

## The Indo-Aryan Invasion Debate: The Logic of the Response

Edwin F. Bryant  
*Harvard University*

The quest for the Indo-European homeland over the last two centuries has been almost exclusively a preoccupation of European scholars. However, this concern has resulted in the reconstruction and reconfiguration of the pre- and proto-histories of other civilizations whose languages happen to belong to the Indo-European language family. This paper consists of a selection of responses from various (primarily) Indian scholars, over the course of a century or more, who have rejected the idea of an external origin of the Indo-Aryan side of the family into the Indian subcontinent.

The solution to the Indo-European [IE] problem has been one of the most consuming intellectual projects of the last two centuries. It has captivated the imagination and dedication of generations of archaeologists, linguists, philologists, anthropologists, historians, and all manner of scholarly, and not so scholarly, dilettantes. Predicated on the assumption that cognate languages necessitate an original proto-form spoken by a group of people inhabiting a reasonably delineated geographical area, the problem has resulted in a massive amount of scholarship attempting to reconstruct this proto-language, locate the original homeland, and conjecture on the social and cultural life of the proto-speakers. Although the endeavor has very much been a preoccupation of European scholars, the belief in, and pursuit of, the origins of European civilization has caused these scholars to reconstruct and reconfigure the pre- and proto-histories of other civilizations whose languages happen to belong to the Indo-European language family.

The publicization, in Europe, of the Sanskrit language and of its connection with the classical languages of Europe was the catalyst for the whole post-Enlightenment obsession with the Indo-Europeans that continues, unresolved, to this day. This "discovery" of Sanskrit resulted in the earliest history of the Indian subcontinent also being engulfed by the problem of European origins. Although India was initially considered the homeland of all the Indo-Europeans by segments of the European intelligentsia, various arguments were soon raised

against this hypothesis, and Indian civilization was construed as the joint product of an invading Indo-European people – the Indo-Aryan branch of the family – and an indigenous non-Indo-European one. Yet despite taking it upon themselves to determine the history of the Indian subcontinent in accordance with the currents of scholarship that have ebbed and flowed in academic circles in Europe over the decades, western scholars have been generally unaware, or dismissive, of voices from India itself that have been critical over the years of this European reconstruction of their country's history.

This paper consists of a few extracts from a forthcoming book examining how various (primarily) Indian scholars, over the course of a century or more, have rejected this idea of an external origin of the Indo-Aryans by questioning the very logic, assumptions and methods upon which the theory is based. The subtitle of this paper, "The Logic of the Response," plays on the subtitle of Mallory's comprehensive Ph.D dissertation entitled *The Indo-European Homeland Problem: The Logic of the Inquiry* (1975). I have used the term "The Indigenous Aryan School" as a clumsy and somewhat essentialized label denoting a shared theme that is common to many of the scholars I examine. These all share a conviction that the theory of an external origin of the Indo-Aryan speaking people has been constructed on flimsy or questionable assumptions and conjectures. As far as such scholars are concerned, no compelling evidence has yet been produced to posit an external origin of the Indo-Aryans. Due to size limitations, I will focus exclusively on some interpretations of the linguistic evidence from the Indigenous Aryan school and relegate other issues such as the archaeological evidence, and the on-going debate as to the relationship between the Indus Valley Civilization and the Vedic culture, to a future paper.

Historical revisionism is by no means unique to the Indian subcontinent (*i.e.*, Bond and Gillian 1994; Graves-Brown *et al.* 1996) nor is the debate between migrationism and indigenusness a South Asian phenomenon (*i.e.*, Chapman and Hamerow 1997). There is no doubt that religious nationalism, generally referred to as *Hindutva* in the South Asian context, has been a transparent motive compelling certain members of the Indigenous Aryan group towards the reconstruction of a version of history that reflects the cultural superiority and legitimacy of the dominant culture. This has understandably inhibited many Western scholars from analyzing and engaging with these alternative points of views – except on the level of the sociology of nationalism – or has caused them to be *a priori* hostile to them. This nationalist agenda of certain scholars has also invoked strong reactions from within the academic community in India itself. However, this agenda is not the only element in operation: there is a major anti-Orientalist, post-colonial dimension reacting to European nationalism and imperialism of the 19th century and what is considered to be its continuing legacy. Many scholars are motivated by a desire to reexamine the way that the infrastructure of Indian history was assembled by the colonial power since much of this infrastructure is still very much in place. Any analysis of this debate that does not recognize this element is likely to be simplistic and limited in usefulness.

Unfortunately, the strands of nationalism and post-colonialism are not always easily distinguishable, nor detachable. Nonetheless, this anti-imperialistic dimension to the Aryan invasion debate is an inherent ingredient: many scholars in this group are concerned with reclaiming control over the reconstruction of the ancient history of their country. It was Europeans, after all, who introduced archaeology, linguistics, and philology, into the subcontinent and presented their Indian subjects with a new, and in places unfamiliar, version of ancient events authorized by these seemingly formidable disciplines. Many members of the Indigenous Aryan school are quite understandably uncomfortable about inheriting an account of their ancient history that was assembled for them by their erstwhile colonial masters. A principal motive in this debate is the desire to reexamine the infrastructure of ancient history that is the legacy of the colonial period and test how secure it actually is by adopting the very tools and disciplines that had been used to construct it in the first place. The Aryan invasion theory is a major foundation stone of ancient Indian history, the "big-bang," as Trautmann (1997) puts it, and has therefore attracted the initial attention of many Indian scholars.

While it can be traced back for at least a century, the indigenous Aryan position has, over the last decade or two, been primarily spear-headed by Indian archaeologists. These critiques have been triggered by the failure to identify any suitable archaeological culture correlatable with the Indo-Aryan culture evidenced by Vedic texts that can be convincingly demonstrated to be intrusive into the Indian subcontinent from Central Asia. This, coupled with the fact that the archaeological record in South Asia reveals a certain degree of continuity from the 7th millennium BC onwards, has provoked many Indian archaeologists into questioning why they are obligated to accept the theory of Indo-Aryan migrations at all.

Of course, it is all very well and good insisting that there is no archaeological evidence supporting the theory of an external origin of the Indo-Aryan language, but the Indo-Aryans are a linguistic entity: how are the linguistic connections between Vedic Sanskrit and the other members of the Indo-European language family to be explained? That cognate languages must have had a common linguistic origin is an assumption that only a handful of scholars have ever challenged. Accordingly, there only seem to be three options that could account for the connection of the IE languages as a family. Either the Indo-Aryan languages came into India from outside or, if it is to be claimed that the Indo-Aryan languages are indigenous to India, the corollary must be that the other IE languages left from India to their historically known destinations. The third alternative which is sometimes offered (but which would not be acceptable to most linguists due to lack of historical precedent) is that there was a very large surface area speaking related, but not necessarily homogeneous, IE languages, stretching from the Northwest of the subcontinent to the areas adjacent to the Caspian Sea (Sethna 1992).

Unfortunately, the minute one tries to narrow this vast area down further, one enters the quagmire of speculation and disagreement that has been characteristic of the Indo-European homeland quest since its inception. What

most western scholars have not been aware of is that some Indian scholars have utilized the same linguistic evidence used in debates in the West, to argue that even the Northwest of the Indian subcontinent cannot be excluded *a priori*, from also being a possible homeland candidate. If the shared lexical, morphological and other similarities mandate that the IE's had to come from one side of this large IE-speaking expanse, most Indigenous Aryanists see no reason why it has to be the western side: "we can as well carry on with the findings of linguistics on the basis that India was the original home" (Puskalkar 1950:115). In other words, by arguing that India *could* be the IE homeland, the more cautious scholars in the Indigenous Aryan camp are attempting to demonstrate the inadequacy of the linguistic method in pinpointing any homeland at all, rather than seriously promoting India as such.

It should be noted at the outset, however, that with a few exceptions, the thrust of most Indigenous Aryanist arguments has not been to provide evidence of any outward movement of Indo-Europeans from India, but rather to critique the evidence produced by those arguing for their inward movement into the subcontinent. There is generally little interest demonstrated in the greater Indo-European problem except to deconstruct the aspects of it that impinge on South Asia; what is at stake here is the origins of the Indo-Aryans. The greater Indo-European problem is typically characterized as a futile historical obsession of western scholars. Accordingly, operating within these parameters, the very best that the Indigenous Aryan school can aspire to is a kind of stalemate: they can claim that there is no conclusive evidence of internal language-flow, but they have so far provided very little evidence of external flow. But even such a stalemate, of course, depends on how compelling the linguistic evidence for internal incursions is deemed to be, and by whom.

The first note of discord between traditional exegesis and western scholarship was sounded due to the complete lack of mention, in the Vedic texts, of a foreign homeland for the Aryan people. This absolute silence had been noted even by several 19th century western scholars (*i.e.* Elphinstone 1841). The absence of any unambiguous mention of external Aryan origins in traditional Vedic sources is, to this day, perhaps the single most prominent objection underlying much of the scholarship claiming indigenous origins for the Aryan culture. This consideration was summed up succinctly by one Srinivas Iyengar in 1914:3.

The Aryas do not refer to any foreign country as their original home, do not refer to themselves as coming from beyond India, do not name any place in India after the names of places in their original land as conquerors and colonizers always do, but speak of themselves exactly as sons of the soil would do. If they had been foreign invaders, it would have been humanly impossible for all memory of such invasion to have been utterly obliterated from memory in such a short time as represents the differences between the Vedic and Avestan dialects.

That the Vedas make no explicit mention of any Aryan invasion or immigration reveals a major epistemological concern in this debate. Scriptural testimony in varying degrees still holds a preeminent status as an authoritative source of historical information in the view of many Indian scholars.

Once the warning alarm had been raised regarding the lack of explicit mention of Aryan invasions, scholars began to look more carefully at the implicit evidence western scholars had brought forward in this regard. It was the racial interpretations imposed by western scholars on various Vedic passages describing the Aryans and their enemies the Dasyus that particularly aroused the indignation of Indian scholars. Aurobindo was an outspoken, witty, and penetrating forerunner in this regard:

It is urged that the Dasyus are described as black of skin and noseless in opposition to the fair and high-nosed Aryans. But the former distinction is certainly applied to the Aryan Gods and the Dasa Powers in the sense of light and darkness, and the word *anāsh* does not mean noseless. Even if it did, it would be wholly inapplicable to the Dravidian races; for the Southern nose can give as good an account of itself as any "Aryan" proboscis in the North (Aurobindo 1971:24).

Srinivas Iyengar, in 1914, was equally unconvinced by the "great scientific hardihood" expressed in such theorizing:

One solitary word *anāsa* applied to the Dasyu has been quoted by...Max Müller...among numerous writers, to prove that the Dasyus were a flat nosed people, and that, therefore, by contrast, the Aryas were straight-nosed. Indian commentators have explained this word to mean *anāsa*, mouthless, devoid of fair speech...[T]o hang such a weight of inference as the invasion and conquest of India by the straight nosed Aryans on the solitary word *anāsa* does certainly seem not a very reasonable procedure (Iyengar 1914:6).<sup>1</sup>

Iyengar similarly deconstructs the other passages in the Veda that had been given a racial interpretation by Western scholars. As for the so-called battles between the invading Aryas and indigenous Dasyus:

The word...Arya occurs about 33 times [in the Rigveda]...the word *Dāsa* occurs about 50 times and *Dasyu* about 70 times...The word *Arya* occurs 22 times in hymns to Indra and six times in hymns to Agni, and *Dāsa* 50 times in hymns to Indra and twice in hymns to Agni, and *Dasyu* 50 times in hymns to Indra and 9 times in hymns to Agni. The constant association of these words with Indra clearly

<sup>1</sup>Müller had construed the word as *a-nāsa*, 'without nose' as opposed to *an-āsa* 'without mouth or face' as Sayana, the earliest surviving Vedic commentator, had construed it.

proves that *Arya* meant a worshipper of Indra (and Agni)...The Aryas offered oblations to Indra...The Dasyus or Dasas were those who were opposed to the Indra Agni cult and are explicitly described thus in those passages where human Dasyus are clearly meant. They are *avrata* without (the Arya) rites, *anyavrata* of different rites, *ayajavāna*, non-sacrificers, *abrahma* without prayers, also not having Brahmana priests, *anrichah* without Riks, *brahmadvisha*, haters of prayers to Brahmanas, and *anindra* without Indra, despisers of Indra. They pour no milky draughts, they heat no cauldron. They give no gifts to the Brahmana...Their worship was but enchantment, sorcery, unlike the sacred law of fire-worship, wiles and magic. In all this we hear but the echo of a war of rite with rite, cult with cult and not one of race with race (Iyengar 1914:5-6).

Interestingly, almost a full century after Indian scholars started objecting to the racial interpretations imposed on the Arya/Dasa dichotomy, western Indologists have recently also started drawing attention to 19th century philological excesses in the matter of finding evidence of racially distinct Aryans and Dasyus in the Vedas (Levitt 1989; Schetelich 1990; Trautmann 1997; Hock, forthcoming).

A further argument, initiated by Muir in 1860, that provided influential evidence of Indo-Aryan incursions into the subcontinent involved the geographical parameters of the Vedic and chronologically later texts which seemed to expand from the northwest part of the subcontinent to the eastern and, eventually, the southern parts. From this perspective, this textual awareness of increasing portions of India corresponded to the actual physical expansion of the Indo-Aryans themselves into India from the Northwest and then across the subcontinent. More recently, Witzel (1989, 1995) has done meticulous work tracing the geographical spread of Vedic dialects.

Curzon, who in 1855 still believed that the Indo-European homeland was in India, found all such reasoning gratuitous: "Is it legitimate...to infer that because the Aryans early spread to the South...and extended themselves over the peninsula, they also originally invaded, from some unknown region and conquered India itself?" This argument articulates the perspective of most Indigenous Aryanists who, on the whole, are prepared to accept a shift of power from the Indus Valley region to the Gangetic plain (with increased contacts with the South) in the historical period. This is sometimes correlated with the drying up of the Sarasvati and the eastern drift of the Indus Valley sites from the Mature to the Late and post-Harappan periods. But they do not feel compelled to then project this eastern drift into preconceived hypothetical movements into the subcontinent itself in the pre- and proto-historic period:

We may notice a greater acquaintance with Central and Eastern India in the latter [texts], showing perhaps the shift of the seat of Vedic Civilization more inland. But such a shift would be a matter of internal history and could have no bearing on the question of the

Rigvedics hailing in 1500 B.C. from beyond the Afghanistan-Punjab complex (Sethna 1992:14).

This raises the crucial issue: while there is substantial philological evidence internal to the texts, as well as other linguistic evidence such as that of topography indicating that Indo-Aryan languages spread from the Northwest of the subcontinent into the East and South, what is the conclusive linguistic evidence mandating that the Indo-Aryan languages were intrusive into the Northwest of the subcontinent itself? To what extent, if at all, can the direction of Indo-European speech movements be reversed to support the possibility of linguistic emigrations from the Northwest as opposed to immigrations into it, at least in theory? After all, in the words of Latham, who, in the mid 19th century was attempting to challenge the then very entrenched idea that Asia was the homeland of the Aryans – the exact reverse of what the Indigenous Aryan school is doing today: "a mile is a mile and a league is a league from which ever end it is measured, and it is no further from the Danube to the Indus than it is from the Indus to the Danube" (1862:612).

There are, of course, a number of fundamental linguistic objections to a South Asian homeland that can instantly be raised. At least five obstacles immediately spring to mind: 1) the evidence of linguistic palaeontology; 2) the evidence of loan words, particularly from Finno-Ugric; 3) the evidence of a non-Indo-European linguistic substrata in the Vedic and later texts; 4) the intra-IE dialectical relationships; and 5) the homogenous nature of the Indo-Aryan side of the family. The remainder of this paper will briefly glimpse at the logic of some of the responses of the Indigenous Aryan school to these objections, as well as raise additional considerations in this regard. Let us consider a PIE-in-India hypothesis as a purely theoretical linguistic exercise. I wish to stress, here, that this exercise becomes relevant to the field of Indo-European studies not so much as a presentation of theories claiming NW South Asia to actually be the original IE homeland; (this would simply replace one set of perceived dogmas with another.) This exercise is an experiment subjecting some of the linguistic data to critiques from outside mainstream western academic circles, thereby examining whether this area can definitively be excluded as a possible homeland, even in theory. Obviously, if it cannot, this further problematizes the possibility of a homeland ever being established anywhere on linguistic grounds. If the linguistic evidence cannot even eliminate South Asia as a candidate then the whole endeavor of archaeologically identifying the Indo-European speakers in an area supposedly pre-configured (or at least delimited) by linguistics becomes much more formidable at best, and meaningless at worst.

Beginning with the first of these objections, linguistic palaeontology, Friedrich (1970), in one of the more comprehensive projects undertaken in this regard, has noted that linguistic palaeontology reveals eighteen different categories of trees which were known to the ancient Indo-Europeans. His findings reveal that the Slavic languages have at least one of the reflexes for each of these eighteen terms suggesting that the Slavs were familiar with all eighteen IE trees. In sharp contradistinction to these languages, the paucity of these

eighteen stocks attested in Indic, Anatolian, and Tocharian suggests to him a "movement into a radically different environment." This basic argument, albeit in much cruder forms, goes back to scholars such as Geiger who were promoting a Europe-centered homeland predicated on the infamous beech evidence innocuously presented by scholars such as Pictet (1877).

The work of Dhar, a linguist at Delhi University in the 1930's, responding to similar arguments involving the beech tree, affords a typical glimpse at an Indigenous Aryan reaction towards this type of method:

Central Asia might be the secondary home of the Aryas [IE's]...but their primary home might be situated outside central Asia, in the Himalayas....Of late, the beech argument is much advertised by the promoters of the Indo-European theory of the home of the Aryas. But the term for the "beech' might have been coined by the Aryan settlers in Europe where the tree grew" (Dhar 1930:26).

The logic here is that if the Indo-European tribes had, indeed, journeyed forth from north India (Dhar situated the homeland in the Himalayas), they would obviously have encountered strange trees, flora and fauna in Central Asia or Europe for which they would have coined terms or borrowed names from the indigenous people resident in those areas. Such new lexical terms would obviously not surface in the Indo-Aryan languages that remained behind in the subcontinent. The result would precisely be a large number of common terms in the western IE languages and a smaller number in Indo-Iranian. This type of basic premise is used to challenge conclusions drawn from any other cognate terms of material culture extant in the western IE branches but absent in the Indo-Iranian or Indo-Aryan ones. It is relevant and interesting to note, in this regard, that very similar arguments are still current with other scholars challenging a Steppe homeland (Renfrew 1987).

South Asia has repeatedly been excluded as a potential homeland based either on such grounds or, by the inverse logic, namely that exotic items unique to India are unattested elsewhere. Thus Thieme notes: "we can eliminate [as homeland candidates] those [languages] for whose characteristic plants and animals no reconstructable designations are available, that is India: (no Proto-Indo-European words for elephant, tiger, monkey, fig tree, etc.), Iran (no Proto-Indo-European words for camel, donkey, lion, etc.)" (1964:596).

Reacting to similar arguments made by Giles (1922) in the *Cambridge History of India*, Dhar again responds:

The absence of common names in the Indo-European languages for such Asiatic animals as the lion and the tiger and the camel, can not prove the European origin of the Aryas [IE's], for the names of such animals as are peculiar to the East might easily be forgotten by the people [after they had left India] in the West where those animals were not found. Professor Giles is an advocate of the European home of the Aryas. He ought to realize that his argument cuts both ways, for the names

of European flora and fauna do not exist in the Asiatic Aryan languages either (Dhar 1930:30).

Dhar's reasoning simply reverses the logic of the argument: why should India be held accountable for containing exotica with no cognates in the West, and the European languages be immune from having to account for their shared terms with no Indic cognates? If the IE's had migrated from India, it would be reasonable to assume that the words for uniquely Indian objects would disappear from use and would not surface in the western cognate languages. Again, identical arguments are still current (Dolgopolsky 1987) and actually go back to much earlier scholars such as Max Müller who were also defending an Asian homeland.

Moreover, at least according to some linguists, proto-IE may indeed have retained forms for exotica such as the monkey, lion, and elephant, a possibility which would actually not detract from the case of those promoting a South Asian homeland if we are to follow the same logic that has been levied against it. In Gamkrelidze and Ivanov's reconstructions (1995), the monkey has widely distributed cognates and was therefore known to the Proto-Indo-Europeans (perhaps as a loan word from Dravidian). Sanskrit also shares a cognate form for elephant with Latin and possibly Hittite-Luwian, Greek and Tocharian from which these scholars propose a single Proto-IE form for this animal (although this reconstruction is by no means uncontested *i.e.* D'iakonov 1985). Likewise, although there is a variety of terms for lion, Dolgopolsky (1987) considers the term *\*sing<sup>h</sup>* as one of the few PIE animal terms that appear to be fairly reliable on the basis of Indic and Armenian. According to the logic of linguistic palaeontology, the natural habitat of the items attested in the various IE dialects is evidence of the original homeland. Either this methodology is inadequate or, in the opinion of many Indian scholars, India can give as good as it gets. If salmon-trout and beeches can be touted as proof of a European homeland, there is little preventing the Indigenous Aryan school from trumpeting elephants and monkeys in support of a South Asian one.<sup>2</sup>

A related and often encountered observation concerns the names of some animals in India: they are coined terms, newly-formed from Sanskritic elements. Masica elaborates:

Although spokesmen for the traditional Indian view try to fight back with selective modern arguments, the philological evidence alone does not allow an Indian origin of the Aryans...the names of things peculiar to India...are for the most part either borrowed or coined (rather than "primitive"), either of which may be taken as an indication that the thing in question is new to the speakers of a language (Masica 1991:38).

<sup>2</sup>Although accounting for the salmon evidence from the perspective of the Indigenous position is somewhat complicated.

Another Indigenous Aryanist, Koenraad Elst, takes objection to this: "far from being an indication of more recent and "artificial" coinage, these descriptive nouns are the typical PIE procedure for creating names for animal species" (1996:380).<sup>3</sup> He notes that PIE \**b<sup>h</sup>eros* 'brown', has yielded the name bear (and the reduplicated form \**b<sup>h</sup>eb<sup>h</sup>rus*, beaver); \**kasnos* 'the grey one' hare; \**eḱwos*, 'the fast one', horse; \**udros* 'the water animal', otter; \**leuk<sup>h</sup>* 'to be bright', lynx; \**p<sup>h</sup>reu* 'to jump', frog. These are all creatures with accepted PIE pedigree, yet their nomenclatures consist of "coined" rather than "primitive" terms. Elst argues that in some cases Sanskrit is the only language maintaining the descriptive origin of the words based on the verbal root, as in *vrka* 'wolf' from the root *vrk* 'to tear' (1996:381). As is encountered repeatedly with Indigenous Aryan arguments, Elst reverses the logic of those supporting the Aryan invasions to conclude that "the argument from the colourful descriptive terms in the Indo-Aryan languages will, if anything, rather plead in favour of the IUT [Indian Urheimat Theory] than against it" (1996:382). As for Dhar, he is simply bewildered by such logic: "one fails to understand what has the admission of Aryas into India got to do with the appellative name *Hasti*. Why could not the Aryas be natives of India and at the same time give the elephant a name... 'animal with a hand'... having been struck naturally by the animal's unique and prominent trunk?" (1996:44). He appears to have a point, here, since Sanskrit does have a very old term for elephant, which it definitely shared with Latin and, if Gamkrelidze and Ivanov are correct, was even possibly Proto-Indo-European so the Indo-Aryans had no need to invent a new term. The term *hasti* is arguably a popular, folk, secondary term that gained currency.

The most pressing item from Gamkrelidze and Ivanov's reconstructions likely to be raised as an objection against a South Asian homeland is the much later appearance of the horse in the South Asian archaeological record as opposed to its much earlier use in the Steppes. Apart from one or two reports of very early horse bones, and a variety of other claims from the Indus Valley Civilization, the earliest uncontested evidence of horses in the Indian subcontinent is generally dated to around the early 2nd millennium BC. The horse has been the primary animal that scholars have tried to account for in the homeland quest, since it is culturally central to the various IE traditions, and was clearly known to the undivided Indo-Europeans.

When all is said and done, however, the attribution of such significance to this animal is not without problems. A number of scholars, beginning with Fraser (1926), have warned against over-emphasizing the horse evidence. More recently, Diebold has reiterated the problems that can be raised in regard to the PIE horse:

IE linguistics can agree on the reconstructed PIE etyma \**eḱwos* 'horse'... But let us note [that] the animal terms tell us, in and of themselves, nothing about the cultural uses of those animals or even whether they were domesticated; but only that PIE speakers knew

of some kind of horse... although not which equid... The fact that the equid \**eḱwos* was the domesticated *Equus caballus* *ssp.* Linnaeus... come[s] not from etymology but rather from archaeology and paleontology (Diebold 1987:53-54).

There seems to be an element of circularity in such reasoning. Linguistics, we are informed, cannot tell us whether PIE \**eḱwos* known to the Proto-Indo-Europeans was the domesticated *Equus caballus* Linnaeus, or whether it referred to some other undomesticated equid: the archaeology of the homeland does. But the archaeology of the homeland is primarily located in the Kurgan area by many scholars because that is where *Equus caballus* Linnaeus was first domesticated (which is a PIE phenomenon supposedly confirmed by linguistics)! It is doubtful whether such logic will assist in convincing those already suspicious of the enterprise of linguistic palaeontology. Since northwestern South Asia is the home of *Equus hemionus* Khur, a subspecies of onager, one occasionally encounters arguments in India which use the logic outlined above by Dhar to argue that PIE \**eḱwos* might just as well have originally referred to a northwestern, South Asian *E. hemionus* Khur, which was then transferred onto other types of equids by outgoing IE tribes leaving an Afghanistan/South Asian homeland.<sup>4</sup> Again, such suggestions are meaningful not as serious proposals suggesting that such an occurrence actually happened, but as illustrations of how the assumptions involved in linguistic palaeontology are easily challenged and reversed by those inclined to do so, leaving very little conclusive enough upon which to build elaborate homeland theories.

Allowing that \**eḱwos* does refer to the domesticated *caballus* Linnaeus, as seems probable, the most convincing argument used by the Indigenous Aryan school to account for its absence in the Indian subcontinent that I have come across is that horse domestication may well have occurred in the Steppes, since this is the natural habitat of the animal, but it is an unwarranted assumption to then conclude that the IE homeland must have also been in the same area. Thus Shrikant Talageri, who has written a book exploring the case for an Indian homeland, argues that "the horse could have been very well known to the Proto-Indo-Europeans in their original homeland before their dispersal from it (which is really the only thing indicated by the facts), without the horse necessarily being a native of that homeland, or they themselves being its domesticators." The logic here is that the horse could have been an import from Central Asia into India – a highly prized, elite item – in the proto-historic period just as it has continued to be in the historic period. The paucity of horse bones in the early Indian archaeological record is due precisely to the fact that the animal, although highly valued, was a rare commodity used in elite priestly or military circles.

<sup>3</sup>The page numbers noted here are from Elst's earlier publication.

<sup>4</sup>I have encountered such arguments during interviews conducted between 1994-1995 in India.



Perhaps a more substantial argument selects the chariot as a better indicator of Indo-Aryan origins, or the spoked wheel, both of which are known in the Vedic texts. The wheel was definitely known to the Vedic Indo-Aryans and other Indo-European peoples. Although iconographic representations of solid-wheeled vehicles are attested as early as the 4th millennium BC, evidence of the spoked-wheel chariot occurs in the Sintashta cemetery on the Russian Steppe east of the Urals (Gening 1979) and in representations from Anatolia, Uruk and on 18th and 17th century BC Syrian seals. Just as *equus caballus* Linnaeus is the precise equid scholars have selected to demonstrate Indo-Aryan identity, the spoked-wheel chariot is the specific vehicle involved in the same task. However, in India, not even iconographic evidence of the chariot has been found before the Northern Black Polished Ware period in Atranjikhērā sometime between 600-200 BC and the representations occurring in the late 1st millennium BC on stupas, Ashokan pillars, and Kushana art. There is sufficient evidence of wheeled vehicles in the Indus Valley, particularly in the form of miniature models, or toys, but nothing suggestive of spoked-wheels or chariots. Of course, this is negative evidence based on *argumento ab silentio*, but this absence of the spoked wheel is, nonetheless, a lacuna that is frequently and justly levied against the case of the Indigenous Aryans.

But even here we run into problems when we get to South Asia. Even if we accept the latest date assigned by scholars to the *Rig-Veda*, viz, 1500-1200 BC (many Indian scholars consider it to be considerably older than this), the spoked-wheel chariot as known to this text must have unquestionably been in existence on the subcontinent for a millennium or so before becoming evidenced in iconographic form at the end of the 1st millennium BC. The archaeological *argumento ab silentio* clearly shows its limitations in this period during which we know the chariot was extant from the literary evidence, but yet have no evidence of it archaeologically. Obviously, the further back in time we go, the more the likelihood of finding such archaeological evidence decreases. If the spoked-wheel chariot was undoubtedly present in the Northwest of the subcontinent for well over a millennium without being evidenced archaeologically, then how can the possibility be discounted that it might have been present earlier still? It seems legitimate to wonder, then, to what extent this evidence can be utilized as an absolute arbitrator of Indo-Aryan origins. In the event of a lucky find, archaeology can confirm but, as this South Asian case demonstrates, it can not deny, in the absence of such evidence. Having said that, one must, in fairness, note that considerable work has been done on the Indus Valley since its discovery and, if the archaeological method is to be allowed any epistemological value at all, the absence of spoked wheels and horse bones (or, at best, extreme paucity of the latter) is an immediate obstacle facing those attempting to correlate the Indus Valley Civilization with the Vedic Indo-Aryans that can not be expected to escape the attention of the detractors of this view (*i.e.* Parpola 1994). Even South Asian archaeologists inclined to question the theory of Aryan Invasions are acutely aware of this rather glaring lacuna, with the result that the horse is presently "the most sought after animal in Indian archaeology" (Sharma 1974:75).

As is well known, the inherent imprecision of linguistic palaeontology has led a number of scholars to more or less reject the whole methodology altogether. One has only to glance through any of the various homeland hypotheses to see how the same linguistic evidence is utilized very differently by different scholars. Depending on one's own perception of things, one will find alternative theories far too complicated. The judgment on Occam's razor is very likely to be perceived quite differently in India, than in the West. Ultimately, the dramatically different scenarios arrived at by different western scholars themselves by using the method of linguistic palaeontology is, in itself, seen as sufficient proof of its unreliability, if not total inadequacy. Bypassing the dizzying variety of hypotheses generated by this method over the last couple of centuries, one has only to glance at the most recent theories to understand such skepticism. If Gimbutas (see 1997) is satisfied that linguistic palaeontology can support the reconstructed Proto-IE *par excellence* as an aggressive, mounted, nomad warrior where Renfrew (1987) (albeit dismissive of the whole method) finds a gentle, sedentary agriculturist, or if the method can be used to promote the environment of the proto-*urvolk* as the harsh, cold and austere northern one of the Steppes, but yet be interpreted by Gamkrelidze and Ivanov (1995) as a warmer and more exotic southern one, then one is forced to question how this method can be used as conclusive evidence to compel disenchanted Indian scholars to believe in the theory of Aryan invasions or migrations into the Indian subcontinent. That being the case, it should not be too surprising when some Indian scholars, trying to make sense of all this, conclude that: "the whole subject of the Aryan problem is a farrago of linguistic speculations or archaeological imaginations complicated by racial prejudices and chauvinistic xenophobia" (Prakash 1966:xliv).

The second objection to an Indian homeland from our list concerns the loan words from the Indo-Iranian languages in Finno-Ugric. Since there is absolutely no evidence suggesting the presence of Finno-Ugric speakers near the Indian subcontinent, it is reasonable to conclude that Indo-Iranian speakers must have been present in northwest Central Asia. How, then, could they have been indigenous to India or, even, the far Northwest of the subcontinent and Afghanistan?

In response to this, S. S. Misra (1992) draws attention to one very significant feature regarding these loan words which he believes is decisive in determining the direction of language flow corresponding to Indo-Aryan movements: *all the loans are from Indo-Iranian into Finno-Ugric*. There are no loans from Finno-Ugric in Indo-Aryan. This is a point crucial to his argument. Misra argues that had the Indo-Aryans been neighbors with the Finno-Ugrics in the regions to the North of the Caspian Sea for so many centuries, then both languages would have borrowed from each other. If the Indo-Iranians, as per the standard view of things, had, indeed, journeyed on from there towards their historic destinations in India and Iran, they should have brought Finno-Ugric loans in their lexicons with them, some of which should have surfaced in the earliest textual sources of India and Iran. But, there are no Finno-Ugric loans evidenced in the *Rig-Veda* or the *Avesta*. This, for Misra,

indicates that the Indo-Iranians never went from the area neighboring the Finno-Ugrics down to Iran and India; they went from India to the Caspian Sea. The Finno-Ugrics, in this version of events, could, therefore, freely borrow from the Indo-Iranians, but since those emigrating Indo-Iranians never returned to Iran and India, no Finno-Ugric loans ever surfaced in the Indo-Iranian literary sources, thereby accounting for the one-way borrowing. The argument is ingenious (although, of course, arguments can be raised against it such as the sociology of power behind language borrowing). It is also one of the very few positive arguments that have been offered in support of a South Asian homeland. And again, a reversed variant of this logic is used by Dolgopolsky (1993) who argues that the lack of Proto-Indo-European words in Finno-Ugric indicates that PIE could never have been spoken in the Steppes to the North of the Caspian Sea.

Moving on to the third objection, I have examined some of the relevant evidence more thoroughly elsewhere (Bryant, forthcoming) and will simply mention here, cursorily, that almost all the non-IE lexical and syntactical innovations evidenced in Indo-Aryan (such as retroflexes, etc.), many of which are shared with Dravidian and/or Munda, can be, and have been, accounted for (by linguists who do accept the external origin of the Indo-Aryans on other grounds) either as spontaneous areal innovations or convergence (*i.e.* Hock 1996 with further references), or as the result of adstratum, as opposed to influence (*i.e.*, Bryant, forthcoming). Postulating that an Indo-Aryan language superimposed itself on a pre-existing non-Indo-Aryan substratum, while arguably the most efficient method of accounting for this evidence, is nonetheless not the only way of explaining the non-IE features in question.

In fact, Dravidian and the New Indo-Aryan languages are continuing to undergo the process of convergence to the point where some linguists are suggesting that "if the direction of their development does not change in the future, the now observed tendency to develop the formal similarity may gain strength and result in the formation of new relationship ties and of a new language family, which will be neither Indo-European, nor Dravidian" (Andronov 1968:13). If, in the modern and historical period which can be verified, linguistic convergence, both lexical and morphological, is an ongoing process which is obviously not the result of any bilingual substrata (although *adstrata* or other types of bilingualism may certainly be principal factors involved), then this certainly also could have been the case in the less-verifiable, proto-historic period. Syntactical or lexical borrowing between languages does not necessitate a situation of a linguistic substratum. Much of this evidence, then, is not immediately decisive in the matter of Indo-Aryan origins.

It is relevant to note that although the place names in the eastern and central areas of the subcontinent show signs of non-IE etymologies, whatever work has been done on the place names in the Northwest have revealed almost none for which foreign etymologies have been claimed. Almost all of the names of rivers are also accountable for by Sanskrit. Of course, these names could have been coined or Sanskritized after the Indo-Aryans entered India – Witzel (forthcoming) notes that some of them are transparent as new formations – but we are nonetheless deprived of compelling data that has been utilized to determine the

existence of substrata in other parts of the Indo-European speaking world. More thorough research needs to be done in this area: in particular, an analysis of place names in the Punjab, Pakistan, and Afghanistan would be an indispensable contribution to this issue.

Kuiper (1991) points to the etymological obscurity of a few plant names in Sanskrit texts and of certain agricultural terminology which certainly could indicate that the pastoral compilers of the *Rig-Veda* imposed themselves on an indigenous non-IE agrarian population. But even here, easy conclusions are hard to come by. As Das notes in his general critique of Kuiper:

Not being able to find a clear Indo-European etymology does not automatically imply that an Indo-European origin is impossible. In actual fact, there is to my knowledge *not a single case* in which a *communis opinio* has been found confirming the foreign origin of a Rgvedic (and probably Vedic in general) word, which may be due to the fact that many of the arguments for (or against) such foreign origin are often not the results of impartial and *thorough* research, but rather of (often wistful) statements of faith (Das 1995:208. Italics in original).

In addition to the century-old debate between Indo-Europeanists and Dravidianists (with occasional contributions by Munda specialists) over the etymological pedigree of unusual Vedic words, it seems somewhat difficult to discount the possibility that whatever foreign words can be indisputably demonstrated to exist in the texts might simply be loans, rather than borrowings from a pre-existing substratum language. There is undoubtedly a number of non-Indo-European tribal and personal names in the *Rig-Veda* (Kuiper 1991; Witzel personal communication), but since tribes have a tendency to be transient, the possibility remains that these might represent non-Indo-Aryan individuals or groups that intruded into an Indo-Aryan speaking area and not vice-versa.

The obliquity of agricultural terms is further underscored in a study by Massica (1979) on New Indo-Aryan languages. This study found 80% of the agricultural terms in Hindi were non-Indo-Aryan (which, as an aside, is equally detrimental to the case of those promoting Dravidian, or Munda, as the pre-Aryan language of the Northwest, since only an insignificant portion of these have been traced to those language families). Again, this strongly indicates that Indo-Aryan nomads imposed themselves on a non-Indo-Aryan agrarian population. However, the inscrutability of certain terms for fauna and flora does not seem to be unique to Indo-Aryan. Talageri (1993) draws attention to C.D. Buck's remark that for most Indo-European animals and trees "the root connections are mostly obscure" (Buck 1949:528). Friedrich (1970:155), in his study on IE trees, found only three roots could be "cogently connected with a verbal root....the great majority of PIE tree names were...unanalyzable nominal roots, and that for their reconstruction the most relevant branches of linguistics are phonology and semantics." This would appear to be an important point: obscure etymological pedigree would seem to be the norm for most plant and



animal terms in Indo-European in general. Talageri comments in this regard that:

Unless one is to presume that the proto-Indo-Europeans were not acquainted with *any* animals or plants *at all*, one has to accept that etymologically obscure names may be "what were at first colloquial or even slang words" and that etymological obscurity need not necessarily indicate a non-IE source unless such a source can be specifically demonstrated (1993:206).

More work needs to be done in the area of linguistic substrata for this evidence to play a decisive role. But, to my mind, from the five points outlined earlier, it is in this area that the possibility of solid results is most likely to be found. Especially problematic for the Indigenous Aryan case is the fact that Iranian, which was so immediately adjacent to Vedic temporally, geographically, linguistically, and even economically in the ancient period, did not share in the non-IE linguistic innovations which the latter shared with other South Asian languages. As Witzel (forthcoming) notes, if these innovations had indeed been spontaneous in India or the result of borrowing and not substrata-induced, then why did at least a few isoglosses, such as the retroflexes, not ripple out into Iranian and other adjacent Indo-European speaking areas? This observation merits further attention which would have to examine the origins of Dravidian and Munda, as well as issues of chronology, both of which are beyond the scope of the present paper.

Proceeding on to the next point regarding the dialectical connections of the IE languages, Koenaard Elst has coopted Gramkrelidze and Ivanov's model of the breakdown of Proto-IE to argue that PIE could have evolved in India, itself:

It is perfectly possible that a Kentum language which we now label as PIE was spoken in India, that some of its speakers emigrated and developed Kentum languages like Germanic and Tokharic, and that subsequently the PIE language in its Indian homeland developed and satemized into Sanskrit (Elst 1996:227).

Elst envisions Anatolian breaking off first from an Indian *urheimat*, followed by a group of Tocharian, Italic, and Celtic, leaving Greek, Indo-Aryan, Armenian, and Balto-Slavic-Germanic to develop their common isoglosses. Balto-Slavic-Germanic is the next to leave, followed by Greek, then Armenian and finally Iranian. Elst, echoing a variety of scholars opposed to a homeland in the Russian Steppes, postulates that the Caspian Sea area could have been a kind of secondary, post-Indian homeland.

Hock finds this type of a scenario unlikely, although he notes that "the 'PIE-in-India' hypothesis is not as easily refuted [as arguments claiming that Proto-Indo-European is Vedic]....Its cogency can be assessed only in terms of circumstantial arguments, especially arguments based on plausibility and

simplicity" (forthcoming). In Hock's estimation the consideration that PIE could have developed dialectical diversity within India:

While...not in itself improbable...has consequences which, to put it mildly, border on the improbable and certainly would violate basic principles of simplicity....What would have to be assumed is that the various Indo-European languages moved out of India in such a manner that they maintained their relative position to each other during and after the migration. However, given the bottle-neck nature of the route(s) out of India, it would be immensely difficult to do so. Rather, one would expect either sequential movement of different groups, with loss of dialectical alignment, or merger and amalgamation of groups with loss of dialectical distinctiveness (forthcoming).

Judging from the perspective of Occam's razor, Hock has a point. However, a staggered bottleneck exodus is not the only mode of language spread that need be considered. Johanna Nichols (1997) has recently presented an alternative model for the epi-centre of the Indo-European linguistic spread which could potentially be of relevance to the South Asian case. Nichols argues for a homeland well to the East of the Caspian Sea, and even east of the Aral Sea in the vicinity of ancient Bactria-Sogdiana on the basis of loan-word trajectories. Since this area overlaps the territory being considered here, viz, a northwest Indian/Pakistan/Afghanistan homeland, it merits particular attention.<sup>5</sup>

Nichols' model also addresses the final point regarding the homogeneity of the Indo-Aryan languages in the eastern periphery of the Indo-European language spread. This feature was originally used in 1851 by Robert Latham, an ethnologist, who was the first to challenge the idea of the Asian homeland that was generally accepted in his time. A similar principle has been presented more recently by Dyen (1956). Latham had proposed that languages are analogous to biological species: the geographical center of origin of a species exhibits the greatest variety of features. The homeland of the Indo-Europeans must, therefore, be found in, or near, Europe, since the greater variety of language forms were evidenced there. The Indo-Iranian languages, in contrast, being more homogeneous, were more peripheral to the area of greatest variety and must have therefore been peripheral to the homeland. In other words, it is more probable that one or two groups moved out from a common area, which may have become linguistically heterogeneous in time, than that many separate groups moved out from a linguistically homogeneous area leaving only one group behind.

Before considering Nichols' model, we can note that Lachhmi Dhar, responding to Latham's hypothesis in 1930, provided a different explanation for this greater linguistic diversification in the western Indo-European languages of Europe based on the conservation principle. Dhar argued that the tribes

<sup>5</sup>At the time of writing, the second part of Nichols' article was still in press and unavailable to the author.

representing the European side of the family, upon leaving their original homeland in the Himalayas, had to impose themselves on the indigenous, pre-Indo-European languages known to have existed in Europe (such as Basque, Etruscan, etc.) and thereby absorbed more foreign linguistic elements. This resulted in the greater linguistic variety in Europe. The Indo-Iranian languages in contrast, developing organically from Proto-Indo-European which was native to India, absorbed no such alien influences, and thereby remained relatively homogeneous and conservative. The very characteristics used by Western scholars to postulate a European homeland were used, by Dhar, as evidence that this homeland could certainly not have been in Europe, and the disqualification assigned to Indo-Iranian, he reconstrued as its qualification. However, while Dhar's position might provide some kind of an explanation for the heterogeneous nature of the languages in the West, it does not fully account for the homogeneity of the Old-Indo-Aryan language in India. After all, Indo-Aryan evolved into a variety of later Indo-Aryan speech forms, so if PIE had indeed originated in India, one would have expected a wider variety of non-IA, IE languages in the subcontinent itself. This is another significant obstacle to the Indigenous Aryan position (and one which has not so far been addressed by proponents of this view).

Nichols' model, however, potentially necessitates a reconsideration even of this evidence. She argues that the principle that the area of greatest genetic diversity of a language family is indicative of its locus of origin is demonstrably false for the languages of Central Asia. She cites Iranian, which spread over enormous stretches of Asia in ancient times, and Turkic, which likewise spread over major portions of Asia, as examples of languages whose greatest diversity occurred in refuge areas on the western periphery of their point of origin. In Nichols' Bactrian homeland, PIE expands out of its locus eventually forming two basic trajectories, appearing, on a language map, like two protuberant seepings out from a protoplasmic origin. The language range initially radiates westward engulfing the whole area around the Aral Sea from the northern Steppe to the Iranian plateau. Upon reaching the Caspian, one trajectory expands around the sea to the North and over the Steppes of Central Asia to the Black Sea, while the other flows around the southern perimeter and into Anatolia. Here we have a model of a continuous distribution of proto-Indo-European – which we can define as being, in reality, a dialectal continuum – covering a massive range from where the later historic languages emerge, without postulating any migrations whatsoever. By the 3rd or 2nd millennium BC we have the proto-languages of Thracian, Italic, Celtic, and perhaps Germanic in the environs of central Europe, and the proto-forms of Greek, Illyrian, Anatolian, and Armenian stretching from northwest Mesopotamia to the southern Balkans (Nichols 1997:134). In this model, Proto-Indo-Aryan spread a short distance into the subcontinent proper, whilst Proto-Tocharian remained close to the original homeland in the Northeast.

As this expansion was progressing into Europe, a new wave of IE language, Iranian, is spreading behind the first language spread (Nichols does not indicate an exact time frame except that it is posterior to the first expansion, presumably

in the later part of the 2nd and 1st millennium BC). Nichols also does not indicate the exact point of origin of Iranian, but one might assume that it was the evolute of PIE that emerged from more-or-less the same locus since it follows the same trajectories taken by the preceding waves of IE. However, sweeping across the Steppes of Central Asia, the Caucasus and the deserts of north Iran, the Iranian dialects separated the two preceding trajectories – which up till that time had formed an uninterrupted continuum – into two non-contiguous areas (one in central Europe, the other in Anatolia), whilst separating Tocharian along the same lines (which would eventually become completely severed from other IE languages by the incursion of Turkic into this area). In time, the two original trajectories coincided in the Balkans resulting in a continuous chain of Dacian, Thracian, Illyrian, Greek, and Phrygian, spreading from West Anatolia to the Danube Plain, while Italic spread from Central Europe, and Celtic spread to its historic destination, followed, in time, by Germanic which was followed, in turn, by Balto-Slavic. All of these languages spread by expansion – there are no migrations throughout this whole immense chronological and geographical sequence.

The corollary of Nichols' model is that it explains the homogeneity of Indo-Iranian and the heterogeneity of the western languages in a new light. The variegatedness of the western languages is only due to the fact that Iranian had severed the contiguity of the northern and southern IE trajectories (which had previously formed an unbroken continuity around the east coast of the Caspian), thereby making them appear non-continuous whilst leaving behind Indo-Iranian and a stranded Tocharian to the East. The variegatedness of western languages is hereby accounted for as resulting from their situation on the western periphery of the original locus, or homeland. This model also addresses the issue of why PIE did not appear to evolve into more dialects in the putative homeland: the later westward spread of Iranian obliterated all of the eastern parts of the proto-continuum except for Indo-Aryan to the East of Nichols' homeland, and the isolated Tocharian to the Northeast.

From the perspective of dialect geography, the question arises whether Nichols' homeland model, if enlarged somewhat, or relocated a little more towards the southeast, could be applied to our hypothetical Bactrian/Pakistan/NW Indian homeland. From this perspective, anyone choosing to argue this position would have to postulate some kind of a scenario along lines similar to the following: PIE could have evolved in Bactria/west South Asia into a continuum of dialects which radiated westwards in the proto-historic period covering an unbroken area from the desert of Iran to the Steppes of Central Asia. In this continuum, Indo-Iranian held a central position. More specifically, the evolving Proto-Indo-Aryan elements in Indo-Iranian held a central position with the evolving Proto-Iranian elements manifested on the western perimeters of the Indo-Aryan core as the part of the continuum nearest the locus of origin.

This western periphery of Proto-Indo-Iranian was flanked on its northwestern side by Italic, Celtic, Tocharian, and Anatolian. Anatolian would have peeled off earliest to resurface in its oldest destination in the Near East, and

Tocharian expanded further to the Northeast and off the western path of subsequent language spread until it became a language isolate (or separate in Dyen's terms). Italic and Celtic continued to expand as the vanguard of the northwestern trajectory over the Steppes. They formed a continuum and shared isoglosses with Germanic, which in turn was followed by, and shared isoglosses with, Balto-Slavic. Balto-Slavic was immediately contiguous with the northwestern part of the Indo-Iranian dialects (which were central to this whole IE continuum), producing further isoglosses between these particular dialects.

On the southwestern side, Armenian was immediately contiguous to the core area, and was in turn connected on its western periphery with Greek. Satemization was an isogloss which spread through a core area of Indo-Iranian and adjacent dialects on both sides of this group. On its southwestern side, it affected Armenian, and in diminishing degrees through the transition areas of Thracian, Pelasgian, and Phrygian but without reaching Greek which was further southwest. The change also rippled through a transition area of Balto-Slavic, to the northwest of Indo-Iranian, but without reaching Germanic which was still further northwest. Another isogloss, that of the preterite augment, was shared by Indo-Iranian, Armenian, and Greek. Dhar's comments about Indo-Aryan conservatism and the influence of substrata on the languages of the western expansion of IE are not incompatible with this model.

Again, the idea, here, is not to suggest that any of this actually happened, but merely to consider whether it could have happened, at least in theory, in order to gauge the efficacy of some of these methods. Nichols' thesis has yet to receive scholarly responses, and I will leave it to linguists more qualified than myself to fine-tune the details, or point out any irreconcilable flaws in her Bactrian model which can then be compared with the linguistic idiosyncrasies which have been pointed out in all the other homeland models. An immediate problem with any South Asian cooption of the model, as noted above, would be accounting for the significant number of non-Indo-European lexical and grammatical innovations which surface in Vedic but not in Iranian or other Indo-European languages. If they were spontaneous innovations or the result of adstratum borrowings why would some of the areal features shared by Indo-Aryan and Dravidian and/or Munda not have rippled out into other Indo-European languages, or at least even Iranian? The only way around this would seem to be to postulate that it was Munda and/or Dravidian that encroached on an Indo-Aryan speaking area after all the other Indo-Europeans had left the subcontinent and not vice-versa which would raise a whole host of other issues not the least of which involve matters of chronology. Apart from these significant considerations, in and of themselves, it is doubtful whether dialect geography and arguments based on homogeneity or heterogeneity can adequately adjudicate between a variety of homeland candidates, including even a South Asian one.

In conclusion, some of these arguments are intriguing to my mind because they challenge established assumptions and reconfigure the same data to reverse the direction of the Indo-European movements. Regarding how valid they are, as I noted previously, the judgment regarding Occam's razor is likely to be seen

quite differently by many Indians than by most western scholars. Just as there exists an at times seemingly unbridgeable disciplinary gulf between linguists and archaeologists, there is a major geographical gap between certain western and eastern scholars on the matter of Indo-Aryan origins. This should be clearly visible to anyone who has paid any attention to the marginalized and neglected voices raised outside the more dominant discourses operating in western academic circles and stemming from western epistemes.

There are problems with all homeland theories. Historical reconstruction generally involves opting for the least complicated scenario. To my mind, there are especially significant problems with postulating an Indigenous Aryan community with its corollary of a South Asian homeland for all of the Indo-Europeans. But there seems little doubt that the last word has yet to be spoken. Much of the evidence marshaled to support incoming migrations is ambiguous and malleable. This has not escaped the attention of the Indian intelligentsia. Anyone tracing the history of this debate in India over the last century, is likely to find it quite remarkable how resilient, and at times quite penetrating, the responses can be. One must also bear in mind that most Indigenous Aryanists do not have access to anywhere near the same academic resources as their western peers, and are not aware of much of the linguistic evidence supporting the theory of Indo-Aryan migrations. Indeed, at the time of my research (1994-1995), there were only two university departments in the whole subcontinent even offering courses in Indo-European historical linguistics. But it is nonetheless remarkable how the assumptions behind whatever linguistic data have received attention have been called into question or reconfigured to support different possible conclusions. This is likely to continue. To my mind, this simply highlights the malleability of the data, the persistence of interpretational predispositions, and the unlikelihood of ever arriving at a solution to the IE homeland in the absence of radical new evidence.

As I noted, in my opinion, most of these arguments are offered not so much to argue that South Asia was factually the homeland, but to attempt to demonstrate the inconclusiveness of the whole IE homeland project. This greater project is of little interest per se; it is reclaiming control of the Indo-Aryans from the heritage and unquestioned hegemony of colonial and western scholarship that is at stake. Unfortunately, the debate in India, particularly of late, has been permeated by elements whose primary concern is the politics of representation and the construction of an indigenous Hindu identity which can then be prioritized over the non-indigenous "Other," most specifically, the vulnerable Muslim community. Just as problematic from the point of view of the historian of ancient India is the fact that certain scholars opposing such political cooption of scholarship also bring their agendas to bear on the issue. It has therefore become an emotional and politically surcharged topic and one which has become increasingly difficult to address in an objective fashion. This political cooption has also tended to obscure the other dimensions underpinning the debate as noted earlier. Be that as it may, in the present-day post-colonial academic landscape where historical reconstruction has been forced to consider the critiques of Deconstruction, Orientalism, New Historicism, and Post-

Processualism and all the other 'isms' that cluster under the rubric of post-modernism, I hope the arguments presented here have been useful in revealing how the logic behind a historical construct that most of us take very much for granted, the Indo-Aryan migration hypothesis, appears when seen through the perspective of some who do not share the same religious, political and intellectual history as their western peers.

## References

- Andronov, M.  
1968 *Two Lectures on the Historicity of Language Families*. Annamalainagar: Annamalai University.
- Aurobindo, Shri  
1971 \* *The Secret of the Veda*. Pondicherry: Shri Aurobindo Ashram.
- Bond, George Clement and Angela Gilliam (eds.)  
1994 *Social Construction of the Past*. London: Routledge.
- Bryant, Edwin  
forth- Linguistic Substrata and the Indigenous Aryan Debate. *Harvard coming Oriental Series*.
- Buck, Carl Darling  
1949 *A Dictionary of the Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Chapman, John and Helena Hamerow (eds.)  
1997 *Migrations and Innovations in Archaeological Explanation*. BAR International Series 664. Oxford: BAR.
- Curzon, A.  
1855 On the Original Extension of the Sanskrit Language over Certain Portions of Asia and Europe. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (16):172-201.
- Das, R.P.  
1995 The Hunt for Foreign Words in the R̥gveda. *Indo-Iranian Journal* 38 (3):207-238.
- Dhar, Lachhmi  
1930 *The Home of the Aryas*. Delhi: Delhi University Publications.
- D'iakonov, I.M.  
1985 On the Original Home of the Speakers of Indo-European. *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 13 (1&2):93-74.
- Diebold, Richard A. Jr.  
1987 Linguistic Ways to Prehistory. *Proto-Indo-European: The Archaeology of a Linguistic Problem, Studies in Honor of Marija Gimbutas*. Susan Skomal and Edgar Polomé (eds.). Washington, D.C: Institute for the Study of Man, 19-71.
- Dolgopolsky, Aron  
1987 The Indo-European Homeland and Lexical Contacts of Proto-Indo-European with other Languages. *Mediterranean Language Review* 3:7-31.
- Dyen, I.  
1956 Language Distribution and Migration Theory. *Language* (32):611-627.
- Elphinstone, Mountstuart  
1841 *History of India*. Vol. 1. London: Murray.
- Elst, Koenraad  
1996 *Linguistics and the Aryan Non-Invasion Theory*. Privately published in Leuven, Belgium.  
in press *Linguistics and the Aryan Non-Invasion Theory*. Delhi: Aditya Prakashan [Reprint of previously privately published 1996 volume.]
- Fraser, J.  
1926 Linguistic Evidence and Archaeological and Ethnological Facts. *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 257-272.
- Friedrich, Paul.  
1970 *Proto-Indo-European Trees*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Gamkrelidze Thomas V. and Vjačeslav V. Ivanov  
1983 The Ancient Near East and the Indo-European Problem: Temporal and Territorial Characteristics of Proto-Indo-European Based on Linguistic and Historico-Cultural Data. *Soviet Studies in History* XXII (1-2):7-52.  
1983 The Migration of Tribes Speaking the Indo-European Dialects from their Original Homeland in the Near East to their Habitations in Eurasia. *Soviet Studies in History* XXII (1-2):53-95.  
1985 The Problem of the Original Homeland of the Speakers of Indo-European Languages. *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 13 (1&2):174-184.  
1985 Response to I. M. Diakonoff (1982). *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 13(1&2):175-202.  
1995 *The Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans*. Trends in Linguistics Studies and Monographs 80, Johanna Nichols (trans.) Berlin: Mouton and de Gruyter.
- Geiger, L.  
1878 *Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Menschheit*. Stuttgart: Berlag.
- Giles, P.  
1922 The Aryans. *Cambridge History of India*. E. J. Rapson (ed.). vol. 1. Cambridge: University Press, chapter two.

- Gimbutas, M.  
1997 *The Kurgan Culture and the Indo-Europeanization of Europe*. Miriam Robbins Dexter & Karlene Jones-Bley (eds.). Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph Series 19. Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of Man.
- Graves-Brown, Paul, Sian Jones, and Clive Gamble (eds.)  
1996 *Cultural Identity and Archaeology*. London: Routledge.
- Hock, H.H.  
1996 Pre-Rgvedic Convergence between Indo-Aryan and Dravidian? A Survey of the Issues and Controversies. *Ideology and Status of Sanskrit*. Jan E.M. Houben (ed.). Leiden: Brill.  
forth-coming Out of India? The Linguistic Evidence. *Harvard Oriental Series*.
- Iyengar, S.  
1914 Did the Dravidians of India Obtain their Culture from Aryan Immigrant [sic]. *Anthropos*, 1-15.
- Kuiper, F.B.J.  
1991 *Aryans in the Rigveda*. Leiden Studies in Indo-European 1. Atlanta: Rodopi.
- Latham, R.G.  
1851 *The Germania of Tacitus with Ethnological Dissertations and Notes*. London: Taylor.  
1862 *Elements of Comparative Philology*. London: Walton and Maberly.
- Levitt, Stephan.  
1989 What Does 'Noseless' Mean in the *Rgveda*? *Annals Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* (70):47-63.
- Mallory, J. P.  
1975 *The Indo-European Homeland Problem: The Logic of the Inquiry*. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles.
- Masica, C.  
1979 Aryan and Non-Aryan Elements in North Indian Agriculture. In: *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*. M. Deshpande and P. Hook (eds.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 55-151.  
1991 *The Indo-Aryan Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Misra, Satya Swarup  
1992 *The Aryan Problem: A Linguistic Approach*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Muir, J.  
1874 *Original Sanskrit Texts*. London: Trüber.
- Nichols, Johanna.  
1997 The Epicentre of the Indo-European Linguistic Spread. In: *Archaeology and Language I*. Roger Blench and Matthew Spriggs (eds.). London: Routledge, 122-148.
- Parpola, Asko.  
1994 *Deciphering the Indus Script*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pictet, A.  
1877 *Les Origines Indo-Europeennes*. Paris: Sandoz et Fischbacher.
- Prakash, Buddha.  
1966 *Rgveda and the Indus Valley Civilization*. Hoshiapur: Vishveshvarananda Institute.
- Pusalkar, A. D.  
1950 Some Problems of Ancient Indian History. *Bhāratiya Vidya* XI:110-123.
- Renfrew, Colin  
1987 *Archaeology and Language*. New York: Cambridge University.
- Sethna, K. D.  
1992 *The Problem of Aryan Origins: From an Indian Point of View*. New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan.
- Sharma, A. K.  
1974 Evidence of Horse from the Harappan Settlement of Surkotada. *Puratattva* 7:75-76.
- Schetalich, Maria.  
1990 The Problem of the "Dark Skin" (Kṛṣṇa Tvac) in the *Rgveda*. *Visva Bharati Annals* 3:244-249.
- Talageri, S. G.  
1993 *Aryan Invasion and Indian Nationalism*. New Delhi: Voice of India.
- Thieme, P.  
1964 The Comparative Method for Reconstruction in Linguistics. In: *Language in Culture and Society*, Dell Hymes (ed.). London: Harper, 585-598.
- Trautmann, Thomas R.  
1997 *Aryans and British India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Witzel, Michael.  
1989 Tracing the Vedic Dialects. *Dialectes dans les Littératures Indo-Aryennes*. C. Caillat (ed.). Paris: Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 97-265.  
1995 Early Indian History: Linguistic and Textual Parametres. In: *The Indo-Aryans of South Asia*, George Erdosy (ed.). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 85-125.  
forth-coming Aryan and non-Aryan Names in Vedic Indian: Data for the Linguistic Situation, c. 1900-500 B.C.

Edwin F. Bryant  
Committee for the Study of Religion  
Harvard University  
ebryant@fas.harvard.edu



## Table of Contents

Proceedings of the Tenth Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference

Los Angeles, 1998

*Edited by:*

Karlene Jones-Bley, Martin E. Huld,  
Angela Della Volpe, and Miriam Robbins Dexter,

Cover: Stag God (in human form) at YAZILIKAYA (see Watkins, Fig. 5)

*Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph Series No. 32*

ISBN 0-941694-70-4

Copyright © 1999, Institute for the Study of Man Inc.  
1133 13th St. N.W. #C-2  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Introduction	v
<b>LINGUISTIC INVESTIGATIONS</b>	1
A Celtic Miscellany <i>Calvert Watkins</i>	3
Palatalization and Labiovelars in Luwian <i>Vyacheslav Vs. Ivanov</i>	27
Vowel Epenthesis and Syllable Structure in Hittite <i>Darya Kavitskaya</i>	49
"Stative" Suffix /-āi-a/ in the Verbal System of Old Indic <i>Ilya Yakubovich</i>	65
The Arrival of Italic and Germanic 'have' in Late Indo-European <i>Carol F. Justus</i>	77
<i>Ōkeanos</i> : Mythic and Linguistic Origins <i>Apostolos N. Athanassakis</i>	95
PIE 'bear' <i>Ursus arctos</i> , <i>Ursa Major</i> , and <i>Ursa Minor</i> <i>Martin E. Huld</i>	117
<b>STUDIES IN POETIC DICTION</b>	131
Kings Communicating: Royal Speech and the Fourth Function <i>Dean Miller</i>	133
Towards the Poetics of Potions: Helen's Cup and Indo-European Comparanda <i>Thomas R. Walsh</i>	147
Studies in Homeric Epic Tradition <i>Ralph Gallucci</i>	165
Cometas, <i>On Lazarus</i> : A Resurrection of Indo-European Poetics? <i>Edwin D. Floyd</i>	183

<i>INDO-EUROPEAN EXPANSION</i>	203
The Indo-Aryan Invasion Debate: The Logic of the Response <i>Edwin F. Bryant</i>	205
Priestesses, Enarees, and Other Statuses Among Indo-Iranian Peoples <i>Jeannine Davis-Kimball</i>	231
Echoes of the Big Bang: The Historical Context of Language Dispersal <i>Andrew Sherratt</i>	261
Index	283

**Proceedings of the Tenth  
Annual UCLA Indo-European  
Conference**

**Los Angeles  
May 21-23, 1998**

*Edited by:*

**Karlene Jones-Bley, Martin E. Huld,  
Angela Della Volpe, and Miriam Robbins Dexter**

**Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph Series No. 32  
Institute for the Study of Man  
Washington, D.C.**

1999

**Proceedings of the Tenth  
Annual UCLA Indo-European  
Conference**

**Los Angeles  
May 21-23, 1998**



*Edited by:*

**Karlene Jones-Bley, Martin E. Huld,  
Angela Della Volpe, and Miriam Robbins Dexter**