

The RV Date = a Postscript

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1. When I was finishing in 1998 my paper(s) on the RV¹ composition date (Kazanas 1999, 2000), I did not know of Professor M. Witzel's numerous relevant observations, particularly on SarasvatI, on the Internet (in 1998). Through force of habit I had even misread his reference to SarasvatI in Afghanistan (p 317) in his article "Rgvedic History..." (1995b) and dealt only with what he termed "indirect references" to an immigration in the Veda. I also (mis)took his reference to *BaudhAyana Srauta SUTra* 18.44 (p 320) as a correct translation and did not bother to check the original (badly printed in my copy): I thought it yet another movement of Aryans eastward like that of ViSvAmitra's sons in *Aitareya BrAhmaNa* 7.18; it did not occur to me that so eminent a sanskritist would be mistranslating. Since then Prof Witzel has said much more - about SarasvatI, copper, horses, etc. Before dealing with his arguments I would like to make a personal confession.

2. I am not Indian but Greek and a British subject - a mere sanskritist, with a little Greek and less Latin. As an undergraduate in the 1960s (SOAS, London) I absorbed and accepted the "Aryan invasion" theory, which, despite the archaeological finds in the mid 1960s, is not as extinct as many wish or think. Even earlier I had a vague notion that the IndoEuropeans had spread out of the South Russian Steppe in all directions and eventually established themselves in their present habitats as the various IE branches - Celtic, Germanic, Indic and so on. As I had no interest in early History but only Sanskrit itself, I did not delve then into the subject and retained this theory as a proven fact. (I did once wonder, as I was writing an essay about the Aryans rolling into the valleys of Saptasindhu, how their chariots had managed to climb up and then down the stiff-necked passes of the mountains. This was a question put to me also by a student of mine many years later.) When in the 1970-80s I prepared a course for Sanskrit (in Modern Greek), in some lessons I wrote passages about Aryans conquering the land and the natives having to acquiesce and cooperate. But in the late 1980s I began to have strong doubts about this matter and in 1996, after slow but considerable research, I abandoned the whole notion of the Aryan-invasion/immigration. Of course, since the Aryans did not enter into Saptasindhu, then logically, the other IndoEuropeans emigrated from there, unless, as some might envisage, the PIE⁽¹⁾ homeland in the 4th and 5th millenia extended much beyond the Saptasindhu, north and west to the Caspian (Sethna, 1992) - which now seems just as likely. I am speaking of course not of a race with common biological features but of peoples who shared a common language (now differentiated into several dialects), and certain common cultural characteristics like the worship of the god *Dyaus/Zeus/Ju[s]piter/Tiwaz* etc or the goddess Dawn *Ushas/Eôs/Au[s]rora/Eos-tre* etc. Surprisingly, although it is language that primarily connects all the IE peoples, linguistic evidence on its own is completely inadequate in determining absolute dates (Kazanas 1999: 17-8); one must resort to archaeological and cultural evidence.

I have seriously changed my mind on this subject; I have no axe to grind, as it were, no position or reputation to maintain; I can and shall change my mind again if strong and sufficient evidence emerges. Prof Witzel raises many points for discussion - some useful, some wasteful - but offers no evidence other than conjecture. Conjecture or hypothesis is not admissible as evidence in any impartial Court of Law.

3. Prof Witzel makes two interesting statements on 22/5/98 and 24/5/98 (On Line). In the first he has no doubt that "there is very clear evidence of a continuous civilization" down to 1400; in the second he says that only "Linguistic evidence" shows the Aryan migration into India. Here we have two points: 1, only "linguistic evidence" exists; 2, the archaeological record shows no intrusion, but a continuity of the existing civilization. Why accept the former, which is only a theory? ...

Now, it is not only SS Misra that was dissatisfied with the "linguistic evidence", as Prof Witzel states. It is a well-known fact that the same linguistic data have been and continue to be interpreted differently by different philologists who thereby reach different conclusions about linguistic time-depths, migration dates and the original homeland: eg. T. Burrow (1973), IM Diakonov (1985), Gamkrelidze and Ivanov (1985, 1995), SS Misra (1975, 1992). We would find similar difficulties of divergence or inconsistency among philologists if we examined simple cognations: thus SGD² accepts the Gk/S cognation *Ouranos/VaruNa*; M Mayrhofer (KEWA 3) finds the etymology of *VaruNa* unclear and is suspicious of all cognations except the Mitanni *U-ru-ua-na*; IM Diakonov questions (1990: 74) the S/Mt cognation and connects *uruwana* with the Old

U-ru-ua-na; IM Diakonov questions (1990: 74) the S/Mt cognation and connects *uruwana* with the Old Iranian *urvan* ‘soul’; J. Puhvel postulates (1989:49) **worsanos* as an earlier form of Gk *Ouranos* and connects this with S *varsha* ‘rain’. We shall find the same divergences among philologists if we looked at other examples and we find inconsistencies even in the work of one and the same scholar: thus Mayrhofer (ibid) accepts the S/Gk cognations *sama/hamo-then* ‘same’ and *sarva/holo-, houlo-* ‘all, whole’, but not *sama/homo-* ‘same’; he accepts *si-sar-mi/hal-lomai, ial-lô* ‘jump, run’, *sarp-âmi/herp-ô* ‘creep’ and *sarpis/elpos* ‘butter’ but not *saraNyulerinu-* ‘Name of a goddess’. Linguistic theory in its different aspects has, of course, consistency in many areas and has yielded many useful results; but since it displays also this fluidity and unreliability, I cannot regard it with Prof Witzel’s enthusiasm and trust. I shall therefore continue to ignore all linguistic theory in this matter.

4. The archaeological record in Saptasindhu shows, as Prof Witzel indicated, a continuous civilization down to 1400 and no traces of any intrusion. In fact all archaeologists agree about this from about 1984 to this day (Heskel 1984; Allchins 1997; Shaffer & Lichtenstein 1999). This is a fact, not a theory, not a conjecture, not a hypothesis. “My business is to teach my aspirations to conform themselves to fact, not to try to make facts harmonise with my aspirations,” so wrote Thomas Huxley. “Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever nature leads, or you will learn nothing” (Beveridge 1968: 50).

The big ineluctable fact before us is that there is only one continuous culture, “the Harappan groups and their immediate neighbours ... from Baluchistan to the Yamuna-Ganges divide, and from Swat and Kashmir to the Central Deccan Plateau (after 2000 BC)” from the 7th millenium to c500 BC (Shaffer and Lichtenstein 1995, 1999). Since this is so, then all divergent theories should be dropped. Given that the Aryans are indigenous and that the Braahman-a-texts, which are later than the *RV*, reflect many elements from the IVC, then it is safe to assign the composition of the *RV* to a period prior to the IVC. Since the early IVC starts c 3000 and the native tradition (PurANas, Epics and astronomers) pinpoint the date 3102 as the beginning of the Kali Yuga and say that the *RV* was arranged just before that period, then it seems prudent to assign the composition of the bulk of the hymns sometime before 3100. All other relevant issues should be examined in the light of this overruling fact and be organised fittingly around it. Anything else would be irrational.

5. Prof Witzel stated (24/5/98 On Line) that he is waiting for “Rgveda style chariots or the remnants of a *RV* style horse-sacrifice in (pre-) Indus levels.” It is true that only very few horse-remains from before 1700 have been found so far in the excavated IVC sites, whereas the remains after this date are more plentiful. However, even if not one tooth or bone of a horse were found in the area, the fact of the indigenous origin of the IndoAryans remains paramount. I too, incidentally, await the excavation in (post-) IVC levels of those copper/metallic (*AyasI*) and stony (*aSmanmayin-*) *puraH* ‘forts, cities’: Sambara alone had 100 (*RV* II, 14, 6), so there should be plenty of them since they were built of such durable material.

6. In fact, the presence of domesticated horse in north India is well-established. Before presenting this evidence, it would be instructive to examine the method by which the IndoAryans are said to have entered into Saptasindhu despite all the evidence to the contrary. R and B Allchin begin their 1982 study by stressing the continuity in the area but in chapter 11 they usher in the Aryans; in this study they note also the presence of certain cultural elements in the IVC and point out their similarity with elements in “later Vedic Literature” (1982: 203). In their 1997 work they again stress the continuity (p 191), then, following Parpola they bring in the Aryans: “Their presence *should* therefore be in evidence archaeologically ... But *as yet* it is **scarcely** attested in the archaeological record *presumably because* their material culture and lifestyle were already indistinguishable from those of the existing population” (pp 221-2: emphasis added). Let us ignore the linguistic devices subtly suggesting the existence of evidence (... *scarcely* ...) when there is none and mingling hypothetical explanations (... *presumably because* ...) with facts. The two archaeologists are saying that the Aryans lived in close proximity to the IVC natives, acquired their “material culture and lifestyle” (ie clothing, tools, weapons, means of transport, building methods and the like) but not their language *nor*

writing, then gradually infiltrated the IVC society (Witzel: multiple waves) or entered in two waves (as Parpola would have it), took over and imposed their own language and religion expunging the native language and culture from the area - and this without leaving any traces in the archaeological record.³

Is this likely?

7. The Harappans were obviously a literate and highly civilized people who maintained their 1000 year old culture with peaceful means through trade and perhaps religion rather than conquest and expansion. The area they inhabited was, according to Rao (1991: 1), "1.5 million square kilometers" - though I suspect it was much bigger. Then at about 2000 down to 1800, because of ecological and environmental changes including the alteration of the routes of some rivers and as a result, the desiccation of the SarasvatI river, they, or many of them, began to move eastwards to the Gangetic basin while their culture was breaking down. At about this time, then, enter our illiterate barbarians, the Aryans. Here the Allchins (Parpola and Witzel) fail to notice the glaring contradiction in their theory: **if the Aryans had acquired the "material culture and lifestyle" of the Harappans before they entered into Saptasindhu, then the RV hymns ought to reflect Harappan elements (urbanization, fixed fire-hearths, bricks, silver, cotton, rice);** but it is the later texts (BrAhmaNas and sUtras) that do so, and not at all the RV hymns. Anyway, the Aryans take over and after 2 or 3 centuries produce a most astonishing collection of hymns, to be followed by other collections, various prose works about cultic rites and codes of social behaviour. Lord Renfrew (ignoring the archaeological evidence he cites) suggests they came as mounted bands and formed an *élite* (1989: 197) presumably with their horses alone since in all else they were just like the natives. All that the natives left were their ruined brick-built cities and some seals with inscriptions the nature and use of which is still unknown.

In this Region of the Seven Rivers, then, we have an archaeologically well attested culture that seems to have no literature at all (other than the briefest inscriptions: no code of laws, no religious hymns or secular songs, no fables and tales), and then in immediate succession, *an illiterate people that is not archaeologically attested* yet produces, all the kinds of literature that the previous culture lacked. It is a most amazing paradox, an astonishing coincidence of space, time and people.

All this is, of course, possible - just as it is possible to be struck by lightning in one's bed, or to fall from the 10th floor on the lawn below and live with only a few concussions. Many wondrous things are possible in life, but the question is - do they really happen? ... The Mycenaeans did not expunge the Minoan culture on Crete. The Hittites were conquerors who formed an Empire but, instead of imposing their IE language and culture on their subjects, they were absorbed within the Near Eastern cultures retaining only scanty elements of their own one. The Kassites and Mitanni who came from the East and ruled Mesopotamia retained even fewer elements of IE provenance as they got engulfed by the local culture. The Anglo-Saxons in Britain managed to drive the Celts westward and confined the Picts to the north, but they did so because they had large numbers. When the Slavs (illiterate barbarians) made their incursions into Byzantine Greece in the 8th century CE and penetrated with small numbers as far south as the central Peloponnese they were soon afterwards absorbed completely by the natives. I know of no parallel elsewhere in the world to the paradox provided by the Aryan immigration theory.

8. What now are the facts regarding horse-remains? Prof Witzel states that "horses are indeed not found in South Asia before 1700 BCE, all other reported finds are from UNSTRATIFIED or BADLY recorded excavations: such bones belong to the native half-ass (... onager)" (30/11/1999 On Line). This is plainly untrue. B B Lal dismisses as suspect the evidence for horse at Rana Ghundai (1997: 162) but finds evidence in Lothal, Surkotada and Kalibangan (ibid and p 285) though he states "one would like to have more and more examples" (p 286). Lal, it may be claimed, is Indian and in favour of the indigenous Aryans. G R Sharma and R S Sharma though Indians are in favour of the Aryan immigration. G R Sharma found ample evidence of wild horse c 18000 and domesticated horse 6570±210 and 5440±240 and 4530±185 at the Belan and Son valleys near the Ganges (1980: 110ff; see also Kazanas 1999: 33-4). These dates were re-examined and R S Sharma gives them as ranging "between 5000 and 1000" but does not mention the wild horse (1996: 17). Thus there is

abundant evidence for the horse (not onager) in India long long before 1700. Certain hymns suggest there were large numbers of horses, eg VI, 63, 10 with 100s and 1000 and VIII, 46, 22 with 60000. On the other hand many hymns speak of few horses (I, 116, 6; V, 33, 8; X, 68, 11) and many more petition for them (IV, 32, 17; VI, 45, 12; etc) as if the animals are not readily accessible. Then, in some races the car is drawn not by horses but other animals, as the bullock in the case of Mudgala and his wife (X, 102); in the *Aitareya BrAhmaNa* IV, 7-9, we find a race where Agni's car is drawn by mules, Ushas's by cows, Indra's by horses, and the ASvins' by asses. The gods' chariots are not in all cases drawn by horses: that of the ASvins is often said to be drawn by birds (eagles in I, 118, 4; swans in IV, 45, 4; birds generally in VI, 36, 6 etc) while that of PUshan by goats (VI, 55). Thus at least some evidence suggests that horses may not have been numerous at all periods and places.

9. One of our distinguished Professor's arguments in favour of a post-IVC date for the *RV* (1500 and after) is the mention of *ayas* 'copper' in several hymns. He rightly stresses the difference between copper objects found from early strata at Mehrgarh and the actual smelting process itself. Then he states (On Line, 22/5/98) "copper ... would be *globally* out of date in a pre-Harappan Rgveda" and adds "a 'pre-Indus' *RV* of the Aryan homeland theory cannot have copper since it was not used ... yet". Here, if he means that copper had not been in use world-wide (=globally) before 3000, he is enormously and very sadly mistaken. The full technology of extraction and smelting of copper is known by 4000 in Egypt (Aldred 1984: 76) and in Europe (Renfrew 1989: 31). These dates are confirmed by HWF Saggs who, moreover, gives a similar date for Syria and gives the 6th millennium for various sites in Anatolia and the Near East (1989: 197). I repeat: extraction and smelting.

With regard to the IVC, copper comes fully into use, according to R and B Allchin, with the Early Harappa by 2800 (1997: 149). B B Lal gives a similar date for various sites (1997: 23-5). The *RV* has one crucial reference not simply to copper-objects but the very process of smelting (root $\sqrt{dham/dhma}$). Hymn IV, 2, 17 says *áyo ná devA jánimA dhámantaH* 'the gods [are] smelting like copper/metal ore the human-generations'. One could, of course, and perhaps legitimately, claim that here we have a metaphor in the sense of blowing off, cleansing or purifying and not *smelting*, but this would be dishonest. In many other passages, yes, 'copper' is being used metaphorically - like "feet of ayas" (I, 163, 9), "pillars of ayas" (V, 62, 7-8), "the edge of ayas" (VI, 3, 5), or "teeth of ayas" (X, 87, 2); but in IV, 2, 17 we must take it that smelting is intended. Now some Indian writers make inordinate claims about the decipherment of the Indus script, use of copper (smelting) and other matters long before 3000 (eg B Singh 1995 or N Jha and N S Rájaram 2000) but there is no need to resort to dubious data. I can admit that there is a gap of 300 to 400 years. Here, I must point out that I do not claim that every single hymn was composed before 3100. In my paper (1999) I mention *RV* as though I mean the whole of it but I am quite happy to modify that into "the bulk of the *RV*" allowing for some later additions into the Sam-hitaa. Some additions or retouches may well date even from the 1st millennium; but the bulk of the *RV*, the 80% of it, is entirely pre-Harappan. Then, we must take into account that the evidence of copper-smelting at 2800 does not necessarily impose an absolute limit. The process could well have started earlier (100 or 200 years) and future excavations may reveal much earlier data. Already at Padri, Gujarat, V Shinde of Deccan College has found "a circular furnace, a platform and a number of copper implements" that may be closer to 3000 (1996). Since smelting was known in the Near East from the 6th millennium and since there was trade between Mesopotamia and the Mehrgarh-IVC culture, it should come as no surprise to find the process operating in the region much earlier. This time gap is, in any event, a fact subordinate to the overriding general evidence that no foreigners in mass entered into Saptasindhu before c500 BCE.

10. The most curious argument used by Prof Witzel is an old hypothesis about the river SarasvatI. Basically it is the notion that the IndoAryans together with the Iranians (when they were, as is thought, one undivided branch) had spent some time in Afghanistan by a river which the Iranians later called Haraxvaiti and the IndoAryans SarasvatI. That the Indo-Iranians were a single people who spent some time in Afghanistan, then split and the Iranians moved south-west while the IndoAryans moved southeast, is sheer conjecture

(based on a linguistic hypothesis that Indo-Iranian was an actual language outside India) without any proof or even evidence in fact. However, according to this view, when the IndoAryans entered into Saptasindhu c1700 (it is the old “invasion” theory), they foisted out of nostalgia the name SarasvatI upon one local river, known today as Sarsuti (<SarasvatI), Ghaggar or Hakra. In a personal letter to me (1998), two scholars from the Warburg Institute, London, used a very similar argument: “Those parts of the RV which refer to the mighty river owe a debt to earlier inhabitants of India. A myth can be taken over from one language(family) to another: witness the *Epic of Gilgamesh* [Sumerian to Akkadian to Hittite]” (square brackets in the original). The analogy with *Gilgamesh* is not at all pertinent since the epic is an adventure-tale translated from one language to another where the past tense narrative is retained throughout. The SarasvatI has no such “myth”, even though there is a goddess inspiring that river as is so common in Vedic polytheism; the references to the river are all in the present NOW – not in the past.

11. There were earlier attempts to connect the Vedic SarasvatI with the Iranian HaraxvaitI, like that of Hillebrandt in the late 19th century. A B Keith, who certainly did not favour an Aryan Saptasindhu original homeland laid it to rest in the first quarter of the 20th century (1922: 86-7).

The notion was resuscitated but with this difference, namely that the Afghani *Sarasvati (so Prof Witzel) was renamed SarasvatI by the Indo-Aryans and HaraxvaitI by the Iranians. It seems that so long as there was uncertainty about the actual condition of SarasvatI, no need was felt by the immigrationists to consider this more closely. But once it was established in the 1980s (A Stein 1942; H Wilhelmy 1969; Lal & Gupta 1984; Bakliwal & Grover 1988; Ramasamy et al 1991) that the modern minor stream Sarsuti that dies out in the desert hundreds of miles from the ocean, did flow into the ocean until c 2000 when it dried up, the situation became critical. The supporters of the indigenous Aryan origin could and did point out (as I did too) that the RV poets could not possibly know of a river that had dried up some eight centuries earlier and more than three centuries before they arrived at that region. So this hypothesis was introduced. It is interesting that R and B Allchin, who cannot even remotely be regarded as anything but immigrationists, do not refer at all to this hypothesis but fully accept that the mighty river SarasvatI of the RV is the very river in Saptasindhu and even quote a passage which they translate as SarasvatI “perhaps Mother of the Indus” (1997: 219).

We should not have to argue about this but since Prof Witzel (and others) saw it necessary to resort to this implausible hypothesis examine it we must. I shall consider 4 points.

12. First, it is not just implausible but preposterous to suggest that a people who lived by a great river that flowed “from the mountains to the ocean” migrated to a different region and there gave the name of that river to a pitiful stream that petered out in the desert when there were larger rivers around and one of them indeed flowed from the mountains to the ocean - the river Indus. Aware presumably of this difficulty, apart from the fact that the whole idea seems so unrealistic, Prof Witzel proceeds to make it more palatable by telling us that *SarasvatI* (feminine) means ‘she who has (many) ponds’.

13. Second point: undoubtedly *saras* means even in the RV ‘pond, pool’ as later *SarasvatI* means ‘she who has (many) ponds/pools’. And so Prof Witzel (and others) conjecture that the IndoAryans stayed in Afghanistan by a river that had many ponds or pools and then, when settled in Saptasindhu, gave this name to a similar river there. But it is possible that in very ancient times *saras* did not mean ‘pond, pool’ but something like ‘current, flow’. YAska’s *NighaNTu* certainly gives the flow of ‘speech’ (I, 11), while the (White) *Yajur Veda* (XIX, 12) mentions the goddess SarasvatI as a physician who through speech endows Indra with heroic powers. It is taken for granted that *saras* means ‘pool, pond’, but the root $\sqrt{s}R$ itself and its derivatives denote always motion or flow or extending out: only *saras* (and *sarasI*, a secondary form) has this meaning of an immobile, confined mass of water. So I do wonder whether the original meaning of *saras-vant-* was ‘having (many) ponds/pools’ even as regards the river SarasvatI. However, we can turn to weightier evidence.

14. Third, the *Avesta* (Fargard 1) mentions *Haraxvaiti* in connection with the 16 lands that the Iranians

had wandered through before arriving at their final destination, which is their present homeland; it has also a direct reference to the *Hapta Hindu* which is the Vedic Saptasindhu, the land of the Seven Rivers. Thus the Iranian people remember having been at and having left the region where SarasvatI flowed among the Seven Rivers. The Vedic Aryans have references to locations in near and distant neighbouring areas but do not mention any previous habitats or migrations. Prof Witzel's statements about places that the IndoAryans passed from before settling in Saptasindhu have no basis whatever in factual evidence: they are sheer conjectures built upon his own interpretation of various passages in the Veda and parallels from the Avestan passage mentioned above, that can be and have been interpreted in quite different ways (Kazanas 1999: 26-7). It is quite astonishing that Prof Witzel hypothesizes *three* rivers, one in Bactria - Margiana, another in Afghanistan and a third in the Panjab, to which the IndoAryans give the name SarasvatI (25/3/2001 On Line). If it is necessary to have so complex and unrealistic an hypothesis to explain a phenomenon within a larger theory, then both are divorced from facts.

15. The facts are that the SarasvatI in the *RV* is a very large river at the time that the poets are writing and this is stated or suggested in several hymns in different Books. This is the fourth and final point. Prof Witzel seems rather to prevaricate on this matter when he states that SarasvatI is praised as a great river only once by only one poet of "unclear western origins", ie VasishTa, and then calls this "a little hyperbole (typical of *RV* poets)" (22/5/1999 On Line). I don't believe that he does not know of *RV* II, 41, 16 *ámbitame náditame dévitame sárasvati* 'O SarasvatI, most motherly, greatest of rivers, most divine' (or, best mother, best river, best goddess). Here it is not VasishTa who extolls the divine river nor can this be some insignificant rivulet dying in the desert; and the poet continues "O SarasvatI, on thee who art divine, abide (*SritA[H]*) all generations (*áyUm.si*)". In V, 43, 11 SarasvatI is said to come 'from heaven and a large mountain'; in VI, 49, 7 to have 'wondrous life' (*citrAyuh:*) and in VI, 52, 6 to be swollen (*pinvamAnA*) with other rivers: these hymns also are not by VasishTha. Our Professor would also know that in VI, 61, 8-12 this great river and divinity SarasvatI, is said to be endless, swiftmoving, roaring, most beloved among her seven beloved sister-rivers and the one that makes the five Aryan tribes grow in prosperity (*vardhayanti*). Then again, in VIII, 21, 8 as well as in (VasishTa's) VII, 96, 2 we read that kings and their people thrive on SarasvatI's banks. So the line "from the mountains to the ocean" (VII, 95, 2) is not an isolated instance and a hyperbole. All these statements are plain and unambiguous. One wonders why Prof Witzel withholds all this relevant information and, instead, tosses at the reader irrelevant references to king SudAs and two other rivers in III, 33 or the plural *samudrANI* (22/5/1998, On Line). The seminal fact is that SarasvatI is a very large river, not of the past, not in some other country, but here and now even as the poets compose in Saptasindhu. And all this could not apply to the small Sarsuti river nor be written after the desiccation of the great river (starting at 2500?).

I would not deny the usefulness of a hypothesis as a tool in research, but, obviously, when facts and reason oppose it, it must be abandoned whatever other merits it may seem to have. We must apply Darwin's dictum: "I have steadily endeavoured to keep my mind free so as to give up any hypothesis (and I cannot resist forming one on every subject) as soon as facts are shown to be opposed to it" (Beveridge 1968: 59).

As I said in the first paragraph, I did not know Prof Witzel had raised these issues and the old implausible theory regarding SarasvatI. I trust I have not ignored the facts nor confused facts with conjectures nor deviated from the dictates of reason. The situation whereby the Aryans are indigenous and compose the bulk of the *RV* in the 4th millennium in Saptasindhu is a very simple one and in harmony with the archaeological data in the region. Scholars who think that this simple situation is at odds with their linguistic theories need do no more than reexamine these theories, which necessitate the further theory of the Aryan immigration, which theory generatess complexities and problems and is in conflict with the data of Archaeology. After all it is not as though these linguistic theories are without problems of their own or that in their present form they harmonize with archaeological data anywhere else in the Eurasian belt involved.

16. It has been demonstrated that Prof Witzel grossly mistranslated the passage in the *BS'S* (§1) as an immigration. He acknowledged that K Elst was right in his stringent criticism (Agarwal 2000) but claimed that

his 1995b paper was full of printing errors and he had been unable to correct the proof, thus indirectly blaming his editor, then offered different explanations at different times (ibid). As he also claimed that he advocates “immigration”, not “invasion”, when as we saw (n 3 above) in his mind is invasion, and as he avoided reference to other poets and passages in the *RV* that bring out the greatness of SarasvatI, it becomes difficult to trust him fully in these matters.

What should disturb all indologists and indeed all scholars of whatever stream, is Prof Witzel’s indiscriminate attack on *all non-immigrationists* in his vicious article (with S Farmer: 2000). Just because two Indians, N Jha and N S Rajaram wrote a book with exaggerated claims and possibly faked evidence (as strident nationalists are wont to do in all countries)⁴, our eminent scholar has no right to place all those who disagree with him in the same bracket with the accusation that they “contradict well-known facts” and “ignore 150 years of evidence fixing [the PIE’s] origin to the northwest [of Panjab, ie South Russian Steppe].” What evidence and facts are these? ... It is not possible he does not know that T Burrow placed this “origin” in middle Europe, Diakonov in the Balkans, Lord Renfrew in southeast Anatolia, Gamkrelidge and Ivanov near Caucasus and J P Mallory, who spent so much effort *In Search of the IndoEuropeans*, ended up by saying that he found no good evidence for any claim and that he accepted the Pontic steppe, not because of “facts”, but as “merely ‘the least bad’ solution” (1997: 115). The only well-known fact in all these views is that each rejects all others. It is Prof Witzel himself and his followers who contradict facts by rejecting the archaeological record, showing that there was no intrusion into Saptasindhu before c 500 BC.

One wonders too at the relevance of his next rather irrational comment: “Ironically, many of those expressing these anti-migrational views are emigrants themselves, engineers or technocrats like N S Rajaram, S Kak and S Kalyanaramam, who ship their ideas to India from US shores”. What indeed has this absurd statement to do with facts and evidence?... Then, it continues in the same tone of irrelevance and contempt, forgetting how many Universities and Journals spend enormous funds on useless hypotheses and ostracise all non-immigrationists: “They find allies in a broader assortment of home-grown nationalists including professors, bank employees and politicians (S S Misra, S Talageri, K D Sethna, S P Gupta, Bh Singh, M Shendge, M Gidwani, P Chauduri, A Shourie, S R Goel). They have gained a small but vocal following in the West among “New Age” writers or researchers outside mainstream scholarship, including D Frawley, G Feurstein, K Klostermeier and K Elst. Whole publishing firms, such as the Voice of India and Aditya Prakashan, are devoted to propagating their ideas”. Here two further points are worthy of note: first, Prof Witzel obviously does not know what “New Age” writers are; second, the whole passage has the shrill tones of McCarthyism or any totalitarian dogmatism (and censorship).

Instead of emitting such strident emotional cries and witch-hunt slogans, Prof Witzel and his followers had better re-examine their unfounded linguistic assumptions and recall the words of Edmund Leach, who was neither an Indian nationalist technocrat, nor a New-Age writer, but a solid, mainstream pillar of the academic establishment. He wrote: “Because of their commitment to a unilineal segmentary history of language development that needed to be mapped onto the ground, the philologists took it for granted that proto-Indo-Iranian was a language that had originated outside either India or Iran. ... From this we derived the myth of the Aryan invasions”. Then that provost of King’s College, Cambridge, added that to shift the Aryan invasion theory, which he dismissed contemptuously, “is like trying to cut down a 300-year-old oak tree with a pen-knife. But the job will have to be done one day” (1990).

NOTES

¹ Abbreviations: RV = Rgveda; IE = Indo-European; PIE = Proto-Indo-European

² This Dictionary incorporates H.Frisk, J. Pokorny, J de Vries et al.

Abbr.: Gk = Greek; Mt = Mitanni; S = Sanskrit.

³ Prof Witzel in various studies uses language that implies invasion: “The first appearance of thundering chariots must have stricken the local population with terror similar to that experienced by the Aztecs and the Incas upon the arrival of the iron-clad, horse riding Spaniards” (1995 a: 114). “The immigrating group(s) may have been relatively small one(s), such as the Normans who came to England in 1066” (1977: xxii). So the “invasion” theory is being resuscitated. More explicit expressions are found in 1995b “battles” and “campaigns” (p 324), “immigration and initial conquest” (p 326) and so on up to “frequent warfare” (p 339). Underneath the lip-service to “immigration” there seems to lurk, “invasion” and “conquest”.

⁴ Here in Greece, one writer claimed that Hermes (Trismegistus) travelled as far as Japan in the 9th millennium and “civilized” the world. Another claimed that the top of mount Taygetos (Peloponnese) is, in fact, a pyramid and that the Egyptians modelled their pyramids on this one. Can serious scholars waste their time with such patent absurdities?

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