

Indo-European Military

Overview Military defense and preparedness, among the PIE's, must not be understood as we might understand the 'armed forces' of a modern nation, or even 'elite warriors' in some far less complex society. And yet the earliest instigators of the IE people's march to the West, which was the vast macro event of, say, the third millennium B.C.E., was led by aggressive and powerful horse-rider forces, which swept muscularly across the plains of eastern Russia and Ukraine, and ultimately, we begin to think, arrived in Western Europe as conquerors, mates, and major gene-pool modifiers. The doers of this invasion were not professional soldiers, but males in search of land conquest, and creative space for their herds--which--sheep, goats, and horses--were the single sustenance for their culture. In so mobilizing themselves as manpower, it seems, they were striking out against what Marija Gimbutas, and others, describe as the Old Europe, almost as old as the tenth millennium B.C.E., in which matriarchy--but this flight of thought is speculative--dominated most of the world's major culture-systems.

The Invasions of IE peoples to the west Roughly speaking, there appear to have been hunter gatherer incursions westward from the East Asian steppes, as early as 37 000 years ago. 9 000 years ago, to pursue the sequence, farmer types from the Anatolian plains made the same westward incursion. Then in 5000-4800 B.C.E. the Yamnaya people, whose home was in the Pontic Steppes, invaded as far as Western Europe. They were an early Bronze Age people, who brought with them herding skills--practice with multiple kinds of cattle, the strategies for large scale cattle management, and above all horses, whom they had been training for over a millennium--and whom they ate, sacrificed and sacrificed to, while using them as much dreaded attack animals, to which they became proficient at attaching light and fast moving chariots. So powerful was this Yamnayan incursion from the steppes that, though it cannot precisely be called 'military,' its effect was like that of a full-scale military invasion. It is estimated that within a few hundred years, the Yamnaya contributed one half of the European genetic ancestry we know today.

Yamnayans' warlike posture The keyword to open the power of Yamnaya culture is the horse. It is well known that the PIE's, to whom the Yamnayas belonged, were masters of ridership and horse training--a Yamnaya horse could carry a rider 20-30 miles a day--and that in battle they could maneuver their horse drawn chariots with dexterity. (The Europeans of that time were not at their best in pitched warfare.) The Yamnayans were famed as 'berserk,' wild men on horse--of a fearsome Hunnish type known for devastating and quick tactics, and they fought, as Bronze Age Knights, for the immortality their epic poets would guarantee them in song.

Reading

Dolukhanov, Pavel, *The Early Slavs: Eastern Europe from the Initial Settlement to the Kievan Rus*, New York, 1996.

Wells, Spencer, *The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey*, Princeton, 2002

Discussion questions

Is our genome-transforming study one concerning erotically sensitive European farm girls, who are swept up into the power of a new culture, and by men who were, as we surmise from the evidence, light in hair color and five or six inches taller than the locals?

Are herders typically 'military' as well as trained in the ways of flocks? What kind of work do you see involved in what the IE's did as herding? What did the women do while the men herded?

Do you see the Yamnayas carrying with them, on their incursions, a language completely formed, *tout fait*, or a kind of bricolage language to which they were adding as they traveled through different language regions?