

his constant assistant the Pratiprasthâtar. That there was a plurality of Adhvaryus already at the time of the Rishis, we may learn from several passages of the Sâmhita of the Rigveda (2, 37, 2 ; 8, 2, 4).

The fourth priest here mentioned is the Agnîdhra ; for by the term *Agnimindha* we can only understand him. His office appears to be very old and he is once mentioned by his very name *Agnîdhra* in a Vedic song (2, 36, 4). Besides we meet with the well known formula which he has, as the protector of the sacrifice, to repeat as often as the Adhvaryu commences a set of oblations accompanied by the Anuvâkyâ and Yâjyâ mantras of the Hotar. This is *astu s'râushat* (1, 139, 1), which he has to repeat when the Adhvaryu calls upon him to do so, by the formula *ô s'râvaya*.⁷ Before he repeats it, he takes a wooden sword, called *sphya*⁸ into his hand, and ties round it twelve stalks of kus'a grass, called *idhmasannahanâni* (what is tied round the wood) making three knots (*trisandhana*). He must hold it up as long as the principal offerings last, from

⁷ This formula is repeated just before the commencement of the so-called Prayâjas. As'val. S'r. S. 1, 4, gives the following rules : *Adhvaryur âs'râvayati pratyâs'râvayed âgnîdhrah*, i. e. the Adhvaryu calls, *ô s'râvaya*, to which the Agnîdhra responds by *astu s'râushat*. Both formulas are mentioned or alluded to in two Sûtras of Pânini (8, 2, 91-92), who teaches that the first vowel in *s'râushat*, and the first and second in *ô s'râvaya* are to be pronounced in the *pluta* way, i. e. with three moras. Regarding *s'râushat* As'val. gives the same rule (*astu s'râushat iti aukaram plāvayan*) ; but the pronunciation of *ô s'râvaya* he does not particularly mention.

⁸ Other interpretations have been given of this word by European scholars. But being myself in possession of a *sphya*, and having seen its use at the sacrifice, I can prove beyond any doubt, that it is a wooden sword.