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MĀTARIŚVAN, HEAVEN, UNDERWORLD

Atsushi Hayakawa, Leiden

Kuiper (1971) put forward an interesting problem for us. Up to that time, Mātariśvan was thought to bring Agni only from heaven. He noticed that the word *parāvátaḥ* "from afar" denotes the underworld,[1] and indicated that some of the Rigvedic Mātariśvan passages describe the derivation of fire from the underworld, not from heaven. The passages cited by him can indeed most naturally be interpreted as he does, and so he seems to be right. However, this new interpretation revealed a certain inconsistency in the Rigvedic Mātariśvan myth: There are some Rigvedic passages which explicitly say that Agni is brought by Mātariśvan from heaven.

Kuiper (1971:94) mentions this problem, but his explanation sounds somewhat ambiguous: "It remains one of the unsolved problems of Vedic mythology why terms for 'nether world' and 'primeval world' can alternate with 'heaven', 'the highest heaven', 'the third heaven'. Possibly these terms primarily denoted the mysterious world of the totality of the dualistic cosmos, Viṣṇu's third step, and were then also used in application to the undivided primeval world. Be that as it may, this much is obvious that the *parāvát*, which could be identified with *Nírṛti-*, was not a dwelling-place of the Devas." He seems to be hesitating to apply his own theory to this problem, and just says: "The same equivalence of the distant region *(parāvát-)* and heaven is found in the myth of Mātariśvan. On the one hand Mātariśvan is said to have brought Agni for Manu from afar: 1.128.2 *yám mātariśvā mánave parāváto, devám bhā́ḥ parāvátaḥ*, while on the other hand Mātariśvan brought Agni from heaven *(divó)*, in constrast with Soma who is said to have come from the rock."

Although Kuiper's work has a great significance in that he corrected the mistake of earlier studies, the above point must still be answered. Why are there

Acknowledgements: A prototype of this paper was written in 1996. I received some constructive criticism to it from prof. H.W. Bodewitz. After some corrections, the prototype was exposed on my personal Internet webpage in 1998 with the title *Unit 5: Hymn to Jātavedas*. This paper is a thoroughly revised, second version.

1 See Kuiper 1960:226 and Kuiper 1964:107.

two different types of statements concerning from whence Mātariśvan brought fire?

1. Chronological Scan

The first approach we could try might be a chronological one. Following Converse (1971) and Bodewitz (1994), I assume 5 layers in the Rigveda[2]: I. Books 2-7, II. 1.51-191, III. Book 8 and 1.1-50, IV. Book 9, V. Book 10. We will examine the relevant material in each layer.

In Stratum I, Mātariśvan appears in 3.2.13, 3.5.9, 3.5.10, 3.9.5, 3.26.2, 3.29.11, and 6.8.4. Among these, Mātariśvan is said to bring Agni "from afar" in 3.9.5 and 6.8.4:

RV 3.9.5 Mātariśvan led Agni, who has, so to say, run away by himself, who was hidden thus, who was kindled, *from afar* for the gods.[3]

RV 6.8.4 In the lap of the waters, the buffaloes seized [him]. The kinsmen have worshipped the praiseworthy king. The messenger of Vivasvat brought Agni. Mātariśvan [brought] Vaiśvānara *from afar.*[4]

3.2.13 gives us different information:

RV 3.2.13 Mātariśvan took the regular, sacrifice-worthy, inspired, praiseworthy one, *who dwelt in heaven*. We beg Agni, who has conspicuous way, who has golden hair, who shines well, for a new good advance.[5]

"Who dwelt in heaven" *(diví kṣáyam)*[6] implies the derivation of Agni from heaven.

2 Witzel 1997, following Oldenberg, discerns the following layers: I. Books 2-7, II. 1.51-191 and 8.1-66, III. 1.1-50 and 8.67-103, IV. Book 9, V. Book 10. However I have formally synchronized this paper with Bodewitz' discussion.

3 *sasṛvā́ṃsam iva tmánāgním itthā́ tiróhitam / aínaṃ nayan mātaríśvā parāváto devébhyo mathitám pári.*

4 *apā́m upásthe mahiṣā́ agṛbhṇata víśo rā́jānam úpa tasthur ṛgmíyam / ā́ dūtó agním abharad vivásvato vaiśvānarám mātaríśvā parāvátaḥ //*

5 *ṛtā́vānaṃ yajníyaṃ vípram ukthyàm ā́ yáṃ dadhé mātaríśvā diví kṣáyam / táṃ citráyāmaṃ hárikeśam īmahe sudītím agníṃ suvitā́ya návyase //*

3.5.9 and 10 do not mention the place from whence Agni is brought: RV 3.5.9 "Being praised, the youngest one has glared up with the fire-wood towards the hight of heaven at the navel of earth. Agni should be invoked as Mitra, Mātariśvan, the messenger, carries the gods for the offering."[7] RV 3.5.10 "Agni, [flaming] high with the fire-wood, being the highest of the lights, has propped up the firmament, when Mātariśvan has kindled him, who was hidden for the the Bhṛgus as an oblation-carrier."[8]

3.26.2 and 3.29.11 does not seem to be concerned with the bringing of Agni: RV 3.26.2 "We call him, the bright Agni, for help. [We call] Vaiśvānara, Mātariśvan, who is praiseworthy. [We call] Bṛhaspati for the divine service of human. [We call] the inspired hearer, the guest who runs rapidly."[9] RV 3.29.11 "The asuric embryo is called Tanūnapāt. When he is born, he becomes Narāśaṃsa. [He is] Mātariśvan, when he is formed in [his] mother. He became the gust of wind at [his] advance."[10]

Stratum II. The following verses explicitly state that Mātariśvan brings Agni from heaven.

RV 1.93.6 Mātariśvan brought one *from heaven*, the eagle stole the other from the rock. O Agni and Soma, being strengthened by the prayer, you have made a wide world for the sacrifice.[11]

RV1.143.2 *Being born in the highest heaven, Agni became manifest for Mātariśvan.* When he was kindled by the magical power and might, his flame illuminated Heaven and Earth.[12]

In the following verse, Agni is brought "from afar":

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6 Geldner notes: "*diví kṣáyam* ist unfertiges Bahuvrīhikompositum, vgl. 10.63.5, 8.64.4 und 8.15.9," and he translates it "da er im Himmel wohnte".

7 *úd u ṣṭutáḥ samídhā yahvó adyaud várṣman divó ádhi nā́bhā pṛthivyā́ḥ / mitró agnír īḍyo mātaríśvā dūtó vakṣad yajáthāya devā́n //*

8 *úd astambhīt samídhā nā́kam ṛṣvò 'gnír bhávann uttamó rocanā́nām / yádī bhṛ́gubhyaḥ pári mātaríśvā gúhā sántaṃ havyavā́haṃ samīdhé //*

9 *táṃ śubhrám agním ávase havāmahe vaiśvānarám mātaríśvānam ukthyàm / bṛ́haspátim mánuṣo devátātaye vípraṃ śrótāram átitiṃ raghuṣyádam //*

10 *tánūnápād ucyate gárbha āsuró nárāśáṃso bhavati yád vijā́yate / mātaríśvā yád ámimīta mātári vā́tasya sárgo abhavat sárīmaṇi //*

11 *ā́nyáṃ divó mātaríśvā jabhārā́mathnād anyám pári śyenó ádreḥ / ágnīṣomā bráhmaṇā vāvṛdhānórúṃ yajñā́ya cakrathur u lokám //*

12 *sá jā́yamānaḥ paramé vyòmany āvír agnír abhavan mātaríśvane / asyá krátvā samidhānásya majmánā prá dyā́vā śocíḥ pṛthivī́ arocayat //*

RV 1.128.2 We make the accomplisher of sacrifice intimate with us by the way of the Ṛta with the salutation accompanied with offering, with the divine service accompanied with offering. By the offering of our tonic, he does not become old in the appearance. [We make intimate with us] the god whom Mātariśvan brought *from afar* to Manu, *from afar.*[13]

The following verse mentions "the shaker of mead" *(mádhva ādhavé)*:

RV 1.141.3 When the ruling lords liberate him from the depth, from the form of a buffalo with power, when Mātariśvan steals him, who was hidden in *the shaker of mead* since a long time.[14]

If "the shaker of mead" denotes the underworld where the subterranean water is, Agni is here also brought from the underworld.

The other verses do not mention the place Agni is brought from: 1.60.1 "Mātariśvan brought for Bhṛgu Agni, who is the famous carrier, the banner of distribution, the mindful messenger, who reaches object immediately, who has twofold birth, who is praised like wealth, as a present,"[15] 1.96.4 "Mātariśvan, who has rich welfare, the procurer of the heavenly light, found the way for the offspring. He is the herdsman of the settlements, the begetter of both worlds. The gods hold Agni, the treasure-impeller,"[16] 1.148.1 "When Mātariśvan churned out the Hotṛ, who has every form, who belongs to all the gods, whom they put down in the human settlements like the sun, who shines forth brightly for wonder,"[17] 1.164.46 "They call [him] Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa [and] Agni. And he is the heavenly bird Garutmat. The inspired ones speak variously about it, which is unique. They call [it] Agni, Yama, [and] Mātariśvan,"[18] 1.190.2 "The speeches regularly strive for him, who were discharged like an emission of those who worship gods, because Bṛhaspati, who quickly extends over the wide

13 *táṃ yajñasā́dham ápi vātayāmasy ṛtásya pathā́ námasā haviṣmatā devátātā haviṣmatā / sá na ūrjā́m upā́bhṛty ayā́ kṛpā́ ná jūryati / yám mātariśvā mánave parāváto devám bhā́ḥ parāvátaḥ //*

14 *nír yád īm budhnā́n mahiṣásya várpasa īśānā́saḥ śávasā kránta sūráyaḥ / yád īm ánu pradívo mádhva ādhavé gúhā sántam mātariśvā mathāyáti //*

15 *váhniṃ yaśásaṃ vidáthasya ketúṃ suprāvyàṃ dūtáṃ sadyóartham / dvijánmānaṃ rayím iva praśastáṃ rātím bharad bhṛ́gave mātariśvā //*

16 *sá mātariśvā puruvā́rapuṣṭir vidád gātúṃ tánayāya svarvít / viśā́ṃ gopā́ janitā́ ródasyor devā́ agníṃ dhārayan draviṇodā́m //*

17 *máthīd yád īṃ viṣṭó mātariśvā hótāraṃ viśvā́psum viśvádevyam / ní yáṃ dadhúr manuṣyā̀su vikṣú svàr ṇá citráṃ vápuṣe vibhā́vam //* I cannot translate the word *viṣṭá-* here.

18 *índram mitráṃ váruṇam agním āhur átho divyáḥ sá suparṇó garútmān / ékaṃ sád víprā bahudhā́ vadanty agníṃ yamám mātariśvānam āhuḥ //*

spaces, became equal to Mātariśvan at the Ṛta,"[19] RV 1.71.4 "When Mātariśvan, [as the fire was] distributed, churned it, and he became white and noble in every house, then Bhṛgavāna followed his duty as a messenger, just like being in attendance on a more powerful king."[20]

Stratum III contains two verses:

RV 1.31.3 O Agni, be first manifest for Mātariśvan with the good magical power for Vivasvat. Heaven and Earth trembled at the Hotṛ-selection. You became a match for the burden. You sacrificed to the great, o Vasu.[21]

1.31.3 is parallel to 1.143.2 "Being born in the highest heaven, Agni became manifest for Mātariśvan." This can also be regarded as the derivation of Agni from heaven. 8.52.2 does not indicate the place: "O Indra, [just as] you were intoxicated with the pressed [Soma] at Pṛṣadra, Medhya, [and] Mātariśvan, just as [you drank] Soma at Daśaśipra, Daśoṇya, Syūmaraśmi [and] Ṛjūnas."[22]

Stratum IV contains one verse: 9.67.31 "The one who learns the Pavamāna-verses by heart eats the essence which was brought together by the Ṛṣis, the all which is purified, which was made sweet by Mātariśvan."[23] This also does not specify the place.

Stratum V. RV 10.46.9 "[They have put] Agni, whom heaven and earth begot, whom the waters, Tvaṣṭṛ, [and] the Bhṛgus [begot] with power. Mātariśvan [and] the gods have formed the sacrifice-worthy one, who is to be invoked first, for Manu."[24] 10.105.6: "He praised by the lofty power with the lofty ones. The brave one, Mātariśvan, has formed [the club] with power just as Ṛbhu [forms it] with the magical power."[25] 10.85.47: "Let all the gods and waters melt the heart of us two together. Let Mātariśvan, the creator and

19 *tám ṛtvíyā úpa vā́caḥ sacante sárgo ná yó devayatā́m ásarji / bṛ́haspátiḥ sá hy áñjo várāṃsi víbhvā́bhavat sám ṛté mātaríśvā //*

20 *máthīd yád īṃ víbhṛto mātaríśvā gṛhé-gṛhe śyetó jényo bhū́t / ā́d īṃ rā́jñe ná sáhīyase sácā sánn ā́ dūtyàm bhṛ́gavāṇo vivāya //*

21 *tvám agne prathamó mātaríśvana āvír bhava sukratūyā́ vivásvate / árejetāṃ ródasī hotṛ-vū́ryé 'saghnor bhārám áyajo mahó vaso //*

22 *pṛ́ṣadhre médhye mātaríśvanīndra suvāné ámandathāḥ / yáthā sómaṃ dáśaśipre dáśoṇye syū́maraśmāv ṛ́jūnasi //*

23 *yáḥ pāvamānī́r adhyéty ṛ́ṣibhiḥ sámbhṛtaṃ rásam / sárvaṃ sá pūtám aśnāti svaditám mātariśvanā.*

24 *dyā́vā yám agním pṛthivī́ jániṣṭām ā́pas tváṣṭā bhṛ́gavo yáṃ sáhobhiḥ / īḷényam prathamám mātaríśvā devā́s tatakṣur mánave yájatram //*

25 *prā́staud ṛṣvaújā ṛṣvébhis tatákṣa śū́raḥ śávasā / ṛbhúr ná krátubhir mātaríśvā //*

directress, put us together."[26] 10.48.2: "I am Indra, the wall [and] breast-[plate] of the Atharvans. For Trita, I released cows from the Dragon. I took manly power from the Dasyus, directing the cowherds to Dadhyañc [and] Mātariśvan."[27] 10.88.19: "Before the winged one wears the face of Uṣas, o Mātariśvan, the Brahmin puts [him], coming to the sacrifice, sitting down against the Hotṛ."[28] 10.109.1 "They, [namely] the limitless ocean, Mātariśvan, the heat which has strong flame, the terrible, benevolent one, the goddesses waters, the one who was first born with the Ṛta, spoke first about the offence against a Brahmin,"[29] and 10.114.1 "The two heats, which are next to each other, have filled the threefold [world]. Mātariśvan has enjoyed them. They, desiring to obtain the heavenly milk, flew. The gods know the song of priase which is accompanied by a melody."[30]

In the later Saṃhitās, Mātariśvan is not often mentioned as the carrier of Agni. MS 4.14.15 is the same verse as RV 1.148.1, which we have already seen. RV 1.93.6, in which Mātariśvan is said to bring Agni from heaven, appears also in MS 4.14.18, and KS 4.16.

As the above material shows, both of the motifs "Mātariśvan brings Agni from the underworld" and "Mātariśvan brings Agni from heaven" appear in Stratum I and II. In Stratum III, we see one instance of the motif "Mātariśvan brings Agni from heaven". We cannot find back these motifs in Strata IV and V. These facts mean: (1) We cannot chronologically differentiate these two motifs. As far as our existing material is concerned, we cannot say that one motif is a later development of the other. (2) Current discussion on the Vedic concept of "life after death" makes it clear that the other alternations indicated by Kuiper are observed in the latest layers of the Rigveda.[31] In contrast, the alternation of the place from whence Mātariśvan brings Agni can be observed in the first three layers. Therefore Mātariśvan should be treated separately from the alternation of

26 *sam añjantu víśve devā́ḥ sám ā́po hṛ́dayāni nau / sám mātaríśvā sáṃ dhātā́ sám u déṣṭrī dadhātu nau //*

27 *ahám índro ródho vákṣo átharvaṇas tritā́ya gā́ ajanayam áher ádhi / ahám dásyubhyaḥ pári nṛmṇám ā́ dade gotrā́ śíkṣan dadhīcé mātaríśvane //*

28 *yāvanmātrám uṣáso ná prátīkaṃ suparṇyò vásate mātariśvaḥ / tā́vad dadhāty úpa yajñám āyán brāhmaṇó hótur ávaro niṣī́dan //*

29 *tè 'vadan prathamā́ brahmakilbiṣé 'kūpāraḥ saliló mātaríśvā / vīḷúharās tápa ugró mayobhū́r ā́po devī́ḥ prathamajā́ ṛténa //*

30 *gharmā́ sámantā trivṛ́taṃ vy ā̀patus táyor júṣṭim mātaríśvā jagāma / divás páyo dídhiṣāṇā aveṣan vidúr devā́ḥ sahásāmānam arkám //*

31 See Bodewitz 1994 and Butzenberger 1996.

the Pitṛs, Yama, and Varuṇa. (3) These motifs become much less important in the newer strata.

2. Conceptual Scheme

Let us approach our motifs from a different angle. In which context are these motifs related?

It is conspicuous that the motif "Mātariśvan brings Agni from heaven" is related in the context of Agni's birth in heaven and the establishment of Agni as the sacrificial fire on earth:

RV 1.143.1 I present a powerful new hymn, a hymn of the speech to Agni, the son of strength, the dear son of water who sat down with the Vasus on earth as a pleasant Hotṛ, the regular one.[32]

RV 1.143.2 *Being born in the highest heaven, Agni became manifest for Mātariśvan.* When he was kindled by the magical power and might, his flame illuminated Heaven and Earth.

RV 1.143.3 The glaring, ageless rays of Agni, who has beautiful appearance, who has a beautiful face, who shines beautifully, who has the power of the light, trembles without sleeping, without aging, just like rivers at night[33].[34]

RV 1.143.4 Send forth with songs in [your] own house Agni, the all-knowing, *whom Bhṛgus have put down on the navel of the earth* with the power of the world, who, as a unique one, rules over wealth like Varuṇa[35].[36]

32 *prá távyasīṃ návyasīṃ dhītím agnáye vācó matíṃ sáhasaḥ sūnáve bhare / apā́ṃ nápād yó vásubhiḥ sahá priyó hótā pṛthivyā́ṃ ny ásīdad ṛtvíyaḥ //*

33 *áty aktúr*: Oldenberg and Geldner take it as adnominal. This seems more natural than the interpretation by Grassmann, who takes it as adverbial (see his *Wörterbuch* under *áti*). But *aktúr* is the nominative form. Oldenberg conjectures *áty aktū́m̐r* > *áty aktúr*. Geldner thinks that it is a haplology of *áty aktúm aktúr* "die Nacht über gleich dem Farbenspiel". Renou notes: "peut-être un ancien *aktū́n ná síndhavaḥ* a-t-il été remplacé par *aktúḥ* sous l'influence du type *sindhur ná kṣódaḥ*" (EVP 12, p.105), and translates "par delà (les nuits) comme la surface-ointe". There are no decisive grounds to adopt one of these.

34 *asyá tveṣā́ ajárā asyá bhānávaḥ susaṃdṛśáḥ suprátīkasya sudyútaḥ / bhā́tvakṣaso áty aktúr ná síndhavo 'gné rejante ásasanto ajárāḥ //*

35 *yám eriré bhṛ́gavo viśvávedasaṃ nā́bhā pṛthivyā́ bhúvanasya majmánā / agníṃ táṃ gīrbhír hinuhi svá ā́ dáme yá éko vásvo váruṇo ná rā́jati //*

1.143.2 and 4ab refer to the events in the past. In these verses, Agni's birth, Mātariśvan's deed, and the Bhṛgu's establishment of the sacrificial fire can be interpreted as sequential events. RV 3.2 gives another instance:

RV 3.2.10 The human tonics made the seer of the settlements, the chief of the settlements, sharp like an axe. He goes upwards and downwards, while working. He puts the embryo in these beings.[37]

RV 3.2.11 The procreating seed bull incites himself into the conspicuous wombs, while roaring like a lion. Vaiśvānara, who has a wide surface, the immortal one, who distributes the treasure and wealth for a pious one.[38]

RV 3.2.12 Vaiśvānara has ascended heaven as in the ancient time. Being honoured by singers, he [ascends] the top of heaven. Producing the wealth for people as before, the watchful one goes round the same course.[39]

RV 3.2.13 *Mātariśvan put the regular, sacrifice-worthy, inspired, praiseworthy one, who dwelt in heaven.* We beg Agni, who has a conspicuous way, who has golden hair, who shines well, for a new good advance.

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36 The rest of the hymn: RV 1.143.5 *ná yó várāya marútām iva svanáḥ séneva sṛṣṭhā́ divyā́ yáthāśániḥ / agnír jámbhais tigitaír atti bhárvati yodhó ná śátrūnt sá vánā ny ṛ̀ñjate //* "Agni, who cannot be braked just like the noise of Maruts, like a discharged army, like the heavenly lightning, eats and devours with sharp teeth. He overpowers woods just as a warrior [overpowers] enemies." RV 1.143.6 *kuvín no agnír ucáthasya vī́r ásad vásuṣ kuvíd vásubhiḥ kā́mam āvárat / codáḥ kuvít tutujyā́t sātáye dhíyaḥ śúcipratīkaṃ tám ayā́ dhiyā́ gṛṇe //* "I wonder whether Agni is eager for the verse of us, whether the good one fulfils [our] desire with good ones, whether the impeller would urge our hymns for the booty. I praise with this hymn the one who has shining face." RV 1.143.7 *ghṛtápratīkaṃ va ṛtásya dhūrṣádam agním mitráṃ ná samidhāná ṛñjate / índhāno akró vidátheṣu dī́dyac chukrávarṇām úd u no yaṃsate dhíyam //* "The kindling one launches your Agni, whose face is Ghṛta, who sits on the shaft of the Ṛta, like a friend. Let the kindled race-horse, shining at the distributions, raise our bright-coloured hymn." RV 1.143.8 *áprayuchann áprayuchadbhir agne śivébhir naḥ pāyúbhiḥ pāhi śagmaíḥ / ádabdhebhir ádṛpitebhir iṣṭé 'nimiṣadbhiḥ pári pāhi no jā́ḥ //* "O Agni, protect us, being attentive, with the attentive, friendly, powerful protectors. O Iṣṭi, protect our offsprings with the undeceivable, uncheatable, vigilant [protectors]."

37 *viśā́ṃ kavíṃ viśpátim mā́nuṣīr íṣaḥ sáṃ sīm akṛṇvan svádhitiṃ ná téjase / sá udváto niváto yāti véviṣat sá gárbham eṣú bhúvaneṣu dīdharat //*

38 *sá jinvate jaṭháreṣu prajajñivā́n vṛ́ṣā citréṣu nā́nadan ná siṃháḥ / vaiśvānaráḥ pṛthupā́jā ámartyo vásu rátnā dáyamāno ví dāśúṣe //*

39 *vaiśvānaráḥ pratnáthā nā́kam ā́ruhad divás pṛṣṭhám bhándamānaḥ sumánmabhiḥ / sá pūrvaváj janáyañ jantáve dhánaṃ samānám ájmam páry eti jā́gṛviḥ //*

This passage was discussed in Hayakawa (2001:305-306) as an instance of "Agni's birth in heaven" = Heaven's ejaculation. In 3.2.10-12, Agni Vaiśvānara releases the sperm. The sperm is infused into "these beings" (3.2.11) or "the conspicuous wombs" (3.2.11), which seems to be the plant from which the churning sticks are taken.[40] 3.2.13ab can be interpreted as the establishment of the sacrificial fire.

As discussed in Hayakawa (2001:301-302), RV 1.31 contrasts Agni's birth on earth with Agni's birth in heaven:

RV 1.31.3 O Agni, be first manifest for Mātariśvan with the good magical power for Vivasvat. *Heaven and Earth* trembled at the Hotṛ-selection. You became a match for the burden. You sacrificed to the great, o Vasu.

RV 1.31.4 O Agni, you caused Heaven to roar for a man. For the benevolent Purūravas, a more benevolent one [caused Heaven to roar]. When you are released at the *parents* with the power, they lead you around forward and again backward.[41]

In 1.31.4, Agni is born from the parents = the churning sticks, through the movement "forward and again backward". As already mentioned above, 3ab is parallel to 1.143.2, which explicitly relates Agni's birth in heaven. "Heaven and Earth" in 1.31.3 corresponds to the "parents" in 1.31.4, and implies the churning out of Agni through the union of Heaven and Earth.[42]

The above Rigvedic passages associate Agni's birth in heaven with the establishment of the sacrificial fire. Mātariśvan appears as a figure who combines these two elements.

As to the other motif, RV 3.9 gives a comprehensive picture of it:

RV 3.9.4 After he has escaped the faults and many droughts, the attentive, undeceivable ones have found him, *who abided in the waters* just like a lion.[43]

RV 3.9.5 *Mātariśvan led Agni, who has, so to say, run away by himself, who was hidden thus, who was kindled, from afar for the gods.*

40 See Hayakawa 2001, section "Agni's Birth in the Highest Heaven".

41 *tvám agne mánave dyā́m avāśayaḥ purūrávase sukṛ́te sukṛ́ttaraḥ / śvātréṇa yát pitrór múcyase páry ā́ tvā pū́rvam anayann ā́param púnaḥ //*

42 See Hayakawa 2001, section "Agni's Birth in the Highest Heaven".

43 *īyivā́ṃsam áti srídhaḥ śáśvatīr áti saścátaḥ / ánv īm avindan nicirā́so adrúho apsú siṃhám iva śritám //*

RV 3.9.6 The mortals seized you, o oblation-carrier for the gods, so that you watch all the sacrifices, o humanly one, with your magical power, o the youngest one.[44]

RV 3.9.9 The three thousand and three hundred thirty nine gods honoured Agni. They sprinkled Ghṛta and scattered Barhis for him. And then they put him down as the Hotṛ.[45]

Agni is found abiding "in the waters" in 3.9.4, and Mātariśvan brings him "from afar" = the underworld. Obviously, these two places are identical. As was discussed in Hayakawa (2001:313ff), the underworld is associated with "Agni's birth in the waters" in the Rigveda. In other words, this passage, which relates the derivation of Agni from the underworld, can be interpreted as a variant of "Agni's birth in the waters". Agni is received by people in 3.9.6, and his presence at the sacrifices is mentioned. And 3.9.9 states that Agni is put down as the Hotṛ. As far as this hymn is concerned, Agni's stay in the waters, Mātariśvan's bringing of Agni, and the establishment of the sacrificial fire, are three successive events. And Mātariśvan's deed can be interpreted as combining "Agni's birth in the waters" and "establishment of the sacrificial fire on earth".

RV 1.128 gives another instance of this motif:

RV 1.128.1 This one is born in the fire-holder of Manu. The Hotṛ who sacrifies the best [is born] according to the obedience of Uśijes. Agni [is born] according to [his] own obedience. [He is] the one who listens to everything for the one who attends as a friend. [He is] like treasure for the one who seeks for fame. *The undeceivable Hotṛ sits down at the place of libation, being covered at the place of libation.*[46]

RV 1.128.2 We make the accomplisher of sacrifice intimate with us by the way of the Ṛta with the salutation accompanied with offering, with the divine service accompanied with offering. By the offering of our tonic, he does not become old in the appearance. [We make intimate with us] the god whom Mātariśvan brought from afar to Manu, from afar.

RV 1.128.3 He surrounds the earth with the speedy [movement] at once. Raising voice suddenly, *the seed bull [puts] sperm while roaring*, putting sperm while roaring.

44 *táṃ tvā mártā agṛbhṇata devébhyo havyavāhana / víśvān yád yajñā́m̐ abhipā́si mānuṣa táva krátvā yaviṣṭhya //*

45 *trī́ṇi śatā́ trī́ sahásrāṇy agníṃ triṃśác ca devā́ náva cāsaparyan / aúkṣan ghṛtaír ástṛṇan barhír asmā ā́d íd dhótāraṃ ny àsādayanta //*

46 *ayáṃ jāyata mánuṣo dhárīmaṇi hótā yájiṣṭha uśíjām ánu vratám agníḥ svám ánu vratám / viśvā́śruṣṭiḥ sakhīyaté rayír iva śravasyaté / ádabdho hótā ní ṣadad iḷás padé párivīta iḷás padé //*

Seeing with hundred eyes, the god is victorious in the woods. *Putting the seat in the lower summits*, Agni, in the higher summits.[47]

RV 1.128.4 Agni, the Purohita who has good magical power, gives consideration to the sacrifice and Soma sacririfice at every house. He gives consideration to the sacrifice with the magical power. With magical power, Vedhas for the one who shoots arrows has seen all the creatures, *as soon as the guest, being beautiful with Ghṛta, was born, [namely when] the draught animal, Vedhas, was born.*[48]

1.128.1 "The undeceivable Hotṛ sits down at the place of libation, being covered at the place of libation" implies the establishment of the sacrificial fire. Agni's birth, which is mentioned in the same verse, can be interpreted as its birth on earth. 1.128.2 "the god whom Mātariśvan brings from a distance to Manu" mentions the derivation of Agni from the underworld. 1.128.3 "the seed bull [puts] sperm while roaring" and "putting the seat in the higher summits" seem to imply Heaven's ejaculation = Agni's birth in heaven.[49] 1.128.4 "when the guest, being beautiful with Ghṛta, was born" is again concerned with Agni's birth on earth. As is already clear, Agni's threefold birth is related in this passage. The following passage also mentions two of the Agni's births:

RV 6.8.1 Now, I praise the strength and wisdom of Jātavedas, [namely] the strong, reddish bull. For Vaiśvānara the new hymn purifies himself, just like the pure soma which is dear to Agni.[50]

RV 6.8.2 *Being born in the highest heaven*, Agni, the lord of obedience, protected the obedience. Vaiśvānara, who has good magical power, measured out the Antarikṣa, and touched the vault with greatness.[51]

RV 6.8.3 As the wonderful Mitra, he supported the two worlds apart. He made the darkness in-between splitted with light. He rolled up both Dhiṣaṇās just like hides. Vaiśvānara obtained the whole strength.[52]

47 *évena sadyáḥ páry eti pā́rthivam muhurgī́ réto vṛṣabháḥ kánikradad dádhad rétaḥ kánikradat / śatáṃ cákṣāṇo akṣábhir devó váneṣu turváṇiḥ / sádo dádhāna úpareṣu sā́nuṣv agníḥ páreṣu sā́nuṣu //*

48 *sá sukrátuḥ puróhito dáme-dame 'gnír yajñásyādhvarásya cetati krátvā yajñásya cetati / krátvā vedhā́ iṣūyaté víśvā jātā́ni paspaśe / yáto ghṛtaśrī́r átithir ájāyata váhnir vedhā́ ájāyata //*

49 See Hayakawa 2001, section "Agni's Birth in the Highest Heaven".

50 *pṛkṣásya vṛ́ṣṇo aruṣásya nū́ sáhaḥ prá nú vocaṃ vidáthā jātávedasaḥ / vaiśvānarā́ya matír návyasī śúciḥ sóma iva pavate cā́rur agnáye //*

51 *sá jā́yamānaḥ paramé vyòmani vratā́ny agnír vratapā́ arakṣata / vy àntárikṣam amimīta sukrátur vaiśvānaró mahinā́ nā́kam aspṛśat //*

RV 6.8.4 *In the lap of the waters*, the buffaloes seized [him]. The kinsmen have worshipped the praiseworthy king. The messenger of Vivasvat brought Agni. *Mātariśvan [brought] Vaiśvānara from afar.*

"The highest heaven" (6.8.2) and "the lap of the waters" (6.8.4) denote Agni's birth in heaven and in the waters, respectively.

The above instances of the motifs "Mātariśvan brings Agni from heaven / underworld" show that these motifs are directly connected with "Agni's birth in heaven/in the waters". And, as some of the above passages show, these motifs are connected with the establishment of the sacrificial fire. This means that the motifs of Mātariśvan had the function to integrate the threefold birth of Agni into the sacrificial fire. Through the stories of Mātariśvan, the sacrificial fire is identified with the Agnis born in heaven and in the waters.

If we understand the meaning of the motifs "Mātariśvan brings Agni from heaven / the waters" as above, we can explain the reason why there are two different motifs concerning Mātariśvan: inasmuch as there are three births for Agni, the sacrificial fire must be associated with all the three births to guarantee the conceptual completeness and consistency of Agni. Agni's birth on earth is implicitly associated with the sacrificial fire. The other two births must also be associated with it in some way. The motifs of Mātariśvan must have been created from this need. If we think of it like this, the "alternation" of the place from whence Mātariśvan brings Agni is not a peculiar phenomenon at all, but it is a logical consequence of the concept "Agni's threefold birth".

Although Mātariśvan becomes less important in the later Rigvedic period, the conceptual scheme of "Agni's completeness" remained in the thought of Vedic ritualists, and was implemented in the classical Agnyādheya ritual.[53] See Krick (1982:118-188) for the image of the primordial water which is associated with almost each Sambhāra-item, and especially MS 3.2.3 (Krick 1982:119): "Die Wasser sind der Mutterschoß *(yoniḥ)* des Feuers; somit wird das Feuer auf seiner eigenen Geburtsstätte geschichtet." See also the motif "Agni's sperm" which appears in connection with Araṇī (Krick 1982:188-203) and the story of Purūravas and Urvaśī (Krick 1982:203-223), and especially MS 1.6.12 (Krick

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52 *vy àstabhnād ródasī mitró ádbhuto 'ntarvā́vad akṛṇoj jyótiṣā támaḥ / ví cármaṇīva dhiṣáṇe avartayad vaiśvānaró víśvam adhatta vṛ́ṣṇyam //*

53 The reason why these motifs became less important is unknown. Possibly the formation of the standard Agnyādheya procedure (i.e. the Sambhāra and the churning out) might have something to do with it. Once the standard procedure was formed, they did not have to create new Mātariśvan hymns, because now the completeness and the consistency of the fire was guaranteed by the ritual procedure.

1982:205), which identifies Agni's sperm with Aśvattha Āroha, which are used as the churning sticks. She further says: "Die himmlische Abstammung des Feuers wird durch das Material der Reibhölzer (Araṇī) sowie die Gesänge, die die Feuerreibung begleiten, garantiert; die Vollkommenheit des Feuerleibes (der 'Gesamtperson Agni') wird dadurch erreicht, daß die einzelnen Teilkörper Agnis bzw. seine ihm eigenen Wohnstätten gesammelt und im Altar vereint werden."[54] She could have answered Kuiper's question from the viewpoint of the classical ritual. The sacrificial fire in the classical Agnyādheya is established with the material associated with the water, in which Agni was hidden. The fire is churned out with the churning sticks of Aśvattha, which is identified with Agni's sperm. Therefore, the sacrificial fire on earth is the unification of the fires born on earth, in the waters, and in heaven. All of them are necessary for the conceptual completeness and consistency of the sacrificial fire.

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