

**Piśāca** is the name of a class of demon mentioned in the Atharvaveda<sup>1</sup> and later.<sup>2</sup> In the Taittirīya Samhitā<sup>3</sup> they are associated with Rakṣases and Asuras, while opposed to gods, men, and fathers. In the Atharvaveda<sup>4</sup> they are described as *kravyād*, 'eaters of raw flesh,' which may be the etymological sense of the word Piśāca itself.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that the Piśācas were, as suggested by Grierson,<sup>6</sup> really human foes, like the north-western tribes, who even in later times were reputed eaters of raw flesh (not necessarily as cannibals, but rather as eaters of human flesh in ritual). This is, however, not at all likely, the Piśācas having in all probability only meant 'ghouls' originally: when they appear as human tribes, they were presumably thus designated in scorn. A science called Piśāca-veda<sup>7</sup> or Piśāca-vidyā<sup>8</sup> is known in the later Vedic period.

<sup>1</sup> ii. 18, 4; iv. 20, 6. 9; 36, 4; 37, 10; v. 29, 4. 5. 14; vi. 32, 2; viii. 2, 12; xii. 1, 50. The word occurs once in the Rv. (i. 133, 5) in the form of Piśāci.

<sup>2</sup> See St. Petersburg Dictionary, s.v.

<sup>3</sup> ii. 4, 1, 1; Kāthaka Samhitā, xxxvii. 14.

<sup>4</sup> v. 25, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Oldenberg, *Religion des Veda*, 264, n.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Grierson, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1905, 285-288. Cf. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 164 (B).

<sup>7</sup> Gopatha Brāhmaṇa, i. 1, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra, x, 7, 6.

**Piśīta** in the Atharvaveda<sup>1</sup> and later<sup>2</sup> denotes raw flesh (of **Piśāca**). In one passage of the Atharvaveda<sup>3</sup> the sense seems to be 'small piece,' 'bit,' but the St. Petersburg Dictionary suggests that Piśīta here stands for *piśīta*, equivalent to *piṣṭa* (what is 'pounded,' then 'particle').

<sup>1</sup> v. 19, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, ii. 11; Kausika Sūtra, xii. 8; xxxv. 18; xxxix. 14, etc.

<sup>3</sup> vi. 127, 1. Cf. Bloomfield, *Hymns of the Atharvaveda*, 531; Whitney, *Translation of the Atharvaveda*, 376.

**Piśīla** is found in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (ii. 5, 3, 6) as the name of a wooden vessel or dish. In the Lāṭyāyana Śrauta Sūtra (iv. 2, 4. 5) a Piśīla-viṇā is mentioned, which seems to have been a kind of guitar, with strings stretched over a body of wood.