

Cultural Remnants of the Indigenous Peoples in the Buddhist Scriptures

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ABSTRACT

While the linguistic influence of India's indigenous languages on the Indo-Aryan language (IA) is well understood, the cultural impact of the autochthonous Munda, Dravidian and Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples is much harder to evaluate, due to the lack of indigenous coeval records, and later historicization of the Buddha's life and teachings. Nevertheless, there are cultural remnants of the indigenous belief systems discoverable in the Buddhist scriptures. In this article we examine 1) The longstanding hostility between the IA immigrants and the eastern ethnic groups, especially the Buddha's Sakya clan. 2) The Sakyas' socio-political organization, religious and cultural values which differ significantly from those of the immigrants. 3) The concept of the Mahāpuruṣa which was likely an historicization of an indigenous Indian belief. 4) Indigenous belief structures like serpent- and tree-worship and the culture of sacred groves, and 5) Indigenous funeral rites in the story of the Buddha's parinibbāna.

Keywords

Cultural diffusion, linguistic diffusion, autochthonous peoples, Munda, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman speaking ethnic groups, indigenous peoples, Indianization, South Asian Linguistic Area, *Mahāpuruṣa*, *Mahāpurisa*

INTRODUCTION

When the Indo-Aryans entered the Indian sub-continent in the late second millennium, they did not enter a linguistic or cultural vacuum; they encountered a large indigenous population with their own distinctive cultural and linguis-

tic presence (Emeneau 1954, 282; also in Dil 1980, 85).¹ The linguistic influence of the Dravidian, Munda² and Tibeto-Burman language speakers on Indo-Aryan language (IA) has been well studied. In addition to word lending, the indigenous Indian languages have left a significant phonological and structural imprint on IA, which is discoverable in Old Indic (OI = Vedic) and the Buddhist writings of Middle Indic (MI). Their cultural impact, however, has been less easy to discover as no coeval compositions of theirs have survived and their role in shaping the Buddha's life and teachings has been submerged or historicized with a distinctive brahmanical overprint. This paper is an attempt to study these 'cultural remnants' of the indigenous peoples which are buried in the Buddhist writings. Many scholars have previously noted the presence of ideas foreign to Vedic Brahmanism in the early Buddhist and Vedic scriptures and have suggested a possible non-Aryan source (Fergusson 1868, 114; Senart 1896, xvi–xvii; Macdonnell 1897, 153; Vallée-Poussin 1924, 124; Keith 1925, 10; Fürer-Haimendorf 1953, 45; Chattopadhyaya 1959, 459–94; Gonda 1965, 13; Coomaraswamy 1971, 3),³ but no

1. Some readers may be familiar with the 'out-of-India' theory proposed in recent years which argues for an indigenous, autochthonous Indo-Aryan speaking population, with no immigration from the north-west, as is traditionally believed to have taken place. In his article on 'Autochthonous Aryans? The Evidence from Old Indian and Iranian Texts' (2001, 1–118), Witzel discusses the evidence for the indigenous theory and rejects it as contradictory and unscientific.
2. The Munda are an Austro-Asiatic language group who currently live in the Chotanagpur plateau of north-eastern India, in the state of Jharkhand, just south of Bihar, where the Buddha lived and taught. Munda is one of the indigenous languages of India and Munda speakers were present at the time of the Buddha. For an introduction to the Munda language family see Anderson 2008, 1–10.
3. Fergusson 1868, 114, 'Snake Worship was an old and prevalent form of aboriginal faith all over India before the Aryan immigration, and the Aryans adopted it in proportion as they became mixed with the aborigines, and their blood became less and less pure'. Senart 1896, xviii, asks 'Is this current [underlying Hinduism] purely Aryan, or in what measure mixed with aboriginal contributions? Is it come from a part of the Vedic people or in its origin is it the patrimony of a different stream of immigration?' (Et ce courant, est-il de source purement aryenne ou dans quelle mesure mélangé d'apports aborigènes? Est-il sorti d'une fraction du peuple védique, ou est-il à l'origine le patrimoine d'un flot différent de l'immigration ?); Macdonnell 1897, 153, '...serpent worship was probably due rather to the influence of the aborigines. For on the one hand there is no trace of it in the RV., and on the other it has been found prevailing very widely among the non-Aryan Indians'. Vallée-Poussin 1924, 124, 'Without doubt the tribes of the Aryan language (in the north of India) and of the Dravidian language were in contact in the plains with the same populations [groups outside of brahmanical civilization] which survived in the difficult places of the mountains. And we are today witnesses of the incessant work by which the civilization ate into these little islands, imposing its language, transforming its demons and idols into brahmanical-Hindu gods, its sorcerers into brahmins, its totem clans into castes'. (Sans doute les tribus de langue aryenne (nord de l'Inde) et de langue dravidienne furent en contact dans les plaines avec les mêmes populations qui survivent dans les lieux difficiles des montagnes. Et nous sommes aujourd'hui témoins de l'incessant travail par lequel la civilisation mord sur ces îlots, imposant sa langue, transformant les démons ou les idoles en dieux brahmano-hindous, les sorciers en brahmanes, les clans à totems en castes). Keith 1925, 10, '...there is one very definite piece of evidence which suggests that the invaders were conscious, not merely of racial, but also of religious differences between themselves and the aborigines. In two passages [RV 7.21.5 and 10.99.3] are mentioned phallus-worshippers and in both cases with abhorrence: it is certain that the Dravidians in historical times were addicted to this form of fetishism, and it is as probable as anything can be that the phallus-worshippers opposed by the singers [of the RV] were aborigines', and throughout (see index under 'Aborigines'). Fürer-Haimendorf 1953,

overarching account of the entire subject — which also takes into account the recent breakthroughs (see below for references) in identifying linguistic diffusion from non-IA languages to IA — has been attempted.

THE SOUTH ASIAN LINGUISTIC AREA

At the time of the Buddha, the Indian linguistic landscape was very multi-dimensional. The composers and compilers of the Pāli canon were well aware of this complex linguistic fabric and the possibilities of miscommunicating the teachings as a result of it. In the *Vinaya* commentary, for example, Buddhaghosa gives a list of errors which would invalidate a *kammavācā* — an official act of the *Saṅgha*:

Where instead of an unaspirate an aspirate sound, instead of an aspirate an unaspirate one, instead of an oral one a nasalised one, instead of a nasalised one an oral one is produced, these four [kinds of] sounds in the formula pronounced in legal procedures damage the proceedings. For anyone speaking in this way, and pronouncing a sound different from the one required, is said to have a bad pronunciation. (von Hinüber 1987, 108)⁴

One may also not change, the commentary goes on to state, a voiced consonant into an unvoiced or vice-versa ($d > t$; $t > d$; $c > j$; $j > c$; $y > k$; $k > y$), which is allowed in the *Sutta-piṭaka*, but, however, does ‘not apply to formulas in legal proceedings’ (108). How did these rules come about? The rules reveal the fact that some of the monks were not expert in Pāli, or the Prakrit on which Pāli was based. We know for example that aspirates are not characteristic of Dravidian languages and voiced consonants in Dravidian are allophones of unvoiced consonants (Andronov 2003, 28). In Munda languages the contrast between voiced and unvoiced consonants is also neutralized in certain situations and aspirates are not part of the native sub-system, but borrowed from IA or Middle Indo-Aryan (MIA) (Ghosh 2008, 26). In Tibetan the distinction between voiced and unvoiced stops (like *-t-* and *-d-*) is less phonemically distinctive than the difference in high and low pitch between the two consonants (DeLancey 2003, 270). Since many of the initial converts to the Buddha’s teachings were from the Sakya and other nearby eastern clans,⁵ it is reasonable to infer that, with MI as their second language (see

45 ‘The very fact that the concept of repeated rebirth and repeated death is peculiar to India and that it is absent among other Indo-European peoples, suggests that the gradual transformation of the earlier Aryan beliefs and practices occurred under the influence of certain indigenous concepts held by populations with which the Vedic Aryans came in contact after their arrival in India’. Chattopadhyaya 1959, 459–494, presents a comprehensive account of the conflict between the kingdoms and the *gaṇasaṅghas* and the influence of the latter on the development and organization of the early Buddhist *Saṅgha*; Gonda 1965, 13, ‘It can hardly be denied that the religious ideas of those people which constituted the substratum have contributed a great deal towards the formation of the concepts underlying the later Hindu cult, theology and mythology’. Coomaraswamy 1971, 3, ‘I have attempted to present a fairly clear picture of an even more important phase of non- and pre-Aryan Indian “animism”, the worship of *Yakṣas* and *Yakṣiṣ* and to indicate its significance in religious history and iconographic evolution’.

4. *Samantapāsādikā* (Sp) 1400^{13–16}.

5. In one *Jātaka* story, for example (*Kuṅāla-Jātaka*, Ja V 412–456), 250 members of the Sakyas and 250 Koliyas joined the Buddhist *Saṅgha* when the Buddha resolved a dispute between the two clans over the boundary river Rohini.

discussion on the Sakyas below), they were susceptible to making many of these phonetic mistakes. Non-IA speakers are specifically mentioned in the *Vinaya* (III 2735–37) with reference to a monk who wants to leave the community. His resignation is not valid if he declares it in Aryan to a non-Aryan and the latter does not understand. Non-Aryan (*milakkhaka*) languages mentioned include Andha, Damiḷa and others. Andha and Damiḷa (i.e. Tamil) are both Dravidian languages.⁶

While the non-Aryan linguistic and ethnic groups feature hardly at all in the Pāli canon, the influence of these indigenous peoples, especially linguistically, has left a lasting imprint through diffusion. The South Asian linguistic area (or ‘Sprachbund’) is now a well established entity and has received extensive study over the last fifty years. In Emeneau’s classic definition, it is a name for an area in which ‘languages belonging to more than one family show traits in common which do not belong to the other members of (at least) one of the families’ (Dil 1980, 1). In Emeneau’s definition of the term with respect to South Asia, the common traits belong to the Indo Aryan languages — Old Indic (Vedic and Sanskrit), Middle Indic (Pāli and the other Buddhist vernaculars) and New Indo-Aryan (Hindi and other related languages of modern India) — and Dravidian and Munda (and perhaps Tibeto-Burman), but are not shared by Indo-Aryan’s closest cousin, Iranian. The mechanism which creates these shared features is extensive bilingualism. Emeneau calls this process ‘Indianization’ of the Indo-European component in the Indic linguistic scene (Emeneau 1956, 7; also in Dil 1980, 111). While a full discussion of the effects of the indigenous languages on IA is beyond the scope of this paper, an introduction to the interaction between the families is essential for an understanding of the mixed linguistic landscape in Buddhist India, and by extension the mixed cultural context in which the Buddhist teachings arose. Six of the principal effects of this linguistic Indianization are discussed below.

WORD BORROWING FROM THE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES INTO IA

This is especially evident with respect to plants, animals, customs and practices, slang words, and proper names which were foreign to the IA immigrants (Emeneau 1954, 286–91; also in Dil 1980, 92–99; Kuiper 1955, 137–185). The *Jātaka* stories, for example, contain a rich storehouse of animal names, farming words and slang words which may well be non-IA in origin (*viḍāla/biḍāla* = ‘cat’; *kakaṇṭaka* = ‘chameleon’; *lāṅgala* or *naṅgala* = ‘plough’; *mora* = ‘peacock’; *nakula* = ‘mongoose’; *kamaṇḍalu* = ‘water pot’; *markaṭa* = ‘monkey’; *sakaṭa*, ‘cart’; *maṅgala* = ‘auspicious’).⁷ The founder of the Sakya clan, King Ikṣvāku (Pāli: Okkāka) has a Munda name, suggesting that the Sakyas were at least bilingual (Kuiper 1991, 7;

6. In the commentary on the *Vinaya* (Sp), vol. 1, 25527–29: *tattha ariyakaṃ nāma ariyavohāro Magadhabhāsā. milakkhakaṃ nāma yo koci anariyako Andha-Damiḷādi*. ‘Here *ariyaka* means Aryan language [i.e.] the language of Magadha. *Milakkhaka* means any non-Aryan language [such as] that of Andha, Damiḷa, etc.’. Trans. by von Hinüber 1977, 239.

7. *Jātaka* 128, *viḍāla/biḍāla*: Mayrhofer 1963 (KEWA), vol. 2, 429, ‘probably a foreign word, Dravidian origin suspected’. *Jātaka* 141, *kakaṇṭaka*: KEWA, vol. 1, 137, s.v. *kaikatah*: ‘Unclear and not satisfactorily explained’. *Jātaka* 542, *lāṅgala* or *naṅgala*: a Munda word per Kuiper 1955, 156. *Jātaka* 159, *mora/mayura*: Mayrhofer 1992 (EWA), vol. 2, 317, problematic, possibly Dravidian or Munda; see also Emeneau 1954, 288; also in Dil 1980, 95; *Jātaka* 165, *nakula*: EWA, vol. 2, 2, ‘unclear, foreign word?’. *Jātaka* 175, *kamaṇḍalu*: Kuiper 1948, 163, possible Munda word. *Jātaka* 273, *makkāṭa*: EWA, vol. 2, 322, ‘unclear, foreign word?’ from Dravidian or Austro-Asiatic. Turner 1962–85 (CDIAL), 9882 < Kannda *maṅga* = monkey. *sakaṭa*: a Munda word per Kuiper

Mayrhofer 1992, vol. 1, 185). Many of the Sakya village names are believed to be non-IA in origin (Thomas 1960, 23), and the very word for town or city (*nagara*; cf. the Sakya village *Nagakara*, the locus of the *Cūlasuññata Sutta*) is of Dravidian stock (Mayrhofer 1963, vol. 2, 125). In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the names of many of Rāma's opponents among the *rākṣasas* (the demons), appear to have been borrowed from the Munda or Dravidian languages, for example Kabandha ('barrel', Kuiper 1948, 100; Mayrhofer 1992, vol. 1, 327); Dundubha/Ḍuṇḍubha ('lizard, snake', Kuiper 1948, 68–69); Khara ('rough, harsh', Burrow and Emeneau 1961 #1265; Kuiper 1991, 49); Daṇḍaka (name of the forest where Rāma lived, Kuiper 1948, 75–83; Turner 1962–1985, #6128), and so forth. The name of Rāma's ally Hanuman, the monkey chief, may also be the 'transformation of a pre-Aryan name' (Mayrhofer 1963, vol. 3, 574). A recent comparative study of the Pāli *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (MPP, D II 122–168) and the BHS *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (MPS, Waldschmidt, 1950–1951) shows significant linguistic borrowing from the autochthonous peoples, preserved in the toponyms of the places the Buddha visited before his *parinibbāna*, and in the names of various sacred trees and cultural practices associated with his funeral.⁸

THE CONFUSION OF VOICED AND UNVOICED CONSONANTS, DUE TO OF LACK OF PHONEMIC DISTINCTION IN SEVERAL INDIGENOUS AND IA LANGUAGES

Even some IA languages (e.g. Krorainic, the language of the Niya documents⁹ and Tocharian, a language of the Tarim basin of northwest China) do not preserve this distinction (Burrow 1936, 431; Adams 1988, 36). Accounting for the confusion of voiced and unvoiced consonants is a well known crux in Buddhist philological studies. Lüders (1954, §122–148) explained them as 'Hyperpālismen', that is, hyper corrections by scribes who believed that the source language they were translating from regularly voiced intervocalic consonants; as a result they mechanically devoiced them. Mehendale (1968, 56f) argued the opposite. In fact, the randomness of the consonantal interchange suggests the cause is lack of phonemic distinction on the part of the speakers and/or hearers (Levman 2013a, Chapter 11).

1955, 161; EWA, vol. 2, 601, 'Not satisfactorily explained'. *maṅgala*: a Munda word per Kuiper 1955, 183. KEWA, vol. 2, 547, 'Not securely explained'.

8. Levman 2013b. This work is not yet published. It is perhaps not surprising that most of the names of the villages in the Malla country that the Buddha visited before his *parinibbāna* were of autochthonous origin (e.g. Nalanda < Kannaḍa *naḷḷu*, 'reed'; Koṭigāma < Tamil *kōtu* 'peak of a hill'; or Kuśinagara < Tamil *nakaram*, 'town, city' and *kuśin*, 'furnished *kuśa* grass', perhaps non-IA per KEWA, vol. 1 245, ? < Koṇḍa *kusa*, 'greens and vegetables'), nor even that the sacred trees had native, non-IA names (e.g. *candana*, 'sandalwood' < Tamil *cāntu*, *idem*; *udumbara* < Munda, per Kuiper 1948, 23–25; *asvattha* < non-IA per KEWA, vol. 1, 61). After all, the indigenous peoples occupied this territory long before the arrival of the Aryans, so their linguistic imprint is expected. What is surprising, however, is the intersection of this indigenous vocabulary with the non-IA religious, cultural and political practices — to be discussed in detail below — which strongly suggests that linguistic diffusion from the indigenous peoples to the Indo-Aryans is inseparable from cultural diffusion.
9. The Niya documents, dating from the third century CE, are administrative documents from the kingdom of Shan Shan located on the south side of the Karim basin in NW China (Burrow 1937, viii).

RETROFLEXION

This is generally agreed to be a feature of the indigenous languages imported into IA. Retroflex consonants are proto-Dravidian and may be proto-Munda. Tibetan also has them. Emeneau accounts for these by positing that Sanskrit was transmitted at an early period by speakers for whom it was a second language; since Dravidian was their first language and it had contrasting dentals and retroflexes, those allophones in OI which were close to the Dravidian retroflexes were assigned to retroflex phonemes by Dravidian bilingual speakers (Emeneau 1974, 93; also in Dil 1980, 198). 'The origin of retroflexion lies not so much in the Aryans' borrowing this trait from Dravidians in early times [as was suggested by Kuiper 1967, 89–90] as in Dravidians' adapting Aryan speech to their native phonology' (Deshpande 1979, 297).

ECHO WORDS

Echo words are also believed to be a pan-Indic trait, found in Dravidian, Munda, Tibetan and OI and MI, a feature which is not shared by other Indo-European (IE) languages, like Iranian. They are defined by Emeneau as a construction where a basic word formulated as CVX (C = consonant, V = vowel, X = echo) is followed by an echo-word in which CV or C is replaced by another phoneme and X remains the same and the meaning is 'and the like' (Emeneau 1956, 10; also in Dil 1980, 114), e.g. *puli gili* 'tigers and the like' in Dravidian, *acel pacel* 'abundance' in Santali, where it is known as an 'expressive' (Ghosh 2008, 73), and *kharji barji* 'food' in Tibetan (Vollmann 2009, 21). In the South Munda language Sora, the chief echo morpheme starts with *m-* but there is a wide variety of latitude allowed (Kuiper 1948, 6, calls it 'free variation on a large scale'). In Santali, a Munda language, there are several variational possibilities — repeating the element in an identical form, augmenting a consonant in the repeated element, and vowel mutation. The repeated item does not have an independent meaning but modifies the meaning of the first element (Ghosh 2008, 73). Sylvain Lévi (1923, 56) reported on this idiosyncrasy of the Munda language, whereby identical pairs and triplets were differentiated only by their first consonant which was extremely variable. He reports on ancient tribes that formed 'twinning ethnics' (*ethniques pour ainsi dire jumelés, parfois même trijumeaux*, 'twinning ethnics so to speak, sometimes even triplets'), named Kosala/Tosala, Aṅga/Vaṅga, Kaliṅga/Triliṅga, Utkala/Metkala, Pulinda/Kulinda, Uṅḍa/Puṅḍa/Muṅḍa.¹⁰ These tribes lived in the same areas and had the same name except for the change of the first consonant; he suggested that the names referred to the identical tribal group and the variation that occurred was due to the nature of the Munda language (see further discussion below).

Emeneau expanded his definition of echo words in 1969 (p. 284; also in Dil 1980, 263), calling them 'Onomatopoeics', while pointing out that 'We are deal-

10. Note that Muṅḍa (with retroflex consonants) refers to the tribe or ethnic group. Munda (with dental consonants) refers to the language group. The two are related as the ethnic group probably spoke a Munda language. For further information see Levman 2011, 65, footnote 3. The identification of Puṅḍa (= Puṅḍra) and Muṅḍa may mean that the word *muṅḍaka*, a common term of abuse used by the brahmins against the Buddha and his followers and usually thought to mean 'bald person', had an additional pejorative meaning of 'eastern tribes'. The ancient Puṅḍ(r)as were an eastern ethnic group in the sub-Himalayan foothills.

ing only in the most marginal way with blatantly sound-imitative forms ... the class denotes varied types of sensation, the impingement of the material world, outside or within the person, upon the senses — not merely the five conventionally identified senses, but all the feelings, both external and internal'. This fits in well with the Munda notion of 'expressives'. Emeneau identifies five classes of onomatopoeics: non-reduplicated with and without derivative suffix; identical reduplication with and without derivative suffix and reduplication with change of vowel, of initial consonant or both. Typically echo forms (in non-IA languages) are inseparable but of course we have no idea how these forms may have functioned in the fifth or fourth century BCE; they may have functioned both separately and together in the ancient texts. Certainly, some of these echo-forms probably originally had independent meanings before they were assimilated into a combined form and the meaning of one of the words was lost (Peterson 2011, 133), while others simply result from the change of the initial syllable. Some examples of onomatopoeics or echo forms in Skt. and Pāli are: *gaggara* < Skt. *gargara* 'whirlpool', 'roaring, cackling, cawing — sound of geese,' *bharabhara* or *babbhara* in P, imitation of a confused rumbling sound; *kilikilāyati* to 'tinkle' < Tamil *kilukilu* 'to resound with noise,' *kukkura* 'dog,' *sarasara* = 'an imitative word', 'a rustling sound,' *gaḷagaḷāyati* = *gaggarāyati*, 'crashes, thunders,' *kaṭakaṭāyati* = *taṭataṭāyati* (per PED), 'to grind, creak, snap,' *kalakala* = any indistinct and confused noise; *kinikiṇika* = 'sound of a small bell,' *capucaṇu* = sound made when smacking one's lips' *cicciṭāyati* = to hiss, fizz, sizzle (always combined with *ciṭiciṭāyati*); *bubbula* and *bubbula* < Skt. *budbuda*, 'bubble,' *mummura* < Skt *murmura*, 'crackling, rustling'. I have suggested elsewhere that intractable duos like *accasāri paccasāri* in the *Sutta-nipāta* v. 8 may be echo-type constructions (Levman 2013a, chapter 11, 362).

THE ABSOLUTIVE

The absolute (non-finite verb form) does not exist in Iranian and is believed to be derived from Dravidian (Emeneau 1965, 30–31; also in Dil 1980, 130). In Sanskrit it is formed by the addition of *-tvā* to verbs without prefixes and *-ya* to verbs with prefixes. In the Prakrits, *-tvā* changes to *-ttā*, while in P it is re-Sanskritized as *-tvā*. Dravidian and Munda both have this feature as does Tibetan, which follows verbs with a particle *nas*. Kuiper believes that since the Munda forms vary from north to south, that they are innovations in Munda and copied from Dravidian (Kuiper 1967, 96).

THE QUOTATIVE MARKER

The quotative marker in Sanskrit is *iti* ('thus'), which always occurs after the statement. While there is a cognate form in Avestan (*uiti*), this usually occurs before direct speech. In Vedic it occurs in both locations with a strong predilection (30 of 36 occurrences) for after the direct quote. This is also a prevalent feature in Dravidian (where the particle in Tamil, for example, *enru*, means 'having said'). In Munda the form is the post-quotation form *mente* ('by saying' in Mundari and Santali) or *gamle* ('having said' in Sora), and in Tibetan the particle *zhes* (or *ces*, depending on what letter the previous word ends with), which also occurs after the quote (Kuiper 1967, 91–95).

The above is only a sampling of some of the more conspicuous features of the Indic linguistic area; there are many others: causative verb structure, basic subject-object-verb word order; postpositions; goals of verb of motion, adverbial and infinitive complements which go in the object position; adjectives, genitive phrases, demonstratives and numerals which precede the noun they modify; qualifiers which precede adjectives; use of genitive for the verb 'to have'; use of dative to express internal states of mind; caste system terminology similarities, and more.

Why is this important? If linguistic diffusion from the indigenous peoples of India was so prominent a feature in the IA language, it is impossible that cultural diffusion did not also leave a lasting imprint. In fact it did, but, much of it was covered over through 'brahmanization' by the Buddha's brahman disciples — making the Buddha appear more brahmanical than he was — probably in order to cultivate acceptance with the mainstream Aryan hegemony.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE BUDDHA

We have virtually no original records of the life of the Buddha; his detailed biography was created by his followers after his death and these compositions often postdate the events described by hundreds of years. Due to its conciseness and its repetition in other parts of the *Tiṭṭaka*, many consider the *Ariyapariyesanā Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* (*Middle Length Discourses*, M) to be the earliest biographical account we possess of Siddhārtha Gautama (Thomas, 1960, 62n1; Bareau 1963, 72–72; Norman 1987, 25; Walters 1999, 251–256). Here the Buddha tells us in one sentence how he began his search for enlightenment:

Later, while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life, though my mother and father wished otherwise and wept with tearful faces, I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and went forth from the home life into homelessness.¹¹

This may or may not represent something close to the actual words of the historical Buddha; the simplicity and candor of the statement do seem to reflect a 'certain genuineness' on the part of the speaker (Walters 1999, 253). But the words certainly bear little resemblance to the superfluity of details which have accreted to his biography in later Theravādin and Mahāyāna writings, where his father is a king, his mother a queen and various supernatural events accompany his going-forth. As E. J. Thomas puts it in his classic *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History* (1–2):

all of them [the legends] belong to a period far removed from the stage which might be considered to be the record, or to be based on the record of an eyewitness-

11. Nāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, 256. M I 16327–31: *So kho ahaṃ bhikkhave aparena samayena daharo va samāno susu kāḷakeso bhadrena yobbanena samannāgato paṭhamena vayasā akāmakānaṃ mātāpitunnaṃ assumukhānaṃ rudantānaṃ kesamassuṃ ohāretvā kāsāyāni vatthāni acchādetvā agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajim*. The same phrase is repeated almost verbatim in the *Mahāsaccaka Sutta* (M I 24025–29), the *Cankī Sutta* (M II 16627–29), the *Saṅgārava Sutta* (M II 21133f), the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya* = D I 11515–20) and the *Kūṭadanta Sutta* (D I 13130–34), the *Bodhirājakumāra Sutta* (M II 9318–20) and the first part of the sentence (*daharo yuvā susu kāḷakeso bhadrena yobbanena samannāgato paṭhamena vayasā*) also occurs three times in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (A).

ness. Everything, even in the Scriptures, has passed through several stages of transmission, and whatever the period of the actual discourses, the legends by which they are accompanied are in no case contemporary. Some of the scriptural legends, such as the descent from heaven, and the miracles of the birth and death, are just those which show most clearly the growth of apocryphal additions, as well as the development of a dogmatic system of belief about the person and functions of Buddha. Another development is that which makes Buddha the son of a king, and the descendant of a line of ancestors going back to the first king of the present cycle.

To say that the Buddha's biography has been historicized ('to make appear historical')¹² by his followers is a truism; one could say this about all biographies of distant historical figures, or indeed about any biography at all. They each have a certain viewpoint to cultivate and project, according to the inclinations and biases of their author(s). The Buddha's biography is no different and, since many of his followers were brahmins, many of the legends that have attached to his life story are concerned with showing his teachings as the 'crowning and consummation of the Brahmanical religion' (Olivelle 2008, xix). In *Aśvaghosa's Buddhacarita*, the *Lalitavistara*, the *Mahāvastu*, and the *Nidānakathā*, the Buddha's biography is thoroughly 'brahmanized' – *inter alia*, his father is portrayed as a *ṣṭriya* king with his own retinue of brahmin priests; the young Buddha is represented as the fulfillment of a long line of famous brahmanical and Vedic ancestors; he is given a brahmanical *gotta* (family or clan name), Gotama; recognized as a *Mahāpuruṣa* (P. *Mahāpurisa*) by the court *purohitas* (priests) with all the marks of a great man, 'handed down in our Vedic mantras' (*āgatāni ... amhākam mantesu*);¹³ likened to the Vedic gods; and administered the *saṃskāras* (sacred Vedic rites) starting with the naming ceremony (Rhys Davids, 1878, 160; Cowell 1895, 8–9 Olivelle 2008, 15–17, 23). Interpreting this trend as an attempt on the part of the colonized to imitate the hegemonic, colonizing culture may not be far from the mark (Weber 1958, 17; Bhabha 1994, 85);¹⁴ for the Buddha was from the Sakya clan, one of the eastern ethnic groups that were contemned by the increasingly dominant brahmanical immigrants from the northwest (see discussion below). Within 500 or so years of his death, epitomized by such biographies as the *Buddhacarita* and the *Lalitavistara* – and persisting up until the late twentieth century – the Buddha has been historicized as an Aryan prince, son of an Aryan king and prominent *khattiya* member of the Aryan *vaṇṇa* (social class) system;¹⁵ yet *Suddhodana* as

12. *American Heritage Dictionary*, 1997.

13. *Brahmāyu Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya* (M II 134¹⁵⁻¹⁶). See discussion below.

14. For a discussion on linguistic imitation see Emeneau 1962, 431–434; also in Dil 1980, 41–45.

15. Humphreys 1951, 29–30, 'He was born of the Aryan race in the Kshatriya caste of the Sakya clan ... His father, *Suddhodana*, was Raja of the Sakya clan, and if not a king as often described, was a native prince of substance; Tucci 1985, vol. 15, 269, 'The Buddha was born about the year 563 BC in the kingdom of the Śakyas (on the borders of present-day Nepal and India). As the son of *Suddhodana*, the king, and *Mahāmāyā*, the queen, the Buddha thus came from a *ṣṭriya* family (i.e., the warrior caste or ruling class)'; J. P. McDermott 1989, 122, 'Siddārtha Gautama was born into the *Ṣṭriya* (warrior) caste as the first son of the *rāja* of *Kapilavastu*. His education was most likely in accord with the standards of a martial aristocracy'. While most, more recent biographies do not call the Buddha a 'prince' and his father a 'king', the Aryan-indigenous peoples' dichotomy is not critically examined either (for example, Armstrong 2001; Bechert 2004; Harvey 2009).

ruler of the Sakyas was not a king, but an elected leader of a *gaṇasaṅgha*, a tribal republic (Thapar 2002, 46; Malalasekera 2003 = DPPN, s.v. Sakiyā) and Gotama never called himself a prince. His teachings are sometimes presented as a heterodox or reformist development of an earlier Upaniṣadic tradition;¹⁶ yet they are often radically different from orthodox Brahmanical beliefs. Buddhism itself is viewed, not as a separate teaching that may or may not have cultural affinities with the indigenous peoples, but as a set of antitheses to Brahmanical doctrines, or even a schismatic reform movement from within Brahmanism.¹⁷ While more recent scholarship is generally changing to a more balanced view, we are still a long way from the ‘middle path’ that history teaches: when two peoples meet, a complex socio-cultural dynamic evolves, with many trends and cross-currents towards both assimilation and segregation, and the synthesis is by no means one-sided. One is reminded of the twentieth century Canadian analogy of minority cultural groups anxiously assimilating themselves to the dominant British value system, while still retaining their own cultural heritage.

THE EASTERN ETHNIC GROUPS

The eastern ethnic groups were looked down upon as inferior by the incoming Aryans from the northwest. The centre of the Aryan homeland (Āryāvarta, ‘the abode of the noble ones’) lay west of the intersection of the Yamuna and Ganges rivers, while the Buddha belonged to the Sakyas (P, Skt. Śākya), an eastern sub-Himalayan ethnic group, in the eastern borderlands. Like the other eastern groups, the Sakyas were of ‘mixed origin’ (*saṃkīrṇa-yonayaḥ*), which presumably meant that their ancestry was part Aryan and part indigenous, the former component probably being in the minority (Dutt 1960, 52; Emeneau 1974, 93; also in Dil 1980, 198; Deshpande 1979, 297). The *Baudhāyana-dharmaśāstra* (1.1.2.13–4) lists all the groups (including that of Magadha, where the Buddha spent much of his

16. Rhys Davids 1878, xxvii, ‘the religious system [Hinduism] of which his own was, after all, but the highest product and result ... After the first glow of the Buddhist reformation had passed away, there was probably as little difference between Buddhist and Hindu as there was between the two kings in the story which has just been told’; Frauwallner 1956, 11, ‘From a temporal and spatial point of view, the Buddha is not far removed from the most recent doctrines of the *Upaniṣad* period’; Gombrich 1996, 31, ‘The central teachings of the Buddha came as a response to the central teachings of the old Upaniṣads, notably the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*. On some points, which he perhaps took for granted, he was in agreement with the Upaniṣadic doctrine; on other points he criticized it’. Collins 1982, 40, ‘The intellectual stratum of Buddhism worked with the basic paradigm provided by Brahmanical thought, accepting the overall form, while rejecting certain features’. On pages 31–32 Collins discusses the possible influence of indigenous peoples’ beliefs on Brahmanism and Buddhism, but does not pursue this, because of lack of historical evidence.

17. Thomas 1933, 2, ‘The problem of the relation of Buddhism to Brahmanism and of their interaction as religious and philosophical schools runs throughout the whole history. But Brahmanism was not merely a rival; it was in the first place the system in the midst of which Buddhism originated. Brahmanism had long grown out of the prehistoric nature religion of Aryan peoples, and, influenced doubtless by contact with non-Aryan peoples, had become by the sixth century B.C. an elaborate sacrificial and sacerdotal system. It had also originated the philosophical principles which have ever since dominated it’. Thapar 1997, 140, ‘[Buddhism] began as a schismatic movement from the more orthodox outlook of Brahmanism’. Gombrich 1990, 13–14, ‘For many years I have tried to show in my teaching and lecturing that the Buddha presented central parts of his message, concerning *kamma* and the *tilakkhaṇa*, as a set of antitheses to brahmanical doctrine’.

teaching career) outside the pale of the Āryāvarta; just visiting them required a purificatory sacrifice as expiation.¹⁸ In Manu (10.11, 22) the Vaidehas, Magadhas, Licchavis, the Mallas, and the rulers of Kusinārā and Pāvā (cities of the Malla ethnic group, and the near neighbours of the Sakyas) — that is all the eastern clans including the Dravidians — are deemed to be the result of mixed caste marriages and treated ‘as though being non-Aryan’ (Oldenberg 1882, 399). Those who chose to isolate themselves in the forests are mentioned in the Aśokan edicts (RE 13, section M) where Aśoka calls them ‘foresters’ (*aṭavi*, a Dravidian word = Skt. *āṭavikāḥ*), saying that he ‘pacifies and converts them’.¹⁹ In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (Ś. Br., 13.8.1.5) the people of the east are called ‘*asuras*’ (*asurāḥ prācyāḥ*, ‘eastern demons’) and their speech was looked down upon as corrupt, for they pronounced western *r* as *l* (Ś. Br., 3.2.1.23) and regularly resolved conjunct consonants by epenthesis, rather than the usual western practice of assimilation (Wackernagel 1896, vol 1, §53c). The non-Aryans are particularly criticized for being *mṛdhra-vācaḥ* (with obstructed speech’) and for worshipping false gods (Deshpande 1979, 254). Other eastern clans are also mentioned in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (33.6) where the sons of Viśvāmītra are cursed by him to become the Andhras, Puṇḍras, Śabarās, Pulindas and Mūtibas, living beyond the boundary (*udantyā*), the most numerous of slaves (*dasvūnaṃ bhūyīṣṭhāḥ*). The Andhras are a Dravidian speaking group from South India; the last four are all Munda tribal names (Witzel 1999, 39).²⁰ In the *Atharva Veda*, an ancient pre-Buddhist collection of magic spells, there is a further illuminative reference to the eastern clans where *takman* the fever is banished to the Angas and Magadhas inhabiting the eastern Himalayan foothills.²¹ One of the unique *mattāchanda* poetic metres first recorded by the Buddhists in their early poetry — in marked contradistinction to

18. *Baudhāyana-dharmasāstra* 1.1.2.13–5:

*avantayo 'ṅga-magadhāḥ surāṣṭrā dakṣiṇāpathāḥ / upāvṛt-sindhu-sauvirā ete saṃkīrṇa-yonayah //
āraṭṭān kāraskarān puṇḍrān sauvīrān vaṅgān kaliṅgān prānūnān iti ca gaṭvā punastomena yajeta
sarvaprṣṭhayaḥ vā // athāpy udāharanti / padbhyāṃ sa kurute pāpaṃ yaḥ kaliṅgān prapadyate / ṛṣayo
niṣkr̥tiṃ tasya prāhur vaiśvānaraṃ haviḥ //*

‘The inhabitants of Avantī, of Āṅga, of Magadha, of Surāṣṭra, of the Dekhan, of Upāvṛt, of Sindh, and the Sauvīrās are of mixed origin. He who has visited the (countries of the) Āraṭṭas, Kāraskaras, Puṇḍras, Sauvīras, Vaṅgas, Kaliṅgas, (or) Prānūnas shall offer a *Punastoma* or a *Sarvaprṣṭhā* (*iṣṭi*). Now they quote also (the following verses): “He commits sin through his feet, who travels to the (country of the) Kaliṅgas. The sages declare the *Vaiśvānarī iṣṭi* to be a purification for him”’ (Bühler, 1882, 148); *iṣṭi* = sacrifice.

19. See Hultzsch 1969, 69, section M: ‘And even (the inhabitants of) the forests which are (included) in the dominions of Dēvānāmpriya, even those he pacifies (and) converts. The Prakrit may be found on page 67, section M: *ya pi cha aṭavi Devanamprīyasa vijite bhoti ta pi anuneti anunijapeti*. The verb *anuneti* is from Skt. *anu + ni* (‘conciliate, pacify’); the verb *anunijapeti* = Skt. *anu + ni + dhyai* (‘to win affection’).
20. See Law, 1943. The ancient Puṇḍras are an eastern tribe in the sub-Himalayan foothills, who lived just south-east of Bihar (where the Buddha lived and taught) and east of Jarkhand, where present day Muṇḍas live (278). Sylvain Lévi connects these with the Muṇḍas, a Munda speaking tribe. See above page 150. The Śabarās, Andhras and Pulindas lived in the Deccan (172). The Mūtibas may also have been a southern tribe (173).
21. *Artharva Veda* 5, 22, 14. *Gāndhāribhyo Mūjavadbhyo 'ṅgebhyo Māgadhebhyah, praiṣyam janam iva śevadhīm takmānaṃ pari dadmasi* ‘To the Gandhāris, the Māgavants, the Angas, and the Magadhas, we deliver over the *takman*, like a servant, like a treasure!’ Bloomfield 1897, 2. ‘Gāndhārī’ is also a Munda name for a people who settled in the Panjab, per Witzel 1999, 12.

the old Vedic metrical system — was named *vetaliyā*, ('ghost', 'demon', 'goblin'), suggesting its derivation from the pre-Aryan eastern clans (Warder 1967, 88 n1).²² For a recent discussion of the well known opposition between the Āryāvarta and the eastern ethnic groups, see Bronkhorst 2007, 1–9. He calls the eastern groups the culture of 'Greater Magadha', but stops short of drawing any linguistic or ethnic conclusions, simply noting that 'Buddhism and Jainism arose in a culture which was recognized as being non-Vedic' (p. 6). See also Oldenberg 1882, 391–411 for a still relevant discussion of the hostility between the non-brahmanical (and at least in part, non-Aryan) eastern stocks and the *vaidikas* (followers of the Veda) of the west. This sentiment is also reiterated in the Pāli *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* where the Buddha's Sakya clan is characterized by the brahmins as 'fierce, rough-spoken, touchy and violent. Being of menial origin, being menials, they do not honour, respect, esteem, revere or pay homage to Brahmins'.²³ A whole pejorative vocabulary is developed to criticize the Buddhists themselves who in the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* are called 'shaven little (*muṇḍaka*) ascetics, menials, black scourgings from Brahma's foot'.²⁴ The commentary makes the meaning of *muṇḍaka* clear: 'The brahmins come from the head of Brahma, the warriors from his chest, the merchants from his navel, the servants from his knee and the ascetics from the back of his feet'.²⁵ The *muṇḍakā samaṇakās* are thus the lowest of the low, well below servants in the social order, that is, on par with the mixed castes and untouchables. This position is also re-iterated in the *Aggañña Sutta* from the *Dīgha Nikāya* where Vāseṭṭha, questioned by the Buddha as to the brahmins' verbal abuse, repeats the criticisms levelled against the monks, the brahmins claiming that the monks have renounced the highest class and gone over to the inferior class, which are the *muṇḍakas* and *samaṇas*.²⁶ The Sakya clan derive their ancestry from

22. Warder suggests, 'It is possible that this *deśī* music was that of the pre-Aryan population of the Ganges region', and on page 103, 'The new metre may have had its origin in *deśī* (Māgadhi) folk song: its rhythms may even be non-Indo-Aryan in origin, coming perhaps from some Munda tradition in Eastern India'.
23. Walshe 1995, 113. D I 9027–914: '*caṇḍā bho Gotama Sakya-jāti, pharusā bho Gotama Sakya-jāti, lahusā bho Gotama Sakya-jāti, rabhasā bho Gotama Sakya-jāti. Ibbhā santā ibbhā samānā na brāhmaṇe sakkaronti na brāhmaṇe garukaronti na brāhmaṇe mānenti na brāhmaṇe pūjenti na brāhmaṇe apacāyanti*'. This is one of Ambaṭṭha's insults to Buddha. Buddha turns the conversation around and shows that Ambaṭṭha himself is derived from King Okkāka's black slave girl Disā (ibid, 115).
24. *muṇḍakā samaṇakā ibbhā kaṇhā bandhupādāpacā* D I 9015. The Sakyans are also called *ibbhā* — of menial origin; see below.
25. *Sumaṅgala-Vilāsinī* (Sv) Rhys-Davids & Carpenter 1886–1932, vol. 1, 25428–30: '*brāhmaṇā Brahmaṇo mukhato nikkhantā, khattiyā urato, vessā nābhito, suddā jāṇuto, samaṇā piṭṭhi-pādato' ti*. Note the contrast with *Rg Veda* 9, 20, 12 where the *sūdra* is said to have been born from the feet of *Puruṣa*. In the Indian caste system, the only groups lower than the *sūdra* were the mixed castes and those who did menial work which rendered them 'untouchable'. For the use of the word *muṇḍaka* to mean 'eastern ethnic group', see footnote 10.
26. D III 8114–17: *te tumhe seṭṭham vaṇṇaṃ hitvā hīnaṃ attha vaṇṇaṃ ajjhupagatā, yadidaṃ muṇḍake samaṇake ibbhe kaṇhe bandhu-pādāpacce. tayidaṃ na sādhu, tayidaṃ na patirūpaṃ, yaṃ tumhe seṭṭham vaṇṇaṃ hitvā hīnaṃ attha vaṇṇaṃ ajjhupagatā, yadidaṃ muṇḍake samaṇake ibbhe kaṇhe bandhu-pādāpacce ti*. 'And you, you have deserted the highest class and gone over to the base class of shaveling petty ascetics, servants, dark fellows born of Brahma's foot! It's not right, it's not proper for you to mix with such people!' Trans. by Walshe 1995, 407. See also Levman 2013a, Chapter 12 where I argue that *muṇḍaka* also is a pejorative term for the eastern ethnic groups.

King Ikṣvāku, whose name is of Austro-Asiatic Munda origin (see above, page 148). While the Sakyans' rough speech and Munda ancestors do not prove that they spoke a non-IA language, there is a lot of other evidence suggesting that they were indeed a separate ethnic (and probably linguistic) group.

THE SAKYAS' SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

The eastern ethnic groups had a different political system than the Aryan *janapada* ('nation' or 'people') kingdoms which we encounter in the Pāli writings. The local clans were called *gaṇa-saṅghas* ('tribal assembly') where the ruling group operated as a community of equals who elected a *primus-inter-pares* leader to rule them. The Sakyas had no king (Oldenberg 1893, 416; Chattopadhyaya 1959, 469–475; Thomas 1960, 20). The Buddha himself provides a full description of their polity at the beginning of the MPP, when King Ajātasattu sends his chief minister Vassakāra to ask the Buddha if he will be successful in conquering the Vajjians, a confederacy of several eastern clans; the Buddha responds in the negative, praising the Vajjians for their liberal and egalitarian government process.²⁷ They met regularly in the council or mote hall (Skt. *saṁsthāgāra*, P *santhāgāra*) where business was conducted by a majority vote of equals (Chattopadhyaya 1959, 489–490).²⁸ More telling is the scene at the end of the same *sutta*, where a conflict erupts over who is to receive the Buddha's funeral remains. Of the ten portions available (eight for the relics and one each for the urn and the embers), seven go to the clans, two to brahman converts, with only one begrudgingly given to King Ajātasattu of Magadha in order to avoid an armed conflict.²⁹

That the eastern clans were in conflict with the *janapadas* is apparent in the Pāli writings. The Sakyans were in fact vassals of King Pasenadi of Kosala, something which they resented and the Buddha clearly resisted acknowledging. In the *Sutta-nipāta*, King Bimbisāra of Magadha asks the Buddha what his lineage is and he responds: 'Straight on [in that direction] there is a people, king, [living] on the flank of Himavat, endowed with wealth and energy, [belonging to] one who is indigenous (*niketino*) among the Kosalans. They are Adicca by clan, Sākiya by

27. D II 7325–7522. The Buddha's description of the Vajjian political process is the model for the government of the *Saṅgha* (monkhood), as the Buddha himself prescribes at DN II 7631–7726.

28. In the *Vinaya*, the voting system of the *gaṇasaṅghas* is described as *gaṇamaggena gaṇetum sālakaṃ vā gāhetum*, (*Mahavagga* 2, 18 = *Vin* I 117) which Chattopadhyaya translates as 'count ... by the method of the *gaṇas* or that you take the voting tokens'. There are two variant readings, *nāmaggena* in the Burmese addition which could mean (*nāma-aggena*) 'by a majority of names' and the Thai recension which reads *nāma-mattena*, 'by merely the names'. *gaṇamaggena* is from the Cambodian edition. Horner (2007, vol. 4, 154) translates 'count by way of groups or to take (a count) by ticket'. Brackets in original.

29. The Mallas, in whose territory the Buddha died, received two portions, the Licchavis (of the Vajjian confederacy), the Sakyas, the Bulayas, the Koliyas, the brahman of Veṭhadipa and King Ajātasattu each receive a share of the relics; the Moriyas receive the embers and the brahman Doṇa received the urn. Over each of these a stūpa was built. Curiously, both the Vajjis and the Mallas are also grouped with the *janapadas* in the later writings, while they certainly were originally *gaṇasaṅghas* (Rhys Davids 1911, 26; for the list of *janapadas*, see A I 2131–4). See, for example, the *Cūlasaccaka Sutta*, M I 23110–16 where the *gaṇasaṅghas* of the Mallas and Vajjis are specifically contrasted with the kingdoms of Ajātasattu (Magadha) and Pasenadi (Kosala) to the west.

birth. From that family I went forth, king, not desiring sensuous pleasures'.³⁰ The commentator interprets this to mean that the Buddha did not accept the legitimacy of the vassalship of the Sakyans to the Kosalans:

Saying 'indigenous among the Kosalans' (*kosalesu nicketino*), he rejects the new kingship. A new king is certainly not to be called 'indigenous' (*nicketi*); but he whose country has been his home, according to tradition, from the earliest time, only he is to be called 'indigenous' (*nicketi*). And King Suddhodana is such a one, with reference to whom he says 'indigenous among the Kosalans' (*kosalesu nicketino*).³¹

So apparently the use of the word *nicketin* (< Skt. *niketa*, 'mark, sign, house, habitation, home') is intended to contrast with the Kosalans who are not indigenous (*nicketino*) residents in the Sakya country, but newcomers. In the *Mvu* this contrast is made explicit. The Buddha's native country (*nija-janapado*) has been 'made to settle' (*nivāsito*) amongst the Kosalans. This is more explicit in the *Aggañña Sutta*, where the Buddha says, 'Now the Sakyans are vassals of the King of Kosala ...' using the pejorative word *anuyuttā* which means 'inferior' or 'vassal'.³² That the Sakyans were deeply resentful of their vassalhood to Kosala is also apparent in the story told in the *Jātaka* 7 and 465; here King Pasenadi's request for a wife from the Sakyan clan was only reluctantly fulfilled by providing him with Vāsabhakkhattiyā, the daughter of a slave girl Nagāmuṇḍā (note the totem-like name, 'bald serpent' or 'serpent of the Muṇḍa clan'). When Pasenadi found out, he deprived his new wife and their son Viḍūḍabha of their status, but restored it when the Buddha intervened. When Viḍūḍabha inherited the throne after Pasenadi's death, he avenged the insult by massacring the Sakyans including women and children.³³ The survivors fled to the mountains where they built a city (Moriyanagara) from which the Moriya (Maurya) dynasty is alleged to have originated.

SOCIAL CLASS

Social class is another example of the difference between the indigenous peoples and the incoming Aryans. The Buddha did not subscribe to the validity of

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30. *Ujūṃ jānapado rājā himavantassa passato// dhanaviriyena sampanno kosalesu nicketino//Ādicca nāma gottena, Sākiyā nāma jātiyā, //tamhā kulā pabbajito 'mhi rāja //na kāme abhipatthayaṃ. Sn 422 & 423. Translated by Norman 2006, 49. There is a parallel version of these *gāthās* in the *Mahāvastu* 2,199¹⁴⁻¹⁵ which makes the vassalship more explicit, using the causative verb *nivāsito*: 'My native country, O King, endowed with wealth and energy on the flanks of the Himalayas, has been caused to dwell (*nivāsito*) among the Kośalas'. *nijajanapado rāja himavantasya pārśvataḥ dhanaviryena sampanno kośalesu nivāsito*.*
31. *Paramatthajotikā* II (*Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā* = Pj II) 3854-8: *Kosalesu nicketino ti bhaṇanto navakarājābhāvaṃ paṭikkhipati, navakarājā hi nicketi ti na vuccati, yassa pana ādikālato pabhuti anvayavasena so eva janapado nivāso, so nicketi ti vuccati, tathārūpo ca rājā Suddhodano, yaṃ sandhāyāha: Kosalesu nicketino*.
32. D III 8325-27: *Sakyā kho pana Vāseṭṭha, rañño Pasenadi-Kosalassa anuyuttā bhavanti*. Walshe 1995, 409. Commenting on this passage also, see Caillat 1974, 48, footnote 43: 'From "vassal" *stricto sensu* to "dependant", with various scornful implications, the transition is easy. That this status was sometimes resented seems to result from Sn 422 (Pj); also DPPN II 971-972'. The latter reference is to the entry on the Sākiyā clan.
33. See E. B. Cowell 1895, vol. 1, 27-29 and vol. 4, 91-98. The story is also told in Law 1943, 251-252 and Malalasekera DPPN: s.v. Sākiyā, available on line at http://www.palikanon.com/english/pali_names/dic_idx.html Accessed, August 2013.

the Aryan fourfold social class system (*brāhmaṇa-khattiya-vessa-sudda*) for it was not part of his ethnic heritage. The non-Aryan, indigenous clans were segregated by being assigned to *sudda* (slave, servant) status, while some, who cooperated with the Aryans, were sometimes made *khattiyas* (Fick 1920, 12–13; Dutt 1960, 52; Pande, 1974, 262–63; Deshpande 1979, 297; Thapar 2002, 148). In the laws of Manu for example, (10.44; perhaps second century BCE or later), a list of tribes is given who, since they neglected the Vedic rites and failed to consult Brahmans, have sunk from their original *khattiya* status to the rank of *suddas*: the Puṇḍrakas (var: Puṇḍraka), the Cauḍras (var: Coḍa), the Draviḍas, the Kāmbojas, the Yavanas, the Śakas, the Pāradas, the Pahlavas, the Cīnas, the Kirātas, the Daradas and the Khaśas. We have run across the Puṇḍrakas (read Puṇḍras; see above footnote 10) before and the Draviḍas (= Damiḷas or Dravidians, page 1 above). The Śakas are either the Buddha's Sakya tribe or the much later Scythian Greeks who also went by that name. The others are geographically marginal groups, including the Cīnas (Chinese), Pahlvavas (Persians) and the Yavanas (Greeks).³⁴ All are non-IA speaking groups. According to the *Sundarikabhāradvāja Sutta*, when asked of his *jacca* (birth) by the eponymous brahman, the Buddha denied belonging to any social class, presumably since he was a *samaṇa*: 'I am certainly not a brahman, nor a prince, nor a vessa nor am I anyone [else]. Knowing [and renouncing] the clan of the common people, I wander in the world, possessing nothing, [being a] thinker'.³⁵ Elsewhere, when he did use the categories of social class, he always inverted the first two terms, placing the *khattiyas*, his (assigned) class, first: 'There are, Vāseṭṭha, these four social classes: the *Khattiyas*, the *Brahmans*, the *merchants* and the *artisans*'.³⁶ In the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*, the Buddha explicitly asserts that the *khattiyas* are superior to the brahmans: 'Even if a *Khattiya* has suffered extreme humiliation, he is superior and the *Brahmans* inferior'.³⁷

Yet the Buddha never calls himself a *khattiya*. Three *suttas* mention the Buddha as being from a high family (*uccākulā*) and from the *khattiya* social class,³⁸ and in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*, a relatively late canonical work on the Buddhas of long past ages and eons (Pande 1974, 94), the Buddha says that three of the previous Buddhas were 'born of *khattiya* race, and arose in a *khattiya* family'.³⁹ In the *Dhammacetiya Sutta*, King Pasenadi of Kosala says 'the Blessed One is a noble (*khat-*

34. The Kirātas live in the mountainous regions of Nepal per Choudhury 1977, 100; the Daradas live in the mountainous region of Kashmir (ibid, 52); the Khaśas live in the mountains of Nepal and Kashmir (ibid, 99) and the Coḍas are from the Coromandel coast of south-east India.

35. 'Na brāhmaṇo no 'mhi na rāḷaputto, // Na vessāyano uda koci no 'mhi, // gottam pariññāya puthujjanānam // akiñcano manta carāmi loke. Sn 455. Trans. by Norman 2006, 54.

36. Trans. by Walshe 1995, 408. D III 826–7 from the *Aggañña Sutta*: *cattāro 'me Vāseṭṭha vaṇṇā, khattiyā brāhmaṇā vessa suddā*. In the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*, even *Ambaṭṭha*, the antagonistic brahman, repeats this statement with the *khattiyas* first (D I 9129–30). Other examples can be found in the *Kaṇṇakathala Sutta*, M II 1285–6.

37. Walshe 1995, 118. D I 993–5 from the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*: *yadā pi khattiyo parama-nihinataṃ patto hoti tadā pi khattiyā va seṭṭhā hinā brāhmaṇā*.

38. The *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta* D I 11531–32: *samaṇo khalu bho gotamo uccā kulā pabbajito asambhinnakhattiya-kulā*, 'He is a wanderer of high birth, of a pure *Khattiya* family' — translated by Walshe 1995, 127 — which is repeated in the *Kūṭadanta Sutta* (D I 1339–10), and in the *Canki Sutta* (M II 1679–10).

39. *khattiyo jātiyā ahoṣi, khattiya-kule udapādi*. (D II 1114). The other three were born of a brahman family.

tiya) and I am a noble; the Blessed One is a Kosalan and I am a Kosalan; the Blessed One is eighty years old and I am eighty years old'.⁴⁰ In the MPP, a similar statement is made by King Ajātasattu, the Licchavis, the Bulayas, the Koliyas and the Mallas, as justification for their entitlement to part of the funeral remains.⁴¹ Significantly, of all the other extant alternate witnesses to this relic tradition — available in Sanskritized Prakrit, Tibetan, and three Chinese versions — the Buddha's *khattiya* ancestry is preserved in only one Chinese edition, lending serious doubt to the Pāli version's authenticity or credibility (Waldschmidt 1944–48, 315); calling the Buddha a *khattiya* looks like another brahmanization of his life by his disciples. The Sanskrit *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* and Tibetan recensions simply say 'for a long time the Blessed one has been dear to us and pleasant to his helpers'.⁴² It is significant that the Buddha never calls himself a *khattiya*; the *suttas* simply do not provide us good evidence for the Buddha's social status or ancestry (Walters 1999, 275).

While he acknowledged a conventional distinction among the social classes, when it came to liberation, he believed in the equality of all social classes in terms of spiritual potential. In the *Kaṇṇakatthala Sutta* he declares to King Pasenadi of Kosala: 'When spiritual fire is kindled by energy, lit by striving, there is, I say, no difference, that is, between the deliverance of one and the deliverance of the others'.⁴³ In the *Madhura Sutta* the monk and former brahman Mahākaccāna tells King Avantiputta of Madhurā that the ability to command others depends on wealth, not on birth, and that people must be judged by their behaviour, not their birth. All social classes are equal; that the brahmins are the highest class is 'just a saying in the world'.⁴⁴ In the *Assalāyana Sutta* (M II 147), the Buddha shows a young, eponymous brahman student that on the basis of a variety of genealogical, purificatory and soteriological criteria, the brahmins' claim to superiority is misplaced.

The four class system was also, in some circles, a fact of life, but not one to which the Buddha gave any support. The true brahman is not so by birth, but by virtue of the purity of his/her actions.⁴⁵ The Buddha did acknowledge the

40. Nāṇamoli & Bodhi 1995, 733. M II 12416–18: *Bhagavā pi khattiyo, aham pi khattiyo, Bhagavā pi Kosalako, aham pi Kosalako, Bhagavā pi āsitiko, aham pi āsitiko.*

41. *Bhagavā pi khattiyo aham pi khattiyo* D II 16427–28. The Sakyas say 'The Lord was the chief of our clan...' (p. 1656: *Bhagavā amhākāṃ nāti-seṭṭho*) and the brahman of Veṭṭhadīpa said 'The Lord was a *khattiya*, I am a brahman' (p. 16524: *Bhagavā tu khattiyo, aham asmi brāhmaṇo*).

42. Waldschmidt 1950–1951, Teil 3, p. 432, §50.4: *dīrgharātraṃ sa bhagavān asmākaṃ priyaś cābhūn manāpaś ca.*

43. Nāṇamoli & Bodhi 1995, 738. M II 1309–10: *evam eva kho mahārāja, yan taṃ tejaṃ viriyā nimmathitaṃ, padhānā 'bhiniḥbattaṃ. nāhaṃ tattha kiñci nānākaṛaṇaṃ vadāmi, yadidaṃ vimuttiyā vimuttin ti.*

44. Nāṇamoli & Bodhi 698. M II 8410: *ghoṣo yeva kho eso, mahārāja, lokasmim*

45. The redefinition of brahmanical terms is a cardinal feature of the Buddha's teachings, starting with the word 'brahman' itself. There are numerous references to the 'true brahman' in the Pāli writings. One of the earliest is probably the *Brāhmaṇadhammika Sutta* ('Good conduct of a brahman') in the Sn which starts with: *Isayo pabbakā āsuṃ saññatattā tapassino, pañca kāmaguṇe hitvā attadattham acārisuṃ.* (Sn v. 284). 'The seers of old had fully restrained selves, [and] were austere. Having abandoned the five strands of sensual pleasures, they practised their own welfare' (Norman 2006, 34). Another ancient *sutta* on this subject is the *Vāseṭṭha Sutta*, also from the Sn (verses 594–656). See also the *Brāhmaṇvagga* of the *Dhammapada* (Dhp v. 393), one of the most ancient Buddhist writings which states: *na jaṭāhi na gottena // na jaccā hoti brāhmaṇo, // yamhi saccaṃ ca dhammo ca // so sucī so va brāhmaṇo.* 'Not by matted locks, not

practical differentiation between high and low strata in society.⁴⁶ The *khattiya*, *brāhmaṇa* and *gahapati kulas* (family, line, descent) were considered *uccākula* (high status) whereas other *kulas* were considered *nīcakula* (lower), usually on the basis of the type of work they did: in the *Bālappaṇḍita Sutta*, the Buddha talks about fools being reborn into a low family — a ‘family of outcasts or hunters or bamboo-workers or cartwrights or scavengers’.⁴⁷ The *caṇḍāla-kula* was considered the lowest of the social classes, defined by the Aryans as someone born from a *sudda* father and *brāhmaṇa* mother. Yet, while the Buddha acknowledged the existence of these classes as a social reality, he did not preclude their membership in the Buddhist *Saṅgha*.

The Brahmanical establishment had always looked down upon the *gahapati* (householder) of *vessa* or *sudda* status, who was engaged in trade or manufacturing, privileging the brahmanical and *khattiya* classes as socially higher and more important. A completely different attitude is taken by the Buddha: for him *gahapatis* do not represent a group whose status is based on birth; they were the households of any social class who commanded respect based on wealth, whether gained by trade, manufacturing or farming (Kosambi 1965, 101; Chakravarti 1987, 178). It is not surprising therefore that the *gahapatis* are major supporters of Buddhism, as their social role is acknowledged and encouraged by the Buddha. Two of the most famous *gahapati* supporters of the *Saṅgha* were Anāthapiṇḍika, a financier of the city of Sāvatti and Ambapālī, a courtesan of Vesālī. In the *Sigālaka Sutta*, the Buddha instructs Sigālaka, a householder’s son, in the ‘discipline of the Noble One’ (*ariyassa vinaye*), reinterpreting Brahmanic ritual, and giving the young man some practical advice for happy living. In a *gāthā*, he advises Sigālaka on his financial affairs, telling him to gather wealth like a bee gathers honey in order to devote it to people’s good: ‘He should apportion his wealth in four parts — this guarantees friendships. He should enjoy one part, two parts he should invest, and the fourth part he should save for misfortunes’.⁴⁸ This apportionment of wealth is similar to the story of the farmer in *Jātaka* 56 (*Kaṇcanakkhandha Jātaka*) who finds a gold bar and cuts it up into quarters: ‘One portion will be for maintenance of the house, one portion having buried, I will keep, with one portion I will engage in business and with one portion there will be good works and charity’.⁴⁹ While the adherents of Brahmanism always associ-

by clan, not by birth, does one become a brahman. In whom is truth and righteousness, he is pure and he is a brahman’. Translated by K. R. Norman 2004, 57. The *Kūṭadanta Sutta* (D I 144–148) redefines sacrifice in terms of donations to renunciants of the Buddhist community and subscribing to the precepts. Throughout the Buddhist teachings the term *ārya* (P *ariya*, ‘noble’) used to designate the IA speaking *vaidika* immigrants is redefined in terms of the Noble Path (*ariyamagga*) and the kinds of ‘noble’ persons that it leads to: stream-enterers, once-returners, non-returners and *Arahats*.

46. Chakravarti, *Social Dimensions* 1987, 100f.

47. M III 16927–28: *yāni tāni nīcakulāni- caṇḍālakulaṃ vā nesādakulaṃ vā veṇakulaṃ vā rathakārakulaṃ vā pukkusakulaṃ...* This phrase is found in numerous places of the Pāli writings as in A I 10722–24, A II 8515–17.

48. D III 18817–22: *catudhā vibhaje bhoge, sa ve mittāni ganthati. // ekena bhoge bhuñjeyya, dvīhi kamamāṃ payojaye, // catutthaṃ ca nidhāpeyya, āpadāsu bhavissatī ti.* The word I have translated as ‘invest’ is *payojaye* from *payuñjati* which means ‘to harness, yoke, employ, apply’ (PED, available on-line at <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/pali/>).

49. Jā I 27724–26: *ettakaṃ kucchibharāṇāya bhavissati, ettakaṃ nidahitvā ṭhapessāmi, ettakena kam-*

ated the making of money with a lower social class occupation, this view was not shared by the Buddha. As is well known, the *Saṅgha* depended upon the merchant class for financial support and it was through travelling merchants that the message of Buddhism was first disseminated abroad.

Establishing the Buddha's social space and time is critical to understanding his appeal. He was, in effect, at the 'middle way' or juncture between two cultures, the colonizing Aryan *vaidikas* (Vedists) and the colonized indigenous peoples. Significant ethnic and linguistic mixing had already taken place and various attempts had been made to incorporate the local clans into the brahmanical culture, both on the part of the Aryans themselves and by the Buddha's brahman adherents. However, those processes were still incomplete and unfolding, and, as the various incidents above show, significant antipathy between the two cultures continues to be expressed socially, culturally and religiously. Rejecting the social class structure and Vedic sacrifice, the Buddha was clearly sympathetic to the indigenous clans and many of his original converts were from these same groups.

MAHĀPURISA

The earliest account we have of the Buddha's birth is contained in the *Sutta-nipāta*, a very early work often portraying the Buddha as a peripatetic monk before the founding of an organized *Saṅgha* and before the Buddhist philosophy of the *Nikāyas* (collections) had congealed in a set form. Two of its *vaggas* (sections) are so old that their commentary (the *Niddesa*, 'explanation') is part of the canon (Norman 1983, 63). The *Nālaka Sutta* of the Sn describes the Buddha's birth and parts of it have also been preserved in the *Mahāvastu*, a Sanskritized Prakrit work of the Lokottaravādin school (a subdivision of the Mahāsāṃghikas), suggesting that both works drew on a common tradition that pre-dated the Mahāsāṃghika-Sthavira split after the second Council, held one hundred years after the Buddha's death. The *Nālaka Sutta* is in two parts (which are separated in the *Mahāvastu*): the prophecy of Asita ('dark-coloured') the seer, concerning the Buddha's future, and the Buddha's teaching to Asita's nephew Nālaka about the nature of sagehood. In the *Nālaka Sutta*, Asita is called a seer, *isi*, a holy man. While not stated in the *sutta*, he is described by the commentator as a *purohita* (court priest) of Suddhodana's father Sihahanu, and became Suddhodana's *purohita* upon his coronation.⁵⁰ Asita is described as one who 'had completely mastered marks and [vedic] mantras' (Norman 2006, 86, translating *lakkhaṇa-manta-pāragū*, lit: 'gone beyond the marks and the mantras'; Nāṇamoli 1992, 7 translates 'adept in construing marks and signs') which the commentator equates with the marks of a great man, although it is not stated in the poem;⁵¹ Asita prophecies that the baby will become a Buddha, but there is no mention of *Mahāpurisa*. Also known as Kaṇhasiri ('black splendour') and Kaṇhadevala ('black devil worshipper'), Asita (or his eponymous

mante saṃyojessāmi, ettakaṃ dānāpituṇṇakiriyāya bhavissatīti.

50. Pj II, 48330: *abhisittakāle purohitoyeva ahoṣi.*

51. Pj II 4888-12: *anuttar'āyan ti anuttaro ayaṃ, so kira attano abhimukhāgatesu Mahāsattassa pādātalesu cakkāni disvā tadanusāreṇa sesalakkhaṇāni jigimsanto sabbalakkhaṇasampattiṃ disvā 'addhā ayaṃ buddho bhavissatī' ti ṇatvā evaṃ āha. 'anuttar'āyan means he is unsurpassed. Having seen the wheels on the soles of the Great Being's feet when they were turned towards him, and then wanting to see the remaining marks, he saw that he had attained all the marks, and knowing that "For sure he will be a Buddha," he spoke thus'.*

ancestor) was apparently the son of Disā, one of King Okkāka's slave girls; he was born black, spoke at birth and people called him a *pisāca* ('demon'), a group associated with the *yakkhas*, indigenous nature deities (see discussion on *yakkhas* below).⁵² Recall that Okkāka was the legendary progenitor of the Sakyas, and bears a name of Munda ancestry (page 148 above). Asita is evidently also an autochthon. The *Nālaka Sutta* is the beginning of the equation of the Buddha with the *Mahāpurisa* (P, Skt. *Mahāpuruṣa*) or Great Man, at least by the commentator, for Asita does not announce him as such, and, judging from his genealogy, he may well have been originally simply an indigenous Sakya seer who in later tradition (reflected in Buddhaghosa's *purohita* designation) is historicized into a brahman. In the much later *Mahāvastu* he indeed becomes a brahman youth and master of the Vedas, *mantras* and *sāstras* (treatises) and the thirty-two marks of the Great Man are fully described (Jones 1952, vol. 2, 26–40). The Pāli *Nālaka Sutta* story deviates significantly from the later 'standard' Pāli version, whereby a brahman, '... master of the Three Vedas with their vocabularies, liturgy, phonology, and etymology, and the histories as a fifth; skilled in philology and grammar, fully versed in natural philosophy and in the marks of a Great Man',⁵³ visits the Buddha or, as in this referenced case, sends his student Uttara to find out if the Buddha possesses the thirty-two marks. Brahmāyu tells Uttara, 'the thirty-two marks of a Great Man have been handed down in our hymns, and the Great Man who is endowed with them has only two possible destinies, no other. If he lives the home life, he becomes a Wheel-turning Monarch ... but if he goes forth from the home life into homelessness, he becomes an Accomplished One [*Arahat*], A fully Enlightened One, who draws aside the veil in the world' (Nānamoli and Bodhi, 1995, 744).⁵⁴ But the source of the *Mahāpurisa* legend is a great puzzle; is it simply another example of historicizing the Buddha as a brahmanical hero, or is it a remnant of an old, indigenous tradition? Its source in the Vedic tradition cannot be located. Radich (2007, 290, 295–331) argues that,

There is little evidence to suggest that the doctrine of the *mahāpuruṣa* is taken from anything external or prior to Buddhism itself, except for the frequent assertion in the canon that this idea is a piece of Brahmanical learning; it is thus best for us, for the purposes of intellectual history, to treat the doctrine as a domestic Buddhist innovation elaborated very nearly from whole cloth.

52. See Sn verse 689-a (Kaṇhasiri), Pj II 4873 (Kaṇhadevala). *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names* (DPPN) s.v. Kanha. The story of his birth is told in the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*, D I 932–16. The *yakkhas* and the *pisāca* are both *amanussas* according to the commentary, Sv III 88638: *Amanussānaṃ ti yakkha-pisāc' ādīnaṃ*. The word *amanussa* is 'a being which is not human, a fairy demon, ghost, god, spirit, *yakkha*' (PED). Both *pisāca* and *yakkha* may well be words of non-IA genealogy. See discussion in EWA, vol. 2, 135, 391.

53. Nānamoli and Bodhi, 1995, 743, *Brahmāyu Sutta*. This standard description of the learned brahman is repeated in over thirty different locations in the Pāli canon. M II 13314–17: *tiṃmaṃ vedānaṃ pāragū sanighaṇḍukeṭubhānaṃ sakkharappabhedānaṃ itihāsapañcamānaṃ padako veyyākaraṇo lokāyatamahāpurisalakkhaṇesu anavayo*.

54. M II 13415–28: *āgatāni kho, tāta Uttara, amhākaṃ mantesu dvattiṃsa mahāpurisalakkhaṇāni, yehi samannāgatassa mahāpurisassa dve va gatiyo bhavanti anaññā. — sace agāraṃ ajjhāvasati, rājā hoti cakkavattī dhammiko dhammarājā ... sace kho pana agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajati, arahamaṃ hoti sammāsambuddho loka vivatṭacchado*.

Powers (2009, 16–19) is more cautious in his conclusions, and while he cannot find Vedic antecedents for the *mahāpuruṣa* notion, he stops short of concluding it a Buddhist invention, pointing out the possibility of an oral tradition that was never written down (page 255, footnote 79). Indeed, it seems hard to imagine, given the number of times the legend is told in the canon, that there is not some antecedent for it (in the Vedic writings or elsewhere), or that such a detailed and complex legend could be manufactured by the Buddha's disciples with no objections from the brahmanical community as to its attribution. Zimmer (1953, 129) claims that the *Mahāpuruṣa cakravartin* ('wheel-turner') 'goes back not only to the earliest Vedic, but also to the pre-Vedic, pre-Āryan traditions of India', but he gives no references for the statement. Rahula (1978, 174) also suggests that the myth was very ancient, while not fully developed until Buddhist times. In his monumental *History of Dharmaśāstra* (1941–75, vol. 3, 63–67), Kane states that 'the idea of a suzerainty extending over many kingdoms was known in the times of the Ṛgveda' (65); he attributes one of the earliest references to the world-ruler to the *Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa*, but the section he quotes mentions neither *mahāpuruṣa* nor *cakravartin*; there is another reference in this same work, which mentions *mahāpuruṣa*, but it appears to be only one of several personifying epithets of the *soma* ritual, not used in the technical sense of 'world-ruler' or 'world-renunciant'.⁵⁵ All the other references he provides are post-Buddha. Tan (2007, 152–153) suggests that the thirty-two marks may have had a Babylonian origin in the figure of the bull man Enkidu from the Gilgamesh Epic; but this is 'purely conjectural'. Buddhaghosa also seems puzzled by its origin. Commenting on the word *mantesu* (lit., 'in the mantras') he says:

Here, '*mantesu*' means in the Vedas. Previously when it was said that 'A Tathāgata will arise', the gods of the pure abodes placed the marks in the Vedas, and thinking 'These are the mystic verses of a Buddha', they caused the Vedas to be recited through a brahman, thinking 'In accordance with this [Vedic recitation], influential beings will recognize the Tathāgata'. Thus in the past the marks of a great man appeared in the Vedas. With the complete extinction [death] of the Buddha the marks gradually disappear, therefore they are not there now'.⁵⁶

This appears to be saying that the oral tradition of the marks was lost when the Buddha's *parinibbāna* (final extinction) took place, which of course was before the Vedas were written down. Buddhaghosa gives no reason why this should be the case, while the implication is that now the knowledge of the marks is no longer needed as there is no new Buddha arising to be recognized.

55. *Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa* 3.5.2: *Yamevaṃ kāmayetaikarājāḥ syānnāśya cakram pratihanyetetyekavṛṣeṇābhiṣīcet*. 'The priest should perform the coronation with the *Ekavṛṣa Sāman* for that king whom he desires to be the sole ruler and whose circle of territory (he does not desire) to be overwhelmed (by an enemy)' (translated by Kane). The commentary glosses *cakram* with *maṇḍalaṃ* ('circle of a king's neighbours') (Sharma 1964, 183–84). Also 1.2.7: *namaḥ puruṣāya supuruṣāya mahāpuruṣāya madhyamapuruṣāyottamapuruṣāya brahmacāriṇe namo-namaḥ*. 'Homage to the man, to the excellent man, to the great man, to the middlemost man, to the ultimate man, homage to he who practices *Brahmacarya*' (Sharma 1964, 23).

56. *Papañcasūdanī* (Ps) III 36411–17: *Tattha mantesu ti vedesu. Tathāgato kira uppajissatī ti paṭigacc' eva Suddhāvāsā devā vedesu lakkaṇāni pakkhipitvā Buddhamantā nāma ete ti brāhmaṇavesena vede vācenti. Tad anusārena mahesakkhā sattā Tathāgataṃ jānissanti ti. Tena pubbe vedesu mahāpurisalakkhaṇāni āgacchanti. Parinibbutte pana Tathāgate anukkamena antaradhāyanti. Tena etarahi n' atthi.*

It seems impossible to rationalize that the Great Man concept was first invented by the Buddha's followers, as most ancient civilizations seem to have something akin to a world-conqueror/world-saviour type motif. The Buddhists may have worked out some of the details — the paralleling of a wheel-turning universal emperor with a Buddha, for example — but Zimmer's suggestion that the overarching concept of the Great Man is pre-Vedic and pre-Aryan is the most cogent. In addition to Babylon's Gilgamesh one thinks of the Judaeo-Christian Moses and Messiah figure, Heracles, Prometheus and Perseus from Greek mythology, Horus, the Egyptian saviour figure and Mithra from Iran. While we know very little of the cultural heroes in ancient Dravidian and Munda mythology, they too apparently had their Great Man legends. Certainly by the time of the South Indian *Cilappatikāram* epic (fifth century CE), the Chera king Ceṅkuṭṭuvan defeats the Arya kings and aspires to be a universal emperor, the provenance of which concept may well be from the north (Parthasarathy 1993, 343). However in the earlier *Puranānūru* anthology (first to third century CE), there are numerous references to an all-conquering king who rules in wisdom, kindness and compassion (Hart 1979, 140–144), and, judging from the literary style, they do not seem to be borrowed from the Sanskritic north, but represent a separate, indigenous tradition (Hart 1975, 277).⁵⁷ An indigenous origin for the thirty-two *lakṣaṇas* also may explain some of the features which have previously not been understood. The Buddha's curly black hair for example, represented in sculpture and literature (feature #14 in the *Lakkhaṇa Sutta*, but for body-hair, and feature #31 in the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* version; Levman 2005, 46), has led some nineteenth century scholars to opine that the Buddha may have had an African origin (Burnouf 1852, 560–563); however the colour and hair style of some ethnic Munda speakers has a very similar look to this day. An indigenous origin may also account for other problematic marks, whose origin is so far unexplained, like the Buddha's reticulated (webbed) fingers (feature #6 in the *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* and feature #4 in the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*), or the protuberance (*uṣṇiṣa*, P *uṇhisa*; feature #32 in the *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* and feature #26 in the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* version) on the top of his head.

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

Non-Aryan customs are most apparent in the marriage customs of the Sakyas and related eastern ethnic groups. The Sakyan princes who marry their own sisters is a distinctly non-Aryan custom, as incest is strictly forbidden in the Vedic *śāstras*. In a Sakya origin legend reminiscent of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, their ancestral King Okkāka accedes to a request from one of his queens wishing to transfer the kingdom to her son, and banishes his elder half-brothers from the kingdom. They make their home on the flanks of the Himalayas in a teak grove (*mahā-sāka-saṅḍo*) and cohabit with their sisters to keep the stock pure. When the king hears about it he exclaims, 'They are indeed Sakyas, these princes, they are the best of Sakyas'.⁵⁸ The commentator glosses *sakyā* with *samatthā* ('strong') and *paṭibalā* ('competent')

57. The word in Tamil for 'great man' is *vēl*; thanks to Dr. Maithili Thayanithy for references to the Great Man concept in Tamil literature.

58. D I 931-2: *Sakyā vata bho kumārā, parama-sakyā vata bho kumārā ti*. In a Munda creation myth, a stork lays two eggs which brings forth a boy and a girl, who marry each other and procreate (Van Exem 1982, 30–2). In another Munda myth, all humans on the earth die except for a brother and sister who re-populate the earth (41).

taking it from the root *śak*, meaning ‘to be strong or powerful, able competent;’⁵⁹ there is also a pun on the word *sāka*, ‘teak’, referring to the grove in which they lived and the word *śaka* (with short *-a-*), meaning ‘dung’, one of the *pañcagavya*, or five products of the cow. Both the Sakyans and the Koliyans trace their origin from King Okkāka, and there was frequent intermarriage between the two clans. The Buddha and his father both marry wives of the prohibited degree within the same *gotra* (Thomas, 1927, 23; DPPN, sv. *Sakiyā*).⁶⁰ These so-called ‘incest marriages’ (by IA and Semitic standards) are a sure sign of a matrilinear culture where endogamy, even between parents and children and siblings was common.⁶¹

TREE AND SERPENT WORSHIP

One cultural practice which is not Vedic, but stems from the indigenous peoples is tree, sacred grove and serpent worship (Rhys Davids 1902, 45; Kosambi 1965, 20; Thapar 1966, 67; Régnier 1998, 52–54; Thapar 2002, 148). The Buddha himself was sculptured as a *bodhi* (enlightenment) tree (or the seat under it) in the earliest art we possess at Bhārhut (second century BCE) and Sāñcī (first century BCE), long before he was represented in human form (Tanaka 1997, 4). At Sāñcī he is represented by a Sacred Fig tree (*Ficus Religiosa*), the enlightenment tree of Sakyamuni, while at Bharhūt both the Sacred Fig and the other enlightenment trees of six of his seven immediate predecessors (including the Sāl tree under which Viśvabhū attained enlightenment) are represented (Fergusson 1868, 115–20; Régnier 1998, 54). The Sāl tree was the sacred totem of the Sakya tribe; here both his birth and *parinibbāna* take place close to one. The Buddha is said to have been born in the

59. Sv I 26225–27 *Sakyā vata bho ti raṭṭhamhā pabbājītā araññe vasantā pi jāti-sambhedam akatvā kulavāsaṃ anurakkhituṃ sakyā, samattha paṭibalā ti attho.* ‘sakyā vata bho (‘they are real Sakyas’) means that though they left the kingdom and lived in the forest they didn’t contaminate their stock, they were able to protect their lineage, that is the meaning’.

60. Michael Witzel (email communication), believes that the practice of incest marriage is an Iranian (Zoroastrian) custom and that the Buddhist Sakya clan ‘cannot be separated from the designation of the northern Iranian Śaka that entered India only after c. 140 BCE, via Sistan (*Saka-stāna*) in southern Afghanistan’. He is referring to what are commonly known as the Indo-Scythians who apparently enter India several centuries after the Buddha. In Witzel 1997, 312–313, he suggests that the Sakyas may be a non-orthoprax Indo-Aryan tribe from northern Iran who ‘then constitute an earlier, apparently the first wave of the later Śaka invasions from Central Asia’. The origin of the Sakyas is however, ‘not as clear’ as that of the Malla and Vṛjji who he feels are Indo-Aryan in origin, but also not orthoprax (312), representing, along with the Sakyas, a ‘last wave of immigration which overran northern India in Vedic time’ (1989, §10.3, page 237). The evidence for this final wave is however, very slim and there is no evidence for it in the Vedic texts; for their western origin, Witzel relies on a reference in Pāṇini (4.2.131, *madravjyoh*) to the Vṛjjis in dual relation with the Madras who are from the northwest, and to the Mallas in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (§198) as arising from the dust of Rajasthan. Neither the Sakyas nor any of the other eastern tribes are mentioned, and of course there is no proof that any of these are Indo-Aryan groups. I view the Sakyas and the later Śakas as two separate groups, the former being aboriginal.

61. Schayer (1934, 58). Schayer sees the *gandhabba*, the between-lives state of a being which is involved in child conception (M I 2661f), and which in Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa* is overpowered with love for its mother (if male) and hatred for its father, as part of this non-Aryan incest tradition (Poussin 1926, vol 2, 50). The word *gandhabba* (Skt *gandharva*) is apparently of non-Aryan origin (See references in KEWA, vol 1, 321). See also Horsch 1968, 118 who cites certain matriarchal traits in Hinduism (e.g. polyandry) as derived from the indigenous culture.

village of Lumbinī,⁶² also known as Rummindei, a Sāl grove which later texts see as having been sacred to the mother goddess and a meaning of ‘a forest of flowery trees’.⁶³ And it is also in a grove of Sāl trees where the Buddha takes leave of this world, the trees bursting forth into an ‘abundance of untimely blossoms, which fell upon the Tathāgata’s body, sprinkling it and covering it in homage’.⁶⁴ When the Buddha is cremated, water bursts forth from the sky and a nearby Sāl tree to extinguish the pyre.⁶⁵ The very name of the Sakya clan which, in some etymologies is believed to derive from the *sāka* (that is, teak) grove where the first Sakyans — sons of King Okkāka — cohabited with their sisters (see above page 165), probably refers to the Sāl tree, as the teak (< Skt. *śāka*) is not indigenous to the sub-Himalayan forests (Thomas 1923, 7, fn 2).

Tree veneration is important to the religion of Buddhism to this day; in Bodhi Gayā the *bodhi* tree is still worshipped and the story of Aśoka’s sending a branch of this tree to Sri Lanka in the third century BCE shows that this has been the case for millenia.⁶⁶ Similarities with the present day Munda-speaking ethnic groups in Chotanagpur, who are nature worshippers and have a religion centered around the *sama* or sacred grove are striking (Van Exem 1982, 118; Singh, 1994, 846; Carrin-Bouez 1986, 94). The Sāl tree is symbolic of the Munda tribes to this day and the flowering of the Sāl tree in the early spring marks the beginning of the New Year and the Flower Feast festival (Van Exem 1982, 150–157). The Santals, a Munda tribe, worship the Sāl tree and gather under it to make communal decisions (Patnaik, 2002, 40, 47). The mythology of sacred trees is also an important theme in the five hundred plus *Jātaka* tales of the Buddha’s former lives, where he is a tree sprite (*rucādevatā*) in forty-three of them; so while a certain amount of brahmanizing is apparent in the *Nidānakathā* (the introduction to the *Jātaka* tales, which presents the Buddha’s early history in a brahmanical context; see page 153 above), the *Jātaka* stories themselves seem to preserve some very old material.⁶⁷ In the *Kusanāli Jātaka* (121) for example, the *bodhisatta* (Buddha in a former life, reborn here as a *kusanālidevatā*, a lowly grass-sprite) saved the life of a great wishing tree (*maṅgala-rukko*), illustrating the principle that ‘A friend,

62. The Buddha’s birth is recorded in the *Nālaka Sutta* of the *Sutta-nipāta* (Sn 82), verse 683. He was born ‘in the village of the Sakyans in the Lumbinī country’ (*Sakyānaṃ game janapade Lumbineyye*), Norman, 2006, 85).

63. Charpentier 1914, 18 and Kosambi 1965, 109. See *Lalitavistara Sūtra*. Māyā, the Buddha’s mother, enters the Lumbini garden, whose Sāl trees are in bloom and gives birth while leaning on a sacred fig tree, the *plakṣa*, which is the *ficus religiosus* under which the Buddha becomes enlightened (Vaidya 1958, 61); he passes away lying on a bed between two Sāl trees (D II 137^{14f}). An English translation from the Tibetan is available in Bays 1983, vol. 1, 129.

64. *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, D II 137^{19–21}: *Tena kho pana samayena yamaka-sālā sabba-phāli-phullā honti akāla-pupphehi. Te Tathāgatassa sariraṃ okiranti ajjhokiranti abhippakiranti Tathāgatassa piṇḍāya*. Trans. by Walshe 1995, 262.

65. D II 164^{15–17}: *Daḍḍhe kho pana Bhagavato sarire antalikkhā udaka-dhārā pātu bhavitvā Bhagavato citakaṃ nibbāpesi, udaka-sālato pi abbhummamitvā Bhagavato citakaṃ nibbāpesi*. Trans. by Walshe 1995, 275, as ‘And when the Lord’s body was burnt up, a shower of water from the sky, and another which burst forth from the *sāl*-trees extinguished the funeral pyre’. The word *sāla* (P)/*śālā* (Skt) is itself probably non-IA. See KEWA, vol. 3, 328–339.

66. *Mahavaṃsa*, Chapter 18.

67. Rhys Davids 1878, ci. In only twenty-four cases is the future Buddha represented as a brahman; he is an ascetic in eighty-three cases, a king in eighty-five and an animal in eighty-eight cases.

whether, equal, lower or higher is to be cultivated indeed'.⁶⁸ Every Magadha village had its own sacred grove where the *yakkha/yakṣas* or tree spirits received offerings from young maidens seeking marriage and children (Régnier 1998, 54). One legend in the *Nidānakathā* (68–70) makes the association of the tree spirit and the Buddha explicit: Sujātā, who came from a village near Uruvelā where the Buddha attained enlightenment, had vowed to a banyan tree to make an offering if she had a first born son; when her wish was fulfilled she gave the future Buddha milk-rice, thinking that she was actually making an offering to the tree spirit himself (Rhys Davids 1878, 184–187).

Many tree spirits are also called *yakkhas* (fem. *yakkhīs*, Skt *yakṣa/yakṣī*), which is a broader term for an indigenous non-Aryan benevolent, local nature deity or *deva* conferring wealth and fertility to his/her adherents (Coomaraswamy 1971, 36; Misra 1979, 6–8). It was also a name used to designate some of the unassimilated eastern tribespeople encountered in the *suttas* (Marasinghe 2007, 772). In the *Sutta-nipāta*, the Buddha actually calls himself a *yakkha*, 'to such an extent is the purity of a *yakkha* — he deserves the sacrificial cake' (Norman 2006, 55).⁶⁹ The *yakkhas* are worshiped in both Brahmanism and Buddhism, at altars built at the foot of sacred trees and in fabricated temples. In the *Samyutta Nikāya* a whole chapter is devoted to the Buddha's discourses with *yakkhas* (S I 206–215), teaching them *Dhamma* or the *yakkhas* teaching it to others; a particularly interesting case is the *Sānu Sutta* (S I 208¹⁷–209¹⁵) where a *yakkhī*, who was the mother of a backsliding monk in a former life, takes over his body to prevent him from leaving the *Saṅgha* and instructs his current mother in the *Dhamma*. When he was staying at the *Sārandada* shrine in Vesālī, the Buddha taught the Vajjians seven principles for preventing their decline and it is at the *Cāpāla* shrine, also in Vesālī, where he renounces the life principle and announces to Māra that he will take final *nibbāna* in three months time; both of these places are *yakkha cetiyās* (sacred monuments), and on both of them a *vihāra* (monastery) is built for the Buddha.⁷⁰

68. Jā. 1, 4436–7: *mitto nāma sadiso pi adhiko pi hīno pi kattabbo va*.

69. Sn 478–e&f: *ettāvātā yakkhassa suddhi — tathāgato arahati pūṛāsaṃ* and glossed simply as *puri-sassa* ('of a man') at Pj II 411¹² and with a wider spectrum of similar meanings at Nidd I 281^{22–24} (ad Sn 875): *Yakkhassā ti sattassa narassa mānavassa posassa puggalassa jīvassa jāgussa jantussa indagussa manujassa*. 'Of a being, a man, a youth, a man, an individual, a life, someone born, a living being, sprung from Inda, a human being'. As Norman says with reference to the Buddha as *nāga* (see page 170 below), the later commentators seem to be embarrassed by the epithet.

70. Sv II 521: *Tattha Sārandade-cetiye ti evaṃ-nāmake vihāre; anuppanne kira Buddhē tattha Sārandadassa yakkhassa nivāsanaṭṭhānaṃ cetiyaṃ ahoṣi, ath' ettha Bhagavato vihāraṃ kāṛāpesuṃ*. 'Here "In the *Sārandada* shrine" means in a monastery of such a name. For before the Buddha had appeared, it was the *cetiya*, the living place of the *yakkha* *Sārandada*. They built a *vihāra* for the Bhagavan in this place'. In a *Gāndhārī* version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, the shrine is called the *Sālādhvayam* (Allon and Salomon 2000, 249–250) meaning 'pair of *Sāl* trees', which is also how it is translated by the Tibetans (*shin sa la gnyis po*), reinforcing the connection between sacred trees and sacred shrine.

Paramatthadipani (*Udāna-aṭṭhakathā*), Ud-a 322²³–323²: *Cāpālaṃ-cetiyān ti, pubbe Cāpālāssa nāma yakkhassa vasita-ṭṭhānaṃ Cāpāla-cetiyān ti paññāyittha. Tattha Bhagavato kata-vihāro pi tāya ruḷhiyā Cāpāla-cetiyān ti vuccati*. "The *Cāpāla* shrine" was formerly the dwelling place of a *yakkha* called *Cāpāla*; it is known as the "*Cāpāla* shrine". There also a *vihāra* was built for the Bhagvan which was called the "*Cāpāla* shrine", by convention'. In Sv II 554^{21–22}, *Buddhaghosa* says that the *Udena*, *Gotamaka*, *Sattambaka* and *Bahuputta* shrines in Vesālī were also former *yakkha* (whose names were eponymous) sites on which *vihāras* were built.

SERPENTS

In the third week after his enlightenment, the Buddha re-experienced the bliss of liberation under a *mucalinda* tree (*Barringtonia Acutangula*, mangrove or Indian oak tree; a non-Aryan name per KEWA, vol. 2, 649), and when a storm arose Mucalinda, the serpent king — who was evidently also the tree deity — came and protected the Buddha by wrapping his coils seven times around him and covering his upper head with his hood; there he remained for seven days, protecting him from the inclement weather. This story is told in the Theravādin *Khandaka* (at Vin I 0311–31), considered by many to be a work containing some of the earliest layers of Buddhist tradition (Waldschmidt 1944–48, 335–337; Frauwallner 1956, 153; Pande 1974, 98; disagreeing, Lamotte 1988, 178–179).⁷¹ The earliest representation we have of the *nāga* cult occurs on the southern gate at Bhārhut where the Buddha is worshipped by the *nāga* king Erapato (Vogel 1926, 39; plate 3 facing page 40). The Mucalinda incident is alluded to on the western gateway at Sāñci where the Buddha is represented by an empty platform underneath the *mucalinda* tree, and the *nāga* by a man wearing a five-part snake hood under the platform. A scene depicting the worshipping of the five-headed *nāga* is chiselled on Sāñci's eastern gateway (Fergusson 1868, 113). In the later *Mahāvastu*, the Mucalinda legend is also told, but the role of the *nāgas* is embellished: the Buddha spends the fourth week after his awakening in the abode of the *nāga* king Kāla and the fifth week in Mucalinda's abode where he is protected against unseasonable weather (Mvu III 300₁₀–301₀₇). On his way to set the wheel of *Dharma* turning at Benares, the Buddha is escorted by the Sudhāvāsa deities, the Suvarṇas, and the Nāga kings, and lodged along the way by the *yakṣas* Cunda and Kandha, and by the *nāga* kings Sudarśana and Kamaṇḍaluka, as well as an unidentified householder (Mvu III 324–328). In the Amarāvātī monastic site (second century BCE) in south-eastern (Dravidian) India, the Buddha is represented as a *nāga* on a *stūpa* (Stern and Benisti 1961, plates 8a, 15b and 40b; the *nāga* in the former plate is contemporary with some of the earlier bas-reliefs of Sāñci, p. 73).

Snake veneration was an aboriginal, not an Aryan cult — there is no trace of serpent worship in the *Vedas* and snakes do not become an important Aryan religious theme until the *Mahābhārata*, where they are usually treated as dangerous enemies (Fergusson 1868, 58; Macdonell 1897, 153);⁷² it was however, evidently part of Buddhism from the very beginning and an integral part of its founding mythology; the *nāgas* were both worshippers of the Buddha and important pro-

71. The legend may well predate the Shavira–Mahāsamghika schism, after the second Council. It is preserved in the *Khandaka* of the Pāli *Vinaya* (Vin I 2), in the *Mahāvastu* III 301, and the *Catuspariṣat Sūtra*. See Kloppenborg, 1973, 12. The *Catuspariṣat Sūtra* is a work of the Sarvāstivādins.

72. See Winternitz 1888, 262–264 who disagrees with the idea that it is not an Aryan cult. He cites the occurrence of the snake cult in the *Grhyasūtras*, the *Atharvaveda* and the white *Yajur Veda*. Judging from the various sources he cites, he seems to hold a minority position in this regard, at least at that time. Macdonell 1897, 153, says, 'It does not seem likely that the later serpent worship had any connexion with the myth of the Vṛtra serpent [a demon conquered by Indra in the RV], but its development was probably due rather to the influence of the aborigines. For on the one hand there is no trace of it in the RV., and on the other it has been found prevailing very widely among the non-Aryan Indians. The Aryans doubtless found the cult extensively diffused among the natives when they spread over India, the land of serpents'.

tective deities which were themselves venerated.⁷³ In what is perhaps one of the earliest works of the canon (the *Sutta-nipāta*), the Buddha is addressed as a *nāga* as a mark of respect;⁷⁴ however, by the time the commentary was written (fifth century CE), this snake epithet is something of an embarrassment (Norman 2006, 191–192), and attempts are made to explain away the snake connection with fake etymologies: *nāgan ti punabbhavaṃ n' eva gantāraṃ, atha vā āgun na karotī ti pi nāgo, balavā ti pi nāgo, taṃ nāgaṃ* (Pj II 208_{12–13}: 'he is called "nāga" since he does not go to a new birth [taking the *ga-* in *nāga* as derived from the MI verb *gam*, 'to go' with *na-* as the negative adverb], or he does not commit a fault [*na-* *-āgu*, 'no, fault'] and also since he is strong'. In fact, the etymology of *nāga* is not well understood and may or may not be of IA origin.⁷⁵ The meaning of the words *nāga* and *yak-kha/yakṣa* seems to have worsened over time, and in some instances they also represented harmful demons. Whether this is an example of linguistic pejoration or ambiguity with respect to a *nāga*'s moral status is unknown. Later in the *Khandaka* story, for example, where Mucilinda protects the Buddha, the Buddha subdues a savage *nāga* king who lived in the fire room of the *jaṭila* (matted hair ascetic) Kassapa (Vin I 24_{10–2538}).

Snake-worship is generally believed to be an aboriginal cult associated with a Mongolian or Tibeto-Burmese people who occupied North India before the advent of the Aryans (Minor 1981, 519). The *nāgas* (serpents or cobras) were also another pejorative name the Aryans used for the eastern tribes (along with *asuras* and *dasyus*),⁷⁶ and the cobra is to this day one of the totems of the Munda-speaking tribes of Jarkhand (Kosambi 1965, 86; Singh 1994, 850).

73. For a discussion of the *nāga* mythology as it appears in Buddhism over time see Vogel 1926, 93–165.

74. See verse 166: *Sihaṃ v' ekacaraṃ nāgaṃ...* '(having gone up to) the *nāga* [who is] like a lion, wandering alone...' Norman 2006, 20.

75. In modern Hindi the word *nāgā* has the meaning of 'naked ascetic', or 'Naga tribesman of Assam', again suggesting its long association with the indigenous peoples. The PED suggests that the word *nāga* is related to Anglo Saxon *snaca* (snake) & *snaegl* (snail) and with the secondary meaning 'elephant' may be of non-IA origin. KEWA, vol. 2, 150 says the word is 'nicht sicher erklärt', and Autran (1946, 66) suggests that the word is of non-IE origin ('Le mot, sans étymologie en indo-aryen, appartient sûrement au fond anaryen et préaryen du terroir...'). KEWA vol. 3, 1 suggests that *yakṣa* is derived from Skt root *yakṣ* ('to be quick, speed one'), but its derivation is not certain. See other suggestions in Renou 1957, vol. 3, 38 and 1960, vol. 7, 51.

76. Parpola (1988) argues, partly on linguistic grounds, that the *Dāsas*, *Dasyus* and *Paṇis* in the RV, traditionally identified as indigenous, non-Aryan, speakers, were a pre-Vedic wave of Aryans who entered India round 2000 BCE. To the archaeological evidence, which is sparse and highly conjectural, he adds a linguistic argument that the word *Śambara*, one of the enemy demon kings in the RV, may have an IA etymology. However a lot of previous research has shown that the names of the demon kings — whether *Śambara*, *Arbuda*, *Pipru*, and others — appear to be all of non-IA, perhaps of Proto-Munda origin (Witzel 1999, 54; re: *Śambar(l)a*, KEWA, vol. 3, 300; Kuiper 1948, 136; Witzel 1999, 30, 38–39; re: *Arbuda*, KEWA, vol. 1, 51; Kuiper, 1948, 146; re: *Pipr(l)u*, KEWA, vol. 2, 286). Their names being non-IA in origin, it is hard to characterize them as an IA group, unless one is going to argue that the labels have been assigned to them by their opponents, based on pejorative, indigenous terms. In any case, whether the *Dāsas* are eventually determined to be IA language speakers or not does not affect the basic argument herein, that is, the obfuscation of a non-Brahmanical, non-Vedic substrate within the Buddhist tradition.

FUNERAL CUSTOMS

Another important difference between the incoming Aryans and the eastern clans is their funeral ceremonies. One of the earliest (pre-Buddhist) references occurs in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* where the people of the east are called ‘*asuras*’ (*asurāḥ prācyāḥ*, ‘eastern demons’).⁷⁷ This group made their burial mounds in a round shape — as did the ancient Buddhists with their *caityas* or *stūpas* — while the Indo-Aryan burial places were square.⁷⁸ There are also extensive differences between the Aryan burial customs (described in the *Gr̥hyasūtras*) and that documented for the Buddha; the strange burial customs, described in the Pāli MPP, the MPS (Waldschmidt 1944–1948 and 1950–1951) and the newly discovered Gāndhārī version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (Allon and Salomon 2000), which involve wrapping the Buddha’s body in multiple layers of cloth, submerging it in an iron vat full of oil, covering it with another iron pot and then cremating it — find their origin ‘without doubt ... in the old religion of the autochthons of this region, before the coming of Brahmanism’ (Bureau 1975, 183;⁷⁹ cf. Bronkhorst 2011, 213). Some of these principal differences include wrapping the Buddha’s body in cloth five hundred times; placing the body in an oil vat of iron (as a mark of honour, not for purposes of preservation) which is covered with another iron pot; public honouring of the Buddha’s body with dance, songs and music; placement of the bones in a golden urn, their veneration and their interment in a round *stūpa* with central mast, flags, pennants and parasols, at a public, crossroads location.⁸⁰ Bureau argues that these were the rites performed for a great indigenous ruler — prior to the Aryan immigration — by the local people whose autochthonous religion had not yet been assimilated by encroaching Brahmanism:

77. Ś. Br. 13, 8.1.5. For discussion see Jha 1967, 12.

78. See Eggeling 1972, vol. 5, 423–424: ‘Four-cornered (is the sepulchral mound). Now the gods and the Asuras, both of them sprung from Prajāpati, were contending in the (four) regions (quarters). The gods drove out the Asuras, their rivals and enemies, from the regions, and, being regionless, they were overcome. Wherefore the people who are godly make their burial-places four-cornered, whilst those who are of the Asura nature, the Easterns and others, (make them) round, for they (the gods) drove them out from the regions’. For a discussion, see Bronkhorst 2011, 194–200. The contemporary Munda also build circular stone cairns to bury their dead (Roy 1970, 43–44), and in the Chokahatu (‘place of mourning’) burial ground in Jharkhand, reputed to be in constant use for over 2000 years, various kinds of megaliths are found from monumental stones, cromlechs and dolmens to circular, rectangular and irregular sepulchral slabs, sunken into the ground or raised off of the earth on short, vertical stones. Under these earthen cinerary urns are stored, containing the ashes and/or bones of the Munda dead (Dalton 1873, 112–119).

79. ‘Les différences ... doivent s’expliquer également par des croyances concernant le roi *cakravartin* dans l’Inde orientale, c’est-à-dire sans doute par des idées ayant leur origine dans la vieille religion des autochtones de cette région, antérieure à la venue du brahmanisme’.

80. Bureau 1975, 151–189. In the Brahmanical tradition the relics are considered impure and buried in a hole at the foot of a tree, in a private place away from the village (160–164, 175). The only instance of storing a body in oil was Daśaratha’s funeral in the *Rāmāyana*, where it was done for preservation purposes (156). The *śmaśāna* (‘burial-place’) for Brahmanical relics was always quadrangular (161–162). Buddhist *stūpas* were decorated so as to attract attention and reverence, while *śmaśānas* were considered impure (165–166). Bronkhorst (2011, 213–217) says that the bodies of brahmins who maintained the sacred fire (*āhitāgnis*) were also preserved in oil, a custom which they may have obtained from the funerary practices of the native peoples.

The place where the most ancient versions of our story were formed, and their canonic character imposed, according to all appearance was the middle or even the popular layers of the residents of the eastern part of the middle Ganges basin, of Magadha, of the Vṛjis and of the Mallas. One probably finds there a large proportion of autochthonous, non-Aryan inhabitants mixed (*métis*) to various degrees, born or descended from the union of the original inhabitants and the Aryan invaders who had settled in the region for the last three or four centuries. This indigenous and mixed population would surely poorly know or understand the complicated beliefs and rites of the brahmins and other ‘twice-borns’ who regarded them with suspicion and intended besides to keep them away from the advantages obtained from their religion.⁸¹

Although Bareau did not discuss the actual language of the funeral rites, many of the key, ritual words are of non-IA, autochthonous origin and bear out his hypothesis. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this point. The carded cotton (*kappāsa*) in which the Buddha’s body is wrapped is of Austric (Munda) origin, as is the oil (P. *tela*, Skt. *taila* < *tila* ‘sesamum seed’) in which the body is placed.⁸² The public honouring of the Buddha prior to cremation, with the erection of cloth awnings (*cela-vitānāni*) and circular tents (*maṇḍale-māle*) is also a native, non-IA custom, described with its own distinctive indigenous terminology.⁸³ And the supernatural offerings which rain down on the Buddha’s palanquin en route to Makuṭabandhana,⁸⁴ his cremation place — the *utpala*, *padma*, *kumuda*, *puṇḍarīka* and *mandāra*/*mandāraka* flowers (MPS §47.20, MPP D II 160³²⁻³³) and the *agaru*, *takara* and *candana* powders — plus the four trees that appear out of the water extinguishing his funeral pyre (MPS §49.25) — the *kāncana*, *kapittha*, *aśvattha* and *udumbara* trees — are virtually all native words.⁸⁵ This in itself is not surpris-

81. Bareau 1975, 181: Le milieu où se sont constituées les versions les plus anciennes de nos récits et où leur caractère canonique s’est imposé est, selon toute apparence, celui des couches moyennes, voire populaires, des habitants de la partie orientale du bassin moyen du Gange, des Magadha, des Vṛji, des Malla. On y trouvait probablement une forte proportion d’autochtones anaryes et de métis à des degrés divers, nés ou descendants d’unions entre les premiers et les envahisseurs aryens installés dans cette région depuis trois ou quatre siècles. Cette population indigène et métissée devait assurément mal connaître et mal comprendre les croyances et les rites compliqués des brahmanes et autres «deux fois nés» qui la regardaient avec mépris et entendaient du reste à tenir à l’écart des avantages procurés par leur religion.

82. KEWA, vol. 1, 174. See also Przulski 1929, 23–25 for a discussion of the etymology of Skt. *karpāsa*. For *taila*, see KEWA vol. 1, 504–505.

83. The compound *cela-vitānāni* (‘cloth awnings’ Skt. *caila-vitānaṃ*, MPS §47.19) is derived from the Malayālam (Dravidian) word *cīla* (‘cloth’) and *maṇḍale-māle* (‘a circular hall with a peaked roof, a pavilion’ PED) is also non-IA in origin: *māla* < Tamil *mādam*, ‘house, hall’ and *maṇḍala* (‘circular, round’) is probably derived from Dravidian or Munda or possible other source. ‘Nicht überzeugend erklärt’ (‘not convincingly explained’) per KEWA, vol. 2, 559. ‘Umstritten’ (‘controversial’) per EWA, vol. 2, 294. The word *maṇḍala* is derived from Tamil *muṭalai*, ‘ball, globe’ DED s.v. *muṭaṅku* per Burrows (in KEWA which the latter calls ‘zweifelhaft’, ‘doubtful’ and Turner 1962–1985, entry #9742, calls ‘attractive’) and/or from **maṇḍa*, ‘curvature, circle’ (EWA) which is also of Dravidian or Munda origin. Woolner 1926–1928, 66 makes the point that most if not all words with the retroflex *-ṇḍ-* conjunct are of indigenous origin.

84. Makuṭabandhana means ‘fastening on the diadem’ and the first word of the compound is derived from Tamil *mukūṭa* ‘peak’ or Malay *makuta*, ‘crown’. See DED and KEWA, vol. 2, 646 s.v. *mukūṭaṃ*.

85. The *utpala* is the blue lotus or water-lily whose etymology is unknown, perhaps < Tamil *uppili*

ing, as much of this flora is native to the sub-continent and the Aryans, with no words for these, would have adopted the local terms. What is surprising is their consistent usage in a ritual capacity associated with the Buddha's funeral rites.

CONCLUSIONS

The nature and scope of the Aryan immigration(s) and the process of assimilating the indigenous populations has been a subject of scholarly speculation for over two centuries. While there is no consensus in the details, the overall process has been summarized by Dutt (1960, 52):

the Aryans (whether they came in one immigration or more) were a 'small body of foreign immigrants', who, without producing great racial disturbances, acted as a strong leaven, both cultural and sociological, in the aboriginal population. The rich and virile culture of this small minority slowly infiltrated the life and society of the vast native non-Aryan population till the Aryan language was adopted by the natives, in whose mouths it broke up into various dialects, just as rustic Latin did into the Romance Languages in Southern Europe. The process of this Aryanization of northern India was not one of forced superimposition, but of gradual infiltration of a dominant culture which itself slowly settled into a distinct Indian type.

It was in this environment of intermingling cultures that the Buddha arose. He came from an ethnic group which was already Aryanized politically and was in the process of adapting to a powerful new social, linguistic and cultural force. While some of his teachings — like the nature of true brahmanism or Vedic *ātman* vs. Buddhist *anātman* — involved redefining the brahmanical cultural hegemony through an indigenous lens, other concepts, motifs and practices discussed here seems to have their roots set firmly in an indigenous, non-Aryan tradition. In the spread of elements of a language or culture from one region or people to another — that is cultural diffusion — it is notoriously difficult to prove sequence and priority, especially when thousands of years have elapsed and written records are inadequate. Bronkhorst's position (2007, 79–93), for example, that the *samaṇa* (mendicant) tradition originated as part of the Greater Magadha (eastern) culture and was borrowed by Brahmanism, can be argued both ways — Dutt even suggests that the *samaṇa*/*śramaṇas* were peripatetic missionaries, 'torch-bearers of a new Aryan learning' (1960, 55), bringing the new knowledge from the west to the eastern clans. The origin of belief systems like karma and reincarnation are also unprovable, despite Bronkhorst's attempts (Wynne 2011). There is however strong evidence to identify indigenous political systems and autochthonous

or Tulu *uppala*, 'plant name'; KEWA, vol. 1, 103 refers to a Munda etymology which he considers 'unwahrscheinlich' ('unlikely'). The etymology of the *padma* (another lotus) is also not clear, quite likely (EWA, vol. 2, 79–80) derived from Tamil *kuvaḷai*, 'blue nelumbo' which closes by day < Tamil *kūmpu*, 'to close, to shut (as a flower)'. The *kumuda* ('esculent white water lily, red lotus') is 'wohl Fremdwort' (EWA, vol 1, 369, 'probably a foreign word') and the *puṇḍarika* ('white lotus') is a Dravidian or Munda word < Santali *poṇḍ*, 'white' (Kuiper 1948, 91). The word *agaru* or *aguru* ('aloe') derives from Tamil *akil*; *tagara* from Tamil *takara* ('wax-flower dog bane, aromatic unguent for the hair, fragrance'); and *candana* ('sandalwood') from < Tamil *cāntu* (*idem*). The *kapittha* (*Feronia elephantum* or wood apple) and the *aśvattha* (*Ficus religiosa*, 'holy fig tree') are both of Dravidian origin (KEWA, vol. 1, 61, 155) and the *udumbara* (*Ficus glomerata*, 'cluster fig tree') is a Munda word (Kuiper 1948, 23–5). The *mandāra*/*mandāra* ('coral tree') has no clear IA derivation (KEWA, vol. 2, 581).

beliefs like animism (worship of local nature deities like *yakkhas*), tree worship, serpent veneration, and others as native to the autochthonous peoples and later adopted by Brahmanism. The Buddha as *Mahāpurisa* also does not appear to be an Aryan concept (despite the Buddhists' claim) and at the very least is a good example of the Buddha's followers' attempts to brahmanize their founder and to place him firmly in the dominant Brahmanical establishment, representing him as a leading light of Brahmanism. This historicization of his biography and teachings permeates all the Pali writings, overprinting the history with a bias, which yet, like a palimpsest, only partially conceals; there are still remnants discoverable.

The Buddha stood midway between two cultures, one coming from outside of India, the other from its native soil. When the cultures meet and mix, diffusion inevitably takes place; we have seen the indelible imprint the native languages have left on the IA languages. While this was happening in the zone of everyday communication, the same process and result were also happening culturally. Due to its spontaneity, language was not subject to the same critical self-examination of deeply held cultural and religious beliefs; there was no attempt to excise the innovations in IA borrowed from the native languages, since the borrowing was unquestioned and unexamined — it was simply a natural process of linguistic evolution. But beliefs are another matter and where they could not be excised, they were simply adapted and adopted to the new brahmanical culture and legitimated, rationalized, or historicized as necessary to make them appear their own. Examining this superimposition and disentangling this complex and highly variegated fabric will help us understand much more about the native 'Indian' roots of Buddhism and Vedism, and the process of cultural mixing and assimilation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A	<i>Anguttara Nikāya</i>
BHS	Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit
CDIAL	Turner 1962-85
D	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
DED	<i>Dravidian Etymological Dictionary</i> , Burrow and Emeneau, 1961.
DPPN	<i>Dictionary of Pali Proper Names</i> , G. P. Malalasekera PTS London 1937.
EWA	Mayrhofer 1992
IA	Indo Aryan people and their language
IE	Indo European language
Jā	<i>Jātaka</i>

KEWA	Mayrhofer 1963
M	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
MI	Middle Indic language
MIA	Middle Indo Aryan languages
MPP	<i>Mahāparinibbāna Sutta</i>
MPS	<i>Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra</i> , Waldschmidt, 1950-1951.
Mvu	<i>Mahāvastu</i> , Senart 1882-1887.
Nidd I	<i>Mahā-niddesa</i> , ed. L. de La Vallée Poussin, E.J. Thomas, PTS London 1978.
OI	Old Indic or Vedic
P	Pāli.
PED	<i>Pāli-English Dictionary</i> . Rhys-Davids, T. W. & Stede, William. PTS Chipstead 1921-25.
Pj II	<i>Paramatthajotikā II (Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā)</i> , ed. H. Smith, PTS London 1916-1918.
Ps	<i>Papañcasūdanī (Majjhimanikāya-aṭṭhakathā)</i> , ed. J. H. Woods, D. Kosmabi, I. B. Horner.
PTS	Pali Text Society
RV	<i>Rig Veda</i> .
S	<i>Samyutta Nikāya</i>
Ś. Br	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
Sn	<i>Sutta-nipāta</i>
Sp	<i>Samantapāsādikā (Vinaya-aṭṭhakathā)</i> , ed. J. Takakuso, M. Nagai, PTS London 1924-47.
Sv	<i>Sumaṅgala-vilāsini (Dīghanikāya-aṭṭhakathā)</i> , T. W. Rhys Davids & J. E. Carpenter, PTS London 1886-1932.
Ud-a	<i>Paramatthadipani (Udāna-aṭṭhakathā)</i> , ed. F. L. Woodward, PTS London 1926.

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