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Michael Witzel

*Moving Targets? Texts, language, archaeology and history
in the Late Vedic and early Buddhist periods*

ABSTRACT

The Late Vedic and earliest Buddhist texts are investigated to indicate their relative historical layering. Besides the texts themselves, their language, place names, archaeological and their inherent historical background are brought to bear. These data and those on some historical contemporaries of the Buddha do not indicate a correlation with late Vedic personalities and texts. A certain period of time separates both corpora.

KEYWORDS

Veda, Upaniṣad, Buddha, Pāli, Buddhist canon, Kosala, Videha, Magadha, Vajji, Pasenadi, Bimbisāra, Ajātasattu, urbanization, ascetics, Herodotus, Pānini, chandas.

§ 1. The problem

The literary and political history of India during the lifetime of the Buddha has remained enigmatic. How much actual historical information do we possess? Do early (pre-Pāli) Buddhist texts follow on Late Vedic texts, as common opinion has it, or do they overlap with it, if only to some extent?¹ What do these texts tell us about actual history of the period, "wie es wirklich gewesen" (Ranke)? And, what are their respective absolute dates?

However, some of these questions may have been put the wrong way. As we will see, we rather are dealing here with two moving targets. Both text corpora have still not been explored sufficiently well as to establish either the beginning of actual Buddhist text formation, or the end of Vedic text formation and the closure of the Vedic corpus.²

¹ Cf. J. Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha Studies in the Culture of Early India*. Leiden: Brill 2007.

² M. Witzel, *The Development of the Vedic Canon and its Schools: The Social and Political Milieu*. In: *Inside the Texts, Beyond the Texts. New Approaches to the Study of the Vedas*. Harvard Oriental Series. Opera Minora, vol. 2. Cambridge 1997, 257-345 ; cf. L. L. Patton, *Authority, Anxiety and Canon. Essays in Vedic interpretation*. Albany, SUNI Press 1994; Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha*, 2007.

This has recently emphasized by Oskar von Hinüber: "... early Buddhist historiography ... is deplorably absent..." and later on, "our sources never allow us to go beyond more or less likely or probable conclusions about the roots of the texts that reach far back into period of early Buddhism", adding the same caveat for the date of the closure of a text.³

As a further caveat, it must be underlined that I leave aside, for the most part, the development of thought, philosophy and religion. It remains a difficult undertaking to trace their multiple strands, impossible to carry out in a brief paper.⁴ Rather, I will concentrate on some aspects of archaeology, material culture, language, society and contemporary history.

§ 2 Materials

In order to establish what occurred in the various parts of North India, and during which periods, both the locations of the individual texts and their relative or, better, their absolute dates need to be ascertained. Only on this basis it will be possible to illuminate what each text or group of texts from the various geographical regions and the various time levels involved can tell. However, in spite of some recent advances, much work still needs to be done in this respect.

The location of most Vedic texts of this period has been established fairly well over the past few decades.⁵ However, it is still difficult to pinpoint the geographical location individual Pāli texts, even if one can be generally sure that the earliest texts of the canon were composed in the eastern part of Northern India, mainly in the Kosala (Audh), Kāśī, Bihar and Magadha areas.⁶

³ O. v. Hinüber, *Hoary past and hazy memory*, *JlABS* 9, 2008, p. 209.

⁴ For this, see J. Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha*, Leiden: Brill 2007, cf. nevertheless the question of asceticism, below.

⁵ M. Witzel, *On the localisation of Vedic texts and schools*. In: G. Pollet (ed.), *India and the Ancient world. History, Trade and Culture before A.D. 650. P.H.L. Eggermont Jubilee Volume*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 25, Leuven 1987, pp. 173-213; cf. K. Mylius, *Geographische Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgegend des Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, *Wiss. Zeitschr. der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig* 14, 1965, 759-761.

⁶ However, the introduction phrase to individual texts ("at this time the Lord stayed at...") often is doubtful. See Oskar von Hinüber, *Hoary Past*, *JlABS* 9, 2008, and G. Schopen, *If You Can't Remember, How to Make It Up: Some Monastic Rules for Redacting Canonical Texts*, in: *Buddhist Monks and Business Matter. Still More Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India*. Honolulu 2004, 395-407

The relative timeframe of the Vedic texts, however, is well established: they are layered in five levels⁷ from the *Rgveda* down to the oldest *Upaniṣads* (*Ṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*). Yet, there still is no reliable absolute dating for these texts.

However, the language and content of Late Vedic texts, seen in the earliest *Upaniṣads*, overlap with those of late *Brāhmaṇa* texts, such as the first section of the (JB 1.1-1.65) or the independent appendix to the *Taittirīya* texts, the *Vādhūla Anvākhyāna*. They point to a living Vedic language at a time when the Buddha (like later on, *Pāṇini*) still could call Vedic Sanskrit "*chandas*" ('metrical').⁸ This is the period of the Late Vedic 'southeastern Koine.'⁹ Both language and shared stories (both little researched)¹⁰ point to the same period. The area is congruent with the *Kosala*, *Kāśi*, *Vajji* and *Magadha* territories of the early Buddhist texts.

There also are some small sections in the Late Vedic texts *Upaniṣads* that can be suspected to be post-Buddha,¹¹ and the final form of Vedic texts seems to have undergone some minor phonetic shifting and adjustment¹² until about the time of *Pāṇini* (c. 350 BCE) as they reflect some of his euphonic rules.¹³

⁷ M. Witzel, *Tracing the Vedic dialects*, **Tracing the Vedic dialects**. In: Colette Caillat (ed.), *Dialectes dans les littératures indo-aryennes*. Paris : Collège de France/Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1989, 97-264, esp. p.121-128

⁸ Perhaps the Eastern Vedic, with the two tone *bhāsika* accent of the ŚB is intended, see below.

⁹ Meaning the Late Vedic language of the East and of the JB, south of the Ganga and Yamuna). See M. Witzel, *On the origin of the literary device of the 'Frame Story'*. In: H. Falk (ed.) *Old Indian literature. Hinduismus und Buddhismus, Festschrift für U. Schneider*, Freiburg 1987, 380-414.

¹⁰ See N. Tsuji, *Genzon Yajurveda Bunken*, Tokyo: Tokyo Bunko 1970, 32sq, 75; M. Witzel, *On the origin of the literary device of the 'Frame Story'*, 1987; M. Witzel, *The case of the shattered head. Festschrift für W. Rau, (= StII 13/14)*, Reinbek 1987, 363- 415.

¹¹ Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha* 2007, M. Witzel, *Yājñavalkya as ritualist and philosopher, and his personal language*. In: Adhami, S. (ed.) *Paitimāna. Essays in Iranian, Indo-European, and Indian Studies in Honor of Hanns-Peter Schmidt*. Volumes I & II. Costa Mesa CA: Mazda Publishers 2003, 103-143.

¹² This refers only to some aspects of the redaction (as different from composition) that took place until and even after *Pāṇini*, or rather his type of Sanskrit. This is visible, for example, in the treatment of the *Abhinihita Sandhi* with restored *a-* in most of RV and later Vedic texts, cf. J. Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha*, on these problems. In addition there remains the problem of an early written ŚB (*Kāṇva*) text, see Witzel, *Tracing the Vedic dialects*, p. 240, n.334, and: *Variante Readings in the Rgveda? Presentation at the 14th World Sanskrit Conference, Kyoto 2009*. <http://www.indology.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/14thWSC/programme/01/Witzel.pdf> paper at the 14th World Sanskrit Conference, Kyoto, 2009.

¹³ This has to be kept separate from J. Bronkhorst's assertion, (*Greater Magadha*, 2007) that Vedic text were still actively composed after the Buddha. See below for counter-evidence.

However, it is much more difficult to determine the absolute time of individual texts and of groups of texts as such. The late Vedic texts commonly are dated as following centuries of Middle and Early Vedic texts (after and before c. 1000 BCE respectively),¹⁴ while the late Vedic ones are usually dated, in absolute time, as being pre-Buddha, thus before c. 400 BCE.

The situation is still not that clear for the earliest texts of Buddhism. It is well known that we do not have the original sermons of the Buddha composed in an early eastern Middle Indo-Aryan dialect, but that we just have their transpositions into a western MIA literary language, Pāli, as well as later adaptations into other languages.¹⁵

To establish which were the earliest Buddhist texts and their layering still is a work in progress. However, the *Pātimokkha* formulas, to be recited monthly, or a large section of the *Suttanipāta* belong to this level.¹⁶ It is also well known that the Pāli texts have undergone collection and canonization at the council of Pāṭaliputra during the reign of the emperor Aśoka.

The actual layers within the Pāli canon are even less clear. Apparently, we have to reckon with pre-Aśokan texts (before c. 250 BCE), Aśokan texts (c. 250 BCE) and post-Aśokan texts. But which particular text of the multitude of Pāli texts (or which stratum of a text) belonged to which period still is largely unresolved.¹⁷

In short, we must deal here with *two moving targets*: on the one hand, the temporal extent of the late Vedic texts as well as their canonization and final redaction (that may taken place considerably later), and on the other, a similar problem for the Pāli canon, its beginnings, layering and redaction.

In this situation, it is useful to take a closer look at the overlap, if any, of factual data that can be found in both corpora. Some are obvious, such as the use of some rare words that do not occur, or do not widely occur, before both kinds of texts and that are sometimes

¹⁴ Cf. now M. Witzel, *Das Alte Indien*. München: Beck 2003: 25.

¹⁵ O. v. Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittelindisch im Überblick. 2., erweiterte Auflage*, Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 2001.

¹⁶ O. v. Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittelindisch*, § 34, p. 63, Hideaki Nakatani, *Buddha no Konron*. In: *Koten no Sekaizō*, Kobe: Heisei 15 [2003] 32-50.

¹⁷ Though see several individual works on this topic, especially by O. v. Hinüber, listed his *Das ältere Mittelindisch*, in his *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*. Berlin: de Gruyter 1996; see also his «Hoary Past», *JlABS* 9, 2008, 204, on his linguistic notes on the *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta* of the *Vinaya*, at c. 350-320 BCE.

restricted to eastern North India¹⁸ -- a voluminous task that cannot be undertaken here. However, the combination of textual, archaeological, cultural and political data from both classes of texts results, to begin with, in the following table.

TABLE 1.

VEDA	EARLY BUDDH/PĀLI TEXTS
Vedic texts, down to: Vajji, etc. VIDEHA acculturation to Kuru orthopraxy Older Upanisads (BĀU, ChU, JUB), before c. 400 BCE including Videha No evidence of cities, develop c. 450 BCE	late immigrations: Malla, Vajji confederation
LATE VEDIC SPEECH (SE Koine)	Mahāpadma, Bimbisāra of Magadha unknown to the Veda
	<u>The Buddha,</u> contemporary of: King *Prasenajit? ~ King Pasenadi of Kosala King Ajātaśatru (of Kāśi)? ~ King Ajātasattu of Magadha
	The Buddha, c. 460-380 BCE: his teaching Earliest Buddhist texts
	CHANDAS LANGUAGE cities not in earliest texts
(Pāṇini)	

¹⁸ Such as *viśāla*, *pāpa* (M. Witzel, *Tracing the Vedic dialects*, p. 205, n.266; Hideaki Nakatani, *Buddha no Konron* p. 40), *punar mṛ*, *karma*, and certain substrate words (O. v. Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittelindisch* § 72), including the snake name *Mucilinda*; further: *argala*/*argāda*/*irgala*, *argalikā* 'bolt' (Turner, *CDIAL* 629, cf. additions to this by F. Southworth in the *SARVA* substrate dictionary (in progress), entry S629, see: <http://www.aa.tufs.ac.jp/sarva/entrance.html>).

collection/redaction, c.350 BCE?
Pāli

transposition into

collection/redaction, c.

250BCE

§ 2. Language

It is well known that the Buddha's sermons and speeches were given in an early eastern¹⁹ Middle Indian dialect of Kosala-Videha, probably approaching that of the "middle country", Majjhimadesa,²⁰ a small area in Malla country close to his home in Lumbini and Kapilavastu, with early texts in a «Buddhist Middle Indian» *lingua franca*.²¹

It is also clear that later on a transposition of these texts in a «Buddhist Middle Indic» has taken place into the western 'literary' language, Pāli,²² and that these texts were then collected and redacted at the so-called Third Council under the great King Aśoka, at Pāṭaliputra, c. 250 BCE. Some additional texts were included at least until, and sometimes beyond, the supposedly first written version emerged in Sri Lanka, shortly before the beginning of the common era²³ and more than a century before the extant manuscripts in another MIA language, Gāndhārī.²⁴ Some residues of the eastern dialect are still visible in our current Pāli texts, a problem that O. v. Hinüber has contributed to substantially.²⁵

However, the layering of the extant Pāli texts is not as well established as that of the Vedic canon. Again, O. v. Hinüber has made important contributions to this problem, but the large extent of the materials -many of them having multiple internal layering - does not yet allow

¹⁹ See O. v. Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittelindisch*, § 36 p. 64, § 38 p. 65 with lit.; cf. K.R. Norman, *The dialects in which the Buddha Preached*. In: H. Bechert (ed.) *Die Sprache der ältesten buddhistischen Überlieferung*. Göttingen 1980, 61-77 = *Collected Papers II*, 128-147.

²⁰ At Vin. I 197,27 defined by a *brāhmaṇagāma* in Malla land, Thūna; later on, the area is expanded, see G.P. Malalasekara, *Dictionary of Pāli proper names*. London: Pali Text Society 1974 [1937], Vol. II 418 f. - Nowadays, *Mades* is the name of the plains of Southern Nepal.

²¹ See O. v. Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittelindisch*, § 39, p. 40.

²² See O. v. Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittelindisch*, § 3 p. 36, § 48-40 p. 64 ff., § 39, p. 66.

²³ Allegedly, nder *Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya* 87-77 BCE.

²⁴ See O. v. Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittelindisch*, § 33, p. 62.

²⁵ See for example his work on the perfect tense, *Das ältere Mittelindisch*, § 480, p. 304 sq.; cf. the earlier, ground-breaking work on the *Urkanon* by H. Lüders, summarized by H. Bechert, *Die Sprache der ältesten buddhistischen Überlieferung*, p. 11-16.

for a comprehensive picture and summary, -- though we have such important studies as that of the Suttanipāta.²⁶

In general we can rely on the first canonization of the Pāli texts in Aśoka's time around 250 BCE. We must therefore extrapolate backwards to the life time of the Buddha, c. 460-380 BCE, in order to reach the earliest form of his sermons and speeches. This will also remain a problem in this paper throughout. I will thus clearly distinguish between «earliest Buddhist texts» of the Buddha's life time and those of the Pāli canon some 150 years later.²⁷

One way to get a closer handle on the problem is to investigate the language of both corpora closely, as language usually is a good yard stick for the age of a text, -- that is, unless an author intentionally used archaic forms.²⁸ Unfortunately, this kind of evidence is again clear in the Veda, but less so in Pāli texts, as these have constantly been updated and, in part, even Sanskritized.²⁹

One has occasionally tried to achieve a historical layering of Pāli texts.³⁰ We therefore have to rely on archaic or more modern forms in individual texts, such as the Pātimokkha formula or the oldest sections of the Suttanipāta. Again: we have to deal with a moving target. However, we can compare such forms with the archaeologically attested ones in Aśoka's inscriptions and compare these data with those in Late Vedic texts, even if both forms of Indo-Aryan are from different forms of speech and social registers.

First of all, there is awareness of late Vedic speech (as well as of many aspects of Brahmanical life and rituals),³¹ in the canon, though this would still have to be specified as per - supposed-- text layer in the early

²⁶ Hideaki Nakatani, *Buddha no Konron*.

²⁷ Note L. Schmitthausen, *An attempt to estimate the distance in time between Aśoka and the Buddha in terms of doctrinal history*. In: H. Bechert (ed.) *The dating of the historical Buddha.2*. Göttingen: 1992, 110-147, O. v. Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, § 98.

²⁸ Note, even then, the many later Upanisads with beginnings imitating Vedic sentences

²⁹ See for example O. v. Hinüber's discussion of the absolutes in -tvā, *Das ältere Mittelindisch* § 498 p. 314 etc., for Sakya see Nakatani, *Buddha no konron* p. 39; with some changes down to the the 19th century Council in Burma.

³⁰ See for example, Paul Kingsbury, *The Chronology of the Pali canon. The case of the Aorist*. PhD Diss., Univ. of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia 2002. Cf. his summary paper *Inducing a chronology of the Pali canon*, <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~kingsbur/inducing.pdf>. This approach however, does not succeed as the author has adjusted his texts to a predestined mathematical curve.

³¹ See Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha* 2007; H. Falk, *Vedische Opfer im Pali-Kanon*. *Bulletin des Etudes indiennes* 6, 1988, 225-254.

Buddhist texts,³² again a task that cannot be undertaken here.

Nevertheless, the Buddha is well aware of Late Vedic speech, which he calls *chandās*, just as Pāṇini does, maybe about half a century later. The designation is unusual in the Vedic texts that distinguish between Mantra, Brāhmaṇa and, occasionally, Kalpa (Sūtra). But it can be understood when comparing the (educated) spoken language, *bhāṣā*, that Pāṇini mainly teaches, along with the (older) hieratic Vedic whose Mantras are largely composed in metrical fashion, employing *chandās* (meter). The distinction for both will thus rather have been one between local levels of speech (OIA, MIA) and the hieratic one of Vedic Mantras and prose composed in the same «style».

Furthermore, Vedic (and even Pāṇini's *bhāṣa*) still had tonal (pitch) accent, which additionally will have distinguished it from the MIA of the Buddha's time.³³

However, an additional point may be that Eastern OIA, and even the eastern Vedic of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, had a two tone accent system (the confusingly so-called *bhāṣika* accents, see *Bhāṣika Sūtra*);³⁴ while western (Kuru-Pañcāla) Vedic and the Gandhāra *bhāṣā* had a three tone accent system of Anudātta, Udātta and Svarita. The latter was introduced into the East for liturgical purposes, as seen in the Samhitā belonging to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, where it clashes with the *bhāṣika* accents,³⁵ and with which clash the Mīmāṃsakas, such as Śābara, still had to struggle, many centuries later.

It is thus imaginable that the Buddha's admonition to propagate his teachings not in *chandās* language³⁶ may refer either to the highly hieratical Vedic of the Samhitās or rather to the high level speech of Vedic prose (Brāhmaṇa, early Upaniṣads, BŚS of Kosala) used by contemporary Brahmins in teaching contexts.

Apart from this, there are numerous features in late Vedic and the MIA of the early Buddhist texts that overlap across language boundaries, as both forms of Indo-Aryan were used by people that were actually interacting with

³² See for example the detailed 3-tier layering in H. Nakatani, *Buddha no Konron*.

³³ Pitch accent no longer existed in MIA; however, the oldest Buddhist texts were composed when Vedic pitch accent still was spoken, see O. v. Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittelindisch* § 159: p. 145, §247, §283.

³⁴ M. Witzel, *Tracing the Vedic dialects*, p. 226 n. 317; cf. n. 334, n. 226, 230, 355; for a scholastic, pandit-like approach to the problem, see G. Cardona, *The Bhāṣika Accentuation System. Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 18, 1993, 1-40.

³⁵ M. Witzel, *Tracing the Vedic dialects*, n. 317, and: *The Development of the Vedic Canon and its Schools*.

³⁶ K. R. Norman, *chandasi aropetam*. In: H. Bechert (ed.) *Die Sprache der ältesten buddhistischen Überlieferung*. Göttingen 1980.

each other on a daily basis. For example, there are unusual late, colloquial features in Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.³⁷

Other items such as the use of the perfect in narrative contexts stand out. In Late Vedic texts of the Center and East of northern India, the perfect replaced the earlier use of the imperfect.³⁸ This is standard in texts such as the ŚB and BĀU. However, the JB, largely composed and collected in the western lands south of the rivers Yamunā and Gaṅgā, had a mixed use of imperfect (for traditional, mythological tales) and perfect (for reports of more recent occurrences) in natural speech, with a strong showing of the Aorist, especially when reporting facts with results in the present (the former domain of the perfect).³⁹

The latter situation can be seen as the predecessor to the complete domination of the aorist in reporting the past in ~~the~~ Pāli, which is, after all, like the JB's, a western MIA language. The contrast between the few (5) remnants of the perfect in Pāli⁴⁰ that go back to eastern MIA usage of the Buddha's area of activity and the western Pāli cannot be starker.⁴¹ Both stages of early MIA clearly overlap with the developments in Late Vedic,⁴² even if Pāli is younger by several hundreds of years.

There also are several other nominal and verb forms as well as interjections⁴³ and finally, some individual words that are of interest in this context. Remarkable is the increase in the usage of *pāpa* 'evil' in the late Vedic texts⁴⁴ and the earliest layer of the Suttanipāta,⁴⁵ surely an indication of the increasing ethicization of the karma concept in Late Vedic leading to the origin of the

³⁷ See K. Hoffmann, *Aufsätze zur Indoiranistik*, ed. J. Narten, Wiesbaden 1976: 370 sqq., on ChU 6 (with Uddālaka Āruṇi) as «the youngest level of Vedic prose; cf. also on the Kṣatriya dialect in the somewhat later Middle Upaniṣads: R. Salomon, *Linguistic analysis of the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, *WZKS* 25, 1981, 91-105.

³⁸ M. Witzel, *Tracing the Vedic dialects*, p. 139 sqq.

³⁹ M. Witzel, *On the origin of the literary device of the 'Frame Story'*.

⁴⁰ For the few remnants of the perfect see O. v. Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittelindisch*, § 480, p. 34 sq.

⁴¹ However, see now Eystein Dahl, *Evidentiality in Late Vedic?* Presentation at the 14th World Sanskrit Conference, Kyoto 2009. <http://www.indology.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/14thWSC/programme/02/Dahl.pdf>.

⁴² Discussion in M. Witzel, *Tracing the Vedic dialects*, p. 208 sqq.

⁴³ M. Witzel, *Tracing the Vedic dialects*; cf. O. v. Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittelindisch*, § 497: p. 312 sq.; C. Caillat, appendix to Witzel, *Tracing the Vedic dialects*, and in: *Inside the Texts, Beyond the Texts. New Approaches to the Study of the Vedas*. Harvard Oriental Series. Opera Minora, vol. 2. Cambridge 1997, 14-27; see the literature quoted in: O. v. Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittelindisch*, § 9, p. 41 sq.

⁴⁴ M. Witzel, *Tracing the Vedic dialects*, p. 205 sqq..

⁴⁵ H. Nakatani, *Buddha no Konron*.

karma/rebirth complex in the Upaniṣads, Buddhism and Jainism.

Clearly, even the earliest eastern MIA (the dialect still using perfects), Pāli and Aśokan MIA are several consecutive steps later than Late Vedic -- even when taking into account the different social register of speech. In sum, there is a clear time gap and only some marginal overlap between late Vedic and earliest MIA.

§ 3. Archaeological, social and political data.

How should we proceed then, to evaluate the initial question? There is a number of data points in archaeology, historical place names, and near-contemporary authors that could be brought to bear.

1. Archaeology and texts

The late Vedic texts are not yet aware of cities⁴⁶ before the so-called second urbanization of India of c. 450 BCE. The word *nagara* occurs only in very Late Brāhmaṇa and Āraṇyaka texts, such as in the post-Pāṇinean part of Gopatha Br. (1.1.23), and in the Puraṇic-time part of Taittirīya Āraṇyaka (1.11.7, 1.31.2).⁴⁷ *Nagarin* 'one who has/is characterized by a *nagara*' occurs only in a name, and always as the same person, *Nagarin Jānaśruteya*. He appears in *Jaiminiya* and *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* as well as in *Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*,⁴⁸ as belonging to the *Dālbhya* clan, once along with with *Āruṇi*,⁴⁹

The absence of cities is also typical for the earliest level of Buddhist texts: the Buddha stayed and taught in villages, not cities.⁵⁰

Notable are the place names in early Buddhist texts such as *Rāja-gaha* ('king's house'), or *Pātali-gāma*, the modern Patna.⁵¹ Only in later levels of the Pāli texts do we find centrally located cities that are so typical for the

⁴⁶ W. Rau. *The Meaning of pur in Vedic Literature*, [Abhandlungen der Marburger Gelehrten Gesellschaft III/1] München : W. Finck 1976; cf. K. Mylius, *Gab es Städte im jungvedischen Indien? Ethnographisch-Archäologische Zeitschrift* 10, 1989, 33-39.

⁴⁷ On TĀ 1 see: M. Witzel, *An unknown Upaniṣad of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda: The Kātha-Śikṣā-Upaniṣad*. *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre*, Vol. 1, Wiesbaden-Kathmandu 1977, 135 sqq; *Die Kātha-Śikṣā-Upaniṣad und ihr Verhältnis zur Śikṣāvallī der Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*. *WZKS* Vol. XXIII, 1979, 5-28; *WZKS* XXIV, 1980, 21-82.

⁴⁸ JB 1. 11, etc. 1.247, 2.397, 2.409, 2.423 = JB § 4,90, 161, 167, 168; JUB 3.40.2, AB 5.30.

⁴⁹ JB 2.397; see below on *Brahmadatta*.

⁵⁰ O. v. Hinüber, *Hoary Past*, *JiABS* 9, 2008: 197 sqq.

⁵¹ O. v. Hinüber *Hoary Past*, *JiABS* 9, 2008: 202, on *Pātali-gāma* becoming *Pātali-putta*, not yet a capital.

texts, i.e. Campā, Rājagaha, Sāvatti, Sāketa (Ayodhyā), Kosāmbi, Bārānasi, (Dīghanikāya II 169,11).

This agrees with the two levels of archaeologically attested settlements of the East: Kosala, Videha, Magadha are not characterized by the expanding western, Kuru-dominated Painted Grey Ware (PGW) culture of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. It had a three-tiered settlement structure of villages, market places, and towns and extended up to the lower Doāb area of Vaṃśa/Kauśāmbi, just west of the Allahabad. Instead, the East was characterized by the indigenous Black and Red Ware/Ochre Colored Pottery (BRW/OCP) culture that had only two-tiered settlements (villages and market places) during the pre-450 BCE period.

The Buddha is said to have given his speeches and sermons in the Kāśi, Magadha, Malla, Sakya, Vajji (Vrji), and even in the Kuru area. (Notably Videha, the new home of Brahmanical orthopraxy, is missing). In that context, the earliest Buddhist texts speak only of villages (*gāma*) and market places (*nigama*) as his locations, clearly reflecting the two-level settlements of OCP/BRW archaeology. Many if them are unknown little villages in Kosala, Magadha, or Kuru.

The Buddha thus spent much of his life (c. 460–380 BCE) in a pre-urban society of villages and market places: in many cases he visited villages, and cities (*nagara*) only in his later life, such as those of the kings Pasenadi, Bimbisāra and Ajātasattu.

They include Campā (in Aṅga), Rājagaha (in Magadha), Sāvatti and Sāketa (in Kosala), Kosāmbi (in Vaṃśa, in the lower Doāb), and Bārānasi (Kāśi),⁵² but not yet Pāṭaliputta (Patna). These cities are usually mentioned in the introduction to a sermon, most frequently Sāvatti: «at one time, the Lord stayed at...»⁵³ and many of them have been added to the canon only later on, sometimes with contradictions involved, and later on even artificially.⁵⁴

The Buddha thus seems to have lived in the period of the second urbanization of India that saw the sudden emergence, rapid rise and expansion of cities, long distance trade, etc. In this respect, Late Vedic and early Buddhist texts overlaps for the earlier part of the Buddha's life.

2. Place names

This scenario agrees with the actual names found in the Pāli canon (before urbanization): only *gāma* (Skt. *grāma*)

⁵² As per *Dīghanikāya* 2.169.11.

⁵³ O.v. Hinüber, *Hoary Past*, *JIAS* 9, 2008: 198.

⁵⁴ G. Schopen: *If You Can't Remember. If one was in doubt, one should insert Śrāvasthī.*

'village' and *nigama* 'market place' but not yet *nagara* 'city' are found. O. v. Hinüber has recently indicated a number of (Brahmin) villages that remain totally unknown, except for their mentioning in the canon.⁵⁵

In such cases, the Vedic and older Pāli texts use «Ortnamenparenthese,» that is, they parenthetically explain to the contemporary audience such localities that are not generally known, whether they be villages, ruins, ponds, and the like. In the Buddhist canon, this device usually refers to places where the Buddha taught. Examples include villages, otherwise completely unknown, such as Nagarvinda, and Sāla in Kosala, or *Ambaṣaṇḍā brāhmaṇagāma* in Magadha, or *Thullakoṭṭhita*, and *Kammāsadhamma (nigama)* in Kuru land.⁵⁶

Interestingly, these villages are mostly fairly close to the homeland of the Buddha; they do not occur in the rapidly Sanskritizing Videha of the former King Janaka.⁵⁷

However, the the Brahmin villages quoted are concentrated in Kosala⁵⁸ but they also include some in Magadha and Aṅga. The latter was a marginal area on the southern bend of the Ganges, while Magadha had been taboo for Brahmins for long -- even Videha was so at first, as ŚB reports. Brahmins are attested for Magadha only in very late Vedic texts (*Kauṣītaki Āraṇyaka* KĀ 7.13 mentioning a single person, *Madhyama Prātibodhīputra*, called *magadhavāsin*).⁵⁹

That the Buddha actually taught in Brahmin villages of Magadha ---not just an individual Brahmin in that land-- is again indicative of the clear time difference separating the early Buddhist texts from the Vedic corpus. In this sense, both the Vedic and early Pāli texts may overlap, only for the early part of his life.

Again, all of this points to the transition period from the pre-urban Vedic texts and early Buddhist texts, toward the Pāli text corpus, with fully blown city civilization, parks etc.

3. Political situation.

However, another point, that of the social and political development of the East has hardly been used so far in the

⁵⁵ O. v. Hinüber, *Hoary Past*, *JiABS* 9, 2008: 197 sqq.

⁵⁶ O. v. Hinüber *Hoary Past*, *JiABS* 9, 2008: 198 sqq.

⁵⁷ In ŚB, BĀU, see M. Witzel, *The Development of the Vedic Canon*, p. 319 sqq.

⁵⁸ O. v. Hinüber, *Hoary Past*, *JiABS* 9, 2008, 201.

⁵⁹ Even in late/post-Vedic texts such as the *LŚS* 8.6.28 or *KŚS* 22.4.22, a *brahmabandhu Māgadhedeśīya* is mentioned as recipient of *Vrātya* equipment, which would mean that some Brahmins lived there by the time of the authors; cf. Macdonell-Keith, *Vedic Index*, 1912, vol. II 116.

current context.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, there is some information about the actual political situation of the time, such as on Vedic kings, and more so in the Buddhist texts -- though we must be careful, with O. v. Hinüber, as »...many references to Indian history in the Tipitaka remain doubtful...»⁶¹ Nevertheless, it will be attempted here, with Ranke, to show «*wie es wirklich gewesen.*» The historical information found in both sets of texts can be summed up in the following table.

<u>Kosala</u>	<u>Magadha</u>	<u>Videha</u>
---	---	Janaka; also remembered in BĀU;
...	...	Pāli : Mahā-janaka (in memory only);
		late
<i>immigration:</i>		
Mahākosala	Mahāpadma	
<u>Kosala-Pasenadi</u> :	Bimbisāra &	Vajji,
Malla,		Sakya
(*Prasenajit), brother of → queen Kosaladevī,		
tribes, etc.;		
	(dowry: Kāśi),	Kāśi re-annex
	her son:	by Kosala
	<u>Ajātasattu</u> :	Vajji
confederation		
'Kausalya' Brahmadatta ~ Ajātaśatru		Sakya
defeated,		
Prāsenajita (JB)	of Kāśi? (BĀU)	then Kosala
		conquered by Magadha
	Ājātaśatrava?	
	(ŚB, VādhB)	

⁶⁰Note the rich, if somewhat hagiographic, often undigested and non-comparative materials in G. P. Malalasekara, *Dictionary of Pali proper names*, and cf. T.W. Rhys-Davids, *Buddhist India*, London 1911, from where much historical writing of the 20th cent. about this period has proceeded.

⁶¹Note the caveat, on historical information in the Pāli texts, O. v. Hinüber, *Hoary Past, JIABS 9, 2008, 206f.*

The Late Vedic texts clearly indicate increasing «Sanskritization» of the eastern (OCP/BRW) territories. Both the Ikṣvāku Kings of Kosala (despised by western Brahmins) and those of the Videha area east of it⁶² strove to emulate the successful, orthoprax Kuru model of society, religion and state.⁶³

They imported Kuru-Pañcāla Brahmins such as Yājñavalkya⁶⁴ furthered canonization of the Veda by the collection of Śrauta ritual in the first incipient Sūtra⁶⁵ and by the import of western modes of recitation of Vedic texts⁶⁶ as opposed to the aberrant, two-tone Vedic language of the East (*bhāṣika*, as still heard today in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa),⁶⁷ and by the fixation of the text of the Ṛgveda.⁶⁸

Janaka of Videha is the prototypical king of this effort: he also organized big speech contests for Brahmins with prizes of thousands of cows and gold tied to their horns. It is to be noted, however, that Janaka was already a legendary figure (Mahājanaka) in the Pāli texts; some time clearly has passed between the accounts in the early Upaniṣads and those in the Pāli texts, thus at a minimum, from c. 500 BCE to 400 BCE. The same is the case even for the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, where people compare later kings with Janaka.⁶⁹

We do not know what happened to Janaka's Vedic 'reforms' during the times of the Vajji confederation, that is, during Buddha's lifetime. Apparently, the Videhas again changed their societal set-up, under pressure of the newly immigrant Vajji tribes. The Pāli canon indeed speaks of former kings of Videha (such as Mahājanaka and Nimi,⁷⁰ and Janaka was remembered as a great king of the past.

⁶² Note the Videgha Māthava legend of the ŚB 1.4.1.10 sqq, with clear link back to the 'sacred land' of the Veda, Kuruksetra.

⁶³ For a brief summary, see M. Witzel, *The Realm of the Kurus: Origins and Development of the First State in India*. *Nihon Minami Ajia Gakkai Zenkoku Taikai, Hokoku Yoshi*, Kyoto 1989, in more detail: *Early Sanskritization. Origins and development of the Kuru State*. B. Kölver (ed.), *Recht, Staat und Verwaltung im klassischen Indien. The state, the Law, and Administration in Classical India*. München : R. Oldenbourg 1997, 27-52.

⁶⁴ See M. Witzel, *Yājñavalkya as ritualist and philosopher, and his personal language*.

⁶⁵ M. Fushimi, *Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra: Development of the ritual text in Ancient India*. PhD Diss., Harvard 2007.

⁶⁶ Mainly, the Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā, see M. Witzel, *The Development of the Vedic Canon*, p. 324 sqq

⁶⁷ M. Witzel, *The Development of the Vedic Canon*, p.324 sq.

⁶⁸ In Śākalya's Padapāṭha, see M. Witzel, *The Development of the Vedic Canon*, p. 322 sqq.; cf. J. Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha*; and: *The orthoepic diaskeuasis of the Ṛgveda and the date of Pāṇini*, *IJJ* 23, 1981, 83-95.

⁶⁹ «Janaka, Janaka!» BĀU 2.1.1, also in KĀ 6.1; the same holds true for the late Vedic Kāṭhaka section preserved in TB 3.10.9: Janaka has had conquered the heavenly world, where a pupil of Atyaṃha Āruṇi appears;

⁷⁰ Cf. G.P. Malalasekara, *Dictionary of Pāli proper names* II 880.

In sum, one has to conclude, again, that an unspecified period of time has passed between Janaka (ŚB, BĀU) and the life time of the Buddha.

Accordingly, the Vedic texts (early Upaniṣads, late Brāhmaṇas) do not yet mention the Magadha kings Bimbisāra, Ajātaśatru, and the Kosala king Prasenajit, who are contemporaneous with the Buddha. Actually they do not mention any great kings of the East, with the exception of the (despised) Ikṣvāku lineage of Kosala and their favorite, King Janaka of Videha.

In contrast, the Bihar area appears quite differently in the Pāli canon. Videha was no longer a kingdom but it was, like its neighbors, including the homeland of the Buddha, an oligarchic 'republic.' Between the Late Vedic texts and the time of the Buddha, momentous developments took place in the East when a number of 'new' tribes appeared. They were not yet known to the Vedic texts, next to a few 'aboriginal' ones mentioned in the late AB, such as the Pulinda, Mūṭiba or Andhra.

The new ones include the Sakya, Malla, Licchavi, and the Vajji themselves, who are known from Pāṇini as the Vṛji gaṇa (tribe) of the Panjab. The Malla, too, appear in the Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa as Rajasthan desert people.⁷¹ Clearly a certain section of these western gaṇa tribes moved toward the East and settled in Bihar. Many of them, surprisingly including Videha, make out the prominent Vajji confederation of the Buddha's lifetime.

Videha clearly had, by then, reverted from a monarchical state to a tribal one, for the earlier kings of Videha are well remembered in the Pāli canon, for example Janaka as a distant Mahājanaka. The change from the Vedic, Sanskritizing kingdom to a Vajjian «republic», again, is another clear indication of the time difference between both corpora. That includes the earliest texts of Buddhism as the Buddha clearly interacted with the Sakyas and Vajjis as well as with their enemies, the Kosala king Pasenadi, and the Magadha kings Bimbisāra and Ajāsattu.

All the preceding points indicate a period of social and political change around 450 BCE, and a clear time difference between the Late Vedic texts and the earliest Buddhist ones, still pre-Pāli, of the lifetime of the Buddha.

4. Herodotus' ascetics.

⁷¹ Note that a section of the Malloi still appeared in Alexander's time in the lower Panjab: see Arrian, *Anabasis* 5.22.2, 6.4.1sq, 6.4.3, 6.5.4, 6.6.1sq, 6.14.2, *Indikā* 4.10, 19.8.

This is also supported, exceptionally, by an outside source, Herodotus (c. 484-425 BCE). Due to the expansion of the Persian empire into Gandhāra and Sindh (after 530/519 BCE), he had some knowledge of Northwest India, acquired from contemporary Greek authors in the service of the Persian King of Kings, and from the hearsay of merchants. Writing at c. 430/425 BCE, he describes the northwestern area, as one of wild barbarian tribes that eat raw meat but also of vegetarian ascetics.⁷²

This relatively early date presupposes a lively culture of ascetics, wandering all over northern India, before c. 430 BCE, and this agrees with the early experiences of the Buddha at age 30 (c. 430 BCE), when he joined other Eastern ascetics and with uncertain Jaina traditions about Pārśva, the supposed predecessor of Mahāvīra, at c. 750 BCE.

An early, though only relative date is also indicated by the wanderings of Yājñavalkya's fellow Brahmin contemporaries up to Madra (N. Panjab, BĀU 3), and by the fate of Yājñavalkya himself. He became first attested 'sannyāsīn' in Indian literature.⁷³

However, as indicated, I leave aside the development of religious thought and philosophy, as such data are treacherous. For example, can we assume some form of early Sāṅkhya in RV 10.90, in the opposition and conjunction of *puruṣa* and *virāj*? Which idea then disappeared from sight for many centuries.

Nevertheless, the Buddha's non-*ātman* theory is clearly based on the long history of *ātman* speculation in the late Brāhmaṇas and early Upaniṣads.

§ 4. The political situation

Taking now a closer look at the political situation during the life time of the Buddha (see table 1), we can discern a triangular set up between the powerful kingdoms of Kosala and Magadha on the one hand and the equally powerful Vajjian confederation on the other. A few marginal states, such as the kingdoms of Kāśi (Bārānasi) and Kosāmbi/Kauśāmbī in the lower Doāb also played a varying role.

Kāśi was a marginal, barely Vedicized territory even in Late Vedic texts,⁷⁴ and the heavily Sanskritizing Kosala was still half-despised by Vedic Brahmins. Their kings belonged to the «degenerate» Ikṣvāku lineage, and their

⁷² Herodotus, *Histories* 3.97.

⁷³ If we neglect legends about predecessors of Vardhamāna Mahāvīra, such as the second last Tirthaṅkara, Pārśva.

⁷⁴ In the ŚB, they are said to have lost the sacred fires for 10 generations, i.e. they never possessed them.

crown sprince spoke like the easterners (with two tones?) and «could not be understood.»⁷⁵

According to the Pāli texts, Kāśi and Kosala were in constant conflict and conquered and reconquered each other several times. During the Buddha's lifetime, Kāśi was finally conquered by Kosala and was given to Pasenadi's sister Kosaladevī as dowry when she was married to Bimbisāra of Magadha. Her son Ajātasattu thus was also the King of Kāśi. These kings contemporary with the Buddha are best dated according to his revised life time. As is well known now, he is thought to have lived for 80 years from c. 460 to 380 BCE.⁷⁶

However, there are a few precious data in Late Vedic texts that, on first view, seem to indicate an overlap with the kings attested during the lifetime of the Buddha. For example, a possible descendant of Pasenadi could be the Vedic king Brahmadata Prāsenajita of Kosala. He occurs just once in a ritual discussion, and as an isolated reference, in the midst of a Middle to Late Vedic Brāhmaṇa text (JB I 337-8: §115).⁷⁷ Also mentioned is his Purohita, who, curiously, is called Brahmadata as well, but whose patronym is Caikitaneya and his clan name is Dālbhya.⁷⁸

The Jaiminiya Br. tale is told in perfect tense,⁷⁹ which is the contemporary style of the late Brāhmaṇas⁸⁰ of the «southeastern Koine.» The passage is somewhat corrupt, so that neither Caland nor Bodewitz translated it in its entirety.⁸¹

This Kosala king (*Kausalyo rājā*), called Brahmadata, had a son who «speaks like the Easterners» and could not be understood. This criticism,⁸² however, befits much more the low esteem for the emerging Kosala lineage than the prominent role of Kosala during the lifetime of the Buddha.

⁷⁵ JB 1.337 §115.

⁷⁶ See H. Bechert (ed.), *Die Datierung des historischen Buddha*. AAWG 189, 194, 222, Göttingen 1991, 1992, 1997. -- According to older Indological accounts, he lived from 563-483 BCE; similarly in Ceylonese dating.

⁷⁷ H. Bodewitz, *The Jyotiṣṭoma ritual: Jaiminiya-Brāhmaṇa I, 66-364. Introduction, translation and commentary*. Leiden 1990, transl. p. 191, comm. 314.

⁷⁸ Possibly indicating the lineage of the famous Pañcāla king Keśin Dālbhya (or Dārbhya), who was responsible for the invention and subsequent insertion of the *Kaiśinī dikṣā* into the Soma ritual, see VādhB 4.37: 47 sqq, swapping knowledge with a dead king as goose; cf. KB 7.4, JB 2.53.

⁷⁹ M. Witzel, *On the origin of the literary device of the 'Frame Story'*.

⁸⁰ M. Witzel, *Tracing the Vedic dialects*, p. 139 sqq.

⁸¹ See comments by W. Caland, *Das Jaiminiya-Brāhmaṇa in Auswahl*. Amsterdam 1919: 129, and cf. H. W. Bodewitz, *The Jyotiṣṭoma ritual*, transl. p. 191, comm. p. 314.

⁸² Cf. H. W. Bodewitz, *The Jyotiṣṭoma ritual*: p. 314.

It is thus not entirely clear whether this particular Prāsenajita could indeed be the son of Pasenadi.

Prāsenajita would be a descendant of *Prasenajit, who is not attested in Vedic, and would have lived a generation later than *Prasenajit/Pasenadi of Kosala. There is indeed a late very tradition of Brahmadata as one of the sons of Pasenadi.⁸³

However, Brahmadata is a very common name in the Pāli texts, where it occurs, among others, as the name of various kings of Kosala and Kāśi.⁸⁴ The name was also fairly common in late Vedic⁸⁵ and it is thus possible that some confusion entered both the Vedic and Pāli texts: 'Brahmadata' is the name of several more or less famous persons. Such confusion is seen earlier with the accounts of the R̥gvedic Ten Kings' Battle,⁸⁶ where the Brāhmaṇa texts confuse kings of the R̥gvedic Bharata lineage and the location of the Sudās battle that had occurred some centuries earlier.

Second, the Magadha king Ajātasattu Vedehiputta may appear in some late Vedic texts as Ajātaśatru, both as a king of Kāśi⁸⁷ as well as a king of the Kurus.⁸⁸ However, it is not clear whether the Vedic Ajātaśatru of Kāśi is the same king as Ajātasattu of Magadha. Their identity is, at least, possible. According to Buddhist sources, the king of Kosala, Pasenadi, gave Kāśi to his daughter Kosaladevī as dowry when she married king Bimbisāra of Magadha. Therefore, their son Ajātaśattu became king of Kāśi as well. The Vedic texts may have mentioned him as just as such, as to avoid naming the despised Magadha, an *argumentum ex nihilo*.

⁸³ Only according to the Theragāthā commentary 1.460, see G. P. Malalasekara, *Dictionary of Pali proper names*, II p. 171; 174, n. 39, the latter according to the (late) Divyāvadāna 369.

⁸⁴ Vin. 1.342 sqq: Brahmadata, Purohita of the Kāśi King; Theragāthā 441-446 (221) by Brahmadata, son of the King of Kosala, born at Sāvattthī «in this Buddha age»; and in the Jātakas, Divyāvadāna. Among these, the Vin. and Theragāthā are sufficiently old; the rest of the attestations can be due to a later or indeed, a very late tradition.

⁸⁵ ŚB 14.4.1.26, JB 1.333, 337, JUB 1.59.1, 1.38.1, BĀU 1.3.24, VaikhGS 2.7, cf. Pān. 4.1.99, see M. Witzel, *Tracing the Vedic dialects*, n. 264.

⁸⁶ For this see M. Witzel, *R̥gvedic history: poets, chieftains and politics*. in: G. Erdosy (ed.) *Language, Material Culture and Ethnicity. The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, ed. G. Erdosy, Berlin/New York: de Gruyter 1995, 307-352; and: *The Vedas and the Epics: Some Comparative Notes on Persons, Lineages, Geography, and Grammar*. In: P. Koskikallio (ed.) *Epics, Khilas, and Puranas. Continuities and Ruptures. Proceedings of the Third Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Puranas. September 2002*. Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Sciences and the Arts 2005: 21-80.

⁸⁷ BĀU 2.1.1-17, KauṣU 4.1-17, 19.

⁸⁸ VādhBr. 4.75.

However, to begin with, the designation *ajātaśatru* «one who has 'unborn' (non-existent) enemies» is not rare and is indeed found since the *Rgveda*,⁸⁹ It can have been the name of many men ever since. One of them, the Kuru King *Ajātaśatru*, is definitely to be excluded as being identical with *Ajātasattu*. He is the son of a *Medhātithi* (a *maidhātitha*), not of *Bimbisāra* or whatever this Magadha king may have been called in Vedic.⁹⁰

Yet, the Veda also has one mentioning of a son of a certain *Ajātraśatru*, called *Bhadrasena Ājātaśatrava*.⁹¹ This occurs in a ritual discussion of the *Sautrāmaṇi* ritual. He was bewitched by one *Āruṇi* (whose son *Kusurbinda* has an autochthonous name). The famous *Yājñavalkya* is said to have responded to this kind of sorcery. This would place the tale in pre-Magadhan times.

It is however notable that *Ajātaśatru* is not called a king here. The appearance of *Āruṇi* could point to the *Brāhmaṇa/Upaniṣad* period⁹² but some *Āruṇis* are also mentioned in an early *Samhitā* text.⁹³

In addition, the *ŚB* passage occurs in the closing statements of the discussion of the *Sautrāmaṇi*, just before the *daśiṇās* (*ŚB* 5.5.5.16-18), and thus can have been added any time before the (late) redaction of the text.⁹⁴

Based on these data, *Bhadrasena* can be the son of any of the *Ajātaśatrus* in the Veda, mentioned or not, since the *RV*, though the juxtaposition of *Yājñavalkya* weighs in favor of a late Vedic timeframe of the tale.⁹⁵

Importantly, the late *Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa* already speaks of kings not belonging to the *Ṛsatriya* class - which is typical for the *Nanda* and *Maurya* dynasties and will have been so for the earlier *Magadha* kings as well.

⁸⁹ *RV* 5.34.1, 8.93.15, *PS* 15.2.2; *ŚB* 14.5.1.1 sqq, *KĀ* 6.1; as king of *Kāśi*: *BĀU* 2.1.1-17, *KaṣU* 4.1-17,19; *ĀŚS*, *ŚŚS*; for later explanations in the *Pāli* comm., see G. P. Malalasekara, *Dictionary of Pāli proper names*, I 34.

⁹⁰ *Maidhātitha*, whose clan ancestor *Medhātithi* is known to the *RV*, does not occur in the *Pāli* canon, see G. P. Malalasekara, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper names*.

⁹¹ *ŚB* 5.5.5.14 = *ŚBK* 7.5.3.11.

⁹² For *Uddālaka Āruṇi*, see *Macdonell-Keith, Vedic Index I*, 87ff.

⁹³ *KS* 13.12: 194.7, where the only manuscript available then (*Ch*, a late *Kashmirian* style *Nāgarī* paper ms.) has, however, *aruṇayo*, who are mentioned next to the *Kaṇvas*, *Garbhas*, *Yāskas*, and *Kāpeyas*.

⁹⁴ M. Witzel, *The Development of the Vedic Canon and its Schools*, p. 314 sqq.327 sqq.

⁹⁵ *ŚB* 5.5.5.14: *Āruṇi*, not, with *Eggeling's* translation of *ŚB*: *Āraṇi*; *Eggeling* says: «*Ājātaśatru* of *Kāśi* (sic!)» was «very proficient in speculative theology, and jealous in this respect, of King *Janaka* of *Videha*.» It is unclear from where *Eggeling* extracted this information, as *Ajātaśatru* appears in the Veda only here, and along with *Gārgya* and *Yājñavalkya* in *BĀU* 2.1.1-17, *KaṣU* 4.1-17,19, (and, unrelated as king of the *Kuru*)! At best, one can adduce the quote of people shouting «*Janaka, Janaka!*» in *BĀU* 2.1.1., *KaṣU* 4.1.1.

In sum, both the names *Ajātaśatru* and *Bhadrasena* were common in Late Vedic and at the time of the Buddha. As really existent historical personalities, the Vedic ones do not agree very well with the Buddha's contemporaries. At best, we may hesitatingly accept the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa's *Bhadrasena Ājataśatrava* and a Kāśi king *Ajātaśātru* as referring to *Ajātasattu*, who perhaps does not appear otherwise in the Veda as to avoid the mentioning of Magadha. Though the latter is possible⁹⁶ it remains an *ex nihilo* argument, which is always better avoided.

Indeed, *Ajātraśatru* of Magadha is unknown to even the latest Vedic texts, though a Brahmin living in Magadha occurs in a very late Āraṇyaka. Most likely, *Ajātaśatru* was too late to be included here. All Vedic kings mentioned are non-Magadha ones. Magadha had not yet emerged as a major player in the East.

This contrasts remarkably with the Buddha's many conversations with *Pasenadi* of Kosala, *Bimbisāra* and *Ajātasattu* of Magadha, notably his political discussion about the Vajji confederation with *Ajātaśattu's* Brahmin(!) minister *Vassakāra*.

However, the Vajji (*Vrji*), *Sakya* and other late immigrants into the East do not occur in Late Vedic texts (with the exception of the *Malla*), -- which again points to a certain gap between the late Vedic and the early Buddhist texts⁹⁷. The *Sakya* etc. do not appear as anti-Brahmanic in the early Buddhist texts: apparently some acculturation occurred after their immigration and before the testimony of the earliest Buddhist texts.

In sum, it is unavoidable to conclude, that -- in spite of some uncertain allusions to *Ajātaśatru* and *Prasenajit* and their sons-- an undefined amount of time must have passed between the Late Vedic and early Buddhist texts. These data are summed up in table 3.

TABLE 3.

VEDA:	PĀLI:
Vedic texts, down to :	
Immigration of <i>Ikṣvāku</i> , <i>Pūru</i> late immigrations:	
<i>Malla</i> , <i>Vajji</i> , <i>Sakya</i>	
Kosala & Videha: acculturation	
to <i>Kuru</i> orthopraxy	

⁹⁶ M. Witzel, *The Development of the Vedic Canon and its Schools*, p. 319 sq; cf. J. Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha*.

⁹⁷ Some Late Upanisadic additions (such as BĀU 3.9, end) notwithstanding.

King Janaka only) (Mahā-Janaka remembered only)

Older Upaniṣads (BĀU, ChU, JUB), before c. 400 BCE includes Videha Vajji confederation

No evidence of cities (nagara); develop only after c. 450 BCE

Herodotus: Ascetics in Panjab, c. 420 BCE
First attested roving ascetic, Yājñavalkya

The Buddha,
c. 460-380 BCE,
his teachings:
earliest Buddhist texts

texts; Cities missing in earliest only villages, market places

(nigama)

Ār.: Brahmin in Magadha Magadha, Aṅga

Brahmin villages in

Para-Vedic languages with (2) tonal language known, but not accents spoken in the East

Vedic (chandas) preferred

late Vedic

Time span intervening between and Eastern MIA / Pāli texts

KOSALA

MAGADHA

VIDEHA

Kings:

Mahākosala

Mahāpadma

|

|

Kosala-Pasenadi : confederation: Malla,

Bimbisāra &

Vajji tribal

(*Prasenajit?), brother of → queen Kosaladevī, Sakya tribes, etc.

Licchavi,

|

(dowry: Kāśi),

|

her son:

Kāśi re-annexed by

Kosala

|

|

Sakya defeated by Kosala

|

Ajātasattu:

'Kausalya' Brahmadatta	~	Ajātaśatru	Brahmadatta of
Kosala/Benares			
Prāsenajita, kausalyo rājā		of Kāśi? ---	(and
		others of the same name)	
(JB) ~ Brahmadatta Caiki-		Not the Kuru king:	
taneya, son speaks like		Ajātaśatru Maidhātitha	
Easterners (prācyavat)		(VādhB)	
		Bhadrasena Ājātaśatrava	
		(ŚB) ~ Āruṇi; Yājñavalkya	
		Kosala conquered	
emergence of cities,			fully developed
cities in Pāli texts			
c. 450 BCE			(Sāvatti, etc.)
(Eastern grammarians;			
Pāṇini, c. 350 BCE?)			
Bhikṣu-Sūtra (monks' texts)			
Kamboja king			
final (phonetic) Veda redaction, c.350 BCE?			
			Buddh. texts transposed
into Pāli			
			collection/redaction, c.
250 BCE			

§ 5 Conclusion

Reviewing the materials adduced so far, the following can be stated.

* The Buddha lived in time of changes from villages to cities and from tribal states to large monarchies.

* Though he still knew about the living Vedic language (*chandās*), his own language, an early eastern Middle Indic of the borderland between Kosala and Videha, still had the perfect, which coincides with the standard of Eastern Vedic spoken in Kosala-Videha.

* The large majority of the Vedic texts, including that of the oldest Upaniṣads (BĀU, JUB, ChU) preceded him, and he reacted against the Upaniṣadic *ātman* theories.

* This occurred in a period where ascetics were common from Gandhāra to Bihar, c. 430 BCE, as Herodotus attests and Jaina tradition suggests, -- when both the Buddhist/Jaina order developed.

* The eastern countries and kings mentioned in Late Vedic texts are those well before the earliest Buddhist texts. Magadha was not yet a major power. Its prominent King Ajātasattu is not mentioned and can be identified with one of the Vedic Ajātaśatrus only with difficulty. In addition Bhadrasena, Ajātaśatru's son, belongs to a period well before that of Ajātasattu, to the time of Yajñavalkya of BĀU.

Cumulative evidence -- historical, archaeological and textual-- of the Late Vedic and early Buddhist texts therefore points to a clear time gap between both text corpora and the time periods they depict.

In sum, the results of this limited investigation, which intentionally excluded the development of thought, uphold the "traditional" view of several consecutive linguistic, textual and historical layers from Vedic to the earliest Buddhist texts. We can be fairly certain, that this sums up "wie es wirklich gewesen" -- *evam etaṃ bhūtapubbam*.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Thus, in the words of the Pāli canon, D. II 167,20; note O. v. Hinüber, Hoary Past, *JiABS* 9, 2008: 209.