

While this is the general organization of the text, there are many exceptions to these ordering principles. So, for example, we remarked above that the Family Books, II–VII, are ordered from the shortest to the longest. While this is generally true, it is not completely the case. Consider the list of the Family Books and the total number of hymns in each:

II	43 hymns
III	62 hymns
IV	58 hymns
V	87 hymns
VI	75 hymns
VII	104 hymns

Although we would have expected the sequence of maṇḍalas to show a steadily increasing number of hymns, instead book IV has fewer hymns than III and book VI fewer than V. In a similar fashion, hymns can appear out of order within the various groupings that make up both the Family Books and the other books of the Ṛgveda. Such discrepancies have arisen through insertions of hymns and redactional combinations and divisions of hymns. These alterations occurred after the initial collection of the Ṛgveda, when the order of books and hymns was established, and by the time or at the time of Śākalya's final redaction of the text around the middle of first millennium BCE. Attention to these discrepancies can be an effective tool in reconstructing the compositional history of individual hymns and of groupings of hymns, since they allow us to see where an alteration has occurred. Oldenberg (1888: 193–94) provides the following example. In a series of single hymns with decreasing numbers of verses, V.83 is a hymn to Parjanya of ten verses and V.85 is a hymn to Varuṇa of eight verses. Between the two is V.84, a hymn to Earth of three verses. Clearly the hymn to Earth is out of sequence and was likely inserted between the hymns to Parjanya and to Varuṇa. While the fact of its insertion is obvious, there are several possible explanations for how and why this occurred. For example, V.84 could be a later composition that was later added to the Ṛgveda, or it could have been composed earlier but have been moved to its current place within the collection. In either case, this little hymn is actually a riddle depicting Earth during a violent storm and must have been felt as an appropriate pendant to the Parjanya hymn (see Jamison 2013).

II. History of the Ṛgvedic Text

A. LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITIONAL TECHNIQUE

The Ṛgveda was composed in an archaic form of Sanskrit that is richer in forms and less grammatically fixed than Classical Sanskrit, but essentially identical in structure. For further discussion of the language, see section VII below. The text

was composed entirely orally and transmitted entirely orally for a very long time, probably several millennia. But it was a type of oral composition very different from what that designation now generally brings to mind in scholarly, especially Homeric, circles. It was not an anonymous floating body of infinitely variable verbal material (re-)composed anew at every performance, generated in great part from fixed formulae that formed the poet's repertoire. In contrast to the vast sprawl of epic, on which the usual model of oral-formulaic composition was formed and tested, R̥gvedic oral composition was small-scale and verbally complex. Though orally composed and making use of traditional verbal material, each hymn was composed by a particular poet, who fixed the hymn at the time of composition and who "owned" it, and it was transmitted in this fixed form thereafter.

R̥gvedic verbal formulae work very differently from those in epic composition. Rather than deploying fairly sizable, metrically defined, and invariant pieces—ready-made surface structures, in the felicitous phrase of Paul Kiparsky (1976: 83)—our poets seem to operate with *deep-structure* formulae. Invariant repetition is fairly rare, and when it occurs, the repeated formulae tend to be short, generally shorter than the *pāda* (= verse line) and not necessarily metrically fixed. But the poets often assume knowledge of an underlying formula, which seldom or never surfaces as such, but which they ring changes on—by lexical or grammatical substitution, scrambling, semantic reversal, and the like, confounding the expectations of their audience while drawing upon their shared knowledge of the underlying verbal expression. These deep-structure formulae tend to be shared across bardic families, and we can in fact sometimes identify cognate formulae in other Indo-European poetic traditions, especially in the Old Avestan Gāthās.

B. PRESERVATION AND TRANSMISSION

The structure of the R̥gveda points to several stages in the creation of the R̥gvedic text as we now have it. Collections of hymns were first made by the families of poets who produced them, and these early collections defined the various poetic traditions and helped train new poets within those traditions. At some point a unified consolidation was made of six family traditions, which formed the original collection of the Family Books, II–VII. As discussed above, the books were arranged from shortest to longest and the hymns of each book were organized according to the same principles. Then, probably at several intervals, the hymns of books I and VIII (except for the Vāḷakhilya hymns) were added, and book IX was assembled from hymns composed by poets of the other books of the R̥gveda and from hymns of younger poets. The last major additions to the collection were the hymns of book X.

We do not know the precise mechanism for the formation of the R̥gvedic collection or the circumstances that brought it about. There must have been some centralized authority or agency that could consolidate the different family traditions and impose a single set of organizational principles on their collections. Michael

Witzel (cf. 1995a, 1995b, 1997, 2003) has suggested that this authority was first the Bharata tribe, as it attained hegemony over the other Vedic tribes during the Ṛgvedic period, and then later the Kuru state, which arose around 1000 BCE. In his view, the initial collection and organization of the Family Books, the Kāṇva hymns of VIII, and the nine collections of I.51–191 occurred under the Bharatas, and the complete collection of the Ṛgveda under the Kurus. These consolidations of the religious traditions supported the political consolidations of the Bharatas and of the Kurus and reinforced their rule by means of a unified religious practice approximating a state religion. The Kuru period saw the creation not only of the complete Ṛgveda but also of the other *saṃhitās*, and the fixation and canonization of Vedic sacrifices. The Vedic rites created at this time were composites, fashioned from different family traditions. They included extended recitations constituted of verses extracted from various parts of the Ṛgveda and thus from various family traditions. The purpose of such composite rites was to create a ritual system that represented the unity of the Vedic tradition. This process is already apparent in late hymns of the Ṛgveda itself (cf. Proferes 2003a). For example, ṚV IX.67 is a hymn to “self-purifying” soma. Rather than being the product of a particular poet or even a particular family of poets, it includes verses from poets representing the principal brahmin lineages. It reflects an attempt to create an “ecumenical” liturgy, as Proferes (2003a: 8) calls it, one in which all the major poetic traditions had a place.

The creation of the Ṛgvedic Saṃhitā reflected a significant ritual change, since it marked an emphasis on liturgical appropriation and repetition of earlier material rather than, as in the Ṛgvedic period itself, on the creation of new hymns. However, the tradition of Ṛgvedic composition did not simply come to a halt at the close of the Ṛgvedic period. The Ṛgveda Khila (Scheftelowitz 1906) is a collection of hymns that do not form part of the Śākalya recension. Some of these hymns may go back to the Ṛgvedic period, but most were likely composed in the following period, during which the hymns, chants, and recitations of the Atharvaveda, the Sāmaveda, and the Yajurveda were composed or assembled. The Atharvaveda itself also represents the extension of hymnic composition into a wider variety of ritual contexts, a process already visible in Ṛgveda book X. Beyond the Veda, elements and techniques typical of Ṛgvedic composition appear in later *praśastis*, epic poetry, and even in *kāvya* (see Jamison 2007: chap. 4).

The Ṛgveda did not remain unchanged after its collection. As described above, the collection of hymns was arranged according to definable principles, but the text of the Ṛgveda we have does not always follow these principles. Most of the changes were made at an early period since they are reflected in all the versions of the Ṛgveda that we have or that are described in later literature. These versions were the product of Vedic schools or *śākhās*, which became the institutions through which the Ṛgveda collection was preserved and transmitted.

The Ṛgveda translated here is the Ṛgveda of the Śākala school, established by Śākalya, a teacher of the late Vedic period. There were other schools that produced other recensions of the Ṛgveda, although most of these other recensions are now

lost. The Caraṇavyūha, a Yajurvedic Parisīṣṭa, lists five R̥gvedic schools: Śākala, Bāṣkala, Āśvalāyana, Śāṅkhāyana, and Māṇḍūkāyana. Other sources give larger numbers of R̥gvedic schools. There are seven according to the Atharvaveda Parisīṣṭa, and twenty-one according to Patañjali (ca. 150 BCE), although the last number reflects not the number of versions of the R̥gveda, but rather of schools that studied the R̥gveda. Of the five recensions mentioned in the Caraṇavyūha, the oldest may be the Māṇḍūkāyana, although little is known about it. The Bāṣkala school may have survived into the sixteenth century (Chaubey 2009: vii), and perhaps the Bāṣkala R̥gveda still exists somewhere in manuscript. But even without a manuscript, much is known about it from other texts. It probably dates to around the time of the Śākala recension and was close to the Śākala recension in substance. According to the Anuvākānukramaṇī, the Bāṣkala R̥gveda included the first seven hymns of the Vāḷakhilya, but rejected the other four, and after R̥V X.191, the last hymn in the Śākala recension, it had a second *saṃjñāna* hymn, or hymn of “agreement,” consisting of fifteen verses. It also rearranged Maṇḍala I, so that the Kutsa collection (I.94–115) followed the Parucchepa collection (I.127–139). This rearrangement conforms better to the expected order of the collections that constitute Maṇḍala I and therefore may represent either an older tradition than that of the Śākala recension or a later correction made according to perceived principles. The Āśvalāyana R̥gveda has recently been published (Chaubey 2009). It was based on the Śākala recension, but includes an additional 212 verses, all of which are later than the rest of the R̥gveda. The Śāṅkhāyana R̥gveda was very similar to the Āśvalāyana R̥gveda. A sixth R̥gvedic school was the Śāisirīya school, mentioned in the R̥gveda Prātiśākhya. Its recension again closely resembled the Śākala recension and indeed the Śāisirīya school might have derived from the Śākala school or have been merged with it (cf. Bronkhorst 1982/83). It again contained a few more verses than does the Śākala recension. In short, the differences among the reported and attested recensions of the R̥gveda are very minor, consisting of variant ordering of some existing materials and the inclusion or not of a relatively few late verses. There seems no need to mourn the loss of these recensions.

These schools produced a *saṃhitā* text, that is, a continuous text of the R̥gveda that includes the phonological alterations that occur between words—a phenomenon characteristic of the Sanskrit language in general known as *sandhi* or “putting together.” It is this basic form of the hymns that would have been recited in their ritual contexts. But in order to secure the text, these schools also produced other forms of the R̥gveda that supported its memorization. According to Patañjali, Śākalya not only created a recension of the *saṃhitā* text, but also a *padapāṭha* text. This latter text provides a grammatical analysis of the words of the R̥gveda by restoring the forms of the words before the application of the sandhi rules when the words are strung together. It shows the schools’ interest not only in preserving and transmitting the R̥gveda, but also in understanding the text they transmitted.

This history gives us reason to be confident that the Śākala R̥gveda is close to the R̥gveda that was created at the beginning of the first millennium, even though

the Śākala recension probably dates to some five hundred years later. We also have evidence for minor changes in the Śākala text itself. In the Śākala Padapāṭha, there is no analysis for six verses in the Saṃhitā: VII.59.12, X.20.1, 121.10, 190.1–3. They are probably missing from Padapāṭha analysis because they were not part of the text of the Ṛgveda at the time of the creation of the Padapāṭha, but were added to the Śākala text at a later period. Note again that these adjustments primarily occur in book X, the latest part of the Ṛgveda and apparently its most fluid.

When we say that the Śākala Ṛgveda is substantially the text created at the beginning of the first millennium BCE, we need to acknowledge one significant area in which the Ṛgveda recensions show demonstrable change since the collection of the Ṛgveda. This is in the phonetics of the text. The recitation of the Ṛgveda in different regions and times apparently reflected the different contemporary dialects and conventions of recitation in those regions and times. Such change is apparent in the Śākala recension in its handling of the phonological alterations that take place between words. The Śākala school imposed a further set of euphonic or sandhi rules on the text that developed during the centuries between the composition of the text and the Śākala recension. The result is that the saṃhitā text does not always reflect the metrical structure of the verses. In most cases, the changes are sufficiently regular that it is not difficult to restore the text to its metrical shape. For example, in the saṃhitā text the last verse of the first hymn of the Ṛgveda reads: I.1.9 *sá naḥ pitéva sūnávé, 'gne sūpāyanó bhava / sácasvā naḥ svastáye*. This hymn is composed in gāyatrī meter, so it ought to have eight syllables in each pāda. But the elision at the beginning of pāda b gives a line of seven syllables, and pāda c also apparently has seven syllables. Originally, the verse must have been recited without the elision in b: *sá naḥ pitéva sūnáve, ágne sūpāyanó bhava*. And in pāda c *svastáye* must have been recited quadrasyllabically *su(v)astáye*. While it is usually not difficult to restore the meter, that work has been done for us in the edition of the Ṛgveda by Barend A. van Nooten and Gary B. Holland (1994), which gives the metrically restored text of the Śākala recension.

These kinds of phonetic and euphonic changes were natural in the oral transmission of the text, more natural than the rigid oral preservation of the text after the Vedic period. Because such changes are natural, they were likely not deliberate alterations. More importantly, the reciters of the Ṛgveda did not deliberately change and, for the most part, did not change at all the order of the books of the Ṛgveda, the order of verses within hymns, the words of the hymns, or their grammar. There were a few—but relatively few—changes to the order of hymns, such as that reflected in the difference between the Bāṣkala and Śākala recensions in the order of Maṇḍala I. This early “freezing” of the text is very important and one of the characteristics that makes the Ṛgveda so valuable for understanding the linguistic, religious, and literary history of South Asia. The Ṛgvedic tradition has preserved a very ancient literature with extraordinary fidelity, with no grammatical or lexical

modernization or adjustment of contents to later conceptual conditions. It could have been otherwise. In R̥gvedic hymns that also appear in the Atharvaveda, the latter text not uncommonly shows a different verse order, and in both Atharvavedic and Sāmavedic versions of R̥gvedic hymns there can be differences in wording and in grammatical forms. In these cases, with few if any exceptions, the R̥gvedic version of the hymn is the older, and the versions of the other Vedas are modifications.

Up to the creation of the recensions of the R̥gveda and long afterward, the transmission of the R̥gveda was oral. At some point, however, the R̥gvedic schools did produce manuscripts of the text. It is difficult to say when this occurred, but the transmission of the text likely remained exclusively oral at least until around 1000 CE. The oldest manuscript in the collection of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute collection dates only to 1464; the Sampurnanand Sanskrit University in Varanasi has an older R̥gveda manuscript from the fourteenth century—thus a gap of considerably over two millennia between the fixation of the text and our earliest written evidence for it. Even when these activities did begin to occur, copying and preserving manuscripts never displaced memorization of the text as the primary means of transmission of the R̥gveda until quite modern times.

C. INDIGENOUS COMMENTARIAL TRADITION

With regard to indigenous commentary, the situation of the R̥gveda differs markedly from that of standard Classical Sanskrit texts, in that there is no unbroken commentarial tradition that might preserve the understanding of the text by the authors and audience at the time of composition. Although we find implicit commentary on some parts of the R̥gveda already in later Vedic texts, it is clear that in many cases this “commentary” is based more on adaptation, speculation, or fancy than on a direct transmission of the purport of the text, as when the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XI.5.1) sketches a narrative background for the Purūravas and Urvaśī dialogue (ṚV X.95) that distorts or misunderstands crucial portions of the hymn.

The first complete de facto commentary on the R̥gveda, dating probably from the late Vedic period, is Śākalya’s Padapāṭha mentioned above, which simply consists of an effectively linguistic analysis of the continuous text (the Saṃhitāpāṭha) of the R̥gveda into individual words (*padas*). Because of sandhi, an important and pervasive feature of the Sanskrit language whereby all words undergo significant phonological adjustment to adjacent words in context, the phonological restoration of the underlying pausal forms of words from the continuous reading is no mere mechanical operation, but presupposes a grammatical and semantic analysis of the text.

The *Nighaṅṭu* is a collection of difficult Vedic words probably made likewise in the late Vedic period. The *Nighaṅṭu* and the commentary upon this collection by Yāska in his *Nirukta* provide early lexical and etymological approaches to the R̥gveda, though understanding “etymology” in a synchronic, rather than our current diachronic sense.

Various indexes or *anukramaṇīs* to the Ṛgveda, also mentioned above, were compiled probably around the middle of the first millennium BCE, attributed to Śaunaka; these were not fully preserved. A comprehensive index, the *Sarvānukramaṇī*, attributed to Kātyāyana and dating perhaps to the mid-fourth century BCE but drawing on the earlier indexes, provides, for each hymn, the poet, the god(s) to which it is addressed, and the meter(s) in which it is composed. The *Bṛhaddevatā*, also attributed to Śaunaka, is in essence also an *anukramaṇī*, specifically an index to the deities of each hymn, but in expanded form, with a number of interesting narratives and legends interspersed in the dry sequential listing of hymns and their divinities.

None of these ancient tools and treatments remotely approaches the standard type of commentary familiar for later Sanskrit texts. For this the Ṛgveda had to wait until the medieval period. The most influential and lasting commentary on the text was made by Sāyaṇa in the fourteenth century CE in South India, although there were a number of pre-Sāyaṇa commentators, some of whose work survives in part. Sāyaṇa's work essentially superseded these earlier works, and remains enormously important in both indigenous and Western interpretations of the text: Max Müller's edition of the Ṛgveda includes Sāyaṇa's commentary, and Geldner's translation, for example, owes much to Sāyaṇa. It should be remembered, however, that Sāyaṇa is temporally closer to our own age than to that of the Ṛgveda, and he was writing in a very different geographical, political, and religious landscape from that of the Ṛgveda. It is therefore more useful to read Sāyaṇa not as a direct conduit of the "true meaning" of the Ṛgveda but as a scholar grappling with the same problems as modern interpreters, and bringing to bear all the intelligence and knowledge he can muster, just as we do.

D. WESTERN SCHOLARSHIP ON THE ṚGVEDA AND MAJOR RESOURCES

Because the transmission of the Ṛgveda has preserved the text remarkably well, we have a trustworthy and uniform text of the Ṛgveda. The published editions of the Ṛgveda differ in their presentation of the text, not in the text itself. The landmark edition of the Ṛgveda was that of Max Müller (1849–74), who published both the *Samhitā* and *Padapāṭha* text in devanāgarī script, together with Sāyaṇa's commentary. Before the completion of Müller's Ṛgveda, in 1861–63 Theodor Aufrecht published the text in Roman transliteration, together with selected *Padapāṭha* analyses. A second edition, the standard edition of Aufrecht's Ṛgveda, appeared in 1877. The Ṛgveda and Sāyaṇa's commentary were published again under the editorship of N. S. Sontakke (1933–51), together with the *Padapāṭha*. Also noteworthy is the aforementioned publication of the metrically restored version of the Ṛgveda text by Barend A. van Nooten and Gary B. Holland (1994).

The uniformity and reliability of the text of the Ṛgveda cannot be said of its translations, which vary considerably. The standard scholarly translation remains that of Karl Friedrich Geldner into German. This translation was published in full

in 1951, but was complete in the 1920s and partially published in limited fashion then. Although it remains a remarkable philological accomplishment, whose worth we two translators have appreciated more and more over the years, it of course could not take account of the advances in Vedic scholarship over the last eighty years or so. Louis Renou (1955–69) was able to finish most of a French translation of the R̥gveda, in a series of thematic publications, under the general title *Études védiques et pāṇinéennes*, organized by the divinity addressed rather than the order of the R̥gvedic text. But he left undone substantial parts, notably the Indra and Aśvin hymns, and the later publications are rather sketchy. T. Ya. Elizarenkova (1989–99) completed a Russian translation of the text. Currently in preparation is a new German translation of the R̥gveda under the direction of Michael Witzel and Toshifumi Gotō. The first volume of the Witzel-Gotō translation (2007), which covers Maṇḍalas I and II, has appeared, with the second volume scheduled for 2013.

Unfortunately, English has not been as well served as these other languages. Aside from anthologies, the English version that is in general use is R. T. H. Griffith's translation, which was first published in four volumes between 1889 and 1892, then in a revised edition in 1896, and then yet again in another revised edition, this time by J. L. Shastri, in 1973. Griffith's translation has been reprinted several times since 1973 and is available online (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/rigveda/index.htm>). Sadly, this translation really does not deserve as many rebirths as it has had. Its philology was already dated when it was published, and the English style of the translation is cloying and almost unreadable. Now, well over a century later, it should have long since been superseded. There was at least one serious effort to do so. From the late 1940s until the early 1960s, H. D. Velankar steadily published English translations of the R̥gveda, which were a decided improvement over Griffith's work (for a list of his translations, see the Bibliography). These were published as independent volumes dedicated to books II, V, VII, and VIII of the R̥gveda and as collections of hymns to different deities published in the *Journal of the University of Bombay*. Partly because these translations are scattered, incomplete, and difficult of access, they have received less attention than they might otherwise have done. In addition to these complete or extensive translations of the R̥gveda, several anthologies of R̥gvedic hymns have appeared. In English, the most notable are those of Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (1981) and Walter H. Maurer (1986). The principal problem with any such anthology is that translators understandably choose hymns that they think will be especially interesting for their readers and accessible to them. As a result, they tend to create a distorted view of the R̥gveda that does not reflect the liturgical functions and scope of the text.

Both the partial and the complete translations just mentioned were fundamental for the present translation. In our introductions to individual hymns, we will often make reference to them, especially when they suggest interpretations of the text we deem particularly worthy of note. Rather than giving a fuller bibliographic reference, we will refer to them only by the last names of the translators. The exceptions are Renou's translations, for which we will give the relevant volume and page of his

Études védiques et pāṇinéenes, and Velankar's translations, where again we will cite the specific source.

In addition to these translations, there are a number of other essential resources for translating and interpreting the Ṛgveda. Among the older works of particular significance are the *Wörterbuch* of Hermann Grassmann (1872–75), whose presentation of the lexicon of the Ṛgveda is somewhat antique but still very useful. Grassmann's work has now been complemented and in some respects superseded by Alexander Lubotsky's concordance to the Ṛgveda (1997), which provides the verse-line context for Ṛgvedic words. Among older works of significance, of particular note is Hermann Oldenberg's *Noten* (1909, 1912) on the complete text of the Ṛgveda, whose insights remain remarkable even a century after they were published. Maurice Bloomfield's *Rig-veda Repetitions* (1916) is an invaluable resource for the study of Ṛgvedic formulaic language and its variations, though it predates the discovery of oral-formulaic composition.

In the last fifty years or so, Ṛgvedic scholarship has blossomed with studies that have significantly advanced our understanding of the language of the Ṛgveda—its lexicon, morphology, and syntax—of its compositional techniques, and of its conceptual universe and ritual procedures and context. We cannot offer even a partial list of such books, let alone articles, since we would omit too many. We will mention only a few, those which were especially close at hand as we worked through the text and whose insights we have often adopted. Particularly important was Manfred Mayrhofer's etymological dictionary of Old Indo-Aryan (*EWA* 1986–2001) and his previous version (*KEWA* 1951–76), not completely superseded by the newer one. Other works include Salvatore Scarlata's study of nominal compounds ending in roots (1999) and Jared S. Klein's studies of Vedic particles and discourse structure (1985). One of the subjects in which there has been substantial progress just in the last decades has been the Vedic verbal system. The flood of monographs on the verbal system probably began with Johanna Narten's work on the s-aorist (1964), followed closely by Karl Hoffmann's influential study of the injunctive (1967). Other verbal subsystems treated more recently include the -áya-stems (Jamison 1983), the first-class presents (Gotō 1987), the intensive (Schaefer 1994), the perfect (Kümmel 2000), the desiderative (Heenen 2006), and the ya-presents (Kulikov 2012). All of these works, as well as many other and many shorter studies, have been of critical importance as we have worked our way through the text.

Finally, we wish to note one last development not just in Ṛgvedic but in Sanskrit scholarship more generally. Among older scholars there was a tendency to deal with difficulties in a text by emending it. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, scholars increasingly recognized that they could gain a much better understanding of the text by accepting the text as transmitted. This process is visible in Oldenberg's scholarship. Before the *Noten*, Oldenberg published translations of the Agni hymns of the first five books of the Ṛgveda (1897). There he was willing to suggest text emendations to smooth rough spots in the hymns. By the time of the *Noten*, however, he had become much more apt to accept the text as it stands and

to explore ways of accounting for that transmitted text. We too are committed to accepting the traditional text and more importantly to allowing the poetry of the R̥gveda to remain complex, elusive, jagged, unsettled, and even unsettling.

III. Power of the Word

A. WORDS, TRUTH, AND KNOWLEDGE

One reason for the intricacy of R̥gvedic poetry and the careful thought that the R̥gvedic poets put into it is the importance that Vedic culture attached to the spoken word and to the truth that it embodied. The elegantly formulated truth, spoken in a ritual context, was powerful. The word for “truth” is *ṛtá*, a crucially resonant word that, with some reason, some other translators have rendered “order” or “cosmic order.” The term *ṛtá* essentially defines what a being or object is and what it does, and it structures the relationships of beings and objects with other beings and objects. By speaking these truths of essence and relationship, the poets could make the truths real and actual in the present. So, for example, the great Indra hymn, I.32, begins, “Now I shall proclaim the heroic deeds of Indra, those foremost deeds, which the mace-wielder performed. . . .” Why does the poet proclaim these deeds? It is not simply to honor the god, although his proclamation surely does do that. It is also to state the *truth* of these heroic deeds, so that these deeds will become real once again. As Indra once before smashed Vṛtra, who was the symbol and epitome of all obstacles, so once again he will smash obstacles. Formulating the “truth” of Indra is part of what makes Indra real and present. Similarly, the story of Indra and the Vala cave is essentially a story of the power of the truth. According to this myth, Indra and the Aṅgirasas opened the Vala cave and released the cattle and the dawns by the songs they recited. These songs were powerful because they contained the truth that the cattle were the dawns, and therefore, by singing this truth Indra and the Aṅgirasas obtained both cattle and dawns. In X.108 the poet narrates part of the story of Indra and Vala and then states his expectation that the truth of his song, which is the truth of the Vala story, will bring cattle back to him: “Exchanging with the truth, let the cows come up, which Bṛhaspati [=Indra] found hidden. . . .” Or again, in IX.113.2 the poet declares the soma is pressed “with real words of truth, with trust, and with fervor.” That is to say, it is not just the physical pressing of the soma plant that produces soma juice. Soma is also created by the intensity of the priests, by their confidence in the effectiveness of their actions, and by the truth they speak about the soma and about the power of the soma to strengthen the gods and to give life to mortals. Words, commitment, and ritual all combine to make the soma real.

The product of the formulating of a truth, the verbal formulation itself, is the *bráhman*, and the poet who formulates truth is the *brahmán*. While the later ritual tradition will rely on ancient formulations of the truth passed down from the early