

## Modern European languages traced to waves of migrating ancient Russian herders

New DNA evidence suggests that herders from the grasslands of today's Russia and Ukraine carried the roots of modern European languages across the continent some 4,500 years ago.

The introduction of farming has often been described as the pivotal event in European prehistory. The new study in the journal *Nature* suggests that instead of one mass migration of farmers, as long thought, there were two: first an influx from Anatolia, a region of today's Turkey, and then a second wave of people moving into central Europe from the steppes of modern-day Russia, four millennia later, who would have brought with them the Indo-European languages that became English and many other modern European languages.

"First there are early hunter-gatherers, then come farmers, then farmers mix with hunter-gatherers—then comes a new population from the east, which is the major migration," says Iosif Lazaridis, a geneticist at Harvard Medical School and co-author of the paper.

Evidence of this second mass migration came to light while Lazaridis and colleagues were working to reconstruct the origins of modern Europeans, using DNA recovered from the bones of 69 ancient inhabitants of the continent. The specimens, which ranged from 3,000 to 8,000 years old, were compared to each other and to modern European populations.

As expected, the researchers found traces of ancient hunter-gatherers and the first Neolithic farmers. But there was an unexpected wrinkle: a massive population movement coming from the plains and grasslands of Eurasia, where Russia and Ukraine are today, beginning around 4,500 years ago.

**Read full, original article:** [Europe's Languages Were Carried From the East, DNA Shows](#)