

## **EVER CLOSER TO *BHĀROPĪYASTHĀN* State of the Art of the Out-of-India Debate**

*Résumé.* — Assez courante vers 1800, l’hypothèse selon laquelle le berceau de la famille des langues indo-européennes se trouvait en Inde ne fut plus prise en considération pendant près d’un siècle et demi, avant de resurgir dans les années 1980. Elle rivalise désormais avec le paradigme dominant d’une immigration « aryenne » en Inde. Les tentatives récentes (surtout à partir de 2006) d’étouffer le débat, qui se déroule malheureusement dans une atmosphère particulièrement acrimonieuse, sont regrettables en l’état actuel des données.

*Abstract.* — After having been widely assumed ca. 1800, the Out-of-India scenario of the Indo-European family’s genesis went dormant until its revival in the 1980s. It is now the main challenger to the dominant scenario of an “Aryan” immigration into India. Unfortunately, the debate has been hampered by acrimony and, certainly from 2006 onwards, by stonewalling, even though the evolution of the evidence does not warrant this.

### **1. Shifting homelands**

In the 1980s, when attending Prof. Lambert Isebaert’s course of Indo-European (IE; in modern Sanskrit: *Bhāropīya*, = *Bhārat* + *Yuropīya*) Linguistics at Catholic University of Leuven (now KU Leuven), we once asked him if there was any proof for the dominant Steppe Homeland Theory that he seemed to assent to. With no idea yet of the recently revived Out-of-India Theory (OIT), we knew already that the homeland search had had a chequered history, so I wondered: what did the Steppes have that the other homeland candidates did not? To the best of my memory, this was literally his answer: “That has been proven ...” Perhaps my memory has become a little vague about the sequel: “... by archaeology”. But that is the answer that I received from numerous back-bench Indo-Europeanists whom I met and asked the same question at successive scholarly conferences.

Another professor of mine, the leading Dutch Indologist Pierre Eggermont, spoke in the same vein, and also named his source: Prof. B. B. Lal’s 1950s’ discovery of the Painted Grey Ware (PGW), a type of pottery that he explained as typical of the Aryans penetrating deeper into

India<sup>1</sup>. Till today, that finding is still being cited as proof of an Aryan invasion, e.g.: “Lal considered PGW to be intrusive”<sup>2</sup>.

For any non-specialist in archaeology, this reliance on an external authority should be acceptable, and at the time, it reflected the state of the art. But that state of the art has evolved since then.

The lone archaeological witness to the Indo-European (IE) immigration into India, Prof. B. B. Lal, has changed his mind. During the last two decades, he has published several books in which he disowns his old interpretation of his PGW discovery<sup>3</sup>, culminating in a hefty tome dedicated to a reasoned argumentation in favour of the OIT, including a refutation of the counter-arguments already given by then, where he pleads that “the civilization that prevailed in the Sarasvati valley from the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE to the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE is indeed that of the Rigvedic people”<sup>4</sup>. He explained to me in 2017 how, as a junior scholar, fresh from studies under the pioneering invasionist Sir Mortimer Wheeler, he had force-fitted his findings into the dominant paradigm, but had later come to understand that his explanation was merely an application of the paradigm, not a proof of it.

B. B. Lal’s is a modern return to the assumption of an Indian homeland common in Europe in the half-century around 1800: “At the time when the Indo-European family was first discovered and scholars began to speculate on their probable place of origin, their initial thoughts were directed toward India because of the evident antiquity of Sanskrit”<sup>5</sup>. The OIT is not some far-fetched novelty, but stood at the cradle of the very notion of an Indo-European language family.

This was, though not logically compelling, an economical hypothesis given the central role of Sanskrit in the discovery of Indo-European. It was considered the language closest to the putative ancestral language or Proto-Indo-European (PIE), and from linguistic closeness, geographical closeness was inferred.

It helped that there was a slight Indomania in Europe’s cultural climate. In a 1775 letter, Voltaire (apparently aware of Gaston-Laurent Cœurdoux’s first mapping of the Indo-European family, sent as a *Mémoire* to the French *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* in 1767) already speculated that the “dynasty of the Brahmins” taught the rest of the world: “I am convinced

1. Starting with B. B. LAL (1950-52), ID. (1952), and still ID. (1981).

2. S. V. PRADHAN (2014), p. 67.

3. B. B. LAL (2002), ID. (2005).

4. B. B. LAL (2015), p. 125.

5. R. S. P. BEEKES (2011), p. 48. For the original Dutch version, see ID. (1990), p. 73.

that everything has come down to us from the banks of the Ganges”<sup>6</sup>. In that same phase of intellectual-cultural development of Enlightenment Europe, Immanuel Kant suggested: “The culture of the Indians, as is known, almost certainly came from Tibet, just as all our arts like agriculture, numbers, the game of chess, etc., seem to have come from India”<sup>7</sup>. The battle hymn of this temporary Indocentrism was Friedrich Schlegel’s 1808 book *Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (‘Language and Wisdom of the Indians’).

But gradually, the difference between PIE and Sanskrit came into sharper focus. Thus, the distinction between the vowels *a/e/o* in Greek was collapsed into *a* in Sanskrit, arguably not the other way around; and Greek *k* more or less continued the PIE consonant, whereas the Sanskrit *c/ś/ṣ* had to be an evolved form. Thus, Greek ὀκτώ (‘eight’) was deemed true to the PIE original, whereas Sanskrit *aṣṭa* came to be considered as an evolute or “deviation” from the original. It was deduced, plausibly but not logically compellingly, that this linguistic distance between PIE and Sanskrit should translate into a geographical distance between the homeland and India.

Together with the background influence of India’s ongoing decline from an exotic trading-partner to a mere colony, this caused a shift to what Indians still call the Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT): locating the homeland in Bactria, Russia, Anatolia or Europe, so that the presence of Sanskrit in India could only be explained through an invasion. In 1834, August Schlegel (Friedrich’s brother) located the homeland around the Caucasus mountains. From there, the putative homeland would travel a bit, but in recent decades stabilize again in the peri-Caspian steppes<sup>8</sup>.

In India, the AIT never caught on except among the discourse-dominant part of the anglicized minority, best exemplified by Hindu nationalist B. G. Tilak’s hypothesis of a homeland in the Arctic<sup>9</sup> (often cited as evi-

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6. *Je suis déjà entièrement de votre avis qu’il n’est pas possible que différents peuples se soient accordés dans les mêmes méthodes, les mêmes connaissances, les mêmes fables, et les mêmes superstitions, si tout cela n’a pas été puisé chez une nation primitive qui a enseigné et égaré le reste de la terre. Or il y a long-temps que j’ai regardé l’ancienne dynastie des brachmanes comme cette nation primitive. [...] je suis convaincu que tout nous vient des bords du Gange, astronomie, astrologie, métempsycose, etc.* (letter to M. Bailly of December 15, 1775; see A.-J.-Q. BEUCHOT [1834], p. 447-448).

7. Quoted in C. HALE (2003), p. 61. German original: *Die Gelehrsamkeit der Indier namentlich rührt mit ziemlicher Gewißheit aus Tibet her, so wie dagegen alle unsere Künste aus Indostan hergekommen zu sein scheinen, z.B. der Ackerbau, die Ziffern, das Schachspiel u.s.w.* (I. KANT, *Physische Geographie* [1802], Zweiter Abschnitt: *Vom Lande*, § 37).

8. Cf. the discussion in B. FORTSON (2010), p. 43-49, or the book by A. PERELTSVAIG and M. W. LEWIS (2015).

9. B. G. TILAK (1903).

dence from the Indian tradition itself for the AIT); Jawaharlal Nehru's evocation of the Aryan riders storming down the Khyber Pass in his book *The Discovery of India*<sup>10</sup>; and archaeologist V. S. Agarwal's suggestion (made famous by Sir Mortimer Wheeler) that as the Aryan war-god, "Indra stands accused" of destroying the Harappan civilization<sup>11</sup>.

Those anglicized intellectuals who objected to the AIT, like Sri Aurobindo Ghose, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (who, to the chagrin of his followers, articulately rejected it<sup>12</sup>) or Guru M. S. Golwalkar, were a bit subdued about it because of "the blind belief in the fallacy that linguists have established that the original homeland of the Indo-European family of languages was located outside India"<sup>13</sup>. There was in decades only one book that tried to argue the case against the AIT, invoking the traditional grammarians, and it got no further than proving that *Ārya* never had a linguistic or racial meaning<sup>14</sup>, about which there was already a consensus among post-1945 linguists. Only traditional Pandits fully rejected the AIT, or had simply never heard of it, as it is not indicated in the Vedas.

In the 1980s, however, the OIT began to reassert itself. The opening shot was fired in the book *Karpāsa in Prehistoric India* by K. D. SETHNA (1982), a Parsi and the elderly former secretary of Sri Aurobindo. He found that *karpāsa* ('cotton') had been absent from the *R̥g-Veda* (RV) but present in the Harappan cities in the same area, mainly the Sarasvati basin. He concluded that the RV (perhaps minus its 10<sup>th</sup> book, which is centuries younger), predates -2600, when the high tide of Harappan city culture started. A sceptic judges that it "discussed in an outwardly rational fashion, without overt signs of nationalism or chauvinism"<sup>15</sup>.

The rejection became a big movement by the mid-1990s. It attracted the cooperation of Western scholars like Professors Edmund Leach, Georg Feuerstein, Klaus Klostermaier and Nicholas Kazanas, while the archaeologist duo J. Shaffer and D. Lichtenstein<sup>16</sup> had not waited for this opinion wave. In India, it caught the attention of the Hindu nationalists, and the negative attention of political movements drawing on the AIT (cf. *infra*, p. 90-93 and p. 98-100). For a short while around 2000, it enjoyed a fairly friendly interest from the Indo-Europeanist establishment, mainly several

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10. J. NEHRU (1946).

11. R. E. M. WHEELER (1947), p. 82.

12. See K. ELST (1993), p. 15-30; Sh. TALAGERI (2000), p. 384-397; A. SHARMA (2005).

13. Sh. TALAGERI (2000), p. 384.

14. Cf. K. S. RAO (1957 [2015]).

15. M. WITZEL (2006), p. 208.

16. J. SHAFFER and D. LICHTENSTEIN (1995) and ID. (2013).

papers in G. ERDOSY (ed.) (1995) and in J. BRONKHORST and M. DESHPANDE (eds.) (1999), Edwin Bryant's doctoral research into the debate and its publication<sup>17</sup>, the fall/winter 2002 issue of *Journal of Indo-European Studies* hosting a pro-OIT paper by N. KAZANAS (2002) with comments, and finally E. BRYANT and L. PATTON (eds.) (2005).

The pivotal year was 2000, when a book was published that changed the terms of the debate. Till then, the AIT was confronted by its opposite, the non-AIT, which saw the Indo-Aryans as native to India but showed no interest in the non-Indian IE languages (with the exception of the linguist S. S. MISRA [1992], improved in ID. [2005]). The term OIT, launched by Edwin Bryant around the same time, was a bit flattered: Westerners thought that any choice of PIE homeland implied a scenario for bringing the other branches to their historical habitat, but most Indians never thought that far. But with the book *The Rigveda, a Historical Analysis*, by Shrikant Talageri, a self-taught historian, the AIT came to be challenged by a fully equipped alternative: North India had been the homeland, and it was the R̥g-Veda that contained a memory of the first emigrations plus an actual description of the last emigrations. This implies a high chronology: third millennium BCE and even beyond, based mainly on the internal logic of the literary data and on coordination with archaeological data.

In India and among Non-Resident Indians, the persuasion caught on that the AIT had been refuted and that “nobody believes in it anymore”. Hindu nationalist mathematician N. S. Rajaram declared the debate over. He presented a “Sanskritic” decipherment of the Harappan script<sup>18</sup> but provoked only sceptical and debunking reactions, culminating in the scathing “Horseplay at Harappa” cover-story in the Marxist fortnightly *Frontline* (October 2000)<sup>19</sup>. This critique contained the false allegation of “fraud” when he had only been deluded by wishful thinking: he saw a horse in a defaced bull on a Harappan seal (just as a top Indologist had read a contrived Aryan invasion reference in a Vedic text<sup>20</sup>), but as a demolition of his anti-invasionist narrative, it was otherwise pertinent.

This deluded triumphalism further led to a tragi-comical overreach by Non-Resident Indians in the California Textbook Affair of 2005-2007 (about amending the history textbooks in a less anti-Hindu sense), triggered by their claim that “the AIT has been discarded” and ending in their total

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17. E. BRYANT (2001), a model of “scholarly fair play” according to J. P. Mallory's blurb.

18. N. JHA and N. S. RAJARAM (2000).

19. Details in K. ELST (2018a), p. 210-214.

20. M. WITZEL (1995), p. 321, debunked in K. ELST (1999), p. 164-167; human psychology allows for more options that “truth” vs. “fraud”.

defeat<sup>21</sup>. This episode featured a breath-taking hatred on both sides, and after that, a distinct hostility has remained throughout an otherwise uneventful decade.

## 2. The parties to the debate

The majority opinion in the West today takes a steppe homeland for granted but is temperamentally agnostic. Scholars consider the whole controversy obsolete: questions of origins remind them of the Biblical or feudal emphasis on ancestry. Also, they vaguely know that the homeland quest has been tainted by politics, first in Britain, then in Germany, and even now in India, and they do not want to be implicated in this (but cf. *infra*, p. 98-99). This is one of the reasons for Western Indo-Europeanists' irritation at many Indians' deadly serious insistence on rejecting the AIT, even before going into the merits of the rivalling theories.

Among Westerners, advocates of an OIT are a mere handful. In India too, it is actively pursued only by a handful of people: apart from a few amateurs, most notably "the bank clerk" (as his rank-pulling enemies never fail to emphasize) Sh. Talageri, we note archaeologists, historians, Sanskritists, now also geneticists. Our insiders' testimony that even in India the OIT is a minority view may come as a surprise, given all the noise made on internet forums by Indian AIT opponents.

An AIT sceptic is something else than an OIT advocate. Many reject that the "Aryans" came from across the Khyber Pass, but are just not interested in anything that happened beyond it: no migration towards India but neither an emigration from India. They just do not want anything Indian to be related to anything external: it might be a neo-colonial ruse by "the foreign hand". They ignore or even deliberately reject the very notion of an IE language family.

Though complete outsiders, they pontificate that Comparative and Historical Linguistics is only "a pseudo-science", where "a conjecture is turned into a hypothesis to be later treated as a fact in support of a new theory"<sup>22</sup>. They contend that Sanskrit is not more akin to Greek than to Dravidian, and that all Indian languages should together count as one language group, distinct from all non-Indian languages; if there are any similarities with these, it must be due to transmission<sup>23</sup>. Thus, typifying how in the absence of philological professionals, amateurs grab the microphone, a surgeon elabo-

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21. Details in K. ELST (2012), p. 145-155.

22. N. S. RAJARAM (1995), p. 217.

23. It is to them that Sh. Talageri addressed his paper explaining the notion of language family; in vain (Sh. TALAGERI [2017b]).

rately derides reconstructed PIE through comparison with the failed Phlogiston hypothesis<sup>24</sup>.

Sh. TALAGERI (2000), p. 403, lists 5 problems in this anti-AIT party: (1) rhetoric rather than analysis; (2) hyperfocus on the early Orientalists' alleged motives; (3) answering invasionist arguments by evasion; (4) not understanding the issues; (5) blind glorification of the Vedic Aryans. This list is practically echoed by several Western critics in E. BRYANT and L. PATTON (eds.) (2005). To the second point: the association of the AIT with colonialism (or indeed of the OIT with Hindu nationalism) is now the biggest hurdle for meaningful debate. To focus on ancient events, we seem to need a moratorium on discussion about recent opinions.

Not only AIT advocates have a negative impression of many AIT denouncers. The latter's arrogant smugness has even put off non-Indian OIT defenders, such as Nicholas Kazanas, Igor Tonoyan-Belyayev (who has argued for lexical exchanges between PIE and its neighbour Tibetan, thus establishing PIE's presence in North India<sup>25</sup>) and Aleksandr Semenenko (who has matched many Harappan findings with Veda passages and offered genetic evidence for a westward emigration<sup>26</sup>). Indeed, A. Semenenko, who had founded a Facebook group for discussion of OIT evidence, decided after a year to throw hundreds of vocal Hindu nationalist off and change the name to an unambiguous "Anti-Hindutva RigVedaSamhita without any trash under the name 'Vedic'".

Many of these history rewriters thought that with Narendra Modi's accession to power in 2014, their time had come, and they sent in "research proposals" to the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR). None of these was accepted because they ignored the elementary rules of scholarship. Any thesis student knows that before developing your own hypothesis, you must first survey the field and assess what previous scholars have found, but these traditionalists couldn't be bothered. Contrary to a rumour about a Modi conspiracy against proper history-writing, they were given short shrift.

At the same time, though supporting the OIT, the Hindu nationalist establishment invests strictly nothing in the scholarly legwork needed to buttress it. Contrary to Western fantasies about "fanatical Hindus", this movement's leaders are just time-servers with a strong anti-intellectual prejudice and limited ideological commitment<sup>27</sup>. Thus, Human Resources Develop-

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24. Sh. SASTRY (2018), answered by K. ELST (2018).

25. See I. TONOYAN-BELYAYEV (2017) and ID. (2018).

26. See A. SEMENENKO (2019).

27. See K. ELST (2015), p. 160-170.

ment Minister Prakash Javadekar declared he was proud of “not having rewritten a single chapter in four years” in the history textbooks (*India Today*, 27 Sep. 2018). While formally controlling the Republic’s educational and research institutions, the government does nothing to promote its agenda through university nominations, grants, or setting up research projects. Instead it uses its power to give posts in the ICHR as rewards to lethargic and incompetent gerontocrats.

So, committed scholars simply try to make the most of whatever little opportunity they get. When history professors Meenakshi Jain and Saradindu Mukherji and archaeology professor Michel Danino (French-born naturalized Indian) fortuitously gained a temporary position in the ICHR (2015-2018), they used it to organize a top-notch conference, “Indian History: Emerging Perspectives” on 5-7 March 2018 in Delhi, and purposefully invited the leading Out-of-India theorists; proceedings forthcoming.

As shown by the example of B. B. Lal, valorized by the AIT camp as long as he was their sole source of hard “evidence”, most OIT advocates are people of equal academic rank as their lambasters. But one would not think so if one saw the scatology, not otherwise allowed, in which OIT defenders get covered in cursory media of Western academe (*Religion in South Asia* list, *Indo-Eurasian Research* list, *Indology* list, or the Facebook group *PIE*). Indians interpret these double standards as evidence of racism. Probably race has little to do with it anymore, but in a time of assuaging or reevaluating non-Western cultures, this behaviour is nonetheless anomalous.

We do not consider it appropriate to quote from this informal discourse, but a published text that has benefited from the author’s leisurely reflections and an editor’s attention should be allowed as an example of the steep inequality assumed by the AIT party between themselves and the OIT party.

A still mild but very representative example is H. H. HOCK (1999b): all while producing a rare serious argumentation against the OIT, Hans Hock systematically identifies the invasion sceptics as “Hindu Nationalists”, which – though not logically of consequence (people can have political or other commitments yet speak the truth) – happens to be untrue. For one counter-example: the present writer is neither Hindu nor nationalist. Nor are the Western scholars enumerated above. And for those who are, it is still unpleasant to be pigeon-holed in their ideological corner instead of criticized for their scholarly conclusions. We see here in a nutshell the same conspiracy theory as among Indian polemicists: a (racist-colonial c.q. Hindu nationalist) politician sits thinking how to fool everyone, shouts *Eureka*, and comes up with a scholarly theory (AIT c.q. non-AIT). Both parties are mistaken in thinking that a theory can simply be “concocted”.



A sharper example is Stephanie Jamison's review of E. BRYANT and L. PATTON (eds.) (2005), which includes chapters by several indigenists:

[...] the parallels between the Intelligent Design issue and the Indo-Aryan "controversy" are distressingly close. The Indo-Aryan controversy is a manufactured one with a non-scholarly agenda, and the tactics of its manufacturers are very close to those of the ID proponents mentioned above. However unwittingly and however high their aims, the two editors have sought to put a gloss of intellectual legitimacy, with a sense that real scientific questions are being debated, on what is essentially a religio-nationalistic attack on a scholarly consensus<sup>28</sup>.

This is flatly untrue: the OIT never posited a supernatural intervention. A number of scholars have no national or religious dog in this fight. It is no less rational than the Anatolian Homeland Theory, found wrong but taken seriously<sup>29</sup>; the eccentric location of its chosen homeland is not stranger than the undoubted eccentric homelands of Austronesian, Bantu, Russian, or Arabic; and a thickly-populated homeland is likelier than the thinly-populated steppes. In practice, this was an explicit call to what has become, from the contemporaneous California Textbook Case onwards, a general policy of the AIT camp: contemptuous stonewalling. The OIT school was henceforth treated as flat-earthers on whom no breath or ink should be wasted.

The OIT party can be harsh on its opponents too, but in a different sense: they highlight alleged polemical malpractice. At the ICHR 2018 conference, Danino's paper was titled: "Fabricating Evidence in Support of the AIT". Sh. Talageri regularly lambasts "the joke that is Western Indology"<sup>30</sup>, not sparing even the biggest names in detailed critiques. Thus, he makes fun of the "radical damage control measures" and "weird about-turns" by the AIT party, such as the "Stalin-era-like" retraction by Johanna Nichols of her plea for an Asian origin of linguistic features in West-Asian languages, attributed to "peer pressure"<sup>31</sup>. She had, in her own words, first contributed "a beautiful theory that accounts elegantly for a great deal of the dynamic and linguistic geography of the IE spread" which "still stands"<sup>32</sup>; but now she disowns the logical conclusion of her own still-standing research, allegedly because it adds evidence for an eastern homeland.

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28. S. W. JAMISON (2006), p. 255-256.

29. Cf. B. FORTSON (2010), p. 48, and especially A. PERELTSVAIG and M. W. LEWIS (2015).

30. Sh. TALAGERI (2017a).

31. Sh. TALAGERI (2017c).

32. J. NICHOLS in a note preceding the academia.edu version of her 1997 paper.

### 3. “Invasion”

Let us clear the air about an unnecessary quarrel that further bedevils even the mere restart of a debate. Many Indo-Europeanists refuse to engage with the Out-of-India school, citing the objection that the description of their own position as “invasionist” is inaccurate, unfair and partisan. Is it?

We do not mind reading “AIT” as *Aryan Immigration Theory*, if that can serve some diplomatic purpose; but we will still know that what the AIT people mean, is really an invasion. First of all, the term is historically accurate. As soon as the wellspring of IE was relocated to a territory outside India, its intrusion into India, like that into Europe, was conceived of as a military conquest. For a generation that remembered a World War or had learned how entire continents were hispanized or anglicized via conquest, this was natural.

The narrative was given an ideological colouring: the Aryans were warlike and patriarchal, their Old European and Harappan victims peace-loving. Marija Gimbutas and the Feminists took the latter’s side whereas Rightists threw their weight behind the Aryans, thinking these had a Darwinian right over their weaker adversaries. In spite of opposing sympathies, both parties had a conquest in mind.

This scenario was explicitly defended by Bernard Sergent, son of a *Résistance* couple. He acknowledges the attempt to outgrow the old-school view of history as a series of battles: “This is healthy, I say, because in doing so, one takes into account the slow movement in history, the long term, whereas the heuristic value of the event is superficial”<sup>33</sup>. He however adds:

Unfortunately, the result of this tendency [...] is the refusal, sometimes systematic, of an explanation of brutal historical change and of the very notion of invasion. [...] In that case methodical doubt and prudence have inverted themselves into dogma. Yet in the case of India and many other countries, history [...] teaches the reverse, namely the frequency and essential role of invasions<sup>34</sup>.

B. Sergent counts nine invasions into India from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the 5<sup>th</sup> CE. None of those, nor the later Arab, Turkish and Afghan conquests, nor the peaceful settlement of the Jews, Syrian Christians and Parsis, led to displacement of a native language, nor even to maintenance of the immigrants’ own language. While infusing their genes in the Indian population, they all assimilated linguistically. The same goes for the parallel case of Mesopotamia, where we note the Aryan-like “imperceptible influx of pastoral people” but also “outright invasion by motley groups of border peo-

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33. B. SERGENT (1997), p. 153 (my translation).

34. B. SERGENT (1997), p. 153 (my translation).

ples” such as “the Guti, Lullubi, Kassites, and Mitanni”<sup>35</sup>. Whether invaders or infiltrators, they all lost their languages, much in contrast with the putative Aryan immigrants.

Even though AIT-minded archaeologists have been looking for signs of a non-violent immigration into India, they still have not found them: “the so-called ‘invasion’ of IA speakers is not (yet) visible in the archaeology”<sup>36</sup>. If it had become visible, this would have been highlighted in cover-stories, in India if not in the West. *Quod non*.

Moreover, emphatic immigrationists often turn out to be invasionists once they reconstruct their immigration, e.g. describing the horse and chariot, supposedly Aryan imports, as a military advantage. Several battles mentioned in the RV, foremost the Battle of the Ten Kings (chiefly RV 7:18, 33, 83), are still generally presented as Aryan against Native: “Indra subjected the aboriginal tribes of the *Dāsas/Dasyus* to the Aryans”<sup>37</sup>. Or: “The Vedic Aryans made their way, fighting, into the Indian subcontinent”<sup>38</sup>. A recent paper speaks of “the Bharatas’ trail of conquest” and “the Vedic conquerors”<sup>39</sup>.

What makes an immigration into an invasion is not the means used but the end achieved: after an “invasion”, the former outsiders are not merely *in*, they are also *in charge*. If the newcomers end up imposing their (religious, linguistic) identity rather than adopting the native identity, the result is like after a military conquest: the natives become second-class citizens in their own country. In the case of the hypothetical Aryan invasion, the result clearly is that North India got Aryanized. Allegedly they even subjugated the natives permanently through caste. It is entirely reasonable to call this an “invasion”.

While this concept fully applies to the AIT, its materialization is completely absent in India, which contrasts with the situation in Europe. As B. FORTSON (2010), p. 48-49, notes:

But in the period 3100-2900 BC came a clear and dramatic infusion of Yamna cultural practice, including burials, into Eastern Hungary and along the lower Danube. With this we are able to witness the beginnings of the Indo-Europeanization of Europe.

The Aryan immigration into Europe was the kind of “clear and dramatic infusion” that scholars have been looking for in India, in vain. Science jour-

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35. M. WITZEL (2006), p. 213.

36. M. WITZEL (2006), p. 213.

37. T. ELIZARENKOVA (1995), p. 36.

38. F. STAAL (1996), p. 154.

39. R. STUHRMANN (2016), responded to by Sh. TALAGERI (2017a).

nalist Colin Barras summarizes: “Five thousand years ago the Yamnaya people started a violent conquest of Europe [...]. Genetic research shows that the old Britons who built Stonehenge must have disappeared soon after”<sup>40</sup>. Archaeologist Kristian Kristiansen postulates that the coming of these Indo-European speakers “must have been a kind of genocide”<sup>41</sup>.

The last few years have seen a wave of enthusiasm among AIT supporters for geneticist David REICH’s (2018) interpretation of his own findings as confirming their “immigration” scenario. That genes “immigrated” into India is in itself no problem: what else did the Shakas, Greeks, Huns etc. do before they adopted the native language? But the pro-AIT journal *Scroll.in* reports “the aggressive nature of Indo-Aryan migration into India”<sup>42</sup>.

D. Reich himself is quoted as confirming with understatement that this encounter between the Steppe pastoralists and the Harappans “cannot have been entirely friendly”<sup>43</sup>. Till now, the AIT party might have hoped that, unlike the Shakas and Hunas, the Aryans were successful in maintaining and imposing their language precisely *because* they did not “invade”, instead immigrating peacefully. That, however, is not what D. Reich has in mind; he clearly means conquest. What the AIT party is applauding for, is purported evidence for an invasion. The term “immigration” on which they nowadays insist, is but a weasel word for “invasion”.

India shows great material and cultural continuity even in the period when an Aryan invasion with its dramatic shift in language should have caused great discontinuity. In addition, the wide presence of Harappan produce in Central Asia, Mesopotamia, and the trading outpost in Bactria (Shortugai), show the existence of Harappan trade networks there, hence a familiarity with this area, facilitating an emigration into their backyard when the need arose. Already in 1995, G. Erdosy noted “the gulf still separating archaeology and linguistics”<sup>44</sup>, i.e. between evidence favouring the OIT and a near-consensus around the AIT.

#### 4. The *Asiknī*

For many people, the word “Aryan” makes an alarm bell go off because of a non-linguistic connotation: racism. This political overtone is partly rooted in a linguistic mistake: a mistranslation. This was not a deliberate “concoction”, as Indian polemicists allege, but a side-effect of the racial

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40. C. BARRAS (2019b), p. 41 and 45.

41. Quoted by C. BARRAS (2019a).

42. Sh. DANIYAL (2019).

43. Sh. DANIYAL (2019).

44. G. ERDOSY (1995), p. xiii.

prejudices common around 1900, that acted as coloured glasses through which translators read the Vedas.

The RV repeatedly refers to “black” entities. Sometimes this innocently refers to natural phenomena that are actually black, e.g. *kṛṣṇa tvac*, RV 9:41:1, ‘the black cover’, may signify the night. But mostly, this usage follows the universal tendency to represent enemies as black: “When there is sufficient context for interpretation, we find that the notions can at least equally well be read as an ‘ideological’ distinction between the ‘dark/black’ world of the *dāsas/dasyus* and the ‘light/white’ world of the *āryas*”<sup>45</sup>. Indeed, as late as World War II, the collaborators with the Axis were called “black”, the resisters “white”, e.g. in British reports, Subhas Bose’s soldiers counted as “black”<sup>46</sup>. So, the racial interpretation of “black” has now partly been discarded in scholarly circles, at least consciously.

One case where an innocent designation as “black” is racially interpreted, is *asikni* characterizing a military enemy in the Battle of the Ten Kings (RV 7:5:3, repeated in 9:73:5). Combined with *viśa*, it is translated as ‘the dark-complexioned races’ (H. H. WILSON [1997 (1866)]), ‘the dark-hued races’ (R. GRIFFITH [1991 (1889)]), ‘*die schwarzen Stämme*’ (K. F. GELDNER [2003 (ca. 1928)]), and even very recently ‘dark clans’ (S. W. JAMISON and J. P. BRERETON [2014]). Moreover, Vedic priest *Vasiṣṭha* and the Vedic *Ṛtsu* clan happen to be described as *śvitya*, ‘white-clad’ (RV 7:33:1 and 7:83:8), which some translators render as ‘white-complexioned’ (thus H. H. WILSON [1997 (1866)]). This battle description became the crowning evidence of the grand AIT narrative, where the white Aryan invaders defeat the black aboriginals.

But in fact, this is a pun on the enemies’ provenance: *Asiknī*, ‘the black (river)’, is simply the Sanskrit name of the river whence they come, the Chenab (to the west of the Vedic tribe’s Ravi). So, ‘the Chenab crowd’. The enemies are led into battle by a king with an Iranian name, *Kavaṣa*. Their tribal names and nicknames are all known from Iranian and Greek sources to refer to Iranian communities. Their religion is described as having distinctively Mazdean characteristics: without *Indra* or *Devas* (who have been demonized) and without fire-sacrifice (because fire is elevated so far as to taboo throwing things into it). Obviously, the enemies of the Vedic people at that time were Iranian, not “black aboriginal”. This is attested from so many angles that one wonders how this mistake could have been made at all.

The mistake was reproduced by numerous authors, including many without ideological agenda. Thus, “the *śūdras* were *an-ārya*, ‘non-Aryan’,

45. H. H. HOCK (1999b), p. 154.

46. Quotes in G. D. BAKSHI (2019a), p. 67 and 153.

referring to the darker-skinned elements of the population (the Sanskrit term for ‘caste’, *varṇa*, means ‘colour’)<sup>47</sup>. In fact, *varṇa* means ‘one in a spectrum’: a colour in the visual spectrum, a letter in the sound spectrum (hence *varṇamāla* for ‘alphabet’), and a class in the social spectrum. The identification of a social class with a colour is a fossilized metaphor. The same symbolic meaning counts for Avestan *pištra*, roughly ‘caste’ but literally ‘colour’<sup>48</sup>.

Today, the dominant egalitarian paradigm projects the same categories onto ancient texts: “The Dalit [‘broken’, the *Untouchables*] were the original inhabitants of India and resemble the African in physical features”<sup>49</sup>, but with the opposite valuation: now the “black aboriginals” count as the good ones, entitled to compensation, the “white invaders” as the bad ones, summoned to discharge their historical guilt. Fanciful racial notions continue to divide India.

### 5. Political dimension

The Indian rejection of the AIT makes an Indologist protest “to what degree the question of Indo-Aryan origins has become politicized”<sup>50</sup>. But seen from India, this makes you wonder what planet the scholar has been living on; probably “the West”, where they know nothing about AIT’s much older divisive effect on India. And even inside the West, the Indo-Europeanist research itself has been deconstructed as a deeply politicized undertaking<sup>51</sup>. It is comical to find academics, as if blushing virgins, run away from the OIT because of its alleged political taint, while having no qualms about espousing the AIT, politicized since far longer, in many more countries, and not as a pastime of a few historians but as the basis for gory government policies. Political applications of the AIT include:

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47. J. PUHVEL (1989), p. 45.

48. Cf. H. H. HOCK (1999b), p. 155.

49. V. T. RAJSHEKAR (2009), p. 43.

50. L. M. FOSSE (2005), p. 434.

51. See e.g. S. ARVIDSSON (2006) and J.-P. DEMOULE (2014). This is not to say, however, that the views of these authors should be uncritically accepted. On J.-P. Demoule’s ideologically motivated misrepresentation of Indo-European linguistics and historical linguistics in general, see A. PERELTSVAIG (2015), R. GARNIER (2015-2016), and especially the systematic refutation of his arguments by Th. PELLARD, L. SAGART and G. JACQUES (2018). Another recent attempt (by Angela Marcantonio) to deconstruct the Indo-European hypothesis is equally unconvincing (see I. YAKUBOVICH [2011], p. 227-228). But it does say that the PIE hypothesis itself has proven as vulnerable to this political explaining-away of scholarly theories as is now being tried on the OIT.

- the colonial justification of rule by the British pure Aryans over the upper-caste mixed Aryans and the lower-caste non-Aryans;
- the perfect illustration of the Nazi scheme of rule by the pure Aryan race and the degeneracy through race-mixing with a lower race, in spite of a commendable effort to prevent this through caste apartheid;
- post-war, a galaxy of Rightist groups in the West still use the AIT to buttress their identity project, see e.g. the relevant “Survive the Jive” Youtube videos by historian Thomas Rowsell, or the periodicals *Terre et Peuple*, *Éléments* and *Nouvelle École*; and some even attribute the successes of the IE family to an intrinsic European superiority:
 

What then does account for the remarkable conquests of the Indo-Europeans? [...] The simplest explanation is that the original speakers of *PIE* possessed, on average, considerably higher intelligence than most of the people they defeated<sup>52</sup>.
- anti-Brahminism, an Indian replica of anti-Semitism (“Brahmins, go back to Central Asia”);
- Dravidianism, a Tamil cultural separatism, from 1947 till 1962 also political;
- the Dalit movement a.k.a. Ambedkarism;
- the British-cum-missionary construction of the Tribals as *Ādivāsīs* (‘Aboriginals’), an ancient-sounding neologism from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, pregnant with the message that the non-Tribals are intruders<sup>53</sup>.

One ideology associated with the AIT was National-Socialism. In order to justify the untouchability of the OIT, invasionist polemicists sometimes try to link it to Nazism, and this not just on Twitter and in yellow journalism, e.g. that Brahminism resulting from the AIT was the “father of Fascism, Racism, Nazism”<sup>54</sup>. This swollen rhetoric is even used among top academics<sup>55</sup>. Possibly these scholars do not realize what they are saying, but this is really not innocent: in contemporary Western culture, association with National-Socialism is the single worst allegation possible. Yes, AIT

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52. M. HART (2007), p. 187.

53. See Sh. TALAGERI (2016).

54. V. T. RAJSHEKAR (1994).

55. E.g. R. ZYDENBOS (1993), unpacked in K. ELST (1999), p. 57-78; Sh. POLLOCK (1993), rebutted by R. GRÜNENDAHL (2012), and by K. ELST (2018), p. 97-105; and M. WITZEL (2006), p. 227.

sceptics have behaved impolitely; but none of their swearwords can match this level of incrimination.

Yet, there is nothing Nazi about the OIT, on the contrary. It is the AIT that served as the perfect paradigm of the Nazi worldview, and that was taught in the history textbooks under Nazi control: “In the Third Reich, even schoolchildren knew from their textbooks that this race had spread from the north to the south and east, and not the other way around”<sup>56</sup>. The Nazi top “race scientist”, Hans F. K. Günther, thought that the Indo-Europeans had penetrated the north of the Indian Subcontinent some centuries BCE<sup>57</sup>.

Among Adolf Hitler’s own rare utterances on the Hindus, each of them negative, was a racial interpretation of the AIT: “We know that the Hindus in India are a people mixed from the lofty Aryan immigrants and the dark-black aboriginal population, and that this people is bearing the consequences today; for it is also the slave people of a race that almost seems like a second Jewry”<sup>58</sup>. He even followed the now-fashionable use of “immigrant” (*Einwanderer*) instead of “invader”.

In India, this racialized AIT is still very alive. In November 2015, Congress leader Mallikarjuna Kharge shouted in a parliamentary debate: “You Aryans are from outside India!” A press comment radicalized this perception: “The only indigenous people in India are the adivasis”<sup>59</sup>. The non-Indo-Aryan-speakers are pitted against the Indo-Aryans, and most of all, the Tribals/“*Adivāsīs*” against the non-Tribal “invaders”. In less extreme form, this racial vision still informs India’s caste-based reservation policy. This way, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century racial AIT interpretation serves as a poison injecting division and resentment into Indian society even today. That is why the Hindu nationalists clutch at any possible refutation of the AIT.

## 6. Linguistics

Linguists are rather modest about their ability to prove the location of a homeland: “Our knowledge of these migrations [*that broke PIE unity*] is

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56. Savitri Devi MUKHERJI (1976), p. 273, quoted in K. ELST (2001), p. 561. She was *née* Maximiani Portas, French-Greek, married to Asit Krishna Mukherji from Kolkata, both Hitler admirers.

57. H. F. K. GÜNTHER (1987), p. 122. But see also H. F. K. GÜNTHER (1934), p. 25: *Die Zuwanderungen der Inder nach Nordwestindien haben wahrscheinlich das 15. und 14. Jahrhundert erfüllt; einzelne erste Zuwanderergruppen mögen Nordwestindien vielleicht schon vorher erreicht haben.*

58. A. HITLER (1920), reproduced in E. JÄCKEL and A. KUHN (1980), p. 195 (my translation).

59. M. GURUSWAMY (1995).



very limited. On a linguistic basis, little can be said about them”<sup>60</sup>. If the anti-AIT party were to care for reading dusty linguists, it would quote this with glee.

In the already limited circle of OIT advocates, linguistically capable people are even fewer. One of the rare linguistic arguments offered to refute the OIT concerns the *isoglosses*, i.e. the changes commonly affecting some IE member languages but not others, indicating that the affected languages have gone through a common development after the dispersal of the common ancestor language. In Hans Hock’s opinion, the pattern of isoglosses is incompatible with the distribution of languages necessitated by an Indian homeland<sup>61</sup>. Sh. Talageri responded to this argument at length<sup>62</sup>, as did N. Kazanas<sup>63</sup>, and K. Elst<sup>64</sup>. It is outside the purview of this paper to discuss the arguments; but do note that, after the demise of S. S. Misra, these are the only names one needs to remember in this respect.

Another linguistic topic, first raised by Sri Aurobindo in a lecture on the Vedas ca. 1915 (published 1956)<sup>65</sup>, is the deeper rootedness within Sanskrit. The word *wolf/vṛka* is taken to be related to the verbal root *vṛk-* ‘to tear’ (whence *vṛkṇa* ‘a cut, wound’), so ‘wolf’ would really mean ‘the tearer’, whereas elsewhere it only means ‘wolf’<sup>66</sup>. Likewise, it is claimed that only Sanskrit can deduce the pan-IE term *name* from a verbal root: *nāma* from *nam-*, *namati* ‘to greet’<sup>67</sup>. N. KAZANAS (2015), p. 43-124, worked out an annotated list of 393 such roots. Thus while Latin *pater* seems isolated, Sanskrit *pitā*, *pitṛ* can be interpreted as an agent noun from *pā-*, *pāti* ‘to protect’; and unlike Greek *θυγάτηρ* or English *daughter*, Sanskrit *duhitā*, *duhitṛ* finds an explanation within the language itself, cf. *duh-*, *dugdha* ‘to milk’ (i.e. ‘milkmaid’)<sup>68</sup>. This would indicate that the other languages have cre-

60. R. S. P. BEEKES (1990), p. 70 (my translation). Cf. also R. S. P. BEEKES (2011), p. 46: “Linguistic information offers us no basis for determining the moments of time at which the Indo-European peoples began to inhabit the areas where they eventually settled.”

61. See H. H. HOCK (1999a), p. 13-17.

62. See Sh. TALAGERI (2000), p. 266-282; ID. (2008), p. 205-236; (2020).

63. See N. KAZANAS (2013), p. 110-163.

64. See K. ELST (2007b), p. 29-35.

65. Sri AUROBINDO GHOSE (1956).

66. According to mainstream IE linguistics, this hypothesis can no longer be maintained since PIE *\*wǵʰos* ‘wolf’ contained a labiovelar whereas the root ‘to tear’ ended in a pure velar; see M. MAYRHOFER (1956-76), vol. III, p. 240, and ID. (1986-2001), vol. III, p. 571.

67. This may be no more than a folk etymology, however. On the problem of the etymology of PIE ‘name’, see M. MAYRHOFER (1986-2001), vol. II, p. 36, and especially S. NERI (2005), p. 212-213, fn. 50.

68. Although such speculation on the origin of IE kinship terms in *\*-ter-* as agent nouns can boast a long history and has not yet died out, it is rarely taken seriously to-

olized somewhat, mixing each with the local substrate language of their respective newfound habitats.

N. KAZANAS (2015), p. 43, concludes:

Sanskrit appears to have lost far fewer items and preserves much greater organic coherence than the other branches. This supports the general idea that Sanskrit is much closer to Proto-Indo-European and that, since this could only happen in sedentary conditions, the Indoaryan speakers of Sanskrit did not move (much) from the original homeland.

Here he reiterates the case he had earlier made in Comparative Mythology: the Vedic pantheon has a completeness in comparison with the bits and pieces in other branches, which often cannot be connected with one another except by bringing in the Vedic version as middle term, so:

This then I call the Preservation Principle [...]: the people or culture that has preserved most, *ceteris paribus* has moved least<sup>69</sup>.

We could extend this principle to another finding in Comparative Mythology. Nick Allen, who never questioned the AIT, has left us a discovery that arguably supports the OIT. Seeing numerous similarities between Homer's epics and the *Mahābhārata*, he realized the latter had yogic elements that are missing in the corresponding Homeric passages. N. Allen argues that the proto-narrative already contained yoga features, which were lost in the Greek version:

*Either* the proto-journey was like the Greek and contained nothing relating to *yoga*, in which case the yogic aspect of the Sanskrit story was an innovation [...]. *Or* the proto-journey was like the Sanskrit and was quasi-yogic or proto-yogic in character, in which case Greek epic tradition largely or wholly eliminated that aspect of the story. [...] I argue that some significant and fairly precisely identifiable features of *yoga* go back to the culture of those who told the proto-narrative – who [...] may well have been proto-Indo-European speakers<sup>70</sup>.

The logical but missing explanation stares him in the face: this dimension was lost by the Greeks in the rough and tumble of the trek westwards.

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day; cf. the thorough discussion – not devoid of sarcasm – by G.-J. PINAULT (2009 [2010]), p. 27-28, who concludes that “*tous les rattachements supposés à des racines verbales sont aussi vains que ridicules*” [p. 28] and also provides a detailed rebuttal of the often attempted derivation of PIE \**d<sup>h</sup>ugh<sub>2</sub>-tér-* ‘daughter’ from the root \**d<sup>h</sup>eug<sup>h</sup>*- [p. 30].

69. N. KAZANAS (2002), p. 300. It must be noted, however, that N. KAZANAS' methodology, if better known, would be considered misconceived because there is no natural relationship between the degree of archaism of a given language and its geographic proximity to the original homeland of the language family to which it belongs (see I. YAKUBOVICH [2011], p. 231-232, in a review of an earlier publication by the same author).

70. N. ALLEN (1998), p. 3; about whom, see K. ELST (2020).

Just as in a decomposing corpse, the brain disintegrates fast while the skeleton remains, the most precious elements in a tradition get lost most easily. They need constant nurturing, which is more difficult during a long-distance migration in premodern conditions. Only the Indians had the comfort of a stable situation where they could preserve them.

Other linguistic topics investigated include the loanwords into Sanskrit (or their absence where they had been expected, as in the Northwest-Indian hydronyms), the loan pattern between Indo-Iranian and Uralic, and linguistic palaeontology. This work is among the least read in the world: no reviews, no response papers, not even quotations. On social media and other forums, the “Aryan Invasion” is actively debated, e.g. to connect Vedic literary data with Harappan archaeological discoveries, or now to digest new genetic findings, but the linguistic dimension is either starkly ignored or filled up with fantasies.

Some Indian linguists do apply the comparative and historical methods to the relation between the Indian languages<sup>71</sup>, but the Indo-European level is somehow beyond their research interest. Most AIT sceptics treat it with disdain or hostility, thinking that Linguistics is necessarily linked to the AIT. The most negative book reviews (now lost in cyberspace) of K. ELST (2007) and Sh. TALAGERI (2008) were not by invasionists but by their *bête noire*, N. S. Rajaram.

## 7. Literary evidence

Most Indo-Europeanists assume some two thousand years between the disintegration of PIE and the first literary testimonies of Hittite, Mycenaean Greek and Vedic Sanskrit. What Sh. TALAGERI (2000 and 2008, summarized and updated 2020a and 2020b) gathered from the Vedic and Avestan corpus will remain his major claim to fame (for the OIT party) or ridicule (for the AIT and anti-AIT parties): the surprising thesis that literary evidence reaches back far enough to provide information on PIE’s disintegration.

Here, the Vedic tradition evolved in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE and even beyond, within the *Paurava* tribe based in the *Sarasvatī* basin. The RV still remembered their coexistence with the *Druhyu* tribe until it largely emigrated under duress (RV 1:107:8, 6:46:8, 7:18, 8:10:5, 10:134), then describes co-existing with the *Ānava* tribe in the northwest until it, too, emigrates under duress; and also with other tribes east and south. These were not daughters but sisters of the Vedic community, so the Vedic traditions represent only one line within the commonwealth of Hinduism, whereas both Hindu nationalists and AIT-minded outsiders commonly assume the

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71. E.g. G. N. JHA (2013), p. 19-38.

Vedas, composed near the supposed invaders' entry point, to be the source of Hinduism.

The *Druhyus* went northwest to Central Asia, shed their Tocharian branch on the way (Anatolian may represent an even earlier emigration) and imposed their dialects on the steppe region, whence their mixed progeny conquered most of Europe, yielding Italo-Celtic, Germanic and Balto-Slavic. The *Ānavas* also went northwest and their Scythian branch was to equally fill up the steppes, but most Iranians and the ancestors of the Armenians, Phrygians, Greeks and Albanians took the route south of the Caspian Sea.

The steppes certainly were a secondary homeland, a staging-ground for the “Aryan invasion” of the European subcontinent, but not the ultimate homeland of PIE. In the words of E. CALLAWAY (2015):

Less clear is whether all Indo-European languages derive from this group, or whether just a subset do, says Paul Heggarty, a linguist at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany. He suspects that the Yamnaya people spoke a language that later developed into Slavic, Germanic and other northern European tongues, but he doubts that they imported the predecessor of southern European languages such as ancient Greek, or those of eastern Indo-European languages such as Sanskrit.

Exactly. In Sh. Talageri's reconstruction, most languages of Europe derive from the *Druhyu* tribe's emigration, which settled in Russia and mixed with the locals, linguistically assimilating them, before intruding into Central Europe<sup>72</sup>. The Greeks, Albanians and Armenians, by contrast, were peripheral groups in a largely Iranian *Ānava* tribe and emigrated in a second wave still described in books 7 and 4 of the RV<sup>73</sup>. An even later emigration – issued from the stay-behind *Paurava* tribe – yielded the Sanskrit traces in Kassite and Mitannic.

An uncontroversial Indologist theory by Hermann Oldenberg about the layeredness of the Vedic text (resented by traditionalists as “reducing a divine revelation to mere history”) yields a sequence of the different chapters. This shows that the older chapters mention eastern rivers, fauna, etc., and the later chapters more westerly ones, so that the RV describes an east-to-west gradient, just the opposite of what the AIT posits. The most Afghanistan-oriented chapter is the late 8<sup>th</sup>, not the oldest chapters as the AIT would imply.

A closer analysis of verse forms and name types proves that the Sanskrit-speaking founders of the Mitanni culture are of a piece with the

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72. Sh. TALAGERI (2000), p. 269-282; ID. (2008), p. 223-225 and 246-250.

73. Sh. TALAGERI (2000), p. 163-231 and 267-270.

youngest layer of the RV. This in turn allowed for absolute chronological information: the late RV predates by centuries the Mitanni kingdom of the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> millennium.

Astronomical evidence confirms Sh. Talageri's relatively high chronology. The useful references in the Vedas are few and far between, sometimes hard to interpret with precision<sup>74</sup>, but still numerous enough, and consistent: not a single one of them supports the low AIT-implied chronology.

Most point to the asterism *Kṛttikā* on the spring equinox or the asterism *Maghā* on the summer solstice, both timed by their precessional movement at ca. 2300. They concern the RV's 10<sup>th</sup> book, the *Yajur* and *Atharva Vedas* and the *Brāhmaṇas*, implying a higher age for the Family Books: up to and even beyond 3000 BCE<sup>75</sup>. One cannot explain them all away as either just wrong and confused, or as mere reminiscences of past observations<sup>76</sup>. Such special pleading can work once, but not in every instance; Occam's razor applies.

The *Vedāṅga Jyotiṣa*, a post-Vedic manual of observational astronomy, definitely not dealing in reminiscences, is unambiguous. It dates itself in two different ways (*Dhanīṣṭha* solstitial, *Bharaṇī* equinoctial) to ca. 1300 BCE, a time when the AIT hardly has the *Ṛg-Veda* being composed. It "gives very precise information on all four solstitial and equinoctial points corresponding to the late 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE, and this text is very much later than the Brāhmaṇas. These data are as valid evidence for an early date for the *Ṛg-Veda* (which long preceded all these texts) as any evidence brought forward to promote a later date"<sup>77</sup>. This latter proof is then said to pertain to the existence of chariots and iron implements, two types of evidence that happen to be in flux due to new discoveries, unlike the precessional data.

It is unbecoming of scholars to cavalierly shift this date down to 500 or even 200 BCE, as is common, pleading that the evolution rate of language necessitates this denial of the astronomical information (what if this soft linguistic evidence, predicated on low Vedic dates, is circular?); or to put a position of *Maghā* on the Solstice at 800 BCE, as A. A. MACDONNELL and A. B. KEITH (1912 [1982]), p. 422-424, did, fully 1500 years later than what the *Brāhmaṇa* text and elementary astronomy tell us. So, as historical evidence goes, the astronomical data provide strong evidence for Sh. Talageri's high chronological estimate.

74. As shown by H. H. HOCK (2005), p. 295-303.

75. Cf. U. SEN (1974).

76. "Information from much earlier times can get embedded in ritual and through this channel continue into later times" (R. THAPAR [2006], p. 27).

77. E. BRYANT (2002), p. 348.

### 8. Genetics

Educated Indians, steadfast in their willful illiteracy in linguistics, are more on their home turf in the hard sciences. Strictly, these have at most a minor impact on the linguistic homeland question: “Racial movements allegedly traced on the basis of genomes and haplogroups *cannot* help us trace the history of the Indo-European *language* migrations”<sup>78</sup>. This is but a modernized variation on what we all learned about skull-type Indo-Europeanism in our IE courses: it was a pre-war mistake to identify physical groups with linguistic communities. Yet somehow the AIT school, after having totally avoided taking cognizance of the advancing OIT case for more than a decade, suddenly turned jubilant over certain findings by geneticists.

The bygone identification of a race with a language is hailed again, though now defined by genotype. Invasionist polemicists argue in all seriousness about the evidential value of the “Aryan gene”, R1a1<sup>79</sup>. Genes, like skulls, do not speak: while a human migration may be proven by a sufficient number of such findings, we still would not know what happened to their language.

Yet, genetic discoveries favouring migrations *out of India* exist but have been passed over in silence. Thus, S. SHARMA, E. RAJ and R. JENA (2009) claim to show that R1a1, widely present in Central Siberia, Eastern Europe and North India, has its origin in the latter<sup>80</sup>. But now that research by David REICH (2018) seemed to support an AIT scenario, this made headlines. It was applauded among pro-AIT scholars and their political followers worldwide<sup>81</sup>.

The recent AIT applause for D. Reich was centred on his claim of the R1a1 genes’ eastward movement. This does not impress the Indians anymore, as they claim to have solid evidence for the reverse:

The haplogroup R1a\* originated in India approximately 15,450 – 18,500 years ago. [...] The westward Indo-Aryan expansion is a plausible explanation for the male-mediated demic expansions of R1a1a (R-M17) into Europe beginning around 2,500 BCE, which, to a large extent, replaced indigenous European males and their Y-chromosome strata<sup>82</sup>.

Impeccable scientists have demonstrated many migrations from India, affecting both the human and in their wake several non-human species

78. Sh. TALAGERI (2018).

79. As cited by, e.g., G. D. BAKSHI (2019b), p. 172.

80. Cited by G. D. BAKSHI (2019b), p. 200, as “never refuted”.

81. E.g., for the *Nouvelle Droite*, P. BOUTS (2019); and in India, T. JOSEPH (2018), responded to in Sh. TALAGERI (2019).

82. A. L. CHAVDA (2017).

(even mice, see P. PRIYADARSHI [2012]). Thus, genetic evidence for Indian cows' genes in Ukrainian cows shows an Indian presence on the steppes:

However, in some areas of the Eurasian continent, phenotypically humpless cattle are known to have been influenced by historical admixture from zebu cattle [...]. This study suggests that the Ukrainian and the Central Asian regions belong to hybrid zones where taurine-zebu crossbreeds have existed<sup>83</sup>.

So, accompanying human emigrants, Indian cattle migrated all the way to Ukraine. By contrast, there is no sign that Western cattle were brought into India: the Aryan invaders were cowherds without cows.

Indologist Giacomo BENEDETTI (2012) comments: "Then, the presence of zebu genes and representations in Asia and Europe seem to be [...] a confirmation that there was an important movement from South Asia to the West".

The genetic debate has technical aspects that exceed our competence. What we can report, though, is the much increased self-confidence in the new generation of OIT-minded researchers. After the AIT crowd has thrown the gauntlet regarding genetic evidence, they are meeting the challenge quite well. As we witnessed at the conference "Bharat beyond Aryan Invasion Myth in the Light of Recent Discoveries" (Hyderabad, 7 December 2019, organized by Indic Academy and Pragna Bharati), they still wax indignant about Western "manipulations of evidence", but they also provide excellent counter-evidence.

## 9. Conclusion

The polemicists for and against the AIT have a lot in common. They attribute political motives to their opponents and deduce from these imagined motives a justification for ignoring the evidence presented. Not that the debate is entirely symmetrical: though the AIT sceptics *talk* in the same vein, a few of them nonetheless do provide responses to all the opposing arguments that reach their attention. This is much less the case in the other direction: "An ostrich-like attitude is perpetuating the Aryan invasion myth"<sup>84</sup>.

So, we plead against this rhetoric of excluding opponents from the debate. It is unbecoming of scholars to declare themselves above pertinent evidence, even if coming from a school alleged to have unpleasant motives. Moreover, given the fast-shifting international power equation, this attitude

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83. J. KANTANEN *et al.* (2009), p. 404.

84. B. B. LAL (2010).

of Western scholars ignoring their Indian counterparts, or at best talking down to them, strikes us as increasingly anomalous.

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