

# Nomads: Sophisticated Cultures on the Move

# I. Nomadic Emergence

## A. Theories

1. Pre-existing condition
2. Economic specialization
3. Escape from political subjugation
4. Niche (hunters → nomads → migrant laborers  
gatherers → slash and burn → sedentary agriculturalists)

# I. Nomadic Emergence

## B. Contact with sedentary groups

1. Symbiotic
2. Confrontational

## II. Types of Nomads

A. Max Weber — ideal types according to dominant animal

1. sheep and goats (most widespread — Bakhtiari)
2. cattle (Dinka, Nuer, Masai)
3. camel (Bedouin)
- [4. horse (Hittites, Hyksos, Hsiung-nu [Huns], Cimmerians, Scythians, Sarmatians, Pechenegs, Polovtsians, Qipchaqs, Mongols)]
- [5. reindeer (Lapps)]

## II. Types of Nomads

### B. Domestication — two stages

1. Husbandry — culling herd of young males
2. Breeding

## II. Types of Nomads

### C. Earliest evidence of domestication of ruminants

1. Sheep — Zawi Chemi; Shandar, Iraq — 8650 B.C.
2. Goats — Ganj-Dareh, Iran — 8200 B.C.
3. Pigs — Cayönu, Turkey — 7200 B.C.
4. Cattle — North Africa — 6800 B.C.

## II. Types of Nomads

### C. Earliest evidence of domestication of ruminants (cont.)

5. Horses — Ukrainian steppe — 4800–4500 B.C.  
(Przewalski's horse)

6. Camels — Middle East — 1200 B.C.

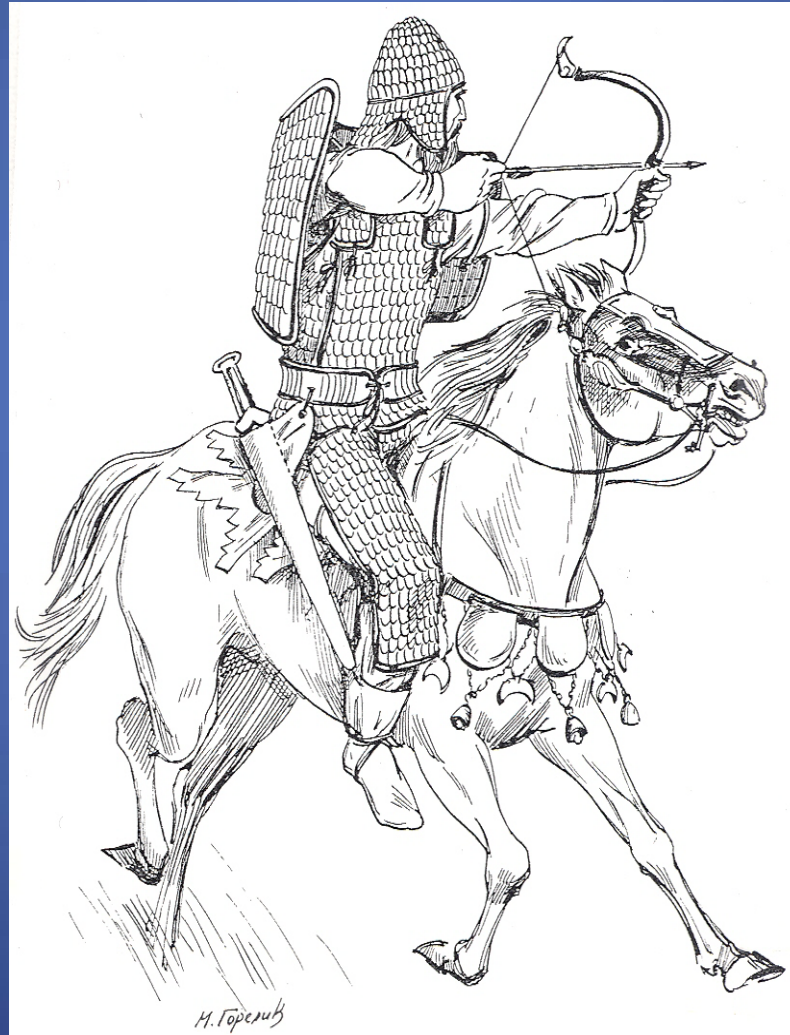
– but see Genesis 12–50; and Steve Caesar, “The Diffusion of Camel Domestication from Turkmenistan to Egypt and Its Reflection on the Patriarchal Narratives,” ALM thesis, Harvard University, 2002.

# Horse nomad





# Horse nomad shooting a bow



# A Chronology of the First Horsemen

**4800–4500 B.C.**

Horse domesticated on Ukrainian steppe

**1700 B.C.**

Horse-drawn chariot introduced in Near East.

**1500 B.C.**

Seminomadic stockbreeding tribes inhabit steppes.

**c. 900 B.C.**

Spread of mounted nomadism.

**707 B.C.**

Cimmerians, earliest-known mounted nomads, defeat kingdom of Urartu in Near East.

**c. 700 B.C.**

Scythian presence in Near East recorded in Assyrian texts.

**674 B.C.**

Scythian king marries daughter of Esarhaddon, ruler of the Assyrian Empire.

**612 B.C.**

Medes, with Scythians, capture Nineveh and destroy Assyrian Empire.

# Chronology of First Horsemen (cont.)

**c. 600 B.C.**

Medes drive Scythians north of the Caucasus.

**514 B.C.**

Scythians, now dominant in Ukraine, repel Persian invasion under Darius the Great

**c. 450 B.C.**

Herodotus visits Greek trading colony of Olbia to gather information on Scythians.

**c. 350 B.C.**

Sarmatians begin to enter Scythian territory. Little Scythia founded in Romania

**339 B.C.**

Scythians, under King Ateas, defeated in battle in Romania by Philip of Macedon.

**331 B.C.**

Scythians annihilate an army of Alexander the Great in Black Sea region.

**214 B.C.**

Chinese complete Great Wall as defense against Hsiung-nu.

**c. 200 B.C.**

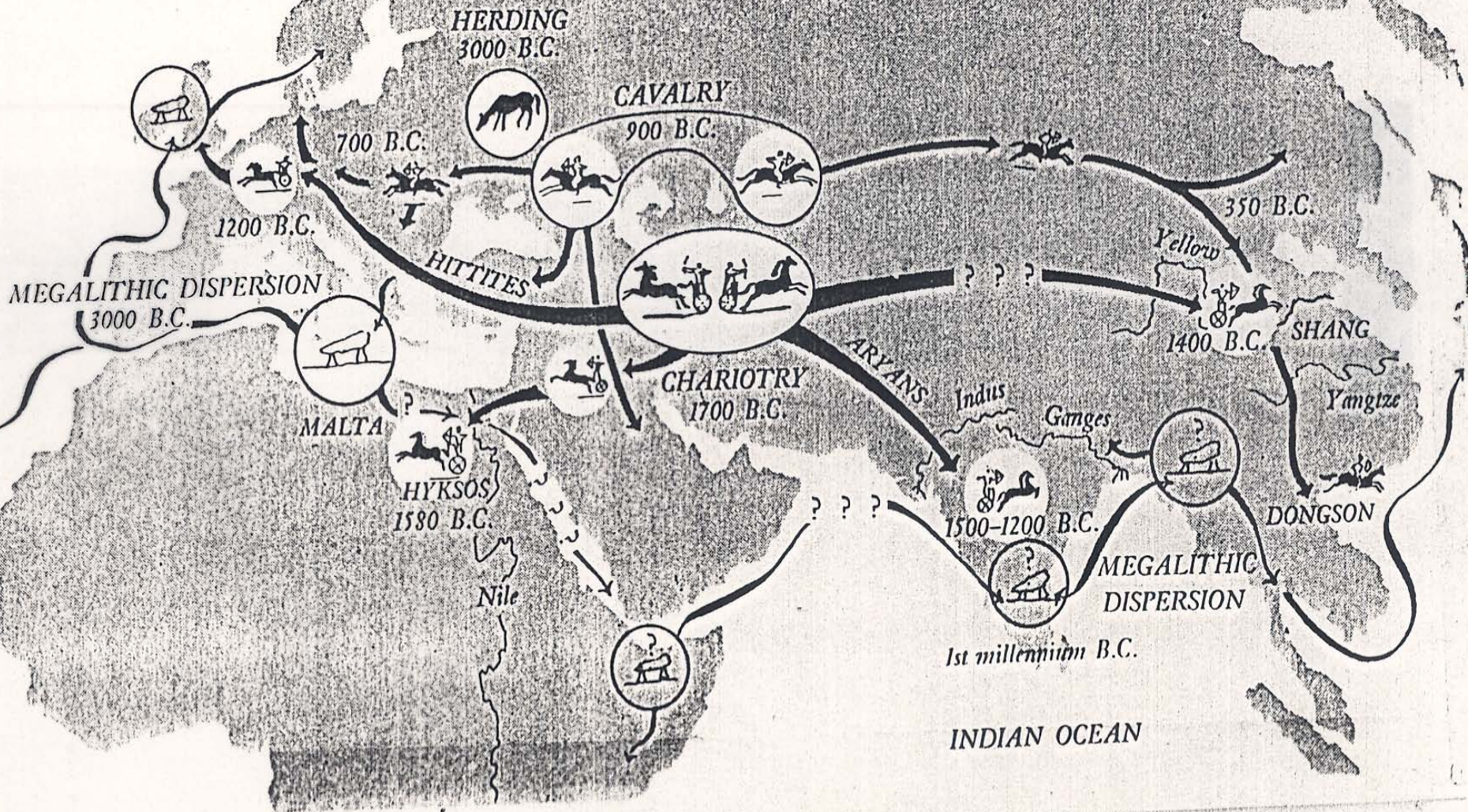
Scythians withdraw to Crimea, establish capital at Neapolis and impose heavy tribute on Greek colonies.

**110-106 B.C.**

Scythians in Crimea defeated by Pontic king Mithradates the Great. Black Sea area is gradually drawn into Rome's sphere of influence.

# THE SEAWAYS AND STEPPES 3000-300 B.C.

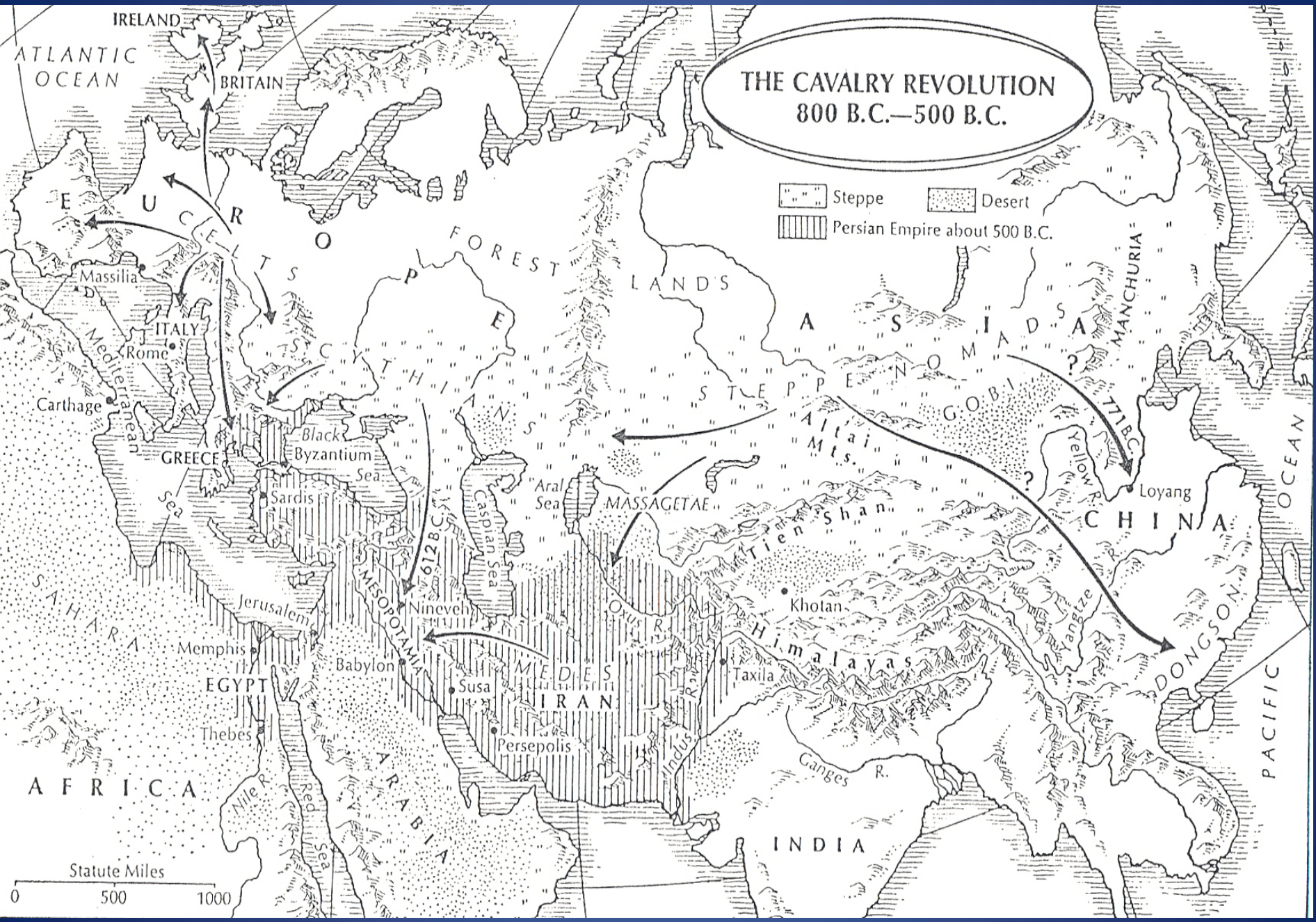
ATLANTIC OCEAN



INDIAN OCEAN

# THE CAVALRY REVOLUTION 800 B.C.—500 B.C.

" " " Steppe      Desert  
 ||| Persian Empire about 500 B.C.



Statute Miles  
 0      500      1000

# III. Nomadic Life

## A. Social distinctions

1. gender
2. patron-client
3. rank within clan
4. rank of clan within chieftaincy

# III. Nomadic Life

## B. Political distinctions

### 1. khan

#### a. chiefs (heads of chieftaincies)

(1) heads of clans

(a) families

### 2. assembly of notables

# III. Nomadic Life

## C. Religious Practices

1. Herodotus
2. Later travelers



## IV. Impact of Nomads

- A. Franz Oppenheimer, *The State (Der Staat)*, Frankfurt, 1907)
1. founders of complex societies and states were nomads
  2. pastoral nomads conquered sedentary people and est.  
`themselves as nobility
  3. diet—the reason for success (high in protein)

## IV. Impact of Nomads

### A. Franz Oppenheimer, *The State (Der Staat, Frankfurt, 1907)*(cont.)

#### 4. Evidence to support theory

- a. Babylonians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans
- b. Medes, Persians, and Aryans
- c. Vikings (nomads of the sea)

#### 5. Evidence against the theory

- a. Egyptian civilization
- b. most inventions and advances in technology and thinking
- c. nutritional studies

## IV. Impact of Nomads

B. David W. Anthony, “Horse, Wagon & Chariot: Indo-European Languages and Archaeology,” *Antiquity*, September 1995

1. Sintashta-Petrovka
2. Mounted nomadism since 4000 B.C.
3. Chariots, ca. 2000 B.C. (8- and 12-spoke wheels)
4. Evidence from *Rg Veda on burial rituals*

See also: David W. Anthony, *The Horse, the Wheel, and Language: How Bronze-Age Riders from the Eurasian Steppes Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton University Press, 2007).