

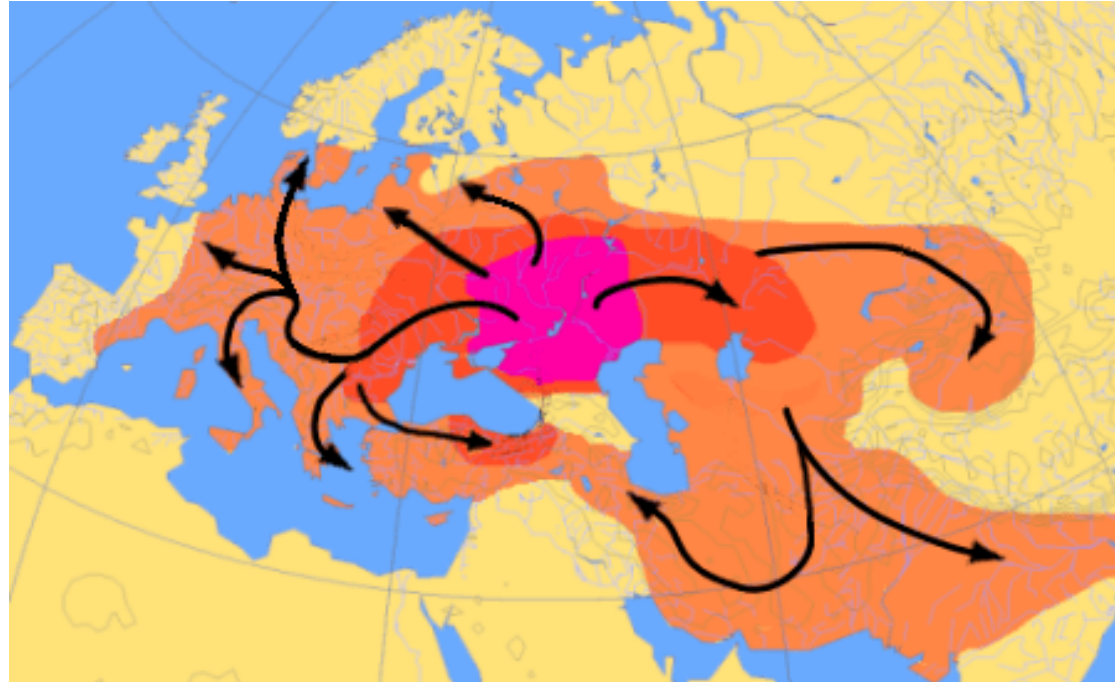
ECER 2025

Revisiting the Indo-European Myth: A Pillar of European Identity?

Athens, October 3, 2025



[One of the] map of hypothesized
Indo-European migrations (Kurgan hypothesis)



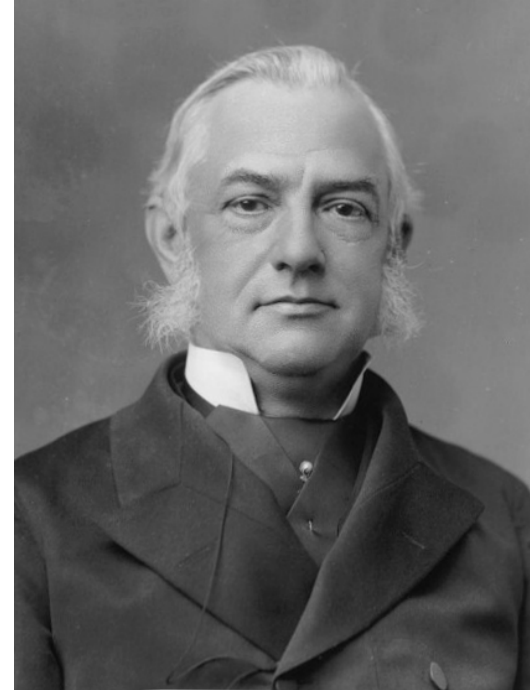
The Indo-European (IE) Myth

- 200-year-old narrative: A shared linguistic/cultural legacy among IE-speaking peoples (from India to Europe).
- Legitimizes contemporary ethnic based movements
- Fosters continuity with ancient "ancestors"
- Despite post-WWII critiques, IE identity endures as a supranational framework.



Historical Roots: Academies and Nationalism

- Max Müller's linguistic/mythological theories
- *Urheimat* "obsession": Scholars linked IE origins to their homelands
- Gustaf Kossinna: Nordic *Urheimat* ≡ southern Scandinavia/Germany
- Nazi legacy: IE theory ≡ "Aryan" identity; funded for racial propaganda
- Swedish scholars: Gotland and eastern Sweden
- Polish scholars: Oder-Vistula region
- Serbian scholars: Middle Danube
- Soviet scholars: Ukraine/Belarus or Upper Volga
- Georges Dumézil's trifunctional hypothesis
- Michael Strmiska?...



IE Theory in Contemporary Ethnic religions



- Müller's solar focus resonates in contemporary pagan rituals (e.g., solstice celebrations, etc...)
 - Connects modern practices to reconstructed pre-Christian traditions
- but:
- The Indo-European (IE) linguistic/cultural "roots" are reconstructions, not proven historical realities
 - Feminine symbolism, for example in some circle dances (very archaic origins)



Contemporary "pagan" Religions: Two Competing Frameworks

Within the framework of (part of) Western contemporary paganism, spirituality is often articulated as transcending ethnic boundaries, with ecological consciousness and pacifist values emerging as integral and subsequent commitment

Contemporary Western paganism is generally inclusivist, embracing a pluralistic ethos that welcomes multicultural influences. This openness manifests in syncretic practices, wherein deities, rituals, and cosmologies from a wide array of traditions—including Celtic, Greco-Roman, Indigenous, Eastern spiritualities, and various forms of witchcraft—are reinterpreted and woven into a cohesive spiritual framework.

Within dominant strands of contemporary Ethnic — Nordic (Germanic), Baltic, and Slavic — religions, ethnicity may, in certain cases, take precedence over spirituality, as exemplified by *Rodnovers* fighting on opposing sides of the Ukrainian front. Ecological and pacifist ideals are frequently framed as a return to a mythic 'Golden Age'.



But...

Contemporary pagan groups or individuals influenced by ethno-nationalist ideologies can be found even in the United Kingdom and the United States, as exemplified by certain strands of folkish Heathenry



Beyond nationalist narratives, ritual attendance in Ethnic based religious groups is sustained by a diverse demographic, including significant participation from women often motivated by libertarian ideals and New Age spiritual aesthetics



And...

Within contemporary Western paganism, the Indo-European question remains largely absent from both scholarly inquiry in pagan studies and the internal discourse of practitioners. While this omission might, at first glance, be interpreted as a sign of ideological maturity or a deliberate distancing from essentialist frameworks, conversations with numerous respondents suggest a different explanation. The lack of engagement appears to stem less from a conscious rejection of Indo-Europeanist paradigms and more from a general unfamiliarity with the topic and its underlying academic apparatus (I have not observed the dissemination of Bruce Lincoln's *Death, War, and Sacrifice* among contemporary pagans).

The academic study of pre-Christian societies in Eastern Europe continues to be shaped by a persistent reliance on Indo-Europeanist paradigms, a tendency less pronounced in Scandinavian scholarship. Although academics are not direct proponents of racialized concepts, the lack of a robust critical engagement with the ideological heritage of Indo-European studies has a profound effect: it fosters an intellectual environment within contemporary Ethnic religious communities where ethnonationalist ideas can be disseminated freely, without confronting necessary theoretical scrutiny.



Let's start the conclusion

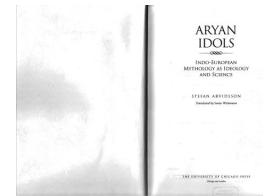
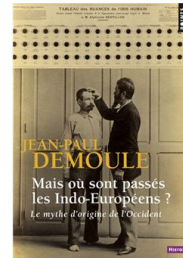
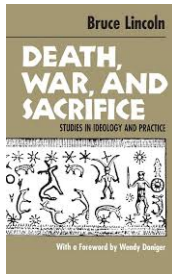
- Contemporary constructions of Indo-European identity often function as narrative frameworks that can be leveraged to essentialize and legitimize patriarchal and aggressive models of social organization—for instance, through the notion of an "innate" warrior ethos.
- The Indo-European narrative remains widely endorsed in Eastern Europe, with only slightly less prominence in Scandinavia and German-speaking countries, and receives insufficient critical scrutiny in Anglo-Saxon contexts.



...let's continue...

A renewed theoretical engagement with Indo-Europeanism in Western academic circles—particularly within Anglo-Saxon scholarship—would be highly desirable, not only to foster deeper reflection but also to ensure that such debates permeate contemporary pagan communities.

- Equally important would be the translation of works by scholars critical of Indo-European theory (e.g., Andrew Lang, Giuseppe Sergi, Nicolai Trubetskoy, Bruce Lincoln, Thomas R. Trautmann, Jean-Paul Demoule, Stefan Arvidsson, etc.) into Eastern European languages (or in the case of Trubetskoy, the re-editing and promotion of his works), thereby broadening access to alternative perspectives and encouraging a more nuanced and critically aware discourse within Eastern European academic and Ethnic based circles.



To what extent can Ethnic religions integrate identity and tradition within a framework that is both libertarian and anti-racist?

Contemporary Ethnic religions may draw inspiration from local and identity-rooted folkloric traditions, without necessarily interpreting them through the lens of Indo-European theory.

The symbolic universe of the feminine, linked to moon-related mythology, has historically attracted scholarly attention extending well beyond the frameworks of Marxist or anarchist paradigms. Current ideological preconceptions, particularly in Eastern Europe, should not hinder the re-engagement with this rich and complex mythological tradition.

It is entirely possible to wear a traditional costume or a reconstructed "barbaric" outfit while exhibiting a different pigmentation. In practical terms, this does not pose any issue.



Recommended authors

Andrew Lang. *Modern Mythology* (1897)

Giuseppe Sergi. *The Mediterranean Race: A Study of the Origin of European Peoples* (1901)

Nikolai Trubetzkoy, *Réflexions sur l'indo-européen* (1939)

Bruce Lincoln. *Death, War, and Sacrifice: Studies in Ideology and Practice* (1991)

Thomas R. Trautmann. *Aryans and British India* (1997)

Jean-Paul Demoule. *Mais où sont passés les Indo-Européens ? Le mythe d'origine de l'Occident* (2014).

Stefan Arvidsson. *Aryan Idols: Indo-European Mythology as Ideology and Science* (2008)

