The Iksvākus

Iksvāku according to the Purāṇas was the son of Vaivasvat Manu but the fact is not corroborated by the Vedic texts. His name occurs in the following mantras of the Rgveda which reads as follows-

'Asamātim nitūjanam tresam niyayinam ratham/ Bhajerathasya satpatim/......... yasya Iksvakurupa vrate revān marāyyvedhate/
divīva pānca kṛṣṭayā/ that Asamāti was the king of Bhajeratha and he was known as 'Ratha' too, and that under his law (guardianship) the brave and killer -'marāyi' Iksvāku was being brought up -'edhate'. Asamātis were known as Rathaprosthas -'asamātis rutprosthesu/...'/ and Māhinās. All these mantras read together lead us to the inference that Asamāti or Ratha, of the Rathaprosthas or the Māhinās, was the benevolent king or the ruler of the land of Bhajeratha (probably modern Tihri and Garwāl) under whose care Iksvāku flourished. The relationship of Asamāti and Iksvāku is not clear. Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa, Sātyayankas and Brhad devatā calls Asamāti as an Iksvāku prince and his son Bhayada as Aiksvākal. According to Buddhist literature Mahāsammata (probably

1 Rg., X.60.2.4.
2 Rg., X.60.5.
3 Rg., X.60.1 In the opinion of authors of Vedic Index the word used in plural, may be a patronym referring to the priests who praised Asamāti, or it may be an adjective of uncertain meaning (VINS., 2.164).
4 Sayana interpreted Bhajeratha as the name of a person whereas according to Griffith it was name of some land. We followed Griffith. Bhajeratha appears to be the land of Bhagīratha of the Purāṇas who might have been named after the place. He practised penances in the land of Janhūsa from where the Ganges (Jahnīvi) originated. Satadru and Janhavi originates in the same region, later known as area of Kulindas.
5 III.167.
6 Maxmuller, Rigveda, 4, C-CVII, 167, JOAOS.
7 VII.85.
8 III.237.
Asamāti was the primeval king and Iksavāku was the ancestor of later Kosals. Vedic Index and scholars like Caland think that Asamāti was an Iksavāku prince. But Vedic Index on the other hand says that 'asamāti' is merely an adjective. We do not agree with Vedic Index. Asamāti was a person. It is probable that the family of Rathaprosthas adopted the title of Iksavāku as Iksavāku was the most valiant of his times. We shall discuss them one by one.  

ASAMĀTI  

Asamāti, the king of Bhajeratha, was a very brave king. He used to hold a spear in his hand and had the power of bringing his formidable enemies to their knees. He enjoyed the patronage of Indra. He had the qualities of leadership and capacity of carrying people with him, as a chariot carries the goods and the people - 'niyayinam ... ratham'.

The Gaupayanās popularly known as four Bandhus were his priests. Once in a satra at Khandava (the forest at the border of Kuru lands) Asamāti was displeased with them. He dismissed them and appointed Kirata and Akuli the two asura priests in their stead.  

10 VINS.,1.75.  
11 VINS.,1.47.  
12 Rg.,X.60.3.  
13 Rg.,X.60.5.  
14 Rg.,X.60.2  
15 They were the sons of Agastyas sister, named as Bandhu, Viprabandhu, Śrutabandhu and Subandhu also known as Lopayanās too (Sarva.).  
16 JB.,III.167 Perhaps Khāndava was considered a religious place where kings used to go for performing yajñas. As is evident from the Brahmanas. King Janamejaya son of Kutasta and Abhiprātarin Kākṣaseni also performed Yajñas there. (See Ch.X Pp.135 & 136).  
17 PB.,XIII.12.5 calls them crafty 'māyāri' asuras. JB.,III.167 says that these asuras were so crafty, that they could cook porridge and meat without fire 'ānagna'. SB.,1.6.1.2 says that they had powers to sow and immediately reap. According to the authors of the Vedic Index (VINS.,1.158) the name Kirata is chosen not as that of a historic person, but as a suitable designation of a hostile priest; for it is identical with the name of hill folk known as Kiratas. They were regarded as degraded kṣatriyās and not respected by other priests. That is
place. But later on he got reconciled and appointed Bandhu again to perform a sacrifice. Kirāta and Ākuli did not like it, so to take revenge upon them they killed Subandhu, the youngest of the Gaupayanas. Then Gaupayanas invoked goddess Asūnīti and revived Subandhu to life. They performed the yajña for Asamāti. Asamāti’s son was Bhayada.

**Bhayada**

Bhayada posed a threat to the Bharatas. He had won over a number of cows by siding with Pratidarśa. Indra wanted to have the cows. Bhayada refused to oblige him. As a result Bharata took the cows from him by force and gave them to Indra (See Ch.VIII P.109).

**Ikṣvāku**

Ikṣvāku as referred to above was a valiant king—*marāyi*. He had either the knowledge of treating leprosy or was suffering from it as is inferred from the Atharvaveda—

*yam tvā veda pūrvam Ikṣvāko yam vā tvā kuṣṭha kāmyah*

*yam vā vasa yamāṭsyasteniśā viśva bhagajah*22. Two Ikṣvākas, most probably his sons, are known. They are—

1. **Bhagiratha Ikṣvāka**

Bhagiratha might have been a son of Ikṣvāku. It appears that he belonged to the place Bhajeratha as his name suggests. Purāṇas have connected him to Jahnu most probably because of area from which Jahnavi originated. The brahmanas of the Kurus and the Pāñcālas including Baka Dālbhya— the most learned amongst them,

why the legends about their crafty nature were carved out. They opposed Yajñas and that is why they were called *anāgna* without fire.

18 A goddess of death according to Sayana.
19 Rg.,X.57-60; BD.,VII.84.
20 JB.,IV,8.7.
21 Pratidarśa Śvaikna/Aibhāvata was a teacher of Suplān Sāraṇjaya (SB.,II.4.4.3).
22 Ath.,XIX.39.9.
went to have a talk with him. He had a debate with Baka Dālbhya on theology.

2. **PURUKUTSA AIKSĀVĀKA**

Purukutsa is stated to be a king of the Purus. Purus were the people who dwelt on the two grassy banks of Sarasvati, Sāryaṇāvat and Suṣomā rivers in Ārjikiya. Indra also ruled over them. When Purukutsa became the ruler of the area he came to be known as the king of the Pūrus. These Pūrus had no link with Puruśṇi. Purukutsa performed a horse sacrifice. Indra and Aśvins were his benefactors. Indra demolished seven forts of Sārada asura and gave plundered wealth to Purukutsa 

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25 SB.,XIII.5.4.5.
26 Rg.,V.20.10; I.63.7.
27 ‘ubhe yaṭ te mahina subhre andhasi adhiṣṭiyanti pūravah/
    Rg.,VII.96.2. Zimmer (VINS,2.12 cf., altindische Leben,124) thinks that the Sindhu (Indus) is meant in this passage. But according to Ludwig (Ibid.,TR, 3,175) and Hillebrandt (Ibid.,cf.,Vedische mythologie,1,50,115; 3,374) Sarasvati of Kuruksetra is meant.
28 ‘ayam te mānuse jane suṣmah pūrussu sūyate/ ...... ayam te
    Sāryaṇāvati Suṣomavāmadha priyah/ Ārjikiye madintamah
    Rg.,VIII.64.10-11.
29 See ch.III. Indra is stated to be ‘purutamaḥ pūrūpaṁ’
    (Rg.,I.5.2) i.e., foremost among the Purus. Varuṇa (Rg.,VIII.25.16) and Aśvins (Rg.V.73.1,2; 74.8; VI.62.2) were also known as Purus. Though Sayana has given the meaning of ‘Puru’ as ‘many’. Indra was also the king of the same area.
    Purus performed Yajñas for Indra (Rg.,VI.20.10). They were friends of Indra (Rg.,X.48.5) and always accompanied him (Rg.,I.52.16). In Pargiter’s opinion Rgvedic Purukutsa and Trasadasyu who were Purus were different from Aiśāvāka Purukutsa and Trasadasyu (AIHT,133-134,169-170).
    In P.L.Bhargava’s opinion neither the Rgvedic Purukutsa and Trasadasyu were Purus nor the Puranic Purukutsa and Trasadasyu are different from the Rgvedic kings of these names.
30 Most of the scholars have not differentiated between the two. This Puru was one of the twenty one kings who resided at the bank of Puruṣṇi. He was called Mrdhraṇa (Rg.,VII.18.13) and an Asura Rākṣasa (SB.,VI.8.1.14).
31 SB.,XIII.5.4.5.
32 Saptapuraṇa may be Sātpura range of mountains. According to the Puruṣṇas Purukutsa was married to Narmada. Thus there is a possibility that when he was defeated in the north he shifted to the region of Sātpura range belonging to his wife.
33 Rg.,I.63.7; I.174.2.
As vins helped Purukutsa in winning a horse race\(^{34}\). Purukutsa was later killed\(^{35}\) in some battle or was put in captivity\(^{36}\) by the enemies. His wife Purukutsanī, with the help of Saptarśis performed a Yajña. Indra and Varuṇa granted her a boon and blessed her with the birth of a son, whom she named Trasadasyu\(^{37}\).

TRASADASYU

Trasadasyu, a seer of the Vedas\(^{38}\) also was the king of Pūrus\(^{39}\). Most probably Purukutsa conquered the region around Sarasvatī. His son Trasadasyu consolidated the kingdom and later his son Kuruśravā changed its name to Kurukṣetra. He ruled over a big area as he was remembered as ‘samarāja Trasadasyavam’, ‘āryaḥ’ and ‘saḥpatip’\(^{40}\) – the lord and the best. He was a brave king who subdued the Dasyus and made the Purus rich\(^{41}\). He was a protege of Indra and Varuṇa. Indra helped him in a war\(^{42}\). Āśvins also gave him wealth\(^{43}\).

He was a philosopher type of person and had realized the Supreme Reality. His poetry in the Rgveda shows his mood of ecstasy in which he claimed himself to be the Varuṇa and Indra incarnate\(^{44}\) and a demigod – ‘ardhadeva’. Samhītās extolled him as a famous sacrificer\(^{45}\). Once he performed a Yajña along with Dhvanyak, son of Laksamana, and Vidatha, son of Marutāśva, the other princes. All of them gave Samvarana a lot of wealth, horses, clothes and ornaments\(^{46}\). He performed many a Yajñas with the help of various

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\(^{34}\) Rg.,I.112.21.

\(^{35}\) VINS.,1.327.

\(^{36}\) Sayana commenting upon Rg.,IV.42.

\(^{37}\) Rg.,IV.42.

\(^{38}\) Rg.,IV.42; V.27; IX.110; Sam.,437-441,1364-1366,1494-1496,1506-1508.

\(^{39}\) Rg.,IV.38.1.

\(^{40}\) Rg.,VIII.19.32,36.

\(^{41}\) Rg.,IV.38.1.

\(^{42}\) Rg.,VIII.36.7.

\(^{43}\) Rg.,VIII.8.21.

\(^{44}\) Rg.,IV.42.

\(^{45}\) Kath.S.,XXII.3; Taitt.S.,V.6.5.3.

\(^{46}\) Rg.,V.33.5.8-10.
priests like Atri, Samvarana and Vasistha and gave them heavy meeds. Trasadasyu gave 50 maidens to Sobhari Kanva. His sons were:

1. Kurusravana, the originator of Kuru dynasty (See Ch.X for details).
2. Tryaruna.
3. Trksri.
4. Hariscandra.

TRYARUNA

Pancavimsa Brähmana mentions 'Tryaruna Travidhatva Aikṣavāka', who according to the authors of Vedic Index was identical with 'Tryaruna Trivrṣṇa Aikṣavāka' of the Brhaddevata and with 'Tryaruna Trasadasyu' of the Rgveda. Trivrṣṇa Aikṣavāka was the son of Purukutsa according to the Sarvānukramaṇi. It appears that Triaruna was the son of Tridhatu/Trivrṣṇa which were the titles of Trasadasyu, son of Purukutsa. He was also a seer of the Vedas.

Once king Triaruna went on a drive with his family chaplain Vṛsa, the son of Jana. A boy was run over by the chariot. Vṛsa had held the reins. Both of them accused each other of the murder. King Trasadasyu was consulted. He found Vṛsa to be guilty. Vṛsa thereupon revived the boy by his spiritual powers. But fire ceased to burn in the houses of Trasadasyu’s people. They appealed Vṛsa to restore it. He came and saw the Piśāci in the form of

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47 Rg.,V.27.1; V.3.3; VII.19.3.
48 Rg.,VIII.19.36 According to Von Roth mares or other female drought animals are intended. (HV.,P.409 Fn.36).
49 XIII.3.12.
50 VINS.,1.75.
51 V.14.
52 Rg.,V.27; IX.110.
53 She might have been a lady belonging to 'pisaca' clan a resident of Kashmir. She was the mother of Triaruna- 'piśāci va iṣum triarupasya jāyā'. RIR.,Parisisthā (da)P.97. As the pīsacas were disliked by the people she has been depicted as such.
Trasadasyu's wife, who had stolen the glow of fire. Vrsa then succeeded in restoring fire. Actually the reason of the calamity, it appears, was the attack by some enemy.

TRKŚI

Trksi, the son of Trasadasyu, was a powerful king. Āśvins gave him a lot of wealth. His sons were:

1. Syena.
2. Āristanemi
3. Bhṛmyaśva

SYENA

Syena was the son of Trksi and Suparṇa was his son. Syena means a 'hawk' that is why he was considered to be a mythical bird and was often identified with Garuḍa - the auspicious bird. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa names Ṭārksya Vaipasyat as king of the birds which means that he had a very sharp vision. On account of this very quality he must have been nicknamed as Syena. Moreover the bird is the appellation of rṣis in the Vedas. Thus he was not a bird but a sage.

He brought Soma, a herb which was used for the preparation of the libation of Soma made at the sacrifices. There are two conflicting versions of this incident in the Veda. The preceding mantra assigned the task to Suparṇa, his son. It appears that the commentators have interpreted the two mantras basing their judgment on the second mantra. But in our opinion it was Syena who brought
Soma, as all other descriptions of the event is given in the name of Syena. It was Syena who went to fetch Soma, for Manu, along with Kakṣīvat from Muṇjavat mountain. There is a Somagiri in Baluchistan. This appears to be the mountain where Soma plant grew as the name suggests. Kṛṣānu Somapāla, a guard of Soma, shot an arrow at Syena. He lost his arm - ‘parpa’.

SUPARNA

Suparna's name was Aliklava. Suparna probably was his nick name. He was one of the seers of the Rgveda. Aliklava is a kind of bird mentioned in the Kaṭitaki Brāhmaṇa. This again may be symbolic. The Atharvaveda also names one Alikāyu Vācaspati. He might have been the son of Suparna/Aliklava.

ARISTANEMI

He was a seer of the Vedas and probably a teacher as the Brahmaṇas mention one Tārksya or Tarūksya - a teacher.

BHRMAYASVA and his son MUDGAL

Bhrmyasva's son was Mudgal. He was a seer of the Rgveda and 65 Rg.,IV.26.3-4. 66 Rg.,X.61.16.Kakṣīvat was king of Aṅga, son of Dīrghatamas. (See Ch.XIII P.169). 67 Rg.,I.161.8 Cunningham 'Ancient Geography of India'. Trubner, London,1871 describing Somagiri states that there is a hala range of mountains in Baluchistan where Indus falls into Arabian sea. It is possible that this might have been the Muṇjavat mountain where Soma creeper was found in abundance. Muṇjavats according to Vedic Index was a northern tribe (VINS.,2.170). They might have been the residents of Muṇjavat mountain. Zimmer identifies this peak with a mountain on the south - west of the valley of Kashmir (Ibid.,cf.,op.cit.,29).

According to Hillebrandt (Vedische Mythologie,1,63) the identification lacks justification. Yask suggests that Muṇjavant is equivalent to Muṇjavant, which actually occurs later, in the Epic (Mbh.,X.785; XIV.80) as the name of a mountain in the Himalayas (Ni.,IX.8).

69 Rg.,IV.27.3-4. 69 JB.,II.440. 70 X.144. 71 XI.2.2; 9.9. 72 IV.26.5; 28.4. 73 X.178; Sam.,332. Arstanemi was the name of 22nd Tirthakara of the Jains. Whether he was same or different is not known. 74 Sankh.Ār.,VII.19; Ait.Ār.,III.1.6. 75 Sarva.; Ni.,IX.24; Asv.S.S.,XII.12 Mudgal do not appear.
Mudgal got the lost cattle back from the clutches of Dasyus with the help of his wife Indrasena and a weapon Drughana. He yoked a bull—"vrasbha"—to the chariot and asked his wife Mudgalani to drive. She held the reins of the chariot. He was waving a wooden club—"drughana" in his hand and was shooting arrows on the enemies. His people followed him. By the use of Drughana he could catch hold of the thieves and got the cows back.

Several descendants of Mudgala are mentioned in the Vedic texts. Out of them following were prominent:

1. Naka
2. Satabalaśaka, a grammarian.
3. Lāngalāyana.

HARISCANDRA/HARIDASVA and his son ROHITA/ROHIDĀSVA

Hariscandra’s patronymic was ‘Vaidasa’ and he belonged to the family of Ikṣvākus. Though ‘vedhas’ in the Vedas is a word of common use yet its use specifically for a king is rare. Trasadasyu, in one mantra, uses an epithet ‘Vedhas’ for himself which leads us to the inference that he was the father of Hariscandra.

to be the original name but only an epithet as Mudgal in Hindi or Sanskrit simply means a wooden club or mace.

76 Ath., IV.29.6.
77 Rg., X.102 Sāyana says that dasyus had stolen the cows of Mudgal which he recovered from them. Yash (Nī.IX.23,24), Pischel (VINS., cf., Vedische Studien, 1.1.124), Geldner (Ibid., 1.139; 2,1-22) and Von Bradke (VINS, 2.166 cf., Zestschrift der Deutschen Körigen Landischen Gesell Schaff, 46,445 et seq.) described it as chariot race in which Mudgal won by his wife’s aid. Bloomfield (Ibid., 48,547) had interpreted the legend as one of the heavenly events.

78 SB., XII.5.2.1; Brd.Up., VI.4,4; JUpBr.III.13.5.
79 Nī., XI.6.
80 Ait.Br., V.3.8.
83 Rg., IV.42.7.
84 The legend of Sunahsepa’s proposed sacrifice in the Yajña of
Hariscandra was known as Haridāśva. There is a legend that Hariscandra had no issue. On the advice of Nārada he propitiated Varuṇa and made a vow that if he obtained a son he would sacrifice him to Varuṇa. A son was born but Hariscandra postponed the sacrifice under various pretexts. As a result he suffered from ‘oedema’. Then he resolved to perform the sacrifice. But when the son Rohita came to know his father’s vow he went out into the forests. There he happened to come across a drought stricken hungry Brāhmaṇa Ajīgarta who was ready to sell his sons. Rohita purchased Sunahṣepa, the son of Ajīgarta, for a hundred cows. He substituted him in his place as a victim of sacrifice. When Sunahṣepa was about to be sacrificed, he invoked Varuṇa, Agni and other gods. The gods relented and relieved him from the bondage. Hariscandra’s son was Rohita/Rohidāśva whose son was Vasumana.

**VASUMANA**

Vasumana was a seer of the Rgveda and a friend of Pratardana Daivodāsi and Śibi Ausinara (See Ch.VIII P.116).

Some scattered names of the Ikṣavākus are also met with in the Vedic texts. There order of succession is not certain.

**MANDHĀTRA** SON OF YUVANĀśVA

Gopatha Brahmaṇa calls Māndhātra a king of the whole world—*mandhātrah yuvanāśvasya ṛṣyabhaumasya ṛṣīṇah*'. This appears to be an exaggerated version though ‘Mandhātrapur’ a place in south, after the name of Māndhātra, has also been located. He was a brave...
king, a slayer of the dasysus - *mandhātuh dasyuhantamagnim*.

Mandhatra was very wise - *manīśi mandhātā* and a seer of the Vedas*.

Kabandhi Atharvan instructed him. He was strengthened by Asvins in his tasks as lord of lands - *parāvati mandhātāram kṣaitrapatyasyāvatam*.

The mount Mandhāta in the Himalayas appears to be after his name though he has been attached with Māhiṣmati on river Narmadā.

**VIBHINDUK**

Bṛhad Devatā names one king Vibhinduk of Kāśi. He was a patron of Medhatithi. The Vibhindukīyas (the residents of Vibhinduk, modern Bhīnd) performed a sacrificial session with Medhatithi as their śrāpāti. Other priests were Agastyā’s son Drīhacyuta, Sakti’s son Gaurivīti, Acyutcyuta, Vasukaksya, Sanaka and Navaka. All wanted to fulfill their desires. Indra assumed the form of Medhatithi’s ram and drank the Soma. They drove him away. Thereupon he assumed his own shape. Since then Indra was known as ram of Medhatithi. Medhatithi tried to acquire the cows of his own share as well as the nymphs which were the share of others but could not succeed. He also received many gifts from king Vibhinduk.

Vibhinduk might have established a kingdom named Vibhinduk (probably modern Bhīnd).

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89 Rg.,VIII.39.8.
90 Sayana on Rg.,I.34.1.
91 Rg.,X.134.1-5,6(first half only); Sam.,379,1090-1092.
92 Go.Br.,I.2.10.
93 Rg.,I.112.13.
94 Rg.,VIII.2.41 Sāyana calls him to be a king.
95 Name of a group of priests according to VINS.,(2.303) but inhabitants of Vibhinduk , according to Caland (PB.,P.419 Footnote). Vibhinduk was king of Kāśi according to BD.,(VI.42). As Vibhinduk was a king Vibhindukīyas were the people belonging to him.
96 Bhind district gives evidences of PGW and BRW, Mrs. Romila Thapar give probable identification of Bhīnd as Cedi. AISH.,P.248.
97 JB.,III.2314-235.
98 Rg.,VIII.2.41.
Ikṣvākus probably belonged to the territory near upper Indus and origin of Ganges (Jahnävi). A locality in that region named as Bhajeratha, as stated above, was ruled over by Asamāti. Bhayada Asamātya fought with the Bharatas near Satudri (modern Satluj) and Vipāsa (Vyāsa). The place must have been somewhere near their source. It was not possible for him to attack Bharatas from their north western side, if he happened to be a resident of Ayodhyā or Kāśi in far east. The Kāśi which was ruled over by Pratardana was most probably Uttara Kāśi in the Uttar Pradesh. Ikṣavākus slowly moved downwards and eastwards. Devavāta adopted Vadhryāśva, the son of Anūpa Aiksavāka, (probably a resident of Anūpasahr as stated above). When Divodāsa, the great grandson of Bharata, became an ascetic Trasadasyu, the grandson of Ikṣavāku, attacked Ilāyāspada and became a king of Pūrus. Pratardana, the son of Divodāsa became a ruler of Uttar Kāśi of the Ikṣavākus. Pūrus came to be known as Kurus after the name of mighty king Kuruśravana, son of Trasadasyu. Some of the Ikṣavākus moved towards east and established Kāśi. They established marital relations with the Kosals and Videhas (See Ch.XII).

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99 As suggested by Zimmer also (VINS, 1.75 cf., op.cit.,104,130)
100 Jahnävi meets Bhāgīrathi at Hariprayaga.
# GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE DESCENDANTS OF IKṢAVĀKU

1. Asamāti

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2. Bhayada

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3. Transadasyu/Tridhātu/Trivraṇa/Vedhas

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4. Trkṣi Triaruṇa Kuruśravaṇa

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5. Śṛṇa Arjūtanemi Brhrmyasva

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6. Suparna/Alikava Mudgala

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7. Nāka Satāblaksa Lāṅgalāyana