

This is the INTERLUDE between
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by Francisco Gil-White © 2005

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The Book of Genesis

The Birth of the Jewish People

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INTERLUDE

Where did the Persians come from?

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We’ve seen in the previous chapter that the ancient Persians (or Iranians) produced a leftist, world-saving, politico-religious movement: Zoroastrianism. And we’ve seen how many dramatic similarities there are between Zoroastrianism and Judaism. Since, as I will show later, it was the ancient Persians who sponsored Judaism as an even more radical egalitarian and ethical mass-liberation movement, the point of understanding where the Persians came from is to get a sense for the ultimate provenance of Jewish ideas.

The evidence supports the view that the ancient Iranians were a development of ancient Indian culture, emerging into their own as a result of population movements *out of* the Indian subcontinent, where civilization began. However, this is poorly understood because for the last 150 years a remarkably

tenacious but unsupported theory of Indian history has been taught in the West. It has also been taught in India, because the dominant educational system there was set up by the British colonialists and did not undergo significant changes after independence. This mistaken picture of Indian history is a direct product of nineteenth-century European politics—especially *German* politics, combined with the colonial and missionary interests of the British Empire. It has little to do with India.

At this point you may be thinking that you can no longer be shocked, because you have already seen, after all, the radical manner in which Western historians have distorted beyond recognition the history of both ancient Greeks and Persians. This has been a matter of putting an absurd and radical spin on things, with the result that all the important political meanings—of words, of events, of ideology, etc.—are represented precisely upside down. In the Indian case, believe it or not, we have something that is arguably more extreme: outright fabrication by scholars.

What this book does for Western historiography has already been done for Indian historiography (or ‘Indology’ as this field has been called in the West)—luckily for me. A decade ago, Navaratna S. Rajaram and David Frawley refuted the so-called ‘Aryan invasion theory’ of ancient India by exhaustively pointing out what should have been obvious all along: not one shred of evidence agrees with it. And yet quite a few people are still defending the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ in the year 2005, so I will here briefly review its refutation, there to establish what the *real* origin of the Persians was.

Since Rajaram and Frawley, and more recently Koenraad Elst, have already done the hard work, and since this is not the main topic of my book, I will be relying heavily on them. Interested readers are welcome to consult their detailed demonstrations if they wish to examine this issue further. That said, I *will* devote some space, at the end, to examining how defenders of the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ have responded to these recent challenges, the better to increase your confidence that the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ cannot be defended.

The ‘Aryan invasion theory’

There was once an ancient people, the ‘Indo-Europeans,’ or ‘Aryans,’ who were nomadic herders and warriors somewhere in Central Asia. *They were a white-skinned, blond, and blue-eyed race.* These Aryans suddenly burst forth from this place in Central Asia, or perhaps it was somewhere in Eastern Europe (anyway, but somewhere landlocked such that they didn’t even know about the ocean). Wherever they went, they conquered, and made everybody their servants, because they were great warriors and also very smart (blondes, after all). Some Aryan tribes traveled West, and became the ancestors of the modern Europeans, and other Aryans traveled south to the Indus Valley where, around 1500 BCE, they easily defeated the materially advanced Harappan civilization, which had drainage and water supply systems that even the Romans, *much* later, would not quite match. And yet the Harappans somehow did not produce any literature, perhaps because they were dark-skinned, and hence, in the end, not very bright. Although the Aryans

completely destroyed the advanced Harappan civilization, these victorious white nomads—as if by magic, and despite the fact that they were illiterate when they arrived—almost immediately produced a classic work of literature to celebrate their victory over the Harappans, the *Rigveda*, in a language so perfect that computer scientists are now turning to it for insights. In Europe, the Germans are the purest descendants of these ancient Aryans, but all the peoples of Europe whose languages show similarities with Sanskrit are likewise descendants of the Aryans, and this explains those similarities. All of these languages together are called ‘Indo-European.’

Where do the Iranians fit in? They belong to the Indo-European language family, so they are also descendants of the Aryans. Or else of the Indo-Aryans—or Indo-Iranians. In other words, there was an ancestral group, the Indo-Iranians, which itself was descended from the Indo-Europeans (or Aryans), and it split, and some of them went to Iran and became the Iranians, and the others went to the Indus Valley and became the Indo-Aryans.

That about sums it up. I *think* I got it right.

Please resist any urge to laugh at this theory. It is the theory that helped unify Germany, and one reason it was popular as a unifying myth was that it yielded a story of origins where the wonderful ancestors of the German people were not Jews, and therefore a welcome alternative, in an antisemitic culture looking for a national myth, to the Christian story of origins, which is Jewish. As is famously known, this ‘Aryan invasion theory’ later became a favorite of the German Nazis, which is why they talked incessantly of their ‘Aryan superiority’ and moreover borrowed the swastika of the ancient

Indians as a symbol, though they did not borrow its meaning. This is also the theory that has been taught in the West, until now, as the history of *India*, and it is taught in India still today as the mainstream theory. Not a shred of evidence agrees with it.

This is serious.

How the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ came to be

As the Catholic ex-priest James Carroll (2001) has detailed in *Constantine’s Sword: The Church and the Jews*, European Christians have, for a tragically long time, denigrated and reduced the living Jews among them, oppressing them alternatively with genocide, inquisition, forced conversion, expulsion, genocide... The same history has inflicted, on Christians, a profound intellectual awkwardness: the ancient ‘heroic age’ of Christianity is Jewish! It just doesn’t feel comfortable, in an antisemitic civilization, that one’s story of origins should be Jewish; or that this story should be so much longer than the Christian ‘New Testament’; or that it should be so much more interesting and fun to read. But it cannot be avoided, because Christianity claims to have developed out of ancient Judaism.

It is remarkable that this absurd state of affairs has remained stable for so long, but signs that it would not remain so forever began to appear in the eighteenth century. At this time, many European intellectuals began looking for a way out,

and tried to give themselves an ancient ‘heroic age’ that would not be Jewish. Navaratna S. Rajaram explains that,

The humanist movement now known as the European Renaissance was followed by voyages of discovery in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, leading to greatly increased trade and colonizing activities. This had resulted in Europe becoming aware of the richness, antiquity and the complexities of Indian history and culture. As Jim Shaffer notes:

“Many scholars such as Kant and Herder, began to draw analogies between the myths and philosophies of ancient India and the West. In their attempt to separate Western European culture from its Judaic heritage, many scholars were convinced that the origin of Western culture was to be found in India rather than in the ancient Near East.” (Shaffer 1984:80)

At the time, skin color in particular was also capturing the European imagination, because colonialism brought close contact with dark-skinned peoples whom the Europeans, with their more effective weaponry, had subjugated. So the story these conquering Europeans came up with became that, in ancient times, mirroring the contemporary experience, the so-called ‘Aryan race’—blond, blue-eyed, and white-skinned—had burst forth from Central Asia and invaded everything, becoming the ruling class in India, Iran, and Europe, replacing the dark-skinned natives just as the modern Europeans in colonial times were subjugating the dark-skinned natives everywhere else.

Not exactly original.

It was German intellectuals with a nationalist bent who became most interested in this alternative ‘heroic age’ story of origins, the better to coalesce around it in pride. Why? Because, for a long time, the Germans had been divided into small principalities rather than unified into a single state, and in consequence were pushed around by the other European powers. The ‘Aryan race’ theory was a convenient and unifying alternative myth of origins with which the German nationalists were able to stir the imagination of the German masses to mobilize together politically. The theory became popular all over ‘Nordic’ Europe, but the German nationalists claimed special ownership over this theory by saying that the Germans were the ‘purest’ descendants of the original Aryans.

As a dominant European power, the British had zero interest in fostering German unification—and yet they accidentally did just that, by sponsoring the ‘Aryan race’ theory. Here is how it happened.

The British were looking for ways to undermine Indian culture and pride in order more effectively to rule India. For example, in 1831, Colonel Boden bequeathed to Oxford University his entire fortune—worth £25,000—to create the Boden Professorship of Sanskrit, the explicit purpose of which was to promote knowledge of Sanskrit among Englishmen so as “to enable his countrymen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian religion” (quoted in Rajaram 1995:71). More significantly, “as chairman of the Education Board,” Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) “was instrumental in establishing a network of modern English schools in India, the principal goal of which was the

conversion of Hindus to Christianity” (*ibid.* p.105). This is not speculation: in a letter to his father in 1836, Macaulay wrote,

It is my belief that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence. And this will be effected without any efforts to proselytize, without the smallest interference with religious liberty, by natural operation of knowledge and reflection. I heartily rejoice in the project.—
quoted in Rajaram (1995:105)¹

Macaulay was obviously a narrow Christian chauvinist, convinced of the superiority of Christian doctrine. And yet he was not so self-assured that he felt comfortable with a level playing field: to ensure that the Brahmins would become Christians, he “wanted someone willing and able to interpret Indian scriptures in such a way that the newly educated Indian elite would see for itself the difference between their scriptures and the New Testament and choose the latter” (*ibid.* p.106). It was in Germany that Sanskrit studies were flourishing the most, so Macaulay eventually recruited a German scholar to make a translation of the Vedic scriptures that would undermine Indian religion. That he selected his man with care may be inferred from the fact that it took him fifteen years to find him: the ardent German nationalist and Sanskrit scholar Max Müller.

Given that the rise of German Prussia as a European power was then worrying the British, and given the fateful

¹ Clive, J. 1975. *Macaulay: The shaping of a historian*. New York: Viking. (pp.412-13)

consequences of Max Müller's work for Prussian expansion, it is ironic that it was the Prussian ambassador, Christian Karl Hossias, who brought the 31-year-old Müller to meet Thomas Babbington Macauley, the man who would become his British sponsor. It was hardly fitting for a German nationalist to assist the British in their efforts to turn themselves into an even more formidable international power, but Max Müller was also a devout Protestant Christian—and hard up. So, for the sake of Christianity, and for the sake of his own economic stability, he accepted payment from the British East India Company for the work that Macauley commissioned (*ibid.* pp.106-107). A letter that he wrote to his wife in 1866 shows that Max Müller took his Christian mission seriously:

...this edition of mine and the translation of the Veda, will hereafter tell to a great extent on the fate of India and on the growth of millions of souls in that country. It [the Vedic scripture] is the root of their religion and to show them what that root is, I feel sure, is the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it during the last three thousand years.

Rajaram quotes the above passage and comments that, since Müller had no particular reason to misrepresent his motives in a private letter to his wife, we may take the above as a sincere expression of his intent (*ibid.* p.108). I think that's reasonable. Rajaram (*ibid.* p.114) also quotes a letter that Müller wrote to N.K. Majumdar, an Indian social reformer, late in his life:

The first thing you have to do is to settle how much of your ancient religion you are willing to give up, if not as utterly false, still as antiquated; ...Tell me

some of the chief difficulties that prevent you and your countrymen from openly following Christ, and when I write to you I shall do my best to explain how I and many who agree with me have met them, and solved them... (*In Devi Chand 1988:xxvi-xxvii*)

This leaves little doubt that Müller's purpose was to undermine Indian belief, which is hardly a recommendation for someone who is supposed to be a scholarly authority on Indian beliefs, and the author of the Vedic translation that many scholars still today are using.

In one sense Macauley's effort was highly successful, because the upper-class Indians whom Macauley targeted responded very well to British-style education—except that they didn't convert to Christianity. But if Macauley failed to undermine Indian religion, he did manage to create a new religion in Europe, because Müller's work was a huge log in the fire of the 'Aryan race' theory.

Though he was not the only one or the first German nationalist to do this, Müller interpreted the words 'Arya' and 'Aryan,' which appear repeatedly in the *Rigveda*, as referring to a race—the ancestral 'Aryan race' to which the German nationalists were learning to imagine themselves as the purest descendants. Thus, for example, "in 1861 he gave a series of lectures under the title 'Science of Languages' in which he made extensive use of Vedic hymns to show that the Vedic words Arya and Aryan were used to mean a race of people" (*ibid.* p.109). This completely contradicts the way in which these words are used in the original Sanskrit. For this distortion Müller bears a special responsibility because, "Unlike most other German romantics and nationalists, he as a Sanskrit

scholar was fully aware that *in Sanskrit, Arya does not refer to any race*” (*ibid.*; original emphasis). Not all Sanskrit scholars followed Müller in this. For example, “Shlegel, no less a romantic or German nationalist always used the word Aryan to mean ‘honorable’ or ‘noble’ which is much closer to the original Sanskrit in meaning” (*ibid.* p.110). But the interpretation of the Aryans as a supposed race was more influential by far. And it matters, because it was the claim that the ancient Sanskrit texts speak of a supposed Aryan race—when they don’t—that became the basis for the belief that there had ever existed such a race or people.

As it turned out, Max Müller was very successful with this ‘Aryan race’ stuff, and the emerging ideology was instrumental to Otto von Bismarck’s push to create a unified German empire by extending the borders of his native Prussia.

Ever since the 1700s, when Frederick I of Prussia had “raised the army to 80,000, effectively making the whole state a military machine,”¹ Prussia had been, as in the case of the ancient Greeks, though not quite as extreme, *society as army*. Though Prussia had lost—like everybody else—to Napoleon Bonaparte, by the time it provoked a war with France in 1870-71 (after provoking wars with Denmark and Austria), it was again a redoubtable fighting machine. The outcome of the Franco-Prussian war was a resounding victory for Prussia,

¹ "Prussia." Britannica Student Encyclopedia from Encyclopædia Britannica Online.

<http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:8409/ebi/article?tocId=9276562>

[Accessed April 20, 2005].

which then allowed its leader, Bismarck, to annex the south German principalities, creating Germany. In order to expand Prussia’s borders to create the German Empire or ‘Reich,’ Bismarck appealed to the German speaking peoples of Europe in a way that shows the importance of the ‘Aryan race’ theory of German origins:

Bismarck’s famous exhortation to the German people, over the heads of their particular political leaders, to ‘think with your blood’ was a[n]...attempt to activate a mass psychological vibration predicated upon an intuitive sense of consanguinity. An unstated presumption of a Chinese (or German) nation is that there existed in some hazy, pre-recorded era a Chinese (or German) Adam and Eve, and that the couple’s progeny has evolved in essentially unadulterated form down to the present.—Connor (1994[1978]:93-94)

The Germans were learning to think of themselves as the exalted pure descendants of an *Aryan*—not Jewish—Adam and Eve: the ‘Aryan race.’ This worked so well that even in Austria, which was then a major power in Europe, a movement grew among the German-speakers to join ‘Germany.’ For example, “a large part of the membership [of the student fraternity *Deutsche Lesehalle* in Vienna] insisted on Austria’s subservience to Germany... and supported Austria’s eventual union with Bismarck’s militant empire” (Elon 1975:52). This view was widespread. As is well known, the mood of nineteenth century pan-German nationalism continued into the twentieth century, making Adolf Hitler’s bloodless annexation of his native Austria—under the banner of a now truly assertive ‘Aryan race’ ideology—relatively easy.

German nationalism produced a tragic irony: “Many, if not most, Jewish students in Austria were ardent German patriots” (Elon 1975:53). In fact, hardly anybody was more infatuated with German culture than the German-speaking Jews: “many Jewish intellectuals were dazzled by the rise of German power under Bismarck” (*ibid.*). It took these Jews a long time to recognize the dangers to them inherent in German power, something that can be dramatically appreciated by the fact that one of the Austrian Jews who most firmly believed himself to be ‘German,’ and who was initially most in love with the rise of Germany, was Theodore Herzl, the very man who in time would create the Zionist movement to protect the European Jewish population from the antisemitic violence that he finally realized would engulf his people. And yet German nationalism was clearly antisemitic, based on the ‘Aryan race’ theory that exalted white skin, blue eyes, and yellow hair, and explicitly desired to exclude Jews: “‘Nowadays one must be blond,’ Herzl wrote in a revealing note found among his papers from that time” (*ibid.* p.54). Herzl’s own pro-German fraternity, *Albia*, soon became a nest of antisemites, and in March of 1883 he resigned in anger (*ibid.* pp.60-61)—but it was a while still before he became seriously worried for the fate of the Jews, and despite the eventual success of his belatedly feverish and heroic efforts to create a Jewish homeland, his dire predictions would find themselves confirmed in the twentieth-century German assault against the Jewish people.

The Western Jewish naïveté before the growing German threat appears to many, in hindsight, remarkable; but *proper*—i.e., historically informed—hindsight produces an

exactly opposite assessment: this was normal. Herzl’s biographer, Amos Elon, writes that “Never was an attachment by a minority [German-speaking Jews] to a majority [Germans] so strong” (1975:53), and yet the modern Jewish attachment to and infatuation with the United States is arguably stronger, despite the fact that US foreign policy towards Israel in the twentieth-century, and into the twenty-first, has been a series of stunningly vicious attacks, something the Jews appear entirely blind to, but of which I have now given a book-length demonstration.¹ Anybody who has read historian Christopher Simpson’s 1988 work, which documents, with material obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, that US Intelligence was created after the World War by absorbing in secret tens of thousands of Nazi war criminals, cannot be surprised that US foreign policy has prepared the impending destruction of the Jewish state.² But most Jews have not read

¹ “Is the US an ally of Israel?: A chronological look at the evidence”; Historical and Investigative Research; by Francisco Gil-White
<http://www.hirhome.com/israel/ihrally.htm>

² Simpson, C. 1988. *Blowback: America's recruitment of Nazis and its effects on the Cold War*. New York: Weidenfeld & Nicholson.

To read an analysis of how the recruitment of these Nazis affected the conduct of the US government, read:

”Did the National Security Act of 1947 destroy freedom of the press?: The red pill...”; Historical and Investigative Research; 3 January 2006; by Francisco Gil-White
<http://www.hirhome.com/national-security.htm>

Simpson's book, and so they are fulfilling George Santayana's dire prediction that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Indeed, just as many Western Jews in the nineteenth century decided, absurdly, to embrace antisemitism rather than abandon their German patriotism, tragically destroying themselves, today many Jews inside and outside of Israel have turned themselves into enemies of the Jewish state by supporting the foreign policy of the United States, or else (or simultaneously) by supporting the PLO, whose controlling core (Al Fatah) was created by Hajj Amin al Husseini, mentor to Yasser Arafat, and earlier *one of the top leaders of Adolf Hitler's Final Solution*.¹ These Jews represent their historically ignorant and politically absurd behaviors to themselves, in honest delusion, as 'peace-seeking,' not realizing that antisemitism has to be fought (for it will not be appeased)²; but they are once again assisting their own

¹ "How did the 'Palestinian movement' emerge? The British sponsored it. Then the German Nazis, and the US"; from UNDERSTANDING THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT; Historical and Investigative Research; 13 June 2006; by Francisco Gil-White
http://www.hirhome.com/israel/pal_mov4.htm

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² As the Jewish author Kenneth Levin has tried to explain in *The Oslo Syndrome: Delusions of a People Under Siege* (2005), such behaviors are instances of the famous Jewish 'self-hatred,' a tragic phenomenon that

destruction, and that of their more patriotic brethren. The predictable result will be another Catastrophe.

Returning to our main thread, I note that if Max Müller was dramatically successful promoting the theory of the 'Aryan race,' he also spat into the wind. Something funny happened as a result of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71. I don't mean the war itself, and certainly not the barbaric behavior of the Germans in occupied France, but rather its effects on British perceptions and in turn on poor Max Müller.

About the impact of Sanskrit studies on German nationalism, "Sir Henry Maine, an influential Anglo-Indian scholar and former Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University pronounced a view that many Englishmen shared about the unification of Germany: '...a nation has been born out of Sanskrit' (Sathe 1991:13)" (Rajaram & Frawley 1997:29-30). The British had so far been amused by the romantic German attachment to Sanskrit, but after the 'unification of Germany' they took a different view:

German unification was followed in England by an outburst of British patriotism in which the hapless Max Müller found himself having to walk a political tightrope. As already noted, ideas about the Aryan race and culture were being seen by the British as having played a significant part in German nationalism that led to unification; the two ideas—the Aryan nation and German unification—were

afflicts all systematically oppressed populations (e.g. blacks in the US have their 'uncle Tom's').

inseparable in the public mind.—Rajaram (1995:111)

In other words, the vigorous British waving of the Union Jack in reaction to Bismarck's success, plus the reasonable British perception that the 'Aryan race' theory of Sanskritists had helped produce this competing and fearsome military power, was the sort of thing to make the most important German Sanskritist, then in the employ of the British government, and permanently installed in Britain, *less* comfortable. So, to play it safe in his British environment, it was advisable for Max Müller to backpedal from his earlier claims about an 'Aryan race.' Thus, following the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian war in 1871, in a big rush, Max Müller put together what became the *linguistic* as opposed to the racial theory of Aryan origins.

He placed the original Aryan ancestors in Samarkand in the Trans-Oxus region in Central Asia north of Kashmir. According to this new theory, actually a linguistic reincarnation of the old race theory, one branch migrated southeast into Iran, Afghanistan and India to become the Indo-Iranians, while a second branch migrated southwest and went on to become the Greeks and the Europeans. As support he claimed that the original Aryans were landlocked and immobile and therefore had no notion of the sea or any word for fish. But he overlooked the elementary fact that both Iran and Afghanistan lie not to the southeast of Samarkand but to the southwest. Further, Afghanistan has always been culturally and linguistically an extension of India. Compounding the absurdity, Max Müller failed to note that several species of fish

including such staple varieties as *katala* and *loch* are found in Samarkand.

Looking at it today, the extraordinary shoddiness with which his new theory was put together is astounding. In his rush to dissociate himself from the Aryan race theory, Max Müller had succeeded in creating the most absurd contradiction imaginable: The Aryans of Central Asia were so immobile that they were ignorant of the ocean only a few hundred miles away, and fish found even closer. And yet they were so fleet of foot (or horse) that they managed to spread over a vast stretch from Ireland to the east coast of India. As one of his recent critics put it: "Max Müller has made as many mistakes as is possible to make in one argument."¹ Nothing but extreme haste can account for so preposterous a theory from a scholar of his standing.—Rajaram (1995:116)

From this point onwards, Max Müller never wavered: "Just as he had been using the word Aryan in the racial sense for twenty years until 1871, for the next thirty years he was insistent that Aryan could only refer to a language family or culture, but to little or no avail" (*ibid.* p.110). *To little or no avail...* There is a reason for that. Max Müller's contemporaries were obsessed with the idea of 'race,' and this is precisely why such an idea had proved instrumental in 'unifying Germany' in the first place. To help you understand

¹ Waradapande, N. R. 1989. *Aryan invasion: A myth*. Nagpur: Babasaheb Apte Smarak Samiti.

the ideological climate that produced an obsession with race, allow me a short detour.

A short detour: whence the obsession with 'race'?

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* summarizes the eighteenth and nineteenth century theorizing about 'race' as follows:

Major proponents of the ideology of race inequality were the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, the French philosopher Voltaire, the Scottish philosopher and historian David Hume, and the influential American political philosopher Thomas Jefferson. These writers expressed negative opinions about Africans and other "primitives" based on purely subjective impressions or materials gained from secondary sources, such as travelers, missionaries, and explorers...

During the same period, influenced by taxonomic activities of botanists and biologists that had begun in the 17th century, other European scholars ...[went about] classifying all peoples into "natural" groupings, as had been done with other flora and fauna. ...it was the classifications developed by the Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus and the German physiologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach that provided the models for modern racial classifications.¹

¹ "race." Encyclopædia Britannica from Encyclopædia Britannica Online.

Linnaeus was involved in systematizing all of the world's *species*. Applying this method to humans, both he and Blumenbach thought they could see natural divisions *within* the human species, and tried to derive a systematic classification of different human 'types.' Unsurprisingly, given that at this time Europeans were subjugating and enslaving dark-skinned people all over the world, these classifications assigned to the 'European type'—or 'whites'—the most exalted place in the classification of humanity. By this means a pseudo-moral argument was produced that justified the oppression of *non-whites*.'

From the scientific point of view all this 'race science' was a monumental waste of time. Rajaram & Frawley (1997:27) quote the geneticist S.K. Mahajan, who says that "In spite of the great labors of the race scientists, their work has mostly been forgotten. The emergence of Molecular Biology of genes has proved it to be false." Following that, they comment:

A modern researcher today can scarcely have an idea of the enormous output of these race scientists, output that in sheer quantity (and value) can only be compared to that of medieval theologians who produced volume upon massive volume on such important topics as the number of angels that could dance on the head of a pin. The home of this crackpot discipline was Germany, with French savants like Comte Joseph de Gobineau not far behind. It was such men as these that gave

<http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:8409/eb/article?tocId=234671>

[Accessed April 20, 2005].

currency to the concept of the Aryan race. It was Max Müller's friend E. Rénan who popularized the term 'Aryan' in France. This was the climate in which Sanskrit studies became highly popular in nineteenth century Europe, especially Germany, the home of Indology for over a century.

Neither Rajaram nor Frawley were trained by a Western social-science department; in consequence, they can be excused for their spectacular naïveté on this point, because in fact many modern 'researchers'—*still today*—are energetically involved in 'race science,' contrary to what Rajaram and Frawley appear to think, and they continue to produce an "enormous output." This sham discipline never died, though of course Rajaram and Frawley are correct that modern genetics has thoroughly refuted the claim that the human species can be divided into biological races.

The most important modern incarnation of 'race science' is IQ testing, of which I have given a book-length refutation in *Resurrecting Racism: The Modern Attack on Black People Using Phony Science* (the same book explains the genetic data that refutes the idea of human 'races').¹ IQ testing as it is still practiced today was invented by the leaders of the American eugenics movement in the early twentieth century, whose goal was to develop a measure that would make the Western upper classes look smart, and members of the lower classes look stupid, the better to give apparent support to the

argument that whole categories of people needed to be exterminated in order (supposedly) to protect the human species from bad 'germ plasm.' The point of this argument was to hold a sword over the working classes, which in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the beginning of the first, were becoming politically quite assertive. Not coincidentally, as historian Edwin Black (2003) has documented in *War against the weak: Eugenics and America's campaign to create a master race*, the eugenicists were organized and financed by the wealthiest families in the Western world (the Carnegies, the Rockefellers, the Harrimans...) in collusion with the US government. It is significant that some of this money was going to the German Nazis, whose extermination ideology had been borrowed from the same American eugenicists, as Black also documents. Again not coincidentally, the eugenicists developed so-called IQ measures designed to test the culture of the Western *upper*-classes, whose money was backing this effort. This naturally guaranteed that these upper classes would come out looking as though they were naturally superior, mentally, and with the claim that the tests were supposedly measuring 'innate intelligence,' they got to forcibly sterilize or incarcerate hundreds of thousands of innocent Americans whom these tests supposedly identified as 'feeble-minded,' and hence a genetic danger to the species. And yet despite the fundamental fraud involved in the structure of the tests themselves, the IQ testers have obviously been somewhat insecure, because they have resorted to faking their data, fudging their math, and even inventing non-existent researchers under whose phantom names studies that were never carried out were nevertheless published, as I document in *Resurrecting Racism*.

¹ Gil-White, F. J. 2004. *Resurrecting Racism: The Modern Attack on Black People Using Phony Science*. Historical and Investigative Research.

<http://www.hirhome.com/rr/rrcontents.htm>

As the above would suggest, the leaders of the eugenics movement, in tandem with the anti-worker ideology that produced IQ testing, partook also of a form of racism in which the favorite category was not 'white' but *Nordic*, as in Germans, Scandinavians, Britons, and French, in opposition to the Irish, Mediterraneans, and Slavs. 'Nordic,' of course, is just another word for 'Aryan' in this ideology: eugenics and IQ testing were an early twentieth-century extension of the nineteenth-century 'race science.' German Nazi ideology in the twentieth century, which was one version of the international eugenics movement, was also, in particular, an outgrowth of the nineteenth century 'Aryan race' theory, which was now used to mobilize the Germans—the purest 'Nordics' according to this ideology—against the very Jews whom the theory had been designed to extirpate from the German cosmological firmament in the first place.

Though it is no longer politically correct to defend eugenics, due to the revulsion that the German Nazi genocide of the Jewish people produced, in its IQ-testing form the eugenics movement has endured and enjoyed great success. The SAT, a descendant of the 'Army Alpha' IQ test that had been designed by some of the most extreme racists among the American eugenicists, and administered to vast multitudes of US soldiers in order to assign their ranks, has become a near-universal requirement for application to a college education in the United States, with predictable consequences for the lower classes whom these tests were designed to disadvantage. And IQ testing continues to be rampant all over US society. People routinely speak of their supposed 'intelligence' in terms of

wholly meaningless IQ scores and pretend they understand what they are talking about.

So, coming back to Rajaram and Frawley, if these authors were aware that an entire branch of widely institutionalized twentieth-century 'psychology' is nothing more than racist snake oil, they would be much less surprised that the entire field of 'Indology' has survived into the twenty-first century despite being little more than a nineteenth-century racist—and, not insignificantly, antisemitic—fraud.

Perhaps it is worth pointing out that the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century obsession with the concept of 'race'—the belief that the culture and language of a people are a product of their unchangeably racial (i.e. biological) *nature*, together with a distinctive physique supposedly discontinuous with that of other populations—is not a radical idiosyncrasy of the Europeans. I have taken pains in my own work to show that people *everywhere* easily imagine, erroneously, that cultural differences are supposedly biological, due to perceptual and cognitive biases that distort our perception of human variation.¹

¹ Gil-White, F. J. 1999. How thick is blood? The plot thickens...: If ethnic actors are primordialists, what remains of the circumstantialist/primordialist controversy? *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22:789-820.

<http://www.hirhome.com/academic/blood.pdf>

—. 2001. Are ethnic groups biological 'species' to the human brain?: Essentialism in our cognition of some social categories. *Current anthropology* 42:515-554.

<http://www.hirhome.com/academic/species.pdf>

This is a bit like the way our perspective makes the Earth appear flat when it isn't. What happened in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe is that these cognitive and perceptual biases, which have always been there, were reified as if 'science'—then fast becoming popular—had established their justice. But this was a *sham* science.

Once the extremely 'race'-conscious pseudo-scientific climate of the European eighteenth and nineteenth century, still with us, is understood, it is clear why the search for a heroic age that would not be Jewish—especially in the case of the German nationalists—produced an explicitly *racist* account: the 'Aryan race' theory.

What the 'Aryan invasion theory' was built on

Indian historical tradition has zero memory of an 'Aryan invasion.' This was pointed out a long time ago by F.E. Pargiter, an authority on the *Puranas*, a class of ancient Indian

—. 2001. Sorting is not categorization: A critique of the claim that Brazilians have fuzzy racial categories. *Journal of cognition and culture* 1:219-249.

<http://www.hirhome.com/academic/emic.pdf>

—. 2002. The cognition of ethnicity: Native category systems under the field-experimental microscope. *Field methods* 14:170-198.

<http://www.hirhome.com/academic/methods.pdf>

works chronicling the ruling dynasties of India: "Vedic literature says, I believe, nothing about the entrance of the Aryans from the north-west into India" (quoted in Rajaram 1995:153). Since the *Puranas* say nothing about this, the only 'support' for this supposed invasion came from Max Müller's interpretation of the most ancient Vedic work: the *Rigveda*. According to Max Müller, the *Rigveda*'s account of a battle between the forces of light and darkness was describing a conflict between invading light-skinned people and the dark-skinned natives whom they defeated. And this invasion, he said, happened around the year 1500 BCE.

How did he come up with this date?

Max Müller believed firmly in the Biblical interpretation that the world was created on October 23, 4004 BCE. "[A]s late as 1875, Max Müller himself wrote to the Duke of Argyll: 'I look upon the account of creation given in the Genesis as simply historical'" (*ibid.* pp.95, 98). This naturally had a constraining effect on the chronology that he produced, and which assigned the *Rigveda*, the earliest of the ancient Indian scriptures, to the period 1200 to 1000 BCE. For you see, the date of The Flood, by the Biblical reckoning, was 2448 BCE. As Rajaram explains, "Allowing another 1000 years for the waters to subside and for the ground to get dry enough for the mounted Aryan tribes to begin their invasion of India, brings us inside of 1500 BCE for the invasion" (*ibid.* p.95).

Max Müller then went looking for something—anything—in the old Indian works that would support his chronology. He found it in a collection of fairy tales written by Somadeva of Kashmir around 1060 CE, which is to say more than 2000 years after the supposed invasion that Müller was

attempting to date. In addition, I point out that “[Somadeva] himself records that his stories were written to entertain Survayati, the wife of King Ananta of Kashmir” (*ibid.* p.93)—so even the author did not claim they had any historical value.

But never mind that, because the way Müller used Somadeva’s fairy tales is quite preposterous enough all by itself. In one of Somadeva’s stories, there is a one-eyed ghost who claims that one Vararuchi, who in the story is the minister of the Magadhan ruler Nanda, was a reincarnation of a certain Katyayana. Max Müller somehow decided that this was the same Katyayana as a Vedic commentator from the Sutra period of the same name, and therefore that this Vedic commentator was a contemporary of Nanda. “Since Nanda is thought to have lived in the 4th century BCE, Max Müller assigned the Sutra literature to the period around Nanda. His own imagination did the rest” (*ibid.* p.92).

I will clarify. Somadeva’s story does not say that Katyayana was a contemporary of Nanda, but only that Katyayana’s *reincarnation*, Vararuchi, was. So Max Müller, in contradiction to what the story stated, decided that Vararuchi was not really the reincarnation of Katyayana, but Katyayana himself, and moreover that this was not just any Katyayana, but specifically the Vedic commentator from the Sutra period of the same name, an identification that the story nowhere makes. And yet things can get crazier still: Max Müller himself noted that his reckoning was a bit uncertain because the Southern Buddhists substituted Chandragupta for Nanda (*ibid.* p.93), so he did not even have a stable fairy tale to misinterpret!

But there is more. Having thus ‘fixed’ the Sutra literature to the period 600 to 200 BCE, which captures the

fourth century Nanda, Müller worked his way backwards, producing the following chronology (*ibid.* p.91):

Work	Time of Composition
Rigveda	1200 to 1000 BCE
Mantras	1000 to 800 BCE
Brahmanas	800 to 600 BCE
Sutras	600 to 200 BCE

It’s all very neat, every time a period of 200 years (except for the last one), and always perfectly consecutive. How did Müller come up with the other dates? He didn’t bother to misinterpret a one-eyed ghost story from the eleventh century for those—he just made them up.

As you might expect, Müller’s chronology did not escape criticism in his time, to which he replied with a radical disclaimer:

I need hardly say that I agree with every one of my critics. I have repeatedly dwelt on the entirely hypothetical character of the dates which I venture to assign to the first three periods of the Vedic literature. All I have claimed for them is that they are minimum dates. If now we ask how we can fix the date of these three periods, it is quite clear that we cannot fix a *terminus a quo*. Whether the Vedic hymns were composed 1000, 1500 or 2000 or 3000 BC, no power on earth will ever determine.—quoted in Rajaram (1995:94)

In fact, powers on earth *can* determine it, but it is noteworthy that in the above Max Müller completely repudiated his own “entirely hypothetical” chronology.

But there is still room for astonishment. In the year 1954, historian of India A.L. Basham was writing as follows:

The earliest Indian literary source we possess is the *Rigveda*, most of which was composed in the second half of the 2nd millennium [i.e. 1500 BCE to 1000 BCE]. It is evidently the work of an invading people, who have not yet fully subjugated the original inhabitants of N.-W. India. ...The invaders of India called themselves *Aryas*, a word generally Anglicized into Aryans... ...[Here is the theory] which seems to us most reasonable, and which, we believe, would be accepted by a majority of those who specialize in the subject. About 2000 BCE the great steppeland which stretches from Poland to Central Asia was inhabited by semi-nomadic barbarians, who were tall, comparatively fair, and mostly long-headed. ...They migrated in bands westwards, southwards and eastwards, conquering local populations, and intermarrying with them to form a ruling class.—Basham (1954:28-29)

None of this was being defended *in 1954*; it was stated in passing that the “most reasonable” scenario, and the one “accepted by the majority of those who specialize on the subject,” was still Max Müller’s nonsense.

But add another half century and still nothing changes. Romila Thapar, another prominent historian, also of Indian nationality, wrote the following *in 1992*:

The generally accepted chronology is that the Rig Vedic hymns were composed over a period from about 1500 BCE to 1000 BCE...—quoted in Rajaram (1995:91)

In other words, at the turn of the twenty-first century, the “generally accepted chronology”—even by historians who happened to be Indian nationals—was still the nonsense used to support the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ and which, over one hundred years ago, even the original Max Müller had decided not to defend. Scholars who endorse this chronology such as Basham and Thapar nowhere demonstrate the validity of this dating, which they have inherited from Max Müller—they just state it. They can get away with this because it is the “generally accepted chronology,” and what is generally accepted hardly needs to be defended.

In the year 2005, Washington State University has a website called *World Civilizations: An Internet Classroom and Anthology*.¹ In here one can find a page dedicated to Ancient India, and within it, a page on the “Ancient Aryans.”² The Aryans, this page confidently explains,

...were a tribal and nomadic peoples living in the far reaches of Euro-Asia in hostile steppe lands barely scratching out a living. ... They swept over Persia with lightening speed, and spread across the northern river plains of India. Their nature as a warlike, conquering people are [*sic*] still preserved in

¹ <http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/>

² <http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/ANCINDIA/ANCINDIA.HTM>

Vedic religion [i.e. supposedly in the *Rigveda*], the foundation of Hinduism.

And here is what the *Encyclopedia Britannica* writes, also in the year 2005, concerning the origins of Hinduism:

Around 1500 BCE the Indus Valley was invaded by an Indo-European people called Aryans. They almost totally transformed Indian civilization, and in so doing they imposed new forms of religion.¹

Aside from the other absurdities, can you think of anything more embarrassing than to find the *Encyclopedia Britannica* sticking to Max Müller's date of 1500 BCE, which Müller himself disowned?

For anybody to be defending the 'Aryan invasion theory' today, it would have to be true that Max Müller, despite having simply invented the Aryan invasion story in a vacuum, nevertheless, and quite spectacularly, got it right. But he didn't. Once Indian archaeology really hit the ground running as a discipline (which it hadn't in Müller's time), all sorts of absurdities were discovered when attempting to interpret the new evidence in light of the 'Aryan invasion theory.'

When the [Aryan invasion] theory was formed in the nineteenth century there was no evidence of any significant urban civilization in ancient India before

¹ "Hinduism." Britannica Student Encyclopedia from Encyclopædia Britannica Online.

<http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:8409/ebi/article?tocId=202038>

[Accessed April 21, 2005].

1000 BCE. The Aryan invasion theory was thus first devised in terms of the Aryans overrunning of an aboriginal culture, which had small settlements. On the invasion assumption, the Vedic battle between the powers of light and darkness was interpreted as indicating the Aryan invasion with more advanced light-skinned people overwhelming the dark-skinned aborigines who were regarded as crude and uncivilized.

However, in the early twentieth century evidence of a large urban civilization was found in Western India—the so-called Indus civilization of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro (c. 3000-1800 BCE). The Aryan invasion theory was recast in light of these ruins. It was suggested that the Aryans plundered and destroyed this culture and were responsible for the sudden and possibly violent ending to it. This was the initial view of researchers like Wheeler, who were trained to accept the Aryan invasion theory, particularly since the end of the Harappan era appeared to occur about the time proposed for the so-called invasion (c. 1500 BCE)—Rajaram & Frawley (1997:53)

This was a big change. The original Aryan invasion theory was that the blonde super-warrior nomads from the north were much smarter than the primitive darkies, who were therefore easily conquered. When it turned out that the supposedly primitive darkies had in fact constructed spectacularly advanced cities in the Indus Valley (Harappa and Mohenjo Daro), the Aryan invasion theory was hardly abandoned; it was simply modified to say that the blond nomads had easily conquered this highly urban civilization of

the Indus Valley, because apparently dark-skinned people are always stupider than blondes, whether or not dark-skinned people have built advanced cities. Turning once again to the *Rigveda*, defenders of the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ now claimed they saw in it descriptions of how the invading Aryans had destroyed the cities of the Harappans. But they had not noticed these descriptions when they maintained that the Aryans had destroyed primitive villagers.

I do not mean to suggest that nomadic invaders cannot defeat a materially more advanced civilization. This has happened more than once, most famously with the spectacular Mongolian conquests that have in fact served as an inspiration for this new version of the ‘Aryan invasion theory.’ The problem with using the Mongols as a model, however, as Koenraad Elst points out in *Update on the Aryan Invasion Debate*, is the following:

...the outcome of such episodes [nomadic invasions of more advanced civilizations] is [that]...the invaders were usually assimilated into the sedentary civilization which they had overpowered in battle, if they were not driven back out. The Mongols became Chinese in China, Muslim in Iran, and of the enormous territory they conquered, there is (with the exception of Kalmykia) not one square mile where a native language was permanently replaced with Mongolian.—(Elst 1999:4.1.2)

The ‘Aryan invasion theory’ maintains, on the contrary, that the invading Aryan culture *completely displaced* what was there. This is not in principle impossible but in that case we would expect to see signs of the violent destruction. Koenraad

Elst explains that in Europe some linguistic evidence is consistent with the view that the Hellenes, Illyrians, and Thracians invaded and displaced a materially advanced native civilization in the Balkans, but that here we *do* find archaeological evidence of destruction, which we don’t in the Indian case.

These [Balkan] natives had used an as yet undeciphered writing system reportedly going back to 5300 BC, and disappearing along with the Old European culture in about 3500 BC. So there it really was an advanced civilization being overrun by barbarian invaders who largely destroyed it.

That model is being projected onto the Vedic-Harappan history: a literate urban and agricultural civilization being overrun by semi-nomadic horsemen. But the crucial difference is that in the Balkans, this violent scenario is attested by archaeological findings...The same thing happened when, according to most specialists, the Greeks entered mainland Greece in 1,900 BC, driving the last remains of Old European culture to their last refuge on Crete... *This [archeological] testimony of many settlements having been burnt down is absent at the [Indus Valley] Harappan sites.—Elst (1999:4.7.1; emphasis mine)*

As Rajaram & Frawley put it, “[t]here is no real archaeological evidence of any violent demise for the Harappan civilization” (1997:54). But such negative findings failed to put a dent in the enthusiasm for the Aryan invasion ‘theory,’ because

...by this time the invasion theory was so impressed upon the minds of researchers that they continued

trying to remold it. Some assumed the Aryan invasion occurred when the cities were in decline or had already been abandoned—that it was only the degenerate remains of Harappans the Aryans conquered. That this refuted their previous assumptions that Vedic literature portrayed the destruction of cities in battle did not seem to cause any problems for such scholars. It is clear by such shifts of view that Vedic literature was never taken seriously by these scholars and one wonders if they feel any need to account for it at all.—Rajaram & Frawley (1997:54)

In other words, the ‘Aryan invasion theory,’ whose *only* support had been a particular interpretation of the *Rigveda*, has kept going strong even though the archaeological evidence has roundly contradicted this interpretation of the *Rigveda*. This is remarkable, because what it means is that the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ no longer explains anything. In a sense this is what makes it so stable, because evidence cannot refute a dogmatic religious faith.

How the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ has been supported

It is a bit of an exaggeration, however, to say that the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ is based entirely on nothing. The discovery by European scholars of a number of interesting similarities between Sanskrit words and European and Iranian language cognates led to the speculation that all of these languages had a common ancestor. The ‘Aryan invasion theory,’ which has the

mythical blond and blue-eyed Aryans spreading out in remote times from Central Asia and invading both Europe and India, was offered as an explanation for the puzzle of the similarities between all these languages. In the absence of archaeological data agreeing with the invasion scenario, it was the comparative linguists, so-called, who would provide the lasting ‘support’ for this historical hypothesis. But comparative linguistics—or philology, as the discipline was once called—is more a branch of superstition than a science, and in this section I will explain why.

The 1968 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica (vol. 14, p.76) stated that

Special linguistic methods, elaborated mostly for the study of the Indo-European languages, enable one to determine the genetic relationships between the languages by a comparison of their forms. These relations permit the supposition that there once existed a parent language.

Since the “study of the Indo-European languages” is practically synonymous with the defense of the ‘Aryan invasion’ scenario, what we learn above is that “special linguistic methods” were created to defend the theory that Max Müller designed to give German nationalists a ‘heroic age’ purged of the Jews. That does not bode well for these “special linguistic methods.”

Already in 1933 the linguist Leonard Bloomfield had pointed out the rather extreme assumptions that were required:

The comparative [linguistic] method assumes that each branch or language bears independent

witness of the forms of the parent language, and that identities or correspondences among the related languages reveal features of the parent speech. This is the same thing as assuming, firstly that the parent community was uniform as to language, and secondly, that the parent community split suddenly and sharply into two or more daughter communities, which lost all contact with each other.—Bloomfield (1933:310)

Why did philologists or ‘comparative linguists’ assume that linguistic communities split neatly, suddenly, and sharply, and thereafter lost all contact with each other? Naturally, because they were thinking of linguistic communities as if they were *biological species*. When a biological population splits into two reproductively isolated lineages these will begin to evolve independently, because the information relevant to organismal design—carried by genes—cannot be ‘exchanged’ between two populations unless they mate with each other. The manner in which *cultural* populations evolve, however, hardly corresponds to this model.

The evolution of cultural populations cannot be understood except by reference to the psychological and other laws governing the *social acquisition* of what are now called ‘memes’: socially transmissible bits of information such as ideas, beliefs, norms, habits, laws, traditions, etc. The evolutionary theorist Richard Dawkins (1976) coined the term ‘meme’ to rhyme with ‘gene’ so as to emphasize that memes, too, are subject to Darwinian forces of mutation, inheritance, and selection, because some memes will perforce be more ‘popular,’ becoming more common at the expense of other memes. But apart from its sound, Dawkins deliberately coined

this term to suggest morphemic linkages with *mimesis*, *memory*, and the French word *même* (which means ‘the same’). Why? Because memes are transmitted through social learning (as opposed to biological reproduction), they are stored in memory (as opposed to in the cell’s nucleus), and they must show some non-trivial degree of similarity between parent and copy for Darwinian analyses to apply.

Robert Boyd and Peter Richerson, in 1985, launched what is arguably the most productive approach to elucidating the laws governing the transmission of memes in *Culture and the Evolutionary Process*. For an update of their ideas and a summary of twenty years of research, consult Richerson & Boyd’s *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed the Evolutionary Process*, published in 2005 (full disclosure: I got my Ph.D. in cultural and biological anthropology at UCLA, with Robert Boyd as my thesis advisor). One of the purposes of the research agenda of these two pioneers is to determine the relative importance of various forms of cultural transmission in producing historical change. It is certainly true that parents will transmit many memes to their biological children, and here the direction of transmission is identical to what happens in genetic transmission. However, humans also learn from their peers, from adults who are not their ancestors, from those who are younger, and even from foreigners, and these directions of transmission are radically different from what happens in the genetic case. In addition, a population boundary defined by ethnic identity and/or the preservation of certain traditions will by no means always correspond neatly to the boundary of a speech community; as any anthropologist will tell you, humans

display maddening complexity in their social boundary overlaps.

For example, different classes in the *same society* always speak different dialects and sometimes entirely different languages. Bits of a language can travel horizontally in piecemeal fashion and be adopted by foreigners without more substantial cultural contact or influence—and certainly without implying an ancestor-descendant relationship between the donor and borrower populations. In fact, a population can acquire an entirely new language, whole, without being descended from the population that originally spoke it (e.g. the Irish). Therefore, imagining that one can look at similarities between different speech communities to reconstruct a neat splitting and branching historical pattern *of cultures conceived of as indivisible wholes*, in the manner of the phylogeny of biological species, is an obvious non-starter. But if any doubts remain, anthropologist Richard McElreath (1997), who likewise studied with Robert Boyd, has given a definitive mathematical demonstration that one cannot construct cultural phylogenies the way biologists do for species. He concludes (p.38):

Current work in this area...still tackles the problem [of reconstructing cultural phylogenies] as if cultures had a single “real” phylogeny. This may certainly be true for some classes of traits, but we do not know yet which traits these are. We cannot presuppose that the traits we are interested in share a phylogeny with language.

In other words, the various forms of social transmission of information, and the fact that different bits of information

are transmitted through different channels and in different ways, make it impossible to reconstruct branching trees of ancestor-descendant relations as if cultures branched *whole*, with all their traits traveling together, in the manner of biological species. So the so-called comparative linguists presuppose something that “we cannot presuppose,” and this is the method that has been recruited to support the ‘Aryan invasion theory.’

The linguist Leonard Bloomfield (1933:311) explained some time ago what the consequence of this was:

...studies of Indo-European did not realize that the family tree diagram was merely a statement of their method: they accepted the uniform parent languages, and their sudden clear cut splitting, as historical realities.

That’s the polite way of saying that the comparative linguists ended up believing their own nonsense.

But what did the comparative linguists do, exactly? They invented a fictional language: ‘Indo-European.’ This was supposedly the ancestor language to all so-called Indo-European languages. Another name for ‘Indo-European,’ of course, is *Aryan*. The claim by comparative linguists to have demonstrated that there had been a Indo-European or Aryan language, parent to Sanskrit, Iranian languages, and German, among other European languages, was simply their entirely incorrect assumption—as pointed out above—concerning what the similarities between languages will imply about ancestor-descendant relations. Therefore, the existence of ancestral

‘Indo-European’ or ‘Aryan’ has never been supported, let alone demonstrated; this language was just conjured out of thin air.

Naturally, in order to defend the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ it is important to privilege the so-called ‘evidence’ of comparative linguists over all other, because otherwise the archaeological evidence will lead people to the obvious hypothesis: that the ‘Indo-European’ languages are similar because they are all descendants of *Sanskrit*. This would make a whole lot of sense.

With its extensive and fertile river systems of the Indus, Saraswati and Ganga, India was the best place on earth for food production, for demographic growth, for cultural life and for scientific progress. ...it is perfectly plausible that large groups of Indians went to other countries as traders and colonists, precisely like the Europeans did when it was their turn to have a demographical as well as a technological edge over their neighbors. And just like a dominant Spanish minority managed to make its own language the mother-tongue of much larger populations which are genetically predominantly Native American, so also the slightly darker emigrants from India may have passed on their language to the white people of Russia and Europe.—Elst (1999:4.1.1)

What about the genetic evidence?

The genetic evidence likewise does not support the ‘Aryan invasion theory.’ On 10 January 2006 *National Geographic*

News reported on the results of a genetic study by “Vijendra Kashyap, director of India’s National Institute of Biologicals in Noida.”¹ According to *National Geographic*, “the data reveal that the large majority of modern Indians descended from South Asian ancestors.”

It is by now perhaps needless to say that this has not shaken the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ in the least, and in fact the *National Geographic* article takes pains to explain this.

The finding disputes a long-held theory that a large invasion of central Asians, traveling through a northwest Indian corridor, shaped the language, culture, and gene pool of many modern Indians within the past 10,000 years.

That theory is bolstered by the presence of Indo-European languages in India, the archaeological record, and historic sources such as the Rig Veda, an early Indian religious text.

... Peter Underhill, a research scientist at the Stanford University School of Medicine's department of genetics, says he harbors no doubts that Indo-European speakers [i.e. the supposed ‘Aryans’] did move into India. But he agrees with Kashyap that their genetic contribution appears small.

"It doesn't look like there was a massive flow of genes that came in a few thousand years ago," he

¹ “India Acquired Language, Not Genes, From West, Study Says”; by Brian Handwerk for *National Geographic News*; January 10, 2006.

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/01/0110_060110_india_genes.html

said. "Clearly people came in to India and brought their culture, language, and some genes."

Clearly? This is remarkable. Who can doubt that if the genetic data supported the view of a population movement from the Northwest into India, mainstream scholars would be telling us that, naturally, this is because the 'Aryan invasion theory' is correct? And yet, if the genetic data go the other way the 'Aryan invasion theory' is still "clearly" the right one. As before, we see that it matters little which way the evidence goes: the 'Aryan invasion theory' will simply be asserted, with confidence.

The title of the *National Geographic* article is in perfect agreement with Peter Underhill, for it reads: "India Acquired Language, Not Genes, From West, Study Says." In other words, if the data says that Indians are genetically descended from South Asians, well then the invading Aryans—because there *must* be invading Aryans—bequeathed their culture to Indians but few genes.

The problem is not that Underhill's theory of a deep cultural but shallow genetic impact of invading Aryans from the Northwest has to be incorrect in principle—the problem is that there is simply no evidence to support it, and the genetic evidence is just the latest blow. Regurgitating the mainstream view matter-of-factly, *National Geographic* tells its readers that the 'Aryan invasion theory' "is bolstered by the presence of Indo-European languages in India, the archaeological record, and historic sources such as the Rig Veda, an early Indian religious text." But we have already seen that the archaeological evidence refutes this theory, and that the linguistic 'evidence' is no evidence at all. I shall now turn to

the supposed evidence from the *Rigveda* in order to show that there is simply nothing—nothing at all—that will support this theory. This exercise will finally take us where we ultimately wanted to go: towards an elucidation of the origins of the ancient Persians.

So who were 'the Aryans' of the *Rigveda*, then?

The original scholarly impetus for the entire 'Aryan invasion theory' was a misinterpretation of the word 'Aryan' as used in the *Rigveda*. At first, as we saw, Max Müller along with others said that the Aryans were a 'race.' Then, when the political winds made his position delicate he changed his tune and said that the Aryans were a linguistic group. The notion of the Aryans as a 'race' persisted despite Müller's flip, but was made disreputable when the Nazis put it to their infamous uses. So in the academic community what has flourished since has been the theory of the 'Indo-European language family,' developing Müller's second theme. But the 'race' idea was never quite abandoned: "An original Aryan race that spoke proto-Indo-European [i.e. Aryan, the language from which all the 'Indo-European' languages are supposedly descended] was proposed, which then migrated and transmitted its language, but not necessarily its racial type to other people" (Rajaram & Frawley 1997:61). Actually this is the same old Nazi idea, isn't it? It suggests that only some of the modern Europeans will be 'pure Aryans.'

But the point here is the evidence: the term ‘Arya’ in the ancient Sanskrit literature is a concept having zero similarity either to a ‘race’ *or* to a ‘language group,’ which guarantees that the notion of the ‘Aryan people,’ in either version, will be nonsensical *in principle*. Here is an example of how the term ‘Aryan’ is used in the *Rigveda*:

The Gods generated the Divine Word (Brahman), the cow, the horse, the plants, the trees, the Earth, the mountains and the Waters. Raising the Sun in Heaven, the bountiful Gods released the Aryan laws over the world. *RV.x.65.11*—translation, Rajaram & Frawley (1997:63)

Now, with nothing but the above for context, ask yourself, if we were to rewrite the last phrase, which of the following three possibilities would make more sense:

- 1) “...the bountiful Gods released the *laws of the Aryan race* over the world”; or
- 2) “...the bountiful Gods released the *laws of the Aryan-speaking people* over the world”; or
- 3) “...the bountiful Gods released the *good laws* over the world”?

What in the text forces the first or second choices? The text is obviously exalting the gods—they have done everything well. And these gods, who are so “bountiful” and have thus created everything, blessed us also with laws. Therefore, to me it seems as though “the Aryan laws” has to mean ‘the perfect laws’ of the gods or something like that. I can find no good reason to suppose that this is a reference to the laws of an ‘Aryan race’ or speech community.

Another reason for preferring the third option is that a Sanskrit dictionary which is one-thousand five-hundred years old agrees with it.

The most authoritative source for classical Sanskrit words is Amarakosa, a lexicon from about 500 CE. According to this authority an Arya is: *mhakula-kulinarya-sabhya-sajjanasadhavah*. This is unambiguous and means: *an Arya is one who hails from a good family, of gentle behavior and demeanor, good natured and of righteous conduct.*—Rajaram (1995:151).

The Aryan laws = the righteous laws; nothing to do with ‘race’ or language.

The definition of ‘Arya’ in Amarakosa reminds me of the way Mexican aristocrats speak, and on the basis of the Mexican comparison I would submit the following hypothesis: the ancient Sanskrit word ‘Arya’ is an aristocratic marker for a *class distinction*. But is it legitimate for me to use modern Mexico as a model to interpret the ancient Indus Valley civilization? It is, so long as, regardless of time and location, humans will tend to feel compassion unless an ideological structure intervenes. If this is true, then the only stable aristocracies will be those which reliably equip young aristocrats, every generation, with a belief in their own superiority, there to preempt the compassion that would otherwise make them band together with the lower classes and institute some form of progressive politics. And what could be more effective, for the stability of an aristocratic class, than to define words in such a way that compassion will be effortlessly and automatically trumped *in the daily act of speaking*? So, if it

is true that stable aristocratic classes in different times and places will code certain meanings in similar ways, then the Mexican comparison may well prove useful. Let's see how far it takes us.

I grew up as a member of a prominent aristocratic family in Mexico, a country with sharp class divisions. Since I was always of an anthropological bent (and thus became an anthropologist) my experience in my own native society was to a certain extent that of a *participant-observer*. In other words, I was always, in a sense, a foreigner, never quite in my own skin, and more than one person made the observation. Less charitably, I was *weird*, because nothing about my society seemed natural—it all demanded an explanation. My atypical mental and social experience has equipped me with reflections about the Mexican aristocracy that I think will prove useful here. (Note: I am using the word 'aristocracy' loosely because there are no titles of nobility in Mexico; but this is a distinction without much of a difference: the very upper classes in Mexico are a relatively stable group of people who inherit their position to their children, and whose physical appearance is mostly European. They are certainly a hereditary ruling class *in effect* if not formally).

The people around me (the Mexican aristocrats) were always cutting up the Mexican universe into two types of people: 'gente decente' (or 'gente bien,' a synonym) in opposition to 'nacos.' The word 'gente' means 'people,' and although the word 'nacos' appears all by itself, it is also referring to a group of people, which is why I have it in the plural. So the opposition 'gente decente' vs. 'nacos' is an opposition between two different categories of people. I shall

now try to give you a sense for the meanings of these words, and I will be careful to specify the relevant context, each time, because usage and precise meaning vary by context.

First, let us imagine a situation *without* a class-relevant dimension but a clear *moral* one. Thus, imagine that you are a Mexican aristocrat and that somebody—another aristocrat—did not keep a promise, or cheated in a transaction, or tried to bribe you. This person, in consequence, is *not* 'decente'; he is 'naco.' Or suppose that this fellow aristocrat threw trash out of the window of his car, or spat on the ground, or didn't wash his hands after going to the restroom. Once again, this person is *not* 'decente'; he is 'naco.' Or suppose that this fellow aristocrat called you names, or took some liberties when speaking to you even though you had not been quite introduced. Once again, he is *not* 'decente'; he is 'naco.' So on a first pass it appears that 'decente' is not that different from 'Arya' as defined in the ancient Sanskrit dictionary Amarakosa, as it easily covers the meanings of being "of gentle behavior and demeanor, good natured and of righteous conduct."

Now take a look at the remaining meaning for Arya in Amarakosa: "hailing from a good family." For the Mexican aristocrats, "hailing from a good family" is a euphemism for being a member of the aristocracy—and when finer distinctions apply, for being a member of the *old* aristocracy as opposed to the *nouveau riches*. So this makes me wonder whether the Sanskrit dictionary means the same thing when it says that "Arya is one who hails from a good family." If so, this would agree perfectly with the Mexican model, because when a *class* context is involved, Mexican aristocrats will use 'gente

decente' (*lit.* 'decent people') to refer to *themselves*, the aristocrats, who come from 'good families'—they are not qualifying anybody's behavior (though there is always an implication that the behavior of aristocrats is morally superior).¹ By symmetry, in a class context, Mexican aristocrats will use the contrast term 'nacos' to refer to *the lower classes*.

Does Sanskrit have a term to contrast with 'Arya' that will be the equivalent of 'naco'? It does: *Dasa* or *Dasyu*. Navaratna S. Rajaram and David Frawley explain that the *dasas* are "[those] opposed to the Vedic way of life. ... Literally it means *servant*..." (1997:272; emphasis mine). Interesting. The slang term 'gato' (*lit.* 'cat') is used by Mexican aristocrats, with derogation, to refer to their servants, and it is often used interchangeably with 'naco' when referring to the lower classes at large, or when criticizing 'improper' forms of behavior (according to aristocratic standards).

Elsewhere, Rajaram & Frawley write (*ibid.* p.72):

Dasyus, Dasas, and Panis as people are opposite to Aryans. They are unspiritual people. They do not sacrifice, do not offer gifts, do not honor the Gods. In other contexts they are not even people but demons... Dasyu means destroyer and often simply means a robber, a criminal or an uncivilized person, or a low class person (such as we find its usage in the *Manu Samhita*).

¹ It is also precisely when a class context is involved that 'gente bien' (*lit.* 'good people') becomes a perfect synonym of 'gente decente.'

Just as with 'naco,' Dasa or Dasyu, depending on context, means someone who breaks the norms, or else a low class person (or both simultaneously). The opposition between Arya and Dasyu does indeed appear to follow rather closely the Mexican opposition between 'gente decente' and 'nacos,' allowing for the fact that the authors of the Vedic texts were hyper-religious and so added a religious dimension to the distinction (an Aryan does the sacrifices properly, etc., and a Dasyu does not).

Additional support for the usefulness of the Mexican model is the following:

...the most common use of the word Arya in classical Sanskrit is as an honorific—as in addressing people. 'Arya Chanakya' simply is equivalent to Mr. Chanakya. Addressing a man as Arya is equivalent to calling him 'Sir' in English or 'Monsieur' in French.—Rajaram (1995:152)

If the word Arya was used by the ancient Indus Valley aristocrats, in a class context, to refer to themselves, then by the Mexican model it is not in the least surprising that the same word should have functioned also as an honorific, because honorifics are also used to mark class distinctions in the daily intercourse between two people. In Mexico, when two people *of the same class* are speaking to each other, they may address each other honorifically as *Don* this or that. But when members of the upper and lower classes speak to each other, it is traditional (and still common) for the upper-class person to be addressed as *Don* something (with honorific grammar) and for the lower-class person to be addressed by their first name (with familiar grammar).

English speakers unfamiliar with the class discourse of Mexican society can nevertheless plumb their own intuitions by reflecting on English usage. For example, the observations above also apply to the use of the Spanish term ‘Señor,’ which is a good translation for the French ‘Monsieur’ and the English ‘Sir.’ But the specifically *British* ‘Sir’ also has affinities with ‘Don,’ because it is sometimes employed as an aristocratic title. Since I am arguing that aristocrats everywhere will make a linkage between membership in the aristocracy and supposedly superior manners and moral values, it is telling that a member of the lower classes can become *Sir* in Britain *through meritorious behavior* in the eyes of the aristocracy, which aristocracy then condescends to confer the title on the ‘worthy’ commoner.

But the most productive English-language intuition here comes from reflecting on the use of the word ‘noble,’ which in a class context means “of high birth or exalted rank: ARISTOCRATIC,” as Merriam Webster Online puts it; outside a class context, according to the same dictionary, ‘noble’ means all of the following: “possessing outstanding qualities,” “possessing very high or excellent qualities or properties,” “very good or excellent,” “grand or impressive especially in appearance,” and “possessing, characterized by, or arising from superiority of mind or character or of ideals or morals.”

On first pass it might seem as if a contradiction to my interpretation appears in the great epic *Ramayana*, where the following description of Rama is given: “Arya—who cared for the equality of all and was dear to everyone” (Rajaram 1995:153). But even interpreting this passage to mean that Rama frowns on class divisions, this is not a contradiction.

Caring for the equality of all, here, is not part of the definition of Arya. Rather, ‘Arya’ in my view is simply being used here as an adjective to qualify the general worthiness of Rama, which would agree with the most common use of ‘Arya’ in the *Rigveda*: “The *Rigveda* uses the word [Arya] mainly as an adjective, invariably as a term implying finer qualities” (Rajaram 1995:153). So Rama is a noble divinity (nice guy), who therefore cares for the equality of all. This is also how the word ‘decente’ is mostly used in Mexico, *as an adjective*, for this is its primary and default meaning. Hence, “la gente decente lucha por la igualdad de todos” (“the *gente decente* fight for everybody’s equality”) will be a perfectly reasonable phrase in many a Mexican context, just as “the fight for equality is a noble pursuit” is a perfectly good English phrase, despite the fact that ‘noble’ in some contexts means *aristocrat*. In further support of this interpretation I note that “The Buddha called his religion Aryan (Arya Dharma)...[and] Cyrus, the first emperor of Persia also called himself an Aryan, or a noble person” (Rajaram & Frawley 1997:63). Both the Buddha and Cyrus the Great were interested in justice for all, as in the case of Rama, so ‘Arya’ cannot have been used by them in its aristocratic sense, but simply as an adjective of moral worthiness.

By the way, the interpretation that the Arya/Dasyu opposition marks a class distinction is one that Navaratna Rajaram, my source on the meanings of these words, does *not* like, and which he derogatorily labels ‘Marxist’ (Rajaram 1995:152). So if one can build this case even with Rajaram’s translations, then perhaps there is something to it.

Now, I find it quite interesting that, although Dasyu was a term of *derogation* in the Vedic works, “[t]he Iranians and some Central Asiatics... seem to have described themselves as Dasyu after they broke away from the Vedic fold” (*ibid.* p.272). What could explain this? Well, we know from the modern experience that it is not uncommon for discriminated groups, when politicized, to adopt—in proud defiance of the symbol system they mean to oppose—the insults heaped on them by their oppressors. Famously, *within* the African-American community, ‘nigger’ may be used in certain contexts as a comradely term of endearment, and some politicized gays have adopted as an identity symbol the pink triangle that the Nazis designed to brand them with. Since the Iranians, as we have seen, eventually developed a successfully egalitarian, justice-seeking, world-saving religion, Zoroastrianism, the fact that they adopted for themselves the term Dasyu suggests that perhaps they emerged out of a major class struggle in ancient Vedic civilization.

This hypothesis has going for it that it avoids the absurdities that otherwise emerge when you try to interpret the battles between Aryas and Dasyus in the *Rigveda* as wars between blue-eyed-blond and dark-skinned ‘races’ or ethnies.

The *Rigveda* describes a battle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. This is the battle between the Gods (Devas) and the demons (called variously Panis, Dasyus, Dasas...) The Vedas proclaim the victory of the light and the destruction of the forces of darkness.—Rajaram & Frawley (1997:64)

If the *Rigveda* uses the term Dasa or Dasyu to denote the demons or ‘bad guys,’ and the same classical Sanskrit term is used to denote the lower classes, this is further support for the view that the *Rigveda* depicts a class conflict. What does not appear well supported is the interpretation that the battle between ‘light’ and ‘darkness’ represents a racial or ethnic conflict between groups of people of contrasting complexion. As Rajaram and Frawley note, the battle between ‘forces of light’ and ‘forces of darkness’ occurs in many other cultures, and nowhere does it have a racial interpretation of white-skinned, blond, blue-eyed people fighting with dark-skinned people. For example, nobody gives this interpretation to *The War of the Children of Light Against the Children of Darkness*, one of the documents found in the famous Dead Sea Scrolls uncovered at Qumran, in present-day Israel. Why give a ‘racial’ or ethnic interpretation, then, to the Vedic scriptures? Aryans vs. Dasyus is a representation of the ‘good guys’ versus the ‘bad guys’ from the point of view of those who won (as usual); no racial or ethnic interpretation is called for.

Those who would interpret the *Rigveda*’s battle between the forces of ‘light’ and ‘darkness’ as a story written by the invading and supposedly white-skinned Aryans to celebrate their victory over the supposedly native and supposedly dark-skinned Dasyus, run into obvious problems. Consider, for example, the so-called Battle of the Ten Kings, which is one of the most prominent stories in the *Rigveda*. Its hero is King Sudas, who was aided by miraculous floods called forth by the god Indra.

The floods extended for Sudas. Indra you made them shallow and easy to cross. The host of the

Simyus who are unworthy of praise, Indra, who is to be lauded by speech, gave the curse of the rivers.

Turvasa was the leader, seeking gain, like hungry fish with an appetite for gain. The Bhrgus and the Druhyus followed his advice. Friend to friend crossed over from opposite regions. The Pakthas, Bhalanas, Alinas, Visaninas, and Sivas came. Yet Indra came and led the side of the Aryans.

Of evil mind, trying to drain the Earth (*Aditi*), the unwise parted the Parusni river. The ruler of the Earth, Indra with his might scattered them. The herd and their leader lay still piled up (in their defeat).

They went to their goal, their defeat on the Parusni. Even the swift did not return. Indra for Sudas, for man, defeated the strong, unfriendly people of false speech. *RV. VII.18.5-9*—translation, Rajaram & Frawley (1997:76)

Above we are told that the god “Indra came and led the side of the Aryans.” But this has to mean ‘the good guys,’ in this passage, because elsewhere we are told that,

Indra and Varuna, aid Sudas with grace and destroy his opponents both Dasa and Arya... Both sides call upon you in battle, Indra and Varuna, for victory. *RV.VII.18.12-14*—translation, Rajaram & Frawley (1997:77)

If both sides call upon the same gods, it is obvious that both sides are members of the same culture, which contradicts the idea that nomads from Central Asia called ‘Aryans’ were invading non-Aryan people already in the Indus Valley. And if there are both Aryans and Dasyus opposing King Sudas, then it

is impossible to interpret this conflict neatly as one between Aryans against Dasyus, with the Aryans as the white-skinned race who defeated the dark-skinned race—that would make zero sense. And yet this is how the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ interprets the text!

By contrast, accepting my defense of the idea that the Arya/Dasyu distinction is labeling a class division from the aristocratic point of view, then perhaps the Indus Valley was witness to some rather extended political conflicts which, as in the first century Mediterranean, will benefit from a ‘modern’ interpretation in terms of a sophisticated ideological contest between an ancient right-wing and an ancient left-wing. Why not? After all, it is already quite clear that the ancient Indians were terribly sophisticated, and in some ways more advanced than modern Europeans. Consider for example Panini and Patañjali (of *Yogasutra* fame):

Panini [was an] ancient Sanskrit grammarian whose *Astadhyayi* is generally regarded as the greatest work on descriptive linguistics ever written. ... Computer scientists are only now beginning to discover the linguistic treasures of Panini’s *Astadhyayi* and Patañjali’s *Mahabhasya*. The value of Indian linguistics in modern computer science is well established, by researchers in artificial intelligence and computer languages.—Rajaram & Frawley (1997:285, 14).

Panini and Patañjali belong to the Sutra period, which in the corrected, scientific chronology—as opposed to in Max Müller’s superstitious nonsense—is contemporaneous with the Harappans and Sumeria (as we shall see). This means that the

traditional Indian dating of these authors, which places them around 3000 BCE, cannot be far off. If that bygone civilization could produce better linguistics than we have today, why should we imagine that their political awareness was less sophisticated than ours? So I find the possibility intriguing that if the most important political conflict depicted in the *Rigveda* represents the opponents of King Sudas as including both Aryans and Dasyus, perhaps an ideological movement not unlike the leftist movements that produced ancient Judaism, the French revolution, or modern socialism, all of which involved alliances of aristocrats and commoners, may have also taken place in the ancient Indus Valley.

King Sudas won, says the *Rigveda*, which is consistent with the fact that progressive politics was dealt a severe blow in India, but nevertheless flourished among the Vedic offshoot that became the Iranians, who not only turned the deity Indra, patron of the Vedic warriors, into an evil spirit (as we saw in the previous chapter), but also defiantly adopted for themselves the designation Dasyu (as we saw above). Consistent with these speculations is the fact that the ancient Vedic works lump the Panis with the Dasas and Dasyus as enemies of the Aryans. The Panis are traders and merchants—businesspeople. This is consistent with social conflicts in other times and places, where the lower classes have found allies among the traders and merchants against the aristocrats and their mercenaries.

On the basis of this interpretation, I will now turn to the question of when the Iranians came into their own.

When did the Iranians arise?

Archaeologists have shown that the heartland of the so-called ‘Indus Valley’ civilization was actually by the Sarasvati river, which was enormous when this civilization was at its height. This is consistent with the contents of the *Rigveda*, where the Sarasvati is assigned a prominent place.

The *Rigveda* lauds [the Sarasvati] as the greatest of rivers and the holy mother. Satellite photography, archaeology, as well as hydrological surveys all show that the Sarasvati was once a mighty river, over five miles wide in places. This is entirely in accord with the Vedic accounts that make that Sarasvati the first of rivers.” (Rajaram & Frawley 1997:110).

As if the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ didn’t already have enough problems, it turns out that “The Sarasvati river, it is now known, changed its course several times, finally drying up completely around 1900 BCE” (*ibid.* p.111). Why is this a problem? Because the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ claims that the invading Aryans arrived around 1500 BCE, and wrote the *Rigveda* to celebrate their supposed invasion around 1200 BCE. Why would these arriving nomads celebrate a mighty river which no longer existed at the time of their supposed conquest, and around which they had *not* built a great civilization? Seems hard to explain. However, if the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ is abandoned, there is no special problem: the *Rigveda* was composed by those who lived around the Sarasvati river, and who in their latest stage correspond to the populations of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro.

But when was the *Rigveda* written, then? Rajaram & Frawley marshal several independent lines of converging evidence to derive a new chronology. For example, astronomical observations made in the ancient Vedic works are useful because the features of the sky have been changing, and some things that could be observed a long time ago could not be observed later, which is of invaluable help in dating the composition of texts which mention certain—now outdated—astronomical phenomena.

There is also the evidence of comparative mathematics. The historian of mathematics A. Seidenberg, in *The Ritual Origin of Geometry* (1962) and *The Origin of Mathematics* (1978) had already shown that the mathematics of the Indian Sulbasutras are ancestral to the mathematics of Babylonia, Egypt, and Greece (see discussion in Rajaram & Frawley 1997:136-173). However, Seidenberg encountered among historians of India the doctrine of the ‘Aryan invasion theory,’ the general agreement about which he took to mean that solid science was behind it. Since these historians, following Max Müller, told him that the Sutras had been composed between 600 and 200 BCE, he was led to posit a mathematics ancestral to both the Sulbasutras and the mathematics of these other civilizations. Now, for this ancestral mathematics there is *zero* evidence, just as there is zero evidence for the ancestral ‘Indo-European’ language. Thus, with a refutation of the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ in hand, the natural solution is obviously that the Indian mathematics expressed in the Sulbasutras are ancestral to the Babylonian, Egyptian, and Greek mathematics, just as Sanskrit is ancestral to the Iranian and European

languages. This requires pushing back the date of composition of the Sutras to around the year 3000 BCE.

These pieces of the puzzle agree nicely with the archaeological evidence and also the geographic/ecological evidence about the drying up of the Sarasvati river, which in turn agrees with traditional Indian history (the same traditional history that has no memory of an ‘Aryan invasion’ from the north). For example,

Several ancient [Indian] works like the Pancavimsa, Brahmana, the Mahabharata, and the Puranas state that the Sarasvati disappeared into the desert well before reaching the ocean. This represents a later state in the life of the great river. The Sarasvati that [in the *Rigveda*] flowed “from the mountain to the sea” must therefore correspond [to] a much much earlier age, at least a few centuries before 3000 BCE. So the *Rigveda* must belong to a period before that date.—Rajaram (1995:23)

These and other considerations produce a new chronology that, needless to say, is more convincing than Max Müller’s. According to this new chronology—which moreover agrees, more or less, with the dates offered by the tradition of Indian history dating to ancient times—the composition of the latest portions of the *Rigveda* should be placed around 3700 BCE (*ibid.* p.204). A long time ago indeed. On this reckoning, it is also around this time that King Sudas fought it out against a coalition of Aryans and Dasyus, with victory going to King Sudas and his mercenaries. This means that the Iranians, who called themselves Dasyus, emerged into their own after this

battle and not before. When exactly is a difficult question to answer, but here is an exciting clue:

There are tantalizing references to Zarathustra and his schism in the Indian literature also. An Indian historian, Madalasa Devi Agarawala cites the following passage from the *Bhavisya Purana* (139, 13-15):

“...contrary to the Vedic practices, your son will become famous by the name of Mag. His name will be Jarathustra Mag and he will bring fame to the dynasty. His descendants will worship fire and will be known by the name Mag (Shaka) and being worshippers of ‘Soma’ (*magadha-shakadvipi*) will be Mag Brahmins.” (Agarawala, 1979)

From this one is led to conclude that Mag was sometimes used in India to refer to that Sakas or their land. The Sakas are not necessarily the Scythians; eastern Iranians were also so called. Their land was known as Sakasthana—the modern Seistan. Ms. Agarawala further explains that the word ‘Mag’ was used in ancient India to describe heretical people who were opposed to Vedic practices. Could the words ‘Magus’ and ‘Magi’ used by Herodotus for Median and Persian priests have been related to the Indian Mag—the *magadha shakadvipi*?—Rajaram & Frawley (1997:126)

The following points bear emphasis. The name Jarathustra needs only the substitution of a ‘Z’ for a ‘J’ and we get ‘Zarathustra.’ Eastern Iranians are close to Afghanistan, and many scholars believe that’s where Zarathustra was from. Zarathustra indeed preached “contrary to the Vedic practices.”

Moreover, as Rajaram points out, Herodotus referred to what were almost certainly Zoroastrian priests as Magi, and these could easily be the Mag Brahmins. Since the Iranians adopted the derogatory term Dasyu in apparent defiance of the Vedic symbol system, it would fit if their priests adopted the term Mag, used by the Vedic aristocratic priests to derogate ‘heretics.’ There is no question but that fire played a central symbolic role in Zoroastrianism. And the Zoroastrians had a ritual that involved what the Avestan texts call ‘haoma’ (above, ‘Soma’), a psychoactive drug (Boyce 1992:58, 111), and one of their divinities was the Mainyu of the plant, or Haoma (Boyce 1992:109, 116).¹

I do not believe ancient texts can prophecy such minute details into the future, even when they pretend to be doing so. Therefore, the *Bhavisva Purana*, despite writing in the future tense, since it refers to the coming descendants of Zarathustra, had to be written when descendants of Zarathustra already existed and Zarathustra himself was already “famous” and worth writing about for having created a successful ethical mass movement. The *Puranas* represent the traditional Indian historical tradition, and they are supposed to belong to Vedic times, the closing of which Rajaram & Frawley’s new chronology places around 1900 BCE, when the Sarasvati river finally dried up. So Zarathustra, by this reckoning, had to make his appearance no later than 1900 BCE, and almost certainly somewhat earlier (there is convergence with Xanthos of Lydia here, who, as we saw in the previous chapter, placed Zoroaster around 1800 BCE). Presumably the Iranians predate Zarathustra

¹ This drug was perhaps ephedra, cannabis, or both.

himself, in which case they emerged into their own before this date.

When?

Rajaram (1995:164) notes that “The famous Battle of Ten Kings resulted in the expulsion from India of several tribes of Indian Aryans who settled in Persia, Parthia, and as far west as Anatolia [Turkey],” something that had already been noted long before by students of the *Puranas* such as F.E. Pargiter (*ibid.* p.165). Of course, there is no particular reason to call these emigrants ‘Indian Aryans’ if the term is a marker of class rather than ethnicity, and especially if some of these would eventually call themselves Dasyus. If the Battle of Ten Kings, as I argued above, was a conflict between a right-wing, represented by Sudas and his mercenaries, and a left-wing, then perhaps the origins of the Iranians may be found in these migrations, and if not perhaps in a later population movement out of India.

I must clarify that most of those who left India continued to worship in the Vedic religion much as before. Consider for example that in 1907 a tablet dating to about 1400 BCE was discovered in Anatolia [Turkey] recording a treaty between the Hittite and the Mittani in which the Vedic deities Indra, Mitra, and Varuna were invoked as guarantors (Rajaram & Frawley 1997:122-123). It is those who moved into Afghanistan and Central Asia, it appears, that developed a more egalitarian culture where Indra was not worshipped but demonized, and from which Zoroastrianism eventually arose. These would be the Iranians. Other links between the Iranians and their Vedic ancestors can also be seen in Mary Boyce’s reconstruction of the religion that Zarathustra modified, as we

saw earlier, and in the fact that the language of the Zoroastrian scriptures, Avestan, is very close indeed to Sanskrit.

Rajaram & Frawley (1997:125) favor placing the arrival of Zoroaster around the time of the final drying up of the Sarasvati river in 1900 BCE because it agrees rather exactly with Xanthos of Lydia. They also like this date because “The Kassites, who... worshipped Indian deities” appeared in Mesopotamia around that time, suggesting a population movement out of India contemporaneous with the drying up of the Sarasvati. However, the major drought that ultimately spelled the end of the Sarasvati began in 2200 BCE (*ibid.* p.204), so there may have been significant population movements out of India as early as that, and these may well have resulted from sharpened class conflicts in the wake of the strains produced by the drought. Other scholars whose main concern is Zoroastrianism will have to pin this down with greater accuracy. My concern here was to establish, in a broad sense, where the Iranians came from, and more or less when, so that the ultimate provenance of Judaism—which the Persian Iranians influenced and sponsored—can be understood.

Can partisans of the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ defend it?

Defenders of the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ exist in large numbers because the theory has been institutionalized, so those whose careers have been built on it naturally will not give up without a fight. But the details of this fight suggest they cannot win.

For example, against the avalanche of evidence presented by Navaratna S. Rajaram and David Frawley, much has been made by the pro-Aryan resistance of the question of *horses*. The *Rigveda* mentions horses and chariots repeatedly but, according to invasionists, there is no evidence of horse domestication among the ruins of the Indus Valley civilization (Harappa, Mohenjo Daro, etc.); therefore, they say, the *Rigveda* had to be written by a horse-riding culture from Central Asia and which invaded India—the Aryans.

Unfortunately for this argument, there *is* evidence of horse domestication in the Indus Valley, which removes any obstacle to saying, on such grounds, that the Vedas were composed by the Sarasvati river civilization (of which the Harappan or Indus Valley portion is the latest stage).

...in several Harappan sites remains of horses have been found. Even supporters of the AIT [Aryan Invasion Theory] have admitted that the horse was known in Mohenjo Daro, near the coast of the Arabian Sea (let alone in more northerly areas), in 2500 BCE at the latest. But the presence of horses and even domesticated horses has already been traced further back: horse teeth at Amri, on the Indus near Mohenjo Daro, and at Rana Ghundai on the Panjab-Baluchistan border have been dated to about 3,600 BCE. The latter has been interpreted as indicating “horse-riding invaders”, but that is merely an application of invasionist preconceptions. More bones of the true and domesticated horse have been found in Harappa, Surkotada (all layers including the earliest), Kalibangan, Malvan and Ropar. Recently, bones which were first taken to

belong to onager specimens, have been identified as belonging to the, domesticated horse (Kuntasi, near the Gujarat coast, dated to 2300 BCE). Superintending archaeologist Dr. A.M. Chitalwala comments: “We may have to ask whether the Aryans (...) could have been Harappans themselves. (...) We don’t have to believe in the imports theory anymore.”

... any finds of horses are good enough to make the point that horses were known in India, and that they were available to a substantially greater extent than a simple count of the excavated bones would suggest. The cave paintings in Bhimbetka near Bhopal, perhaps 30,000 years old (but the datings of cave paintings are highly controversial), showing a horse being caught by humans, confirm that horses existed in India in spite of the paucity of skeletal remains. There is, however, room for debate on whether the animals depicted are really horses and not onagers. Other cave paintings, so far undated, show a number of warriors wielding sticks in their right hands and actually riding horses without saddles or bridles.—Elst (1999:4.4.3)

Supporters of the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ have pointed to “the apparent absence of horse motifs on the famous Harappan seals (except one)” (*ibid.*). This is a weak argument, considering the confirmed presence of horse remains! But even without that, as Elst remarks, all one need do in reply is point out

...the equally remarkable absence of the female cow among the numerous animal depictions on the seals, even though the cow must have been very

familiar to the Harappans considering the frequent depiction of the bull. A taboo on depictions of the two most sacred animals may well explain the absence of both the cow and the horse.—*ibid.*

The Harappan seals have been the locus of a far louder debate, however, and I shall now turn to this.

Ever since Navaratna S. Rajaram and David Frawley refuted the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ lots of accusations have flown that Rajaram has the wrong ideology: *Hindutva*, which is a form of Hindu nationalism. So Rajaram is trying to say that there was no Aryan invasion, goes the argument, because this injures his Hindu pride. This sort of thing is what philosophers call an argument *ad hominem*: one tries to defeat the opponent’s claim not by pointing to any flaws in his argument, but by trying to impugn the character of the opponent. Whoever resorts to arguments *ad hominem* betrays the weakness of his position—after all, if the facts support you, then you hardly need to sling mud.

Let us be charitable to Rajaram’s detractors, however, and suppose that this accusation against him is fair, and that he is indeed a *Hindutva* nationalist. What then? In this case, we have a choice between a theory espoused by a *Hindutva* nationalist on the one hand, and a theory produced by nineteenth-century antisemitic German nationalist ideology—and which inspired twentieth-century antisemitic German *National Socialist* (Nazi) ideology—on the other. Is the latter choice obviously to be preferred?

Of course we will agree, in any case, that what matters is which theory accounts best for the known facts. As we have

seen, it is quite hard to find a single fact that will agree with Max Müller’s ‘Aryan invasion theory,’ but that has not deterred a few ‘patadas de ahogado’ (‘drowning man’s final kicks,’ as they say in Mexico), from the theory’s defenders. For example, defenders of the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ have seized on an admittedly weird move by Navaratna Rajaram, to which I now turn.

Ever since Max Müller, the mainstream argument has been that the Aryans, supposedly nomadic foreigners, invaded and destroyed the Indus Valley civilization which included the cities of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro, thereafter composing the *Rigveda*, supposedly, to celebrate this victory. Rajaram’s contrary argument is that the literate classes in the extremely advanced Indus Valley—or more properly, Sarasvati river—civilization wrote the Vedic texts. To bolster his argument beyond the refutations of the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ that I have reviewed above (and I focused only on the main demonstrations), Rajaram has recently attempted to show that the so-called Indus-Valley script of the famous Harappan seals was a true language. I find this puzzling, because, even if Rajaram could succeed, it is obvious at a glance that he would not thereby be demonstrating the Harappan seals to contain *Sanskrit*. Rajaram’s critics have replied that the Harappan seals are not ‘written’ in a true language—let alone *Sanskrit*—and that *therefore* (!) no Harappans were literate. A madhouse. I will first take the trouble to show that Rajaram’s critics are right that this particular argument of his is incorrect: the Harappan seals are certainly *not* linguistic. Then I will show that this does not affect one bit Rajaram’s general thesis

concerning who wrote the Vedic texts. The entire debate around the Harappan seals is a red herring.

In a 2004 article devoted to this issue, Steve Farmer, a comparative historian, Richard Sproat, at the University of Illinois Department of Linguistics and Electrical and Computer Engineering, and Michael Witzel, a Harvard University Indologist, make a devastating presentation in the face of which it is impossible to defend the thesis that the Harappan seals are linguistic. Their article is an exercise in overkill, so I will present only what strike me as the decisive pieces of evidence.

First, let us get acquainted with the types of objects on which the Indus Valley symbol-script appears:

Some 4-5000 objects are known today on well over a dozen media—including steatite, faience, and metal seals, clay seal impressions, pots, potsherds, copper plates, molded terracotta and copper tablets, incised shells, ivory cones and rods, stone and metal bangles [ornamental bracelet], metal weapons, tools, rocks, and a miscellany of other objects including a famous three-meter wide 'signboard' discovered in the urban ruins of Dholavira (Bisht 1991, 1998-89)—Farmer, Sproat, & Witzel (2004:22)

There are two main categories of objects with Indus symbols. In the first category are seals (for making impressions) and tablets (for making impressions on); in the second category are all sorts of private-property objects with Indus symbols on them, made either with seals or incised some other way. Needless to say, these are not ideal media for

writing *language* on and, as you might expect, the sequences of symbols found on these objects are *extremely brief*.

The longest on one surface [catalogued as **M-314 a**] has 17 symbols [i.e. exactly half as many as the phrase to the left of this bracket, not counting the spaces]; less than 1/100 carry as many as 10. Many Indus inscriptions—if 'inscription' is really an appropriate term—contain only one or two symbols; the average length of the 2,905 objects carrying Indus symbols catalogued in Mahavedan's standard concordance is 4.6 signs long.—*ibid*.



[To the left is a picture of **M-314 a**. It is shown larger than its actual size.]

The authors add that,

Like most objects carrying Indus symbols, **M-314 a** is surprisingly small, according to its excavators (in the 1920s) measuring a scant 1×.95 inches (2.54×2.41 cm.) in size.—*ibid*.(p.30, fig.3)

In addition, it is quite significant that the symbols are hardly ever *repeated*.

Whatever the total counts of signs, all major studies agree that a small number of symbols dominate in Indus inscriptions. Just four of 417 signs account for 21% of the 13,372 sign occurrences in Mahadevan's concordance; eight signs make up 31%; and twenty signs over 50%.—*ibid.* (p.26)

Even more telling is the fact that symbols are rarely repeated in the same inscription. If you look at the previous sentence and count, you will find that it contains 12 repetitions of the symbol 'e'; moreover, each symbol in that sentence appears more than once except for 'b,' 'd,' 'g,' 'f,' and 'v.' Repeated symbols in the same inscription will be a feature of any type of language, be it alphabetic, syllabic, pictographic, or some combination. By contrast, the longest Indus inscription found on a single surface, **M-314 a**, which contains only 17 symbols (as noted above), is as follows:

10 of the 18 highest frequency signs in Mahadevan's concordance show up in the inscription...but not one of them shows up twice. Findings like this are not limited to the famous seals, but extend to all inscription types and to the corpus as a whole.—*ibid.* (p.29)

When a symbol does appear repeated in the same inscription, the overwhelming majority of the time it is repeated *in a row*.

...it should be noted that none of the relatively small percentage of Indus inscriptions that do repeat signs contain any suggestions of sound encoding. The most common types...involve duplications of the same sign up to four (and occasionally more) times

in a row...that at times imply some type of quantification.—*ibid.* (pp.34-35)

Finally, there is a staggering number of signs that *appear only once* in the entire corpus of archaeological findings. That would be somewhat like saying that you found an 'x' in this sentence, which you did (there it is in quotes), but could find it nowhere else in my entire manuscript, or in any other manuscript in my civilization. If this keeps happening over and over again—i.e. that you find symbols, called 'singletons,' which appear on only one inscription and never again—it is a sure sign that you are not looking at linguistic writing.

Even odder than their absolute numbers is the way that new singletons and other rare signs keep cropping up with each new batch of discoveries. If Indus symbols were part of a genuine script, we would expect the percentages of singletons and other rare signs to drop as new examples of those signs showed up in new inscriptions. Paradoxically, those percentages appear to be rising instead over time, suggesting that at least some Indus symbols were invented 'on the fly' only to be abandoned after being used once or a handful of times.—*ibid.* (pp.36-37)

Taking all this evidence together, I agree strongly with Farmer, Sproat, and Witzel that the Indus Valley symbol system is *not* a language. These authors think, however, that demonstrating this amounts also to showing a corollary: that no Harappans were literate. The authors in fact splash this alleged implication all over the title of their article, which reads: "The Collapse of the Indus-Script Thesis: The Myth of a Literate

Harappan Civilization.” Why the rush to conclude the *general* illiteracy of the Harappans from the fact that the Indus symbols are non-linguistic? Well, if no Harappans could read and write, then they could not have written the *Rigveda*, and we are back to the ‘Aryan Invasion theory.’ That will certainly make a traditional Indologist at Harvard University, such as Michael Witzel, feel much better than if he is forced to admit that the theory of Indian history that he and others have been defending for a century and a half is a lot of antisemitic nonsense. But unfortunately for him, the *general* illiteracy of the Harappans has hardly been demonstrated.

Let us first provide ourselves with a running hypothesis about what the Indus Valley symbol system was for; with this in hand, we can better place in its proper context the question of whether it makes sense to say that *no* Harappans could read and write just because *the Indus symbol system* found on the Harappan seals, in particular, is not linguistic.

The most important clues, of course, will come from the actual objects on which inscriptions were made, and from the ways in which such objects were used and treated. Here is Geoffrey Cook (1994) making an observation of what the seals and tablets were for:

While many people focus on the aesthetic qualities of these inscribed objects, we must remember that these were also functional objects. The seals appear to have been used extensively in both internal and external trade.

Numerous impressions of seals have been found on ceramics...as well as on "tags" or bullae used to seal bundles of trade goods... Traces of rope

impressions on the back of many "tags" indicates that they were applied to bundles of goods, possibly to denote ownership or for security purposes. The sealing or the seal itself could possibly carry the symbol of power or authority of office. The motif on the seal and/or impression may have functioned as an amulet as well.

If the tablets appear to have functioned as ID tags for trade goods, then practically everything about them can easily be explained.

The fact that we find so many “singletons” created apparently “on the fly” corresponds well with the idea that such singletons marked the ‘name’ of the individual manufacturer or the trader sending the goods. The same can be said for ‘singletons’ appearing on private-property objects, which may have been marked to denote the names of the individual owners or else a family ‘coat of arms.’

The apparently extremely short currency of the tablets and seals is also consistent with this view, as they would mark the name of the manufacturer or trader (plus a description of the bundle’s contents) in specific trading events, thereafter becoming useless. Of course, one expects that there would have been some standardization in shipments, in which case we should find certain tablets repeated, identical, as they would be useful for more than one such standardized shipment, though useless beyond the life of an individual manufacturer or trader. There is indeed evidence consistent with this. For example, Steve Farmer points to a symbol that shows up repeatedly but that he insists should nevertheless be counted as a ‘singleton.’ His reasoning is instructive.

This sign shows up 38 times in the *Corpus of Indus Seals and Inscriptions* (H-252 – H-277 and H-859 – H-870). This is accordingly listed as a high-frequency sign by Wells 1999 (the 42nd most common). All 38 inscriptions, however, were made in a single mold. As a result, we could just as easily count the sign as another ‘singleton.’¹

This is precisely what we would expect if the symbol in question were, for example, identifying a particular manufacturer or trader. And since the entire inscription was made at least 38 times from a single mold, this inscription could be identifying the goods in a standardized type of bundle that was sent repeatedly by the same merchant. The above is not, by any means, an isolated case. Jonathan Mark Kenoyer and Richard H. Meadow give another example of “A group of 16 three-sided incised baked steatite tablets, all with the same inscriptions, [that] were uncovered in mid- to late Period 3B debris outside of the curtain wall [of Harappa].”² There are other such cases.

The fact that when symbols are repeated in the same inscription they typically appear *in a row*, “imply[ing] some type of quantification” (see above) is again consistent with this

¹ “Five cases of ‘Dubious Writing’ in Indus Inscriptions: Parallels with Vinca Symbols and Cretan Hieroglyphic seals: The emblematic and magical nature of Indus symbols”; Notes/Handout for the Fifth Harvard Indology Roundtable; May 10, 2003

<http://www.safarmer.com/indusnotes.pdf>

² http://www.harappa.com/indus5/page_438.html

view, because for some kinds of goods it would be useful to specify quantity on the identification tag. Other symbols might convey such meanings as ‘fragile’ and ‘this way up,’ which in our modern world are internationally rendered, respectively, with an outline representation of a wineglass and an upward arrow—both non-linguistic symbols. One of the most common symbols on these Harappan seals and tablets is, in fact, an upward-pointing arrow, exactly like the one we use (see the top-left symbol in **m-314a**).

Farmer, Sprout, & Witzel (2004:45) note that

In a giant multilingual society, a relatively simple system of religious-political signs that could be reinterpreted in any language may have provided greater opportunities for cultural cohesion than any language-based ‘script’—as suggested in a different way in our own global age of highway and airport symbols.

Why do these authors say, “in a different way”? Given that the Harappan tablets apparently functioned as ID tags for trade goods, and that they have been found in great quantities in neighboring civilizations, the analogy to modern highway and airport symbols is closer to the Harappan case than they appear to realize, especially considering that one of our finds includes the “famous three-meter wide ‘signboard’ discovered in the urban ruins of Dholavira,” mentioned earlier, which is apparently an *exact* parallel to our modern highway and airport signs.

Non-linguistic symbols on modern highways and in airports do not serve the purpose of unifying politically or religiously the disparate populations that easily interpret them,

so the first hypothesis should be that the non-linguistic Indus script—which we find on tags attached to trade bundles—solved the problem of communicating simple messages about trade goods locally and internationally. The signboard, by this hypothesis, would probably indicate the location of a Dholavira marketplace where certain goods could be bought and sold. The Indus Valley peoples may well have spoken several different languages, as the authors suggest, and so the non-linguistic Indus symbols had the function of helping all those who handled the trade bundles to communicate such things as a bundle's contents, handling requirements, provenance, and destination.

Not-coincidentally, in my view, three symbols that look a lot like fish are among the most high-frequency symbols, which is to be expected given that fish would obviously have functioned as a trade good for a civilization erected by the sea, as is the case for the Indus Valley, and moreover given that fish can be dried and function as a long-distance trade good with inland societies. In addition, as these authors themselves point out, “many Indus symbols...appear to depict seeds, sprouts, plants, and agricultural instruments” (Farmer, Sprout, & Witzel 2004:31). Agricultural products have of course always figured prominently in trade, and in the ancient world they constituted by far the bulk of all traded goods. This is not to deny that the same symbols may have been used *in addition* for certain religious or political meanings, but merely to point out their primary uses. After all, if we assume that the meaning of these symbols was primarily “religious-political” rather than

quotidian and prosaic, then it is surprising that the tablets that bore them were so unceremoniously discarded.¹

Now we can return to our question: Can we go from the demonstration that the Indus symbol system found in the seals and tablets is *not* linguistic to the conclusion that there were no literate Harappans? That would be a bit like going from the

¹ This is made clear in Jonathan Mark Kenoyer and Richard H. Meadow's online presentation at Harappa.com (<http://www.harappa.com/indus5/>) called *Harappa Excavations 1995-2001*:

Quoting from R.H. Meadow and J.M. Kenoyer's article in *South Asian Archaeology 1997* (Rome, 2001): “It is tempting to think that the evident loss of utility and subsequent discard of the tablets is related to the “death” of the seal. Seals are almost always found in trash or street deposits (and never yet in a grave) indicating that they were either lost or intentionally discarded, the latter seeming the more likely in most instances. The end of the utility of a seal must relate to some life event of its owner, whether change of status, or death, or the passing of an amount of time during which the seal was considered current. A related consideration is that apparently neither seals nor tablets could be used by just anyone or for any length of time because otherwise they would not have fallen out of circulation. Thus the use of seals—and of tablets—was possible only if they were known to be current. Once they were no longer current, they were discarded...”

http://www.harappa.com/indus5/page_439.html

observation of stick figures representing men's and women's lavatories in airports around the world to the conclusion that there are no literate humans in the twenty-first century. Of course, in the twenty-first century no extraterrestrial student of planet Earth would make this mistake because there is plenty of evidence everywhere to demonstrate that many of us are literate. In the case of the Indus Valley civilization, however, this mistake *can* be made because we have not found examples of media with linguistic writing on them.

Is it possible that some Harappans were writing even though we can find no examples of this writing? Certainly. Suppose the following were true: 1) Only a small minority could write, and 2) the few who wrote always did so on perishable media. If the above two obtain, then it is hardly surprising that we have not found original examples of writing on perishable media from a civilization that collapsed as long ago as the second millennium BCE. Therefore, one cannot say that the general illiteracy of the Harappans has been demonstrated with the finding that the Indus symbol system is non-linguistic—especially considering that, just as with stick figures to mark restrooms in the modern world, the Indus symbols would have been the ideal solution for trade across language barriers *even if some people could read and write*. If our modern restroom symbols in airports do not demonstrate that we are all illiterate, neither does the non-linguistic and obviously trade-functional Indus symbol system demonstrate that no Harappans could read and write.

The *Rigveda* is a series of religious hymns. It was written by priests, obviously. In every society, priests are a minority, and sometimes a very small minority. Therefore,

nothing stands in the way of postulating that the aristocratic priests of the Sarasvati river civilization (of which the Indus Valley—i.e. Harappa, Mohenjo Daro, etc.—portion is the last stage) were the people who wrote the *Rigveda*, which work has been preserved through an uninterrupted chain of copying to our day, but of which no original copies—very few to begin with—have survived. And since Navaratna S. Rajaram *has* shown that almost every analysis possible argues *for* the Sarasvati river civilization as the author of the *Rigveda*, concluding anything else requires a prejudice—the same prejudice that led Max Müller and others to postulate the ‘Aryan invasion theory’ in the first place.

Conclusion

The best current evidence agrees with the view that the Iranians are a development *out of* the Vedic-Indian civilization *of the Sarasvati river* (later, the Indus Valley), and it appears that they emerged into their own at least in part as a result of ideological movements produced by class conflict, with the proto-Iranians representing the ancient left, and in turn producing a world-saving leftist movement: Zoroastrianism. In time, as we shall see, the Zoroastrians would sponsor a more radical leftist movement: Judaism.

Up next, I return to the Greco-Persian conflict.