

the time of the beginning of the Prayâjas till the Svishtakrit is over. The purpose of this act as explained by the Shrotriyas (sacrificial priests) of the present day is to keep the Rakshas and evil spirits away from the sacrifice. Now the whole ceremony, along with the formulas used, resembles so closely what is recorded in the Zend-Avesta of the angel *S'raosha* (now called *Serosh*), that we can fairly conclude that the office, or at any rate the duties, of the Agnîdhra priests were already known to the Aryas before the Iranians separated from the Indians. Serosh, as may be seen from the Serosh Yasht (Yas'na 57), holds in his hand a sword (*s'naitthis*) in order to fight against the Devas, and to keep them away from the creation of Ormazd. He first spread the sacred grass or twigs; he first repeated (*fras'râvayat*) the sacred prayers. His very name *S'raosha* reminds of the call *s'râushat*. One of the duties of the Agnîdhra, or Agnî, was to kindle the fire. Such an office is known also to the Parsi ritual. It is that of the *Atarevasho*, *i. e.* who feeds the fire, a name often applied to the Rathwi, in which we have recognised the Adhvaryu.

The fifth priest is the *Grâvagrâbha*, a name no further mentioned in other Vedic books. Sâyaṇa identifies him with the Grâvastut⁹ of the ceremonial of the Brâhmaṇas. The office of the latter is to repeat the Pâvamânya verses when the Soma juice is being prepared. But the name *Grâvagrâbha*

⁹ On his office, see 6, 1-2, pp. 379-80.