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The Ikṣvākus in the Rigveda

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According to India's traditional Indian history, in the most ancient period the whole of India was divided among the ten sons of the mythical First King **Manu Vaivasvata**: this translates into Ten Great (conglomerates of) Tribes, who are believed to have been the occupants of different parts of India. However, very little is known about eight of these, and whatever little is given about them is so meagre, garbled, and mixed with all kinds of contradictory data, that it becomes clear that the Puranic editors in northern India were well acquainted with the history of only two main divisions mythically treated as descendants of two of the "sons", **Ilā/Sudyumna** and **Ikṣvāku**: the **Lunar Race (Aīlas)** and the **Solar Race (Ikṣvākus)** respectively.

The Rigveda is the **Book of the Pūru**, and in fact, in the earlier period of the Rigveda, in the **Family Books** (2-7), it is specifically the **Book of the Bharata Pūru**.

The **Anu** and **Druhyu** to their west and northwest are mostly their *rivals* and *enemies*, especially in the earlier periods, though there is more friendly co-existence in the period of the **New Books**, (5,1,8,9,10), the **Mature Harappan** period.

The **Yadu** and **Turvaśa (Turvasu)** to their south are farther off, almost always referred to as a pair, described as coming from afar after crossing many rivers, on specific occasions where they are sometimes friends and sometimes enemies. These are the **Five Tribes** known to tradition as the **Lunar** tribes.

But what is the role of the **Ikṣvāku**, or the **Solar**, tribes in Rigvedic history? It would appear that they were too far to the *east* to have played any important role in Rigvedic history. Nevertheless, one section of the **Ikṣvāku** did play an important role in the Rigveda. We will examine here the exact nature of this role:

- I. The Ikṣvākus in the Rigveda.
- II. The Northwestern Connection.

I. The Ikṣvākus in the Rigveda

The word **Ikṣvāku** is found only once in the whole of the Rigveda, in **X.60.4**. It simply means "**the Sun**".

However, the **Ikṣvāku** are referred to in the Rigveda by another name: as the **Trīkṣi**: this word is found twice in the Rigveda: **VI.46.8**; **VIII.22.7**.

a) In the second reference, **VIII.22.7**, the word is used as an epithet of a king called **Trāsadasya**, "**the son of Trasadasyu**". The actual name of this king, "**the son of Trasadasyu**", is not given in the hymn, but most Indologists assume his *name* to be **Trīkṣi**, on account of the phrase "**Trīkṣim Trāsadasyavam**" (mis)translated as "**Triṣi, the son of Trasadasyu**". However, it should actually be translated as "**the Triṣi, the son of**

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Trasadasyu", meaning "**the son of Trasadasyu, of the Trikṣi (tribe)**". The other earlier reference makes it clear that the word is not the name of a *person* but of a *tribe*:

b) The first reference, **VI.46.8**, is one of those *directional* references which names tribes as references of *direction*. The two verses **VI.46.7-8** are as follows:

**"All the manly powers of the Nahuṣa Tribes, all the Glory of the Five Tribes, bring it together, O Indra!
All the Strength with Trikṣi, with Druhyu, and with Pūru, bestow it all on us, O Indra, that we may conquer all our enemies in battle".**

Very clearly, *tribes* are being referred to, *not individuals*. The translators clearly translate as "**the Druhyu folk/tribes/people**" and "**the Pūru folk/tribes/people**" in two of the three cases, but simply "**Trikṣi**" in the third, and assume it to be the name of a *person*! Obviously, it is the name of a *tribe*!

The two verses are clear: the first verse refers to "**Nahuṣa Tribes**" and "**Five Tribes**" in the sense of "**All the Tribes**". The second specifically names together the easternmost tribes, the **Trikṣi** in the far east, the westernmost tribes, the **Druhyu** in the far northwest, and the central tribes, the **Pūru**, in the home areas, to again indicate "**All the Tribes**". And they ask Indra to give all the strength and power of *all* these tribes to *Us*, the **Bharatas**.

Therefore also, the word in **VIII.22.7** means *the* **Trikṣi**, and not **Trikṣi**.

The **Trkṣi (Ikṣvāku)** kings are referred to as follows:

1. **Mandhātā**: **I.112.13**; **VIII.39.8**; **40.12**.
2. **Purukutsa**: **I.63.7**; **112.7**; **174.2**; **VI.20.10**.
3. **Trasadasyu**: **I.112.14**; **IV.38.1**; **42.8,9**; **V.27.3**; **33.8**; **VII.19.3**; **VIII.8.21**; **19.32,36**; **36.7**; **37.7**; **49.10**; **X.33.4**; **150.5**.
Paurukutsa: **IV.42.9**; **V.33.8**; **VII.19.3**; **VIII.19.36**.
4. **Trivṛṣan**: **V.27.1**.
5. **Tryarūṇa**: **V.27.1-3**.
Trasadasyu: **V.27.3**.
6. **Trāsadasya**: **VIII.22.7**.
7. **Kuruṣravaṇa**: **X.32.9**; **33.4**.
Trāsadasya: **X.33.4**.

The first of these, **Mandhātā** is clearly a distant ancestral king in this line, since he is not referred to in any contemporary sense: in the first reference, **I.112.13**, he is included in a long list of beneficiaries of the grace of the **Aśvins**. In the next two (both by one composer), he is clearly an old *ancestral* figure: **VIII.40.12** specifically refers to him as an ancestor (*pitr*). The composer is **Nābhāka Kāṇva**: incidentally, in the **Ikṣvāku** dynastic lists in both the Puranas and Epics, **Nābhāga** is the name of one of the *far* descendants of **Mandhātā**.

The rest of the kings are clearly kings *contemporary* to the period of the **New Books**. They are found in all in **14** hymns in the **New Books**, and in **6** of them they are the patron kings of the hymns (i.e. the king from whom the composer is receiving some kind of gifts): **V.27,33**; **VIII.19,49**; **X.32,33**. In the remaining **8**, they appear in regular lists of people aided by the Gods: in **4** by Indra: **I.63,174**; **VIII.36,37**; in **3** by the **Aśvins**: **I.112**; **VIII.8,22**; in **1** by Agni: **X.50**.

But then we come to the **4** references to them in the **Old Books**: **VI.20**; **VII.19**; **IV.38,42**. How can kings of the period of the **New Books** be found in references in the **Old Books**?

As I pointed out in detail in my second book (TALAGERI 2000:66-72), the names of these **Trkṣi** kings in these **4** references are *unique* and

extraordinary in the ethos of the Rigveda, since they are cases where their names were *deliberately* added into the **Old Hymns** in the period of the **New Books**, by composers belonging to the two families most closely associated with the **Bharata Pūrus**, the **Angiras** and **Vasiṣṭha** composers, as a special homage of gratitude for some extraordinary aid given by them to the **Bharata Pūrus** in particular or the **Pūrus** in general.

In general, in the **Old Books**, even the Redacted Hymns are found modified (due to repeated popular recitals in front of new audiences during the R̥gvedic period) only in language but not in geographical or historical content. Thus they refer only to the people, events and geographical features of the **Old** times. Book 6 is associated with Divodāsa, and Books 3 and 7 with Sudās:

- a) In Book 6, Divodāsa is found in 6 hymns: **3 Old** (26,31,43) and **3 Redacted** (16,47,61). There is no reference to the *later* Sudās in *any* hymn in Book 6.
- b) In Book 3, Sudās is found in 2 hymns: **1 Old** (33) and **1 Redacted** (53).
- c) In Book 7, Sudās is found in 10 hymns: **8 Old** (18,19,20,25,53,60,64,83) and **2 Redacted** (32,33).
- d) *Eastern* geographical names (rivers up to the **Asiknī**) are found:
In Book 6 in 11 hymns: **6 Old** (1,4,8,17,20,27) and **5 Redacted** (45,49,50,52,61). In Book 3 in 10 hymns: **7 Old** (4,5,23,45,46,54,58) and **3 Redacted** (26,29,53).
In Book 7 in 13 hymns: **10 Old** (2,9,18,35,39,40,44,58,69,98) and **3 Redacted** (36,95,96).
- e) *Western* geographical names are totally missing in *all* the three Books (**6,3,7**) in *all* the Hymns, **Old** as well as **Redacted**.

The logic of *inadvertently* interpolating *new* pieces of geographical or historical data into *old* works must be understood. No one would seriously introduce (except in joke or satire) a reference to *England* or *apples*, or to *Nehru* or *Shivaji*, or to *telephones* or the *internet*, in writing out or retelling the story of the Ramayana or Mahabharata, since a person would normally be aware of the fact that the places or objects or people or technologies represented by these words *cannot* be part of the geographical and historical ethos of the Epics. But words not *known* to be representing later phenomenon *could* be interpolated into the stories. Thus the writers, editors and redactors of the Epics and Puranas, which relate events which took place *long* before they were set out in writing (in the period after 500 BCE), and which were carried forward for long periods and countless generations of retelling as oral traditions, *did* unknowingly interpolate *countless* names of places, people and things which were *so* common and current in their time that it did not seem to have occurred to them that they were *new* things. As recently as the 1960s, the film *Sampoorna Ramayan* showed a scene where, after Sita's abduction, a distraught Rama saw an image of Sita in a *sitaphal* and Sita (in her place of imprisonment in the *Ashokavan*) saw an image of Rama in a *ramphal*. Obviously, the filmmaker was unaware that these two fruits were brought into India from Latin America only a few centuries ago by the Portuguese! This is why the data in the texts cannot be taken unquestioningly or without examination in serious historical discussions.

On the other hand, the Vedic texts, and especially the Rigveda, were carried forward by such a strict, unique and totally unparalleled system of oral recitation (the *ghanapāṭha*) that the Rigveda remained totally unchanged once the text was given its final canonical form sometime around 1500 BCE. I always give the quotations of Witzel in this respect since they are so perfect, and I will repeat them here (the quotation from WITZEL 1999a alone is a new one, and it gives an additional proof):

“Right from the beginning, in R̥gvedic times, elaborate steps were taken to insure the exact reproduction of the words of the ancient poets. As a result, the R̥gveda still has the exact same wording in such distant regions as Kashmir, Kerala and Orissa, and even the long-extinct musical accents have been preserved. Vedic transmission is thus superior to that of the Hebrew or Greek Bible, or the Greek, Latin and Chinese classics. We can actually regard present-day R̥gveda recitation as a *tape recording* of what was composed and recited some 3000 years

ago. In addition, unlike the constantly reformulated Epics and Purāṇas, the Vedic texts contain *contemporary* materials. They can serve as snapshots of the political and cultural situation of the particular period and area in which they were composed. [...] as they are contemporary, and faithfully preserved, these texts are equivalent to inscriptions. [...] they are immediate and unchanged evidence, a sort of oral history — and sometimes autobiography — of the period, frequently fixed and ‘taped’ immediately after the event by poetic formulation. These aspects of the Vedas have never been sufficiently stressed [...]” (WITZEL 1995a:91).

“[...] the Vedas were composed orally and they always were and still are, to some extent, *oral literature*. They must be regarded as *tape recordings*, made during the Vedic period and transmitted orally, and usually without the change of a single word.” (WITZEL 1997b:258).

"At the outset, it must be underlined that the Vedic texts excel among other early texts of other cultures in that they are 'tape recordings' of this archaic period. They were not allowed to be changed: not one word, not a syllable, not even a tonal accent. If this sounds unbelievable, it may be pointed out that they even preserve *special* cases of main clause and secondary clause intonation, items that have even escaped the sharp ears of early Indian grammarians. These texts are therefore better than any manuscript, and as good—if not better—than any contemporary inscription" (WITZEL 1999a:3).

“It must be underlined that just like an ancient inscription, these words have not changed since the composition of these hymns c.1500 BCE, as the RV has been transmitted almost without any change [...] The modern oral recitation of the RV is a *tape recording of c.1700-1200 BCE*.” (WITZEL 2000a:§8).

“The language of the RV is an archaic form of Indo-European. Its 1028 hymns are addressed to the gods and most of them are used in ritual. They were orally composed and strictly preserved by exact repetition through rote learning, until today. It must be underlined that the Vedic texts are ‘tape recordings’ of this archaic period. Not one word, not a syllable, not even a tonal accent were allowed to be changed. The texts are therefore better than any manuscript, and as good as any well preserved contemporary inscription. We can therefore rely on the Vedic texts as contemporary sources for names of persons, places, rivers (WITZEL 1999c)” (WITZEL 2006:64-65).

In these circumstances, the deliberate interpolations into **Old Hymns**, of references to **Tṛkṣi** kings of the **New Books**, during the later Rigvedic period must have been motivated by a truly extraordinary sense of gratitude for the help given by these kings to the Vedic **Pūrus**. While we cannot discover the details, the basic fact is clear: the **4** references in the Old Books stand out from normal references to kings in the Rigveda: **IV.42.8-9** twice refers to **Trasadasyu** as an *ardhadeva* or "**demi-god**", an extraordinarily adulatory phrase found nowhere else in the Vedic texts. It glorifies his birth in a manner reminiscent of the glorification of the birth of later divine heroes not only in India but all over the world, but without parallel in the Rigveda: the Seven Great Sages (*sapta ṛṣi*) gather together, **Purukutsa**'s wife gives oblations to Indra and Varuṇa, and the two Gods are pleased to reward her with the birth of Trasadasyu "**the demi-god, the slayer of the foe-men**".

That these **4** references are late *interpolations* in the hymns is definite. Although it cannot be expected that there should necessarily be discernible clues to the *lateness* of these references in the **Old Books**, since that was not the intention of the interpolators (late composers from the **Aṅgiras** and **Vasiṣṭha** families), we *do* find such clues:

1. In the case of **IV.42.8-9**: the idea of Seven Sages (*sapta ṛṣi*), is a very late one, common in the Atharvaveda, but otherwise found in the Rigveda only in two verses in the very late Book **10**: **X.82.2**; **109.4**—it is also found in the Avesta. Understandably, although the hymn is not a **Redacted Hymn**,

Griffith tells us that "**Grassmann banishes stanzas 8, 9 and 10 to the appendix as late additions to the hymn**".

2. **VI.20.10** is the only verse in the **Old Books**, singled out by Prof. Hopkins (HOPKINS 1896a:72-73), in the "Final Note" to his path-breaking article "**Prāgāthinī - I**", as a verse which seems to have "**interesting marks of lateness**", in spite of the hymn not being a **Redacted Hymn**. He notes not only that **Purukutsa** is a king belonging to a much later period, but that the verse contains the phrase *purah śārādīh*, found elsewhere only in the **New Book 1**; and, most significantly, the phrase *pra stu-* which is "**a very important word in the liturgical sense; and it is one of the commonest of words in later literature**", found very commonly in the Brahmanas, five times in the Atharvaveda, and also very commonly in the Avesta as *fra stu-*. But, in the Rigveda, outside this single reference in an **Old Book**, it is found **10** times in the **New Books**.

3. Verse **IV.38.1** is definitely *totally out of place* in the hymn. Hymns 38-40 are hymns in praise of Dadhikrās, the deified war-horse, and this one verse, out of the 21 verses in the three hymns, is the only verse which stands out from the other 20 verses in deifying **Trasadasyu** (who is not mentioned at all in the other verses) rather than Dadhikrās.

4. About **VII.19**, the hymn itself may have been composed long after the period of **Sudās**, since Griffith points out that the contemporaneous king referred to in verse **8** is "**probably a descendant of Sudās, who must have lived long before the composition of this hymn, as the favor bestowed on him is referred to as old in stanza 6**".

These references in the **Old Books** (and one more in **Book 1** by a composer belonging to the same **Āṅgiras** branch as the composers of **Book 4**, the **Gautamas**) are absolutely unanimous in specifically crediting **Purukutsa** and/or **Trasadasyu** for help given to the **Pūrus**:

IV.38.1 thanks Mitra and Varuṇa for the services which **Trasadasyu**, "**the winner of our fields and plough-lands, and the strong smiter who subdued the dasyus**", rendered to the **Pūrus**.

VII.19.3 refers to Indra helping the **Pūrus** "**in winning land and slaying foemen**" once by way of **Sudās** (the hero of **Book 7**) and once by way of **Trasadasyu Paurukutsa** (who is otherwise not connected in any way with **Sudās**, but is elevated to his level with this reference in **Book 7**).

Likewise, **I.63.7** refers to Indra rendering military aid to the **Pūrus**, once by way of **Sudās** and once by way of **Purukutsa**.

VI.20.10 shows the **Pūrus** lauding Indra for destroying the fortresses of their enemies by way of **Purukutsa**.

It may be noted that in all the other references to these **Trkṣi** kings **Purukutsa** and **Trasadasyu**, in the **New Books**, not one refers even once to the **Pūrus** in connection with them, and the only praise for these kings is in the *dānastutis* (**V.33**; **VIII.19**) for gifts given to the composers of those hymns. It is clear therefore that the **4 interpolated** references in the **Old Books** are special *memorial* references to the two **Trkṣi** kings of the period of the **New Books**, who saved the **Bharata Pūrus** or the **Pūrus** in general from total defeat and destruction in some unspecified wars. They were inserted into the **Old Books** by late composers of the respective families since the **Old Books** represented the special period of the **Bharata Pūrus**.

The presence of these **Ikṣvāku** kings in the Rigveda has always been a pain for the Indologists, firstly because they are not specifically called **Ikṣvākus** (and the Indologists do not realize that the tribal term for them in the Rigveda is **Trkṣi**, which they assume to be the name of an individual king) and secondly because they actually misinterpret the **5** special memorial references (**4** in the **Old Books** and **1** by the **Gautama Āṅgirasa** composer in **Book 1**) to the great help given to the Pūrus by these two kings to mean that the two kings *themselves* were **Pūrus**!

They are aware that this misinterpretation has no support *anywhere* in the Rigveda outside their own misinterpretations of these 5 references, and certainly nowhere in any other Vedic, Puranic or Classical Sanskrit text. It is not only the *Puranas* and *Epics* which *unanimously* classify these kings as

Ikṣvāku: other Vedic texts also do so: the **Panchavimsha Brahmana** xiii.3.12 calls **Tryaruṇa** an **Aikṣvāka**, and the **Shatapatha Brahmana** xiii.5.4,5 calls **Purukutsa** an **Aikṣvāka**. *Nowhere* are they called **Pūrus**. But instead of realizing the mistake, some Indologists try to explain this (most others simply ignore or stonewall it) by suggesting that "**the Ikṣvāku line was originally a line of the princes of the Pūrus**" (MACDONELL-KEITH 1912a:75).

Not only is their misinterpretation of the **5** references totally unsupported *anywhere*, but it leads them into contradictions and confusion. Instead of realizing that the word **Pūru** in these verses in fact refers to the **Bharatas**, they somehow conclude that **Bharatas** and **Pūrus** were the main rivals in the Rigveda, and treat **Purukutsa** and **Trasadasyu** as the leaders of these rival or enemy **Pūrus**. But then *those very 5* references on which their entire misinterpretation is based become incomprehensible to them, since in **3** of them, **I.63.7**; **VI.20.10**; and **VII.19.3**, Indra is described as helping *both* **Sudās** and **Purukutsa/Trasadasyu** to victory! This confusion and contradiction is reflected in their interpretations:

Witzel, in his 1995 papers, recognizes that it is "**the Pūru, to whom (and to [...] the Bharata) the Ṛgveda really belongs**" (WITZEL 1995b:313), and that the Rigveda was "**composed primarily by the Pūrus and Bharatas**" (WITZEL 1995b:328), and even that the **Bharatas** were "**a subtribe**" (WITZEL 1995b:339) of the **Pūrus**. But he convinces himself that, while **Divodāsa** and **Sudās** were **Bharatas**, **Purukutsa** and **Trasadasyu** were **Pūrus**; and hence he confuses every reference to **Pūrus** (i.e. to the **Bharatas**) as a reference to those *non-Pūru* **Trkṣi** kings, whom, moreover, he somehow identifies as the *enemies* of **Sudās** and the **Bharatas** in the Battle of the Ten Kings. Altogether, therefore, he ends up with a thoroughly chaotic and confused picture of Rigvedic history, for which he blames "**conflicting glimpses**" and "**inconsistencies**" in the hymns themselves (!):

"Although book 7 is strongly pro-Bharata, it provides several, conflicting, glimpses of the Pūru [...in] 7.5.3, Vasiṣṭha himself praises Agni for vanquishing the 'black' enemies of the Pūrus — this really ought to have been composed for the Bharatas. Inconsistencies also appear in hymn 7.19.3, which looks back on the ten kings' battle but mentions Indra's help for both Sudās and Trasadasyu, the son of Purukutsa, and also refers to the Pūrus' winning of land [...]" (WITZEL 1995b:331)!

In her comment on **VII.19.3**, Jamison tells us: "**The first half of this hymn (vss. 1-5) celebrates various victories of Indra, giving aid both to men of the mythic past (e.g., Kutsa, vs. 2) and those of the present, especially King Sudās (vs. 3, also 6), the leader also in the battle of the Ten Kings treated in the preceding well-known hymn (VII.18).** The allegiances and enmities of that hymn are strikingly different here: for example, **Indra helps the Pūru king in this hymn (vs. 3), whereas in VII.18, the Pūrus are the enemy**". She does not comment on the other verses (**I.63.7**, and **VI.20.10**) where both **Purukutsa/Trasadasyu** and **Sudās** are led to victory by Indra!

In fact, as per Macdonell, the early Indologist Ludwig, in order to push his view that **Purukutsa** and **Sudās** were mutual enemies, went so far as to decide that a word in **I.63.7** was *wrong*, and to actually *alter* that word *sudāsam* to *sudāse* (MACDONELL-KEITH 1912b:327,fn7)!

All this had been dealt with in my books, but now we must discuss a new dimension of this **Ikṣvāku** or **Trkṣi** history in the Rigveda.

II. The Northwestern Connection

There is one more point about the **Ikṣvāku** presence in the Rigveda which should cause puzzlement: the prominent presence *in the northwest* of these kings—who are located in the Puranas and Epics in the *far east* (northeastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar).

This does not cause puzzlement to the Indologists, of course, because according to their theory, *all* the ancestors of *all* the Puranic tribes and dynasties were located in the northwest in the Rigvedic period as constituents among the newly arrived **Vedic Indo-Aryans**, and it was only *later* that these tribes migrated eastwards and spread out all over northern India. Scholars like P.L. Bhargava, who try to fit the Puranic data into the geographical constraints of this Rigvedic-origin paradigm, also locate the **Ikṣvākus** in the northwest. Then we have crank writers like Rajesh Kochhar trying to push even the geography of the Ramayana into the northwest. Unfortunately, the views of orthodox Hindus *opposed to the AIT*, who support the Vedic-origin-of-Indian-culture-and-history paradigm, indirectly falls in the same category.

But as we have seen elsewhere (see my books and articles), the data in both the Rigveda and the Puranas prove that the Vedic Indo-Aryans were in fact the **Pūrus** alone (and, in the earlier period, specifically the **Bharata Pūrus**). And *they* alone occupied the home territory within the Rigvedic horizon. The **Ikṣvākus** were indeed to their *far east* from very early pre-Rigvedic times: the location-based reference to the **Trkṣi** tribe in the early VI.46 clearly places them to the *far east* in contrast to the **Druhyu** in the *far west* and the **Pūru** in the *central* home area.

But the 14 hymns in the **New Books** which treat these kings as contemporary (in *dānastutis*) or merely enumerate them (in lists of persons favored by the Gods) seem to be located in the *northwest*. At least, not one of these hymns has an eastern geographical name, but northwestern rivers **Rasā** (I.112.12) and **Suvāstu** (VIII.19.37) are named in two of them, in the second as the actual river on whose banks **Trasadasyu** gave gifts to the composer. A later reference in the Shatyayana Brahmana records that **Trasadasyu's** wife was a **Pīśācī** (i.e. a person belonging to the **Pīśāca** or Nooristani **Anu** people who occupied exactly the same area).

So what accounts for the presence of these **Ikṣvāku** kings in the northwest?

The explanation is in the Puranic accounts:

There were **non-Bharata Pūrus** living to the *east* and slightly *south* of the central area of the **Rigvedic Bharata Pūrus**, in western UP and parts of northern Madhya Pradesh. We have the **Pūru Matsyas**, who lived to the south of the **Yamunā** and fought against **Sudās** and the **Bharata Pūrus** in the battle on the **Yamunā** in alliance with the **Yadus** and **Turvasus** of the area (VII.18). We have the **Kīkaṭa**, whom later tradition actually associates with the Magadha area in the east, but, even without going that far, even Witzel identifies it as an interior location to the south-east of Haryana "**in eastern Rajasthan or western Madhya Pradesh**" (WITZEL 1995b:333 fn)!

So the **Bharata Pūrus** of the Rigveda were certainly generally acquainted with the people to their east and immediate south from *pre-Rigvedic* times. They were acquainted so well enough with the *far eastern* location of the **Trkṣi**, even in the period of the *oldest* Book 6, as to be able to use the name as a location-based reference to the far east (in VI.27). Doubtless, the relations between the more eastern (**non-Bharata**) **Pūrus** and the **Ikṣvākus** to the far east must have been even closer.

In any case, the Puranas tell us that the ancient **Ikṣvāku** king **Mandhātā** of the east was related to the **Pūrus** through his mother, who was the daughter of a **Pūru** king **Matināra**. It is at least clear from this that **Mandhātā** (half a **Pūru** himself) had reason to be friendly with the **Pūrus**, who were his maternal relations.

The Puranic accounts of the **Ikṣvāku** dynasty associate all the early kings with the east, but in the case of **Mandhātā**, they relate his movement *westwards* in support of his **Pūru** kinsmen who were under assault from the **Druhyus** to their west in a *pre-Rigvedic* period. The **Druhyus** had attacked all the people to their east and all the eastern people combined against them to drive them out. **Mandhātā** moved out as far as the Punjab and drove the **Druhyus** out from the Punjab into the northwest. Pargiter describes it as follows: "**The Druhyus occupied the Punjab, and Mandhātṛ of Ayodhya had a long war with the Druhyu king Aruddha or Āṅgāra and killed him**" (PARGITER 1962:167). Later, more in detail, he tells us that **Mandhātā** pushed past "**the prostrate Paurava realm, and pushing**

beyond them westwards, he had a long contest with and conquered the Druhyu king who appears to have been then on the confines of the Panjab, so that the next Druhyu king Gandhāra retired to the northwest and gave his name to the Gandhāra country" (PARGITER 1962:262).

Later, **Mandhātā** returned to his own kingdom in the *east*, and there is little record in traditional history of the activities of his successor kings in the *east* having much to do with the northwest (until the much later period of the Epics). However, it is clear that some of his descendants remained in the northwest and originated a new *northwestern* branch of **Trkṣi** or **Ikṣvāku** kings distinct from the eastern ones. Undoubtedly **Purukutsa**, **Trasadasyu** and their descendants in the Rigveda were late descendants, in the period of the **New Books** of the Rigveda, belonging to this *northwestern* branch.

The evidence for this is that, in spite of both the Puranas as well as later Vedic texts regularly classifying these kings as **Ikṣvākus**, and in spite of the fact that they are the main or only **Ikṣvākus** in the **New Books** of the Rigveda, the eastern **Ikṣvāku** traditions are completely blank about these important kings. **Purukutsa** and **Trasadasyu**, though the descendants of **Mandhātā**, are not known to the Ramayana traditions as being ancestors of Rama. The Ramayana (II.110) records all the important ancestors of Rama and kings of Ayodhya known to the Puranic traditions, including (other than **Mandhātā**) **Ikṣvāku**, **Trīṣaṅku**, **Dhundhumāra**, **Ajita**, **Sagara**, **Aṁśuman**, **Dilīpa**, **Bhagīratha**, **Raghu**, **Kalmāṣapāda** and **Ambarīṣa**, none of whom (again other than **Mandhātā**) are known to the Rigveda. But it does not seem to know the very important **Purukutsa**, **Trasadasyu** and the other **Ikṣvāku** kings known to the Rigveda (but also to the Puranas).

Bhargava notes this fact: he points out that "**Eleven Purāṇas and the Harivaṁśa give the list of the kings of this dynasty more or less completely**", as also two Upa-Puranas and the Mahabharata, and also the Ramayana (twice), but "**all the lists are in general agreement except the two Ramayana lists, which differ from all others. Thus the Ramayana genealogy omits many kings, such as **Purukutsa**, **Trasadasyu**, **Hariśchandra** and **Rohita**, who are well-known in Vedic literature as **Aikshvāku** kings**" (BHARGAVA 1956:56).

The reason is clear. Obviously **Purukutsa** and **Trasadasyu** were not known to the eastern traditions as ancestors of Rama, because they were *not* ancestors of Rama: they were kings of the *northwestern* branch of the **Ikṣvākus**.

[Incidentally, Bhargava himself provides the logic for different versions in different Puranas or groups of Puranas. He gives a case where "**between Mitrasaha and Dilīpa Khaṭvāṅga two lines of kings are given in two sets of Purāṇas for six generations**", which he explains as follows: "**It is clear that one line is the main line and the other a branch line, and while some Purāṇas have dropped the main line, the others have dropped the branch**" (BHARGAVA 1956:59). This is the explanation for the differences in the **Ikṣvāku** lineages: always keeping in mind that the Puranic lists in different texts are in any case often jumbled, confused and partial (and sometimes even fictitious) *except where confirmed by more definite evidence*, the fact is that the Puranas retain lists of *all* the **Ikṣvāku** kings, while the *Vedic* texts name only kings from the *northwestern branch* line, and the *eastern* traditions (though also in the manner of the Puranic records) name only kings from the *main eastern* line].

Three other interesting points emerge out of all this:

1. The fact that the kings of the *northwestern* branch of **Trkṣi** or **Ikṣvāku** kings were close allies of the **Pūrus** in the post-Sudās period of the Rigveda may throw light on the identity of the **Ambarīṣa** of I.100.17, one of the five **Vārṣāgiras** in the battle beyond the **Sarayu** in the period of **Sahadeva** and **Somaka**. He was not a **Bharata Pūru**, but an **Ikṣvāku**—but then there is no reason to believe that the five **Vārṣāgiras** were brothers or clansmen. **Ambarīṣa** seems to have been a common family name among **Ikṣvākus**:

we have kings of Ayodhya named **Ambarīṣa**, and apparently that was also the name of one of **Purukutsa**'s brothers (PARGITER 1962:93).

2. As inhabitants of the *northwest*, the northwestern **Ikṣvākus** must have been experts at horsemanship and may have introduced the war-horse of the northwest to their **Pūru** allies. There are two clear indications of this in the Rigveda:

a) The verse referring to **Trasadasyu** in **IV.38**, is inserted at the beginning of a group of *three* hymns (**IV.38-40**, with a total of 21 verses) addressed to a divine war-horse **Dadhikrās**. The verse (**IV.38.1**) describes the war-hero **Trasadasyu** and the war-horse **Dadhikrās** as the two great gifts given by Varuṇa and Mitra to the **Pūrus** which enabled them to win back their plough-lands and fields.

b) Another divine war horse, named in two late verses, **I.89.6** and **X.33.4**, is named **Tārṣya**, which is literally derived from the name **Trkṣi**: i.e. "of the **Trkṣi**".

3. This early expansion of a group of **Ikṣvākus** from eastern India to the northwest explains the westward transfer of the names of the two eastern rivers **Gomati** and **Sarayu**.

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Posted by [Shrikant Talageri](#) at 05:55

28 comments:



arish108 19 May 2020 at 10:29

Talageri ji, in the last paragraph you justify the occurrence of eastern rivers names Gomati and Sarayu in the west. Is there also some similar case for Sarasvati and Harahvati?

Also I have query regarding “Ganga” from your previous articles. Western Indologist said that the Word “Gāngya” in RV 6.45.31 is in a trīṣṭup section can you please explain what is this trīṣṭup?

Now the Western Indologist will always change their claim just to satisfy their AIT/AMT that's why they sometimes calls this hymns unsuspecting and sometimes suspicious. But the question is does occurring in this trīṣṭup section really creates any problem for “Ganga”?

[Reply](#)

[Replies](#)



Shrikant Talageri 19 May 2020 at 18:46

These questions about the Sarasvati-Harahvati have already been answered fully in the article on “The Logic of Rigvedic Geography”.

In this very article, I have shown how the geographical and historical references in the Old Books are identical for both the Old and Redacted Hymns, and it is only the language which may get accommodatingly modified (before the final freezing of the text) if the hymn is a popular one which was regularly recited before audiences as in a keertan. So why should a reference being in a trīṣṭup (which is simply a strophe consisting of three verses) be of any importance in deciding the age of the reference? In fact, this trīṣṭup section is the danastuti section which in fact shows that the three verses are the most contemporary verses in the whole hymn where the actual living patron of the composer is being praised.

In the article on the logic of Rigvedic geography, I have shown how Witzel in his earlier articles argues hard to show that the Ganga is a very old reference. When he realized the danger to the AIT after my books, he tried to backtrack and give any excuse to now show that it is not old. If he had not found anything else he would have said “this is in a gayatri verse”. Then should we have seriously sat down to discuss whether it being in a gayatri verse makes it a late reference?

In an unrelated article (Hinduism vs. Hindutva) above, I gave the example of the wolf in Aesop's fable who is determined to find some excuse to attack and kill the lamb. Here (after my books) Witzel became desperate to find some excuse to show that the reference is a late one. It only shows motive and desperation.

[Reply](#)



arish108 20 May 2020 at 02:42

Thanks for the clarification.

[Reply](#)



arish108 20 May 2020 at 02:49

It seems like now Professor Witzel is working on “Out of Africa” theory as the description of this book of his “The Origins of the World's Mythologies” stated. According to the description of this book on Amazon he tries to show the mythology and spirituality of all the world's religion have there origin in Africa.

[Reply](#)



arish108 20 May 2020 at 10:32

Talageri ji is there really no connection between middle east and Indian subcontinent before 2000 BCE. Because again I came across a name of a middle eastern king name “Amar-Sin”, where the

word Amar means "Immortal", exactly the meaning it's similar sounding Sanskrit word "Amar" has.

[Reply](#)



Mayuresh Madhav Kelkar 20 May 2020 at 11:40

'When elephants battle, the grass suffers.' Power, ivory and the Syrian elephant

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00758914.2016.1198068>

There is clear evidence of Asian elephants as far away as Syria. They went extinct by 800 BCE.

"Evidence for the Syrian elephant ceased to exist during the 1st millennium BC as textual, pictorial and physical evidence for these animals stops during the second quarter of the 1st millennium BC (Barnett 1982: 74, n. 35; Collon 1977; Miller 1986; Moorey 1994: 119). "

[Reply](#)



arish108 22 May 2020 at 12:59

Talageri ji what is the source of PARGITER's information regarding Mandhata?

Also why did Ramayana mentioned Sarasvati and Sindhu as an eastern river along with Sarayu, Ganga and Yamuna?

For people like rajesh kochhar Ramayana occurred in Afghanistan so according to him this makes perfect sense.

[Reply](#)



Shrikant Talageri 22 May 2020 at 18:12

Even today we have the "underground Sarasvati" in Allahabad and the Sindh river going north from Madhya Pradesh to join the Yamuna in Jalaun district.

Now could you please tell me the source for Rajesh Kochhar's Ganga and Yamuna in Afghanistan?

[Reply](#)



arish108 22 May 2020 at 22:55

So you are saying that Sindhu mentioned in here is not Indus but actually river Sindh.

He didn't mention any reference or source for this identification.

[Reply](#)



Mayuresh Madhav Kelkar 23 May 2020 at 08:34

"For people like rajesh kochhar Ramayana occurred in Afghanistan so according to him this makes perfect sense."

This is a classic case of Kochhar wanting to have his cake and eat it too.

A review of Rajesh Kocchar's book by Koenraad Elst

Refer to the section "Some far fetched proofs."

<http://koenraadelst.bharatvani.org/reviews/kochhar.html>

"He really goes overboard when he tries to counter the obvious objection that the whole surroundings of the Vedic Saraswati are unmistakably Indian (e.g. elephants), making its identification with the Afghan river Helmand difficult. Thus, in the famous River Hymn (RV 10:75), the rivers are enumerated from east to west, with the Saraswati coming after the Ganga and Yamuna and before the eastern tributaries of the Indus: here, like in the whole post-Rg-Vedic Sanskrit literature, the term "Saraswati" unmistakably refers to the Ghaggar/Hakra. So, Kochhar decides to move the whole Rg-Vedic setting along with the Saraswati into Afghanistan: Ganga and Yamuna become tributaries of the Helmand (p.131). Well, anything is possible, but this ad hoc solution really is far-fetched.

Also, he sticks to the Afghan identification EVEN FOR THE POST RG VEDIC PERIOD (emphasis added) which he has otherwise admitted as showing Indian locations (with the settlement of Northwest India taking place during the late Rg-Vedic period): "We have shown that the description of Sarasvati and Sarayu in the Rgveda and even sutra literature, fits the Afghan rivers Helmand and Hari-rud better than any river in India." (p.222, emphasis added) Have we really?"

So to sustain the Haraivaitti= Sarasvati equation Ramayana and Mahabharata have to happen in Afghanistan as well.

[Reply](#)



arish108 23 May 2020 at 11:03

Ok, I was doing a little bit of search of my own. And yes based on the context there are various reason to believe that this river Sindhu is not the Indus but a tributary of Yamuna named Sindh.

The verses occurs in kishkindha kanda (4-40-20b,21,22,23). It describe rivers like Ganga, Sarayu, Kaushiki, Yamuna, Saraswati, Sindhu, Shona, Mahi, Kaalamahi. All of them are eastern rivers. Regarding Saraswati River which Talageri ji already explained that it is the underground Sarasvati" in Allahabad.

For Sindhu which is actually river Sindh and not Indus in this case. Those same verses also mention places like Brahmamaala, Videha, Maalva, Kaashi, and Kosala, Maagadha, Pundra and Anga. All of them are eastern kingdoms/places.

One of this places Maalva (Malwa Plateau) interestingly is the place from where Sindh River actually flows from and joins Yamuna. Also in this verses there is another river mention i.e river Mahi which is also nearer to Malwa Plateau though not nearer to Sindh River, but still all of them are within that same region i.e central-western MP.

It could also be possible that this tributary was also known as Sindhu in the past. Just like the Sindh province of Pakistan which in ancient times known as Sindhu/Sindhu Kingdom.

Again there is another river i.e Sarayu. But according to Rajesh kochhar's this Sarayu is the Harayu/Hari/Heart/Hereyru of Afghanistan which is in the west. So if these verses are mentioning eastern geography why a western river (Saray/Harayu) is mentioned with them. Even if kochhar assumed that Saraswati as Helmand and Sindhu as Indus then also Sarayu/Harayu still remains a western river. The logic is simple; this Sarayu just like other rivers is the Sarayu of present day eastern UP.

Finally kishkindha kANDa (4-42-15) which describes the western geography again mentioned Sindhu. So one should ask him why Ramayana mentioning Sindhu twice, once in the east and another in the west. Again simple logic eastern Sindhu is river Sindh and western Sindhu is river Indus.

I hope this analysis is right.

[Reply](#)



Sagar M 31 May 2020 at 01:15

Sir, is TRTSU (mentioned variously as family of Sudas himself or as clansmen of Vasistha) the same as TRKSI?

Earliest migration from Ayodhya to Central Asia was by Narisyanta, son of Vaivasvata Manu/brother of Ikshvaku. He is mentioned as the ancestor of SHAKA KSHATRIYAS.

[Reply](#)

[Replies](#)



Shrikant Talageri 31 May 2020 at 20:32

The words Trtsu and Trksi are found only in the Rigveda, and they clearly refer to the Bharatas and the Ikshvakus respectively.



Sagar M 4 June 2020 at 19:29

Thank you sir.

[Reply](#)



Mayuresh Madhav Kelkar 31 May 2020 at 12:39

https://www.academia.edu/43115135/Semenenko_%D0%90.%D0%90._Watery_Humpback_Cattle_Pattern_in_Rigveda_and_Archaeology_of_the_Ancient_East

"Due to the limitations of the text we can't describe here all material embodiments of the watery humpback cattle pattern in the archaeological record of the Ancient East regions starting from the Indus Valley around 4000 BCE and moving further in time (between 2800

– 1000 BCE) and farther West through Afghanistan, Bactria

– Margiana and Iran up to the Central Anatolia. It is sufficient to state that the first ever in the IE studies' history exact archaeological route of the RVedic (=Pre)Harappan) IA migration has been reconstructed by us supporting the Out-of-India Theory of IE dispersal. The readers wishing to learn more are kindly asked to watch our video report on the 5th of December 2019 at the All-Russian conference at Voronezh State Art Institution entitled 'The motif of the humpback water bull in the culture of the Ancient East: art history comes to the aid of history' and the conference's presentation and an updated map. [2]"

[Reply](#)



South Indian 29 June 2020 at 21:50

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRcu-ysocX4> - so theirs collapsed due to sea men. Ours had to be horse men!

[Reply](#)



Mayuresh Madhav Kelkar 3 July 2020 at 12:03

Archaeologist/historian Alexandr Semenenko has recently released books in Russian promoting the OIT. Check out his English language videos here

https://twitter.com/Vritrahan2014?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor

His main claim is that what they call "chariots" in Eastern Europe are just carts.

[Reply](#)



Vishwa Yatri 14 November 2020 at 11:52

I have been reading your blogs but have not finished reading all of them. So please excuse if my question is already answered by you.

While explaining the OIT theory at one place you ask a hypothetical question. If one assumes Aryans coming into India before 3000BC to take in account the later development of Rigveda in India itself still some questions remain. That of them not knowing north west geography and being localized in Haryana/ Western UP region until much later time (i.e. newer books of Rgveda)

How would it pan out if one assumes the Indo-european speakers entering India not through north west as traditionally assumed but across Himalayas? Starting in tarim basin or thereabout where Tocharian was spoken, passing ideally somewhere near Kailas mountain in Tibet, across the himalayan ranges which have some of holiest sites of Hinduism on to north Indian plains. Here they split into Ikshvaku and Pūru-Anu-Druhyu groups over next millenia. The further story is already explained by you in detail

By this assumption the questions raised about early and late branches of IE languages are answered. The peculiar position occupied by Tocharian language in relation to early departure from IE homeland is taken care. For this I am assuming a circuitous route from south russia onto inner mountain steppe down to India, outward to west Asia ending back in Europe. This also answers the question of genetic input (R1a haplogroup). I assume here multiple R1a migration towards India. One of them is already before 3000BC as explained above and one could imagine similar migrations in later stages right upto sakas etc in various numbers.

Does that pass occam's razor?

I would be happy to know what you think.

Thanks and regards,
VY

[Reply](#)

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Shrikant Talageri 16 November 2020 at 05:04

The theory you suggest above to somehow bring the "Aryans" into India from South Russia into India by 3000 BCE raises many impossible situations. To take just two:

1. The arrival of the ancestors of the Vedic people into India from Tibet over the Himalayas, where they must have been constantly climbing and descending the world's highest mountain ranges and moving through extremely inhospitable terrains and unimaginable routes (with cattle and chariots?) is like a science fiction film.
2. The linguistic point is not the non-mention of the northwest. It is that common terms for cart-and-wheel technology and copper technology, among other things, developed in common in all the 12 branches of IE languages around 3000 BCE. So then did the speakers of all these 12 branches come across the Himalayas into India by 3000 BCE and then spread west to Europe and West Asia after that? If so, where does the question of a South Russian origin arise in the first place?



Vishwa Yatri 17 November 2020 at 13:16

This comment has been removed by the author.



Vishwa Yatri 17 November 2020 at 13:19

Firstly thanks for taking out time to reply to my comment.

1. I know it is convoluted. After Narsimhan's paper which suggest there was no interaction of Steppe people coming to India even with BMAC culture I thought on this line to try and align DNA evidence + linguistic evidence from you. I am not talking about bringing 'Aryans' in but rather the steppe dna R1a into India. I read already that 'Aryan' is not necessarily steppe people but could also be honorific term used.

Also I found the chronology of epics Ramayana, Mahabharata peculiar and not in accordance to north west arrival. Hence your hypothesis about vedic aryaans being just one of the several IA groups perfect to explain this anomaly of earlier epic being based deeper in gangetic plains. Hence this idea of such a difficult way in for these steppe gene into India without passing north west region of India and still reaching deep into India.

- 2) I was assuming Indo iranian, hittite and balto slavic group arrive in India before 3000BC and then leave by 2000 BC. Since they have higher affinity to Indic. The rest I am assuming already separating before 3000 BC

I wanted to know your opinion as to whether such a scenario passes Occam's razor. It seems it doesn't. Thanks for answering none the less.



Puru 25 November 2020 at 05:07

Hi Vishwa Yatri,

In the context of genetics, I wanted to mention a few points here.

1. Genetics can only serve as an evidence when you there is a population replacement occurring or the migrants are many folds bigger in number than the original inhabitants. Such case is easily seen in Europe, as per Olalde et al 2018, we see a complete population replacement in western Europe (Britain, Spain, Portugal) ~2,500BCE in such a genocidal extent that it led to 100% complete Y-chromosome replacement. Similar scenarios are seen across Europe after 3000BCE.

2. Do we see such scenario in South Asia? answer is big fat NO. I will explain what the genetic data tells us. see below

2a. In Modern Indian population (as per Narasimhan et al. 2019), 87.6% of the ancestry comes directly from the Indus Valley. Even in IA speakers of South Asia - 85.4% ancestry is directly from Indus Valley DNA.

2b. Look at the published supplementary data of Narasimhan et al 2019 here - (<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/suppl/2019/09/04/365.6457.eaat7487.DC1>)

They talk about the SWAT valley aDNA which shows admixture between Indus & steppe occurring between 1400-1900 BCE. (these SWAT aDNA skeletons are carbon dated to 1000BCE). Using this and the absence of aDNA from proper South Asia (not the periphery). Furthering their own paradigm, the Narasimhan concluded that steppe ancestry which is seen in the modern South Asian thus arrived here between 2000-1500BCE.

Forget about "alleged" migration of Sanskrit into South Asia, their own data contradicts even with the steppe migration too.

why?

Because of the following reasons

i) The so called aryan gene - the R1a is almost non-existing in the SWAT valley aDNA.

ii) Even in the periphery of South Asia (in SWAT aDNA) - this unique steppe ancestry (with the steppe R1a gene) is a little as 10-20%

iii) The autosomal make up of the SWAT aDNA is incompatible with the modern data South Asians. Implying that the "unique" steppe people whose ancestry is found in SWAT aDNA are NOT the people whose ancestry is found in the modern South Asian.

iv) even as per the Narasimhan, there are almost no admixture dates calculated for the modern South Asian, which are concentrated between 2000-1500 BCE.

3. The last thing is the origin of R1a, I am NOT going to mention the on record claims of Niraj Rai and Gyaneshwar Chaubey, let's just look at what the published researches say about R1a origin.

Although I will admit that there isn't a grand scholarly consensus. But if you want to see which side the scale tips. There are more scholars/ papers which find the R1a origin to be in South Asia. I must also admit that Indus Valley aDNA haven't so far shown the presence of R1a in them, which is interesting. Despite the fact that as per published papers, the R1a age is the oldest in India. to be precise in J&K then as you move south into India and west into Asia and Europe - the age of R1a decreases in a linear fashion. Refer to Table 3 in Shrivastava et al here - <https://www.nature.com/articles/jhg20082>



Puru 25 November 2020 at 05:12

* correction to point 2b (ii)

The "unique" steppe ancestry found in SWAT aDNA shows almost NO presence of steppe R1a gene.

[Reply](#)



Vishwa Yatri 26 November 2020 at 05:01

@Puru

Thanks for the explanation. According to you when in time do you place the entry/exit of R1a. As I said above one way is to place it around 3000Bc where all the Vedic/ Sanskrit development happens subsequently, possibly with contribution from IVC people or from a mixture of above steppe and IVC people within India.

Other option is to assign R1a to incursion from outside India but at much later time right down to Sakas etc. Here as far as I know the model fails as no eastern component is seen in India IA speakers are expected from later incursions.

Yet other option is origin of R1a in India as you mentioned in point 3. In this case the model of the dispersal from India towards steppe, Europe needs to be created. Also when would you place such a movement in time?

[Reply](#)



Raghavar Voltore 5 March 2021 at 03:23

Sir I have a question, more like confused. King Nimi is descended from the Iksavaku lineage. Is he mentioned in the Rig Veda? King Nimi is said to be the founder of the Vedaha dynasty which

located in close to Mithila. King Janaka is also associated with these Area as well. So it means that the these were post Rig Vedic kingdoms as its commonly thought but Vedic. Is this correct?

[Reply](#)

[Replies](#)



Shrikant Talageri 6 March 2021 at 03:03

There is a Nami Sapyra twice mentioned in the Rigveda as a beneficiary of Indra's help. I don't think he has any connection with the Nimi of Videha.

There is the well known reference in the Shatapatha Brahmana to a Videgha Mathava who took the Agni-worship system to the Videha area. He is identified, I believe, by many scholars as Nimi the founder of Videha. I don't know what conclusions can be drawn from this meagre and vague data.

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Goran Peric 9 February 2023 at 03:02

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