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### *DHÁRMAN IN THE ṚGVEDA*

In his article on the development of *dhárma*, Paul Horsch already has given consideration to the meaning of *dhárman* and related terms in the *Ṛgveda*. In this essay, I examine Horsch's conclusions about *dhárman* by approaching its analysis in a somewhat different way. Where Horsch's discussion of Ṛgvedic *dhárman* is set within the broader arc of the history of *dhárma* and Indian culture, I will consider only the *Ṛgveda*. Where he discussed other nominal and verbal derivatives of √*dhṛ*, I will study only *dhárman* and *dharmán*. And finally, where Horsch selected examples to illustrate the semantic range of *dhárman*, I will account, or at least try to account, for all instances of *dhárman* and *dharmán* in the *Ṛgveda*. This strategy will not produce a synoptic account that even approaches the scope of Horsch's work, but it may provide an anchor for the reevaluation of the history of *dhárma*.

A study of the attestations of *dhárman* in a single article is possible because *dhárman* occurs a manageable 63 times in the *Ṛgveda*, including once in a compound *dharmakṛt*, six times in *satyádharman*, and once in an adjective *dharmavant*. In addition, there are another four examples of *dharmán* and two of *dhārīman*. While this is not a small number, the relatively modest frequency of *dhárman* nonetheless implies that it was not a central term in the Ṛgvedic lexicon or in Indian culture of the Ṛgvedic period. Nor does the word have a long history before the *Ṛgveda*. There are Indo-European parallels to *dhárman* (cf. Wennerberg 1981: 95f.), but the only Iranian equivalent is Old Persian *darman* 'remedy,' which has little bearing on Indo-Aryan *dhárman*. There is thus no evidence that *\*dharman* was a significant culture word during the Indo-Iranian period. In this respect, *dhárman* contrasts with other terms whose semantic sphere *dhárman* sometimes intersected and eventually subsumed, such as *ṛtá* (Av. *aša*) and *vratá* (Av. *uruuata*). Both these terms had significant roles in the old Indo-Iranian religious vocabulary, and therefore study of their meanings in the *Ṛgveda* has to consider the Iranian evidence and their pre-Ṛgvedic history. In contrast, the discussion of *dhárman* can reasonably begin with the *Ṛgveda*.

But even if it was not a central term within the *Rgveda*, *dhárman* is thoroughly established in the text, since the word is attested at all its chronological levels. The following chart presents the occurrences of *dhárman* (including *dhármavant*, *satyádharman*, and *dharmakṛt*) through the layers of the *Rgveda* from the old family books (2, 4–6) to book 10 and the *Rgvedic* appendix in 8.49–59<sup>1</sup>:

Old family books (2, 4–6)	11
Young family books (3, 7)	6
1, 8.1–48, 8.60–103	14
9	13
10	18
8.49–59 (Vāḷakhilya)	1

The distribution of the term, especially its increasing frequency in the younger layers, confirms that it is a part of the developing terminology of the *Rgveda*. Interestingly, 7 of the 11 attestations of *dhárman* in the oldest *Rgvedic* layer occur within book 5, and therefore its increasing occurrence in later books may partly reflect the influence of the Atri poets. In addition, the large number of attestations in 9, the Soma Pavamāna book, shows that *dhárman* belongs especially to the vocabulary of Soma. Not indicated by this chart, but almost as significant, is its association with Mitra and Varuṇa. These latter attestations are distributed throughout the *Rgveda*, although they appear especially in its older levels: 6× in the family books, 2× in book 8 (including 1× in the Vāḷakhilya section), 1× in 9, and 2× in 10.

Since *dhárman* is a developing term in *Rgveda*, its meaning reflects directly its etymology and form. And, happily, the formation of *dhárman* is transparent. It is derived from *√dhr* ‘uphold, support, give foundation to’ and a *-man* suffix. Therefore, it denotes a thing which upholds or supports, or, more simply, a ‘foundation.’ The word *dharmán*, a noun of agent, then designates an ‘upholder’ or ‘foundation-giver.’

Unlike *dhárma* in the later period, which becomes richly evocative, *dhárman* in the *Rgveda* has few consistent, concrete associations. To borrow an example from Stephanie Jamison (1996: 11), ‘porridge’ has specific literary connotations that the neutral term ‘oatmeal’ does not. In its *Rgvedic* attestations, *dhárman* is far more ‘oatmeal’ than ‘porridge,’ and therefore, in each of its occurrences, the best approach is to see how the basic meaning of ‘foundation’ applies. Of course, ‘foun-

dation' is by no means a perfect rendering of *dhárman*, as I will soon amply illustrate by so translating it, but it is a good starting place. In examining its attestations, I will try to account for the use of *dhárman* in as coherent and efficient manner as possible. By 'coherent,' I mean that the actual sense of the word in a particular passage should be evidently connected to its basic meaning, 'foundation.' By 'efficient,' I intend an analysis that avoids unnecessarily inflating its semantic sphere.

#### DHÁRMAN AND RITUAL

##### *Sacrifice as the ritual foundation for the world*

I begin with passages in which *dhárman* describes the ritual as the basis or 'foundation' for the world. In 5.15, *dhārúṇa*, which Elizarenkova (1995: 152)<sup>2</sup> describes as the hymn's 'magic word,' is repeated and echoed by other derivatives of  $\sqrt{dhr}$  throughout the hymn. *Dhárman* itself occurs only once, in 5.15.2 *rténa rtám dharúṇam dhārayanta yajñásya śáké paramé vyòman | divó dhárman dharúṇe sedúšo nṛñ jātáir ájātām abhí yé nanakṣúḥ* "In making powerful the sacrifice in the highest heaven, they (= the Áṅgirasas) supported the truth, itself a support, by means of the truth / – they who have reached the men (= the gods) that have taken their seat upon the support, upon the foundation of heaven; they who, even though they themselves were born, (have reached) the unborn." Threading through this verse is not an easy chore. The Áṅgirasas have 'supported,' or given foundation to, 'the truth.' This truth is the sacrifice itself, which is the truth because it is an expression of the nature of things (cf. Skjaervø, 2003), and as such, it is the template and ultimate basis for world. Since it is the basis for the world, the truth that is the sacrifice is 'itself a support.' Moreover, the Áṅgirasas supported this truth 'by means of the truth,' that is, by means of the hymns they sang. In sum, the truth (= the hymns) is the support for the truth (= the sacrifice), which, in turn, is the support for the world. In lines cd, there is an ambiguity, undoubtedly an intentional one, as to whether the seat of the gods is their heavenly seat or their seat in an earthly sacrifice. In either case, however, the 'support,' upon which the gods take their seat, is again the sacrifice. Since this sacrifice is itself the foundation (*dhárman*) of heaven,<sup>3</sup> *dhárman* here signifies the ritual as the foundation for the gods and the world.

In a similar manner, the sacrifice is both the support and the foundation of heaven in 10.170.2 *vibhráḍ brhát súbhrtam vājasátamam*

*dhárman divó dharúṇe satyám árpitam / amitrahá vrtrahá das-yuhántamaṃ jyótir jajñe asurahá sapatnahá* “That which blazes forth aloft, well-borne, best prize-winner – (that) real (= the sun) is embedded into the foundation, the support of heaven. Striker of enemies, striker of obstacles, best striker of barbarians, the light has been born as the striker of lords, the striker of rivals.” Where and what, then, is the support and foundation in which the sun is ‘embedded’? On one level, at least, this foundation is likely represented by the sacrifice, in which the fire, ritually corresponding to the sun, is installed. At the end of the hymn, the sun itself then becomes a support that sustains the living world: 4c *yénemā víśvā bhúvanāny ábhrtā* “by whom all these living worlds are borne here.” Note also that in the phrase *dhárman divó dharúṇe*, the genitive *divás*, standing between the two locatives *dhárman* and *dharúṇe*, patterns with either and with both. With *dhárman*, it replicates the phrase *divó dhárman dharúṇe* of 5.15.2, and with *dharúṇe*, it inverts it. These shifts argue for the essential equivalence of *dharúṇa* ‘support’ and *dhárman* ‘foundation.’

Not only the sacrifice in general, but also the central constituents of the sacrifice function as foundations for the world. The fire is the heart of the sacrifice, and in 10.88.1 the god Agni creates the foundation for the living world: 10.88.1 *havīṣ pāntam ajāraṃ svarvidi diviṣpṛśy áhutaṃ júṣtam agnaú / táśya bhármaṇe bhúvanāya devá dhármaṇe kām svadháyā paprathanta* “The pleasing oblation and drink is poured here in Fire, who finds the sun and touches heaven. For him to bear the living world, and yes, to give it foundation<sup>4</sup> in accordance with his own will, the gods will extend themselves.” The hymn is addressed to Sūrya and Agni Vaiśvānara. Here Agni, the sacrificial Fire, assumes the form of the universal fire, the sun, and thereby becomes the foundation for all things.

Like Fire, so also Soma supports heaven and earth: 9.86.9 *divó ná śānu stanáyann acikradad dyáuś ca yásya prthiví ca dhármabhiḥ / índrasya sakhyám pavate vivévidat sómaḥ punānāḥ kaláśeṣu śidati* “Thundering like the back of heaven, he has cried out, by whose foundations heaven and earth (have foundation).<sup>5</sup> / He purifies himself, rediscovering again and again his partnership with Indra. Purifying himself, Soma sits in the vats.” The verse describes Soma’s pressing and purification through the woollen filter, the ‘back of heaven’ (Oberlies, 1999: 154). The theme of the presence of *soma* throughout the universe dominates this hymn. Just preceding this passage, for example, we hear that 8cd *ádhy asthāt śānu pávamāno avyáyaṃ nábhā prthivyā dharúṇo mahó diváh* “(Soma) has mounted

the woollen back as he purifies himself, as the support of great heaven on the navel of the earth.” And in the verses that follow vs. 9, Soma is the ‘father and progenitor of the gods’ (*pitā devānām janitā* vs. 10) and the ‘lord of heaven’ (*pátir diváh* vs. 11). He moves between heaven and earth (*ródaśi antará* vs. 13); he ‘touches heaven’ and, ‘filling the midspace, is embedded into the living worlds’ (*divispṛśam antarikṣaprā bhúvaneṣv árpitaḥ* vs. 14). His representation in vs. 9 as the foundation of heaven and earth, therefore, accords with the context of the verse and the theme of the hymn as a whole.

*The sacrifice as the ritual foundation for gods*

Soma can likewise act not only as the foundation of heaven and earth, but also as the foundation of gods, especially Indra. This theme occurs several times, or I think it does, for the passages become increasingly obscure. The clearest is 1.187.1 *pitūṃ nú stoṣam mahó dharmāṇam táviṣīm, yásya tritó vy ójasā vrtrām víparvam ardáyat* “Now I shall praise food, that gives foundation to the great one and that is his force, / that by whose power Trita violently shook away Vrtra, whose joints were broken.” Although this is ostensibly a hymn to ‘food,’ the food addressed both in this verse and throughout is the *soma*.<sup>6</sup> Soma, then, is the *dharmán*, the one who gives foundation to the great one. We would normally expect this ‘great one’ to be Indra,<sup>7</sup> but here Trita occupies the position of Indra as the destroyer of Vrtra. In any case, it is on a foundation of *soma* (or sacrificially offered food more generally) that Trita successfully is empowered to break the obstacle represented by Vrtra.

I interpret 10.50.6 along the same lines, although the context is so open that it can be plausibly construed quite differently: 10.50.6 *etā víśvā sávanā tūtumá kṛṣe svayám sūno sahaso yāni dadhiṣé / várāya te pātraṃ dhármaṇe tánā yajñó mántro bráhmódyataṃ vácaḥ* “You have made thick all these *soma*-pressings, which you yourself have received, o son of strength. / For your choice and for your foundation, there is offered, each in its turn, the cup, the sacrifice, the *mantra*, the formulation, and speech.” Even though the epithet ‘son of strength’ is characteristic of Fire, the god addressed here is Indra. Here the poet invites Indra to choose this sacrifice and thereby to give himself a ‘foundation’ in the power and presence that the sacrifice confers on him.

In 1.55.3, we enter a realm of syntactic and interpretive uncertainty, even deeper than usual: 1.55.3 *tvām tám indra párvataṃ ná bhójase mahó nṛmñasya dhármaṇām irajyasi / prá vīryeṇa devátāti*

*cekīte víśvasmā ugrāḥ kármaṇe puróhitaḥ* “To enjoy that (which is) like a mountain, Indra, you have control of the foundations of great manliness. / He appears foremost among the gods by his heroism, he who is the powerful one placed at the fore for every act.” I suggest that *tám* refers to the *soma* (mentioned in vs. 2c) and that the *soma* is compared to a mountain.<sup>8</sup> A problem for this view is that the basis for a comparison of *soma* to a mountain is not apparent.<sup>9</sup> But if Indra’s control results in his drinking the *soma*, then his control is reasonably over the source or the basis of the *soma*, the ‘foundations of great manliness.’ These foundations might refer to the ritual, or possibly to the *soma* juices themselves, which are the basis of Indra’s strength. The precise sense of this verse, however, continues to elude me.

*The sacrifice as the ritual foundation of Soma*

In a material and religious sense, the sacrifice is the foundation for *soma*, both god and oblation, for *soma* is physically and visibly created within the ritual process. This is particularly evident in the hymns of the 9th book, which celebrate and effect the appearance of both the *soma* drink and the god Soma as *soma* drips through the filter and into the *soma* vat. The ritual is the foundation on which *soma* is created in 9.7.1 *ásrgram índavaḥ pathā dhárman ṛtasya suśríyaḥ / vidānā asya yójanam* “The drops of great glory have been sent surging along the path upon the foundation of truth / – they that know its trek.” The basic image of this passage is that of *soma* as a race horse, and the foundation on which *soma* runs is the truth. The description of the truth as a ‘foundation’ is particularly apt here, since *dhárman* suggests a physical foundation which could support a horse.<sup>10</sup> This verse describes *soma*’s descent from heaven to earth during its ritual preparation. The truth upon which the *soma*’s path rests or course runs, then, is either the sacrifice as a whole or the hymn.

A later verse in the same hymn returns to the theme of the foundation of *soma*. Here, however, the foundation of *soma* might be either that which creates Soma or that which constitutes the god Soma’s nature: 9.7.7 *sá vāyúm índram áśvínā sākám mádena gachati / ráṇā yó asya dhármabhiḥ* “He goes to Vāyu, Indra, and the Áśvins, along with the invigoration, / with the joy which is according to his foundations.” Because Soma has been properly fashioned in the ritual, he becomes invested with the ability to invigorate and please the gods of the morning offering. The *dhármans* signify his ritual foundations, which may be also the foundations of *soma* itself, the nature of *soma*.

The possibility that *dhárman* refers to the nature of *soma* is strengthened because of a number of passages, considered section 4, in which *dhárman* has the sense of the foundational nature of a deity. I have not included any instances of *dhárman* with Soma among those passages, however, because in the verses in which *dhárman* might refer to the nature of *soma*, the sense of *dhárman* as the ritual foundation of *soma* is still present or still possible. In the case of 9.7, vs. 1 shows the sense of *dhárman* as ritual foundation but not that of *dhárman* as the foundational nature of a god. When *dhárman* reoccurs in vs. 7, even though the sense of ‘foundational nature’ is possible – Re, for example, translates *dhármabhis* here as ‘dans ses comportements’ – it continues also to carry the sense of a ritual foundation.

Likewise, these senses of the foundations of *soma* are combined and elaborated in 9.107.24 *sá tú pavasva pári pārthivaṃ rájo divyā ca soma dhármabhiḥ / tvāṃ víprāso matibhir vicakṣaṇa śubhrāṃ hinvanti dhītíbhīḥ* “Purify yourself all around the earthly realm and the heavenly (realms), o Soma, according to your foundations. / Far-gazing, it is you, the resplendent, whom the inspired poets speed with their thoughts and their insights.” Again, *soma* is purified both according to his ritual foundations and possibly according to his nature as the *soma*. In addition, the poet also evokes the image of heaven and earth as the universal foundations that support *soma*.

Similarly, *dhárman* is the ritual foundation of *soma* and the foundational character of *soma* in 9.97.12 *abhí priyāṇi pavate punānó, devó devān svēna rāsena prñcān / índur dhármāny rtuthā vásāno, dāśa kṣīpo avyata sāno ávye* “As he purifies himself, he purifies himself in the direction of the things dear to him – he the god that fills the gods with his own juice. / The *soma*-drop, clothing himself with his foundations following the ritual sequence, has enwrapped himself in the ten fingers on the woollen back.” I have avoided the difficult problem of the identity of ‘the things dear’ to Soma. On the basis of 9.75.1 *abhí priyāṇi pavate . . . nāmāni*, Ge suggests that the ‘dear’ are the ‘names’ of Soma, but they may just as well be the water and the milk, the vessels, and perhaps the hymns and names. That is to say, the ‘dear’ may be all the ritual constituents toward which *soma* flows. If Soma moves toward the ritual constituents which make *soma* become truly *soma*, then these constituents can be the foundations that create and define him. Note the parallelism of ‘clothing himself in his foundation’ and ‘has enwrapped himself in the ten fingers.’ The ‘10 fingers’ refer to the hands of the priests who ritually prepare the *soma*, so the ‘foundations’ can likewise refer to things that are the bases of

the *soma* offering. However, both Re and Ge understand the *dhárman* not as the ritual ‘foundations’ through which *soma* becomes *soma*, but as the characteristics that *soma* assumes. So Re translates line c as ‘revetant ses propriétés,’ and Ge as ‘nimmt... seine Eigenschaften an.’ Such an interpretation is possible and may well be also implied. But here, I think, it is likely to be a secondary resonance, since the liturgical context implies that Soma is putting on all the physical ritual ingredients that are his foundation.

This same hymn also describes more a specific foundation on which *soma* is produced in 9.97.22 *tákṣad yádī mánaso vénato vāg jyéṣṭhasya vā dhármaṇi kṣór ánīke | ád īm āyan váram á vāvasānā júṣṭam pátiṃ kaláše gāva índum* “When the speech from the thought that is tracking him fashions (Soma) on the foundation of the foremost (thought)<sup>11</sup> or in the face of the herd,<sup>12</sup> then the cows, bellowing as they wished, came to him, their delighting husband, the *soma*-drop, in the vat.” The verse is open to a variety of explanations, but can establish a specific ritual context: this part of the verse describes the mixing of milk, the ‘cattle,’ with *soma*, who is the husband of the cows. Therefore, in b, *soma* ‘in the face of the cow’ should be the *soma* as it is about to be mixed with the milk.<sup>13</sup> The rest of the verse refers to a different ingredient in *soma*’s creation, namely the recitation of the hymn. It is this thought of the seer which provides the foundation for *soma*. I account for the disjunctive *vā* by a locational contrast between the ‘foundation of the foremost (thought)’ and the ‘face of the herd.’ The thought is the starting point for the fashioning of *soma* (and as such, its foundation) and the ‘herd’ is the point toward which *soma* goes. This movement reflects a ritual sequence from the beginning of the chant at the first flowing of *soma* into the filter up to *soma*’s pouring into the milk mix.

*Dhárman* and *dhárīman* appear in consecutive verses in 9.86, and neither verse lends itself to easy interpretation. *Dhárīman* is attested only twice, and so it is difficult to know whether or how it differs from *dhárman*. However, the formal contrasts between the two words in this hymn are striking: *dhárman* occurs in the instrumental plural and *dhárīman* in the locative singular. Perhaps *dhárīman* is, as Re suggests, an infinitive. But whether *dhárīman* is a noun (so Wennerberg, 1981: 94), perhaps equivalent to *dhárman*, or an infinitive, in either case, it can describe the ritual as a foundation for *soma*: 9.86.4 *prá ta áśvinīḥ pavamāna dhījúvo divyā asrgran páyasā dhárīmaṇi | prāntár íṣaya sthāvīr asrkṣata yé tvā mṛjānty ṛṣiṣāṇa vedhásaḥ* “Forth have your (streams?),<sup>14</sup> that speed insights and are Áśvin-bound, been sent



surging, together with the milk and upon the foundation.<sup>15</sup> Forth have the seers sent surging their stalwart (insights?)<sup>16</sup> within (the soma streams [?])<sup>17</sup> – they the ritual experts, who groom you, o you that win seers.” The passage is amenable to the interpretation of *dhárman* I have been urging, although I cannot claim much more than that. The verse describes the blending of the *soma* juices pouring through the filter and the hymns that accompany that process. The juices and hymns are equated (by the fact they are both ‘sent surging’) and mixed (if indeed the hymns enter into the *soma* streams). In that context, *dhárīmaṇi* might recall the ‘foundation of truth’ (9.7.1, 110.4) or the ‘foundation of the foremost (thought)’ (9.97.22). That is to say, an additional intersection of the *soma* juices and the hymns is that the hymns provide the ritual foundation for the creation of *soma* as it flows through the filter.

The meaning of 9.86.4 is not made much clearer by vs. 5, in which *dhárman* also occurs: 9.86.5 *viśvā dhāmāni viśvacakṣa řbhvasaḥ prabhós te satáḥ pári yanti ketávaḥ / vyānaśiḥ pavase soma dhármabhiḥ pátir viśvasya bhúvanasya rājasi* “Your beacons circle around all your domains, o inventive (Soma), whose gaze falls on all, even though you are he that comes to the fore. Reaching throughout (your domains), you purify yourself according to your foundations. You rule as lord of the whole living world.” The hymn operates on a double characterization of Soma as ‘going around’ and as ‘leading.’ On the one hand, *soma* visibly goes all around the filter and symbolically goes all around his domains. And in a contrasting movement, *soma* visibly leads the way forward into the *soma* vat and symbolically leads the way into the world. This double characterization of Soma’s action is then resumed by the opposition between his domains and his foundations. The former describe the area *through* which *soma* moves; the latter the basis *upon* which it moves and upon which the pressed *soma* becomes the purified *soma*.<sup>18</sup>

Soma – or the Sun or even Soma as the Sun – is produced on the ‘foundation of truth,’ that is, on the foundation of the ritual, in 9.110.4 *ájāno amṛta mártyeṣv ām rtásya dhármann amṛtasya cāruṇaḥ / sádāsaro vājam áchā sániṣyadat* “You have given it birth, o immortal one, here among mortals, upon the foundation of the truth, (upon that) of the deathless and cherished. / You have ever raced, always flowing here toward victory’s prize.” The initial problem in this verse is to sort out who has done what to whom. First, who has given birth? That, surely, is Soma, who is explicitly addressed throughout the hymn. Who, then, is given birth? According to

Sāyaṇa, whom Re follows, *soma* has given birth to the sun, or rather, *soma* has given birth to itself as the sun. Elsewhere, as the *soma* passes through the filter, which represents the midspace, it becomes a symbol of the sun (cf. Oberlies, 1999: 151 n. 107, 244 n. 119), and this passage is moving along the same lines. Who is the ‘deathless and cherished’? Again this must be *soma*, since these are characteristic epithets of *soma*. What, then, is the ‘foundation of truth’? The central problem is the relation between the ‘truth’ and the ‘deathless and cherished.’ Ge separates them by taking *amṛtasya cāruṇaḥ* as a partitive genitive with the *soma*, which is the implied object of the verb: “Du . . . hast . . . (den Trunk) des angenehmen Göttertranks.” But in so dividing *āmṛtasya* and *amṛtasya*, which form a figure suggesting their connection (as Re rightly points out), this syntactic analysis is forced. It is better to construe the genitives closely, and that leaves two possibilities. First, the ‘deathless and cherished’ is in apposition to the ‘truth,’ as Re interprets it: “. . . dans l’observance de l’Ordre, (ce) beau (principe) immortel.” If the ‘deathless and cherished’ is *soma*, then *soma* must be the ‘truth’ as well. This is possible: Soma could be the foundation for the sun and, as part of the ritual process, an expression of the truth. But a second possibility is that the ‘truth’ and the ‘deathless and cherished’ are parallel genitives to *dhárman*. If the ‘truth’ is again the sacrifice (or the hymn), as in 9.7, then the verse would be saying that Soma as the Sun is born on a foundation of the ritual and on a foundation of *soma* itself. Despite its convolutions, I prefer this second interpretation.

At the heart of two other passages rests a paradox. Soma’s journey of purification takes it from heaven to earth through the midspace,<sup>19</sup> but unlike heaven and earth, which are visible foundations, the midspace across which *soma* runs provides no natural foundation. According to two verses, *soma* nonetheless finds a foundation as it rides the wind toward the earth. The first is 9.25.2 *pávamāna dhiyā hitò ’bhí yónim kánikradat / dhármaṇā vāyúm ā viśa* “Purifying yourself, sped by insight, and crying loudly toward your womb, / enter the wind through your foundation.” The governing image is once again that of *soma* as a horse. Here it leaps into the wind and gallops downwards toward the *soma* vat. The question is: what is the ‘foundation’ that allows him to do that? Re says that it is his ‘nature’ and Ge, his ‘ordinance, instruction’ (‘Bestimmung’). Both are possible, but in light of 9.7.1 and 110.4 in which *soma* is founded on the truth, the foundation of *soma* here might also be the ‘insight’ of the priests that speeds him on his way. The difficulty with this view is that

a parallel passage, 9.63.22 (below), shows no basis for a similar interpretation. Therefore, even though this passage does not demand this interpretation, I take *dhárman* to refer to the ritual in general, which provides the foundation for *soma*'s journey from heaven to earth in the purification process. The ritual gives *soma* a foundation through space, which itself offers no foundation.

As I mentioned, the interpretation of 9.25.2 must take into account 9.63.22 *pávasva devāyuság índram gachatu te mádaḥ | vāyúm á roha dhármanā* "Purify yourself, god, toward life.<sup>20</sup> Let your invigoration go to Indra. / Mount the wind through your foundation." If anything, the paradox is more sharply stated here: the wind does not offer support, but yet *soma* finds a 'foundation' that allows it to mount the wind. Here Soma is the rider rather than the horse, but the image is otherwise similar to that in 9.25.2. Again too, Re's interpretation 'selon (ton) comportement-naturel' is inviting. Ultimately, however, I think that here also *soma*'s 'foundation' is his foundation in the ritual.

### *Summary*

This section has considered those passages in which *dhárman* describes the ritual, or elements of the ritual, as a foundation. The ritual provides a foundation for the world (5.15.2), for heaven (10.121.9, 170.2), for living beings (10.88.1), and for heaven and earth (9.86.9). It is likewise the foundation for the gods (1.187.1), or more specifically of Indra (10.50.6) or the manliness of Indra (1.55.3). The bulk of these passages, however, concern the ritual foundations of *soma*. This theme emerges especially in the verses in which *soma* depends on a 'foundation of truth' (9.7.1, 110.4, cf. 97.22, 86.4), where the truth may be the ritual or the ritual chant. The *dhárman* or *dhármans* of *soma* may also extend beyond the realm of the ritual and the visible purification of *soma*. *Dhárman* may imply also universal foundations (cf. 9.107.24, 86.5, 110.4), physical foundations (cf. 9.25.2, 63.22), or possibly the foundational nature of Soma (cf. 9.7.7, 107.24, 97.12, 25.2, 63.22), as well as ritual foundations. But in all of these verses, the sense of the ritual foundations of *soma* remains present and primary.

### DHÁRMAN AS THE FOUNDATION FOR THE RITUAL

#### *The first foundations*

Thus far, I have tried to show that *dhárman* can signify the ritual foundation for heaven and earth or for the gods. But it is also a

concern of the R̥gvedic poets that the ritual itself have a foundation. This foundation for the ritual can be its ancient precedent or ancient prototype. Especially in the younger parts of the *R̥gveda*, where the effort to establish the basis of the ritual already emerges, poets mention the ‘first foundations’ which present sacrificers carry forward. The most famous instance is in the *puruṣa sūkta*, 10.90. At the end of the hymn, the poet declares the sacrifice of the *puruṣa* (or possibly the sacrifice that is the *puruṣa*) to be the foundation for subsequent ritual performance: 10.90.16 *yajñéna yajñám ayajanta devās tāni dhārmāṇi prathamāny āsan / té ha nākam mahimānaḥ sacanta yātra pūrve sādhyāḥ sānti devāḥ*<sup>21</sup> “With the sacrifice the gods sacrificed the sacrifice<sup>22</sup>: these were the first foundations, / and those, its greatnesses, follow to heaven’s vault, where exist the ancient ones who are to be attained (*sādhyas*),<sup>23</sup> the gods.” The ‘first *dhārmans*’ are the model sacrifice instituted by the gods and replicated in human performance, and as such, they are the ‘foundations’ for ritual performance.

If its use in 10.90 establishes the sense of *dhárman* as a ritual precedent, then we can allow this sense in other, less clearly marked passages. One example is 10.56.3 *vājy āsi vājinenā suvenīḥ suvitá stómaṁ suvitó dívaṁ gāḥ / suvitó dhárma prathamānu satyā suvitó devān suvitó ’nu pátma* “You are the prize-winning horse with the ability to win, who tracks well (?).<sup>24</sup> Go, having travelled easily to the praise-song,<sup>25</sup> having travelled easily to heaven, / having travelled easily along the first and real foundations, having travelled easily to the gods, having travelled easily along your flight.” One reason that *dhárman* appears in this verse is that its literal meaning is applicable, since, as we have seen before, a horse requires a physical ‘foundation.’ But the horse itself may be a metaphor<sup>26</sup> and its ‘foundations’ certainly are, for the ‘foundations’ on which the horse runs are the foundations of ritual precedent. The *dhārmans* are thus the first foundations of the past, which are also real and present now in the current ritual performance.

In addition to the passages in the tenth book, there are several in the third, which likewise refer to the first foundations of the ritual. Two appear in the same hymn: 3.17.1 *samidhyāmānaḥ prathamānu dhārmā sám aktúbhir ajoyate viśvāvāraḥ / śociṣkeṣo ghṛtánirṇik pāvakāḥ suyajñó agnír yajáthāya devān* “Being kindled according to the first foundations, he is anointed with unguents – he that fulfills all wishes, / the flame-haired, ghee-cloaked, purifying Fire, who makes the sacrifice good – for the sake of the sacrifice to the gods.” What

gives the present sacrifice legitimacy is that it is a new instantiation of the ancient form, and therefore its fire is kindled according to that ancient form. If the foundations in vs. 1 refer to the ancient prototype, then this may also be the case in vs. 5, although here there is no reference to the ‘first’ and *dhárma* might be either singular or plural: 3.17.5 *yás tvád dhótā pūrvo agne yājñyān dvitā ca sātā svadhāyā ca sambhūḥ | tāsyañu dhárma prá yajā cikitvó ‘tha no dhā adhvarām devāvītau* “The *hotar*-priest who is before, o Fire, who performs sacrifice better, who sits now, as before, and is luck-bringing by nature – / following his foundations, set forth the sacrifice, o you who are perceptive, and establish the rite for us in our pursuit of the gods.” There is much that is puzzling in this verse. Most centrally, who or what is the *hótā pūrvaḥ*? If *pūrva* has a locational sense, then the fire, whom the poet addresses and who is not the *hótā pūrvaḥ*, might be the *gārhapatya* or of any other fire except for the *āhavanīya*. The *āhavanīya* should be the *hotar* ‘before you’ or ‘to the east of you.’ In this case, the *dhárma* of that *hotar* are either the ‘foundations’ or installation of the *āhavanīya*, or they are the ‘foundations’ or starting point for the sacrifice provided by the *āhavanīya* fire. In either case, with its installation, Fire is then asked to carry out the sacrifice. Alternatively, the *hótā pūrvaḥ* might be the ‘ancient *hotar*,’ the ancient Fire, who takes his seat again as the *āhavanīya* fire. In this case, his foundations could be Fire’s ancient installation, which forms the prototype for his present installation. Of these alternatives, I think the latter the more likely. In this interpretation, *dhárma* carries the same sense in this verse as it does in the first verse of the hymn.

Another verse returns us to the realms of metaphor and problematic syntax: 3.60.6 *índra rbhumān vājavān matsvehá no ‘smín sávane śácyā puruṣtuta | imāni túbhyaṃ svásarāṇi yemire vratā devānām mānuṣas ca dhármabhiḥ* “O Indra, together with Rbhu and with Vāja, may you become invigorated here in this pressing of ours, along with your power, o you who are much praised. / These pastures (= rituals?) have offered themselves to you according to the command of the gods and according to the foundations of Manu.” Again the verse can be construed and interpreted in a number of plausible ways. Ge takes *vratā* as instrumental, as I have done. This interpretation is rejected by Ol, who suggests that it might be nom. pl. with an ellipsis of *yā* – an interpretation, especially with its supposition of an ellipsis, that seems strained.<sup>27</sup> If it is instrumental, then *vratā* parallels *dhármabhiḥ*, and the two form a complementary pair. The gods command that the ‘pastures,’ which I take to be a metaphor for the

rites that support Indra, be given to Indra. This command is in conformity with the ‘foundations,’ the ancient precedent of Manu’s sacrifice. Since Manu is the first sacrificer, his sacrifice can form an obvious prototype.

If this is the sense of the *dhárman* of Manu in 3.60.6, then *dhárīman* may have a similar one in 1.128.1ab *ayám jāyata mānuṣo dhārīmaṇi hótā yájiṣṭha uśijām ánu vratám agníḥ svám ánu vratám* “This one here is born on the foundation of Manu – (the one) who is the best sacrificing *hotar*-priest following the command of his acolytes and who is Fire, following his own command.” Various interpreters have offered varying interpretations of *dhārīmaṇi*: both Ge ‘im (Feuer)behälter des Manu’ and Hoffmann (1967: 121) ‘in den Händen des Menschen’ take it materially, Oldenberg (1897: 137) ‘in Manu’s firm law’ more abstractly, and Re ‘pour être porté par l’Homme’ as an infinitive. But if it is interpreted in accord with 3.60.6, then the ‘foundation of Manu,’ on which the Fire is kindled, could again be the ritual precedent established by Manu. This is essentially the view of Grassmann, who translates ‘nach altem Brauch’ (cf. Wennerberg, 1981: 94). Always, however, there is the possibility that *dhárīman* has a double significance and that it indicates something material as well, perhaps, as Ge surmises, the fire place.

Another complex verse also refers to another kind of ancient prototype, this time the prototypes of the sages’ compositions: 3.38.2 *inótā pṛcha jānimā kavīnām, manodhṛtaḥ sukṛtas takṣata dyām/imā u te praṇyò vārdhamānā, mánovātā ádha nú dhārmaṇi gman* “And ask about the forceful generations of sages. Giving foundation to their thought and performing well, they fashioned heaven. / And these are your (= Indra’s) leadings forth, which grow strong and which are won by thought; therefore they go now upon (that) foundation.” Although not directly relevant to the meaning of *dhárman*, it would be helpful to know what exactly is meant by *manodhṛt*, since *mánovātāḥ* . . . *dhārmaṇi* in cd echoes it. It is typically translated in the sense of ‘resolute’ (Ge: ‘entschlossen’) or, more literally, ‘holding firm the mind’ (Ol: ‘die Festhalter des Geistes’ or Hoffmann, 1967: 225: ‘den Geist festhaltend’), and such an interpretation is both justifiable and sensible. But it yields a bland translation that does not reveal much about why the sages are here called *manodhṛt*. If *sukṛt* refers to the sages’ ritual performance, then *manodhṛt* should refer to the sages’ ritual speech, which would be the means through which the sages ‘give foundation’ ( $\sqrt{dhr}$ ) to their thought. More critical to the interpretation of *dhárman* are Indra’s ‘leadings forth’ (*praṇī*). Most likely

they are the hymns or rather the ‘inspired thoughts,’ which 3.38.1a announces as a theme of this hymn: *abhí táṣṭeva dīdhayā manīṣām* “Like a fashioner, I reflect upon my inspired thought.” If the ‘leadings forth’ do refer to the hymns, then they might be the inspirations that Indra leads toward the present generation of sages, or they might be inspirations that lead Indra forth. In favor of the latter, the descriptions of the ‘leadings forth’ as ‘growing strong’ and even more, as ‘won by thought’ are appropriate to the sages’ poetry and its success in making Indra manifest. In this context, then, *dhárman* is the ‘foundation’ on which these new hymns are composed, namely, the old hymns of the ancient sages, the old hymns which helped create the world.

*Fire as the creator of ritual foundations*

The sacrifice has not only a historical foundation in its ancient prototypes but also a present foundation in the various constituents on which it depends. The most fundamental constituent is the fire, which sustains the sacrifice. The clearest instances of this image are two passages in which Fire is the *dharmán*, the ‘foundation-giver’ of the rite. The first is 10.92.2 *imám añjaspām ubháye akr̥ṇvata dharmāṇam agnīm vidáthasya śādhanaṃ/aktúm ná yahvám uśásaḥ puróhitaṃ tánūnápātam aruśásya niṃsate* “This one, drinking straightaway,<sup>28</sup> have both<sup>29</sup> made their own – Fire, the foundation-giver and success-bringer of the ritual distribution – / him, the youth, do the dawns kiss like the night, him who is installed in front and who is the bodily descendant of the ruddy one.”<sup>30</sup> *Dharmán* and *śādhana* are complementary: Fire is the beginning of the rite as its founder and also its end, as the agent of its success. The second verse is 10.21.3 *tvé dharmāṇa āsate juhúbhiḥ siñcatīr iva / kṛṣṇā rūpāṇy árjunā ví vo máde víśvā ádhi śríyo dhiṣe vívakṣase* “The foundation-givers sit on you, like pouring (ladles) with their tongues.<sup>31</sup> / Colors of black and silver: you all, have I in my invigoration – / (you) and all glories you assume – have I made to declare.” The address is to the Fire’s flames, which repose on fire as tongues of flame, in the same way that spouts, representing tongues, are attached to the ladles that pour the offerings. The verse does not explain why the flames are foundation-givers, but in view of the preceding verse, it is most likely that they provide the foundations upon which the ritual offerings are poured.

If the flames repose on Fire, then they have their ‘foundation’ in the fire. Such is the meaning of 10.20.2 *agním īle bhujām yáviṣṭham*

*śāsā mitráṃ durdhārītum / yásya dhárman svār éñīḥ saparyānti mātúr ūdhaḥ* “I call upon Fire, the youngest of those finding satisfaction [= the gods], the ally (/Mitra)<sup>32</sup> difficult to hold<sup>33</sup> through his authority, / upon whose foundation, the mottled females wait on the sun, (as on?) their mother’s udder.” As the parentheses and query that decorate this translation indicate, the verse is problematic in its details. The function of *dhárman*, however, is thankfully more plain. As both Ge and Re have recognized, the ‘mottled females’ are the flames. Here, therefore, Fire is the foundation of the flames that reach upward to the sun in order to suckle on it.

In three other passages, 3.3.1, 8.43.24, and 5.26.6, Fire creates or oversees foundations, although the identity these foundations is unstated. Given that the verses concern the ritual fire and that Fire is the ‘foundation-giver’ of the rite, these foundations are likely to be either foundations that are the ritual itself or foundations for the ritual. The most intriguing of these passages is 3.3.1 *vaiśvānarāya prthupājase vípo rátnā vidhanta dharúṇeṣu gātave / agnir hí devāṃ amṛto duvasyāty áthā dhármāṇi sanātā ná dūduṣat* “They give inspired words as riches to do honor to Vaiśvānara of broad face, in order that he go upon supports, / for Fire as a deathless one befriends the gods, and therefore, from of old, he never ruins their foundations.” The ‘supports’ (*dharúṇa*) are the ‘inspired words’ that empower Fire. The reason to give these words to Fire and thereby empower him is that the Fire never compromises the ‘foundations’ of the gods. In my view, the foundations are the rites that the Fire brings to success. One might understand the *dhármāṇi* as the foundational ‘ordinances’ of the gods rather than the ritual ‘foundations’ that sustain the gods. However, the point of the verse is to emphasize the service that Fire renders to the gods and not his obedience to them. Further evidence from the context is inconclusive. The root  $\sqrt{dūṣ}$ , which governs *dhárman*, is only attested in two other verbal forms. In one verse, though, the thing ‘ruined’ is probably a ritual recitation: 7.104.9ab *yé pākaśaṃsāṃ vihāranta évair yé vā bhadráṃ dūṣāyanti svadhābhiḥ* “Who distort an innocent recitation in their ways, or who ruin a good one willfully...” If a ritual recitation can be ruined, so then can a ritual. The other example is in the notoriously problematic Vṛṣākapi hymn. In her study of this hymn, Jamison (1996: 78) translates the relevant lines in this way: 10.86.5ab *priyā taṣṭāni me kapir vyāktā vy ādūduṣat* “The monkey has spoiled my dear (well-)shaped and decorated things.” *Indrāṇī* is speaking, and her ‘things’ are her sexual organs. In both these verses, therefore, the things ruined are



perceptible objects: words or body parts. The interpretation of the *dhármāṇi* as rites carries a comparable concreteness.

If we understand 3.3.1 in this way, then 5.51.2 might be interpreted similarly. The verse addresses all the gods: 5.51.2 *ṛtadhītaya ā gata sátyadharmāṇo adhvarám / agnēḥ pibata jihváyā* “You whose insights are truth, come here. You whose foundations are real, (come) to the rite. Drink with the tongue of Fire.” Undoubtedly, the thoughts that the gods think are true, and the foundations that they institute are real. If the verse is so interpreted, *dhárman* might have the sense of ‘decree’ that it has in connection with Mitra and Varuṇa in 5.63.1 (below). The reference to the *ṛtá* ‘truth’ does bring the verse within the sphere of those sovereign gods, but even granting the possibility of this reading, a second interpretation of the verse is also implied. The ‘insights’ are typically the hymns that are recited to the gods, and therefore the ‘foundations’ could likewise be the ritual foundations that are established for the gods. This reading is particularly appropriate here at the beginning of a hymn, which is inviting the gods to come to the real and present rite that is being offered them. Supporting this second interpretation is also 1.12.7ab *kavīm agnīm úpa stuhi satyádharmaṇām adhvaré* “Praise the sage Fire, whose foundations are real at the rite.” Here the ‘real foundations’ are the ritual foundations that Fire creates at the ritual performance.

The possibility that *dhárman* has both a ritual and non-ritual significance is especially strong in 8.43.24 *viśám rájānam ádbhutam ádhyakṣam dhármaṇām imám, agnīm īle sá u śravat* “The undecivable king of the clans and overseer of the foundations, this one here, – / Fire, I reverently invoke: he will hear.” Since Fire is the ‘king of the clans,’ *dhárman* might also have a political sense and therefore designate the ‘decrees’ of a king. Oberlies (1999: 359), for example, notes that Fire is here similar to Varuṇa and translates, “Den König der Viś, diesen untrüglichen Aufseher der Ordnungen, Agni erquickte ich.” But *ádhyakṣa*, unlike *rájan*, is not a political term. In 10.129.7, the poet asks about the ‘overseer’ of the world and in 10.88.13, Agni Vaiśvānara, representing the sun, is the ‘overseer’ of the ‘marvel’ (*yakṣá*), although it is not clear what that marvel is.<sup>34</sup> The most suggestive parallel occurs in 10.128, which is an appeal for help in the contest of sacrifices. In the first verse, this appeal is made directly to Fire: 10.128.1 *mámāgne várco vihavésv astu vayám tvéndhānās tanvām puṣema / máhyaṁ namantām pradīśas cātasras tváyādhyaḥkṣeṇa pṛtanā jayema* “Fire, let luster be mine amid the competing calls. Kindling you, we would thrive ourselves. / Let the four directions pay rever-

ence to me. With you as overseer, we could win the contests.” The imagery is military, but the context is ritual, and here Fire is the overseer of the rite that the poet hopes will triumph over all other rites for the attention of the gods. I would suggest we have a similar context in 8.43.24, and once again, Fire is the overseer of the rites as ‘foundations.’ The verse would reflect Fire’s double role as the image of the priest and of the clan lord, who is the sacrificer.

The idea that Fire provides the foundations for the gods by carrying forward the sacrifice appears in 5.26.6 *samidhānāḥ sahasrajaḥ āgne dhārmāṇi puṣyasi devānāṃ dūtā ukthyāḥ* “Being fully kindled, o Fire who conquers thousands, you made the foundations thrive, as the praiseworthy messenger of the gods.” Elsewhere, the kinds of things that are ‘made to thrive’ are typically goods (*vāsūni*) and other things worth choosing (*vāryā[nī]*), so the ‘foundations’ should be a material thing that makes someone’s life better. Since this an address to the Fire, those things would reasonably be the ritual offerings, and those who are supported would be the gods. This interpretation is strengthened by the description of Fire as the ‘messenger of the gods,’ who carries the words and offerings to the gods. But with equal plausibility, these foundations could be the rewards, the ‘goods’ and ‘things worth choosing,’ that are earned by Fire’s efforts in the sacrifice, and the beings so rewarded could be humans. In the latter case, the ‘foundations’ would then be the possessions that are the foundations of human life or the sacrifice that produces such things.

### *Indra*

As Fire establishes foundations, so also can Indra, although in the one example, the nature of those foundations is undefined. Tentatively, I place it together with the other passages in which the foundations are foundations for the ritual: 8.98.1 *indrāya śāma gāyata viprāya brhaté brhāt / dharmakṛte vipaścite panasyāve* “To Indra sing the chant, a lofty (chant) to the lofty inspired poet, / to him that creates the foundations, that perceives poetic inspirations, and that draws admiration.” Scarlata (1999: 74) considers various possible ways of construing the passage. As he points out, it is possible that the first stem of the compound *dharmakṛt* is *dharmán*, rather than *dhárman*. In favor of this interpretation,  $\sqrt{kr}$  once (in 10.92.2) has *dharmán* as its acc. object,<sup>35</sup> but it never has *dhárman*. But while possible, this interpretation makes the passage even more obscure. Who would be the ‘givers of foundations’ that Indra makes? The priests? Or Fire?

Scarlata also cites 9.64.1 where  $\sqrt{dhā}$ , which can semantically parallel  $\sqrt{kr}$ , governs *dhárman*. In that passage, *dhárman* has the sense of a foundational authority, and that meaning too is possible here, although otherwise the contexts of the two passages are quite different. But the thing, and it is an admittedly slight thing, that makes me believe that *dhárman* in 8.98.1 refers to the ritual is its complement *vipaścít*, which can describe a ritual performer (cf. Scarlata, 1999: 122). Since *vipaścít* establishes a ritual context, I take *dharmakṛt* as meaning either that Indra creates ritual foundations (for the world) or that Indra creates foundations for the ritual.

### Summary

The best evidence for the interpretation of *dhárman* as a foundation for the ritual are the passages, such as 10.90.16, that speak of the ‘first foundations’ of the ritual, the ritual precedents which the present rituals follow. Later on, of course, it would be appropriate to speak of the ritual ‘ordinances,’ eventually formulated in the *sūtra* literature, but for the period of the *Rġveda*, in which the ritual was varied and fluid, such reference to ritual ordinances is an anachronism. The theme of the ritual’s foundations carries into Agni hymns, in which Fire is the *dharmán*, the one who gives foundation to the rites (10.21.3, 92.2). In other verses (e.g., 3.3.1, 8.43.24, and 5.26.6), however, the rites that Fire governs are themselves ‘foundations,’ those of the gods and of humans.

### DHÁRMAN AS THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

While many of the ‘foundations’ mentioned in the *Rġveda* have reference to the *soma* ritual, *dhárman* also means ‘foundation’ in the general sense of a universal, physical foundation, a foundation for all things or living beings. The earth is the ultimate foundation, since every object and living being rests upon the earth. A good example, if not entirely unproblematic, is 1.159.3 *té sūnávaḥ svápasah sudámsaso mahí jajñur mātārā pūrvácittaye / sthātús ca satyám jágataś ca dhármaṇi putrásya pāthaḥ padám ádvayāvinaḥ* “These their sons, of good deeds and very wondrous skills, have given birth to the two great parents who are to be attended to first.<sup>36</sup> / You two protect the real one upon the foundation of the standing and the moving, and (you protect) the track of your son who is free of deception.” The hymn addresses Heaven and Earth, who are the ‘two great parents.’

Two problems in this verse are the identities of their ‘sons’ in line a and their ‘son’ in line c. We can leave the first undecided. As Ge suggests, they could be the gods generally or they could be ancient seers, since either might be credited with the creation of Heaven and Earth. The identity of the ‘son’ is more critical to the interpretation of *dhárman*. According to one explanation of Sāyaṇa, their son is the sun. Ge notes that this interpretation is supported by 1.160.1 (below), but says that the son more likely refers to the living creature. Similarly, Re understands the son as a human son. But I think Sāyaṇa’s explanation is right, since it yields a perfectly coherent image of the sun moving across the sky and because it is appropriate to the context. That still leaves the question of the identification of the ‘real one’ in line c. It need not be the same as the ‘son’ in d, but if not, it should be closely connected with him. Most likely it refers to the Fire, who is ‘real’ because he is actually and immediately present in front of the reciter of the hymn and other participants in the rite. Elsewhere, Fire is the ‘real’ (1.1.5, 5.25.2), the ‘real sacrificer’ (3.14.1), and the ‘most real’ *hotar*-priest (1.76.5, 3.4.10). If so, then line c is a reference to the fire and d to the sun: the fire is on the earth, which is the foundation of both plants and animals, that is, ‘the standing and the moving,’ and the sun, to which the fire corresponds, is in the heaven.

The characterization of earth as the foundation also occurs in 10.16, which is a funeral hymn: 10.16.3 *sūryaṃ cákṣur gachatu vātam ātmā dyāṃ ca gacha prthivīm ca dhármaṇā* / *apó vā gacha yádi tátra te hitám ōṣadhīṣu práti tiṣṭhā śáriraiḥ* “Let your eye go to the sun, your life-breath to the wind. Go to heaven and to the earth according to your foundation, / or go to the waters, if there (a place) is fixed for you. Take your stand among the plants with your body parts.” Lines bc form two alternatives for the dead man: either he finds a place in heaven and earth or in the waters. The translation of line b is awkward and uncertain, but I believe the line means that the deceased should go to heaven and to earth with the earth (or heaven and earth) as his foundation. Note the parallelism in lines b and d. In d, the plants become the body parts of the deceased, as in b, the earth (or heaven and earth) become his foundation.

Heaven and earth together function as a foundation also for the sun, which moves between them. This is one sense of 1.160.1, although the verse is complicated because it may refer both to the sun and to its earthly equivalent, the ritual fire: 1.160.1 *té hí dyāvāprthivī viśvāsambhuva rtāvarī rájaso dhārayátkavī* / *sujánmanī dhiṣāṇe antár īyate devó devī dhármaṇā sūryaḥ súciḥ* “Because these are Heaven and

Earth, that are good luck to all, that are truth-bearing, and that give foundation to the sage of the airy space, / he goes between the two stations of strong birth, he the god (goes) between two gods, he, the blazing sun (goes) according to his foundation.” According to Ge (following one suggestion of Sāyaṇa) and Re, the ‘sage of the airy space’ is the sun. The sun is between Heaven and Earth, who give birth and foundation to it. Another possibility is suggested by Ol, who takes the sage to be the Fire. Now, clearly these two interpretations are not exclusive, since the ritual fire can represent the sun. If the ‘sage’ is first the Fire in line b, then line d is reenvisioning that Fire as the Sun. This interpretation would also relocate the main action and principal reference of the verse to the sacrificial ground. The two ‘stations’ (*dhiṣāṇe*) could refer to places in the ritual that represent earth and heaven, that is, to the fire places at the western and eastern ends of the *vedi*. The movement of the ‘sage’ between heaven and earth would therefore be reflected in the movement of the sacrificial fire from the west to the east, as well as in the movement of the sun from the east to the west. The ‘foundation,’ therefore, would be both the installation of the fire in the fire places as well as the foundation for the sun created by heaven and earth.

In 10.149, the god Savitar, rather than Heaven and Earth, establishes the foundation for the sun. This hymn presents a short cosmogony in which the sun is born on the foundation provided by Savitar: 10.149.3 *paścédām anyád abhavad yájatram ámartyasya bhúvanasya bhūná | suparṇó aṅgá savitúr garútmān púrvo jātāḥ sá u asyānu dhárma* “After this (world), the other, sacrificial (world) came to be, together with the coming to be of a world of living beings that is deathless. / Surely the strong-winged bird of Savitar was born first, following upon his (= Savitar’s) foundation.” As obscure as it is, this translation is clearer than the verse, and especially in ab, the translation makes several interpretive leaps. With some confidence, however, we can say that ab refers to the creation of this world, and possibly also to the creation of the world of the sacrifice and to the creation of the next world. On this cosmogonic level, Savitar’s ‘strong-winged bird’ is the sun, which here is the first created thing after heaven and earth (cf. Oberlies, 1998: 444). But this first creation rests on a foundation provided by Savitar himself. Savitar is associated with the onset of night, but he also brings the night to a close by sending the sun on its course and all the creatures to their various daylight activities (Oberlies, 1998: 222f.). Therefore, the verse depicts the birth of the sun, a birth which Savitar compels, even as he himself disappears.

The theme of the ‘foundation of the sun’ also occurs in 8.6.19f., which is a complex passage because it sustains metaphor through ellipsis. The result are verses that successfully defy exegetical determination: 8.6.19 *imās ta indra pṛśnayo ghṛtām duhata āśīram / enām rtāsya pipyūṣīḥ* // 20 *yā indra prasvās tvāśā gārbham ācakriran / pári dhármeva sūryam* “These dappled (cows)<sup>37</sup> yield ghee and the milk-mix for you, Indra, / (and also) this, (a milk-mix)<sup>38</sup> of truth,<sup>39</sup> since they are swelling (with truth), // – (they, the) fruitful (cows), that have made you their new-born by their mouth, (are) around (you?) like foundations<sup>40</sup> (around) the sun.” With the understanding that any interpretation of this verse is a risky enterprise, I understand it in the following way. The insights embedded in the hymns are the ‘dappled’ and ‘fruitful’ cows, which bring Indra into manifestation at the sacrifice (Oberlies, 1998: 276ff.). Since they bring him to manifestation, they therefore give birth to him, who is their ‘new-born’ child, and they surround him, for indeed the hymns do surround Indra. ‘Their mouth’ is the mouth of a cow licking clean a new-born calf, and the mouth of the priest who recites the hymns. Finally, because they give birth to him, these cows and hymns are his foundations.<sup>41</sup> Since Indra is like the sun, therefore, the cows and hymns are like foundations for the sun. The reference to the foundations of the sun may suggest a mystery: What holds the sun up in the heavens? It must have a foundation, even if it is not a visible one.

An unnamed god gives birth and foundation to the world in 10.121.9 *mā no himsīj janitā yāḥ pṛthivyā yó vā divaṃ satyádharṃ jājana / yās cāpās candrā brhatīr jajāna kásmā devāya havīṣā vidhema* “Let not him, who is the birth-father of earth, do us harm, or him – the one whose foundations are real – who gave birth to heaven, / and him who gave birth to the glittering, deep waters. Who is the god to whom we should do homage with our oblation?” Since the emphasis in this verse is constantly on the unnamed god as the birth-giver of the world, *satyádharman* should refer to the foundations that this god establishes, the foundations upon which heaven and all the rest of the world depend.

There is one final passage that is intriguing because, on one level, at least, it suggests a more common sense of ‘foundation.’ This verse is 2.13.7 which likely refers to the ‘foundation’ of plants. The verse addresses Indra: 2.13.7 *yāḥ puṣpīṇś ca prasvās ca dhármañádhi dāne vy āvánūr ádhārayaḥ / yās cāsamā ajano didyúto divá urúr ūrvām abhítaḥ śásy ukthyāḥ* “You, who distributed (*vi...adhārayas*) the flowering and fruitful (plants)<sup>42</sup> according to the foundation (of each)

and the streams at their division (?),<sup>43</sup> and you, who produced the incomparable flashings of heaven, you, the wide one surrounding the containing ones,<sup>44</sup> you are the praiseworthy.” *Dhárman* here draws and plays on *vi* +  $\sqrt{dhr}$ , and represents the basis for the plants’ distribution. But a variety of interpretations are then possible. The *dhárman* could belong to Indra, and therefore be the ‘ordinance’ according to which he assigns them their place. In this interpretation, Indra’s command is their foundation. Or the *dhárman* could belong to the plants, in which case the ‘foundation’ could be the place where each kind of plant belongs. I think the latter is the least freighted interpretation. The ‘foundation’ of the plants is therefore the place of the plants.

#### *Summary*

With the exception of 2.13.7, the above passages refer to various kinds of cosmic and physical foundations. Both the living (1.159.3) and the dead (10.16.3) find foundations on heaven or earth or both. The sun especially finds a foundation (8.6.19f.), which may be on heaven and earth (1.160.1) or through the god Savitar (10.149.3). These uses of the term illustrate the breadth of *dhárman* and suggest that the liturgical sense of the term considered earlier is a reflection of the character of the *Rgveda* rather than that of the word *dhárman* itself.

#### DHÁRMAN AS THE ‘FOUNDATION’ OR ‘NATURE’ OF A DEITY

In the passages considered thus far, the sense of *dhárman* as ‘foundation’ has been directly applicable. What follows are passages, in which occur more extended senses of *dhárman*. These fall into two groups. In one, *dhárman* has the sense of the foundation of a deity, or more clearly, the ‘foundational nature’ of a deity. In a second, *dhárman* is the social and material ‘foundation’ provided by the authority of a king. It is not always easy to separate these senses from the more concrete meaning of ‘foundation,’ nor indeed from one another – a hardly surprising circumstance in a poetic collection like the *Rgveda*. In fact, already in the discussion of the ritual foundations of Soma, especially with regard to 9.7.7, 86.5, and 110.4, I argued that *dhárman* might refer to the nature of *soma* that is created in the ritual, as well as to its ritual foundation. Since the boundaries that separate these different senses are permeable, the following passages

are those that show the senses of ‘foundational nature’ or ‘foundational authority’ more distinctly, rather than exclusively.

Both Renou and Geldner frequently recognize *dhárman* in the sense of ‘nature’ in their translations, indeed more emphatically and frequently than I. But they are surely right that there are passages which refer to deities’ foundations in the sense of their ‘natures.’ In 10.44, the poet twice speaks of the ‘foundation’ of Indra, the character that defines his action: 10.44.1 *ā yātv indraḥ svápatir mādāya yó dhármanā tūtujānás túviṣmān | pratvakṣāṇó áti víśvā sáhāmsy apāréṇa mahatā vṛṣṇyena* “As the lord of his own, let Indra journey here for his invigoration – he, the vibrant, who thrusts forward according his nature (‘foundation’),/ who energetically dominates<sup>45</sup> over all strengths according to his boundless and great bull-likeness.” The parallelism in case and construction of *dhármanā* in b and *vṛṣṇyena* in d suggest that both belong to Indra and both define who and what he is. A few verses later, *dhárman* once again appears, although here the sense is less well defined: 10.44.5 *gámann asmé vásūny ā hí sámśiṣam svāśiṣam bháram ā yāhi somínaḥ | tvám īśiṣe sásminn ā satsi barhīsy anādhṛsyā táva pātrāṇi dhármanā* “Let good things go among us, for I hope for them. Journey here to the *soma*-bearer’s stake,<sup>46</sup> which carries his good expectation.<sup>47</sup>/ You are master. Take your seat here on this sacred grass. Vessels which belong to you are not to be claimed (by another) according to your nature (‘foundation’).” The focus of cd is still the character of Indra: the verse states that he is master and therefore the poets invite him to sit at the sacrifice. It would be reasonable, then, if the *dhárman* is that principle according to which the *soma* cups belong to Indra and to Indra alone in his foundational nature, his very character as Indra. Alternatively, these vessels may be Indra’s according to *their* foundation, that is, according to their place in the ritual.

One of the problems regarding the sense of *dhárman* as the nature of a deity is the rather limited number of deities of whom it is used. In addition to the passages in which it describes the character of Indra, those considered earlier in which it might refer to the nature of Soma, and those to be considered in which it might refer to the natures of Mitra and Varuṇa, the sense of *dhárman* as ‘foundational nature’ appears distinctly only in connection with Savitar. The latter especially is not a major deity of the *Rgveda*, and yet there are four passages in which *dhárman* is the ‘nature’ of Savitar. The reason for this is the transparency of Savitar, or rather, the transparency of Savitar’s name. Consider, for example, 10.175.1 *prá vo grāvāṇaḥ*



*savitā devāḥ suvatu dhármaṇā / dhūrṣú yuyyadhvaṃ sunutá* “Let the god Savitar (Compeller) compel you forth, pressing stones, according to his nature (‘foundation’). / Hitch yourselves to the chariot poles. Press the *soma*!” Renou has this verse exactly right: “selon sa disposition innée (de dieu Incitateur).” ‘Compelling’ is the foundational nature of the god ‘Compeller,’ and therefore it is according to that nature that Savitar compels the pressing stones. This verse is echoed later in the same hymn and to the same effect: 10.175.4 *grāvāṇaḥ savitā nú vo devāḥ suvatu dhármaṇā / yájamānāya sunvaté* “Pressing stones, let the god Savitar compel you according to his nature (‘foundation’)/ for the sacrificer who presses *soma*.” Again, it is the character of Compeller to govern the movement of the pressing stones.

Two other verses from the core *Rgveda* show the same idea, although not as obviously as in 10.175. The first is 4.53.3 *āprā rájāṃsi divyāni pāṛthivā ślókāṃ devāḥ kṛṇute svāya dhármaṇe / prā bāhū asrāk savitā sāvīmani niveśāyan prasuvānn aktúbhir jágat* “He has filled the heavenly and earthly realms. The god sets their rhythm to his own nature (‘foundation’). / Savitar has stretched forth his two arms to compel, as he makes the moving world settle down and compels it forth at night’s darkest hours.” Lines cd depict Savitar as the god that brings the world to rest during the night, and then, in the dark hours before dawn, that begins to rouse it once again. This rhythm reflects his nature as the god that compels both rest and activity, and therefore the verse says that he sets that rhythm to his own nature.

A fourth example presents the most complicated (and doubtful) case: 5.81.4 *utá yāsi savitas trīṇi rocanótá sūryasya raśmībhiḥ sám ucyasi / utá rátrīm ubhayátaḥ pāṛiyasa, utá mītró bhavasi deva dhármabhiḥ* “And you travel, Savitar, through the three realms of light, and you abide with sun’s rays. / And you encircle the night on both sides, and you become Mitra, o god, according to (your)<sup>48</sup> nature (‘foundations’).” In its interpretation of *dhárman*, this translation essentially follows Ge: “und du bist nach deinen Eigenschaften der Mitra” and Re ‘de par (tes) dispositions-naturelles.’ The question remains, however, how the verse fits together. Why is Savitar Mitra, or, to rather, why is the god that compels also the god of alliances? Lines a-c describe Savitar as embracing the two ends of the day, the beginning and end of night. In doing so, he conjoins those times, as an alliance between them would do. Because his uniting day and night is a reflection of his nature as the god that compels, he becomes, as the compeller, also the god of alliance. Alternatively, the verse might be read: “according to his (= Mitra’s) nature.” This latter

interpretation gives the verse a slightly difference nuance. Insofar as Savitar acts as the god of alliances by uniting the space and time, he becomes the god of alliances according to the nature of Mitra.

In addition to these passages, there is a repeated line that compares an object or being to Savitar because it and Savitar share the same foundational nature, the ability to compel or impel. The first instance is from the gambler hymn, 10.34, in a verse that compares the dice to Savitar: 10.34.8 *tripañcāśāḥ krīṇati vrāta eṣāṃ devā iva savitā satyādharmaṃ / ugrāsya cin manyāve nā namante rājā cid ebhyo náma ít kṛṇoti* “Three times fifty in number, the army of these (dice) plays. Like god Savitar’s, its foundation is real. / They do not bow even to the battle-fury of the powerful; even the king does homage to them.” Were it not so awkward, I would like to translate: “Like god Savitar’s, its (Savitar-like) foundation is real” or “its (Savitar-like) nature is real” because the point is not that both Savitar and the army of dice each have a real foundation, but that they each have the *same* real foundation, the same ability to compel. As the nature of Savitar is to compel, so also the dice too have become a compulsion for the gambler. The second verse is 10.139.3 *rāyó budhnāḥ saṃgámano vásūnāṃ víśvā rūpābhī caṣṭe śácībhiḥ / devā iva savitā satyádharmaṃ ná tásthau samaré dhánānām* “The basis of wealth and the gathering of goods, (the sun) watches over all visible things through his powers. / Whose foundation is real like god Savitar’s, he stands like Indra in the contest for the stakes.” This verse anticipates the merging of the identities of Savitar and the sun, for it attributes to the sun the nature of Savitar. Like a Savitar, the sun impels those whom he wishes to win in the contest for goods that he oversees.

### *Summary*

The sense of *dhárman* as the ‘foundational nature’ of a deity is a difficult one to judge. It may be more prominent than I have allowed. In the above discussion of the *dhárman* of Soma, for example, I have mentioned this possibility in connection with five passages (9.7.7, 107.24, 97.12, 25.2, 63.22) and could have done so with others. But I am inclined to restrict this sense of *dhárman* primarily to contexts in which the foundational nature of a god is manifest in the god’s name. This is certainly the case for Savitar, whose character is so transparent that he is often marked as *devā savitrī* ‘god Compeller,’ where *devā* makes it clear his identity as a god. This same transparency to a foundational nature of a god and therefore the use of *dhárman* to

describe that foundational nature may also be the case for Mitra and Varuṇa, whom we will consider below. Where a god's names are less transparent or their characters more complex, I would expect this use of *dhárman* to be less frequent. It is not absent, however, since *dhárman* may describe the nature of Indra in 10.44.1, 5.

#### DHÁRMAN AS THE FOUNDATION CREATED BY A SOVEREIGN DEITY

The last sense in which *dhárman* is a 'foundation' is the most significant, for it is on this sense that much of the later development of *dhárman* and *dhárma* is established. A *dhárman* can be the 'foundation' through which a sovereign deity upholds the life of a community. This foundation can be the material basis for the community, or it can be prescribed behaviors and social relations which structure and sustain the community. In the latter use, it is the sovereign's ruling 'authority' or 'institute' – and in these ways it may often and best be translated – upon which the life of a community depends. This use of the term is largely confined to the spheres of two deities, or rather of one deity and one complex of deities: the first is Soma and the second, Varuṇa or Varuṇa together with Ādityas.

#### *Soma*

In the case of Soma we have some of the clearer instances of the link between *dhárman* and a ruler. In them, the 'foundation' that the rule provides is likely the material foundation for the community, the wealth which sustains it. The text is not unarguably clear on this point, but the context suggests this interpretation in two verses and permits it in a third. The first is 9.35.6 *vísvo yásya vraté jáno dādhāra dhármaṇas páteḥ / punānāsya prabhūvasoḥ* "Under whose command every people finds foundation (√*dhṛ*),<sup>49</sup> under that of the lord of foundation, / who is purifying himself, who brings the foremost good things..." The foundation that the community finds and Soma governs might be a system of social relations, but since Soma is here invoked as *prabhūvasu*, it is more likely material. In either case, the verse establishes the link between the authority of Soma and the basis for communal life. He is the *dhármaṇas pátiḥ* because he possesses royal 'command,' and therefore establishes the foundations for the people. A similar connection between command and foundation occurs in 9.64.1 *vṛṣā soma dyumān asi vṛṣā deva vṛṣavrataḥ / vṛṣā dhármāṇi dadhiṣe* "A bull you are, *soma*, a brilliant one – a bull,

whose command is a bull, o god. / A bull, you set the foundations.” Again, Soma possesses command, and it is through that command that he establishes ‘foundations,’ although here the passage provides little information about the nature of these foundations. Finally, a connection between kingship and the material foundation of a community occurs in one of the attestations of *dharmán* ‘foundation-giver’: 9.97.23 *prá dānudó divyó dānupinvá rtám rtāya pavate sumedhāh | dharmā bhuvaḥ vrjanyasya rājā prá raśmibhir daśábhīr bhāri bhūma* “The divine giver of drops, sweller of drops, (goes) forth. As the truth and for the truth, the very wise one purifies himself. / He will become the foundation-giver, the king of what belongs to the community. He has been brought forward toward the world by the ten reins.” It is the king who is the foundation-giver, for he governs what belongs to the community, that is, its wealth. The precise sense *vrjanyā* is not certain because it is attested only here in the *Rgveda*, but an earlier verse in this same hymn provides an indication of its sense. Here Soma, as lord of the community, conquers the land and thereby gives the people the space to live: 9.97.10cd *hānti rákṣo bādhatē páry áráṭīr vārivaḥ kṛṇvān vrjānasya rājā* “He strikes down the demon, and he presses away hostilities on every side – he who, as king of the community, creates expanse.” Soma’s kingship is connected to his ability to give his people the means to raise and pasture their cattle.

#### *Mitra, Varuṇa, and the Ādityas*

Frequently, *dhárman* occurs in close association with Varuṇa, Varuṇa and Mitra, or the Ādityas and is, therefore, characteristic of the sphere of the Ādityas. While it does not give us much information about the reason for *dhárman*’s connection to Mitra and Varuṇa, 8.35.13 does illustrate how characteristic that connection is: 8.35.13 *mitrāvāruṇavantā utá dhārmavantā marútvantā jaritúr gachatho hávam | sajóṣasā uśásā sūryeṇa cādityáir yātam ásvinā* “Together with Mitra and Varuṇa and together with (their) foundation, together with the Maruts, you go to the singer’s call. / Along with Dawn and Sun, journey with the Ādityas, Ásvins.” Here *dhárman* is something that Mitra and Varuṇa would naturally bring with them when they respond to the singer’s summons. It belongs to them as closely as the dawn and sun belong to the Ásvins, gods who appear characteristically in the early morning.

For the most part, when it is linked to Mitra and Varuṇa, *dhárman* carries the sense of a foundational authority. The reason for this rests not so much in the semantic resonance that *dhárman* independently possesses, but rather in the character of the Ādityas. These are the gods most closely associated with the principles that govern the actions of humans. Varuṇa is the god of commandments and Mitra is the god of alliances.<sup>50</sup> The distinct characters of these gods then give color to the more neutral *dhárman* and define the kind of ‘foundation’ it describes, and thus, *dhárman* becomes ‘the foundation of authority’ that structures society.

This interpretation of *dhárman* leads to another explanation, or at least another nuance, of the relationship between *dhárman* and Mitra and Varuṇa. Since they represent the authority of alliances and commandments, their ‘foundation,’ that is, their nature, is to represent this authority, just as the nature of Savitar is to compel. When the poets speak of the *dhárman* of Mitra and Varuṇa, therefore, this *dhárman* can be both the foundational authority that orders the social worlds of gods and humans and the foundational nature that defines the Ādityas themselves. These two sides of *dhárman* are possible in two occurrences in 5.63: vs. 1ab *ṛtasya gopāṁ ádhi tiṣṭhatho rátham sátyadharmānā paramé vyòmani* “Herdsman of the truth, you two stand upon your chariot, o you whose foundations are real, in the furthest heaven” and vs. 7 *dhármanā mitrāvaruṇā vipaścītā vratā raksethe ásurasya māyāyā | ṛténa víśvam bhúvanam ví rājathah sūryam ā dhattho diví cítryam rátham* “In accordance with your foundation, o Mitra and Varuṇa, who perceive inspired words, you two guard your commands through the craft of a lord. / In accordance with truth, you rule over the whole living world. You place the sun here in heaven as your shimmering chariot.” *Dhármanā* could be explained in two different ways. First, it could be that in accordance with the foundation they provide, Mitra and Varuṇa guard the commands which keep the world in order. This foundation is their authority, the standard they impose on the world. Note that *dhármanā* finds a positional, syntactic, and semantic parallel in *ṛténa*, the truth that expresses the right organization of the world. Second, *dhárman* could signify the foundations of Mitra and Varuṇa as the embodiments of the authority to govern. It would then be according to their own foundation that Mitra and Varuṇa guard their commands. Note especially the appearance of *vratā*. Etymologically, it is connected to Varuṇa, which again suggests that it is especially his nature or ‘foundation’ as god of commands that is manifest in the

“foundation” or authority according to which Mitra and he govern the world.

Similar arguments apply also to 5.72.2ab *vraténa stho dhruvákṣemā dhármanā yātayájjanā* “By your command, you two are those that give peaceful dwellings that endure, assigning places to the people according to your foundation.” This time *vraténa* expresses the general authority of the Mitra and Varuṇa to ensure that people can dwell in peace, and *dhármanā* expresses their foundational authority to organize the different peoples. Note that ‘assigning places to the people’ is a function particularly connected with Mitra (cf. Thieme, 1957: 40f.). The appearance of *vratá* and *yātayájjana*, terms that reflect the characters of Mitra and Varuṇa, again suggests that the *dhárman* according to which they act is both their foundation as well as the foundational authority they apply to the world.

The Ādityas are kings, and the connection between royalty and *dhárman* is a constant in verses describing the *dhárman* of the Ādityas. A complex but informative example is 10.65.5 *mitráya śikṣa váruṇāya dāśúṣe yá samrájā mánasā ná prayúchataḥ | yáyor dhāma dhármanā rócate brhád yáyor ubhé ródasī nādhasī vṛtau* “Strive for the sake of Mitra and of Varuṇa who acts dutifully, for them, the universal kings who, through their thought, are not far away, / whose dominion shines aloft according to their foundation, for whom the two worlds are twin need<sup>51</sup> and twin course.” Ge rightly notes that the *dhāman* ‘dominion’ of Mitra and Varuṇa is probably, in one sense at least, the sun. Therefore, *dhárman* is a ‘foundation’ for the sun as the symbol of their rule. Thus, *dhárman* has a double resonance. On the one hand, since Mitra and Varuṇa are kings, their foundation is their authority. On the other, the hymn recalls also the image of *dhāman* as the cosmic foundation for the sun. More generally, though, *dhāman* might refer to the whole heavenly sphere over which Mitra and Varuṇa rule and to which they give foundation by their dutiful action as gods of alliance and commandment.

Both Soma and Varuṇa occur as kings and in connection with *dhárman* in 10.167.3 *sómasya rájño váruṇasya dhármaṇi bṛhaspáter anumatyā u śármaṇi | távāhám adyá maghavann úpastutau dhātar vídhātaḥ kalásām abhakṣayam* “Upon the foundation of king Soma and Varuṇa,<sup>52</sup> and under the protection of Bṛhaspati and Anumati, / today, at your praise, o generous one (= Indra), I consumed vats (of *soma*), o you that set in place and that set apart.” Note the implicit locational imagery. On top is the ‘cover’ (*śárman*) provided by

Brhaspati and Anumati and below the ‘foundation’ created by Soma and Varuṇa. Their designation as kings implies that the *dhárman* of Soma and Varuṇa is their royal authority. And perhaps, their appearance together reflects the complementary sides of their *dhárman*: Soma establishes material foundation, Varuṇa social foundation.

Soma and Varuṇa appear together only rarely, but given the repeated connections between Soma and *dhárman* and between Varuṇa and *dhárman*, it is not surprising that Soma and Varuṇa, when they do appear together, do so in the context of *dhárman*: 9.107.15f. *tárat samudrám pávamāna ūrmīṇā rājā devá rtám brhát | árṣan mitrásya váruṇasya dhármaṇā prá hinvāná rtám brhát || nṛbhir yemānó haryató vicakṣaṇó rājā devāḥ samudríyaḥ* “He crosses the sea in a wave as he purifies himself, he that is king and god – and lofty truth. / He rushes according to the foundation of Mitra and Varuṇa, being sped forth – he, the lofty truth<sup>53</sup> // – he, that is controlled by fine men, the enjoyed, the far-gazing, the king and god of the sea.” Here *dhárman* shows its underlying meaning as the foundation upon which Soma travels. But that foundation is also the foundation that Mitra and Varuṇa provide, their authority. The reference to *dhárman* is also conditioned by these verses’ insistence on the kingship of Soma. Soma moves on a foundation of royal authority because he is himself a manifestation of kingship.

A concrete sense of *dhárman* as ‘foundational authority’ occurs in 7.89.5 *yát kíṃ cedám varuṇa daívye jáne ’bhidrohám manuṣyáś cārāmāsi | ácitī yát táva mā nas tásmād énaso deva rīṣaḥ* “Whatever this deceit that we humans practice against the race of gods, Varuṇa, / if by inattention we have erased your foundations, do not harm us because of that misdeed, o god.” The foundations the poets worry about effacing, therefore, are precisely those foundations we would expect the god of commandments and the embodiment of royal authority to create – his institutes, his commands. The context of the verse speaks strongly for this interpretation. In 10.134.7a *nákir devā minīmasi nákir á yopayāmasi, √yup*, which governs *dhárman* in 7.89, parallels *√mī* (or *√mī*). This later verb characteristically governs the *vratá* and, in that context, means ‘violate’ these ‘commands’ of the gods (cf. 1.69.7, 2.24.12, 38.7, 3.32.8, 7.31.11, 47.3, 76.5, 10.10.5, etc.). The phrase *dhármā yuyopimá*, therefore, likely reproduces the sense of *vratā(ni) + √mī*, and thus *dhárman* approximates the meaning of *vratá* ‘command.’ The *dhármans* are commands as manifestations of royal authority.

In the passages so far considered, either Varuṇa appears alone or in conjunction with Mitra. In one example, however, Mitra appears without Varuṇa: 8.52.3 *yá ukthá kévalā dadhé yáh sómaṃ dhr̥ṣitāpibat / yásmāi viṣṇus tr̥ṇi padā vicakramá úpa mitrásya dhármanabhiḥ* “He (= Indra) who made the solemn words his own, who boldly drank the soma, / for whom Viṣṇu strode his three steps, according to the foundations of Mitra...” The image of ascent is one basis for the occurrence of *dhárman* here, since it implies the need for a foundation for that ascent. But the *dhárman* is only figuratively a physical foundation. The real foundation of Viṣṇu’s ascent is his relationship with Indra. The ‘foundations of Mitra’, that is, the foundations of the god of alliances, refer here to the alliance between Indra and Viṣṇu, which is the basis of Viṣṇu’s three strides.

This same combination of *dhárman* in the sense of a foundational authority with the imagery of *dhárman* as a physical foundation appears in another passage concerning Viṣṇu: 1.22.18-19ab *tr̥ṇi padā ví cakrame viṣṇur gopā ádābhyah / áto dhármāni dhārāyan // viṣṇoḥ kármāni paśyata yáto vratāni paspaśé* “Three tracks he strode out: he, Viṣṇu, the undecivable cowherd, / who gives foundation ( $\sqrt{\text{dhr}}$ ) to the foundations from there // – see the deeds of Viṣṇu! – from where he watches over his commands.” The ‘there’ from which Viṣṇu ‘gives foundation’ is probably heaven, but this still leaves the problem of identifying the ‘foundations.’ The reference to Viṣṇu’s *vratāni*, his ‘commands’, sets this verse within the context of royal authority and again of Varuṇa. The ‘foundations’ to which Viṣṇu gives foundation, therefore, are his authority. At the same time, however, again as in 8.52.3, the imagery and the context also suggest the sense of *dhárman* as a physical and universal foundation. The verse preceding this passage describes the journey of Viṣṇu through the world: vs. 17 *idám viṣṇur ví cakrame tredhā ní dadhe padám / sámūlham asya pāmsuré* “Viṣṇu strode out – three times he set down his track – through this (world) here, / which is drawn together in his dusty (track).” That is to say, the world is encompassed in the footprints of Viṣṇu. In vs. 18, the scene shifts explicitly to heaven, which is the limit of Viṣṇu’s journey. Viṣṇu thus makes heaven the foundation for the worlds. Thus, while the primary sense of *dhárman* is a foundational authority, the poet again evokes its sense as a physical foundation.

A similar complex deployment of *dhárman* occurs also in 6.70.1-3, where again the context requires a double sense of a foundational authority and of a physical foundation:



6.70.1 *ghrtávaṭi bhūvanānām abhiśrīyorvī prthvī madhudúghe supéśasā / dyāvāprthivī varuṇasya dhármanā viśkabhite ajāre bhūiretasā* “The two rich in ghee and excelling in glory over living beings, wide and broad, giving honey as their milk, well-adorned – / Heaven and Earth are buttressed apart according to the foundation of Varuṇa as the pair that are never aging, endowed with abundant semen.”

6.70.2 *ásaścantī bhūridhāre páyasvaṭi ghrtāṃ duhāte sukrīte śúcivrate / rájanī asyā bhūvanasya rodaṣī asmé rétaḥ siñcataṃ yān mánurhitam* “Never dry, with abundant streams, and rich in milk, they give ghee as their milk to him that performs well – they of flame-bright commands. / You two worlds that rule over this living world, may you pour the semen for us which was established for Manu.”

6.70.3 *yó vām rjāve krāmaṇāya rodaṣī mārto dadāśa dhiṣane sá sādhati / prá prajābhir jāyate dhármaṇas pári yuvóḥ siktā viśurūpāni sávrata* “Who has acted dutifully toward you in order to stride straight ahead – o you two worlds, you two stations – that mortal attains success. / He is regenerated through his offspring from your foundation. Beings of varied form but of like command are poured out from you.”

The first verse tells of the foundations of Heaven and Earth. This foundation is the authority of Varuṇa that determines their place and their distinction from one another.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, mention of heaven and earth and of the foundations of heaven and earth also puts the verse in the context of the physical foundations of the world. The authority of Varuṇa becomes materially sensible in the stability of the worlds. The second verse mentions the commands of Mitra and Varuṇa and the theme is carried over into the third verse, in which, in complement to the first, *dhárman* becomes a temporal as well as a spatial foundation. Earth and Heaven, paralleling their function as physical foundations for the present world, are also the foundations for future generations. Because of the worshipper’s reverence, the two worlds continue the life of that mortal through his offspring by providing them a foundation, a place for them to be and to prosper.<sup>55</sup> At the same time, *dhárman* in vs. 3 does not only have the sense of a physical foundation for generations. Again, consider the context. The sense of *dhárman* as foundational authority is established in the first verse by its association with Varuṇa, and *vrata* occurs in both vs. 2 and in the compound *sávrata* in vs. 3. Heaven and Earth inherit the characteristic *dhárman* of Varuṇa, the authority that here ordains the continuation of the sacrificer’s line.

Moreover, 6.70.3c is repeated twice more in verses which again suggest the sense of *dhárman* as ‘foundational authority.’ In the first of these, Mitra and Varuṇa create the foundation for future generations: 8.27.16 *prá sá kṣáyaṃ tirate ví mahīr īṣo yó vo várāya dāśati / prá prajābhir jāyate dhármaṇas páry áriṣṭaḥ sárva edhate* “He extends his dwelling forward across great refreshments – he, who dutifully acts to your wish. He is regenerated through his offspring from your

foundation. Never harmed and whole, he thrives.” In the second, it is the Ādityas: 10.63.13 *āriṣṭaḥ sā mārto víśva edhate, prá prajābhir jāyate dhármaṇas pári / yám ādityāso náyathā sunītíbhīr, áti víśvāni duritā svastáye* “Never harmed, each mortal thrives, and he is regenerated through his offspring from your foundation, / whom, Ādityas, you lead with your good leading beyond all difficult ways to well-being.” The function of Varuṇa and Mitra that was assumed by Heaven and Earth in 6.70 is here reassumed by those gods in these two verses. At the same time, the foundation that their authority provides is figured as a physical foundation upon which later generations stand.

### *Wind*

One last verse that I find difficult to interpret, let alone classify, is 1.134.5 *túbhyaṃ śukrásaḥ śúcayas turanyávo mádeṣūgrā iṣanta bhurvány apām iṣanta bhurvāni / tvám tsārī dásamāno bhágam īṭṭe takvaviye / tvám víśvasmād bhúvanāt pāsi dhármaṇāsurayāt pāsi dhármaṇā* “For you the glistening, gleaming rapid ones, powerful in their invigorations, send themselves swirling; they send themselves towards the swirling of waters. / The one moving stealthily [= the priest?], exhausting himself, calls upon you, his fortune, in his pursuit of the swooping (bird) [= *soma*?]. / You, because of the whole living world, protect according to your foundation; you, because of your lordliness, protect according to your foundation.” Since this verse is addressing the wind, I take it as a description of the movement of the *soma* through the midspace in the process of purification.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps this verse again reflects the idea that the wind, which seems to have no foundation, actually does. Its foundation is both all living beings, since breath is located within them, and also its own lordliness. In the latter context, therefore, this passage again attests the connection between rule and *dhárman*.

### *Summary*

This sense of *dhárman* as ‘foundational authority’ is a critical source for the later development of the concept of *dhárma*, and in considering this aspect of *dhárman* several points relevant to the history of *dhárman* and *dhárma* emerge. First, *dhárman* implies not just ‘foundational authority’ but more specifically ‘royal authority.’ This facet of its meaning is indicated either by the direct description of the gods

that act in connection with *dhárman* as kings (9.97.23, 5.63.7, 10.65.5, 10.167.3, 9.107.15f., 1.134.5) or by attributing commanding authority to them (as in 9.35.6, 9.64.1, 5.72.2, 1.22.18f., 6.70.1ff., cf. 7.89.5).

It is not difficult to explain directly how *dhárman* ‘foundation’ could come to mean ‘foundational authority’ or ‘institute.’ If an ‘authority’ is the basis of relationships among different beings or for the organization of the world, then it is a ‘foundation’. The fact that *dhárman* as ‘authority’ is persistently connected to Varuṇa and *vratá*, however, suggests that it is at least partly the character of Varuṇa that invests *dhárman* with the specific sense of authority. As we have seen, *dhárman* can mean the ‘foundational nature’ of a deity. This sense occurs especially in connection with Savitar, whose name transparently displays his nature as the Compeller. Varuṇa’s name is etymologically related to *vratá* ‘command, commandment’, and the R̥gvedic poets were aware that Varuṇa embodies *vratá* and is defined by *vratá*. As Savitar is the Compeller, so Varuṇa is the god of commands. When Varuṇa (typically together with Mitra) acts in accordance with *dhárman* (cf. 5.63.7, 72.2), or when other gods (cf. 10.65.5, 6.70.1, 9.107.15) and humans (cf. 10.167.3, 7.89.5) act by or on his *dhárman*, his ‘authority’, that *dhárman* also expresses *his* foundation, *his* nature, as the god of commands. Since the nature of Varuṇa is defined by *vratá*, predictably *vratá* appears in close proximity to *dhárman* (5.63.7, 72.2, 6.70.1ff., and cf. 7.89.5).

Even if *dhárman* describes a foundational authority primarily in association with Varuṇa, nonetheless, already in the younger sections of the R̥gveda, it carries this sense in part independently of Varuṇa. The obvious case is that of the *dhárman*, the ‘foundation’ that Soma establishes for human communities. Two features of *dhárman* motivate this use. First, as we have observed, *dhárman* in other senses is frequently connected with *soma*. Second, the instances in which Soma is associated with *dhárman* are often contexts involving Varuṇa or *vratá* or are suggestive of Varuṇa. In 10.167.3, ritual consumption of *soma* occurs on the ‘foundation’ of kings Soma and Varuṇa. In 9.35.6, Soma’s command (*vratá*) provides a foundation and in 9.64.1, he sets foundations through his command. In other instances too, Varuṇa is not far when other gods possess *dhárman* as ‘foundational authority’. Normally paired with Varuṇa, Mitra alone appears with *dhárman* in 8.52.3, where the *dhárman* is foundation constituted by an alliance. Parallel to the relation between Varuṇa and command, alliance is both the foundation of Mitra and the foundation that Mitra establishes. Finally, in 1.134.5, Wind protects through a

‘foundation’ because of his ‘lordship’ (*asuryá*). Although various gods are called *ásura*, Varuṇa is characteristically such a ‘lord’, and therefore this term once again places the passages within a Varuṇa context.

The close connection between *vratá* and *dhárman* had consequences for the future development of both terms. To a significant degree, *dhárma* inherits the functions of R̥gvedic *vratá* ‘command’, while the word *vratá* itself becomes circumscribed to a ‘vow.’ Why this development occurs is a difficult question, but it may reflect the changing nature of the state during the Vedic period. The *dhárman* as a physical foundation of the world and of living beings would lend concreteness and legitimacy to the *dhárman* as royal and foundational authority. Moreover, while *vratás* rest on the personal authority of kings and sovereign gods in the *R̥gveda*, *dhárman*, and certainly later *dhárma*, have universal application. As rule was institutionalized in India, therefore, *dhárman* may have become the anchor for a broader claim of authority by rulers, an authority that ultimately reflects the very foundation of the world. This claim, therefore, could have contributed to the replacement of *vratá* by *dhárman* in the political sphere.

We might posit a similar development in case of another term of the old Indo-Iranian religious vocabulary, *ṛtá*. After the early Vedic period, *ṛtá*, ‘truth’ has part of its semantic space occupied by *satyá* ‘real, true’ and part by *dhárma*. In the *R̥gveda*, the ‘truth’ defines the functions of both gods and humans, the structure of the ritual, and the general order of things. These spheres resemble those of the *dhárman*, which, as we have seen, can signify the foundations of gods, humans, ritual, and world. But *dhárman* and *dhárma* came to be more closely connected to sovereigns, while *ṛtá* was less so. To describe the order of the world through *dhárma*, therefore, linked it more specifically to rulers and ruling authority than to describe it through *ṛtá*. Thus, a growing authority of the king may have made *dhárma* a seemingly more realistic description of the governing principle of the world.

#### CONCLUSIONS

At the end of his article, Horsch helpfully laid out a summary of his conclusions concerning the early history of *dhárman*. In order to present the results of this study for that history, I will match the points he makes about *dhárman* with my own conclusions.

(1) The origin of the concept of *dhárman* rests in its formation. It is a Vedic, rather than an Indo-Iranian word, and a more recent coinage than many other key religious terms of the Vedic tradition. Its meaning derives directly from  $\sqrt{dhr}$  ‘support, uphold, give foundation to’ and therefore ‘foundation’ is a reasonable gloss in most of its attestations.

(2) *Dhárman* can mean a physical and even a universal, cosmic foundation; a foundation created by the ritual and a foundation for the ritual; and a foundation comprising royal authority which creates material or social bases for communities.

(3) There is little evidence of semantic development of *dhárman* within the *Rgveda*. Horsch’s view of a progression from myth to law is influenced by an understanding of cultural evolution that is imported into the analysis of the *Rgveda* and does not derive from that analysis. Indeed, the ‘mythic’ sense of *dhárman* as a universal foundation occurs especially in the later parts of the *Rgveda*, while the ‘legal’ sense of *dhárman* as royal authority appears regularly in the family books, the old *Rgvedic* core collection. Rather than reflecting a historical evolution within the *Rgveda*, the senses of *dhárman* are better understood as different and mutually supportive aspects of the meaning ‘foundation.’

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This chronological analysis of the text follows the generalizations of Oldenberg and Witzel, (cf. Witzel, 1995: 308ff for a more detailed discussion of the structure of the *Rgveda*). It need hardly be said that this periodization only generally describes the history of the composition of *Rgveda* hymns, and no layer forms an absolutely discreet chronological stratum.

<sup>2</sup> Neither Elizarenkova nor Ge, who also notes the repetition of derivatives of  $\sqrt{dhr}$ , is able to explain just what the purpose of these repetitions might be. The *Anukramāṇī* implies that it is a play on the name of the poet, Dharuṇa, but there are no real grounds to believe that this was the poet’s name.

<sup>3</sup> The sacrifices could also be *at* the foundation (*dhárman*) of heaven, in which case this verse belongs with those in which *dhárman* describes the ‘foundation’ of the world. But see the next verse, 10.170.2.

<sup>4</sup> This translation takes both *bhármaṇe* and *dhármaṇe* as quasi-infinitives with *bhúvanāya* as the object of both and *tásya* as the subject. Another possibility is that *dhármaṇe* refers to the foundation of Fire himself and therefore is the sacrificial ground: “for him to bear the living world, and yes, to give him foundation. . . .” Less likely, *dhármaṇe* might be the foundation of the gods themselves: cf. Kümmel, 2000: 320 “Durch dessen Eigenkraft sollen zum Tragen der Welt die Götter [und] für [ihren] Erhalt sich ausbreiten.” Other interpreters have offered other variations: Ge takes *tásya* only with *svadháya* and therefore allows the gods both to ‘bear’ and ‘give foundation to the world’, while Ol takes *tásya* with *bhármaṇe* and *bhúvanāya* only

with *dhármaṇe*. In support of his view, Ol refers to 10.81.4, 1.154.4 ( “one who, by triple division, has given foundation to [ $\sqrt{dhr}$ ] the earth and heaven and all living beings”), 4.54.4.

<sup>5</sup> The problem here is the verbal gapping in b. In this case, it is *dhárman* that suggests a form of  $\sqrt{dhr}$ .

<sup>6</sup> Ge is more circumspect: he says that *pitú* encompasses food and drink, especially the *soma* drink. Here, though, I think *soma* represents all food, cf. vss. 9–10.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. 3.34.6, 6.29.1, 7.25.1, 8.68.3, 10.99.12.

<sup>8</sup> This interpretation makes unnecessary Ge’s more convoluted proposal that *tám* is for *tát* or *táni* (referring to *nṛṇā*), masculine by attraction to *párvatam*.

<sup>9</sup> It is true that *soma* ‘grows strong on the mountain’ (e.g., 9.71.4), but this is an uncertain basis for describing *soma* as mountain.

<sup>10</sup> The next verse continues the image of *soma* as a horse running into a vessel containing waters: 9.7.2 *prá dhārā mádhvo agriyó mahír apó ví gāhate / havir haviṣṣu vándyaḥ* “The stream, the lead (horse) of honey, (goes) forth and sinks away into the great waters, / celebrated as the oblation among oblations.”

<sup>11</sup> The completion of the ellipsis rests principally on the nearby *mánasas*, but also cf. 1.136.1ab *prá sú jyéṣṭham nicirābhyām brhán námo havyám matím bharatā* “Bring forth the foremost (reverence) to two attentive (gods), your lofty reverence, oblation, and thought.”

<sup>12</sup> Like *paśú* from which it derives, *kṣú* can be a singular collective ‘herd’, as well as ‘herding animal, cow’.

<sup>13</sup> Ge and Re construe *jyéṣṭhasya* with *kṣós* and take the genitives phrase with *ánike*. Therefore Re translates the line, ‘...ou (quand il s’agissait d’) établir (le sacrifice) en présence du plus puissant bétail.’ In this interpretation, therefore, *dhárman* remains the “foundation” of the ritual. Ge interprets the ‘best cow’ as the *dakṣiṇā*.

<sup>14</sup> Jamison (pers. com.) suggests that there is an ellipsis of *dhārā*, perhaps suggested by *dháriman*.

<sup>15</sup> Or ‘to be given foundation through the milk’?

<sup>16</sup> I am supposing that there is an ellipsis of *dhí* with *sthávirī*, on the basis of *dhījū* in line a.

<sup>17</sup> Within the *soma* streams in *pāda* a – or, if not *soma* streams, whatever other object might be implied in a.

<sup>18</sup> *Dhárman* also occurs in vs. 9 of this hymn, which we have already considered. According to that verse, *Soma* provides the foundations of heaven and earth, in contrast to vs. 5, where the *dhármans* are the foundations of *soma*.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. 9.46.2c ‘The *soma* drops are set free to the wind’ and, for a discussion of *Soma*’s journey through the filter, which represents the midspace, see Oberlies 1999: 151ff.

<sup>20</sup> Ol, on 9.25.5, takes *āyusák* as adverbial, although he does not offer a translation. Following Ol’s logic, Scarlata (1999: 590) considers ‘towards life’ or ‘lifewards’ (‘dem Leben zugewendet’) a possibility, although ultimately he sets it aside in favor of ‘accompanying the *Āyus*’.

<sup>21</sup> Line b occurs also in 1.164.43d and the whole verse occurs in 1.164.50, another hymn concerned with the interpretation of the sacrifice and therefore with its foundations.

<sup>22</sup> That is, ‘performed for themselves the sacrifice’ or ‘sacrificed the sacrifice (= the *púruṣa*).’ But the phrase might also mean ‘sacrificed to the sacrifice.’ Or, according to Hoffmann *Aufs.* I, 117, performed ‘sacrifice after sacrifice’ (‘Opfer um Opfer’).

<sup>23</sup> Are the *sādhyás* already ancient gods in heaven whose desirable status is worth attaining, as the scholarly consensus suggests (cf. *EWA* II: 722), or, as I think more likely, are the *sādhyás* simply the gods in general? The verb *sánti* stresses that heaven is where the *sādhyás* are, and this would be appropriate for the gods.

<sup>24</sup> With Ol and Re, I understand *suvenīh* to be nom. sgl. masc., not acc. pl. fem. Ol takes *venī* for *veñī* and therefore as ‘well braided’ with reference to the braiding of pearls in the tail of the horse. On this form, cf. *AiGr* II, 1: 239, which states that *suvenā* could be a compound with an adjective as second member or a *bahuvrīhi*.

<sup>25</sup> The praise-song sent earlier to heaven?

<sup>26</sup> Most interpreters do take it as a literal horse, but in my view, the horse is actually the fire.

<sup>27</sup> Against Re’s attempt to defend Ol’s syntactic interpretation of *vratā* and in support of Ge, see Klein 1985 I: 97.

<sup>28</sup> The meaning of this compound is unclear. Cf. Re ‘celui qui protège à l’instant même’ from  $\sqrt{pā}$  ‘protect’ and Scarlata (1999: 317) ‘stracks sich bewegend’ from  $\sqrt{pā}$  ‘move’.

<sup>29</sup> Ge: gods and humans.

<sup>30</sup> It is not clear who the ‘ruddy one’ is. Ge suggests, tentively, either the fire itself (so also Re) or heaven (citing 6.49.3). In the context of the dawns, however, it might be the morning sun. Cf. 10.55.6, 30.2, both, however, with *aruṇá* rather than *aruṣá*.

<sup>31</sup> According to Ge, they sit with ladles like women pouring water. But according to Ol, either the streams of butter are themselves pouring, or we might supply a plural form of *upasécānī* from 2c.

<sup>32</sup> Fire is both a *mitrá*, an ally, and Mitra, the god who protects alliances. Here the word is nuanced toward the latter because of the mention of his authority.

<sup>33</sup> Literally, of course, but also figuratively because of the authority he possesses.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Ge’s note for other references to the ‘marvel’ and a suggestion, which is unlikely, that it refers to the soul or spirit.

<sup>35</sup> In that one instance, the *dharmán* is Fire.

<sup>36</sup> According to Ge, they are to be attended to first in the sacrifice, but I do not see that they actually are attended to first. Re offers a more likely interpretation that the thought of men should be first on them, with reference to Ge on 1.112.1 and Ol cited there.

<sup>37</sup> On the surface level, as the context demands, the ‘dappled’ are cows, but the ellipsis creates the context for a metaphor. Ge identifies the ‘fruitful’ in vs. 20 as the ‘insights’ (i.e., *dhītáyās*) of the poets, and Ol identifies the ‘fruitful’ in vs. 20 with the ‘dappled’ in vs. 19. The ‘dappled cows’, therefore, are also the ‘insights’, the hymns recited by the priests.

<sup>38</sup> There is a long discussion by Ol on *enām*, which does not come to a final conclusion. Ge supplies *āśīram*, the ‘milk-mix’, which, on the narrative level, I think is right. But like the ‘dappled’ and the ‘fruitful’, ‘this’ or ‘this (milk-mix)’ refers to ‘insight’ (*dhī*) or something similar. Cf. 8.95.5 where *pratnām* (*dhīyam*) occupies the position of *enām*. This resolution of the ellipsis depends on the suggestion of *rtásya*, which points toward the hymn. If there is a difference between the ‘cows’ and their ‘milk-mix’, it may be that the cows represents the general insights that give rise to hymns and the ‘milk-mix’ is the insight embodied in this particular hymn.

<sup>39</sup> Ol construes *rtásya* with *pipyúṣīh*, but Ge, rightly, argues that the position of *rtásya* between *enām* and *pipyúṣīh* suggests that it is to be construed with both. Cf. 8.95.5, where *rtásya* may also be taken with the word before and after it.

<sup>40</sup> It is not clear here whether *dhárma* is to be interpreted as singular or plural.

<sup>41</sup> There are, to be sure, other ways of interpreting this verse. According to Ol, they make Indra surround all *dhárman* like the sun coursing around the whole world. But the position of *iva* suggests that *dhárman* is part of the comparison. According to Ge, they surround Indra like the supports or pillars the sun. But do supports or the like ‘surround’? Ge refers to 5.15.2, in which the heavens have supports.

<sup>42</sup> Both Ge and Re suggests an ellipsis ‘plants,’ presumably *óṣadhīh*.

<sup>43</sup> Following Roth, Re ‘upon the earth’ and Ge ‘upon the field,’ a solution that is appealing, although this interpretation of *dāna* is unique to this verse. If one were to

take *dāna* as 'gift', then it might refer to *soma* as the 'gift' to the Indra. Therefore, the verse would then be saying that at the giving of *soma* Indra carries out his distribution of the plants and streams. But I think it less forced to take *dāna* from  $\sqrt{dā}$  'divide' and therefore in the sense of 'division'.

<sup>44</sup> Re, Ge 'seas' and this is surely one reference, but also perhaps the vats of *soma*?

<sup>45</sup> Hapax. But cf. *vitvākṣaṇa* in 5.34.6.

<sup>46</sup> Ge: 'Menge' with a note explaining it is the 'abundance' of *soma*. In any case, it is what the *soma* offerer has put up in his offering to Indra in the hopes of gaining something back from Indra.

<sup>47</sup> Perhaps both for Indra and the sacrificer, who hopes for Indra's gift in return?

<sup>48</sup> Or 'according to his (= Mitra's) nature' as the god of alliances.

<sup>49</sup> On this isolated use of the active perfect of  $\sqrt{dhr}$  as intransitive, see Kümmel 2000: 261.

<sup>50</sup> For a discussion of the role of the Ādityas in the *Rgveda*, see Brereton 1981. The functions of Mitra and Varuṇa are defined by their names. In the *Rgveda*, *mitrá* means 'alliance' or 'ally' (cf. pp. 25ff.), and therefore Mitra is the god that governs in the sphere of alliance. Varuṇa's name is etymologically and semantically related to *vratá* 'command, commandment' (cf. pp. 70ff.), and therefore Varuṇa governs in the sphere of 'command' or 'authority'.

<sup>51</sup> Hapax. With Ol, the word is probably dual and refers to the two 'Hilfesuchungen', personified abstracts.

<sup>52</sup> As Ge notes, *rājñas* belongs to both Soma and Varuṇa, with reference also to *Atharvaveda* 4.27.5a.

<sup>53</sup> On this verse, cf. Hoffmann, 1967: 117.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. 5.69.1 *trī rocanā varuṇa trīṃr utá dyūn trīṇi mitra dhārayatho rājāṃsi/vāvrđhānāv amātiṃ kṣatriyasyānu vratām rākṣamānāv ajuryām* "The three realms of light, Varuṇa, and the three heavens, the three airy spaces do you two give foundation, Mitra, / having grown strong, protecting the emblem of the ruler, in accordance with his unaging command." Here Mitra, together with Varuṇa, 'gives foundation' to the three realms of light and the other heavenly spaces.

<sup>55</sup> This idea that the two worlds provide a place for the mortal's continued line is reflected in the description of them as *dhiṣṇās*, as those that provide a location for someone or something.

<sup>56</sup> Who is the creeping one and who is or are the swift that the creeping one pursues? Ge takes the language as suggesting a hunter seeking his prey, and this may be the image. But it still does not explain what in the *soma* rite represents the 'hunter' and what the 'prey.' In the above translation, I have suggested that they are the priest and the *soma*. The epithet *dāsamānas* would be appropriate to a priest laboring at the ritual, and *tákvan* could describe the movement of *soma* as it rushes through the filter, but neither is certain.

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