
Classifying and Defining Deities in the Late Vedic Age:

A Study and an Annotated Translation of Yāska's

Nirukta Chapter 7¹



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Abstract

Yāska's *Nirukta* (ca. fifth-third century BCE), the seminal text of the Sanskrit discipline of *nirvacana* or 'etymology', is one of the most important yet least studied late Vedic texts. Particularly little attention has been paid to *Nirukta* Chapter 7. This chapter outlines Yāska's views on Vedic deities and articulates the hermeneutic principles whereby they are classified and defined. It plays a crucial, yet under-appreciated, role in the history of ancient India's theological and hermeneutical speculations. The absence of an accessible English translation, which tackles the text's many conceptual and linguistic complexities, is the main reason why *Nirukta* Chapter 7 has not received the attention it deserves. We offer the first complete annotated English translation in a century. A comprehensive introduction clarifies the structure and rationale of Chapter 7 and elucidates the salient features of Yāska's theology.

Keywords: *Nirukta*; *nirvacana*; Vedic deities; Yāska's theology

Yāska's *Nirukta* (ca. fifth to third century BCE) is one of the most fascinating yet least studied late Vedic texts.² Modern scholarly contributions on the *Nirukta* have been few and far

¹This paper is the result of both authors' close collaboration. Both should be thus equally considered as first authors. We thank Johannes Bronkhorst for several valuable comments on a previous draft. We also thank *JRAS*'s two anonymous reviewers.

²There is no scholarly consensus on the dating of the *Nirukta*. Kahrs briefly reviews previous views and concludes that "[m]y own inclination is that Yāska's date falls within the later period of a possible timespan between the seventh and third centuries BCE". E. Kahrs, *Indian Semantic Analysis: The nirvacana Tradition* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 13–14. More recently, Scharf has proposed that the *Nirukta* is a multilayered text and that different parts of the texts were composed at different stages; specifically, he regards the first portion of the text (*Nirukta* 1.1–2.4), together with Chapters 13 and 14, as later additions. P. Scharf, 'Linguistics in India', in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Linguistics*, (ed.) K. Allen (Oxford, 2013), p. 229. P. Scharf, 'The Relation between Etymology and Grammar in the Linguistic Traditions of Early India', *Bulletin d' Études Indiennes* 32 (2014), p. 259.

between, and have focused almost exclusively on its etymologies.³ One important dimension of the text that has virtually remained unexplored is Yāska's theology. In this respect, *Nirukta* Chapter 7 is particularly relevant. It provides a wealth of information regarding how Yāska conceptualises Vedic deities, including sophisticated arguments whereby the deities are classified and defined. This chapter offers unique glimpses into the development of Indian religions and associated hermeneutic practices. We believe that recognition of the importance and fascination of Yāska's theology is long overdue. As a first attempt to fill this gap, we give an annotated translation of *Nirukta* Chapter 7, preceded by a comprehensive introduction. We hope that our contribution will stimulate interest in Yāska's theology and more generally in the *Nirukta*.

The only other English translation of *Nirukta* Chapter 7 of which we are aware is by Lakṣman Sarup.⁴ This pioneering work, which remains the only complete English translation of the *Nirukta* to date, is still essential. Yet, two main factors make it hard to read: (i) the Ṛgvedic citations and Yāska's commentary thereupon are not differentiated in print; and (ii) no information is given regarding Yāska's argumentation. As a result, the reader struggles to pick her way through the complexities of the text. Although they do not constitute a full translation, Rudolph Roth's copious notes accompanying his edition of the *Nirukta* are very helpful.⁵ In preparing our translation, we also benefited from Jamuna Pathak's masterful Hindi translation and commentary.⁶

The following introduction comprises eight sections: section 1 briefly presents the *Nirukta* and the *Nighaṅṭu*; section 2 introduces *Nirukta* Chapter 7; sections 3 to 7 give a detailed summary of the structure and contents of this chapter; section 8 delineates Yāska's theology.

1. The *Nirukta* and the *Nighaṅṭu*

Yāska's *Nirukta* comprises 14 chapters. The last two chapters are later additions and are known as 'supplements' (*pariśiṣṭa*). The first two chapters provide a general introduction into the discipline of etymology. Notably, they give rules for etymologising, and detail the purposes that etymology is supposed to achieve. The bulk of the *Nirukta*, Chapter 2.5 to Chapter 12, is a commentary on a list of words, mostly excerpted from the Ṛgveda. Called *Nighaṅṭu* (or, more precisely, *nighaṅṭavas* in the plural), this word list comprises 1,770 items divided into five chapters, which are arranged in three sections.

The fifth chapter of the *Nighaṅṭu*, which corresponds to its third section, is known as *dāvatakāṇḍa* 'the section on divine [names]'. It lists 151 divine names and epithets. These

³For a fairly comprehensive, yet by no means exhaustive, overview of modern scholarship, see M. Deeg, *Die altindische Etymologie nach dem Verständnis Yāska's und seiner Vorgänger: Eine Untersuchung über ihre Praktiken, ihre literarische Verbreitung und ihr Verhältnis zur dichterischen Gestaltung und Sprachmagie* (Dettelbach, 1995), pp. 67–73, and P. Visigalli, 'An Early Indian Interpretive Puzzle: Vedic Etymologies as a Tool for Thinking', *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 46 (2018), pp. 985–988.

⁴L. Sarup, *The Nighaṅṭu and the Nirukta, the Oldest Indian Treatise on Etymology, Philology, and Semantics. English Translation* (London and New York, 1921).

⁵R. Roth, *Jāska's Nirukta sammt den Nighaṅṭavas* (Göttingen, 1852).

⁶J. Pathak, *Nirukta of Yāskācārya: Edited with 'Saśiprabhā' Hindi Commentary and Notes* (Varanasi, 2018 [2010]). We translate the text established by Sarup in his critical edition. In two occasions, we choose a different reading; see below note 57 (*pravahlitam* > *pravahhitam*) and note 101 (*āharad* > *āharad*). Our references to the *Nighaṅṭu*, too, follow Sarup's edition. L. Sarup, *The Nighaṅṭu and the Nirukta, the Oldest Indian Treatise on Etymology, Philology, and Semantics. Sanskrit Text, with an Appendix Showing the Relation of the Nirukta with Other Sanskrit Works* (Lahore, 1927).

are divided into six subgroups, and are commented in *Nirukta* Chapters 7 to 12 respectively. The first three subgroups comprise the names of deities that reside on earth (*Nighaṅṭu* 5.1 [= *Nirukta* 7.14-7.31]; *Nighaṅṭu* 5.2 [= *Nirukta* 8]; *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3 [= *Nirukta* 9]). The fourth and fifth subgroups comprise the names of deities that reside in the middle space region (*Nighaṅṭu* 5.4 [= *Nirukta* 10]; *Nighaṅṭu* 5.5 [= *Nirukta* 11]). The sixth and last subgroup comprises the names of deities that reside in the sky (*Nighaṅṭu* 5.6 [= *Nirukta* 12]).⁷

2. Nirukta Chapter 7

Chapter 7 of the *Nirukta*, the object of our study, can be divided into four parts: Part I (*Nirukta* 7.1-13); Part II (*Nirukta* 7.14-18); Part III (*Nirukta* 7.19-20); and Part IV (*Nirukta* 7.21-31). Part I is a general introduction to the latter half of the *Nirukta*, Chapters 7 to 12, which comments on the *daivatakāṇḍa*. This part deals with several topics pertaining to the divine names and to the formulas (*mantra*) in which such names occur, including principles to classify the deities and the associated formulas. Each of Part II, III and IV deals with one of the three divine names that form the first of the six subgroups in which the 151 divine names of the *daivatakāṇḍa* are divided. Specifically, Part II deals with *agni* (*Nighaṅṭu* 5.1.1), Part III with *jātavedas* (*Nighaṅṭu* 5.1.2), and Part IV with *vaiśvānara* (*Nighaṅṭu* 5.1.3).⁸ Part IV is the most detailed one.

We summarise below the contents of Part I to Part IV. For the sake of clarity, we have divided the text into sections. These are marked by a progressive number preceded by '§'. For each Part, we first give a discursive summary; this is followed by a table that represents each Part's content schematically. Though the argumentation in *Nirukta* 7 follows a logical sequence and is fully self-consistent, this is obscured by Yāska's terse style. To help the reader navigate Yāska's argumentation, we have tried to make his reasonings and their concatenation as explicit and clear as we can.

3. Summary of Part I (*Nirukta* 7.1-13)

We begin with a bird's-eye view summary of Part I. Yāska deals with four major themes:

- (i) He gives a definition of two key topics, [§1] the divine names and [§2] the formulas in which they occur.
- (ii) In [§3-5], formulas are the focus of attention. Different ways to classify the formulas are discussed. Yāska records three major kinds of formulas: those in which the divine name, i.e. the name of the addressee deity, is explicitly mentioned [§3]; those in which the divine name is not mentioned [§4]; and those in which the divine names refer to seemingly non-divine entities, such as 'horse' (*aśva*), 'herb' (*oṣadhi*), and 'mortar-pestle' (*ulūkhalamusale*) [§5].

⁷In this paper, 'sky' renders Sanskrit *dyu*. (We use 'celestial' as its corresponding adjective.) We chose this rendition over the usual 'heaven' because we think that the latter is partly misleading and does not fit well with Yāska's theology. 'Heaven' is a religiously loaded term, whereas 'sky' denotes a spatial/cosmological locus. 'Heaven' conjures up earth, thereby suggesting an opposition in which only heaven is predominantly associated with the supernatural. In Yāska's theology, however, all the three worlds (earth, mid-space, and sky) are cosmological loci that are equally associated with their corresponding deities (see Part I: §6.1; §8).

⁸We use italics to refer to the word (e.g. *agni*) and capitalised roman to refer to the deity (e.g. Agni).

- (iii) In [§6–9], the deities are the focus of attention. The following topics are discussed: how many deities there are [§6]; their form [§7]; their shares, i.e. the items with which such deities are connected; their characteristic actions; their association with other deities [§8]; finally, a fourfold classification of deities, depending on what they enjoy (*√bhaj*), is given [§9].
- (iv) In [§10], Yāska explains the rationale that led him to select and transmit the divine names constituting *Nighaṅṭu* 5.

A more detailed summary of Part I follows. Yāska begins by defining two interrelated key topics: the divine names that are listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5 [§1], and the formulas in which such names occur [§2].

[§1] Divine names are the appellations with which the deities are addressed in the formulas. Yāska identifies two kinds of divine names: (a) those with which the addressed deities enjoy primary praise; and (b) those with which they enjoy secondary praise.⁹ (a) refers to the deity that is the primary addressee of a formula; (b) refers to a deity whose name is mentioned incidentally in a formula that is addressed to another primary deity.¹⁰

With respect to this twofold classification, note three points. First, this classification is not word-bound, but formula-bound. One and the same divine name can be (a) in one formula, but (b) in another formula.¹¹

Second, all the names that belong to (b) exclusively are not listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5. That is, this list does not include the names with which the deities enjoy secondary praise only, but never enjoy primary praise.¹²

⁹Yāska uses the following terminology: (a) ‘primary praise’ (*prādhānyastuti*: *Nirukta* 1.20; 7.1, 13; *prādhānyena*: *Nirukta* 1.20); (b) ‘incidental mention’ (*naighaṅṭuka*: e.g. *Nirukta* 1.20; and *nipāta*: e.g. *Nirukta* 7.18). For the sake of clarity, we render ‘incidental mention’ as ‘secondary praise’, to better match ‘primary praise’. Yāska uses two different terms (*naighaṅṭuka/nipāta*) to refer to ‘secondary praise’. He defines *naighaṅṭuka* in *Nirukta* 1.20: ‘with respect to this (i.e. the twofold classification of divine names into primary [*prādhānyena*] and incidental [*naighaṅṭuka*]), whatever [divine name, *devatāmāna*] drops in a formula [addressed to] another deity, that is incidental (*naighaṅṭuka*)’ (*Nirukta* 1.20: *tad yad anyadevate* [variant reading: *anyadaivate*] *mantra nipatati naighaṅṭukam tat*).

Note that the same term *naighaṅṭuka* (yet in the plural *naighaṅṭukāni* [*nāmāni*]), rather than in the singular) is used in *Nirukta* 1.20 in a different sense, to refer to the first section (=first three chapters) of the *Nighaṅṭu* word list. This section consists of synonyms: e.g. *Nighaṅṭu* 1.1 lists twenty-one words, all of which mean ‘earth’.

¹⁰Two examples will help clarify how this twofold classification works. In *Nirukta* 1.20, immediately after having defined *naighaṅṭuka* (see note 9), Yāska cites *Rgveda* 1.27.1. In this verse, two divine names are mentioned, *agni* [*Nighaṅṭu* 5.1.1] and *āsva* ‘horse’ [*Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.1]. Yet, *āsva* is mentioned only incidentally, for *Rgveda* 1.27.1 is addressed to Agni. Thus, while Agni enjoys primary praise through *agni*, *Asva* enjoys only secondary praise through *āsva*.

In *Nirukta* 12.20–21, Yāska discusses the divine name *viśvānara* [*Nighaṅṭu* 5.6.12]. He says: ‘[The name] *viśvānara* has been already explained [in *Nirukta* 7.21; below Part IV: §21]. *viśvānara* has an incidental mention (=Viśvānara is incidentally mentioned) in [the following] verse addressed to Indra [*Rgveda* VIII.68.4]’ (*viśvānaro vyākhyātaḥ | tasyaiṣa nipāto bhavaty aindryām ica*). This means that the mention of *viśvānara* in *Rgveda* VIII.68.4 is incidental, for the hymn is addressed to Indra. Thus, while Viśvānara enjoys only secondary praise through *viśvānara*, Indra enjoys primary praise through *indra*, which occurs several times in the hymn.

For the *Rgveda*, we use the following edition: T. Aufrecht, *Die Hymnen des R̥gveda*, 2 vols (Bonn, 1877).

¹¹Take as an example the word *āsva*. As we just saw, it is mentioned incidentally in *Rgveda* 1.27.1; yet, it refers to the deity that enjoys primary praise in *Rgveda* IX.112.4; see *Nirukta* 9.2.

¹²This can be deduced from *Nirukta* 7.1, in which the ‘section on the names of the deities’ (*daivata* [= *Nighaṅṭu* 5]) is defined as comprising names with which the deities enjoy primary praise; see below [I: §1]. More clearly, the point is expressly stated by Yāska, when he explains the rationale behind the arrangement of *Nighaṅṭu* 5; see below [I: §10].

Third, we will see that this classification plays an important role in Part II, III, and IV, when Yāska discusses which of the three fires (terrestrial [=ritual fire]; atmospheric [=lightning]; celestial [=sun]) is the referent of the three divine names, *agni*, *jātavedas*, and *vaiśvānara*.

[§2] A formula (*mantra*) is a praise by which a seer addresses a deity, wishing to obtain an object. This definition assumes reciprocity as the characteristic feature of the interaction between human beings and deities: The seer praises the deity with a verse and the deity reciprocates by fulfilling the seer's desire.

[§3] Yāska records several parameters whereby formulas are classified. A threefold classification ([§3.1]; [§3.2]; [§3.3]), which is mostly based on formal grammatical features, is followed by additional classificatory parameters that are mostly concerned with the content of the formulas [§3.4].

[§4] Yāska goes on to discuss formulas that do not contain a divine name. He notes three cases. [§4.1] First, if the formula is used in ritual, its deity is the deity of the ritual or the deity associated with the part of the ritual in which the formula is recited.¹³ [§4.2] Second, if the formula is not used in ritual, its deity is a default deity. This is Prajāpati for the ritualists, Narāśaṃsa (=Agni) for the etymologists.¹⁴ [§4.3] Third (which seems to be an alternative of [§4.2]), several alternative practices are recorded, including choosing the deity according to one's own wish.

[§5] Yāska turns to discuss another kind of formulas, those in which the divine names refer to entities that are seemingly not divine. Reference is to the names listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3. Yāska first records an objection [§5.1], and then responds to it [§5.2]: all such names—e.g. 'horse' (*aśva*: *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.1), 'herb' (*ośadhi*: *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.1), and 'mortar-pestle' (*ulūkhalamusale*: *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.29)—are divine names on their own right, for they share the same ultimate referent with all the other divine names, namely, the one existing deity, the Self (*ātman*).

[§6] Next, the discussion focuses on the deities. How many deities are there? Yāska records the etymologists' and the ritualists' views. [§6.1] The former maintain that there are only three deities, Agni, Vāyu/Indra, and Āditya, which are associated respectively with the earth, the atmosphere, and the sky. [§6.2] The ritualists believe that there are many deities, for there are multiple praises and multiple appellations. Yāska first records the ritualists' criticism of the etymologists' view [§6.3], then he sides with the etymologists [§6.4].

¹³Durga (see *Ṛjvarthā* 7.4 [626.10–15]) gives the following example: formulas whose divine name is not specified that are used in the Agniṣṭoma should be considered as addressed to Agni, for the Agniṣṭoma is associated with Agni. However, when such formulas are recited during the first, second, and third soma pressing of the Agniṣṭoma, they should be taken as being addressed to Agni, Indra, and Āditya, respectively; for each of the three pressings is associated respectively with one of these three deities.

For the *Ṛjvarthā*, we use the following edition: V. K. Rajavade, *Durgācārya's Commentary on the Nirukta*, *Durgācāryakṛtvarttisametam Niruktam* (Poona, 1926).

¹⁴Prajāpati is the main deity for the ritualists. As noted by Durga (*Ṛjvarthā* 7.4 [627.1–3]), the affinity between the formulas whose deity is not specified and the deity Prajāpati consists in the fact that both are 'undefined' (*anirukta*). See Renou and Silburn's study of the terms *nirukta/anirukta* in the Brāhmaṇas. L. Renou and L. Silburn, '*Nirukta* and *Anirukta* in Vedic', in *Sarūpa-Bhāraṭī: The Homage of Indology (Dr. Lakṣman Sarup Memorial Volume)*, (eds.) J. Agrawal and Bhim Dev Shastri (Hoshiarpur, 1954), pp. 68–79. See also P. Visigalli, 'The Vedic Background of Yāska's *Nirukta*', *Indo-Iranian Journal* 60 (2017), p. 112f. Durga (*Ṛjvarthā* 7.4 [627.3–12]) explains Narāśaṃsa as an epithet of Agni, the main deity in the etymologists' pantheon. Cf. below [I: §15], where Agni is said to be all the deities.

[§7] What do deities look like? Specifically, are deities like human beings, i.e. do they have a human-like intellect? Having an intellect seems to be a necessary precondition for the deities to be able to understand—and thus reciprocate—the formulas human beings address to them. Four views are recorded.

[§7.1] maintains that deities are like human beings. In support of this view, the following four arguments are given. (a) That praises are addressed towards the deities (and they are called with names) shows that deities must have a human-like intellect that enables them to understand such praises (and their own names). Next, several Ṛgvedic passages are cited in which deities are praised in association with (b) bodily limbs, (c) human-like objects of possession, and (d) human-like actions. Conversely, [§7.2] maintains that deities are not like human beings, for it is evident that deities such as fire and wind do not look anything like human beings. Hereafter the four arguments given in [§7.1] are countered. (a¹) Divine names are recorded in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.4–22, such as ‘dice’ and ‘herb’, which refer to entities that clearly do not have intellect. Next, Ṛgvedic passages are cited in which non-human entities, such as the pressing stones and the rivers, are praised in association with (b¹) bodily limbs, (c¹) human-like objects of possession, and (d¹) human-like actions. [§7.3] seems to offer a compromise view: deities are both like and unlike human beings. [§7.4] seems to be Yāska’s view, though what this view entails is not fully clear. Yāska seems to say that there are two kinds or aspects of deities, one with and the other without intellect. The latter kind of deities consists in (ritual) action, and are subordinated to the former kind. Yāska explains the relationship between these two kinds of deities with reference to the relation between ritual action (which is without intellect) and the patron of the sacrifice (with intellect).

[§8] Yāska elaborates on the etymologists’ view that there are only three deities [§6.1], Agni [§8.1], Indra [§8.2] (note that Vāyu is not mentioned, unlike in [§6.1]), and Āditya [§8.3]. For each deity, he discusses three parameters: (a) their ‘shares’ (*bhakti*), i.e. the items that are associated with each deity; (b) their characteristic actions (*karman*); (c) and their association with other deities in the formulas.

[§9] One other way of classifying deities is given. Deities can be classified according to what they enjoy (*√bhaj*): (a) hymns (*sūkta*); (b) oblations (*havis*); (c) stanzas (*ṛc*); (d) and incidental mention (*nipāta*).

[§10] Yāska returns to discuss the divine names, with which he began in [§1]. Criticising other similar lists of divine names, Yāska explains that in *Nighaṅṭu* 5 he has recorded only those names that are conventionally known to refer to a deity and with which a deity enjoys primary praise.

The structure and content of Part I is represented in [Table 1](#). The four columns contain: (i) the number marking the sections in which we divide chapter seven; (ii) a heading that characterises the section’s main theme; such headings occur in square brackets in the body of the translation; (iii) reference to the traditional text division of *Nirukta* 7; (iv) reference to page and line numbers in Sarup’s edition.¹⁵

¹⁵See note 6.

Table 1: structure and contents of Part I (*Nirukta* 7.1–13)

(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
§1	Definition of the divine names listed in <i>Nighaṅṭu</i> 5	7.1	132.3–4
§2	Definition of the deity of the formula	=	132.4–5
§3	Classification of formulas	1–3	132.5–134.8
§3.1	Formulas that address a deity indirectly	1–2	132.6–14
§3.2	Formulas that address a deity directly	2	132.15–133.6
§3.3	Formulas that are self-addressed by the deity itself	=	133.7–9
§3.4	Additional classificatory principles	3	133.10–134.8
§4	Formulas in which the divine name is not specified	4	134.9–12
§4.1	If the formula is used in ritual, it has as its deity the deity of (part of) the ritual	=	134.9–10
§4.2	If the formula is not used in ritual, it has as its deity Prajāpati (for ritualists), or Narāsaṃsa (=Agni) (for etymologists)	=	134.10–11
§4.3	Additional cases	=	134.11–12
§5	Should the names listed in <i>Nighaṅṭu</i> 5.3 be regarded as divine names?	=	134.13–135.2
§5.1	No: they do not refer to deities	=	134.13–14
§5.2	Yes: also non-deities are part of the one divine Self (<i>ātman</i>)	=	134.14–135.2
§6	How many deities are there?	5	135.3–10
§6.1	Etymologists' view: there are three deities: Agni, Vāyu/Indra, and Āditya	=	135.3–5
§6.2	Ritualists' view: there are many deities	=	135.6
§6.3	Ritualists' criticism of etymologists' view	=	135.6–7
§6.4	Yāska's view: etymologists' view [§6.1] is correct	=	135.7–10
§7	What forms do deities have?	6–7	135.11–136.13
§7.1	Deities are like human beings, i.e. they are provided with intellect	=	135.11–136.2
§7.2	Deities are not like human beings, i.e. they are without intellect	7	136.3–11
§7.3	Deities are like and unlike human beings	=	136.12
§7.4	Yāska's view	=	136.12–13
§8	Agni, Indra and Āditya: their shares (<i>bhakti</i>), actions (<i>karma</i>), and association with other deities	8–11	136.14–138.3
§8.1	Agni	8–9	136.15–137.7
§8.2	Indra	10	137.8–13
§8.3	Āditya	11	137.14–17
§8.4	Remaining shares	=	137.17–138.3
	We omit translating <i>Nirukta</i> 7.12 and part of <i>Nirukta</i> 7.13 (Sarup's edition 138.4–17). These lines only contain etymological explanations of a few words and interrupt the flow of Yāska's discussion.		
§9	Fourfold classification of deities depending on what they 'enjoy' (<i>√bhaj</i>)	13	138.18–19
§10	Yāska's rationale for the transmission of <i>Nighaṅṭu</i> 5	=	138.19–139.5

4. Similar Structure of Parts II, III and IV

Part II, III, and IV follow a similar fourfold structure, with Part IV being the most elaborate.

(i) An opening question “where is ‘x’ from?” (‘x’ *kasmāt*?)—with ‘x’ being the divine names *agni* [II: §12], *jātavedas* [III: §17] and *vaiśvānara* [IV: §21], respectively—is answered with several etymologies.¹⁶

¹⁶The meaning of Yāska's terse formulation (‘x’ *kasmāt*?) has been debated in scholarship, for it is connected with an overall interpretation of Yāska's etymological project: are Yāska's etymologies best understood as derivational (*kasmāt* = ‘from where?’, i.e. from what root?) or causal (*kasmāt* = ‘why?’, i.e. why is something called ‘x’? e.g. ‘why is Agni called *agni*?’) explanations? In our view, Yāska's etymologies are concerned with both derivational-grammatical and causal-semantic aspects; while Yāska's primary concern is to elucidate the semantic content of a

(ii) One or two Ṛgvedic verse(s) containing ‘x’ is(are) cited and then explained. These verses are representative examples. For *agni*, Yāska cites the first two verses of the first hymn of the *Ṛgveda* (*Ṛgveda* I.1.1; I.1.2) [II: §13]. For *jātavedas*, he cites the first verse of *Ṛgveda* X.188, which is then said to be the only hymn in the *gāyatī* meter that is addressed to Jātavedas [III: §18]. For *vaiśvānara*, *Ṛgveda* I.98.1 is cited [IV: §22].

(iii) Next, Yāska addresses the issue of what the referent of ‘x’ is [II: §14; III: §19; IV: §23]. Yāska assumes that there are three fires that reside in the three worlds: the terrestrial (=the ritual fire),¹⁷ the atmospheric (=lightning), and the celestial fires (=sun). The issue, then, is to determine which fire ‘x’ refers to. While in the example verses cited in (ii) ‘x’ refers to the terrestrial fire, Yāska contends that ‘x’ refers also to the other two fires, i.e. lightning and the sun.¹⁸ Yāska first registers two views according to which ‘x’ refers to lightning [II: §14.1; III: §19.1; IV: §23.1] and to the sun [II: §14.2; III: §19.2; IV: §23.2], respectively.

At this juncture, Part III and Part IV introduce other elements. Part III deals with the view that Agni is all the deities, i.e. all the divine names refer ultimately to Agni, the one existing deity [III: §15; cf. §5.2 above]. In Part IV, an additional third view regarding the referent of ‘x’ is added, i.e. Śākapiṇi’s view that *vaiśvānara* refers to the terrestrial fire [IV: §23.3]. Next, Yāska counters the first two views in detail [IV: §24.1 (*vs* §23.1); IV: §24.2 (*vs* §23.2)], and additional issues are discussed [IV: §25; §26; §27].

To fully understand Yāska’s reasoning in (iii), it is crucial to gain clarity on two points. First, the issue of the referent of ‘x’ is connected with the twofold classification of divine names discussed at the beginning of *Nirukta* 7 [I: §1]. Ascertaining whether ‘x’ refers to the ritual fire, the lightning, or the sun amounts to ascertaining which one of these three deities is being addressed by the formula that contains ‘x’. In other words, at stake is ascertaining whether it is the ritual fire, the lightning, or the sun that enjoys primary praise through the divine name ‘x’.

Second, the two views according to which ‘x’ refers to the lightning or to the sun do not represent Yāska’s own view, but voice two other parties’ mutually competing views.¹⁹ They should be understood in relation to Yāska’s twofold classification of the divine names. So,

word, doing so involves providing a derivational-grammatical analysis of that word. On the meaning of *kasmāt* and its relation to an overall interpretation of the *Nirukta*, see Kahrs’s and Scharf’s studies. E. Kahrs, ‘Yāska’s Use of *kasmāt*’, *Indo-Iranian Journal* 25 (1983), pp. 231–237. Kahrs, *Indian Semantic Analysis*. P. Scharf, ‘The Natural-language Foundation of Metalinguistic Case-use in the Aṣṭādhyāyī and *Nirukta*’, in *Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference*. Vol. 4, *Indian grammars: philology and history*, (eds.) George Cardona and Madhav Deshpande (Delhi, 2012), pp. 181–214. Scharf, ‘The Relation between Etymology and Grammar in the Linguistic Traditions of Early India’, pp. 255–266.

¹⁷Of the three ritual fires, it is the *āhavanīya* or offertorial fire which Yāska has in mind. This is clear from his explanation of Agni’s main actions [I: §8.1]: carrying the oblations to the gods and inviting the gods to the ritual place.

¹⁸In Part II and III, (iii) is introduced with the same formulation: ‘One should not think that [the word] *agni* (III: *agni* [*jātavedas*]) [refers to] this (terrestrial fire) only. Also the well-known two upper lights (i.e. the lightning and the sun) are called *agni* (III: *jātavedas*): *sa na manyetāyam evāgnir iti | apy ete uttare jyotiṣi agnī* (III: *jātavedasī*) *ucyete |*

¹⁹What are these two parties? In Part IV, the first view is ascribed to the ‘teachers’ (*ācāryas*) [IV: §23.1], and the second view to the ‘previous ritualists’ (*pūrvē yājñīkālā*) [IV: §23.2]. Commentators gloss ‘teachers’ with ‘etymologists’ (*Ṛjvarthā* on *Nirukta* 7.22 [697.21]: *nairuktāḥ ke cit ācāryāḥ*; *Niruktabhāṣyaṭīkā* on *Nirukta* 7.22 [88.5]: *pūrvē nairuktā*). It is possible, though not certain, that the two competing views mentioned in Part II and III, too, may be ascribed to the same two parties.

For the *Niruktabhāṣyaṭīkā*, we use the following edition. L. Sarup, *Commentary of Skandasvāmīn & Mahēśvara on the Nirukta [Chapters VII–XIII] Critically Edited by Dr. Lakshman Sarup with Additions and Corrections by Acharya V. P. Limaye* (New Delhi, 2012). [Originally published in three volumes, (Lahore, 1928–34)].

while the first view maintains that it is lightning that enjoys primary praise through 'x', the second view claims that this deity is in fact the sun.

(iv) At the end of each Part, Yāska states his own final view, using the same formulation: 'agni [II: §16]/agni jātavedas [III: §20]/ agni vaiśvānara [IV: §28] who enjoys the hymn and to which the oblation is offered is only this (terrestrial fire). These well-known two upper lights (i.e. the atmospheric [=lightning] and the celestial [=sun] fires) enjoy only incidental mention through this name'.²⁰

The two competing views given in (iii) maintain that 'x' refers to either the lightning or the sun, i.e. it is either Lightning or the Sun that enjoys primary praise through a formula featuring 'x'. Conversely, Yāska maintains that 'x' refers to all the three fires. Yet, an important specification must be made. When 'x' refers to the ritual fire, this is the deity 'who enjoys the hymn and to which the oblation is offered'. We take this to mean that whenever 'x' refers to the ritual fire, the latter enjoys primary praise through 'x', i.e. ritual fire is the addressee of the formula. On the other hand, whenever 'x' refers to either the lightning or to the sun, these two deities enjoy only secondary praise, i.e. their names are incidentally mentioned in a formula addressed to another deity.

5. Summary of Part II (Nirukta 7.14-18)

[§11] After the preliminary discussions in Part I, Yāska says that from now he will be dealing with the deities listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5. The first divine name is *agni* (*Nighaṅṭu* 5.1.1), a deity whose place is the earth.

[§12] Yāska first gives four etymological explanations of *agni*; [§13] then he cites two representative Ṛgvedic verses (*Ṛgveda* I.1.1; I.1.2) that contain this word and comment on them.

[§14] Yāska states that the word *agni* does not refer to the terrestrial fire only (as it does in the verses cited in [§13]), but it also refers to the two other fires. Next, Yāska cites two competing views. While [§14.1] maintains that *agni* refers only to the atmospheric fire (=lightning), [§14.2] maintains that *agni* refers only to the celestial fire (=sun). In support of the former view, *Ṛgveda* IV.58.8 is cited. In support of the latter view, *Ṛgveda* IV.58.1a and *Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa* XXV.1 are cited.²¹

These two views advance mutually exclusive interpretations concerning the addressee deity of *Ṛgveda* IV.58, and should be understood in relation to the twofold classification of divine names. [§14.1] claims that Lightning enjoys primary praise through *agni* in *Ṛgveda* IV.58.8; [§14.2] argues that *Ṛgveda* IV.58.1a shows that the addressed deity in *Ṛgveda* IV.58 as a whole is the Sun. Accordingly, it is the Sun that enjoys primary praise through the mention of *agni* in *Ṛgveda* IV.58.8.

[§15] Agni is all the deities. The view is reminiscent of [§5.2], where Agni is equated with the one existing deity, the Self. This view seems to entail that all the divine names have Agni as their ultimate referent. In support of this view, two citations are given. First,

²⁰ yas tu sūktam bhajate yasmai havir nirupyate 'yam eva so 'gnir [III: agnir jātavedāḥ; IV: agnir vaiśvānaraḥ] | nipātam evaite uttare jyotiṣi etena nāmadheyena bhajete ||

²¹For the *Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa*, we use the following edition. B. Lindner, *Das Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, I. Text (Jena, 1887).

Aitareya-Brah̄maṇa II.3.3: “Agni is all the deities”.²² Next, *R̄gveda* I.164.46 is interpreted as saying that the one deity Agni is called with different names, such as *indra*, *mitra*, *varuṇa*, *agni*, etc. Agni is identified with the Great Self (*mahāntam ātmānam*).

[§16] Yāska’s final view. While the divine name *agni* refers to all the three fires, it is only Agni the terrestrial fire which enjoys primary praise through this name and to which oblations are offered. Lightning and Sun only enjoy secondary praise through the name *agni*. This means that *agni* refers to either one of these two deities only when it occurs incidentally in a formula that is addressed to another deity.

Table 2: structure and contents of Part II (*Nirukta* 7.14–18)

(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
§11	Here begins the examination of <i>Nīghaṇṭu</i> 5	7.14	139.6
§12	Where is <i>agni</i> from? Four etymologies are given	=	139.6–10
§13	Two <i>R̄g</i> -verses addressed to Agni are cited: <i>R̄gveda</i> I.1.1; <i>R̄gveda</i> I.1.2	14–16	139.10–140.2
§14	<i>agni</i> refers not only to the terrestrial fire, but also to the atmospheric (=lightning) and celestial (=sun) fires	16	140.2
§14.1	<i>agni</i> refers to lightning: <i>R̄gveda</i> IV.58.8	16–17	140.3–9
§14.2	<i>agni</i> refers to sun: <i>R̄gveda</i> IV.58.1a; <i>Kauṣītaki-Brah̄maṇa</i> XXV.1	17	140.10–11
§15	Agni is all the deities: <i>Aitareya-Brah̄maṇa</i> II.3.3; <i>R̄gveda</i> I.164.46	17–18	140.12–18
§16	Yāska’s final view	18	141.1–2

6. Summary of Part III (*Nirukta* 7.19–20)

[§17] This part deals with the word *jātavedas* (*Nīghaṇṭu* 5.1.2). Six etymologies of this word are given.

[§18] *R̄gveda* X.188.1 is cited as an example and commented upon.

[§19] Yāska states that the word *jātavedas* does not refer to the terrestrial fire only (as it does in the verses cited in [§18]), but it also refers to the two other fires. Next, Yāska cites two competing views. While [§19.1] maintains that *jātavedas* refers only to the atmospheric fire (=lightning), [§19.2] maintains that *jātavedas* refers only to the celestial fire (=sun). In support of the former view, *R̄gveda* IV.58.8a is cited.²³ In support of the latter view, *R̄gveda* I.50.1a is cited.

[§20] Yāska’s final view. While the divine name *jātavedas* refers to all the three fires, it is only Agni the terrestrial fire that enjoys primary praise through this name and to which oblations are offered. Lightning and Sun only enjoy secondary praise through the name *jātavedas*. This means that *jātavedas* refers to either one of these two deities only when it occurs incidentally in a formula that is addressed to another deity.

²²For the *Aitareya-Brah̄maṇa*, we use the following edition: T. Aufrecht, *Das Aitareya Brāhmaṇa: Mit Auszügen aus dem Commentare von Sāyaṇācārya und anderen Beilagen herausgegeben* (Bonn, 1879).

²³Note that this is the third time *R̄gveda* IV.58 is cited; see above [§14.1] (*R̄gveda* IV.58.8) and [§14.2] (*R̄gveda* IV.58.1a). It is worth noticing that different views regarding the deity of this hymn (Agni, Sun, the Waters, Cows, or Ghee) are recorded in the *Sarvānukramaṇī* (see S. W. Jamison and J. P. Brereton, *The R̄gveda: The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*, 3 vols [New York, 2014], p. 643) and the *Bṛhaddevatā* (V.11). For the *Bṛhaddevatā*, we use the following edition. M. Tokunaga, *The Bṛhaddevatā: Text Reconstructed from the Manuscripts of the Shorter Recension with Introduction, Explanatory Notes, and Indices* (Kyoto, 1998).

Table 3: structure and contents of Part III (*Nirukta* 7.19–20)

(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
§17	Where is <i>jātāvedas</i> from? Six etymologies are given	7.19	141.3–7
§18	One Ṛg-verse addressed to Jātavedas is cited: <i>Ṛgveda</i> X.188.1	20	141.15–142.1
§19	<i>jātāvedas</i> refers not only to the terrestrial fire, but also to the atmospheric (=lightning) and celestial (=sun) fires	=	142.1–2
§19.1	First view: <i>jātāvedas</i> refers to lightning: <i>Ṛgveda</i> IV.58.8a	=	142.2
§19.2	Second view: <i>jātāvedas</i> refers to the sun: <i>Ṛgveda</i> I.50.1a	=	142.4–5
§20	Yāska's final view	=	142.6–7

7. Summary of Part IV (*Nirukta* 7.21–31)

[§21] Part IV deals with the word *vaiśvānara* (*Nighaṇṭu* 5.1.2). Three etymologies are given.

[§22] *Ṛgveda* I.98.1 is cited and explained.

[§23] Yāska asks ‘what is Vaiśvānara?’. That is, when the word *vaiśvānara* occurs in a formula, which of the three fires is its referent? Yāska records and discusses three competing views: [§23.1] his teachers take *vaiśvānara* to refer to the atmospheric fire, i.e. lightning; [§23.2] the ritualists maintain that it refers to the celestial fire, i.e. the sun; [§23.3] Śākapūṇi believes that it refers to the terrestrial fire, i.e. the ritual fire. It must be remembered that, like in Parts II and III, the issue concerning the referent of the divine name is associated with the twofold classification of divine names. That is, determining which of the three fires is the referent of *vaiśvānara* amounts to determining whether it is Ritual Fire, Lightning, or Sun the deity that enjoy primary praise through a formula that contains the name *vaiśvānara*.

[§23.1] View I: The teachers opine that *vaiśvānara* refers to lightning, for *vaiśvānara* is praised in connection with the action of rain-making in *Ṛgveda* I.59.6. The verse is cited and commented on.

[§23.2] View II: The previous ritualists maintain that *vaiśvānara* refers to the sun. Six arguments are given.

[§23.2.1] The first argument pertains to the ritual of the Soma pressing. This ritual comprises three pressings, in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. Each pressing is associated with one of the three worlds, i.e. the earth, the atmosphere, and the sky. By means of the pressings, the sacrificer or patron of the sacrifice is thought to ascend from earth to the sky. With the third pressing, then, the sacrificer is supposed to be in the sky. Key to the ritualists’ argument is that at this point the Hotar Priest lets the patron of the sacrifice descend from the sky and return to the earth by reciting a hymn addressed to Vaiśvānara. This correspondence between Vaiśvānara and the sky is seen as proof that the word *vaiśvānara* refers to the celestial fire (=sun).

[§23.2.2] The second argument, too, draws on ritual. That *vaiśvānara* refers to the sun is supported by the fact that an oblation cooked on twelve potsherds is offered to Vaiśvānara. The number twelve is significant, for it is taken to symbolise the twelve-fold actions performed by the sun, i.e. the actions performed in the twelve months of the year.

[§23.2.3] As the third argument, a *brāhmaṇa* passage is cited: “Agni Vaiśvānara is clearly that sun over there.” (*Maitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā* II.2.1; II.3.11).²⁴

²⁴For the *Maitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā*, we use the following edition: L. von Schroeder, *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā*, 4 bde (Leipzig, 1881–6), reprint (Wiesbaden, 1970–2).

The fourth [§23.2.4], fifth [§23.2.5] and sixth [§23.2.6] arguments are similar. The ritualists' reasoning comprises two steps: (i) if it can be proved that the *nivid* formula, the *chāndomika* hymn, and *R̥gveda* X.88 are addressed to the Sun, (ii) from this it follows that the word *vaiśvānara*, which is mentioned in these three formulas, refers to the Sun, i.e. the Sun is the deity that enjoys primary praise through this name. To prove (i), the ritualists cite one passage from the *nivid* and the *chāndomika*, respectively, which refer to actions that are characteristically associated with the sun. (Note two things. First, even though no citation from *R̥gveda* X.88 is given, the ritualists must implicitly refer to one such passage.²⁵ Second, even though the word *vaiśvānara* does not occur in the passages cited by the ritualists from the *nivid* formula and from the *chāndomika* hymn, this does not affect their argument: the ritualists' aim is to prove that the *nivid* and the *chāndomika* as a whole are addressed to the Sun.)

[§23.3] View II: Śākapūṇi. He maintains that *vaiśvānara* refers only to the terrestrial fire. He argues that the word *viśvānara* refers to the two 'upper lights', i.e. the atmospheric (=lightning) and the celestial fire (=sun). The word *vaiśvānara* is a derivative of *viśvānara*; it means that which is born from *viśvānara*. Four arguments are given in support of this view.²⁶ The first two arguments are empirical:

[§23.3.1] The terrestrial fire is born from the atmospheric fire, as is observed when lightning generates fire.

[§23.3.2] The terrestrial fire is born from the sun; this can be demonstrated with a small experiment: one can produce fire by interposing a brass plate or a jewel between the sun's rays and dried cow dung.

The other two arguments rely on textual citations: [§23.3.3] That *vaiśvānara* does not refer to the sun is supported by *R̥gveda* I.98.1d: "Vaiśvānara is united with the sun". Clearly, something cannot be united with itself; hence, *vaiśvānara* cannot possibly refer to the sun. (Note that *R̥gveda* I.98.1 is cited in [§22]).

[§23.3.4] If *vaiśvānara* referred to the sun, it would follow that (a) *vaiśvānara* should be mentioned in hymns that are addressed to the deities that reside in the sky; (b) it should be praised with reference to actions performed by the sun, such as rising, setting, and revolving. However, (a¹) *vaiśvānara* is mentioned only in hymns that are addressed to Agni, the terrestrial fire; (b¹) it is praised with references to actions that are performed by Agni, such as inviting the deities to the sacrifice, cooking, and burning. Hence, *vaiśvānara* does not refer to the sun, but to the terrestrial fire.

Next, Yāska counters the teachers' and the ritualists' views. [§24.1 (vs §23.1)] The teachers' argument (*vaiśvānara* refers to lightning because it is praised in connection with the action of rain-making in *R̥gveda* I.59.6) is not probative. For also the terrestrial [§24.1.1]

²⁵Durga [R̥jvarthā 603.1-7] explains that the ritualists have in mind *R̥gveda* X.88.12 (X.88.12b: *vaiśvānarāṅ ketūm āhnām akṣṇvan*, '[the gods] made Agni Vaiśvānara the beacon of the days'). He glosses *ketu* with *kartṛ* 'maker'. It is only the sun that is the maker of the day, in the sense that it creates the days with its own rising and setting; hence, the name *vaiśvānara* must refer to the sun.

²⁶It is not clear whether the four arguments recorded in [§23.3.1-4] are by Śākapūṇi or by Yāska. We prefer the former option. Yāska's own voice seems to first occur in [§24], whereby the first view [§23.1] regarding the referent of *vaiśvānara* is countered. Note that Yāska would probably agree with Śākapūṇi's arguments in [§23.3.1-4], for both believe that *vaiśvānara* refers to the terrestrial fire. However, while Śākapūṇi maintains that *vaiśvānara* refers to the terrestrial fire only, Yāska says that it also refers to the other two fires [§28].

(*R̥gveda* I.164.51) and the celestial [§24.1.2] (*R̥gveda* I.164.47) fires are praised as rain-makers. [§24.1.3] One *brāhmaṇa* passage provides further evidence. It describes both the terrestrial and the celestial fires as rain-makers.

[§24.2 (vs §23.2)] Yāska counters all the ritualists' arguments.

[§24.2.1 (vs. §23.2.1)] The ritualists' first argument is not probative, for the correspondence between the three Soma pressings and the ascent of the three worlds is based only on a traditional statement (*āmnāya* [= *āmnāta* in *Nirukta* 7.23]). Hence, the correspondence between the hymn addressed to Vaiśvānara and the sky, too, is based merely on a traditional statement. The point seems to be this: Statements stemming from human tradition are fallible; they do not have the same degree of authority as statements found in the *śruti*.

[§24.2.2 (vs. §23.2.2)] There is no inherent or necessary connection between the number twelve and Vaiśvānara, for also oblations cooked on one or on five potsherds are offered to him. Hence, the argument that Vaiśvānara is the sun because of an oblation cooked on twelve potsherds—the number twelve symbolising the sun's twelve-fold actions—is not probative.

[§24.2.3 (vs. §23.2.3)] That a *brāhmaṇa* passage identifies Vaiśvānara with the sun is not probative, for other *brāhmaṇa* passages also identify Vaiśvānara with other items, such as the earth, the year, and the Brahmin.

To counter the ritualists' fourth [§24.2.4 (vs. §23.2.4)], fifth [§24.2.5 (vs. §23.2.5)], and sixth [§24.2.6 (vs. §23.2.6)] arguments, Yāska employs the same kind of argument used by the ritualists and turns it against them. Like the ritualists, Yāska seeks to determine the referent of *vaiśvānara* in the *nivid* formula, the *chāndomika* hymn, and *R̥gveda* X.88, by ascertaining what is their addressed deity. To do so, Yāska cites other passages than those cited by the ritualists. These citations are meant to prove that the *nivid*, *chāndomika*, and *R̥gveda* X.88 are addressed to the terrestrial fire, and, therefore, *vaiśvānara* refers to the terrestrial fire, i.e. it is the Ritual fire that enjoys primary praise through this name. It is not clear why Yāska's citations should provide more robust evidence than the citations given by the ritualists. It is clear however that Yāska takes the word *vaiśvānara* occurring in the *nivid*, the *chāndomika*, and *R̥gveda* X.88 as referring to the terrestrial fire only (*eva*). This is consistent with Yāska's final view that when *vaiśvānara* refers to the deity being the formula's primary addressee that deity is the terrestrial, ritual fire.

In the concluding part of Chapter Seven Yāska's argumentation becomes harder to follow. Our analysis is necessarily more interpretive.

[§25] Yāska cites *R̥gveda* VI.8.4. This verse describes Agni Vaiśvānara as deriving from the celestial fire, the sun (4cd) (and perhaps also as deriving from the atmospheric fire, the lightning [4ab]). It seems that Yāska cites *R̥gveda* VI.8.4 to provide further evidence in support of his view that *vaiśvānara* refers to the terrestrial fire.

[§26] Yāska cites five verses from the *haviṣpāntīya* hymn, i.e. *R̥gveda* X.88. In our interpretation, in doing so Yāska emphasises two interrelated points: (i) Agni, the terrestrial/ritual fire, is the fundamental fire; (ii) Agni pervades the three worlds in the forms of lightning and the sun, which are essentially the same as Agni.

Ṛgveda X.88 is addressed to Agni as the sun. This means that the terrestrial/ritual fire is being praised in its celestial form. We refer to this form as the sun-form of Agni. In the verses of *Ṛgveda* X.88 cited by Yāska, this sun-form of Agni is praised in two different ways, either as Agni or as the Sun. Specifically, [§26.1] verses 6 and 10 praise the sun-form of Agni as Agni; [§26.2] verse 11 praises it as the Sun; [§26.3] verses 17 and 19 praise it, again, as Agni. Praising the sun-form of Agni as Agni or as the Sun means that the verses in question characterise the sun-form of Agni with features that are relatable to Agni (=the terrestrial/ritual fire) or to the Sun.

[§26.1] Verses 6 and 10 praise the sun-form of Agni as Agni. *Ṛgveda* X.88.6ab says that ‘this very [Agni = terrestrial/ritual fire] is born as the rising sun in the early morning’; *Ṛgveda* X.88.6cd characterises the gods’ esoteric knowledge as the knowledge that one and the same Agni is the terrestrial fire at night as well as the sun in the daytime. *Ṛgveda* X.88.10ab says that the gods begot Agni in the sky (‘in the sky (*divi*), the divinities (*devāso*) begot (*ājījanañ*) Agni’). *Ṛgveda* X.88.10cd says that this Agni is threefold, i.e. it has three forms: terrestrial/ritual fire on earth; lightning in the mid-space; and the sun in the sky. That the sun-form of Agni is referred to with the name *agni* (*Ṛgveda* X.88.6a; 10a) seems to be the reason why verse 6 and 10 are said to praise the sun-form of Agni as Agni.

[§26.2] Verse 11 praises the sun-form of Agni as the Sun. *Ṛgveda* X.88.11ab says that ‘the gods (*devāḥ*) set it in the sky (*divi*) as the Sun (*sūryam*), the son of Aditi (*āditeyām*)’. This half-verse closely resembles *Ṛgveda* X.88.10ab. Both half-verses say that the gods (*devāso/devāḥ*) begot or set the sun-form of Agni in the sky (*divi*). There is one notable difference, however: while the sun-form of Agni is called *agni* in verse 10, it is called sun (*sūrya*) in verse 11. This difference seems to be the reason why Yāska states that the sun-form of Agni is praised as Agni in verse 10, but as Sun in verse 11.

[§26.3] Verses 17 and 19, again, praise the sun-form of Agni as Agni. Verse 17 mentions a debate between two divine Hotars, the lower (*āvarah*) and the higher (*pāras*) one. The former is the terrestrial/ritual fire on earth. The latter is the sun in the middle of the sky. While the word Hotar commonly refers to the terrestrial/ritual fire, its reference to the sun is significant. The fact that the sun-form of Agni is referred to as Hotar shows that verse 17 praises it as Agni. Verse 19, too, indicates two Hotars, the Brahmin who sets up the ritual fire in the morning to perform the Agnihotra and the ritual fire itself. Like in verse 17, that the sun-form of Agni is referred to as Hotar shows that the former is being praised as Agni.

[§27] Yāska mentions one last competing view. In the formula recited by the Hotar (note the link with [§26.3]), the divine name *vaiśvānara* does not refer to Agni. For it explicitly qualifies Agni’s father. Hence, in this formula *vaiśvānara* must refer to either the atmospheric or celestial fire, Agni’s father. Yet, that *vaiśvānara* refers also to the other two fire does not seem to contradict Yāska’s final view.

[§28] Yāska’s final view. While the divine name *vaiśvānara* refers to all the three fires, it is only Agni the terrestrial fire which enjoys primary praise through this name and to which oblations are offered. Lightning and Sun only enjoy secondary praise through the name *vaiśvānara*. This means that *vaiśvānara* refers to either one of these two deities only when it occurs incidentally in a formula that is addressed to another deity.

Table 4: structure and contents of Part IV (*Nirukta* 7.21-31)

(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
§21	Where is <i>vaiśvānara</i> from? Three etymologies are given	7.21	142.8-9
§22	One R̥g-verse (<i>R̥gveda</i> I.98.1) addressed to Vaiśvānara is cited	21-22	142.10-14
§23	Which of the three fires does <i>vaiśvānara</i> refer to?	22	142.15
§23.1	Teachers' view: <i>vaiśvānara</i> refers to the atmospheric fire (=lightning), for Vaiśvānara is praised in <i>R̥gveda</i> I.59.6 as rain-maker	22-23	142.15-143.4
§23.2	Ritualists' view: <i>vaiśvānara</i> refers to the celestial fire (=sun)	23	143.5-19
§23.2.1	First argument	=	143.5-9
§23.2.2	Second argument	=	143.10
§23.2.3	Third argument	=	143.11-12
§23.2.4	Fourth argument	=	143.13-14
§23.2.5	Fifth argument	=	143.15.16
§23.2.6	Sixth argument	=	143.17
§23.3	Śākapūṇi's view: <i>vaiśvānara</i> refers to the terrestrial fire	=	143.18-19
§23.3.1	Terrestrial fire is born from the atmospheric fire (=lightning)	=	144.1-3
§23.3.2	Terrestrial fire is born from the celestial fire (=sun)	=	144.4-5
§23.3.3	<i>vaiśvānara</i> does not refer to the sun: first argument	=	144.6-9
§23.3.4	<i>vaiśvānara</i> does not refer to the sun: second argument	=	144.10-14
§24.1 (vs §23.1)	Yāska counters the teachers' view	=	144.15f.
§24.1.1	Terrestrial fire too is described as rain-maker	=	144.15-18
§24.1.2	Celestial fire (=sun) too is described as rain-maker	24	144.19-145.3
§24.1.3	Both the terrestrial and the celestial fires are described as rain-makers	=	145.4-6
§24.2 (vs §23.2)	Yāska counters the ritualists' view [§23.2]	24-25	145.7-146.8
§24.2.1 (vs §23.2.1)	First counter-argument	=	145.7
§24.2.2 (vs §23.2.2)	Second counter-argument	=	145.8-9
§24.2.3 (vs §23.2.3)	Third counter-argument	=	145.10-11
§24.2.4 (vs §23.2.4)	Fourth counter-argument	=	145.12-13
§24.2.5 (vs §23.2.5)	Fifth counter-argument	=	145.14-146.2
§24.2.6 (vs §23.2.6)	Sixth counter-argument	24-25	146.3-8
§25	Vaiśvānara refers to the terrestrial fire that derives from the celestial fire (=sun)	25-26	146.8-16
§26	Agni, the terrestrial/ritual fire, pervades all the three worlds, i.e. lightning and the sun are its forms	26-31	146.17-148.10
§26.1	The sun-form of Agni is praised as Agni in <i>R̥gveda</i> X.88.6 and 10	26-28	146.17-147.9
§26.2	The sun-form of Agni is praised as Sun (Āditya) in <i>R̥gveda</i> X.88.11	28-29	147.10-17
§26.3	The sun-form of Agni, again, is praised as Agni in <i>R̥gveda</i> X.88.17 and 19	29-31	147.18-148.10
§27	One last competing view	31	148.11-13
§28	Yāska's final view	=	148.14-15

8. Yāska's theology

In this final section, we describe Yāska's key theological ideas. As is characteristic of his style, Yāska does not state his view explicitly. Although some interpretive work is therefore required, we think that our interpretation does not stray far from Yāska's own ideas.

Yāska's theological thinking concentrates on the number of deities and their relation. He records three different views. (i) The etymologists believe that there are three deities, Agni, Vāyu/Indra, and Āditya. These three deities are associated with one of the three worlds, the earth, the atmosphere, and the sky, respectively [I: §6.1]. (ii) The ritualists opine that there are many deities [I: §6.2]. (iii) A third party (*R̥jvarthā* 7.17 [690.12] *ātmavids*, 'the knowers of

the self”) maintains that there is only one deity, the Great Self (*mahāntam ātmānam*) [I: §5.2]. Yāska rejects the ritualists’ view and sides with both the etymologists and the knowers of the Self. He defends the etymologists’ view against the ritualists’ criticism [I: §6.4] and adopts their three-deity model of Agni, Indra and Āditya [I: §8]. With respect to the view of the knowers of the Self, Yāska uses the argument that all names ultimately refer to the one existing deity, the Self, when he counters the criticism that names referring to non-divine things, such as plants and ritual tools, should not be regarded as divine names [I: §5.2]. He refers to the ‘Great Self’ in his commentary on *R̥gveda* I.164.46 [I: §15].

Yāska’s theological system conflates both the three-deity view and the one-deity view. Both views appear to be simultaneously valid at two different levels of description. Yāska’s system can be thought as a Matryoshka doll. On the surface, Yāska accepts the three-deity view. This means that all the divine names listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5 are reduced to three main deities. Specifically, the names listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.1–3 ultimately refer to the one terrestrial deity, Agni. The names in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.4–5 refer to the one atmospheric deity, Indra. And the names in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.6 refer to the one celestial deity, Āditya. On a deeper level, however, these three basic deities are in turn reduced to one fundamental deity. This one deity is Agni, the terrestrial/ritual fire.

Yāska’s theological system coordinates with Yāska’s conceptualisation of the three fires and their relation. There are three fires, the ritual fire on earth, the lightning in the atmosphere, and the sun in the sky. Each of these three fires corresponds to the main deity associated with one of the three worlds. That is, the terrestrial/ritual fire corresponds to Agni, the lightning to Indra, and the sun to Āditya.²⁷ These three fires can be reduced to one, the terrestrial/ritual fire, which Yāska regards as the fundamental fire, the other two fires being its forms or manifestations in the two upper worlds [IV: §26]. In short, Yāska’s view on the three fires provides the conceptual model whereby the plurality of deities can first be reduced to the three main deities and these in turn can be reduced to the one fundamental deity, Agni, the terrestrial/ritual fire, the Great Self.

9. Translation of *Nirukta* Chapter 7

Part I (*Nirukta* 7.1–13)

[§1 Definition of the divine names listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5]

[*Nirukta* 7.1] Now, then, [we shall explain] the section [of the *Nighaṅṭu*] on the names of the deities. So (*tad*), [teachers] call ‘section on the names of the deities’ the names of the deities that enjoy primary praise. That section is [the subject of] the following close examination into the deities.²⁸

²⁷On Yāska’s identification of Indra with lightning, see Kawamura’s recent article. Y. Kawamura, ‘On the Name and Role of Indra: From the Viewpoint of Yāska’s Etymology and Theology’, *The Hiroshima University Studies, Graduate School of Letters* 79 (2019), pp. 15–28. This article is written in Japanese with English summary.

²⁸For possible interpretations of the sentence-introducing *tad* (‘so’ in our rendition), cf. Cardona’s comments on *Nirukta* 1.1 *tad yāni (etāni) catvāri padajātāni . . .* G. Cardona, ‘Philology, Text History and History of Ideas’, *Nagoya Studies in Indian Culture and Buddhism: Saṃbhāṣā* 35 (2019), p. 2, note 5. Cf. also J. Bronkhorst, ‘Yāska and the Sentence: the Beginning of *śābdabodha?*’, in *Subhāṣiṇī: Dr. Saroja Bhate Felicitation Volume*, (ed.) G. U. Thite (Pune, 2002), pp. 57–58.

To properly parse *Nirukta* 7.1 (=1.20) (*tad yāni nāmāni prādhānyastu fīnāmī devatānāmī tad daivatam ity ācakṣate*), one needs to recognise that the direct object pronoun *tad* has *nāmāni* as its antecedent, but it agrees in gender and number

[§2 Definition of the deity of the formula]

Desiring [it], seeking to obtain ownership of [that] object, a seer employs [a verse of] praise (*stuti*) for deity 'x'—that [praise] becomes a formula (*mantra*) that has 'x' as its [addressed] deity.²⁹

[§3 Classification of formulas]

This (formula) occurs as three kinds of Ṛgvedic stanzas:³⁰ [§3.1] those which address [a deity] indirectly; [§3.2] those which address [a deity] directly; [§3.3] those which are self-addressed (i.e. spoken by the deity itself).

[§3.1 Formulas that address a deity indirectly]

Of these, those which address [a deity] indirectly are associated with [i.e. they present] all the nominal endings and the third persons of the verb:

[Nirukta 7.2]

"Indra (*indro*) is master of heaven and Indra of earth." (Ṛgveda X.89.10a)³¹

"Just to Indra (*indram*) have the singers [bellowed] aloft." (Ṛgveda I.7.1a)

"These Ṛtsus, constantly laboring alongside Indra (*indreṇa*), . . ." (Ṛgveda VII.18.15a)

"To Indra (*indrāya*) sing a Sāman chant." (Ṛgveda VIII.98.1a)

"Without Indra (*indrād*) he (Soma) does not purify any domain of his." (Ṛgveda IX.69.6d)

"Now I shall proclaim the heroic deeds of Indra (*indrasya*)." (Ṛgveda I.32.1)

"On Indra (*indre*) the desires were based."³²

[§3.2 Formulas that address a deity directly]

Next, [the formulas] which address [a deity] directly are associated with the second person [of the verb] and the pronoun 'you' (*tvam*):

with the object predicate (*daivata* n.) governed by \bar{a} \surd *caḥ* (**tāni* [*nāmāni*] > *taḥ*). In the following sentence ("That section is . . .") (*saiṣā devatopaparīkṣā*), a similar agreement obtains between subject (**taḥ* [*daivatam*] > *sā*) and subject predicate (*devatopaparīkṣā* f.). Both kinds of agreement (between object and object predicate, and between subject and subject predicate) of the *ta*-pronoun are regular in Vedic prose. See J. P. Brereton, "Tat Tvam Asi' in context", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 136 (1986), pp. 99–101 and J. P. Brereton, "Unsounded speech: Problems in the interpretation of BU(M) 1.5.10 = BU(K) 1.5.3", *Indo-Iranian Journal* 31 (1988), p. 3, note 10.

²⁹We take *yat* (*kāma*) to refer to *ārtha* (*patyam*). Cf. Roth's rendering ". . . diejenige Gottheit, welche der Rishi um den Besitz irgend einer Sache, die er zu erhalten wünscht, anruft . . ." [emphasis added] and Macdonell's 'the formula has that god for its deity to whom he addresses praise when desiring the possession of an object which he wants' (emphasis added). Roth, *Jāska's Nirukta sammt den Nighaṇṭavas*, p. 100 (Erläuterungen) and A. A. Macdonell, *The Bṛhad-devatā Attributed to Saunaka: A Summary of the Deities and Myths of the R̥gveda, Critically Edited in the Original Sanskrit with an Introduction and Seven Appendices, and Translated into English with Critical and Illustrative Notes*. Part I, introduction and text and appendices (Cambridge, 1904), p. 2 (ad *Bṛhaddevatā* I.6). We take 'verse of] praise' (*stuti* f.) as the antecedent of the pronoun *sa*, which agrees in gender with the subject predicate *mantra* (m.) (**sā* > *sa*).

Yāska's definition of the deity of the formula is echoed in *Bṛhaddevatā* I.6: *artham iccham ṣir devaṃ yaṃ yaṃ āhāyam astv iti | prādhānyena stuvāṃ chaktyā mantras taddeva eva sah. ||* As noted by Tokunaga (M. Tokunaga, *The Bṛhaddevatā* [Kyoto, 1998], p. 159), this definition is reminiscent of Ṛgveda X.121.10: *prājāpate nā tvād etān, y anyo viśvā jātāni pāri tā babhūva | yātkāmās te juhūmās tān no astu vayam sṛjāma pātayo rayiṇām ||* ("O Prajāpati! No one other than you has encompassed all these things that have been born. Let what we desire as we make oblation to you be ours. We would be lords of riches.") This translation is by Jamison and Brereton, *The R̥gveda*, p. 1594.

³⁰*Nirukta* 7.1 (132.5) *tās trividhā ṛcaḥ*. We take *tās* as a pronoun having the word *mantra* as its antecedent; it agrees in gender and number with the predicate (*ṛcas*) (**saḥ* [*mantra*] > *tās*).

³¹The translation of the Ṛgvedic verses follows Jamison and Brereton's work mentioned above, with minor variations, unless Yāska comments on the verses. In the latter case, our translation reflects Yāska's interpretation.

³²This verse is untraced. Durga (*R̥jvarthā* 1.2 [614.10–11]) cites the entire verse: *indre kāmā ayam sata divyasaḥ pārhivā uta | tvam ū su gṛnatā narah |* ("On Indra the desires were based, the celestial as well as the terrestrial. O people do praise him well") cf. M. Bloomfield, *A Vedic Concordance* (Cambridge, 1906), p. 225.

“You (*tuvām*), Indra, were [born] from power.” (*R̥gveda* X.153.2a)

“Smash away (*jahi*) the scornful for us, O Indra.” (*R̥gveda* X.152.4a)

Furthermore, those who praise (i.e. the seers) are addressed directly, the objects of praise are addressed indirectly:

“Don’t praise (*vī śamsata*) anything else!” (*R̥gveda* VIII.1.1a)

“Sing forth (*prā gāyata*), o Kaṇvas.” (*R̥gveda* I.37.1c)

“Come forth (*ūpa prēta*), Kuśikas; make yourselves known (*cetāyadhvam*).” (*R̥gveda* III.53.11)³³

[§3.3 *Formulas that are self-addressed by the deity itself*]³⁴

Further, [the formulas] which are self-addressed are associated with the first-person verb and with the personal pronoun ‘I’ (*aham*). Examples of this are: Indra Vaikuṇṭha [hymns] (*R̥gveda* X.48–49), the hymn of lapwing (*R̥gveda* X.119), and the hymn of Vāc, daughter of Āmbhṛṇa (*R̥gveda* X.125).

[*Nirukta* 7.3] Formulas which address a deity indirectly and those which address a deity directly are the most numerous. Formulas which are self-addressed are rare.

[§3.4 *Additional classificatory principles*]

Furthermore, there is praise only, not wish (*āśis*), like in this hymn:

“Now I shall proclaim the heroic deeds of Indra.” (*R̥gveda* I.32.1a)

Further, there is wish only, not praise:

“May I see well with my eyes, may I be intensely lustrous by my face, may I hear well with my ears.”³⁵

This [kind of formula] is abundant in formulas connected with the Adhvaryu priests (i.e. in *yajus* formulas) and in [other] ritualistic formulas.

Furthermore, [some formulas are] a curse [on oneself] and a curse on [others]:

“Let me die today if I am a sorcerer.” (*R̥gveda* VII.104.15a)

“Then he should be separated from ten heroes.” (*R̥gveda* VII.104.15c)

Furthermore, [some formulas have] the intention of describing a certain state:

“Death did not exist nor deathlessness then.” (*R̥gveda* X.129.2a)

“Darkness existed, hidden by darkness, in the beginning.” (*R̥gveda* X.129.3a)

³³Yāska cites only the portions of the verses that contain the seers that are addressed directly, i.e. with the second person. The remaining portions of the verses contain the objects of praise (*R̥gveda* VIII.1.1: Indra; *R̥gveda* I.37.1: the Maruts; *R̥gveda* III.53.11: king Sudās) that are addressed indirectly.

³⁴On such ‘hymns of self-praise’ (*ātmastuti*), see G. Thompson, ‘*Ahaṅkāra* and *Ātmastuti*: Self-Assertion and Impersonation in the *R̥gveda*’, *History of Religions* 37, 2 (1997), pp. 141–171.

³⁵Almost the same passage is found in *Kāthaka-Āraṇyaka* III.1.214. For the *Kāthaka-Āraṇyaka*, we use the following edition. M. Witzel, *Kāthaka-Āraṇyaka: Critical Edition with a Translation into German and an Introduction* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005).

Furthermore, [some formulas are] lamentation of a certain state:³⁶

“If the gods’ pet should fly away today, never to return, . . .” (*R̥gveda* X.95.14a)

“I do not understand what sort of thing I am here.” (*R̥gveda* I.164.37a)

Furthermore, [some formulas are] criticism and commendation:

“Who eats alone has only evil.” (*R̥gveda* X.117.6d)

“This dwelling of the benefactor is like a lotus-pound.” (*R̥gveda* X.107.10c)

In this way in the dice-hymn (*R̥gveda* X.34) [the formulas are] criticism of gambling and commendation of agriculture. Thus (as described in §3.4) with several different intentions the seers have vision of the mantras.

[§4 Formulas in which the divine name is not specified]

[*Nirukta* 7.4] Then, [there follows] a close examination of the deities of the formulas whose deities is not specified.

[§4.1: view 1]

[Such formulas have] as deity the deity of the ritual or part of the ritual [in which they are employed].

[§4.2: view 2]

Further, ritualists say that [formulas that are employed] elsewhere than in the ritual have Prajāpati [as their deity].³⁷ The etymologists say [that such formulas] have Narāśaṃsa as their deity.³⁸

[§4.3: view 3]

Or else, that [deity] would be a deity according to one’s desire (i.e. one can choose the deity as one wishes);³⁹ or there would be many/various deities. For the practice is various in the world: [one and the same formula has sometimes] a god as its deity, [sometimes it has] the guests, [sometimes it has] the ancestors.⁴⁰

³⁶We take the ablative *kasmāc cit bhāvāt* as the object of dislike (cf. *vārttika* 1 on *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 1.4.24: *juḡpsāvīrāmapramādārthānām upasaṅkhyānam*) governed by *paridevanā*. If it is taken as a causal ablative, then the translation would be ‘on account of a certain state’.

For the *Vārttika* and the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, we use the following editions respectively. K. V. Abhyankar, *The Vyākaraṇa-mahābhāṣya of Patañjali: Edited by F. Kielhorn*, 3 vols (Bombay, 1880–5), Third edition, revised and furnished with additional readings, references and select critical notes by K. V. Abhyankar, 3 vols (Poona: 1962–72) and Appendix III (*Aṣṭādhyāyīsūtrapāṭha*) in G. Cardona, *Pāṇini: His Work and Its Traditions, Volume One, Background and Introduction* (Delhi, 1988), Second edition, revised and enlarged (1997).

³⁷Durga identifies two major kinds of formulas that are not employed in ritual: (a) formulas whose original ritual use had been lost (*utsanna*) (*R̥jvarthā* 7.4 [626.16–23]); (b) formulas that are used in non-ritual performances such as the recitation of the Veda (*svādhyāya*) and atonement practices (630.1–2).

³⁸Durga (*R̥jvarthā* 627.3–12) explains Narāśaṃsa (*Nighaṅṭu* 5.2.4; cf. also *nārāśaṃsah Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.6) as an epithet of Agni, the main deity in the etymologists’ pantheon (secondarily, it is also identified with Yajña, an epithet of Viṣṇu, and with Sūrya [630.11]). According to Findly, Narāśaṃsa is the personification of the priests’ (*narā* < **nārām* is an old subjective genitive plural of *nr̥* ‘man’, i.e. the poet-priests) praises (*śaṃsa*) for the deities, especially for Indra. Due to their poetic eloquence such praises were expected to satisfy the deities and thereby make ritual successful. E. B. Findly, *Aspects of Agni: Functions of the R̥gvedic Fire* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1978), p. 174f.

³⁹*api vā s̄ā kāmadvatā syāt*. We take *s̄ā* as the subject; it refers to the implied word *devatā*, ‘deity’.

⁴⁰Formulas whose deities are not specified are divided into two main groups, (i) those that are employed in ritual and (ii) those that are not. Formulas (i) have as their deity the deity of (part of) the ritual in which they are employed. With respect to (ii), three views are given. Such formulas have as their deity: (a) Prajāpati, for the

[§5 Should the names listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3 be regarded as divine names?]

[§5.1 No: they do not refer to deities]

[It has been said that] a formula [has as its deity the deity of] the ritual or [another] deity.⁴¹

[With respect to this, there is the following objection:] also non-deities are praised as deities like [those referred to by the divine names] beginning with ‘horse’ and ending with ‘herb’ (i.e. the names listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.1–22). Furthermore, there are eight dyads [of such non-deities that are praised as deities, referred to in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.29–36].⁴²

[§5.2 Yes: also non-deities are part of the one divine Self (*ātman*)]

One should not consider as adventitious/fortuitous (*āgantū*), as it were, the meanings/objects (*artha*) of the deities.⁴³ This becomes evident [in what follows].

Because of the great power of the deity (= Self, *ātman*), one single Self is being praised as multiple. The other gods are limbs of the one Self-trunk. Also, [scholars] say that seers

ritualists; (b) *Narāśaṃsa* (=Agni), for the etymologists; (c) *kāmadevatā* ‘desire deity’, i.e. one can choose the addressee deity in accordance with one’s own will; (c’) *prāyodevatā* ‘general/various (?) deity’.

We take (c) and (c’) as forming the third view, which is illustrated by the concluding passage (*asti hy ācāro . . .*): the practice in the world is various (*bahula*), i.e. one and the same formula has sometimes a god as its deity, sometimes the guests, sometimes the ancestors. We tentatively take the problematic *prāyo(devatā)* to mean something like *bahula*.

⁴¹The phrase *yājñadaivato mantra iti* (*Nirukta* 7.4) is problematic. Our interpretation is, therefore, provisional. While this phrase must refer to one or more views that have been mentioned above, it is unclear what view(s) is (are) meant exactly. We assume that *yājñadaivato mantra* gives a shorthand summary of all the classificatory cases for formulas that have been dealt with so far. We analyse *yājñadaivata* as follows. ‘[The deity] of the ritual’ (*yājñā*) refers to view [§4.1], i.e. formulas whose deity is not specified have as their deity the deity for which (part of) the ritual is performed. ‘[Another] deity’ (*daivata*) refers to all the other possible cases: the name of the addressee deity is either (a) explicitly mentioned, (b) or it is not specified; (b) includes the views discussed in [§4.2] and [§4.3].

⁴²The main thrust of the objection seems this: the names listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.1–22, such as ‘horse’ (*aśva*: *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.1) and ‘herb’ (*ośadhī*: *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.1), as well as the eight dyads listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.29–36, such as ‘mortar-pestle’ (*ulūkhalamusale*: *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.29) and ‘oblation-receptacle’ (*havirdhāne*: *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.30) cannot be divine names. For horse etc. and mortar-pestle etc. are not deities.

Durga (*Ṛjvarthā* on *Nirukta* 7.4 [630.17–631.1]) explains that the deity of a formula must be able to fulfil men’s desires by reciprocating their praises (see the definition of the deity of the formula in §2). Now, how can a horse or an herb understand men’s praises, let alone be able to fulfil their wishes? (For a partly similar issue, cf. §7 below.)

This objection might be reminiscent of Kautsa’s criticism recorded in *Nirukta* 1.15. Kautsa challenges Yāska’s statement that the purpose of the discipline of *nirvacana* is to explain the meaning of the formulas (*Nirukta* 1.15). Kautsa claims that, if this is the discipline’s purpose, then *nirvacana* is ‘without meaning/purpose’ (*anarthaka*), for Vedic formulas have no meaning at all. One of Kautsa’s arguments is that formulas have impossible (*anupapanna*) meanings; as evidence he cites the formula ‘Save him o herb! (*ośadhī*)’ (*Nirukta* 1.15). Kautsa’s criticism is not a case of ‘early anti-vedic scepticism’ (Sarup, *The Nighaṅṭu and the Nirukta*, p. 71). Rather, as Otto Strauss pointed out, Kautsa’s view reflects the idea that the ‘power [of the formulas] resides in their mysterious efficacy when they are pronounced, and not in their meaning’. O. Strauss, ‘Altindische Speculationen über die Sprache und ihre Probleme’, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 81 (1927), p. 120. This interpretation has been endorsed and further elucidated by Thieme and Taber. P. Thieme, ‘Grammatik und Sprache, ein Problem der altindischen Sprachwissenschaft’, in *Kleine Schriften*, (ed.) Georg Buddrus (Wiesbaden, 1984), pp. 27–28, and J. Taber, ‘Are Mantras Speech-acts? The Mīmāṃsā Point of View’, in *Mantra*, (ed.) Harvey P. Alper (Albany, 1989), pp. 144–164.

⁴³The word ‘meanings/objects’ refer to the entities listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.1–22; 29–36, such as ‘horse’, ‘herb’ etc. Two interpretations are possible: (i) One should not think that objects (*artha*) such as horse and herb have fortuitously ended up being referred to among (taking ‘of the deities’ as a partitive genitive) the other deities mentioned in *Nighaṅṭu* 5; (ii) One should not think that the meanings (*artha*) of words such as ‘horse’, ‘herb’ etc. are fortuitous (taking ‘of the deities’ as ‘[the names of] the deities’); that is, they are no by chance, but there must be a reason why they are recorded in *Nighaṅṭu* 5 together with the other divine names. Yāska explains below that such names, too, are full-fledged divine names, for they ultimately refer to and derive from the one existing deity, the Self (*ātman*).

perform praises through the plenitude of the source (=Self) of the beings. And because the source (=Self) has all the names [of the beings].

[Deities] are born from each other; they have each other as their origin; they are born from [ritual] action; they are born from the Self.⁴⁴ [For example] ‘chariot’ [*Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.6] among these [so-called non-deities referred to in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.1–22; 29–36] is nothing else than the Self; ‘horse’ [*Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.1] [among these is nothing else than] the Self; ‘weapon’ (*āyudha*) [= *dhanus* (*Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.11) ‘bow’] [among these is nothing else than] the Self; ‘arrows’ [*Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.13] [among these is nothing else than] the Self. Everything of the god(s) is the Self (i.e. every manifestation of the gods is nothing but the Self).

[§6 How many deities are there?]

[§6.1 Etymologists' view: there are three deities: Agni, Vāyu/Indra, and Āditya]

[*Nirukta* 7.5] The etymologists [maintain that] there are only three deities: Agni whose place is the earth; Vāyu or Indra whose place is the mid-space; the Sun whose place is the sky.⁴⁵ On account of their great power, each of the three deities has many names; or on account of their distinct actions [each of the three deities has many names]. Like [the ritual performer], though he is one, [he is called] ‘Hotar’, ‘Adhvaryu’, ‘Brahman’, ‘Udgātar’ [according to the distinct ritual actions he performs].⁴⁶

[§6.2 Ritualists' view: there are many deities]

[On the other hand, the ritualists maintain that] or else, [the deities] would be disparate. For the praises [of the deities] are disparate [and] so are [their] appellations.⁴⁷

[§6.3 Ritualists' criticism of etymologists' view]

As to [the etymologists' view (§6.1) that] ‘on account of their distinct actions [each of the three deities has many names]’, [the ritualists raise the following criticism:] many [agents], too, would perform their [respective] actions after having divided them [among themselves].⁴⁸

⁴⁴It is unclear whether the first three views about the origin of the deities conflict with, or rather are preliminary to, the fourth view. It is clear however that the last view is endorsed by Yāska.

⁴⁵References to a tripartite division of deities are found in Vedic literature. We cite two examples: (i) [Sūrya, Vāta, Agni] Ṛgveda X.158.1: *sūryo no divās pātu vāto antārikṣāt | agnir nah pārthivebhīyah |* (“Let the Sun protect us from heaven, the Wind from the mid-space; let Agni (protect) us from the earthly ones.”)

(ii) [Agni, Indra, Sūrya] AB II.37.17: *bhūr agnir jyotir jyotir agnir indro jyotir bhuvo jyotir indrah | sūryo jyotir jyotir svaḥ sūryah |* (“*bhūr*, light is Agni, Agni is light; light is Indra, *bhuvo*, Indra is light; light is Sūrya, Sūrya is, *svaḥ*, light.”) In this formula, the word *jyotis* ‘light’ refers to Agni, Indra, and Sūrya; cf. Yāska’s use of the same word to refer to the three fires, the terrestrial, the atmospheric, and the celestial (*Nirukta* 7.18; 20 [×2]; 23; 31).

⁴⁶Each of the three deities has many names because of its great, manifold powers, or because it performs many different actions. The latter point is illustrated with a simile. Like one ritual agent is called Hotar, Adhvaryu, Brahman, or Udgātar, because he performs different actions, in the same way one of the three deities is called with different names, because it performs different actions. The point of the simile seems to be this: one and the same priest performs different priestly roles in the same or in distinct rituals.

⁴⁷The fact that there are distinct praises shows that there are different deities. In the same way, the fact that there are different appellations shows that there are different deities.

⁴⁸While the etymologists argued that one agent performs multiple actions, the ritualists counter that multiple actions are performed by distinct agents. Specifically, the ritualists seem to counter the ritual simile employed by the etymologists. While the latter say that one ritual agent performs multiple actions, the former argue that multiple ritual agents (Hotar, Adhvaryu, Brahman, and Udgātar) perform distinct ritual actions after having divided them among themselves. Note that the ritualists’ criticism is introduced with the formula *yatho etad . . . iti*. In its other occurrences in *Nirukta* 7 (I: §7.2; IV: §24.2.1–6; see also *Nirukta* 1.14), this formula introduces Yāska’s own criticism to a previously mentioned view.

[§6.4 Yāska's view: etymologists' view (§6.1) is correct]

With respect to this (i.e. the number of deities), the unity in terms of common location and common enjoyment should be considered. Common location: like on earth there are men, animals and gods etc. Common enjoyment, too, is seen: [first example] like the Earth enjoys [an oblation/formula] with Parjanya (rain-cloud), Vāyu (wind), and Āditya (sun). [Second example] and another world's [fire] (the atmospheric and/or celestial fire) [enjoys an oblation/formula] together with Agni (terrestrial fire).⁴⁹ With respect to this, it is like a kingdom of human beings.⁵⁰

[§7 What forms do deities have?]

Now, [we] consider the forms of deities.

[§7.1 Deities are like human beings, i.e. they are provided with intellect]

One [view] is that they should be like human beings. For there are praises [for deities] as if they were provided with intellect; and the same is true of [their] names.

Furthermore, [deities] are praised with their limbs which are like those of human beings:

“High are the arms of you, O Indra, who are stalwart.” (*R̥gveda* VI.47.8c)

“When you grabbed them (two world-halves) together, bounteous one, it was just a handful for you.” (*R̥gveda* III.30.5d)

Furthermore, [deities are praised] with the associations of objects of possession, [associations that are] like those of human beings:

“With your two fallow bays, Indra, journey here.” (*R̥gveda* II.18.4a)

“Your lovely wife, a great delight, is in your house.” (*R̥gveda* III.53.6b)

Furthermore, [deities are praised] with actions that are like those of human beings:

“Eat and drink of it (Soma) when it is presented, Indra.” (*R̥gveda* X.116.7d)

“You of listening ear, listen to our call.” (*R̥gveda* I.10.9a)

⁴⁹[§6.4] is difficult. In our interpretation, Yāska supports the etymologists' view by mentioning two parameters by which many deities can be reduced to one: common location and common enjoyment. One example for common location is given: while men, animals and gods are distinct entities, they occupy the same location, earth. Likewise, we are given to understand, distinct deities that occupy one and the same location—i.e. earth, atmosphere, and sky—can be regarded as one. Next, Yāska gives two examples for common enjoyment: (i) the same formula/oblation is enjoyed by Earth as well as by Parjanya, Vāyu, and Āditya; (ii) the same formula/oblation is enjoyed by both Agni, the terrestrial/ritual fire, and by one (or two) of his counterpart(s), i.e. the atmospheric fire (=lightning) and/or the celestial fire (=sun). We take (i) and (ii) to refer to ritual. The point seems to be this: distinct deities enjoy one and the same formula/oblation. Alternatively, a natural-physical interpretation may be possible. In this interpretation, the words Parjanya, Vāyu and Āditya would not refer to the names of the deities, but to natural-physical phenomena: rain-cloud, wind, and sun. Depending on whether one takes the genitive *ṛ̥thivāḥ* ‘of the earth’ as subjective or objective, two interpretations follow: (i) (subjective genitive) One entity, the earth, enjoys distinct natural phenomena, i.e. the rain-cloud, the wind, and the sun; (ii) (objective genitive) the distinct natural phenomena enjoy one and the same object, the earth.

Additionally, note that the word earth (*ṛ̥thivā*) occurs in the example for common location and in the first example for common enjoyment (in the second example it may be implied by the reference to Agni, the terrestrial fire). The Earth is the first of the three places (*sthāna*) in which deities are organised according to the etymologists' tripartite division [§6.1]. This suggests that Yāska gives examples for the first place only; examples for the remaining two places (mid-space and sky) are implied.

⁵⁰The exact sense of this simile is unclear. Yāska seems to liken the organisation of the world of deities to that of a human kingdom.

[§7.2 Deities are not like human beings, i.e. they are without intellect]

[Nirukta 7.7] The other [view] is that [deities] should not be like human beings. For, surely, what is [actually] seen is not like human beings. For example: fire, wind, the sun, the earth, and the moon.

As to this [reason given above that] '[deities should be like human beings] for there are praises [for deities] as if they were provided with intellect', [we reply that] also beings without intellect are praised in the same way. For example: [those deities referred to by the divine names] beginning with 'dice' and ending with 'herb' [which are listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.4-22].

As to this [reason given above that] '[deities should be like human beings for they] are praised with limbs that are like those of human beings', [we reply that] this occurs also regarding beings without intellect:

"They (pressing stones) roar with their golden mouths." (*R̥gveda* X.94.2b)

This is a praise of the pressing stone.

As to this [reason given above that] '[deities should be like human beings for they are praised] with the associations of objects of possession, [associations that are] like those of human beings', [we reply that] this, too, is the very same (i.e. such kind of praises occur also for beings without intellect, e.g.):

"Sindhu has yoked her own well-naved, horsed chariot". (*R̥gveda* X.75.9a)

This is a praise of a river.

As to this [reason given above that] '[deities are praised] with actions that are like those of human beings', [we reply that] this, too, is the very same (i.e. such kind of praises occur also for beings without intellect, e.g.):

"They (pressing stones) have achieved the eating of the oblation even before Hotar". (*R̥gveda* X.94.2d)

This is a praise of the pressing stone.

[§7.3 Deities are both like and unlike human beings]

Or else, [the deities] should be of both kinds [both with and without human-like intellect].

[§7.4 Yāska's view]

Or else, the [deities that are not like human beings, i.e. those without intellect] whose nature is the [ritual] actions would belong precisely to the truly existing (*satām*) deities that are like human beings [i.e. those that have intellect].⁵¹ Like sacrifice [which is without intellect and has the nature of ritual actions belongs] to the patron of the sacrifice [who is provided with intellect]. 'And this is the agreement of the legend [school of interpretation] (*ākhyānasamaya*)'.⁵²

⁵¹Note that while the *bahuvrīhi* compound *karmātmāna* ('whose nature is the [ritual] actions') presupposes a masculine word, *deva* ('god'), the feminine word *devatā* ('deity') was used above in 'Now, [we] consider the forms of deities (*devatānām*)' [§7]. In *Pāṇini* (A 5.4.27; see the *Kāśikāvṛtti* thereon), the word *devatā* is recorded as having the same meaning as *deva*. For the *Kāśikāvṛtti*, we use the following edition. A. Sharma, K. Deshpande, and D. G. Padhye, *Kāśikā: A Commentary on Pāṇini's Grammar by Vāmana & Jayāditya*, 2 vols (Hyderabad, 1969–70).

⁵²The term *ākhyāna* 'legend, story' refers to a school of interpretation of the Vedic formulas. According to Gupta, the adherents of this school maintain that stories about and descriptions of the Vedic deities should not

[§8 Agni, Indra, and Āditya: their shares (*bhakti*), actions (*karma*), and association with other deities] It has been said before [in §6.1] that there are three deities only. We will explain their shares and association [with other deities].

[§8.1 Agni]

Now, the following are the shares of Agni: this world, the morning pressing (of soma), spring, the *gāyatrī* meter, the triple *stoma*, the *rathantara* Sāman chant. And the group of gods transmitted [in the *Nighaṅṭu* 5.1–3 as residing] in the first place (i.e. earth). Agnāyī, Pṛthivī, Iḷā are the women [of Agni].⁵³

Next, the action of Agni is: carrying oblations [to the deities] and bringing the deities to [the ritual arena], and whatever pertains to the domain of sight—that is precisely Agni’s action [and not the action of other deities].

Then, the gods that are jointly praised with Agni are Indra, Soma, Varuṇa, Parjanya, and R̥tus. There is a joint oblation offered to Agni and Viṣṇu, but no joint R̥g-verse addressed to them in the tenfold (i.e. the *R̥gveda*). Furthermore, there is a joint oblation offered to Agni and Pūṣan, but no joint praise is addressed to them.

With respect to this (i.e. that Agni and Pūṣan are not praised jointly), [the scholars] give as example the [following] R̥g-verse in which [the two deities] are praised separately:

[*Nirukta* 7.9] “Forth let Pūṣan stir you from here, the wise one, whose livestock does not get lost, the herdsman of the world. He will entrust you to these forefathers; Agni [will entrust you] to the wealthy gods.” (*R̥gveda* X.17.3)

“Let Pūṣan stir you forth from here, the wise one, whose livestock does not get lost, the herdsman of the world”: for this (Pūṣan) is the protector of all beings. “He will entrust you to these forefathers”: the third foot is doubtful (i.e. it is unclear whether its subject is Pūṣan or Agni). One [view is that] Pūṣan that was mentioned above is referred to again here. The other [view is that] Agni that is mentioned below is referred to here. “Agni [will entrust you] to the wealthy gods”: *suvidatra* means wealth; it is from *vid* (‘to find’) with one preverb (*su*) or from *dā* (‘to give’) with two preverbs (*su* and *vi*).⁵⁴

[§8.2 Indra]

[*Nirukta* 7.10] Then, these are the shares of Indra: middle space, the midday pressing, summer, the *triṣṭubh* meter, the fifteenfold *stoma*, the *bṛhat* Sāman chant. And the group of gods

be taken literally, but understood figuratively or allegorically. S. K. Gupta, ‘Ancient Schools of Vedic Interpretation’, *Journal of the Ganganatha Research Institute* 16, 1/2 (1958–9), p. 149.

⁵³The mention of Iḷā [*Nighaṅṭu* 5.5.35] as one of Agni’s wives seems to conflict with its occurrence in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.5. *Nighaṅṭu* 5.4–5.5 list deities that reside in the mid-space; hence, one would expect Iḷā to be associated with Indra, not with Agni. Note also that while Pṛthivī [*Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.26] and Agnāyī [*Nighaṅṭu* 5.3.28] are mentioned in the *Nighaṅṭu* section that is associated with Agni [*Nighaṅṭu* 5.1–3], their order is inverted in [§8.1]; cf. also note 88 below.

The association of Iḷā with Agni may be explained as follows. An oblation offered to Agni can be called *iḷā* ‘refreshment’. When this oblation, after going up to heaven, returns down to the earth, it becomes rainwater that is associated with Indra. Yāska may be thus referring to *iḷā*’s previous form, *iḷā* as an oblation to Agni. *iḷā* is enjoyed by Agni as well as by Indra.

⁵⁴Yāska seems to analyse *suvidatra* ‘wealth’ as follows: (i) *su-vid-atra* ‘something that is well (*su-*) found (*-vid-*)’, where *-atra* is likely to be taken as a suffix; cf. A. Debrunner, *Jacob Wackernagel, Altindische Grammatik, Band II, 2, Die Nominalsuffixe* (Göttingen, 1954), p. 170; (ii) ‘something that is given (*dā*) in a good (*su-*) and special/various (*-vi-* = *viśeṣena/vividhena*) way’.

transmitted [in the *Nighaṅṭu* 5.4–5 as residing] in the middle place (i.e. atmosphere) and the women [of Indra, i.e. those referred to by the female divine names listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.4–5].

Next, the action of Indra is: releasing the waters, slaying Vṛtra, and any activity of physical strength—that is precisely Indra's action [and not the action of other deities].

Next, the gods jointly praised with Indra: Agni, Soma, Varuṇa, Pūṣan, Bṛhaspati, Brahmanaspati, Parvata, Kutsa, Viṣṇu, and Vāyu. Furthermore, [among the gods residing in the middle space like Indra,] Mitra is jointly praised with Varuṇa; Soma with Pūṣan and Rudra; Pūṣan with Vāyu;⁵⁵ Parjanya with Vāta.

[§8.3 *Āditya*]

[*Nirukta* 7.11] Then, these are the shares of Āditya: the world over there, the third (evening) pressing, the rainy season, the *jagatī* meter, the seventeen-fold *stoma*, the *vairūpa* Sāman chant. And the group of gods transmitted [in the *Nighaṅṭu* 5.6 as residing] in the highest place (sky) and the women [of Āditya, i.e. those referred to by the female divine names listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.6].

Next, the action of Āditya is: taking the fluid (i.e. to absorb water) and retaining it by means of his rays,⁵⁶ and whatever is enigmatic/mysterious (*pravalhita*)⁵⁷—that is precisely Āditya's action [and not of other deities]. [Āditya is] praised together with the Moon, Wind, the Year etc.⁵⁸

[§8.4 *Remaining shares*]

In this very distribution of places (i.e. in earth, mid-space, and sky), one should arrange the remaining shares concerning seasons, meters, *stomas* and *ṛṣṭhas*. Autumn, the *anuṣṭubh* meter, the twenty-one-fold *stoma*, the *vairāja* Sāman chant are [the shares] that have earth as their

⁵⁵Some manuscripts and Roth's edition add here: *agninā ca pūṣā* 'Pūṣan with Agni'.

⁵⁶*rasādānaṃ rasnībhiḥ ca rasadhāraṇam* (some manuscripts and Roth read *rasādānaṃ*). Two etymologies of *āditya* seem to be referred to here: (i) Āditya takes (*ā* √*dā*) the fluid and (ii) retains (*ā* √*dhā*) it by means of its rays. (i) is mentioned explicitly in *Nirukta* 2.13: *ādityaḥ kasmād ādatte rasān* 'wherefrom *āditya*? He takes (i.e. absorbs) liquids'. With respect to (ii), the implied etymology would seem to require the reading *rasādāraṇam*. Note also that this etymological link (*āditya* < *ā* √*dhā*) is already attested in the Brāhmaṇas; see the passages cited in Deeg's work. Deeg, *Die altindische Etymologie nach dem Verständnis Yāska's und seiner Vorgänger*, pp. 206–207. Finally, for the idea that the rays (*rasmī*) serve the function of retaining the liquid absorbed by the sun, cf. *Nirukta* 2.13: *rasmīr yamanāt* 'ray is from restraining'.

⁵⁷Sarup reads *pravalhita* [oversight?] (Sarup, *The Nighaṅṭu and the Nirukta*, p. 137 [text]) and translates it as 'all that relates to greatness' (p. 118 [translation]); Roth reads *pravalhita* (Roth, *Jāska's Nirukta sammt den Nighaṅṭavas*, p. 119 [text]) and renders it as 'all that is mysterious' ('alles Geheimnisvolle') (p. 105 [Erläuterungen]). In Vedic *pra* √*valh* means 'to confound, to challenge through an enigma'; see T. Gotō, *Die „I. Präsenstklasse“ im Vedischen: Untersuchung der vollstufigen thematischen Wurzel-päsentia* (Wien, 1987), pp. 293–294, and M. Mayrhofer *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen*, 3 bde (Heidelberg, 1992–2001), p. 527. The connection between *pravalhita* and Āditya is somewhat unclear (is the sun enigmatic/mysterious because it disappears at night and reappears in the morning [?]). Indian commentators are not helpful here. Curiously, Pathak glosses *pravalhitam* (sic) with 'the growth (√*ṛddhī*) and nourishment of herbs and plants' (Pathak, *Nirukta of Yāskācārya*, p. 504). While this interpretation would seem to fit the context—the link between growth, the sun, and the sun's actions of absorbing and retaining water is easily understandable—, it is unclear how one may assign such a meaning to *pravalhitam/ pravalhitam* (contamination with the roots √*ṛddh*, √*bṛh* ?).

Werner Knobl (personal communication) offered the following perceptive remarks. We thank him and cite his words with his permission: "From a Proto-Indo-European (PIE) point of view, a root **valh* would have been impossible. Minimally, the root structure is CVC; maximally, CRVRC (R = resonant). A root **valh*, representing *CVCRC, could not have occurred. A root *valh* (CVRC), however, could. The verbal compound *pra*√*valh*-, if it means "confuse, embarrass", fits the action of the sun, insofar as Āditya, by absorbing the water, makes it disappear mysteriously, like a trickster or conjurer quickly—*hey presto!*—deceives the eye that is too slow to follow the sudden change brought about by his dexterous fingers".

⁵⁸We take *iti* ('etc.') as having an enumerative function.

foundation. Winter, the *pañkti* meter, the twenty-seven-fold *stoma*, the *śākhara* Sāman chant are [the shares] that have mid-space as their foundation. Cold season (late winter?), the *atic-chanda* meters, the thirty-three-fold *stoma*, the *raivata* Sāman chant are the shares of sky.

[. . .]⁵⁹

[§9 *Fourfold classification of deities depending on what they ‘enjoy’ (√bhāj)*]

[*Nirukta* 7.13] Thus, these deities have been dealt with in order. [Some such deities] enjoy hymns (*sūkta*); [some] enjoy oblations (*havis*), and the most numerous ones enjoy Ṛg-verses. A few enjoy incidental mention [alongside the principal deities].

[§10 *Yāska’s rationale for the transmission of Nighaṅṭu 5*]

Now, then, [an injunction] enjoins [one to offer an] oblation having joined [the principal names of the deities with their] epithets: e.g. ‘to Indra, the slayer of Vṛtra’; ‘to Indra, the deliverer from crisis’.⁶⁰ Some [scholars] transmit also such epithets [as part of the list of the names of the deities]. However, [such epithets] are more numerous than the transmitted list.⁶¹ On the other hand, I transmit only those [epithets] that are conventionally known and by which [the deities] enjoy primary praise.

Now, then, seers praise the deities [with epithets that are associated] with the deities’ actions ‘the slayer of Vṛtra, the splitter of stronghold, etc.’. Some transmit such epithets as well. However, [such epithets] are more numerous than the transmitted list. Also, such [epithets] merely [circumstantially] qualifies the [principal] names [of the deities]. Like ‘Give rice gruel to a Brahmin who is hungry, an ointment to a Brahmin who has taken a bath, a drink to a Brahmin who is thirsty’.⁶²

Part II: Agni (*Nirukta* 7.14-18)

[§11 *Here begins the examination of Nighaṅṭu 5*]

[*Nirukta* 7.14] From now on, we will deal with [the deities] in order (i.e. according to how they are listed in *Nighaṅṭu 5*). We will explain first Agni [*Nighaṅṭu* 5.1.1] whose place is the earth.

[§12 *Where is the word agni from? Four etymologies are given*]

[Question:] Where is *agni* from?⁶³

⁵⁹We omit translating a few lines (*Nirukta* 7.12 [138.4-17]), which only contain etymological explanations of a few words and interrupt the flow of Yāska’s discussion.

⁶⁰Cf. *Maitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā* II.2.11: *indrāya vṛtraḡmā ekādaśakapālam [nir vapet]* ‘[One should offer an oblation] cooked on eleven potsherds to Indra, the slayer of Vṛtra’ and *Maitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā* II.2.10; II.6.6; IV.3.9: *indrāyāñhomūcā ekādaśakapālam nir vapet* ‘One should offer [an oblation] cooked on eleven potsherds to Indra, the deliverer from crisis.’ Note the sandhi in *añhomūcā ekādaśa-* from *añhomuce ekādaśa-*. This is one of the special sandhis observed in the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā*: -e + V- (any accented vowel) → -ā + V-.

⁶¹Two interpretations seem possible: (a) the actual lists that include also the epithets of the deities fail short of recording all such epithets; (b) such epithets are too many to be recorded manageably in a list.

⁶²Epithets describing the deities’ actions (e.g. ‘slayer of Vṛtra’ etc.) merely qualify a circumstantial state/aspect of the deities, like ‘who is hungry . . . who has taken a bath . . . who is thirsty’ qualify a circumstantial state/aspect of a brahmin. For a comparable argument regarding the relation between name and the action one performs, cf. *Nirukta* 1.15.

⁶³Yāska’s etymologies of Agni are discussed in detail in P. Visigalli, ‘Words in and out of History: Indian Semantic Derivation (*Nirvacana*) and Modern Etymology in Dialog’, *Philosophy East and West* 67, 4 (2017), 1143-90 and Y. Kawamura, ‘How to Define the God of Fire: Fresh Perspectives on Yāska’s Etymology of *agni*’, in Professor George Cardona’s Felicitation Volume, (ed.) Peter M. Scharf (forthcoming).

[Etymology 1:] [For, Agni] is led at the front (*agranī*): he is led forth at the front in the rituals.
 [Etymology 2:] He leads (*nayati*) his limbs (*aṅga*) (flames) [ahead], completely inclining forward.

[Etymology 3:] Sthaulāṣṭhīvi says that [Agni] is a non-moistener (*aknopana*) (i.e., a drier). It does not moisten [something], that is, it does not make [something] wet.

[Etymology 4:] Śākapūṇi says that [the word *agni*] is produced from three verbs: *i*, *añj* or *dah*, and *nī*.⁶⁴ You should know,⁶⁵ Śākapūṇi takes the sound *a* from the verb *i*, the sound *g* from the verb *añj* or *dah*, and (the verb) *nī* is the final.⁶⁶

[§13 Two Ṛg-verses addressed to Agni are cited]

The following Ṛg-verse is for Agni:

[Nirukta 7.15] "I beg (*īle*) Agni, the one placed to the fore, god and priest of the sacrifice, the Hotar, the best conferrer of treasures." (*Ṛgveda* I.1.1)

'I invoke Agni', that is, I beg Agni. The [verb] *īl* (*īli*) denotes the action of requesting or worshiping. 'The one placed to the fore' (*purohita*) and 'sacrifice' (*yajña*) have been explained already [in *Nirukta* 2.12 and 3.19, respectively]. 'God' (*deva*) is from giving (*dāna*), or from shining (*dīpana*), or from illuminating (*dyotana*), or from the fact that he is the one whose place is the sky (*dyusthāna*). What is a 'god' (*deva*) is a 'deity' (*devatā*) [i.e. both words are synonyms].⁶⁷ 'Hotar', that is, 'one who invokes' (*hvātar*). Aurnavābha says that *hotar* is from [the verb] *hu* (*juhoti*) 'to offer oblations'. 'Best conferrer of treasures' (*ratnadhātama*), that is, 'best giver of agreeable wealth' (*ramaṇīyānāṃ dhanānāṃ dātṛtamam*).

The following is another Ṛg-verse for Agni:

[Nirukta 7.16] "Agni, to be invoked by ancient seers and by the present ones, shall carry the gods here to this place." (*Ṛgveda* I.1.2)

Agni, who is to be invoked by both ancient seers and us, the newer ones, may he carry the gods here to this place.

[§14 *agni* refers not only to the terrestrial fire, but also to the atmospheric (=lightning) and celestial (=the sun) fires]

One should not think that [the word] *agni* [refers to] this [terrestrial fire] only. Also the two upper lights (i.e. the lightning and the sun) are called *agni*.

⁶⁴Śākapūṇi refers to these verbs in the form of verbal adjectives (past particles), *ita-*, *akta-*, *dagdha-*, and *nūta-*. This seems to be an archaic practice; cf. H. Scharfe, 'A New Perspective on Pāṇini', *Indologica Taurinensia* 35, p. 111, note 23. In his paraphrase, Yāska cites these verbs in the third person singular, as is common in grammatical literature.

⁶⁵In translating *khalu*, we follow M. B. Emeneau, 'Sanskrit Syntactic Particles — kila, khalu, nūnam', *Indo-Iranian Journal* 11, 4 (1969), p. 258.

⁶⁶Schematically, Yāska's etymologies are as following:

[1] *agranī* (*agram* . . . *prañīyate*) → *agni*.
 [2] *aṅgam* + *nayati* → *agni*.
 [3] *aknopana* → *agni*.
 [4] *a* (< √*i*; through a form having *a*, such as *ayāni*) + *g* (< √*añj* or √*dah*; through forms having *g*, such as *aṅgdhi* or *dagdha*) + *nī* → *agni*.

⁶⁷On *deva* and *devatā*, see note 51.

[§14.1 *First view: agni refers to lightning*]

Now then, the middle [fire (=lightning)] is called *agni*:

[*Nirukta* 7.17] “They bend themselves, like same-minded young women, lovely, smiling, towards *agni* (=lightning). The streams of ghee (=water) bow to [reach] the kindling sticks. Jātavedas delights, taking pleasure in them.” (*R̥gveda* IV.58.8)

They bow toward, like same-minded young women. *samana* (‘same-minded’) is from *samanana* ‘thinking the same’ or from *sammānana* ‘honouring together’—lovely, smiling, towards Agni. [This half verse] is metaphorical. ‘The streams of ghee’, that is, the streams of water, approach the kindling sticks. The [verb] *nas* denotes the action of reaching or bowing to. ‘Jātavedas delights (*haryati*), taking pleasure in them’. The [verb] *hr̥* denotes the action of longing for or diverting oneself.⁶⁸

[§14.2 *Second view: agni refers to sun*]

“From the sea (*samudra*), a honeyed wave has arisen.” (*R̥gveda* IV.58.1a)

[Some other people] think that [in this verse] the sun is being spoken of. [Therefore, *R̥gveda* IV.58 is addressed to the sun; hence, the divine name *agni* (*R̥gveda* IV.58.8) refers to the sun, not to the lightning].

A *brāhmaṇa* passage also says:

“From the sea, indeed, this (honeyed wave) rises from the waters.” (*Kauśītaki-Brāhmaṇa* XXV.1)

[§15 *Additional view: Agni is all the deities*]

Furthermore [another] *brāhmaṇa* passage says:

“Agni is all the deities.” (*Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa* II.3.3)

The following [R̥g-verse] [serves] to further explain this [point, i.e. that Agni is all the deities:]

[*Nirukta* 7.18] “They call [Agni] ‘Indra’, ‘Mitra’, ‘Varuṇa’, ‘Agni’, and he is also the celestial well-winged Garutmat (bird, i.e. the sun)—though it is one, inspired poets speak of Agni in many ways—they call [him] ‘Yama’, ‘Mātariśvan.’” (*R̥gveda* I.164.46)⁶⁹

The wise speak of this very (terrestrial) Agni, the Great Self, in various ways, as Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, and the celestial Garutmat. ‘Celestial’ (*divya*), that is, born in the sky (*divija*).

⁶⁸Streams of ghee’ refers to water. The word *ghṛta* ‘ghee’ is glossed with *udaka* ‘water’ in *Nirukta* 7.24 and it occurs in *Nighaṇṭu* 1.12.10 as one of the synonyms of water. Ghee refers metaphorically to (rain)water already in the *R̥gveda*; see e.g. *R̥gveda* I.164.47, VII.62.5, VII.65.4. In Yāska’s interpretation of *R̥gveda* IV.58.8, the streams of ghee, i.e. (rain)water, are represented as women that willingly approach the kindling stick, Agni (=lightning); the sexual imagery is clear.

⁶⁹Yāska seems to take the word *agnīm* (*R̥gveda* I.164.46d) as the direct object of the verb ‘to speak’ (*vadanti*). The word *agni* is the implied direct object (x) governed by the verb *āhuh̥* (‘they call’ [x y], *R̥gveda* I.164.46ad). All the other accusatives are the object predicates (y). This means that ‘Indra’, ‘Mitra’, ‘Varuṇa’, ‘the well-winged Garutmat’ (bird, i.e. the sun), ‘Agni’, ‘Yama’ and ‘Mātariśvan’—all such names have one and the same referent, the (terrestrial) Agni, which is equated with the Great Self. Note the inclusion of ‘Agni’ (*R̥gveda* I.164.46a) among such names. Note also that ‘Yama’ and ‘Mātariśvan’ are not mentioned in Yāska’s commentary.

Garutmat, that is, the one provided with praise (*garaṇavān*); or heavy-souled (*gurvātmā*), i.e. great-souled.⁷⁰

[§16 Yāska's final view]

Yet, *agni* who enjoys the hymn and to which the oblation is offered is only this [terrestrial fire]. These two upper lights (i.e. the atmospheric [=lightning] and the celestial [=sun] fires) enjoy only incidental mention (*nipātam*) through this name (*aṅṅī*).

Part III: Jātavedas (Nirukta 7.19-20)

[§17 Where is the word *jātavedas* from? Six etymologies are given]

[Nirukta 7.19] [Question:] Where is *jātavedas* from?

[Etymology 1:] [Agni] knows (*veda*) all the creatures (*jātāni*).

[Etymology 2:] Or all the creatures (*jātāni*) know (*viduḥ*) him.

[Etymology 3:] Or he is found (*vidyate*) in every creature (*jāte jāte*).

[Etymology 4:] Or he is the one due to which wealth is born (*jātavitta*).

[Etymology 5:] Or he is the one due to which wisdom is born (*jātavidya*).

[Etymology 6:] There is a *brāhmaṇa* passage:

“When born (*jātāh*), he found (*āvindata*) the cattle. This is why Jātavedas is called *jātavedas*.” (*Maitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā* I.8.2)

Also [there is this other *brāhmaṇa* passage]:

“Therefore, during all the seasons, the cattle crawl towards Agni.” (*Maitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā* I.8.2)

[§18 One *R̥g*-verse addressed to Jātavedas is cited]

There is the following [*R̥g*-verse] for Jātavedas:⁷¹

[Nirukta 7.20] [Interpretation 1] “Forth (*prā*) now ye spur (*hinota*) Jātavedas, the one that is all-pervading [by means of actions], to sit here on this ritual grass of ours.”

[Interpretation 2] “Forth ye spur Jātavedas like [one spurs forth] a horse, to sit here on this ritual grass of ours.” (*R̥gveda* X.188.1)

Ye spur forth (*prahīnuta*) Jātavedas, the one that is all-pervading (*sam-āśnuvāna*) by means of actions. Or else, [*āśva* ‘horse’] is used as a simile: ‘[Ye spur forth] Jātavedas like [one spurs forth] a horse’.⁷² May Jātavedas sit on this ritual grass of ours. This triplet of verses in the *gāyatrī* meter (i.e. *R̥gveda* X.188) is the only one that is addressed to Jātavedas in the tenfold

⁷⁰Yāska gives two etymologies of Garutmat: (i) *garut-* (= *garaṇa* ‘praise’) + *-mat* (= *-vat-* ‘provided with’); (ii) *garu-* (= *guru-* ‘heavy’, i.e. ‘great’) + *-tmān* (< *ātman* ‘soul’). With respect to (ii), note two things: first, the juxtaposition *garu-* = *guru-* may be facilitated by the vowel apophony in the comparative and superlative forms of *guru-*, i.e. *garīyas/garīṣṭha*. Second, the juxtaposition *-tmān* = *ātman* may find support in the Vedic forms *tmānā* (instrumental), *tmāne* (dative), and *tmāni* (locative), which are the old oblique cases of the word *ātman*.

⁷¹In some manuscripts, *R̥gveda* I.99.1 is here cited and commented upon. This passage is not commented by Durga. Sarup gives the passage within brackets (Sarup, *The Nighaṇṭu and the Nirukta*, p. 141 [text]).

⁷²Yāska explains *āśva* (*jātāvedasam āśvaṇi*) in two ways: (i) as an adjective-participle (*samaśnuvāna*) derived from *√as* ‘to reach’, which qualifies Jātavedas. Note that Yāska seems to take *sam* in (*jātaveda*-)*sam* as (also) being the pre-verb to be construed with *√as*. That Jātavedas is all-pervasive would be consistent with etymologies [1], [2], and [3] given above in [§17]. (ii) Yāska takes *āśva* as a noun ‘horse’ which is employed in a simile.

(i.e. the *R̥gveda*). However, any [hymn in the *gāyatrī* meter that is] addressed to Agni can be used in the place of [hymns] addressed to Jātavedas.⁷³

[§19 *jātavedas* refers not only to the terrestrial fire, but also to the atmospheric (=lightning) and celestial (=sun) fires]

One should not think that [the word] *agni* [*jātavedas*] [refers to] this [terrestrial fire] only. Also the two upper lights (i.e. the lightning and the sun) are called *jātavedas*.

[§19.1 *First view: jātavedas* refers to lightning]

Now then, the middle [fire, i.e. lightning, is called *jātavedas*]:

“They bend themselves, like same-minded young women.” (*R̥gveda* IV.58.8a)

This has been explained before [in §14.1].

[§19.2 *Second view: jātavedas* refers to sun]

Next, the sun over there [is called *jātavedas*]:

“Up do [the beacons convey] this Jātavedas.” (*R̥gveda* I.50.1a)

We will explain this below [*Nirukta* 12.15].⁷⁴

[§20 *Yāska’s final view*]

Yet, *agni jātavedas* who enjoys the hymn and to which the oblation is offered is only this [terrestrial fire]. These two upper lights (i.e. the atmospheric [=lightning] and the celestial [=sun] fires) enjoy only incidental mention through this name (*jātavedas*).

Part IV: *Vaiśvānara* (*Nirukta* 7.21-31)

[§21 *Where is the word vaiśvānara from? Three etymologies are given*]

[*Nirukta* 7.21] [Question:] Where is *vaiśvānara* from?

[Etymology 1:] he leads every (*viśva*) people (*nara*).

[Etymology 2:] Or every (*viśva*) people (*nara*) leads this one.

[Etymology 3:] Or else, [*vaiśvānara*] is precisely the same (*eva*) as *viśvānara*. [*viśvānara* is analysed as] fixed upon all the beings—*vaiśvānara* is its [derivative].⁷⁵

[§22 *One R̥g-verse addressed to Vaiśvānara is cited*]

The following R̥g-verse is for *Vaiśvānara*:

⁷³*R̥gveda* X.188, which consists of three *gāyatrī* verses, is the only *gāyatrī* hymn in the *R̥gveda* that is addressed to Jātavedas (there are other hymns that are addressed to Jātavedas, but they are not in the *gāyatrī*). Should the (ritual) circumstances demand it, however, it is possible to utilise verses in the *gāyatrī* meter that are addressed to Agni as if they were addressed to Jātavedas.

⁷⁴We cite *R̥gveda* I.50.1 in its entirety: *úd u tyāṃi jātávedasaṃ | devāṃ vahanti ketāvah | dṛśé viśvāya sūr,ṃam ||* (“Up do the beacons convey this god Jātavedas, the Sun, for all to see”).

⁷⁵The word *vaiśvānara* is said to be the same as the word *viśvānara*; the former is also said to be a derivative (*tasya* ‘its’) of the latter. Since both words are the same, the analysis of *viśvānara* as ‘fixed upon all the beings’ (*pratyṛtaḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni*) must also apply to *vaiśvānara*. What kind of information does this analysis provide? The authors’ views differ in this regard. For Kawamura, this analysis pertains only to the semantic aspect of the word *vaiśvānara*; accordingly, *vaiśvānara* and *viśvānara* are the same because they share the same meaning. For Visigalli, this analysis also implies an etymological analysis: *viśvānara* < *viśvān* (= *sarvāni bhūtāni*) + *ara* (= *praty-ṛta* [< √ṛ]); accordingly, *vaiśvānara* and *viśvānara* are the same because they share both the same meaning and the same basic etymology. Cf. also §23.3.

[*Nirukta* 7.22] “May we be in the goodwill of Vaiśvānara, for he is indeed the king to be relied on by [all] the creatures. Born from here, he looks over this entire [world]. Vaiśvānara is united with the sun.” (*R̥gveda* I.98.1)

Born from here, [Vaiśvānara] looks out over this whole [world]. Vaiśvānara is united together with the sun. May we be in the favourable will of Vaiśvānara, who is the king to be relied on by all the creatures.

[§23 Which of the three fires does vaiśvānara refer to?]

Then, what is Vaiśvānara?

[§23.1 Teachers' view: vaiśvānara refers to the atmospheric fire (=lightning), for Vaiśvānara is praised in *R̥gveda* I.59.6 as rain-maker]

Teachers say that he is the middle [fire (=lightning)]. For [a seer] praises it (Vaiśvānara) with the action of making rain:

[*Nirukta* 7.23] “I now proclaim the greatness of the bull (i.e. rain-maker), whom the Pūrus (i.e. those men to be filled with [rain-water]) follow as Vṛtra(cloud)-smasher. Agni Vaiśvānara, having smashed the Dasyu (cloud), shook the *kāṣṭhā* (water), cut down Śambarā (cloud).” (*R̥gveda* I.59.6)

I announce the greatness, i.e., the high excellence of the bull (*vṛṣabha*), i.e. the rain-maker (*varṣitar*), whom the Pūrus, i.e., those men to be filled with (*pūrayitavya*) [rain water], desiring rain, follow, i.e. attend upon as the Vṛtra-smasher, i.e. the cloud-smasher. Dasyu is from [the verb] *dasyati* having the meaning of destroying. [Dasyu is one] in whom water decays (*upadasyanti*); [one] who destroys (*upadāsyati*) [ritual] actions.⁷⁶ Agni Vaiśvānara, smashing him, shook down the water, the *kāṣṭhā*; he split Śambarā, i.e. the cloud.⁷⁷

[§23.2 Ritualists' view: vaiśvānara refers to the celestial fire (=sun)]

[*Nirukta* 7.23] Now, previous ritualists say that [the name *vaiśvānara*] refers to that sun over there.

[§23.2.1 First argument]

The ascent of [the three] Soma pressings has been traditionally considered (*āmnātaḥ*) as the ascent of these [three] worlds (i.e. earth, mid-space, and sky). The descent from [or after] that ascent is desired to be done. A Hotar performs that (descent) as an imitation (i.e.

⁷⁶Possibly this means that the lack of rainfall makes impossible the performance of ritual actions or actions of any kind that needs water.

⁷⁷Yāska explains *śambarā*, *vṛtra*, and *dasyu* as meaning rain-cloud. *śamvara* (*Nighaṇṭu* 1.10.13; the different spelling ‘v’/‘b’ is not significant) and *vṛtra* (*Nighaṇṭu* 1.10.27) are listed in the *Nighaṇṭu* as synonyms of cloud (*megha*). (*śambarā* occurs in *Nighaṇṭu* 1.12.93 as a synonym of water [*udaka*].) Yāska's way of explaining Pūrus etymologically seems reminiscent of the Mīmāṃsakas' exegetical strategy whereby the proper names mentioned in the Veda are taken to refer not to actual human beings but to natural elements. This strategy is part of the arguments the Mīmāṃsakas deploy to ensure the eternity of the Vedas; see Śābara's commentary on *Mīmāṃsā-sūtra* 1.1.31 (G. Jha, *Śābara-Bhāṣya Translated into English. Vol. I, adhyāyas I-III* [Baroda, 1933], pp. 49–50). Cf. also the relevant brief remarks by Kahrs and Bronkhorst regarding a possible affinity between Yāska's and Mīmāṃsā's attitude towards the Veda. Kahrs, *Indian Semantic Analysis*, p. 273 and J. Bronkhorst, ‘Etymology and Magic: Yāska's *Nirukta*, Plato's *Cratylus*, and the Riddle of Semantic Etymologies’, *Nimn* 48 (2001), p. 159.

The word *kāṣṭhāḥ* is glossed with *apaḥ* ‘waters’. (Note the inverted order: **kāṣṭhā apaḥ* would seem more natural.) While *kāṣṭhāḥ* occurs in *Nighaṇṭu* 1.6.5 as one of the synonyms for direction (*diś*), it is also said to mean water (*āpo 'pi kāṣṭhā ucyante*) in *Nirukta* 1.15.

symbolically),⁷⁸ by means of a hymn dedicated to Vaiśvānara recited at the time of a *śāstra* dedicated to Agni and the Maruts. Further, [the Hotar] should not heed the *stotriya* (*tr̥ca*, a set of three verses recited at the beginning of the corresponding *śāstra*), for [this *stotriya*] is addressed to Agni. From there (i.e. the sky) [the sacrificer in his descent] comes to the mid-space deities, to Rudra and the Maruts.⁷⁹ From there (i.e. the mid-space) [the sacrificer comes to] Agni situated here (i.e. on earth). It is precisely at this point that the [Hotar] recites the *stotriya* [dedicated to Agni and the Maruts].⁸⁰

[§23.2.2 *Second argument*]

Furthermore, ‘[an oblation cooked on] twelve-potsherds is offered to Vaiśvānara. For this one [Vaiśvānara (=sun) performs] a twelve-fold action (i.e. actions done in the twelve months of the year).

[§23.2.3 *Third argument*]

Furthermore, there is this *brāhmaṇa* passage [which also shows that *vaiśvānara* refers to the sun]:

“Agni Vaiśvānara is clearly that sun over there.” (*Maitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā* II.2.1; II.3.11)

[§23.2.4 *Fourth argument*]

Furthermore, a *nivid* [formula] is addressed to Vaiśvānara as the sun (that is, the word *vaiśvānara* contained in it refers to the Sun, i.e. the latter enjoys primary praise through the name *vaiśvānara*):

“[Agni Vaiśvānara] who shines in the direction of sky, in the direction of the earth.” (*Śāṅkhāyana-Śrautasūtra* VIII.22.1).⁸¹

For this one (the sun) illuminates earth and sky. [Hence, *vaiśvānara* must refer to the sun]

[§23.2.5 *Fifth argument*]

Furthermore, a *chāndomika* hymn is addressed to Vaiśvānara as the sun (that is, the word *vaiśvānara* contained in it refers to the Sun, i.e. the latter enjoys primary praise through the name *vaiśvānara*):

⁷⁸ *tām anukṛtīm hotā . . . pratipadyate*. We take the *ta*-pronoun to have *pratyavaroḥa* ‘descent’ as its antecedent. It agrees in gender (*tām* < **tam* [=pratyavaroḥa]) with its object predicate *anukṛti* (f.).

⁷⁹ We take the subject of ‘comes to’ to be the patron of the sacrifice, in his symbolical descent from the sky to mid-space, and then from mid-space to earth. See J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration: The Rājāsīya Described according to the Yajus Texts and Annotated*, (Mouton, 1957), pp. 12–13. Alternatively, the subject may be the Hotar and ‘comes to’ means that the Hotar comes to sing verses addressed to mid-space deities, like Rudra and the Maruts (in the *Nighaṇṭu* 5, they are listed as mid-space deities), and then verses addressed to terrestrial Agni (and the Maruts). This second interpretation is followed by Pathak, *Nirukta of Yāskācārya*, p. 530 and Paramesvarānanda et al, *Yāskā’s Nirukta with Sanskrit and Hind Commentaries* (New Delhi, 2013), pp. 364–365.

⁸⁰ Ritualists argue that *vaiśvānara* refers to the sun, because a hymn dedicated to Vaiśvānara is recited by the Hotar in conjunction with the beginning stage of the sacrificer’s symbolical descent from the sky to the earth. Thus, that a hymn addressed to Vaiśvānara is employed in connection with the sky would confirm that *vaiśvānara* refers to the sun, the celestial fire.

Ritualists also reply to a possible objection (or simply further clarify their stance). The fact that the *stotriya* is addressed to Agni, i.e. the terrestrial fire (and the Maruts) does not contradict their view that the hymn is addressed to Vaiśvānara that is the sun, the celestial fire. For this *stotriya* is recited *after* the sacrificer has (symbolically) descended down to earth, and has come to the terrestrial fire. In other words, the *vaiśvānara*-hymn and the *agni-stotriya* have distinct domains of application.

⁸¹ For the *Śāṅkhāyana-Śrautasūtra*, we use the following edition. A. Hillebrandt, *The Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra Together with the Commentary of Varadattasuta Ānartīya*. 3 vols (Calcutta, 1888–97).

“Sought after, [the lofty Agni Vaiśvānara] shone forth in the sky.” (*Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā* XXXIII.92)⁸²

For this one [the sun], sought after, shone forth in the sky. [Hence, *vaiśvānara* must refer to the sun]

[§23.2.6 *Sixth argument*]

Furthermore, the *haviṣpāntīya* hymn (*R̥gveda* X 88) is addressed to Vaiśvānara as the sun (that is, the word *vaiśvānara* contained in it refers to the Sun, i.e. the latter enjoys primary praise through the name *vaiśvānara*).

[§23.3 *Śākapūṇi's view: vaiśvānara refers to the terrestrial fire*]

Śākapūṇi maintains that Vaiśvānara is none other than this [terrestrial] fire. [For] these two upper lights (i.e. lightning and sun) are [called] *viśvānara*. This [terrestrial fire] [is called] *vaiśvānara* (i.e. that which derives from *viśvānara*) because it is born from these two [upper lights].⁸³

But how is this [terrestrial fire] born from these two [upper lights]?

[§23.3.1 *Terrestrial fire is born from the atmospheric fire (=lightning)*]

When the lightning[-fire] strikes a receptacle, as long as it is not being appropriated [by people] it preserves the very characteristics of middle [fire=lightning]—i.e. it has water as its kindling [and] it becomes extinguished in [solid] bodies. As soon as it is being appropriated [by people] [the atmospheric fire=lightning] becomes this [terrestrial fire], it becomes extinguished in water and it flares up in [solid] bodies.⁸⁴

[§23.3.2 *Terrestrial fire is born from the celestial fire (=sun)*]

Next, [it is explained how the terrestrial fire is born] from the sun.

When the sun is high, having just reached [the pinnacle in his daily course],⁸⁵ one, after having polished a brass plate or a jewel, holds [it] upon a focal point where there is dried cow dung, without letting [the brass plate or the jewel] touch [the focal point]; then fire flares up. That [sun] becomes this very [terrestrial fire].

[§23.3.3 *vaiśvānara does not refer to the sun: first argument*]

Also, [a seer] says:

“Vaiśvānara is united with the sun.” (*R̥gveda* I.98.1d)⁸⁶

⁸²This passage also occurs in *Āśvalāyana-Śrautasūtra* VIII.10.3, in the context of the second *chandoma* day.

For the *Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā* and the *Āśvalāyana-Śrautasūtra*, we use the following editions respectively. W. L. S. Paṇṣīkar, *Suklayajurveda-Saṁhitā (Śrīmad-Vājasaneyi-Mādhyandina.) with the Mantra-Bhāṣya of Mahāmahopādhyāya Śrīmad-Uvātāchārya and the Veda-dīpa-Bhāṣya of Śrīman-Mahīdhara (with Appendices & Mantra-kośa)* [Bombay, 1912] and R. Vidyārtna, *The Śrauta Sūtra of Āśvalāyana, with the Commentary of Gārgya Nārāyaṇa* (Calcutta, 1874).

⁸³Śākapūṇi maintains that the name *vaiśvānara* refers to the terrestrial fire, for the word *vaiśvānara* is a derivative of the word *viśānara*, whose dual form *viśvānarau* refers to the atmospheric and celestial fires. *vaiśvānara* denotes the terrestrial fire as being born from these two upper fires.

⁸⁴The atmospheric (=lightning) and terrestrial fires exhibit opposite characteristics. The former burns in water and is extinguished in contact with objects; the latter does the opposite. People obtain (*upa-ā-√dā*) the terrestrial fire from lightning. This illustrates that the former fire (*vaiśvānara*) is born from the latter (*viśvānara*).

⁸⁵We take this to refer to the mid-day sun, which has just (*prathama-*) reached (*-samāvṛtta*) its highest (*udīci*) position in the sky.

⁸⁶*R̥gveda* I.98.1 is cited above in [§22].

It is not the case that one is united together with oneself. One is united together only with something else [therefore, Vaiśvānara does not refer to the sun]. Here (on earth) one establishes this [terrestrial fire]. There (in the sky) the rays of that [sun] over there appear. Here (on earth) there are his (terrestrial fire's) flames. Having seen the close connection between the two lusters, [the seer] would have uttered [*R̥gveda* I.98.1] thus.⁸⁷

[§23.3.4 *vaiśvānara* does not refer to the sun: second argument]

Now, [if it was the case that *vaiśvānara* referred to the sun], in the hymns addressed to [deities] situated in the highest place (sky), that is, in hymns addressed to Bhaga, Savitar, Pūṣan, or Viṣṇu, there would have been references to Vaiśvānara. And [the seers] would have praised Vaiśvānara by referring to the sun's actions such as 'you rise', 'you set down', and 'you revolve'. Actually, [however,] there are references to Vaiśvānara only in hymns addressed to Agni (terrestrial fire). [Indeed, a seer] praises Vaiśvānara by referring to Agni's activities such as: 'you carry', 'you cook', and 'you burn'. [Therefore, *vaiśvānara* refers to this terrestrial fire, not to the sun.]⁸⁸

[§24.1 *Yāska* counters the teachers' view: (§23.1) '*vaiśvānara* refers to the atmospheric fire (=lightning), for *Vaiśvānara* is praised in *R̥gveda* I.59.6 as rain-maker']

[§24.1.1 *Terrestrial fire too is described as rain-maker*]

As to this [view (§23.1) that *vaiśvānara* refers to lightning] 'for [a seer] praises it (*Vaiśvānara*) with the action of making rain [in *R̥gveda* I.59.6]', [we reply that] this is also true of this [terrestrial fire]:

"This same water goes up and down throughout the days. Rain clouds vivify the earth, and fires (*agnāyah*) vivify heaven." (*R̥gveda* I.164.51)

This [verse] has been explained [merely] through reciting it.⁸⁹

⁸⁷Close connection (*saṁsaiḡa*) appears to refer to the encounter between the flames emanating from the terrestrial fire and the rays of the sun. The former move upwards from the earth; the latter move downwards from the sky. The use of the conditional *avakṣyat* is a bit problematic. For the conditional usually expresses an *irrealis* (e.g. Had he been a millionaire, he would have bought a Porsche), which makes no sense here. It is possible that conditional *avakṣyat* is due to the influence of the two conditional forms (*abhaviṣyan*, *astoṣyan*) that occur immediately below.

⁸⁸*Yāska* argues that if *Vaiśvānara* referred to the sun, then (a) the name *vaiśvānara* should co-occur with the names of deities residing in the sky; (b) *Vaiśvānara* should be praised with actions relatable to the sun. Instead, (a¹) *vaiśvānara* occurs in hymns addressed to Agni, the terrestrial fire; (b²) *Vaiśvānara* is praised with reference to actions relatable to Agni. (a) and (b) refer to two (of the three) parameters employed by *Yāska* in [§8] to describe the three main deities, Agni, Indra, and Āditya: namely, their shares (*bhakti*), i.e. associations with particular items or deities, and their characteristic actions (*karman*), i.e. actions with which the deities are described in the formulas.

It is interesting to compare (a) and (b) in [§23.3.4] with the two same parameters given in [§8.3], where *Yāska* describes Āditya. While (a) is consistent with the shares in [§8.3] ('the group of gods transmitted [in the *Nighaṅṭu* 5.6 as residing] in the highest place [sky]'), (b) does not match well the corresponding actions (absorbing fluid and whatever is enigmatic/mysterious). This inconsistency may perhaps be explained by taking the actions given in [§8.3] as the main characteristic action, and those given in [§23.3.4] as secondary.

Finally, note that the order in which Bhaga, Savitar, Pūṣan, and Viṣṇu are mentioned in [§23.3.4] does not match the order in which they are listed in *Nighaṅṭu* 5.6: *śavitā* [5.6.7]; *bhagaḥ* [5.6.8]; *pūṣā* [5.6.10]; *viṣṇuḥ* [5.6.11]. This discrepancy may suggest that the *Nighaṅṭu* 5 to which *Yāska* referred differs slightly from the one we have now; cf. note 53.

⁸⁹Poured onto the ritual fire (=terrestrial Agni), oblations (=water) go up to the sky and return down to earth in the form of rain. Cf. Geldner's note "Wechselwirkung zwischen Himmel und Erde, zwischen Regen als Gabe des Himmels und dem Opfer als der Gabe der Menschen". K. F. Geldner, *Der R̥g-Veda: Aus dem Sanskrit ins deutsche Übersetzt und mit einem laufenden Kommentar versehen*, 3bde (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), p. 23.

[§24.1.2 *Celestial fire (=sun) too is described as rain-maker*]

[Nirukta 7.24] “[During (?) the black way (*niyāṇam*), graspers (=sun-rays), well-feathered, clothing themselves in water, fly up toward the sky. When they (graspers=sun-rays) return [to earth] from the abode of order (*ṛtāsya*) [=water], then the earth is moistened widely with ghee (*ghṛtēna*) [=water].” (*R̥gveda* I.164.47)⁹⁰

‘Black out-way’ (*nirayaṇa*), i.e. the night of the sun (= *dakṣiṇayāṇa* ‘the southern course’). ‘Graspers (*hari*), well-feathered’, i.e. the grasping (*haraṇa*) sun-rays [because they grasp the water, i.e. absorb and carry it from the earth to the sun; cf. [§8.3]]. When the rays of the sun return hitherward from there, that is, from the co-abode of the water, i.e. from the sun (the abode of the heavenly water seems to be equated with the sun), then the earth is moistened widely with ghee (*ghṛta*). ‘Ghee’ is a name for water (*Nighaṇṭu* 1.12.10). [*ghṛta* derives from the verb] *ghṛ* denoting the action of moistening.⁹¹

[§24.1.3 *Both the terrestrial and the celestrial fires are described as rain-makers*]

Furthermore, there is the following brāhmaṇa passage [which describes both (a) the terrestrial/ritual fire and the (b) celestrial fire (=sun) fires as rain-makers]:

[(a)] “Agni verily propels rain from here (i.e. the earth). After becoming a coverer of abodes in the sky (i.e. clouds), he produces rain. The Maruts lead the released rain. [(b)] When that sun returns to Agni with his sun-rays, he produces rain”.⁹²

[§24.2 *Yāska counters the ritualists' view (§23.2) that vaiśvānara refers to the celestrial fire(=sun)*][§24.2.1 (*vs* §23.2.1)]

As to the [argument that *vaiśvānara* refers to the sun because] ‘the descent from (or after) that ascent is desired to be done’, [we reply that] this is [only based on] a traditional (*āmnāya*) statement.⁹³

[§24.2.2 (*vs* §23.2.2)]

As to the [argument that *vaiśvānara* refers to the sun because] ‘[an oblation cooked on] twelve-potsherds is offered to Vaiśvānara’, [we reply that] the [number of] potsherds is a non-explanation (*anirvacana*) [that Vaiśvānara, which is the recipient of the oblation, should be identified with the sun]. For [an oblation cooked on] one-potsherd and five-potsherds are offered to the sun.⁹⁴

⁹⁰Both *ṛta* [*Nighaṇṭu* 1.12.72] and *ghṛta* [*Nighaṇṭu* 1.12.10] are listed as one of the synonyms for ‘water’.

⁹¹Our interpretation of Yāska’s commentary on *R̥gveda* I.164.47 is indebted to Pathak, *Nirukta of Yāskācārya*, p. 538. The verse seems to refer to the two courses of the sun: the ‘northern course’ (*uttarāyāṇa*), from 23 December till 22 June, and the ‘southern course’ (*dakṣiṇayāṇa*), from 22 June till 23 December. The latter is referred to as ‘black way’ (*kṛṣṇām niyāṇam*) in *R̥gveda* I.164.47. Yāska glosses *niyāṇa* with *nirayaṇa* ‘out-way’, and calls it ‘the night of the sun’, possibly because nights are longer than days during the ‘southern course’. During the southern course, the sun-rays absorb water and carry it to heaven, where water is thought to be stored in the sun. During the northern course, the water stored-up therein returns to earth in the form of rain.

⁹²Cf. *Kāthaka-Saṃhitā* XI.10, *Taittirīya-Saṃhitā* II.4.10.2, and *Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā* II.4.8. For the *Kāthaka-Saṃhitā* and the *Taittirīya-Saṃhitā*, we use the following editions. L. von Schroeder, *Kāthakam: Die Saṃhitā der Kāthaka-Ākhā*, 3 bde (Leipzig, 1900–10) and A. Weber, *Die Taittirīya-Saṃhitā*, 2 Bde (Leipzig, 1871–2).

⁹³This picks up on *āmnātaḥ* (‘... has been traditionally considered ...’) in [§23.2.1], i.e. that statement is based on human tradition, it does not have the same degree of authority as evidence found in *śruti*.

⁹⁴Cf. *Taittirīya-Saṃhitā* II.4.10.2: *sauryām ékakapālam*. The ritualists identify Vaiśvānara with the sun, since an oblation cooked on twelve-potsherds is offered to Vaiśvānara, and the number twelve (=twelve months) is associated with the sun. Yāska counters that there is not a necessary association between the number twelve and the sun,

[§24.2.3 (*vs* §23.2.3)]

As to the [argument that a *brāhmaṇa* shows that *vaiśvānara* refers to the sun], [we reply that] *brāhmaṇa* passages express many shares [of Vaiśvānara] (i.e. *brāhmaṇa* passages identify Vaiśvānara with several other items, e.g.):

“Vaiśvānara is the earth.”

“Vaiśvānara is the year.”

“Vaiśvānara is the Brahmin.”⁹⁵

[§24.2.4 (*vs* §23.2.4)]

As to the [argument that *vaiśvānara* refers to the sun because] ‘a *nivid* formula is addressed to Vaiśvānara as the sun, [we reply that] that [same] *nivid* formula is [addressed] to this [terrestrial fire] only:

“[Agni Vaiśvānara] who shone for the human clans.”

For it is this [terrestrial fire that] shines for the human clans.⁹⁶

[§24.2.5 (*vs* §23.2.5)]

As to the [argument that *vaiśvānara* refers to the sun because] ‘the *chāndomika* hymn is addressed to Vaiśvānara as the sun’, [we reply that] that [same] *chāndomika* hymn is [addressed] to this [terrestrial fire] only:

“[You (terrestrial fire)], having been offered the oblations by the Jamadagni family, . . .” (*Āśvalāyana-Śrautasūtra* VIII.9.7)⁹⁷

Jamadagnis, i.e. ‘those whose fire moves forward’ (*prajamitāgni*) or ‘those whose fire burns up’ (*prajvalitāgni*). [The terrestrial fire] was offered an oblation by them.

because oblations cooked on one-potsherds and on five-potsherds are also offered to the sun. Hence, it cannot be concluded that Vaiśvānara is the sun from the fact that it is the recipient of an oblation cooked on twelve-potsherds. Note the word ‘non-explanation’ *anirvacana* (< *nir/vac*). This word is reminiscent of a specific Vedic usage of derivatives of *nir/vac*: a formula is *niruketa* if it contains the name of a deity or one of its recognisable epithets or symbols; if these are missing, the formula is *aniruketa*; see Renou and Silburn, ‘*Niruketa* and *Aniruketa* in Vedic’ and Visigalli, ‘The Vedic Background of Yaska’s *Niruketa*’, pp. 112–114.

⁹⁵See, for example, *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* XIII.3.8.3: *iyaṃ vai vaiśvānarāḥ*; *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* VI.6.1.5: *samvatsarō vaiśvānarāḥ*; *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa* III.7.3.2: *agnir vaiśvānarāḥ | yād brāhmaṇāḥ |*

For the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* and the *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa*, we use the following editions. A. Weber, *The Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa in the Mādhyandina-Çākhā with Extracts from the Commentaries of Śāyana, Harisvāmin and Diviveda-gaṅga*, The White Yajurveda, part II (Berlin and London, 1855), reprint (Leipzig, 1924) and *Kṛṣṇayajurvedīyaṃ taittirīyabrāhmaṇam sṛimatsāyanaçāryaviracitabhāṣyasametam*, 3 vols (Poona, 1898).

⁹⁶One part of the *nivid* formula (“[Agni Vaiśvānara] shines in the direction of heaven, in the direction of the earth”) was cited as an argument for the view that Vaiśvānara is the sun. Now, Yaska cites another part of this same formula, which shows that Vaiśvānara is the terrestrial fire. We give the *nivid* formula in full, followed by Caland’s translation. *Sāṅkhya-Śrautasūtra* VIII.22.1 (I.94.11–16): *agnir vaiśvānarāḥ somasya matsat | viśveṣāṃ devānām samit | ajasraṃ daivyaṃ jyotiḥ | yo vidbhyo mānuṣibhyo dīdet | dyuṣu pūrvāsu didyutānaḥ | ajara uṣasām antike | ā yo dyām bhīty ā prthivīm | orvantarikṣam | jyotiṣā yajñīyāya śarma yaṃsat | agnir vaiśvānara iha śravat iha somasya matsat | premāṃ deva iti samānam |* (Caland [1953, p. 224]: “‘May Agni Vaiśvānara enjoy the Soma—the fuel stick of all the Gods—the imperishable divine light—who hath shone for the clans of men—who hath shone on the days of old—imperishable on the foremost rank of the dawns—who illumines the sky and the earth—and the wide intermediate region—by his light may he bestow protection on him who is worthy of sacrifice—May Agni Vaiśvānara hearken here, may he enjoy the Soma. May he favour this God-invocation’ etc. as above.”) W. Caland, *Sāṅkhya-Śrautasūtra: Being a Major Yājñika Text of the R̥gveda, Edited with an Introduction by Lokesh Chandra* (Nagpur, 1953), reprint (Delhi, 1980).

⁹⁷The context in which this passage occurs is the first *chandoma* day.

[§24.2.6 (vs §23.2.6)]

As to the [argument that *vaiśvānara* refers to the sun because] ‘the *haviṣpāntīya* hymn (*R̥gveda* X.88) is addressed to Vaiśvānara as the sun’, [we reply that] that [the same] *haviṣpāntīya* hymn is [addressed] to this [terrestrial fire] only:

“The oblation, drinkable, unaging, has been offered to (*āhutam*) to Agni as delightful, who finds the sun (*suvarvīdī*) and touches the sky. In order to sustain, produce and support this oblation, whom (*kām*) did the gods spread out with food?” (*R̥gveda* X.88.1)

The oblation which is drinkable, unaging, has been poured into (*abhihuta*) Agni as delightful, the one who finds the sun (*sūrya*) (*sva* [*Nighaṇṭu* 1.4.1] is glossed as *sva ādityo bhavati* [*Nirukta* 2.14]) and touches the sky. In order to sustain, produce, and support that oblation—for all these actions, the gods spread out (*apaprathanta*) this terrestrial Agni with food.⁹⁸

[§25 *Terrestrial fire derives from both the atmospheric (=lightning) and celestial (=sun) fire*]

Furthermore, [another verse] says:⁹⁹

[*Nirukta* 7.26] “In the seat of the waters, the powerful ones (i.e. the mid-space group of deities) grasped [the atmospheric fire], [like] the clans reverently approached their praiseworthy king [so did the mid-space deities reverently approach the atmospheric Agni]. The messenger [of the deities], Mātariśvan, carried hither (*ā . . . abharad*) Agni Vaiśvānara from the stimulator/far-flung (*parāvataḥ*) Shining one (the sun).” (*R̥gveda* VI.8.4)

‘In the seat of the waters’, i.e. in the abode, (*mahiṣā*, i.e.) those that reside (*āsīnāḥ*) in the great (*mahati*), i.e. in the mid-space world, or the powerful ones (*mahānta*)¹⁰⁰—the mid-space group of gods grasped (*agr̥hṇata*) [the atmospheric fire]. Like the clans reverently approached their king [so did the mid-space deities reverently approach the atmospheric fire]. ‘Praiseworthy’ (*ṅmīya*) means ‘provided with *R̥g*-verses (*ṅmat*)’, or worthy to be praised (*arcanīya*). Which (i.e. Agni Vaiśvānara) the messenger of the gods brought hither (*āharad*)¹⁰¹ from the Shining one, i.e. the sun. ‘Shining one’ (*vivasvat*) means ‘the one provided with radiancy’ (*vivāsanavat*). The [verse] describes Mātariśvan, the bringer (*āhartāram*) of this Vaiśvānara Agni from the [sun that is the] stimulator ([*parāvataḥ*=] *preritavataḥ*), or the far-flung ([*parāvataḥ*=] *parāgatād*) one. Mātariśvan is Vāyu: inside his mother (*mātari*), i.e. the mid-space, he breaths (*svasīti*); or inside his mother (*mātari*) he draws rapid breaths (*āsu anīti*).

⁹⁸While *kām* seems to correspond to ‘this terrestrial fire’ in Yāska’s commentary, it is unclear how Yāska understood it. Yāska may have taken *kām* as: (i) an interrogative pronoun (our transl. of *R̥gvedic* verse); (ii) a verse-filling particle (*pādapūrāṇa*; so the *Niruktabhāṣyafikā*); (iii) as a qualifier of Agni. *ka* is listed in *Nighaṇṭu* 5.4.14, the section of the names of mid-space deities.

⁹⁹Yāska cites the verse as further evidence that Vaiśvānara does not denote the sun but refers to the terrestrial fire. Yāska seems to interpret the verse as describing the origin of the terrestrial Agni Vaiśvānara. Its source is the celestial abode of the waters that is in the sky. This abode is identified with the sun, the Shining one (*vivasvān*). The mid-space deities grasp the atmospheric fire from its source, and the wind, the atmospheric carrier par excellence, brings it down to earth. Considering §9.3.4.3, where ‘*vaiśvānara*’ is said to derive from the ‘*vīśvānara*’ which denotes the atmospheric and the celestial fires, it is here conceivable that Yāska intimates that ‘*vaiśvānara*’ derives from ‘*vivasvān*’.

¹⁰⁰Yāska analyses *mahiṣā* in two ways, as formed by locative *mahati* ‘the great’ (=mid-space) and *āsīnāḥ* ‘residing/dwelling’; or as a participle plural ‘those who are powerful’ based on *√mah*.

¹⁰¹Sarup’s edition reads *aharad* (Sarup, *The Nighaṇṭu and the Nirukta*, p. 146), but Yāska’s gloss below—‘bringer’ (*āhartāram*)—suggests solving the sandhi *vāharad* as *vā-āharad*.

[§26 *Agni, the terrestrial/ritual fire pervades all the three worlds, i.e. lightning and the sun are its forms*]

[§26.1 *The sun-form of Agni is praised as Agni in Ṛgveda X.88.6 and 10*]

Now, with the following two Ṛg-verses (Ṛgveda X.88.6,10), [a seer] praises this (*enam*, the sun-form of Agni) as moving across (*abhyāpādaṃ*) all the [three] worlds:

[*Nirukta* 7.27] “During the night, Agni becomes the head of [all] beings (*bhuvó*); therefrom [this very Agni (=terrestrial/ritual fire)] is born as the rising sun in the early morning. Yet (*ū tu*),¹⁰² [people regard] this as the wisdom of those worthy of sacrifice—the work which [Agni] foreknowing [performs] speedily.” (Ṛgveda X.88.6)

Head (*mūrdhan*), i.e. that which is placed ($\sqrt{dhā}$) on this, i.e. on the solid [body] (*mūrta*) (*mūrdhan* < *mūrta*- $\sqrt{dhā}$). Agni, which during the night becomes the head of all beings (*bhūta*), therefrom, this very [Agni=terrestrial/ritual fire] is born as the rising sun in the early morning. But (*tu*) [people] regard this as the wisdom (*prajñā* [= *māyā*]) of those worthy of sacrifice, i.e. of the gods that partake of the sacrifice. [This is] the work (*apas*), i.e. the action (*karman*) which (Agni) foreknowing [the way] performs (*carati*)—that is, he moves across (*anucarati* [= *carati*]) the [three] worlds, rushing (*tvaramāṇa* [= *tūrṇi* in Ṛgveda X.88.6d]).¹⁰³

The following [Ṛg-verse] [serves] to further explain this [point, i.e. the sun-form of Agni moves across the three worlds].¹⁰⁴

[*Nirukta* 7.28] “For with a song of praise, in the sky, the divinities (*devāso*) begot (*ājījanañ*) Agni, the filler of world-halves through his powers—that one they wrought (*akṛṇvan*) threefold for the sake of the universe (*bhuvé*). He ripens the plants of all forms.” (Ṛgveda X.88.10)

For with a song of praise, in the sky, the gods (*devā*) generated (*ajanyayan*) Agni, the filler of the sky and earth through [his] actions—that one they made (*akurvan*) threefold for the sake of the world (*bhavāya*). [This means] according to Śākapaṇi: on earth, in the mid-space, and in the sky.

A *brāhmaṇa* passage says: “The sun over there is the third [form] of this [terrestrial fire] in the sky”. Thus, [the seer who saw Ṛgveda X.88] praises [the sun-form of Agni], making [it] into Agni [in Ṛgveda X.88.6,10] (*tad agnīkṛtya stauti*).

[§26.2 *The sun-form of Agni is praised as Sun in Ṛgveda X.88.11*]

Now [the same seer] praises this [sun-form of Agni], making [it] into the Sun in the following [verse, i.e. Ṛgveda X.88.11] (*athainam etayādityīkṛtya stauti*).

[*Nirukta* 7.29] “When the worthy of sacrifice, the gods set it in the sky as the Sun (*sūryam*), the son of Aditi (*āditeyaṃ*); when the wandering pair appeared, only after that did all living beings see in front of [them].” (Ṛgveda X.88.11)¹⁰⁵

¹⁰²The particles *ū tu* are glossed with *tu* in Yaska’s commentary. If they retain an adversative sense, this sense seems weak.

¹⁰³By night, Agni resides on earth in the form of actual fire. At dawn, the same Agni is born as the rising sun. The knowledge that one and the same Agni is the terrestrial fire at night and the sun by day is seen as the esoteric knowledge of the gods. Agni performs the action of rising from the earth and reaching the sky as the sun, moving across the atmosphere, thereby traversing the three worlds. The word *tataḥ* can have a temporal (after, i.e. once the night is over) or spatial (from there, i.e. from the earth) sense. The genitive *yājñīyānām* ‘worthy of sacrifice’ can be either subjective (the wisdom (*prajñā* [= *māyā*]) possessed by the gods) or objective (the wisdom about the gods).

¹⁰⁴Durga (*Rjvarthā* [717.18–22]) says that Ṛgveda X.88.6 describes only two worlds (*sthāna*); whereas Ṛgveda X.88.10 mentions all the three worlds.

¹⁰⁵The last *pāda* (“only . . . [them]”) is not commented by Yaska; cf. Ṛgveda X.88.10d in *Nirukta* 7.28. The translation of this *pāda* is from Jamison and Brereton, *The Rigveda*, p. 1534.

When all the worthy of sacrifice, the gods, set him in the sky as the Sun (*āditya*), the son of Aditi; when the wandering pair appeared into existence, always wandering together—the Dawn and the Sun (*āditya*). Where is ‘pair’ (*mithunau*) from? [i] ‘*mi-*’ expressing the action of leaning onto; ‘*thu-*’ is a noun-maker, or ‘*tha-*’ [is a noun-maker]; ‘*ni-*’ (‘to lead’) as last, or ‘*van-*’ (‘to seek for’ [?]). Leaning/relying together they lead each other, or seek for each other. Also, ‘human pair’ come from the same (analysis as above). [ii] Or else, making a pair (*methantau*), they they seek for each other.¹⁰⁶

[§26.3 *The sun-form of Agni, again, is praised as Agni in Ṛgveda X.88.17 and 19*]

Now [the same seer] praises this [sun-form of Agni], making [it again] into Agni in the following [verse, i.e. *Ṛgveda X.88.17*] (*athainam etayāgnīkṛtya stauti*):

[*Nirukta* 7.30] “Where the lower and the higher discuss ‘which of us two leaders of sacrifice knows better?’. The friends attended to the debate [between the lower and the higher], they attained the sacrifice [asking] ‘who of us shall proclaim (*vi vocat*) this?’.” (*Ṛgveda X.88.17*)

Where the two divine Hotar priests debate, this Agni here (=terrestrial) and the middle one over there (=atmospheric), ‘which of us two knows more about the sacrifice?’. Thus, then (*tat*?)¹⁰⁷ the same-minded (*samānākhyāna* [= *sakhāya*]),¹⁰⁸ i.e. the priests, attended (*āsaknuvanti* [= *ā sekulḥ*]) the communal intoxication [a debate (?)] (*sahamadana* [= *sadhamāda*] between the two fires) [asking] ‘which of us who have attained the sacrifice will proclaim (*vivakṣyati* [= *vi vocat*]) this [i.e. which one of the two fires is superior]?’.¹⁰⁹

The following (*Ṛg*-verse, i.e. *Ṛgveda X.88.19*) serves to further explain this [point, i.e. the sun-form of Agni is praised as Agni]:

¹⁰⁶Yāska seems to give two analyses of the word *mithuna*: [i] when *mithuna* refers to a godly pair; [ii] when it refers to a human pair. [i] The word is analysed as comprising three parts: (1) *mi-* in the sense of leaning/relying on (*śrī-*); (2) a nominal affix *-thu-* or *-tha-*; (3) the final part of the word ‘*-na*’ is linked with *nayati* (*nā-*) (‘lead’) or with *van-* (‘seek for’ [?]). Note two points. With respect to (2), Yāska may give *-thu-* first because it phonetically matches (*mi-thu(-nau)*); then he gives *-tha-* because it is a more common affix; is Yāska perhaps suggesting that the odd *-thu-* derives from the standard *-tha-*? With respect to (3), Yāska’s analysis of *van* can be explained in two ways. First, *van* becomes (*mi-th-*)*un* (<*van*)-*a*, because of *sampṛasarāṇa*. Second, Yāska’s analysis presupposes the dual form *mithunau*: (*mithu*)-*nau* < *na(-yati)*; (*mithu*)-*nau* < *van-*. In this case, the two items (*nau* < *van-*) consist of the same sounds, yet the order is reversed. [ii] *mithuna* < *meth-* + *van*. It is noteworthy that Yāska differentiates between *mithuna* as referring to gods and to humans. On *etasmād eva* in the *Nirukta*, cf. Kahrs, *Indian Semantic Analysis*, p. 131.

¹⁰⁷Tentatively, we think that Yāska takes *tat* as a gloss of *it* (*Ṛgveda X.88.17c*), as a pronoun that correlates with *yatrā*.

¹⁰⁸Yāska’s analysis of *sakhāyah* ‘companions’ as *samāna* ‘same, identical’ plus *ākhyāna* ‘thought/knowledge’ is reminiscent of analogous analyses, *samāna* plus *khyāti/khyāna* ‘knowledge, insight’. Compare the following analyses of *sakhāyah* in *Ṛgveda X.71.2*. This verse is cited in *Nirukta* 4.10 and in *Mahābhāṣya* (I.4.10–11). While neither Yāska nor Patañjali say much about *sakhāyah*, the analyses given in their respective commentaries are reminiscent of the analysis in *Nirukta* 7.30. For the *Mahābhāṣya*, we use the following edition. K. V. Abhyankar, *The Vyākaraṇa-mahābhāṣya of Patañjali*: Edited by F. Kielhorn, 3 vols (Bombay, 1880–5), Third edition, revised and furnished with additional readings, references and select critical notes by K. V. Abhyankar, 3 vols (Poona, 1962–72).

Ṛjivarthā (I.372.11–12): *sakhāyah*—*samānākhyānāḥ* / *samānākhyānānām eva samāneṣu śāstreṣu kṛtāstamānām tad yathā vaiyākaraṇānām vaiyākaraṇā eva nairuktānām nairuktā eva | sakhyaṇi sakhībhavān sanjānate [. . .] |* (“they know the friendship [i.e.] the state of being a friend only of those who possess the same knowledge [i.e.] those who have accomplished an effort with respect to the same *śāstras*—as for example only the grammarians [know the friendship] of [other] grammarians, only the *nairuktas* [know the friendship] of other *nairuktas*.”)

¹⁰⁹In Yāska’s interpretation, this difficult verse seems to express a parallelism. The debate between the two divine Hotars, the terrestrial and celestial fires, has its counterpart in a debate among human priests.

“Just (*nā*) when the Dawn’s visage [appears], the fast-rushing (nights) clothe themselves, O Mātariśvan, [with the rosy light of dawn]. Then, the Brahmin sets up [the *agnihotra* ritual fire], approaching the sacrifice, sitting down next to the Hotar [=ritual/terrestrial fire].” (*R̥gveda* X.88.19)

When there is the Dawn’s decoration [*pratyakta* (= *pratīka*), i.e. her looks. [The particle *na*] of comparison is used in the sense of ‘just now’. Like [in the utterance] ‘place [it] here just now (*iva*)’ [where the particle of comparison *iva* is taken to mean ‘just now/ at once’.]¹¹⁰ ‘The well-feathered ones’ (*suparṇyaḥ*), i.e. the fast [well]-rushing ones (*supatanāḥ*); [that is,] these nights clothe themselves, o Mātariśvan, with the light of colour (i.e. with the rosy light of dawn). Then, coming to the sacrifice (i.e. having reached the place where the *agnihotra* ritual fire is to be kindled), the Brahmin, i.e. the Hotar priest, sets up [the ritual fire], sitting down next to the Hotar, i.e. this [terrestrial] fire.

[§27 One last competing view]

On the other hand, the Hotar’s muttered recitation [contains the word] *vaiśvānara* [which does] not [refer] to Agni:

“O God Savitar, they choose this Agni as you, for the sake of oblation, together with [your] father Vaiśvānara.” (*Āśvalāyana-Śrautasūtra* 1.3.23)

[The citation] speaks of this very terrestrial fire as Savitar, the propeller of everything; [it speaks of its] father as the middle [atmospheric fire=lightning] or as the highest (i.e. celestial fire=sun).

[§28 *Yāska’s final view*]

Yet, Agni Vaiśvānara who enjoys the hymn and to which the oblation is offered is only this [terrestrial fire]. These two upper lights (i.e. the atmospheric [=lightning] and the celestial [=sun] fires) enjoy only incidental mention through this name (*vaiśvānara*).

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¹¹⁰The particle *iva* is commonly used to express comparison. In citing a sentence example, Yāska says that *iva* also means ‘just now’. He ascribes this same sense (‘just now’) also to *na*, which is often used in Vedic as a particle of comparison.