

## Origins of Europe's Fairies—Proto-Indo Europeans

On the Neolithic steppes of Eurasia in a primal wilderness that stretched out for thousands of miles, a wilderness in which humans could still be hunted by wolves and bears were born the seeds of most of the European languages. It was here buffeted by the cold winds of the Eurasian steppes and always on the look out for bears, wolves and other wild animals which at any moment could take either their lives or the lives of the animals on whose lives they depended for their food – that one people began to flourish. The Proto-Indo-Europeans began to find new ways to utilize animals to help them survive as they began to ride horses for the first time and use oxen to pull newly invented wagons in order help them herd cattle and sheep with the help of domesticated dogs.

When darkness came and the wind would grow frigid these people would gather around the fires to cook, eat, and protect themselves from the cold as well as the darkness of the unknown that lay beyond their camp as the howls of the wolves and the growls of the bears surrounded them.

The fires glow would only help so much for a fire does not banish the darkness from site it only pushes it away creating a wall outside of which creatures might prowl. Enemies from other clans certainly could easily be prowling in the darkness. Worse still were the 'others,' the predecessors of the giants and trolls, of the fairies that snatched children away from the arms of their loving families, as well as the forbearers of the demons that would haunt the dreams and fears of later Europe. Even the monstrous creatures who had opposed the gods, those who sought to undo the world may have wondered the darkness beyond the fires. For we cannot know if they had been neatly defeated as they were in later Greek myths or if they were simply biding their time as in Germanic myths. The night then wasn't just darkness, for darkness is fear, it's the unknown the place where evil things can lurk. It was here surrounded by darkness huddled together around a fire and hearth eating cheese, butter, and meat that the embers of Europe's later

### The Spirit of the Storm

The storms rolls in bringing with it life giving rain but also winds and floods which destroy homes and sweep away loved ones. So it is that storms are the most confusing of natural phenomenon - needed, even desired - yet at the same time, feared. Nearly everyone has experienced fear as a storm rolls in, the sense of dread as the sky turns dark and the winds howl outside like demons. Then theirs a flash of lightening followed by a boom. But to the Indo-Europeans this boom, this lighting was an ally, brought to defeat the evil, to defeat the monsters which they feared. Of all the deities of the Indo-Europeans the most commonly attested is the lord of thunder and the storm. He is the warrior who banished the darkness and destroys evil with his thunder bolts.

This god of thunder of the storm was the chief deity Zeus in Greek legend, the Chief Deity Indra of the Rigveda in Indian mythology, as well as Perun the most likely chief deity of the Slavic peoples and one of the most important deities in Celtic, Scandinavian, Hittite and Germanic folklore.

He is the only deity I know so commonly attested to as being of primary importance in all Indo-European faiths which we still have a record of. That he is so commonly attested to can be taken one of two ways, the first is that he was the lead deity of the Proto-Indo-European peoples. Certainly he appears to be a good candidate for this and it seems very likely that he was extremely important. On the other hand we should expect that the deity best attested to would be a defender of the people against strange demons for all nearly Indo-Europeans migrated to strange lands. The people who wrote the Veda, the people who entered Europe were thousand of miles from home, for what ever reason they had traveled across the world into the unknown where only the sky and the storms remained the same. The peaceful sky however could not protect them, it could not defeat the demons they feared, only the storm could do that. Only the axe, arrows, or hammer of the gods could strike down the giants of the new

fairy tales and religion grew. It was also likely here that people continued to contemplate the nature of the soul, of the spirits around them as they developed the fairy faiths that would come to dominate Europe.

Within the warm but never quite secure confines of their small homes and semi fortified villages these pastoralists would contemplate the nature of the world around them. The voice of a priest would rise in a poetic song to tell tales of the heroic deeds of their people in hopes of instilling these heroic values in their children, or simply to entertain each other with amusing tales of the strange things their deities and heroes did. The night was the time of these poets and singers, it was the time to feel secure in the heroics of the deities and the power of the singer to keep evil away with his charms and songs.

When daylight came they would return to their work in the fields to harvest plants and cereals or to the Steppes to herd their animals and hunt for food. Later Indo-European peoples would have clearly defined work for men and women, with the later sometimes staying at home or cultivating cereals as the men went out

to hunt and herd. It is impossible to say if the Proto-Indo-Europeans had a similar system but it is likely that they did divide work into various castes as nearly all later Indo-Europeans groups would.

The men and women would continue their stories here under the sky which seemed to go on for ever, the sky which they watched carefully for signs of storms as they both passed the time and built upon their values. These stories were likely different from the tales of the night before, for while poetry is an important part of Indo-European mythology so too are folk tales, tales of the clumsy and weak, the ordinary surviving and thriving in a harsh world as well as amusing tales of animals doing strange and silly things. They needed these stories too not only for the distraction but also for the courage and humor they could take from them for like all ancient peoples they faced what seemed an infinite number of dangers After all for most people heroic deeds mean little, for most of us are altogether ordinary. We dream of heroism but relate to the Jacks of folk tales.

In order to help those of them who were ordinary with their ordinary tasks they had the fairies, the spirits of the land. For like later peoples of the steppes and their decedents they too very likely had a fairy faith of sorts, a belief in spirits and souls of the land and sky that could harm or help them. It is these people of the Steppes, the Proto-Indo-Europeans who would come to define the fairy faiths of

### *Spirit of the Storm Continued*

land in which they found themselves. So while one can presume that the Indo-European's thunder god is yet a sign that they were war like, (which they likely were were) one can also take it as a sign that they were afraid, that they needed a guardian in the sky. Certainly when one considers what his original role likely was this idea makes some sense. Consider after all why it is that the thunder is considered to be the weapon of good? Most people who sit in the darkness with the storm raging around them would not consider this to be so, but remember that religion has its roots in function. When a weeping fearful child climbs into bed with their parents as the storm rages around them and asks what the thunder is what are the parents to say? What story do they tell their baby to comfort them? It seems unlikely that the story of the Proto-Indo-European parents would have told their child would have been one of demons haunting the world, for there were enough of those in the darkness and the storm. What was needed was a sign of something trying to defeat the fears of the child and so they would tell their child of how the oak tree which they had made offerings to, the spirit of the oak tree which supplies some of the food was out in the storm fighting the demons, fighting the darkness which the child feared. In this way the child would know that the thunder was his friend and so would be comforted.

So while the god of the oak trees and the thunder may be a god of war, making a warrior one of the most important gods to the Indo-European peoples this may only be because a warrior is sometimes what is needed to give comfort not just to those going into battle but also to those who are weak and afraid.

Europe as they moved into Europe to bring with them what would become the Slavic, Greek, Roman, Germanic, and Celtic languages while replacing the original languages and many of the original ideas of the Native Europeans. So while the Proto-Indo-Europeans weren't the first peoples of Europe these articles start with them because they became by far its most significant.

As pastoral people living off the land, trying to help their animals gather enough food for winter and possibly even through the long cold winter months they needed to move quickly while often carrying their wealth and some shelter with them in this unforgiving land. This need was likely the catalyst that lead to them or a people near them to discover that they could breed horses to be ridden for the first time and to their developing the first solid wheel wagons pulled by oxen as they were far to heavy for the horses. It was these two inventions along with their skill at animal husbandry that would change everything and lead the language, culture and religion of these people to dominate Europe.

The challenges that exist in understanding the original culture of the peoples would eventually come to dominate European culture are many not only because they have fractured into many cultures but because they were likely formed from multiple tribes with multiple leaders and different shamans or priests long

before they began their Journey into Europe and India. However there are a number of similarities between Indo-European cultures and a number of linguistic clues which can help us to better under-

### **Indo-Europeans Deities**

The Deities of Indo-European mythology most largely resembled mortals, for although they were powerful and knowledgeable they could still be wounded in battle and grow old. In order to stave off their old age they would eat sacred food which give them their immortality. In one Norse myth the deities weren't able to obtain this food for some time and so grew old and feeble until Loki was able to get the food for them.

The idea the gods gain their immortality from a sacred food is one of the best attested ideas in later Indo-European myths. This food was known as Ambrosia among the Greeks and Soma in India, the De' Dannan of Ireland stayed young thanks to sacred barriers on an island in a loch which was guarded by a dragon. In Norse mythology golden apples held by the goddess Idoun were held to give the gods their power. In all cases this food was difficult to collect. In order to obtain it one of the deities often times had to transform into a bird to carry it out of the realm where it was held. The deities mortality is not to say that the Indo-Europeans thought they weren't incredibly powerful because they were as attested by the fact that they would grow up nearly instantly in order to begin doing amazing feats that no normal human could. Indra was said to be born asking who he could do battle with and within a year after Zeus's birth he was strong enough to defeat the titans. There are many legends of the gods feats of strength and their prowess to prove they are much more then a mortal human. Still it is a common feature of Indo-European mythology that the deities are understandable in that they have the same concerns and desires which mortals have.

This is perhaps because the job of the deities of Indo-European mythology was to inspire courage, through their own acts to combat evil. The deities of the ndo-Europeans showed the importance of courage by being vulnerable After all someone cannot learn how to live and fight from someone who cannot fear, who cannot die, and who has no mortal concerns.

MacCulloch and Bailey believed that the original deities were closer to the realm of fairy and that they evolved into the deities we would know later. I would argue however that this situation is fluid, that religion and the deities and fairies reflect peoples desires and fears so that they can help fill roles in society. So as humans need to take courage in an all knowing god this is what they believed in but when they needed hero's to lead by example this is what they tell tales of.

stand the general culture of this group of peoples.

The Proto-Indo-Europeans were a pastoral culture, one of the first if not the first to have started breeding horses and wagons (so heavy that they were likely pulled by oxen as horses were still too small to do this) which gave them a level of mobility not enjoyed by nearly any other culture of the time. Such mobility offers many advantages to a society which needs to hunt and herd animals for much of its food. However it can also offer some level of disadvantage as well as horses make it far easier for one tribe to make quick raids on another in order to loot food and women. This in turn can force these societies to become more warlike and it is under this catalyst that the Proto-European society developed. This warlike nature can be seen in their development of a clear warrior cast whose role was perhaps to raid for cattle from their enemies and recover cattle taken in raids. To aid them in their raids many of their deities including Dyēus 'the sky father' who was perhaps one of their most important deities became warlike and could be asked to aid them in their battles. He would later evolve into Zeus, Jupiter, Tyr and other deities of the European pantheons.

### The Sky Father

The sky is always looming over head, it is always watching, The sun may rise and fall, it may move from one place to the other so that it cannot see you, but the sky, the vast sky covers everything. In this role \*Dyēus Ph<sub>2</sub>ter 'Sky Father' watched over oaths, made certain that the earth was functioning as it should so one can see then how then how \*Dyēus Ph<sub>2</sub>ter 'Sky Father' came to be one of the most important deities of some of the Indo-European pantheons, important enough that some have claimed that he was the lead deity. It is difficult to determine who was the lead deity of the Proto-Indo-Europeans, however, certainly Zeus and Jupiter were the lead deities of the Roman and Greek pantheon but they were not only the 'Sky Father' they were also the lighting deity. The 'Sky Father' does not hold so much importance among the Slavic, Indian, Norse, or Germanic peoples. Nor does he appear to be extremely important to the Celts. The sky father does hold great importance too many of the peoples of the steppes and so is very well attested to but for whatever reason this importance either faded or was never fully present for nearly all the Indo-European peoples. He remained important among the Indo-Iranians as Mitra and Varuna and certain aspects of his nature appear to be present in Odin the head gods of the German, but much of Odin's nature seems to be borrowed from a preexisting shamanistic people (likely the Finno-Ugric peoples) So with the exception of the Persians the Sky Father never seems to lead without being merged with another deity.

Their rituals to these war gods seemed to be of special im-

portance as they would sacrifice great horses (surely one of their most valuable positions) to them in a festival that involved the drinking of \*Medhu (the root word for mead and many other sweet honeyed foods and drinks from India to Ireland). They would punish those who failed at war by the sword or the fire or sacrifice humans using the sword and fire to aid in victory.

One of the most important tales of nearly all Indo-Europeans from the Hittites and Vedic to the Norse and the Greeks involved a heroic figure who would lose his cattle to a giant and often times three headed serpent and then would seek the aid of the war god to get them back.

Another important tale is that of the heroic last stand, of warriors fighting a battle that they are destined to die in for glory and to insure the survival of even a few humans. This story would eventually evolve into Ragnarok when spirits of the dead hero's and the gods would battle a great evil in order to avoid the complete destruction of humanity, knowing full well that they would die in this battle.

Such stories would have been important to the warrior cast as part of their role as guardians, for there would likely have been many times when a group of them from one clan or another would have had to face unbeatable odds while allowing the other casts to escape.

It's important to understand however that while the Proto-Indo-Europeans had a warrior cast with a

deity, rituals and tales of their own the whole society was not necessarily obsessed with war. The Proto-Indo-Europeans like other Indo-European societies after them was a triple society with two

### **The Earth Mother**

Just as the sky is always above the earth is always below, but while one views the sky with awe, as a mystery to be unraveled, a something which is always watching the earth isn't as mysterious. It doesn't bring the rain, and unlike lightning when the earth rumbles as an earthquake it's always viewed as negative. And while I know of no cases of Indo-European myth where Gaia is blamed for earthquakes it still doesn't change the fact that the earth for the most part remains silent. So the Earth mother is not well attested to in most Indo-European societies.

Indeed there are very few goddesses we can name that came from Proto-Indo-European mythology, the most famous goddesses from Greek Mythologies are borrowed from Near Asia and so are not a part of the original Proto-Indo-European Pantheon, there are very few goddesses attested to in Vedic Mythology or in Europe which don't have obvious root elsewhere. Those that exist represent natural or abstract elements such as rivers, the dawn, happiness, or are married to a male deity. The most important female deities appear to have been Mother Earth, the Mistress of Horses, and the Dawn.

### **The Dawn**

In the darkness and on cold night's humans all share one thing in common we are waiting for the dawn. It should be no surprise then that as far as I can tell the dawn is the best attested to of all the goddesses of Proto-Indo-European origin. The dawn after all is a dramatic event and it may be that only such dramatic events survived the test of time, in story after story. Just as the dawn is beautiful so too is the goddess who represents her. In the Rigveda she smiles beautifully and displays her bodily charms. Among the Greeks the dawn Eos was thought to fall in love with many men and to carry them away as many of their mythological characters did.

Among the Anglo-Saxons the dawn was Eostre from whose name we get the word Easter for she was a goddess of the spring as well as the dawn. The spring adds to her importance for as the goddess of spring she not only ends winter but brings the food back to the world. Thus while Gaia can be thought of as important but passive, the dawn and spring can be said to take an active role in helping humanity.

castes other than the warrior; the priestly caste and the caste of herders. Thus the vast majority of spirits, elements and deities appear to have been related to fertility and the land. Indeed for the Indo-Europeans who entered Europe the land and the wilderness were perhaps the most important thing. Oak trees were held to be sacred and the word for temple comes from their word for wood, for sacred grove. The Proto-Indo-European too lived in an area with at least some forestation and would bring their cattle and sheep to the elms and oak to forage, they would use the ash trees to make their spears, the birch to make cloth, and the willow tree to weave baskets. They would plough their fields and use sickles to aid them in harvesting cereals. Their food came from farming and pastoralist activities so the bulk of their people were engaged in these activities. Fertility was of key importance and most of the festivals of Europe and India involve fertility not war. They would sacrifice he-goats and occasionally people by drowning them to assure the fertility of their animals and the land.

The reason war stories were of such importance may be due in large part to the fact that they are interesting. Just as many of the movies from now are relat-

ed to heroic fighters even though combat itself doesn't necessarily define our society so too could their society have been much more peaceful than their tales would seem to indicate.

Ultimately the Proto-Indo-Europeans worshiped the elements and what to them were heroic figures. Their sacrifice to rivers and fire along with the importance of these elements to the Indo-Iranians, the Vedic, and early Europeans indicates that they believed in the importance of the spirits of these elements. Trees too as mentioned previously were likely believed to have important spirits who could

aid them in their time of need as did the sun and the moon. In addition to the elements they worshipped what to them were heroic figures. Deities with very clear flaws that involved womanizing, a horrible temper, and a propensity to throw nearly childish temper tantrums. It would seem that like later Europeans they believed fairly early that immortal beings may never completely mature in the way one would expect a human too.

### **The Hearth Goddess**

The Greeks equated Tabiti the lead deity of the Scythian raiders to their goddess Hestia the goddess of the hearth, home and family. If we are to believe the Greeks the Scythians this would mean that the Scythians were the only Indo-European people whose head deity was goddess. However, Hestia was so important to Greek families that the first sacrifice they offered was to her. Vesta was the goddess of the hearth and fire in Roman mythology and offerings were made to her for protection. Outside of the Scythian deity she only has male counterparts in Vedic mythology and while there appear to be a number of potential Celtic deities of a similar nature such as Belisama the goddess of fire and crafts the challenge we may run into with the goddess is that of stories. The names and figures of deities are passed down in part through stories but the hearth goddesses while important were not slaying serpents or acting lusty as Aphrodite did so they had not stories told about them. The same problem likely exists among the fertility goddesses as well, who became goddesses of the field or personified within trees. Its interesting to note however that long after the other gods and goddesses had come to be considered demons by Christianized Europe the deities of the field and family were still worshiped.

But such 'faults' were likely considered to be more amusing than actual faults as we see from the dualism of many of their decedent cultures the worst flaws were weakness, guile and trickery much like what would be displayed by Loki in Norse mythology. It was okay then for their deities and the fairies to act lecherous and lusty so long as they weren't weak or deceitful. It was clear that they believed that they could please and manipulate the elements of the earth and the deities through their priestly caste which would sacrifice cattle in order to gain the favor of their gods with the word for hundred cattle meaning a special sacrifice. It was in this third priestly caste that we see an expectation of wisdom and knowledge, the final most important trait of a good person in a society that valued productivity, strength and knowledge especially in men. The Indo-Europeans after all are for the most part all patriarchal societies with the Proto-Indo-European word \*Wedh being from the grooms

point of view and meaning 'to lead home.' This means that the males born from their marriages would grow up and remain in their fathers village which in turn meant that they would grow up to compete with their fathers brothers for position and that their courage and strength were important to their father and their uncles survival in the future. This meant that these relatives would take on the role of being stern disciplinarians. While the uncles from the mothers family would live more distantly and so could act as advisors and friends. Because of this the maternal family appears to have been closer emotionally to a child even though they lived some distance away.

### **A second society - of fairies**

You see them in the distance, on the hill tops for a brief moment as dusk starts to settle in. Anxiously you watch them carefully, uncertain what the strangers might want, and then all at once they are gone. Did they disappear into a ravine? You strain your eyes but the twilight plays tricks on your eyes and you see shadows dancing among the hills so you can never be certain. Even without such experiences however its easy for people to imagine that theirs another society, another set of people living along side them - in the hills and the forests. As stories come in of other peoples from distant lands who have strange and wondrous foods, songs, technologies, or societies - perhaps the first tales of the copper being extracted from rock or a strange looking piece of jewelry – the tales from

these stories would grow. Such tales and artifacts may not come often but once is all that's needed for the tales to begin. It seems unlikely then that there are a people in the world who don't have some tales of fairies who live much as they do but have strange powers.

Fairy societies are present among every Indo-European people I've been able to find folk tales on, from those of the Hindu-Kush and Persia within Asia and the Celts and Germanic peoples of Europe we see the presence of a second society of magical humans who live in a parallel world, humans who we now call fairies. These fairies have a supernatural control over nature - the wild animals are their herd animals and friends so they protect them. People always had to be very careful to respect these fairies for they would haunt buildings or people that were in their paths and at times they would curse and kill those who disrespected their claims on wild animals and plants.

The parallel world in which these fairies lived was all around the Indo-European peoples, hidden by secret doorways into mountains, rocks, cliffs and trees or at the bottom of special lakes and rivers. Tales of deities and fairy like creatures opening windows in cliff faces or doors in the sides of mountains are common, as are stories of people in Europe seeing the fairies living within hills or the craggy rocks.

It seems likely then that the Proto-Indo-Europeans believed that they traveled among fairies which

lived within the rocks, mountains, trees and lakes which surrounded them as they herded their animals through the wilderness or went hunting. It's also likely that the Proto-Indo-Europeans acted to both pacify and keep these fairies at bay while also making offerings to them for luck and healing. Among later Germanic peoples the warriors, priests and poets would worship the gods who could grant them victory and magic, but what do peasants need victory for?

For peasants there are the gods, but there are also the fairies which make the plants grow, the fairies which help the animals be fertile and which give or withhold permission to hunt in the wild. These are who the farmers and herders, need bargain with. Long after Europe was Christianized the peasants would still pray to these fairies, they would still make offerings to pear trees and sacred wells, still bargain with the spirits of the hills and rocks.

### **When parents need children to be afraid**

Come away from the river or you might fall in and drown a parent warns their child, but the child is certain that they aren't so stupid as to accidentally fall in so the parents must take them away from the rivers edge over and over again. Even in our time the forest, the outside too can be filled with dangers, but this was even truer in the past when even the small foxes that gathered around human's settlements and camps can be dangerous to a child, especially if the animals have rabies.

So to keep the child safe the parents make up a boogie-man or some other fairy which will snatch them away or drown them in the river, a fairy that will come to get them if they are bad. The success of this method leads parents to warn that there are boogiemens which will take them if they are naughty. The child grows up to tell their children the same and so the story is passed on until its origins are forgotten and only the fear of the spirits in the forests and rivers remains.

However like nature fairies are fickle. The apsara of India who lived in the forests, lakes, rivers, trees and mountains loved to sing and dance could be dangerously so. Their beauty hid a certain amount of malicious glee and they would often leave humans mentally deranged.

The Nymphs of Greece and the fairies of the Celts too would dance through the forests, playing and laughing with childlike glee as if never able to truly grow up and they too could leave those they encountered insane. But perhaps the most fickle of all are the rusalky of the Slavic peoples who are known to tickle humans to death.

The male counterparts to the nymphs and the apsara were equally as playful, equally as musical. Among the people of India the part horse or bird gandharva were said to guard Soma, the food that made the gods immortal. They aren't all play, however, for they act as messengers between humans and the gods.

The satyrs of Greek mythology too were originally depicted as having horse tails but through encounters with the Latin peoples who's Faunas was part goat they too became part goat. By the time fairy tales and myths were collected in Europe nearly every European society has a forest spirit with goat legs. The Leszi of the Slavic peoples were the ultimate bachelors just as the satyrs of Greece were; causing and getting into trouble from too much drink, chasing female humans and fairies around the forests and generally acting rowdy. The outlier in all this are the Glaisig of the Scottish Celts, who are beautiful females with the lower half of a goat. Still despite their gender their role appears to have been similar as nature spirits which herd cattle and love song and dance but which are dangerous for they unlike the others drink human blood.

## **Migration into Europe**

At some point in pre-history the Indo-European languages and culture began to expand to become the dominant culture of Europe. Yet how this occurred has been the subject of much controversy because while there are some signs of cultural changes at the end of the Neolithic period there are no real signs of a massive military invasion in Northern or Eastern Europe which would indicate a massive invasion. Further the collapse of the societies within Europe and the construction of walls that did occur can be arguably attributed to the environmental changes which occurred at the time.

Around 3200 BC the world began to change as a baby ice age caused temperatures to drop and the climate to become dryer. The growing season for foods would have become shorter and the crops would have grown less in the cooler dryer climate or withered all together from lack of rain which would leave many people starving. The Neolithic populations after all had been built to sustain larger and larger populations on less and less land and so the sudden environmental shift could have destroyed their society. This along with the opportunity to do battle presented by horses could have lead to war or at the very least theft by neighboring or even distant villages desperate for food.

The Indo-Europeans like everyone else would have faced shortages as they had to bring their animals over a wider area to find food. Analysis shows that pollens from cereal crops throughout Europe began to drop which meant that the Indo-Europeans own crops likely started to fail. The need for more room as well as the danger presented by starving predators and other clans who would have likely sought to steal food to provide a buffer against their own failing crops and dying animals would have pushed the Indo-Europeans to begin to migrate much as the drop in temperature forced the Germans to migrate into Rome over 3000 years later. There is a key difference between the Germanic migration and the Indo-European migration however for the Germanic peoples were facing against the Romans, a well organized military people while the Indo-Europeans were entering post Neolithic Europe which although capable of amazing levels of organization was still not so well organized or structured as Rome.

The question then is where did the Indo-Europeans come from?

The Kurgan hypothesis states that they came from the Pontic steppes and this does seem fairly likely for a number of linguistic and architectural reasons. However others believe that the lack of signs from a massive invasion means that they were Neolithic peoples who adapted. To some extent both



might be possible; after all there is no real barrier between the Pontic-Steppes and the peoples of Eastern Europe, no massive mountains or strange rivers. Indeed in 4500 BC the people the Kurgan Hypothesis states are the Indo-Europeans began to trade seriously with arguably the most advanced Neolithic European society and to a large extent people live like they need to live which means that even if the ( ) peoples of the Kurgan Hypothesis are the Indo-Europeans they may not be the only ones. The problem of course is that there isn't an overwhelming amount of evidence to support any hypothesis, still the Kurgan Hypothesis does seem to have a reasonable amount of support so I'll use this as a jumping point to try to understand the expansion of the Indo-European peoples and how this could have affected the mythology and folklore of Europe.



According to the Kurgan Hypothesis the Yamna culture, known from the way they buried their dead and their other cultural artifacts most likely represents the Proto-Indo-European society. As you can see from the map other than two seas to the south they have few barriers surrounding them so it's likely that they were influenced by and influenced their neighbors greatly. Indeed the Proto-Uralic people which bordered them to the North have a number of loan words in their language from the Proto-Indo-Europeans. To the East lies more people of the steppes possibly the later Altaic peoples but this is uncertain, to the south are the peoples of the Caucasuses and to the West lies the Cucuteni-Trypillian Culture. There is evidence not only of extensive trade between the Proto-Indo-Europeans but that for thousands of years they shared some of the same territory.

The Cucuteni-Trypillian Culture had massive cities for their time with some as large as those of the Fertile Crescent. The Yamna and the Cucuteni-Trypillian cultures began to live side by side around 4500 BC. It's important to remember that at this time there likely weren't borders in the sense that we have today so communities of peoples from different cultures would have traveled side by side. Over time the successors to the Yamna seem to have become more dominant, however while the Cucuteni-Trypillian built walls there are no real signs of a major conflict and their culture didn't fade away until 2,750 BC. This means that they and the Proto-Indo-Europeans lived side by side for

1,750 years. Hardly what one would expect if the Yamna were a purely warrior culture bent on conquest and the Cutcuteni-Trypillian were purely peaceful.

The extensive amount of time that the two cultures had in contact with each other is likely to have influenced the later Indo-European Cultures. Indeed similar contact such as the ones between the Romans and the Germans for example ended with the Germanic people adopting Roman Christianity. The Romans before this adopted a number of Etruscan religious and cultural ideas and for centuries after they defeated the Etruscans some Roman nobles still proudly proclaimed that they were related to Etruscans. The Greeks adopted many elements from their neighbors to the near east and the chief deity of the Norse and Germanic peoples adopted many elements from the Uralic people.

Yet all of these people fought a number of wars with and occasionally eliminated the societies of the peoples they emulated all together. So while it's impossible to say of how much of the Cutcuteni-Trypillian culture the Proto-Indo-Europeans would have adopted given that they left no written records to indicate what they believed the written history that we can surmise or read of the Indo-Europeans in Europe seems to indicate that they adopted a lot of cultural elements from their neighbors.

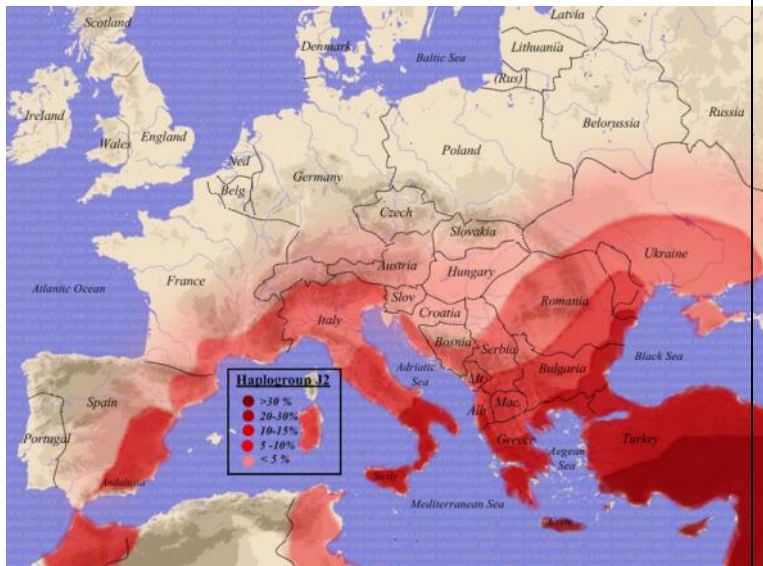
It is fairly common to presume that the Cutcuteni-Trypillian were matriarchal and that they worshiped a female goddess. However it's also been argued that the figurines which they left were more in line with magical charms than sacred idols. In addition peoples of Northern Indo-European descent such as the Germanic and possibly the Slavic peoples would believe that it was wrong to try to trap their deities and nature spirits in wood or stone form. In other words the later cultures of Northern Europe were against the construction of idols which means that any art found could simply have been art. It's impossible then to know what the Cutcuteni-Trypillian believed with certainty just as it's impossible to know the exact relationship that these two peoples had. Given their proximity to each other it's even possible that they spoke a similar language although there isn't any archeological evidence to support this.

Still regardless of their relationship at some point something changed and the Cutcuteni-Trypillian culture disappeared while the Indo-European peoples expanded to take over Europe, Iran, India, etc.

### The Fates

The Moirae of Greece, the Norns of the Norse, and the Parcae of Rome were three women who acted to spin the fate of man and at times even the gods, determining how they should live as well as when they should die. These givers of fate are common throughout European Mythology and fairy tales and have promoted some to call them the triple goddesses; there were not three of them in every myth however. The Irish for example appear to have believed in seven daughters of the sea who fashioned the threads of life. The Lithuanians also attested to their being seven dieves valditojes (ruling deities) The Laimas of the Latvians appear either in ones or threes depending upon the myth. Regardless of their number however what's important is their function for this is what lets us know that they all have the same origin. The fates are always female and they are the ones who determine a child's fate after they are born through the spinning of thread. Because of how widespread they are through Europe some have speculated that they were present in Europe before the Indo-European invasion. Given that they are so pervasive in Europe and that they are not really present so far as I know in the east such speculation seems reasonable. It is possible of course that the Indo-Europeans lost their belief in them as they traveled east. Still presuming that they are of European origin there are three possibilities as to why they are so prevalent throughout the continent.

1-They were prevalent throughout most of Europe before the Indo-European invasion. This is certainly possible though if this is the case it seems unlikely that figures like them would have been the focus of every religion given the likely number of cultures and religious systems that would have been present in Europe. So while fate may have been the primary deity of a few lands, chances are they were secondary figures as we see in later mythology.



## The Fates Continued

2-They were passed in popular stories from country to country after the Indo-Europeans came. Again this seems possible and certainly the story and basic idea seem to be catchy enough to have passed on.

3-The Indo-Europeans encountered the fate goddesses early on their way into the Europe which means that they may have been a product of the Cucuteni-Trypillian people. Certainly the idea of using a female as a charm to bring luck, if this is indeed what the Cucuteni-Trypillian female figurines were would seem to fit the idea of a female that controls the future.

The 'fates' were never seen as purely benevolent, after all they deal death, illness and ill luck just as they deal good luck and often times one of them acts petty and jealous. In the Edda the youngest of there number cursed a child to death because she accidentally hurt herself, in Sleeping Beauty one of them cursed a baby to die on her sixteenth birthday because she felt overlooked. Its certainly possible that this is a result of their being lessened by the conquering Indo-Europeans but I would point out that fate itself seems fickle and at times cruel. It would be surprising then for people to believe that the one dealing fate was saintly and perfect.

I realize that giving three possible answers to what the origins of the fates does not explain who or what they are, however this is the challenge with trying to track what might be pre-Indo-European mythology, with no records left we are only left with possibilities but no real answers.

Its hard to say how much influence the Fertile Crescent hand on the Cucuteni-Trypillian culture. This map shows some genetic influence on the region where they came from but there are still many questions it leaves open. Is the migration north recent or does it actually represent a past movement, were there more people from the Fertile Crescent in Northern Europe before the Indo-Europeans took it over? Also how much influence is necessary to change a culture? We see for example that there is very little genetic replacement by the Indo-Europeans within Ireland and other parts of Europe but these people still speak an Indo-European language and have elements within their mythology that would indicate a lot of influence. Genetic replacement isn't absolutely necessary then to indicate a linguistic or religious change.

## Tribes of the the Gods

In both Scandinavian mythology and Vedic mythology there were two tribes of the gods who went to war with each other. In the Vedic texts these are the Asura and the Devas while among the Norse these tribes are the Æsir and the Vanir. Although the name of the Æsir and the Asura do likely have the same root one should be careful when trying to draw parallels between them.

There are two reasons for this; first Thor the god of the Storms is an Æsir in Norse myth while his counter part Indra is the King of the Devas in the Rigveda, further the lord of the Æsir, Odin, has no counter part in India as he is partially inspired by Ugric-Finno mythology. Second the Devas become dominant in Hindu mythology while the Æsir become dominant in Norse mythology.

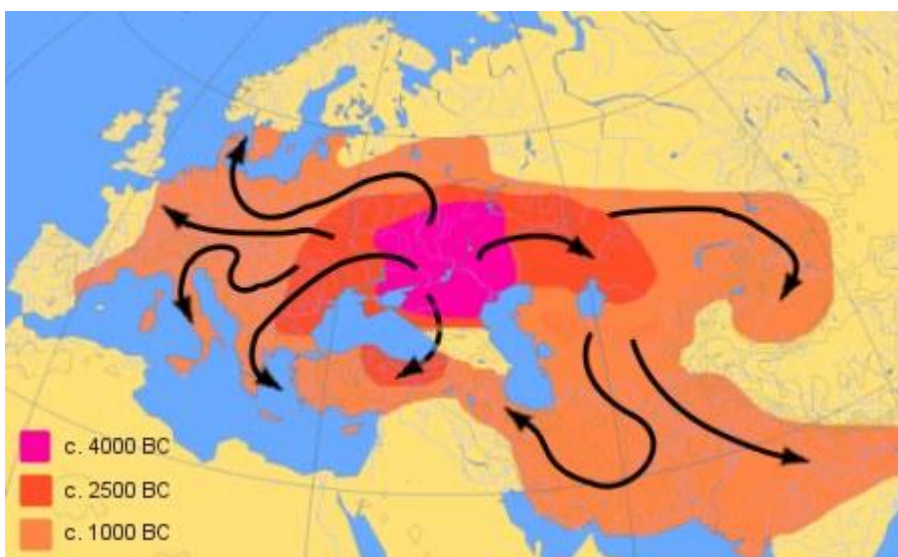
The challenge to understanding or comparing either tribe is that there appears to be some borrowing of dei-



ties from other cultures within each and the roles of the individual tribes names do not appear to be as important as what the story represents..

What's important to understand is that this meeting of two tribes of gods could have come out of the Proto-Indo-European meeting with another people their early history, before they split and traveled to India and Europe. Certainly this isn't a given and given the fact that there appears to be so many borrows, changed sides and changed roles it might be impossible to sort out which god belonged to which side or which people originally.

More likely however is that since there are few to no details of this war only of the truce that the war itself is just an artifice used to explain why the warrior and priestly class deities are above the working class deities.



Although some people have imagined the Indo-European migration into as a sudden mass movement of horse riding invaders much like the later Turkic or Mongolian expansions this doesn't appear to be the case. From the map of their presumed expansion its easy to see that from the time they hypnotically moved through Europe at less then one mile per year. I repeat that this hardly seems like a military invasion against a peaceful people.

This is not to say that there wasn't military invasion, rather its to say

that it seems more likely that there were a series of wars conducted at different times by different peoples against the Pre-Indo-European peoples who had knew how to and were able to defend themselves to one extent or another.

There are some clear signs of wars and raids between the Neolithic peoples before the Indo-Europeans showed up in which they appear to have taken women and other wealth from each others villages.

The Native Europeans were farmers and hunter gatherers who were decimated by the mini-ice age which ruined their crops and the wild game that they hunted. Further they did not have horses to help them track their wild game or aid them in raids on other villages or to escape from raiders. Nor did they have wagons to help them move when they needed to search for food. Finally they did not have as much experience with animal husbandry so they were less able to utilize goats and cattle which would have been more likely to survive the shortages then the cereal crops which they grew. Archeological evidence points to a collapse of many of their societies as they began to work desperately to survive the mini-ice age. It was into this collapsing and starving society that the Indo-Europeans first came.

Just as the Indo-European societies were split into three castes so too was the invasion likely to have involved three parts.

#### 1-Fertility, Farming and Economic Invasion

During the first part of the invasion the Indo-Europeans had a clear advantage thanks to their pastoral life style because while the Native Europeans would have faced serious food shortages the Indo-Europeans would have been able to settle between the existing villages while bringing their animals

through the ancient forests, meadows and plains to eat tree leaves and grasses which humans couldn't easily cultivate for food, allowing them to continue to eat the meat, butter and cheese of their animals. Further on horse back they could travel farther to search for wild grains, vegetables, acorns and game.

In this sense much of what probably occurred was an economic invasion, in which the Indo-Europeans entering Europe could entice the women of the Neolithic inhabitants to marry them. Further as food grew more scarce they also may have begun to hire the Neolithic European men to work for them. In order to survive then many of the people of Europe would have chosen to learn the language of and join the Indo-Europeans, slowly depleting their already dwindling numbers.

Being a male dominated society the women who married into the Indo-European families would go to live with them in their villages and so would learn their language and their culture. And while having better incomes would also mean that

Indo-Europeans females would be less likely to marry into the Europeans hypothetical egalitarian society when this did occur it is likely that the European male would choose to live in the Indo-European society because of the greater wealth available to him within it.

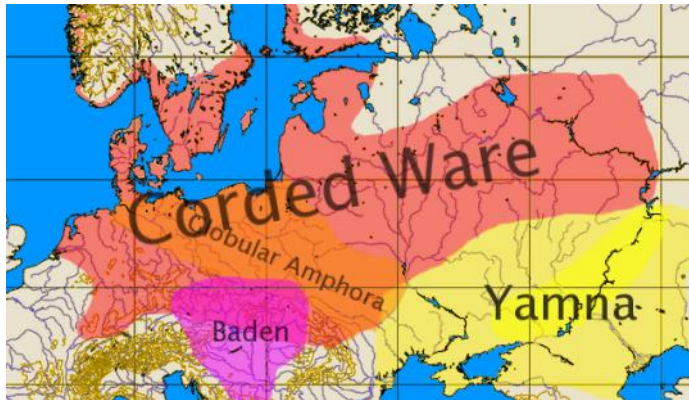
Certainly there may have been occasions when an Indo-European man was lured into the European, however, it is much less likely for a man from a pastoral society with a warrior class to choose to live with a sedentary society. Indeed Europe's nymph mythology in which a man is lured into living with the fairies in their realm may refer to this. As Perkiss points out in her book "Fairies and Fairy Stories – A History" when a knight or Greek warrior goes to live with a nymph or fairy their heroism is taken from them and this is considered to be a fate worse than death. In other words for an Indo-European male to have chosen to give up their heroism to marry someone would have been so horrible that warning tales were built against this idea.

Further starvation likely drove many Europeans to attempt to steal the cattle and sheep of the far wealthier Indo-Europeans who in turn would have followed the example of one of their most important myths in stopping at nothing to take revenge. What we see then is that as to European societies collapsed they began to live in caves and isolated islands, perhaps stealing from the Indo-Europeans rather than confronting them directly. Perhaps many Europeans who refused or were unable to become a part of the incoming Indo-European societies must have appeared, dehumanized by the Indo-Europeans the stories of them must have been very much like the tales of weak and desperate fairies of later years hiding in the mountains, secretly stealing from the Indo-Europeans, or working for occasional scraps of food.

### **Water Dragons**

Giant serpents lurked in the waters of Indo-European myths, serpents whose mythological decedents are the dragons of nearly every people in Eurasia. For the Indian Naga is descended from these creatures and the Chinese and Japanese dragons were adapted from these. Further nearly every European people believed in water dragons as well.

The first water dragons do not seem to have had any good qualities, more likely this was a later addition. The ancient serpents of Proto-Indo-European myth very likely were believed to block the flow of water, to poison and pollute wells. They were the monster that the storm god battled. Perhaps the most famous battles in Indo-European myths are between heroes and serpents. Zeus battled the many headed dragon typhoon, while Indra of Vedic mythology battled Vrtra. Hercules, Beowulf, they all had to battle some form of serpent.



2900 to 2400 BC



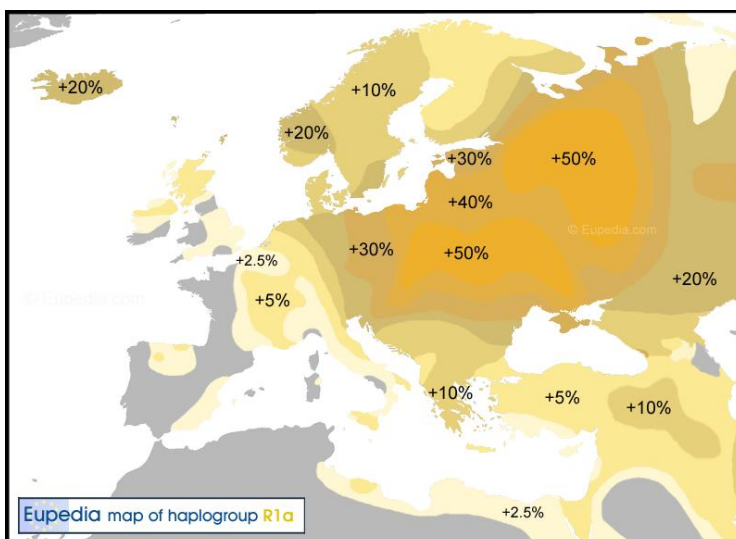
## 2-Cultural Invasion

In Indo-European cultures bard and mistral figures can earn huge amounts of wealth, the Celts and Vedic cultures would pay them in herds of horses and cattle. As the Indo-Europeans began to prove ever more successful their epics and sagas as well as their religion may have seemed all the more enticing to some of the peoples with which they had contact. This in turn could have caused them lure some of the most intelligent and capable peoples of Europe's societies to begin to immolate them.

## 3-Military Invasion

The early Romans and Etruscans lived next to each other for hundreds of years having various periods of peace and war in which Rome slowly conquered Etruscan land bit by bit. In legend Rome also raided the Sabine in order to obtain more women to help them populate their young city. Such raids for women were probably not uncommon among the Indo-Europeans and over time would certainly have resulted in their ability to greatly enhance their population as well as more serious conflicts between them and other peoples.

Like the Romans the Indo-Europeans likely often moved into a new area or expanded their borders so that they were suddenly in contact with a new group of peoples who they traded and went to war with over the course of generations. As they warred the existence of their warrior class would have allowed them to excel over many of their competitors and their growing numbers would have allowed them eventually overwhelm Europe's other inhabitants.



If the Indo-Europeans had aggressively invaded Europe all the way to the coast one would expect to see clusters of their population centers where they wiped out the local populations. Instead we see that as we get to the coast of France, Denmark, Sweden, and England the appearance of the genetic marker associated with their males drops to 10% or below.

What likely happened was that one generation only went a little ways into Europe, intermarried with the existing population and then their children who now only accounted for a smaller per-



centage of their genetic population pushed further into Europe.



4000-3500 BC

There has been a lot of speculation that the peoples of Europe were made up of peaceful matriarchal societies thanks to the many statues of female deities, however, one needs to be careful when making speculation based solely on art which can have a number of meanings. First we should understand that Europe likely had many different tribes of peoples with different belief systems. Further the Neolithic farmers at this time had migrated a few thousand years earlier from the Fertile Crescent where many of the goddesses such as Anat (who the Greeks adopted as Athena) were war goddesses. Further looking outside of Europe we see that there have been almost no Matriarchal societies in recorded history. And in Japan we see an example of a society where a goddess Amaterasu was the chief deity of the Empower, yet despite Amaterasu's importance to Japan and the Emperor they are not and were not Matriarchal, nor were they peaceful, indeed they rose to power through a series of battles and wars with other peoples and clans.

Further we see evidence of war and battles, not massive wars, but small battles none the less which seem to have involved slave taking or the capture of women. With this small battles and with Neolithic Farmers and Uralic Peoples having been moving in from Asia for thousands of years I would argue that it would be nearly impossible for any people to be purely peaceful as a single warlike neighbor will either force everyone else to become semi-war like or into slavery.

Finally given the number of cultures likely present in Europe speculation on their societies has to be done one at a time which is why these will be discussed in further articles discussing the mythology and fairy tales of the Greeks, Romans, Slavic people, Celts, Germanics, etc.

Imagine the challenge for the Neolithic Europeans now, food is growing more difficult to get so they are growing more dependent on each and every member of the village. But there are these strangers wandering through the forests strangers with enough to eat, who can ride horses.

For the Indo-Europeans to they have left their homeland, there are not necessarily a lot of members of their own peoples around for them to marry. Do they start to marry relatives or the local people? They don't want to leave their home, and their the ones with the wealth, a young girl or boy is far less likely to choose to live among a starving people then to choose to stay at home. So they lure the peoples from the villages to marry them.

Now the Neolithic Europeans faced with a serious problem, their boys are being lured away by these strange girls before harvest season or in the spring during planting season. To deal with this they begin to tell stories of the dangers of being taken in by strange girls or boys of the pastoral dancers and singers in the forest as dangerous.

Over time the Indo-Europeans and the Neolithic Europeans integrated, into one people and when the Neolithic's married the Indo-Europeans some of their stories went with them.

We must consider that the fairification of other peoples went both ways that even as the Indo-Europeans told tales of the Europeans the Europeans told tales of the Indo-Europeans. In fact many of the tales of fairies work better this way as the Indo-Europeans were a pastoral people living in small groups, often traveling through the wilderness, obsessed with song, and likely to take women and girls to be able to expand their population just as Europe's later fairies were said to.

Where is the Earth Goddess?

The Indo-Europeans adopted many deities, myths and legends. Odin, Mercury, and Hermes appear to have come from a Ugric-Finno shaman figure; as does Artemis, Diana. Zeus and Poseidon draw many aspects of their personality from pre-Indo-European deities. Athena and Aphrodite are adopted goddesses from the Near East and it's conceivable that they were spread throughout Europe in one form or another before the Indo-Europeans came to Greece.

So if the Neolithic Europeans worshiped an earth goddess above all others the question remains where is she? In Gaia perhaps? The Earth grandmother of the gods of Greek mythology at first glance seems like she could be a good candidate but there are two problems with her as a powerful preexisting goddess. Firstly she's not very important in most of Greek mythology, nor did she have or retain a large number of followers, second there is no similar earth mother in other European legends. The various forms of 'fate spinners' may be good candidates but here to worship was minimal. Worship could have stopped of course but there does appear to be a better candidate for the role of goddesses.

Frazer in the Golden Bough tells of fertility rituals and the worship of corn and field mothers, as do others. There were then a pervasive set of field deities throughout Europe. Further the spirits of the water were the most pervasive of all the fairies in Celtic lore and it is these water spirits that appear to be the actual fertility goddesses of much of Europe. In the beginning of the Sleeping Beauty tales the King and Queen seek to have a child by asking the sacred wells or get the blessing of what appears to be a water fairy. Fertility then, the success of crops doesn't only depend on the ever present, ever constant earth, rather it depends of rivers, lakes and rain. These water goddesses and corn mothers were so important that even after all the other Indo-European deities had been demonized or forgotten people still worshiped them. The belief in them lasted for 1500 years after the conversion to Christianity so it seems quite possible that it lasted through the Indo-Europeanization process. The mistake that is often made in trying to understand early Europe could be two fold then; first the early Europeans may not have worshipped what we would recognize as a goddess but what we would think of as nymphs, fairies and nature spirits. Second the Indo-Europeans may have even had the same general religion as many of the Neolithic Europeans, one which adapted over time, after they had already entered Europe. The first gods of Rome had no statues nor did those of the Germanic peoples. As Frazer puts it in the 'Golden Bough'

"The notion of a man-god, or of a human being endowed with divine or supernatural powers, be-



longs essentially to that earlier period of religious history in which gods and men are still viewed as beings of much the same order, and before they are divided by the impassable gulf which, to later thought, opens out between them. Strange, therefore, as may seem to us the idea of a god incarnate in human form, it has nothing very startling for early man, who sees in a man-god or a god-man only a higher degree of the same supernatural powers which he arrogates in perfect good faith to himself. Nor does he draw any very sharp distinction between a god and a powerful sorcerer. His gods are often merely invisible magicians who behind the veil of nature work the same sort of charms and incantations which the human magician works in a visible and bodily form among his fellows. And as the gods are commonly believed to exhibit themselves in the likeness of men to their worshippers, it is easy for the magician, with his supposed miraculous powers, to acquire the reputation of being an incarnate deity.”

River, forest and field goddesses are common throughout Indo-European nations and they were so important to the peoples of Europe that the people continued to worship them well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, over a thousand years after Christianity came to dominate Europe and the Indo-European gods were mostly forgotten.

The worship of river and field fairies rather than all powerful goddesses in Neolithic Europe would explain why while there were clear linguistic and cultural differences the primary outside influences we see on the Indo-European religions in Europe are from Asia rather than from the lands they integrated with.

It's quite possible that while the field and river spirits were the most important it was the most heroic of the spirits, the ones which sagas and epics would be sung about, the ones that the upper priest and warrior castes worshiped are the ones would come to rise above the others. Not necessarily because of the way society was structured but because while most people may pray more often for rain and their lives may revolve around tilling fields and harvesting crops they listen to tales of hero's, not of someone putting seeds in the ground. Stories lead people to deify fairies and nature spirits, but the stories were not about the most important deities they were about the ones who went on adventures, made love to beautiful women (or were lusty women) and did all the things that peasants wished they could do to escape their lives. No one comes home from back breaking labor after all and wants to listen to songs about working hard.

### **The fairy shawl**

The Greeks, Japanese, Celts and more all have tales of fairies which use scarves, shawls or some other item of clothing to turn into fairies and animals which allows them to enter the hidden realm. When these fairies are female its common for their to be tales of a man stealing their item of clothing as they bath in order to force them into a marriage arrangement which always ends badly in Europe though can end positively in Asian societies.

It was also common in both places for people to believe that there were secret herbs, chants, or potions which gave the fairies their powers and while it seems likely that such stories could have been developed independently of each other because as people thought about the nature of the separate society and pondered how they gained their powers the idea of magical herbs or items likely could easily have been developed. The question then is how early would this idea have been struck upon? Certainly it seems probably given the importance of the priest class in Indo-European societies that the idea of some magical system was present in the Proto-Indo-European society. This in turn makes it possible that at least some fairies were believed to be fairies thanks to some magical item which they had.