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Edited by

ASKO PARPOLA
PETTERI KOSKIKALLIO

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Apāṃ Napāt, Dīrghatamas and Construction of the Brick Altar: Analysis of Ṛgveda 1.143

LÁSZLÓ FÓRIZS

INTRODUCTION

In this paper¹ I translate and interpret Ṛgveda 1.143, which presents a newer and stronger vision of Dīrghatamas. In the arrangement of the surviving Śākalya recension of the ṚV, 1.143 belongs to the Dīrghatamas cycle, a group of 25 hymns traditionally attributed to Dīrghatamas. Vedic scholars have been frustrated about the hymn, and no consensus on its significance and meaning has been reached. It is a laudation of Agni and Apāṃ Napāt. I will show that the intertwining imagery of the hymn gives Agni a unique cosmological significance unparalleled in contemporary sacerdotal poetry.

SOME PRINCIPLES CONCERNING THE TRANSLATION

The following principles concerning the translation may seem trivial but are important.

¹ This research has been supported by The Hungarian Scientific Research Fund, OTKA T 21224, The Pro Renovanda Cultura Hungariae, and The Gate of Dharma Buddhist Fund.

- 1) A solution that does not violate the grammar is preferable to a solution that does. For example, a nominative is not an accusative, even if it occurs in a difficult Vedic passage. Cf. Sāyaṇa's interpretation of ṚV 1.143.3.
- 2) A solution that does not misuse the vocabulary (e.g., by introducing *ad hoc* meanings) is preferable to a solution that does. Cf. Geldner's 'Elefant' in ṚV 1.143.7.
- 3) A solution that does not replace a whole word by another one in order to get the 'required' meaning is preferable to a solution that does. Cf. Ludwig's replacement of *ajarāḥ* by *amarāḥ* in ṚV 1.143.3.
- 4) A solution that does not modify the grammatical form of a word forcefully to get a 'more desirable' form (e.g., a word with a different ending) is preferable to a solution that does. Cf. the replacement of *aktúr* (masc. sing. nom.) by *aktún* (masc. pl. acc.) in ṚV 1.143.3 by Oldenberg and later on by Geldner, Mylius, etc. (Renou and Elizarenkova tried to avoid this kind of abuse in two different ways.)
- 5) A solution that does not violate the metre is preferable to a solution that does. Cf. ṚV 1.149.3 *á yáḥ púram nārmiṇīm ádīded* in the metrically restored (!) edition of van Nooten and Holland (1994: 91).
- 6) A solution that does not destroy (alter) the integrity of the original text is preferable to a solution that does. Cf. The insertion of the refrain *nábhantām anyaké same* in ṚV 8.41 by the redactors. Nevertheless, such an early intrusion can provide us useful information.
- [7) A profound solution is preferable to a simplistic one.]

ANALYSIS OF ṚV 1.143

A Newer and Stronger Vision to Agni

Let us start the analysis with an important observation: the hymn differs from the usual patterns of Ṛgvedic poetry with regard to its poet (his metronymic name/maternal lineage)², its theme (Apāṃ Napāt, *iṣṭi*, anointment of the cosmic/creative Agni), and its poetic form (application of pure rhymes in 1ab, 1cd, 2ab, *agnāye – bhare, priyó – rtvíyaḥ, víomani – mātariśvane*). The hymn is Dīrghatamas' newer and stronger vision to Agni/Apāṃ Napāt:

I bring forward a stronger and newer vision (praise) to Agni, a hymn of Vāc to the son of strength; [he is] Apāṃ Napāt, the beloved *hotā*, who together with the Vasus has sat down on the Earth observing the appointed time. (ṚV 1.143.1.)

The Problem of Apāṃ Napāt

The most important and most difficult part of the vision is verse 3. So I will discuss it in greater detail. Without taking into account the complex roles that Apāṃ Napāt (and Agni) could play, a proper understanding of the subtle imagery of the verse is not possible.

Apāṃ Napāt is encountered only in a few hymns of the Ṛgveda: in 1.22.6a, 143.1c; 2.31.6d, 35.1c, 35.2c, 35.3d, 35.9a, 35.10b; 3.9.1c; 6.50.13b, 52.14b; 7.34.15a, 47.2b; 10.30.3b, 30.14d, 92.13b. There is an entire hymn of the Gṛtsamada clan (2.35) that lauds Apāṃ Napāt exclusively. An alternative appellation is *apāṃ gárbhaḥ* that occurs in 1.70.3a, 164.52b; 3.1.12d, 1.13a, 5.3b; 7.9.3d; 9.97.41b. This alternative form does not occur in the 2nd Maṇḍala. Neither Apāṃ Napāt nor *apāṃ gárbhaḥ* is found in the

² Dīrghatamas is called Māmateya in four different hymns of the Ṛgveda. ṚV 1.147.3 and 1.152.6 are probably self-references. One reference, 4.4.13, is in a hymn of the Vāmadevas. In addition, in a controversial biographical hymn that vividly describes the dramatic end of his long and fruitful life, Dīrghatamas is called not only by his metronym Māmateya (1.158.6), but also twice by his patronym Aucathya (1.158.1). I plan to discuss the intricacies of this important hymn and the life and work of Dīrghatamas in another paper.

4th, 5th and 8th Maṇḍalas. The 9th Maṇḍala has only *apām gárbhaḥ*. We can see that in the 1st, 3rd and 7th Maṇḍalas both forms occur. The Dīrghatamas cycle has Apām Napāt only in 1.143, while *apām gárbhaḥ* occurs at the end of the Riddle hymn (1.164.52b).

The problematic nature of Apām Napāt is evident from the discrepancies between his numerous scholarly interpretations: sun, lightning, moon, water spirit, Soma, Varuṇa, god of waters, the horse-shaped sun-fire in the waters (Findly 1979; Parpola 2005). In his quest for a sound interpretation, Dumézil turned to Indo-European mythology for clues. Findly summarizes the results of her comparative analysis in the following way:

We can see ... that the myths from the Old Irish, Roman, and Iranian sources have four major themes: 1) a burning or glowing element 2) hidden in the midst of the waters 3) attainable only by those who are qualified and forbidden to those who are not, 4) but whose illegitimate attempts to claim the element result in the overflowing of the waters (Findly 1979: 176).

What Findly tries to show is that all these four major themes can also be found in the Ṛgveda, but with a gradual shift of emphasis from the ‘natural’ water forms (streams, rivers, lakes, seas, rains, and snows) to the ‘ritual’ ones (the water used in the preparation of oblations and other kinds of liquid offerings, i.e., milk, ghee, Soma, and honey), culminating in the ritual mixing of the *vasatīvarī* and *ekadhanā* waters in the course of the *aponaptrīya* ceremony of the Soma ritual.

Some Remarks on the *aponaptrīya* Ceremony

The following questions arise naturally: What ritual activities precede its performance and what activities follow it? What (if any) special ritual constructions are present in the scene in the course of the *aponaptrīya* ceremony?

At the time of the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* the Soma ritual has two ritual enclosures. Besides the *vedi*, there is also an *uttaravedi* (U). The old *āhavanīya* (OA) has already become the new *gārhapatya*

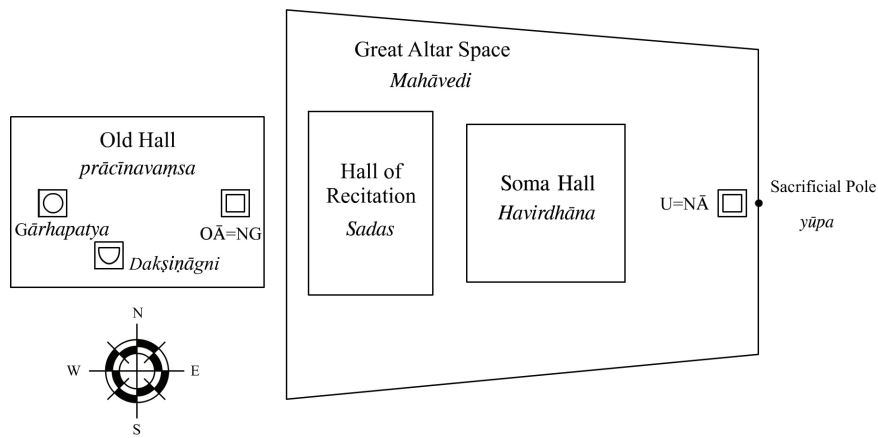


Fig. 1. Ritual enclosures for Soma rituals

(NG) (see Fig. 1). However, the new domestic altar is square-shaped and constructed of bricks (*gārhapatyaciti*) in the place of the old offering altar, which was made of clay.³

Whether any of the fireplaces or altars was made of bricks at the time of the hymn discussed remains an open problem, but we know that in later times not only the new domestic altar, but also the new bird-shaped fire-altar in the east (*agniciti*) was made of bricks. Since what time have brick constructions been present in Vedic rituals? The answer to this question is not known.

³ One of the main themes of the *aponaptrīya* rite is the mixing of the old and the new: “Water hath united with water, plants with plants!” the sap of the sacrifice which was fetched yesterday and that fetched today, both kinds he thereby mixes together’ (ŚB 3.9.3.29). There is another possible connotation here: mixing of the old ritual and the new one. I think the two ritual enclosures and the ‘strange’ (square-shaped) form of the new domestic altar clearly indicate that rituals have grown together. I intend to discuss this problem complex in another paper.

I am well aware that present-day scholars of the Veda apparently agree on the lack of bricks in the Ṛgveda; it suffices to quote the epoch-making work of Frits Staal:

The Ṛg-Vedic references to houses indicate that they were made of perishable wood and thatch. Bricks were thus not part of the Ṛg-Vedic technical or ritual accomplishments (Staal 1983: I, 131).

However, some of the greatest Vedic scholars of the past did not find it impossible to trace the piling up of brick altars back to the Ṛgveda. Hermann Oldenberg, for example, did not rule out that an early form of the *agnicayana* was present even in the time of the Ṛgveda:

Perhaps we may conjecture ... that the *agnicayana* rite in its simplest form was known already in the Ṛgveda period (Oldenberg 1988: 286).

For Eggeling (1897: xiii–xviii), this was possible also in the context of the Puruṣasūkta (ṚV 10.90). Interestingly enough, Geldner saw a possible reference to it even in our present hymn (ṚV 1.143).⁴

From the above comments we can conclude that at least indirectly the *aponaptrīya* ceremony is connected with the construction of a brick altar during the performance of a Soma ritual. But since what time has the construction of a brick altar been part of the Soma ritual? Where does it come from?

Vedic Fireplaces and the *uttaravedi*:

Evidence of ṚV 1.140.1, 2.35.5 and 1.149.3

Instead of just relying on the situation that prevailed at the time of the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*, we have to find evidence for any of these constructions in the Ṛgveda, at the time of Dīrghatamas.

⁴ Cf. Geldner's note on ṚV 1.143.4: 'In den Nabel der Erde = den Feueraltar' (Geldner 1951: 201).

There is some Ṛgvedic evidence on the *uttaravedi*. In a hymn of the Dīrghatamas cycle, Agni is called *vediśád* (ṚV 1.140.1). This means that Agni sits on the *vedi*, but in this case Agni can sit only on the *uttaravedi*, as Hillebrandt noted already long ago:

Because Agni is called *vediśád* in RV. 1.140.1, thus corresponding to the *uttaravedi* of the ritual ... (Hillebrandt 1980: 379).

The most problematic word of verse 5 of the Apāṃ Napāt hymn ṚV 2.35 is *kṛtā*.⁵ It occurs only here in the Ṛgveda. For Geldner, the reading (*kṛtā iva*) is only one of the probable options, and he did not try to translate it (cf. Geldner 1951: 321, n. 1). Nor did Renou: ‘le mot reste mystérieux’ (Renou 1965: 103). Mayrhofer did not give a clear derivation either. For him, the word was still ‘nicht voll geklärt’. As an excuse, he made a reference to the failure of Geldner and Renou. Bailey’s tentative suggestion is ‘girl’. He identified the word with *Vīdēvdād* 19.30 (*srīra*) *kārata*, and translated it as ‘(beautiful) girls/maidens’, but according to Mayrhofer (1992–2001: I, 390) this was ‘ohne erkennbare philologische Begründung’. On the other hand, Mayrhofer (*ibid.*) got very close to the solution when he tried to think over Bailey’s rather *ad hoc* conjecture:

A.a.O. auch zum Etymon von iir. **kṛtā*- ‘Mädchen’; wenn es existiert hat, dann ist es eher erotischer Slang aus ‘*Spalte’.

The most probable meaning of *kṛtā* is ‘holed’ or ‘something/somebody with a hole’, e.g., holed fireplaces. (At that time, the Vedic innovations concerning fireplaces, such as those of the *āhavanīya*, were still waiting to take place.) So the translation is:

Three women, goddesses, desire to bestow (*didhiṣanti*, desiderative of *dhā*- ‘to give’) food upon the immovable (or unshakeable, *avyathyá*, fut. part. pass. (gdv.) of *vyath*- ‘to waver’) god. [It seems] as if he stretches forth (*úpa prasarsré*, pr. intens. sg. 3, of (*úpa*) *pra+sṛ*-, ‘to extend, stretch forth to’) to

⁵ ṚV 2.35.5 *asmaí tistró avyathiyáya nárīr deváya devír didhiṣanti ánnam | kṛtā ivópa hí prasarsré apsú sá pīyúṣaṃ dhayati pūrvasúnām ||*

the holed ones (the holed fireplaces) in the waters while he sucks the milk of those who have brought forth [life] for the first time.

The problem of ṚV 1.149.3 is an old one.⁶ Geldner (1951: 207) translates ‘die Burg *Nārmiṇī*’. Witzel repeats this with a question mark: ‘*Nārmiṇī* “a fort?”’ (Witzel 1999: 361). For the meaning of *pur* one has to consult Wilhelm Rau:

The evidence ... does not fit the cities of the Indus civilization. It rather suggests the existence of numerous, frequently concentric, mud or stone ramparts of round or oval ground-plan, – many times hastily erected – and reinforced by wooden defences, enclosing thatched timber sheds to serve at best as temporary homes but more often to shelter men and their cattle in times of war, water supply and provisions being, therefore, of vital importance (Rau 1976: 52; cf. also Parpola 1988: 211–217).

According to Mayrhofer (1992–2001: II, 38), ‘*nārmiṇī*-, f., Name (oder Beiwort) einer *púr*- (s.d.; ṚV 1,149,3)’, is of uncertain interpretation: he refers, with reservation, to the explanation ‘nicht trümmerhaft’ (*na*- + *árma*-). In my view, interpreting *ná* as a negative particle is problematic, among other things because in this case *púram ná ármiṇīm* would become *púram nārmiṇīm* in speech; but if we interpret it as a particle of comparison, the problem disappears.

Ná is used in V. (very commonly in ṚV., comparatively rarely in AV., but never in B.) as a particle of comparison, exactly like *iva* ‘as, like’. This *ná*, being in sense closely connected with the preceding word, never coalesces in pronunciation (though it does in written Sandhi) with a following vowel, whereas *ná* generally does. This *ná* always follows the word of comparison to which it belongs; or if the simile consists several words, then *ná* generally follows the first word, less commonly the second. (Macdonell 1916: 236)

Interestingly enough, the ‘metrically reconstructed’ text of van Nooten and Holland (1994: 592) does not even mention the problem, while Oldenberg (1897: 177) does:

⁶ ṚV 1.149.3 *á yáḥ púram ná ármiṇīm ádīded átyaḥ kavír nabhaníyo ná árvā | súro ná rurukvāñ chatáātmā ||*

We do not know what *nārmiṇī* is. Possibly in this word two words, *ná* *armiṇī*, are contained, so that the particle *ná* would be repeated in each of the three Pādas. The translation would then be: ‘he who lighted up the *armiṇī* (?) like a stronghold’.

Though Oldenberg did not give a solution for the word *armiṇī*, and we do not agree with him in the details of his translation, the interpretation of *ná* as a particle of comparison (even if it was only a hypothetical suggestion) goes beyond all the other tentative solutions.

My solution is the following:

- 1) In spite of the text of van Nooten and Holland (1994: 91) the first line is: *á yáḥ púraṃ ná armiṇīm ádīded*.
- 2) In the comparison, *pur* denotes a (possibly fortified) ceremonial centre, a kind of sanctuary rather than a fort, the emphasis being on the sacred character of the place rather than on its fortified nature. This agrees both with the newly found fortified ceremonial centre at the BMAC settlement in the oasis of Dashly-3 in northern Afghanistan and with the *agnicayana* portion of the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (ŚB 6.3.3.24–25).
- 3) According to my reading, the problem of *armiṇī* is connected with the interpretation of *armaká* (RV 1.133.3) and *arma* (TS, TB+). I think the most probable meaning for *armiṇī* (as well as *armaká*) is ‘fire-well’, i.e., ‘a holed (fire-)place made of mud or clay’. As already noted, the Vedic innovations concerning fireplaces, such as those of the *āhavanīya*, were still waiting to take place. Cf. Mayrhofer:

arma- m. (TS, TB +), dazu *armaká-* m. (RV [1,133,3]+; s. Hoffm, ZDMG 110 [1960] 68 Anm. 2 = HoffmA 124 Anm. 2): wohl ‘Brunnen’ (Bedeutungsbestimmung nach K. T. Schmidt, StIdgW 290ff.). – Wenn richtig bestimmt, dann identisch mit toch. B *ālme* ‘Brunnen’ (und Flußnamen Europas wie *Almus*, *Alma* usw.) < idg. **h₂el-mo-*; dazu vřddhiert **h₂ēl-mo-* in toch. B *yolme* ‘Teich,’ Schmidt, a.a.O. (Mayrhofer 1992–2001: I, 120)

- 4) The fire-well (and the sacred place) is illuminated by the hundredfold *ātman* (*sūro ná rurukvāñ chatáātmā*) (and not set aflame by it/him).

So the translation is:

Who illuminates the fire-well like a sanctuary/fort, the sage (seer, *kavī*) runs like a neighing steed, the hundredfold *ātman* shines like the Sun.

The Cosmic, Creative Role of Apāṃ Napāt

Although Findly talks about RV 2.35 in great detail in her paper (Findly 1979), she omits three important verses of this hymn. The first omitted verse⁷ clearly states:

Apāṃ Napāt, the true [Lord]⁸, has with his Asuric power (*asuríasya mahnā*) created all the creatures (2.35.2.cd).

Remarkably enough, in a late Avestan text we find a passage that strengthens this evidence:

... We worship the great lord ... Apāṃ napā ... the strong one, ... who created men ..., the god who dwells in the waters, and who is the first to hear when he is worshipped. (Yašt 19.51, transl. Hillebrandt 1980)

Of course, such a creative activity and cosmological role is incompatible with the Avestan fire cult, even if the name, Apāṃ napā, is Avestan. Taking into account the fact that Yašt 19 belongs to the later part of Avestan texts (Witzel 2001: 4), the situation is remarkable. Attributing the creation of men to a subordinate Yazata, Apāṃ napā, is in clear conflict with the usual Zoroastrian concepts of creation.⁹

⁷ RV 2.35.2 *apāṃ nāpād asuríasya mahnā víśvāni aryó bhúvanā jajāna*.

⁸ 'aryó,' of course, refers to the creator god and not to the creatures. (Contrary to this, e.g., O'Flaherty 1981: 105.)

⁹ Hillebrandt was among the first scholars who realized the problem. In spite of his obsession with lunar interpretations, he was well aware of the problems presented by this aspect of Apāṃ Napāt.

In view of the Iranian evidence the omission of the verse 2.35.2 by Findly is even more problematic. Findly should have analyzed the evidence instead of covering up the tracks. The second omitted verse ṚV 2.35.12¹⁰ leads us to another important aspect of Apāṃ Napāt that Findly's analysis failed to touch: the concrete, earthly form of the god:

I rub its back, I would like to bestow it¹¹ with the holed ['fireplaces'] and food, and praise it with stanzas.¹²

To summarize: Findly's paper seems to be a well balanced analysis but there are at least two aspects of Apāṃ Napāt it fails to do justice to, namely, (1) its cosmic, creative role and (2) its concrete earthly form. The lack of these themes in the Indo-European heritage does not mean that these are negligible or unimportant aspects of the Apāṃ Napāt complex. It can only be interpreted as a sign that they came from another background.

Analysis of the Available Renderings of ṚV 1.143.3

ṚV 1.143.3 has caused endless frustration among scholars since the time of Sāyaṇa. No sound interpretation has been achieved yet.

Sāyaṇa takes *tveṣāḥ* in the sense of *dīptayaḥ* ('*asya stūya-mānasyāgneḥ tveṣā dīptayaḥ*') and construes *asyá tveṣā ajārāḥ* as a clause by itself. According to him, *bhānávaḥ* is the subject of the next clause; *susamḍṛśaḥ* and *sudyútaḥ* are nominative plurals agreeing with *bhānávaḥ* and forming the predicate of the clause; *suprátikasya* is in construction with *asya*. In explaining the second

¹⁰ ṚV 2.35.12 *asmaí bahūnām avamāya sákhye yajñair vidhema námasā havírbhiḥ | sám sānu mārjmi dídhiṣāmi bílmair dádhāmi ánnaiḥ pári vanda ṛgbhíḥ ||*

¹¹ The demonstrative, of course, refers to Apāṃ Napāt, but in this case to its visible, touchable, concrete earthly form (referred to by 'it' instead of 'him').

¹² The third verse omitted by Findly, ṚV 2.35.15, also refers to an important aspect of Apāṃ Napāt shared by the Ṛgveda and the Iranian myth, namely the contest theme. However, it is fair to say that Findly paid due attention to this aspect of the Apāṃ Napāt complex in her analysis.

line Sāyaṇa ‘takes refuge in the absurdity’ that the nominative perhaps stands here for the accusative (cf. Peterson 1888: 89–91 for this and the next three paragraphs.)

Roth takes *bhātvakṣasaḥ* (which occurs only here in the Ṛgveda) as a genitive and apparently (cf. Böhtlingk & Roth 1852: 91, under *ati*) connects it with *sindhavaḥ*. He explains that form as an anomalous genitive (*sindhavaḥ* = *sindhvaḥ* = *sindhoh*). He takes *ati* to be a preposition governing the genitive in the sense of ‘over’: ‘on the surface of’. Accordingly, the translation in Geldner and Kaegi’s *Siebenzig Lieder* (1875) is ‘Like the shimmer which floats on the surface of the stream’.

Ludwig (1876–88) takes *bhātvakṣasaḥ* with *agneḥ*: ‘who has light for his strength’, and takes *atyaktuḥ* to mean ‘all night through’. He takes *ajarāḥ* in both places as an adjective and avoids the apparent tautology by changing the second *ajarāḥ* to *amarāḥ*. In this way, Agni resembles the rivers as far as he, like them, is in constant motion day and night.

Grassmann follows Sāyaṇa in taking *bhātvakṣasaḥ* and *sindhavaḥ* as nominative plurals. He takes *ati* as an adverb with *rejante*. For *sindhavaḥ* in the sense of ‘streams of light’ he instances ṚV 1.52.14 *sindhavaḥ rajasaḥ* as a somewhat similar metaphor. He translates the sentence as

Die Flammenströme flimmern, wie das Tageslicht, die lichtgewalt’gen, nimmer schlummernd, ewig jung¹³ (Grassmann 1876: 148).

Oldenberg proposes: ‘Probably we should read *āti aktún*; comp. 6.4.5. *āti eti aktún*’ (Oldenberg 1897: 158). He translates:

His flames are fierce; never ageing are the flames of him who is beautiful to behold, whose face is beautiful, whose splendour is beautiful. The never sleeping, never ageing (rays) of Agni whose power is light, roll forward like streams across the nights(?). (Oldenberg 1897: 157)

¹³ ‘The flame-streams shine like the daylight (*āti aktúr*), full of light, never slumbering, ever young.’

It seems straightforward, but comes at the price of abusing the (orally transmitted) text. Soon we will see how much this ‘little change’ costs.

Geldner: ‘... zittern die Nacht über gleich dem Farbenspiel der Flüsse’ (Geldner 1951: 201), with the same abuse of the original.

Mylius (along with the same lines as Geldner and Oldenberg):

Seine funkelnden, nicht alternden, seine Strahlen des schönen Anblick gewährenden, schönantlitzigen, schön leuchtenden, leuchtkräftigen Agni bewegen sich zitternd die Nacht über, wie die Flüsse nicht schlummernd, nicht alternd (Mylius 1978: 16).

Renou:

aktú ‘Farbenspiel’ de Gld. est tentant, mais non confirmé (Atkins JAOS. 70 p. 35 proposait ‘flot’); peut-être un ancien *aktún ná síndhavaḥ* (*aktún* en liaison avec *áti* comme 1.36.16, 6.4.5) a-t-il été remplacé par *aktúḥ* sous l’influence du type *sindhur ná kṣódaḥ* (Renou 1964: 105).¹⁴

Renou’s effort is quite remarkable, but it is evident that he had difficulty in grasping the meaning of the verse:

Ses (flammes) étincelantes, à l’abri de vieillir, les rayons de ce (dieu) beau à contempler, au beau visage, au bel éclat, / vigoureux en brillance, tremblent par delà (les nuits) comme la surface-ointe (des) fleuves, (ses rayons) exempts de sommeil, exempts de vieillir. (Renou 1964: 35)

Let us have a look at the second (and most interesting) part of his rendering:

les rayons ... tremblent par delà (les nuits) comme la surface-ointe (des) fleuves – ‘the rays tremble beyond (the nights) as the surface-ointment (of) the streams.’

¹⁴ ‘The “*Farbenspiel*” of Geldner (for *aktú*) is tempting but it is not confirmed (Atkins, JAOS. 70, p. 35 proposed “*flot*”, ‘wave’); perhaps an ancient *aktún ná síndhavo* (*aktún* in connection with *áti* as in 1.36.16, 6.4.5). A replacement of *aktún* with *aktúḥ* under the influence of the type *sindhúr ná kṣódaḥ*.’

He is almost there, but the final conclusion is still much ado about (almost) nothing. Although he interprets *aktú* as ‘ointment/anointing’, he could not escape from the bondage of the preconceptions of his predecessors; even the nights came back in the backdoor of the first brackets; and, what is (grammatically) worse, Roth’s spirit also appeared in the coat of the second brackets.

In fact, Oldenberg was one of the first scholars who argued that *aktú* could also mean ‘ointment’ in the Ṛgveda. Cf. the Index of words in Oldenberg 1897: *aktú*, night, 1.36.16, 68.1, 94.5; 2.10.3; 3.7.6; 4.10.5; *áti aktúḥ* (conj. *áti aktún*), 1.143.3; *aktú*, ointment: *aktúbhiḥ ajyate*, 3.17.1. In a note to 3.17.11, Oldenberg stated: ‘I do not believe that the existence of a Vedic word *aktú*, “ointment”, should be denied.’ Nevertheless, he did not think this possibility over, or more probably, he did try, but failed.

Elizarenkova: She too is almost there (in the first line, at least): ‘Его искрящиеся нестареющие (языки пламени), его лучи’ – but then she falls into the same kind of trap as all of her predecessors:

(У этого) прекрасного видом (бога) с прекрасным обликом, с яркой вспышкой, / Сильные (своим) блеском (лучи), трепещут, словно реки / Сквозь ночь, о Агни, недремлющие, нестареющие (Elizarenkova 1989: 182).

Even if she quotes the original in note 3c: ‘... трепещут, словно реки *сквозь ночь* (*áty aktúr na sindhavo*) ...’ (Elizarenkova 1989: 633), the problem is still there: the preposition (*áti*) requires an accusative! Anyway, she is honest like Peterson (who left this verse untranslated in his English rendering of the poem): ‘Сравнение остается неясным. Предлагались разные эмендации текста, но ни одна из них не очевидна.’¹⁵ It seems to me that Elizarenkova, while struggling towards the understanding of the structure and meaning of the complex imagery of the verse, relied too much on the simplistic approach of her predecessors.

¹⁵ ‘The simile seems to be unclear. Many emendations of the text have been suggested, but none of them is obvious/clear.’

The strange thing is that the language of this particular hymn is not that difficult. The same holds true for the majority of the hymns of the whole Dīrghatamas cycle. A clear exception is, for example, ṚV 1.158; but in this case the authorship of Dīrghatamas is more than questionable. As a matter of fact, almost all the obscurities concerning the grammar and the meaning of words have already been removed by the above mentioned scholars. However, no proper understanding of the complex imagery of the poem has been achieved yet. It is the overall picture, the integrity of the vision that is lost. In order to solve the difficulties, one has to understand not only the grammar and the proper meaning of the words, but also the intertwining images and the overall context of the poem. The (probably) unconscious application of pure rhymes in ṚV 1.143.1ab, 1cd, 2ab (*agnáye – bhare, priyó – ṛtvíyaḥ, víomani – mātariśvane*) is in agreement with the importance of the poet's vision about the emergence of a newer and stronger Agni. The poetical form of the hymn reflects the intensity of the poet's penetration into the depth of the mystery of creation.

My Solution of ṚV 1.143.3

The first line is a nominal sentence; the subject is put at the end of the phrase as in the case of Pāṇinean Sanskrit: *asyá tveṣā ajārā asyá bhānāvah* 'His rays are his unageing (ceaseless, not decaying) stimulations/ incitements'. The second line can also be interpreted as a nominal sentence: *susaṃdīśaḥ suprátikasya sudyútaḥ* 'The splendour(s) (or light-rays) of 'the one with a beautiful face' are pleasing ('good to look at')'. Having been completely freed from the preconceptions of the predecessors, the only obstacle to the interpretation of the last two lines is *bhātvakṣasaḥ*. I removed that obstacle in the simplest (but not simplistic!) possible way: *bhātvakṣas* = *bhā-* 'light' + *tvakṣas-* 'maker' ('somebody who makes something with his hands', e.g., 'a carpenter'), from *tvakṣ-* (*takṣ-*) 'to create, produce' (Avestan *θβaxš-*); *bhātvakṣasaḥ ati:* 'beyond the light-makers' (or: carpenters of light, i.e., the stars);

aktúr ná ... agnéḥ: ‘as [if] the anointment of Agni’; *ásasantah*: ‘not-sleeping (i.e., awakened by the incitements of Agni)’; *ajārāḥ*: ‘unageing’ (without the incitements of Agni, time [= creation] is not yet in the making). So the translation is:

His rays are his ceaseless incitements; the splendour of the one with a beautiful face is good to look at. Beyond the light-makers – as the anointment of Agni – the not-sleeping, unageing streams begin to move. (1.143.3)

Dīrghatamas’ New Vision of Agni

‘Sun and its rays’ means the culmination of the creative process. On the other hand, Agni’s incitements begin the process of creation. Without the incitements of Agni, the time (creation) is not yet in the making. The Sun with its rays is a kind of a final cause, but it is better to say that Dīrghatamas’ imagery is one of the first expressions of the Vedic idea of re-creation. Agni creates the Sun and the Sun re-creates Agni.

Later on the images of Vedic poets followed the path of Dīrghatamas’ vision and his insight helped them to formulate their answer to the mysteries of creation. Cf. ṚV 10.72.4: Dakṣa → Aditi and Aditi → Dakṣa, ṚV 10.90.5: Puruṣa → Virāj and Virāj → Puruṣa, ṚV 10.121.7 & 9: *āpas* → *garbha* and *garbha* → *āpas*. The first three *brāhmaṇas* in the *agnicayana* section of the *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* are the culmination of this new insight into mutual creation; ŚB 6.1.1–3: Prajāpati → Agni and Agni → Prajāpati. The analysis of this development will be discussed in another paper (see also Fórizs 2005).

Analysis of ṚV 1.143.7

The above solution is based on my understanding of *ak-ra-*, adj. ‘anointed’, m. ‘someone who is anointed’ (cf. *vip-ra-* ‘inspired’; *gṛdh-ra-* ‘greedy’) and the understanding of the hymn as a whole. My translation of verse 7 corroborates that of verse 3:

Having been kindled, it (i.e., our heart) reaches (*rñjate*) your Agni, whose face shines with ghee (or: your ghee-faced Agni), as a (good) friend in (or: under) the yoke of *Ṛta*; the anointed one (*akró*) in the [sacrificial] assemblies (*vidátheṣu*), the kindling one (= Agni) stretches out (or: sustains, maintains, *yamsate*) our bright-colored vision. (1.143.7)

To give an idea of the divergences and serious problems with other renderings, it suffices to quote Geldner and Elizarenkova:

Eurem Agni, dem Schmalzgesicht, der auf der Deichsel des rechten Werkes sitzt, läßt der Anzündende den Vortritt wie einem verbündeten Freund. Entflammt bei den Opfern leuchtend möge er (wie) ein Elefant*(?) unser lichtfarbenes Gedicht emporheben.

*Oder nach Ludwig: (Wie) eine Säule entflammt bei den Opfern leuchtend, möge er emportragen. (Geldner 1951: 201–202)

К вашему Агни с ликом, (обмазанным) жиром, сидящему на дышле закона, (Жрец,) зажигающий (его,) направляется как к другу. Зажженный, сверкающий на местах жертвенных раздач, (этот) боевой конь (?). Пусть понесет вверх нашу светлоокрашенную поэтическую мысль! (Elizarenkova 1989: 182)

Translation of ṚV 1.143.2

He (who is) being begotten in the highest heaven, Agni revealed himself to *Mātarīśvan*. By the inspiration (*krátvā*), by the greatness/majesty (*majmánā*) of the [one who] kindled [himself, his] radiance/flare (*śocīh*) glittered on Heaven and Earth. (1.143.2.)

Analysis of ṚV 1.143.4

yám eriré bhṛgavo: ‘The possessor/knower of all (or: the all-possessor/all-knower) whom the *Bhṛgus* (have) obtained’; *ā+ir-* can mean not only ‘to set in motion, set to work’ (Oldenberg), ‘spornen’ (Geldner), ‘to strengthen’ (Elizarenkova), but also ‘to procure, obtain’. All these choices are acceptable with more or less equal probability.

nābhā pṛthivyā bhúvanasya majmánā: ‘(who is) on the navel of the earth, and of the world, with/in (all his) majesty/might/greatness (*majmánā*, instr.)’. Grammatically not only the instrumental,

but also *majmánā* used as an indeclinable adverb is acceptable (cf. Geldner's solution: 'in den Nabel der Erde¹⁶, der Welt insgesamt eingesetzt haben'), but taking into account the occurrence of *majmánā* in verse 2, the first choice is preferable.

agnīm táṃ: It is a concrete thing that is referred to here, the fire that can be grasped with one's hands and then carried. But if this is the case, then a vessel is also required for carrying the fire. This carrying of fire is accompanied with the utterance of praises (*gīrbhír*). *ā+hi-* can mean 'to stir up' (Oldenberg) or 'spornen' (Geldner), but it is more likely that here it means 'to convey, bring, carry' or 'подгонять' (Elizarenkova: 'Этого Агни подгони к своему дому хвалебными песнями'). *yá éko vásvo váruṇo ná rājati*: That (sacrificial) fire (*agni*) is, on the other hand, (mysteriously) identical with Agni (Apām Napāt and even the *iṣṭi*, altar, see further on), (that Agni) who – like Varuṇa (the lord) of the Vasus – is the (only) One who rules. A possible connotation here is 'the One (lord) who – like Varuṇa (the lord) of the Vasus – rules (over everything)'. So this Agni is not only the Fire of the Vasus, but also the Fire of all of us, like Agni Vaiśvānara. However, Vaiśvānara is not found in the Dīrghatamas cycle: the word occurs only in two hymns of the first Maṇḍala, four times in ṚV 1.59, a *triṣṭubh* hymn of Nodhas (of the Gotama family)¹⁷ and four times in ṚV 1.98, another *triṣṭubh* hymn of Kutsa (Aṅgiras family). It is also important to note that Agni Vaiśvānara does not occur in the hymns of the Gṛtsamada clan (Book 2) at all; in fact, this is the only book of the Ṛgveda where Agni Vaiśvānara is not found. This requires an explanation all the more because he is found already in the oldest strata of the Ṛgveda, in Book 6, where three entire hymns (two *triṣṭubhs* and a *jagatī*) laud him: 6.7 (7x), 6.8 (6x), 6.9 (2x). Note also that the status of Agni Vaiśvānara is unique in these hymns. No individual god is named except him, and when all the

¹⁶ Cf. Geldner's note quoted above (n. 4), equating the navel of the earth with the Fire altar.

¹⁷ *Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa* 1.147 tells about a Nodhas, the son of Kakṣīvat.

gods are named (in 6.9.7) we hear: *vísve devá anamasyan bhīyānās tuvām agne támasi tasthivāṃsam | vaiśvānaré avatu útáye no ámartiyo avatu útáye naḥ*. In the Maṇḍala of the Atri clan, Agni Vaiśvānara occurs in 5.27 (2x), 5.51 and 5.60. I am going to discuss Agni Vaiśvānara and the Bharadvāja clan on another occasion.

Taking into account all the above considerations, my translation is as follows:

Whom the Bhṛguṣ [have] obtained, the possessor/knower of all [who is] on the navel of the earth and of the world with all his majesty/might, carry that fire with thy prayers to [your] own house, [that Agni] who – like Varuṇa, [the lord] of the Vasus – is the [only] One who rules.(1.143.4)

Previous Translations of ṚV 1.143.8

The first part is straightforward: ‘O Agni (Sun, cf. verse 1ab), attentive with your attentive, kind and powerful guardians (i.e., the stars, cf. verse 3), preserve us.’ The second part is a challenge, but there is hope of a great victory.

Oldenberg translates:

Preserve us, O Agni, never failing with thy never-failing, kind and mighty guardians; protect our people all around with those undeceived, undismayed, never slumbering (guardians), O thou our wish! (Oldenberg 1897: 158))

Renou’s solution is similar to Oldenberg’s: ‘ô (dieu qui es l’objet de notre) recherche’ (Renou 1964: 35). Both of them interpret *iṣte* as a vocative. The problem with their interpretation is that they could not provide the word of which *iṣte* is the vocative.

Elizarenkova rightly criticizes Renou (and Oldenberg whom she does not refer to) for his solution. It seems to her ‘несколько натянутым’. In fact this is not only a forced solution (as Elizarenkova calls it), but also a wrong one. In her own interpretation, Elizarenkova follows a different path that closely resembles that of Geldner:

Schirme uns, o Agni, unablässig mit deinen unablässigen, freundlichen, wirksamen Schirmern; mit den unbetörten, nie zerstreuten, lieben(?), die die Augen nie schließen, beschirme unsere Kinder! (Geldner 1951: 202).

Cf. also Geldner's note on 8c:

iṣṭé (Pp. *iṣṭe*) mit Abfall der Endung für *iṣṭébhiḥ*, ebenso in der Parallele 6, 8, 7. Man müßte sonst *iṣṭe* als Vok. von *iṣṭi* = Gegenstand des Wunsches, Liebling (wie später *kāma*) fassen.

Elizarenkova translates 8cd as follows:

С не допускающими обмана, нерассеянными, желанными, не смыкающими глаз (защитниками) защиты со всех сторон наше потомство! (Elizarenkova 1989: 182)

adding a note on 8c:

Последняя форма рассматривается как усеченная вместо *iṣṭébhiḥ* наряду с другими формами (Elizarenkova 1989: 633).

As we can see, they interpret *iṣṭe* as a short (i.e., cut-off) form of *iṣṭébhiḥ*. Elizarenkova's solution also abuses grammar and is unconvincing for this reason as well. Again, all these scholars are almost there, but there is something still missing, and none of them could provide a decisive solution.

My Solution of RV 1.143.8

The crucial point is the analysis of *iṣṭe*. We have to find a solution that does not abuse grammar nor vocabulary. Formally, *iṣṭe* is the sg. voc. of an *i*-stem. Our job is to find a stem that fits the context best. To derive it via a past passive participle either from the root *yaj-* 'to sacrifice' or from the root *iṣ-* 'to desire', is not only a forced but also a false solution. The problem is that no Ṛgvedic word easily fits our case without abusing grammar or vocabulary or both. When a word notoriously resists all attacks of researchers (as has been the case with *iṣṭe* since the beginning of Vedic scholarship), one has to try a different approach. First of all, one has to

enlarge the horizon and look at the problem from a different perspective. This is what I have essentially done in my completely independent and new solution. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the problem of *iṣṭe* has not been taken too seriously by the majority of scholars; definitely not as seriously as the problem deserves. The core of the problem is the fact that 1.143.8c seems to be the only occurrence of this difficult word in the Ṛgveda. Consequently, our success will finally depend on our understanding of the context and the complex imagery of the hymn as well as the consistency of our analysis. In fact, the situation is not that bad; rather, it is promising, because the word in question occurs in the hymn of a great poet with clear vision and poetical insight and unity of thought. Let us analyse the structure of the poem.

The beginning (Verses 1–2):

Agni, son of strength	Begotten in the highest Heaven	radiance/flame glittered on Heaven (Sun)
Apāṃ Napāt, the beloved <i>hotā</i>	He has sat down on the Earth	radiance/flame glittered on Earth (altar)

The middle:

- a) Cosmic level (especially verse 3): Streams (not sleeping, un-ageing) begin to move by the incitement of Agni (Sun). On the other hand, the Sun corresponds to the completion of the process of creation.
- b) The level of the ritual (especially verse 4): Carry that fire with thy prayers to (your) own house. (1) That fire is the possessor/knower of all, the (only) One who rules (over everything); (2) whom the *Bhṛgus* (have) obtained; (3) it is on the navel of the earth and of the world (*nābhā pṛthivyā bhúvanasya*), a likely reference to some form of an altar (I am going to discuss this issue later).
- c) Microcosmic (personal/inside the heart) level: Would Agni be fond of our hymn? Would He – the Vasu together with the

Vasus – fulfil our desire? Will He, the inciter/inspirer, stir our visions that they may be successful? I praise Him whose face is bright, with this vision/prayer (of mine)¹⁸

The end:

First of all, note that there is a clear parallelism between the first and the last verse: 1ab is related to 8ab and 1cd to 8cd. Now let us start our rendering with the neighbouring words of *iṣṭi*. *á-dabdhebhīr*: the usual rendering of *á-dabdha-* is ‘undeceived’, but I prefer ‘unimpaired, intact, unbroken, unharmed’, from the root *dabh-* ‘to harm’; *á-dṛpita-*, usual solution: ‘uninfatuated’ from the root *dṛp-* ‘to rave’, but ‘uninflamed’ from the root *dṛp-* ‘to light, kindle, inflame’ (*Dhātupāṭha* 39.14) is at least as acceptable as the previous meaning; *á-nimiṣadbhiḥ*, from *á-nimiṣá-*, mfn. ‘unwinking’ from *ni+miṣ-* ‘to shut the eyelids, wink, fall asleep’. *nimiṣá-*, mfn. ‘winking’ is applied also to the stars, therefore *á-nimiṣá-* qualifies something that corresponds not to the stars, not to the heavenly guardians (and the Sun), but to their earthly counterpart, something connected with the (sacrificial) fire/altar (and/or the altar/fire itself).

1ab: I bring forward a stronger and newer vision (praise) to Agni, a hymn of Vāc to the son of strength;

1cd: Apāṃ Napāt, the beloved *hotā*, who together with the Vasus has sat down on the Earth observing the appointed time.

8ab: O Agni (cf. verse 1ab), attentive with your attentive, kind and powerful guardians (i.e., the stars), preserve us;

8cd: O *Iṣṭi* (?), but cf. 1cd), with your unimpaired, uninflamed, unwinking [something, not known yet] (however, cf. 8ab), protect our children!

¹⁸ One can see from this short summary that the hymn intertwines the three main levels of Ṛgvedic sacerdotal poetry. A later masterpiece of the same poet which uses this technique is the great Riddle hymn (1.164). See Brown 1967, Fórizs 1995, and especially Houben 2000.

Let us summarize our findings:

8ab

Agni:	attentive, kind and powerful guardians	Heaven
	belonging to or parts of Heaven (the stars)	Sun

8cd

<i>iṣṭi</i>	unimpaired, uninflamed, unwinking guardians	(the navel of the) <i>Earth</i>
can be identified with Apāṃ Napāt	belonging to or parts of <i>iṣṭi</i> (requires further analysis of the etymology and meaning of <i>iṣṭi</i> -)	can be identified with <i>iṣṭi</i>

We have arrived at the following situation: *Iṣṭi* can be identified with (a form of) Apāṃ Napāt (that sat down on the Earth). It is also clear from the context that the use of the vocative of this still ‘unknown’ word is legitimate. The use of the vocative together with the connotations of the neighbouring words is consistent with the assumption that the primary meaning of *iṣṭi*- is not an abstract notion, but some real thing. It is a new word on its own right.

On the other hand, the earlier expression *nābhā pṛthivyā bhúvanasya* together with a clear reference to the sacrifice and a form of an altar in 164.34ab and 35ab (in the same Dīrghatamas cycle of hymns) – *pṛchāmi tvā páram ántam pṛthivyāḥ pṛchāmi yátra bhúvanasya nābhiḥ* (34ab) *iyám védiḥ páro ántaḥ pṛthivyā ayám yajñó bhúvanasya nābhiḥ* (35ab) – makes it probable (or even reasonable) that this new word (that represents the visible earthly form of Apāṃ Napāt, the Child of the Waters) refers to a special form of an altar (or, at least, can be identified with it). We could arrive at these conclusions without preliminary assumptions about the semantic field of the word *iṣṭi*- or the knowledge of its etymology.

Etymology of the Word *iṣṭi-*

We have reached a point where the etymological analysis of the word is necessary. I would like to emphasize that there is no known Ṛgvedic word that fits in well with our previous analysis. There exists a possibly related word in Vedic, but it occurs only in the early Yajurveda: *iṣṭakā-* ‘brick’. It denotes almost exclusively the sacred bricks of the *agnicayana* ritual. Converse (1974: 83–85) suggested two possible Tamil candidates as its etymology: *cengal* (*cennu + kal/gal*) and *cuṭakal/suṭakal* (*cuṭalsuṭa + kal*). On account of Emeneau’s critique of Converse’s proposal, Staal (1983: I, 131–132) turned to other possibilities and offered the Avestan *iṣṭiia-* and Old Persian *iṣṭiṣ* as a starting point. Witzel (1995: 103) not only accepted this, but also enlarged the horizon significantly by arguing – on the basis of the slightly different Vedic and Iranian (Avestan and Old Persian) forms – that ‘the origin as a loan word from some unknown pre-Aryan culture should be considered’. He also made a proposal for this pre-Aryan language: that of the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC) alias the ‘Oxus culture’ of Bronze Age (ca. 2500–1500 BCE).

Since that time a considerable amount of work has been done on the BMAC language (Witzel 1999; Lubotsky 2001). An important innovation was the use of Common Tocharian as a ‘control language’. Archaeological evidence shows not only contacts between Xinjiang and the BMAC, but also the direction of transfer of both material and non-material culture: Proto-Tocharians borrowed among other things the usage of mud bricks, and the widespread use of ephedra, especially in burial ceremonies. On the other hand, it is reasonable to assume that Common Tocharian and Indo-Iranian borrowed independently from the BMAC language. On these grounds Witzel suggested a BMAC origin for the words denoting ‘brick’ (Witzel 1995: 103; 1999: 342, n. 26) and reconstructed by him as ***iṣṭ-* (Witzel 2001: 63, 74). Pinault (2002) could even show that BMAC **iṣṭ(i)-* had been integrated into the inflection of *i*-stems in Common Tocharian: **iṣṭ(i)-* ‘clay, mud

brick’, Toch. B *išcem* ‘clay’, **išcake* (*išcake* in St. Petersburg bilingual manuscript) ‘a kind of clay’, from a paradigm Toch. B **išce*, acc. sg. **iśc*, Toch. A **išäc*, borrowed into Old Turkic (Uighur) *išič*, *äšič* ‘cooking pot’. Indo-Iranian: Old Persian *išti-*, Middle Persian *xišt* ‘brick’, Late Avestan *ištiia-* ‘brick’. *zəmōištiuuu-* ‘brick of clay’, Vedic *ištakā-* fem. ‘brick’, *ištikā-*, etc. (Pinault 2006)

Now we are in a position to give a preliminary translation of verse 8:

O Agni (cf. verse 1ab), attentive with your attentive, kind and powerful guardians (i.e. the stars), preserve us; O *Iṣṭi* [brick altar], with your unimpaired, uninflamed, unwinking (guardians) [bricks], protect our children! (1.143.8.)

We have come to the conclusion that it cannot be excluded that before the innovation of Vedic *ištakā-*, *ištikā-*, an earlier form *iṣṭi-* also found its way to the Ṛgveda, or – more precisely – to a singular hymn of a great western poet, who praised an equally singular form of fire, Apāṃ Napāt, the Child of the Waters (identified with *iṣṭi*) as well as a widely known one, Agni, in the same hymn. The intertwining imagery of the hymn gave Agni (and Apāṃ Napāt and *iṣṭi*) such a unique cosmological significance that was unparalleled in the contemporary sacerdotal poetry.

I hope that my analysis of ṚV 1.143 – along with the corroborating evidence of the Apāṃ Napāt *sūkta* of the Gr̥tsamada clan (ṚV 2.35) – will reopen an old debate and some scholars may even reconsider the possibility of tracing the construction of a brick altar in the Ṛgveda. As for me, I am confident that I have found strong indirect evidence for the presence of brick in the Ṛgveda. Remarkably enough, it turned out that the most important obstacle that confused the evidence was the brick-altar itself. In other words, we have not seen the bricks for the altar.

TRANSLATION OF RV 1.143

*prá távyaśīm návyaśīm dhītīm agnáye vācō matīm sāhasaḥ sūnáve
bhare | apām nápād yó vásubhiḥ sahá priyó hótā pṛthivyām ní
ásīdad ṛtvíyaḥ || 1 ||*

1. I bring forward a stronger and newer vision (praise) to Agni, a hymn of Vāc to the son of strength; [he is] Apām Napāt, the beloved *hotā*, who together with the Vasus has sat down on the Earth observing the appointed time.

*sá jáyamānaḥ paramé víomani āvír agnír abhavan mātariśvane |
asyá krátvā samidhānáśya majmánā prá dyāvā śocīḥ pṛthiví
arocayat || 2 ||*

2. [He who is] being begotten in the highest heaven, Agni revealed himself to Mātariśvan. By the inspiration, by the majesty of the [one who] kindled [himself], radiance/flame glittered on Heaven and Earth.

*asyá tveṣā ajārā asyá bhānávaḥ susaṁdīśaḥ suprátikasya su-
dyútaḥ | bhātvakṣaso áti aktúr ná síndhavo agné rejante ásasanto
ajārāḥ || 3 ||*

3. His rays are his ceaseless incitements; the splendour of the one with a beautiful face is good to look at. Beyond the light-makers – as the anointment of Agni – the unsleeping, unageing streams begin to move.

*yám eriré bhṛgavo viśvávedasaṁ nábhā pṛthivyā bhúvanasya
majmánā | agnīm táṁ gīrbhír hinuhi svá ā dáme yá éko vásvo
váruṇo ná rájati || 4 ||*

4. Whom the Bhṛgus (have) obtained, the possessor/knower of all, [who is] on the navel of the earth and of the world in [all his] majesty; carry that fire with thy prayers to [your] own house, [that Agni] who – like Varuṇa [the lord] of the Vasus – is the [only] One who rules.

*ná yó várāya marútām iva svanáḥ séneva sṛṣṭá diviyá yáthāsániḥ |
agnír jámbhais tigitaír atti bhárvati yodhó ná sátrūn sá vánā ní
rñjate || 5 ||*

5. He who is unstoppable like the roar of the Maruts, like an arrow that is sent forward, like the thunderbolt of heaven, Agni eats with his sharp jaws, he chews, he throws down the forests as a warrior throws down his foes.

*kuvín no agnír ucáthasya vír ásad vásuḥ kuvíd vásubhiḥ kámam
āvárat | codáḥ kuvít tutujyát sātáye dhíyaḥ súcipratīkaṃ tám ayá
dhiyá grṇe || 6 ||*

6. Would Agni be fond of our hymn? Would He – the Vasu together with the Vasus – fulfil our desire? Will He, the inciter/inspirer, stir our visions that they may be successful? I praise Him whose face is bright, with this vision/prayer [of mine].

*ghṛtápratīkaṃ va ṛtásya dhūrṣádam agnīm mītrám ná samidhāná
rñjate | índhāno akró vidátheṣu dídiyac chukrávarṇām úd u no
yaṃsate dhíyam || 7 ||*

7. Being kindled it reaches your Agni, whose face shines with ghee, as a [good] friend under the yoke of *Ṛta*; the anointed in the [sacrificial] assemblies, the kindling one (Agni) stretches out / sustains our bright-colored vision.

*áprayuchann áprayuchadbhir agne sívébhir naḥ pāyúbhiḥ pāhi
śagmaíḥ | ádabdhebhir ádrpítebhir iṣṭe ániṃṣadbhiḥ pári pāhi no
jáḥ || 8 ||*

8. O Agni (Sun), attentive with your attentive, kind and powerful guardians (i.e., the stars), preserve us; O *Iṣṭi* (Altar/Apāṃ Napāt), with your unimpaired, uninflamed, unwinking [guardians], protect our children!

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