

## PUDENDA VEDICA

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§1. The third stanza of the Rigvedic hymn 9.72, to Soma Pavamāna, contains an enigmatic word, which remains a hapax legomenon in the entire Indo-Aryan vocabulary: *vinamṅṛsāḥ* in the Saṁhitā text. The text of the whole stanza is here followed by the classic translations of Geldner and Renou:

RV 9.72.3    *āramamāṇo āty eti gā abhi*  
                  *sūryasya priyāṃ dubitús tiró rávam /*  
                  *ánv asmai jóṣam abharad vinamṅṛsāḥ*  
                  *sāṃ dvayībhiḥ svásṛbhiḥ kṣeti jāmbhiḥ //*

Ohne zu rasten geht er durch (die Seihe) auf die Kühe los; er über(tönt) den lieben Schall von Sūrya's Tochter. Den Arm steckte sie ihm nach Lust hinein; den beiderseitigen verwandten Schwestern wohnt er bei. (Geldner 1951: III, 65).

Sans jamais s'arrêter, (le *soma*) va au-delà (du tamis) vers (le lait des) vaches, (passant) outre à la chère rumeur de la Fille du soleil (= au chant des prêtres). / À son gré elle lui offrait ses charmes ; il cohabite avec les sœurs germaines de l'un et l'autre bord (= avec les dix doigts de l'opérateur). (Renou 1961: 21–22).

In spite of this general interpretation of the sentence in the erotic sense, these two distinguished scholars admitted that this word defies analysis: 'ininterprétable' according to Renou (1961: 83). This erotic reading was questioned by Oldenberg (1912: 170), who did not, however, offer any alternative solution. The problematic word is left untranslated by Elizarenkova (1999: 65), who reviews the preceding translations in her commentary. She surmises that the noun *vinamṅṛsāḥ* is a nominative singular, since an accusative plural would presuppose a ghost noun \**ṅṛs-* (1999: 386). But she adds in her translation 'praises' (Russian хвалы) with a question mark as the direct object of the verb *bharat*, while tentatively assuming an ellipsis in the original text. This implies that the activity of the agent *vinamṅṛsāḥ* was about praising, and it would be more or less in accordance with Sāyaṇa's reading (see below, §3). Ludwig (1876: II, 476; see also 1883: V, 360) believed that the word ought to refer to the hawk (or eagle) that brought Soma from heaven<sup>1</sup>

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1 Cf. Macdonell 1897: 111; Oberlies 1998: 244–247.

according to a well-known myth: ‘der falke brachte [ihn] ihm [selber] zu gefallen, nun wont [sic!] er bei den doppelten verschwisterten schwestern’. Therefore, *vinamṅṛśáḥ* would be the subject of the verb *bhar-/bhṛ-*. Ludwig did not propose any explanation of the word itself. It would, in any case, be quite problematic to insert the mention of this myth into the context of this stanza, and even of the complete hymn. On the formal side, this interpretation also presupposes a nominative singular form, which seems, of course, the most straightforward one at face value, although there are other possibilities.

§2. In an apparently desperate situation, the temptation to change the text is of course present. In his translation of the RV, Grassmann proposed (1877: 511) to correct *vinamṅṛśáḥ* to *vánaṃ ḡṛháḥ*, pleading that the context would lead everyone to expect here both the subject and the direct object of the sentence (“der Zusammenhang lässt hier das Objekt und Subjekt des Satzes erwarten”). He translated pāda c as follows: ‘Der Diener brachte Wasser ihm nach seinem Wunsch’ (1877 : 241). This would somehow anticipate the general content of the next pāda. But the interpretation of the two nouns that would be restored here remains extremely adventurous: *ḡṛháḥ* ‘Diener’ is admitted by Grassmann (1873: 406) only for this passage and one other (10.119.13, last stanza); its meaning is justified by the idea that it should be an agent noun of the root *ḡṛh-* ‘to grasp’: ‘der Diener (als der, welcher ergreift und zur Hand reicht)’. Even though hymn 10.119 contains numerous difficulties, there is no cogent reason to assume for this single passage a noun different from *ḡṛhá-* masc. ‘house’ (see Oldenberg 1912: 340 and Geldner 1951: III, 346).<sup>2</sup> The recorded references to *vána-* (107 times in the RV) are ‘wood’, ‘tree’, and ‘wooden object’ (especially the vessels where flows the soma juice). Grassmann (1873: 1206–1207) has assumed a special meaning (no. 7 in his list) ‘water, stream’ for some instances, many of which are found in connection with the soma: 1.70.3a, 2.14.9b, 5.58.6c, 9.6.5c, 9.45.5b, 9.64.2b, 9.89.1d, 9.90.2a. In this, he followed the track of the old Indian lexicographical tradition: the Naighaṇṭuka (I.12) already quoted *vána-* among 101 words that are recorded as synonymous with ‘water’. But the reading of these stanzas by more recent translators (following Geldner, ad loc.) confirms that they contain the noun *vána-* ‘wood’ in usages that are well explained by metonymy or metaphor. The fantastic identification of *vána-* with ‘water’, which left traces in later Sanskrit literature, is based on the misunderstanding of some passages that itself depends on the correlations assumed by the first exegetes.<sup>3</sup> Grassmann’s attempt belongs

2 See also EWAia I, 495 with further literature.

3 See Renou (1939: 351 = 1997: 187); on the methods of the earliest Indian lexicographers, see Renou (1951 = 1997: 145–155).



§4. Going back to the Rigvedic stanza itself, one can get sufficient hints of an interpretation that accounts for the sequence of ideas. The first pāda refers to the running of the soma juice about to be mixed with the milk; since the flows of milk are designated as ‘cows’ (*gāh*), the soma is implicitly personified as the bull going about serving the females, according to a familiar image. The mixing of soma with milk has previously been mentioned in the hymn: 1b *sām dhenúbhīḥ kalāśe sómo aiyate*. Later, he is called ‘the dear husband of the cows’, 4ab *priyāḥ, pátir gāvām*. Therefore, the beginning of the third stanza sets the scene in the realm of fecundity through the vision of the sexual activity of the personified Soma as a male person.<sup>5</sup> The end of the stanza belongs to the same sphere through another familiar image<sup>6</sup> referring to the soma plant manipulated by the ‘fingers’, which are, with some redundancy, metaphorically designated as the ‘related sisters’, 3d *svásṛbhīḥ (...) jāmībhīḥ*. Here also the soma is seen as a male surrounded by his females. One may then surmise that the whole stanza is based on the representation of the soma as a sexual partner. Pāda 3b evokes a female person who is known elsewhere as the spouse of the king Soma: the ‘daughter of the sun’ (*dubhitā sūryasya*). The latter should be identical to Sūryā, a goddess<sup>7</sup> who is different from Uṣas (Dawn), and Uṣas herself is also called the ‘daughter of heaven’ (*divó dubhitā*). The mythic marriage of Soma and Sūryā is celebrated in first part of the wedding hymn RV 10.85, as the prototype of human marriage.<sup>8</sup> In the present passage, the relationship between Soma and his female partner is approached from the theme of the auspicious bellowing of the bull, which is familiar in the hymns to Soma Pavamāna, who is invoked quite frequently as the ‘bull’ himself (*vṛṣan-* or *vṛṣabhá-*): to his bellowing responds the bellowing of the cow. This sound is described by the verb *rav-/ru-* ‘to bellow’ (Grassmann 1873: 1169), or by a derivative from the same root.<sup>9</sup> From pāda 9.72.3b, we are invited to infer that the bellowing sound of the soma that flows through the filter (*pavitra-*) drowns out the sound that is simultaneously uttered by the female person, his wedding partner. This ‘cow’ of the animal metaphor is identified, on the mythic level, with Sūryā, the bride of Soma, and on the ritual level, with the poetic speech, concretely with the songs that accompany and favor the cleansing (*paví-/pū-*) of the soma.

5 Cf. Oberlies 1999: 208–213.

6 Cf. Oberlies 1999: 71–72.

7 Cf. Oberlies 1998: 180 (in connection with the Aśvins) and 240–241.

8 Cf. Jamison 1996: 47.

9 See EWAia II, 439 and Werba 1997: 371–372. The root features some *seṭ* forms that justify the traditional zero grade *rū-* of the lemma; cf. Gotō 1987: 265–266. It is then likely that the original root ended in a laryngeal; cf. LIV 306.

As Geldner puts it (ad loc.), the bellowing soma-bull drowns out the sound of the praising songs uttered by the priests. Actually, this theme has already been sounded at the beginning of the hymn, 9.72.1cd *úd vācam iráyati hinváte matī, puruṣtutásya káti cit paripriyaḥ* ‘He [the soma] raises the voice, while they [the priests] incite (him) through the poem, the very dear ones, as many as they can be, of the one who is much praised.’ The same topic is taken over somewhat differently in the next stanza: 9.72.2abc *sākáṃ vadanti bahávo manīṣína, indrasya sómaṃ jaṭháre yád ādubhúḥ / yádī mṛjánti sūgabastayo náraḥ* ‘The numerous ones that are provided with poetic skill speak together when they extract the soma for Indra’s belly, when they cleanse (him), the men provided with good hands.’ In other words, the cleansing of the soma plant is favored by the praising songs of the priests that sound at the same time. On the mythical level, that would be expressed by the fertilizing union of the Soma male with a goddess that personifies the poetry. Therefore, the famous spouse of Soma, Sūryā, stays for the poetic speech (*vāc-* or *manīṣā-*, both of feminine gender), as assumed by Geldner, who refers (ad 9.72.3c) to the following passages: 9.1.6ab *punāti te parisrútaṃ sómaṃ sūryasya dubhitā* ‘The daughter of the sun clarifies for you the soma that flows around’; in 3.53.15c, the new art of singing praise, named *sasarparī-*, fem., which has been granted and taught to the poet Viśvāmitra, is designated as *sūryasya dubhitā*. The ritual process combines material action and singing or praising, and the resulting harmonious concert of voices, which produces success for the sacrifice, is simultaneously the music of love. The Vedic poets conceive the loving as the effective sexual union.

§5. The flow of soma often has as a metaphor the seminal fluid or sperm, *rétas-*, of a male animal (bull or horse, cf. RV 9.19.4b, 9.60.4c, 9.86.28a, 9.99.6c, 10.61.2d and 11b, 10.94.5d); it is named *rādhalḥ surétalḥ* ‘the present provided with good semen’ for Indra in 1.121.5b, and Soma is invoked as *retodhā-* in 9.86.39b. The identification is made overtly in 1.164.35c, which gives the solution of an enigma: *ayám sómo viṣṇo ásvasya rétalḥ*.<sup>10</sup> One may say that in RV 9.72 the soma juice matches on the ritual level the fluid or semen that results from the union of the Soma god with the goddess of speech, identified there as Sūryā. One should not doubt that the same theme is continued in pāda 9.72.3c. Its erotic content does not come out solely from the following pāda, which describes the union of the soma/Soma with the ‘sisters’. It is implied already by the evocation in the preceding pāda of the daughter of the sun, who was the wife of Soma according to a myth that was well known to the audience of the hymn. In the poetic discourse, the very place of this marriage is actually pāda 9.72.3c. Geldner (1909: 140) has already

<sup>10</sup> Cf. also Oberlies 1999: 42–44.

pointed out the erotic dimension of the verb *ánu-bhr̥-*, which means in two clear passages ‘to penetrate sexually, to stick (one’s penis) in’, see AV 11.5.12b *bṛhác chéþó ’nu bhúmau jabhāra* ‘He stuck (his) great penis in the earth’, RV 10.61.5, which tells the myth of the incest of the sky with his daughter: *cd púnas tát á vṛhati yát kanāyā, dubitúr á ánu bhṛtam anarvā* ‘again he pulls out from the maiden, his daughter, this thing which has been stuck in, without any wound’.<sup>11</sup> This verb forms the base of an agent noun, feminine, *anubhartrī* in RV 1.88.6a, which has been interpreted by Jamison (1981: 59) as a ‘female penis-wielder’, which would refer to a musical instrument, that sounds in response to the chanting Maruts; it is compared to the human voice (*d vāgháto ná vāñī*). The sexual simile would play on the phallic shape of the instrument that would be akin to the Indian lute (*vīñā-*). In RV 9.72.3c, the sexual gesture is somewhat obscured by the ambivalence of the words as they are placed (cf. Geldner, *ad loc.* and Jamison 1981: 59 n. 4). Although *ánu* can belong as a preverb with the verb *bharat*, the straightforward construction is as a preposition with *jóṣam*, giving the familiar idiom *ánu jóṣam* ‘at pleasure’. It occurs eight times (including this occurrence and *jóṣam ánu* in 6.64.5b) in the RV out of 15 occurrences of *jóṣam*. The other instances of the accusative sg. of *jóṣa-* feature the adverbial idioms *jóṣam á* (4x) and *jóṣam* alone (3x: 1.113.10d, 4.27.2a, 10.96.7c), bearing the same value as *ánu jóṣam*. If one takes for granted the reading *ánu jóṣam*, it is certainly clear that *bharat* means ‘to bring’ or ‘to offer’ something to somebody (*asmai*). By adopting the reading *jóṣam*, which can stand for *ánu jóṣam*, one gets that the object of *bharat* refers to a sexual limb or part. This erotic reading is then implied as well if *bharat* is taken as the plain verb of the sentence, modified by *ánu jóṣam*. The near context does not provide any noun that could be the implicit object of *bharat*. Therefore, this object ought to be *vinamṛṣáḥ*, and the subject would be Sūryā herself, mentioned in the previous pāda. This reading is relatively easy, since the pronoun *asmai*, of masculine gender, can refer only to Soma. Therefore, *vinamṛṣáḥ* would designate something that Sūryā brings for pleasure to Soma when they have intercourse since they are the prototypical couple: her vagina. Since one reads simultaneously *ánu-bhr̥-*, which implies the penis as object, one should admit some exchange of sexual roles as happened in the paradox formation of *anubhartrī-*, the feminine derivative of an agent noun *anu-bhartár-* that expresses precisely a typically male action. There is, however, an underlying motivation for this *ánu-bhr̥-* in the under-text, as we shall see.

11 On the latter passage, see also Jamison 1991: 295–296. As for the translation of *anarván-*, epithet of several gods, I follow rather Hajnal’s account (1999: 96–99).

§6. From the formal point of view, *vinamṅṛśāḥ* would be the accusative singular of a neuter stem *vinamṅṛśās-*, which, as seen already by the Padapāṭha, is likely to be a compound. Geldner was quite right in surmising that this noun was somewhat rude, more than the reference to the arms. In some sense, Renou is closer to it, while using in his translation (1961: 22) a prudish French idiom (‘ses charmes’) that refers to the private parts of the feminine body. If we assume that *vinamṅṛśās-* refers to the female sexual organs, the shape of the noun, being a compound with four (2+2) syllables, as well as its reference, recalls the word *sārdigr̥di-*, which has been interpreted as referring specifically to the portio vaginalis (or cervical portion) of the uterus (see Das, 1998). In the Vedic ritual literature, this noun occurs in the verses recited by the onlookers of the culminating scene of the *Aśvamedha* (Horse Sacrifice) rite: after the death by suffocation of the stallion, the chief queen (*mahiṣī-*) of the king inserts its penis into her vagina, which is called here *sārdigr̥di-* and described as ‘the secret dear one of women’ (*priyāḥ strīṇām apīcyāḥ*), see *Taittirīyasaṁhitā* 7.4.19.2 (= *Kāṭhakaśaṁhitā*, *Aśvamedha* 4[= 44].8).<sup>12</sup> In later sexological tracts of the *Kāmasāstra* literature, the *sardigr̥di-* (featuring the variants *sardigr̥da-*, *sardagr̥di-*) is described as the organ that gives great pleasure to the woman when it is struck by the penis, whose contact triggers an orgasm and an emission of the fluid accompanying it, according to the Indian belief. Das (1998: 305) has cited evidence that in both Indian and Western medical tradition this internal part of the female reproductive organs is often regarded as a little penis within the vagina. On the lexical side, it would then be confirmed by the obvious connection of the second part of the compound *sārdigr̥di-* with the Vedic word *gr̥dā-* ‘penis’, as was already adduced by Hoffmann (1976: 570 n. 2). Taking it one step further, Melchert (2002) has explained the first member of this determinative compound *sārdi-gr̥di-*, lit. ‘vagina-penis’, i.e. ‘penis of/ in the vagina’ by taking *\*sarda-* or *\*sardi-* ‘vagina’ as the recipient of the act of intercourse. An etymological link connects the root *\*serd-* of this noun with the variant root *\*serdh-* reflected by the Germanic strong verb *\*serdan* ‘futuere’, see Old Norse *serða* (variant *streda* with metathesis) ‘to sodomize’, Middle High German *serten* ‘to violate’ (women, animals). Melchert has found a further cognate of the Germanic verb in the Hittite verb *šart-* (pres. act. 3rd sg. *šartai*) ‘to wipe, rub’.<sup>13</sup> The sexual slang of several languages testifies to this semantic shift from an original meaning ‘to rub, scrape’ in verbs meaning ‘to have sexual intercourse’.

<sup>12</sup> About this scene of copulation, which is not symbolic, while being played out under the cover of a blanket, see Jamison 1996: 65–72, and especially 68–69.

<sup>13</sup> This etymology has been accepted by Kloekhorst (2008: 738), who, however, dismisses the connection with Skt. *sārdigr̥di-* on purely formal grounds since he does not accept the

Both roots *\*ser-d-* and *\*ser-dh-* would contain enlargements of a basic root *\*ser-*, whose sense was ‘that of bringing one object up against the surface of another with varying degrees of violence’ (2002: 327).<sup>14</sup>

§7. Going back to the second member of the compound *sárdi-gr̥di-*, the noun *gr̥dá-* ‘penis’ does occur in the same passage of the Áśvamedha ritual (*Taittirīyasamhitā* 7.4.19.1), although it is rare in the whole Indo-Aryan literature. Actually the Vedic vocabulary is not lacking in words for sexual organs and activities.<sup>15</sup> If one considers only the current designations of the penis, several words may be quoted: *pásas-*, nt. (Khila of the RV, AV +), which is inherited, cf. Gk. πέος < PIE *\*pés-os-*;<sup>16</sup> *kápr̥th-*, masc. (RV), which, despite some uncertainties, may be old as well;<sup>17</sup> *śísna-*, nt. (RV +);<sup>18</sup> *śépa-*, masc. (RV +) or *śépas-*, nt. (AV +);<sup>19</sup> *médhira-* nt. (RV +) and *méhana-* nt. (RV +), both of which are derived from the root *meh-/mih-* ‘to urinate’.<sup>20</sup> By contrast with the last cited nouns, which are internally motivated, the original meaning cannot be recovered in every case, and some of those nouns (see for instance *śépa-*) possibly had a vague reference like ‘tail’ (French *queue*).<sup>21</sup> These nouns may not refer to sexual activity, but to another bodily function. The word *liṅga-*, nt. (Brāhmaṇas +) ‘mark, sign’ received its well-known sexual specialization only later.<sup>22</sup> Some words are probably borrowed from unknown languages, since they have some non-Indo-Aryan phonological features and they do not allow a morphological analysis according to patterns of Indo-Aryan languages. Besides, the priestly elevated language had recourse to euphemistic or abstract vocabulary for this limb, see *retodhá-* ‘seed-placer’, *garbhadhá-* ‘impregnator’ (lit. ‘embryo-placer’), *prajanana-* ‘generator, generative organ’.<sup>23</sup> One may say that this area of the lexicon covers a wide range of expressions, from crude or obscene designations to high-toned formulations, also including compromises

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theory of the variation of phonological quality of the root-final enlargements. This objection is not cogent in my opinion.

14 Compare the verbs of movement (especially of going to and fro) that serve to describe intercourse in the French language, as recorded by Guiraud 1978: 24.

15 For Indo-European languages see Adams in Mallory & Adams 1997: 507–508.

16 Cf. EWAia II, 111.

17 Cf. EWAia I, 302.

18 Cf. EWAia II, 642.

19 Cf. EWAia II, 654.

20 Cf. EWAia II, 381.

21 The list of the designations of the ‘penis’ in the French language is long and remains open: around 550 are recorded by Guiraud 1978: 29–34.

22 See MW 901c, EWAia II, 478.

23 See Jamison 1996: 68, with references.



and intermediate possibilities of every kind, among which are borrowings that could undergo various forms of adaptations.

§8. The semantic field of sexuality is open to all forms of verbal creativity in many languages of the world. The rare word *gṛdā-*, masc. (AV +) has a cognate in Iranian, Avestan *gərəda-* with a collective sense ('genitals') as the first member of a compound.<sup>24</sup> Because of its phonological shape, and its absence of cognates in other Indo-European languages, it is taken as belonging to the Indo-Iranian substratum as defined by Lubotsky (2001). It would be a loanword from some language of Central Asia.<sup>25</sup> Actually, we cannot recover with full exactness the original shape of this word, although it looks in Indo-Aryan as well as in Avestan like a thematic noun of masculine gender. This external feature may be due to its integration into the Indo-Iranian inflectional morphology. It is not excluded that there existed a by-form *\*gṛdī-* of *gṛdā-*, as reflected in *sárdi-gṛdī-*. Alternatively, it is possible that *sárdi-gṛdī-* is remodeled after an original *\*sárdi-gṛdā-* (see the variants quoted above), so as to make a rhyme of the final syllables of the two members of the compound but this is far from being certain. We do not know for sure the original final vowel of the first member of *sárdi-gṛdī-*, because this noun does not occur elsewhere. An argument in favor of an original *sárdi* would lie in the presumption that this form is the locative singular of a root noun *\*sárd-* (provided with the etymological connections mentioned above, §6), because the compound means 'penis in the vagina'.<sup>26</sup> Be that as it may, it is likely that a loanword is subjected to various influences from other words of the receiving language. Therefore, I would assume that *gṛdā-* (nom. sg. *gṛdāḥ*, which could also belong to a neuter *s*-stem) has been modified through crossing with the old and dignified noun *pásas-* 'penis' (nom. sg. *pásah*), resulting in the form *\*gṛsás-* that is found as the second member of *vinam-gṛsás-*. Such was the device for attenuating the rudeness of the word *gṛdā-*. Elsewhere, the occurrences of *gṛdā-* and *sárdigṛdī-* are confined to passages of the literature, such as the text of the copulation scene of the *Aśvamedha*, that allow, by exception, quite explicit discourse. The underlying presence of the word *\*gṛsás-*, referring to the 'little penis' of the vagina, as parallel to the male reproductive organ, would justify nicely its position as the object of the verb *ánu-bhṛ-*, which expresses the 'sticking' of the penis into the vagina (§5). One could hardly search for a more fitting allusion to the shared sexual pleasure in the copulation, as experienced by Soma and Sūryā in

24 Cf. EWAia I, 404.

25 See precisely Lubotsky 2001: 303, 306 and 311.

26 This possibility has been pointed out to me by Prof. Klaus Karttunen (Helsinki).

the mythological reference of RV 9.72.3. It may be inferred that the ejaculation of both partners in intercourse, as the Indian tradition sees it, produced a fluid, the so-called semen, that was a metaphor for the soma juice itself.

§9. Vedic *vinam-grśās-* is thus a semi-euphemistic and older equivalent of *sārdi-gr̥dī-* ‘penis of/in the vagina’. Both compound words refer to the sexual organ that provides pleasure to the woman. In order to make this case, our next task is to interpret the first member of the compound that would accordingly refer to the vagina. At first glance, this word is totally isolated. It cannot be taken as the reshaping of any item of the vocabulary. The only remaining track to follow is a word that would contain the adverb *vi* ‘apart, asunder, in different directions’, which shows, as preverb and preposition, a wide range of meanings (MW 949c). Accordingly, *vinam-* could reflect a root noun *\*vi-nám-*, of the root *nam-* ‘to bend, bow’, that would be parallel with regard to its formation to the root nouns *ā-nám-* (*ānámam* RV 4.8.3a) and *ni-nám-* (*nínáme* RV 3.56.1d), which are used as action nouns.<sup>27</sup> One may refer to the erotic connotations of a few occurrences of the verb *nam-* in the RV, where the poets allude, by way of metaphor or simile, to a woman bowing or giving in to her husband or lover, see 3.33.10cd (the river addressing the poet) *ní te námsai pīpyanéva yóṣā, máryāyeva kanyā śásvacáí te*, 10.30.6ab (the waters uniting with Soma) *evéd yūne yuvatáyo namanta, yád īm usánn usatīr éty ácha*. In addition to the relative scarcity of this usage, the weak point of this idea lies in the fact that the verb *nam-* never occurs with the preverb *vi* in the RV, nor in ancient Vedic.<sup>28</sup> The verb *vi-nam-* ‘to bend down, bow down, stoop’ appears only in epic and classical literature (PW IV, 47; MW 969b). The existence of the parallel *vi-nam-* in Middle Iranian does not have much weight, see Khot. Saka *binam-* ‘to split apart’.<sup>29</sup> One may of course assume that the absence of Vedic *vi-nam-* is only due to chance. Since the connection with the root *nam-* does not offer any clear semantic link in the field of sexuality, this possibility is better left out. The expected sandhi with the second member of the compound allows for other possibilities. The problem can be tackled from a different angle if one surmises that the first member of *vinam-grśās-* conceals a designation of the female sexual organ. Indo-Aryan does have a decent word for the vulva, to wit *bhága-*, masc.: the first meaning of this word, as based on an action noun of the root *bhaji-* ‘to divide, distribute, receive, enjoy’, is of course ‘prosperity, happiness, fortune’ (see also Av. old *baga-*, recent *baya-*). The noun *bhaga-*, masc.

27 Cf. Scarlata 1999: 280–281.

28 Cf. Gotō 1987: 193–196; Werba 1997: 201–202.

29 Cf. Cheung 2007: 280.

referring to the female organ in Manu's law code (Mānavadharmasāstra) and in epic language, goes back with certainty to a specialization of the former word,<sup>30</sup> which features already in RV and AV the senses 'beauty, loveliness' of the wife or female lover, and 'love, sexual pleasure'. This meaning is registered by Grassmann (1873: 922, no. 5) for the following RVic occurrences of *bhāga-*: 1.163.8b, 2.17.7b, 10.11.6a, 10.39.3a. See also the adjective *su-bhāgā-* 'most fortunate', as a favorite epithet of women, human or divine (especially Uṣas and Sarasvatī); cf. nom. sg. *subhāgā* (1.48.7c, 1.89.3d, 1.92.12a, 2.32.4b, 3.61.4c, 4.57.6c, 5.56.9c, 7.77.3a, 7.95.4b, 8.21.17b, 10.75.8d, 10.85.25d), acc. sg. *subhāgām* (3.33.3b, 6.64.3b, 10.85.45b, 10.86.11b), voc. sg. *subhage* (1.92.8d, 1.113.7d, 2.32.5d, 7.76.6b, 7.95.6b, 8.24.28c, 10.10.10d and 12d, 10.108.5b and 9b, 10.145.2a), nom. dual *subhage* (1.185.7c, 2.31.5a), voc. dual (10.70.6d). One notes several occurrences of it in the wedding hymn 10.85, in the erotic dialogues of 10.10 (Yama and Yamī) and 10.86 (Vṛṣākapi and Indra's wife).

§10. Now, an alternative expression for 'loveliness' or 'sexual pleasure' as something that is allotted by fortune, *bhāga-*, would refer to some status or quality that is obtained or reached by someone.<sup>31</sup> In the present case, it would be the sexual pleasure reached by the woman. The fitting verb for this meaning in the RVic language is *naś-/aś-*, present act. *āśnóti*, aorist act. *ānaṣ*, perfect act. *ānaśa*, etc., which is quite well attested.<sup>32</sup> The current objects of this verb refer to possessions of all sorts: wealth (*rayi-*), long life (*āyus-*), power (*kṣatrá-*), contentment (*tr̥pti-*), good fortune (*bhāgā-*), object of desire (*kāma-*), etc. A precise combination of this verb with *bhāga-* 'happiness, love pleasure' is found in RV 5.7.8 (to Agni): *śúciḥ śmā yásmā atrivát, prá svádhiṭva rīyate / suṣūr asūta mātā, krāṇā yád ānaśé bhāgam* 'To whom it (the stream of the flame) flows bright like the axe, her well-begetting mother begot (him), when readily she had obtained happiness'.<sup>33</sup> One may surmise that this joy has a sexual cause. Moreover, the verb *naś-* in the RV has numerous (21) occurrences with the preverb *ví*, which gives a somewhat stronger nuance to the verb: 'to reach completely, bring under control' and 'to get through'. The

30 Cf. KEWAi II, 459 and EWAia III, 360; the dictionaries usually arrange *bhaga-* 'female organ, vulva' under the lemma *bhāga-* 'fortune'; see PW V, 170 and MW 743c.

31 French verbs such as *arriver* ('to arrive'), *obtenir* ('to reach a goal'), *venir* ('to come') also serve as describing coitus and sexual pleasure, cf. Guiraud 1978 : 26, 55, 143, 624. But the erotic value of Vedic verbs that have approximately the same meanings should be established by internal evidence.

32 Cf. Grassmann (1873: 133–136 and 717–719); EWAia II: 27–28 (NAŚI).

33 Compare the translation by Geldner (1951: II, 10): 'Dem wie bei Atri (die Flamme) hervorschießt blank wie eine Axt, (ihn) hat die Mutter in leichter Geburt geboren, nachdem sie (dazu) bereit das Liebesglück erlangt hatte'.

objects cover the same range as with the simple verb *naś-*: 1.54.9c, 1.73.5a, 1.73.9d, 1.89.8d, 1.93.3d, 2.35.6d, 7.98.2a, 8.31.8b, 8.45.22c, 8.45.27c, 8.82.6c, 9.22.3c, 9.22.5b, 9.66.27a, 10.27.7a, 10.27.20c, 10.29.8a, 10.64.15a, 10.67.7d, 10.85.42b, 10.133.3ab. The perfect stem is the base of the adjective *vyānaśi-* (RV 3x: 3.49.3b, 9.86.5c, 9.103.6c) ‘pervading, penetrating’ < ‘getting through’. The root *naś-* (< PIE *\*h<sub>2</sub>nek-*, cf. LIV, 282) has an allomorph *namś-*, which is found in the perfect stem as well as in some nominal formations. The perfect 3rd sg. act. *ānāśa* (< *\*h<sub>2</sub>e-h<sub>2</sub>nok-e*), weak stem *āś-* (< *\*h<sub>2</sub>e-h<sub>2</sub>ṅk-*) is not as well attested in the RV as the competing formation featuring 3rd sg. act. *ānámśa* (< *\*h<sub>2</sub>e-h<sub>2</sub>nonk-e*), weak stem *ānaś-* (< *\*h<sub>2</sub>e-h<sub>2</sub>ṅk-*). The latter is found only with preverbs. Both formations are actually inherited, although this perfect is the only verbal formation that is based on the root *namś-*.<sup>34</sup> The antiquity of the type *ānámśa/ānaś-* is ensured, however, by the equation with the Old Irish pret. *·anaic* < *\*-ānonk-e* < *\*h<sub>2</sub>e-h<sub>2</sub>nonk-e*. Since a root *\*h<sub>2</sub>nenk-* would be at variance with the rules governing the structure of PIE roots, it is admitted that its starting point was in a present stem with nasal infix, to wit *\*h<sub>2</sub>n-nek-/\*h<sub>2</sub>n-nk-*, which could be reflected after thematization in Celtic by the present *\*-an-n-k-e/o-*, cf. Old Irish act. 3rd sg. *·ic*, pl. *·ecat*.<sup>35</sup> In ancient Vedic, *namś-* is the base of several nominal derivatives: a root noun *námś-* (once as quasi infinitive in the locative sg. *námśi* ‘in order to obtain’, RV 6.51.12a)<sup>36</sup>, a thematic action noun *námśa-* ‘acquisition’ (RV 1.122.5b and 12b) and an agent noun as second member of the compound *svapna-námśana-* (10.86.21c) ‘sleep-attainer’.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, it does not require a long path to assume, in addition to these formations, a root noun compounded with a preverb *\*vi-námś-*, meaning ‘obtaining, acquisition’. It would be of the same structure, albeit on a different allomorph of the root, as the compound action noun *pari-ṅáś-* (*pariṅáśe* 1.54.1b), *saṃ-náś-* (*saṃnáśe* 8.3.10c, 8.55.5d), also meaning ‘obtaining, reaching’.<sup>38</sup> The formation of root nouns of this type was still very much alive, cf. Debrunner (1954: 15–18). On the formal side, the noun *\*vinámś-* as first member of a compound

34 On the Vedic data, cf. Kümmel 2000: 18 and 284–287. For a survey, with all relevant literature, of the evidence for this root, see García Ramón 1999, especially 50–51 and note 11.

35 Cf. Schumacher 2004: 71 and 200–203; also Kümmel in LIV (283 n. 11) with further literature.

36 Cf. Oldenberg 1909: 403 and Hoffmann 1967: 219. The form has otherwise been taken as an injunctive aorist, 1st sg. middle, cf. Grassmann 1873: 719, but this is falsified by the accent and by the fact that the allomorph *namś-* of the root is never found in the strong stem of the aorist, which is based only on the allomorph *naś-* following PIE inheritance, aorist active 3rd sg. *ánaṣ* < *\*e-h<sub>2</sub>nek-t*, cf. LIV 282.

37 Alternatively, ‘sleep-destroyer’ (according to the traditional view, as per PW VII, 1432); see the discussions of the meaning by Oldenberg (1912: 293) and Jamison (1996: 86 and 280 n. 177).

38 Cf. Scarlata 1999: 281–282.

regularly yielded the form *vinamḡṛśás-* < \**vinarig-ḡṛśás* < \**vinank-ḡṛśás-* according to sandhi rules.<sup>39</sup> The scenario requires only the creation by some Vedic poet, certainly an expert in language, of this abstract formation that referred indirectly to the ‘happiness’ of love, the thing one is so eager to reach and pleased to obtain: it was created as a substitute for the noun *bhāga-*, which was still felt to be too explicit as a designation of the place of sexual pleasure.

In conclusion, the formation of the nonce word *vinamḡṛśás-* of the RV summarizes in four syllables the versatility of the formation of the Vedic learned vocabulary, which used the potential wealth of intertextuality combined with language contact.

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39 Cf. Wackernagel 1905: 127.

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