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The Rigveda Dictionary from a modern viewpoint

Toshifumi Gotō

The *Dictionary of the Rigveda* by Hermann Grassmann is the only standard Rigveda [RV] dictionary today.¹ The 5th reprint followed in 1976, and there exists a 6th edition, revised and supplemented by M. Kozińska [H. Grassmann 1996]. After its appearance, research has developed radically in the fields of philology (understanding of vocabulary and meaning) and grammar. The progress achieved in Indo-European linguistics in the twentieth century has been remarkable. The study of morphology including the functional analysis of grammatical forms has developed towards totally new dimensions. The *Dictionary*, nevertheless, is an essential tool even today. Its layout plays an important role in this regard. It seems that Grassmann could anticipate how the gaps should be bridged in the future, and how an entry would be more or less mechanically reinterpreted. I would like to report how this phenomenon was possible, foremost from my own three-year experience with the new translation of the Rigveda [Witzel and Gotō 2007], after the translations of Grassmann [RV1; RV2], [Ludwig 1876–1888], and [Geldner 1951] (completed in the 1920s, but published in 1951).

¹ Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus 1873. Preface: Stettin, 18.8.1872. Afterword: 8.8.1875. For more information on the publication, cf. Preface, p. V and [Windisch 1920, 365].

Lemmas, forms and meaning

The *R̥gveda* is a collection of more than 10,000 *ś̥c*-s “praising stanzas”, codified as a sacred text (*veda*) presumably about 1,200 B.C. It is not only the oldest text in India, but also one of the most important documents written in the Indo-European languages. Grassmann’s dictionary is an indispensable tool for RV scholars and for Indo-European studies in general.

Grassmann records all forms in the RV with almost all the occurrences and essential contexts. The occurrence is cited, however, inconveniently according to 2-figure numbers (sequential hymn and stanza), and not by the 3-figure numbers (book, hymn, and stanza) which are common today. The 1st edition of the RV by [Aufrecht 1861; 1863], which Grassmann used as a basis, gives us also the continuous numbering besides the 3-figure system. Unfortunately, in today’s standard edition [Aufrecht 1877] the collateral data has been left out. The songs have been classified and codified according to the poets’ families; within a family book, the number of the songs and stanzas as well as the length of the metrical line was standard for the arrangement of the songs. All these facts became obvious in full detail only after Grassmann’s *Dictionary* had appeared, through investigations by [Bergaigne 1886; 1887] and [Oldenberg 1888]. But Grassmann had already essentially recognized this arrangement. He writes about this editorial principle in his translation of the RV [RV1, 2]. His translation consists of two parts, reflecting his understanding of the editorial background as well: 1. “The family books of the Rig-Veda”: II–VIII [RV1], 2. “Collected books”: I, IX, X [RV2]. The information showing in which of the ten books a certain word form is attested is important. It is true that the 3-figure parameter causes substantially more difficulty for presentation and correction. Did the mathematician Grassmann confuse the philologist Grassmann here? Anyway, one cannot easily understand his decision. Maybe he had noticed the importance of this fact only gradually, during his translation, and did not have enough time for the rearrangement.

At first, let a group of verbal roots be taken up to illustrate Grassmann’s treatment, and to compare them with today’s state of research (“xxx” suggests omission; “583,10 [VII 67,10]” means: 583,10 in the *Dictionary* corresponds to Book 7, 67th Hymn, Stanza 10; this reference is omitted in Book I; [] is my addition):
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³*jar*, originally **gvar*, substantially identical with *jur*, perhaps also with *jvar* [“be in fever”]. Basic meaning: “grind down, wear out, consume” (cf. Kuhn, in his *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Sprachforschung...*, Curtius, *Grundzüge der griechischen Etymologie*,² 1866). (1) “grind down, make fragile, make old”; (2) “let become old”, i.e. “let reach an old age”; (3) “become fragile, become old, be consumed”; (4) “be ground down”; (5) causative “grind out, wear out, make old”.

stem *jāra-*: -*anti* (1) *nā yām ~ śarādas* 465,7 [VI 24,7]. -*atam* (2nd person dual imperative) (2) *sūrīn* 583,10 [VII 67,10].

jara-: -*anta* (3) *pūrvīś uśāsas* 857,7 [X 31,7].

orist *jāriṣ-*: -*śus* (3) *mā dyumnāni* 139,8.

stem of causative *jarāya-*, *jārāya-* see under participle.

participle *jārat-* ((3) fragile, old, aged): -*antam* (3) xxx. -*antā* (dual) (3) xxx. -*atos* (genitive dual) (3) xxx. -*atas* (genitive singular) (3) xxx. -*atibhis* (4) xxx.

participle of causative *jarāyat-*: -*an* (5) xxx. -*antam* (5) xxx. -*anti* (5) xxx. -*antiś* (accusative plural) xxx.

participle of causative *jārāyat-* (Padapāṭha *jarāyat-*): -*anti* 124,10 (*uśās*).

column 493

jur, another form of ³*jar*. (1) “become fragile, become old”, of living beings, further (2) of the god’s deeds; (3) “make frail, make old”; especially (4) participle II *jūrṇá-* “friable, brittle” (of a net 180,5), “frail” (of the casted-off snake’s skin 798,44 [IX 86,44]); (5) *jūrṇá-* “very old”, without nuance of fragility. – Cf. *jūrv* und *ni-jūr-*.

stem I. *jurá-*: -*atam* (2nd dual imperative) *panéś ásum* 182,3.

stem II. *jūrya-*: -*ati* (1) *sá (agnis) ayá kṛpá ná ~* 128,2. -*anti* (2) *nā vām ~ pūrvīā kṛtāni* 117,4.

imperfect *ajūrya-*: -*an* (1) *devanidas ha prathamās ~* 152,2.

participle *jurát-* (stem I): -*até* (1) *cyávānāya* 584,6 [VII 68,6]. -*atām* (1) 225,10 [II 34,10] (*jārāya*).

jūryat- (stem II) (see *á-jūryat-*): -*atsu* (1) *vāneṣu* (metaphorical) 257,1 [III 23,1], opposed to *ajāras* (*agnis*). -*antai* (dative feminine) (1) *pátim ~ adatta* 117,7.

participle perfect *jujurvās-*, weak *jujurús-*: (1) xxx

participle II *jūrṇá-*: xxx (4) xxx. xxx (5) xxx. xxx (4) xxx. xxx (5) xxx.

verbal *jūr-*, “becoming old, aged”, included in *a-*, *rta-*, *dhiyā-*, *sanā-jūr-*.

column 499

jūrv, basic meaning presumably “wear out, consume”, and therefore related to *jur*, and came from this (cf. *nijur-*); but limited in consuming by heat (of fire, lightning, sun), thus: “scorch, consume through the heat (of the sun)”.

With *ní*, “burn down, consume through the heat (of the fire, lightning)”. *sám*, “burn, consume through the heat (of the fire)”.

stem *jūrva-*: -*asi sám* 669,7 [VIII 60,7] *atasám*. -*ati ní* 1013,3 [X 187,3] *rāksāmsi*. -*athas ní*: *rāksas* 620,4 [VII 104,4]. -*ās ní*: *śatrum* 221,5 [II 30,5].

stem *jūrva-*: -*a ní*: *spṛdhas* 447,6 [VI 6,6].

orist *jūrvī-*: -*it ní*: *ámānuśam* 202,10 [II 11,10].

participle *jūrvat-*: -*an* (read *jūruan*) *vīśvāni* 191,9. – *ní* 303,11 [IV 7,11].

Note: The more basic form *jūr* is found in *ni-jūr-* “scorching, consuming”.