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The lexicon of the “act of accepting (*pratigraha*)”: an approach to the multilayered Vedic culture

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This joint work has its ground (and scope) in a variation-oriented reading of the Vedic sources, here applied to those which mention the act of the so-called “[gift-]acceptance” (*pratigraha*) within mechanisms for attaining and distributing the “goods of life” among all the members of a community. The most ancient occurrences are read and contrasted against the subsequent socio-ritual context where the well-known homonymous privilege and peculiar means of livelihood for Brahmins is depicted.

The tentative interpretation of the relevant passages and the consequent reconstruction of the several layers of the Vedic lexicon revolving around the verbal base *prati-grah-* might contribute to better assessing the presence of a specific Indo-Aryan cultural matrix that might have pre-existed (and co-existed with) the mainstream Vedic world, and to better understanding how later knowledge systems succeeded in creating a new all-encompassing balance.

Keywords: stratification of the ancient Vedic Culture; Indo-Aryan matrices; lexical linguistics; Ved. *pratigraha-*; gift

1. A methodological proposal

The present research is part of a broader and recent project whose focus was a lexical approach to Vedic linguistic issues.¹ Such an approach is grounded in our conviction

¹ This paper is the result of joint research fully discussed and shared by both authors. For the sake of academic requirements, Maria Piera Candotti is responsible for §§ 1; 2.1; 2.4 and Tiziana Pontillo for §§ 2.2; 2.3; 3. Maria Piera Candotti’s contribution is part of the University Research Project (University of Pisa) PRA 2018-2019 “Spazi del sacro e loro evoluzione dall’antichità a oggi.”

that a more significant reconstruction of lexical usages can only be achieved by the interaction of philology and linguistics. In particular, in the specific case of Vedic sources, it seems crucial to reconcile the use of some traditional tools available to linguistic research, such as the charting of diatopic and diachronic differences as explained in Witzel's works on the so-called "Vedic dialects", with the definite awareness that "the history of the Old Indian language – as Renou and Elizarenkova taught us – appears to be a history of styles succeeding one another, as opposed to a strict evolution of the language".² The method developed by Witzel from 1987 onward commonly distinguished regional differences through mainly phonological and morphological investigations of the relevant sources.³ In this kind of research, we are used to looking for the centre of each linguistic innovation, assuming that "certain developments spread from an original (often small) area to the surrounding territories [...]".⁴ Furthermore, we know that the innovative linguistic phenomena do "not always occur only in an Eastern direction, as one might think". For instance, the gen. fem. in *-ai* originated in a small area of North India (the Pañcāla land in Eastern Uttar Pradesh) and subsequently spread precisely eastwards (and partly southwards), without affecting the West (the Kuru area) and the "North" (Panjab and the East Gandhāra area of Pāṇini's *bhāṣā*). On the other hand, the Kuru-Pañcāla plural ending *-ās* gained prominence in Sanskrit everywhere, even though the Ṛgvedic usage of *-āsas* had reached the Eastern area, where it remained in use – e.g. in the Pāli form *-ase*.⁵ These two different movements, i.e. from west to east and from an innovative centre (Kuru-Pañcāla area) to peripheral areas, do not always develop in a predictable way.

Until now this kind of research has been almost exclusively phonologically and morphosyntactically oriented, while being targeted at reconstructing the language (and hence the history) of the Vedic *śākhās*, more than the areal diversity. On the other hand, over the last thirty years, the focus of this field of research has shifted from different languages to different cultural matrices to be identified within the same language, in a perspec-

We have tried to tackle lexical issues such as *devayāna pathin*, *brahmabhūta*, *yogakṣema*, *śaratalpa*, *setu* or the Vṛātyastoma terminology, sometimes in collaboration with e.g. Moreno Dore and Chiara Neri (see e.g. Dore & Pontillo 2013; Pontillo & Dore 2016; Candotti & Pontillo 2015; Neri & Pontillo 2015; 2016).

² Elizarenkova 1995: 1. Cf. Renou 1956: 2.

³ As noticed by Hock & Bashir (2016: 25), "There are also differences between the language described in Pāṇini's grammar," presumably an extreme northwest (near Gandhāra) variety of Indo-Aryan language, and the mainstream language, i.e. "the roughly contemporary (late) Vedic tradition", which recent contributions on Vedic language try to also account for. See e.g. Deshpande 1980; 1987; Hock 2012, where some of Pāṇini's morpho-syntactical restrictions (e.g. on agent-coreference in an infinitival construction or on the several usages of verbal tenses) are explained precisely in terms of regional difference.

⁴ In a more extensive cultural sense, as far as the so-called 'Brahmanism' is concerned, an analogous pattern of development starting from a mere "regional tradition, confined to the northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent" has recently been depicted by Bronkhorst (2017: 361).

⁵ Cf. Witzel's (1989: § 9.2 n. 281) comment: "one may think that perhaps it was indeed the famous 'first wave' of Indo-Aryan immigration into the East which had perpetuated the spread of the Ṛgvedic usage *-āsaḥ* to the East, where it remained in use, while the Kuru-Pañcāla form *-āḥ* gained prominence in the rest of the Middle Indian dialects." However, Witzel states (1989: 118): "[...] one may posit a late Vedic Eastern Central/Southern/Eastern dialect grouping which stands opposed to the earlier Kuru-Pañcāla area."

tive which may give higher significance to *śākhā* distinctions themselves. In fact, a number of scholars, including Witzel (1987; 1989; 1997), Lubotsky (2001), Bronkhorst (2007), and Samuel (2008), have postulated two different, more or less linguistically oriented, matrices for the ancient Indo-Āryan sources, albeit from different perspectives.⁶ This is perhaps why some alternative approaches have been advanced, such as Houben’s (2012: XV)⁷ proposal for reconsidering the “Vedic dialects” – as they were called by Witzel from 1987 onward – as “regional variations of a ‘sociolect’ of a language belonging to a particular sociological *stratum* of ancient Indian society”, since “‘ideology and status’ were more important than variations according to geographical localisation”. This is more than a merely terminological shift, as it entails a change in the object being scrutinised and, in consequence, in the methodology best suited to deal with it.

In considering at which linguistic level this *discontinuum* can be better perceived, i.e. where this variational distance between the two assumed cultural matrices can actually be identified, one of the possibilities we have concentrated on is the lexicon. Witzel’s studies include one clear lexical case study, i.e. the polarisation of occurrences of the verbal forms of *sprdh-* and *saṃ-yat-* respectively, which are employed in an otherwise identical formula to denote the famous contest between Devas and Asuras (Witzel 1989 §§ 5.3; 7.4),⁸ *devāś cāsurāś ca pasprdhire | aspardhanta : °saṃyattā āsan | āsuḥ* “the Gods and Asuras were in conflict / contested”. Witzel considers the former verbal base as conservative, traceable back to the Indo-Iranian or even Indo-European age by relying on comparison with cognate words such as Avestan *spərəd*, English *sport*, German (*sich*) *spurten*. The assumedly innovative lexeme *saṃ-yat-* occurs exclusively in the *Taittirīya-Saṃhitā*, which for Witzel is found in a more central area of India than the *Maitrayāṇī-Saṃhitā*, in the West, and the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, in the East,⁹ which both use *sprdh-*.

Indeed, it was precisely this kind of data that led us to consider the heuristic potential of an old linguistic theory, namely Bartoli’s four areal linguistic norms (1925: 7), one of which states that “Lateral areas preserve older linguistic features than central areas,”¹⁰ provided that the central areas are not isolated. In the case we are considering, the peripheral areas to the northwest and northeast of the Indo-Gangetic plain may have been more successful than the middle part in keeping the most ancient lexeme *sprdh-* alive for a longer time, i.e. the *Maitrayāṇī-Saṃhitā* in the West and *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* in the East did not participate in the lexical innovation that emerged in the more central area.

⁶ Two distinct cultural traditions had already been highlighted e.g. by Hillebrandt 1891; Oldenberg 1894; Kosambi 1956. For the renowned theory of different waves of Aryan immigrants, see also Hoernle 1880; Grierson 1903; 1927a; 1927b; Parpola 1983; 2012; 2015.

⁷ Houben 2012: XV.

⁸ This lexical opposition together with that of the verbal tense had already been identified by Lévi (1966: 43-44). Witzel (1989: 96-99) also noticed the intriguing lexical cases of *punarmṛtyu* and *pāpa*.

⁹ See <http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/%7Eewitzel/Local-map2.jpg>.

¹⁰ This is precisely Bonfante & Sebeok’s translation (1944: 383).

Nonetheless, not all the data can be easily classified in accordance with their diatopic variational difference or by resorting to Bartoli's principle. First of all, some sources, such as the *Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa*, *Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa* and *Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa*, contain both of the lexemes. Moreover, the so-called innovative *saṃ-yat* occurs both in the *Taittirīya-Saṃhitā* and in the *Kāṭhaka-Saṃhitā*, even though the latter is probably to be localised in the West and, of course, is more ancient than the *Taittirīya-Saṃhitā*. Therefore, this distribution cannot be explained by resorting either to the diversity of the geographical area, or to the School (Black Yajurveda Schools), seeing that the *Maitrayāṇī-Saṃhitā* employs *sprdh-*. And again, a diachronic basis is of no help, since these two old *Saṃhitās*, *Kāṭhaka-Saṃhitā* and *Maitrayāṇī-Saṃhitā*, use different lexemes. We are thus forced to postulate a more complex pattern to explain such lexical diffusion, and thus to consider an important exception to Bartoli's norm, proposed, for instance, by Vittore Pisani. With reference to Indo-European linguistic reconstruction, that scholar considered the crucial role played by poetry and so-called wisdom prestige. He admitted Bartoli's model as a pattern to explain the relationship between two linguistic phenomena occurring very far from each other, but not in "the case – which can always be postulated – when single tribes or single people move their place and consequently transfer some words and the sense they convey from an area to another even at large distance" (Pisani 1966: 352).¹¹ And this is supposed to have happened especially if the protagonists of shared beliefs were aware that they belonged to the same cultural milieu (Ruegg 2001: 738; Sferra 2003: 59-61).

Lexical diffusion (particularly in the case of specialised languages such as ritual language) follows patterns that may differ considerably from those of phonological and morphological shifts. It is quite evident that to account for lexical phenomena we have to resort to a more complex model which allows us to conjecture that single individuals or tribes also had an impact on lexical change. Thus, we also have to take into account the literary and poetic push for change and its specific features. In order to do so, it seems important to analyse the Vedic language against the background of its conceptualisation as a *Sprachbund*¹² by relying on Sanderson's (1994: 92-93) more general "substratum model", which can account for the possibility and limits of borrowings. In fact, a common background of shared categories and concepts is the matrix of many lexical borrowings and shifts; but some intentional interruptions of dialogue did take place, that is, some efforts were made intentionally to mark the distance between identity differences, i.e. to consolidate a specific identity with a marginalising effect with respect to the hegemonic culture.

We decided to focus on the lexicon within this general research framework in the hope of better assessing the existence of at least two specific Indo-Āryan cultural matrices, which might have co-existed in different geographical areas.

¹¹ This proposal was formulated for the first time in Pontillo 2017 on the basis of a different case study. See also some preliminary reflections on this hypothesis in Dore & Pontillo 2016: 10-11; Neri & Pontillo 2016: 145-146.

¹² The Indian linguistic phenomena are commonly presented as a *Sprachbund*: see e.g. Hock 1986: 498.

2. Applying the method: *pratigraha-* as a sample

2.1. Tensions in the orthodox notion of accepting gifts

Before beginning a lexical analysis of the most ancient occurrences revolving around the root *prati-grah* (as it is generally cited), it is probably best to work backwards from the end, by first stating the eventual meaning of its derivatives, in particular the nominal base *pratigraha-*, in the highly formalised contexts of *dharma* treatises. We consider these usages the conclusive point in the long history of these terms, when they convey a semi-technical and extremely specific meaning, which embodies the orthodox notion of accepting gifts. However, some traces of tensions and shifts in usage are still visible. In the orthodox brahmanical perspective, the acceptance of gifts is prototypically the brahmin’s special lore, both a duty and a privilege, expressed through the action noun *pratigraha*, in a widespread formulaic list of pairs.

Nevertheless, this function is at the same time represented as inherently dangerous and subject to extreme caution: although the action of accepting itself is not presented as problematic, the quality of the thing accepted, the quality of the donor, and the attachment of the receiver pose many problems.

- (1) MDhŚ 1.88:

*adhyāpanam adhyayanam yajanam yājanam tathā |
dānam pratigraham caiva brāhmaṇānām akalpayat ||*

“To Brahmins he assigned reciting and teaching the Veda, offering and officiating at sacrifices, and receiving and giving gifts.” (transl. Olivelle 2005)

- (2) MDhŚ 4.186-7:

*pratigrahasamartho 'pi prasaṅgam tatra varjayet |
pratigraheṇa hy asyāśu brāhmaṇaṃ tejaḥ praśāmyati ||
na dravyāṅām avijñāya vidhiṃ dharmyaṃ pratigrahe |
prājñāḥ pratigrahaṃ kuryād avasīdann api kṣudhā ||*

“Even if he is qualified to accept gifts, he should avoid becoming addicted to that practice, for by accepting gifts his Vedic energy is quickly extinguished. Without knowing the procedure prescribed by Law for accepting things, a wise man should never accept a gift even if he is racked by hunger.” (transl. Olivelle 2005)

In Vedic sources, the anxiety aroused by the action of accepting gifts is already sometimes associated even more dramatically with the image of drinking poison. For instance, in PB 19.4.1-2: *athaiṣa punaḥstomaḥ. yo bahu pratigrhya garagīr iva manyeta sa etena yajeta* “Now, this is the Punaḥstoma. He who felt as if he had swallowed poison, after having accepted many gifts, should perform this sacrifice!”

This is perhaps the most famous relevant occurrence, but we found the same lexicon and analogous sentences in several other Brāhmaṇas and Śrautasūtras in both the Black Yajurveda and the White Yajurveda traditions. For a complete survey of relevant passages see Candotti & Pontillo 2016. One is compelled to wonder what caused this anxiety, making it important to ascertain whether this form of apprehension is recorded in the most ancient Vedic sources.

2.2. The verb *prati-grah-/grabh-* in the *Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā*

The *nomen actionis pratigraha* or other nouns derived from the same verbal root do not appear in the *Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā*. However, there are 15 occurrences of the verb *prati-grah-/grabh-*, among which 8 are included in the so-called Family Books and 4 in the section which is considered the earliest *addendum* (1,51-191). The root is polymorphic, showing present forms both of class IX (*prāti grbhñāti*) and of class X (*prati grbhāyāti*).¹³ The origins of these two verbal stems might not be so distant, if the suffix *-āyá-* is in fact to be explained as the phonological reflex of **-ṇh₂-jé/-ó*, a phonic change already identified by Saussure (1879: 251-252) and later recalled by Jasanoff (2003: 123).¹⁴ Schrijver (1999) tried to distinguish the meaning of *grbhāyāti* as ‘to (actively) grab, take’ from *grbhñāti*, *grbhñīté* ‘to (passively) receive, get’. Moreover, two distinct roots are recorded in the list of roots appended to the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, i.e. in the *Dhātupāṭha*, where the class X verb *grh-* is associated with the meaning of *grahaṇa-* ‘action of seizing’ and the class IX verb *grah-* with *upādāna-* ‘the act of [humbly] taking’ with the option of using the medial forms in the meaning ‘for oneself’. Even though it seems quite difficult to maintain this difference consistently in all the occurrences, Pāṇini’s classification and Schrijver’s attempt indicate the awareness of an ambiguity in the meaning of the root in terms of agency.

The following table shows the distribution of all these verbal forms:

IMPERATIVE FORMS				PRESENT AND IMPERFECT FORMS		PERFECT AND OPTATIVE FORMS		GERUND	
2 sg. P <i>prāti-grb-hāya</i>	5×	2 pl. P <i>prāti-grbhñāta</i>	1×	<i>prāti-grbhñāti</i> / <i>prāti-grbhñanti</i> / <i>praty-agrbhñan</i>	7×	<i>prāti-jagrbyāt</i>	1×	<i>pratigrhya</i>	1×
<i>*-ṇh₂-jé/-ó</i> > OInd. <i>āyá-</i>				<i>*-neh₁- / -nh₁-</i> > OInd. <i>-nā- / -nī-</i>					

Hymns, praises and oblations are the prevailing objects of this action in the RV, and 13 times out of 15 the recipient is a God or another godlike figure. A devotee is prototypically eager to please the Gods, so that they accept or better enjoy a praise which is offered. Gods are expected to reciprocate with blessings and celestial gifts, a fact which is almost always explicitly recalled in the immediate proximity of the verbal occurrence. We have tried to indicate this by labelling such cases as showing a free agent, whose

¹³ There are seven other present verbal forms comparable with *grbhāyá-*: *mathāyá-* ‘tear off’, *pruṣāyá-* ‘drip’, *muṣāyá-* ‘steal’, *śamāyá-* ‘be active’, *śrathāyá-* ‘loosen’, *skabhāyá-* ‘fasten’, and *stabhāyá-* ‘support’. In particular, Jasanoff (2003: 123) also added *aśāyá-* ‘attain’, provided that “the contrast between *aśnóti* ‘attains’ and *aśnāti* ‘eats’ is actually secondary”, and *damāyá-* ‘subdue’, “which corresponds to the formal counterpart of a class IX present in Greek (δάμνημι).”

¹⁴ Nonetheless, Jasanoff (2003: 122-124), who concentrates on the Hittite present forms with *anna-/i-*, keeps the thematic suffix **-je/o-* (segmented from *grbhāyāti*) apart from the two ordinary homophone suffixes, used as present and denominative suffixes.

action is independent from what he has been given (++) animated). It thus seems that the etymological meaning of *prati-grah-* as denoting the action of ‘taking back’ played an important role in the construction of the semantics of the verb. Indeed, all the different occurrences of the verb share the fact that the giver – often only hinted at in our texts – uses varying degrees of intensity to plead with the agent to accept or receive the gift, because it is this self-same acceptance that bestows benefits on the donor.

A plain example is RV 4.4.15, where men beg Agni both to accept their praise and at the same time to give them protection:

- (3) *ayā te agne samīdhā vidhema prāti stómaṃ śasyámānaṃ grbhāya |*
dāhāśaso rakṣāsaḥ pāhy āsmān druho nidó mitramaho avadyāt ||
 “With this kindling stick may we prepare you, Agni: receive the praise being recited! Burn the hating demons, protect us from injury, from contempt, from blame, o you with Mitra’s might!”

We have labelled such examples as cases where the agent plays the role of “donee”, defining the concept through the following crucial features: the agent of the action of receiving is an individual animate being (mostly a God) who benevolently accepts a gift and who is simultaneously compelled to reciprocate by offering something else, such as wealth and long life. RV occurrences mostly come under this type, although there may be some in-between cases (cognate with the second type).

In fact, some occurrences seem to imply a different, more pregnant relationship between the receiver and the received object. Both receiver and received are somehow modified by the act of accepting, which in this case shows the features of assuming, absorbing and thus becoming transformed. We have labelled this agent as the beneficiary.

Suggestively, in the RV it is Indra (only seldom Soma) who alone among the deities assumes this role, in particular when it comes to Soma offerings. In a figurative passage, the breadth and vigour of Indra reinvigorated by Soma are compared to those of the sea absorbing the rivers:

- (4) RV 1.55.2ab:
só arṇavó ná nadyāḥ samudríyaḥ prāti grbhñāti visritā várīmabhiḥ |
indraḥ sómasya pītāye vṛṣāyate śánāt sá yudhmá ójasā panasyate ||
 “As an ocean’s flood¹⁵ the rivers, he (= Indra) receives the scattered one (Soma streams) with his expanses:¹⁶ Indra is eager to drink the Soma. Since ancient times he has excited admiration as a battler thanks to his strength.”

Similarly RV 3.36.2, where Indra is begged to accept the Soma which is being pressed (*prāti śú grbhāyendra piba vṛṣadhūtasya vṛṣṇaḥ*) so that he can become strong and per-

¹⁵ As is often the case in the *Rgveda*, a third level, the ritualistic level, is to be taken into account besides the natural and the divine levels: *samudra* in fact is also typically the liturgical vessel which collects the Soma streams coming from pressing.

¹⁶ From the very first verse onwards, the focus is on Indra’s divine expanses (*variman-*) capable of encompassing the whole earth, which is treated as a crucial feature of this god.

form the deeds for which he will become famous,¹⁷ the same imagery involving a vessel or vast recipient for liquid is used to illustrate this activity of gobbling up streams of Soma: he becomes a large drinking vessel (*amatra*) whose girth is such that neither the earth can completely embrace him, nor can the ocean of rivers surpass him, once he has drunk the Soma.¹⁸ These figurative occurrences are fine examples of the borderline between the second and third kind.

The third kind is much rarer in the ṚV, while it is crucial in the other Saṃhitās. We use the label “keeper” for those cases characterised by a low level of animacy (and by a scarcely active agency) where the receiver (mostly an object, rarely a human being, in the somehow highly artificial context of the sacrifice) principally acts as a container or guardian of something for a limited span of time. No transformation of the keeper is at stake; at most transformation may concern what is given to be kept safe and, outside the ṚV, it assumes definite negative traits. The final beneficiary of what is safeguarded is someone else. For example, in another figurative example such as ṚV 7.101.3, a mother-to-be accepts the semen (called “milk”) of her partner (*pitúḥ páyah prāti grbhñāti mātā*). Both the child and his father somehow benefit from the transformation of the seminal fluid (*téna pitā vardhate téna putráḥ*), respectively obtaining life and afterlife, while the woman is merely a convenient vessel for accepting the semen so that the transformation itself can come about.

This image is found in a cryptic hymn dedicated to Parjanya, the rain cloud, assimilated to a cow fecundated by the celestial fire. Here we may also assume that the rain cloud simply acts as a vessel for celestial waters, and that the earth (and not the cloud) benefits from the rain produced by the lightning. This case seems quite rare in the ṚV, while we will see that it is quite frequent in the AV.

The lexical categorisation of all the ṚV occurrences is given below:

¹⁷ The next strophe explicitly states that by drinking again the offered Soma, as in the years of old, Indra becomes newly worth of praise.

¹⁸ ṚV 3.36.4a and 6c.

	Agent	Object	R	T	TC	Quotation	Notes
Donee (++ animate)	host ¹⁹	treasure ²⁰	X treasure			RV 1.125.1	
	Gods	Aśvamedha horse ²¹				RV 1.162.15	
	Goddess Aditi	praise ²²	X Brahman			RV 5.42.2	
	Gandharvas	buffalo ²³	X juice in Soma plants			RV 9.113.3	
	God Indra	sacrificial offering ²⁴	X			RV 10.116.7	
In-between examples	God Agni	wood, praise ²⁵	X protection	X		RV 4.4.15	Agni is both sacrificial fire and God
	Divine Chariot	sacrificial offering ²⁶	X	X		RV 6.47.28	The <i>ratha</i> is both an implement and a divinised chariot
Beneficiary (+ animate)	King Soma	oblations ²⁷				RV 1.91.4	
	God Indra	Soma		X		RV 3.36.2	
	God Indra	Soma		X		RV 1.55.2	
In-between examples	water expanse ²⁸	rivers ²⁹			X	RV 1.55.2	Figurative
Keeper (– animate)	wife	husband’s semen			X	RV 7.101.3	Figurative
	Parjanya	celestial fire			X		
Doubtful	Aṅgiras	Sāman (?)		X	X	RV 10.62.1-4	4×

R = Reciprocation

T = Transformation

TC = Temporary Custody

¹⁹ *cikitvān* lit. “considerate, earnest, careful” [host].

²⁰ *rātna-*. In fact in RV 1.125.1 (*prātā rātnam prātaritvā dadhāti tāṃ cikitvān pratigrhāyā nī dhatte*), both Geldner (1951) and by Jamison & Brereton (2014) interpret the verb *pratigrah-* as denoting the action of duly receiving an early-coming (*prātaritvan*) guest. Nonetheless, in Candotti & Pontillo 2016: 48-51, on the basis of the other Vedic occurrences of *prātaritvan*, we assumed a different object of the verb *pratigrah-* (*rātnam* instead of *tām*), by translating the half-verse as follows: “He who comes in the early-morning supplies a treasure: the one who is attentive to him, after receiving [it = the treasure], supplies himself with it.”

²¹ *iṣṭá-*.

²² *stóma-*.

²³ *mahiṣá-*.

²⁴ *havis-*.

²⁵ *samidh-*, *stóma-*.

²⁶ *havyá-*.

²⁷ *havyá-*.

²⁸ *arṇavá-*, *samudriya-*.

²⁹ *nádī-*.

Some crucial features stand out from our survey, namely: a preference for the first kind of usage of the verb in the RV in a definitely classical *do ut des* context, and a specialisation of the second kind for the figures of Indra and Soma. Moreover, the lack of anxiety and negativity in the contexts where the verb occurs is a definite contrastive feature with the sources we will tackle later on.

2.3. Accepting human beings?

We have left a doubtful case, RV 10.62.1-4, in our table, which incidentally may well also be one of the most interesting. The agents of the action denoted by the imperative *prāti grbhñāta*,³⁰ namely the Aṅgirasas, are not common officiants who receive a gift at the end of a sacrificial performance, nor can they indisputably be assimilated to divine figures who are praised, since their immortality is mentioned as an achievement rather than as a natural status obtained from birth. The status of what they accept is subject to doubt: the reading proposed here is that they accept the Mānava hymn bestowed on them by Mānava Nābhānediṣṭha in order to successfully accomplish the sacrifice in which they are engaged. We must postpone a full discussion of the data concerning the reading of this passage, which is generally considered as imploring the Aṅgirasas to accept Mānava, a man.³¹ This same meaning of an act of accepting, welcoming a man has been suggested in few other passages in Vedic literature. One of them is the aforementioned RV 1.125.1, for which (see above, n. 20) we have already proposed another interpretation.

The second possible match would be with the later passage of BŚS 18.24 (*vrātyastomena yakṣyamāṇo bhavati. te rājani vā brāhmaṇe vā pratigraham icchante māsāya vartave vā*), which Hauer (1927: 105-106), Falk (1986: 28), and Kashikar (2003: 1207) interpreted as a text containing a description of people who want to find favour (*pratigraha*) with a prince or a *brāhmaṇa*. However, in Candotti & Pontillo (2015: 200-205), we advanced the hypothesis that it dealt rather with a horde seeking a chief who is available to play the role of the immobile core of their aggressive action and the trustworthy keeper and dispenser of their goods.³² These two occurrences in which a human being is

³⁰ RV 10.62.1: *yé yajñēna dākṣiṇayā sāmaktā indrasya sakhyām amṛtatvām ānaśā | tébhyo bhadrām aṅgirasō vo astu* “Let there be good fortune for you, o Aṅgirasas, who, anointed, have attained the fellowship with Indra, i.e. immortality by means of *yajña* and *dakṣiṇā*! Receive the Mānava, o you of good wisdom!” This is the only occurrence of an imperative of the ninth class in the RV.

³¹ In fact, the proper name Manu also occurs in verse 8 of this hymn, where Manu is supposed to be the poet’s patron. All the final four verses are interpreted as a *dānastuti* of this patron. Manu Sāvarnya’s generosity is extolled, as it is said that his *dākṣiṇā* “spreads out like a river” (RV 10.62.9cd: *sāvarnyāsya dākṣiṇā vi sindhur iva paprathe*). In accordance with Jamison & Brereton (2014: 1479), “it seems more likely that in this refrain the poet is commending his patron and / or his family to the protection of the Aṅgirasas.” By contrast, since the Anukramaṇī attributes this hymn to another Mānava, namely Mānava Nābhānediṣṭha, Geldner added “me”, interpreted the refrain as “receive me, the descendant of Manu!”, and referred it to the story of the homonymous protagonist of a story told in AB 5.14.

³² Thus, we proposed the following translation of the above-mentioned sentence: “[When somebody] is going to perform the *vrātyastoma*, they seek somebody who plays the function of receiving on their behalf / to their benefit in a prince or in a *brāhmaṇa*, either for a month or for a (?) season.”

the object of the acceptance can be isolated in the context of Vedic literature, and an alternative reading is possible in both cases. The same can also be found in our passage. It will suffice here to point out the AB passage already recalled by Geldner, which tells the story of Nābhānediṣṭha, a *brahmacārin* and one of Manu’s sons, who had been excluded from his father’s inheritance by his brothers. Manu himself suggested that he should go to the Aṅgirasas, who were performing a sacrificial session, to help them in accomplishing this performance successfully and to receive their cattle as a sacrificial reward. The crucial sentence in the AB 5.14 version is the following:

aṅgirasō vā ime svargāya lokāya satram āsate te śaṣṭham śaṣṭham evāhar āgatya muhyanti. tān ete sūkte śaṣṭhe ’hani śamsaya. teṣāṃ yat sahasraṃ satrapariveśaṇaṃ tat te svar yaṃto dāsyantīti.

“Over there, they are the Aṅgirasas, who are seated for a Sattrā which is aimed at attaining Heaven. They fall in confusion whenever they reach the sixth day. Make them recite these two hymns on the sixth day! When they go to Heaven, they will give you the thousand [of cows] which is what is distributed in a Sattrā.”

Nābhānediṣṭha approached them uttering the RV refrain at issue: *prāti grbhñita mānavāṃ sumedhasaḥ*. The Aṅgirasas accepted Mānava’s offer of help and, at the end of the sacrifice, the Aṅgirasas gave him a thousand cows. The most important details in the AB story are indeed the two hymns which Manu’s descendant teaches to the Aṅgirasas.

Oldenberg (1912: 269), Keith (1920: 236) and Jamison & Brereton (2014: 1478-9) consider the Brāhmaṇa story as secondary and, like many other cases, based on misunderstanding. Nevertheless, this story cannot be easily neglected, at least because it also occurs in an earlier text, the TS, where once again the pivotal contribution given by Mānava is something which has to be recited, namely a formula:

TS 3.1.9.4-5:

āṅgirasa ime sattrām āsate te. suvargāṃ lokāṃ nā prā jānanti tēbhya idāṃ brāhmaṇaṃ brūhi te suvargāṃ lokāṃ yānto yā eṣāṃ paśāvas tāṃs te dāsyantīti.

“Those are the Aṅgirasas, who are seated for a Sattrā. They do not know how to attain Heaven. Thus, tell the relevant formula to them! When they go to Heaven, they will give you their cattle.”

Therefore we postulate that *mānavā* in RV 10.62 originally denoted a hymn specifically “propagated, i.e. enunciated for the first time” by Manu in accordance with Pāṇini’s rule A 4.3.101 *tena proktam*, i.e. in the sense of *manunā proktam*, and thus the relevant refrain might mean “Receive the Mānava hymn (the hymn of Manu), o you of sound wisdom!”

As a consequence, we see no point in proposing the meaning of accepting a man under one’s protection, which – if our assumption on RV 1.125.1 is correct – is not included in any other occurrence of the verb *pratigrah-* in the RV, and which moreover is rarely, if ever, attested in later prose. The TS and especially AB (note that the fifth

book should have been composed in a lateral area, namely “in the west: in the Panjab, even west of the Sarasvatī” according to Witzel 1997: 322) might have been quite conservative in resurfacing at least a part of the sense alluded to in RV 10.62. In fact, once again we encounter some officiants and future Gods who receive something which is recited, that is to say praise, and this fact is perfectly tuned to our diagram of the Objects and Recipients that combine with this verb. Nevertheless, while hymns are generally the prerogative of full-fledged divinities, here they are part of the divinisation process itself, carried out by means of the sacrifice.

The *dakṣiṇā*, the later prototypical object of the act of accepting, is mentioned twice in this hymn, but there is no officiant who has to be remunerated in order to bring the sacrifice to its perfect conclusion. On the contrary, the beneficiary of the final “inheritance” of Aṅgirasas is Mānava – a man – while the recipients of the homonymous Mānava – which in our opinion is indeed a Hymn – play the role of magnanimous gift-givers, exactly like the poet’s patron, who is mentioned at the end of the hymn.

Since both TS and AB emphasise that the context is that of a *sattra*, it follows that the officiants are also sacrificers and that the final gift cannot be a classical *dakṣiṇā*, but rather a final distribution of goods contributed by all the participants at the end of a sacrifice. We thus assume that Manava’s contribution is the hymn itself. If this interpretation is correct, our passage fits well in the second type, since the divinisation of Aṅgirasas comes about through the completion of the sacrifice and the hymns they have accepted.

2.4. The verb *prati-grah-/grah-* and the noun *pratigrahitṛ* in the *Śaunakīya-Atharvaveda-Saṃhitā*

There are twice as many occurrences (28) in this work as in the *Rgveda*, with a prevalence of imperative (*prātigrbhāyata* imp. 2nd p. pl.) and present or imperfect forms, along with some interesting nominal forms. Interestingly, the ŚS shows an expansion of the ninth class, which also covers some forms of the imperative, albeit with no appreciable difference from the tenth class.

Imperative forms		Present/imperfect & perfect forms		Optative forms		Gerund, participle and primary derivative nouns	
2 sg. P <i>prāti-grbhāya</i>	4×	1 sg. pres. P <i>prāti-grhṇāmi</i>	4×			<i>pratigr̥hya</i>	1×
2 sg. P <i>prātigr̥hṇāhi</i> <i>prāti grbhāhi</i> <i>prāti grhāna</i>	3×	3 sg. pres. P <i>prāti-grbhṇāti</i>	3×	3 sg P <i>prātigr̥hṇīyāt</i>	2×	<i>pratigr̥hṇāt-</i>	1×
2 pl. P <i>prātigr̥bhāyata</i>	1×	3 sg. impf. P <i>prātyagr̥hṇāt</i>	1×			<i>pratigr̥hṭā-</i>	1×

3 sg. P <i>prátigrhñātu</i>	1×	3 sg. impf. P <i>prátyagrbhñan</i>	2×			<i>pratigrahūtī</i>	1×
3 pl. P <i>prátigrhñāntu</i>	2×	1 sg. pf. P <i>prátijagraha</i>	1×				

The majority of passages refer to recipients who are not beneficiaries. Gods as recipients are relatively rare – although 9 times the recipient is a man – but there are even 6 inanimate recipients, outside purely figurative contexts, such as in ŚS 11.1.8; 18, where the (sacrificial) skin laid on the ground is accepted by the earth, so to speak, and rice-grains are poured into the water so that the pot holding the water is said to accept these grains.

- (5) *iyāṃ mahī prāti grhñātu cárma pṛthivī devī sumanasyámānā | átha gachema sukṛtásya lokám ||*
 “Let this great earth, the divine broad earth accept the [sacrificial] skin with auspicious mind: then, may we go to the world of what is well done!”
 [...] *bráhmaṇā śuddhá utá pūtá ghrténa sómasyāṃśávas taṇdulá yajñiyā imé | apáh prá víśa-ta prāti grhñātu vaś carúr imám paktvá sukṛtām eta lokám ||*
 “Cleansed with a formula and purified with ghee, shoots of Soma are these rice-grains ready to be sacrificed: may you enter waters, may this pot accept you! After cooking this, you could go to the world of the well-doers.”

As we have said, the recipient is a man on numerous occasions. Such occurrences are particularly difficult to interpret, since the distinction between beneficiary and keeper is less obvious than in the scanty examples in the RV. Nevertheless, the heading “beneficiary” records all cases where a man, in the sacrificial context, is considered to be divinised, “acts as Indra”, as is once explicitly stated (ŚS 19.37.2 *indriyāya ... karmaṇe*). Yet the transformation, which is a crucial feature of this category, is rarely spelt out by the texts and seems rather to be implied by the dynamics of the sacrifice itself. The keeper on the other hand accepts something for a limited time and then transfers it (or even tries to get rid of what he has received).

In the following passage, for example, he seems to act more as a guardian, since he is made responsible for guarding all the treasures which can be collected within the enclosure he has been given.

- (6) ŚS 9.3.15; 16cd:
antarā dyāṃ ca pṛthivīm ca yád vyácas téna śálām³³ prāti grhñāmi ta imám | yád antárikṣaṃ rájaso vimānaṃ tát kṛṇve ’hám udáram śevadhíbyah | téna śálām prāti grhñāmi tásmāi ||

³³ According to Whitney (1905: 527), *śálā* is a house, but the hypothesis of an enclosure as a point for a shared collection of goods seems to be fostered by the following image of a belly for treasures (*udáram śevadhíbyah*).

“For you I accept this enclosure through that which is the expanse between heaven and earth. The intermediate space which goes through the sphere of air, I make it a belly for treasures. Through this I accept the enclosure.”

[...]

viśvānnāṃ bibhratī śāle mā hiṃsīḥ pratigrhṇatāḥ |

“O enclosure which holds all kinds of food, do not injure them who accept you!”

Thus, the act of accepting this enclosure seems to match with a specific appointment or to hint at a sort of legitimation of a leader who is responsible for all the shared goods, since the common life of the community seems to depend on this.

We find here the first occurrences of a modality of accepting through a medium, in this case the atmosphere, which will be more common in the Yajurveda sources, in contexts which even include the transference of a brahminicide. A comparable expression of anxiety about the consequence of the act of accepting a gift (“May I not lose my life!”) occurs in that which is – to the best of our knowledge – the most ancient occurrence (ŚS 3.29.7-8) of a renowned formula, which is repeated every time an officiant has to accept a gift.³⁴

(7a) *kā idāṃ kāsmā adāt kāmaḥ kāmāyādāt |*
kāmo dātā kāmaḥ pratigrahītā kāmaḥ samudrām ā viveśa |
kāmena tvā prāti grhṇāmi kāmaitāt te ||

“Who has given here to whom? Desire has given to Desire. Desire is he who donates. Desire is he who accepts. Desire entered into the Samudra (the great vessel of the Soma). Through the (mediation of) Desire I accept you. This is yours, o Desire.”

This formula is followed by an explicit expression of anxiety (*may I not lose...*) together with the device of the transference of the gift, of which we will read more in the following pages. Here the Earth becomes a keeper, able to neutralise the potential negativity of the act of accepting the due part of the *iṣṭāpūrta*:

(7b) *bhūmiḥ tvā prāti grhṇātv antārikṣam idāṃ mahāt |*
māhāṃ prāṇéna mātmanā mā prajāyā pratigrhya ví rādhiṣi ||

“May earth accept you, this great atmosphere! May I not lose my life, or my self, or my offspring, because I have accepted!”

The relevant occurrences are organised in the list below:

³⁴ This formula occurs in the earliest Yajurveda Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas and Śrautasūtras and clearly shows that a further step in the direction of distinct roles played by patron and officiant in the sacrificial arena has already been taken.

	Agent	Object	R	T	Tc	Quotation	Notes
DONEY	God Agni Jātavedas	oblations	X			ŚS 3.10.6	
	Goddess Uṣas	oblations	X			ŚS 3.10.13	
	Gods	breath of the sacrificial victim	X			ŚS 2.34.5	Gods accept the sacrificial victim in heaven
	God Indra	devotion, oblations	X			ŚS 19.42.3	
In-between examples	God Agni Jātavedas	wood	X protection	X		ŚS 5.29.14-15	+ instrumental ³⁵
	chariot	oblations	X	X		ŚS 6.125.3	
	man (sacrificial context) like Indra	? amulet/brightness		X	X	ŚS 19.37.2	heroism
REFORMED BENEFICIARY	Aṅgirasas as offici-ants	<i>dakṣiṇā</i>		X		ŚS 20.135.6-10	4× The <i>dakṣiṇā</i> , if accepted, transforms the A. into officiants
KEEPER	<i>kāma</i>	gift/offering			X	ŚS 3.29.7-8	4× anxiety - accepting through a medium
	a man (sacrificial context)	gifts			X	ŚS 6.71.1	anxiety - accepting through a medium
	man	enclosure			X	ŚS 9.3.9; 15; 16	3× anxiety - accepting through a medium
	brahmin	1 goat, 5 rice dishes			X	ŚS 9.5.12	end-beneficiary is the <i>yajamāna</i>
	cardinal points	1 goat, 5 rice dishes			X	ŚS 9.5.37	medium for the brahmin
	Earth	sacrificial skin			X	ŚS 11.1.8	end-beneficiary is the <i>yajamāna</i>
	Earth	water jar			X	ŚS 11.1.14	
	pot	Soma filaments			X	ŚS 11.1.18	
	Ratham̐tara hymn	sun light				ŚS 13.3.11	the two hymns are like a cuirass
Doubtful	cow	sacrifice		X		ŚS 10.10.25	

R = Reciprocation

T = Transformation

TC = Temporary Custody

³⁵ *prātigrhñāhy arcīṣā* is the only occurrence where, also thanks to the instrumental case, the meaning of ‘actively grab’ seems hardly avoidable.

On the basis of this classification, we can see that the *Atharvaveda* may have been more conservative than the *R̥gveda* in maintaining the sense of receiving for the verb *prati-gra(b)h-* in contexts where the agent is not a beneficiary of the goods he/she/it takes hold of, or where there is merely provisional or temporary possession. Moreover, such occurrences are characterised by frequent expressions of anxiety connected with the act of accepting itself, anxiety which entails the resolve not to retain possession of what is given.

To this general picture we must add some later passages of the *Śaunakīya-Atharvaveda*, such as ŚS 20.135.6-10, where the verb *pratigrah-* is combined with the term *dakṣiṇā*, and this certainly seems to be the orthodox institution with which we are familiar, i.e. the sacrificial fee due to the officiant which constitutes the complete achievement of the sacrifice.

- (8) *ādityā ha jaritar āṅgirebhyo dakṣiṇām anāyan |*
tām ha jaritaḥ pratyāyaṃs tām ú ha jaritaḥ pratyāyan ||6||
tām ha jaritar naḥ pratyagr̥bhṇaṃs tām ú ha jaritar naḥ pratyagr̥bhṇaḥ | [...] ||7||³⁶
dēvā dadatv āsuram̐ tād vo astu sūcetanam |
yúṣmām astu dīve dīve praty éva gr̥bhāyata ||10||
 “O Singer, the sons of Aditi had brought the *dakṣiṇā* to Aṅgirasas. O Singer, indeed they received (lit. went to meet) it; indeed they received it.
 O Singer, indeed they accepted it from us. O Singer, they indeed accepted it from us. [...] Let Gods give gifts! Let this wealth, which is worthy of Asuras, be significant for you! May it be yours! Day by day may you accept [it] indeed!”

It is clear that we could consider this text as substantially unintelligible. The text as it stands is obscure and the parallel versions which are available are not of help. In the Khila version (RVKh 5.20.1-2) there are a couple of additional negations and some other variant readings in the last hemistich:

- (9) *ādityā ha jaritar āṅgirebhyo dakṣiṇām anayan | tām ha jaritar na praty āyan tām u ha jaritaḥ pratyāyan || tām ha jaritar na praty agr̥bhṇān tām u ha jaritaḥ praty agr̥bhṇān | [...]*
 “O singer, the sons of Aditi had taken sacrificial *dakṣiṇā* to Aṅgirasas. O singer, indeed they did not receive it. O singer, indeed they received it. O singer, indeed they did not accept it. O singer, indeed they accepted it.”³⁷

Even though these variations show that the text in fact appeared problematic even to ancient exegetes, they do not improve the overall comprehension of the passage. The context might be explained through AB 6.35, where almost the same words occur within a complex story, even though it is possible that the Brāhmaṇa might have completely invented an almost rational *a posteriori* explanation for the traditional verses. In brief, the Ādityas asked the Aṅgirasas to officiate at one of their sacrifices. As a fee they gave

³⁶ As far as ŚS 20.135.7cd is concerned, see below.

³⁷ Cf. Bhise (1995: 223), who translates the two verbal forms of *prati-i-* as “to return” and the two forms derived from *prati-grah-* as “to grasp”.

the Āngirases the whole earth full of *dakṣiṇās* (*imām pṛthivīm pūrṇām dakṣiṇānām adaduh*), but since, after it was received, it (the earth) continued to distress them (*tān iyam pratigrhītātapat*), they refused it (*tām nyavrñjan*). Then, the Ādityas provided them with a second *dakṣiṇā*, namely a white horse, which was in fact the Puruṣa in the solar circle, and which the Āngirases eventually accepted.

- (10) *tām ha jaritar na praty agrbhñann iti. na hi ta imām pratyagrbhñams tam u ha jaritaḥ praty agrbhñann iti. prati hi te 'mum agrbhñann [...]*
 “O Singer, they indeed did not accept this (f., i.e. the earth), they indeed did not accept that (f.). In fact, they accepted this (m., i.e. the white horse), they accepted this (m).”³⁸

This imaginative story could indeed be a sort of aetiology for a danger that is still textually connected to the action conveyed by the verb *pratigrah-*, but no longer consistent with the whole sacrificial system. On the other hand, the most ancient versions of the passage also seem to promote the mandatory character of the *dakṣiṇā* by means of a conclusive, but unfortunately corrupted hemistich:

- (11) ŚS 20.135.7cd: *āhā netarasam na vi cetānāni yajñā nētarasam na pūrogāvamaḥ.*

Weber (1865: 306) proposed the emendation of *netarasam* (2×) with *ned asann*, so that the meaning of the whole hemistich might reasonably have been: “Without this (i.e. without the Sun), the days are undistinguished, and sacrifices without it (i.e. the *dakṣiṇā*) are destitute of that which leads them.”³⁹ The matching AB passage also ends with an explanation as to why the *dakṣiṇā* is called a *purogavī*, so that any sacrifice bereft of a *dakṣiṇā* can be compared to a chariot without an animal drawing it.

Patyal (1975: 421) discusses two readings of the ŚS version, namely *jaritar na* (which also matches RVKh 5.20.1, AB 6.35.8, ŚSS 12.19.1 – see below) and *jaritar naḥ*, the basis for the following two interpretations: “O singer, they (the Āngirases) did not accept [this earth as *Dakṣiṇā*]” / “they did accept [this earth] belonging to us [as *Dakṣiṇā*]”, and he finally maintains that the latter reading goes against the context of the whole Ākhyāna, even though the former one is the *lectio facilior*. By contrast, we prefer to keep the other variant reading, which is *lectio difficilior*, and which may refer rather to the *dakṣiṇā* in general, so that the Ādityas’ success might precisely consist in the fact that their rivals, i.e. the Āngirases, accepted their *dakṣiṇā* and played the role of officiants for them.

³⁸ Keith 1920 translates the verbal forms of *prati-i-* as ‘to approach’ and the forms derived from *prati-grah-* as ‘to accept’. Cf. also ŚSS 12.19.1 where the word *aśva* specifies the object of the verb *nī-*, i.e. *dakṣiṇā* at the beginning of the analysed passage: *ādityā ha jaritar aṅgirobyho 'śvam dakṣiṇām anayan. tām ha jaritar na pratyāyams tām u ha jaritaḥ praty āyann. tām ha jaritar na praty agrbhñams tām u ha jaritaḥ praty agrbhñann*. The GB version (2.6.14) adds a negative prefix to *dakṣiṇā* at the beginning: *ādityā ha jaritar aṅgirobyho adakṣiṇām anayan*.

³⁹ The last hemistich of the mentioned RVKh passage (2cd) also seems to be corrupted: *ahā neta sann avicetanāni yajñā neta sann apurogavāsaḥ*, Bhise translates it in the following manner: “Do not go when the days are dark. Do not go to sacrifices which are without leader.”

3. A bridge between the *Ṛgveda* and the *Atharvaveda*

This now leads us to the question of how to interpret the *Atharvaveda* data. Should we consider this work as somehow innovating, and for some reason fostering a different usage of the verb *prati-gra(b)h-* and associated nominal forms, which may be summarised as a shift from a notion of accepting to one of receiving, harbouring and even sustaining? Or is the *Atharvaveda* here bringing older usages of the term back to the surface in an attempt to include an older, hitherto marginalised, cultural stratum? The Vedas of the Yajus are the most suitable for research in this direction, also because one of their functions was to collect non-Ṛgvedic material, which, also in the context of other inquiries, has been shown to be involved in the process of re-styling of marginal Vedic material (Witzel 1989: § 4.2.2). Our analysis here is limited to the *Taittirīya-Saṃhitā*, but a broader analysis encompassing the other Yajurveda-Saṃhitās is needed to complete the picture.

Overall, we can say that there are 42 occurrences of the verb *pratigra(b)h-* in this Saṃhitā, often in co-occurrence with the simple verbal form *grhṇāmi* (and once with *anugrḥṇāmi*). It must nevertheless be noted that most of the relevant TS metric material does not really belong to this Saṃhitā, as it is of Ṛgvedic origin and sometimes shared by the *Atharvaveda*, such as TS 1.2.14.6 = ṚV 4.4.15; TS 4.6.6.6 = ṚV 6.47.28 = PS 15.11.7⁴⁰ = AVŚ 6.125.3. The nominal forms are very rare, and only two occurrences (*pratigrāhin-/pratigrhin*) have been recorded in the same context, where the verbal function again seems to prevail over the nominal (TS 2.3.12.2), while there is a certain number of gerunds, gerundives and participles – all with a definite verbal meaning.

But far more significant are a number of occurrences concerning an act of accepting/receiving where the beneficiary is an animate being (either a man who generally plays the role of officiant, or Gods who act as active agents in the sacrificial arena), the act itself is heavily loaded with negative traits, and the donated object has to be handled with extreme ritual caution.⁴¹ As we have already outlined, such examples fall under the category of keeper, whose concrete realisation nevertheless shows some clear-cut differences with the ŚS. The Earth, as quoted in TS 2.5.1.2-6, is requested by Indra to accept part of his brahmanicide of Viśvarūpa. The Earth accepts, but asks for a boon in exchange to compensate for the damage she will suffer. The same role may be played by entities with more definite individual features, as happens in all cases where a deity is requested

⁴⁰ For this PS occurrence and some other matching Yajurveda passages, see Lelli (2015: 142).

⁴¹ This can easily be shown by the vivid warning expressed in the very general description of the prototypical *sattra*, i.e. the twelve day (or longer) “session” which has no separate officiants, but rather all patrons/officiants, i.e. (generally 16) *yajamānas* who undertake and perform the sacrifice for their joint benefit. According to TS 7.2.10.2-4, the act of accepting in a *sattra* is assimilated to the act of eating a corpse. Such an anxious context seems to be well-tuned to the definition of *sattra-* as *ātmādakṣiṇa-* “where the *dakṣiṇā* is oneself” (e.g., TS 7.4.9; KB 15.1.23) and to the assumption of self-immolation in the sacrificial fire as a part of the earliest pattern of *sattra*, advanced by Falk (1986: 37-40). It is instead hardly compatible with Bronkhorst’s (2016: 159-161) hypothesis according which *sattra* takes place as a way of “extracting donations from sponsors”, also when they “had lost, or were losing, their positions as priests in a primary religion, and were reinventing themselves, mainly by turning inward”. The issue of the historical role of *sattra* is still open and needs further research on our part.

to take the gift on someone else’s behalf.⁴² As compared to the picture that emerges in the RV, the role of Gods and officiants is evidently different in these later Vedic Texts: the status of the different actors at play in the sacrificial scene is much more fluid, and the sacrificial act includes different movements towards the divine or the demonic end of the spectrum. In fact, such a picture might better match what we have seen in the ŚS.

Here we will focus on only one significant example, also showing how the textual material was re-elaborated by later texts in a century-long process of “domestication” of heterodox material. The background is a mythological justification of the reason why someone who accepts a horse in the context of a sacrifice needs a purification by means of a specific offering.

- (12) TS 2.3.12.1-2: *prajāpatiḥ vāruṇāyāśvam anayat. śa svām devātām ārchat. śa pāry adīryata. śa etām vāruṇam cātuṣkapālam apaśyat. tam nīr avapat. tāto vai śa varuṇapāśād amucyata. vāruṇo vā etām grhṇāti yō ’śvam pratigrhṇāti. yāvato ’śvān pratigrhṇīyāt tāvato vāruṇān cātuṣkapālān nīr vapat. vāruṇam evā svēna bhāgadheyēnōpa dhāvati. śa evānam varuṇapāśān muñcati.*

“Prajāpati led a horse to Varuṇa, he (P.) targeted his divinity, he was struck by disease / became dropsical; he saw this [offering] to Varuṇa on four potsherds. He offered it. Therefore, he was indeed released from Varuṇa’s noose. Varuṇa seizes him who accepts the horse. As many horses as he accepts, so many [offerings] on four potsherds to Varuṇa he should offer; he actually resorts to Varuṇa with his share; verily he frees him from Varuṇa’s noose.”

Thus, besides the due caution in the act of accepting, our text also teaches how to handle the contamination entailed in at least some forms, such as accepting in the most competitive or aggressive contexts. The mythical context – that of Prajāpati targeting the divinity of Varuṇa through (the gift of) a horse – seems to place the text against a “satrix”, competitive background or at least clearly excludes the possibility that the person who receives (*prati-grah-*) one, two or more horses etc. can be the officiant who receives a *dakṣiṇā* in the classic Śrauta sacrifice context. The agent of the action denoted by the verb *prati-grah-* is in fact the one who takes the final purificatory bath (*avabhṛtha*), the typical final mandatory ritual that marks the end of the *dīkṣita* condition for the *yajamāna*.⁴³ Yet the purificatory *iṣṭi* is enjoined more generally for anyone accepting a horse, an ambiguity that will later be exploited when the śrauta reform fosters the equation *pratigraha* = *dakṣiṇā*.

Nevertheless, given what has already been said, it is far from surprising that the switch in the meaning of *pratigraha* we saw at the beginning perfectly achieved in the MDhŚ may have needed some fine tuning to fit with the ‘reformed’ rite with a clear division between the patron of the sacrifice and the officiating priest.

⁴² See TS 2.6.8.6, where Bṛhaspati cautiously handles the dangerous “part of Rudra” through other divinities (Savitṛ’s impulse, the arms of the two Aśvins, Pūṣan’s hands and Agni’s mouth).

⁴³ *apò ’vabhṛthām avāiti* “He enters the waters for the final purificatory bath” (TS 2.3.12; BŚS 13.33). The final bath is not mentioned in the parallel passages MS II 3, 3 and KS 12.6.

Thus, when later on we find:

a) the same formula *devásya tvā savitūḥ prasavè* used in association with the well-known formula (7a) and explicitly allotted to the moment when the *dakṣiṇā* is received

- (13) TĀ 3.10.1: *devásya tvā savitūḥ prasavè 'śvinor bāhūbhyāṃ pūṣṇó hástābhyāṃ prátiḡrḥṇāmi. rājā tvā váruṇo nayatu devi dakṣiṇè 'gnāye hiraṇyam tenāmṛtatvam aśyām vayo dātre máyo máhyam astu pratigrāhitre. ká idám kásmā adāt. kāmāḥ kāmāya kāmo dātā kāmāḥ pratigrhūtā kāmāṃ samudrām āviśa. kāmēna tvā práti ḡrḥṇāmi kāmaitāt te eṣā te kāma dakṣiṇā. uttānás tvā 'ngirasah pratigrhṇātu.*

“At the impulse of God Savitṛ, with the arms of the Ásvins, with the hands of Pūṣan I receive you. King Varuṇa lead you, o divine *dakṣiṇā*. Gold to Agni! With this I could get *amṛtatvam*. Vigour to the giver! Be refreshing for me who is the receiver. Who gave this to whom? Desire has given to Desire. Desire is the giver, Desire is the recipient, enter [O Soma] the Samudra (the great vessel of the Soma), which is Desire. Through Desire I receive you, O Desire, this is for you! Yours, O Desire, is the *dakṣiṇā*. Let Ut-tāna of the Aṅgiras receive you!”

b) and also the same Varuṇeṣṭi again dedicated to the reception of the *dakṣiṇā*,

we understand that the domestication process might have been a complex one requiring a series of adjustments, some of which may still have left some traces in our texts. An ancient *Śrautasūtra* preserves the injunction that the one who receives in a ritual context should expiate and distribute (*nir-vap-*) at least part of what he has received.

- (14) BŚS 13.33: *yāvato 'śvā pratigrḥṇīyāt tavato vāruṇāñ catuṣkapālān nirvaped ekātiriktānñ iti.*

“As many horses as he accepts, so many (offerings) to Varuṇa should he offer.”⁴⁴

But the injunction to accomplish a purifying rite because one has accepted a *dakṣiṇā* is bewildering in the reformed context, and the text commentators struggle to fit it into well-established schemes. A particularly significant passage (highlighted and used by Kashikar 2003 in support of his translation) appears in JMS 3.4.30-31, where Śabara proposes to interpret the verb *pratigrḥṇīyāt* with a causative value. But Jaimini already has difficulties with this text, as he wonders whether the expiation is to be assumed for the patron of the sacrifice or the officiant, finally deciding that in this case, it is the former.

- (15) *sā liṅgād ārtvije syāt ||31||*

“Because of the sign (i.e. the fact that an atonement is enjoined for a prescribed action), it should apply to him who has recourse to the officiant (*ārtvija*).”

⁴⁴ Cf. BŚS 23.4: *yāvato 'śvān pratigrḥṇīyāt tāvato vāruṇāñś catuṣkapālān nirvaped ekātiriktānñiti. sa ha smāha baudhāyano vaiśvānareṇaikam pratigrḥṇīyād evaṃ dvau gaṇaṃ tu pratigrhya.* Cf. BŚS 23.4: *yāvato 'śvān pratigrḥṇīyāt tāvato vāruṇāñś catuṣkapālān nirvaped ekātiriktānñiti. sa ha smāha baudhāyano vaiśvānareṇaikam pratigrḥṇīyād evaṃ dvau gaṇaṃ tu pratigrhya* “As many horses one may have accepted, he should offer as many cakes on four potsherds plus one. Baudhāyana maintains that one could receive one horse through an offering to Vaiśvānara Agni and analogously if he had accepted two [horses or] a group.” Cf. transl. Kashikar 2003: 1497, where the verb *to give* always corresponds to *prati-grah-*, and even to “to give a *dakṣiṇā*” in the first occurrence.

While commenting on this sūtra, Śabara (*ad* JMS 3.4.31) states:

(16) *naiṣā pratigrahakartuḥ, kiṃ tarhi hetukartuḥ syāt.*

“This (i.e. the Varuṇeṣṭi) is not to be performed by the agent of the act of accepting. What else? by the agent who is also the impeller (i.e. the causative agent).”

The patron of the sacrifice is thus the one who makes the officiant accept, and he is the one who must therefore expiate for this. In our opinion, such examples of “acrobatic” exegesis clearly illustrate the distance between the new reformed ritual and the original cultural values expressed by the forms stemming from the root *pratigrah-*.

At the present stage of our survey we can at least affirm that the testimony of the *Taittirīya Samhitā* offers us a credible bridge between the data of ṚV and those of AV: the traces of uneasiness we already found in the AV must not be interpreted as an innovation (or as a trace of parallel, more magic-oriented rites) unless we want to posit an improbable strong dependence of the Yajurveda from the Atharvaveda. Those same traces, on the other hand, fit perfectly with a different, slowly resurfacing concept of sacrifice, which is more competitive and *sattric*-like, and which partly clashes with the divine world depicted by the ṚV. Of course it will be crucial to dive in depth into the different recensions of the Yajurveda in order to see whether these traces are more evident in areally marginal recensions, as we have assumed above (§ 2.3) in the proposed comparison between ṚV 10.62.1-4 and AB 5.14. But we consider that we may at least state confidently that the Yajurveda preserves some marginal, perhaps even older cultural values. This is the only approach that can account for a such widespread contemporaneous “innovation” operating even across the Samhitās. Such marginalised cultural values have subsequently undergone a century-long adaptation process which has partly obliterated their specificities, although these may still be glimpsed at those points where the tensions remain unresolved.

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- AB *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, ed., transl. by Haug, Martin. Bombay: Government Central Book Depot 1863 [Re-edited by Jain, S. 2 Vols. Delhi: New Bharatiya Book Corporation, 2003].
- PS (*Paippalāda*) *Atharvaveda*. See Lelli 2015.
- BSS *Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra*, crit. ed., transl. by Kashikar, Chintaman G. 4 vols. (Kalāmūlāsāstra Series, 37). New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts/Motilal Banarsidass 2003.
- GB *Das Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*, ed. by Gaastra, Dieuke. Leiden: Brill 1919.
- JMS *Jaiminīya-Mīmāṃsāsūtra—Śrīmajjaiminipraṇite Mīmāṃsādarśane, Mīmāṃsakakaṇṭhīrava—Kumārīlabhaṭṭapraṇita—Tantravārtikasahita—Śābara-bhāṣyopetaḥ*, ed. by Abhyankar, Kashinath Vasudev & Joṣī, Ganesasastri Ambadasa (Anandāśramasamskṛtagranthāvaliḥ 97). Poona: Anandasrama 1929-1934 [Reprint 1971-1980].
- KS *Kāthaka-Samhitā — Kāthakam. Die Samhitā der Katha-Śākhā*, ed. by Schroeder, Leopold von. Leipzig: Brockhaus 1900.

- MDhŚ *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra*. See Olivelle 2005.
- MS *Maitrayāni-Sāmhītā*, ed. by Schroeder, Leopold von. Leipzig, Brockhaus 1881-1886.
- PB *Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa = Tāṇḍya-Mahābrāhmaṇa. The Tāṇḍyamahābrāhmaṇa Belonging to the Sāma Veda with the Commentary of Sāyānācārya* ed. by Śāstrī, A. Chinnaśvāmi & Śāstrī, Paṭṭābhirāma. 2 Vols. (The Kashi Sanskrit Series, 59). Benares: Krishnadas-Gupta 1935-1936.
- RV *Ṛgveda Samhitā with the commentary of Sāyānācārya*, ed. by Sontakke, N. S. and Kashikar, Chintaman G., 4 Vols. Poona: Vaidika Samsodhana Maṇḍala 1933-1951. [Reprint Poona: Vaidika Samsodhana Maṇḍala, 1983].
- RvKh *Die Apokryphen des Ṛgveda: Khilāni*, crit. ed. by Scheftelowitz, Isidor. *Indische Forschungen* 1, 1906. 1-191.
- Śābara *Śābarabhāṣya*. See JMS.
- ŚS *Atharvaveda (Saunaka) with the Padapāṭha and Sāyānācārya's commentary*, ed. by Bandhu, Vishva. Hoshiarpur: Vishvesvaranand Vedic Research Institute 1960-1964.
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