

## **Indo-Europeans Were the Most Historically Significant Nomads of the Steppes**

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This paper contrasts the historical significance of the Indo-European to the non-Indo-European nomads. The impact of such nomadic peoples as the Scythians, Sogdians, Turks, and Huns never came close to the deep and lasting changes associated with the ‘Indo-Europeanization’ of the Occident. While Indo-Europeans were not the only people of the steppes organized as war bands bound together by oaths of aristocratic loyalty and fraternity, they thoroughly colonized Europe with their original pastoral package of wheel vehicles, horse-riding, and chariots, combined with the ‘secondary-products revolution.’ In contrast, the relationship between the non-Indo-European nomads with their more advanced sedentary neighbours was one of ‘symbiosis,’ ‘conflict,’ ‘trade,’ and ‘conquest,’ rather than dominion and cultural colonization.

In this essay I don’t wish to question the great merits of Martin Hewson’s long review, “[Multicultural vs. Post-Multicultural World History: A Review Essay.](#)” of *The Uniqueness of Western Civilization* (2011). Hewson poses a very important question about the exceptionality of Indo-Europeans vis-à-vis other pastoral peoples from the steppes that I would like to address. I will also clarify why my explanation on the aristocratic spirit of Europeans does not, as Hewson says, abjure “a materialist conception of history.” By ‘Indo-Europeans’ (IE) I understand a pastoral people from the Pontic-Caspian steppes who initiated the most mobile way of life in prehistoric times, starting with the riding of horses and the invention of wheeled vehicles in the fourth millennium BC, together with the efficient exploitation of the ‘secondary products’ of domestic animals (dairy products, textiles, harnessing of animals), large-scale herding, and the invention of chariots in the second millennium. By the end of the second millennium, I argue in *Uniqueness*, these nomads had ‘Indo-Europeanized’ the Occident, but the IEs who came into Anatolia, Syria, Mesopotamia were eventually absorbed into the more advanced and populated civilizations of this region. In Neolithic Europe, the Indo-Europeans imposed

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themselves as the dominant cultural group, displacing the native languages. In Europe, they developed ‘individualizing chiefdoms’ (to be contrasted to the group-oriented chiefdoms of the East) in which the status of the chiefs was linked with the pursuit of personal status in warfare and the control of exchange networks dealing with prestige goods.

Indo-Europeans were uniquely ruled by a class of free aristocrats grouped into war-bands that were egalitarian within rather than ruled by autocrats. These bands were contractual associations of peers operating outside strictly kin ties, initiated by any powerful individual on the merits of his martial abilities. The relation between the chief and his followers was personal and based on mutual agreement: the followers would volunteer to be bound to the leader by oaths of loyalty wherein they would promise to assist him while the leader would promise to reward them from successful raids. Indo-Europeans prized heroic warriors striving for individual fame and recognition, often with a ‘berserker’ style of warfare. This aristocratic culture was the primordial source sustaining the unparalleled cultural creativity and territorial expansionism of Western civilization. The *Iliad*, *Beowulf*, *The Song of Roland*, including such Irish, Icelandic and Germanic Sagas as *Lebor na hUidre*, *Njals Saga*, *Gisla Saga Sursonnar*, *The Nibelungenlied* recount the heroic deeds and fame of aristocrats. These are the earliest voices from the dawn of Western civilization.

In my book, I argue that the West has always been in a state of divergence from the rest of the world’s cultures, characterized by persistent creativity from ancient to modern times across all fields of human thought and action. Within every generation one finds individuals searching for new worlds, new religious visions, and new styles of painting, architecture, music, science, philosophy, and literature—in comparative contrast to the non-Western world where cultural outlooks tended to persist for long periods with only slight variations and revisions. Using Charles Murray’s, *Human Accomplishment, Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences, 800 BC to 1950*,<sup>1</sup> I point out, for example, that ninety-seven percent of accomplishment in the sciences occurred in Europe and North America from 800 BC to 1950. In a subsequent publication, I note that around ninety-five percent of all explorers in history were European (2012). It is my claim that the ultimate roots of this creativity should be traced back to the aristocratic warlike culture of the Indo-Europeans.

But Hewson wonders “how unusual the Indo-Europeans were” in comparison to “many nomadic arid-zone peoples who, like Turks, or Arabs, or

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<sup>1</sup> This is the first book (2003) to systematically arrange “data that meet scientific standards of reliability and validity” for the purpose of evaluating the story of human accomplishments across cultures, by calculating the amount of space allocated to these individuals in reference works, encyclopedias, and dictionaries.

Mongols, managed to conquer adjacent sedentary peoples?” He brings to attention Christopher Beckwith’s observation that “the key institution of the steppe was the war band or *comitatus* bound together by oaths of [aristocratic] loyalty and fraternity.” “Unlike Duchesne, Beckwith holds that there was a common central Eurasian culture, encompassing all the steppe peoples.” True, I only made passing references to other steppe warriors, suggesting that these nomads “came much later” after their sedentary neighbors (and the Europeans themselves) had attained a far more advanced level of civilization (than the Neolithic cultures encountered by IEs) over which “they were unable to superimpose their culture” (347). Beckwith’s book, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (2009), which came out while I was writing *Uniqueness*, argues indeed that “the most crucial element of the early form of the Central Eurasian Culture Complex was the sociopolitical-religious ideal of the heroic lord and his *comitatus*, a war band of his friends sworn to defend him to the death” (12). Beckwith sees these war bands throughout the steppes, rather than exclusively among Indo-European speakers. Yet, all in all, what he says actually solidifies my view. He agrees that the *comitatus* “goes all the way back to the Proto-Indo-European times,” and that “the true *comitatus* is unknown among non-Central Eurasian peoples.” Moreover, he says, if indirectly and without cognizant elaboration, that the Ural-Altai steppe peoples evolved in a direction heavily influenced by the bordering Asian civilizations. There is a section on “the Islamicized *Comitatus*” (23), which is about “Central Asian influence on the Arab Islamic world,” *but* which informs us that the “*comitatus* system” was “Islamicized as the *mamluk* system,” wherein the *mamluks* or warriors were transformed into “a new imperial guard corps that was loyal to the ruler personally” (25). Now, Beckwith still thinks that this system was akin to the *comitatus*, but the fact is that the steppe warriors who were transformed into *mamluks* can no longer be categorized as ‘aristocratic’ even if they were bound by a strong ethos of camaraderie with their peers, inasmuch as they were not free men but slaves purchased to become loyal Muslim fighters for the personal use of the Sultan. While they were eligible to attain the highest positions, and were trained with a code that emphasized courage, horsemanship and other warrior skills, they were not true peers but servants of the Sultan ([Waterson 2006](#)).

Beckwith is clearer about the fate of the pastoral nomads and “natural warriors” known as the Hsiung-nu on the frontiers of China in the third century BC; their inability to impose themselves over the civilized Chinese, and the eventual success of the armies of the Han Dynasty “in reducing the power of the Hsiung-nu considerably and spreading Chinese culture into the steppe zone” (87). In contrast, as Beckwith shows, the migrations of the Indo-Europeans, particularly during the “second wave around the seventeenth century BC, in which Indo-European speaking people established themselves

in parts of Europe, the Near East, India, and China,” were far more influential in their effects on the lands occupied. “By the beginning of the first millennium BC much of Eurasia had already been Indo-Europeanized, and most of the rest of it had come under very heavy Indo-European cultural and linguistic influence” (30). At the same time, and also in line with my observations, Beckwith points out that the Indo-Europeans who migrated into the Anatolian highlands during the second millennium were eventually assimilated to the native Hatti culture, “growing up learning Hatti customs and language.” The Hittite rulers managed to maintain strong components of their Indo-European language for half a millennium, “but at the end of the Bronze Age in the early twelfth century BC their kingdom was overwhelmed by the convulsions ascribed to the little-known Sea Peoples” (38-9). This outcome should be contrasted to the linguistic situation in the Greek mainland after the Mycenaean order ended around the same time, which remained Indo-European and would go on to produce the Homeric epics, which recounted the aristocratic and heroic ethos of the Mycenaeans. In the case of India, the Indo-Europeans would give India its national epic, the Mahabharata, with its depictions of the feats of the early warlike immigrants who herded cattle and fought from horse-drawn chariots. At the same time, as Beckwith notes, “the local peoples of India heavily influenced” these warlike newcomers, “who mixed with them in every way conceivable, eventually producing a new hybrid culture” (42).<sup>2</sup> By the late Vedic period (after 1000BC) the power of the aristocratic assemblies started to be replaced by a new kind of politics centered on the chief priest, the courtiers, and palace officials (Kulke and Rothermund 1995: 33-50).

Moreover, Beckwith is aware that it was the Proto-Indo-Europeans, not the Turks or the Mongols, who originated and developed the steppe toolkit, horse riding, wheel vehicles, chariots and, I would add, the ‘secondary-products revolution.’ Unfortunately, he barely writes about the nature and impact of these inventions on Neolithic Europe and the ancient world, other than making quick observations and stating that the Indo-Europeans “possessed a powerful dynamism” (320). About 150 pages of *Uniqueness* are dedicated to the Indo-European aristocratic culture, styles of fighting, heroic poetry,

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<sup>2</sup> In arguing that Beckwith’s views on non-Indo-European nomads *cannot* be seen as a challenge to my argument on the unique impact of the Indo-Europeans, I am not implying that his views on the Indo-Europeans support my view; in fact, he wrongly says that the non-Indo-European cultures (in Neolithic Europe) “had an equally revolutionary impact on the Indo-Europeans,” through the generation of creoles via intermarriage and through linguistic symbiosis (33). He offers no further words on this; but, as it is, the Indo-Europeans spread their languages throughout Europe, and the borrowings were just that, borrowings, rather than eventual subordination to the natives, as was the case outside Europe.

migratory movements, and the way their barbarian energies and tribal divisions were sublimated into more cohesive political entities (Polis), and the connections of this aristocratic culture to the cultural flourishing of archaic and classical Greece. I also show how Macedonia and Rome were rooted in the same Indo-European culture, and the way they revived the cultural and territorial dynamic exhibited by the classical Greeks. Similarly, I emphasize the aristocratic feudal polities of the Germanic peoples and how they continued the Western legacy through the Middle Ages.

Beckwith does not even use the term ‘aristocratic’ but describes the comitatus as a group of peer warriors, in the course of which he erroneously assumes that the development of organized warfare in Greece and Rome, and the rise of the *polis* and the Roman senate, signalled the end of the aristocratic mind set. We need to keep in mind the aim of Beckwith’s book, which is to challenge the portrayal of the steppes peoples as unduly barbaric and brutal. In this effort, he concludes with a rather bland view of ‘Central Eurasians’ as a people who were “exactly as all other known peoples on earth”: “urban and rural, strong and weak, fierce and gentle, abstainers and drinkers, lovers and haters, good, bad, and everything in between” (355).) My view, rather, is that the Indo-Europeans were a highly influential people.

Beckwith’s book, of course, is only a single source; nevertheless, the scholarship supports the view I suggested, as I will try to show here by way of a summation of two key books with plentiful chapters by the foremost experts, which address in particular the relationship between the nomads and their sedentary neighbors, namely, *Mongols, Turks and Others: Eurasian nomads and the sedentary world*, edited by Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran (2005), and *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, edited by Denis Sinor (1990). It will be argued that the impact of non-Indo-Europeans never came close to the deep and lasting changes associated with the ‘Indo-Europeanization’ of the Occident.

From the ‘Introduction’ to the *Mongols, Turks and Others*, by the editors, we learn that the relationship between the nomads and their neighbors, from ancient times through the modern era, was one of ‘symbiosis,’ ‘conflict,’ ‘trade’ and ‘conquest,’ *but* never dominion and cultural colonization (by the nomads) in a culturally defining way. Rather, “the ongoing contact between steppe and sown in Eurasia deeply affected the nomads themselves: their economy, political frameworks, religious life, expression and methods of warfare” (1). While the arrival of the Indo-Europeans involved symbiosis as well, a far stronger case can be made that they thoroughly colonized Europe as ‘pure nomads’ with their new pastoral package of wheel vehicles, horse-riding, and chariots, combined with their aristocratic-libertarian ethos, which was superimposed on the natives. Gideon Shelach, in his chapter on the pastoral contacts of Northeast China during 1100-600 BCE, says that interaction was

intensified bringing an increasing flow of goods and ideas, as attested by the archeological record, but overall, he adds, the civilization of China and the pastoral peoples of this period maintained their separate identities.

Regarding the Cimmerians and Scythians who came into contact with their Near Eastern neighbors in the eighth and seventh centuries BC, Askold Ivantchik is very clear that these two ethnically-related peoples never migrated to the Near East, but only carried raids, including military alliances and dynastic marriages, for limited periods without ever breaking off contact with their homeland situated to the north of the Caucasian mountain range (118-120). Similarly, Naomi Standen observes in her study of the Liao peoples bordering north China in the 10<sup>th</sup> century that they were not interested in permanent administrative control over a piece of territory but looked to China as a raiding opportunity when trade was denied. These observations should not surprise us inasmuch as we are looking at nomads at a time in history in which their sedentary neighbors were occupying well-developed and populated territories which could not be easily contemplated as frontiers to be colonized. Michal Biran makes the general observation that the nomads who actually conquered Muslim lands “either converted to Islam before the conquest, as had, for example, the Qarakhanids and the Seljuqs or, even if they conquered Muslim lands as ‘infidels,’ after decades in a mostly Muslim territory they eventually embraced Islam” (175). Yehoshua Frenkel similarly argues, in his study of the relationship between the Turks and neighboring Muslims, during 830-1055, that despite Islamic ‘dependence’ on the recruitment of Turkish soldiers to achieve effective government along the borders, and despite the number of Turks who became involved in Islamic politics, it was the Seljuk Turks who converted to Islam around the year 1000 (204-208). The Turks were Islamicized; consequently, I would add, the outcome of the Turkic conquests of Asia Minor, the Balkans, and the Indian subcontinent was the expansion of Islam rather than Turkic nomadism (which had long come under sedentary influences).<sup>3</sup>

*The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* likewise shows that the peoples of the steppes did not have a lasting impact on sedentary societies. In this book with fifteen chapters, there are no countering facts or arguments which can be said to falsify the exceptionality of the Indo-Europeans in being

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<sup>3</sup> Carter Findley’s *The Turks* corroborates this assessment in the case of the Turko-Mongols further to the east within China’s sphere of influence; he notes, first, that “interactions with non-nomadic peoples profoundly affected the steppes” (26-7); the Turko-Mongol conception of authority came under the influence of the Chinese idea of “heaven’s mandate” (31-2); the “trade-tribute empires” of the Turks around 552-630 and 682-745 CE were centralized, hierarchical orders wherein the rulers claimed to represent and embody the mandate of heaven (37-43).

the first steppe people to create sedentary cultures of their own, as the dominating elites, inside European lands. We learn from A. I. Melyukova that the Scythians and Sarmatians, from the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, carried numerous military expeditions into Western Asia from their location north of the Black Sea (99-100). However, the “relatively long period spent by the Scythians in the countries of Western Asia exerted a strong influence on Scythian society and culture.” The “Scythian chiefs learned to appreciate luxury and *strove to imitate oriental sovereigns*” (100, my italics). The aristocratic ideal of Indo-Europeans known as ‘first among equals’ or *primus inter pares*, which was exhibited by the Mycenaeans and was vividly expressed in Homer’s *Iliad*, was the root base of Greece’s creation of the *Polis* and a culture characterized by competitive poetical displays, the Olympics, Hoplite Warfare, and the dialogical style of its philosophers. It was also the ethos that inclined the Romans to create a republican form of government, and the Germanic barbarians to transform their warlike organization (that Tacitus called *comitatus*) into a feudal contractual form of rule based on mutual obligations by lords and vassals. The Scythians never managed to develop (out of their tribal /barbarian republics) a form of ‘civilized’ government in a republican direction. Notwithstanding their famed stand against an enormous Persian invasion about 514 or 512 BC, by way of partisan warfare, they never established dominion over their (increasingly) more advanced neighbors in the Near East. Instead, around the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, the Scythians were dissolved, losing their ethnic distinction (108). The Sarmatians suffered a similar fate in the fourth century AD, dealt by the Huns.

Ying-Shih Yu’s chapter on the Hsiung-nu details in dramatic fashion the general observations of Beckwith, how “a proud and defiant people” were forced to accept submission to the Han leadership sometime in the first century BC, leading to the “Northern Hsiung-nu’s collapse in the eight decade of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD” (148). What about the dreaded Huns? “No people of Inner Asia, not even the Mongols, have acquired in European historiography a notoriety similar to the Huns,” says Denis Sinor. They “seriously challenged the equilibrium of the Western world [...] at a time when...the Roman Empire had to contend with serious internal disorders” (177). The raid of 395-6 into Armenia, Syria, and Northern Mesopotamia traumatized the inhabitants; their destruction of the Burgundian kingdom in the 430s “caught the imagination of generations” (188). Yet, the Huns did not exhibit any grand political designs, did not establish any permanent control over any sedentary civilization, but remained “a nation of warriors” always dependent on pastures available to their horses (204).

Colin Mackerras tells us that the Uighurs, who in the period before 744 excelled in horsemanship and archery, abandoned their nomadic past as they were impacted by the Central Kingdom. The Sogdians introduced them to a

religion with a settled clergy and temples, and, “as a result, the nomadic life became more and more difficult” (340). A similar fate awaited the Kitans, according to Herbert Franke. The period of the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD “showed a slow but inexorable change of the Kitan people through Chinese cultural influence.” Many Kitan emperors and their court aristocrats adopted Buddhism and became pious protectors of the Buddhist faith (409). Similarly, the Jurchen people under the Yuan and Ming dynasties were “absorbed into Chinese civilization and lost their national identity” (422).

“The Mongols were by far the most successful of the steppe warriors,” writes Hildinger (109). This is a generally held view, and it is true enough, but only so long as we pretend that the Indo-Europeans were merely a linguistic group, which is a widely shared perception.<sup>4</sup> The Mongols were an influential nomadic people who created the largest contiguous empire in history encompassing Mongolia, China, Korea, Russia, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Transoxiana, Syria, and the Caucasus. *However*, the impact of the Mongols was felt in the main during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries during the conquests and while the empire lasted. Moreover, by the time the Mongol and Turkic tribes experienced the leadership of Temüjin (1165-1227), the Mongolian steppe world was far from the earlier “blood relationships between equals,” but was instead dominated by a single supra-tribe known as the *Khamag Mongol Ulus* or the All Mongol State. This State dissolved old tribal lines by regrouping them into an army based on a decimal system (units of 10, 100, and 1000); a process which was aided by a bureaucracy staffed in large measure by educated elites obtained from the sedentary conquered populations (May 2012; Morgan 1986). The most significant legacy of the *Pax Mongolica* was the creation of a continuous order across a vast territory, easing the dissemination of goods and ideas throughout Eurasia—in addition to the mayhem and terror they brought to China, Persia, Russia, all of which suffered mass exterminations and famine.

The historical experiences of these steppe nomads stands in sharp contrast to the actual historical trajectory of the Indo-Europeans. Starting from their homelands in present-day Ukraine, the IEs successfully colonized the entire

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<sup>4</sup> Hildinger thus writes: “The Scythians and the related Sarmatians are the first steppe nomads of whom we have any real knowledge” (33). None of the sources/authors I cite here acknowledge them as a steppe people; *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* has a chapter (by A. K. Narain) with the title “Indo-Europeans Inner Asia,” which opens with the sentence: “No barbarians survived so long and became so famous as those who are conventionally known as the Indo-Europeans” (151). But this chapter is on the IEs who migrated eastwards such as the Tokharian speakers and others of the Iranian ethnos, covering the period from the second century BC to the fifth century AD. The IEs who colonized the entire European continent are ignored; in *Uniqueness* I documented this academic tendency to view the IEs as if they were merely a linguistic group.

European continent retaining while civilizing their elemental aristocratic ways. During the course of their migratory movements they exhibited a variety of cultural and linguistic forms, including the Yamnaya culture (3400-2300), which spread across the Caspian region and moved into the Danube region; followed by the [Corded Ware](#) or Battle Axe culture, which extended itself across northern Europe from the Ukraine to Belgium after 3000BC; followed by the [Bell-Beaker](#) culture, which grew within Europe and spread further westwards into Spain and northwards into England and Ireland between 2800-1800BC.<sup>5</sup> The [Indo-Europeans](#) also spread eastwards across the steppes as far as the Tarim Basin in present-day Xinjiang, China. While these groups did have important influences on Chinese ancient culture, they were eventually absorbed by other non-IE cultures.<sup>6</sup> The ones who migrated into the Greek mainland went on to create the *first* Indo-European ‘civilization’: Mycenae. The Mycenaean warriors comprised the background to archaic and classical Greece. The Macedonians rejuvenated the martial virtues of Greece after the debilitating Peloponnesian War, and went on to conquer Persia and create the basis for the intellectual harvest of Alexandrian Greece. The third barbarian Indo-Europeans who developed a civilization were the early Romans who founded an aristocratic republic, preserved the legacy of Greece, and cultivated their own Latin tradition. The fourth were the Celtic-Germanic peoples who interacted for some centuries with the Romans, and then continued the Western legacy. Despite the eventual decline of classical Greece, the stagnation and break-up of the Hellenistic Kingdoms (out of the Western cultural orbit), and the aging despotism of Imperial Rome, the dynamic spirit of the West was sustained several times over thanks to the infusion of new sources of aristocratic peoples brought on by fresh waves of barbarians.

Andrei Znamenski, in his [review](#) of *Uniqueness*, says that I seem to understand well that “the aristocratic libertarian spirit of military democratic chiefdoms” (605) was not uniquely Indo-European, but that I only make passing references to other peoples of the steppes, and only briefly mention the native warriors of the northwestern coast of North America with their own decentralized quests for heroic deeds. Fair enough, I did not engage in any

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<sup>5</sup> See the appropriately titled book by Marija Gimbutas, *The Kurgan Culture and the Indo-Europeanization of Europe, Selected Articles from 1952 to 1993*, edited by Miriam Dexter and K. Jones-Bley. Washington D.C.: The Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph Series No. 18 (1997). I have recently learned of another similar title, with close to 30 articles, entitled: *The Indo-Europeanization of Northern Europe*, edited by Karlene Jones-Bley and Martin Huld (1996). No such titles exist for the IEs who went to the East, and for non-IEs nomads.

<sup>6</sup> See the interesting collection of papers in Victor H. Mair, ed., “The ‘Silk Roads’ in Time and Space.” Sino-Platonic Papers 228 (July 2012), [http://www.sino-platonic.org/complete/spp228\\_silk\\_roads.pdf](http://www.sino-platonic.org/complete/spp228_silk_roads.pdf)

comparative assessment of the individualist-oriented ethos of Indo-European chiefdoms and the similarly organized chiefdoms of North America, but rather compared the former with the group-oriented chiefdoms of other non-European cultures. Znamenski provides some revealing examples of the American Indians of the Plains (Comanche, Cheyenne and others) as “nomadic horse riders whose lifestyle and migration patterns closely resembled those of the Indo-Europeans” (606). The Plains chief, far from being an autocrat, sustained his status as a leader performing glorious deeds in the sight of his competitive peers.<sup>7</sup> These societies collapsed due to European colonization, and so Znamenski writes: “we will certainly never know if these Plains ‘military democracies’ would have evolved into something that would resembled the Athenian polis.” He also wonders why the Indo-Europeans who stayed in their homeland in the Ukraine did not evolve in the same direction as the ones who migrated to Europe. These examples tell us, he adds, that the connection from the aristocratic culture of the Indo-Europeans and the Athenian polis, Roman Republic, or the rise of the West generally, was “far from linear” (607).

This brings me to Hewson’s impression that “Duchesne eschews a materialist conception of history”. I understand that Hewson’s main point is that I paid little attention to certain materialistic factors such as family patterns and farming regimes that may have played a significant role. Still, I cannot help responding that the portrayal offered of the Indo-Europeans was materialistically focused on their use of wheel vehicles, domestication and riding of horses, their “secondary products revolution,” and their geographical location in the steppes. The aristocratic ethos was explained, if too concisely, in connection to this pastoral lifestyle, which included fierce competition for grazing rights, constant alertness in the defense of one’s portable wealth, and an expansionist disposition in a world in which competing herdsman were motivated to seek new pastures as well as tempted to take the movable wealth of their neighbors. This life of horsemanship, conflict and raids, brought to the fore certain mental dispositions, including aggressiveness and individualism, in the sense that each individual, in this hyper-masculine oriented atmosphere, needed to become as much a warrior as a herds-man. The perception that this is an idealistic view possibly comes from my central argument that the fight to the death for pure prestige was the primordially defining trait of aristocratic

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<sup>7</sup> While I did find support for this argument in the two books I consulted, namely, *The Comanches* (1952) by Ernest Wallace & Adamson Hoebel, and *Indians of the Plains* (1963) by Robert Lowie (which Znamenski references, in addition to two other books I did not find ready at hand), there is more to an aristocratic way of life than political organization; as I argued, among the IEs, this aristocratic way was reflected in the nature of their gods, their heroic poetry, mythologies, individuated names, dressing styles, and burials.

virtue. While I dedicated a section defending the findings of socio-biology, I added to this perspective the neo-Hegelian argument that a warrior's ability to overcome his natural instinct for survival, or his fear of death (in the pursuit of individual renown in competition with one's peers) was the beginning of Western self-consciousness and freedom. I contrasted the social-seeking desires of aristocrats with the ordinary pursuit of survival by humans generally. But now I agree with Kevin MacDonald, as he pointed out in his excellent review-article, that the *non-materialist* striving for prestige and honor can also be seen within an evolutionary perspective. Indo-European individuals demonstrated their worthiness as men of virtue by risking their life for immaterial prestige, but, as my own argument shows, the Indo-Europeans did achieve great success as a genetic group; hence, in the words of MacDonald: "prestige and honor among one's fellows is in fact typically linked with material possessions and reproductive success. Like other psychological traits related to aggression and risk-taking, the pursuit of social prestige by heroic acts is a high risk/high reward behavior, where evidently the rewards sufficiently outweighed the risks over a prolonged period of evolutionary time" (2011: 51).

No linear logic was intended by this emphasis on the IE aristocratic way of life. The decision to trace the origins of Western uniqueness back to the prehistoric Indo-Europeans was meant to show that "the beginnings" of the West were not in the never-explained "Greek Miracle". "In the beginning" we witness warriors thirsting for individual glory, not philosophers seeking to advance original explanations of the universe. I defended at length the varying contributions of past Eurocentric historians on the rise of the West, their emphasis on Europe's (and Greece's) geographical uniqueness, as well as their respective efforts to define and trace the rise of the West. The West did not rise point blank with the Indo-Europeans. There were many successive phases and uneven developmental dynamics with their own antecedent conditions and logics coming from different social spheres, military competition, the proximity of seas, the growth of scientific knowledge, political dynamics, innovations, literary influences, and more. For example, there was the Catholic Church's organizational structure and scholastic method of reasoning, the Gregorian reform and the systematization of Canon law, the contractual and decentralized character of feudalism combined with the separation of society into autonomous corporate bodies, the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment. It would be extremely simple-minded to think that these developments were logically entailed in the aristocratic way of life of prehistoric Indo-Europeans, even if the West experienced renewed Indo-European beginnings with the Macedonians, the archaic Romans, and the Celtic-Germanic barbarians. The West is full of transitions, renaissances, and novelties, each of which was embedded to complex configurations of 'internal'

and ‘external’ factors, unintended consequences, struggles, charismatic personalities, and environmental circumstances. At the same time, throughout these movements one finds the West’s spirited and restless culture of aristocratic individualism. This does not mean, as Hewson inclines, that the continuous creativity of Westerners was the work of the aristocratic class per se. The meaning of aristocratic honor and excellence changed considerably from its barbarian origins through classical Greek times, Christianization, and bourgeois entrepreneurship. My book focuses on ancient Greece and medieval times with only marginal references to modern times,<sup>8</sup> but in a subsequent article, “[A Civilization of Explorers](#),” I tried to capture this aristocratic soul in the history of modern exploration, arguing that i) almost all the explores in history were European, and that ii) in the history of modern exploration we can detect in its pure form (and in a modern, peaceful way) this aristocratic desire to explore for its own sake insomuch as explorers were no longer driven by a desire for riches, religious conversion or even scientific knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph Schumpeter’s concept of [creative destruction](#) captures this Faustian personality in the world of business; true capitalist entrepreneurs employed their rationality for the joy of creation, to fight off competitors and conquer markets. Robber barons were creative destroyers of the existing economic conditions (Nietzsche: “Whoever must be a creator always annihilates”). This type of capitalism personified the opposite of preservation, stagnation, the status quo: “Capitalism, then, is by nature a form or method of economic change and not only never is but never can be stationary...” But Schumpeter was not optimistic, and under the influence of Weber’s iron cage, saw a future in which capitalism would be replaced by a panoply of bureaucratic bodies, collectivities, regulations, and masses of [politically correct] administrators concerned with orderly management, regularity and continuity—even as the society continued to innovate and promote development.

<sup>9</sup> As I also noted in this article: “The same spirit that drove Europeans to discover the world drove Luther in his uncompromising challenge to the papacy’s authority: “Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.” It drove the “intense rivalry” that characterized the art of the Renaissance, among patrons, collectors, artists, and that culminated in the persons of Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, and Titian. It motivated Shakespeare to outdo Chaucer, creating more than 120 characters, ‘the most memorable personalities that have graced the theater—and the psyche—of the West.’”

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