

The Heimdall-Dyu Comparison Revisited

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In the *Rígsþula* the Norse god Heimdall travels among men under the name Rígr. Already in the 1950s Dumézil proposed a rapprochement between Heimdall and Dyu (from *Dyeus) who, according to the *Mahābhārata*, is incarnated in the hero Bhīṣma. With the aid of the pentadic theory of IE ideology and of the hypothesis of an IE protonarrative, Dumézil's comparison can be confirmed and elaborated, casting new light on both texts.

Of the IE deities whose name can be reconstructed the best known is *Dyeus, 'Heaven', whose reflexes include Vedic Dyu or Dyaus, Greek Zeus and Roman Jupiter (= Ju-father). It is often thought that, apart from his role as father, little can be said about any mythology Dyu may once have possessed; certainly the Vedas offer little help. However, in the 1950s the situation changed. Dumézil examined the incarnation of Dyu in the hero Bhīṣma, a major figure in the *Mahābhārata*, and having previously studied the Norse god Heimdall, proposed a Heimdall-Bhīṣma rapprochement (Dumézil 2000: 151-188; or, briefly, 1968: 182-190). The similarities arose, he thought, because the *Mahābhārata* originated in India when myths of IE origin were 'transposed' into stories about epic heroes; and one such IE myth had as protagonist a figure ancestral to both Heimdall and Vedic Dyu. Among his major sources for Heimdall was the Eddic poem the *Rígsþula* ('Rígr's List'), on which I shall be concentrating. In interpreting this he naturally drew on his trifunctional theory.

For some years I have favored replacing the transposition theory with the theory of an early IE *Mahābhārata*-like protonarrative, and also of subsuming the three functions (F1,2,3) within a larger pentadic theory. The five elements of this theory have the classical functions at their core (the definition of F1 being retouched), but the core is bracketed by two halves of an 'Otherness' function (F4); the half at the top

of the hierarchy is valued, that at the bottom is devalued.¹ A certain amount of IE material has already been analysed or reanalysed in terms of the pentadic schema, and I try here both to add to this and to support the protonarrative theory.

For the *Rígsþula*, a poem of great thematic richness, I mainly use Ursula Dronke's parallel-text edition plus commentary (1997: 161-238), but also Klaus von See (2000: 477-665). After a two-sentence prose introduction the poem proper (seven pages in Larrington's 1996 translation) consists mostly of three parallel episodes, but then, for the last 6 of its 49 stanzas, it as it were 'changes key'.² The introduction says that the poem is about Heimdall, who during this episode calls himself Rígr ('King', a Celtic loanword). Rígr visits in succession three childless couples, receives the hospitality they offer, and spends three nights lying between the spouses in their marital bed. Nine months later each couple produces a son who shares some of his human parents' attributes. The sons (Thrall, Karl and Jarl) are eponyms of the three social classes – slaves or servants, free peasants ('churls'), warrior nobility ('earls') – and, having married an appropriate wife, they beget children who have appropriate names and activities. However, in the last six stanzas attention shifts to the youngest son of Jarl, who is contrasted with his older brothers. Although he is called Konr Ungr, meaning 'Young Kin/Scion', his name is a pun for *konungr* 'king', so we have shifted from the social classes, with their plural membership, to a new social position, that of monarch. It is this shift that I label 'the change of key'. When the poem ends or (more likely) breaks off, Konr Ungr is being encouraged by a crow to attack Danr and Danpr of Denmark and apparently to marry there and start a royal line.

Most of the *Mahābhārata* data that we need comes from book 1 (between 1.57 and 1.115, Crit. Ed.) and can be summarized in the simplified genealogy of Fig. 1. In the bottom row the five Pāṇḍava brothers, the central heroes of the poem,

¹The difference between the two schemas can be summarized thus:

<i>Trifunctional theory</i>	<i>Pentadic theory</i>
	F4+ valued otherness, transcendence
F1 magico-religious sovereignty	F1 knowledge, esp. of the sacred and of law
F2 physical force and war	F2 (unchanged)
F3 fecundity, fertility, wealth...	F3 (unchanged)
	F4- devalued otherness, exclusion

²Dronke bisects st. 33; most texts give 48 stanzas.

are begotten by various gods, but the diagram indicates only the three gods who impregnate Kuntī and beget the three older brothers, Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma and Arjuna.

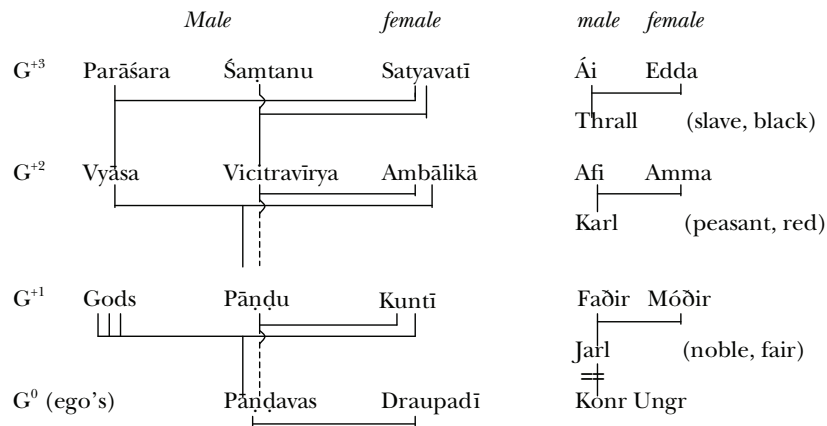


Figure 1. Comparison between selected genealogical data drawn from the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rígsþula*. G stands for generation. For simplicity, the *Mahābhārata* diagram omits Bhīṣma, son of Śaṃtanu by his earlier union with Gaṅgā, the Ganges, and lumps together the three Pāṇḍavas born from Kuntī. Broken lines show socially recognized filiation (Pāṇḍu counts as the son of Vicitravīrya), as distinct from biological filiation (Pāṇḍu was begotten by Vyāsa). The *Rígsþula* diagram omits each couple's daughter-in-law and grandchildren, apart from Konr Ungr. ≡ indicates 'change of key'.

The aim of the paper is to compare the Norse poem and the Indian genealogy, bearing in mind Dumézil's Heimdall-Bhīṣma rapprochement. I cannot attempt a full summary of Dumézil's argument, but it is based on the following: the chronological framework (both as regards cosmic time and generational time);³ the fact that despite their closeness to kingship neither figure is actually king; their 'mission', that is, the steps they take to ensure either a continuous sequence of kings or the emergence of the first king; their role in the education of kings; their lack of socially recognised wives or children; and their birth stories, which involve eight plus one

³Both figures are killed at the end of a more or less eschatological battle and, one can add, by figures who are in some sense female: Loki adopts female disguises, Śikhaṇḍin was born female.

beings linked with water. Moreover, both of the gods take on human form: Heimdall claims to be Rígr, while Dyu incarnates as Bhīṣma.

1. Three plus one generations

In the Sanskrit, as is discussed in Allen (2007b), Bhīṣma, who himself does not marry, organises the marriages of his relatives over three generations. In G^{+3} he makes possible the second marriage of his father Śaṃtanu; in G^{+2} that of his half-brother Vicitravīrya, and in G^{+1} that of his nephew Pāṇḍu; but his matchmaking ceases with the third generation. The Pāṇḍavas in G^0 have many dealings with Bhīṣma, but they acquire their joint wife Draupadī without his help.

In the Norse the three couples are not genealogically linked with each other, but they are named as if by generation. Ái and Edda mean Great-grandfather and Great-grandmother, Afi and Amma are Grandparents, and Faðir and Móðir are (transparently) Parents. The three-generation pattern ends with the ‘change of key’ after which, we shall argue, Konr Ungr represents a fourth element in the pattern.

2. Plural fatherhood

In the Norse Thrall, Karl and Jarl are in identical situations. Each has an ordinary human father – a married householder, but in addition each somehow owes his birth to the visit of Rígr. The nature of this debt is not clear since the text leaves it open whether Rígr impregnates his hostess (as most scholars have assumed, including Dumézil) or whether he promotes conception in some other way. Rígr does claim Jarl as his son (st. 37), but he is not necessarily claiming biological fatherhood (any more than a Christian thinks biologically when addressing a prayer to Our Father). Leaving this matter on one side, let us just say, vaguely, that we have three cases of dual fatherhood.

In the Sanskrit we have both dual and triple fatherhood. In G^{+1} we can contrast the gods, who are biological fathers or (in anthropological terms) genitors, with Pāṇḍu, who is the social father or pater; and in G^{+2} we have as genitor Vyāsa (human but supernaturally gifted), and as pater Vicitravīrya (now deceased). In these generations, we can speak straightforwardly of dual fatherhood. However, in G^{+3} , although the two fathers can be contrasted in various ways (e.g., in terms of the duration of their liaison with Satyavatī), they have

different sons, and one cannot talk of dual fatherhood in the same sense. Similarly, in G^0 , the Pāṇḍavas' polyandrous marriage produces five sons, one for each husband. One can merely note, in both stories, a tendency for more than one male to be involved in fertile marriages.

But there is more to it. Both Śaṃtanu in his second marriage and the two fathers after him in G^{+2} and G^{+1} only have sons of any sort because Bhīṣma has brought them together with their wives. Though he is never a genitor, over three successive generations Bhīṣma ensures the legitimate continuity of the lineage, and in that sense promotes paternity. So if the protonarrative was like the Sanskrit, then (however it may have appeared to mediaeval Norse poets) a proto-Rígr promoted conception without himself impregnating. The literature (e.g., Dronke 1997: 193) already suggests a possible interpretation. There existed an Indo-European custom whereby, during the first three nights of a marriage, the couple were not permitted sexual intercourse. The prohibition was sometimes symbolised by an object placed in the bed between the couple – a sword in various European narratives, a decorated staff in a Sanskrit ritual text. Presumably the custom was intended to promote unions that would ultimately be fertile, and one can imagine that Rígr's intervention was effective in the same way as the sword or staff.⁴

3. Location of ego in G^0

The numbering of generations implies a starting point or ego, and in the Sanskrit this position is obviously filled by the Pāṇḍavas, who are the central heroes of the whole epic – Śaṃtanu, Vicitravīrya and Pāṇḍu have all died before the main action begins.

The Norse is more complicated, since the story uses the concept of generation in at least two separate ways, which seem to fuse towards the end. Within each class three generations are represented in the ordinary way by the original couple, their son and daughter-in-law and their grandchildren; and the structure recurs three times. But these three triads are subsumed within the superordinate structure implied by the

⁴As West points out (2007: 437), swords were not yet current among early IE-speakers, so the staff variant is no doubt the older. For the staff (*daṇḍa*) see Āpastamba's Gr̥hyasūtra 3.8.9. Presumably the fatherhood of *Dyeus ph₂tér lies somewhere in the background of the story.

nomenclature of the original couples, and this three-generation sequence (great-grandparents, grandparents, parents) implies a fourth generation occupied by ego. At the level of the subordinate triads Konr Ungr is exactly analogous to the children of Thrall and Karl, and one cannot speak of an ego. But in the superordinate perspective, situated as he is after the 'change of key', Konr Ungr becomes a candidate for the role of ego. Rather than three times three, the overarching structure has the form three plus one.

4. Location of Protagonist in G^{+2}

In the Sanskrit, Bhīṣma is often referred to as 'Grandfather' (*pitāmaha*) by the main heroes of the epic. In other words, not only does the genealogy locate him in G^{+2} , but this location is emphasized by the kinship term applied to him.

The Norse is again more complicated. After leaving their homes, Rígr has nothing further to do with Thrall or Karl. However, when Jarl is old enough, Rígr returns, teaches him runes, gives him the name Rígr, and recognises him as his son. This recognition has no equivalent in the earlier generations, and implies that Rígr situates himself in the generation immediately before Jarl's, namely G^{+2} relative to Konr Ungr. By itself the argument from silence is not particularly strong, but it can be reinforced by noting yet another set of three generations. The name or title Rígr is used by three individuals: the god Rígr gives it to his 'son' Jarl, and it is then won by Jarl's youngest son Konr Ungr (st. 46). To put it the other way round, the first human king succeeds to a title introduced by the god who is in some sense his grandfather. Arguments 3 and 4 are thus interlinked.

5. G^{+3} as a starting point

The Norse story clearly starts in G^{+3} with Ái and Edda. At first this sight contrasts with the Sanskrit where Śaṃtanu's line extends backwards more than thirty generations, to start with gods. However, there are several senses in which Śaṃtanu constitutes a beginning. Śaṃtanu is 'the first figure who really belongs in the action of the poem' (Dumézil 1971: 238). Vaiśampāyana, the main narrator of the epic, puts the same point in another way when he announces that he will be celebrating the virtuous Śaṃtanu, 'whose glorious history is called the *Mahābhārata*' (1.93.45-6). Śaṃtanu is the first member of his line to be an incarnation of someone else – he

incarnates a human king called Mahābhiṣa who rose to heaven but offended Brahmā and was punished by return to earthly life: and Mahābhiṣa's story begins (1.91.1) with a turn of phrase that is typical of IE story openings: 'There was once a king named so-and-so'.⁵ The lack of reference to Mahābhiṣa's parents may also hint at primordality.⁶ So, despite the lengthy Sanskrit genealogy, probably the protonarrative started with the great-grandparents of some ego.

5. Sequence of generations and functions

In the Norse the superordinate generations relate clearly to Germanic social structure – slaves, peasants, warriors – three estates or classes which fall readily under F4, F3, F2. Dumézil notes that the Germans had no F1 priestly class comparable to Brahmans or Druids, but interprets Konr Ungr as representing the first function by virtue of his magical sovereignty. The interpretation seems to me correct, at least in part, but pentadic theory removes sovereignty from the definition of the first function, so the interpretation needs support on other grounds. Let us follow the Sanskrit generations downwards.

Śaṃtanu. In heaven Gaṅgā is attracted to Mahābhīṣa, and when he falls to earth she takes human form to pursue her affair. So Śaṃtanu's first marriage is essentially with a goddess, who seeks the union. His second is quite different. Satyavatī, born from a fish in the Yamunā river, operates the ferry across that river when Śaṃtanu meets her and falls in love. Her adoptive father, King of the Fishermen, initially makes the match impossible, but when he observes his love-sick father pining, Bhīṣma takes action and is able to bring the couple together. Two oppositions coincide here. The Ganges contrasts with the Yamunā as pure and auspicious versus impure and inauspicious; and Gaṅgā contrasts with Satyavatī as goddess versus fisher-girl or ferry-girl – lowly occupations that in caste terms are confined to Untouchables. Moreover, the goddess seeks out the king and thereby exalts him, while the 'Untouchables' at first reject him. Thus in his second marriage – the first of the marriages organised by Bhīṣma – the king puts himself on the level of outcastes, who surely represent F4 (Allen 2007a: 279-282). The

⁵... *rājāsīt pṛthivīpatiḥ Mahābhiṣa iti khyātaḥ*, 'a king there was, lord of the earth, called M.' For literature on this incipit see West (2007: 93-4).

⁶Both the opening formula and the lack of parents applies equally to Satyavatī's father Uparicara. According to 1.1.50, some of those who learned the *Mahābhārata* started with the story of Uparicara (1.57.1).

parallel is with the first stage of the sociogony, namely the F4-slaves.

Vicitravīrya. This prince is so handsome that he matches the Aśvins in beauty (1.96.56). He devotes himself to making love with his paired wives (Ambikā is not shown in Fig. 1), and he dies from sexual excess. If one relates him to his brothers (Bhīṣma; the adopted Brahman Kṛpa; the bellicose Citrāṅgada; and the anomalous and ugly Vyāsa), he is a clear representative of F3 (Allen 2005a: 35-38). As such he parallels the F3 peasants in the Norse.

Pāṇḍu. Immediately after marrying his two wives (his second, Mādrī, is not shown in Fig. 1), Pāṇḍu ‘decided to conquer the world’, and he soon vanquished ‘all the kings of earth’, coming to resemble Indra (1.105). So he is intrinsically a conqueror. The only passage that deals with the matter (15.39.9) makes him an incarnation of the host of Maruts, the warlike companions of Indra. Moreover, if one relates him to the other biological sons of Vyāsa (Allen in press), he falls squarely under F2.⁷ The comparison is of course with the F2 nobility in the Norse.

Pāṇḍavas. In G⁰, the eldest Pāṇḍava, Yudhiṣṭhira, the legitimate heir to Pāṇḍu, takes the throne after the Great War and retains it till he dies. Dumézil showed convincingly that he represents the first function. Son of the god Dharma (‘Sociocosmic Law’), he is law-minded, learned and pious, and when he has to go into hiding, he chooses to disguise himself as a Brahman. As we noted, Dumézil also construed Konr Ungr under F1, but he did not compare the two figures directly. Three points are relevant.

Firstly, both figures are clearly contrasted with their more belligerent brothers. Whereas Jarl’s other sons are warlike (st. 43), the youngest is introduced in st. 44 as knowing about runes right from his birth; and it seems that he would not undertake the military expedition without urging from the crow. Similarly, Yudhiṣṭhira is an unenthusiastic warrior, barely competent. He resists the hawkish urgings of his family, avoids participating in the conquest of the four quarters in book 2, and in book 3 leads a pilgrimage while Arjuna is visiting heaven to get

⁷Dumézil interprets Pāṇḍu as if he were an incarnation of Varuṇa, hence F1, but his arguments do not convince me.

weapons from Indra.

Secondly, both figures are subjected by their fathers to tests of knowledge. Konr Ungr disputes runes with Rígr Jarl and 'knew better than he' (46/1-4). In India, as their twelve-year exile nears its end, the five Pāṇḍavas set out together in pursuit of a deer. One after another, they visit a lake and are tested by a supernatural being (3.295-9). The four younger brothers all fail, but Yudhiṣṭhira, having succeeded triumphantly, learns at the end that his questioner is his father Dharmā, disguised as a crane. This is one of not very many contexts where Yudhiṣṭhira comes last in a sequence – compare the position of Konr Ungr in the birth order.

Thirdly, both heroes are addressed by birds. The crow speaks to Yudhiṣṭhira during and immediately after his test. After his session with Jarl, Konr Ungr rides off to shoot birds and encounters the crow on a tree in st. 48.

Although the knowledgeable Konr Ungr fits well under F1, there is more to him. As well as knowing runes (spells and secret knowledge), he is a First King, and such figures typically represent F4+, as do Arjuna and Romulus (Allen 2005a); he has the strength of eight men (F2, recalling Bhīma); and he knows how to deliver the new-born and pacify the ocean (F3). These latter abilities are not attributed to the Pāṇḍava Twins, but their divine fathers, the F3 Aśvins, are the physicians of the gods and (like the Greek Dioskouroi) rescue mariners at risk of drowning. The functional attributes do not form a straightforward list, but even so Konr Ungr appears to combine in his own person the qualities that in the Sanskrit are distributed among the five Pāṇḍavas.

These two interpretations can be reconciled by means of a distinction. Regarded 'vertically', in terms of the sequence of social roles, Konr Ungr represents F1; but regarded 'horizontally', in himself or within his generation, he spans the upper four fifths of the pentadic schema. In the horizontal perspective, the emphasis should probably be placed on Arjuna and his position as representative of F4+, the top slot (Allen 1999); moreover, Konr Ungr is the youngest of Jarl's sons, and in the story where the Pāṇḍavas incarnate five Indras from different world ages, Arjuna incarnates the most recent, i.e. the youngest (1.189.28). The vertical dimension operates on a larger and more holistic scale and for that reason can be given

analytical priority.⁸

6. Colors

Among its many other themes the *Rígsþula* alludes to color. Thrall is born black (*svartí*), Karl is redhaired and rosy (*rauðr ok ríðr*), Jarl is blond haired (*bleikr*) and bright cheeked. According to Dumézil, the correlation between functions and colors is usually F1 white, F2 red, F3 black, and in this case he argues for a *glissement*, a slippage, whereby the lack of a priestly (F1) component of society has caused the colors to descend by one rank relative to their standard associations. When I explored the topic in 1998, I noted the fit between black (the absence of color), and the negative connotations of F4-, and suggested that the traditional IE color for F3 was yellow/green. However, here we have only the triad black-red-white, which in world-historical terms is thought to represent an earlier stage in the development of color terms. So let us leave aside the four-color idea and focus on comparison with the *Mahābhārata*.

In 1.90.51 Satyavatī is given another name, Gandhakālī: *gandha* means ‘smell’ (a reference to the fishy smell that she is born with and that she retains until her encounter with Parāśara), but *kālī* is from *kāla* ‘black’.⁹ Moreover, her son Vyāsa has the additional name Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana – the Black One born on an Island (a *dvīpa*, in the Yamunā). He too is smelly (*gandha* again) and so ugly that Ambālikā’s elder sister Ambikā closes her eyes when making love to him (1.99.43, 100.5). Thrall is ugly as well as black (8/3-9), and although Edda is not described as black those associated with a given social status tend to share attributes.

In Vicitravīrya’s name, *vicitra* means ‘variegated, many-colored, motley’.¹⁰ This is not the same as red or ruddy, but can reasonably be taken to include it.

Pāṇḍu means ‘yellowish-white, white, pale’, and his third

⁸It is interesting that one of Arjuna’s names, presented both as deeply meaningful and as that of an ancient sage, is Nara, ‘Man’ (1.1.117, 210.5, and often), and that the figure of First King (here Konr Ungr) is in many mythologies closely related to the figure of First Man.

⁹The Southern mss call her simply Kālī. In IE contexts, blackness is often attributed to the earth (West 2007: 179-180), and in Sāṃkhya philosophy (Allen 2005b) earth is the element linked with F4- and correlated with the sense of smell.

¹⁰*vīrya* means manliness, both in the sense of heroism, which Vicitravīrya conspicuously lacks, and in the sense of virility (it can even mean semen), which accords with the king’s uxoriousness.

son (F4+) is Arjuna, whose name means ‘white, clear’. Pāṇḍu’s color is explained in the Sanskrit by the story that Ambālikā went pale when she saw the ugliness of Vyāsa, but a deeper explanation is needed to account for the full sequence. In both stories, as we move down the generations from G^{+3} , we move up the color spectrum from the usually devalued black via intermediate hues to white (usually associated with purity).

It is interesting that at both ends of the triad the coloring relates not to an individual but to a parent-son dyad (Satyavatī+Vyāsa, Pāṇḍu+Arjuna). This recalls the intergenerational sharing of attributes in the subordinate triads in the Norse, but the rapprochement is perhaps too slight to justify conclusions about the protonarrative. Independent parallel development is a possibility, and the picture is complicated the two ‘Blacks’ in G^0 (Kṛṣṇa the god-man, and his sister, Kṛṣṇā, another name for Draupadī).

7. Location of protagonist in functional schema

As is well recognised, the *Rígsþula* is not only about the structure of human society but also about ‘social evolution’ or ‘the progress of man’ (to cite Dronke 1997: 179). The progression from the poor and crude life-style of the slave to the refinement of the noble is echoed in the progression from black to white and, more abstractly, from F4- to F2; and despite the complexities, we have argued that the vertical functional series continues, after the change of key, to F1.

In the Sanskrit the life-styles are not so neatly ranked: Vicitravīrya and his wives in G^{+2} are not obviously of lower standing than Pāṇḍu and Kuntī in G^{+1} . Even so, the advance is clear from the lowly fishergirl in G^{+3} at the start of the triad to the princess in G^{+1} at the end. We have suggested that the colors accord with this progress and that again the functional series continues to F1.

G^{+3}	slaves	black	F4-	Śaṃtanu	with his ‘Black’ wife	F4-
G^{+2}	peasants	red	F3	Vicitravīrya	‘Motley Manliness’	F3
G^{+1}	nobles	white	F2	Pāṇḍu	‘White’	F2
G^0	king		F1	Yudhiṣṭhira		F1

One wonders next whether the stories contain a representative of F4+, and the answer is obvious. Each story is held together as a whole by the matchmaker-protagonist – Bhīṣma and Rígr respectively. Both are good candidates for this half-function. Within his own generation this is certainly where

Bhīṣma belongs, and Rígr, being a god, stands above and on a different level from the humans whose social organisation he creates.¹¹

If one looks at the columns of functions, the natural location for this representative of F4+ would seem to be in G^{-1} , which would fit well with the column of social roles – the rising hierarchy would culminate in the god. However such an allocation makes little sense within the myth as a whole: creators precede creation. From this point of view the natural location is G^{+4} . Moreover, Rígr is old (*aldinn*, 1/3) when he approaches Ái's house, and Bhīṣma incarnates a god who is certainly senior to the Mahābhiṣa incarnated in his father Śaṃtanu. Such thoughts may perhaps have occurred to early narrators, but the myth as we have it associates both Bhīṣma and Rígr with G^{+2} (argument 4). This is half way between G^{+4} and G^0 and right in the middle of the three generations that form so prominent a group (dominating the structure of the Norse, delimiting the span of Bhīṣma's matchmaking, being correlated with colors). Previous scholars have noticed the number of references to Rígr being in the middle of something (Dronke 1997: 193). This centrality also seems to be the reason, or part of it, why Arjuna, the F4+ Pāṇḍava brother, occupies only the third position in birth order: it is the middle position in a pentad.

8. Ego and three previous generations

Having so far only discussed narrative (except for the staff in the bed), we can end with a brief reference to ritual – I attempt only to indicate a line of research. In India an ancient and well known ritual called *śrāddha* is performed by a male, in principle monthly, to honour his deceased father and his paternal grandfather and great-grandfather, each of whom receives one rice ball. When the performer dies, his son takes over the duty of performing the ritual, but he no longer honours his father's great-grandfather, who is merged into the host of nameless ancestors; so the ritual always involves ego and

¹¹Comparable creator figures are Vedic Puruṣa, Avestan Yima and Nuristani Imra, all of whom have been seen as representing F4+ (Allen 2007a: 274-5; 2000). Interestingly, Heimdall has 'prodigious auditory acuity' (Dumézil 2000: 172), and hearing is the sense correlated with F4+ in Sāṃkhya philosophy – cf. note 7 on smell and F4-. Some analysts have emphasised similarities between Rígr and Odin, the 'All-Father' and head of the Norse pantheon, but I do not pursue this.

$G^{+1,2,3}$.¹² Referring to this ritual, Manu (9.186) denies the involvement of a fifth element, but the nameless ancestors, who ‘transcend the human condition’ (Dumont 1980: 18), are part of the conceptual field within which the ritual operates.

The relation between the ritual and the narrative raises questions beyond our present scope, but it is clear at least that the ritual, like the narratives, focuses on a set of three generations starting in G^{+3} , but involves both the generation after the triad and the ones before it – the latter being taken as a unit. In other words, the ritual shows a 1+3+1 structure. Since this structure is also typical of the pentadic ideology, we ought to consider the relation between the two structures, as well as between the ritual and our narratives. For the moment at least, I cannot see whether or how to attach functions to the generations in the ritual, so the comparison remains somewhat abstract. It is not even clear whether in the *śrāddha* the earliest generation of the triad is of higher or lower rank than the latest. So let us devise a notation which leaves that question open (row 2).

1. <i>śrāddha</i> generations	$G^{>+3}$	G^{+3}	G^{+2}	G^{+1}	G^0
2. functions (rank order indeterminate)	F4a	$\frac{F1}{3}$	F2	$\frac{F3}{1}$	F4b
3. generations in <i>Rīgṣpula</i> & <i>Mahābhārata</i>	$(G^{>+3})$	G^{+3}	G^{+2}	G^{+1}	G^0
4. functions in <i>Rīgṣpula</i> & <i>Mahābhārata</i>	F4+	$\frac{F4}{-}$	F3	$\frac{F2}{-}$	F1

In row 2 one can either suppose that, for ego, he himself is the centre of attention and transcends everyone else (the only consciousness he fully knows about is his own), in which case the remoter the ancestor the less he is valued, so F4a stands for F4- and we have a rising hierarchy; or one can suppose that the remoter the ancestor the closer he is to deification and the more he is valued, so F4a stands for F4+ and the hierarchy descends. In row 3, as we saw, the protagonist, the figure who is ultimately of highest rank and most senior (respectively Rīgr and Bhīṣma), appears in disguise or as an incarnation, and not in the leftmost slot but in the central one (as could be indicated by drawing an appropriate arrow). In their human form both protagonists situate themselves in G^{+2} , along with representatives of F3 (peasants and Vicitravīrya), but whether they have other affinities with that function is a question I do

¹²This may reflect Indo-European practice: in legal Latin the *parentes*, who were worshipped annually at the Parentalia, comprised just those three generations (West 2007: 395).

not examine.

In conclusion

Despite many unanswered questions, I hope at least to have confirmed that Dumézil was right in comparing Heimdall and Rígr with Dyu and Bhīṣma, that his rapprochement can be taken a good deal further than he realised, and that, like so many others, it makes better sense in the light of pentadic theory than of the three classical functions. The comparison has implications for the understanding of both texts. For instance, the suggestion of Scher (1963: 404) – that it is ‘futile’ to speculate about why the three original couples are named as they are – ignores the types of argument and evidence that we have here brought to bear on the question; and yet further reason has been given to reject a view of the Sanskrit epic as a hotch-potch of entertaining tales or ballads. The prehistory of the texts takes on new aspects, and the question arises whether Konr Ungr represents a fusion among proto-Pāṇḍavas. As regards theory, it is interesting to find a protonarrative 1+3+1 structure in which the triad does not correspond to the classical functions – a form of ‘slippage’, but not quite what Dumézil envisaged. One notes the flexibility with which the ancient bards could manipulate their ideology. But at this stage conclusions can only be provisional, since the present paper needs to be combined with analyses of the reflexes of *Dyeus in other branches of Indo-European.

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