

The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture

Introduction

The solution to the Indo-European problem has been one of the most consuming intellectual projects of the last two centuries. It has captivated the imagination and dedication of generations of archaeologists, linguists, philologists, anthropologists, historians, and all manner of scholarly, and not so scholarly, dilettantes. Predicated on the deduction that cognate languages necessitate an original protoform spoken by a group of people inhabiting a reasonably delineated geographic area, the problem has resulted in a massive amount of scholarship attempting to reconstruct this protolanguage, locate the original homeland where it was spoken, and conjecture on the social and cultural life of the protospeakers. Although the endeavor has very much been a preoccupation of European scholars, the belief in and pursuit of the origins of European civilization have required scholars to attempt to reconstruct and reconfigure the prehistory and protohistories of other civilizations whose languages happen to belong to the Indo-European language family.

The publicization, in Europe, of the Sanskrit language and of its connection with the classical languages of Europe was the catalyst for the whole post-Enlightenment quest for the Indo-Europeans that continues, unresolved, to this day. This “discovery” of Sanskrit resulted in the earliest history of the Indian subcontinent also being subsumed by the problem of European origins. Although India was initially entertained as the homeland of all the Indo-Europeans, various arguments were raised against this proposal, and Indian civilization was construed as the joint product of an invading Indo-European people—the Indo-Aryan branch of the family—and indigenous non-Indo-European peoples. Yet although taking it upon themselves to determine the history of the Indian subcontinent in accordance with the currents of scholarship that have ebbed and flowed in academic circles in Europe over the decades, Western scholars have generally been unaware, or dismissive, of voices from India itself that have been critical over the years of this European reconstruction of their country’s history. In the words of one of the scholars who will be featured here, “However well-meaning such [scholars] . . . and their publications are, they have taken it upon themselves the task of interpreting the past heritage of a very large number of people who belong to various nation states and may like to formulate their own ideas of the past” (Chakrabarti 1997, 207).

This book is primarily a historiographical study of how various Indian scholars, over the course of a century or more, have rejected this idea of an external origin of the Indo-Aryans by questioning much of the logic, assumptions, and methods upon which the theory is based. The aim of the book is threefold. A primary aim is to excavate marginalized points of view reacting against what is perceived as a flawed and biased historical construct. As a corollary of this aim, this work will further complicate the Indo-European homeland quest by exposing the whole endeavor to a critique from scholars outside mainstream European academic circles who do not share the same intellectual history as their Western peers. A further aim of this book is to present a comprehensive exposition and analysis of views from within mainstream academic circles addressing the issue of Indo-Aryan origins.

With regard to the primary aim, I have used the term *Indigenous Aryanism* to denote a theme that is common to many of the scholars I examine in this book. This runs the risk of essentializing a quite variegated cast of characters, and I merely use the term to encompass a position on Indian protohistory that I view as common to most of the arguments that I examine. The scholars referred to by this term all share a conviction in the theory of an external origin of the Indo-Aryan speaking people on the Indian subcontinent has been constructed on flimsy or false assumptions and conjectures. As far as such scholars are concerned, no compelling evidence has yet been produced to posit an external origin of the Indo-Aryans.

The various scholars whose work I have examined here are a disparate group. They range from brilliant intellectuals like Aurobindo, to professional scholars like B. Lal, to what most academics would consider "crackpots," like P. N. Oak.¹ The primary feature they share is that they have taken it upon themselves to oppose the theory of Aryan invasions and migrations—hence the label *Indigenous Aryanism*. Although I am not fully satisfied with my descriptive label, I could find no better term with which to conveniently refer to my target group. Initially I toyed with the idea of contextualizing these arguments into a "traditionalist" framework, with the corollary that such material was an encounter or response to modernity, but not all the scholars in my target group are traditionally oriented at all; nor do they all by any means have problems with modernity. "Indian responses to the Aryan migration theory" is an obviously inadequate label, since many Indian scholars support the hypothesis, and a number of Western scholars have begun to contest it. "Dissenting voices from India" failed for similar reasons (the work of several scholars not resident in India is discussed herein), as did any thoughts of casting the debate in terms of "Hindu" responses to Western scholarship. *Indigenous Aryanism* is a convenient (if somewhat generalized) label, and no more.

A further qualification is in order at this point. The descriptive label *Indigenous Aryanism* could, in strict linguistic terms, be *Indigenous Indo-Aryanism*, since it specifically refers to the speakers of the Indic languages. The term *Aryan* was used to denote the undivided Indo-Europeans during most of the nineteenth century; for our purposes, the Indo-Aryans are primarily the Vedic- and pre-Vedic-speaking members of the family. However, *Aryan* is often used by the Indian scholars in my survey to denote the Vedic-speaking peoples. Since the term is, after all, Sanskrit (and Iranian), I have adopted this denotation, in the context of my descriptive label *Indigenous Aryanism*. Elsewhere, I use *Aryan* to refer to all Indo-European speakers only in those contexts where the term was used in this gen-

eral way (particularly when quoting nineteenth-century scholars), and the more precise term *Indo-Aryans* to refer to the speakers of Vedic (and related dialects).

My topic, then, is a debate. It is a debate about which most scholars in the West were unaware until very recently, which in itself says something about the balance of intellectual power in the academic field of Indology. In order to contextualize the responses of what I will call the Indigenous Aryan school—to summarize exactly what it has been reacting to—the first chapter lays out some of the more prominent features of the two-hundred-year history of the Indo-European homeland quest in Europe, particularly as it related to India. The various religious and political exigencies that influenced much of the scholarship during this period are touched upon, as are the many viewpoints regarding the Indo-European homeland. This should set the scene for the responses of my target group—the Indigenous Aryanists—who were observing this intellectual melee from outside mainstream Western academic circles.

Chapter 2 touches briefly on a variety of discourses that appropriated the Aryan theme in India in the hope of exploiting it for political or other mileage. The reaction to the theory by religious intellectuals is also addressed in this chapter, thus providing a brief Indian parallel to the nineteenth-century political and religious concerns of Europe in the first chapter. Chapter 3 initiates the analysis of the actual data concerning Indo-Aryan origins. By the mid-nineteenth century, one of the few things regarding the homeland that western Indo-European scholars did agree on was that it could not have been India; wherever the original homeland might have been the Indo-Aryans at least must have come to the subcontinent from outside. While not the slightest bit concerned with the homeland obsession of European scholars in general, Indigenous Aryanists soon reacted to the corollary of the problem when it impinged on the origins of their own culture. It seemed unacceptable to consider that such an enormously speculative gigantic and seemingly inconclusive European undertaking should be entitled to make authoritative pronouncements on the early history of the Indian subcontinent. The first voices of opposition that attempted to utilize critical scholarship to counter the claim that the forefathers of the Vedic Indians hailed from outside the subcontinent are introduced in this chapter. The initial objections raised concerned the philological evidence that had been brought forward as decisive by Western philologists. Since philology was a discipline that resonated with their own traditional *Śruti*-epistemologies, and since it focused on texts in their own ancient language, Vedic Sanskrit, the philological evidence was the most easily accessible to Indigenous Aryan scrutiny. Moreover, these texts that were suddenly of such interest to Western scholars happened to be their sacred ones, and this fueled their concern.

Chapter 4 traces the dethronement of Sanskrit from its initial position as the original protolanguage of all the Indo-Europeans in the opinion of the early linguists, to its ongoing diminishing status as a secondary language containing a number of linguistic features that are considered to be more recent than other Indo-European cognate languages. Chapter 5 analyzes the evidence for a non-Indo-Aryan linguistic substratum in Sanskrit texts, which has remained perhaps the principal and, to my mind, most persuasive reason brought forward in support of the Aryan invasions and migrations. The issue here is: Do the Vedic texts preserve linguistic evidence of languages preceding the Indo-Aryan presence on the Indian subcontinent? This is an essential aspect of this debate but one that has been mostly ignored by Indigenous Aryanists. Chapter 6 exam-

ies various points of view based on the method of linguistic paleontology—one of the most exploited disciplines used in the homeland quest, and one also fundamental in insisting that the Indo-Aryans had an origin external to the Indian subcontinent. Here we will find Indian scholars reconfiguring the same logic and method to arrive at very different conclusions from those of their Western counterparts. Chapter 7 deals with the linguistic evidence from outside of India, particularly loan words from the Finno-Ugric languages, as well as the Mitanni and Avestan evidence, all of which have a direct bearing on the problem. Here, too, Indigenists have their own way of accounting for the evidence. Chapter 8 deals with other linguistic issues often utilized in the homeland quest and Indo-Aryan origins, such as dialect geography and the implications of the subgroupings of the various cognate languages. It must be stated immediately that there is an unavoidable corollary of an Indigenist position. If the Indo-Aryan languages did not come from outside South Asia, this necessarily entails that India was the original homeland of all the other Indo-European languages. Indo-Aryan was preceded by Indo-Iranian, which was preceded, in turn, by Indo-European; so if Indo-Aryan was indigenous to India, its predecessors must have been also. Hence, if proto-Indo-European is indigenous to India, all the other cognate languages must have emigrated from there. Chapters six to eight discuss the possibility and problems of a South Asian homeland. Chapter 9 deals with the relationship between the Indus Valley Civilization and the Indo-Aryans—a topic that has received a tremendous amount of attention from Indian archaeologists and historians. The issue to be discussed in this chapter is whether the Indo-Aryans preceded, succeeded, or coexisted with the inhabitants of the Indus Valley region. Chapter 10 outlines some of the scholarship that has attempted to trace the trans-Asian exodus of the Indo-Aryans on their proposed route to India, across central Asia. Chapter 11 examines the problems associated with identifying them in the archaeological record within the subcontinent. Chapter 12 examines the various attempts made to date Sanskrit texts upon which, as I shall argue, a tremendous amount hinges. How far back can we go with an Indo-Aryan presence on the subcontinent? The final chapter discusses some of the more modern ideological underpinnings of this debate in India. Different forces compete over the construction of national identity. Other concerns motivating some of the participants on both sides of the Indigenous Aryan debate will also be considered in this chapter.

I have left this chapter on ideology until last, in order to present the intervening chapters on the evidence primarily in the terms, and through the logic and perspectives, of the various points of view. However, historical data do not tell their own story: they are interpreted. And interpretation emanates from human cognition that is structured by each individual's cultural, religious, political, economic and social circumstances and biases. People have a reason to contest or reinterpret history. The present volatile situation in India has made Western, and many Indian, scholars particularly concerned about the repercussions of communal interpretations of history. However, although the position of Indigenous Aryanism is undoubtedly extremely important to notions of identity and to the politics of legitimacy among certain Hindu nationalists, such concerns are representative of all the scholars who have supported this point of view. Unfortunately, the whole Indigenous Aryan position is often simplistically stereotyped, and conveniently demonized, both in India and in the West, as a discourse exclusively motivated by such agendas. This bypasses other concerns also motivating such

reconsideration of history: the desire of many Indian scholars to reclaim control over the reconstruction of the religious and cultural history of their country from the legacy of imperial and colonial scholarship. In chapter 13 I discuss the manifold concerns that I perceive as motivating Indigenous Aryanists to undertake a reconsideration of this issue. I argue that although there are doubtlessly nationalistic and, in some quarters, communal agendas lurking behind some of this scholarship, a principal feature is anticolonial/imperial.

On a personal note, I am accordingly sympathetic to the Indigenous Aryan "school" (if, simply for ease of reference, I might be permitted to reify my motley group as a school) when I view it as a manifestation of a postcolonial rejection of European intellectual hegemony (since most of the voices are from India), especially since my analysis has led me to realize exactly how malleable much of the evidence involved actually is. This does not mean that the Indigenous Aryan position is historically probable. The available evidence by no means denies the normative view—that of external Aryan origins and, if anything, favors it. But this view has had more than its fair share of airing over the last two centuries, and the Indigenous Aryan position has been generally ignored or marginalized. What it does mean, in my view, is that Indigenous Aryanism must be allowed a legitimate and even valuable place in discussions of Indo-Aryan origins.

I am emphatically not sympathetic to the elements of the Indigenous Aryan school that I perceive as utilizing this debate to construct illusory notions of an indigenous Aryan pedigree so as to thereby promote the supposed Hindu descendants of these Indo-Aryans as the original and rightful "sons of the soil" in a modern Hindu nation-state. As an aside, this is illusory not only from a historico-philological perspective but also from the perspective of almost the entirety of the philosophical systems associated with what is known as Hinduism. Vedantic discourse, for one, would consider nationalism (whether Hindu, American, English, or anything else) to be simply another *upādhi*, or false designation, imposed on the *ātman* out of ignorance ("Hindu nationalism" from this perspective, is something of an oxymoron). Needless to say, any prioritization of the Hindus can only be at the expense of the "Other," namely, the non-Hindu communities—specifically Muslims and Christians. Since my task is to be receptive to all rational points of view, including the more cogent interpretations of the Indigenous Aryan school, there have been many moments when I have regretted undertaking this research for fear that it might be misconstrued and adapted to suit ideological agendas. This concern very much remains as a dark cloud hovering over what has otherwise been an intriguing and intellectually very fulfilling research project.

On the other hand, and again on a personal note, I am also concerned at what I perceive to be a type of Indological McCarthyism creeping into areas of Western, as well as certain Indian, academic circles, whereby, as will be discussed in chapter 13, anyone reconsidering the status quo of Indo-Aryan origins is instantly and a priori dubbed a nationalist, a communalist, or, even worse, a Nazi. Since I have observed that many scholars, when confronted with "Indigenous" voices of dissension, immediately assume that it must be just another manifestation of Hindu nationalist discourse (even without being aware of the linguistic and archaeological issues at stake), a few words on this issue might be in order at this point.

There is a major difference in focus between nationalism and anti-imperialism although they overlap in a number of ways. Nationalism involves attempts to concoct

ons of shared identity in order to unify a variety of individuals and social groups a cohesive political and territorial body in contradistinction to other such bodies—erson's "imagined" communities. Communalism, as understood in the context of emic discourse about India, also involves attempts to construct political unity be- individuals and groups, but it is predicated on notions of shared religious affili- that is distinct from that of other groups who are perceived as identifying with ent religious communities. Anti-imperialism and anticolonialism, on the other hand, he opposition, by a group of people, to alien power—often advantaged because of rior technology—to which it has been subjected against its will. It is a struggle against ppressive, and generally stifling, force.

he alien power opposed by the anti-imperialist voices of the Indigenous Aryan school ellectual: it consists of the construction of early Indian history by Western scholars ; their "superior technology" in the form of linguistics, archaeology, anthropology, ology, and so forth. The version of historical events arrived at by these means was imposed on the native population in hegemonic fashion. Indigenous Aryanism, this perspective, is an attempt to adopt this same technology to challenge the co- l power (or the heritage it has left behind), to test its foundation, to see how ac- the Aryan migration hypothesis actually is by examining it with the same equip- ; the same disciplines of archaeology, and so on, that were used to construct it in irst place. Obviously, in so doing it has been co-opted into a Western critical para- and has adopted the vocabulary and conceptual structures of the discourse (indeed, the arguments considered here are from English medium publications).² It is none- ss an attempt to reclaim control over indigenous affairs—in this case the writing of in history—from the power of scholars who are perceived as being motivated and stworthy in their scholarship due to their status as imperialists, colonizers and s (and from the heirs of such scholars). In Gramscian terms, colonial intellectuals een as the "functionaries," the "deputies," of the coercive dominant power.

aturally, perceiving a power to be alien necessitates defining oneself, and others neself, as native, and so anti-imperialism and nationalism often go hand in hand. efore, rejection of the Aryan migration—Indigenous Aryanism—has been co-opted both anti-imperial and nationalist discourses. But there is a difference in focus een these two agendas, and it is this that I wish to emphasize. The focus of those promote Indigenous Aryanism for nationalist purposes is to try to show that the lus are an integral, indigenous people who have always had the ingredients required nation-state in the form of a shared cultural past with clear links to the present: the lic" culture. New nations paradoxically claim to be the opposite of novel, namely, d in the remotest antiquity; nationalists co-opt archaeology, philology, and linguis- a efforts to "prove" that the imagined nation has always existed. In the postcolonial te of South Asia, this discourse shares many permeable borders with, and can clearly over into, communal discourse. The focus, in this latter case, is to set up a juxta- tion between those linked religiously (in however generalized ways) with the Vedic in opposition to those not affiliated with any notion of Vedic identity—specifi- the Muslim and Christian minorities. (Here, too, a paradox can arise when disci- s that are empirical in nature are adopted in attempts to prove scriptural authentic- hich is transcendental in nature, to legitimize notions of identity that are based them.)

The anti-imperialist concern, in contrast, is the rejection of the Aryan invasion hy- pothesis on the grounds that it is an alien intellectual import, assembled by Europeans as a result of exigencies, initially religious and then imperial, that were prevalent in nineteenth-century Europe. The theory was exported to the colonies, where it was intro- duced by an imperial, colonial power in order to serve imperial, colonial interests. Some Indigenous Aryanists construe this process as being a conscious one: planned and con- spiratorial; others regard it as unconscious and the result of the inevitable bias and self- centered modes of interpretation that are inherent in the human psyche. The point I stress in chapter 13 is that not all Indigenous Aryanists are necessarily interested in the construction of notions of Hindu Aryan greatness or, with some exceptions, in the promotion of communal agendas. In much of the literature I have read, and in count- less hours of interviews, an overwhelming concern of Indigenous Aryanists is to reex- amine what is suspected of being a false account of Indian history concocted by Euro- pean imperialists—an account that does not correspond to the "facts" even when analyzed by the modern processes of critical scholarship. In short, the Aryan invasion hypothesis is seen by many Indian historians as an Orientalist production. As a result, Indigenous Aryanism can be partly situated within the parameters of postcolonial studies.

Having said all this, I do not intend to suggest that the Indigenous Aryan school is somehow angelically engaged in the disinterested quest for pure knowledge. There is no disinterested quest for knowledge. Many Indigenous Aryanists are, indeed, engaged in the search for self-definition in the modern context. Some are Hindu nationalists, and some do engage in communal polemics. But much has been written on Hindu "revisionism" from this perspective; rather than a priori pigeonholing the Indigenous Aryan school into simplistic and conveniently demonized "communal," "revisionist," or "nationalist" molds that can then be justifiably ignored, this study is an attempt to analyze and articulate some of the actual empirical objections being raised to the colo- nial construction of Indian pre- and protohistory. This book, accordingly, is primarily an examination of the empirical, historical evidence—philological, archaeological, lin- guistic, and so on—and how this has been interpreted both to support the theory of Aryan migrations and to contest it. However, since interpretations take place only in a specific context, a secondary aim is to touch upon (and no more) some aspects of the religious and political forces, in both Europe and India, that influenced and continue to influence, the prioritization of certain interpretive possibilities and the exclusion of others.

A note on method. My intention herein has been not so much to take sides in the actual debate but to present the interpretations of the evidence from all rational per- spectives and point out the various assumptions underlying them—this book is intended to be a reasonably thorough exposition of the entire problem of Indo-Aryan origins. Each chapter outlines some of the main features of the history of the data covered in that particular chapter. Since the relevant material is usually so voluminous, however, I have limited my selection to data that have either attracted responses from the Indig- enous Aryan school or that are indispensable to a discussion on the origins of the Indo- Aryans. This book is not a comprehensive history of the greater Indo-European prob- lem, but of the Indo-Aryan side of the family.

I have not hesitated to state my own opinion on the value of some of the arguments being contested, and my organization and presentation of the material will reveal much

about my own estimation of the merit of some of these points of view. Nonetheless, my primary project has been to present the debate in its own terms, hence my decision to quote as much as possible so that the primary voices involved can be heard in their own right rather than paraphrased. I hold it important that marginalized points of view that have made a valuable contribution to this issue be brought into a more mainstream academic context, and it is often edifying to confront as much of the primary tone of the debate as possible. From the Indigenous Aryan side, the tone of these responses reveals much about how a historical construct that is taken very much for granted by most of us—the Aryan invasion/migration theory—is viewed when seen through very different cultural, religious, and political perspectives.

I have taken material from a wide variety of contexts if I feel that it can contribute to the debate. I have found that someone, Western or Indian, who can make an astonishingly infantile argument or reveal an alarming lack of critical awareness in one place can make a penetrating and even brilliant comment in another. Not all the scholars referred to herein are necessarily schooled in the same intellectual environments, versed in state-of-the-art academic rhetoric and vocabulary, or familiar with the latest conceptual structures current in Western academia. Nor do all scholars in India have anywhere near as much access to the latest cutting-edge scholarship or even, sometimes, basic seminal material as their Western colleagues. I have not rejected any worthwhile argument even if it is situated in a greater context that many would consider unworthy of serious academic attention; not all the arguments quoted here are from professional scholars, but I have allotted space to anyone whom I believe has anything valuable to contribute to the issue. I have taken it upon myself to wade through a good deal of, to put it mildly, substandard material in search of nuggets—but nuggets are to be found.

I have also separated my discussion of the evidence from discussion of the religious-political context of its interpretation: chapters 3 to 12 focus on the former, and chapters 1, 2, and 13 discuss the latter. Talageri the linguist has been critiqued in the chapters on linguistics, and Talageri the nationalist has been dealt with in the chapter on nationalism. The validity of a particular interpretation of some aspect of the data has not been minimized because of the author's overt religious or political bias, however distasteful they might be to the sensitivities of those of us who do not share those values. Ignoring a serious attempt to analyze data because of the author's ideological orientations does not invalidate the arguments being offered, or make them disappear. On the contrary, they resurface, often more aggressively because of having been ignored. I have attempted to analyze, as objectively as possible, any serious interpretation of the data that might further the task of accurately reconstructing proto-history, while also, in separate chapters, drawing attention to any ideological agendas that might favor the promotion of a particular point of view.

I would lie to note that while I have had training in historical Indo-European linguistics and in South Asia as a linguistic region, I am not an Indo-Europeanist—although I hold the contributions of this field indispensable to our knowledge of South Asian pre- and proto-history. I approach this material from the perspective of a historian of ancient Indian religions and cultures. I beg the indulgence of the specialists and request that I be forgiven for any errors in technical linguistic detail that they might encounter in these chapters, and that I be judged, rather, on my more general analysis of the data and of the conclusions that they can generate in matters pertaining to the origins of the

Indo-Aryans. I should also note that while I would like to think that this work might be of some interest to Indo-Europeanists, if only from a historiographical point of view, or from the perspective of the history of ideas, it is primarily intended for those involved in and interested in South Asian studies. With this audience in mind, I have eliminated all technical linguistic detail that is not essential to illuminating the general linguistic principles and theories relevant to the quest for the Indo-Aryans.

In my fieldwork in South Asia, as well as in my research thereafter, I have had adequate opportunity to discuss the South Asian archaeological evidence with specialists in the field, although, here again, specialists will likely recognize that I am not an archaeologist. Nor am I a historian of science, despite my lengthy treatment of the astronomical evidence. Ultimately, in the hyper-specialized academic culture of our day, it is not possible for a single individual to have expertise in all of the disciplines and subdisciplines demanded by a topic such as this. I request my critics to consider that no one can be a specialist in nineteenth-century historiography in Europe, nineteenth-century historiography in India, Vedic philology, Avestan Studies, historical Indo-European linguistics, South Asian linguistics, Central Asia as a linguistic area, the archaeology of Central Asia, the archaeology of the Indian subcontinent, astronomy, and modern Hindu nationalism, to name only some of the areas covered here. Anyone attempting a multidisciplinary overview of such a vast amount of material will necessarily need corrections from the specialists in any of these fields. I hope that my efforts have at least been successful in gathering most of the materials relevant to the origins of the Indo-Aryans, shedding some light on why these materials might be contested, and perhaps invoking further discussions by scholars more qualified than myself in these respective areas.

Perhaps this is an opportune moment to reveal my own present position on the Indo-European problem. I am one of a long list of people who do not believe that the available data are sufficient to establish anything very conclusive about an Indo-European homeland, culture, or people. I am comfortable with the assumptions that cognate languages evolve from a reasonably standardized protoform (provided this is allowed considerable dialectal variation) that was spoken during a certain period of human history and culture in a somewhat condensed geographic area that is probably somewhere in the historically known Indo-European-speaking area (although I know of no solid grounds for excluding the possibility that this protolanguage could have originated outside of this area).

However, regarding homelands, I differ from most Western scholars in that I find myself hard pressed to absolutely eliminate the possibility that the eastern part of this region could be one possible candidate among several, albeit not a particularly convincing one, provided this area is delimited by Southeast Central Asia, Afghanistan, present-day Pakistan, and the northwest of the subcontinent (rather than the Indian subcontinent proper). I hasten to stress that it is not that the evidence favors this area as a possible homeland—on the contrary, there has been almost no convincing evidence brought forward in support of a homeland this far east. As we shall see, the issue is that problems arise when one tries to prove that the Indo-Aryans were intrusive into this area from an outside homeland. In other words, one has almost no grounds to argue for a South Asian Indo-European homeland from where the other speakers of the Indo-European language departed, but one can argue that much of the evidence brought forward to

cument their entrance into the subcontinent is problematic. These are two separate, not obviously overlapping, issues.

Coupled with the problems that have been raised against all homeland candidates, these issues have caused me to conclude that, in the absence of radically new evidence or approaches to the presently available evidence, theories on the homeland of the Indo-European speaking peoples will never be convincingly proven to the satisfaction of even a majority of scholars. This skepticism especially applies to the theories of some Indian scholars who have attempted to promote India as a Homeland. I know of no unproblematic means of re-creating a convincing history of the Indo-Aryan speakers prior to the earliest proto-historic period, at which time they were very much situated in the northwest of the subcontinent (as, of course, were other Indo-European speakers elsewhere). I do not feel compelled to venture any opinions beyond this: how the cognate languages got to be where they were in prehistory is as unresolved today, in my mind, as it was two hundred years ago when William Jones announced the Sanskrit language connection to a surprised Europe. The Indigenous Aryan critique has certainly been one of the formative influences on my own point of view. In my opinion, this critique not only merits attention in its own right but, also, perhaps more important, must be addressed by western scholars, since it is rapidly rising in prominence in the country whose history is most directly at stake.

1

Myths of Origin

Europe and the Aryan Homeland Quest

The Indigenous Aryan debate can only be understood in the context of the history of the greater Indo-European homeland quest in Europe. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the most prominent features of this history that are most directly connected with the problems of Indo-Aryan origins. Indigenous Aryanists are almost universally suspicious of the motives surrounding the manner in which evidence was interpreted and construed by British and European scholars in the colonial period. It is important to clearly excavate the various biases that influenced the epistemes of the time before attempting to consider the evidence itself. This chapter will address some of the more blatant ideological and religious attitudes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the West that co-opted Aryan discourse in some form or fashion. Since there have been a number of studies focused on the general history of Indo-European Studies, I will focus only on the aspects of this history that are of particular relevance to the Indian side of the family.

One common characteristic of Indigenous Aryan discourse is the tendency to dwell on, and reiterate, the blatant excesses of nineteenth-century scholarship. This is perfectly understandable, and even justified, provided that one proceeds from such analyses to engage and address the more state-of-the-art views current in our present-day academic milieu. The function of this chapter is not just to tar and feather all eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholars as racists and bigots in order to reject all and any conclusions formulated in that period as a priori tainted, but to thoroughly acknowledge the extremities within Western intellectual circles of the time. Only once all that is openly on the table can one attempt to extrapolate the data from the interpretational constraints of the time and move on to reexamine it all anew, albeit from within the contextual constraints of our own. Accordingly, although massive advances were made in the nine-