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Considerations About Traditions Influential in the Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā

Abstract: The Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā, probably compiled in South India in the twelfth/thirteenth century, is one of the most interesting texts of the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra tradition. Its most important deity is Sudarśana, the anthropo-morphic discus of Viṣṇu, who is ritually worshipped by personal priests (*purohita, purodhas*) for the sake of the king. In contrast to other Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās, the Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā contains extensive theological and cosmological chapters. It also shows traces of several other religious traditions. The paper is mainly devoted to this second characteristic and presents examples of influences from two sides, namely, from Śaivas on one hand and Atharvavedins on the other, and tries to give a possible explanation for their presence.

Keywords: Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā, Pāñcarātra, Atharvaveda, Sudarśana, *purohita*

1 Introduction

Of texts from the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra tradition, the Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā (AS) is the best known in the West. For one, it is the focus of the first monograph about the Pāñcarātra to have been published in the West (Schrader 1916). This was followed by a second monograph (Matsubara 1994) and a few minor studies, mainly by Andreas Bock-Raming (1987, 1992, 2002). For the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra tradition, a tradition that has generally been neglected in South Asian scholarship, the quantity of secondary literature that touches on this particular text is actually quite considerable.

The fact that of all the Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās, it was the AS through which the tradition became first known in the West has led to quite an unbalanced notion concerning Pāñcarātra. This is because the AS is quite atypical for the texts of this tradition. In comparison to other Saṃhitās, it is very complex and contains extensive theological and cosmological chapters. It also shows many traces of

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several other religious traditions. However, it is exactly these characteristics that make the text so interesting.

This paper is a first attempt to present some of the traditions whose traces can be seen in the AS and to give a possible explanation for their presence.

2 Contents, date and place of origin of the Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā

Most of the Saṃhitās, as the authoritative texts of the Pāñcarātra are called, consist primarily of ritual prescriptions since rituals are the main means for Pāñcarātra followers to achieve their religious aims. Saṃhitās often also contain theological and cosmological sections and passages on Yoga, but these are normally not very long. As already mentioned, the AS is atypical in this respect, as its theoretical sections are comparatively long (which was probably the reason for the Western interest), but it also contains ritual prescriptions and many narrative passages.

The most important deity of the AS is Sudarśana. Mythologically, Sudarśana is Viṣṇu's discus, that is, one of his weapons. Commonly used in battles in ancient India, the discus was usually a metal disk with sharpened edges that was thrown through the air; sometimes it was also used as incendiary weapon.[1] In the course of time, Viṣṇu's weapons were personified in mythology, above all the discus, which bears the proper name Sudarśana (all of Viṣṇu's weapons carry individual names). Iconographically, they were represented as persons or deities who attend Viṣṇu.[2] Sudarśana was worshipped as an independent deity perhaps from the eleventh century onwards, although he continued to be considered Viṣṇu's weapon. Usually, he is represented as an anthropomorphic deity with a varying number of arms, either two, eight, sixteen or sixty-four.[3]

Theologically, according to the AS, Sudarśana is Viṣṇu's volition (saṃkalpa) and power of action (kriyāśakti) by which Viṣṇu operates in the world. He is thus necessary for the creation of the world.[4]

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1 Cf. Wijesekera 1961 and Begley 1973: 12–13.

2 Examples are a seventh-century bronze Viṣṇu from Kashmir, now in the Museum für indische Kunst in Berlin (see Begley 1973: 53–54) and a thirteenth-century bronze now in the Madras museum (Begley 1973: 66).

3 See AS 36.6–9b (8 arms; for a bronze image with eight arms from the thirteenth century, see Begley 1973: 66), 37.1–17b (16 arms; cf. Begley 1973: 73–75), 42.67–68 (64 arms), 44.28 (2 arms, 8 arms, 16 arms, 64 arms).

4 See e. g. AS 3.29c–39.

The ritual worship of Sudarśana as it is described in the AS primarily serves the goals of kings and rulers, such as their military aims. The rituals are usually performed by personal priests (*purohita, purodhas*) for the sake of the king.[5] The AS describes many different rituals, including: an initiation ritual (*dīkṣā*) for the king during which he receives the *sudarśanamantra*, whose worship can achieve aims that are typical for kings (AS 20.50c–58b), the daily worship of Sudarśana (*nityapūjā*, AS 28[6]), and rituals for the fulfillment of particular wishes, such as curing illnesses (AS 38), defense against black magic performed by enemies (*abhicāra*, AS 42) or destroying villains (AS 43).

Most of the Saṃhitās are compiled texts. At least parts of them were repeatedly revised, supplemented and probably also abridged. This makes dating them extremely difficult, since various passages in a single text may have different dates of origin. The AS is also a compiled work of this type.[7] On the whole, however, it is structured quite systematically,[8] giving the impression of the work of a final redactor who gave the text, at least superficially, a homogeneous appearance. Here the AS will only be examined in the form of this final product, in the form as it now stands with its own reception history.

The AS is currently dated between the eleventh and thirteenth century AD.[9] According to Sanderson, it must have been composed after Kṣemarāja, who is dated between 1000 and 1050 AD, since it bears traces of the influence of Kṣemarāja as well as of other Kashmirian Śaiva sources.[10] According to Begley,[11] the text cannot have been composed much earlier than the twelfth or thirteenth century for iconographical reasons, since we have no evidence of Sudarśana images in the form described in the AS that are older than the thirteenth century.[12]

Both scholars think that the AS was composed in South India. Sanderson bases this on the fact that the Yajurveda mantras treated in chapter 58 of the AS

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5 See below, pp. 12 ff.

6 Cf. Rastelli 2005.

7 Cf., e. g., Bock-Raming's analysis of AS 5 (2002: 21–56), in which he shows that the text of this chapter is based on various sources.

8 Cf. Bianchini 2015: 17–20; see also Bock-Raming 2002: 183–184.

9 In the early days of research on the AS, it was dated much earlier (see Schrader 1916: 96 ff.). For a summary of Schrader's as well as Matsubara's reasons for dating the AS earlier, see Bianchini 2015: 11–12.

10 Sanderson 2001: 36–38. See also Sanderson 1990: 34, n. 16, where he argues for the eleventh century as the AS's date of origin.

11 See Begley 1973: 27–28.

12 According to Peter Bisschop (personal information quoted in Leach 2012: 156, n. 256), the reference to Viśveśvara worship in Vārāṇasī in AS 42.35 can date back to the twelfth century at the earliest.

appear in the version of the Vedic Taittirīya school, which is prevalent in South India.[13] Begley[14] adduces the fact that images of Sudarśana as described in the AS appear only in South India.

3 The influence of other religious traditions on the AS

3.1 Śaivism

As already mentioned, traces of several other religious traditions can be found in the AS. Especially in the chapters on creation, the influence of Śaivism is striking. Indeed, in the Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās, Śaiva influences are not unusual; they can be found in many texts of the tradition, also in the earliest extant works.[15] But this influence is especially strong in the AS and in the Lakṣmītantra, another Pāñcarātra text very similar to the AS in many respects.

The influence of Kṣemarāja and other Kashmirian Śaivas has already been mentioned; evidence for this is given in a very long footnote of A. Sanderson.[16] Although this certainly deserves further examination, in this paper I would like to offer two other examples of Śaiva influence in the AS.

The first is the name of the Saṃhitā and its own explanation of why it bears this name. The Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās are usually composed in the form of a dialogue in which one sage asks questions and another sage, or a deity or Viṣṇu himself, gives detailed answers. Often Saṃhitās are named after one of these interlocutors, such as the Paramasaṃhitā, the Pādmasaṃhitā and the Lakṣmītantra.[17] The first chapter of a Saṃhitā usually contains the so-called *śāstrāvatāra* story, a story about the descent of the teaching explaining how this dialogue came about. These stories generally describe sages, tormented by the

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13 Sanderson 2001: 38. For more detailed arguments why the mantras treated in AS 58 are from the Taittirīya school, see Bock-Raming 1992: 82–85.

14 See Begley 1973: 27–28.

15 See Sanderson 2009: 58–70.

16 Sanderson 2001: 36–38, n. 47. On Śaiva influences in the AS, see also Bock-Raming 1992: 74 and Torella 1998: 79–81.

17 According to ParS 1.33c–34b, the Pāñcarātra was composed by the "supreme person" (*parama puruṣa*), and in the subheadings of the dialogue, the teaching god is called *parama* (it is, however, not clear if these subheadings belong to the original text). In the Pādmasaṃhita, Padma is one of the persons in the line of the text's transmission (PādS *jñānapāda* 1.27c–34b). In the Lakṣmītantra, Lakṣmī/Śrī is the revealer of the text; see LT 1.53 ff.

sufferings of transmigration and searching for a way out, who ask another sage for guidance. This sage reports that Viṣṇu once revealed a teaching about this to yet another sage. The dialogue between the latter two – that is, Viṣṇu and the third sage – then makes up the main content of the Saṃhitā. Thus, the Saṃhitās are generally presented as a direct revelation of Viṣṇu.[18]

At the beginning of the AS's *śāstrāvatāra* story, the sage Bharadvāja approaches the sage Durvāsas to get information about Sudarśana, on which, as he has realized, everything else is based (AS 1.3–14). Already this interlocutor is a first link to Śiva, since Durvāsas is closely related to him in mythology.[19] Durvāsas answers that he once received this information when the god Śaṅkara (i. e., Śiva)[20] revealed it to the sage Nārada, who had requested it (AS 1.15–18).

Although Nārada was a perfect ascetic and sage as well as a teacher for deities and other sages, he was full of doubts. He could not find anyone able to remove these doubts other than Śiva (AS 1.19–23). So he went to Mount Kailāsa, where Śiva dwelt together with his consort Umā and his entourage, bowed to the god and praised him with a hymn (*stotra*) (1.24–42b). Śiva was pleased and expressed his willingness to grant Nārada a boon. First Nārada modestly answered that he did not wish anything other than that the "lord of the world" (*jagatpati*) be pleased with him, but then, after all, he opened his heart. He said that he had once observed a fight between the demon Kālanemin and the god Kṛṣṇa, who is here identical to (Viṣṇu-)Nārāyaṇa.[21] Although it was a terrifying battle with a series of frightful weapons, Kṛṣṇa was easily victorious by means of the discus Sudarśana (AS 1.42c–63). Nārada had then bowed to Kṛṣṇa in astonishment, but Kṛṣṇa instantly disappeared and left Nārada full of doubts:

> I bowed to Kṛṣṇa, the teacher of the world, who instantly disappeared. Carrying a heavy mass of doubts in [my heart], I arrived here, near to you, just in order to destroy doubts, for no one other than the all-knowing ruler (*īśāna*) is known as a destroyer of this [mass of doubts].[22]

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18 For a study of *śāstrāvatāra* stories in the Pāñcarātra and other traditions, see Oberhammer 1994. For a translation of the *śāstrāvatāra* story of the AS into English, see Matsubara 1994: 153–169.

19 In ViṣṇuP 1.9.2, for example, Durvāsas is a "part" (*aṃśa*) of Śiva.

20 The name Śiva is not mentioned in AS 1. For the name Śaṅkara in this chapter, see AS 1.18 and 25. Apart from this, Śiva is called Īśāna in AS 1 (AS 1.27, 29, 66). It is without any doubt that Śiva is meant by these names; cf. the description of him and his consort Umā on Mount Kailāsa, or Nārada's praise (*stotra*) (AS 1.24–42b), which cannot refer to any other deity.

21 See AS 1.62, where he is called Nārāyaṇa. Nārāyaṇa is generally identified with Viṣṇu in the AS; cf. Rastelli forthcoming b: 266–268.

22 AS 1.64c–66b: *antarhitaṃ kṣaṇāt kṛṣṇaṃ praṇipatya jagadgurum* || 64 *imaṃ saṃdehasaṃdohaṃ hṛdayena vahan gurum | tavāntikam iha prāptaḥ saṃśayacchedanāya vai* || 65 *na hi sarvajñam īśānaṃ vinā chettāsya vidyate |*.

Śiva promised to remove Nārada's doubts and answered all of his questions. The content of this dialogue is the Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā. As the story relates, it originally consisted of 240 chapters, but over the course of time it was abridged by other sages to the length of first 120 and then 60 chapters, the actual length of the AS in its edited form (AS 1.67c–74).

The name Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā is understood as the "Saṃhitā (collection) of Ahirbudhnya".[23] The name Ahirbudhnya already appears in the Ṛgveda (e. g. in VII.34.16–17), where it is used for some kind of water dragon. Later Ahirbudhnya appears as one of the eleven Rudras, the emanations of Rudra.[24] In the AS, however, Ahirbudhnya seems to designate Śiva, the proclaimer of the Saṃhitā.[25]

This means that the AS is a Vaiṣṇava Saṃhitā named after Śiva and proclaimed by him. Śiva received the Saṃhitā from Viṣṇu himself, after having practiced severe mortifications, as he relates later.[26] This means that Viṣṇu is superior to Śiva, as one would expect in a Vaiṣṇava system, but it is still remarkable that it is Śiva who is the teacher in the AS.

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23 Cf. the only two passages of the AS in which the words *ahirbudhnya* and *āhirbudhnya* appear: "This has been called 'Saṃhitā' that, as a name, is preceded by 'Ahirbudhnya'." (AS 1.68c–69b: *saṃhitā seyam ākhyātā* [...] *nāmnāhirbudhnyapūrvikā*); "The teaching of Ahirbudhnya, which is called 'essence of the Tantras' (...)" (AS 60.20cd: [...] *tantrasārākhyam āhirbudhnyaṃ hi śāsanam*).

24 See e. g. Gopinatha Rao 1914, vol. 2/2: 386 ff.

25 Apart from the two passages mentioned in n. 19, the term does not appear in the text of the AS, but only in the subheadings, of which it is not clear if these also appear in the manuscripts or if they were added by later editors. The later PārS, which is partly based on the AS (cf. Rastelli 2006: 56 f.), definitely identifies Ahirbudhnya with the proclaimer of the AS: "(...) as this was taught in detail [and] according to the rule by Ahirbudhnya to Nārada who asked [about this]" (PārS 26.43abc: *pṛcchate nāradāyaitad ahirbudhnyena vistarāt | yathopadiṣṭaṃ vidhivat*). This is also the case in the Sudarśanasahasranāmastotra, which has been added to the edition of the AS, in which Ahirbudhnya is designated as the seer (*ṛṣi*) of the *sudarśanamantra* (vol. 2, p. 617, after verse 21: *oṃ asya śrīsudarśanasahasranāmastotramahāmantrasya ahirbudhnyo bhagavān ṛṣiḥ*), which is based on AS 20.25ab: "Therefore they call me (i. e. the proclaimer of the AS, who drew the *sudarśanamantra* out of the Atharvaveda) the seer of the gross mantra-lord." (*sthūlasya mantranāthasya tato māṃ ṛṣim ūcire |*).

26 See AS 2.3–4b: "Listen according to the truth, Nārada, the supreme knowledge that I once received from Saṃkarṣaṇa himself, the ocean of knowledge and strength, after having practised severe mortifications for myriads of years." (*śṛṇu nārada tattvena yat taj jñānam anuttamam | varṣāyutagaṇān ghoraṃ tapas taptvā mayā purā || 3 prāptaṃ saṃkarṣaṇāt sākṣād vijñānabalavāridheḥ |*) and 25.14c–15b: "Nārāyaṇa told me [this essence of the Tantras], which extinguishes all afflictions [and] prevents all sufferings, in the holy Badarikāśrama in order to appease the great crime of cutting off the head of Pitāmaha (i. e. Brahmā)." (*mama nārāyaṇenoktaṃ puṇye badarikāśrame || 14 pitāmahaśiraśchedamahāpātakaśāntaye | sarvabādhāpraśamanaṃ sarvaduḥkhanivāraṇam || 15*). Cf. also AS 20.22c–24 (quoted on p. 10). On the name Ahirbudhnya, see also Schrader 1916: 95 f. and Matsubara 1994: 168, n. 44.

In many other Saṃhitās, Viṣṇu himself is the proclaimer. Why not in the AS? In the *śāstrāvatāra* story, the statement that no one other than Śiva can remove Nārada's doubts is even found twice (AS 1.23 and 65–66). Kṛṣṇa, i. e., Viṣṇu, although addressed as the teacher of the world (*jagadguru*), immediately disappears when Nārada pays obeisance to him. Thus Śiva seems much more accessible than Viṣṇu.

The second example for the influence of or at least closeness to Śaivism in the AS is possibly the main deity itself, that is, Sudarśana. It has already been mentioned above that Sudarśana is the discus of Viṣṇu. Already the Mahābhārata relates that Kṛṣṇa received the discus Sudarśana from Agni.[27] A few Purāṇas state that the divine architect Viśvakarman or Tvaṣṭṛ was involved in the creation of Sudarśana.[28] Other Purāṇas[29] as well as an interpolated passage in the MBh (after 13.14.54) ascribe the origin of Sudarśana to Śiva.[30] Of course, such statements originate in rivalries between Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva groups. By using this kind of statement, a Śaiva tradition is attempting to show that Śiva is the supreme god and that other deities as well as their weapons, from which these deities procure at least part of their strength, have their origin in Śiva. However, there are also other indications of a certain closeness between Sudarśana and Śiva.

Independent ritual worship of Sudarśana is documented since the eleventh century AD onwards.[31] From this time onwards, Sudarśana worship was very popular in South India, especially in Tamil Nadu, where shrines for Sudarśana, there known by the name Cakkarattāḻvār, were erected in many Śrīvaiṣṇava temples.[32] There are also a few examples of independent Sudarśana temples, such as the so-called Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa temple at the Cakratīrtha in Hampi (Karnataka).

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27 MBh 1.216.21; cf. also Begley 1973: 13.

28 ViṣṇuP 3.2.8–11 (Viśvakarman), MārkP 108.1–3b (Viśvakarman), MatsyaP 11.27–29 (Tvaṣṭṛ). Cf. also Begley 1973: 19–20.

29 E.g. ŚivaP 2.5.24. Cf. also Begley 1973: 20.

30 See also Gillet 2010: 209–221. Here Gillet describes representations of Śiva as Jalandharasaṃhāramūrti, the form in which he kills the demon Jalandhara, in Pallava temples. In these representations, the discus Sudarśana through which the demon is killed is clearly visible. As text references that describe Śiva creating the discus, Gillet mentions passages from the Śivapurāṇa, Padmapurāṇa, Liṅgapurāṇa, and the two Tamil works Tēvāram and Kantapurāṇam.

31 An inscription of Jaṭāvarman Śrīvallabha (end of eleventh century AD) in the Citrarathavallābha Perumāḷ temple in Kuruvitturai in Madurai district documents the existence of a shrine for Sudarśana within this temple (cf. Champakalakshmi 1981: 251 and Mani 1985: 19).

32 Cf. Begley 1973: 68 ff., Champakalakshmi 1981: 251 f., Mani 1985: 17–22. The importance of Sudarśana worship can also be seen in the fact that the eminent philosopher and theologian Veṅkaṭanātha (thirteenth/fourteenth century) composed two *stotras* devoted to Sudarśana, the Ṣoḍaśāyudhastotra and the Sudarśanāṣṭaka (cf. Begley 1973: 30–32).

While the deity worshipped in this temple is called Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa, it is actually the sixteen-armed Sudarśana. The location of the temple is especially interesting. Cakratīrtha is one of the most important *ghāṭ*s (ritual bathing places) of the Tuṅgabhadrā river in Hampi. In the area west of the Cakratīrtha, mainly Śaiva temples are found, while to the east, Vaiṣṇava temples prevail. At the Cakratīrtha itself and in its close proximity, we find today mainly Vaiṣṇava temples. However, architectural remains of Śaiva temples and the existence of Śiva-liṅgas cut into the basal rock at the Cakratīrtha show that in former times Śiva was also worshipped there. Thus Cakratīrtha is a site where Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples once coexisted, contrary to the areas west and east of it.[33] The local myth about this site also has to do with Viṣṇu and Śiva. It relates that here, Viṣṇu once practiced severe mortifications (*tapas*) in order to please Śiva and to acquire effective weapons against the demons who troubled the deities. He made a Śiva-liṅga of mud and worshipped it with a thousand lotus flowers a day. One day, Śiva hid one of the flowers to test Viṣṇu. To replace the flower, Viṣṇu offered his own eye. As a reward for this devotion, Śiva gave Viṣṇu the Sudarśanacakra. With it, Viṣṇu killed many demons but then he brought it back to the Cakratīrtha to protect the devotees there. According to the story, it is still present there today.[34]

This story shows that in one of the few places where Sudarśana is worshipped in an independent temple, he is actually subordinate to Śiva.

Another deity that stands perhaps even more obviously on the threshold between Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism is Narasiṃha. Narasiṃha is a being who is in many aspects liminal. According to one version of the myth, the son of the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu was a devout Vaiṣṇava against his father's will; to rescue him from his father, Viṣṇu assumed the form of Narasiṃha. Hiraṇyakaśipu could not be killed by day or by night, in a house or outside a house, by a human being or an animal. Thus Viṣṇu appeared in a human body but with a lion head and killed Hiraṇyakaśipu in a doorway at twilight. This is originally a Vaiṣṇava myth, but there are also Śaiva versions,[35] which accept the worship of Narasiṃha based on the understanding that Viṣṇu is actually identical to Śiva.[36]

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33 Verghese 1995: 407–409.
34 Verghese 1995: 410–411. Verghese's description of this myth is based on an unpublished translation of the Pampāmāhātmya by G.S. Kalburgi and on Gopinatha Rao 1914, vol. 2/1: 209–210., who himself refers to the Śivapurāṇa and the Mahābhārata without offering any detailed references. I was unable to verify this information about this myth, but the myth can also be found in LiṅgaP 98 (information gathered from Gillet 2010: 219).
35 See Hacker 1959, Gonda 1970: 104–107 and Eschmann 1978: 104.
36 Gonda 1970: 107.

Thus, like Sudarśana, it seems that Narasiṃha is also a deity important for both Vaiṣṇavas and Śaivas. But there are still other links between the two. The AS prescribes, among other things, the ritual worship of Sudarśana on a *yantra*. On the back side of this *yantra* is an image of Narasiṃha.[37] There even exist a few Sudarśana sculptures with Narasiṃha on the back side.[38] Eschmann, Kulke and Tripathi[39] even consider this an indication that Sudarśana and Narasiṃha are identified with each other. Moreover, the AS devotes three chapters (AS 54–56) to the mantra of Narasiṃha.[40]

As Eschmann writes, "Narasiṃha is (...) the furious (*ugra*) aspect of Viṣṇu *par excellence* and therewith also that aspect of Viṣṇu with the highest affinity to Śiva."[41] One could say the same about Sudarśana. He is also a furious deity,[42] worshipped for military aims and other fierce purposes. It is probably no accident that influences of Śaiva traditions and Sudarśana worship are found together in a single text, namely, the AS.

3.2 Atharvaveda

Already Andreas Bock-Raming has stated that one can observe a "pro-Vedic" attitude ('*pro-vedische' Haltung*) in the AS, and that the text, in the form it has today, was probably the work of a Pāñcarātrin oriented towards Vedic-brahmanic orthodoxy.[43] There are several indications of an orientation toward

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37 For a description of this *yantra*, see AS 26.5–72.

38 The extant images, however, seem to be only of a rather late date, i. e., from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; see Begley 1973: 86–89.

39 Eschmann, Kulke, and Tripathi 1978: 186.

40 What should be added is that there could be a relation between the Atharvavedic influence (which is described in the next section of this paper) and the importance of Narasiṃha in the AS. Narasiṃha is, in any case, the personal tutelary deity (*iṣṭadevatā*) of the Orissan Paippalādins and is thus of great importance in this Atharvavedic school (cf. Sanderson 2007: 226–227, Sumant 2010).

41 Eschmann 1978: 104.

42 Cf. also Eschmann, Kulke, and Tripathi 1978: 186: "Thus the personified Sudarśana is regarded as a very mighty Vaiṣṇava deity who represents Viṣṇu's *ugra*, or the 'furious' aspect."

43 Bock-Raming 2002: 184–185, especially: "All dies zusammengenommen ließe sich möglicherweise so deuten, daß die AS in ihrer endgültigen uns vorliegenden Gestalt einem zu einer besonderen Gruppe innerhalb des Pāñcarātra-Viṣṇuismus gehörigen Redaktor zuzuschreiben ist, nämlich einem zur vedisch-brahmanischen Orthodoxie hin orientierten Pāñcarātrin, den man mit einem von R. C. Hazra geprägten Begriff auch als Smārta-Pāñcarātrin bezeichnen könnte." Cf. also Bock-Raming 1992: 88–89, describing the AS as a "Versuch, zu einer Integration sowohl der tantrischen als auch der vedischen Tradition auf einer gemeinsamen Grundlage der Pāñcarātra-Philosophie zu gelangen."

various directions of Vedic-brahmanic orthodoxy, that is, various traditions within the Vedic orthodoxy. One tradition whose prominence is especially striking in the AS is that of the Atharvaveda.[44]

For example, the *sudarśanamantra*, which designates Sudarśana and is the most important mantra taught in the AS, is described as hailing from the Atharvaveda:

> The Atharvaveda (*atharvāṅgiras*) indeed has five[45] branches, o great sage. In these [branches], however, the divine mantra-king, who brings [evils(?)] to an end, himself is hidden. After having performed mortifications for a myriad of years at the beginning of the *tretāyuga*, I gradually churned the complete Atharvaveda by means of supreme absorption on the divine order of Saṃkarṣaṇa. Then I drew this eternal mantra, together with its retinue and its limbs and sub-limbs, out of the [Atharvaveda] while it was being churned like clarified butter[46] out of thick sour milk.[47]

> I drew this six-syllable [mantra][48] out of the Atharvaveda, which is adorned with great mantras, just as the *kaustubha* [jewel was drawn] out of the ocean.[49,50]

Also Viṣṇu's other most efficacious weapons have their origin in the Atharvaveda:

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44 Another Vedic tradition whose influence can be detected in the AS is the school of the Taittirīyas belonging to the Black Yajurveda. It was already mentioned above (p. 4) that mantras of this school are treated in AS 58. One link between the Taittirīya branch and the Atharvaveda is the Mahānārāyaṇopaniṣad; both traditions possess recensions of this text and the AS borrows from it in its chapter 37 (see Oberhammer 2004: 120–121 and 2007: 675–677).

45 Also AS 12.9d explicitly states that the Atharvaveda has five *śākhā*s (*pañca śākhā atharvaṇām*). Traditional reports list nine *śākhā*s of the Atharvaveda, of which two are extant today (see e. g. Bloomfield 1899: 11–15). It is not clear what the AS means by five *śākhā*s or whether the number five should be considered a reference to the tradition's name, Pāñcarātra.

46 Actually clarified butter (*ghṛta*) is not directly churned from milk or sour milk, but is prepared from butter.

47 AS 20.21c–24b: *atharvāṅgiraso nāma pañca śākhā mahāmune* || 21 *tāsu tv antarhito divyaḥ kṛtānto mantrarāṭ svayam* | *mayā tretāyugādau tu taptvā varṣāyutaṃ tapaḥ* || 22 *divyāt saṃkarṣaṇādeśāt parameṇa samādhinā* | *sarva ātharvaṇo vedo mathitas tu śanaiḥ śanaiḥ* || 23 *mathyamānāt tatas tasmād dadhno ghṛtam ivoddhṛtaḥ* | *mantro 'yaṃ saparīvāraḥ sāṅgopāṅgaḥ sanātanaḥ* || 24.

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

49 This comparison refers to the myth of the churning of the milk-ocean during which, among other things, Viṣṇu's jewel was drawn out of the milk-ocean; see, e. g., MBh 1.16.35.

50 AS 42.4: *ātharvaṇān mayā vedān mahāmantrapariṣkṛtāt* | *samuddhṛtaḥ ṣaḍarṇo 'yaṃ kaustubhaḥ sāgarād iva* ||. Cf. also AS 44.14 and 43.6–10 which describe how Ahirbudhnya goes to the peak of Meru and reflects on how to destroy evildoers. A strong light appears, Śiva recites an *ātharvaṇa mantra*, and then he is able to perceive Sudarśana in the light. It is quite possible that also here what is meant is the *sudarśanamantra*.

(...) with regard to the very fortunate multitude of offensive and defensive weapons that are settled in the Atharvaveda (...)[51]
(...) [the weapons] that are hymns of the Atharvaveda and those coming from other mantras, which are all-efficacious, offensive and defensive (...)[52]

Echoing a passage from the Nārāyaṇīya, AS 11.20 describes the original teaching (śāstra) of the Pāñcarātra as "'liked' (juṣṭa) by the hymns of the Ṛg, Yajur, Sāma [and] Aṅgira Atharva[veda]",[53] and a passage in the subsequent chapter explains why the Atharvaveda belongs to Vedic orthodoxy. In early times the Atharvaveda was not accepted as a Veda by the orthodox.[54] Even as late as the time of the composition of the AS, this is reflected by the use of the term *trayī*, "triad", for the Vedas:

Among these [teachings] the one made of the triad is the first form, which teaches all objects. It is called "triad" as it has the form of the Ṛg, Yajur and Sāma[veda] hymns. Although it is a triad on account of different purposes, it is approved as fourfold, namely as Ṛg, Yajur, Sāma and Atharvaveda hymns, because a sacrifice performed by four priests is predominant. The triad is the triad of Ṛg[veda] and the others. The complete form of the Atharvaveda hymns has the nature of hymns of the [Ṛg] and the Yajur[veda]. Nevertheless they are separated because of the predominance of pacification rituals (śānti) and black magic (abhicāra) [in these hymns].[55]

Moreover, according to the AS it is not necessary to undergo the ritual initiation (dīkṣā) that is characteristic for the Pāñcarātra in order to receive a mantra. In addition to an initiation that is performed only mentally, a saṃskāra – probably an initiation ritual (upanayana) is meant[56] – according to the prescriptions of the Atharvaveda is mentioned as an alternative:

Then, having the [initiand] who serves the teacher initiated by means of a [ritual] initiation or having him made a worthy person (pātra) [only] by means of thought or having

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51 AS 1.5bcd: (...) *ātharvaṇavinirṇaye | mahodaye 'strasaṃghe ca pravartakanivartake || 5.*
52 AS 1.56c–57b: *atharvāṅgiraso* (v.l. ms. J, ed. *atharvāṅgirasā*) *ye te ye te mantrāntarodbhavāḥ || 56 sarvakāryakarā ye te pravartakanivartakāḥ |.*
53 AS 11.20cd: *ṛgyajuḥsāmabhir juṣṭam aṅgirobhir atharvabhiḥ ||.* Cf. MBh 12.322.37cd: *ṛgyajuḥsāmabhir juṣṭam atharvāṅgirasais tathā ||.*
54 According to Witzel 1986: 65, n. 4, the Atharvaveda was accepted by the brahmins only since the time of the late Brāhmaṇas.
55 AS 12.5–8b: *tatra trayīmayaṃ rūpam ādyaṃ sarvārthadarśanam* (corr., ed. *sarvārthadaśanam*) *| ṛgyajuḥsāmarūpatvāt trayī sā parikīrtitā || 5 kāryabhedāt trayītve 'pi caturdhā sā prakīrtitā | ṛco yajūṃṣi sāmāni hy atharvāṅgirasas tathā || 6 cāturhotrapradhānatvād ṛgāditritayaṃ trayī | atharvāṅgirasāṃ rūpaṃ sarvam ṛgyajuṣātmakam || 7 tathāpi śāntyābhicāraprādhānyāt te pṛthakkṛtāḥ |.*
56 Prescriptions for an initiation ritual according to the Atharvaveda can be found in Kauśikasūtra 55–57.

consecrated (*saṃskṛtya*) him with mantras by means of a *saṃskāra* from the Atharvaveda, the teacher should teach him this mantra.[57]

There is yet more that reveals a heavy influence of the Atharvaveda in the AS, namely, the fact that personal priests (*purodhas, purohita*) are ascribed a prominent role.

It was already mentioned above that the rituals described in the AS mainly served kings and their purposes. These rituals were usually not performed by the kings themselves, but by their personal priests. The AS contains a series of narratives reporting how kings who find themselves in a particular state of emergency – as for example, being tormented by demons, after having committed a crime, or finding their kingdom in danger of decline – could overcome these problems by means of the *sudarśanamantra* and achieve new success. However, this is not done directly, but through the medium of personal priests. It is personal priests who tell the kings that the *sudarśanamantra* is the means for overcoming their state of emergency and who perform the appropriate rituals.[58] Thus personal priests are in a very strong position: the ups and downs of kings are dependent on them. Due to this importance, there are several passages in the AS that describe the ideal qualities of a personal priest. Also emphasized is the indispensability of personal priests and their importance for the king:

> What will you not accomplish after having found the personal priest Kratu? (60cd) The well-versed sage is the best among all ascetics. Tranquil, restrained, pure, fortunate, truthful, firm in resolution, (61) knowing the *dharma*, knowing all teachings, learned in all rituals, eagerly engaged in rituals, possessed of virtue, constantly sacrificing, healthy, (62) devoted to compassion, neutral to all [beings], attentive, having a good fate, very distinguished, steadfast, honored by kings, (63) always liked by everybody, devoted to the supreme person, conversant with the six *dharmas* of the guilds,[59] learned in polity, (64) pitiful, well-born, a *sādhaka* who knows all mantras,[60] and endowed with other good qualities, such is the personal priest (*purohita*) declared. (65) Endowed with such qualities is Kratu himself, having no superior just like Bṛhaspati.[61] Perform all rituals with him,

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57 AS 20.47–48b: *dīkṣayā dīkṣayitvātha pātrayitvāthavā dhiyā | saṃskāreṇātharvaṇena yad vā saṃskṛtya mantrataḥ || 47 mantro 'yam upadeṣṭavyo guruṇā gurusevinaḥ |.*

58 For summaries of these narratives, see Schrader 1916: 132–141. See also Rastelli 2015 and forthcoming a.

59 For the term *samayadharma* as the "code of ethics and conduct prescribed for" "socio-religious and economic congregations of the guild" see Kanaka Durga 2001: 152 and 160. It is unclear what kind of particular *samayadharma* the number six refers to.

60 I.e. a *sādhaka* who has mastered all mantras. For the *sādhaka* as a particular grade of initiation and his characteristics, see Rastelli 2000.

61 Bṛhaspati is the *purohita* of the gods; see Sörensen 1904 s.v. Bṛhaspati.

Maṇiśekhara." (66) (...) He gave the supreme six-syllable *sudarśanamantra*, which bestows the four ends of human life[62] as a result, to the two (i. e. the king and his personal priest). (74bcd) "Accomplish what you desire with this [mantra] just by means of this personal priest, because only a personal priest accomplishes the visible and invisible aims of kings (75) at the installation, ritual worship, etc., of especially this deity. All defectiveness of the [king] is caused by a fault of the personal priest, (76) [and] the same is true for the excellence of the king in [his] duties, o king. [Whatever] may be performed by other personal priests, that may also be performed by him.[63]

Listen, if the king cannot perform [a ritual], a skillful personal priest should perform [it]. Only he is the king's entire property in effecting invisible aims. (3) Acting according to the *dharma*, perfect with regard to Vedic learning, well-conducted, truthful, pure, well-born, free of self-conceit, patient, having a good memory, powerful, (4) knowing the divisions of space and time, an astrologer, unwearied, invincible, careful, bountiful, learned in polity, (5) knowing the means and the end, a counsellor/one who has mastered the mantras, constantly sacrificing, free of desire, knowing fate, speaking kindly, belonging to the Veda, endowed with [the quality] *sattva*, a lord, (6) a devotee of Viṣṇu, an ascetic, knowing the rituals, eagerly engaged in rituals, faultless, wishing the acquisition of good and the abandonment of evil, generally esteemed by kings, (7) such a personal priest who is competent for [being] a *guru* for kings is difficult to find, because such a [personal priest] is able to keep back a stream of evils for kings. (8) Therefore only this [personal priest] is entitled to the method of protecting kings. A king who has a *guru* of such a kind can become a universal ruler (*samrāj*), (9) live long, be without enemies, healthy, [and] a slayer of hostile heroes, because with regard to him no pains such as drought, etc., arise. (10) [If] the king were to have a *guru* or personal priest who is different than that, [this] would undoubtedly be unfavorable for the king.[64]

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62 I.e. *dharma, artha, kāma,* and *mokṣa,* cf., e. g., Apte 1957 s.v. *caturvarga.*

63 AS 33.60c–66 and 74b–77: *kratuṃ purohitaṃ labdhvā bhavataḥ kiṃ na setsyati* || 60 *anūcāno muniḥ śreyān sarveṣāṃ ca tapasvinām* | *śānto dāntaḥ śuciḥ śrīmān satyavādī dṛḍhavrataḥ* || 61 *dharmajñaḥ sarvaśāstrajñaḥ sarvakarmasu kovidaḥ* | *karmaṭhaḥ śīlasampanno yāyajūko nirāmayaḥ* || 62 *kṛpānuraktaḥ sarveṣu samabuddhiḥ samādhimān* | *daiṣṭikaḥ paramodāro dhṛtimān rājasatkṛtaḥ* || 63 *sarvair anumataḥ śaśvad bhaktimān puruṣottame* | *ṣaṇṇāṃ samayadharmāṇām abhijño nayakovidaḥ* || 64 *dayālur abhijātaś ca sādhakaḥ sarvamantravit* | *anyaiś ca sadguṇair yuktaḥ purohita iti smṛtaḥ* || 65 *īdṛśo 'yaṃ kratuḥ sākṣād bṛhaspatir ivāparaḥ* | *anena sarvakāryāṇi kuruṣva maṇiśekhara* || 66 (...) *ṣaḍvarṇaṃ mantram uttamam* | *saudarśanaṃ tayoḥ prādāc caturvargaphala- pradam* || 74 *anena sādhayābhīṣṭam etenaiva purodhasā* | *purodhā eva rājñāṃ hi dṛṣṭādṛṣṭārthasādhakaḥ* || 75 *viśeṣeṇāsya devasya pratiṣṭhārādhanādiṣu* | *vaiguṇyam asya tat sarvam aparādhāt purodhasaḥ* || 76 *tathā sādguṇyam asyaiva rājñaḥ kāryeṣu bhūpate* | *anyaiḥ paurodhasaiḥ kāryaṃ kāryam etasya tac ca vai* || 77.

64 AS 46.3–11: *śṛṇu rājā na cet kuryāt purodhāḥ kurutāt kṛtī* | *sa eva rājñaḥ sarvasvam adṛṣṭārthopapādane* || 3 *dhārmikaḥ śrutisampannaḥ suśīlaḥ satyavāk śuciḥ* | *abhijāto 'nahaṃkāras titikṣuḥ smṛtimān vaśī* || 4 *deśakālavibhāgajñaḥ śāstradṛṣṭir atandritaḥ* | *apradhṛṣyo 'pramādī ca vadānyo nayakovidaḥ* || 5 *upāyopeyavin mantrī yāyajūko hy alolupaḥ* | *daivavit priyavādī ca vaidikaḥ sattvavān prabhuḥ* || 6 *viṣṇubhaktas tapasvī ca kāryavit karmaṭho 'naghaḥ* | *hitāhitāptihānecchur nṛpāṇāṃ sarvasammataḥ* || 7 *īdṛśo durlabho rājñāṃ gurukalpaḥ purohitaḥ* | *īdṛśo hi kṣamo rājñām aghaughavinivāraṇe* || 8 *ataḥ sa eva rājñāṃ hi rakṣāvidhim athārhati* | *evaṃvidho gurur yasya sa samrāḍ nṛpatir bhavet* || 9 *dīrghāyur niḥsapatnaḥ syād*

Knowing thoroughly all principles and objects, conversant with all branches of knowledge, (10cd) not failing [in the performance] of regular [rites] and [rites] that are to be performed on particular occasions, esteemed by pure families, being pure in three aspects,[65] being free of doubts with regard to the three [traditional means of subsistence of a brahmin, namely, teaching, sacrificing for others and the acceptance of gifts], fully conversant with the prescriptions for the six acts,[66] (11) a brahmin who is a *brahmayonistha*,[67] devoted to his own wife [and] pure is entitled to Viṣṇu's supreme power of action in the form of a mantra. (12) Without being supported, a brahmin does not have the right to perform a [religious action] with it in this world. Being supported by a king, however, he can act with it for the purpose of the world, (13) because the king is the supreme being, the all-pervading one, who consists of all deities [and] the base of Viṣṇu's power of action, consisting of the venerable one.[68] (14) For once god,

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arogaḥ paravīrahā | avagrahādyā jāyante pīḍās tadviṣaye na hi || 10 taṃ vinānyo bhaved rājño gurur vātha purohitaḥ | viparītaṃ bhavet tasya mahībhartur na saṃśayaḥ || 11.

65 *triśukla* means being pure in three aspects, namely, birth (*janman*), action (*karman*) and knowledge (*vidyā*); cf. Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary ad MBh$_N$ 12.270.7.

66 The six acts are the six traditional means of subsistence of a brahmin, namely, teaching (*adhyāpana*), studying (*adhyayana*), sacrificing (*yajana*), sacrificing for others (*yājana*), giving (*dāna*) and accepting gifts (*pratigraha*) (e. g. Manu 10.74–76). *nistrisandeha* in this context means that one performs all six acts, i. e., also teaching, sacrificing for others and accepting gifts, that is, that one does not have doubts with regards to these acts; cf. Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary on the words *trisandehas trikarmakṛt* in MBh$_N$ 12.235.23: "As one is doubtful with regard to the three [acts of] teaching, sacrificing for others, and accepting gifts, not being engaged in these [acts], such is the meaning. Performing three acts [means] performing studying, sacrificing and giving." (*triṣu adhyāpanayājanapratigraheṣu saṃdehavāṃs tatrāpravṛtta ityarthaḥ. trikarmakṛt svādhyāyayajanadānakṛt*).

67 The word *brahmayonistha* can be interpreted in various ways, as can be seen in diverse commentaries. See e. g. Sarvajñanārāyaṇa ad Manu 10.74: *brahmayonisthāḥ brāhmaṇam ātāpitṛjanyāḥ*, "*brahmayonisthas*, [i. e.] those who belong to a family that is zealous with regard to the Brāhmaṇa [portion of the Veda (?)]", Kullūka ad loc.: *brahmaprāptikāraṇa-brahmadhyānaniṣṭhāḥ*, "those who adhere to meditation on *brahman*, which is the cause of the attainment of *brahman*", Rāghavānanda ad loc: *brahmayonisthā brahmayonijāḥ*, "*brahmayonisthas*, [i. e.] those who are born from the womb of a [female] brahmin", Nandana ad loc: *brahmayonir dharma iti yāvat tatrasthāḥ athavā vedasya yonitvena pravaktṛtvena sthitāḥ*, "as far as they are devoted to the *dharma* whose source is the *brahman* or those who exist as the source of the Veda, [i. e.] as a teacher [of the Veda]", Nīlakaṇṭha ad MBh$_N$ 14.38.10: *brahmayonisthā vedakāraṇe brahmaṇi niṣṭhāvantaḥ*, "*brahmayonisthas*, [i. e.] those who adhere to the *brahman* that is the cause of the Veda". It is difficult to decide which meaning is meant in the AS.

68 In the first line of AS 16.14, the king is identified with the supreme god (for the term *sarvade-vamaya* for the supreme god, see, e. g., JS 6.205, 12.26; for *vibhu* see, e. g., AS 42.31); in the second line it seems that the king is rather seen as an individual and his relation with the supreme god is described: he is the base of Viṣṇu's *kriyāśakti* on which it can become effective, and he "consists" in god, since this is generally the case with individual souls, cf. the description of the individual soul in AS 14.6: "The *puruṣa* is without beginning, cannot be limited, is made of thought and bliss, it consists just of the venerable one, is always directed towards the venerable one." (*anādir aparicchedyaś cidānandamayaḥ pumān | bhagavanmaya evāyaṃ bhagavadbhāvitaḥ sadā ||*).

the lord, created the king from [his] head.[69] Therefore the [king] is bathed on the head [for the sake of consecration and therefore] he stands above all beings. (15) In the Vedas and the Śāstras the king is praised as a double brahmin.

But one who hates him through foolishness, this blockhead hates Hari. (16) One who hates Hari through foolishness, this person hates fortune/Lakṣmī.[70] A fool who is a hater of fortune/Lakṣmī is given up in all Dharmas. (17) He is fallen from all worlds, abandoned by all deities. For eternal years he remains in unsafe blind darkness. (18) Therefore a highly intelligent [person] who wishes to attain fortune/Lakṣmī in this and the other world should highly esteem a king who is presiding over all worlds. (19)

On account of [his] excessive gentleness, fortune/Lakṣmī does not remain in a brahmin alone. On account of [his] excessive fierceness being terrified, it/she does not want to stay in a *kṣatriya* alone. (20) In a brahmin and a *kṣatriya*. together, however, whose nature consists of moon and fire, it/she dwells with excessive delight, just as at a cool lake in the hot season, (21) because both majesties (*?tejasī*)[71] together maintain the existence of the world, since the entire śakti of Viṣṇu, whose nature is action, is present at both. (22)

Because just as a *kusara* [reed] is unable to hold back a big river, a weak man is unable to hold back the power of action. (23) Just as the firm sea receives the big [river], the *kṣatriya* along with the brahmin receives the power of action. (24) A badly made pool bursts when it is filled by a big river. Nevertheless a single [pool], if it is protected, is not completely filled by it. (25) Just as other tanks close to a big river flowing into the sea are constantly exceedingly filled by moistening, (26) if the power of action is employed in a country (*cakre*) by the ruler of the country, all subjects living in [his] country prosper greatly with fortune."[72]

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69 This line is reminiscent of the Puruṣasūkta (ṚV X.90), but it has, of course, been reinterpreted for the benefit of the king. According to ṚV X.90.12, the brahmin is the mouth of the *puruṣa*; the *rājanya* (i. e. *kṣatriya*, the *varṇa* to which a king usually belongs) are made from his arms. Here, in opposition to the Puruṣasūkta, the AS clearly places the king above the brahmin.

70 *lakṣmī* here implies Viṣṇu's consort as well as (royal) fortune, which is personified by Lakṣmī and is essential for kings.

71 It is strange that both *brahma* and *kṣatra* are designated as *tejas*, although they are differentiated as moon and fire in the preceding verse.

72 AS 16.10c–27: *sarvatattvārthapārajñaḥ sarvavidyāviśāradaḥ* || 10 *askannanityanaimittaḥ śuddhābhijanasammataḥ | triśuklo nistrisaṃdehaḥ ṣaṭkarmavidhipāragaḥ* || 11 *brāhmaṇo brahmayonisthaḥ svadāraniratah śuciḥ | adhikuryāt kriyāśaktiṃ viṣṇor mantramayīṃ parām* || 12 *brāhmaṇo nānavaṣṭabdhas tayā kāryam ihārhati | avaṣṭabhya tu rājānaṃ jagato 'rthe tayā caret* || 13 *rājā hi paramaṃ bhūtaṃ sarvadevamayo vibhuḥ | kriyāśakter adhiṣṭhānaṃ vaiṣṇavyā bhagavanmayaḥ* || 14 *mūrdhato hi purā devo rājānam asṛjat prabhuḥ | mūrdhābhiṣiktas tenāsau sarvabhūtopari sthitaḥ* || 15 *dviguṇo brāhmaṇo rājā vedaśāstreṣu gīyate | yas tu taṃ dveṣṭi sammohāt sa hariṃ dveṣṭi durmatiḥ* || 16 *yo hariṃ dveṣṭi sammohāt sa lakṣmīṃ dveṣṭi mānavaḥ | lakṣmyā dveṣṭā tu durmedhāḥ sarvadharmeṣu hīyate* || 17 *sa bhraṣṭaḥ sarvalokebhyaḥ sarvadevabahiṣkṛtaḥ | apratiṣṭhe tamasy andhe samās tiṣṭhati śāśvatīḥ* || 18 *aihikāmuṣmikīṃ lakṣmīm ataḥ prepsur udāradhīḥ | rājānaṃ bahu manyeta sarvalokādhidaivatam* || 19 *brāhmaṇe kevale lakṣmīr na vasaty atimārdavāt | atyaugryād bibhyatī kṣatre kevale necchati sthitim* || 20 *brahmakṣatre tu sampṛkte hy agniṣomamayātmani | nivasaty atisamprītā grīṣme śīta iva hrade* || 21 *dve hi te bibhṛto lokasthitiṃ sambhūya tejasī | tayor hi sakalā śaktiḥ sthitā viṣṇoḥ kriyātmikā* || 22

Personal priests of kings were traditionally Atharvavedins[73] who, with their magic and healing rituals, were specialized in fulfilling kingly needs, even if sometimes this was only an ideal.[74] It is thus fitting that a text describing rituals mainly for kingly purposes contains Atharvavedic tendencies.

The redactor of the AS may have been an Atharvavedin, although one who had integrated his traditional Atharvavedic prescriptions and rituals into the tantric system of Pāñcarātra, following the spirit of the time, in which tantric rituals had replaced the traditional Vedic-orthodox ritual at royal courts.[75]

4 On the relationships between the various traditions according to the AS

In Pāñcarātra texts, influences from other systems or traditions are not rare. Special in the AS, however, is the explicit discussion of the relationship between various religious systems.[76] In addition to the Pāñcarātra, these systems are the Veda, the Sāṃkhya, the Yoga and the Pāśupata.

Through this concept the AS is referring to the Nārāyaṇīya. The text of the Nārāyaṇīya is a part of the epic Mahābhārata (MBh 12.321–339) and considered the earliest literary evidence of the Pāñcarātra (fifth century AD at the latest[77]). A number of Saṃhitās refer to the Nārāyaṇīya.[78]

The Nārāyaṇīya teaches the Sāṃkhya, the Yoga, the Pañcarātra, the Vedas and the Pāśupata as five different systems that all have Nārāyaṇa as their point of reference (*niṣṭhā*) (MBh 12.337.59–69) and that in part complement each other (MBh 12.336.76–78). The AS follows this position of the Nārāyaṇīya.

The AS explains how these systems came into existence in the following way: Immediately after god created the world, it existed in an ideal form. All beings lived according to the Dharma and attained liberation from transmigration quickly. In the

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mahatyā hi yathā nadyāḥ kusaro na dhṛteḥ kṣamam (em. *kṣamaḥ*) | *evaṃ laghur naro naiva kriyāśakter dhṛtau kṣamaḥ* || 23 *pārāvāro yathā dhīro mahatīṃ tāṃ pratīcchati* | *brahmapṛktaṃ tathā kṣatraṃ kriyāśaktiṃ pratīcchati* || 24 *pūryamāṇaṃ mahānadyā kutaṭākaṃ vidīryate* | *rakṣyamāṇas tathāpy eko naiva paryāpyate tayā* || 25 *yathā samudragāminyāṃ mahatyāṃ sariti dhruvam* | *upasnehena pūryante saraṃsy anyāni bhūyasā* || 26 *prayuktāyāṃ kriyāśaktau cakre vai cakravartinaḥ* | *cakrasthā hi prajāḥ sarvāḥ samedhante tathā śriyā* || 27.

73 Sanderson 2007: 204–208.
74 Witzel 1986: 47–48.
75 Cf. Sanderson 2007: 195 and 2004.
76 For many more details on this topic, see Leach 2012: 155–176.
77 Oberlies 1997: 78–80, 86.
78 Grünendahl 1997: 362–370.

course of time, the balance of this divine order was upset and evil beings appeared, whereby the help of Viṣṇu became necessary. Viṣṇu produced two means for destroying those who disrupt the Dharma: an array of weapons on one hand and a body of teaching (śāstra) on the other. The śāstra had a perfect form and the human beings could please the god through the practices it taught. However, in the course of time, this teaching was neglected more and more and the world became full of delusion. Thus four beings reflected on what should be done: the sages Apāntaratapas, Kapila, Hiraṇyagarbha and Paśupati, i. e. Śiva. They practiced austerity for many years. Then the supreme god, i. e., Viṣṇu, permitted them to produce their own bodies of teaching from parts of the original body of teaching. Thus Apāntaratapas created the Vedas; Kapila, the Sāṃkhya; Hiraṇyagarbha, the Yoga; and Paśupati, the Pāśupata. Viṣṇu himself created the Pāñcarātra from the essence (sāra) of the original body of teaching (AS 11.3–65b).

Just as the Nārāyaṇīya does, the AS also says that these five bodies of teaching have only a single point of reference (niṣṭhā), namely, Viṣṇu.[79] Viṣṇu assumes various forms for the followers of the various traditions and to fulfill different functions:

> The Lord alone is worshipped in the form of Śiva by Śaivas. He alone creates this aggregate of all created things whether animate or inanimate in the form of Brahmā. He alone protects it, when the tormenter of [evil] people has become Viṣṇu. He alone destroys the whole world in the form of Śiva, and as Buddha he alone is present in the world for the Buddhists.[80]

The various bodies of teaching are able to fulfill the different needs of their followers.[81] They can be a path to salvation applied in combination or separately.[82]

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79 AS 12.54: "There is, however, just one point of reference of these bodies of teaching, which are five paths. The body of teaching is Sudarśana indeed. Its meaning is the imperishable Viṣṇu." (niṣṭhā tv ekaiva śāstrāṇām eteṣāṃ pañcavartmanām | śāstraṃ sudarśanaṃ nāma tadartho viṣṇur avyayaḥ || 54).

80 AS 33.15c–17: sa eva śivarūpeṇa śaivair ārādhyate prabhuḥ || 15 sa eva brahmarūpeṇa sṛjaty etac carācaram | sa eva pālayaty etad viṣṇur bhūtvā janārdanaḥ || 16 sa eva rudrarūpeṇa saṃharaty akhilaṃ jagat | buddhātmanā ca bauddhānāṃ sa eva jagati sthitaḥ || 17. Cf. also AS 8.1–28, which explains how the various systems came into existence.

81 AS 13.30–31: "For the appearance of the welfare of the worlds, in order to diminish crimes, [and] in order to make those who are set in motion by passion and hatred to attain manifold results, similar to the teaching of the Āyurveda, Dharmas that are differentiated on account of various restraints and manifold thoughts are enjoined by the [various] bodies of teaching." (hitapravṛtter lokānāṃ tanūkārāya pāpmanām | rāgadveṣaprayuktānām āyurvedopadeśavat || 30 nānārūpaphalāvāptyai nānāniyamabheditāḥ | śāstrair dharmā vidhīyante nānārūpā dhiyas tathā || 31).

82 AS 14.38c–41: "(...) segregating the essence from everything, aggregating the highest understanding, being intent on Sāṃkhya and Yoga, being himself attached to good works, observing

This could almost give the impression that all five systems are considered equivalent, but the redactor of the AS does not go quite that far. Just as in the end it is always Viṣṇu who is considered the point of reference in all of these systems, the Pāñcarātra is the uppermost of all five systems. Changing from one of the four other systems to the Pāñcarātra is considered an advancement.[83] As great as the AS's redactor's esteem of the other systems is, in the end these always remain subordinate to the Pāñcarātra.

5 Concluding remarks

What is the basis of this apparently liberal attitude towards other systems? An important reason is the one already mentioned, namely, that the AS follows the Nārāyaṇīya in the position that all five systems have Viṣṇu as their point of reference. The Nārāyaṇīya is an important source for many Saṃhitās, but this does not mean that all Saṃhitās follow the Nārāyaṇīya in every aspect. The syncretistic attitude that can be observed in the AS is not found to this extent in any other Saṃhitā.[84] So there must be further reasons why the AS emphasizes this position of the Nārāyaṇīya.

These reasons may have been political and economic. It was mentioned that the redactor of the AS was probably an Atharvavedin who was also a Pāñcarātrin. It is possible that he was even a personal priest (*purohita*) of a king; personal priests are at least one target audience of his text.

In early times, Vedic-orthodox brahmins performed the religious rituals of Indian kings, for example, the extensive Vedic Śrauta rituals and of course the

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fierce austerities, possessing knowledge, being steady with regard to the knowledge of the Vedānta, being perfectly certain, he arrives at Viṣṇu's place by means of these paths, combined or separately, with great pain. Having gained fullness of knowledge having purified his mind, he then enters Viṣṇu's pure, painless abode." (*vicinvan sarvataḥ sāram upacinvan parāṃ dhiyam* || 38 *sāṃkhyayogasamāveśī satkarmaniratah svayam | ugravratadharo jñānī vedāntajñānaniścalaḥ* || 39 *saṃhatair vigṛhītaiś ca mārgair ebhiḥ suniścayaiḥ* (em. *suniścayaḥ*) | *kleśena mahatā sthānam vaiṣṇavaṃ pratipadyate* || 40 *samprāpya jñānabhūyastvaṃ nirmalīkṛtacetanaḥ | anāvilam asaṃkleśam vaiṣṇavaṃ tad viśet padam* || 41).

83 Cf. AS 15.21c–22: "Only those who follow the triad [of the Vedas] are successful also in the three [other] systems of Sāṃkhya, etc. If they wish, they also ascend to the supreme Sātvata-teaching." (*trayīsthā eva sidhyanti sāṃkhyādiṣv api ca triṣu* || 21 *ārohantīcchayā te 'pi sāttvataṃ śāsanam param* |).

84 An exception is the Lakṣmītantra. Cf. Leach 2012: 162–176, who describes the similarities between the AS and the Lakṣmītantra in this respect.

Gṛhya rituals. In the early medieval period, from about the fifth to the thirteenth century AD, we observe a decrease in the performance of Vedic Śrauta rituals in the religious ceremonies of Indian rulers, and Tantric rituals becoming more popular.[85] This means that on one hand followers of the Tantric traditions took over the performance of royal rituals, and on the other, that traditional brahmins, as for example Atharvavedins, adapted their rituals to accommodate this trend.[86] An example for the latter type of brahmin could be the *purohita* of the AS: a personal priest who performs rituals for a king, oriented toward the Atharvaveda on one hand and Tantric streams on the other, thereby satisfying the trends of his time.

However, not all Tantric traditions were the same at that time. Within the Tantric traditions it was the Śaivas who had the greatest influence at the Indian courts. The Pāñcarātra and Tantric Buddhism essentially emulated Tantric Śaivism in order to gain influence there as well.[87]

Thus the redactor of the AS faced a major competitor in the form of Tantric Śaivism. In this situation, it was probably not easy to censure Śaivism and present the Pāñcarātra as the better alternative. Obviously it was easier to integrate Śaivism into the redactor's own tradition in an inclusivistic manner.

The Pāñcarātra, relying in part on the Atharvaveda according to the AS's point of view, always remained the supreme point of reference. But the worship of the furious deity Sudarśana instead of the gentle Viṣṇu and the inclusion of Śiva, who was more familiar to some kings, as the transmitter of these rituals and teachings perhaps gave some rulers the impression of it being a better means for accommodating their needs than the "classical Pāñcarātra" would have been.

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85 Sanderson 2009: 41.
86 Cf. Sanderson 2007: 195–196.
87 Cf. the important paper Sanderson 2009 on "The Śaiva Age".

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ṚV   Ṛgveda. Die Hymnen des Ṛigveda. Hg. von Th. Aufrecht. 2 Bde. (*Indische Studien. Beiträge für die Kunde des indischen Alterthums* 6, 7). Berlin 1861, 1863, Hildesheim, New York 1973 (repr.).

KauśSū   Kauśikasūtra. The Kāuçika-Sūtra of the Atharva-Veda with Extracts from the Commentaries of Dārila and Keçava. Ed. by Maurice Bloomfield. Baltimore 1889.

JS   Jayākhyasaṃhitā. Jayākhyasaṃhitā. Crit. Ed. with an Introduction in Sanskrit, Indices etc. by Embar Krishnamacharya. (*Gaekwad's Oriental Series* 54). Baroda 1931.

PādS   Pādmasaṃhitā. Padma Samhita. Crit. Ed. by Seetha Padmanabhan and R.N. Sampath (part I), Seetha Padmanabhan and V. Varadachari (part II). (*Pāñcarātra Pariśodhanā Pariṣad Series* 3, 4). Madras 1974, 1982.

ParS   Paramasaṃhitā. Paramasaṃhitā [of the Pāñcharātra]. Ed. and translated into English with an introduction by S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar. (*Gaekwad's Oriental Series* 86). Baroda 1940.

PārS   Pārameśvarasaṃhitā. Pārameśvarasaṃhitā Govindācāryaiḥ saṃskṛtā, anekavidhā-darśādibhiḥ saṃyojitā ca. Śrīraṅgam 1953.

MatsyaP Matsyapurāṇa. Śrīmaddvaipāyanamunipraṇītaṃ Matsyapurāṇam. etat pustakam Ānandāśramasthapaṇḍitaiḥ saṃśodhitam. (*Ānandāśramaḥ saṃskṛtagranthāvaliḥ* 54). Poona 1907.

Manu   Manusmṛti. Mānava-Dharma Śāstra [Institutes of Manu], with the Commentaries of Medhátithi, Sarvañanáráyaṇa, Kúllúka, Rághavánanda, Nandana, and Rámachandra and an Appendix by Vishvanáth Náráyan Mandlik. Bombay 1886.

MārkP   Mārkaṇḍeyapurāna. (Veda-vyāsapraṇīta) Śrīmārkaṇḍeya purāṇa bhāṣā ṭīkā sahita jisko aneka pustakoṃ ke racayitā B. Vṛndāvanadāsa ne bahut śuddha aur sarala hindī bhāṣā meṃ anuvādita kiyā. Mathura 1941.

MBh   Mahābhārata. The Mahābhārata for the First Time Crit. Ed. by Vishnu S. Sukthankar, S.K. Belvalkar et al. 19 vols. Poona 1933–1966.

MBh$_N$ Mahābhārata. The Mahābhārata with the Bharata Bhawadeepa Commentary of Nīlkaṇṭha ed. by Ramchandrashastri Kinjawadekar. 6 vols. New Delhi ²1979.

LiṅgaP   Liṅgapurāṇa. Liṅgapurāṇam Jivānanda Vidyāsāgara Bhaṭṭācāryyeṇa saṃskṛtam prakāśitañ ca. Calcutta 1885.

LT   Lakṣmītantra. Lakṣmī-Tantra. A Pāñcarātra Āgama. Ed. with Sanskrit Gloss and Introduction by V. Krishnamacharya. (*The Adyar Library Series* 87). Madras 1959, 1975 (repr.).

ViṣṇuP Viṣṇupurāṇa. The Critical Edition of the Viṣṇupurāṇam. 2 vols. Crit. ed. by M.M. Pathak. Vadodara 1997, 1999.

ŚivaP   Śivapurāṇa. Śivamahāpurāṇam. Published by Khemraj Shrikrishnadas. Bombay 1965.

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