

RUDRA MAHĀVĪRA: VRĀTYA-ELEMENTS IN THE VEDIC PRAVARGYA-COMPLEX

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This study reviews the arguments of previous publications, and adds new ones, for establishing connections between the Vedic *pravargya*-complex (the rituals, stanzas, and mythology of the *pravargya*), the *vrātya*, and the deity Rudra. These connections include Rudra as Mahāvīra (the epithet given to a deity and a vessel in the *pravargya*), the *sattra* setting of the *pravargya*'s paradigm-myth, the motif of the unstrung bow, the theme of exclusion, and the divinisation of man as a goal of the ritual. It is argued that the superhuman status attributed to Mahāvīra is comparable with that of characters celebrated in the Ṛgveda and Atharvaveda, such as the *ekavrātya*, *brahmacārin*, and *keśin*. The affinity between these figures may be derived from a common ideology, with the roots of some of them to be sought in the Indo-European warrior-society and male *rites de passage*.

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the study is to review the connections already identified by scholars, and to establish new ones, between the Vedic *pravargya*-complex, the *vrātya*, and the deity Rudra.¹ Inspiration for this undertaking comes from recent studies on *vrātyas*, which have deepened our understanding of the subject and raised new questions. The study is based on the reading of Sanskrit texts, mainly from the Vedic period, but also includes passages from the great epics and Purāṇas.

The study is structured as follows: Parts 2 and 3 provide an overview of the most important findings of previous scholarship on *pravargya* and the *vrātya*, and how the two subjects may be linked together. Parts 4 to 8 discuss the “paradigm-myth” about the origins of *pravargya*, making use of all the versions of this myth that I am aware of in the texts and comparing the myth with some Indo-European (Hellenic and Germanic) material. Particular attention is given to Rudra and the mythological material which links him to *pravargya*. Part 9 deals with the concept of Mahāvīra and how it relates to a type of heroic-ascetic person endowed with superhuman powers, found in the Ṛg- and Atharva-Vedas. The results are summarised in Part 10, regarding to what extent they differ from or confirm past contributions to this field of study.

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2. OVERVIEW OF THE *PRAVARGYA*-COMPLEX AND THEORIES ABOUT ITS DEVELOPMENT

Different aspects of the classical *pravargya* ritual have attracted the interest of scholars for some time now, not least because of its ancient origins, unusual character, and secrecy (Houben 1991: ix; van Buitenen 1968: 38). In Julius Eggeling's (1900: xlvi) words: "Whilst the central feature of this sacrificial performance consists of a ceremony of an apparently simple and unpretending character [...] the whole rite is treated with a considerable amount of mystic solemnity calculated to impart to it an air of unusual significance". There is more to the *pravargya* than just the classical ritual, however; under the umbrella-term "the *pravargya*-complex", I include the following:

- The simple *gharma*-offering referred to in early Vedic texts.
- The elaborate, classical *pravargya* ritual described in later Vedic texts.
- The *avāntaradīkṣā* (initiation) of the *pravargya*-student in later Vedic texts.
- *Pravargya*-related stanzas in the RV-, Śaunakīya-, and Paippalāda-Saṃhitās.
- *Pravargya*-related mythology in Vedic and post-Vedic texts.

The central object of the classical *pravargya* is a clay vessel, which is filled with hot milk and *ghī*. The vessel is lauded as Mahāvīra 'great hero' and *samrāt* 'supreme ruler' when it undergoes apotheosis through heating. Both the Kaṭha and the Taittirīya schools of Yajurveda have placed their chapters on the *pravargya* in their secret Āraṇyakas 'wilderness/forest-books', to be studied only far away from the village and people.² The Ṛgvedasaṃhitā (RVS) refers numerous times to *gharmá* 'warm' – the offering of hot milk, which forms the central part of the later, classical *pravargya* – and to *pra-√VRJ*, from which the term *pravargya* 'set apart' is derived.³ In the earliest texts, the *gharma/pravargya* appears to be an independent ritual undertaken in the early morning (RVS 5.76.1; cf. Āpastambaśrautasūtra 15.18.13; Lüders 1959: 361; Oberlies 2012: 465), but it had definitely become a part of the *soma*-sacrifice at the time of the systematisation of the Vedic *śrauta* ritual (Witzel 1997), where it appears as a voluntary, ancillary ritual in the *somayāga*, performed in the morning and the evening.

Performed on the *upasad*-days preceding the pressing-day, the *pravargya* ritual takes three or more days to complete. It can be divided into the following main events: 1. Making of three Mahāvīra vessels, though only one of them is heated and used in the offering. The vessels are about a span in height, made from baked clay and a few other ingredients. 2. Heating of the main Mahāvīra, filled with *ghī*, in a fire; praising the Mahāvīra as it undergoes apotheosis. 3. Milking of a she-goat and a cow, followed by the pouring of mixed milk into the hot Mahāvīra, which causes a pillar of fire, several metres high, to arise from the vessel. 4. Offering of the hot milk for the Aśvins, poured from the Mahāvīra into the *āhavanīya*-fire. After an *agnihotra*-offering to the *devas*, the remnants are consumed by the participant(s). 5. Disposal of the sacrificial instruments by placing them on the *uttaravedi* in the shape of a man with the three vessels as the head. Over the course of the following year, the sacrificer adheres to special rules.

² The Ṛgvedic Aitareya and Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇas treat *pravargya* in their sections on *soma* rituals.

³ Meaning 'set apart (before the main ritual)', or it could be a secondary derivative from *pravargá* 'belonging to an excellent, secluded class' (Houben 2007; see also Oberlies 2012: 283). Witzel (2004: xxix) instead suggests 'the one to be turned towards (the fire)'.

J.A.B. van Buitenen (1968) writes that one can detect the coalescence of two distinct rituals in the *pravargya*. One is the simple ritual, referred to in the ṚV-, Śaunakīya- and Paippalāda-Saṃhitās, of offering hot milk to the Aśvins – the twin-deities associated with dawn and sunlight. The other is the elaborate making and adoration of the clay vessel for the strengthening of the Sun before the monsoon, and for regeneration. According to van Buitenen (1968: 38–41), who could not detect any “mystique” in the references to the *gharma*-offering in the earliest texts, it was probably increasing ritual complexity that turned the simple milk-offering into an arcane ritual,⁴ as is also shown by the *avāntaradīkṣā*.

Jan Houben (1991: 3, 29, 31) has argued that the two constituents of what is called *pravargya* in later texts formed a single rite already at the time of the ṚVS (cf. Kashikar 1973), and that the earliest attestable form of the ritual are to be sought in the Atri clan, whose members composed book 5 of ṚVS; the ritual then supposedly spread to other families. Houben (2000a: 17; 2010: 98–99) reconstructs three stages of development of *gharma/pravargya* in ṚVS:

- I. References to a mythical, pre-Atri origin of *gharma*. The seer Atri is said to have received *gharma* from the Aśvins. Houben (2000a: 19–20) suggests that the *gharma*-offering originates in the *prṣātaka*, a simple offering of milk and *ghī* (and honey) referred to in the Gṛhyasūtras, which the Atri clan modified into the *gharma*-offering.
- II. References to the “developed ritual” in ṚVS 5, composed by the Atri clan. A metal vessel can be used and then given away.⁵ The ritual is already associated with the *soma*-offering.
- III. References to the *gharma/pravargya* in texts produced by other clans, to whom it has spread from the Atri clan. Made of clay, the vessel is solemnly prepared and disposed of. The ritual is associated with the *soma*-offering, but also with a horse-sacrifice and a possible precursor of the classical *pravargya*’s *avāntaradīkṣā* (ṚVS 7.103, 1.164). According to Houben (2000b: 17), the late ṚVS-form of *pravargya* is “already quite similar” to that of the Śrautasūtras, but it “still had to undergo a transformation” from a ritual form dominated by the ṚVS to one dominated by the Yajurveda.

In short, the development of the *gharma/pravargya* is not entirely clear. Are the secretive-initiatory elements an addition to the *pravargya* or have they been part of it since the earliest times? Why are these elements found in the ritual? Can we detect influences from different social and religious milieus in the *pravargya*-complex? My own take on the subject, based on the existence of links between *pravargya*, *vrātya*, and Rudra, is given in the conclusion of this survey.

3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON *VRĀTYAS* AND POSSIBLE CONNECTIONS WITH THE *PRAVARGYA*

The Vedic term *vrātya* may come from *vrāta* ‘group, troop’ and/or be related to *vrata* ‘vow, religious observance’, and designates a person standing “outside” the Vedic-Brahmanic socio-ritual community ruled by *patres familias*. The outsiderhood of the *vrātyas* has been interpreted in different ways: as an Indo-Āryan, non-Vedic-Brahmanic, cultic community (Hauer 1927), as

4 “My suggestion will be that the hot milk offering became combined with a ceremonial involving preparation, heating, worship and disposal of an artifact [...], and that it was this ceremonial which made the simple milk offering an *āraṇyaka*” (van Buitenen 1968: 5).

5 According to Witzel (2004: lv) the clay vessel is a Kuru innovation and archaizing of the ritual, to make it look more ancient, since the vessel is metallic in ṚVS 5.30.15.

an organisation of young men (a brotherhood, sodality, or warrior-society),⁶ or as evidence of a more ancient sacrificial system in which men altered between a settled lifestyle and seasonal warrior/*vrātya*-expeditions (Heesterman 1962). *Vrātyas* appear as members of a troop of consecrated peers (*sattrins*) performing a collective ritual (what became the classical Vedic *vrātyastoma* and *sattra*).⁷

In two recent volumes edited by Tiziana Pontillo et al. (2015; 2016; see also af Edholm 2017), “*vrātya* culture” is described as the culture of an agonistic, mobile, and militant tribal society, characterised by an age-set system and cyclical alteration between a settled lifestyle and expeditions, which Jan Heesterman and others have outlined. *Vrātya* culture contains elements prominent in pre-Kuru Vedic culture, which were later marginalised and silently absorbed when the single RVS was created. Traces of this alternative, Indo-Āryan society are thought to be found in the R̥V-, Śaunakīya- and Paippalāda-Saṃhitās, the Mahābhārata, et cetera (Pontillo et al. 2015: 2). The *vrātya* occupies a sphere which corresponds to what Vedic ritual texts refer to as “belonging to the wilderness” (*āraṇya*). Features which scholars associate with *vrātya* culture, based on the Vedic texts, include the following:

- Rudra, the Rudras (including the Maruts), and Indra as central deities.
- Rituals performed by a group (*vrātyastoma*, *sattra*) with a leader (*gr̥hapati*, *sthapati*), who is *primus inter pares*.
- References to activities typical of a warrior-society and sodality, such as seasonal expeditions or raids and time spent in the men’s house (*sabhā*).
- Use of specific gear: bow and arrows, black garments or animal-skins, et cetera.
- A “sort of heroic asceticism aimed at god-like status” (Pontillo 2016: 210).

Connections between *pravargya* and *vrātya* have been suggested by several scholars, beginning with J.W. Hauer’s landmark-study on the *vrātya* (1927). Hauer drew attention to similarities in attributes and equipment for the *vrātyastoma* leader, the Mahāvīra vessel, and Rudra. Hauer also saw the Atharvavedic *ekavrātya* ‘single/unique *vrātya*’ as the expression of a Vedic type of Rudraic divinised person (see Part 9).

More recently, Tiziana Pontillo (2019) has suggested a connection between the mystic speculation on *pravargya* in a late R̥V hymn (10.181) and the *vrātya*’s aim of divinisation (the concept of *devayāna pathin*; see Pontillo & Dore 2016: 22–25). And in a study on the ritual contexts of *sattra*-myths, Kyoko Amano has argued that the Maitrāyaṇī-, Taittirīya- and Kāṭha-Saṃhitās, as well as their Brāhmaṇas, contain “non-orthodox” influences, that is, *vrātya*-influences, which contrast with the “orthodox *śrauta* ritual” in the Yajurvedic Saṃhitā period. An orthodox *śrauta* ritual is defined as a ritual whose core act is the offering of oblations along

6 Many pre-modern cultures had organisations of men, often referred to by scholars as “Männerbünde”, which functioned as preparation for their recognition as grown male members of society. The phenomenon of “Männerbund” cannot be strictly defined and covers a spectrum of groups and organisations for men: warrior-bands, fraternities, secret societies, and so on (Sundqvist & Hultgård 2004: 5). Among many Indo-European tribes, young men seem to have engaged in brotherhoods of a lycanthropic character (Falk 1986; McCone 1987; Kershaw 2000). Selva (2019: Appendix I) distinguishes between “Jugendbund” (an Indo-European institution concerned with the education of boys, originally an age-set) and “Gefolgschaft” (“an evolution of the Jugendbund in which admission was not restricted to initiated boys”, but also included marginalised categories of adults); *vrātya*-sodalities included both types.

7 See references in Falk 1986: 30–31; Pontillo 2016: 207; af Edholm 2017. Harry Falk (1986: 31) suggests that both *sattra* and *vrātyastoma* originate in the warrior-society – *vrātya* and *sattrin* being one and the same person at different ritual stages.

with the recitation of ṛc-verses by the *hotṛ*, for the benefit of the sacrificer (*yajamāna*) (Amano 2016: 35). One such *vrātya*-influenced passage is Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā 4.5.9, which gives a version of the *pravargya*'s paradigm-myth, dealt with in Part 4.

In his work on Ṛgvedic religion, Thomas Oberlies (2012: 153, 283–289) attempts to connect the *pravargya* with a reconstructed, early Vedic form of initiation for boys, which influenced both the *pravargya*-complex and the classical *upanayana* (a *rite de passage* for Āryan boys). This line of thought is continued by Frank Köhler in one of the recent studies on *vrātyas*. Köhler suggests that the RVS's predecessor of the *pravargya* may have developed from an initiation ritual, the preparation of which seems to have included the crafting of poetry (see Krick 1982: 5; Falk 1986), which is one of the *vrātya*'s arts. A connection between *pravargya* and the *vrātya* may be established via *sattra* as a *vrātya* ritual (Köhler 2016: 172; see also Amano 2016), but Köhler himself presents two objections to this:

1. There must be a probability that the mythical origin of *pravargya* within a *sattra*-narrative is not merely the secondary explanation by *śrauta*-experts, but carries some historical truth. However, it does seem to be a secondary explanation (Köhler 2016: 172–173).
2. The “Frog hymn” (RVS 7.103) mentions the *gharma*-offering and compares the sound of frogs at the beginning of the rains with *brāhmaṇas* beginning to speak after their year-long vow (*vratā*), which may be analogous to the *avāntaradīkṣā* in later texts (van Buitenen 1968: 31).⁸ The Frog hymn plays an important role in Oberlies' theory, but since it refers to the elaborate *soma* ritual it “cannot be taken as pointing towards a stage prior to its Ṛgvedic form” (Köhler 2016: 173). If the *gharma*-offering originates in the Atri clan, as Houben (2000a: 19–20) has suggested, who based it on the *prṣātaka*-offering, the development of the *pravargya* “can be explained without resorting to the concept of orthodoxy or the like” (Köhler 2015: 361); there is, therefore, no original connection with the *sattra* ritual or the *vrātya* (Köhler 2016: 173).

The doubts voiced by Köhler have to be balanced against other elements in the *pravargya*-complex, in the RVS as well as in other texts, which point to the *vrātya*. This is the objective of the present study. The concept of “orthodoxy” is certainly problematic for the early Vedic period, but it may be justified if we mean the increasingly uniform Vedic-Brahmanic culture, which resulted from the canonisation of a single RVS and the fixation of the *śrauta* ritual form, under Kuru hegemony, as described by Michael Witzel (1997).

Finally, Umberto Selva (2019: Appendices I–II) has argued that Paippalādasamhitā 3.25 (=Śaunakīyasamhitā 4.11) contains references not just to the *gharma/pravargya*, but to practices of the *vrātya* as well. He suggests that the secret *gharma/pravargya* ritual, “restricted to males, and taught in the wilderness, appears to be an initiatory rite of the Jugendbund, in which a pot is employed to represent the young warrior [...]” (Selva 2019: Appendix II). Like Heesterman and Falk, Selva sees a continuation between the archaic, pre-classical forms of Vedic ritual, in which *vrātyas* had a more prominent role, and the classical *śrauta* ritual form. Therefore, when one encounters *vrātya* elements in the orthodox Brahmanic texts, one “should not merely assume that the orthodoxy has re-elaborated traditions belonging to peripheral cultures in an inclusive or hegemonic way”; rather, “most of these elements might simply be re-elaborations of older Jugendbund traditions that simply belonged to the very same culture within which Brahmanical orthodoxy emerged” (Selva 2019: Appendix I). I find this approach to the existence of *vrātya* elements in Vedic-Brahmanic texts and rituals to be the best.

⁸ Cf. the ‘*vrata* of *gharma*’ in Śaunakīyasamhitā 4.11.6 (≈Paippalādasamhitā 3.25.6) and 9.1.8.

4. THE PARADIGM-MYTH IN VEDIC TEXTS

With this understanding of existing scholarship on *pravargya* and the *vrātya*, let us now look at the aetiological narrative of the *pravargya*, which I refer to as the “paradigm-myth”. I have detected six versions of this myth in the Vedic ritual texts (see Houben 1991: 26–28) and five closely related myths (without the ritual context) in post-Vedic texts. I will first give the synopsis of each version, then analyse the content in light of what is known about the *vrātyas*.

The **Śatapathabrāhmaṇa** in the Mādhyandina recension (ŚBM 14 1.1.1–25)⁹ tells us that the *pravargya* goes back to a *sattra* in Kurukṣetra performed by Agni, Indra, Soma, Makha-Viṣṇu,¹⁰ and the Viśvedevas – but not the Aśvins. The *devas* decided to hold a contest to see who among them would first attain the goal by means of toil (*śrāma-*), asceticism (*tāpas-*), faith, sacrifice, and oblations. He who succeeded in winning the prize – splendour (*śrī-*), glory (*yāsas-*), and food – would share it with the rest of the group and become “the best of deities” (*devānām śreṣṭha-*). Makha-Viṣṇu won the contest, but, contrary to what was agreed upon, he kept the prize for himself. The other *devas* attacked Makha-Viṣṇu, who defended himself with a bow and three arrows (*tisṛdhanvā-*). Having repelled them, Makha-Viṣṇu rested his head on the upper end of the bow. At this point, some termites (*vamrī-*, *upadīkā-*)¹¹ cut through his bowstring (*jyā-*), in return for the boon of always finding water and food, even in the desert. When the bowstring snapped and the ends of the bow recoiled, Makha-Viṣṇu’s head was severed from his body, making the sound *ghṛṇṇ* – hence (the offering is) called *gharmā*. The decapitated head transformed into the Sun. Lying stretched out on the ground, the glorious body of Makha-Viṣṇu was admired by the *devas* and praised as Mahāvīra, for he is a great hero (*mahān* [...] *vīra-*); thus, as the vessel containing the *gharmā*, he is called Mahāvīra. A contest now began for the possession of the body (Makha, the Sacrifice), which Indra won: Indra took upon himself Makha-Viṣṇu’s glory and became Makhavat, a pun on Indra’s epithet Maghavat ‘the generous’, and the best (*śreṣṭha*). The body was divided and offered in a *soma*-sacrifice (the three pressings of *soma*), even though it was a “headless sacrifice” and therefore incomplete. So goes the first part of the myth.

The second part of the story deals with the seer Dadhyañc Ātharvaṇa, who knew the pure essence, the sacrifice (*śukra*, *yajña* in ŚBM 14.1.1.18 and other passages), the honey (or essence, *madhu*, in 14.1.1.25, taken from the ṚVS) – that is, how the Head of Sacrifice (*yajñāsya* [...] *śīrah-*) could be put on again and the sacrifice completed (*kṛtsnā-*). Indra, who wanted to maintain his supreme position, forbade Dadhyañc to tell anyone this secret, or else he would cut off Dadhyañc’s head. The Aśvins, who did not participate in the *devas*’ *sattra*, went to Dadhyañc and said: “We have come to you” (*úpa tvāyāvēti*). “Why?”, he asked. “To learn how the Head of Sacrifice is put on again,” they replied. But he dared not tell them, because of Indra’s wrath. The Aśvins ‘horse-men’ suggested replacing Dadhyañc’s head with that of a horse, so that he could reveal the secret to them “when you will have received (us as pupils)” (*upaneṣyasé*, from *upa-*√*NĪ*, as in the term *upanayana*). In this way there would be no danger of losing his (real) head, as they would put his human head back, afterwards. Dadhyañc agreed, “received them (as pupils)” (*tau hópaninye*), and was given an equine head, with which he taught them

9 Cf. Vājasaneyisaṃhitā 37.3 ff.; Hauer 1927: 109.

10 Makha and Viṣṇu should hardly be read as separate (Gonda 1979: 167–177; Houben 1991: 105).

11 It is said in ŚBM 14.1.1.8 that “these *vamrī* were doubtless of that kind called *upadīkā*”; see below on these terms.

the sacrificial essence. When Indra found out, he beheaded Dadhyañc, whereupon the Aśvins restored his human head. Therefore, one should not teach the *pravargya* to just anyone, or else Indra will cut off that person's head (ŚBM 14.1.1.26). One should only teach the *pravargya* to a worthy student, who spends a year in the forest (during the initiation called *avāntaradīkṣā*; see below). In this way the Aśvins restored the Head of Sacrifice (ŚBM 14.2.1.11 et cetera).¹² Though not explicitly stated, it is to be understood that as a result of all this, the sacrifice of the *devas* was made complete¹³ and the Aśvins received a share in the *soma*-offering and the *gharma/pravargya*.

The **Taittirīyāraṇyaka** (5.1) has little to add to the myth as told in the ŚBM. The *devas* (it is not specified which ones) held a *sattra* in which Kurukṣetra was the altar-area (*vēdi*-). Their goal was glory (*yāsas*-). Makha, here called Vaiṣṇava 'of Viṣṇu', attained the goal and wanted it for himself. He went away, pursued by the *devas*. Miraculously, a bow (*dhānur*) came forth from Makha Vaiṣṇava's left hand and arrows (*iṣavaḥ*) from his right hand; therefore, the bow-and-arrow (*iṣudhanvaṃ*) weapon is of pure origin (*pūnyajanma*), born from the Sacrifice (Makha). Though he was alone (*ēka*-), the many (*bahāvo*) could not overpower the archer. In return for the boon of finding water wherever they dig in the ground, the termites (*upadīka*-) promised to make Makha subject to the *devas* by disarming him. When the termites cut through the bowstring and the bow's ends recoiled, the head of Makha was cut off with the sound *ghrām*, wherefore (the offering, Makha's head) is called *gharmā*. The "heroism of the great one" (*mahatō vīryām*) went away with the loss of the head, and thus he is Mahāvīra. Since his head "proceeded" (*prāvartata*) along heaven and earth, the ritual is called *pravargyā*, and since the *devas* "collected" (*samābharan*) him from this earth, he is the sovereign ruler (*samrājñah*). The *devas* offered the sacrifice, but because it was headless they received no blessings and could not conquer the heavenly world (*suvargāṃ lokāṃ abhy ājayan*, 5.1.6).

The second part of the myth is much shorter in the Taittirīyāraṇyaka, compared with the ŚBM, as the episode of Dadhyañc is missing. The Aśvins, who are physicians (*bhiṣājau*), put the Head of Sacrifice back on Makha's body in return for a share (in this sacrifice, the *pravargya*). Offering with that, the *devas* gained blessings and conquered heaven, and will any performer of the *pravargya* (Taittirīyāraṇyaka 5.1.7).

The version in the **Pañcaviṃśabrahmaṇa** (7.5.6; Caland 1931: 143–144) is similar to that of Taittirīyāraṇyaka but leaves out the part dealing with the Aśvins. Vāyu is mentioned among the *sattrins*, and the victor of glory (*yāsas*) is simply called Makha. Makha was leaning on the tip of his bow when its end sprang upwards and cut off his head. It became the *pravargya*. Neither the termites nor the sound of bow when it severed the head are mentioned. By performing the *pravargya*, the *devas* put the Head of Sacrifice (Makha) back and divided the glory among themselves.

The **Maitrāyaṇīsamhitā** (4.5.9; Falk 1986: 26–27; Amano 2016: 45–47) also knows the myth, though the *pravargya* is never mentioned; the narrative is found in the *soma*-drawing chapter and explains the three pressings of *soma*. Agni, Makha, Vāyu, and Indra held a *sattra* in Kurukṣetra. Makha attained the goal of becoming successful (*rdhnāvat*). He did not want to share it, contrary to what was agreed upon, and consequently was attacked by the other deities. Makha (supernaturally) produced (from his hands) a bow (*dhānus*-) and three (arrows) (*tisrō*) and defended himself. The termites (*vamrī*-) cut the bowstring on Indra's command (no

12 Cf. *pravargya* as the head of sacrifice in ŚBM 9.2.1.22–23.

13 The second part of the myth, though disconnected from the *pravargya*, is also found in Jaiminīyabrahmaṇa 3.120–128 (Caland 1919: 251–257).

boon is mentioned). Makha was decapitated by the end of the bow; it became a supreme ruler (*samrāḍ*). The *devas* each got one third of the body, minus the head: Agni the upper part, Indra the middle, and Vāyu the lower part. Therefore, the morning-pressing of *soma* is for Agni, the midday-pressing for Indra, and the third pressing for the Viśvedevas.

Before we look at versions of the myth in which Rudra is the bow-deity (in the Kathāraṇyaka, Taittirīyāraṇyaka, and other texts), let us reflect on what we have seen so far. Two important themes in the myth can be related to the *vrātya* or Rudraic milieu. The first is the *sattra* (also spelled *satra*), which, as we saw above, “in its original form” is interpreted as a *vrātya* ritual. Since no *sattra* is mentioned in the RVS while the *gharma/pravargya* is, it has been suggested that the attribution of a *sattra* context for the *pravargya* is secondary and only mythological, a “retrospective explanation given for rituals the origin of which is no longer known” (Köhler 2016: 172). But it could also be, as Amano writes, that both the *sattra* and the *pravargya* (and other *āraṇya* rituals)¹⁴ have a shared origin in the *vrātya* milieu, and that this is a reason for them to be associated with one another.

Indeed, there are a few passages that link *pravargya* to *sattra* without the context of the paradigm-myth: one is Maitrāyaṇīsamhitā 3.39, which mentions a fire-pillar in the woods (*vaneṣu*) – probably the one in *pravargya* (Amano 2016: 51–53) – “which the *sattrins* know of”. Another is ŚBM 11.8.4.1–6, which tells us that a tiger killed the *samrāt*-cow (providing milk for the *pravargya*), which belonged to the *sattra* leader Keśin. Keśin had to visit Khaṇḍika Audbhāri to learn the atonement for this “shattered sacrifice”.

The epithet *keśin* ‘(long-)haired’ can be linked to *pravargya* in more than one way, and it is associated with both *vrātyas* and Rudra¹⁵ (Heesterman 1962: 16–17; Falk 1986: 69–72; Koskikallio 1999: 309). RVS 1.164, presenting the riddle-hymn devoted to the *gharma/pravargya*, speaks of “three *keśins*” in verse 44. The Brhaddevatā (1.94) identifies the *keśins* as three forms of Fire; others have suggested that they are Fire, Sun, and Wind (Houben 2000b: 524) – in the same order of appearance as in the Keśin hymn, RVS 10.136 (see Koskikallio 1999: 317–318). Perhaps the three *keśins* refer to ascetics or initiands who let their hair grow, as in the *avāntaradīkṣā* of later texts (Āpastambaśrautasūtra 15.20–21; Oberlies 2012: 467)? And/or is this a reference to the three Mahāvīra vessels in the classical *pravargya*, representing three forms of cosmic heat, although only one vessel is actually used for the offering (cf. the “three *gharmas*” following Dawn are mentioned in RVS 7.33.7, Śaunakīyaśamhitā 8.9.13 and the Aśvins hymn in 9.1.8)? In the classical *pravargya*, during the final disposal of the ritual objects in the shape of a man, the three Mahāvīras construct the head and a grass-brush becomes the man-figure’s unshorn hair (*kéśā*, *sikhā*) (Kathāraṇyaka 3.183, 219; Āpastambaśrautasūtra 15.15.1). As I see it, the three *keśins* in RVS 1.164 may refer simultaneously to three forms of cosmic heat/fire (or to Fire, Sun, and Wind) and to ascetics who build up inner heat (*tapas*); this would fit the ritual concept of Mahāvīra attested in later texts (see Part 9).

In the paradigm-myth, first Makha and then Indra appear to play a role corresponding to that of the *sattra/vrātya* leader (*grhapati*, *sthapati*). The violent outcome of the mythical *sattra* is due to the leader’s broken promise of sharing the prize with the other *sattrins* (see Pontillo et al. 2016: 17). When the archer is decapitated, another contest begins for the headless body (the sacrifice), which Indra wins. The RVS-term *makhā* ‘fighter, combatant (?)’ and *sūmakha*

14 There is secrecy surrounding *pravargya* already in the RVS (Amano 2016: 61–63).

15 RVS 10.136 celebrates a Rudraic ascetic called Keśin. In Śaunakīyaśamhitā 11.2.31 the Rudras are called *keśins*.

‘good fighter (?)’ are typically used for deities associated with the warrior-society – Indra, the Maruts, the Rudras, and Rudra – or with the enemy-warrior.¹⁶ The epithets Makha and Mahāvīra attributed to the heated vessel in *pravargya* and to the victor in the paradigm-myth point to the sphere of battle and competition,¹⁷ which is also the sphere of the *vrātya*.¹⁸ The bow with three arrows (*tisr-dhanvá*, or *tisró* and *dhānus*) used by the victor in our myth is a standard attribute of the *vrātya* leader in Vedic texts (see Part 5).

Another important theme is that of ritual exclusion. The Aśvins were originally excluded from the *devas*’ sacrifice, according to the versions in the ŚBM, Taittirīyāraṇyaka, and Kāthāraṇyaka 2.115, and so is Rudra in Kāthāraṇyaka 2.100 (see below).¹⁹ In a similar way, some *vrātyas* were excluded from “the *deva*-way”.²⁰ The second part of the paradigm-myth, the story of Dadhyañc and the Aśvins, which has RVS-origins,²¹ is found only in the ŚBM (the Taittirīyāraṇyaka mentions the Aśvins, but not Dadhyañc). Its function is to validate the incorporation of *pravargya* into *somayāga*, according to Witzel (2004: xvi; see also van Buitenen 1968: 21–22). Even if the story was not originally connected with that of the *sattra* in Kurukṣetra,²² it harmonises with the *pravargya*, since the Aśvins are central deities in the *gharma*-offering.

The centrality of the Aśvins in the *gharma*-offering is linked to the solar-matutinal setting and symbolism of the ritual: they are saviours from death and darkness, associated with dawn and the Sun (Norelius 2017). But the motif of Aśvins saving men from calamities such as holes, clefts, and traps – death-like states of darkness, blindness, and captivity (Norelius 2017) – possibly also reflects initiatory scenarios, with which the *gharma/pravargya* is associated (Oberlies 2012: 285, 466–467). The Aśvins’ role as prototypical pupils, learning from a sage the sacrificial secret/essence (*madhu*), the Head of Sacrifice, which is the *pravargya*, fits well with the year-long *avāntaradīkṣā* ‘intermediate initiation’ in the wilderness, during which the qualified celibate student (*brahmacārin*) learns the *mantras* and secrets of the *pravargya*.

The Maruts are divine prototypes of the young initiate or *snātaka* (Oberlies 2012: 152–155, 288), described in the RVS as endowed with bright ornaments, brothers born at the same time (5.60.5,

16 RVS 1.6 seems to refer to Indra finding the cows (=Dawns) with the help of a troop (the Maruts or Aṅgirasas, *maryā* ‘youth’ in verse 3; on the term *maryā* in relation to the warrior-society, see Wikander 1938: ch. 2; Bollée 1981). Verse 8 mentions the ‘fighter’ (*makhā*) chanting together with Indra’s troops (*gaṇāir indrasya*). In 1.64.1, the Maruts are called ‘good fighters’ (*sūmakha-*; cf. verse 11 and 1.85.4, 6.66.9) and ‘Rudra’s youth’ (*rudrāsya mārṣyā*, 1.64.2; cf. 3.31.7). In 4.3.7, Rudra is *sūmakha*. Indra calls himself *sūmakha* as the Maruts’ companion (1.165.11; cf. 5.41.14, 3.34.2), and the Maruts are Rudras and *sūmakha-* (5.87.7). From RVS 10.171.2, we learn that Indra cut off Makha’s head (*makhāsya* [...] *śiró*). On the shared characteristics of Rudra and Indra as deities of the warrior-society, see Das 2000.

17 Indra is called *mahāvīra* when he crushes Vṛtra in RVS 1.32.6. The *pravargya* hymn RVS 1.164.43 says that heroes (*vīrās*) “cooked the spotted bull (= *gharma*?)” (Houben 2000b: 523). On the concept of *vīra* see Pelissero 2014.

18 It has also been suggested that the motif of the decapitated head is linked to the warrior and the *vrātya*; see Heesterman 1967; Malamoud 2005: 33–41.; see also Dange 1991–1992.

19 See ŚBM 1.7.3.1–8 below.

20 The *daiva vrātyas* aiming for heaven were left on the Earth due to a ritual mistake (Pañcaviṃśabrahmaṇa 24.18; af Edholm 2017: 9–11).

21 Indra went in search of the horse-head hidden in “the reed-filled (lake)”, and with the bones of Dadhyañc he smashed 99 obstacles/Vṛtras (RVS 1.84.13–14; cf. 9.113.1). Dadhyañc disclosed “Tvaṣṭr’s honey/secret” to the Aśvins by means of a horse-head (1.116.12, 1.117.22, 1.119.9; Rgvedakhilāni 1.9–11). The myth of the horse-headed Dadhyañc giving the secret to the Aśvins and the myth of the submerged horse-head are not necessarily interconnected in the RVS (Rönnow 1929: 116–117).

22 Kurukṣetra is the place of the *yātsattra* (Amano 2016: 44). A connection between the Kuru-Pañcālas and the *vrātyas* is mentioned by Heesterman (1962: 15–18).

5.55.3), “like twins” (*yamā iva*, 5.57.4), and as Rudras (*rúdrā*, 1.39.7, 5.54.4, et cetera) or Rudraic ones (*rudrīyāsaḥ*, 5.58.7).²³ Similarly, the Aśvins are garlanded, bright, young, twins,²⁴ and as Rudras (*rúdrā*, 2.41.7, 5.75.3 et cetera). They are deities of *madhu*²⁵ and of *surā*²⁶ – the alcoholic drink associated with warriors and the men’s hall (*sabhā*) – rather than *soma*.²⁷ The Aśvins can be interpreted as divine initiands, who until they have acquired the secret knowledge of *pravargya*, cannot consume *soma* or partake in the *soma* ritual (Oberlies 1998: 182–183).

It should be noted that **Aitareyabrāhmaṇa** 1.18, **Gopathabrāhmaṇa** 2.2.6, and **Kaṭhāraṇyaka** 2.115 explain the origin of *pravargya* with reference to a different myth, which leaves out the *sattra*, bow, and beheading but still mentions the Aśvins’ act of completing or healing the sacrifice. The Aitareyabrāhmaṇa combines this motif with that of the fleeing Sacrifice,²⁸ which is found in several myths in the Brāhmaṇas and is associated with Rudra (see Parts 5–7).

The termites²⁹ play a crucial role in the paradigm-myth in the mentioned versions (except the Pañcaviṃśabrāhmaṇa version) and in four more versions presented below. Their reward for cutting through the bowstring, that they would always find food and water, is referred to already in the Śaunakīyasamhitā (2.3.4, 6.100.1–2; cf. RVS 1.112.15; Heesterman 1967: 38–40; Krick 1982: 139–144; Houben 1991: 105).³⁰ In the classical *pravargya* ritual, earth from a termite mound (*valmīka*, *valmīkavapā*) is mixed into the clay for making the vessels (ŚBM 14.1.2.10; Taittirīyāraṇyaka 2.8–9; Bhāradvājaśrautasūtra 11.2).³¹ John Irwin (1982) stresses the termite

23 When the vessel is heated, the *pravargya* is declared to be the Sun, with the Maruts as its rays (Taittirīyāraṇyaka 5.4.8–9).

24 Unlike the Maruts, the Aśvins are not said to be born at the same time; they have different fathers but the same mother. Being born at the same time or being twins can refer to initiatory rebirth.

25 Oberlies suggests that the explanation for the Aśvins’ connection with *madhu* is to be sought in their roots in the Proto-Indo-European divine twins, who were associated with ‘mead’ (Vedic *madhu* ‘honey, sweet’). The high status given to mead was in Proto-Indo-Iranian times lost to **sauma*, the Vedic *soma* (Oberlies 2012: 129–130). See Walker (2015: ch. 5) on the *dioskouroi*, the Hellenic divine twins, as deities of adolescence, standing in-between deities and men, and being of lower status than deities like Zeus.

26 The Aśvins are *surā* deities in the Brāhmaṇic myth of Namuci, in which they restore Indra to health (Rönnow 1929: 130–131).

27 The Aśvins receive a share of *soma* already in the RVS, but it is *madhu* that is particularly given to them. In Taittirīyasamhitā 6.4.9, the Head of Sacrifice is cut off and the Aśvins put it back in return for a share in *soma*. This similarly appears in Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa 3.120–128. In ŚBM 4.1.5.13–18 for the *āśvinagraha* in the *agniṣṭoma* it is said that the gods once performed a sacrifice in Kurukṣetra (the one in the *pravargya*-myth?) but excluded the Aśvins. The Aśvins informed them that they were sacrificing with a headless sacrifice, and so the gods had to invite the Aśvins, the *adhvaryus*, to make it complete. It was Dadhyañc who had imparted *madhu* to the Aśvins.

28 The sacrifice fled from the *devas*, because it did not want to become their food. Hunting it down, the *devas* crushed and divided it, but it remained incomplete. Only with the help of the Aśvins, the *adhvaryus*, could they heal it.

29 The use of the terms *vamra*, *vamrī*, *valmī*, *upadīka*, *upajihvikā*, and *upajīka* by Vedic and post-Vedic authors is not entirely clear; some of these terms appear to refer to both termites and ants. RVS 8.102.21 mentions both *upajihvikā* and *vamrā*, perhaps to be read as ‘termite’ and ‘ant’ respectively, or as synonyms. In ŚBM 14.1.1.8 (above) the *upadīkā* are identified as a type of *vamrī*.

30 In RVS 1.51.9 Indra takes the form of an ant/termite to defeat an enemy (in two versions of our myth, discussed below, it is Indra as termite who cuts the bowstring; in another Indra orders the termites to do it) (see König 1984: 15, 19).

31 The mound (*valmīka*-) built by termites (*upadīka*-) is “the ear of the Earth”, built from the “essence of the Earth” (Taittirīyāraṇyaka 5.2.8–9; Krick 1982: 139–144). Among the other ingredients mentioned are earth torn up by a wild boar (symbolising the primordial Earth raised from the ocean), *pūtīka* plants, hairs from a blackbuck (symbolising the Sacrifice), and hairs from a goat (symbolising Agni). Cf. the making of the *ukhā* vessel in the *agnicayana* (Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra 10.1 ff.), which was influenced by the *gharma*-vessel (Ikari 1983; see also Parpola 2005: 90–93).

mound as a solar symbol of the primordial mound (in ŚBM 14.1.2.10 and Vājasaneyisaṃhitā 37.3–4 the termites are called *bhūtāsya prathamajā* ‘first-born of the creation’). In Indian folklore the termite mound is regarded as a gate to the underworld, from which issues the rainbow, “Indra’s bow” or Rudra’s bow (see Part 6) (Kālidāsa’s Meghadūta; Vogel 1926: 28–30; König 1984: 91 ff.; Shulman 1978: 114). The termite mound is also associated with Rudra, since this is where the sacrificial remains, “Rudra’s share”, are deposited (Āpastambaśrautasūtra 8.18.9, 19.12.25; König 1984: 173 ff., 242), and with cobras (who inhabit old termite mounds) and ascetics (who can remain immovable for such extended periods of time that termites begin to build mounds around them (Irwin 1982; Rigopoulos 2014)).³²

In sum, the reasons for the importance given to the termites in the myth and for earth from a termite mound to be an ingredient in the making of *gharma*-vessels, remain obscure. The desire to include this material in the vessel may have to do with the notions of termites as “first-born”, skilful creatures, who construct their impressive fortresses from the “essence of the Earth”. It may also be based the termite mound as a liminal locus: it belongs to the liminal deity Rudra, situated at a symbolic “edge of the world” (even if it is only at the edge of one’s village).

5. RUDRA AND HIS BOW

The connections between *vrātya* and Rudra have long been noted by scholars (Charpentier 1909; Hauer 1927; Falk 1986; Parpola 2005: 81–82; 2015: 136–142; af Edholm 2017). Similar to the *vrātya*, Rudra (in ṚVS, Śaunakīyasaṃhitā, and other texts), is an ambivalent figure, the leader of a troop of warriors, both feared and adored, and usually treated as an outsider (Arbman 1922; Mertens 1998: 3). That he is said to wear animal-skins and keep his long hair bound-up is indicative of his wild and liminal nature (see Falk 1986: 23). One of his characteristic attributes is the bow, and he is asked to unfasten the bowstring,³³ as in the Rudra hymn of the Taittirīyasaṃhitā:

Release the bowstring from the two notches of your bow, and the arrows in your hand!³⁴

Unstrung is the bow of him of the braided [/bound-up] hair, arrowless is his quiver; his arrows have departed, empty is his quiver.³⁵

The bow is a standard attribute of Rudra, as well as the *vrātya* (Falk 1986: 24–28).³⁶ The *vrātyastoma* leader has an ‘unstrung’ bow (*vyāhroḍa*, *vyāhṇoḍa*),³⁷ or an ‘unusable bow’ (*ayogyam dhanus*) (Hauer 1927: 101).³⁸ This is comparable with Rudra’s bow which is unstrung (Vājasaneyisaṃhitā 16.9–14)

32 See Cyavana in Mahābhārata 3.122, the myth of Vālmīki, and the colossal statue of Bāhubali Gommateśvara at Śravaṇa Beḷagoḷa. Cf. the enigmatic ṚVS 4.19.9.

33 Rudra has golden ornaments (ṚVS 2.33.9), a necklace (verse 10), and a bow and arrows (2.33.10, 5.42.11, 7.46.1, 10.125.6). He is fierce, luminous, the father of the Maruts, the Rudras, lord of wild animals, pursuing the enemy like a tracker pursues the deer (Śaunakīyasaṃhitā 11.13, 24).

34 *pra muñca dhānavas tvām ubhāyor ārtniyor jyām | yās ca te hāsta śavaḥ ||* (Taittirīyasaṃhitā 4.5.1.3)

35 *vijyam dhānuḥ kapardīno viśalyo bāṇavān utā | anēśann asyēśava ābhūr asya niṣaṅgāthiḥ ||* (Taittirīyasaṃhitā 4.5.1.4, based on Keith 1914 II: 354).

36 Note that the bow is also the primary weapon of the *vrātya*-like warrior-*brāhmanas* Droṇa and Kṛpa in the Mahābhārata (see Pontillo 2016).

37 The equipment of a *vrātyastoma* leader includes a *vyāhroḍa*, turban, goad, board-covered rough vehicle, garment with black fringes, two goat-skins (one white and one black), and a silver ornament or necklace (Pañcaviṃśabrāhmaṇa 17.1.14–15). On the *vrātīna* with unstrung bow see Hauer 1927: 197–198.

38 Kātyāyanaśrautasūtra 22.4.11.

– at least for the moment,³⁹ as a sign of his non-hostile intentions. The victor in the paradigm-myth has a bow and three arrows (*dhānus* and *tisrō*, or *tisr-dhanvá* ‘bow with three [arrows]’),⁴⁰ these also comprise an attribute of the *vrātya* leader (Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra 18.24). The same weapon appears in the *mahāvratā*, which Hauer identifies as a *vrātya*-related ritual, and in the symbolical conquest during the *rājasūya* (Āpastambaśrautasūtra 18.14.10–13, 18.17; Heesterman 1957: 95; Falk 1986: 24–28). The warlike hymn Śaunakīyasamhitā 8.8 mentions *gharmā* in connection with Śarva (Rudra), and the blue-and-red bow, which also figures as an attribute of the *vrātya* and Indra in Śaunakīyasamhitā 15.1 (Hauer 1927: 140–141, 346–347): the *vrātya* takes Indra’s bow, which is blue in front and red behind (verses 6–8). Indra’s and Rudra’s martial powers are called upon for defeating the enemies:

The hot drink [*gharmā*-] (is) kindled with fire, this thousand-slaying oblation; both Bhava and the spotted-armed one, O Śarva [=Rudra], slay ye (two) yonder army!⁴¹

With the blue-and-red (bow) I shoot (arrows) against them [=the enemies].⁴²

The Kāthāraṇyaka is a particularly interesting text in that it places Rudra at the centre of the *pravargya* ritual and its mythical narrative. Rudra is endowed with a solar-heroic character suited for the ritual context, being identified with the Mahāvīra vessel and the Sun (Kāthāraṇyaka 2.89, 100; 3.207, 233, 238, 240; Houben 1991: 12, 28; Witzel 2004: xxx). When the Mahāvīra is being heated, the priest puts a gold plate on top of it, in order to prevent excessive burning of the yonder world, and a silver plate below, enclosing the vessel from both sides. According to the Kāṭha and Taittirīya schools,⁴³ the priest sings a Rudraic *mantra* from book 2 of the RVS in praise of the Mahāvīra vessel:

Worthily you bear the arrows and the bow and worthily the sacrificial neck ornament of all forms.⁴⁴
Worthily you parcel out the whole formless void. Surely there exists nothing more powerful than you, Rudra!⁴⁵

The description of the deity in this stanza fits well with both the *vrātya* and the victor in the paradigm-myth: he is momentarily the most powerful and holds a bow and arrows. Besides a neck-ornament (*niṣka*), Rudra is also said in RVS 2.33.9 to have adorned himself “with gleaming, golden (ornaments)” (*śukrēbhiḥ* [...] *hīraṇyaiḥ*). Hauer relates this to “the two gold and silver ornaments” (*suvarṇarajatau rukmau*) worn by the leader in *vrātyastoma*, and the gold and silver plates protecting the *gharma*/Mahāvīra (*pari-gharmya*); nothing comparable is found in the paradigm-myth.⁴⁶ Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra 18.24, which identifies the attributes of the *vrātya* with those

39 In Śāṅkhāyanaśrautasūtra 14.69–72 the bow seems perfectly functional.

40 According to Hauer (1927: 107, 132), however, *tisrdhanva* is not a bow with three arrows but a “magic bow” made out of three pieces of wood. Cf. Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra 18.24.

41 *gharmāḥ sāmiddho agnīnāyām hōmaḥ sahasrahāḥ | bhavās ca p̄śnibāhuś ca śarva sēnām amūm hatam ||* (Śaunakīyasamhitā 8.8.17; Whitney 1905: 505).

42 *nīlahitēnāmūn* abhyāvatanomi (Śaunakīyasamhitā 8.8.24).

43 This is not found among the Vājasaneyins, but in the Vājasaneyisamhitā’s expiatory formulas for the *pravargya*, in which deities are associated with various body parts, there is an enumeration of the names of the Maruts and of Rudra: Paśupati, Bhava, Śarva, Mahādeva [...] (39.7–9; cf. Śaunakīyasamhitā 15.5).

44 *viśvarūpa* ‘(he who has) all forms/colours’ could also mean ‘the brilliant’ (Houben 1991: 117; af Edholm 2017: 45).

45 *ārhan bibharṣi sāyākāni dhānvārhan niṣkām yajatām viśvarūpam | ārhan idām dayase viśvam ābhvan nā vā ojīyo rudra tvād asti ||* (RVS 2.33.10; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 449; Kāthāraṇyaka 2.92; Taittirīyāraṇyaka 5.4.10).

46 A silver *niṣka* is worn by the *vrātya* leader in *vrātyastoma* (Pañcaviṃśabrāhmaṇa 17.1.14); see Hauer 1927: 128–130; Falk 1986: 64.

of the initiate (*dīkṣita*), states that the *gr̥hapati* wears the ornaments as a “form (*rūpa*) of the two *pari-gharmya*” (Hauer 1927: 129–130). In Śaunakīyasamhitā 15.2 the *vrātya* wears a splendid jewel (*kalmalir maṇiḥ*), representing the Sun and Moon; similarly, during the disposal of the *pravargya*’s ritual objects in the form of a man, the gold and silver plates form the eyes and are identified with the Sun and Moon (Kāṭhāraṇyaka 3.183, 219).⁴⁷ Hauer (1927: 130) draws the conclusion that the gold and silver ornaments originate in a *pravargya* context, and have been attributed to Rudra and the *vrātya* due to identification with the Mahāvīra.

6. RUDRA IN VEDIC VERSIONS OF THE PARADIGM-MYTH

Let us now return to the paradigm-myth, dealt with in Part 4. In the version of this myth found in Kāṭhāraṇyaka 3.207 we read that the *devas* had excluded Rudra from the sacrifice (*yajña*-, no *sattra* is mentioned). Rudra was resting his head against his bow when the bowstring was gnawed through by Indra in the form of a termite (*vamrirūpa*-). When the bowstring snapped the recoiling bow made the sound *ghṛṇ*, wherefore (the offering) is called *gharma* (as in the ŚBM). Rudra’s head was cut off and transformed into the *pravargya* (the Head of Sacrifice). Since it took place among the “great heroic ones” (*mahatīr* [...] *vīryāvātīs*) he earned the epithet Mahāvīra. Because (the vessel) is “turned towards” (*pravṛjyāte*) fire, (the ritual) is called *pravargya*. By means of *pravargya* the sacrificer restores Rudra’s head and Rudra does not attack him (who knows thus).

Another passage in the Kāṭhāraṇyaka, 2.100, uses the well-known motif of Rudra’s original exclusion from sacrifice⁴⁸ when dealing with the heating of the Mahāvīra, but apart from the motif of one *deva* turning against the other *devas*, the narrative has little in common with the paradigm-myth: there is no *sattra*, no broken bow, and no decapitated head. Note that Rudra is identified with the Sun. In Witzel’s German translation:

Die Götter erkannten den in die Himmelswelt gekommenen, als sonnefarbigen, einerschreitenden Rudra nicht. Sie sprachen: ‘Wer bist du?’ [Rudra:] ‘Ich bin Rudra, ich bin Indra, ich bin Āditya (=die Sonne), ich bin die Abwendung alles himmlischen Zornes.’ Die (Götter) sprachen: ‘Wir wollen ihn (von einem Anteil am Opfer) ausschliessen.’ Brüllend schrie er sie an. Er drang auf sie ein. [...] [Devas:] ‘Dein ist die Oberherrschaft über das Seiende, das Gewordene, das Zukünftige. Zur Oberherrschaft über alles lässt er den Opferherrn gehen.’⁴⁹

There is also a myth in Kāṭhāraṇyaka 3.225, which, again, uses the motif of the excluded Rudra in relation to *pravargya*: the *devas* excluded him from a share (in the sacrifice).⁵⁰ Rudra turned on them with his bow, and they were forced to include him in the *pravargya*. The exclusion of Rudra in 2.100 and 3.225 mirror, one might say, the Aśvins’ exclusion from the *devas*’ *sattra* (from which the *pravargya* is derived in the ŚBM and Taittirīyāraṇyaka) and their original exclusion from the *somayāga* according to other Vedic myths (related above).

47 Cf. Ṛgvedakhila 3.22.5–10 on the Sun and Moon keeping a great vow (*mahivratā*), of which the first four verses are recited by the *hotṛ* in the classical *pravargya* (Houben 2000b: 529).

48 This is told, for example, in ŚBM 1.7.3, not connected with *pravargya* (see Mertens 1998: 4–5): Rudra was left behind on the sacrificial site while the *devas* ascended to heaven. When Rudra saw that he had been excluded, he went with raised weapon to the North. The deities begged him to calm down in return for a share in the sacrifice, which Rudra accepted.

49 *devā vai rudrām svargām lokām gatām na vyājānann ādityāvarṇam cārantan tē bruvan kō ‘sīty ahām rudrō ‘hām indro ‘hām ādityō ‘ām sārvasyāvayā hāraso divyāsīyēti tē ‘bruvan nīrbhajāmainam iti tān ruvānn abhyāvadat tān prādhrājat tē ‘bruvan [...] bhāvāsya bhūtāsya bhāvāsyaśdhipatyam iti sārvasyāśdhipatyam yājamānam* (Kāṭhāraṇyaka 2.100; Witzel 2004: 38–41).

50 *rudrām vai devā nīrabhajan*.

Taittirīyāraṇyaka 1.5, a chapter ascribed to the Kāthas (Houben 1991: 28), also claims that it was Rudra’s head which was severed when the bowstring was cut through by Indra, in the form of a termite (*vāmriirūpenā*), and it identifies the head with the *pravargya*. The bow without bowstring is identified as Rudra’s bow and as “the Indra-bow”:

That bow is called “the Indra bow” which is without bowstring, seen in the colours among clouds [=the rainbow]. This is (the bow) of the son of Bṛhaspati, Śamyu. It is Rudra’s bow. Rudra’s head was crushed by the (upper) end of the bow. It became the *pravargya*. Therefore, he who sacrifices with the *pravargya* puts Rudra’s head back. Rudra is not dangerous for him who knows thus.⁵¹

This bow can be related to the blue-and-red bow, “Indra’s bow” (the rainbow), in the *vrātya* hymn (Śaunakīyasamhitā 15, below).

7. POST-VEDIC VERSIONS OF THE PARADIGM-MYTH

Moving on to the post-Vedic material, we notice a version of the myth – or another myth closely related to the paradigm-myth – in the **Mahābhārata** (10.18, critical ed.; Shulman 1978: 114; Mertens 1998: 25–30). The narrative goes that the *devas* were preparing a sacrifice (*yajña*) and deciding the shares of the participants, but excluded Rudra. When he came to know that they had denied him a share, Rudra created a bow from the elements of sacrifice: the *vaṣaṭ*-call was the bowstring, and so on. As a *brahmacārin* clad in animal-skin⁵² and with matted hair, the raging Rudra-Mahādeva attacked the sacrificial gathering; Savitr and others were mutilated. The Sacrifice fled in the form of an antelope to the sky, along with the sacrificial fire, but was shot down by Rudra. Having driven the wounded *devas* into a corner, the blue-throated deity mocked them, while leaning on the tip of his bow.

At this point, the cry uttered by the immortals caused the string of this bow to break [*cchinat*]. With the bowstring broken, [...] the bow became stretched out.⁵³

Then the *devas* and Sacrifice sought refuge in Rudra, “the bowless one” (*vidhanuṣaṃ*), “the best of deities” (*devaśreṣṭham*, 10.18.20; cf. *devānām śreṣṭha* in the ŚBM-version of the paradigm-myth). Rudra calmed down and sent his anger in the form of a fire into the ocean. Then he restored the wounded *devas* to health, as well as the Sacrifice, and was given his sacrificial share.

We see here that the Mahābhārata combines the paradigm-myth – though not in connection with *pravargya*, which is never mentioned – with the myth of Rudra’s exclusion from the sacrifice of the *devas* (Dakṣa’s sacrifice), attack, piercing of the personified Sacrifice, and final inclusion⁵⁴

51 *tād indradhānur ity aiyām | abhrāvārṇeṣu cākṣate | étād évá śāmyór bārhaspatyasyá | etád rudrasya dhānuḥ | rudrāsya tveva dhānurārtniḥ | śira útpipeṣa | sá pravargyo 'bhavat | tásmād yáḥ sá pravargyēna yajñéna yájate | rudrāsya sá śiraḥ prátidadhāti | náinaṃ rudrá āruko bhavati | yá evám véda ||* (Taittirīyāraṇyaka 1.5.4–5).

52 *kṛttivāsas*, a Vedic epithet of Rudra (Arbman 1922: 37–38). Cf. Mahābhārata 12.160.

53 *tato vāg amarair uktā jyām tasya dhanuṣo 'cchinat | atha tat sahasā [...] chinnaajyam visphurad dhanuḥ ||* (Mahābhārata 10.18.19).

54 Another version of how Rudra earned a share in sacrifice is given in Mahābhārata 3.114. In the land of Kalingā, Rudra once stole the sacrificial animal (*paśu*) of the *devas* and declared: “This is my share [*bhāga*]!” But having been satisfied with words of laudation and an offering (*iṣṭi*) by the *devas*, who asked him not to take others’ property, Rudra let go of the animal and went “the *deva*-way” (*devayāna*).

(cf. Kathāraṇyaka 2.100, 3.225 above; Shulman 1978: 114).⁵⁵ Shulman (1978: 114) argues that there are entire phrases in this episode which have been taken from the Vedic versions. In any case, there are significant differences: the bowstring is not broken by termites, but *by sound*, which can be compared with the Vedic versions in which the bow made the sound *ghṛṇ* when the bowstring snapped (hence the term *gharma*). In the Vedic versions the sound is made because the bowstring snaps, whereas in the epic the sound *makes* the bowstring snap. Further, the motif of the decapitated head is missing in the Mahābhārata. It is Rudra who heals the wounded sacrifice, not the Aśvins. The *vrātya*-like appearance of Rudra in this episode is noteworthy.

Then there is the **Rāmāyaṇa**'s (1.65–66, 73–76) account of how Rudra-Śiva's bow was unstrung, was acquired by Janaka of Mithilā, and was broken by Rāma Dāśarathi. We read that Viśvakarman made two excellent bows; one was given to Rudra, the other to Viṣṇu. It was Rudra's bow that Rāma Dāśarathi later broke (!) in Mithilā: Rāma Dāśarathi, the best of men (*naraśreṣṭha*-), the possessor of heroism (*vīryavān*), took the bow in his hand, bent it, affixed the bowstring (*maurvī*-), fitted an arrow to it, and drew it back when the bow broke (*babhañja*) with a tremendous sound (*śabdo mahān*). This was a marvellous feat of strength (Rāmāyaṇa 1.66). It was with the same bow that Rudra had destroyed the Three Cities. The *devas* had once desired to determine the relative strength of Viṣṇu and Rudra; they then sought advice of Brahmā, who provoked a battle between Viṣṇu and Rudra. The battle was terrible, but ended abruptly:

Then by the syllable *hum*, Śiva's awesomely powerful bow was unstrung [*jṛmbhita*-], and the great three-eyed god himself was paralyzed.⁵⁶

Seeing that the bow of Rudra had been unstrung by the “heroic powers of Viṣṇu” (*viṣṇuparākramaiḥ*), the *devas* and seers judged Viṣṇu the greater of the two. Rudra gave his bow and arrows to King Devarāta of Mithilā (Rāmāyaṇa 1.65.5–13).⁵⁷

The battle between Viṣṇu and Rudra in this version is comparable with the contest in the paradigm-myth. The battle resulted in Rudra's bow being unstrung and the deity being paralysed, which bear strong resemblance to the paradigm-myth, especially the version in which it is Rudra who is rendered harmless. Similar to the Mahābhārata, Rudra's bow is unstrung because of a powerful sound, there are no termites or decapitation, and the *pravargya* is never mentioned.

The Rāmāyaṇa goes on to inform us that Viṣṇu's bow was later given to the seer Ṛcīka, who gave it to his son; then it came to Rāma Jāmadagnya, an ascetic warrior-*brāhmaṇa* with obvious Rudraic traits. When the young warrior-*brahmacārin* Rāma Dāśarathi was on his way home from Mithilā, after having broken Rudra's bow, he met Rāma Jāmadagnya – matted-haired, blazing, holding an axe and Viṣṇu's bow and arrow, “looking like Hara (=Rudra)” (1.73.18). Rāma Jāmadagnya gave Viṣṇu's bow to Rāma Dāśarathi to see if the latter could put an arrow to it. Rāma Jāmadagnya challenged him to a duel, but, impressed by Rāma Dāśarathi's wrath and

⁵⁵ Pañcaviṃśabrahmaṇa 7.9.16; ŚBM 1.7.3.1–8; Taittirīyasamhitā 2.6.8 (Rudra is excluded from the *devas*' sacrifice; he pierces the Sacrifice; Mertens 1998: 1–15); Gopathabrahmaṇa 2.1.2 (Rudra is excluded from Prajāpati's sacrifice; he pierces the Sacrifice; Pūṣan and Savitṛ are mutilated). In ŚBM 1.7.4.1–9 and Aitareyabrahmaṇa 3.33, Rudra pierces the sinful Prajāpati (with the Sacrifice in the form of an antelope) and receives a share (the injured part) of the sacrifice. Cf. RVS 1.71.5; Arbman 1922: 30–32; Deppert 1977; Mertens 1998: 5–10. In post-Vedic mythology this develops into the story of Dakṣa's sacrifice (Mahābhārata 7.173, 13.145; Mertens 1998: 16–22).

⁵⁶ *tadā taj jṛmbhitam śaivam dhanur bhīmaparākramam | huṅkāreṇa mahādevaḥ stambhito 'tha trilocanaḥ ||* (Rāmāyaṇa 1.74.17, Pollock 1984: 265).

⁵⁷ An alternative account is given in Rāmāyaṇa 1.30.6–11 and 2.110.38–47 (Pollock 1984: 393–394).

strength, he decided to return to his hermitage. Rāma Dāśarathi released the arrow and freed the sky from darkness; then he gave Viṣṇu's bow and arrow to Varuṇa (Rāmāyaṇa 1.73–76).⁵⁸

In the main Purāṇas there are two versions (at least) of our myth, none of them mentioning the *pravargya*. The first is found in **Liṅgapurāṇa** 1.99–100 (Shulman 1978: 114): When Śiva came to know of the immolation of his wife Satī, who had been angry with Dakṣa, he sent the warlike Vīrabhadra (an aspect of Śiva) to destroy Dakṣa's sacrifice and the *devas*. Viṣṇu defended himself with a bow and arrows against Vīrabhadra, but Viṣṇu's bow split into three parts “because of three” (*tribhiś*), perhaps three hits by the three arrows of Śiva's (Vīrabhadra's) bow (cf. *tisṛdhanvá* in the Vedic myth):

By three (hits?) the bow of the lord [=Viṣṇu] was overcome and split into three pieces. Because of contact with the end of the bow, he (=Vīrabhadra) cut off the head of the lord.⁵⁹

The head fell into the underworld. When Vīrabhadra was pacified, Śiva restored Viṣṇu and the other *devas* to health.

The other is found in **Devībhāgavatapurāṇa** 1.5 (Shulman 1978: 111–112). This version does not mention Rudra, but combines the paradigm-myth with the story of the horse-headed Viṣṇu (Hayagrīva, instead of Dadhyañc) and celebration of Devī. It uses the motif of the termites cutting the bowstring, who were rewarded with a share in the sacrifice (not the Aśvins or Rudra); this is probably taken from Vedic tradition, since it is missing in the epics. The same goes for the head of Viṣṇu.

Finally, there is a **Tamil** version, related by Shulman (1978), according to which the *devas* performed a sacrifice in Kurukṣetra to see who was supreme. Viṣṇu completed the sacrifice and became proud. “By the command of Śiva, the sacrificial fire spurted up toward heaven, and a bow appeared in it [= the rainbow]; Viṣṇu proclaimed himself first among the gods and, taking the bow in hand, showered the gods with arrows” (Shulman 1978: 109). The *devas* fled from Kurukṣetra to Śaktipura and Viṣṇu pursued them, but when he reached Śaktipura he fell asleep in the sanctity of the *devī*, which was disrespectful. The sleeping Viṣṇu was resting his head against the bow when the *devas* transformed into termites and cut through the bowstring. Viṣṇu's head was severed from the body, but instead of it transforming into the Sun (as in the Vedic myth), a bright *liṅga* arose from the termite mound. The *devas* worshipped the *liṅga*. “Śiva gave his bow to Indra, and if Indra places it [=the rainbow] near a cloud, rain comes” (Shulman 1978: 110). The Aśvins restored Viṣṇu, who came back to Śaktipura to worship there.

The Tamil version was probably directly influenced by the ŚBM. The bright *liṅga* (cf. the *liṅga* as a blazing pillar of fire in Śivapurāṇa 4.12.17–20; Liṅgapurāṇa 1.17.33 ff.; Kramrisch 1981: 158–160) is reminiscent of the visually most powerful moment in the *pravargya* ritual: the blazing pillar of fire created when the milk is poured into the hot, *ghī*-filled, semi-phallic vessel, which is made from clay and earth from a termite mound.

In short, Rudra's bow in the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa can be connected to Rudra/*vrātya*-like warriors and to mythical motifs found in of the paradigm-myth, though the *pravargya* ritual is not mentioned in the epics. How should we interpret these similarities,

58 In Rāmāyaṇa 1.65 the same bow is related to Rudra's destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice, but the motif of the unstrung bow and the paralysed deity is missing: at Dakṣa's sacrifice, Rudra, with bow in hand, forced the *devas* to give him a share or else he would cut off their heads. They calmed the furious Rudra, who entrusted the divine bow to king Devarāta (1.65).

59 *tribhiś ca dharṣitaṃ sārṅgaṃ tridhābhūtaṃ prabhos tadā | sārṅgakoṭiprasaṅgād vai cicheda ca śiraḥ prabhoh ||* (Liṅgapurāṇa 1.100.31).

and significant differences, between the Vedic and the epic material? One might view the epic myths of how Rudra was pacified as late versions of the paradigm-myth, disconnected from a *pravargya* context, which would not be surprising considering the insignificance of this ritual in the epics.⁶⁰ Or one could see them as influenced by the paradigm-myth, and in the case of the Mahābhārata combined with the myth of the destruction of the gods' sacrifice. Yet, there is also the possibility that the epic myths go back to old, independent (non-sacerdotal) mythological material concerning how Rudra's bow was made unstrung and the raging deity was pacified.

The termites, the severed head, and the *pravargya* (as well as solar symbolism, since the head is the Sun) all disappear from the paradigm-myth in the epics. What the epic versions have in common with the Vedic versions is the motif of the wrathful, divine archer who is pacified when his bow is suddenly unstrung. In the later versions in the Liṅgapurāṇa, Devībhāgavatapurāṇa, and Tamil tradition we do find the head (of Viṣṇu) and – in the two latter texts, probably directly influenced by the Vedic tradition – the termites but not the *pravargya*.

Since the bow plays a fundamental role in the paradigm-myth, it is highly unlikely that it is secondary to the myth; it probably derives directly from the *vrātya* milieu (Falk 1986: 26), since the *tisṛdhanva* is not part of the *sattra* leader's equipment but the *vrātyastoma* leader's. Also, the bow appears in versions in which Rudra or Viṣṇu is the victor, even when no *sattra* is mentioned. Now, the question arises, which version of the Vedic paradigm-myth is the more ancient: that which has Viṣṇu or that which has Rudra as the victor with a bow and three arrows? (Houben 1991: 28.) We have seen that the bow is the attribute of Rudra, as well as the *vrātya*. All ritual texts except the Vājasaneyins' have the *mantra* in ṚVS 2.33.10, which mentions Rudra's bow and arrows in praise of the Mahāvīra vessel (Houben 1991: 28). The warlike hymn Śaunakīyasamhitā 8.8 mentions *gharmā* in connection with Rudra and the blue-and-red bow. It seems to me, on the basis of this and the comparative Indo-European material discussed below, that the mythical divine archer is essentially a warrior-*brahmacārin*, an outsider, originally excluded from the community of deities; this profile fits Rudra the best.

8. COMPARATIVE INDO-EUROPEAN MATERIAL

Since both the Vedic and the epic, as well as the Purāṇic, versions have the motif of *the divine archer who is pacified when his bow is unstrung*, but not all include those of the termites and the cut-off head, or references to the *pravargya*, one may see the former motif as the oldest one. It is also found in the Vedic myths of how *the excluded Rudra attacked the sacrifice of the devas* (led by Prajāpati, later Dakṣa), was calmed down, and was included in their sacrifice/community. It is only natural that the latter myth became combined with the paradigm-myth in the epics and Liṅgapurāṇa.

The motif of the appeasing of a threatening deity and the unstringing of his bow (cf. ṚVS 2.33.10–11; Taittirīyasamhitā 4.5.1.3–4; Kāṭhāraṇyaka 2.100, 3.225; myths of how Rudra attacked the sacrifice) may even have Proto-Indo-European roots. Consider the first verses in **the Homeric hymn to Apollōn, the great archer**.⁶¹

60 “References to the Pravargya [in the epics] are very shallow [...] Had the Pravargya already become a hollow construct when these epics were composed?” (Houben 2000b: 529).

61 Cf. Iliad 1.37–52.

I will remember and not be unmindful of Apollo who shoots afar. As he goes through the house of Zeus, the gods tremble before him and all spring up from their seats when he draws near, as he bends his bright bow. But Leto alone stays by the side of Zeus who delights in thunder; and then she unstrings his bow, and closes his quiver, and takes his archery from his strong shoulders in her hands and hangs them on a golden peg against a pillar of his father's house. Then she leads him to a seat and makes him sit; and the Father gives him nectar in a golden cup welcoming his dear son [...]⁶²

These verses are reminiscent of the Vedic text-passages and all the more significant when we know that Apollōn is a deity of adolescence and the wild, liminal sphere; he is the *éphēbos* with unshorn hair, the wolf-god Lukeios, who resides half the year in Hyperborea (Grégoire 1949: 131 ff.; Kershaw 2000: 188–190; Oberlies 2012: 158). The name Apollōn has to do with the *apēllai* or assemblies (*apēlla* ‘enclosure; assembly’) for young men (*koūroi/éphēboi*) transitioning from boyhood to adulthood; during the festivities they offered their hair to Apollōn.⁶³ Similarly, Rudra is the *brahmacārin* with uncut, bound-up or matted hair, and he resides in the North.⁶⁴ Like Apollōn, Rudra can harm with his arrows, but he can also save from harm.

I would also like to suggest a possible connection with **the Old Norse myth of Skaði**. Much like Artemis, Skaði is a goddess associated with bow-hunting and the wilderness. According to the myth, the *æsir* had killed Skaði's father, the *jötunn* Þjazi (the concept of *jötunn* can be compared with the ancient Indian *asura*, and *æsir* with *devas*). Skaði, who lived on her father's domains in Þrymheimr in the mountains, “took a helmet, coat of mail, and all weapons of battle and went to Ásgarðr [=the abode of *æsir*] to avenge her father”.⁶⁵ When she arrived with the intention to fight them, the *æsir* avoided battle by letting Skaði, as compensation, choose one of their own as husband, but only by looking at their feet.⁶⁶ Skaði chose the brightest feet, thinking they belonged to the beautiful Baldr, but instead found herself betrothed to Njǫrðr, a marine deity (whose feet are always washed clean). They did not make a good pair, for Skaði could not stand the call of gulls at Njǫrðr's place by the sea, and Njǫrðr could not stand the howling of wolves in Þrymheimr.⁶⁷

Scholars have pointed out that Skaði is actually a masculine name (*skaði* ‘harm, damage’, Proto-Germanic *Skapōn ‘harm, damage, injury, scathe’),⁶⁸ whereas the name of her husband Njǫrðr corresponds to the feminine Proto-Germanic *Nerþuz.⁶⁹ Skaði is also given the mascu-

62 μνήσομαι οὐδὲ λάθωμαι Ἀπόλλωνος ἐκάτοιο, ὄντε θεοὶ κατὰ δῶμα Διὸς τρομέουσιν ἰόντα: καὶ ῥά τ' ἀναΐσσοσιν ἐπὶ σχεδὸν ἐρχομένοιο πάντες ἀφ' ἐδράων, ὅτε φαίδιμα τόξα τιταίνει. Λητὼ δ' οἷη μίμνε παρὰ Διὶ περὶ κερᾶν ἡ ῥά βίον τ' ἐχάλασσε καὶ ἐκλήισσε φαρέτρην, καὶ οἱ ἀπ' ἰφθίμων ὤμων χεῖρεσσιν ἐλοῦσα τόξα κατεκρέμασε πρὸς κίονα πατρὸς εἰο πασσάλου ἐκ χρυσεύου: τὸν δ' ἐς θρόνον εἶσεν ἄγουσα. τῷ δ' ἄρα νέκταρ ἔδωκε πατὴρ δέπαϊ χρυσεῖω δεικνύμενος φίλον υἱόν [...] (Homeric Hymn to Apollōn; Evelyn-White 1936: 325; see Bakker 2002). Penglase 1994: 55–60, 99–125 instead tries to relate this scene to a Sumerian god (see also Puhvel 1987: 56–58, 134–135; West 2006: 148).

63 Apollōn's sister Artemis can be seen as a feminine lunar version of him: she is armed with a bow and arrows, hunts in the wilderness, is a virgin, and rules over unmarried girls (the wild bear-cult of Artemis at Brauron).

64 In the *pravargya* the hot *gharma* drink is made to overflow in the northern direction, so that the Rudras can partake of it; one offers a share (*bhāga-*) to Rudra in the North (Taittirīyāranyaka 5.8.4–5, 9).

65 *tök hjálm ok brynju ok qll hervápn ok ferr til Ásgarðs at hefna fǫður síns* (Skáldskaparmál 56).

66 Furthermore, the deities managed to make (the wrathful) Skaði laugh by causing Loki to play the fool. As a bonus, the eyes of Þjazi were cast into the skies and became stars.

67 Grímnismál 11 in the Edda Poetica; Gylfaginning 23 and Skáldskaparmál 56 in the Edda of Snorri Sturluson. Skaði is counted among the *ásynjur* in Skáldskaparmál; she has thus joined the collective of the *æsir*. According to Lokasenna (in Edda Poetica), Loki was bound by the *æsir* and Skaði placed a snake to drip venom on his face, which made him writhe in pain.

68 Orel 2003: 336. Skaði plays the role of injurer and threatening revenger in the few myths that have survived. Skaði is a hunter, threatens the *æsir* after Þjazi's death, and threatens and injures Loki.

69 See Puhvel 1987: 208. *Skapōn and *Nerþuz are attested in Scandinavian theophoric place-names.

line (or neuter) epithet *ǫndurguð* ‘snowshoe/ski-god’.⁷⁰ Indeed, from what we know about ancient Germanic-Scandinavian culture, it is awkward that in the myth of Skaði, a *female* inherits her paternal lands, goes to avenge her father, is armed as a warrior, and is treated as a peer by a group of warlike males. It is also strange that a female chooses a husband based on his beauty rather than his power and strength. Thus, I suggest that a hypothetical, reconstructed, Proto-Germanic version of the myth would look something like this: The **etunaz* (*ǰotunn*) **Skaþōn* was enraged at the killing of his father by the **ansiwiz* (*ǰæsir*). He went armed with bow-and-arrows and clad in full armour from his home **Þrumihaimaz* (‘noise-home/abode’) in the northern wilderness to **Ansgarðaz* (‘deity-enclosure/house’). The **ansiwiz* pacified **Skaþōn* by letting him marry one of the unmarried goddesses, thus including him into their community, making him an **ansuz*. **Skaþōn*, who was only allowed to look at the goddesses’ feet, thought that he chose the most beautiful one when he chose the brightest feet, but he got the sea-goddess **Nerþuz*, since her feet are always washed clean.

In other words, the function of the archer **Skaþōn* (‘he who can bring) harm/injury’) corresponds to that of Apollōn and Rudra, who can injure animals and people with their arrows; **Skaþōn*’s home in the cold, mountainous wilderness fits Apollōn as residing in the North and Rudra as residing in the North and in the wilderness; and **Skaþōn* joining the **ansiwiz* correspond to the welcoming of Apollōn among the Olympic *theoi* and the inclusion of Rudra in the *devas*’ sacrifice. In all three cases, a young, threatening, wrathful archer from far away arrives before the gathered deities, is appeased by them, and joins their community. These correspondences indicate that certain characteristics of Rudra and certain motifs that appear in the paradigm-myth go back to archaic, Indo-European customs and beliefs associated with young warriors and liminality.

9. THE CONCEPT OF MAHĀVĪRA

Having looked at Mahāvīra in *pravargya*-related mythology, let us now turn to Mahāvīra as a concept and as a vessel in the ritual. As argued above, the term ‘Mahāvīra’ points to the sphere of the warrior; the application of the term to the vessel could have grown out of Indra-related material in the RVS, since this epithet is given to Indra and the term Makha to his foe (Wright 1995). I agree with van Buitenen (1968) that there is an “anthropomorphic” aspect of the Mahāvīra vessel, but not in the sense that it is a proto-idol (see Kashikar 1973; Houben 1991: 17, 29; Kramirsch 1975: 232). Rather, the anthropomorphism of the Mahāvīra is seen in it representing the hero in the process of accumulating *tapas* (ascetic heat).⁷¹ The heating of the Mahāvīra is an essential part of its transformation and apotheosis (Vesci 1992: 259). The vessel (that is, what it *represents*) is adored as supreme lord, born of *tapas*, the lord of *tapas*, the lord of *brāhman*.⁷² The heating of the vessel corresponds to, and contributes to, the power of the Sun (Oldenberg 1917: 446–449; Gonda 1965: 47, 290; Kaelber 1989: 22–24).⁷³ The heating can be linked to the minimal presence of the

70 The masculine deity Ullr shares characteristics with Skaði as archer, hunter, skier, and fighter.

71 “The Pravargya, and especially the rite concerning the *mahāvīra* pot, looks like a representation of the initiation of an Indo-European warrior” (Selva 2019: Appendix II).

72 Taittirīyāraṇyaka 5.6.7; Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra 9.8; cf. Vājasaneyisaṃhitā 37.16–18; van Buitenen 1968: 26, 93; Vesci 1992: 257–258.

73 The Mahāvīra, and the *pravargya* itself, is the Sun (ŚBM 10.2.5.4–8, 12.1.3.5, 14.1.1.27–31; Taittirīyasaṃhitā 1.6.12e–f; Kauṣītakiḥṛāhmaṇa 8.3–7). Walter Kaelber (1989: 22–29, 69) asserts that the *pravargya* was thought to generate both fertility and rain through the accumulation of *tapas* in the performer (see also van Buitenen 1968: 34; cf. Taittirīyāraṇyaka 5.6.11, 5.10.6).

sacrificer's wife in the *pravargya*; she is confined to a hut most of the time and not allowed to watch the vessel being made and heated, as this could harm her.⁷⁴

In the Kāṭhāraṇyaka, the *yajamāna* is thought to be able to attain the same supremacy as Rudra did, by means of the *pravargya*, and acquires a new, immortal, sun-coloured (*ādityavarṇa*) body (Witzel 2004: lxvi; cf. ŚBM 14.1.2.26).⁷⁵ The blazing *gharma* is supposed to make the sacrificer ablaze, too. The vessel is enthroned and anointed with *ghī* (ŚBM 14.1.3.13; cf. RVS 5.43.7), which can be compared with the anointing of a king. References to the directions of space during the heating of the vessel (Taittirīyāraṇyaka 5.5.1; Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra 9.8; van Buitenen 1968: 88–89) express the idea that the Mahāvīra extends his dominion.⁷⁶ Like Soma, Mahāvīra/Gharma is installed on a rudimentary, wooden “imperial throne” (*samrādāsandī*, cf. ŚBM 14.1.3.12). One might see this as an influence from the *soma* ritual (see Houben 1991: 17–22), but this need not be the case. Vedic texts mention thrones or seats constructed for sovereign figures, which are not directly connected with Soma and with which Mahāvīra shares characteristics: those of the *ekavrātya* in Śaunakīyaśaṃhitā 15, the *brāhman* in Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka 3, and the *kṣatriya* in the Vedic royal consecration.

On the material level, the Mahāvīra is just a fragile clay artefact, much like man himself, wherefore the praise of Mahāvīra may seem strange, but it is reminiscent of other divinised persons: the “peculiar and seemingly excessive praise” (Dore 2015b: 59) of the *brahmacārin* in Śaunakīyaśaṃhitā 11.5,⁷⁷ the “grotesquely extravagant glorification” (Griffith 1896: 199) of the *vrātya* in Śaunakīyaśaṃhitā 15, and the extolment of *gharma* in the *pravargya* hymn Śaunakīyaśaṃhitā 4.11 (see below). It is also comparable with the praising of *rohita* in Śaunakīyaśaṃhitā 13, and *keśin* in RVS 10.136.

Moreno Dore (2015b) seeks an explanation for the *brahmacārin*'s supremacy in an ideology characteristic of *vrātya* culture. Already Hauer (1927: 315–333) identified *keśin*, *ekavrātya*, and *brahmacārin* as expressions of a Vedic type of divinised holy person. All three characters are identified with deities, described as sovereigns, possessed of esoteric knowledge, and pursuing a mobile lifestyle (going in the four directions of space). The shared goal of these characters is to become divine, or even superior to the *devas* (Dore 2015a: 58, 61; see also 2015b; 2016a; 2016b). The image of the Sun is very important in these texts, and Dore (2015a: 62) writes that the authors “may have had the same concepts in mind and perhaps even shared a poetic heritage, a common ideology to which all of them refer”.

The texts discussed by Dore, mostly Atharvavedic, are characterised by a celebration of earthly mortals divinised and empowered through knowledge and asceticism. This closeness of man and deity seems to have been strong in the *vrātya* milieu, since the *vrātya* leader and his group were thought of as impersonating Rudra/Indra and the Rudras/Maruts (Falk 1986: 193). I suggest that the ascetic ideology outlined by Dore for the *vrātya*, *brahmacārin*, and *keśin* can also be detected in the *pravargya*'s concept of Mahāvīra. The solar nature of Mahāvīra is clear enough. The Mahāvīra vessel, with its semi-phallic shape, evokes the image of the male organ – the milk being the semen,

74 Only at one moment, when the vessel is glowing, does she look at it and recite a *mantra* for offspring, et cetera. The Black Yajurvedic texts forbid the wife even to view the vessel (ŚBM 14.1.4.16; Taittirīyāraṇyaka 5.6.12; Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra 9.8; Āpastambaśrautasūtra 15.8.16).

75 The treatment of the Mahāvīra vessel is paralleled by the treatment of the *brahmacārin* in *avāntaradīkṣā* (Houben 2000b: 513).

76 Cf. Kāṭhāraṇyaka 2.80 ff.; Garbe 1880: 341; van Buitenen 1968: 75.

77 On *vrātya* and *brahmacārin* see Hauer 1927: 324–331; Heesterman 1962; Falk 1986: 66–72; Lubin 1994: 22–37.

which is poured into the fire (=womb) for procreation, as Aitareyabrāhmaṇa 1.22 puts it. This aspect of the Mahāvīra, and the fecundating effect of *pravargya* on man and nature, can be compared with that of the phallic *brahmacārin* in Śaunakīyasamhitā 11.5.12. In the same hymn, there is mention of the *brahmacārin*'s heat (*gharma*):

Prior born of the *brāhman*, the *brahmacārin*, clothing himself with *gharmá*, stood up with *tápas*; from him (was) born the *brāhmaṇa*, the chief *brāhman*, and all the gods, together with immortality.⁷⁸

Another hymn in the same style is that of the draft-ox (*anaḍvāh*) in Śaunakīyasamhitā 4.11 (≈Paippalādasamhitā 3.25),⁷⁹ which is of particular interest because it refers to the *gharma*-vessel. Sustaining the directions of space, the ox entered all existence, and follows the *vratas* of the *devas*:

Born as Indra among humans, he goes about, a heated *gharmá*, glowing.⁸⁰

The toiling, sweating ox in verse 5 is an image of the ascetic as well as the heated *gharma* (Lubin 1994: 73). In verse 6, the *devas* are said to have ascended to heaven by means of the *gharma* vessel/offering, which is reminiscent of the completion of the *devas*' ritual through the *pravargya* in the paradigm-myth:

Tell us of that *gharmá* which is quadruped, by means of whom the gods ascended to heaven, quitting the body, to the navel of the immortal, by him may we go desiring glory to the world of well-done deeds, by means of the *vrata* of *gharmá*, by means of *tápas*.⁸¹

Thus, in the *pravargya*'s concept of Mahāvīra can be detected an ideology, which can be described as ascetic and solar, but also as Rudraic.⁸² Its origins possibly go back to archaic rituals of initiation in which one practised ascetic heating. One should distinguish between a royal sphere, on the one hand, and a Rudraic one, on the other. These overlap, since both celebrate humans who ritually attain a sovereign status and become endowed with superhuman, virile, heroic, and solar powers. The *rohita* and the anointed king belong to the royal sphere, and to an ideology that defines the lawful ruler and his relation to the people. The *gharma*, *vrātya*, *brahmacārin*, and *keśin*, in contrast, belong to the Rudraic sphere, which is a state of liminality with a set of rules and behaviours different from those of ordinary society.

78 *pūrvo jātó brāhmaṇo brahmacārī gharmám vásānas tápasód atiṣṭhat | tásmāj jātām brāhmaṇam brāhma jyeṣṭhām devās ca sárve amṛtena sākám* || (Śaunakīyasamhitā 11.5.5, based on Whitney 1905: 637).

79 See comments on this hymn (cited in Kauśikasūtra 66.12) by Gonda 1965: 287–299. Cf. Śaunakīyasamhitā 9.4.

80 *indro jātó manuṣyēsv antár gharmás taptás carati śósucānaḥ |* (Śaunakīyasamhitā 4.11.3ab ≈ Paippalādasamhitā 3.25.5; see Lubin 1994: 71; Selva 2019: Appendix II).

81 [...] *gharmám no brūta yatamás cátuṣpāt || yéna devāḥ svār āruruhúr hitvá śárīram amṛtasya nābhim | téna geṣma sukṛtásya lokám gharmásya vraténa tápasā yaśasyávaḥ* || (Śaunakīyasamhitā 4.11.5d–6 ≈ Paippalādasamhitā 3.25.4d, 6, based on Lubin 1994: 71) Could the *vrata* of *gharmá* in Śaunakīyasamhitā 4.11.6 refer to an early form of *avāntaradīkṣā*? (Houben 1991: 22) In 11.5.18, the ox is mentioned along with the horse as winning food through *brahmacarya* (Lubin 1994: 75). *Vrata* also appears in verse 11 of the ox hymn (see comment by Gonda 1965: 298). Selva (2019: Appendix II) interprets the ox-verses in Paippalādasamhitā 3.25 as referring to *vrātya* practices connected with the *pravargya*.

82 Rudra is the “*brahmacārin* par préférence” (Charpentier 1909: 154).

10. CONCLUSIONS

In the following I give an overview of the possible *vrātya*-Rudraic elements in the *pravargya*-complex in the texts discussed above. One can divide the text passages into four periods:⁸³

Period I

During the early RVS period, the Atri clan of book 5 performs the *gharma*-offering of hot milk and *ghī* for the Aśvins, who are said to have rescued the seer Atri from a hole/cleft (=initiatory scenario?) and brought the *gharma* to him.⁸⁴ The offering takes place at dawn and is connected with the Sun. A metal vessel can be used and there does not seem to be any solemn preparation or disposal of the vessel. The ritual appears to be part of a larger ritual in which *soma* is pressed. There is a possibility that the centrality of the Aśvins has to do with their role as divine initiands and deities of adolescence; this would accord with the solar aspect of the *gharma*-offering, since the Sun is connected with the *pravargya*'s initiatory element in later texts. There is also a reference to the host of Maruts, who can be interpreted as divine initiates and members of the warrior-society; in 5.54.1, they sing “to the (host) uttering joyful sounds like the (boiling) *gharmā*” (Houben 2000a: 8). The epithet *makhá* ‘fighter (?)’, which is important in the later *pravargya* ritual and myth, is used for the Maruts, Indra, and Rudra in books 3–5 and 1, though without being related to *gharma*.

The *gharma* is also mentioned in early hymns, such as 4.55, and in book 7. The Frog hymn (7.103) refers to the *gharma/pravargya* and its possible *avāntaradīkṣā*-precedent. Considering it to be relatively late, Houben (2010: 99) places it in the same stage of development as 1.164 (Period II in the present article). Reference is made to the *vrata* and asceticism, and the *gharma*-offering is probably thought to stimulate both rainfall and sunshine. This form of *gharma/pravargya* is undertaken at the end of a year-long initiation period (Oberlies 1998), at the summer solstice at the onset of the rainy season (Selva 2019) – in contrast to the classical *avāntaradīkṣā*, which does not include the performance of *pravargya*. One can speculate that the myth of Dadhyañc, *madhu*, and the Aśvins as prototypical pupils (found in RVS book 1 = Period II) is connected with *gharma/pravargya* (as it is in Period III) already at this stage, since it mirrors the later *avāntaradīkṣā*. Perhaps the *mantra* mentioning the *vrātya*-like Rudra (RVS 2.33.10) was used in the ritual already at this time.

Period II

The late RVS's riddle-hymn 1.164 refers to a (“highly developed and elaborate”; Houben 2010: 98) form of the *gharma/pravargya*, in which a clay vessel is used. The ritual is endowed with mystical meaning and solar symbolism, also found in 10.181, which Pontillo (2019) suggests is linked to the *vrātya*'s goal of divinisation in later texts. The *pravargya* is probably seen as the Head of Sacrifice (cf. 1.164.19, 35), replacing “Makha's head” cut off by Indra (10.171.2), but neither the bow nor the termites of the later paradigm-myth are mentioned in that context. The “three *keśins*” mentioned in 10.136 may refer to three forms of cosmic heat/fire (or to Fire, Sun, and Wind) and to ascetics who build up inner heat (*tapas*), in accordance with the concept of Mahāvīra in later texts; since the epithet *keśin* is linked to *vrātyas* and Rudra (cf. RVS 10.136), this may hint at an early link between the *gharma/pravargya* and *vrātyas*/Rudra.

83 Compare the three RVS stages in Houben 2000a, summarised in Part 2.

84 According to Houben 2010: 137–138, the latter motif is clearly expressed in books 1 and 8 but not book 5.

That the *pravargya*'s mythical motif of the *devas*' gift (of water) to the termites was known in this period is evident from Śaunakīyasamhitā 6.100.1–2 (cf. RVS 1.112.15), as was the motif of Indra as termite or ant (RVS 1.51.9). The verses on the *gharma* as draft-ox in Śaunakīyasamhitā 4.11 (Paippalādasamhitā 3.25) show evidence of mystical speculations on *gharma/pravargya* and a type of ascetic ideology aiming at divinisation, also evident in the Atharvavedic hymns to the *ekavrātya*, the *brahmacārin*, and the Ṛgvedic *keśin*. The *gharma* is mentioned in a warlike, Rudraic, and possibly *vrātya* context in Śaunakīyasamhitā 8.8.

Period III

Yajurveda-Samhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, and Sūtras describe the classical *pravargya* and *avāntaradīkṣā*, which are seen as arcane rituals by the Yajurvedins (the Ṛgvedins instead have the *mahāvratā*, with which the *pravargya* shares certain features). Various aspects of the *pravargya*, as evidenced by texts from this period, are understandable if some of the roots of *pravargya* date back to an initiation ritual, in which the vessel represented the young man or warrior accumulating *tapas*, as argued by Oberlies and Selva. One such aspect is the minimal presence of females in the *pravargya*-complex: there are no female deities in the paradigm-myth; the sacrificer's wife is not allowed to watch the vessel being made and heated (this could hurt her); and in the *avāntaradīkṣā* the *brahmacārin* is forbidden even to speak to a female, as this could weaken his *tapas*.⁸⁵

The view of Mahāvīra as a representation of the superhuman, solar hero, as found in Period III-texts, is compatible with the ("Atharvavedic") Rudraic ideology of Period II. The *mantra* about Rudra with the bow (RVS 2.33.10) is used in the ritual for the adoration of the Mahāvīra. The expiatory formulas for the *pravargya* enumerate the names of Rudra and the Maruts. The two plates or ornaments of (solar) gold and (lunar) silver form another link between the Mahāvīra, the *vrātya*, and Rudra. The ritual is thought to strengthen the Sun and secure an immortal, solar body for the performer.

There are good reasons to believe that the origins of the paradigm-myth in Period III-texts are to be sought in the Rudraic *vrātya* milieu. The myth locates the *pravargya*'s origin in the *devas*' *sattra* (a collective ritual associated with *vrātyas*), which different versions combine with the motif of the decapitated bow-deity (Makha/Rudra/Viṣṇu), and (in ŚBM) with the myth of the Aśvins as pupils of Dadhyañc. Links can also be found between the *sattra* and the *pravargya* outside the paradigm-myth in the Maitrāyaṇīsamhitā and the ŚBM, which mentions Keśin as a *sattra* and *pravargya* performer).

The role of the bow-god in the paradigm-myth fits the character of Rudra quite well: he shoots the bow with three arrows (this and the unstrung bow are attributed to *vrātyas* in the Sūtras), until the bowstring is cut by termites; he is a fighter (Makha), hero (Mahāvīra), victor, and foremost among *devas* (*śreṣṭha*, like the *sattra/vrātya* leader, who is *primus inter pares*). His attack on the other *devas* and his subsequent pacification is reminiscent of another Vedic myth in which Rudra attacks the *devas*' sacrifice, as well as the epic myths (see Period IV) on how the raging Rudra was paralysed when his bowstring snapped. The motif of the divine archer as an outsider who confronts the assembled deities, threatens them with his bow, is

85 At one moment, however (the morning after a night spent blindfolded), the *brahmacārin* is to look at several objects, one of them being a "fully grown/naked woman" (*mahānagnā/ī*) (Āpastambaśrautasūtra 15.20.8; Kashikar 1976: 72). Śaunakīyasamhitā 14.1.36 mentions *mahānagnī* along with the Aśvins, *surā*, and the dice game, which are all associated with *sabhā* and sodalities (Falk 1986: 84–92; Vassilkov 1990).

appeased by them, and becomes included into their community is found not just in ancient Indian mythology but Germanic and Hellenic myths as well, suggesting that this motif is Indo-European and perhaps related to archaic initiatory/liminal customs and beliefs.

It has been suggested (Witzel 2004: xvi) that the second part of the paradigm-myth – the story of the Aśvins as pupils of Dadhyañc, which has RVS-origins – as given in the ŚBM (e.g. in Taittirīyāraṇyaka and Kaṭhāraṇyaka 2.115, the Aśvins heal the sacrifice in the *pravargya*, but Dadhyañc is not mentioned) – functions as a justification for the incorporation of the *pravargya* into the *soma* ritual: the Aśvins were originally excluded from the *devas*' sacrifice. But since already the RVS associates the Aśvins with the *gharma/pravargya* and acknowledges that a share of *soma* was given to them, there is the possibility that the Aśvins' appearance in the paradigm-myth is due to their connection with both initiation and the *pravargya*. Some versions of the myth from this period (Kaṭhāraṇyaka) which do not mention the Aśvins as pupils, still use the motif of exclusion – but for Rudra.

Period IV

The early post-Vedic epics, the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa, have very little to say about *pravargya*, but contain narratives that have clearly been influenced by the paradigm-myth, either via the sacerdotal literature or from an independent (warrior/*vrātya*) tradition existing parallel with the priestly one. The existence of such a tradition is suggested by the presence of *vrātya*-like figures in the early epics, such as Rāma Jāmadagnya and Droṇa (Pontillo 2016).

The Mahābhārata combines the paradigm-myth – disconnected from the *pravargya* – with the Vedic and post-Vedic myths of Rudra's exclusion from the gods' sacrifice, his attack, piercing of the Sacrifice (based on a Vedic myth), and final inclusion. Just as in the myth from Period III, Rudra leans on the tip of his bow, but new elements have been introduced: the bowstring is broken not by termites but by sound (i.e. the sound made when the bowstring snaps in the Vedic versions), and no head is cut off. As in the *sattra*-setting of the Vedic myth, the Rāmāyaṇic version is based on a contest, between Rudra and Viṣṇu. The bows of Rudra and Viṣṇu are passed on to Rāma Jāmadagnya and the young Rāma Dāśarathi, both warrior-*brahmacārins*. Thus, even without the *pravargya* context the myth is linked to Rudraic figures in the epics. Since the *pravargya*-context, the solar symbolism, the termites, and the motif of the severed head (the Sun) all disappear from the myth in the epics, these four elements are linked together. The severed head (of Viṣṇu) is mentioned in the Liṅgapurāṇa, along with the termites in the Devībhāgavatapurāṇa and in a Tamil myth, but since the latter two appear to be directly influenced by Vedic texts, they are of less interest.

In conclusion, this gives the impression that an initiatory element may have been part of the *pravargya* from earliest times, but that possible links to, or influences from, the *vrātya* milieu belong to the late RVS and post-RVS periods. Structuring the textual material like this is not unproblematic, however. We must always keep in mind the scarcity of early sources. Passages from the RVS do not disprove possible “unorthodox” or *vrātya* versions of the ritual. The question of the *pravargya*'s historical origins and development during the Vedic period is a complex one.

Even if, as Köhler (2016) argues, there was no connection between the oldest form of *gharma/pravargya* and *sattra* or *vrātya*, this does not mean that there were no genuine influences from the *vrātya* milieu into the *pravargya*-complex referred to in the Atharvavedic and Yajurvedic Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, and Sūtras. I do not follow Köhler when he writes that *if* the

pravargya originated in the Atri clan and their adaption of the *prṣātaka* (as Houben suggests), the development of *pravargya* “can be explained without resorting to the concept of orthodoxy or the like” (Köhler 2015: 361). Even such origins and inner development cannot explain the existence of different *vrātya* or Rudraic (or “non-orthodox” in Amano 2016) elements in the later *pravargya*-complex. Are we to view such elements as secondary, random, and purely mythological? To me this seems unlikely. If there was no real orthodoxy in the RVS period, as Köhler argues, how do we know that the Atri clan’s *gharma/pravargya* was the only and oldest form of this ritual?

Houben bases his arguments on the relative dating of the individual RVS hymns, and on his evaluation of the references to *gharma*, suggesting that the ritual moved in the direction of increasing complexity. But to me it seems problematic to assume that differences concerning a specific ritual (*pravargya*) in a given set of texts from different periods correspond exactly to the development of the ritual: texts (RVS and other) that we date later than the family books may preserve traditions that are as old as those found in the family books. One need not assume, as van Buitenen (1968: 38–41) does, that it was increasing complexity of the ritual that gave it a secret/initiatory character. The earliest *gharma* references in the RVS do not say anything about *sattra*, *vrātya*, or Rudra, but the Aśvins were from the very beginning the recipients of the offering – and, if Oberlies (1998: 182–183) is right, the Aśvins can be interpreted as divine initiands. Perhaps the ascetic and initiatory element in the Frog hymn was not a novelty or addition to the simple *gharma*-offering, but belonged to it all along?

In any case, the ascetic and initiatory elements are important in many later references to the *pravargya*-complex, and, if I am right, looking at it in light of the beliefs and practices associated with the *vrātyas* can increase our understanding of the *pravargya* and Vedic-Brahmanic culture more generally.

ABBREVIATIONS OF PRIMARY SOURCES

- Aitareyabrāhmaṇa, see HAUG 1863.
 Āpastambaśrautasūtra, see CALAND 1924–1928; Garbe 1880.
 Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra, see KASHIKAR 2003.
 Bhāradvājaśrautasūtra, see KASHIKAR 1964.
 Devībhāgavatapurāṇa, see PANDEYA 1956.
 Edda of Snorri Sturluson, see FAULKES 2007.
 Edda Poetica, see NECKEL & KUHN 1983.
 Gopathabrāhmaṇa, see GAASTRA 1919.
 Homeric Hymn to Apollōn, see EVELYN-WHITE 1936.
 Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa, see CALAND 1919; TSUCHIDA 1979.
 Kāthāraṇyaka, see WITZEL 2004.
 Kātyāyanaśrautasūtra, see WEBER 1856.
 Kauśikasūtra, see GONDA 1965.
 Kauṣītakibrāhmaṇa, see LINDNER 1887.
 Liṅgapurāṇa, see SHASTRI 1980.
 Mahābhārata, see SUKTHANKAR et al. 1933–1966.
 Maitrāyaṇīsamhitā, see VON SCHROEDER 1881.
 Paippalādasamhitā, see SELVA 2019.
 Pañcaviṃśabrāhmaṇa, see CALAND 1931; KÜMMEL, GRIFFITHS & KOBAYASHI 2005 (& Jost GIPPERT 2009).

- Rāmāyaṇa, see GOLDMAN & SUTHERLAND 1985; RAMKRISHNA 1992.
 Ṛgvedakhilāni, see BHISE 1995.
 RVS = Ṛgvedasamhitā, see AUFRECHT 1877; JAMISON & BRERETON 2014.
 Śāṅkhāyanāranyaka, see KEITH 1908.
 Śāṅkhāyanaśrautasūtra, see HILLEBRANDT 1889.
 ŚBM = Śatapathabrāhmaṇa-Mādhyandina, see EGGELING 1882–1900 (1962–1963); WEBER 1855.
 Śaunakīyasamhitā, see GRIFFITH 1896; ROTH & WHITNEY [1924] 1966; WHITNEY [1905] 1962.
 Taittirīyāranyaka, see HOUBEN 1991; RĀJENDRA LĀLA MITRA 1864–1872.
 Taittirīyasamhitā, see KEITH [1914] 1967; *Taittirīya-samhitā*.
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