The discovery of the **Indo-Europeans** is one of the most fascinating and important stories in all of modern historical studies.

- Starts with a suggestion made by **William Jones** in 1786, a British judge in India, that **Sanskrit**, Latin, and Greek share a common language of origin.

- Sanskrit: *The Vedas*
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Introduction: The Archaeology of Language

• Indo-European **historical linguistics**
  • various Eurasian languages derive originally from a single “mother tongue”
    • languages found from India to Iceland
  • root vocabulary demonstrates this well
words which are related in this way are called **cognates**

Jones’ conclusion (1786 Meeting of the Asiatick Society of Calcutta):

... no philologer could examine all three languages [Sanskrit, Latin and Greek] without believing them to have sprung from some common source which, perhaps, no longer exists.
Introduction: The Archaeology of Language

- the “mother tongue” was eventually named **Proto-Indo-European**
  - we don’t know what the original speakers called their own language — or themselves!
- produced many “daughter languages”
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Introduction: The Archaeology of Language

- ramifications of the discovery of IE civilization were earth-shattering!
  - there was once a common culture
    - a common language presupposes a common religion, family and government structures
    - not well-received among the generally white-supremacist, Eurocentric colonial powers in the day
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Introduction: The Archaeology of Language

• ramifications of the discovery of IE civilization were earth-shattering!
  • IE culture conquered much of the world
    • IE cultures include Persians, Greeks, Romans, Slavs, Philistines, Vikings, etc.
      • also their modern counterparts: Spanish conquistadors, Crusaders, European colonists, etc.
    • not IE: Sumerians, Egyptians, Hebrews, Etruscans, Assyrians, etc.
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Introduction: The Archaeology of Language

• today more than half the world’s population speaks at least one language derived from IE

• and for most of those it’s their native tongue or the official language of their nation
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

History of the Indo-Europeans

- ca.5000-2000 BCE: Indo-Europeans began expanding across Eurasia
  - displaced indigenous peoples and exterminated native cultures
    - Greeks (Greece), Romans (Italy), Slavs (Central Europe), Philistines (Canaan)
  - also displaced earlier IE invaders
    - e.g. **Dorian Invasion** into Greece, which caused a Dark Age (1100-800 BCE)
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

History of the Indo-Europeans

- Indo-Europeans in Northern Europe
  - **Common Germanic** broke up into:
    - **Germanic**: German, English, Dutch, Yiddish
    - **Scandinavian**: Swedish, Danish, Norwegian
    - also, **Celtic**: Welsh, Scots Gaelic
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

History of the Indo-Europeans

• date of this break-up is unknown
  • but it must have begun ca. 100 BCE
• the subdivision of Common Germanic followed natural (geographical) contours
  • Scandinavian: around the Baltic Sea
  • West Germanic: west of the Oder River
  • East Germanic: east of the Oder River
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

History of the Indo-Europeans

Europe at Clovis' Death
A.D. 511
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

History of the Indo-Europeans
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

History of the Indo-Europeans

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  • Scandinavian: around the Baltic Sea
  • West Germanic: west of the Oder River
  • East Germanic: east of the Oder River
    • all East German languages are now extinct!
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

The Great Consonant Shift

• it was just before this time that Common Germanic underwent the Great Consonant Shift

   It is often assumed that the change was due to contact with a non-German population. The contact could have resulted from the migration of the Germanic tribes or from the penetration of a foreign population into Germanic territory.

   A.C. Baugh, *The History of the English Language* [1993] 20
**The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics**

**The Great Consonant Shift**

- **consonants**: formed by stopping or restricting the flow of air through the mouth
  - stopping the flow of air:
    - labials (lips): p/b
    - dentals (teeth): t/d
    - gutturals (roof of mouth): g/k(c)
  - restricting the flow of air: f/v/th/ch/j
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

The Great Consonant Shift

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- **unvoiced**: p/t/k(c)
- **aspirate**: ph/th/kh(ch)
- **voiced**: b/d/g

**Great Consonant Shift:**

- **FIRST STAGE**: UNVOICED > ASPIRATE
- **SECOND STAGE**: ASPIRATE > VOICED
- **FINAL STAGE**: VOICED > UNVOICED
Grimm’s Law: Jacob Grimm (1785-1863)

- one of the Brothers Grimm
- wrote Grimm’s Fairy Tales
- the gruesome stories reflect the grim reality of non-urban life in early Western Civilization
Grimm’s Law

| LABIALS: | P > PH (F) > B > P |
| DENTALS: | T > TH (F) > D > T |
| GUTTURALS: | K/C > KH/CH (H) > G > K/C |

• by comparing Germanic and other IE words, Jacob Grimm was the first to recognize the Great Consonant Shift
  • e.g. IE *patêr- = what English word?
  • father!
  • cf. paternal, paternity, patter
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Grimm’s Law

• thus, the relationship between many Germanic and non-Germanic IE words can be reconstructed by reversing the Great Consonant Shift

• we’ll use Latin/Greek words because they have often produced recognizable English derivatives
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Grimm’s Law

• but remember the following rules:
  • change only the voiced, unvoiced and aspirate consonants
    • all other consonants (m, n, s/st, w) are not affected by Grimm’s Law and remain the same
  • vowels can change easily, e.g. patêr-/father
    • we’ll leave a blank when reconstructing them
  • liquids (l/r) can shift position
### The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

#### Grimm’s Law

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**GEN (US):** genus, genesis, genetic

“race, family”

**KIN**
GEM(I)D(US): gelid, congeal, Jell-O

“frozen”

COLD
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Grimm’s Law

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**CHOL(OS):** cholera, melancholy

“bile”

**GALL**
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Grimm’s Law

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**HOST(IS):** host, hostile, hotel/hostel

“stranger”

**GUEST**
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Grimm’s Law

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**DA(CTYLOS):** dactylic, pterodactyl

“digit, finger, extremity”

TOE
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Grimm’s Law

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DUO: dual, duo, duplicate
“pair, both”

TWO
### The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

#### Grimm’s Law

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**THE(MA):** theme, synthesis, antithesis

“act”

**DO**
# The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

## Grimm’s Law

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**POL(Y):**

- polygon, polygamy
- “many, much”

**FULL**

**FILL**
### Grimm’s Law

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**FER(O):** fertile, transfer, refer

“carry”

**BEAR**
### The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

#### Grimm’s Law

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**FRAG(ILIIS):** fragile, fragment, fracture

“crush, destroy”

**BREAK**
### The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

#### Grimm’s Law

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#### PISC(IS):
- Pisces
- Piscary
- “sea creature”

### FISH
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Grimm’s Law

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**DOM(US):** domestic, domicile, dome

“house”

**TAME**

**TIMBER**
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Grimm’s Law

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FER(VO): fervid, effervescent

“become hot”

BURN
### Grimm’s Law

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**GRAN(US):** granary, granola

“grain”

**CORN**
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Grimm’s Law

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CORN(U): unicorn, cornet

“antler”

HORN
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Grimm’s Law

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DE(N)T(ES):  
dentist, dentition, indent

“molar, incisor”

TOOTH
### The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

#### Grimm’s Law

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**AG(E)R:**

- agriculture, agronomy
- “field”

**ACRE**
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

Grimm’s Law

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TON(ITUS): intone, astonish, detonate

“loud noise”

THUNDER
# The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

## Grimm’s Law

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**FLO(RA):** florid, florist, flourescent

“flower”

**BLOOM**
### The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

#### Grimm’s Law

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**AP(O)⁻**: apostate, apostrophe, apostle

“away from”

**OFF**
### Grimm’s Law

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**PR(O)-:** progress, proceed, pro

“in place of, on behalf of”

**FOR**
• not only is IE language reconstructable, but so is IE culture
  • because we can reconstruct words from Proto-Indo-European, we can see the sorts of things and ideas that existed in early IE society (before the migrations that separated IE peoples)
• still, there’s much we don’t know
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics
The Indo-Europeans: History and Culture

What We Don’t Know About IE Culture

• no known archaeological site can be definitively linked to the Indo-Europeans
  • thus, no clear type of technology
    • horseback riding?
  • no form of writing
  • no historical events
    • the Agricultural Revolution?
What We Don’t Know About IE Culture

• no clear dating of IE history

• glossochronology?
  • unreliable because rates of language change vary greatly and are unpredictable
  • break-up of common IE culture happened ca. 5000-2000 BCE
  • not very precise!
What We Don’t Know About IE Culture

• no clear indication of where the Indo-Europeans lived

• homeland problem

• best guess: the steppes of central Russia

• the Indo-Europeans were probably nomadic
  • that, at least, would explain the absence of physical evidence
What We Know About the Indo-Europeans

• the Indo-Europeans conquered many lands and suppressed or exterminated many native peoples
  • e.g. in India, they created the caste system
The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics
The Indo-Europeans: History and Culture

What We Know About the Indo-Europeans

• their religion was polytheistic
• their chief god was “Sky-Father,” cf. Jupiter
  • IE *deiw-: “shining”; cf. Zeus, Tiw (Tuesday)
  • also cf. divine, deity, day
What We Know About the Indo-Europeans

• favored **tripartition**
  - the tendency to form or envision groups of threes
  - **social classes**: kings/warriors, priests, workers
  - **universe**: earth, sky, water/sea
    - Christian trinity: Father, Son, Holy Ghost
    - arguments/stories: beginning, middle, end
    - beginning of a race: “Ready, Get Set, Go!”
What We Know About the Indo-Europeans

• family structures:

  . . . many family words (such as ‘mother’, ‘husband’, ‘brother’) can be reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European. These include several words for ‘in-laws', which seem to have been used solely with reference to the bride. Evidence of this kind suggests that it was the wife who was given a position within the husband's family, rather than the other way round, and that the society must therefore have been patriarchal in character.

The Indo-Europeans and Historical Linguistics

The Indo-Europeans: History and Culture

What We Know About the Indo-Europeans

• **government**: kings (*reg-*, cf. regal)
• **animals**: cows (*gwous*)
  • also sheep, pigs, dogs
• **technology**: ships (*nau-*), horses (*ekwo-*)
  • also bows/arrows
• but no IE words for “bronze” or “gold”
  • nor “ocean”: IE’s were not a coastal people!
What We Know About the Indo-Europeans

There are no anciently common Indo-European words for elephant, rhinoceros, camel, lion, tiger, monkey, crocodile, parrot, rice, banyan, bamboo, palm, but there are common words, more or less widely spread over Indo-European territory, for snow and freezing cold, for oak, beech, pine, birch, willow, bear, wolf, otter, beaver, polecat, marten, weasel, deer, rabbit, mouse, horse, ox, sheep, goat, pig, dog, eagle, hawk, owl, jay, wild goose, wild duck, partridge or pheasant, snake, tortoise, crab, ant, bee, etc.

Harold H. Bender, *The Home of the Indo-Europeans*
Conclusion: Who Were the Indo-Europeans?

• Who *were* the Indo-Europeans?
  • Unknown! but linguistic evidence leaves no question they once existed

• Who *are* the Indo-Europeans?
  • all people who are born of IE stock or speak in IE language — or even anyone who is predisposed to think in “threes”
Conclusion: Who Were the Indo-Europeans?

- the Indo-Europeans were and still are the most formidable conquerors ever!
  - they imposed their culture and values across the entire globe
    - the colonization of America was an IE invasion
  - and their descendants continue to do so
    - the first man to walk on the moon was IE
    - so maybe the reason we haven’t returned is we found no natives there to displace!