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*Ritualistic Functions of the vajra in the Atharvaveda*

*Vajra* is best known as Indra's mythical weapon. Etymologically it goes back to Indo-Iranian era. *Vajra* has been studied by Indologists (e.g. W. Rau, B. Schlerath, T. K. Dasgupta, etc.) and it has been generally interpreted to imply powerfulness or firmness. The *vajra* motif was employed by post-Vedic religions (especially in Buddhism) and played an important role. The *vajra* conveys even the meaning of a diamond in the classical period. However, the study of *vajra*'s ritualistic functions in Vedic rites has not been thoroughly examined to date.

The *Brāhmaṇa* texts identify several elements in the Śrauta-ritual with the *vajra*: such as the *vaṣaṭ-kāra* in a mantra, certain kinds of stotra, the sacrificial post (*yūpa*), the wooden sword (*śphya*), the chariot (*ratha*), etc. Vedic priests thought that by using these devices they could harness the power of *vajra* systematically.

*Vajra* appears in verses of *Atharvaveda*-mantra when calling upon Indra for assistance. In such cases, the verses are often taken from the *Ṛgveda* and the relationship to the concerned sacrificial tools with the *vajra* is not apparent. In *KauśS* 14.17-21, AV 3.1 and 3.2 are used in a rite for confounding the enemy's army. In AV 3.1.4, for example, appears the *vajra*: "Impelled, O Indra by thy (two) bays – let thy thunderbolt (*vajra*) go forth, slaughtering the foes; smite the on-coming, the following, the fleeing; scatter their actual intent" (Whitney) but, as in many other instances, we cannot precisely identify the ritual element corresponding to the *vajra* appearing in AV 3.1.4 according to the description of the *KauśS*. However, from the perspective of its ritualistic function, ritual objects implicitly identified with *vajra* could be regarded as '*vajra*-like'. For example, in a rite praying for victory in a dispute by using a plant named *pāṭā*, the herb is treated like a *vajra*. Take for instance the following passage from AV 2.27.3: "Indra put thee on his arm, in order to lay low the Asuras: smite the dispute of [my] counter-disputant; make them sapless." (Whitney)

In this paper, by examining relevant passages in which the *vajra* or an *vajra*-like thing appears, I intend to classify the *vajra*'s ritualistic function in the *Atharvaveda-saṁhitā*, the *Kauśikasūtra*, etc. and point out some characteristics of it.