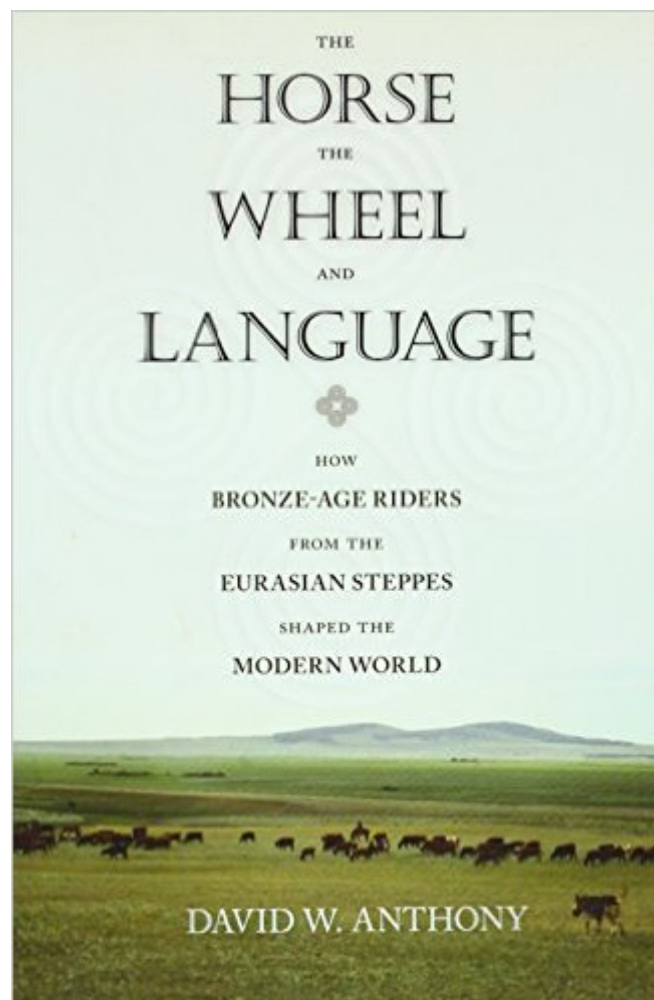




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# **The Horse, The Wheel, And Language: How Bronze-Age Riders From The Eurasian Steppes Shaped The Modern World**



## Synopsis

Roughly half the world's population speaks languages derived from a shared linguistic source known as Proto-Indo-European. But who were the early speakers of this ancient mother tongue, and how did they manage to spread it around the globe? Until now their identity has remained a tantalizing mystery to linguists, archaeologists, and even Nazis seeking the roots of the Aryan race. *The Horse, the Wheel, and Language* lifts the veil that has long shrouded these original Indo-European speakers, and reveals how their domestication of horses and use of the wheel spread language and transformed civilization. Linking prehistoric archaeological remains with the development of language, David Anthony identifies the prehistoric peoples of central Eurasia's steppe grasslands as the original speakers of Proto-Indo-European, and shows how their innovative use of the ox wagon, horseback riding, and the warrior's chariot turned the Eurasian steppes into a thriving transcontinental corridor of communication, commerce, and cultural exchange. He explains how they spread their traditions and gave rise to important advances in copper mining, warfare, and patron-client political institutions, thereby ushering in an era of vibrant social change. Anthony also describes his fascinating discovery of how the wear from bits on ancient horse teeth reveals the origins of horseback riding. *The Horse, the Wheel, and Language* solves a puzzle that has vexed scholars for two centuries--the source of the Indo-European languages and English--and recovers a magnificent and influential civilization from the past.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this study of language, archeology and culture, Hartwick College anthropology professor Anthony hypothesizes that a proto-Indo-European culture emerged in the Ponto-Caspian steppes 4,000 years ago, speaking an ur-language ancestor to the Romance, German and Slavic family of languages, Sanskrit and modern English. Citing discoveries in the Ukraine, Russia and Kazakhstan made possible only after the fall of the Iron Curtain brought together Soviet and western scientists, Anthony combines evidence from radioactive dating, demographic analysis of migration patterns, linguistic analysis and the study of epics such as the Iliad and the Rig Veda to substantiate his contention. Central to his thesis is the role of the horse, originally domesticated for food and first ridden to manage herds; only later, with the development of the chariot, were they ridden during combat. Anthony provides a comprehensive, in-depth analysis of his subject, complete with a history of relevant research over the past two centuries (including evidence and opinion that counter his own, such as the now-discredited Aryan race hypothesis). A thorough look at the cutting edge of anthropology, Anthony's book is a fascinating look into the origins of modern man. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Winner of the 2010 Book Award, Society for American Archaeology"David W. Anthony argues that we speak English not just because our parents taught it to us but because wild horses used to roam the steppes of central Eurasia, because steppedwellers invented the spoked wheel and because poetry once had real power. . . . Anthony is not the first scholar to make the case that Proto-Indo-European came from this region [Ukraine/Russia], but given the immense array of evidence he presents, he may be the last one who has to.... The Horse, the Wheel, and Language brings together the work of historical linguists and archaeologists, researchers who have traditionally been suspicious of each other's methods. [The book] lays out in intricate detail the complicated genealogy of history's most successful language."--Christine Kenneally, The New York Times Book Review"[A]uthoritative . . . "John Noble Wilford, New York Times"A thorough look at the cutting edge of anthropology, Anthony's book is a fascinating look into the origins of modern man."--Publishers Weekly (Online Reviews Annex)"In the age of Borat it may come as a surprise to learn that the grasslands between Ukraine and Kazakhstan were once regarded as an early crucible of civilisation. This idea is revisited in a major new study by David Anthony."--Times Higher Education"Starting with a history of research on Proto-Indo-Europeans and exploring how this field for obvious reasons assumed an ethno-political dimension early on, leading PIE scholar Anthony moves on to established facts . . . then shifts his focus to the interrelation of the three essential

elements of horse, chariot, and language and how the first and second provided the means for the spread of Indo-European languages from India to Ireland. The bulk of the book contains the factual evidence, mainly archaeological, to support this argument. But a strength of the book is its rich historical linguistic approach. The combination of the two provides a remarkable work that should appeal to everyone with an interest not just in Indo-Europeans, but in the history of humanity in general."--K. Abdi, Dartmouth College, for CHOICE"David Anthony's book is a masterpiece. A professor of anthropology, Anthony brings together archaeology, linguistics, and rare knowledge of Russian scholarship and the history of climate change to recast our understanding of the formation of early human society."--Martin Walker, *Wilson Quarterly*"The Horse, the Wheel, and Language brings together the work of historical linguists and archaeologists, researchers who have traditionally been suspicious of each other's methods. Though parts of the book will be penetrable only by scholars, it lays out in intricate detail the complicated genealogy of history's most successful language."--Christine Kenneally, *International Herald Tribune*"The Horse, the Wheel and Language maps the early geography of the Russian steppes to re-create the lost world of Indo-European culture that is as fascinating as any mystery novel."--Arthur Krim, *Geographical Reviews*"In its integration of language and archaeology, this book represents an outstanding synthesis of what today can be known with some certainty about the origin and early history of the Indo-European languages. In my view, it supersedes all previous attempts on the subject."--Kristian Kristiansen, *Antiquity*"A key book."--David Keys, *Independent*

I started this book hoping to learn more about P. I. E I did, but the ratio of linguistic information to archaeological information was not what I had expected. This was a challenging book to read, thanks to its plethora of pottery. But it was interesting and presented a plausible case for the author's hypothesis on the origin and spread of Proto-Indo-European and its child languages. I am pleased I read it, and I think any who have an amateur's interest in linguistics would probably also like it. Although an affection for archaeology would also be an asset.

Love the book which is quite informative. Took a long time for me to read and re-read in parts. Provides information that is not evident in other books covering 5,000 years ago languages and peoples. I will reference this book often in the future, I'm sure. Well worth the effort.

Though this book should not be viewed as an academic treatment as it doesn't delve TOO deeply into the intricacies of linguistic theory, it DOES do a good job of providing an overview of the

methods used to investigate the roots of Proto-Indo-European. I felt like I really learned something, and was pleased with the general tone and approach taken by the author. As noted by other reviewers, I grew tired of list after list of archaeological sites and the objects found at each site, and at some point I simply skipped over those. I saw decreasing value in these lists, and think an EXPLANATION of the IMPORTANCE of certain sites and its artifacts would have been much more helpful (vs. the listing of a LOT of sites, then an explanation in the text, where they appeared). This practice is common in academic treatments, and lends 'weight' to an author's conclusions. Here, it was a distraction from the otherwise interesting and intriguing conclusions drawn from this data. They interrupted the flow of the book, and lessened the impact of the story being told. Be sure to bookmark the several (slightly inadequate) maps; you will refer to them later in the text. These maps could have also used some improvement, as several were small and/or crowded with locations. Probably inevitable in this format, but at some point I found myself wondering if a better job couldn't have been done with a few of them. In conclusion, I think a more thorough editing of several portions of the text as well as the addition and/or reformatting of some maps would have made for a 5 star book.

Great run down on PIE language and cultures. A nice update and expansion of available materials. The horse bit research the author did was interesting, as was his rant that Archaeologists and Linguists need to get their heads together and out of...the sand. I just wish there was a power point presentation to go along with it, or more maps (there are many, but the material is dense and there are a lot of prehistoric cultures that are looked at in depth). I will say, I thought the origin location was new, and it's not. The area he's looking at is the general vicinity of the more agreed locations of PIE that have been discussed since at least the 70's, though he provides a lot of evidence for why he puts them precisely where he does. Highly recommended.

This is a terrific book for those interested in just who the original Indo Europeans were, BUT it is also a tough read. Forge ahead, but prepare to skim some sections. The book begins with an explanation of how linguistic scholars have re-created (or at least imagined) the Indo European language from which most of the languages of Europe, including English, ultimately developed. He then moves to archaeology, gathering and presenting the physical evidence on where -- and when -- the people who spoke that ancestral Indo-European actually emerged. This is important in terms of understanding history, but it may be even more important in terms of avoiding a misunderstanding of history. For the past two centuries, there has been a lot done by linguists on the Indo-European

language, but much less on the archaeological side about the actual Indo-European people. . This allowed the development of nationalistic and racist myths with little or no historical basis, myths that have had terrible consequences. The myth of the "Aryan race" is best disproved by actual archaeological research. And the writer presents and evaluates a massive amount of archaeological evidence, much of it work carried out by Soviet scientists which has only recently become available in the west. He also includes discussions of his own work, including a very interesting discussion of how he estimated times and place for the emergence of horse-riding. From this evidence, he does draw conclusions which seem born out by what is known, and which I found absolutely fascinating. The problem is the sheer weight of the evidence. Several reviewers have suggested that much of the technical archaeological discussion -- and there is SO much of it, site after site, tomb after tomb, pot after pot -- could better be put in footnotes and/or appendices. For a non-professional reader like myself, this would have avoided the sensation of plodding through a whole lot of minutiae to get to the points. For professionals, I am sure the detail is valuable and interesting. (I didn't find the sections on linguistics at all dull, which may be because I know a bit about it.) But for popular readers, less would definitely be more. I learned a lot from this book, and -- in the expository sections -- the writing is a pleasure to read. Because of the massive detail, however, I am giving it four stars instead of five.

More than half a year ago, I read this book. Then and now I think that David Anthony did a very fine job in detailing early evidence on the dissemination of the Indo-European languages into east central Europe and central and southern Asia. Much remains with regard to timing and manner of spread throughout the rest of Europe, where DNA studies have shed some light (see the July 11th issue of Nature) and will likely shed much more light. Nonetheless, Dr. Anthony's research will surely be recognized as a great watershed in understanding the timing and manner of spread of this widely distributed (and now nearly universally spoken) language group.

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