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TOWARDS AN INVASIONLESS MODEL
OF INDOEUROPEAN ORIGINS:
THE CONTINUITY THEORY

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Surprisingly, although the archaeological research of the last few decennia has provided more and more evidence that no large-scale invasion took place in Europe in the Calcholithic, Indoeuropean linguistics has stubbornly held to its strong invasionist assumption, and has continued to produce more and more variations on the old theme. Mallory, himself a supporter of Gimbutas' theory of the 'kurganisation' of Europe in Calcholithic (e.g. Gimbutas 1970), has reckoned that in the last hundred years no less than seventy theories of IE origins (and thus of invasion) have been published (Mallory 1989), of which Gimbutas' is the most popular among linguists, and Gamkrelidze & Ivanov's (1995 = 1984) the last of the series, suggesting an invasion from Armenia.

Renfrew's model (Renfrew 1987) is in part different from traditional invasionist theories, in the sense that it replaces the traditional Calcholithic mass invasion with an innovative Neolithic mass invasion, coinciding with an economic event of extraordinary importance such as the neolithization of Europe. It clashes nevertheless against current archaeological views, according to which the neolithization process was either totally invasionless, or, at the most, a complex and geographically differentiated acculturation process, within which the autochthonous populations almost always played the major role.

If invasionist models for IE origins cannot be reconciled with the results of modern archaeological research, why not, then, an invasionless model?

Although this idea has been often suggested (most lately by Marcel Otte), the first attempt to present it in detail is to my knowledge my own 800-page volume published in Italy in 1996 (Alinei 1996), which will be soon followed by a second volume, with a more detailed survey of the development of the major linguistic areas of Europe from the end of Paleolithic through Metal Ages.

I have called my theory the Continuity Theory, not only because ethnolinguistic continuity from Paleolithic is the main point of my thesis, but also because there already exists a Continuity Theory for the Finno-Ugric languages, which is now currently accepted by both Uralic archaeologists and linguists.

Interestingly, until about thirty years ago, also the origins of the Uralic peoples and languages, that is Finno-Ugric and Samoyed peoples and languages, were sought in a recent invasion, modeled exactly upon the IE one. Slowly but surely, however, archaeological evidence for continuity of Uralic cultures from Mesolithic times has determined a reversal in opinions, and nowadays all specialists view Uralic people as a branch of *Homo sapiens* coming from the

south, and having occupied their present north-eastern European territories in postglacial times.

It must also be pointed out that if we take into consideration not only Uralic but world languages and peoples considered globally, we will observe that the continuity model is the most general one, as it is applied, albeit not in detailed theories, to most African, Asiatic and New World languages and peoples.

The question then arises: why should only IE people, despite evidence to the contrary, continue to be seen as invaders of their present territories?

Clearly, the answer is ideological. For the invasion model was first advanced in the nineteenth century, when archaeology and related sciences were dominated by the ideology of colonialism, as recent historical research has shown. The successive generations of linguists and archaeologists have been strongly inspired by the racist views that stemmed out of colonialism. Historians of archaeology (e.g. Daniel 1962, Trigger 1989) have repeatedly shown the importance of ideology in shaping archaeological theories as well as theories of human origins, while, unfortunately, linguistics has not followed the same course, and thus strongly believes in its own innocence.

Yet there are innumerable proofs of ideological bias in linguistic work. In particular, many fundamental works on IE origins written in the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth are based on racist views. Let me quote, as one among scores of examples, Pictet, one of the founding fathers of IE studies, who in the middle of the nineteenth century, in the foreword of his most famous book, spoke of the Arian race in the following terms:

"a race destined by Providence to dominate one day the entire globe...Privileged among all others for the beauty of blood, and for the gifts of intelligence, ... this fertile race has created, as a powerful medium of development, a language which is admirable for its richness, its vigour, its harmony and for the perfection of its forms" (Pictet 1859-63)

If one, then, remembers that IE linguistics began after the end of 'catastrophism' and in the context of the Darwinian revolution, when science was faced with the discovery of evolution, and with the fact that 'even' Europe had been inhabited by 'antedeluvian' or 'savage' ancestors, it becomes clear why the believers in the myth of the superior and perfect Arian race would inevitably refuse direct continuity of modern Europeans from the newly-discovered European 'savages'. The Arians became then the mysterious invaders, originating from an unknown and unreachable place, with an unknown and unknowable prehistory, who descended upon Europe as the future world saviours.

Of course, IE traditionalists have also some technical, linguistic arguments, to which they cling as survivors from a shipwreck cling to their rafts. Their main argument is still today, as it was more than a century ago, that a consistent part of Neolithic terminology belongs to the common IE stock. This fact is supposed to prove that IE differentiation began only after Neolithic, and as this differentiation proves to have been gigantic, and is to have taken place in an extremely limited time, a mass invasion placed in Chalcolithic times is indeed the only possible explanation.

But this line of reasoning is open to criticism from many points of view. First of all, even assuming persistence of a basic IE unity throughout Neolithic (an untenable thesis, as I have shown in my book), there would be no need for a mass invasion of totally intrusive people to justify language differentiation. Aggressive expeditions of local elite groups, with subsequent territorial expansion and domination upon autochthonous societies, which became increasingly frequent in Chalcolithic and Bronze age, could have unleashed a series of waves of differentiations, without changing the basic ethnolinguistic picture of Europe, already shaped at the end of Paleolithic.

More importantly, Renfrew has already pointed out that Neolithic terms shared by many IE languages could be easily explained as loanwords, as they all designate fundamental innovations such as plough, yoke, domesticates and the like, and thus are very susceptible of being imported with the realia they designate. The history of any European language provides innumerable evidence of such a phenomenon.

Finally, in my book I have not only shown how these words could easily be explained as loanwords from within or from without the IE area, but I have also collected a lot of evidence that indicates that by far the largest part of the Neolithic vocabulary is differentiated in all or most IE languages.

On the other hand, Mesolithic and Neolithic ethnolinguistic differentiation of the European subcontinent is implicit in the rich mosaic of cultures that characterises both Mesolithic and Neolithic Europe.

As to Neolithic, Renfrew has already shown (but without seeing the contradiction with his premisses) that the main Neolithic cultures seem to correspond with the main linguistic groups of Europe: Sesklo with Greek, Starè evo-Karanovo with Slavic, Impresso/Cardial with a larger than thought Italic group, LBK with Germanic and so on.

Linguistic differentiation by Mesolithic times is one of the main points of my book, and will also be of the following volume. I have proved this point by using a very simple linguistic principle (called lexical self-dating), by which the names of all tools, techniques and notions, the beginning of which can be dated with certainty to the Late Paleolithic or Mesolithic (such as arrow, needle, awl, tar, harpoon, net, and the like), can be dated to the same period, provided certain stringent linguistic conditions are satisfied.

By using this method, for example, most Germanic names of fishing tools and working techniques, which continue without essential modifications Mesolithic innovations, should be dated to the Mesolithic.

Let me give at least one example of this kind of analysis: given the fact that the production of tar from trees begins to be documented only in Mesolithic, it is quite significant to note that the name for 'tar' in Germanic languages (Engl. *tar*, Germ. *Teer*, Du. *teer*, dan. *tjǿre*, sved. *tjära* and so on) represent a specific Germanic development from a word of common IE stock designating the tree. It is thus different from words for 'tar' in other IE language groups. Isn't it then much simpler and more elegant to suppose that this Germanic innovation took place at the time of the technical innovation in Mesolithic, rather than to wait first until the IE invaders come to Europe in Chalcolithic times, and after that differentiate by

the Bronze Age, and finally proceed systematically to rename all the techniques and products that had existed for several millennia?

There is more. Given the fact that the main application of tar was for the glueing of parts of Mesolithic composite tools, it is also interesting to note that the same Germanic word family of *tree* and *tar* also include such words as *trust* and *true*, originally 'reliable'. Traditionally, these words have been connected to *tree*, without any pertinent arguments. More concretely and significantly, both *trust* and *true* 'reliable' could be connected with glueing techniques, and reflect the impact of this innovation on the mind of Germanic Mesolithic fishers and hunters.

If Germanic was already separated from other IE language groups by the time Mesolithic fishers and hunters discovered tar, then the same can be said of Latin *pix* 'pitch' coming from *pinus* 'pine', and of Latin (of Celtic origin) *bitumen* 'pitch' coming from Celtic *betulla* 'birch'. These three parallel developments are absolutely meaningless in a Bronze-Age cultural framework.

This Mesolithic reading of the linguistic record seems to me much more illuminating than the traditional one, which places such semantic developments in a no man's land, and leaves them entirely unexplained.

A final argument for the Continuity Theory can be drawn from current research by geogeneticists, who have discovered that the correlation between the world distribution of languages and that of genetic markers is highly significant. If this is so, as it must be assumed, then the Continuity Theory would be a much more suitable framework also for European language origins than mass invasions, followed by catastrophic processes of language substitution.

Within the same framework, the observation that the distribution of racial types does not coincide either with language distribution or with genetic markers distribution can only be explained if we see racial distribution as more recently formed than language distribution, and thus if we project language differentiation into paleolithic times.

However, since I speak as a linguist, the question might arise: what can the use be, for archaeology, of such an invasionless model?

In my opinion, it would open the prospect of connecting most archaeological cultures from Mesolithic to Bronze Age to well-known ethnical and linguistic groups, such as Celtic, Germanic, Italic, Baltic, Slavic, Greek.

In fact, archaeology is deeply aware of the 'power' language has for transforming the fog of prehistory into the realities of history. A stone is no longer a stone by the time it can be labelled as 'Roman' or 'Greek' or 'Phoenician'. Even without written sources directly connected with them, prehistorical cultures that can be labelled as 'Celtic', such as La Tène, differ substantially, from a cognitive point of view, from earlier, unidentified ones. In much the same way, the rich Mesolithic cultures of Scandinavia that developed after deglaciation, so well studied by Grahame Clark and the successive generation of archaeologists, would undergo a similar substantial change if they could be labelled as North-Germanic. For it would be Germanic peoples who would have settled the Scandinavian peninsula after deglaciation, invented techniques -such as tar production- that have exclusively Germanic names, and given exclusively Germanic place names to their newly settled territory (a fact that cannot be reconciled with the

invasionist model). Moreover, the immense linguistic record dialectologists have built up on each European language group could now be spread over millennia and thus become available for interdisciplinary work, obtaining the convergence of archaeological developments with linguistic developments.

The search of ethnical frontiers, and the identification of prehistoric political units, for example, to mention two major subjects of debate in this very congress, would be made much easier by the Continuity Theory thanks to the fact that most ethnic and linguistic units and areas would be identified in advance.

European prehistory could then be seen as the prehistory of European peoples, and not that of some unknown and unknowable 'savages', whose mysterious connection with us poses an insurmountable problem to archaeologists and prehistorians.

In short, one could hazard that the Continuity Theory may have the potential of extending 'protohistory' to Mesolithic times.

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