

Agni-dagha.—This epithet ('burnt with fire')¹ applies to the dead who were burned on the funeral pyre. This is one of the two normal methods of disposing of the dead, the other being burial (*an-agnidagdhāḥ*, 'not burnt with fire').² The Atharvaveda³ adds two further modes of disposal to those—viz., casting out (*paroptāḥ*), and the exposure of the dead (*uddhitāḥ*). The exact sense of these expressions is doubtful. Zimmer⁴ considers that the former is a parallel to the Iranian practice of casting out the dead to be devoured by beasts, and that the latter refers to the old who are exposed when helpless.⁵ Whitney⁶ refers the latter expression to the exposure of the dead body on a raised platform of some sort.

Burial was clearly not rare in the Rigvedic period: a whole hymn⁷ describes the ritual attending it. The dead man was buried apparently in full attire, with his bow in his hand, and probably at one time his wife was immolated to accompany him, in accordance with a practice common among savage tribes. But in the Vedic period both customs appear in a modified form: the son takes the bow from the hand of the dead man, and the widow is led away from her dead husband by his brother or other nearest kinsman. A stone is set between the dead and the living to separate them. In the Atharvaveda,⁸ but not in the Rigveda, a coffin (*vrkṣa*) is alluded to. In both Saṃhitās⁹ occur other allusions to the 'house of earth' (*bhūmi-gṛha*). To remove the apparent discrepancy between burning and burial, by assuming that the references to burial are to the burial of the burned bones, as does Oldenberg,¹⁰ is unnecessary and improbable, as burning and burial subsisted side by side in Greece for many years.

Burning was, however, equally usual, and it grew steadily in frequency, for in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad¹¹ the adornment

¹ Rv. x. 15, 14; Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, iii. 1, 1, 7; *dagdhāḥ*, Av. xviii. 2, 34.

² Rv., *loc. cit.*; = *nikhātāḥ*, Av. xviii. 2, 34.

³ *Loc. cit.*

⁴ *Allindisches Leben*, 402.

⁵ Rv. viii. 51, 2.

⁶ Translation of the Atharvaveda, 841.

⁷ x. 18. The interpretation of v. 8 is a famous crux, see Patnl.

⁸ xviii. 2, 25; 3, 70.

⁹ Rv. vii. 89, 1; Av. v. 30, 14; xviii. 2, 52.

¹⁰ *Religion des Veda*, 571.

¹¹ viii. 8. 5.