

960

INDRA AND VRTRA

INDRA AND VRTRA: A STUDY  
OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN  
THE INDIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITION

By

RAYMOND HODGSON, M.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

October 1975



DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (1975)  
(Religious Sciences)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Indra and Vrtra: A Study of Continuity and Change in the  
Indian Religious Tradition

AUTHOR: Raymond Hodgson, B.A. (McMaster University)

M.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISORS: Professor D. Kinsley  
Professor W. Whillier

NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 247

SCOPE AND CONTENTS:

This dissertation, by focussing upon one particular theme -- the combat between Indra and Vrtra -- sheds light upon what this theme meant to those inside the Rgvedic tradition at various times and also indicates the changes that the tradition underwent. A key to understanding this theme is the identification of soma as Amanita muscaria, a hallucinogenic mushroom, particularly since Indra drinks soma-juice more than any other god and it is this juice that empowers him in his conflict with Vrtra. While examining textual references to the conflict it became apparent that there are at least two cultic settings which utilize the conflict theme for a particular purpose: a cultic setting reflecting the ingestion of a hallucinogen and a cultic setting reflecting the ritual function of the king in the New Year's ceremony.

### ABSTRACT

It is my contention that the assumption by Vedic scholars of a coherent cosmogonic myth throughout the various strata of the Rgveda is not warranted. The dissertation, by focusing upon the combat between Indra and Vrtra, sheds light on what this theme meant to those inside the Rgvedic tradition at various times and also indicates the changes that the tradition underwent. In the course of analyzing appropriate references it became apparent that there were several layers within the data, each of which utilized the conflict theme for a particular purpose. The method used in examining the material was the form-critical method as utilized in some areas of Old Testament scholarship. This method, with some small modifications, suits the data and enables one to coherently separate out layers of the tradition and thus pursue the hermeneutical task to a satisfying conclusion. A key to understanding the combat theme is the identification of sóma as Amanita muscaria, a hallucinogenic mushroom, particularly since Indra drinks sóma-juice more than any other god and it is this juice that empowers him in his conflict with Vrtra.

The employment of the method brought several factors into clearer perspective. The epithet vrtrahan is employed throughout the Rgveda, but not in a consistent manner. The two broadest and most significant usages are found within 1) a context suggesting the ritual ingesting of sóma, where vrtrahan is the overcomer of obstacles in the quest for a psycho-pharmacologic vision and 2) a context suggesting the

later New Year's festival ritual which surrounds the homology between the king overcoming his enemies and the mythology of the divine warrior overcoming the dragon.

The word vrtrá is also employed throughout the Rgveda in a similar manner. Again one can establish the two broadest and most significant usages as being within 1) a context suggesting the ritual ingestion of sóma where vrtrá may mean either an enemy who has appropriated sóma or the physical barriers to be overcome in the receiving of a vision, and 2) a context suggesting both the mythological development of an epic theme of overcoming the dragon and the tendency to see this struggle in terms of a cosmogony.

Three hymns are examined in some detail (3.30, 5.30, 8.89). The accommodation apparent in 8.89 (in comparison with the other two hymns) demonstrates the disappearance of sóma (i.e., Amanita muscaria) as a normative cult experience. Its place appears to be taken by a highly organized ritual centered on Agni. Indeed, it appears certain that (by the time of the composition of 8.89) the Agni sacrificial complex is predominant in the minds of those who chanted the hymn (and wished to imitate normative cult experience). Concomitant with this is the folk-etymology Vrtrahan ergo Vrtra-slayer such as is expressed in 8.24.2. This connection presents the base for the later interpretations of the conflict by the Indian Religious Tradition, such as those enumerated in the Nirukta (i.e., the story of the conquest of the dragon or the mythological explanation for rain).



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all those who gave encouragement during the preparation of this thesis. I would like to thank Dr. G.P. Grant whose incisive comments on Western society enabled me to come to grips with my own culture. Without such a critical awareness of one's own culture any attempt to come to grips with another culture is both ill-founded and foolhardy. In this respect, I would like to thank Dr. J.G. Arapura for the constant stimulus of providing an environment where the differences between India and the West could be examined philosophically.

To my supervisors goes my gratitude for their patience during a long and difficult task. For the guidance, support, and criticism during my attempt to understand a certain motif in Rgvedic religion through a way different to that normally suggested, my thanks go to Dr. D.R. Kinsley. My thanks also go to Dr. W. Whillier who bore me up while I wrote on the Veda as he was a guide through a labyrinth which he himself had entered.

I cannot adequately express the depth of my gratitude to Professor R.M. Smith of the University of Toronto. While I was studying Sanskrit with him he was patient yet rigorous. His motto seemed to be: "What else could this be?". I thank him for carefully reading the Sanskrit translations. His comments were invaluable and improved my work greatly, although I am responsible for the final translations that appear in this thesis.

To those who typed the manuscript, Mrs. G. Gordon and Ms. Carmella Marasco, go my thanks for putting up with a text that not only included Sanskrit but also the occasional note that ran sideways up the margin. Finally, to my wife Joyce goes my deep appreciation for not only clarifying my thinking but also for never doubting that this thesis would come to a successful conclusion.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |      |
|---|------|
| CHAPTER ONE: Introduction   | Page |
| Aim and Scope of the Thesis.....  | 1    |
| The Utilization of Primary Sources.....   | 8    |
| The Hymns of the <u>Rgveda</u> .....  | 15   |
| An Overview of Recent Research.....   | 20   |
| Interpretations of the Indra-Vrtra Conflict.....                                  | 39   |
| The Importance of <u>vrtrahan</u> as the Starting Point.....                      | 48   |
| Methodological Reflections.....   | 51   |
| CHAPTER TWO: Occurrences of Indra-Vrtrahan in the <u>Rgveda</u>                   |      |
| Introduction.....   | 63   |
| Epical Occurrences of Indra-Vrtrahan.....   | 70   |
| Indra as Ahihan.....  | 85   |
| Contextual Occurrences of Indra-Vrtrahan.....                                     | 89   |
| The Blind and the Lame.....   | 99   |
| Further References to Vrtrahan.....   | 102  |
| Summary.....  | 104  |
| Appendix.....   | 106  |
| CHAPTER THREE: References to Vrtrahan Other Than Those<br>Applicable to Indra     |      |
| Introduction.....   | 108  |
| Agni as Vrtrahan.....   | 111  |
| Sarasvati as Vrtrahan.....  | 116  |
| Soma as Vrtrahan.....   | 117  |
| Indra-Agni as Vrtrahan.....   | 131  |
| General Liturgical Context.....   | 131  |
| Releasing Soma.....   | 133  |
| The Elusive Missile.....  | 136  |
| Vajra as Vrtrahan.....  | 138  |
| Other Non-Indra References to Vrtrahan.....                                       | 140  |
| Trasadasyu as Vrtrahan.....   | 146  |
| Summary.....  | 152  |
| CHAPTER FOUR: An Examination of Themes in the Indra-<br>Vrtra Conflict            |      |
| Introduction.....   | 154  |
| The Epic-Narrative Theme.....   | 157  |
| Major Indra-Vrtra Hymns.....  | 167  |
| A Possible Hermeneutical Framework for the<br>Indra-Vrtra narrative elements..... | 176  |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| The Allies of Indra.....   | 178 |
| The Cosmologic Theme.....  | 182 |
| Words and Phrases Referring to the Indra-<br>Vṛtra Conflict..... | 191 |
| Excursus on Vṛtra(s).....  | 194 |
| A Ritual Setting for the Indra-Vṛtra Conflict.....               | 199 |
| Summary.....   | 218 |

#### CHAPTER FIVE: Concluding Remarks

|                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Recapitulation of Aim and Scope..... | 222 |
| Speculation on Ritual Contexts.....  | 226 |
| The Persistence of Cosmology.....    | 235 |

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 241 |
|-------------------|-----|

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### Aim and Scope of the Thesis

This thesis attempts an examination of the conflict between the Indian god Indra and his opponent Vrtra as outlined in the ancient collection of hymns authored by seers (ṛsis) known as the Rgveda. Within this text, Indra is portrayed as the most important god while Vrtra is his chief demonic opponent. The story of the combat between Indra the warrior god and the great serpent (Vrtra is also known as Ahi, "snake") occurs outside the Veda as well in the literature of the later Indian Religious Tradition. It was this fact that first drew my attention to the combat. I wanted to examine what changes the story underwent in its utilization during various stages of the tradition. However, it became quite apparent that the Rgvedic references to the conflict were not subject to a univalent interpretation. A detailed contextual examination of these references yielded enough significant information that I decided to write on the Rgvedic aspect of the conflict alone.

This concentration on the Rgvedic aspect of the conflict focussed the thesis so that an analysis of the places where these references occur could be carried out in some detail. The research pointed to the conclusion that there does not seem to be a coherent cosmogonic



myth in all strata of the Rgveda which employs the imagery of the Indra-Vrtra conflict. The thesis first analyzes the occurrences of the epithet vrtrahan (usually translated as "Vrtra-slayer") for reasons that are outlined later in the introduction. Chapters Two and Three contain the textual data and the analysis of these occurrences. The epithet vrtrahan is mainly used in two contexts: 1) the ritual ingestion of soma which suggests the quest for a vision and 2) the homology between the ruler overcoming his enemies and the mythology of the Divine Warrior overcoming the dragon. An analysis of the contexts where vrtra is used demonstrates that the widely held assumption in Vedic studies that the conflict reflects a cosmogonic myth may not be warranted. The major part of the discussion on whether one may always interpret the conflict as cosmogonic myth is undertaken in Chapter Four. Two contexts which use the conflict imagery seem predominant: 1) the ritual ingestion of soma where vrtra is a barrier in the quest for a vision and 2) a tendency to view the struggle against the dragon in terms of a cosmology. The detailed textual examination and argument for these points is the first aim of the thesis.

The second aim of the thesis is an examination and clarification of some theoretical and methodological approaches to the Rgveda as an entire work by focussing upon one component of the text -- the Indra-Vrtra conflict. While examining secondary sources which discussed the combat two different kinds of presuppositions were discerned. First, some view of the nature and origin of religion was prominent in the

authors' assumptions that preceded exegesis of the data. In the older secondary sources, particularly, the orientation towards a rather naive naturalism predominated. This theoretical assumption coloured the approach to the data and determined the foci for interpreting the conflict. I do not deny that some view of the nature of religion is held by everyone (including myself) who approaches a religious document. However, in terms of general theory, the nature of religion cannot be reduced legitimately to a naive naturalism. Further, speculation on the origin of religion leads to asking certain, very specific questions which are often not the most appropriate ones. This type of speculation must be restricted if one wishes to understand the full meaning of the Rgveda. The second kind of presupposition stems from an evaluation of the place of the Rgveda within a larger religious system -- either a cross-comparison with several Indo-European systems or a comparison and contrast with the later Indian Religious Tradition. Both of these approaches have much to offer the investigator of the Rgveda. However, proper balance is required. A steering away from a careful scrutiny of the text itself leads both to over-generalization and over-simplification.

In terms of methodology the basic difference of opinion manifest in contemporary scholarship stems from the orientation one takes to the Rgveda. The interpretive role given to later mythological and ritual traditions is stressed, for example, by Kuiper. On the other hand, the refusal to go beyond the text and, more importantly, the

words and phrases of the text, is stressed by Renou. Both of these positions are examined in further detail below. One of the points I attempt to establish is that these two methods are not mutually exclusive but examine the material from different perspectives and with different goals in mind. Because I approach the text as a textual critic I have taken Renou's position as the starting point for my own investigation. However, Renou does assume a particular context for the composition of the hymns (see below, p. 14) and considers the composer to be a poet operating in a secular literary context. Kuiper, while perhaps overstating his case, has decided that the Rgveda is the textbook for the religious festival of the New Year. Renou chooses to examine the composition of the individual hymns while Kuiper concentrates on the book as a whole in order to understand the role of the hymns in the Vedic cultus. My own stance is to view the hymns as being a more appropriate focal point for textual examination on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to interpret the material from a perspective that assumes a cultic context for both composition and recitation. The resulting synthesis allows the text to speak for itself, but not in isolation from larger cultural questions.

A most important development in the analysis of the Rgvedic texts is the argument of Wasson that sóma is Amanita muscaria, a mushroom that has hallucinogenic properties.<sup>1</sup> Soma is a drink

---

<sup>1</sup>See R. Gordon Wasson, Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality (New York, 1973), (hereafter cited Wasson, Soma).



ingested by Indra more than any other deity and serves to empower him in his conflict with Vrtra. Further, some passages speak of soma as being inside Vrtra, and this is described as presenting a highly dangerous situation to early Vedic man. An examination of the conflict with this identification in mind entails going beyond a strictly literary analysis of the words of the text to a reflection on the meaning and significance of some of the hymns.

Wasson's hypothesis is used in developing the major arguments of the thesis as a heuristic device which aids the examination of textual material. During the analysis of this material from the perspective of the textual critic, I encountered several passages which remained unclear. The textual critic is primarily concerned with internal text criticism. The Rgvedic hymns contain allusions to the cultic context in which they were composed. By examining these allusions with the aid of Wasson's hypothesis some of the passages were opened up to a clearer understanding. Because of this clarity brought about by utilizing Wasson's hypothesis fresh translations of the passages were necessary. Thus most of the translations, except where noted, are my own.

The first aim of the thesis, as noted above, is the demonstration through textual examination that there is no coherent cosmogonic myth using Indra-Vrtra conflict imagery in the Rgveda. Wasson's hypothesis suggests that hallucinogenic visions lie behind much of the imagery in the hymns. That a visionary experience is being referred to has been carefully documented by Gonda.<sup>1a</sup> Whether

---

<sup>1a</sup>J. Gonda, The Vision of the Vedic Poets (The Hague, 1963), passim.

or not the visionary experience of the ṛsi is caused by the ingestion of the psychotropic plant Amanita muscaria has not been firmly established.<sup>1b</sup> Since the visionary experience reflected in the hymns can be established without reference to Wasson, his hypothesis is not critical to the thesis, i.e., the thesis does not stand or fall on the validity of Wasson's identification of soma. However, I have used his hypothesis as a heuristic device that does enable the text critic to gain a clearer understanding of some texts. This in turn allows the text critic to conclude that the imagery of the Indra Vrtra conflict does not consistently refer to a cosmogonic myth.

In any discussion of the conflict, it is important to understand what it is that Indra is fighting. This leads into a detailed examination of vrtra and related words. The Rgveda has been culled for information by both philologists and grammarians. The former, who are interested primarily in the isolation of word-clusters and etymology, have concluded that vrtrahan means 'overcomer of obstacles or resistance' while vrtra means 'resistance or obstacle'. However, while a correct philological interpretation provides a base for a full explication of the nuances of these terms, a full and complete understanding of the usage of these terms in the Rgveda will not necessarily result from a philological examination.<sup>2</sup> One must go beyond the literal trans-

---

<sup>1b</sup> See pp. 30ff. for a discussion of the scholarly debate.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the comments by F.B.J. Kuiper in a review of P. Thieme, Mitra and Aryaman, Indo-Iranian Journal, 3 (1959), 207-212, (periodical hereafter cited IJ).

lation to the contexts in which these words are employed and exegete the passages to determine the specific usages of the terms. One way to analyze specific usages is to examine the work of grammarians who designate vrtrahán as an epithet or attributive adjective. The difference between these two terms is so slight<sup>3</sup> that I employ the former term to cover both uses. It is important to examine who (or what) is designated vrtrahán in order to determine what patterns, if any, are present in its application to the Rgveda. This task is undertaken in Chapters Two and Three. Further, some determination of the various ways in which vrtrá is used will be made. Some passages clearly identify (explicitly or implicitly) vrtrá with Ahi, some passages employ the neuter plural, and other passages are more problematic. One may also determine the significance of the different contexts in which the word is employed. For example, there is a series of references that apparently stems from an actual battle-conflict situation, there is another series of references that relates a narrative account of the struggle between Indra and Vrtra, and there is a third series that refers to a cosmologic myth. An examination of vrtrá and the contexts in which it is found is undertaken in Chapter Four.

Therefore, in sum, a careful study of both the terms and their contexts enables one to test the results of philology over against an examination of the actual usage of these terms. It is my contention

---

<sup>3</sup> See J. Gonda, Epithets in the Rgveda (S'-Gravenhage, 1959) 157f., (hereafter cited Gonda, Epithets).



that such a procedure will yield the clearest picture of the central purposes of the hymn writers and will allow one to consider whether some passages reflect the ingestion of a chemical hallucinogen. This allows the exegete to go beyond rigidly limited interpretative principles and will open the exegetical task up to continual hermeneutical reflection.

The aim and scope of this thesis, then, stems from an examination of the Indra-Vrtra conflict in the Rgveda, focussing upon the terms vrtrahan and vrtra along with their contexts. This procedure aids in isolating different usages of the terms within the text. The prime focus is the exegesis of passages that connect these terms with the taking of a hallucinogenic drug and the attempt to communicate that experience. In order to utilize the best methodological perspective in this interpretive task, a combination of the approaches to the text suggested by Renou and Kuiper seems apposite.

#### The Utilization of Primary Sources

The primary source material dealing with the Indra-Vrtra conflict extends beyond the Rgveda. While the thesis limits itself to an examination of this text, one cannot completely ignore either comparative material, in this case Avestan material, or the later Indian Religious Tradition's utilization of the Indra-Vrtra conflict. The former is useful because of the usage of words and phrases similar to those found in the Rgveda. An analysis of this similarity allows a deeper understanding of some of the usages within the Rgveda. The latter material demonstrates in what ways the later tradition developed the

story of the conflict.<sup>3a</sup>

The utilization of Avestan material in exegeting some hymns has been proposed by various scholars. However, some comments on possible relationships between the two documents is apposite. Benveniste and Renou<sup>4</sup> see the Avestan material as being of paramount importance in analyzing vrtrahan, which is discussed below in the introduction and in the next chapter. The necessity for judicial balance in employing this material must be emphasized for two reasons: 1) the similarity of many features in Vedic and Avestan grammar should not necessarily lead to the assumption of a close chronological relationship<sup>5</sup> and, 2) the tangled textual history of the Avestan material<sup>6</sup> must give one pause before stating certainties in the comparison of religious significations in the two documents.

The Indra-Vrtra conflict is one of the themes that continues on in the later Indian Religious Tradition. The later tradition (as early as 600 B.C.) held two divergent opinions on the conflict.

---

<sup>3a</sup> While the later tradition, in my opinion, develops themes not central in the earlier strata of the Rgveda, the supposition leads to speculation on why such is the case. One central reason for this change could be the decline in the ingesting of soma and the consequent shift in the metaphorical employment of the imagery away from attempts to describe and communicate psychedelic experience.

<sup>4</sup> E. Benveniste and L. Renou, Vrtra et Vrθragna: Etude de Indo-Iranienne (Paris, 1934), passim, (hereafter cited Benveniste and Renou, VV).

<sup>5</sup> J. Gonda, Handbuch der Orientalistik. Die Indischen Sprachen: Old Indian (Leiden-koln, 1971), 21-22, (hereafter cited Gonda, Old Indian).

<sup>6</sup> Brilliantly summarized by Geldner and E.J. Thomas, "Zend Avesta", Encyclopedia Britannica (London, 1957), 942-944.



The first, that the conflict was a rendering in poetic language of the bringing of rain by the god of rain piercing the clouds, was the opinion of those who studied etymology.<sup>6a</sup> The second, that the conflict is the story of the triumph of the chief god over his main demonic opponent was the opinion of the story-tellers.<sup>6b</sup> Neither of these views, although some small support could be found in the text, reflect the religious nuances or significations appropriate to the thought-world of the Rgvedic hymns.

The Brahmanas<sup>7</sup> demonstrate a more pronounced focus on the ritual in their usage of the Indra-Vṛtra conflict. Sometimes it is used as an aetiological explanation for material used in a ritual,<sup>8</sup> sometimes an extended story is included in the text,<sup>9</sup> and sometimes equivalences between various things are set up.<sup>10</sup> Thus these texts reflect the thought-world of the priest as technician and do not directly aid the

<sup>6a</sup> Nirukta 2.16

<sup>6b</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> For an interpretative consideration of the data, see Lüders, Varuna I (Gottingen, 1951), 196-201; A. Hillebrandt, Vedische Mythologie, (reprint, Gg, Olms, 1965), 206-229; S. Lévi, La Doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brahmanas, (Paris, 1898) *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> For example, TS 6.1.1. (Vṛtra's eyeball becomes collyrium).

<sup>9</sup> For example, ŚB 5.2.3.8-9, Vṛtra is slain by Indra by means of the cake sacrifice; ŚB 6.2.2.19, Indra drives Vṛtra away by means of the full-moon offering. In the Śrauta Sūtras, verses referring to the slaying of Vṛtra are used at the full-moon sacrifice. (See A.B. Keith, Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads (Cambridge, 1925), 320).

<sup>10</sup> For example ŚB 3.4.13 etc., or Soma=Vṛtra; TS 2.4.12.6 Vṛtra=stomach/womb; ŚB 1.6.4.13 Moon=Soma=Vṛtra.

exegete of the R̥gvedic data. Heesterman<sup>11</sup> comments (on the later data) that the year is considered as homologous to the full term of pregnancy and Vṛtra's slaughter is associated with birth.<sup>12</sup> Further, the conflict is placed in the crucial situation of the gaining of light at daybreak and the role of the king is to imitate that ab initio conflict.<sup>13</sup> There are, within the R̥gveda, references to the role of the ruler and also references to a cosmologic ordering. However, the orientation of these themes is usually quite different from their utilization in the Brāhmaṇas and Sūtra literature.

Indian commentators on the Veda are hidden in obscurity until the fourteenth century and the works of Śāyana and Mādhava. The former undoubtedly had his predecessors<sup>14</sup> but there is nothing definite between the time of Nirukta<sup>15</sup> and his commentary. Gonda judiciously places Śāyana in proper perspective:

---

<sup>11</sup>J.C. Heesterman, The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration ('S -Gravenhage, 1957).

<sup>12</sup>ibid., 28, 187f. See also F.B.J. Kuiper, "Cosmogony and Conception: a query". History of Religions, 10 (1971), 91-138, (hereafter cited Kuiper "Cosmogony and Conception".)

<sup>13</sup>ibid., 100f.

<sup>14</sup>L. Renou, The Destiny of the Veda in India (Delhi, 1965), 22f., 81, (hereafter cited Renou, Destiny.)

<sup>15</sup>The Nirukta of Yāska, ca. 6th century B.C., is a commentary revising an earlier work (the Nighantu) and "...is a series of etymological analyses of the words given in the Nighantu, analyses accompanied by a sort of running gloss on the verses in which the words occur". Renou, Vedic India (Calcutta, 1957), 48.

...there is no denying that the commentaries attributed to Sāyana bristle with linguistic mistakes: not infrequently, explanations of words and forms are erroneous, grammatical constructions impossible; there are many contradictions and anachronistic interpretations. However, his works are not completely worthless. We may learn from his mistakes; his inconsistencies could in part be due to the fact that he followed various traditions or authorities. The best way seems to be to read his commentaries carefully and critically, to reject what we know to be impossible, to adopt that which is consistent with knowledge gathered from other sources and to note for reconsideration the information which cannot for the moment be checked.<sup>16</sup>

Following this assessment, my own utilization of his work is scanty and is included most often to corroborate the comments of others. Since a great deal of my interpretive framework depends on a clear identity of soma, even texts as early as the Brāhmaṇas shed little light on the exegetical problems (because of the disappearance from the cult of soma).

I do not think that my continued stress on the necessity to concentrate on the Rgveda itself is over-stated. Too often the text has been used as a 'proof-text' for hypotheses already firmly established in authors' minds. It is absolutely essential to determine the self-understanding, or, more correctly, the layers of self-understanding, present in this text, and then proceed to the interpretation of these layers. Only after this has been accomplished can

---

<sup>16</sup>Gonda, Old Indian, 4-5. See Gerow's comment on Renou's use of Sāyana, E. Gerow, "Renou's Place in Vedic Exegetical Tradition" American Oriental Society Journal 88 (1968), 321, (periodical hereafter cited JAOS).



one bring in speculation on the relationship of the Rgveda to either comparative material or the texts of the later tradition.

Renou's constant return to the text of the Rgveda has been the most profound influence on my own views. He does not utilize the later texts for explicating the ritual or the mythology of the Rgveda. He comments that

the ritual which was established long afterwards, drew freely on the hymns and verses, with little regard to their original meaning. Put to this new use, the Rgveda became the book of the hotri. On the other hand, the mythology of the Rgveda is no longer the common mythology of Vedism: it is older and at the same time not directly ancestral but collateral.<sup>17</sup>

The concentration on textual isolation leads to an enriched understanding of the intention of the authors and an ability to understand the structure of the text.<sup>18</sup> The system Renou uses has been called "poeticization" which "reinforces the independence of the text (literalism) at the expense of its "meaning"...."<sup>19</sup> The "meaning" suffers be-

---

<sup>17</sup>Renou, Vedic India, 9f.

<sup>18</sup>Others besides Renou have attempted to come to grips with the text in terms of internal criticism. He comments that "as has been explained by Bergaigne, whose results Oldenberg has made more exact, the arrangement of the hymns and verses proceeds according to precise rules: in mandalas II-VII the arrangement of the hymns is by gods, with Agni at the head, followed by Indra, and in mandala IX by metres; within any one series, determined by deity or metre, the arrangement of the hymns is in descending order of the number of verses; when several hymns have the same number of verses, they are arranged in descending order of the length of the metre; the order of the series in a mandala is the descending order of the number of hymns in the series; finally mandalas II to VII are themselves arranged according to the numbers of hymns they contain. Similar rules, but qualified by other tendencies, govern mandalas I, VIII and X." Vedic India, 2f.

<sup>19</sup>Gerow, "Renou's Place in Vedic Exegetical Tradition", 332.

cause Renou refuses to place the text in any early Vedic cultic context.<sup>20</sup> It is my contention that Renou is correct in constantly relying on the text for relevant interpretative data. However, one cannot deal with a text completely isolated from cultic considerations. Renou sees clearly the dangers of an over-eager ethnographical approach or of a linking of the text with the later tradition that neglects the internal textual evidence that speaks against such a linkage. But one cannot throw up one's hands at this point. The probable identification of soma allows some comments on content, on the one hand, and, on the other, an examination of the transmission-history of some themes in the hymns allows us to comment on what kinds of contexts seem evident.

To this point in the discussion of primary source material I have been noting without comment the pivotal role of the cultic ingestion of soma for determining some crucial questions on the significance of material extraneous to the Rgveda. Also I have noted the possibility of proceeding beyond the words and phrases of the text to a reflection on the meaning of these words and phrases. Immediately after discussing the nature of the Rgveda, I am going to examine in some detail the identification of soma as a hallucinogen in order to establish the importance of this for hermeneutical reflection on some hymns. I can note here that the disappearance of soma from the later Vedic cult

---

<sup>20</sup> ibid., 312f. and 332. Renou is an authority on cult and writes extensively on the place of Rgvedic verses in later Vedic cultic material.

necessitated the re-working of metaphorical imagery, which in its turn had earlier been re-worked in order to express facets of psychedelic experience which entered the culture through borrowing. Thus the later tradition is in a very special sense cut off from an understanding of many Rgvedic references. Further, the Avestan material, which also has been re-worked, only dimly reflects this identification. This gives the material limited value as an aid in exegesis. A key to interpreting some of the strata of the text reflected in the Rgveda is the realization that psychedelic experience had considerable impact on how Vedic man oriented himself to what he considered to be both real and true. This in its turn requires reflection on the nature and composition of the text itself.

#### The Hymns of the Rgveda

One fundamental puzzle concerning Vedic material revolves around the question: "What is it?" That is, as a collected document, what intention lies behind it? Those who undertake a translation of this material must have (either implicitly or explicitly) answered this question. Most modern Western scholars have tended toward the view that the Rgveda contains, for the most part, secularized court poetry. Thieme, in criticizing the presupposition held by both Renou and Geldner concerning the secularized literary context for the composition of these hymns, decried the tendency to secularize the Rgveda. He tartly added that he could "hear in some renderings of Geldner's overtones of their own that call to mind unfortunate associations with the Nuremberg master-singers and the minnensingers' tournament of song



on the Wartburg."<sup>21</sup> Thieme's intention is to deny any allegations that militant nationalism provides the impetus for composition. Gerow criticizes Renou's conception of the text because it leads to an over-emphasis on literary aspects. He comments that "Renou is one who emphasizes the formulaic character of the text, the secular motivation (if not occasion) of the singer who becomes, in more than a metaphorical sense, a poet (kavi)."<sup>22</sup> Kuiper, while in agreement with Thieme on the necessity to avoid a secularizing tendency in interpreting the hymns<sup>23</sup> has decided that "only the theory that the Rg-Veda in its essence is a textbook for the ceremonies of the New York festival would seem to provide a satisfactory explanation for the remarkably one-sided character of these hymns."<sup>24</sup> This orientation towards a collection utilized for festival purposes lends particular significance to his theory of the Indra-Vrtra conflict as a cosmogonic myth, to be discussed in detail below. What is important here to follow the intention of Thieme's criticisms of Renou and Geldner, is the stress placed by Kuiper on the necessity for appreciating the religious context for

---

<sup>21</sup>Thieme, JAOS 77 (1957), 56.

<sup>22</sup>Gerow, "Renou's Place in Vedic Exegetical Tradition", 311. Renou characterizes the text as a "...literary anthology, drawn from family traditions." L. Renou, Religions of Ancient India (New York, 1968), 10, (hereafter cited Renou, RAI).

<sup>23</sup>F.B.J. Kuiper, "The Ancient Aryan Verbal Contest", IJJ 4 (1960), 217, (hereafter cited Kuiper, "Verbal Contest").

<sup>24</sup>Kuiper, "Cosmogony and Conception", 105-6.

the utilization of the hymns. Further discussion on the nature of the text will be undertaken below in the section dealing with methodological reflections.

However, even if one can generally settle the question of "what", there still remains the question of "when". While the majority of scholars have decided on a date around the twelfth century B.C.E., this is more a focal point for discussion than a hard and fast conclusion. In fact, the history of the text is both complex and confused. "...After a long period of oral transmission during which it did not remain unaltered, the text of the Rgveda must -- in the time elapsing between the oldest brahmāna compilation and Pāṇini -- have been 'edited' and established by disakeuasts whose activity...left many traces...."<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the collections which comprise the ten books are of unequal antiquity. There have been several attempts at internal chronology<sup>26</sup> but Renou's analysis seems, in broad outline, to be most appropriate.<sup>27</sup> However, this does not solve many problems because there is a difference in chronology between individual texts, collections of texts, individual words and phrases, and, in some cases, verses contained in hymns.

While recent studies have not solved the problem of where the hymns were composed, some negative conclusions have been reached. For

---

<sup>25</sup>Gonda, Old Indian, 8. See also Renou's comments Vedic India, 3.

<sup>26</sup>Gonda, ibid., 91.

<sup>27</sup>L. Renou, Études védiques et pāṇinéennes, (Paris, 1955), II, 1ff. The division is: Books 2-7; 8.1-66, 67-103; 9; 1; 10.1-60, 61-84, 85-191, (series hereafter cited EVP).



example, Gonda comments that "it appears that no evidence whatever can be produced in favour of the supposition that certain parts of the Rgveda were composed in Iran or in the Indo-Iranian borderland."<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the conclusion that the texts show evidence of cognate dialects and different streams of migrants further complicates the picture. The main import of this diversity is to engender the realization "that in the Rgvedic period there existed, in the North-West of India, several closely related dialects one of which was the basic dialect of the oldest corpus, another being basically...the ancestor of Classical Sanskrit."<sup>29</sup> This forces one into a state of partial isolation both chronologically and, as has already been noted, textually in the case of both comparative Indo-European material and the later Indian tradition.

Automatically included in a discussion of "where" is, by the nature of the available data, "who". The literature of the Rgveda is highly traditional (passed down orally by generations of hereditary priest-bards)<sup>30</sup> and some elements may have been in use during the period of Indo-European unity.<sup>31</sup> However, the language itself is somewhat artificial, reflecting neither an ancient tongue nor the language spoken at the fixation of the texts.<sup>32</sup> Thus one may agree

---

<sup>28</sup> Gonda, ibid., 22.

<sup>29</sup> ibid., 18.

<sup>30</sup> On the nature of such transmission see A.B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (New York, 1965), 4ff. On the Rgveda see Renou, Vedic India, 4f.

<sup>31</sup> The supposition of Indo-Iranian unity, at least, is strongly supported by the Soma-Haoma identification as Amanita muscaria (see below).

<sup>32</sup> On these points see Gonda ibid., 14ff.

with Gonda that the language reflects a special milieu of Aryan society to which the ṛsis belong.

The "why" of the collecting of hymns into the Rgvedic corpus is too complex to be examined in the thesis. Such a question requires erudite unravelling.<sup>33</sup> In any case, the purpose of this thesis is not to examine an unedited collection reflecting<sup>34</sup> to some degree the purposes of the compilers, but rather to follow, after isolating, one theme through the corpus. Instead of commenting at length upon the purpose of the present text, my intention is only to comment on the religious significance of one theme appearing throughout the text, answering the "why" in a small way that may or may not be capable of extension into a general theory on the collection of the corpus.

One may draw upon these observations for insights into my own perspective on the text. The controversy over the setting of the Rgveda is ongoing but the weight of scholarly opinion is inclining away from the previously dominant view of a secularized literary context for composition of the hymns. Further, most scholars have come to realize that several contexts reflecting shifting cultic and theological tendencies are present within the hymns of the Rgveda. These tendencies manifested themselves over a considerable period of time. One may also presuppose that while the hymns were authored by ṛsis over a

---

<sup>33</sup> See Renou, Destiny, passim.

<sup>34</sup> The very nature of the text determines the principles of internal criticism and clearly demonstrates the reflected nature of the text. Kuiper's New Year Festival thesis is one interpretation as to why the collection is in its present form.

period of time, the text was collected and fixed by the tradition for a liturgical purpose that did not necessarily accurately reflect the concerns of the composers of all of the individual hymns. This conclusion is but the starting point for textual examination of the hymns.

### An Overview of Recent Research

To undertake an examination and interpretation of a theme within the Rgveda requires textual ability, hermeneutical acumen and, above all, a certain sense of adventure. There are two reasons for this attitude. The nature of the material is more complex than has ever before been realized in the discipline of the academic study of religion, requiring a knowledge of the most recent achievements in textual interpretation in order to ascertain its meaning. The proper utilization of current exegetical techniques can lead to a new awareness of Vedic man's thought-world. Thus any venturing into the text will be more than amply rewarded. Moreover, the present state of activity on the Rgveda shows a transition from the presuppositions of one generation on the nature of religion itself to the presuppositions of a new generation. This movement is three-fold: 1. there is a movement away from the quest for the "origin" of religious experience,<sup>35</sup> 2. there is a deeper understanding that the text contains several layers of religious thought,<sup>36</sup> 3. there is an appreciation of the subjectivity of the

---

<sup>35</sup> See the historical sketches in M. Eliade, The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion (Chicago, 1969).

<sup>36</sup> Techniques such as those utilized by Old Testament form criticism, to be discussed below, may be used in an examination of the Rgveda.



interpreter intruding in the analysis of a text.<sup>37</sup> The growing awareness of the complexity of interpretation allows a more cogent and, hopefully, accurate consideration of religious themes in the Rgveda.

One example of this growing awareness of complexity is the continuing debate over the place of the Rgvedic hymns within the larger framework of the Indian Religious Tradition. Renou sees a complete shifting away from the religious milieu of the Vedas in the later tradition.<sup>38</sup> He maintains that "religious terminology is almost completely transformed between the Veda and the Epic or the Puranas...."<sup>39</sup> He also contends that Rgvedic citations in the Brāhmanas and Sūtras are removed from their Rgvedic context and utilized to amplify Brāhmanic concerns. Gonda, on the other hand, sees a thematic continuation within the Indian Religious Tradition.<sup>40</sup> This situation requires a balanced, rather than a polemical, resolution. The Rgveda is manifestly dissimilar in many respects from what most of us would call "Hinduism" yet there are several themes in the Rgveda that continue to be important in the

---

<sup>37</sup> The awareness of the intruding of one's own presuppositions and the impossibility of approaching a problem tabula rasa enables the exegete to come to grips with some of the methodological problems involved and forces the exegete to continually reflect on the applicability of such intrusions.

<sup>38</sup> See Renou, Destiny; Vedic India 9f., 94; "Reserche sur le rituel Vedique: La place du Rig-Veda dans l'Ordannance du Culte", Journal Asiatique 250 (1962), 161-184.

<sup>39</sup> Renou, RAI, 47.

<sup>40</sup> See J. Gonda, Change and Continuity in Indian Religion (The Hague, 1965), passim. He holds, for example, that māyā is an exception to Renou's rule (165n9), (hereafter cited Gonda, Change).

ongoing Religious Tradition.

A more fundamental question for the present examination is the determination of the character of Indra. Within the Rgvedic corpus of 1017 hymns Indra is one of the most important deities and is invoked in about one-quarter of the hymns. Furthermore, Indra drinks sóma more than any other god. Kuiper considers the battle between Indra and vrtra to be the central mythic exploit of the Rgvedic hymns. Each of these three points present separate yet intertwined problems. Indra as a deity is a many-sided figure and any attempt to picture him completely goes far beyond the scope of the present examination.<sup>41</sup> What is being undertaken here is a narrowed examination of the great deed of Indra -- his battle against Vrtra and some of its religious ramifications. The identification of that which Indra drinks (sóma) as a hallucinogen has only recently been postulated and the hypothesis that it is a hallucinogenic mushroom must lead to a revision of the interpretation of the cultus that employed sóma, and what is meant by stating that Indra is the drinker of sóma par excellence.

At this point some general observations about Vedic scholarship are apposite. There still remains to be written the definitive work

---

<sup>41</sup>I am not in agreement with those who consider only a holistic picture to be adequate. See, for example, H. Lommel, Der Arische Kriegsgott (Frankfurt am Main, 1939), 7. Furthermore, Thieme criticizes Lommel for ignoring "certain features of his as being 'not characteristic' since they contradict his alleged unity ....These are precisely the traits he shares with Varṇa....". P. Thieme, "The 'Aryan' Gods of the Mitanni Treaties", JAOS, 80 (1960), 313, (hereafter cited Thieme, "Aryan Gods").

on the 'history of the history of Vedic interpretations'.<sup>42</sup> However, some generally familiar over-simplifications can be made without doing violence to what actually occurred. It is clear that one of the greatest obstacles preventing a clear understanding of Rgvedic material is the misuse of the materials which reflect the cultic concerns of Vedic man. The Rgveda was first brought to the West by scholars and travellers interested in the language alone. They were fascinated by the correspondences between Greek, Latin and Sanskrit. As a result various theories of language were founded on the basis of these correspondences. This led to the founding of the discipline of comparative philology. The science of comparative mythology, as developed by such as the Brothers Grimm, also saw many of the stories as being analogous to German folk tales. This roughly corresponded with the development of Chairs in Comparative Religion in European universities. In terms of cultural or intellectual history, some of the more 'theological' or 'philosophical' parts of the Rgveda were taken out of context to support the pantheistic tendencies of post-Enlightenment German philosophy. Finally in accordance with the growth of Romanticism, some individuals were impressed by the beauty of the language and treated the Rgveda as a collection of poetry expressing the wonders of nature in mythological language. Thus the dangers inherent in studying the Rgveda extend from being slowly devoured through detailed

---

<sup>42</sup>Renou, Les maîtres de la philologie védique (Paris, 1928), needs updating and reworking. Gonda, Les Religions de l'Inde (Paris, 1962) I, 10ff. presents a thumbnail sketch extending past 1930. Gonda, Old Indian, deals with the history as far as linguistics is concerned. Renou, Destiny, presents the history within the Indian Tradition.



over-specialized labours to being swept into the vortex of imprecisely defined comparative studies. The problem facing the exegete is the proper utilization of a methodological framework that enables a steering between Scylla and Charybdis.

One further indicator that suggests caution in interpreting the data is provided by Gonda. He is very aware that Vedic Sanskrit does not absolutely distinguish between the personal and the impersonal connotations of words. This becomes crucial because in attempting to exegete the religious documents of another culture, one must be aware of the underlying nuances and connotations of various key terms (here, most certainly vrtra). Gonda has consistently noted cases where a definite power is sometimes conceived as an impersonal potency and sometimes as a divine person.

The ancient Indian power-substances or Daseinmächte were no 'ideas' or 'concepts' in the modern sense of these terms. They were often regarded as represented by objects or persons, or rather: the relative terms do not only signify more or less definite powers, but also the persons or objects endowed with it. That the same term describes both an object, person, or phenomenon and the quality possessed by it or attending it, is far from being rare.<sup>43</sup>

Such is the case with vrtra: there are instances where 'power of obstruction' lie uppermost, places where āhi (the demon Vrtra who

---

<sup>43</sup>J. Gonda, Four Studies in the Language of the Veda ('S-Gravenhage, 1959), 140. He employs the term "daseinmächte" borrowed from H. von Glasenapp, Entwicklungsstufen des indischen Denkens (Halle, 1940), 9ff.

obstructs the waters) is meant, and places where it is virtually impossible to separate the abstract or personal connotations. Furthermore, since the thought-world of Vedic man does not readily separate these two categories (as Gonda has noted), any separation for interpretative purposes is more of a hindrance than a help to a clear understanding of what is being expressed. Both aspects may be simultaneously present. Thus, the hermeneutical task is to balance precariously these considerations in order to exegete the verses.

Before outlining my own procedure, some comments on the procedures utilized by others is necessary in order to make my own position clear. I intend to outline the presuppositions of Hillebrandt and "Luders because there is much to be learned from an analysis of their approaches, even though severe criticisms of their resulting work can be made. Further, I intend to examine the presuppositions of Kuiper because it is to him that I owe the greatest debt in terms of the interpretations of the conflict, even though I am frequently critical of his tendency to over-extend his approach. Thus I must examine both my agreements and disagreements with his procedures. My debt to Renou, as was noted earlier, stems from his determination to stay within the confines of the Rgveda rather than bring in the later tradition, a position Kuiper is uncomfortable with.

Hillebrandt wishes to focus on the Vedic texts, using philological exegesis to make the texts intelligible because others have been too



greatly influenced by the Indian commentaries.<sup>44</sup> This orientation is also favoured by Renou. However, Hillebrandt also advocates the usage of the analogies and warnings supplied by ethnographic studies, which Renou (as will be developed below) sees as both misleading and irrelevant. Hillebrandt attempts to separate out the various strands in order to inquire after the oldest characteristics of the various gods.<sup>45</sup> He regards the Rgveda as a stage in the ongoing stream of mythological development, which is undoubtedly the case. However, because he considers the ritual texts to reflect the cultus at the time of the collection (which is correct in itself) he believes that these ritual texts contain the purest mythological tradition.<sup>46</sup> His attempts to trace the historical development of Vedic mythology depend on a naturalistic interpretation (development of an original winter-myth due to migration from north to south) and also on the conviction that Vedic mythology is more of a throwing together of diverse elements than a conscious

---

<sup>44</sup>It should be remembered that both Hillebrandt and Oldenberg are attacking the position held by Geldner and Pischel who see a strong connection between Vedic civilization and the epic and classical periods. They, in their turn, were attacking the usage of comparative studies by earlier scholars. See, for a brief summary, Gonda, Les Religions de l'Inde, I, 9-15.

<sup>45</sup>The problem of isolating the "oldest" depends for its resolution on Hillebrandt's usage of an antiquated naturalism.

<sup>46</sup>Renou argues cogently against this position (see below). Kuiper, in contradistinction to Renou, depends on the ritual texts.

systematization.<sup>47</sup>

"Luders considers the search for origins to be futile simply because such a procedure indicates that one is asking the wrong question of the text. Thus naturalistic interpretations of Rgvedic religion and the assumption of "primitive" religion in the Veda are also incorrect. One should rather ask what these gods mean for Vedic man.

"Luders' work on the Vrtra-conflict is difficult to interpret because the book, Varuna, was put together posthumously and consists of only partially-complete notes in a state of revision. For example, Kuiper considers that Luders was on the verge of completely revising his view on the Vala myth (with consequent re-evaluation of some aspects of the Vrtra myth).<sup>48</sup> In his writing, Luders observes that Indra is not the rain-god in the Rgveda nor is his weapon (the vajra) the lightning-bolt. He considers the conflict to be a Vedic myth of creation whereby the heavens and earth are ordered and fire, the sun, and soma appear. While agreeing that questions of meaning must be uppermost in any coherent exegesis of the Rgvedic text I remain unconvinced<sup>49</sup> that a

---

<sup>47</sup> A more balanced view is necessary. While diverse elements are incorporated into the Rgveda, the final redaction may have been around a conscious systematization (Kuiper's New Year hypothesis is one possibility). While Hillebrandt is probably reacting against Bergaigne's over-simplification, Renou comments that "...it is impossible to establish a history of the gods from this material, obscured as it is by the constant repetition of the same phrases in different contexts. We are really dealing not so much with individual gods as with mythological contexts...." Renou, (RAI, 12). See also the discussion of Renou below.

<sup>48</sup> F.B.J. Kuiper, "The Heavenly Bucket" India Maior (Leiden, 1972), 144f, (hereafter cited Kuiper, "Heavenly Bucket").

<sup>49</sup> See Chapter Four for a more detailed examination of the theme of creation in relation to the Indra-Vrtra conflict.

well-developed creation myth utilizing the Indra-Vrtra (vrtra) conflict is present in the earlier strata of the Rgveda. A reconsideration of the purposes for the final redaction of the Rgveda combined with the hypothesis that soma is Amanita muscaria necessitates a re-evaluation of many texts cited by Luders to support his view.

While Kuiper acknowledges the essential correctness of Luders' position, i.e., the Vrtra conflict is a Vedic myth of creation, he develops the assumption by moving away from the textual occurrences of the conflict by attempting to place the conflict in a social setting. This hypothesis is the most stimulating contribution made by Kuiper to the interpretation-history of the Vedic conflict. For him, the recital at the New Year's festival follows the typological pattern of the Babylonian akitu festival.<sup>50</sup> However, this may be an over-simplification of the problem. F.M. Cross<sup>51</sup> in a recent work on Israelite religion has pointed out the barrenness of either a strict myth and ritual approach or a strict history of redemption

---

<sup>50</sup> While Kuiper nowhere (to my knowledge) acknowledge his indebtedness to Ancient Near Eastern studies, his dependence on the myth and ritual pattern adopted by some scholars is incontrovertible. For a discussion of the material see, for example, H.F. Hahn The Old Testament in Modern Research (Philadelphia, 1966), 78-82, 116f. The myth and ritual pattern as expounded by, among others, S.H. Hooke, was specifically applied to the Hebrew king through an analysis of psalms by, among others, S. Mowinckel and A.R. Johnson. I intend to discuss the utilization of studies on the Psalms for methodological insights in dealing with Rgvedic material below.

<sup>51</sup> F.M. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (Cambridge, 1973), especially 79-90 for a discussion of the two schools.



approach (i.e., concentration on either the ideology of the royal cultus in the era of the monarchy or in the earlier cultus of the league for understanding Hebrew religion). These approaches are not mutually exclusive. The result of this line of reasoning is the reconsideration of the typology of the divine warrior, which becomes apposite in the analysis of Indra's role and significance in Vedic religion. (One must keep in mind, though, that Cross is speaking to a very specific situation.) Cross concludes that:

the god as "divine warrior" belongs to two types stemming from parallel but distinct *Sitze im Leben*. One finds its place in the great cosmogonic myth in which the storm god, overcoming the powers of chaos..., usually in individual combat, establishes kingship and with it the order of heaven and earth. The other type has its setting in the patriarchal society, as "god of the father", or especially as god of a league. Here the fundamental institution is "holy warfare", in defense of a clan or league, or in the semi-nomadic peoples who, to survive or flourish, must enter and secure new domains in wars led by their tutelary deity. To be sure, these two types do not remain in ideal form, clean and distinct, but tend to become mixed. The war god who establishes the order of the cosmos also establishes the political-historical order thereby. Kingship in heaven and earth belongs to the "orders of creation". In the same way, historical wars of a league may be given cosmic-universal significance, and the god of the league given the attributes of the storm god, at least in his attack on the enemy.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> ibid., 58-59. Cross also points out another typology which could be useful in discussing Indra's battles. He draws a distinction between cosmogonic myths and myths of theogony (the distinction between creation myths wedded to the theology of the divine king and battles to establish headship in the family of the gods). See 40ff.

The Rgveda appears to reflect, as Chapter Four demonstrates, the transition between two orientations to Indra as Divine Warrior which suggest similarities with Cross' distinctions in his work on the Divine Warrior in the Ancient Near East. Therefore, the utmost caution is required in the hermeneutical task.<sup>53</sup> Kuiper's analysis suffers from being too one-sided, rather than from incorrect assumptions.

After having postulated a possible Sitz im Leben where the cultic ingestion of sóma is of utmost importance and after having suggested several times the importance of the recognition that sóma is a hallucinogen, it is now apposite to enter into a more detailed discussion of sóma. I intend to examine the objections brought by Brough and Kuiper against Wasson's hypothesis. While these well pondered objections raise several relevant questions, it is my contention that these objections are not damaging to Wasson's identification. Then some observations on the particular nature of Amanita muscaria as a hallucinogen will be outlined. It is only after such an analysis that my suggestion that sóma is the hermeneutical key for understanding some hymns of the Rgveda can be fully appreciated.

For the last several years a raging controversy has surrounded attempts to discover the actual identity of Soma. These attempts have generally ranged from intoxicants to hemp to rhubarb.<sup>53a</sup> These

---

<sup>53</sup>The willingness to go beyond the text to an attempted determination of cultic setting is a major point developed by Kuiper. Renou steadfastly refuses to move beyond the text itself. I find myself more in agreement with Kuiper's procedure than with Renou's reluctance on this methodological issue.

<sup>53a</sup>See the detailed discussion by W.D. O'Flaherty in Wasson, Soma.

designations give a differing flavour to hymns such as 10,119<sup>54</sup> according to which identification of Soma you subscribe to -- Indra as drunkard, Indra as pothead, Indra as rhubarb freak.

Recently a new solution was postulated by Gordon Wasson,<sup>55</sup> who claimed that Soma was derived from a hallucinogenic mushroom. Wasson was the first to seriously postulate the sacred mushroom because he was not encumbered by Western cultural reactions. First, most Western cultures feel more at home with green plants than with white fungi. A second factor is also cultural, as the effective part of

---

<sup>54</sup>From A.L. Basham, The Wonder That Was India (New York, 1959), 234:

"Like wild winds  
the draughts have raised me up. Have I been drinking Soma?

"The draughts have borne me up,  
as swift steeds a chariot. Have I . . . ?

"Frenzy has come upon me,  
as a cow to her dear calf. Have I . . . ?

"As a carpenter bends the seat of a chariot  
I bend this frenzy round my heart. Have I . . . ?

"Not even as a mote in my eye  
do the five tribes count with me. Have I . . . ?

"The heavens above  
do not equal one half of me. Have I . . . ?

"In my glory I have passed beyond the sky  
and the great earth. Have I . . . ?

"I will pick up the earth,  
and put it here or put it there. Have I . . . ?

<sup>55</sup>Wasson, Soma. For a judicious summary of reactions occasioned by the book see H. Smith, "Wasson's Soma", Journal of the American Academy of Religion XL (1972), 480-499.



the crushed plant -- the juice -- can be taken after being filtered by the human body, i.e., drunk mixed with urine.<sup>56</sup> Siberian shamans actually do this and there are some possible references to that in the Rgveda.<sup>57</sup> The two reactions, depending on our own emotional responses, are cultural in nature. These should and must be overcome in trying to ascertain soma's identity.

The argument against the identification of soma as a hallucinogen put forward by Brough, although stated in language that sometimes borders on the polemical, was, at first reading, convincing. This argument is two-pronged, both parts of which require a fundamental decision on the nature of the Rgveda. First, Brough, who is opposed

---

<sup>56</sup> See D. Ingalls, "Remarks on Mr. Wasson's Soma", JAOS, 91 (1971) 188-191. He calls into question the 'third-filter' theory on the grounds that there is no hard evidence of ritual urination by the priests. This is so, but there is definitely a homology being set up between Indra drinking Soma and then releasing it and the ingestors of Soma. The point to be raised is whether or not, given the nature of the texts, explicit references to ritual urination by the priests have to be present. J. Brough, "Soma and Amanita muscaria", Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, XXXIV (1971), 331-362, also comments on the "three filters". He contends that in the two passages used by Wasson (9.63.7; 9.70.10) to support the theory the Sanskrit will not allow such an interpretation (p. 357f.). Both of his arguments, however, depend on one's initial orientation to the problem of Soma. What Brough demonstrates is that these two references are neutral in the decision-making process.

<sup>57</sup> Brough (p. 338f.) takes 7.26.1 ("Soma unpressed has never intoxicated Indra, nor the pressed juices unaccompanied by sacred hymns") as being decisive in any comparison with Siberian ingestion. However, he does not consider the relative date of the reference which could demonstrate priestly attempts to control the taking of soma by appropriating in and overseeing its ingestion through ritual means. The second half of the reference could either refer to the same thing or could connect the chanting as a guiding control in the ingestion of a hallucinogen. Thus, this verse is by no means as decisive as Brough contends.

to Wasson's solution, contends that extraneous material cannot be used in any way to help determine the identity of soma.<sup>58</sup> Such a procedure would be termed inadequate in, for example, serious Biblical criticism because no event, religious or otherwise, occurs in a cultural vacuum.<sup>58a</sup> The second argument is Brough's contention that soma is used to incite and uphold the warrior in battle, and is thus a stimulant. There are two ways of answering this objection. The first is to state, as Wasson, "that Brough does not know an hallucinogen when he describes one."<sup>59</sup> The second deals with the nature of the text itself and the hermeneutical presuppositions one brings to it.<sup>60</sup> Brough appears to interpret the hymns as reflecting tribal (i.e., historical) battles in most cases. Smith comments that Wasson "could appropriately have gone on to ask if the

---

<sup>58</sup> ibid., 332f.

<sup>58a</sup> The available date, on early Vedic culture is nowhere near as abundant as comparable Biblical data. There is enough to give validity to the point made.

<sup>59</sup> Smith, ibid., 492, quoting Wasson's rejoinder to Brough.

<sup>60</sup> In addition to what immediately follows, Brough states two other presuppositions on the nature of the text. First, he contends that a direct continuation between the Rgveda and later texts is likely. He comments that "these later texts nevertheless continue a direct tradition from the Rgveda which can be seen to reflect an earlier stage in the development of the ritual, doubtless of a less rigidly formalized and probably less elaborate nature." (p. 331). This view is counter to Renou's whose view on the nature of the relationship between the Rgveda and later texts will be developed below. In a discussion on the name of the plant Brough considers the Veda to be a secret written text guarded by priests (p. 336). This runs counter to the long oral transmission lying behind the text and is correct only in terms of the final form of the text. See on this A.B. Lord, The Singer of Tales, especially 280 n 9.



battles the poets had in mind were not primarily cosmic -- against the ever-threatening forces of chaos and evil....Against mythic forces stimulants would have limited utility, whereas the metaphysical triumph of righteousness is a common psychedelic assurance."<sup>61</sup>

While I am not thoroughly convinced of the applicability of the language Smith uses to describe the experience, on point can be made vis-a-vis the present thesis. One of the meanings of vrtrahan is "he who overcomes resistance". This meaning can be used in the attempt to communicate the visioning experience contained in the Rgvedic material which seems analogous to the 'common psychedelic assurance'.

Kuiper,<sup>62</sup> who remains non-committal on the problem of identifying soma, also has stated his views on the nature of the text. He places too great a reliance on the Brāhmanas and the Sūtra literature as aids in interpreting the Rgveda.<sup>63</sup> This stance agrees with his

---

<sup>61</sup>Smith, ibid., 492 n 8. I do not intend to enter into a complete and detailed discussion of either the pharmacology of Amanita muscaria or the physiological implications of ingestion. See below, p. 35f. for some general comments.

<sup>62</sup>Kuiper, in a review of Wasson's Soma, IJJ, XII (1970), 279-285.

<sup>63</sup>As does Brough, see above. See Wasson's rejoinder to Kuiper, "Soma: Comments Inspired by Professor Kuiper's Review", IJJ, XII (1970), 286-298. He quotes (p. 296) Rgveda 10.85.3: "One thinks one drinks Soma because a plant is crushed. The Soma that the Brahmanas know -- that no one drinks." This verse is used to deny most interpretative data from later texts as being significant for the Rgvedic problems of identifying soma.



understanding of the Rgveda as part of a New Year ceremony, which he feels implies an organized priesthood in a monarchical society. However, his comments on mythic versus botanical interpretations of some phrases are very insightful<sup>64</sup> and remind one of the necessity to cognize one's own presuppositions on the nature of the material and to utilize caution in exegeting Rgvedic phrases.<sup>65</sup> Of particular interest are the differing interpretations of 9.71.2: "Aggressive as a killer of peoples he advances, bellowing with power. He sloughs off the Asurian colour that is his. He abandons his envelope, goes to the rendez-vous with the Father. With what floats he makes continually his vesture-of-grand-occasion." (Kuiper's rendering, 280f.) Wasson (p. 40) considers this to be a botanical description of the plant bursting through the ground and takes várna as denoting colour. Kuiper considers the word to denote "party" although he does note the "group-character" might be more appropriate (p. 282n2). While Smith (p. 495) tries to mediate the two views, I do not think he is successful.<sup>65a</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup>Kuiper, ibid., 281ff.

<sup>65</sup>Of a similar nature are Brough's remarks on "udder". "When the soma-juice is pressed out of the plant, the verb 'to milk' is a natural metaphor, whence 'udder' follows quite naturally. There is no need to invoke the shape of a mushroom to explain such metaphorical usage". (p. 356). See below, Chapter 4, where a discussion of "udder" takes on a somewhat different interpretation. Brough agrees with Kuiper on the complexity of separating out references and comments that "often, details of the ritual acts, the divine Soma, and the physically present soma-juice so interact in the minds of the priests that an attempt to analyse these aspects could only distort the hieratic purport of the poets." (p. 335f.)

<sup>65a</sup>Sanskrit of 9.71.2  
 prá kṛṣṭihéva sūśá eti róruvad asuryāṃ vārṇaṃ ní riṇīte asya tám /  
 jáhāti vāvriṃ pitúr eti niṣkṛtāṃ upaprútaṃ kṛṇute nirṇijam tānā //

Kuiper's suggestions are more intelligible in this context. However, a third interpretation is quite possible. Vṛtra is once called an envelope<sup>66</sup> and an intelligible interpretation of the verse can be made by deciding that sóma bursts through the resistance that is Vṛtra, thus sloughing off his asuric character.<sup>67</sup>

Since the ingestion of sóma is so important to an understanding of the Rgvedic orientation to what is "real"; some comments on the pharmacology of Amanita muscaria are necessary. The chief chemical contained in the mushroom is muscimol and not muscarine.<sup>68</sup> The former chemical "...makes a toxic psychosis with confusions, dysarthria, disturbance of visual perception, illusions of colour vision, myoclonia, disorientation in situation and time, weariness, fatigue and sleep. Concentration tests show an improved performance with smaller doses (5 mg), but diminished performances and learning with an increased number of errors with higher doses (10-15 mg)."<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the chemical effects of the drug do cause visioning-experiences.

<sup>66</sup>Rgveda 5.32.8

<sup>67</sup>This interpretation is strengthened by the waters being called dāsapatnī while under the control of Vṛtra. See below, Chapter 4, p. 166f.

<sup>68</sup>This was only realized by John Brough when it was too late to change some of the remarks in his review.

<sup>69</sup>P.G. Waser, "The Pharmacology of Amanita Muscaria" in D.H. Efron (ed.) Ethnopharmacologic Search for Psychoactive Drugs (Washington, 1967), 435. Waser continues by noting that "...with the very low concentration of muscarine in the orally ingested mushroom, it is impossible that this alkaloid produces the psychomimetic symptoms observed in amanita intoxication.", 436.

Although intense hallucinations as with LSD were missing with doses of 10-15 mg, there resulted considerable disturbance of psychic functions, such as orientation in situation and time, visual perception, process of thinking, speech and some new psychic phenomena of illusions and perseveration of optical pictures (echo pictures).<sup>70</sup>

This data leads to a discussion of the effects of the chemical on the individual as he attempts to communicate his experience. There appears to be three stages of intoxication.<sup>71</sup> In the first stage the individual is pleasantly excited with a feeling of both increasing agility and strength. There is also spontaneous singing and dancing. The second stage includes the hearing of strange noises bidding incongruous actions and macropsia (at a minimum),<sup>72</sup> although the individual is still aware of his surroundings.

The descriptions of the third stage, which are scattered throughout Wasson's book, are recorded from a different perspective than are those of the first two stages. The third stage is documented by the reports of those who underwent the experience and are therefore of a subjective nature. Unconscious activity and then deep sleep are phenomena observable by the onlooker. In the third stage the individual at first is unconscious of his surroundings but active (he stumbles,

---

<sup>70</sup> ibid.

<sup>71</sup> The following is extracted from several of the documents collected by Wasson and do not differ fundamentally from his remarks in "Fly Agaric and Man" in Efron, ibid., 405-414, especially 412.

<sup>72</sup> See Waser's descriptions above.



raves, breaks objects). The agaric spirits<sup>73</sup> take him through various worlds and show him strange sights and peoples. These spirits, by telling the shaman what he wants to know, lead the seeker to the successful completion of the quest for a vision. Then follows a heavy slumber during which it is impossible to rouse the sleeper. The sleep provides the greatest enjoyment because of the "fantastic, beautiful, sensuous dreams". It is here that one sees visions under the guidance of the chanting companions. There is a great deal of suggestibility transferred from the companions to the ingestor of the mushrooms.

One method of appreciating the possible significance of the Amanita muscaria for Vedic man could be the examination of contemporary cultures that utilize hallucinogenic drugs for religious purposes.<sup>74</sup> There are two points to be remembered though. The first is that Wasson and his sources are observing the fly-agaric cult only in its dying phase.<sup>75</sup> This cultic situation cannot readily account for the cultic references in the Rgveda. The second is to remember that "the soporific and kinetic effects of the fly amanita are utterly unlike

---

<sup>73</sup>It is by eating the mushrooms that an individual creates helpers for himself. These spirits are man-like creatures (equal to the number of ingested mushrooms) who act as 'singing-leaders' for the prophesying shaman and tell him what he wants to know. See Wasson, Soma, 280ff. The reference is to the Yurak Samoyed culture.

<sup>74</sup>Kuiper recognizes the viability of such a procedure. While examining Uṣas he comments that "although this interpretation, based upon the evidence of the Vedic and Avestan texts, has to be judged on its own merits, a comparison with an archaic culture of our day may lend some support to it." F.B.J. Kuiper, "The Bliss of Aśa", IJJ 8 (1964), 252.

<sup>75</sup>Wasson, ibid., 208.

anything produced by the mushrooms of the genus *Psilocybe* of Mexico".<sup>76</sup>  
 Thus one cannot equate accounts from different cultures using different drugs in attempting to explicate the Rgvedic references.

The heuristic usage of Wasson's hypothesis that soma is Amanita muscaria does not diminish the number of complex problems still requiring scholarly attention. For example, some speculation on the structure of the soma cult should be undertaken. A preliminary structuring based on allusions in the Rgvedic texts is outlined in the conclusion of the thesis but the full detailing of the structure requires documentation that goes beyond the reasonable limits of this thesis. Wasson's hypothesis is applied, within the body of the thesis, specifically to an examination of Indra's combat against vrtra, which leads to an examination of the meaning and significance of the imagery, using his identification of soma as a means of clarifying some passages.

#### Interpretations of the Indra-Vrtra Conflict

Before entering directly into the conclusions some scholars have reached on the meaning and significance of Indra's central mythic deed, a short enumeration of some views on Indra himself should be undertaken.<sup>77</sup> It can readily be seen that these depend rather heavily on conclusions concerning Indra's deed. A textual touchstone for these

---

<sup>76</sup>Wasson, op. cit., 413.

<sup>77</sup>Following the general outlines of Gonda's treatment in Les Religions de l'Inde I, 67 ff.

conclusions would be 2.12. These interpretations fall into three general categories: a naive naturalism, Indra as a model for the hero-warrior, the symbolic interpretation of nature based on a naive naturalism.

The naturalistic interpretations depend heavily on Indra's releasing of water in the Vṛtra conflict. Thus, Indra is a god of spring-time sun melting the winter ice.<sup>78</sup> Here one must postulate a northern origin for the Rgvedic hymns. Indra is the force of spring, the return of warmth, the overcomer of cold, death and barrenness. Using comparative Indo-European mythology, Indra may also be interpreted as a thunder-god,<sup>79</sup> much along the same lines as Zeus. With the thunderbolt as his weapon and the thunder his voice, Indra is the bringer of the rains. The verses cited in support of this theory speak about a storm, rather than a monsoon, indicating the composing of the hymns outside of India. Focussing on the rain-bringing aspect, Indra may be interpreted as a god of rain, and by implication fertility.<sup>80</sup> This theory combines the revolving seasons of nature and life of man. Man and woman are part of the cycle of nature so the rain that Indra brings is also seen as semen which makes the whole earth (which has homologies with the female cycle)

---

<sup>78</sup>Hillebrandt, Vedische Mythologie I, 142-189.

<sup>79</sup>See the discussion of this position in Renou, Les maîtres de la philologie védique.

<sup>80</sup>For Hopkins Indra began as a fertility god, later became a warrior god, and finally a supreme god. Meyer emphasizes the fertility aspect interpreting Indra as a phallic god who brings fecundity and whose action is symbolised as the spring-time sun.



reproduce to its fullest.<sup>81</sup> By referring to some nuances of the later tradition Indra was interpreted as the moon.<sup>82</sup> A connection was made between the waxing and waning of the moon as a reflection of battles against an engulfing adversary and Indra's central deed. Since soma was identified as the moon in the later tradition, part of the hypothesis concerns the problem of why the original identification was dropped and soma came to designate the moon.

The connection between Indra and conflict leads to several interpretations of Indra as a hero and/or warrior. Indra may be seen as a conqueror, a personification of part of the society.<sup>83</sup> This deals with the problem of the god of the warrior class, assuming that each class in the society has a particular god. Indra does what the warrior does; therefore, Indra is the god of the warrior. This particular stance leads in two directions. The first direction is the analysis of the warrior aspect of Indra to demonstrate that the actions of Indra are a divine model on which all sacred acts (and war is a sacred act) depend.<sup>84</sup> Another direction is to see Indra as a conqueror of demons who is modelled on the actions of the human warrior.<sup>85</sup> As

---

<sup>81</sup> See M. Eliade Patterns in Comparative Religion (Cleveland, 1963), especially 289-366.

<sup>82</sup> See Gonda, Les Religions de l'Inde I, 68 and especially "Soma, Amṛta and the Moon" Change for the weakness of this position.

<sup>83</sup> See G. Dumézil, The Destiny of the Warrior (Chicago, 1970), especially xff., (hereafter cited Dumézil, DW).

<sup>84</sup> For example, Lommel, Der Arische Kriegsgotte.

<sup>85</sup> For example, Dandekar, "Vṛtrahā Indra" Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute 31 (1950), 1-55. He also lists other views on Indra. Dandekar sees Indra as originally being a national war-hero.

the warrior fights battles against enemies, so must the gods fight battles against their enemies.

The third division is dependent on the interpretation of the data in terms of nineteenth-century views of religion. For example, Apte<sup>86</sup> considers Indra to be the mid-day sun which is then interpreted as symbolizing the blazing light of good opposed to the engulfing darkness of evil (i.e., Vrtra). Mythology is thus seen as an articulated attempt to come to grips with, and explain, the workings of natural phenomena such as stars, the sun, and the moon.

The interpretations of Indra's conflict with his chief opponent may be divided into two sections. The first is dependent on a naturalistic interpretation. The second takes cognizance of the creation motif apparent in some of the hymns and concentrates on cosmogonic/cosmologic aspects.

The naturalistic interpretations of the conflict rely heavily upon the motif of the releasing of waters. The Indra-Vrtra conflict has been interpreted as an original winter-myth.<sup>87</sup> Indra is the spring-time sun who melts the ice, releasing the waters that can make the cold, barren earth green again, restoring life to man and his world. A less tendentious naturalistic explanation (because it is not tied to an original winter-myth) is the interpretation that the conflict is a

---

<sup>86</sup>For example, V.M. Apte, in A.D. Pusalker (ed.), The Vedic Age (London, 1952), 370.

<sup>87</sup>Hillebrandt, Vedische Mythologie I, especially 142-187.

metaphor for the releasing of terrestrial streams from the bondage of snow-covered mountains.<sup>88</sup> Focussing on Indra's connection with the rain, the conflict may be seen as parallel to the releasing of rain.<sup>89</sup> This view pictures Indra as the thunder-god who pierces the cloud (i.e., Vrtra) with his thunderbolt, thereby releasing fertilizing rain. An extension of this view to include the symbolic connection between light and good allows an interpretation that portrays the conflict as a symbolic depiction of the daily triumph of light over darkness.<sup>90</sup>

The cosmological interpretation of the conflict is currently the most popular. It was first clearly articulated by Lüders.<sup>91</sup> The myth of Indra-Vrtra is symbolic of the creation of order from chaos, on the lines of the Mesopotamian myth of Tiamat and Marduk. The creator-god overcomes the force of chaos, splits it open, and from the wounds flow life-giving cosmos-ordering waters. Placing great reliance on this general structure, though not without reservations, Kuiper<sup>92</sup> attempts to place the story within a cultic setting. For him the ritual

---

<sup>88</sup> See note 79 above.

<sup>89</sup> A.A. Macdonnel, The Vedic Mythology (Varanasi, 1963, rep.), 58ff., (hereafter cited Macdonnel, Vedic Mythology).

<sup>90</sup> "Max Muller, Contributions to the Science of Mythology (London, 1897), I, 141f.

<sup>91</sup> Lüders, Varuna I, 183-196. Note that he used neither the work of Lommel nor that of Benveniste and Renou. Note that this interpretation is accepted by Gonda (for example, J. Gonda, Aspects of Early Visnuism (Delhi, 1969), 30, (hereafter cited Gonda, Aspects)).

<sup>92</sup> Kuiper, "Cosmogony and Conception", "Verbal Contest", etc. He has reservations about the theory of the celestial ocean. He further considers Vala as the primordial Hill. See "Heavenly Bucket", 144.



occurs during the New Year festival and the myth symbolizes the sacred re-creation of the cosmos every year, again along Mesopotamian lines. Indeed the supporters of the cosmological theory depend heavily on the presuppositions and conclusions of comparative mythology for their analyses.

The above interpretations, whatever the level of their validity, do not take into account the possibility that if soma is a hallucinogenic drug, then the central cultic concerns of the Rgveda take on a rather special orientation. The Indra-Vrtra conflict is one theme that expresses the cultic concerns of the text. From the postulation of the ingestion of a chemical of a hallucinogenic nature as part of the cult it follows that the conflict could, in some instances at least, be attempting to express both the vision brought about by the effects of such a chemical on the individual and the necessity to keep the chemical under the careful control of those who would not use it to the disadvantage of the suppliant and his allies.

One comment that has arisen in the last few years, although the question has been gradually fading, is the determination whether or not the effects of psychedelic drugs can be construed as 'religious experience'. As Smith has pointed out<sup>93</sup> the question revolves around the examiner's own prejudices on the one hand, and, on the other hand,

---

<sup>93</sup> H. Smith, "Do Drugs have Religious Import?" The Journal of Philosophy LXI (1964), 517-530.

the more central question of the relationship of 'religion' to 'religious experience'. The setting of the ingestion of chemicals within the context of religious faith provides religious meaning. This is the situation as portrayed within the Rgvedic hymns. How else can one interpret 8.48.3:

We have drunk the Soma, we have become  
immortal, we have arrived at the light,  
we have found the gods. What now can  
the enemy do to harm us, and what  
malice can mortals entertain...? <sup>94</sup>

I conclude, therefore, that in discussing the taking of soma, we are dealing with a religious ceremony that includes the taking of a hallucinogen in order to appropriate visions. The taker 'sees' (literally) <sup>95</sup> the cosmic battle of gods and demons and upholds the claims of the gods. This view of soma enables one to come to a clearer understanding of some of the nuances that the Indra-Vrtra conflict is trying to communicate.

Returning to the subject-matter of the Rgveda, some preliminary comments on how the hallucinogenic experience relates to the examination of Indra as Vrtrahan and the Indra-Vrtra conflict seem apposite. The psychedelic experience contains both psychological and social factors. <sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>94</sup>H. Smith, op. cit., 488.

<sup>95</sup>J. Gonda, The Vision of the Vedic Poets (The Hague, 1963), passim, (hereafter cited Gonda, Vision).

<sup>96</sup>See H. Munn, "The Mushrooms of Language" in M. J. Harner (ed.) Hallucinogens and Shamanism (London, 1973), 86-122.

The one who overcomes obstacles may be interpreted as the one who batters his way through egoity to transcend ordinary consciousness in order to reach a different state of consciousness. Similarly the battle between Indra and vrtra can be seen as an attempt to communicate that experience in figurative language. In terms of social competition <sup>97</sup> (which is reflected in the Rgveda), one who is not an ally can wreak havoc and harm if he has ingested soma in order to gain a religious vision which can be used contrary to the wishes and desires of another. It is my contention that both psychological and sociological situations are present within some hymns of the Rgveda. Further, an examination of 8.89 (for example) shows a regularization of the Indra-Vrtra theme within a ritualistic priestly setting. It is not my contention that these frames of reference exhaust the theme of the Indra-Vrtra conflict as presented in the Rgveda. However, the identification of soma allows for reflection on the attempt to communicate facets of hallucinogenic religious experience. The concluding chapter will develop this more

---

<sup>97</sup> U. Schneider, Der Somaraub des Manu (Wiesbaden, 1971) presents a social conflict over Soma based on a detailed analysis of Rgveda 4.26, 27. He set up an opposition between the Adevas and the Aryans: the former are non-sacrificers who are not interested in using soma but are committed to preventing the Aryans from gaining access to the locations where soma grows. He contends that the Aryan's god of war, Indra, would be helpless without it. However D. M. Knipe, "The Heroic Theft: Myths from Rgveda IV and the Ancient Near East" History of Religions 6 (1967), 328-360, shows clearly that such a historicizing reductionism is not possible as a hermeneutical tool for understanding the Rgvedic citations. However this contribution is significant in two respects: 1) the utilization of Wasson's identification of soma, and 2) the positing of a conflict critical in terms of the acquisition of soma. While there may have been conflicts with non-users, the Indra-Vrtra typology does not fit well into this particular hypothesis, as is developed in Chapter 4.



fully.

My own procedure, which is elaborated immediately below, is greatly indebted to others who have examined texts both methodologically and exegetically. I have attempted in the body of the thesis to balance the views of Renou and Kuiper concerning the nature of the text and its interpretation. By means of utilizing Wasson's identification of soma as a hermeneutical key, I have been able to go beyond Renou's refusal to discuss the sociological context of the hymns, without over-extending the final redactor's purposes to a general hermeneutical principle, as does Kuiper. I have accepted Renou's insistence on examining the internal material in the text before interpreting the data in terms of utilization in the later ritual. This procedure, carried out in accordance with the general principles of form-criticism as understood by Old Testament scholars, allows insightful reflection on the meaning and significance<sup>98</sup> of the Rgvedic material on the Indra-Vrtra conflict.<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Meaning and significance are not synonymous terms. "Meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. Significance, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation or indeed anything imaginable." E. D. Hirsch, Jr., Validity in Interpretation (New Haven, 1967), 8.

<sup>99</sup> From the comments on the methodology of others, and the myriad of interpretations of the conflict that have been proffered, it seems clear to me that no one interpretation will convince everyone. However, the argument must deal with the proper utilization of data and not with the conclusions reached by a proper utilization. "...The practical goal of every genuine discipline is consensus -- the winning of firmly grounded agreement that one set of conclusions is more probable than others -- and this is precisely the goal of valid interpretation. It must not be dismissed as a futile goal simply because the subject matter of interpretation is often ambiguous and its conclusions uncertain. Certainty is not the same thing as validity, and knowledge of ambiguity is not necessarily ambiguous knowledge". ibid., ix.

The Importance of vrtrahan as the Starting Point

The examination of Indra as Vrtrahan constitutes one of the central foci of this thesis. It is my contention that the Indra-Vrtra conflict can be best understood through a study of this epithet. The structure of the body of the thesis proceeds from an analysis of the term vrtrahan as applied to Indra, through an analysis of the term as applied to other gods, objects, men, and finally to an analysis of the Indra-Vrtra conflict itself.

The rationale for proceeding in this manner comes from an analysis of the Avestan material. While Indra is a minor bad demon (daēva) in the Avesta, mentioned only twice, the adjective varəθragan (cognate with vrtrahan) is used to qualify various gods, objects, men. The Avesta also mentions a god Varəθrayna (m.) who is a Pre-Zarathustrian deity 'God Victory' which reflects the earlier Proto-Aryan \*Vrtraghna -- all cognates of Vrtrahan. From this reconstruction <sup>100</sup> it seems that both the adjective and the traits of this 'God Victory' accrue to Vedic Indra as Indra has replaced this Proto-Aryan deity.

In the Avestan material varəθragan sometimes qualifies Haoma (=Soma). In the Rgveda vrtrahan sometimes qualifies Soma. Further, Haoma is a \*daiva who is conspicuously not consigned to the ranks of bad demons. Soma, as has already been mentioned, is frequently drunk

---

<sup>100</sup> See Thieme, "Aryan Gods".

by Indra as an aid to his exploits. Thus one may conclude that sóma was utilized in cultic practices in the Indo-Iranian period, and maintained its cultic significance into the Avestan and Vedic eras. If Wasson's identification of sóma as Amanita muscaria is correct, as I think it is, then the hallucinogenic effects of ingesting the mushroom cannot be ignored in attempting to understand Soma as Vrtrahan and the drinking of sóma by Indra in the Rgveda. The Rgvedic hymns quite clearly delineate vision experiences.<sup>101</sup> One set of these experiences is communicated by reference either to vrtrahan or the Indra-Vrtra conflict. The thesis demonstrates that the visioning experience is being referred to in contexts which utilize vrtrahan or the conflict imagery. However, the communication of this experience cannot account for every occurrence of vrtrahan or the conflict imagery.

By the time of the later strata of the Rgveda the equivalence of Ahi (the dragon that is the chief evil demon and archenemy of Indra) and Vrtra is well established. However, the Avestan material knows only the dragon Azi Dahāka, not a personified Vrtra (verētra). Furthermore, Verethra does not slay a dragon. ('God Victory' and the dragon-slayer have different functions.) The 'obstacle or resistance' (verētra) is not pictured, then, as a dragon. Kuiper attempts to argue that the obstacle is a cosmogonic obstacle<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup>See Gonda, Vision, passim.

<sup>102</sup>See especially "Cosmogony and Conception".



and that it is inconceivable that this connection is secondary. Returning to the differentiation between the Avestan deity Vərəθraγna and the adjective vərəθragan one then would have to conclude with Kuiper that the qualities denoted by this adjective correspond to the expected action of one who overcomes this cosmogonic obstacle. What I am arguing is that this interpretation does not account for the attempt to communicate psychedelic experience, not that this cosmogonic reference is incorrect.

The legitimation for beginning with an analysis of vrtrahan' can be argued from the standpoint of the examination of textual stratification. Since the epithet accrues to Indra, beginning with Indra and attempting a holistic analysis is not sound methodologically because of possible overemphasis on Indra's special characteristics. Also, one avoids the temptation/necessity to delineate what is specifically characteristic or not characteristic of Indra. Also, one should not narrow the study to only those references clearly attributable to Indra. To go beyond the Indra references allows a more complete analysis of the possible meanings of vrtrahan'. This brings the references to soma and the implications of hallucinogenic experience into consideration. Since there is no Indra-Vrtra conflict in the Avestan material (but only the usage of the cognate of vrtrahan'), it is only after a complete analysis of the epithet vrtrahan' that an examination of the Rgvedic conflict may yield meanings that do not include the cosmogonic implications.

The usage of the Avestan material does not mean that this historical reconstruction dealing with the genesis of vrtrahan' and the vrtra'

complex is the purpose of this thesis. The thesis is consciously limited to a study of the Rgveda in order to focus upon the various meanings and significances of vrtrahan and the vrtra complex within this text. However, the rationale for beginning with an analysis of vrtrahan rests on historical grounds.

### Methodological Reflections

I have already outlined some analyses of the Indra-Vrtra conflict as a whole and some attempts to explicate its religious significance. A somewhat different approach to the data was undertaken by Benveniste.<sup>103</sup> He attempted an explanation of how the Indra-Vrtra conflict came to have its present form in the Rgveda. The conflict is broken down into three once-separate themes which became conflated in the Rgveda. Basing his conclusions on a comparative analysis with Avestan material, Benveniste sees these three as: 1) a motif of the religious tradition (the exploits of a victorious god), 2) an epic motif (the battle of heroes against the monster), and 3) a mythic motif (the liberation of the waters of fertility). Since this reconstruction is generally accepted, some objections to using this schema must be raised. I have already noted above that Benveniste could be severely criticized (as he was by Thieme) for not considering the difference between an adjective and a god who is a personified abstract (i.e.,

---

<sup>103</sup>See Renou and Benveniste VV 177-199. This analysis is apparently accepted by Gonda. See Epithets, 5ln42.

Vara Bragan and Vara Brayna, 'God Victory'). Once this distinction is made, it is less clear that the supposed motif of the religious tradition constitutes an essential part of the conflict as detailed in the Rgveda. As for the second motif, while one cannot doubt the existence of something resembling this epic motif within the Rgveda, there is no justification for the conclusion that Indra, then, is an example of euhemerism. In order to utilize this motif one must fully develop the particular nuances connoted by 'epic' and examine the exact textual setting which occasions it, which Benveniste did not do. The application of this theme to an analysis of the Rgvedic data is of minimal worth. The mythic motif cannot be separated out from the central deed of Indra in the Rgveda. This is constantly stressed in the body of the thesis, especially Chapter Four. Thus Benveniste's observation is useless in attempting to interpret the Rgvedic data. I conclude that any discussion which depends on the supposition of conflation of themes in the Rgveda not only misses the point that the Rgvedic reworking of material is unique in its own right but also requires considerably more proof that such is actually the case,

Since there can be no confidence in a literary analysis which depends on thematic conflation, one is forced to return to interpretations of the data previously discussed. I propose that it is possible to utilize the form-critical methodology utilized by Old Testament scholars to overcome the seeming impasse in the literary analysis of the Rgveda so that exegesis can be placed on a foundation both appropriate in and



well received by critical scholarship which deals with the academic study of religion.

There is, because of the limitations of this thesis, no necessity to enter into any argumentation against the naturalistic theories of religion as they pertain to the interpretation of the Rgveda.<sup>104</sup> A criticism of these theories is readily available and the general criticisms can be easily applied to the specifics of Rgvedic exegesis.<sup>105</sup> The theorists who propose a cosmologic interpretation of the data are discussed within the body of the thesis. As will be pointed out in later chapters, there is some difficulty in accepting Luders' theory of a celestial ocean. What is more important is the realization that Kuiper's theory on the New Year festival assumes that there was a highly structured cultic festival at the time when the earliest hymns were composed. There is no textual proof for a king-oriented New Year festival before the time of the final redaction of the Rgvedic material. This is not to say that the Rgveda was not put into final form for that exact purpose. What is being argued by Kuiper, however, is that the hymns themselves, and more specifically those celebrating the central deed of Indra were composed with that purpose in mind. It seems to me that Kuiper is

---

<sup>104</sup>This is not to deny any "naturalism" in the Rgvedic hymns. I align myself with Renou who notes that the hymns "...are not evidence of a spontaneous aesthetic response to natural phenomena....In part they [the doings of the gods] are the transposition of natural phenomena to the mythical plane. Vedic nature-worship...is undeniable." (RAI, 9, 14)

<sup>105</sup>See Eliade, The Quest, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Theories of Primitive Religion (Oxford, 1965), and some articles in Waardenburg, Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion, I (The Hague, 1973).

taking his methodological starting point from the Scandinavian school of Biblical criticism.<sup>106</sup>

I have already discussed some elements of Biblical scholarship that could enable Vedic scholars to better understand the material they deal with. The same holds true in my case as the form-critical method, particularly as applied to the exegesis of the Psalms, has provided a methodological framework for handling the textual data. The pioneer in this method was H. Gunkel,<sup>107</sup> whose work has been utilized by others in studying the Psalms.<sup>108</sup> He described five main types of psalms,<sup>109</sup>

<sup>106</sup>For example, I. Engell, Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East (Uppsala, 1943).

<sup>107</sup>See particularly H. Gunkel, The Psalms (Philadelphia, 1967) and H. Gunkel the Legends of Genesis (New York, 1969). While some scholars have suggested some alternative forms, Gunkel's basic structure still prevails in critical Biblical scholarship.

<sup>108</sup>See, for example, O. Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: An Introduction (New York, 1965), K. Koch, The Growth of the Biblical Tradition (New York, 1969) and especially S. Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship (New York, 1962).

<sup>109</sup>See the discussion by A. R. Johnson "The Psalms" in H. H. Rowley (ed.), The Old Testament and Modern Study (London, 1951), especially 166ff. The five main types are: 1) hymn (normal round of worship), 2) communal laments (occurrence of calamity), 3) royal psalms (deal with a king who must be regarded as a native Israelite monarch of the pre-exilic period), 4) individual laments (which contain interesting transferences of battle imagery found in the royal psalms, and 5) individual songs of thanksgiving.

the most important of which, for the purposes of this thesis, is the "royal psalm".<sup>110</sup> His student, S. Mowinckel, was convinced that all psalms were cultic and, by isolating the Gattung of the psalms of divine enthronement,

he associated them with the annual celebration of the enthronement of Yahweh on the occasion of the New Year's festival and found in the Babylonian akitu celebration the source of their composition and content. Thus the association of the chaos dragon conflict in the primeval abyss with the coronation of the king could be explained, Mowinckel contended, only by a common setting.<sup>111</sup>

The form-critical method qua method developed from the awareness that even if one could isolate the oldest traditions from their secondary accretions, one could not adequately examine the oral transmission lying behind the textual material. The procedure of the literary historian, after isolation of a genre, is to classify it in terms of "its formal characteristics, style, mode of composition, terminology, and rhetorical features".<sup>112</sup> But one cannot stop here, but must ask

---

<sup>110</sup> There is no real need to enter into the debate between Gunkel and Mowinckel on the liberation of some psalms from their cultic setting into spiritual songs and prayers.

<sup>111</sup> J. Muilenburg, "Introduction" in H. Gunkel, The Psalms (Philadelphia, 1967), viii. Comments on the utilization of this basic schema by Kuiper and other factors discussed by Cross to gain methodological balance have already been mentioned above.

<sup>112</sup> ibid., v.



questions about the particular aspects of the community in which this genre served its function.

Both Renou and Kuiper note the significance of the oral composition of the hymns. Renou considers that

...the cult and its liturgy, its hymnology, constitute the underlying organism of the Rgveda so long as this is in process of composition, so long as it reflects itself in actual usage and is not simply maintained, as holy word, for application to other, intrinsic ends. rc becomes mantra, but by this change, loses that integrity which inspired its composition. The notion of ritual itself has changed; the hymn, no longer the primary element of the liturgy, becomes, on the one hand, secondary in an elaborate sacrificial cult (mantra), but, on the other, is potentially freed from the uses of ritual altogether -- and we witness the birth of the late Veda, of philosophical, speculative, even historical "poetry". 113

Kuiper, as might be expected, deals somewhat differently with the fact that the hymns reflect an oral composition. He infers that, along with other "sporting" contests held in conjunction with the winter solstice, "...men tried to assist Indra in his fight against Death and Darkness by their ritual". 114 A verbal contest, which "...was also a veneration of the primordial fight with the cosmic forces of resistance (vrtrāni)" 115

---

113 ibid., 332.

114 Kuiper, "Verbal Contest", 221.

115 ibid., 25.

became central in the ritual. Kuiper paints a word-picture of the occasion:

The patron apparently does not act as a sabhéyo yúvā <sup>116</sup> during the great annual festival, but, while impersonating Indra as magháva by his munificence, he obliges the poets by his gifts to assist him in return by defending his party in the word duels in the sabhā. That in such duels, where the contestants had to rely on the "mental quickness in their heart" (X.71.8), elaborate hymns could have been of much importance for the ultimate decision is hardly probable. <sup>117</sup> It is possible that, owing to the specialization which reserved this task for the priestly poets, these duels had already assumed the character of the purely priestly brahmodyas. <sup>118</sup>

I think that this description of the social context of composition best falls into Renou's "mantra-period", when recital rather than composition becomes more important in the ritual. Lord comments that "it should be clear...that sacred texts which must be preserved word for word, if there be such, could not be oral in any except the most literal sense". <sup>119</sup>

In order to exegete the hymns of the Rgveda one must come to grips

<sup>116</sup> An adult fit to be a member of the assembly.

<sup>117</sup> This comment shows Kuiper's unfamiliarity with the complex process of oral composition. See A. B. Lord, The Singer of Tales, especially 65.

<sup>118</sup> Kuiper, ibid., 280.

<sup>119</sup> Compare also the distinction in Greece between the aidoi and the rhapsodoi. "The former are considered to be the poets proper who themselves made an epic song and then, on their travels, recited it to the accompaniment of the lyre at the courts of the nobility. The rhapsode is really only the man who recites a song he has learned...." Jan de Vries, Heroic Song and Heroic Legend (Oxford, 1963), 172.

with the phenomenon of oral composition in order to understand the genre it produces. First, some idea of what an oral composition is should be ascertained.

Stated briefly, oral epic song is narrative poetry composed in a manner evolved over many generations by singers of tales who did not know how to write; it consists of the building of metrical lines and half-lines by means of formulas and formulaic expressions and of the building of songs by the use of themes....<sup>120</sup>

Such is the character of the Rgvedic hymns.<sup>121</sup> Lord states that while the story is important to an oral poet, the text becomes important to those who read and write. "The change has been from stability of essential story, which is the goal of oral tradition, to stability of text, the exact words of the story."<sup>122</sup> I have attempted to treat, in the body of

---

<sup>120</sup> Lord, *ibid.*, 4. One must not assume that the art was "secular". "The poet was sorcerer and seer before he became "artist". His structures were not abstract art, or art for its own sake. The roots of oral traditional narratives are not artistic but religious in the broadest sense." *ibid.*, 67. Renou is both ambiguous and ambivalent on the relationship between artist and seer. See Renou *EVP* I, 26-27 and Gerow's comments p. 311f.

<sup>121</sup> See Gonda, *Old Indian*, 155f.

<sup>122</sup> Lord, *ibid.*, 138. Lord writes expertly and convincingly on many aspects of oral composition including the relationship of grammar to the oral epic form, the utilization of formulas, the flexibility of thematic patterns as well as the transition from an oral society to a written society. The necessity of exact preservation due to "canonization" would, I think, be the step that most interests us here, not the putting down of the exact preservation on paper. Also, we are more concerned with the manner of composition rather than with the specific genre.



the thesis, the earlier strata of hymns as oral composition reflecting the period prior to "canonization". The later strata reflect a more complex situation as the change from oral composition of hymns to the preservation of the hymns in a fixed corpus seems to be roughly contemporaneous with the change in orientation from the utilization of soma for gaining a vision to a re-organization of the cultus around the Agni sacrificial complex. While some hymns, such as 8.89, appear to suggest such a change, the satisfactory substantiation of this point for Vedic religion in general lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

I noted earlier that perhaps the examination of observable archaic cultures might aid in understanding the Rgvedic material. One major different between some observable non-literate societies and the world of early Vedic man is that the latter contains references to priests as the main religious practitioners, whereas the former recognizes the shaman as the main religious practitioner. The shaman (not only one who takes hallucinogens) exhibits a change in state of consciousness<sup>123</sup> in his religious experience.

---

<sup>123</sup>On this see, among others, John C. Lilly, Programming and Metaprogramming in the Human Biocomputer (New York, 1972) and T.X. Barber, LSD, Marihuana, Yoga, and Hypnosis (Chicago, 1970). Both of these works are highly technical and attempt to avoid the clichés and exuberances of those in the drug-cult. See also the essays in C. Tart ed., Altered States of Consciousness (New York, 1972).

One of the most typical aspects of the shamanistic experience is the change into another state of consciousness, often called a trance, with the shaman feeling that he is taking a journey....A shaman on a "trip" or journey typically passes through situations involving spirits, often hostile, and often belonging to other shamans with whom he has to deal in order to cure an illness or to bewitch someone with his own spirits.<sup>124</sup>

Extreme caution is necessary here, however, because there is no hard evidence for shamans being present within Aryan society or for shamanistic activity being reflected in the Rgveda. If Amanita muscaria was borrowed from another culture by the migrating Aryan tribes it was incorporated into an already existent priest-functionary (r̥ṣi) structure. The exact role of the priest, though, is not known. One may conclude only that by the time of the final compilation of the text there is a hierarchical, regularized priesthood engaged in minute rationalistic speculation. An examination of the hymns of the Rgveda demonstrates that the majority of hymns must have been composed in a period of transition between the introduction of the hallucinogenic mushroom and the full-blown ritualistic speculation of the later Vedic period. Moreover, these two perspectives also become important in the interpretation of the Indra-Vṛtra conflict. An analysis of

---

<sup>124</sup> M.J. Harner, Hallucinogens and Shamanism, xii.

the relevant texts shows an orientation in the earlier strata towards the crisis of obtaining sóma on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the crisis of preventing someone inimicable from doing harm through the ingestion of sóma. Combining the assumption of shifting cultic settings with an examination of the contextual occurrences of vrtrahán and the Indra-Vrtra conflict enables one to recognize the accommodation (through actualization) and 'taming' of the earlier view within the confines of the Agni sacrificial complex. Thus it is only in the later strata that Kuiper's comments on the meaning and significance of the Indra-Vrtra conflict become apposite. It is not coincidental that the usage of sóma is simultaneously declining.

The body of the thesis examines the contextual occurrences of vrtrahán and the Indra-Vrtra conflict in order to demonstrate the shifting cultic settings. Chapter Two examines references to Indra as vrtrahán, establishing the absence of thematic connections between Indra as vrtrahán and the mythological narrative of the Indra-Vrtra conflict. Chapter Three examines non-Indra references to vrtrahán, establishing two ritual contexts: 1) the gaining of material prosperity and material benefits brought about by the vrtrahán, and, 2) the gaining of a vision through ingesting sóma. Some of the references examined in Chapter Two fit this second context well. Chapter Four examines in detail the Indra-Vrtra



conflict, establishing through textual analysis the usage of conflict imagery to express both ritual contexts mentioned above. In the concluding chapter the question of the decline in the use of soma is considered.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Occurrences of Indra-Vrtrahan in the Rgveda

In the preliminary exposition of the Indra-Vrtra complex undertaken in this chapter, I have decided to concentrate on Indra as Vrtrahan. I have done so primarily for two reasons: first, since the purpose of this thesis is the explication of the Indra-Vrtra conflict, beginning with vrtrahan provides an exemplary starting point, especially since the epithet is regularly applied to Indra yet the two words vrtrahan and vrtra rarely appear together. Many scholars, as previously noted, have drawn either mythological motifs, or ritual complexes, or theories on religion from the Indra-Vrtra conflict. Moreover, one would expect a concentration upon Vrtrahan-Vrtra to be fruitful for enlarging upon or defining the religious significance of the Indra-Vrtra conflict. However, since these two words are infrequently placed together, which is not what one would immediately presuppose, a thorough examination of the occurrences might reveal some information that could alter normative understandings of the Indra-Vrtra conflict such as those outlined in the previous chapter. Second, an examination of the extra-Vedic (i.e., outside the Indian tradition) attestation to a model corresponding linguistically to Vrtrahan-Vrtra enables the postulation of conscious choice in the rsi's selection of this model for expressing religious significance to Vedic man. A short discussion on the extra-Vedic material

follows below. The reason for stressing conscious choice is to demonstrate the meaningfulness of Vrtrahan-Vrtra to the Indra-Vrtra conflict to the extent that the authors of the hymns shaped something unique by developing Indra as Vrtrahan, in order to express some religious intent which they found to be meaningful, both to themselves and the community. The investigation, beginning with the Indra-Vrtrahan references in this chapter and then proceeding to the non-Indra references to Vrtrahan which occur in the Rgveda in the next chapter will demonstrate the viability of this hypothesis concerning conscious choice. Further, the nature of the examination will throw some light on what situation occasioned the invoking of Vrtrahan. An analysis of the situation using the form-critical method provides us with a more complete picture of any religious significations by extending the examination beyond the word clusters themselves to the context in which they are found.

The extra-Vedic references to a Vrtrahan-like figure have been examined by Benveniste,<sup>1</sup> Dumézil,<sup>2</sup> and Thieme,<sup>3</sup> among others. While the methodology of the three does differ, their conclusions on the subject of Vrtrahan are similar. Briefly, while there is a Vrtrahan-like figure

---

<sup>1</sup>Benveniste and Renou, VV and see Keith's criticism in A.B. Keith, "Indra and Vrtra" Indian Culture 1(1934), 461-466 and Lommel Der Arische Kriegsgott.

<sup>2</sup>Dumézil, DW and "Vahagn" Revue de l'histoire des religions CXVII (1938), 152-170.

<sup>3</sup>See Thieme and his reasons for the discussion, "Aryan Gods".



in the extra-Vedic material, there is no "personified Vrtra" (i.e., identification of Vrtra with Ahi "snake" in the masculine gender) but only a word of neuter gender, meaning basically "resistance". Further, the Vrtrahan-like figure is not identified with any Indra-figure. The majority of references come from the Avestan material, especially Yasht XIV,<sup>4</sup> while, for example, other references come from Armenian<sup>5</sup> and Sogdian.<sup>6</sup> My discussion will concentrate basically on the Avestan material. The purpose for such an examination should be firmly kept in mind: the purpose of showing that, in extra-Vedic material, there is no connection between Indra and a Vrtrahan figure on the one hand, while, on the other hand, in the Rgveda the connection is without doubt.

The problem which arises in examining the material is the unavailability of Proto-Aryan religious documents which could be used as a bridge (or parent document) between the Avestan and Rgvedic materials. The Avestan material stresses a god Vərəθraγna and the Rgvedic material stresses the god Indra. Which religious document relates more closely to Proto-Aryan religion and which religious document shows a conscious evolution away from the earlier material? Thieme succinctly describes the dilemma.

---

<sup>4</sup>J. Darmesteter, (trans.) The Zend Avesta, Part II, in F. Max Müller (ed.), The Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXIII, (New Delhi, 1965 repr.), 231-248.

<sup>5</sup>Dumézil, DW and "Vahagn" and Renou and Benveniste, VV, 75 ff.

<sup>6</sup>Renou and Benveniste, VV, 83 ff.

We may go so far as to say that the god Vrthraghna in his role as the fighting companion of Mithra is the equivalent of the Vedic Indra in his role as the helper of the Adityas. This does not necessarily mean that Vrthraghna has taken the place of the Proto-Aryan \*Indra; it may well mean that the Vedic Indra has replaced a Proto-Aryan \*Vrtraghna.

Thieme, in my opinion, clearly articulates the dilemma presented by the evidence (see his article for detailed argumentation<sup>8</sup>), without positing a solution. However, it should be kept firmly in mind that this is an evolutionary and chronological problem, whose solution need not detain us here. The fact that such a dilemma occurs for scholars underwrites the responsibility of the interpreter. The working hypothesis at this point, subject to the analysis below, can be none other than that the linking of Vrtrahan and Indra is of prime importance vis-à-vis an analysis of Rgvedic Indra, whatever either Indra or Vrtrahan may mean or signify within the framework of Vedic religion, irrespective of the "pre-history" of the problem.

However, the usage of Avestan material for clarifying an examination of the Indra-Vrtra motif has been brought into question

---

<sup>7</sup>Thieme, "Aryan Gods", 312 (spellings standardized).

<sup>8</sup>These arguments are, chiefly, against Benveniste and Renou for not insisting on a difference between an adjective and an Avestan personified abstract, and against Lommel for the assumption of a Proto-Aryan God \*Indra Vrtraghan. See Chapter One for a discussion of the problematic phrase "personified abstract", 22-24.

by Lommel<sup>9</sup> and A.B. Keith<sup>10</sup> in discussing Renou and Benveniste. Each makes use of a somewhat different premise based on the same methodological standpoint (to question the analysis of Renou and Benveniste). Lommel seriously questions an exegesis based on the useage of the Avestan material. He states:

Die Vedischen Verhältnisse erweisen also eine entwicklungsgeschichtliche Zerspaltung des Indra Vritrahan in zwei angebliche ursprünglichere Gottheiten keineswegs als notwendig; vielmehr sprechen sie dagegen und die fragwürdige Rekonstruktion eines besonderen Vritrahan ist nur durch das Vorhandensein des iranischen Parallelgottes Vurthraghna veranlasst, der -- man sieht nicht recht<sup>11</sup> warum? -- von Indra abgetrennt werden soll.<sup>11</sup>

Lommel concludes that this approach is not correct, and, therefore, that one must take a holistic view of Indra. For him the Vrtra-conflict is best interpreted as a mythological outworking of battle-motifs, with the masculine gender of the "Originalwortes" ahi- ("Man übersetzt statt Schlange gerne: der Drache...."<sup>12</sup>) being of prime importance for understanding the meaning of Vrtra. Two points must be raised here contra this line of argument. First, the contextual relationships of Vrtra and Vritrahan are infrequent and do not occur in

---

<sup>9</sup> Lommel, Der Arische Kriegsgott.

<sup>10</sup> Keith, "Indra and Vrtra".

<sup>11</sup> Lommel, Der Arische Kriegsgott, 51.

<sup>12</sup> ibid., 35.



the hymns that Renou considers most important for the understanding of the Vrtra-conflict except for five instances (3.30.5; 6.17.11; 8.6.37.40; 10.111.6). Of these only the first and last need attention here (see pp. 72-78 for argument). Renou's examination of the Vrtra-conflict led him to list certain hymns,<sup>13</sup> including the above ones as being central to a recitation of the Vrtra-conflict because of the narrative information contained within them. Since Vrtrahan does not regularly appear in the most important narrative hymns, a re-asking of the question concerning the use of the Avestan material must be bracketed until a detailed examination of the Rgveda enables one to bring up the question having settled as Lommel urges us, the Rgvedic context first. Second, it is by no means clear that ahi- is the correct point of focus. Looking at the instances where Ahihan occurs (1.117.9; 2.13.5; 2.19.3; 2.30.1) and the hapax ahighna (6.18.14) one observes that any connection between these and the majority of references to Vrtrahan is not assured and awaits further documentation. From this it follows that the usage of ahi- must also be examined before pronouncements concerning its applicability as a focus point are issued.

Keith, similarly troubled by the employment of Avestan material by Benveniste and Renou, asks for a clarification on the criteria for

---

<sup>13</sup> Benveniste and Renou, VV, 167, lists 1.32, 52, 80; 2.11; 3.30; 4.17, 18, 19; and 5.32 as most prominent examples of epic narrative motifs. Less clearly relevant are, in his opinion 6.17; 8.6; 10.111 and 113.

determining priority. While his criticisms may not carry as much weight as Lommel's, because of Keith's outmoded conceptions concerning Vedic religion,<sup>14</sup> his questioning of the proper relation between the two streams of thought is apposite. Keith states that "...the essential fact is that the deity in the Avesta by his name is a secondary product of priestly reflection, and presumably is not the original of the epithet Vrtrahan" and that "there is...nothing in this evidence to discount the originality of the Indra-Vrtra legend."<sup>15</sup> For him, a reasonable conclusion is to regard the disappearance of this motif in the Avesta as secondary.<sup>16</sup> Since it is Keith's presupposition on the nature of religion rather than his immediate comments that cause disquiet, an examination of the appropriate Rgvedic material, before drawing in the Avestan material at all, seems methodologically correct. I have returned full-circle to one of the implications of Thieme's comment. We do not know what has taken the place of what, vis-à-vis the religion of the Rgveda, the religion of the Avesta and earlier Indo-Aryan religion. Therefore, because of the insoluble nature of the

---

<sup>14</sup>Professor Keith's views on Indian religion have come under fire by later scholars for two reasons. First, he holds to a simplistic naturalism in his interpretation of religious phenomena in the Rgveda. Secondly, he holds to an evolutionistic view of religious ideas, from the simple to the more sophisticated. For the purposes of this discussion, the points are minor, but must be noted lest either point appears to colour the validity of my using his arguments to demonstrate the lack of hard chronology in comparing the Rgveda and Avestan material.

<sup>15</sup>Keith, "Indra and Vrtra", 462, 463.

<sup>16</sup>See J. Duchesne-Guillemin, "The Religion of Ancient Iran" in C.J. Bleeker and G. Widengren (eds.) Historia Religionem (Leiden, 1969), I, 323-376.

quandary, the Rgvedic material must be examined by itself in order to bring out its own self-understanding.

In order to conduct a thorough examination, the material must be organized so as to facilitate analysis of the name "Vrtrahan." The structure to be followed allows some room for comment on the conscious linking of Indra and Vrtrahan in the Rgveda and also for comment on the contextual significance of the occurrences. The breakdown of the Rgvedic material to be examined is as follows: references to Indra as Vrtrahan, the references to Indra as Ahihan and then the references to others as Vrtrahan.

#### Epical Occurrences of Indra-Vrtrahan

Before discussing some of the passages, a few observations on the peculiar nature of Book 8 are necessary because of the great number of occurrences of the name "Vrtrahan" contained therein. Renou's chronological reconstruction of the Rgveda places Book 8.1-66; 67-103 between Books 2-7 and 9, 1, and 10.<sup>17</sup> In Book 8, 54 of 103 (or 53%) of the hymns including the Vāṭakhilya deal directly with Indra. Excluding the Vāṭakhilya 46 of 92 (or 50%) of the hymns deal directly with Indra. The next highest percentage (43%) occurs in Book 6 where 32 out of 75 hymns deal directly with Indra. However, upon

---

<sup>17</sup>Renou, EVP II, 1 ff.



examining these books for the frequency of Vrtrahan one finds interesting data. In Book 6 only 6.45.5 and 6.47.6 contain a clear reference to Indra as Vrtrahan -- 6.16.14, 19, 48 deals with Agni; 6.17.11 with Soma; 6.20.9 with vájra; 6.48.21 with the Maruts; 6.60.3 with Indra-Agni; and 6.61.7 with Sarasvatī.

In Book 8 even a cursory examination shows many references to Vrtrahan.<sup>18</sup> These references, besides those to others than Indra, break down into three general categories: 1. an epithet disclosing little of its meaning, usually used in connection with Soma; 2. epical references; 3. references which require a closer examination but do not readily fit into either of the above categories. The many references to Vrtrahan may reflect the eagerness of the authors of the hymns to demonstrate their familiarity with the major thrusts of the Aryan religious tradition. However, an internal examination shows that just the opposite is the case (see Appendix). These hymns reflect only a superficial knowledge of the major thrusts of the tradition.

There are two attempts in the Rgveda to come to grips with why Indra is also called Vrtrahan:

8.24.2ab: śávasā hy ási śrutó vrtrahátyena  
vrtrahā/

You are renowned on account of (your)  
heroic strength; on account of slaying  
Vrtra (overcoming resistance) you are  
Vrtrahan.

---

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix to chapter for a listing of the references in Book 8.

10.74.6ab: yād vāvāna purutāmam purāśal  
ā vrtrahēndro namāny aprāh/

When frequently he,<sup>19</sup> the victor of old  
(fortress-destroyer), won,<sup>20</sup> he fulfilled,  
Vrtrahan-Indra, the namings.

It is clear from 10.74.6ab (and 10.73.8a) that great importance was placed on names and naming<sup>21</sup> and that Vrtrahan was a "name" of some particular potency. Further, 8.24.2ab shows either an unclear rationalization of the name "slaying Vrtra, ergo Vrtra-slayer" or a legitimate attempt to come to terms with the more complex meaning of the term -- "the Vrtrahan is he who overcomes resistance in whatever guise". Any conclusion which would resolve this depends on the weight of the evidence of the whole, to which I now turn.

I will first examine the "epical" references to Indra and/as Vrtrahan (3.30.5; 6.17.11; 8.6.37, 40; 10.111.6) dealing with 6.17.11 and 8.6.37, 40 first.

6.17.11:

vārdhān yām vīsve marutah sajōśah pācac  
chatām mahisān indra tūbhyam/ pūśā vīśnus  
trīṇi, sārāṇsi dhāvan vrtrahānam madirām  
amśum asmai//

---

<sup>19</sup> purāśal is hapax. Monier-Williams accepts the sense "victor of old", while Geldner, following Sayana, uses "Burgenzwinger". Unfortunately, this is an instance where eisegesis proves the point for either side.

<sup>20</sup> See 10.73.8a (in reference to Indra): tvām etāni vi nāmesāna (you have completely fulfilled these namings...).

<sup>21</sup> On this point see Gonda, Notes on Names and Naming.

He cooks a hundred buffalo for you, O  
 Indra, whom all the accompanying Maruts  
 shall strengthen. Pusan, Viṣṇu, purified  
 three lakes for him, the exhilarating one,  
 Vrtrahan, Soma.

There are two conclusions to be drawn from this verse. First, the referent of Vrtrahan is not Indra but Soma.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, any argumentation concerning the relationship of Indra-Vrtrahan to the Indra-Vrtra conflict cannot rest upon this verse. Even if one were to translate, as Griffith, vrtrahanam as "that slaughters Vrtra" and then comment that, of course Soma inspires Indra, one cannot escape the fact that such linkage, based upon a mythological interpretation because of the context, is arbitrary. I will show below, when dealing with Soma as Vrtrahan, that, at the very least, this line of reasoning is open to serious questioning. Second, this verse is a very complex one, lumping together Agni, Pusan, Soma, Viṣṇu, the Maruts, and Indra. Perhaps this seemingly overwhelming preponderance of "names" misleads one from an examination of the point of the verse which is (from the "cooking" and the "pouring") a sacrificial, ritualistic occurrence. This fact should cast further doubt on any connection to the Indra-Vrtra conflict in terms of expressing a narrative theme.

---

<sup>22</sup>The purpose of discussing this verse here is to introduce the problem of an epithet common to one 'god' being used with another. The next chapter will discuss these occurrences more fully.



Rgveda 8.6.37 and 40 present two different contexts for the usage of Vṛtrahan. In referring back to my earlier categorizations of Vṛtrahan as used in Book 8, it seems at first glance that 8.6.37 fits into category three whereas 40 fits category one.

8.6.37: tvám íd vṛtrahantama jánāso  
vrktábarhiṣah/ hávante vājasātaye//

The people who have spread the sacrificial grass invoke you, O best Vṛtrahan, for the "securing of vigour".<sup>23</sup>

However, we should also examine 5.35.6 before commenting:

tvám íd vṛtrahantama jánāso vrktábarhiṣah/  
ugrám pūrvīṣu pūrvyám hávante vājasātaye//

The people who have spread the sacrificial grass invoke you, O best Vṛtrahan, the one who has violent energy, foremost among many, for the securing of vigour.

Without entering into a discussion of chronological priority 5.35.6c can be seen as emphasizing two points implicit in the rest of the verse (which is identical to 8.6.37): "foremost among many" doubles "best Vṛtrahan" and the singer would ask the "one who has violent energy" for "vigour". It is worthy of note, however, that the "securing of vigour" occurs more times in Book 8 (14) than in any other.<sup>24</sup> Further,

---

<sup>23</sup>Gonda, Aspects, 53. Note his translation of vāja as "energy", not "booty", 43 ff. See 8.33.1 for another verse where Vṛtrahan is invoked by those who have spread the sacrificial grass.

<sup>24</sup>8.4.18; 6.37; 8.21; 9.13; 13.3; 20.16; 27.13; 34.4; 40.2; 63.12; 69.2; 76.6; 77.6; 91.3.

since the phrase occurs outside the Vrtra- and Vrtrahan-complex, and since other gods, such as Agni,<sup>25</sup> can be invoked for that specific purpose, it is my conclusion that no essential light is shed on the meaning of Vrtrahan by an examination of 8.6.37. A similar conclusion can be drawn from 8.6.40 where vrtrahā is strung together with somapātamah (and also vr̥sā and vajrīn).

The verses which do warrant attention for the analysis of vrtrahān are 3.30.5 and 10.111.6. Since even a cursory examination shows the integral connection of 3.30.4 and 5, I will look at both verses.

tvām hí smā cyāváyann ácyutāny éko vrtrā  
cārasi jīghnamānah/ tāva dyavāpr̥thivī  
pārvatāsó 'nu vratāya nīmiteva tasthuh//

Indeed, you, especially, cause to shake  
those which are unshakeable. You alone move  
forth overcoming obstacles. Heaven and  
earth and the mountains stand as if fixed  
for your command.<sup>26</sup>

utābhaye purūhuta śrávobhir éko dr̥lham  
avado vrtrahā s̄an/ imé cid indra ródasī  
apāré yāt samgr̥bhñā maghavan kāsir it te//

And in security, Much-invoked-through-praises,  
alone you spoke firm (i.e., unmoveable)  
renowned (words) as Vrtrahan. Even these  
two, O Indra, unlimited heaven and earth  
that you can hold together, for you they are  
only a handful.

---

<sup>25</sup> Agni 8.63.12; 91.3; Ásvins 8.21, 9.13, 76.6; Maruts 20.16; Viśvadevas 27.13.

<sup>26</sup> With Renou and Geldner against Griffiths, "for him who followeth thy Law".

With Renou, I prefer to translate "overcoming obstacles" in verse 4 rather than overcoming demon(s) or human enemies.<sup>27</sup> The latter hardly seems appropriate to the context of the hymn. The fixing of the cosmos, the praising of Indra's all-encompassing power, and the invocation of Indra to be present all suggest a ritual setting where enemies may refer to those who oppose the ritual, but not merely those who oppose it by force of arms. However, the juxtaposition with "shaking the unshakeable" leads to the conclusion that overcoming obstacles is what is intended. The same argument holds true against demon(s) being meant. What appears significant in these verses is the speaking of the unmoveable word as Vrtrahan in 3.30.5, i.e., verse 4 speaks of the power to shake the unshakeable yet at the command of the god, heaven and earth stand as if fixed. This expression links with the impression in verse 5 concerning Indra's holding together heaven and earth. Here I must postulate a connection between dr̥lham and vrataya with the "holding together" being the evidence for the speaking of what is firm. But what is not clear is why the phrase "speaking the firm (word) as Vrtrahan" is used. Therefore, I must postpone further discussion of this verse until all information is drawn together in the conclusion.<sup>27a</sup> This is, however, the first significant verse concerning Vrtrahan in an "epical" hymn.

---

<sup>27</sup>Griffith translates "Vrtras" and Geldner "die Feinde", Velankar "enemies".

<sup>27a</sup>See below, 236f.



The final verse occurring in an "epical" hymn is 10.111.6,  
a late hymn which throws some light on how the mythology has developed.

vájrena hí vrtrahā vrtrám ástar ádevasya  
susuvánasya mayāh/ ví dhṛsno átra dhṛsata  
jaghanthāthābhavo maghavan bāhvòjāh//

The Vrtrahan with his vajra has knocked Vrtra<sup>28</sup>  
down. Then you boldly destroyed the wisdom  
of the godless which had grown large (swelled  
up), O courageous one. Hence you are the  
beneficent one, the one having strong arms.

One can see here two divergent strains. First, Vrtrahan is used only as a "naming" device (cf. 8.24.2b) as it is the Vrtrahan who overcomes Vrtra. (Note that Vrtra is knocked down by the vájra.) Second, one sees here the destroying of the "wisdom of the godless which had swelled up" which would seem to correlate with some of the interpretations applicable to the usage of Vrtrahan in the earlier strata of the text (here the reference would be to the belly being full of Soma) rather than the developed, embellished mythology apparent in the later strata, such as is expressed in the first part of the verse. The second point will be fully developed and argued in the conclusion of the thesis. Briefly, it is my contention that the phrase does not refer to a pre-cosmogonic act which had to be accomplished so that an

---

<sup>28</sup>Much has been written on the subject of māyā, including more than one doctoral thesis. Obviously, I cannot entertain a long discussion of the term here. See Gonda, Change, 164-197, especially p. 166: The "meaning may be paraphrased somewhat as follows: "incomprehensible wisdom and power enabling its possessor, or being able itself, to create, devise, contrive, effect or do something"."

ordered cosmos might be constructed, nor does it refer to a naturalistic situation of swollen rain clouds. Rather it refers to a situation of critical importance in the preparation of Soma. Soma's vision-giving properties are something much desired by the hymn singer. However, there is a problem. The godless one, an individual who does not subscribe to the religious orientation of the hymn singer, has appropriated the Soma. The wisdom gained through the misappropriation Indra has destroyed either by forcing the release of Soma (as I think) or by negating the effects of the power obtained through the vision by the godless one. Such an interpretation needs full clarification, which will be postponed until all the evidence has been discussed. Only at that point can one draw together all the elements that lend credibility to such an interpretation.<sup>28a</sup>

Before leaving 10.111.6, I should examine further the occurrences of Vr̥tra and Vr̥trahan within one verse. I have already looked at 8.24.2 and will now examine 8.89.3, 8.93.2, 10.49.6, 10.152.3 and 8.17.9 (Vr̥trahan-Vr̥tras). (Note that the only examples of this association occur in Book 8 and in Book 10.)

While the whole of 8.89 is interesting and provocative for any consideration of Vr̥trahan, since here I am only interested in occurrences within one verse, consideration of the hymn as a whole will be postponed.

8.89.3: prá va índrāya br̥haté māruto  
brāhmāracata/ vr̥trám hanati vr̥trahā sātá-  
kratur vājrena sātáparvanā//

---

<sup>28a</sup> See below p. 199 ff.

Sing, O Maruts to your firm<sup>29</sup> Indra of  
firmness. Let the hundred-fold resource-  
ful Vrtrahan slay Vrtra with the hundred-  
knotted<sup>30</sup> vajra.

Again the emphasis is on the Vrtrahan slaying Vrtra. The epithet "hundred-knotted"<sup>31</sup> shows, by its occurrences, that this particular construction is a later descriptive addition to the Vedic references to the Vrtra fight and also reinforces the etymology of 8.24.2 ("slaying Vrtra ergo Vrtra-slayer"). This epithet adds descriptive detail to the narrative of the Indra-Vrtra conflict within the same context as the author's conclusion that, naturally, the Vrtrahan is the one who slays Vrtra. These points added to the fact that the epithet occurs elsewhere only in Book 1 (once) and in Book 8 (twice more) lends credence to the conclusion that the verse does not throw light upon the earlier usages of the Indra-Vrtra conflict within the Rgveda. A similar conclusion may be drawn from 8.93.2 with, however, one important distinction.

náva yó navatám púro bibheda bāhvōjasā/  
āhim ca vrtrahāvadhīt//

He rent assunder ninety-nine fortresses  
with strong arms. The Vrtrahan slew Ahi.

---

<sup>29</sup>Following Gonda on brh. See J. Gonda, Notes on Brahman (Utrecht, 1950).

<sup>30</sup>Interestingly, it occurs only here and 1.80.6; 8.76.2; 8.6.6.

<sup>31</sup>To alleviate any premature conclusion, let me state here that "knotted" refers to the unevenness of a club made of wood and does not refer to tied knots. This allows us to bypass completely the massive, complex problem of the religious significance of knots and binding in Indo-Aryan religions.



The linking of Vrtrahan and Ahi is significant as it shows that the connection between Ahi and Vrtra is assumed by the singer. This would, at first glance, seem to support Lommel's contention that Ahi is the key to the interpretation of the Indra-Vrtra conflict. The conclusion that a mythological narrative underlies the Indra-Vrtra conflict also would seem to follow from such an assumption by the hymn singer. Since Ahihan occurs in the Rgveda, these passages should also be examined to see if they contain corroborating evidence. The whole question of meaning and any decision regarding the significance of these occurrences for my consideration of Vrtrahan will be taken up shortly.

Before examining Ahi and Ahihan, there remains a consideration of 10.49.6 and 10.152.3 to round out the analysis of Vrtra-Vrtrahan references. These two occurrences of Vrtra and Vrtrahan within a single verse both refer to kingship.

In 10.49.6 a correlation is set up between the deed of the king and the deed of Vrtrahan:

10.49.6: ahám sá yó nāvavāstvam brhādratham  
sám vrtréva dāsam vrtrahārujam/ yād vardhā-  
yantam prathāyantam ānuśág dūrē pāré rājaso  
rocanākaram//

I shattered Navavāstvam Brhadratham as the  
Vrtrahan Vrtra (the Dasa). Which I caused  
the bright sky to grow and increase in  
proper order to the furthest end of open  
room....

The slaying of Vrtra is unmistakeable here. The relationship of a and b with c and d raises some crucial points. If the rsi in c and d is acting as "Vrtrahan", what is the connection of Vrtrahan with the growth of the bright sky to the end of open room? (The rsi is undertaking some of the functions of the king as is demonstrated also by 4 cd). It is on the answering of this type of question, i.e., the assessment of the hermeneutical situation rather than a philological or linguistic study, that the viability of much of the thesis depends.

If the allusion in 10.49.6 to Vrtrahan contains a reference to some kind of cosmogonic myth, then one set of correlations may be set up with Vrtrahan and the Vrtra-conflict, the resolution of the hermeneutical problem being much in line with Kuiper's discussions.<sup>32</sup> If, on the other hand, what is being referred to here is not a cosmogonic myth-motif, but rather a motif on the taking of Soma and the concurrent growth of energy and power, an entirely different set of correlations will have to be set up. For example, is the shattering of the enemy within the context of an actual battle situation or is the context centered on a ritualistic taking of Soma for the gaining of visions?<sup>32a</sup> It is my contention that any recognition of cosmogonic thrusts in this verse and that the assumption that victory in physical

---

<sup>32</sup>See the full consideration of Kuiper's views in Chapter One, pp. 20, 27, 43f., 53f., 56f.

<sup>32a</sup>See below p. 236.

battle is being celebrated are both unwarranted. Both the cosmogonic and battle assumptions combine to give an interpretation that does not allow the verse to speak for itself. When, in the conclusion of the thesis, the drawing together of various elements into a cohesive whole will be outlined, an interpretation zeroing in on the taking of Soma will prove to be the key for understanding this verse.

The second verse dealing with kingship raises a somewhat different, but equally compelling, series of questions concerning hermeneutical procedure.

10.152.3: ví rakṣo vi mṛdho jahi vi  
vrtrásya hánū ruja/ ví manyum indra  
vrtrahann amitrasyābhidasatah//

Drive away the evil one, drive away the  
contemptuous one. Scatter the jaws<sup>33</sup>  
of Vṛtra, dissipate the fury of him who  
is not-like-us, O Indra-Vrtrahan.

In 10.152.1 Indra is called "Destroyer of the Foe" (amitrakhādo, hapax) and in verse 2<sup>34</sup> Indra is Lord of the Clan (visās patir) as well as Vrtrahan and Averter of the Contemptuous (vimrdho). The thrust of both these verses, indeed of the whole hymn, is the extolling of Indra as Ruler (sasa). Vrtrahan is an epithet used, among others,

---

<sup>33</sup>The only other unmistakable reference to the jaws to Vṛtra occurs in 1.52.6, an epical hymn. See also 4.18.9 (also an epical hymn) where Indra's jaws are broken.

<sup>34</sup>See Gonda, Epithets, 73-74.



to accentuate the king (here seen as Indra) as the protector from evil.<sup>35</sup>

The occurrence of Vrtrahan with Vrtra in 10.152.3, while showing some influence from the epical hymns (the mention of jaws, perhaps), cannot be said to be decisive in any consideration of the relationship of Vrtrahan with the Vrtra-conflict because of the ambiguity of the verse. The mention of jaws may not be "mythological" in the usual application of that word,<sup>36</sup> but rather symbolic<sup>37</sup> of a theological truth on the possibility of being engulfed by evil. Another way of looking at the "jaws", however, is to posit that because of the scattering of jaws the evil one can no longer drink Soma, therefore the fury is no more.<sup>38</sup>

The latter would tie in with some other references to Vrtrahan where the drinking of Soma by an opponent is the disaster the Vrtrahan overcomes (e.g., 10.111.6, discussed above).

---

<sup>35</sup> There is no strict division between moral and physical evil in R̥gvedic thought. See, in general, S. Rodhe, Deliver us from evil (Lund, 1946). See in particular, Gonda, Epithets, 130-138.

<sup>36</sup> I mean the broadest usage of the word, referring to a narrative concerning the acts of gods and men. The word "jaws" would be a descriptive embellishment of the snake Vrtra.

<sup>37</sup> This is a word so encrusted with nuance that any usage immediately necessitates definition. I mean by the word something that points beyond itself to something else.

<sup>38</sup> ibid., 53-54 on lips as connected with the drinking of Soma.

Before leaving entirely the discussion of occurrences within one verse, I should look at 8.17.9, even though it is atypical,<sup>39</sup> in order to round out the discussion.

8.17.9: indra préhi purás tvam visvasyé-  
śāna ójasā/ vrtrāni vrtrahañ jahi//

O Indra, advance in front, you who have  
lordship over all by means of vital energy.  
O Vrtrahan, overcome the defenses.

This verse does not occur in an epical hymn nor does it appear to develop narrative mythological material. In addition, the reference to Vrtras is not in the singular (contra Geldner). Thus the reference cannot be to the arch-demon Vrtra. Here a battle-motif is readily apparent.<sup>40</sup> Indra is to overcome the opposition as the vanguard of the attack. One should expect the "Overcomer of Resistance" to be in the forefront of battle. The other references do not reflect this concrete battle-motif but are more concerned with Vrtra as a personified evil. The verse, then does not contribute positively to the elaboration of the Vrtrahan-Vrtra discussion.

The foregoing examination of the epical occurrences of Vrtrahan-Vrtra has cast some doubt on the normative interpretation

---

<sup>39</sup>This verse is the only one where Vrtrahan appears with vrtrā in the (neuter) plural.

<sup>40</sup>See verse 8 where Indra, strong-armed, and made strong by Soma, then overcomes the Vrtras.

of either cosmogonic symbolism, mythological narrative, or actual battle description. Before drawing conclusions on the relationship between Vrtrahan and the epic narrative material, however, I am going to examine the references to Indra as Ahihan, as mentioned earlier.

#### Indra as Ahihan

Turning now to the occurrences of Ahihan one can immediately discard 1.117.9 and 1.118.9 as referring to the horse of Pedu, a motif separate from Indra-Vrtrahan. The remaining places, interestingly, are in Book 2 alone: 2.13.5, 2.19.3, and 2.30.1. I will also consider the hapax ahighna of 6.18.14.

All three references in Book 2 refer to the release of waters, a common motif of the Indra-Vrtra complex. Further, it is clear that Indra as the Ahihan is inextricably tied to that releasing and the results of that releasing -- this appears to be a cosmologic theme.

2.13.5: adhākṛnoḥ prthivīm samdrśe dive  
yó dhautīnam ahihann ārinak pathāh/ tām  
tvā stómebhir udābhir nā vājīnam devam  
devā ajanan sāsy ukthyah//

Then he made the earth to look to heaven.  
 O Ahihan, you released the paths of the  
 streams. You, the god, the gods have gen-  
 erated with praises, as the vājīn one<sup>41</sup>  
 by the waters. You are deserving praise!

---

<sup>41</sup>See Gonda, Aspects, 45.



The second half of the verse shows a ritualistic setting (see also 6.18.14 below) as uttered praises in fact appear to accomplish the release of the streams through Ahihan. The relation of the root vāj- with its derivatives referring to energy has been amply demonstrated by Gonda.<sup>42</sup> One should note the apparent parallelism in cd: as the gods have generated the god (with praises) the waters have generated the vājīn one (with vāja?). This theme of energetic waters is contained in 2.30.1 where rtá is emphasized. This connects both verses with a cosmologic theme. This theme is intensified in 2.19.3.

sá mahina índro árho apám prairayad ahi-  
hāchā samudrām/ ájanayat sūryam vidád gā  
aktúnāhnām vayúnāni sādhat//

The mighty Indra, the Ahihan, set in motion  
the flood of waters to the ocean. He caused  
the generating of the sun, found the cows,  
regulated the proper ordering of days by  
means of first light of dawn.

This hymn refers to several deeds to Indra but what should be noted in this context is that verse 2 refers to the cutting in pieces (vi+vraśc) of Ahi who encompassed the flood and that verse 4 refers to the slaying of Vṛtra along with the struggle to conquer the sun.<sup>43</sup> This last probably ties in with the regulating of the days which

---

<sup>42</sup> ibid., 44-45.

<sup>43</sup> Even if Geldner's comments on the necessity of seeing apratīni as another word for vṛtrāni in verse 4 are correct, I do not see the point in construing vṛtrā as a collective.

is a motif that fits in well with an ordering-creating function. This function is further explicated in 2.30.1.

rtám devāya kṛnvatē savitrā indrayāhighné  
ná ramanta āpah/ ahar-ahar yāty aktur apām  
kiyāty ā prathamāḥ sārṅga āsām//

The waters never standing still, make rtā  
for the god Savitr, for Indra the Ahihān.  
Day after day continues the gliding of the  
waters. How long is it since the first  
discharging?

Verses 2 and 3 also refer to the slaying of Vrtra. In verse 1 one sees a continuation of the theme of ordering the days and the ordering of the cosmos. However, in contradistinction to 2.19.3, where Indra not only has the initiative but continues the ordering, here Indra sets in motion what the waters themselves accomplish. Perhaps this is the reason why Savitr is mentioned. Such could be the case if this usage is an example of savitr as an epithet of Indra<sup>44</sup> as in 3.33.6.<sup>45</sup> All three examples of Indra as Ahihan, therefore, show a direct knowledge of the Indra-Vrtra conflict and belong within the mythological framework. However, because these usages do not parallel the majority of usages for the epithet Vrtrahan, they should not be used to explicate the meaning of the epithet.

---

<sup>44</sup>See Macdonell, Vedic Mythology, 32 ff.

<sup>45</sup>Griffith notes that Sāyana here takes Savitr as an epithet of Indra.

Before leaving the subject of Ahihan I will look at 6.18.14 where the hapax ahighna is used. At first glance this usage appears to invalidate my previous comments, but after more detailed examination appears to give a valuable insight into the meaning of Vrtrahan.

anu tvahighne ádha deva devā mādan viśve  
kavítamam kavīnam/ káro yātra varivo bā-  
dhitāya divé janāya tanvè grṇānāh//

Then after you, O god, in the slaying of Ahi (when Ahi had been slain) all the gods would praise the most inspired one of the inspired<sup>46</sup> where you made room, being praised, for pressed-down heaven, for the people, and for yourself.

The phrase "making room" brings to mind what one would expect the "Overcomer of Resistance" to do. But the two concepts must go together making room without overcoming, as in this case, connotes what is being expressed in 2.13.5a: "then he made the earth to look to heaven". Therefore, one has reference to a proper ordering, rather than an overcoming of some kind.<sup>47</sup> As further evidence that the verse has no reference to the epithet Vrtrahan, one can cite the hapax ahighna -- which is here a locative absolute construction, not an epithet. Indra is not being called Vrtrahan, rather an action in the past is being described so that the central import of ab is the

---

<sup>46</sup> See 2.13.5cd above.

<sup>47</sup> See the discussion below p. 156ff. for a discussion of the distinctions between ordering and overcoming.



praising of the gods for the deed of Indra. It is on account of the praising that Indra makes room. Thus the cosmologic reference cannot be used in support of a general cosmologic interpretation of the Indra-Vrtra conflict.

#### Contextual Occurrences of Indra-Vrtrahan

One central question needs to be asked concerning Indra-Vrtrahan: Since the release of waters is the primary and most common referent in the Indra-Vrtra conflict, why the paucity of references to Vrtrahan and the release of waters? In order to clearly understand the significance of the above question I will limit the discussion here to an examination of the references to Indra-Vrtrahan in order to determine their contextual referents. In Chapter 4 I will fully discuss the Indra-Vrtra conflict and the release of waters. Here, in order to lay the groundwork for such a discussion a minimum of commentary will be employed while attention will be focused on the collecting of the verses which directly refer to Indra-Vrtrahan.

The most common context of the usage of vrtrahān is in conjunction with the drinking of Soma, or its pressing, but little information beyond that is included, except that the drinking is purposive and usually within a ritual context. A good example of this type is a passage from Book 9, which is devoted to the pressing of Soma.

9.113.1: śaryanāvati sōmam índrah  
pibatu vrtrahā/ bālam dādhāna ātmāni  
karisyān vīryam mahād índrāyendo  
pāri srava//

Let Indra Vrtrahan drink Soma in  
Saryanavat. Placing strength within  
the self, he is about to accomplish  
a great (feat). For Indra, O Indu,  
flow!

Two points in the verse are clearly expressed: (1) Indra Vrtrahan does drink Soma, and (2) a great feat will be accomplished because of that drinking. The other examples<sup>48</sup> follow the same general pattern. The term "Vrtrahan" is also used as an epithet in verses where little specific information can be elicited (1.106.6; 1.186.6; 4.30.22; 8.27.8; 8.77.3). Even the drinking of Soma is not mentioned. The first example of the above model occurs in a refrain-filled hymn to several gods. In 1.106.6 Indra is Vrtrahan and also sacīpati (Lord of power). In 1.186.6 a similar idea is expressed as Indra is Vrtrahan and also most powerful of men. In 4.30.22 Vrtrahan occurs with gōpati and the designation of Indra as one who shakes all. In 8.77.3 Vrtrahan is used as a doubling for dasyuhān. In 8.27.8 it is not clear whether Indra comes first because he is Vrtrahan or because Indra is of pre-eminent importance in the sacrificial ritual and is therefore the first to receive the invocatory call. The verses connecting Vrtrahan to the sacrificial ritual are very important and an analysis of some examples follows immediately.

---

<sup>48</sup> See also, 1.16.8; 1.84.3; 3.41.4; 3.52.7; 5.40.1-4; 6.47.6; 8.2.26; 8.3.17; 8.4.11; 8.6.40; 8.13.15; 8.33.1, 14; 8.37.1; 8.78.7; 8.82.1; 8.92.24; 8.93.18, 20, 30, 32, 33; 8.96.19-21. The selected verses typify the thrust of the ones just cited.

There are other referents to Vrtrahan also within a ritual context but which develop a theme which allows further reflection in addition to a consideration of a contextual setting. The two clusters of verses mentioned above (5.40.1-4 and 8.96.19-21) while not developing various themes extensively since the drinking of Soma is continually stressed, show how themes may be developed using the ritual context as a base or contextual referent in the composing of verses.

One further point that becomes clear in examining these verses is the non-separation of battle or strife from a ritualistic action.<sup>49</sup> The hermeneutical problem becomes more complex, however, when one examines the verses in order to determine whether the strife refers to military action or to a ritualistic action within the cultus which is being expressed in terms which the interpreter would normally assume refers to military action. The startlingly clear delineation of extra-Indra Vrtrahan references into the categories of either 'strife' (in terms of military action) or 'ritual action' in the next chapter<sup>50</sup> forces great care in analysis when examining the

---

<sup>49</sup>For a general theoretical setting see M. Eliade Cosmos and History (New York, 1959) 29 and on the need to sacralize territory The Sacred and the Profane (New York, 1961) 29 ff. and for more specific information on the relationship between strife and ritual see Kuiper "Verbal Contest" and J.C. Heesterman, "The Case of the Severed Head" Weiner Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens XI (1967), 22-43.

<sup>50</sup>See p. 111ff. below.



present category for similar thrusts. However, the references to Indra as Vrtrahan are more complex and are not easily divided into self-contained thematic sections. The best way to resolve such a dilemma is to let the verses speak for themselves. Then the interpreter can examine the context of the verses and so arrive at a reasoned conclusion.

In order to focus attention upon the thrust of the verses to be examined some general motifs can be set forth -- for instance, the one mentioned above on the drinking or pressing of Soma. An example of the bringing together of strife and ritual is 2.20.7, which, while being the only reference to Indra-Vrtrahan in Book 2, serves as an appropriate focus.

sá vrtrahéndrah kṛsnáyonīḥ puramdaró  
 dāsīr airayad ví/ ájanayan mánave  
 ksām apás ca satrá sānsam yájamān-  
 asya tūtót//

Indra, the Vrtrahan, the destroyer of forts, split apart the Dasas who were generated in blackness<sup>51</sup> (whose wombs were black).<sup>52</sup> He generated earth and water for man and always strengthens the praising of the sacrificer.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup>This may refer to an outcast situation.

<sup>52</sup>This may refer to the malappropriation of Soma by those whose bellies (a possible meaning for *yóni* as 'generation' under the influence of Soma is an important aspect of ritual) must be split open to allow the Soma to flow for the benefit of the Aryans.

<sup>53</sup>cf. 4.32.1; 7.32, 6; 8.46.8; 8.62.11; 8.90.1; 10.23.2. The selected verses typify the thrust of the ones just cited.

A further clarification of this category (the bringing together of strife and ritual) is provided by 5.35.6 (discussed above) as the reference deals unmistakably with a conflict and a ritual action. In the latter verse Indra is being invoked "for the securing of vigour" by "the people who have spread the sacrificial grass".

There are several occurrences of Indra-Vrtrahan being described as a helper in battle. These references do not seem to have a direct ritual setting but there needs to be some hermeneutical reflection on these passages in order to ensure a correct decision on the context of these passages. As examples of this type of reference I have chosen 7.31.6 and 1.81.1.<sup>54</sup>

7.31.6: tvám vármāsi sapráthah puro-  
yodhás ca vrtrahan/ tváyā prāti bruve  
yujā//

You are a wide shield,<sup>55</sup> the one who  
advances first,<sup>56</sup> the overcomer of  
resistance. With you as my companion  
I answer.

---

<sup>54</sup>cf. 1.100.2; 3.54.15; 4.32.1; 5.38.4; 6.45.5; 8.46.13; 8.61.15; 8.93.15, 16; 8.70.1; 8.92.17; 10.103.10; 10.133.1. While there is no exclusive reason why 7.31.6 and 1.81.1 were chosen for discussion over against the other verses cited here, these two verses typify well the elements contained in the other verses.

<sup>55</sup>From the root vr.

<sup>56</sup>The only other reference is 7.82.9 where the context is a ritual action. It is not clear whether an honorific or descriptive usage is primary. The resolution of the proper context of the verse would have to precede any decision.

1.81.1: índro mādaya vāvrdhe śavase  
 vrtrahā nr̥bhīh/ tām in mahātsv āji-  
 sūtem ārbhe havāmahe sā vājesu prā  
 no 'visat//

Indra Vrtrahan was increased in strength  
 by men for exhilaration and power. Him  
 we call on in great competitions and  
 the small one. He aids us in our  
 vigorous energies.

In the latter verse it is clear that Indra-Vrtrahan is a helper in battle. What is not so clear is what kind of 'battle' is being indicated. Kuiper has written on the games and contests associated with Vedic ritual<sup>57</sup> and this verse may well refer to such a situation. Moreover, the nature of the battle may be within the ritual itself, an attempt at overcoming obstacles in the gaining of the religious quest. The former verse used very explicit military terminology, but even here the situation is not clear. The extension of Indra's power, the protection and confidence Indra gives could apply equally well to a ritualistic setting.

Another classification of verses refers to a ritual setting where there is no actual reference to fighting or battle. This classification may be divided into two sections: one dealing with invocatory phrases<sup>58</sup> and the other showing a more general ritual

---

<sup>57</sup> See Kuiper, "Verbal Contest".

<sup>58</sup> See also, 3.31.14, 18; 3.40.8; 4.30.1; 8.24.7, 8; 8.64.9; 8.45.25; 8.66.9, 10, 11.



setting as context.<sup>59</sup> Rgveda 8.66.9, because it contains an "epic" reference, will be discussed below.<sup>60</sup> An example of invocation<sup>61</sup> (other than 1.81 cited above) is 8.45.25:

yā vrtrahā parāvāti sánā návā ca  
cucyuvé/ tā samsátsu prá vocata//

Announce in the assemblies these  
(deeds) which, ancient and recent,  
far away the Vrtrahan has performed.

As an example of a generalized ritual context, 8.1.14 contains the elements appropriate to the category.

ámanmahíd anāsávo 'nugrásas ca vrtra-  
han/ sakṛt sú te mahatā śura rádhasānu  
stómam mudīmahi//

We thought ourselves slow and weak,  
O Vrtrahan. May we have delight one  
day in your great gift, O Hero, at  
the praising.

As can be seen from an examination of this example, a great deal of specific information cannot be elicited, other than the ritualistic orientation. Therefore, the listing of these verses concerning a general ritual orientation is done more for the rounding out of the

<sup>59</sup>See also 3.31.11, 21; 4.32.19, 21; 8.1.14; 8.66.3; 9.98.10.

<sup>60</sup>See below p. 98f.

<sup>61</sup>I mean by "invocatory" those verses which clearly and explicitly deal with the calling of the god to the sacrifice as opposed to those whose general ritual function is less clearly discernible.

categories in which the references fall than for information which will shed some light on the meaning of the epithet.

Before proceeding further, an examination of 3.47.2 and 3.52.7 together may enable a clearer definition of the hermeneutical problem. An analysis of these verses demonstrates the difficulty of separating the categories of fighting (battle) and ritual orientation in the Rgveda. Moreover, the question must be raised as to whether separation can or should be made.<sup>62</sup> The lines on which attention must be concentrated are: 3.47.2 ab and 3.52.7 cd. For the sake of clarity the entire verse is translated in each case.

sajóṣā indra sāgaṇo marúdbhih sómam  
piba vrtrahā śura vidvān/ jahí  
śatrūñr āpa mrdho nudasvāthābhayam  
krnuhi viśvato nah//

Together, accompanied by Maruts, drink,  
O Indra, Soma, wise hero and Vrtrahan.  
Slay enemies, push away the contemptuous  
and so make us secure on all sides.

pūsanvāte te cakrma karambhām hāri-  
vate hāryaśvāya dhānah/ apūpām addhi  
sāgaṇo marúdbhih sómam piba vrtrahā  
śura vidvān//

---

<sup>62</sup> p. 104f.

We have made gruel for you, accompanied by Pushan, corn for the having yellow (i.e., Soma), for the Lord of Bay steeds. Accompanied by Maruts, eat the meal cake, drink Soma, wise hero and Vrtrahan.

The insertion of the similar phrases "drink...Soma, wise hero and Vrtrahan" and "drink Soma, wise hero and Vrtrahan" does not imply a poetic convention but rather a conscious intention to express part of the religious signification of Vrtrahan. Here we have a double inference clearly demonstrated -- on the one hand Indra as Vrtrahan overcomes enemies in a battle (after drinking Soma); on the other hand, the Vrtrahan (unmistakably Indra in both verses) partakes fully in the sacrificial ritual. The former verse also illustrates the contextual placing of the word vrtrahan within a hymn giving direct reference to a conflict. The conflict appears to focus upon the drinking of Soma. The reference to Vrtra in verse 3 and Ahi in verse 4 along with the references to drinking Soma and the close reciprocal relationship between the Maruts and Indra (verses 3d and 4) lends credence to the view that a ritualistic context is meant by the images and metaphors of the hymn. This point is argued more fully in Chapter 4 during the analysis of verses referring to the allies of Indra in the Vrtra-conflict.

I discussed above the occurrences of Vrtra and Vrtrahan within one verse. The occurrences within one hymn are not numerous,



occurring most frequently in Book 8.<sup>63</sup> While the occurrences within Book 8 do not contribute significantly to the hermeneutical unfolding of the Indra-Vrtra motif, the two examples in Book 10 cast doubt on the normative interpretations, as was mentioned above.

There are some references dealing with what have been termed epic-narrative passages which deal with Vrtrahan and are outside the framework of the epical hymns discussed above. In 4.30.7 the reference to Vrtra is oblique at best (danu). The most interesting reference, however, is 8.45.4 because of the reference to the mother (mātr) of Indra and also the reference to the birth of Indra. This reference to the bow, which may remove the verse from the normative Indra-Vrtra conflict theme should be noted.<sup>64</sup>

In the birth-narratives of Indra, especially 4.18, Vrtrahan is not mentioned, even though the Vrtra-conflict is.<sup>65</sup> One would expect some mention of the epithet in these lists of deeds since the epithet supposedly celebrates Indra's chief deed. At this point 8.66.9 should also be mentioned as Indra is called the Vrtrahan from birth. Vrtrahan is also used in verses 3, 10, and 11 of this hymn. The reference in verse 9 to birth is so pithy that it cannot be concluded that Indra was destined from birth to be the Vrtrahan. Rather, it appears

---

<sup>63</sup> Besides 8.47: 3.30, 8.2, 8.3, 8.6, 8.62, 8.89, 8.90. It should be noted that 3.30 is an epical hymn and that 3.30.4, 5, have already been discussed.

<sup>64</sup> See F.B.J. Kuiper, "An Austro-Asiatic Myth in the RgVeda" in *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie*.... (Amsterdam, 1950) (hereafter cited Kuiper, "Austro-Asiatic Myth").

<sup>65</sup> See also 8.77.1, where Satakratu is used, not Vrtrahan.

to be a device to celebrate the slaying of Vrtra as Indra's chief and greatest deed. Thus one must conclude that there is no integral connection of the epithet with the birth of Indra in the Rgveda. The mention of Vrtrahan in connection with epic-narrative material, especially the references to the birth of Indra and to his mother, are not conducive to any firm connection between the epithet and an epical feat because the references are not only not numerous, but also occur most often in the later hymns (Book 8).

#### The Blind and the Lamé

While collecting information on the Indra-Vrtra conflict I came across one reference which seemed deserving of a sub-heading on its own because of some of the ramifications of its context. The problem of interpretation becomes crucially important in ascertaining the intention of the verse. The debate between the two schools of interpretation which focus upon either military themes or ritual context themes crystallizes in the analysis of this verse. The reference is an atypical one occurring in 4.30.19 and it could shed light on whether the battles frequently mentioned in connection with Vrtrahan are armed conflicts or are reminiscent of a cosmic conflict in a ritual situation. In the terms and concepts expressed in the verse (the linking of vrtrahan with "the blind and the lame") the verse is atypical from those verses previously discussed. However, after examining references to "the blind and the lame", it becomes clear that the verse is an interpretative key for the analysis of the conflict

situation.

ánu dva jahita nayo 'ndham sronam ca  
vrtrahan/ ná tát te sumnám ástave//

You, Vṛtrahan, lead the two who have  
been abandoned -- the blind and the  
lame. They<sup>66</sup> are not able to attain  
this favour of yours.

The problem here is to decide what is meant by "the blind and the lame". If these are the injured warriors who can no longer fight, then they would be abandoned by the remaining warriors and they would cry out to the "best warrior" for succor. If, however, the reference is to those who cannot perform the sacrificial ritual (the connotation here being unworthy rather than handicapped), then a separate series of correspondences may be set up. An example of the latter is 8.1.14, discussed above. The Rgvedic references to the blind and the lame several times also refer to an "outcast"<sup>67</sup> or the son of an unwed girl. For example, Indra raises the outcast from the depths (which may also be the point of 1.106.6) and gives fame to the blind and the lame (2.13.12), the Asvins give the outcast aid and make the blind to see and the lame to walk (1.112.8). Soma

---

<sup>66</sup>Not, as Griffith, "None may attain...."

<sup>67</sup>It is possible that some thinly veiled references in 4.18 may refer to Indra having been an outcast. For example, verse 5 refers to Indra's mother concealing him after which he rose up and put on his garment, paralleling somewhat 2.15.7(a). There is no hard evidence that Indra's father is mentioned in 4.18, but much evidence about his mother's embarrassment.



(8.79.2) enables the blind to see and the lame to walk and helps the blind and the lame (10.25.11). Indra allots a portion of the praising to the outcast, the son of the unwed girl (4.30.16). There are two remaining passages which are clearly ritualistic in nature and should be looked at carefully.

4.19.9: vamribhih putram agrūvo adā-  
 nam niveśanad dhairiva ā jabhartha/  
 vy āndō akhyad āhim ādadāno nīr bhūd  
 ukhachit sam aranta pārva//

You, possessor of Soma, have brought out from the secret place the unwedded one's son being eaten by ants. The blind saw, grasping the snake. The Potbreaker came away, his limbs knitted together.

2.15.7: sā vidvan apagoham kaninam  
 āvir bhāvann ud atisthat parāvṛk/  
 prāti sronā sthād vy anag acasta  
 somasya tā māda indras cakāra//

Knowing the secret place of the virgins, the outcast stood up, becoming visible. The lame stood firm, the blind saw. These things Indra did in the exhilaration of Soma.

The first verse may be divided into two sections. The first half refers to a ritual act which has been mentioned by Heesterman<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup>Heesterman, "The Case of the Severed Head".

while the second is a healing incantation of some sort. The invocation to Indra is what ties these two sections together in a coherent whole. The second verse clearly shows what Indra caused to happen under the influence of Soma. The problem here is what "virgins" means. It may have reference to the waters released in the Vrtra-conflict as in 4.19.7 where the waters are called unwed and young women (yuvatis).<sup>69</sup> The thrust of the argument seems clear: the blind and the lame are not those physically handicapped (except for 4.19.9 cd) through a battle, but rather refer to those unable to perform expertly the proper ritualistic sequence.

#### Further References to Vrtrahan

The remaining references to Vrtrahan seem, at first glance, to directly and explicitly support Kuiper's contention that the

---

<sup>69</sup>The Connection of this inference with the Vrtra-conflict will be discussed in a later chapter when the waters released in the conflict are examined for contextual references. The problem of the interpretation of water symbolism is complex. Mircea Eliade in Patterns, comments (p. 188): "To state the case in brief, water symbolizes the whole of potentiality; it is fons et origo, the source of all things and of all possible existence. "Water, thou art the source of all things and of existence!" says one Indian text [Bhavisyattarapurāṇa, 31, 14], summing up the long Vedic tradition." This treatment of water symbolism fits in well with Kuiper's cosmogonic treatment of the Indra-Vrtra motif. Therefore, one is forced to examine the references to the released waters. If the Indra-Vrtra conflict is not basically a cosmogonic application of water symbolism, then the problem becomes one of interpreting the data otherwise without doing violence to the content or intent of the references.

Indra-Vṛtra conflict has a basis in a cosmogonic myth. There seem to be two different motifs reflected in the references. The first to be discussed implies the supporting of the cosmos while the second refers to the generation of light.

In 10.153.3 Indra the Vṛtrahan props up the sky because he fills up the atmosphere (referring to the separation of heaven and earth).

tvám indrāsi vrtrahā vy àntárikṣam  
atirah/ úd dyām astabhñā ójasā//

O Indra, you are the Vṛtrahan, you  
have pervaded (filled up) mid-space.  
You have propped up the sky by means  
of energy.

If one were to make a distinction between what is normally called cosmogonic and what is normally called cosmologic, as is done below,<sup>70</sup> the latter seems to be indicated here.

The second reference, 8.89.1,<sup>71</sup> is more complex. It refers to a ritual situation where the chanters of the hymn (the Maruts) aid Indra.

brhád indrāya gāyata maruto vrtra-  
hantamam/ yēna jyótir ajanayann  
rtāvṛdho devām devāya jāgrvi//

---

<sup>70</sup>See below p. 156ff.

<sup>71</sup>It is my intention to explicate the entire hymn in Chapter Four. See below, pp. 214 ff.



To Indra sing, O Maruts, the firm  
 (hymn) that is the best Vrtrahan, by  
 means of which the supporters of order  
 caused the deva to generate watchful  
 light for the god.

What is being communicated by this verse? The "supporters of order" (which presupposes an already existent order) are using the chanting of the verse to cause light to appear within the cosmos, which would be an extension of the concept of the cosmologic theme, and not the cosmogonic. Here order (ṛta) is the basis or foundation for coherency in the cosmos.<sup>72</sup> A similar motif is expressed in a verse containing Vrtrahan (8.93.4) where the rising of Surya lies under the authority of Indra. It is not possible to derive any conclusions from such a short sample of material. After examining references to Vrtrahan which do not include Indra (alone) in the next chapter, an examination of the Indra-Vrtra conflict will be undertaken. It is at this point that further discussion on the cosmogonic theme can be continued.

#### Summary

The main thrust of this chapter has been to discuss the references to Indra ás Vrtrahan and to attempt an analysis of various

---

<sup>72</sup>This could tie in with the motifs in 2.13.5 discussed p. above. The latter reference is to Ahihan which contains the motif of releasing the waters. In 8.89.1 the Maruts as chanters send up the hymn and make the hymn Vrtrahan and there is no releasing of waters mentioned. The important distinction will be further elaborated on in Chapter Four.

categories that differentiate these references. Therefore, references to the epic-narrative or to the cosmologic myth themes can only be noted en passant. However, it can be stated that the examination to this point has cast doubt upon the cosmologic theme usually employed as the interpretive key because no foundation has been established concerning the legitimacy of using this motif. There also appears to be a lack of direct connection between Indra-Vrtrahan and the mythological narrative. The infrequent connection between Indra-Vrtrahan and Vrtra (occurring only in Books 8 and 10) and an examination of the occurrences of Ahihan demonstrate this lack of direct connection. There is considerable confusion over the references to strife since similarities of language occur whether one centers on actual physical strife or ritualistic concerns of gaining desired religious ends. Here the wider question of the Sitz im Leben of the hymns must be examined. In this connection the references to Soma take on added significance as the majority of them are not clichés but attempts to express the necessity of imbibing Soma for the gaining of religious visions. The exegesis of the "blind and the lame" passages together with the new understanding of the role of Soma combine to give weight to the ritualistic interpretation, rather than the battle interpretation of the "strife" references.

## APPENDIX:

## References to Indra-Vrtrahan in Book 8:

- (a) An epithet disclosing little of its meaning, usually used in connection with Soma.

|    |                      |                       |                       |
|----|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | 8.2.26               | 8.62.11               | 8.93.80 (superlative) |
|    | 8.3.17 (superlative) | 8.64.9                | 32 (superlative)      |
|    | 8.4.11               | 8.66.9                | 33                    |
|    | 8.6.40               | 10                    | 8.96.19               |
|    | 8.13.15              | 11                    | 20                    |
|    | 8.24.7 (superlative) | 8.70.1                | 21                    |
|    | 8                    | 8.82.1                |                       |
|    | 8.27.8               | 8.90.1                |                       |
|    | 8.32.11              | 8.92.17 (superlative) |                       |
|    | 8.33.1               | 24                    |                       |
|    | 14                   | 8.93.18               |                       |
|    | 8.45.25              | 20                    |                       |
|    | 8.46.13              |                       |                       |

2. epical references
- 8.45.4
- 8.77.3
- 8.78.3
- 8.93.2
- 15
- 16 (superlative)

3. references which require a closer examination but do not fit readily into either of the above categories.

|         |                      |
|---------|----------------------|
| 8.1.14  | 8.78.7               |
| 8.17.9  | 8.89.1 (superlative) |
| 8.24.2  | 8.93.4               |
| 8.37.1  |                      |
| 8.46.3  |                      |
| 8.61.15 |                      |
| 8.66.3  |                      |



Kuiper ("Austro-Asiatic Myth", 179) demonstrates that Book 8 has less acquaintance with Aryan religion. He notes that

...while the names of the other priestly families, to which the books II-VII of the Ṛksamhita are ascribed are Aryan, the name Kaṇva- is clearly not so....The circumstance that the name of the Kaṇvas is non-Aryan becomes particularly significant in the light of Hillebrandt's statement that they did not belong to the elite of the Vedic priestly families, and that their hymns reflect a less direct and intimate acquaintance with the Aryan religious tradition than the other families had.

Thus, the references to Book 8, while statistically numerous, are not to be considered necessarily central to the problem at hand.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### References to Vrtrahan Other Than Those Applicable to Indra

##### Introduction

In the previous chapter references to Indra as Vrtrahan were analyzed. Some doubt was cast upon the suitability of the cosmogonic motif as a key for understanding Indra as Vrtrahan. Also, the lack of direct connection between the epical narrative and the word vrtrahan was pointed out. In addition to the above, and more important to the subject of this chapter, the problem of the reference of the language employed in the verses to either physical strife or cultic ritualistic procedures was noted. An extension of the analysis of vrtrahan to references other than Indra will round out the discussion of this problem.

In the Rgveda there are several references to Vrtrahan in contexts where the relationship is to some other deity than Indra: Agni (1.59.6; 1.74.3; 1.78.4; 3.20.4; 6.16.14,19,48; 8.74.4; 10.69.12), Soma (1.91.5; 6.17.11; 9.1.3; 9.24.6; 9.25.3; 9.28.3; 9.37.5; 9.89.7; 9.98.5; 10.25.9), the Asvins (8.8.9,22), Maruts (6.48.21), Indra-Agni (1.108.3; 3.12.4; 5.86.3; 6.60.3; 7.93.1,4; 7.94.11; 8.38.2), Agni-Sarasvatī (2.1.11), Sarasvatī (6.61.7), Vajra (1.121.12; 6.20.9), Surya (10.170.2), and Manu (10.83.3). Also one individual Trasadasyu, is called Vrtrahan in 4.42.9. This list is more complete than those of Renou<sup>1</sup> or

---

<sup>1</sup>Benveniste and Renou, VV, 115f.

Grassmann.<sup>2</sup>

An examination of these references should help one understand what is often called the "sharing" of this epithet which is used as an example of the tendency towards non-distinctiveness in Vedic theology.<sup>3</sup> Such a view reflects the presupposition that the composers of the hymns, or perhaps more correctly, the compilers of the hymn cycles, transferred epithets from one god to another because of a growing awareness of the one-ness of the other. This view sees a progression towards henotheism, monism or monotheism throughout the later Vedic tradition. Another aspect of the transference of epithets is outlined by Gonda.<sup>4</sup> Gonda does not see anything surprising in the application of attributes to the utensils or properties of a divine person as these would participate in the distinctiveness of the owner.<sup>5</sup> An examination of vajra as Vṛtrahan below will demonstrate this point.

<sup>2</sup>H. Grassmann, Wortebuch zum Rigveda (Wiesbaden, 1964), col. 1770, note phrase "nicht ganz vollständig".

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Macdonell, Vedic Mythology.

<sup>4</sup>Gonda, Epithets (see index, "epithet, transference of").

<sup>5</sup>ibid., 199.



Another decision should also be made concerning the centrality of this epithet to Indra. For example, if one holds in abeyance the references to Indra-Vrtrahan in Book 8, it can be seen that the references to Indra-Vrtrahan are not significantly more numerous than the other references. Consequently, questions must be raised concerning the assumption that the epithet "belongs" to Indra. An examination of the Avestan material yields but one point: there are two references to Haoma (Soma) as varəθragna (Yast 9.16:14,57).<sup>6</sup> Since Indra is not the Haoma-drinker par excellence in the Avestan material, some evidence concerning the "floating" nature of the epithet can be deduced. An examination of the references to Soma as Vrtrahan must take into account the Avestan references. Otherwise one would unreflectingly assume that Gonda's comment on the transference of epithets is correct in all instances and conclude that since Indra drinks Soma, therefore, Soma is Vrtrahan. The problem concerning transference of epithets is more complex, then, than might be supposed at first glance. However, these references should not be used as evidence to conclude that the epithet is not attached to Indra more fundamentally than to other deities in the Rgveda. Rather, some speculation concerning why the drink is thus called is necessary. Is it because of the changed situation which imbibing brings to pass?

---

<sup>6</sup> Kuiper, as quoted by J. Duchesne-Guillemin in "The Religion of Ancient Iran" in C. F. Bleeker and Geo. Widengren (eds.) Historia Religionem, vol.1: Religions of the Past" (Leiden, Brill), 1969, p. 333.

Agni as Vrtrahan

In the references to Agni as Vrtrahan one encounters again the problem of being unable, in many instances, to distinguish between a battle or strife situation and a context surrounding some ritual action. One point that becomes clear is that Agni receives the epithet because some action involving "overcoming" or some concept implying "overcoming" is being expressed by the singer. The references to Agni-Vrtrahan are contained mostly in Books 1 (3), 8 (1) and 10 (1). There are three references in 9.16 and one in 3.20.4. It is the latter that will be examined first.

agnir netā bhaga iva ksitīnam daivīnam  
devā rtupā rtavā / sa vrtrahā sanāyo  
visvavedāḥ parśad viśvati duritā gr̥ṇāntam //.

Agni, as Bhaga the leader of the inhabitants  
who have deva things, <sup>7</sup> the god (who) is the  
maintainer of the seasons, the upholder  
of order, Vrtrahan, ancient one, knower of  
all, <sup>8</sup> let the singer cross over all  
dangers.

The first thing that seems surprising is why Agni should be included in this verse at all. If Indra were substituted the verse would not seem atypical to the verses which were examined in the previous chapter. The same appears to be the case in the three references in 6.16. In

---

<sup>7</sup>i.e., observe the proper rites. I am indebted to Professor R. M. Smith for the phrasing.

<sup>8</sup>Gonda, Epithets, 86, comments that visvavedāḥ in this verse refers to the practical side of knowledge.

6.16.14 Agni is Vrtrahan and destroyer of forts (puramdaram), in 6.16.19 Agni is Vrtrahan and Lord of existence (sátpatis), <sup>9</sup> and in 6.16.48 Agni is best Vrtrahan, the Powerful (vajin) and crusher of the Rakṣasa. The same frame of reference is expressed in 1.59.6 where Agni slays the Dasyu, shakes the wooden stick (kāsthā) <sup>10</sup> and splits Śambara, <sup>11</sup> and in 1.78.4 where Agni is the best Vrtrahan and shakes off the Dasyu. An examination of these verses in their contextual setting leads to two conclusions. The first is that the examples just given take place within a ritual setting. The second is less explicit. It is not clear whether or not an actual physical battle is being indicated. All the references except 1.59.6 are quite ambiguous on the point. The wooden stick and the reference to Śambara in 1.59.6 lead to the supposition that the ritualistic preparation of Soma is intended. This will be further developed in the discussion of Vajra as Vrtrahan.

More clarity is expressed in the two remaining examples, 10.69.12

---

<sup>9</sup>Whether "visible to many" (purucétanas - hapax) can be easily identified with Agni or whether it could refer to an action such as that expressed in 2.15.7 which was discussed in the previous chapter (p. 101) is problematic.

<sup>10</sup>See below, 5.86.3, for a possible connection.

<sup>11</sup>It is well within the bounds of possibility that this word refers to a "missile" being used to pound Soma. However this particular "missile" is being used by an opponent and is, therefore, very dangerous and threatening.



and 1.74.3. In these two verses the reference is to ritual action that reflects a tense situation suggesting combat, but not to an actual battle situation.

10.69.12: ayam agnir vadhryasvasya vrtrahā  
 sanakāt preddho nāmasopavākyah/ sa no  
 ajāmīn utā vā vijāmīn abhi tiṣṭha  
 sardhato vadhryasva//

This Agni of Vardhryasva is the Vrtrahan,  
 kindled from of old, to be praised with  
 obeisance. You, O son of Vardhryasva,  
 defeat our mockers, relations or non-  
 relations.

1.74.3: utā bruvantu jantāva ud  
 agnir vrtrahājani/dhanamjayo  
 rane-rane//<sup>12</sup>

And let men say, "Agni the Vrtrahan,  
 the winner of the prize in every contest,  
 is born!"

The context of these two verses is a verbal contest of some kind within a ritual situation.<sup>13</sup> Agni Vrtrahan is to overcome mockers in the first reference and in the second is to win the prize. The thrust of the first reference is the necessity to overcome a mocker who must be one who denies the efficaciousness of the rite. Thus the verse is not primarily concerned with the religious end which is being scoffed at,

---

<sup>12</sup>There are only two occurrences of the doubling -- the other is in 6.16.5 (note the three references to Agni Vrtrahan in this hymn).

<sup>13</sup>See Kuiper, "Verbal Contest".

but rather oriented towards those who scoff. Agni as the Vrtrahan overcomes and defeats utterly those who would mock. It is not clear at this point why Agni is called Vrtrahan in 1.74.3. There is a connection drawn between Agni who overcomes and gains the prize, but it is not clear what the prize is. In discussing what the "prize" might be later <sup>14</sup> a more definite conclusion can be drawn concerning the "prize" as a religious vision. Here the context seems to be one of gaining either a religious end other than a vision, or even something far more materialistic.

The final occurrence of Agni as Vrtrahan is 8.74.4. The contextual setting of this verse is not clear but the setting appears to be a generalized ritual one.

āganma vrtrahāntamam jyēsthām agnīm  
 ānavam/ yāsyā śrutārvā brhānn ārkśo  
 ānīke ēdhate//

We come to Agni, strongest best Vrtrahan,  
 belonging to the Anava tribe, in front of  
 whom Srutarva, descendent of Rksa becomes  
 prosperous.

There is little information within this verse as to why Agni is here called Vrtrahan, a phenomenon which also occurs occasionally with Indra-Vrtrahan. However, there is a connection between Agni as Vrtrahan and prosperity, which may well reflect a similar situation such as that depicted in 1.74.3, discussed in the previous paragraph.

---

<sup>14</sup>See below, p. 165, and 185f.

There is reference to Agni as Vrtrahan in a list of other namings (2.1.11). I have separated this verse out from the other Agni references to point out that while there are a number of feminine names with attributes being compared to Agni, Vrtrahan is here masculine.<sup>15</sup>

tvām agne āditirdeva dāsūse tvām  
 hotrā bhāratī vardhase girā/ tvām  
 ilā sātahimāsi daksase tvām  
 vrtrahā vasupate sārāsvatī//

You, O Agni, O deva, are Aditi to the one who praises you. You as Bharati grow of the invoking voice for the sacrificer. You are Ila, long lived and strong. You Vrtrahan, Lord of good things are Sarasvatī.

In this verse Vrtrahan, Vasupati, and Sarasvatī are linked. The emphasis appears to be on the practical, material benefits that flow, as Sarasvatī flows, from the Lord of good things who overcomes obstacles. However, Agni (not Sarasvatī) is the effective agent in this reference. One point to be made is that vasupati is most commonly an epithet of Indra<sup>16</sup> and this may argue against any specificity being implied in the usage of the epithet vrtrahā to describe either Agni or Sarasvatī.

---

<sup>15</sup> See Geldner's note where he takes Vrtrahan as the writing of a masculine form for a feminine one and thus concludes that Vrtrahan is an epithet of Sarasvatī. Renou comments (EVP XII, p. 110) that vrtrahā is masculine because one is to think simultaneously of Agni in this usage.

<sup>16</sup> Gonda, Epithets, 75f.



Sarasvatī as Vrtrahan

There is one reference to Sarasvatī as Vrtrahan (6,61,7) and mention should be made that the form vrtraghnī is a hapax feminine form. This is a further argument against the usage of the epithet in 2.1.11 to describe Sarasvatī.

utá syā nah sárasvatī ghorá  
híran̄yavartanih/ vrtraghnī  
vastī sustutīm//

And that Sarasvatī, the terrible,  
having a golden path, the Vrtrahan,  
desires from us a well-praising-hymn.

An argument against the specificity of the usage of this epithet can be made on two grounds. First, the epithet híran̄yavartani occurs most often with the Ásvins.<sup>17</sup> Second, the use of Vrtrahan in this verse reflects an idea which was expressed in verse 5.

yás tvā devi sarasvaty upabrūté dhāne  
hité/ índram ná vrtraturye//

...Who invokes you, O devi Sarasvatī, when  
the prize has been placed, as Indra,  
(was invoked) when resistance was over-  
come.

The concept being expressed here seems to be that, in a ritual setting, a contest of hymns is being sponsored. Sarasvatī is to give aid to the singer, aid of a particular kind. Sarasvatī is to overcome obstacles just as Indra does. Therefore, one cannot make any definitive statement

---

<sup>17</sup>Renou, EVP XV, p. 132.

about the non-Indra usage of the epithet vrtrahan from an examination of 6.61.7 because the Indra-Vrtra conflict lies behind the usage of the epithet. The connection between Sarasvatī and Vāc, developed in the Brāhmaṇas, would greatly enhance the hermeneutical task. However, such a connection in this verse is not obvious and must be avoided lest the argument be labelled anachronistic. The thrust of the reference appears to be the wish for material benefit to flow to the invoker.

#### Soma as Vrtrahan

I will now turn to an examination of Soma as Vrtrahan in order to pursue the extra-Indra usage of the epithet more thoroughly. In the course of my analysis, the references will be split into two parts: references in Book 9 (9.1.3; 24.6; 24.3; 28.3; 37.5; 89.7; 98.5) and references outside Book 9 (1.91.5; 6.17.11; <sup>18</sup> 10.25.9).

#### References in Book 9

The reason for examining the references within Book 9 as a whole is fairly evident when the reasons for the collection of hymns within the book are analyzed. We are here confronted with a theological rationale for collecting and arranging based upon the ritual preparation of Soma. <sup>19</sup> One of the main thematic points is the visualization of

---

<sup>18</sup> This verse was analyzed earlier -- see p. 72f.

<sup>19</sup> Such a statement hardly needs argumentation after the similar conclusions reached by scholars on the subject. See, for example, Renou EVP IX, 1-16, K. F. Geldner, Der Rig-veda aus dem Sanskrit ins Deutsche übersetzt (Cambridge, 1951) III, 1-9.

Soma as a "connecting link" between a desire (or wish) and its fulfillment. This particular thrust becomes apparent when the references in Book 9 are compared with the other references to Soma as Vṛtrahan outside Book 9. Moreover, it seems to me that Renou completely misses the point of his comments on vṛtrahan in Book 9. "Au livre IX la référence au cosmos est conditionnée par la situation rituelle; elle en est la projection; c'est dire qu'il n'y a place que pour les grands événements, non pour le détail des combats ou pour l'itihāsa légendaire. Soma y est bien appelé vṛtrahan en quelques passages, mais l'épithète ne déclenche aucun rappel d'exploits précis." <sup>20</sup> The first part of his comment should have alerted him to the fact that because one should not expect itihāsa in this context, some other rationale must lie behind the use of vṛtrahan. Thus a detailed examination, not a superficial survey, is necessary to determine precisely why and how the epithet is used in Book 9. One would expect a theological usage in this context and such a usage does not invalidate nor does it render insignificant the usage of the epithet.

Two examples, 9.1.3 and 9.37.5, occur where sōma is invoked as Vṛtrahan in order that room (or wide space) might be established.

9.1.3: varivodhātamo bhava māṇhistho  
vṛtrahāntamah/ pārṣi rādho maghónām//

---

<sup>20</sup>Renou, EVP IX, 3.



Best giver of room, best Vrtrahan, be  
most generous! Preserve (promote,  
heap up) the gifts of generous patrons.

In this verse the desire, within a ritualistic context, is fairly evident. The connection between one who is the best giver of room and best Vrtrahan leads to the conclusion that Vrtrahan is here being used in the sense of overcoming obstacles -- especially the tight purses of the patrons. Room is made as the gifts are heaped up in abundance.

9.37.5: sa' vrtrahā vr̥ṣā suto' varivovid  
adābhyah/ sōmo vajam ivāsarāt//

This Vrtrahan, the Bull, pressed Soma,  
granting room, infallible, <sup>21</sup> Soma  
has flowed as vigour! <sup>22</sup>

The implications of the connection between granting room and Vrtrahan in this verse are not as clear as those of the previous verse. Perhaps the connection lies between overcoming obstacles (either mental or physical) and the widening of horizons (whether spiritual or geographic). The particular context of 9.17.5 seems to imply that the vigour of Soma is "wisdom" as distinct from conceptual knowledge because of the usage of "infallible". The distinction between knowing all (in the sense of practical knowledge) and not being able to be deceived is of some importance. Whereas the references to Agni reflect a desire for practicality

---

<sup>21</sup>Infallible either in the sense of knowing all (Geldner) or in the sense of not being able to be deceived (Renou).

<sup>22</sup>As Gonda - see Aspects, 48 and 49 n. 66 where a distinction between the concept and its objective sense is drawn out.

and material benefit, the implication here is that Soma as Vrtrahan gives other than practical knowledge. The granting of the religious vision which coheres with what really is constitutes the thrust of 9.37.5. This contrasts not only with the thrust of the Agni references but also to the rather blatant intent of 9.1.3. These two differing intents must be kept clearly in mind when interpreting the verses that refer to Soma as Vrtrahan.

There is another series of verses (9.24.6, 9.25.3, 9.28.3) clustered together that raises a very complex problem. In my analysis of the Indra as Vrtrahan verses, attention was drawn to the verses dealing with the ingesting of Soma. The same problematic arises in these verses and, therefore, these verses are significant in our examination of the connotations of Vrtrahan. The first verse takes on significance in this respect only when joined to verse 5, where Indra is mentioned, and the important phrase indrasya dhāme "for the dhāman"<sup>23</sup> of Indra", which probably refers to the ingesting of Soma. Such a referent also allows an understanding of why pāvaka, "purifier", usually applied to Agni,<sup>24</sup> is here applied to Soma.

---

<sup>23</sup>See J. Gonda, The Meaning of the Sanskrit term Dhaman (Amsterdam, 1967), (hereafter cited Gonda, Dhaman).

<sup>24</sup>Renou, EVP, VIII, p. 72.

9.24.6: pávasva vrtrahantamokthébhīr  
 anumādyah/ śūcīh pávakó ádbhutah//

Be purified, best Vrtrahan, be gladdened  
 by songs. Pure, purifier, the inconceivable  
 (or mysterious) one!

The context stresses the purification of Soma and comments on the inexplicable mystery of the pure one purifying the drinker. In this sense, then, Soma is aiding Indra and it is in this general context that the phrase "best Vrtrahan" should be understood.<sup>25</sup>

The other two verses also refer to the ingesting of Soma.

Different terminology is employed, however, as the Vrtrahan is in the yóni.

9.25.3: sám devaiḥ śobhate vṛśā kavir  
 yónāv adhi priyāh/ vrtrahā devavītamah//

This bull is being embellished along with  
 the gods, the inspired seeker, the beloved,  
 in the womb. Vrtrahan, the one who most  
 sets in motion the gods!<sup>26</sup>

9.28.3: eṣā devāḥ śubhāyaté 'dhi  
 yónāv amartyah/ vrtrahā devavītamah//

This god is being embellished, the undying  
 one, in the womb. Vrtrahan, the one who  
 most sets in motion the gods!

---

<sup>25</sup> See 9.89.7 and 9.98.5 below.

<sup>26</sup> Phrasing suggested by Professor R. M. Smith. The phrase devavī occurs only in connection with Soma (7.4.1, 748.2, 9.25.3, 9.28.3, 761.3), Madas (775.16, 776.12), Kavi (819.9) and, once, Agni (1.36.9). The reference to Agni is consistent with the other references, even though the others refer to the taking of Soma and the ensuing effects.



These two verses, which are reflecting the same ideas in practically identical ways connect the inspired seeker (here most certainly Soma and not the rsi) with the concept of the deathless. Soma is the one who inspires, the source of inspiration, the constant one who always inspires and implicitly, he whose visions are constant. Further, it is only in the context of having been ingested that Soma is called Vrtrahan. This could refer to the overcoming of physical limitations in the seeking of visions, rather than a reflection of the ingesting by Indra exemplified by transference of the epithet. The larger question here is whether Indra becomes the overcomer of obstacles only by means of the resistance-shattering Soma which he ingests.

A further hermeneutical possibility depends on the interpretation that yoni in the two verses refers to the "third-filter" straining of Soma. The word yoni then would refer metaphorically to the bladder as the source of vision-giving liquid.<sup>27</sup> In the quest for a religious vision, a metaphorical connection may be set up between the bladder as the

---

<sup>27</sup> S. S. Bhawe, The Soma-hymns of the Rgveda (Baroda, 1960), wishes to translate yoni as "place" in both 9.25.3 and 9.27.3, commenting that in 9.27.3 yoni may refer to Soma's (i.e., the deity) heavenly seat. However, in his notes on 9.1.2, which refers to the ritual preparation of soma, he indicates that yoni in this context refers to the place of its origin (the place where the juice was pressed). There is little difficulty in extending this meaning to the bladder in 9.25.3 and 9.27.3. Further, Renou EVP IX.14 would prefer to translate yoni as an ancient word for "chemin". To counter this Gonda, Loka, World and Heaven in the Veda (Amsterdam, 1966), 142, comments on 10.85.24 (and the discussion does not invalidate the present point) that "...the term yoni- implies also the idea of "a safe place", where one is "out of harm's way" ...one of the main connotations of the term loka - is in my opinion intensified...".

source for the on-flowing purified Soma and the racing of rivers to the ocean.<sup>28</sup> This connection has great significance in interpreting the epic-narrative theme and its predilections for the motif of the released waters of Vrtra flowing towards the ocean.<sup>29</sup>

Another correlation based on waters flowing to the ocean suggests itself. The point of taking Soma is the desire to gain a vision (dhī) and it is in the heart (hrd) that the visions are fashioned into words.<sup>30</sup> This process is explicitly described as a purification parallel to or identical with the purification of the soma juice.

The idea is clear: the god who, as the material soma, undergoes in the course of sacrificial ceremonies, a process of clarification, and who, at the same time, is the inspirer of thoughts, is believed to be the power presiding over clarification and to bring about that process with regard to the inspired thoughts which, while being received by the "poet" in his heart, are transformed into liturgical words which in their turn are to accompany oblations of the soma juice and to make these effective.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, the words come from an ocean, reside in the ocean that is the heart, and flow out as hymns from the inspired singers. Renou comments

---

<sup>28</sup>Grassmann, col. 1126, under meaning 4 for yōni states "als solches wird für den Soma die Kufe dargestellt, der er zuströmt, für die Ströme das Meer".

<sup>29</sup>See below Chapter Four.

<sup>30</sup>See Gonda, Vision, 278f., for the following comments.

<sup>31</sup>ibid., 279.

on hrd in 4.58 that

le coeur est un océan spirituel, vers  
lequel confluent les éléments de la parole.  
...L'océan (samudra) est apposé à hrd....  
Mais l'image comporte un champ plus complexe,  
car "océan" est aussi le nom magnifié de la  
cuve à soma où se déversent les eaux et les  
sucs de la liqueur sacrée: c'est cet océan  
même que représente le "coeur" poétifiant. <sup>32</sup>

Gonda, basing his comments on Lüders, interprets the ocean-heart/  
ocean-sacred speech complex as the coalescence of three ideas:

the existence of a heavenly ocean which is of  
vital importance for the inhabitants of the  
earth, the heavenly origin of sacred speech,  
the heart as the place where inspiration is  
received and from which sacred speech originates. <sup>33</sup>

However, the whole question of a celestial ocean has come under close  
scrutiny. F. B. J. Kuiper <sup>34</sup> comments that Lüders' conclusions concern-  
ing a celestial ocean are not backed up by the passages he cites.

However, if one follows the suggestion of Renou above that the ocean  
symbol refers to the soma bowl we do not need to interpose a celestial  
ocean motif on the interpretation. Thus the soma bowl is the origin

---

<sup>32</sup>L. Renou, Études sur le Vocabulaire du Rgveda (Pondichéry, 1958),  
60-61, (hereafter cited Renou, E Voc).

<sup>33</sup>Gonda, op. cit., 281.

<sup>34</sup>Kuiper, "Heavenly Bucket". Kuiper notes that at his death Lüders  
was on the verge of a different orientation to Vedic mythology.



of sacred speech (the ocean whose waters flow to the heart), the heart is another ocean and "waters" flow from it as actualized sacred speech. <sup>35</sup>

Renou, for his part, does not maintain any consistency, however, in his remarks on waters and ocean. He comments elsewhere, in a fairly long discourse <sup>36</sup> on "waters", missing, as he did in another context, <sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Kuiper also notes the correlation. "It would require a special study to demonstrate the parallelism which for the Vedic poet exists between the macrocosmic opening of the primordial hill and the microcosmic opening of the mind, as a result of Indra's vrtrahatya-. I must confine myself to the statement, that the Rig-vedic seer gets his vision with or in his heart (hrda or hrdi). Hence it is that the Rigveda refers to the "ocean of the heart"....and divine inspiration is looked upon as an "opening of the doors of the mind" that is parallel to the opening of the cosmic "enclosure" (vraja-). "The Bliss of Aśa" IJJ 8 (1964), 125. See also "Verbal Contest", 249.

<sup>36</sup> Renou EVP IX.11-12. Il y'a d'autre part, des mots du langage courant, qui dans un entourage favorable (comme celui qu'offrent par nature les phrases du Livre IX) ont pu sembler désigner des instruments, des éléments concrets du sacrifice, ainsi samudra pour dire "cuve à soma", nadi pour "jet de soma", adri pour "pierre du pressoir", sanu pour "filtre", nabhas pour "tapis humide". Il y aurait là, la somme, une majoration d'emploi, la tendance des poètes védiques pour la prodigalité verbale les ayant conduit à utiliser des mots "immenses" pour décrire de fait très menus. Mais c'est là une observation secondaire, à certains égards même erronée. Comme il ressort mieux maintenant du travail de Lüders, le vocabulaire divin du soma demeure (en général) distinct du vocabulaire terrestre: quand il est question de samudra ou de sindhu, il s'agit bien de mer et de fleuve, non de cuve à soma ou de coulée; nous sentons bien, évidemment, que "mer" et "fleuve" sont des translations au ciel de figurations sômiques (ou, ce qui revient au même -- tant les choses védiques sont indéfiniment réversibles --, que les figures nées du rite reproduisent des phénomènes que l'oriel du poète situait dans les creux) mais il n'y a pas là superimposition de sens, il y a projection de schémas, véritable traduction. L'ambivalence réside dans la pensée, sans pour autant accéder au langage. Les mots sont plus riches que les significations.

<sup>37</sup> See above p. 124.

the significance of the macrocosm-microcosm homology. He also relies on Lúder's theory of a celestial ocean to understand and interpret the references to sóma and samudra. The combination of these two presuppositions leads, in my opinion, to an inadequate analysis of the inter-relationship of the above terms.

Moreover, in order to avoid further confusion, it must be remembered that, in the Rgveda, we are not dealing with anatomical precision. "Words for "heart" or their derivatives were on the one hand frequently used also for the "middle" or "centre" and even for the "bowels", and on the other hand employed to denote a variety of emotions the seat of which was thought to be "in the heart"." <sup>38</sup> There are other words used in the Rgveda to connote the abdomen: jathára, udára, kuksí, vyacas, and vaksámā. <sup>39</sup> By far the majority of these references specify the drinking of sóma by Indra. The usage of yóni in the two verses above centers on the "inner source" of inspiration. Soma is the overcomer who "most sets in motion the gods" through sacred speech.

The preceding analyses dealt with some allusions to the ingesting of sóma. By focussing on references to the retention of sóma a correspondence was set up between the physical release of sóma and the metaphorical

---

<sup>38</sup>Gonda, op. cit., 282.

<sup>39</sup>See Grassmann for a listing of the occurrences. Interestingly, udára occurs in Book I 4 times, Book 8 4 times, Book 10 once; kuksí Book 1 once, Book 2 once, Book 3 twice, Book 8 twice, Book 9 twice, Book 10 twice; vyacas Book 1 twice, Book 10 once; vaksámā Book 1 3 times, Book 3 twice, Book 4 once, Book 6 once, Book 8 once, Book 10 twice; jathára Book 1 three times, Book 2 twice, Book 3 7 times, Book 5 once, Book 6 twice, Book 8 once, Book 9 4 times, Book 10 5 times.



imagery of waters racing to the ocean (not a celestial ocean). Along the same lines, the soma bowl may be pictured as an ocean and the release of soma from the soma bowl may be pictured as the flowing of released waters. Soma flows to the "heart" which is also pictured as an ocean. From the ocean of the heart come the words of the hymn. No definite conclusion can be drawn at this point because all the evidence has not yet been examined. However, I offer these remarks as a tentative hypothesis which does not conflict with the discussions occasioned by the references to Indra as Vrtrahan.<sup>39a</sup>

The two remaining references to Soma as Vrtrahan in Book 9 (89.7 and 98.5) clearly imply a close connection with Indra. The first verse expresses the mysteries of the working of Soma and also stresses purification.

vanvān āvāto abhi devāvītim indrāya  
soma vrtrahā pavasva/ śagdhī mahāḥ puruṣ-  
candrasyarāyaḥ suvīryasya patayaḥ syāma//

Winning, not having won. For Indra do you  
who are the Vrtrahan, O Soma, flow clear at  
the setting in motion of the god. Be  
powerful over great resplendent riches.<sup>40</sup>  
May we be the lords of heroic ability.<sup>41</sup>

At this point one question must be raised: what is the nature of these "riches"? Are these "riches" in the sense of booty or gifts from patrons

<sup>40</sup>As Renou and Geldner.

<sup>41</sup>Gonda, *op. cit.*, 116.

<sup>39a</sup>See below 199 ff.



of the sacrifices (as 9.1.3) or is something else meant? It is my contention that the granting of visions is being referred to and that this interpretation extends to the phrase concerning the lordship of heroic power. Again, the references to Soma as the one who "overcomes" explains the usage of Vrtrahan in this context, better than would a transference of the epithet from Indra to Soma. Much the same interpretation can be developed from 9.98.5.

vayam te asya vrtrahan vaso vasvah  
 purusprah/ ni nedisthatama isah  
 syama sumnasyadhrigo//

O benevolent one, O Vrtrahan, greatly desiring  
 this wealth of yours, O irresistible one may  
 we be nearest to the drink of euphoria.

A somewhat stronger argument for the transfer of the epithet could be made concerning this particular verse because 8.24.8a, which refers to Indra, is equivalent to 5a. However, the question must again be raised concerning the nature of "wealth", and should be answered as previously, especially since there is a direct connection between the vision-giving properties of Soma and wealth. Secondly, if the translation of adhrigo as "irresistable"<sup>42</sup> connotes the proper meaning, then the usage of Vrtrahan does not seem out of context as one would expect the "Overcomer of Resistance" to be "Irresistable".

---

<sup>42</sup>With Grassmann against Renou EVP, IX, pp. 52 and 111. Also note the uncertainty of Geldner. For "irresistable" as the meaning, see also M. Mayrhofer, Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindische (Heidelberg, 1956), under "adhrih" and Gonda, Epithets, 126.

The remaining examples of Vrtrahan applied to Soma occur outside of Book 9 in the late Books 1 and 10 (1.91.5 and 10.25.9). The first example is interesting for other reasons than those which immediately concern us here because Soma in 1.91 is the moon.<sup>43</sup> Many different traits of Soma are expressed within the verse, including the reference to Vrtrahan.

tvám somāsi sátpatis tvám rájotā  
vrtrahā/ tvám bhadró asi krátuh//

You, Soma, are lord of truth,<sup>44</sup>  
you are king and Vrtrahan.  
You are auspicious'psychic power.

Here, a somewhat different flavour from the examples from Book 9 is evident. Kingship appears to be stressed with krātu being connected with Soma on the one hand and, on the other hand, with krātu being the power which enables the king to be both "lord of truth" and "overcomer of obstacles". The winning of visions seems to be downplayed and the inculcation of a more "practical"<sup>45</sup> wisdom, much along the same lines as the usage of Vrtrahan in reference to Agni, examined above,<sup>46</sup> is

<sup>43</sup>See Gonda, Change 48 and 51. See also A. Bergaigne, La religion védique (Paris, 1878).

<sup>44</sup>See Renou, EVP, IX, 120.

<sup>45</sup>See Gonda, Epithets on the meaning of krātu.

<sup>46</sup>See above p. 111ff.

stressed. Material prosperity is not directly mentioned but the benevolence of the king, and the supposition that Soma allows the king to see what decisions he should justly make are being stressed. Thus the emphasis has shifted away from the ingesting of soma for the purpose of receiving religious visions. A similar conclusion could be drawn from 10.25.9.

tvam no vrtrahantamēndrasyendo sīvaḥ  
sākḥā/ yāt sīm hāvante samithé vi vo  
made yudhyamānās tokāsātau vīvaksase//

You, O Indu, O best Vrtrahan for us, are  
the auspicious friend of Indra when they  
who fight call him in conflict, in inspiration  
you desire to speak in the winning  
of offspring.

At first reading this appears to be just another instance of the transference of the epithet. However, the last phrases of the verse show that the same belief in the overcoming of obstacles by Soma is still in effect. However, the "prizes" are not those of the verses in Book 9. Here again, practicality prevails. The references here are to life-crises, when anxiety rises and the issue is in balance. Both battle and child-begetting fit these life-crises and the practical expediency of invoking Soma is stated to be the way to overcome the problems. Therefore, the two verses just examined (along with 9.1.3) do not appear to lend themselves to the interpretation which I propose concerning the ingesting of Soma. Soma in the other references discussed above is the overcomer of obstacles in the seeking of a vision,



### Indra-Agni as Vrtrahan

The examination of the references to Vrtrahan as a grammatical dual are important. Interestingly, all the references implying a dual refer to Indra-Agni. These references may be broken down into two distinct groups: references within a broad liturgical context (6.60.3; 7.93.1,4; 7.94.11) and references that seem to refer to the two Vrtrahans releasing soma (1.108.3; 3.12.4; 8.38.2). One further reference may be noted within this section. The singular reference to Indra as Vrtrahan in 5.86.3 occurs within an Indra-Agni hymn. This particular reference is quite complex, but it is my opinion that a discussion of it belongs more properly under a discussion of the references to Indra-Agni.

### General Liturgical Context

This particular category does not shed much light on either the problem of the meaning of Vrtrahan or why the word should be employed in the dual to refer to Indra-Agni. In 6.60, verses 1 and 6 refer to the slaying of foes and winning of spoil that becomes problematic if an actual skirmish is not being referred to. However, verse 3 sheds some light on what is meant by speaking about what the "spoil of battle" might be.

ā vrtrahanā vrtrahābhih<sup>47</sup> sūsmair  
 indra yātam namobhir agne arvāk/  
 yuvām radhobhir ārkavebhir indragne  
 asme bhavatam uttamebhih//

O Vrtrahans, with energies that do  
 overcome resistances, O Indra, O Agni,  
 come here with allotments of praises.  
 You be among us, O Indra and Agni,  
 with the best, abundant favours.

Because the resistances have been overcome energies are now ready to  
 be utilized. Indra and Agni are asked to be present in order to share  
 the benefits of overcoming resistances. The references in 7.93.1 and  
 4 should also be seen in much the same way, i.e., a general liturgical  
 context which stresses both the invocatory aspect and the request for  
 energy or vigour.

sūcim nū stomam nāvajātam adyēndrāgnī  
 vrtrahanā juṣethām/ ubhā hi vām suhāvā  
 jōhavīmi tā vajam sadya usatē dhesthā//

Right now, O Indra, Agni, Vrtrahans, enjoy  
 this pure, new-born chant. Both of you,  
 easily invoked, I repeatedly call, most  
 generously at once give vigour to one who  
 desires (it).

gīrbhīr viprah prāmatim ichāmana itte  
 rayīm yasāsam pūrvabhājam/ indrāgnī  
 vrtrahanā suvajrā prā no nāvyebhis  
 tiratam desnāih//

---

<sup>47</sup>While this is a play on words, a more significant meaning is  
 apparent.

The ecstatic seer, desiring protection  
 through praising with songs, begs splendid  
 wealth, begs receiving the first share. <sup>48</sup>  
 O Indra-Agni, Vrtrahans, having excellent  
 vajras, <sup>49</sup> promote us with new gifts.

The conclusion may be drawn from these verses that what is required by the ecstatic seer is vigour or energy. The first or foremost share is called for and 7.93.4 definitely implies the sacred context of this wealth because the seer weaves hymns of praise to protect himself against the possible bad effects of the "gifts". The phrase "having excellent vajras" usually applied to Indra in the singular leads to another question: are we again dealing, as with the references to Agni Vrtrahan, to a transference of epithet from Indra to Indra-Agni? The next section should clarify this problem.

#### Releasing Soma

The only firm reference to the release of sóma in an Indra-Agni verse is 1.108.3. However by placing the references in 3.12.4 and 8.38.2 beside the first instance, one can draw some conclusions concerning the releasing of sóma. It further becomes evident that vigour or energy is related to this releasing.

1.108.3: cakráthe hí sadhryān nāma bhadram  
 sadhrīcīnā vrtrahanā utá sthah/ táv indrāgni  
 sadhryānca niśādhyā vṛśnah sómasya vṛśanā vṛsethām//

---

<sup>48</sup> Much the same emphasis occurs in 7.94.11.

<sup>49</sup> Gonda, Epithets, 243 -- note this is the only plural reference.



You have made for yourselves, for a common goal, <sup>50</sup> an auspicious name, and for a common goal, you are Vrtrahans. You, O Indra-Agni for a common goal, seated, you mighty ones pour forth powerful soma.

One might expect that the drinking of Soma by Indra-Agni leads to the acquisition of energy or vigour -- energy and vigour that can be passed on to one who invokes. Here, however, it is soma itself that is poured forth, that streams, from the Vrtrahans. In 9.37.5, soma, as discussed above, pours forth as vigour. A further insight into what this may mean is provided by 3.12.4 and 8.38.2.

<sup>/</sup><sub>1</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>2</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>3</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>4</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>5</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>6</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>7</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>8</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>9</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>10</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>11</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>12</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>13</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>14</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>15</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>16</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>17</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>18</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>19</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>20</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>21</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>22</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>23</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>24</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>25</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>26</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>27</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>28</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>29</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>30</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>31</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>32</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>33</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>34</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>35</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>36</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>37</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>38</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>39</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>40</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>41</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>42</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>43</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>44</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>45</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>46</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>47</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>48</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>49</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>50</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>51</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>52</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>53</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>54</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>55</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>56</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>57</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>58</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>59</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>60</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>61</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>62</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>63</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>64</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>65</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>66</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>67</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>68</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>69</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>70</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>71</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>72</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>73</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>74</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>75</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>76</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>77</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>78</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>79</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>80</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>81</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>82</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>83</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>84</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>85</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>86</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>87</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>88</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>89</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>90</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>91</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>92</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>93</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>94</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>95</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>96</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>97</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>98</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>99</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>100</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>101</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>102</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>103</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>104</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>105</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>106</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>107</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>108</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>109</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>110</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>111</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>112</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>113</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>114</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>115</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>116</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>117</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>118</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>119</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>120</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>121</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>122</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>123</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>124</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>125</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>126</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>127</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>128</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>129</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>130</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>131</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>132</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>133</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>134</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>135</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>136</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>137</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>138</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>139</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>140</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>141</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>142</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>143</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>144</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>145</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>146</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>147</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>148</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>149</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>150</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>151</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>152</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>153</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>154</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>155</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>156</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>157</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>158</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>159</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>160</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>161</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>162</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>163</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>164</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>165</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>166</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>167</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>168</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>169</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>170</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>171</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>172</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>173</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>174</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>175</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>176</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>177</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>178</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>179</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>180</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>181</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>182</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>183</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>184</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>185</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>186</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>187</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>188</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>189</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>190</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>191</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>192</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>193</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>194</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>195</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>196</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>197</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>198</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>199</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>200</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>201</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>202</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>203</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>204</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>205</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>206</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>207</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>208</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>209</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>210</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>211</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>212</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>213</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>214</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>215</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>216</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>217</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>218</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>219</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>220</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>221</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>222</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>223</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>224</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>225</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>226</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>227</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>228</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>229</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>230</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>231</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>232</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>233</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>234</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>235</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>236</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>237</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>238</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>239</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>240</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>241</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>242</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>243</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>244</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>245</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>246</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>247</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>248</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>249</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>250</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>251</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>252</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>253</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>254</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>255</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>256</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>257</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>258</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>259</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>260</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>261</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>262</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>263</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>264</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>265</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>266</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>267</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>268</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>269</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>270</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>271</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>272</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>273</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>274</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>275</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>276</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>277</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>278</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>279</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>280</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>281</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>282</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>283</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>284</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>285</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>286</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>287</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>288</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>289</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>290</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>291</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>292</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>293</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>294</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>295</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>296</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>297</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>298</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>299</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>300</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>301</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>302</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>303</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>304</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>305</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>306</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>307</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>308</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>309</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>310</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>311</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>312</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>313</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>314</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>315</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>316</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>317</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>318</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>319</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>320</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>321</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>322</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>323</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>324</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>325</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>326</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>327</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>328</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>329</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>330</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>331</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>332</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>333</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>334</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>335</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>336</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>337</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>338</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>339</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>340</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>341</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>342</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>343</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>344</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>345</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>346</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>347</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>348</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>349</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>350</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>351</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>352</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>353</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>354</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>355</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>356</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>357</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>358</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>359</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>360</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>361</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>362</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>363</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>364</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>365</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>366</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>367</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>368</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>369</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>370</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>371</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>372</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>373</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>374</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>375</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>376</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>377</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>378</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>379</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>380</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>381</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>382</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>383</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>384</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>385</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>386</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>387</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>388</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>389</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>390</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>391</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>392</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>393</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>394</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>395</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>396</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>397</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>398</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>399</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>400</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>401</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>402</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>403</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>404</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>405</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>406</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>407</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>408</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>409</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>410</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>411</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>412</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>413</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>414</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>415</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>416</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>417</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>418</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>419</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>420</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>421</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>422</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>423</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>424</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>425</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>426</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>427</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>428</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>429</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>430</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>431</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>432</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>433</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>434</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>435</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>436</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>437</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>438</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>439</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>440</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>441</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>442</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>443</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>444</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>445</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>446</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>447</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>448</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>449</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>450</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>451</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>452</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>453</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>454</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>455</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>456</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>457</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>458</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>459</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>460</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>461</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>462</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>463</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>464</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>465</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>466</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>467</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>468</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>469</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>470</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>471</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>472</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>473</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>474</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>475</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>476</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>477</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>478</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>479</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>480</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>481</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>482</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>483</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>484</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>485</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>486</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>487</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>488</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>489</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>490</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>491</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>492</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>493</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>494</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>495</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>496</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>497</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>498</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>499</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>500</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>501</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>502</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>503</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>504</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>505</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>506</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>507</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>508</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>509</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>510</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>511</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>512</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>513</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>514</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>515</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>516</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>517</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>518</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>519</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>520</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>521</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>522</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>523</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>524</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>525</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>526</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>527</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>528</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>529</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>530</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>531</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>532</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>533</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>534</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>535</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>536</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>537</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>538</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>539</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>540</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>541</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>542</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>543</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>544</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>545</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>546</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>547</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>548</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>549</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>550</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>551</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>552</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>553</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>554</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>555</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>556</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>557</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>558</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>559</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>560</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>561</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>562</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>563</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>564</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>565</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>566</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>567</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>568</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>569</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>570</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>571</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>572</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>573</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>574</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>575</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>576</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>577</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>578</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>579</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>580</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>581</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>582</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>583</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>584</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>585</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>586</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>587</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>588</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>589</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>590</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>591</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>592</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>593</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>594</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>595</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>596</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>597</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>598</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>599</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>600</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>601</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>602</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>603</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>604</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>605</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>606</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>607</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>608</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>609</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>610</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>611</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>612</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>613</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>614</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>615</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>616</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>617</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>618</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>619</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>620</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>621</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>622</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>623</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>624</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>625</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>626</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>627</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>628</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>629</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>630</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>631</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>632</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>633</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>634</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>635</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>636</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>637</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>638</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>639</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>640</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>641</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>642</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>643</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>644</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>645</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>646</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>647</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>648</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>649</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>650</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>651</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>652</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>653</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>654</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>655</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>656</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>657</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>658</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>659</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>660</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>661</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>662</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>663</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>664</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>665</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>666</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>667</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>668</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>669</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>670</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>671</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>672</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>673</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>674</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>675</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>676</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>677</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>678</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>679</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>680</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>681</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>682</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>683</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>684</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>685</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>686</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>687</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>688</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>689</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>690</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>691</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>692</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>693</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>694</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>695</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>696</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>697</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>698</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>699</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>700</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>701</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>702</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>703</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>704</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>705</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>706</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>707</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>708</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>709</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>710</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>711</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>712</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>713</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>714</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>715</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>716</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>717</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>718</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>719</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>720</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>721</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>722</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>723</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>724</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>725</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>726</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>727</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>728</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>729</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>730</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>731</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>732</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>733</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>734</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>735</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>736</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>737</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>738</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>739</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>740</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>741</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>742</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>743</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>744</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>745</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>746</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>747</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>748</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>749</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>750</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>751</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>752</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>753</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>754</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>755</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>756</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>757</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>758</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>759</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>760</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>761</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>762</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>763</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>764</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>765</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>766</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>767</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>768</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>769</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>770</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>771</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>772</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>773</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>774</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>775</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>776</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>777</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>778</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>779</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>780</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>781</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>782</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>783</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>784</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>785</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>786</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>787</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>788</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>789</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>790</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>791</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>792</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>793</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>794</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>795</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>796</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>797</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>798</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>799</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>800</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>801</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>802</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>803</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>804</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>805</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>806</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>807</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>808</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>809</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>810</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>811</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>812</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>813</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>814</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>815</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>816</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>817</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>818</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>819</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>820</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>821</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>822</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>823</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>824</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>825</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>826</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>827</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>828</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>829</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>830</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>831</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>832</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>833</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>834</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>835</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>836</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>837</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>838</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>839</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>840</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>841</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>842</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>843</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>844</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>845</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>846</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>847</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>848</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>849</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>850</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>851</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>852</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>853</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>854</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>855</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>856</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>857</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>858</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>859</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>860</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>861</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>862</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>863</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>864</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>865</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>866</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>867</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>868</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>869</sub> <sup>/</sup><sub>870</</sub>

energy whose release is expressed by sprinkling. Is this not the same point that 1.108.3 is commenting on? If it is then we may have here two references to that "third filter" which is so repugnant to our Westernized mores. If it is not, then one must account for what is being sprinkled and why.

It has been pointed out by Ingalls<sup>51</sup> that there are few references that solidly support the "third" filter postulated by Wasson. However, I think that Wasson's reply to Brough<sup>52</sup> on the usage of comparative data is apposite here. One cannot refuse to speculate on the grounds that an agnostic position reflects sounder scholarship. The only point agnosticism demonstrates is an ultra-conservative approach to the Rgvedic material which does not allow for hermeneutical reflection.

Further, other explanations of the sprinkling do not seem to warrant consideration. The interpretation that the chariots are clouds and the sprinkling is rain rests on an assumption that Rgvedic mythology is naturalistic. This position was dealt with in the Introduction. Another explanation is, of course, the interpretation that semen is being sprinkled. However, the relationship between the sexual act and the verse would seem to be reversed as "best dispensers of energy" would be a more

---

<sup>51</sup>D. Ingalls, "Remarks on Mr. Wasson's Soma", 189. Those that are solid he prefers to interpret metaphorically.

<sup>52</sup>Wasson's remarks cited by H. Smith, "Wasson's Soma: A Review Article", 492-493.

logical refrain in that context if the verse refers to fructification. Moreover, the context of the verses does not in the least refer to a sexuality motif.

### The Elusive Missile

I have included a discussion of 5.86.3 at this point because it takes place within an Indra-Agni hymn. However, the verse is quite complex and requires considerable comment as to meaning and significance.

tāy<sup>1</sup>or id<sup>1</sup> āmavac<sup>1</sup> chāvas<sup>1</sup> tigmā<sup>1</sup> didyun<sup>1</sup>  
maghō<sup>1</sup>noh/ prā<sup>1</sup>ti dru<sup>1</sup>nā gā<sup>1</sup>bhastyor gāvā<sup>1</sup>m  
vr<sup>1</sup>tragh<sup>1</sup>nā e<sup>1</sup>sate//

Indeed the impetuous vigour of these two,  
the sharp (or violent) missile of these  
two generous ones: by means of the wood  
between the hands he goes for the benefit  
of the Vrtrahan, lord of cows.

There are several possible correspondences set up within this verse.

The missile seems to be the same as the wood between the hands. This wood is most likely the implement used to pound the plant to obtain soma juice. In support of this line of reasoning, Renou comments <sup>53</sup> that the cows here refer to "le lait somique". Another correspondence is set up by referring to one who prepares soma for the benefit of the Vrtrahan (here, most probably Indra). As Indra has overcome, as Indra ingests and controls soma, so also the participant in the ritual. Moreover, the

---

<sup>53</sup>Renou, EVP, XIV, 124.



language of the verse sets up a stronger correlation between the participant in the ritual and Indra. The participant acts on behalf of Indra, making soma for the Vrtrahan and he acts in a manner reflecting Indra (and Agni) as being paradigmatic models within the sacrificial context. Thus there is a homology between the macrocosm of the world of the gods and the microcosm of the ritual enactment of soma preparation. If the "vigour" referred to is, as we earlier assumed, soma then the verse may be seen as two doublets expressing the same ideas in the sequence a-b-b-a as the cows correspond to the vigour.

A problem that confronted us earlier may now be resolved. Earlier we postulated that the references to Indra-Agni as Vrtrahan might stem from a stress on Indra and the transference of the epithet to Indra-Agni. Since, in the context where one would expect the dual, the singular is used, further credence is lent to the supposition that the references stress the functions of Indra as Vrtrahan.

Since the inclusion of Agni in the dual Indra-Agni references to Vrtrahan appears to be of minor importance for this examination, a brief recapitulation of the application of the epithet "Vrtrahan" to Agni alone is apposite. These references seem to refer to material prosperity and had little to do with the acquiring of Soma or its effects. Thus in the Indra-Agni verses the emphasis appears to be on Indra and Indra's quest for soma-given properties and the sacrificer's wish to emulate Indra's quest.

Returning to the discussion of 5.86.3, one correspondence that immediately comes to mind is the equation missile=wood=vajra. Is it possible that this verse gives us an insight into one possible ritual symbolization of the vajra of Indra? The discussion of the references to the Vajra as Vrtrahan, which follows immediately will allow some conclusions to be drawn concerning this equation.

### Vajra as Vrtrahan

There are two distinct and unmistakable references to the vajra<sup>54</sup> of Indra being called Vrtrahan (1.121.12 and 6.20.9). Both verses also contain a reference to Indra mounting steeds and riding them. While a mythological interpretation seems obvious the questions raised by 5.86.3 should prevent too hasty a conclusion. The same caution should be exercised before deciding that this reference occurs through a transference of epithet from Indra to his weapon.

1.121.12: tvám indra náryo yān ávo nṛn  
 tīṣṭhā vātasya suyújo váhiṣṭhān/ yám te  
 kāvyá usānā mandīnam dād vrtrahānam  
 pāryam tatakṣa vājram//

You, O Indra, vigorous (for) men whom you comfort, mount the well-yoked best carriers of Vāta. He<sup>55</sup> has fashioned the vajra -- exhilarating, decisive -- the Vrtrahan which Kavya Usanas gave you.

---

<sup>54</sup>What the vajra connotes in the Vedic period should be noted. "Whereas in the Veda the vajra is a stable, metallic, club or hammer-like weapon which the god holds firmly in his hand, the artists of the later period like to give it the shape of a 'thunderbolt'." Gonda, Change, 78.

<sup>55</sup>Tvastr according to Renou, EVP, XVII, 41.

6.20.9: sā īm sprdho vanate apratīto  
 bibhrad vajram vrtrahanam gabhastau/  
 tisthad dhari adhy asteva garte vacoyuja  
 vahata indram rsvam//

He, the Irresistable, overpowers adversaries,  
 carries in both hands the Vrtrahan vajra.  
 He mounts the Bays as an archer the platform.  
 Yoked at a command they carry towering Indra.

There is a major point of correlation between these two verses and 5.86.3.

In the latter verse the wood is held between the hands as is vajra in 6.20.9. Secondly, if the vajra=wood=missile then the verses stand in a fundamental relationship to each other. Then the mythological interpretation cannot stand by itself as there are allusions to a ritual context wherein soma is being prepared. If this is the case then the steeds of the winds (or the Bays) refer to the words of the chant which are as effective in the same way that an arrow, released from the bow, inevitably strikes the target.<sup>56</sup> A further corroboration comes from 9.47.2 where Soma, at the time of praising, becomes a thousand-fold valuable vajra.

What is left to decide is whether or not one is dealing with a transference of an epithet. After a superficial glance one could conclude that such is the case here. However, if Vrtrahan does refer to the overcoming of obstacles, then the vajra, as the means of preparing the exhilarating soma, can justifiably be called Vrtrahan.

---

<sup>56</sup>See 9.50.1.



The vájra, sóma, and Indra are all called "Vrtrahan". It was noted above that there was a conceptual division between wealth as material goods and wealth as the vision-giving property of sóma. The references to Vrtrahan applied to the three cohere well with the vision-giving quest of the Rgvedic seer. It is my contention that we are not dealing with the transference of an epithet in these three instances. If the equation vájra=wood=missile holds in the references cited then the vájra is the means of crushing the Soma and mixing it with other substances. The reference to sóma as vájra (9.47.2) does not participate in this particular structural arrangement but belongs to the complex of descriptions surrounding the effectiveness of the verses chanted under the guiding influence of sóma. The usage of vájra is not univalent in the context of sóma-taking and chanting. (However, sóma is not called Vrtrahan in 9.47.2 nor is the vájra.) To return to the references where Vrtrahan is used, a contextual coherency becomes evident and must be interpreted within the confines of sóma-taking. Thus Indra as the effective agent, sóma as the process and vájra as the means of mixing may all justifiably be called Vrtrahan.

#### Other Non-Indra References to Vrtrahan

Of the remaining references to gods to be considered, I see only the reference to the Maruts (6.48.21) as having particular significance for this thesis. In my opinion, the references to the Asvins as Vrtrahans (8.8.9,22) are demonstrably secondary.<sup>57</sup> The references to Surya and

---

<sup>57</sup>As Renou, EVP, XVI, 55.

Manyu belong, on examination, together and may shed some light on the ongoing development of the epithet within the Indian Religious tradition. I shall now consider each of these references in turn.

It is only c and d of 6.48.21 that are significant for the present study. The reference underlines and further strengthens the contention concerning the ritualistic interpretation of the epithet.

6.48.21cd: tveṣam sāvo dadhire nāma  
yajñīyam maruto vrtraham sāvo jyēstham  
vrtraham sāvah

...an awesome power, a name worthy  
of worship, the Maruts have obtained --  
Vrtrahan-power, highest Vrtrahan-power.

The context is clearly ritualistic as the phrase itself lends credence to this setting. That names have power has already been mentioned<sup>58</sup> and the particular power here is that of the "Overcomer of Obstacles". The name itself becomes effective and auspicious. Thus a connection may be made with the naming of Indra as Vrtrahan. There seems to be little to connect the usage of Vrtrahan to anything other than the auspiciousness of the name. Thus, one must conclude that this reference deals with the transference of an epithet without any conscious attempt on the part of the seer to allude to the narrower uses of the epithet in connection with the taking of soma.

---

<sup>58</sup>See Gonda, Notes on Names and the Name of God in Ancient India (Amsterdam, 1970).

The two references to the Asvins both describe them as best Vrtrahans -- the former in terms of bringers of refreshment and the latter in terms of protection.

8.8.9: ā vām vipra ihavase 'hvat  
stomebhir asvinā/ aripṛā vrtrahantamā  
tā no bhūtam mayobhuvā//

The inspired seeker calls you, Asvins,  
here for a favour by means of hymns.  
Blameless, best Vrtrahans, be bringers  
of refreshment for us.

8.8.22: prā vām stomāḥ suvrktayo giro  
vardhantv asvinā/ purutrā vrtrahantamā tā  
no bhūtam purusprhā//

May songs, praiseworthy songs, praises 59  
strengthen you, Asvins. Rescuing many,  
best Vrtrahans, be very eager for us.

The points to note are that here the Vrtrahan(s) bring refreshment because they have overcome the obstacles, and I think a correspondence may be drawn between refreshing and rescuing. Therefore, the point of these verses, within the ritual context, is the invoking of the function of a "Vrtrahan" through praises, in hopes that the function will be carried out to a successful completion. This is by no means a peculiar trait of the Asvins nor does the superlative form show an earlier understanding on what the term means. Because of these reasons one may con-

---

<sup>59</sup>Not following Geldner and Sāyana "protector of many". Gonda, Epithets, 119 translates "rescuing many". I prefer the latter as it aligns better with the idea of one who defends or counterattacks.



clude that, although the epithet may not be out of context in a liturgical setting, what is occurring here is the transference of an epithet.

The Asvins are characterized by their beneficence and helpfulness. <sup>60</sup>

The usage of an epithet expressing the overcoming of obstacles should not surprise us. The lack of extended meaning is similar to the usage of the epithet in connection with the Maruts.

I am combining a discussion of 10.83.3 and 10.170.2 together because these verses seem to exhibit similarities to each other on the one hand, and some basic dissimilarities to the other examples on the other hand.

Both, of course, appear in the later hymns of the Rgveda.

10.83.3: abhihi manyo tavāśas tāvīyān  
tāpasā yujā ví jahi śātrūn/ amitrahā  
vrtrahā dasyuhā ca viśvā vasūny a  
bharā tvām nah//

Go towards and slay, O Manyu, the enemies  
with heat <sup>61</sup> as your yoke-fellow, stronger  
than the strong. Slayer of those-not-like-  
us, slayer of Vṛtra(s) and slayer of Dasyus --  
Bring all booty to us!

---

<sup>60</sup> See Gonda, Epithets, 115-120. On page 119 Gonda translates 8.8.22 within a context of a discussion concerning the beneficence of the Asvins.

<sup>61</sup> "Becoming "heated" means becoming flooded by a mysterious non-human, and irresistible force." Gonda, Change, 294. The later associations of tapas with austerity are not present in this verse. "...C'est la "brûlure" causée à l'ennemi. C'est...cette valeur que rend de Livre X dans une partie des cas: ainsi 83.2 et 3 où l'on voit Manyu, la "fureur" guerrière, s'associer au tāpas pour détruire l'ennemi." Renou, E Voc, 55.

10.170.2: vibhrāḍ brhāt subhrtam vājasā-  
 tamam dhārman divo dharuṇe satyāṁ arpitam/  
 amitrahā vrtrahā dasyuhantamam jyōtir jajñe asurahā  
 sapatnahā//

Gleaming, strong, well-cherished, best  
 acquirer of energy, the firm foundation 62  
 fixed in the support of the sky -- the  
 overcomer of those-not-like-us, the over-  
 comer of resistance, the best overcomer  
 of enemies, the overcomer of asuras, the  
 overcomer of rivals -- light has been  
 generated!

In both instances Vrtrahan appears in a list of feats, leading to the supposition that the epithet here refers to either the feat of overcoming resistance or the feat of overcoming the demon Vrtra.

The reference to Manyu as Vrtrahan could mean, as Dumézil notes,<sup>63</sup> a correspondence between Manyu and berserkir. This would definitely, then, refer to an actual battle and could be used either as the basis for supposing that all references are to a battle-conflict situation or used as an instance which reflects a development in the usage of the term. The former does not appear to be a viable supposition because of the preceding analyses of the contexts of vrtrahan. If it is the

---

<sup>62</sup>Renou, EVP, XV p. 11.

<sup>63</sup>See Dumézil, DW, 115-138.

latter, then after the loss of powerful soma<sup>64</sup> the concept "Vrtrahan" becomes aligned with a parallel concept of berserkir operating on a physical level only. I suggest these only as possibilities because a full investigation of Manyu is not possible within the context of this thesis.

The reference to Surya runs along somewhat similar lines as the reference to Manyu. Vrtrahan also appears in a list of terms or epithets. The cosmogonic reference, if it is such, fits in well with the discussion on the theme earlier where Indra Vrtrahan was analyzed.<sup>65</sup> For example, as in 10.153.3, the supporting of the cosmos is implied. As was noted in the earlier discussion however, a discussion of the Indra-Vrtra conflict has to be undertaken before further discussion on the cosmogonic

---

<sup>64</sup> See the essay by W. D. O'Flaherty in Wasson, Soma where substitutes for Soma in the Brāhmanas are discussed. Even in the Rgveda Soma ceases to be available. In Rgveda 10.85.3 we read: "One thinks one drinks Soma because a plant is crushed. The Soma that the Brahmins know -- that no one drinks". When Soma ceased to be available the effect of ingesting soma were re-interpreted in the light of berserk-raging (berserkir). In comparing the effect of the fly-agaric and berserk-raging Wasson comments that "murderous ferocity marked the Viking seizures almost always, whereas murderous ferocity is conspicuously absent from our eye-witness accounts of fly-agaric eating in Siberia". Soma, 157.

<sup>65</sup> See above pp. 102ff.



motif can be continued. A preliminary conclusion would be that the inference that the cosmogonic motif appears here is erroneous since the ritual setting and the effective agent, Surya, seem to indicate a hymn of praise for the rising of the sun. However, if this verse reflects an ab initio situation,<sup>66</sup> then the question may not be so easily resolved.

Trasadasyu as Vrtrahan

There remains one non-Indra reference to Vrtrahan, a reference that is puzzling and complex because the referent is a human, King Trasadasyu "Him who makes the enemies (or the demons) tremble."<sup>67</sup> The reference occurs in 4.42.9cd. However, this passage parallels 4.42.8cd and thus both passages require a close examination.

8cd: tā ayajanta trasadasyum asyā indram na  
vrtraturam ardhadevām

For her [the wife of Purukutsa] they [the Seven Rsis] gained by sacrifice Trasadasyu, a demi-god, like Indra an overpowerer of Vrtra.

9cd: āthā rājānam trasadasyum asya vrtrahanam  
dadathur ardhadevām

Then the two [Indra-Varuna] gave to her King Trasadasyu, a demi-god, a Vrtrahan.

---

<sup>66</sup>See the works of Mircea Eliade, especially The Sacred and the Profane for a detailed analysis of the term.

<sup>67</sup>Dumézil, DW, 117.

Griffith notes that Grassmann considers verses 8-10 to be a late addition to the Indra-Varuna hymn. This insight will enable an unravelling of the meaning of the reference.

The word ardhadeva is a hapax to these two parallel passages. We should not be surprised, however, that the ancient India king is deva-like. Gonda comments:

...we should never forget that he is considered a deva, that is to say, neither the sole Eternal Lord of later Hinduism, nor God's son or representative, but one of a large class of powerful beings, regarded as possessing supernormal faculties and as controlling a department of nature or activity in the human sphere. <sup>68</sup>

The hermeneutical key is the phrase "like Indra" in verse 8. Since vrtratur and vrtrahan are intentional doublings, 9cd should be expanded to read "like Indra a Vrtrahan". Therefore, as Indra is a Vrtrahan so is King Trasadasyu.

The Vedic Indra is a demon-slayer and a helper and deliverer of his worshippers. The king is an unflinching destroyer of enemies and a protector of his people. Indra is the god of battle, kings and warriors are his companions. <sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> J. Gonda "The Sacred Character of Ancient Indian Kingship" Supplements to Numen IV (Leiden, 1959), 172. I cannot agree with Dumézil, op. cit., 117f, who finds the combination of ardhadevā and vrtrahan remarkable because the act that the latter word implies leads to an ascent in the hierarchy of beings designated by the former word.

<sup>69</sup> ibid., 175.

The epithet, then, extends its meaning in two directions: towards the king and towards Indra.

There is no referent here to the drinking of Soma but there is a linkage between this verse and the usage of *Vrtrahan* in 1.91.5 and 10.25.9 discussed above.<sup>70</sup> There is a certain practicality and a materialistic emphasis which warrant the conclusion that in 4.42.8-9 there is a reflection of a similar life-crisis situation. Indeed, an examination of the two verses shows clearly that such is the case. The wife of Purukutsa has beseeched the Seven *Rsis* to act on her behalf for (presumably) the return of her husband. The Seven *Rsis*, by means of sacrifice, implore Indra-Varuna to send King Trasadasyu to her aid -- the king who, like Indra, overcomes obstacles.

Why were these verses later attached to 4.42? First of all the hymn is addressed to Indra-Varuna and Indra-Varuna is mentioned in verse 9. Secondly, *vrtrani* occurs in verse 7 along with the motif of the release of the rivers. The redactor saw a connection (in his own opinion) and joined the fragment to the hymn. Since the redactor saw this connection between *vrtratur*, *vrtrahan* and the release of waters he had in mind the epic-narrative theme of Indra slaying *Vrtra* (the *ahi*).

---

<sup>70</sup>See p. 129f. above.



One further problem needs to be resolved. Dumézil connects vrtrahán and vrtratur as synonyms based on similar usage of Avestan equivalents, as for example in Yasht 14.57.<sup>71</sup> An examination of vrtratur is necessitated by Dumézil's assumption. The word itself may mean either "overpowerer of Vrtra" or "one who passes over vrtrá". The other occurrences of vrtratur are 6.20.1; 6.68.2; 10.48.8 and 10.99.1.

The occurrence of vrtratur in 6.68.2<sup>72</sup> is interesting because the hymn is an Indra-Varuna hymn as is 4.42. The word vrtratur is in the dual, thereby referring to both gods, and the word is connected specifically to rtá as the means by which the two are overcomers of Vrtra. In verse 3 Indra overcomes Vrtra (hánti vrtrám) by the vájra

---

<sup>71</sup>Dumézil, DW, 119. However, on reading Benveniste, whom Dumézil cites, a somewhat different approach is noted. First Benveniste notes (p.20) that "dans l'Avesta récent on voit s'affirmer plus d'une fois cette connexion..." (emphasis mine). Thus one cannot automatically assume a Proto-Indo-Aryan usage as synonyms which is present in the oldest layers of either the Rgveda or the Avesta. Secondly, by no means is Benveniste using Yasht 14.57 as an example of this usage since a completely different point is being made by the usage of the citation in a completely different sentence.

<sup>72</sup>A fuller discussion of this verse will be undertaken in the next chapter in the context of discussing the allies of Indra in the Vrtra conflict. See below p. 166f.

and strength. The poet apparently has in mind in these verses the epic-narrative theme because Indra, on the side of order (ṛta) helped by Varuṇa who acts as a seer (vīpra) uttering inspired speech,<sup>73</sup> overcomes Vṛtra.

The referent of vrtratuṛ in 10.48.8 is not clear. Both verse 7 and verse 9 refer to an actual battle context. The usage of vrtrahātya in 8cd and the obvious connection with 1.53.8 align the reference within the epic-narrative theme. The actual referent of vrtratuṛ is is (strength or refreshment) so that strength (like that) which overpowers Vṛtra is used against other demon-foes. Behind that strength, of course, lies Indra. Similarly, Indra lies behind the occurrence of vrtratuṛ in 10.99.1 while the actual reference is vāja. The hymn as a whole relates several deeds of Indra. The inclusion of the sending of waters (ap) in connection with vrtratuṛ demonstrates the poet's reliance on the epic-narrative theme in this occurrence also.

The final occurrence of vrtratuṛ is in 6.20.1. I have delayed an examination of this occurrence until now partly because Dumézil connects 6.20.2 with the "promotion motif" of the warrior<sup>74</sup> but primarily because

---

<sup>73</sup>Gonda, Vision, 36.

<sup>74</sup>Dumézil, op. cit., 118. Further, the thrust of the comments contained in note 37 apply here. I could quarrel with his phrase "the quality of asura" when the text reads ásuryām...vīśvam "all asura-ness. Also satrá+ instur. would render the phrase "together with the gods" rather than "by the gods" as more cogent. Finally, to imply a "promotion" through the loaded translation of root dha- as "conferred" is highly tendentious, especially when the "promotion" accrues to all the devas.

the connection with the epic-narrative theme implicitly outlined in 6.20.2 firms up the contention that all references to vrtratur' depend on a common hermeneutical key for explication. Further, it is not Indra directly that is vrtratur' in verse 1, but rayi' "property". The material goods that change hands at the sacrifice lead to the desired material ends outlined in verse 1. In much the same way (that is, within the context of sacrificial ritual action) Indra gains the powers of his adversary Vrtra-Ahi by overcoming him.

All the references to vrtratur', then, depend upon the epic-narrative theme. What occasioned this discussion was the linkage of vrtratur' and vrtrahan' in 4.42.8,9. Thus Vrtrahan in this context also refers to the epic-narrative theme and does not lend itself to an interpretation coalescing around the taking of soma and its vision-producing effects. This particular citation must be placed along with the references to Indra-Vrtrahan and Vrtra discussed in the last chapter <sup>75</sup> as being infrequent and secondary. Also, while vrtratur' may be thought of as a synonym of vrtrahan', it is only within the limits of the epic-narrative theme that such can be done, a theme that is not the hermeneutical key for an understanding of vrtrahan'.

---

<sup>75</sup> See above, p. 77ff.



### Summary

The intent of this chapter was to examine the non-Indra references to vrtrahan. One of the major questions to be resolved was whether an actual battle situation or a ritual orientation was reflected by the context of the reference. The analysis of the references showed that in most cases the latter was the more appropriate context, except for the references to Manyu and Trasadasyu. However, within this ritual orientation at least two different thrusts were determined. First, some Vrtrahan references (Agni, Sarasvatī, Ásvins, Surya and some references to Soma (1.91.5, 9.1.3, 10.25.9) concentrated on the material prosperity and material benefits brought about by the Vrtrahan. While the Maruts citation reflects a conscious transference of the epithet, the context cannot be determined beyond being that of a general ritualistic orientation although it is quite clear that this first category is far more appropriate than the one to be discussed below. It is important that the deities are called vrtrahan because they can (must) overcome all obstacles in order to give benefits to the suppliant. The second ritual context develops the themes of sóma preparation, the drinking of sóma, and its effects. These include the references to Soma (except as noted above), Indra-Agni, and Vajra. Interestingly, the Indra-Agni references place far more emphasis on Indra, or Indra's quest for sóma-given properties, and the sacrificer's wish to emulate Indra's quest. Thus Agni is relatively unimportant in these citations. A determination of

the equation missile=wood=vájra in some contexts allows a fleshing out of the sóma-oriented references to vrtrahan. Indra as the effective agent, sóma as the process, and vájra as a means of mixing sóma are all called, justifiably, vrtrahan. Therefore, along the same lines as the examination of Indra as Vrtrahan, in the previous chapter, there emerges from the present analysis three elements of the Vrtrahan motif: the sóma-orientation, the cosmologic theme, and the epic-narrative theme. The former is clearly the central and most consistent key to interpreting the varied references. However, an examination of the Indra-Vrtra conflict itself, undertaken in the next chapter, will allow further reflection on the epic-narrative theme which has often been taken as the sole basis for the epithet vrtrahan.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### An Examination of Themes in the Indra-Vrtra Conflict

#### Introduction

In the previous chapters the interpretation of the vrtrahan references dealing with the Indra-Vrtra conflict began with an analysis of Indra and then non-Indra references, with the ingesting of soma chosen as the central focal point for the hermeneutical examination of the vrtrahan references. It is now necessary to temporarily leave this examination of vrtrahan and concentrate upon the story of the Indra-Vrtra conflict as recorded in the Rgvedic mantras.

The analysis of this conflict undertaken by various scholars both warned against the dangers of eisegesis and informed the present writer concerning valuable hermeneutic insights. There were certain pre-suppositions and certain structural models which seemed to be dominant in the interpretative task as understood by these scholars. The introductory chapter pointed these out in some detail. The comments and criticisms noted there hopefully led to a hermeneutical awareness that facilitated a steering between conclusions drawn exclusively from a comparison with cognate Indo-European examples on the one hand, and on the other hand, conclusions drawn from a too close identification with the interpretative techniques and inferences that the later Indian



tradition brought to bear on the material. The next two chapters dealt primarily with the word vrtrahan and tried to examine the contexts where it was used. The disjunction between vrtrahan contexts and "Indra-Vrtra" contexts was clearly pointed out along with an examination of cul-de-sacs and insights stemming from a consideration of non-Indra references to vrtrahan. (See Chapters Two and Three.)

In the course of these chapters two major perspectives concerning the Indra-Vrtra conflict became evident. First, several references to a possible cosmologic theme were noted but not analyzed. Second, using Renou's designation of an epic-narrative theme (i.e., itihāsa)<sup>1</sup> to encompass the story-line of the conflict in several hymns has enabled a collation of material outlining this conflict. This particular chapter is going to address itself specifically to an examination of these themes (and an analysis of other themes or motifs present), in an effort to determine the relative importance of these themes for the interpretation of the Indra-Vrtra conflict as portrayed within the Rgveda.

My analysis of the Indra-Vrtra conflict will attempt to discuss the references from several different angles. What immediately strikes the reader of the Vedic hymns is the richness of "mythological"<sup>2</sup> detail.

---

<sup>1</sup>Renou, EVP IX, 3, see also Benveniste and Renou, VV.

<sup>2</sup>I am using this term in its widest sense (as employed by Mircea Eliade consistently throughout his work) to denote the birth of Supernatural Beings and the manifestation of their sacred powers. Further, the outline of these events gains considerable detail in Book 1.

I wish to concentrate upon the imagery presented and have decided that the most appropriate way to do so is to split the epic-narrative category into two sections. The first section deals with "fragments" of the epic-narrative theme, i.e., those references outside the major Indra-Vrtra hymns which seemingly relate part of the story of Indra's great deed. The second section deals more specifically with the elements of the story as reported by the major Indra-Vrtra hymns. An analysis of the more significant elements of the story will aid in ascertaining the purpose and possible setting for the story, as conceived by the singer of each hymn.

The analysis of the cosmologic theme will not examine in depth whether "cosmologic action", "cosmogonic act", or "creation-motif" is the most appropriate term to be employed. But because of the ex nihilo connotation of the last term, and the connotation of "genesis of the cosmos" of the second, I have chosen to use the first term to express the "creative" action of Indra. Moreover, the sense of "ordering the cosmos" is brought out more easily by using "cosmologic". The Indra-Vrtra conflict, within this cosmologic theory, is perceived by the Vedic singers from two perspectives: macrocosmic and microcosmic. Thus, the analysis of this theme ought to be separated into two discussions. The first will deal with the cosmologic theme in its macrocosmic aspect. The second will deal with Vedic man's response to this act in his appropriation of it as a metaphor reflecting on individual and corporate existence.

An analysis of various words used in the Rgveda to indirectly denote the Indra-Vrtra conflict will be examined for their contextual referents. Such a procedure will enable a rounding out of the discussion of various motifs. Of some importance, further, is the usage of vrtrani i.e., "enemies" in the neuter plural. These must also be placed within an appropriate context. Finally, some comments should be made on the allusions in the Indra-Vrtra story to any ritual context in order to ascertain the possible cultic significance of the combat.

#### The Epic-Narrative Theme

The bare outline of the epic-narrative theme outside the major epic-narrative hymns consists in the simple formula Indra slays Ahi and/or Vrtra, or Ahi-Vrtra.<sup>3</sup> Within these references there is some mention of the taking of soma<sup>4</sup> or the choosing of soma without further elaboration on the significance of this act. Also, three passages mention the aid of the Maruts.<sup>5</sup> The role of allies in the Indra-Vrtra conflict will be considered below. The most important elaboration of this theme is the addition of the release/freeing/speeding of the waters/streams/rivers.<sup>6</sup> The reference in Book 9 includes, naturally

---

<sup>3</sup>1.61.6,8 ab, 12; 1.103.7, 8; 2.14.12; 2.15.1; 3.32.4; 3.36.8cd; 3.47.3; 4.22.5; 5.31.4,7; 7.19.5; 8.2.32,36; 8.3.19ab,20cd; 8.12.22; 8.62.8; 8.76.2; 8.932,7; 8.96.5; 8.99.6; 10.96.4; 10.116.1; 10.147.1.

<sup>4</sup>2.15.1; 3.36.8cd; 10.116.1.

<sup>5</sup>3.32.4; 3.47.3; 8.76.2.

<sup>6</sup>1.61.10; 1.85.9; 1.103.2; 1.165.8; 2.12.11, 12; 2.30.1,2; 3.32.5cd, 6cd, 11ab; 3.33.6,7; 6.20.2; 6.72.3; 6.30.4cd; 6.72.3; 7.21.3; 8.12.26; 8.76.3; 8.100.7,12; 9.61.22; 10.67.12.



enough, a reference to Soma. Both the Maruts <sup>7</sup> and Viṣṇu <sup>8</sup> aid Indra in this mighty deed. There are two places where the event is concretely contextualized through the mention of seven rivers <sup>9</sup> which occur in later strata. Both of these references add opponents -- the former reference adds Rauhiṇa and the latter Arubda showing further embellishment of the theme.

There are further embellishments of this theme, mainly in the later strata. In 2.30.3 Vṛtra is shrouded in fog, <sup>10</sup> reminiscent of a developing Namuci-myth. The devas fear Ahi/Vṛtra and flee from him in 8.93.14 and 8.96.7. A motif reflected in the major hymns, the defeat of the māyīn Vṛtra by māyā, is mentioned in 10.14.2.

A major development in the epic-narrative story concerns the side-by-side mention of the Vala-myth and the Vṛtra-myth. While in 4.16.7 Indra slays Vṛtra and sends forth the waters in 4.16.6cd the devoted friends of Indra (here, most probably the Maruts) open the stalls

<sup>7</sup>8.76.3.

<sup>8</sup>6.20.2; 8.100.12.

<sup>9</sup>2.12.11, 12; 10.67.12.

<sup>10</sup>In 1.32 Vṛtra uses lightning, thunder, hail and mist. In 5.32 Suṣṇa is called child of mist but this reference does not appear to be part of the Vṛtra-myth. In 10.73.5 the Dasyu is spoken about in terms of gloomy fog.

of stone and release cattle.<sup>11</sup> In 8.7.23 the Maruts cut off Vrtra's limbs and also cut the arājin<sup>12</sup> mountains, referring again to a doubling of the myths, here in a very shortened manner. Another example of this doubling, an obvious poetic embellishment because of the attached similes, occurs in 10.89.7. As an axe fells a tree so Indra slays Vrtra, breaks the forts, and digs out (in the sense of making a free flowing path) the streams; like a new pitcher (is broken), he broke open the hill and brought forth the cattle with his allies (probably the Maruts). It is interesting to note that in all three examples just cited, the breaking of the mountain is either done by Indra in conjunction with allies (the Maruts) or by the allies themselves. This is significant enough to be developed further in the section dealing with the allies of Indra in the Vrtra conflict.

There are some references in the Rgveda to Indra overcoming a boar or Vrtra being a boar (1.61.7 and 1.121.11). These references depend

---

<sup>11</sup>Geldner notes the parallel between the Vala and Vrtra myths here and extends it to 1.32.11; 1.51.4; 1.61.10; 1.174.4c; 2.19.3; 2.23.18; 5.29.3; 9.108.6. The parallels within the major hymns will be discussed below.

<sup>12</sup>A hapax word which could mean either "lustreless" referring to the gloomy interior of the cave or "lordless" referring to their present lack of being controlled by Vrtra until Indra, through Marut's aid, controls them. Renou (EVP X, 48) prefers the former and Geldner the latter. The other hermeneutical possibility is the linking of this reference with the well-known story of Indra's cutting off the wings of the mountains and fixing them in one place. See Macdonnell Vedic Mythology, 62. However, this post-Vedic myth is most probably not being referred to here. See also Kuiper, "Cosmogony and Conception", 108-109.

heavily on the Kanva circles and reflect an Austro-Asiatic myth,<sup>13</sup> In 1.61.7 Viṣṇu appears as an ally of Indra but Kuiper does not believe that this verse reflects the normative role of Viṣṇu in the Rgveda. He notes that Viṣṇu functions as a durgād āhartā "slayer from an inaccessible place" as in the Yajurveda. In 1.121.11 Vrtra is called a boar. Both of these passages reflect the Austro-Asiatic myth but both of these are included in their contexts because "Indra's combat with the boar is mythologically equivalent (though not, of course, historically identical) with the myth of Vrtra."<sup>14</sup> Thus, this particular line of embellishment does not render intelligible the purpose for the retelling of the Indra-Vrtra conflict. As for Viṣṇu, Kuiper concludes that "it seems likely that Viṣṇu... equally represents an aboriginal deity, although the priests who Aryanized this myth must have been conscious of some equivalence between this god and Viṣṇu."<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup>For a full, informative discussion see Kuiper, "Austro-Asiatic Myth". He also considers Sambara, Arubda, and Srbinda as being derived from Proto-Munda and these are included in the Rgveda because of Aryan contacts with Proto-Munda tribes (p. 177).

<sup>14</sup>ibid., 174.

<sup>15</sup>ibid., 180.



Another side-current to the Indra-Vṛtra conflict is the substitution of Trita for Indra. Trita is a barely remembered pre-Vedic deity with ties to a similar deity in Avestan literature who also slays a serpent.<sup>16</sup> In 1.187.1 Trita<sup>17</sup> by means of food (pituh) rends Vṛtra, in verse 6 by means of food he slays Ahi, reflecting a setting within the ritual of sacrifice in these verses. Continuing to focus on this ritualistic context, 10.48.2 states that the sacrificer, Indra Vaikuntha in this particular instance, brought cattle to Trita from Ahi.<sup>18</sup> The reference to Trita in 8.7.24 also tells about the aid rendered to Trita by the Maruts in his fight, and in cd tells the Maruts to aid Indra in the vrtraturya.<sup>19</sup> It seems clear that Trita "doubles" Indra in these references. However, little specific information is given in these references other than the bare outlines of a conflict between Trita and Vṛtra-Ahi. Thus, there are

---

<sup>16</sup>See Benveniste and Renou, VV, passim.

<sup>17</sup>Trita (10.99.6) also slays a boar, but the late chapter of this reference allows for such a confusion. See Kuiper, ibid., 173.

<sup>18</sup>The sacrificial context appears to be reflected in a macrocosmic/microcosmic homology as demonstrated in 2cd. As the sacrificer can obtain cattle for Trita from Ahi, he is also able to obtain cattle for patrons. Thus there is little reflection on the significance of the combat, but reliance on its practical efficacy.

<sup>19</sup>See below p. 180f.

no hermeneutical clues to be gained from examining Trita.

One of the important features in the Indra-Vrtra conflict which which has already been mentioned in passing, is the relationship between the cosmic battle between Indra and Vrtra (between the "Divine Warrior" and the "Chief Demon") and the battles Vedic man fought. A homology is drawn up in some verses <sup>20</sup> between the cosmic conflict and the actual battle situations. Thus, for example, 1.63.4 demonstrates this homology by comparing the crushing of Vrtra by Indra to the crushing of Dasyus far away. Much the same point, although developed in detail, is meant in 10.152 (especially verses 2 and 3). Indra, because he has conquered Vrtra, is unparalleled in battle (7.21.6cd) and is thus to be invoked (verses 7 and 8). In 1.174.2cd the double-entendre becomes obvious. While Indra is the one who releases the streams, he leaves Vrtra to the young Purukutsa. Here Vrtra should be understood in both the singular and plural senses <sup>21</sup> in order to fully appreciate the nuances being expressed.

---

<sup>20</sup> 1.63.4; 1.174.2; 6.13.3ab; 7.21.6cd; 10.152.2.

<sup>21</sup> The use of singular where the plural makes more sense hermeneutically will be discussed below in the section on usage of the plural. Whereas the verb root han is the key to these examples, such an implication is definitely behind the expression here. Gonda comments Epithets, 134 that "the plural, or the singular accusative used "collectively" -- which is regularly employed with verbs for slaying --, though referring also to terrestrial enemies, properly expresses the idea of "representative or manifestation of the Vrtra idea"."

An elaboration of this usage is contained in an Agni-hymn (6.13.3ab). The here (sátpati)<sup>22</sup> slays Vrtra by heroic power; the vipra<sup>1</sup> carries off the vaja<sup>23</sup> of Pani. The different roles of patron and sacrificial officiant in the cultic act as expressed in such a verse take on added meaning in a contextual examination of the roles played by Indra's allies (see below). There are two occurrences where, although the Indra-Vrtra conflict is tied into a ritual context, little additional information may be elicited from the context. In 9.61.20 Soma kills Vrtra who is hostile (amitriyā), the capturer of vaja, day after day.<sup>24</sup> Soma also gains horses and cows.

---

<sup>22</sup>Renou, EVP XIII, 134, notes that the word here means "'maitre" humain inspiré par Indra" and continues by stating that there is a pronounced attempt to differentiate "guerrier" and "l'orateur sacré" (vipra). This becomes significant in the discussion of the help given by Varuna in the Vrtra-conflict below.

<sup>23</sup>I prefer to leave the term untranslated at present because I think Gonda's rendition of "vigour" to be far more appropriate than "booty". However, such would not appear correct from this isolated instance. When most of the examples of vāja and vasu in reference to the Indra-Vrtra conflict are examined, it can be seen that "booty", or "material goods" neither fully explicate nor exhaust the significations of the term.

<sup>24</sup>The repetitious nature of the gaining of vaja here clearly demonstrates the ritualistic imitation of an ab initio act. The horses and cows that are also gained most likely refer to the gifts bestowed upon the sacrificer by his client.



The other instance is 10.28.7 where Vasukra is boasting of what he has done. In 7cd Vasukra claims that he himself has slain Vrtra by means of the vajra and for the offerer has opened with might the cow stall, referring to the double action of Indra in the Vrtra and Vala conflicts. Thus epic-narrative elements in the Indra-Vrtra conflict are placed within a ritualistic context to the extent that the officiator takes upon himself Indra's actions and their benefits, demonstrating that only through the officiant's ritual actions or with the help of the officiant can Indra bring these things to pass.

The usage of epic-narrative embellishment within a ritual context reaches its furthest extent in 5.29.2-4, 7-8 (verse 1 is introductory and verses 5 and 6 elaborate other deeds of Indra). In verse 2 Indra drank the soma, grasped the vajra, and helped by his companion Maruts, slew Ahi and released the swift/youthful (yahvīr) waters. Indra is to drink the soma (verse 3) pressed by the sacrificer because it is the soma that found the cows for Manu. Indra, drinking the soma, slays Ahi. There seems to be a distinction made between the gaining of cattle, which refers to Vala, and the slaying of Ahi. Continuing on (but not in a chronological sense) verse 4 states that Indra sundered heaven and earth and supported them. However, this does not appear to belong to the cosmologic theme of fixing heaven and earth per se as the point appears to be that Indra is so mighty that heaven and earth cloak his shoulders (sam + vyac). This sight struck

the beast <sup>25</sup> (mrgá) with terror. Indra forced the engulfer (jigartih) to disgorge and slew the snorting (svasántam) <sup>26</sup> Dānava. The ritualistic context is vividly expressed in verses 7 and 8 as Agni prepares buffalo meat and Manu prepares sóma (see verse 3) for the vrtrahátya. When the food and drink were consumed all the gods spoke like a chant "the prize!", when Indra slew Ahi. This verse is most probably a cosmic reflection of the cultic ceremony.

A further insight into the relationship between cultic ceremony as reflected in a particular hymn and the Indra-Vrtra conflict is provided by an examination of 10.124.6-8 which, in my opinion, is an expansion on the different roles of here and seer <sup>27</sup> delineated in 6.13.3ab. <sup>28</sup> Indra invites himself and Varuṇa <sup>29</sup> to slay Vrtra. Soma is told to come forth <sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> There appears to be a conscious attempt in this verse to avoid the naming of Vrtra or Ahi as three other words (mrgá, jigartih and Dānava) are used instead.

<sup>26</sup> See 1.61.10 for súsant "hissing".

<sup>27</sup> In 6.13.3ab and 6.68.3 Varuṇa is a viprá and in 10.124.7 Varuṇa is a kavi. For these terms see Gonda, Vision, passim.

<sup>28</sup> See p. 163 above.

<sup>29</sup> See F. B. J. Kuiper, "An Indian Prometheus?" Asiatische Studien XXV (1971) 85-98.

<sup>30</sup> Presumably from being enclosed by Vrtra rather than a "stage direction" inviting Soma in from the wings.

as he is the oblation and Indra and Varuṇa will sacrifice by means of the oblation. The inspired seer (kavi = Varuṇa, not Indra as Renou<sup>31</sup> and Geldner) by means of inspiration attached the rūpa (most probably "bright form" = light/sun) in the sky and Varuṇa released the waters because he could do nothing else (aprabhūti).<sup>32</sup> I think that Varuṇa has not been belittled by Indra, but rather that Varuṇa acts under the constraint of ṛta. In 6.68.2-3,<sup>33</sup> Indra and Varuṇa both overcome Vṛtra -- Indra by strength and the vájra, Varuṇa by being a vīpra and standing nearby as a helper.

Returning to 10.124.6-8, the verses continue by discussing the released waters. Like women who are made (ritually) safe (kṣéma), they bear the colour (várna)<sup>34</sup> of this brightness.<sup>35</sup> They possess his pre-eminent Indra-quality. Indra takes possession<sup>36</sup> of these waters by means

<sup>31</sup>Renou EVP XIV, 30. His usage of 8.41.5 (EVoc, 13) which seems to be connected in its imagery with 10.124.7 clearly refers to Varuṇa.

<sup>32</sup>hapax.

<sup>33</sup>Briefly discussed above, p. 163

<sup>34</sup>On the distinction between rūpa and várna see Renou, EVoc, 12-14. The former is a more general term and the latter denotes a characteristic element.

<sup>35</sup>A correlation may be drawn between this verse and 3.34.5: "he... revealed these 'visions' to the praiser, he furthered their bright (pure) form (outward appearance)" (Gonda, Vision, 99). See also *ibid.*, 167f. Thus the hymn and the inspiring influence behind the hymn (in 10.124.7 the waters which take on Indra's own-nature) have a certain lustre because they both partake of the visioning experience.

<sup>36</sup>Refers back to kṣéma in verse 7 (Renou, EVP XIV, 98).



of his own nature (svadhā).<sup>37</sup> They, as peoples choosing a leader, turn away, repelled, from Vrtra.<sup>38</sup> These verses seem to be a reflected interpretation of the changing status of the waters dāsāpatnī to aryāpatnī.

### Major Indra-Vrtra Hymns

Those hymns designated by Renou as "major" for understanding the epic-narrative (itihāsa) element of the Indra-Vrtra conflict are not univalent in either content or purpose. In examining these major Indra-Vrtra hymns both for content and similarities, the likelihood of divergence occasioned by personal choice should be kept in mind. These hymns were not written to consciously express a single unvarying account of this great struggle.

Chaque poète puise dans ses fonds  
sans copier servilement les prototypes;  
il y apporte des variantes, des amplifications,  
il interfère avec des formules voisines,  
moins préoccupé de retenir l'intention primitive  
du récit que de jouer avec les mots,  
d'enchérir sur la phraseologie d'un poète concurrent,  
d'adapter son texte à la structure métrique qu'il a choisie  
et de le relier à la stylisation générale de son oeuvre.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Related to dhāman. See Renou, EVoc, 18-20. For an extended definition of dhāman which sheds light on the usage of svadhā here see Gonda, Dhaman, 19.

<sup>38</sup> The combination of references to Varuna and Vrtra is not any attempt to inherently connect them together. Renou (VV, 146 n 1) comments that "on connaît dans X, 124,8 avec Oldenberg, bien moins une confusion pré-rgvédique Varuna - Vrtra (Bergaigne et Geldner cités chez Oldenberg) qu'un simple mélange de formules, dans un mythe qui cessait d'être vivant." I cannot agree, however, when he continues that "le passage des fleuves de la domination de Varuna à celle d'Indra (vers 7) rappelle au poète qu'ils furent aussi, durant un temps, soumis à Vrtra."

<sup>39</sup> Renou, VV, 172.

While I would not readily ascribe some of the problems concerning the recovery of the Indra-Vṛtra conflict to problems of style as Renou does, he certainly points out succinctly what any interpreter must remember before making rash judgements.

Before continuing the analysis, I should comment further on the myth of Vala and its relationship to the Vṛtra myth. I am not going to undertake an examination of the "myth" in its epic-narrative entirety as this has already been done adequately.<sup>40</sup> Some of the same problems as are present in the Vṛtra myth occur in the hermeneutical task of understanding the Vala myth, for example the differentiation between abstract/personified vṛtra (demon Vṛtra?, "resistance"?) and vala (demon Vala?, "rock-cave"?). The Vala myth to follow Lüders,

in the form presented to us by the RV poets is the same as the Vṛtra myth worked over by priests. The great warrior Indra, who smites Vṛtra with the Vajra and slays him... is represented in the Vala myth as overthrowing Vala by the instrumentality of rta or a hymn, an instrument that is appropriate enough in the case of priests, but wholly out of place in connection with a warrior.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup>"Lüders, Varuna II, 519-537, and especially Schmidt, Brhaspati und Indra (Wiesbaden, 1968).

<sup>41</sup>This summary of Lüders' position in Venkatasubbiah "Indra's Winning of Cows and Waters", Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenlandischen Gesellschaft 115 (1965), 128. While his article is of great value in the hermeneutical task, it must be conceded that he accepts the priest/warrior dichotomy as being always present in Vṛtra-myth and Vala-myth distinctions, rather than seeing a creeping institutionalization of ritual leading to dichotomy.

Therefore, vala will be presently considered only in those instances where it directly connects with the Indra-Vrtra conflict within the major Indra-Vrtra hymns.

Some themes of the conflict are present in all the major hymns. The most dominant one, naturally enough is the slaying of Vrtra or Ahi accompanied by the releasing (or winning) of waters. Present in most hymns<sup>42</sup> is the breaking/bursting/opening of the cave/rock/mountain with the addition<sup>43</sup> of the bursting of cowstalls/releasing (or winning) of cows. Lüders believes that the Vrtra and Vala myths influenced each other and that the release of cows is not one of the results of the Vrtra conflict<sup>44</sup> and that the release of waters in the Vala myth is borrowed from the Vrtra conflict.<sup>45</sup> Venkatasubbiah has concluded, by listing occurrences, that the release of waters and cows is a "conventional" expression and that the mention of waters and cows is not due to borrowing.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup>Except 1.80; 3.30; 8.6; 10.111.

<sup>43</sup>In 1.32; 3.30 (which does not mention the bursting of the rock).

<sup>44</sup>See Venkatasubbiah, ibid., 121.

<sup>45</sup>ibid., 127.

<sup>46</sup>Venkatasubbiah, op. cit., 133. The problem, of course, is to define the boundaries of meaning expressed by "conventional" and to enquire as to why such should be the case.



Further, Renou<sup>47</sup> contends that the release of waters is rather to be understood as an element that became attached to Vrtra only by means of the attraction of Ahi to Vrtra (as demonstrated by the Avestan material which outlines two themes: 1, the hero versus the dragon and 2, the overcoming of dryness by a star). This observation becomes important if one seizes it to conclude that a consideration of the release of waters as an integral part of the overcoming of Vrtra is irrelevant in the attempt to understand the conflict as presented in the Rgvedic material. Such a conclusion stems from an over-evaluation of the Avestan evidence whose relationship to Vedic material is, to say the least, ambiguous.

Venkatasubbiah has also noted other "conventional" expressions<sup>48</sup> in the Vrtra conflict such as the giving of life to light (expressed as sun/dawn/heaven),<sup>49</sup> and the setting of the cosmos in order.<sup>50</sup> Thus the general outline of the epic-narrative hymns would appear to be "creation-hymns" except for the facts that the release of waters has not been demonstrated to connote a "fertility" motif nor has the setting of the cosmos in order been demonstrated to be the prime thrust of the hymns.

<sup>47</sup>Renou VV, 141-145, 102f. (and Benveniste 187f).

<sup>48</sup>He describes them as "the 'winning' of the sun and usas and the extension and propping up of earth and heaven". p. 128.

<sup>49</sup>In 1.32; 1.52; 2.11; 3.30; 6.17; 10.111.

<sup>50</sup>1.32.15(?); 1.52; 6.17; 8.6; 10.111; 10.113.

An examination of the hymns focussing on individual content rather than comparative similarities demonstrates that 1.32. and 6.17 tell the most complete "story". All four themes (releasing of waters, bursting of rock, giving life to light, setting things in order) are included in these hymns, along with Indra's use of the vájra fashioned by Tvastṛ in overcoming Vṛtra and the choosing/drinking of sóma.<sup>51</sup> These two hymns must be viewed in contrast to others (1.80; 2.11; 5.32; 10.111; 10.113) which present the "bare outlines" of the story. In 1.80 Indra slays Vṛtra with the vájra and drinks sóma (brought by the hawk).<sup>52</sup> The waters are released. The bursting of the rock and gaining of light are mentioned in addition by 2.11. The gaining of light is not mentioned in 5.32. While both themes of the bursting of the rock and the gaining of light are not mentioned in 8.6 the setting of the cosmos in order is. Hymn 10.111 neglects the bursting of the rock while 10.113 omits any mention of the giving of light but notes the use of the vájra. Thus the outlines of the story presented in these hymns would be unintelligible without resorting to 1.32 and 6.17. It seems, to me, therefore, unclear why 1.80; 2.11; 5.32; 10.111, and 10.113 are called major hymns by Renou.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup>Venkatasubbiah comments that "it also becomes clear that the RV poets are following a convention when they describe that Indra performed his exploits 'in the exhilaration caused by Soma'." (p.133).

<sup>52</sup>This is the only instance in the major hymns of the "hawk" theme concerning the obtaining of sóma.

<sup>53</sup>Renou does qualify 6.17; 8.6; 10.111 and 113 as "moins nettement" (VV, 167) major Indra-Vṛtra hymns and is unsure of 5.32. Why 6.17 is included here is unclear to me unless he wishes to make a division between late ("le livre I abonde en traits nouveaux, qui mettent en évidence les aspects personnels de Vṛtra") and early ("...ancien VI-VII-VIII où la mythologie de Vṛtra est rudimentaire...", 168). He is unsure of 5.32 because Vṛtra is not mentioned and the use of Ahi is infrequent. The remaining hymn (8.6) will be discussed below in conjunction with 1.52.

The collection of hymns in Book 4 (17-19) notes briefly the deeds of Indra (slaying Vṛtra, releasing waters, bursting rock, having allies) and depends heavily for orientation on 4.18, a hymn which gives an account of Indra's birth and deeds.<sup>54</sup> While much epic-narrative material is outlined concerning Indra's total career, very little detail is shed on the Indra-Vṛtra conflict itself except for, perhaps, 4.18.11 where Viṣṇu is asked to step widely.

Two major hymns (1.52; 8.6) because of their explicit interpretation of waters as "rain" should be considered together. While 1.52 outlines much information on the Indra-Vṛtra conflict the phrase svavṛṣṭi (verses 5 and 14) "qui a la pluie en son pouvoir"<sup>55</sup> applied to Indra gives pause as "il introduirait une valeur de "pluie" qui est totalement étrangère dans le RV à ce cycle formulaire".<sup>56</sup> In 8.6.1 Indra is compared

---

<sup>54</sup>See W. N. Brown, "Indra's Infancy According to 4.18", Siddha-Bhārati (Hoshiarpur, 1950), 1-6. Gonda has commented on the importance of knowing about the origin of a god. "Speculations about the birth, origin or birth-place of exalted beings are not rare. It was of the utmost importance to know the origin of a god, because just like knowledge of a being's name or nature, acquaintance with his birth-place enables the person who knows, to control that being, or to make it subservient. Or knowledge of its origin was regarded as the key to an understanding of a being's nature and essence." Observations, 26. This becomes especially significant in 5.30.1.

<sup>55</sup>Renou, op. cit., 164. He accepts Oldenberg's rendering as opposed to Geldner's "sa (propre) grandeur."

<sup>56</sup>ibid. See also Luders, Varuṇa I, 196-201.



to Parjanya as being vr̥stimat "raining, bringing rain".<sup>57</sup> This hymn notes that Indra slays Vr̥tra, releases the waters and sets heaven and earth in order. The intention of the poet here seems to be in line with later interpretations of the Vedic conflict. For example, Yāska comments on 1.32.10 at 2.16

Who was Vr̥tra? "A cloud" says Nairuktas (etymologists), "an Asura, son of Tvaṣṭṛ", says the Aitiḥāsikas (story-tellers). The fall of rain arises from the mingling of the waters and of light. This is figuratively depicted as a conflict. The hymns and Brāhmaṇas describe Vr̥tra as a serpent. By the expression [expansion] of his body, he blocked up the streams. When he was destroyed, the waters flowed forth.<sup>58</sup>

Continuing on to comment on 1.32.11 at 2.17, Yāska explains āhi:

The cloud (āhi) is (so called) on account of its motion: it moves in the atmosphere. The other (meaning of) āhi, i.e., a serpent, is derived from the same root also, or from āhan (to attack) with its preposition shortened: it attacks.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, by the time of Yāska, the bringing of rain was one dominant interpretation of the Indra-Vr̥tra conflict. Both 1.52 and 8.6 partake

<sup>57</sup>Gonda, Epithets, 179.

<sup>58</sup>Sharma, "Vr̥tra", New Indian Antiquary 9 (1947), 95 (quoting from Muir, OST).

<sup>59</sup>L. Sarup (trans.), The Nighantu and the Nirukta (Delhi, 1967 rep.).

of this later interpretation foreign to the main thrusts of the epic-narrative hymns. Further, 8.6 so self-consciously extols the Kanvas that one cannot conclude otherwise than Kuiper<sup>60</sup> that they long to be considered as part of the élite and know only the broad outlines of Aryan mythology.

Before directly discussing 3.30, there are some points concerning epic-narrative details enumerated in individual hymns that should be discussed. The mother of Vrtra is mentioned in 1.32.9, but Renou contends that, with reference to 4.18.9 which discusses Indra's mother and 3.30.8 (along with Geldner) which demonstrates the grammatical reasons for perhaps reading "avec la Dānu" instead of "avec les Dānu", such a motif is secondary. He speculates "toute la légende de la mère de Vrtra sortirait-elle de ces deux passages?".<sup>61</sup> Also occurring in 1.32 is the flight of Indra after killing Vrtra (verse 14). This has been variously interpreted as either remorse after berserkir (in comparative Indo-European studies on this verse) or fear of punishment because of brahmicide (in the later Indian tradition).<sup>62</sup> However, a third alternative is possible due to the symbiotic relationship of powers and their bearers. Gonda, quoting S. B. 5.2.3.8, examines the motif. The text states:

<sup>60</sup>Kuiper, "Austro-Asiatic Myth" and above p. 106f.

<sup>61</sup>Benveniste and Renou, VV, 157.

<sup>62</sup>For a concise summary of both positions see Dumézil, DW, 123-127.

When Indra slew Vrtra, his specific heroism (indriyam vīryam) went out of him, he who was frightened; by this sacrifice he replaced it into himself. In like manner does the sacrificer... for Agni is tejas and Indra is indriyam vīryam; he (the sacrificer) thinks: "may I be consecrated, having embraced (assumed) both these powers (vīrye)". <sup>63</sup>

While such a passage could be interpreted in the light of berserkir it appears more apposite to see the combat as exhausting even the mightiness of Indra because it is his prime deed and his hardest task (the deed for which he was born). This is, then, a literary metaphor emphasizing the difficulty of the deed rather than an extension of human battles to the divine plane in terms of narrative.

There is one mention of Trita overcoming Viśvarūpa (2.11.19), Indra gave Viśvarūpa, the son of Tvastṛ, to Trita. This embellishment encapsulates the Indo-Iranian narrative (reflected in the Avestan material relating the victory of the hero Θeraitauna over Aži Dahāka) and demonstrates the existence of two parallel myths, (that of āhi and that of Viśvarūpa) which became conflated by the time of the Brahmanas. Thus Vrtra is not fundamentally the son of Tvastṛ nor does Trita normally slay Vrtra (as 1.187.1). <sup>64</sup> The separating out of this material is necessary in order to gain a perspective on the themes surrounding the Indra-Vrtra conflict.

---

<sup>63</sup>Gonda, Observations, 60.

<sup>64</sup>Renou, op. cit., 106 n 1 and passim. Also see K. Ronnow "Visvarūpa", Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies 6 (1931), 469-480.



A Possible Hermeneutical Framework  
for the Indra-Vṛtra narrative elements

The expected list of deeds that Indra performs has been succinctly enumerated by Venkatasubbiah:

as soon as he is born (1) becomes adult  
 (2) drinks Soma and attains great strength,  
 (3) takes the Vajra in hand and kills Vṛtra  
 and other enemies with it after fighting  
 (4) shatters the rock (cave), (5) sets free  
 the waters (rivers) and cows confined therein,  
 (6) extends and firmly establishes earth and  
 heaven and (7) places in the sky the sun,  
 Dawn and other lights. <sup>65</sup>

However, another list of deeds presented in 5.32.1, which appear to encapsulate the deeds of Indra from another perspective provides a more appropriate focus. The verse, as rendered by Kuiper, is as follows:

Thou splitst the well open, thou sentst  
 forth the (water from the) orifices, thou  
 setst to rest the flood (arnavá) that was  
 hemmed in. Then thou, O Indra uncoveredst  
 the big mountain thou sentst forth the streams  
 (dhārā) and slewest the son of the Dānu. <sup>66</sup>

Stripping away the epic-narrative embellishments of the story-line in Venkatasubbiah's list what remains of his enumeration is the slaying of Vṛtra, the bursting of the rock, the release of waters, the establishing of the cosmos and the giving of light. These last two are not reflected in 5.32. The relationship between the rock and cattle is explicated in

---

<sup>65</sup>Venkatasubbiah, *ibid.*, 123.

<sup>66</sup>Kuiper, "Heavenly Bucket", 149-150. I would prefer the rendering Dānava rather than "son of the Dānu" for reasons outlined above. See also 2.24.4: "The well that has a rock for orifice and streams of "madhu"."

verse 2 where the well is likened to an udder. Thus, the cows here are not parallel to the waters.

The reference to udder and the corresponding relationship of the rock and cow also aid in gaining perspective on 3.30.14 and 6.17.6. (The relationship of these two verses to 8.89.7 will be discussed below.) The former verse is rendered as follows:

máhi jyótir níhitam vaksánāsv āmā pakvām  
carati bibhratī gauh/ visvām svādma sām-  
bhrtam usriyāyām yāt sīm indro ādadhād  
bhōjanāya//

A great light was placed in the udder, the  
raw cow wanders bearing the cooked.  
All sweetness (i.e., sōma) was collected in  
the cow  
When Indra placed it for enjoyment.

This juxtaposition of the raw and the cooked <sup>67</sup> is repeated in 6.17.6:

tāva krátvā tāva tād dāmsānābhir āmasu  
pakvām śācyā ní dīdhah/ aurnor dūra  
usriabhya vi dīdhod ūrvād gā asrjo  
āngirasvān//

Through your resourcefulness and your  
marvellous powers you have with energy  
placed the ripe in the raw. You opened the  
door for the cows and you set free with  
the Angirases the cattle from the cavern.

Verse 7 then outlines the setting of the cosmos in order, while verse 3

---

<sup>67</sup> See 1.62.9; 1.80.3; 2.40.2; 4.3.9; 6.44.24; 6.72.4; 8.32.25;  
8.93.13; 10.49.10.

mentions making the sun visible. The point of treating references to the motif of the raw and the cooked in this particular context is to draw attention to a series of relationships being formulated by the poets within the epic-narrative setting: cow=mountain, udder=cavern, milk=waters.

The waters released by the conflict between Indra and Vṛtra are described in terms of ownership in one passage. In 1.32.11 the waters are called dāsāpatnī "having the Dāsa as lord".<sup>68</sup> In another passage, 4.19.7, discussed above<sup>69</sup> the released waters are young maidens who are unwed.<sup>70</sup> These designations will be tied in with the motif of the waters bearing Indra's vārṇa below.<sup>70a</sup>

#### The Allies of Indra

In the utilization of the epic-narrative theme, the poets of the hymns embellished the story of the Indra-Vṛtra conflict with accounts of help rendered by various companions of Indra. The most important allies are the Maruts, Viṣṇu and Varuṇa.

One of the hermeneutical roadblocks facing the interpreter of Rgvedic material on the Indra-Vṛtra conflict is the separating out of

<sup>68</sup>See also 5.30.5 and 8.85.18.

<sup>69</sup>See p. 101f. above.

<sup>70</sup>The waters are also designated as belonging to Indra (above and beyond the passages describing the release of the waters by verbs 'to win' (ji and san), 8.15.6 and 10.43.8.

<sup>70a</sup>See below p. 197.



instances where Ahi-Vrtra is meant by vrtra. This problem also occurs in the consideration of the allies of Indra. For example, in 8.9.4 the bounteousness of the Asvins is being both praised and requested. The plea of the singers for help in overcoming vrtra. The context of this verse enables one to conclude that "resistance" in the shape of an obstacle to growth and prosperity (see verse 5) is meant, not Indra's enemy.

A further problematic instance of ambivalent usage occurs in 1.36.7-8 where caution should be exercised in translating vrtra. The overcoming of vrtra by means of Agni is followed by the bringing under control of heaven, earth, and waters and the making of a wide space. This actualization through ritual of the cosmologic theme does not appear to directly refer to the Indra-Vrtra conflict. Rather through worship and sacrifice is the world "cosmicized".<sup>71</sup> In 5.29.7-8 Agni is the ally of Indra, but only in a very ritualized context, by dressing 300 buffalo to be eaten in conjunction with three lakes of soma for the vrtrahatya. The point is that only through the means of sacrifice can Indra slay Ahi (verse 8). Therefore, Agni can hardly be called an ally of Indra in the sense of being an active companion in the Indra-Vrtra conflict. The emphasis centers on the ability of the sacrificial cult surrounding worship of Agni to bring about the desired result.

---

<sup>71</sup>M. Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 20-65, especially 30-31.

The Maruts are well-known as the companions and aiders of Indra. In his fight with Vrtra their aid is described in two divergent ways: on the one hand, as the aid that fellow fighters bring to their leader in conflict (1.23.9, 1.165.6 [their absence emphasizing the might of Indra rather than including them in the terrified flight of the other gods], 8.63.12 ab [Rudras]; 7.23.24) and, on the other hand, the designation of the Maruts as viprah, either explicitly or implicitly (3.32.4-6; 3.47.3-4; 4.16.6-8; 5.29.2-3; 5.30.6).

The latter designation of the Maruts recalls the aid rendered by Varuna, which has already been alluded to.<sup>72</sup> Viprah means "seers" or as Gonda expands the meaning "a moved, inspired, ecstatic and "enthusiast" seer as a bearer or pronouncer of the emotional and vibrating, metrical sacred words....".<sup>73</sup> In 3.32.4-6 the Maruts (here sārdhas personified) shake (vip-) with emotion<sup>74</sup> and urge Indra on to slay Vrtra and release the waters. The poet also, parallel to the aid rendered by the Maruts, asks Indra to accept the libation of soma offered by himself and his patron so that Indra might have vigour (ojas). The same theme is repeated in 3.47.3-4 where soma is being offered to Indra with the request that he share it with the Maruts who are viprah (verse 4) and

<sup>72</sup>See above p. 165f.

<sup>73</sup>Gonda, Vision, 39.

<sup>74</sup>Velankar, Rgveda Mandala III, 77.

who give Indra o<sup>1</sup>jas. The passage 4.16.6-8 is complex <sup>75</sup> yet parallels the actions of the hymning Maruts in verse 6cd and the aid rendered by the hymning Angirases in verse 8 in bursting the mountain and making manifest the cowstalls. In 5.29.1 Indra is called the dhira<sup>h</sup> (inspired) <sup>76</sup> rsi of the Maruts. The Maruts hymned Indra and he, after drinking the offering of soma, killed Ahi. In verse 2 swift/youthful (yahv<sup>i</sup>r) waters are released and in verse 3 cattle (ga) are found after Ahi is slain. The last reference, 5.30.6, combines the hymning and soma-pouring as the acts of the Maruts so that Ahi could be overcome and waters released. <sup>77</sup> Thus the aid given by the Maruts, in the passages that add more detail beyond mere companionship, is the aid of the "seer" and is closely connected with the pouring and drinking of soma.

The aid given by Visnu significantly differs from that rendered by the Maruts and Varuna, being seemingly more in alignment with the results gained when Agni overcomes vrtra. However, the contextual setting of Visnu's aid is epic-narrative. <sup>78</sup> Sometimes he is just mentioned as a

---

<sup>75</sup> H. P. Schmidt, Brhaspati und Indra, 162-163, wishes to divide this hymn between a central Vala-myth (3-4, 6cd, 8) and the Vrtra-myth (4ab, 7) because of the breaking of the mountain and the release of water appearing together. Such a conclusion deals harshly with the doubling-motif expressed earlier and relies on a too strict division of the text.

<sup>76</sup> Gonda, ibid., 40.

<sup>77</sup> It should be noted that Ahi alone is mentioned in the passages in Book 5.

<sup>78</sup> For several interpretations of this aid see Kuiper "The Three Strides of Visnu" Indological Studies in honor of W. Norman Brown (New Haven, 1962), 137 ff.



companion of Indra (1.22.4) or as a companion in the slaying of Vrtra (6.20.2, 10.113.2) but at other times his aid is explicitly described -- Visnu is the "wide-strider" (4.18.11; 8.100.2; 8.12.26-27 [the three steps]).<sup>79</sup> Visnu's pervasiveness and omnipresence<sup>80</sup> which is beneficial is being contrasted with Vrtra ("Resistance") the foe whose power of obstruction is harmful.<sup>81</sup>

### The Cosmologic Theme

One of the primary tasks facing the exegete in delineating the cosmologic theme is the determination of various benefits accruing to Vedic man and his world from such an act. Basing my observations presently on the references not found in major hymns, as cosmologic references in these require a separate examination,<sup>82</sup> four benefits deriving from the Indra-Vrtra conflict appear to be of utmost significance: 1) the release of waters; 2) the bringing out of "something" from a mountain/rock/stone; 3) the granting of light/heat; 4) the granting of room or wide space. However, only twice (1.56.5-6 and 6.60.1-2) do all the benefits occur

---

<sup>79</sup>I am not going to discuss 1.61.7 as it belongs with the boar myth. See above p. 159f.

<sup>80</sup>See Gonda, Aspects, "Prefatory Note" and p. 32f.

<sup>81</sup>ibid., 72.

<sup>82</sup>This examination, already undertaken above, demonstrates that the references in major hymns do not show the motif as being the prime thrust of the hymns. Instead, the instances seem "conventional" and tend to stress the storyline or to extol Indra's mightiness, rather than the ordering of the cosmos.

together, and the latter reference is quite complex and should be treated separately.

In 1.56.5-6 Indra, with the help of soma, defeats Vrtra. Waters were released and the cosmos was ordered <sup>83</sup> through separation and fixing. This Indra did (verse 5) in the contest for light (svārmīlhe) which seems to be one of the major thrusts of the hymn (see verse 4), the other benefits being almost secondary here. In 1.56.6cd Indra broke the stone (pāsya) <sup>84</sup> of Vrtra, which, in an indirect way, rounds out the list of benefits.

There are two occurrences (1.51.4; 2.19.2-4) where the first three benefits appear together. I include here neither 2.12.3 because of its reference to seven rivers, which presents a special problem, nor 10.138.2 which, because of its complexity, deserves special consideration with other Book 10 references. In 1.51.4 Indra's opponent is Ahi-Vrtra and in 2.19.2-4, according to verse 2 Indra with soma defeats Ahi, in verse 3 Indra is called

<sup>83</sup>Renou, *EVoc*, 1 "Plus souvent et assez naturellement, c'est la Terre qui est le dharuna du ciel, ainsi I, 56, 6 et sans doute aussi au v.5 du même hymne où, quelle que soit, l'interprétation, dharuna note la terre à côté de rājas (=antariksa) et div..."

<sup>84</sup>In the dual this would refer to soma-pressing stones, but here mountain appears to be meant. Geldner would prefer jawbone (Kinhlade?), referring to 1.52.6, 15 and 10.152.3 (hānu for 1.52.6 and 10.152.3 "jaws" and āna-hapax for 1.52.15 "mouth"). Such a conclusion seems unwarranted unless there is an underlying presupposition that personification is meant, tying the verse to an epic-narrative setting.

Ahihan,<sup>85</sup> and in verse 4 Indra slays Vrtra. It is only by connecting verse 2 with 3-4 that a cosmologic theme becomes apparent for the cluster as a whole. Waters are released in 1.51.4 and 2.19.2. In 1.51.4 goods (vasu) are brought out from the mountain, while in 2.19.3 cattle are found (a frequent designation of what is brought out from the mountain).<sup>86</sup> Sunlight is important in both contexts (1.51.4 and 2.19.3). Indeed, since Indra was the one to overcome Vrtra he is sought by men who desire sūrya.

Both 2.12.3 and 4.28.1 refer to the releasing of the seven rivers when Indra overcame Ahi. This concretizing of the release of waters does not detract from the cosmologic theme but could personalize the motif for the singer so that it refers positively to the geographic area<sup>87</sup> of the Panjab (leading perhaps to the fourth benefit in a roundabout way). In the first reference Indra also drove cattle from the cave of Vala<sup>88</sup> and begat fire between two stones. All these benefits are summarized as booty

<sup>85</sup> See above, p. 86f.

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, 2.12.3 below.

<sup>87</sup> If, indeed, the use of "seven" refers to the seven rivers of the Panjab. The number could have other, less concrete connotations.

<sup>88</sup> See 2.14.3 and 1.11.5 etc.



(samvr̥k-hapax) gained in battle (samād) -- obviously the battle with Ahi. With the aid of soma, Indra in 4.28.1 besides sending forth the seven rivers, opens the obstructed wells (khā).<sup>89</sup>

There are three references that appear to extol the fourth benefit of granting room alone: 4.21.10 (varivas), 7.20.2 (loka), and 10.104.10 (loka).<sup>90</sup> Vr̥tra is the opponent in all three contexts.<sup>91</sup> The first reference, however, contains the enigmatic phrase evā vasva indrah satyāh samād, "so Indra is the true (supreme and) universal king<sup>92</sup> of vasu". What might this vasu be? In verse 8 we read that (when the well inspired ones [sudhyāh]<sup>93</sup> strive for vigour [vāja]) Indra finds

<sup>89</sup> Here and in 6.36.4 where one has the phrase "well of excellent riches". This refers to, in a metaphorical way, the cavern of the mountain. See 4.28.5 where Indra bursts into the stable that was obstructed by stone as another metaphorical way of rendering the benefit. See Kuiper, "Heavenly Bucket", 148.

<sup>90</sup> Both words definitely refer to the concept of sacral space, in the sense of taking possession of a territory and then consecrating it, which is equivalent to a cosmogony. For a detailed elaboration see Gonda, Loka, J. Gonda, "The Vedic Concept of Amhas" IIJ, 1 (1957), 33-60, and M. Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 29-32.

<sup>91</sup> See above p. 22ff.

<sup>92</sup> See Gonda, Epithets, 152.

<sup>93</sup> Gonda, Vision, 65.

wild cattle in the hiding-place (goháh) when he opens the spaces (varānsi) of the mountain and speeds the rushing waters with his fluids (payáh).<sup>94</sup> This reference, although not explicit, leads to the conclusion that the ingesting of sóma (vaja or cattle) by the seers (well-inspired ones) aids Indra in his cosmologic deed, the results of which are the releasing of waters and the finding of "something" in the mountain. Because Indra controls the vasu (here referring to cattle and the waters) he grants man varivas.

The reference in 7.20.2 is similarly complex. Just as the swelling (sus-) Indra slays Vrtra, so Indra aids the invokers. For example, for Sudas he made a loka and for the one who offers oblations he grants vasu. The vasu in this context refers to more material items on a ritualistic quid pro quo basis. The relationship between the Indra-Vrtra conflict and making a loka seems here to be almost secondary. The loka is an example of Indra's aid and since Indra has shown his power by slaying Vrtra, he will make a loka. One cannot, however, overlook the connection between the "swelling" Indra and the granting of a loka by Indra.

The final reference in 10.104.10<sup>95</sup> does not contain difficulties in and of itself. Indra overcomes Vrtra, making a loka. Similarly, the

---

<sup>94</sup> The word can mean "milk, water, fluid", (Mayrhofer) but what is intended here is an emphasis on the powerful impelling nature of Indra's fluids (whatever they might be).

<sup>95</sup> See Gonda's comment on this verse, Loka, 21.

"Mighty" (sakra'), the giver of aid, overcomes all demoniac hordes (referring to the overcoming of Vrtra). It is only by overcoming Vrtra, in these verses, that Indra makes a loka'. However, this verse is juxtaposed between 8-9 which deal with the freeing of waters, and 11 which is a repetition of the Visvamitra cliché verse concerning battles. Verse 10 does not seem to have any integral connection with either, other than attraction by vrtra-words.

The cosmologic theme expressed in 3.34.3-4 zeroes in on light. The Indra-Vrtra conflict is elaborated upon also. Indra encompasses Vrtra using physical strength (sardhas).<sup>96</sup> He destroys the mayā of the mayin-one (cf. 1.32.4) using a magical transformation (varpas).<sup>97</sup> Burning eagerly in the woods,<sup>98</sup> he slew Vyamsa and made manifest the

---

<sup>96</sup>Velankar's rendering. Renou, EVoc, 43-44, notes that this probably refers to the Maruts, leading to an epic-narrative form, but this argument is not altogether convincing in this context because of the doubling with varpas. (Conclusive is the doubling with vrjana in verse 6.)

<sup>97</sup>Velankar's rendering. Renou ibid., 13-14, associates the word with mayā (which must be supplied in this context).

<sup>98</sup>This phrase is usually applied to Agni. It is unclear why it is used here to refer to Indra unless it is because of the stress on the bringing of light in verse 4.



the dheṇā<sup>99</sup> of the nights. In verse 4 it is with the help of eager priests (forcefully demonstrating the ritualistic context of the cosmologic theme) that the manifestation of light is accomplished.

The cluster 6.60.1-3 captures one's interest because the hymn is an Indra-Agni hymn. Verse 3, with its reference to vrtrahan<sup>100</sup> has already been discussed. The setting is an invocatory ritualistic one, where (verse 1) it is said that whoever worships Indra and Agni pierces Vṛtra and gains energy (vāja). Therefore, Indra is to now fight (verse 2) for cows and waters, Agni for light (svar) and abducted dawns. Continuing

---

<sup>99</sup>A most complex word. Gonda relates it to dhih (Vision, 11 n 9). Velankar translates it as cows=dawns and further comments that "perhaps the dheṇā includes the cows and other luminaries imprisoned in the dark cave of Vāla, all of which were released by Indra". Mayrhofer splits the word into two sections, either voice, speech, prayer, or female, milk-cow, breast. Geldner, in commenting on 1.2.3, has a long discussion on the word. He concludes that the meaning in 3.34.3 is uncertain. However, a double meaning here is not out of the question. The meaning "cows" fits in well with the "something" released from the mountain. The concentration on light in 3-4 could, then, relegate the interpretation of "dawns" uppermost. But there is nothing to deny the possibility of a more hidden meaning of "inspired speech" manifested through soma. The verse is placed into a context where this meaning remains hidden, not suspect. Such an interpretation needs arguing and will be developed later.

<sup>100</sup>See above p. 131ff.

the theme, 2cd goes on to say that Indra gains regions,<sup>101</sup> light, dawns, bright waters and cattle along with Agni the binder of goods or prayers (niyutvant).<sup>102</sup> It is interesting, but unclear, why Agni gains light and dawns in contradiction to other passages which refer to Indra alone. Perhaps the theme of light joining light in a ritualistic context referring to the worship of Agni is meant here.

Two references in Book 10 (10.138.1,2 and 10.139.6) need to be considered together because there seems to be a certain amount of confusion reflected in the verses concerning the Indra-Vrtra conflict. In the first reference priests remembering ṛta aid Indra in rending Vala.<sup>103</sup> The priests release the waters and give dawns and Indra makes powerful<sup>104</sup> the Ahi.<sup>105</sup> Verse 2 continues by noting that Indra drinks soma and

<sup>101</sup>Geldner prefers "weltpole" or axis mundi in the sense of orientation but, since the occurrence is accusative plural I prefer "regions" as exemplifying making room in the sense of sacralizing space.

<sup>102</sup>For the complex word niyut and its derivatives, see Renou, EVoc, 3-6, and Geldner on 3.31.14. Either "goods" or "prayers" i.e., inspired words, will fit this context as Agni either gives religious inspiration in the form of the various words (cattle, bright waters) or goods (relative to the word vasu).

<sup>103</sup>Not, as Griffith, "Vrtra".

<sup>104</sup>See Mayrhofer and Geldner on this hapax word derived from dāmsah.

<sup>105</sup>It is unclear why the plural is used here, as in 10.139.6. Geldner would prefer to translate "cows" and align the word with the phrase "pregnant cows" in verse 2. However, this is not the most felicitous solution. I would prefer to leave the word as it is, while understanding its referent to be those things which the Ahi(s) have within them, i.e., light and waters. Therefore, Indra controls the dawns and makes the waters powerful.

sends forth the pregnant (prasvāh from prasu) waters.<sup>106</sup> Indra also makes the mountains yield<sup>107</sup> and sends forth dawns/cattle (usra).<sup>108</sup> Indra allows the strengthening of this tree<sup>109</sup> by means of power (dāmsah).<sup>110</sup> Sūrya shines by means of the hymn born from rtā, which refers back to the rending of Vala in Verse 1. Clearly, the cave/mountain Vala complex has become confused with the Vṛtra-Ahi release of waters complex.<sup>111</sup> The priests aid mainly in the manifestation of light while it appears that Indra, by means of power, makes soma effective.

The plural of āhi is also used in 10.139.6. Moreover, a new character is introduced, Viśvāvasu the gandharva.<sup>112</sup> It is he who found

<sup>106</sup>Not, as Geldner, "cows". The pregnant waters are the waters made powerful. Here pregnant should not be understood in the normative sense, but as waters able to produce inspired speech within the singer.

<sup>107</sup>See Geldner's comment.

<sup>108</sup>There is again a double meaning for cows/dawns. See a somewhat analogous, yet dissimilar, context in note 98 above.

<sup>109</sup>Whether this refers to soma or not is problematic.

<sup>110</sup>See above and also note 98 above.

<sup>111</sup>As Geldner indicates in his notes to this hymn.

<sup>112</sup>Only in this hymn (verses 4 and 5) as the guardian of waters (used in preparation of soma) and in 10.85.21-22 as the guardian of the bride in a late wedding hymn. Geldner, commenting on verses 4-6, states that there is a confusion here with the Gandharva myth of the rescue of the Sun. I am inclined to agree, although Renou (EVoc, 12) sees the Gandharva here as being Soma himself.



the capturer (i.e., Indra) in the motion of the streams and opened the doors of the rock-stalls (here plural, not singular as expected). The gandharva proclaimed the non-dying Names<sup>113</sup> (of the waters). Indra understands the cleverness or dexterity (dákṣa)<sup>114</sup> of the áhis.

#### Words and Phrases Referring to the Indra-Vrtra Conflict

The phrase ahihátya "overcoming the snake" does not closely correspond to the usage of ahihán, "overcomer of the snake" discussed in Chapter Two. The phrase occurs in Books 1 and 3 only.<sup>115</sup> Whereas in 1.165.6 Indra accuses the Maruts that he was alone in the ahihátya, 3.47.4ab notes that the Maruts gave aid which is far more common.<sup>116</sup> The vájra is sharp as a woodsman's axe in the ahihátya according to 1.130.4 whereas 3.32.12 notes that sacrifice invigorates Indra and aided the vájra in its task. The final usage occurs in a major hymn, 1.61.8. Indra is praised because of the ahihátya by the consorts of the gods. Thus all the references are applicable to the epic-narrative theme.

The hapax phrase áhi-ghna "when the snake had been overcome" (6.18.14), already discussed as shedding no light on ahihán, does, however, refer to a major theme. The cosmologic theme is implicit in

---

<sup>113</sup> See Geldner's comment and also 10.123.4d. I do not hold with his interpretation of "cows" for the contextual referent. If, however, "cows" is intended then the twenty-one secret names of the cows (7.87.4, Renou, *ibid.*) are meant.

<sup>114</sup> See Gonda Observations, 4. Geldner wishes to connect dákṣam with dāmsayah in 10.138.1d, discussed above.

<sup>115</sup> 1.61.8; 1.130.4; 1.165.6; 3.32.12; 3.47.4ab.

<sup>116</sup> See above on Indra's allies.

the phrase (14cd), "where you made room, being praised, for pressed-down heaven, for the people, and for yourself." This usage does correspond to the general thrust of the contextual meaning of ahihán.

Another hapax phrase, vr̥tra-hátha (3.16.1), occurs in an Agni hymn. The point of the verse is to show Agni's control over several situations, including the slaughter of enemies in battle. An actual battle situation is meant here.

The epithet vr̥tra-khādāh most probably means "consumer of Vr̥tra", rather than "uprooter of Vr̥tra".<sup>117</sup> This epithet is twice used to refer to Indra (3.45.2ab; 51.9cd) and once to refer to Brhaspati (10.65.10). This latter context is an invocatory one in a list of gods referring, in verse 11, to a generalized cosmogonic theme. The reference in 3.45.2ab briefly develops the epic-narrative theme as Indra is the consumer of Vr̥tra and impeller of waters, the breaker of Vala and shatterer of forts. The doubling of Vr̥tra and Vala suggests two separate deeds of Indra. The other reference in Book 3 declares that the consumer of Vr̥tra drinks soma along with the Maruts (verse 8 sets the scene as being the birth of Indra, with the gods crowding around, and the drinking is connected to his "great battle".). That Indra is the much-invoked one in verse 8 connects well with the wish in 9d that the drinking of soma be done in the proper place of (determined by) the worshipper. The epithet itself most probably refers to the might of Indra being so great that Vr̥tra is utterly annihilated

---

<sup>117</sup>See Geldner's note on the simile in 10.113.8d as opposed to Velankar's note on 3.45.2.

but its usage does not permit any conclusion on its exclusivity to any one motif of the epic-narrative theme.

The two remaining phrases to be considered, vrtrahátya "overcoming Vrtra" and vrtraturya "overcoming Vrtra", deal mainly with the epic-narrative theme,<sup>118</sup> an actual battle context,<sup>119</sup> or the utilization of the epic-narrative theme in a ritualistic setting which refers (directly or indirectly) to a battle.<sup>120</sup>

There are two late references (8.89.5 and 10.104.8-10) which seem contextually suited to the cosmologic theme. The former refers to the fact that Indra was born for vrtrahátya and proceeds to develop the cosmologic theme explicitly throughout the entire hymn. The latter reference includes some embellishing epic-narrative touches (seven rivers, 99 streams). Most significantly, however, in the vrtraturya is the removal of the curse from the waters with which Indra nourishes his body. He is the only deva (verse 9) of these waters which constitute the way (gātuḥ)

<sup>118</sup> vrtrahátya: 5.29.7 (son of Dānu motif); 6.18.9; 6.47.2; 8.24.2 (etymology); 8.63.12ab. vrtraturya: 8.7.24; 8.37.1 (etymology); 10.66.8cd; 6.61.5 (use of similes).

<sup>119</sup> vrtrahátya: 1.9.5; 1.53.6; 1.109.5; 3.37.1; 6.23.2; 6.25.1,8 (note verse 4 where battle is for cows, water, fertile soil, tokā (young men) and tanaya (offspring) -- see Renou, EVoc, 63-64); 6.46.1 (see verse 3 for thousand-testicled Indra); 7.19.3; 7.32.15ab; 10.22.10ab; 10.48.8. vrtraturya: 1.106.2 (Adityas); 2.26.2; 6.34.5; 6.38.5; 8.19.20 (Agni).

<sup>120</sup> vrtrahátya: 4.24.2; 6.26.2; 6.36.2; 7.1.10; 7.19.10; 10.65.2. vrtraturya: 6.13.1 (Agni -- note strong fertility inference); 6.18.6 (note tokā and tanaya); 8.35.11ab, 12ab (Asvins -- note reference to progeny); 8.74.9, 12 (Agni).



for gods and men. Verse 10cd states that Indra quelled Vrtra and gave men a loka. This verse seems more aptly connected with verse 11 (=3.30.22 etc.) referring to an actual battle context, thus being only loosely connected with verses 8 and 9.

It is important to note that references to fertility (of the clan, the land) are to be found within a battle motif rather than the cosmologic theme. Thus some doubt must be cast upon the supposition that the cosmologic theme implicitly deals with the motif of fertility in the Indra-Vrtra frame of reference. Some speculation on the purpose of the cosmologic theme then is necessary. Such consideration will be dealt with later.

#### Excursus on Vrtra(s)

It is well known <sup>121</sup> that the singular accusative can be used in a collective sense with verbs for slaying. The idea being expressed by the use of vrtram is "representative or manifestations of the Vrtra idea". There are several instances <sup>122</sup> of this usage in the Rgveda, an examination of which rounds out the discussion of the Indra-Vrtra conflict. The context is always one that reflects an actual battle situation. In 3.53.11cd and 5.37.4 the role of the ruler (rajan) and his sacrificial duties in connection with warfare are stressed. In 7.58.4 the Maruts aid the samraj

---

<sup>121</sup>See, for example, Gonda Epithets, 134.

<sup>122</sup>3.37.5,6; 3.53.11cd; 5.37.4; 5.42.5; 6.37.5; 6.44.15; 7.48.2; 7.58.4; 8.21.12; 10.42.5; 10.54.2.

in slaying the foe. The usage in 6.44.15 so clearly parallels verse 14 that one can conclude that the collective accusative is meant in the former verse, even though epic-narrative elements are apparent (drinking soma, use of vajra). One instance that merits attention is 10.54.2 because it is stated that all battles are māya, and that Indra never has had a vrtra. However, Gonda rightly concludes <sup>123</sup> that māya is used here in the sense of marvellous ability so that the poet celebrates that there is no foe equal to Indra.

Most of the references to foes (vrtrāni -- neuter plural) follow the general outline of 3.30.22, and do not warrant an extended discussion in this study because of the orientation to the Indra-Vrtra conflict undertaken here. As translated by Velankar <sup>124</sup> the verse states:

For the sake of favour at this battle  
where plunder is to be acquired, may we  
successfully call upon this very brave and  
liberal Indra, who though fierce, listens  
to us, kills our enemies in battles and  
wins their treasures for us.

On occasion the imbibing of soma is also mentioned <sup>125</sup> but in the later strata of the Rgveda. Most instructive in this regard is 10.83.7 <sup>126</sup>

<sup>123</sup>Gonda, Four Studies in the Language of the Veda, 135-137.

<sup>124</sup>Velankar, Rgveda Mandala III.

<sup>125</sup>1.48; 1.102.7; 6.44.14; 7.22.2; 8.17.8; 8.95.9; 10.83.7. Also the references in Book 9: 1.10; 17.1; 23.7; 88.4; 109.14; 110.1. Except for 17.1 and 110.1 the drinking of soma by Indra is explicit and in these two it is implicit.

<sup>126</sup>Verse 3, which refers to Manyu as vrtrahan has already been discussed in Chapter Three above p.143. Also note the comment on soma at that point.

which connects Manyu and madhu, a term usually employed in reference to soma. It appears that a reference is being made to the draught which produces berserkir.

The grammatical shortening of vr̥trhátyesu in 1.7.5; 6.26.2, 46.1 to vr̥tresu accounts for the locative plural <sup>127</sup> and these references have already been discussed in their more appropriate place above.

There are two references which appear to directly point to the plural being used as designating demonic forces rather than earthly foes. In 6.73.2 Br̥haspati <sup>128</sup> makes a loka, kills enemies, breaks forts etc.. The sacrificial homology indicated by Br̥haspati's general function is made intelligible by combining verse 2 with verse 3 where he also wins waters, cow-stalls, light, and vasu and also slays the amitra-one <sup>129</sup> by means of hymns. <sup>130</sup> These "winnings" correspond to the cosmological doublings discussed earlier. <sup>131</sup> The second reference, in 8.96.18, where

<sup>127</sup> Except 5.50.3 which is grammatically coherent.

<sup>128</sup> See H. P. Schmidt, Brhaspati und Indra for an analysis of the relationship between the two gods (although the descriptive and analytic models employed by him do not meet with general approval). He translates the verse on p. 214.

<sup>129</sup> Most likely referring to Vr̥tra (Gonda, Epithets, 134 for amitriya in 6.17.1) and paralleling the plural usage in verse 2.

<sup>130</sup> Not, as Griffith, "lightning".

<sup>131</sup> See above pp. 168ff. The centrality of the Vala-myth for an understanding of Br̥haspati is examined by Schmidt in considerable detail.



the release of waters is connected with slaying Vrtras (perhaps seven in number according to verse 16 because of the mention of seven streams in verse 1). The hymn itself is a clumsy compilation of themes and motifs, most notably the epic-narrative theme in verses 5-7 and the repetition of vrtrahan in 19-21. There is an important phrase in verse 18, apó dāsāpatnīh "waters having the Dāsa(s) as lord" <sup>132</sup> which should be contrasted with their depiction as "having the bull (i.e., Indra) as lord" in 8.15.6 and "having the arya (i.e., Indra) as lord" in 10.43.8. Further, the waters bear the varṇa of Indra in 10.124.7. <sup>133</sup> The hermeneutical implications of such phraseology will be dealt with later.

A less clear homology than that expressed in 6.73.2 appears to be reflected in 7.30.2 and 7.34.3. In the former verse an actual battle is being fought for life and for winning of the sun and Indra makes the enemy easier to kill. In the latter verse the fact that the waters swell and grow vast for Indra enable the fighters to praise him amidst their foes (because of this demonstration of his might). Both references seem tangentially connected with the epic-narrative theme as the underlying problem concerns a life-crisis situation (underscored by the reference to the swelling waters -- irresistibility of a flooding river?) and the aid which makes the difference between gain and loss.

---

<sup>132</sup>See also 1.32.11 and 5.30.5. Also see the listing by W. N. Brown, "The Creation Myth of the Rigveda" JAOS 61 (1941), 96.

<sup>133</sup>See discussion above, p.165f.

The relationship between Indra and Varuṇa is reflected obliquely in the Indra-Varuṇa hymn 4.42.7 and more importantly in 7.85.3. While the former verse is often construed as exemplifying opposition between Indra and Varuṇa, it should not be so construed<sup>134</sup> especially if vedhás ("disposer") is analogous to rtāvan. Thus Varuṇa, as guardian of rtā is well aware of Indra's deeds. In 7cd two separate deeds of Indra are outlined -- the slaying of foes and the unblocking of rivers. There appears to be neither an intrinsic connection between them nor an overall correlation to the epic-narrative theme. However, the latter reference ties in with what has been discussed earlier on the separate roles of Indra and Varuṇa in the Vṛtra conflict.<sup>135</sup> In 7.85.3cd<sup>136</sup> Varuṇa keeps the people separated (pravikta)<sup>137</sup> while Indra slays foes/overcomes resistances. In 3ab the marvellous waters support Indra and Varuṇa "chacun selon ses qualifications"<sup>138</sup> among the gods.

---

<sup>134</sup> See Renou, EVP, VII, 78.

<sup>135</sup> See above, p. 165ff.

<sup>136</sup> A similar conception is expressed in 7.83.9ab.

<sup>137</sup> Not in the sense of class distinctions, a possibility suggested by Renou, EVP, IV, 87, but in accordance with another of his suggestions i.e., coupled with 6.50.5, thus separate in the sense of chosen. This could well be explained by using 7.83.9ab where Varuṇa guards laws (vrātāni).

<sup>138</sup> See Renou's explication of this verse, EVP, IV, 87, and his translation EVP, V, 102.

The reference in 7.23.3 focuses on the notion of "swelling". After overcoming irresistible (apratí)<sup>139</sup> resistances (vrtrāni), Indra forced the two world-halves apart (a cosmologic act) by means of his greatness. Verse 4 continues the theme that the waters are swollen as barren cows are swollen. These waters are the waters used in the preparation of soma.<sup>140</sup> Thus one is inclined to consider the swelling of the belly as signifying the ingesting of soma. It would probably be stretching the point of the metaphor to speculate on whether the swollenness of barren cows can be alleviated by Indra's giving the milk (= soma) to his allies, the ṛsis who are elsewhere (5.30.10) likened to calves.

#### A Ritual Setting for the Indra-Vrtra Conflict

One of the Indra-Vrtra hymns, 3.30, clearly places the Indra-Vrtra story within an expanded ritualistic framework. The opening verse isolates the users of soma over against those who revile them:

ichānti tvā samyāsah sākḥāyah sunvānti  
sómam dádhati prayānsi/ titiksante  
abhisastim jānānam índra tvád ā kás  
canā hí praketaḥ//

---

<sup>139</sup>Used in most instances to refer to the Vrtra(s) - fight.

<sup>140</sup>See Velankar's connection of āpah with surūdhaḥ in verse 2b and mādhah in verse 5a, Rgveda Mandala VII, 63.



They, the companions, soma offerors,  
 seek you. They press soma. They offer  
 the feast. They endure the scoffing/  
 cursing <sup>141</sup> of the people. O Indra,  
 insight <sup>142</sup> comes only from you.

Thus a scenario is detailed in which a crisis situation arises. The next two verses praise Indra and invite him to come to the cultic act as all is in readiness. But he is absent -- 3cd asks "(But now) where are those brave deeds of yours, O mighty god, since you, the fierce one, performed them when you were opposed among the mortals". <sup>143</sup> Then follows verses 4 and 5 which have already been discussed. <sup>144</sup> Speaking the unmoveable word as Vrtrahan does not only reflect the ordering of the cosmos in verse 4, as already noted but also refers to the total contextual situation reflected throughout the hymn of the necessity for inspired speech overcoming the bad skills of the rivals.

---

<sup>141</sup>The word is used in conjunction with Agni, Indra, and Soma, in terms of turning the curse aside. Of some interest for the Indra-Vrtra conflict, Indra twice (10.30.7, 104.9) frees waters from a curse. Agni-Soma (1.93.5) frees rivers from the curse. The word also occurs 8.89.2 which will be noted below in a discussion of the hymn. In 6.72.3 Soma is the guardian from curses. In lines cd he is asked why he looks on as men revile the sacrificers. Then 3.30.17d is repeated: "Throw the glowing missile at the despiser of the brahman-word". Extrapolating from this one sees a connection between cursing and despising the brahman-word which links 3.30.1 with verse 17.

<sup>142</sup>See Velankar's notes on this verse and 6.11.1. Renou EVP, XVII, 68 translates "le signe-pré (monitoire)".

<sup>143</sup>Velankar's rendering.

<sup>144</sup>See above, p. 75f.

The thrust of the hymn changes in verses 6 and 7 to focus on an actual battle situation. Indra is to aid the invoker by killing those that attack from the front, or the rear, or who run away. Booty and food are thus to be gained by the mortal who supports Indra. This theme is taken up again in verse 11 where booty and food are again mentioned as being brought near by Indra.

The thrust of the hymn again changes. Now the great deed of Indra is examined in verses 8-10, 12-13. Indra smashed Kunāru (mutterer or armless)<sup>145</sup> the armless who dwelt among the Dānu. He slew (the) vrtra who was a scorner (piyāru)<sup>146</sup> and footless and who was growing powerful by means of the powerful (most likely vajra should be supplied here but note verse 17). The results of this are fairly normative within the epic-narrative framework. The waters were released, the rock-cave burst, the cows were released and Indra was aided by hymns. The cosmos was ordered and light placed in the sky.

Verse 14 speaks about the cooked carried in the raw. This refers to the soma being carried within the cow, a parallel to the waters being released from Vrtra. While it has already been noted that the cows being released sometimes refers to spoken words, in 3.31.4 the released cows are

---

<sup>145</sup> This hapax word is usually translated "armless" in Western circles since the time of Roth who connected the word with kūnih (see Mayrhofer). However, an alternative explanation has been offered by Velankar. He derives the word from the root kun=kvan "to murmur, mutter indistinctly" which parallels nicely line c.

<sup>146</sup> Only here and 1.190.5.

clearly the dawns. In the present case these considerations do not seem to apply at all. One should not hurriedly attempt to achieve a univalent coherence of the elements being expressed.

Then the hymn reaches a critical point. For Geldner, verses 15-17 encapsulate the actual purpose of the hymn.

īndra dr̥hya yāmakosā abhūvan yajñāya  
śikṣa gr̥naté śakhibhyah/ durmāyāvo  
durēvā mārtyāsa niṣangiṇo ripāvo  
hantvāsaḥ//

O Indra be firm. The tubs of the  
sacrifice have been (prepared). 147  
Give aid to allies for singing and  
sacrificing. The malicious men having  
bad skills 148 -- the hurrying-around 149  
deceivers -- these must be overcome.

sam ghosah sr̥nve 'vamair amitrair jahī  
ny ēsv asānim tāpistām/ vṛścem adhaśtād  
vī rujā sāhasva jahī rākṣo maghavan ran-  
dhayasva//

---

147 yāmakosā. A hapax word unsatisfactorily reconstructed by BR as "carriage box". (See Velankar's "travelling coffers"). Geldner, following Sāyana employs 'procession around' in the sense of encircling. Professor R. M. Smith thinks the word refers to the sacrificial way. Renou (EVP XVII, 70 translates the entire phrase as "les vases de la prière ont été (apprêtés)", which I am adopting here.

148 See Gonda, Four Studies in the Language of the Veda, 127.

149 Phrase suggested by Professor R. M. Smith instead of 'quiver-carrying' for the hapax niṣangiṇo.



A cry is heard from those near who are  
not-like-us. Hurl the hottest missile <sup>150</sup>  
at them. Split <sup>151</sup> from below! Break them!  
Overcome the rakṣa <sup>152</sup> -- prevail and subject,  
O Maghavan!

ud vr̥ha rākṣaḥ saḥāmūlam indra vr̥ścā mad-  
hyam prāty āgram sṛñīhi/ ā kivataḥ sala-  
lūkam cakārtha brahmadviṣe tapuṣim hetim  
asya//

Pull out the rakṣa by the root. <sup>153</sup> O Indra,  
tear open the middle, break the front into  
pieces. How long are you to be aimless! <sup>154</sup>  
Throw the glowing missile at the despiser  
of the brahman-word!

<sup>150</sup>In the exposition of vājra as vr̥trahan (above) a connection was drawn between the vājra, the missile, and wood. This verse is another connective link with the designation "hottest" replicated by "glowing" in verse 17. This will be considered further in an examination of 8.89.7 below.

<sup>151</sup>I am using 'split' in the vivid sense of bursting through and overcoming the ritual encirclement and taking 'below' to refer to the concept that Indra's foundation is more firm and he can therefore strike from that direction. Geldner takes 'below' in conjunction with 17a to refer to tree symbolism.

<sup>152</sup>In both Vedic and post-Vedic mythology the sacrifice is especially exposed to the attacks of the Rakṣases. See Macdonnell, Vedic Mythology, sect. 170.

<sup>153</sup>"Root" here connotes completely (as Velankar) rather than an extension of Geldner's tree symbolism, which has dangers of being concretized into a "tree-demon".

<sup>154</sup>"Aimless" (sahālūkāḥ -- a hapax word with a play on words with sahāmūlah) referring both to Indra's indecision to act, on one plane, and, on another, the word play contrasts the rakṣa firmness with Indra's firmness and the rakṣa action with Indra's inaction, with the implicit contention that the reverse situation is much desired.

Thus the thrust of these verses is the imploring of Indra to act on behalf of the participants in the ritual. There are false, dangerous rivals who must be overcome.

Once more the thrust of the hymn changes. Earlier (verses 6-7,11) booty and food were listed as being required by the participants in the sacrifice. Verses 17-22 reiterate these desires of the poet and patrons. Cows, horses, gold and food are required. Furthermore, the happiness that comes from bearing children (verse 18d) is asked for.<sup>155</sup> The final verse<sup>156</sup> of the hymn (22), refers back to verse 11. One of the most important sections of the hymn, for an elucidation of the purposes of the thesis, is the description of Vrtra in verse 8. Vrtra is handless and footless, a mutterer and a scorner. In 5.32.8 further descriptions of Ahi the Dānava are given. He is lying down (sāyanam), insatiate (asinvām), a large container (vavram). Why? Because he is a drinker of the floods (arnapā) which is parallel to drinker of the sweet (madhupā) which is, of course, soma. Further, he is a footless beast who is a false-speaker

---

<sup>155</sup>The same kind of request is made in 6.17.3 (food -- an addition that jars the normal listing of the results of killing Vrtra), 14 (food, vāja), 15. In 8.6.23 the request is for food, children (prajā, as 3.30.18) and heroic ability. The requests for food and children do not form an inseparable part of the Vrtra-myth.

<sup>156</sup>This verse is repeated throughout Book 3: 31.22; 32.17; 34.11; 35.11; 36.11; 38.10; 39.9; 43.8; 48.5; 49.5; 50.5.

(mrdhravācam).<sup>157</sup> Therefore, the conflict being set up in 3.30 is between Indra, the only source of insight (verse 1), and Vṛtra, the scorner who is handless and footless,<sup>158</sup> the one, who must be rendered unable to perform the rites, even though he has drunk the soma and is thus powerful (5.32.8).

---

<sup>157</sup> See also 1.174.2; 5.29.10; 7.6.3, 18.13; 10.23.5. Of particular importance is the neighbouring passage 5.29.10 where Indra slew Dasyus who were anās "having no mouth or face" (Gonda, Epithets, 135) and over-threw the false-speakers in their duryona, either "bad abode" (Mayrhofer) or "bad [sacrificial] path" (Benveniste, in VV, 54 n 1). The latter seems to fit the contextual usage of false speakers more coherently. However, I have already examined above 1) soma as vrtrahan being embellished in the womb (9.25.3, 28.3) and, 2) the Dasas who either were generated in darkness or whose wombs were black (krsnāyonih). But, returning to anās, one can conjecture that the appellation refers to the inefficacy of their ritual chants by disdainfully stating that they cannot chant at all, being mouthless.

<sup>158</sup> It is quite possible that a conceptual link could be drawn between the scorner (false-speaker, mouthless one) who is headless and the blind and the lame aided by the Vṛtrahan (see Chapter Two). Whereas the blind and the lame do not see visions nor do they perform the ritual movements but ask for Indra's aid, the scorner who is handless and footless cannot do the ritual movements nor call upon Indra for aid. The lack of the appellation "blind" to Vṛtra (and to all designations referring to "enemies" except 10.103.12 where the amitrās have their senses deprived in an actual battle situation) shows that lack of the soma-given vision is sometimes meant. Of course, in other places actual blindness is meant. See the usages of anāks (2.15.7), anaksā (9.73.6; 10.27.11), and andha (1.100.8, 112.8, 116.16, 147.3, 148.5, 164.16; 2.13.12; 4.16.4, 19.9, 30.19; 8.79.2; 10.25.11, 27.11, 39.3, 103.12).



As mentioned earlier soma (8.79.2) also enables the blind to see and the lame to walk. Some of the verses in 9.73 refer to a conflict between soma-drinkers and incompetents. In verse 6 the blind and the deaf (badhiráḥ)<sup>159</sup> are called the "bad-makers"<sup>160</sup> (duskrta) who do not travel the pathway of rtá. This does not invalidate the comments in note 157 as those who neither see the vision nor hear the chants are not "enemies" but incompetents. The final two lines (9cd) as translated by Gonda<sup>161</sup> encapsulate the opposition between the two groups:

---

<sup>159</sup>Only here and 4.23.9 where praise of rtá opens deaf ears.

<sup>160</sup>Geldner links the word with dusstuti (7.32.21), "a bad hymn of praise". The word also recalls durmāyā in 3.30.15, although maliciousness rather than incompetence is meant in 3.30. The distinction is important.

<sup>161</sup>Gonda, Vision, 212.

Only the "wise" ones <sup>162</sup> who desire to  
attain that <sup>163</sup> have reached it; the  
incompetent <sup>164</sup> will fall down into  
the hole. <sup>165</sup>

Thus the blind and the lame are also the incompetent but they are not  
beyond the aid of Indra (for example, 8.79.2).

However, Vrtra is not an incompetent, riteless one. He has drunk  
the sóma and misused it to speak evil (see 5.32.8). Vrtra is not an in-

<sup>162</sup> dhīrāḥ (plural). Gonda characterizes one of the wise ones as  
"the man whose hymns have successfully passed through the sieve because  
they are in harmony with the reality underlying the phenomena, do not  
infringe the laws and rules obtaining in the universe, and are so to  
say rays of divine light in the world of man...." *ibid.*, 212-213,  
*italics mine*.

<sup>163</sup> Referring to the receiving of a vision.

<sup>164</sup> aprabhu - hapax. The incompetent are the same as the disfavoured  
(justāḥ) riteless (avratā) ones in verse 8.

<sup>165</sup> Both the incompetent and the riteless fall down (involuntarily)  
into the hole (kartāḥ). See also 1.121.13 and 2.29.6. Except for the  
latter citation there is no hard evidence that "hell" is meant (contra  
R. N. Dandekar, "Universe in Vedic Thought", India Major, 113) and Gonda  
takes it metaphorically. He comments that "unsuccessful attempts at  
handling that which is sacred lead the incompetent into dangerous situations".  
(Vision, 212 n 19). This usage would then parallel the phrase "crossing  
of waters". See, for example, Velankar's note on 3.11.8.

competent but is skillful (māyin), <sup>166</sup> He can be rendered footless and handless, but he still speaks. Because of this he is dangerous, powerful. Two things must happen; first, Vṛtra must be made speechless, and, second, the soma must be "taken away" from him. This is the basis for the contextual setting of the Vṛtra conflict in 3.30. Those malicious men having bad skills and hurrying around deceivers (verse 15) are representative of Vṛtra the scorner (verse 8) who is also the powerful, skillful one. They have the hottest missile hurled at them (verse 16). In much the same way, the rākṣa who threatens the efficacy of the rite must be subjected (verse 16) by the act of hurling the glowing missile at him (verse 17). This rākṣa threatens the rite because he is a despiser of the brahman-word (verse 17). This designation refers to Vṛtra as the evil-speaking disturber of the ritual.

There are two other hymns which also reflect the utilization of epic-narrative themes within a ritualistic context, although both 5.30 and 8.89 contain themes and motifs not readily identifiable with the embellishment of the Indra-Vṛtra conflict as expressed most fully in 1.32. The

---

<sup>166</sup> Both Indra and Vṛtra may be māyin-ones but Vṛtra is never a dhīrah. That is to say, there is an important difference between "those characterized by the possession of māyā" and "those who are able by 'vision'". (Gonda, ibid., 213). See the examples in 1.32.4; 1.80.7; 2.11,4,9,10; 4.16.19; 6.18.9; 10.111.6; 10.147.2. It should be remembered that māyā is ethically indifferent. "Power as such is ambivalent. If it is in the possession of, and put into practice by, those beings who are active for man's interest and the public weal it is good and useful power, if it is wielded by 'demons', enemies, and malignant or destructive beings it is considered evil, deceitful, and pernicious." (Gonda, Four Studies in the Language of the Veda, 127).



first hymn has often been analyzed <sup>167</sup> as a somewhat confusing amalgam of the Vṛtra-, Vala-, and Namuci-sagas. This is due to an over-reliance on older views concerning the concretization of mythic story-lines as being base paradigms for hermeneutical reflection. The second hymn occurs in a later book, written by "outsiders" to the normative (or élite) Vedic cult. Yet this hymn captures a ritualistic context through its vocabulary rather than its story-line per se.

The first hymn may be divided into three main sections. The first, verses 1-3, contains the prologue and invocation. The second section, verses 4-10ab, presents the story-line of Indra and his combat. The third section, verses 10cd-15, connects the preceding story with the present ritual situation (10cd-11). The remainder of the third section relates the gifts of the patrons to the officiants and the latter's thanks.

The hymn begins with a question -- where is Indra? -- which encapsulates the same anxiety being expressed throughout 3.30. Since Indra is not present someone must go to his dwelling (ókah). Who can do this? Verse 2 answers this question. The singer of the hymn has seen his powerful (ugrá), hidden (sasvár) place (padá). He has longingly sought the place of the supporter (nidhātr -- hapax). This singer has gathered together a group of awakened (bubudhānā) men to seek Indra. Thus the members of the ritual action are gathered together for the proper purpose. Verse 3 continues on to briefly describe the ritual: at the time of the pouring, the mighty

---

<sup>167</sup>For example, Geldner, and Schmidt, Brhaspati und Indra, 143f.

deeds of Indra will be rehearsed. The climax of the first section occurs in 3cd. The call goes out to the participants; let the non-knowers learn, let the knowers listen. Maghavan approaches with his attending host.

The second section relates the story of Indra and his battle (never is Vrtra mentioned). The structure of verses 4-7 is "interesting" in that lines ab reflect a praising or aiding situation whereas lines cd contain the actual recitation of Indra's deed. Verse 8 is unique to the hymn in that, although replicating the theme of 7c and 8b, the interpretation of 8a is controversial and 8cd contains a somewhat abstruse and obscure simile. Verses 9-10 return to a deed with embellishing motifs concerning the released waters.

The story begins with the birth of Indra and the proclamation that he alone seeks battle after having made his sense-organ (mānas)<sup>168</sup> firm in 4ab. The latter half of the verse relates the breaking open of the rock (asmāna) wherein are found the cow stables (referring to the vala' theme). Verse 5 begins with praise of Indra's name and then goes on to say that even the gods were in awe of him (5c) because he conquered the floods which are designated (5d) as dāsāpatnīh.<sup>169</sup> The Maruts sing and gain sōma (6ab) reflecting a homology between them and the participants in the current ritual. Then follows a list of terms describing the enemy.

---

<sup>168</sup>In commenting on the relationship between mānas and dhīh in 9.100.3 Gonda states that "the psychical organ in which the processes of thought, will, and feeling take place...produces the dhīh, or, to express myself more cautiously, the manah is its birthplace." (Vision, 75). Thus Indra is to prepare his mind for the visioning-quest outlined in 4cd.

<sup>169</sup>See below, p. 197 for a discussion of the phrase.



Indra overcomes the māyín one by māyā. The māyín one is āhi the skulker (ohana)<sup>170</sup> who is a surrounder of the waters (asāyāna). Then, after again returning to Indra's birth for a reference to the constant scattering of the contemptuous (mrdhah), Indra is called the Generous One, the Giver, who enjoys the cow.<sup>171</sup> The specifics of the deed of Indra are then recited (7cd); When he twisted (root vyrt) the head of Namuci<sup>172</sup> the Dāsa, he

---

<sup>170</sup>Only here and 6.52.5 where a less pejorative sense is meant. The latter usage connotes the sense of "hovering near" applied to vaśupati, which makes a nice contrast with the present verse.

<sup>171</sup>This anticipates the reference to cows and calves in verse 10.

<sup>172</sup>Anyone who has attempted to make sense of the various "mythic" enemies in the Rgveda immediately becomes aware that the attempt is fraught with peril. The immediate solution appears to be an attempted homogenization of the fully embellished later mythology with Rgvedic references, which is not an altogether felicitous approach, as already demonstrated by an examination of the vrtra-myth. There are not many references to Namuci in the Rgveda: 1.53.7 notes that Indra slew the mayin Namuci (as 6c); 6.206b=5.30.8b; 2.14.5 only lists the name; 10.131.4cd notes that the Asvins aid Indra in dealing with Namuci the Asura; 7.19.5 listing Namuci and Vrtra together demonstrates that by the time of composition of this verse two definite opponents are meant; 8.14.13 anticipates the later mythology by noting that Indra tore off the head of Namuci with foam; 10.73.7 notes that Indra killed Namuci the Dāsa and adds detail to be discussed in context with 5.30.9. Thus not much information is recorded in the Rgveda. Taking Namuci (na-muci from mūncati as Mayrhofer) as meaning non-releaser, it is my contention that, rather than dealing with two separate enemies in earlier strata, such passages as in 5.30 reflect a somewhat different orientation to the vrtra-one where tremendous emphasis is put on the need for release, rather than on the fact of the capture of the waters. It is interesting that, in matters of detail, the head of Namuci is normally torn off, whereas Vrtra is pierced and Vala is burst. This predilection could very well stem from the non-releasing aspect which could mean the misuse of the waters (=soma) that has to be overcome. Thus jaws and face figure in the Vrtra-myth in contexts that connote the drinking of soma, but the loosing of a head renders one effectively "mouthless". (The epithet vyāmsa, rather than meaning "shoulderless" in the normative sense should rather refer to the cutting off of the neck ridge (sana, see 1.80.5,6). H. P. Schmidt, "Die Kobra im Rgveda" has pointed out (p. 298) the special character of this epithet applied to a snake. His conclusion that the cobra is meant is not tenable. However, his insight can lead in the suggested direction.)



desired for man a way (gātuh). <sup>173</sup>

The sacrificer now (8a) interjects himself <sup>174</sup> into the picture by declaring that Indra has made him a companion. Indra then (8b=6.20.6b) rolled (root math) the head of Namuci the Dāsa. The next two lines contain a somewhat obscure simile. Indra turns the rolling stone (svaryā āsmāna), which recalls two things: first, there seems to be a parallel with 8b concerning the head of Namuci and, second, some reference to the rock (āsmāna) of 4c seems necessary. Anyway, the rolling stone is turned like heaven and earth by means of a wheel for the Maruts. <sup>175</sup>

Now the singer turns to the captured waters again (see 5d). In 9a

<sup>173</sup>That is, the intent is the way of sacrifice leading to the goal ("voie vers le bonheur, le salut" Renou, EVP, III, 72).

<sup>174</sup>Geldner interprets this as being a direct quote from Namuci which would fit in well with the later development of the Namuci myth but such a conclusion is not warranted here. The word "companion" is repeated in 10c where the participants in the sacrifice are meant. Further, if 8c is not a direct quote neither does 9b need to be a direct quote from Indra. Instead, the sacrificer is once more interjecting himself into the picture.

<sup>175</sup>Is this some abstruse reference to Indra's breaking the car of Usas (as in 4.30.8-11, 10.73.6 etc.) or the wheel of the sun (as in 4.30.4 etc.)? Or, is this some abstruse reference to Indra's cosmologic ordering action resulting in the regular turning of the cosmos?

the poet comments that the Dāsa has made women (striyā) weapons, <sup>176</sup>  
 The sacrificer asks what harm his weakened armies can do to him. (None!)  
 Returning to the waters, Indra has distinguished between both his (i.e.,  
 Namuci's) voices (dhenuh). Only then did Indra advance to fight the  
dasyu. Based on an integral connection with 10.73.6cd, 7, these two  
 voices are the true speakers and the false speakers i.e., the true speech  
 that comes from ingesting sōma if one is friendly to the officiant and  
 the false speakers spoken of in 3.30, and see especially the description  
 of Ahi in 5.32.8. Indra cannot be fooled as to who his allies really are.

In verse 10ab the waters are described as cows bellowing on all  
 sides, wandering here and there because they are separated from their calves.  
 These (cows) <sup>177</sup> Indra reunited with his allies (the calves) <sup>178</sup> when the  
 well-pressed sōma intoxicated him (10cd). This interpretation fits well  
 with 10.75.6cd 7, where Indra acts on behalf of the ṛsi(s) to gain Namuci's

<sup>176</sup> In 10.73.6cd, 7 one may have an actualization of this reference  
 to a more sophisticated audience. Indra and his beloved allies overcame  
for the ṛsis the "internal foundation" (Gonda, Observations, 27) (pratisthā  
hr̥dya). In verse 7ab Indra slew Namuci the Dāsa (the makhasyu?? See  
 Gonda Epithets, 124 and Mayrhofer for conjectures) and deprived (him) of  
 his 'incomprehensible wisdom', vimaya (hapax) for the ṛsi. Then an inter-  
 pretation of the pathway thus made is rendered, reminiscent of 5.30.7d.  
 The connection between internal foundation and incomprehensible wisdom is  
 obvious and must refer to the waters (=sōma).

<sup>177</sup> This recalls the finding of the cow-stalls in the rock (4cd) and  
 the rock as Namuci's head (8).

<sup>178</sup> The imagery here is self-evident and should recall to mind the  
 placing of the cooked in the raw in 3.30.14 and 8.89.7.

internal foundation and incomprehensible wisdom. The deed of Indra in 10cd is used by the singer to tie in with the present ritual situation (11ab) and then follows gifts and thanks (the third section of the hymn).

The basic difference in orientation between 3.30 and 5.30, besides that stemming from the different names "Vrtra" and "Namuci", is the view of 3.30 that several enemies wish to do harm, the chief one being Vrtra. In 5.30, except for 7a, there appears to be a definite concentration upon one individual enemy, which may well account for some of the unusual inner relationships in the hymn. Thus, in other words, 5.30 is reflecting a context where the danger stems from a specific individual who wishes harm to the patrons and officiants.

The second hymn (8.89) also exhibits some peculiar characteristics. There is much usage of the vrtra complex of words as is typical of the hymns in Book 8. Also, the general thrust of this hymn appears to veer away from drinking soma etc., to the winning of light and the establishment of the sacrifice consisting of chants and fire. Thus two facets of accommodation seem reflected in this hymn. First, the normative usage of the Vrtra-myth as a creation-theme is of paramount importance, rather than being one element among others. Second, one may see here the "taming" of the Vrtra-myth by its inclusion within the Agni sacrificial complex. 179

---

<sup>179</sup> Following and developing a suggestion made by D. H. H. Ingalls, "Remarks on Mr. Wasson's Soma". "I am speaking of two sorts of religious expression and religious feeling, one built about the hearth fire, with a daily ritual: calm, reflective, almost rational; the other built about the Soma experience which was never regularized into the calendar, which was always an extraordinary event, exciting, immediate, transcending the logic of space and time." (p.191).



This hymn may also be divided into three sections. The first section, verses 1-2, contains the prologue and invocation. The second, verses 4-6, presents the deed of Indra. The third section, verse 7, in contradistinction to 5.30, lists some further consequences of Indra's deeds in ab. It is only in 7cd that some connection is made to the present ritual.

The first verse sets the stage for the hymn. The Maruts are to sing to Indra that hymn which is the best vrtrahan. Why is this hymn designated thus? Because this hymn was the means by which the supporters of order (ṛtāvṛdhah)<sup>180</sup> caused the god to generate wakeful light (jyotir) for the god. Verse 2ab defines the conditions under which Indra will appear. It, <sup>181</sup> the destroyer of curses (asāstihā)<sup>182</sup> blew the curses away. Then Indra the splendrous one (dyumnin) was present. The gods desire Indra's companionship (2c=8.98.3c) because he has firm-and-extensive light (brhadbhānah)<sup>183</sup> and because he has the troop of Maruts.

As in 5.30, the second section of this hymn, dealing with the deed of Indra, lines ab of 3-5 emphasize praise or aid while lines cd relate the deed itself. In verse 6 the situation is reversed, perhaps for emphasis

<sup>180</sup>Referring to the Maruts, especially to their function here of being cosmic parallels of the officiants.

<sup>181</sup>There is some confusion over whether the hymn or Indra is meant. I chose the former for reasons outlined in the next note.

<sup>182</sup>Here and 8.99.5 (verse 6 connects the epithet with Vrtra), 10.55.8 (cd mentions the Dasyu=Vrtra), and 9.62.11 (an epithet of Soma). If the hymn can be called best vrtrahan there is no reason why it cannot also be asāstihā.

<sup>183</sup>Elsewhere applied to Agni, 1.27.12, 36.15; 10.140.1.

on the centrality of the establishment of the sacrifice.

The Maruts praise Indra (replicating the theme of verse 1) in 3ab. Then comes the command: Let the hundred-fold resourceful Vrtrahan slay Vrtra with the hundred-knotted thunderbolt.<sup>184</sup> Indra is asked to be courageous because he is the courageous one (4ab). Then once more comes the command: Slay Vrtra. Now some of the results of the conflict are listed: 1) the mother (mātarāh)<sup>185</sup> waters are released and 2) Indra wins the light of heaven (svar). The praise in 5ab states that Indra was born<sup>186</sup> for this particular task (i.e., the vrtrahātya).<sup>187</sup> Then further results are mentioned: Indra spreads out the earth and supports and props the heavens. Three of the four motifs of the epic-narrative theme have been listed (releasing of waters, giving life to light, setting things in order).<sup>188</sup> The climax of the hymn occurs in 6ab. After the battle has

<sup>184</sup>3d=1.80.6b. The epic-narrative embellishment found usually in Book 1 is self-evident here.

<sup>185</sup>Why such an appellation here? Perhaps one can extrapolate from the comments made above on the accommodation present in the hymn to see a change from young, unwedded women, virgins, "pregnant" etc., dealing with Soma to a fructifying deluge concerned with cosmogony.

<sup>186</sup>Referring back to 5.30.4 and 4.18 on the importance of birth.

<sup>187</sup>See above for a discussion of 8.89.5,p.

<sup>188</sup>The theme of the bursting rock has not been utilized in this hymn.

been won, the cosmos ordered, then the sacrifice (yajñá) was generated for him <sup>189</sup> consisting of the hymn (arka) and the bright light (haskṛtiḥ-hapax). <sup>190</sup> The next two lines, 6cd, which proclaim Indra's supremacy are somewhat anti-climactic.

The final verse of this hymn adds in lines ab two further consequences of Indra's deed, but these read like cliché-ridden afterthoughts. The first line repeats a motif of both 3.30 and 5.30: "You placed the cooked in the raw". Then follows the comment that he made the sun rise to heaven, <sup>191</sup> re-affirming 4d. The final two lines link up with the first line in continuing a clichéd reference to sóma: Heat the desired firm (hymn) <sup>192</sup> for the desirer of the song (7d) as gharmá is heated for the sóma <sup>193</sup> with tapas (7c). <sup>194</sup>

---

<sup>189</sup>Supposedly by the "supporters of order" (verse 1) with whom the present participants identify themselves. It is significant that here there is the realization (absent from 5.30.7) that men do the rituals for the benefit of the god.

<sup>190</sup>Geldner, by referring to 4.7.3, aligns 6b to the establishment of the sacred rites concerning chants and fire. This is much different than the implications in 3.30 and 5.30 which connote the drinking of sóma.

<sup>191</sup><sub>7b</sub>=9.107.7d and 10.156.4b.

<sup>192</sup>Referring back to the first verse.

<sup>193</sup>This could also mean "fully" according to Grassmann, col. 1512, as well as referring to the chants instituted for use in the sacrifice, implied in verse 6.

<sup>194</sup>Much of the language of 7cd reminds one of the "hottest missile" to be hurled against enemies in 3.30.16,17. Geldner takes the present context to refer to the tapas of the singer which connotes the later development of the word (See Renou, EVoc, 56) which again accords well with the accommodation of this hymn. Taken together with the rather clichéd reference to the raw and the cooked, one must conclude that a moving away from the essential thrusts of 3.30 and 5.30 has taken place.



Therefore, the marks of accommodation in this hymn show the disappearing of the soma-experience as a normative cultic experience. Instead one now receives the impression that the Agni-sacrificial complex is predominant in the minds of the participants. This, in addition to the epic-narrative embellishments in Book 1 and the speculative developments of parts of Book 10 demonstrates that while there is a certain continuity concerning Indra's battle with his chief enemy, there is a shifting of focus in meaning and significance.

#### Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to undertake an examination of the Indra-Vrtra conflict from several different perspectives. The material used fell into two major divisions: 1) data found in major (itihāsa) hymns and 2) fragments of the story of the conflict. After an analysis of the material it was found that the so-called "fragments" of the story contained useful information for understanding the significance of the Indra-Vrtra conflict for Vedic man because of their specific vocabulary and their context. The major hymns, particularly 1.32 and 6.17, provided a framework for the story-line that became fully actualized in the former hymn. The other major hymns add little detail beyond the framework (if, indeed, they utilized it fully) to the point that without 1.32 and 6.17 the Indra-Vrtra conflict as epic-narrative material would scarcely be intelligible.

Upon investigation, the data showed two different thrusts in terms of literary usage: 1) an epic-narrative strand that intended to portray the birth and the great deeds of Indra and 2) a cosmologic theme which, by stressing the orderedness of the cosmos resulting from the combat, lays the groundwork for reflected statements on ritual (its origin and purpose). It should be noted that, within the confines of the present examination, an explicit, conscious articulation of the motif of fertility is lacking in these cosmological references, but is articulated in some contexts dealing with an actual battle situation.

In order to focus on the central themes and motifs of the story the framework for reflection on the story was not the total enumeration of the consequences of Indra's deed but rather one verse, 5.32.1, which looked at the deeds from a somewhat different perspective than the epic-narrative strand. The consequence of zeroing in on this particular verse was the turning away from the well-developed Vrtra and Vala myths to examine their structured similarities and the possibility of their hermeneutical identification for an understanding of the meaning of the release of waters or cows. This led further into an analysis of the usage of cattle in the stories to express other than normative understandings such as gifts by the patron to the officiants at the time of sacrifice. Cows, those released, could refer to the dawns, to inspired speech or to a doubling of the motif of released waters. The identification of the cow's udder with the cave led to an equivalent relationship between cow, mountain, Vrtra. This relationship also aids in an understanding of the enigmatic phrase "placing

the cooked in the raw". The released waters change their status when they come under Indra's sway, becoming a way (gā́tuh) for both gods and men. This way is the way of ingesting sóma for the gaining of visions in 3.30 and 5.30.

The attempt to understand the nature of Vrtra as one who threatened the religious rites of Vedic man by his obstruction of "waters" showed that Vrtra was indeed to be feared because of his power and wisdom. He was not an incompetent (as the blind and the lame) but one who could speak evil and wreak havoc because of his skillfulness. However, Indra was proclaimed by the offerors of sóma as the only source of insight (3.30.1).

The allies of Indra aid him in the combat against the evil-speaker. The Maruts chant hymns and, in some instances, pour sóma for Indra, as do the Angirases. Varuṇa acts as an inspired seer to support Indra during his conflict and is not antagonistic to him. Both gods and men desire Indra's ultimate victory over his formidable opponent. The mirroring of man's action by the gods in 5.29.7-8 lends credence to this point as the gods celebrate Indra's victory.

Through an analysis of 3.30 and 5.30 two inter-related ritualistic settings for the Indra-Vrtra conflict were found. In the former hymn the problem centers on several enemies who exemplify the evil-speaking qualities of Vrtra whereas in the latter the emphasis appears to be placed upon one individual who was withholding the "waters" and was therefore an obstacle and a hindrance to the desired goal.



Finally, an examination of 8.89 allowed some reflection on the change in religious significance undergone by the Indra-Vrtra conflict. No longer is the problem one of the misuse of soma but rather the necessity for the ordering of the cosmos. Then, and only then, the ritual, here the sacrificial cultus consisting of the worship of fire and the chanting of hymns not the ingesting of soma for the gaining of religious visions, was produced for Indra's benefit. The waters are no longer the way for gods and men. Thus the Indra-Vrtra conflict has been accommodated and tamed.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Concluding Remarks

#### Recapitulation of Aim and Scope

The examination of the conflict between Indra and Vrtra through an analysis of the context of the references to vrtrahan as well as those to the Indra-Vrtra conflict constituted the first aim of the thesis. Before one could proceed to such an analysis, however, one had to have a firm idea on the method to be used. It is my contention that the form-critical method as utilized in some areas of Old Testament scholarship, with some small modifications, suits the data and enables one to coherently separate out layers of the tradition and thus pursue the hermeneutical task to a satisfying conclusion.

The employment of this methodology brought several factors into clearer perspective. The epithet vrtrahan is employed throughout the Rgveda, but not in a consistent manner. The two broadest and most significant usages are found within 1) a context suggesting the ritual ingesting of soma, where vrtrahan is the overcomer of obstacles in the quest for a psycho-pharmacologic vision and 2) a context suggesting the later New Year's festival ritual which surrounds the homology between the king overcoming his enemies and the mythology of the divine warrior overcoming the dragon.

The word vrtra is also employed throughout the Rgveda in a

similar manner. Again one can establish the two broadest and most significant usages as being within 1) a context suggesting the ritual ingestion of sóma where vrtrá may mean either an enemy who has appropriated sóma or the physical barriers to be overcome in the receiving of a vision, and 2) a context suggesting both the mythological development of an epic theme of overcoming the dragon and a tendency to see this struggle in terms of a cosmology.

The method of investigation consisted in a literary and textual analysis which facilitated the isolation of the above usages of the Rgvedic material. Lest it be assumed that the form-critical method is borrowed wholesale from Old Testament scholarship and applied in an undiscerning manner to the Rgvedic data, let me briefly mention two limitations imposed by the Rgvedic data upon the method as others have used it in Old Testament scholarship. First, one cannot establish the place(s) where the sóma cultus is practiced on a regular basis. Indeed one cannot even establish that there are specific cultic sites. The evidence seems to point in a contrary direction. Second, there is at present no technique of dating that can establish a chronology of the material that can be related to any other significant and dateable culture. Further, there is much work yet to be done on internal evidence in the hymns and in the written documents of the larger Vedic culture before a precise chronology of the Vedic material could be established which would be generally accepted. With these limitations in mind, however, the usage of the form-critical method can yield



significant results when applied to the hymns of the Rgveda.

Neither the full articulation of the method nor a complete discussion of its implications was undertaken because this falls beyond the range of the scope of this dissertation. Some of the implications of the examination have been reserved for exposition in this chapter. Two in particular are discussed below: 1) the possible ritual context for the soma ingesting cultus, and 2) the realization that the theme of cosmology, although expressed in various ways, permeates every layer of the tradition.

One of the aims of the thesis was to examine the Indra-Vrtra conflict in the Rgveda. In the course of analyzing appropriate references it became apparent that there were several layers within the data, each of which utilized the conflict theme for a particular purpose. It is my contention that the assumption by Vedic scholars of a coherent cosmogonic myth throughout the various strata of the Rgveda is not warranted. By assuming the essential validity of Renou's classification of major Indra-Vrtra hymns an attempt was made to see if references outside these hymns would integrate into the picture of a well-developed myth. The examination of the references, including the analysis of three hymns in some detail (3.30, 5.30, 8.89), demonstrates that this integration cannot be accomplished. I did not intend to examine why there are several layers in terms of a social analysis but only to determine that several layers are present in the Rgveda.

Lying behind the examination are three basic presuppositions which could not be fully developed within the thesis because of limitations of space. These three are: 1) the determination by Wasson that sóma is derived from Amanita muscaria, 2) the general stratification of the hymns of the Rgveda as stated by Renou, and, 3) the social organization of later Vedic society as developed by Kuiper and Heesterman. The first was assumed as a heuristic device to draw out the meanings of some verses in the Rgvedic corpus that did not fit into the generally accepted picture of a coherent cosmogonic myth. The second allowed the broad ordering of the textual data into large blocs based on general grammatical and linguistic considerations. The specific textual examination undertaken in the body of the thesis demonstrates the validity of Renou's position. The third was assumed as a heuristic device to analyze ritual contexts reflected in the material and to analyze passages where this particular structure does not fit the data. This presupposition allows some reflection on the possible ritual context for the sóma ingesting cultus. Each of the above presuppositions does have its limitations. Wasson's identification of sóma as Amanita muscaria, while a subject of debate, has been generally accepted. The minimum input of this identification is the extraordinary visioning powers brought about by the ingestion of sóma. Renou's stratification of large blocs of material does not fully allow for the reworking carried out by later editors, as was pointed out in Chapter Four. The main divisions of the material are, however, beyond serious question. The

major limitation of the third presupposition is the accompanying assumption that the Brāhmanas accurately reflect the makeup of late Vedic society and that this picture holds for the later material in the Rgveda. These limitations do not vitiate the use of these presuppositions but rather warn against an oversimplistic acceptance of them.

#### Speculation on Ritual Contexts

The utilization of the above presuppositions enabled a detailed examination of the occurrences of vrtra-complex words and their specific contexts. Three general contexts were discussed and their general outlines will now be briefly summarised (beginning with the later strata of the text). By the later stages of the text, when soma is no longer normally used in the cult, the epithet vrtrahan means "slayer of Vrtra" and vrtra connotes the chief demonic opponent of Indra. The plural of vrtra (vrtrāni) usually means "enemies" in the sense of opponents in a battle situation. The second context is quite fluid, covering a period of transition when the usage of soma in the cultic quest for a vision is declining. The epithet vrtrahan is used in contexts other than those which directly correlate to either Indra or the Indra-Vrtra conflict. Chapter Three examined these references to others than Indra (e.g., Agni, Trasadasyu) and I noted there that the epithet takes on the meaning of "Overcomer of Obstacles". The overcoming was accomplished either through persuasion (persuading the god to



grant something because he is vrtrahán and thus can do so, the god persuading someone else to do something) or by physical combat (the god aiding the supplicant to gain desired ends through support in battle). The noun vrtrá means "obstacle" which connotes the obstacle preventing the realization of worldly needs and material goods. It also connotes enemies, or any obstacle to the successful completion of the ritual so that the desired ends are obtained. In the earlier strata of the text the epithet is used in conjunction with Indra, sóma, vájra and means "Overcomer of Obstacles" in the quest for a religious vision (see the appropriate sections of Chapters Two and Three). The overcoming means the bursting or passing through of obstacles leading to the release of "goods". In most cases (see, for example, the exegeses of 3.30 and 5.30 in Chapter Four) the physical obstacle connoted by vrtrá refers to the one(s) who is liable to misuse the sóma and who must be rendered helpless. This is further discussed below. It may be that the bursting of physical limitations in the vision quest is alluded to in a few references. However, it is my contention that the hymns in their present form and context are not self-conscious articulations of interior psychedelic experience.

The accommodation apparent in 8.89 (in comparison with 3.30) demonstrates the disappearance of sóma (i.e., Amanita muscaria) as a normative cult experience. Its place appears to be taken by a highly organized ritual centered on Agni. Indeed, it appears certain that (by the time of the composition of 8.89) the Agni sacrificial complex is predominant in the minds of those who chanted the hymn (and wished

to imitate normative cult experience). As further evidence of cultic transition, the epic-narrative embellishments on the Indra-Vrtra conflict in Book 1 coupled with the speculative developments in parts of Book 10 concerning cosmology exemplify the shift of focus of the conflict in terms of both meaning and significance. It would be difficult to account for the layers which make up the present state of the text other than through the postulation that the imagery which was used to express an older cultic experience becomes free from the cult because of the decline in the usage of sóma, that this imagery is used in other ritual contexts before coalescing in the royal cult which is reflected in the later strata of the Rgveda. This is not to say that a royal cult did not exist along with the sóma ingesting cult. Rather, the point is that the imagery expressing nuances of the the sóma ingesting cult in the earlier strata expresses nuances of the royal cult in the later strata.

As additional support for this hypothesis concerning the conflict one may add that the examination of the epithet vrtrahan (taken here to be a term self-consciously chosen by the Vedic rsis to communicate religious significance to Vedic man) also demonstrates a shift in focus. This term, as already reiterated in this chapter, gives additional input into the hermeneutical task at hand because the infrequent coupling of vrtra and vrtrahan requires explication. When the ingesting of a hallucinogen is considered as the foundation for cultic experience in the earlier layers of the Rgveda it becomes readily intelligible

that Indra as the one who performs under the influence of the drug, sóma as the drug that produces visions in the ṛsi, and vájra as a means of mixing the drug can all be designated as vrtrahan. These are, indeed, "Overcomers of Obstacles" in the central quest for a religious vision. The references to others as vrtrahan reflect a different cultic situation that does not seem to include the taking of a hallucinogen but rather one that centers on Agni and seems to be more concerned with material or practical benefits accruing to the officiator and his patron. Moreover, some references to Indra as Vrtrahan show a growing connection between the epithet and the epic-narrative portrayal of Indra's chief deed. A good example of this is the folk-etymology Vrtrahan ergo Vrtra-slayer as expressed in 8.24.2. This connection, occurring in the later layers of the Rgveda, presents the base for the later interpretations of the conflict by the Indian Religious Tradition, such as those enumerated in the Nirukta (i.e., the story of the conquest of the dragon or the mythological explanation for rain).

One can speculate on the structure of the sóma cult based on the evidence presented in the earlier layers of the Rgvedic hymns. In 5.30.1, 2 it is important for the singer, who has seen the sacred place of Indra to gather awakened men around him. This can only refer to the gathering together of a group of men for the purpose of ingesting sóma. It is important that the singer does not do this in isolation because of the possible dangers inherent in psychotropic ingestion.



Thus, the group must be made up of those who also have had hallucinogenic experience and can guide the singer through the experience. The chanting by the group at the time of the pouring (and imbibing) of sóma serves to guide the inner mental reactions of the imbiber. The rehearsal of the mighty deeds of Indra serves this purpose in that a proper focus is established. Then the visioning-time comes, most likely structured in three sections as outlined in the Introduction to the thesis (pp. 35ff) with the actual vision occurring in the third state. In the first stage the ingester engages in spontaneous singing and dancing and receives an impression of increased strength and agility. In the second stage several perceptual changes occur. The third stage begins with some activity by the ingester but the most important aspect is the deep slumber where one gains the desired vision. The hymns, naturally enough, compress both the time involved and the stages. The vision is communicated in verses 4 to 8 using the imagery of the Indra-Vrtra conflict, while verses 9 and 10 further embellish the imagery. This, then, seems to be the structural organization of the cult: a sóma-taker surrounded by chanting guides to aid the taker through the hallucinogenic process.

The emphasis of 3.30 further aids an examination into the structure of the cult by outlining (especially in verses 15 to 17) the various groups in Rgvedic society in the era of sóma ingestion that interact, either positively or negatively, with the sóma cult. Verse 1 mentions the sóma offerers, who are obviously the elite in this

situation (according to the singer). Juxtaposed to them are the "scoffers". Whether these are the people of the tribe, which hardly seems likely under the circumstances, or perhaps the priestly elite who specialize in the Agni sacrificial complex is not clear here. Of those who do ingest sóma, apart from the elite of this hymn, there appear to be two other groups: the incompetent and the "godless ones". The incompetent are not malevolent but are merely those unable to handle the kinetic or hallucinatory effects brought about by sóma. In the words of 9.73.9cd:

Only the "wise" ones who desire to  
attain that have reached it; the  
incompetent will fall down into  
the hole.

These incompetent ones need either more rigorous training in preparation for ingesting sóma or are physiologically unable to handle the effects of the drug. Of much greater importance, because of their potentiality for harm, are those who can manage the effects of the drug and do so in order to gain power over the elite of the hymn. The "wisdom of the godless" (10.111.6) must be overcome by the elite. The hot missile must be thrown at the despiser of the brahman-word because they are malicious, deceitful and false-speakers. Therefore, the conflict being expressed in 3.30 is between the supporters of Indra, who is seen as the only source of insight, and the vrtrá who is skillful (a māyín). Not only must this faction be rendered footless and handless, i.e., rendered unable to perform the cultic kinetic acts, but also must be rendered speechless in order to make the vision harmless. It is not

enough to make the vr̥tra-one seem incompetent because appearances deceive. He still knows how to appropriate and misuse soma. Therefore, the soma must be taken away. He must be "burst" by the action of Indra so that the pent up waters (=soma) are released for the use and benefit of the soma-taking elite. This exposition, of course, does not limit the usage of the imagery only to references to the opponent(s) of the cult. In Chapter Four further uses of the imagery are enumerated. The point here is the applicability of the conflict imagery to a situation of rivalry in the ingestion of soma.

The placing of some epic-narrative elements within a ritualistic conflict allows for reflection on the respective roles of patron and officiant in the soma-taking cult. The officiant is the only active participant in the ceremony. In several cases (e.g., 10.152; 1.63.4; 1.174.2) it appears that the officiant takes upon himself, in a macrocosmic-microcosmic homology, the initiative for both Indra's actions and for the benefits accruing from them. In these cases it sometimes appears as though the officiant is in "control" of the situation because it is only through the ritual action undertaken by the officiant or, at least, with the help of the officiant, that Indra can bring about the benefits desired by the patron. Thus the officiant is the linch-pin of the cultus.

This homology of the microcosmic and the macrocosmic is reflected in the roles that the gods (allies of Indra) play in some hymns. The benefit most desired by both patron and officiant is the vision gained by the latter under the influence of soma. In 5.29.7-8 the gods, at the appropriate moment chant "the prize!" which in



this context must connote the vision. This is the moment when Indra overcomes the áhi. This imagery is expressing the cultic concerns of the sóma-taking élite. The sóma-taker is guided by his companions. In the same manner Indra is guided by the chanting of his allies (most often the Maruts). For example, in 3.32.4-6 the Maruts shake with emotion and urge Indra to slay Vrtra and release the waters. At the same time, the singer asks Indra to accept the sóma offered by himself and his patron so that Indra may have vigour. In much the same way Varuṇa is pictured as an ally of Indra, a kavi or a vipra who aids Indra because Varuṇa must act under the constraint of ṛta. The allies of Indra, then, act similarly to the helpers of the sóma-taker.

The later cultic use of the imagery of the Indra-Vrtra conflict centers on the ritual function of the king in the New Year's ceremony. There is some textual evidence concerning this cult in the hymns of the Rgveda. This should not be surprising since, according to Kuiper among others, the final redaction of the Rgveda was carried out expressly for its maximum utilization in this ceremony. This New Year's king-centered ceremony has an identifiable structure. According to Widengren,

the myth and ritual pattern...of this great festival consisted of two series of mythical and ritual items, one series of a so to speak "personal", the other of an "impersonal" character, comprising of the following motifs.

The impersonal series:

- 1a The drought
- 2a The conquering of the fortress
- 3a The releasing of the waters
- 4a The coming of the rain

The personal series:

- 1b The reign of the Dragon
- 2b The conquering of the Dragon
- 3b The liberation of the women
- 4b The Holy Marriage<sup>1</sup>

Lommel points out that sometimes all these elements are preserved together in hymns of the Rgveda but most frequently several characteristics are absent.<sup>2</sup> It is not my intention to discuss the viability of this scheme as an accurate structuring of the ceremony, since this would go far beyond the scope of the thesis and would necessitate a discussion of unmanageable length in the present context. Assuming, however, the essential correctness of the schema, one is made aware of the transition in the cultus as expressed by the usage of conflict imagery. Heesterman notes the connection between kinship and cosmogony in the rājasūya.

He states that

the universe had yearly to be re-created and so had the king who, like the common śrauta sacrificer, incorporated the cosmos. Already Hocart ascertained the identity of coronation and cosmogony. In the cyclic conception of the world, the cosmogony-consecration must be repeated over and over again.<sup>3</sup>

Two definite uses of the Indra-Vṛtra conflict may be discerned from

---

<sup>1</sup>G. Widengren, "The Sacral Kingship of Iran" in Supplements to Numen IV (Leiden, 1959), 252. See also H. Lommel, Die Arische Kriegsgott, 51-70, especially 62.

<sup>2</sup>Lommel, ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Heesterman, The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration, 10-11.

this quote. The imagery of the conflict is, first of all, utilized as a means for expressing a cosmogony. Second, the interpretation of this cosmogony on the macrocosmic-microcosmic planes has shifted away from sóma ingestion to a setting reflecting a royal ideology. First, there is the release of fructifying waters enclosed by a demon of drought, which must be accomplished again and again by victorious Indra in order that the earth might be revitalized. Second, the kingship must be renewed again and again through the fructification provided by a hieros gamos. One need not read this cultic situation into all the layers within the Rgveda. Such a procedure smacks of fundamentalist anachronism. The appropriate stance is to acknowledge the presence of both ritual contexts.

#### The Persistence of Cosmology

This thesis endeavoured to prove that the identification of sóma as a hallucinogen was a hermeneutical key for understanding some Indra-Vrtra references. As a consequence, those interpretations that attempted a univalent view of these references such as those which centered on cosmogony were labelled inadequate. It was my contention that these interpretations were not warranted by the evidence. Kuiper's position (and Lüders') has been noted several times, not as being incorrect, but as being over-extended. In the Introduction, when the possibility that usage of sóma was borrowed from another culture was noted, I implied that cosmogonic imagery present in the Aryan cultus was possibly reworked in order to



give expression to the new, manifold psychedelic experience. Even within hallucinogenic experience there is an orientation towards cosmogony.

In addition to the "cosmicizing" of battles through the linking of the king with the Divine Warrior and the struggle against chaos which results in an ordered universe, the possibility of hallucinogenic experience being oriented toward a cosmological vision must not be ruled out.

At [the] initial moment of awakement, experiencing the dawn of light in the midst of the night, the shaman evokes the illumination of the constellations at the genesis of the world. Mytho-poetical descriptions of the creation of the world are constant themes of these creative experiences. From the beginning, the vision his words create is cosmological.<sup>4</sup>

Two points may be developed from this insight. First, even within a cultus based on the ingestion of soma cosmogonic/cosmologic implications have an appropriate place within the total theological framework. This point applies to Rgvedic data. For example, 3.30.4-5, containing the affirmation that Indra speaks firm words as vrtrahan, correlates with this point. Further, Kuiper has observed that a decision brought about by the speaking of a word which is

---

<sup>4</sup>H. Munn, "The Mushrooms of Language" in Hallucinogens and Shamanism, 106.

designated as varəṣrajan is found also in Avestan material.<sup>5</sup> It follows, according to him, that this word refers to cosmogony. Such is the case in Rgveda 3.30.4-5. The joining together of a cosmologic reference and speech within a sóma-taking context becomes intelligible in the light of comparative data and solves the problem of why Indra should speak the firm word as vrtrahan in these verses. A similar contextual situation occurs in 10.49.6. In Chapter Two I raised the question as to whether a cosmogonic interpretation or an interpretation based on the ingestion of sóma was a more adequate exegetical conclusion. At this point, because of the preceeding discussion, one may state that both elements are present in the verse without doing violence to either category because of the cosmogonic-visioning possible while under the influence of a hallucinogen. Second, on the one hand, the appearance of vrtrahan in a cosmologic reference must not be used a priori to deny any reference to hallucinogenic experience, nor, on the other hand, should one be surprised to find vrtrahan used in a late hymn (e.g., 8.89) in a cosmologic context where the ingestion of sóma seems irrelevant.

If Indra the Divine Warrior plays the featured role in both the great cosmogonic deed and in earthly battles as the helper of Vedic man, then one can allude to the typology developed by Cross

---

<sup>5</sup>Kuiper, "Verbal Contest", 251.

to deal with Ancient Near Eastern material in order to amplify observations on Rgvedic material. One should not be surprised to discover that "the war god who establishes the order of the cosmos also establishes the political-historical order thereby."<sup>6</sup> This particular trait occurs clearly in the later Vedic age when the combat imagery has coalesced into a royal ideology: "May the king, the slayer of Vrtra, be our king and slay the enemy" (Taitt. Br. 1, 7, 3, 7; cf. TS 1, 8, 9, 2). This desire for safety in both cosmic and historical planes found expression in the imagery of the combat against Vrtra.

Gonda comments that

its [Vrtra's] name...and character show without a shadow of doubt that the minds of the Vedic Indians and their forefathers were much preoccupied with fear of being enclosed and surrounded, not only on their earthly roads, pastures and territories, but also with regard to the range of action of divine powers active in the heavens and the atmosphere.<sup>7</sup>

This, then, is the clearest expression in later Vedic thought of the relationship between cosmologic imagery and the fundamental concerns of society. The other facet of this relationship, the New Year's festival, shows, as already has been noted, the connection between the king, cosmology, and fecundity.

---

<sup>6</sup>Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 58.

<sup>7</sup>J. Gonda, "The Vedic Concept of amhas", IJJ, 1 (1957), 52. See also Gonda, Loka, 21.



The cosmologic references occasioned by the taking of sóma, therefore, account for only a part of the cosmologic references in the Rgveda. When dealing with some implications of cosmologic imagery within the context of sóma-taking it seems that sóma promotes awe and wonder about the cosmos and man's place within it. It is the royal ideology that concretizes the combat imagery in terms of security and fecundity. In the earlier strata earthly battles and cosmologic images do not normally coalesce. Rather, one observes the joining of cosmologic imagery with the ritual of sóma-taking. The usage of vrtrá-complex words to denote "enemies of the ritual" is predominant.

Furthermore, the supposition that the sóma-bowl may be represented by the imagery of an ocean lends itself well to cosmologic imagery, especially the release of the waters. The sóma bowl is the origin of sacred speech and the waters flowing from it signify the ingesting of sóma. The heart is another ocean where the words gain the actuality of utterance, and "waters" flow from the heart as actualized sacred speech. This is an excellent example of the utilization of cosmologic imagery within the sóma-taking cultus. This demonstrates the persistence of the imagery and supports my contention that this imagery need not be interpreted as referring to a celestial ocean and the ordering of the cosmos.

In the light of the above remarks the central aim of the thesis should be restated. It was my contention that the assumption

by Vedic scholars of a coherent cosmogonic myth throughout the various strata of the Rgvedic text is not warranted. The body of the thesis demonstrated the viability of this contention. The analysis of references to the Indra-Vṛtra conflict showed that only the later strata of the text reflect a well-developed cosmogonic myth. The earlier strata reflect a soma ingesting cult that uses the imagery evoked through vṛtra-complex words to express concerns over the use and misuse of soma.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### A. Texts, Translations, Translation Aids

- Aufrecht, T. Die Hymnen des Rgveda. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1968.
- Bhawe, S.S. The Soma-hymns of the Rgveda. Baroda: University of Baroda, 1960.
- Darmesteter, J., trans. The Zend Avesta. Part II, in F. Max Muller, ed., The Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXIII. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965.
- Geldner, K.F. Der Rig-veda aus dem Sanskrit ins Deutsche übersetzt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951.
- Grassmann, H.G. Wörterbuch zum Rigveda. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1964.
- Griffith, R.T.H. The Hymns of the Rgveda. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1963.
- Macdonnell, A.A. A Vedic Grammar for Students. Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Max Muller, F., ed. Rig-Veda-Samhitā. Varanasi: Chowkhamba, 1966.
- Mayrhofer, M. Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1956.
- Monier-Williams, M. A Sanskrit-English Dictionary. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960.
- Renou, L. Études sur le Vocabulaire du Rgveda. Pondichery: Institut Français d'Indologie, 1958.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Études védiques et pāṇinéennes. Paris: Boccard, 1955.
- Sarup, L., trans. and ed. The Nighantu and Nirukta. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967.
- Velankar, H.D. Rgveda Mandala VII. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Rgveda Mandala III. Bombay: Bombay University Press, 1968.



Visva-Bandhu Śāstrī. A Vedic Word Concordance. Lahore: Viśveśvārananda Vedic Research Institute, 1942.

#### B. Books

Benveniste, E. and Renou, L. Vrtra et Vr̥ṣagna: Étude de Mythologie Indo-Iranienne. Paris: Payot, 1934.

Basham, A.L. The Wonder That Was India. New York: Grove Press, 1959.

Cross, F.M. Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973.

Dumézil, G. The Destiny of the Warrior. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Eliade, M. Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return. New York: Harper, 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_. Patterns in Comparative Religion. Cleveland: Meridian, 1963.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Sacred and The Profane. New York: Harper, 1961.

Gonda, J. Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969.

\_\_\_\_\_. Change and Continuity in Indian Religion. The Hague: Mouton, 1965.

\_\_\_\_\_. Epithets in the R̥gveda. 's-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_. Four Studies in the Language of the Veda. 's-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_. Handbuch der Orientalistik. Die Indischen Sprachen: Old Indian. Leiden-Köln: E.J. Brill, 1971.

\_\_\_\_\_. Les Religions de l'Inde. Paris: Payot, 1962.

\_\_\_\_\_. Loka, World and Heaven in the Veda. Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandische V.M., 1966.

\_\_\_\_\_. Notes on Brahman. Utrecht: J.L. Beyers, 1950.

- Gonda, J. Notes on Names and The Name of God in Ancient India. Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandische U.M., 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Some Observations on the Relations between "Gods" and "Powers" in the Veda, a propos of the phrase sūnuh sahasah. 's-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Meaning of the Sanskrit term dhāman. Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandische U.M., 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Vision of the Vedic Poets. The Hague: Mouton, 1963.
- Gunkel, H. The Psalms. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967.
- Hahn, H.F. The Old Testament in Modern Research. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.
- Harner, M.J. Hallucinogens and Shamanism. London: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Heesterman, J.C. The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration. 's-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1957.
- Hillebrandt, A. Vedische Mythologie. Hildesheim: Gg. Olms, 1965.
- Hirsch, E.D., Jr. Validity in Interpretation. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.
- Keith, A.B. The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads. Harvard University Press, 1925.
- Lévi, S. La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brāhmanas. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1966.
- Lommel, H. Der arische Kriegsgott. Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1939.
- Lord, A.B. The Singer of Tales. New York: Atheneum, 1965.
- "  
Luders, H. Varuna. Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1951.
- Macdonnel, A.A. The Vedic Mythology. Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1963.
- Renou, L. Les maîtres de la philologie védique. Paris: Geuthner, 1928.

- Renou, L. Religions of Ancient India. New York: Schoken, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Destiny of the Veda in India. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Vedic India. Calcutta: Susil Gupta, 1957.
- Rodhe, S. Deliver Us From Evil. Lund: Gleerup, 1946.
- Schmidt, H.-P. Brhaspati und Indra; Untersuchungen zur Vedischen Mythologie und Kulturgeschichte. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1968.
- Schneider, U. Der Somaraub des Manu. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1971.
- de Vries, J. Heroic Song and Heroic Legend. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Wasson, R.G. Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969.

#### C. Articles

- Brough, J. "Soma and Amanita muscaria", Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, XXXIV (1971), 331-362.
- Brown, W.N. "Indra's Infancy According to Rgveda IV, 18" in the Dr. Siddheshwar Varma Presentation Volume, Siddha-Bhārati. Hoshiarpur: Vishveshvaranand Vedic Research Institute, 1950.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Creation Myth of the Rigveda", Journal of the American Oriental Society, 61 (1941), 85-98.
- Dandekar, R.N. "Universe in Vedic Thought", in India Maior. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Vṛtrahā Indra", Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 31 (1950), 1-55.
- Duschesne-Guillemin, J. "The Religion of Ancient Iran", in C.J. Bleeker and G. Widengren, eds., Historia Religionem, Vol. 1: Religions of the Past. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969.
- Dumézil, G. "Vahagn", Revue de l'histoire des religions, CXVII (1938), 152-170.
- Geldner, K.F. and Thomas, E.J. "Zend Avesta", in Encyclopedia Britannica. London, 1957.



- Gerow, E. "Renou's Place in Vedic Exegetical Tradition", Journal of the American Oriental Society, 88 (1968), 310-333.
- Gonda, J. "The Sacred Character of Ancient Indian Kingship", in Supplements to Numen IV: The Sacral Kingship. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Vedic Concept of amhas", Indo-Iranian Journal, 1 (1957), 33-60.
- Heesterman, J.C. "The Case of the Severed Head", Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Sud- und Ostasiens, XI (1967), 22-43.
- Ingalls, D.H.H. "Remarks on Mr. Wasson's Soma", Journal of the American Oriental Society, 91 (1971), 188-191.
- Johnson, A.R. "The Psalms", in H.H. Rowley, ed., The Old Testament and Modern Study. London: Oxford University Press, 1951.
- Keith, A.B. "Indra and Vṛtra", Indian Culture, 1 (1934), 461-466.
- Knipe, D.M. "The Heroic Theft: Myths from Rgveda IV and the Ancient Near East", History of Religions, 6 (1967), 328-360.
- Kuiper, F.B.J. "An Austro-Asiatic Myth in the Rigveda", in Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie....Deel 13, No. 7 (1950), 163-182.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "An Indian Prometheus?", Asiatische Studien, XXV (1971), 85-98.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Cosmogony and Conception: a query", History of Religions, 10 (1971), 91-138.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Ancient Aryan Verbal Contest", Indo-Iranian Journal, 4 (1960), 217-281.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Bliss of Aśa", Indo-Iranian Journal, 8 (1964), 96-129.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Heavenly Bucket", in India Maior. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Three Strides of Vishnu", in E. Bender, ed., Indological Studies in honor of W. Norman Brown. New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1962.

- Kuiper, F.B.J. "review of P. Thieme, "Mitra and Aryaman"", Indo-Iranian Journal, 3(1959), 207-212.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "review of R.G. Wasson, Soma", Indo-Iranian Journal, 12(1970), 279-285.
- Muilenburg, J. "Introduction", in H. Gunkel, The Psalms. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967.
- Munn, H. "The Mushrooms of Language", in M.J. Harner, ed., Hallucinogens and Shamanism. London: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Renou, L. "Reserches sur le rituel Vedique: La place du Rig-Veda dans l'Ordannance du Culte" Journal Asiatique, 250 (1962), 161-184.
- Ronnow, K. "Vis'varūpa", Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, 6(1931), 469-480.
- Schmidt, H.-P. "Die Kobra im Rgveda", Zeitschrift fur Vergleichende Sprachforschung, 77(1961), 296-304.
- Sharma, B.R. "Vrtra", New Indian Antiquary, 9(1947), 94-99.
- Smith, H. "Do Drugs Have Religious Import?", The Journal of Philosophy, LXI (1964), 517-530.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Wasson's Soma: A Review Article", Journal of The American Academy of Religion XL (1972), 480-499.
- Thieme, P. "review of Renou's Études védiques et pāṇinéennes, I" Journal of the American Oriental Society, 77(1957), 51-56.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The 'Aryan' Gods of the Mitanni Treaties", Journal of the American Oriental Society, 80(1960), 301-317.
- Venkatasubbiah, A. "On Indra's Winning of Cows and Waters", Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft, 115(1965), 120-133.
- Waser, P.G. "The Pharmacology of Amanita Muscaria", in D.H. Efron, ed., Ethnopharmacologic Search for Psychoactive Drugs. Washington: United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare (Public Health Service Publication No. 1645), 1967.

Wasson, R.G. "Fly Agaric and Man", in D.H. Efron, ed., Ethnopharmacologic Search for Psychoactive Drugs. Washington: United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare (Public Health Service Publication No. 1645), 1967.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Soma: Comments Inspired by Professor Kuiper's Review", Indo-Iranian Journal, 12(1970), 286-298.

Widengren, G. "The Sacral Kingship of Iran", in Supplements to Numen IV: The Sacral Kingship. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959.