

## Geographical Location of Vedic *Iriṇa* in Southern Rajasthan

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**Abstract:** Vedic literature refers to a place or region by name *Iriṇa*. In the Ṛgveda it appears as a locale frequented by a particular wild animal for drinking water. But with the passage of time, in the Yajurveda texts, the word acquires a negative meaning as a desert or a place devoid of water. Gradually, in the ritualistic Vedic texts *Iriṇa* gets more and more associated with disaster or misfortune. The physical features associated with *Iriṇa*, as described metaphorically in the Vedic texts, are analysed to identify its probable location. It is possible the word *Iriṇa* is the progenitor of the Greek name (gulf of) *Eirinon* of Periplus which is presently designated as the Raṇ-of-Kutch. During the Ṛgveda period *Iriṇa* was in all probability, situated a little north of the Raṇ-of-Kutch. Available data indicates its location in the Luni-Jawai plains west of the Aravallis, in Rajasthan. The small town Erinpura (25° 5' N, 73° 3' E) appears to retain memories of the Vedic *Iriṇa*.

**Keywords:** Indian pre-history, Vedic literature, Aravallis, Raṇ-of-Kutch, Southern Rajasthan.

### INTRODUCTION

The Raṇ-of-Kutch, a vast region of wasteland, in north Gujarat is generally described as a salt marsh. The region is of considerable interest to historians, archaeologists, geologists as well as common people. One of the ancient cities of the Harappan period, now called Dholavira, has been excavated in this region. Many other Harappan settlements have been unearthed in Kutch, making the region of special importance in delineating ancient Indian history. Since the River Sarasvati, also flowed in the same broad geographical province, Vedic culture must have been influenced by its nearness to this region. Starting from the Ṛgveda (RV), Vedic literature refers to a special type of land called *Iriṇa*, quite often in a nuanced fashion. In the scheme of Vedic rituals, as described in the *Brahmaṇās* and *Sūtras*, *Iriṇa* occupies a significant place associated with *Nirrti* the deity of disaster. The word is used in the epics in the sense of empty or barren land. In one place, the *Mahābhārata* refers to it as land formed by recession of the sea. Gradually, the word is rarely used and disappears from classical Sanskrit literature altogether. There are, however, sufficient hints available in Vedic literature to discern what could have been the most likely region indicated by *Iriṇa*. In the past, *Iriṇa* no doubt had been identified with the Raṇ-of-Kutch (Bisht, 1989; Agrawala, 1953), but a proper evaluation of this identification appears necessary. The present paper critically reviews the literature about

the word *Iriṇa* taking into account, associated names, legends and other metaphorical hints. This is followed by a discussion on the identification of dominant physical features around *Iriṇa*. It is concluded that the Vedic *Iriṇa* was in all probability located a little northward of the Raṇ-of-Kutch.

### *Iriṇa* in the Ṛgveda (RV)

Ṛgveda is the most ancient literature of India that has attracted worldwide attention for more than a century. Transmitted through an unbroken oral tradition of remarkable accuracy, it is the source to which many social, philosophical, religious and scientific concepts of later India can be traced. The word *Iriṇa* occurs six times in the RV. In the first book (*maṇḍala*) of RV, hymn (*sūkta*) 186 is a prayer addressed to several deities; Savitar, Aryamā, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, Indra, Tvaṣṭar, Marut and others. Verses (*mantra*) 8 and 9 are about a place called *Eriṇa* a variant of the word *Iriṇa*. The text in its translation by Griffith (1896) reads:

So may the Maruts, armed with mighty weapons, rest here on heaven and earth with hearts in concord. As gods whose cars have dappled steeds like torrents, destroyers of the foe allies of Mitra. They hasten on to happy termination their orders when they are made known by glory. As on a fair bright day the arrow flieth over all **the barren soil** their missiles sparkle. (RV 1.186. 8-9)

Griffith translates the word *Eriṇam* as barren soil. The context is that of Maruts, who armed with their mighty weapons can discharge sparkling arrows over a region or place called *Eriṇa*. Next, we do not meet the word till the eighth book. In verse 8.4.3 addressed to Indra the word gets translated as *desert's watery pool*. In hymn 8.87 addressed to Aśvins, it appears twice in its basic form *Iriṇa*, interpreted as a *pool*. The interesting point here is that in all the three cases *Iriṇa* is associated with a special animal called *Gaura*. The simile in the hymn refers to the thirst and swiftness of *Gaura* to go to the pool. Griffith is not sure of the meaning of *Gaura*, since he takes this animal to be *wild-bull* in one place, and an *antelope* in another place (RV 8.4.10). The nature of this animal is mentioned in RV (7.69.6) as being thirsty and going to a glittering place. Thus, it may be inferred that the composers of these verses associated *Iriṇa* with water holes and the habitat of animals called *Gaura*. The next usage of *Iriṇa* is in the tenth book, where tradition interprets it as a dice board.

Sprung from tall trees on windy heights, these rollers transport me as they turn **upon the table**....Cast **on the board**, like lumps of magic charcoal, though cold themselves they burn the heart to ashes.

(RV 10.34.1, 9)

The first verse refers to objects that sprung from tall trees at a height. This could refer to the nuts of the *Vibhītaka* tree out of which dice were made. Also another interpretation is possible, as the second half of verse 9 above in original reads,

*Divyā angāri Iriṇe nyuptāḥ śtāḥ santo hṛdayam nirdahanti|*

Heavenly charcoals having ploughed into ***Iriṇa***, though cold, burn the heart.

The above are the six places in RV where the word *Iriṇa* appears. These apparently are not sufficient to identify the place unequivocally. Yajurveda Samhita and other related texts provide further clues for its identification.

#### ***Iriṇa* in the Yajurveda**

*Iriṇa* acquires a ritualistic position in the sacrificial practices as described in the Yajurveda texts. Taittirīya-Samhitā (TS) of the Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda first refers to it in the legend of Viśvarūpa. The legend in brief is: Viśvarūpa son of Tvaṣṭṛ had three heads. Indra killed him by cutting off the heads, but was accused of being guilty. Earth agreed to take one-third of the guilt of Indra, in

return for a boon. This head (guilt) became *Iriṇa* on the earth and hence orthodox people are advised not to stay at *Iriṇa* (TS. 2.5.1.3). This legend of Viśvarūpa is suggestive of orthodox Vedic people emigrating out of *Iriṇa*, which for some special reason became uninhabitable. The translation of *Iriṇa* as a natural fissure (Keith, 1914) does not appear to be appropriate as can be inferred from other hymns (TS 3.4.8.5) where *pradara* (fissure, opening) is suggested as an alternate to *Iriṇa*. *Iriṇa* and *pradara* were both natural (*svakṛta*), in contrast to man-made fields or openings. The two landforms were equivalent as far as the ritual was concerned but were not physically identical. *Iriṇa* is said to have been seized by *Nirṛti*, the deity of disaster and misfortune, equating *Iriṇa* with disaster or misfortune. If *Iriṇa* meant a region, the additional reference to *pradara* here may hint at the existence of a natural crevice or opening. Through *Nirṛti*, a direction is also indicated for *Iriṇa* as in (TS 5.2.4.3). This in translation reads (Keith, 1914):

They go in this direction (to this quarter). This is the direction of *Nirṛti*; verily in her own direction he propitiates *Nirṛti*. He places (it) in self-made ***Iriṇa*** or in a fissure; that is the abode of *Nirṛti*; verily he propitiates *Nirṛti* in her own abode.

The Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā (3.2.4) has similar statements associating *Nirṛti*, *Iriṇa* with the southwest direction without mentioning the *pradara*. Preoccupation with *Iriṇa* is not limited to the Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa of the Śukla-Yajurveda also provides similar directions for locating ***Veriṇa***, a variant of the word *Iriṇa*. The translation of Eggeling (1885) is

They go south, where the self-created (natural) ***Veriṇa*** is reached or a fissure due to a whirlpool.

(5.2.3.2)

With them they go towards the southwest direction (quarter). That is the direction of Nirrti. Verily he places Nirrti in the abode of Nirrti. He places those (bricks) in the self-created ***Veriṇa*** or in the fissure of a whirlpool. Verily Nirrti grasps that part where there is a ground fissure or a place where no herbs grow.

(7.2.1.8)

The tradition of Sāyana (14<sup>th</sup> Cent A.D.) explains *Iriṇa* and *pradara* as two alternate places, both in the southwest direction. The first is a natural region devoid of grass and the second, a natural circular ground opening. *Śvabhṛa* is usually taken to mean a deep pit or a hole. It is interesting to note that River Sabarmati flowing through Gujarat

derives its name from the original Śvabhramatī, the river with whirlpools or caverns (Majumdar, 1960). Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa in its 13<sup>th</sup> kāṇḍa (8.1.14) uses the word *ūṣara* to denote saline or barren soil (Eggeling 1885). This again differentiates *Iriṇa* from other known ancient landforms. The above Vedic texts taken together indicate a direction associated with *Nirṛti* and hence with *Iriṇa*. This is clearly the southwest, which in later Sanskrit and other Indian languages became known by the word *naiṛtya*. The texts hint at *Iriṇa* as a region that suffered a natural disaster. It became uncultivable on its own without human intervention. This also implies that during the time of the 8<sup>th</sup> maṇḍala of RV, *Iriṇa* was at least in parts inhabited. This was, in all likelihood, located southwest of a central region culturally important to the composers and followers of the Vedas. Bharadwaj (1986) has indicated that the Vedic *madhyadeśa* or central land as the area between the rivers Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī including Kurukṣetra. Hence, the broad outlines of *Iriṇa* and Raṇ-of-Kutch appear to agree. There are, however, other limitations to be considered.

#### *Iriṇa* in the Epics

Outside the Vedic texts, the earliest mention of *Iriṇa* appears in the epics. Rāmāyaṇa in the Bāla-kāṇḍa (54.24) describes the hermitage of Vasiṣṭha after an attack by Viśvāmitra as having become silent like a desert. The phrase used is *īriṇa-sannibham* to describe the eerie silence.

In the Mahābhārata the word occurs in two places. In the *ādi-parvan* (64.2-3) it is used in the sense of a barren or vacant land at the end of a forest and in the *Anuśāsana-parvan*, (Ch.139 v.24-26) recounting the episode of River Sarasvatī drying up,

*darśayasva sthalaṃ bhadre ṣaṭ-sahasra-śata-hradam|  
tatastad Iriṇam jātam samudraūca apasarpitaḥ||  
tasmāt deūānādīm caiva provāca asau dvijottamaḥ|  
adrśyāgaccha bhī ru tvam sarasvatī marum prati||  
apuṇyah eṣa bhavatu deśastyaktastvayā śubhe|*

‘Show me Dear, the place with six thousand one hundred water holes. Then that place became *Iriṇa* and the sea was pushed aside. Then he said to the River ‘O timid Sarasvati, disappear from this place and come towards the desert. Let this place, discarded by you, be devoid of merit.’

These verses imply that *Iriṇa* and *Maru* were distinctly different regions. The above is an ancient literary reference to the sea receding to bring out a landform called *Iriṇa*. Mahābhārata clearly associates this place with the drying up of River Sarasvatī.

#### *Iriṇa* in Classical Sanskrit

Pāṇini (c 7<sup>th</sup> Cent. BC) the well known grammarian does not refer to *Iriṇa*, but mentions two generic suffixes or word endings *-kaccha* and *-agni*. The first refers to marshy land, the standard example being Bharu-kaccha (Bhṛgu-kaccha, Broach). Examples with suffix *-agni* are Vibhujāni and Khaṇḍāgni (Agrawala, 1953). These notations are still recognizable in the names Bhuj and Khaṇḍāla in the Kutch district of modern Gujarat. The association of the suffix *agni* with Bhuj, which is the doorway to the Raṇ-of-Kutch, is possibly reminiscent of a natural fire that devastated this region.

The earliest use of the word *Iriṇa* in classical literature is traceable to the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya (4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Cent. BC). In the classification of forts, *Iriṇam* type of fort is described as being without water (Shamashastry, 1988). Manusmṛti, which describes Aryans as those living east of River Sarasvatī and north of the Vindhya Mountains, prohibits in (4.120) reciting Vedas while being in *Iriṇa*. Several popular books on architecture refer to *Iriṇa*-type fort. *Maya-mata* (Ch.10, 36b, 38b) classifies forts into seven types, depending on their location. These are mountain, forest, water, marsh, *Iriṇa*, natural, and mixed types. Usually *Iriṇa* is explained as desert, since that type of fort is said to be in a place without water and trees (Dagens 1995). Bṛhat-samhitā of Varāha-mihira, which is a standard reference on ancient geography, does not cite *Iriṇa*. Popular lexicons Amara-kośa and its successor Trikāṇḍa-śeṣa do not list this word. However, Kacchha as a geographical name appears prominently in many texts. Thus, in medieval India *Iriṇa* as an identified location had been forgotten except possibly in the small area where the Vedic *Iriṇa* was originally located.

#### *Iriṇa* of Periplus

*Iriṇa* associated with the Raṇ-of-Kutch, gets independent validation from a Greek source. Periplus of the Erythrean Sea is a navigator’s guide belonging to 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. It is instructive to quote extracts from this text as translated by McCrindle(1879). “After the river Sinthos is passed we reach another gulf, which cannot be easily seen. It has two divisions – the Great and the Little by name – both shoal with violent and continuous eddies extending far out from the shore, so that before ever land is in sight ships are often grounded on the shoals, or being caught within the eddies are lost. Over this gulf hangs a promontory which, curving from Eirinon first to the east, then to the south, and finally to the west, encompass the gulf called Barake, in the bosom of which lie seven islands.”

On this, McCrindle comments: "The first place mentioned after the Indus is the Gulf of Eirion, a name of which traces remain in the modern appellation the Raṇa of Kachh. This is no longer covered with water except during the monsoon, when it is flooded by sea water or by rains and inundated rivers. At other seasons it is not even a marsh, for its bed is hard, dry and sandy; a mere saline waste almost entirely devoid of herbage, and frequented but by one quadruped – the wild ass."

### Geographical Constraints

*Eirion* of Periplus is easily recognized as the Raṇ-of-Kutch of present day. The resemblance of *Eirion* to the Vedic word *Iriṇa* is significant. Periplus provides an eyewitness account of the northwest coast of India some two thousand years ago. There were seven islands and the present day Raṇ region was a shallow sea. This immediately brings up the question of where the coastline was, in those days. This question has not been answered satisfactorily on the basis of geological, marine and climate data. There are strong pointers, however, to indicate that Nagar, Bela, Khadir, Wagir and Pacham were islands along with Kutch. Sivewright (1907), the first person to carry out engineering survey of Kutch region, has constructed a map showing the probable ancient shoreline, two thousand years before present. He has collated accounts of Alexander's campaign (325 BC), the Periplus and the notes of Arab writers (712 AD) with his own leveling operations to delineate the approximate position of the ancient coastline. As per this study, during Alexander's time Raṇ, was navigable with its northern limit almost coinciding with the 25<sup>th</sup> parallel. However, thousand years later in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD this coastline had shifted considerably southwards forming a line joining Nagar and Debal near Karachi. As a working approximation Sivewright proposed that the 100 feet (33 m) contour of his time (1900 AD) on land could be treated as the ancient shoreline *circa* 100 BC. Hence, two thousand years before present, for people living in Rajasthan, *Eirion* of Periplus would have represented the southern sea.

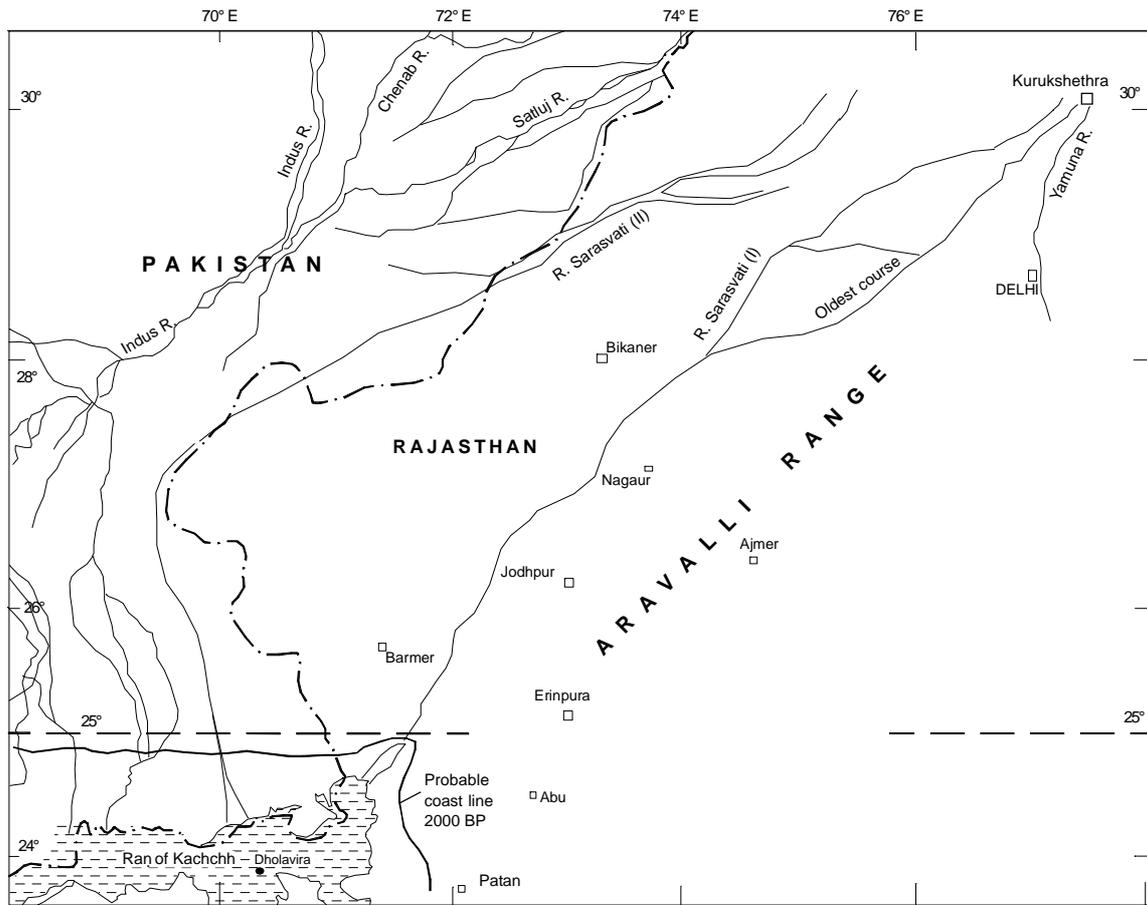
### Evidence of River *Sarasvatī*

The above leads one to believe that the recession of the sea could have created the Vedic *Iriṇa* as mentioned in the Mahābhārata. As per this epic, sea recession was coterminous with the migration of River *Sarasvatī* relatively westwards towards the desert. In recent years the history of the dried up River *Sarasvatī* has been investigated by scientists using sophisticated modern methods (Radhakrishna and Mehr, 1999; Roy and Jakhar, 2001;

Valdiya, 2002). This has produced considerable scientific literature that can be used to compare and verify ancient textual evidences. Integrating the results of several scientific researches, one gets the broad picture of *Sarasvatī* being the major river in northwest India during 7000-5000 B.C. In the following period of 5000-3000 BC the region was affected by severe neo-tectonic activity and by the onset of a regime of aridity. This was also the period when proto-Yamuna, initially flowing southwest, shifted on to an easterly course. This is attributed to the subsidence or down-sagging of the northern limbs of the Aravalli Mountains and consequent flattening of the region. The subsequent period up to 1000 BC saw the slow desiccation of rivers *Sarasvatī* and *Dṛṣadvatī*. Ghose et al. (1979) have analyzed satellite imagery of paleo-channels indicating westward shift of *Sarasvatī*, which was once flowing along the foothills of Aravallis ending in the Little Raṇ-of-Kutch. The western limit of the disrupted drainage is now seen as the dry bed of the River Ghaggar ending in the Great Raṇ-of-Kutch. The sediments brought down by the mighty Himalayan Rivers would have contributed in no small measure to the filling up of ancient estuaries and raise the land relative to the sea. Investigations do show that Dholavira was a port around 2500 B.C. This would mean that the ancient sea level was four to six metres higher than at present (Gaur and Vora, 1999; Mathur 2002). Hence Vedic *Iriṇa* has to be located north of the northern shoreline of *Eirion* of Periplus. Since dating of the Ṛgveda is not a settled problem, it may be tentatively concluded that during the Vedic period the coastline was at least half degree north of Sivewright's approximation of 25° N. A map of the region, based on the results of Sivewright and Ghose et al. is shown in Fig.1. It can be seen that the ancient sea in Vedic times washed the foothills of the Aravalli Mountain ranges and made the Vedic *Iriṇa* in the alluvial plains near the confluence of the present River Luni (Skt. *Lavaṇavatī*) with the Raṇ-of-Kutch. In this scenario the most conspicuous physical features to be associated with *Iriṇa* would be the near-by sea and the Aravalli Mountains. The current name of this mountain range is derived from the local name *Arbali* meaning haphazard (Sinha-Roy et al. 1998, p.15). In turn, this word is traceable to the Sanskrit name *Arbuda*. Presently, this word can be recognized in the name of its prominent peak Mt. Abu. This takes us back to the Vedic texts to look for associations between *Iriṇa* and *Arbuda*.

### *Iriṇa* and *Arbuda*

In the RV text the word *Arbuda* appears seven times. The first reference is in RV (1.51.6), where Indra is said to



**Fig.1.** Map of South Rajasthan and Ran-of-Kutch. The shoreline during Alexander's time (325 BC) was approximately along 25° N, according to Sivewright. In the Ṛgvedic period the coast would have been further north of this line.

have *trod mighty Arbuda under his foot*. This hymn is in a sequence of laudatory poems to Indra for his heroic acts. In the past, scholars have interpreted Indra and his acts in a variety of ways ranging from the mystical to the trivial. But the conspicuous act of Indra hitting a mountain most probably called *Arbuda* cannot be easily overlooked. RV (1.55.3) is quite specific about one of his acts, when it says: 'you bend, as it were, even that famed mountain down'. The second book of RV refers to *Arbuda* twice in hymns (11.20) and (14.4) again in connection with the mighty acts of Indra. In RV (2.11.20) Indra is said to have 'cast down *Arbuda*'. Curiously enough, the preceding hymn RV (2.11.19) informs 'Tavaṣṭar's son *Viśvarūpa* was given to *Ṛta*'. The above RV hymn further says that 'Indra sent forth his whirling wheel like *Sūrya* and aided by the *Angirases* rent *Vala*'. The other hymn RV (2.14.4) is similar in mentioning that Indra 'cast down headlong *Arbuda* and slew him'. Further, three references to *Arbuda* are in the eighth book, which is the only family book in RV referring to *Iriṇa*.

Hymn RV (8.3.19) is about Indra driving out cattle of *Mrgaya* and *Arbuda* from the mountain. Here *Arbuda* appears to be a personal name, but is connected with the mountain. This hymn equates Indra with the highest God and also mentions his above deeds as most ancient. Another hymn RV (8.32.3) by the same seer, lauds Indra as having brought down the height of lofty *Arbuda*. In the same hymn RV (8.32.6) it is mentioned that *Arbuda* was pierced with snow (or frost). The last reference is in RV (10.67.12), translated by Griffith as: 'Indra with mighty strength cleft asunder the head of *Arbuda* the watery monster'. In the original, the Sanskrit text reads '*arṇavasya arbudasya*'. There is nothing to indicate that *Arbuda* was a monster. Moreover *arṇava* is sea and not just any water. The inference can only be that *Arbuda* that was hit by Indra, was connected with a sea. All the above seven references strongly indicate that *Arbuda* was a mountain close to the sea. The act of Indra highlighted in the verses should be taken to mean, bringing down the height of a peak or renting a hilly region from above. Shorn of the

metaphors, the above may be the description of a spectacular natural event, which could have lead to a chain of disasters over a period of time.

The geographical constraints as dictated by modern scientific investigations about River Sarasvatī, match with the Rgvedic description of the decrease in height of *Arbuda* as a real topographical change.

### DISCUSSION

It is well accepted that the RV text is not chronologically ordered. It is also generally conceded that the first and the tenth books are later than the other eight books. The ninth book is a collection of hymns by various seers belonging to different families. From the remaining family books, it appears reasonable to infer that the seven families and their members have visualized Indra and his acts differently in successive generations. Thus the hidden timeline in RV is not linear, but is cut and stacked generation-wise, within individual family books. It would be a challenging exercise to decode the stratification and come out with a probable relative chronology for the 521 *sūktas* of the seven family books.

Notwithstanding this difficulty, it is easy to observe that Viśvarūpa Tvāṣṭra and his link to the act of Indra slaying *Arbuda* in the second book, is the earliest version of the same episode recounted in the 8<sup>th</sup> Book. *Viśvarūpa being given to Trta* (RV 2.11.19) is most likely an archaic but picturesque way of saying that the personified celestial object got divided into three parts. This surmise is reasonable since the Yajurvedic legend describes the same Viśvarūpa Tvāṣṭra as having had three heads. One of the heads cut by Indra eventually formed the *Iriṇa*, as per TS. This was coeval with the renting of *Vala*, which in modern terminology could indicate the formation of a crater. This appears to be the reason for Yajurvedic ritual texts to prescribe *pradara* as an alternate for *Iriṇa*. The ritualistic text of the RV school, namely Aitareya Brāhmaṇa does not recognize *Iriṇa* as special. Hence the associations found in the YV texts should be treated as later proposals indicating geographical closeness of *Iriṇa* and *Arbuda*. Besides *Arbuda* the other physical feature of *Iriṇa* is *Arṇava*, the sea. As the visible mountain ranges showed dramatic reduction in their heights, there were possibly disturbances in the nearby sea. Along with changes in the shoreline, the land became saline and uncultivable. As time passed on *Iriṇa* became a by-word for disaster. The Upanishadic seers appear to have been inspired by these events, deeply thinking about the meaning of life and the place of Man in the universe. Significantly in the Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣad

(1.4) the questions raised are “why do the oceans dry up, why do the mountain peaks fall down, why the Polestar drifts, why the earth moves from its position....” The present discussion about *Iriṇa* is a pointer that these mythical narratives represented real happenings in the past.

It is clear that at some ancient period an influential group of the Vedic community emigrated out of a fertile region between the Aravallis and the sea. Memories of this land were carried further as the population moved in a northeastern direction, most probably towards Kurukṣetra, along the disturbed River Sarasvatī. Yajurveda books consistently preserve these facts codified in a ritualistic fashion. In the sacrifices oblations are provided for *Arbuda* (TS 7.2.20.1) and *Gaura* is recognized canonically (TS 4.2.10.2, 5.5.11.1, 5.6.16.1, 7.3.18.1). The hymn ‘Rejoice in the spring of sweetness, O Ocean, enter your seat of the sea.’ (TS 5.5.10, 16) is most likely a prayer for the sea to recede after it had over-flowed. As is well known, RV upholds *Ṛtam*, which may be explained rather simplistically as *universal order*. *Niṛṛti* the deity already recognized in RV represents an exception to this order. However, RV does not associate *Niṛṛti* with the southwest direction. This happens first in the Yajurveda practices that originated in the broad Kuru-Pāñcāla land. Thus, we may safely conclude that the Vedic *Iriṇa* was in the *Arbuda* region southwest of Kurukṣetra. Since the Raṇ-of-kutch in those days was still a sea, *Iriṇa* has to be located north of the Raṇ near the Luni river delta. Information available in the epics, purāṇas and historical literature supports this conclusion. Mahābhārata, (Aranya P. 82.55) describes *Arbuda* Mountain as having an ancient crevice or fissure.

*tato gaccheta dharmajño himavatsutamarbudam/  
prthivyām yatra vaicchidram pūrvam āsīd yudhisthira||*

Yudhisthira! Then one should go to *Arbuda* son of Himavān, where previously there was a fissure in the ground.

Skanda-purāṇa describes this as a deep pit near the hermitage of Vasiṣṭha. It also describes allegorically, a sea wave or tsunami killing several thousands in the hermitages of Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra and others (Iyengar, 2004). Ptolemy (2<sup>nd</sup> Cent. AD) knew about the association of *Arbuda* with a natural disaster. In *Indika* (McCrinkle, 2000) he names *Orbadarou* or *Arbuda* as *punishment of gods*, which synchronizes with the Vedic legend. It has not been possible yet to study the local literature of the region to find about the reminiscences, if any, of the ancient *Iriṇa*. However, not surprisingly, a town by name

Erinpura (25° 5' N, 73° 3' E) is located in this region. It is also famous in geological literature as the type locality of Erinpura granites.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

An attempt is made in this paper to identify the location of a place or region called *Iriṇa* mentioned in the Vedic literature, starting from the *Rgveda*. Analysis of literature indicates location of *Iriṇa* to the north of the Raṇ-of-Kutch. The nearness of *Iriṇa* to *Arbuda* in ancient times indicates

that it was probably west of the Aravalli mountain ranges near the delta of River Luni. A more precise location is not possible at present. The small town Erinpura in the identified area indicates, through its name, that the Vedic *Iriṇa* was perhaps not far from it.

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