

Characteristics of the Aśvamedha Described in the Vādhūla-Śrauta-Sūtra

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The ritual of the Aśvamedha, which lasts more than two years long, contains many ceremonies, and ways of executing the ceremonies are prescribed among the ritual texts much variously. In the case of the Vādhūla-Śrauta-Sūtra (VŚS), its Aśvamedha-chapter has many prescriptions common to the Aśvamedha of the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa (TB) and that of the Baudhāyana-Śrauta-Sūtra (BŚS), but shows also a lot of characteristics unknown in the TB and the BŚS.

This report aims to clear characteristics of the Aśvamedha described in the 11th chapter of the VŚS. For this purpose we will check a detailed table of contents of the Aśvamedha in the VŚS compared with the transmissions of the other ritual texts (Brāhmaṇas and Śrauta-Sūtras), and will examine how the Aśvamedha in the VŚS relates to those transmitted in the other texts.

We will inquire further into the historical place of the VŚS on the development of the ritual form of the Aśvamedha in the Taittirīya school. In this inquiry we will direct our attention especially to (1) the prescriptions of the “Night Ritual” (naktaṃhoma-, rātriṇcaraṇa- etc.) taking place during the night on the first Soma-pressing day of the Aśvamedha, and to (2) the prescriptions of the “Paśūpākaraṇa-ceremony” in the great sacrifice on the second Soma-pressing day. Notable is that each of both portions has enumeration of ritual elements: in the portion of the Night Ritual there is an enumeration of the Anuvākas to be used for the offering; and the portion of the Paśūpākaraṇa shows a list of the animals to be brought to the sacrificial posts. These portions will provide us a clue to understanding most clearly how the VŚS shares the transmission with the TB and the BŚS, and how the former differs from the latter texts. This report will consequently clear the common parts to the three older texts (TB, BŚS and VŚS) which may transmit the early form of the Aśvamedha in the Taittirīya school.