At the Right Side of the Teacher*

Imagination, Imagery, and Image in Vedic and Śaiva Initiation

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand,
Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom
prepared for you from the foundation of the world.
Matthew 25: 34 (cf. Ecclesiastes 10: 2)

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the Vedic religion into new systems of belief and practice, early Hinduism for short, is a process of cultural change that, despite two centuries of research, has only partly been understood. The replacement of the sacrificial fire by images of wood and stone is among the most obvious innovations. As has been convincingly argued by Phyllis Granoff (2006), this innovation was only reluctantly accepted in some circles of brahmanic orthodoxy. On the other hand, there can be little doubt that Vedic imagination informed the concept of God and His image (*mūrti*) in the newly emerging religions. It found expression in the Sanskrit texts of early Hinduism. The confrontation of this textual evidence with the material images of the archaeologist is often perplexing, however.

An example of such a conundrum is the so-called Dakṣiṇāmūrti, mentioned in the Pāśupata texts, the *Mahābhārata*, and the later Śaiva literature of the Mantramārga. In this essay, we will examine the Vedic origins of the imagery of the Dakṣiṇāmūrti. This *mūrti* appears first and foremost to be an ideal image embedded in the ritual of initiation. The Vedic *upanayana* ceremony laid the structural foundations for the initiation rites of the later religious orders. The Dakṣiṇāmūrti appears to be a token of the theistic transformation of the Vedic imagination. It illustrates how literate Śaiva brahmins took the Hinduistic turn. At first material images played, if at all, only a secondary role in this transformation. However, in a religious world that was increasingly pervaded by material images of the divine, it was bound to happen that the visionary

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image became an archetype of visual representation, the Dakṣiṇāmūrti as an iconographic category. In this process, an essential characteristic of the vision of God as revealer was reinterpreted: His right side became interpreted as His southern face. The incongruity of this representation with the age-old religious idea of the south as being terrifying, inauspicious,¹ was to make a conundrum.

THE SITTING POSITION OF TEACHER AND PUPIL IN THE VEDIC UPANAYANA RITUAL

The Śatapathabrāhmaṇa

The *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 11.5.4 is our earliest source for the ancient *upanayana* ritual; a brief summery may highlight its major features.

- 1 The pupil approaches a teacher and expresses the wish for apprenticeship by saying: I have come for *brahmacarya* (*brahmacaryam āgām*). He commits himself to be a *brahmacārīn*.
- 2 The teacher (*ācārya*) asks his name. The question implies the answer: ‘who’ (*ka*) conceived as another name of Prajāpati.
- 3 The teacher takes the pupil by the hand, implying that he accepts him as a student, saying *indrasya brahmacāry asy, agnir ācāryas tavāham ācāryas tavāsāv iti*. Thus the *ācārya* and Agni are seen as homologous.
- 4 He consigns the student to Prajāpati and Savitrī and to all beings in heaven and earth.
- 5 He consigns him to *brahman*, that is, he makes him a *brahmacārīn* by saying *brahmacāry asi*, while he lets him sip water, which embodies the elixir of life (*amṛta*). Thus the pupil is initiated into the life eternal, and becomes a ‘wanderer in *brahman*’.
- 6 After this initiation—with or without delay (see below n. 11 on p. 508)—the *ācārya* teaches the Veda by making him repeat its quintessence, the *Sāvitrī*.

The importance attached to the position of pupil and teacher during the Veda instruction is apparent from the fact that it is singled out for specification in the *Brāhmaṇa*; there appear to be two different traditions. According to one tradition the student sits or stands at the right side (*dakṣiṇatas*) of the teacher, who, as is understood, is facing east. The position of the pupil is characterised by the term *bulva/bulba*. This word, apparently a hapax legomenon, is given by Mayrhofer EWA s.v. as ‘etwa “seitwärts”’ (with the remark: ‘nicht klar’). Because of this sideways position, this tradition is rejected in the *Brāhmaṇa*, which opts for the alternative: the student should sit opposite the teacher looking at him from east to west.²

¹ Cf. Bodewitz 2000, 22 f.

² ŚBr 11.5.4.14:

Which direction, we may ask, faces the pupil in the situation that is rejected? The commentary of Śaṅkara does not resolve the question.³ There can be little doubt that the teacher, homologous to Agni, is facing east;⁴ the student, on the other hand, may be thought to be looking at his teacher in profile, i.e. he may be facing north, for that is the region of the gods,⁵ the region of living men as opposed to that of the deceased.⁶ Or, he may face the northeast, since standing towards that direction Prajāpati created the creatures, there the gate of heaven is believed to stand.⁷ The northeast may be particularly appropriate in the present case, because it not only is the direction into which Prajāpati issued the beings—Prajāpati to whom the student has just been consigned—but also is the point of the compass where the Sun (Savitr) rises at the summer solstice to begin a new year, the Sun to whom the student has just as well been consigned and into whose mantra (*Sāvitrī*) he is actually being initiated, that is, whose mantra he is reciting. If directed to the northeast, the student is seated obliquely, not transversely, with respect to the teacher. It is difficult to determine whether *bulva* means ‘oblique’ or ‘transverse’.

Consequently, the first of the two alternatives discussed in the *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*, the one that is rejected by the *Brāhmaṇa* itself, namely that the student is sitting at the right side (*dakṣiṇatas*) of the teacher, allows for two interpretations: (1a) teacher is facing east and student is facing north, or (1b)

ātha haṁke dakṣiṇatāh[] tiṣṭhate vāsīnāya vānvāhur ná tātā kuryād yó hainaṁ tātā brūyād bulbāṁ nv ā ayām imām ājījanata bulbo bhaviṣyatītīśvaró ha tātāiva syāt tasmāt purāstād eva pratice samīkṣamāṇāyānubrūyāt || 14 ||

Now some recite (to the pupil) while the latter is standing or sitting at the right side (of the teacher). One should not do so. One would be able to say to him in that case: ‘Yes indeed, he (the teacher) has begotten him (the student) sideways, and sideways (i.e. wayward) he (the student) will be’; and so, indeed, it will come to pass. Therefore he should recite to (the pupil) sitting in front of him, while the former is westwards looking.

- 3 Śaṅkara glosses: *ayam ācārya imam śiṣyam atha bulvaṁ tiraścīnaṁ prāṇmukham ājījanat tathā cāyaṁ [b]ulvaḥ parāṇmukho bhaviṣyatītī* I take *prāṇmukham*, like *bulvaṁ tiraścīnaṁ*, as an adverb qualifying *ājījanat*: ‘*bulva*, i.e. transversely, while facing forward/eastwards (*prāṇmukham*), he has begotten (the pupil)’; this adverb, referring to the position of the teacher, serves to pronounce the contrast with the pupil, who will turn away (*parāṇmukha*), will be adverse. *Bulva* thus means transverse (*tiraścīna*), adverse (*parāṇmukha*), which, again, suggests that teacher and pupil sit at right angles.
- 4 This is the default position. ‘In the domestic rites the sacrificer stands to the west of the fire facing the east’ (Gonda 1980, 52). Cf. Bodewitz 2000, 25, 49.
- 5 ŚBr 12.7.3.7: *uttaro vai devalokó, dakṣiṇaḥ pitṛloka[h]*.
- 6 ŚBr 13.8.1.6: *ūdici vai manuṣyāṇāṁ dīk*. Cf. Gonda 1980, 53; Bodewitz 2000, 23.
- 7 ŚBr 6.6.2.2-4:

ūdan prāṇ tiṣṭhan | ūdan vai prāṇ tiṣṭhan prajāpatiḥ prajā asṛjata || 2 || yádve(v)ódan prāṇ tiṣṭhan | eṣā hobháyēṣāṁ devamanuṣyāṇāṁ dīg yád ūdici prāci || 3 || yádvevódan prāṇ tiṣṭhan | etāsyāṁ ha diśi svargāsya lokāsya dvāraṁ tasmād ūdan prāṇ tiṣṭhan āhutir juhoty ūdan prāṇ tiṣṭhan dakṣiṇā nayati dvāraiva tát svargāsya lokāsya vittāṁ prāpādayati || 4 ||

Cf. Gonda 1980, 53; Bodewitz 2000, 24.

teacher is facing east and student is facing northeast. (1b) is clearly a variant of (1a) and a combination of both is perfectly feasible: the pupil faces north, but, if appropriate, may look towards the northeast.⁸

That the Brāhmaṇa prefers alternative (2)—teacher and pupil sitting opposite to one another, directed to the east and west respectively—may above all have practical reasons, since the teacher bestows more than only learning upon the neophyte at this occasion; a change of position may have been thought to be cumbersome.⁹ The first alternative (1a–b), on the other hand, because it makes sense in terms of the mystique of the quarters, may have preserved original traits. Moreover, the right side of the teacher has symbolic meaning. ‘There is ample evidence that the right hand or the right side of the body was decidedly preferred to the left.’¹⁰ We will return to this below.

The *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* does itself refer to earlier modalities of the ritual recitation of the *Sāvitrī*, when it reads: ‘In former days, however, they recited that same verse (the *Sāvitrī*) at the end of the year (*saṃvatsare*), thinking “being as old as a year, indeed, children are born; as soon as born, we impart speech to him”.’¹¹ The appropriate direction in this ritual is, or so it seems, the northeast, in which direction Prajāpati gave birth, Prajāpati who is equated with the year (Gonda 1984).

The Gṛhyasūtras

The two traditions indicated briefly in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* can be followed in the Gṛhyasūtra literature. As one would expect, the only Gṛhyasūtra that

8 Gonda 1980, 54 gives a confusing rendering of this position:

On the other hand, the *brahman* (priest) is placed or sits south. ... The *same* position is prescribed to the boy who is to be initiated before a girdle is tied round his waist, which is to protect him against evil influences.

The boy is not said to sit in or face the south, but to sit at the right side of the teacher. That this coincides with the south is secondary and as such does not play a symbolic role, as I will argue in this article (cf. Bodewitz 2000, 26).

9 According to the Gṛhyasūtras the pupil receives, among other things, a girdle and a staff, to which the sacred thread may be added. All three items are missing in the ŚBr account. It seems that bestowing the *yajñopavīta* upon the novice at this occasion is a relatively late addition (see Gopal 1959, 296). There is obviously a loss of symbolic significance in this second position of the pupil compared to the first alternative. Surveying the meaning of the western direction in Vedic ritual Gonda 1980, 55 observes: ‘It follows that facing eastwards whilst standing in the west [as does the *ācārya*, H.T.B.] results in a desired effect, so that in the west one can be prosperous; facing the west does not however produce results.’

10 Gonda 1977a, 624; Gonda 1980, 57–60. ‘In the case of male beings the right side was auspicious, most probably because it was the ‘male’ side. *Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa* 70 c 25, 5 a royal sacrificer seeing that the flame of a (sacrificial) fire points to the right will be victorious. The side of strength and auspiciousness is also widely regarded as that of benignity, allegiance, benediction’ (*op. cit.* 60).

11 ŚBr 11.5.4.6: *tām ha smaitām purā saṃvatsarē ’nvāhuḥ saṃvatsarāsammitā vai gārbhāḥ prājāyante jātā evāsmiṃs tād vācam dadhma iti* | Sāyaṇa *ad loc.* takes this to mean that the teaching of the student of the *Sāvitrī* took place a year after the initiation (or after a shorter period as specified in the following paragraphs).

belongs, like the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*, to the White Yajurveda, the *Pāraskara-gr̥hyasūtra*, follows the accepted tradition of the Brāhmaṇa, though it mentions the alternative. The place where the teaching takes place is specified: north of the sacrificial fire.

After (the pupil) has made a *pradakṣiṇa* around the fire he takes his seat. The teacher, touched (by the pupil), pours oblations of ghee into the fire; when the remains have been eaten, he instructs him: ‘You are a *brahmacārīn*, drink water, do your service, may you not sleep in the daytime, restrain your speech, put fuel on the fire, drink water.’ Then he recites to him the *Sāvitrī*, north of the sacrificial fire, while (the pupil) is sitting near him with his face turned west, looking (at him) and being looked at. Some: ‘to him while standing or sitting to his right side’.¹²

The Gr̥hyasūtras of the R̥gveda, the *Āśvalāyana*- and *Śāṅkhāyanagr̥hyasūtras*, although different in details and sequence, seem basically to follow the accepted tradition of the White Yajurveda with regard to the place of teaching, to the north of the fire, and the vis-à-vis position of teacher and pupil.¹³ The same goes for the *Gobhilagr̥hyasūtra* of the Sāmaveda.¹⁴

¹² PārGS 2.3.1–5:

pradakṣiṇam agniṃ parītyopaviśati || 1 || *anvārabdha ājyāhutir hutvā prāśanānte 'thainam samśāsti* || 2 || *brahmacāry asy apo 'śāna karma kuru mā divā suṣupthā vācam yaccha samidham ādhehy apo 'śāneti* || 3 || *athāsmā sāvitṛm anvāhottarato 'gneḥ pratyañmukhāyopaviṣṭāyopasannāya samikṣamāṇāya samikṣitāya* || 4 || *dakṣiṇatas tiṣṭhata āśināya vaike* || 5 ||

Words in **bold face** are literal quotations from the ŚBr 11.5.4.5, 14. Stenzler in his translation (1878, 44) leaves *dakṣiṇatas* out altogether. Oldenberg in his translation (1886, 306) takes *dakṣiṇatas* as referring to the fire: ‘to the south (of the fire)’, which, since we are here concerned with a literal quote from the ŚBr, is certainly wrong.

¹³ The *Āśvalāyana* gives the following procedure. The teacher, touched (by the pupil), after having poured (oblations of ghee into the fire), stands to the north of the fire, his face turned east; opposite of him, with his face turned west the other (ĀśvGS 1.20.2–3: *samanvārabdhe hutvōttarato 'gneḥ prāñmukha ācāryo 'vatiṣṭhate* || 2 || *purastāt pratyañmukha itaraḥ* || 3 ||). Then, while pouring the water of his *añjali* into that of the pupil, the teacher consigns the pupil to Savitr̥ and to Prajāpati. After this the pupil puts on fuel and touches the fire. Then, without mentioning another position, the text continues by saying that the pupil, while reciting mantras, ‘approaches (the teacher), bends his knee, touches (the feet of the teacher), and should say: “O lord, teach the *Sāvitrī*, O lord, recite”’ (ĀśvGS 1.21.4: [...] *upasthāya jānv ācyopasaṃgr̥hya brūyād adhīhi bho sāvitṛm bho3 anubrūhīti* || 4 ||). Cf. *Śāṅkhāyanagr̥hyasūtra* 2.5.8–12:

[...] *uttareṇāgnim upaviśataḥ | prāñmukha ācāryaḥ pratyañmukha itaro | adhīhi bho3 ity uktvā | ācārya oṃkāraṃ prayujyāthetaraṃ vācayati sāvitṛm bho3 anubrūhīti | athāsmā sāvitṛm avāha tat savitur vareṇyam ity etām paccho 'rdharcaśo 'navānam* || 5 ||

¹⁴ GoGS 2.10.31–35:

udañ agner utsṛpya prāñ ācārya upaviśaty udagagreṣu darbheṣu || 31 || *pratyai māṇavako dakṣiṇajānvakto 'bhīmukha ācāryam udagagreṣu eva darbheṣu* || 32 || *athainam triḥ pradakṣiṇam muñjamekhalām pariharan vācayatiyaṃ duruktāt paribādhamāneti ṛtasya goptṛti ca* || 33 || *athopasīdaty adhīhi bhoḥ sāvitṛm me bhavān anubravitv iti* || 34 || *tasmā anvāha paccho 'rdharcaśa ṛkśa iti* || 35 ||

The other tradition, rejected in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*, we find in some Gr̥hyasūtras affiliated with the Black Yajurveda, though not in all.¹⁵ For an assessment of the *upanayana* ritual according to this tradition, we turn to the elaborate description in the *Bhāradvājagṛhyasūtra*. Its procedure may be epitomized (with cross-references to the *Hiraṇyakeśigṛhyasūtra*).

The teacher prepares for the *homa* sacrifice by consecrating the implements etc. (BhGS 1.3). He prepares west of the sacrificial fire a seat of grass (*kūrca*), of which the grassblades are turned to the north. There the teacher takes his seat, his face turned to the east; the pupil (*kumāra*), who has put on the *yajñopavīta* and sipped water, takes his seat at the right side (of his teacher) (*dakṣiṇatas*).¹⁶

The teacher performs the *homa* sacrifice (BhGS 1.4). Then he gives the pupil a new cloth, a girdle of muñja grass (*mauñjī mekhalā*), and a skin of the black antelope (*ajina*) (BhGS 1.5–6). Next (BhGS 1.7) (the teacher) strews to the west of the sacrificial fire darbha grasses, on which the two (teacher and pupil) take their stand, one facing east, the other west. The one facing east takes the hand of the one facing west and vice versa. A servant fills the *añjalis* of both with water. By his *añjali* (the teacher) transfers the water into the *añjali* (of the pupil).¹⁷

A formal interview takes place in which the teacher asks for the name of the pupil and subsequently leads him (*upanayāmi*) to Prajāpati (Ka) (BhGS 1.7).

15 Not, for instance, in the ĀpGS 4.11.7–8:

*pariṣecanāntaṃ kṛtvāpareṇāgnim udagagraṃ kūrcaṃ nidhāya tasmīn uttareṇa yaju-
ṣopanetopaviśati || 7 || purastāt pratyaiñ āsīnaḥ kumāro dakṣiṇena pāṇinā dakṣiṇaṃ
pādān anvārabhyāha sāvitrīm bho anubrūhīti || 8 ||*

The commentator Sudarśanārya, reading *pratyaiñāsīnaḥ*, glosses: *pratyaimukhaḥ*. Similarly the *Baudhāyanagṛhyasūtra* 2.5.38–39:

*apareṇāgnim udagagraṃ kūrcaṃ nidhāya tasmīn prānimukha ācārya upaviśati—
rāṣṭrabhṛd asy ācāryāsandī mā tvad yoṣam iti || 38 || tasyāgreṇa kumāro darbheṣu
pratyaimukha upaviśya pādān anvārabhyāha—sāvitrīm bho anubrūhīti || 39 ||*

Although the site of the teaching is said to be to the west side of the sacrificial fire, the pupil is said to sit opposite (i.e. east) of the teacher while facing west, that is he sits with his back towards the fire blocking the teacher's access to it. This evidently hybrid version of the ritual appears to be a conflation of the tradition of the White Yajurveda (and R̥g- and Sāmaveda, as we saw above) and the alternative tradition (see below). The *Gautamadharmasūtra* adds to the confusion when it declares that the student should sit at the right side of the teacher, but may face either east or north; in the former case he sits parallel to the teacher: *prānimukho dakṣiṇataḥ śiṣya udānimukho vā ...* (GauDhS 1, in Dutt 1988).

16 BhGS 1.3 (cf. HirGS 1.2.5–6):

[...] *apareṇāgnim udagagraṃ kūrcaṃ nidhāya tasmīn prānimukha upaviśati | yajño-
pavītaṃ kṛtvāpā ācamya dakṣiṇataḥ kumāra upaviśyānvārabhate || 3 ||*

17 BhGS 1.7:

*apareṇāgnim dvayān darbhan pūrvāparān udagagrān stṛṇāti | teṣu pūrvāparāv upa-
tiṣṭhete | prānimukhaḥ pratyaimukhasya hastaṃ gr̥hṇīyād ity ekam | pratyaimukhaḥ
prānimukhasyetye apāram | athainayoḥ praiśakṛd añjali udakena pūrayati | athāsyañja-
lināñjalāv udakam ānayati |*

The teacher consigns the pupil to several other deities. The teacher asks him to step on a stone (*aśman*) and to put fuel on the fire (BhGS 1.8).

Then the pupil makes a *pradakṣiṇa* around the fire, takes his seat at the right side (*dakṣiṇatas*), scil. of the teacher, while he turns to the north, touches (the feet of the teacher), and asks: ‘O lord, recite the *Sāvitrī*’.¹⁸ The place where the teacher is seated is not again specified, but presumably he is still seated west of the fire facing east, that is the place where he performed the *homa* sacrifice, took the interview accompanied by the *añjalis*, and consigned the pupil to Prajāpati etc. This is corroborated by the *Hiraṇyakeśigrhyasūtra*.¹⁹

The sitting position of the preceptor and his audience

Veda study is of course not restricted to the *brahmacārīn*. Outside the village, retreated into the wilderness (*araṇya*), brahmins devoted themselves to study and, if they became known for their learnedness, attracted students. In this way we conceive of the origin of the different Upaniṣad teaching traditions and of other early Indian schools of philosophy (above, p. 230). The subject of study and teaching may have changed accordingly, but the setting is traditional and had a long life. We find such an idyllic setting, for instance, in the *Śāṅkhāyana-grhyasūtra*, where it describes ‘the rules for the forest-dweller regarding his (Veda) study’.²⁰

For this study (*svādhyāya*) the forest-dwellers should go to a pure spot in the northeast that is open at the eastern side. The site is circular or marked by a circle with an entrance to the east or the north. After some preliminary rites, they may take up their studies.²¹

The next section describes the teaching situation.

*atha praviśya maṇḍalam | prāṇmukha ācārya upaviśyaty udānī mukhā dakṣiṇata ita-
re yathāpradhānam | asaṃbhavē sarvatomukhāḥ | pratikṣerann udayam ādityasya |
viññāya cainam dīdhitimantam | adhīhi bhoḥ iti dakṣiṇair dakṣiṇam savyaiḥ savyam
dakṣiṇottarair pāṇibhir upasaṃgrhya pādāv ācāryasya nirṇiktau |* (ŚāṅGS 6.3.1–6)

Then, after having entered the circle, the teacher is seated with his face turned to the east; the others sit with their faces turned to the north at the right side (of the

18 BhGS 1.8 (cf. HirGS 1.6.10, below, n. 19 on p. 511):

[...] *pradakṣiṇam agnīm parikramya dakṣiṇata udagāvṛtyopaviśyopasaṃgrhya pṛ-
cchati || 8 || sāvitrīm bho anubrūhīti |*

19 HirGS 1.6.9–10:

*aparenāgnīm udagagram kūrcaṃ nidhāya tasmīn prāṇmukha upaviśati | rāṣṭrabhṛd
asy ācāryāsandī mā tvad yoṣam || iti || 9 || ādityāyāñjalīm kṛtvācāryāyopasaṃgrhya
dakṣiṇataḥ kumāra upaviśya | adhīhi bho | ity uktvāthāha | sāvitrīm bho anubrūhī ||
iti || 10 ||*

20 ŚāṅGS 6.1.1:

*athāto brahmāṇam brahmarṣīm, brahmayonīm indram [...] sarvān eva pūrvācāryān
namasya svādhyāyāraṇyakasya nīyamān udāhariṣyāmaḥ |*

21 ŚāṅGS 6.2.3–10:

*prāḡgyotiṣam aparājītāyām dīśi puṇyam upagamya deśam | ... maṇḍalam tu prāgdvā-
ram udagdvāram vā ... bahirmaṇḍalasthābhir ācamya | prādhīyīran kṛtaśāntayaḥ |*

teacher), according to rank; if this is impossible (i.e., if there is not enough space) they may face all directions. They should wait for the rising of the sun. And when they have seen it (rise) in all its splendour, they say: ‘Sir, recite’, while touching with their right and left hands the hallowed feet of the teacher—his right (foot) with their right, his left (foot) with their left hands.²²

The *Śāṅkhāyanagṛhyasūtra*, which, as we have seen, agreed with the tradition of the White Yajurveda in opting for the face-to-face position of teacher and pupil north of the sacrificial fire in the *upanayana* ritual (see above n. 13 on p. 509), reserved the alternative position, in which the student sits at the right side of the teacher facing north, for the traditional school of the hermitage.

It is to be expected that this time-honoured traditional setting of religious education may be met again in the *Mahābhārata*. The practice to stand with one’s face turned to the east when making a solemn pronouncement or to reveal a secret is attested in the great epic, as the following example may show.

But then, when Kṛṣṇa, haven of brahmins, heard the cause of Pārtha’s (i.e. Arjuna’s) sorrow, he touched water and stood still, his face turned to the east; and the mighty lotus-eyed one spoke this word for the benefit of Pāṇḍu’s son, intent upon killing the army of Jayadratha: ‘O Pārtha, there is a supreme unfailing weapon called “Pāśupata”, by which god Maheśvara killed all the Daityas in battle.’²³

However, I have not found in the *Mahābhārata* an exact parallel of the situation described in the *Śāṅkhāyanagṛhyasūtra*, in which the position of the audience is specified.

THE SITTING POSITION OF GURU AND NOVICE IN EARLY ŚAIVA INITIATION RITUAL

We may next investigate whether the tradition of Vedic initiation and instruction informed similar rites in the emerging religious communities. In his *Change*

22 Cf. *Āpastambadharmasūtra* 1.(2).6.24: *ekādhyāyī dakṣiṇaṃ bāhuṃ pratyupāsīdet* || 24 || *yathāvākāśaṃ bahavaḥ* || 25 ||, which is translated by Olivelle (1999), 14: ‘A single student should sit on his teacher’s right, while a group may sit as space permits.’

23 MBh 7.57.14–16:

śokasthānaṃ tu tac chrutvā pārthasya dvijaketanaḥ |
saṃsprṣṭyāmbhas tataḥ kṛṣṇaḥ prāṇmukhaḥ samavasthitaḥ || 14 ||
idaṃ vākyaṃ mahātejā babhāse puṣkarekṣaṇaḥ |
hitārthaṃ pāṇḍuputrasya saindhavasya vadhe vṛtaḥ || 15 ||
pārtha pāśupataṃ nāma paramāstraṃ sanātanaṃ |
yena sarvān mṛdhe daityān jaghne devo maheśvaraḥ || 16 ||

Cf. MBh 12.333.14cd–16ab:

[...]
saṃkalpayitvā trīn piṇḍān svenaiva vidhinā prabhuḥ || 14 ||
ātma-gātroṣmasaṃbhūtaiḥ snehagarbhaiḥ tilaiḥ api |
prokṣyāpavargaṃ deveśaḥ prāṇmukhaḥ kṛtavān svayam || 15 ||
maryādāsthāpanārthaṃ ca tato vacanam uktavān |
[...]

and *Continuity in Indian Religion* Jan Gonda elaborates the theme of the book with regard to the Vedic *upanayana* and the initiation (*dīkṣā*) in the monastic orders.

Instead of *upanayana* and the renewable *dīkṣā* we find in the monastic orders an ordination proper—sometimes called *dīkṣā*—which is to be preceded by a noviciate beginning with a ceremony which is a parallel of the *upanayana*, and in various Hindu sects and communities an admission to full membership, to priesthood or guruship, which is also known as *dīkṣā*. (Gonda 1965, 317)

And describing the initiation ritual of ascetics, he makes the following remark.

... *dīkṣā*. This term is translated by ‘consecration’ and ‘renouncement of the world’. On this occasion one is *inter alia* given a new name. During important acts, such as study, confession, one has to turn east- or northward; as is well known these directions are of special importance in brahmanic rites, the ‘door of heaven being in the northeast’. (Gonda 1965, p. 385)

We shall confine ourselves here to the Śaiva orders and investigate whether these traditional directions of teacher and student can actually be found in their early texts.

Initiation in the Pāśupata tradition

The earliest text of a Śaiva order that we have is the *Pāśupatasūtra* with the commentary of Kaunḍinya. The initiation in the order is briefly described by Kaunḍinya when he explains the future tense used in the first Sūtra (*vyākhyāsyāmaḥ*, ‘we shall expound’).

‘SHALL’ (*syā*) refers to the time required, namely the time that is required (before the exposition can begin) by the *ācārya*, to consecrate a brahmin at Mahādeva’s ‘southern *mūrti*’ with ashes that are consecrated with the (five) mantras, ‘Sadyojāta’ etc., and to initiate him in the mantra, after he has made him relinquish the signs of his origin—a brahmin whose (antecedents) have earlier been screened, as follows from the word ‘therefore’ (*ataḥ*) in the Sūtra, who comes (to him) from amongst the householders etc., and who has (already) engaged himself in fasting and observances.²⁴

The other Pāśupata text that has survived is the *Gaṇakārikā*. The *Ratnaṭīkā*, commenting on *Gaṇakārikā* 5, in which the elements of the initiation are

24 Kaunḍinya *ad* PS 1.1 (p. 8):

syā ity eṣye kāle | yāvad ayam ācārya gṛhasthādibhyo ’bhyāgataṃ pūrvam ataḥ-śabdāt parīkṣitaṃ brāhmaṇaṃ vratopavāsādyam mahādevasya dakṣiṇasyāṃ mūrtau sadyojātādisaṃskṛtena bhasmanā saṃskaroti utpattiliṅgavyāvṛttiṃ kṛtvā mantraśrāvaṇaṃ ca karoti tāvad eṣyaḥ kālaḥ kriyate |*

* read: °*ādhyam*, instead of °*ādyam*.

I consider the interpretation that takes the locative *mūrtau* as depending on °*saṃskṛtena*, rather than on *saṃskaroti*, possible, though less likely in the present context for reasons given below (cf., however, the Ṭīkā quoted in n. 38 on p. 518).

summed up—the (right) materials, the (right) time, the ritual (of consecration), the image (*mūrti*), and the preceptor (*guru*)²⁵—explains what in the context of the consecration ritual (*saṃskāra*) is meant by *mūrti*. It reads:

The word IMAGE (*mūrti*) in the Kārikā aims at (*abhipretaḥ*) the spot (*bhūpradeśaḥ*) a little to the right (*dakṣiṇa*) of that, which [by Kauṇḍinya], in [his commentary on] the ‘Sūtra on offering’ [i.e. PS 1.8–9], is described (*vyākhyātaṃ*) as the locus (*sthāna*) of worship of Mahādeva that is characterized by the erect phallus etc.—a spot not separated from it by a wall (*kuḍya*) or the like.²⁶

‘*Mūrti*’ is here to be interpreted as a location, ‘at the *mūrti*’, referring to the site of consecration, said to be by the right side of (° *dakṣiṇa*°), close to ° *samīpa*° and not separated ° *avyavahito* from that which in *Pāśupatasūtra* 1.8–9 is qualified as Mahādeva’s manifestation (*rūpa*). If we assume that the commentator of the *Gaṇakārikā* and Kauṇḍinya both describe the same initiation tradition, we may deduce from the Ṭikā that the words of Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.1, *mahādevasya dakṣiṇasyāṃ mūrtau*, are to be understood as saying that the novice is seated on the right side of Mahādeva.²⁷

Though the esoteric intention of both authors clearly hampers our understanding, I would hazard the conjecture that the guru, who initiates the student into the Pāśupata observance (*vrata*) by communicating to him the doctrine as revealed by Śiva himself in the *Pāśupatasūtra*, embodies Śiva. The novice is seated next to him on his right-hand side, that is, he is situated ‘at the *mūrti*’; and this designation is understandable as it refers to a situation in which the neophyte envisages the image (*mūrti*) of the divine preceptor in his guru, that is, he sits at Mahādeva’s visual manifestation and sees Him, His *rūpa*, His benign epiphany, in front of him, in profile. The two natures of the teacher, the learned and pious person of flesh and blood, and the divine archetype are explicitly stated in the Ṭikā on the word ‘*guru*’.

‘*GURU*’ is the preceptor (*ācārya*); he has two forms, on account of the distinction supreme and not-supreme. With regard to these (two forms) not-supreme is he as

25 *Gaṇakārikā* 5cd: *dravyaṃ kālāḥ kriyā mūrtir guruś caiveha pañcamah*.

26 Bhāsarvajña (?) *ad* *Gaṇakārikā* 5c (p. 9):

mūrtiśabdena yad upahārasūtre mahādevejyāsthānam ūrdhvaliṅgādīlakṣaṇaṃ vyākhyātaṃ tatsamīpadakṣiṇabhūpradeśaḥ kuṭyādyavyavahito ’trābhipretaḥ*
As Harunaga Isaacson has suggested to me, we should read *kuḍyādyā*°, instead of *kuṭyādyā*°.

I cannot subscribe to the translation of Oberhammer (1984, viii), which makes *mūrtiśabdena* the logical subject of *vyākhyātaṃ* (‘Mit dem Wort *mūrti*h, das im Verehrungs-sūtram [vorkommt], wird der große Gott als [sichtbares] Object der Verehrung (*mahādevejyāsthānam*) genannt, das [ikonographisch] durch das aufgerichtete Glied gekennzeichnet ist [*ūrdhvaliṅgādīlakṣaṇam*]’). The commentator’s wording seems to me on the other hand a sign that he tried to avoid saying that the *mūrti* meant here is a sculpture that has the actual iconographic characteristics of *ūrdhvaliṅgādi*.

27 To interpret the word *mūrtau* here (above, n. 24 on p. 513) in conformity with the commentary on the *Gaṇakārikā* was first suggested to me by Dr Gérard Colas.

being circumscribed by the knowledge of the five categories. The supreme guru is the lord Maheśvara, who empowers the former.²⁸

If we turn to the *Svacchandatantra*, describing the *samayadīkṣā*, we find the above interpretation confirmed.

After he has performed the (preliminary) rites, he [i.e. the guru], rejoiced at heart, makes the pupil, whose eyes are full of joy, stand up and, taking him by his hand, leads him towards the ‘southern *mūrti*’: Having made a circle there into a seat (consisting) of the syllable *om* with the help of a flower, he places the pupil upon it, his body erect, his face turned to the north. After the guru has installed himself whilst facing east, he performs the sprinkling and subsequent rites.²⁹

THE DAKṢIṆĀMŪRTI

From the place of initiation where Śiva manifests himself to the novice for the first time in that He assumes the form of guru, we now proceed to the public domain of the temple. In that context the word *mūrti* is used to refer to the physical object of veneration. This connotation underlies the Ṭikā’s description of the daily worship of the initiated Pāśupata, who, after his bath in ashes,

enters slowly the sanctum. Then he falls to his knees on a spot to the right of the image (*mūrtidakṣiṇe bhūpradeśe*), makes an *añjali* before his heart, and looks at Śiva in the image as if He were there in His very person,

and which means that,

he, fully concentrated and with his head turned towards the north, practises *japa* with the aim of that (*viśeṣa*) detachment from the sensual world, after which *japa* he sinks into meditation on Śiva; only then (*eva*) he should burst into repeated boisterous laughter.³⁰

28 Bhāsarvajña (?) *ad Gaṇakārikā* 5c (p. 9):

*gurur ācāryaḥ sa dvividhaḥ parāparabhedāt | tatrāparaḥ pañcārthajñānamaryādānvī-
tataḥ | ... tasyādhiṣṭhātā bhagavān maheśvaraḥ paro guruḥ |*

29 SvT (Bombay ed.) 3.129–131ab:

*kṛtakṛtyaḥ prahrṣṭātmā prahrṣṭanayanam śiśum |
utthāpya hastāt saṃgrhya dakṣiṇām mūrtim ānayet || 129 ||
tatra maṇḍalakaṃ kṛtvā puṣpeṇa praṇavāsanam |
tasyopari śiśum nyasya ūrdhvakāyam udamukham || 130 ||
guruḥ pūrvānanaḥ sthītvā prokṣaṇādīni kārayet |*

Kṣemarāja *ad SvT* (Bombay ed.) 3.129d (I, p. 212): *dakṣiṇām anukūlām śivātmikām e-
va, na tu pāśaviṃ dehamayīm* || (“*dakṣiṇām*”, i.e. favourable, purely of Śiva’s/auspicious
nature, but not a *paśu*-type, corporeal (*mūrti*)). See also SvT 4.496 (*sādhakābhīṣeka*)
and SvT 4.468–9 (*ācāryābhīṣeka*). Cf. MrĀ Kr. 7.61–62, 8.198–202ab.

30 Bhāsarvajña (?) *ad Gaṇakārikā* 7 (p. 18):

*... śanaīr garbhagṛhaṃ praviśet | tad anu mūrtidakṣiṇe bhūpradeśe jñanunī pātayitvā
hr̥di cāñjaliṃ baddhvā mūrtisthaṃ sākṣād iva śivaṃ paśyan ... saṃyatātmano-
ttarābhīmukheṇa pratyāhāraviśeṣārthaṃ japtavyaṃ japtvā tu śivadyānāsakta evātta-*

Analogous with the situation of initiation, the Pāśupata envisages Śiva in front of him, this time, however, in the physical object of worship. It is towards this manifestation of God that the Pāśupata turns and in whom he is sunk, an idea we also find in the following passage of the Southern Recension of the *Mahābhārata* where broad-minded Vāsudeva teaches.

The holy man who has reached Me (i.e. Vāsudeva) fixes himself upon My body (*mūrti*), or on Rudra's Dakṣiṇ(ā)mūrti, especially on the fourteenth (*tithi*). He, the great ascetic, while he is venerated by Siddhas, Brahmarṣis and celestial folk, and while his praises are sung by Gandharvas and choirs of Bhūtas, he of great splendour enters either Me or Śaṅkara.³¹

We thus observe that the term *mūrti* in the Pāśupata context on the one hand refers to the 'image' (meaning bodily manifestation) and, on the other hand, when used in the locative (or when the locative is meant), refers to 'a particular spot near the image', that is not to the image itself. Both meanings are, as we will argue, comprehended by the technical term *dakṣiṇāmūrti*, literally 'southward/rightward image/body/figure'. This term is explained by Kauṇḍinya when he comments on *Pāśupatasūtra* 1.9: *mahādevasya dakṣiṇāmūrteḥ* |

'OF THE GOD' (°*devasya*) is a genitive. This is a syntactic feature that expresses the relationship of owner and property; it signifies possession/grace (*parigraha*) only.

'SOUTHERN' (*dakṣiṇā*°) in the Sūtra is in the sense of a specific point of the compass. The sun divides the quarters and the quarters divide the *mūrti*.

'IMAGE' (*mūrti*): Either this (*yad etad*) form (*rūpa*) that is perceived by him who is standing at the right side of God, his face turned north, in (His) proximity, a form that is characterised by the bull-banner, the lance in hand, Nandin, Mahākāla, erect phallus etc., or to which (*yad vā*) the laymen resort.

The sanctuary is 'OF THE GREAT GOD' (*mahādevasya*). This is the answer (*iti*). There is the object to be worshipped.³²

hāsaṃ punaḥ punaḥ kuryāt |

The commentator rejects the view of some (*ity eke*) who say that he may burst into boisterous laughter as soon as he got to the temple, if his detachment has not ceased (*yady anivṛttapratyāhāras tadā gatamātra eva hasitaṃ kuryād ity eke*).

- 31 MBh 14 Appendix I No. 4 ll. 1454–58:

niveśayati manmūrtiā(m) ātmānaṃ madgataḥ śuciḥ |
rudradakṣiṇāmūrtiāṃ vā caturdaśyāṃ viśeṣataḥ ||
siddhair brahmarṣibhiś caiva deva lokaiś ca pūjitaḥ |
gandharvair bhūtasamṃghaiś ca gīyamāno mahātapāḥ |
praviśet sa mahātejā māṇ vā śaṅkaram eva ca ||

Cf. *ibid.* ll. 3067 f. *dakṣiṇāmūrti* here instead of *dakṣiṇāmūrti* for metrical reasons. I am grateful to Phyllis Granoff who pointed these passages out to me.

- 32 Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.9 (p. 15):

devasya iti ṣaṣṭhī | *svasvāmibhāvaḥ sambandhaḥ* | *parigrahārtham evādhikurute* |
atra dakṣiṇeti dikprativibhāge bhavati | *ādityo diśo vibhajati* | *diśaś ca mūrtiṃ vibhajanti* |

For the initiated Pāśupata like Kaunḍinya the term *dakṣiṇāmūrti* thus seems rather to refer to a situation or state than to a particular ‘image’, namely the state in which God appears to him who sits or stands at His right side and sees Him in front of him (for instance in the temple image). It is the situation in which Śiva reveals himself ‘towards him who is at His right side’ (*dakṣiṇā*),³³ namely, by turning His auspicious, gracious side towards him who is facing north—the sitting position of the novice since Vedic times.

The strength of this tradition obviously rests on the religious idea of the right side. To turn one’s right side upon someone is an auspicious act; in the case of God it is an act of grace in which He reveals Himself and His doctrine ‘unto them on his right hand’. It happens to the blessed ones in His proximity, that is in heaven on the Himavat, and as such to the initiated Pāśupata in his *yoga* with God, who may be represented either by the image or by the guru. In sum, the Pāśupata *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* is a state in which God reveals one quarter of Himself, the form to which He grants access, i.e. *yoga*; it is Śiva’s figure of grace.³⁴

In spite of the use of the word *mukha*, used here in figurative sense, I think the *Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad* 4.21 expresses this very idea:

‘Unborn is He’, so saying, Let a man in fear approach Him: O Rudra [show] thy right [auspicious] cheek, Protect me with it ever!³⁵

In the direct vision that is granted to the Pāśupata the ideal image of Mahādeva is visualized as being accompanied by his acolytes Nandin and Mahākāla, the

mūrtir nāma yad etad devasya dakṣiṇe pārśve sthitenodanmukhenopānte yad rūpam upalabhyate vṛṣadhvaṣaśūlapāṇinandinamahākālordhvaliṅgādilakṣaṇaṃ yad vā laukikāḥ pratipadyante ||

mahādevasyāyatanam iti tatropastheyam |

I propose to read a *daṇḍa* after *pratipadyante*.

- 33 The adverbial *dakṣiṇena* (cf. MBh 1.203.21, above, p. 500) is equivalent to *dakṣiṇā*, which is the OIA instrumental in *ā* preserved in some adverbs. Wackernagel 1930, III § 41b s.v. *dāksina*: ‘*dakṣiṇā* zur rechten Seite.’ The phrase *dakṣiṇāmūrtigrahaṇāt* in his commentary *ad* PS 1.9 shows that Kaunḍinya takes *dakṣiṇāmūrteḥ* as a compound, although he does not explain it. However, his speaking of ‘eastern’, ‘northern’, and ‘western’ *mūrtis* (below, n. 34 on p. 517) implies that he takes the compound as a Karmadhāraya. In the gloss (above, n. 32 on p. 516 f.) he makes clear that ‘southern’ is to be understood as ‘at the right side of’ (*dakṣiṇe pārśve*). This is his explanation of the adverbial *dakṣiṇā* (cf. below, n. 39 on p. 518).

- 34 In this way the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* continues the Rgvedic idea that the supreme deity manifests only one fourth of himself. RV 10.90.3–4:

etāvān asya mahimā āto jyāyāṃś ca pūruṣaḥ |
pādo ’sya viśvā bhūtāni tripād asyāmṛtaṃ divī || 3 ||
tripād ūrdhvā ūd ait pūruṣaḥ pādo ’syehābhavat pūnaḥ |
tāto viśvāni vyakrāmat sāśanāśāśanē abhī || 4 ||

This seems to be the purport of Kaunḍinya’s remark (*ibid.* p. 15): *dakṣiṇāmūrtigrahaṇāt pūrvottara paścimānām mūrtīnām pratiśedhaḥ |*

- 35 R.C. Zaehner’s translation in *Hindu Scriptures*, p. 197: *ajāta ity evaṃ kaścīd bhīruḥ prapadyate | rudra yat te dakṣiṇaṃ mukhaṃ tena māṃ pāhi nityam || 21 ||*

bull-banner etc., in short, a ‘tableau de la troupe’. The physical image in the sacred compound is not defined. If our interpretation is correct, it may be any image, most often a *liṅga*, considered by the Pāśupata laymen as ‘the image’ (*mūrti*) of Mahādeva, a designation that for the initiate is true only in metaphorical sense.³⁶

The definition of God’s figure of grace

The concept of *dakṣiṇāmūrti* thus comprises the manifested form (*rūpa*) of God, the (physical) image or body (*mūrti*) in which it may be envisaged, and the right side (*dakṣiṇe pārśve*), which indicates the Pāśupata’s position with respect to Mahādeva and his embodiment. As such the term is applicable to every situation in which the Pāśupata enters into contact with his object of worship. And this appears to have been the intention of the author of the *Pāśupatasūtra* when we read PS 1.8–9 coherently (as also the author of the *Ṭikā* seems to have done: *upahārasūtra*, above, p. 514): ‘He should worship with offerings of laughter, singing, dancing, bellowing, obeisance, and muttering to the figure of grace (*dakṣiṇāmūrti*) of Mahādeva.’³⁷ The same idea underlies the *Ratnatīkā*, where it says that the Pāśupata should consecrate the ashes with mantras in the temple ‘at Śiva’s Dakṣiṇāmūrti’,³⁸ or the *Skandapurāṇa* when it advises that one should offer rice pudding with ghee at the ‘southern *mūrti*’ during one year in order to become like Nandin.³⁹

It seems obvious that the same idea underlies the initiation rite, in which the place of the physical image, i.e. the *mūrti*, may be taken by the guru who

36 This position conforms best with the view of images maintained in the Nyāya school, which is generally believed to have had close links with the Pāśupata. In Colas 2004, 163 this author describes Udayana’s point of view as follows: ‘The rite does not specifically invest the image with a divine presence or power through a mechanical process, but occasions the conscious reflection, by deities, of themselves as being present in the image.’ In other words, Śiva’s presence in the Dakṣiṇāmūrti is an act of grace (*parigraha*).

37 PS 1.8–9: *hasitagītanṛttaḍuṃḍuṃkāranamaskārajapyopahāreṇopatiṣṭhet mahādevasya dakṣiṇāmūrteḥ* || 8–9 || I take *dakṣiṇāmūrteḥ* here as *genitivus pro dativo* depending on *upahāreṇa* (see Speijer 1889, § 132). Alternatively, we may read an accusative, *dakṣiṇāmūrtim*, in accordance with the Benares and Calcutta MSS of the Sūtras and some testimonies. See Bisschop 2006a, 5.

38 *Ratnatīkā* at *Gaṇakārikā* 7 (p. 18): ... *śivadakṣiṇāmūrtau mantraiḥ saṃskṛtya* Cf. Kaunḍinya *ad* PS 1.1 (above, p. 513).

39 SP 27.31:

*dakṣiṇāyām tu yo mūrtau pāyasaṃ saghṛtaṃ śubhe |
nivedayed varṣaṃ ekaṃ sa ca nandisamo bhavet* || 31 ||

Cf. SP_S 167.15 (Bisschop 2006, 92):

*tasmīnn āyatane rudraṃ tṛṇāṅgaḥ sa mahān ṛṣiḥ |
dakṣiṇām mūrtim āsthāya stauti nityaṃ kapardinam |
divaukasas tam abhyarcya bhavanti gaṇapādhīpāḥ* || 15 ||

When the compound *dakṣiṇāmūrti* is dissolved, *dakṣiṇa* is taken as an adjective—sometimes inflected nominally (above), sometimes pronominally (e.g. Kaunḍinya *ad* PS 1.1, quoted in n. 24 on p. 513)—which shows again that we should read *dakṣiṇāmūrti* as a Karmadhāraya compound. However, when dissolved, the original use of the adverb *dakṣiṇā* (= *dakṣiṇena*) is ignored.

represents Śiva (as the *ācārya* represents Agni in the *upanayana*). In fact, it appears most likely that the concept of *dakṣiṇāmūrti* originated from this ritual in which Śiva as supreme teacher reveals himself. To this primordial figure—a god who is facing towards the east, but who confers his blessings, that is his ‘right’ side, on his creatures, be they gods, Siddhas, or worshippers in Bhāratavarṣa—the pseudo-Śaṅkara pays homage:

tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye ||

THIS obeisance is to Him who has the form of the illustrious teacher,
to the illustrious figure of grace.⁴⁰

THE DAKṢIṆĀMŪRTI AND ICONOGRAPHY

Having thus established the original meaning of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, we may proceed to its current iconographic denotation.

Among the earliest texts that describe the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* in iconographic terms may be the two Upajāti verses that are quoted by Gopinatha Rao, which he ascribed to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, but which are not found in the printed text of that name.

His right (lower) hand shows the (*jñāna*) *mudrā* and in his (right) upper (hand) he (holds) a white rosary; in his left (lower hand) he is holding a book comprising all the Āgamas and more, and with his upper (left hand) he holds the cup with nectar.

He is seated on a white lotus, his colour is white, powerful, with white cloth and ointment, and crowned by the crescent, teaching knowledge to the sages: that is what they call his Dakṣiṇāmūrti.⁴¹

On this and other, predominantly late South-Indian texts Rao based his description, which was repeated without any significant change by almost all later indological writing on this subject. It may be significant to note, though, that in the above passage the southern orientation of the image is not mentioned. To substantiate his view, however, Rao wrote:

One account gives an explanation regarding the etymology of this name; it states that because Śiva was seated **facing** south when he taught the *ṛishis yōga* and *jñāna* he came to be known as Dakshināmūrti. This aspect of Śiva is always invoked by students of science and arts.⁴²

40 T.M.P. Mahadevan (1980), *The Hymns of Śaṅkara*, p. 2 ff. Śaṅkara’s authorship of this hymn is doubtful, see Potter 1981, 317.

41 Rao 1914, II.2, Appendix B, p. 140 (cf. *Mayamata* 36.98–101):

*dakṣeṇa mudrāṃ pratipādayantaṃ sitākṣasūtraṃ ca tathordhvabhāge |
vāme ca pustāṃ akhilāgamādyāṃ bibhrāṇaṃ ūrdhvena sudhādharmaṃ ca ||
sitāmbujasthaṃ sitavarṇaṃ iśaṃ sitāmbarālepanaṃ indumaulim |
jñānaṃ munibhyaḥ pratipādayantaṃ taṃ dakṣiṇāmūrtim udāharanti ||*

42 Rao 1914, II.1, p. 273 (bold face mine).

Unfortunately, however, we are not informed about this ‘account’,⁴³ but Rao, without any doubt, was following an Indian iconographic convention, which prescribes ‘that in all Hindu temples, both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, the niche on the south wall of the central shrine should have the figure of Dakṣiṇāmūrti enshrined in it’.⁴⁴ Bruce Long, who devoted an article to the subject, relied heavily on Rao, but he put his finger on the problem, when he professed that he was puzzled,

As to why the southern direction, which is believed almost everywhere in India to be sinister and inauspicious, should in this instance be evaluated as auspicious and benign.

It is not beyond reason that we explain this curiously positive evaluation of the southern direction on the basis of the same religious principle by which the Furies in Greece came to be called the ‘Eumenides’, and Rudra, the ferocious Howler, came to be addressed as Śiva, the Auspicious. Perhaps the worshippers of Śiva hoped that by having the Divine Preceptor face the southern direction, that area would, thereby, lose its sinister qualities and become benign.⁴⁵

Although I shall not deny that considerations such as the above may have played some role, at least in coming to terms with the apparent incongruity once established, it is important to recognize that, if they played a role, they did so in retrospect. The cause of the alleged incongruity, I would like to argue, is a reorientation of the tradition. A cult concept was transposed to iconography. Part of the original meaning was retained—Śiva as the source of knowledge—part of it was reinterpreted, namely, the direction God faces when expounding His wisdom: His ‘right side’ became his ‘southern face’. The southern temple walls were consequently thought most suitable for showing images of Śiva in his role of teacher.⁴⁶ Thus the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* entered the textbooks of Indian architecture, for instance the *Mayamata*, which divided Kaundinya’s vision into two.

A chacun des paliers des temples il faut disposer aux points cardinaux des (images des) dieux. Au rez-de-chaussée on place à l’Est les deux gardiens de la porte, Nandi et Kāla; au Sud c’est la Dakṣiṇāmūrti, à l’Ouest Acyuta ou Liṅgasambhūta et au Nord Pitāmaha.⁴⁷

43 I could not find this ‘account’ in the texts at issue presented in Rao’s Appendix B (II.2, pp. 137–146).

44 Rao 1914 II.1, p. 273.

45 Long 1971, 69; *ibid.* n. 1.

46 Harle 1986, 301:

All the principal images of the Brahmanical pantheon are represented in South India during the Coḷa period. There is a particular predilection for Bhikṣāṭana, Śiva as the naked young ascetic, and for Śiva as Dakṣiṇāmūrti, the expounder of yoga, music and the śāstras, who is always, where possible, facing south (*dakṣiṇa* means ‘south’, and although there is no very convincing explanation of the name, it may account in part for the popularity of this image in South India).

47 *Mayamata* 19.39–40 (Translation Bruno Dagens):
tale tale vimānānām dikṣu devān nyaset kramāt |

The development of a cult concept into an iconic image

Finally the question must be briefly addressed when and where this cult concept turned into an iconographic one. This development may actually have had two moments.

- 1 An anthropomorphic (iconic) representation of Śiva who through attributes, a book for instance, a *mudrā* (*vitarka-*, *vyākhyāna-mudrā*), or some other gesture, or because he sits alongside a pupil, is identifiable as the supreme teacher. This image, or at least Śiva as its main character, faces the east.
- 2 An anthropomorphic representation of Śiva, two- or four-armed, with one or more of the attributes of (1), but whose main characteristic is that he is directed towards the south without showing the terrifying aspect.

The transition of 1 to 2 calls forth the ‘incongruity’.

This incongruity may be considered to have been solved when the image of the Dakṣiṇāmūrti began to evolve an autonomy of its own, next to and independent of that of Aghora/Bhairava. Given the fact that the central image in the *garbhagrha* is orientated towards the east, the image at the southern wall may be seen as an original ‘visualisation’ of the right side, expressing one aspect of the god enshrined, from whom it became spatially detached. Buddhist influences (e.g. the deer at Śiva’s feet, the tree above his head) are discernible in this process of iconographic composition.⁴⁸

The genesis of the iconic representation of the teaching Śiva thus ended with his ‘banishment’ outside the cultic sphere. The idea of the guru as the locus (*sthāna*) or support of the divinity was transferred onto the central cult object in the sanctum, the *liṅga*. Therewith the Dakṣiṇāmūrti on the southern outer temple wall lost its original ritual setting. It became part of the iconographic programme of the Śiva temple.

The process of transformation from cult concept into an iconic image seems to have been completed (in South India at least) by the tenth century (i.e. the early Coḷa period), but may have started much earlier. An early textual testimony of this process is found in the *Skandapurāṇa*. It tells the myth of Tilottamā that we discussed above, pp.498 f. When the nymph bows to Śiva’s southern appearance (*dakṣiṇām mūrtim*), the face of the guru of the gods (*mukhaṃ suraguro*) emerged, ‘possessed of the colour of a languid cloud laden with water, having a ferocious voice, with dreadful teeth shining (in an open mouth), and the corners of the eyes bloodshot and glittering’ (SP 62.18–19). The ‘incongruity’ is obviously not yet solved, since the description of this face suits the figure of Aghora/Bhairava, not that of the teacher or guru.

pūrvāyām dvārapālau tu nandikālau ca vinyaset || 39 ||
dakṣiṇe dakṣiṇāmūrtim paścime 'cyutam eva hi |
athavā liṅgasambhūtam uttare tu pitāmaham || 40 ||

For a survey of later texts see, in addition to Rao 1914, II.2 (Appendix B), the *Pratima-Kośa* III, s.v. (pp. 73–80).

48 Gail 2008; cf. Kalidos 1991.

Plate 114
Tiruttanī: Dakṣiṇāmūrti

To assess the above-sketched development properly requires an art-historical scrutiny of the available archaeological material examined for the above features; this cannot be done here. Material representing moment 2 is not hard to find. A relatively early example dating from the late Pallava period (AD 875–900) is illustrated in Plate 114. It shows a four armed Śiva as teacher on the outer southern wall of the *garbhagrha* of the Virāṭtāneśvara Temple in Tiruttanī. His hands show the *vitarkamudrā* combined with rosary, *abhayamudrā*, book, and lotus-stalk.⁴⁹

The question when and where exactly this type of ‘southern image’ is found for the first time is more difficult to establish, partly for the same reasons as why the material representing moment 1 proves so hard to identify. It is often difficult to establish which direction the teaching Śiva is facing, if the image or relief is no longer part of a spatial construction or has been reemployed.

It may even be doubted, whether our moment 1 is an historic reality at all; possibly, the teaching Śiva, the Dakṣiṇāmūrti as an iconographic category, was from the beginning conceived of as facing the south.

A Dakṣiṇāmūrti on a crossbar found in Nagarī

To conclude I wish to present an image that may alleviate our doubts somewhat. It concerns a crossbar found in Nagarī (Rajasthan) illustrated in Williams 1982, Pl. 216. On p. 140f. this scholar gives the following description.

The most impressive carvings at Nagarī are the remains of a gigantic gateway or *torana* that must belong to the early sixth century on the basis of its relationship to works from Mandasor.

The lintel has sculptures on both sides. The reliefs on what appears to be the reverse (mistakenly said in *op. cit.* 141 to be illustrated in Pl. 216) are identified by Williams as scenes from ‘the story of the encounter between Arjuna and the *kirāta* or hunter’. After his fight with Śiva incognito, Arjuna receives the

49 Dumarçay & l’Hernault 1975, photo 54. Cf. *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture* I, plate 77. For the few images classified as Dakṣiṇāmūrti found in Uttar Pradesh see Singh 1976.

Pāśupata weapon, a scene that is unfortunately missing, but may have been depicted in a relief that belonged to the part of the crossbar that has broken off and is missing.⁵⁰

Plate 115
Nagarī: Crossbar of toraṇa

About the obverse side of the lintel (Plate 115; see also below, Plates 141–142) Williams observes:

The subjects of the [obverse] of this same crossbar remain to be identified. The third panel from the right (not the center of the lintel) [below, Plate 154] shows a seated figure with twisted locks in meditation, surrounded by four worshippers; despite the lack of the club, this might represent Lakuliśa. If so, the remaining scenes are presumably Śaiva.⁵¹

50 The end of the story may be supplied as it is told in the *Mahābhārata* (see also below, pp. 592 ff.). Mahādeva reveals himself and Arjuna falls to his knees MBh 3.40.55–56:

tato devaṃ mahādevaṃ giriśaṃ śūlapāṇinam |
dadarśa phalgunas tatra saha devyā mahādyutim || 55 ||
sa jānubhyāṃ mahīm gatvā śīrasā praṇipatya ca |
prasādayāmāsa haraṃ pāṛthaḥ parapuraṇjayaḥ || 56 ||

Arjuna asks for forgiveness and receives a boon. Arjuna asks for the terrible Pāśupata weapon also called ‘Brahmaśīras’ (MBh 3.41):

bhagavan dadāsi cen mahyaṃ kāmam prītyā vṛṣadhvaḥ |
kāmaye divyam astraṃ tad ghoram pāśupataṃ prabho || 7 ||
yat tad brahmaśīro nāma raudraṃ bhūmaparākramam |
yugānte dāruṇe prāpte kṛtsnaṃ saṃharate jagat || 8 ||

This is granted. Then Arjuna, purified, embraces the feet of the Lord and the latter says ‘learn’:

tac chrutvā tvaritaḥ pāṛthaḥ śucir bhūtvā samāhitaḥ |
upasaṃgrhya viśveśam adhiṣveti ca so ’bravīt || 17 ||

Though the text omits it, we have to assume, after the above and in view of the other side of the lintel, that Arjuna takes his seat at the right side of the Lord. Then Śiva explains the secrets of the weapon:

tatas tv adhyāpayāmāsa sarahasyanivartanam |
tad astraṃ pāṇdavaśreṣṭhaṃ mūrtimantam ivāntakam || 18 ||

51 Williams 1982, 141.

In a letter (e-mail d.d. 10-3-2001) Joanna Williams informed me that she ‘wonders whether the scene at the left end of this face (below, Plates 145–146) might not represent the destruction of Dakṣa’s sacrifice’. This proposition is further pursued in the present article, but an elaborate study of the crossbar by Bakker & Bisschop 2016 intends to show that it is untenable after all.⁵²

Dakṣa’s sacrifice and his instruction in the Pāśupata observance

The story of Śiva’s destruction of Dakṣa’s sacrifice is told in *Mahābhārata* 12 App. I No. 28 (= Northern Recension); it may be briefly recapitulated here.

Virabhadra and Bhadrakālī etc. destroy Dakṣa’s sacrifice in Gaṅgādvāra. Dakṣa takes refuge with Maheśvara (ll. 123 ff.). Devadeveśa himself appears (ll. 140 ff.). Dakṣa begs him that not all his sacrificial toil may have been in vain (l. 151). This is granted by Hara. Then the text reads (ll. 154 f.):

*jānubhyām avanīm gatvā dakṣo labdhvā bhavād varam |
nāmnām aṣṭasahasreṇa stutavān vṛṣabhadhvajam ||*

DAKṢA fell to his knees, having received (this) boon from Bhava.

Then he praised Vṛṣabhadhvaja by his Thousand-and-eight Names.

The stotra of Śiva’s thousand-and-eight names follows (ll. 160–389). Śiva expresses his satisfaction and promises Dakṣa that he will gain the benefit of thousand Aśvamedha and hundred Vājapeya sacrifices, thanks to his grace (ll. 390–94.). Then Mahādeva bestows upon him another boon (ll. 395–409): the *vrata*, based on the Veda with its six *aṅgas* and on the Sāṃkhya-yoga, arduous on account of its *tapas*, which is transgressive of, in some cases conformable to the ordinary *dharma*, which is practised by those who are nearing the end, and which is beyond the (ordinary four) stages of life (*atyāśrama*).⁵³ Mahādeva promises him the reward of this *vrata* (ll. 407–09):

*mayā pāśupataṃ dakṣa yogam utpāditam purā |
tasya cīrṇasya tat samyak phalaṃ bhavati puṣkalam |
tac cāstu te mahābhāga tvajyatām mānaso jvaraḥ ||*⁵⁴

⁵² See below, pp. 567 ff. and pp. 576 ff.

⁵³ MBh 12 App. I No. 28 ll. 395–406:

*athainam abravīd vākyaṃ trailokyādhipatir bhavaḥ |
āśvāsanakaraṃ vākyaṃ vākyaṃ vākyaṃ vākyaṃ vākyaṃ vākyaṃ |
dakṣa dakṣa na kartavyo manyur vighnam imaṃ prati |
ahaṃ yajñaharas tubhyaṃ drṣṭam etat purātanam ||
bhūyaś ca te varam dadmi tam tvaṃ grhṇīṣva suvrata |
prasannavadano bhūtvā tad ihaikamanāḥ śṛṇu ||
vedāt ṣaḍaṅgād uddhṛtya sāmkyayogāc ca yuktitāḥ |
tapaḥ sutaptaṃ vipulaṃ duṣcaraṃ devadānavaiḥ ||
apūrvam sarvatobhadraṃ viśvatomukham avyayam |
abdair daśāhasanyuktaṃ (?) gūḍham aprājñāninditam ||
varṇāśramakṛtair dharmair viparītaṃ kvacit samam |
gatāntair adhyavasitam atyāśramam idaṃ vrataṃ ||*

⁵⁴ *tasya* in l. 408 refers to *vrataṃ* mentioned in l. 406. The gender of *yogam* is neuter here

LONG ago, O Dakṣa, the Pāśupata *yoga* was created by me: that (*tat*, scil. *yoga*) is the eminent reward of properly practising that (*tasya*, scil. *vrata*), and that (*yoga*) shall be yours, O blessed one. Throw off the fever of (your) soul!

In other words: Mahādeva instructs/initiates Dakṣa in the Pāśupata observance; this is the boon that will lead him eventually to the end of suffering (*duḥkhānta*), the Pāśupata *yoga* or union with God.

In view of the material discussed in the present article, it is obvious to see in the first panel from the right on the lintel (Plate 116; cf. Plate 156) an example of a Dakṣiṇāmūrti. If we assume that the *torāṇa* was facing east and that this is the obverse side of the lintel, Maheśvara, accompanied by his wife,⁵⁵ sits facing east, leaning towards the right, where his suppliant sits on his knees, facing north.

This interpretation is corroborated by our later study of the crossbar. However, although the two panels to the left (above, p. 524) initially suggested that the suppliant in question might be King Dakṣa (Bakker 2004c, 133), there are good reasons to reconsider this interpretation and to see in the person who receives instruction, not Dakṣa, but Arjuna.⁵⁶

Plate 116
Nagari: a Dakṣiṇāmūrti

(cf. MBh 13.17.18). Yoga in the Pāśupata system is defined by Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.1 as ‘union with god’: *ucyate yogam | atra ātmeśvarasamyogo yogaḥ* | My interpretation differs from that of Mertens 1998, 76 f., who assumes a conflation of concepts: ‘Im selben Satz wird das *pāśupatavrata* als *yoga* bezeichnet (407); die beiden Begriffe *tapas* und *yoga* werden hier also synonym verwendet. Für bestimmte Schichten des Mahābhārata ist die Vermischung beider Begriffe üblich.’ However, no examples from the MBh are adduced to corroborate this contention.

⁵⁵ Cf. MBh *ibid.* 1.410: *evam uktvā mahādevaḥ sapatnīko vṛṣabhadvajāḥ* |

⁵⁶ Bakker & Bisschop 2016, 239 f.; below, p. 586.

It thus appears that the central theme of both sides of the crossbar is the acquisition of a Pāśupata good: the instruction in the Pāśupata observance and the procurement of the Pāśupata weapon. The *torāṇa* may have stood at the entrance of a Pāśupata temple. The depiction of the instruction scene, the Dakṣiṇāmūrti or Śiva's figure of grace, would therefore be appropriate, if our analysis is correct.