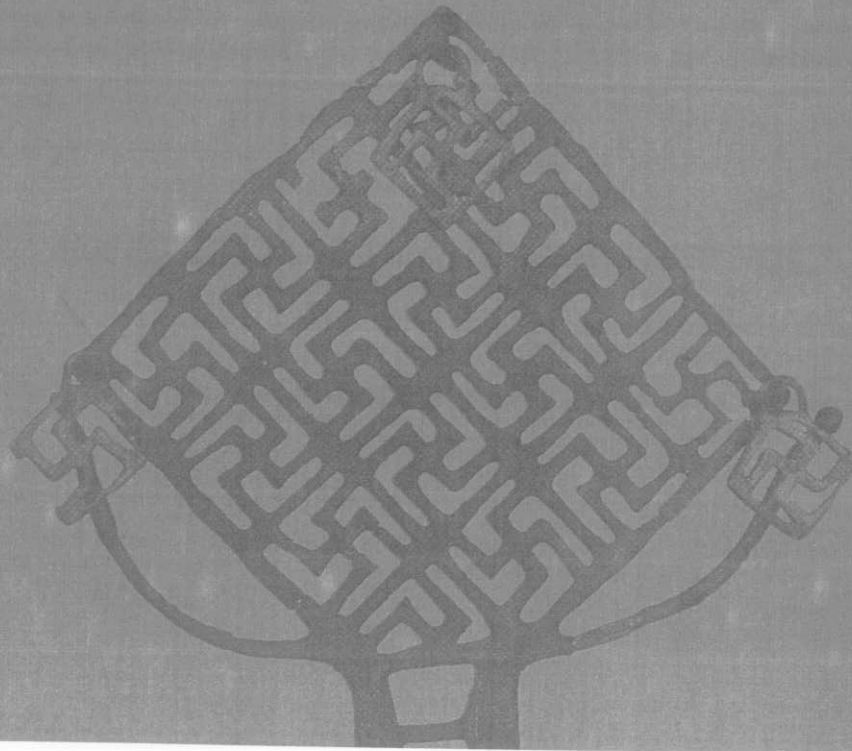


Chicago University Press 2007

Edited by Philip L. Kohl,
Mara Kozelsky, and
Nachman Ben-Yehuda

ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE CONSTRUCTION,
COMMEMORATION, AND CONSECRATION
OF NATIONAL PASTS

selective remembrances





The Aryan Homeland Debate in India

SHEREEN RATNAGAR

The nation is a modern phenomenon, and nations, India included, have constructed themselves and their images in the modern period. It is in this context that I attempt an explanation of how an Aryan identity came to be inscribed into the construction of ancient Indian civilization. In the ancient Indian texts, the Aryan identity was associated with a certain culture and ritual. Aryan culture was imbued with high status, and Aryan rituals were believed to be particularly efficacious, though accessible to only a few. In modern India the concept of Aryan identity is not shunned, in spite of associations with the horror of Nazi history in Germany. This concept is current even though the category did come to be smudged by connotations of physical type in the colonial period, given British interest in racial categories as explanations of cultural difference. The reason is that in Sanskrit *arya* carried only the connotations of status and culture.

As I discuss the nation as a modern construct and explain what Indians mean by the label "Aryan," I shall outline what historical linguistics tells us about the Indo-European homeland and about the Indo-Iranian language(s) (in the period 5000 to 2000 BC). Indo-Iranian, a branch of Indo-European, is the parent of the Indo-Aryan languages, including Sanskrit, the classical language of ancient India. In spite of the difficulties of matching the evidence in the early texts of the

Indo-Iranian branch with available archaeological evidence, it is reasonable to infer that the early Aryans were immigrants in South Asia after 2000 BC during the last days of the Harappa civilization (2600–1800 BC) or after its demise. When the Harappa civilization was discovered, it was interpreted unequivocally as Dravidian (rather than Aryan) by John Marshall, whose excavation report on Mohenjo-daro is in many ways the founding text of Harappan studies. It was only later that scholars began to challenge this identity, for reasons explained below.

Archaeologists as members of society are influenced by social movements of their own times. Nowhere is this more evident than in the cases of Somnath and Ayodhya. The authorities demolished an ancient ruined temple at Somnath in 1951, in the early days of the Indian republic, in spite of protests from citizens. The home minister at the time went along with the popular clamor to obliterate the "shame" that had been perpetrated by the desecration of this temple by a medieval Muslim invader (as the public understood it) and overruled the objections of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI, a body created, *inter alia*, for the preservation of ancient monuments). Thus, after a token excavation, the Somnath temple was demolished. In the late 1980s and 1990s, swept along by street clamor for the righting of the "wrongs" perpetrated by medieval Muslim invaders, an ex-director general of ASI actually became part of a movement for the demolition of Babur's mosque at Ayodhya and helped create the fiction that temple ruins existed under the foundations of the mosque.

Even though the constitution of India grants all religious minorities full rights, political and cultural, current majoritarian movements insist that the religious majority is entitled, in some ludicrous way, to superior rights. There is a spurious distinction between "sons of the soil" (Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains) and "aliens," whose ancestors and religions originated elsewhere (Muslims and Christians). For the archaeologist to search for ancient groups who may have referred to themselves as Aryan is fraught with difficulty; but worse, a preoccupation with the ancient Aryans—who were in any case only one section of ancient Indian society—as either indigenous or foreign feeds the politics of exclusion and of upper-caste dominance.

Following Hobsbawm and Gellner, my first point is that there is nothing primordial about the Indian (or any other) nation, however ancient its civilization or individual culture elements. It has been said by Anderson

that the nation is an imagined political community. Nations are essentially political entities, constituted as states. They are "imagined" because their boundaries are arbitrarily drawn, and because their members are too numerous to be actually known to one another; they are "communities" because nations are never purely political phenomena: they are believed to have common interests or collective consciences and are often conceived as immortal, worthy of the sacrifice of lives. Nations emerged in Europe in the late eighteenth century in tandem with the decline of divine kingships, the development of countrywide markets, and the birth of modern bureaucracies.

Gellner has insisted that nations are inventions of modern times, times when the old bonds of religion, kinship, and locality were decaying with industrialization, society was becoming impersonal, and the means of speedy communications across countries appeared. Often a language was imposed as the medium of education and administration in districts where it was not the currency of daily life. Similarly, cultural constructs such as the "typical Dutch meal" created and emphasized a national mainstream.¹ For Anderson (1983: 40) the extension of literacy and the advent of the printed newspaper with mass circulation in Europe meant that thousands read the same message each day, which affected the interactions among members in "profoundly new ways."

In addition to communications, administration, language, and state-directed education, the past plays an important role in the construction of a nation. Like other cultural constructs, the pasts of nations were invariably selective and patchy.² A common past invokes a kind of substitute for a blood relationship between people. Nations "create and preserve... images of themselves as continuously existing." A society's experiences are underwritten by its understanding of its past, and simultaneously, the content of the remembered past influences how society views the present. By constructing "a canon of historical research," intellectuals and professional historians "participate in the formation of a political identity and give shape to the memory of a particular culture" (Connerton 1993: 13-16). In a book on ancient India, Romesh Chunder Dutt (1888: x-xi) wrote about the pioneering work of those Western Indologists who had brought new sources, the texts of ancient times, to light. He emphasized the importance of knowing about the "Hindu period." Significantly, he then said, "No study has so potent an influence in forming a nation's mind and a nation's character as a critical and careful study of its past history."

According to Hobsbawm and Gellner, ideas of national mainstreams and national cultures were constructed by intellectuals, and these became

incorporated into modern education systems. So it was in modern times that the great traditions (or "high cultures") of civilizations could be accessed by the masses. Later, the "folk" came to be included in, and compendia of folklore were made as part of nationalist projects celebrating the primitive stages of a nation, but the high culture as included in public education was what came to define the newly created nation. Here, then, is one way in which nations were the conscious creations of modern elites. In India, people of different provinces and social groups were brought together in a national movement to free the country from British rule and by the institutions of the freedom struggle. As they cast their assertions of Indianness, they were inevitably influenced by ideas of India and its past then current in the West.

The articulations of Indian nationalists such as Jawaharlal Nehru on their conceptions of Indianness and Indian civilization drew on centuries of Indological scholarship. The British as the dominant imperial culture, and with reference to Brahmanic tracts and worldviews, produced Indological knowledge. Compilations and classifications of traditions, traditional law, religious beliefs, and customs provided data for use in colonial administration. Breckenridge and van der Veer (1993) point out that as colonial administration became routinized, the production of Orientalist Indology was systematized, and many of its ideas—some still current—were absorbed by Indian nationalists.

In the Indologist-to-nationalist scholarship, certain elements were said to give Indian civilization its uniqueness. The soul of the land lay in its villages; Indian civilization was imbued with spirituality and tradition in contradistinction to technology, rationality, and modernity; caste was the characteristic—almost the defining framework—of Indian society; and ancient religion was structured on two distinct cultural streams: "Aryan" and "Dravidian."

Aryan India

Let us explore the inscription of Aryanness onto Indianness. It was in 1786 that William Jones delivered the lecture in which he made his famous statement on the affinity between Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin—an affinity so strong that there must have been, he said, a common ancestral language. With Franz Bopp there began, in 1816, an era of comparative philology, exploring the parallels between Sanskrit and the European languages. The early Indologists were taught by Brahmans that all extant Indian languages were offshoots of Sanskrit and that there were also

foreign and local words in these languages. As Robert Caldwell's comparative grammar of Dravidian languages was published in the 1850s, however, and as it began to be known that the Munda languages constituted a third group, there emerged the notion of a pre-Aryan "substratum" (Trautmann 2004: 136–157). Small wonder, then, that H. H. Risley, organizer of the great Indian census of 1901, which classified communities into dozens of races and hundreds of castes, thought that it was the Aryan "invasion" that made caste the organizing principle of Indian society: the fair Aryans conquered the dark Dravidians and took wives from the subjugated population (so that half-breeds came into existence) but would not allow Dravidian men into their fold. Castes were thus groups with varying degrees of Aryan blood. The idea took root that "Indian civilization was formed by a big bang, caused by the conquest of . . . Aryan . . . invaders over . . . savage aboriginal Indians" (Trautmann 1999: 287). Dravidian languages, it may be noted, were spoken in northern India before they were replaced by Indo-Aryan.

R. C. Dutt thus wrote in his history of ancient India (1888: 4–5) that "the Hindu Aryans as conquerors and settlers on the banks of the Indus" were a robust race who appropriated lands from the "aborigines of the soil," who "struggled to maintain their own against the conquerors."³ Dutt sees the ancient period as a series of Aryan conquests that spread civilization further across India so that the "zone of unreclaimed barbarism . . . receded."⁴ Another instance—selected at random from library shelves—is provided by Havell's two-volume tome on architecture, with a subtitle significant for us: *A Study of Indo-Aryan Civilization*. In his introduction to this foundational text, Havell writes, "The history of India is the history of Aryan institutions, traditions, and culture. . . . The Aryan tradition of building is still a living art in India"; the British must understand this ancient civilization, akin to their own, in order to rule India successfully; and "Great Britain could grant to India no greater boon than the restoration or reconstruction of her ancient Aryan constitution" (1915: xxvii, xxviii, vii).

For his part, Nehru, in *The Discovery of India*, suggests, apropos to the cultural transformation that followed the Indus civilization, not conquest but a great cultural synthesis between immigrant Aryans and the Dravidians of the Indus cities: "Out of this synthesis and fusion grew the Indian races and the basic Indian culture, which had distinctive elements of both" (1946: 73). Following the Indological tradition, Nehru suggests (84–85) that Aryan conquest and interaction with Dravidian speakers gave rise to the caste system but that instead of annihilating the indigenous communities, the Aryans assimilated them. As for professional

archaeology, Marshall's long founding statement on religion⁵ in the Mohenjo-daro excavation report (1931) conceives of the latter as Dravidian and claims that Mohenjo-daro proves that there is nothing inherently primitive about Dravidian culture.⁶

Much of the importance of the Aryan identity in India accrues from its place in the earliest extant religious text of the Hindus,⁷ the *RgVeda*. Orthodox Hindus accord a prime place to the Vedas. Ancient treatises often claimed to be written on the authority of the Vedas, because these were believed to be the source of all knowledge and infallible (Gonda 1965: 7–8). Gonda points out (9–10) that in ancient times people ceased to understand these tracts but still believed in their authority, as a way of “clinging to continuity” and in a search for certainty. In the *RgVeda* the *Āryah* were those who worshipped certain deities with characteristic rituals and in a particular language. Such worship was the mark of a righteous person or *Ārya* (Nandi 2001: x).⁸ “Aryan” was what the authors of our earliest texts, Indian and Iranian, called themselves.⁹ Among the Buddhists of later times, *arya* meant “worthy” or “honorable.” Later it was an honorific: for instance, a daughter-in-law in a classical Sanskrit play addressed her father-in-law as *arya*.

A line of thought from the later nineteenth century to the 1950s saw Hindu religion as first expressed in its purest form in the *RgVeda* but conceded that with its emphasis on mantra and sacrifice, nature deities, the Soma cult, and the beginnings of caste hierarchy, it did not comprise the sum total; *puja*, *bhakti*, the theism of Vaishnavism and Saivism, propitiations of village goddesses, and protection from demons of all kinds were as much part of Hinduism as was Vedic ritual. Many of these latter phenomena derived from a Dravidian “substratum.” Whereas the Vedic Aryans were thought to be male-dominated and worshippers of male gods because they were pastoralists, the Dravidians as agriculturists were thought to believe in the principles of fertility and in mother goddesses. “Aryan” vis-à-vis “Dravidian” became a device for mapping numerous beliefs and rituals.¹⁰

Aryanism became increasingly identified with Hinduism in the nineteenth century with the birth of a reform and modernizing movement within Hinduism, the Arya Samaj. Founded in 1875, the Arya Samaj advocated a return to the pure religion of the Vedas, devoid of idol worship and the rituals of popular cults. For the founder of the Arya Samaj, Dayanand Saraswati, *Aryan* should replace the term *Hindu*, because the latter was not the original name of the Indian people and was used by foreigners in a derogatory sense (Pashaura Singh 1999). He urged his audiences to call themselves Aryan. Regeneration would come with the restoration

that hunters or gatherers were physiologically closer to the apes than were the tall blond Europeans, and there came about "a certain obsession for acquiring and measuring skulls of various 'races', which were in fact more ethnic or tribal groups" (Shipman 1994: 75).¹² In the United States, racist science was used to justify slavery and to prove that the enslaved, with smaller skull cavities, were inherently less intelligent (Bates 1994: 225).

Such ideas inevitably came to India. The British administration assumed that criminality was biologically inherited, and it classified certain landless and marauding groups as "criminal tribes." Officials who led campaigns against highway robbers initiated programs of craniometry. Even a modernizing reformist such as Ram Mohan Roy sent "Hindu" skulls to Edinburgh in 1822 for analysis (Bates 1994: 232). It was sincerely believed that there was a correlation between criminals and skull shapes and between the finest noses and the highest castes (243). Embedded in the discourse was the primary distinction between Aryans and non-Aryans (see Bayly 1994: 168–172). Many scholars and officials assumed that Aryan skulls were dolichocephalic, or "long-headed," as opposed to the brachycephalic, or "broad-headed," skulls of the "lower," autochthonous groups, even though many north-Indian Brahmans were found not to have long heads (Kennedy 1995: 46–48). Such thinking had been fueled by readings of certain RgVedic references to the Dasas and the Dasyus as expressing racial differences, when in fact it was in language and religion that these ancient groups were seen to differ from their enemies, the RgVedic poets (Trautmann 2004: 206–212).

What is unfortunate is that even today, although craniometry is on the wane, such racism (by which I mean seeking an inherent connection between culture and physiology) survives, sometimes with reference to genetics or blood groups. Physical anthropology in India continued to be preoccupied with skull types until a surprisingly late date. The middle class, even if it knows nothing about genetics or is incapable of giving a working definition of "Aryan," insists on the "genetic superiority" of the upper castes over the outcastes. In 1995 the physical anthropologist K. A. R. Kennedy, admitting that the identification of Aryans is not within the competence of the physical anthropologist, reported (49–54) that there was a biological affinity between the skulls at Harappan sites and those of Gandhara (cultures of the latter have been interpreted as vestiges of Aryan immigrants). He did not acknowledge that those who spoke a particular language in the past may not necessarily have constituted an internally breeding group. Kennedy stated (correctly) that a new language cannot be proof of an invasion (56), but he added the observation

that the *RgVeda* "does not claim a *foreign* home for the Aryans" (emphasis mine), thereby confusing ancient geography with present-day national boundaries.

There is other work by American physical anthropologists that argues in the same vein, utilizing skull and dental morphology with reference to Aryans and Dravidians, to posit the absence of a biological interruption after the Harappan period. The issue is not that a very small collection of skulls, bones, and teeth today represents the residents of Mohenjodaro and Harappa. What is at issue is that, by implication, this argument challenges the theory of Aryan "invasion," even though invasions in history do not generally result in total population replacement and even though the external origins of a language mean immigration and not necessarily an invasion. I challenged the relevance and integrity of such physical anthropology (Ratnagar 1998), asking whether nineteenth-century preoccupations were still with us and questioning the relevance of bones to language groups and the use of particular physical features to demonstrate population continuities. There was a defense by Kennedy, Hemphill, and Lukacs (2000), who do not seem to have understood the absence of a link between culture and physical type, and by Walimbe (2000) and Joglekar (2000), with a final rejoinder from me (Ratnagar 2000).

Language

Thus far we have seen that Aryanness became a crucial issue in certain perceptions of Indian civilization and Hinduism and that even today tendencies persist to view it as a matter of biological inheritance. I now will attempt to explain why we should identify the homeland of the Indo-Europeans with the steppe country in Eurasia: my reasoning comes from historical linguistics and the concept of bilingualism and language replacement. It will become clear that archaeology does not neatly prove or disprove the theory of migrations but that it does indicate the possibility of the immigration of small and disparate groups, at various times (during the second millennium BC) and over different routes, into South Asia. After we have viewed the theory of Aryan migration in all its strengths and weaknesses, when it is established that this is a reasonable hypothesis, we can explore the social and political background of why it has generated controversy. Let us thus move to "Aryan" as a linguistic label.

Sanskrit, and the later northern Indian languages that derived from it, belongs to the Indo-Aryan group. Vedic Sanskrit has strong affinities

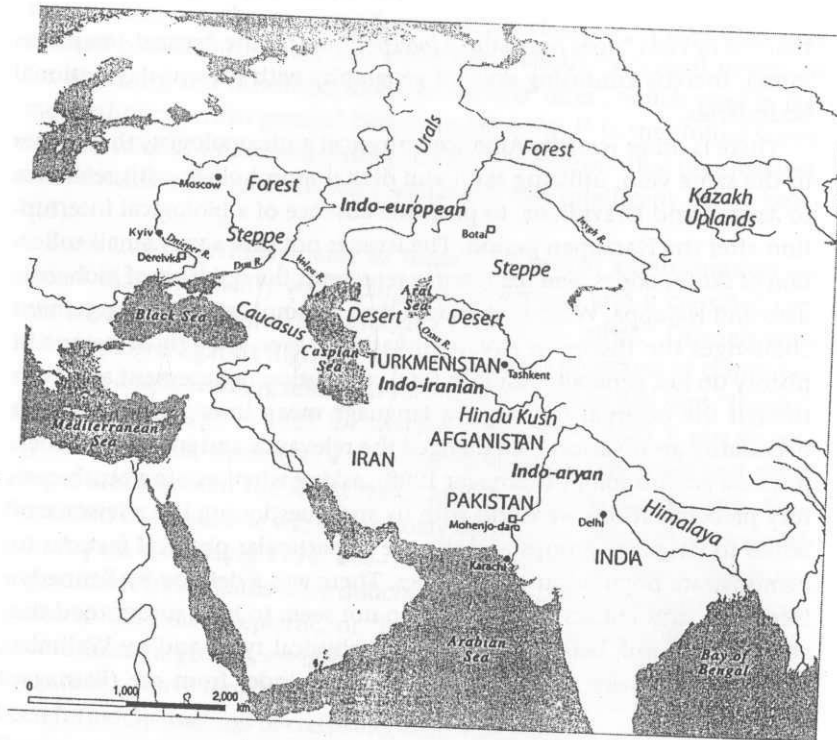


Figure 12.1. Eastern Indo-European language areas

with Avestan, and they belong to the Indo-Iranian language group. Indo-Iranian is in turn part of the huge Indo-European family of languages. Vocabulary and language structure are what justify these inferences about affinity. Indo-Aryan (of the *RgVeda*) and Avestan made the same innovations in the parent language. They are in fact so similar that, with reference to phonetic correspondences, one can translate entire Avestan sentences, word by word, into Vedic Sanskrit (Harmatta 1992: 357–358). Moreover, the cultural affinity (especially in cult, ritual, and mythology) between the two bodies of text is marked (Shrimali 2002: 32). Therefore no one contests the common origin of the two languages: a period of unity, perhaps in a northern Iranian or central Asian homeland, before they diverged into two sets of languages, is a reasonable inference. The only way branches of this Indo-Iranian parent language would have reached their later speech areas would have been through migration.

Let us briefly review the evidence for the Eurasian homeland of the progenitor of the Indo-European languages, and for the projected migrations of the Indo-Iranian speakers—in short, the reasons why we say

that the language of the *RgVeda* came into India with migrants in the later second millennium BC.¹³

Among the earliest known languages of the Indo-Iranian family are the languages of the *RgVeda*, that of the *Gathas* of the Zoroastrians (composed in the early second millennium BC a few centuries after the schism of the Iranian-language speakers),¹⁴ and linguistic remnants used by the Mitannians in Syria and by chariot-horse trainers in Anatolia. The *RgVeda* and the *Gathas* went through centuries of oral transmission before they were collated into written texts, whereas the material in Syria and Anatolia was inscribed on clay tablets between about 1600 and 1380 BC. Meanwhile, the languages of the Kafiri-Nuristani and Dardic language families, spoken in northeastern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan, have forms of Indo-Aryan that are considered earlier than their counterparts in Avestan and the *RgVeda* (Witzel 1995a: 110; 1995b: 322–323), and we can take these to be a fourth early Indo-Iranian branch.

It is significant, besides, that the language remnants that the Mitannians, a chariot-warrior aristocracy (who ruled a Hurrian-speaking populace), brought into Syria are closer to Indo-Aryan than to Avestan. The Mitannians were charioteers and horse-breeders, and the Hittite archives contain a manual of horse training said to have been authored by one Kikkuli the Mitannian. The words for numbers, for the horse, and for the chariot (and the names of deities in other texts, viz. treaties with the Hittite rulers) are strikingly similar to the language of the *RgVeda*. Mehendale (1993: 46) argues that Mitannian belongs to a stage older than the language of the *RgVeda*, a stage "before the forefathers of the Indo-Aryans came to India." For instance, Mitannian preserves the diphthongs (*aika* for "one") of Proto-Indo-European that Vedic transformed into simple vowels (*eka* for "one"). The secure dating of the Mitannian texts indicates that the separation from the parent group of Indo-Iranians would have occurred before 1600 BC, perhaps around 2000 BC. This in turn gives us an indication that the earliest poetry of the *RgVeda* was composed around 1600 BC. The period of composition may have lasted until 1200 or 1000 BC (Gonda 1975: 20–23; Deshpande 1979).

That the migration could not have occurred westward out of India is indicated by numerous bits of evidence.

In early Sanskrit literature (not necessarily in the *RgVeda* itself), the words for the elephant, the tiger, and the monkey are either coined terms or loan words from Dravidian or Munda.¹⁵ These animals are all characteristic of South Asia. Instead, Indo-European languages have common words for the horse, cow, sheep, goat, and deer. Moreover, the *RgVeda* contains dozens of non-Indo-European words.

Although all stages of the agricultural cycle are well documented in that text (Nandi 2001: 39–41), Shrimali avers (2002: 29) that these occur mainly in the interpolations and that most of the terms used are either coined or are non-Indo-European in origin. As for the Old Avestan texts, there are references to the chariot, the horse, the camel, the house, the clan, and so forth, but none to agriculture (Skjaervo 1995: 167–168). (Indian river names, to be sure, are Sanskrit—a fact that Bryant [1999] considers strange. It is held by Kochhar [2000], however, that the immigrants transferred existing names into the new country.) In addition, Hittite was an Indo-European language current in Anatolia between 1400 and 1200 BC, intrusive into that country (whose earliest, non-Indo-European, language is known as Hattic). Hittite is the most archaic of the known Indo-European languages, the closest to Proto-Indo-European.

The horse is an animal of the Eurasian grassland (the Pontic-Caspian steppe) and could not have been taken from India to Iran and Syria. Horse sacrifice, it needs to be noted, was an important and prestigious ritual in the *RgVeda* (Shrimali 2002: 39) and is generally believed to be an Indo-European feature. One could add that where the early Avestan material is concerned, personal names contain elements that mean “horse” (*-aspa*, thus Vishtaspa, etc.) as well as “camel” (*-ushtra*, thus Zarathushtra, Frashaoshtra) (Skjaervo 1995: 168).

There is a group of languages known as Finno-Ugric (Hungarian, Estonian, Finnish, Sami, etc.) that have a prehistoric homeland in the forest zone north of the Pontic-Caspian steppe, and about two hundred words are common to these languages. These languages received many loan words, in different periods, from Proto-Indo-European, and the archaeological evidence supports this in the sense that the forest zone saw agriculture and animal domestication much later than did the steppe. The loan words are for things like “to drive,” “hunt,” “sickle,” “goat,” “milk,” and so forth.

Not so well known is that Proto-Indo-European also had contact with Proto-Kartvelian, spoken in the southern Caucasus (Anthony 2001: 17–18).

If the authors of the *RgVeda* had been indigenous to India, we would expect some aspects of central India and the Deccan peninsula to be mentioned at least in passing in the text. In addition, early Indo-Aryan languages, with the exception of Sinhalese, remained mostly north of the Vindhya.

There is also the problem of retroflexion. Sanskrit is the only Indo-European language to have retroflex forms of *t*, *th*, *d*, *n*, and so forth. All South Asian languages have these retroflex forms, so that retroflexion in the extant *RgVeda* is explained only by “Dravidianization of the Aryan language” (Deshpande 1979: 257). For centuries, the *RgVeda* was transmitted orally, so that it is safe to infer that the poetry, when compiled and edited as a text, incorporated spoken forms. Furthermore, in the case of this poetry, it was of prime importance to enunciate the verses correctly so that they would have their intended efficacy at the sacrifice

and so that the text would be very well preserved (Gonda 1975: 15–16; Deshpande 1979: 242–247). So it is not impossible that some degree of retroflexion was present at the outset. Deshpande concludes that early Sanskrit was sometimes handed down by men for whom it was in fact a second language (1979: 297; 1995: 75–8), their mother-tongue being Dravidian. Bryant (1999) thinks that there are flaws in the Dravidian substratum theory and that linguistic convergence is not necessarily the outcome of bilingualism. However, if India had been the Indo-European homeland, surely other, if not all, Indo-European languages—Avestan in particular—would have had retroflexion.

Dispersal

Why did the Indo-European languages, of all the language families of the world, have such a wide dispersal? A language can be dispersed only with the movement of speakers of that language. It appears that the extensive dispersal was connected with the domestication of the horse, which is unique to the Indo-European homeland and its ecology. The words for the horse in the various Indo-European languages come from the same origin. The wild progenitor of the horse was native to the Eurasian grasslands east of the Volga, and it thrives in stretches where the grass grows knee-high. It also appears that it was in the homeland, at an early date, that the wheeled vehicle was introduced.

Harmatta (1992: 367–368) makes the stimulating suggestion that where the Indo-Iranian branch is concerned, there may first have been slow, short-distance, movements of cattle breeders, but that later, with the domestication of the horse (around 3500 BC) and the introduction of the war chariot, it was possible for the Indo-Iranians to make raids into distant lands to the south (into Babylonia, as the Kassites) and the south-east (toward India). It was with the subsequent advent of horse-riding that groups who remained in the homeland could keep huge herds and develop a cavalry, so that their migrations (in the later first millennium BC) became massive. This appears to be more valid than my suggestion in 1999 (Ratnagar 1999: 228–231) that horse-mounted pastoralism explains migrations into India in the second millennium BC. Kohl (commenting on Lamberg-Karlovsky 2002) too warns against assumptions that there were huge sheep and horse herds in the Bronze Age. Besides, South Asia does not have vast stretches of natural grassland and is not horse-breeding country.

The horse-riding chief and his retinue *has* perhaps left traces in South Asia, but in a relatively late period, in and after the seventh century

BC, in megalithic burials of central and peninsular India (all Iron Age). Individuals were buried with a horse or horse trappings, pottery, ornaments, and various iron artifacts, and there is a striking correlation of burials with a horse on the one hand and exceptionally long iron lances (sometimes called "javelins" or "spikes") on the other. The lance was a new weapon of the Iron Age, presumably for the horseback rider, usually only about 2.5 centimeters thick but 1 to 2.1 meters (usually 1.5 meters) long. It appears that the position of the lance in these burials carried symbolic significance. Little has been written about this strange co-occurrence of the horse, evidence for horse-riding, and the iron lance at about a dozen peninsular sites. Thus there is little we can say about the movements of seemingly horse-mounted chiefs and their retinues and their dispersals across the peninsula, let alone address the question of the language they may have spoken. All we know is that these bits of evidence were relatively late.

However, in the second millennium BC, as in northern Syria and Iran, so too in northwestern South Asia, we have literary evidence for horse-drawn chariot warfare,¹⁶ in which the charioteer was armed with bow and arrows and perhaps a mace, rather than warfare using cavalry. (It was considered *déclassé* for a Vedic chief to mount a horse.) Chariot horses are stall-fed, thus bred in fewer numbers than if free-grazing.

What, then, can be the explanation for the early dispersal of the Indo-Iranian branches? Perhaps it is basically ecology: given the low carrying capacity of the steppe, its severe winters, and periodic failures of rainfall, herds can swell and dwindle rapidly and minor fluctuations may trigger out-migration. Connected with the fragile ecosystem are the slow increments in wealth and status that a family can expect from success in animal breeding over the long term.¹⁷ Wealth and status come more easily from leadership in looting or raiding one's neighbors. This in turn gives scope for the rise of warrior aristocracies, but more importantly for us, periodic warfare causes the repeated displacement of families and clans, if not entire tribes.

Archaeology

Before we survey the archaeology, let us clarify just what kind of archaeological evidence we would be looking for. We would look for intrusive cultures of the second millennium BC in the northwestern border regions of South Asia, and for Central Asian or Iranian materials in them. But we can hardly search for the archaeological correlates of the *RgVeda*.

The *Rgveda* is a collection of poetry composed between 1500 and 1200 (or 1000) BC, often to accompany various stages of the sacrificial ritual. Transmitted orally, the hymns were arranged in a written corpus around 700 to 500 BC. The extant text comprises ten books: the second to the seventh include the poetry of six separate clans, dedicated mainly to the deities Agni and Indra and the deified Soma. (An invigorating drink was pressed from the *soma* plant and offered to the gods during the sacrifice.) The hymns of the *RgVeda* were set in the regions of present-day Afghanistan, northern and central Pakistan, and present-day northern India up to the Jumna river. Sharma points out (1999: 87) that there would have been some overlap in the lands of the Vedic and Avestan poets. Kochhar (2000: 94–140) explores the habitat of the ephedra plant, with which the *RgVedic* Soma has been identified, and finds that the region known to the poets was confined to the Hindu Kush and surrounding terrain and not, for instance, the Indo-Gangetic divide in which flows a river that some believe to be the Vedic Sarasvati. In Book 8 there are references to camels, to the best horses, to mountains, and to snow (Witzel 1995b: 317). There are references to the crossing of rivers, the Indus included: in Book 2 the Bharata clan wages successful battles against the enemy Dasas in their hill forts and hence moves down the passes that give entry into South Asia (322). (For the variety of habitats and land use, see Nandi 2001: 39–41.) The *RgVeda* does not refer to the Vindhya mountains of central India (Gonda 1975: 24).

The subject of the poetry of the *RgVeda* is “almost exclusively ritual” (Witzel 1995a: 93). Most hymns invite the gods to the sacrifice. The language is elaborate and would have been appreciated only by the upper crust (92). Situations are not explained from first principles, as much of the background would have been known to the sacrificer or audience. This and many internal features of the language contribute to the obscurity of much of the text. The meanings of entire verses remain doubtful, and even in the ancient commentary texts, we find that verses of the *RgVeda* have been misunderstood (Winternitz 1927: 68–69).

Even though agriculture is mentioned in the later interpolations, there are indications that the poets belonged to mobile groups. The word *grama*, which means “village” in later Sanskrit, in the *RgVeda* meant basically a “group” of people. It was a mobile group, with cattle, carts, horses, and chariots. *Grاما* came to connote the temporary camp of such a group. It appears, besides, that populations were small. Nandi, for instance, finds on internal evidence that the fighting groups could have comprised no more than about 150 men; in one instance it is just 21 warriors of two localities who are vanquished (Nandi 2001: 13). Thus, we cannot expect

that mounds would mark the habitations of those who followed the RgVedic rituals.

Furthermore, the text reveals the interactions of the *aryas* with local people, some of whom were subjugated. Aside from acculturation and the assimilation of various culture elements between migrant and autochthon, there was intertribal rivalry among the Aryans (Sharma 1983: 36–38; see also Hock 1999: 160–161). Not all Aryans who migrated into India followed the religion of the *RgVeda*. Thus, at the most, archaeologists may ask what kind of techno-complex (in the sense used by David Clarke) could logically match the setting of the RgVedic hymns.

Concerning archaeological correlates of the initial stage of Proto-Indo-European unity, some scholars (Mallory 1989: 198–215; Parpola 1993; Anthony 2001: 17–19, 25–26) have pointed to the late fifth or early fourth millennium BC Sredni Stog and related cultures of the Pontic-Caspian steppe that in their later development saw the emergence of a mobile herding economy with, possibly, the domesticated horse. The date of horse domestication continues to be debated primarily because the skeleton of the horse is not visibly transformed with the onset of domestication and because the stratigraphic context of a tooth with bit abrasion is open to doubt (Levine, Renfrew, and Boyle 2003). After 3500 BC, a large part of this steppe had cemeteries of more mobile stockbreeders, perhaps horse-mounted, who knew the wheeled vehicle, metallurgy, and agriculture (this was the Yamnaya or “pit-grave” horizon). Eastward, in Kazakhstan, sites such as Botai (after 3500 BC) have yielded thousands of horse bones, though it is not clear whether the horses were ridden or just hunted at the site. In this eastern region there gradually appeared around 2200 BC a new culture with metallurgy, large-scale cattle and sheep herding, elaborate animal sacrifices, and chariot burials in the graves, and also, paradoxically, fortified settlements. The main sites are Sintashta and Arkaim. After 2000 BC, the Andronovo culture flourished east of the Urals. People raised crops and rode the horse and the Bactrian camel. Full horse-mounted nomadism and warfare did not develop until a millennium later, but it cannot be doubted that horse-riding itself was mastered around 2000 BC.

Andronovo pottery is found in limited contexts at some sites of the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC) in, say, 2200–1600 BC. And this is where correlations with the literary evidence on Indo-Iranians usually begin: Carpelan and Parpola (2001: 132–134), for instance, see the Proto-Iranians remaining west of the Urals at this stage; they see the remains of the Proto-Indo-Aryans in the Andronovo culture.

It has been suggested that although the prosperity of the BMAC culture was based on agriculture, and although it was a local development, it was Aryans from the northern steppes who imposed their rule over its fortified settlements (137) in the same kind of coup as in Mitanni. Significantly, the fortified settlements are small, and the sites are generally "single-period . . . with less than a meter of cultural deposit" (Kohl 1984: 146). Perhaps a clan occupied each settlement. The massive fortification walls and towers are almost out of proportion with the sizes of the settlements.

The attention scholars have paid to the BMAC in the context of the Aryan identity accrues from the following factors: (1) Horse bones were found in Margiana (Kelleli 1 and Tapi Depe), as also in Namazga VI contexts in the Turkmenistan piedmont (Kohl 1984: 141), together with steppe ceramic elements and steppe burial forms (141, 146–147). (2) The remains of the ephedra plant, identified as Vedic *soma*,¹⁸ were found at Togolok-21 in Margiana, in vessels lying in the ruins of a fortified ritual building (Parpola 1995). (3) The concentric circular walls around the small settlement at Dashly 3 in Bactria prompted Parpola (1995: 368) to identify this and similar settlements as forts of the Dasa people against whom the RgVedic Aryans often fought. (4) Several artifactual similarities link Margiana with the western fringes of South Asia: BMAC artifacts that have parallels elsewhere include flat violin-shaped figurines (also seen in Swat); rare kidney-shaped chlorite vessels (seen also at Mehrgarh South Cemetery); "columns" and disks of white stone (also at Shahdad east of Kerman in Iran and at Mehrgarh Cemetery and Sibri); some seal types (Kohl 1984: 147–149) with counterparts at Shahdad, Harappa, and Mohenjo-daro; bronze mirrors with parallels at Shahdad, Mehi, Mohenjo-daro, and Harappa; bronze cosmetic flacons reported from Mehrgarh South Cemetery and from Chanhu-daro; bronze shaft-hole axes or adze-axes also known at Shahdad, Khinaman, Sibri and Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, and Chanhu-daro; and bronze animal-headed pins also seen at Harappa and Mehrgarh South Cemetery. In addition, horse and Bactrian-camel bones occur at the site of Pirak, which, like Mehrgarh and Sibri, is located near the foot of the Bolan Pass.

Is the artifact trail adequate evidence for migrations? No geographic pattern is discernible. Most of the artifacts probably belong to the ritual sphere, yet we do not find references to anything like them (except perhaps the imagery on a few seals) in the *RgVeda* or the Avestan texts. Likewise, many of them are artifacts of bronze, which receives scant mention in the *RgVeda*. While Mallory states (1989: 227–231) that the Indo-Iranian

identity of the Andronovo culture is hard to disprove, Lamberg-Karlovsky (2002) points to its long time-span and wide geographic reach and to the fact that the BMAC, with a very different material culture, is also identified as Indo-Iranian. While it has been argued that the imagery on BMAC seals, including snakes and mythical animals and birds, could represent struggles between good and evil as known in the Avestan texts (Kohl 1984: 149, quoting Sarianidi), Francfort (2001) rejects the Iranian identity of the BMAC, suggesting that the "Iranization" of Bactria occurred later, and finds in the iconography of the BMAC seals no correlates in the texts. I would add that one does not expect seals and advanced agriculture and metallurgy as remains of the people of the *RgVeda*. Let us, however, consider the archaeological evidence in some northwestern regions of South Asia.

Some scholars claim that after 1800 BC, Indo-Aryans entered the narrow Swat valley in the mountain region of northernmost Pakistan, where Dardic languages have been spoken. After 2500 BC there appeared in this and surrounding regions an entirely new cultural horizon, and it has reasonably been inferred that the authors of this "Gandhara Grave culture" were immigrants (see Stacul 1989). For Kochhar (2000: 186, 222) "non-RgVedic Aryans", (presumably he means speakers of Dardic or Kafiri languages) arrived around 2000 (or 1700) BC, to be followed by the "actual RgVedic people" in around 1400 BC. In the period 2000 to 1400 BC, which is represented mainly by inhumation and cremation burials, stone houses were built, ground stone tools were used with a range of bone tools, and there was some metal. A grey pottery has strong similarities in fabric and shape (e.g., cups on high pedestals) with pottery from sites in northeastern Iran, and there is also a painted red ware. A range of crops was grown,¹⁹ including the grape, and sheep, cattle, and pigs were kept; there is also evidence of the horse. Horses were buried with people in two graves at Katelai in the lower Swat valley. At the settlement of Birkot Ghundai, too, horse bones were found. Around or after 1500 BC, the settlement of Aligrama saw a violent destruction. Horse burials with pieces of horse harness occur in the cemeteries of Dir and Chitral in "warrior graves" after about 500 BC, when stone fortifications also came up around some settlements.

There are intrusive cultures on the Indus plains too, after about 1800 BC. Among the first of these to be reported was the posturban Cemetery H culture at Harappa (Vats 1940: 203–245). Here two kinds of burial occurred in succession, inhumation and then fractional burials. The burial urns were of a pottery finer than those of the Harappan period, with pictures

of the sun, stars, peacocks, and the like painted on them. Vats was convinced they expressed the people's ideas about life after death, and he found resonances with the poetry of the *RgVeda*: the hounds of Yama, the offering of a goat to Agni at the funeral, and so forth. Yet in his honesty, Vats stated that one could not carry the match of text and pot paintings too far, since this was not the residue of the cremation rituals mentioned in the text. As for the "Gomal Grave culture" not far away, it is little known and bears testimony of a complex ritual of disposal of the dead.

Dikshit (1969: 51) notes that whereas some authorities have identified the Painted Grey Ware (PGW) culture of the Ganga-Jumna interfluvium with early Aryans, others make the equation with the Ahar or the Banas culture; some even suggest that the latter represents the first, and the PGW culture the second, influx of Aryans. One cannot proceed very far on this reasoning, because what is meant by "culture" is largely pottery types. Ghosh (1994) in fact pointed out that the PGW does not occur in northwestern Pakistan or Afghanistan, the region of the *RgVeda*. For Sharma (1983) the PGW culture is to be correlated with the world of the *later* Vedic texts, as these sites are located in the zone where certain flora, which are mentioned in the texts, are known and as rice, iron, and glass were excavated.

Other archaeologists have characterized the Chalcolithic Banas/Ahar culture as Aryan, because of an absence of burials and certain shapes in black-and-red pottery; recently, at Gilund, a characteristically BMAC terra-cotta in the shape of a stepped cross has also been found (Possehl, Shinde, and Ameri 2004: fig. 15).

Horse bones have occurred in the sites of the BMAC; the Gandhara Grave culture; at Pirak at the foot of the Bolan pass (where there are other stray Central Asian elements as the sequence moves from copper or bronze to iron); the Late Harappan-PGW overlap at Bhagwanpura; and at PGW Hastinapur, in contexts with or without fortifications, metallurgy, or seals. They also occur in the warrior graves in central and southern India mentioned above. Can we say, then, that horse remains mark the routes of Aryan immigration? Certainly the horse is an exotic element in South Asia and was very much a part of the Indo-Iranian culture. Yet it would surely be dangerous to conclude that the horse necessarily means the presence of those who spoke Vedic Sanskrit. A cooccurrence of the horse *and* the Bactrian two-humped camel (as at Pirak but, to my knowledge, not in the Gandhara Grave culture of Swat) would be a more convincing indicator of migrants from Afghanistan, northern Iran, or Bactria.²⁰

Language Replacement

There are many second-millennium regional cultures in the northwestern borderlands of South Asia, thus, that bear traces of immigrant groups. It could be said that this evidence shows that it was not by force of numbers, or by overpowering the local people, that Indo-Aryan speech came to prevail in large parts of northern India. Language replacement could have occurred by way of bilingualism. Perhaps local communities took to speaking Indo-Aryan not because they were outnumbered, but because Indo-Aryan was the language of people with skills in horse-breeding and chariot-building, groups who had achieved military or political ascendancy, whose complex rituals (sacrifice on a large scale) were viewed with awe as highly efficacious, and whose wealth in animals was a matter of envy.

After a period of bilingualism, indigenous communities could have begun to use Indo-Aryan terms and phrases among themselves, so that ultimately they began to converse between themselves in Indo-Aryan. Language replacement has occurred in many parts of the world and is not necessarily a result of the migration of hordes of people. And where it has occurred (in ancient Mesopotamia, in medieval Turkey, and in Ireland, for instance) anthropologists have not begun searches for contrasting skull types or trails of destruction.

Arguments for an Indigenous Origin

Shnirelman says in this volume (chapter 1) that it is in popular perception and not academia that latter-day Russians have begun to insist on an Aryan identity. In India, however, it is a section of scholars, professional archaeologists included, who view the Aryans as indigenous, in keeping with current political trends. Let us take a look at a conference volume published a little more than a decade ago (Deo and Kamath 1993).²¹ The Mythic Society in Bangalore organized the conference. The volume is not the work of a lunatic fringe: its senior editor was director of a major center for archaeological study (and my respected teacher), and several professors as well as an ex-director general of the Archaeological Survey of India are among the contributors. There are two papers that accept the idea of Central Asian origins, one of them by a specialist in the Kushan period of the first centuries of the Christian era (B. N. Mukherjee), and the other by a linguist-Sanskritist (M. A. Mehendale). The latter is one of only two papers that refer to Mitanni. As for Finno-Ugric contacts, these

are mentioned in only one paper, by V. S. Pathak (Deo and Kamath 1993: 92). There is the inevitable paper on bones, by S. R. Walimbe, which, disconnecting language and race, nevertheless refers to the absence of marked change in skull morphology as an argument against "invasion"—which in any case is not the same thing as immigration and is not the essence of the external-origins theory. S. P. Gupta argues the fallacy of race, the fallacy of the theory of invasion (there are no broken walls or ruined cities, etc.), and says there is no clear division between Aryan and Dravidian, linguistically. Yet he is constrained to make a case that the *absence* of the use of iron, the alleged occurrence of the horse,²² and the coexistence of city and village in the Harappa culture make the latter equivalent to Vedic culture. Having painstakingly tried to draw up a match of culture elements, Gupta concludes by saying the two were different manifestations of the same culture complex.

In the same volume, S. R. Rao, the excavator of the Harappan site of Lothal, claims to have found evidence of fire altars used in Vedic sacrifice and Vedic deities and myths in the images on the seals; he reverts to his old theory that the language of the Harappan seal inscriptions is a variety of Sanskrit.²³ As regards the "fire altars," the argument is strained. If we are to interpret certain fixtures as a ritual element, we need to establish that they have recurrent and regular features. Nowhere does Rao state which attributes would distinguish a ritual fire "altar" from an ordinary hearth or industrial kiln, except for observations that one or two are exceptionally large (brick-lined) pits. In any case, oval cooking pits with central columns of clay, on which were fixed baking pans, have been found in other cultures (Dhavalikar 1995: 96) where they are not ritual fixtures. Further, does the occurrence in a Lothal pit of a single jawbone indicate animal sacrifice? A gold pendant (a sphere of gold leaf) found in one of these is said to be a gift to a Vedic priest, but what exactly establishes this connection remains a mystery.

Instead of continuing with a point-by-point refutation, let me refer the reader to the general tone of this conference volume. In his keynote address, the president of the Mythic Society states (Deo and Kamath 1993: xvii): "We should remove the distorted impression that the forefathers of the present-day Indians were the invaders of India and foreigners to India." There is more than one reference to foreign conspiracy and the Christian hand. European notions of superiority, it is said, received a blow with the discovery of Sanskrit and the "most advanced, refined and cultured race of the world" (52). Missionaries had discovered that the intellectual and moral authority of the Brahmins would be a major obstacle to their evangelization. "Missionary scholars . . . had already

perceived the potential of the science of comparative philology in uprooting the hold of the Brahmins, Sanskrit language and Vedic tradition over the minds of the Indian masses" (32). One participant asks how the Vedic Aryans could have been "agro-pastoralists" since these are "two different levels of technology," two different ways of life, he thinks (104). Yet another participant thinks that to say the early Aryans were pastoralists is to say that they were "barbarians" (157).

We have seen the importance given to being Aryan in modern India and the key place given to the Vedas as the fount of Hinduism. When Indian nationalism first expressed itself, it was a liberating, modernizing force and a move toward unity. Consider, for instance, the sober assessment of Dutt, whose early history is mentioned above. In 1888 (23n1) he wrote of the early home of the Aryans that it was probably somewhere in Central Asia, even though patriotic Indians would not admit that their first home could be anywhere outside India. Dutt also stated that speaking the same language did not amount to belonging to one race. He lived in an age before the perversion of nationalist ideas had begun.

Where latter-day reconstructions (as embodied in the conference volume discussed above) are concerned, however, we are not dealing with a matter of innocent patriotism. Let the Western reader not imagine, either, that all this is because Indian society is in some way more "religious" than other societies. In many of the newer nations of the world, religion is not confined to the private sphere. As the political class seeks its following, religion is co-opted. In India, temple leaders (called "seers" and "godmen" by the media) become fixers for administrators seeking promotions or transfers and for political aspirants; candidates for elections are chosen according to the predominant religion or caste of the constituency in question; preachers at mosques tell their congregations to vote for this or that party. "Hindutva," politically embedded, is not at all the same thing as Hinduism. Hindutva is, as Patnaik and Chalam (1996) explain, the articulation of the projected interests of certain sections of society (those labeled "Hindus"), interests viewed as conflicting with those of other sections (other faiths). The nation, far from being the liberating force it once was, has in the hands of the Hindutva movement become something that excludes.

Scholars taking the Hindutva position give minimal attention to philology and even less to language-replacement theory. Indian archaeology, too, has not developed its analytic tools with due rigor. It conflates

concepts such as "culture" with distinctive kinds of pottery, in many cases. There is also the painful reality of the low standard of Sanskrit studies in India, with no fresh translations or editions of the *RgVeda* in recent times. Scholars with a nationalist bent have, almost inevitably, read the early Sanskrit literature (the "greatest," "oldest," "best" in the world) with the remains of the "glorious" Harappa civilization, even though the latter is incontestably urban, seafaring, and internationally mercantile, as well as preoccupied with animals like the monkey—all of these are features absent from the *RgVeda*. Given this agenda, it has become imperative for these archaeologists to highlight "identifications" of fire altars and of the horse on Harappan seals and to read the hitherto undeciphered script as expressing an Indo-Aryan language. The excavator of the Harappan town of Dholavira, instead of systematically publishing the finds as they have been unearthed, interprets the site as a Vedic town (whatever that may mean), even though the *RgVeda* has nothing to do with the Rann or the Kutch mainland. There was a project on "Sarasvati" valley archaeology, generously funded by the Hindu nationalist government in power until 2004, aiming to correct the "error" in the naming of the Harappa civilization. (It was named after the Indus instead of the Sarasvati, the latter being a river, said [quite incorrectly, it appears to me—see Kochhar 2000] to be of central importance in the poetry.) Inevitably, some scholars have sought to argue for cultural continuity from the Harappan civilization to that of the Ganga, even though the latter lies in a totally different location and begins its development at least eight hundred years after the demise of the former. State examinations for college-teacher eligibility included questions, to be answered in eight lines, about the similarities between the Indus and Ganges civilizations. Popular lectures sought to arouse anger by stating that "Marxist" scholars actually describe the RgVedic Aryans as "nomads"—how insulting!

Reading the *Aryan Problem*, I felt twinges of embarrassment and a small degree of compassion for the narrow-mindedness and low self-esteem behind this kind of writing. But there is also the question of expediency, as was pointed out when I presented the material in this chapter as a paper at the University of Delhi in February 2005. It cannot be a coincidence, for example, that the volume came out in 1993, after the "heroic" demolition of the medieval mosque at Ayodhya.

It is probably in the context of opportunism that another, more recent volume (Tripathi 2005) was produced. Here too we are told that the *RgVeda* is much older than 1500 BC, that the Aryans are indigenous to India (and many more archaeological cultures are said to be Indo-Aryan), and that Sanskrit is nothing but Proto-Indo-European (13).²⁴ There are

strange statements. The editor says, "Vedic civilization is either identical with Harappan and Indus civilization as Sarasvati civilization, or continuous with them as a developmental stage" (13); V. N. Misra asserts that because many RgVedic hymns were written on the banks of the Sarasvati and this river flows in India, we can conclude that the Indian subcontinent was the original homeland of the Indo-Aryans (177-178); S. Singh finds that Arya is "the Supreme Being in His capacity of the nearest reference point in the context of the management of the support cycle of life in phenomenal realm" (123); M. K. Dhavalikar states that it is the text of the *RgVeda* that gives evidence of "a heavy concentration of settlements in the Sarasvati and Drishadvati basins" (203). He says (208) that besides Indian names such as Somasena and Arisena occurring in Mesopotamian tablets, "there are two more names: Al Alli Asrani and Ila Brabani," and for the latter cites Parpola 1995. I can find no such mention in Parpola 1995. There is only one reference, by A. M. Shastri (103), to Iranian identification with Aryanness, and that is with reference to the tradition of origins further east. Some contributors to the volume, including archaeologists with claims to academic distinction, appear to have become interested in Aryans only recently. Is their rush to conform to the majority a symptom of the insecurities that prevail among the middle classes, or did the scholars succumb to the temptations of political patronage and rush to discover the indigenous origins of the Aryans?

There are other modern nations that identify their ancient past (and glory) with the Aryans. *Ariyana*, the "land of the Aryas,"²⁵ denotes both Iran and Afghanistan to the peoples of these two countries. The Achaemenid emperor Darius claimed Aryan ancestry and the initiation of writing in the Aryan (Old Persian) language. The Pahlavi kings of the twentieth century pretended to be the legitimate successors of the Achaemenids and emphasized Persianness over Islam, exhorting the world to call their land "Iran." Even so, official Iranian thinking in the days of the shah and after the revolution grants that the Aryans were immigrants into Iran and acknowledges the existence of a pre-Aryan period of Iranian history. There has been *no* attempt, political, administrative, or scholarly, to doctor the historical sequence to claim indigenous origins.

Why is it, then, that so many Indians should find the thought of external Aryan origins to be threatening? This question put to university students elicited the glib answer that Iran had a homogeneous culture

and religion, which is false. For the main part, the answer lies in twentieth-century majoritarianism and the politics of exclusion pursued in India. On the one hand, Muslims are projected in some schoolbooks and in popular discourse as alien invaders, the destroyers of temples, and the violators of Hindu women. On the other hand, citizens who have for centuries been treated as outcaste or untouchable claim that the Harappa civilization was *their* creation, that they are the autochthonous population. In such a scenario it would not do to acknowledge that the ancestors of the upper-caste leaders of the Hindu chauvinism were themselves of foreign origin.

At an international conference, "India and Iran: The Confluence of Musical Cultures," at the National Centre of Performing Arts in January 2005, Ashok Ranade stressed that we must think of a "culture zone" that incorporated both Iran and India, one in which there were constant exchanges between the two countries even as Arab, Turkish, and Afghan elements were being absorbed by either or both of them. Another scholar found that rather than the "tree" or "wave" models of cultural interaction, it is the "spaghetti" model that best represents the give-and-take in music that went on for centuries. How ironic that those Indian intellectuals who are so preoccupied with their Aryan ancestry have not yet realized that "few people have been more closely related in origin and throughout history than the people of India and the people of Iran" (Nehru 1946: 148).

Notes

1. This does not mean that the nation is a falsehood (Anderson 1983: 15). Instead, Gellner (1983: 54) was insisting that the boundaries of nation-states could not possibly coincide with those of specific culture traditions.
2. Jawaharlal Nehru, a romantic nationalist, admits that of our Indian nation we "make and preserve the pictures of our choice" (1946: 63).
3. Even a modern scholar like Gonda sees Dravidian culture as a "substratum" from which Aryans repeatedly borrowed and adapted (1965: 15).
4. See Bayly 1994 for exceptions among the colonial administrators who did not think in this way.
5. His framework and assumptions have been used in a large number of subsequent passages or tracts on the Harappan religion.
6. Aside from these two language groups, of course, there are also in India speakers of Munda languages and languages related to those of Tibet and Burma.
7. *Hinduism* was a term coined in the 1820s in the view—often contested—of a religion that was all-embracing.

8. *Arya*, was used in contradistinction to *dasa*; *arya* could thus mean those who, under the leadership of the god Indra, defeated the Dasas (Monier-Williams 1899: s.v. "arya"). Apte (1965) gives the word the connotations of "worthy, high, honorable," etc. For *Arya*, see also Macdonell and Keith 1912.
9. Avestan, the ancient language closest to RgVedic Sanskrit, also uses this term. The later Persian emperor Darius the Achaemenid claimed not only his Persian ancestry but also that he was "an Aryan of Aryan seed."
10. Colonial Indology was built on knowledge gleaned from Brahman scholars and ignored many non-Brahmanic strands and protest movements (see Hardy 1995; Dalmia and von Stietencron 1995; Sontheimer and Kulke 1997). Hinduism was incorrectly understood as an all-embracing whole. Modern Hinduism is in fact a "form of corporate and organized and syndicated religion" (Frykenberg 1997: 89) defined by the upper castes and classes and by colonial codifications of law and government controls of temple treasuries. Brahman supremacy has in any case, since the nineteenth century, been contested by the downtrodden (Omvedt 1995), who see the caste system as oppression and the ancient Brahmans as foreign invaders who destroyed the glorious civilization of Mohenjo-daro.
11. Reconversion was a policy of the Arya Samaj. The Hindu Mahasabha was dissolved in the 1960s, but its ideas persisted, e.g., in the thinking of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a crypto-cultural organization that enjoyed great political power between about 1998 and 2002. Its ideology appealed to the upper castes and their middle-class frustrations about jobs and life in overcrowded cities.
12. Shipman (1994: 87-99) writes about Rudolf Virchow's survey of 6 million German schoolchildren in order to dispel the myth of Christian Germans being blue-eyed and blond Aryans (he was aware of the potential for political abuse). He could not, however, shake the faith of Christian Germans that they constituted a race.
13. The paragraphs that follow draw from Mallory 1989; Deshpande 1979, 1995; Witzel 1995a, 1995b; Harmatta 1992; Anthony 2001; Mehendale 1993; and Skjaervo 1995.
14. Later languages of the Iranian group include Persian, Baluch, Pashto, and Tadjik.
15. Baluchistan is the western frontier of the distribution of the monkey in Asia.
16. In an important review of the evidence, Sparreboom (1985) asks what use the RgVedic cattle herders could have made of the chariot. He finds that chariot racing is more frequent than chariot warfare. But racing was not for sport in a kind of folk festivity. Chariot races were connected with contests between individuals vying for supremacy and prestige.
17. Sharma (1983: 159) comes to the same point in the context of the RgVedic textual evidence.
18. Needless to say, such an identification can never be proved.
19. In the RgVeda, only *yava*, probably barley, occurs as the crop.

20. We must not forget, either, that the Dravidian language speakers themselves may have entered South Asia from the northwest.
21. Note that it was in December 1992 that the mosque at Ayodhya was demolished by a frenzied mob. Movements in academia along the lines of Hindu nationalism were most confident during the period 1990 to 2004.
22. Surkotada is perhaps the only Harappan site whose animal remains have been subjected to detailed study by more than one scholar—see Bokonyi 1997 for identification as horse bones, and Meadow and Patel 1997 for the refutation of this identification.
23. There has been no conclusive decipherment of the script. Needless to say, in Hindutva circles it has become important to project it as encoding a variety of Sanskrit.
24. Also, the Vedic language is “the original language” and “the real Indo-European” (Tripathi 2005: 114–116).
25. From the ancient *Airyānām vaējō* was derived *Erān Vēz*, and thus “Iran.”

References

- Anderson, B. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Anthony, D. 2001. Persistent identity and Indo-European archaeology in the western steppe. In *Early Contacts between Uralic and Indo-European: Linguistic and Archaeological Considerations*, ed. C. Carpelan, A. Parpola, and P. Koskikallio, 11–35. Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura.
- Apte, V. S. 1965. *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. 3rd ed. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Baird, R. D. 1998. *Religion in Modern India*. Delhi: Manohar.
- Banga, I. 2004. Swami Dayanand's Aryavarta. In *India—Studies in the History of an Idea*, ed. I. Habib, 195–203. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Bates, C. 1994. Race, caste, and tribe in central India. In *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, ed. P. Robb, 219–259. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Bayly, S. 1994. Caste and “race” in colonial ethnography. In *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, ed. P. Robb, 165–218. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Bokonyi, S. 1997. Horse remains from the prehistoric site of Surkotada. *South Asian Studies* 13:297–307.
- Breckenridge, C., and P. van Der Veer. 1993. Orientalism and the postcolonial predicament. In *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, ed. C. Breckenridge and P. van der Veer, 1–19. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Bryant, E. 1999. Linguistic substrata and the indigenous Aryan debate. In *Aryan and Non-Aryan in South Asia*, ed. J. Bronkhorst and M. M. Deshpande, 59–83. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Carpelan, C., and A. Parpola. 2001. Proto-Indo-European, Proto-Uralic, and Proto-Aryan in archaeological perspective. In *Early Contacts between Uralic and*

- Indo-European: Linguistic and Archaeological Considerations*, ed. C. Carpelan, A. Parpola, and P. Koskikallio, 55–150. Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura.
- Connerton, P. 1993. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dalmia, V., and H. von Stietencron, eds. 1995. *Representing Hinduism*. Delhi: Sage.
- Deo, S. B., and S. Kamath, eds. 1993. *The Aryan Problem*. Pune: Bharatiya Itihasa Sankalana Samiti.
- Deshpande, M. M. 1979. Genesis of Rgvedic retroflexion, In *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*, ed. M. M. Deshpande and P. E. Hook, 235–315. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Deshpande, M. M. 1995. Vedic Aryans, non-Vedic Aryans, and non-Aryans. In *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, ed. G. Erdosy, 67–84. Berlin: W. de Gruyter.
- Dhavalikar, M. K. 1995. The living past: The first farmers of Maharashtra. In *Folk Culture, Folk Religion, and Oral Traditions in Maharashtrian Culture*, ed. G.-D. Sontheimer, 87–105. Delhi: Manohar.
- Dikshit, K. N. 1969. A note on the problem of the plain black and red ware in northern India. In *Potteries in Ancient India*, ed. B. P. Sinha, 48–55. Patna: Patna University Press.
- Dutt, R. C. 1888. *The Early Hindu Civilization, 2000–320 BC*. London. Reprint, Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1963.
- Francfort, H.-P. 2001. The archaeology of protohistoric Central Asia and the problems of identifying Indo-European and Uralic populations. In *Early Contacts between Uralic and Indo-European*, ed. C. Carpelan, A. Parpola, and P. Koskikallio, 151–165. Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura.
- Frykenburg, R. E. 1997. The emergence of modern "Hinduism" as a concept and as an institution. In Sontheimer and Kulke 1997, 82–107.
- Gellner, E. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ghosh, A. 1994. A note on the homeland of the painted grey ware. In *Painted Grey Ware*, ed. R. C. Gaur, 25–28. Jaipur: Publication Scheme.
- Gonda, J. 1965. *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal. Reprint, 1985.
- Gonda, J. 1975. *Vedic Literature*. Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz.
- Hardy, F. 1995. A radical re-assessment of the Vedic heritage. In Dalmia and Stietencron 1995, 35–50.
- Harmatta, J. 1992. The emergence of the Indo-Iranians. In *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, ed. A. H. Dani and V. M. Masson, 1:357–378. N.p: UNESCO.
- Havell, E. B. 1915. *The Ancient and Medieval Architecture of India: A Study of Indo-Aryan Civilization*. Reprint, Delhi: S. Chand, 1972.
- Hobsbawm, E. 1990. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hock, H. H. 1999. Through a glass darkly. In *Aryan and Non-Aryan in South Asia*, ed. J. Bronkhorst and M. M. Deshpande, 145–174. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Jaffrelot, C. 1996. *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s*. Delhi: Penguin Viking.
- Joglekar, P. P. 2000. Back to bones? A rejoinder. *Man and Environment* 25 (1): 117–118.
- Kennedy, K. A. R. 1995. Have Aryans been identified in the prehistoric skeletal record of South Asia? In *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, ed. G. Erdosy, 32–66. Berlin: W. de Gruyter.
- Kennedy, K. A. R., B. E. Hemphill, and J. R. Lukacs. 2000. Bring back the bones. *Man and Environment* 25 (1): 105–109.
- Kochhar, R. 2000. *The Vedic People*. Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Kohl, P. L. 1984. *Central Asia: Palaeolithic Beginnings to the Iron Age*. Paris: Editions Recherches sur les Civilisations.
- Lamberg-Karlovsky, C. C. 2002. Archaeology and language: The Indo-Iranians. *Current Anthropology* 43 (1): 63–88.
- Levine, M. A., C. Renfrew, and K. Boyle, eds. 2003. *Prehistoric Steppe Adaptation and the Horse*. Cambridge, U.K.: McDonald Institute.
- Macdonell, A. A., and A. B. Keith. 1912. *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*. London: John Murray.
- Mallory, J. P. 1989. *The Indo-Europeans*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Marshall, J. 1931. *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization*. London: Arthur Probsthain.
- Meadow, R. H., and A. Patel 1997. A comment on "Horse Remains from Surkotada" by S. Bokonyi. *South Asian Studies* 13:308–314.
- Mehendale, M. A. 1993. The Indo-Aryans, the Indo-Iranians, and the Indo-Europeans. In Deo and Kamath 1993, 43–50.
- Monier-Williams, M. 1899. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. Reprint, 2002.
- Nandi, R. N. 2001. *Aryans Revisited*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal. 1946. *The Discovery of India*. Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund and Oxford University Press. Reprint, 2002. Page references are to the 2002 edition.
- Omvedt, G. 1995. *Dalit Visions*. Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Parpola, A. 1993. Margiana and the Aryan problem. *International Association for the Study of the Cultures of Central Asia Bulletin* 19:41–62.
- Parpola, A. 1995. The problem of the Aryans and the Soma. In *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, ed. G. Erdosy, 353–380. Berlin: W. de Gruyter.
- Pashaura Singh. 1999. Revisiting the Arya-Samaj movement. In *Aryan and Non-Aryan in South Asia*, ed. J. Bronkhorst and M. M. Deshpande, 261–276. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Patnaik, A., and K. S. R. V. S. Chalam. 1996. The ideology and politics of Hindutva. In *Region, Religion, Caste, Gender, and Culture in Contemporary India*, ed. T. V. Satyamurthy, 252–280. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Possehl, G., V. Shinde, and M. Ameri. 2004. The Ahar-Banas complex and the BMAC. *Man and Environment* 29 (2): 18–29.

- Ratnagar, S. 1998. Back to the bones? *Man and Environment* 23 (2): 101–105.
- Ratnagar, S. 1999. Does archaeology hold the answers? In *Aryan and Non-Aryan in South Asia*, ed. J. Bronkhorst and M. M. Deshpande, 207–238. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ratnagar, S. 2000. Reply. *Man and Environment* 25 (1): 119–120.
- Robb, P. 1994. South Asia and the concept of race. In *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, ed. P. Robb, 1–76. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Sharma, R. S. 1983. *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*. Delhi: Macmillan.
- Sharma, R. S. 1999. *Advent of the Aryans in India*. Delhi: Manohar.
- Shipman, P. 1994. *The Evolution of Racism: Human Differences and the Use and Abuse of Science*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Shrimali, K. M. 2002. The Rgveda and the Avesta. In *The Growth of Civilizations in India and Iran*, ed. I. Habib, 23–57. Delhi: Tulika.
- Skjaervo, P. K. 1995. The Avesta as a source for the early history of the Iranians. In *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, ed. G. Erdosy, 155–176. Berlin: W. de Gruyter.
- Sontheimer, G.-D., and H. Kulke, eds. 1997. *Hinduism Reconsidered*. Delhi: Manohar.
- Sparreboom, M. 1985. *Chariots in the Veda*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Stacul, G. 1989. Continuity and change in the Swat Valley. In *Old Problems and New Perspectives in the Archaeology of South Asia*, ed. J. M. Kenoyer, 249–251. Madison: Wisconsin Archaeological Reports.
- Trautmann, T. 1999. Constructing the racial theory of Indian civilization. In *Aryan and Non-Aryan in South Asia*, ed. J. Bronkhorst and M. M. Deshpande, 277–293. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Trautmann, T. 2004. *Aryans and British India*. 2nd rev. ed. Delhi: YODA.
- Tripathi, D. N., ed. 2005. *A Discourse on Indo European Languages and Culture*. Delhi: Manak and ICHR.
- Vats, M. S. 1940. *Excavations at Harappa*. Delhi: Government of India.
- Walimbe, S. R. 2000. Tumults in skeletal biology. *Man and Environment* 25 (1): 111–116.
- Winternitz, M. 1927. *A History of Indian Literature*. Vol. 1. Trans. S. Ketkar. Calcutta: University of Calcutta. Reprint, Delhi: Oriental Books, 1972.
- Witzel, M. 1995a. Early Indian history: Linguistic and textual parameters. In *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, ed. G. Erdosy, 85–125. Berlin: W. de Gruyter.
- Witzel, M. 1995b. Rgvedic history: Poets, chieftains, and polities. In *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, ed. G. Erdosy, 307–352. Berlin: W. de Gruyter.

Archaeology

When political geography changes, how do reorganized or newly formed states justify their rule and create a sense of shared history for their people? Often, the essays in *Selective Remembrances* reveal, they turn to archaeology, employing the field and its findings to develop nationalistic feelings and forge legitimate distinctive national identities.

Examining such relatively new or reconfigured nation-states as Iran, Iraq, Israel, Russia, India, and Thailand, *Selective Remembrances* shows how states invoke the remote past to extol the glories of specific peoples or prove claims to ancestral homelands. Religion has long played a key role in such efforts, and the contributors take care to demonstrate the tendency of many people, including archaeologists themselves, to view the world through a religious lens—which can be exploited by new regimes to suppress objective study of the past and justify contemporary political actions.

"With their highly topical and tightly focused studies, the contributors to this volume reach beyond standard assertions of links between archaeology and nationalism. As they show, archaeology may have developed in conjunction with the declining model of the 'modern' nation-state, but its powerful capacity to concretize the past in scientifically sanctioned *lieux de mémoire* remains all the more pertinent today, when dealing with far more fluid and contested configurations of global, national, and religious identities."
NATHAN SCHLANGER, AREA—Archives of European Archaeology

"In this deeply intriguing and appealing book, expert contributors explore a wide and varied set of political, cultural, and ethical issues. Not only will this excellent collection be formative for the history and practice of archaeology for years to come, but it may also be hotly debated in the various regions it describes."
SUZANNE MARCHAND, Louisiana State University

"Over the last twenty or so years, scholars have increasingly recognized the ways in which archeology and the state are, for better or worse, intertwined. Building on earlier work on this relationship, these essays advance the discussion by noting the significant changes in national identity and nationalism, particularly in the last ten years. The essays are uniformly excellent, and the introduction provides a landmark synthesis for future work."
JEFFREY K. OLICK, University of Virginia

PHILIP L. KOHL is professor of anthropology and the Davis Professor of Slavic Studies at Wellesley College. MARA KOZELSKY is assistant professor of history at the University of South Alabama. NACHMAN BEN-YEHUDA is professor of sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Cover design by Isaac Tobin

The University of Chicago Press

www.press.uchicago.edu

ISBN-13: 978-0-226-45059-9

ISBN-10: 0-226-45059-7

