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# Aryan Invasion/Migration Theory

Evidence For & Against the Theory

# Outline

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- What are the AIT and AMT?
- Evidence supporting the theory
  - Linguistic
  - Archaeological
- Evidence disputing the theory
  - Decline of the Indus Valley Civilization
  - Literary
  - Saraswati River
  - Archaeoastronomy
  - Anthropology and Genetics
  - Paradoxes

# What are the AIT & AMT?

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- AIT: nomadic Sanskrit-speaking Aryans invaded India between 2000 BC and 1500 BC, destroyed the Indus Valley Civilization and drove its inhabitants to the south of India.
- AMT: these Aryans migrated into the Indian subcontinent and interacted with the remnants of the Indus Valley Civilization to form the Vedic Civilization.

# Linguistic Evidence For AIT/AMT

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- Is *the* main evidence supporting AIT/AMT
- North Indian languages are distinctly different from South Indian languages
  - North Indian languages derived from Sanskrit
  - South Indian languages derived from an unknown proto-Dravidian language
- Sanskrit derived from an older Indo-European language family

# Linguistic Evidence For AIT/AMT

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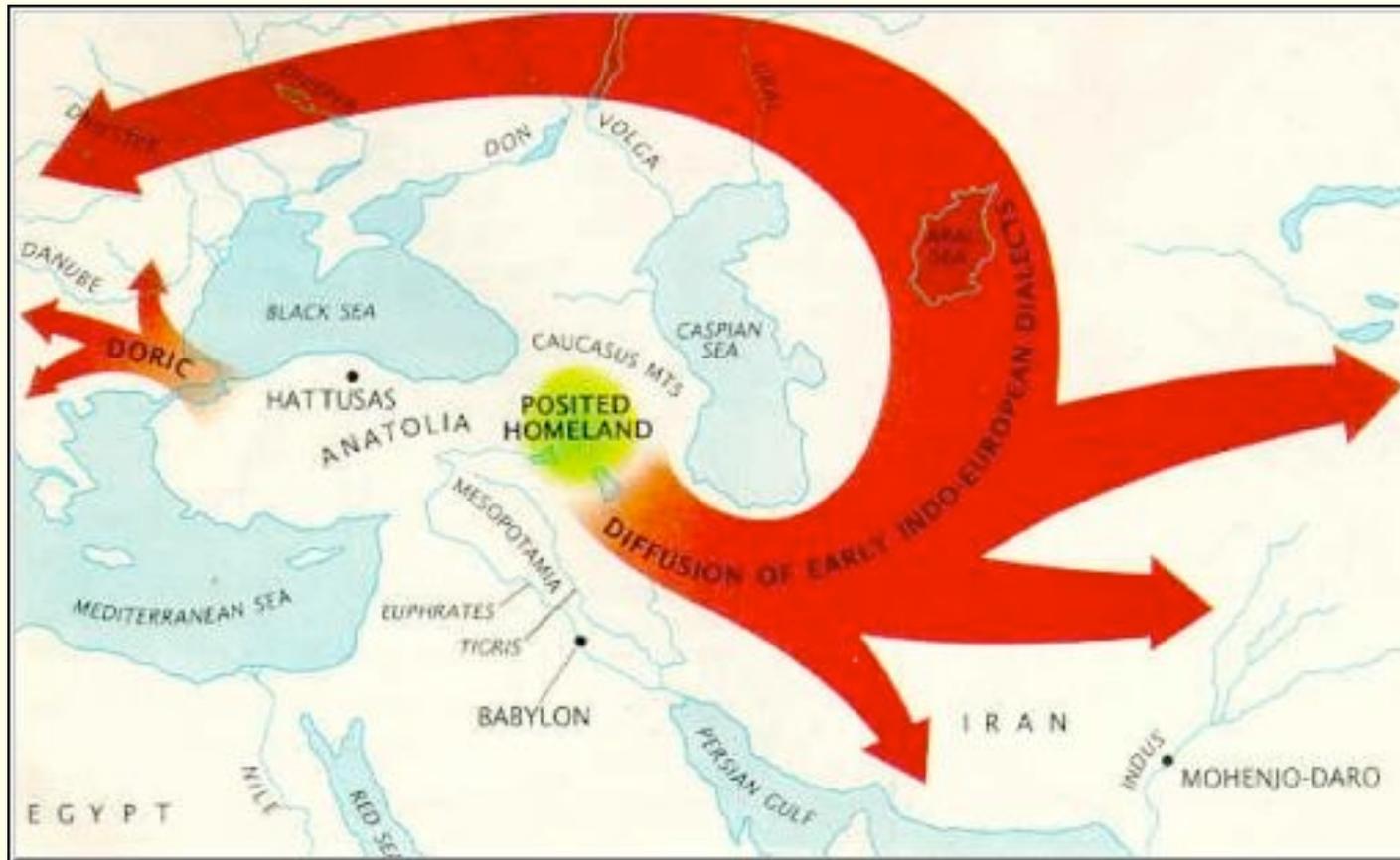
- According to historical linguistics theory, the area of highest linguistic diversity of a language family is usually fairly close to the area of its origin
- This is due to the fact that placing the origin of a language family in the area of least heterogeneity requires postulating the fewest number of migrations, and because of the unlikelihood of several linguistic features developing in an area without leaving any representatives behind
- By this criterion, India, home to only the Indo-Aryan subfamily, seems to be an exceedingly unlikely candidate for the origin of the Indo-European languages

# Linguistic Evidence For AIT/AMT

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- Most likely candidates for Urheimat (original homeland) of the Proto-Indo-European language speaking peoples
  - Black Sea (the Caucasus)
  - Anatolia (modern-day Turkey)
  - Eastern Europe
  - Southwest Russia

# Possible Path of Migration



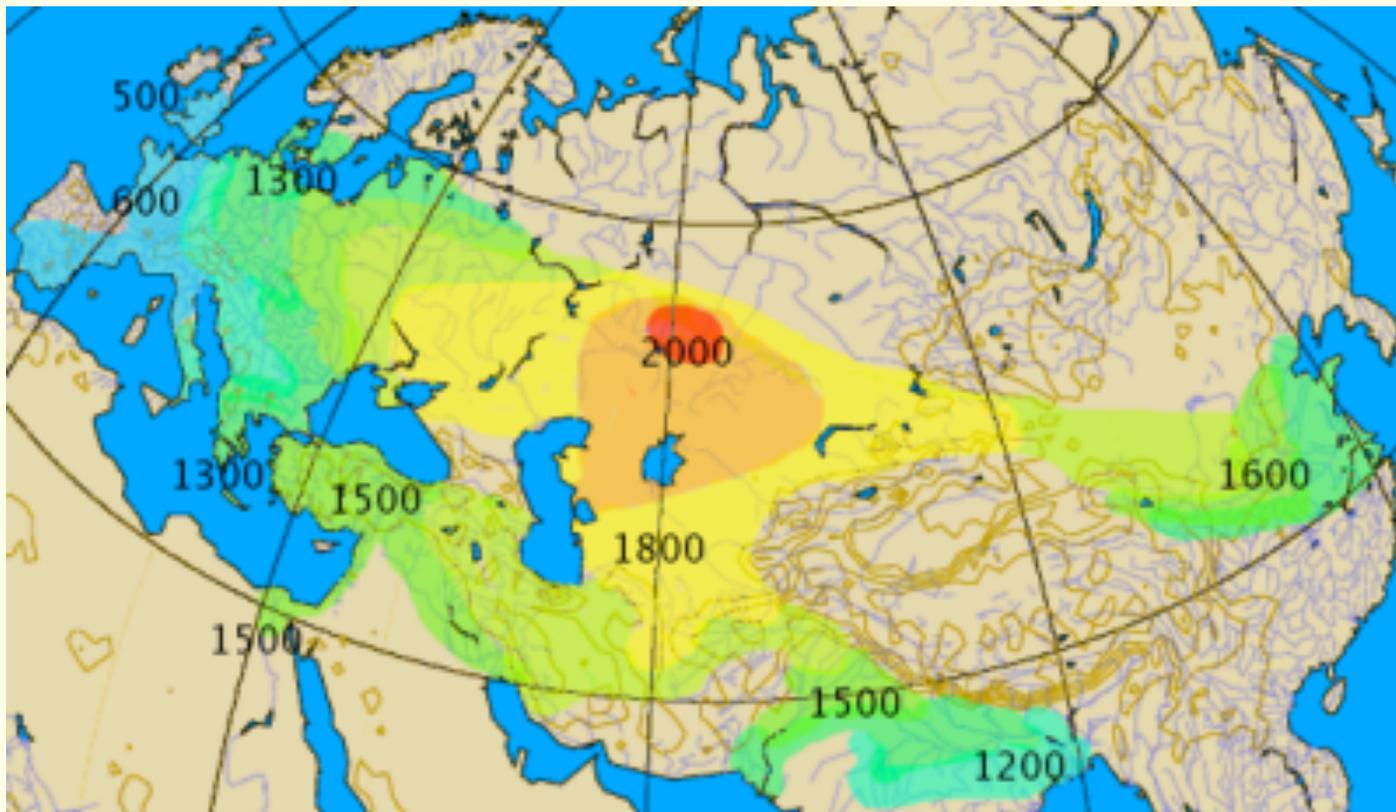
# Literary Evidence for AIT/AMT

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- The *Rig Veda*, the oldest Sanskrit text:
  - Mentions destruction of forts and cities (IVC?)
  - Portrays a pastoral, rural culture
  - Contains references to horses and chariots, introduced to India around 1500 BC

# Historical Spread of the Chariot

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# Archaeological Evidence for AIT/AMT

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- Horse skeletons and chariots discovered after collapse of IVC
- Excavated Indus Valley artifacts (e.g. seals, pottery, imagery, etc.) are not mentioned in the Vedas
- The Indus Valley script, found on clay tablets and other objects, is not of Indo-European origin
  - Yet to be deciphered
  - May not be a language at all

# Opposition To AIT/AMT

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- Cites prejudiced and racist intentions behind the formulation of the theory
- Insists there is not sufficient evidence to support the theory
- Claims there is sufficient evidence to dispute the theory
- Offers alternate theories
  - Language diffusion via acculturation
  - Out-of-India Theory
    - Suggests India as the Urheimat of the Indo-European people
    - Aryans may have been one of the peoples that populated the Indus Valley Civilization

# Decline of Indus Valley Civilization

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- Before IVC was discovered, AIT postulated that the ancient, aboriginal inhabitants of India were a primitive people with a low level of culture and that the superior Aryans made them civilized.
- After IVC was discovered in the 1920s, AIT changed its stance to nomadic Aryan barbarians destroying a sophisticated urban Dravidian civilization

# Decline of Indus Valley Civilization

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- No archaeological evidence of any large scale invasion or migration into the Indus Valley Civilization
- All archaeological evidence suggests a gradual decline and abandonment of IVC
- Possible reasons for its decline
  - Economic stagnation
  - Cultural decay
  - Internal strife
  - Droughts, floods and other climatic changes
  - Drying up and shifting of rivers
  - Environmental degradation

# Literary Evidence Disputing AIT/AMT

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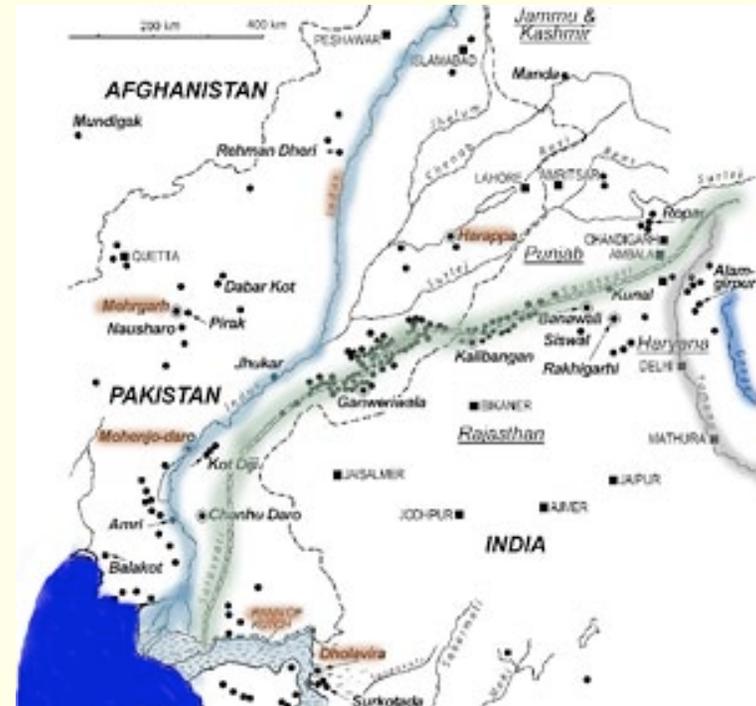
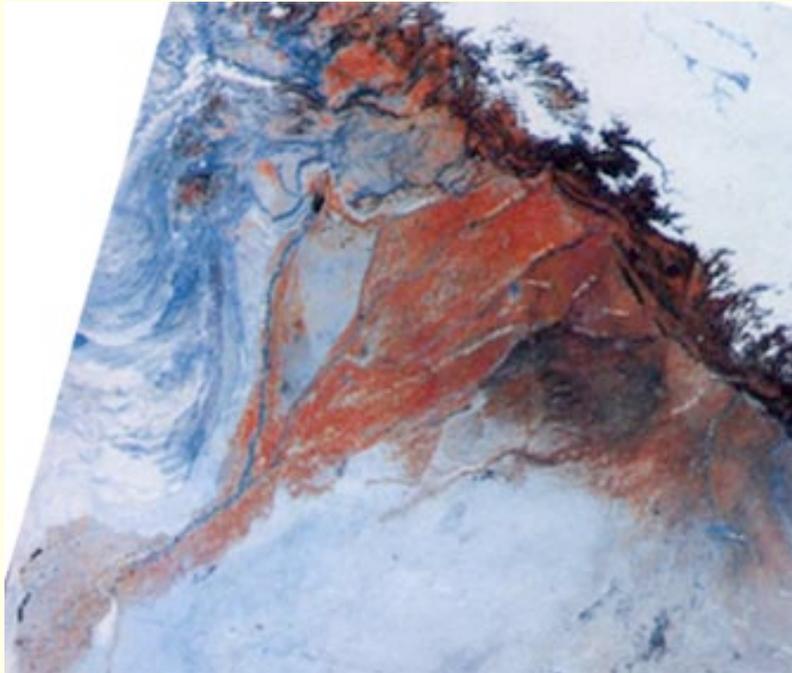
- No mention of a large scale invasion or migration into India in any ancient Indian text, Aryan or Dravidian
- Dravidians have no recollection of being driven out or even migrating from the IVC
  - Instead, there is a Tamil legend that Tamilians came from an island off the coast of Southern India
- References to battles, forts and cities could be related to internal fighting between Aryan tribes
  - Dasyus – one of the tribes in the Vedas with which the Aryans were almost incessantly at war with – were actually an Iranian branch of the Indo-Aryan people, not Dravidians as previously thought

# Saraswati River

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- Saraswati River is the most frequently mentioned river in the Rig Veda
- Rig Veda states that the Saraswati flowed between the Yamuna and the Sutlej
- Mahabharat mentions that the river dried up in a desert
- Satellite imagery and geological tests have confirmed that the Saraswati River once flowed through the IVC
- A large number of IVC sites have been found to be based around this dried-up river
- Saraswati River dried up prior to the supposed invasion/migration of Aryans into India!

# Saraswati River



The satellite image on the left is drawn in the map on the right, showing the Indus River in blue, the dry Saraswati River basin in green and archaeological sites as black dots.

# Archaeoastronomy

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- There are numerous references to constellations and other astronomical events, e.g. eclipses, in the Rig Veda
- Based on such references, the composition of the Rig Veda has been dated circa 4,000 B.C., which is long before their supposed invasion/migration into India circa 2,000 B.C.

# Anthropology and Genetics

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- No significant differences have been found between the skeletons of IVC's inhabitants and the Indo-Aryans
- No significant genetic differences have been between the two groups either

# Paradoxes

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- Frawley's Paradox: how did a nomadic, pastoral tribe like the Aryans develop a sophisticated language like Sanskrit, while the inhabitants of the urbanized IVC apparently had no written language?
- Chariots are vehicles best suited for flat terrains, so how did the Aryans drive them through the mountains of the Hindu Kush?