

Vāc as a Goddess of Victory in the Veda and her relation to Durgā¹

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Abstract

The worship of Durgā, the Hindu goddess of victory, appears to be a good deal older in South Asia than is generally assumed. I have been arguing that Durgā's

¹ In 1984, I submitted for publication a longer article entitled 'From Ishtar to Durgā: Sketch of the prehistory of India's feline-riding and buffalo-slaying goddess of victory'. It was to appear in a book to be called *Durgā and the Buffalo* and to be edited by Günther-Dietz Sontheimer and M. L. K. Murty in the series of the South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg. I did receive and return the first proofs, but then heard nothing of the book until more than five years later, when Professor Sontheimer died and I was informed that the project had been cancelled. Even though it is my intention eventually to revise this unpublished paper (which has been quoted from manuscript in some publications, e.g. Hiltebeitel 1991 and Mallebrein 1993) and to enlarge it into a full-length monograph, I have wanted to communicate its principal findings more rapidly by making the original available with minimal editing in smaller bits. One part appeared with the title 'The metamorphoses of Mahiṣa Asura and Prajāpati' in 1992 (Parpola 1992a). A second part experienced yet further delay. With the title 'The sound as a ritual means: Why is the goddess of victory called Vāc in the Veda?', I presented it at an International Indological seminar on 'Upāsana by the religious and areligious' held at the Somaiya Vidyāvihār, Bombay, on 27–30 December 1992. The proceedings of this seminar were supposed to come out soon afterwards, but until now, more than eight years later, I have received no information about its fate in spite of several inquiries. For this reason the paper is now being published here with some updating (without, however, systematically taking into consideration the copious literature relevant to the theme that has appeared in the meanwhile). Out of their original context, fragments of larger pieces of research like this one could lose much of their meaning. Before getting to the point indicated in the title, I have therefore sketched some main arguments of my overall hypothesis concerning the goddess Durgā (mainly on the basis of Parpola 1988).

cult came from the ancient Near East as early as Harappan times, partly directly by sea, but mainly overland via Iran and Afghanistan. This goddess of victory associated with lions/tigers and fortresses appears even in the Veda, being there called *Vāc*, 'Speech, Voice, Sound'. Presenting evidence for this here, I suggest that the name *Vāc* has its motivation in the mantras and the instrumental music which were important ritualistic means of securing military victory in ancient India; indeed, instrumental music and other kinds of noise play an integral (and for Vedic ritual quite unusual) part in the worship of the goddess *Vāc* at Mahāvratā. This Vedic new year festival seems to be functionally, as well as historically, related to the principal festival connected with Durgā's cult, namely the Navarātri/Daśarā, which is expressly connected with war expeditions and defence of the country. I further speculate that *Vāc* might be a translation loan from Dravidian **vil-/vel*, in which case the revelatory nature of this goddess of 'Speech' could derive from the oracles pronounced by her priests, in view of the archaic Dravidian cultic tradition that survives in Kerala to the present day.

Evidence for the cult of a proto-Durgā in the Indus Civilization

It has long been suggested that the Hindu goddess Durgā might be connected with the Near Eastern goddesses of love and war, such as the Sumero-Akkadian Inanna-Ishtar². In the absence of detailed and specific evidence, however, the prevalent critical view continues to be that the cult of Durgā, at least in her manifestation as the slayer of the Buffalo Demon, did not exist in India before about the beginning of the Christian era³.

The starting point for my own researches into the prehistory of Durgā was the art of the Indus Civilization, particularly the iconography on a cylinder seal from Kalibangan. Two soldiers spearing each other are held by the hand by a skirted goddess (whose figure appears even next to this scene, but now combined with the body of a tiger). This configuration suggested to me in 1970 that the Harappans worshipped a goddess of war and associated her with the tiger. Though the Kalibangan seal has been carved in Harappan style, and the image of the goddess is also found on square stamp seals characteristic of the Indus Civilization, its

² Cf. Przyluski 1950; Bhattacharyya 1974: 1ff.; 1977: 1ff.; 1982: 87ff.; 1996: 184ff.

³ Cf. Kane 1941: II (2), 738 f. and 1958: V (1), 185 f.; Stietencron 1983; Yokochi 1999. — There is now much new literature on the Goddess and her cult that I have not been able to take into consideration in this paper. I refer only to some recent books where further references can be found: Dehejia 1999; Hawley and Wulff 1996; Michaels et al. 1996.; Krauskopff and Lecomte-Tilouine 1996.

cylinder shape points to the west, and more particularly to the neighbouring Bactria-Margiana culture⁴. The Near Eastern and more particularly Elamite inspiration of the art of Bronze Age Bactria and Margiana (including the seals depicting a lion-escorted goddess) is established beyond any doubt⁵. It results from long-continued trade relations between the Near East/Elam and the Iranian plateau up to Afghanistan and Central Asia⁶.

The hypothesis that the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī myth goes back to Harappan times received further support from a comparison of the Harappan and Near Eastern variants of the so-called 'contest' motif, which I presented for the first time in 1981⁷. Here the parallelism is clearly the result of a historical connection, which is also demonstrated by the presence of Indus seals in Mesopotamia. The prototype of the 'contest' motif appears to be the fight between the lion and the bull as it is represented in Proto-Elamite art. In South Asian fauna, the tiger and the buffalo of the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī myth are natural counterparts of the lion and bull. This equation is not mere speculation, for there is factual evidence for a religious correspondence between the bull of the Near Eastern tradition and the water buffalo of the Indus Valley. Thus, the peculiar sitting posture of some bulls in Proto-Elamite seals is likely to be the model for the so-called 'yoga āsana' of the

⁴ Parpola 1970: 94; 1988: 238, 294 fig. 24; 1994: 253–255. — A different interpretation has recently been offered by Mark Kenoyer (1998: 117), who suggests that the two men are "fighting over a woman" and grabbing her hands. However, as I have pointed out in my review (Parpola 1999), "rather, she is grabbing their hands (space did not allow her horns nor her tiger vehicle to be depicted in this scene, but she appears to be the goddess of war [being depicted in the remaining part of the seal in a form interpreted by Kenoyer too as 'a female deity with the body of a tiger']). Her action can be understood from the Vedic text Jaiminiya-Brahmaṇa [2,115] which tells us of the goddess Vāc. Angered, she became a lioness with a mouth at either end of her body. Standing between the gods and demons who were fighting with each other, she grabbed whomever she could reach on either side. In other words, both sides lose warriors as victims to the goddess of war. On the Kalibangan seal, the two men both wear their hair in the 'double-bun': Kenoyer does not tell us that this hairstyle comes from Mesopotamia and that hair worn in such a 'double-bun' constitutes part of a Sumerian electrum helmet excavated at the Royal Cemetery of Ur."

⁵ Cf. Amiet 1986; 1989ab, with further references.

⁶ Cf. Potts 1999: 81ff. (spread of the Proto-Elamite script to the Iranian plateau, up to Shahr-i Sokhta in the east, c. 3000 BC), 98ff. ('Intercultural Style' carved stone vessels of the Iranian plateau, c. 2500 BC), 111ff. (Old Akkadian period contacts, including Bactria and the Indus Valley), 135ff. (Ur III period), 169, 178ff. (tin trade with Bactria in the Old Babylonian period).

⁷ Parpola 1984. See now also Parpola 1994: chapter 14.2.

famous 'Proto-Śiva' of the Indus Civilization. In 1978, Alf Hiltebeitel⁸ had already drawn attention to two details in the 'Proto-Śiva' seal, which induced him to rename the deity as 'Proto-Mahiṣa': the 'Proto-Śiva' wears the horns of the water buffalo, and the tiger and the water buffalo are represented on this seal as facing each other, as if they were opponents in a duel. On the other hand, Wolfram Nagel⁹ and Rainer Michael Boehmer¹⁰ have shown that the substitution of the bull with the water buffalo in the Old Akkadian seals is in all likelihood due to the import of actual specimens of the water buffalo into Mesopotamia from the Indus Valley.

The Akkadian 'contest' scenes even contain a new iconographic feature which must rely on the influence of Harappan art: the hero fighting the water buffalo lifts one of his feet upon the head of the beast. This pose is characteristic of the man who in several Indus Valley tablets and seals is represented as spearing a water buffalo. These scenes appear to depict a buffalo sacrifice, which is yet another trait pointing to the cult of Durgā. 'The sacrifice of the buffalo in India is offered exclusively to the Goddess, either at the festival of her temple in the beginning of the spring, or during the Navarātri [in the autumn]', says Madeleine Biardeau¹¹.

⁸ Hiltebeitel 1978.

⁹ Nagel 1962: 204.

¹⁰ Boehmer 1965; 1975.

¹¹ Biardeau 1981: 215, translated. Strictly speaking, Biardeau is not quite right, for according to the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā* (3,14,10) and the *Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā* (24,28), water buffaloes were to be sacrificed to Varuṇa (*varuṇāya mahiṣān*). This is the only reference to water buffalo sacrifices in the Middle Vedic texts, and it is all the more interesting as Varuṇa, the greatest Asura, appears to go back to the Dāsa god Śambara, who in turn seems to have been the lover-husband of the goddess, comparable to Mahiṣa Asura (see further on). The habit of sacrificing buffaloes to the god (Śambara) or goddess of war before a battle may have also prevailed in India at the time of the early R̥gvedic poems, for the R̥gvedic Aryans seem to have imitated it at first: Indra is said to have increased his warring powers by feasting on the meat of the water buffalo, sacrificed in enormous numbers. But with the single exception mentioned above, there is no mention of water buffalo sacrifices in later Vedic texts, which suggests a deliberate discrimination against the buffalo by the conservative circles of the Vedic priesthood. Apparently the buffalo was too conspicuously associated with the non-Vedic cult. For a more detailed discussion see Parpola 1992a, and for the connection of the buffalo and Varuṇa with the Durgā cult, Parpola 1998: 243f., 260ff., 270, 282, 293ff., 297ff.

Durgā as the goddess of the fortress (*durga*) and evidence for her worship by the Dāsas and in the Bronze Age culture of Bactria and Margiana

These hints at Durgā's genetic connection with Inanna-Ishtar and related Near Eastern and Mediterranean goddesses of war and fertility induced me to study the conceptions and cults related to the latter for the elucidation of Durgā's character. One important feature shared by many Western Asiatic goddesses is their association with the citadel or the defensive walls of the city. For example, the lions of the Goddess guard the gates of such cities as Boğazköy in Anatolia, Zincirli and Carchemish in Syria and Mycenae in Greece¹², and at Mari in Syria she is called *bēlēt ḥiṣāri* 'Mistress of the city walls'¹³. After the Anatolian goddess Kybele had been imported to Rome, the mural crown and lions remained her standard emblems.

The same characteristics — association with the fortress and the felines — seem to be fundamental to Durgā and her variant forms in India. The very names of many of these goddesses can be derived from various appellations of the 'stronghold', some of Aryan, others of Dravidian etymology. Such an explanation is, moreover, fully endorsed by the textual tradition. Thus, for example, the Agni-Purāṇa (138,14) states that 'One would be able to slay his enemies after having propitiated the goddess Durgā with the words, "O Durgā, Protectress of the fort (*durga-rakṣaṇī*)!"'¹⁴

Similarly in Agni-Purāṇa 135,2, the goddess Cāmuṇḍā is addressed as *koṭa-rākṣī* 'protector of the fortress', while the Kālikā-Purāṇa (68,79) speaks of the goddess as *koṭeśvarī* 'mistress of the fort'. In Harivaṃśa (3,22–27), the naked goddess *Kōṭṭavī* saves Kumāra (the young god of war). *Kōṭṭavī* (alias *Kōṭṭarī*, *Koṭarā*) is the name of the (feline-faced) goddess Carcikā, who was worshipped with phallic rites and a serpent cult at Hiṅgulāja in south Baluchistan¹⁵. In Sanskrit, the name *Kōṭṭavī* can be explained as consisting of the word *kōṭ(t)a* 'fort, stronghold' + the suffix *-va-* 'provided with' + the feminine suffix *-ī*¹⁶. In Nepal,

¹² Hörig 1979: 53–55.

¹³ Hörig 1979: 187.

¹⁴ Agni-Purāṇa 138,14: *durge durgarakṣaṇīti durgām prāracyārihā bhavet*. Cf. also Bhattacharyya (1982: 208): "Durgā...was associated with inaccessible regions, and it is also possible that she was originally conceived of as the protectress of forts (*durga*). However, fanciful explanation of Durgā was invented on etymological ground by associating her with the slaying of a demon called Durgama".

¹⁵ Agrawala 1964: 171–175 with textual references.

Durgā has a sanctuary in every fort of the country, and her temples are called ‘fortresses’, *koṭ* in Nepali and *kvāṭha* in Newari¹⁷. The word used of the Goddess’s temple in Old Tamil is *kōṭṭai* ‘fort’¹⁸. If this etymon is of Proto-Dravidian origin, as many authorities think¹⁹, it may have been used of the Harappan forts.

Goddess *Tripurā* or *Tripura-sundarī* is a form of Durgā popular from early on in Kashmir and South India and later eastern India as well²⁰. I have argued that she was originally so called because she was the guardian deity of the *tripura*, the triple (i.e. three-walled)²¹ stronghold of the Asuras. These ‘demons’ appear to have been the *Dāsas*, the enemies of the Ṛgvedic Aryans, who worshipped gods called *asura* and had forts provided with several concentric, circular walls, exemplified by the Bronze Age temple-fortress of Dashly-3 in North Afghanistan (c. 2000 BC). Could the nine identical rooms (each with a single door) that form the innermost circular wall of the Dashly-3 “tripura” possibly be related to the “Nine Durgās” (*navadurgā*) of the later Tantric tradition, or to the celebration of the nine days/nights of the *navarātri*? In Bhaktapur, Nepal, Tripura-sundarī guards the internal space of the town, her seat being located near the regal centre represented by the palace: this 9th goddess of the Nava-durgā group in the centre of the Aṣṭa-mātrkāś, the eight goddesses guarding the cardinal and intermediate directions of space, “concentrates their individual powers in an eightfold increase at the centre of the *maṇḍala*”²². A direct genetic relationship between the Tantric

¹⁶ Cf. Vācaspati quoted by Filliozat (1973: xxx). Filliozat (*l.c.*) observed: “Le sens de ‘forteresse’ *durga-*, proprement ‘mal accessible’, est aussi normalement celui de *koṭa*. On serait donc tenté, *Koṭavī* étant un nom de la déesse Durgā, la ‘Mal accessible’, d’y chercher un synonyme de Durgā...” As Filliozat did not think of Durgā as ‘the goddess of the fortress’, he was, however, not satisfied with this etymology, which I think is the correct one.

¹⁷ Toffin 1981: 77, 60.

¹⁸ References in Subrahmanian 1966: 334f.

¹⁹ Cf. Burrow and Emeneau 1984: no. 2207; Mayrhofer 1997: III (22), 124f.

²⁰ See Kinsley 1997: 112–128.

²¹ Cf. Macdonell and Keith 1912: I, 329: “Tri-pura, ‘a threefold stronghold’, is alluded to in the Brāhmaṇas [footnote 1 gives references] as a secure protection. But as the passages are mythical, no stress can be laid on them as evidence for the existence of forts with three concentric walls”. Later on, *tripura* was often understood to denote ‘three cities’, made of iron, silver and gold, and built on the earth, in the atmosphere and in heaven, respectively (cf. e.g. Dange 1990: V, 1481). — Kinsley (1997: 120) is somewhat inaccurate in stating that the “most obvious and apparent meaning” of the name Tripura-sundarī “is ‘she who is beautiful in the three worlds’”. Tantric texts associate Tripura-sundarī with various triads of Hindu philosophy and religion (see Kinsley 1997: 120f.).

tradition of South Asia and the Bronze Age culture of Bactria-Margiana is strongly suggested by the ‘palace’ of Dashly-3 which has a ground plan identical with the most fundamental Tantric maṇḍala of later South Asian religions²³. Reference has already been made to the fact that several compartmental metal seals of the Bactrian Bronze Age culture depict a goddess associated with lions, panthers or other felines²⁴.

The single inscribed Indus seal coming from Shortughai in northern Afghanistan, in the immediate vicinity of Dashly, bears the image of the rhinoceros (which has martial associations in later South Asia, being called in Sanskrit *khadga-mṛga* ‘animal with a sword’) and two signs of the Indus script²⁵. The Indus sign which is to be read first consists of ‘three short vertical strokes’ and stands for the number 3²⁶. The second sign evidently depicts a ‘palisade’ or ‘fence, defensive wall’²⁷. I tentatively read this in Proto-Dravidian as **mu-k-kōṭṭai*, which is a synonym of Sanskrit *tri-pura*. The compound *mu-k-kōṭṭai* is actually attested in medieval Tamil literature, and denotes there ‘a shrine of Durgā who is said to endow Her votaries with poetic powers’²⁸.

To the names Durgā, Kōṭṭavī and Tripurā, which all connect the goddess of war and victory with the fortress, can be added *Śāradā*²⁹. The temple of the goddess Śāradā at the present-day fort of *Śardi* (< **Śāradī*) in Kashmir used to be widely famed and still attracts pilgrims at the great ‘autumnal worship’ (*śāradīya-mahāpūjā*) of the goddess. (According to Kālikā-Purāṇa 69,1, the Goddess has got her name Śāradā from the autumnal worship.) Śāradā is connected with the stronghold through the phrase *śāradī pur*, which is used of the Dāsa forts in several R̥gvedic hymns. We have seen that a fortress often serves as the temple of Durgā; what I am suggesting is that the Dāsas may have used

²² Gutschow 1996: 195, quoting Levy 1990: 229; on the Navadurgā of Bhaktapur, see also Levy 1987, and Gutschow and Bāsukala 1987. In South India, there are several different lists of the Nine Durgās, Tripura-sundarī not being among them; see Nagaswamy 1982: 132ff.

²³ Brentjes 1981: 26; 1983; Jettmar 1981: 227; Parpola 1988: 257, 298 fig. 29. On Dashly see Sarianidi 1976; 1977. The Dashly temple-fort has turned out to have impressive parallels in the southern Urals c. 2000 BC, such as Arkaim (see Zdanovich 1995). Arkaim was almost certainly built by speakers of an early Aryan language (Parpola, in press.).

²⁴ Parpola 1988: 258ff. with figs. 11, 29 and 30; Sarianidi 1998: 52–57 nos. 16, 22, 24, 34, 37, 40.

²⁵ Francfort 1984: 171 fig. 22.3.

²⁶ Parpola 1994: 73 fig. 5.1 (sign list), no. 130 a; 81f. (numbers).

²⁷ Parpola 1994: 76 fig. 5.1 (sign list), no. 295 g.

their 'autumnal forts' as temples for celebrating their yearly festivals of the goddess. Independently of this hypothesis, Karl Jettmar has pointed out that the living facilities of the Bronze Age 'ceremonial fort' of Dashly-3 in Bactria are such that it could not have been permanently inhabited; he has therefore suggested that people of the neighbouring regions lived there in relative discomfort during yearly festivals. Jettmar compares this assumed custom to the yearly festivals of the Nuristani-speaking peoples of present-day northern Afghanistan³⁰. A Nuristani hymn speaks of a golden fortress created by the goddess *Disani*³¹. *Disani*'s name comes from that of the early Vedic goddess *Dhiṣāṇā*,³² whom the Vedic texts identify with *Vāc*³³, the goddess upon whose warrior character this paper is focusing.

The 'autumnal forts' are mentioned in the Ṛgveda as belonging to *Dāsa Śambara*. A later variant of *Śambara*'s name, *Samvara*, warrants its derivation from the root *vr-* 'to enclose, protect', from which also come Vedic *saṃvarana* 'enclosure for cattle' and Avestan *vara* 'citadel'³⁴. The word *śambara* itself appears to be an appellative meaning 'stronghold, citadel' in a couple of places (RS 2,24,2; 1,59,6)³⁵. *Śambara* or *Samvara* is also the name of a terrifying divinity of Śaiva origin in the Lamaistic pantheon, who has a protective function and is a variant of the buffalo-shaped god *Heruka*³⁶. The buffalo shape of this later

²⁸ *Tamil Lexicon*, s.v. The word *kōṭṭam* 'fortress' is used of the temple of the goddess in Old Tamil too: Maṇimēkalai speaks of the temple of the tutelary goddess of the city of Pukār as *mutiyāl kōṭṭam* (21,3) or *mutiyōl kōṭṭam* (17,88; 18,169; 19,39; 22,3), cf. Subrahmanian 1966 s.v. The word *mutiyāl/mutiyōl* means 'old woman, goddess' (*Tamil Lexicon*, s.v.). — Another possible reading would seem to be *mu-m-matil*, which Piṅkala-nikaṇṭu records in the meaning of *tripura*, and which is used figuratively by the Jains (the three fortifications of *camavacaraṇam*, TL s.v.). The Tamil word *matil* denotes 'wall round a fort, fortification' (TL), occurs in Old Tamil literature (Kalitokai 67) and has cognates in Malayalam, Kannada, Tulu, Telugu and Konda (DEDR no. 4692). Old Tamil texts (Kalitokai 2,4; Paripāṭal 5,25; Puṇam 55,2) use also the compound *mū-v-eyil* of 'the three cities destroyed by Śiva' (TL) or 'tripuras, the three forts of the Asuras' (Subrahmanian 1966: 704), but though the word *eyil* 'fortress, wall, fortification' (TL) is Dravidian, it is known from Tamil and Malayalam alone (DEDR no. 808).

²⁹ For the following, cf. Parpola 1988: 259f.

³⁰ Jettmar 1981.

³¹ Jettmar 1975: 98.

³² Turner 1966: no. 6813.

³³ MS 3,1,8 and ŚB 6,5,4,6: *vāg vai dhiṣāṇā*.

³⁴ Parpola 1988: 261.

³⁵ Burrow 1977: 74.

Śambara and the fact that the early Śambara belonged to the Asura-worshipping Dāsas gives reason to ask: is Śambara not the same as the Buffalo demon Mahiṣa Asura of Durgā's mythology, and Vedic Varuṇa, the mightiest Asura, to whom buffaloes were sacrificed?³⁷ The original meaning of Śambara as a masculine noun (used as a proper name of a warrior or war-god) would have been 'protector' (compare the related Avestan *hām.var ʔtay* 'manly courage' and modern Persian *gurd* 'hero'), and as a neuter noun 'protection, stronghold'.

Hindu and Vedic festivals connected with war expeditions

An etymological connection has been widely assumed to exist between the name *Śambara* and the Sanskrit word *śabara*, which means 'savage'³⁸. It seems significant that the latter word is found in *śābarotsava*, the name of the tenth-day festival on which the autumnal Navarātri or the nine-day celebration of Durgā culminates. This 'tenth day of victory' (*viṣaya-daāmī*, also called *daśaharā* > Hindi *daśahrā* > English *dussehra*) is in memory of Durgā's victory over the Buffalo demon, and it is the most auspicious day of the year to start a military expedition³⁹.

There are two major Durgā festivals in the year, the principal being, nowadays, the Navarātri celebrated at the beginning of the Āśvina month (September–October) when the military operations have traditionally started, and another, less important, at the beginning of the Caitra month (March–April)⁴⁰. This broadly agrees with the law texts, according to which the king should set out on a military expedition in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa (now November–December, in Vedic times October–November), when the roads have dried up after the rainy season and there is abundant fodder and grain available; an alternative date is either in the month of Phālguna (now February–March, in Vedic times

³⁶ Snellgrove 1987: 153 ff.; Parpola 1992: 298f.

³⁷ Parpola 1988: 261f.; 1992: 296ff.

³⁸ An instructive parallel for the relationship between the high god Śiva and a tribal deity of aboriginal hunters is found in Kerala (Parpola 1999b); cf. also Śiva as a tribal hunter (*kirāta*) in the Mahābhārata (Scheuer 1982: 212ff.).

³⁹ For a detailed analysis of the textual descriptions of the navarātri + daśaharā, see Einoo 1999; for descriptions of its local variants, see Fuller and Logan 1985 (Madurai); Krauskopff and Lecomte-Tilouine 1996 (Nepal); Östör (1980) 1992 (Bengal); Sivapriyananda 1995 (Mysore); Sontheimer 1982 (Karnataka); Tanaka 1999 (Chidambaram); Vergati 1994 (Rajasthan).

⁴⁰ Kane 1955: V (1), 154.

January–February) or in Caitra (now March–April)⁴¹.

According to Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa (TB) 1,8,4,1 (and Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 5,5,2,3–5), the Vedic Kuru and Pañcāla tribes formerly used to start their eastwards directed raids in the cool season (around January–February); after appropriating the barley harvest in the east, they returned in late summer immediately before the rainy season (around the first half of July)⁴². Thereafter, they offered cooked rice to Sarasvatī; this statement is followed in the TB by the comment ‘therefore all (manner of) voices sound in the rainy season’ (*sārasvataṃ carum nirvapati/tasmāt prāvṛṣi sarvā vāco vadanti*). The phrase connects the ‘sounding of all manner of voices’ with the rainy season. It is significant that exactly the same phrase occurs in the Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa (5,5,20) in the description of the Mahāvrata festival: ‘All (manner of) voices sound’ (*sarvā vāco vadanti*).

In most texts, the Mahāvrata and the Viṣuvat, festivals marking the end/beginning and the middle of the Vedic sacrificial year, are connected with the winter solstice and the summer solstice respectively; this tradition of starting the year with the winter solstice continues Indo-European heritage⁴³. After coming to India from Bactria and Margiana, where non-Vedic Indo-Iranian warriors called Dāsa appear to have taken over the rule and therewith the local worship of the originally Near Eastern goddess of victory, this Indo-European tradition seems to have become fused with the Harappan tradition which started the year with the vernal equinox:⁴⁴ in the Indus Civilization, too, the Goddess of Victory was worshipped, presumably in connection with the principal seasonal festivals surviving in the two Navarātris⁴⁵. The Mahāvrata in particular is full of acts that are very rare in the Vedic ritual, which suggests that they are of non-Vedic (i.e. Dāsa) origin; the few other Vedic rites that offer parallels to these acts, the so-called Vrātya rituals, are specifically connected with raiding expeditions. These include the horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*) and the Vrātya-stoma rites. Thus, it has been shown that ‘the vrātya-stoma primarily celebrates the covenant between the vrātyas when setting out on a vrātya expedition, while on return a similar celebration takes place’⁴⁶. The Vrātya rituals are generally considered as archaic survivals of older practices⁴⁷. Their military and orgiastic character and

⁴¹ Manu 7,182; Viṣṇu-Smṛti 3,40; Yājñavalkya 1,347.

⁴² Rau 1957: 15; Heesterman 1957: 211.

⁴³ See Falk 1986: 144ff.

⁴⁴ See Parpola 1994: 201–207.

⁴⁵ See now Parpola 1998, passim.

⁴⁶ Heesterman 1962: 7.

association with the turning points of the year link them with the present-day Hindu festivals of Durgā, and I have been arguing for their common origin.

As already noted, the Navarātri festival of Durgā culminates on 'the tenth day of victory'. The Kālikā-Purāṇa explicitly connects it with the lustration of the army (62,31–32; 42ff.) and describes its Śābara-festivities as follows (63,18ff.):

People should be engaged in amorous play with single women, young girls, courtesans and dancers, amidst the sounds of horns and instruments, and with drums and kettle-drums, with flags and various sorts of cloths covered with a miscellany of parched grain and flowers; by throwing dust and mud; with auspicious ceremonies for fun; by mentioning the female and male organs, with songs on the male and female organs, and with words expressive of the sexual act, until they have enough of it. If one is not derided by others, if one does not deride others, the goddess will be angry with him and utter a dreadful curse (Transl. Kooij 1972: 121.)⁴⁸.

This Śābara festival seems to me to be the original context of the famous *cakra-pūjā* or 'circle worship'⁴⁹ of the goddess in the left hand Śākta Tantrism. The male partners of the 'circle worship' are spoken of as 'heroes' (*vīra*);⁵⁰ this term is significant, as it connects the performers with warriors beginning or ending a military expedition. According to the Devī-Māhātmya, Durgā drinks wine to increase her fury for the fight against the mighty buffalo. The warriors, too, take intoxicants, and while they are still in ecstasy from the feast, the army marches into the battle⁵¹. The circle worship may progressively take the form of the 'five m's' (*pañca ma-kārāḥ*): *madya* 'intoxicant', *māmsa* 'flesh', *matsya* 'fish', *mudrā* 'seal, impressed wafer, parched grain' and *maithuna* 'sexual intercourse'⁵². All these elements are present in the Śābara festival; in addition to the above quotation from the Kālikā-Purāṇa, compare the following extracts from chapter 63:

43–48. one should worship the Supporteress of the worlds with dance, song, play, festivity and benediction; with sweetmeat, cakes, drinks, foods... various kinds of meat, spirituous liquors... with parched grain... with he-goats, rams and with

⁴⁷ On the Vratya rituals, see Hauer 1927, Heesterman 1962, and now especially Falk 1986.

⁴⁸ Cf. also Kane 1955: V (1), 177. Beck (1981: 117) points out that even nowadays insults of the Brahmins form an integral part of the goddess's festival. This may be compared to the criticism of the (Brahmanical) sacrificers at the Mahāvratā.

⁴⁹ Walker 1968: I, 220 f.; Marglin 1985: 217ff.

⁵⁰ Cf. Marglin 1985: 227f., 238; Bharati 1993: 240 ff.

⁵¹ Stietenron 1983: 137.

⁵² Cf. Marglin 1985: 217ff.; Bharati 1993: 242ff.

quantities of one's own blood; with various sorts of wild animals... with flesh, blood and slime (Transl. Kooij 1972: 110f.).

Let us now take a closer look at some of the acts not normally found in a Vedic rite that take place at the culmination of the Mahāvrata⁵³. At noon, 'they make a Māgadha and a Puṁścalū copulate on the southern border of the Vedi' (JB 2,405). A celibate student and a harlot scold each other. The prostitute reviles the ascetic because he has broken his vow of chastity, while the ascetic reproaches the girl as 'a vile harlot, the washerwoman of the warring band, who cleanses the member of every man'. People shout for joy. The sacrificers are praised and reviled by special officiants. Young maidens, expressly said to be Dāsīs, i.e., slave girls of Dāsa descent, dance around the fireplace used for 'cleansing' the utensils; while dancing, they carry water pots, smite their thighs, and sing a song of fertility for the cows. All sorts of noise is produced (PB 5,5,20: 'all (manner of) voices sound' *sarvā vāco vadanti*), especially music by various kinds of harps, flutes and drums. This is one of the very few places in Vedic religion where instrumental music plays any role. Most prominent among the musical instruments mentioned in this connection are a hundred-stringed harp and a big 'earth drum'.

The Vrātyas who perform the Vrātya-stomas are said to be accompanied by a harlot (*puṁscalī*) and a bard, whose name, *māgadha*, associates him with the non-Vedic country of Magadha in the east. These two persons appear together in only two other contexts: in the Mahāvrata, and in the long list of additional victims at the human sacrifice. Among the very few Vedic rituals involving sexual intercourse, in addition to the Mahāvrata, are the horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*) and the human sacrifice (*puṁśmedha*). These two are practically identical, except for the difference concerning the chief victim, a stallion and a man respectively (ŚŚS 16,10,2). In both of these rites, the chief victim has returned from a year-long victorious expedition; the accompanying army has parallels in the Vrātya bands of the Vrātya-stomas⁵⁴. During the expedition, the horse or the young man may gratify any other wish but he has to remain chaste (ŚŚS 16,10,9); after he has been put to death at the sacrifice, he lies with the chief queen. This post-mortem intercourse, reminding one of the marriage and death of the buffalo with the Goddess in the South Indian village cult⁵⁵, is accompanied by an obscene dialogue that has a counterpart not only in the Mahāvrata but also in the Śābarotsava of the Vijaya-daśamī.

⁵³ For Mahāvrata, see Rolland 1973.

⁵⁴ Parpola 1983: 51.

⁵⁵ Beck 1981.

VĀC AS A GODDESS OF VICTORY IN THE VEDA AND HER RELATION TO DURGĀ

The circle of the four royal wives (together with their 400 maids-in-waiting) who participate in the sexual rite of the horse sacrifice⁵⁶ provides a Vedic counterpart to the circle of the Śākta Tantric *cakra-pūjā*. The latter has its prototype in the *mātr-maṇḍala* or *mātr-cakra*, which according to the Tantric texts consists of 'mothers' or apsaras (especially Jayā, Vijayā, Ajitā and Aparājitā, goddesses of victory associated with the four points of the compass) who form a circle around the god Tumburu (identified with Bhairava, Rudra Tryambaka, Śiva, etc.) and work themselves up to the state of the utmost revelry, dancing, singing, laughing, mocking people, drinking and devouring quantities of raw flesh⁵⁷.

Vāc as the creative speech

It will appear from the discussion of the musical instruments played at the Mahāvratā that the goddess Vāc is the central deity of this festival, which thus corresponds to the tenth day of Durgā's autumnal festival also in its worship of a female divinity. But that is not all. As we shall see, Vāc is also a goddess of war, in many respects similar to Durgā. This is not generally acknowledged, however, and we must insert here some words on the current conception about the goddess Vāc. David Kinsley in his book *Hindu Goddesses* makes the following statements regarding the Vedic texts:

many of the most important goddesses of the later tradition are not found at all in Vedic literature... Such important goddesses as Pārvatī, Durgā, Kālī, Rādhā, and Sītā are unknown in early Vedic literature... Furthermore, none of the Vedic goddesses is clearly associated with battle or blood sacrifice, both of which are important associations in the myths and cults of several later Hindu goddesses (Kinsley 1986: 18).

As Kinsley on the whole is well informed and gives an excellent survey of the female deities in the Hindu tradition, this must be taken as a widely accepted view⁵⁸. My own thesis is that the Vedic goddess Vāc is in fact a form of Durgā, and that Vāc is associated both with battle and with blood sacrifice, although this is not apparent in Kinsley's two-page description of Vāc (pp. 11–13). It may well be that scholars have been somewhat misled by the name of the goddess. While correctly translating the name of the goddess as 'Speech' (the Sanskrit word *vāc* is etymologically related to Latin *vox* 'voice, speech') Kinsley comments on its meaning as follows:

⁵⁶ References and more details are given further on.

⁵⁷ Goudriaan 1973: 57 ff.

⁵⁸ Cf. also Alper 1989: 334, with a fairly extensive and up-to-date bibliography on Vāc.

Although the significance of sound and speech as the primordial stuff of creation is primarily a post-Ṛg-vedic concept, it is apparent even in the Ṛg-veda that sound, and especially ritual speech, is powerful, creative, and a mainstay of cosmic-ritual order. The goddess Vāc, whose name means “speech”, reveals herself through speech and is typically characterized by various attributes and uses of speech. She is speech, and the mysteries and miracles of speech express her peculiar, numinous nature (Kinsley 1986: 11).

Though sound is mentioned in this quotation together with speech, non-verbal sounds are left out of consideration in the sequel, which concentrates on expatiating the importance of speech and its creative capacity. This is understandable in view of W. Norman Brown’s influential article ‘The creative role of the goddess Vāc in the Rig-Veda’ (1968) and André Padoux’s book of 1963, translated into English with the title *Vāc: The concept of the word in selected Hindu Tantras*. Attention has indeed often been focused on the more ‘philosophical’ aspects of Vāc:⁵⁹ thus in his conclusion Kinsley observes that

her role in the Brāhmaṇas is suggestive of the nature of *śakti* in later Hinduism. Her role vis-à-vis Prajāpati is also suggestive of the theory of *śabda-brahman* (the absolute in the form of sound) and the *spṛṣṭa* theory of creation (in which the world is created through sound) (Kinsley 1986: 13).

Sarasvatī as a goddess of war and victory

Shyam Kisore Lal in his book *Female divinities in Hindu mythology and ritual* (1980) devotes 17 pages to Vāc. In this more comprehensive but less known exposition, Lal discusses also the destructive and terrible side of Vāc as well as her connection with non-verbal sounds. But even Lal devotes just one footnote to the drum (Lal 1980: 166 n. 45), which is one of the focuses of the present paper.

Both Kinsley (1986: 11) and Lal (1980: 178, 182ff.) note that Vāc is consistently identified in the later Vedic literature with the goddess Sarasvatī (*vāg vai sarasvatī*: TS 2,1,2,6; 2,2,9,1; ŚB 2,5,4,6; 3,9,1,7; etc.). We start with Sarasvatī, who is more clearly characterized as a martial goddess in some Ṛgvedic references.

Originally, Sarasvatī is a river goddess: she represents the holiest of the rivers, in early Vedic times probably the Indus. But as noted by Helena Willman-Grabowska in 1952, Sarasvatī also appears as a tutelary goddess, and a goddess of war and victory in the Ṛgveda⁶⁰. Thus RS 7,95,1 says, ‘With nourishing stream, she flowed swiftly forwards: Sarasvatī is a support, a fort of bronze’ (*prā kṣōdasā*

⁵⁹ See now also Beck 1993.

dhāyasā sasra eṣā sárasvatī dharūṇam āyāsī pūh). One may compare the 'watery fortress' (*abdurga*) mentioned in Manu 7,70. In verse 3, the same Rgvedic hymn praises Sarasvatī as 'the manly one among the young maidens' (*nāryo yōsanāsu*) and 'the male young bull among the (goddesses) worthy of sacrifice' (*vṛṣā śíśur vṛṣabhó yajñtyāsu*), who 'bestows a victorious steed to the munificent'. According to the Anukramanī, the male river god Sarasvat is meant here, who is often mentioned side by side with Sarasvatī. In the Brāhmaṇa texts oblations to Sarasvat and Sarasvatī are performed with 'Victory' (*jaya*) formulae, which were seen by Prajāpati and given by him to Indra; by means of them Indra became terrifying in battles and vanquished the demons (TS 3,4,4; 3,5,1). In RS 6,49,7, Sarasvatī is 'the spouse of the hero' (*vīrápatnī*); one possibility to interpret this debated epithet is in the light of Bhāsa's Ūrubhaṅga, where the celestial water nymphs, apsarasas, select their spouses among the heroes who fall on the battle-field and thereby reach heaven. In RS 6,61,2, Sarasvatī is the slayer of enemies (*pārāvataḥnī*); in verse 6, she has swift steeds in competitions (*vājeṣu vājini*), while in verse 7, Sarasvatī has the epithets 'terrible' (*ghorā*) and 'enemy-killing, victorious' (*vṛtraghnī*). At Mahāvratā and Vājapeya, victory in racing is ascribed to the goddess Vāc.

Herman Lommel has suggested that as a river Sarasvatī most originally is the river known from Old Iranian sources as Harahvatī in Arachosia, and that as a goddess Sarasvatī corresponds to the pre-Zoroastrian goddess of ancient Iranians, Anāhitā, known especially from the fifth Yašt of the Avesta and also appearing as a river; according to Lommel, Anāhitā, too, is to a large extent a goddess of war and victory;⁶¹ one of Anāhitā's very names is Sūrā, 'heroine'⁶². This connection with the pre-Zoroastrian goddess of eastern Iran and Central Asia suggests that Sarasvatī/Vāc descends from the lion-escorted goddess of Bronze Age Bactria-Margiana.

In later Hinduism, Sarasvatī (who is also called Vāgīśī, Vāgīśvarī, Vāgdevatā, Vāgadhīdevatā)⁶³ is the patroness of music, fine arts, eloquence and learning. Traditionally, public performance of music, song and dance was a taboo for ladies other than prostitutes in India. "Sarasvatī is traditionally associated with the

⁶⁰ Willman-Grabowska 1951–52: 258, 262ff.; cf. also Lommel 1954: 409f.; Lal 1980: 99, 169, 181.

⁶¹ Lommel 1954 ("Und wie sehr kriegerisches Wesen bei Anahita besteht, sehen wir schon daraus, dass sie von zahlreichen Helden der Sage in ihren Kämpfen um Sieg angefleht wird. Sie überwindet alle Feindschaften...", p. 409).

⁶² Lommel 1954: 412.

⁶³ Mallmann 1963: 190ff.

courtesans for her being the presiding deity of the sixty-four arts which the learned courtesans should master according to the *Kāmasūtra*"; actually the prostitutes worship both Sarasvatī as well as Kārttikeya (the Hindu war god Skanda) who is supposed to be her consort⁶⁴. At the horse sacrifice, Sarasvatī seems to be represented by the consecrated queen⁶⁵, who has sham sexual intercourse with the sacrificial horse (as Gaṇapati, the leader of the victorious army of the sacrificing king, the horse — like the victim of the parallel human sacrifice — represents the god of war, as well as the dying god of fertility)⁶⁶, as well as by the other wives of the king and their female retainers, who circumambulate the couple⁶⁷ and wait upon them⁶⁸, and by the singing and dancing apsaras who make an appearance at the folk entertainment⁶⁹. These females correspond to the harlot who is the female partner in the sexual intercourse at the Mahāvratā, and to the yoginīs of the Vijaya-daśamī. *Vīṇā* 'harp' is played in the horse sacrifice by bards praising the sacrificing king⁷⁰. In later Hinduism, Sarasvatī plays the harp (*vīṇā*) as does Rudra, the god of war, Rudra-vīṇā being one of the popular types of harp⁷¹. Sarasvatī and Skanda, Rudra's successor as the god of war, also share the same vehicle⁷² — the beautiful peacock that screams

⁶⁴ Bhattacharyya 1996: 202.

⁶⁵ In ŚB 6,5,3,1, the consecrated queen (*mahiṣī*) is equated with the earth and said to be 'invincible' (*aṣādhā*).

⁶⁶ Cf. Parpola 1998: 293ff.

⁶⁷ Cf. ŚB 13,2,8,4–5.

⁶⁸ Cf. ŚB 13,5,2,1ff. Note that "every kind of speech" has a central role on this occasion (ŚB 13,5,2,9–10).

⁶⁹ Cf. ŚB 13,4,3,8.

⁷⁰ Cf. ŚB 13,1,5,1–6; 13,4,3,3–14; 13,4,4,2–3; TB 3,9,14,1–3.

⁷¹ In the Veda, Rudra's harp is represented by the harp of the god of Death (Mṛtyu) in the orgiastic sacrifice similar to the Mahāvratā, which (according to JB 2,69–70) for a long time rivalled the 'purified' Vedic sacrifice. In the Dīgha-Nikāya (II, p. 219), Brahma Sanamkumāra plays the harp to the gods in the form of the heavenly musician Pañcasikha. Brahma Sanamkumāra is undoubtedly the war god Skanda, also called Sanatkumāra 'eternal youth', and (especially in South India) Subrahmaṇya. Skanda is also the god of learning, whose spear symbolizes the sharp knowledge and intellect, which pierces the demon of ignorance. In Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 7,26,2, Sanatkumāra is equated with Skanda. Here Sanatkumāra teaches higher knowledge to Nārada, the divine musician, who masters a great number of sciences. Many of the branches of learning mentioned here are little known (cf. Horsch 1966: 17 f.), but appear in the enumeration of the kinds of educational programmes arranged for the public at the royal horse sacrifice (cf. ŚB 13,4,3,2–14; cf. Horsch 1966: 20 ff.). This is, once again, a common point between this festival and the Hindu Durgāpūjā.

and dances at the coming of the rains. Sarasvatī and Rudra-Skanda appear to be just the male and female aspects of one and the same divinity of war and fertility, like ʿAṭtar and ʿAṭtart among the Semites.

One further thing underlining Sarasvatī's identity with Durgā⁷³ is that in parts of India (particularly the south), the autumnal Durgā-pujā and the Vijaya-daśamī are mainly celebrated with Sarasvatī-pūjā, performed on the 7th to 10th days in the bright half of the Āśvina month. Then all books and manuscripts of the household and the ladies' harps are worshipped along with the image of Sarasvatī; during these days of worship, no one must study, teach or write a book⁷⁴. On the Vijaya-daśamī, which is auspicious for all undertakings (but especially for war expeditions), the study is started with the *vidyārambha* ritual⁷⁵. The craftsmen also perform an āyudha-pūjā on the 9th day, worshipping the tools of their trade⁷⁶. Besides 'tool' the word *āyudha* means 'weapon': this pūjā is, of course, related to the worship of (Durgā's) weapons of war during the autumnal festival of the goddess (Kālikā-Purāṇa 62, 52ff.)⁷⁷.

⁷² Cf. Bhattacharyya 1996: 202.

⁷³ On the 24th of November, 1999, I attended a lecture by Catherine Ludvik at the Italian School of East Asian Studies at Kyoto. Ludvik spoke on "Eight-armed Benzaiten: Her origin and manifestations". She pointed out that the iconography of this Japanese form of Sarasvatī goes back to China as found at Dun Huang. The iconography exactly matches Kaṇḍinya's stotra added later to the Chinese translation of the Suvarṇa-prabhāsa-sūtra; this Kaṇḍinya's stotra in turn goes back to a Durgā-stotra of the Mahābhārata and the Harivaṃśa. Cf. the article on Benzaiten in *Hōbōgirin*, I (1929), 63–65. — In the ensuing discussion I mentioned my Bombay paper on Vāc as a Goddess of Victory, and Werner Knobl without knowing my argumentation suggested that the name Vāc might refer to the sound of war-drums.

⁷⁴ Cf. Kane 1958: V (1), 442; Tanaka 1999.

⁷⁵ The Sarasvatī-pūjā performed before starting the study for the sake of its successful completion is paralleled by the worship of Gaṇapati at the beginning of any task but especially study. *Gaṇapati* 'leader of a host' is a military title in origin, synonymous with *senāpati* 'leader of the army', an epithet of the war god Skanda, who undoubtedly was one with Gaṇapati once. In the horse sacrifice, the mantra 'We call upon you, the host-leader of (divine) hosts...' *gaṇānām tvā gaṇapatiṃ havāmahe* (RS 2,23,1; VS 23,19, etc.) is addressed to the chief victim after he has returned from a victorious war expedition (ŚB 13,2,8,4).

⁷⁶ Kane 1958: V (1), 442.

⁷⁷ Kooij 1972: 111.

Evidence for Durgā cult in the Veda

Although the cult of Durgā is clearly attested only from around the beginning of the Christian era⁷⁸, references to a goddess essentially identical with her can be found in fairly early Vedic texts⁷⁹. The Brāhmaṇa texts speak of the goddess Vāc as an ‘invincible’ (*aśādhā*) goddess of victory associated with the lion. The Ṛgvedic hymn 10,125, which praises the goddess Vāc as the highest principle, is important evidence for early ‘Śāktism’; in the 6th verse of this hymn, Vāc describes herself as a goddess of war: ‘I draw the bow for Rudra, so that his arrow kills the hater of the holy power; I create strife for people...’⁸⁰

In ŚB 7,4,2,32–39, the goddess Vāc appears in the guise of a brick laid down on the fire altar, called the ‘invincible’; the passage explains the name of this brick, connecting it with victory in battle:

32. He then lays down the Aśādhā (invincible brick), — the ‘invincible one’ being this earth, it is this earth he thus lays down. He puts it on the fore-part (of the altar site), for this earth was created first. 33. And as to its being called Aśādhā. The gods and the Asuras, both of them sprung from Prajāpati, strove together. The gods saw this invincible brick, even this earth; they put it on (the altar); and having put it on, they conquered (and drove) the Asuras, the enemies, the rivals, from this universe; and inasmuch as they conquered (*asahanta*), it is called Aśādhā... 34. And, again, why he lays down the Aśādhā. The Aśādhā is speech (*vāc*), and by speech the gods indeed conquered (and drove) the Asuras, the enemies, the rivals, from this universe... 39. (He lays down the Aśādhā, with VS 13,26) ‘Thou art Aśādhā, the conquering’ (*aśādhāsi sahamānā*), for the gods thereby conquered the Asuras, — ‘conquer the enemies! conquer the hostile!’ (*sahasvārātīḥ sahasva pṛtanāyataḥ*) as the text, so the meaning; — ‘thou hast a thousand energies: do thou speed me!’ (*sahasravīryāsi sā mā jinva*)... (Transl. Eggeling 1894: III, 387 f.)

In this passage, the ‘invincible’ brick is explicitly identified with Vāc ‘Speech’ as well as with the earth. In another passage of the same text, ŚB 6,5,3,1–4, the goddess Vāc is represented by the chief queen (*mahiṣī*) of the sacrificing king, and

⁷⁸ See note 3. *Durgā Devī* is explicitly mentioned by name in Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 10,2,3 and appears as Durgi in TĀ 10,1,7 in a late variant of the Sāvitrī stanza (*kātyāyanāya vidmahe kanyakumārī dhīmahi tan no durgīḥ pracodayāt*). The tenth book of the TĀ, however, is a relatively late addition (Cf. Varenne 1960: I, 30–33.). As an appellative of the neutre gender meaning ‘fortress, citadel’, *durga* occurs from the Ṛgveda onwards (e.g. RS 7,25, 2 *nī durgā indra śnathīhy amītrān*).

⁷⁹ For details of the following, see Parpola 1992: 281 ff.

⁸⁰ RS 1,125,6 *ahām rudrāya dhānūr ā tanomi brahmadviṣe sārave hātavā u / ahām jānāya samādam kṛṇomy...*

both are identified with the earth. The queen is fertilized by the male partner in the 'sacred marriage' of the horse sacrifice. Thus the killed sacrificial victim (who in many places is equated with the 'sacrifice', *yajña*) is the 'husband' of the goddess Vāc⁸¹. This is clear also from ŚB 3,2,1,18 ff. The last mentioned passage is particularly interesting, as here the author tells us that originally the goddess Vāc was worshipped by Asuras, i.e., 'demon'-worshippers speaking a Māgadhī-like Prakrit⁸², but afterwards appropriated by the gods, i.e. Vedic Aryans worshipping Devas:

18. Now the gods and the Asuras, both of them sprung from Prajāpati, entered upon their father Prajāpati's inheritance: the gods came in for the Mind and the Asuras for Speech. Thereby the gods came in for the sacrifice and [the] Asuras for speech; the gods for yonder (heaven) and the Asuras for this (earth)... 23. The gods then cut her (i.e. Speech) off from the Asuras; and having gained possession of her and enveloped her completely in fire, they offered her up as a holocaust, it being an offering of the gods. And in that they offered her with an anuṣṭubh verse, thereby they made her their own; and the Asuras, being deprived of speech, were undone, crying, *He 'lavah! he 'lavah!* [= *he 'rayah* 'Lo, strangers!'] 24. Such was the unintelligible speech which they then uttered, — and he (who speaks thus) is a Mleccha (barbarian). Hence let no Brahman speak barbarous language... 25. That Yajña (sacrifice) lusted after Vāc (speech), thinking, 'May I pair with her!' He united with her. 26. Indra then thought within himself, 'Surely a great monster will spring from this union of Yajña and Vāc: (I must take care) lest it should get the better of me'. Indra himself then became an embryo and entered into that union. (Transl. Eggeling 1885: II, 30–32).

The last section suggests that Indra, the Vedic war god, was identified with the war god Rudra/Kumāra (who originally seems to have belonged to the Asura pantheon), for it was Rudra who was born of the union of Prajāpati (represented here by the sacrifice) and Vāc⁸³.

In the Purāṇic ritual, the goddess Durgā is offered the sacrificial victim's blood and head immediately after decapitation⁸⁴. A similar cultic practice concerning the goddess Vāc is recorded in ŚB 3,5,1,22–23 and 3,5,2,9 ff. Here we are told that Vāc as the goddess of victory went over to the side of the gods on the condition that the offering should reach her before it reached the sacrificial fire: therefore they pour ghee on the high altar (*uttara-vedi*), which represents Vāc, with the mantra VS 5,12 'Thou art a lioness, Hail!...' The Taittiriya-Samhitā (6,2,7,2),

⁸¹ Cf. Parpola 1998: 231ff.

⁸² This old hypothesis of Paul Thieme is endorsed by Witzel (1989: 99).

⁸³ Cf. AB 3,33; Parpola 1998: 229f., 298, 303.

⁸⁴ Cf. Kane 1958: V (1), 165ff.

while discussing the construction of the *uttara-vedi*, states: “Thou art a lioness; thou art a buffalo” (TS 1,2,12,2 e *simhīr asi mahiṣīr asi*), he says, for it (i.e., the high altar) taking the form of a lioness went away and remained between the two parties’. The two parties referred to here are those of the gods (*deva*) and the demons (*asura*), who were contending with each other. In TS 6,2,8,1 this is continued:

The high altar said, ‘Through me ye shall obtain all your desires’. The gods desired, ‘Let us overcome the Asuras our foes’. They sacrificed (with the words), ‘Thou art a lioness, overcoming rivals; hail! (TS 1,2,12,2 k *simhīr asi sapatnasāhī svāhā*)’ They overcame the Asuras, their foes. (transl. Keith 1914: II, 509).

In these passages, Vāc is explicitly the goddess of victory. Moreover, she is addressed both as ‘lioness’ and ‘she-buffalo’. The Kālikā-Purāṇa (69,44–45), in turn, connects both the lion and the buffalo with the Goddess as her mounts⁸⁵.

Vāc as the central deity of the Mahāvrata

The Mahāvrata is similar to the Navarātri of Durgā also in its worship of a female deity with musical instruments. This is the goddess Vāc, who is equated with the sound of the drums and other musical instruments that are central in the archaic Vṛātya rituals. Thus, according to TS 6,1,4,1,

Vāc, ‘Voice’ escaped from the gods... She entered into the trees. She is this voice that resounds in wood(en instrument)s, in the drum, in the flute, in the harp.

When the Atharvavedic hymns addressed to the war-drum specifically speak of ‘the wooden (drum)’ (AS 5,20,1–2), they seem to refer to this myth⁸⁶. The important position of Vāc in the ritual acts of the Mahāvrata and her connection with victory and conquest is reflected in the following explanations of this rite in TS 7,5,9,2:

They run a race, to win what has not yet been won. They beat drums; the voice of the drum is the highest (form of) speech; verily they win the highest (form of) speech. They beat the earth-drum; verily they win that speech which has entered this (earth); verily also they conquer the earth. All (forms of) speech they utter, to gain all (forms of speech) (Transl. Keith 1914: II, 627.).

At the royal Vājapeya sacrifice, another Vṛātya ritual, drums are similarly associated with Vāc or ‘Speech’ and with victory (here: victory in a chariot race); ŚB 5,1,5,6ff. further equates Speech with Prajāpati, the ‘Lord of Creation’, who

⁸⁵ Kooij 1972: 180.

⁸⁶ Bloomfield 1897: 437.

stands for the sacrifice (here particularly the Vājapeya sacrifice):

6. They put up seventeen drums... for he who offers the Vājapeya wins Prajāpati; but Prajāpati is speech, and that doubtless is the supreme speech which is (the outcome) of seventeen drums: he thus wins the supreme speech, the supreme Prajāpati. Seventeen there are, because Prajāpati is seventeenfold: he thus wins Prajāpati. 7. One of these drums he (the Brahman) beats (while praying) with a sacrificial formula: thereby all of them become beaten with a sacrificial formula. 8. He beats it with (VS 9,11), 'O Bṛhaspati, win the race! lift ye up your voice unto Bṛhaspati: make ye Bṛhaspati win the race!' (transl. Eggeling 1894: III, 23 f.)

The hundred-stringed harp of the Mahāvratā

The harp (*vīṇā*) associated in later Hinduism with Sarasvatī (in Vedic texts a duplicate of Vāc), seems to be represented by the hundred-stringed harp (*vāṇa*) played in the Mahāvratā⁸⁷. In any case, the mantras pronounced by the Udgātṛ priest while stroking and playing the harp connect its sound with the goddess Vāc and the overpowering of enemies:⁸⁸

Sounding, sound! Sound! Sounding, sounding, sound!
Wide, broad, easy to go, easily goable,
play, playing, player, one with playing-strings,
overpowering, and one who overpowers, and striking the enemy, and one who strikes the enemy,
very mighty, most mighty, mighty one, one who is mighty,
highly vigorous, and one of great vigour, one with vigour and one of grown-up vigour!
O divine harp, let sound your Indra-like voice (*vāc*),
which is great, has all the forms and grants the life of a hundred (years)!

After stroking, the Udgātṛ strikes the harp at the bottom (of the strings) with a reed plectrum 'bent by Indra' and with a leafy branch of the rattan cane,

⁸⁷ Cf. also Dange 1996: 247, where the tune of the *vīṇā* is equated with that of the *vāṇa* as an aspect of Speech.

⁸⁸ LŚS 4,1,4=DŚS 11,1,5 *taṁ abhimṛśed*
vado vada vadā vadī vado vado-
ruḥ pṛthuh sugaḥ sugantvaḥ
karmaḥ karaṇaḥ karaḥ karasyur
abhīṣāt cābhīṣāhī cābhīmātiḥś cābhīmātiḥā ca
sāsahiś ca sahtyāṁś ca sahasvāṁś ca sahamānaś co-
dvayāś ca bṛhadvayāś ca savayāś ca vṛddhavayāś
caindrīm vācam byhatīm viśvarūpām
śatāyusīm pravada deva vāṇeti.

muttering: 'Voice (is) all, mind (is) light, wish (is) auspicious'⁸⁹.

The earth drum of the Mahāvrata

The most important musical instrument at the Mahāvrata besides the hundred-stringed harp is the big 'earth drum' (*bhūmi- Dundubhi*, LŚS 3,10,19). It consists of a hole dug in the earth, west of the hearth of the fire-kindler priest and half inside and half outside the sacrificial area; this hole is covered with the hide of a bull, with the hairy side up (LŚS 3,11,1-2). It is then beaten with the tail (of the bull), to the accompaniment of these mantras: 'Thou art (the goddess) Sound (*vāc*)! Announce, o drum, success (*rāddhi*) for those who reviled us at the sacrificial session, at the initiation, at the fatigue and sitting, (announce) success for us!'; "Contradict (i.e. ward off by sound) him who hates (us), contradict (him by emitting) a terrible sound (*ghorām vācam*)! Then announce noble fame for us, o drum, (by emitting) a sound that is kind and friendly (for us)!"; "Contradict those who hate (us), o musical instrument, those who are evil-hearted and split on both sides! Then announce welfare, success and good fortune for us, o drum!" (LŚS 3,11,3).

In the Mahāvrata, the 'beating' of the 'earth drum' with the tail has a double meaning, for Sanskrit words denoting 'tail' also mean 'penis', and the verb *āhan-* 'to beat' likewise has a sexual meaning besides 'slaying, killing'⁹⁰. According to JB 2,404, the 'earth drum' covered with a bull's skin is sounded for the obtainment of the highest (form of) Voice, 'for the bull's roar (represents) the highest (i.e. loudest) Voice'. This is indeed so, if the bull here is the bull of heaven or the raincloud, whose roar is the thunder.

In the Old Tamil heroic poetry, the sound of the war-drum is compared to thunder or *vice versa* some twenty times. Thus Puṇam 369, in which the bard Paraṇar celebrates the victory of a Cēral king, begins as follows (verses 1-6):

The war-elephants with long, strong trunks and tusks adorned with iron rings are like clouds; the blades raised by the warriors who had vowed to fight, resemble lightning; the sounding war-drums to which is offered blood as libation rival thunder; and the crestfallen hostile kings are like snakes. The speedy steeds are like winds and the arrows released from the highly strung bow-string resemble rain-drops... (transl. Kailasapathy 1968: 216, q.v.).

In this poem the weapons of the soldiers are compared to lightning. In the

⁸⁹ LŚS 4,1,7 *vāk sarvaṁ mano jyotir māno bhadra iti jṛṇitvā vādayed indreṇatayeṣikayā vetasaśākhayā ca sapalāśayā mūlataḥ*.

⁹⁰ Parpola 1983: 48 f.

Brāhmaṇa texts, Vāc or 'Speech' is often identified with the thunderbolt (*vajra*), the mightiest weapon (AB 2,16 & 21; 4,1; TS 3,2,9,2; TB 2,5,1,15). In JB 2,26, the sun took the thunder from Vāc (*stanayitnum vācaḥ*). According to MS 1,11,5 and KS 14,5, that Vāc which is in the heaven is the thunder. In JB 2,265, the 1000th cow (given away to the priests) — representing Vāc — is said to have entered the creator god Prajāpati in the form of the lightning, which, saying *da-da-da-da-da* i.e. 'I shall give, I shall give' (*dadāni, dadāni*), provides beings with rain and food. Here Prajāpati, then, is the rain cloud; this conclusion is in accordance with AS 9,1,10: 'thunder is thy voice, o Prajāpati' (*stanayitnūs te vāk prajāpate*). The bull, whose hide covers the earth drum in the Mahāvratā, and who is beaten with the tail, sexually as well as lethally, represents the husband of the goddess, Prajāpati⁹¹. His double role reminds us of the Buffalo demon, the paramour and enemy of Durgā, who is said to have had the name Dundubhi 'drum' in a previous incarnation⁹².

In the Rāmāyaṇa, the monkey king Sugrīva's elder brother Vālin fights with two demon brothers, one of whom is called Dundubhi 'drum'. Vālin seems to have celebrated a festival of victory to Durgā, for he comes to the combat 'fresh from amours with his concubines' and with intoxication (*mada*) from what he himself calls 'the drink of heroes' (*vīra-pānam*, 4,11,36)⁹³. The Asura Dundubhi is introduced in 4,11,7 with the words 'a buffalo named Dundubhi, who resembled the peak of Mt. Kailāsa' (*mahiṣo dundubhir nāma kailāsaśikhaprabhaḥ*), and a little later (verse 25) he is said to have assumed buffalo form (*dhārāyan māhiṣam rūpam*) for his fight with the valiant Vālin. In the next verse (26), the buffalo-shaped demon is directly compared to the drum:⁹⁴ 'then the high-powered Dundubhi roared out, causing the earth to tremble, like the drum which bears his name' (*nanarda kampāyan bhūmim dundubhir dundubhir yathā*). The translation is Hiltebeitel's (1980: 203), who remarks that the large kettle-drum referred to was 'probably covered with buffalo hide'.

Such drums are used in Tamil villages during the festival celebrating the

⁹¹ On Prajāpati as the husband of the goddess Vāc and his identity with Mahiṣa Asura see Parpola 1992a.

⁹² Devī-Purāṇa in Stietencron 1983.

⁹³ Hiltebeitel 1980: 203 f.

⁹⁴ 'In Polynesia, the god Tane was saluted with every kind of drum; that instrument being himself or his embodiment, its sound was his voice. The drum was surmounted by a representation of Tane's head' (MacCulloch 1917: 6, referring to H. C. March, JAI xxii [1892-93] 328 and W. W. Gill, Myths and songs from the S. Pacific, London 1876, pp. 106, 219; cf. also Crawley 1912: 93a, based on March l.c.).

Goddess's marriage with the buffalo demon:

Even the drums which the Paraiyas beat during this period would seem to contain a special 'reversed' imagery of their own. All other drums used in the area have two opposed 'ends'. Where one end is hit with a stick that is called the 'male' side of the instrument. The other end, when hit with the hand alone, is described as 'female'. Given the long, thin shape of such drum sticks, a male association is not surprising... But in the case of the *tappattai* drum there is only one side, a buffalo hide stretched over a large hoop-style frame. Only in this one case is the drum head called 'male' and the stick hitting it, 'female'. Considering the context of the Māriyamman festival, where the use of these drums is critical, it is possible to see in that stick a multiform for the goddess 'beating' a male companion. It is not an accident, perhaps, that this male symbol is made out of a buffalo hide, and is here reminiscent of Mahiṣāsura (Beck 1981: 117f.)⁹⁵.

Vāk as the sound of the war drum

Shyam Kishore Lal has already made the following important observation: 'How Vāk incites people in the battle is explained in AV 5.20'⁹⁶. The goddess Vāk seems to be connected with the battle in the first place as the sound of the battle-drum. The two hymns AS 5,20 and 5,21 are very important in giving us a detailed idea of the various associations connected with the war-drum. In the following translations by Maurice Bloomfield I have emphasized particularly important passages, including comparisons to the lion, the escort of the Hindu goddess of war:

1. **High sounds the voice of the drum, that acts the warrior**, the wooden (drum), equipped with the skin of the cow. **Whetting thy voice, subduing the enemy, like a lion sure of victory, do thou loudly thunder against them!**
2. **The wooden (instrument) with fastened (covering) has thundered as a lion, as a bull roars to the cow that longs to mate. Thou art a bull,**

⁹⁵ The 'male' and 'female' sides of a drum referred to by Beck seem to have a long history. According to Dadhi-Vāhana-Jātaka (Jātaka 186), a hermit living in the Himalayas 'told Sakka that he was annoyed by elephants, and wanted them to be driven away. Sakka gave him a drum. "If you beat upon this side, Sir", he explained, your enemies will run away; but if you strike the other, they will become your firm friends, and will encompass you with an army in fourfold array. "Then he handed him the drum' (Transl. W. H. D. Rouse in Cowell 1895: II, 70.). The magic drum seems to reflect the two functions of the war-drum, first, to scare the enemy, and second, to give one's own troops signals concerning the battle array.

⁹⁶ Lal 1980: 166 n. 45.

thy enemies are eunuchs; thou ownest Indra's foe-subduing fire!

3. Like a bull in the herd, full of might, lusty, do thou, O snatcher of booty, roar against them! Pierce with fire the heart of the enemy; with broken ranks the foe shall run and scatter!

4. In victorious battles raise thy roar! What may be captured, capture; sound in many places! Favour, O drum, (our deeds) with thy divine voice; bring to (us) with strength the property of the enemy!

5. When the wife of the enemy hears the voice of the drum, that speaks to a far distance, may she, aroused by the sound, distressed, snatch her son to her arms, and run, frightened at the clash of arms!

6. Do thou, O drum, sound the first sound, ring brilliantly over the back of the earth! Open wide thy maw at the enemies' host; resound brightly, joyously, O drum!

7. Between this heaven and earth thy noise shall spread, thy sounds shall quickly part to every side! Shout thou and thunder with swelling sound; make music at thy friend's victory, having (chosen) the good side!

8. Manipulated with care, its voice shall resound! Make bristle forth the weapons of the warriors! Allied to Indra do thou call hither the warriors; with thy friends beat vigorously down the enemies!

9. A shouting herald, followed by a bold army, spreading news in many places, sounding through the village, eager for success, knowing the way, do thou distribute glory to many in the battle!

10. Desiring advantage, gaining booty, full mighty, thou hast been made keen by (my) song, and winnest battles. As the press-stone on the gathering skin dances upon the soma-shoots, thus do thou, O drum, lustily dance upon booty!

11. A conqueror of enemies, overwhelming, foe-subduing, eager for the fray, victoriously crushing, as a speaker his speech do thou carry forth thy sound; sound forth here strength for victory in battle!

12. Shaking those that are unshaken, hurrying to the strife, a conqueror of enemies, an unconquerable leader, protected by Indra, attending to the hosts, do thou that crusheth the hearts of the enemies, quickly go! (Transl. Bloomfield 1897: 130–1.)

According to Kauśikasūtra 16,1, this hymn, together with AS 6,126 (=RS 6,47,29–31) was used at the ceremonial washing and anointing of musical instruments before a battle⁹⁷. (The Purāṇas, too, prescribe a consecration with mantras of the conch [which has a far-reaching sound] and other musical instruments just before the battle⁹⁸.) These verses put might into the drum:

AS 6,126,1. Blast thou unto heaven and earth; in many places let them win for thee the scattered living creatures (*jāgat*); do thou, O drum, allied with Indra [and] the

⁹⁷ Bloomfield 1897: 436.

⁹⁸ Agni-Purāṇa 137, 16–17: *atha saṁgrāmasamaye... dūraśaṅkhādivādyaṇi vidyayā hy abhimantrayet*.

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gods, drive away our foes further than far.

2. Resound thou at [them]; mayest thou assign strength [and] force to us; thunder against [them], forcing off difficulties; drive, O drum, misfortune away from here; Indra's fist art thou; be stout.

3. Conquer thou those yonder; let these here conquer; let the drum speak loud [*vāvad-*] [and] clear; let our horse-winged heroes fly together; let our chariot-men, O Indra, conquer (Transl. Whitney 1905: I, 375–6.).

The hymn AS 5,21 is also addressed to the battle-drum for inducing terror in the enemy:

1. Carry with thy voice, O drum, lack of heart, and failure of courage among the enemies! Disagreement, dismay, and fright, do we place into the enemies: beat them down, O drum!

2. Agitated in their minds, their sight, their hearts, the enemies shall run, frightened with terror, when our oblation has been offered!

3. Made of wood, equipped with the skin of the cow, at home with every clan, put thou with thy voice terror into the enemies, when thou hast been anointed with ghee!

4. As the wild animals of the forest start in fear from man, thus do thou, O drum, shout against the enemies, frighten them away, and bewilder their minds!

5. As goats and sheep run from the wolf, badly frightened, thus do thou, O drum, shout against the enemies, frighten them away, and bewilder their minds!

6. As birds start in fear from the eagle, as by day and by night (they start) at the roar of the lion, thus do thou, O drum, shout against the enemies, frighten them away, and bewilder their minds!

7. With the drum and the skin of the antelope all the gods, that sway the battle, have scared away the enemies.

8. At the noise of the beat of the feet when Indra disports himself, and at his shadow, our enemies yonder, that come in successive ranks, shall tremble!

9. The whirring of the bowstring and the drums shall shout at the directions where the conquered armies of the enemies go in successive ranks!

10. O sun, take away their sight; O rays, run after them; clinging to their feet, fasten yourselves upon them, when the strength of their arms is gone!

11. Ye strong Maruts, Pr̥śni's children, with Indra as an ally, crush ye the enemies; Soma the king (shall crush them), Varuṇa the king, Mahādeva, and also Mṛtyu (death), and Indra!

12. These wise armies of the gods, having the sun as their ensign, shall conquer our enemies! Hail! (Transl. Bloomfield 1897: 131–3.)

The drum is mentioned together with army, arrow and weapon in AS 5,31,7 as objects into which spells have been put for the destruction of the enemy⁹⁹. AS 6,38,4 in turn prays:

‘(The brilliancy [*varcas*]) that is in the man of the royal caste, in the stretched drum,

⁹⁹ Bloomfield 1987: 77 and 456f.

in the strength of the horse, in the shout of men [*pūruṣasya māyāu*, cf. AS 19,49,4] (shall be ours)! May the lovely goddess [*Uṣas*] that bore Indra come to us, endowed with lustre!' (transl. Bloomfield 1897: 117).

Parallels in the early Dravidian tradition of South India

The 'earth drum' of the Mahāvrata, covered with bull skin and sounded to vanquish the enemy, has a striking parallel in the Old Tamil war drum made of the skin of a bull that has won in a bullfight. The ancient Tamils used the various drums 'to evoke the sacred in battle (such drums are sometimes called the agency by which the battle is won)'¹⁰⁰. The war-drum, called *muracu* or *muracam* indeed occupied an important position, being often mentioned in Old Tamil texts¹⁰¹. The royal *muracu*, which sounded like the thunder and received blood offerings¹⁰² was a symbol of the king's power. George Hart writes:

The sacred status that this drum possessed is well described in Pur. 50, where the poet, after traveling, comes to the palace and mistakenly lies down on the table of the drum, which has been taken out to be given a bath:

Before they brought back from its bath
the fearful drum, which thirsts for blood,
its black sides lined by leather straps
and adorned with a sapphirelike garland
of the bright eyes of long peacock feathers
and with golden-shooted *uliñai*,

¹⁰⁰Hart 1975: 44; cf. Patirruppattu 17,15 quoted in Kailasapathy 1968: 30.

¹⁰¹Subrahmanian 1966: 694 f.

¹⁰²Subrahmanian 1966: 694 f. In Africa, too, blood offerings were made to drums: 'Each temple and house of a chief in West Africa has a tall drum (*gbedu*) covered with carvings. This drum had a protecting spirit, that, namely, of the slave who was sacrificed on it when it was made. It is beaten only at religious ceremonies. Before being struck, it receives an offering of blood and palm-wine, which is poured on the carvings'. (Crawley 1912: 93a, referring to A. B. Ellis, Yoruba-speaking peoples, 1894: 100). 'When the special royal drum, *kaula*, of the Baganda received a new skin, the blood of the cow whose skin was used was run into the drum. Also a man was beheaded, and his blood was run into it. The idea was that, when the drum was beaten, the life of the man added fresh life and vigour to the king. When any drum was fitted with a new skin, the ox killed for the purpose also supplied the blood for pouring into the drum' (Crawley 1912: 93a, referring to J. Roscoe, The Baganda, 1911: 27f.). For a detailed ancient description of an Akkadian 'Ritual to be followed by the *Kalū*-priest when covering the temple kettle-drum' with the skin of a black bull, see Sachs 1969: 334–338. This ritual also involves blood offerings, as well as libations of beer, wine and milk, etc.

unknowing I climbed upon its bed,
which was covered with soft flowers
as if the froth of oil had been poured upon it.
Yet you stayed the edge of your sword, which cuts in half.
/...../

In war, a victorious king would at once take his enemy's drum (Pur. 26), by which act he received the right to his kingdom (Pur. 70). If a *muracu* broke, it was an extremely bad omen (Pur. 238). The *muracu* was made of the skin of a bull that had vanquished a rival in bullfight (Pur. 288) and of wood taken from an enemy's tutelary tree (Hart 1975a: 15-16).

In their poetics, the Old Tamil poets placed the theme of announcing the expedition by the beat of drum (*tuti nilai*) immediately before that of worshipping the goddess of victory (*korravai nilai*). According to the ancient Tamil grammar Tolkāppiyam (Poruḷ 61), beating of the *tuti* drum mustered the courage of the warriors¹⁰³. In the 12th chapter of Cilappatikāram, robbers worshipping the Goddess always sounded drums and other musical instruments during their attacks:

O Kumari! Accept the blood of sacrifice at your altar in fulfilment of the oath made, touching your feet, by the tiger-like Eyinar, who sally forth in the dead of night, with *tudi*, the small *parai*, and the pipe, sounding as if to pierce the sky... eat this offering made by us, the heartless Eyinar, who enter neighbouring villages when all are sleeping, and sound our *tudis* before we plunder them. (Transl. Dikshitar 1939: 187 f.).

Vāc as the sound of the war trumpet

In North India, too, the sounding of musical instruments played an important part in battles, particularly when they were started. This is stated by Megasthenes (quoted in Arrian's Indike 7,9) around 300 B.C., and in the first canto of the Bhagavadgītā we read:

12. In order to cheer them up, the aged Kuru, his valiant grandsire, roared aloud like a lion and blew his conch. 13. Then conches and kettledrums, tabors and drums and horns suddenly were struck and the noise was tumultuous... 19. The tumultuous uproar resounding through earth and sky rent the hearts of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons. (Transl. Radhakrishnan 1949: 84-86).

Verses 14 to 18 mention the individual names of the conches blown by particular heroes: among them are *Anantavijaya* 'of endless victory' and 'invincible' (*aparājita*) Sātyaki.

¹⁰³Nagaswamy 1982: 6.

The conch-trumpet belonged to the standard equipment of the epic chariot-warrior. Thus Karna ordered his chariot to be furnished with sixteen quivers of arrows, bows, shafts, darts, maces and his conch (MBh. 7,2,24), while Kṛṣṇa asked for his conch, discus, mace, quivers, javelins and all kinds of weapons to be put into his chariot (MBh. 5,81,12)¹⁰⁴. And how was the conch used? With blasts of his conch, Karna gave orders about his army's battle formation (MBh. 8,7,13). Kṛṣṇa challenged Śālva to a fight by blowing his conch Pāñcajanya (Mbh. 3,15,20). The loud blares of Kṛṣṇa's conch Pāñcajanya and of Arjuna's conch Devadatta terrified animals and warriors (MBh. 6,1,18)¹⁰⁵. Also, some of the infantrymen are said to carry conches, drums, cymbals, horns and other musical instruments (MBh. 6,1,15; 6,23,13; 7,38,30)¹⁰⁶. The army expressed its joy and approval by shouting, by sounding drums, conches and other musical instruments, for instance when a new leader (*senāpati*) was appointed (MBh. 5,153,26–28; 7,5,38ff.)¹⁰⁷. The keeper of the assembly hall (*sabhāpāla*) called the warriors to arms by blowing his conch (MBh. 1,212,11)¹⁰⁸.

In the ancient Near East as well, the trumpet belonged to the emblems of the goddess of war associated with the lion. Thus Lukianos, in his book *De dea Syria* written around AD 150, informs us 'how the Lydians [of Anatolia] represent the goddess [corresponding to Greek] Rhea: She is carried by lions, she holds a trumpet in her hand, and upon her head she carries a mural crown'¹⁰⁹. Miniature trumpets made of silver are known from the Bronze Age culture of Bactria and Margiana¹¹⁰.

The ritual bell and the Goddess

A few more musical instruments associated with the goddess call for comment. Ramachandra Rao, on the basis of the Śilpaśāstra and Āgama manuals, explains the Sanskrit term *ghaṇṭā* as follows:

Ritual bell made of bronze (*kāñśya*), employed during worship of deities, especially in some sequences like administering bath (*snāpana*), offering incense (*dhūpa*), waving lights (*nīrājana*) and presentation of food (*naivedya*). The sound of bell is

¹⁰⁴ Singh 1965: 41.

¹⁰⁵ Singh 1965: 49.

¹⁰⁶ Singh 1965: 19.

¹⁰⁷ Singh 1965: 147.

¹⁰⁸ Singh 1965: 149–150.

¹⁰⁹ Lukianos, *De dea Syria*: *léontes gár min phérousi kai túmpanon ékhei kai epì tēi kephalēi purgophorēei*. Cf. Hörig 1979: 38.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Amiet 1989b: 175 fig. 19 ab.

said to be dear to the gods, and to dissolve all demerits (*sarve doṣāḥ praliyante*). The bell, when sounded, beckons the gods to come, and drives away evil spirits that abound in the atmosphere (*āgamārthaṁ tu devānāṁ gamanārthaṁ tu rakṣasāṁ; kurve ghaṇṭāravaṁ tatra devatāhvānalāñchanam*).

Ritual bells... are surmounted by a bull (*vr̥ṣabha*, Śiva's *vāhana*)... in the Śaivite sects. In the Vajrayāna sects of Nepal and Tibet, ritual bells are very important and quite frequently employed. The bells carry the representation of Viśva-vajra... on their top. The bells... are called Vajra-ghaṇṭā, and are regarded as endowed with magical powers.

Some deities, fierce in aspect (*rājasa*), like the ten-armed Durgā and Bhairava, carry bell in one of the arms. Many Vajrayāna deities (two-armed) hold Vajra-bell in one hand and Vajra in the other (Ramachandra Rao 1989: II. 190–2.).

The Agni-Purāṇa (135,1) starts its description of the secret knowledge that gives victory¹¹¹ with a mantra addressed to the goddess Cāmuṇḍā as holding in her hands bells, drums and cymbals (*ghaṇṭāḍamarukiṅkiṇihaste*) and one rich with roaring sounds (*nādaśabdabahule*). The same text further mentions the bell and the drum as attributes of two other fierce aspects of the goddess, namely Caṇḍī and the Nava-Durgā¹¹². Describing the worship of the Nava-Durgā in Bhaktapur (Nepal), Niels Gutschow writes:

Sound as embodiment of the goddesses:

Tyen kāl bhatī thvā — this sound, characteristic for the Navadurgā of Bhaktapur, signals the presence of the troupe of gods and goddesses in town. *Tyen kāl*, the sound of a pair of small cymbals, is high-pitched and of an extremely clear quality, resembling a crystal or a diamond as symbols of permanence and immutability. The sound permeates the urban space, it virtually takes gradual possession of it. It can be heard over a distance of a few hundred meters, announcing the approach of the gods and goddesses... Hearing that striking sound, people invariably stop what they are doing and, even from afar, honour the gods and goddesses with the gesture of *namaskāra*.

The sound is unique, only heard in Bhaktapur and played exclusively by the musicians of Navadurgā... Transformed into syllables and words, *tyen kāl* imitates the pair of cymbals, while *bhat thvā*, the following sound of the 'drum of the gods'... The large thin cymbals (Nev. *kāy*) and the double-headed drum made from skulls (*ḍamaru*) — instruments that are also played in other contexts — join the instruments dedicated to the Navadurgā at halting points. They stand for Caṇḍī or Mahākālī and Mahādeva, the divine couple... (Gutschow 1996: 212f.).

According to the classic text of the Durgā cult, the Durgāsaptasatī alias Devī-Māhātmya, the goddess Durgā (Caṇḍikā, Ambikā) filled the atmosphere with the twanging of her bow-string, with the roar of her lion, and with the sound of her

¹¹¹ Agni-Purāṇa 135,1 *saṁgrāmaṁ vijayāṁ vidyāṁ... vadāmy aham*.

¹¹² Mallmann 1963: 255.

bell, as well as with the terrifying cries of Kālī, and thus expelled and defeated the army of her demoniac enemy¹¹³.

The apotropaic or evil-averting influence of the bell is clearly visible in the traditions concerning the godling Ghaṇṭā-karṇa 'bell-eared'¹¹⁴, whose help is petitioned against various diseases, particularly smallpox; at the same time, Ghaṇṭā-karṇa often has an explicit connection with war. Thus in the Mahābhārata (9, 2526), Ghaṇṭā-karṇa is one of the four attendants of the war-god Skanda, while in the Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa (3,77,3-6), the war-god Kārttikeya himself is described as holding the bell (*ghaṇṭā*) in one of his four hands (the others hold a cock, a spear and a banner of victory). According to the Agni-Purāṇa, Ghaṇṭā-karṇa is a powerful hero who has a great army and who destroys pestilence or death;¹¹⁵ he wears a garland of bells and carries in his 18 arms a bell, a severed human head and many kinds of weapons, by means of which he destroys the disease of smallpox¹¹⁶. According to Tithyāditya, Ghaṇṭā-karṇa is worshipped (in Bengal) as a helper against skin diseases¹¹⁷. The Jains consider Ghaṇṭā-karṇa as a great hero and protector of all living beings, who moreover wards off obstacles to penances¹¹⁸.

Fierce forms of speech: Aggressive mantras

Finally, one more fierce aspect of Vāc must be briefly mentioned when dealing with the martial aspects of this Vedic goddess and her relationship with the Hindu

¹¹³Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa 88=Devī-Māhātmya 8=Durgāsaptaśatī 8 (ed. Sharma 1916):
7. *āyāntaṁ caṇḍikā dṛṣtvā tat saṁyam atibhīṣaṇam / jyāsvanaiḥ pūrayām āsa dharanīgaganāntaram*. 8. *tataḥ siṁho mahānādam atīva kṛtavān nṛpa / ghaṇṭāsvanena tan nādam ambikā copabṛmhayat*. 9. *dhanurjyāsiṁhaghaṇṭānām nādāpūritadinmukhā / ninādair bhīṣanaiḥ kālī jigye vistāritānanā*. 10. *tan ninādam upāśrutya daityasaṁnyas caturdiśam / devī siṁhas tathā kālī saroṣaiḥ parivāritāḥ* //

¹¹⁴Mallmann (1963: 61) suggests that the name refers to the constant ringing of bells, as it were, in the ears of feverish patients, who seek the help of the god responsible for the disease but also capable of removing it.

¹¹⁵Agni-Purāṇa 302, 25b-26: *ghaṇṭākārṇo mahāsano vīraḥ prokto mahābalaḥ / mārīnirṇāśanakarah sa mām pātu jagatpatiḥ* // Cf. Mallmann 1963: 60f.

¹¹⁶Agni-Purāṇa 50,41-2: *ghaṇṭākārṇo 'ṣṭādaśadoḥ pāparogam vidārayan / vajrāsidaṇḍacakreṣumuśalāṅkuśamudgarān // dakṣiṇe tarjanīm khetam śaktim muṇḍaṇ ca pāśakam / cāpaṁ ghaṇṭām kuṭhāraṇ ca dvābhyāṇ caiva trisūlakam / ghaṇṭāmālākulo devo viṣphoṭakavimardanaḥ* // Cf. Mallmann 1963: 60f.

¹¹⁷Tithyāditya quoted in Śabdakalpadruma; cf. Mallmann 1963: 61.

¹¹⁸Ramachandra Rao 1989: II, 192-3.

goddess Durgā, namely the aggressive mantras¹¹⁹. In the Durgāsaptasatī or Devī-Māhātmya, Durgā annihilates the demon Dhūmralocana just by pronouncing the destructive mantra: *Hūm*.¹²⁰ That curses and aggressive words were used in war in early Vedic times is suggested by texts such as ṚS 10,87,13, where Agni, the god of fire, is asked to pierce the witch's heart with what the couple (of man and woman) curses, what hard parts of the speech are uttered by the bards, and what arrows are born of mind on account of anger¹²¹. The Vedic text Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka (4,27,1) mentions as examples of the 'cruel forms of Speech' (*vācaḥ krūrāṇi*) the mantras *khaṭ!* *phaṭ!* Kill! Cut! Break! Slay! *kaṭ*.¹²²

Out of these Vedic mantras, *phaṭ!*, for example, is called a 'weapon' (*astra*) in the later Tantric tradition¹²³. In Durgā's cult, the sword with which the victim sacrificed to the goddess is decapitated, is addressed with the mantra *om astrāya phaṭ!*¹²⁴ The mantra *ām hūm phaṭ!* in turn is used when chopping off the head of the sacrificial victim in Durgā-pūjā¹²⁵. In Buddhist Tantrism the parallel mantra *om hūm phaṭ!* is used, among other things, for banning, for exorcism and for the worship of the Tantric goddess Kurukullā¹²⁶. After the victim (usually a goat) has been decapitated with one stroke of the sword, its blood is collected in a vessel, placed before the goddess, and offered with a mantra like this: 'This is the blood of the goat. *Om!* O Victorious Lady (*jayanti*)! *Aim hrīm śrīm!* O Kauṣiki! May she be pleased by the blood!'¹²⁷

Many of these short aggressive mantras are pure Sanskrit, usually imperative verb forms or vocative or dative forms of divine names or appellative nouns. But some of the most important and seemingly meaningless one-syllable interjections appear to be of Dravidian origin. I have already earlier proposed a Dravidian

¹¹⁹On mantras in general, see the excellent collection of essays edited with an extensive bibliography by Alper (1989). For the relationship of the mantras with Vāc, compare Sanjukta Gupta's formulation, according to which 'mantras are the highest forms of manifest sound' (Gupta, Hoens and Goudriaan 1979: 179, quoted by Alper 1989: 430f.).

¹²⁰Durgāsaptasatī 6,9: *ity uktāḥ so 'bhyadhāvat tām asuro dhūmralocanaḥ / humkāreṇaiva tam bhasmasā cakārāmbikā tataḥ //*

¹²¹ṚS 10,87,13 *agne adyā mithunā śāpāto yād vācāḥ tṛṣṭām janāyanta rebhāḥ / manyór mānasah śaravyā jāyate yā tāyā vidhya hṛdaye yātudhānān //*

¹²²Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka 4,27,1: *khāt phāt jahī / chindhī bhindhī handhī kāt / iti vācaḥ krūrāṇi iti //*

¹²³Bharati 1965: 116.

¹²⁴Kane 1955: V (1), 166.

¹²⁵Bharati 1965: 121.

¹²⁶Bharati 1965: 121.

¹²⁷Kane 1955: V (1), 166f.

etymology for *ām*, *ōm* and *hūm*¹²⁸. The mantra *phaṭ!* can also be explained in such a way¹²⁹.

Conclusion

The kings... sped swiftly, marshalling the host, and in their midst was the flashing-eyed Athene, bearing the priceless [shield] aegis, that knoweth neither age nor death, wherefrom are hung an hundred tassels all of gold, all of them cunningly woven, and each one worth of an hundred oxen. Therewith she sped dazzling throughout the host of the Achaeans, urging them to go forth; and in the heart of each man she roused strength to war and battle without ceasing. And to them forthwith war became sweeter than to return in their hollow ships to their dear native land (Homer, *Iliad* 2,445–454, transl. Murray 1924: I, 83–85.).

Thus Homer in his *Iliad* graphically describes the principal function of the goddess of war: to incite soldiers to battle. Often it is music that serves as the concrete means by which this incitement is achieved. ‘Generally [in tribal societies]... before a fight, as with the Maoris, “war songs are sung to work them up to fury for battle”’¹³⁰. A Hittite text of ‘The festival of the Warrior-God’ refers to musical instruments called ‘Ishtar instruments’. These musical instruments directly connected with the lion-escorted Akkadian goddess of war play an important role in the ritual. At the culmination of the ceremony, ‘the king (and) the queen drink in standing position (god) Tauri. The great Ishtar instruments play, but they do not sing...’¹³¹

¹²⁸Parpola 1981.

¹²⁹In Sanskrit, the oldest meaning for *phaṭ* appears to be ‘crack’ or ‘crash’; cf. AS 4,18,3 ‘many stones fall upon her [i.e. the witch] with a loud crash’ (*āsmānas tāsyām... bahulāḥ phāt karikrati*) (transl. Bloomfield 1897: 70). As an onomatopoeic interjection expressing explosion it survives in Neo-Indo-Aryan languages: ‘In Hindi *phaṭ* is a very common colloquial term for “burst, explode”... The motor-cycle rikshaw in Delhi is called *phaṭphaṭā* by its drivers; *phaṭkī* is a firecracker’ (Bharati 1965: 116). *Paṭ(a)*, often repeated as is usual with onomatopoeic words, is widely attested in Dravidian languages with the same meaning: ‘onom. expr. signifying bursting, breaking, falling with a rattling noise’ (Burrow and Emeneau 1984: no. 3841). Emeneau (1969) has made it very likely that this type of onomatopoeic expression, which is an areal feature in South Asian languages, originated in the Dravidian family. A number of interjections (especially repeated ones) in the Tantric dhāraṇīs can have a similar explanation.

¹³⁰MacCulloch 1917: 5a, quoting J. Hawkesworth, *Voyages*, London 1773, II: 344.

¹³¹Goetze 1969: 360. ‘(In the following, king and queen “drink” various gods in slightly varying ways.)’ (ibid.)

In ancient India, too, all kinds of musical instruments were used both to scare the enemy in battles and to incite soldiers to bravery. An important part of the incitement took place immediately before the battle in a festival that celebrated the mythical victory of the goddess of war. It is therefore not surprising that such musical instruments as the drum, conch-trumpet, harp and bell have become iconographic emblems of warrior gods and that they are used as ritual means to scare away demons even in more peaceful forms of worship.

We have seen that there is ample evidence for a martial use of musical instruments and for their connection with the goddess *Vāc* in the Veda. This evidence is chiefly found in *Vrātya* rituals, such as the *Mahāvratā*, which for other reasons too appear to be directly related to the later Hindu festivals of *Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardinī*. It thus complements the arguments that I have for quite some time been presenting for a pre-Vedic and ultimately Near Eastern origin of the *Durgā* cult in India¹³².

Is *Vāc* a translation loan from Dravidian?

But Vedic *Vāc* is not only a Goddess of War and Victory. She is much more: just like her Near Eastern counterpart, she is also a creative power, the supreme feminine principle of creation. She manifests herself not only in the sounds of the musical instruments and other inarticulate noises but above all in the spoken word. If the Harappans spoke a Dravidian language, as I have been arguing¹³³, the language of the earliest 'Hindu' or 'Tantric' religion largely changed from Dravidian¹³⁴ to Sanskrit by the time of our earliest textual sources. In my opinion it is important to try and recover the original Dravidian terminology, as this is likely to provide us with new insights into the meaning of some key religious and philosophical concepts and help us to understand how they have come into being. I therefore cannot close this essay on Goddess *Vāc* without making an attempt at interpreting her name as a translation loan from Dravidian.

There are several words in Dravidian languages which could be suspected to be the source for the Vedic name *Vāc* 'sound, voice, speech'. Essential criteria of

¹³² Parpola 1970; 1973; 1983; 1984a; 1984b; 1985; 1988; 1992a; 1992b; 1994.

¹³³ For the Dravidian affinity of the (principal) Harappan language see especially Parpola 1994.

¹³⁴ Another likely substratum of the Tantric religion is the non-Indo-European and non-Dravidian language spoken by the original population of the Bronze Age culture of Bactria and Margiana, ruled by Aryan-speaking *Dāsas*. Many unidentified loanwords in the *Ṛgveda* probably come from this source (Lubotsky, in press).

selection must be that the Dravidian term is sufficiently ancient, that it is attested in several branches and can be reconstructed for Proto-Dravidian. One good candidate fulfilling these criteria is the Proto-Dravidian verbal root **murV* 'to sound', with such connotations as 'to resound, produce musical sound, cry, lament, growl (tiger), grumble, thunder, speak...'. This basic word is attested in most Dravidian languages, including the northern group¹³⁵. The connotations also eminently fit the instruments with which the Goddess Vāc is worshipped in Vedic ritual. Moreover, for instance *muracu*, the term used in Old Tamil of the war-drum, is derived from this root, as is the name of another musical instrument, *murali* 'flute'.

However, as a sort of confirmation that one has hit the right source term, one would expect to find that the respective word or its homonym has survived also as a name of a goddess in some Dravidian language. Therefore, I would like to propose another Dravidian root as a more likely possibility for being the immediate source of the Sanskrit name Vāc¹³⁶. The meanings of Sanskrit *vāc* and the ritual contexts in which this word occurs in the Veda (including e.g. shouts of joy at the Mahāvratā) would seem to be matched by the Proto-Dravidian root **vil*: 'to say, speak, reveal, make known, make public, proclaim openly, cry, call, invite, cry aloud, shout, exclaim, roar, summon, sing'; from this root we have nouns such as *vilī*, *vilvu*, *vilippu* etc. meaning 'sound, song, word, speech, shout of excitement, frenzy, or joy, call, cry, summons, warrior's shout, war-cry'¹³⁷. This root is a homonym and quite possibly even a derivative of the Proto-Dravidian *vil/vel* 'to break (as the day), to become bright, become white, become clear', from which are derived nouns denoting 'light, lamp, brightness, dawn, the planet Venus, purity', etc¹³⁸. These are concepts which are all very much associated with the goddess of victory both in Mesopotamia and in India. Thus the lighted lamp (*vilakku*, *vilakkam* in Tamil and Malayalam) is a central cultic symbol for the goddess¹³⁹.

In Kerala ancient traditions of Murukan cult have been preserved to the present day which are attested two millennia ago in the Caṅkam literature of Old Tamil¹⁴⁰ and which are not unlikely to go back to the Indus Civilization¹⁴¹. In

¹³⁵Cf. DEDR no. 4973. This root appears to be descriptive and onomatopoeic in origin, and has parallels in other (unrelated or very distantly related) language families, cf. Finnish *murista* 'to growl', English *murmur*, etc.

¹³⁶It is not necessary that Sanskrit Vāc goes back to just one Dravidian term. Thus the alternatives presented here need not be mutually exclusive, nor do they prevent the possibility of other Dravidian terms being relevant as well.

¹³⁷DEDR no. 5433.

¹³⁸DEDR no. 5496a.

Kerala, the Goddess (Bhagavati, usually Bhadra-Kālī or Durgā) is represented by a sword-carrying oracle priest (“devil-dancer”) called in Malayalam *veliccappāṭu*: during worship he will become possessed by the Goddess, and the Goddess will ‘show herself’, ‘reveal her heart’ and ‘speak out’¹⁴² through this medium of hers, pronouncing an oracle to her devotees and worshippers. In Malayalam, the word *veliccam* means ‘light’ of dawn or lamp, ‘coming to light’ or ‘publicity’, ‘revelation’, and ‘showing oneself, coming forth’¹⁴³. The semantic correlation between the two roots *vil/vel* meaning ‘to make public, reveal, say’ and ‘to become bright, clear, white’ is very evident in this context.

The Vedic Goddess Vāc as ‘Word’ possesses the creative power of revealing the hidden reality¹⁴⁴, and the Vedic tradition forms the basis of the later Indian philosophy of language¹⁴⁵. An important concept in the philosophy of language is *sphoṭa*, from *sphuṭ-* ‘to burst open (with a sound), burst into flower, crack, crackle (fire), burst into view, appear suddenly’: this Sanskrit root is nearly synonymous with the Proto-Dravidian root **vil* ‘to open out, unfold as a blossom, crack, split, burst, burst open’, etc.¹⁴⁶, and this in turn is a perfect homonym (and probably a derivative) of the above-discussed roots **vil/vel* ‘to say’ and ‘to be(come) bright/clear’. It is further significant that Vāc as the feminine creative principle is prominently identified with the Vedic metre called *vi-rāj*, which means both ‘luminous’ and ‘widely ruling’¹⁴⁷. In other ways too Vāc is associated with Dawn, a most important Goddess in the Veda. The Hindu Goddess Durgā (a beautiful virgin riding a lion and vanquishing a demon riding on a dark buffalo), like

¹³⁹See Parpola 1998: 224ff., 247f. Further, the word *vel* ‘white’ figures prominently in the Tamil names of Goddess Sarasvatī as seated on the white lotus (*Veṇ-kamalai*, *Veṇ-calacam-urrāl*, *Veṇ-tāmarai-makal*, *Veṇ-tāmarai-yāl*, *Veṇ-pāvai*, *Veṇ-pū-mān*) or as having a white body (*Vellai-meyyāl*, *Vellai-mēṇiyāl*, *Vellai-y-uruvāl*); cf. also *veṇ-koṭi* ‘1. flag of victory. 2. Sarasvatī’; see *Tamil Lexicon*, s.vv.

¹⁴⁰Cf. Kurup 1973: 26ff.; Parpola 1997: 184ff.

¹⁴¹Evidence for Harappan worship of Murukan is presented in Parpola 1994: 225ff.

¹⁴²All these meanings are given to the Malayalam verb *veliccappetuka* by Gundert (1872: II, 984b).

¹⁴³Cf. Gundert 1872: II, 984.

¹⁴⁴Cf. e.g. RS 1,164,45 *catvāri vāk pārimitā padāni...* ‘The Word is measured in four quarters which are known to those brahmans endowed with intelligence. Three remain concealed and motionless; human beings speak the fourth quarter of the Word’ (transl. Padoux 1990: 22f.).

¹⁴⁵See Padoux 1990; Beck 1993; Raja 1969; Coward and Raja 1990.

¹⁴⁶DEDR no. 5432.

¹⁴⁷Cf. Padoux 1990: 9f.

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Mesopotamian Inanna-Ishtar, symbolizes the Victory of Light over the dark forces of night and death, which is tantamount to the Creation of the World¹⁴⁸.

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¹⁴⁸Cf. Parpola 1992; 1998.

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