

VÁCLAV BLAŽEK & MICHAL SCHWARZ

**EARLY INDO-EUROPEANS
IN CENTRAL ASIA AND CHINA**

Cultural relations as reflected in language



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Buddhist stupa in Subashi (Kucha oasis), China
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Bereich Sprachwissenschaft

Innrain 52

6020 Innsbruck, Austria

e-mail: wolfgang.meid@uibk.ac.at

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Preface

Central Asia constitutes the interface between the East and West and marks the easternmost extension of the Indo-Europeans on the frontiers of China. Here on the periphery of the Indo-European world, Iranians and Tocharians occupied the mountain pastures, steppelands and oases that constituted the northern route of the Silk Road. The prehistory of the contacts between the East and West is continually emerging in the light of new archaeological discoveries but our ability to interpret the evidence of material remains in a broader ethnic context depends largely on a nuanced understanding of the relevant linguistic evidence as well. Can we discern the linguistic strata of Indo-Europeans as they entered and settled the Tarim Basin? Can we assess the chronological periods when the various Indo-European groups were in contact with both each other and their Central Asian and Chinese neighbours? These questions provide a broad context for the tasks set out by Václav Blažek and Michal Schwarz who evaluate the mutual loans between Chinese and the Indo-European world, the etymology of one of the most obvious items of material culture, metals, that may have been involved both commercial and linguistic exchanges, and the etymology of the all important names of rivers and lakes of the region. This work will undoubtedly provide a point of departure for all future discussion of the contacts between ancient China and the Indo-European world.

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James P. Mallory