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HORST BRINKHAUS

SŪRYAVAMŚA - SOMAVAMŚA - HARIVAMŚA.<sup>1</sup>

The two famous dynastic lines of the Sūryavamśa and Somavamśa have been used to back up claims to power by many Indian royal houses down to the present time. The original purpose of the two lines, however, was to specify the origin and ancestry of the main heroes of the two Sanskrit epics: the Sūryavamśa of the *Rāmāyaṇa* heroes and the Somavamśa of those of the *Mahābhārata*.

The question whether the two lineages were already defined and distinguished in the epics themselves or not - and whether a competition of sorts already existed between them - has been touched upon several times in the pertinent research:

– Thus E. Washburn Hopkins in his *Epic Mythology* of 1915 declared that the solar line of the *Rāmāyaṇa* had been merely a continuation of Vedic ideas, and that it was against that background that the genealogists of the *Mahābhārata* "wished to assure equal dignity for the parvenu Moon-race with that long claimed by the solar dynasty."<sup>2</sup>

– Michael Witzel, in his Dubrovnik paper of 2002, corroborated Hopkins's view; according to him, the formulation of the Moon lineage in the *Mahābhārata* "remains inexplicable, unless one regards [it] as a reaction to the sun mythology of the powerful Ikṣvāku lineage."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a slightly revised and enlarged version of a paper delivered during the 14th World Sanskrit Conference 2009 in Kyoto. I am thankful for valuable comments on my paper by John Brockington and Peter Schreiner.

<sup>2</sup> Hopkins 1915: 90.

<sup>3</sup> Witzel 2005: 46.

My own studies on the subject, though mainly concerned with the *Harivaṃśa* text, have made me sceptical about any such assumption which presupposes knowledge of a double lineage in the two epics. In the following, I shall first present the results of my investigations on the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* and, with those as a basis, turn to the details surrounding the pointed distinction between the Sūrya- and Somavaṃśas in the *Harivaṃśa*.

Let us, however, first of all have a short look at the **Vedic** conception of the early history of mankind. This tradition, Thomas Oberlies notes,<sup>4</sup> has the human race starting from Vivasvat and his son Manu as the first mortals. Vivasvat at that early time was not yet identified with the Sun-god. With the help of a sacrifice, Manu obtained a daughter, Iḷā. She became famous as the mother of her son Purūravas, who was invariably called by his metronymic Aiḷa, so that his father remained unknown. It is this Purūravas Aiḷa who, Oberlies asserts, is the "real primogenitor of men".

Now we can start with the epics, first of all with the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Rāma and his family are consistently traced back there to Ikṣvāku as their eponym, who at the same time was the first king in Ayodhyā. What exactly the genealogical term *aikṣvāka*, occurring occasionally in the *Rāmāyaṇa* text,<sup>5</sup> refers to is made clear in two detailed lists of Rāma's ancestors.<sup>5</sup> The line starts uniformly with the creator-god Brahmā Svayambhū, continues with Marīci → Kaśyapa → Vivasvat → Manu → Ikṣvāku, and ends after a long series of further ancestors with Rāma and his brothers. One innovation in comparison with the Veda is the fact that Ikṣvāku is presented here as the eldest son of Manu. But no particular emphasis on Vivasvat can be discerned in the text, though he may already be understood here as the Sun-god.

Apart from this it is conspicuous that in the line between Ikṣvāku and Rāma are included two well-known ancestors of the *Mahābhārata* heroes, namely Nahuṣa and his son Yayāti.

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<sup>4</sup> Oberlies 1998: 384 f.

<sup>5</sup> Rm I,69 and Rm II,102.

Sheldon I. Pollock suspects that the *Mahābhārata* genealogy was deliberately ignored in the *Rāmāyaṇa*,<sup>6</sup> but I see no grounds for this assumption - at least in kāṇḍas I to VI (about kāṇḍa VII I shall have something to say a little later). The two names could easily have been borrowed from Vedic tradition: after all, Nahuṣa and Yayāti are mentioned side by side with Vivasvat and Manu in one verse of a Ṛgvedic hymn.<sup>7</sup> In the older portions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* there is no evidence whatsoever that its authors had any notion of the two lines which later on came to be known as the Sūrya- and Somavaṃśas.

Remarkably enough, the situation takes on a different complexion if we take into account the relatively late Uttarakāṇḍa of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In this book VII there appear to be clear indications of an underlying rivalry between the ancestors of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and those of the *Mahābhārata* heroes:

-- In one passage,<sup>8</sup> famous forefathers of the *Mahā-bhārata* lineage, namely Duṣyanta, Gādhi and Purūravas, are portrayed as cowards when pitted against the former Ayodhyā king Anaraṇya.

-- In another passage,<sup>9</sup> the Yayāti episode is told more or less in accordance with the *Mahābhārata* version; Yayāti is appropriately specified as a descendant of Purūravas, the son of Budha, but at the same time the progeny of his eldest son Yadu are cursed and become Rākṣasas.

-- And again in a third passage,<sup>10</sup> Purūravas is firmly identified as the son of Budha and of Iḷā, and Iḷā is cursed there by Śiva to living life back and forth as a male and as a female. This passage certainly presupposes the version in the

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<sup>6</sup> Pollock 1986: 42: The *Rāmāyaṇa*'s "silence about the *Mahābhārata* may come not from ignorance but from wilful disregard. As if it were attempting to supersede the second epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa* incorporates the great personages of the lunar dynasty into Rāma's solar lineage."

<sup>7</sup> RS X,63,1:  
*parāvato ye didhīsamta āpyaṃ manuprītāso janimā vivasvataḥ /  
yayāter ye nahuṣyasya barhiṣi devā āsate te adhi bruvaṃtu naḥ //*

<sup>8</sup> Rm VII,19,5 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Rm VII, App. I,8 (well-attested after adhyāya 51).

<sup>10</sup> Rm VII,79-81.

*Mahābhārata* genealogy and may perhaps even be based on the expanded version of the *Harivaṃśa*.<sup>11</sup>

In summary, one can say that in the Uttarakāṇḍa (and only there in the *Rāmāyaṇa*) there are clear signs of knowledge of and a reaction to the *Mahābhārata* genealogy, although nowhere in the whole of the *Rāmāyaṇa* text is explicit mention made of the Sūrya- and Somavaṃśas or of a clearly conceived distinction between the two lines of separate divine origin.

If we now turn to the *Mahābhārata*, the first thing to emphasize is the following: Genealogy is a didactic theme; and I have not found in the narrative parts of the *Mahābhārata*, which are normally thought of as forming the core of the epic, any such genealogical derivations of the main heroes as are presented in the didactic parts of it. In fact, insofar as there is any genealogical information in the narrative portions it can be regarded as a relatively late addition to the work. In other words, neither the solar nor the lunar line makes its appearance as such in the older textual strata of the *Mahābhārata*.

As is well known, the most comprehensive genealogical chapters are to be found in the Ādiparvan.<sup>12</sup> There the main *Mahābhārata* heroes are traced back to the progenitors of mankind, and even further back to their divine ancestors, up to the creator-god Brahmā. As in the genealogical chapters of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, here again there are clear references to the Vedic model: Purūravas Aiḷa appears as the specific progenitor of the *Mahābhārata* lineage. Knowledge of the *Rāmāyaṇa* genealogy, too, can be taken for granted, since Ikṣvāku again is named as the son of Manu. Indeed, the term *ikṣvākuvāṃśa* appears in quite a few other passages in the critical text of the *Mahābhārata*.<sup>13</sup>

In the Ādiparvan genealogy, ten children of Manu are enumerated, with Ikṣvāku as the fifth and Iḷā as the eighth child. However, only Iḷā's descendants are followed up. Manu figures here as the progenitor of mankind,<sup>14</sup> and correspondingly the

<sup>11</sup> See further below p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> A long genealogy in MBh I,59-60; 70; 89, and a short one in I,90.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. in MBh I,91,1; 166,1; III,126,5; 256,6; XII,160,77; XIII,77,1.

<sup>14</sup> MBh I,70,11cd:

*manor vaṃśo mānavānāṃ tato 'yaṃ prathito 'bhavat //*

whole line is specified in the final verse as the "Ailavaṃśa within the Manuvaṃśa".<sup>15</sup> This shows that the focus is here, in the first place, on the human ancestors of the heroes, and only secondarily on their divine origins - thus according well with the observation that in the only passage in the whole epic where the descent of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* heroes is referred to together, these two lines are designated as the purely human *ailavaṃśa* and *ikṣvākuvāṃśa* respectively.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, in the Ādiparvan, the lineage of the heroes is traced further back to their divine origins, to as far back as Brahmā.<sup>17</sup> But no particular focus on the Sun-god is noticeable in the text. Tracing back Purūravas's descent strictly in accordance with the Vedic tradition, however, gave rise to a vexing problem, since only his mother's name and not his father's is mentioned in the Veda. The genealogists of the *Mahābhārata* solved the problem by simply claiming that Ilā was both Purūravas's mother and father at one and the same time.<sup>18</sup>

This solution obviously could not satisfy the expectations of other genealogists. That is why we find a correction in the form of a newly conceived descent for Purūravas in another genealogical passage in the Dronaparvan.<sup>19</sup> This passage, which contains the lineage of the Yādavas as a supplement to the

<sup>15</sup> MBh I,89,55cd:

*jātā manor anvavāye ailavaṃśavivardhanāḥ //*

<sup>16</sup> MBh II,13,4-5:

*ailasyekṣvākuvāṃśasya prakṛtiṃ paricakṣate /  
rājānaḥ śreṇibaddhāś ca tato 'nye kṣatriyā bhuvī //  
ailavaṃśyās tu ye rājāṃs tathaivekṣvākavo nṛpāḥ /  
tāni caikaśataṃ viddhi kulāni bharatarṣabha //*

<sup>17</sup> MBh I,59,60, 70 and 89 present Brahmā → Marīci → Kaśyapa + Aditi → Vivasvat → Yama → Mārtaṇḍa → Manu → Ilā → Purūravas → Āyus ...; while the summary in MBh I,90,7 (in prose) has Dakṣa → Aditi → Vivasvat → Manu → Ilā → Purūravas → Āyus ...

<sup>18</sup> MBh I,70,16:

*purūravās tato vidvān ilāyāṃ samapadyata /  
sā vai tasyābhavan mātā pitā ceti hi naḥ śrutaḥ //*

<sup>19</sup> MBh VII,119,4-5:

*atreḥ putro 'bhavat somaḥ somasya tu budhaḥ smṛtaḥ /  
budhasyaiko mahendrābhaḥ putra āsīt purūravāḥ //  
purūravasa āyus tu āyuso nahuṣaḥ sutāḥ /  
nahuṣasya yayātis tu rājā devarṣisammataḥ //*

genealogical scheme of the Ādiparvan, at the same time deliberately alters the descent of Purūravas so as to give the following succession:

Atri → Soma → Budha → Purūravas.

What is remarkable here is the resulting paternal line: Aditi and Ilā are eliminated, and that is why Manu is no longer mentioned either. The line goes back to Atri, who is known as one of the six mental sons of Brahmā from the Ādiparvan genealogy. Again, there is no particular emphasis on the Moon-god in the Droṇaparvan lineage.

But in four further *Mahābhārata* passages, the roots that go back to Soma are clearly highlighted for different members of the *Mahābhārata* lineage. Two of these passages<sup>20</sup> clearly refer to and thus presuppose the Droṇaparvan genealogy, while the other two belong to relatively late portions in the *Mahābhārata* text: one occurs in the Hanumat-Bhīma episode,<sup>21</sup> qualified by John Brockington as "particularly late",<sup>22</sup> and the other in the Nārāyaṇīya<sup>23</sup> in a passage declared by the authors of the *Nārāyaṇīya-Studien* to be one of the latest additions to it.<sup>24</sup>

This emphasis on the descent from the Moon-god may finally have provided the needed incentive to accentuate the solar origin for the parallel line of the Aikṣvākas: The solar

<sup>20</sup> MBh III,177,6:

*nahuṣo nāma rājāham āsaṃ pūrvas tavānagha /  
prathitaḥ pañcamaḥ somād āyoh putro narādhipa //*

MBh V,147,3:

*somaḥ prajāpatiḥ pūrvaḥ kurūṇām vaṃśavardhanaḥ /  
somād babhūva ṣaṣṭho vai yayātir nahuṣātmajaḥ //*

<sup>21</sup> MBh III,147,3:

*kauravaḥ somavaṃśīyaḥ ..... /  
..... bhīmasena iti śrutaḥ //*

<sup>22</sup> Brockington 1998: 478. In a letter (22 October 2009), John Brockington added that the occurrence of *somavaṃśīya* "in the context of the Hanumat-Bhīma episode looks ... very much like an implicit (indeed fairly overt) contrast with the sūryavaṃśa lineage of the Rāmāyana".

<sup>23</sup> MBh XII,329,31 (in prose; Śacī addresses Nahuṣa): *prakṛtyā tvam dharmavatsalaḥ somavaṃśodbhavaś ca.*

<sup>24</sup> Schreiner (ed.) 1997: 167 and table inserted after p. 414.

lineage is explicitly named only in one place in the *Mahābhārata*, in a passage referring to Kalmāṣapāda:<sup>25</sup> Though he is assigned to the *ikṣvākuvaṃśa* in two different places,<sup>26</sup> here he is called *ādityavaṃśaprabhava*, and this passage in particular, Jacob Ensink suspects,<sup>27</sup> is a relatively late addition among the diverse Kalmāṣapāda passages of the *Mahābhārata*.

To sum up the results for the *Mahābhārata*: On the one hand, there is the genealogical view that both main lineages, that of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and that of the *Mahābhārata* heroes, descend from the human progenitor Manu, and ultimately from the creator-god Brahmā. Since this view poses the problem concerning the paternal line of Purūravas, an alternative scheme emerged in which the Moon-god's son Budha figures as Purūravas's father. This lineage eventually resulted in the idea of a lunar line for the *Mahābhārata* heroes, which entailed in turn a solar line for the Aikṣvākas. This, however, would mean that the development was exactly the reverse of what former scholars have assumed: not the Moon race is to be regarded as the "parvenu" (Hopkins) and the formulation of the Moon lineage as "a reaction to the sun mythology" (Witzel); rather, it seems to me to have happened just the other way round. In any case, the combined notion of Soma- and Sūryavaṃśas is just starting to be developed in unmistakably late additions to the *Mahābhārata*, but it does not figure in the epic in any sustained way.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> MBh I,173,11: *ādityavaṃśaprabhavaḥ*.

<sup>26</sup> MBh I,166,1 and XIII,77,1: *ikṣvākuvaṃśajah*.

<sup>27</sup> Ensink 1968: 581.

<sup>28</sup> After I delivered the paper during the WSC 2009 in Kyoto, Alf Hildebeitel drew the audience's attention to the fact that Arjuna's son Abhimanyu is viewed in the *Mahābhārata* as an incarnation of the son of the Moon-god Soma, and that it was this same Abhimanyu who procreated the only surviving descendant (*vaṃśakara*) of the Pāṇḍavas, Parikṣit. According to Hildebeitel, the implication is that Soma was here making sure that his own line, the Somavaṃśa, would be perpetuated.

In reply, I should like to emphasize that the *Mahābhārata* offers no explicit evidence that Abhimanyu has secured the continuation of the Somavaṃśa as a representative of that line (just as Karṇa, the son of Sūrya, is nowhere said to represent the Sūryavaṃśa in the epic). What is said about Abhimanyu and his son as the only descendant of his family is the following: In MBh I and XVIII, Abhimanyu is mentioned as being identical with the son of the Moon (under the name of *suvarcas* in I,61,86 or *varcas* in XVIII,5,16). He is termed a

The first comprehensive description of a complete scheme of the two main dynasties is to be found in an appendix to the *Mahābhārata*, the *Harivaṃśa*. The Harivaṃśaparvan of that work is clearly based on the genealogies of both epics: it draws on details of the Aikṣvāka line from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, while at the same time attempting to harmonize the two accounts of Purūravas's paternal roots in the *Mahābhārata*. What is new in the *Harivaṃśa* is above all the fact that both the lines are explicitly traced back to the Sun- and Moon-gods as their primogenitors.

In order to elucidate this a short table of contents of the Harivaṃśaparvan may be useful:

HV 1-7	<b>Introduction</b>	
	1-6	cosmogony and a genealogy of the primeval beings
	7	cosmology: the manvantara doctrine
HV 8-29	<b>Main part:</b> Vaṃśānucarita in the Antara of Manu Vaivasvata:	
	8-19	<b>Solar race:</b>
	8	Vivasvat's birth and the generating of Manu
	9-10	Manu's descendants: the main line of the Aikṣvākas
	(11-19)	Manu Vaivasvata as Śrāddhadeva)
	20-29	<b>Lunar race:</b>
	20	Soma's birth and the generating of Budha
	21-29	Budha's descendants: Purūravas etc.

*vaṃśakara* only in North Indian manuscripts of the epic (MBh I, App. I, No. 42, line 21, and in the critical apparatus of I,90,89), and there explicitly with regard to the *bharatavaṃśa*, not the Somavaṃśa. After his death on the battlefield, Abhimanyu enters the Moon (*abhimanyur ... viveśa somam*, XVIII,5,16-17) and later on he is pointed out to Yudhiṣṭhira in heaven as a companion of the Moon (*somena sahitaṃ paśya ... abhimanyum ...*, XVIII,4,15). The fact that Parikṣit is the only descendant of the Pāṇḍavas is, to be sure, emphasized in the *Mahābhārata*; it is reported at length that he was killed as an embryo and that the still-born child had to be resurrected by Kṛṣṇa on the specific grounds that a male descendant was necessary for the *śrāddha* ritual of his forefathers and because the Pāṇḍavas wanted the line of their family to be continued (MBh X,16 and XIV,60-69). There is no mention, though, of the Somavaṃśa being preserved through the intervention of its progenitor, be it direct or indirect. This seems to me to be significant and, although an *argumentum ex silentio*, provides evidence to counter the assumption that the notion of a Somavaṃśa was firmly fixed in the mind of the creator of these *Mahābhārata* chapters.

I separate, as constituting an introduction, the first seven adhyāyas from the rest, which can be taken as the main part, consisting largely of the Vaṃśānucarita. It in turn is subdivided into two principal sections dealing consecutively with the solar and lunar races.

The introduction mainly offers a cosmology: It starts with a cosmogonical account, presents the origin of the first living beings in the world, and finally describes the scheme of altogether fourteen Manu ages, the Manvantaras.

The scope of the following main part is restricted to the seventh age, the present period of Manu Vaivasvata. In the opening subsection, on the solar race, Vivasvat's birth and his later begetting of his son Manu is first described at some length. Afterwards the main line of descent via Manu's eldest son Ikṣvāku is recounted in detail down to Rāma and fourteen further generations after him. This subsection concludes with the comment that the Ikṣvākuvamśa has been treated in the foregoing text as the main line within Vivasvat's lineage.<sup>29</sup>

In a manner wholly parallel to the first subsection, the second subsection starts with a detailed account of the birth of the founder of the other main line, namely Soma, and with his begetting of a son of his own, Budha. Subsequently his numerous descendants via Purūravas down to the main Mahābhārata heroes are presented in even more copious detail, which is after all understandable, given that these descendants form the main subject of this Mahābhārata khila.

Now, this second subsection exclusively presents the *Mahābhārata* account of the paternal descent of Purūravas as presented in the short account of the Droṇaparvan. But the account of the Ādiparvan is also offered in the Harivaṃśaparvan: it is found in an excursus in the first subsection on the solar race:

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<sup>29</sup> HV 10,79:

*ikṣvākuvamśaprabhavāḥ prādhānyeneha kīrtitāḥ /  
ete vivasvato vamśe rājāno bhūrtejasah //*

HV 9: First part of the solar lineage	
9,1-2	Nine sons of Manu Vaivasvata: Ikṣvāku etc.
9,3-20	Excursus on Manu's "daughter" Iḷā
9,21-37	Descendants of Ikṣvāku's younger brothers
9,38 ff.	Main line of Manu: Ikṣvāku and his progeny

As can be seen in this table, after the enumeration of the nine sons of Manu the text is interrupted by the statement that, even prior to begetting Ikṣvāku, Manu had celebrated a sacrifice to Mitra and Varuṇa, in reward for which he had obtained what he thought would be a daughter of his own, whom he named Iḷā. Iḷā, however, was afterwards claimed by Mitra and Varuṇa as their own daughter, but they allowed her to change her sex and, in the guise of a son of Manu, named Sudyumna, care for Manu's progeny. Later on, Iḷā, back to being a woman, provides Budha with their common son Purūravas, and then as the male Sudyumna begets further sons to carry on Manu's line.

Obviously the author of the *Harivaṃśaparvan* intended in this way to do justice to the different epic accounts mentioned above: On the one hand, Ikṣvāku is introduced now as the eldest son and thus the founder of one main line of Manu, while, on the other, both Iḷā's dual sex and Budha's begetting of Purūravas is taken up and elaborated on. Thus the two disparate conceptions of the *Mahābhārata* are harmonized and linked to each other. At the same time, both main genealogical lines are traced back to separate divine origins: Ikṣvāku and his progeny is presented as part of Vivasvat's lineage, while Purūravas now enjoys a double divine descent: on his mother's side, he is the grandchild of the two gods Mitra and Varuṇa, while paternally he traces his roots back to the Moon-god Soma.

Both these genealogies, finally, have their starting point in the primeval god Hari Nārāyaṇa. This at least is the upshot of the seven introductory adhyāyas of the *Harivaṃśa*. It is Hari who, in the beginning, sets in motion the creation of the whole world<sup>30</sup> and, at the end, re-absorbs it in the *pralaya*

<sup>30</sup> For Hari Nārāyaṇa in the cosmogonical account of HV 1, see Brinkhaus forthcoming.

process.<sup>31</sup> The very title *Harivaṃśa*, however, makes it clear that its main subject is not cosmology, but genealogy. And thus the primeval ancestor of all living beings is no longer Brahmā, but Hari Nārāyaṇa.

But that is not all: The last śloka of the introductory section<sup>32</sup> states that Hari intervenes in worldly affairs in the middle of a cosmic cycle, and that this happened during the time of the *Mahābhārata* events when he was born as Kṛṣṇa. He thus became the most illustrious member of the Somavaṃśa, as described further on in the work. The title *Harivaṃśa* can be and has been understood in the past as an allusion both to Hari as the primeval origin of all genealogies and at the same time to Hari's incarnation as Kṛṣṇa, who marks the climax within the genealogy of that main dynastic line. In any case, the title sums up what is probably the most basic theme in this *Mahābhārata khila* as a whole, namely the relevance and effectiveness of the divine element for the cosmic and historical progression of the world.

### Literature:

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<sup>31</sup> HV 7,52c-54c:

*pūrṇe yugasahasre ... bhūtāni sarvāṇi ...  
praviśanti surāśreṣṭhaṃ harim nārāyaṇaṃ prabhum ...*

<sup>32</sup> HV 7,56

*vṛṣṇivamśaprasaṅgena kathyamānaṃ purāṇanam /  
yatrotpanno mahātmā sa harir vṛṣṇikule prabhuḥ //*

- HV = *The Harivaṃśa, Being the Khila or Supplement to the Mahābhārata*. Critically edited by P. L. Vaidya. 2 vols. Poona 1969-71.
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