# The Realm of the Kuru
## Origins and Development of the First State in India

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*Preface*

*This issue of EJVS contains the long version of my article "Early Sanskritization. Origins and development of the Kuru state" of 1997, published in a volume edited by B. Kölver. At that time, I had merely presented the outline and results of the longer paper published here.*
*After 1997, I have added some data, over the next few years, to the unpublished long version. I have mow minimally updated it, for example by important genetic aDNA data about the first immigration of steppe people to India (Swat) around 1250 BCE. However, I could not find the time to thoroughly update the paper and therefore present it here as is, in the hope that it will be useful to colleagues.*

*As the current version includes many sections of the 1997 paper, some repetitions and overlaps will occur in the bulk of the text, for which I beg the reader's indulgence.*

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**THE REALM OF THE KURU**

**ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRST STATE IN INDIA**

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and civilization. As will be seen, it is at *this* moment that the social "raw material" present in Ṛgvedic time was *intentionally* transformed into what became the core and the pattern initially of Vedic and, later on, of all of Hindu culture.

The only substantial materials that we possess of this time are only the Vedic texts.[6] Archaeology has recently, and increasingly so, become another factor in describing this period, although the correlation between the texts and the archaeological facts is, as always, still a matter of much discussion. Only the Vedic texts are available as other parts of the contemporary oral literature did not survive; the period of the --still undeciphered-- Indus seals is already a distant past by the time of the late Ṛgveda.

I will return to the evidence of the texts presently but would like to make one important point first. There are many, *prima facie* just small observations that help to create a framework for judging the historical developments and the trends in this dark period. Among them, there are phonetic peculiarities, intentional use of "high" Ṛgvedic forms in one of the two AV texts (Paippalāda Saṃhitā), the intentional use of outdated, archaic materials in ritual, the incorporation of ancient textual materials into the final RV collection and into the YV texts, or the archaization of Atharvaveda Mantras, by beginning hymns with hieratic meters.

As pointed out above, our approach has primarily to be a textual one; there remains little else that can tell us something about this period. We will have to rely on the texts, their form, their organization, their internal chronology, and their language in its historical development as well as in its synchronic dialect spread. Furthermore we have to take into account the criteria such as that of text formation, that of the development and spread of the various Vedic schools (śākha) of ritual interpretation, of the development of ritual and religious thought in general. Finally we have to include the occasional remarks in the texts about the tribes and peoples of the area, their history, their material culture and their gradual development in time.

However, when Vedic texts are discussed by Vedic and other scholars, they are usually treated as poetry, as ritual handbooks, or as early philosophy, that is -- only as *texts*.[7] What I will try here is to discover something beyond this, about the history of the period as well as about the beliefs and concerns of the people *living* in the period.

If one would ask a specialist of this period, a *Vedisant*, I doubt that one would get a coherent answer about this period. The materials available now have been collected for more than a hundred years, e.g. by Zimmer, Rau and Mylius, and there is, Vedic specialists will readily point out, little that is historical about them or that is of direct historical interest in them.

In brief: even after some 150 years of study, the Vedic period as a whole does not seem to have a history, and its texts are generally thought to have been composed in a geographical vacuum "somewhere in Northern India".[8] Because of this lack of geographical and historical attention, we first have to take a quick tour of the area and the historical data relating to it that are readily available.

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[6] For a summary of the texts and the available tools for their study as well as the major work done on them, see S. Jamison and M. Witzel, Vedic Hinduism, in A. Sharma (ed.), *The Study of Hinduism*. University of South Carolina Press 2003, 65-113 [long version: (1992): http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~witzel/vedica.pdf

[7] With a few notable exceptions such as those of W. Rau and K. Mylius.

[8] Cf. Witzel 1989.

The chronology of the earlier Vedic period can be summarized as follows: the first fixed date in Indian history that is usually mentioned is that of the Buddha around 500 BCE (or, as H. Bechert now tells us, some 100 years later)[9]; secondly that of Pāṇini, who is generally assigned to the mid-4th century BCE. Both dates presuppose the evolvement of the bulk of Vedic literature.

The beginning of the Vedic period, however, is equally vague and uncertain. Recent findings in archaeology, however, put the disintegration of the Indus civilization at c. 1900 BCE, with some survivals until c. 1300 BCE. As the RV does not speak of cities but only of ruins (*armaka*),[10] apparently even larger ones (*vailasthāna* and *mahā-vailasthāna*), we may suppose that the Indo-Aryans immigrated[11] or trickled in,[12] tribe by tribe[13] and clan by clan, *some* time *after* 1900 BCE.[14] As a possible date *ad quem* for the RV one usually adduces the Hittite-Mitanni agreement of c. 1380 BCE that mentions four of the major Ṛgvedic gods: Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra and the Nāsatyas (Aśvins).[15] The language of the Indo-Aryan words in the Mitanni texts is actually slightly older than that of the RV.[16]

Recently, we were able to add genetic data, a steppe immigration into Swat at c.1250 BCE.[17]

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[9] H. Bechert, *Ind. Taur.* 10, 1982: 29-36; 1991-2. Cf. now Erdosy 1993.

[10] See the discussion by W. Rau 1983, 36-38.

[11] Cf. G. Erdosy 1977: 40; cf. also G. Erdosy 1995, Parpola 1988. -- On the recently fashionable denial of *any* immigration, see Renfrew 1987/1989; Shaffer 1984: pp. 77-90; more zealously: Arun Kumar Biswas 1988: 44: "there is no earthly reason why the young students in India should be made to swallow the theory of the so called Aryan intrusion into India and their minds be poisoned about a fictious Aryan-Dravidian bi-*racial* paradigm." -- The ulterior *political* motives of this "scientific" writing are obvious. It has been followed up zealously over the past decades, see Witzel, EJVS 7-3, 2001.

[12] Cf. G. Erdosy 1977, 1995.

[13] In my opinion (Witzel 1995) the earlier ones of the Yadu-Turvaśa, Anu-Druhyu tribes, and later ones such as the combined Pūru-Bharata, who split into two groups upon their arrival in the Afghan borderlands. The Bharatas were the last to move eastwards into the Panjab and into Kurukṣetra and this is represented especially by RV 3 and 7. See Witzel, Rigvedic history: poets, chieftains and polities, in: G. Erdosy 1995.

[14] Some overlap of the immigrating Indo-Aryans with the later stages of the Indus civilization (Allchin 1995) is, of course, possible, but should be demonstrated clearly. Similar cases are those of the various *nomadic* tribes moving into ancient Egypt, the immigration of the Semitic speaking peoples into Sumerian Mesopotamia, of (some) Germanic tribes into the Roman empire, of some Turkish tribes into the Arab Caliphate, etc; or in later India, those of the Abhīra, Gurjara.

[15] Note that these gods are appended to a longer list of more than 100 gods. The Mitanni, settling in N. Iraq, were of Hurrian descent and spoke a Hurrian language but they had been exposed, as the names of their kings and their horse racing terminology indicate, to Indo-Aryan (not: Indo-Iranian) influences a few hundred years *earlier*. These Indo-Aryans must be a branch of those who entered the Bactro-Margiana area and then proceeded to India. See Thieme 1971, 396-412; cf. Mayrhofer 1974.

[16] Witzel 2014.

[17] Narasimhan 2019.

The next major archaeological date available is that of the introduction of iron[18] in the Greater Panjab at c.1000 BCE. It is first mentioned in the second oldest text, the Atharvaveda, as 'black metal' (*śyāma ayas,* cf. *kṛṣṇa ayas*) while the RV still only knows of *ayas* itself, of "copper/bronze".[19]

The lack of progress had been made, until recently, in the whole question of the absolute dating of Vedic texts can be seen in the fairly recent articles by K. Mylius[20] and Bronkhorst.[21] We do well not to follow blindly the various datings of later Vedic texts, such as that assumed by the otherwise so careful and skeptical Keith,[22] not to speak of those proposed recently by the current "rewriters" of ancient Indian history.[23]

Against this background it is perhaps not surprising that the professional writers on older Indian History did not shed much light on the early and middle Vedic period until a few years ago. *The Cambridge History of India* (Rapson 1921) narrates a few disparate facts of political history as a fight of "everybody against everybody else", the *communis opinio* found also in the recent history by R. Thapar (1966). The relevant volume of the *The History of the Indian people* of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan (Majumdar & Pulsarkar 1951-), is in part clearly unscientific as it uses data from the RV and the much later Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas to describe Ṛgvedic history. If both or all three of these texts agree, it is taken as proof for the historicity of the matter reported.[24] In the fairly recent book on Indian history by H. Kulke and D. Rothermund (1986), however, the Vedic period is treated more

[18] Apparently from central India and from the Himalayas (D.P. Agrawal 1982), not as previously supposed from Iran! See for Panjab at 1000 BCE, Possehl-Gullapalli 1999. However one early date is from Pirak III, in E. Baluchistan, slightly before 1000; it is common after c. 900 BCE (Allchin 1995: 39).

[19] See W. Rau 1973, 1983; AV 11.3.7, 9.5.4, PS 16.53.12; AV 9.5.4.

[20] Mylius 1970; cf. also Rau 1983: 19.

[21] Bronkhorst 1989. - Recently various extremely early, revisionist dates have been proposed in an ever-increasing avalanche of popular books, see Witzel 2001.

[22] See Keith 1909: "[AĀ 1-3 is to be dated] between 700 and 550 B.C." p. 25, cf. p. 31, 49; further Keith,(1914) transl. of TS, p. clxviii, sqq., clxxiii, or for the Śāṅkhāyana Śrautasūtra at 400 BCE, and for other texts.

[23] For a list and characterization see Witzel 2001.

[24] The possibility that the Vedic materials were simply excerpted by Purāṇa authors is not even mentioned, except in one short passage by Ghurye who calls the Purāṇa technique a "patchwork method". See now the work of R. Söhnen, who showed that the AB was the source of some of the sections in the Gautamī-Māhātmya of the Brahma Purāṇa (Söhnen 1986) and cf. Horsch (1966) for other Purāṇas. As a matter of fact, in all the Purāṇa "histories" and texts such as the Rājataraṅgiṇī and various Vaṃśāvalis, everything before the Mahābhārata war, whose date was only fixed by Varāhamihira or Āryabhaṭa in the middle of the first millennium CE, is filled in from Vedic sources in the single-minded attempt to reach the beginning of the Kaliyuga at 3102 BCE. One can easily show that groups of 2-3 kings were lifted intact from the RV, the Brāhmaṇas, etc., and inserted into an earlier period of Purāṇic history wherever it was thought to fit. -- Note also the complete separation in the Purāṇas of the Ikṣvāku dynasty from the Pūrus and the insertion of appropriate kings at a *much earlier* date, (note, however, the correspondence with the dynasties of the Pūrus, e.g. the Bharata Sudās). The insertion technique is, as mentioned, also the typical method of Kalhaṇa, and Vaṃśāvalīs such as the Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī, see Witzel 1990. -- Buddhist sources are treated in the same way by the authors of the handbooks on history. Interestingly however, Buddhist sources disagree quite often with the Purāṇic ones, even for the period of the Buddha: this is brushed aside.

adequately, if very briefly. Recent progress both in archaeology and in Vedic philology has been made use of in this book and an up-to-date, fairly reliable picture of the period emerges.[25] In this paper, I propose to add some very significant features to the evolving picture.

In contrast with the rather diverse opinions referred to above, scholars generally agree on the *relative* age of the texts: the RV is the oldest text and the later Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads are the youngest, still pre-Buddhist texts.[26] Special attention, however, must thus be paid to the other *historical levels* in the development of the texts as well. They are much more complex than that usually referred to, following Indian tradition, when one usually distinguishes Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, Upaniṣads, and Sūtras, in roughly that chronological order.[27] The internal chronology of the texts helps to establish historical levels. Even more so, the development of the Vedic language is a secure guide in doing so. Language changes constantly, but often imperceptibly, and so did Vedic. From the point of view of linguistic development we have to distinguish the following text layers that do not always coincide with the traditional divisions (see Witzel 1995 for details).

1. Ṛgveda (with a late addition, book 10, and also including the initial parts of book 1);
2. Mantra language (Atharvaveda, Sāmaveda, Ṛgveda Khila, the *mantra*s of the Yajurveda, i.e. MS, KS/KpS, TS, VS);
3. expository prose of the Yajurveda Saṃhitā texts (MS, KS/Kps, TS),
4. the Brāhmaṇa prose (including the older portions of the Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads, as well as the earliest Sūtras, such as BŚS, VādhS);
5. the late Vedic Sūtras (and the post-Vedic Upaniṣads).

These five linguistic and textual levels can conveniently be divided into three major periods that are distinct in language, habitat, in their social, religious, and political features: the Old Vedic period (level 1: RV), the Middle Vedic period (levels 2-4) and the Late Vedic period (the later sections of the Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, Upaniṣads, and most Sūtras).

## § 1   OLD vs. LATE VEDIC.

By "Early" or "Old Vedic" we understand the period of the oldest texts, that is the Ṛgveda. The Late Vedic period is that of the level of texts   (Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣads, etc.) immediately preceding the Buddhist texts as preserved in their Pāli form.

The   two periods differ from each other in many respects, in their geographical areas, their political and social organizations, their economy, ritual, language and genre of literature, as reflected by the texts. The change from the Ṛgvedic to the Middle/Late Vedic

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[25] I leave out a discussion of recent revisionist rewriting of Indian history, as it is either purely imaginative (Rajaram, Frawley, etc.) or based on lacking of philological background (Talageri 1993, 2000, Bisht 1999 etc.).

[26] Some still believe that the early Upaniṣads date from a period later than that of the Buddha; see P. Horsch 1966, or Bronkhorst 1986.

[27] As is well known, Indian tradition additionally distinguishes between *śruti* ("hearing"), i.e. texts revealed to the Ṛṣis, the primordial Seers, and texts having human authors (*smṛti* "remembrance"). All texts from the Saṃhitās to the Upaniṣads are *śruti* while the late Vedic Sūtras are regarded as *smṛti*.

period on the surface appears to be a sudden one; however, this enigmatic "dark period" can be approached from various angles.

In order to recognize the changes involved it is necessary, first, to briefly characterize the Old and the Late Vedic period.

| RV, the oldest text | Late Brāhmaṇas/Upaniṣads |
| ----------------------- | ------------------------------------- |

*geographical area*:

| | |
| --- | --- |
| Afghanistan, Panjab and surroundings up to the Yamunā (once the Gaṅgā); | All of Northern India, from the Kabul river (Gandhāra) to Aṅga, Puṇḍra (Bengal), and to Vidarbha (N. E. Mahārāṣṭra), Andhra in the South |

*political set-up*:

| | |
| --- | --- |
| Some 50 smaller tribes/clans, in constant conflict (*gaviṣṭi*) against each other and against some the aborigines (*dasyu*) | Two major groups, the Kuru-Pañcāla and Kosala-Videha; at the rims of these policies there are some minor tribes: Matsya, Uśīnara, etc. |
| The Vedic tribes are sometimes arranged into 5 "peoples" (*kṛṣṭi, jana*), etc.: 4 in the 4 directions, with one, the major tribe at the "center" | Area is divided into some 16 "kingdoms"; the Kuru-Pañcāla form the center, the minor tribes and "outsiders" (Bāhīka, Magadha etc.) constitute the outward frames*society:* |
| Chieftains (*rāja*n) lord over fellow *rājanya*/*kṣatriya* (nobility) and the *viś* "the people", with the addition of the aborigines and servants / slaves (*dāsa, dasyu, puruṣa*) | Joint front of the Kṣatriya and the Brahmins (*brahma-kṣatra*) against the "people"; successively stricter stratification into the 3 *ārya* (twice-born) and the additional *śūdra* (aboriginal) classes (*varṇa*) |

*texts and ritual*:

| | |
| --- | --- |
| Gods are invited to often quite elaborate rituals, such as the Soma ritual, they are treated as guests, fed and praised by poets who are in-spired and compose hymns in the traditional (IIr./I.E.) | The ritual has been transformed into an elaborate framework of complicated, frame-like structures, set according to two major patterns (*Soma, Iṣṭi*); poetry of ancient style is no longer produced; most older poetry is collected in some major texts and used in the |

poetical language and in the traditional meters; the hymns are collected in small sets by the poets' families and clans.

ritual in a rather schematic way. - New forms of literature dealing with the explanation of the ritual have developed.

In the sequel, more substance is provided to this skeleton of oldest Indian history.

## § 2 The Ṛgvedic Period and the Middle Vedic period.

We still do not know little concrete about the immigration of various tribes and clans, except for a few elusive remarks in the RV, ŚB or BŚS. The Panjab is regarded in the RV as settled by some early Ṛgvedic tribes,[28] the Yadu-Turvaśa, and the Anu-Druhyu.[29] There are some dim reminiscences[30] of an earlier immigration from the mountainous areas west of the Panjab, that is mainly, Afghanistan with its great River Sarasvatī (Harax$^v$a$^i$tī, Helmand). The Pūru and their sub-tribe, the Bharata, entered into this set-up and thoroughly disturbed it. Especially RV books 3 and 7 give several accounts of the final victory of the Bharatas over the earlier tribes that seem to have been joined by the Pūrus (probably with their Ikṣvāku sub-tribe). In the famous *Battle of the Ten Kings* the Bharata chieftain Sudās,[31] together with his priest Vasiṣṭha, a newcomer from the Iranian west, overcame the joint forces of the other Ṛgvedic tribes by cleverly diverting the water of the Paruṣṇī river, which flowed

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[28] **More on the Ṛgvedic period in Witzel 1995.**

[29] **Their exact locations are not well known. RV 8.10.5 mentions them from west to east: as Druhyu, Anu (in this order, no metrical reason) and Turvaśa, Yadu (here, order because of the meter; according to Behaghel's law one would expect the opposite order: Anu-Druhyu, Yadu-Turvaśa). The Anu lived on the Paruṣṇī (8.74.15,4, note that this is in a Kāṇva book). The Druhyu may have been situated in the northwest; the Epic locates them in Gandhāra. The Turvaśa are connected with the Pañcāla at ŚB 13.5.4.16, cf. below, on the Ikṣvāku. The Yadu are identified as Yakṣu at 7.18 by H.-P. Schmidt 1980; they stay at the Yamunā with their chief Bheda, after the Ten Kings' Battle. -- The Pūru survived at least until the time of Alexander: he fought their king *Poros* (< *Paurava*) in the Panjab. (Names of tribes and their kings often are identical, cf. Pāṇini on *Kamboja*, and *Abisarēs* = *Abhisāra*, the name of a land retained as late as in the Rājataraṅgiṇī). The RV once locates the Pūru on the Suṣoma, perhaps the Soan, an eastern tributary of the Indus, close to their later habitat in Alexander's time.**

[30] **They have immigrated into the Panjab in living memory: "Indra... carry Yadu and Turvaśa across the waters" RV 6.20.12 = 1.174.9; "Indra .. brought Yadu and Turvaśa from far away" RV 6.45.1; they "have crossed many rivers" (frequent); "have gone through narrow passages": 2.11.18 "For the Arya you open the light; the Dasyu was left lying on the left." (*ápāvṛṇor jyótir ā́ryāya, ní savyatáḥ sādi dásyur, indra*).a'**

[31] **He is called Kṣatra in the Ten Kings' Battle at JB 3.245 §205; KS 21.10:50.1 has Pratardana; MS 3.7.7: 40.6 Pratardana Daivodāsi. Even if we suppose the usual model of descendence (Divodāsa - Daivodāsa - Daivodāsi) this does not work out as Sudās is the son of Divodāsa. The name reflects, however, some vague reminiscences, as Pratṛd is one of his Sudās' ancestors; JB, however, also has Sudās Paijavana (a patronym of the Saudāsa family at RV 7.18.22-25) as chief of the Ikṣvākus(!), not of the Bharata, while the Bharatas (still with Viśvāmitra, crossing the Sindhu) are pursued by the Ikṣvākus at JB 3.237-238 : §204. -- JUB 4.6.1.2 knows of the Bharatas and Bhagīratha Aikṣvāka being in friendly relation (cf. RV 10.60.1-2 Bhajeratha, next to Māhīna, Rathaproṣṭha, -- grandsons of Agastya).**

between naturally built up dams on a much higher level than the surrounding land.[32] Apart from such data, there are but few indications of what exactly has happened at this early period of Indian history.[33] JB 3.238 remembers the crossing of the Sindhu river by the immigrating Bharatas and their rivals, the Ikṣvākus.

An early Sūtra text, however, retains at BŚS 18.44:397.9 sqq., a pregnant memory of the (im)migration of the Indo-Aryans into Northern India and of their split into two groups: *prāṅ Āyuṃ pravavrāja. tasyaite Kuru-Pañcālāṃ Kāśi-Videhā ity etad Āyavam. pratyaṅ Amāvasus. tasyaite Gāndhārayas +Parśavo*[34] *'rāṭṭā ity etad Āmāvasyavam.* "Āyu went (*ay/i*) eastwards. His (people) are the (well-known) Kuru-Pañcāla and the Kāśi-Videha. That is the Āyava (group). Amāvasu (stayed at home,[35] *amā vas*) in the West. His (people) are the (well-known) Gāndhāri, Parśu and Arāṭṭa. That is the Āmāvasyava (group)."[36]

The Gāndhāri, Parśu[37] and Aratta as well as the Kāśi-Videha constitute the outer rim of Old Indo-Aryan civilization while the Kuru-Pañcāla form the innovative center where Vedic orthopraxy developed. Indeed, the text makes a differentiation between the peoples of the Panjab and the territories west of it on one hand, and of the "properly Vedic" tribes of Madhyadeśa and the adjacent country east of it, on the other hand. (We must forget, however,

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[32] For such type of rivers, note the Po in N. Italy, the Yellow River in China, etc. - See R. L. Singh 1971:89, 132. cf. above, n. 1.

**[33]** For details see Witzel,1995.

[34] *gandhārayasparśavo* of the corrupt MSS for intended *Parśu*, attested since RV 8.6.46, a book that has western (Iranian) leanings (Witzel 1999), cf. OP *Pārsa* 'Persian' < *\*pārsva* < *\*pārc'ua*. The Aratta (with various spellings, *Āraṭṭa, Arāṭṭa),* are a western people just as the Gandhāra and other 'outsiders' (*Bāhīka,* ŚB 1.7.8.3, Mbh 8.2030); cf. Mesopotamian *Aratta*, a distant eastern country from where Lapis Lazuli is brought (Witzel 1980); probably Arachosia, just north of the Chagai Hills that produce Lapis, just like the more famous Badakhshan area, north of the Hindukush; see now Possehl 1996b and P. Steinkeller 1998, Vassilkov & Gurow 1995. Discussion in Witzel 2001.

[35] Alternatively, echoing the first sentence: "Amāvasu (went) westwards." See discussion in the next note.

[36] Detailed discussion in Witzel 2001: n. 45-46. This passage was not correctly translated as printed in Witzel 1989, 1995, which has elicited lively, if not emotive and abusive internet discussions, even alleging "fabrication of evidence" (cf. Elst 1999: 164-5). I had printed: "(His other people) stayed at home in the West" instead of: "(His other people stayed) at home in the West" or better "Amāvasu (stayed at home) in the West,"— thus unfortunately intermingling translation and interpretation in the two summary style papers (1989, 1995). However, the passage plays, in the usual Brāhmaṇa style, with names and their Nirukta-like interpretations and etymologies: *Amāvasyu : amā vas* 'to dwell at home', as opposed to *Āyu : ay/i* 'to go', contrasting the 'stay home' peoples in the west (*Āmāvasyavaḥ*) with those (*Āyavaḥ*) who went/went forth (*ay/i + pra vraj*) eastwards, as the text clearly says; cf. Krick (1982: 214). -- However, the missing verb in *pratyaṅ Amāvasus* allows suppletion of *pravavrāja*. In that case, one group (*Āyavaḥ*) 'went east', the other one (*Āmāvasyavaḥ*) 'went west', but *both* from an unknown *central* area, to the west of the Kuru land, which is excluded as the Kurus went eastwards (i.e. towards it!): apparently they moved out from somewhere in the Panjab, e.g., from the Paruṣṇī, the place of the Ten Kings' Battle, RV 7.18.

[37] Regarded by some as Persians, see Cardona 1976/1980: *Pāṇini*, p. 276; cf. Witzel 1989: n. 327, 339. However, this is the earliest attestation of the name of the Pashtos, whose early linguistic form was *\*parc'wa*, that resulted in mod. Pashto (discussion in Witzel 2000). - However, RV *paktha-* N.pr., 'the fifth" has to be excluded in this Pashto context, see Mayrhofer, *KEWA* 2,183; 3,748, *EWAia* II,61. (below n. 353)

in this context, the *vrātya*s of whom much has been made in past decades as early Eastern immigrants).[38]

The Bharata chief Sudās settled on the Sarasvatī river in the E. Panjab; in fact RV 3.53.11 regards this as the center of the Earth (*vara ā pṛthivyāḥ*) where he has slain his enemies in the W., N., and E., and where the South (probably the Khāṇḍava jungle)[39] is home to the non-Aryan, non-offering Kīkaṭa aborigines with Pramaganda as their chief.[40] It is here that Sudās celebrates his victory[41] with a horse sacrifice.[42]

All of this points to the early emergence of the area later known as Kurukṣetra, with the victory nearby and the settlement of the Bharatas in the region. The land of Kurukṣetra was not chosen without reason. It has a strategic importance between the Himalayas in the North and the desert viz. the Khāṇḍava jungle to the south. It is the only easy passage to the Gangetic plain![43]  The Ṛgvedic period is followed by the little studied

## Middle Vedic period

This period is represented by the Mantras and the expository prose of the YV Saṃhitās (MS, KS/ KpS, TS) and by several older Brāhmaṇas[44] -- texts composed in the Kuru-Pañcāla area, between the E. Panjab and Kausambi / Allahabad. The Kāśis are still regarded as outsiders, as are the Bāhikas of the Panjab: the geographical center of Vedic civilization thus has spread from the Gandhāra/ Panjab area to the Eastern rims of the Panjab (Kurukṣetra, Haryana) and beyond, well into Uttar Pradesh. This is obvious because of references as such those on the rivers flowing eastwards and westwards.[45] Both Saṃhitās of the AV attest the rims of geographical knowledge of this period. They are *Balhika*

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[38]  Now H. Falk (1986) provides a better interpretation of their character, strictly derived from the evidence of the texts themselves: The Vrātyas are poor, mostly younger Brahmins and Kṣatriyas who in search of a "start capital" form a dark, ominous sodality which demands ransom from the local well-settled *gṛhastha*s and even from the chieftains. Note the story in BŚS 18.26 (cf. Falk's transl. 1986: 55 sqq.) about the Vrātyas of the Kurus at the court of the Pañcāla king Keśin Dālbhya. The Kurus apparently play the role of Vrātyas for the Pañcālas (and vice versa?) -- Cf. also the "*divya vrātya*" of the Sṛñja(ya) in the Keśin legend on *dīkṣā*, VādhB 4.37: Caland 1990:,447 sqq.) A constant dichotomy of society is expressed by the loose union of the two major tribes. Cf. the situation as reflected in myth: the *deva*s and *asura*s are in constant conflict. On the other hand, JB 2.278-9 tells that the mother of Keśin Dārbhya, the Pañcāla king, came from the Kuru tribe, and his (maternal) uncle Ucchaiḥśravas, son of Kuvaya, was the King of Kurus (*kauravya rājā*): a clear case of intermarriage of the two royal houses, see Witzel 1989: 236, n.328.

[39]  To be understood as a dry forest such like that of Girnar in Gujarat where even now lions, mentioned so frequently in the RV, survive.

[40]  South: 10.61.8 southern places are fit only for banishment; cf. n. 5.

[41]  Regarding the aboriginal population, described in terms such as: "the black tribes moved away, leaving behind their possessions" 7.5.3; "Āyu drove them from their home".

[42]  Clearly a predecessor of the later Śrauta rite, see below; for the horse sacrifice in RV, see RV 1.162-163, and cf. 4.38-40 on the horse Dadhikrā of king Trasadasyu.

[43]  Note that many major battles in Indian history were fought there.

[44]  The older portions (1-5) of the Aitareya Br.; TB; the lost Śāṭyāyaṇa Br. which was elaborated as JB; the older, lost form of PB (*pace* Bodewitz 1990: introd. p. 2 sq.); some older portions of the largely lost KaṭhB.

[45]  For details see Witzel 1987: 173-213.

(Bactria), *Mūjavant* (Mt. Muzh Tagh Ata, southwestern Xinjiang) and *Gandhāri* in the northwest while the southeast is marked by the *Kāśi* (PS) viz. *Aṅga* (in the somewhat later ŚS).[46]

At the end of the Ṛgvedic period the 50-odd tribes have disappeared and only the Kuru(-Pañcāla), along with a few minor tribes at their rims (Uśīnara, Matsya, etc.) appear in the post-Ṛgvedic texts.[47]

## II. EMERGENCE

However, the origin of the new large Kuru tribe is still hidden behind the veils of the late and post-Ṛgvedic Dark Period. There are some hints, though: some earlier tribes were remembered as forming parts of the two new tribal unions, such as the *Krivi* among the Pañcāla.[48] In addition, some very neglected passages in Middle Vedic texts suggest that among the Kuru "dominion is threefold"[49] and it was six-fold[50] (originally threefold as well)[51] among the Pañcāla, all of which suggests *phyle/tribus*-like divisions of these larger

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[46] Only occasionally the Vaideha, Saindhava horses and cows, see Witzel 1987: 181 (KS 13.4:183.17, MS 2.5.3:50.10; TS 2.1.4.4, cf. p. 183, 195 n. 76;), or the Himalayan mountains are mentioned: perhaps there was not much interest for other areas, of mostly non-orthoprax groups and tribes and of *dasyu*s.

[47] As will be seen below, it was at this time that the Kuru tribe evolved and many other changes in the political situation, structure of tribes and society in general took place, and it is this period that saw major shifts in religion and ritual, and in the collection and production of texts. -- In terms of relative chronology, this happened in the immediate post-Ṛgvedic period which preceded the texts of the YV Saṃhitā prose (= expository prose in Brāhmaṇa type texts of MS, KS, TS) and coincides with the Mantra period (AV, SV, RVKh, YV Mantras).

[48] MacDonell-Keith, 1958/1967 :I,198.

[49] The *rāṣṭra* among the Bharatas is divided into three parts: one is with the Vaitahavya's, one with the Mitravat's (Kṛtaveśa unified the two) JB 3.196: §196; the third group most probably is that of the reigning clan, the Bharatas. Cf. the Bharata/Bhoja name Sumitra. -- The Vaitahavyas are identified with the Sṛñjaya, AV 5.18.11, 5.19.1; they lost their position as they had killed and devoured a Brahmin's cow; see *Vedic Index*, s.v. - Cf. also Sahadeva Sārñjaya :: Somaka Sāhadevya AB 7.34.9; and also the Sṛñja king at VādhB 4.37: Caland, *Kl. Schr.* p. 147 sqq. At ŚB 12.9.3.1 sqq. the Kauravya are quite separate from the Sṛñjaya as far as "kingship" is concerned. -- Note that this kind of division is still reflected in the Mahābhārata, - at least into two groups, the Pāṇḍava and Kaurava, and with their two "capitals" at Indraprastha and Hastinapura.

[50] See below. -- Note that the YV school of the Pañcāla, the Taittirīya, has 6 subschools as well (Baudh., Vādh., Bhār., Āp., Hir., Vaikh.) which echo, also in location (see Witzel 1987: 205), the division of this great tribe. -- The Pañcāla include the Ṛgvedic Krivis, see Vedic Index I,198, cf. Kraivya Pañcāla ŚB 13.5.4.7. According to R.K. Paul, *South Pañcāla*, p.13, the Pañcāla include 5 tribes: *Krivi, Turvaśa, Keśin, Sṛñjaya*(! - really a Kuru subtribe), *Somaka* (but see last note!); the Purāṇas are said to have: *Mudgala, Sṛñjaya, Brahadiśu, Yavinara*, see Bajpai, *The Geographical Encyclopaedia of Ancient and Medieval India*, p.100, and H.C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India (7th ed.)*, p. 65.

[51] KS 30.2:183,17, speaks only of a threefold division: JB 3.156 *tvatvādṛśāḥ ṣaḍ rājānaḥ Pañcāleṣu vedyā iti*. (Rau 1957: 47: "Es gibt bekanntlich sechs wie du [Abhipratāraṇa] hochadlige Männer"); cf. R. Thapar 1984: 23 n. 8, with a division into 5 and a mixed I.E.-Dravidian etymology. One group among them, at least, is indicated by ŚB 13.5.4.7 which tells that the Pañcālas were formerly called Krivi.

unions.[52]  Interestingly, the designs of the pottery of the period (PGW, see §6) seems to echo the tribal distinction between the Kurus and Pañcālas, and it remains to be seen whether further distinguishing archaeological traits will be identified.[53]

However, between the clear evidence for the leading position of the Bharata tribe in the late Ṛgvedic period and the equally detailed textual support for the eminent position of the Kuru in the Kuru-Pañcāla group of the early YV Saṃhitās (Maitrāyaṇi and Kaṭha Saṃhitās), there is clear evidence for a certain dark period, a gap in time between the late Ṛgveda and the time of the YV Saṃhitās. It is this period that will be studied here in detail.

## § 3 The Dark Period and the "Mantra" Period.

§ 3.1. We now know that the linguistically defined period of the "Mantra language"[54] intervened between that of RV poetry and the beginning of the Middle Vedic prose, a third level that is first attested as the expository prose in "*brāhmaṇa* style" of the earliest extant YV Saṃhitās. Though the Black Yajurveda Saṃhitās contain both Mantras and expository prose (in *brāhmaṇa* style) the Mantras are linguistically older and are quoted as such in the younger prose sections of these Saṃhitās.

We do not know much about the Mantra period. Frequently, it is not even recognized as a separate period at all. Some Vedic scholars believe that the Ṛgvedic texts were followed immediately by those of the Atharvaveda and the Maitrāyaṇi, Kaṭha, and Taittirīya Saṃhitās. Others do not recognize a time difference at all, for example between AV and MS. Surprisingly, even more scholars confound the early Yajurveda Saṃhitās (MS, KS, TS) with the Brāhmaṇas proper (AB, TB, etc.), e.g. Gonda in his *History of Vedic Literature*.[55] However, from the point of view of linguistics and of internal chronology, these are definite, separate periods.

The texts of the Mantra period include the following: the two Atharvaveda texts, Paippalāda and Śaunaka Saṃhitā and the Ṛgveda Khilas (Scheftelowitz' *Apokryphen*); then, the Sāmaveda Saṃhitās, i.e. the Kauthuma/Rāṇāyaṇīya Saṃhitā (SV) and the Jaiminīya Saṃhitā (JS) -- that is, as far as they actually differ[56] from their direct source, the Ṛgveda. Finally, there are the Mantras of the Yajurveda Saṃhitās: the various small Mantra collections found in the various YV Saṃhitās, the Maitrāyaṇīya (MS), Kaṭha (KS), Kapiṣṭhala (KpS), Taittirīya (TS), and, in a consolidated and unified form (without

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[52]  And which provide a parallel to the much later development of Greek city states and the early Roman kingdom and republic, see G. Nagy, *Greek mythology and poetics*, 1990: 276 sqq.

[53]  See G. Erdosy 1988, 1995: The Prelude to Urbanisation, forthc. Update in G. M. Pande (1999).

[54]  See J. Narten, *Die Sprache* 14, 1968, 113-134, Witzel 1989, p. 124.

[55]  Something rather surprising for someone who spent his whole life in Vedic studies, see J. Gonda 1975.

[56]  The Kauthuma SV has 75 new, non-RV Mantras only.

intervening expository prose) in the Vājasaneyi (VS) schools; VS has two sub-school Saṃhitās, the Kāṇva (VSK) and the Mādhyandina Saṃhitās (VSM).[57]

It is in these texts that we find scarce but valuable indications of what has happened during the Dark Period referred to above. In addition, we can occasionally adduce the evidence provided by the next textual layer, that of the expository prose of the YV Saṃhitās (MS, KS, TS), with their *brāhmaṇa* type explanation of the ritual, to adumbrate the more scanty evidence from the Mantra texts. The Mantras, for the great part, only provide the texts recited (or mumbled) by the priests during the ritual and cannot, by their very nature as ritual formulas, be expected to yield much information on the contemporary society.

They are either composed in verse or they are prose formulas. Though the verse Mantras are often taken from the RV, they differ remarkably from the RV verses in their rather liberal treatment of the actual wording of the text, as seen in each of the non-Ṛgvedic oral traditions of the period. There are innumerable innovations, corruptions, changes or substitutions of words or whole verse lines. It is in these texts, stemming from the Vedic "Dark Age", that the emergence of the new, post-Ṛgvedic Śrauta ritual, the so-called 'Classical' Vedic ritual, is apparent for the first time.

There is a remarkable change from the Ṛgvedic period, with its "heroic" (Indra) and ritual (Soma) poetry, which reflects a society of several dozens of semi-nomadic tribes with kinglets or chieftains as their leaders. Politically and socially, several parameters have changed dramatically. In the Mantra texts we do no longer hear of the pre-eminence of the Bharata tribe but *only* about the Kuru tribe as the dominant force. Nevertheless, the great chieftain of the Kuru still is called the chieftain (*rājan*) of the *Bharata*, e.g. in the Mantras of the royal consecration in the Taittirīya Saṃhitā.[58] The other Ṛgvedic tribes have virtually disappeared from the scene. Some of them have merged into the Kurus, some others apparently into the neighboring tribe of the Pañcālas, who settled east of the Kurus, in modern Uttar Pradesh. The Kuru of the Mantra period thus are the first large trans-tribal union, a large chiefdom, a kingdom; it continues to figure most prominently in the much later Yajurveda prose texts.

Both tribes, the Kurus and the Pañcālas, form a "people" of two large tribes with separate chieftains, whose families, however, intermarry.[59] In other respects as well, the two tribes form a ritual union within one large chiefdom. This is based on competition between two moieties: for example, they exchange their roving bands of *vrātya*s, etc. (see below).

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[57] The enormous complication of rituals and their discussion in school classes actually situated on the offering ground, as well as the practice to challenge each other about the secret import of a rite or a single action, led to the early development of "schools", literally "twigs/branches" (*śākhā*) in each of the four Vedas. Among the oldest YV schools are the Caraka, Maitrāyaṇīya and Kaṭha. For more on this, see below § 5.

[58] TS 1.8.10.2, TB 1.7.4.2,6.7 *eṣa vo Bharatā rājā* (remarkable for a Pañcāla text, but understandable if the Kurus were dominant still at the time of the formation of the text), while the parallel version in MS 2.6.9:69.7, KS 15.7:214.1 is vague: *eṣa te janate rājā*, VSK 11.3.3, 6.3 *eṣa vaḥ kuravo rāja* (underlining their western origins!); VSM 9.40 *eṣā vo 'mī rājā*; cf. Keith, *TS transl.*, p. xciii, Witzel 1987, esp. p. 177 sqq. and 182, n. 42.

[59] See intermarriage at JB 2.278-9; see below § 9.

This Dark Age, the "gap" between the late RV and the Mantras of the early YV Saṃhitās, can be approached by asking such questions as: what was the reason

* for the shift in the geographical location of the tribes from the Panjab to Kurukṣetra and Pañcāla?[60]

* for the shift of the political center?

* for the importance of Kurukṣetra in general?

* for unification of the 50-odd major clans and tribes into a few large tribes?

* for the development of the new Vedic (Śrauta) ritual, such as the new order of priests, multiplication of ritual fires, and the development of new rituals, such as the Agnicayana ritual?

* for certain changes in religion: emergence of new gods such as Prajāpati, beginning already in RV 10? (See below § 5).

* for the collection of all Ṛgvedic hymns and other early Vedic texts?

* for the establishment of small Mantra collections (*darśapaurṇamasa, soma*, etc.) *within* the YV Mantra collections?

* for the differences in language and order of the texts as preserved by different schools of the same Veda: AVŚ : PS,   KS : MS, TS; JS : KauthSV.

What becomes apparent from even a brief study of the Mantras as a separate body of texts is the following. As indicated above (§ 2), the geographical center of Vedic civilization has moved from the Panjab to the Eastern Panjab (Kurukṣetra, Haryana) and beyond, into Uttar Pradesh. This is obvious in such references as those on the rivers flowing eastwards and westwards[61] from Kurukṣetra, the eastern portion of that straddles the subcontinental divide between the Indus and Gangetic plains. Both Saṃhitās of the AV attest the rims of geographical knowledge of this time as Balhika (Bactria), and Gandhāri in the extreme northwest of the subcontinent and Kāśi (according to PS) viz. Aṅga (acc. to the somewhat later ŚS, situated at the northwestern border of Bengal) in the southeast.[62]

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[60] An additional question to be asked is that of the relationship of this shift with that of the late/post-Indus population (Shaffer 1999) into the *same* area, see below.

[61] For details see Witzel 1987, p. 177.

[62] Only occasionally the *Vaideha* cows, and *Saindhava* horses, or the Himalaya mountains are mentioned: perhaps there was not much interest for other areas, for mostly non-orthoprax groups and tribes and for *dasyu*s.

As has been underlined above, the tribes mentioned in the Mantras are new. The Kuru[63] and Pañcāla tribes make their first appearance here; a few old tribes and several smaller new ones occur: Uśīnara, Matsya, Satvant, Kāśi, etc. The Gandhāri in the Kabul basin in the north-west, and their neighbors, the Mahāvṛṣas, are regarded as outsiders or foreigners by the people who composed these Mantras. In the same way the eastern neighbors, the Kāśis (PS) or the Aṅgas on the border of Bengal (ŚS) are beyond the pale of Vedic civilization. The 50-odd Ṛgvedic tribes and clans thus have coalesced into a few major groups along with some remaining fringe tribes. The eastern and southern expansion[64] of Vedic culture has just begun at this moment.

## 3.2. Kurukṣetra

What is surprising, however, is the central role of Kurukṣetra, that even at this early time was more of a marginal region in the north-west of the geographical area of the texts. It is no longer the Indus or the other Panjab rivers that are the center, nor is it, as later on, Uttar Pradesh or the Benares area (Kāśi), but it is the Sarasvatī/Dṛṣadvatī area, --- in short Kurukṣetra, the "Field of the Kurus".

The new geo-political notion of the Kuru-Pañcāla may be compared to the older, Ṛgvedic notion of the "Five Peoples" (*jana, kṛṣṭi, carṣaṇi, kṣiti, mānuṣa*), with the four well-known tribes, the Yadu-Turvaśa and the Anu-Druhyu, to which the Pūru are added in the (theoretical) center. Kurukṣetra could then be regarded as the new political center, with the major tribe, the Bharata-Kuru, and this center mut not be the exact geographical one. The same is expressed in ritual: Kurukṣetra is the *real,* cosmic center. It is here, and not in other parts of the Kuru land, nor in the Pañcāla area (such as the Naimiṣa forest), that the gods traditionally sacrifice and hold their long *sattra* rites to overcome their perpetual foes, the Asuras.[65]

In terms of real geography, the area was relatively dry already by c. 1000 BCE, and indeed, the later Brāhmaṇas speak about the Sarasvatī as disappearing in the desert at the

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[63] Note that the name of the *Kuru* is a new one (cf. Old Persian *kuruš* / Cyrus); apparently, it was originally a nickname that was avoided at first -- especially if K. Hoffmann's etymology, from *ku-ru* "denigrating (the enemies, before battle)", see *KEWA* III 677, is modified to include the "bad speech habit" of the Kurus (cf. ŚB 9.3.1.24 characterizing Bāhīka speech as *śapatara*). Indeed, the Kuru kings, both in the Veda as well as in the Epic typically have names that include the denigrating elements *duḥ-, ku-,* such as *Dur*-yodhana, *Duḥ*-śāsana; RV *Dur*-gaha (sometimes only the horse of a Pūru king, see H.-P. Schmidt, *Fs.* Heesterman), ŚB 13.5.4 Bharata *Dauḥ*-śānti; *Duṣ*-tarītu Paumsāyana is a Kauravya king who had lost the kingdom after 10 generations, ŚB 13.9.3.2 Uccaiḥśravas, a Kuru king, is the son of *Ku*-yava; also the Pañcāla king *Dur*-mukha Pāñcāla AB 8.14/8.19. -- Note that, normally, such pejorative names are given to children for their protection from evil; in the present case, they have become a dynastic fashion.

[64] See W. Rau 1957: 13.

[65] See below, on the rivers Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī, and cf. PB 25.13 "Indra and Ruśamā made a wager: 'Whichever of us shall first run around the earth shall be the winner.' Indra ran around the earth, Ruśamā ran around Kurukṣetra (only)." This indicates that Kurukṣetra is identified with the whole earth; cf. Hoffmann 1975: 7.

western edge of Kurukṣetra.[66] However, enough of the monsoon as reaches the area: making it suitable for successful cattle raising, and good enough for agriculture -- at certain locations even without irrigation, mostly in the shallow valleys. This view is supported by the excavations and surveys of the French archaeological team of J.-P. Francfort,[67] which indicate that the climate roughly had been the same as today (that neglects the massive climate change around 2000 BCE). However, agriculture had been supported in some parts of the Kurukṣetra area by irrigation already in Harappan time.[68] The use of irrigation in this area continues in post-Harappan times.[69] In fact, two different canals that led from the Sutlej viz. Yamunā westwards were used throughout the post-Ṛgvedic period;[70] their control must have been of considerable importance even for the semi-nomadic Aryans who mainly cultivated barley (*yava*) but some other crops such as buckwheat, sesame and wheat, and increasingly so also rice that had reached the Indus area from the east at the end of the Harappan period.

It is in this period that we find the first clear evidence for the use of rice by the Indo-Aryan tribes (see below). The RV, it is true, contains the word *puroḍāśa* that later on always means "rice cake", but there is no indication for this specific meaning[71] in the RV. Indeed, a ritual item such as *puroḍāśa* is expected to have retained its older ingredients, that is some kind of flour other than rice. The most likely one was "cake made of *yava* (barley) flour", the traditional offering made to the gods.[72] (Wheat was the staple of the Indus civilization but, typically, it was not adopted as main offering in the Śrauta ritual.)

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[66] A fact usually reported only by the Brāhmaṇa texts, such as JB *Sarasvatyā unmajjana* 3.43. The simple reason for the continuing fame of the Sarasvatī in the RV can be *tradition* itself (as seen in the ŚB Videgha story and in that of Namin Sāpya, PB 25) -- The reason is not simply the increasing lack of rainfall due to changing climate, see D.P. Agrawal and B. M. Pande 1977: 55-92, and cf. R. L. Singh 1971: 89. There also was a dramatic change in the course of some rivers: several of the headwaters of the Sarasvatī were captured by the Yamunā at some point during this period, see above, n. 1 and cf. G. Erdosy 1989, 34-47, Radhakrishna and Mehr 1999, and see especially Mughal 1997.

[67] Francfort 1985, cf. Francfort 1989: 260-264.

[68] Indeed an old canal reaches Siswal, that is 200 km west of the Yamunā! (Francfort, p.35); cf. this with the Vedic and Iranian evidence for "canals": RV *nāvyā-* 'navigable river', vs. *yavyā* "stream, channel", *Yavyāvatī*, RV 8.98.8, see *KEWA* III, 11; Buddruss KZ 77, 242. The existence of a similar word in Old Persian (*yauviyā*) indicates contact of the Indo-Iranians with irrigating peoples in N.Iran/Afghanistan by c. 2000 BCE; see Witzel 1999 on this Central Asian loan word.

[69] Cf. the preceding note; however, the references in RV to "damming of rivers", e.g. in the 'Battle of the Ten Kings' is a misunderstanding of the natural features of the area, see above n. 32.

[70] During the PGW period; only after this there is a hiatus until Kuṣāṇa times.

[71] The related word *odana* "rice dish" is limited to the Emuṣa myth of book 8: see Kuiper 1950; but cf. now his partial withdrawal in Kuiper 1991:18. The word is attested at: RV 8.69.14 *bhinát kanæena odanam pacyámānam par" gir†*; 8.77.6 *nir āvidhyad giribhya ā dhārayat pakvam odanam*; 8.77.10c *śatám mahiṣ†n kṣīrapākám odanáṃ varāhám índra emuṣám.* -- Cf. Geldner, (Bergaigne, *Rech. lit. rit. véd.*, 16) *ad* RV 3.28; cf. also *odana*, below.

[72] Cf. Greek *zeiá, zéa* = *yava* (cf. *KEWA* 3,10), and cf. C. Watkins 1978.

According to some Indian scholars, during this period (until c. 800 BCE) a wetter climate continued in Kurukṣetra, which perhaps made irrigation less necessary.[73] In any case, the actual use of rice in the agriculture of the period provided for the first great surplus that was necessary for the upkeep of a large class of priests as constituted by the Brahmins, and for the large sacrifices they propagated.

Furthermore, Kurukṣetra is, as later history teaches again and again, a strategically important area: wedged between the Himalayas in the north and the Tharr desert in the south, it controls the access to the Gaṅgā plains, especially the savanna of the Yamunā/Gaṅgā *doāb*. A later text, AB 3.44, speaks about the wide wildernesses (*dīrghāraṇyāṇi*) of the West and the more settled areas of the East, where "villages (*grāma*, correctly still: 'wagon train, trek'[74]) are closer to each other". The western areas[75] obviously were much less settled and drier.

The eastern boundary of the Kuru(-Pañcāla) is probably due to the wetter climate (because of the increasing influence of the monsoon) east of Delhi and even more so, east of Kausambi/Allahabad. The steppe/savanna type vegetation of the eastern Panjab and western U.P. gave way to tropical rain forest about the latitude of Allahabad. Such jungle areas were of very little attraction for the cattle raising Indo-Aryans. They also were more difficult to clear for agriculture though this was not impossible even with stone and copper axes. However, such general clearing was carried out only after the introduction, on a larger scale, of iron tools. Even the Gaṅgā-Yamunā *doāb* was at first settled only along the rivers during the Middle Vedic period. The Eastern jungles were finally cleared and present N. Bihar was "cultivated" with rice plantations -- as the Videgha legend narrates[77] -- only during the Brāhmaṇa period, while it was only thinly settled before.[78] It is notable that iron is found within its vicinity, in the Magadha hills, and that it has been mined there locally by aboriginal tribes.[79]

Apart from its dominant geopolitical location, the Kurukṣetra area was and still is important also in religion and ritual. Not only is this the standard land of sacrifice of even of the gods, but the river Sarasvatī itself is the personification on Earth of the goddess Sarasvatī, the name of the Milky Way in the Vedic texts (Witzel 1984). Comparable to the Iranian

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[73] See D.P. Agrawal and B. M. Pande 1977; cf. also the use of wild rice which does not need irrigation, see Thapar 1984: 23; for domesticated vs. wild rice in general, see I. C. Glover 1979; however note the recent advances, based on plant genetics, according to which Indian rice is a hybrid of Oryza *japonica* and Indian wild rice.; for *yava* > "rice", Fussman 1972; but cf. Turner, *CDIAL* 10431 for other Kafiri dialects.

[74] The forts made up of wagons every time the semi-nomadic Aryans settled down for a while (*kṣema*) before they move again (*yoga*), see W. Rau 1957: 51 sqq., Rau 1997.

[75] Note that AB 1-5 is a western text, from the Kurukṣetra area, see Witzel, *Localisation*. The western areas (unless those close to the Himalayas and their foothills) receive less rain, see e.g. J. Schwartzberg, *Historical Atlas of South Asia*, Chicago 1978, 5 .

[77] See below § 9.

[78] See below, on the two-level, chalcolithic settlements of the east.

[79] It is known now that iron has been introduced from there and from the Himalayas, and not primarily from Iran. Cf. W. Ruben (1954) on the Asur smiths, and cf. *asurya* as used for the eastern tribes; cf. also ŚB 3.2.1.23-24, ŚB 13.8.1.5 (their graves), 3.5.3.17 and 6.8.1.10 (Asurya speech, of the axle), pottery, thrown on a wheel, is regarded as demonic (*asura*-like); see W. Rau 1983: 41 sq., Witzel 1987: 187, and now Kottkamp 1992; note the legend at AB 7.18 about the adoption of such tribes.

Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā, she is important for procreation (providing sperm to men) and nourishing babies (giving milk to mothers), for the inspiration of poets (*dhī*).[80] She also is the heavenly river (Milky Way) that falls down on earth at the Plakṣa Prāsravaṇa, the world tree at the center of heaven and earth, located at the foothills of the Himalayas (Witzel 1984). The Sarasvatī continues to flow through the land of the Kuru people -- which is identified with the whole earth.[81] Later ritual (PB, JB, LŚS, etc., Witzel 1984) makes the Sarasvatī and her companion river, the Dṛṣadvatī, the place of long treks along their banks, that one may perhaps call "pilgrimages" -- they lead to the world tree and to heaven.

All of this is unmatched by any other area mentioned in Vedic texts. Places like Prayāga and Kāśi or even the Naimiṣa forest (famous later on in the Epic, though mentioned already in KS 10.6:130.8) attain this kind of status only well after the Vedic period.

After this sketch of the Mantra period, we have to return to the main question, that is how and why did all the changes referred to above (§1, §3) occurred. What were the forces behind the emergence of the Kuru hegemony, the increasing stratification of society and the origin of the caste system? What brought about Vedic orthopraxy, exemplified by the Śrauta ritual, which is first visible in the Mantra collection of the Yajurveda, and the Brahmanical "orthodoxy", first represented in the expository prose of the Yajurveda Saṃhitās?

# § 4 RITUAL AND MYTH

The description of the geographical, social and political facts, so far only sketched in outline, may now be supplemented by details relating to other facets of the civilization of the time. First, the development of rituals and texts.

## § 4.1. The changing ritual

During the late-Ṛgvedic and immediate post-Ṛgvedic period major changes in ritual took place. By the time of the expository prose of the Yajurveda Saṃhitās, the typical Śrauta rituals were well established. Actually, they seem to have taken shape already earlier, in the Mantra collections of the Yajurveda. These changes include the following:

1. Material changes emerge, such as that of the use of three fires instead of just one, as is typical for Indo-Iranian worship.[82] This brought about a new symbolism. Instead of the old

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[80]  Later on she becomes the goddess of poetry.

[81]  PB 25.13, see above.

[82]  This development began already in the RV, for example RV 1.164 has already three fires. Further: RV 1.15.4, 2.36.4, 5.4.8, 5.11.2, etc., see Hillebrandt 1897: 14. This has nothing to do, as one can read in certain

Indo-Iranian identification of fire with the sun (seen e.g., in Zoroastrian ritual),   the three new fires were identified with the earth, heaven and moon. Consequently, the offering ground became the universe and the priests act on it as gods in macrocosm. Also, rice was added to the traditional Indo-European food of the gods, barley (*yava*, see below).

2. There was a change in the character of the sponsor of the ritual (*gṛhapati*), now called *yajamāna*. His role diminished as far as active participation was concerned and, in spite of his name, "the one offering for himself", he became, for the most part, an inactive onlooker (*upadrāṣṭṛ*). This development, too, is foreshadowed in the RV.

3. A new division of labor for the priests is established. Some types of Ṛgvedic priests disappear, others get new assignments.   According to their actions and recitations, all are classified into four groups that coincide with the types of texts collected in the Four Vedas (see below § 4.5-6) There is a new and special role of the royal priest (*purohita*, see § 4.6).

4. A new structure of the ritual emerges and there is a multiplication of rites. Smaller rites become included by embedding them in large frames and these, in their turn, make up part of still larger rituals. While it is clear that Ṛgvedic ritual was changing, its original form still remains rather obscure. This is due to the nature of RV poetry -- notwithstanding some substantial recent advances in understanding the nature of change in late RV ritual (Proferes 1999, Oberlies 1998-1899).

5. In some Mantra texts the development of the non-solemn domestic rituals (*gṛhya*) is visible, especially *upanayana* (PS 19, 20, see Kajihara 2002), marriage (ŚS 14, PS 18), death (ŚS 18, PS 18) and *vrātya* (ŚS 15, PS 18, Falk 1986).

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One may agree with Heesterman (1983, 1985) in attributing some of these changes to a growing trend towards a less "violent" ritual without overt brutality and bloodshed. Or, one may rather investigate a number of other factors, as will be done here. In any case, it is obvious that the nature of the older Ṛgvedic rituals has changed. The earlier scheme was one of 'rites of passage' of the year, including, among others, a simple morning/evening fire ritual, some seasonal festivals, and the major New Year Soma sacrifice. All this was converted into a set of closely patterned rituals that were structured according to two major schemes (*iṣṭi* and *soma*). On this basis, they were expanded into elaborate arrays of complicated, framework-like sets of larger rituals. The very structure of each ritual makes for fascinating study, as does its development out of quite diverse Ṛgvedic (and often, even older) strands. During the same post-Ṛgvedic period, the "job description" of the priests in the emerging Śrauta rituals changed as well and their number was increased from a smaller Ṛgvedic number[83] to a maximum of 16 (or 17).

 It will be seen that all these changes did not occur accidentally, as the outcome of a steady rate of historical change, but that they took place during a fairly short period of time, and that they were even carried out deliberately, by a certain group of persons living at a certain place and at a certain time. This change was not brought about by a 'prophet', such as Zarathustra among the neighboring, closely related Iranian peoples, but by a group of

recent Indian publications, with the seven fireplaces found at Kalibangan, which may be anything from community kitchens to industrial fire places but which prove nothing for Vedic ritual (see now *EJVS* 7-3). If anything, the number seven is indicative of a *Harappan* interest in this number.

[83]  Seven, and incidentally more, see Hillebrandt 1897: 11 sqq.

persons with quite different motives. We will try to discover the exact nature of this group and the actions they undertook.


## § 4.2.   Sources for the emerging Śrauta ritual

The earliest texts that provide detailed evidence for the "classical" Vedic (Śrauta) ritual are the *mantra* texts of the YV Saṃhitas. The *mantra*s are prose sentences, and to some extent also verses, that are to be pronounced (actually, mumbled) during the ritual performance. Each action of the priest is accompanied by a Mantra. However, the actual procedure and order of ritual action can only be inferred, to some degree, from the Mantras themselves.[84] The sources of these Mantras are either unknown or they have been taken from the RV (Oldenberg 1888). Many of the Mantras are also found in the Brāhmaṇa and in later texts of the RV, SV, AV, sometimes for the first time.[85]

While such is the earliest available evidence for the "classical" Śrauta ritual, a puzzle remains: Many smaller rites as well as some larger ones such as the Soma ritual (Proferes 1999), the horse sacrifice, or the *dadhigharma* are already mentioned in the RV; however, as far as we can discern, these rituals differ widely from the "classical" ones both in form, content and "style."

The older parts of the YV Saṃhitās contain several small collections of Mantras (such as those of the prototypical New and Full Moon rituals and of the Soma ritual) that were collected and arranged for a substantial number of Śrauta rituals. Some of the major Śrauta rituals are indeed mentioned by name in early Mantra texts.[86] The very existence of these small Mantra collections as well as other evidence, gained from all earliest Mantra texts (AV, RV Khila, YV Mantra, SV), indicates that the major "classical" Śrauta rituals were fully developed already by the time of these early YV collections

The Mantra collections, then, are our first solid evidence for the classical ritual. What is remarkable is that a number of standard Mantras appear throughout these rituals so that it is extremely difficult to establish where their original place might have been. If one turns around the argument, the more useful question (at this moment) is: why is it that there is so much overlap between various rituals in the usage of one and the same Mantra? Obviously, because the rituals have been standardized and as they have influenced each other to a great extent, so that various identical or similar actions during a given ritual could automatically be assigned to the same Mantra.

The questions to be asked then are: how, by whom and why were they assigned? Why were the many diverse rites of the RV, executed by a number of famous clans with somewhat

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[84] There is no description of the ritual in these early YV texts; the *brāhmaṇa* style sections of the early YV Saṃhitās are later (linguistic level 3).

[85] Mantra production continued throughout the Vedic period and picked up again with the development of the Post-Vedic Hindu ritual. A good example are the Vaikhānasas with their Vedic and subsequently, Vaiṣṇava, rites and Mantras (Resnik 1997,2020).

[86] AV, catalogue of rituals, see AVŚ 11.7; etc.

varying[87] ritual customs put into a single framework? In which manner did this happen and who were the main protagonists of this process?


## § 4.3. Artificial change in the ritual

If one takes a closer look at some of the Śrauta rituals, one will discover that the reform was an intentional and artificial one. Not by priests who felt the slaughtering of animals a heavy weight on their conscience: this is the approach of modern phenomenologists of religion and of theoreticians of the Indian theory of ritual as expounded in the YV Saṃhitā and Brāhmaṇas. To exclude physical force from the ritual is not enough. In fact, slaughtering of animals continued in (Vedic) ritual, and even through the Upaniṣad and later periods, until this very day.[88]    Only, the method was changed at the time of the Yajurvedic "reform". The victim was no longer decapitated at the offering pole (Schmidt 1973), as in Ṛgvedic times, but was killed in a more "humane" way, by strangling and suffocation.[89]  Importantly, there is no *overt* bloodshed involved; the killing takes place outside the actual offering ground and it is executed by some helpers and not by the actual offering priests. As has not been observed, this substitution is elaborately justified by utilizing the ancient Dadhyañc myth (Witzel 1987, n. 103).

What is more interesting in this development is the fact that some Ṛgvedic rites reappear in the YV Saṃhitā in an *intentionally* archaic form, as for example the *pravargya* (or *gharma, mahāvīra*) ritual. This ritual is mentioned in the RV as being performed with a metal (*ayasmaya*) vessel. In the YV Saṃhitā, however, the same vessel is surprisingly made of a much more 'archaic' material, namely clay, and in a fashion that was outdated in the Greater Panjab long before the time of the Ṛgveda.[90]  Further, the *pravargya* vessel is not made by potters as they belong to a low caste that could not take part even in the preparation of implements used in Śrauta ritual;[91]  also, it is not made on a wheel but fashioned in a very primitive, archaic way by the Brahmin priests themselves: three or five sausage-like coils of clay are put on top of each other. By inserting a stick into this rough structure and by agitating and churning it one then tries to give it some shape. A clear case of artificial archaization.

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[87] See Hillebrandt 1897: 16.

[88] Though often secretly, as F. Smith has observed in S. India; cf. Dandekar, *Vedic Bibl.* IV.

[89] The same discussion among the contemporary rituals of the Trobriand Islands, well studied by B. Malinowski. They distinguish, like the Vedic ritualists, between decapitating, killing by a blow, and strangulation (as more 'humane').

[90] However, the making of primitive hand-made vessels for daily use continues in the Hindukush Mountains to this day.

[91] Cf. the interdiction against use of washed clothes: *ahata* "unbeaten", that is unwashed; new dresses have to be employed in ritual. Washermen or washerwomen belong to the lowest occupations and are regarded as unclean; there is a clear injunction against washerwomen using lye at AV 12.4.9 = PS 17.16.9, see Witzel, 1986: JB *palpūlanī*, esp. p.190. -- Also, the vessel is not made with the help of the pottery wheel that was commonly used already during the Indus civilization. To this very day, the wheel is driven by a stick that is put into the wheel and quickly retracted when it has gained the desired speed, though in the South one also uses a spoked wheel.

On the other hand, some innovations have taken place, for example the introduction and the liberal use of rice (*vrīhi*) instead of the traditional barley (*yava*).[92] This most probably happened due to the new area of Vedic settlement. Though present in the last stages of the Indus civilization and at Pirak, in the Vedic texts rice first occurs in the AV. Apart from the well-watered Himalayan valleys, it is typical for the area east of Allahabad. As pointed out above, one may ask whether the Ṛgvedic *puroḍāśa* cake was made of barley or already from rice.[93] Yet, with any regularity, and clearly mentioned as such, rice only appears in the post-Ṛgvedic period.

Interestingly, and in line with this evidence, is the fact that the word denoting 'rice' is aboriginal in Indo-Aryan language (Ved. *vrīhi* <*vrijhi*- see KEWA, EWAia) and in Iranian (Pers. *birinc*).This is the case also for Burushaski *bras*, Tibetan *hbras*, Purik *bras*, Austronesian (Malay *bəras*), Dravidian (Tamil *ari, arici*, whence Greek *oruza*), Japanese *uruchi*, *uru-shine*. (Witzel 1995, 1999). [94] Apparently, an old word of culture of uncertain origin was transmitted via various routes to all these language families from the home of rice cultivation, at one or more locations in South and Southeast Asia.[95] The word must go back to forms such as *\*vrijhi/bras*, most probably something like *\*brəž*, which seems to reflect the western source, while a word such as *\*\*kru-may* was the source of almost all eastern designations for rice.[96]

From the time of the Mantra period (AV, YV Mantras) onwards, rice has quite commonly been used in ritual. The sudden appearance does not indicate a gradual substitution. Barley has remained in use; it indeed is employed until this day, along with other grains like sesame (*tilaka*), buckwheat, in various *homa* ceremonies. Interestingly, the Near Eastern import, wheat, that was the staple of the Indus Civilization, never gained prominence in Śrauta ritual and it is entirely absent in the RV. In a traditionally conservative setting such as that of ritual, the introduction of a new implement or offering substance requires a major innovation that was pushed through by a powerful priestly community or, at least, an influential group or school.

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[92] Cf. C. Watkins, 1978.

[93] Cf. Geldner, *RV transl.* 1951, with Bergaigne (*Rech. lit. rit. véd.*, 16) *ad* RV 3.28; cf. also *odana*, above.

[94] For Burushaski and Malay see Kuiper 1962: 40, 1955: 143 n. 17. Cf. now also Tikkanen *SO* 64. -- Fussman (1972) reports that *yava* denotes "rice" in the Kafir languages, see above. However, this looks like a substitution for earlier grains.

[95] The issue is contested, see Glover 1979. Note that domesticated rice is found earlier and earlier now in India as well as in China. In Japan, too, rice is increasingly found earlier, already in some Jōmon sites.

[96] For details see Witzel,EJVS 5-1, here summarized as follows: Proto-W.-Malayo-Polynesian *\*pajay*, Proto-Austronesian *\*pagrᵓy*; Old Jpn. *uru-shine*, Jpn. *uru-chi* < *\*uru-ti*, all probably from a proto-form *\*\*bᵓrᵓjᵓəy*. Further, Proto-Austro-Thai *\*krumay* > Jpn. *kome*, *kuma(-shine)*, perhaps from a proto-form *\*\*k(h)ru* + *\*\*may,* is seen in Austro-Asiatic: Khasi *khau*, Mon-Khmer: Kuoi *aṅkau*, etc. and in Austro-Thai-Japanese *\*krumay*. However,*\*may* and *\*moy* appear separately in Sino-Tibetan. See now, however, Osada 1995:143-162 with copious word lists from Austronesian, Munda, Mon-Khmer, Sino-Tibetan and some Indo-European languages. He summarizes (1995: 186): Austroasiatic *\*rkəw* -->Thai, Tibeto-Burm. *k'au, hau, kaw*; and *\*imay* --> Chin. *mi.* -- Note that the word of 'wheat,' the staple of the Indus civilization, is not used in RV ritual; it is a western import, *EJVS* 1999.

## § 4.4. Frames inside frames

Another surprising development of this period is the enormous complexity of the ritual that is apparent already in our earliest post-Ṛgvedic documents, the Mantras of the AV and the YV.

Each of these rituals has a rather complex structure, a fact that has been recognized for more than a hundred years but has recently been put into focus by F. Staal and others. The Śrauta rituals do not have a simple structure, such as the old Indo-Iranian daily fire ritual with the parts A - B - A, that is: *A* preparation of the offering ground and the sacred fires, with an invitation to the gods, *B* actual feeding the gods by offerings made into the fire, and *C* sending away the gods, cleaning up the fires and the offering ground. Instead, various sorts of insertions into this basic outline are made. However, they are not always simply taken from parallel, similar, related or otherwise contemporaneous materials found in parallel sacrifices.

Rather, it can be observed that various old, originally independent rites have been inserted into other important larger rituals. For example, the *pravargya* and the *upasad* have been incorporated into the early parts of the old Indo-Iranian Soma ritual. It was remembered, down to the Sūtras, that the *Pravargya,* an offering of milk to the Aśvins, is an optional insertion.[97] Some of the Sūtras actually treat the *Pravargya* separately from the Soma rite. In its Śrauta version, it is the function of the *Pravargya* to serve as the *ava-antara-dīkṣā*, a kind of additional consecration (*dīkṣā*) of the sponsor of the sacrifice (*yajamāna*).[98]

The word *avāntaradīkṣā* 'in[serted] inner consecration' is a keystone in understanding the structure of Śrauta ritual. Staal (1979, 1983, 1990) has frequently observed that the classical Vedic ritual has a quasi-Chomskian "tree-like" structure. I think that the image of frames, boxes inside a box inside a box (in the fashion of Russian or Japanese dolls) or 'nesting' fits the description of the ritual much better.[99] Actually, it has not been noticed that the original meaning of the word *avāntaradīkṣā* and its use in the Soma ritual precisely indicate this nesting device. The *avāntaradīkṣā* is a special, more severe consecration (*dīkṣā*) inside (*antara*) the normal *dīkṣā:* a set of observances that are to be kept by the sponsor, set inside the general frame of the Soma ritual. The very name *ava-antara-dīkṣā* already tells this much: it is *ava-antara-* "down and inside" a ritual, --- and not, for example, regarded as a branch or twig (*śākhā*) "grown out of" a stem or root of the main ritual procedure.

The method of creating more complicated rituals by simple addition, accretion, insertion, or by cumulative and hierarchical addition of simpler sets, and of whole rituals into a newly created framework has left its trace in literature as well (Witzel 1987).[100] The inclusion of the *Pravargya* into the *Soma* ritual is justified by the first ever long frame story

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[97] This also lies behind the combination of two tales in ŚB and especially JB (Cyavana and Dadhyañc), in *one long frame story, see Witzel 1987. On the historical and archaeological background of the Dadhyañc story, see Witzel 2000; and cf. recent excavations in the Ural areas: http://users.hartwick.edu/iaes/newsletter/newsletter.html;the tale of the exchanged heads as such is fairly widespread, see Stith Thompson 1932-36.

[98] On this see separately, Witzel, *The Veda in Kashmir*, 2020, ch. VI.

[99] See Heesterman 1957, 1985, and Witzel, 1987, n. 103.

[100] See above, Witzel 1987.

found in Vedic literature. It deals with the Cyavana/Dadhyañc myth. The gap between both myths and the gap in ritual performance between the Soma and the Pravargya is still visible in the stories preserved in texts such as JB and ŚB, while in MS-KS-TS the inclusion of the Pravargya has taken place in ritual but has not yet been expressed in literature.

As I have pointed out elsewhere (Witzel 1987),[101] the framework device of structuring large masses of texts or of other materials has been widely used in India. Examples include such diverse cases as Pāṇini's grammar, the Mahābhārata, the 'catalogue' of gods from the neuter Brahman to the male Brahmā, and of other gods such as Viṣṇu and his 10 subsets (*avatāra*). As is well known, one of them is the Buddha, a simple technical feature that effects the inclusion of all of Buddhism into Hinduism. In fact, the usage of the framework device (in other words, *inclusivism*) seems to be one, if not the most prominent feature that characterizes Indian thought (Oberhammer 1983).

In the context of the present topic, it is important to note that this feature can be observed already in the Mantra texts and that it is, in fact, even found in the RV and earlier Indo-Iranian texts. There, it occurs in poems of ring structure type and represents a feature inherited from Indo-European poetry. Importantly, the (post-)Ṛgvedic ordering of the RV hymns in a collection (*saṃhitā*) has been carried out in this fashion as well, see below § 5.

Similarly to the Soma ritual, but more complex still, the *Rājasūya* is an assembly of various smaller rituals that even in the "classical" Vedic ritual are separate entities.[102] A simple *rājābhiṣeka* ceremony is already found in RV and AV (Schlerath 1960). In this regard, the importance of book 10 of PS, which has no parallel in the Vulgate (AVŚ), has not been noticed.[103] This set of 16 hymns, used at a particular type of royal inauguration, suddenly appears as a separate unit at the proper place within the normal ordering of PS hymns. This Saṃhitā is arranged, without regard to contents,[104] on the number of stanzas per hymn, and book 10 has the expected 14 stanzas. The PS collection is also notable as it mentions, for the first time, the *Sava* ritual[105] (an *abhiṣeka* or unction rite inserted into a standard *soma* sacrifice), as well as other items typical for the Śrauta version of the consecration ritual, the *Rājasūya*. This special *Sava* is later on found as *Rājābhiṣeka* in KS 37.9, TB 2.7.15-17, BaudhŚS (as *Mṛtyusava*) 18.16-19, ĀpŚS 22.28, etc.

The Śrauta from of the *Rājasūya* is nothing but an elaboration of the older, simple *abhiṣeka* that has been sandwiched between various more solemn rites of the Śrauta type. The PS collection represents the first indication of this development. It becomes clear here that this was an elaboration carried out by priests who were ritual specialists. Note for example, the statement at a most important moment of the ritual, the solemn proclamation of the newly consecrated chieftain (*rājan*, traditionally translated "king") to his people "This, you people (viz., o Bharatas, o Kurus, etc.) is your king," to which the Brahmins add "Soma

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[101] **Witzel 1987; cf., for the Mbh., Minkowski 1989.**

[102] **See Witzel, 1987, Heesterman 1957, and Weber 1893.**

[103] See Witzel 1999 and Tsuchiyama.

[104] **There are some attempts at arranging hymns with a similar content close to each other, see Kajihara 2002.**

[105] **Cf. Gonda, *The Savayajñas*, Amsterdam 1965.**

is our king!" -- clearly separating themselves from the Kṣatriya class and underlining their (often rather theoretical) superior status.

In order to comprehend the frame-like, additive structure of the *Rājasūya* requires one to understand a very central feature of Śrauta ritual. The most important ceremony during the reign of a chieftain or 'king' is solemnified by its inclusion into a host of other, solemn rituals, partly of hoary antiquity, such as the Indo-Iranian śrautified Soma ritual, various *homa* type fire rituals, an *abhiṣeka* type unction (Hocart 1927), etc. and, in part, by inclusion of new ritual compositions. It is a rather complex set of rites built around a very simple central ritual, the *abhiṣeka* in a sequence of rites that has intentionally been made much more complicated than it used to be in the RV and even in the early AV. The *abhiṣeka*, incidentally, is repeated yearly, effecting the renewal of the powers of the chieftain (Pant 1976).

But why should the chief and the priests go through this very elaborate ritual that is carried out, on and off, for a whole year, and then again repeated in a briefer form during the following years? Why is a simple *abhiṣeka* not enough? Some obvious, Marxist type interpretations are possible: increase of the power of the priesthood (thus, already Weber 1868), making the chief dependent on it, exploiting the people by getting elaborate utensils for the ritual made and robbing their possessions in *brahmodya*-like questionings about intricate details of the ritual.[106] Much of this is indeed part of the truth, as the Vedic texts clearly state, with Marxist analysis before its day: the union of the Brahmins and Kṣatriyas (*brahma-kṣatra*) exploits the people.[107] The elaborate ritual obviously benefits not only the Brahmins but it is indeed only this sort of complex ritual that is fit for the new-won status of a Great Chieftain (or "king") of the great Bhārata dynasty of the Kurus.

The consecration of a Bhārata or Kaurava prince is not effected by the simple *abhiṣeka* that was used in Ṛgvedic times and that might be fit for a small chief (*rājan*) or even an *ekarājan*, a "singular chief" that is a superior chief, as described in KauśS 11. The Kaurava Great Chieftain is not simply a *rājan*, a chieftain or kinglet, as one might call the chieftain of one of the constituent groups of the Kurus, i.e. the Vaitahavya (Sṛñjaya), Mitravat, and Bharata, or in case of the Pañcāla, the chief of the Krivi, etc. Instead, he is the supreme monarch, elected (Rau 1957) by the high aristocracy of the Kuru tribe, including various *rājan*s. Note that already in the AV and YV Mantras terms occur that indicate superior status: *samrāj, abhirāj, viśvarāj, svarāj.*[108]

Clearly, a new ritual was necessary for the "coronation" (installation) of a supreme chieftain or "king." The materials are supplied first by the PS 10 and the YV Mantras of the *Rājasūya*. At its core, we find the old *abhiṣeka*.[109]

In addition, we can ask, with H. Falk, whether the *Rājasūya* did not serve in aiding to overcome a major problem in the preservation of a dynasty, that is insuring the succession

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[106] See VādhB on questioning, see Witzel 1987.

[107] Cf. Rau 1957: 60 sq.; ŚB 6.4.4.12-13 Vaiśya and Śūdra are the subjects of the Brahmins and the Kṣatriyas. -- Cf. also AB 3.11; KB 3.5; 9.5; AB 7.19 (Kṣatriya, without weapons, goes to sacrifice); 8.7; KB 12.8; 16.4. "They say: 'why is the *brahma-kṣatra* unstable, the subjects stable?' ... Therefore the Brahmins rule the people insecurely, insecurely also the Kṣatriyas; therefore are the subjects stable"; 19.1; TB 3.8.4.3; 9.16.4; BŚS 18.2:10; ŚŚS 14.29.3.-- Cf. below n. 474, 494.

[108] See Witzel 1987: 183; Kumkum Roy 1994.

[109] A fact not clearly brought to light by Heesterman 1957; see now Witzel 1987(Coronation).

of the king by his *own* son and not by someone else from among his cousins and relatives (*sva-*),[110] or from a different line among the high nobility of the Bharatas or of that of other Kuru sub-tribes.

If a king was without issue, as is the case in the famous story of king Hariścandra Vaidhasa Aikṣvāka of AB 7.13, he had, except for divine intervention, real or supposed, only recourse to one option: adoption. This was effected, as argued by H. Falk, during a *Rājasūya* ritual. Indeed, we can observe several instances in the texts where such adoptions took place.[111] More importantly, there is some indication that this was at the core of the succession of the early Bharata chiefs after Sudās and his son. The early Bharata dynasty quickly disappeared from the texts and survived only as name and title.[112] On the other hand, we have the curious re-appearance of the Ikṣvākus in late-Vedic[113] (JB, ŚB, AB 7.13, ŚŚS) and post-Vedic texts. Originally they were probably a subgroup of the Pūru tribe[114] and later on apparently a Pañcāla sub-group. Note that the opposition between the Bharata-Kuru and Ikṣvāku is the core of the opposition between the Sūryavaṃśa and Candravaṃśa dynasties of the Purāṇas.

As indicated, the earliest evidence for the more complicated coronation ritual is found in Paippalāda Saṃhitā 10. While the Ṛgveda and Śaunaka Saṃhitā only have a few "royal hymns" (Schlerath 1960) that deal with the installation of a chieftain or kinglet of one of the many tribes of the Greater Panjab, the evidence of PS indicates that the Atharvaveda priests of the Paippalāda school made an effort to provide the Great Chief with a more solemn procedure, a state ritual.[115] There must have been a social and political reason for this elaboration of traditional ritual; in my opinion, it was the emergence of the first larger Vedic realm, that of the Kurus.

If this is correct, the tendency of the Paippalāda Atharvaveda is understandable to use antiquated or hyper-correct forms, such as *kṛṇoti*, *kṛṇumaḥ, kṛṇu* for the typical

[110] Note that one always wants to become the "best of one's *sva-*" group, mostly said, however of rulers, see Rau 1957: 71-75. Cf. Iranian *xvaētu-* "family", an artificial formation (= Ved. *\*sve-tu*) just like the other important social institution, guest friendship (*arya-man*, *airiia-man*); see now H. Kulke 1992.

[111] Note the role of *Rohita*, Viśvāmitra and his adoption of Śunaḥśepa, AB 7.13; adoption is even found in RV: poets such as Bharadvāja, Śunahotra Śaunaka (Gṛtsamāda), and Viśvāmitra are adopted by the Bhṛgu and Aṅgiras clans (see Witzel, Rigvedic History); Trasadasyu is regarded as the son of both Mitrāvaruṇā (RV 4.42.8-9, see now H.-P. Schmidt 1992; similarly supernatural is the birth of Vasiṣṭha (RV 7.33-10-14).

[112] See above, on the coronation Mantras. Otherwise the Kuru kings are called Pārikṣita, see BĀU 3.3.1.

[113] At JB 3.168 §190 they are described as "downtrodden" or "defeated" (*parābhūta*), as they had eaten Asura food; cf. 3.94-96 § 180, 3.237-8: § 204; -- at 2.329: § 159 they have the same *purohita*, together with the *Kāśi and Kosala*, and at ŚŚS 16.29.6 with the Videha and Kosala; cf. Rau 1957: 123.

[114] See MacDonell-Keith, *Vedic Index*, p. 75. Further indications are Paurukutsa Aikṣvāka ŚB 13.5.4.5, with his son Trasadasyu Paurukutsa KS 22.3:59.10, (cf. TS 5.6.5.3 °*kutsya*, PB 25.16.3 °*dasya*), -- clearly, the famous Pūru kings of the RV.

[115] Cf. also the mysterious book PS(Or) 18.15 sqq. = ŚS 13, (and PS 18.44-53 = ŚS 17 dealing overcoming rivals, cf. RV 10.174) with which also seems to deal with the king, see immediately. -- See also below for other attempts to group together certain types of materials (Kajihara 2002).

Atharvavedic (and later) *allegro* forms[116] *karoti, kurmaḥ, kuru*. PS has some cases of *kṛṇva* instead of *kaṇva* which is the Ṛgvedic form. It so happens that PS here is more archaic than RV itself! This cannot be accidental.

The position in classical Vedic ritual of the Atharvaveda priests (Ātharvāṅgirasa, Bhārgava) was marginal, and for a long time their texts remained outside the realm of proper Vedicism, even according to the Vedic texts themselves.[117] Clearly, they made an effort to get accepted by their sustainers, the nobility, and by those Brahmins who represented the 'holy' *Trayī*, the three other Vedas. They did so in giving their Atharvaveda hymns a new shape, inserting many stanzas addressed to the gods of Ṛgvedic and classical Vedic ritual, or adding such verses to their AV stanzas proper. These verses often betray themselves by the solemn Triṣṭubh or Jagatī meter, in contrast to the usual Atharvavedic Anuṣṭubh.

With the help of such now 'acceptable' sorcery hymns they could gain a position as the fourth main priest at the solemn Soma and other Vedic rituals. It became their work to watch the whole procedure and to rectify mistakes in the execution of the ritual by supplying the proper "remedy " stanzas (the *prāyaścitti* Mantras). In order to be able to do so, they had to learn all details of the complicated set of sacrifices, and could not remain specialized in just one aspect of it, as the Ṛgveda priest (*Hotṛ*), the Sāmavedin (*Udgātṛ*) or the main actor during the sacrifice, the Yajurvedic *Adhvaryu*, could do.

The Atharveda bears witness to this. It contains, next to the multitude of sorcery stanzas, also the first reflections on ritual as such, however, still in the form of poems (AV 8-12) and not yet as expository prose[118] *brāhmaṇa* style explanations that are typical of the early Yajurveda Saṃhitās (MS, KS, TS). Hymns like that about the *ucchiṣṭa* or the *brahmacārin* are reflections of this tendency to speculate on the ritual and its meaning in the way of the Brāhmaṇa texts by establishing a net of correlations (*bandhu*), but in poetic form.[119] In this way, the *brahmán* priests and transmitters of the AV continue to be poets (*brahmán*), as they had been in Ṛgvedic times, before the establishment of the Śrauta priesthood with its fourth silent priest, the *brahmán*.

A typical example for the emergence of the classical Vedic Śrauta ritual is indicated by the fact that the ancient group of rituals typical of the yearly change of the seasons has been put into the Procrustes bed of the reformed *Soma/Iṣṭi* sacrifice. They have taken the form of the three (or rather four) Cāturmāsyas of the "classical" Śrauta ritual. The older concepts of seasonal sacrifices (as preserved in Iran)[120] are still discernible behind the elaborate Śrauta set-up, but they are diluted by the inclusion of all kinds of fully developed

[116] See Hoffmann 1975-6: 570 sqq. Note that *kuru* occurs already a few times in RV 10, but in popular expressions.

[117] The AV as such is mentioned first only in late Brāhmaṇa and Āraṇyaka texts, see Witzel 1974: V.

[118] This is not to forget that there are quite a few *brāhmaṇa*-like passages both in PS and ŚS, notably in ŚS 15 = PS 18.27-43.

[119] This is a little-studied topic of great significance, -- if investigated together with other key elements of later Ṛgvedic and AV speculation, such as *tapas, vāc, śraddhā, yajña, brahmaudana, dakṣiṇā* (RV 10.117). See for the time being, Malamoud 1972, A. Wezler 1978 [Engl. summary, p. 121-127], Weber-Brosamer 1988, and cf. also B. K. Smith 1990, Heesterman 1985: 185.

[120] Cf. the Avestan *Gāhanbār* rituals (Bhide 1971) or the seasonal festivals of the Kalash in Chitral; see now Witzel, Indra among the Kalasha (forthc.).

Śrauta rites such as the *paśubandha, soma*, etc. Naturally, this goes hand in hand with new interpretations as set out in the Brāhmaṇa portions of the YV Saṃhitās (Einoo 1985, 1988).

Another important ritual makes its appearance in this period, the *Agnicayana*. Staal (1983) stressed the fact of the large number of bricks are used in order to build up the fire altar, and that this must indicate an Indian innovation. However, while bricks are not mentioned in the RV, the word *iṣṭakā-* occurs since the early YV.[121] Yet, there is also Avestan *ištiiā-, -ištuua-*, and Old Pers. *išti-* (cf. N.Pers. *hišt*, and perhaps also Toch. *iścem* "clay").[122] The evidence indicates Indo-Iranian age of the word, and as the words slightly differ from each other in their suffixes, origin as a loan word from some unknown pre-Aryan culture should be considered, such as the Bactria-Margiana complex (BMAC) that existed around the beginning of the second millennium BCE. As such, it forms part of a larger but so far little studied group of substrate words of culture, animals and plants of the Indo-Iranian area.[123] In Vedic India, however, houses were built from wood, bamboo, straw mats etc.[124] Though bricks cannot have been unknown in Ṛgvedic times (as they were prominent in the Indus Civilization), they were apparently not used in ritual before the YV texts. Note that ruins of brick buildings and potsherds are well known already to RV 1.133.3 (*vailasthāna, armaka, Mahāvailastha*). This is where one later on gets the potsherds (*kapāla*) used in Śrauta ritual. The lower Sarasvatī (Hakra Valley, in Cholistan, Pakistan) is fossil, and has not been disturbed since Indus time; it abounds in millions of potsherds and bricks of the period (Mughal 1995).

As the knowledge of bricks has been present in Indo-Iranian since c. 2000 BCE it is not necessary to invoke the Harappans as having been (directly or indirectly) responsible for the building of Vedic brick altars (Agnicayana).[125] Rather, it is the *concept* of the Agnicayana that is important here, and that is new and post-Ṛgvedic. The altar is built in the form of a bird taking the sponsor of the sacrifice to heaven, which is a general concern

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[121] MS, KS, KpS, TS, VS; mostly only in prose, but already in some Mantras: MS 2.7.15; MS 2.13.16; KS 16.16; 29.9, TS 4.2.9.2.d, VS 17.2, 35.8 etc.)

[122] Obviously, the Vedic word was altered according to participle *iṣṭa-* "offered, see Wackernagel, *Ai.Gr*. II 2, 143; cf. also *VPK* s.v.

[123] See now Witzel 1995, 1999, Lubotsky 2001. Cf. Mayrhofer *KEWA* III, 292, cf. Witzel 1995, 85 sqq..

[124] See W. Rau 1983: 34 sq., Renou 1939.

[125] Certain archaeologists tend to find fire altars in many Indus and other settlement they excavate (see above); they commonly also identify simple fire places (at the Harappan site of Kalibangan, or in the early Malwa cultures) with Vedic *agnikuṇḍas*, even when they do not have any resemblance with the Vedic prescriptions and contain --against all rules-- animal bones, even those of pigs, which never were animals fit for Vedic sacrifice. See for example some papers in the recent seminar held at Calcutta (Ray & Mukherjee 1990); see now Witzel, *EJVS* 7-3, 2001

of the Vedic "sacrificer", the *yajamāna*.[126] It must be observed that the Agnicayana is a complicated ritual, comprising many subsets of Śrauta rites.[127]

(Note also that the fire pot, *ūkhā*, that is similar to the *pravargya* vessel and is prepared in a similar fashion, is made and addressed with many of the Mantras that also appear in the Pravargya rite. The influence both rituals have exerted on each other is an indication of their late formulation and redaction (in the Mantra period); their sources may be older, as can clearly be seen in the Pravargya rite of the RV.)[128]

The question may be asked, however, whether the piling up of (five) layers of bricks as to form a fire altar was based on some sort of local, (post-)Indus influence. Little can be said about this question at the present moment. It must be pointed out, however, that one of the most important early protagonists of the Agnicayana, Kāvaṣeya is a great-grandson of the "old Kavaṣa', the priest/poet of the Pūru chieftain that opposed Sudās in the great battle on the Paruṣṇī (RV 7.18.12; Proferes 1999). That is, if we can trust here the patronymic naming system (Hilka 1910, van Velzen 1938), which indicates a lineage Kavaṣa-Kāvaṣa-Kāvaṣi-Kāvaṣeya.[129] This kind of data would narrow down the gap between the later RV (of Sudās' life time, or perhaps that of the composer of RV 7.18) and the beginnings of the new Agnicayana Śrauta ritual to about 100 years. Incidentally, this again would point to a rather low date for the bulk of the Ṛgveda, one that is more in line with the recent data for the (post-Ṛgvedic) introduction of iron around 1000 BCE.

§ 4.5. A new division of labor for the priests

As has been indicated above (§ 4.1), the many changes that are manifest in the development of the Śrauta ritual do also include the shift from the Ṛgvedic *brahmán* 'poet' (and the late Ṛgvedic *brāhmaṇa*) to the Atharvavedic *brahmán*, -- in other words, from Ṛgvedic poet to Atharvavedic supervisor of the Śrauta ritual and reciter of remedial stanzas in the course of the ritual.

Though a clear picture of the solemn Ṛgvedic ritual has not yet been achieved,[130] the "job description" of the various priests[131] has shifted[132], by the time of the Mantra and

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[126] Note the same concept in the pictures on some vessels of the Cemetery H cultures that show soul birds. -- For the opposite direction, note the falcon of the RV carrying the Soma from heaven (a myth derived from the old IE myth of stealing the mead, ambrosia).

[127] Such as the sub-rites, for example the Soma ritual or the animal sacrifice in the Agnicayana, or the *ratnin's havis* in the Rājasūya, etc.

[128] See Witzel 1981/2; cf. Hillebrandt, 1897: 11 sqq.; cf. further the old *āprī* hymns (see van den Bosch 1985); for pictures of the *ūkhā* and the *mahāvīra* vessels, see the photos taken at an Agnicayana ritual, in Staal 1983.

[129] Like **the Up.** Aruṇa-Āruṇa-Āruṇi-Āruṇeya see Proferes 1999.

[130] See Hillebrandt 1897: 11, cf. Oldenberg *ZDMG* 42, Renou 1962. However, see the important investigations by Th. Proferes 1999.

[131] See Hillebrandt 1897:11 sqq, 99 sqq., Caland-Henry 1906 (preface), and the summary by C. Minkowski 1991: 20-22, 43 sq. (He regards the functions of the priests as equivalent to those of various deities they represent in ritual.) Cf. also R. Inden 1992: 556-577.

[132] In part already by the time of the later RV, see RV 10.71.11 and cf. Hardy 1893:142; cf. Geldner *ad loc.*, "One sits, increasing the wealth of verses [the Hotar], one sings a melody (based) on *śakvarī* (verses) [the

YV prose texts (Śrauta ritual) in the way delineated in the table below. There are five, seven, and sometimes more than a dozen individual priests' offices in the RV[133] (*ṛtvij*, etc.; often called *hotṛ*[134] like Zoroaster). Some of these priestly offices are already of Indo-Iranian origin.[135] Sometimes they seem to be distributed in three categories already in the RV,[136] and once, in the late RV (10.71.11), there appear to be four of them.[137] This division is the standard one of the Śrauta ritual, which echoes, or rather has caused, the division of the Vedic materials into the Four Vedas.[138]

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**Ṛgvedic period**                           **(Classical) Śrauta ritual**

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**1.**

**Hotṛ**     pourer of ghee?[139]       -->     **Hotṛ, RV reciter**[140]

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Udgātar]; one recites, as Brahman, known knowledge, one measures the measurement of the ritual [the Adhvaryu]."

[133] See for example in the old family book, RV 2.1.2-3: *hotṛ, potṛ, neṣṭṛ, agnidh, praśāstṛ, adhvaryu, brahman* and also the sponsor: *gṛhapati*, cf. 1.162.5: *hotādhvaryu-, āvayāj, agnimindha* ('fire lighter'), *grāvagrābha* ('holder of pressing stone'), *śaṃstṛ* ('reciter') = called *suvipra* (= *brahman?*)

[134] But including, for example, the *adhvaryu* RV 2.1.2! Note also 10.98.7 a *purohita* was selected as *hotṛ*.

[135] Note *hotar* = Avest. *zaotar*, *stotar* = Avest. *staotar*, and the identity of function of other priests with different names in Vedic and Iranian, see Hillebrandt 1987: 11. -- Note also the Vedic terms *kavi, uśij* = *kauui*, *usij* both of which are negative terms in Avesta; also Avest. *kar^ə pan* = ved. *\*kṛpan, \*kṛpan*, from *kṛp*.

[136] The common division is into three, reflecting that of the texts into *ṛc, sāman, yajuṣ*, which are recited (*śaṃs; uktha*), sung (*gā; gāyatra, pragātha*) or pronounced differently (e.g. the Adhvaryu's answer to a request to recite: *pratigara*, RV 3.53.3 *prati gṛṇīhi*; later on, the *yajuṣ* are mumbled). Note that there are many other types (more than 20) of verses and formulae (see Horsch, Gāthā- u. Ślokaliteratur 1966).

[137] The hymn, by an unknown author (supposedly Bṛhaspati), shows its late character by using the word *brāhmaṇa-* for 'poet' (cf. the *puruṣa* hymn).

[138] For the later list of priests and their connections with various gods, note also the list in the *ṛtugraha*, see Eggeling, *SBE* 26.320 (ad ŚB 4.3.1.10): *hotṛ, potṛ, neṣṭṛ, āgnidhrā, brāhmaṇācchaṃsin, maitrāvaruṇa (*on this priest see Minkowski 1991).

[139] RV 2.1.2, etc.; note the *zaotar* Zaraϑuštra, in whose professional designation *zaotar-* is used: from *\*zav* (*juhoti*) "to pour", not *zbātar-* from *zbā/zav* (*juhve*) "to call"! (cf. also Yt 3.1 *stator, zaotar, zbātar*). This may reflect the older distribution in Indo-Iranian times (cf. C. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, s.v. *zaotar*: he supposes congruence of both words and functions already in IIr.). -- Note that the Ṛgvedic *hotṛ* is already called *suvāc* and *sujihva*.

[140] The Hotṛ recites with loud voice, as opposed to the Adhvaryu who mumbles his formulae.

perhaps already
reciter of verses[141]
(5 or 7 *hotṛ*s!)

Praśāstṛ,[142] Upavaktṛ,[143] Śaṃstṛ[144]--> Maitrāvaruṇa or Praśāstṛ[145]
*[achā vac][146]          ? --> Acchāvāka[147]
                         ? --> Grāvastut[148]

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**2.**
Udgātṛ[149]: singer          --> Udgātṛ, SV singer[150]

*Prastotṛ          --> Prastotṛ[151]
?                          ? --> Pratihartṛ
[*subrahmaṇya*][152]  ? --> Subrahmaṇya[153]

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**3.**
Adhvaryu:[154] offering priest[155] --> Adhvaryu, YV reciter (mumbling)

?                          ? --> Pratiprasthātṛ

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[141] See Bartholomae 1961, s. v. *zaotar* (above).

[142] RV 2.1.2.

[143] See Hillebrandt 1897: 12: RV 9.95.5 indicates that he functions as *praiṣavaktṛ* for the *hotṛ* (*iṣyan vācam upavakteva hotur*).

[144] RV 1.162.5, called *suvipra*.

[145] Principal assistant to the Hotṛ; see the monograph of C. Minkowski 1991; he is "the *praśāstṛ* 'the commander' (p. 43, 159), he "divides" speech among the other priests (p.153), and does so with the *praiṣa* (see RVKh).

[146] Appears as verb in the RV, usually addressing gods, Cf. Minkowski 1991: 43.

[147] See Mylius 1981, 1982, 1986.

[148] Cf. Mylius 1981: 184.

[149] RV 2.43.2.

[150] For the characterization of Sāman singing, see above, § 5.5.

[151] Meant in RV 8.8.15 *pra stoṣad (upa ast)*.

[152] Adjective used at RV 10.62.4.

[153] His only function is to invite Indra to come to the sacrifice.

[154] RV 2.1.2 (*adhvarīyati*); note especially 2.14.1-12, with a description of some of their actions in ritual; further 6.41.2; 6.44.13; 7.98.1 and 8.4.13; 8.101.10. Note the early occurrence in book 6, and note that neither book 2 nor (the first part of) 8 is an Āṅgirasa book!

[155] They are manual workers = *suhasta*; cf. 3.53.3: "Let us speak, Adhvaryu! Answer me! *śáṃsāvādhvaryo práti me gṛṇīhi*, see n. 133.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Neṣṭṛ[156] | --> | Neṣṭṛ |
| ? | ? --> | Unnetṛ |

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**4.**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Brahmán[157]: poet | --> | Brahmán[158], AV reciter |
| | | reciter/supervisor in ritual |
| (Āṅgirasa) | | composer of speculative hymns |
| | | (Āṅgirasa, Bhṛgu)[159] |
| | | |
| ø? | ? --> | Brāhmaṇācchāṃsin[160] |
| Potṛ[161] | --> | Potṛ[162] |
| Agnidh,[163] Agnimindha[164] | --> | Āgnidhrā[165] |

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[156] RV 2.1.2.

[157] RV 2.1.2 as priest (one of the Hotṛs).

[158] Does not act in the classical Śrauta ritual but supervises it and "heals" it whenever a mistake has been made, with the recitation of Mantras from the AV. Minkowski (1991: 22) points out his connection, as *purohita*, with the sponsor of the ritual, the *yajamāna*. Note that the AV Pariśiṣṭa, in the main, is the Purohita handbook of royal priests, see Witzel 1985, Bodewitz 1983; M. Fujii 1991.

[159] Note Bhṛgv-Aṅgiras also in JB 1.31.

[160] Hillebrandt thinks that in Ṛgvedic times, the Brahman still had the job of the later Brāhmaṇācchaṃsin, i.e. mainly recitations for Indra.

[161] RV 2.1.2; see Mylius 1981.

[162] See Mylius, 1977, 1982.

[163] RV 2.1.2.

[164] *agnidh* (thrice in RV 1, 10), *agnimindha* (once, 1.162.5); *agnīdh* occurs later on as well, for example in VādhS, see Caland 1990: 290, 604.

[165] "The fire stoker," also makes the gods listen to the recitations of the Hotṛ.

------- note also: ----------

Yajñanī[166]                       -->       the later Brahmán?
                                            note similar work of the
                                              Sadasya[167]

Purohita[168] (frequent)              -->       the later Brāhmaṇa (of king,
                                   gentry)

*Atharvan[169]: *[fire?] priest??       -->    } AV reciter/sorcerer[170];

Kaṇva[171] *sorcerer             -->    } composer of sorcery hymns[172]
                                         (Kaṇva, Atharvan)

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This leaves a few Ṛgvedic designations for priests, usually attested only once, unaccounted for; they are not used later on:

*Grāvagrābha* 1.162.5;    *Udagrābha* 9.97.15;    *Āvayāj* 1.62.5
(cf. *grāvahastin* 1.15.7)

*Sāmagā* 2.43.1 (late ), 10.6 (late);        *Sāmanya* 9.96.22.

The two *Śāmitarau* 5.43.4   are an allusion to the helpers of the ritual, attested later on, who slaughter the sacrificial animals.

*Purohita* (frequent) is a different case; he has become the later Brahmán and often is a royal priest or serves the nobility as "house chaplain". But note that at RV 10.98.7 a *Purohita* was selected as *Hotṛ*.

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[166] All are late: 1.15.12: *yajñanī* and *gārhapatya*; 10.107.6: a list of poets and priests, *ṛṣi, brāhmaṇa(!), yajñanī, sāmagā, ukthaśās*; 10.88.17: the two leaders of opposing sides in a ritual discussion.

[167] The supervisor of the Kauṣītaki ritual; for all these priests see Hillebrandt 1897: 97.

[168] But called a Hotṛ as well, RV 1.1.1, etc.

[169] Already 15 times in RV, also said of Zaraϑuštra. -- Note the mentioning of *Atharvans* as priests in book 8. Note meaning of *athar-van / *atha-rwan*, cf. Lubotsky 2001: 304, for the similar words from the religious sphere, *\*gandha-rwan*, perhaps also *\*c'a-rwa-*.

[170] This is how they were regarded even inside (Atharva)-Vedic tradition, as opposed to the texts of the Āṅgirasa.

[171] As the etymology of K. Hoffmann 1975-6 implies, originally a sorcerer: *\*kṛṇva*; this has now actually been found in PS 7 in his reconstructed form.

[172] Such as AV 1-7, PS 1-15, or their collectors.

After presenting the relevant materials the question can be asked again: why the addition of the additional priests? And why the shift in the work of the *Brahmán* from a Ṛgvedic poet to a reciter of AV verses?

## § 4.6. The emergence of the Brahmán and the role of the Purohita

The answer to the first question is not difficult to arrive at: as is easily visible in the above list, the number of priests has been increased[173] and formalized, to fit the new scheme of 4 groups (for the 4 Vedas) with 4 members each, that is: each group has one main priest with three helpers, in total 16 priests.

The most coherent explanation concerning the origin of the new job description of the *Brahmán cum suis* is the following. The end of the composition of RV style poetry in Kuru time that occurred with the introduction of the reformed Śrauta ritual made it necessary to find a *new* slot for the important group of Ṛgvedic poets. They mostly belonged to the Āṅgirasa clan and used to compose ritual poems and recited them at the solemn Ṛgvedic rituals.[174] A new slot was found in that of the *Yajña-nī*, the leader of the ritual (and *brahmodya* style discussion). Typically, his function was not very prominent in the RV and was confined to late parts of the text.

The Brahmán thus became, on the one hand, the general and "omniscient" supervisor of the Śrauta ritual. As a supervisor should be, he is indeed silent[175] for the most part. In stark contrast to his earlier role as reciter of his own poems during the Ṛgvedic ritual he now does exactly the opposite. He keeps quiet as the recitation of his poems for the gods was taken over by the recitation of a fixed set of hymns by the Hotṛ of the Śrauta ritual. Consequently, the new AV Brahmán simply had to be silent: there was nothing left for him to recite.

Even the only item remaining in his domain, the invitations to Indra, were taken over by his new helper, the Brāhmaṇācchāṃsin, whose name still reveals that he is connected with the recitation of the Brahmán poet/priest (or, in its late RV version, the Brāhmaṇa).

The Brahmán's new job also coalesced with that of the ancient Purohita, the "house priest" of the nobility and of the chieftains of RV times. Both are supervisors of rituals, though the ancient Purohita played a more active role. The role of the new Purohita, ideally an Atharva Brahmin (see AV Par.), is especially clear in the typical AV sections dealing with the rites of chieftains (AV 13, PS 18, PS 10; also in AB 5.33-34, 7-8, esp. 8.24-28).

On the other hand, the new Brahmán continued the composition of traditional priestly poetry in the speculative hymns (AV 8-12, PS 16-17) and this was incorporated into the newly created Atharvaveda collections. These poems usually deal with "new" topics such as (*brahma-*)*odana*, *brahmacārin*, the "cow," -- just as their counterparts in the late RV (*vāc*,

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[173] Unless some of the Ṛgvedic names not accounted for in the later Śrauta ritual have to be identified with some of these Ṛgvedic designations.

[174] See Witzel 1995: 307 sqq.

[175] Cf. Renou *JAOS* 69 -- As opposed to his Ṛgvedic job of constantly composing new hymns, see Gonda 1941: 275 sqq., Bodewitz 1983; M. Fujii 1991.

ritual, *śrāddha*, *dakṣiṇā*, *tapas*, food, *ghṛta*, creation, etc.) As such, the AV (ŚS 8-12 ~ PS 16-17) really is a continuation of late RV compositions. The overlap between "Atharva-like" hymns in RV 10 and those of the AV should be investigated much more closely than can be carried out here.[176] (Note that some typically Ṛgvedic hymns are also found in the AV, notably the Varuṇa hymn of AV / PS).

Finally, there is the question of the Atharvans (and their relation with the Kāṇvas). It is quite clear that the Atharvans originally were a rather old group of priests, as their name indicates.[177] It is both Ṛgvedic as well as Avestan (*atharvan-* :: *aθaurun-/āθrauuan-*), designating priests in both cases. Whether the work of these priests was originally connected with the (maintenance of?) fire remains unclear.[178]

In the AV they appear as healers, sorcerers and magicians, which also is reflected by the traditional understanding of the designation of the AV as *ātharva-āṅgirasa-*. The connection between Atharvan priests and sorcerers has still to be established. Indeed, even in the classical ritual, the Brahmán continues to offer into the Gṛhya fire when applying his Mantras in order to "heal" the sacrifice or when he simply carries out magic, as is obvious especially in the Kauśika Sūtra. It also is important to note that the helper of the Brahmán priest, the Agnidhrā, has preserved a part of the presumed job of the old Atharvan priests: he is the fire stoker (note his older name *agnidh*, "the kindler of the fire").[179]

However, in the context of the AV, the Atharvans mainly stand for all the old white and black magic that has come down from the Indo-European and Indo-Iranian periods to the Veda.[180] In this context Lubotsky's (2001) new etymology of *atharvan* may again be of interest. He compares *\*ath-arwan* with other substrate words from the religious sphere. They were perhaps taken over from the BMAC area, and include words such as *\*gandh-arwa,* and perhaps also *Ś-arwa.*

Another substrate word is seen in the other name for sorcerer, *kaṇva*, that K. Hoffmann long ago has explained as derived from *\*kṛṇ-va* "carrying out (sorcery)".[181] However, even though PS indeed has *Kṛṇva*, the etymology must not *by default* be an Indo-European one. The occurrence of retroflex *-ṇ-* after *-a-* always is a good indicator of non-IA origin. This is

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[176] See below,on innovations in language, religion, ritual and thought. - cf. also Witzel 1997.

[177] It is seen, e.g., in the Young Avestan word for 'priest,' *aθauruuan < \*athar-van*? cf. Lubostky 2001.

[178] Many have connected it with Iran. *ātar-/āθr-* 'fire", (where the *-th-/θ* is secondary, due to following *-r-*!), thus *\*athar-van* "having fire". The difference between Ved. *athar-* and Avest. *atar-* remains unresolved, see now *EWAia* I 60 and Lubotsky 2001; it belongs to a number of old loan words in Indo-Iranian (see Witzel 1995) with the suffix *-(r)va*, such as *gandharva : gaṇdərəßa*; cf. also *Śarva : Sauruua*(?) -- Insler's etymology of Mātariśvan (AOS meeting) as *°m # athar-iśvan-* therefore does not appear to be correct, equally so in terms of comparative mythology, cf. Witzel (2000-2001: 55, 2012.) on Eurasian mythology: the O. Japanese fire god *Ho-musubi* ("fire child", in Kojiki, Nihongi) is described as *growing inside* his mother Izanami (cf. *mātar-iśvan*), killing her upon being born; his father Izanagi therefore punished him by decapitation.

[179] And the Potṛ was some sort of "cleaner" of the offering ground originally; see Mylius 1982.

[180] See above on Germanic and Hittite parallels.

[181] K. Hoffmann 1995-6: 1 sqq.; as this paper was written in 1941; the form only could be reconstructed at that time as the correct PS text was not available; it has now actually been found in PS (which has a few *kaṇva* forms as well). PS *kṛṇva* is more archaic than the Ṛgvedic form (cf. also the hypercorrect RV *avata* / AV *avaṭa* case), and it is clearly distinguished from the form *kāṇva* which also occurs in PS; note, however, Kuiper,1991: 16, Witzel 1985.

true especially if RV/AV *Kaṇva* represents the original form and PS *Kṛṇva* is a hyper-Sanskritism like *kṛṇoti* for AV style *karoti*, or RV *avaṭa* AV *avaṭa*, etc. (n.181).

The Kaṇvas are one of the well-known clans of poets (RV, book 8). They are one of the few clans of the RV that is not of Āṅgirasa origin, and they also differ from the rest of the RV by the use of strophic verse collections with a predilection for meters that (predominantly) use 8 syllables, as is also the case in the typical AV Anuṣṭubh. A link with the Kaṇvas is also established by the fact that *atharvan* is used in RV 8.9.7 as designation for the priest who pours Soma and the hot (*gharma*) milk drink of the Aśvin (see above n. 245). In the AV, however, the Kaṇvas occur as sorcerers and as demons (AV 2.25, etc.). In PS these two groups are well distinguished by the phonetic shape of the designation: the *kaṇva* are more often (e.g. PS 4.13.1-6 = ŚS 2.25.1-5) regarded as demons in PS (c. 3:1) than in ŚS (only ŚS 2.25), while the *kṛṇva* are both demons/sorcerers (PS 7.11.7, 12.20.4, 5.12.3, cf. Kuiper, *Aryans*, 1991:17) as well as a member of the Kaṇva clan (PS 11.2.6). As pointed out above, the form *kṛṇva* is artificially archaic; it gives a respectable ring to an otherwise not honored profession. We thus see a clear Kāṇva/Atharvan link with the early AV. These two clans are the only real counterparts to the predominant role of the Āṅgirasa in the RV (and in the later AV hymns, AV 8-12).

Before the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa, however, there is no substantial evidence, as far as I see, on a close connection of the AV with the Bhṛgus.[182]

The division of the AV into two basic units, that of the Atharvans and that of the Aṅgiras therefore is important. It has its ancient roots in the different origin of their respective texts and of the very clans that have transmitted them. The juncture of both types of texts in the AV illustrates the amalgamation of the roles of the Ṛgvedic Brahmá and Atharvan/Kaṇva in the new Śrauta type priest, the supervisor of the ritual, the Brahmán.

## § 4.7. Aims of the Śrauta rituals

As has been briefly pointed out above (§ 4.1, 4.4.) many of the Śrauta rituals are closely tied to the progress of the sun, moon and the year; they are, in a way, the 'rites of passage' of time, of the year.

However, many of these complicated rituals cannot be undertaken just by any Vaiśya or by the average Kṣatriya. One has to employ an often quite large number of priests and helpers. Carrying out the solemn ritual thus is possible only for persons of a certain status and wealth. At the same time, Śrauta ritual also *provides* status through its very visible, elaborate preparation and execution. This mutual reinforcement is constantly underlined in the post-Ṛgvedic texts (*brahma-kṣatra*, etc. n.107).

Perhaps even more importantly, the sponsor (*yajamāna*) is promised and provided with "a way to heaven".[183] This is different from the pleasant world of the Fathers (*pitṛ*),

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[182] See Bhṛgv-Aṅgiras- in JB 1.31 (with a long note by Bodewitz (1973:83, 89 sqq.) on the All Gods, similarly GB 1.1.29 sqq.; for the rest: ŚB 1.2.1.13 = VS 1.18 = TB 1.1.4.8.

[183] See Witzel 1984. - The topic that has become stereotypical in Mīmāṃsā philosophy: *svargakāmāḥ ... yajeta* 'one who wishes to obtain heaven should offer with [the *xyz* ritual]. - See Farmer, Henderson and Witzel (2000); see for the time being Smith 1989 and especially Wezler 1996.

which is the normal abode of the deceased, before they return, after three or four generations, to this world once their ritual merit (*iṣṭāpūrta*,[184] *sukṛta*) has been 'used up.' Ever since the Purūravas hymn (RV 10.95.18, an added stanza), heaven has been the focus of religious attainments.[185] This wish is discussed in innumerable passages found in all YV-Saṃhitās and in the various Brāhmaṇas. Some rituals, such as the Agnicayana,[186] directly attest to this wish by the very construction of a bird shaped eastern altar, by which the sponsor can go to heaven (and which set-up was then repeated at cremation). This access to heaven is open to all the three Ārya Varṇas (Brahmin, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya) but it is of course barred to the Śūdras who cannot perform Śrauta rituals.[187]

So far only the seasonal Śrauta rituals have been mentioned here as well as those that aim at an increase of status, such as the royal rituals. There is, however, an amorphous mass of rituals of incidental *kāmyeṣṭi*s, that is rituals aiming to reach certain individual goals of the sponsor; only a certain number of them have survived in texts such as BŚS or VādhŚS[188] (cf. § 7.2.6).

Most of such wishes are also dealt with by the Atharvaveda. Whether one wishes to obtain rain, cattle, sons, heal a broken leg, visit one's girlfriend by night, or regain a lost kingdom, -- the Mantras of the AV (and the many Yajurvedic "wish offerings") provide a means for all situations in life.

Finally, the Atharvaveda texts also deal with some of the most important rites of passage. Some of these "house" rituals (*gṛhya*) are found both in ŚS (13-18) and in PS 18. They include the two major rituals of the life cycle, marriage and death. The little understood *vrātya* group (*Männerbund*, sodality) of roving and aggressive young men, i.e. the unmarried and promiscuous *marya(ka)*, is dealt with in this section as well. Another one is the *upanayana*, the initiation into the group of the twice-born three Aryan classes (*varṇa*) that entails the taking up of Vedic study. This is found in the later part of PS 19 and 20 only.[189] Of special interest is ŚS 13 = PS 18.15-26, the Rohita "book" that deals with the glory and the power of the chieftain, which is identified with the red glowing sun.

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[184] See Witzel 1998, Lopez 1997, Sakamoto-Goto 2000.

[185] Incidentally, this continues, in spite of the belief in *karma*, to this very day. Even the Buddhists of Nepal --in spite of the *anātman* principle-- rather prefer to "go to heaven." Deceased people are referred (for example in printed wall posters and in common parlance) to as *'svargagata'* or *'svargīya'* both by Hindus and Buddhists. I have made many enquiries, with similar results, in many parts of India.

[186] The Agnicayana ritual, with its large scale use of bricks, is not necessarily to be derived from Indus civilization, as has been assumed by many in the past. The word for 'brick' is ancient, already Indo-Iranian (see Witzel 1995, 1999). Notable is the important input by Kavaṣa's family (Proferes 1999); according to Kuiper (1991) this a Dravidian name; for a possible scenario of late Ṛgvedic Dravidian/Indo-Aryan interaction see Witzel 1999.

[187] Occasional exceptions are made for important people such as the "hi-tech" specialist (Drews 1989) of the time, the chariot maker (*rathakāra*, Minkowski 1989), and also the chieftain of the Niṣādas, the Niṣādasthapati, a feature that indicates beginning Sanskritization (cf. Srinivas 1989, Staal 1963).

[188] And the similar *Kāmyāḥ Paśavaḥ*, the *Savas*. Note that the *ṣadopaśadau* (Purūravas legend), BŚS 18.45, are meant for offspring.

[189] See Kajihara 2002. The rest of the sections in PS 18, ŚS 13-18 is of interest as well: it includes PS 18.1-14 (ŚS 14) marriage, PS 18.15-26 (ŚS 13) the *rohita* aspect of the sun and of the chieftain, PS 18.27-43 (ŚS 15) the Vrātya, PS 18.44-53 (ŚS 16) the Parittas, PS 18.54-55 (ŚS 17) on the sun, and PS 18.57-82 (ŚS 18) the Yama hymns dealing with death and cremation.

This section of the AV, again, indicates one of the major concerns of the Atharvavedins: to be *purohita*s, house chaplains of royal and noble families. For this purpose they developed, as the first among the Vedic schools (*śākhā*), a set of verse or prose Mantras (in addition to one or two hymns found in the Ṛgveda) for occasions like death, marriage, *upanayana*, and for the great chieftain (PS 10, ŚS 13= PS 18.54-56).

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

If we then take another, final look at the changes in ritual that occurred between the RV and the Mantra time AV/YV collections, we can sum up as follows.

Material changes (three fires, introduction of rice offerings) may be innovative, but they are counterbalanced by the remarkable tendency of the emerging Śrauta ritual to be artificially archaic. The same holds for the reorganization of the labor of the priests. Their new assignments are classified according to the Four Vedas. Many old names of priests and their job descriptions are kept, but the role of the Brahmán changes markedly, with the disappearance of the need for new Ṛgveda style (speculative) poems. Just as his role is restructured, so is that of the many rites and great old rituals. All are reorganized in increasingly complicated frameworks of rites inside rituals inside major rituals.

Again, we can ask the question, why did this unification of ritual happen? Not because of an urge of the Brahmins to play their ritual games, nor simply by "breaking up" the old agonistic ritual of an unspecified heroic period, and putting it together in another, artificial way, as Heesterman proposes. Why should any priest or group of priests do so? Ritual tends to be conservative. More surprisingly, why did *all* the priests' and poets' clans follow suit in the reform? They constituted a number of prominent clans (the Vāsiṣṭha, Vaiśvāmitra, Bhāradvāja etc., and some super-clans like that of the Āṅgirasa,[190] all of whom were in competition with each other. They differed among themselves not only in their ritual poetry but also in their ritual practices.[191] There certainly was no central religious authority during the late Ṛgvedic period or the subsequent dark period who could tell the priests to reform the traditional ritual, and furthermore in the wide stretches of land from eastern Afghanistan to the Ganges, and from the Himalayas to the Rajasthan desert, an area inhabited by some 50 tribes and major clans.

However, the sudden acceleration in the development of the ritual, sketched above, does not stand alone. It can be compared with certain shifts in the old Ṛgvedic religion seen in the development of new concepts and even of new gods. It is necessary, thus, to take a brief look at late and post-Ṛgvedic religion and mythology as well as the political and social situation.

## § 4.8. Religion and Mythology

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[190] See Witzel 1995: 307 sqq.

[191] See Hillebrandt 1897: 16.

The trends in the development of Vedic religion include at least three distinct elements.

  <u>(1)</u> In the Mantra period, the old gods (Varuṇa, Mitra, even Indra) are not as important any more as in the Ṛgvedic period. Indra changed his character considerably, or rather, other aspects of his character were emphasized now.[192] In the RV he had been a god who was involved in creation by pushing up the sky and who performed such heroic primordial deeds as breaking open the Vala cave and releasing the cows/dawns, or killing the dragon (Vṛtra) and releasing the waters. Now, he is a tricky, sexually overactive and boastful "super-Kṣatriya" who still is the nominal king of the gods, but mainly a rain deity.[193] The worship of Rudra, originally aimed against his sending cattle disease, becomes more important; notable also are the many new myths about his acceptance into the fold of the Āditya/Deva gods. From among the older types of hymns, only the Indra and some Āprī hymns tend to be actively composed even in Atharvavedic circles. Finally, new deities appear such as Prajāpati, Viśvakarman, Manyu, or new concepts such as *vāc, śraddhā* 'belief in the efficacy of ritual', *ucchiṣṭa* 'left over of the ritual', or *anna* 'food' as universal means of exchange. Several of them are in need of a detailed study that promises to enhance our understanding of later Ṛgvedic thought about the workings of the cosmos and of the role of human beings in it.[194] Finally, there are a number of important, deeply speculative hymns dealing with cosmogony and cosmology in parts of the AV that continue the speculation of the late RV.

  Equally important <u>(2)</u> perhaps is the development of a new, local mythology involving the Kurukṣetra area. As has briefly been indicated above (§ 2, 3, below § 4), the rivers Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī are regarded as heavenly streams flowing through the Kuru area. Kurukṣetra itself is equated, as has been pointed out above, with the whole earth.
  The beginning of these developments can be discovered already in the RV. The Kurukṣetra area -- that did not yet have that name then -- was supposed to be "at the center of the earth" (*vara ā pṛthivyāḥ,* RV 3.23.4), in hymns dealing with the chieftain Sudās and his dynasty. While this might have been just a "center out there" (V. Turner) in relation to the four other major tribes of the Ṛgvedic period, Kurukṣetra has become, by the time of the Mantra period, the actual center of political and ritual activity.[196] It is here, for example, that the Kuru kings have their traditional seat (if a temporary one, due to their constant peregrinations) at Rohitakakūla (mod. Rohtek?, PB 14.3.12). It is the place where even the gods offer (*devayajana*). From Kurukṣetra one can even travel to heaven by performing a

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[192] Note that the trickster aspects of Indra are represented in Greece as well, where they appear as aspects of Zeus; or cf. also the similar deity in Japan, Susa.no Wo.

[193] As such Indra survives until today, see Witzel 1998, and forthc.

[194] See Witzel 1998, Lopez 1997; cf. Jamison and Witzel, 2003.

[196] Note that this section (see Witzel 1997) was written before it became clear, at least to me, that Kurukṣetra was the area into which a large part of the late-/post-Harappan population moved *en masse*, (Shaffer 1999). Importantly, this area was also a center of non-IA river names (Witzel 1999). The overlap of these two separate facts with developments of the late Ṛgvedic civilization, as well as the subsequent emergence of the Kuru realm and its ritual remains a question to be studied at length; it cannot be done here. The same applies to the post-Harappan building of smaller towns in the same area. These are not mentioned at all in the Vedas: they were 'beyond the pale' for the cattle herding Indo-Aryans. -- However, note that the development of the Kuru state takes place only at the end of this extensive resettlement period.

special kind of *Sattra* ritual[197] that involves following the course of one or of both Kurukṣetra rivers upstream (Witzel 1984) until one reaches their source[198] at the foot of the tree Plakṣa Prāsravaṇa in the lower Himalayas. This is said to stand at the center of the earth viz. at the center of heaven (JB, VādhB). Clearly this is the world tree, the axis between heaven and earth, another precursor of the later (*Su*)*Meru* or *Kailāsa*[199] mountain. Even during the Brāhmaṇa period (PB), these 'pilgrimages' allegedly still attracted a Videha king, Nāmin Sāpya,[200] to travel all the way from eastern North India to Kurukṣetra in order to carry out this Sattra.

Upon reaching the source of the river Sarasvatī one reaches Heaven, as both PB and JB stress. Or, if one was not successful in one's mundane Sattra goal of obtaining a thousand cows one commits suicide, apparently by drowning oneself in the nearby Yamunā river. All of this foreshadows the Mahābhārata story of the Pāṇḍavas' and especially Yudhiṣṭhira's march to the Himalayas and to Heaven, as well as the medieval custom of drowning oneself, at another *triveṇī*, at the tree growing at the confluence of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā at Prayāga (Allahabad).[201]

These Sattras indicate certain developments in astronomy as well. The Milky Way and its movement throughout the year was apparently investigated in detail; its two prominent branches were deliberately identified with the local rivers Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī. All of this is, in Śrauta ritual (e.g. in the Gavām Ayana), closely related with the calculation of the year of 360 (or 365) days divided into solar months of 30 days but having, at the same time, lunar months with 27 or 28 days (i.e. according to the *nakṣatra*s).

Other changes in traditional mythology include the many "śrautified" versions of traditional myths in a new garb, a topic that cannot be treated here in detail.[202] Such myths are built on the traditional models visible in the RV but are made use of and slightly changed or re-arranged in the texts as to fit the typical Brāhmaṇa explanations of rituals and their constituent parts.

Finally, (3) the development of the post-Ṛgvedic ritual involves the well-known shift away from the importance of the individual gods towards the power of ritual as such, a feature that has been stressed by many scholars for the last hundred and fifty years or so. In

[197] Just as the gods perform their own Sattras in Kurukṣetra, the mundane replica of heaven, see § 3, and cf. below §10.

[198] Strictly speaking, these "pilgrimages" are attested only in one later section of a Yajurveda Saṃhitā (TS) and then, in the Brāhmaṇa texts (JB, PB, see Witzel,1984.

[199] See the fragment of the Kaṭha Brāhmaṇa on KS 40.7:140.17-18, ed. by Caland 1920: 486 = Surya Kanta 1943: 27. Mt. Meru survives in the linguistically and religiously conservative Chitral area as (Tirich) *Mir*.

[200] This is a fiction, however, as the name is Ṛgvedic, cf. Witzel 1989: 240, n. 334. In fact, it may prove the eastern origin of our present version of PB (which may be the same, then, as the lost Bhāllavin text that is reported to have had the (eastern) *bhāṣika* accent), while it deals with a western *sattra* ritual, carried out on the Sarasvatī in eastern Panjab, in Kurukṣetra.

[201] Cf. Thakur 1963, von Stietencron 1967, Berglie & Suneson 1986, with a discussion of the secondary literature, p. 39 sq.

[202] For examples see K. Hoffmann 1975-6: Struktur eines Brāhmaṇa-Abschnittes; S. Jamison 1997.

the "classical" Vedic ritual not only one's ascendance to heaven, but all aspects of nature and society, including the neighboring tribes, can be manipulated. This is the dawn of the "pre-scientific" age of "Brāhmaṇas", that is of the expository prose of the Yajurveda Saṃhitās and the individual Brāhmaṇa texts (Oldenberg 1919). The Mantra literature and the early, lost Brāhmaṇa portions of the pre-MS/KS Yajurveda Saṃhitās[203] (see below) presuppose the correlative so-called 'identification' (or rather, correlation) technique by which the Brahmavādins of this early period discovered and firmly established the major *bandhus* that underlie the homologies of the YV Saṃhitā expository prose;[204] they form the underpinnings of the Śrauta ritual that is (frequently) based on the correlating procedure underlying sympathetic magic. The stress on ritual further enhances the position of the Brahmins in the evolving stratification of the society into four classes. In the framework of their strategic alliance with the Kṣatriyas they claim to be the "scientists" and "technicians" of their day, and to control, by their powerful rituals, nature, society, and even the gods.


§ 4.9. Summing up

A number of major developments and changes occurred in Old Indian ritual during the Dark Period that intervened between the Ṛgveda and the Mantra period, first represented by the Mantras of the Atharvaveda and the Yajurveda. The many smaller private and some of larger public rites were thoroughly restructured. Most of them were primarily connected with time, with the changes of day and night, of the moon and of the seasons. In addition there were incidental socially important performances, such as the installation of a (great) chieftain. Most of them were now amplified and embedded into a fixed framework-like setting. Due to their frequent schemes of interlinking and substitution, the rituals became so complicated in time that elaborate (oral) texts were composed by the Brahmins (and *for* the Brahmins!) that explained the esoteric meaning of the rites and that speculated on the meaning of each or parts of a ritual and of the Mantras pronounced then.

The core of each ritual had been modeled on that of guest worship that was also extended to the gods as visitors from heaven. In the RV the gods had been invited to the fire as honored guests. Now, the offering ground of the Śrauta sacrifices, with its three sacred fires, symbolizing earth, moon and sun/heaven, became the model of the universe, and the priests operating on it became the (temporary) incarnations of the gods. The sponsor of the ritual (*yajamāna*) and his wife, who also had to be present on the offering ground, were temporally transported to heaven as well -- until "they stepped down to this earth again" as not to die before their time.

These developments were accompanied by a change in the job description of the priests and a re-ordering of their ranks into four groups, each with its own Veda text collection (see § 5). Further, the number of priests was inflated, just as the structure of the ritual was expanded, as to provide work for 16 or 17 priests officiating during a larger Śrauta ritual. Special emphasis was given to the royal rituals. The rather simple installation ceremony of a chieftain (*rājan*) of the Ṛgvedic period, which made use of a few hymns and a ceremony centered around a simple unction rite (*abhiṣeka*), was inserted, just like so many

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[203] See Hoffmann 1975-6, 509 sqq; Witzel 1981, 1982.
[204] See Witzel 1979, S. Farmer, et al., 2000.

other Śrauta rituals, into large frameworks, notably that of the *Rājasūya*. These developments are indicative of the increased importance of the *rājan* -- originally a simple tribal chieftain who was now developing into the ruler of more than a single small tribe, into a Great Chieftain or "king", -- mainly, the king of the Kurus.[205] Accordingly, the special role of the royal priest (*purohita*) was further developed[206] and his Mantras were collected in certain sections of the AV (PS 10, PS 18, AVŚ 13, etc.).

The material changes in ritual are remarkable as they are surprisingly innovative (e.g. introduction of oblations of rice). But, at the same time, many of them show intentional archaization. The metal vessels of the RV were substituted by very primitive wooden or clay ones; ritual garments were freshly made (and thus unwashed, i.e. unpolluted by low caste washerwomen), and they were made in a very archaic fashion, without the use of needle and thread. The same trend towards artificial archaization will reappear in several of the investigations to follow.

## § 5   TEXTS[207]

The massive changes in ritual theory and performance are well matched, if not paled, by the extensive development and subsequent collection of the traditional and new texts used in the rituals and at other public occasions. As discussed above, it was during the Mantra period that the concept of the Four Vedas was developed. Special attention will therefore be paid in this section to the composition of the various Vedic texts, their initial collection, the process of oral transmission, and their final redaction as the Four Vedas at the time of the emergence of the Kuru(-Pañcāla) union.

During the Ṛgvedic period the four Vedas did not yet exist in the form we have them now. Instead, there was a wealth of largely clan-based, limited or secret knowledge of Ṛc verses and hymns. Some of them were already assembled in informal, small 'family' collections, and a larger amount of floating verses was the more or less common knowledge of the Brahmins and some Kṣatriyas. In addition, there must have been early, even Indo-Iranian Mantras of *yajuṣ* type that accompanied the ritual[208] and that included the

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[205] Note the terms in AB 8.14 *sāmrājya, bhaujya, svārājya, vairājya, rājya, pārameṣṭyam rājyam, māhārājyam, ādhipatyam*, etc., see Witzel 1987: 183. Note that *Bhoja* is a title of Sudās and his family already in RV; it continues in the Malwa area through the middle ages.

[206] See the sections in AB 8.24-28, etc.

[207] There is some overlap with Witzel 1997, but this has been paired down considerably in this chapter. Some sections that had been eliminated for brevity's sake in Witzel 1997, however, have been kept here; some additions have been made where necessary.

[208] See for example RV 3.53.3: "Let us speak, Adhvaryu! Answer me!" -- Hillebrandt 1897:12 maintains that in Ṛgvedic times there were old YV formulas (*pratigara*, referring to Oldenberg's history of the ritual (*ZDMG* 42). Note that the word itself is not found in the RV, but there were no metrical YV texts that could have been included; note, however, the YV-like Mantras in the RVKh Kuntāpa hymns (Witzel 1997).

*praiṣa*,[209] *nivid*,[210] *pratigara*,[211] etc. as well. The large *sāman* collection in RV 9 presupposes the existence of its melodies at an earlier time.[212] In addition, the RV text itself knows of different groups of priests engaged with various types of recitations and actions during the ritual, such as the *hotṛ, udgātṛ, adhvaryu*.[213]

Some of the materials used in the three of the four Vedas thus were present already in Ṛgvedic time. Atharvan type verses, too, must have existed. This is evident from their very content that agrees, in some cases, with other Indo-European sorcery hymns and rites.[214] However, their language, though generally younger than that of the RV, sometimes approaches the language and style of the RV (notably in the still persistent use of the Injunctive). In addition, RV 10 contains much that is Atharvavedic in character. There is a certain overlap, thus, between the texts and the language of the late RV and the AV.[215]

We can thus sum up that Ṛgvedic hymns, Sāmavedic melodies, Yajurvedic Mantras of *yajuṣ* or *praiṣa, sampraiṣa, nivid,* or *nigada* type, and Atharvavedic extra-sacrificial sorcery hymns were in existence and were still being composed at the time our investigation begins.

We first turn to the most prominent feature of post-Ṛgvedic texts, the large and varied Yajurveda collections. While the White YV generally is much younger than the Mantra period, the Black YV has come down to us in 4 or 5 recensions that differ from each other considerably. In the most probable historical arrangement, they are: the lost Caraka YV-Saṃhitā,[216] then the Maitrāyaṇi Saṃhitā, Kaṭha Saṃhitā, Taittirīya Saṃhitā, and the text of a Kaṭha sub-school, the Kāpiṣṭhala-(Kaṭha) Saṃhitā.

As has been mentioned, these texts contain individual small collections of Mantras meant for the various Śrauta sacrifices. These collections are often followed or interspersed with expository prose in *brāhmaṇa* style, that is discussions and explanations of the ritual. The Mantras clearly are older than their explanations, as can easily be seen from internal chronology (by quotation) and even more so in the linguistic development that occurred between the Mantras and the expository prose of the YV Saṃhitās.

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[209] See S. Einoo *IIJ* 28, on the *Nigada*, a prose Mantra different from *sampraiṣa, praiṣa, nivid*; - cf. also *astu śrauṣat* with Avesta Y. 56.3 *sᵊraošas-ca ... astū*, see Kreyenbroek 1985: 70, 105; and cf. *ye yajāmahe* with Avestan ...*yazamaidē*.

[210] RV 1.89.3 "the old Nivid" : *tā́n pū́rvayā nivídā hūmahe vayám bhágam mitrám áditiṃ dákṣam asrídham | aryamáṇaṃ váruṇaṃ somam aśvínā (sárasvatī naḥ subhágā máyas karat).*

[211] For details see Hillebrandt 1897: 12 sq.

[212] Note also the Avestan and Vedic designation of certain hymns as *gāthā*.

[213] Note that even the term *adhvaryu* is fairly early (books 2, 4): Ṛgveda 2.14 (fighting, Indra); 6.41.2; 6.44.13; 7.98.1 and 8.4.13: fighting priests?, Indra's Soma offering; 8.101.10 ~*path*; most noteworthy is (the appendix hymn) 3.53.3: "Let us speak, Adhvaryu! Answer me! We want to make Indra's beloved chariot *śáṃsāvādhvaryo práti me gṛṇīhī́ndrāya vā́haḥ kṛṇavāva júṣṭam | édám barhír yájamānasya sīdā́thā ca bhūd ukthám índrāya śastám.* See the list in Hillebrandt 1897: 11.

[214] See, e.g. the *Merseburger Zaubersprüche,* which, unnoticed so far, agree with some of the Indian material even in their typical narrative structure: both first tell a (mythological) story and then add the sorcery stanza. For a particular obnoxious rite found both in Atharvavedic and Anatolian texts, see Watkins *Sprache32.*

[215] See, e.g. Oldenberg's list of materials concerning RV 10, (1888: 267 sqq.).

[216] Witzel 1981/2.

By the time these Mantras were collected, the Śrauta rites had already been classified as either *iṣṭi* or *soma* type sacrifices; indeed, all YV Saṃhitās begin with two small Mantra collections, that of an *iṣṭi*, the *Darśapaurṇamāsa* (New and Full Moon sacrifice), followed by that of a *soma* ritual, the *Agniṣṭoma* (also called *adhvara*). After these two small "Saṃhitās", the texts proceed with a more or less parallel arrangement of Mantra collections and their corresponding expository prose in Brāhmaṇa style, pertaining to nearly all the other Śrauta rituals.[217]

## § 5.1. The old, lost prose explanations of the YV Mantras

It is surprising, however, that the most common types of rituals, the New and Full Moon and the Soma rituals, went without a Brāhmaṇa explanation for a long time, until one is supplied in the *latest* parts of MS, KS, TS (Witzel 2020). One might think that the structure and secret import of these rituals was so well known to the practitioners, the Adhvaryus, that they did not feel it necessary to compose a Brāhmaṇa text on them. Indeed, the first Brāhmaṇa expository prose in both MS and KS deal not with the explanation of ritual as such, or with the actions of the Adhvaryus, but with the participation of the sponsor of the sacrifice (*yajamāna*) in the Agnihotra rite. (This is another indication, incidentally, of the importance the Mantra and YV Saṃhitā time priests attached to their relation with the Kṣatriyas, their sponsors; cf. above § 4.)

Still, the lack of *brāhmaṇa* style explanations for the *Darśapaurṇamāsa* and *Agniṣṭoma* rituals remains puzzling, as their Mantras were collected first, were made the prototype of all other Śrauta rituals, and were collected and arranged at the beginning of the existent Yajurveda Saṃhitās.

Indeed, there are a number of indications that even these rituals had an earlier *brāhmaṇa*-type explanation in expository prose that was composed during the Mantra period itself. This *oldest prose explanation* of the Mantras (and of the ritual) is now lost to us. It must have contained a host of such standard correlative statements as "*Agni* is *retas*". K. Hoffmann has reconstructed such a passage in his article "*Der Mantra yan navam ait.*"[218] This sentence, clearly belonging to expository prose, was misunderstood already by the time of a YV Saṃhitā (TS prose) as a *mantra.* This fact indicates that the lost (Caraka?) expository prose of Mantra time must have been quite remote already to the authors of TS *brāhmaṇa* style texts! Expository prose was, in fact, recited by heart on the offering ground.[219] It was

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[217] This order and the general contents have not been investigated well, nothing in Gonda 1975. But see, Witzel, *The Veda in Kashmir*, ch. VIII, 2020-- As mentioned above, the following section overlaps, to some extent, with my long paper on the canon (Witzel 1997).

[218] K. Hoffmann 1995-6: 509 sqq.

[219] As noted by J. Narten, in one of her classes at Erlangen, c. 1967. -- Note also the rule of the TĀ 2.11.1 (= KaṭhB) to recite "from where the roofs of the settlement cannot be seen (any more)", and ŚB 13.8.1.12 to establish grave monuments where they are invisible "from here", presumably from the offering grounds next to the settlement. Similar expressions are found when describing the distance from the settlement in the case of Veda study (TĀ 2): one has to be distant enough, that is stay in the wilderness, *araṇya* (Oldenberg 1915).

occasionally reformulated and added to as the ritual developed; such additions are sometimes found only in the later parts of MS and KS.

These findings permit to assume the existence of a whole class of early *brāhmaṇa* style expository prose that preceded MS, KS, TS and that was more or less contemporaneous with the collection of the YV Mantras. This throws an interesting light on the composition of MS/KS and on the origin of *brāhmaṇa* type texts as such.

As has been mentioned just now, it is remarkable, though as far as I see not noticed, that the Brāhmaṇa explanation to the "standard rituals" of *iṣṭi* and *adhvara*[220] do not have an old Brāhmaṇa. All such expository prose includes straightforward *brāhmaṇa*-like interpretations of the ritual, "sacrificial" myths and myths of aitiological nature. In all its preserved versions, such a myth agrees in several respects:[221] the beginning sentence(s)[222] of a particular myth usually are found without variants[223] in all the texts and the closing statements also largely agree with each other. This again indicates a very old layer of now lost prose texts (*itihāsa*, to use the traditional term), texts that were significantly different in nature from the preserved expository prose proper (*arthavāda*).

To this the observation another significant fact can be added. Many of the Brāhmaṇa style correlations and homologies appear already as fixed (the type *agnir vai retas*) when they first occur in the oldest YV texts (MS, KS). But, they are never explained or further adumbrated.[224]

All of these facts point to old, lost Brāhmaṇas: the Mantra time "reformation" and reformulation of Ṛgvedic ritual obviously took place not without extensive thought and well formulated discussion points on the nature of ritual. These recent discoveries indicate a certain time span between the end of Ṛgvedic hymn composition and early Yajurvedic ritual reform, or at least a longer period of development and overlap --in early Kuru time-- than usually expected or admitted.

## § 5.2. The Four Vedas

A look at the different types of Veda texts, the "Four Vedas," is in place now. Usually, one accepts the separate existence of the four Vedas (Ṛgveda, Sāmaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda) as a given, and the question under which circumstances and how these four

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[220] Why *adhvara*? Note the term *Adhvar-yu* 'wishing to find the path (to heaven, to the end of the ritual)' from *\*adhvan-/adhvar-* 'path', see Mayrhofer, *KEWA* I 32, but cf. K. Hoffmann in Mayrhofer, *EWAia* s.v.

[221] As noticed recently by Jamison 1991.and 1997.

[222] For this part of the problem, see already Witzel 1989 § 5.3, on the traditional beginnings "the gods and the Asuras were in contest".

[223] Excepting, of course, a few grammatical changes and some extra particles here and there, cf. Witzel 1989 § 5.3.

[224] See already Witzel 1979; on these "identifications" (correlations) cf. B.K. Smith 1989, Wezler 1986, Farmer, Henderson & Witzel 2000. -- Note that Saṃhitās and the Brāhmaṇas still use *vai* when making an assertion, while a later texts such as TĀ drops it, and just present the identification/correlation as such.

separate collections came into existence is rarely raised.[225] It is of course well known that the Ṛgveda is the oldest text among them and that, on the other hand, the Atharvaveda contains much archaic material on sorcery in a linguistically younger form. The Sāmaveda and the Mantras of the Yajurveda are usually supposed to have originated some time after the composition of the hymns of the Ṛgveda, and that both types of text were obviously composed for ritual use only. Even at first sight, it seems that the division of Vedic texts into four separate groups, the Four Vedas, originated with the appearance of the Śrauta ritual and with the reassignment of ritual work among the priests (see above § 4.3,6).

As has been pointed out above, this is supported by the fact that the RV speaks of 5 or 7 priests, while the text material used in the classical Śrauta ritual is subdivided according to the four main types of priests: the *Hotṛ, Udgātṛ, Adhvaryu, Brahman*, who represent one of the four Vedas each in their recitations during the ritual. Even the divergent forms the texts have taken at the time of their first collection underlines this division. Apart from the RV, of which *de facto* only one school survives, [226] all the other Vedas have two or more 'schools' (*śākhā*). As for the form the Mantras have taken in the individual transmission of each school, the *śākhā*s of each Veda generally agree more with each other than with that of any other Veda.[227] A closer look at such variations indicates that all other variants, not due to the division into the four Vedas, are secondary.

Such comparisons between all the four Vedas, taking into account all or most of their schools have, however, hardly been made.[228] Yet, already Oldenberg (1888)[229] concluded that the treatment of ancient Ṛc materials differs from Veda to Veda.[230] The development of the early Saṃhitās can be represented schematically as follows, as far as the use of RV materials is concerned.

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[225]  However, see Witzel 1997 for more details on this question (below, on canon formation).

[226]  However note some recent RV editions, Āśvalāyana,etc.

[227]  This is easily seen in the few obvious cases where the same hymn is transmitted by all the four Vedas, as for example in the *sahasraśīrṣa puruṣa* hymn. In this case, it definitely appears that there has been an *Ur*-YV Mantra collection, an *Ur*-SV melody collection, and an *Ur*-AV hymn collection, -- each with its particular variants and its specifically Sāmavedic, Yajurvedic, Atharvedic readings. Oldenberg came to a similar conclusion for the YV, see below.

[228]  Cf. now Witzel 2020, and: *Prolegomena on Atharvaveda Tradition* (forthc.).

[229]  Oldenberg provided one or two examples only and they included only MS, TS, VS and one recension only of RV, AV, SV as in his time only few of the various recensions of the Vedas had been published. See Oldenberg 1888: 325, on the "relationships among the Veda traditions": "It is not often that a single verse of RV is taken up in YV and SV or in YV and AV at the same time. And the treatment found in each Veda is different." His examples of coexistence of different recensions of the same verse include: RV 10.128 and TS 4.7.14 (Cayana), AV 5.3. -- TS 4.4.4 (Cayana). This clearly shows the imitation of ṛcs of Sāmaveda; the redactor of Yajuḥ texts found and utilized the specific topics of Sāman-diaskeuasis which deviate from ṛc traditions (p.327-8, n.3).

[230]  In one case, interesting for the inter-relationship between the early Vedas, he noticed that the compiler of the Yajuḥ texts found and utilized the specific Sāman diaskeuasis which deviated from Ṛgveda tradition. See Oldenberg, p. 327-8, n. 3; but note that some of the innovations in PS are to be explained in another way, i.e. those that are on the level of phonology (imitation of RV), occasional variants (again RV; cf. below).

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Source of        early transmission            later oral transmission,
ṛc in RV:        and first collection:         orthoepic diaskeuasis,
                                                  and redaction:


--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
                          --------------> ŚS (late add.: book 20 from RV; also: Kuntāpa)
                     /                          ---> no early RV influence
                   /
RV partly -->> UrAV    --->   PS , incl. royal rites,...      ---> later, book 18
|
influenced by
|                                                      RV redaction
|
|--partly--->> UrYVMtr.--> MS , esp. Agnicayana,... ---> no early(!) RV influence
|
RV ṛcs for
Sāmans:
completely ->> UrSV    ---> SV/JS   incl. stobhas, etc.     --->   no RV influence


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The RV, in whatever form it existed at the time,[231] clearly was not yet "sacred" when these adaptations of its texts were made. The Mantras which were taken by YV, SV, AV protagonists from the various Ṛgvedic "family" collections,[232] were derived from "a common stock of knowledge of the Vedic priests,"[233] though not without some changes in their wording (Oldenberg 1888).

Therefore the collection and the subsequent process of RV "orthoepic diaskeuasis"[234] and transmission, even of the so-called "family" books of the RV (1.51-7)

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[231] **Most probably only as individual hymn collections of some clans and a mass of "floating verses" (see Oldenberg 1888: 271-369).**

[232] **Or from the already partly collected Ur-RV? -- It should be investigated in detail which hymns from which collections/books were taken into texts such as AV, SV, YV. This could be indicative of the influence of a particular poets' family or the time frame of the takeover (cf. n. 287). - Note divergences in ritual at the time, see Hillebrandt 1897: 16.**

[233] **Cf. Oldenberg 1888: 271-369: "On the Ṛk Text and the Texts of later Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas". He states that the forms of RV verses taken in other Vedas show floating forms, allowing freedom of variations in the early Saṃhitās while approaching fixed forms in the Brāhmaṇa period.**

[234] **This term indicates the "deliberation of the correct pronunciation" by post-Ṛgvedic Veda teachers. It has been studied at length by Oldenberg (1888), and then by others in his footsteps (see, especially Hoffmann 1975-6, Index, and Narten 1995, index). Post-Ṛgvedic and pre-Śākalya teachers were in doubt whether to follow certain developments and trends in contemporaneous pronunciation; they also doubted and**

can have taken place only during the Mantra period (or even later, as will be discussed below). Even then, the new RV-Saṃhitā was not directly accepted by all groups of priests, as the Purūravas hymn, described by ŚB 11.5.1.10, clearly indicates.[235] Furthermore, RV 10 overlaps with AV to some degree, though it was not composed by AV poets/priests.[236]

All of this is indicative of a still "liberal" attitude with regard to original Ṛgvedic materials,[237] but also of the increasing impact of the innovative, "complete Ṛgveda" text on other Veda collections.[238] It also indicates a long period of ritual development before the Yajurveda Saṃhitās, such as MS, were collected. All of this falls into the period of this inquiry, the Kuru realm. The same is true of the Atharvaveda, which is in need of a more detailed investigation, attempted here to some degree.

§ 5.3. The Atharvaveda

The Atharvaveda is somewhat of an anomaly among the Four Vedas as its materials are little used and as its priest, the Brahmán, gets little work assigned in the execution of the Śrauta ritual. In addition, the AV always has had an aura of dubious respectability, much of it being concerned with sorcery. Though linguistically younger, the contents of the AV frequently are as old if not more archaic than the Ṛgveda, though they also include much later material. All groups of AV texts, the older sorcery stanzas (AV 1-7), the somewhat later, speculative hymns (AV 8-12), and the Gṛhya type books ŚS 13-18 (PS 18), however, clearly are transmitted in a form that is linguistically younger than that of the Ṛgveda, including its late book 10.[239]

Because of its high antiquity the AV is of great importance. It contains some very old, sometimes perhaps even original Indo-European sorcery materials.[240] Furthermore, it has preserved materials that are widely different from what is found in the older books (2-9) of

deliberated about the correct pronunciation of certain individual words (such as *pavāka*), where they did not always make the historically correct choice.

[235] The Purūravas hymn in ŚB 11.5.1.10 has, as the text clearly states, only 15 stanzas, while our Śākala RV has 18. This argument is usually not used to indicate that quite divergent versions of the RV existed even at the time of the later Brāhmaṇas, that is the very time Śākalya lived; see however, Witzel 1989 § 5.1, and 1997.

[236] Cf., however, now S. Insler 1998.-- Note that AV is supposed to have been composed by the Atharvan and Aṅgiras (and therefore the older name is Ātharvāṅgirasa; cf. overlap of hymns of the Āṅgirasa and the Bhṛgu: Bhṛgv-Aṅgirasa in GB 1.1.29,31, 2.9.3, etc.

[237] One has to investigate especially the relationship between the death hymns, marriage hymns in PS and ŚS and their form in RV: is there any special method of ordering the materials, and how far does it agree with RV?

[238] Note the term *Bahv-ṛc* "having many verses" as designation for the RV. Interestingly, it does not occur before the Brāhmaṇa period (AB 2.36, 6.18, PB, ŚB); the only exception, RVKh 4.2.5 *bahvṛcá-priya*, occurs in some very late (but accented) verses.

[239] Cf. Oldenberg 1888: . 271-369: The Ṛk Text and the Texts of Later Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas; Wackernagel, *Ai. Gramm.* I, Renou 1956; Narten 1969, 115 n.3; 121 sqq.

[240] Cf. above n. 203; this does not mean that themes or ideas in AV necessarily are restricted to Indo-European speaking peoples. Cf. Schlerath 1968; Zysk 1985 :73 sqq., 113 sqq.

the Ṛgveda (as well as in the later, ritual-oriented YV-Saṃhitās, and the Brāhmaṇas). As has frequently been noted, the AV is an irreplaceable source for the material culture, the customs and beliefs, the desires and sorrows of everyday Vedic life.[241] The character of the bulk of the hymns indicates that they were used for purposes of white and black magic in everyday circumstances.

With regard to the development of the two surviving Atharvaveda texts (ŚS, PS), the following[242] remarks can be made. Already Oldenberg (1888: 320) had stressed "floating form" of verses and the great freedom of variations in the early Saṃhitās, also in the AV[243] and even to a greater extent than in the other Vedas.[244]
As in the other Vedas, the RV has been used in AV stanzas and whole hymns have been taken over, frequently disagreeing even within AV tradition (PS:ŚS). The Atharvavedins did so for their *own* use (being healers, sorcerers, *purohita*-type priests), and in their own way, by changing words, sentences or whole stanzas, and very frequently also the order of stanzas. As for the other Saṃhitās, the RV verses were not yet "sacred" and one was free to make use of this "All-Aryan" knowledge (*vispe aire*, as the Avesta says in a different context) as far as it was available and useful to these disregarded "doctors".[245] Both RV and AV have taken these hymns from the mass of floating Mantras,[246] (while the hymns in RV are better transmitted, due to early fixation; see below § 5.)
A brief comparison of the two Saṃhitās reveals some important results for the present investigation. The first parts of both ŚS (1-4) and PS (1-4) more or less correspond to each other in contents. PS 5-15 contains other basic sorcery material that is spread out all over ŚS.[247]
The second section, ŚS 8-12, deals with some of the major speculative topics such as the *brahmacārin*, the Brahmin's cow, the *ucchiṣṭa* of the sacrifice; and additionally

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[241] Though a few hymns also treat the problems of chiefs, of the solemn ritual etc.

[242] A final evaluation will have to wait for the critical edition of the complete text of PS.

[243] That means only ŚS, except Book 20; he did not yet use PS.

[244] Archaic Ṛgvedic forms were more and more replaced by younger forms. Among them, Oldenberg (1888) mentions: -*tvā*, instead of -*tvāya* (RV 10.14.8); -*tvī* (RV 10.15.12, 10.85.29); elimination of Instr.pl. in -*ebhis*; verb *grah* instead of *grabh*; three-syllabic "*syona*" is understood as two-syllabic; *panthās* (Nom. pl.) is replaced by *panthānas*; *yudhaye* > *yuddhāya* etc.; -- statistics of *kim* (b. 10: 28x / *kad* (b. 10: 8x) among a total number of 92x *kim* in RV and 62x *kad;* -- one can now add: -*ā* > -*au* in the Nom.Du.Masc., -*ā* > -*āni* in the Nom.Pl.Ntr., -*āsas* > -*ās* in the Nom.Pl.Masc., *kṛṇoti* > *karoti, kṛṇumas* > *kurmas, kṛṇu* > *kuru* (mostly in ŚS), *viśve* > *sarve*, etc.

[245] Cf. TS and other YV texts on the Aśvins as Adhvaryus and as doctors of the sacrifice and of men: they can only be late-comers to the ritual as they often visit mankind and are defiled by this contact. See J. Filliozat 1975, cf. Witzel 1997.

[246] The opposite tendency can already be observed in book 10 of the RV where much 'popular' AV material is used that re-occurs in AV;-- Note that the -admittedly later- RV-Anukramaṇī does not know many of the authors (or their clan) of hymns in book 10.

[247] In ŚS there is a subdivision, ŚS 6-7, which has parallels to PS 19 and 20 only, - a clear sign of interpolation in the emerging ŚS. This is confirmed by the deviations for the number of verses per hymn in these two ŚS books. See Witzel 1985.

cosmological and cosmogonical hymns such as the one on the Earth, on *Skambha*, and on *Kāla*.

The third section, ŚS 13-18 containing the Vivāha (marriage), *Rohita*, *Vrātya*, *Paritta*, *Viṣāsahi*, and *Yama* (burial) hymns, corresponds more or less to PS 18. In those hymns (marriage and burial) that already occur in RV, PS generally agrees with the RV wording and not with Śaunaka one. In the case of VS (Mādhy./Kāṇva) and KS/KpS, close adherence to the RV indicates the younger age of the redaction of these texts,[248] as opposed to the more original and independent YV texts. The matter is somewhat different in the present case.[249]

Clearly, ŚS 1-5 / PS 1-15 are the oldest part of the collection. Yet, even the second part, ŚS 8-12 / PS 16-17 is of considerable age, as is indicated by the mentioning of iron that was introduced at c. 1000 BCE (Apparently the southern attestation of iron in Maharastra is older than in the Panjab, see Possehl & Gullapalli 1999). The AV stanzas mentioning iron[250] belong to the core of the hymns, present at the time of the composition in the Mantra period.

Additionally, the age of the *gṛhya* type books ŚS 13-18 / PS 18 that has remained unclear[251] can be narrowed down. ŚS 15 / PS 18.27-43 contain some of the oldest prose in Brāhmaṇa style that is found outside the YV. This section contains at least one form that is typical for the state of the language in TS and in the Brāhmaṇas, the genitive in -*ai* of stems in *i, ī*, etc.[252] This would place the prose of PS 18 (= ŚS 15) in the later Saṃhitā or in the early Brāhmaṇa period. Yet, a few forms of this sort also occur in the early parts of AV (ŚS).[253] In Witzel (1989), I had dismissed this as late intrusions. However, ŚS is less conservative than PS and it can have introduced some modern forms even in ŚS 1-5. This does not happen in PS. As the text of PS 18.40.1 (*Vrātya*) contains this modern form, it is indicative of later composition, in the later Saṃhitā/Brāhmaṇa period.[254]

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[248] See Renou 1948, Oertel (1934)on KpS.

[249] If PS had taken over these hymns from ŚS, it would have conserved them in the form as transmitted by ŚS, and hardly have 'corrected' them according to the text found in the RV. -- -- Wherever ŚS has genuine deviations from the RV, such as a change of words, new or variant phrasing, or insertion of complete *pādas* and stanzas, PS generally agrees with ŚS, and does *not* follow RV. However, this does not mean that PS has exactly the same text as ŚS. There are genuine differences even in the largely parallel books PS 18 : ŚS 13-18.

[250] PS 16.53.12 (= AV 11.3.7) *śyāmam ayo lohitam ayo 'sya māṃsam (śyāmam ayo 'sya māṃsāni, lohitam asya lohitam)* ‖ 16.53.13 *trapu bhasmārjunam asthi (trapu bhāsma)* | *haritam varṇaḥ puṣkalaṃ (puṣkaram) gandhaḥ* ‖ ---
PS 16.97.3 (= AV 9.5.4) *anu chya (cchya) śyāmena tvacam etāṃ viśasvī (viśastar) yathāparv asinā mā māsthāḥ (mābhi maṃsthāḥ)*. The second verse is interesting as it mentions the knife, *asi*, but differently from the RV as a black (iron) one.

[251] The arrangement of the various books or sections in ŚS 13-18 = PS 18 should also be investigated. The *vrātya* section is (at least stylistically and linguistically) late and should perhaps form the last part of the collection in ŚS 13-18, PS 18. But it does not, in actual arrangement. What was the principle of arrangement?

[252] See Witzel 1989: 130 sqq.

[253] AV 3.25.6, 4.5.6 where PS disagrees, see Witzel 1989 p. 135

[254] PS 18.40.1 *etasyai devatāyā udakaṃ +yācāmīty asmā udakaṃ yācet*. This points to a late YV Saṃhitā or Brāhmaṇa time redaction of the text.

In sum, it seems to be correct that ŚS 1-5, 8-12 = PS 1-15, 16-17 are the two older parts, the core of the Atharvaveda texts dealing with sorcery and speculation; they have to be dated as being *ad quem* or slightly later than the introduction of iron; and they generally agree with Mantra period language. ŚS 13-18 = PS 18, however, may be -- at least in part-- of a slightly later age, that of the later Saṃhitā period (TS) or of some early Brāhmaṇas.

The question then remains why the AV --with its strong sorcery content-- was collected in the first place, and secondly, why in its present form. This has already been answered preliminarily (§ 4.6). The Ṛgvedic poets (*brahmán*, mostly belonging to the Āṅgirasa clan) received a new assignment when the Śrauta ritual was established. The AV is supposed to have been composed by *ātharvan* and *āṅgirasa* (and occasionally, by *bhārgava*) poets. The bulk of the RV, however, is due to *āṅgirasa* (and also some *bhārgava*) poets, the only exception being the *Kāṇva*s of book 8 and of part of book 1. The sorcery hymns of the Atharvans were joined, as has been explained above, with the speculative hymns of the Āṅgiras. Both parts form the core of the AV collections, the *ātharvāṅgirasa texts*.

However, after the initial collection made in the Mantra period, the AV hymns continued to lead their own life in both AV traditions, producing the typical AV variants now found in PS and ŚS.[255] This is comparable to the development of the Mantra variants of the Yajurveda. The redactors of PS, however, tried to make their hymns "acceptable" by inserting, wherever possible, Ṛgvedic forms, so that many hymns of PS 18 largely agree in form with those also found in RV.

The geographical features mentioned in PS indicate that the text was composed in the Eastern Panjab / Haryana area (just as KS, and the older part of AB),[256] in short, in the Kuru territory.

There are more indications of the importance the Kuru kings had in the genesis of this text. Book 18.15-26 = ŚS 13 deals with *Rohita*, the [victorious] "Red [Sun/Dawn]". A closer study of the book leads to the conclusion that it is the victorious aspect of the sun[257] that is intended here: *rāṣṭra* and *varcas* are constantly stressed (just as in the "coronation book" PS 10). There are clear indications that the king is brought into contact or correlated with Rohita. (It is not without interest that in the famous Śunaḥśepa legend of AB, which is closely connected with the discussion of the Rājasūya, Hariścandra's son is called Rohita as well.)[258] As the Rohita book is also found as ŚS 13, and as we do not know of its ultimate origin yet, it might be argued that it and its contents are not typical just for PS.

However, the content of book 10 of PS is found only in this Saṃhitā. This collection of 16 hymns (of 14 stanzas, in the present redaction of PS) deals with a version of the royal consecration that already includes the *Sava* (see above § 4). The appearance of a thematically

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[255] Cf. S. Insler 1998.

[256] See Witzel 1987: 176-177, 1989: 115.

[257] For this feature, see the similar development of the Dawn goddess to the Sun goddess in Baltic (*Saule*) and Japanese (*Amaterasu*) myth, and also in oldest Semitic, see Witzel 2012. -- The "reddish" Dawns have taken over the function of the male Sun deity and are described as warrior-like: the dawn, after all, victoriously overcomes the ominous and dangerous darkness of night, every morning, and so does the first dawn of the New Year (Kuiper 1983, Schmidt 1968).

[258] Note that Hariścandra, in later mythology, a representative of the Candravaṃśa line of Ikṣvāku, has a son Rohita, named after the sun (which would point rather to Sūryavaṃśa!).

compact collection of hymns in one of the early books of PS (books 1-15, roughly corresponding to ŚS 1-5) is quite extraordinary. Otherwise, each book has a collection of hymns of the same number of stanzas, but with quite diverse topics. The appearance of a "royal" book in PS 10 therefore is quite remarkable.[259]

There is, thus, a certain stress in PS on royal ritual in connection with the Śrauta ritual. This transgresses the usual hymns intended for the royal Purohita found also in ŚS. It may now be obvious that geographical area, time frame, and professional interest of the PS collectors agree with the influence of the Kuru realm and of royal influence on the formation of this text.[260] In sum, the importance of the royal ritual, the Kuru kings, and the Kurukṣetra area is obvious in connection with this Vedic school.[261]

## § 5.4. The Ṛgveda Khila Collection

The *Khila*s (apocryphic texts) of the RV[262] are usually overlooked as they have been transmitted only as appendixes to individual RV hymns. For example, the *Vālakhilya* group in book 8 also is of Khila character.[263] It is only in Kashmir that the Khilas have been transmitted as a separate collection of five *adhyāya*s.[264] They contain quite diverse materials mostly of Ṛgvedic and Mantra period age.[265] However, at the end of the Khila

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[259] The reasons remain obscure to me. -- Note also Kajihara (2002) for similar tendencies in books 19, 20; and the Rudra section in PS book 14.

[260] The ultimate redaction of PS has taken place much later than this; it is most clearly indicated by the secondary split of the longer hymns into two hymns, one with 10 and the other with the additional stanzas. The redactor's hand is also visible in the addition of a stanza or two at the end of certain hymns that are contradicting the order of arrangement in PS.

[261] The Śaunaka text, on the other hand, contains some indications of having been transmitted in a country lying more to the East of Kurukṣetra, in the land of the Pañcālas (Eastern Uttar Pradesh, up to Benares). During its long history of oral tradition in the area, the text further deteriorated by *perseveration* and was finally redacted in this form, at an unknown time and at an unknown location, but presumably under the Kaiśina dynasty of the Pañcālas, during the Brāhmaṇa period (see below).

[262] Ed. by Scheftelowitz 1906. See Bhise 1995.

[263] For a more detailed literary study see Witzel 1997, § 2.6;2020. -- They have been inserted in the middle of book 8, out of sequence followed by the arrangement of the RV; they are divided in Śākalya's Padapāṭha, but excluded by Sāyaṇa. -- In the Kashmirian Khila collection they are found in RVKh 5.

[264]Attached as an appendix to the only complete Śāradā RV manuscript that has come down to us, due to the efforts of G. Bühler in Kashmir in 1875 (see Bühler 1877).

[265] These are added to some individual hymns, such as the Śrī Sūkta 2.5, which has some Brāhmaṇa time additions (gen. fem. sg. in *-ai*, PS 18.40.1 *etasyai devatāyā udakaṃ*; see Witzel 1989 § 5.1) and include some unaccented parts that are already Purāṇic and Tantric. Note that the Śrī Sūkta is even used by the Nepalese Buddhists.

collection we find the *Kuntāpa* hymns, the *Nivid*s and the *Praiṣa Adhyāya* all of which contain very old materials.[266]

The *Kuntāpa* hymns represent the late stage of Ṛgvedic poetry. They were composed for the rituals of the New Year festival, especially the *Mahāvrata* day at the "end" of the solar year, just before the onset of "spring". In that sense they are representative of other cyclical rituals. However, the carnival-like atmosphere of the Mahāvrata furthered the typical mixture of traditional, solemn and very "popular" features in these hymns, such as the *śloka*-like (Anuṣṭubh) riddles with refrains,[267] and many sexually explicit passages (5.15, 22),[268] already in Mantra time language.

These Khila hymns are among the very first that mention the Kuru dynasty, albeit in a slightly veiled (and therefore, usually undetected) form, as *Kaurama*.[269] The new Kuru dynasty is presented here at the time of their golden age and their great chiefs are the focus. This will be crucial for the further investigation (see below §9).


§ 5.5. The Sāmaveda

The Sāmaveda can be dealt with fairly summarily as its texts[270] (in the Kauthuma/ Rāṇāyaṇīya version) have been taken completely from the RV, especially books 9 and 8, except for 75 Mantras. Therefore the SV cannot be expected, by its very nature, to contribute much. However, the *stobha*s -- often complete sentences like *e, svar jyotiḥ* -- have almost universally been neglected by scholars so far. Perhaps they contain more material, which is, however, too bulky and disparate to be considered at this point.

However, SV has some interesting deviations from the present RV redaction which have been studied by Oldenberg (1888: 271-369) and Brune (1909). These have been characterized as "floating forms" that exhibit a great amount of freedom of textual variation in the early texts such as YV, SV, AV. The feature is typical of Mantra time changes in general.[271] The deviations of the SV affect all parts of the RV from where SV verses have been taken. Such substitutions fall, according to Oldenberg, into several categories.[272] Just

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[266] For an early treatment see Bloomfield 1897, and cf. Caland 1953: 335 (ŚŚS 12.14 sqq.).

[267] For example: *na vai kumari tat tathā, yathā kumari manyase*, 5.16; Oldenberg 1883: Ākhyāna (*Kl. Schriften* 1967:451 sq.) stresses the fact that these hymns (= AV 20.127-11) show a mixture of the old Ṛgvedic Anuṣṭubh and "modern" Śloka.

[268] See now Witzel 1997 (Prosimetrum).

[269] For Kaurava and Ruśama, see K. Hoffmann 1975-6: 6.

[270] Cf. Oldenberg 1888: 3. "The Ṛk Text and the Texts of later Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas", pp. 271-369.

[271] See above and cf. Witzel 1980.

[272] 1. Replacement by a word of the same or similar meaning.

2. Words of different meanings but of similar sounds, e.g. replacements of old words in a Ṛg verse, which have brought about totally different meanings in the SV parallels, such as *ditstu > dikṣu; ajmeṣu > yajneṣu; tapuṣā > tapasā, ma iha nāsti > mehanāsti*.

3. Constant, intentional variants, such as *īm* and replacement of archaic forms. - Some three-syllable words of the RV are replaced by new forms in SV: *deyām* (8.1.5) > *dīyase; śreṣṭha* (8.19.4) > *śreṣṭha + u* etc. The SV redactors sometimes did not notice the simple and regular metrical construction of the RV text!

4. Introduction of new words.

as in the case of some YV Mantras, the loans from the RV were made when the RV material still was uncollected and more or less "floating". The dependence on the RV is also clear, later on, in the ordering of the SV materials: the SV Saṃhitā follows the arrangement scheme of the RV quite closely.

The relative age of SV : YV : RV Mantra texts can sometimes be inferred from the forms the Sāmans take in the Yajurveda texts. [273] As Oldenberg stressed, the authors/collectors of Yajuṣ texts knew, in the same way as those of the Ṛg text, the (*Ur-*)Sāmaveda text and respected it.[274] In another case, the redactor of the Yajus texts found and utilized the specific forms of Sāmavedic diaskeuasis deviating from Ṛg traditions.[275]

While all of this throws an interesting light on the individual collection activities and mutual rivalries(!) of the newly emerging four groups of priests that represent the four Vedas, it must also be observed that the teachers of the Kauthuma SV version have worked together closely with the Kaṭha (Kapiṣṭhala) school.[276] This locates the Kauthumas in the Kuru area as the Kaṭhas are clearly localized in the eastern Panjab "where the rivers flow westwards most copiously" (Witzel 1974), where even Megasthenes (c. 300 BCE) and Arrian still locate the *Kathaioi* and their sub-school, the *Kambistoloi.*


## § 5.6. The Yajurveda

For an understanding of the developments of the Dark Period, the Yajurveda is of great relevance. It is central to the Śrauta ritual, so much so that a whole mythology, often apologetic in nature, has been created to justify the important role of the YV priests, the Adhvaryus.[277] They were the ones who carried out much of the manual work in the ritual even at the time of the RV (n.220). Their increased importance, compared to the old priestly group of the Hotṛs, makes them "late comers" to the Śrauta ritual. This is precisely the way they are represented in their "charter myth" (Malinowski), that of the cut-off head of

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5. As in the other Saṃhitās, Oldenberg 1888, *Prolegomena*, p. 335, noted decreasing liberty in the treatment of the RV text in the later parts of the Mantra time texts. Thus, also in the SV. The second Ārcika of SV has less deviations from Ṛgveda than the first, see Oldenberg, *ZDMG* 38, p. 467.

[273] Oldenberg, *Prolegomena*, p. 343.

[274] TS 4.4.4 (*chando-iṣṭakā*). The Yājyānuvākyas agree with SV (MS 2.13.9, however, agrees with RV !) -- In one case at least, Taittirīya Saṃhitā refers to a verse used as Sāman, whose text deviates from that of RV and SV: TS 5.4.12.1 (Cayana): "*pavasva vājasātaya.*" SV has the Pratīka at 2.366 = RV 9.100.6, 7, 9, where, however, the reading is *pavasva vājasātamaḥ*! --- Note some old Sāmans in KaṭhĀ 3.229-231, 233-234 which are not attested otherwise in early texts.

[275] TS 4.4.4 (Agnicayana) and the imitation of the Ṛcs of the Sāmaveda, see Oldenberg 1888: 327-8, n. 3. -- Cf. Ikari 1989.

[276] PB 1 is a collection of Mantras taken from the Kapiṣṭhala-Kaṭha school. Note also Pāṇinean Kaṭha-Kauthuma, see discussion in Witzel2020.

[277] See above, and cf. Witzel 1987, notes 104-5.

Dadhyañc and the role the Aśvins play in it. The foundational nature of the myth requires a brief study.[278]

Śrauta sacrifice produces and sustains the world (cf. RV 1.164.50 *yajñéna yajñám ayajanta devāḥ).* But it entails violence and destruction, such as severing the head of the victim.[279] While this was still carried out during Ṛgvedic times, it has been substituted in the Śrauta ritual by the strangulation of the victim. The cut-off head of the victim is then represented in the YV texts as a great mystery, for even the gods did not know 'the head of the sacrifice.' They had to learn about it from 'outsiders', that is from the Twin Gods, the Aśvins, who in turn had gained this secret knowledge from the sage Dadhyañc Ātharvaṇa ("Milky White, descendent of Atharvan"). Only then could the gods succeed with their Sattra ritual held in Kurukṣetra.

Normally, such violent action results in an evil (*pāpa),* a 'guilt' that has to be passed on to others.[280] However, in the Dadhyañc myth, there apparently is no such evil involved: Indra, on learning that Dadhyañc had divulged the secret of the sacrifice to the Aśvins, rushed to cut of Dadhyañc's head, but the Aśvin had replaced it with that of a horse,[281] the supreme sacrificial animal (after that of a human, *puruṣa).* In other words, the slaughter of a human is substituted by that of an animal. The Aśvins who were
indirectly responsible for the killing, bear no 'guilt' either, as Dadhyañc is neither really killed (but, a horse instead), nor did this 'half-sacrifice' have lasting consequences: the horse head was quickly replaced by the Aśvins with Dadhyañc's real head.[282] Everything is perfect: the Aśvin have gained th secret, the gods can proceed with their Sattra, and Dadhyañc has his head back. In addition, as will be seen, all of this reflects on the human condition.

The Aśvins are the 'doctors' of the sacrifice for the gods and they also function as physicians of humans on earth. As such they have become polluted, and they are late-comers to the sacrifice of the gods, a disadvantage they remedy by gaining access to the secret of the sacrifice, its head.

The Yajurveda texts identify the Aśvins with the Adhvaryus. Both are the doctors of the sacrifice, and as mentioned, the Adhvaryus, though pre-existent, are 'late comers' to the new Śrauta ritual as well.

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[278] See already Witzel 1987 with notes 104-5.

[279] Schmidt 1973, Heesterman 1983 (and frequently).

[280] Note the ancient (Mantra time) idea of a transmission of evil to Trita Āptya; cf. ϑraētaona āiϑβia in Avesta (Yt. 8.33), who kills the "dragon" and cf. in this context, Indra's guilt in killing the "Brahmin" dragon Viśvarūpa (YV Saṃhitās). Such evil is normally passed on to one's neighbors, and then onwards, "into the farthest distance", see especially AV 5.22, PS (K) 13.1= PS(Or) 12.1-2 (and cf. the elimination of evil from someone undergoing consecration (*dīkṣā)* for the Soma ritual BŚS 2.5 (*pāpmano vinidhayaḥ).*

[281] A grave of a human body without head which was substituted by a horse head has been found in E.Russia (at Popatovka).

[282] Indra later on used this horse head to slay some Asuras and then threw it away on the "backside" (west) of Kurukṣetra,(JB).

This myth has become the "charter", the apology and justification of all 'classical' Śrauta ritual, incidentally a fact not noticed by the theoreticians of Śrauta ritual.[283] It serves as the justification and apology of ritual killing and the actual offering of animals by the Adhvaryus; note, however, that the actual killing has been further removed to another substitute, the Śamitṛ and that it takes place outside the hallowed offering ground.[284] The myth serves to establish and maintain the position in ritual and society of the Adhvaryus.

Just as the actual killing of the victim is removed, step by step, from the main acting figures, the Adhvaryus, so is the identity of the victim. In myth it is not the sage Dadhyañc whose head is cut of but that of a horse, and in Śrauta ritual, not only was cutting off replaced by strangulation,[285] but from among the five "sacrificial victims" (man,[286] horse, cow, sheep and goat) only cattle, sheep and goats were commonly used in ritual.[287] They are substitutions for the human [288] and the stallion (that was used only in royal ritual, Aśvamedha).

In sum, multiple substitution takes place both in the Dadhyañc myth as well as in the actual execution of the Śrauta ritual, and the evil (*pāpa*) involved in killing is removed further and further away from the actors.[289] As will be seen below, the shift of evil and pollution 'down the line' to socially lower entities is one of the main features of the evolving *varṇa* and

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[283] Cf. in general, Heesterman, 1967 (= Heesterman 1985). Note also, the case of the horse sacrifice in VādhB: a young pre-pubescent boy must be killed as atonement for the slaying of a horse that has spilled semen during its suffocation, see Falk,1986:160.

[284] Violence thus is not completely excluded, though the texts mostly pass it over silently or hide it by euphemistic expression such a *ā-labh, śam*, etc. (Gotō 1976, Oertel 1942).

[285] Note also the avoidance of spilling the generally polluting substance of blood -- which is quite different from the ritual customs of Greece. Note that the role of pollution by any form of blood is also seen in the closely related religions of the Hindukush (Jettmar 1986).

[286] The gods actually prefer the sacrifice of humans and human blood, see BĀU/ChU -- just as in Aztec and Mayan Mexico, where, without constantly renewed human blood sacrifice, the sun cannot rise and stay its course.

[287] During the late Vedic period there was a (partial) trend to substitute sacrificial animals by figures made of flour (*piṣṭapaśu*). This trend has continued until today, see for example the case of the 1975 Kerala Agnicayana (Staal 1983, where the sacrificial goats were in fact saved by the intercession of party politics -- a communist one, in this case! Or note the recent secret reintroduction (2002) of human sacrifice (see Kālika Purāṇa) at Kāmakhya in Assam, however, ... with the substitution of the human victim by a 6 feet(!) *piṣṭapaśu* figure. -- Animals' heads, however, were necessary for the Agnicayana, where they have to be interred, see for example TS 5.1.8.1: a man's head is impure without the "breaths"; it is deposited on an anthill that is pierced in seven places just like a human head (openings of the eyes, etc.); cf. Heesterman,1985. It is only in rituals like the Agnicayana that the priests have to resort to seeking for the head of someone killed by lightning or in battle.

[288] Heesterman would add, an animal substitution for offering oneself.

[289] This has become the standard; note for example the apparently unrecognized case of the Buddha who never verbally agrees to an invitation but keeps quiet as not to incur any (indiect) guilt: in fact he died from consuming pork meat (*sukara-maddana*) prepared for him by the (low class) smith Cuṇḍa; for the similar case of Mahāvīra who ate two dead pigeons, see Alsdorf 1962; or some Hindu ascetics who eat only fruit that actually have fallen down from trees and thus are no longer 'alive."

caste system: from the gods to 'lower class' gods (Aśvins,[290] Trita Āptya) and to humans (Adhvaryu), from the sponsor of the ritual (*yajamāna*, the Kuru kings and noblemen) to their priests, from the main priests (Adhvaryu) to semi-priests (Śamitṛ), and so on. Other defilements and evils are sent off[291] to the neighbors (Gandhāri, Kāśi), or down the scale to the Śūdras and even further down to the Caṇḍāla.[292] It is always someone else, and preferably someone lower in social position, that has to bear the 'evil' (*pāpa*) and the pollution: as even today, one may perhaps clean one's own house but nobody sweeps in front of one's doorstep.

As the main actors of the Śrauta ritual, the Adhvaryus, must use Mantras accompanying each ritual action they carry out. These prose and verse Mantras are of various origins and nature. Important work regarding the position of these texts in relation to the RV and to each other has already been carried out by Weber and Oldenberg[293] more than a hundred years ago. Little has been added to these studies in the intervening period.[294]

Oldenberg (1888: 294) has stressed that the YV Saṃhitās have two main constituents, the separate small Mantra Saṃhitās, (a) the *Darśapaurṇamāsa/Soma* and (b) the *Cayana Saṃhitā*s. Also, he correctly concluded that the Saṃhitā elements and the Brāhmaṇa elements of TS were not brought together in one work at the same time. The "Taittirīya Saṃhitā", for example, is a later product *combining the literatures of two widely different periods* into a seemingly integrated whole.[295] This is precisely what we now call, on the basis of linguistic criteria as well, the Mantra period and the period of YV expository prose[296] (see above, § 1).

For the present purpose it is the Mantras themselves and their ordering in small collections forming the core of the early YV Saṃhitās that are at the center of attention as they indicate the direction of the activity of the Adhvaryu group of priests at this time.

The oldest Mantra texts are those of the Soma ritual (at New Year) and of some other "rites of passage" of the Year, such as the Darśapaurṇamāsa rituals. Both were codified early on in the Mantra period and serve as paradigms for all other rituals (excluding the Paśubandha; the Agnicayana mantras were added later as a second level.)[297] A close

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[290] See Falk 1984 on the "lower class" gods, the horse riding Aśvins.

[291] See the *pāpamano vinidhayaḥ* (BŚS 2.5) etc., at the beginning of the Soma sacrifice; cf. Witzel 1987.

[292] Nowadays, the leather worker etc. members of the the *pañcama* class/Dalit/ Harijan/ Pariah/ Outcaste. -- note Witzel 1997.

[293] See Oldenberg 1888: 290 sqq.

[294] See however the "Mantra philology" carried out by Hoffmann, Narten, and Sharma (1959/90), and see Ikari 1989, and Ikari, forthc.

[295] Interestingly, even Pāṇini speaks only of the *mantrakṛt* of the Taittirīya texts, see Witzel 1989 § 6.5, p. 178. This may refer to the comparatively late period of TS redaction as compared to that of MS, KS.

[296] The Mantras of the Cayana Saṃhitā that have been taken from RV have a separate position, see Oldenberg 1888: 297.

[297] Others were added still later, and were directly taken from the RV: (1) the Hotṛ Mantras, see Oldenberg 1888: 336 sq. - *Iṣṭi hautra* section of Hotṛ Mantras: TB 3.5 (cf. TS 2.5.7f.) ... only one variant (in a true sense): *agniḥ pratnena janmanā* (TB 3.5.6.1) for *agniḥ pratnena manmanā* (RV 8.44.12); (2) the Yājyānuvākya sections: Oldenberg: 1888: 337 and see Ikari 1989. The *Yājyānuvākya* sections belong to the youngest elements of the YV, which is confirmed by their position: this is one of the few instances in which Oldenberg or

comparison of all available Mantras allows for the reconstruction of an Ur-YV (Witzel 1997). The development which begun in the late RV period has now reached its zenith.

More than half of the YV Mantras are in (usually simple) prose, but there are a number of, usually isolated, RV verses that have been incorporated even into the *Darśapaurṇamāsa* and *Soma* collections (Oldenberg's "*Saṃhitā der Opfer*"). Their form still was that of the "unregulated" wording of RV, independent of that of the Ṛgvedic poets' clans.[298]

The number of such Ṛgvedic Mantras grows outside of these two original paradigms, probably due to pressure from the newly collected RV verses (the first "Saṃhitā") of the *Bahvṛc*, "those having many verses", the Hotṛs (Witzel 1997). This influence accelerated during the whole Mantra period. As far as the form of these borrowings is concerned, archaic forms and word combinations are often eliminated in YV, just as in the AV and SV.[299] Again, all of this bears witness to the competition among the emerging Four Vedas.

The distinction between early prose Mantras and the (early) take-over of RV Mantras in a more "popular" transmission was due to the work of the various priests involved in ritual, whose respective needs were slightly different from each other when they set out to construct a new, elaborate ritual out of materials available in loose oral traditions. As far as the YV is concerned, what was needed was a collection ordered according to the procedure of the various sacrifices and not one interested in the RV as such. One must also not forget the forces aiming at distinguishing the YV Mantras from those of the RV, YV, SV. It is obvious that they frequently changed, as a minimal measure of camouflage, the order of RV stanzas in their texts (for details, see Witzel 1997).

The area of the Mantra texts is the Kurukṣetra region and its immediate western and southern surroundings (MS, KS) as well as the land east of it (TS). The Kuru tribe and their kings are prominently mentioned in the Mantras. The absolute time frame of these Black YV texts is indicated by the mentioning of king Dhṛtarāṣṭra in KS (prose) who can be placed in a genealogy of Kuru kings (to be published elsewhere).

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someone else has made use of the criterion of position in the text arrangement of the YV, cf. now Witzel, The Veda in Kashmir, ch. 8 (2020); note especially in TS and MS: on TS, Weber's notes to TS 1.1.14; 5.5; 5.11 etc.; in MS, they are found at the end of the Khilakāṇḍa. - Often there is preservation of RV readings.

[298] An investigation into the clans from whom these Mantras were taken will indicate the prominence of particular clans at the time of the Kuru Śrauta reform (see Witzel 1997, §2.8) See for example the extensive list of J.R. Gardner: http://vedavid.org/. One would expect Āṅgirasa clans such as the Viśvāmitras (and originally also the Vasiṣṭhas) to be prominent.

[299] These include the change of fem. *-ī > -i*. RV 2.33.14: *pari ṇo hetī rudrasya* :: YV *pari no* (*ṇo* TS) *rudrasya hetir vṛṇaktu*; cf. also MS 1.5.12 *rātrīr* (gods speak): *rātrir* (author of MS); sometimes, behind such change of words, there is the consideration of an auspicious omen in the selection of words or the word order to be selected (cf. ŚB 1.4.1.35: not to say "*aram*" like "*hotāram*"): RV 10.173.1 *bhraṣat* (unauspicious word) is avoided. -- In some cases, to quote Oldenberg, it is possible to see the better (and correct?) readings in the parallels of TS or MS. In other cases, MS agrees with RV while deviating from the common basis of TS/MS. (3) Thirdly, there are the Mantras of the Aśvamedha ritual, another late addition to the YV Mantra corpus: For a useful collection and discussion, see Bhawe 1939, Oldenberg, 1888: 342.

There are two distinct groups of YV texts, classified as Black and White Yajurveda. The White Yajurveda (VS) is much younger and of eastern (Bihar) origin. Translated into a diagram, these developments would read as follows:

| Panjab | Kurukṣetra/Kuru land | Pañcāla | Kosala/Videha |
|---|---|---|---|
| RV ___(Ur-KYV)__ MS,KS | | | |
| \| \|_____TS | | | |
| \| \|_____VS | | (secondary adoption of already |
| \|_____/ | | fixed form of the RV text) |
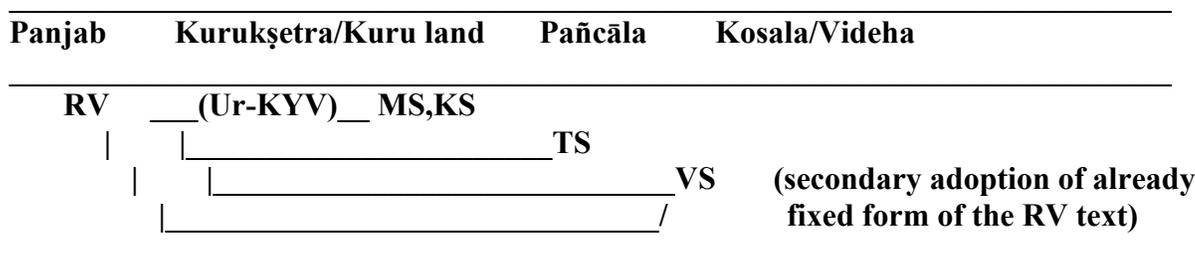
The overlap of the Kaṭha texts with those of the Paippalādins and Kauthuma in the Kuru(kṣetra) region supports the theory, formulated here, of a Mantra time development of the new Śrauta ritual, with the Adhvaryus as its main priests, under the new Kuru dynasty.

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While all these observations indicate a fairly long period of development of YV, AV and SV materials, beginning with a first collection in the emerging Kuru realm of the diverse materials that were partly available already during the Ṛgvedic period (Witzel 1997: § 2.7). However, it is the investigation into the collection process of the Ṛgvedic hymns that sheds considerable light on these early post-Ṛgvedic times and on the interval of wide-ranging transitions preceding the Mantra period proper: this is the Dark Period which is of special interest here. Therefore, the formation of the RV is dealt with briefly. (For more details, see Witzel 1997: § 1.1. sqq.).

§ 5.7. Collection of the RV Mantras and of RV 10

It is well known that the Ṛgvedic hymns were the composition and property of individual priests belonging to a number of "families" or clans. They regarded their poems as personal or as clan property and marked them, either with (parts of) their own individual name, or with certain refrains that indicated their clan origin: a Ṛgvedic version of the copyright notice. The loose collections belonging to eight or nine major clans were assembled into what is now the RV. From Oldenberg's *Prolegomena* (1888: 249-270) it appears that the RV grew in several consecutive layers, around the core of the "family books", RV 2-7 (1888: 263).

The details of RV composition as opposed to the initial, individual collections of the hymns belonging to various clans[300] cannot be discussed here at length, however, even the various "family books" of RV have a definite affiliation with certain tribes and their

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[300] For details see Witzel 1997.

**chieftains ("kings").[301]  The "family" books, as aligned with the last "kings" belonging to a definite family line or dynasty mentioned in the RV appear as follows.**

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| book poets' clans | areas prominent | last Bharata/Pūru king mentioned |
|---|---|---|
| 2 Gṛtsamāda | NW, Panjab | Divodāsa (Bharata) |
| 3 Viśvāmitra | Pjb., Sarasvatī | Sudās (Bharata) |
| 4 Vāmadeva | NW, Panjab | Trāsadasyu (Pūru), Divodāsa (Bharata) |
| 5 Atri | NW -->Pjb.-->Yamunā | Tṛkṣi (Pūru) |
| 6 Bharadvāja | NW, Pjb., Sar.;->Gaṅgā | Tṛkṣi (Pūru) |
| 7 Vasiṣṭha | Pjb., Sar.; ->Yamunā | Sudās (Bharata) |
| 8 Kaṅva & Āṅgirasa | NW, Panjab | Tṛkṣi (Pūru), etc. |

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| 9 Soma hymns | (extracted from older collections) | |
|---|---|---|

**This throws some light on the early history of RV composition. It is interesting to note that four of the "Five Peoples" of the RV, the Yadu-Turvaśa and Anu-Druhyu, do not figure much in most of the older parts of the RV, and we cannot reconstruct several generations of any one of their royal lineages, as we can for the Bharata and Pūru.[302]  This situation does not speak in favor of the survival of early family collections under the Yadu-Turvaśa and Anu-Druhyu. One would expect more reminders of such collections than just a few hymns such as those in RV 8.1-66 (and probably also more diverse, even "eastern" forms).[303]**

**The questions now rises is whether there was there an early effort at collection of the RV materials already by the Pūrus? Any attempt to describe the political and social background of this process meets with several difficulties. We know very little so far about**

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[301] **For details on the political history of the RV see Witzel 1995: 307 sqq.**

[302] **For details see § 8; cf. already the genealogies reconstructed by Lassen 1847-62; Ludwig 1878: 146-177, Zimmer 1879: 100-138, 162 , see Rau 1957: 86.**

[303] **Nevertheless, S. Insler told me (1989) that he had isolated about 700 dialect forms in the RV. They have not been published since.**

the Pūru[304] domination in the Panjab. It is only clear that they were the leaders in a loose coalition of the *Five Peoples* and some other tribes[305] that lost out in the *Ten Kings' Battle* against the Bharata chieftain Sudās and his *purohita* Vasiṣṭha. About Sudās,[306] however, we know much more. Having won his fight against the Pūru coalition (probably including Sudās' ousted *purohita* Viśvāmitra), he settled his tribe on the banks of the Sarasvatī, where he also celebrated a horse sacrifice (RV 3.53.11) that established his dominance in all directions.[307]

Sudās himself cannot have ordered or instigated the compilation of our present ten book RV, or even of its core "family books" (2-7), as it is in these very books that some later events [308] are mentioned, such as those under Trasadasyu's descendents Tṛkṣi and Kuruśravaṇa. In sum, what we witness in most parts of the RV is just the brief period before and after the famous Ten Kings' Battle (RV 7.18), towards the end of the period.

This first attempt at a collection must have been made shortly after Sudās, at a time when not the direct descendants of Sudās but instead those of the post-Sudās Pūru and the early Kuru lineages are prominent in the last sections of the RV. This late, relatively extensive treatment of the Pūru would surprise if our RV was a purely Bharata collection. Indeed, both the Pūru and the Bharata, however, figure about equally in the "family books." It must be underlined, though, that all such tribal unions lasted only for very limited periods; for example, the great Pūru alliance of ten "kings" is described in RV 7.18 was one made "on the spur of the moment" (Schmidt 1980). Tribes and sub-tribes united and disbanded constantly all through the Ṛgvedic and early post-Ṛgvedic periods. However, even this scenario does not support the collection of the RV hymns by the victorious Bharata but by someone who was *not* closely linked to the Bharata or the Pūru.

But, such a group is not in sight, unless one supposes an impartial group of arbiters that wanted to collect all *ṛc* (for which we do not have any indications, for the time being at least).[309] An even more basic question, however, is: Why were the hymns collected at all, and *how could* they be collected at all? For they were the sole property of certain major clans

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[304] See, on king Poros (and Abisares) in Alexander's campaign in the Panjab, above n. 29, and for details see Witzel 1995.

[305] Cf. also Kosambi 1967; one may try to order them in dual groups, but there is no evidence for such an alignment as the rest of the 10 tribes, for the most part, appears only once in this hymn: Paktha(?, see above n. 34), Bhalānas, Alina, Viṣāṇin, Śiva(?, usually understood as name of the Śibi) 7.18.7; others include: Yakṣu = Yadu; Bhṛgu, Pṛśnigu, [present time of the author of the hymn: Aja, Śigru, Yakṣu]; -- persons: Śimyu, 2 Vaikarṇa, [and, at the present time of the author: Bheda; Yudhyāmadi?]

[306] The name is often understood as belonging to *dāsa* "slave", (cf. his father Divo*dāsa*), which is not the case; it belongs to *dā*, see *KEWA* II, 13; sometimes a pun (Chief) *Sudās*- : *sudās*- "giving freely" can be intended, e.g. at RV 1. 184.1, 185.9.

[307] Except, perhaps the South, which was occupied by indigenous peoples; see note 4, 37.

[308] Still later tradition (and the commentaries) have it Vasiṣṭha revenging himself on Sudās' sons, the Saudāsa, after they had thrown Śakti, the son of Vasiṣṭha, into the fire. See *Ved. Index* : II 480sq, 275: TS 7.4.7.1; KB 4.8; PB 4.7.3, BŚS? Caland, 1990; -- cf. also Geldner (1951) *ad* RV 3.53.22.

[309] Cf. Hillebrandt's proposal, (1987: 534); he asks --in passing-- whether the collectors "searched all the land in or around, say, Kurukṣetra, or whatever else their homeland may have been" in order to collect all old materials, "in a sort of council", and whether these people then neglected or destroyed everything else that had not been collected, -- a procedure which he regards as unlikely.

of poets and priests who were not willing to part with their ancestral and (more or less) secret knowledge.[310]

Furthermore, the role of the poets' clans of the Kāṇva and the Āṅgirasa has to be investigated. The Kāṇva are often linked to the Pūru, and they even have connections with the preceding group of Ṛgvedic tribes, the Yadu-Turvaśa and Anu-Druhyu, especially in RV 8.[311] On the other hand, most of the other clans of the family books (1.51 - 7) are, by birth or adoption, ultimately Āṅgirasas.[312] In this light, the Āṅgirasa additions to book 8 and to book 1 (RV 8.67-103, 1.51-191) are of special interest.

However, if we suppose an original Kāṇva *book*, now split up, of the strophic Kāṇva section of RV 1 and 8, this would have come to 50 + 48 (or 66) hymns, thus to a total of 98 or 116 strophic hymns, -- a perfect follow-up to the long Vāsiṣṭha book 7 with 104 hymns.[313] Such a Kāṇva addition could have been made under the later, post-Sudās, Bharatas.

Because of the link between the Kāṇvas and the Pūrus, this could be the outcome of an appeasement policy directed towards the Kāṇva/Pūru groups, bringing about their inclusion into a "national" (*vīspe aire*, as the Avesta would say) a Bharata-Pūru collection carried out under the later Bharata chiefs. This is also visible in the opening of the RV which, though belonging to the Kāṇva section, was composed, according to the Anukramaṇī and AB 7.18.1, by Madhucchandas, a descendant of Viśvāmitra, the ousted *purohita* of Sudās who had defected to the Pūru. The Soma book 9, too, is opened by a Madhucchandas hymn.

Taking into account this theory of a reconciliation and, perhaps, an intermarriage of the Pūru and Bharata royal houses,[314] the family books might have been collected when the new union was established, i.e. perhaps under chief Kuruśravaṇa Trāsadasyava (or his father). Note that some of the family books are too pro-Pūru to be part of a single-minded Bharata collection. The frame with strophic hymns (RV 1.1-50, RV 8) that surrounds the family books could have been effected by the same Kuru lineage ("dynasty") as to include their favorite Kāṇva poets in a prominent position.[315]

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[310] Note how they often give their family "seal" a certain refrain at the end of hymns to claim their property. In many cases they mention their own name in a hymn or disguise it behind some assonances. Most hymns have, of course, been recited in public and a quick study could well have memorized them and copied them subsequently.

[311] Cf. also Kuiper (1991) on their "non-Aryan" character. Since K. Hoffmann's early etymology now is confirmed by PS, we may modify this and suggest that the Kāṇvas are the product of a long time pre-Pūru, i.e. Yadu-Turvaśa, Anu-Druhyu acculturation (cf. Witzel 1999).

[312] For details, see Witzel 1995.

[313] For details see Witzel 1997. The reason was that all strophic hymns are collected in book 8.

[314] Intermarriage at JB 2.278-9, see below § 9.

[315] Actually, even the Āṅgirasa section RV 1.51 sqq begins with the hymns of Savya Pājra and contains at 1.53.9 the interesting reference to Suśravas fighting a *Twenty Kings' Battle*. Note that the order is due to internal factors of counting hymns, stanzas, etc.:*tvám etā́ñ janarā́jño dvír dáśābandhúnā suśrávasopajagmúṣaḥ | ṣaṣṭíṃ sahásrā navatíṃ náva śrutó ní cakréṇa ráthā duṣpádāvṛṇak ||* 1.53.10: *tvám āvitha suśrávasaṃ távotíbhis táva trā́mabhir indra túrvayāṇam.*-- Nevertheless, the parallel occurrence of a 10 and 20 Kings' Battle in RV is suspicious. Similar names using the element *śrav-as/-ana* occur in the later *Pūru* dynasty (see below § 8-9),

The addition of the Kāṇva and the Āṅgirasa sections[316] as well as the positioning of the Madhuchandas hymns thus seems to point to a historical compromise between the Bharata on one side and the defeated Pūru and their coalition on the other, as well as that of their respective poets' clans, the Āṅgirasa, Vasiṣṭha, as well as that of the Kāṇvas.[317]

It has been observed above that the bulk of the RV provides a "snapshot" view only of some 5-6 generations, mostly of the Pūru and Bharata. This indicates that the initial RV collection was indeed made under the incipient Kuru. The name *Kuru* appears only once in RV proper as the name of the chief *Kuru-śravaṇa,* and the Kuntāpa hymns depicting the golden age of the Kuru tribe have not even been incorporated into the late tenth book of the RV but are part of the Khila collection only.

However, the full collection (see § 5.7, cf. § 6.) of the Ṛgvedic materials in its 10 "books" (*maṇḍala*) was made under the Kuru, including book 9 as well as 10.[318] This, the *second* effort to collect RV material, is the more interesting one in the present context of an investigation into the "Dark Period".

At this moment, the *sāman*s taken from the various "family" collections were included in book 9.[319] This serves as a clear indication of the aim of the collector, namely the inclusion of as much verse material as possible. This meant the addition of the *sāman*-like material in book 9 as well as that of the "Atharvedic" spells in book 10, and that of the stanzas accompanying some major rites of passage (marriage, death) in the same book![320]

Oldenberg had indeed come to the conclusion (1888*:* 328) that the establishment of the RV text had already taken place and the text had reached the form in which we have it

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which might be intended in RV 1.53-54. This is found in close connection with a reference to Tūrvayāṇa who is fighting Āyu, the ancestor of the Bharatas, and at 1.54.6, a mentioning of Indra's help for the Yadu and Turvaśa. All of this looks too "pro-Pūru" to be taken as the intention of a Bharata poet's clan or chieftain. -- If the frame, however, was due to later accretion or intentional addition, this could have been the work of later Kuru kings who added to the Bharatas' (Kuruśravaṇa's?) first collection of RV 2-7).

[316] The reason for the split up would have been the difference in meter of the rest of book 1 which includes additional Āṅgirasa materials.

[317] Note, however, the continuing feud of the Vāsiṣṭha and Vaiśvāmitra clans; in fact, it continued right through the middle ages so that they would not comment on each other's hymns: *this* is arch-enmity!

[318] See Oldenberg (1888), and Proferes (1999) on the collection of RV liturgies, especially of RV 9, as being later than RV 1-8. -- All of this should be confirmed by linguistic arguments: are parts of books 1 and 8 later than 2-7, and if so, which hymns? How much of the snapshot view of Ṛgvedic history in RV 2-7 is really older than the Pūru/Bharata immigration? For some details see Witzel 1995: 307 sqq. and Witzel 1997.

[319] Following Oldenberg, a fairly early collection of a core of RV hymns by *some* groups/person(s) (such as the later Bharata King Kuruśravaṇa or the early Kuru kings as such) is also indicated by the *early* Sāman collection as well, which is now represented by RV 9. Though the Sāman collection we have in our Śākalya RV has mainly been taken from RV 9 and 8 (note again the role of the Kāṇvas!), there was an earlier Sāman collection. -- The RV knows of it and respects it. On the other hand, as Oldenberg 1888: 328 points out: during the time when the Sāman, the older Yajuḥ, and the Atharvan texts came to be fixed, the Ṛgveda text tradition had been formed and fixed, with relatively few exceptions, in a form as we have it today.

[320] Only the Yajuḥ have been excluded altogether as they at first were - for the most part - in prose; cf. above, on YV. -- The zeal to include all Ṛc may also be taken as the effort of the Hotṛs to assemble as much as possible verse materials, just as the Brahmán priests and "poets" did with Atharvavedic materials in book 10 of RV.

today[321] at the time when the Sāman, the older Yajus, and the Atharvan texts came to be fixed, i.e., as we would say now, during the Mantra period.[322]  This is reflected, as discussed above, by the decreasing liberty of text treatment in the later parts of the non-Ṛgvedic Saṃhitās.[323]

If viewed in this way, the second collection may very well have been due to the new Kuru dynasty. Note that the same grand design is perceptible in the large scale effort resulting in the collection of the materials of the "new" YV, AV, SV Saṃhitās: all of them represent some sort of a "national collection" of ritual texts.

It is remarkable that some of the same materials have been included into more than one Veda. We may have to reckon with inter-Vedic rivalry, in other words: rivalry between various groups of priests. This meant double collection in some cases where two or three priests' groups were contending for certain rituals, --- a scenario that is visible also in later Śrauta ritual, for example in the various forms of the royal inauguration rite discussed above (§ 4). It is, however, also quite possible that the Kuru king instigated or ordered several priestly groups to collect all current Mantra material, and that they came up with the set-up we see now in the older parts of the Saṃhitās of the Four Vedas.

Rivalry of this kind indeed seems to be well reflected, for example, in the mutually opposing schemes of arrangements of the various texts. The RV, SV, and the AV materials in their respective Saṃhitās (Śākalya-RV, AV, PS, Kauthuma/Rāṇāyaṇīya and Jaiminīya SV). As has been well known since Bergaigne and Oldenberg, the order of the Ṛgvedic "books" (actually, *maṇḍala*s "circles") depends on the *increasing* number of stanzas of hymns per book, and inside the various books, on the *de*creasing number of stanzas per hymn. PS, however, is characterized by a *de*creasing number of hymns per book in the older books 1-15[324] and an *in*creasing number of stanzas per hymn. Both criteria determine the position

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[321] Excluding the diaskeuasis, of course.

[322] Cf. Oldenberg 1888: 328, n.1,2.

[323] Oldenberg 1888: 355. A conscious effort to return to the Ṛgvedic form of the text is also seen in another comparatively late Saṃhitā, that of the White YV, -- something that contrasts with the trend of the basic texts of the Yajuḥ literature. The reason has been mentioned above: Caland believed that VS has only secondarily been taken out of ŚB (see Caland 1990, *Kl. Schr.* XIV, cf. n. 273). -- Also, the second Ārcika of the Sāmaveda shows more frequent deviations from Ṛgveda than the first, *ZDMG* 38, 467.

[324] Hymns per book in PS (as visible with present materials, B.= Barrett, Bh.= Bhattacharya):

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1: 112 | 4 stanzas per hymn | | | |
| 4: 40 | 7 | | | |
| 5: 40 (B.) | 8 | | | |
| 6: 23 | 9 | | | |
| 7: 20 | 10 | | 16: 155 | appendix = AV 8-11 |
| 8: 20 | 11 | | 17: 41 | often = AV 12 |
| 9: 29 ! | 12 | | -------------------------------------------------- | |
| 10: 16 (probably combined to 12 | | | 18: 82 | app. II : AV 13-18 |
| only before division into units of | | | -------------------------------------------------- | |
| 10 stanzas) | | | 19: 55 | app. III: AV 7 |
| 11: 16 | 14 2: 91  5 | | 20: 65 | app. IV : AV 7 |

of the book inside the Saṃhitā. The *Pūrvārcika* of the SV, however, follows the arrangement of the RV: the verses addressed to Agni, Indra and Soma follow each other and the hymns inside these groups are arranged in a *decreasing* order of the length of the meters used.

There are some more indications of the intentions of the initiator(s) or author(s) of the final collection (i.e. *not* the final *redaction*) of the RV Saṃhitā. A Kāṇva frame around (or an original Kāṇva book added to) the family books has been mentioned above. However, the symmetry of the Kāṇva framing device is broken. The frame of Kāṇva strophic hymns (RV 1.1-50, RV 8.1-48/66), though both longer and shorter than expected with regard to the other family books, provides a unified organization of the older materials. However, the inclusion of the Āṅgirasa materials in books 1 and 8 violates this arrangement. In book 8.67-103, the section forming the frame is too short, and in 1.51-191 it is too long. Furthermore, book 8 has strophic meter, the section of 1.51-191 has not. It rather looks as if both the Āṅgirasa sections were added as an afterthought. They split the framing device (see Witzel 1997):

```
1.1-50        1.51-191                                    RV 8.1-48/66   8.67-103
strophic      non-strophic    FAMILY BOOKS                 strophic       non-strophic
Kāṇva         Āṅgirasa        (43-104 hymns                Kāṇva          Āṅgirasa
 |              |             per book )                     |              |
   ---------------|----------------------------------------------                |
              | -----------------------------------------------------------------|
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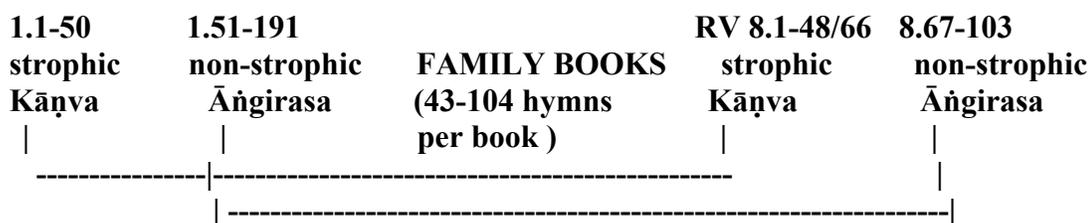
Given the importance of framing devices in Indo-Aryan and Vedic tradition[325] one has to assume that the split frame[326] was created only when the person who established the final collection wanted to balance book 1 with book 10, which both have 191 hymns.

In fact, as has been indicated above, it may not be just pure chance that the Ṛgvedic books 1 and 10, the outer frame surrounding the older *maṇḍala*s, both have 191 hymns, both of which balance the collections of the disparate Kāṇva and Āṅgirasa collections perfectly.[327] It is probable that the number of 191 hymns in book 1 is the starting point, as

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| 12: | 22 ! | 15 3: 40 6 | (61 B.) at the end with |
| 13: | 9 | 16 | Gṛhya Mantras missing in AVŚ. |
| 14: | 9 | 17 | |
| 15: | 2 | 18 | |

The list will have to be adjusted taking into account the correct number of the original, often much longer, hymns before they were split up into units of 10+x stanzas in books PS 8-20. -- Contrast the slightly different situation in ŚS 1-5, or 1-7.

[325] See Witzel 1987.

[326] For similar deviations from a correct frame work see Witzel 1984.

[327] See above on the strophic frame surrounding the older family books 2-7, itself encased by a late addition at the beginning of book 1 and the end of book 8.

it is based on the "remnant materials" from the Kāṇva and Āṅgirasa clans, while the same number in book 10 is likely to have been modeled after this, as to provide a well balanced frame. Further, it is notable that the last hymn is a hymn to unity![328] Just as the first hymn of RV, *agnim īḷe*, was already known to and therefore copied by the author of RV 10.20-26, the position of the 'hymn to unity' at the very end of the collection may very well have been chosen with equal care.[329]

Furthermore, the beginning of the text is remarkable too. RV 1.1 is, a hymn to Agni Vaiśvānara, 'Agni of all people.' Although this is a common name of Agni, the hymn seems to have been put there by design. Note that it is Agni Vaiśvānara who precedes Videgha Māthava in his march eastwards (ŚB 1.4.1.10-19). Here, Agni Vaiśvānara serves a culture hero of the Bharata/Kuru tribe,[330] "civilizing" the east. Furthermore, the poet of RV 1.1 is Madhucchandas, a descendant of Viśvāmitra, one the great poets of the Bharatas. Typically, he is an enemy of the Bharata chief Sudās by the time of the *Ten Kings' Battle*, having been ousted by Vasiṣṭha. Like other Pūru figures, and including the Kāṇvas, his descendants reappear in the later and in last parts of the RV.[331]

All of this points to a contemporaneous effort entailing Yajus, Sāman, and Athavarveda collections at a time when the text of the RV was brought into a collection that included book 10.[332] The concurrent nature of these efforts is clearly indicated by the data of the late book 10, the "book of additions."[333] Book 10 contains old materials as well.

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[328] Which even today is used for that purpose at official functions.

[329] This even more so if RV 10 had less hymns at first; (note the division in the middle of the book, due to character of the collection: groups vs. single hymns, which allows for easy interpolations). In that case, the 'Unity Hymn' RV 10.191 was added as the "full stop". Interestingly, it exceeds the preceding hymns by one stanza and thus cannot be original in its present form -- unless by design. This may be due to several factors: the last stanza may have been added (or rather stanza 3 which is Triṣṭubh and not, like the rest, Anuṣṭubh). Or the whole hymn may have been late. Note also that other, lost RV versions (Bāṣkala) have more hymns, and ends with another hymn. This may point to a Śākalya RV with the *saṃjñānam* hymn only.

[330] Note that he also is at least alluded to in the Kuntāpa hymns under the name of Parikṣit Vaiśvānara, see Bloomfield 1897.

[331] Note also his role in AB 7.13, in the Śunaḥśepa legend, where he aids an Ikṣvāku chieftain; these were opposed to the Bharatas in the earlier period and the later Kosala king Hariścandra, an Aikṣvāka; see above.

[332] Oldenberg's deliberations leave out the possibility that (part of) the RV text was fixed twithin the traditions of the various poet clans. Rather, the question has to be asked: where are real innovations in *old* hymns? This has to be checked in a typical, historically late "Bharata" book, such as that of Vasiṣṭha. -- Note also Oldenberg 1888: 343 on the text forms of Sāmans in the Yajurvedas: the Yajuḥ texts knew, in the same way as the Ṛg text, the Sāmaveda text and showed respect to it.

[333] First of all, according to Oldenberg (1889), book 10 was *composed* already in the knowledge of the other books, and even while having knowledge of the *order* of their hymns; thus the poet of the group RV 10.20-26 *intentionally* starts with *agnim īḷe*! Some of the great rituals and their Sāmans were known to the poet of 10.181, i.e. Rathantara, Bṛhat, Gharma (= Pravargya). The various cases infringing the rules of order in 1-9 cannot show development of the books, only that of the individual hymns (1888: 262); only book 10 is clearly the "book of additions." Additions in other parts of the text are incidental and late. Book 10 has the older additions. The various small additions are clearly much younger (see 1888: 265 n. 2, 253). Also, the hymns of

Oldenberg thought that the reason for their non-inclusion in the family books was that, in these cases, less stress was put on poets' families than on the individual poets, such as Gaya Plāta (and though many of the poets of RV 10 belonged to the well known older families).

One may, however, evaluate this situation also in the following way. RV 10 rather creates the impression of a collection of "bits and pieces" of *individual* poetry composed at the time of the later Bharata realm and perhaps, at the time of the emerging Kuru tribe.[334] The great family collections were history already, and hymns forgotten at the time of initial compilation[335] under the late Bharata as well as those poems that had been composed in the meantime had to be added[336] as to achieve a certain degree of completeness of the collection.

More interesting still for a comparison with the Mantra time materials of SV, YV, AV is the criterion of *content*. Just as in AV and YV, not every great deity of the RV is all-important any longer in RV 10; only the Āprī hymns and those addressed to Indra still are alive, vigorous and vibrant (see above §4, end). New gods and "powers" appear: Prajāpati, Viśvakarman, Manyu, Śraddhā, and there are hymns dealing with cosmogony, just as in AV. Both RV and AV also share the hymns that are, in a way, poetic predecessors of the Gṛhya ritual.

The metrical form of the hymns of book 10 and their grammatical peculiarities as well tend to agree more and more with those of the Mantra period. The Pragātha hymn disappears, something that agrees with the new frame, established by RV 1.1-50 and 10 around the older strophic frame (RV 1.51-191 and book 8, 1-66); there also is more freedom in the first *pāda* of the Anuṣṭubh (as in the comparatively free AV meter).

Grammar points in same direction: The Sandhi of book 10 shows more contractions, more rare hiatuses more *y, v* for *iy, uv*; sometimes even *i* in the noun declension, there is more -*ās* instead of -*āsas*; absolutives in -*tvā-ya* [338] are only found in book 10 while other absolutives appear in the older books.[339] As far as the vocabulary is concerned, many old words disappear; younger ones often only occur here and in hymns of older books that have

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book 9 that are in connection with book 10 are in correct position in the arrangement of the book and thus older than the various small additions in books 1-8. -- Further cf. the text of the Vāsiṣṭha (7.32.22,23) and text of the Bhāradvāja (6.46.1,2). - See Renou 1956.

[334] Note the mentioning of king *Kuru*śravaṇa 10.32.9; 10.33.4 and, albeit only in the RV Anukramaṇī, of *Kuru*suti Kāṇva, the poet of RV 8.76-78.

[335] How does one make a complete collection of all the widely dispersed members of one clan on a purely oral basis? Even in written form, this would have been difficult, given the geographical range of the late RV clans: from Suvāstu (Swat) to the Gaṅgā and from the Himalayas to Bolān (*Bhalānas*).

[336] Exceptions: 10.65-66 is completely like book 7 and even says: *Vasiṣṭāsaḥ pitṛvad vācam akrata*! It is, however, younger than book 7: Absolutive in -*tvī* which in book 7 occurs only once, etc.; see p. 266 sq.; similarly at 10.89, a Viśvāmitra descendent as a late epigone.

[338] On the absolutive, cf. Kuiper 1967,*IIJ* 10, 1991.

[339] See Delbrück 1888: *Altindische Syntax*.

been singled out as interpolations.[340] The many new words found in book 10[341] are, needless to say, typical for AV and YV Mantras.

Book 10 thus is younger, as a whole, than books 1-9, and it approaches, at the same time, the Mantra texts of YV, SV, AV. To pinpoint its exact age would ultimately depend on those RV hymns that actually appear in AV, SV, YV as well, --- an investigation which has to be carried out separately.

## § 5.8. Summary and Conclusion

The collection of the RV[342] as well as that of the other Vedic Saṃhitās (AV, SV, YV) appears as an all-out effort aiming at the gathering of all "national" lore and folklore in four sets of texts.[343] That means, collections according to the new division of labor established by the novel Śrauta ritual as that of RV, SV, YV,[344] and AV priests.[345] It is possible that the later myth of a (Veda)Vyāsa,[346] the "arranger of the Veda", has its origin in this dimly remembered activity. This person should of course not have been a *ṛṣi* but a Kuru Brahmin or the Kuru king himself.

A certain amount of rivalry among the new groups of priests might well have been calculated and even encouraged by the Kuru kings. It is visible in the competition of the four groups of priests striving to include as much of the Vedic materials in their own collection (Saṃhitā) as possible. The Ṛgvedins included Sāmavedic and Atharvavedic materials (RV 9 and 10); the Atharvavedins included some Ṛgvedic materials (at various places in AV, and

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[340] Oldenberg 1888: 269 with details.

[341] Especially noteworthy is *grāmaṇī-*, the leader of a trek, a semi-nomadic wagon train. The word is common in post-RV texts. Was there a change in leadership style? Cf. W. Rau 1957, 1983, H. Kulke 1991, 1992. -- Oldenberg (1888) mentions as new words: *labh, lakṣmī, loman, lohita, vijaya, yajñapati, yajñakāma, yatkāma, yathākāmam, yathāpūrvam, puṇḍarīka, puṣkarasraj, tīkṣṇa, grāmaṇī, grāmya, ājya, kāla, śvāpada, saṃjñāna, sarīsṛpa, evam*. The word *loka* occurs (instead of *uloka*) only in book 10, interpolation in the Vālakhilyas, etc., instead of *uloka; mṛtyu,* (but *mṛtyubandhu* 8.18.2), *mogha, visarga, brāhmaṇá, dīrghāyutva, nāsthita, gup, gopāy, chandas / chandasiya, puruṣa (pūruṣa)*. Certain other words are more prominent (see 1888: 270) than in other books.

[342] Not be confused with the slightly altered text (due to orthoepic diaskeuasis) that Śākalya encountered when he composed his Padapāṭha in eastern North India during the late Brāhmaṇa period.

[343] for a more detailed discussion see Witzel 1997: § 2.7.

[344] With regard to the ordering of mantras in YV it should be checked whether, in addition to the apparent order of the ritual which is followed closely, judging from the later texts such as the expository prose parts of the Kṛṣṇa YV and the Brāhmaṇa texts, any other principle was followed. Cf. the forthcoming work of Y. Ikari onVādh.ŚS.

[345] Instead of the older 5 or 7 priests, see Hillebrandt 1897: 12. -- The rest of the traditional texts had to be subsumed somewhere: such texts must have included the Praiṣas, now found in RVKh, etc.; cf. the many categories in Horsch 1966: *raibhī*, etc. Was there also an ancient Itihāsa(-)Purāṇa?? Cf. Chakrabarty 1989.

[346] Found first in the Epic and some very late Ups. Even such "Ṛṣis" as Vaiśampāyana, Kaṭha, Tittiri, etc. are late: they occur first in Pāṇini and some late Vedic texts such as TĀ 1.

finally, in AV 20); the Yajurvedins included in the same way, some Ṛgvedic Mantras, especially in the later rituals such as the *Agnicayana* and in the *Yajyānuvākya*s.

The same tendencies are reflected in the competing arrangements of the major Saṃhitās, a system based on the decreasing lengths of hymns within a book in RV, and one of increasing length in AV, one of decreasing length in the Pūrvārcika of the SV, -- while the YV has a completely different grouping of mantras, based on the actual sequence of the ritual in question.[347] These differences between the four Vedas may have been encouraged by the Kuru king as to exercise influence over the emerging four factions. Similar political schemes have been played out by kings throughout history when establishing or securing power.

All the literary activities described in this section indicate a contemporaneous effort carried out by the Kurus during the post-Ṛgvedic Mantra period. This resulted in Ur-Yajus, Sāman, and Athavarveda collections at a time when the RV, including book 10, was assembled for the first time.

The question that still remains as integral part of this investigation is, however, why a collection was made at all,[349] and how it could actually be carried out in the (late) Ṛgvedic society that so extraordinarily valued individual or clan-wise authorship and possession of poems? Indeed, even after assembling the first *saṃhitā*s, the traditional names of the authors of the hymns were remembered, to some extent, and later on collected in the RV-Anukramaṇī. In addition, the compulsory mentioning of their individual name before the recitation of a particular hymn carries on the memory of these original "copyright" owners. The second part of the question concerns the ritual. How was the standardization of ritual possible in a society that so jealously watched over the correct performance of the rituals, which nevertheless showed certain tribal and clan-wise differences? An answer to these questions will be attempted below (§ 9, cf. Witzel 1997: § 2.7).

## § 6 DIALECTS

Much of what has been said about the political and social trends in Mantra time text collections can be substantiated by a study of the particular features of post-Ṛgvedic Sanskrit. In a separate investigation (*Tracing the Vedic Dialects*)[350] I hope to have established the major facts about the existence, the geographical spread and the historical development of post-Ṛgvedic dialects. Indeed, as even the Vedic texts themselves occasionally mention (see Witzel 1989 §1) that there are regional differences in the Vedic language. In sum, within post-Ṛgvedic Northern India --the area from Eastern Panjab to Bengal-- we can distinguish a western Kuru, a central Pañcāla, and an eastern (Kosala)-Videha dialect. The beginnings of this development can be detected in the Mantra period.

## § 6.1. Mantra time language

The appearance of the Kuru dialect is preceded by a remarkable shift from Ṛgvedic to Mantra time grammatical forms. Some of the most typical developments that took place

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[347] Details in Witzel 1997.

[349] See now discussion in Witzel 1997 § 2.7.

[350] Witzel 1989, 1991; cf. also Hock, 1991.

in the late Ṛgvedic period (i.e. in the Bharata dialect of Vedic) and the beginning of the Mantra period (the Kuru dialect), are the following:

-- instr.      *-ena*                    (for RV    *-ā* )

-- instr. pl.   *-ai+*, cf. YAv. *-āiś*    (for RV *-ebhiḥ*,   cf. OPers. *-aibiś*

-- nom.pl.       *-ā+*,[351] cf. YAv. *-āḥ*   (for   RV *-āsa+*,    cf. Med./OAv. *-āha*

-- nom.du.m.    *-āu*                    (for   RV *-ā*)

-- nom.du.ntr. *-āni*                    (for   RV *-ā*)

-- *sarve* replaces RV   *viśve*,[352] cf. YAv. *vīspe* :: OAv. *-āŋhō*, Med. *-āha*;
              cf. *anye* with YAv. *aniie* :: Median/OPers. *aniyāha (bagāha)*

-- increasing speed of the disappearance of the injunctive

-- allegro forms of *kṛṇoti, kṛṇumaḥ, kṛṇu* etc. > *karoti, kurmaḥ, kuru*

-- 1. pl. *-masi* is replaced by *-maḥ*

These features were fully established by the time of the YV Mantras[353] and continued in later Vedic text levels. In addition to the synchronic developments, there also are some regional differences, dialect features that have been studied in some detail in Witzel 1989. These dialect traits spread rather dynamically from an originally small area (initially, just the Kuru tribal area) to the surrounding territories. Certain well localizable innovations that occurred at one particular level of Vedic can be observed to have spread quickly in various directions during the next level of texts. There are three main, successive centers of innovations: the Kuru, Pañcāla, and Eastern (*Prācya*, in the Kosala-Videha) areas.

The earliest form of post-Ṛgvedic Sanskrit, the Kuru dialect, is characterized by a number of phonetic and flexional developments. They distinguish the texts of the earlier Mantra period (PS, AV, MS, KS, SV, RV Khila) from that of the YV Saṃhitā period (expository prose of MS, KS, SV, and the occasional PS and AV prose), and from the later Saṃhitā (TS) and the Brāhmaṇa (AB, etc.) periods.

Among the texts of the second level (Mantra language), the Atharvavedic texts deserve special attention. Some of the differences exhibited by the two versions of the AV, that is by the Vulgate (AV, as well as the very similar Śaunaka version, AVŚ) and by the

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[351] Notwithstanding that this is the older, expected form on the basis of comparison with other Indo-European languages. The pl. *\*-āsas* already t was an Indo-Iranian innovation.

[352] See Arnold J*AOS* 18: 235, sqq; cf. Witzel 1989: 234

[353] Except where these quote Ṛgvedic Mantras.

Paippalāda Saṃhitā (PS), are striking.[354] A synchronic and regional investigation indicates (cf. above § 5) that PS frequently exhibits more ancient forms than the Śaunaka/Vulgate. One may understand this as modernism on part of ŚS. But, there are clear indications that PS rather is intentionally "antiquated". As has been mentioned above, there is a definite preference [355] in PS for Ṛgvedic forms like *kṛṇoti*, *kṛṇumaḥ*, *kṛṇu*, instead of the Atharvavedic (and common Mantra language) forms such as *karoti*, *kurmaḥ*, *kuru*. However, these *allegro* forms make their first appearance in late Ṛgvedic hymns with forms such as RV 10 *kuru* < *kṛṇu*. Obviously, there is a clear predilection by the authors and collectors[356] of PS mantras for "proper Ṛgvedic Sanskrit". A spectacular and obvious point in case is that of *Kṛṇva* (PS) vs. *Kaṇva* (ŚS) mentioned above.[357] Here, PS is hyper-correct even in comparison with Ṛgveda, as this clearly older text only has the more 'popular' form *Kaṇva*. However, *kṛṇva* "sorcerer" is the expected *older* form, as has been shown by K. Hoffmann (1975-6: 15-28) more than half a century ago.[358]

Such observations[359] place PS in an interesting perspective: why did one want to be so "correct"? An answer can be arrived at by comparing PS with that of other post-Ṛgvedic texts of the Mantra period, that is with the Sāmaveda Saṃhitās, the RV-Khilāni, and the Yajurveda Mantras. It then appears that PS is a text that originated in an area situated more to the west[360] than the Vulgate/Śaunaka Saṃhitā. PS authors lived, by and large, in the same territory as those of Maitr.S., Kaṭha-S., and those of the older parts of Ait.Br. They all inhabited the Kuru country, comprising Eastern Panjab, Haryana, and Western Uttar Pradesh (along the upper reaches of the Yamunā). The dialect features common to all these early texts agree with this appraisal.[361] They all have been composed under the Kuru hegemony.

## § 6.2 Mantra time dialects

There already exists a fairly long list[362] of the features and materials collected for the study of Mantra time dialects, -- however, a study that has not yet been carried out in earnest. We can observe certain dialect features in various geographic areas. The Panjab proper presents only few data. While it had been the main habitat of the Ṛgvedic tribes and

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[354] A detailed investigation will be published elsewhere; for some more details see Witzel 1997; PS in general follows, only in this book, the RV version more closely than ŚS (while it keeps typical AV readings that also are found in ŚS).

[355] In ŚS the distribution of *kṛṇoti* : *karoti* is ca. 1:7 (s. K. Hoffmann 1975-6: 577); Hoffmann also underlines that where PS and ŚS are parallel, PS has only c. 50% of the *kar/kur-* cases of ŚS.

[356] Or of the redactors of PS. Note that the methods of PS diaskeuasis have not yet been studied.

[357] Cf. Hoffmann 1975-6: 15 sqq.

[358] For other explanations see above

[359] They can be multiplied, see the structure of hymns: *takman*; or sound changes: *avata* RV, *avaṭa* AV, etc.; Oertel 1940.

[360] See Witzel 1987: 176-177.

[361] See Witzel 1989: 222 sqq.

[362] See Witzel 1989: 222 sqq.

then exhibited many dialect variations,[363] little is known about the linguistic features of the area after the RV.[364] As for the rest of Northern India, two early centers of post-Ṛgvedic innovation and subsequent diffusion of dialect features are observable, as has been indicated in Witzel 1989. The linguistic features of these three areas include the following.

1. The Kuru area (E. Panjab, Haryana, Upper Yamunā) is the earliest and trend-setting center of innovations in Mantra texts, in YV Saṃhitā prose (MS, KS, parts of PS), and even in an early Brāhmaṇa text (AB 1-5). Among the innovations, the following are notable: *-ḍ- > -ḻ-; CuV > CV*, and (in part of the area) *khy > kṣ*. Partly going back to late Ṛgvedic times are: the introduction of nom. pl.m. *-āḥ;* nom. dual *-au*; nom. pl. ntr. *-āni*; instr. sg. *-ena*, instr. pl. *-aiḥ*. The Kuru area also is the center of diffusion, though not of original occurrence, of the Ṛgvedic inf. *-toḥ* and of the Ṛgvedic precative in *-eṣ(ma)* instead of *-āyās(ma)*.

Some categories and individual words disappear or are on their way out in the Kuru area. They include elimination of the older RV nom. pl. *-āsaḥ*, dual ntr. *-ā*, instr. pl. m./n. *-ebhiḥ*. There is an increasing decline of subjunctive; the injunctive disappears rapidly during the Mantra period; there is decline of inf. *-tavai* and a decline of the use of the particle *u*.[365]

2. The Pañcāla land (Madhyadeśa: Eastern Uttar Pradesh) shares most of the these Bharata/Kuru innovations and peculiarities. However, as this is a different tribal area, a few of the innovations are not followed: there is *-ḍ-* not *> -ḻ*, and *khy* not *kṣ* (e.g. *anu-khyā* TS 2.5.11.3, etc.). The Pañcāla area also has its own innovations. These are attested *later* than those of the Kuru area and they are represented by texts like TS, TB, KB. They include: the older Ṛgvedic *ch [śch]* and KS *śch* develop to *cch*; this has been the standard form ever since. There also are Sandhi innovations of the group *-o/au* + vowel.[366] The most typical new development is the gen. fem. *-ai* of stems in *-ā, i, -ī* (e.g., *gaṅgāyai* = RV and Class. Skt. *gaṅgāyāḥ)*.

However, the retention in Taittirīya texts of *Cuv* (consonant + *u*+ *v*) in *suvar, uv* (*eva*), etc. is artificial,[367] as everywhere else, and even in most of the words in Pañcāla texts, the "contraction" of *Cuv* had already resulted in *Cv*. However, the retention of *Cuv*, when taken

[363] Which are studied by S. Insler (personal comm. 1989). Nothing, however, has appeared since. See now also Scharfe 1995 (Fs. P.Thieme *StII* 1995).

[364] Such as the ŚB reports of the speech of the Bāhīkas, and cf. the following note. - Pāṇini's north-eastern *bhāṣā* of the Gandhāra area --he comes from the confluence of the Kabul River and Indus-- has to be distinguished from the dialects of the Panjab. The "North" was an area of correct speech (KB 7.2), and northwestern (Dardic) speech still has many archaic features, especially in Kalasha and Khowar.

[365] There even are some sub-dialect features: Northern speech, partly known from Pāṇini's *bhāṣā* and from a few statements in the Brāhmaṇas, is praised for its high standard (KB 7.2), but partly overlaps with that of the Mahāvṛṣas.-- Some local peculiarities of Kurukṣetra, the land between the Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī rivers in E. Panjab, like the *auśānasa* stones BŚS 18.47: 7, or *nyubja* as name of bowls (see Witzel 1989, § 1), perhaps *Vaiśambhalyā* as a name of the River Sarasvatī (TB 2.5.8.7, ĀpŚS 4.14.4, see Wackernagel, *Ai. Gramm.* II,1,206).

[366] See Witzel 1991: 33-39.

[367] One may add *tuvak*, see S. Jamison, Brāhmaṇa Syllable Counting, *IIJ* 29, 161-181

over from the RV, has to be understood differently.[368] It is due to traditional recitation of Ṛgvedic verses, in which *Cuv* was definitely changed to *Cv* only during the late Brāhmaṇa period, at the time of the redactor of the RV, Śākalya.

3.       Only in the following period, that of the Brāhmaṇas proper, a third center emerges. This comprises the East, primarily Videha (N. Bihar), and to some extent also the transitional area of Kosala (Eastern Uttar Pradesh, W. Bihar), and the "South," that is the vast stretches of land south of the Yamunā. These areas are the late Vedic center of major innovations, at a time much later than the one discussed here.

## 6.3. The Kuru dialect in perspective

Summing up the historical development of the early Vedic dialects, it is important to note the Ṛgvedic *Koine* had many divergent dialect features which have not been studied in detail so far.[369] This type of language is followed by a *new* Vedic dialect. It first appeared in the late RV,[370] especially in book 10, along with the emergence of the dominant position of the Bharata tribe. It then is clearly established in the Mantra period (PS, ŚS, RVKh, SV, Mantras of MS, KS, TS, VS).

Little attention, however, has been paid to the fact that the Bharata/Kuru dialect differs from the language of the older RV not only in its -expected- diachronic development but also in its dialect *basis*. This is not only seen in the score of new words and forms, reported in Oldenberg's collectanea on RV 10 (1888: 267 sqq., below n.244). This has been observed even less (Witzel 1989), but it is quite conspicuous that the new dialect has forms that are closer to Young Avestan than to Ṛgvedic Sanskrit. The latter is often closer to Median (as preserved in some Old Persian expressions), Old Persian and the Old Avestan of Zaraϑuštra.[371]

On the other hand, many late Ṛgvedic and Mantra time innovations agree with forms in Younger Avestan. This points to the interesting possibility of a previous *common* habitat of the tribes that spoke Younger Avestan and Late/Post-Ṛgvedic Sanskrit. It could be the area north of present day Iran and Afghanistan, where these common innovations developed.[372] On the other hand, we might also suppose a longer period of common or

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[368] Cf. S. Jamison, *IIJ* 29, 161-181

[369] Under study by S. Insler since 1989; see now H. Scharfe, in *Fs. P. Thieme*, *StII* 1995. -- Earlier investigations (such as those of Lanman, Arnold) stressed the historical aspects and neglected the synchronic aspects; however, many traces of what seems a historical development may be due to various contemporaneous dialect forms which influenced each other within the (late) Ṛgvedic *Koine*.

[370] See the study of Arnold in *JAOS* 18, 228-233

[371] We still are in need of a good comparative study, especially a synchronic one (as far as possible by reconstruction), as well as a diachronic one, of the whole spread of early Indo-Iranian dialects, from the Mitannis to the Videhas, and from the Scythians and Saka to the Proto-Nuristanis. See, for the time being Witzel 1989. -- During all of this period, continuous commercial exchange across dialect boundaries was possible and took place as contemporary testimonies in AV (*Balhika*, Witzel 1980) and Patañjali (*Kamboja*, *Bahlīka*) indicate.

[372] Such common innovations obviously are a good argument against the theories, now propagated by some archaeologists, of a local Indian origin of the Indo-Aryans: they must assume that the Mantra time tribes of

mixed settlement in E. Iran. This is exemplified by the taking over of local names (Sarasvatī > *Harax<sup>v</sup>aitī*, Sarayu > *Haroiiu-m* (*Haraēuua-*), Sindhu > *Həndu*, etc.).[373] Some of these contacts seem to date back to the late RV, especially in parts of book 8.[374]

At any rate, dialect overlaps between late RV/Mantra time Vedic and Old Iranian persist well into the Mantra period. They suggest an earlier and quite close, pre-immigration relationship of the tribes that spoke these dialects, i.e. the East Iranians and the Bharatas. In other words, both groups share some *regional* features that transgress the dialect/language divide between Old Indian and Old Iranian.[375]

Indeed, there are indications for a late immigration of the Pūru and their original subtribe, the Bharata, from the East Afghan mountains and of their crossing the Sindhu into the Panjab.[376] While the Pūru are described in middle Ṛgvedic hymns as leaders of the Five Peoples (including the older immigrants, the Yadu-Turvaśa and Anu-Druhyu), the decisive

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the Haryana area have moved westwards into Afghanistan. Or, following J. Shaffer's argument (1984), that they spread the Indo-Aryan language *and* culture just via a trade network... (see above n. 11). The same holds true for the older Ṛgvedic period. Indeed, many Indian scholars and religious writers ---there is little distinction between these two classes of writers--- have assumed, since Vivekananda, Dayanand Sarasvati and Sri Aurobindo, that the Persians (and indeed all Indo-Europeans) moved *out* of India and that (according to Aurobindo's personal observation) there is no difference, somatic, cultural or otherwise, between North Indian 'Aryans' and S. Indian Draviḍas. By now we can add many more books written along these lines, see Witzel 2001 : *EJVS* 7-3.

[373] This may have extended into the (comparatively late) period of the formation of the Vīdēvdād; the text describes some "non-Iranian" customs such as cremating the dead, in the very heartland of Zorastrianism, Arachosia! -- The retention of such common characteristics may also have been sustained by the fact that the two "dialects," Old Iranian and Old Indo-Aryan, were almost mutually understandable, and certainly after some exposure--such as are Dutch/Low German and even High German. It is typical that Yāska and Patañjali know of the Eastern Afghan Kambojas, who must have spoken a Young Avestan dialect, (*śavati* = Avest. *šauuau<sup>i</sup>ti*), see below.-- Trade may have sustained these common features, of which the Young East Iranian name in Vedic form, *Balhika* (AV+) for YAv. *Bāxδī*, is indicative, see Witzel 1980. -- For the Sindoi north of the Caucasus see M. Mayrhofer 1979: 78 sqq.

[374] See names such as Ved. *Parśu* ~ mod. *Pashto*, above n. 34, and RV *Kaśu*, *Kanīta*, see Hoffmann 1995-6: 7-15. The problem is that of defining earlier or Ṛgveda time (pre-)'Iranian' tribes and persons as seen in Kaśu etc. To this we may add, with some hesitation, the *Tukriš* who has settled in Central Iran by the mid-second mill. BCE. Henning (1949) had brought them together with the later E. Iranian name of the country of *Turān*, *Tuγrastān* (and less likely, with the Tocharians); however, it is possible that the names reflect some of the Ṛgvedic *Tugra,* (and *Tugrya, Taugrya*), an enemy of Indra (cf. Witzel *EJVS* 5-1, Kuiper 1991). -- At any rate, we must assume that not all "E. Iranians" stayed in the E. Iranian area; some like the *Pārśva/Paršuma* may have moved west to become the Persian, note IIr. *šv > śś >* OPers. *ç* --- Note also the persistence of "Vedic" customs in Afghanistan, for example that of burials, as late as the Vīdēvdād. Perhaps we have to restudy the Zoroastrian texts in this particular light; the ideological enemies of the Zorostrians then were the Vedic *survivals* in the Afghan area.

[375] Such contacts are not unique. When studied in other contexts, it turns out that originally unrelated dialects exhibit secondary areal features after having settled closely together, as for example the Anglo-Saxons in England, who originally came from NW. Germany and S. Denmark, or the various northern Germanic tribes, the Swabians and Bavarians settled next to each other in S. Germany (and for some time also the Langobardians, in N. Italy ).

[376] For further details, see Witzel 1995: 307 sqq.

move of the Bharatas into the Panjab must have taken place before the late Ṛgvedic period as represented by the hymns about the Bharata chief Sudās (especially in RV 3 and 7, cf. also JB 3.238).

All of this suggests one of the many new waves of immigration that N. India has seen over the millennia. In this particular case, it concerned tribes speaking a dialect that had been in contact with East Iranian (Avestan, etc.) for a much longer time than those of the Ṛgvedic *Koine*. During long term settlement side by side of speakers of two closely related, but superficially quite distinct languages, linguistic exchange is not unlikely. People quickly learn the peculiarities of each other's dialects. Due to frequent social interaction on all levels, and in spite of the differences existing in many points of phonology and flexion, people continue to communicate closely. This is, in fact, in evidence even in much later times, in the period of Yāska and Patañjali (c. 150 BCE). Both quote the (East Iranian) dialect of the Kamboja, in S.E. Afghanistan, that must have been very close to Young Avestan.[377] It appears that Kambojan E. Iranian and Vedic apparently still were mutually understandable, and certainly so after some exposure of their speakers to each other's languages.[378]

As has been indicated above, the new Bharata(-Kuru) dialect is visible first in the late RV. This fact has not yet been recognized in its full importance as one usually regards these forms simply as inner-Ṛgvedic innovations that are then attested copiously in Mantra language texts. The growing accumulation of such new features in RV 10[379] makes it very likely that the dialect basis of the poetic *Koine* of this "great appendix" already was the Bharata(-Kuru) dialect.[380]

Viewed against the dialect basis of the new, Kuru form of Vedic, the archaic forms attested here and there in PS and to some extent in KS (much less so in TS)[381] clearly create the impression of their introduction as something intentionally archaic. The motive is easily understandable from the point of view of a speaker of a later, and somewhat different dialect. One keeps a few old forms just as they have come down, in the same way as we still know and occasionally use Shakespearean *hath, cometh, thou art*, or in German, Lutheran *zween*

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[377] See Witzel 1980, cf. n. 377, 439, 493; note *gacchati* = Kambojan *śavati* = Young Avestan *š'auuaiti* (< O. Avest. *šiiauuati* ~Ved. *cyavate*; Pat. *gatikarmā kambojeṣu eva bhāṣitam bhavati. vikāre enam āryā bhāṣante śava iti.*

[378] According to the later testimony of Yāska/Patañjali who regard the *Kamboja* language as some kind of aberrant language, opposed to proper Aryan usage. From my own experience, I might add that a few transformation rules, once internalized so much that they have become automatic, allow for an automatic 'translation' between the two West-Germanic languages, Dutch and High German: so much so, that the substitution rules sometimes result in hyper-correct or only partially transposed forms (note e.g. Caland, ĀpŚS Übers. 22.28.7 when he prints: *Schöpper* < Dutch *schepper* for German *Schöpfer*. I once used the semi-Dutch adaptation *Lucht-Hansa*) -- In this context, note the many correspondences in RV and even Young Avestan vocabulary. Apparently even Y. Avestan was more conservative in this respect than Mantra time Vedic.

[379] That is in other than in the traditional hymns.

[380] If this is so, a straightforward identification of a "Kuru immigration" with the post-RV language is unlikely: the seeds may well go back to the late Ṛgvedic Bharata dialect (in books 3,7, -- and especially in 10).

[381] Notably in the *l/r* treatment; note that RV 10 has the popular *l* in a number of cases where KS, PS often avoid it even in "popular words", such as *rohita, romaśa, ariklava*, Witzel 1991: 44 sq. -- The Taitt. form *suvar* may be an imitation of older Kuru archaisms: the Pañcālas also needed their stamp of authority. Note that Pāṇini still regards the TS Mantras as young.

(= Engl. *twain*) and *zwo* (only retained in counting) for modern German *zwei*. However, the constant predilection in PS for archaic forms, sometimes more archaic than those of the RV itself, indicates a conscious choice for archaic forms on the part of the Mantra time composers of these texts.

The phenomenon is not new. F.B.J. Kuiper has studied it in some detail already more than half a century ago.[382] Even the RV has a few hypercorrect forms[383] such as RV *avata*[384] :: Mantra *avaṭa* (SV, JS, MS, KS, TS, VS, PS 11.7.6; AV 20.134.6 *pipīlikāvaṭa*; KS 37.16) or RV *paḍbīśa* :: later *paḍvīśa, paḍviṃśa* AV, PB etc.[385] Another example of archaism is the Taittirīya retention, discussed above, of -*u*- in *suvar, suvarga* but not in, e.g. *svasti*, and the rather artificial introduction of this principle in *uv eva* for *u eva/-v eva*.[386]

Oldenberg has already noticed that the tendency to be archaic increases during the Vedic period, e.g., the later SV, YV texts tend to introduce Ṛgvedic forms in their Mantras instead of keeping their own traditional Mantra language forms. This is most typical in texts redacted late, such as that of the Kāṇva version of VS and the Kāpiṣṭhala version of KS.[387] However, this kind of archaism is materially different from the archaisms discussed so far. It is due to the strong position, indeed the preponderance, of the collected Ṛgveda Saṃhitā text. Therefore, it has typically not exerted influence on the forms in YV prose.[388]

The Kuru dialect of Vedic held sway in the Kuru lands but also over thePañcālas for a long time, until it had to give way to, and subsequently was overshadowed, by the form of the Vedic language that had developed among the Pañcālas. The Pañcāla dialect gained prominence only in the late YV Saṃhitā and in the early Brāhmaṇa period (TS, etc.). It strongly influenced the areas east and south of it, as can be seen most clearly in the spread of the gen. fem. -*ai*.[389] Most of the forms originally belonging to the common Bharata/Kuru dialect basis and also the Kuru innovations were kept in the Mantra and YV Saṃhitā prose periods, both by the Kuru and Pañcāla tribes. This "common" form of Middle Vedic (Kuru-Pañcāla) spread even further in the Brāhmaṇa period until it was superseded by the eastern dialect, characterized by its reminiscences of early Ṛgvedic *l* for *r*,[390] and forms in -*e* instead

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[382] See Kuiper 1955, see also 1991.

[383] See Kuiper 1991. -- Perhaps one might add local, non-IA words such as *kīsta* : *śīṣṭa* (Kuiper 1991, Witzel 1995, 1999; *karkoṭa* : *śarkoṭa*; *kimīdū* : *śimidā; śambha* 'shell' : *kamba, kambhu; śambala, śambara, Śabara, śamala* Pkt. > Oriya *Sa(h)ara, Saūra; śabala: kar/mbara*, (cf. n. 91, 121); *Śirimbiṭha : Ilimbiṭa; Ailusa: Śailuśa; kuṇṭha* 'lame' : *śuntha* 'small cow'.

[384] Also KS 38.14; AV 20.88.3 = RV 4.50.3.

[385] See Witzel in: A. Wezler, Zum Verständnis von ChU 5.1.12, *StII* 8/9,1982/1983: 147, esp. p. 155 sqq.

[386] See Witzel 1989: 174, 178.

[387] See Renou 1948, Oertel 1934.

[388] An exception may be *tuvak*, see S. Jamison, *IIJ* 29, 161-181; but this is due to the traditional, canonical form of the list. -- Note the order of the compound *śūdrārya* which retains older (RV) pronunciation *āriya*, see Oertel *KZ* 63, 1936, 249; *KZ* 63, 1936, 249; 64

[389] See Witzel 1989: 138

[390] Mantra language also is characterized by a predilection for *r* instead of sporadic Ṛgvedic *l,* see Witzel 1991.

of -*as/-o*. The "eastern dialect" (*Prācya* in Pāṇini's grammar) emerged into prominence only during the late Brāhmaṇa period, which is much too late to be of importance for our present purpose.


§ 6.4. Summary

For the present investigation, instead, it is the development of dialect features during the Mantra and the immediately following Vedic periods that is of great importance. The (still little studied) dialect varieties of the Ṛgvedic *Koine* that was used by the poets and other educated men were overlaid by the new Bharata/Kuru dialect of the late Ṛgvedic and early Mantra period. In that sense the typical Mantra forms of nominal and verbal inflexion (*devau, rūpāṇi, kuru*, etc.) are direct continuants of the late Ṛgvedic forms of RV 10. In addition, there are quite a number of innovations that are first traceable after the RV, during the Mantra period. By their use, this type of Vedic language is clearly set off even from the late Ṛgvedic dialect of the Bharata. These features include such as the phonetic development *khyā* > *kṣā, Cuv > Cv* or *Ciy > Cy*, and later on (in YV Saṃhitā prose) the introduction of the periphrastic aorist.

However, the Kuru dialect is also characterized, at least in some Vedic schools and their texts, by archaisms that have been shown to be artificial ones. The tendency to use archaic and hypercorrect forms or, if necessary, even to artificially *create* such archaic forms, agrees well with what has been described above (§4, §5) with regard to ritual and text selection: *artificial archaization* as easily applies to grammatical forms and texts as to ritual pottery.

The question asked in some of the preceding sections, can therefore be put here as well: why was there such a strong tendency to be archaic and hypercorrect? A preliminary answer has already been given above, several times: it was the formation of the new Kuru tribe and the influence of its dominant groups that brought about these changes. The formation of a new dialect was due to political and socio-economic reasons that include social and economic interchanges by groups from various adjacent geographical areas at tribal meetings and in market places. On the other hand, the introduction of archaic forms in ritual texts must have been brought about by the wishes and expectations of the "speakers" (the priestly actors/reciters) and of the "listeners" (the sponsor, *yajamāna*, and the onlookers, *upadrāṣṭṛ*) taking part in the rituals.

It is of great importance to note that these archaic forms are found in the texts concentrated in the (northern) Kuru area, that is in PS, KS, and the older parts of AB. This again underlines the expectations and pressures exerted on the reformers of the ritual at the time of the emergence of the Kuru realm. Interestingly, the same archaizing tendency can be observed in the Taittirīya texts (e.g. *suvar*[391]), once the political and cultural center had moved from the Kurus to the Pañcālas (as brought into focus by the role of the Pañcāla king Keśin Dālbhya as innovator of ritual).[392] As has been pointed out above, the new Pañcāla

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[391] See Witzel 1989: 173 sqq.

[392] See Witzel 1991: 40. Cf. his invention of the *Kaiśinī dīkṣā*; see Caland, *Kl. Schr.*, 1990: 447-449; Witzel 1997.

dialect influenced the neighboring areas only in the later YV Saṃhitā and Brāhmaṇa periods (e.g. gen. fem. *-ai*), until it was itself overshadowed by the Late Vedic *Eastern Koine.*

## § 7 ARCHAEOLOGY AND TEXTS

### § 7.0. Background: the pre-Ṛgvedic period

The various sets of data presented so far can now be compared with recent, increasingly comprehensive data of archaeology.[393] The problem remains, as always, how to correlate textual evidence with archaeological remains.[394]

      To provide the general background, a few salient features of the pre-Vedic period in the northern subcontinent must be delineated. After a prolonged stone age period, characterized by hunters and gatherers (Neolithic, from c. 8,000 BCE onwards), sedentary life and agriculture was first introduced in the northwest (Mehrgarh, Baluchistan) around 6000 BCE. However, Neolithic cultures continued in other parts of northern India until c. 2000 BCE (V.N. Misra 2001: 500). This was the case for example in Kashmir, in a particular form related to Northern and Eastern Central Asia, from c. 2400-1500 BCE, with similar cultures in Swat, the Himalayas and the northern plains of the Indus.[395] All these are collectively called "Northern Neolithic" (Possehl 2002: 36, 39) and perhaps represent early speakers of Sino-Tibetan).

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[393] Because of many recent archaeological finds, this section has been updated from its original version written in c. 1993: -- B. and R. Allchin 1982, D.P. Agrawal 1982; Fairservis 1971, 1975; R. Allchin 1995, B.B. Lal 1997, etc.; Allchin 1997; Possehl 2002

[394] An initial initiative was the Toronto conference (1991), organized by G. Erdosy and published as Erdosy 1995.

[395] Cf., at Sarai Khola, Possehl 2002: 36

The various early agricultural societies spread out and increasingly differentiated (Shaffer's "regionalization" period). They covered all of the *piedmont* of the Baluchi/E. Afghani hills and eventually the whole Indus plain. This led to the sudden rise of the great copper age Harappan (or Indus) civilization (2600-1900 BCE). It spread from the *piedmont* eastwards into the plains, and later on also into the Sarsuti-Ghaggar-Hakra ("Sarasvatī") valley and flourished especially along the inland delta of this river near Ft. Derawar ("Hakra Phase", Mughal 1997, Possehl 2002: 33, 37). The Harappan tradition overlaid most local cultures and covered practically all of modern Pakistan, and at 2500 BCE also Gujarat (Possehl 2002); it represents Shaffer's "integration period". Indus people even had an outlying trade station at Shortugai (on the Oxus/Kokcha rivers), certainly due to the exploitation of lapis lazuli in nearby Badakhshan; they maintained regular oversea trade with Mesopotamia, and overland connection with the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC, Possehl 2002: 229).

After the sudden collapse of the Indus civilization around 1900 BCE, elements of it survived in the various local post-urban cultures until c. 1300 BCE (see below) that lacked certain Indus aspects such as international trade, Indus script, large settlements. In many areas the pre-urban, pre-Harappan traits reassert themselves (Allchin 1995: 36). A new element in many of them was the introduction of millets that can withstand a dryer climate (Pirak, S. Rajasthan, Saurasthtra, and also in the Deccan).

However, not all areas, even in the northwest, were overlaid by the Indus civilization. The Derajat plateau (west of the Indus) and the Potwar plateau in N. Pakistan remained outside its orbit (2500-1900 BCE, Possehl 2002: 62). This is important to note in view of the loan words encountered in the Ṛgveda. These cultures, as well as that of Kashmir and Swat,[396] are now subsumed under the rubric "Northern Neolithic".

The northern Vindhya and Gangetic plains were sparsely occupied, at the time, by Mesolithic (-2000 BCE), and then by Neolithic/Chalcolithic populations (1500- BCE) who had agriculture with rice, barley, wheat and who raised humped cattle, sheep and goats.

Closer to the Indus we find some copper age cultures. On the Banas River in eastern Rajasthan/Madhya Pradesh, the Ahar culture flourished from c. 3600-1500 BCE. It is characterized by a thin red ware and Black and Red Ware (BRW) with similarities to Indus wares. Its agriculture featured wheat, barley, millet, as well as cattle, sheep, goat, buffalo and pig. The square and circular houses were made of stone, mud-brick and mud, including one large rectangular fort enclosing (at Balathal in Udaipur) an area of some 600 square feet and with four bastions. The Ahar culture entertained some relationship with the Indus civilization, e.g. in copper mining.

Further east, on the Chambal and its confluents, we find the copper age Kayatha culture (2000-1800). Kayatha ware is chocolate slipped or buff, and occasionally (handmade) grey. It features wheat, barley, cattle, sheep and goats. Allegedly, there also is a figure of a mare, which would be one of the earliest attestations of the horse in S. Asia As for dwellings, there were small huts only. Its sites were later on covered by the Ahar culture.

The Malwa culture (1700-1450) is found on the Chambal, Betwa and Narmada rivers. It has rectangular and round wattle and daub houses, but also an earthen defense wall with a moat (at Eran), which is important in view of the relatively early attestation of the word

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[396] Cf., again, at Sarai Khola, Possehl 2002: 36

*nagara, nagarin* in the area (JB), before the second urbanization (5th century BCE). Houses with drains, both made of dried and fired bricks also are found (Nagda, just north of the Vindhyas and the Narmada). The excavator has interpreted a square pit with ash and burnt wood as a sacrificial pit (Navdatoli). Western influence (from Iran, Tepe Hissar) is seen in the form of swords. The culture features wheat, rice, linseed and *ber* (Zizyphus jujube) as well as cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. It has buff ware with cream slip, buff ware with red colored paintings, and BRW. Its swords have some affinity with Tepe Hissar in Iran.

In this area there were also other agricultural societies such as the S̲avalda culture (2300-2000), which is earlier than the Harappan influence. It does not have any copper or stone tools but only bone tools.[397]

However, the influence of the Indus civilization seems to have extended into N. Maharashtra (D̲aimabad, 2200-1800 BCE, Misra 2001: 517), with its famous large copper hoard of a bull, rhino, elephant, and a bull-drawn chariot with full wheel; the date of this is disputed by some. They were found in a settlement, made of mud bricks, where some Harappan seals were found as well.

Into this area, the Malwa culture spread at c. 1700-1500 BCE. It was later followed by the local Jorwe culture (1500-900 BCE). The South of India remained Neolithic from c. 2500-1000 BCE.

Finally, just east of the Indus civilization, in the Indus-Ganges divide and in the Upper Ganga-Yamuna *doāb*, we find the Chalcolithic Ochre Colored Pottery (OCP, Misra 2001: 512)[398] which has been found overlapping with the mysterious copper hoards; these take the form of (unusable) weapons and anthropomorphic figures. The culture extends from the upper Yamuna to Jaipur and Allahabad. Its pottery shows similarity to Indus wares. Rice and barley and cattle characterize its agriculture; there is evidence of baked and unbaked bricks. Its people may be related to the agricultural substrate of the local languages, perhaps that of "language "X" visible even modern Hindi (Masica 1979). Some thermo-luminescence dates point to 2600 and 1200 BCE; the exact dates of this culture are still unclear but it seems to end around 1450 BCE. It is succeeded by the BRW culture (1450-1200 BCE;   see below

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**NORTHERN SOUTH ASIA   from 6000 BCE-**

| Gandhara/ Sindh | Panjab | Kuruksetra | W. Doab | Center | East |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6000- Spread of early agricultural communities | | | | | |

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[397]It is characterized by storage pits and poultry pits; some were used as dwellings. Some elements point to semi-nomadic people occupying the sites for short periods only during the monsoon for limited agriculture (millet). The culture is characterized by Red Ware with influences of the neighboring Indus Black on Red Ware; Also, there is the coarse grey Savalda ware and the (imported?) Kayatha ware. However, Savalda features millets (*bajra, jowar* i.e. Sorghum bicolor), originally imported from Africa by the Gujarat Indus civilization.

[398]Cf. Allchin 1995: 29.

**(Mehrgarh)**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **2400** | **[Northern** <br> **steppe elements** <br> **enter the BMAC]** | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **2500-** | **N. Neolithic    N. Neolithic** | |
| **1900** | **(Kashmir, Swat, Potwar, Derajat)** | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **3600-** | | **Ahar culture** |
| **1500** | | **in E. Rajasthan** |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **2600** | | **---Indus   civilization---** |
| **\|** | | **OCP          OCP   /   Mesolithic   -** |
| **2000** | | |
| **1900** | **BMAC elements  in  late** | **& Copper        \|** |
| | **Indus   civ. (Harappa, etc.);** | **Hoards** |
| | **Sack of   Baluchistan (2000),** | **(- 1450)** |
| | **Mehrgarh VII (2000)** | **\|** |

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**1900-**              **post- Harappan / post-urban**

 

 

       In sum, the first few millennia BCE present a complex web of cultures and interactions. It is into this complex scene that new elements intrude after c. 2000 BCE. First of all, we see some influx, by trade or otherwise, of objects from the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological complex (BMAC, 2400-1600 BCE). This influence extends westwards up to Susa and eastwards up to Mohenjo Daro and Harappa (Possehl 2002). Even the famous "priest king" of the Indus seems to belong to this category of imports (for BMAC influences, see further below)

       Then, there is the sudden collapse of the Indus civilization around 1900 BCE. A number of reasons have been given for this, with increasing evidence for a major climate shift that is also seen in Iran and the Ancient Near East (see below). It cannot be assigned, as still done by M. Wheeler to an Aryan invasion. Instead, a number of new elements emerged on the margins of the Indus civilization and also in its heartland.

       They include the Gandhara Grave culture in N. Pakistan (Gandhara, Swat, etc., c. 1700-/1600 BCE-) which features some of the first domesticated horses in the subcontinent in Swat at 1400 BCE (Allchin 1995). Still on the northwestern border, there are intrusive elements at Mehrgarh VII (c. 2000-1900), at Pirak (c.1750 BCE-), and in nearby Sibri and Quetta (Allchin 1995:48). They are linked to Bactria and Central Asia and they all have yielded new, unusual materials, [399] including the first horse bones and terra-cotta representations of riding (Pirak and Kachi Plain of E. Baluchistan, c. 1800 BCE).

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[399] Note also the concurrent sack of Baluchi settlements, Allchin 1995: 48

In the Indus heartland of Sindh we find, among the post-urban cultures, intrusive materials at Chanhu Daro[400] (c. 1700 BCE) and at nearby Amri. These have Iranian and Central Asian connections, notably in their Iranian/C. Asian terracotta seals and copper tools. Similarly, the cemeteries at Mehrgarh VIII, Sibri, Pirak (c. 1750 BCE), and the Quetta hoard contain Central Asian objects. Allchin (1995: 32) has interpreted all of this as local adaptations to "changing environmental demands". -- This stage is followed by the short Jhangar occupation (Allchin 1995: 36, 39), at c. 1000 BCE. that features rather primitive elements.

At the end of the post-urban (post-Harappan) phase, a similar collapse, probably due to climate, seems to have taken place as witnessed around 1900 BCE. The remaining sites in Sindh, just like those of the Jorwe culture were abandoned again, around 1000/900 BCE. [401]

However, (north)western influx does not continue to spread further eastwards,[402] to the Indus settlements that had expanded into Saurashtra around 2500 BCE; here post-urban Harappan cultures continued (Rangpur IIB-C, III) next to the re-assertion of local elements. Just as in Haryana, the new settlements are of smaller size and in a smaller area than in Harappan times. The deterioration in climate, so critical for Sindh, resulted in a different type of agriculture, including the cultivation of millets, especially sorghum (*jawar*) and *bajra*, that were first imported from Africa during the Indus period (Allchin 1995: 37). The post-urban traditions seem to have survived unto c.1000 BCE when another major climate shift took place in the Near Eastern, Iranian and Indus region.

Further north, in E. Panjab, there is clear influx of new forms of burial and art motifs at Harappa, Cemetery H (Vats 1940, Allchin 1995: 33) and in the closely related small, post-urban sites of Cholistan on the lower Ghaggar-Hakra river (Mughal 1997). Notably, the new elements differ from the new, Central Asian traits seen at Chanhu Daro and Jhukar in Sind.[403] The Cemetery H culture is closely linked, in its motifs, to new traits found further east, at the sites of Banawali[404] and Mitathal (IIb) in Haryana and at some of the upper Gangetic sites such as at Hulas (between the upper Yamuna and Ganga) and Bhagwanpura (on the upper Yamuna).[405] The latter is important as it clearly features three quite divergent levels of occupation: an early, post-urban one with houses made of mud bricks, then one with simple, semi-circular, thatched timber huts, and a third with larger houses

[400] Allchin 1995, Witzel & Possehl 2003; Chanhu Daro is characterized by a squatter population in Indus ruins (Allchin 1995: 31); cf. below on the late Roman parallels. The pottery is partly linked to Harappan, partly different. It has been called a "native, non-Harappan substratum". It has connections with W.India.

[401] The same holds true for the lower Hakra, but for a different reason: the complete drying up of the Ghaggar-Hakra river (as reflected in the Brahmana texts); only a few sites of the PGW are found here. -- Apart from Iranian swords in the Malwa culture and alleged terracotta even in the Kayatha culture need to be re-investigated.

[402] Allchin 1995: 32

[403] Which may sustain my suggestion that Pirak/ChanhuDaro elements may be precursors of the Dravidian speaking cultures, see Witzel 1999.

[404] Banawali features a pre-urban, an urban phase (both with brick houses), and a post-urban phase. (period III) with houses made of pressed earth and with Mitathal-Cemetery H pottery.

[405] Allchin 1995: 35, 37.

made of pressed earth or mud bricks. Some intrusion is clearly visible. The huts would at first sight suggest Vedic house, but this was even flimsier: it was made of bamboo poles with reed covered (Renou 1939). The last two phase show increasing use of PGW. Hulas has similar evidence.

Shaffer and Lichtenstein (1999), however, stress the cultural continuity with the Indus civilization. The settlements represent the shift of the Indus population upstream -- the Hakra delta and much of the Ghaggar-Hakra area had been abandoned-- and eastwards into the upper *doab,* where many new settlements were founded.[406] They are concentrated in fertile areas and made use of the new agricultural possibilities (two harvests, of rice and wheat) provided by more reliable rainfall and the consistent availability of Yamuna water. Just as a later text (AB, composed in E. Panjab) tells us, there are more settlements of this type in the eastern than in the western parts of this area.[407]

All of this points, next to some continuity of post-Harappan village and small town traditions, to some strong outside influence that spread throughout the Sarasvati, Haryana and upper *doab* areas, while there also is basic continuity in much of the agricultural and village base of the culture.[408]

In the upper *doab*, for example at Hulas, here is little evidence of Harappan culture but in the post-urban period there is another new element in pottery decorations, quite similar to Cemetery H and Mitathal/Banawali, next to survival of pre-Harappan elements.[409] A new local culture, called the Black and Red Ware culture[410] (BRW) emerges around c. 1450-1200 BCE (according to TL dating). This is found at Atranjikhera and Noh. At the latter location, it includes some of the earliest finds of iron in the area (Misra 2001: 619); cf. however, Possehl and Gullapalli 1999 who limit its first occurrence in this area to c. 1000/900 BCE. The local BRW is unpainted; also present are black slipped and red ware. At Atranjikhera a few burnt bricks have been found, which is important in view of the post-Rgvedic occurrence of the word for 'brick' (*iṣṭaka* etc.).

A little further east, the *doab* BRW adjoins, in the middle Ganges plains and in the northern Vindhyas, the local Chalcolithic culture (1500-700 BCE) with BRW, red and black slipped wares (see below). This links up with the early historical period. It features rectangular wattle-and daub houses, wheat, barley, rice, millet, buffalo, sheep, goats, pigs; a few burials are found in the Vindhyas.

In other areas, the pre-Harappan cultures re-assert themselves after the collapse of the Harappan Civilization (Allchin 1995: 30). This is J.C. Shaffer's "localization" period. In some areas, such as Saurashtra, local cultures had continued side by side with the Indus civilization (Allchin 1995: 29, 32); in the Derajat and Potwar plateaus, characterized by the

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[406] Cf. the summary by Allchin 1995: 398 sq.

[407] Note that Allchin (1995: 34) says; "the sites of this group are particularly found in the eastern part of the region, and that there are markedly fewer sites towards the west."

[408] Notably, the pottery tradition continued (Allchin1995: 33) but had adopted "foreign" motifs in its paintings (see below).

[409] Cf. Allchin 1995 : 36

[410] Although Black and Red wares are found in large parts of the subcontinent.

Northern Neolithic, the Indus civilization, however, had never taken hold.[411] This is important in view of the question whom the earliest IA immigrants actually encountered in the Greater Panjab.

**NORTHERN SOUTH ASIA from 1900 BCE- 1000 BCE**

| | Gandhara/ Panjab Sindh | Kurukṣetra | W. Doab | Center | East |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1900 | Sindh, most of Panjab evacuated | immigration of Indus popu- lations | | | |
| | (re-)emergence of local traditions | | OCP | OCP | |
| 1750 | **Intrusion of new elements:** Pirak (horse) Cemetery H Jhukar, Jhangar | Banawali/ Mitathal | Hulas | | |
| | Gandhara Grave Culture (horse) --- | | | --Malwa Culture-- (1700- 1450, spreading south to Maharashtra) | |
| 1500 | | | OCP | Neolithic/Chalcolithic | |
| 1450 | | | BRW -1200 | (BRW) | |
| 1000 | Jhangar; Sindh, lower Hakra abandoned | | | | |

It is against this background that we have to view the data from the Ṛgveda (and other Indo-Iranian texts).

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The upper limit the Ṛgvedic period has escaped precision so far. According to the latest data, the disintegration of the Indus civilization took place about 1900 BCE, probably due to a combination of several factors, mainly the massive climate change, that caused this large scale 'system collapse.' Possehl 2002: 237 sqq., V.N. Misra 2001: 506)[412] At this point

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[411] It may be this culture that the IAs first encountered, cf. also Herodotos on the Indus areas.

[412] For some of the reasons of this system collapse, see S. Weber on the agricultural economy of the Rangpur, Rojdi, Cemetery H phase (*Antiquity* 1999, and the following number for a debate with Q. Fuller).

in time, a rapid decay and disappearance of the large Indus cities took place. True, there was some continued habitation, for example at Dholavira and Harappa. However, it was not that of urbanized people but rather that of squatters,[413] while Mohenjo-Daro and many other cities were totally abandoned. (Possehl 1997, 2002, Allchin 1995).

As the RV does indeed not speak of cities but only of ruins, the speakers of Indo-Aryan and/or the composers of the Ṛgveda must have immigrated or trickled in,[414] tribe by tribe and clan by clan, (well) after[415] 1900 BCE. There are, indeed, clear intrusions into the Indus area.

For example, there are the developments seen in the Cemetery H culture, briefly described above. This culture is found at Harappa and its surroundings, and importantly in Cholistan along the lower Hakra river. As R. Mughal has shown,[416] the Cemetery H culture found there in some abundance is a clear continuation of Harappan occupations, but it also represents new elements.

Most obvious is the introduction of cremation and fractional burials, something unheard of during the Indus period. Remains were buried in urns that have, however, traditional Indus paintings of plants and animals, such as the peacock. Surprisingly, some of these birds contain, in their hollow belly, the picture of a small human being. As has been explained already by the excavator (Vats 1940, Allchin 1995), this points to the Vedic belief of birds as (carriers of) the human soul after death (Witzel 1984). Both in form as well as in content, these burials therefore seem to combine traditional Indus motifs with new, (quasi-)Vedic ones.

Some other possible candidates of early impact of the speakers of Indo-Aryan (the early 'horse cultures', i.e. the Gandhara Grave Culture and possibly Pirak and surrounding sites in E. Baluchistan) have already been mentioned.

However, recent discussions[417] both in India and in some circles of Anglophone archaeology,[418] of the arrival of the Vedic Aryans exhibit a growing denial of any immigration or even trickling in of people speaking Indo-Iranian or Indo-Aryan dialects. Yet, it is important to note that not only the Vedic language but the *whole* complex of material and spiritual Indo-Aryan culture has somehow been taken over and absorbed in the

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[413] Not unlike the sporadic habitation of Roman cities overrun by Germanic etc. tribes -- another type of system collapse.

[414] Cf. Erdosy 1977: 40; cf. also Erdosy in Allchin 1995. -- The very possibility of immigration at whatever scale, is disputed by J. Shaffer 1984, c

[415] It is of course possible that some Indo-Aryan tribes or clans moved into the plains already during the Indus period, occupying areas that were not (primarily) used by the Indus people (cf. Possehl & Witzel 2003).That they did not share the same places is clear from the absence of horse bones in Indus sites; on this last point see H. Falk 1994; *EJVS* 7-3.

[416] Mughal 1997, see also his discussions in the 3rd and 4th Harvard Round Table: http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~sanskrit/RoundTableSchedule.html.

[417] This section has been taken over, in modified form, from Witzel 1999.

[418] It is useful to heed the warning of S. Embleton (1990), "When academics enter a field [outside their specialization] and particularly when non-academics also get involved, progress is often slowed down and the field as a whole suffers, sometimes with all work in the field being unjustly tainted. Or to quote [Margaret] Gelling 'constant difficulty is occasioned by the 'anyone can do it' attitude, which leads scholars who have no philological expertise to propound impossible etymologies.' " -- For this discussion see Allchin 1995.

northwest of the subcontinent. This includes complicated chariot making technology[419] and horse training, just as well as Indo-Iranian poetry with its complicated conventions[421] that are still visible and functioning in the Ṛgveda. It also includes the old Indo-Iranian religion[422] centering around the opposition of *Deva*s and *Asura*s or ancestor worship that is carried out along old Indo-European lines.[423] Innovation also includes the naming or renaming of places and rivers.

One can picture the impact of these elements, following the models of Mallory and Ehret as follows.   They were diffused in billiard ball or *Kulturkugel*-like fashion (Mallory 1998), with local adoption of an "elite kit" (Chr. Ehret).

In one simplified model, one might picture a first *Kulturkugel* that brought BMAC elements to the borders of South Asia, even into late Harappa, around 2000 BCE,[424] and a second pastoral one that started out from the Afghan hills (cf. Witzel 2000, genetically attested in Swat at 1250 BCE)), proceeded eastwards and southwards into the Greater Panjab, and eventually came to be reflected in the earliest Vedic texts.

The movement of speakers of (Indo-)Aryan into the neighborhood of the subcontinent becomes increasingly apparent now that more is known about the settled agricultural communities of the Bactria-Margiana Archeological Complex (c. 2400-1600 BCE) and about the appearance of northern, steppe characteristics, via the Central Asian Mountain belt (Francalacci) in some of these sites. Such (mutual) influence between the steppe and the sown (Hiebert 1998) points back all the way to the burials belonging to the Sintashta-Petrovka culture (c. 2100-1700 BCE) east of the Ural mountains, an offshoot of the preceding copper producing  cultures west of the Urals. The Sintashta complex has some of the earliest occurrences of the horse-drawn chariot and includes horse burials. At another site, Popatovka near Samara on the Volga, we even find the burial of a decapitated man whose head had been substituted by that of a horse (cf. the Cyavana legend of the RV and the YV; see Anthony & Vinogradov 1995, Witzel 2000).

That virtually no archaeological remains of the (pre-)Ṛgvedic tribes have been found so far should however not surprise, though this fact has led to the recent assumption[425] that the speakers of Indo-Aryan *never* immigrated into India at all. It is well known that semi-nomadic and migrating tribes leave few archaeological traces. A notable example are the Huns whose archaeological remains have been found in Hungary only a few decades ago.

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[419] See the detailed discussions in Drews 1989, for Egyptian and Near Eastern chariots.

[421] See R. Schmitt 1968, Elizarenkova 1995, and the summary by Watkins 1997.

[422] See Kuiper 1983, Oberlies 1989-99.

[423] Only three ancestors only, from of the (many) generations still remembered, are actually worshipped, and three *piṇḍa*s are offered; cf. the Greek *tripatores*, and the Russian custom of offering three *klyochki* to the ancestors (Schrader 1919).

[424] This would correspond more or less to Allchin (1995) "first encounters" which he, however, takes as IA encounters with the Indus.

[425] See Shaffer (1984). His arguments with regard to the (non-)introduction of the Indo-Aryan language and civilization is in need serious revision, which has been discussed elsewhere (Witzel 1999). I leave aside the current revisionist scene in India.

Until then, we knew about their intrusion (in this case, rather an invasion!) only from literary sources -- just as we do in the case of the Indo-Aryans.[426]

Unlike the situation in Central Asia, evidence arising from the excavation of pastoral sites in the subcontinent  is missing that would reflect RV cattle-based semi-nomadic or transhumance settlements, and that preferably would include direct evidence of RV ritual.

One reason is that pastoralist camp sites are not very prominent. They are only periodically used and re-used, maybe once per year. Compare, e.g. Possehl (2002: 32) on a similar  pastoral site, Bagor, typically not in the alluvium of the Panjab but near the Banas River in S.E. Rajasthan. It lies, however, outside the early Vedic area. If archaeologists look for the remains of the Indo-Aryans they should search for the few distinguishable remnants of these sites (*armaka*, W. Rau 1983).[427] The best chance for finding them in South Asia is in the hills of E. Afghanistan and in the NW Frontier Province of Pakistan, not under the meters of alluvial deposits of the Panjab.[428]  The frequent floods, due to the constant shifting and realignments of the rivers of the Panjab, have wiped out most of such sites or have covered them with many feet of alluvium. Unfortunately, a thorough survey of the area has not been published, though one of parts of the Panjab has been carried out by Pakistani archaeologists led by R. Mughal.

Worse, we cannot expect to find pottery remains that are typically "Vedic" either. Everyday pottery was produced by low class artisans who were not admitted into the Aryan three-class society.[429] Unless specially ordered, these potters continued to produce their own local wares (cf. Allchin 1995: 33sqq).

This kind of evidence agrees with the model of language and culture shift that Ehret (1988) has described in some detail for East Africa. He underlines the relative ease with which ethnicity *and* language shift in small societies, due to the particular cultural/economic/military *choices* made by the local population in question. The intruding/influencing group bringing new traits may initially be small and the features it contributes can be fewer in number than those of the pre-existing local culture. The newly formed, combined ethnic group may then initiate a recurrent, *expansionist* process of ethnic and language shift. The material record of such shifts is visible only insofar as new prestige equipment or animals (the "status kit", with new, intrusive vocabulary!) are concerned. This

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[426] The opposite case is found, e.g. in early post-Roman Italy. The graves of the Avar settlement at Vicenne near Variano, in the province of Campobasso, between Rome and Naples, have all-out Langobardic armor, but also with newly introduced stirrups. The excavations were carried out by Prof. Bruno Genito, Oriental University Institute at Naples. Written documents confirm that the area was given to the Bulgarian Horde in 668 CE.

[427] Obviously, one area that is most promising in this respect is the fossil river valley of the lower "Sarasvatī", the Hakra in Cholistan. This part of the Sarsuti-Ghaggar-Hakra bed has not been reflooded or otherwise changed since early post-Harappan times. PB 25 mentions its potsherds, still seen in millions on the surface (Mughal 1997).

[428] Another interesting location may be the lower, preserved layers of those places in the Panjab that have been settled continuously.

[429] Professionally made pottery, thrown on a wheel, is regarded as demonic (*asura*-like); see W. Rau 1983: 41 sq.

is especially so if pottery -- normally culture-specific -- continues to be made by local specialists of a class-based society.[430]

There are indeed many indications within Vedic culture that can be distinguished from the preceding Indus civilization and its immediate village level successor cultures. In any possible scenario, we must distinguish between the initial import and the process of (gradually) taking over, by the indigenous populations, of the Indo-Aryan language (including poetry, etc.), of Indo-Aryan technology (horse drawn chariots, etc.), and thirdly, that of the *whole complex* of Indo-Iranian culture including language, customs, beliefs, religion, ritual, family structure, pastoralist economy, material culture and technology. All of these features may have progressed at a different rate, and with varying impact, in the various areas of the northwest and beyond.

The 'import' of Indo-Aryan language and culture into the subcontinent was the outcome of an influx of a group of clans, tribes, or a people who spoke early Vedic and had an early Indo-Aryan civilization, with exogamous groups of patrilinear descent, pastoralism, horse-drawn chariots, etc. Emerging from the general Turkmenistan-Bactrian area (in the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex?), after some acculturation in the area,[431] and after some stay in the hills of Afghanistan, the speakers of Indo-Aryan probably had (mainly) Central Asian somatic characteristics,[432] which has now been substantiated by the balaysis of ancient DNA (aDNA) in Swat at 1250 BCE (Narasimhan 2019). Their genetic impact may have been fairly negligible due to acculturation[433] and the quick adaptation of their culture by the populations of the Greater Panjab.[434] But it nevertheless still amounts to some 50% of the highest classes in N.India.

Exactly which populations the speakers of early IA met in this area, is open to further research. The continuation of pre-Harappan (in part Northern Neolithic) traits on the Potwar and Derajat plateaus on the one hand, and the prevalence of non-Dravidian substrate words in the early Ṛgveda on the other, points to an encounter with non- or post-Indus, simple farming communities.

This summary circumscribes the questions to be asked here in order to clarify the archaeological and historical setting of the Ṛgvedic period. For, the exact sequence of

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[430] For more details see Witzel 2001: §10.

[431] Bactria has always been a staging place for immigration to and invasions of India; however, it also has been an area where relatively quick acculturation has taken place, e.g. of the Central Asian Yue Ji, the Kuṣāṇa, the Turks of the Turkī Śāhi dynasty, the Turks and Mongols of Babur and Akbar, etc.

[432] Like the modern inhabitants of much of Afghanistan, especially Nuristan and the neighboring Kalash Valleys. A few strains might have been included, such as *one* 'goldhaired' (*hiraṇyakeśin*) person (thus, not a god who is often referred to as golden in all respects), but the very human author of HŚS. For other genetic details see now Cavalli-Sforza 1994; Francalacci, 3rd/4th Harvard Round Table, 2001/2; Narasimhan 2019. In Central Asia "western" characteristics are about 25%, while East/Central Asian characteristics dominate now.

[433] A model such as that of Renfrew (1987) based on economic exchange does not explain this kind of complete cultural take-over. His dominance model, however, might have applied in *some* strictly localized cases. Both scenarios neglect the increasing evidence for a voluntary adaptation of IA culture (Ehret1988) by some of the leading classes of the indigenous population in certain areas of the Northwest. See below.

[434] An opposite view is held by recent geneticists, cf. Cavalli -Sforza 1994;Narasimhan2019.

developments regarding the sudden implosion and disappearance of the mature Harappan civilization and the changes towards the Vedic period, as visible in our texts, still are enigmatic. Some Archaeologists, notably J. Shaffer and to some degree also J. M. Kenoyer, have stressed the continuity of archeological cultures from before the Indus into the historical period. This actually is not something that should surprise. It actually is the norm in most parts of the world. Even if one assumes an influx of speakers of Indo-Aryan from the Afghan hills (and beyond), as the linguistic and religious materials suggest, this does not exclude the continuation of local crafts so prominently found in the excavations (Ehret 1988, Allchin 1995). Rather, one has to look out for clear signs of *change* and *innovation*, such as the introduction of horses (in the Gandhāra culture), and new motifs on painting (such as the Cemetery H 'soul birds'), sudden changes in burial practices (Cemetery H), and the like.

Linguistic investigations (Kuiper 1955, 1991, Witzel *EJVS* 5.1), too, have underlined the linguistic continuity of substrates within Vedic. This is clearly seen in non-Indo-Aryan words pertaining to nature, village life, agriculture, and music. In this context, it is useful to remember Kuiper's definition (1991: 6 sq.) of the Ṛgvedic Ārya: "[In the RV] 'Aryans' were in general those who maintained the world order by means of sacrifices and gifts..." They were not isolated form the rest of the population: "those who believed that a definite ethnic barrier separated the 'Aryans' from the surrounding non-Aryan peoples disregarded some well-known facts."

The reasons for the initial immigration of the Indo-Aryans may have included the following. The breakdown of the city-centered Indus civilization resulted in reverting to smaller rural settlements. This was accompanied by an explosive spread of the post-Harappan culture eastwards into Haryana and Western U.P. (Shaffer 1995: 139, cf. Allchin 1995: 33-35; also into Gujarat), resulting in a large scale abandonment of the *earlier* settlements in the Indus and Sarasvatī areas.[435] Shaffer refers to the latter movement as the only archaeologically attested migration of the period. The expansion was probably due to the availability of water resources on the upper courses of the rivers in Haryana and western U.P. where, in addition, the nearby Himalayas result in much more and sustained rainfall[436] than in the rest of the plains. This was enhanced by newly developed agricultural possibilities of growing both the traditional wheat and barley in winter, as well as the summer grains, rice and, in drier areas, millet,[437] resulting in a food surplus.

Consequently, large sections of the abandoned Panjab were now open to the (mainly) pastoral IA tribes who could exploit not only the area formerly marginal for agriculture but

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[435] One should not, however, take TB 2.4.6.8 as an indication of this *(yeṣam ime pūrve armāsa āsan / ayūpā* (text: *ayūpāḥ) sadma vibhṛta purūṇi / vaiśvānara tvayā te nuttāḥ / pṛthivīm anyām abhi tasthur janāsaḥ)*. The mentioning of *a-yūpa* dwellings rather seems to refer to the mobile IA *grāma* and to offering grounds. However, note also AB 3.45 with "long wildernesses" in the west and with more populous settlements in the east; this describes the post-Indus (with the abandonment of the lower courses of the Hakra) and also the post-RV situations perfectly.

[436] There are pre-monsoon showers , excessive rains in the monsoons, and there also is a short "winter monsoon" around new Year, caused by remnants of the Atlantic jet stream that brings showers to theTienShan just as well as to the Hindukush and Himalayan Ranges.

[437]

also the newly abandoned agricultural lands.[438] It was the people of the Northern Neolithic and remnants of the village people of the Indus civilization, their language(s) and local crafts that the speakers of Indo-Aryan encountered when they entered the Panjab plains with their herds.[439] As the Indo-Aryans had traditionally practiced only limited agriculture[440] (*yava* 'barley') in an area not affected by this change, i.e. their older homes in Afghanistan, they did neither take over rice or millet immediately on their arrival in the Panjab. The RV does not mention either (*vrīhi* AV, *aṇu* VS 18.12, *priyaṅgu* MS, KS, TS, VS), and not even the staple of the Indus civilization, wheat (*godhūma* MS, VS). Only when the Indo-Aryans further expanded into U.P., that is during the Mantra period (AV, PS, YV Mantras), rice, millet and wheat made their appearance.

In other words, the RV period has seen increasing pastoralism in the Panjab, with some post-Indus villagers hanging on to agriculture in those areas that had periodic flooding or could have irrigation. These people are clearly distinct: as has already been mentioned, most of the agricultural terminology is non-IA (Kuiper 1991).[441] Note that even in the later RV, Viśvāmitra and his sons can speak of the autochthonous people, the Kīkaṭa in the Kurukṣetra area, as being inept with cattle: 'what is the use of cows with the Kīkaṭa?' (RV 3.53).

The post-Harappan movement of many Indus people eastwards into Haryana coincides well with the concentration of non-Indo-Aryan river names in the Kurukṣetra area (Witzel 1999), while most of the (fairly empty) Panjab steppe and desert area is characterized by Old IA names. All of this raises, again, the question of how to describe the nature of the population of the emerging Kuru realm in E. Panjab/Haryana, a point to which we will have to revert.

We[442] can expect linguistic interaction between the newly arrived speakers of Indo-Aryan and the indigenous population at some point after the end of the Indus civilization at c. 1900 BCE, and its late version (up to 1300 BCE). Indeed, the language, the names, as well as the data for civilization and religion in the RV indicate a period of acculturation. As Kuiper has shown (1967, 1991) even the hieratic and highly poetical language of the Ṛgveda has been influenced by acculturation and, therefore, by substrates, in the form of loan words, calques or in syntax.

More recently Kuiper (1991: 20) has stressed that "[grammatical innovations].... were only gradually gaining access among the poets of the Rigveda. This would allow but one conclusion, viz. that they had arisen among lower social circles of bilinguals, who were in a steady contact with speakers of Dravidian and other non-Aryan languages (Kuiper 1967:

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[438] See now also Allchin 1995 cf. Mallory's "opportunistic " use

[439] For a more detailed discussion see Witzel 1999, 2001.

[440] Some Indo-European words relating to agriculture have survived in Vedic, such as *sā* 'to sow', *sītā* 'furrow', *kṛṣ* 'to plow', *kṛṣṭi* 'furrow', *yava* 'barley'. But see EWAia on the root *sā*, and cf. Lubotsky 2001.

[441] See Kuiper 1991: 8, 96.

[442] This section has been adapted from Witzel 1999.

96)." The latter is true with regard to agriculture (Kuiper 1991, Southworth 1979, 1995),[443] on the other hand, IA influence on Dravidian is evident with regard to the innovative chariot technology (*akṣa* RV > Ta. *accu* 'axle', *āṇi* RV > Ta. *āṇi* 'nail', Southworth 1979).[444]

Dravidian words are only found in the l*ater* parts of the Ṛgveda (Witzel 1999). The mode of their entry is still open to question. The early Ṛgveda is free of them, this may be due to the Neolithic peoples encountered on the rims of Afghanistan and on the Potwar Plateau (bordered by the Salt Range in the south ). We do not have good evidence for the remnant village cultures of the contemporary Panjab. However, as even the early Ṛgveda includes areas up to the Sarasvatī,[446] this area cannot have been Dravidian speaking either. In the old RV books we miss, as has been stressed (Witzel 1999), all references to trade, merchants, etc. Some residue would should occur. If the Panjab was free of Dravidian speakers (of the Indus Civilization?[447]) the question is how they could enter the area as to have some impact on the later books of the RV. A tentative proposal has been made (Witzel 1999): they moved upriver when Sindh area was abandoned at the end of the Indus period. Importantly, even the area of the new settlements of the Indus people, the Sarasvati-Yamuna area in Haryana and U.P., does not have Dravidian river names (Vipāś, Śutudrī, etc., see Witzel 1999) which excludes Dravidian as the *original* language of the new immigrants and thus of the Indus civilization.[448]

A hint may be provided by the first mentioning of the Śūdras in the late RV (Puruṣa hymn, 10.90). It is often held that certain tribes entered the Vedic class system (*varṇa*) at a low level: they belong to the Vedic population as such but are at the same time excluded from the major rituals (Witzel 1998). Interestingly even at c.325 BCE, Alexander's historians still mention the *Sudroi* (Συδροι) on the border of Panjab and Sindh. It seems that this tribal name has become that of the fourth class. Their inclusion/exclusion clearly points to an additional element, just like the inclusion of the local people as the fourth class, the Panhellenes in Greece.

However, things may not have been *that* simple. It is known from many examples in similar societies that by exception people could rise to the very top of society. We know of several chieftains in the RV that have non-IA names (Bṛbu, Balbūtha, Varo, etc.; Witzel 1999). The same holds for the priestly class, the Brahmins (who too occur with this name first in RV 10.90). Even earlier, a major poet/priest of the loosing Pūru coalition (RV 7.18),

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[443] The words for 'plow' and 'threshing' are of uncertain origin (Witzel 1999): *\*lāṅgala* 'plow,' Dravidian: DEDR 2907, Ta. *ñāncil, nāncil* 'plow' (with the popular etymology *\*ñān-kel/kil/kal* 'earth stone'!); but: Munda: *lāṅgala* 'plough'; Khasi *lynkor* [*lənkor*]; cf. also the cognates in Austronesian and similar words in Afro-Aasiatic.

[444] Southworth even supposes an earlier contact between the Dravidians and the Aryans: 1979: 203, 228 sq., 1990: 222-3, 1995.

[446] And in late sections even up to the Ganga).

[447] The linguistic and ethnic identity of the Indus peoples has been under continuing discussion. See Possehl 2002 for a summary.

[448] The only way out of the dilemma for those who maintain Dravidian as the Indus language or the language of its administrators and merchants, would be to assume that all the peoples mentioned above would have maintained their local non-Dravidian languages and that only the upper class spoke and communicated in Dravidian with each other. See however Witzel 1999 with counterarguments. -- Also the loans in Sindh (Witzel1999 point to no Dravidians even for Sindh. -- If the upper class shad spoken Dravidian, we MUST expect some words such as fortrade etc. in (post-)Ṛgvedic, there are none, see in detail Witzel1999.

is called Kavaṣa "lame", a Dravidian name according to Kuiper (1991). His descendants were important in the development of the Agnicayana ritual (Proferes 1999). In short, various elements can be seen by the time of the late Ṛgveda and the emergence of the Kuru realm.

In sum, mutual linguistic influences in Northern South Asia must have included Munda, Dravidian, Indo-Iranian, Tibeto-Burmese, and some unknown languages (Proto-Burushaski?, the language "X", and others such as Proto-Nahali). All of which indicates that the linguistic (and ethnic) situation in S. Asia of the Vedic period was more complicated and varied than usually admitted.

**NORTHERN SOUTH ASIA   from 1000 - 500 BCE**

| | Gandhara/ Sindh | Panjab | Kurukṣetra | W. Doab | Center | East |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1000** | **Sindh, lower Hakra   abandoned** | | | | | |
| | | | | \| | \| | |
| **1200? / 1000 - 600** | **Neolithic/Chalcolithic** | **(PGW)** | **PGW** **as table ware** | | **PGW** **(BRW)** | |
| **500-** | | **NBP** | **as luxury ware** | **NBP** | **NBP** | **NBP** |

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In the margin, the lower limit for the Vedic period should be discussed as well. It is determined by the appearance of the Northern Black Polished ware (NBP, c.700-300 BCE).[449] This luxury ware quickly spread over all of N. India, around 500 BCE, in the same way as the late Brāhmaṇa and early Upaniṣad texts suddenly exhibit a geographical horizon reaching from Gandhāra in the north-west to Aṅga on the borders of Bengal in the east, from the Himalayas in the North to Vidarbha and Andhra in the South, including the south-eastern tribes of the Puṇḍra, Kaliṅga, etc.

Pāṇini's grammar, if carefully and judiciously used, may add a few facets to this emerging picture. Pāṇini, who probably lived around 350 BCE, was as a subject of the

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[449]Various dates are given:Kennedy 1995: 229has 700-300 BCE.

Persians who conquered the Panjab in c. 530 BCE.[450] He knows of script (*lipi, libi*, both loan-words from Old Persian), of books written by certain authors (*grantha*), and of a "king" (satrap?) of the Kamboja. He knows of nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*), and of a Padakāra (of the Ṛgveda?). He knows of the category of Sūtra, though this does not refer to Vedic texts but to those of the *bhikṣuṇī* and *naṭa* (actors). He presupposes most of Vedic literature,[451] including the YV Saṃhitās (KS, etc.), and maybe even an early Śrautasūtra (MŚS, Hoffmann 1975-6).

Herodotos, who lived about the same time (c. 484-420 BCE) and had access to indirect reports of the Panjab, mentions some nomadic, homeless Indians who do not kill any living beings and subsist on "grass", rather its pulses, that grow freely.[452] In fact, a contemporary of Yājñavalkya had visited northern Panjab (Madra, BĀU 3.3,7). All of this points to a time when certain people like Yājñavalkya had go into homelessness. It must have been common enough by c. 450 BCE, so that Herodotos could hear about it from his Persian collaborators. The absolute dates of the later Brāhmaṇa texts and of the early Upaniṣads have always been related to the lifetime of the Buddha, usually assumed at 563-483 BCE, but probably c. 100 years later.[453] It is notable that there is no mention of towns in the Vedic texts,[454] nor of writing, both of which are first attested in the Pāli texts[455] (generally assigned to the third century BCE), and in Asoka's inscriptions. Similarly, not all of the famous 16 countries of the Pāli canon are attested in the later Vedic texts. Notably, the kingdom of Magadha and the Vajji confederation (*Vṛji* in Pāṇini) still are absent.

Since the Pāli canon thus is culturally and politically later than the Vedic texts and since the date of the Buddha also has to be revised to c. 400 BCE, and the emergence of towns to c. 450 BCE,[456] a *terminus ante quem* of ca. 500 BCE for the early Upaniṣads (like BĀU, ChU), BŚS, for some of the later Brāhmaṇa texts such as VādhB,[457] AB 6-8,[458] and for the late parts of ŚB seems probable, at least at the present state of our knowledge.

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[450] He is from Śālāturā at the confluence of the Kabul River with the Indus; his grammar contains many references to the Northwest.

[451] Thieme 1935.

[452] Herodotos, Hist,. III 99. His description of India is at III 98-105.

[453] See Bechert , *Ind. Taur.* 10, 1992; cf. the summary by O. v. Hinüber 1986, Überblick, § 6, Erdosy 1993.

[454] For the Vedic evidence see Mylius 1960, 1970. However, most of his materials (on *pur*, etc.) are not conclusive in the present context; they deal with (temporary) settlements of smaller size only; the occurrence of the word *nagarin*, e.g. in JB 1.11, 1.247, 257, 2.297, AB 5.30, does not tell us anything about the nature of such settlements in the late Brāhmaṇa period. The occurrences of *nagara* in TĀ 1.11.7, 31.2, GB 1.1.23, SVidhB 2.4.2, 5.6 are in notoriously late parts of the texts.

[455] See v. Hinüber 1989, cf. P. Daffinà 1992, Salomon J*AOS* 1995.

[456] See Erdosy 1988, Allchin 1995 etc.,

[457] Note that BŚS 18.44 could intend the Persians, if contemporaneous (6th cent. BCE), by *Parśu* (see Witzel 1989: n. 334, 323); rather, the ancestors of the Pashto are meant: the form *Parśu* corresponds to modern *Paštu* (*Paxtu*), see Morgenstierne 1927 *s.v.*, Witzel 2000. -- Note that other tribes of similar names are attested in the area of E. Afghanistan (e.g. Gr. *Paruētai*, < *parvata*?; they settle in Areia bordering on the Paropanisos mountains, see Ronco 1968: 111, *ad* 17.3; -- for the period, cf. H. Kulke 1982.

[458] Could refer to emerging kingdoms.

Interestingly, the geographical knowledge of the Pāli texts agrees with the area of NBP ware and with that of the later Brāhmaṇa/early Upaniṣad literature. [459] This underlines, just as many points in the vocabulary and in dialect features, the close relationship of both of languages and texts.[460] Nevertheless, as C. Caillat (1997) has shown, later Vedic and Pāli are separated from each other by a certain period of time. All of the preceding items point to a date *ante quem* of c. 500 BCE for the late Vedic texts. As indicated earlier, the starting point of the period, however, is not so obvious.

§7.1. The Ṛgvedic period

A possible *terminus ad quem* for the RV is provided by the mentioning of Ṛgvedic gods in the well-known Mitanni agreement of 1380 BCE where Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra and Nāsatya (Aśvin) appear.

However, the language of the Indo-Aryan words in the Mitanni documents of N. Iraq/Syria (c. 1400 BCE) is slightly older than the language of the RV (Witzel 2001: §18). The language of the RV should be therefore be dated between c. 1400 and the (presently, lowest date for the) introduction of iron in the Panjab at c. 1000 BCE (Possehl & Gullapalli 1999).

Iron is first mentioned in the Atharvaveda as 'black metal' (*śyāma ayas, śyāma*) while the RV still knows only of *ayas* "copper / bronze".[461] The bulk of RV, barring some easily detectable additions (Oldenberg 1888), must therefore have been composed before the beginning of the first millennium BCE.

This leaves many years for the Ṛgvedic period, -- between the collapse of the late Indus Civilization (c.1300 BCE) and the bulk of the RV. This is long enough to suppose several "waves" of immigration [462] and a gradual acculturation process involving the population of the Greater Panjab, the former Indus and other North Indian civilizations.

However, as the RV represents only some five generations of chieftains and poets, the earlier stages of Indo-Aryan occupation in the Panjab, for example by the Anu-Druhyu and

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[459] Note that *Ajātaśatru* occurs in ŚB and VādhB as a king of the Kāśis but also as one of the Kurus. *Ajātasattu* of Magadha is still unknown in the Veda; compare also king Brahmadatta Prāsenajita of Kosala, JB 1.337: §115 with the Kosala king Pasenadi of the Pāli texts; apparently both names were common in late Vedic as well as at the time of the Buddha (see Witzel 2003a). - For more linguistic correspondences, see Witzel 1989: n. 314, 359 and C. Caillat (1997).

[460] See Witzel 1989: 208 sqq. § 9, cf. n. 314, 359. Rau (1983: 21, n. 2) regards the Pāli texts as much later, because of the development of (material) culture that they indicate; he consequently dates all Vedic texts that precede the Pāli texts much later than usually thought.

[461] See W. Rau 1973, 1983. Meteoric iron was found and occasionally used even during the Bronze Age (Possehl & Gullapalli 1999).

[462] In my opinion, earlier ones of the Yadu-Turvaśa, Anu-Druhyu tribes, and a later one of the combined Pūru-Bharata, who split into two groups upon their arrival in the Afghani borderland. Such alliances are made and dissolved frequently, "on the spur of the moment," see RV 7.18. The Bharatas were the last to move eastwards into the Panjab and into Kurukṣetra, and this is represented especially by RV 3 and 7. (See Witzel, 1995: 307 sqq.).

Yadu-Turvaśa tribes, may precede the comparatively late date of the bulk of the RV text and its post-Mitanni linguistic form by a few centuries. A few of the earliest hymns of the RV could then date from before c. 1250 BCE, its bulk from the period between c. 1250 and c. 1000 BCE.[463]

As has been pointed out above, there are a few possible traces of Ṛgveda-type cultures[464] in Gandhāra that are archaeologically visible, while archaeological remains of Ṛgvedic pastoral cultures can be expected in the alluvium of the lowlands of the Panjab. However, one may expect (proto-)Vedic remnants in the hills, such as in Swat, which is actually mentioned as *Suvāstu* in RV.

Notably, it is in Swat (and also at Pirak in E. Baluchistan) that some of the earliest remnants of the domesticated horse have been found in the subcontinent. In the graves of Katelai (16/15th c. BCE) in Swat, and at Timargarh in the Dir Valley (1500-1000 BCE), horse furniture and cheek pieces have been found. Such finds are a definite *leitfossil,* especially if they were to be found together with the two-wheel chariot. However, until a clear relationships with the steppe influence seen in the BMAC can be established, it is as well possible that the Pirak and Gandhāra finds represent local people, descendants of the bearers of the Northern Neolithic culture, that maybe were still *without* Indo-Aryan language and merely had taken over some pastoral traits,[465] similar to the situation in Mesopotamia with the non-IA Kassite and Mitanni. This is now sustained by the steppe aDNA data from Swat at 1250 BCE. More research, especially in such areas as that along the fossile Hakra river, is necessary to throw light on the actual spread of pastoralism and the various Indo-Aryan type cultures in the post-Harappan Panjab.

The finds at Pirak (E. Baluchistan) and in Swat belong to a whole series of outside influx, dealt with above, into the post-Indus cultures, that spread from Gandhāra to Sindh and Saurashtra and from Gandhara to the Delhi area. It is typical of most of these cultures that they represent a reversal to pre-Indus village patterns, a development called "localization" by J. Shaffer. There is a clear pattern of long-standig continuity, that was only temporarily eclipsed by the Indus Civilization (see above).

However, there also are some discontinuities: for example, how to describe the fact that the eastward movement of the farming population of the Panjab led to the founding a

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[463] Previously (until 1999), I had advocated earlier dates for the RV -- however, they were based on the then available dates for the introduction of iron at c. 1200 BCE, and they will have to be revised accordingly to c. 1000/900 BCE for the introduction of iron in the Panjab area, see Possehl and Gullapalli 1999. In this point we depend entirely on archaeology, and our date for the lower end of the RV will have to shift with archaeological opinion.

[464] Such as, perhaps, the Gandhara grave culture, Cemetery H 32. Note that the Black and Red Ware culture represents the local material culture for much of the area in Indus/post-Indus time, and as such, can underlie much of the Vedic culture of the Panjab and Kurukṣetra until the Painted Gray Ware culture (c. 1200-800 BCE).

[465] Such a suggestion was made by Witzel 1999 for Pirak. As it lies on the hypothetical immigration path of speakers of Dravidian through the Bolan (*bhalānas*) pass. Note that Dravidian has loanwords for agricultural terms that point to early contact with Sumerian, - which would be before c. 2000 BCE, and hardly oversea: if the Indus civilization had been Dravidian speaking, such loans would be late as agriculture had stayed in Baluchistan and Sindh much earlier than the oversea connection with Sumerian. An overland connection between Sindh and Sumerian Mesopotamia also is not likely as the large Elamite territories --at least from Khuzistan (Susa) to Bampur intervenes. Rather, close neighborhood to Sumerian Mesopotamia in the Northern Zagros (?) must be assumed.

large number of new settlements, some of them of considerable size (14 ha), though not as large as the Indus cities (Shaffer 1995, 1999). These small towns are not reflected in the hymns of the RV where we simply do not find any type of permanent settlements. The word usually mistaken for a town, *pur*, signifies a fort built with mud and wooden walls (Rau 1976) or stone (in Bannu). We do hear of non-IA people such as the Kīkaṭa in the Greater Kurukṣetra area, but they are described as not being fit for cattle rearing. Or we hear of some others who are described as worshipping other deities than the Indo-Aryans (*śiśnadeva, mūradeva*).

     A new, close reading of the RV is necessary to account for the dichotomy between the semi-nomadic pastoralists speaking Indo-Aryan and the local, settled agricultural people, especially of the eastern Panjab/Haryana. It may very well be the case that the traditional 'enemies,' the half-mythical Paṇi with their fortresses (originally of the BMAC area), reflect, in mythical language, much of what is actually going on in the contemporary Ṛgvedic Panjab. Notably, the authors of the Ṛgvedic hymns always speak about their wish to enter and conquer the rich Paṇi *pur*s (Elizarenkova 1995), but we do not see evidence in the hymns of trade or much of other friendly interaction.

     Perhaps we have to assume a studious disregard, by Ṛgvedic poetry and ritual, of the population settled in towns, while both groups were actually living next to each other on pastoral and agricultural lands. In general, one can observe that the Ṛgvedic people looked down on the settled populations with the same contempt that nomads habitually have for agriculturalists. This is true at least for those settled people that did not join the Aryan fold. Some of this disdain is clearly expressed when the poets speak of the strange gods and ritual customs of the local people, e.g. in RV 7.104. (Much more of the non-IA substrate becomes visible in early post-Ṛgvedic texts, especially in the Atharvaveda). All of this is due for a re-evaluation.

     In stark contrast, the multitude of non-IA animal and plant names, as well as the terms of agriculture, indicate the importance of the speakers of local languages in the social structure and in the economy of Ṛgvedic India. They must have had a fairly low social position as they were not even able to maintain their local place and river names, the majority of which were supplanted by new Indo-Aryan ones. Their elite or their upper classes, however, joined, especially in the Panjab and in Kurukṣetra, the new 'Aryan' elite early on, as their personal and tribal names and those of places and rivers clearly indicate (Witzel 1999). This is visible in the occurrence of such "culturally Aryan" chieftains (*rājan*) as Bṛbu or Balbūtha and Varo who clearly have non-Indo-Aryan names.

     The close interaction also allowed for some influence of the substrate language(s) even on the form of Sanskrit spoken by the more well educated among the Ṛgvedic people, including the poets (Kuiper 1991, 2000). The class pattern of the new society then established is visible in the late RV (Puruṣa hymn), with its three *ārya* and one non-*ārya* (Śūdra) class.

     By the end of the Ṛgvedic period, after Sudās' victory, the focus of the texts has shifted, from the Panjab to the Kurukṣetra area, precisely where we also find the new concentration of the remnant Indus population. That Sudās chose to settle in this area is, again, a fact that points to close interaction of Indo-Aryan pastoralists and their dependence on the farm products of the local post-Indus agriculturalists. Any other area of the Greater Panjab, excluding the northwestern desert in the Sindh Sagar Doab, might have been as attractive

for pastoralists. However, the Kurukṣetra area was settled, as it hydronomy shows (Witzel 1999), by local agriculturalists including the Kīkaṭas, who could be exploited by the new Indo-Aryan elite.[466] This area excludes the southernmost parts, beyond confluence of the Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī. This area, along the Hakra, saw increasing desertification, resulting in the *vinaśana* "disappearance" of the Sarasvatī, as is attested in the Brāhmaṇas (PB, JB). It probably also excluded the region that was later known as Khāṇḍava forest,[467] an area covered with the typical local thorny, dry brush vegetation. (For further details on this period, see below § 8.1).

The basic question remains, how far we are allowed to compare archaeological cultures with the habitat of tribes or peoples, with the textual references, and with the territory of the languages these people spoke. Direct comparisons between archaeological cultures and "peoples" have often been made quite naively in the past.[468] The issue becomes even more important when we attempt a look into the post-Ṛgvedic period.


§7.2. The post-RV period

In the past few decades a large number of north Indian sites dating from around the turn of the first millennium BCE have been excavated. W. Rau (1983) has compared, in a number of publications, the archaeological evidence with the textual evidence for material culture found in the Vedic texts. However, the Vedic texts and schools had by then not been firmly located (Witzel 1987 sqq.) and dated by internal chronology. Any comparison of texts and archaeology necessarily depends on the exact location of the texts. Only then can the evidence from the texts of certain traits of material culture be compared with archaeological finds. Therefore, such comparisons had to remain somewhat vague in the past.

Only after a new, philologically 'multivariate' comparison can we hope to achieve better results. This would include geographical attribution of the texts, the material culture they represent, evidence for dialects, tribal units, polities, settlement patterns. These can then be compared with archaeological data, and a more definite identification of the archaeologically attested cultures with the texts can be achieved. The present case concerns copper and iron age cultures and certain Vedic texts.

In spite of dozens of excavations in the Haryana-Uttar Pradesh area, the picture for the post-Harappan, Ṛgvedic and Iron age period is not very clear so far. One reason is that so few of the excavations of the past fifty-odd years have actually been published as monographs and that we often have to rely on very brief summaries in *ARE* or even on preliminary newspapers reports. The recent summaries by Allchin et al. (1995), B.B. Lal (1997) and V.N. Misra (2001) help --to some extent-- to fill this gap. The sequence of developments in the area can be summarized as follows:

  1.  OCP

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[466] For exploitation see the later texts (MS,KS,TB with raids.

[467] First mentioned in TĀ 5,1 , see Witzel1987.

[468] For a recent cogent evaluation of the problem see Ehret 1988, cf. Erdosy 1995. The pattern still continues when archaeologists or historians speak of the "OCP people" or the PGW people. But, archeological cultures easily straddle several ethnicities.

**2.**

In the Eastern Panjab, Haryana and the Upper Ganges Doab, the sequence begins with the Chalcolithic Ochre Colored Pottery (OCP, Misra 2001: 512) which also featured, according to more recent excavations, the famous Copper Hoards.

The occurrence in the OCP of baked and unbaked bricks is of some relevance as to their occurrence (*iṣṭakā*, etc,) in local post-Ṛgvedic texts (see below). The agricultural basis was rice, barley and cattle.

Unfortunately, this culture cannot be dated well yet. An early Thermo-Luminescense date point to 2600 and a late one 1200 BCE. However, it seems to end around 1450 BCE and would thus barely fall into the time frame of the RV, especially so as its territory hardly extended to the Yamuna: the Ganges is mentioned twice (in the late hymn 10.75 and as *gāṅgya* "Gangetic" at 6.45.31. (though in a *ṭrca* section

**2. BRW**

In the upper *doab*, the local Black and Red Ware (BRW) culture follows. According to TL dating it lasted from c. 1450-1200 BCE. Some archaeologists hold that the local BRW largely overlaps with OCP, but the picture still is clouded as this culture has been found mostly in minor excavations with small trenches. At Noh, the earliest find of iron in the area is reported (Misra 2001: 619); however, Possehl and Gullapalli 1999) put its introduction at c. 1000/900 BCE.

Depending on the exact dating of iron, our date for the latest parts of the Ṛgveda would shift, however, the area of the BRW is just outside its area, as is that of the OCP. At Atranjikhera a few burnt bricks have been found, which is important in view of the post-Ṛgvedic occurrence of the word for 'brick' (*iṣṭakā* etc.). Apart from this, copper beads and rings, stone blades and beads of semi-precious stones were found.

In sum, we can see, in this area, the antecedents of post-Ṛgvedic material culture in place by c. 1200 BCE, which fits the dates given above for the earliest Vedic text.

**3. PGW**

Both cultures are followed, from c. 1200-800 BCE, by the Painted Gray Ware culture (PGW).[469] The older consensus let this period begin at 950/900 BCE, but these dates come from the middle level of PGW, while a calibrated date from Atranjikhera points to 1100-1200 BCE. However, the summary, by Misra (2001) again limits the PGW to 1000-600 BCE.[470]

Its find places extend from the Indus-Ganges divide through the *doab*, and include the sites of Ropar, Panipat, Bairat, Noh, Purana Qila (Delhi), Hastinapura, Atranjikhera, Ahicchhatra, Kampila, Kanauj. Outlying or stray finds are reported from Lakyopir in Sindh,

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[469] **Allchin 1995: 39 : towards the end of the second millennium;" Sringaverapura has 875-820 BCE.**

[470] However I have the impression that all his dates are very rough, and tied for most pre-Vedic elements before 1450.

Ujjain, a few along the Hakra and Ghaggar valleys (Mughal 1997), at Shravasti, Kausambi, Vaishali, and Lumbini.

The spread towards the east (Kaushambi, Sravasti, Lumbini, Vaishali) has to be studied in connection with the expansion of Kuru orthopraxy eastwards (below). -- Most early settlements ones are found close to the main rivers.

The abandonment of the remaining settlements in Sindh and the lower Hakra at this item (c.1000 BCE) is striking. It has been attributed, however, to climatic change (Allchin 1995: 36)[471] and drying up of the Hakra, due to shift of its Sutlej feeder, Mughal 1997);

Its signature pottery is made on a fast wheel, with a thin slip applied. On it various designs were painted in black (both inside and outside the vessels): they include geometric patterns but also swastikas, and other shapes such as lotuses and other flowers or three-legged *swastika*, see Erdosy 1995.

PGW agriculture included that of rice, wheat, barley, beans, and for the first time in northern India also that of the horse. Its people lived in wattle and daub houses, wattle and daub huts; they are typical for the settlements found in the PGW settlements.

As in previous periods, bricks were known, so far only a few mud brick houses have been identified in the PGW area, in a major permanent settlement center that even has some sewage arrangements.[472] --- See below for detailed comparisons. However, whatever was the origin of these local wares, they were used even by the new Indo-Aryan elite.[473]

§ 7.2.1. Geography

With respect to the Vedic texts, it is important to note that the find spots of the Painted Gray Ware culture cover the geographical area of easternmost Panjab, Kurukṣetra and the country east of it (Haryana, U.P.) up to Kausambi and Allahabad; there also is a significant extension, south of the Yamunā along the Chambal river and in Malwa.

The relation of these archaeological data with those of the texts is open to question, just as it is for the Ṛgveda. It has long been assumed, also by me, (Witzel 1989-1999) that the post-Ṛgvedic period is coterminous with the Painted Gray Ware culture of U.P. and Haryana, in other words the area of the Kuru and Pañcāla peoples.

Indeed, PGW shares a geographical extension with that represented, in text-internal details, by the early post-Ṛgvedic texts of the early Middle Vedic period. These were composed from Eastern Panjab to the confluence of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā, and from the Himalayas to the outskirts of the Vindhyas (Witzel 1987). The early Middle Vedic texts, i.e. those of the linguistic level two and three, composed in Mantra language and in YV Saṃhitā prose, include the Atharvaveda, Sāmaveda, Ṛgveda Khila, and the Black Yajurveda Samhitās (MS, KS, TS).

[471] Note that at the same time the Jorwe settlement in Maharastra was abandoned (Allchin 1995:36).
[472] Allchin 1995.
[473] As these persons did not fashion such pottery themselves; actually, it was forbidden to use wheel-thrown pottery, made by local (low class) specialists, in ritual. Se above , Rau 1983.

Even the next level of texts, that of the earlier Brāhmaṇas, is still limited to the Kuru-Pañcāla area: these texts still know only the area from E. Panjab to Allahabad.[474] It is only the late Brāhmaṇas, such as the ŚB, that know of more eastern lands, and they were in part even composed there (Mylius 1969, Witzel 1987). This kind of statement is of course only possible after a localization of these texts had been made. The general descriptions of the homeland of the post-Ṛgvedic texts usually met with just say "Northern India," and are too vague.[475] The early post-Ṛgvedic area thus includes E. Panjab, Kurukṣetra, Haryana, and W. Uttar Pradesh up to Allahabad, but it still excludes Benares (Kāśi).[476]

This is precisely the area that is covered by PGW culture,[477] and it is characterized by a two and, sometimes, a three-level[478] distribution of settlements. We find comparatively large settlements with an area of 10 ha (Bahawalpur 14 ha), while the middle level has 4 ha, and the small ones less than 2-3 ha.[479] That means we have simple villages and smaller market-like settlements as well as a few larger ones that seem to have been regional centers and functioned as centers of commerce and certainly also of political power,[480] contrast Allchin 1995.

It is remarkable that the PGW culture did not really spread beyond the area just mentioned.[481] Notably, the areas east of it have their own, distinct, Neolithic/Chalcolithic cultures (see above 7.1) with only a sparse, two-level settlement pattern. To my mind, the overlap of the geographical area of PGW and Middle Vedic texts is too great to be accidental.

§ 7.2.2 Settlements and texts

Even the settlement pattern mentioned in the texts agrees with that found archaeologically on the ground. According to the Vedic texts we find that only the areas along the rivers had

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[474] See Witzel 1987: 176 sqq.; the only exception is ŚS, with Aṅga (on the borders of Bengal), which replaces Kāśi of PS.

[475] Unfortunately, this still is common in present day scholarship.

[476] Kāśi is only included in the ŚS version, at 5.22.

[477] The outcome indicates several centers of innovation which happen to coincide with those of the political centers/tribal chiefdoms, - and with those of archaeologically attested cultures, at least as far as we know them at this moment.- Cf. also Rau (1983:48) who, on other grounds, came to a similar conclusion: "The so-called... [OCP]... agrees best, according to the area of spread, technical condition, and approximate age, with the pottery described in the Vedic texts" (my transl.). -- Shaffer (1984: 84 sq.) is of the opinion that his "recent archaeological research in Eastern Panjab (Shaffer, 1981) substantiates objections to the PGW = Aryan correlation." The point is, however, as has been mentioned above, that 'pottery alone' cannot decide the question: *all aspects* of this civilization (including the horse, iron, the absence of mud-brick architecture, etc. -- quoted by Shaffer himself, p. 84) have to be taken into account.

[478] For calibrated radio carbon dates of such settlements, see Erdosy 1988.

[479] Later on, there is a four level stage and the total area of the settlements is much larger: 50 - 10 - 6 - 3 ha.

[480] See the surveys by Erdosy (1988) in the lower *doāb* of the Kausambi area.

[481] There are only some stray finds, often non-typical or degenerated, of PGW at Shravasti and further east, even at Lumbini in S. Nepal. --- For the eastern movement of Vedic civilization (not tribes), the summary by Oldenberg 1882: 391-411, still is very valuable.

been settled. Even in late-redacted texts, one should recite the name of the river one lives on during the Gṛhya ceremony of name-giving.[482] This agrees exactly with the evidence from a survey of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā *doāb*: the settlements are found along the rivers and the area between the rivers was settled only much later (Erdosy 1888).

Further, an early Brāhmaṇa text (AB 3.44) says that the west has long stretches of "wildernesses"[483] (*araṇya*), that is land not used for agriculture or intensive pasture, while the settlements in the east are more "numerous". This agrees with the settlement pattern of the Upper Gaṅgā-Yamunā *doāb*, where the distance between settlements is only c. 7 km, while the west is much more sparsely settled, except for such areas where enough water was found, such as in the ancient river bed of the Sarasvatī (Ghaggar).[484] The lower Hakra area, Sindh and even the area of the Jorwe culture (above, §7.2) were largely abandoned about 1000 BCE (Allchin 1995: 36).

Much of this is merely a function of the climate. The half-savanna[485] of the Upper *doāb* in the east is better suitable for mixed pastoralism and agriculture than the drier west, with its thorny brushes and dry woods in Kurukṣetra and Eastern Panjab, where the Sarasvatī dries up and is lost in the desert (PB 25.10.5, 25.13.4; JB 2.297-298: §156 ). However, it is important to note that this piece of textual information comes from a text level removed by two from the Mantra period.[486] The stratigraphy of the texts, however, is as important as the archaeological one. In the texts of level 2 and 3 we find sentences indicating that the rivers flow most copiously either eastwards or westwards (KS), -- referring to the eastern Panjab and the Uttar Pradesh rivers. The statement in AB 3.44 about the "long" wildernesses in the west thus may refer to a comparatively late period when most of the Sarasvatī already had dried up (Mughal 1997).

However, just as for the late RV, it is not clear yet in how far the settled agricultural population of the area, in evidence in its PGW remains, is actually reflected in the texts, and how much interaction there was between them and the speakers of Indo-Aryan (Vedic). Interestingly this question has not even been put (see now Witzel 2003/2010) as it was generally assumed that the PGW reflects a later wave of "the Aryans" (thus Misra 2001: 520, Witzel 1989).

The text hardly, if ever, talk about the local, PGW area settlements, and a term for 'village' or 'town' appears only at the end of the period (*nagara,* JB). It must be underlined that the word *grāma* of the Mantra/YV Saṃhitā period and even of the Brāhmaṇas do not refer to villages as we imagine them now. Rather, a *grāma* was, as even Patañjali (150 BCE) still remembers, a 'wagon train' (Rau 1997), that is a trek that was either on the move (*yoga*) or at rest (*kṣema*). It temporarily rested for two days during transhumance (Rau 1996,

[482] See Witzel 1987: 205 sqq. -- usually the Ganges and the Jumna are mentioned. -- For the settlement pattern in the Doāb and on the historical climate and flora see G. Erdosy, Deforestation in pre- and protohistoric South Asia (forthc.).

[483] Oldenberg 1915, cf. Sprockhoff 1981, 1984.

[484] Where we find only a few PGW time settlements, see Mughal 1997; -- See above,on the bed of the Sarasvatī, and cf. Agrawal & Pande 1988: 89.

[485] On the historical climate and flora see G. Erdosy, Deforestation in pre- and protohistoric South Asia (forthc.).

[486] The older Brāhmaṇas belong to level 4 of the Vedic language while the Mantra texts come from level 2.

Cyavana) or it 'settled' for a shorter or longer period on favorable pastoral land. This was required to be suitable for grazing the cattle and the other animals (horses, sheep, goats, even boars!) of the *grāma* in question. A contemporary Kṣatriya was not desirous of possessing villages or 'towns' but of gr*āmas,* he was, as the standard term has it, a *grāmakāmin* (Kulke 1991).

The exact nature of the interaction between the people of the fixed PGW settlements and the semi-pastoralist Vedic people is thus not clear. One cannot expect that the local Kṣatriyas would have ruthlessly exploited the settlements found in their own backyard: one does not kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. Instead, we hear of expeditions to the east to rob grain.[487] However, between the local agriculturalists and the pastoral Vedic tribes a relationship of mutual exchange, seen already in the Ṛgvedic period, must have continued to exist. Nevertheless, one gets the impression that the PGW settlements were regarded as 'raw material' fit for exploitation. The relationship between socially higher and lower groups as is vividly expressed by the concept of *attṛ/ādya* "devourer/devoured" (W. Rau 1957). The settled population was largely kept apart from 'proper society' with its three classes of Ārya.

These are questions that have not yet been recognized sufficiently by archaeologists or Vedic specialists. Just as for the RV, a closer reading of the textual evidence, in comparison with the archaeological evidence, is in order. Nevertheless, it is clear that both texts and archaeology agree as far as material culture is concerned: there are finds of the newly introduced horses, iron, and the new cereals (rice, millet), and at least originally, little stratification of settlements.

§ 7.2.3 Material culture: pottery

However, the general statement made above, that archaeologically attested pottery alone does not allow to distinguish the tribes or peoples that used it, is not quite valid here. It is true that pottery, as described in the Vedic texts, does not provide an adequate base for comparison. Vedic vessels used in ritual could not be made by professional potters as these did not belong to the three higher (*ārya*) classes. Instead, such vessels were handmade in Neolithic fashion or even built up of several sausage-like rings (i.e. the Pravargya *mahāvīra* vessel).[488] Such ritual implements had to be made by the Brahmins themselves, thus by archetypal non-specialists.[489] It is unlikely that such simple and unprofessionally made vessels attract special attention of archaeologists,[490] even if indeed found. Typically, one would expect to find Vedic vessels *outside* the settlements, on a specially delineated offering ground, near water. Such vessels will do not fit the local pattern but rather look like the first attempt of a young artisan apprentice. Also, the actual shape of such ritual vessels remains

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[487] The Kurus move *eastwards* or *southwards* victoriously (KS,MS) while TB 1.8.4.1 speaks about the raiding expeditions of the Kuru-Pañcālas *into the east* (no longer practiced by the time of ŚB 5.5.2.3-5), see Heesterman 1985, Witzel 1987, 1997.

[488] Such primitive vessels are indeed found outside the Vedic area in the NE; note also that they continue to be made until today in the Hinduskush; such vessels are used for simple storage.

[489] Note that such simple hand-made pottery is still being made in parts of the Hindukush for everyday use.

[490] That is unlike they are the only types of vessels, as in the NE.

typically stable -- actually, until today. Both the well-known archaism of ritual implements as well as the class system thus conspire to deprive us (outside of TL dating) of one of the most important, well preserved and historically useful parts of archaeological materials.[491]

In sum, true "Vedic" pottery cannot be expected to be found easily and when this should indeed happen, the style of ritual pottery would not fit the one of the dominant Indus, post-Indus, OCP, BRW, PGW pottery that was professionally produced by local potters. Such local pottery preceded the arrival of speakers of Indo-Aryan in the, Panjab and in the Kuruksetra-U.P. area, and it was continued locally after their settlement, either by the potters that joined the Aryan treks or by the acculturation and Aryanization of local groups in the area. In many or most cases, pottery alone is not sufficient to trace IA occupation and it certainly cannot be used as sole indicator of an Indo-Aryan settlement.

However, just as with Cemetery H pottery, there is one redeeming factor. The artifacts of the Painted Gray Ware are the table ware of the wealthier groups in society (though it was not yet the pure luxury ware like the NBP vessels that were actually shipped all across northern India). Among the Vedic people 'settled' in the PGW area, it was the Kṣatriyas as well as the wealthier Brahmins and Vaiśyas that must have used this fine table ware. If, as indicated, the geographical extent of PGW agrees with the settlement area attested in the Middle Vedic texts and with the polities and tribes described by the same texts, this overlap can be taken as a clear indication of identity.

Interestingly, the motifs found on the vessels of PGW vary considerably in the various, extensive areas of this culture. It seems that the western area, in Kurukṣetra and along the Yamunā, has motifs that differ from those on the vessels found in Uttar Pradesh proper, along the Ganges and the lower Yamunā. The differences in distribution of these motifs agree with the tribal boundary between the Kuru and the Pañcāla tribes. Typical pottery designs include a three-legged *svastika*, i.e. they are signs or emblems of the Kuru and the Pañcāla.[492] Later on, similar designs are found on the punch marked coins where the symbols differ, typically, per tribe.

More research is necessary to clarify this interesting aspect of PGW artifacts.

§ 7.2.4. Material culture: iron, houses, agriculture

Other traits of material culture, as gleaned from the texts and from excavations, agree with each other as well. This comparison is now facilitated by W. Rau's investigations (1983). There is early evidence for *ayas* (W. Rau's "*Nutzmetall*"), i.e. copper, while bronze is unusual in early India. Obviously, *ayas* is not, as still frequently translated, "iron." As has been

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[491] W. Rau (1974, 1983:41 sq.) is more optimistic: he thinks that it is possible to compare sacral pottery with everyday ceramic objects, which were more modern (thrown on a wheel) but regarded as demonic (*asura*-like).

[492] Interestingly there are some antecedents with Pirak designs (Meadow, oral comm. 1991), which should be compared with my suggestion (1999) of amalgamation elements from the southern Indus area (Dravidian) and the northern one (Indo-Aryan/Para-Munda) in the emerging Kuru realm. The three-legged *svastika* (incidentally, also found in many Celtic designs) may reflect the traditional three classes of Indo-Aryan (and Indo-European) society: Brahmins, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya. Interestingly, these designs are found on the luxury pottery of the PGW, expressing the underlying ideology.

indicated, iron is found from Mantra time texts onwards as "black metal" (*śyāma ayas,* Rau 1976.)[493]

The early texts speak only of rather flimsy, easily removable and rebuildable huts.[494] They were more like *yurt*s, but constructed with the aid of bamboo poles. This was absolutely necessary as one still moved about a lot, along with the cattle herds, especially outside the growing season and the monsoon. As has been pointed out above, in the Middle Vedic period *grāma* did not yet mean "village" but "trek, wagon train." There also existed wattle and daub huts but they are typical for the settlements found in the PGW area. While bricks were known, there were not used, according to the texts, for house building. Indeed, as has been pointed out above, so far only a few mud brick houses have been identified in the PGW area, at a major permanent settlement center that even has some sewage arrangements.[495]

Cultivation of rice, barley, wheat, etc. ("the seven grains", Rau 1997) was common, again both according to archaeology and texts. More important, however, was pastoralism: cattle, horse, sheep, goats ("the five animals").[496]

In sum, what archaeology tells us about the rest of the material culture agrees with the texts. This still was a fairly simple material culture with small settlements of wattle and daub huts that were easily removable, and with horse drawn chariots (*ratha*) and heavy, oxen drawn wagons (*anas*), a mixed agricultural/pastoral economy with semi-nomadic traits.[497]

## § 7.2.5 Settlement levels and politics

The few major settlement centers, especially in the Kuru area, might reflect contemporary political centers. The level of these major settlements seems to substantiate several enigmatic notices in the YV Saṃhitās and in the Brāhmaṇas that mention a threefold division of power (*rāṣṭra*) among the Kuru [498] and a sixfold (*rājan*) [499] in the much larger Pañcāla

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[493] Cf. Chakrabarti 1976 (not always correct as far as the Veda is concerned), Chakrabarti 1992, Possehl & Gullapalli 1999, Agrawal & Kharakwal (forthc.).

[494] For a modern picture of a similar 'house' (near Bamiyan, Afghanistan) see Ligabue & Salvatori 1984: ill. 16. For literature on Vedic houses, see in general Rau 1983, with Renou 1939

[495] Allchin 1995.

[496] According to the standard sacrificial listings; this includes the occasional sacrifice of humans. -- Non-domestic animals are: bos gavaeus, bos gaurus, camel, VādhB ; note that (wild) pigs/boars (*sūkara, varāha*, known since RV) are also mentioned occasionally, for example at MS 3.14.21 (a boar "follows the cows").

[497] Thapar 1984 admits nomadic character only for the RV period, and she tends to regard all the following periods (Mantra / YV Saṃhitā / Brāhmaṇa period) already as "late Vedic" and sedentary. See however, Rau 1957: 57 on villages and (late!) land grants in the Vedic period, and in detail Rau 1997.

[498] JB 3.196: §196 *tredhā Bharateṣu rāṣṭram āsīt. Vaitahavyeṣu tṛtīyam, Mitravatsu tṛtīyam, Kṛtaveśe tṛtīyam. so 'kāmayata Kṛtaveśo ha tv: ime dve rāṣṭre ekadhā rāṣṭraṃ syād iti. ... teneme dve rāṣṭre ha tvāikadhā rāṣṭram abhavat*; cf. above.

[499] This should end all speculation that the name of the Pañcāla is somehow linked to the number "five" -- that is inluding the unlikely possibility of an earlier state of affairs with 5 sub-units, to which a dominant(?) sixth might have been added; all of which is against the testimony of the texts, (see above n. 49).

territory.[500] The latter originally had a threefold one as well, with three 'faces' or 'arrays' (*anīka*), just like the Kuru. (This reminds of the pottery with three-legged svastikas).

One may understand these data either as indicating the three or six territorial divisions of the Kuru and Pañcāla areas or, rather, as reflecting the original smaller tribal origins of the various groups that coalesced in forming the Kuru and in the Pañcāla super-tribes. Some of the original tribes are indeed mentioned even in the Brāhmaṇas.[501] The Kuru are reported[502] to include the Vaitahavya, Mitravat (Sṛñjaya), and obviously also the Bharata(-Tṛtsu), who seem to be represented by Kṛtaveśa in one JB passage.[503] The Pañcāla include the ancient Krivi[504] and Vibhindu, perhaps also the Vaśa in the lower Doāb, and maybe the enigmatic Ikṣvāku[505] on their eastern fringes.

However, the general uniformity of Vedic culture agrees well with the geographical spread of the Kuru-Pañcāla hegemony, as indicated by the Middle Vedic texts of the Mantra and YV Saṃhitā period.

## 7.2.5. Dialects and politics

This notwithstanding, the subdivisions seen in the Vedic dialects, in tribal boundaries and in the distribution of motifs on PGW pottery agree with each other. It has been pointed out above (§ 5) that there were three dialect centers coinciding more or less with the territory of the Kurus, Pañcālas and (Kosala-)Videhas. This coincidence should not surprise. It is well known from dialect studies that major and minor political boundaries often agree with dialect boundaries. It is therefore not accidental that the territory of the various Vedic dialects covers that of the political units, like that of the Kurus, etc. In fact, the congruence

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[500] See above n. 48-50; JB 3.156 *tvatvādṛśāḥ ṣaḍ rājānaḥ Pañcāleṣu vedyā iti*. (Rau 1957: 69), where, *rājan* signifies the six kinglets of the six Pañcāla sub-tribes. -- Note that even the supreme chieftains are imply called *rājan* with the Kuru-Pañcāla (AB 8.14), but note also *viśvarāj, sarvarāj, ekarāj* (with the Śvikna) JB 2.275 : Caland p. 301, etc. The oldest list is that of MS 1.2.10: *samrāj, svarāj, virāj, sattrarāj, viśvarāj* while KS 2.11 has *rāj*, etc. and VS adds *janarāj* (see Witzel 1987: 183). -- In contrast to JB, the older text, KS 30.2: 183.17, speaks only of a threefold division: *tryanīkam asya prajā bhavatīti. tataḥ Pañcālās tredhābhavan* "three 'faces' (chiefs = *pramukha*) has his progeny. Therefore the Pañcālas became threefold (split into three groups with three chiefs, *anīka*)"

[501] Note that the vestige of such subdivisions persisted well into the historical period, e.g. that the Pañcāla are said to have two capitals, and note the Mbh.'s typical split between the Kaurava : Pāṇḍava subgroups.

[502] See above, n. 48-50.

[503] Only attested at this instance, JB 3.196; theoretically, he could also be the chieftain of the immigrant Salvas who ousted the Bhārata/Pārikṣita lineage of the Kurus: ŚŚS 15.16.11-12 (where the ousted king of the Kuru, however, is called Vṛddhadyumna). BĀU 3 mentions the disappearance of the Pārikṣita lineage of the Kurus.

[504] Attested already in the RV, 8.20.24, 8.22.12, etc.; see the discussion in Vedic Index I,198.

[505] See further below on this group; an Ikṣvāku is found once in the RV; later on they are a substandard Kṣatriya group on the eastern fringes of the Kuru orthopraxy area; however, by the time of the Buddha it was already prestigious to claim the Ikṣvāku lineage as one's ancestors; this applies both for the Buddha as well as the Rāma of the Rāmāyaṇa.

of tribal and dialect territory and the spread of certain dialect peculiarities over time (as seen in subsequent levels of Vedic texts, Witzel 1989), agrees well with the political developments.

The historical facts, as far as they can be gleaned from the texts, indicate the earliest center of political power in the west, in Kurukṣetra itself. Ever since the late RV, it has been the "holy land" of the Brahmins. This is the place where even the gods are said to sacrifice all of the time (*devayajana*), -- and for a good reason: here is the "center of Heaven and the Earth."[506] It was the political center of the Bharata/Kuru tribe,[507] at Āsandīvant[508] and Rohitakakūla,[509] which dominated the late Ṛgvedic and the post-Ṛgvedic period.[510]

However, according to the Vedic texts the Kuru domination was shattered later on by the immigration into and conquest of Kurukṣetra by the Salva tribe.[511] This is precisely what archaeology seems to indicates as well. The Kurukṣetra area was subsequently abandoned for a long time.[512] The Kuru realm therefore was succeeded as the main political and cultural force[513] by the Pañcāla kingdom and this, in turn, was then superseded in importance by the emerging larger kingdoms of the Kosala, Videha (viz. the Vṛji/Vajji confederation), and in the end, by imperial Magadha.[514]

## § 7.2.6. Economy and society

A few remarks on the general economic situation are in order, that is as far as it can be made out from the texts.[515] As has been pointed out above, the shift of the pastoral Bharata/Kuru from the Panjab to the Kurukṣetra area corresponds precisely with the move and new concentration of the remnant Indus population into this area (Shaffer 1995,1999).

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[506] JUB 4.26.12, and the unpublished VādhPiS, see Witzel 1984: 223, with n. 74.

[507] For details, cf. Witzel 1984, cf. 1995: 307 sqq.

[508] Note the meaning of this geographical term 'having a/the throne'; that of the Bhāratas is described at ŚB 5.4.4.1; at ŚB 13.5.4.2 it is the place where Janamejaya Pārikṣita offered an Aśvamedha, cf. also AB 8.21.

[509] PB 14.3.12, cf. JB 3.183 etc.

[510] Some further speculation may be added, if the other copper hoard cultures in the South are taken into account: do they represent the earliest forays of Indo-Aryan speakers (or of tribes closely related to them in culture, if not in language!), which petered out, without much effect? (cf. Falk 1994). Only after the consolidation of Indo-Aryan culture in the Kuru-Pañcāla area did the spread southwards start again in earnest, as MS 4.7.9: 104.14 indicates and as ŚB 2.3.22 still asserts: Naḍa Naiṣadha (*sic*) is said to carry Yama (death) (further) South, day by day.

[511] See on the Salva, and cf. for the possiblity of a Balhika (Bactrian) immigration and take-over of the Kuru realm, by Balhika Prātipīya ŚB 12.9.3.3. The Mbh. knows of Balhika/Bahlika in the Panjab (Witzel 1980).

[512] Francfort 1985: 112, 1985, 1989, Moghul 1997.

[513] It is remembered in the Pāli texts, notably in *the Kurudhamma Jātaka* (No. 276), also in its old verse portion, as a realm of peace and *dharma* under the Kuru King Dhanaṃjaya Koravya of Indapatta, and of the Yudhisthira-gotta, expressively called Kuru 'righteousness'. E. Cowell, & W. Rouse, III:251-260.

[514] This is, more or less, also what H. Oldenberg extracted, in the introduction to his book on the *Buddha*,1882: 391-411.

[515] In general, see Rau 1957: 20 sqq; however, note that the passages quoted by him will have to be subdivided into those belonging to the various post-Ṛgvedic periods outlined above.

The overlap again points to a close interaction of Indo-Aryan pastoralists and their dependence on the farm products of the local post-Indus agriculturalists. This is indeed visible in the vocabulary of the Ṛgveda and the subsequent texts -- even if not all the populations of the Panjab and Kurukṣetra were within the orbit of the Vedic authors.

Even a brief look at the late RV confirms the increasing importance of agricultural terms borrowed from the local population (Kuiper 1955). Yet, the use of rice,[516] wheat, millet is not yet seen in the conservative poetic language and the equally conservative ritual of the Ṛgvedic period.[517] It is however clear that such food items belonged to the local diet. In general, it appears that the economy was still mainly centered on pastoralism, along with some small-scale agriculture.

During the ensuing periods of the Mantra language and YV Saṃhitā prose, this situation continues. As the texts are more specific than the poetry of the Ṛgveda, a much clearer picture can be obtained. Next to pastoralism and agriculture, even the collection of fruits, herbs and wild grains was still prominent, and the food supply was further augmented by hunting and fishing[518] (Rau 1957: 21-27). Several types of artisans, always from the *śūdra* class,[519] and a simple form of trade, mostly bartering, are also attested.

Much of the social reality and economy are depicted in detail by the so-called wish offerings of the Śrautasūtras (both the 'vegetarian' *kāmyeṣṭi*, and the corresponding animal offerings, the *kāmyāḥ paśavaḥ*). Both are Atharva-like intrusions in the scheme of the Śrauta ritual as they directly address the wishes of the sponsor of the ritual (*yajamāna*).[520] Therefore they are a perfect indicator of the major concerns of the Mantra and Saṃhitā periods. As may be expected, they are centered around wishes for the family, the wellbeing of the clan, and the desire for social status.

A quick overview of these rites may be subdivided into a few major categories. There are rituals (1) for personal health and long life and for children (especially sons); (2) for rain, cattle and enough food (both of which depend on the unpredictable amount of monsoon rain!);[521] (3) for social position and status: against rumors and ostracism, against cheating and oath breakers; for personal power and image, for everlasting fame; for a secure position among one's relatives (*sajāta*) and against one's rivals (*bhrātṛvya*), as to become the best among one's relatives, *śreṣṭhaḥ svānam* (Zimmer 1995). (4) Of greatest interest are the rituals intended for social and political advancement: for averting damage to one's power; for gaining a secure position via-à-vis the Vaiśyas; for becoming, at least, the owner of a wagon train (*grāma*), seen in the *grāmakāma* offering (Kulke 1991); for moving into others' territory; for obtaining enough 'fields' (*kṣetra*). (5) Finally, there are some special royal

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[516] Perhaps with the exception of *odana* in the clearly non-IA, localized version of the Vala myth pointed out by Kuiper (1950, 1991).

[517] Other aspects of local influence also increase, such as the use of popular words in *-l-;@e* changes in ritual in the late Ṛgvedic period, see Proferes 1999.

[518] Mostly carried out by local tribes, as their names indicate, see Rau 1957: 24, Witzel 1999.

[519] Witzel 1999; many of them first appear in the lists of the horse sacrifice (Aśvamedha ritual).

[520] Many of their concerns also occur in the framework of the major Śrauta rituals and the Brāhmaṇa style texts that explain them; however, interspersed with general matter: they are not the major concern, say, of a Soma ritual.

[521] Cf. Rau 1957: 31 on draught and hunger, the fear of which is frequently expressed in the texts.

rituals: for success in battle and for a return with bounty; for ruling the realm, or regaining one's lost 'kingdom', etc.[522]

       There is little differentiation in the number and nature of these 'wish offerings' between the three major Vedic schools, the KS (northern Kuru), MS (southern Kuru) and TS (Pañcāla). Apparently the Vedic nobility of the whole area, from the Ravi up to Kausambi, and from the Himalayas to the Chambal river, seems to have been rather uniform in its desires, aims and goals.

       In addition, historical progression is not seen. Many of these wishes are already found in the Mantras of the immediate post-Ṛgvedic period, thus that of the emerging Kuru realm. Again, the wishes typically include: long life, sons, rain, food, cattle, social status, a wagon train, success in battle, retaining a chieftainship. In short, the 'wish offerings' reflect the social reality of a mainly pastoral people[523] and their interaction with local agriculturists, as described in the preceding sections.

## § 7.2.7. Again: Archeology and Texts

In sum, in spite of some of the difficulties described above, the evidence available for the identification of the producers of the PGW with certain elements of the Middle Vedic civilization is too striking to be accidental. I have therefore proposed[524] to identify the archaeological evidence of PGW with that of the YV Saṃhitā expository prose and of the early Brāhmaṇas, such as AB 1-5.

       The level preceding PGW (1200-800 BCE) is that of BRW and, still earlier, that of the copper hoard culture, that is frequently found together with OCP. The BRW could correspond, if Vedic at all, with a still earlier level of Vedic: the one of the Mantra period. These texts are the first that mention iron at all, the AV first speaks of the "black metal".[525] The date of the introduction of iron corresponds, again, with the relative chronology of the Vedic texts. The post-Harappan OCP/BRW cultures in this area overlap with the beginnings of the Vedic "Dark Period" and with the Mantra period in general.

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[522] Rau 1957: 24 gives this order: cattle, sons, health, long life, and "much less frequently" a place in heaven.

[523] The number of offerings made concerning pastoralism are much larger than those concerning agriculture, Rau 1957: 20.

[524] See Witzel 1989: 246 sqq.

[525] See Witzel 1980. - However, the date proposed by W. Rau (1983: 19) for the beginning of the Vedic period as *later* than 1000 BCE cannot be sustained. The introduction of iron alone (which is not yet mentioned in RV) but appears in India already in the 12th cent. BCE (at Hallur). Therefore, it is quite fittingly first mentioned in the second oldest Vedic text in AVŚ 11.3.7 = PS 15.53.12, AVŚ 9.5.4 = PS 16.97.3. Both hymns belong to the second layer of AV texts, which was composed before the late Saṃhitā period; the stanzas mentioning iron belong to the core of the AV, as they occur in sections that form the core of both hymns in both recensions. (Though both hymns in question have additions to this core, the mentioning of iron is not found in these additions; for details see Witzel 1997 § 2.5 with n. 138-139). -- For iron tools see, Vibha Tripathi 1990, Possehl & Gullapalli 1999.

If these identifications would be further confirmed by future research, this would be of major importance for an absolute dating of the texts (see below). It also would very much aid the further interpretation by archaeologists of these cultures.

§ 7.4. Overview of the period

In the sequel, I follow R. and B. Allchin and others.[526] A simplified table of archaeological data would look like this. (OCP = Ochre Colored Pottery, BRW = Black and Red Ware, PGW = Painted Gray Ware, NBP =Northern Black Polished Ware).

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**NORTHERN SOUTH ASIA   from 6000 BCE- 500 BCE**

| | Gandhara/ Sindh | Panjab | Kurukşetra | W. Doab | Center | East |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6000- | Spread of early agricultural communities (Mehrgarh) | | | | | |
| 2400 | [Northern steppe elements enter the BMAC] | | | | | |
| 2500-1900 | N. Neolithic (Kashmir, Swat, Potwar, Derajat) | N. Neolithic | | | | |
| 3600-1500 | | | | Ahar culture in E. Rajasthan | | |

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| | Gandhara/ Sindh | Panjab | Kurukşetra | W. Doab | Center | East |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2600 | | | ---Indus  civilization--- | | |
| | \| | | | OCP | OCP / Mesolithic -2000 | |
| 1900 | BMAC elements in late Indus civ. (Harappa,etc.); Sack of Baluchistan (2000), Mehrgarh VII (2000) | | | & Copper Hoards (- 1450) \| | \| | |

---

| | Gandhara/ Sindh | Panjab | Kurukşetra | W. Doab | Center | East |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1900- | | "Post- Harappan" Sindh, most of Panjab evacuated | immigration of Indus popu-lations | | | |
| | (re-)emergence of local traditions | | | OCP \| | OCP \| | |

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

| | Gandhara/ Sindh | Panjab | Kurukşetra | W. Doab | Center | East |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1750 | Intrusion of new elements: Pirak (horse) Jhukar | Cemetery H | Banawali/ Mitathal | Hulas | | |

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[526] B. and R. Allchin 1982, Fairservis 1975, R. Allchin 1995.

```
                                    Bhagwanpura date
        Gandhara Grave                              --Malwa Culture--
        Culture (horse) ---                         (1700- 1450, spreading
            |                                          south to Maharasthra)
                                            |
1500                                        OCP     Neolithic/Chalcolithic
1450                                        BRW          (BRW)
                                            -1200          |
1000    Sindh, lower Hakra abandoned        (late Bhagwan-
                                            pura)
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
                                            |          |
1200? / 1000 -        (PGW)     PGW                  PGW
        Neolithic/Chalcolithic
 600                            as table ware         (BRW)


500-                  NBP                NBP         NBP         NBP
                                as luxury ware
_____
```

  If the comparisons made above are correct, we arrive at the following more detailed table, largely taken over from: Witzel 1989.

```
_____

        W E S T         C E N T E R     |    E A S T
_____|_____
1900-                                   |
        Late Harappan                   |
        OCP: Ochre colored / and        |
        various smaller                 |   (Neolithic)
        cultures (Gray Ware,
1500     Gandhāra grave culture,
        etc.)
            (no iron)        (1250 Kausambi:
                                OCP
_____
1200        BRW: Black & Red ware       |
    KURU        (with iron!)             |
                                         |
  1st center    Mantras, AV, etc.        |   (chalcolithic)
_____
1000-       PGW: Painted Gray Ware      900- Black & Red
            MS,KS                           Ware
                PAåCĀLA
                                          (& Gray Ware)
```

```
            2nd center                (iron)
              TS

                                   (Kausambi
                                    750 BCE)
                                                                 No PGW!


                        (Kosala- )    -VIDEHA
                           ŚBK        3rd center
                                        ŚBM


-500 BCE                               -500 BCE
```
_____

**Second urbanization in the Gangetic valley**

**400- BCE      NBP: Northern Black Polished Ware spreads over
                N.India**

The establishment of an absolute chronology correlated with archaeology, would allow us, for the first time, to date the several layers of Vedic texts that so far have received only very general dates in terms of relative chronology.

The earliest periods of Indian history would look like this, then:

_____

```
         |
Panjab |       W E S T        | C E N T E R  |    E A S T
         |                    |              |      &
         |                    |              |    South

_____|_____|_____|_____
-1900       Late Harappan /      |
            OCP: Ocre Colored Ware |
               (some rice)       |              |
            and various smaller  |              | (Neolithic)
            cultures (Gray Ware, |1250 Kausambi:
            Gandhāra grave           OCP
            etc.)
            copper, no iron;     |
            earliest occurrence of  |
            rice in the west     |
 1200      early Ṛgveda          |
            compositions         |
            & first 'family' collections|


            immigration to the Panjab,  |
            of OIA speakers,         |
            in several waves,        |
            the latest = Bharata     |   NB. rice is
                                     |  early in the
            RV hymns composed        |   Malwa culture
            gold, silver, ayas (copper)  |  S. of
```

mentioned, no iron; no rice    |   Kurukṣetra =
                                       |   later? |

---

     BRW: Black & Red Ware
    <u>KURU</u>    ( with iron!)
          establishment of
<u>1st center</u>  <u>Kuru realm</u> in                   |  (chalcolithic)
        E.Panjab/W. Uttar Pradesh      |     (rice)
        (Kurukṣetra as center)         |
        Pārikṣita dynasty             |

        collection of RV 1-10,
        PS, SV, RVKh (Kuntāpa hymns!), &   |  Kāśi  =
         Mantras of Car.S, MS, KS composed |   outsiders
        and collected;                   |  (in PS)
        composition of early (lost) Br.type     |
        explanation of the Śrauta ritual      |

        Iron first mentioned in AV:
        *śyāma- ayas-*
        rice first mentioned (AV, Mantras)

---

1000/900-     PGW: Painted Gray Ware        |           No PGW!

        YV prose composed and
          collected in MS,KS
        AB (older parts)

        General movement towards the East
        (KS) and South (MS)
        impermanence of settlements:
        *grāma* = trek; wattle huts;
    Immigration into
    and conquest of
    Kurukṣetra by the
    Salvas (& Trigartas)      <u>PAÑCALA</u>
                        <u>2nd center</u>     |  900- Black &
                                      |  Red
    Temporary decay                        |  Ware
    of Kaṭha and                            |
    Maitr. schools       TS prose, TB       |
    (no Maitr.Br.,        *Śāṭy.Br.          |  (and Grey
    fragm. KaṭhB)                       |  Ware)
    emigration                               |   (iron)

| to Gujarat and | prominence of the | immigration |
| towards the | dynasty of Keśin Dārbhya | of Western |
| East (Kosala/ | (Kausambi 750 BCE) | orthoprax |
| Videha) | PGW | groups, from |
| | | the Kuru |
| | | Sarasvatī |
| | | area |
| | | Videgha |
| | | Māthava |

## § 7.5. Summary

Archaeology tends to reconfirm the evidence of the investigations carried out above of the rituals, text collections, and linguistic features. After some spurious elements of RV cultures, including the Gandhara/Swat period, a new element emerged with the PGW culture. It had an early concentration in eastern Panjab, Kurukṣetra, Haryana and in the Upper Doāb of Uttar Pradesh. It then slowly spread, with settlements at first only along the banks of the major rivers, to Kausambi in the east and towards Ujjain in the south, but hardly beyond these points.

This area coincides exactly with that indicated by the texts. For example, the Kāśis are still regarded as outsiders (ŚB 13.5.4.19). The heaviest concentration of the semi-nomadic, pastoralist Kuru clans was in the Upper *doāb*, as reconfirmed by a later text, AB 3.44 that states that "the (temporary) settlements (*grāma*) are more copious in the East", while "the west has long wildernesses (*dīrghāraṇyāṇi*)".

Another direction of expansion was towards the south, in the Chambal area, as the evidence from Maitrāyaṇi, Saṃhitā[527] indicates. This movement skirts the Aravalli hills and the Rajasthan desert and keeps to a region of a somewhat wetter climate, the territory of the early agricultural groups called the Niṣādas in the texts (Witzel 1999 and the use of *dasyu* in JB).

During this period, iron was first introduced into the area, though not from Iran as believed earlier. The introduction is reflected in Mantra time texts such as AV.[528] The rest of the material remains of the PGW culture agrees with the Middle Vedic texts: a still fairly simple material culture with movable bamboo huts of the *grāma* on trek, and with wattle and daub huts of permanent settlements, but with hardly any brick buildings at all. There were two, sometimes three levels of the size of settlements: simple villages, market places, and a few major political centers. The culture had horse drawn chariots (*ratha*) and heavy wagons (*anas*), a mixed agricultural and pastoral economy with semi-nomadic traits, an industry of copper (*ayas, loha*) and iron (*śyāma/kṛṣṇa ayas*) tools, wheel-thrown pottery of various types, next to very primitive vessels made by Brahmins for ritual purposes, ---(as apparently found with copper hoards).

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[527] See Rau 1957: 13, on MS 4.7.9, KS 26.2

[528] Unless RV *asi* "knife" belongs, as P. Thieme *Language* 34, 512 sqq. has suggested, to a designation for "black (metal)", cf. Latin *ensis* 'sword'.

## § 8 THE EMERGENCE OF THE KURU REALM

The preceding investigations (§ 1-7) into the late Ṛgvedic and early post-Ṛgvedic period, covering ritual, myth, text collections, linguistic features, dialects, and archaeology, have indicated the emergence of the Kuru realm during the Mantra period. This time can also be characterized the *golden age* of the Kurus, with a center in Kurukṣetra during the immediate post-Ṛgvedic era. A number of major developments and (planned) innovations took place during this period.

However, the question that still remains to be answered is: what brought about the major changes in political set-up, social structure, and what caused the firm establishment of the four *varṇa*s? What could have motivated the late Ṛgvedic and early Mantra time poets, "copyright owners" and priests to make major changes in text transmission and ritual performance? Conservative structures such as ritual do not change easily, nor can they be intentionally altered that easily. Some major influence or force must have been at work behind the scene, as visible in the texts: either the pressure of society or otherwise that of particular interest groups.

As for the time frame of these developments it was noted that there seems to have been an attempt by the later Bharata kings of the Bharata dynasty of post-Dāśarājña times to collect the "national lore" of the Indo-Aryan tribes of the Panjab[529] but that the actual collection of all Ṛgvedic materials was completed only under the Kurus.

It is obvious now that one or more persons had the ingenious idea to use whatever was present and prominent in the religion and society at the time and to reshape and tailor all these elements in order to establish and maintain Bharata/Kaurava and Kuru dominance. This affected and involved traditional ritual, the institutions of priests, including their number and character, their traditional poetry and ritual texts; furthermore, whatever was amenable to change in the other tribal elites, such as the families of the high aristocracy and the gentry, the poets and bards, and even the leadership of the settled aboriginal population (Niṣāda).

Who exactly was/were the person(s) to accomplish all of this? A priest, a prophet like Zoroaster, a group of ethical reformers/priests (Heesterman 1985), a chieftain (*rājan*) of the many late Ṛgvedic tribes, or more precisely, among the great chieftains ("kings") of the Bharatas? The answer to the question can, exceptionally, indeed be found in the texts themselves, -- if one looks carefully enough.

The clue to the enigma is traceable, as has been indicated above, by an investigation into the *Kuntāpa* ritual (ŚS 20.127, RVKh 5). The Kuntāpa section of the Ṛgveda Khilas is an enigmatic, intriguing small collection of hymns and a few prose Mantras (*yajuṣ*).[530]

While the detailed treatment of the Kuntāpa section has been carried out at nother occasion,[531] it can be said that in the post-Ṛgvedic Śrauta ritual the *Kuntāpa* section forms

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[529] **Now represented by the family books 2-7.**
[530] **See above, § 5.4.**
[531] **See Witzel, Vala and Iwato (1995), cf. also Witzel 1997 (Prosimeter).**

part of the *Mahāvrata* day, i.e. the culmination point of the one-year *Gavām Ayana* rite at winter solstice. This ritual has, as all Śrauta rituals, many historical layers. The main idea seems to be that of helping the sun around its 'turning point' at winter solstice.

The procedure is assisted by sympathetic magic, such as chariot races imitating the elliptic course of the sun around its turning point: this is the difficult period of the year, when the days get shorter and shorter, and the sun comes to its yearly solstice turning point when it rises in the southeast on December 21st. To the observer on earth it looks as if the rising point of the sun, that had moved southwards by about half a degree each day from midsummer to midwinter, actually stops in the southest for a few days, before its starts again to move northwards. The chariots, too, have to turn around the difficult turning point, the *methī*, where many indeed crash.

During the race, a wet skin that was affixed to poles north of Āgnīdhrā hut is driven around by armored noblemen and shot at. Their arrows must stick in the skin. Then they drive north-wards for a distance (imitating the course of the sun) and unharness the horses. Also, an Ārya (a Brahmin) and a Śūdra pull at a wet round white piece of leather, while standing inside and outside, respectively, of the central part of the offering ground (*vedi*), and while denigrating viz. praising. The Brahmin wins, and throws the leather into the Āgnīdhrā hut.

But the *Kuntāpa* rite also is a fertility rite: the *Mahānagnikā*[532] prostitute and Brahmacārin tease each other with riddles, and she and a *Māgadha* man copulate in a hut on the offering ground, -- obviously a rite ensuring fertility for the beginning new year.[533]

Part of the stanzas is also used at an Aśvamedha -- due to the overlap in the rites of the Mahāvrata and the horse sacrifice -- see RVKh 5.15, *(a)ucchaiśravas*- in 5.14.4,[534] and cf. the name of the king's wives, usually appearing in the Aśvamedha as well: *parivṛktā*- and *mahiṣī*- at 5.13.5.[535] However, 5.15 rather looks like a Mahāvrata festival (featuring a *Mahānagnī*).[536]

A closer look at the Ṛgveda Khila's version of the *Kuntāpa* texts may help to find out why the name *Kuntāpa* is used: apart from the special meaning of *kuntāpa*- "20 glands in the belly", *kunta*- means "lance" or "spear", but no spear is won or used during the ritual, unless

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[532] The prostitute is apparently called so as she is "naked", because she shaves her pubic hair to avoid lice; a *nagnikā*, however, is a young, prepubescent girl (*kumārī*, RVKh 5.16) as opposed to the *mahānagnikā* of RVKh 5.22. Town women later on follow this practice, as appears from the Buddhist Vinaya where the nuns are teased because they do not shave, which leads to invention of the Buddhist bathing suit. On *nagnikā* see also Patkar 1963.

[533] There is nothing "obscene" in this: even in the medieval and modern coronation ritual, out of the 16 types of clay the king is besmeared with, one comes from the doorstep of a prostitute (*veśyā*) -- and that this earth is applied to his loins, obviously for fertility. Following the more recent ("Victorian") practices of South Asia, during the coronation of the present Nepalese king in 1975, the local Nepali and English newspapers tried to hide this fact (see Witzel 1987).

[534] But cf. Uccaiḥśravas, the name of a Kuru king, son of Kuyava, see n. 54.

[535] A king had 4 wives: *mahiṣī* (chief queen), *parivṛktī* (rejected queen), *vavavātā* (his preferred woman, i.e. where he usually sleeps), *pālāgalī* (daughter of a lower official).

[536] But note that this has been transferred to the copulation rite of the queen and the dead (sun) horse. For further discussion of the relationship between Sun and horses, see Witzel, Vala and Iwato (1995), and Possehl/Witzel 2003.

it is used as an euphemism.[537] In post-Vedic texts, *kunta-* also is the god of love, and *kuntala-* the hair of the head. However, cf. MS 4.2.6 *kaunté*, *Kunti* Kps 41.7, KS 26.9.

Finally, not only some of the *Kuntāpa* hymns but a number of other hymn collections from the AV (see § 5) have a curious relation to royal fame and power, especially PS 10 that already mentions a Śrauta *Sava* rite, and PS 18.15-26 (= ŚS 13).

I suspect that both the power of the sun --cf. the *Etaśa Pralāpa*[538] of the *Kuntāpas*--, of nature (productivity), and of the King[539] are to be renewed by this ritual. It can be observed that royal glory and fame is closely connected with the concept of "luminescence" or "brightness": *varcas*, as found in the related term *brahmavarcas*;[540] the Iranian concept of *xvarᵊnah* is closely related as well. It is typical of the living, semi-personal entity *xvarᵊnah* to "hide" in the "lake Vourukaša", the Milky Way (Witzel 1984), when deserting a particular king. The red sun (*Rohita*) is praised in AV (ŚS) 13 = PS 18.15-26 along with the glory (*varcas*) of a king. Interestingly all these concepts occur first in the Mantra period, when several features point to a close relationship with contemporary Iran, in political geography, grammar and thought.[541]

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[537] Or, unless one thinks of the later ritual, when arrows are shot at a round streched out white skin, symbolizing the sun; -- or if the lance is not the one of Indra (i.e. his stemming up the sky), or a more explicit one -- the one of the Māgadha. In this respect, one may think of other creation mythologies as well, for example that of Japan where a spear is used to churn the primordial ocean. --- Cf. also the story of *Kuntī,* wife of Pāṇḍu; and cf. Kuntibhoja, a Yādava king of the Kuntis who adopted Kuntī (for *bhoja-* §9, and AB 8.14.) - Also, cf. Kauntala, a people Har. 784; *Kauntī*, a river, Bhag.P. 12.1.37.

[538] "The prattling of Etaśa", a solar horse, cf. Witzel 1997(Prosimetrum).

[539] Later on, he has to undergo a rejuvenation rite every year in the month of Pauṣya, the Puṣyābhiṣeka at AV-Par. 5, see Witzel 1987.

[540] See Tsuchiyama.

[541] Is there some Eastern Iranian influence among the Bharata? Note the role of Vasiṣṭha, who is mentioned as having come from the west, from across the Sindhu (see Witzel 1995:§ 2; more interestingly, the close overlap of later Avestan and post-RV forms: see § 6 on dialects (RV/Ved. *viśve* : YAv. *vīspe* :: RV *viśvāsaḥ* : O.P. *visa-* / Med. *vispa-*, cf. Med. *aniyaha bagāha* in DB 4.61, 63). These tribes understand each other (e.g. Yāska on the Kamboja word *śavati* (Witzel 1980), cf. above; they also actively trade with each other, notably horses (especially the Balhika, Kamboja, etc.). All of this makes Iranian influence in Vedic India possible. For early testimony in the RV see K. Hoffmann (1975-6: 1sqq.) on *kaśu-*, *kanīta*, camels, etc.; G. Morgenstierne 1975; Pinault 1989, Kuiper 1991b. For the later period note the name of king Balhika Prātipīya ŚB 12.9.3.3, who had taken over the Kuru kingdom from *Duṣ*-tarītu Pauṃsāyana, a Kauravya king who had lost his kingdom after ten generations. Does this reflect the immigration of a Balhika (Bactrian? or Salva?) group or is it just a nickname? See Witzel (1989). In this context note the late Vedic movement of the Panjab *Vṛji* (Pāṇini) into Buddha's time N.Bihar (*Vajji*), and that of the *Malla* from the late Vedic desert Rajasthan (JB) into the same N.Bihar area (*Malla*); note further the sudden appearance of the Sakya in the same area in the Pāli texts, while their name points to the Śaka/Saka of Central Asia. In this context, note the appearance of other Iranian elements in the east: the *stūpa* form of grave mounds that are called Asuric by the ŚB, the Iranian custom of marriages between brothers and sisters seen in the lineage of the Buddha, the first use of a scale to weigh the deeds of the departed in the afterlife, etc. (S. Jamison and M. Witzel, Vedic Hinduism, and Witzel 1997).

There are some further clues regarding the nature of the period when all these changes in society and ritual, described above, took place: the *Kaurava* (*kaurama*;[542] *kauravya*) are mentioned in the *Kuntāpa* hymns for the first time and the reign of one of their chiefs is clearly described as a period of prosperity and bliss:[543] We witness the golden age of the Kaurava/Kurus under their great chief (cf. *Kaurava, Ruśama, Kauravya pati,* further below).

It is interesting to note that the *Kuntāpa* ritual - as it has come down to us - is neither part of the RV proper[544] nor of the original AV.[545] But it is already accepted in one of the oldest Brāhmaṇa, the AB. However, the Mantras themselves tell us when it was composed. The language of this portion of the text is clearly that of the Mantra period.[546] Otherwise, it is in the Mantras of the YV that we first hear about the newly emerged *Kuru* tribe, or rather their kings, the *Kaurava.* The name *Kuru* otherwise occurs first as part of the name of a person in the RV,[547] and then, independently, in the Kuntāpa section of the Ṛgveda Khilas.

The important yearly *Kuntāpa* ritual thus transports us into the center of early Kuru power, to the *Ruśama* in *Kurukṣetra.*[548] The *Kuntāpa* rite, perhaps first performed in its Ṛgveda Khila form by the Kuru kings, is the central feature of the New Year ritual of the recently emerged Kuru tribe and its new royal lineage, the *Kaurava* (who still are called *Bharata* during the royal consecration in TS.) Both the tribe Kuru and its dynasty had evolved by the time of the Mantra period and now experienced their golden age, as the *Kuntāpa* themselves indicate.

In these stanzas, the Kuntāpa ritual is mentioned as taking place with the [+]*Kaurava* (*Kaurama*) among the *Ruśama,* that is in Kuru territory. At RVKh 5.10.2 a member of this tribe is called a *Kauravya pati.* His king's reign apparently constitutes the high point, the golden age in the history of the tribe. It is clearly described as such:[550]

> *rā́jño viśvajanī́yasya yó devó mártāṃ áti*
> *vaiśvanārásya suṣṭutím ā́ sunotā/[+]śṛṇota Parikṣítaḥ*

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[542] See K. Hoffmann 1995-6: 1 sqq.

[543] Expressed in the present tense! This indicates contemporaneousness of the author of the hymn and of the king.

[544] Though, maybe, of the Māṇḍūkeyas, see Scheftelowitz 1906, introduction.

[545] Where it is a very late addition to ŚS, as part of the Brāhmaṇacchaṃsin "book" 20 which is not treated in the Prātiśākhya (Cāturadhyāyikā).

[546] See above, § 5.4.

[547] *Kuruśravaṇa* Trāsadasyava, see below, and the Kāṇva poet *Kuru-suti* (however, appearing only in the late RV Anukramaṇī).

[548] Cf. that the early Krivi, who later make out part of the Pañcālas, defeat, at 8.51.8-9, the Ruśama (found several times already in RV), and that the Ruśama king Ṛṇaṃcaya offers a Pravargya rite at 5.30.12-14. This would fit the usual pattern of Pūru > Krivi, Pañcāla, Ikṣvāku, etc. and Bharata etc. > Kuru, Ruśama, etc.; see above n. 48-50.

[550] Bloomfield (1897) takes *vaiśvanārá- parikṣít-,* following AB 6.32.10, cf. KB 30.5, GB 2.6.12 ŚŚS 12.17, as a name of Agni. Note also the more popular Anuṣṭubh meter (for which see Oldenberg 1967, 1188 sqq.)

"Listen to the good praise of the King belonging to all people, who, (like) a god, is above men, (listen to the praise) of Parikṣit!"

*'Parikṣín naḥ kṣémam akarat táma āsanám ā́ ⁺saran*[551]ꞌ
*⁺marāyyáṃ*[552] *kúrvan Káuravyaḥ pátir vadati jāyáya*[553]

" 'Parikṣit has just now made us peaceful dwelling;[554] darkness has just now run to its dwelling.' The Kuru householder, preparing (grains) for milling, speaks (thus) with his wife."

*'katarát ta ā́ harāṇi dádhi mánthām3 parisrútam'?*
*jayā́ pátim ví pr̥cchati rāṣṭré Rā́jñaḥ Parikṣítaḥ*[555]

"'What shall I bring you, sour milk, the Mantha [a barley/milk drink], (or) the Parisrut [liquor]?' the wife keeps asking in the Realm of King Parikṣit."

*ábhīva svàḥ prá jihīte yávaḥ pakváḥ pátho bílam*
*jánas sá bhadrám edhate rāṣṭré Rā́jñaḥ Parikṣítaḥ*

"By itself, the ripe barley bends heavily (*iva*) over the deep track of the path. The tribe thrives auspiciously in the Realm of King Parikṣit."

The hymn sums up the good life of this period: peaceful settlement (*kṣema*), not strife and war; a variety of food and drink: barley flour, sour milk, the mixture of barley and milk (*mantha*), a sort of herbal alcohol, (*parisrut*), and a rich harvest of barley.[556]

Even the exact time frame is indicated: after Sudās' Ten Kings' Battle that is mentioned at RVKh 5.14.1 as *dāśarājñé mānuṣam*, "at the Mānuṣa (locality)[557] at the Ten Kings' Battle."

The language of these stanzas affirms this date. The R̥gvedic social institution of a *vidatha* (5.12.1 *vidathyà*)[558] is still known. Further, the injunctive is still used while it occurs

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[551] *saram* ed. / Kashmir MS.

[552] *arāyyáḥ* ed. / Kashmir MS.

[553] Note the alliteration: *(Pari-)kṣín ... kṣémam a-karat ... kúrvan ... Káuravyaḥ ...*, and the (pseudo-) etymological constructions: *°kṣín... kṣémam, kúrvan Káuravyaḥ*, thus involving both the name of Parikṣit and Kuru.

[554] This is a pun on Parikṣit and Agni (cf. Bloomfield 1897). Parikṣit as epithet of Agni means 'casting light all around', cf. the use of the word (of Heaven-Earth) in RV 1.123.7, 3.7.1, 10.65.8.

[555] Note again the rhyme-like alliteration: *rāṣṭré rā'jñaḥ (Parikṣítaḥ)*, which is repeated in the next stanza.

[556] Barley fits the Kurukṣetra area; rice is found further eastwards at the time (where wild rice is indigenous); though some rice has been planted already in the late Indus civilization and is even attested at Mehrgarh. Note also that there was "wild rice, grown on non-irrigated land," (Thapar 1984: 23) -- as indeed, there are wild varieties in S. Asia as well as elsewhere. For details see Glover 1977.

[557] Schmidt (1980) takes *mānuṣa* at RV 7.18 not as a locality (as it clearly is in JB, etc.) but as meaning "human world"; cf. also Witzel 1980; for *mānuṣa* see also *EWAia* II 309.

[558] See Kuiper 1960.

just a few dozen times in AV:[559] *ká eṣāṃ karkaríṃ likhat, ká eṣāṃ duṇḍubhíṃ hanat, yád íṃ hanat, katháṃ hanát...* (5.15.17-18); the Ṛgvedic particle *gha* is still used instead of later *ha*[560] (5.15.3-4), *devatta-* instead of *devadatta-* (5.15.8a), and *akṛṇoḥ* instead of later (AV) *akaroḥ* (5.21.2), etc.[561]

The ritual still begins in Ṛgvedic fashion with the traditional invitation by the herald (*kāru*, 5.11), includes a praise of the Great Chief (5.10) that, incidentally, is not a *dānastuti*, and a *dakṣiṇā* (5.20). The Ṛgvedic social institution of a distribution of bounty (*vidatha,* 5.12.1 *vidathyà,* Kuiper 1960) has already been mentioned: the Kuru king must have regularly distributed the booty of raids and wars.

The most important point, however, is the late Ṛgvedic or early post-Ṛgvedic praise of the golden age of the Kurus under their King Parikṣit,[562] the ancestor of the well-known Janamejaya Pārikṣita of Brāhmaṇa and Mahābhārata fame. In short, in this ritual the Kuru tribe is already fully established and governed by a (new) powerful lineage, the one of Parikṣit, who is mentioned with the Kaurava, among the Ruśamas.

One may conclude: if it was not Parikṣit who brought about all the social, ritual, and political changes described above, it was someone else with the same name...

## § 8.1. The ethnic background

This literary scenario of the Ṛgveda and the immediate post-Ṛgvedic texts must be complemented by information on the 'real life' background of the times: what prompted the immigration of the Bharata, the formation of the Kuru super-tribe, the emergence of the Bharata and later the Pārikṣita lineages? And what kind of ethnic group did they represent and what language(s) did they speak? A few answers have already been provided above; others will be attempted here.

The[563] middle Ṛgvedic Bharata and the late Ṛgvedic Kuru (Witzel 1997) both represent a new wave of IA immigration from the other side of the Indus (Vasiṣṭha in RV 7, JB 3.238-9 §204). As has been mentioned, they brought new linguistic traits with them (Witzel 1989). The Bharata-Kuru dialect is remarkably more modern than the language of the bulk of the RV, and book 10 often reads already like the next level, that of the AV and other Mantra texts of the Kuru period.

The Kuru built, together with IA-acculturated Indus people (represented by *Arya* tribes such as the Anu-Druhyu, Yadu-Turvaśa) and with the late addition of Dravidian speakers, a new society with a new *elite kit* (Ehret). This included traditional IA pastoralism, IA religion, ritual and acculturated customs, but also post-Indus type agriculture (barley, wheat, rice, millet) and local artisans. The new culture, Vedic orthopraxy and its social system (with four classes) then spread eastwards into the Gangetic plains, and ultimately to

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[559] **About 60 cases, see Hoffmann 1967: 110.**

[560] **For a study of *gha* and *ha,* from the RV through medieval times, see now Alika Hejib-Agera 1988.**

[561] **One could ask in the later case, whether this is artificially archaic as in PS, --- however, there are no clear indications of such a procedure in RVKh, which simply retains much of RV ritual structure and language in this passage.**

[562] **Note that Bloomfield takes this as the name of Agni.**

[563] **This section has been adapted from Witzel 1999.**

Bihar. Not everybody was included in this new set-up: The non-IA *Kīkaṭa* (3.53) or the *Paṇi* are clearly described as 'foreigners' (late hymn 6.45.31). In RV 10.61.8 as well the South (i.e. the area south of Kurukṣetra) still is the land to banish someone. The same exclusions are seen even in the Mantra and YV Saṃhitā period, with the *Niṣāda* in the Chambal area (MS 2.9.5 etc.) and other *dasyu* 'enemies' (JB, Witzel 1997b: n.161, 163, 278).

In sum, we have to distinguish the following linguistic and --at least in part -- corresponding ethnic identities:
• **Indo-Aryan with some north-western linguistic elements** such as Nuristani *kāca* 'shining piece of jewelry' or Burushaski *kilāy* ~ RV *kīlāla*, *šon* ~ RV *kāṇa*, *bus* ~ RV *busa,* etc.;
• **The Indus substrate ("Para-Munda")**, that also is found in the Ganges area (next to some elements of language 'X'), such as in RV *kuśika, karañja, kaṅkata, śiṃśapā, śiṃśumāra, puṣkara, puṣya,* especially the words with prefix (*pər/kər/sər-* etc,), *kar-koṭaka* RVKh ~ *śar-koṭa* AV, *tila* AV: *jar-tila* KS, *kalmaśa* MS, KS, *kal-māṣa* PS, *kul-māṣa* Up. : *māṣa* AV, with the *-ṭa, -śā/ṣa* suffixes, and with *-ṇḍ-: ka-maṇḍalu : maṇḍa-la,* etc.
• **The Middle and Late Ṛgvedic Drav. element**, also found in the Ganges area: *godhūma* AV (Hindi *geh*  etc., Kusunda *gabun*), *kuṇapa* AV, *kurkura* AV, *cūḍa* ŚB, *coḍa* TS, *eḍaka* JB, *arka* ŚB, *bilva* AV 20 (Kuiper 1991:66), *-nīra-* 'water' ŚB, etc.

The upper class IA language used in the upper Gangetic plains therefore contains the same substrate elements as those seen in the late Ṛgvedic period of the Panjab. However, due to the increasing stratification of society and increasing specialization among occupations, many words from the sphere of the artisans and from technology were added; furthermore many names of persons, localities and rivers.

Among the post-Rgvedic texts, especially the AV is full of non-IA, 'popular' words of plants, animals, demons, local deities, and the like. Their character still is, by and large, Para-Munda, with some words from the 'local' Gangetic language ("X"), and with some Drav. words included. The linguistic situation is well reflected, among other items, in the mixture of IA and other river names in the area. The famous Sarasvatī is also called *Vaiśambhālyā / Vaiśampālyā / Vibalī*; these names and that of the nearby Vipāś < *vipāš/vipāž* all seem to go back to a local word, *vi-śam-paž,* (Witzel 1999), adapted to IA in several different forms, something that always points to indigenous origin. (This is also seen in the name of the Satlej river). Typically, there are no Dravidian river names in the whole Kuru area.

Dravidian words first appear in Middle and Late Rgvedic, in RV 3, 7, and 8, especially in the Kāṇva section. Interestingly, it is Tura Kāvaṣeya, the great-grandson of the Drav.-named *Kavaṣa* 'straddle legged', a priest on the 'wrong side' in the great Bharata battle (RV 7.18) who becomes an influential priest in the Kuru realm. He developed some new, post-Rgvedic *(Śrauta)* rituals (Proferes 1999). A hint of how Drav. influence on Vedic was exerted is also contained in the name of the Śūdra. From the late RV (10.90) onwards, this designates the fourth, non-Arya class; it was added to the three Arya classes of Brahmins, Kṣatriya (nobility) and Vaiśya ('the people') only at this time. However, Greek sources of Alexander's time still place a tribe, the *Sudroi,* at the confluence of the Panjab rivers with the Indus; this may still indicate their origin in Sindh/ Baluchistan.

According to observations made earlier (Witzel 1999) about the early linguistic evidence of Sindh, Dravidians were not a primary factor in the population of the Indus civilization and they were immigrating into the Panjab only in middle Ṛgvedic times. Earlier

scholars thought that they entered S. Asia from the west and proceeded via Baluchistan, Sindh and Gujarat to S. India (e.g., Zvelebil 1970, 1990: 48, 123). Indeed, their tracks are still visible in certain place names in Sindh, Gujarat and Maharashtra (Southworth 2005). Several agricultural terms in Dravidian are loan words from Sumerian and sometimes from beyond (Afro-Asiatic, Blažek and Boisson 1992). These include words for plough-tail, -handle, plough share, to plough, mortar, threshing floor, and 'to grind.' The close link may point to a more western path of immigration of Proto-Drav. speakers than that of those of pre-Vedic IA. An early wave of Dravidian speakers might very well have preceded the IAs into Iran and S. Asia. (Note the strange absence of *Maka* in the list of "Aryan countries" in the Avestan records, such as Vīdēvdād 1, cf. Herodotos 3.94).

According to Southworth and McAlpin the semi-nomadic speakers of Dravidian (Southworth 1979: 203, 228 f., 1990: 222-3, 1995), came to S. Asia relatively late, but early enough to participate in the Indus civilization, from which they acquired agriculture and the accompanying vocabulary. This scenario, if applied just to Sindh, explains why the c. 300 foreign words of the RV (in the Panjab) with their (agricultural) vocabulary are relatively free of Drav. influence.

It seems likely (Witzel 1999) that the speakers of Indo-Aryan entered the Panjab and acquired local agricultural words from the Northern Indus dialect (such as *śaṇa, lāṅgala, vrīhi, godhūma, kaṅgu, Gandhāra*), and that the Dravidians entered Sindh at or about the same time and acquired such words from the southern dialect (*gōnu, ñāñcil, variñci, godī, kaṅku/kampu*). It may even be the case that the first who made horses statues at Pirak (1700 BCE) were early Dravidians, not the IA Bhalānas. For, the first use of horses[564] must not necessarily be linked to speakers of an IA language.

The features of the Ṛgvedic substrate languages are also found in post-Ṛgvedic texts that were composed further east in the Kurukṣetra and in the western Gangetic plains, as well as in the Chambal area. We can clearly distinguish all three linguistic elements mentioned above (IA, Para-Munda, Drav.) This includes many new words. They have the same 'foreign' grammatical formations as seen in the RV: prefixes, retroflexes, initial *b-* , suffix *-āla* (Witzel 1999).

Because of the amalgamation of these three different groups we have to suppose a large degree of bilingualism and even trilingualism, and the formation of pidgins. (Note Kuiper 2000, on a 'bilingual' Vedic poet). A Vedic pidgin must have been used at home, and proper Vedic Sanskrit was learnt 'in school', at the time of initiation of boys and during Veda study. While the *lingua franca* was a form of late/post-Ṛgvedic IA, pockets of the Para-Munda Indus language, of the newly arrived Dravidian as well as some remnants of the Gangetic Language "X" (Masica) must have survived as well. They would have represented the Kīkaṭā, Niṣāḍa, *dasyu,* etc. mentioned in the texts. While these must have retained many features of their indigenous culture, the increasingly dominant features in E. Panjab,

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[564] The Drav. words for 'horse' underline this: DEDR 500 Tam. *ivuḻi*, Brah. *(h)ullī*, 1711 Tam. *kutirai*, Kan. *kudire*, Tel. *kudira*, etc., 3963 Tam. *pari* 'runner', 4780 Tam. *mā* 'animal' (horse, elephant), Tel. *māvu* 'horse, (cognates mean 'deer' etc. in other Drav. languages), cf. Nahali *māv* 'horse'. These words are quite different and independent of IA *aśva* 'horse' and various words for 'runner' (*arvant, vājin*, etc.), etc. -- On the other hand, the technical terminology for chariots is IA and IE. It has been taken over into Drav.: *akṣa* 'axle' RV > Parji-Kolami *accu* 'axle'; *āṇi* RV (of unknown origin) > *āṇi* 'lynch pin', *ara* RV > *ār* 'spoke' (cf. Southworth 1979: 230 n. 14). Dravidian has only words for 'wagon' or 'bullock cart'.

Kurukṣetra, Haryana, U.P., areas were of IA nature, reflecting the new 'status kit' and orthopraxy of the Kuru realm.

## III. STRATEGIES

### § 9   POLITICAL AND SOCIAL OUTCOME

The most important political result,[565] thus, of the reform carried out by Parikṣit (or his 'namesake') was the formation of the Kuru tribe and the permanent establishment of the Bhārata-Kuru chiefdom. It must be stressed that the formation of the Kuru state[566] and the establishment of its new socio-religious basis is a lasting feature of the Vedic period, and not a transient one like that of the Pūru or Bharata dominance in Ṛgvedic times. In fact, as we shall see, the "new order" has its distant effects until today.

### §9.1. The emerging Kuru tribe and realm

The changes were carried out in what then was and for long remained the center of political power and of contemporary culture, in Kurukṣetra. This area between the two rivers Sarasvatī (Ghaggar-Hakra) and Dṛṣadvatī (Chautang) and the surrounding area now became the center of the newly emerging Vedic orthopraxy and "orthodoxy."[567]

At this time, various Ṛgvedic tribes[568] in eastern Panjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh first fused into one super-tribe, the Kuru, that later expanded into two major tribes, the Kuru-Pañcāla. They formed a union, of two partly antagonistic moieties. At the same time, a strong royal family, that of the Pārikṣita, emerged from or next to the earlier Bhārata line, though the traditional name of the Bharata was kept (e.g. in the Rājasūya Mantras of TS).

In the introductory sections, above (§ 1-3), the political situation of the Mantra period, which was dominated by the large Kuru viz. the Kuru-Pañcāla realm, has been compared with the political scene of Ṛgvedic times, when a large number of small tribes and clans roamed the Panjab. Both periods have been contrasted with the Late Vedic situation when a few larger kingdoms in the east took the lead (Kosala, Videha, the somewhat later Vṛji/Vajji federation and finally, the imperial Magadha).

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[565] In general, cf. Paul Mus: The Problematic of the Self, *East and West* 9: 75-77 (i.e. the Puruṣasūkta as the first 'constitution' of India), cf. Dandekar, Ved. Bibl. III, p. 576; cf. also Fussman 1980.

[566] For more on the concept of the early state see immediately below.

[567] This is also evident if we trace the movements and differences of the various Vedic schools backwards: The East has the later schools (Vājasaneyin); the Central area (Taittirīya) shows a clear dependence on the KS/MS traditions; the South (Jaiminīya etc.) is equally dependent on the earlier Central (Pañcāla) schools; there remains, thus, the Kuru territory with schools such as the Maitrāyaṇīya and Kaṭha.

[568] See above: Bharata, Tṛtsu, Ruśama, Vaitahavya, n. 446, and above n. 48-50.

In carrying out this comparison, it became clear that the Kuru union and the realm of their Bharata/Kaurava kings represents the first larger polity or "early state"[569] on Indian soil. Their sheer size among the other surviving tribes would have insured their dominance. However, the new union of the Kurukṣetra and surrounding tribes was accompanied by a number of major changes that sustained the new great chiefdom internally and externally.

The Kuru realm indeed matches many of the characteristics of early states that emerged from traditional tribal chiefdoms, or from the larger aggregation of such chiefdoms, the realm of a "Great Chief".[570] The new Kuru king, in fact, may often still be characterized as a Great Chief.[571] He is only the *primus inter pares* (*śreṣṭhaḥ svānām*) among the high nobility (*rājanya*) of the Kuru confederation that is characterized as having three subtribes.[572]

However, the new powerful kingship is at least semi-hereditary,[573] supported by a claim of ultimately divine ancestry,[574] re-enacted in ritual. This claim is supported by the royal priest (*purohita*[575]) and by a retinue of *ratnin*s, royal officials who are bound to the Kuru lord by loyalty and liberal gifts. The new order is further sustained by some major changes in society, such the increasing stratification into four classes (*varṇa*), first met with in the late RV, the establishment of the new priestly corporations representing the Four

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[569] After (a) possible state(s) in the Indus civilization, - if this went beyond the 5-7 great organized cities we count now. These large cities, now including Dholavira in N. Gujarat, have displaced the older concept of "the dual capital cities of the Indus civilization." See Possehl 1999 -- The discussion by R. Thapar (1984) of the Ṛgvedic and Kuru/Pañcāla "lineages" recognizes the new union of the Kurus and Pañcālas; however, it does not take into account the *new structure* of this realm: forced *bali*, organizing the four classes (*varṇa*), exploitation of the *viś* and the *śūdra*s by the *brahma-kṣatra* alliance. See also Kumkum Roy 1994 for the whole post-Ṛgvedic period.

[570] Cf. Claessen 1984; Claessen & Skalnik 1978.

[571] I will use "king" to designate the ruler of the new Kuru tribe as to underline his preeminence in comparison with the chiefs of the Matsya, Uśīnara, Satvant, etc. tribes who survived from the Ṛgvedic period as smaller independent units with a chieftain (*rājan*) as leader.

[572] Bharata, Tṛtsu, Vaitahavya.

[573] In the RV, and later on, it is clear that kings were be elected, but at the same time, there existed dynasty-like lineages: obviously, the chieftains could be elected from a group of noblemen (note that RV 10.90 only speaks of *rājanya*s, not of *kṣatriya*s!), which may be compared with the White/Black bones of Turkish tribes and the White/Blue groups of the Lolo/Moso tribes of China. In many, if not in most, cases, the council of the Rājanyas would elect the son of the king, or his adopted heir. Adoption played a greater role in the Veda than supposed so far. This topic will have to be investigated in detail. Cf. Thapar 1994, *Ancient Indian Social History*, Hyderabad, p. 247 (which deals, however, with the Mbh. genealogy). -- In one case, that of Duṣṭarītu (ŚB 12.9.3.2), we hear of an uninterrupted succession in ten generations before he was ousted. -- Note that a ritual such as the Rājasūya was necessary to keep the line of the King intact, in case he had no direct heir: by this ritual, he could adopt one (see Falk 1984).

[574] See on Rohita, AV 13 = PS 18.15-26, and his relation to the sun, *varcas* (*x*ʸ*ar*ᵊ*nah*), his identification with Indra, the king of the gods etc. -- cf. See Tsuchiyama, cf. *rohita/rohītakakūla*, the "capital" of the Kurus at Āsandīvat and Rohītakakūla: the "slope, bank, mound of Rohīta/ the reddish bank, etc."

[575] See RV 10, PS 10, and the Rohita book of AV 13 = PS 18.15-26.

Vedas, and especially by the ever-increasing dominance of the *Brahma-Kṣatra* alliance.[577] It was created, as some Brāhmaṇa texts clearly say with Marxist analysis before its day, in order to exploit the rest of the population.[578]

## § 9.2. Planned Sanskritization

The establishment of the new Kuru order qualitatively differed from the more gradual Ṛgvedic political and social developments. In Ṛgvedic times, there clearly were some "non-Aryan"[579] chiefs whose non-Vedic names (such as *Varo* Suṣāman, *Balbūtha*, *Bṛbu*)[580] give them away. These rulers, however, all followed Indo-Aryan religion, sacrificed to the Aryan gods and gave the customary *dakṣiṇā* to their poets and priests.[581] They represent examples of an early wave of Sanskritization,[582] or rather acculturation, which still was rather incidental, unplanned and disorganized. It must, however, have been fairly wide-spread and thorough as not just the names of kings but even the linguistic features of Vedic Sanskrit indicate acculturation.[583] Even the hieratic poetic language of the RV hymns shows the increasing influence of the local substrate[584] (and, incidentally, much more than the closely related Old Iranian, which kept many of the archaic Indo-Iranian features and has relatively fewer loan words than Vedic, see Witzel 1999.

Now, under the Kuru kings, Sanskritization was well-planned and represents major changes in social format.[585] It included, in a strategically advantageous way for the Kuru, the older (Ṛgvedic) elements of ritual with its priests, texts, and language, while exceedingly stressing its traditional character by being overly archaic and restrictive. The new class system introduced, for the first time, non-Aryans such as the Śūdras into the Vedic society[586] but, at the same time, barred them from ritual. Only by way of exception, prominent non-Aryans such as the *Niṣāda-sthapati* and a "border line" artisan, the *rathakāra*

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[577] Note that the Brahmins pretend to be pre-eminent and semi-independent: "Soma is our king" they say in the royal consecration. They accept orders only from him and not from the king whom they just have consecrated. The texts, however, also stress that the nobility is the "eater" and the Brahmins are their "food", see Rau 1957: 34 n.6.

[578] See Rau 1957: 118, A. Weber 1868, *Ind. Stud.* 10, 26-35.

[579] See also Kuiper 1991.

[580] Bṛbu, "lording over the Paṇis on the Gaṅgā", 6.45.31 (part of a late addition to the hymn). His grandfather had immigrated; Bṛbu fights with the Bharatas.

[581] Note Kuiper's definition of *ārya* as those offering ... (above).

[582] Srinivas 1952, 1989, Staal 1963.

[583] In this regard the Ṛgvedic period is materially different from the (pre-)history of the relation between some Indo-Aryans and the Hurrite Mitanni, who have retained some Aryan names for their kings, technical vocabulary for horse racing, etc.

[584] See Kuiper 1955: 137-185, 1991, cf. Hock 1975, Emeneau 1980, Witzel 1999.

[585] As Claessen (1984) calls it; for details see Claessen & Skalnik 1978.

[586] Cf. the parallel in the development of the class system in the Greek *polis*, see G. Nagy 1990.

(Minkowski 1989b)*,* were allowed to sponsor sacrifices[587] -- early forms of the inclusionism that later on characterizes Hinduism, in fact, until today.[588]

The effect was the creation of permanent, and after all the liberal Ṛgvedic intermingling and acculturation, an *artificial* boundary between Aryans and non-Aryans (*śūdra-ārya*).[589] The changes in the social formation, from semi-nomadic tribe to a larger tribal union, needed a definite expression in order to be able to function as a "new order." This is frequently expressed as antagonism between classes and groups both in language and ritual, and is first met with in the "first constitution of India,"[590] the *puruṣa* hymn of RV 10.90. Such demarcations are, as is observed elsewhere,[591] a typical reaction to an initial stage of free and wide-spread acculturation. The dominant *brahma-kṣatra* elite, already thoroughly mixed with local and aboriginal elements, now encapsulated itself *vis-à-vis* the "third estate", the Vaiśyas, and stressed its superiority with regard to them, as well religious and racial "purity" over the non-Aryan Śūdras.

### § 9.3. The role of the king and state formation

One of the strategies of the Kuru kings by which they achieved their new status was the gaining of booty in their external expeditions (see below) and its distribution. But, this was supplemented by the collection of "taxes", rather, the coercion of "tribute," *bali*. It has always belonged to the traditional duties of a king (and a *kṣatriya*) to collect *and* to distribute wealth, down to modern times: the king is supposed to distribute *dāna*. He is the ideal type of a "benevolent lord" who seems to give more than he takes from his subjects but supports his nobles and other subjects.

Sociologically speaking, this is typical for many early societies, whether based on collecting/hunting, simple horticulture or agriculture, or on (semi-)nomadic pastoralism. However, since the Kuru period, this kind of exchange, implemented throughout the realm, has been institutionalized in Indian society in a semi-religious fashion. As W. Rau (1957) has pointed out, the mutual relationship is expressed in the Vedic period by the concept of *bhartṛ :: bhārya*. However, the form of exchange follows a complicated pattern, as form of "social contract" that cannot be detailed here.[592]

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[587] See MS 2.9.5 on their chieftain, the Niṣāda-*sthapati*, cf. KS 17.13, TS 4.5.4.2. AB 8.11 etc.

[588] Similar patterns of Hinduization are visible in modern Nepal, Orissa, and in medieval Bali.

[589] On this term see Oertel 1936.

[590] See Paul Mus, *East and West* 9, 75-77.

[591] Even the British in India did not react differently in the 1830s when their free-wheeling lifestyle as half-Indianized traders was changed, after the arrival of steam ships (with their British wives) by a series of "reforms" that brought them in line with the (soon to be "Victorian") norms of their British homeland.

[592] Reminiscent of the modern *jajmān* relationships, but extending to other areas as well: it comprises a social contract including several generations, as well as the relationship between men, their ancestors and the gods; see, in brief form, S. Jamison and M. Witzel in: A. Sharma, *Hinduism* (2003).Longer version 1992 (online).

The RVKh Kuntāpa hymns still reflect something of the old ideal in their description of the golden age of Parikṣit, with the distribution of booty (*vidatha*) at a great festival at the time of the winter solstice. But the Ṛgvedic pattern of a ritual exchange of goods and booty within a small tribe is now replaced by complicated (Śrauta) ritual and social exchange within the larger Kuru realm, in which, nevertheless, tribal sub-units survive. As has been pointed out above, the Kurus had three, and their neighbors, the Pañcāla, six (originally three) such sections. The great royal rituals underline the new and strengthened position of the king: Vedic ritual is not always as private as some think.[593] The power of the Kuru king was qualitatively different from that and much greater than that of a chieftain, say of the Yadu tribe, in the RV (see below).

The expanded rituals are supported by the increasing stratification of society during the Mantra and YV Saṃhitā period. It is visible, apart from the establishment of the four classes (*varṇa*), in the formation of a large number of artisan specialists that are mentioned in the more complicated royal rituals such as the Aśvamedha.[594] This development coincides with an increasing production of goods: now, also the land *between* the rivers is settled and production increases;[595] later on, the east, too, is 'reformed' by the Kuru-Pañcāla Brahmins, whose 'culture hero', Agni Vaiśvānara, "sweetened the country as to make it suitable for agriculture". Excess production apparently took place only after the establishment of a central power, such as that of the Kuru or that of the legendary Videha king as well as that of the better attested Kosala and Magadha realms. Centralized power also brought about the perceived necessity of specialized crafts, best visible at the occasion of the great state rituals.

As far as the rest of the nobility and gentry was concerned, competition for superiority (*śreṣṭhaḥ svānām, ahaṃśreṣṭha*) among them was stimulated when it did not interfere with the role of the supreme chieftain, the King of the Kuru. All important positions in society were occupied by the alliance of Brahmins and Kṣatriyas (*brahma-kṣatra*), that exploited -- according to their own words -- the rest of the population; but within this new system competition was possible and indeed persistent.[596] Rivalry and competition is also clearly visible in the newly developed Śrauta ritual (if one disregards, for the moment, the usual phenomenological, pseudo-historical, and "philosophical" approaches to Vedic ritual).

## § 9.4. Social and ritual reform

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[593] Heesterman underlines their private character too much. Even a simple Agnihotra can attract visitors -- at least nowadays, and Vedic evidence points to similar, contemporaneous occurrences (*upadrāṣṭṛ*). Certainly, larger rites, such as Soma sacrifice, and especially the Horse sacrifice, were often disturbed by rivals.

[594] See e.g. the list in VādhB., Caland 1990*: 365

[595] See G. Erdosy 1999. The early settlements are on the banks of rivers, Yamunā and Gaṅgā, only; this is still reflected in some Mantras of the (much later) Gṛhyasūtras, see Witzel 1987: 205.

[596] The examples are too numerous to be quoted, see for example the many expressions with *bhrātṛvya* (cf. E. Gerow 1985, 292 sqq.), Rau 1957: 45.

Indeed, one of the strategies of achieving their goal of an internal competition without peril was the setting up by the Kuru kings of the complicated Śrauta ritual, that once and for all divided the people into four classes, and forged a new unity, based on exchange between Brahmins and Kṣatriyas (*brahma-kṣatra*).[597] The Kuru kings also succeeded in controlling, in turn, the older, amorphous groups of priests[598] by a clear subdivision of their ritual labor.

This was now re-distributed into four fields of specialization, i.e. the four Vedas and their ritual use. These four groups of priests (RV: *hotṛ*, SV: *udgātṛ,* YV: *adhvaryu*, AV: *brahman*) [599] had specified duties during the solemn (Śrauta) rituals. The priestly occupations were even further divided, for good measure, into sub-specializations of 16 or 17 types[600] -- something not unlike the increasing specialization among the craftsmen and artisans. In both cases, centralized power stimulated specialization.

On the other hand, with a political master stroke, the Kuru kings also succeeded in controlling the aristocracy, that is their fellow Rājanyas and Kṣatriyas, by giving them something else, new, and fashionable to 'worry about': the complicated Śrauta ritual.

It is surprising that even the contemporary specialists of Vedic ritual have not noticed that the Śrauta ritual - while often having one and the same aim, namely reaching heaven - is set up in such a way as to satisfy various levels of solemnity and status. A Vaiśya of little wealth might have been content with the domestic (*gṛhya*) rituals of passage that are executed for him and his family. However, a lower rank Kṣatriya might have attempted to go on to the next step on the socio-religious ladder and become a *dīkṣita*, that is an initiated "sacrificer" (*yajamāna*), after having learnt more of the Veda than a Vaiśya (such as a *grāmaṇī*, a "trek leader")[601] or a lower rank Kṣatriya owner of such a wagon train (a *grāmin*), or a simple *kṣatriyabandhu*. After he had established the three sacred fires, he could then perform the *Agnihotra*, the New and Full Moon sacrifices, etc. If he wished for more, he could add the seasonal rituals (*Cāturmāsya*) and the yearly Soma ritual. If he was still not content with this and wished to impress his rivals further (who would often come to interfere with or destroy his rituals),[602] he could go on with seven more types of Soma rituals (*soma-saṃsthā*). While violent interference with one's ritual may have been a remnant of a more agonistic period, as Heesterman believes (this would be the one of the RV, not of a nebulous past!), ritual violence was still visible but tamed. Nobody takes the trouble to disturb a simple Agnihotra or New- and Full Moon ritual. It is the more important rituals, especially the Aśvamedha (capturing the horse), which bring out the rivals of the sponsor. What is

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[597] See Rau 1957: 59-60, 118: they exploit the *viś*.

[598] See the enumerations in RV, with five or seven priests, e.g. RV 8.72: Adhvaryu, Hotṛ, etc.; see above § 4.5.

[599] Even though the Atharvaveda remained a text that was not fully recognized for quite some time.

[600] Note the same technique in medieval Orissa where we find not one but four *rājaguru*s, see Pfeffer 1975, 1982.

[601] Cf. German *Herzog* 'the one who marches (*ziehen, zog*) in front of the army (*Heer*)', 'duke'; see Rau 1957: 56.

[602] This is overly stressed by Heesterman; note that in the *sattra* ritual everyone could come and dispute with the sacrificers until the 11th day (called *avivākya* "no discussion" day, see Falk 1986: 35)! The custom of verbally challenging the sacrificer(s) and participants in the ritual, - who could lose their heads if they did not know the answer, - went on until well into the Upaniṣad period, see Witzel1987.

important here is that these expected rivalries were cleverly channeled in the new, Śrauta way of stratification.

The next level is that of the nobility of royal blood *(rājanya)*, i.e. of men who are "fit to be elected as kings" *(abhiṣecanīya*, Rau 1957: 84 sqq.), then that of the *rājan*s themselves, not "kings" but rather "chieftains"; for example one of the 3 among the Kurus or one of the 6 of the Pañcāla. And, finally, there is the supreme chief, the King of the Kurus.

The nobility had the means - and probably also the leisure - to perform such rituals as the *agnicayana*, a complicated rite taking a whole year, or -- instead of the seasonal offerings *(cāturmāsya)*, -- the *Gavām Ayana* which also takes a year. In similar gradation, a low rank ruler could receive, as pointed out above (§ 4), the consecration as chieftain through the simple royal *abhiṣeka* (Rau 1957: 89) the more complicated *rājābhiṣeka*[603] and *ekarājābhiṣeka*,[604] or the solemn *aindrābhiṣeka*,[605] and finally, there was the most solemn Śrauta option of the *rājasūya*. Later on, a revised, complicated Śrauta version of the Ṛgvedic, originally even Indo-European,[606] horse sacrifice *(aśvamedha)*, was added for especially powerful supreme kings who claimed "world domination"[607] that however only encompassed parts of (northern) India.

In the case of Parikṣit (or his supposed namesake), there may have been a very direct reason for the introduction of the complicated *Rājasūya* ritual, namely the lack of a son by his own predecessor. In other words, the Rājasūya was invented, formalized by inclusion of many diverse rites into the framework of a *Soma* ritual,[608] and was carried out (for the first time?) in order to effect Parikṣit's own adoption by the ruling (Bharata) royal family. It may be speculated that Parikṣit was from the Ikṣvāku, Pūru, or some other royal line. Actually, we can see the process of Śrauta adaptation happen before our eyes: it has not been noticed so far[609] that another Mantra time text, Paippalāda Saṃhitā 10, was composed to serve as "coronation" text of the early Kuru kings. It is here that we see, for the first time, the mentioning of typical Śrauta terms such as *sava*. In connection with the evidence from the *kuntāpa* section of RVKh, described above, the *śrautification* of the "coronation" ritual clearly is under way. More importantly, there is the connection, proposed by H. Falk, of the Rājasūya and royal adoption, which is hinted at already in an older text, the Rohita book of AV (ŚS 13, PS 18.15-26). In this connection it is noteworthy that the son of the Aikṣvāka King Hariścandra also was called "the Red One" (Rohita); he was exchanged for the Brahmin "Dog Tail" (Śunaḥśepa, at AB 7.13 sqq.) when he was about to be offered in sacrifice by his own father. Rohita apparently is added to this story in order to show his descendence from

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[603] **KS 37.9, TB 2.7.15-17, Baudh. ŚS (as *Mṛtyusava*) 18.16-19, ĀpŚS 22.28, etc. See above § 4.4.**

[604] **As found in the Atharvavedic manuals and in Kauśikasūtra, see Witzel 1987.**

[605] **In AB 7. 13 sqq., see Witzel 1987.**

[606] **For a brief summary see Puhvel 1989: 269-276, and now Possehl & Witzel 2003.**

[607] **As *cakravartin*, etc., see S. Tambiah, 1987. The first attested case is that of the great chieftain Sudās, RV 3.53.11-12, and the Aśvamedha of the chief Purukutsa, RV 4.42.8-9.**

[608] **See above, § 4.4.-- Note the *Sava* ritual in PS 10.**

[609] **See Tsuchiyama.**

Rohita, the Sun.[610] The term *rohita* also hints at the close connection of the "brilliance of the sun" and of royal glory (*varcas*, Avest. xvar³na). This whole complex, too, is in need of further investigation.[611]

 Summing up the discussion of ritual it can be said that by the time of the Mantra period, there were, on all levels of Indo-Aryan society, several *ritual* options available to each man if he wished to attain fame and glory, *kīrti* and (*brahma*)*varcas*. Every Rājanya, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya could perform such solemn rites on an offering ground near his home.[612] The new Śrauta ritual thus put everyone in his proper station and at his proper place: in the life cycle and in society, both during the period of one's Veda study and the roaming about as Vrātya as well as during one's time as "settled" householder (*gṛhastha*). There was opportunity for each and everyone to gain higher status by having the Brahmins perform more and more elaborate rituals -- instead of simply raiding one's neighbors.[613]

## IV. STRUCTURE

### § 9.5. The political structure

 The immediate outcome of the establishment of the new system of Śrauta ritual for a king of the Kurus was this: his "reform" unified various smaller tribes by a single, but complicated network of mutual ritual relations; this frequently was of a dualistic and partly antagonistic nature (note especially the Kuru-Pañcāla *vrātya* relationship that imitates the *deva :: asura* strife in myth, and the *ārya :: śūdra* competition in society).[615]

 The older dual organization of the Five Peoples of Ṛgvedic times (Anu-Druhyu, Yadu-Turvaśa) was probably echoed in the Kuru kingdom by that of the Bharata-Pūru. This pattern emerges more clearly when the Kurus started to spread eastwards. The new territories (up to Kausambi /Allahabad) were settled by groups who then organized

[610] That is Vivasvant/Mārtāṇḍa, one of the great Āditya gods; Rohita was engendered with the help of the Āditya god Varuṇa. -- Note that the problem of origin from the twins Yama/Yamī (by incest) is avoided that way, - which was a problem for the Ikṣvāku descendants among the Śākyas, the clan of the Buddha.

[611] Note that "brilliance" and glory often are linked in Indo-Iranian thought (cf. Iran. xᵛar³nah). On *varcas*, see Tsuchiyama.

[612] He had to ask the king for permission, however, to use land for this. Incidentally, this is contrary to R. Thapar's opinion (1984) that the king had no ownership of land; note that in a late Vedic text, BĀU 4.2.4, Janaka is reported to have given away his whole country to Yājñavalkya (Witzel 1987: n. 76, 97, also n. 11); -- cf. Rau (1957: 57, 38) on (late) land grants.

[613] Though vastly differing in time and society, this is a 'trick' not unlike that of Louis XIV who made his nobles stay at Paris for part of the year and gave them ceremonial duties such as chamberlain. Cf. also the obligatory yearly visit of the Daimyōs to the Edo court of the Shōgun.

[615] Note that it is formalized in the Mahāvrata ritual as a Śūdra :: Ārya conflict (ĀpŚS 21.17 sqq. etc., see Witzel 1997 (Prosimetrum); the discussion on the Aśvamedha mentions the taking away the goods of the lower classes, see Vādhūla Śrautasūtra 3.79, Caland 1990: 370 sq.; note also Oertel 1936: 249, on the compound *śūdrārya*, cf. Krause 1937: 103, and again Oertel 1937: 64. - During the Ṛgvedic period it might have been a Bharata :: Pūru configuration.

themselves as the Pañcāla tribe,[616] that was explicitly divided into *six* sub-units, -- a fact that should lay to rest all speculation about the origin of the name in the number "five".[617] The (Pūru-)Ikṣvāku are mentioned to have settled on their eastern rim near Benares.[618] Both major tribes now formed the new dual tribal union of the Kuru-Pañcāla.

The relationship between Kurus and Pañcālas was ambiguous. On the one hand, both royal families intermarried.[619] This, actually, was one of the strategies of the supreme Kuru king aiming at asserting his authority at this highest level, and has been a favorite method in all early states that cannot rely on paid bureaucrats but must rely on various types of relations, built on personal loyalty between the ruler and his nobles. Polygamy, which is well attested for Vedic kings,[620] helped to establish multiple relationships with important external and internal noble families, something that certainly was necessary as the Kurus and Pañcālas[621] still were divided into three viz. six powerful subgroups.[622] The device, in fact, was one of the means to forge alliances between various exogamic units of *gotra*s even for the richer ones among the Kṣatriyas and Brahmins.[623]

On the other hand, the union (of ritual[624] moieties) of the Kurus and Pañcālas was stressed by the custom of sending their *Männerbund* associations (sodalities, *vrātya*) into each other's territory:[625] note the story (KS 10.6) about king Dhṛtarāṣṭra Vaicitravīrya.[626] The

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[616] This included the Ṛgvedic Krivi tribe, see above for other members.

[617] See literature in Mayrhofer, *KEWA* II 188, *EWAia* II, 66. see above, on other, misleading etymologies. -- Note that the YV school of the Pañcāla, the Taittirīya, has 6 subschools (Baudh., Vādh., Bhār., Āp., Hir., Vaikh.), which echo, also in location (see Witzel 1987: 205), the divisions of this great tribe.

[618] Ikṣvāku in the eastern parts of the Kuru-Pañcāla-Kosala area, see above n. 29, 31, Witzel 1989: notes 253, 349, 389; cf. JB 3.168-170: § 190. Note that JB has Tryaruṇa as an Ikṣvāku, see Witzel 1995:§ 5c with n. 57; cf. also JB 3.237-238: §204, JUB 4.6.1.2.

[619] See JB 2.278-9.

[620] Note the technical names of the Kuru king's wives already in the Kuntāpa hymns.

[621] See above n. 48-50.

[622] Cf. also n. 30 for the name Kṣatra.

[623] A well-known example are the two wives of Yājñavalkya, Maitreyī and Kātyāyanī, who is called a *mahāśāla* Brahmin (see Witzel 1989: 221 n. 314). Polygamy later on led to the necessity to specify the mother of a certain prince (or a Brahmin's son): See the names in *-putra* in the Maurya, Sātavahana dynasties, and of the authors of ŚB in the Vaṃśas of this text.

[624] Note the ritual competition between the two tribes, e.g. at JB 1.262, where they hold a debate (*brahmodya*) on cosmological and theological questions.

[625] Note also that even the Jaiminīyas, who live south of the Yamunā, still send their sons northwards, into the Kuru-(Pañcāla) territory (JB 3.146), and not southwards, beyond the Vindhya, into "new territories" such as those of the Vidarbhas, which are mentioned at JB 2.442 (cf. also AB 7.34, with their chieftain Bhīma).

[626] Why this Kuru king? Does this reflect the *vrātya*, i.e. a not always amiable relation between Kaurava and the Kuru-Pañcāla *vrātya,* here led by a Pañcāla: Vaka Dālbhi, a *sattrin* from the Naimiṣa wilderness, who has a typical Pañcāla name (like Keśin Dālbhya, see Witzel 1991); cf. also Koskikallio, *EJVS* 3). On the other hand, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is clearly described here as Kuru chieftain. See Falk 1986: 58 sqq. -- Cf. also AV 8.10.29,

*vrātya*s were not accepted by him, and therefore destroyed his cattle with the help of some rituals.[627] Note also the story in BŚS 18.26 about the Vrātyas of the Kurus in the land of the Pañcālas.[628] Most telling, perhaps, is the note about the Southern (Madhya Pradesh) people at JB 3.146 who send their sons northwards to the Kurus.[629] It is important to note that the young men associations do not enter new, "virgin" territory south of the Vindhya but enter, just as the Kurus and Pañcālas respectively, in their *vrātya* excursions the land of their closest orthoprax neighbors. This clearly indicates that *vrātya* exchange is carried out between (nominal, ritual) allies,[630] and *not* between, for example, the Aryans and the aboriginal tribes of the south. -- At the same time, the stories translated by Falk (1986) indicate something of the traditional aggression resulting in cattle rustling, fighting and small scale warfare existing with one's neighbors which was now canalized by the new (*vrātya*) ritual.

Through the ritualization of these relationships, social and political energy could now be projected either towards a common goal, namely expansion to the east and south,[631] or otherwise towards more or less innocuous, often petty rituals that enabled ambitious Kṣatriyas to compete with their neighbors and rivals. This sort of rivalry always existed, even within the clan, where one wanted to become *śreṣṭhaḥ svānām,* Zimmer 1985).

### § 9.5.1. Emergence from a small center

While the strategies described so far were successful in the establishment and enlargement of Kuru power, the rather minute origins of the Kuru realm are reflected by the terms used for its incipient "administration." The titles of the royal functionaries or ministerials [632] include designations such as 'butcher', 'dice-thrower', or 'driver', etc. At

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PS 16.135.8 Dhṛtarāṣṭra Airavata (and cf. further PB 25.15, cf. the list in the *pāriplava*, see S.C. Chakrabarti 1989).

[627] See transl. Falk 1986: 58.

[628] See above, n. 37, see Falk 1986: 55 sqq.

[629] Cf. Rau 1957: 14 "wenn ein Vater seinen Sohn aussiedelt, dann siedelt er ihn im Norden aus." I think this rather is a question of *vrātya* movement to one's neighbors, see n. 37.

[630] The "south", i.e. the JB territory north of the Vindhya and South of the Yamunā, is inhabited by Matsya (on the Yamunā), by the Satvants, both going back to Ṛgvedic times, and apparently also by the (aboriginal?) Kunti, MS 4.2.6 *Kúrūṇāṃ kaunté*, cf. above §5.4.-- Note the fight of the Pañcālas with the Kuntis, see Witzel 1989: n. 113, KS 26.9 at the end.

[631] See KS 26.2 : 123.17, MS 4.7.9 : 104.14, TB 1.8.4.1, but contrast ŚB 5.5.2.3-5, cf. and Rau 1957: 13, Witzel 1987: 178, Bodewitz 1973 transl. JB 1.66 sqq., p.276 n. 31. -- Note that this also refers to ritual: JB 1.262: § 94 is very clear in this regard: the Śrauta ritual had by then spread even to the *udantya*s, Witzel 1987: 187.

[632] See W. Rau 1954: 107 sqq., Scharfe 1989. The officials (*ratna/ratnin*) are: *purohita* 'house chaplain', *senānī* 'army leader', *grāmaṇī* 'trek leader' or later 'village' head, *sūta* 'herald', *saṃgrahītṛ* 'chariot driver', *kṣattṛ* 'meat cutter', *bhāgadugha* 'food distributor (at the 'table')', *govyaccha / govikarta* 'cow butcher', *akṣavāpa* 'dice thrower', *takṣan* 'carpenter', *rathakāra* 'chariot maker', *pālāgala* 'runner', and other *rājopajīvin*s; note also the *sthapati* of the indigenous tribe of the Niṣāda (Rau 1957: 113), others offcials include: *ugra/pratyenas* 'henchmen' (who do not belong to the aristocracy); *dūta* 'emissary', *abhikrośa* 'herald', *piśuna, pariskanda* '?'

first glance, these seem to be rather minor servants at the home of the king.[633] The titles of the kingdom of the Franks readily come to mind, titles such as chamberlain (*Kämmerer*), pourer of wine (*Mundschenk*), master of the wagon train (*Truchsess*), horse master (*Marschall*, *marshal*).

Actually, this comparison is not as unhistorical as it may look at first. Just as the Kurus formed the first larger tribal union of the Indo-Aryans, so did the Franks among the Germanic tribes: both suddenly emerged, complete with their newly coined name, from a number of Indo-Aryan / Low German tribes. And just like the Franks, the unified Kurus also spread quickly beyond their original territory, especially eastwards and southwards. Part of this expansion may have been limited to the periodic raiding and looting of new agricultural crops,[634] taken from the pockets of aboriginal agricultural populations (Niṣādas, with popular etymology, "those sitting at their proper places"), and may have occurred as recurrent parts of the yearly transhumance movements.[635] But in other cases[636] we notice a long-range advance eastwards.

§ 9.5.2. Royal ritual

The originally quite small nucleus of Kuru power is also visible in the (royal) ritual itself. Most of the older, Ṛgvedic and tribal rituals were linked to the course of the days and nights, the phases of the moon, the seasons, and the course of the sun. However, the new unified and rearranged Śrauta ritual, with its highly archaizing tendency, not only included all aspects and all officiants of the older rituals, but it also included some major new royal and 'national' rituals. These took place, just as their counterparts performed by the gods, at the Kurus' spiritual and political center in Kurukṣetra, at *Āsandivat* 'the (place) having the throne', obviously a temporary seat of the constantly traveling Kuru kings;[638] other names for their royal settlement (*sādana*) are *Naḍapit* and *Rohītakūla*.[639] Some other rites took

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[633] Some of them continued all through the medieval period in the English kingdom or the Franconian kingdom and its successor states, i.e. the medieval German empire, and some even survive in such modern English titles as *marshal* (in charge of mares, stable master), *chamberlain* (chambers, household), *or beefeater* (from French *buffetier*).

[634] See Rau 1957: 13, and Heesterman 1985: 258, *ad* TB 1.8.4.1.

[635] Again, some of the Germanic tribes may be compared. Even the Western Gothic Kingdom (Visigoths) in Spain mainly had laws about pastoralism, in spite of the long tradition of Spain as one of the major wheat producing provinces of the Roman empire.

[636] Such as the march eastwards of the Kurus (TB 1.8.4.1), the victory of the Pañcālas over the Kāśi, ŚB 13.5.4.19.

[638] Note that the kings roam about in their territory (again, not unlike the Franconian kings), because of their comparative lack of centralized power, in order to control the various parts of their realm, see Claessen 1984, Rau 1957: 128.

[639] PB 14.3.11-12; Sāman of Viśvāmitra who won a race with it at this locality in Kurukṣetra (cf. also Shafer, 1954: 94); but cf. JB 3.183: § 192 about Viśvāmitra and the Bharata, Mahāvṛṣa on the high bank (*kūla*) of the Yamunā, with a folk etymology for the name *Rohitaka-kūla* (from the two ruddy, *rohita*, oxen of V.); The

place "at the back of Kurukṣetra" at *Parisaraka or Parīnah* (Witzel 1984) where the river Sarasvatī disappeared in the desert.

## § 9.5.3. The realm of a Great Chieftain

All of these strategies and the changes brought about underline the increased power of the supreme *rājan* of the Kuru as a new "Great Chief."[640] The relation between the 'royal' court, the subtribes (*jana, janatā*), the clans (*gotra*), and the individual families (*kula*) was characterized by the ability of the higher levels in the social hierarchy to extract tribute (*bali*) from the lower levels. These tributes (in kind) still were to some degree "recycled" during the great rituals just as they had been in Ṛgvedic times (during the *vidatha*, Kuiper 1960). However, the royal officials of the budding administration of the Kuru kings (see above), also took their "fair" share. That this was not always taken in genial fashion can be noticed already in a Mantra time text, at Atharvaveda 3.29.1, which describes the other world as one where one has to give up just one sixteenth[641] as tribute. The Mantra and Brāhmaṇa texts bear frequent witness to the relatively undetermined nature of this kind of "tax".[642] Sahlins (1963) has described this type of society in some detail.

The royal officials were "paid" by the king from his *bali*. They did not hold just ceremonial offices (such as the *govikartā*, etc.[643] but had real "administrative" functions as well: as army leader (*senānī*), herald (*kāru*) or emissary (*dūta, sūta*), as royal priest (*purohita*) who was closely linked to the actual carrying out of government (and who was very closely allied to the King also on a personal level, sometimes as his chariot driver).

The various levels of authority within the new super-tribe are discernible to some degree: At the top was the king (*ekarājan*[644] as JB 2.275 and later on an Atharvavedic text have it), his relatives and his peers (the high aristocracy), from which alone the king could be chosen (*rājya*).[645] Below this ranged the smaller chiefs (*rājan*), three in the Kuru, and six in the Pañcāla tribe.[646] Then came the leaders of the various clans who strove to become "the best" (*bhrātṛvya, ahaṃśreṣṭha*); for them a title is not found. They may, however, often

name should rather refer to that of the river bank, cf. *kulyā*- RV); cf. also Rohita PS 18.15-26 = AV 13, and his relation to the (red) sun, *varcas* (cf. xvarⁿah).

[640] Note that the Persian king used a similar terminology: "King of Kings", Darius DB 1; on this construction see Oertel 1937. How different, indeed, was the Kuru king from the one of the Francs?

[641] See already RV 8.47.17; AV 3.29.1 "What the kings share among themselves - the sixteenth of what has been offered- and-bestowed - you assessors (*sabhāsád*) of Yama: from that white-footed sheep, given [as] ancestral offering (*svadhā'*), releases" (Whitney).

[642] Examples in Rau 1957: § 24.3, 25, 40.2, p. 104.

[643] Rau 1957: 107.

[644] In the late Kauśika Sūtra; cf., the Mantra time names *samrāj, adhirāj*, see Witzel 1987: 183.

[645] See Rau 1957: 68: the Vaiśya and others were *a-rājya*.

[646] Note that according to Rau 1957, one could be a *rājan* even before one's "coronation". Note also the more than 7000 "*rāja*s" of the Vesāli people in the Pāli texts. -- Cf. S. Zimmer 1985.

have been identical with the owner (*grāmin*) viz. the leader of a wagon train[647] (*grāmaṇī*). Significantly, this term was first introduced in RV 10, thus under the Bharata kings. Finally, there is the head of the extended family (*dampati, pitā(mahā), pati*).[648]

The king could exert his will by a ready band of [649]"terrible [warriors]" (*ugra*)[650] or henchmen. He also relied on a network of spies, known since Ṛgvedic times as *spaś*, in the Brāhmaṇas perhaps as *piśuna*; this institution was perfected under the early empires, as described in detail by Kauṭilya (as *cāra*). Nevertheless, the chieftain and even the Great Chief of the Kuru, was not, by any means, an absolute monarch. He could be disposed by a rebellion among his peers or by the people. This happened fairly frequently; the person of the exiled king is a recurrent topic in the texts of the YV Saṃhitā and the Brāhmaṇas, and special rituals were created to let him regain his kingdom.[651]

The new concentration of power created, as Sahlins (1963) notes, at the same time, the roots for its destruction, of revolution. Absolute power was realized only in the first great states, with aspirations of empire, such as Magadha about 500 BCE[652] The Vedic Kuru realm still resembles that of a large Polynesian chieftainship[653] such as that of Hawai'i -- and with a similar ideology.[654] In its origin and size, though not in its ideology,[655] it may be compared with another early state, the realm of the Franks under the Merowingian kings.

## § 9.6. Religion and myth in the new realm

The new religious and political ideology necessary for the expanded dimension in tribal organization included many elements of the older, Ṛgvedic beliefs about mankind's

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[647] Cf. again the Germanic term Germ. *Herzog*, Dutch *hartog* "the one who leads in front of the army [on the move]". See Kulke (1991) on the wish for a settlement.

[648] See Rau 1957: 38 sqq. for details of the later, YV Saṃhitā and the Brāhmaṇa period.

[649] See Witzel Channa (forthc.)

[650] See Rau 1957: 114, who takes them as some sort of military men, referring to the famous passage of BĀU 3.8.2, who were ranked higher than other officials such as the *grāmaṇī*, etc. Cf. also *pratyenas*, loc. cit.

[651] See W. Rau 1957: 128 sq. on revolts and the exiled king. Note that the AV and the YV have many rites for regaining such power. One case is described in great detail in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa: Balhika Prātipīya, the Kauravya king (ŚB 12.9.3.1 sqq.) is opposing two exiles who join forces to regain the chieftainship over the Kuru subtribe of the Sṛñjaya.

[652] Which is, consequently, characterized in quite unpleasant fashion, by the Indian Epic in the person of king Jārasandha of Magadha (Mbh. 2.14 sqq.).

[653] Sahlins (1963) has described this type of society in some detail for Polynesia.

[654] Which is not only an accident of history or the result of social and economic development. Both societies make use of the old Eurasian "ideology" of a descent of the chiefs from the Sun deity. More on this see Witzel (1995): Vala and Iwato.

[655] Though the Vedic (and later Indian) kings had to give (*dāna*) they did not and could not hand out such gifts continually, as the Franconian kings did (cf. Claessen, 1984). Rather, they had to rely on periodically making booty in the east and of distributing new pasture (and also fields for barley and rice agriculture) to their nobility and their people (*viś*).

descent from the gods, their access to heaven and to eternal "happiness" after death. For example, warriors who died in battle were taken to heaven by the Apsaras (the rather unnoticed sisters of the Norse Walkyries), and they were readily accepted there by the gods -- a topic found from the Rgveda[656] onwards all through classical literature, even as late as 1151 CE in the Rājataraṅgiṇī where the motif figures prominently.[657]

An important, if not the chief one among the religious developments is that the new royal center in Kurukṣetra gave rise to a new mythology of the region. The Kurukṣetra area was conceived as the "center of the world", a trait first visible after the victory of the Bharata king Sudās and his settling on the Sarasvatī (RV 3.53). Such identifications of one's habitat with the center of the world are common among many peoples, and in such cases the place of the ritual always is regarded as the center (e.g. among the Sioux or the Polynesians); it is found already at Sudās' offering ground, located according to RV 3.53.11 *vara ā pṛthivyāḥ* "at the best place of the earth". However, Kurukṣetra now also became the place where even the gods offer (*devayajana*).[658] The source of the river Sarasvatī, which flows through Kurukṣetra, is in the tree Plakṣa Prāsravaṇa (the Plakṣa tree of "forth-streaming"), and one span north of this tree is the center of both heaven and earth (JB, VādhPiS).[659] At this location, the Plakṣa tree clearly is the central world tree that pushes up heaven.[660]

Furthermore, the heavenly river (Sarasvatī, the Milky Way) was regarded as flowing down from heaven at this spot about the time of the winter solstice: it thus opened, with its two branches touching the north-eastern horizon, the "gate" to heaven.[661] This is a transformation of the older Rgvedic concept of the 'heavenly gates', a standard feature found in the *āprī* hymns.[662] In addition, by performing a sort of pilgrimage along its banks, against the current of the stream, one could move along the Sarasvatī (= Milky Way) through the night sky and reach heaven, just like in China a certain contemporary of Yan Junping[663] is

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[656] Note the promise given to Purūravas, RV 10.90.18; cf. KU 1.4, etc.

[657] Kalhaṇa, Rājataraṅgiṇī 7.173 "brave men wedded to the heavenly maids (*apsaras*)..." The concept is perpetuated in the later Rājataraṅgiṇīs of Jonarāja (15th cent.), etc. - Cf. also Bhagavadgītā 2.31-32 *yudhād chreyo 'nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate || yadṛcchayā copapannam svargadvāram apavṛtam | sukhinaḥ kṣatriyāḥ ... labhante yuddham īdṛśam.*

[658] On *devayajana* cf. below.

[659] See Witzel 1975, 1984; cf. also "at the navel of the earth" RV 8.43.4 *nabhā pṛthivyā, bhuvanasya majmane*; and "the best place on earth" RV 3.23.4 *ni tvā dade vara ā pṛthivyā, iḷāyās pade*; 3.53.11 Sudās will offer at the best place on earth: *athā yajāte vara ā pṛthivyāḥ* (cf. above n. 4).

[660] Cf. in Germanic lore, *Yggdrasil*, which is the source of three rivers.

[661] See Witzel 1984. -- Note, however, that some of these data come only from slightly later texts, such as the prose of the Yajurveda Saṃhitā (TS), and in even more detail from the Brāhmaṇas (JB, PB). Nevertheless, they reflect older ideas, as the inverted tree is already found in the Rgvedic *aśvattha*, held upside down by Varuṇa 1.24.7, cf. TĀ 1.11.5, and later on at KaṭhU 6.1, BhG 15.1-3 (see Kuiper 1972, 1964, Witzel 1995). -- The concept of Kurukṣetra occurs first at MS 2.1.4, 4.5.9; then at AB 7.30, ŚB, JB, PB, KaṭhB, and TĀ 5.1.1 (with a description of its borders); that of *devayajana* as early as ŚS 10.5.15-20, PS 16.129.1-5, MS 1.1.8, KS 1.7, TS 1.2.3., etc. but the two are not immediately linked formally; though descriptions such as MS 2.1.4:5.9 are clear enough: *devā' vái sattrám āsata kurukṣetré* [[cf. Oberlies 1998/99.

[662] See van den Bosch 1985 and cf. Witzel 1984.

[663] A famous Taoist of the first cent., at Chengdu in Sichuan.

reported to have done, according to the Bowu zhi,[664] or, in a different version, Zhang Qian under emperor Wu in the second century BCE.[665]

Access to heaven is, apart from these specialized cases, one of the major topics of all Śrauta ritual. Next to sons, rain, cattle, long life (*āyus*) it is a prolonged (theoretically, but only by exception, eternal as for Purūravas) stay in heaven that one strives for after a stint on earth, characterized by constant strife and frequent hunger, as has been described in detail by W. Rau.[666]

## § 9.7. The collection of texts (and rituals)

In order to carry out many of the religious and social reforms mentioned so far and as to achieve the general purpose of overlord ship in northern India,[667] the Kuru kings initiated, apart from the re-organization of the traditional ritual, also a collection of the major poetic and ritual texts, -- certainly intended to show their care for *traditional* lore and knowledge. The "trick" was to preserve the old but to institute some, often minute changes as to serve the new ruler's goals. In the case of traditional Aryan lore, the aim was not only to collect all (suitable) texts but also to re-arrange them in a fashion suitable for the new goals. The old ritual hymns and some poetry were assembled in the Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā, the major ritual Mantras and early explanatory prose texts in an *Ur*-Yajurveda-Saṃhitā, the melodies sung during the Soma sacrifice in an *Ur*-SV-Saṃhitā, and the healing and other charms as well as speculative hymns, though all reworked by Āṅgirasa Brahmins, in an *Ur*-AV-Saṃhitā.

However, this cannot under any circumstances have been an easy task. What could have motivated the late Ṛgvedic and early Mantra time poets and "copyright owners" and priests to make major changes in text transmission and ritual performance? The 'extraction' of the often secret *ṛc* and Mantra texts from their authors' and "owners'" clans of poets and priests cannot have happened without a certain amount of pressure. Traditional owners of the "copyright" to a certain hymn were not likely to divulge the exact text or to voluntarily give up all their exclusive rights to the private collection of texts, composed and customarily also transmitted by their family or clan. Therefore, the carrot of "joint ownership" by the newly formed Brāhmaṇa class (RV 10.90) or, at least by those Brahmins learning just one Veda by heart, had to be offered as well.

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[664] Ch. 10 §, 211,111.

[665] Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty sent Zhang Qian to find "the source of the Yellow River"; he stayed with the Huns, (Hiung Nu/Xiongnu), from where he went on to Da Xia, i.e. Bactria in 128 BCE.

[666] Rau 1957: 31.

[667] See ŚB 13.5.4.1 sqq. with hymns which praise the Bharatas, especially 13.5.4.23.

Indeed, the tradition of individual and clan-wise origin of each hymn was preserved by a complicated system of arrangement of the Ṛgvedic hymns in the "collection" (*saṃhitā*), which took into account the author whose name must be mentioned, to this very day, before reciting a hymn.[668] Thus, the goal of having a new, fixed text collection fit for Śrauta ritual was achieved by preserving much of the traditional status of the poets/priests, their rights, and their "ownership" of compositions in sacred speech.

The collection of texts was not only made from the poets' clans closely allied with the Bharata royal family, such as the Vāsiṣṭha, but in order not to lose continuity, also with hymns linked to the glorious past of the Pūru and even the Yadu-Turvaśa, Anu-Druhyu tribes. Many if not most of the traditionally remembered old hymns were included in the "national" collection of hymns, the Ṛgveda, though the hymns of the Bharata and the Pūru clearly dominate the collection.

Once the collection was fixed, there was no longer a need to create new hymns -- which was a major goal of poets/priests (*brahán*) in Ṛgvedic times. What was still carried on, however, was the composition of new speculative hymns: in the late RV, under the Bharatas, and especially in the AV under the Kurus. Note that the poet (*brahmán*) of the RV now reappeared as author of (part of the) AV, which was at first called *ātharva-āṅgirasa*, "the (collection of hymns) of the Atharvans and Aṅgiras." [669] Many of these new hymns deal with the ritual and its "philosophical" underpinnings, such as *yajña*, "food *:: (brahma-)odana, ucchiṣṭa*, etc.

In all these cases one can notice that one of the means used to bring about continuity, in spite of the great changes carried out under the Kurus, was the artificial archaization of certain parts of the new Śrauta ritual as well as the use of artificial, archaic forms in the poetic and learned language of the poets, priests and "theologians" of the Mantra and YV Saṃhitā periods. The new ritual and its language appeared to be more elaborate and impressive but at the same time, had to give the appearance of having come down from a hallowed past. (see above § 4-6.)

## § 9.8. Expansion from the new center

The formation of early states such as that of the Kurus usually brings about important changes in ideology, religion and mythology. The new arrangement of the Vedic society -- superficially united in a diversity of four classes -- did not only provide each member of the new Kuru super-tribe with a clear and *fixed* identity but it also allowed society to eliminate much of intra-tribal and inter-tribal strife, such as the constant cattle rustling, and to turn

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[668] The arrangement is based on the author, deity, type of meter and length of hymns and the number of hymns in each collection that originally belonged to one poets' clan (except for books 1, 10, and 9, - and to some extent book 8). Even on the surface, the "family books" of the RV remind one of this diverse origin, and later on, the collection of the (traditional) names in the late RV-Anukramaṇī and the compulsory mentioning, even of author as well as deity and meter before beginning to recite a hymn carry on the memory of the original "owners".

[669] As has been mentioned above, most of the authors of the Ṛgvedic hymns belong to the Aṅgiras clans, and one of the major residual clans of the RV is that of the Bhṛgus who played an important part in the formation of the AV as well: the text is called in GB after the Bhṛgv-Aṅgiras, or even Brahma-Veda (after its priest, no doubt).

the Kṣatriyas' activities *outwards*. Military expansion quickly established the new Kuru tribe as the only major force among the few remaining smaller tribes of Northern India, such as the Matsya, Satvant, Uśīnara. While the nuclear area of the Kuru was the eastern Panjab, Haryana and the western part of Uttar Pradesh, they soon made their presence felt beyond this.

The military expansion of the Kurus may have been limited to the periodic raiding and looting of new agricultural crops,[670] taken from the pockets of aboriginal agricultural populations (Niṣāda, "those sitting at their proper places"), and may have occurred as recurrent parts of the yearly transhumance movements. But in other cases[671] we notice a long-range advance. The texts clearly describe this as happening in two directions: eastwards (KS 26.2:123.17; including the victory over the Kāśi) [672] and southwards (MS 4.7.9:104.14). [673] This means, expansion into the territories of the materially little progressed, chalcolithic cultures of the east and into the lands of the aboriginal agricultural peoples of the south, the Banas/Malwa cultures along the Chambal river. Expansion westwards was less profitable because of the arid climatic conditions of the Panjab and because of the pressure of new Aryan tribes constantly arriving from the direction of the Afghan mountains: a Vedic text warns that one should also watch one's back.[674]

As confirmed by the development of the Vedic dialects (§ 6), the newly stratified society of the Kurus with its model of orthopraxy emerged from a fairly small territorial nucleus and the new pattern spread quickly in all directions, as far as the natural conditions of the subcontinent would allow. The testimony of the texts, their language, and archaeology indicate the expansion of these traits from a small nucleus centering around Kurukṣetra.

Considerable re-organization of texts, rituals and social functions therefore were the hallmark of the strategies underlying the establishment of the Kuru realm. Especially the introduction of the Śrauta type ritual, the division of labor between the King and his brahmins, the close cooperation between Kṣatriyas and Brahmins (*brahmakṣatra*), and even more so, the establishment of the system of four classes (*varṇa*) was to become seminal for the development of Indian society ever since.

In sum, this period with its increasing influence of IA language and culture, albeit in a new acculturated form, culminates in the evolution of the template of later Indian civilization, during the Kuru realm (Witzel 1995, 1997), with its particular reformed but archaizing style of IA ritual, religion, social set-up and political style, that is a decentralized early state with a Great Chieftain or 'king', surrounded by allied chieftains. This cultural

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[670] See W. Rau 1957: 13, and Heesterman 1988: *ad* TB 1.8.4.1.

[671] Such as the march eastwards of the Kurus (TB 1.8.4.1), the victory of the Pañcālas over the Kāśi, ŚB 13.5.4.19.

[672] Cf. ŚB 13.5.4.19 sqq.; note that Ajātaśatru is (at the same time?) king of Kuru, Kāśi; see Witzel 2003.

[673] Cf. Rau 1957: 13, without making use of the different direction of movement, though. Kulke & Rothermund 1986 make this connection.

[674] Rau 1957: 14: "whoever is only victorious in the other (*parāḥ*) direction, his conquered (land) others occupy; who is victorious in both directions, for him free movement (with his *grāma*s) comes into existence." ŚB 6.7.3.5

pattern served as template for the spread of Vedic and 'Hindu' culture for a long time, and in some areas of the subcontinent even today.


§ 9.9. Later Vedic history

The Kuru realm survived under Parikṣit's descendant, Janamejaya Pārikṣita, Janamejaya's sons and his grandson Augrasainya, and probably beyond this.[675] A closer reading of the texts yields more results for this still very hazy picture of Vedic history: the Kurus were overcome by the (probably non-Vedic) Salvas [676] who "dispersed the Kurus from Kurukṣetra" (JB 2.206, ŚŚS 15.16.11-12),[677] -- a fact completely overlooked by the historians of old India. The Salvas (or *Salvi*), mentioned at ĀpMp 2.11.12 as Yaugandhara, settled opposite or near the Matsyas on the Yamunā. By that time, the former and by now defeated Kuru tribe and the Salvas had apparently coalesced and they therefore re-appear in a late Brāhmaṇa text[678] as a standard Vedic people, and then, in the Epic and Buddhist literature as Śūrasena.[679] The name of the Kurus was kept alive during the Vedic period,[680] and, in fact, the conquered Kuru area appears to have been thoroughly (re-)Sanskritized[681] already by the time of ŚB: these late Kurus are not reckoned with the Bāhīkas ("the Outsiders") of the Panjab but are again regarded as belonging to the

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[675] Cf. ŚB on the fights with the Kāśi.

[676] Later known as the Y(a)ugandhara: ĀpMp. 2.11.12.

[677] The fight of the Kurus with the Salvas may be echoed by the great battle of the Mahābhārata, where it is confused with the Ṛgvedic Dāśarājña (between the Bharatas and the other tribes of the Panjab; note also the earlier one, the Twenty Kings' Battle of RV 1.53.9); all of this was distant memory even by the time of RV Khilas, and definitely so in JB 3.245 §205, KS 21.10:50.1 and MS 3.7.7: 40.6: the victory of the pre-Kuru Bharata was amalgamated with other battles (note also the ouster of Duṣṭarītu as chief of the Sṛñjayas, a sub-group of the Kuru, and the role of the (Bactrian?) Balhika Prātipīya king in this, ŚB 12.9.3.1 sqq.; note finally, the defeat of the Kurus by the Salvas. --- The Salva invasion may also have been (one of) the reason(s) for the emigration of the Vedic schools of the Kāṇvas, the Śāṇḍilyas, the Aitareyins eastwards, and the Maitrāyaṇīyas southwards.

[678] Cf. also ŚB 10.4.1.10, where the Salvas have the regular classes (*varṇa*): *rājānaḥ*, *brāhmaṇāḥ*, and *vaiśyāḥ*.

[679] Perhaps originally a nickname, cf. the names of the sons of Parikṣit, such as Ugrasena etc. -- The name is foreshadowed in JB 1.262: "Therefore, among the Kuru-Pañcālas, a hero (*vīra*) is born with all the heroes." -- In the Epic they occasionally occur next to the Kuru(-Pañcālas).

[680] Note the Kuru Jataka which remembers, in quite legendary form, the Kuru kings as virtuous men of the distant past. -- Cf. French "*France*", derived from the name of the Germanic kingdom of the Francs, spanning current French and German territory; or cf. French *Allemand*, taken from the Allemanni tribe in south-west Germany, Alsace and Switzerland, or note Near Eastern *Fering/ji* < Franc, or Germanic *Welsh/Welsch* for their Western, mostly Romance speaking neighbors.

[681] For the nature of the Salvas, see Witzel 1989: n.333; cf. further, the information of JB 2. 297-299 on *vyādhinīḥ* the female(!) hunters that may be compared to the story of Alexander meeting the queen of the Amazons in north-west India, see now Garzilli (1997).

heartland of orthopraxy. Note also the fierce *Kathaíoi* "tribe" (i.e. *Kaṭha Brahmins*) who live in the same area as the Salva (and Mahāvṛṣa) at the time of Alexander.[682]

Against this background it is not surprising that a late Vedic text, BĀU 3.3.1, can look back at the royal family of the Kuru as belonging to the distant past. The passage (ŚB 14.6.3 = BĀUK 3.3.1-2) mentions the fate of the Pārikṣitas, the royal family of the Kurus, and asks: "what has become of the Pārikṣitas?" -- The answer is: "they have, in truth, gone where the offerers of horse sacrifice go" -- and this is a 'heaven', a place beyond the ends of the world, and the ring ocean around it.[683] Apparently they thus have gained a firm place in heaven, that is otherwise granted only to such extra-ordinary persons such as the Seven Ṛṣis.

These few passages might, ultimately, provide the clue for the prominence, in the later YV-Saṃhitā and the Brāhmaṇa period, of the Pañcālas with their Taittirīya, Kauṣītaki, Śāṭyāyana schools. The political and cultural center now had shifted to this tribe that lived more towards the East, in what is now Uttar Pradesh. The Pañcāla king Keśin Dālbhya and his successors are prominent in a later YV-Saṃhitā, TS, and beyond.[684]

According to JB 2.278-9, however, Keśin was closely related to the royal family of the Kuru: his maternal uncle was Ucchaiḥśravas, son of Kuvaya, the King of Kurus (*kauravya rājā*). Apparently he simply took over when the Kuru line was in decline (or without heirs?), due to the Salva invasion.

Keśin is also credited with the 'invention' of the *dīkṣā* of the Soma sacrifice.[685] He is both the new political as well as the "spiritual" leader. The power of this dynasty lasted much longer than that of the original Pārikṣita dynasty. His descendants, who traditionally had intermarried with the Kaurava royal family, are reported as being numerous even in the comparatively late ŚB where they are called Dālbhya/Dārbhya Kaiśina.[686]

The mysterious Ikṣvākus, which once appear at RV 8.60.4, may help to explain the developments in the eastern part of the Pañcāla area. They are mentioned already at AV 19.39.9 = PS 7.10.9 as one of the Eastern groups (with the Kāśi and Matsya), living at the edge of Indo-Aryan settlements: at that time, the Kāśis were still outside the pale of Vedic

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[682] **Arrian, Anabasis 5.22. This "tribe" is reported to be one of the fiercest in north-west India. Alexander was almost killed in the siege of its major town, *Sággala*. Normally it is not in the nature of Brahmins to be in the forefront of battles, but obviously their name here stands for that of the tribe; cf. Patañjali, Mahābhāṣya 6.3.42:157.14 *kaṭhadeśīya, kaṭhajātīya*, (cf. also *Kaṭhī vṛndārikā = Kaṭhavṛndārikā* "the female chief", or "the wife of the chief of the Kaṭha" 6.3.42:157.13). All of this indicates that Kaṭha also is the name of a territory and "tribe/caste" (*jāti*). Cf. Wirth & v. Hinüber 1985: 929, cf. p. 1096.**

[683] **"Then there is an interspace, as broad as the edge of a razor or the wing of a mosquito. Indra, taking the form of a bird, delivered them to Wind," which reminds of the Sarasvatī pilgrimage aimed at gaining access to heaven. -- (... *sa tvā pṛcchāmi, yājñavalkya, kva pārikṣitā abhavann iti. sa hovāca:.. tad yāvatī kṣurasya dhārā, yāvad vā makṣikāyāḥ pattraṃ, tāvān antareṇākāśas... tān vāyur ātmani dhitvā tatrāgamayad yatrāśvamedhayājino 'bhavann iti*. Cf. Klaus 1986.**

[684] **For the prominence of Keśin Darbhya, see Witzel 1990: 40-41; cf. also JB 1.285. Koskikallio, E*JVS* 3.**

[685] **Keśin's invention, the consecration of the Soma ritual, called *Kaiśinī dīkṣā*, is told in VādhB 4.37 = Caland 1990: 147 sq., KB 7.4, JB 2.53; he gains this knowledge from the conversation with a dead king; cf. Sri Krishna Sharma 1968.**

[686] **ŚB 11.8.4.6 says that Keśin's descendants continue to survive.**

culture (at least for PS).[687] In the Pāli texts (DN 3.1.15 sqq.), Okkāka (Skt. *Ikṣvāku*) is the forefather of the Śākyas, who lived in the central Tarai of southern Nepal. A connection of the Ikṣvāku territory with that of the Kāṇvas (of the Brāhmaṇa period and their ŚBK texts) is highly probable. The Rāmāyaṇa takes the Ikṣvāku ancestry of the Kosala dynasty of Rāma for granted. Its appearance in the East may be directly correlated with the movement of the King Videgha Māthava into the country East of the Sadānīrā. (To the Kāṇva, this is the country East of the Kuru-Pañcālas, i.e. Kosala).[688]

The famous Videgha Māthava legend of ŚB 1.4.1.10 sqq. tells the story of the "civilization process of the East" in terms of its Brahmanical authors, and not, as usually termed, as the tale of "the Aryan move eastwards.[689] For it is not only Videgha Māthava, a king living on the Sarasvatī, but also his priest Gotama Rāhūgaṇa who move towards the east. Not only is the starting point of this "expedition" the holy land of Kurukṣetra; the royal priest, Gotama Rāhūgaṇa, is a well-known poet of Ṛgvedic poems as well, -- and thus, completely anachronistic.[690] Further, the story expressively mentions the role of Agni Vaiśvānara, the ritual fire, in making the marshy country of the East arable and acceptable for Brahmins. All of this points to Sanskritization (or rather, Brahmanization) and Kṣatriyazation[691] and not to military expansion.[692]

The *Māthava*, about whom nothing is known outside the ŚB,[693] may be identical with the *Máthai* of Megasthenes (c. 300 BCE), who places them East of the *Pazálai* (Pañcāla), at the confluence of the *Erénnesis* (Son) with the Ganges.[694] The movement of some clans, with their king Videgha and his Purohita, eastwards from the River Sarasvatī in Kurukṣetra towards Bihar thus represents the 'ritual occupation' of Kosala(-Videha) by the bearers of orthoprax (and orthodox) Kuru culture, but it does *not* represent an account of the first settlement of the east by Indo-Aryan speaking tribes that must have taken place much earlier as the (still scanty) materials of archaeology indicate.[695]

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[687] Cf. also Ikṣvāku in the Vādhūla Mantras, see Witzel, 1980. Cf., especially the ethnographic data on Ikṣvāku myths, Berger 1959.

[688] Note the intention of the story: Gotama Rāhūgaṇa is otherwise known only as the author of *Ṛgvedic* hymns. To make him the culture hero of the East is as conspicuous as the sudden replacement of whole schools, notably the Aitareyins, Śāṇḍilya, Śākala, and Kāṇvas into the East.- Note also the Ṛgvedic name Namin Sāpya as King of Videha at PB 25.10.17, interestingly described as making a "pilgrimage" to Kurukṣetra, the holy land of the Veda and the home of Gotama Rāhūgaṇa and Videgha Māthava, who in ŚB are the prototypes of the eastward movement of Vedic orthopraxy.

[689] R. Hauschild, Über die frühesten Arier im Alten Orient, p. 55 on the migration of Videgha, cf. Hauschild 1962; Weber, 1855: *Indische Studien* 1,161 sqq.

[690] Unless one takes the ŚB legend literally and supposes a Ṛgveda time move towards the east. The rest of the current section will contradict such a proposition: it presupposes the development of the Kuru orthopraxy.

[691] To use H. Kulke's term.

[692] Which nevertheless is attested: "The people move eastwards victoriously," in the earlier YV text, KS 26.2:123.17, cf. Rau 1957: 13.

[693] Now explained by Gotō from (*pra-)math*.

[694] See Arrian, Indikē 4.5 and cf. the commentary by v. Hinüber 1985: 1095; cf. also Witzel 1987.

[695] Note the two level settlements, of OCP, see above § 7.

# V. SUMMARY

## § 9.10. Summary

Summing up the whole process it can be said that the Bhārata/Kaurava/Pārikṣita dynasty of the Kurus successfully carried out *and* institutionalized a large scale re-organization of the old Ṛgvedic society. Many aspects of the new ritual,[696] of learned speech,[697] of the texts and their formation[698] reflect the wish of the royal Kuru lineage and their Brahmins to be more archaic than much of the texts and rites[699] they inherited. In this fashion, the new Pārikṣita kings of the Kurus betray themselves as typical newcomers and upstarts who wanted to enhance their position in society through the well-known process of "Sanskritization." In fact, to use the modern term out of its usual context, *the establishment of the Kuru realm was accompanied by the First Sanskritization.*[701] Incipient state formation can only be aided if it is not combined with the overthrow of *all* inherited institutions, rituals, customs, and beliefs. The process is much more successful if one rather tries to bend them to one's goals or tries to introduce smaller or larger modifications resulting in a totally new set-up. The new orthopraxy (and its accompanying belief system, "Kuru orthodoxy") quickly expanded all over Northern India, and subsequently, across the Vindhya, to South India and to S.E. Asia, up to Bali.

This procedure is visible in the Bharata/Kaurava dynasty's large scale collection of older and more recent religious texts: in all aspects of ritual,[702] language and text collection,[704] these texts tend to be more archaic than much of the inherited older texts and rites.[705] On the other hand, the new dynasty was effective in re-shaping society[706] and its structure by stratification into the four classes (*varṇa*), with an internal opposition between

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[696] Note especially the re-introduction of archaic materials such as the clay pot used in the Pravargya rite, etc., see above § 4.

[697] See above, on *kṛṇoti* instead of *karoti*, *Kṛṇva* instead of *Kaṇva*, etc.

[698] Inclusion of all the Ṛc materials, including some old Yadu-Turvaśa, Anu-Druhyu and many of the Pūru hymns.

[699] See above on the Pravargya vessel, and on the Brahmanization of the AV, § 4.

[701] Ironically, if we use Srinivas' (1952) term, -- of people speaking Vedic Sanskrit.

[702] Note the re-introduction of archaic materials such as the clay vessel used in the Pravargya rite, already occurring at RV 5.30.12-14 etc.

[704] Note that the persistent tradition of the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas about an "arranger of the Vedas" (*Vedavyāsa*) may go back to these developments. Compare, however, the comparatively late occurrence of such "Ṛṣis" as Vaiśampāyana TĀ 1, and Kaṭha, Tittiri (especially in Pāṇini) and some other late Vedic texts.

[705] See above on the Pravargya vessel, which was made of metal in Ṛgvedic times but of clay in the YV.

[706] Note the *Puruṣa* hymn RV 10.90, with its designation for the four classes (see above) and note that this is a late hymn indeed: it also has one of the first cases of *loka* instead of *uloka* (otherwise 8.100.12 *loka*; and cf. 3.2.9 *u loka*, 6.47.10 *no loka*).

*ārya* and *śūdra*, which effectively camouflaged the really existing social conflict between the *brahma-kṣatra* alliance and the rest, the *vaiśya* and *śūdra*. Further, the Bhārata/Pārikṣita dynasty was successful in reorganizing much of the traditional ritual and the texts concerned with it. (It must not be forgotten that public ritual included many of the functions of our modern administration, providing exchanges of goods, forging unity and underlining the power of the elite.)

The small tribal chieftainships of the Ṛgvedic period with their shifting alliances and their history of constant warfare, though often not more than cattle rustling expeditions, were united in the single "large chiefdom" of the Kuru realm. With some justification, we may now call the great chief (*rājā*)[707] of the Kurus "the Kuru King". His power no longer depended simply on ritual relationships such as exchange of goods (*vidatha*)[708] but on the extraction of tribute (*bali*)[709] from an increasingly suppressed third estate (*viś*) and from dependent subtribes and weak neighbors; this was often camouflaged as ritual tribute, such as in the Aśvamedha.

Though all these aspects of early state formation are clearly discernible in the texts, the whole process is in need of a still more systematic investigation that could not be undertaken here. The present essay merely aims at laying the ground work. First, it aims at establishing the roots, secondly at identifying the various causes and initial strategies of change, and third, at describing the obscure early stages in the emergence of the new Great Chiefdom, the Kuru Realm.

In view of the data presented here, we are entitled to call the Kuru realm the first state in India.[710] To quote W. Rau, who has described the social and political conditions of the YV Saṃhitā and Brāhmaṇa period in some detail: "... the Indians of the Brāhmaṇa period lived in political organizations which, with good reasons, can be called states."

It must be underlined, again, that the developments that brought about the Kuru realm were lasting and not transient ones as those under the Ṛgvedic Pūru or Bharata. In effect, many of the changes in religion and society then carried out shape Indian society even today.

## VI. EPILOGUE

Finally, a brief note about the methodology, or --perhaps less pretentiously-- on the various techniques that were used in the present investigation. Due to the nature of the

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[707] Note that even this title is traditional. While other areas of northern India use titles such as *adhirāja, sarvarāj* (see above) etc. the Kurus and Pañcālas retain the simple title of *rājan*. One may regard this as another "trick" of the Kuru king: he stresses that he is only a *primus inter pares*.

[708] Again, note that Parikṣit still uses this term at RVKh 5 -- though he must have been the one who formed the early Kuru state.

[709] Rau 1957: 104, cf. also § 24.3, 25, 40.2.

[710] Of course, barring the "decipherment" of the Indus seals which might point to a political and social organization that can be compared to Near Eastern states. See, however, now Farmer at the 3rd and 4th Harvard Round Table, http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~sanskrit/RoundTableSchedule.html.**See:Farmer,Henderson,Witzel@2000.**

available materials, we had to start with the Texts. These were scrutinized in their various aspects, that is:

* their structure, layers of composition, internal chronology;

* the language they use, especially the dialect features; their style; occasionally, also the study of comparative, historical linguistic data;

* the rituals they mainly deal with, their structure, development and their use in the contemporaneous society.

Then, a comparison was attempted with another sort of materials, taken

* from archaeology, and a comparison was made of the evidence from the texts with that from archaeology.

While using both the evidence from the texts and from archaeology, various angles were applied:

* geography, including historical geography and climate;

* astronomy, again including the reconstruction of older phases in the astronomical knowledge and interpretation;

* some sociological and historical analysis, (though I will leave most of this to colleagues).

What is important is not only the use of as many sorts of materials as are available or rendered useful by applying them in comparison, but also the inclusion of the methods of various sciences or at least of some of their aspects. All of this is, of course, nothing really new, as philologists have always made use of such materials and approaches, but it is important to stress it, as philology, after all, is not, as some now maintain, a study of "words", but a '*Kulturwissenschaft* based on texts.'[711] The examination of a particular culture or civilization must always include investigations not only of the oral and written texts but also of the various material and immaterial aspects of this civilization and its geographical, historical and social settings.

In the present case, that of the origin and early development of the Kuru state, the investigation is also typologically interesting: The Kuru realm seems poised on the borderline between the old tribal chiefdoms (of the RV) and the fully developed state with its incipient

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[711] As was felicitously formulated during a brief conference on "What is philology?", held at Harvard University in 1988.

bureaucracy, that of Magadha.[712] It quickly developed into the first Indian empire of the Maurya.


## § 10 THE IMPORTANCE OF KURUKìETRA

We can now return to our initial question: Why, of all northern Indian territories, is the fairly remote and small area of Kurukṣetra so important? An answer can now include the following statements.

It is the strategic center of N. India between the Himalayas and the desert, at the time, controlling the roads east- and westwards. It serves as a bulwark against continuous invasions from the west, protecting (MS 4.7.9, KS 26.2, ŚB 6.7.3.5) the "closely packed settlements" of the east (AB 3.44). Even in Alexander's time the area was still inhabited by the fiercest fighters of India whom his biographers mistakenly took to be the *Kathaioi* (Kaṭha; see Pauly's *Realencyclopädie*, 20, 2512 sq.).

It is the "center of the world," already for the Ṛgvedic king Sudās. Post-Ṛgvedic texts describe the northern part of Kurukṣetra as the place where the central world tree (Plakṣa Prāsravaṇa) grows towards heaven. One span north of this tree is the center of both heaven and earth.[713]

It is here that the Heavenly River, the Sarasvatī of Vedic times, descends down from the night sky, and -- streaming forth from Plakṣa Prāsravaṇa -- continues to flow through Kurukṣetra as the rivers Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī.[714] Moreover, if these two rivers represent the two branches of the Milky way, the 'gate' between them is, of course, identical with Kurukṣetra and therefore with heaven. This is why it is a divine offering ground, *devayajana,* where even the gods offer: it actually *is* heaven. And as a reflection of heaven on earth is regarded as representing the whole earth (PB, Ruśama).[715]

It is here that in ca. 1000 BCE the heavenly river (Sarasvatī, the Milky Way) could be seen as flowing down from heaven at the winter solstice and thus opening the "gate" to heaven.[716] It is here, through the gate to heaven, that one can go there directly, by marching north day by day against the stream of the Sarasvati or Dṛṣadvatī, the representation on earth of the Milky Way. This falls down on earth at the Plakṣa Prāsravaṇa, the world tree at

[712] Note that much of the antipathy and animosity towards the organized state is visible in the Mbh. description of Magadha's (mythical) ruler, Jārasandha,while the supra-tribal state of the Kurus is regarded as the norm and, apart from the intra-tribal fight of the Pāṇḍava and Kaurava, as representing the golden age of ancient India, exactly as RVKh 5 and the Kuru Jātaka do.

[713] JB, VādhPiS; see Witzel 1975, 1984; cf. that already in the RV, the area of the later Kurukṣetra is mentioned as: "at the navel of the earth".

[714] Cf. the term *aśmanvatī* in RV 10.53.8, AV 12.2.26-27; Weber wanted to take it as "Milky Way", but cf. Geldner's and Whitney's comm. on the verses. See further PB 25.10.5, 25.13.4 and JB 2.297-298: §156 on the Sarasvatī/Dṛṣadvatī "pilgrimage".

[715] A variety of the Roman myth of covering up a large stretch of land by an ox hide cut into strips, see Stith Thompson (1934), motif K185.1-11. Ruśamā running around Kurukṣetra, identified with the whole world, is motif K 185.5.

[716] For details see Witzel 1984.

the center of heaven and earth,[717] and then continues to flow through the land of the Kuru people,[718] -- which is identified with the whole earth.[719]

The area was conceived as the "center of the world", a trait first visible after the victory of the Bharata king Sudās and his settling on the Sarasvatī (located according to RV 3.53.11 *vara ā pṛthivyāḥ* "at the best place of the earth"). Such identifications of one's habitat with the center of the world are common among many peoples,[721] and in such cases the place of one's local ritual always is regarded as the center.[722]

It can only be here that the gods established their *devayajana*,[723] and hold their endless *sattra*s, vying for pre-eminence and constantly defeating the Asuras. In other words, it is here, on this "holy ground" that the Kurus of Parikṣit defeat in ritual (*Kuntāpa* festival) and in battle (note : *vidatha*) their rivals, the aboriginal Dāsa/Dasyu (Kīkaṭa, Niṣāda etc.), and their internal representation, the Śūdra, as well as the surrounding Aryan tribes, such as the Matsya, Uśīnara. Even the Pañcāla are regarded just as a branch, supplying the necessary moiety complement, represented in myth by the Asuras who constantly compete with the gods.

Kurukṣetra has remained India's sacred land ever since,[724] though it quickly became a politically peripheral area. During the Vedic period one thought that it was the area, inhabited by the Kuru and Mahāvṛṣa, (including the "North" KB 7.6), that pure Vedic (*ārya vāc*) was spoken;[725] even the very late Vedic text, the Manu Smṛti, still regarded it as the most sacred area in Āryāvārta (Northern India). The ritual and spiritual center may by

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[717] See Witzel 1984: one span north of Plakṣa Prāsravaṇa (the Plakṣa tree of "forth-streaming") is the center of both heaven and earth (JB, VādhPiS); just as in Germanic lore, where *Yggdrasil* is the source of three rivers. Cf. later on the concept of Meru/Kailāsa from where the four rivers Sītā, Vakṣu, Sindhu and Gaṅgā stream forth, cf. Lüders 1951/1959.

[718] The concept of Kurukṣetra occurs first at MS 2.1.4, 4.5.9; then at AB 7.30, ŚB, JB, PB, KaṭhB, and TĀ 5.1.1 (with a description of its borders); that of *devayajana* as early as ŚS 10.5.15-20, PS 16.129.1-5, MS 1.1.8, KS 1.7, TS 1.2.3., etc. but the two are not immediately linked formally; though descriptions such as MS 2.1.4:5.9 are clear enough: *devā vai sattrām āsata kurukṣetre*.

[719] Ruśamā myth PB, above.-- Later ritual (PB 25.13, JB, LŚS, etc.) makes the Sarasvatī and her companion river, the Dṛṣadvatī, the place of long treks which one may perhaps call "pilgrimages" along their banks, leading to heaven, as the heavenly river (Sarasvatī, the Milky Way) was regarded as flowing down from heaven at this spot, about the time of the winter solstice: it thus opened, with its two branches touching the north-eastern horizon, the "gate" to heaven. -- All of this is unmatched by any other area mentioned in Vedic texts. Places like the Naimiṣa forest (though mentioned already in KS 10.6: 130.8) and certainly Prayāga and Kāśi attain this kind of fame only well after the Vedic period.

[721] Note the ancient Chinese concept of the "middle kingdom", and Manu's term *madhyadeśa* for much of Northern India between the *vinaśana* of the Sarasvatī and Prayāga; the term is still found in modern Nepali *madhes "lowlands."*

[722] However, the Plakṣa tree clearly is the central world tree which pushes up heaven. See Witzel 1975, 1984.

[723] MS 2.1.4:5.9 *devā vai sattram āsata kurukṣetre.*

[724] See study by C. Minkowski 1989, referred to above, n. 2.

[725] See Rau 1957: 18, Witzel 1989: 101; note also TS 5.3.4.4.

then have shifted first to a new *Antarvedi* (the Gaṅgā-Yamunā *doāb*),[726] to Videha and to Magadha. But, even according to later Vedic literature (PB 25.10.17), a Videha king came to Kurukṣetra for a 'pilgrimage' along the Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī rivers. Eastern areas such as Videha itself were colonized by Brahmins from the Sarasvatī, with king Videgha Māthava and the Ṛgvedic Ṛṣi Gotama Rāhūgaṇa as their leaders. Even medieval kings still called in Brahmins from the Sarasvatī area to colonize Assam, Orissa, or Konkan (c. 600-900 CE). Incidentally, Harsha's dynasty comes from the Kurukṣetra town of Thanesar; and even the modern capital of India was founded, ironically by the British, at the place of the old Indraprasthā, just east of Kurukṣetra, but well within the confines of the Kuru territory.

Pilgrimages to various places along the Sarasvatī are still made.[727] And to make good for centuries of neglect of the area and as to underline the ancient Bharata roots of the Indian Union, modern *Bhārat*, one founded a new university there, Kurukṣetra University. Finally, in recent years, there have been a revivalist and nationalistic attempts to trace the course of the old, dried up river, improbably, down to the Rann of Cutch. Some even want to reflood it.[728] Others want to make it the "center" of the Harappan/Indus civilization, which clearly developed further west, in the foothills of Greater Iran, that is in Baluchistan/NWFP) before it spread eastwards (Possehl 1996). Some have therefore renamed the Harappan civilization[729] as the "Indus-Sarasvati Civilization" and have turned it, in spite of an exceptionally strong presence of non-Indo-Aryan place names in the Sarasvatī area (Witzel 1999), into an originally Sanskrit speaking one. The old Kurukṣetra thus serves, if not as a *devayajana*, once again as the rallying ground for a new Kuru Realm, that of a re-assertive, Hindutva Bhārat.

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[726] There is another Sarasvatī in Madhyadeśa, found in the Northern version of the Mahābhārata only; cf. Mbh 9.2188 with 7 Sarasvatīs; cf. further VS 34.11; the Kauśikī of MBh 3.6065 seems to be a tributary of this river; cf. also Oldenberg 1882: 410.

[727] For the importance of Kurukṣetra, see also B.C. Law, *Kurukṣetra in ancient India*; P.V. Kane 1930-: List of Tīrthas, *History of Dharmaśāstra* IV, 802; Majumdar 1972, p. 4 sqq.; Singh, Kurukshetra - Past and Present, *Prajñājyoti*.

[728] Which would erase any of the important archaeological sites in the fossilized bed of the lower Sarasvatī/Hakra rivers.

[729] The name of a civilization is given after the first site excavated of it, -- a common practice in archaeology.

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