled, *anthropomorphic* dragon. It may be useful to begin with a schematic depiction of Francfort's reconstruction of BMAC religion (FRANCFORT 1994). Various Old Indo-Aryan and Old Iranian items have been added (in italics) for the sake of comparison.

Oxus religion : : *Ilr. religions*

Goddess	anthropomorphic DRAGON
fertility, vegetation	drought; then releases waters
<i>Anāhitā?/ Sarasvatī/Rasā Aditi, Dezālik</i>	<i>Aži/Ahi / *Vərəθra/Vrtra Apaoša</i> (FORSSMAN 1968)
	<i>3-headed (Ilr.) : θri-kamərəδā/ trišīršan</i> <i>Višvarūpa; Vrtra > cobra snake in India : Vyāmsa</i>
	<u>children:</u>
	combined forms, anthropomorphic lion/snake ~ <i>Sēnmurv?</i> (SCHMIDT 1980)
	<u>FIGHTS WITH THE HERO:</u> eagle faced ³² (<i>Circæetus Gallicus</i> 'snake eagle', <i>saēna?</i>), eagle flies in Winter over the Hindukush (<i>upairi</i> <i>saēna, upari syena</i>); catches and eats snakes; <i>Hero in human form: Vərəθragan/Vrtrahan</i> <i>Indara/Indra</i>

32 For a detailed example, see the reproduction in *Afghanistan 2002*: 204, of the eagle-faced hero found on a bronze axe, from Daulatab near Balkh, of c. 2000 BCE.

The dragon is found in Ilr. as *aži/ahi* 'dragon', a three-headed (*trišīršan, θri-kamərəδā*) reptile monster, however, in Vedic also as the three-headed *Višvarūpa*, the son of a primordial deity, *Tvaṣṭṛ*,³³ the adoptive father of Indra. When Indra kills the dragon *Višvarūpa*, then he kills his 'cousin' (or due to 'adoption' by *Tvaṣṭṛ*, even his step-brother, and in the YV, a Brahmin, to bet), a feature of rivalry seen as *bhrātr̥vyā* all over the post-Ṛgvedic texts. In view of the various representations of the dragon in the BMAC, the designation *Višvarūpa* as 'having all forms' is of some significance. He mainly appears as a scaled, human-headed, ugly, standing man carrying a water vessel.

In most Ilr. descriptions the dragon is seen not in human form but as a giant reptile, killed by the Avestan heroes *Thraētaona* (Yt 5.33–35, Y 9.7–8) or *Kərəsāspa* (Yt 19.38–40, Y 9.11), who was resting and cooking on it (cf. OBERLIES 2000: 371 sq.). The reptile also appears, with local Indian adaptation, as a giant cobra (*vyāmsa*, SCHMIDT 1963, also in the IA *Hindukush*, see §1.5.1). Such slight differences between the Vedic, Iranian and Nuristani strands of Ilr. myth have to be seen within the context of the Avesta as local successor culture of the BMAC. We would then have, in Ilr., these epithets of an old Dragon Slayer god:

Ilr.

indra vrtraghan-	:: *ajhi (*yaz) vrtra;
'strong slayer of resistance'	:: 'dragon', the 'resistance'

Ved./OIA

Indra	:: Vrtra, ahi, (*trišīršan <i>Višvarūpa</i> 10.8.9; 2.11.19, = <i>trišīršan trikakūd krīmi</i> AV 5.23.9) <i>Šuṣṇa, Cumuri</i> (local)
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Avest.

(Indra), <i>Vərəθragna</i>	:: <i>aži</i> , (Y 9.8 <i>ažim dahākam θri-kamərəδam xšašašīm</i>)
(<i>Kərəsāspa</i> , ³⁴	:: yellowish monster, exuding yellow poison;
cooking meal in metal pot at noon, Yt 19.38–41)	:: <i>Gandarāβa</i> with yellow heel
(<i>Ātar</i> , son of A.M. Yt 19.47)	:: <i>aži Dahāka, θri-kamərəδa</i>
(<i>Tištīria</i> Yt 8.13–23: in human, cattle, horse form)	:: <i>daēuua Apaoša, ka-mərəδa</i> black, bald horse

33 Cf. Avesta, Yt 19.18 *θwōraštār* as 'creator' of Ahura Mazda's creation, cf. Y 29.6, EWAia I 685, OBERLIES 2000: 370.

34 Note that his name 'having emaciated horses' (Ved. *Kṛśāśva*, cf. *kṛśagu, kṛśapaśu*) reflects the situation before the release of the waters; the name would fit *Tištīria* better. — Note also the stress in Zoroastrian tradition on the miserable situation (cf. Y 51.12) of Zarathustra ('having old camels?') before he succeeded in gaining some followers.

Interaction between the BMAC and steppe peoples is now clearly visible: the BMAC has certain steppe influences, in pottery etc., and the opposite direction of influence is sometimes assumed for the Arkhaim/Sintashta culture (HIEBERT, SHISHLINA in MAIR 1998). By a comparison of IE and BMAC mythological systems, it appears that the old IE myth of dragon slaying has been adjusted in the Avesta under the influence of the BMAC or its successor cultures. Several Avestan texts were composed precisely in the BMAC area. Not only do we find the killing of the dragon but also Tištriia's fight with the demon of drought, Apaoša, and the generation of clouds and rain, reflecting what FRANCFORT has reconstructed for the BMAC belief system.

Some of these influences are still visible in the RV. Indra is not just the dragon slayer but is also closely connected with releasing the waters. The R̥gvedic giant cobra, *vyāmsa*, surrounds the waters and must be killed (at least temporarily) to let them flow. This is more of an Afghanistan and Indus myth (FALK 1997) than a monsoon myth (VAJRACHARYA 1997). In Central Asia, Afghanistan and the Panjab, the penned up waters, encapsulated by (the *Nāgas of) snow and ice, are released by the snow melt, resulting in the late spring/summer floods so prominent in the Avestan and R̥gvedic texts (FALK 1997).

One may therefore revisit the old etymology of Indra from *ind* 'to swell'.³⁵ He is, in fact, the one who releases the waters and lets the rivers swell in late spring,³⁶ so vividly described for the Afghan Highlands, the Airiianam Vaējah of the Avesta (WITZEL 2000a). Incidentally, as Indra is also attested in the Mitanni documents, this branch of OIA should have come there via (southern) Central Asia.³⁷

Importantly Indo-Aryan has innovated in turning the dragon into a giant snake, and stressing its role in encapsulating the waters. The Avestan concepts, on the other hand, are perhaps closest to the one FRANCFORT (1994) has reconstructed for the BMAC³⁸ — as can be expected for the location of Avestan

35 EWAia, however, connects *indra* with the meaning 'strong': *indra* or **indrā* 'strong, strength' ~ Gr. *oidēō* 'to swell' and perhaps *indu* 'drop'; if this goes back to *(h)jī-n-d-ro ~ Slav. **jēdr* 'strong, forceful' (Croat. *jēdar* 'strong', ORuss. *jadr* 'quick'), note also Ved. *indra* ~ *indriyā*; in the case of the quick rivers of the mountains (of Airiianam Vaējah) there is an obvious overlap; cf. also RVKh 5.5.3 and 11: *Indro* (')*pām vegam atrayat*.

36 Note the Indar-āb in N. Afghanistan (next to another river, Andar-āb < **antara*), and the Indar lake in W. Kazakhstan, even the French river Indré (?), cf. WITZEL 2001b.

37 Mitanni *in-da-ra* = *in-tar*; YAvest. *indra* 'name of a Daēuua': V 19.43 Indra, but also Gaṇḍaraḥṣa = Gandharva, Saurua = Śarva, probably all due to local Vedic (substrate) influence (see now SWENNEN 2001); cf. however the human name Gaṇḍaraḥṣa Yt 13.125.

38 While his reconstruction seems solid, I caution to compare, as he does, the BMAC sit-

in Bactria-Margiana-Sistan. However, differently from the BMAC scheme, a mother goddess-like deity does not play a major role in either the Avestan or the Vedic myths and, indeed, also beyond the Iir. area. Where she occurs, it is at other points in the mythological scheme (Aditi, Yamī, Nur. Dizane, Kal. Ještak, Jpn. Izanami, Amaterasu, which cannot be detailed here).

In other words, the PIE and indeed Pan-Eurasian (Laurasian) myth of killing the dragon has been transformed into a Western Central Asian (Bactrian) myth of releasing the waters of the late spring snow melt by the rivers of Afghanistan, and this concept was transferred with the IA speakers to the Indus. In order to be sure, we can triangulate between the reconstructed IE scheme of things, the reconstructed BMAC one, and the local Iir. variations, the Avestan, the R̥gvedic and the Hindukush ones (§1.5.1, 5).

The IE concept of slaying of the dragon seems to have incorporated some general ideas of fertility,³⁹ as is also seen in Japan: the dragon's blood makes the earth fertile. In the Iir. (and BMAC) version, the dragon guards the waters, and the stress is on their fertilizing aspect, not on a fertilization by blood (which is regarded as polluting, at least in India).

As mentioned above, in the Avestan version a three-headed monster is slain by Thraētaona or Kərəsāspa, and the late spring time waters are released (FALK 1997); but this is complemented by the BMAC-related Apaoša myth: the demon of drought is slain by Tištriia (Yt 8.13–33) in form of a white horse, and rain sets in (FORSSMAN 1968). In the RV, the three-headed monster/Viśvāvasu (guarding the Soma) is slain by Indra; but it is also seen as giant cobra (*vyāmsa*), an innovation (SCHMIDT 1963); when slain and cut by Indra, this releases the waters.

In both the Iranian and Vedic versions there is a clear opposition between the dry (winter) season and the moist (late spring/summer snow melt) season, personified by the fight between Indra : dragon (KUIPER 1979: 11, SCHMIDT 1968), or in Iir. times by *Vṛtrahan : *Aḥhi. This was to change again, later on, in subcontinental India (VAJRACHARYA 1997), where Indra became simply a general rain god (cf. PS 6.15), who must be stopped from raining too much (Matsyendranāth of Nepal, Kṛṣṇa myth of Govardhana). It is less known that

uation with early China. While situations of drought/wet season are fairly universal, the N. Chinese situation is different from that of Bactria. Also, note that the dragon appears as beneficial in China only in sources that do not reflect the *oldest* situation (where he is killed).

39 WATKINS 1995; for Russia, cf. the tale of Ivan, the young bull, for Slavic: *hero/Veles (~Vala), etc.; cf. n. 9.

he is still important at New Year in Nepal, and that even today villagers in Northern India worship him.⁴⁰ In the Hindukush, however, he is still one of the major deities (§1.5.1).

A few further important myths and wide-spread motifs can only be dealt with here in form of a sketch: first, that of the eagle or falcon as a messenger bird or as the bird that brings the Soma or mead from the mountain (India, Greece; see OBERLIES 2000: 371: n. 8, 377 sq., cf. *parā-upari-saina*, n. 27), and the related Avestan topic of the central tree 'of the falcon' (Yt 12.17; cf. Yt 14.41), i.e. the tree *viṣpō.biš*, situated like the mountain *us.həndauua* (Yt 8.32, WITZEL 1984: 257, 2000a: n. 70, cf. for Nuristan, BUDDRUSS 2002: 131), in the middle of the 'lake' Vourukaša. Note also Odin's raven, and the vulture as Indra's messenger (JB 2.440–2, WITZEL 1997a: 337); further Noah's and Jimmu's (Kojiki 2.51) messenger bird, etc. This bird is shot at (OBERLIES 2000: 371 n. 8, Kojiki 51.2, for the Hindukush version see §1.5.2).

Second, there also is the myth of the 'great archer' who gains important advantages for the people in question. It is found from Central Asia to the Indus, China and the Maya: The Avestan hero *ərəxša* 'the best bow-shooter of the Aryas', shot from the interestingly named mountain *Airiio.xšuθa* to the mountain *X'avvant* (Yt 8.6, 37); the Ilr. *T(r)ištriia shot at the demon of drought, (Avest.) Apaoša, viz. as Rudra at Dyaus/Prajāpati (= Sirius at Orion: FORSSMAN 1968). In a local Indus variant Indra shot his *bunda* arrow at the boar enemy Emuša (RV 8.77.7–11, 8.69.14, 8.78.1, KUIPER 1950, 1991: 16, WITZEL 1999b: 24, cf. n. 57). A striding archer is also seen on an Indus copper plate (PARPOLA 1994: 112, 234). In China, the archer Yi shot down 9 of the 10 (too hot) suns; similarly, in Siberian and Mexican myths; in Maya myth, the proud impersonator of the sun (Vucub Caquix, 'Seven Macaw') was shot down from a tree by Hunahpu with a blowpipe (*Popol Vuh* II, beginning).

Third, the Gandharva and Yakṣa (OBERLIES 1998: 228–9, 539–40) should be compared with the lists of local Afghan deities (GNOLI 1980) and of Yakṣas (LÉVY 1915, cf. FUSSMAN 1977: 35 sqq.) as well as local Nāgas (WITZEL 1990b). Fourth, importantly, BMAC iconography has some indications of shamanic ritual: one seal shows a procession with standards (like Avestan, V 1.6, about Bāxdi) and shamanic drums. Such reminiscences are indeed seen in some of Zarathustra's wording, as has long been recognized (*astuant* 'bone-having' life, Y 31.11, 34.14, 43.16), and it is reflected in

40 Survival of Indra (cf. KUIPER 1979): in the Nepalese Indrajātrā, and the little known Indra festival at the Thankot Indra temple in Summer; further on Indra Boh (= *dvādaśi*, WITZEL 1997c: §6.3 and n. 53) in Kashmir, and his still continuing status in N. Indian villages; further note more recent adaptations such as Kṛṣṇa's killing the many-headed river snake.

many myths, such as the life-containing bones of Thor's ram. Or, note the shamanic ladder 'leading to heaven' in the post-Ṛgvedic Vājapeya ritual, still similarly enacted by the shamans of the Nepalese Kham Magars (OPPITZ 1991), cf. the ladder motif in Job, etc. (WITZEL 1984: 253, n. 71, 83) and note the approach to the Avest. *cinvat.pərətu* 'bridge', for which see the book of Ardā Vīrāz (GIGNOUX 1984, ch. 3 sqq.); cf. finally, the Upaniṣadic tales of reaching Brahman's palace (KU, THIEME 1951/2, BODEWITZ 2002); for ascent to the sky, note also the shaman-like Muni and his intoxicating drink in RV 10.136 (cf. 5.56.8 Marut, 8.17.14 Indra as *sakhi* of the Muni).

The lists could be prolonged, covering all of the Ilr. topics already mentioned; however, I add just one rather unexpected example. Because of the Ilr. phrase indicating the priest's gesture of worship, *ustāna.zasta/uttāna-hasta* 'with (upwardly) spread out (arms and) hands', one might regard this 'Near Eastern' gesture as typical for Ilr. ritual. But there is a unique find from BMAC levels of the 'Indian' *añjali* gesture of greeting with the raised, open hands put together. This is accompanied by the 'IE' gesture of kneeling down on just one knee (RV 10.15.6 *ācya jānu dakṣiṇatō niśādya*, MS 1.10,9:149,18 *ūrdhvañjñur āsīno yajati*; OGUIBÉNINE 1997). This combination is performed by three persons sitting in front of a tree in a *cire perdue* copper piece of c. 2000 BCE (*Afghanistan* 2002: 98–9).

All of this indicates close interaction between the Southern Central Asian peoples and the speakers of Ilr. or even of earliest OIA. Yet there is a neighboring, almost neglected region that the Indo-Aryans must have passed through: the high mountain pastures and the fertile valleys of the Hindukush and Pamir, *giri* :: *ajra* as the RV calls them. The religion of the Nuristani speaking former 'Kafirs' and of the neighboring, NIA speaking, but religiously closely allied Kalash (in Chitral, N.W. Pakistan) will be treated here at some length as this 'third branch' of Ilr. speakers (MORGENSTIERNE) offers important insights for the formation of Ṛgvedic religion (in addition to the few selected items in FUSSMAN 1977 that lack comprehensive treatment of the Vedic data and rely too heavily on later Indian features).

§1.5 The Hindukush area: Nuristanis and Dards

The eastern Hindukush is a wide stretch of land that one cannot transgress in a few days if one is intent on moving from Bactria to the Indian (Gandhāra) plains. The Central Afghan highlands offer extensive green pastures and water: Airiianəm Vaējah (WITZEL 2000a) was an ideal land for the cattle herding Indo-Iranians. There are similar highlands in Central Asia, visible in the set-

tlement pattern of the pastoral Kirghiz, in the Pamirs and in Wakhan. Their economy may have closely matched that of part of the Ilr. speaking tribes (cf. STAAL 2001), which would explain the relative closeness of the Muzh Mountains at the time of the takeover of **Sauma*.

However, sources for Greater Afghanistan are few and far between: the Avestan texts, esp. the *Vidēvdād*, some Greek notes, Bactrian inscriptions and letters, some medieval Persian and Arab texts, and recent ethnographic materials, especially ROBERTSON's report about Kafirstan before forced Islamization in 1895. One can only extrapolate from this report based on a year spent in the Hindukush in 1890/1 and compare its data with reminiscences recorded by the anthropologists of the past century (JETTMAR 1975, 1986, BUDDRUSS 1960, 2002, FUSSMAN 1977, BASHIR & ISRAR-UD-DIN 1996). However, we now know how much and how quickly a local religion can change even in these remote mountains (JETTMAR 1975: 394 sqq., whose summary is, by and large, followed in the sequel).

As for the influences pre-Vedic religion might have received in the mountains of the Hindukush and the Pamirs, we must extrapolate from such modern sources (but cf. Jettmar 1975: 179 sqq., BUDDRUSS 2002). Just as in the other areas discussed so far (or as in Nepal, MASKARINEC 1998, Witzel 1997c: 520–32), we must assume many layers of developments and external influences. Nevertheless, the older Hindukush religions, their pantheon and their rituals can be reconstructed to some extent even from our recent sources, but this would lead too far here. There are, however, a number of typical features that allow to sketch the outlines.

To begin with, the valleys of Nuristan in E. Afghanistan are inhabited by the Nuristani (Kafiri) speaking tribes that form a third branch of Ilr., while the neighboring valleys of northern Pakistan are inhabited (apart from a few recent Nuristani immigrants that have arrived in Chitral over the past hundred years), by various Dardic (NIA) speaking Muslim populations such as the Kalash, Kho, Shina etc. Only the larger part of the Kalash, living in three of the western valleys of Chitral, have retained their old, pre-Islamic religion and rituals, while the rest of the Nuristani and Dardic speaking peoples have retained, as Muslims, only vestiges of their former beliefs. However, though the languages of the Nuristanis and Kalash belong to two different, not mutually understandable subfamilies of modern Ilr., they share many common concepts, beliefs and often even figures of the pantheon, though normally under different names. The isolated Kalash have received strong religious influences from pre-Islamic Nuristan. For that reason, most of the religious traits of both areas can be treated together.

Both groups (and to a large degree also the other Dards, including the Kashmiris), also share some features that are general 'Himalaya-Pamir-Hindukush' and in all probability represent an ancient, common substrate (TUIITE 2000, cf. BENGTONSON 1999, 2001, 2002). These must be separated from what *may* appear to be Vedic. In the sequel, Hindukush religion is described according to its traditional Nuristani (N.) features, but Kalash (K.) peculiarities are always indicated.

Common traits of these 'mountain religions' — often extending all along the Himalays — include the following. There is the prominent role of shamans (*pshur*, *wrear*, *deal* N., *dehar* K., LIÈVRE & LOUDE 1990) and related items: the use of flat circular drums, of various types of psychopharmaca (wine, fly agaric, rhubarb, mead, Pashto *hum* ~ Kalash *sāmani*; cf. also NYBERG 1995), and a general pattern of goat sacrifice (already seen at Mehrgarh, near Quetta, 6500 BCE), with sprinkling of the blood of the victim. There also is a general pattern of belief in mountain fairies, now often called by their Persian name, *Peri*, but still called *Apsaras* in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* (3.465, 468–471 for King Raṇāditya's entering and disappearing in a mountain cave into the company of *Dāitya* women). The Kalash distinguish between *Suchi* (*sūci*), who are helpers in the hunt and in the killing of enemies,⁴¹ and the *Varōti* who are the more violent and angry male partners of the *Suchi*, reflecting the later Vedic (and typical medieval Kashmiri) distinction between *Apsaras* and *Gandharvas*. Certain mountains are the favored seats of the fairies, especially the impressive, 7708 m high pyramid of the Kailāsa-like Tirich Mir in the North of Chitral (~ *Meru* KaṭhB, *Meros* Arrian, *Anabasis* 1.6; *Sumeru*, Pāli *Sineru*; cf. **devameru*, Shina *dīamer* = Nanga Parbat, CDIAL 6533). In late autumn, the *Peri* descend to the high mountain meadows.⁴²

A few key features that highlight the position of Hindukush religion in between the Ilr., BMAC and Vedic religions will be summarized and discussed in some detail, as they by and large even now remain unknown to Vedic specialists, in spite of BUDDRUSS 1960 and the selective summary "d'un domaine

41 Note the role of the *Apsaras* as leading warriors to heaven: in the Epic (HARA 2001), in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, for which cf. the Germanic Walkyries (WITZEL 1997b, n. 48); for the Kalash *Varōti* < *vātaputri*, cf. *gandharva vāyukeśa* ṚV 3.38.6, and the Avestan mountain range *Vāiti.gaēsa* 'whose hairs (trees) are tossed up by the wind' (= modern *Bādgīs*), WITZEL 1972: 184 sq.

42 Reflected in the *Nīlamata Purāṇa* and the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*: both *Pisācas* and *Nāgas* stay for half a year each in the Kashmir Valley, see WITZEL 1994: 220 and n. 82; cf. Nuristani *nang* (= *nāga*, cf. FUSSMAN 1977: 36 sqq.), and the Prasun river (f.) *Lu-nang* (*lu* = *deva*, BUDDRUSS 2002: 129); note also the mountains Nanga Parbat and (?) *Nandā Devī*, popular etymology < **naṅgā*? Cf. the many Kashmir mountains in *-nāg*.

mal connu des indianistes” by FUSSMAN (1977: 21–35), who, even with an “esprit hypercritique comme le nôtre” (1977: 27), overstresses (post-Vedic) Indian influences (1977: 69; for a balanced evaluation of the linguistic features, see now DEGENER 2002). However, both Hindukush and Vedic mythology, ritual, and festivals, in spite of many layers of developments and mutual influences, tend to explain each other very effectively; cf. the similar case of Nepal (WITZEL 1997c: 520–32).

§1.5.1 Mythology

Nuristani deities were praised in songs called *bem* (= Ved. *bráhmaṇ*, BUDDRUSS 2002: 123). There is a creator god, appearing under various names, no longer as Father Heaven, but as lord of the nether world *and* of heaven: Imra (*Yama Rājan), Māra ‘death’ (N.), Dezau (**dih*, CDIAL 14621, from N.) or Paidagarau (*paydagarāw*, K.). Sometimes he has taken over, like Zeus, some characteristics of Indra (he kills a snake, like the ṚV Indra). He also is the ancestor of humans or their creator (uncharacteristically, out of mud). However, just as Yama has a twin sister Yamī, so has Dezau (*dizāw*, K.): Dezālik (*dizālik*, K.), the goddess of birth, similar to the Kafiri Nirmali (N. < *nirmalikā*).

Heaven consists of seven round disks, clearly an influence of the South Asian (probably, originally Near Eastern) preponderance of this number, as compared to Northern Eurasian nine (also seen in the ṚV and in Nepalese Shaman songs, MASKARINEC 1998, where 7 appears next to 9).

More importantly, there is an Indra-like figure, often actually called *Indr* (N., K.) or *Varendr* (K., *warín*, *werín*, **aparendra*). As in the Veda, the rainbow is called after him: Ved. *indra-dhanúṣ*, N.: Kati *indrō*, *īdrō*, K. *indrē*, etc. (CDIAL 1577); when it thunders, Indra is playing Polo (or, when Munjem moves, BUDDRUSS 2002: 125); Kal. *indōčik* ‘lightning’ < *indradyotyā* (CDIAL 1576); and the earthquake is called **indreṣṭi* ‘impulse from Indra’, Kati *indrīč*, *indrīṣṭ* (CDIAL 1582).

Indra appears, however, in various forms and modern ‘disguises’; we have to assume many local developments and cross-wise influences from one local tradition on the other during the past 3000 years, as clearly seen in the god Balumain (§1.5.1, 5). The Kafiri Giwīs/Giwē’š/Gyīs (< **gaviṣa* ‘wishing for cows’) is a daring, always successful killer and hero and reflects Indra’s Ṛgvedic character well (ṚV *gaviṣ*, cf. *gaviṣṭi*); some other of his ‘incarnations’ stress fertility that he brought about or personifies, and also Indra’s connection with rain when he appears as Wushum, Shomde (N.) and as Sajigor (Sajigór, K.), who is indeed called Shura Verin (*šúra werín* < **šúra *aparen-*

dra ‘the hero, the unrivalled Indra’). *Warín(dr-)* or *In Warín* (K.) is the mightiest and most dangerous god; the location of his shrine was assigned by bow shot, which recalls Indra’s *Bunda* bow (see §1.4, above). Another god, Munjem ‘*malik*’ (*munjem* < **madhyama* ‘middle’; *malék* < *Arab. malik* ‘king’) is the Lord of Middle Earth and killed, like Indra, his father, a demon. He pressed him down, took his head to the upper valley, his feet to the lower valley and covered him with earth,⁴³ all of which is reminiscent of the Puruṣa/Ymir and Chin. (< Austric) Pangu myths. Most interestingly, Mahandeu (*mahandéo*, K.) and Mon/Mandi (*Māndi*, N., < **mahān deva*), too, is a war god, a negotiator with the highest deity, and he is everywhere and accessible like Indra. Mon/Mandi has a golden body, appears as Zebu bull and collects clouds (cf. the bull/horse form of Tištriia, opponent of the demon of drought, Apaōša).

Even the recently popular Balumain (*baḷimain*, K.) has taken over some of Indra’s features: he comes from the outside, riding on a horse. Mahandeu had ‘cheated’ him, like other Indra figures, from superiority.⁴⁴ Balumain is a culture hero who, among others things, taught how to celebrate the Kalash winter festival (Chaumos).

Like the Ilr. *Indra *Vṛtraghan, the Hindukush Indra has a demon-like counterpart, *Jeṣtan* (K., < **jyeṣtha?*), seen on earth as a dog; the gods (Devalog, cf. N. *dilū*) are his enemies and throw stones at him, seen as the shooting stars.

There are many other deities, which cannot be treated here;⁴⁵ however, the goddess *Jeṣtak* (*jéṣtak*, K. < **jyeṣṭhā*, or **deṣṭrī?*), the Dis(a)ni (< *dhiṣanā*)

43 The same story is found among the Nuristani Prasn: Munjem kills his father and buries him, his head up in the valley and his feet down (BUDDRUSS 2002: 125); cf. further §1.7. on the founding legend of Srinagar; SNOY (in JETTMAR 1975) compares some Sherpa and Panjshir myths (lower Panjshir Valley = ‘the feet of Panjshir’). JETTMAR (1975: 78), however, denies the cutting up of Munjem’s father.

44 In the Kafiri south, Indra remained the patriarch of a divine family: Gish is his brother (cf. the Epic Upendra?), Disani his daughter, Pano his son, Bagisht (a water deity) his nephew, whose myth, recorded by G. Morgenstierne, is found at <<http://www.nb.no:9000/nirmali/nirmali/Imra/Kareik/Bagisht-at.mov>>.

45 For example, Praba(zón) < RV *pravabhrā*, another form of Indra, is generally feared and no woman is allowed near his shrine; his *pru* (*pū*) festival is connected with the grape harvest and the making of new wine, which is poured, like Soma, into the fire and only then is allowed to be drunk. Note that wine is ritually pure, and more so even than snow or spring water (TRAIL & COOPER 1999: 90, sv. *da*, 320 s.v. *uk*), for which compare the Kashmirian ritual (Nilamata 465): new wine (*navya madya*) is drunk *on the snow* after the first snow fall; cf. WITZEL 1994: 243, n. 253. — Or, some spirits take the form of small children: the upper part of their body is black, the lower one red, for which cf. the Vedic Rudra.

of the Kafirs, is important: she is the goddess of the hearth and of life force; she protects children and birth giving women, as do the Jach (*jaç.* < *yakš(in)ī*, K.), a whole category of female spirits of the soil or of special places, fields and mountain pastures.

§1.5.2 Ritual

Hindukush ritual has many Ilr. and IA features, too (*pace* FUSSMAN 1977: 34). Kafiri religion had priests (N. *wutō*, *utō* < *hotrka?* CDIAL 14176; note K. *ištikavan* 'priest', from *ištikhék* 'to praise a god', still found by MORGENSTIERNE in 1929),⁴⁶ bards and shamans. However, in Kalash religion the priests are missing now (only some shamans, *dehār*, remain). Instead, there is a special role for half-grown boys, who are treated with special awe, and who combine, like Brahmācārins, pre-sexual behavior and the purity of the high mountains, where they tend goats for the summer months. The same degree of purity cannot be attained by men who interact with women and other impure entities in the villages.

Purity is very much stressed, just as in the Veda or in Hinduism. In Kalash religion it is centered around altars, goat stables, the space between the hearth and the back wall of houses (as modern Himalayan/Newar practice), and also in periods of festivals; the higher up in the valley, the more pure the location. By contrast, women (especially during menstruation and birth), as well as death and decomposition, and the outside (Muslim) world are impure, and, just as in the Veda (and Avesta), many cleansing ceremonies are required, even for the average householder, if purity was infringed upon.

In Kalash ritual, the deities are seen, as in Vedic ritual (and in Hindu Pūjā), as temporary visitors. Other than Nuristani shrines, Kalash ones (*dūr* 'house' < Ved. *dūr*; *malosh*) are located, with the exception of the women's house (Jeṣṭak Han), under the open sky at trees (juniper, oak, cedar), and they are characterized by a wooden board or a stone altar. There always is an opening, apparently to the other world of the gods (as in shrines for the Newar deity Nāsa Dyo). In 1929 MORGENSTIERNE still saw the effigy of a human head inside such holes; cf. the (lost) 'head of the sacrifice', so important in Vedic ritual (HEESTERMAN 1967, WITZEL 1987); cf. further old Celtic practices.

Fire is generally used at rituals, but next to the altars, and not *inside* an altar as in Vedic religion; blood is sprinkled there, unlike in India where it is

⁴⁶ Incidentally, if *wutō* < **hotrka*, this would be an indication of the Ilr. age of this important ritual term: it is also found in Avestan *zaotar*, the title of Zaratuštra in the Gāthās.

regarded as polluting, except for Tantric or tribal rituals. Horses, cows, goats and sheep are sacrificed.

Hindukush ritual makes use of several forms of sacred drinks, especially wine (vines grow locally, and are attested already by Alexander's Greeks, who thought of Dionysos). Indr, or similar gods, have a vineyard; he defends it against invaders, and an eagle appears. When the invaders shoot at the bird with arrows, he creates a rock slide, killing them. This may reflect a faint Kafiri echo of the old IE and Ilr. myth of the eagle bringing the sacred drink. Crows, however, represent the ancestors, and are frequently fed, also at tombs (with the *left* hand), just as in the Veda and in parts of modern India and Nepal (WITZEL 1986: 163).

In general, solemn Kalash ritual seems to be of *poultach* type (*namús* < Arab.), as KUIPER has proposed for the Ṛgvedic one. By organizing rituals and festivals (up to 12 are mentioned, the highest form being *biramór*) with many offerings of goats and also cattle, one gains fame and a greater voice in the local assemblies. It seems that just as in the ṚV, the offered cattle join the herd of the offerer after death, and perhaps his rank is preserved as well. — Importantly, the former local artisan class was excluded (K., N.) from public religious functions (cf. FUSSMAN 1977: 68), just like the Vedic Śūdras.

§1.5.3 Festivals

Finally, in order to better understand Hindukush religion and to compare it with Ilr. and BMAC religion, it is important to take a brief look at the division of the year and the major rituals/festivals (*khawsāngaw*, K.) associated with it. A common division seems to be that into two moieties, Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter. For example, Māra (~ Yama Rājan) is welcomed in Spring, and Munjem (~ Indra) in the Fall. Among the Kalash, the pastoral god Sorizan protects the herds in Fall and Winter and is thanked at the winter festival, while Goshidai does so until the *Pul* festival (*pū* < *pūrṇa*, full moon in Sept.) and is thanked at the Joshi (*joṣi*, *žóši*) festival in spring. This reminds of the two (ritual) halves of the year (*uttarāyana*, *dakṣiṇāyana* in the *gavām ayana*),⁴⁷ of

⁴⁷ Note that this may be the origin of the term *sam-vatsa-ra* 'year': when all calves, cows have been brought together, at the end of the yearly pasture period in the hills, followed by the end of the cycle of sunrises (dawns = cows/calves). Cf. ṚVKh 5.5.6: *samvatsare svapasō yajñīyam bhāgam āyan*. Note, however, also the other terms of the Vedic five year cycle: *pari-*, *idā-*, *id-vatsara* and *vatsara*, Ved. Ind. II 412, EWAia s.v., FALK 2002: 78, FALK 1982.

various similar instances in the Himalayas,⁴⁸ and the division of the year into a dry and a moist part in the BMAC, Avesta and RV (as discussed above).

The most important Kalash festival is the Chaumos (*cawmós*, Khovar *chitrimas*, importantly < *cāturmāsya*, CDIAL 4742),⁴⁹ which is celebrated for two weeks at winter solstice (c. Dec. 7–22). It has significant repercussions in the foundational myth of the Kalash (and Nuristanis), which will follow. At this festival the visitor god Balumain appears. Impure and uninitiated persons are not admitted. Purification is achieved by waving a fire brand over women and children and by a special fire ritual for men, involving a shaman waving juniper brands over the men. The ‘old rules’ of the gods (Devalog, *dewalók*) are no longer in force, as is typical for year-end and carnival-like rituals. Differently from other festivals, drum and flute are now forbidden, and only the human voice is allowed. The ritual takes place at a Tok tree, a place called Indrunkot, or *indréyin*, clearly indicating the older concept of Indra as focus of this festival; in fact, Indrunkot is sometimes believed to belong to Balumain’s brother, In(dr), lord of cattle. Balumain is offered specially baked bread, often in the form of sacred animals, such as the ibex. This is later taken up to his mountain seat by ‘shepherd king’ (*buđálak*) and offered along with goat milk.

In the ritual, a fire is constructed out of superimposed, crossing twigs (‘a fortress’) much like a Vedic one, and a goat, especially its heart, is offered into the fire. Ancestors, impersonated by the young boys (*ónješta* ‘pure’) are worshipped and offered bread (cf. DOLLFUS 1989: 69 sq.). The children hold on to each other and form a chain (Ved. *anvārambhaṇa*) and snake through the village. (This chain should represent the Vedic *tantu* string of the ancestors, WITZEL 2000b.)⁵⁰ A fox chase is included as the fox is Balumain’s dog. (In the Altai the bear is the ‘dog’ of the mountain god.)

48 Cf. n. 42. Just as in Kashmir, the deities also change in Kalash land: in late Autumn, the Peri descend to the mountain meadows and they are asked to return to the peaks in spring (JETTMAR 1975: 390); Balumain visits in December. JETTMAR (1975: 78) compares the male part of the year in Fall/Winter and female one in Spring/Summer with Tajik beliefs, and notes that the water, stored in ice/snow, is released in Spring to fertilize the female earth, cf. above, on BMAC iconography. Note also the role of Indra at year’s end, and that of other visitor gods, such as the *marebito* of Japan.

49 This etymology is important as it could indicate Vedic ritual influence. But, by contrast, *hotrkalzaotar/Nur. wutō* is already IIr. (see §1.5.2.); note also: Joshi (*joši*, Khovar *chilin-jush*) festival in spring < *yajusya*, CDIAL 14768.

50 But note also the sexual connotations (JETTMAR 1975: 386). — It may also echo that of the heavenly river, connecting heaven and earth, symbolized by the Sarasvatī in the Anvārambhaṇiya Iṣṭi, WITZEL 1984: 253, n. 71. The winter dances are echoed by the same type of dance — but this time by women — during the Joshi festival in spring.

The men must be divided into two parties: the pure ones have to sing the well-honored songs of the past, but the impure sing wild, passionate, and obscene songs, with an altogether different rhythm. This is accompanied by a ‘sex change’: men dress as women, women as men (Balumain also is partly seen as female and can change between both forms at will).⁵¹ Modern dress, such as of tourists, is included now.

At the central point of the ritual, Balumain gives his blessings to seven boys (certainly representing the seven of the eight Devalog who actually received him), and these pass the blessings on to all pure men. At this point, the impure men resist and fight. When the *nagayró* song with the response *han sariás* (< *samrīyate* ‘flows together’, CDIAL 12995) is voiced, Balumain showers all his blessings and disappears. At this crucial moment — it seems that of solstice, i.e. change of the year — the pure get weaker, and the impure try to take hold of the (very pure) boys, pretend to mount them “like a hornless ram”, and proceed in snake procession (see above). This action creates mixture and fusion (like Balumain’s change between male and a female form), so important for the fertility and life of the year beginning now. Things then return to normal.

Much of this reminds of the solstice festival in neighboring Tibetan Ladakh (DOLLFUS 1987) as well as in the Veda, of the Mahāvratā and the form it has taken in the second pressing of the Soma ritual (WITZEL 1997a: 398–400, 404), and also of reflections in myth. The one that corresponds to ‘Indra’s opening of the Vala’, a typical New Year myth, is found among the Nuristani in two main versions, summarized here.

§1.5.4 Creation myths

First, the recovery of the lost Sun and Moon by the gods (ROBERTSON 1896: 385, 28; further Prasun and Urtsun versions, following JETTMAR 1975/1986 (who used BUDDRUSS’ unpublished materials; however, see now BUDDRUSS 2002).

There was no sun, no moon. It was very dark. A demon (Espereg-era) brought sun and moon into his house, right and left of a waterfall.⁵² The god Mandi changes into a boy, and goes to the mother of Espereg-era.

51 Note that the shaman, too, often has a female double that accompanies him throughout life; cf. the alternating male/female lineages of the Kham Magar shamans (OPPITZ 1991).

52 Cf. Mithraic and Iranian-related Armenian myths about David of Sassoun; further BUDDRUSS 2002; ultimately, the descent of waters as Sarasvatī/Gaṅgā may be intended (WITZEL 1984: 217 sq., BUDDRUSS 2002: 128, 130); see next note.

Mandi is not allowed to open a certain door. He tries to do so, pushes in his finger, this turns golden; finally, he breaks the door and sees the waterfall, the sun, the moon and a horse. He puts the Sun on his right shoulder, the Moon on his left, and rides out of the house. The dark world becomes bright. Espereg-era follows them, Mandi cuts off all his seven heads, drags him to the right side of the valley and covers him up.

The God Mara tells him to share sun and moon with the rest of the world; he carries them up to heaven, where they are ordered to go about in circles. Mara then creates humans, gives them cattle, teaches them, goes up to heaven and disappears.

The other version is more concerned with the actual conquest of the 'house' of the sun (Kati in Bumboret, Urtsun and Lutdeh; Prasun version following BUDDRUSS, as reported by JETTMAR 1975).

The gods assemble. In the upper part of the Valley there is a house, near heaven, where a demon lives. He has much wealth. If he is killed the world will become well. The gods decide to fight him. They call God Mandi who gathers other gods as he marches up the valley, finally including also the female deity Disni. Halfway up, they sit and deliberate. They discover the house. Mandi goes there, sees an old woman and asks her about the house. "It is a house, between up and down; inside there are seven brothers (called *Dizano*, cf. *Dezālik* of the Kalash) who have many things: the sun and moon, gold, silver, water, fields where they sow". The Old woman explains how to make the rope visible by which the house hangs between heaven and earth.

Man(d)i goes back to the gods but forgets, three times, what he had been told; finally, another god follows him (cf. the vulture and Saramā, JB 2.240–2) and reports back to the gods, who tease Mandi. The gods shoot arrows at the house, but as it is of iron, the arrows are repelled (cf. the *ayas* forts in the Veda). They ask Disni to sow seeds, which ripen quickly, and are threshed. The chaff attaches itself to the thread and it is visible in white.

Mara makes two-pointed arrows which cut through the copper, silver-, gold and iron thread. The 'flour castle' crashes down to earth. The gods jump against its door, but it does not open. Dis(a)ni tells Mandi to look at her thighs⁵³ which are white and full. Mandi gets excited, jumps against the

53 Cf. the Jpn. Iwato myth, with Uzume dancing, exposed, and stamping loudly on an up-

door and breaks it. He enters with a dagger and kills all seven demons. The gods draw them outside and bury them.

§1.5.5 Kalash myths of winter solstice

The act of reviving the Sun is repeated by the Kalash in the Chaumos (*cawmós*) festival at Winter solstice; this is now dominated by the god Balumain (*baḷimain*). He is the typical 'visitor god' from far away, and is rarely seen. Such visiting deities are also found in Kafiristan (noted by MASSON in 1844), and are also common, as *marebito*, in old Japan. Apparently, Mahandeu had cheated Balumain from superiority, when all the gods had slept together (a euphemism, K.) in the *Shawalo*⁵⁴ meadow; therefore, he went to the mythical home of the Kalash in Tsiyam (*tsiam*), to come back next year like Indra at year's end (RV 10.86, WITZEL 1997a: 394; cf. 1997c: 520 sqq.). If this had not happened, Balumain would have taught humans how to have sex as a sacred act. Instead, he could only teach them fertility songs used at the Chaumos ritual, exemplified by the explicit, chorus-supported male/female exchanges of 'dialogues' such as RV 10.86.

He arrives in Kalash land in early December, before solstice, and leaves the day after. A myth tells how he was at first shunned by some people, who chased him with their dogs, and therefore were annihilated. He comes from the west, the (Kati Kafir) Bashgal valley. But, in spite of this, the mythical country of the Kalash, in the east or south, is also connected with him. Clearly there are several layers of mythology, the later one being the introduction from Kafiristan. He always comes riding on a horse, as also said in the secret songs addressed to him.

He was awaited by seven Devalog of the Kalash land (cf. the seven Ādityas?) and they all went to several villages, e.g., Kamadeo, where he was received only by dogs and therefore destroys the village. The people of Batrik village, however, received him with seven pure, young boys whom he took with him (therefore one only sends men and older boys to receive him nowadays). Several items mentioned in his ritual reception allow to identify him, at least in part, with Indra.

turned bucket (cf. WITZEL 1995b); cf. in the Mahāvratā: young women carrying water vessels go around three times, stomping their right feet, shouting '*madhu*', then pour out the water.

54 Which in Kalash means 'spotted' (*śawala*), like a snake; not possible < Skt. *śabala*, rather, from N. Kati *śawili* 'pregnant': the place is situated on the western boundary of the Kalash valleys with the Kati Kafirs, on a high pass.

Sometimes Balumain is seen as female. When he turns right, he is male, when he turns left, he is female. The shaman, in trance at the sacred Tok tree, identifies and addresses Balumain with Kushumai (*kuṣumáy*), the goddess of fertility, and the festival 'king' honors her. There is a myth about Kushumai's staying away from Balumain's reception, back on her own mountain. Balumain turned towards her, and he in fact became Kushumai, and is now addressed as such.

Balumain is the typical culture hero. He told the people (of Batrik) about the sacred fire made from junipers, about the sowing ceremony for wheat that involved using the blood of a small goat he had brought with him, and he asked for wheat tribute (*hushak*) for his horse. Finally, Balumain taught how to celebrate the winter festival (see above). He was visible only during his first visit, now he is just felt to be present.

§1.5.6 Hindukush influences: a summary

In sum, the Hindukush area shares many of the traits of Ilr. myths, ritual, society, and echoes many aspects of Ṛgvedic, but hardly of post-Ṛgvedic religion (*pace* FUSSMAN 1977). They may be summarized as follows.

In myth it is notably the role of Indra, his rainbow and his eagle who is shot at, the killing of his father, the killing of the snake or of a demon with many heads, and the central myth of releasing the Sun from an enclosure (by Mandi < Mahān Deva). There are echoes of the Puruṣa myth, and there is the cyclical elevation of Yama Rājan (Imra) to sky god (WITZEL 1984: 288 sqq., *pace* FUSSMAN 1977: 70). Importantly, the division between two groups of deities (Devalog) and their intermarriage (Imra's mother is a 'giant') has been preserved, and this dichotomy is still re-enacted in rituals and festivals, especially the Chaumos.

Ritual still is of Ilr. type: Among the Kalash it is basically, though not always, temple-less, involving fire, sacred wood, three circumambulations, and the **hotr* (? , N. *wuīō* 'high priest'). Animal sacrifice, at square fire places, is very prominent; it is carried out by decapitation (as in ṚV, SCHMIDT 1973) and by offering parts of it into the fire or into holes (cf. Avest. *mayā*?, and perhaps even with the 'lost head of sacrifice', still seen by MORGENSTIERNE). Sacred drink (wine < **Sauma* < mead), is prominent; consumption is allowed only after Indra (as Praba) has been offered to. Ritual often is a potlatch-like merit festival (KUIPER) meant to gain status and to confirm rank. There are year-end rituals (*cawmós* < *cāturmāsyā*), involving the two moieties of the gods (Devalog and others) and of society with a Mahāvratā-like carnival, and there

are other seasonal festivals within the two halves of the year.

Society stresses the aspect of purity (as in India, Iran); this affects the position of women, and results in the exclusion of artisans from ritual (like the Śūdras). There is exogamy of clans, and intermarriage is allowed again, as in the Veda, only after 7 or 4 generations. As in Ilr., there is a great importance of oaths, sworn at special ritual places.

Some features already have their Vedic, and no longer their Central Asian form (e.g. dragon > snake), and there is clear South Asian influence as well, such as the prominence of the number 7 (7 heavens, 7 gods, 7 boys in ritual).

One may wonder, however, about the exact nature of the Yakṣ(iṅ)ī and Shuci as local Hindukush or as S. Asian female spirits. The stress on the purity of the mountain regions, as habitat of fairies (Varōti < *vātaputrī*), and the black/red demons (like Rudra) seems to be local. Many of the Hindukush features further elucidate what we observe in the ṚV (Gandharva, Rudra, Apsaras, Yakṣa ṚV+) and especially in the AV, as features of the deities, demigods and spirits living on the (high) mountains. Some items clearly belong to the ancient mountain cultures of the Hindukush-Pamir-Himalayas (TUIE 2000, *pace* FUSSMAN 1977), and have not been taken over, or only fragmentarily so, into Vedic religion. Examples include the shamans (except for the ṚV Muni) and their rituals (except for a trace in the Vājapeya, and maybe some healing ceremonies in the AV); the role of boys and adolescents as semi-priests (note the description of the Brahmacārin in the AV); the centrality of goat sacrifice and blood, of sacred twigs (juniper), and of megalithic monuments.

In sum, all of these features of Hindukush religion are in need of further, much more detailed study, not just by anthropologists but certainly by Vedic specialists. While the Iranian side of Ilr. religion is not followed up further in this context, a brief closer look is taken at the Indian side, as seen in the Ṛgveda.

§1.6 Acculturation in the Greater Panjab

We have to assume a certain degree of interaction, as the ṚV clearly tells us, with local people in northwestern South Asia. The question is still: who exactly were these inhabitants of the Gandhara area, the Salt Range and the Panjab proper? One may think of hill or mountain people belonging, like those of Kashmir, to the so-called Northern Neolithic (POSSEHL 2002). It survived beyond the Harappan period on the Derajat Plateau, west of the middle Indus, and on the Gandhara/Salt Range Plateau. At least in part of the region, however, this culture was rather abruptly followed by the Gandhara Grave Culture,

with early evidence of horses, in Swat, at c. 1400 BCE.

The northern substrate language spoken there, as attested by loan words in the ṚV, cannot have been one of the Proto-Burushaski or Proto-Tibeto-Burmese speakers, as both do not have the full prefix system seen in Ṛgvedic Austro-Asiatic/(Para-)Munda loan words (WITZEL 1999a). Instead, Tib.-Burm. had only a few isolated one-consonant remnant prefixes.⁵⁵ Much future work will have to be done to subdivide the substrate material in the ṚV securely into several layers, such as BMAC-related (*iṣṭ, khar, uṣṭr*), the Gangetic 'language X' (MASICA 1979), Dravidian, and 'local' such as Para-Munda (for a beginning, see WITZEL 2001).

Furthermore, as local rock engravings tell us, the northern cultures were characterized by the important role of the mountain caprids, the markhor and ibex (still seen in Hindukush religion); but these are not typical for the ṚV.⁵⁶

Instead, a different kind of local religion emerges from a study of the substrate words of the ṚV (KUIPER 1955). Apart from terms of village life, music and dance, only the more popular level of religion (the 'small tradition') was accepted, notably the demons *piśāci, kimīdin, nicumpuṇa*; names such as Arbuda and Śambara (see n. 64); the words *punya, maṅgala, bali*; the *aśvattha, pippala, udumbala* trees. However, there also are some words that are more or less closely connected with the prestigious Soma (thus at least partly, from C. Asia?), in KUIPER's list: *ulūkhala*, etc. (see §1.3); to be added are those discussed above as Central Asian (*Atharva(n)*, etc. see §1.3). Finally there is the local Indus motif of the boar *Emuṣa*, and such denigrating words as *śiśnadeva, mūradeva*.

Other South Asian influence seems to include, e.g., that of tree worship (Indus civ., Pali texts, Drav., Munda, Tharu, etc.), the role of the peacock (Cemetery H urns, Kandhs in Orissa, etc.), perhaps that of menhir-like memorial stones (Gandharan and S. Indian megaliths, Drav., Khasi etc.).

The local Gandhara/Panjab influences are perhaps best exemplified by a clear, regionally based example, that is the use of numbers that are prominently used in religion and classifications: the typical North Asian (shamanic) number is the number 9 (or 8 in Japan, Polynesia). As pointed out above, in the Near

55 Such as *s-, r-, b-, g-, d-, m-, a-* (BENEDICT 1972: 103–123). Other language families are excluded as well, such as Dravidian (no system of prefixes), or some (other) form of IE as the Ved. loan words are decidedly non-IE.

56 Perhaps with the exception of ṚV 8.100.6 *śarabha* > Kalash *śāra* 'markhor, male mountain goat with upward spiraling horns' (cf. CDIAL 12331), which confirms the traditional etymology: 'animal with horns', EWAia II 616. Interestingly, ṚV *śarabha* is a name of a person related to Ṛṣis (*ṛṣibandhu*), and connected with the mountain tribe of the Parāvata.

East it is the sacred 7, which is also found in the Indus Civilization, e.g., with seven dancing women appearing in front of a deity in a tree (PARPOLA 1994: 260), and in the ṚV. It has also spread (when?) into the Hindukush and into the Nepalese Himalayas.

Many more items from West Asia could be added, such as the prominent role of the lion, as found in the Indus Civilization and in the ṚV. However, the ṚV expressively *excludes*, probably due to inherited poetic conventions, the use of the Panjab and Central Asian panther (already prominent in pre-BMAC pottery), as well as of the Central Asian and Indian tiger, though the tiger is prominent in the iconography of the Indus Civilization.

In sum, by the time the speakers of OIA dialects set foot into the Greater Panjab, all of the foundational themes and incidental influences (IE, Steppe, BMAC, Hindukush) had already been amalgamated into a *new* system that was set to clash with the local beliefs of the Indus area. Evidence for this amalgam is abundant in the non-IA words in the ṚV (KUIPER 1955, 1991), or in the Vedic *Aśvamedha* as influenced by Indus rituals. In Vedic ritual, the *queen* (*mahiṣī*) interacts with a slaughtered *male* horse, but the Irish *king* bathes in the broth of a *mare* (c. 1185 CE, PUHVEL 1987: 273); in Rome a horse (*October equus*) is killed with a spear, head and tail are raced from the *Campus Martius* to the *Regia* (PUHVEL 1987: 272) while the blood that dripped from the tail is kept by the Vestal virgins and used in the Palilia festival in April. Conversely, on a seal from Chanhu Daro, a willing Indus *woman* is seen as lying under a sexually stimulated *bull* (note Ved. *mahiṣī* 'female buffalo, queen', even today still a title of queens; cf. PUHVEL 1987: 275 on the Near Eastern ritual copulation of queen and bull). Apparently, the IE horse sacrifice has been acculturated in India before it was codified in the Veda (POSSEHL & WITZEL 2003).

The *Emuṣa* boar myth, discussed by KUIPER in 1950 (partially withdrawn in 1991) is another case in point. This myth only occurs in the 'suspicious' Kaṇva book of the ṚV, (HOFFMANN 1975: 15–28 = 1940/1). Here, we find a local substitution for the Ilr. myth, i.e. the Vala myth of the ṚV, the Nuristani one of Mandi opening the House of the Sun, etc., and its earlier versions (IE: Herakles/Cacus and the cows, Eurasian: e.g. Jpn. Amaterasu/Iwato myth), by one of a great archer shooting at the boar *Emuṣa*.⁵⁷ The boar, incidentally,

57 Who is hoarding milk-rice(?) *odana* in the mountains. This interpretation depends on the Ṛgvedic meaning of *odana*. — Cf. our cornucopia, *Schlaraffenland*, and the AV idea of food that cannot be eaten up, LOPEZ 1997.

figures also in AV (PS 6.7) and YV myth (KS 8.2), substituting for the diver bird and, as such, is rather old in South Asia, which archaeological and modern remnants of a boar cult indicate in the linguistically and culturally isolated Andaman islands (CAMPBELL 1988: 122 sq.; and elsewhere, for example among the Mushahars of U.P.).

Whether the Ernuṣa myth is of Munda origin is not very important here (cf. WITZEL 1999a: 23 for some suggestions); rather, it is important to recognize, as Kuiper has prophetically done also in this case, half a century ago, that this myth does *not fit* the Vedic (and IE) pattern.

The historical section of this sketch has to terminate here. In the future, it must be expanded by a close investigation of what we can reconstruct for the religion of the Indus civilization and for Dravidian and Munda/Austro-Asiatic myths and religion; — that is, as far as the Sangam (*Caṅkam*) and medieval South Indian texts as well as modern anthropology and the interpretation of archaeological remains will actually allow. These reconstructions are to be followed by a comparison of the new data with Ṛgvedic religion. Even now, a few topics stand out. The bow shooter is also seen on an Indus copper plate (PARPOLA 1994: 112), and it is also typical for the Dravidian god Murugaṅ. The worship or ritual setting up of megalithic stones among the Hindukush peoples, Khasis, Mundas, and Dravidians, and the role of the peacock and its myths among the Mundas compared with Cemetery H images of *homunculi* souls (WITZEL 1999b: 16 sq., 41) supply further interesting hints.

§1.7 Summary of diachronic developments

An amalgam of all the various historical influences, delineated above, is clearly in evidence in the ṚV, with some of the expected, system-inherent contradictions resolved, and some not. Much has always been made of the various creation myths in the ṚV as one of the elements for emerging Indian philosophical thought. This is, however, rather myopic — as if mythical thought about nature and the universe was developing only at that late stage in Homo Sapiens history.⁵⁸ When we compare Eurasian or Laurasian mythology, we can clearly see that

— Creation of the world out of a primordial giant is a very old item, probably a shamanic myth (of dismemberment) of stone age hunters' societies (cf. MACDONALD 1952): it is found among the IE (Ymir in Iceland, Remus in Rome,

58 Differently, in 'Vedic Hinduism' (JAMISON & WITZEL 1992); an assertion of Eurasian/Laurasian character would have required much explanation in this summary paper; see however, WITZEL 1990a, 2001: 53–57.

Puruṣa in ṚV 10.90, cf. AV 10.2.28, PS 9.5), Ooge.tsu Hime (Kojiki 1.18), in the Chinese Pangu myth (derived from the Miao/Austrian peoples), etc. Variants of it have found various positions in local mythologies, for example close to primordial creation in Iceland (Vafthrūdnismāl 21, Grímnismāl 40), i.e. stage 1, or with OBERLIES (2000: 378) at stage 2: the giant as a son of Heaven. The myth re-appears frequently in 'late' myths, e.g. in Nuristani valleys or in Kashmir: Srinagar city is built on the right bank of the Vitastā, where king Pravarasena II comes across a giant Rākṣasa, whom he kills and then builds an embankment (*setu*, the modern Suth) from his leg, with a sharp turra: the demon's knee (see STEIN, Rājatarāṅgiṇī 3.336–358, *ad loc.*; 1.159, Yakṣa dikes); cf. also the initial section of the Finnish *Kalevala*.

— Very frequent, too, is creation from primordial waters (*salila*, ṚV 10.129.3; cf. also 7.49.1, 10.72.6, 10.109.1, 1.164.41), perhaps best seen in Mesopotamian myth, with the male salty ocean and female sweet waters; or creation arising from darkness/chaos, which is again found from Iceland (*gap var ginnunga*, Völuspá 3) to Polynesia (*Po*, darkness) and to the Maya (only emptiness and water under the sky, Popol Vuh).

— Creation from an egg, or rather from a golden embryo (ṚV 10.121.3, JB 3.360, HOFFMANN 1975–6: 519–22), is again found from Finland (*Kalevala*, introduction) eastwards, for example in Munda (Santal) myth: the first humans developed from two eggs, laid by a goose made of grass (ORANS 1965: 5.)⁵⁹

— The Indian boar diver myth (first seen at PS 6.7, KS 8.2), tells how mud brought up from the bottom of the ocean by a boar (the later Varāha *avatāra* of Viṣṇu) forms the new, still shaky (*śīthira*) earth, floating on the ocean. This is a variation of the older diver bird/diver muskrat myths of Northern Eurasia and North America. Its South Asian shape is due to the influence of local Indian ideas: boar worship is old in the (post-glacially) isolated Andamans and in the subcontinent proper.

— The more 'abstract' creation from 'nothing' (*asat*, unordered chaos) to order (*sat*) is seen at ṚV 10.72.3 (for which see KUIPER 1983).

In sum, even in the ṚV we find representations of the development of the world in 4 stages (in part, even called *yuga*): 1. (salty) waters/darkness, 2. Heaven and Earth, 3. the early gods (Pūrve Devāḥ, Sādhyā, Asura), 4. the (Viśve) Devāḥ (Indra, etc.). This is a progression that is seen in many other cultures as well (such as in Japan: Kojiki), from an asexual/undifferentiated

59 Or created by the primordial deities (Otā Borām and Sing Bonga), put in a cave, and made drunk on rice beer, to have sex and produce children (HASTINGS 1928, s.v. Mūṇḍās §4, Dravidians (North India), §38). Origin from an egg is also found in War-Khasi myth.

state, to bisexual procreation, and to several generations of (competing) gods, frequently followed by a final destruction of the world (summary in WITZEL 2001).

Such comparisons indicate that the Ṛgvedic evidence (10.90, 10.129, 10.82, 3.38, cf. 10.72.2–3, AV 10.7.25, etc.) is not new, but *recapitulated*, *recycled* shamanic/priestly speculation, based on much older models found in Palaeolithic Eurasian/Laurasian mythology, that has been poured into concrete, very elaborate poetic form by the Ṛgvedic Ṛṣis.⁶⁰

§2 Synchronic description: cosmography and cosmology

Viewed in synthetic and synchronic fashion (OBERLIES 2001: 7 sqq.), Ṛgvedic religion contains, like all religions and world views, occasional inconsistencies due to incorporation of various antecedents from outside and inside South Asia; such inconsistencies caused discussion among shamans, priests and poets. Further variation was created by contemporary culture-internal speculation, for example those about the path of the sun (ṚV 5.81.4, cf. 1.115.3, AB 3.44) or the nature of the stars (JUB 1.25, 4.51, cf. 1.3.1, WITZEL 1984: n. 34, 102). Other, only apparent inconsistencies, such as contradictory information on the location of the realm of the gods and the ancestors are based on the 'static' view of the universe commonly found in modern interpretations (WITZEL 1984: 288 sqq.).

A systematic, structured view of Ṛgvedic religion (OBERLIES 2001: 7, 2000: 370) therefore takes into account, first, the evidence of the myths and rituals acquired by the time the Indo-Aryans had made the Greater Panjab their home, had interacted with the local populations and had found time to reflect on, work out and distill their new experiences in the inherent syncretism of the Ṛgveda. Apart from straightforward mythology it also contains an account of the cosmography of the period (KIRFEL 1920, cf. KLAUS 1986), of the spatial distribution of the various types of gods and of the more abstract powers, and on the interrelation between gods, ancestors, ancient Ṛṣis and human beings in general. Further, it takes account of the less prominent 'outsiders' of

⁶⁰ Mythological origin is to be distinguished from the mere poetic description and interpretation of the qualities of the gods ('father of, mother of, son of...') e.g. Agni = son of waters or Vāyu, father of Maruts. Thus, Agni can be the father of the Aṅgiras (1.96.1–2), and the gods can be those of Atri, the Kaṇvas (1.139.9). The ancestry of Vasistha, a newcomer, was apologetically conceived: Mitra-Varuṇa and Urvaśi as his parents, 7.33.10–14. Note also expression such as: Dawn generates the sun, Indra is lord of strength, etc.

divine and human society, the Gandharvas, Apsarases and the Daivya Vratyas (AV) as divine counterparts of the *Männerbund* of the *vrat(y)as* on earth as well as of the Nāgas (AV+) of the Other World and the (mostly post-Ṛgvedic) Netherworld. Finally, it includes the demonic powers, such as Nirṛti, the various demons (Piśāca etc.), and destructive powers such as *takman*, *apvā*, etc. A description of these various semi-divine forces and spirits alone would cover a large amount of the less prominent parts of Vedic religion; constant recourse for this has to be made to the AV.

To elucidate this briefly, and to point out some antecedents, a few items of systematic description of the deities and of cosmography will be included below. In doing so, it is *always* useful to turn to the *indigenous* classifications of the deities, as they reflect *contemporary* sentiment and immediate worldview. (In the ṚV this is certainly tempered and in part confused by poetic speculation.) The Vedic gods are enumerated, in later Vedic texts, as the 8 Vasus, 11 Rudras, 12 Ādityas, but the ṚV does not (yet) count them that way. We have, it is true, the Rudrāḥ, Ādityāḥ, Vasavaḥ at 8.101.15, but this is an appendix *t̄cca* of an appended hymn, and we also have, interestingly, a group of Viśve Vasavaḥ at 7.37.3 (including Savitṛ, the Vasus and in the next stanza: Aditi, Varuṇa, Mitra, Aryaman, cf. n. 24).

Then, there is the well-known enumeration of 33 gods (e.g. ṚV 3.6.9, AV 10.17.13) or of 3×11 gods (ṚV 8.35.3, 8.39.9, 1.34.11, etc.), and that of the Viśve Devāḥ 'all the gods'. This is a group that one would ordinarily think to include *all* deities indeed, but in fact it does *not* include 'all' the gods, and rather is an undefined grouping (probably appearing at New Year, cf. §1.5., the Devalog of the Kalash winter solstice festival, or the assembly of the gods of Japan in Izumo, after the Fall harvest). It remains unclear, *prima facie*, whom exactly this group should include (KUIPER 1979: 46 sqq.).

The solution to this problem is perhaps given by the *old* Nivids (which still use the Ṛgvedic injunctive freely, cf. HOFFMANN 1967). It has not been seen, as far as I know, that this section contains our oldest indigenous and systematic mythography of the Ṛgvedic gods, though influenced by ritual necessities. It would lead too far to discuss details here; I will return to this at a later occasion. The Nivids mention the major features, epithets and deeds of the gods; these are (with some doubling): Agni (Vaiśvānara), Indra, Savitṛ, Heaven and Earth (as father *and* mother!), Ṛbhus, Viśve Devāḥ, Maruts. (The deities are often mentioned with the apposition *deva*, as *Agnir devaḥ*, *Indro devaḥ*, etc.) The epithets used for the Viśve Devāḥ include 'the All(gods) belonging to all men' (*viśve vaiśvānarāḥ*, an epithet normally used for Agni, cf. Viśve Vasavaḥ, etc.), 'having all greatneses' (*viśvamahas*), and 'they who resorted to heaven and

earth, the waters and the sun (*sva*) ... and the wide interspace' (*ye dyām ca pṛthivīm cāsthuḥ | apaś ca svaś ca ... uru cāntarikṣam*), which clearly identifies them as deities active in the whole universe; cf. ṚV 1.139.11 with 11 gods each in heaven, interspace, and on earth, which seems artificial, but note 10.65.9, 10.49.2, 6.51.2. In sum, 33 seems to stand for a totality.

Consequently, the Allgods are also numbered in the ṚV as 3339 (3.9.9) and in the Nivids, as 3×11 , 33, 303, 3003 = 3372 gods (*ye stha traya ekādaśāḥ | trayaś ca triṃśac ca | trayaś ca trī ca śatā | trayaś ca trī ca sahasrā*, and equally so their wives: *tāvatiḥ patniḥ | tāvatīr gnāḥ*; see MINKOWSKI 1996). Obviously this large number, schematic as it is, must include, like the early Japanese lists of thousands of deities (Engishiki of 927 CE), the *local* deities as well. For the Nivids, we have to think of local Gandharvas (see LÉVY 1915) and Apsaras and the like (§1.5.1,6).

This view of the activities of the Ṛgvedic *deva* is echoed by the Ṛgvedic description of heaven — interspace — earth (but significantly, still excluding the Netherworld which is substituted by the concept of the Other World, found horizontally at the rims of the earth⁶¹). Heaven, Earth and Interspace are the three major divisions of the universe, often expressed with elliptical plural 'the three earths, the three heavens', etc. However they are also clearly subdivided into 3 levels each: 3 earths (1.108.9), 3 interspaces (4.53.5, 5.69.1, *uttama* 9.22.5, *parama* 3.30.2, *trīṭya* 9.74.6), 3 heavens (5.60.6, 4.26.6 or more clearly, a 'third ridge in the shining space of heaven' ṚV 9.86.27); in sum we find:

3 HEAVENS:	third <i>pṛṣṭha</i> , <i>uttama</i> 'highest', <i>parama</i> <i>madhyama</i> 'middle' <i>avama</i> 'lower'
3 INTERSPACES:	<i>uttama</i> , <i>parama</i> , <i>trīṭya</i> (= <i>divya</i>) ... (lower = <i>pārthiva</i>)
3 EARTHS:	<i>avama</i> <i>madhyama</i> <i>parama</i>

61 OBERLIES (1998: 366–369, 2001: 10); found for example in Siberian (Tunguse), Polynesian or early Japanese myth (*tokoyo*), beyond the ocean, from where visitor gods 'from beyond' (*marebito*, n. 48) may come; note Herakles' tenth labor, the theft of Geryoneus' cattle found on the island of Erytheia, 'red land', in the western Okeanos: this is the antithesis of Indra's obtaining the cows from the Vala, on an island in the Rasā (JB 2.440–2). — Some very late ṚV passages, such as 7.104.11, speak about a space below the 3 earths, reserved for certain serious evildoers.

This reflects the typical North Asian (and even Icelandic) shamanic division of the universe into nine spheres, connected by a tree (*Plakṣa Prāsravana*, *Yggdrasil*) ending up in the pole star (cf. *uttara* 'up, north', WITZEL 1972: 163, 183, 176), or connected by a stream (Ob/Yenesei in Tunguse myth, or the *Sarasvatī*: WITZEL 1984: 217 sq., cf. BUDDRUSS 2002: 128). In the Ṛgvedic passages quoted above, the North Asian scheme has not yet been overlaid by Near Eastern and Indus Civilization ones using the number '7'.

gods (heaven)	demi-gods	(later addition: Ṛṣi)
Viśve Devāḥ <i>Devalog</i> ; (<i>Lu, N.</i>) DAIVA	Gandharva, ⁶² Apsaras, ⁶³ <i>Varōti, Shuci, Peri</i> {GANDAREWA < OIA?}	
Ādityas:	{= *Dhṛtarāṣṭra serpent } {Janamejaya, etc. PB 25.15}	'bears' (Rkṣāḥ) > 7 Ṛṣi (ṛṣayah) (HAPTŌ IRINGA)
Vivasvant VĪVANHVANT		
Yama/Yamī YIMA, <i>Imra</i>	divya Gandharva (Viśvāvasu) ~ Apsaras *divya Vṛātya (AV) ~ Apsaras; PAIRIKĀ > <i>Peri</i>	
.....		
humans (earth)		
Manu ~ *Manāvī (Idā)	*vrātya ~ *pumścalī	
Purūravas ~ Urvaśī	← Apsaras (on earth); Yakṣa/*Yakṣiṇī, <i>Jac, Peri; Yuz/Yoz</i> (Nur.)	
...	Piśāci, *Piśāca; Rakṣas, etc. <i>Būd/Bhūt</i>	
{*Dhṛtarāṣṭra, KS 10.6}		
.....		
*Netherworld		
Yama (but also in heaven, <i>Imra</i> in day time, YIMA; WITZEL 1984)	*nāga/nāginī, AV+ (*Dhṛtarāṣṭra Nāga) <i>Nang</i>	
Nirṛti		

In sum, a spatial arrangement of gods, demi-gods and humans in their three worlds would look like the reconstructed scheme given above; it has to be fleshed out by further careful investigation. I summarize, based on a long, unpublished study on Nāgas (incl. Viśvāvasu, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Varuṇa, WITZEL 1990b, and 2001; cf. FUSSMAN 1977: 36 sqq.), while taking into account VASILKOV 1991, and HOPKINS 1915: 153; starred (*) items are only attested in post-Ṛgvedic texts; Hindukush comparisons are given in italics, Iranian terms in capitals.

The world view of the ṚV is complemented by that of the origin of humans, referred to in the above table. In the Veda (and somewhat similarly in the Avesta) humans descend from Manu/Yima, and via Vivasvant Mārtāṇḍa (Vīvaṅhuuant, Gayō Marōtan) ultimately from Aditi and the gods; however, in the Veda even primordial incest is not allowed for Yama and his twin sister Yamī (10.10). Whatever Yama may or may not have done in the ṚV (10.14.6 *durmantu*, cf. 1.66.8, 10.13.4), creating (mis?-)birth (1.66.8, 1.83.5, 7.33.9, 12; note Izanagi and Izanami's misbirth, the exposed 'leech child' Hirugo, Kojiki 1.4), he was punished and became the first mortal, as Lord of the Netherworld, Yama Rājan. He is also punished in the Avesta texts: he lost his realm (Yt 19.30–35) and he was killed by Spitūra with a saw (Yt 19.46). However, in Nuristan he has become, due to the revolving nature of his location, the highest god, both as Māra < *māra(ka)* 'death', and Imra < *Yama Rājan.

§3 Ṛgvedic Religion as a system

Based on the comparisons with various IE and Eurasian mythologies, referred to above, one may even try to produce, by way of experiment, a deductive sketch of Ṛgvedic religion that is to be filled in — and, if necessary, to be contradicted — by inductively attained information from the texts.

62 He is found at the top of the sky: ṚV 9.85.12 *ūrdhvó gandharvó ádhi náke asthād viśvā rūpā praticákṣāno asya*, 10.123.7; or in 'deep space' 8.77.5 *abudhnéṣu rájassv ā* (or in waters 10.10.4, cf. 10.11.2 *gandharvī*); 9.86.36 Soma: *apām gandharvām divyām nṛcákṣasam*, and received by the Gandharvas 9.113.3 *tām gandharvāḥ práty agrbhān*; their secret, wild paths: 10.136.6 *apsarásām gandharvānām mṛgānām cáraṇe cáran*; the Gandharva is called Viśvāvasu, the heavenly Gandharva, differently from the 'Titan' Viśvarūpa 10.139.4,5 *viśvāvasuṃ ... gandharvām/divyó gandharvó ...*; he spoke already in the womb (like the Ādityas Vivasvant/Indra) 10.177.2.

63 The Apsarases, too, are in high heaven: ṚV 10.123.5 *paramé vyòman*, and move together with the Gandharvas (see previous note).

Popular belief (the 'small tradition'), such as contained in large parts of the AV, may fill in many of the gaps, especially those about the lower deities, demigods, spirits and demons (Rudra, Apsarases, Gandharva, Piśāca, etc.). This type of religion must not necessarily be regarded as opposed to the 'high religion' (the great tradition) of the Ṛgvedic poets and priests, it just tends to omit some of their more complex rituals and speculations. For example, we do not have a *popular*, non-priestly description of the beginning of the world, say, from the mouth of a Kṣatriya or Śūdra. Indra's primordial role as demiurge and as leader in the fight against the forces opposing the *devas* is quite clear in the ṚV, but more importance is given in everyday, popular religion to his role as fighter in war and as culture hero and trickster who often commits evil actions (*kilbiṣa*) in the process (RAU 1973).

In consequence, comprehensive description and interpretation of the Ṛgvedic complex of religion, mythology and ritual must be supplemented from the AV for the more 'popular' levels of beliefs while always keeping in mind the post-Ṛgvedic date and complex blend of this particular text. Obviously, even in clear cases of overlap of ṚV 10 with the AV, or vice versa the lateness of ṚV 7.104 within the ṚV corpus, we cannot take the 'Ṛgvedic' age of these 'Atharva style' hymns for granted.

Yet, even more or less synchronic descriptions and investigations (e.g. ṚV only, or ṚV including AV) can uncover only part of the reality of early Vedic religion. In my view, it is rather more advantageous to combine and contrast any such synchronic description with elements derived from the historical stages⁶⁴ delineated above (§1).

A combination of both approaches will allow for a better filling in of the many gaps in our knowledge of Ṛgvedic religion and it will help to explain

64 It is instructive to review how diverse the various types of input have been; they include, among others:

- the two IE groups of deities (brothers/cousins) in opposition and occasional cooperation
- the IIr. Asura (Āditya) group opposed to the traditional Devas (and the reverse in Iran), including Indra/Vṛṣṭragna
- the many Eurasian variations of the Vala myth
- the adaptation of a local/Indus myth about a rice *odana*/mountain/boar by the Kaṇvas
- the sun (Svarbhānu) myth, restricted to the Atris (but found also, e.g., in Mexico)
- the local Hindukush mountain / Śambara Kaulitara myth (cf. the Kalash personal name *Sumb'ara*; *šumbér* 'prior, first'?)
- the Indus tradition of the buffalo/queen ritual reflected by the Aśvamedha
- later developments such as of Prajāpati, aiming at systematizing Ṛgvedic myth or at early 'monotheism' (see FARMER *et al.*, 2000).

many of the lacunae and mythic 'hapaxes',⁶⁵ the startling inconsistencies and apparent contradictions that the Vedic poets could not (yet) touch up or synthesize by creative identifications (e.g., Indra = Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, Garutmant, Yama, Mātariśvan RV 1.164.46 *īndram mitrāṃ varuṇam agnīm āhur ātho divyāḥ sá suparnó garútmān | ékaṃ sád viprā bahudhā vadanty: agnīm yamām mātariśvānam āhuḥ*; cf. 1.66.8). Constantly, we have to take into account this drive to integrate all inherited and newly developing features. Even then, occasional contractions and the many paradoxes (so typical for the RV) will remain, which still were to be resolved or were left alone to indicate representations of a 'higher level of truth' (for the processes involved, see FARMER *et al.* 2000). The older system constantly works as feedback to produce a new, further integrated one, though a 'perfect' system cannot be expected. Some lapses remain, especially since even the *individual* voice of a poet comes through occasionally (especially that of Vasiṣṭha, GOTÖ 2000) or note the exceptional hymn mentioning synesthetic aural 'vision' (6.9.6 *vī me kārṇā patayataḥ*).

In sum: (a) Ṛgvedic religion is a system (KUIPER 1983, OBERLIES 1998, 1999, 2001) just like any other religion, though one *still digesting* recent influences from the Hindukush and the Greater Panjab and whose exact conceptual boundaries need to be defined by further research. (b) Such more recent additions are distinguished from older (Central Asian) ones; this amalgamation process is not visible in the commonly found 'flat', synchronic picture of Ṛgvedic religion, which is at best tempered by some (Indo-)Iranian/IE ideas. (c) Instead, we must begin to study Ṛgvedic attempts at changing and 'updating' (FARMER *et al.* 2000) an older pre-Vedic system in accordance with local religious, social and political developments that eventually led to the post-Ṛgvedic continuation of speculation (AV 8–12/PS 16–17), and even more significantly, to the classification in the post-RV period of the Śrauta system with its stress on a rather restricted 'access to heaven'. In this way, I think, we can do justice to Vedic religion and can avoid the conflation of Ṛgvedic and post-Ṛgvedic materials on the one hand, and on the other, the lumping together

65 For example, the otherwise isolated Ved. mytheme *rodasī* 'heaven and earth' may well be based on *rud* 'to cry' (cf. EWAia s.v.), if we take into account the Polynesian (Maori) version of the separation of father Heaven and mother Earth by the god *Tōko* ('pole'): "Darkness (*Pō*) evolved from the void, negation (*Kore*). Heaven (*Rangi*; *Wakea* in Hawai'i) and earth (*Papa*) lay in close embrace, so intertwined that their children dwelt in darkness in this narrow realm. The children resolved to rend their parents apart, several tempted in vain, until Tane-mahuta, Lord of Forests, forced heaven upwards from the breast of his wife and let in the light of day ... Heaven (*Rangi*) became content in the sky, only casting down his tears (at night, dew) towards his loving separated wife." (TREGGAR 1891: 391 sq.).

of all post-Ṛgvedic data, from the AV down to the Upaniṣads, over a period of at least half a millennium.

I hope to have *begun* to indicate how very complex (cf. n. 64) Ṛgvedic religion is: it has taken in and reworked elements from the Urals to the Panjab: notably, the local influences of the Greater BMAC area, of the Hindukush, and those related indirectly to the Near East that came via Elam (BLAŽEK 2002), Baluchistan, S. Afghanistan (Aratta/Arachosia). Finally, it included the local repercussions of the Indus Civilization, already distant in time. All of this makes for fascinating study, involving comparisons with Eurasian myth, from Iceland to Japan, and beyond.

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