

Elena E. Kuz'mina, *The Origin of the Indo-Iranians*, edited by J. P. Mallory (Leiden Indo-European Etymological Dictionary Series 3) Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2007; xviii + 766 pages, appendices, 19 tables, 18 maps, 114 figures, bibliography, index, \$217, €146, hb., ISBN 978-90-04-16054-5

E. E. Kuzmina, *The Prehistory of the Silk Road*, edited by Victor H. Mair (Encounters with Asia Series) Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008; xii + 264 pages, appendix, 15 maps, 57 figures, notes, bibliography, index, \$65, £42.50, hb., ISBN 978-0-8122-4041-2

Academician Elena Efimova Kuz'mina, currently Chief Research Officer, Russian Institute for Cultural Researches, Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation and the Russian Academy of Sciences, exemplifies the very best in Russian scholarship as applied to Central Asian archaeology. To this grounding, she outpaces her peers and forebears by also bringing to bear an impressive range and rigour in ethnology, history, historical geography, linguistics, mythology, and physical anthropology.

All of us in English-speaking scholarship are now indebted to Elena Efimova for these two publications and to her editors—an archaeologist and a Sinologist, respectively—who, long familiar with her scholarship, have rendered yeoman's service in publishing these volumes. Indeed these works are indispensable additions to their own novel collaboration in recent years on Indo-Iranology and Xinjiang studies.¹ Kuz'mina's *The Prehistory of the Silk Road*, a comprehensive introduction, complements their work and compensates for the dearth of pre-historical surveys. Hence a reasonably priced paperback of *The Prehistory* would be desirable.

A low cost reprint is moot of *The Origin of the Indo-Iranians*, a *Handbuch* in the fullest sense in E. J. Brill's recently established Indo-European Etymological Dictionary series under the general editorship of Alexander Lubotsky. Many will, given its numbing scope and depth, consult rather than read this *fin-de-siècle* distillation, which is an expanded and updated version of the 1994 Russian original, *Otkuda prishli indoarii? Material'naiia kul'tura plemen andronovskoi obshchnosti i proiskhozhdenie indoarii* [Whence came the Indo-Arians? The material culture of the tribes of the Andronov cultural community and the origins of the Indo-Iranians]. It is the most exhaustive examination to date of Proto-Indo-Iranians and, as a corollary, foundational for the study of proto-Zoroastrianism. Salient aspects of the latter were fleshed out in the late Mary Boyce's 1985 Columbia Lectures on Iranian Studies, *Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity and Constant Vigour* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1992), 27-51. Boyce correctly included such archaeological and ethnological data into her consciously integrated history of the faith. But both unavailability and lack of knowledge of Russian sources, especially the writings of Kuz'mina, has precluded other Iranists from incorporating such critical research into their own. *The Origin of the*

Indo-Iranians will now be the departure point to all embarking on the study of Zoroastrianism as it affords spatial and temporal ballast for those grappling with its fragmentary literary evidence. Concomitantly, its import is inestimable towards deepening our formulations of late Harappan culture and pre-Vedic religion.²

The Origin of the Indo-Iranians comprises twenty-six chapters divided into four parts, some 60% of the volume. They are: the Andronovo cultural entity; the migrations of tribes and their cultures in Central Asia; the genesis of the different branches of the Indo-Iranians; and the genesis of the Iranians. The rest is devoted to valuable appendices, line-drawings, and a voluminous bibliography which meticulously cites the literature on every question including all contributions of Soviet scholarship. And while Russian publications have been transcribed, Kuz'mina's 2002 work, *Mifologiiia i iskusstvo skifov i baktriitsev kul'turologicheskie ocherki*, was translated as *Mythology and Art of Scythians and Bactrians*. No English edition has been ever published.

The core thrust of the volume lies within parts two and three, namely the culture and migration of Central Asian tribes from the fourth through second millennia BCE; and the genesis of the different branches of the Indo-Iranians. Taken together, they would make for a concise monograph on the dispersal and habitation of the Proto-Indo-Iranians. Hitherto dependant on scattered, technical articles, the researcher is provided a sound, pioneering synthesis by Kuz'mina wherein she examines the Andronovan and BMAC cultures alongside the anthropological and genetic data about the Scythian complex and farming settlements among Iranians in north-central Asia. The narrative is coherent, the translation commendable; and potential research topics and theses are abundantly discernable.

A brisker and briefer pace is evident in *The Prehistory of the Silk Road*. Despite its title, its six chapters afford a coherent, connected picture of the Eurasian steppe, the upper highlands of the Near East, and western and eastern Central Asia in the Copper and Bronze ages. Arguing with full force of her authority, Kuz'mina has now demonstrated that the antecedents of the chariot were not in Mesopotamia but the southern Urals and Pontic steppe (34-38) as well the chronological ordering of Central Asian Bronze cultures with their European counterparts (115-28). No translator is explicitly mentioned though several proof-readers are acknowledged by the editor. It is generally readable but not as smoothly as *The Indo-Iranians*. For example, "northwest Hindustan" (35-36, 188), when surely northwest India is referred to elsewhere in the work, leaves one beguiled. Or (89) that Tocharian B's "written monuments"—mechanically from Russian—enable one to deduce that it "remained a spoken language in the fifteenth centuries AD [*sic*]". However, an earlier *terminus post quem*, at the end of the first or early second millennium CE following the Uyghur

conquest, can be proposed, too, for the extinction of Tocharian B, also referred to as West Tocharian or Kuchean. Furthermore, Tocharian B, a convenient designation for three dialects spoken in Turfan, Kucha, and Qarashähär, leaves one unclear as to which extinction is implied for rates of dialectal decline routinely vary. A comparison with Iran might not be out of place: there Avestan, like Tocharian A or Agnean, was a dead, liturgical medium of expression, whereas Pahlavi—a lemma for Zoroastrian Book Pahlavi and Dari among other variants—like Tocharian B, hobbled in the aftermath of the Arab con-

quest and was eventually replaced by New Persian. The transition from Middle to New Persian was gradual but by no means protracted enough to span more than three centuries. The production of Uyghur translations from Sanskrit via Tocharian by 800 CE should, if anything, strengthen this hypothesis over and above the lack of mutual intelligibility evident between spoken Middle and New Persian.

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Notes

¹ J. P. Mallory and Victor H. Mair, *The Tarim Mummies: Ancient China and the Mystery of the Earliest Peoples from the West* (New York and London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), now out-of-print; an overdue paperback edition has been published by Thames & Hudson in 2008.

² For two recent and significant treatments of Indic religion, see Stephanie W. Jamison, *The Rig Veda Between Two Worlds* (Paris: Collège de France, 2007) and Frits Staal, *Discovering the Vedas: Origins, Mantras, Ritual, Insights* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2007).