

# LECTURE SUMMARY: "GENESIS OF THE INDO-IRANIANS: ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND LINGUISTIC ASPECTS"

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Of crucial importance in the study of the Indo-Iranians' history in the period before writing is a comparison of linguistic and archaeological data. Common terms pertaining to the productive economy and metallurgy, horse-breeding, the cult of the horse and wheel vehicles, which are found in Indo-Iranian and other Indo-European languages, indicate that during the Aeneolithic the Indo-European community was still preserved on the territory embracing areas of advanced horse-breeding and the cult of the horse. According to archaeological data, these areas comprise the South-Russian steppe, where the horse was domesticated in the 4th millennium BC and the cult of the horse and horse sacrifices were practiced at the time. The terminus post quem of the disintegration of the Indo-European community was the period of the spread of wheel vehicles in the Old World: according to archaeological data, the 3rd millennium B.C. The terminus ante quem of the branching off of the Proto-Indo-Aryans fell in the middle of the 2nd millennium BC: according to literary sources, the period concurrent with the appearance of Aryan horse-breeders in the Near East. Notable proximity between the economic types, the social organization patterns and the religious-mythological systems of the Indo-Aryans, Iranians and Saka-Scythians, reconstructed from linguistic sources, indicates that, despite the different historical destinies of these peoples, the problem of the origin of the Indo-Iranians can be resolved only if due account is taken of the origin of each of these ethnic groups.

When reconstructing the peoples' ethnic history in the period before writing, it is important to ascertain the archaeological traces of various types of migration and to

evolve criteria of the ethnic attribution of archaeological cultures. Four such criteria are examined.

1. The retrospective method. This concerns the establishment of systematically traced typological series between the culture of the Sakas and the Sauromatians (unquestionably Iranian speaking peoples) and the antecedent timber-grave and Andronovo cultures, which allows us to regard them as genetically linked and thus to surmise that the bearers of the two latter cultures were Indo-Iranians.
2. The collation of the linguistically reconstructed culture of the Indo-Iranians and of actual archaeological cultures. The predominance of cattle-breeding (mostly large horned cattle); the importance attached to horse-breeding and the use of the chariot; the cults of the horse and of the ancestors; the burial ritual; and the social stratification of society, with the charioteer soldiers making up a specific stratum—all these features prevent us from relating the Indo-Iranians to the cattle-breeding cultures of the Near East and to the inhabitants of present-day Turkmenia and Iran in the 3rd millennium BC. Yet this reconstructed culture tallies fully with the culture of the Eurasian steppe population; moreover, the traditions of this type of economy in the South Russian steppe date back to the 4th millennium BC. Of vital importance is the appearance in this area in the 16th century BC of horse-drawn chariots and the separation of the stratum of charioteer soldiers. The absence in the area of the cult of the pig, inherent in other Indo-European cultures, and the wide use of the two-humped camel (*Camelus bactrianus*) and its cult also favor

the Indo-Iranian attribution of these cultures.

3. The coincidence of the Indo-Iranian toponymic map with the map showing the spread of the timber-grave and Andronovo cultures.
4. The collation of data concerning the contacts between Indo-Iranian and other languages, and those concerning the system of the outside links of the steppe cultures, particularly with Mycenaean Greece and the inhabitants of the Eurasian forest belt.

A comparison of results obtained by various means gives sufficient scientific support to the hypothesis of the Indo-Iranian attribution of the timber-grave - Andronovo tribes.

In determining the routes followed by the Indo-Iranians as they migrated away from their original homeland, precedence is taken by the data reflecting their spiritual culture, and not by the characteristics of their ware and similar characteristics.