

**THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST  
TRANSCRIPTS**

**EPISODE 9:  
WHO WERE THE INDO-EUROPEANS?**

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## **EPISODE 9: WHO WERE THE INDO-EUROPEANS?**

Welcome to the History of English podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language and the people who contributed to that history. Over the last few episodes, we have looked at the oldest known ancestor of English – the ancient Indo-European language called ‘Proto-Indo-European’ by linguists. We looked at how the language was discovered and then how it was reconstructed. We also looked at some of the reconstructed words and the connections many of these words have to Modern English.

But who were these original Indo-European people? As I have mentioned before, a large portion of this ancient language was reconstructed during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but linguists were not entirely sure who these people were. Many of them had their own opinions and guesses, but there were so many theories that I probably couldn’t explore them all in this episode. And many of these theories were wrong – sometimes really wrong. And even today, this remains one of the more controversial topics in linguistics. There are still many differences of opinions as to the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans and the specific manner in which they migrated to the point where the various Indo-European languages are spoken today. And I am certainly not going to resolve all of these debates in this episode. But I do believe that a consensus as to the original homeland has started to emerge. And that is the view that I am going to present here. And while some linguists and historians may still disagree with some aspects of this theory, the theory that I am presenting in this episode is the majority view today.

Keep in mind that the evidence we have to solve the mystery of the original Indo-Europeans is very limited. For much of the history of antiquity, we can rely upon the written accounts of the Greeks, the Romans and the few other literate people of the time who kept and maintained written records. But the Indo-Europeans were the ancient ancestors of the Romans and the Greeks. So we don’t really have written records of these people. We have to rely upon clues within the original Indo-European language itself, and then we have to compare those clues to the archaeological evidence. Eventually, by putting all of these pieces together, we can at least narrow down the options to a general location and a general time frame in which these people lived.

One other quick note before I jump into this topic. As with the other episodes of this podcast, I have utilized lots of resources for this episode. But there is one particular resource which was invaluable, and I wanted to make a specific mention of it here. It’s a recent book by David W. Anthony called “The Horse The Wheel and Language: How Bronze-Age Riders from the Eurasian Steppes Shaped the World.” Anthony is an archaeologist by profession, but he has spent a tremendous amount of time studying the origin of the original Indo-Europeans. And his book links the linguistic evidence with the archaeological and the other physical evidence to determine where and when these people lived. So check out his book if you want more information about this topic.

And let me also mention that since we are dealing with the very distant past, I am electing to use the traditional terms BC and AD to distinguish dates. I realize that modern historians prefer to use BCE and CE, but those terms can get confusing in a podcast. So I will use the more traditional BC and AD.

So let's look at the evidence. In order to analyze the clues to determine who the Indo-Europeans were, we really need to get a handle on the geography of Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Obviously, the best way to that is by reference to a map. And you can find a map at the [HistoryofEnglishPodcast.com](http://HistoryofEnglishPodcast.com). Just click on Episode 9. But since this is a podcast and many of you listening may not have a map to look at while listening to this episode, I am going to try to set the scene for you.

Let me begin by noting that the history of the early tribes of Europe and Asia is really an East-West history – not so much a North-South history. What I mean by that is that for centuries and centuries the movement of peoples between Europe, Asia and North Africa was eastward and westward. Trading routes and migratory routes were along these east-west routes. The Silk Road for example was the primary trading route which extended from East Asia to the Mediterranean. From ancient China, the trading routes moved westward through ancient Persia into the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. But further north, in northern Eurasia, nomadic peoples also moved east-west along the Eurasian steppes which are the vast grasslands that extend from eastern Europe all the way to eastern Asia. These people included later groups like the Huns and the Monguls, and probably included the very first Indo-Europeans.

But why was the movement east-west, and not north-south? Well the answer to that question lies in geography because there are a series of natural barriers extending across Europe and Asia which inhibit north-south travel. And these barriers extend from western Europe all the way to China.

The most obvious of these barriers lies to the west, and it's the Mediterranean Sea. This vast sea which separates Europe from Africa prevented significant migrations or movements from one side to the other. Certainly, there were traders who crossed the Mediterranean by boat or ship. But in these ancient times, large movements or migrations of people across vast seas or oceans was impractical, if not impossible. Remember that in ancient times, many of these people were herders who traveled with their animals – sheep, oxen, and other animals. It wasn't really possible for tribes of people to cross a large body of water with the animals in tow.

So the Mediterranean is an obvious barrier inhibiting north-south travel. As we move eastward, the next natural barrier lies just to the northeast of the Mediterranean, and that's the Black Sea. This oval shaped sea is connected to the Mediterranean by a waterway which forms the dividing line between Europe and Asia.

Then as we look eastward from the Black Sea, we have another sea – The Caspian Sea. And as we move eastward from the Caspian Sea, we find the vast deserts and arid regions of central Asia. This includes modern Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. And even though some limited travel

through these regions was possible, the rugged and dry terrain made it very difficult for any extended period of travel by large groups of people and animals.

So we have these three seas which I mentioned – the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. And these seas together form part of the series of obstacles which limited north-south travel in ancient times. So if these seas are natural barriers inhibiting north-south travel – what about the areas in between them? Why not just travel through the area in between those seas? Well, with regard to the area between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, the answer is that there is another barrier – the Caucasus Mountains. This mountain range extends eastward from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea, and it basically creates a wall between these two seas. The Caucasus Mountains are the home of modern Georgia, Azerbaijan and southern Russia. Once again, it was very difficult for a tribe of people together with animals, wagons, and other belongings, to cross a mountain range.

But what about the area between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean? Well, this was really the only good place to cross from north to south. This narrow crossing point, which includes the Bosphorus Strait, is not blocked by a rugged mountain range or other natural barrier. And not surprisingly, the areas of Europe just to the north of this area known as the Balkans is the location of the oldest settlements in Europe. This passage became tied to the trading routes coming from the far East and from Egypt (in north Africa). All of these trade routes met just south of the area between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean in what came to be known as the Middle East, also known as ‘the crossroads of the ancient world’ for obvious reasons.

So we have the Mediterranean, Black Sea, Caucasus Mountains and Caspian Sea forming an east-west barrier inhibiting travel, except for a narrow passage between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

The consequence of these natural barriers is that two ancient East-West highways developed. The Silk Road which developed to the south of these barriers is the most famous. But to the north of these barriers, we find the vast prairie of the Eurasian steppes which extend from Eastern Europe all the way to Eastern Asia. And this massive territory also permitted East-West movements and is the same region that will become very important to our story.

There are three reasons for this little geography refresher. First, to introduce you to the landscape of Eurasia. Secondly, to introduce the early trade and migratory routes which become very important as we look at migrations of ancient people. And third, and perhaps most importantly, to introduce you to the area around the Black Sea because much of the next couple of episodes of the podcast will center on this region.

So let's look a little closer at the Black Sea. Let's travel clockwise around the Black Sea and see what's there. I have already mentioned that the Caucasus Mountains extend from the east side of the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea. So to the east and southeast we have a mountainous region. To the south of the Black Sea lies modern-day Turkey – what was once known and referred to as Anatolia or Asia Minor. To the west of the Black Sea is the Bosphorus Strait and the waterway which extends to the Mediterranean. North of this waterway as we move

clockwise around the Black Sea is the area known as the Balkans – the home of modern day Bulgaria and Romania. And this is where the Danube empties into the Black Sea. And as we continue to move northward through the Balkans in a clockwise motion around the Black Sea we arrive at the area north of the Black Sea. And it here that we find the probable home of the ancient Indo-Europeans.

This area north of the Black Sea is the westernmost portion of that vast grassy region known as the Eurasian Steppes. And this region extends from this part of eastern Europe all the way to the Great Wall of China. And really, this is the last geographical feature which is essential to this story. So what is a steppe? Well, it is basically a massive prairie like is found the central United States. It is a transitional region between the desert areas to the south in the Near East and Central Asia and the Russian forests in the north. In this transitional region, there is enough moisture to produce vegetation like grass, but there is not enough moisture to produce thick forests. So it is basically just a grassy transitional zone that extends across two continents. This is the same type of transitional zone that we have in the United States between the western United States deserts and the heavily forested areas in the east. And that's where we find the Great Plains. So it is basically the same thing.

As I mentioned, the Eurasian steppes extend across Europe and Asia, with the westernmost portion being located in this area north of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. This region is also sometimes called the Russian steppe.

Now before we look at the specific evidence to determine the home of the original Indo-Europeans, let me begin by giving away the ending a bit. Linguists have generally narrowed the possibilities for the Indo-European homeland down to two main possibilities.

One option is that the Indo-European homeland was south of the Black Sea in Anatolia which is modern-day Turkey. And that homeland existed around 6500 BC. This theory was once very popular and it still has its supporters, but it has largely given way to the other theory which has emerged as the dominant theory in light of modern research and evidence, including both linguistic and archaeological evidence.

This second option holds that the Indo-European homeland was in this area north of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea in the Russian Steppe in the southern area of modern Ukraine and Russia. This theory also suggests that the Indo-Europeans lived there much more recently. Unlike the 6500 BC date suggested by supporters of the first theory, those who believe that the homeland was north of the Black Sea believe the original Indo-Europeans were there between about 2500BC and 4500BC.

So why has the second theory become the generally accepted theory for the date and location of the Indo-European homeland? Well, let's look at the evidence.

Let me begin by noting one more time that, like all aspects of Indo-European origins and migrations, there is no absolute consensus about anything. Remember that we are dealing with pre-history and it is a matter of deciphering various clues to reach an ultimate conclusion. Rather

than presenting every possible theory on the subject in this episode, I am only going to focus on what I believe to be the current majority view of these issues. So with that disclaimer out of the way, let's look at the evidence.

Let's start with the time frame when this original Indo-European language would have been spoken. It is actually easier to identify the end of this period than the beginning. The reason for this is that the original Indo-European language is the parent language from which all other Indo-European languages were descended. So it is the ancestor of all the 'daughter languages' which came later. So there was a time when this original language was spoken. And at some point the speakers of this language began to separate from each other, and they began to migrate and carry a version of the original language with them. At this point, we have variations of the original language which will eventually evolve into the different language families and the various 'daughter languages' like Hittite, Latin, Greek and Sanskrit. So if we can determine when these various daughter languages began to appear as distinct languages, then by definition we are beyond the date when the original language was spoken.

So the first step in this process is to determine when the first known Indo-European languages appeared. Again, if we can establish a date for the first appearance of those languages, we know we are beyond the period of the original language. So that will mark the latest possible point in which the original language could have been spoken. And in fact, languages don't just appear overnight. It usually takes several centuries for one language to evolve into a separate language. Think about the evolution of Latin into French, Spanish and the other Romance languages. It took several centuries to get there. So even when we identify the point at which we have the first known Indo-European languages, the original language would have been spoken at few centuries before that date. So we have to allow for that period of evolution and language change as well.

So to figure out when the original Indo-European period ended, let's try to find the date of the first daughter languages. Now linguists have looked at all of the ancient Indo-European languages, and they have identified the earliest known date when each one existed. And in some cases, they have very specific dates and for others they have a general time frame. Again, this is not to say that the languages first appeared on those dates. Obviously, these languages had been in existence before these dates. But these are the earliest dates that we can actually confirm that these languages were on the ground and being spoken in these regions. So we can say with certainty that we have descendants of the original language in place on those dates. So we are therefore outside of the range of the original language by these dates.

Now based upon all the research of linguists and historians, the first Indo-European language to appear as distinct languages were the ancient Hittite language in modern-day Turkey, the very earliest Greek language known as Mycenaean Greek, and the Old Indic language of India which was the ancestor of Sanskrit. Now for each of these very old, ancient languages, linguists have identified the earliest known date during which each of these was being spoken.

So let's start with the oldest known Indo-European language – the Hittite language of Anatolia, which remember is modern-day Turkey. Hittite is part of the Anatolian branch of the Indo-European family tree. All of those Anatolian languages are believed to be about the same age

having evolved from the original Indo-European language about the same time. But we know the most about the Hittite language so I will focus on that one. You may remember from earlier episodes that the Hittites are mentioned in the Old Testament of the Bible, and that their language has existed in cuneiform inscription for centuries. But it wasn't until the early 20th century that linguists deciphered the language and determined that it was actually an Indo-European language.

So what about the first known date of the language? Well according to researchers, the Hittite language was an established language in Turkey as early as 1900 BC. And remember that there were also related languages within this Anatolian branch which were also being spoken in other parts of Turkey or Anatolia during this same time frame. And since it would have taken some time (probably several centuries) for these languages to become distinct and established in these areas, the ancestral language would have been spoken a few centuries prior to this date. So 2500 BC is generally given as a rough estimate for the date when the original Indo-European ancestors of the Hittites arrived in Anatolia. So around 2500 BC, the early ancestors of the Hittites arrived in modern-day Turkey. By 1900 BC, the various Anatolian languages (including Hittite) had developed and can be documented as established languages in these regions. So that gives us our first date to work with. If the ancestors of these Anatolian speakers separated around 2500 BC, that would mark the latest possible date of the original Indo-European language.

However, there is one little caveat to the use of this date – 2500 BC. Hittite has several unique features which have led some linguists to conclude that it is not a descendant of the original Indo-European language at all, but instead is a sibling or cousin of the original Indo-European language. In other words, the Anatolian languages and the original Indo-European language may have each descended from an even older common ancestor. And if that is true, the dates during which Hittite was spoken will not be of much help. So with that caveat in mind, let's look at the next oldest Indo-European language.

The next oldest language for which we have confident dates is ancient Mycenaean Greek language which appeared in Greece no later than 1650 BC. The Mycenaeans are considered the first Indo-European Greeks, and their language is the oldest known Greek dialect. Now again, we have Mycenaean Greek on the ground and being spoken in 1650 BC. So it would have taken some time to get to this point from the original language. Linguists estimate that Mycenaean Greek probably originated as a dialect of the original Indo-European language at least 500 to 700 years earlier. So that puts the split of the earliest Greek speakers from the original Indo-European speakers at around 2,200 BC. So that is just a short time period after the estimated split of the Hittite ancestors in 2,500 BC which I just mentioned. But we are getting the same general time frame.

The next oldest language family is Old Indic which is the precursor of Sanskrit. Old Indic appeared in writing as far back as 1500BC. But again, by this point Old Indic was an established language which had evolved from an even older Indo-Iranian language which itself was an offshoot of the original Indo-European language. So if we account for the time that it would have taken for this language to fully evolve into Old Indic, linguists estimate that the earliest

Indo-Iranian language was in place and distinct from the original Indo-European language by 2500-2300 BC. So again, we are looking at almost the exact time frame.

So that gives us 2500BC for the split of the Anatolian Branch, 2200BC for the split of the Greek branch, and 2500-2300BC for the Indo-Iranian branch. So based on all of this, historians tend to use 2500 BC (give or take a few centuries) as the end of the original Indo-European period. So, by 2500 BC, the original Indo-European language had begun to fragment into dialects that later became the Anatolian group, the Indo-Iranian group, and the Hellenic or Greek group. So that's how we know the approximate date at which the original Indo-European period ended. But when did it begin? Obviously this takes us much further back in time where we have even less evidence. But there are clues buried within some of the original Indo-European words that we've looked at in some of the earlier episodes.

So let's start with words related to woven wool textiles and fabrics. The key here is 'woven wool.' Woven wool textiles and fabrics did not exist before 4000 BC (and some archaeologists believe they didn't exist before 3500 BC). Woven wool textiles are made from long fibers that did not grow on wild sheep. It required domesticated sheep bred for long wool. And this long wool allowed ancient people to create woolen textiles.

The original Indo-European language also contained root words for **sheep**, **ewe**, **ram** and **lamb**, which indicates access to domesticated sheep. So these people apparently had domesticated sheep with wool which was long enough for woolen fabrics and textiles.

Now based on archaeological evidence, sheep were domesticated between 8000BC and 7500BC in the eastern portions of modern-day Turkey and the western portions of modern-day Iran. But for around 4000 years they were only used for meat. They didn't have the long wool required for textiles until around 4000 BC to 3500 BC. This conclusion is based on the animal-bone evidence in the archeological record.

Another clue as to the location of the original Indo-European speakers (which I focus on in more detail in a minute) is that sheep were initially domesticated in the Near East and later brought to Europe. The longer hair required for textiles may have evolved in the colder European climate. And the longer hair may have then started to be used for fabrics.

So anyway, woven wool textiles appeared in Europe and the Near East after 3300 BC, though wool-bearing sheep could have appeared as early as 4000 BC in the North Caucasus Mountains. So all of this suggests that the original Indo-European language had to be spoken after around 4,000 BC when sheep with long-wool existed. So that's the first big clue as to the earliest possible date of the original Indo-European language.

But now let's consider the original Indo-European words related to wheels and wagons. Wheeled-wagons did not exist before 4000 BC. The original Indo-European language has two words for **wheel**, and other words for **axel**, and **thill** (which was the pole to which animals were yoked), and it also has a verb meaning 'to ride' in the sense of 'go in a vehicle.'



Archaeology and inscriptions on ancient relics indicate that wheeled vehicles were widespread after 3400 BC. There is no evidence of wheeled vehicles before 4000 BC. By 3500 BC or so the wheeled vehicle had probably been invented; and by 3000 BC its use was widespread throughout the Near East and Europe.

So this gives us pretty much the exact time frame as the woven wool words. The original Indo-European language had to have been spoken after wheeled vehicles existed – around 4000 BC.

So based on the linguistic and archaeological evidence, the original Indo-European language was being spoken by around 4000 BC. And we can even say 4500 BC to be a little bit generous and extend that possible time frame back a bit. And that language had fractured and split into separate daughter languages by 2500 BC as I mentioned earlier. So that narrows the maximum time frame in which this original Indo-European language could have been spoken from around 4500 BC at the beginning to around 2500 BC at the end.

So that's the when. What about the where? Well, this has tended to be the most controversial issue among historians and linguists. So where did these original Indo-European speakers live. Again, part of the answer lies in the words the Indo-Europeans used.

The Indo-European words for plants and animals include many of those found in temperate climates – words like **birch**, **otter**, **beaver**, **lynx**, **bear**, **horse**, **bee**, **honey**, **snow** and **ice**. But there are no Indo-European cognate words for animals or vegetation native to tropical, or Mediterranean or desert climates – words like **monkey**, **lion**, **bamboo**, **parrot**, **palm tree**, or **camel**. Now the absence of a word does not prove that the word – or the thing which the word describes – did not exist. It may be the case that there is simply not a surviving cognate word. But the fact that there are so many words for plants and animals in temperate climates, and no such words for plants or animals in tropical or desert climates, that suggests that these people lived in cooler temperate climates further north.

As I mentioned in an earlier episode, the Indo-European words **bee** and **honey** are of particular importance. **Honey** has been reconstructed as *\*medhu* in the original Indo-European language. This word is also the source of the word **mead** which is a honey-based alcoholic drink which was popular for centuries.

And here is why those words are so important. You can't have honey or mead without honeybees. And honeybees were not native east of the Ural mountains which is the mountain range that divides Europe from Asia. So this also narrows the scope of the possible homeland for the original Indo-Europeans. It basically removes Siberia and much of northeastern Eurasia, including central Asian steppes of Kazakhstan.

Another clue that excludes this same region from consideration is the fact that the area east of the Urals continued to be occupied by hunter-gatherers until 2500BC, which remember marks the end of the original Indo-European period. Since the people in this region were hunter-gatherers, there were no domesticated animals in this region until after that time frame. Yet, the original Indo-European language has words for domesticated animals like sheep, oxen and horse. So, this

also tends to exclude this same region. However, farming and herding were practiced in the areas south and west of the Urals during this period – in other words on the European side of the Urals. So that is a major clue that we are looking at the area of Europe, not Asia east of the Urals.

Another clue is the word *horse*. The fact that this word exists in the original Indo-European language is also of particular importance. *Horse* has been reconstructed as *\*ek-wo* in the original Indo-European. This is the source of the Modern English word *equine*. I talked about the many ways in which that word was used in the original Indo-European language grammar in the last episode.

Well between 4500 BC and 2500BC (which remember is the period during which the original Indo-European language was being spoken), horses were rarely found or were completely absent in the Near East, Iran and the Indian subcontinent. But they were numerous and very important in the Eurasian steppes.

So as we narrow the range of possibilities where the original Indo-European language was spoken, we can start to exclude Asia east of the Urals, and the Near East, Iran and Indian Subcontinent. That leaves temperate Europe and the temperate parts of Anatolia and the Caucasus Mountains.

Another clue is some of the strong similarities between the original Indo-European language and the early Uralic Languages. The Uralic language family is distinct from the Indo-European language family, and it includes most of the few languages of Europe that are not of Indo-European origin. These languages are spoken in northern Europe and Siberia, including Magyar in Hungary, as well as Finnish and Estonian.

These languages show evidence of word borrowings from the Indo-European languages. Proto-Uralic, which was the first version of the Uralic languages, may have borrowed several words from the original Indo-European language. That includes words for give, sell, bring, wash, fear, spin, walk, drill, price, water, as well as a few others. And this suggests very early contact between the first Uralic speakers and the first Indo-European speakers.

The homeland of the first Uralic languages was probably in the forest zone north of the Russian steppes, and more specifically the forest zone in the southern flanks of the Ural Mountains. So the contact must have been in the vicinity of the Ural Mountains. We have already established that the Indo-European speakers were most likely not present east of the Urals. So this leaves the area south and west of the Urals that I mentioned earlier.

In earlier episodes of the podcast, I also mentioned several cultural factors that are indicated by the original Indo-European vocabulary. And these can basically summarized as follows:

The original Indo-European speakers raised and bred animals because we have words like *bull*, *cow*, *ox*, *ram*, *ewe*, *lamb*, *pig*, *dog*, and we have words meaning *to drive cattle*, *to shear* (as in wool), and *weave* (as in textiles), and *yoke* (as worn by oxen). All of these words are associated with domesticated animals.

And the original Indo-European speakers consumed milk and dairy foods because we find words meaning *sour milk*, *whey*, and *curds*.

The original Indo-European speakers farmed and tended crops. So some basic farming existed because we find words meaning *ard* (which is scratch plow), and *yoke* (worn by oxen pulling a plow). And we find words meaning *grain*, *furrow*, and *grind* and *pestle* (which are used to turn grain into flour).

There are also some other cultural clues indicated by the vocabulary of the original Indo-Europeans. For example, they had terms for movable wealth which ultimately became the term for herds. And they had separate terms for fixed or immovable wealth. They had male-centered households based on kin terms. They believed in their own souls and had one or more sky Gods. And they had a social hierarchy which began at the household level, and then moved up to the family level, and then the clan, and then a clan chief, and then all of the way to the tribal level. And it should also be noted that there is no known Indo-European word for *city*.

So based on all of this evidence, we can conclude the following:

- (1) These people lived between 4500-2500 BC.
- (2) They were tribal farmers and herded cattle and sheep, so they were not hunter-gatherers.
- (3) They had access to and collected honey from honeybees, and they drank mead.
- (4) They used and drove wheeled wagons.
- (5) They made woolen textiles produced by weaving.
- (6) They plowed fields.
- (7) They had cows, and cows played a prominent role in their society both in daily life and religion.
- (8) They worshiped sky Gods.
- (9) They lived in a temperate climate, not the Mediterranean, tropical or desert climate.
- (10) They lived south or west of the Ural Mountains which divide Europe and Asia. So they lived on the European side of the Urals.
- (11) They did not live in the northern forested steppes of Eurasia because those people were either hunter-gatherers or basic herders without farming during this period.
- (12) They did not live in the Near East, Iran or the Indian subcontinent because those areas didn't have horses during this period.
- (13) They lived in relative proximity to the Urals because of the connections between the original Uralic language and the original Indo-European language. And they probably lived in proximity to the Caucasus Mountains between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea because of some connections with the ancient languages spoken in that region as well.

When all of these factors are combined, and when we look at the archeological record and the anthropological record, this narrows the possible location of the original Indo-European speaking people to the area west of the Ural Mountains and north or east of the Caucasus Mountains in the steppes of modern Russia and the Eastern Ukraine. Basically it's the area immediately north of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. And here is another important key. The archeological evidence in this region confirms the existence of peoples who fit the description of the Indo-

European speakers that I just laid out. These people were the herders of what is called the Yamnaya horizon. They were the first peoples of the steppes to create a herding economy. And these were very likely the first speakers of the original Indo-European language. And they are thus the oldest known linguistic ancestors of English.

When we combine the cultural factors that I mentioned before with the archaeological evidence of the people who lived in this region around this time, we start to get a more complete picture of who these people were. Archaeologists have determined that these people knew and used copper and silver and possibly gold. But they did not use iron. So that means they were part of the so-called 'Bronze Age' – which preceded the 'Iron Age.'

The linguistic and archaeological evidence also indicates that these people had war-like tendencies, and that they engaged in raiding for cattle and raiding for revenge.

So we now have an emerging view of these original Indo-Europeans. We can reasonably determine where and when they lived – north of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea in the Eurasian steppes between 4500 BC and 2500 BC. And we start to get a picture of how these people lived.

In the next episode, I am going to conclude our look at the original Indo-Europeans – the speakers of English's oldest ancestor. It will be a true history episode as I am actually going to try to establish a time line from the very beginning of the Indo-Europeans to their migration throughout Europe and Central Asia. This is the story of the Indo-European migrations. And that will set the stage for our look at the western European branches of the Indo-European languages – specifically Greek, Latin, Celtic and the Germanic languages. Those are the languages which directly influenced and led to the English language we have today.

So until next time, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.