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Early Vedic

Introduction — Part 1: Linguistic Affiliation, External History

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Roadmap

- Basics

- Linguistic Affiliation

- Migratory Routes

- Mitanni Indo-Aryan

- Lexicon

Basics

- Vedic Sanskrit pre-modern Indo-European language
  - preserved many features reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European

- Spoken by Indo-Iranian tribes
  - from early mid 2nd to late 1st millennium BCE

- Migrated from Central Asia to North-West India
  - arrival in the Greater Punjab around 1800 BCE
  - only few archaeological traces of material culture
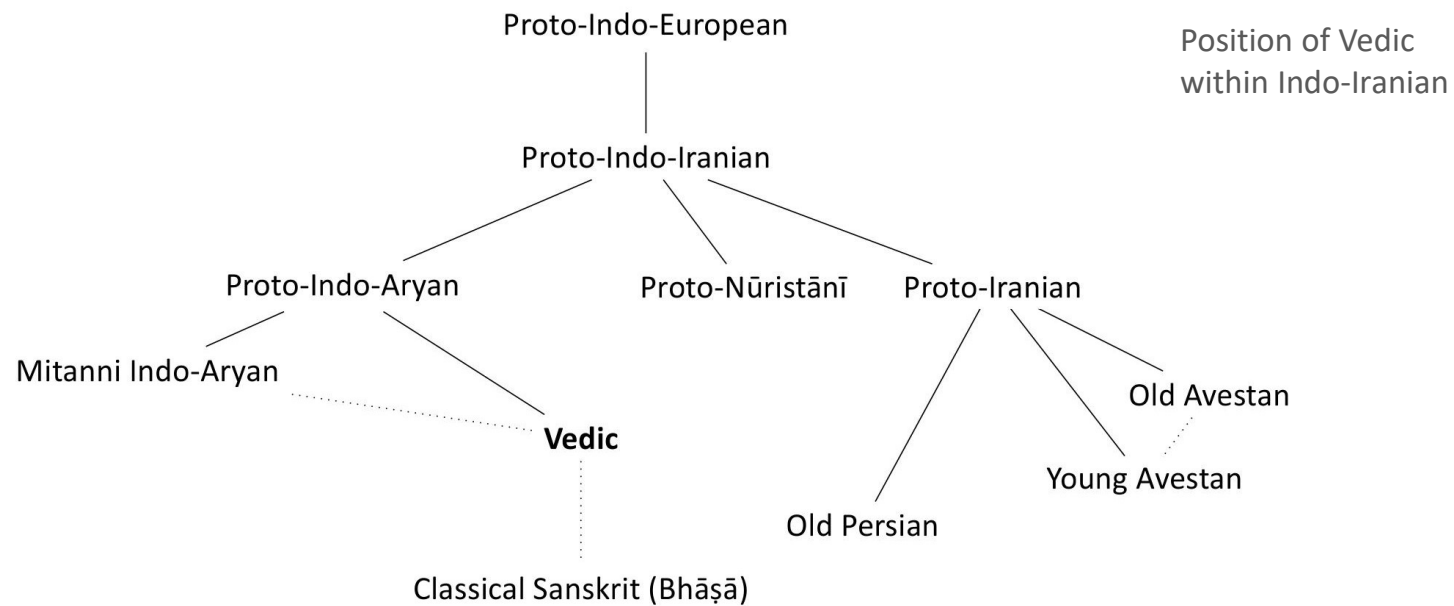 - but huge corpus of texts

Basics — "Aryan"

- Speakers of Early Vedic identify as *ār(i)ya* 'hospitable (people), Aryan'
  - self-designation shared with Iranians
    - YAv. *airiia-*, OP *ariya-*

- Language also called "Aryan"
  - Ved. *āryā vāk* 'Aryan speech' (ŚĀ 8.9)
  - OP *ariyā* '(written) in Aryan' (DB 489)

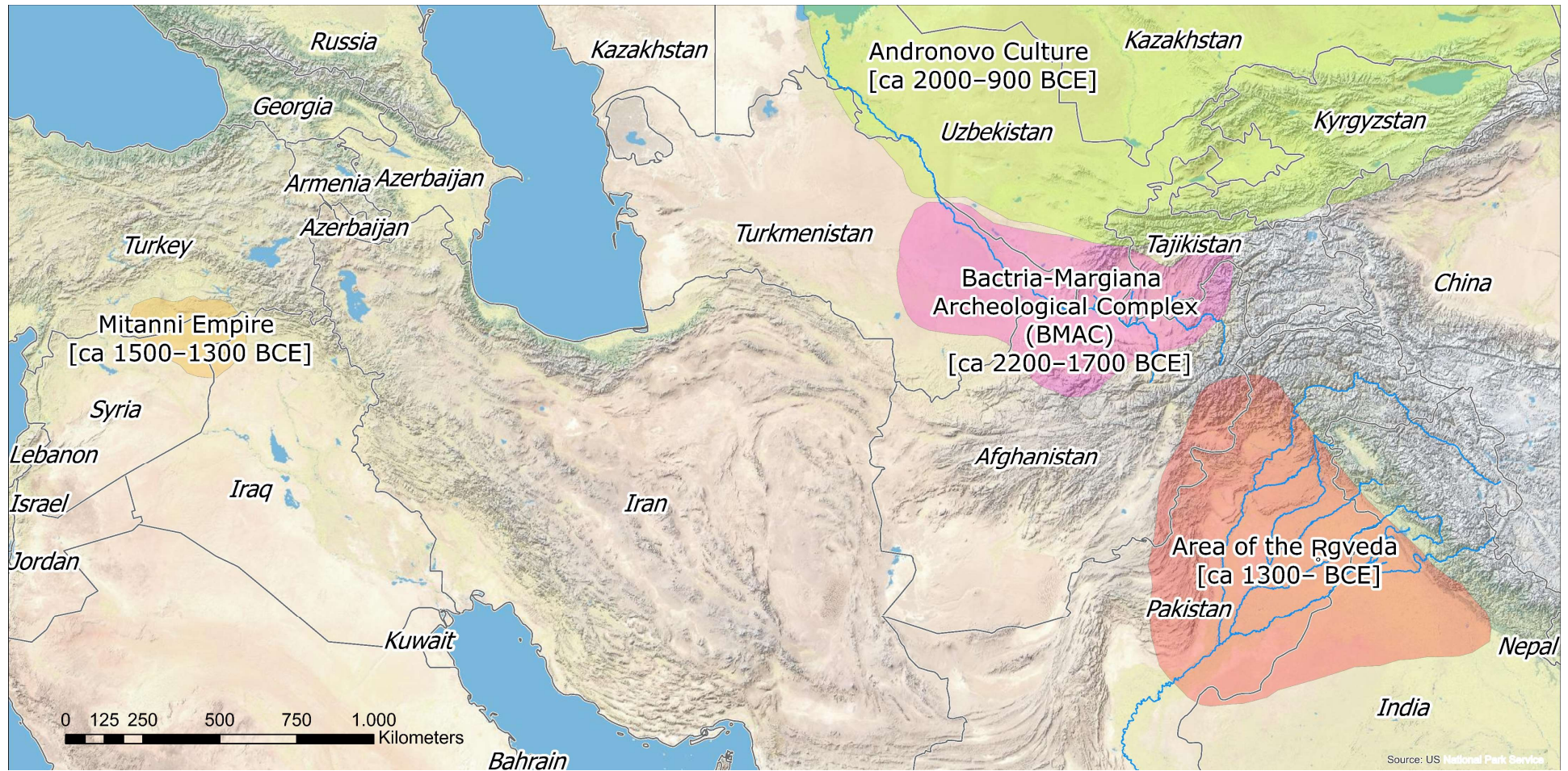- "Aryan" as self-designation mainly based on common language

Basics

- Early Vedic most authentic form of Old Indo-Aryan since
  - Mitanni Indo-Aryan only attested fragmentarily
  - Classical Sanskrit highly standardized

- Vedic continuum of dialects
  - some isoglosses identified
  - limited number of features reconstructable
  - core areas of innovations localizable

Linguistic Affiliation

Position of Vedic
within Indo-Iranian

```
                    Proto-Indo-European
                            |
                    Proto-Indo-Iranian
                   /        |         \
         Proto-Indo-Aryan  Proto-Nūristānī  Proto-Iranian
          /        \                         /      |    \
Mitanni Indo-Aryan  Vedic            Old Persian  Young  Old Avestan
                     |                           Avestan
            Classical Sanskrit (Bhāṣā)
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Early Migration of the Indo-Aryans

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Russia

Kazakhstan

Andronovo Culture
[ca 2000–900 BCE]

Kazakhstan

Georgia

Uzbekistan

Kyrgyzstan

Armenia Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan

Turkmenistan

Tajikistan

China

Turkey

Bactria-Margiana
Archeological Complex
(BMAC)
[ca 2200–1700 BCE]

Mitanni Empire
[ca 1500–1300 BCE]

Syria

Afghanistan

Lebanon

Israel

Iraq

Iran

Area of the Ṛgveda
[ca 1300– BCE]

Jordan

Pakistan

Nepal

Kuwait

India

0   125 250   500   750   1.000
Kilometers

Bahrain

Source: US National Park Service

Homeland

- Indo-Iranian homeland in Eurasian Steppe
- Andronovo Culture
    - in Southern Siberia
    - 2^{nd} to early 1^{st} millennium BCE
    - semi-nomadic pastoralism
    - Bronze Age technology
        - spoke wheeled chariots

View of Eurasian Steppe, East Kazakhstan
Ghilarovus — CC BY-SA 4.0

Migratory Routes

- Groups of Proto-Indo-Aryans left homeland
  - migrated south
  - early 2nd millennium BCE

- At least 2 movements
  - to Northern Mesopotamia
  - to North-West India

View of Gonur Tepe ruins, Turkmenistan
David Stanley — CC BY 2.0

Mitanni Indo-Aryan

- Speakers of IA in Mitanni Empire
  - early 15[th] century to mid 14[th] century BCE
  - important group within society

- Language attested fragmentarily
  - indirectly in cuneiform sources
  - only handful of lexical items
    - mostly personal names
    - hippological vocabulary

Cuneiform tablet, letter by Tušratta of Mitanni, Vorderasiatisches Museum, 1370 BCE. Wolfgang Sauber — CC BY-SA 3.0

Mitanni Indo-Aryan

Mitanni Indo-Aryan	Vedic	Linguistic Note
<a-i-ka> *aika-*	*éka-* 'one'	with {-ka} but Av. *aēuua-*
<aš-šu-wa> *ašwa-*	*áśva-* 'horse'	*$\acute{c}$ represented by sibilant <š>
<wa-ša-an-na> *wašana-*	*vāhana-* 'track'	*$\acute{z}^h$ represented by sibilant <š>
<ma-aš-da> °*mašda-*	°*medʰa-* 'sacrifice'	*az not replaced by vowel *e*

➢ Earliest traces of Indo-Aryan
- but typical "Indian" innovations absent
- provide *terminus post quem* for migration to North-West India

Lexicon

- Majority of Vedic lexicon inherited from Proto-Indo-European
  - especially verbs

- Early Vedic important for reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European

- Inherited material includes formulae
  - poets as "carpenters of words"
    - Ved. *mántraṃ* [...] *átakṣan*(RV 7.7.6)
    - OAv. *maϑrəm tašaṱ* (Y 29.7)
    - Gr. ἐπέων [...] τέκοντες (Pindar, Pyth. 3.112–114)

Lexicon — Language Contact

- Overall very few loanwords in Early Vedic
- Sources often hard to identify
    - probably other languages involved

- Earliest layers of loans
    - from BMAC in Central Asia (pre-RV)
        - *aṁśú*- 'Soma plant', *úṣṭra*- 'camel', *íṣṭikā*- 'brick'
    - from Austro-Asiatic in Greater Punjab (early RV SD1)
        - *píppala*- 'berry of ficus religiosa', *lā́ṅgala*- 'plough'
    - from Dravidian in Greater Punjab (later RV)
        - *pʰála*- 'fruit'

SD1   Ich habe 2 Akzente gesetzt
Saverio Dalpedri; 15.05.2019

बहवो धन्यवादाः
Thank you for your attention!