

Manu, Yemo and Trito

The people who spoke Proto-Indo-European lived on the Eurasian steppe, the vast territory where now the countries of Ukraine and Kazakhstan are and the southern part of Russia between these two countries north of the Caucasus mountains, also Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Roughly the steppe area north and east of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Their ancestors arrived on the pristine steppe some 40.000 years ago after having split off to the north through Iran and Afghanistan from the group of the first modern people (*homo sapiens 'sapiens'*) that 85.000 years ago left Africa. They met favourable and survived harsh climatic conditions on those plains, including the last Ice Age. These Proto-Indo-European speaking people are in part the ancestors of the populace of India and Iran and are the direct ancestors of the Italics/Romans and Greek, the Celts and Germans; these latter people spoke a language that over time would evolve including present day English. They left us this creation myth.



At the beginning of time there were two brothers, twins, one named Man (**Manu*, in Proto-Indo-European) and the other Twin (**Yemo*). They traveled through the cosmos accompanied by a great cow. Eventually Man and Twin decided to create the world we now inhabit. To do this, Man had to sacrifice Twin (or in some versions the cow). From the parts of this sacrificed body, with the help of the sky gods (*Sky Father, Storm God of War, Divine Twins*), Man made the wind, the sun, the moon, the sea, earth, fire, and finally all the various kinds of people. Man became the first priest, the creator of the ritual of sacrifice that was the root of world order.

After the world was made, the sky-gods gave cattle to "Third man" (**Trito*). But the cattle were treacherously stolen by a three-headed, six-eyed serpent (**Ng^whi*, the Proto-Indo-European root for *negation*). Third man entreated the storm god to help get the cattle back. Together they went to the cave (or mountain) of the monster, killed it (or the storm god killed it alone), and freed the cattle. **Trito* became the first warrior.¹ He recovered the wealth of the people, and

¹ The myth of Trito, the warrior, also rationalized cattle theft as the recovery of cattle that the gods had *intended* for the people *who sacrificed properly*. Proto-Indo-European initiation rituals included a requirement that boys initiated into manhood *had* to go out in a *Männerbünde* or *Korios* and become like a band of dogs or wolves to raid their enemies. (*Continued next page*)

his gift of cattle to the priests insured that the sky gods received their share in the rising smoke of sacrificial fires. This insured that the cycle of giving between gods and humans continued.

The three sky gods named here almost certainly can be ascribed to Proto-Indo-European. *Dyeus Patar* or *Dyaus Pitar*, Sky/Heaven Father, is the most certain.² The Thunder/War god was named differently in different dialects but in each branch was associated with the thunderbolt, the hammer or club, and war. The Divine Twins likewise were named differently in the different branches -the *Nāsatyas* in Indic, *Kastōr en Polydeukēs* in Greek³, and the *Dieva Dēli* in Baltic-. They were associated with good luck, and often were represented as twin horses, the offspring of a divine mare.

The two myths were fundamental to the Proto-Indo-European system of religious belief. **Manu* and **Yemo* are reflected in creation myths preserved in many Indo-European branches, where **Yemo* appears as Indic *Yama*, Avestan *Yima*, Norse *Ymir* and, perhaps, Roman *Remus* (from **iemus*, the archaic Italic form of **yemo*, meaning "twin"); and Man appears as Old Indic *Mann* or Germanic *Mannus*, paired with his twin to create the world. The deeds of **Trito*, the same basic story of the hero who recovered primordial lost cattle from a three-headed monster can be found in Indic, Iranian, Hittite, Norse, Roman and Greek myths. The myth of Man and Twin established the importance of the sacrifice and the priest who regulated it. The myth of the "Third one" defined the role of the warrior, who obtained animals for the people and the gods. Many other themes are also reflected in these two stories: the Indo-European fascination with binary doublings combined with triplets, two's and three's, which reappeared again and again, even in the metric structure of Indo-European poetry. The theme of pairs who represented magical and legal power (Twin and Man, Varuna-Mitra, Odin-Tyr); and the partition of society and the cosmos

(Continued) Proto-Indo-European also had a word for bride-price, **ūedmo*. When bride-prices escalated as one aspect of regional competition, the result would be increased cattle raiding by unmarried men with the justification provided by the Trito myth.

² While the second part of the name -Pitar, Patar (or Pater)- may be understood as the word for father, the first part of the name developed into the name of the Greek supreme deity Zeus, while from the whole the name of his Roman counterpart Jupiter (Jove) developed.

³ *Kastōr en Polydeukēs* are personae from Greek mythology. Together they are called the Dioskouroi, "the sons of Zeus". Their pendants in Roman mythology are Castor and Pollux. The constellation of Gemini was named after them; the brightest stars of this sign of the Zodiac are still called Castor and Pollux.

between three great functions or roles: the priest (in both his magical and legal aspects), the warrior (the Third Man), and the herder/cultivator (the cow or cattle). (...) Proto-Indo-European mythology was, at its core, the worldview of a male-centered, cattle-raising people - people who held sons and cattle in the highest esteem. Tribal- or village chiefs first appeared in the archaeological record when domesticated cattle, sheep, and goats first became widespread, after about 5200-5000 bce. The Proto-Indo-European vocabulary contained a compound word (**weik-potis*) that referred to a clan- or village chief, a person who sponsored feasts and ceremonies and to whom immortality was given in praise poetry. The apparently most important amongst them were buried in a kurgan, a burial mound. Another root (**reg-*) referred to another kind of powerful officer. This second root was later used for king in Italic (*rex*), Celtic (*rix*), and Old Indic (*raj-*), but it might originally have referred to an official more like a priest, literally a "regulator" (from the same root) or "one who makes things *right*" (again the same root), possibly connected with drawing "correct" (same root) boundaries.

The Yamnaya horizon, way of life, was the first more or less unified ritual, economic, and material culture to spread across the entire steppe region, starting around 3300 bce when the steppe climate grew dryer, but it was never completely homogeneous even materially. The most obvious material division within the early Yamnaya horizon was between east and west. The eastern (Volga-Ural-North Caucasian steppe) Yamnaya pastoral economy was more mobile than the western one (South Bug-lower Don). This contrast corresponds in an intriguing way to economic and cultural differences between eastern and western Indo-European language branches. Western Indo-European vocabularies contained a few roots that were borrowed from Afro-Asiatic languages, such as, the word for the domesticated bull, **tawr-* (*taurus*). Eastern Indo-European generally lacked these borrowed Afro-Asiatic roots. Western Indo-European religious and ritual practices were female-inclusive, eastern Indo-European rituals and gods, however, were more male-centered. In western Indo-European branches the spirit of the domestic hearth was female (Hestia, the Vestal Virgins), and in Indo-Iranian it was male (Agni). Western Indo-European mythologies included strong female deities such as Queen Magb and the



Valkyries (Old Norse, *Valkyrjar*), whereas in Indo-Iranian the furies of war were male Maruts.

Proto-Indo-European institutions included a belief in the sanctity of verbal contracts bound by oaths (**hóitos*), and in the obligation of patrons (or gods) to protect clients (or humans) in return for loyalty and service. "Let this racehorse bring us good cattle and good horses, male children and all-nourishing wealth," said a prayer accompanying the sacrifice of a horse in the *Rig Veda* (I.162)⁴, a clear statement of the contract that bound humans to the gods. In Proto-Indo-European religion generally the chasm between gods and humans was bridged by the sanctity of oath-bound contracts and reciprocal obligations, so these were undoubtedly important tools regulating the daily behaviour of the powerful toward the weak, at least for people who belonged under the social umbrella. Patron-client systems like this could incorporate outsiders as clients who enjoyed rights and protection. This way of legitimizing inequality probably was an old part of steppe social institutions, going back to the initial appearance of differences in wealth when domesticated animals were accepted.

The Indo-Iranian 'society' and perhaps already the proto-Indo-European community of tribes on the steppe showed more similarities, like the midwinter New Year's sacrifice and initiation ceremony, held on the winter solstice. Many Indo-European myths and rituals contained references to this event. One of its functions was to initiate young men into the warrior category (*Männerbünde, korios*), and its principal symbol was the dog or wolf. Dogs represented death; multiple dogs or a multi-headed dog (*Cerberus, Saranyu*) guarded the entrance to the Afterworld. At initiation, death came to both the old year and boyhood identities, and as boys became warriors they would feed the dogs of death⁵.

⁴ The oldest texts in Old Indic are the "family books", books 2 through 7, of the *Rig Veda*. These hymns and prayers were compiled into "books" or mandalas about 1500-1300 bce, but many had been composed earlier. The oldest parts of the *Avesta*, the *Gathas*, the oldest texts in Iranian, were composed by *Zarathustra/Zoroaster* probably about 1200-1000 bce.

The undocumented language that was the parent of both, common Indo-Iranian, must be dated well before 1500 bce. Common Indo-Iranian probably was spoken during the Sintashta period, 2100-1800 bce. Archaic Old Indic probably emerged as a separate tongue from archaic Iranian about 1800-1600 bce.

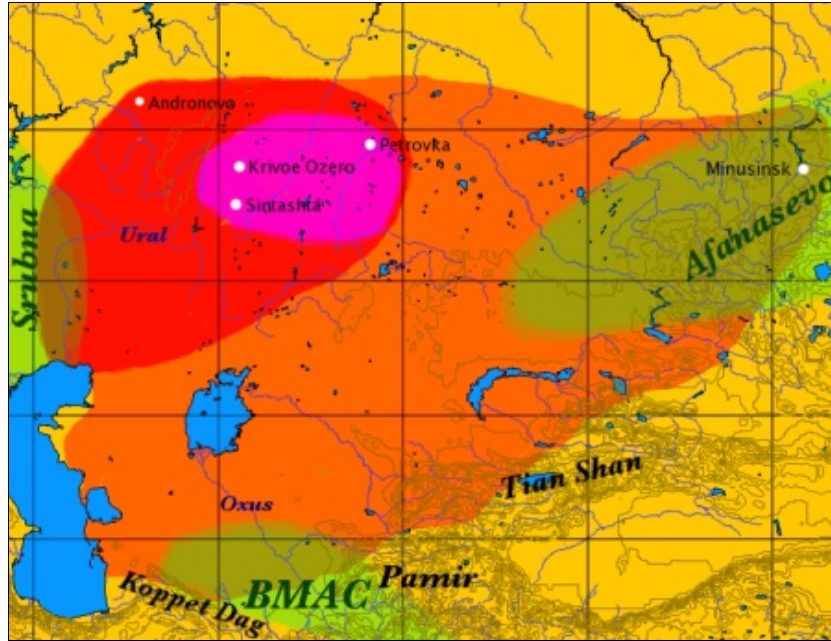
The *Rig Veda* and the *Avesta* agreed that the essence of their shared parental Indo-Iranian identity was linguistic and ritual, not racial. *If a person sacrificed to the right gods in the right way using the correct forms of the traditional hymns and poems, that person was an Aryan. Rituals performed in the right words were the core of being an Aryan.*

⁵ In the *Rig Veda* the oath brotherhood of warriors that performed sacrifices at midwinter were called the *Vrátyas* who also were called dog-priests. The ceremonies associated with them featured many contests, including poetry

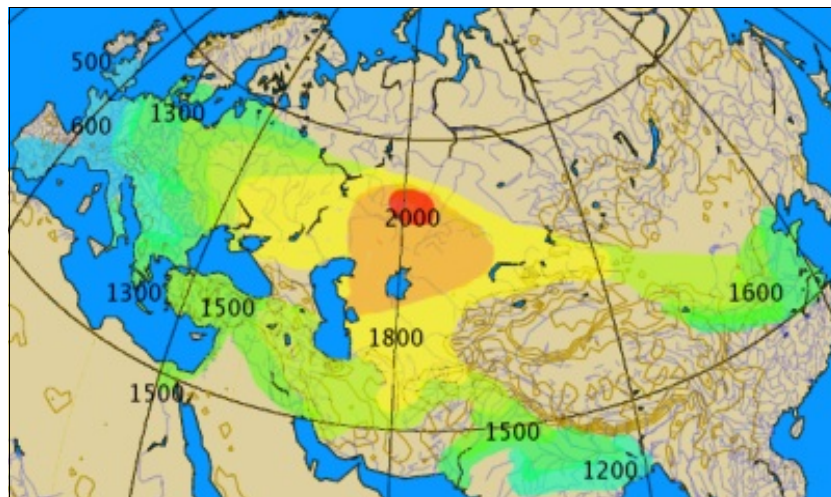
In many ways the cultures between the upper Don and Tobol rivers in the northern steppes showed a common kinship with the Aryans of the *Rig Veda* and *Avesta*. Between 2100 and 1800 bce they invented the chariot, organized themselves into stronghold-based chiefdoms, armed themselves with new kinds of weapons, created a new style of funeral rituals that involved spectacular public displays of wealth and generosity, and began to mine and produce metals on a scale previously unimagined in the steppes. Their actions reverberated across the Eurasian continent. The northern forest frontier began to dissolve east of the Urals as it had earlier west of the Urals. Chariotry spread west through the Ukrainian steppe culture into southeastern Europe's Monteoru (North Valachia, Romania, Moldavia), Vatin (Serbia, Vojvodina), and Otomani cultures, perhaps with the *satəm* dialects that later popped up in Armenian, Albanian, and Phrygian, all of which are thought to have evolved in southeastern Europe (Pre-Greek must have departed before this, as it did not share in the *satəm* innovations). And the Ural frontier was finally broken - herding economies spread eastward across the steppes. With them went the eastern daughters of Sintashta, the offspring who would later emerge into history as the *Iranian* and *Vedic Aryans*.

Main source: David W. Anthony, *The horse, the wheel and language*

(Continued) recitation and chariot races. The *Rig Veda* mentions *Vrātyas* about eight times (e.g. 3:26:6; 5:53:11; 5:75:9; 9:14:2). The *Atharva Veda* (15th kanda) devotes an entire hymn titled *Vrātya- Suktha*, to the "mystical fellowship" of the *Vrātyas*.



Above: The Caspian Sea in the lower left corner. The red colours show the locations of the Andronovo cultures. The Sintashta culture is located where the darker red is. The purple part shows where to date the oldest spoke wheeled chariots have been excavated. Below: Spread of the chariot through the ancient world. The numbers are dates bce.





Spread of Indo-European languages around 2000 bce. The Rope Beaker Culture sits on a yellow background. The area where the satemization began is in dark red and coincides with the Abashevo/Sintashta/Srubna cultures. Blue: centum languages.

BRONZE AGE HERDERS OF THE EURASIAN STEPPES

Archeological Cultures of Steppe Nomads	
Neolith (5000-3300 bce)	Tripolye Culture (4000 - 3500 bce)
	Sredny Stog Culture (4000 - 3000 bce)
	Khvalynsk Culture
	Karanovo VI Culture
	Kemi Oba Culture
	Usatovo Culture
	Botai Culture
	Poltavka Culture
	Fatyanovo Culture
	Abashevo Culture
	Sintashta-Arkaim Culture
Early Bronze Age (3300-1900 bce)	Maikop Culture (3500 - bce)
	Pit Grave Culture (3300 - 2300 bce)
	Baden culture
	Funnel Beaker Culture (3300 - 3000 bce)
Middle Bronze Age (1900-1200 bce)	Catacomb Culture (2800 - 1900 bce)
	Timber Grave Culture (1900 - 1200 bce)
	Andronovo Culture (1800 - 1200 bce)
	Mnogovalikovaya Culture
	Glina III/Monteoru Culture