*niṣ-kṛay*ⁱ: On the Concept of Buying-off of the Self in Vedic Rituals

ŌSHIMA Chisei

1. Preface

According to St. Petersburg Dictionary, *niṣ-kṛay*ⁱ is rendered as “to ransom from (act.), to redeem oneself (med.).” It is commonly known that this verb is used in an idea called *ātmaniṣkṛayaṇa*, redemption of the sacrificer’s self in the Soma sacrifice. But it does not appear not only in the *ātmaniṣkṛayaṇa* but also in the various other contexts, and seems to have a role in the Vedic concept of life and death. We need to examine all the examples in the Agniṣṭoma, the basic Soma sacrifice, as well as in other rituals according to the Vedic texts, and discuss them in detail. I will translate *niṣ-kṛay*ⁱ in the literal sense consistently by using the verb “to buy off.”

2. Agniṣṭoma

2.1. Myth about Fetching Soma

We find *niṣ* + *kṛay*ⁱ in the myth about fetching Soma.¹⁾ Suparṇī, deprived of her self, tries to buy it off with the heavenly Soma. Gāyatrī fetches it, but it is stolen by Gandharvas on its way. The gods try to buy it off with speech.

M[aitrāyaṇī] S[amhitā] III 7,3: 77,7–78,1 (∼ K[āthaka-]S XXIII 10: 86,3–13; XXIV 1: 90,3–20; Kap[iṣṭhara-kātha-]S XXXVII 1–2; T[aittirīya-]S VI 1,6,1–7): *iyám vai kadrúr. vák suparṇī. chándāṁsi sauparṇāni gāyatrī triṣṭúb jágatī. sá vai kadrúr suparṇīm ātmānam + ajayat.*²⁾ *sābravīt “sómam āhara. ténātmānam niṣkrīṇīṣva”- éti. sá chándāṁsi práiṣyad “amútaḥ sómam āharata. téna* ^[77,10] *mā niṣkrīṇīta”- éti. táto jágaty údapatat. sá paśúbhiḥ cāgachad dīkṣáyā ca. tásmāt “paśá-vā” iti jágatīm āhus. tásmād yadā paśún vindaté ’tha dīkṣate. tátas triṣṭúb údapatat. sá dáksīṇayā cāgachat tápasā ca. tásmāt triṣṭúbho loké dáksīṇā dīyante. tásmād u “madhyāmdine tápas tapanīyam” iti. táto gāyatrī údapatat. sá sómam āharat. tám āhriyāmāṇam + sāmī*³⁾ *gandharvó viśvāvasur āmuṣṇāt. sá* ^[77,15] *tisró rātrīr úpahṛto ’vasat. tásmāt tisró rātrīḥ krító vasati. tè ’bruvan “púnar yācā-mahā” iti. té devā abruvant “strīkāmā vai gandharvā. vācam eva sambhṛtya yáthā yoṣíd + anapak-*

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*ṣepyātameva*⁴⁾ *tāyā niṣkrīṇāma*”- *éti. táṁ vái níkrīṇāms. tásmād āhur “vāg vái somakráyaṇī. vācāṁ vā etád gávā ní^[78,1]-ṣkrīṇātī*”- *íti*. Kadrū is this [earth], Suparṇī is speech.⁵⁾ Meters belong to Suparṇī, which are Gāyatrī, Triṣṭubh, and Jagatī. Kadrū deprived her of the self.⁶⁾ She (K°) said, “Fetch the Soma. With it, buy off your self.” She (S°) dispatched meters, [saying] “From that [heaven] fetch the Soma. With it, buy me off.” From there Jagatī fled up. It came back with cattle and consecration. Therefore [people] call Jagatī (i.e. moving around) ‘cattle.’ Therefore whenever he finds cattle, he then consecrates himself. From there Triṣṭubh fled up. It came back with fee and penance. Therefore fees are given in the world of Triṣṭubh.⁷⁾ And therefore [they say] “At noon penance should be done.” From there Gāyatrī fled up. It fetched the Soma.⁸⁾ It being fetched, on its way, Gandharva Viśvāvasu stole it. Being stolen, it spent three nights. Therefore Soma spends three nights after being bought. They said, “Let us ask again.” The Gods said, “Gandharvas love a woman. Preparing speech as if it is the most undeniable⁹⁾ woman, let us buy off with it.”¹⁰⁾ They bought [it] off. Therefore [they say] “Verily the cow for purchasing Soma is speech. Thus he (priest) buys off speech with the cow.”

After this, the gods entice speech by chanting and lose nothing in the end.¹¹⁾ Here, we notice, Suparṇī’s buying-off is related to that of the sacrificer (→2.4).

2.2. Bringing Soma and Arrangement of the Sacrificial Animal

After purchasing Soma, they lap it with a garment and perform some ceremonies, then prepare the victim¹²⁾ for the Agniṣomīyapaśu, animal sacrifice for Agni and Soma. We find *niṣ-kray*ⁱ in the context of *ātmaniṣkrayaṇa*. Let us examine the two following examples from the MS and the KS.

MS III 7,8: 87,3–88,2 (KS XXIV 7: 97,12–22; KapS XXXVII 8): *vāruṇo vā eṣā krīto yajamānasya grhām ōhyate. sá īśvaró ’śānto yajamānaṁ hīmsitor. yád āha <námo mitrásya^[87,5] vāruṇasya cák-ṣasā>* (MS I 2,6) *íti. śamáyaty evá. śāntá evóhyate, yajamānasyāhīmsāyai. sárvaḥbyo vā eṣā devātābhyā úhyate. — agniśómau vā etáu sámabhavato. yajamānaṁ vā etá abhisámभवतām yajamānasya vā paśūṁ^[87,10] s. tād yá eṣá paśúr dhāryáte tām evá bhāgadheyam abhisámभवato. devātā vā etām paśūṁ dhāryāmānaṁ nábhīprācyavanta. -āsmín yajñá āśāmsamānād yó ’yám itaras tām agniśómā upaprācyavetām. tásmād eṣó ’gniśomīyo. ’gniśómābhyām vā eṣá médhāyātmānam ālabhate yó díkṣate. sá vā eténaivá + paśúnātmānam¹³⁾ niṣkrīṇīte. sthūlāḥ pívā syād, ātmāno niṣkrītyai. tásmā^[87,15] d agniśomīyasya paśór nāsitavyām. pūruṣo hy eténātmānam niṣkrīṇīte. tásmād agniśomīye sámsthite yajamānasya grhē ’sitavyām. tárhi niṣkrīto ’nṛṇó. vārtraghnaṁ vā etát. sómo vái vṛtráh. pūrvedyúr vā índro vṛtrám ahan. pūrvedyúr vāvāinam etát sṛtvāthāparedyúr abhiṣunoti. varuṇa-pāśābhyām vā eṣó ’bhīdhiyate yó díkṣate. ’horātré varuṇpāśáu. yád dívā sámsthā^[88,1] páyed anūn-mukto varuṇapāśābhyām syān. náktam sámsthāpyo. varuṇapāśābhyām evónmucyata, ātmāno ’hīmsāyai. This Soma which has been bought, as Varuṇa, is indeed brought to the sacrificer’s house. As it has not been appeased, it would hurt the sacrificer. When he says, “Homage be to the sight of*

Mitra and Varuṇa.” Verily he appeases. Thus appeased it is brought, in order not to hurt the sacrificer. This [Soma] is brought for all the gods. —Verily these Agni and Soma are integrated. These [two] may integrate into the sacrificer or his cattle. Thus these [two] integrate into the victim which is kept, [considering it to be] a share. Verily the divinities did not move toward this victim which was being kept. To this [victim], which is different from what he (priest) claims in this sacrifice,¹⁴⁾ Agni and Soma approached. Therefore this [victim] is for Agni and Soma. This [sacrificer], who consecrates himself, takes hold of and sacrifices his self for the sacrifice and for Agni and Soma. Thus he buys off his self with this victim. Fleshy and fat one should be used, for buying-off of his self. Therefore the victim for Agni and Soma is not to be eaten, for a man buys off his self with this. Therefore, the animal sacrifice having been completed, it should be eaten at the sacrificer’s house. Then he (sacrificer) [has been] bought off and in no debt. Verily this [oblation] belongs to the slayer of Vṛtra. Soma is Vṛtra. Once Indra slew Vṛtra. After running at the [Soma] the day before, he (Priest) presses it on the following day. Verily this [sacrificer] who consecrates himself is surrounded with two nooses. Varuṇa’s [two] nooses are day and night. If he had [the sacrifice] completed in the daytime, he would not be released from Varuṇa’s [two] nooses. It should be completed at the nighttime. Thus he is released from Varuṇa’s [two] nooses, in order not to hurt his self.

KS XXIV 7: 97,13: *agnīṣomābhyām vā eṣa ātmānam medhāyālabhate yo dīkṣate, yat paśum ālabhata ātmānam tena niṣkrīṇāti, yas tūparaś śmaśruṇo dvidevatyasya rūpaṃ lomaśaḥ pīvā puruṣarūpaṣ tam ālabheta, tasya yo ’śnāti puruṣam atti, tasmāt tasya nāśitavyam, kṣudhyati vai dīkṣitaḥ, kṣudha eṣa niṣkrayaṇa ālabhyate*. Verily this [sacrificer], who consecrates himself takes hold of and sacrifices his self for the sacrifice and for Agni and Soma. When he sacrifices the animal, he (priest) buys off the self [of the sacrificer’s] with it. He should take hold of and sacrifice the animal which has underdeveloped horns, beards, a form of which is related to the two divinities, [good] hair, and a form of a man. When one eats it, he eats the man. Therefore it should not be eaten. Verily the consecrated feels hungry. This [animal] is taken hold of and sacrificed in buying-off of the hunger.

We can observe the relationship between the sacrificer who consecrates himself and the animal sacrifice for Agni and Soma. The self which is to be bought off here corresponds to the self that is previously sacrificed in the Dīkṣā. With regard to the ‘fleshy and fat’ victim in the MS, the KS adds the interesting mention about the consecrated, ‘he feels hungry.’ Here, the consecrated who is lean because of the *vrata* fasting is assumed.^{15, 16)}

2.3. Shaking-off of the frame

Though the following passage is different from buying-off of the self, The context is concerned with the animal sacrifice for Agni and Soma.

MS III 9,6: 123,6–10 (KS XXVI 7: 130,10–12; kapS ILI 5): *vapáyā vai paśór devāḥ prātaḥsavané svargāṃ lokāṃ āyan, yád vapáyā prātaḥsavané cāranti vapáyā vā etát paśór yājamānaḥ prātaḥsa-*

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*vané svargám lokám eti. té vái + svàr*¹⁷⁾ *yánto 'sthāni śárīrāṇy adhūnvata. yád āṅgais tṛtīyasavané carānty + asthnāṁ śárīrāṇām*¹⁸⁾ *niṣkrītyai.*

Verily by the omentum¹⁹⁾ of the victim the gods went to the heavenly world at the morning pressing.²⁰⁾ When they (priests) treat the omentum at the morning pressing, thus by the omentum of the victim the sacrificer go to the heavenly world at the morning pressing. Going to the heavenly world, they verily shook off [their] bones, frames. When they treat the limbs at the third pressing,²¹⁾ [it is] for buying-off of the bones, frames.²²⁾

2.4. Animal Sacrifice for Agni and Soma

ŚB III 3,4,21 (ŚBK [āṇva] IV 3,4,14): **21.** *átha pratiprasthātā ágreṇa śālām agniśomīyeṇa paśúnā pratyúpatiṣṭhate. 'gniśómau vā etám antarjambhá ádadhāte yó dīkṣata. āgnāvaiṣṇavám hy ádó dīkṣaṇīyam havir bhávati. yó vái viṣṇuḥ sómaḥ sá, havir vā eṣá bhavati yó dīkṣate. tát enam antarjambhá ádadhāte. tát paśúnātmānam niṣkrīṇīte.* **21.** Then Pratiprasthātṛ stands near with the victim for Agni and Soma in front of the sacrificial hut. Agni and Soma confine this [sacrificer] who consecrates himself between their jaws.²³⁾ For the oblation in the preparatory offering for the consecration becomes [an oblation] for Agni and Viṣṇu at that place.²⁴⁾ Verily when it is Viṣṇu, it is [also] Soma. This [sacrificer] who consecrates himself indeed becomes an oblation.²⁵⁾ Then [Agni and Soma] confine him between their jaws. And he buys off his self with the victim.

ŚB III 6,2,16 (ŚBK IV 6,2,6): **16.** *ṛṇám ha vái púruṣo jāyamāna evá mṛtyór ātmānā jāyate.*²⁶⁾ *sá yád yájate yáthaivá tát suparṇī devébhya ātmānam nirákrīṇītaivám evaiṣá etán mṛtyór ātmānam niṣkrīṇīte.* **16.** Verily man, being born, is born having a debt²⁷⁾ to death.²⁸⁾ When he (sacrificer) performs, in such manner as Suparṇī bought off her self from the gods, thus he buys off his self from death.

Also see the similar description in AB II 3,9–12. Related to the animal sacrifice, we find some supplementary descriptions in ŚB XI 7,1,1–3 (ŚBK XIII 7,1,1–3), VaikhŚS X 1, and Atharvaveda [Śaunaka] II 34,1.²⁹⁾

3. dakṣiṇā

We also find another unique buying-off in the Agniṣṭoma. When the fee is given to the priests³⁰⁾ after the mid-day pressing, buying-off of the sacrificer's body parts (or vital functions) previously given to the priests is discussed in the MS, KS, K[ausitaki-]B and G[opatha-]B. This discussion has come down to some Taittirīya schools such as the Āpastamba-ŚS, Hiranyakeśin-ŚS, and Vaikh[ānasa-]ŚS.³¹⁾

MS IV 8,3: 110,12; 14 (KS XXVIII 5: 159,11; GB I 5,8; II 3,18–19; KB XV 1): —*yām sadasyèbhyo dádāti somapīthám táyā niṣkrīṇīte. yām ārṣeyāya śusruvūṣe dádāti chándāmsi táyā prīṇāti. ná hi tásmād árhanti somapīthám niṣkrīyam.* —*yát kṛtānnám dádāti māmśám téna niṣkrīṇīte. yád*

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āno vā rātham̐ vā śārīram̐ téna. —When he gives it (cow) to the priests in the Sadas, he buys off Soma-drinking³²⁾ with it. —When he gives prepared food, he buys off his meat with it. When cart or chariot, his frame with it.

ĀpŚS XIII 6,4–5 (HirŚS XIV 10,15; VaikhŚS XVI 7,11.): (4) *āṅgāni dattvā tenatena yathāliṅgam̐ niṣkrīṇīte yad dāsyān syāt.* (5) *<hotar vācam̐ te dadāmi. tām te 'nena niṣkrīṇāmi>- iti.* (6) *evam̐ brahmaṇe manah̐, adhvaryave prāṇam̐, udgātre cakṣuḥ, hotrakebhyaḥ śrotram̐, camasādhvaryubhyo 'ṅgāni, prasarpakebhyo lomāni, sadasyāyātmānam̐.* (4) After giving his limbs, by each [of fees] which he is going to give, he buys off what corresponds with each feature. (5) [Saying,] “O Hotṛ, I give you [my] speech. I buy off the speech you have with this.” (6) In the same manner, to the Brahman [he gives his] thought, to the Adhvaryu breath, to the Udgātṛ sight, to the Hotrakas hearing, to the Camasādhvaryus limbs, to the spectator hairs, to the Sadasya self.

4. Iṣṭi

In the Iṣṭis, including Kāmyapaśus, we find various buying-offs. I will try to summarize their characteristics as follows. Comparing with that of the Soma sacrifice, *niṣ-kray*ⁱ is used in active.³³⁾ Therefore a priest is assumed to buy off from the divinities, mostly Agni and Soma, with an oblation. He buys off the frame and sap (*rāsa-*)³⁴⁾ of the sacrificer who is sick, the sacrificer himself,³⁵⁾ or bones and flesh³⁶⁾ of him who wants to prosper.³⁷⁾ Buying-off of the self is rare.³⁸⁾ Another significant example is ŚB XI 1,8,1–6 (ŚBK III 2,7), supplementary description about the sacrificer who goes into obedience in the new and full moon sacrifices. It says that he becomes an oblation for the gods and offers his self, where the notion is partly similar to that of the Agniṣṭoma,³⁹⁾ buys it off with the sacrifice, and be finally [re]born in the heavenly world with his whole body.

5. Conclusion

Though we find more buying-offs of something in other sacrifices,⁴⁰⁾ we do not deal with them. In the Agniṣṭoma, three main types of buying-off have been observed. First, the consecrated sacrificer must buy off his self that has been sacrificed in the Dikṣā with the victim (→2.2 and 2.4), which is foreshadowed by Suparṇī buying off her self with the Soma (→2.1). Secondly, he must buy off his body parts and vital functions he has given to the priests with the fees (→3). Thirdly, after he symbolically went to the heavenly world at the Bahiṣpavamānastotra, he must buy off his frame he has shaken off with the another animal sacrifice (→2.3). In the Iṣṭis, we also see buying-off of the sacrificer himself or his body parts, but it is rather materialistic, according to the nature of the ‘Kāmya’ sacrifice

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(→4). But in the Agniṣṭoma including animal sacrifice and in the new and full moon sacrifices (→end of 4), the sacrificer's self to be bought off is significantly mentioned. His final goal is to be born completely in the heavenly world, and buying-off of the self seems to play a necessary role for it.

- 1) This myth is applied to the *Prāyaṇīyeṣṭi*, an introductory offering for purchasing Soma. It can be traced to Ṛgveda IV 26–27. 2) SCHROEDER ed.: *ayajat*. The KS/KapS/TS have *ajayat*. MITTWEDE, *Textkritische Bemerkungen zur Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā*, 1986, p. 125. 3) SCHROEDER ed.: *sāmi-gandharvó*; SĀTAVALEKAR ed.: *sāmīgandharvó*. MITTWEDE, op. cit., p. 125. 4) SCHROEDER ed.: *anapakṣeyátameva*; pw VII p. 385: *anapakṣepyátama-*; KUIPER, *Kratylos* 33 (1988), p. 171: *anapakṣepyátama-*. See note 9. 5) “yonder sky” in the KS and the TS. 6) *jay*ⁱ + acc. + acc.: DELBRÜCK, *Altindische Syntax*, 1888, p. 180. This is an adaptation to the verb *jyā/jī*: ‘deprive somebody of something.’ See GOTŌ, *Die „I. Präsensklasse“ im Vedischen*, 1987, p. 150. 7) I.e. at the mid-day pressing. 8) KS XXIV 1: 90,3: *gāyatrī śyeno bhūtvā*. ‘Gāyatrī, becoming a hawk, [fetched].’ 9) See note 4. We find only one example of *apa-kṣep*, to throw away, in Kātyāyana-Ś[rauta-]S[ūtra] XVI 3,3: *apakṣipati*, that is, ‘he fans [the pit (*śvābhra-*)] with his hands’ in the Agnicayana. Cf. Ś[atapatha-]B VI 4,3,3. SCHROEDER’s *anapakṣeyátama-*, the most unwasted, may be possible, although its gerundive form *apakṣeya-* is not attested. Cf. *kṣeya-* (‘notwendig zu vernichten’), WACKERNAGEL, *Altindische Grammatik* I, 1957, p. 203. 10) KS XXIV 1: 906: *te ’bruvan “gavā niṣkrīṇāma”- eti. te ’manyata “yajñena vikreṣyāmahe yad gavā niṣkreṣyāma” iti*. ‘They say, “With a cow, let us buy off.” They thought, “If we buy off with a cow, we would pay by a sacrifice.”’ 11) Also see A[itareya-]B[rāhmaṇa] I 27,2–4. 12) It supposed to be a he-goat. 13) SCHROEDER ed.: *paśūn ātmānaṃ*. MITTWEDE, op. cit., p. 128. 14) *ā-saṃs* means to claim one’s rights (loc.). See GOTŌ, op. cit., p. 302f.; DELBRÜCK, op. cit., p. 122. 15) Cf. author, “The Consecrated and *vratá* in the Soma Sacrifice” *IBS* 57-3 (2009), p. 1151. 16) The lean or hungry is not mentioned in the TS. See VI 1,11,6. 17) Ed.: *svaryáto*. Cf. AMANO, *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā* I–II, 2009, p. 334, n. 1140. 18) Ed.: *asnām śrīṇām*. Cf. MITTWEDE, op. cit., p. 140. 19) Its offering is central in the Agniṣomīyapaśu. 20) Priests hold and lift the sacrificer into the heavenly world at the Bahiṣpavamānastotra. See M. FUJII, “The *Bahiṣpavamāna* Ritual of the Jaiminīyas” *Machikaneyama Ronso* 20 (1986). 21) *Savanīyapaśu* is probably meant. See CALAND & HENRY, *L’agniṣṭoma*, 1906–1907, §226. 22) Though it takes a plural, the frame of the sacrificer, who is supposed to follow the gods, must be the meaning. 23) Also see KB X 3: *agniṣomayor vā eṣa āsyam āpadyate yo dīkṣate. tad yad upavasathe ’gnīṣomīyaṃ paśum ālabate. ātmaniṣkrayaṇo haivāśya*. ‘Verily this [sacrificer] who consecrates himself steps into the mouth of Agni and Soma. When he takes hold of and sacrifices the animal for Agni and Soma at the Upavasatha (vigil before the pressing day), [it is] thus buying-off of his self.’ 24) See author, “*dīkṣaṇīyeṣṭi* to Saishu no Gisei” (Japanese) *IBS* 55-1 (2006), pp. 310–313. 25) Also see ŚB III 6,3,19. 26) ŚBK IV 6,2,6: *ṛṇām ha vai jāyamāna eva manūṣyo mṛtyāve jāyate*. 27) For the ‘*idām*

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bhū’ construction of this sentence, see GOTŌ, op. cit., p. 241, n. 528. 28) *Ṛṇá-* + inst. + dat.: TS VI 3,10,5: *jāyamāno vái brāhmaṇás tribhír ṛṇavā jāyate, brahmacáryeṇárṣibhyo, yajñéna devébhyḥ, prajāyā pitṛbhya*. ‘Verily being born, a Brāhmaṇa is born with three debts, for brahmacarya to the Ṛṣis, for a sacrifice to the gods, for offspring to the Pitṛs.’ *Mṛtyós* here is taken as dative, see DELBRÜCK, op. cit., p. 162. 29) Also cf. TS III 1,4,1–3; KS XXX 8. 30) CALAND & HENRY, op. cit., §191b. 31) Also see the myth in JB II 54. 32) Or Soma itself considered as body fluid. 33) The only exceptional passage (*K°iṣṭi*) is in TS II 3,2,9. 34) MS II 3,5: 32,7; KS XI 8: 154,7; TS II 2,10,4; 3,11,1 (*Iṣṭis*), and TS II 1,2,7 (*K°-paśu*). 35) MS II 1,6: 7,21; KS XI 5: 150,15 (*Iṣṭis*). 36) MS II 5,2: 49,1; KS XIII 2: 181,3 (*K°-paśu*). Flesh goes to Varuṇa. 37) It is said that he who does not prosper has been seized by Varuṇa. 38) See TS II 3,2,9, where he gives his self to the fire by offering. 39) In detail, see author, “*Dīkṣā* in the Agniṣṭoma: Some Symbolic Aspects of the Sacrificer’s Role,” *Journal of Indological Studies*, Nos. 22 & 23 (2010–2011), pp. 61–69. 40) Cf. TB I 3,10,2 (*Pinḍapitṛyajña*); 4,4,3 and 4,7,7 (*Prāyaścitti*); 7,5,1 and ŚB V 5,1,1–7 (*Rājasūya*); TS V 5,7,2 (*Agnicayana*); ŚB V 1,5,28 (*Vājapeya*); AB VII 15,7 (Story of Śunaḥśepa); JB II 257 (*Ahina*).

〈Key words〉 Veda, Agniṣṭoma, *Dīkṣā*, redemption, *ātman*, *paśu*

(Part-time lecturer, Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyoto University)