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## THE SCYTHIANS, PAST AND PRESENT

THE history of Herodotus has been the subject of many undeserved attacks, and some of his critics have gone so far as to maintain that his works are but a collection of old wives' tales. It is true that the books of Herodotus do not fulfill the requirements of modern historical thought, which seems concentrated on the interpretation of history on purely economic and material grounds. But, as a matter of fact, for those who are interested in the past life of mankind, Herodotus offers an abundant source of accurate and independent information, combined with shrewd criticism.

Much in Herodotus appears to us unreal and mythical, simply as a result of our ignorance of the subject of his writing. His account, for instance, of the Amazons is almost universally considered a myth; but if we were to make the acquaintance in real life of those Amazons who exist to-day in Central Asia, then

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### <sup>1</sup> *Translator's Note* —

The author of this article, Pavel Stepanovich Nazaroff, is better qualified than any other man to write on the subject dealt with. Born at Orenburg in the Urals, he has grown up among the Kirghiz and known them, their life and language, from his boyhood. For twenty-five years he lived at Tashkend, and he has devoted his whole life to the study of the natural history of Turkestan. By profession a mining engineer and geologist, he has explored that vast territory in detail, both steppe and mountain. By instinct and training a scientific man, he has taken a keen interest in the past of the country he has made his own, and we owe to him notable contributions to our knowledge of its geology and natural history.

*It has been necessary to abbreviate the translation to some extent.* —

EDITOR .

we should understand the reality and the truth of what he wrote.

One of the most interesting portions of the work of Herodotus is his account of the Scythians, those mysterious, half – mythical people who played so important a part in the destiny of Asia, and then disappeared from the pages of history. He writes of them as powerful, independent nomads, occupying the grassy steppes which extend from the lower Danube to the Volga and further away to the east, that is to say to southern Russia and the Kirghiz steppes. The Scythians undertook distant expeditions and penetrated even so far as Egypt. Psammetichus saved Egypt from their invasion only by the costly expedient of buying them off. In the seventh century B.C. they controlled a large part of western Asia, including Syria and Palestine. They held this portion of Asia for twenty-eight years, and the Median emperor, Kvaxares, succeeded in freeing his country from the nomad yoke only when he had disposed of their leaders by craft. It is probably to them that the prophet Ezekiel refers (chaps. 38, 39) when he describes in eloquent words the swarms of savage horsemen led by Gog of the land of Magog. They dealt shattering blows to the Assyrian empire so that it fell an easy victim to the Medes and afterwards to the Persians.

The occasion of the advance of the Scythians into Asia was their pursuit of the Kimmerians; but while the latter went by the eastern coast of the Black Sea the Scythians preferred the western shores of the Caspian, where the broad expanse of grassy steppe offered greater attractions to a nation of cavalry than the narrow, mountainous, forest-clad belt of the Western Caucasus.

In 529 B.C., Cyrus, the great conqueror of Asia, rashly ventured to cross the Syr Daria (Araxas) and penetrated into the steppes of the Massagetae, an easterly branch of the

Scythians, there to meet his fate. In 515 B.C., a powerful army of Darius, who was contemplating a punitive expedition against the Scythians, almost came to ruin in the steppes of Southern Russia. It was only the carelessness of the Scythians themselves that enabled him to extricate his army without complete disaster.

After the beginning of the Christian era the appearances of the Scythians upon the scene of history become rare. There is a characteristic mention of them by Marcus Aurelius. In his account of his visit to Jerusalem he writes that hitherto he had considered the Scythians the dirtiest and most foul-smelling people in the world, but that now that he has made the acquaintance of the Jews he finds that they are worse.

In the fourth century A.D., Scythian cavalry near Adrianople inflicted a crushing blow on the Roman legions, which had hitherto been considered unconquerable. It is from this battle that dates that ascendancy of cavalry over infantry as an implement of war which was to continue until the days of Napoleon. The Byzantine general, Belisarius, gained a decisive victory over the Persians, solely thanks to his Massaget mercenaries.

After this the Scythians and Massagetae completely disappear from the scene. Their place is taken by mysterious nomad tribes, pouring from "the depths of Asia" under various names, about whom neither their contemporaries nor historians know anything. Finally from the same "depths of Asia" there emerged the "Scourge of God," Attila, with his swarms of Huns, the dread and terror of Europe.

Russia, at the very dawn of her history, came into collision with the nomads occupying the southern and eastern steppes, that is, the ancient home of the Scythians and Massagetae. Russian annalists, who drew their education from

Greece, began to describe these swarms of nomad cavalry as the children of Hell, for had they not come out of Tartarus? And so it was the "Tartars" who conquered the whole of Russia of that day. This semi-derogatory name, Tartar, then received an ethnographic meaning and was applied thenceforward to all the peoples of the steppes with whom the Russians came into contact. In Western Europe it came to comprise all the peoples of Siberia, Central Asia, the Caucasus and Crimea. This designation has no foundation in fact nor in historical research; it is not scientific and ought to be abandoned.

Almost to the close of the last century it was generally believed that the central portion of the Asiatic continent concealed immense possibilities of another human inundation of Europe by barbarian hordes and a repetition of the terror of the Dark Ages. It was supposed that there existed a numerous nomad population in the broad and fertile valleys which afforded breeding-grounds for their countless hordes. But the researches of Russian and British travelers have shown that this conception is entirely false. That part of Asia—Inner Mongolia, Gobi, the Tibetan plateau, the lowlands of Alti-Shar—is for the greater portion occupied by barren waterless deserts in which there wander but a few scattered tribes of nomads, while the settled population takes refuge in the small oases with artificial irrigation. These arid and sterile deserts have existed since the tertiary epoch; obviously they could never have given birth to those immense hordes of barbarians who periodically flooded Europe and the civilized regions of Asia. Neither could lofty crests, almost deprived of vegetation, and desert plateau be the birthplace of the Aryan peoples, much less indeed of all mankind, as once was generally believed.

The only place where there could arise and live and develop those nomad tribes which played so important a part in

history, where they could found their own peculiar culture, is the broad belt of grassy steppe land which extends from the Carpathians to the east through southern Russia, western Siberia and the valleys of northern Mongolia, occupying a considerable portion of the Eurasian continent. This is a region of quite peculiar nature, with characteristic flora and fauna and climatic conditions, where in ancient times it was not possible to establish a settled manner of life. Owing to the severity of the winter and heat of the summer, the inhabitants were compelled to adopt a nomadic existence, to live on their herds and to follow the latter in their search for food and water. These grassy steppes offered admirable conditions for breeding, as for all kinds of grazing animals. The Russian geographer Rychkoff, who lived in the Orenburg district in the second half of the eighteenth century, gives us a wonderful picture of the abundance of wild grazing animals in this steppe, which can be compared only with that of the fertile plains of Africa.

The healthy though severe climate, and the wealth of grass and water in this belt of the Old World gave rise to and developed a peculiar type of horse, derived most probably from the *Equus tarpan*, which became extinct in the south Russian steppes as late as the second half of the nineteenth century. The characteristic features of the horse of the steppes, generally known as the Kirghiz horse, are untiring endurance, the capacity for resisting the extreme cold of winter and of finding food under the snow by scraping with its hoofs. It can live independently in the steppes where it gathers into herds under the lead of an old stallion. The Kirghiz is the only breed of horse that can endure the maximum of work while satisfied with such grazing, often dry and scanty, as it can pick up, and also be independent of corn. This speciality of the steppe horse and its faculty for rapid breeding have had an immense influence

on the fate of the peoples of Europe and especially of Asia. If the camel is the ship of the desert, this horse is certainly the vessel of the steppes.

Thanks to these qualities of the horse of the steppes, there have periodically fallen upon Europe and civilized Asia waves of barbarian invaders. The hordes of the northern steppes have been able to penetrate to the valleys of Hindustan, to threaten Egypt, to overthrow empires and found new dynasties, to graft upon other peoples their own peculiar culture and their own blood, to establish new nations and a new blend of population, always bringing new names to old peoples and old countries. What the ships of the Vikings did for the west of Europe (and the Vikings were the nomads of the seas), the wandering horsemen of the steppes did for the east in the enjoyment of the most perfect means of transport then in existence on dry land.

The limits to the expeditions and conquests of the inhabitants of the steppes were laid down by the very specialization of their horses, which made them unable to stand the tropical heat of the plains of Hindustan or the raw climate and damp moist pastures of the north. This prevented the penetration of the marauders to the plains of India in the south; while in the north it saved Muscovy from the hordes of Tamerlane, whose horses succumbed in mass from the wet grass of the forest belt of Russia and from her damp and foggy nights. It is instructive to note that the "Tartars", that is the Turki peoples, in their expeditions against Russia always chose the winter for their inroads, for while the damp grass of the meadows is fatal to the Kirghiz horse, he does not fear the frost, and dry hay is good fodder for him.

The climatic conditions of the belt of grassy plains of the northern hemisphere, with the cold snowy winters and

absence of fuel, compelled the inhabitants to move in winter towards the south and to return in the spring to the abundant pastures of the north, thus following the examples of the birds and beasts that share the steppes with them. These conditions for long made settled life impossible in the steppes of the north ; but in the south, in the waterless valleys of Turkestan, Kashgaria, Khotan, Mesopotamia and other regions, artificial irrigation was developed, leading to a high degree of civilization, and States grew up which have left us splendid memorials and ruins of cities. But in the fertile steppe belt there are no traces of settled occupation; there only remain the monuments of eternal repose, the tombs of former dwellers. The steppes, however, gave birth to their own civilization suited to a nomad existence. We find that the homes, clothes and implements of the steppe peoples all bear the stamp of a peculiar culture that could have developed only in the course of many centuries of nomad existence. Their tent, for instance, is the ideal portable dwelling, of a type unknown anywhere else in the world.

In the not remote past we find in the lowlands of the steppes only two peoples fitted for a wandering existence, in the enjoyment of a high degree of nomad culture and owning herds of cattle and horses; these are the Kirghiz in the west and the Mongols in the east, two peoples anthropologically distinct, different also linguistically and in religion. In these vast plains without natural frontiers it was easy for distinct peoples to arise and yet not to mingle. The name Kirghiz, which is given to the wandering Turki tribes who now inhabit the steppes of Eastern Russia and Siberia, is not quite correct. The men of the steppes call themselves "Kazaki" (whence by confusion the name Cossacks, applied to a totally different people). It is the related tribes, living in the mountains, who call themselves Kirghiz, or Kara-Kirghiz, that is Black Kirghiz. The Kirghiz of the plains

and the Kirghiz of the hills speak different dialects of one and the same language, with local variations, and are connected in the same way with other Turki tribes of Siberia. All the Kirghiz are divided into clans. Among the Kara Kirghiz the most numerous tribe is that of the Sayaki, living in the mountains of Turkestan, and one can scarcely doubt when one reads Herodotus that these are the same as the Saki who formed part of the Persian army, so closely does his account describe this people.

The Kazars, or Khazars, who lived on the banks of the Caspian in the ninth and tenth centuries professed Judaism; they often came into collision with the Russians. To-day we find this purely Turki tribe in Afghanistan where they have been settled for ages, having long since abandoned Judaism for Islam. Another Turki tribe, which came from the northern steppes into Turkestan under the leadership of the Khan Uz Beg, and adopted to a large extent a settled mode of life although still retaining even in their new home many nomad characteristics, is known to-day under the name of Uzbeks.

A striking instance of how an entire people may disappear is afforded by the curious instance of the Kipchaks of Ferghana. The Kipchaks took a very active part in the political life of Ferghana. In the second half of the nineteenth century they overthrew the authority of the Khan of Kokand, Khudoyar Khan, and the well-known Russian general, Skobelev, came and took Ferghana. After the conquest and pacification of the country in the seventies of the last century the Kipchaks disappeared from the scene, and in the census of 1897 it is recorded that there lived in Ferghana only a single individual Kipchak. Does this mean that an entire people bearing a name familiar to Russians from the very beginning of their history had suddenly ceased to exist? This is of course impossible. These



Kipchaks of Ferghana are to-day known officially under the name of Mountain or Alai Kirghiz, and the Kipchak clan is very numerous still in other parts of the steppes.

The Kirghiz have been divided into tribes or clans from very ancient times. Each clan has its own distinctive mark or *tamga*, which is branded on the horses as a sign of ownership. In the upper reaches of the river Turgai in the province of the same name on a lofty rock there are engraved the *tamgas* of all the Kirghiz clans, that is, the archives of their genealogy. It is particularly interesting to note that these Kirghiz *tamgas* are identical with the letters of the so-called "Orkhon" runic alphabet. Similar inscriptions were later discovered in the valley of the Talas in the western Tian Shan. These Orkhon inscriptions have been recently deciphered by the Danish philologist, Professor Wilhelm Thomassen, who has shown that they are in a Turki tongue and date from the beginning of the Christian era. More curious is the fact that these primitive Turki letters, these *tamgas*, very closely resemble the Aramaic script of the language spoken by the Jews in Palestine at the time of Jesus Christ, which was also for long the literary language of the Persians.

The foregoing considerations are sufficient to show that the Turki tribes known to-day under the names of Kirghiz, Kara Kalpak, Soyot, Abakan and Siberian Tartars, are by no means a people of recent origin, nor "wandering foreigners" who have appeared in southern Russia steppes "after the Mongolian conquest", but a people who have lived from time immemorial in this steppe region of the Old World.

A people without literature, they have no historical records. Their language, Turki with its various dialects, extends from Kazan to Tibet and from the Crimea to Eastern Siberia. Needless to say throughout this vast area not every Turki can

understand every other easily, but in a general way a man who knows the language of the Kirghiz of the steppes or of the Uzbeks of Turkestan could make himself understood without difficulty throughout Central Asia, in parts of Tibet, and with ease in Peshawar.

To return to the Scythians, Herodotus tells us that they trace their origin from the sons of Targitai. He tells us also that the characteristic weapons and articles of Scythian life were the battle-axe and the goblet. The crescent-shaped axe has only recently disappeared as a military weapon of the steppes, goblet—in Kirghiz, *kise*, almost identical in sound with the Greek name *skythos* — was until recent times the indispensable companion of every Kirghiz, just as it is still the inseparable vade-mecum of the Tibetan. It is to be seen in a peculiar hard leather case hanging from the girdle or saddle of every Kirghiz. Rude stone carvings scattered in abundance about the steppes, and known to the Russians as “stone women”, were placed on the tombs of the Turki peoples before they adopted Islam. These rough figures are always shown with the hands holding the inevitable goblet on the breast. This goblet played a part in the ceremonial life of the Scythians; even to-day a Kirghiz will not say “I have sworn an oath” but “I have drunk an oath”, which exactly corresponds with the description by Herodotus of the Scythian ceremony.

With equal fidelity, Herodotus describes the preparation by the Scythians of mare’s milk without knowing the object of this operation. It is nothing else than the preparation of *kumuis*, still the chief article of diet of the Kirghiz and famous for its medical and curative properties.

In a Scythian tomb in South Russia have been found two silver vases of Greek workmanship which give us a most valuable illustration of the Scythians, their costumes and horses,

hue drawing of the horses clearly shows their characteristic build, and the peculiar “stepped” trimming of the manes and tails, with the bridles, saddles and tethering ropes, just as though the artist had chosen his model from a Kirghiz horse of to-day. This trimming of the manes and tails of the horses is not seen anywhere else in the world than in the Kirghiz steppes. On their heads the Scythians are wearing the typical conical head-dress of the Kirghiz, a large cap trimmed with fur with big ear-flaps. Their boots are an exact copy of those worn by the Kara Kirghiz to-day. The broad girdle with metallic ornamentation is identical with the pride of every Kirghiz dandy. But the faces of the Scythians in these figures are typical Greek faces; evidently the artist’s instinctive sense of beauty did not permit him to reproduce the natural physiognomy of the Turki.

The Scythian tombs found in Russia are not infrequently decorated with frescoes in color illustrating the life of the deceased, his herds and hunting. In the Moscow Historical Museum are pictures illustrating such a tomb. In the Turgai steppe, on the river Ul Koyak, modern Kirghiz tombs can be seen decorated with just such frescoes, reproducing down to the smallest detail the peculiar character of Scythian art. When I first saw the pictures in the Historical Museum I was unable to believe that these frescoes were not copied from a Kirghiz tomb. Rich archaeological material was provided by the immense *kurgan* of Chartomlitz, opened by Professor Zabellin. It was the tomb of a Scythian king, and entirely agrees with the description of such a tomb and manner of burial as described by Herodotus. It is interesting to note that the royal tombs recently discovered in the ruins of Kish, as reported in the press, are of the same type and character.

But this is after all not so very surprising, as the Sumerian civilization was of the Turki type. Apart from philological considerations, valuable confirmation of this view was afforded by excavations in the ancient ruins of Annau near Ashkhabad in Transcaspia which were conducted by the Pumpelly expedition. It appears in fact that the oldest civilization hitherto revealed by archaeologists is that of the Turki peoples.

It seems strange at first that at the dawn of history the first germs of cultivated and settled life were due to a race of nomads. But their exceptional mobility probably gave them exceptional adaptability. The ancestors of the Ottoman Turks came from the clan Kangli of these same Kirghiz, who founded the kingdom of the Uigurs and laid the foundations of a settled existence in Ferghana, and in Khiva, the first mention of which dates from the twelfth century B.C. The Persians, with whom the Turki population in this region blended, appeared on the scene at a later date. The Turki founded the empires of Kazan, of Bulgaria, of the Volga, from which arose later the Bulgarian empires of the Balkans.

It is to be noted that the armies of the Mongols in their advance upon Europe consisted mainly of Turki cavalry. The hosts of Tamerlane also consisted chiefly of nomads. On the other hand, the settled population of Turkestan, accustomed to live on artificially irrigated fields, was never distinguished by martial spirit and could not have provided the material for a numerous army.

Herodotus tells us of various tribes of Scythians, for example, the Neuroi, who turned themselves into wolves and were driven out of their country by serpents — tales which you may hear any day, seated round the camp fire of a Kirghiz of the steppes. He also tells us of the “eaters of lice”, and at first sight this seems an impossible tale; but anyone who has lived

among the Kirghiz and observed their method of exterminating these vermin by nibbling the seams of their clothing, which they pass with a rapid movement between their teeth, will have no difficulty in realizing the truth of the description.

Herodotus often refers to the Sarmatians and their origin from the Amazons, whose very existence is generally considered a myth. As a matter of fact their existence is not only perfectly possible, but Amazons may be met with now any day in the Kirghiz steppes and mountains of Central Asia. Indeed every Kirghiz woman is a veritable Amazon. Her duties include not only all domestic matters but also the care of the herds. It is she who catches a horse from the flock and saddles it and leads it to her lord and master, who then rides off to a neighboring *aul* to drink *kumuís* with his friends. She is herself a perfect horsewoman. Many a time have I seen a Kirghiz woman boldly riding on a rough mountain path at the edge of precipices, or on the rocks of a lofty pass, with two or even three children on the saddle with her. In her arms a child at the breast, a second on her knee in front, while a third sits on the saddle behind her. The Kirghiz woman enjoys a very influential position in the family; no important decisions are reached without her agreement, and often enough she takes command of everything in the family or even in the *aul*.

The Amazons of Herodotus were undoubtedly the womenfolk of some Turki tribe then inhabiting southern Russia, whose men-folk had gone off on some distant expedition and all been killed, so that the women remained and took charge by themselves of the tribal property and herds, just as the Kirghiz women of to-day are perfectly capable of doing. Their courage and cunning, Herodotus tells us, were so great that they were able to fall upon and cut to pieces the Greeks, who had taken them prisoners and sailed off with them to sea ; but as they had

no knowledge of navigation they were quickly washed ashore. On reaching dry land they at once stole the horses of another tribe of Scythians (hardly a crime in the steppe but rather a sport) and were then in their element, on horseback in the steppe. The young Scythians at first could not understand them, but soon picked up their language which was only a different dialect. As to the costume of the Amazons mentioned by Herodotus, some clans still, as the Kara Kirghiz, are distinguished by the special form of head-dress worn by their women, which is often of very complicated pattern.

Further, those familiar with the Turki languages will recognize in the first syllable of the very name of Amazon a word denoting the female sex. Out of the marriage of these Amazons with the other Scythian tribes there arose the Sarmatians. This word has a Turki ring, and I long sought its elucidation. Finally one day I met a learned Tadjik who translated it for me into the Sart dialect. "*Iniesi bash*" he said, which means Mother Head. He could not have expressed better in two words the description given by Herodotus, who tells us that the Amazons lorded it over their husbands and were in fact the heads of the family.

The Massagetæ were the most powerful tribe of the Scythians. They lived in the grassy valleys of the southern Urals and steppes extending towards the south, and gave their name to one of the tributaries of the river Ural, the Massagat of the Kirghiz or Massagatka of the Russians, near the town of Orsk. There is also in the Urals a mountain called Massagettau. These surviving names point to the land of the Massagetæ as lying between the Urals and the Sea of Aral and the Syr Daria, the Araxes of Herodotus. The Massagetæ wandered about this country just as the Kirghiz roam there to-day.

The Kirghiz, after spending the winter on the scanty but snow less pastures of the Syr Daria, pass in the summer over to the abundant feeding-grounds of the grassy steppes of the PriUral. In the eastern portion of the latter region there are rich alluvial deposits of gold, and on the west deposits of easily smelted oxidized copper ores. There are very many ancient workings of prehistoric age in which are found articles of stone, bone and bronze, such as daggers, arrow-heads, spears, saddle furniture, mirrors, rude statuettes and so on. All this fully confirms the statement of Herodotus, that of all the metals, the Massagetae employed only gold and copper, although they were undoubtedly familiar with iron. But the art of winning gold and working copper ore has long since been forgotten by the modern descendants of the Massagetae.

The account by Herodotus of the fate of the Persian king Cyrus, who ventured into the steppes of the Massagetae beyond the river Araxes, the Syr Daria, has led some to ask how these rude tribes defeated the organized armies of the great king. The Persian conqueror was defeated by the Queen of the Massagetae, Tomyris. That Cyrus might sate that thirst for gore which he could not satisfy in life, she put his head into a leather bag filled with blood. This leather bag, the *tursak* of the Kirghiz, is the ordinary receptacle for milk, water and other fluids. It should be noted that the queen had a typically Turki name, properly Temir-is, which means "crush iron", a name illustrative of her qualities of will and character.

Contrary to the general opinion as to the role of women among nomads, a queen among the Turki peoples dominating her entire folk is by no means a rare phenomenon. As recently as the eve of the Great War there died in Ferghana the famous queen of the Alai Kirghiz, Kurban Datkha, who had enormous influence and authority even after the conquest of her country

by the Russians. In the 'seventies of the last century it had cost General Skobelev no little trouble and difficulty to overcome her forces. Piers was the most obstinate resistance which the Russian forces met in the subjugation of the Khanate of Kokand, and if General Skobelev escaped the fate of Cyrus it was only thanks to the superiority of modern armament. Kurban Datkha died at a ripe old age amid the warm affection of her people. She had received many valuable gifts from the Russian emperor and her sons were in the imperial service. Another queen in Transcaspian Turkestan is I trust still alive and well. She has very great influence over all the Turkmen tribes of the Transcaspian Province, and under her direction the Turkmen showed a vigorous resistance to the Bolsheviks.

The custom of scalping and using the skin of a dead enemy for various purposes died out among the Kirghiz only after the end of the chronic warfare between them and the Cossacks in the first half of the nineteenth century. The cutting of straps from the back of living and dead enemies was very general in the Kirghiz steppes, just as Herodotus relates of the Scythians.

Unfortunately Herodotus tells us very little about the language of the Scythians ; he gives us only a few words and those in mutilated form. In the names of the rivers we find, however, a number of Scythian roots and actual words which survive to the present day in the Kirghiz steppes. Of the river Hypanis, Herodotus tells us that wild white horses graze near its source. Among the Kirghiz and Sarts of to-day there is a widespread belief that near remote rivers and lakes there live white, hairless, wild horses and that a cross between them and domesticated horses produces a splendid animal. It is very likely that the origin of this belief is the *kulan*, *Equus hemionus*, a wild ass of a pale yellowish color.



What was the cause of the expeditions and of the wholesale movements of the Scythians? They were not the migrations of a hungry nomad folk from the desert to rich and populous settled districts. Quite the contrary, for these wanderers had great wealth in cattle and horses and flocks, and were richer than the inhabitants of the irrigated lands. The expeditions of the Scythians into the settled regions of ancient Persia, Mesopotamia and Bactria were purely military forays; the soldiers left their families and herds at home. These raids must be attributed to the natural human love of adventure, to curiosity and, above all, to the superabundance of energy in a wandering people for which they could not find sufficient outlet in the daily routine of their regular occupations. The possession of active horses, of weapons, and of personal strength, all urged the Scythians to go and conquer other lands and to win an easy booty. At a certain stage in man's development, martial activity is attractive and interesting in itself, independently of its results. Wars, raids and forays are a form of sport, like hunting and the tournee of knightly days. On the other hand, the wholesale movement of peoples towards the west, their migration with all their property, cattle, herds, families and goods, evidently arose from more deep-seated, we may almost say biological, causes. The nomad never struggles with nature, for he forms part of it. With his immense herds of cattle and horses he lives with them and on them, totally dependent upon them and subject to all those natural influences which affect not only wild creatures but also the half-wild animals which are the very source of his existence, food and clothing.

These wholesale movements of the nomads were in fact due to the laws of migration of which we know so little, often as we have occasion to observe their effects. Among birds for

instance, the periodical migration to Europe in mass of Pallas' Sand Grouse is well known. Every fifteen or twenty years immense flocks of these beautiful birds out of the half-desert areas of Central Asia stream irresistibly to the west and northwest of Europe. They fly across Russia , Germany, France to Belgium, Holland , Denmark, and even to England , until only the sea stops their flight. Sometimes they stop and nest and produce their young, but rarely wait for the second year and imperceptibly disappear. Such movements cannot be explained by mere shortage of food, for normally these birds fly off from their nesting grounds to winter in the south where there is an abundance of food for them, but on these migrations to Europe they are flying from the sunny steppes to colder climes. Under normal conditions they do not assemble in immense flocks, but at the times of their great flights they collect in hundreds of thousands. An allied species, *Pterocles sezverzozci*, which shares the steppes with the Sand Grouse, also collects in countless thousands but never flies to the north, even to localities quite near. All we can say is that these mass migrations of nomad peoples and animals are a purely biological phenomenon, the consequence of causes that are so far little understood.

To sum up: the ancient Scythians were a race arising out of the peculiar natural and climatic conditions of the country which they inhabited, that great belt of grassy steppe land which extends across the continents of Europe and Asia. They survive to this day to the extent of several million souls in many parts of this steppe country, forming a distinct race of nomad Turki peoples, still preserving their own peculiar form of culture, which is the oldest known to mankind.

These Turki-Scythians have played in historic times an immense role in the life of civilised peoples of Asia and Europe,

appearing at various periods in various places under totally different names, but all coming “out of the depths of Asia”. They were not destroyers only. Like the Normans in the west, so the Scythians in the east reacted upon the composition of the population of the countries they conquered, bringing with them their own peculiar characteristics and often acting as a colonizing element, occupying free or sparsely inhabited districts.

Clearly, therefore, the nomad Turki peoples whom we to-day are accustomed to call Kirghiz are deserving of very special attention. In their customs, language, material culture and manner of life, there has survived much of the ancient Scythian, whom Herodotus describes for us. It would be intensely interesting to study in detail and systematically these living survivors of antiquity from the ethnographic and anthropological point of view before all traces of the ancient Scythians have finally disappeared under the leveling influence of European civilization.

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(Translated by Malcolm Burr).