# Indo-European Society and Language – an archaeolinguistic perspective

Birgit Anette Olsen

Roots of Europe

Dept. of Nordic Studies and Linguistics
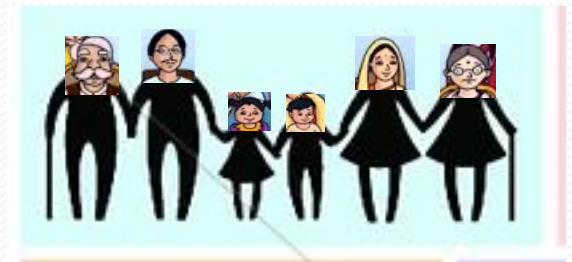
University of Copenhagen

# Indo-European society and language – an archaeolinguistic perspective

- or: What the old man does (and SAYS) is always right
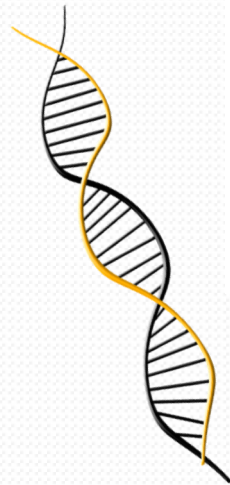
# An integrated picture of the Indo-Europeans
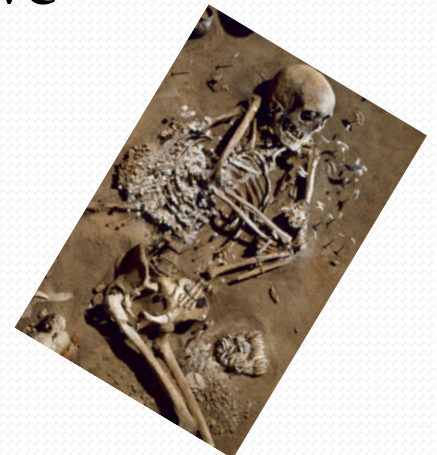
- Language
- Archaeology
- Genetics

Interfaces:

Words and texts (new philology, comparative mythology)

Words and things (archaeo-linguistics)

Words-and-texts-and-things-and-genes

# What is palaeo-linguistics/ linguistic palaeontology?

If a given word can be reconstructed on the basis of several related languages with a suitable geographical distance, regular sound change and semantic precision the corresponding concept goes back to the common culture (but beware of loanwords and parallel formations), e.g.

*$ph_2ter$- 'father': Sanskrit *pitár-*, Greek *patēr*, Latin *pater*, English father, Armenian *hayr*, Old Irish *athair* (cf. Greek *platus* : English flat; Latin *piscis* : English fish)
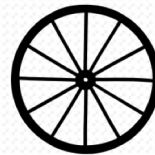
*$k^wek^wlo$- 'wheel': Sanskrit *cakrá-*, Avestan *caxra-*, Greek *kúklos*, Tocharian A *kukäl*, English wheel (cf. Latin *quod* : English what)

Pre-Indo-European: *$k^we$-$k^wlh_1o$- 'roll-roll'

# Migrations into Europe

- Haak et al. 2015 (Nature)
- Allentoft et al. 2015 (Nature): two major migrations, one from Anatolia (first farmers), one later from the Pontic-Caspian steppe: the Indo-Europeans

- Important archaeological findings
- Eulau, Saxony (2700-2400 BC): men and children: local, women: strangers
- Egtved and Skrydstrup: foreign young women (1370-1300 BC)

# Yamnaya

- From the steppes to Northern Europe

# Corded Ware

# Single grave culture (2900-2800 BC)

The gentle and peaceful matriarchal passage grave people were suppressed by the bad, patriarchal Indo-European battle-axe people

# Social structure

- Pastoralist
- Hierarchic
- Patrilocal
- Patrilinear
- Exogamous
- Belligerous

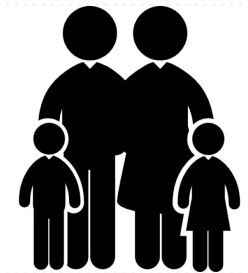# Family types

1. Patrilocal

Wife moves in with husband's family

2. Matrilocal

Husband moves in with wife's family

3. Nuclear family

Husband and wife establish a new household

# Language, genes and migrations

- In matrilocal societies language correlates with the mother's DNA
- In patrilocal societies language correlates with the father's DNA

Proto-Indo-European is the children's "father tongue"

k'lud$^h$i

# Family Highhorse

(Brhadaśva)

# Family Goldenhorse

## (Khrysippos)

# Grandpa Highhorse – déms potis – and his family

- gʷenh$_2$
- suhnús/putlós
- dʰugh$_2$tḗr
- snusós

- népōts

- neptíh$_2$

# Grandpa Highhorse's family

- Daughter
- *dʰugh₂ter-: Sanskrit duhitar-, Avestan duγədar-, Greek thugátēr, Armenian dustr, Oscan fuutir, Gaulish duxtir, English daughter, Lithuanian dukte, Old Slavic dъštь – Lycian kbatra
- - milkmaid?
- Sanskrit duhe 'gives milk'

# Grandpa Highhorse's family

- The daughters-in-law
- *snusós: Sanskrit snuṣā-, Greel nuós, Latin nurus, Armenian nu, Old Slavic snъxъ

- Male in-laws (brother-in-law, father-in-law): root *bʰendʰ- 'bind'

# Grandpa Highhorse's background

- Oldest (or second?) son
- Heir
- Three 'age sets': young, adult, old
- Married to woman from external, possibly non-Indo-European background
- Head of the family – déms potis, pater familias
- - 'someone one with power'
- Opposed to népōts 'someone without power'

# Highorse Junior and his family
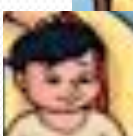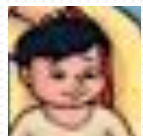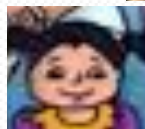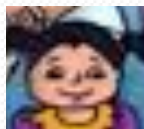
ph₂tḗr/atta-

máh₂tēr/anna-

- bʰráh₂tēr
- su̯ésōr

- gʷénh₂
- ?
- suhnús/putlós
- dʰugh₂tḗr

# Highorse Junior's family

- Brother
- *bʰráhtēr: Sanskrit bhrā́tar-, Latin frāter, Old Irish bráthair, Armenian ełbayr, English brother, Lithuanian broterelis, Old Slavic bratь, Tocharian prācar – but Greek phrātēr means 'member of a brotherhood'

- What kind of brotherhood?
- Military, based on clans and alliances

# The non-heirs



Potentially dangerous to family stability

Solution: fosterage in mother's family with special connection to <span style="color:red">mother's brother</span>

# Fosterage

**Family Goldenhorse**          **Family Highhorse**

avunculus                          nepos

avus 'grandfather' → avunculus 'mother's brother'

# Family terms by fosterage

Fam. Goldenhorse                    Fam. Highhorse

*h$_2$auh$_2$os  (avus)              *h$_2$auh$_2$os

son                    daughter              son

(avunculus)
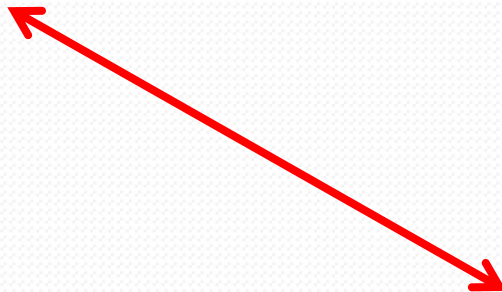
*népōts

# Grandpa and mother's brother

- *$h_2auh_2os$ is both father's father and mother's father
- "little-$h_2auh_2os$" is mother's father's son = mother's brother

Latin avunculus, German Oheim (from grandpa's home)

*$nép\bar{o}ts$ is both son's son (in the father's family) and nephew (in the mother's family)



Grandson = nephew

# Tacitus about mother's brothers

Germania 20.5: Sisters' sons are valued as much by their uncles as by their fathers. Some even consider the connection more sacred and committing and prefer it when taking hostages, thinking that in this way they may achieve a more intense emotional impact and a larger commitment to the family.

# Dawn – Aurōra - and her new family – family Highhorse



$ph_2tḗr$/atta ? 

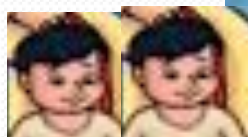$máh_2tēr$/anna ? 

pótis 

- $dai̯h_2u̯ḗr$ 
- $h_1iénh_2tēr$ 
- $ĝl̥huōs$ 

- suhnús/putlós 
- $d^hugh_2tḗr$ 

# Dawn's new family

- Specific terms for

- Husband's brothers

- Husband's sister

- Husband's brother's wife

# Husband's brother's wife

- *$h_1ienh_2ter$-: Sanskrit yātár-, Greek einatéres, Latin ianitrices, Armenian ner, Old Slavic jętry

- Perhaps originally *$h_1ieh_2nt$- 'traveller' influenced by *$d^hugh_2tér$- 'daughter'

- *$ǵ l huōs$ 'husband's sister' may be of foreign origin – women's word

# Husband's brother's wife





- *óṣā́ yāti suyújyā ráthena*
- Dawn drives hither with a well-yoked chariot (RV 1.113.14; Uṣas)

# Dawn's background

- Probably daugther of a non-Indo-European family
- Married to Highhorse Junior as a teenager
- 'lead' → 'marry', only about men, e.g. OE weddian, Eng. wed
- But how?

# Marriage by capture?



A RAID BY KURDS.

# Brideprice/dowry?



Brideprice/Dowry/Wedding Costs
(Type and Prevalence)
Scaled 2016

No exchange or reciprocal exchange of assets between families (0-3 on the scale)

Bride's family endows bride; no significant assets from groom's family (4-5 on the scale)

Net assets move from groom's family to bride/bride's family (6-9 on the scale)

Net assets move from bride's family to groom's family (10 on the scale)
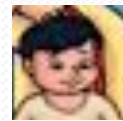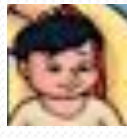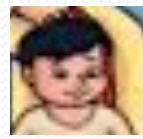
No Data

(Note: Scale captures the practice of the majority of the society; see scale description for further detail)

Project

Map by Think Spatial

VisualLightBox.com

# Good wishes for Dawn

Rigveda,
wedding hymn:

Become sovereign queen over your father-in-law; become sovereign queen over your mother-in-law. Become sovereign queen over your sister-in-law, sovereign queen over your brothers-in-law.

Make this woman here, o Indra the rewarder, possessed of good sons and of good fortune. Confer ten sons on her: make her husband the eleventh.

# Little-Wolf – Wulfila – and his family

h₂au̯h₂os

h₂an(h)ah₂-?

ph₂tḗr/atta

- máh₂tēr/anna-?

- su̯ésōr

- bʰráh₂tēr
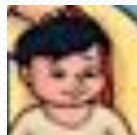
# Little-Wolf's family

- Little-Wolf is the pampered heir and oldest (or second?) grandchild of the family
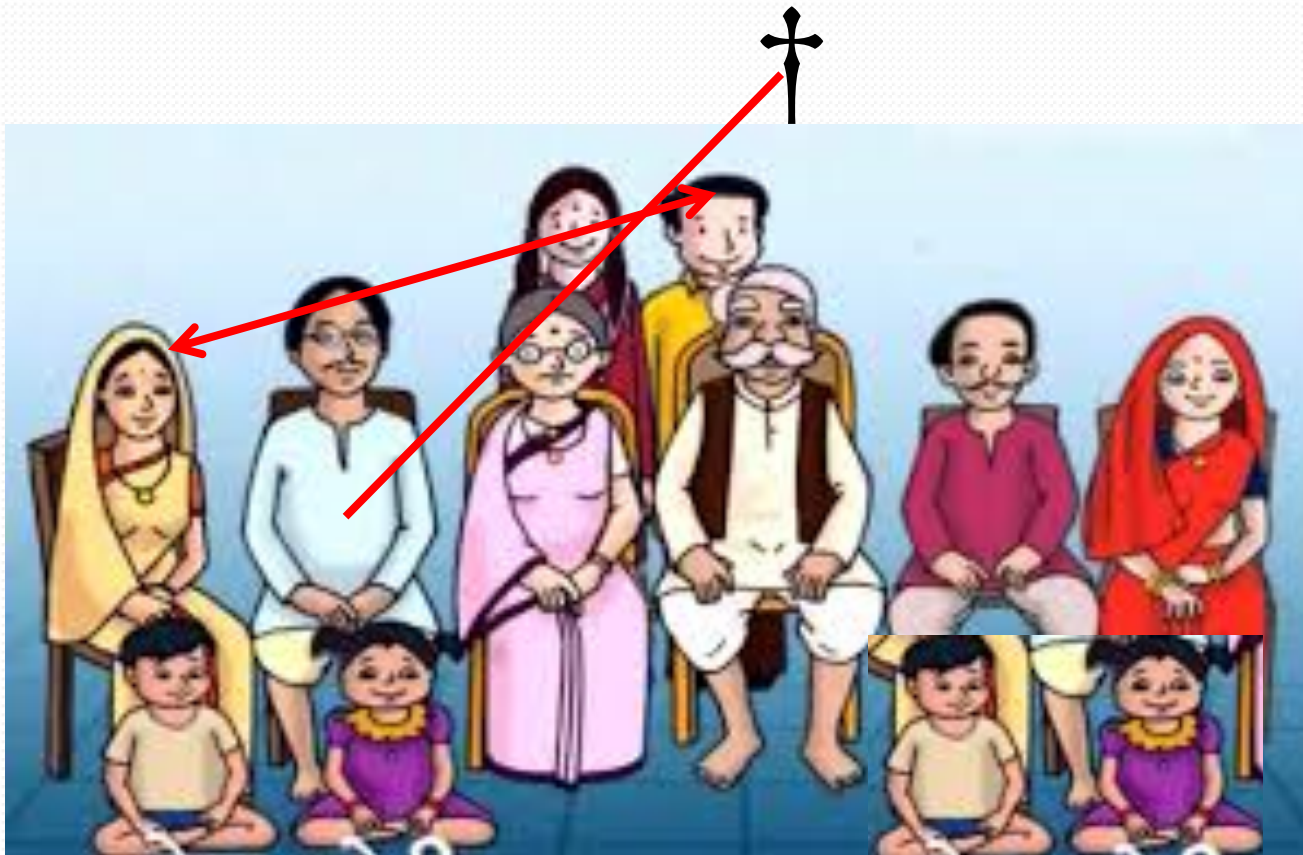- His greatest achievement so far is having survived



- Atharvaveda, prayer for a new-born boy:
- *túbhyaméva jarimanvardhatāmayáṃ mémámanyé mṛtyávo hiṃsiṣuḥ śatáṃ yé*
- For just thee, O old age, let this one grow; let not the other deaths, that are a hundred, harm him

# The widows and the fatherless

Family Highhorse

# The widows and the fatherless

- Rigveda:
- *kó vāṃ śayutrắ vidhắveva deváram*

  *maryám ná yóṣā kṛṇute sadhástha ắ*
- Who takes you to bed, like a widow her brother-in-law, or to a rendez-vous like a maiden a dashing youth?
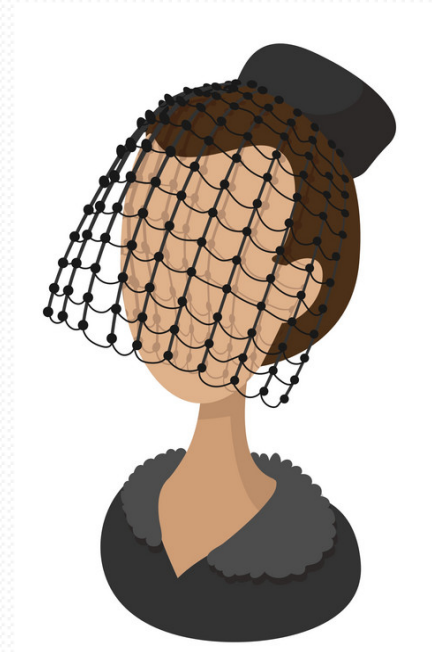
# Widows

*(h)u̯idʰh₁eu̯ah₂-*: Vedic *vidhávā-*, Avestam *viδauuā-*; Latin *vidua*; Old Prussian *widdewu*, Old Slavic *vьdova*, Old Irish *fedb*; English <span style="color:red">widow</span>, German *Witwe*
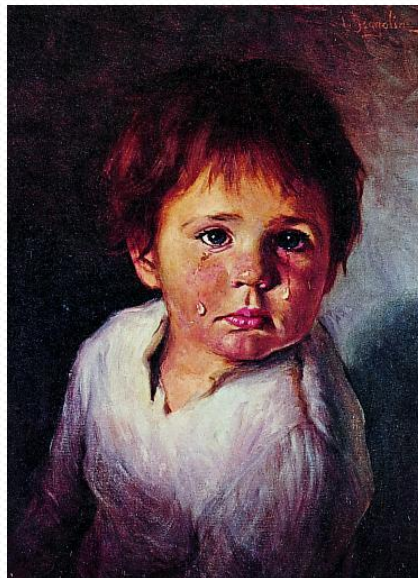
*(h)u̯idʰeh₁-* 'put aside' and 'allot'

The widow is the 'allotted one'

# The fatherless

- h$_3$orb$^h$o-: Greek orphanos, English <span style="color:red">orphan</span>

- Why from the same stem also 'work' (German <span style="color:red">Arbeit</span>, Czech robot) and 'inheritance' (German <span style="color:red">Erbe</span>)?

# Why were Indo-European languages so succesful?

- Exogamy and marriages by alliance: women were taken from afar, often from speakers of unrelated languages
- Patrilocality: the only common language of the household was that of the father
- Fosterage and youth bands: the common language of the bands was Indo-European
- Little-Wolf may have learnt his mother's language as a young child, but from the age of about 8 he communicated in Indo-European, his father-tongue, with his peers

# Little-Wolf and his fellow cubs - the key to the spread of Indo-European languages