CHAPTER FOURTEEN

CONCLUSIONS TO PART ONE

This analysis of the material culture of the Andronovo tribes has been conducted according to the methodology outlined above and over a vast background of synchronous and diachronous archaeological cultures. The evidence has been viewed in the context of written documents, and linguistic, anthropological, and ethnographic data on the culture of the Indo-Iranian peoples; its conclusions have been verified independently by a variety of methods: 1) by establishing the time and direction of migration routes; 2) the analysis of anthropological data; 3) the combining of archaeological and toponymic maps; 4) the study of Indo-Iranian traditions about their homeland; 5) the possibility of interpreting the semantics of Andronovo art and rituals in the light of Indo-Iranian mythology and ritual practice; and 6) the evidence of contacts with Finno-Ugrian and Greek speakers. All of these have led me to the following conclusions.

The retrospective method establishes the succession of the Andronovo culture and the cultures of the Iranian-speaking Sauromatians and Saka, which replaced it in the 8th century BC. This follows not from an individual element of the complex but by the sum total of features, both belonging to one ECT (which defines the similarity of tools, composition of herd, partially house type) and ethnically diagnostic features, which are not connected with the sphere of manufacture and which as a result give extremely important information about ethnic succession thus serving as ethnic indicators (ceramics, clothes, ornaments, types of industrial technology, range of prestige animals reconstructed through the study of ritual burials and art that reflect a unity of mythological ideas, and the retention of functionally unconditioned traditions in production). The genetic connection between specific sets of weapons (spears, arrows), and horse gear (cheek-pieces, vehicles) is significant. The genetic succession of the steppe population is supported by anthropological data. It helps affirm the conclusions of previous researches and accepts the Saka and Sauromatians as the direct descendents of the Andronovo tribes and thus renders the Iranian or Indo-Iranian attribution of Andronovo justified.

Andronovo traditions are revealed in the culture of modern Iranian, Indian and relict tribes (domestic architecture in Ossetia, the Hindukush, the Pamirs and Hindustan, the type of light dwellings of Iranian nomads, the technique of handmade pottery in the Pamirs and Hindukush, dress). The succession of anthropological type of some population groups has been traced. This too affirms the validity of attributing an Indo-Iranian identity to the Andronovo culture.

The analysis of the entire Andronovo natural habitat, and the reconstruction of its ECT as an integral system has led us to assign it to the central Eurasian zone and marks its utmost proximity to the ECT of the pastoral cultures of the Eurasian steppes, especially the Timber-grave culture, and marks it as
fundamentally different from the Indo-Near Eastern ECT type, seen in its agriculture, form of stock-breeding and herd composition, industrial character, settlements and houses types, dress, etc. In the Andronovo and Timber-grave area of the 17th–9th centuries BC there is no mass migration and no major cultural influences from the second order civilizations of Iran and southern Central Asia.

The combination method has shown that the ECT of the early Indo-Iranians, reconstructed by written texts, historic tradition, and linguistic and ethnographic materials, does not fit the Indo-Near Eastern zone but finds correspondences in the Central Eurasian zone in the circle of pastoral cultures of the Eurasian steppes. This is seen in the mixed economic type with stock-breeding dominant, herd composition (horse, cattle, sheep), character of industrial production (domestic production for the family, absence of specialized differentiated crafts for the market, hand-made pottery); house type (long term pole-supported structure with a ridged roof and light proto-yurt); dress which did not correspond to the ecological conditions of India and Iran and had no sources there, while the genesis of every category can be traced to the south Russian steppes from the Eneolithic period. The systemic character of connections is established not according to individual elements but according to a sum of interconnected culturally determining features which firmly connects the origin of the Indo-Iranian ethnos with cultures of the Eurasian steppes, first of all with Andronovo, Timber-grave and also with the related Tazabagyab and Vakhsh. They probably reflect the ethnographic cultures of different tribes of Indo-Iranians before their split in the steppe homeland long before they began their migration to India and Iran. Numerous Indo-Iranian tribes with cultural peculiarities and dialects are known from the Rigveda and Mahābhārata.

The method of surveying culture-indicative features specific only for the given ethnos was used as a further step in the comparison of Indo-Iranian culture, especially Indo-Aryan, with Andronovo. The most important ethnic indicators are: the absence of pig in domestic livestock; the presence of the Bactrian camel; the special role of horse-breeding and horse sacrifices; the special role of the horse-drawn chariot and its cult; the technique employed in making tripartite vessels by means of coil modeling; the form of unique square vessels; and cremation ritual. These confirm the validity of our attribution and make it possible to stress the specific similarity of some Fedorovo type features with Indo-Aryan.

The process of ethnogenesis in the steppes in the 2nd millennium BC was of an autochthonous character of development, involving integration and migration, which was strengthened in the 17th–16th centuries BC, probably because of the appearance of the chariot and bronze casting. In the west of Andronovo territory, the Sintashta-Petrovka type sites were formed as a result of the influence of western cultures (Poltavka, Abashevo, Catacomb, Multi-roller Ware); the Timber-grave culture was formed simultaneously under the influence of the same components.

Beginning from the middle of the 2nd millennium BC there was intensive assimilation and integration in the Andronovo region of the Alakul’ tribes, that are genetically connected with the Petrovka and Fedorovka tribes, which led to a consolidation of the Andronovo culture. In the third quarter of the 2nd