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INDIAN TRADITION

Author(s): Stephen Hillyer Levitt

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# VEDIC - ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIAN INTERCONNECTIONS AND THE DATING OF THE INDIAN TRADITION

*By*

Stephen Hillyer Levitt

## *1. Introduction*

In 2003, I published a paper in the journal *Anthropos* titled, “The Dating of the Indian Tradition” in which, on the basis of synchronisms with the Ancient Mesopotamian tradition, I concluded:

“[T]he Ṛgveda would date back to the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C., With some of the earliest hymns perhaps even dating to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium B. C. The composition of the Ṛgveda would end at about 1500 B.C. with the end of Indus Valley civilization and with the first period of doubt and severe crisis of faith in Mesopotamian civilization.” (Levitt 2003: 356b)

Nicholas Kazanas in various of his publications has either misrepresented my opinion or else, is representing my intent, has quoted only the first sentence, thereby implying that I agree with his dating of the Vedic tradition, which I do not.<sup>1</sup> The only of his publications to date in which his representation of my opinion has approached accuracy is in Kazanas (2006b: 12; 2009b: 186).

I should add that my conclusion continued:

“We then have Müller’s *mantra* period, the composition of the Atharvaveda coinciding in the main with this and with the growth of an interest in magic in ancient Mesopotamia in the latter half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. and the composition of the Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas which texts also indicate this interest in magic as well as the development of monotheism from the late Ṛgveda. The development of monotheistic deities in India can be seen as reflecting the emphasis on personal deities in

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<sup>1</sup> See Kazanas (2002b; revised version 2006: 122b), (2004: 75), (2006a: 119a), (2007a: 21; *ABORI* 2007, p. 31), (2008: 32-33), (2009a: 9/40; 2009b: 323-324).

ancient Mesopotamia in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. Tentatively, I would date the Upaniṣads to the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C. as coinciding with the second crisis of faith in Mesopotamia [which India appears to have avoided through its development of the concepts of monism and *karma*, or moral retribution due to one's actions from birth to birth]" (Levitt 2003: 356b); see Levitt 2003: 354ab with regard to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.)"

Kazanas also noted that he, too, had considered parallels with the Ancient Mesopotamian tradition independent of my considerations around the same time.<sup>2</sup> But my consideration of the Ancient Mesopotamian tradition is very different than his. While I use parallels to set up synchronisms, because of his very early dating of the Ṛgveda on other grounds, and because of parallels he sees between Vedic and other much later Indo-European materials, he arrives at the foregone conclusion that the Vedic material predates the Ancient Mesopotamian material. Further, while I see parallels between the Sumerian pantheon and the Vedic and later Indian pantheon Kazanas, conflating the Sumerian and later Akkadian and Babylonian traditions, and focusing mainly on later tradition and developments, comments right off in his discussion of the Mesopotamian material, "The Mesopotamian religion is quite different from the Vedic." (2007b: 529).

Two other recent discussions that compare the Ancient Mesopotamian and Indian materials might be noted.

One is S. Parpola (1993). But, as I noted earlier (Levitt 2003: 356a), Parpola seems to see many of the possible parallels through a glass darkly, and takes for granted that Indus Valley civilization was Dravidian and that Vedic civilization was later. The main point of the article, though, should be well taken. Parpola rightly points out that scholars of Ancient Mesopotamia might profitably study religion in India to gain better focus on religion in Ancient Mesopotamia, and vice versa. By my argument, Indic religion is in large part a religion of Ancient Mesopotamian type which, because of developments specific to India, was able to survive the crises that racked religion in Ancient Mesopotamia.

The other is McEvelley (2002). This is a stimulating book. But like Parpola's article, it suffers from assuming the late but generally accepted

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<sup>2</sup> Kazanas (2007a: 21-22; *ABORI* 2007, p. 32) (2008: 33), (2009a: 9/40-9/41; 2009b, p. 324).

in Western academic circles dating of the Ṛgveda, as well as McEvelley's lack of a specialist's knowledge of the Ṛgveda and early Indian thought. One might also fault McEvelley for seeing Ancient Egyptian and Ancient Mesopotamian thought as the common pivot for similar developments in Ancient Greece and Ancient India. Sumer is seen as the source of common iconographic elements with Indus Valley civilization, instead of seeing these as evidence of a shared tradition, as I would view them. Many of his points, such as the observation of Zimmer (1955/I: 49-50) that the motif of two entwined serpents that appeared in Sumer was preserved in India in local traditions are made moot by his emphasis on diffusion from the Near East.<sup>3</sup> His stimulating observation that the sanctity of the number '84' in Indian numerology is shared by its distinctive position in the astronomy-based numerology of Sumer in which '84' represents the product of '7,' the number of known planets, and '12,' the number of lunations in a year (McEvelley 2002: 139-140), is blunted by his reference to a Sumerian king list in which he claims '840' and '420' appear repeatedly. These numbers do not stand out especially in this listing, though.<sup>4</sup> In general, McEvelley sees undue Ancient Mesopotamian and to a lesser extent Ancient Egyptian influence behind the development of Indus Valley civilization and in the specifics of Vedic and later Indian literature, which tendency is so exaggerated that it comes across as an unpleasant prejudice.

## 2. *The Third Millennium B.C.*

My argument grew out of an Indo-European justification that I found I could provide to the traditional Vedic derivation of the sacred name of the god Indra from Skt., *indh-* 'to kindle (the sacrificial fire).'<sup>5</sup> Such a derivation of Skt. *indra*, though, did not explain all the characteristics that could be observed for Indra. These, though, I found, were shared with the Sumerian god Enlil. Thus, he is chief of the pantheon just as Enlil is chief of the pantheon. He supersedes a higher moral god just as Enlil supersedes a higher moral god. He separated heaven from earth, just as Enlil separated heaven from earth. He is a god of storm, both literally and figuratively, just as Enlil is a god of storm literally and figuratively. He conquers the enemies of the Aryans, just as Enlil similarly conquers enemies.<sup>6</sup> Viṣṇu, who is noted to stride widely to the

<sup>3</sup> See McEvelley (2002: 215-219).

<sup>4</sup> See Pritchard (1969: 265b-266a) for a translation of this king list.

<sup>5</sup> See Levitt (2008).

<sup>6</sup> Regarding Enlil, see Jacobsen (1949: 153-156) and Kramer (1961: 96).

side in the battle against Vṛtrá, is referred to as Índra's younger brother (Epic period and on), while Enki, who represents fresh water and fertile earth, is referred to as the younger brother of Enlil (Jacobsen 1949: 161). Índra uses a net as a snare (AV 8.8.8), he shakes ripe fruit from trees as if with a hook (RV 3.45.4), and he cannot be stopped by bird catchers (RV 3.45.1). Enlil catches both birds and fish with nets (Jacobsen 1949: 157). In other words, similar specific imagery is shared. And in a myth the possible non-Indo-European nature of which has been pointed out, Índra slays the demon Vṛtrá (Basham 1954: 234, 400; Brown 1961: 286). Similarly, Jacobsen has argued that behind the parallel to this myth in the *Emma Elish* is an older form in which it was Enlil who fought the monster, though such a myth in which Enlil is the central character has not come to light.<sup>7</sup> More recently, Watkins (1995), focusing on the verbal formulas and the conservatism of the verb phrases in the Vedic hymn that he argued can be called distinctly Indo-European, has argued for an Indo-European origin for the myth.<sup>8</sup>

In short, we hereby have a synchronism.

In general, in both the Vedic and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. Sumerian traditions, aspects of nature are deified. In both, the deification proceeded from deification of the natural forces significant in the culture to the anthropomorphic deification of these. In both, the chief god – Índra in the Vedic tradition and Enlil in the Sumerian tradition, is a god of air and the storm, which has been attributed in both traditions by Western scholars to the importance of rain and storm in the everyday life of the people of the respective regions (Dandekar 1958: 13, Jacobsen 1949: 150).

This all is a very clear cut synchronism.

Regarding Viṣṇu, note that the etymology and signification of the name are not firm. Böhtlingk and Roth (1855-75/VI: 1262) give only reference to *Uṇādisūtra* 3.39.1. This refers to the Sanskrit root *viṣ-*.<sup>9</sup> Monier-Williams (1899 [hence, MW]: 999a) notes, also cautiously, “prob. fr.  $\sqrt{vish}$ , ‘All-pervader’ or ‘Worker’.” Keith (1925/I: 109) notes, “The name can be diversely explained as ‘the active one’ from the root *viṣ*, or as ‘crossing the back of the world or the earthly regions’ from *vi* and *snu* (akin to *sānu*), but the solar nature of the deity is reasonably plain.” Mayrhofer (1956-80 [hence, KEWA] / III: 231-232, 795) suggests a derivation from *vi* and the stem form *-snu-* from *sānu*.

<sup>7</sup> See Jacobsen (1949: 155-156). For other parallel myths, see Gaster (1961: 137-149).

<sup>8</sup> See Levitt (2008: 228) for further discussion. And see Shaw (2006).

<sup>9</sup> See Chintamani (1933a: 108), (1933b: 61), and (1939: 130).

Mayrhofer (1992-2001 [hence, EWA] / II: 566), however, steps away from this and notes simply that the derivation of the form is “not clear.” Recently, also, Oberlies (1998-99/I: 221, and n. 338) presents a proposal given Oberlies by Paul Thieme that *Viṣṇu*, from *vi* and *sānu*, means ‘his back standing apart,’ hunchbacked in form, this being the characteristic of a dwarf. According to Oberlies, though *Viṣṇu* can take many forms according to RV 7.100.6 (I: 220), *Viṣṇu*’s form as a dwarf is characteristic. When *Viṣṇu* strides widely to the side in the battle against *Vṛtrá*, *Índra* saying to him “stride wider out, friend *Viṣṇu*” (RV 4.18.11, RV 8.100.12), this is according to Oberlies a reference to *Viṣṇu*’s stunted growth that allowed him to make only short steps.<sup>10</sup> For an attempt to give the name of the god *Viṣṇu* a Dravidian pedigree, see Przyluski (1934-35).

In my earlier paper, I suggested that in the context of both *Viṣṇu* and *Enki* being referred to as younger brother” of *Índra* and *Enlil* respectively. *Viṣṇu* is perhaps to be identified in part with *Enki* (Levitt 2003: 348b-349a). His name would be derived from the root *viṣ-* in its meaning ‘to run, flow (as water)’ *Viṣṇu* would thus signify flowing water, or simply water (=‘flowing stuff’). His association with the sun would be in line with the tradition that the waters released from *Vṛtrá* were pregnant with the sun.<sup>11</sup> A correspondence between *Viṣṇu* and *Enki* explains why it is in later Hinduism that it is *Viṣṇu* who is associated with *avatāras* or ‘descents’ – sometimes understood as incarnations, for the benefit of man. It is in line with *Enki*’s position as the helpful benefactor of mankind. The story of *Viṣṇu* as a dwarf taking three giant steps, first mentioned in *Taittirīyasaṁhitā* and *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*, is interpreted by Keith (1925/I: 110-111) as a cunning device to deceive the *ásuras*, or ‘demons.’ *Viṣṇu* being associated with a cunning device is also in line with a correspondence to the character of *Enki* who, as the water of rivers that with guile travel around obstacles, is considered to be cunning and crafty. *Viṣṇu*’s three steps are perhaps comparable to *Enki*’s tour of the civilized world and setting up of the world order, and earth’s fertility and productiveness, in the story of “*Enki and the World Order*” (Kramer 1963: 171-174). Of note is that the name *Nārāyaṇá* is explained by *Mānavadharmasāstra* 1.10 as meaning ‘moving in the waters,’ *nāra* being said to mean ‘waters.’ The name *Nārāyaṇá* here is said to refer to *Brahmá*, but more standardly it is understood to refer to *Viṣṇu*.<sup>12</sup> The

<sup>10</sup> See the explanation offered immediately below, though.

<sup>11</sup> See RV 1.32 and RV 1.31 regarding this.

<sup>12</sup> See Dowson (1879: 360, 220-221).

name is said to indicate that the waters were the god's first place of motion. It is also interesting that in Śrī Vaiṣṇava prayers Viṣṇu at times seems to be associated with the earth. We occasionally get such locutions, for instance, as "Let waters purify the earth; let the world (earth) which is pure make me pure; Nārāyaṇa who is superior (the master of) to the Chaturmukha, let him purify water;..." (Rangachari 1931: 86).

See in this regard as well the later imagery of the reclining Viṣṇu at the dissolution of the universe in which Viṣṇu is clearly understood as silt to which the lotus on which the creator god Brahmā is seated drops its root. So also, I would interpret Viṣṇu's striding widely to the side in the battle against Vṛtrá as a reference to Viṣṇu being understood as fertile and productive earth. And, just as Viṣṇu is associated with a bird, Garuḍá, the sun-bird, so Enki is associated with an eagle like bird, the thunderbird, Imdugud. To be emphasized is that we cannot tell much about Viṣṇu from the Ṛgveda since he is incidental to the purpose of the collection.

It has been commented that it is not obvious that the subterranean waters in Mesopotamia that are viewed to fructify the earth, which Enki personifies, should be referred to as "Lord Earth," or "Lord of the Soil," which is the meaning of his name. This is comparable, though, in the Indian material to a deity who is more associated with the sun and fertile earth being referred to by a name, or names when we consider Manu's explanation of the name Nārāyaṇá commonly applied to Viṣṇu, which associate him more clearly with the waters. Points such as these may help us understand these deities better in the future. There must be some reason for referring to the deity by the less obvious aspect of his character in the traditions concerned. Note in this regard the comment under section 7 below about the names Śívá and Índra, for instance, being etymologically obtuse to the everyday eye.

See as well, with regard to a further correspondence between Enki and Viṣṇu, section 13n below with regard to the uncommon motif of a tortoise, or turtle – an unusual association shared by these two gods in the two traditions.

Váruṇa is clearly comparable to the Sumerian deity An. Just as Várūṇa is often styled a king in the Ṛgveda, and is king of both gods and men, or all that exists, so An is associated with the highest authority on earth, that kingship. To be suggested is that Vṛtrá, whose name comes from the same Sanskrit root as the name Várūṇa and the word *várṇa* 'color,' which latter word is used as well to refer to the four classes of

man, is perhaps a horrific and non-benign aspect of Váruṇa, and that the name Vṛtrá means in its primary signification not only ‘covering’ but also ‘darkness’. Vṛtrá would thus be the darkness that covers the primeval waters in *Genesis* 1,2, though from a different Vantage. Note that there is indication within historical Dravidian of a connection between Vṛtrá, tanks, and dammed up water, and between the concept of Vṛtrá and a water bag, for instance.<sup>13</sup> In such points, Vṛtrá is comparable to Váruṇa, who is also connected with the waters. In addition, by one tradition, it is Vṛtrá’s skin tacked up that serves as the sky. In this sense the connection with Váruṇa would lay in part the foundation for a connection with Dyaús.

An additional point is that just as An is often visualized in bovine form, so Índra is standardly seen as a bull (Winternitz 1927: 84). The poets, though, sometimes refer to him as a calf (Winternitz 1927: 65, Keith 1925/I: 125).<sup>14</sup> As a calf the cows – or waters, would be his mother. And Vṛtrá described as well in RV 1.32.7 as a bull, though he is usually described from a different aspect as a serpent, would be his father. Note that according to RV 4.18.12, Índra seized his father by the foot and slew him in order to obtain *sóma*. We would thus have an act of patricide in the Índra-Vṛtrá myth much as we have in the *Emma Elish*, and in the slaying of Cronus by Zeus in Greek mythology. Generally in the *Ṛgveda*, it is to be emphasized, Índra’s birth is seen as mysterious (Keith 1925/I: 125). It can be suggested that in the Índra-Vṛtrá myth of the *Ṛgveda* we have the justification for bull-fighting.

The Sumerian grouping of seven gods who “decree the fates,” who were considered to be creative deities or forces of creation, is perhaps comparable to the grouping of seven *ādityás* or forces of expansion and activity in the universe in the *Ṛgveda*. That the *Ṛgvedic* *ādityás* are perhaps deities of social relationships perhaps argues for a Mesopotamian connection since the Mesopotamian cosmos was seen to be an integration of wills in terms of social orders such as the family, the community, and the state.<sup>15</sup> Note that the *ādityá* par excellence is Váruṇa. This becomes very significant in the context of what is said further about Váruṇa below toward the end of section 8.

<sup>13</sup> See Levitt (1989). Regarding the specific points referred to here, see this source, pp. 4<sup>2</sup>-5<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> See RV 4.18.10, in addition to the reference cited by Winternitz, for reference to Índra referred to as a calf.

<sup>15</sup> With regard to the *ādityás* being primarily deities of social relationships, see Brereton (1981: viii). Also see Brereton (1981: 196-198) on the etymology of Áditi.



Also possibly comparable in the early material is the Sanskrit concept *ṛtá*, defined by Brown (1966: 20) as “the body of cosmic law or truth governing the Real, the Sat [the ‘True’],” and the Sumerian concept of *me*. About *me*, Kramer (1950: 56) writes, “The Sumerian theologians, again no doubt taking their cue from the human world about them, adduced a significant metaphysical inference in answer to the problem as to what keeps the cosmic entities and phenomena, once created, operating continuously and harmoniously, without conflict and confusion; this is the concept designated by the Sumerian word *me*, whose exact rendering is still uncertain. In general it would seem to denote a set of rules and regulations assigned to each cosmic entity and phenomenon for the very purpose of keeping it operating forever in accordance with the plans laid down by the deities creating it,” Kazanas misconstrues the term *me* to mean ‘divine power’ exclusive to the high gods, and suggests a parallel with Vedic Skt. *māyá* ‘creative power, occult power, magical power.’<sup>16</sup> More probably, from a Nostratic vantage, is a connection with Tamil *mey* ‘truth, reality,’ *meym-mai* ‘truth, reality, natural state.’<sup>17</sup> Compare also Lycian *mei*, referred to in Szalek (2006: 83, 111).

A further relationship to be noted between Ancient Mesopotamia and Vedic India involves social organization. In both, the divine world and the human world are seen to mirror one another, but the specifics are different. I am not aware, for instance, of a comparable conception in Ancient Mesopotamia to the division of the universe into *sát* and *ásat*, or ‘real’ and ‘unreal,’ with the *ásat* being the realm in which dwell the *ásuras*, beings who plague mankind and the gods. Also, the universe mirrored the political order in Ancient Mesopotamia. In Ancient India, as expressed in RV 10.90, the division of society was paralleled by the division of the universe as a cosmic universal man. Gould (1971: 6-10), however, views caste and the *várṇa* system as espoused in the Ṛgveda as a particular manifestation of ascriptive occupational stratification as found in Middle Eastern pre-industrial state systems such as ancient Sumeria.

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<sup>16</sup> Kazanas (2007b: 535, 579); see also Kazanas (2004-06: 59; 2007, p. 59; 2009b, p. 231). Jacobsen (1976: 85, 269) translates *me* as ‘(cosmic) office,’ and comments that the term is also used for the more lowly domestic appointments on an estate, with its varied tasks. With regard to the meaning of Vedic Skt. *māyá*, see Keith (1925/I: 231, 247), Burrow (1973: 129).

<sup>17</sup> See Burrow and Emeneau (1984 [hence, DEDR], entry no. 5073).

### 3. *The Second Millennium B.C.*

With the 2nd millennium B.C. the Enlil function in Ancient Mesopotamia passed first to the goddess Nininsina of the city of Isin, and then later to the god Marduk of Babylon, originally a solar and agricultural deity, it would seem. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. the nature of religion changed as well. Lambert (1960: 5-7) has noted three changes: the gods became more amicably disposed toward each other, and learned to act in unison; the gods learned how to be good; a belief arose that a personal god could protect from demons. Regarding the personal god, though he was necessarily a small god, he was able to take his client's case to the greater gods. In general, with the rise of Babylon, Ancient Mesopotamia was no longer using the analogy of natural forces. People imagined the gods in their own image, and tried to fit the universe into moral laws springing from the human conscience. Jacobsen (1976: 21, 161) sees the rise of a personal religion to be the main aspect of Mesopotamian religion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C.

In the latter half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. and in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C., Jacobson as well sees an emphasis on witchcraft and sorcery.<sup>18</sup>

In general, around 1500 B.C., the seams came loose in Mesopotamian religion, and we have a period of doubt and severe crisis. Mendelsohn (1955: xix-xxi) sees this as due to the contrast between human ethical and moral codes that had been developed, such as the 'Code of Hammurabi' (ca. 1690 B.C.), but there were others as well, and the sharp contrast of this to the arbitrary and often amoral behavior of the gods. Jacobsen (1976: 161-162) sees this as due to an inherent contradiction in the nature of the personal religion. "Evil and illness, attacks by demons, are no longer considered mere happenings, accidents: the gods, by allowing them to happen, are ultimately responsible, for only when an offence has been committed should the personal god be angered and turn away... [I]n human moral and ethical values man had found a yardstick with which he presumptuously proceeded to measure gods and their deeds. A conflict was immediately apparent. Divine will and human ethics proved incommensurable. *The stinging problem of the righteous sufferer emerged.* [*italics mine*]" (Jacobsen 1949: 228).

We have as well around 1500 B.C., or 1450 B.C., it must be remembered, the development of monotheism with Moses elsewhere in the Ancient Near East. This is the traditional dating based on I *Kings* 6,1. Modern biblical archeology would place the birth of Moses in the late

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<sup>18</sup> See Jacobson (1976: 21), Kramer: and Maier (1989: 100).

14<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.<sup>19</sup> Jacobsen (1976: 164) sees the development of monotheism as a unique extension of the personal religion that developed in Mesopotamia.

In India, in the RV, we have the development of doubt as well, starting in fact as early as RV 2.12 in which it is stated that some question Indra's existence. This is echoed in the later RV, in RV 8.100, where it is said that some say there is no Indra (Keith 1925/II: 433, Winternitz 1927: 97-98). In India, though, doubt impels philosophy to develop along intellectual lines rather than moral lines (Keith 1925/II: 434). Once people began to doubt Indra, they began to doubt the merit of sacrificing to the gods, and they began to doubt the gods themselves. Thus, RV 10.121 asks, "Which god shall we honor by means of sacrifice?" The skepticism reaches its height in RV 10.129 in which the poet asks,

"Who knows it for certain, who can proclaim it here; namely, out of what it was born and wherefrom this creation issued? The gods appeared only later - after the creation of the world. Who knows, then, out of what it has evolved?"

"Wherefrom this creation has issued, whether he has made it or whether he has not - he who is the superintendent of the world in the highest heaven - he alone knows, or, perhaps, even he does not know." (Dandekar 1958: 18).

Hand in hand with this skepticism we have the development of hieratic deities that are in essence monotheistic deities. "In most of the philosophical hymns of the R̥gveda the idea certainly comes to the foreground of a creator who is named now Prajāpati, now Brahmanaspati, or Bṛhaspati, or again Viśvakarman, but who is still always thought of as a personal god" (Winternitz 1927: 100). Keith (1925/II: 434, 435) notes, "the positive side of the tendency of the Rigveda to dissatisfaction with the gods of tradition is to be seen in the assertion of the unity of the gods and of the World." In RV 1.164.46, "...[it] is frankly expressed as regards the gods.... 'They call it Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra, Agni, and the winged bird (the sun): the one they call by many names, Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan.'" "In the Rigveda itself the ... efforts to attain the conception of the unity of the universe are directed in the main to setting up personal deities, who are credited with the creation and government of the whole universe. Of these the most famous and enduring is Prajāpati, ... ." "Brahmanaspati is of interest, since his personality as the god of prayer is closely connected with the

<sup>19</sup> See Lears (1949: 15-19) and Beegle (1997: 361b) for dating.

mighty power of the prayer to secure the ends of man. This idea finds expression also in the hymn which celebrates Vāc, speech, as the supporter of the world, as the companion of the gods, and the foundation of religious activity and all its advantages: she appears as impelling the father in the beginning of things and again as being born in the waters” (Keith 1925/II: 437-438). At times, the creator deity is called simply, “the One” (Winternitz 1927: 98-100).

In the Ṛgveda, we can thus see a development of monotheism.

The Ṛgveda ends, we must judge, around 1500 B.C., shortly before the development of monotheism in the Ancient Near East, with the first period of doubt and severe crisis in Mesopotamian religion, and with the end of Indus Valley civilization.

After the end of the composition of the hymns of the Ṛgveda comes the compilation of the collection of the Ṛgveda, and the compilation of the liturgical texts of the Sāmaveda and the Yajurveda. This is what Müller referred to as the *mantra* period.

The development of the Atharvaveda coincides with this period, and extends back into the period of the Ṛgveda, though much of it in the form we have it now probably does not extend much farther back than the late Ṛgveda, or even to a period after the composition of the hymns of the Ṛgveda was complete.<sup>20</sup> Note that “[t]he Atharvaveda knows iron and silver as well as the copper and gold of the Rigveda” (Keith 1925/I: 23). The Atharvaveda is “a collection of spells for every conceivable end of human life, spells to secure success of every kind, in the assembly, in public life, to restore an exiled king, to procure health and offspring, to defeat rivals in love, to drive away disease in every form, to win wealth and so on. But at the same time, the subject-matter has been thoroughly worked over by the priesthood, ...” (Keith 1925/I: 18).

Following this, we have the development of the Brāhmaṇas, which are texts that treat the sacrifice. “... [In] the doctrine of the sacrifice they develop a theory which may have been held in germ at least in the age of the Rigveda, but which is not expressed there and which doubtless in considerable measure is a new creation. This is indicated by one fundamental fact: the sacrifice in the Brāhmaṇas is a piece of magic pure and simple: this is assuredly not the attitude of the average seer of the Rigveda” (Keith 1925/II: 454-455).

Winternitz (1927: 196-197) notes, “The old gods of the Ṛgveda still appear in the Yajurveda-Saṁhitās and in the Brāhmaṇas, just as in the Atharvaveda. But their significance has wholly faded, and they owe all

<sup>20</sup> See Winternitz (1927: 123-125, 127) on the date of the Atharvaveda.

the power they possess to the sacrifice alone. ... Paramount importance now attaches to *Prajāpati*, 'the lord of creatures,' who is regarded as the father of the gods (*devas*) as well as of the demons (*asuras*). ... [I]n these *Brāhmaṇas* the gods actually have to make sacrifices if they wish to accomplish anything. Nothing is more significant for the *Brāhmaṇas* than the tremendous importance which is ascribed to the sacrifice. The sacrifice is here no longer the means to an end, but it is an aim in itself, indeed the highest aim of existence. The sacrifice is also a power which overwhelms all, indeed, a creative force of Nature. Therefore the sacrifice is identical with *Prajāpati*, the creator. 'Prajāpati is the sacrifice' is an oft-repeated sentence in the *Brāhmaṇas*."

We thus have a growth in the belief in the efficacy of magic at roughly the same time in Mesopotamia and India. With this, India develops toward sacrificialism and sacerdotalism.

I do not wish to repeat my entire argument here, but instead would refer the reader to the earlier article.

#### *4. The Fourth Millennium B.C.*

My reasoning for perhaps dating the very earliest hymns of the *Ṛgveda* to the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C. was on account of their being addressed to natural phenomena as such, not to gods associated with these phenomena, however transparently. This was articulated more fully in Levitt (2007a: 22). As Winternitz (1927: 75-76, n. 1) wrote, "Those hymns, however, in which the natural phenomena and the deities embodied in them are as yet scarcely distinguished from one another, hark back to the times of the beginning of Vedic mythology." A non-human conception of divinity was prevalent in Ancient Mesopotamia in the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C., while in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium it seemed to lurk under the human exterior "ready to break through it to reveal its true essence of divine power and will," just as in the *Ṛgveda* (Jacobsen 1976: 9, Keith 1925/I: 58-63).

#### *5. Carryovers into Later Hinduism*

*Vāhanas* in Hinduism, or theriomorphic vehicles of the deities with which vehicles the deities are associated iconographically, are, I would argue, residual from the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C. stage of religious development, just as in Ancient Mesopotamia after the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium "on crucial occasions it was in their old [non-human] forms as 'emblems' that the gods elected to be present to follow and guide the

army to victory, or to be brought out to witness and guarantee the making of oaths” (Jacobson 1976: 9).

Interestingly, in that in the Ṛgveda *Índra* is the bull par excellence, the later Hindu god *Śiva* whose *vāhana*, ‘vehicle’ or ‘emblem,’ is seen to be a bull, probably can be considered to be a development of *Índra* from the late Vedic Nairukta reduction of the Vedic pantheon to three deities, the atmospheric member being seen to be *Índra* or *Vāyú*. I see the Nairukta reduction of the pantheon to three deities to be the origin of the later *trimūrti*. Note that Skt. *śivá* in the Ṛgveda is the characteristic par excellence of friends and friendship, and the friend par excellence of the Vedic Indian was *Índra*.

Also note that *Śiva*’s consort in classical Hinduism is *Pārvatī*, whose name relates her to mountainous terrain. In this, she is exactly comparable to the Ancient Mesopotamian *Ninhursaga* figured as *Enlil*’s wife, *Índra* sharing many of his characteristics with *Enlil* as I have indicated above. As *Devī Pārvatī* is figured as the “Divine Mother.” Again, this is comparable. Other features of the Hindu deity, however, are not comparable. The two goddesses, while comparable on a number of points, and while in basis perhaps the same, are not identical.

I mention here only a few examples of what I see to be significant carryovers into later Hinduism. That regarding *Enki* and *Vīṣṇu* has been indicated above.

#### 6. *Monotheism*

In an extremely interesting article Kak (2007), viewing the Mitanni to be a westward movement of Vedic Aryans out of India with the drying up of the *Sárasvatī* River, outlines bonds of marriage across several generations between the Mitanni and the Egyptian rulers of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, to which *Akhenaten* (1353-36 B.C.) belonged.<sup>21</sup> Kak views the beliefs of *Akhenaten* as being due to the influence of what were probably late Vedic beliefs of the Mitanni (Kak, 2007: p. 634), and would take monotheism in the Hebrew tradition to be due to Egyptian influence. I would suggest that the introduction of monotheism into the Hebrew tradition by *Moses* (b. late 14<sup>th</sup> c. B.C. according to modern biblical archeology; see above, n. 20) may have also been drawing on the Mitanni beliefs directly, as Kak alludes to them, since the ‘Ten Commandments’ being written in stone, and their drawing on the ‘Code of *Hammurabi*’ and similar Mesopotamian codes demonstrate connection

<sup>21</sup> Kak’s view with regard to the Mitanni is not unlike my view, expressed in Levitt (2008: 220-222), to which the reader is referred.

of the Hebrew tradition with that of Mesopotamia.<sup>22</sup> Documents in Ancient Mesopotamia, of course, were written in stone. Further, the Hebrew God is more a god of fire than a solar deity like Akhenaten's Aton. Thus, in *Exodus* 3,2 and on God speaks to Moses from a burning bush, the fire of which did not consume the bush; in *Exodus* 13,21 and 22 God went before the Israelites in a pillar of fire by night so as to lead them through the wilderness out of Egypt; and in *Exodus* 19,18 God descended on Mount Sinai in fire at the time of the giving of the 'Ten commandments.' So also, I have seen a comment by the renowned Holocaust survivor and author Elie Wiesel to the effect that the Jewish God is a god of fire.

Kak's association of the Hebrew name for God, *yhvh*, vocalized as *Yahweh*, and Ṛgvedic *Yahvāh*, an epithet used in the Ṛgveda for Agnī, is well taken.<sup>23</sup> Agnī 'earthly fire' and importantly 'sacrificial fire,' the chief terrestrial god in the Ṛgveda, in a sense develops historically into the concepts of Bṛhaspāti and Brāhmaṇaspāti in the late Ṛgveda, which in turn leads to the concept Brahmā.<sup>24</sup> I have argued a similar point earlier:

“[T]he present writer thinks he can build a good case that the Hebrew name for God, *yhvh*, the etymology of which is a problem in Hebrew, may well be related to the confused situation in Vedic Sanskrit between Skt. *jivhā* (nom. *jihvā*, *jihvāḥ*) “tongue,” used in reference to the god Agni and hence a “tongue (of flame),” Skt. *√hū/hve* “to call, invoke” (redup. *juhu-/juhv-*, *jihvā=juhū* – by popular etymology according to Grassmann 1873: 490), and Skt. *yahvā* (nom. *yahvāḥ*) “restless, swift, active,” of Agni, Indra, and Soma in the Ṛgveda, said to be probably from a lost *√\*yah* and appearing in the *padapāṭha* (word-by-word) text of the Maitrāyaṇīsamhitā (one of the recensions of the black Yajurveda) where the Samhitā text has *jihvā*.” (Levitt 1995-96: 236-237).

With regard to the various ways in which the deity is referred to in the Old Testament, I would forward Kak to Friedman (1997). Kak's discussion with regard to this (Kak 2007: 628-629) could use improvement. Kak's overall discussion, though, is very well taken.

As for the dating of the Ṛgveda Kak (2000: 69), when discussing the varying dates given for the war described in the Mahābhārata, which he

<sup>22</sup> See Levitt (1985-86: 231).

<sup>23</sup> Kak (2007: 626, 635, 637 n. 28).

<sup>24</sup> With regard to the development of Bṛhaspāti and Brāhmaṇaspāti from Agnī, and their later development to the god Brahmā, see Keith (1925/I: 65-66, 162-164).

relates fairly dispassionately, opines that it is “more plausible to see the flowering of the Vedic age to have occurred during the Harappa phase.”

When we turn to Kazanas with regard to the development of monotheism in the Ṛgveda, I must admit that I find reading Kazanas on the Veda to be most disconcerting as he conflates earlier and later developments, and sees an early tendency as proof of a later development at an earlier time. Also, he blurs the distinction between monotheism and monism, reading both together as basic to what he sees to be the conception of divinity in the Ṛgveda. Thus, he glosses over the development of hieratic deities, or personal gods, in the late Ṛgveda, and finds the monism of the *Upaniṣad*-s implicit in the early Ṛgveda along with monotheism.<sup>25</sup>

The hymns he focuses on to prove his construct of monism and monotheism – RV 1. 164.6 and 46, RV 3.54.8, RV 3.55 (refrain), RV 8.58.2, RV 10.114.5, RV 10.129.2 – are, with only two exceptions (RV 3.54 and RV 3.55), late; RV 8.58 being in the late *Vāḷakhilya*, and RV 1.164 having been pinpointed by Oldenberg as possibly being late or having parts of which were late.<sup>26</sup> Also all, with the single exception of RV 10.129 which is to “Creation,” are to the *Viśve Devāḥ*, or ‘All-Gods.’ The All-Gods, though, a comprehensive grouping of the gods so as to not slight any developed for liturgical purposes (Keith 1925/I: 89, 221-222), are this side of creation as stated in the late hymn 10.129.6 (quoted above under the discussion in 3). They are not transcended as the later monotheistic deities. Further, as time goes on, such hymns to the All-Gods increase in number (Keith 1926/I: 2) - indicating increased importance to the conception. Also, my reading of the refrain of RV 3.55, *mahād devānām asuratvām ékaṁ* ‘great and single is the lordly power of the gods’ [Kazanas’ translation], is not nearly as far-reaching as Kazanas’ in my opinion stretched interpretation. Kazanas’ interpretation is that the gods are manifestations of *asuratvá*, the One Power that is within every one of them, so every god is an expression of One Godhead.<sup>27</sup> MW 121a, following Grassmann (1873: 156), translates *asuratvá* as ‘spirituality, divine dignity.’ Griffith (1896-97) translates it as ‘dominion.’

In short, I find Kazanas’ treatment of monotheism troublesome.

My argument has been spelled out above under the discussion of “The Second Millennium B.C.” in 3.

<sup>25</sup> See Kazanas (2001a: 34), (2007b: 513-516; 2009b, pp. 78-84).

<sup>26</sup> See Witzel (1995: 308-311).

<sup>27</sup> Kazanas (2007b: 514; 2009b: 79-80).



### 7. Indigenous Indo-Aryans?

Kazanas has noted several times, when misrepresenting my dating of the Ṛgveda in such a fashion as to imply that my dating was more or less in agreement with his, in order to bolster my credibility, that I am “by no means an indigenist.”<sup>28</sup> But if we accept Kazanas’ definition of an indigenist as someone who believes that the Indo-Aryans were in the Indic area already *ca.* 6000-4500 B.C. when there is a break in the skeletal record at Mehrgarh, however, then I am indeed an “indigenist” since I have thought since *ca.* 1977-81 on the basis of Dravidian content that I argued at that time for significant early Vedic forms such as the Sanskrit root *mad-/mand-* and Skt. *mandrá*, that there must have been a lengthy period of contact with Dravidian prior to the composition of the Ṛgveda.<sup>29</sup> With specific regard to Skt. *mad-/mand-* and *mandrá*, I might note in this place, it was shown that usage of the root in the Ṛgveda is intimately associated with *sóma* and Indra’s drinking of *sóma*.<sup>30</sup>

So also, I have seen merger of Dravidian and Indo-European material in Skt. *ātmán/tmán* and, as Southworth (1979: 198-199) had argued earlier, between the Dravidian pronouns recorded in DEDR 3196 “*Ta. tāṇ*(obl. *taṇ-*, before vowels *tāṇ-*) oneself ... *Ma.tān* (obl. *tan-*) self, oneself” and Skt. *tanū* “the body, person, self (often used like a reflexive pron.; cf. *ātmán*), RV etc.” (MW 435c).<sup>31</sup> As Witzel (2001: 28) observed, arguing against Southworth’s suggestion, such a comparison of Indo-Iranian and Dravidian words would presuppose a very close relationship between Dravidian and (pre-) Indo-Aryan tribes indeed as pronouns are not taken over easily. Witzel then goes on to state that there is no other evidence of such close contact. But it is just such a period of contact that is argued by Levitt (2001), which agrees with Southworth and further relates these forms both within Indo-Aryan and within Dravidian to Skt. *ātmán/tmán*.<sup>32</sup>

Such also fits with Iravatham Mahadevan’s argument that *sóma* was borrowed from a Dravidian Indus Valley civilization (1985, 1994), and my earlier suggestion, on the basis of Harold W. Bailey’s observation that the native Sanskrit etymology for *sóma* from the root *su-* ‘to press out, extract,’ *i.e.* ‘pressed thing’ [Bailey’s definition], was “a poor kind

<sup>28</sup> Kazanas (2007a: 21; *ABORI* 2007 p. 31), (2008: 32), (2009a: 9/40; 2009b p. 323).

<sup>29</sup> See Levitt (1980).

<sup>30</sup> Levitt (1980: 34, 53 n. 18), (2008: 226-227).

<sup>31</sup> See Levitt (2001).

<sup>32</sup> I note that the analysis or the semantics of Skt. *ātmán/tmán* by Mme. Hélène de William-Grabowska in William-Grabowska (1929-30) agrees with that proposed by Levitt (2001), but she could not identify the Dravidian source.

of way to designate a sacrificial plant of great potency”<sup>33</sup> that Skt. *sóma* was cognate with North Dravidian etyma in DEDR 1035 “Kur. *ōsā* mushroom. Malt *ōsu* id.,” through metathesis. Cognate etyma for these North Dravidian forms display an association with the color red, as also is the case for the other North Dravidian set of etyma for ‘mushroom’.<sup>34</sup> The head of the fly-agaric mushroom argued by Wasson (1968, 1971) to be the Vedic *sóma*, of course, is read. Wasson (1979: 103b) has noted that the plant must have had a name before the Vedic liturgy was devised. This etymology, of course, presupposes acceptance of Wasson’s argument that *sóma* was the mushroom fly-agaric (*Amanita muscaria*).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> See Wasson (1979: 103b).

<sup>34</sup> Levitt (1989: 7<sup>2</sup>-8<sup>2</sup>;7<sup>1</sup>, 37, 2-sided foldout).

<sup>35</sup> In 1975, Stellen Kramrisch published an article in which she argued that the Sanskrit name of a plant substituted for *sóma* in the Pravargya sacrifice, Pūtika, survived to this day in the name “Putka” of a mushroom sacred to the Santal, an aboriginal tribe in eastern India. As Kramrisch (1975: 230b) wrote, “The identification of Pūtika, the Soma surrogate, supplies strong evidence that Soma indeed was a mushroom” (see also Wasson 1979: 101b-103a).

Kuiper (1984) offered several objections to Kramrisch’s identification. The first is based on the identification for the plant by commentators. But commentators are not always correct. See, for instance, the discussion of the titling of Sanskrit plays in Levitt (2005), or the discussion of the *Amarkośa* in Levitt (2007b). The second objection is that the name, properly “*pūtīka*,” does not mean ‘stinking’, which meaning he attributes to the Petersburg lexicon. But as Kramrisch (1975: 226b) clearly indicates, this is the way the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* refers to the plant. That the word may be a loanword in Sanskrit (Kuiper 1984: 222-223) is well taken. But, then, such a form may have dropped out of Sanskrit while it continued in Santali, so the objection is moot. That Kramrisch’s argument is circular, I do not agree with. That the Santali word is *puṭka*, with a retroflex ‘ṭ’ is also moot when the confusion between dental ‘t’ and retroflex ‘ṭ’ is considered on account of their both often having alveolar articulation (see Levitt 2010: 23-25 and 76, for instance). With regard to the Munda forms with which Kuiper relates Santali *puṭka* and the related Santali *puṭi* ‘to swell, bloat, puff up,’ compare as well DEDR 4499 “Pa. *boḍḍa* edible fungus. Go. (Mu) *nira baḍḍa* kind of mushroom (*Voc.* 2480). ? Kol. (Kin) *burma* mushroom (Kamaleswaran),” DEDR 4563 “Ta. *pollu* (*polli-*) to blister, swell ... Ma. *pollu* bubble ...,” DEDR 4492 “Ta. *poṭṭu* drop, Spot, round mark worn on the forehead ...,” and so forth, as listed in Levitt (1989). For the full semantic spread of these forms, and parallel semantic spreads for other words for ‘mushroom’ in Dravidian, see the 2-sided foldout chart and, for instance, 10<sup>1</sup>-11<sup>1</sup>, 29, 32. With regard to a connection with words for ‘stench,’ see pp. 24, 26, the 2-sided foldout chart, and elsewhere in that article. For a proposed Uralic connection here, see Levitt (1989: 38-39). While Kuiper’s objection that grammatical facts have no explanation outside the linguistic system (1984: 225-226) has force, the explanation given by Wasson’s informant on being pressed as to why the form is animate, that after left a day or two in leftover curry the leftover *puṭka* would “stink with the stench of a cadaver” (see Kramrisch 1975: 229b; also Wasson 1979: 102a), would seem to represent an accurate association with the mushroom. Other

So also, I might add, Kuiper (1967: 97) has suggested “that the period between the arrival of the Indo-Aryan in the Indian subcontinent and the composition of the oldest Vedic hymns must have been much longer than was previously thought.” Such a conclusion, I might note, echoes Kunhan Raja (1940: 390-391) whose argument is comparable to that developed more fully in Kuiper (1991: 5-8), hinted at in Kuiper (1967: 87). Kuiper arrives at this conclusion mainly on the basis of two new traits of sentence structure introduced into Vedic Sanskrit, one connected with a new grammatical category (the gerund), and the second with a completely new use made of an inherited word, *iti* ‘thus’. Both are comparable to common Dravidian usage (Kuiper 1967: 91-97). He thus presents, along with words of apparently foreign origin with retroflexes in the *Ṛgveda* and *Atharvaveda* the presence of which increase with time, most of which are hapax legomena, or words of a single occurrence only, and which establish a new set of phonemes, three pre-Vedic innovations that “seem to leave little doubt as to the role of Dravidian in the Indian subcontinent” (Kuiper (1967: 97)). Kuiper, however, considers it unsafe to date any part of the *Ṛgveda* earlier than *ca.* 1400 B.C. (Kuiper (1967: 97-98)).

Kuiper’s 1967 arguments have been countered by, for instance, Hock (1975: 89-90, 101-102, 105-111) who argued on the one hand that there were many possible sources for these phenomena and further, that they are not uncommon elsewhere in Indo-European. So also, Hock (1975: 103-104) has argued against the later suggestion of Emeneau (1974: 93-111) that many usages *api* in Vedic and later Sanskrit texts are due to diffusion from Dravidian.

We might note, such usages here and there in Indo-European might be explainable as Nostratic survivals.<sup>36</sup>

Further, what is important is the quantitative presence of the phenomena in Vedic and later Sanskrit, which indeed suggests convergence with Dravidian even though there may have been an inherited tendency.

With regard to retroflexes in Indo-Aryan, see Levitt (2010).

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Dravidian connections also are reflected in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* passage cited by Kramrisch (1975: 226b) referred to above.

In short, I am not at all sure that Kuiper’s objections are the last word on Kramrisch’s proposed identification of *pūṭika*, or perhaps more correctly *pūṭīka*, as Kuiper (1984: 222) points out, though *pūṭika* does occur in late texts.

<sup>36</sup> See Levitt (2010: 21-23, 71-74) for examples of this.

With regard to a lengthy presence of the Indo-Aryans in the Indian subcontinent prior to the composition of the oldest Vedic hymns, see also Levitt (1995-96) on the merger in the Sanskrit from *bráhmaṇ* of the Sanskrit root *brh-* and Semitic *BRK*, with the semantic spread of the Semitic root unfolding over time in Sanskrit. The semantic spread of the Semitic root is wider than that of Skt. *bráhmaṇ*, which marks off the Semitic root as being the primary source.<sup>37</sup> Further, the word occurs in the early Ṛgveda with the meaning ‘prayer.’<sup>38</sup> This is the basic meaning of the Semitic root. This is not to deny the effect of Indian genius in the development of the later Indic concept of *bráhmaṇ*, “[t]he supreme soul of the universe, self-existent, absolute, and eternal, from which all things emanate, and to which all return” (Dowson 1879: 56), and the equation that equates the *bráhmaṇ* with the individual self, the *ātmaṇ*. But compare the Arabic concept of *baraka*, a concept that embodies the mysterious force of the sacred behind prosperity and fecundity.<sup>39</sup> I would view the overall concept of *bráhmaṇ* in its germinal form to be part of the shared Ancient Mesopotamian-Indic tradition.

Another probable early Vedic loanword from Semitic is the Sanskrit word *śívá* ‘well disposed, beneficial,’ which comes to be used as the name of one of the major Indian deities in the Hindu *trimūrti*, from the Semitic word for ‘seven.’ The Semitic form can be seen elsewhere in such names as the place name Beersheba and the biblical personal names Bathsheba and Elisheba. As noted above in section 5, Skt. *śívá* is in the Ṛgveda the characteristic par excellence of friends and friendship, and the friend par excellence of the Vedic Indian was *Índra*. The semantic change from the number ‘seven’ to the meaning ‘well disposed’ would revolve around the importance in the Indian tradition of the game of dice, in which game the number ‘seven’ carries special good import. It is to be noted that in the Hindu tradition, the god *Śívá* is viewed to be perpetually absorbed in a game of dice (Handelman and Shulman 1997).

There appears to be a rule at work, even with regard to the chief god of Ṛgveda, *Índra* (see Levitt 2008), that the name of a high god is etymologically obtuse to the everyday eye. It is a mystery, on account of and indicating the sanctity of the deity and, since word and thing are one,

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<sup>37</sup> See Burrow (1946: 12-22; esp. 14, 17-18) on the principles behind determining loanwords.

<sup>38</sup> See Grassmann (1873: 916-917), Levitt (1995-96: 226-231).

<sup>39</sup> With regard to the Arabic concept or *baraka*, see Levitt (1995-96: 241-242) and the reference cited in that place.

his name. If one does not *know* the name, one cannot control the deity. Lack of ability to do this indicates the deity's greatness.

With regard to the argument developed by Kazanas, among others, in Kazanas (1999, 2001b, 2002a, and 2006c), that the original Indo-European and Aryan homeland is northwest India, and that there was a continuum of Indo-European speaking peoples "extending from Saptasindhu up to the Pontic Steppes and from here the different branches moved off to their historical habitats" (Kazanas 2006c: 26; 2009b: 147), which type of argument has been argued against by, for instance, Hock (1999) and Witzel (2003), I would point to Kuznetsov (2005) and Telegin (2005), which seem to imply that the Kurgan culture was Indo-Iranian.

Thus Kuznetsov writes, "The Bronze Age people of the European steppe have often been identified with speakers of Proto-Indo-European, the elusive mother tongue that ultimately developed into the modern Indo-European languages. Many Russian archeologists believe, however, that the Proto-Indo-European community existed earlier than the Bronze Age, and that the Early Bronze Age cultures of the European steppe represent a later daughter branch, the Indo-Iranian speech community" (2005: 325).

So also Telegin, suggesting contact between the Kurgan culture and a culture seen to be the precursor of Baltic and Slavonic culture, writes, "Excavations between the rivers Orel' and Samara have uncovered burials of a syncretic nature that attest contacts between the spheres of the Corded Ware and Yamna cultures. It is suggested that these may indicate contacts between Proto-Indo-Iranian and the prehistoric ancestors of the Balts and Slavs" (2005: 339).

Such, of course, would explain the special linguistic relationship that seems to have existed at one time between early Indo-Iranian and those dialects of Indo-European that developed eventually into Baltic and Slavonic. With regard to this special relationship see, for instance, Burrow (1955: 18-23). This also would be in keeping with my conjecture regarding the much earlier than generally accepted in Western circles date for Sanskrit in India. The dating of Proto-Indo-European has long seemed to me to be too late. Kazanas may well be correct with regard to a common culture area between northwestern India and the Kurgan culture, or at least between part of northwestern India and the Kurgan culture, but I would argue that the presence was Indo-Aryan and/or Indo-Iranian. This would fit with the linguistic evidence that I see as demonstrating a long period of contact between Sanskrit and Dravidian

on the one hand, and early contact with Semitic on the other. With regard to a common language spanning culture areas, see Sapir (1921: 209-219, 1949: 34-35, 40-42). Sapir (1921: 209) begins, “That a group of languages need not in the least correspond to a racial group or a culture area is easily demonstrated. We may even show how a single language intercrosses with race and culture lines.”

Interestingly, Kuznetsov (2005) reports that excavations at an Early Bronze Age Yamnaya-culture Kurgan cemetery in the Middle Volga Steppes have yielded a spectacular metal ritual weapon like that described in the Ṛgveda as the legendary *vájra*, the divine weapon of Índra. This weapon is reported to be similar to so-called bar-celts described by Harry Falk as having been found in Hindustan in the Ganges-Yamuna Doab among copper hoards of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. connected to the Ochre Colored Pottery culture. On the basis of Ṛgvedic textual references, Falk considered these bar-celts to be the material expression of Índra’s *vájra*. This supports the view of Levitt (2008) that Skt. *índra* is a very ancient name.

Despite my thinking that there is clear evidence of a lengthy presence of the Indo-Aryans in the Indic area prior to the composition of the Ṛgveda, I would see, though, a migration of the Indo-Aryans into South Asia from the Eurasian landmass. This is unlike Kazanas who, despite his disclaimers, clearly favors an “Out-of-India” argument for Indo-European.<sup>40</sup>

#### 8. *Indus Valley Civilization*

Levitt (2009) has argued for a Dravidian etymology for the Ancient Mesopotamian place name “Meluḥḥa” for Indus Valley civilization, and has Offered Dravidian etymologies for Meluḥḥan words recorded in Ancient Mesopotamian sources. One such word, though, suggests an Indo-Aryan etymology; and the location where the tree in question probably would have grown at that time is exactly in the upper Sárasvatī River area where the Vedic Aryans are supposed to have settled.<sup>41</sup> As Southworth (1988: 663) observed, the Vedic Aryans must have been a mountain dwelling, primarily herding people who were unacquainted with the type of floodplain agriculture practiced by the Harappans.

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, Kazanas (2002a: 300, 303, 323; 2009b pp. 32, 36, 61), (2006c: 26; 2009b: 147, quoted from above); argument implicit in Kazanas (2004: 94).

<sup>41</sup> In passing, I might note that such references as that in RV 7.95.2 that refers to the Sárasvatī River flowing to the ocean may well be hyperbole. With the opinion that the river dried up *ca.* 1900 B.C., I do not argue.

With specific regard to Indus Valley civilization, Fairservis (1986) has noted that close to a thousand Indus Valley culture sites have now been located. Most of these are small, a few acres at the most, and are of little time depth, as if the settlers came and went in a matter of decades. Indeed, recent work on the great urban site of Mohenjodaro indicates that it was probably occupied for only about 200 years. He finds explanation for the wide distribution of short-term settlements in the need for good grazing land for Harappan cattle herds and the competition this usage of land posed to the Harappan agriculturalist in the Harappan mixed economy of farming and cattle herding. As cultivation expands into areas of natural pasture, and as increase in the size of cattle herds imperils the farmer's fields, decisions have to be made. This is the ancient "farmer and the cowherd" problem. The Harappan solution to this problem was to adopt a pattern of migration. Fairservis argues:

"[T]he Harappan sedentary economy was a symbiotic one, where the products of the soil and of the herd were essential to the well-being of all. This interdependence is apparent in those instances where we have good evidence of settlement patterns. Newly colonized areas usually had several contemporary but functionally different settlements. These included a village and/or administrative center that was located in or near the cultivated zone, factory sites where local resources such as metal, clay, shell, and stone could be exploited and manufactured into finished goods, and cattle camps of a temporary nature located where pasture was available in a given season. The whole was bound together by an administrative system that constructed central storage facilities, gathered commodities, and redistributed them... It is also true that in some areas there was only a single site, usually a walled village or town. These settlements tended to be in regions far from the Indus, such as the Makran or Badakhshan, and apparently were created to obtain single resources like copper or lapis lazuli" (1986: 48a, b, c).

This explains both the Short-lived occupations and the great geographical spread of the Harappans, according to Fairservis.

It would also explain, I might note, why the extent of Indus Valley civilization was the extent of wheat and barley cultivation in

South Asia and was never able to adapt itself to wet rice cultivation. It seems to have petered out once it reached the rice cultivation area, as I once heard Gregory Possehl comment in a lecture in 1976.

I cannot but help think, given the importance of cattle in the Ṛgveda, that the Indo-Aryans were the cattle herders of Indus Valley civilization, or at least some of these cattle herders. The Ṛgvedic Aryans would have been mainly those of the (upper) Sārasvatī River region; others would be the non-Vedic Aryans whose speech gave rise to what George A. Grierson referred to as the Outer group of Indo-Aryan languages, and who Southworth (1995: 266) has argued were the Yādavas whom he sees as having had greater and more direct contact with the earlier peoples of the subcontinent.<sup>42</sup>

Interestingly, Southworth (1995: 266 n. 12) provides a Dravidian etymology for Yādava from the etyma in DEDR 5152 “Ta. *yātu*, *ātu* goat, sheep; *āṭṭ-āl* shepherd. Ma. ...*āttukāran* shepherd ... ” [PDr \**yātu* ‘goat, sheep’], which name Southworth sees as meaning ‘herder.’ This name has no known Indo-European etymology. This would fit perfectly with what I am proposing.<sup>43</sup>

As noted, Southworth observed that the Ṛgvedic Aryans must have been a mountain dwelling, primarily herding people who were unacquainted with the type of floodplain agriculture practiced by the Harappans. He concludes this because the earliest literature does not mention the main products of the Indus Valley – wheat, dates, sesamum, cotton, and (southern) rice [in Lothal], which he sees as evidence for a lack of substantial contact between these people and the Harappans (1988: 663). In similar fashion, Kazanas argues that the Ṛgvedic Aryans are pre-Harappan because the Ṛgveda knows nothing of urban structures, fixed hearths/altars, bricks, cotton, silver, and rice.<sup>44</sup>

We must note that if the Indo-Aryans were Indus Valley civilization herders, their literature might well not mention such things. Southworth’s conclusion though, seems in general outline more reasonable. Southworth, however, would date the Ṛgvedic Aryans after the decline of Indus Valley civilization in the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. on this basis (1988: 651).

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<sup>42</sup> The Outer group of Indo-Aryan languages include eastern Indo-Aryan (Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, etc.), those Indo-Aryan languages of southwestern India (Marathi, Konkani, and Gujarati), and perhaps Sindhi and Kashmiri.

<sup>43</sup> See also Levitt (2003: 355a-356a).

<sup>44</sup> Kazanas (1999: 29-30), (2002a: 291; 2009b 21) (2002b, only in rev. versions; 2006: 112a; 2009b: 151), (2003: 229), etc.



As I have pointed out elsewhere (Levitt 2007a: 24), surely the Vedic Aryans were acquainted with mangoes and figs, yet these are not mentioned, and, indeed, fruit as such is mentioned only very rarely in the Ṛgveda.<sup>45</sup> Also, donkeys are only mentioned three times, and surely these were common.<sup>46</sup> Omissions need not necessarily be significant. Kazanas has countered that the Ṛgveda mentions wool, skin, and bark for cloth, but not cotton (personal correspondence dated March 27, 2010). But the cotton plant, as such, is not mentioned in Sanskrit literature till the medical texts. Things made of cotton, or the adjective 'cottony,' are mentioned first in two Śrautasūtras and in the Mānavadharmasāstra, etc. And cotton cloth is mentioned first in the Mānavadharmasāstra, Mahābhārata, etc.<sup>47</sup> Certainly, cotton and cotton cloth were known before these texts, and cotton garments were worn before this!

As the late W. Norman Brown was fond of saying, the Ṛgvedic hymns are like our Christian hymns. Without knowing certain things about the culture (which for the Ṛgveda we lack), they are incomprehensible. By the same token, our Christian hymns leave out details of life significant even in the times in which many of them were written. We would come up with a very strange picture of our more or less contemporary Western society were we to reconstruct it from our Christian hymns.

Further, as Keith (1925/I: 109) has observed, the collection of hymns in the Ṛgveda is mainly concerned with the *sóma* sacrifice, and so it does not even take great account of those deities who are not of much consequence in that sacrifice, such as Víṣṇu and Váruṇa, for instance, who no doubt had the position of being great gods in the period of the Ṛgveda.<sup>48</sup> Need we reasonably expect such hymns to necessarily mention bricks and cotton?

I must also add that our later Indian fable literature clearly goes back to the same period as Ancient Mesopotamian fable literature, and is clearly part of a shared Ancient Mesopotamian-Indic tradition as also some of our Sanskrit proverb literature is part of a shared floating tradition<sup>49</sup>, yet our fable literature does not surface in South Asia until the Pāli Jātaka stories and in Sanskrit literature, until perhaps the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. B.C. with the Pañcatantra and Tantrākhyāyikā, the original of which is lost but

<sup>45</sup> See Grassmann (1873: 896, *s.v. phāla*)

<sup>46</sup> See Grassmann (1873: 387, *s.v. gardabhā*)

<sup>47</sup> MW 258a, *s.v. karpāsa*; 275c-276a, *s.v. karpāsa*.

<sup>48</sup> With regard to this point as it relates to váruṇa, see Winternitz (1927: 80).

<sup>49</sup> See Sternbach (1981: 98a, 103a, 120b-122a, esp. 122a top).

which we know of from Pahlavi, Old Syriac, and Arabic translations of the 6<sup>th</sup> c. A.D. to 8<sup>th</sup> c. A.D. - the 6<sup>th</sup> c. A.D. Pahlavi translation itself being lost.

Omission in Indian textual materials, in general, is not necessarily significant. Morris (2006: 123) has insightfully speculated that “the Indus Valley civilization arose from a double occupation, Indo-European speakers upstream and Dravidian downstream (rather like Mesopotamia - with Akkadians and Sumerians)... .” He opines that the Dravidians occupied the lower Indus Valley, probably centered on Mohenjodaro. “This would explain why Brahui is where it is (i.e. not that far away from Mohenjodaro), as well as the presence of Dravidian substrate in adjacent Indo-European languages like Nuristani.” He has arrived at this conclusion on the basis of skeletal remains at Mohenjodaro, and their difference from those at Chalcolithic Mehrgarh (4500 B.C.), from the late Harappan inhabitants of Cemetery H, and from those at other sites, all of which usually are associated with Indo-Europeans. (Morris (2006: 122))

Somewhat similarly, Vahia (2007: 53, 57) suggests that Harappan civilization was created by the coastal foragers who left Africa *ca.* 60,000 B.C. who would be Dravidians.<sup>50</sup> This population merged *ca.* 2000 B.C. in the Harappan area with a population he sees to be migrants from Central Asia, who would be the Vedic Aryans, and then drifted further east into the Gangetic plains when the *Sárasvatī* River dried up.

Witzel (2001) has argued that the area around Mohenjodaro was peopled by speakers of an unknown language of undetermined connection with anything else, and the more northerly Punjab area along the Indus River was peopled by speakers of what he refers to as “Para-Munda.” The Vedic Aryans he sees as entering the Punjab area *ca.* 1700-1200 B.C.

I mention here only three alternative scenarios that have been proposed.

I have noted elsewhere that there are differences in script sequences between Mohenjodaro and Harappa, which would seem to indicate language difference (Levitt 2006: 268). But note, it is the script sequences at the more northerly site of Harappa that have wide geographical currency.<sup>51</sup> And it is just such a script sequence that has surfaced recently on a Neolithic polished stone celt, or hand-held axe, in Tamil Nadu, dated cautiously by Iravatham Mahadevan to *ca.* 2000-1000 B.C. (2006: 176, 2009: 13-17). According to Mahadevan in the 2006

<sup>50</sup> See Levitt (2007: 28-29), (2009: 140-144; slightly revised in 2010: 53-55, 57-61).

<sup>51</sup> See, for instance, Signe Cohen (2005).

reference cited here, this leads to the conclusion that the language of the Harappan script was Dravidian. Perhaps more cautiously, as Mahadevan (1999: 22) observed with regard to the survival in later Indian civilization of what he refers to as the Harappan “Muruku sign” of Indus script, which sign appears in a regular sequence on this hand-held axe, such symbols spread with the migration of the descendants of the Harappans to eastern and southern India after the demise of the mature Harappan civilization.<sup>52</sup>

To be considered here, as well as, toward the end of section 7 above, is that racial remains or physical culture and language need not coincide.<sup>53</sup>

In short, I think that the soundest conclusion at the present is that Indo-Aryans were the cattle herders of Indus Valley civilization, or at least some of those cattle herders, and that the Ṛgvedic Aryans were those settled in the (upper) Sārasvatī River area.

I also emphasize that the spread of Indus Valley civilization is paralleled by the history of the spread of Indo-Aryan in South Asia (though not necessarily Ṛgvedic Aryans).

In line with the often-argued relationship between the place name “Meluḥḥa” and Skt. *mlecchā* ‘foreigner, barbarian, non-Aryan, any person who does not speak Sanskrit and does not conform to the usual Hindu institutions’ (MW 837c), Pāli *milakkha*, *milakkhu*, Levitt (2009: 146-148, 150-152) has argued that the name “Nimlocanī” in *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 5.21.7, which refers to Vāruṇa’s city situated on the mountain Mānasottara, situated toward the west, might be related to the place name “Meluḥḥa.”<sup>54</sup> The Sanskrit root *mluc-*, or *mruc-*, of questionable connection outside Indo-Iranian (*EWA* II: 388), means primarily ‘to go down, set,’ which usage occurs in Śatapathabrāhmaṇa 14.4.3.33. This root, I would argue, is in some fashion related to Skt. *mlecchā*, which refers to a person of low status in the Aryan scheme of things. In this context, note the late lexicographic meanings of *mlecchā* ‘a person who lives by agriculture or making weapons, copper’ (MW 837c). This is in concord with my suggestion that the Indo-Aryans were

<sup>52</sup> See also Mahadevan (2006: 177) with regard to some contacts between Harappan civilization and the peoples of South India, and migration from the Harappan civilization area to the Tamil area.

<sup>53</sup> See references in Sapir (1921) and (1949) toward the end of section 7 above.

<sup>54</sup> With regard to the confusion in Indic sources as to whether a specific name refers to a country or the major city of that country, and vice versa, see Levitt (2009: 152).

herders, and the Meluḥḥans were the cultivators, miners, and at least some of the artisans of Indus Valley civilization.

Váruṇa, whose city Nimlocanī is said to be, is considered to be one of the older gods in the Ṛgveda, standing in known opposition to the later god Índra (Oberlies 1998-99/I: 194; see also 173). In the Ṛgveda, Váruṇa receives the epithet *ásura* ‘lord’ in proportion more than any other god (Keith 1925/I: 96). In Indian tradition from the Ṛgveda onward, the *ásura*-s are known as the older brothers of the gods (Oberlies 1998-99/I: 173 n. 119). It has been suggested above in section 2 that the demon Vṛtrá slain by Índra is in fact, on etymological grounds, a malevolent and non-benign aspect of Váruṇa. Índra’s act is suggested to be an act of patricide. As noted, as Índra is sometimes described by the poets as a calf, the cows or waters would be Índra’s mother. And this would make Váruṇa’s emblem to be a bull, like that of the Sumerian god An. Such might be a link to one of the common representations of a bull on Indus Valley seals, and would suggest an identification of the *Bhāgavatapurāna*’s Nimlocanī with Meluḥḥa. Váruṇa, under whatever name, we can suggest, would have been a chief deity of Indus Valley civilization.

The divine personage of Śívá may not, only be a continuity of Índra in later Indian tradition, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>55</sup> but also of Váruṇa. Many years ago, Joseph Campbell remarked to me that the trident as a sacred symbol was common to both Śívá and the Roman god of the sea, Uranus (Greek, Poseidon). A three-pronged fork is, of course, a fish fork. I am aware that the etymological connection between the sacred names Váruṇa and Uranus that has been argued, is only one of several that have been proposed (KEWA III, 152, EWA II: 516), but the sharing of a trident as a sacred symbol by both Śívá and Uranus suggests a connection with the divine personage of Váruṇa, who was also a god of the sea. Should we be able to establish that Váruṇa was a chief god of Indus Valley civilization, then the later personage of Śívá may as well be a reestablishment of older, non-Aryan religious identities. Śívá, of course, is as well a continuity of the late Vedic creator god Prajāpati, who tortures and mortifies himself in preparation for the great work of creation.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> See Levitt (2003: 249b-350a), (2008: 225), and above under section 5 on “Carryovers Into Later Hinduism.” Levitt (2008: 225) contains additional important textual points.

<sup>56</sup> If I might expand on this, in that McAlpin (1981) has argued that the language of Elam is close to Brahui, and the etymologies offered for Meluḥḥan words in Levitt (2009) seem to be often closest to Brahui, we can suggest that perhaps in this context Zoroaster’s reform establishing Ahura Mazdā as a monotheistic deity is perhaps a reaction in favor of

Recently, Ananthanarayana (2010) has argued that non-Aryan traditions, and especially Dravidian traditions, are reflected in Sanskrit literature and that Sanskrit is a common South Asian cultural language. That we might have a name referring to Meluḥḥa in Sanskrit literature, and the specifics that this suggests, are examples of this.

### 9. *Púrs*

Kazanas argues that *púr*-s are the supernatural defenses of demons.<sup>57</sup> He argues that they are not the Indus Valley cities, which were constructed of brick and mud, as in several instances they are described as “metallic,” in several instances “autumnal,” in one instance a *púr* is described as mobile, and in one instance 100 *púrs* protect from anxiety. He further quotes a passage in Aitareyabrāhmaṇa 1.23 in which *ásura*-s made the earth a copper or bronze *púr*, the mid-space a silver *púr*, and the sky a golden one. The only reference to a stone *púr* occurs in RV 4.30.20 in which the 100 stone *púr*-s of the demon Śambara are overthrown in a magical, non-material dimension of the world.

This is by Kazanas’ reading of the texts.

Lal (2005: 180) interprets several such passages differently, as does also Rau (1976). Lal, for instance, interprets ‘metal fort’ to indicate that the forts have or should have metal-like strength.

Rau (1976: 7 n. 3, 24 n. 12) interprets the word Kazanas translates as ‘metallic’ to mean instead ‘copper,’ and interprets this to mean ‘most durable.’ An ‘autumnal’ *púr* Rau takes to be a *púr* ‘constructed in autumn’ “against possible attacks, in other words as provisional defences to be repaired or rebuilt every autumn after the floods of the rainy season.” (Rau 1976: 37).

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older religion. We might perhaps view Ahura Mazdā as a development of a Magan and Meluḥḥan equivalent of Váruṇa. See also in this regard Keith (1925/I: 33).

As an aside, we can gain a comparative textual handle on the dating of the *Brāhmaṇas*, in which the highest god is the late R̥gvedic world creator Prajāpati, in that Iranian material on the later *Avesta* Verethragna may be related to material developed for the first time in the Indian tradition in the *Brāhmaṇas*. I am thinking here of the Pahlavi gloss for Av. *vərəθra* as ‘victory,’ which gloss seems to fit the attestations, in the context of material in *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 5.2.3.7. This passage begins, “And on the following day he prepares a cake an eleven potsherds for Agni and Soma, and offers it in the same way as an (ordinary) *ishṭi*, for it was **thereby Indra slew Vritra**, and thereby he gained that universal conquest which now is his. And in like manner does this (king, the Sacrificer) slay his wicked, hateful enemy, and **in like manner does he gain victory**. ...[boldface mine]” (Eggeling 1882-1900/III: 45; for text see *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 5.2.2.7 in Chinnaswami Śāstrī, Pattābhirāma Śāstry, and Rāmanātha Dīkṣita 1984: 435).

<sup>57</sup> Kazanas (2002b; rev. 2006, further rev. 2009b: 148-160).

Rau concludes that the references to *púr* in the *Saṁhitās*, *Brāhmaṇas*, and *Āraṇyakas* suggest that a *púr* “consisted of one or several concentric ramparts on a round or oval ground plan; was built of mud or stone; was fortified with combustible defences, certainly gates and probably palisades, wattle or prickly shrubs; was furnished With wooden sheds as quarters for human occupants, was stocked with provisions, water and grass or fodder for cattle; was not permanently occupied but served mainly as a refuge in times of danger; was erected in war as a protection, a base of operations, or a beleaguering camp; probably needed repairs each rainy season” (Rau 1976: 41, 52).

It is to be emphasized that just as Kazanas’ interpretation depends on Kazanas’ reading of the texts, so Rau’s interpretation depends on Rau’s reading of the texts.

Also, even should we accept the argument of Kazanas that the *púr*-s are the supernatural defenses of demons, if the *Ṛgveda* describes something as being in the realm of demons, there would just so be a human reflex for it. As noted above toward the end of section 2, the divine world and the human world mirror one another. For instance, in both Ancient Mesopotamia and in the *Ṛgveda*, it is the gods who conquer one’s enemies. By the same token, one’s enemies are demons. The *púr*-s, by this logic, would have been the citadels or outposts of the *Meluḥḥans* who, in standard *Ṛgvedic* imagery for non-Aryans, would have been *ásura*-s, or ‘demons.’ So also, in later Sanskrit literature in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, aboriginal populations hostile to Rāma are described as *rākṣasa*-s ‘demons.’

Fairservis (1986: 49a) has argued that in Harappan society the paramount leaders or chiefs probably residing in the larger more elaborate settlements such as Mohenjodaro or Harappa would have received tribute from the far-flung settlements. But the more distant the dependent settlement, the more difficult it was to maintain traditional controls. Eventually, the centrality of the chiefdoms was weakened, and the Harappan cultural style waned and was integrated into new cultural styles developing to the east and south in the Indian subcontinent.

While the usual logic would have it that it is the citadels of such central settlements that would have been our *púr*-s, it is very possible that by reference to 100 *púr*-s and autumnal *púrs*, and the temporary nature of *púr*-s as suggested by Rau, that it is the far-flung settlements and cattle camps, Aryan as well as non-Aryan, that are being referred to

primarily.<sup>58</sup>

#### 10. Rice.

Rice, so essential in later ritual, is not known in the *Ṛgveda*. It is frequently alluded to, though, in the *Atharvaveda*, the different recensions of the *Yajurveda*, and the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads*.<sup>59</sup> Kazanas uses this point, along with the mention of bricks in the *Brāhmaṇas*, to date the *Brāhmaṇas* to the period of Indus Valley civilization. He claims rice for Indus Valley civilization.<sup>60</sup>

I have pointed out to Kazanas in personal communication, and also in Levitt (2007a: 24-25), that this is incorrect. See, for instance, Vishnu-Mittre and Savithri (1993: 217ab).

For his point that rice was cultivated in Mohenjodaro *ca.* 2500 B.C., he cites Piggott (1950: 259), Grist (1965), and Rao (1991). Grist (1965: 5) is taking his information from Andrus and Mohammed (1958: 1, 29). Both say that rice grains were discovered in earthen vessels at Mohenjodaro, which is said to have flourished at least as early as 2500 B.C. The earthen vessels are never dated, and indeed stratigraphy at Mohenjodaro is questionable.<sup>61</sup> Their statement on this basis that “rice was an important item of food in the Indus Valley civilization” is simply not so, to which Vishnu-Mittre and Savithri (1993: 217ab) testify. The earthen vessels were probably later intrusions. Already, in 1950, Piggott makes no reference to rice in Mohenjodaro in his synthesis of the then-standing material on Indus Valley civilization. What Kazanas thought was a reference to rice in Indus Valley civilization in Piggott’s book was not such at all. “[T]he *Rigveda* knows nothing of rice, nor of tropical animals such as the tiger, both of which are mentioned in the *Atharvaveda*, which implies that by the time of its composition Aryan territory had been extended eastwards down the Ganges ...” (Piggott 1950: 259).

With this, I wholeheartedly agree. Similarly, S. R. Rao (1991) does not support his point. Rao refers mainly to rice in Saurashtra.

Rice in the form of impressions of husk and straw with attached fragments of epidermis in burnt clay lumps was recorded in Lothal from Phase II (2350-2200 B.C.), but was not recorded later at this site. For

<sup>58</sup> See Rau (1976: 24, 34-35, 39-40), for instance, with regard to Aryan *púrs*.

<sup>59</sup> See Macdonell and Keith (1912/II: 345, *s.v. Vrihi*), for references.

<sup>60</sup> Kazanas (1999: 29, 31), (2002b; rev. 2006: 122ab, further rev. 2009b: 151), (2007a: 13; *ABORI* 2007: 25), for instance.

<sup>61</sup> See Piggott (1950: 18-19).

other reasons as well, K. Ramesh Rao and Lal suggest that by the later periods, drier conditions had already set in (Rao and Lal 1979-85/II: 679, 682, 683).

Rice husks were also recorded for Rangput, another late Harappan site in Saurashtra, between 2000-1500 B.C.<sup>62</sup> Ghosh and Lal comment, “From the nature of their use, it appears that husks were mixed with the mud as a binding-material for the purpose of plastering ... Though no grain or spikelet of rice has been observed, the manner of utilization of this by-product (husk) indicates the prevalence of rice in the region.” (1962-63: 172)

It is not clear whether the rice imprints found in Lothal and Rangpur are from a wild or cultivated form. They might be of wild rice, which occurs locally in the marshes (Vishnu-Mittre and Savithri 1993: 207a).

In short, rice was only known in the border regions of Indus Valley civilization. Gregory Possehl’s comment that Indus Valley civilization seems to have petered out once it reached the rice cultivation area, referred to above in section 8, has force.

More recently, Kazanas has referred only to evidence of rice from Lothal *ca.* 2300 B.C. but, not mentioning that it is from the border site of Lothal, implies that such evidence holds for sites throughout the area of Indus Valley civilization.<sup>63</sup>

He further refers in these locations to rice having been cultivated in the Ganges Valley since the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> millenniums B.C., with which no one is arguing. But Kazanas interprets this to indicate “that by 3000 the composers of the AV [=Atharvaveda] had become acquainted with rice *vr̥thi* and later this grain was cultivated in ISC [=Indus Valley civilization] too.”<sup>64</sup>

Thus, again, we have rice in Indus Valley civilization.

Note, though, Vishnu-Mittre and Savithri (1993: 219ab) comment, “The Harappans who came in contact with the OCP [Ochre Colored Pottery] Ware peoples, or the Neolithic peoples of North India, influenced the latter food economies with wheat and barley, *but did not take advantage of rice. The evidence at the present stage suggests that the*

<sup>62</sup> Ghosh and Lal (1962-63: 161, 168, 171, 172, 174, plate 43).

<sup>63</sup> Kazanas (2007a: 12; *ABORI* 2007: 24-25), (2009a: 9/32, 9/47 n. 12; 2009b: 313).

<sup>64</sup> Not in Kazanas (2007a: 12 n. 4). Included in all the other references mentioned in n. 64.



*Harappans did not introduce this crop into their own empire [italics mine].*<sup>65</sup>

As Piggott noted in the quotation given above, the mention of rice in the later Vedic texts implies that by the time of their composition Aryan territory had been extended eastwards down the Ganges.

Kazanas' acceptance of an archaeo-astronomical dating of the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* to the early 3<sup>rd</sup> millenium B.C. (2002a: 294-295, 2009b: 24-26), and with it his assumption that the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* was composed in Indus Valley civilization for this and other reasons, has been countered by Witzel (1999, 2003: 174-175) who has argued that the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* was an iron age text (which age starts in India around 1200 B.C.) from central north or eastern India for linguistic and other reasons. While I think Witzel's dating of the text to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C. is way to early, his overall argument, I think has force.

Kazanas' contrived conclusion that rice is present in Indus Valley civilization seems to be because he has already placed the later Vedic texts such as the *Brāhmaṇas* in Indus Valley civilization, and is therefore now forced to find the presence of rice in it.

### 11. The "Preservation Principle"

Kazanas has argued that the *Ṛgveda* contains reference to more common Indo-European deities than any other individual Indo-European language. This indicates, according to Kazanas, that the Vedic Aryans moved least from the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans as they preserved more of the Proto-Indo-European tradition than any other branch of Indo-European. He refers to this as the "Preservation Principle"<sup>66</sup>

My observation, though, has been that the outer fringes preserve more of a tradition than the center. In different words, traditions tend to be retained on the peripheries.

Thus, Kramrisch (1975) argued that the name of the *Sóma* surrogate *pūtīka* survived to this day among the Santal, an aboriginal tribe in eastern India. Kuiper's criticism of this, discussed in detail above (n. 36), suggests that if anything, the Santal name would be the source of the Sanskrit name - which vitiates our point here. But note that the context in

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<sup>65</sup> So also, Rao (1991: 171) mentions, "The Ochre Colored Pottery-using people Haryana and Punjab, who can be identified with the late Harappans, cultivated rice, barley, gram. ... The Neolithic culture of Chirand [in north Bihar] who were contemporaries of the late Harappans, used rice, wheat, barley, and *Pisum*."

<sup>66</sup> See Kazanas (2001b). (2002a: 297-303; 2009b: 29-36), (2006c).

which Kramrisch's identification was proposed was that P.O. Bodding in the preface to his *Santal Dictionary* (Oslo, 1929-36/I: xiv) drew attention to his observation that "[s]trangely enough, the Santals use some pure Sanskrit words, which, as far as I know, are not heard in present day Hindi."<sup>67</sup> And this supports our point.

So also, many years ago I worked on a Sanskrit text on Tantric *mudrā*-s that was preserved in a solitary manuscript in Malayalam script in a private collection in Kerala. These *mudrā*-s, in the same sequence as in this obscure text, were known by a former Buddhist monk whom I knew from Hong Kong.<sup>68</sup> Again, the tradition was preserved on the fringes.

I will give just one more example. In a very interesting recent 2008 article, Alwin Kloekhorst argued that in at least two instances, linguistic features that were generally thought of as innovations in the Anatolian branch of Indo-European were shared with Uralic languages, which is hypothesized to have been a sister of the Indo-European language family. The Anatolian branch of Indo-European is generally considered to have broken off from Proto-Indo-European earliest. Again, we have preservation at the fringes.

## 12. Archaeoastronomy.

I am not necessarily antagonistic to archaeoastronomy. For instance, I think that Hermann Jacobi's cautious conclusions from archaeo-astronomical data dating the Vedic literature back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. with the "period of civilization" to which the hymns of the Ṛgveda belong going back even earlier, has a certain amount of force.<sup>69</sup>

But it seems to be very easy to come to unwarranted and even strikingly bizarre conclusions. Witness B. G. Tilak's arguments with regard to a North Pole origin for the Vedic Aryans, and 5<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C. origins for some of the Ṛgveda's hymns.<sup>70</sup>

Recently, Achar (1999) using, what is referred to as "Planetarium Software" has followed through on an earlier observation of Jacobi with regard to a passage in the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa which states that the Pleiades never swerve from the east. But like Shankar B. Dikshit in

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Kramrisch (1975: 229ab).

<sup>68</sup> See Levitt (1988), (1990).

<sup>69</sup> For a fair and balanced summary of Jacobi's arguments, see Winternitz (1927: 294-299). For a very critical discussion of Jacobi's views that nevertheless presents a good, very brief summary of them, see Keith (1925/I: 4). See Levitt (2003: 342b).

<sup>70</sup> See Deshapande (2009) for a fair and balanced discussion of Tilak's views.

1895, and others, he has used the data that he marshals to arrive at a date of *ca.* 3000 B.C. for the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa.

Witzel (1999), in response to Achar argues not entirely without force that this was traditional lore passed down, the usage of which was retained in ritual context. He argues as well that this traditional lore was still generally correct at the time of the composition of the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa which he argues is an iron age text, which age as noted starts around 1200 B.C. in India, from a period when the Vedic Aryans has moved on to central north and eastern India on the basis of linguistic and other reasons. As noted above, I think Witzel's dating of the text to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C. is way too early. But his overall argument has force.

For still a different interpretation of the data by the astronomer A. Prey of the German University of Prague, who arrived at a date of *ca.* 1100 B.C. for the observation mentioned in Śatapathabrāhmaṇa 2.1.2.3, see Winternitz (1925/I: 298 n. 2). Winternitz thinks this latter interpretation of the text is proven to be correct by Baudhāyana-śrautasūtra 27.5. This date, incidentally, would be more in line with my dating of the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa.

Kak (2000: 36), I might note, with regard to Śatapathabrāhmaṇa 2.1.2.3, cautiously states that it "points to an earlier epoch."

More recently, Archar (2003) has argued for a date of 3067 B.C. for the war described in the Mahābhārata. He argues that the various astronomical events he has relied on to arrive at such a date must have been observed and could not have been back calculated by a clever astronomer to be interpolated into the text. And, indeed, the different points that are brought together to indicate a date of 3067 B.C. for the Mahābhārata war are too scattered and partial to indicate just a remembered tradition, as Witzel has argued for Achar's Śatapathabrāhmaṇa date. His argument is indeed forceful, and I do not quite know what to make of it because it seems way too early-even for me. And for linguistic reasons, I in no way think we can date the Mahābhārata back that far as does, for instance, Kazanas.<sup>71</sup> In dating the *sūtra* literature and the Mahābhārata as early as he does, Kazanas is throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

Of note is that at the same colloquium on the dating of the Mahābhārata war at which Achar's paper was delivered, R. N. Iyengar

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<sup>71</sup> Kazanas (2002a: 296-297; 2009b: 28), (2008: 31).

also using "Planetarium Software" delivered a paper arguing that the date of the Mahābhārata war was 1478 (1) B.C.<sup>72</sup>

My overriding comment with regard to Achar's argument is that gestalts. Which his argument from a number of different references is, do not always hold force.

In short, while I am not entirely antagonistic to archaeo-astronomy, I think it must be used with a great deal of caution.

### *13. Additional Mythic Motifs Shared by the Vedic and Ancient Mesopotamian Traditions.*

Aside from what might be considered to be mythic motifs shared by Vedic and Ancient Mesopotamian traditions discussed in the beginning of this paper, Kazanas (2004-06) has discussed a number of such motifs that he sees to be shared not only by the Vedic and Ancient Mesopotamian traditions, but to be as well common Indo-European mythologems. He argues that as these mythologems are common to the Indo-European traditions, they are therefore borrowed by the Ancient Mesopotamian tradition which "surfaces c. 3000 B.C." He therefore concludes that the Vedic tradition is older than 3000 B.C.<sup>73</sup>

My main problem with Kazanas' discussion is that most of his Ancient Mesopotamian examples are from the later Ancient Mesopotamian tradition of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. and from the later books of the Ṛgveda, the Atharvaveda, and even later, the Brāhmaṇas, and so forth. By my interpretation of the data, his examples often provide us with additional synchronisms. I would also interpret some of the shared traditions as indicating the two regions belong to a common cultural area, not out of accord with what Sternbach (1981: 98a, 122a) has argued to be a "floating mass of oral tradition" with regard to shared proverb literature. Such a cultural area would have been buttressed by trade between Ancient Mesopotamia and the Indian area, and can be seen to continue into the present day with the creation of Pakistan. In most cases, I would not see such parallels as these latter to be an inheritance from a common culture of the hoary past, as Kazanas suggests.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> See Iyengar (2003), especially pp. 150, 167-169 for his discussion and conclusion.

<sup>73</sup> Kazanas (2007a: 21-22; *ABORI* 2007: 32), (2008: 33), (2009a: 9/40-9/41; 2009b: 324), for instance.

<sup>74</sup> See Kazanas (2004-06: 6; 2007 *Adyar Library* 6; 2009b 192), (2007b: 559). In referring to further page references from this article below, I will refer to them as printed in Kazanas (2009b), rather than cumbrously cite all the page references in all four main printings of the article.

a. Kazanas appears to be on fairly sound ground when he argues that the horse sacrifice in a late Ancient Mesopotamian text is due to Vedic influence. A rich horse mythology is attested in almost all Indo-European traditions, the horse sacrifice is referred to in late hymns of the *Ṛgveda* (RV 1.162 and RV 1.163), and is perhaps alluded to in the early family books (RV 3.53.11), and the peculiarity that in both the Vedic and Ancient Mesopotamian traditions a priest whispers into one of the horse's ears would seem to indicate that the borrowing is a certainty.

In that the Ancient Mesopotamian source is late, from perhaps the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. to the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C., and the Vedic material regarding the horse sacrifice, as pointed out by Kazanas, is from the late *Ṛgveda*, the *Taittirīyasamhitā*, the *Vājasaneyisamhitā*, the *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*, and so forth, with the exception of a single allusion, this all fits with my dating of the Vedic tradition.

b. The theme in which an eagle flies to heaven to retrieve a valuable item also appears in Ancient Mesopotamia in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C., with depictions on some Akkadian seals from the late 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. perhaps alluding to one of the Ancient Mesopotamian myths in which this theme appears. This theme, too, appears to be securely Vedic.<sup>75</sup>

c. The motif of seven sages (Kazanas 2009: 198-203) also seems to be secularly Vedic, shared with other Indo-European traditions and mentioned throughout Vedic literature. The tradition in Ancient Mesopotamia is the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. Their association with the form of a fish would appear to be an Ancient Mesopotamian development.

d. Bird augery (Kazanas 2009: 225-226), practiced both in Ancient Mesopotamia and in Vedic India from an early date, also seems to have Indo-European integrity. We may have here, though, just common tradition.

e. However, when we turn to the story of the flood (Kazanas 2009: 203-217), we seem to be on different footing.

In Ancient Mesopotamia, the story appears in the 'Epic of Gilgamesh.' The 'Epic of Gilgamesh' as we have it is from 7<sup>th</sup> c. B.C. tablets. The epic itself, though, has been judged to probably go back to

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<sup>75</sup> See, for instance, Bloomfield (1892-94), as well as Kazanas' discussion on 2009b 195-198).

the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C., and to be based on older sources. The flood story appears as well in an earlier Sumerian version, and in another Babylonian version, the ‘Atraḥasis Epic,’ also going back to *ca.* 1700 B.C.

The deluge hero in the ‘Gilgamesh Epic’ is named Utnapishtim, which is a free rendering of the name of the deluge hero in the Sumerian account, Ziusudra. The meaning of the name is commonly seen to indicate the immortality that after the flood was bestowed on the hero.

The biblical account of the story is a conflation of the story as in the “J” source of the Old Testament, which uses the name “Yahweh [Jehovah]” for the divinity, and which originated *ca.* early 8<sup>th</sup> to mid-9<sup>th</sup> c. B.C. in the kingdom of Judah, and the later “P,” or “Priestly” source, *ca.* late 7<sup>th</sup> to early 8<sup>th</sup> c. B.C. The flood hero here is Noah, which name means ‘rest.’

The ‘Epic of Gilgamesh’ story of the flood and the earlier Sumerian source both mention that it is the “seed” of all living creatures that is to be saved, and the *Old Testament* “J” version of the story mentions that Noah took 7 pair of clean animals and birds, male and female, and 2 pair of unclean animals, male and female. It mentions that this is to keep their seed alive on the face of the earth (*Genesis* 7,2-3).

In the ‘Epic of Gilgamesh,’ also taken are “all craftsmen [or learned men],” this for the purpose of preserving the divine revelations concerning the origin of the world and transmitting the arts and sciences, human culture, and civilization to the post-diluvian race. To be remembered, as noted above, in Ancient Mesopotamia their form is associated with that of fish.

In the Indian tradition, the legend of a deluge is first reflected in the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa. It appears later, as well, in the Mahābhārata and in the Purāṇas. In all these versions, it is a fish that warns the deluge hero Manu of the impending flood and pulls the boat to safety, the story as in the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa being simpler than the others. In the later Mahābhārata version, to focus on only one of the later versions, the Vedic seven seers are also in the boat with Manu, as are “the seeds of all creatures” so that Manu could create the world anew. These elements are not in the earlier Śatapathabrāhmaṇa version in which, after the boat was pulled to safety, Manu made a sacrificial oblation from which arose Ilā, and through her he engendered the new generation of men. This is in keeping with the emphasis on the sacrifice in the Brāhmanas. There is perhaps an allusion to this legend in the Atharvaveda, in mentioning “the spot where the boat glided down, on the peak of the Himalayas.” In the

Ṛgveda, several hymns call Manu “our father” and others seem to regard him as the prototype of sacrificers. There is no indication of the story of the flood, though.

Kazanas points out that stories of a flood are a common Indo-European theme, appearing in Ancient Greece, in Avestan Scandinavian, and Russian lore, and in the Celtic tradition of Ireland.

Using his dating of the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa to ca. 3200-2900 B.C., and his dating of the Mahābhārata to 3067 B.C. (2009b: 210-211), all of which seems to me to be far too early, he gives temporal priority to the Indian versions of the story, instead of the other way around. In a very forced, contrived, and convoluted argument, and using logic chopping to boot, he argues that the Ancient Mesopotamians may have grafted onto an indigenous version of this myth, a mangled and misunderstood earlier Indic narrative of the flood (2009b: 217 for his summation).

To my mind, the introduction of a fish in the Indian version, which in Ancient Mesopotamia is associated with the “craftsmen,” indicates Ancient Mesopotamian priority for the tale. Also, in that it is the late Mahābhārata version that first mentions the seven seers and the seed of all creatures being on board the ark, this too would seem to refer back to the earlier Ancient Mesopotamian version of tale. That the seven seers and the flood may be Indo-European mythologems is irrelevant. It is more likely that Indo-European motifs are grafted onto an Ancient Mesopotamian story within the Indic tradition.<sup>76</sup>

Let us proceed.

f. The dismemberment of a divine being (Kazanas 2009b: 221-222), expressed in the famous late Ṛgvedic Puruṣasūkta (RV 10. 90), may well have a parallel in the Scandinavian myth of the dismemberment of the first giant-being Ymir (Skt. Yáma) by which the gods made the world. But it is not at all parallel to the late *Enuma Elish* battle between Marduk and Tiamat, which is rather parallel to the battle between Índra and Vṛtra discussed in brief above in section 2.

g. That the Vedic Dyaús (*dív, dyú, dyó*) is both male and female, like the Sumerian sky god An (Kazanas 2009b: 221), is a shared motif indicating a synchronism in my estimation. So also the Vedic parallels Kazanas alludes to for the Sumerian concept that “the rains flowed from the sky goddess’ breasts or (since she was usually envisaged in cow

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<sup>76</sup> With regard to the Ancient Mesopotamian and biblical versions of the flood story, see Heide (1949: 14-16, 224-269) and Friedman (1997: 53-60).

shape) her udder – that is, from the clouds” (Jacobsen 1976: 95). The conception of An (male) as a bull and An (female) as a cow would go back to the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. in Ancient Mesopotamia, and perhaps into the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C. The Vedic conception of a “Cow of Plenty” (p. 220) would, as such, appear to have Indo-European integrity, though.

Still other motifs dealt with by Kazanas are equally problematic.

h. The motif of humans springing out of the soil (Kazanas 2009b: 218) is probably a shared motif.

i. The motif of a (sun) god traversing the ocean in a boat (Kazanas 2009b: 218-219) is also probably a shared motif. While not common in Vedic texts, it does occur in the family books of the Ṛgveda. Kazanas’ evidence for Indo-European integrity for this theme is weak, and his association of this theme with Indo-European tradition is speculation.

j. The Indo-European integrity of referring to gods as bulls (Kazanas 2009b: 219-220) is also weak. Further, Kazanas leaves out that in the Sumerian tradition An is figured as a bull, which goes back to *ca.* 3000 B.C. , and perhaps earlier into the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C., as noted above. While the bull motif may not derive from Ancient Mesopotamia, it certainly is shared in the Vedic-Ancient Mesopotamian culture area.

k. What Kazanas mentions with regard to purification in the two traditions (2009b: 228) is also likely part of a shared tradition.

l. In his discussion of demons and ghosts (Kazanas 2009b: 226-227), he lumps together all sorts of creatures, many of different types, such as *rākṣasas* and *piśācās* on one hand, and Vṛtrá on the other. Much of what he alludes to is common to many traditions. For instance, there are demons that affect human life as well in Burma (the *nats*) and Thailand (the *phi’i*). He further lumps together in this context disease, punishment of sinners, and fate. In bringing in Indic concepts of fate and Váruṇa’s noose or fetter, he argues that the latter are well attested in Indo-European traditions. Be that as it may, it demonstrates neither priority for the Indic beliefs, nor beliefs shared in a common culture area.

m. So also, in his discussion of protection against demonic forces (Kazanas 2009b: 227-228), he lumps together a number of different



things, such as spells and amulets to protect from disease, and rites involved with the construction of houses and temples. And in that he finds these in both traditions, he argues for affinity - which by the gist of his argument means Vedic influence on Ancient Mesopotamian tradition. He totally misses the point that in Ancient Mesopotamia in the latter half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. and in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C. there is an emphasis on witchcraft and sorcery, and that this coincides (by my dating) with the development of the Atharvaveda, verses from which Kazanas cites copiously.

n. The motif of a tortoise or turtle in Ancient Mesopotamia of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. Kazanas (2009: 222-224) finds paralleled long before Viṣṇu's second *avatāra* in tortoise form, in the name Kaśyāpa, meaning 'tortoise,' one of the seven seers. He cites passages from the Atharvaveda, Yajurveda, and Brāhmaṇas that associate this sage with creation. He further mentions a tortoise-shaped Vedic altar, and he notes that the tortoise is not a common motif in world mythology. All this leads Kazanas to suspect Vedic influence on Ancient Mesopotamian tradition. But, as he notes at the end of his discussion, the turtle was the emblem of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. god Enki, whom I have argued above in the discussion in section 2 on "The third Millennium B.C." is to be identified in part with Viṣṇu. We would thus have priority in the Ancient Mesopotamian tradition, with a carryover into later Hinduism in the tortoise *avatāra* of Viṣṇu.

This is just one of several instances in which Kazanas has no Indo-European argument to stand on, but instead relies on "the inner constitution of the motif: if this comprises native traditional elements and has no exclusively NE [=Ancient Mesopotamian] elements, then it must be native to India and not borrowed" (p. 191). In this instance, though, the association of Enki with a tortoise or turtle is firm; and identification of a tortoise with this god explains many of the Indic references to it, which otherwise are unexplainable.

o. With regard to the origin of kingship (pp. 229-230), Kazanas again conflates early and late Ancient Mesopotamian material. He contrasts Vedic democratic principles with 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. Ancient Mesopotamia in which Marduk had become king of the gods, religion was no longer using the analogy of natural forces, and the state had become more centralized and tightly organized. Instead of the obvious parallel between Marduk's fight with Tiamat and the Índra-Vṛtrá

myth<sup>77</sup>, he finds a tale in the Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa with regard to Prajāpati sending Indra to lead the gods against the demons to be what he sees to be the prototype since “the Vedic material is much older” (p. 230). Kazanas fails to take into account the similarity between religion in Ancient Mesopotamia and Vedic India that in both, the divine world and the human world are seen to mirror one another though the specifics are different as the facts on the ground that they reflect are different.<sup>78</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. Sumerian “Assembly of the Gods” he takes to be “overplayed,” and he points to “underplayed” occasional gods’ assemblies in the Vedic texts that he takes to be the precursors of the former. More likely, though, we have here another synchronism of the sort I argued for above.

p. With regard to the motif of the seductive female in the Indic and Ancient Mesopotamian traditions, Kazanas also sees no similarity.<sup>79</sup> Here he is probably correct.

q. The motif of eating, or abstaining, from certain foodstuffs when in the underworld or in heaven which foodstuffs, if eaten, will bind the eater to the underworld or make him immortal in heaven (2009b: 224-225), found in an Ancient Mesopotamian text from *ca.* 1400 B.C., for instance, and in late Vedic texts (RV 10.135, the Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa, the Kena Upaniṣad), is also found in Ancient Greek tradition and in Japanese tradition. Kazanas sees this theme in Ancient Mesopotamia to be an elaboration of the Vedic motif. But his suggestion is contraindicated by the occurrence of the motif in Japanese tradition. This points to its being a universal motif.

While I am in general sympathetic to Kazanas’ enterprise in this article as a needed correction to the otherwise standing literature on the subject, I believe he overemphasizes possible Vedic origins for mythologems in exactly the same way McEvelley (2002) overemphasizes Mesopotamian origins.

Such exaggeration with regard to possible Vedic sources for things can be seen as well in a couple of etymologies he suggests, though

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<sup>77</sup> See, for instance, Gaster (1961: 138-139), Levitt (2003: 348a), and above under section 2.

<sup>78</sup> See Levitt (2003: 351b).

<sup>79</sup> Kazanas (2007b: 274-275), abbreviated in Kazanas (2004-06: 47-48; 2007 pp. 47-48), omitted in Kazanas (2009b).

without conviction (pp. 230-232), For instance, his derivation of the name “Meluḥḥa” for Indus Valley civilization in Ancient Mesopotamian sources from Skt. *mlecchā* is the reverse of the development usually argued.<sup>80</sup> His derivation of Sumerian *me* from Skt. *māyā* has been dismissed above toward the end of section 2. His derivation of Sumerian *gigir* ‘wagon’ from Skt. *cakrā* ‘wheel’ and Semitic *sebit-ti/tu* ‘seven’ from Skt. *saptā* ‘seven’ should more properly be considered to be related on a Nostratic level. He mentions a possible connection between the name of the Assyrian god Aššur and Skt. *ásura*, deriving the former from the Sanskrit form, but the usual argued-for-by-some influence is the other way around, deriving Skt. *ásura* from Aššur (KEWA I: 148, EWA I: 65).

With regard to the 20 or so Egyptian parallels that Kazanas sees,<sup>81</sup> which I do not go into here, my dating of the Ṛgveda and approach to such parallels through a common cultural area of the time, is more consonant with these than Kazanas’ explanation which, with his dating of the Ṛgveda, requires apologies and contortions.<sup>82</sup>

#### 14. Concluding Remarks

It was once said that dates in Indian studies are like bowling pins, set up only to be knocked down later. I do not think that this ought to stop us from making suggestions.

Nicholas Kazanas’ point of view is now well known. He has published the same papers several times each, each in several different journals and books as well as posting them on the Internet. My point of view, expressed primarily in a 2003 *Anthropos* article, is much less well known. I thought, therefore, that I should present again my point of view, and at the same time discuss several related matters discussed by Kazanas as these relate to the dating of the Indian tradition, thereby placing Kazanas’ observations on what I see to be sounder footing. I do not date the Ṛgveda to before the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C., as does Kazanas. I merely think that the very oldest hymns of the Ṛgveda may go back to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C. The bulk of the collection I would date to *ca.* 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. to *ca.* mid-2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. on the basis of synchronisms with Ancient Mesopotamian religion and the development of religion in Ancient Mesopotamia, the dating of which is on secure footing.

<sup>80</sup> Pp. 230-231, 241. See Levitt (2009: 146-148).

<sup>81</sup> Kazanas (2007b: 585-597), (2007d; 2009b: 244-276).

<sup>82</sup> See Kazanas (2007b: 585-586, 598-599), (2007d: 49-50, 72-74; 2009b: 245-247, 272-275).

Kazanas is engaged in a vigorous campaign championing his views, is set in his opinions, and claims to know the truth. My only agenda is to push back the borders of ignorance, and to be honest and open-minded in the pursuit of the truth. I do not claim to know the truth. I agree with a former Columbia University professor of religion who specialized in Cambodian Buddhism, and who died young, who once said, “Those who know, are wrong.” I think the relationship between the Vedic Aryans and Indus Valley civilization is yet to be worked out. Above, and in my 2003 *Anthropos* article, I have suggested a viable possibility. I should add that I do not think it is just by chance that *mlecchás*, bricks, 100 hole pots (the Sanskrit term *sáta* for which is said to be of *mlecchá* origin), and rice are all mentioned at roughly the same time.<sup>83</sup> It speaks to a period when Aryan civilization has spread and is incorporating non-Aryans more widely than it had before.

As noted at the outset, while both Kazanas and myself address Vedic-Ancient Mesopotamian parallels, we are using the Ancient Mesopotamian data very differently. I am using it to date the Vedic material. Kazanas has dated the Vedic material on other bases, and is just referring to this material to argue for reasons independent of it, that it is later than the Vedic tradition - with which I do not agree. Further, in his arguing that all previous work on the Vedic tradition is tainted by what he refers to as AIT [“Aryan Invasion Theory”], Kazanas is, I fear, as I noted above with regard to Kazanas’ dating of the *sūtra* literature and the Mahābhārata, throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

While Kazanas cites my 2003 *Anthropos* paper often, he misrepresents my opinion and never cites any of my arguments - which is just to say he doesn’t agree with me at all: he just appreciates my open-mindedness.

I do believe, though, that Kazanas is doing a great service to Indology in campaigning to change the mindset of how academia and interested intelligent people all over look at the dating of the early Indian tradition. While my disagreements with Kazanas are significant, they pale when it is taken into consideration that we both agree that there is no reasonable reason for the usual present Western academic dating of the Vedic tradition, and that this tradition is to be dated much earlier. Further, Kazanas would consider Indo-Aryan to be in the area since at

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<sup>83</sup> With regard to 100 hole pots, see Kazanas (2007a: 114; *ABORI* 2007: 26), (2008: 28-29), (2009a: 9/33-9/34; 2009b: 315-316). With regard to the Sanskrit name *sáta* for these being of *mlecchá* origin according to Śabaravāmin’s commentary on the Mīmāṃsāsūtra, the Śabarabhāṣya, see Mahadevan (1985: 241).

least *ca.* 6000-4500 B.C. and the break in the skeletal record at Mehrgarh, regarding which see Morris (2006: 122). On linguistic grounds I, too, would consider the Indo-Aryans to have been in the area for an extended period of time before the composition of the Ṛgveda – as did also F. B. J. Kuiper, except he considered it unsafe to date any part of the Ṛgveda before *ca.* 1400 B.C.; and as did also C. Kunhan Raja even before Kuiper.

Of late, there has been a great deal of acrimony between Kazanas and Michael Witzel, and I do not wish to get in the middle of it. I like to avoid unpleasantness. But their acerbic and vitriolic exchanges mask what I see to be synchronisms between Ancient Mesopotamian civilization and the Vedic material, with the Ancient Mesopotamian material being on sound Chronological footing, and the Vedic material otherwise not being on such footing.

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#### *Abbreviations*

DEDR	Burrow and Emeneau (1984)
EWA	Mayrhofer (1992-2001)
KEWA	Mayrhofer (1956-80)
MW	Monier-Williams (1899)