The Heart (ḥārdi/hrd-) and the Formula “to Fashion (√takṣ) a Hymn” in the Ṛgveda

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0. Introduction

In the ṚV, the word ḍhārdi/hrd- “the heart,” as a simplex or part of a compound, occurs 116 times in total, which can be broadly classified into the following six categories according to its function: (1) the process of versification by the heart is likened to that of carpentry and (2) to that of the purification of Sóma. (3) The heart is regarded as the seat of mental activities, wherein are found light (jyóti-), prakét-, ketú-), intention (ākūti-), will (krátu-), wish (keta-), and mind (mánas-), and inside which the poet looks at (√pas), seeks (práti- √iṣ), or looks after (√ven) something. (4) The heart is regarded as the seat of emotion, to which fear (bhī-) and desire (káma-) are said to “come.” The heart burns (√tap), or something burns out (√dah) the heart. (5) The heart is conceived of as the core of life that could be damaged by enemies or diseases. The hearts of the enemies are cut asunder (RV 6.53.7 ā ṛikha kikirā kṛṇu pańinām hṛdayā ārke “Scratch and tear into pieces the hearts of the Pani-s, o poet!”). The priest pierces (√vyad) the heart of an enemy with an arrow of his speech. Various diseases called hṛdayāvīdha- “a heart-piercing disease,” hṛdrogā- “jaundice (?),” and yáksma- “a particular wasting disease” are said to be in the heart. (6) The heart appears in the PII formula *fjad mānasā > Skt. hṛdā mānasā “by the heart and the mind” and its variants. Among these six, this paper deals with the first, namely, the one concerning versification.

1. The Heart (ḥārdi/hrd-) in the ṚV

1.1. Indo-European and -Iranian Heritage of the Formula “to Fashion (√takṣ) a Hymn”

At least two ṚVic phrases, vácas- √takṣ and mántra- √takṣ, date back to PII, the latter
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dating even further back to PIE. The combination of the root √taks < PIE *√tetkē “to fashion (as a carpenter)” and a word meaning “a hymn” as its object dates back to the tradition of the so-called “Indogermanische Dichtersprache.” The corresponding expressions found in Vedic, Avestan, and Ancient Greek are as follows (Schmitt 1967: 296–298):

(1) Skt. māntra- √taks (< PII *mātram √taś ) “to fashion a formula” RV 1.67.4b taśān māntrāṁ, 2.35.2ab春运māntrāṁ, 7.7.6b māntrāṁ . . . taśaṇ – OAv. Yasna 29.7a maṯram taśat “he (Ahura Mazdā) fashioned the formula”
(2) Skt. vácas- √taks (< PII *vácas- < PII *wēk-os- √vetkē ) “to fashion a word” RV 6.32.1d vácaṁsi . . . taśan 3) YAv. vacas-taśi- “strophe” ~ Pindar, Pythian 3.113 ἐνεων . . . réctovecx “from the words . . . the carpenters [joined together]”

1.2. The Formula “to Fashion (√taks) a Hymn” in the RV

In addition to vácas- and māntra- as objects of √taks, many examples are found in the RV where the poets substitute other words, e.g., stóma- “word of praise,” brāhmaṇ- “(the power of) formulated poetry,” dhí- “vision,” mánmaṇ- “thought,” and maniśā- “mind’s design” to serve as the word for “a hymn,” (Schmitt 1967: Anm. 1712) sometimes with the phrase rátham nā 2) “as (he fashions) a chariot (as a carpenter),” thereby emphasising the inherited image of carpentry. These examples show that this old formula still remained productive in the days of the RVic poets.

2. The Combination of the Root √taks and the Heart (hā́rdi/hr̥d-) in the RV

The RVic poets innovated on this living formula by associating it with the idea of the heart. Among the 6 examples where the root √taks is combined with the heart (hā́rdi/hr̥d-) in the RV, the most illustrative one is 3.39.1, 3) an opening verse of an Índra-hymn, in which the poet most clearly describes the process of the creation of the hymn he is about to utter.

RV 3.39.1 Índram matír hr̥dá ā vacyāmānā | ácchā pátiṁ stómaṭaśta 4) jīgātī | yā jāgrvir vidāthe śasyāmānā | Índra yāt te jāyate vididdhi tāṣya || “The idea, galloping from the heart, 5) is going towards Índra, her husband, 6) fashioned into a word of praise, which, being awake, is being recited at the distribution (at the sacrifice). O Índra, know about what is being born for you!”

Here we find the poet semantically distinguishing the two different stages of a hymn; 7) mati- is the first state of a hymn, and the poet fashions it into stóma-
afterwards. Various meanings which Grassmann (1872–1875, s.v.) gives to mati- (< √man + -t-) can be traced back to its original meaning “das Denken” (Liebert 1949: 118). The examples where mati- seems to be used with little notable difference from a word meaning “a hymn,” can be interpreted to mean the whole process of versification implied by the first state, just as by a √labh is meant not only the very first act of grabbing a sacrificial animal, but the entire process of sacrificing it (Gotō 1987: Anm. 595). stóma- (< √stav + -ma-) means “Lob, Loblied, Lobgesang” (Grassmann 1872–1875, s.v.), i.e., “a praise verbally expressed.”

Both words discussed above seem to be used here with their original meaning inferred from its formation. Here mati- can be interpreted as an idea, an insight, or a thought before being verbalised as stóma-, a word of praise. The heart is regarded as an instrument (I.) or a locus (Ab.) by or in which the poet/carpenter fashions the raw material (mati-/wood) into the finished product (stóma-/a chariot). The schema of the process, therefore, can be analysed as follows:

1) The idea (mati-) (2) is fashioned (√taks) [by the heart 10] (3) into a hymn (here called stóma-, but also mántra-, havíṣ-, etc. elsewhere), which (4) gallops from the heart [with the mind 11] [with the mind 12], i.e., uttered by the poet, (5) proceeds towards the deity, and [(6) arrives at the deity’s heart. 13]

3. Conclusion

The ṚVic poets, while inheriting the old formula “fashion (√taks) a hymn,” added to it the element “the heart,” 14 which they perceived to be an organ of versification. 15

Notes

1) Here can be added ṚV 1.130.6ab vácam ... ataksīṣuḥ “they fashioned a speech,” though the correspondence is not an exact one.
2) Cf. ṚV 1.130.6, 2.31.7, 5.2.11, 5.29.15, 5.73.10, 7.34.1, 10.39.14. Another verb is used in ṚV 1.61.4 and 10.119.5.
3) The other five examples are ṚV 1.67.4, 1.171.2, 2.35.2, 6.16.47, and 10.71.8. They are treated below in notes 10 and 11. See also note 9.
4) For the type of the compound stómasaṭṭa-, cf. AiG b199e). To the examples therein treated can be added váryavṛtta- “chosen as a gift” (MS 1.8.4). The word stómasaṭṭa- occurs also in ṚV 3.43.2c matāya stómasaṭṭā “ideas fashioned into words of praise” and 10.15.9 yē ... stómasaṭṭāso ... pifiḥhīr “with the forefathers who fashioned (ideas into) words of praise.” The former conforms to the usage in ṚV 3.39.1. The latter, on the other hand, can be analysed as a compound of the type
putrahata-, or hypallage (Geldner 1951: Bd. 3, 146), perhaps a reinterpretation by the poet of the late 10th book.

5) For the idea of a hymn galloping (vāñca), cf. ṚV 1.142.4 and 10.47.7.

6) Here matí-, a feminine noun, is compared to the wife of Īndra, who is the object of praise in this hymn. The same idea is expressed in ṚV 10.91.13.

7) The difference of the two is implied also in ṚV 4.32.15 matinám . . . stómā “a praise of thoughts.”

8) The root ṣman has two different series of stem-formation, each with a different meaning: Present manuté (≈ Aorist āmata) “he directs his thought to . . ., consider . . .” :: Present mányate (≈ Aorist āmansta) “It seems to him that . . . is . . .” (Gotō 1987: Anm. 526, Gotō 1997: 1016, Kümmel 2000: 362–363, Dōyama 2005: 156, Kulikov 2012: 336–344). Though it is not clear which of the two the meaning of matí- belongs to, there are examples where Present manuté ~ Aorist āmata takes a word meaning “a hymn” as its object, e.g., ṚV 5.13.2a stómaṁ manāmahe “We will think out a praise,” 7.82.10 = 7.83.10 sōkam . . . manāmahe “We will think out a hymn praising your fame.”

9) Perhaps the fashioning and the forward movement of a hymn (cf. ṚV 3.39.1) are compared to those of a chariot (cf. Sparreboom 1985: 13 n. 2, to which can be added ṚV 5.61.17).

10) This is known not from the hymn discussed, but from ṚV 1.67.4 hṛḍā yād taśtán máṇtrāṁ “the formulas fashioned by the heart,” 1.171.2 stóma . . . hṛḍā taśtā mánasā “the formulas fashioned by the heart and the mind,” 6.16.47 havír hṛḍā taśtām “an oblation fashioned by the heart,” and 10.71.8a hṛḍā taśtēṣu máṇaso javēṣu “in the mind’s swiftnesses fashioned by the heart.” As Geldner translates 10.71.8a as “während die Einfälle des Geistes im Herzen geformt werden” and comments, “D. h. in passende Worte gekleidet werden” (Geldner 1951: Bd. 3, 250), máṇasā javēṣu might mean hymns as a result of mind’s swiftness, i.e., the inspiration.

11) This is known not from the hymn discussed, but from ṚV 2.35.2 hṛḍā ā sītaṣṭam máṇtraṁ vocema “We would like to speak a formula well-fashioned from our heart.”

12) This is known from ṚV 10.47.7 stómāś . . . hṛḍispṛśa mánasā vacyāmānā “(my) praises touching the heart and galloping with the mind.”

13) This is known not from this hymn, but from ṚV 4.43.1cd kāsyēmāṁ devīṁ amṛtesu prēṣṭhāṁ l hṛḍī śṛṣāma susūṭīṁ suhavyāṁ | “In whose heart among the immortals shall we place this divine dearest good praise here together with good oblations?,” 7.86.8ab ayāṁ sū tuḥhyām varuṇaḥ svādhāvā l hṛḍī stómā āpāsītaś cid astu | “This [praise] here is definitely for you, o Vārūṇa who has the power of self-rule. Let [this] praise [here] be even set within your heart,” and 7.101.5ab idāṁ vācaḥ parjānyāya svarāje l hṛḍō astav āntarām tāj jujoṣat | “This speech here is for Parjānya the self-ruling. Let it be near his heart. He shall enjoy it.”

14) It is possible that the ṚVic poets associated the rhythm of the heartbeat quickened by the effects of Sōma with that of a carpenter chiselling wood (Junko Sakamoto-Gotō, oral communication on November 4, 2016).

15) The stimulant Sōma-drink they used to get inspiration for their poems might have helped them increase their introspective capability and vividly experience this inner process of versification.

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Abbreviations
Ab. = Ablative. I. = Instrumental. PIE = Proto-Indo-European. PII = Proto-Indo-Iranian.

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(This research was supported in part by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 16J03720)

Key words Indogermanische Dichtersprache, Ṛgveda, poets, heart, carpentry, formula (JSPS Research Fellow, Graduate Student, The University of Tokyo)