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Icons, Troubled and Troubling:*
Some Observations from the *Vim n rcanakalpa*

SUMMARY: The *Vim n rcanakalpa*, a text of around the 10th century C.E., belongs to the Vaikh nasa medieval corpus of ritual manuals. It contains a wealth of ritual and iconographic prescriptions about man-made icons of Viṣṇu and his manifestations, management of power in icons, atonements for ritual shortcomings, etc. According to the *Vim n rcanakalpa*, the duty of the founder patron, the priests and the whole society is to perpetuate ritual and preserve the integrity of icons as defectless bodily forms in an unsullied environment, because the benefits aspired to by them through the installation of icons are constantly threatened. Dependent on numerous internal (material damage, ritual defects, etc.) and external (theft, defilement, etc.) factors, icons are forever prone to troubles and can become troubling when deprived of ideal conditions.

KEYWORDS: icon, *Vim n rcanakalpa*, Viṣṇu, kings, power, danger, atonements

1. The icon in the *Vim n rcanakalpa*

Religious icons played a major role in Indian society as foci not only of devotion and pilgrimage, but also of economic activity. Temples built for them received significant donations from political and economic powers. Icon worship was rarely challenged in ancient India. This more or less general socio-religious consensus, however, enfolded a diversity of attitudes towards icons, some devotional, others reticent. From a devotional viewpoint the icon is identified as the very deity

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it represents: devotees consider it as a living person towards which they direct their emotion, and not as a mere abode for the deity.¹ But there exist other viewpoints that clearly differentiate between icon and deity: Advaita, for instance, considers the icon only as a symbol; Mīmāṃsā, which denies that gods possess bodies, is skeptical about icon worship though accepts it as a socio-religious custom (Colas 2012: 118–122). Several saint-poets of the 13th to 15th century, like Vēmana (14th century²) and Kabīr (probably 1398–1448), vehemently denied divine presence in icons.³ Hindus, Muslims and Christians, motivated by sectarian ideology and political gain, sacked temples, and looted and destroyed icons.

Where, among this diversity of viewpoints, to situate the ritualistic perspective of the *Vimānārcanakaḷpa*⁴ in regard to icons? The *Vimānārcanakaḷpa*, a Vaiṣṇava text of around the 10th century and attributed to the sage Marīci, belongs to the Vaikhānasa medieval corpus of ritual manuals.⁵ Unlike devotional and iconophobic texts, on the one hand, and epistemological and metaphysical texts, on the other hand, this ritual manual does not intend to express an homogeneous doctrinal or ideological posture with regard to icons. The bulk of its prescriptions are based on coherent rules of ritual

¹ See, for instance, the devotion of Āḷvārs (6th–10th c.) as examined by Hardy 1983: 288–302; Piḷḷai Lokācārya (13th c.), *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇa* 196 as quoted by Colas 2012: 111 (see also 109–113).

² According to Renou and Filliozat 1985: 462.

³ *Vēmanapadyamulu* Book 3, 45, 180–182; etc.; *Kabīragranthāvalī* 26, 1–2, 8, 10.

⁴ Also *Vimānārcanākaḷpa*, sometimes known as *Marīcisamhitā* and *Vaikhānasāgama*. See Colas 1984: 350; 1986: 3–4.

⁵ For the Vaikhānasa corpus and the date of the *Vimānārcanakaḷpa*, see Colas 1996: 43–97. The present contribution refers to the Īgāvāripāḷeṃ edition, 1927; abbreviation VK, followed by the chapter number, a colon and the page number; this edition mentions variant readings in brackets. It is generally more reliable than the Tirupati edition (1926), which is however mentioned when its readings are helpful (*Vimānārcanākaḷpa*, abbreviation VK Tiru).

reasoning. But they allude to different viewpoints about the icon. While technical prescriptions aim at making icons suitable dwelling places for god,⁶ the icon is also viewed as a living body which enjoys offerings through its senses during the worship (Colas 1996: 303). The god in the icon is attributed with moods. For example, it is said that the god would not be pleased after twelve years passed in a temporary temple. However, the psychology of the deity is rarely alluded to.⁷ The *Vimānārcanakalpa* is also repository of various viewpoints ascribable to different milieus like the *śilpa* traditions and parallel ritual or devotional trends. For instance, the opening of the eyes of the icon is required by the artisan as well as by the priest; the icon is designated as “god” even before the completion of its installation (Colas 2012: 155–159; Colas 1986: 170, 173).

The aim of this paper is to analyze how according to the *Vimānārcanakalpa* the icon could be troubled in the temple and cause troubles to the society.⁸ This text contains a wealth of ritual and iconographic injunctions concerning icons of Viṣṇu and his manifestations, especially with regard to the installation of new icons in new temples. The historical context of its composition probably was the fervour of economic and political affluent classes for the *ad libitum* installation and worship of divine icons in temples founded by them. They wished to obtain material and spiritual gains for themselves and their fellow beings, and to spread devotion among the public. Priestly groups like the Vaikhānasas, who accumulated experience in temple rituals through the centuries, and produced scriptures of homogeneous prescriptions, became their allies.

⁶ See for instance, VK 18: 76: *yathā pūrvam tathaiva kalkena parikalpayed anyathā tadbere devo na vaset*, “One should apply the limewash as previously [mentioned]. Otherwise the god will not reside in this icon”).

⁷ VK 70: 433: *evam (eva) dvādaśavarṣāntam kārayed dvādaśavarṣā(rṣe) īte devo na rameta*. Compare with *Bṛhatsamhitā* (56, 3) for places where deities reside with pleasure.

⁸ Here the words “troubled” and “troubling” are a terminological choice, they do not refer to any Sanskrit terms.

Chapters 61 to 74 of the *Vimānārcanakaḷpa* deal with rituals of atonement (*prāyaścitta*). Atonements often shed light on the meaning of rites because they signal vital elements not to be overlooked in a ritual. The rites of atonements include the performance of appeasements (*śānti*). Five varieties of appeasements are described in descending order of importance (VK 72: 449–452, 454–455): Appeasement in case of portents (*adbhutaśānti*), Appeasement in case of incidents (?) (*prabhūtaśānti*), Great Appeasement (*mahāśānti*), Appeasement (*śānti*) and Purification (*śuddhi*).

Besides the rituals of atonement, chapters 61 to 72 also teach the material repair of icons and temples. In order to understand the ways in which the *Vimānārcanakaḷpa* conceives of Viṣṇu's icons and the dangers which threaten them, it is important to keep in mind several points. This text deals mostly with man-made icons, not miraculous icons which are supposed to be self-born. Self-born icons, being direct manifestations of gods, are automatically worthy of worship without any prior ritual intervention. The worth of man-made icons, on the other hand, arises from their conformity to Vaikhānasa scriptures in two respects, iconological and ritual: an icon is fit to be worshipped if it conforms to textual iconological prescriptions and is ritually installed. The term “iconology” in this context encompasses prescriptive iconography. The Vaikhānasa iconographic prescriptions for the different forms of Viṣṇu and other gods are not only artistic conventions but also generators of various specific results (Colas 1996: 299–302). They aim to achieve that which is *śubha*, in terms of both beauty and auspiciousness. Iconology also regulates the relationship between icons sharing the same cella. The deity of a temple is represented mainly by two functional icons. The *dhruva-*, *mūla-*, or *mahā-bera* is immovable, and generally made of stone. It is a permanent source of power. And the *kautuka-* or *arcā-bera* / *-biṃba* is a movable icon of daily worship. Power is introduced into it every day (Goudriaan 1965: 195, 201; Colas 1986: 79). Other functional movable icons are prescribed for certain specific ceremonies: the festival icon (*utsava-bera/biṃba* or *autsava*), the icon

for the *bali*-offering (*bali-bera*), and the icon for bathing (*snāpana*, *snapanana-bera*) (Colas 1986: 71–75; Colas 1996: 296–298).

Another equally important point to bear in mind is the management of power (*śakti*) in the icon. The exact nature of this power and its relationship with the deity are not precisely defined in the *Vimānārcanakalpa*.⁹ The *Vimānārcanakalpa* states that power is brought into the icon or withdrawn from it through ritual procedure and that power installed in the icon can also leave it or change its nature. During the installation ritual, the *śakti* is linked with the deity which is made to reside in the icon.¹⁰ Efforts are made to preserve the power when negative circumstances threaten its presence in the icon (Colas 2012: 135). The departure of the *śakti* may be due, for instance, to icon defects or damage, or unfavorable circumstances. As regards the deity, it is free to remain in the icon or leave it. When the deity leaves an icon, malevolent power(s) may operate through that icon: an icon abandoned by the deity can also be a dwelling place for nocive (perhaps demoniac) forces. Such an icon is sometimes called *ābhicārika*. *Ābhicārika* is also the name given by the *Vimānārcanakalpa* to malevolent icons of Viṣṇu utilized to bring on the defeat of enemies.

Troubles in icons are not inconsequential for the patron, priests and society. The repair or remaking of icons is onerous and expensive. Besides long and tedious rituals of expiation, the troubles sometimes call for the complete reinstallation of the temple and its icons, beginning with the ritual ploughing of land.

⁹ An analogous or concurrent notion is that of the divine “presence” (*sānnidhya*). This is alluded to in *Vimānārcanakalpa* and explicitly mentioned in other Vaikhānasa manuals of the same period. See Colas 1989: 139, note 40.

¹⁰ For the introduction, maintenance and withdrawal of power in the icon according to Vaikhānasa and other temple ritual traditions, see: Colas 1986: 78; 1994: 518, note 3; Colas 1996: 26, 287, 290–291. For the reinterpretation of the originally Vedic notions of *āvāhana* (invitation), *visarjana* (dismissal) and *samāropana* (resorption) in the Vaikhānasa prescriptions of icon worship, see Colas 1996: 280–283.

2. Troubled icon, troubled deity

A deity may be troubled in its feeling—and not wish to stay in a temporary temple, for instance¹¹—but never in its essence; the destruction of an icon does not entail a threat to the integrity of the deity itself. On the other hand, unlike the deity present in it, an icon is exposed to physical risks as is any concrete object. It is highly vulnerable to damage and destruction. Troubles affecting icons may also consist of circumstances threatening the benevolence of its influence or the presence of the deity in it; or they may be signs announcing calamitous events. We may roughly classify these troubles into five kinds.

The first kind of trouble that may affect an icon is robbery. The *Vimānārcanakaḥ* describes ritual and craft techniques to be resorted to in cases of the theft of an icon, and procedures for the protection of icons, rediscovery of a hidden icon, and reinstallation of a retrieved, stolen or discovered icon. When an image of daily worship is plundered by kings, robbers or enemies, a rite of Great Appeasement is conducted, the daily worship is offered to a temporary substitute such as a precious stone, a piece of gold, or a bunch of holy grass (*kūrca*) into which the divine presence is invited. A new icon is made with features similar to those of the stolen icon in the same or a more precious material and ritually installed.¹²

A great part of chapter 69 is devoted to ritual and practical measures to secure mobile icons (those of daily worship, bathing, festival, *bali* offering and those of the goddesses) in the event of disturbance by robbers or enemies, and threats of military invasion. A hole

¹¹ See above note 7.

¹² VK 64: 385: *arçyamānaṃ kautukaṃ bimbaṃ nṛpādibhiś coraiś śatrubhir vāpahṛtaṃ cet [...] mahāsāntiṃ hutvā tasmīn ratnaṃ suvarṇaṃ kūrcāṃ vā nikṣīpya dhruvād arkamaṃḍalād vā devaṃ āvāhya nityaṃ sam-abhyarçya pūrva(vat) dravyeṇotkrṣṭadravyeṇa vā pūrvavat beram salakṣaṇaṃ kṛtvā kālānapekṣaṃ pūrvavatpratiṣṭhāṃ kārayet*. The divine presence (and power) in the substitute of the *kautuka* icon is probably drawn from the immovable icon, as they later on are in the new *kautuka* icon.

is dug in a secret and pure place. Sand is spread at the bottom, then *kuśa* grass. The goddess Earth (Mahī) is worshipped in the pit. The power of the mobile icon is drawn into the immovable icon of the temple (which is both a permanent source and storing place of power)¹³ or, in case of its absence, into the heart of the performer.¹⁴ The mobile icon is then laid in the pit and covered with sand or mud. It is represented in the cella by a bunch of *darbha* holy grass wherein the divine power is drawn from the immovable icon every day.¹⁵ At the right moment (*sukale*) (probably when the cause of fear has disappeared and at an auspicious time) the icon is removed (*bimbam uddhṛtya*) from the cache, physically cleaned and purified from the evil contacts it endured; a sacrifice and other rites are performed, including invocation of the god and his attendant deities into the *praṇidhi* vessels “in the order of invocation”.¹⁶ A rite of Great Appeasement is performed after six months in case the mobile icon has not been yet unearthed and worshiped; a re-installation after one year.¹⁷

¹³ See above.

¹⁴ VK 69: 422–423: *coraiś śatrubhiḥ paracakrabhayād vā grāmasaṃkule sati bhayarakṣārthaṃ kautukasnapanotsavabaliberalauhikapratimānām devīnām ca tiro(vi)dhānaṃ kārayet. gupte śucau deśe 'vaṭaṃ khaṇitvā sikatābhiḥ prapūryopari kuśān āstīryāvaṭe mahīṃ devīm abhyarcya [...] deveśam anumānya bimbasthām śaktiṃ dhruvabere samāropayed berābhāve hṛdaye samāropayet.*

¹⁵ Ibid.: *avaṭe 'pramādaṃ sannyasya [...] prākchiraś śāyayet. avāṭaṃ sikatābhir mṛdā vā pūrayitvāvaṭaṃ acchidraṃ sudṛḍhaṃ kārayet. paścād abhyantaraṃ praviśya devaṃ praṇamya jīvaśthāne paṃcadaśadarbhair grathitaṃ dvādaśāṅgulamātraṃ kūrcāṃ sannyasya dhruvaberāt kūrcē samāvāhyārcayet [...]* The bunch of holy grass should be changed every month. About *āvāhana*, *visarjana* and *samāropaṇa*, see Goudriaan 1965: 195, 201; Colas 1986: 79 and references in note 10 above.

¹⁶ Ibid.: 424: *deveśasya devyā avatārānām ca dakṣiṇapraṇidhau tadālayagatapariśaddevān uttarapraṇidhau ca samāvāhyāvāhanakrameṇa nirvāpaṃ hutvā.* It is understood that these rites are followed by the resumption of the daily worship of the previously buried icon.

¹⁷ VK 69: 422–425. The rite of Great Appeasement is described in VK 72: 455.

Burial of icons needs a brief explanation. There are two kinds of occasions for such burial: protection of icons from enemies and robbers on the one hand and ritual or material repair, on the other hand. The buried icon (immovable made of stone or mobile made of metal) is considered as an object devoid of power, whether it has been previously installed or not, whether it has been ritually emptied of its power or lost it by serious damage or deterioration beyond repair.¹⁸ For instance, the unrepairable metal icon is buried into the ground,¹⁹ is removed (*uddhr*) the following day and melted to make another icon. The verb *āhr* is employed instead of *uddhr* in other passages which describe the same ritual operation. According to the *Vimānārcanakaḷpa*, when a stone icon for which rites (of installation?) have not been completed (*aniṣpannakriya*) is stolen from a temple, it is first buried in the ground and then ritually removed (*āhr*) (from the ground); the remaining rites are performed and the icon is installed according to the rules.²⁰ Another passage mentions the case when a king who has won over another kingdom takes (*āhr*) an icon from that country, establishes a new village, builds a temple for that icon, installs it and provides for its regular worship.²¹ It is possible that the icon mentioned in this passage is a buried icon and not stolen since the text does not refer to its being taken by force from a temple.

The icon taken from under the ground seems to be considered as a newly extracted stone. It is not a coincidence that the deity Mahī (Earth) is connected with the burial of icons. The sacrifice made during the recovery of a buried icon is “in the same manner as for

¹⁸ On the contrary, self-manifested (*svayaṃvyakta*) icons, often miraculously discovered from under the ground, are considered ritual-worthy irrespective of their defects and in the absence of ritually installed power.

¹⁹ The text does not mention that its power is ritually withdrawn.

²⁰ VK 63: 380: *anyālayāpahṛtam aniṣpannakriyaṃ śilāberaṃ yadi syāt tad bhūmau pidhāya vidhināhṛtya śeṣakriyāṃ kṛtvā vidhinā sthāpayet.*

²¹ VK 63: 381: *rājā rāṣṭrāntaraṃ jtvā beram āhṛtya sthāpayituṃ yad-icchet svarāṣṭre manorame deṣe grāmaṃvinyāsaṃ kṛtvā tadvāstvaṃgālaye beram vidhinā saṃsthāpyārcanādīni kārayet.*

the collection of stone”:²² Mahī is invoked when a fresh stone is taken from the ground to make a new icon (Colas 1986: 164).

The theft of icons from enemy territories during wars appears to have been a current practice. Inscriptions from the 7th century onwards mention the looting of temple icons by enemy kings and their transport to their own kingdoms.²³ Archeological findings also confirm this practice.²⁴ The *Vimānārcanakalpa* does not condemn such actions but mentions them, along with regular robberies, among possible dangers that could arise to the icon. Another passage of the text prescribes the expiation that is necessary following the entry in the cella by enemies or robbers, just as for calamities in the cella like floods, strong winds, etc.²⁵ The *Vimānārcanakalpa* does not refer to the religious affiliation of royal looters; its main concern is the description of the peril and the necessary ritual action.

The looting of icons from kings’ favourite temples was a political means to weaken these monarchs not only because icons were symbolic trophies, but also because the defeated kings lost the protection of the deities installed in those icons. The looting, destruction or mutilation of icons (Davis 1993: 44–45) led to the interruption of worship in the concerned temple and demoralized citizen devotees and armies.

²² See VK 71: 436, quoted in note 67.

²³ See Davis 1993: 28. A well-known later historical instance is the theft of an icon of Kṛṣṇa in Udayagiri by Kṛṣṇadevarāya in 1515 during his military campaign and its reinstallation in a new temple at Vijayanagara. I thank Professor Karin Steiner (Universität Würzburg) for her reference to Verghese 2014: 149–150; see also Davis 1993: 30. Rao mentions an episode of an icon carried off from Shrīrangam by a Muslim king and its recovery by the temple personal (Rao 1961: 27–28, 129–133). For the Muslim desecrations of icons in the medieval period, see Ticku, Shrivastava and Iyer 2018.

²⁴ See Nagaswamy 1987. However, the pits which this article mentions seem to have contained both icons in good condition and icons “without much damage” (p. 2), as well as religious utensils.

²⁵ VK 69: 422: *ālayābhyāntare sarvatra mahāvātātivr̥ṣṭīsatrucorādibhir abhibhūte devaṃ kalaśais saṃsnāpya* [...].

It also disturbed the economic network and challenged territorial proprietary rights of the temple and the icon (Colas 2012: 114–118).

A second kind of troubles affecting icons consists of incidents occurring to the icon in which the deity is present, or in its proximity. Some pertain to the perception, that is, touch (*sparśana*) and sight (*darśana*) of undesirable things, animals or people, by the icon. A portion of chapter 69 (pp. 416–422) describes these troubles and the expiating rites they call for.

Troubles with regard to the sense of touch are, for example, contact of the icon with things, animals and people whose contact is defiling (*asprśyasparsāna*), their presence or entry in the temple compound, and the contact of the above defiling agents with the cooked offering (*havis*). These eventualities necessitate appropriate atonements. The degree of gravity of the fault with regard to people is evaluated not merely according to the social stratification, but also to the degree of impurity of individuals. For instance, the contact of icons with a Twice-born (*dvija*) (that is an individual of the three “higher” classes) in a state of impurity is considered as highly polluting and necessitates a Great Appeasement and the ritual (re-)installation of the icon.²⁶ This ritual expiation is the same as that prescribed for the touch of menstruating women, Śūdras, Anulomas, etc.

Troubles affecting icons include the entry of menstruating women and people of lower classes (*antyajāti*) in the courtyard nearest to the cella and their touch of the chapels of attendant deities.²⁷ While the entry in the temple by *pañcamahāpātakas*,²⁸ Caṇḍālas and/or their physical

²⁶ VK 69: 419: *aśaucidvijasprṣṭahavirivedane ca ekāhaṃ mahāśāntiṃ hutvā [...] pūrvavad arcayet. dhruvabere kautukādiṣu ca sprṣṭeṣu pūrvavan mahāśāntiṃ hutvā punas sthāpanam ācaret.*

²⁷ VK 69: 416: *sūtikodakyārajadhvajādyaantyajātibhiḥ prathamā-varaṇe praviṣṭe pariśaddevānām arcāsthāne saṃsprṣṭe praviṣṭe ca [...] vaiṣṇavaṃ ca juhuyāt.*

²⁸ The five “great sinners” are those who killed a Brāhmaṇa, who drink intoxicating liquors, who committed theft, adultery with the wife of the teacher and those who are associated with one of the four previous categories.

contact with cooked oblation²⁹ and the entry of “degraded” (*patita*) people in the cella³⁰ are considered serious, calling for Great Appeasement and other expiations, their entry in the inner first and second courtyard and moving about there for the period of one month is even more serious. If this occurs, a month-long Great Appeasement must be performed, and then a complete reinstallation of the temple (beginning with the rite of ploughing land) and icons is carried out. If, even worse, such “outcaste” people move about in or outside the temple for an entire year, rites are to be stopped, the mobile icons protected, cows made to reside within the seven enclosures of the temple for a month. Then follow long and complex rituals including a Great Appeasement, complete reinstallation of the temple (beginning with the rite of ploughing land) preceded by a temporary temple and purification of the icons.³¹

The direct contact of the icons of the main god with menstruating women,³² Twice-borns in a state of impurity,³³ people of lower classes (*antyajāti*),³⁴ *pañcamahāpātakas* and *Caṇḍālas*³⁵ is considered critical.

²⁹ VK 69: 417: *pañcamahāpātakais caṇḍālādyais cālaye praviṣṭe tatsprṣṭahavirmivedane ca [...] punaḥ pratiṣṭhām kārayet.*

³⁰ VK 69: 418: *patite garbhagr̥he praviṣṭe [...] mahāśāntim hutvārcayet.*

³¹ VK 69: 418: *eteṣu prathamāvaraṇe dviṭīye vā nairāmtaryeṇa saṃcaratsu māse 'tīte māsam ekaṃ mahāśāntim hutvā karṣaṇādīpunassamskāraṃ kṛtvā mahāpratiṣṭhām kārayet. eteṣu prākārā(sādā)bhyantare (vā) bāhye ca saṃcaratsu saṃvatsare 'tīte 'rcanādīni saṃtyajya kautukādirakṣaṇaṃ kṛtvā garbhāgārādisaptaprākāreṣu gā vāsavitvā [...] mahāśāntim hutvā karṣaṇādīpunassamskāraṃ kṛtvā bālālayaṃ saṃkalpya [...] sarvatra navīkaraṇaṃ kṛtvā pratiṣṭhām kārayet.*

³² VK 69: 416–417: *sūtikodakyārajadhvajadyantyajātibhiḥ [...] ālayābhyantare praviṣṭe tatsprṣṭahavirmivedane ca [...] brāhmaṇān bhojayet. dhruvabere kautukādiṣu ca sprṣṭeṣu [...] mahāśāntim hutvā punaḥ pratiṣṭhām kārayet; VK 69: 421 (rak-tastrīdarśane [...] dhruvabere kautukādaṃ vā sprṣṭe [...] punaḥ pratiṣṭhām kārayet.*

³³ VK 69: 419, as quoted in note 26.

³⁴ VK 69: 416–417, as quoted in note 32.

³⁵ VK 69: 417–418: *pañcamahāpātakais caṇḍālādyairś cālaye praviṣṭe tatsprṣṭahavirmivedane ca saptāhaṃ mahāśāntim hutvā [...] dhruvabere kautukādiṣu sprṣṭeṣu pūrvavac chuddhim kṛtvā mahāśāntim hutvā [...] punaḥ pratiṣṭhām kārayet.*

It necessitates a ritual reinstallation of the whole temple and all its icons. Atonement rites, but no reinstallation, are prescribed when menstruating women, Twice-borns in a state of impurity, Antyajāti people, Śūdras and Anulomas touch the cooked offering; the same from *pañcamahāpātakas* and *Caṇḍālas* entails a reinstallation.³⁶ The direct contact of icons with various animals is also considered as a trouble to the icon requiring expiations, and material repair if needed.³⁷ If the main icon is taken over by various kinds of insects or plants, the deity must be installed in the form of a provisional icon in a temporary temple until the main icon is renovated.³⁸ The entry of rats, serpents, partridges, etc. into the cella, and their urination and defecation, also entail expiations.³⁹

While the notion of physical contact of the icon is unambiguous, that of the sight by the icon of undesirable entities is not always clear. In some passages of the *Vimānārcanakaḥ* the *darśana* clearly refers to the icon's faculty of seeing while in some other passages it may be interpreted as the act of seeing by devotees. The text mentions that when God sees a corpse, he should be bathed and given various offerings.⁴⁰ But it is not obvious whose vision (that of God, of the priests or the other devotees, or of all of them?) is meant in the following cases: when people such as menstruating women, persons of lower classes are seen during the worship, the icon

³⁶ See notes 32, 35 and 26; VK 69: 417: *śūdrādyanulomasprṣṭahavir-nivedane [...] puṇyāhaṃ vācayet. pañcamahāpātakaiś caṇḍālādyaīś cālaye praviṣṭe tatsprṣṭahavir-nivedane ca [...] puṇaḥ pratiṣṭhāṃ kārayet.*

³⁷ VK 69: 419, birds: *khadyotapakṣijātīpraveśe bimbe sprṣṭe [...] homaṃ juhuyāt*; VK 69: 421–422, serpents (*garbhagehe sarpādīdarśane [...] dhruva-kautukādiṣu tais sprṣṭeṣu [...] devaṃ viśeṣato 'bhyarcya havir nivedayet.*

³⁸ VK 69: 420: *valmīkatṛṇakṛmikīṭādy udbhave sati [...] devaṃ bālālaye pratiṣṭhāpya navikaraṇaṃ kārayet.*

³⁹ VK 69: 416: *mūśakasarpakṛkalāsamaṃḍūkamārjāranakulādiṣu garbhāgāraṃ praviṣṭeṣu viṇmūtravisarjane ca [...] teṣu(dhruvaberaṃ) ārūḍheṣu viṇmūtravisarjane ca [...] tair asya bimbeṣu sprṣṭeṣu [...] prokṣyārcayet.*

⁴⁰ VK 69: 420: *deveśasya śave drṣṭe [VK Tiru: devena śave drṣṭe] puruṣasūktam juhuyāt.*

is to be washed with the five products of the cow (so does it mean the icon is purified for having seen such people?);⁴¹ when menstruating women are seen inside the temple or outside (probably when the festival icon is taken in procession), the concerned area only is purified.⁴²

Incidents taking place in the temple are other sources of trouble for the icon, requiring rituals of purification. When a dead serpent is found in the cella, it is to be removed, the surface of the cella smeared with the five products of the cow, the icon bathed and a Great Appeasement performed.⁴³ The death of animals such as elephants, horses, cattle, donkeys, etc. within the first enclosure necessitates a *vāstuhoma*, ablution of the icon with pure waters and various offerings in fire.⁴⁴ Violence against human beings and animals is considered as a serious wrongdoing: if injuring, beating, killing, bleeding of human beings and of dogs, cocks, etc. occur within the precincts of the temple, a Great Appeasement is required. Bathing the icon and a *homa* sacrifice of Appeasement (*śāntihoma*) are to be conducted when such events occur outside the temple.⁴⁵ Other incidents, more or less critical, include, for instance, the invasion of robbers or the inrush of big winds and excessive rains in the cella, which entail the bathing of the icon and other ceremonies;⁴⁶ also a discharge of lightning

⁴¹ VK 69: 417: *teṣv arcanākāle vā dr̥ṣṭeṣu devaṃ paṃcagavyenābhīṣicya [...]* *pūrvavad dhutvārcayet.*

⁴² VK 69: 421: *ālayābhiantare bāhye prākāre vā raktastrīdarśane [...]* *deśaṃ saṃśodhya paṃcagavyaiḥ prokṣya [...]* *devaṃ viśeṣato 'bhyarcya havir nivedayet.*

⁴³ VK 69: 422: *tatra sarpe mṛte [...]* *paṃcagavyaiḥ prokṣya [...]* *mahāśāntiṃ juhuyāt.*

⁴⁴ VK 69: 420: *prathamāvaraṇe gajāśvapaśugardabhādiṣu mṛteṣu [...]* *vāstuhomaṃ hutvā [...]* *puruṣasūktam ca juhuyāt.*

⁴⁵ VK 69: 419: *pūrvoktadeśeṣu manuṣyānāṃ śvakukkuṭādīnāṃ ca chedane tāḍane rudhīrasrāve mṛtau vā saṃbhūte [...]* *mahāśāntiṃ hutvā [...]* *havir nivedayet. ālayā(prāsādā)d bāhye saṃbhūte [...]* *śāntihomaṃ hutvā [...]* *pūrvavad arcayet.* A reinstallation of the icon is also needed according to VK Tiru.

⁴⁶ VK 69: 422: *ālayābhiantare sarvatra mahāvātātivr̥ṣṭīsatrucorādibhir abhibhūte devaṃ kalaśais saṃsnāpya [...]*

on the temple and the presence of big (?) bees requires the bathing of the icon, ceremonies and repair of affected parts;⁴⁷ a “causeless” collapse of a part in the temple necessitates a Great Appeasement, a ritual ploughing of land, the installation of God in a temporary temple, a purification of the main icons, and a complete restoration of the temple followed by a complete (re-)installation (*mahāpratiṣṭhā*).⁴⁸

A third kind of trouble which deprives the icon of its ritual fitness originate from ritual mistakes and from displacements and physical defects of the icon. Some troubles arise from disregard for the timely and right order of ritual actions. For instance, when the immovable icon is not installed within one month after the completion of the temple, supplementary rites must be performed before the installation with additional rites in case of further delay.⁴⁹ In case the temple is completed with the installation of the icon of daily worship but not of the immovable icon, because of either ignorance or greed, the icon of daily worship becomes noxious (*ābhicārika*), which leads to the destruction of the village, the ritual patron (*yajamāna*), the king and the kingdom. A Great Appeasement is to be conducted and an immovable icon installed to ward off this peril.⁵⁰ Non-respect of the prescribed ritual also renders the icon unfit for installation and worship. For

⁴⁷ VK 69: 421: *aśanihate mahāmakṣikādiyute ca devaṃ kalaśais saṃsnāpya [...] śāntihomaṃ hutvā [...] punassaṃdhānaṃ kārayet.*

⁴⁸ VK 69: 420: *vimāne 'kāraṇād bhinne patite(patane) [...] mahāśāntim hutvā karṣaṇādipunassaṃskāraṃ [...] mahāpratiṣṭhāṃ kārayet.*

⁴⁹ VK 62: 376: *samāpte vimāne māsād ūrdhvaṃ dhruvaberasthāpane hīne vaiṣṇavaṃ [...] śāntim hūtvā [...] ārabheta. māsadvaye 'tīte dviguṇaṃ māsatraye triguṇaṃ evaṃ saṃvatsarāntaṃ vardhayet saṃvatsare 'tīte mahataro doṣo bhavet [...] abdaṃ prathamādiśāntim ekāhaṃ saptavarṣāntaṃ vardhayet saptavarṣāntīte karṣaṇādipunassaṃskāraṃ kuryāt.*

⁵⁰ VK 61: 375: *samāpte vimāne 'jñānād arthalobhād vā dhruvaberaṃ vinā kautukaṃ sthāpitaṃ cet tad ābhicārikaṃ bhavati rājño rāṣṭrasya grāmasya yajamānasya ca vināśo bhavati. tasmān mahāśāntim tryahaṃ hutvā [...] kṣamasveti devaṃ praṇamya bālālaye pratiṣṭhāpya dhruvaberaṃ dhruvārcāberaṃ vā sthāpayet.*

example, a stone icon although made with appropriate iconographic features by the artisan but without the preliminary ritual procedure prescribed for the search and selection of the stone (*śilāgrahaṇakriyā*) (Colas 1986: 162–164), is unsuitable for rituals. It must be buried in the ground (thus assimilating it to a mere stone to be extracted) and after various ritual operations retrieved with mantras and installed according to the prescriptions.⁵¹

Apart from troubles due to lacunas in ritual actions, icons can also suffer from displacements, defects (in production) and damage. In case of displacement of the immovable icon and other elements in the temple because of floods, wind, etc., the icon is buried, the temple restored to its original state in the same place and the icon re-installed in it. Or a new temple is built elsewhere and the icon installed in it.⁵² The displacement out of ignorance of a flawless icon leads to inauspiciousness (*aśubha*) (and) destruction for the king and the kingdom. Various rites, including a Great Appeasement, are to be performed followed by the re-installation of the icon in its original temple.⁵³

Two factors guide the evaluation of the defect or damage in the icon and its effects. Firstly, its gravity and secondly, the moment when it occurs or is detected during the ritual. The gravity depends

⁵¹ VK 62: 377: *śilāgrahaṇakriyāṃ vinā beram salakṣaṇam śilpinā kṛtam ced [...] tad beram bhūmau pidhāya vāstuhomaṃ hutvā [...] paścāt samaṃtrakam saṃgrhya vidhinaiva sthāpayet.*

⁵² VK 63: 381: *vimānam dhruvam ca nadītaṭākasamudrasaṃbādham ahāvātādīnā yena kenacī cālitaṃ cet tadberam bhūmau pidhāya tatsthāne pūrvavad vimānam kṛtvā dhruvaberam acalaṃ sthāpayed athavā tatsamīpe grāmādau sati tatra vivikte deśe manorame tathaiva vimānam utkṛṣṭam vā kṛtvā tad beram sapariṣṭka: ṭka)m āhṛtya saṃsthāpya vidhinārcayet.*

⁵³ VK 63: 380: *yathāvidhi yathāsthāne sthāpitaṃ nirdoṣam beram na cālayet. tad ajñānāc cālitaṃ ced rājño rāṣṭrasya cāsubhāya nāśāya bhavati. taddoṣasamanārtham padmāgnau mahāśāntim hutvā [...] punaḥ pratiṣṭhām kārayet.* See also VK 64: 385: *anyālayasthāpitaṃ dhruvam kautukam vājñānād anyālaye sthāpitaṃ cet tad doṣasamanārtham mahāśāntim hutvā [...] pūrvasthāne vidhinā sthāpayet.*

on the limb which is affected. Specific defects bring about specific illnesses: for example, a hole in the belly leads to the destruction of wealth, a lean stomach to emaciation (of the patron?), etc.; leaning of the icon towards one direction or another during installation corresponds to a specific ill: an incline towards the South leads to death, towards the West to the destruction of wealth, etc.⁵⁴ The gravity of the physical damage also depends on the moment of its occurrence or of its detection during ritual. For instance, the damage with regard to the defective immovable icon is evaluated according to its occurrence before or after the sojourn in water.⁵⁵ If a limb is damaged before this ceremony and the icon can be repaired, a new icon is not required, but if it is possible financially, one may take a new icon.⁵⁶ If the limb is damaged after this ceremony, but before setting it up (*sthāpana*) and cannot be repaired, the icon is disposed off according to ritual rules and another icon is installed.⁵⁷ If an iconographic defect in the icon appears or is detected before the ritual of installation, it entails repair and

⁵⁴ VK 64: 386: *pīthasamghāte kṛte tadbere dakṣiṇāvanate mṛtyuḥ paścimāvanate 'rthahānir uttarāvanate 'bhivṛddhiḥ [sic, VK and VK Tiru, for anabhivṛddhiḥ] pūrvāvanate putrahāniḥ kukṣicchidre dhānyanāsa urāśchidre dhanakṣayaḥ kṛṣe kārśyaṃ sthūle mahāvṛyādhir dhūrghe 'nāyusyaṃ hrasve 'nāvṛṣṭir bhavaty anyeṣv aṃgeṣu hīneṣv adhikeṣu ca sarvahānir bhavati.*

⁵⁵ The sojourn in water (*jalādhivāsa*) is one of the most crucial episodes in the process of installation. It is the last of three successive sojourns, which are in the five products of the cow, milk and water. "Only after the sojourn is performed, one performs the setting-up of the icon. If an icon is installed without undergoing the sojourn ceremony, it results in the immediate destruction of that village, the sacrificer (*yajamāna*), the icon-carriers (*sthāpaka*), etc." (VK 28: 178). For the *sthāpaka* (icon-carrier), see Colas 1996: 313.

⁵⁶ VK 62: 376: *jalādhivāsāt pūrvam dhruvaberasyāmgahānīś cet [...]* *saṃdhānayogyam ced aparam beram na samāharec chaktaś cet punarberam saṃgrhṇīyāt.*

⁵⁷ VK 62: 377: *jalādhivāsāt paścāt sthāpanāt pūrvam devadevyādīnām aṃgahānīś cet [...]* *aṃgahīnam (beram) saṃdhānam kṛtvā saṃdhānam kartum ayuktaṃ beram vidhivat tyaktvā punar beram samāhṛtya sthāpayet.*

corrections before the installation is resumed. For instance, the application of the unprescribed or artificial (?) colours to the icon requires that it is cleaned with water (mixed with saps [?]) and painted with the prescribed colours before the installation.⁵⁸ An installed *dhruva* icon lacking the prescribed colours, dimensions, ornaments, etc. is declared to be *ābhicārika*.⁵⁹

According to the *Vimānārcanakalpa*, defects of iconography or iconology render an icon noxious (*ābhicārika*) and lead to the destruction not only of the patron, but also of his village and kingdom.⁶⁰ Defects in *kautaka* icons—such as unprescribed features, measurements, colours, etc. or the use of forbidden materials like *ārakūṭa*-brass, iron, *vṛttaloha*-metal—may originate from the non-respect of iconographic rules out of ignorance.⁶¹ The *ābhicārika* condition may also arise from lack of respect for the iconological rationale—for instance, the installation of the icon of a goddess near the icon of the god in yogic form, which is associated with celibacy;⁶² or the installation

⁵⁸ VK 64: 384: *bere 'nuktavarṇānulipte kṛtrimavarṇānulipte vā nir-yāsādbhiḥ prakṣālya [...] paścād uktavarṇenā(rṇāna)nulepayet.*

⁵⁹ VK 64: 384: *iṣṭakākalpitaṃ dhruvaberaṃ sudhayāyuktaṃ napuṃsaka-vr̥kṣeṇa napuṃsakaśilayā vā kṛtaṃ āyasapaṭṭabaddham ayaḥpāśāṇa-cūrṇalaśunahiṅgu(tai)lādyaisamyuktaṃ pakva(m)mr̥ṇmayamaṃ śūloparirajjubam̐dha(na)hīnaṃ mṛddhīnaṃ ghaṭaśarkarākalkahīnaṃ pramāṇahīnaṃ uktavarṇahīnaṃ bhūṣaṇahīnaṃ ajñānād arthalobhād vā sthāpitaṃ cet tad ābhicārikaṃ bhavati. See Colas 1996: 205–207.*

⁶⁰ See for instance VK 61: 375: *samāpte vimāne 'jñānād arthalobhād vā dhruvaberaṃ vinā kautukaṃ sthāpitaṃ cet tad ābhicārikaṃ bhavati rājño rāṣṭrasya grāmasya yājamānasya ca vināśo bhavati. tasmān mahāsāntiṃ tryahaṃ hutvā [...] kṣamasveti devaṃ praṇamya bālālaye pratiṣṭhāpya dhruvaberaṃ dhruvārcāberaṃ vā sthāpayet.*

⁶¹ VK 64: 384: *ārakūṭāyovṛttalohādyanuktadravyaiḥ kṛtaṃ kautukā-diberam ajñānād sthāpitaṃ cet tadābhicārikaṃ bhavati.*

⁶² VK 71: 442: *pūrvam yogamārgeṇa vā (vā within brackets in VK Tiru) pratiṣṭhāpyārcane pravartamāne paścāt tasya devībhyāṃ saha pratiṣṭhām kārayec ced ābhicārikaṃ bhavati. But according to the *Khilādhikāra*, another Vaikhānasa manual, the installation of the icons of Viṣṇu's two consorts Śrī*

of an icon of worship without a corresponding immovable icon;⁶³ or the placement near an icon of daily worship of another icon made of a superior material:⁶⁴ the undeclared reason could be that the earlier icon would suffer in its pride.

The *Vimānārcanakaḷpa* does not explain the process which makes a defective icon *ābhicārika*. It may be recalled that according to the text worship which is not based on right iconography is seized by demons. Other Vaikhānasa manuals too state that an incomplete temple and rite are seized by *asuras* (Colas 1996: 205–206). Should it be assumed then that defective icons or defective installations also attract demoniac forces into icons?

When an icon which is already installed is damaged or gets worn, the power abandons it. This also calls for repair and new ritual installation. The power of the icon is temporarily removed from it, drawn into a vase or into a temporary icon and later ritually reintroduced in the repaired icon (see for instance VK 70: 433). If the damaged icon is a painting on a cloth or on a wall, its power is drawn into the “diagram of the sun” (*arkamaṇḍala*)⁶⁵ before its restoration and re-installation.⁶⁶ When a high-relief (*ardhacitra*) stone icon is damaged in a limb and is repairable, “the loss of its power is not desirable”. Therefore, its power is transferred (into a substitute) to a provisional temple; the icon is buried in the ground, a Great Appeasement and a sacrifice similar to that performed during the collection of stone are

and Bhū on the sides of a *yoga* icon of Viṣṇu transforms the *yoga* icon into a *bhoga* icon (see *infra*): see Colas 1996: 301, n. 1.

⁶³ VK 61: 375 as quoted in note 50.

⁶⁴ VK 64: 385: *kautukādibere nirdoṣe 'rcyamāne tatrotkr̥ṣṭadrayakṛtaberapraveśanaṃ naiva kārayet kuryāt ced yajamānavināśanaṃ bhavati* (the term *ābhicārika* is however not explicitly mentioned in this passage).

⁶⁵ Which may be the sun itself or its diagram imagined either in the heart of the performer or in a vase filled with water (Colas 1986: 80).

⁶⁶ VK 71: 441: *paṭe kuḍye vālikhyārcitaṃ beram̐ jīrṇam̐ cet tacchaktim arkamaṇḍale samāropya navīkr̥tya punaḥ pratiṣṭhām̐ kārayet*.

performed, and the limbs (of the extracted icon) are appropriately fashioned by the artisan.⁶⁷

With regard to damages and defects, the entire temple is treated as any other icon, for it too undergoes specific installation similar to that of icons (Colas 1986: 80–81, 203–208). If the temple is damaged due to plants, termites, trees, etc., its power and that of “the gods of its limbs”, that is, of the group of icons placed on its various architectural parts, is resorbed into the immovable icon; the temple is restored and a new installation of the temple is performed.⁶⁸

The fourth kind of trouble that afflicts icons is their disposal. An icon which can be repaired is to be restored with all efforts and not thrown away. Whoever discards an icon which is fit for restoration is a wrongdoer. Such action leads to “a complete destruction”.⁶⁹ But an immovable stone icon lacking a limb should be disposed of immediately. If it is not done, the patron, the devotees and the village would be in great danger.⁷⁰ The disposal of a worn out immovable icon is done with elaborate rituals. The icon is cleaned, covered with new clothes, tied with cords of *kuśa* grass. Having it carried exclusively by Brāhmaṇas, it is taken to a river that flows directly into an ocean or any reservoir which does not dry up. A pavilion is built on the bank,

⁶⁷ VK 71: 436: *śailasyārdhacitrasya berasyāṅgopāṅgapratyaṅgeṣu hīne (tacchakti)hānir neṣṭā tasmāc chaktiṃ bālāgāraṃ nītvā tadberaṃ bhūmau pidhāyopari mahāsāntim abjāgnau hutvā śilāgrahaṇavaddhutvā tattadaṅgasamutpattiṃ yuktyā takṣṇā tu kārayet*. For a similar procedure in another Vaikhānasa text, the *Kāśyapajñānakāṇḍa*, see Goudriaan 1965: 305.

⁶⁸ VK 70: 427–428: *bāhye cāṅgopāṅgahīne tṛṇavalmīkamakṣikā-pādapādyair bhede saty atra bālālayasthānaṃ vinā tadvimānaśaktiṃ tad-aṅgadevāṃś ca mahābere samāropya navīkr̥tya vimānapratiṣṭhoktavidhiṇā vimānapratiṣṭhāṃ kārayet*.

⁶⁹ VK 71: 436: *saṃdhānayogyāṃ beraṃ yas tyajet sa pāpīyān bhavati. sarvavināśāś ca bhavati. tasmāt sarvaprayatnena saṃdhānaṃ kārayet*.

⁷⁰ VK 71: 439: *dhruvaberasyāṅgahīne sadyas tadberatyāgaṃ (kuryāt) na kuryāc cet kartārādhakayor grāmasya ca mahadbhayaṃ syāt*. VK Tiru does not have the beginning of the sentence.

a sacrifice is performed in it, including a ‘‘Sacrifice to the limbs’’. Having removed the cords and clothes, the master-priest (* c rya*) recites various mantras, throws the icon into water and takes a bath in that piece of water (*t rtha*).⁷¹ In case the icon is made of wood, the operations are the same but it is burnt and its ashes thrown into water.⁷² There is no mention of withdrawing the power from the discardable stone and wood immovable icons and preserving it till a new immovable icon is installed.⁷³ These worn out icons are no doubt treated with a certain amount of respect, but they seem to have lost all power. The great danger announced in case of the non-disposal of unrepairable immovable icons could refer to their transformation into noxious (* bhic rika*) icons.

The *Vim n rcanakalpa* presents different prescriptions for the repair or disposal of the mobile metal icon of daily worship, ‘‘etc.’’ (and probably other mobile icons) (VK 71: 440). The text distinguishes actions to be taken according to the category of the ‘‘limb’’ that is defective or damaged. When accessory ‘‘limbs’’ (*up nga*), that is, clothes, ornaments, mandorlas, etc. or secondary limbs (*praty nga*), that is, fingers, ears, nose, etc. are damaged, the power of the icon is temporarily transferred to a vase, the icon is repaired and the power replaced back into the icon before further ritual.⁷⁴ When regular limbs (*a ga*),

⁷¹ VK 71: 439: *tasm t sarvaprayatnena j rnam sarvaṃ saṃśodhya navavastrair  cch dya kuṣarajjubhir baddhv  br hmaṇair eva v hayitv  [...] vastrabaṃdhaṃ vimocy c ryaḥ tajjale prakṣipyta tatt rthe sn nam kury t*. Compare with Goudriaan 1965: 305.

⁷² VK 71: 440: *d ravaṃ ced evam eva k rtv  vahnin  (vahnau) d hayitv  tadbhasma jale prakṣipet*.

⁷³ See also Goudriaan 1965: 305.

⁷⁴ See, for instance, VK 71: 440: *tasm d up ngah ne p rvavat kuṃbhaṃ sam s dya tacchaktiṃ kuṃbhe sam v hya tadbimbasya punas-saṃdh nam k rtv  jal dhiv s d ni k rtv  [...] saptabhiḥ kala ais saṃsn pya kuṃbhashtaṃ śaktiṃ tadbimbe sam v hy rcayet. pratyamgaṃh ne tacchaktiṃ mah bere sam ropya bimbam uddh ryta [...] tulyalohena saṃdh nam k rtv  [...] punaḥ pratiṣṭh m k rayet*.

that is, feet, hands, arms are damaged, if possible, the icon is repaired (with similar metal) and the same kind of ritual is performed.⁷⁵

But if the icon cannot be repaired or if the defect occurs in a major limb (*mahāṅga*), that is, stomach, breast, neck or head, the icon is buried in the ground (*tad beraṃ bhumaṃ pidhāya*), with no mention of any transfer of power, unlike when the icon is repairable. A Sacrifice to limbs is performed above it,⁷⁶ followed by a Great Appeasement. The icon is removed the next day from the ground and cleansed. It is then thrown into fire for Triple purification (*triśuddhi*), which apparently means that it is melted three times successively. An icon made of silver, however, is melted twice and that of gold only once. A new icon resembling the previous icon is made out of that melted metal and installed.⁷⁷ Power is not withdrawn from such unrepairable metal icons probably because like unrepairable immovable icons made of stone and wood, they are considered as void of power. In a previous passage about casting of metal icons, the *Vimānārcanakaḷpa* concludes that a newly cast icon which has suffered a metal leak (?), is incomplete, cracked or split must be considered as mere metal.⁷⁸ Just as a buried stone icon is removed as if it were mere extracted stone, the defective metal icon too is buried and removed as if it were an ore.

The fifth kind of troubles in icons consists in portents (*adbhūta*) appearing in them. Chapter 72 of *Vimānārcanakaḷpa* is devoted to their

⁷⁵ Ibid.: *aṃgahīne tad beraṃ saṃdhānayogyam cet tathaiva kuryāt.*

⁷⁶ The *aṃgahoma* is a sacrifice during which the mantra *dadbhyas svāhā* etc. is used. See Colas 1986: 287.

⁷⁷ See VK 71: 440–441: *aṃgahīne tad beraṃ saṃdhānayogyam cet tathaiva kuryād ayuktaṃ cen mahāṃge hīne ca tad beraṃ bhumaṃ pidhāya tasyopari aṃgahomaṃ hutvā mahāśāntiṃ ca hutvā taddīne atīte bimbam uddhṛtya paṃcagavyaiḥ prakṣalyāgnau kṣiptvā triśśu(śu)ddhiṃ kṛtvā rājataṃ ced dvirdagdhvā raukmaṃ cet sakṛddagdhvā taddravyeṇa pūrvavat bimbam kṛtvā punaḥ pratiṣṭhāṃ kārayet.*

⁷⁸ VK 22: 129: *tad bimbam srāvitam apūrṇam khaṃḍitam saṃspṛuṭitam vā yadi bhavet tad beraṃ lohavat smṛtvā pūrvavaddhomaṃ hutvā bimbam ācaret.*

description. They are foreboding events, said to be created by gods when there is an accumulation of human sins or ritual faults, requiring immediate appropriate appeasement rite. The negligence of appeasement out of greed or ignorance, besides troubling the icon, produces great danger for the sacrificer, the devotees, the village, the king and the kingdom.⁷⁹ Portents are said to be of three kinds: celestial (*divya*), pertaining to the intermediate space (*āntarikṣa*), and terrestrial (*bhauma*). The Appeasement in the case of portents (*adbhutaśānti*) (VK 72: 449–452) takes place in a pavilion constructed near the temple and consists of various offerings and fire sacrifices. If the event occurs in a temple, the rite involves both the god (that is, his icon) and the king. This rite of seven days is followed by a festival of nine or seven days. The *Viṃānārcanakaḷpa* specifies that there is no remedy (*cikitsā*) for the *divya* and *āntarikṣa* portents but only Appeasement.⁸⁰

Terrestrial portents are said to be either mobile (*cara*), occurring in moving objects, or stationary (*sthira*), in unmoving objects.⁸¹ The first category includes unnatural births among human and animal beings, a change of natural colour and shape in animals, etc., an unnatural dwelling by birds, insects, etc. in a temple, the sight of a red and languid serpent in the temple.⁸² The remedy for the portents of the *cara* category consists of the displacement of the “origin and its effect” (*nimittanaimittika*) and the performance of the Appeasement.⁸³

Certain terrestrial stationary portents appear in the icon as well as in stationary objects such as temple, trees, etc. Some originate from

⁷⁹ VK 72: 444: *teṣu dr̥ṣṭeṣu sadyaś śāntim kuryād ajñānād arthalobhād vā na kuryāc cet kartārādhakayor grāmasya ca mahadbhayaṃ rājño rāṣṭrasya ca kṣobhaś ca jāyate.*

⁸⁰ VK 72: 447: *divyāntarikṣayoś cikitsā nāsti śāntir bhavati.*

⁸¹ For a similar classification, see *Bṛhatsaṃhītā* 46, 1–5.

⁸² VK 72: 445. The reading of VK Tiru. *alaye raktaśītilīsarpadarśanam* is retained here against VK reading *alaye (raktastrī)sarpadarśanam*. Compare with *Bṛhatsaṃhītā* 46, 52–57.

⁸³ VK 72: 448: *bhaumeṣu careṣu nimittanimittau (naimittikau) deś-āntare vāsayitvā śāntim ārabheta.*

within the icon, for example, when the icon cries, laughs, chatters, blazes, whirls or emits sweat or blood;⁸⁴ exhibits an unseasonable fissure due to worms, insects, flying insects, etc.; becomes the locus of smoke, trembling, grass, an ant-hill, etc.⁸⁵ The same chapter details the rites to be performed before the Appeasement properly speaking. When the icon cries, laughs, blazes, or emits sweat or blood, even in the absence of material damage, the power is withdrawn from the icon and later ritually reinstalled.⁸⁶ Such portents may also signify that the power in the icon is threatened or that the force in it has become dangerous. In the case that the portent involves material damage of the icon, the removal of power is followed by the intervention of an artisan who repairs the icon before its appeasement and/or reinstallation.⁸⁷

Portents also arise around the icon, such as the eye-contact or touch of the icon by objects or beings considered as impure (like menstruating women, certain social groups, animals and insects) or their entry into the temple; the lengthening, moving, whirling round or receding of a pillar; the change of aspect of a wall, door, etc.; unusual changes in fruits, flowers, leaves, etc.⁸⁸ Portents occurring in the temple, its

⁸⁴ Compare with *Brhatsaṃhitā* 46, 8.

⁸⁵ VK 72: 446: *pratimārodanahasanaajalpana(jvalana)parivartanasvedarudhirasrāvakṛmikīṭapataṃgādyudbhavākālasphoṭanadhūmāṅga-kampanasvāpana(āsvādana)ṭṛṇavalmīkodbhava [...]*.

⁸⁶ VK 72, 448: *pratimārodanahasanaajalaneṣū taruṇālaye devaṃ saṃsthāpya tadberasthām śaktiṃ samāropya śāntiṃ kṛtvā punas sthāpanam ācaret.*

⁸⁷ VK 72: 448: *kṛmikīṭapataṃgatṛṇakavakādyudbhave pūrvavac chaktiṃ samāropya punas saṃdhānam yuktitaḥ kṛtvā śānti yādūnyā cared akālasphoṭanādike 'pi tadvat. valmīkodbhava devaberārcāpīṭhālayābhiantareṣu taruṇālaye devaṃ pratiṣṭhāpya yāvad doṣadarśanam tāvat khanitvā sarvatra saṃśodhya [...] punas saṃdhānam kṛtvā punas sthāpanam ācaret.*

⁸⁸ VK 72: 446: *raktastrīdarśanapratilomapatitapāśaṃdāntyajātisṛg-ālādyaspr̥śyasarśanapraveśanasthūṇāvi(va)rohaṇacalanaparivartanāpas arpanabhittikavāṭāsanaśayanāyudhāṃbaravimānāgnihotropaskaravikāra-*

courtyards and pavilions threaten specific groups in society: certain portents visible on the icon, its pedestal or in the central cella announce the destruction of Brāhmaṇas, the king and the kingdom; those in the different parts of the main building, that of the Kṣatriyas; those in the second courtyard, that of the Śūdras; etc. (VK 72: 446–447).

Incidents happening to the icon and in its proximity are sometimes considered as portents and sometimes not. For instance, in the case of crying, etc. of the main icon, VK 69 (420) prescribes expiatory rites to be performed but not an appeasement ritual (VK 72). The development of worms, grass, etc., in the icon, according to chapter 69, necessitates an appeasement,⁸⁹ but may be not the same Appeasement ritual which is meant for portents (VK 72).⁹⁰ Thus the same incident may be understood sometimes as directly endangering the sanctity of the icon or its temple, sometimes as a sign of a deeper problem.

3. Troubling icons

Even iconographically perfect icons of Viṣṇu and his manifestations may be considered as dangerous at certain points of the ritual procedure. Auspicious objects called *darśanadravyas* are presented for the first vision of the icon when its eyes are ritually opened during its installation.⁹¹ Although the text does not explicate the aim of this ceremonial act, modern temple priests explain that the *darśanadravyas* are meant to absorb the violence of the first gaze of the icon (Colas 1989: 140–141). As mentioned earlier, icons may become *ābhicārika* due to ritual mistakes or following a damage. The *Vimānārcanakalpa* also employs

makṣikāvṛkṣapatanappravartanopasarpaṇaphalapuṣpapatrasākhādiviparīta-darśanajalaraktasrāvādīni.

⁸⁹ VK 69: 420: *valmīkatṛṇakṛmikīṭādy udbhave sati pūrvavac chāntim hutvā [...] devaṃ bālālaye pratiṣṭhāpya navīkaraṇaṃ kārayet.*

⁹⁰ VK 72: 448: *kṛmikīṭapataṃgatṛṇakavakādyudbhave pūrvavac chaktim samāropya punassaṃdhānaṃ yuktitaḥ kṛtvā śāntyādīny ācared akālasphoṭanādike 'pi tadvat (the rite of śānti is that which is described later in the chapter, pp. 449 sqq.).*

⁹¹ VK 27: 174–176. See also Colas 1986: 77, 204–205.

the term *ābhicārika* to refer to harmful icons made and installed with the deliberate purpose of troubling others.⁹² This conception is also mentioned in the *Kāśyapajñānakāṇḍa*, another Vaikhānasa manual. According to this text, anything infringing the ritual rules and made with flaws is *ābhicārika* and the *ābhicārika* method of worshipping Viṣṇu is one of the means for a king to win over his enemy.⁹³ According to the *Vimānārcanakaḷpa* *ābhicārika* is one of the four canonical modes of icons of a deity, the other three being those of well-being (*bhoga*), *yoga* and of the hero (*vīra*). Such nocive icons may be standing, sitting or lying, like in the three other modes.

The one desirous of victory over the enemy commissions an *ābhicārika* icon and installs it in a forest, on a hill, in a fort, etc. on the borders of the kingdom facing the direction of the enemy.⁹⁴ The *ābhicārika* icon has negative characteristics and its ritual installation also involves negative factors. For instance, the standing variety of *ābhicārika* icon of Viṣṇu is of the colour of smoke, wears dark clothes, its limbs are emaciated. It is endowed with the qualities of *tamas*, namely gloom, dullness, etc. Its eyes are turned upwards, unlike those of benevolent icons who look straight ahead. It is devoid of divine retinue. Such icons are to be installed under a proscribed, that is, inauspicious asterism. Its temple is deprived of the required canonical characteristics.⁹⁵

⁹² For *abhicāra*, see Tüerstig 1985.

⁹³ Goudriaan 1965: 45; Goudriaan translates *ābhicārika* as “liable to magic”; see *KJ* 10: 16–17.

⁹⁴ *VK* 19: 78: *śatrujayārthī cābhicārikaṃ kārayed [...] vanagirijaladurge rāṣṭrāṃṭe śatrudīnmukhe cābhicārikaṃ bhavati.*

⁹⁵ *VK* 19: 81: *devaṃ dvibhujam caturbhujam vā dhūmavarṇam śyāmādharam śuṣkavaktraṃ śuṣkāṅgam tamoguṇānvitam ūrdhvanetraṃ brahmādidevair vivarjitam paiśācapadaṣṭhaṃ ārdrādyanuktanakṣatre śarvaryāṃ cararāśau sthāpitaṃ vimānaṃ ca lakṣaṇahīnaṃ kārayed etad ābhicārikasthānaṃ syāt.* For the sitting *ābhicārika* icon see p. 83; reclining *ābhicārika* icon, p. 86.

Conclusion

The main purpose of installing perfect icons in temples is, according to the *Vimānārcanakalpa*, to bring welfare, prosperity as well as spiritual benefits to the patron, the village and the kingdom. The icon is an important element of social stability and political strategies. Its well-being safeguards the welfare of the king and his kingdom. Created, installed and worshipped in a temple according to scriptural prescriptions, it sustains an ideal social hierarchy and its prejudices. It is also an object of covetousness and appropriation by enemies. Sometimes kings voluntarily install malevolent icons and temples to defeat their enemies.

From the priestly viewpoint, as expressed in the *Vimānārcanakalpa*, an icon is primarily an object which, through prescribed features, measures, etc., is part of a network of auspicious signs as are other ritual objects such as ritual lamps, recipients, etc. Deity and power reside in an icon in so far as it is “beautiful”, undamaged and unsullied. The evaluation of beauty in this context is not aesthetic but subordinated to auspiciousness, that is, conformity to canonical iconography as well as to ritual and social purity. The constant threat to this iconographic and ritual integrity of the icon requires a ceaseless vigilance.

In spite of the coherence of its ritual prescriptions, the *Vimānārcanakalpa* does not theorize the relationship between the deity and the power in the icon. The first gaze of icons of benevolent god Viṣṇu seems to be naturally fierce. The power needs to be channelled through the framework of iconographic, iconological, iconometric and ritual prescriptions. Even the prescribed ritual installation practised on a non-canonical icon makes this power dangerous. The *Vimānārcanakalpa* prescribes the installation of malevolent icons, but does not provide details of the ritual nor the ensuing worship. It is not clear if the power in these icons is divine or not, if it is divine power turned violent or if it is plainly demoniac. The text also does not give instructions about the fate of the power in worn-out unrepairable icons.

The divine presence and the power in an icon entails duties and obligations not only from the founder patron and the priests but also from the whole society for the centuries to come. Besides

the perpetuation of the ritual performance, they are also responsible for preserving the integrity of icons as defectless bodily forms in an unsullied environment. But the benefits aspired to through the installation of icons are constantly threatened. Dependent on numerous external factors, the frail icon is for ever prone to troubles and may become troubling when deprived of ideal conditions.

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