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The Neolithic Discontinuity Paradigm for the Origin of European Languages*

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Abstract Although the prehistoric Urnfield Culture (German *Urnenfelderkultur*), a late Bronze Age central European archaeological culture, has traditionally been linked to Indo-European speaking people and more specifically to the Celts, there are good reasons to believe that it would better be attributed, at least partially, to non-Indo-European speakers. Three idiosyncratic ancient non-Indo-European languages, Aquitanian, an *ancestral* form of Basque, Iberian and Etruscan, may safely be related, directly or indirectly, to the Urnfield culture. The European Neolithic was probably characterized by a kind of linguistic discontinuity, a circumstance that legitimizes the proposal of accepting a model characterised by some Neolithic discontinuity along with general Paleolithic continuity. The Neolithic Discontinuity Paradigm offers a clear corollary to the Paleolithic Continuity Paradigm, being its most natural counterpart.

Keywords Indo-European, Urnfield culture, Etruscan, Iberian, Basque.

Discontinuity = Indo-European Languages?

In 1987 Colin Renfrew shook the foundations of Indo-European Linguistics with his *Archaeology and Language*. Since he is an archaeologist and not a linguist, his book was somewhat unexpected. It contained two major aspects:

- 1) an empirical criticism of the traditional theory of the origin of the Indo-European languages, and
- 2) a new proposal for their origin.

If we did and still do largely agree with his criticism of the traditional theory, his new proposal, which pointed to a Neolithic origin of the Indo-European languages, was full of highly controversial assumptions lacking sound empirical foundation, such as:

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- a) the explanation for the Indo-European linguistic expansion must necessarily correlate with an exceptional [proto]historical event,
- b) the neolithization of almost all of Europe and much of Asia is a unique and exceptional phenomenon,
- c) neolithization affected, directly or indirectly, most or all Eurasian territories where historically we find Indo-European languages,
- d) neolithization was essentially a demographic process; it involved the effective migration of people and not merely the cultural diffusion of ideas,
- e) the neolithization was carried out by people who spoke Proto-Indo-European.

In summary, in Renfrew's view, the Neolithic *irruption* was the vector that transported the Indo-European languages into most territories in ancient times, implying that the two entities – the Eurasian Neolithic culture and the Indo-European languages – amounted to a sort of equivalence or tautology: i.e. Neolithic \approx Indo-European according to his theory. Thus, Renfrew considered that the Indo-European languages represent a linguistic discontinuity in most territories where historically we find Indo-European languages, in the same way that the Neolithic revolution meant a cultural discontinuity in the same territories.

Obviously, this view is in sharp contrast with the scenario outlined by the so-called *Palaeolithic Continuity Paradigm* (PCP in abbreviation), which defends the essential continuity of Indo-European languages in most Eurasian areas from Palaeolithic times. The fact is that we *do* find Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages side by side from the first linguistic records for the geographical area under discussion, so that we can reasonably pose the question: who arrived first: the Indo-Europeans or the non-Indo-Europeans? And, finally, what is the PCP view on the linguistic effect of the Neolithic revolution? As put by Renfrew, did it mean the first appearance of Indo-European languages in Europe or, on the contrary, did it mean the arrival of non-Indo-European cultures and languages?

<i>Age</i>	<i>RENFREW</i>	<i>PCP</i>
Palaeolithic	non-Indo-European	Indo-European
Neolithic	Indo-European	?

The Past and Present of European Languages

With a view to providing an adequate answer to these intricate questions, let us first of all take a look at the linguistic picture of Europe which can be drawn from the written documents in ancient times – say in Greek and Roman times – i.e. during the centuries around the change of Era. In order to make our statement shorter and more effective we will focus only on the European continent, for which we have more information in many relevant aspects. We will deal only with languages for which we have direct decipherable written records, so that their linguistic adscription is sufficiently clear for us to be able to tell whether the language in question is Indo-European or not.

Although we have both Indo-European and non-Indo-European written records from that period for the European area, the quantitative difference is significant. We have information on at least fourteen languages of definite Indo-European stock: Celtiberian, Gaulish, Gothic, Greek, Illyrian, Latin, Lepontic, Lusitanian, Macedonian, Messapian, Oscan, Thracian, Umbrian and Venetic. We also have sufficient written evidence to be able to assert with reasonable confidence that Iberian and Etruscan were not Indo-European languages, and although the Linear A script has not yet been deciphered, there is every likelihood that it was also non-Indo-European. Aquitanian is only indirectly documented in Latin epigraphy through its onomastics, but it is obviously another non Indo-European language and a clear ancestor of Basque.

Blasco Ferrer (2010) would doubtlessly consider the so-called *Palaeo-Sardinian* language to be non-Indo-European, as he sees clear connections with Iberian, and particularly with Basque, but we so far have not one old inscription in Palaeo-Sardinian, the language basically having been reconstructed from the historical toponymy of Sardinia. On the other hand we must, for the time being, prudently consider not definitively classified languages such as Elymian, North Picene – which Mallory and Adams describe (2006, p. 36) as “anybody’s guess” – *dicephalic* (see below) Raetic, Sicanian, Sicel or Siculian and Tartessian *siue* southern Lusitanian. But even if we decided to include *Palaeo-Sardinian* and the other six doubtful languages, we would still only reach a maximum score of eleven non-Indo-European languages against a minimum of fourteen Indo-European languages.

Some other old European languages have been traditionally assigned to non-Indo-European stock, as is the case of Pictish, in Scotland, but this language is epigraphically recorded around 900 A.D., at an age, therefore, when we also have written documents for many other Indo-European languages, particularly Germanic and Slavic languages. Likewise, at least several Germanic – besides Gothic – Slavic and also Baltic languages were undoubtedly spoken in Roman times, in spite of the lack of direct old epigraphic testimony. On the other hand, since the Pictish script has not yet been deciphered, one cannot exclude the possibility that Pictish also represented a Germanic or Celtic dialect.

Of course, other – perhaps *many* other – languages must have existed all over Europe in Greek and Roman times, but no texts, inscriptions or other linguistic remains have survived, which might allow us to determine whether they were Indo-European languages or not. In ancient authors we sometimes come across information about different contemporary languages, but as we so far lack epigraphical testimony, such languages will be not included in our list. This is the case of Ligurian or Belgian for example. Both onomastics and what was reported on them by ancient authors point to their Indo-European character, but we cannot definitively ascertain anything at all because of the absence of extant documents or inscriptions. In any case, there are consistently about three times more Indo-European languages attested in Greek and Roman times than non-Indo-European languages.

<i>Languages epigraphically recorded in Greek and Roman times</i>	
Indo-European	14
non Indo-European	4
unclear ascription	7

The Important Qualitative Nuance

These are the objective, empirical figures. But of course cold numbers are not everything; many other significant qualitative – and sometimes again quantitative – aspects must be given due consideration.

Another important aspect are the vast geographical extensions which the Indo-European languages – with or without epigraphical evidence – occupied in ancient times. Certainly, if we compare the Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages in terms of actual written documentation, the enormous area covered by the Indo-European languages is striking. On the three major Mediterranean peninsulas, Greece, Italy and Spain, the Indo-European languages held clear territorial superiority in Greek and Roman times, as they continue to do in modern times. The same is true of France, the ancient *Gallia*. Other ancient Indo-European languages were also widely spread: in Roman times, languages of Celtic stock, such as Gaulish or Celtiberian, covered large areas of modern France and Spain, even reaching modern central Turkey as Galatian. Moreover, certain of these ancient Indo-European languages already exhibit important dialectal variations, such as old Greek with its three major dialects: Aeolic, Doric and Ionic.

Both then and now, the most common European languages are Indo-European, and the state of affairs is not likely to have changed throughout history; quite the opposite. If one takes a look at the linguistic situation in contemporary Europe, the point is even clearer. In the book published by Banfi (1993) on the linguistic configuration of Europe, almost 383 pages (41–424) are dedicated to the Indo-European languages and 153 (427–580) to the non-Indo-European ones.

Yet another qualitative factor to be borne in mind is that the presence of some non-Indo-European languages in Europe, such as Turkic Karaim in Lithuania or Mongolic Kalmyk in Russia, is clearly recent, since we have positive evidence of these languages reaching their current locations in historical times. In summary, the qualitative factors are also favorable to the pre-existence of Indo-European languages in our continent.

Unfulfilled Expectations

Outside Europe, Indo-European languages are also attested in classical times in Anatolia. Woodard's *The Ancient Languages of Asia Minor* (2008) describes 11 languages: 3 are non-Indo-European (Early Georgian, Hurrian, Urartian) and the rest, with the exception of the controversial Carian,

are clearly of Indo-European stock (Classical Armenian, Lycian, Lydian, Hittite, Luvian, Palaic, and Phrygian).

For over a hundred and fifty years scholars have traditionally assumed that the Indo-European languages reached Europe at some – rather late – date, i.e. that these languages were not autochthonous but *parvenus*, spoken in Europe or even in Anatolia by *émigrés*. But if this had been the case, when examining the documentation of ancient languages in Europe or even in Asia Minor, one would logically expect to find mostly non-Indo-European or, as traditionalist scholars like to say, *pre-Indo-European* languages, because all languages spoken in Europe before the *arrivée* of the Indo-Europeans would necessarily be non-Indo-European. For this reason, languages such as Hittite or Mycenaean were mistakenly held as non-Indo-European by early researchers.

Thus, according to traditionalist scholars, Europe would have changed its linguistic physiognomie in historical times with a complete upset or catastrophe – from Greek: *katastrophé* ‘overturning’ – of the old situation: from a totally non-Indo-European panorama to an overwhelming prevalence of Indo-European languages. *Catastrophic* explanations are useful for sudden and extraordinary changes, but because of their connatural exceptionality such explanations can hardly be considered the simplest. However, the point now is: how can Indo-Europeanists explain that alleged dramatic change, that true *inversion* of the former situation?

Pre-Indo-European: the Catastrophic Explanation

In the early 19th century, when the principal Indo-European linguistic and historical conceptions were put in place, catastrophic events were regularly used to explain not only sudden changes, but also extraordinary phenomena in general. They constituted a sound explanation before Darwin’s time, but were they still valid after Darwin? And today?

Nineteenth century scholars used to explain historical events by analogy with modern situations. For example, all languages were clearly non-Indo-European in America before its *discovery* by Columbus in 1492; now we observe that most people speak English, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

It is indeed true that most American people speak [Indo-]European languages, but there is still – and this is the crucial point of the analogy – a majority of pre-Columbian languages and linguistic groups in America, in contrast with just four principal European languages, which belong to a single major linguistic group. Mexico has more than 100 million Spanish speakers and around 7 million speakers of indigenous languages, but in Mexico there are about 70 discrete indigenous tongues belonging to a variety of linguistic stocks, alongside Spanish, which functions on its own as a sort of *lingua franca*. Hundreds of millions of North and South Americans speak one of four or five European languages, whilst a few million Americans speak hundreds and hundreds of indigenous languages. The situation is very similar in Australia, where English is today the hegemonic language, but at the same time more than one hundred aboriginal languages still survive. Not the number of speakers, but the number of languages and dialects reveals what kind of languages were originally spoken in America and Australia.

Unfortunately, for the case of ancient Europe we can only rely on written documents and have no access to actual speakers. Nevertheless the situation we find there is the opposite of what one would deduce through analogy, if the Indo-European languages had only been *colonial* languages. On the contrary, we would expect to find a wide variety, and a clear majority, of so-called *pre-Indo-European* languages in ancient Europe.

A Look at the Present

In order to draw a closer comparison with the historical situation in America and Australia, where the arrival of the Indo-European languages *is* well-documented – unlike in Europe –, we could just limit our comparison to languages attested in modern times – in spite of evidence of their non-written presence at an earlier date. Here the expectations of mainstream Indo-European scholarship would be as follows: in those regions where writing was never adopted in ancient times, such as in Baltic area or in Scandinavia, we should expect to find more non-Indo-European languages; however, what we in fact see is a major increase in the predominance of Indo-European ones.

For the sake of simplicity, let us consider only modern state-official languages. There are 31 official Indo-European languages in use in Europe: Albanian, Belarus, Bulgarian, Catalan (in Andorra), Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Faroese, French, German, Greek, Icelandic, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Luxembourgish, Macedonian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romansh, Rumanian, Serbo–Croatian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish and Ukrainian, whilst on the non-Indo-European side we find only four official languages: Estonian (Uralic), Finnish (Uralic), Hungarian (Uralic) and Maltese (Semitic).

Of course, other non-official non-Indo-European languages also exist in modern Europe, such as Basque, Gagauz (in Moldova, Russia and Ukraine), Kalmyk in European Russia, Karaim in Lithuania, not to mention Turkish and Yiddish, but again there are even more Indo-European non-official languages. In Spain alone we have Bable in Asturias, Catalan, Galician, High-Aragonese (or *fabla*, in Northern Aragon), and Valencian; and in France: Alsatian, Breton, Corsican, Gascon, Franco-Provençal, Provençal..., whereas these two countries can boast only one non-Indo-European language between them: Basque.

In short, taking into account the quantity and quality of the historically attested European languages, there is nothing to suggest that Indo-European languages were not indigenous in Europe.

The Non-Indo-Europeans' Late Arrival

As already mentioned, another very significant point is that for most non-Indo-European languages we have specific historical confirmation of their *late* – post-Roman – arrival in Europe, as is the case of Kalmyk, Gagauz, Karaim, Maltese, Turkish or Yiddish. The same might be true of just *one* Indo-European language: Romani, with different dialects spoken by European Gypsies, but here the case is not so clear as in the case of the Jews or Gaugazians, since Indo-Iranian dialects already existed in Eastern Europe in Roman times.

Of course, it can reasonably be objected that sociolinguistic conditions are not the same today as they were in ancient – or prehistoric – times. This is an important line of argument in favour of the Palaeolithic

Continuity Paradigm: we must carry out proper analogies and not merely project linguistic expansive phenomena such as the historical colonizations that spread Latin or, later, English and Spanish to other countries or even continents. Our use of the term *colonization* is deliberately vague but precise enough to allow distinction between ‘colonization’ and simple ‘invasion’ or ‘occupation’. In the 13th century the Mongols invaded and occupied a huge territory spanning from East Central Asia almost to the shores of Dalmatia. Out of all of this vast empire, the only linguistic remains today are some 300 or 400 speakers of Mongolian in Afghanistan. Again the traditional – and historical – invasionist analogical model clamorously fails to predict this outcome. Invasions, even massive invasions, are not sufficient to guarantee the imposition of a language in a conquered territory.

Naturally, the invasionist and expansive model – inspired by the analogy with Roman legions or Spanish equestrian *conquistadores* – was the only one to be expected in the early 19th-century context, in the pre-Darwinian period of research which generated Indo-European Linguistics, when all chronologies were necessarily recent, that is to say, *Epineolithic*. There was simply no way of conceiving that Indo-European languages might be Palaeolithic or at least Neolithic because those ages simply did not exist yet; for contemporary science only a *pre-diluvian* age was contemplated before historical (*beziehungsweise*: Epineolithic) times.

The Pre-Darwinian and Pre-Diluvian Context

In the first place, the mere conception of ‘pre-Indo-European’ languages is in itself unsatisfactory in that it fails to explain the important, objective fact that the Indo-European languages constitute an overwhelming homogeneous majority in ancient Europe while the non-Indo-European minority is significantly heterogeneous. In Europe, in other words, Indo-European stock is the *rule* and non-Indo-Europeanness is the *exception*.

Within this objective framework, the unbiased scholar should give serious consideration to the possibility of a simpler explanation, the one that immediately springs to mind: i.e. that in Europe the few, exceptional non-Indo-European languages might be quite recent *intruders*, and the

dominant Indo-European languages the older, autochthonous tongues. In the natural world, it is normal for the bigger to be the elder and the smaller to be the younger.

Alien: the ‘Pre-Indo-European’ Rag-bag

The ‘pre-Indo-European’ concept – *id est*: the unquestioned existence of an alien linguistic background which was blotted out by the arrival of the Indo-European languages in their historical *headquarters* – is obviously in itself problematic. This phantasmagoric *pre-Indo-European* is often used as a kind of miscellaneous rag-bag to which roots *under suspicion* are peremptorily consigned. For example, although a well documented root like **kar-* ‘stone, rock’ can be easily identified in Celtic languages, its absence from other Indo-European languages, together with its possible presence in Basque (*harri* ‘stone, rock’), and the assumption that Celts could only have reached the Atlantic coast in post-La Tène times (brilliantly countered by Alinei, 2000: 465–573; Alinei – Benozzo, 2008a, 2008b, 2009, etc.) necessarily make **kar-* a pre-Celtic root and therefore belonging to the *pre-Indo-European* substratum.

Within the Continuity Paradigm, the general pushing back of our linguistic [pre]history is accompanied by other theoretical and methodological criteria: one must proceed scientifically, in an objective, unbiased way and cast off pre-Darwinian 19th century ballast. The Palaeolithic Continuity Paradigm makes a stand for realistic explanations – and, all things being equal, for *more* realistic explanations – that is, explanations more consonant with the circumstances and characteristics of other historically well-attested languages or linguistic groups, and with the results of other disciplines focused on the story of man: Anthropology, Archaeology, Climatology, Ethnology, Genetics, Geography, History, Prehistory... The application of this theoretical and methodological principle requires us to grant greater credibility to those explanations which are simpler, more banal, frequent and obvious, rather than unusual, exceptional or catastrophic explanations.

Urnenfelderkultur: Indo-European or Not?

Let us briefly consider a simple but not innocuous example: the widely accepted assumption of the Indo-European nature of the prehistoric Urnfield Culture (German *Urnenfelderkultur*), a late Bronze Age central European archaeological culture that brought a new funerary practice of cremation instead of the former inhumation. As Untermann, 1999, p. 189, remarked:

scholars did not hesitate to conclude that the expansion of Urnfield Culture was inseparable from the migration of people, and as the expansion began in central Europe, the dogma became established that these people spoke an Indo-European language. Today we know very well that [...] an extension of a given material culture need not be identified with a migration of people. At that time, however, Prehistorians did not hesitate to assume that the arrival of the Urnfield culture meant the arrival of Indo-European languages. Scholars did not see any problem at all in the fact that both in the South of France and in Catalonia the first linguistic documents show the undeniable presence of non-Indo-European languages. However, these hypotheses gained such prestige that no one [...] dared cast any doubt on an invasion of Indo-European speakers.¹

Canegrate: Intrusive or Aboriginal Lepontians?

Mainstream Indo-Europeanists *officially* link Urnfield culture to just one language, Lepontic, of Indo-European, and specifically Celtic, stock. Often

1 “Los investigadores no vacilaron en deducir que la expansión de los campos de Urnas fue un fenómeno inseparable de la migración de pueblos, y dado que la expansión empezó en la Europa central se estableció el dogma de que estos pueblos habían hablado una lengua indoeuropea. Hoy en día sabemos muy bien que [...] toda extensión de una determinada cultura material no debe identificarse con una migración de pueblos. Ahora bien, los prehistoriadores de entonces no dudaron en dar por hecho que la llegada de los Campos de Urnas correspondió a la llegada de lenguas indoeuropeas, y no les supuso problema alguno que tanto en el sur de Francia como en Cataluña los primeros testimonios lingüísticos evidenciaron dominios incontestables de lenguas no-indoeuropeas. Sin embargo, estas hipótesis habían ganado un prestigio tan grande que nadie [...] se atrevió a dudar de una invasión de portadores de lenguas indoeuropeas”.

this link is firmly asserted and taken as an almost incontrovertible fact, as is still argued, for example, by Ruiz Zapatero, 2014, p. 203: “the only very probable link between an Urnfield group – Canegrate, North of Italia, or better still its lineal evolution to the Golasecca group – and a language is Lepontic, the oldest known Celtic language”.²

According to specialists, the recent Bronze Age Canegrate culture – whose name comes from the locality of Canegrate in Lombardy, northern Italy – enjoyed a brief existence, barely managing to maintain its homogeneity for a hundred years. In the 9th century BC the newcomers melded with the aboriginal population and gave rise to the so-called *Golasecca culture*. Archaeological data suggest, furthermore, that the newcomers’ interaction with the native population was not peaceful. The point is that – again according to most specialists – the Golasecca culture was the clear predecessor of the Villanovan culture and Villanovan culture can reasonably be linked in many respects, again *consensu fere omnium*, to... non-Indo-European Etruscans. This historical chain of cultures (Urnfield > Canegrate > Golasecca > Villanova) would lead us to suggest the hypothesis that the people who abruptly burst into Lombardy for a century or so were not the Indo-European Lepontians but the non-Indo-European Etruscans. This proposal is consistent with three important pieces of evidence:

- 1) Pliny’s statement (*nat.* 3,20,133: *Rætos Tuscorum prolem arbitrantur a Gallis pulsos duce Ræto*) that the Raetians were believed to be people of Tuscan race driven out by the Gauls.
- 2) Livy’s assertion (5,5,33: *Alpinis quoque ea gentibus haud dubie origo est, maxime Raetis*) of the Etruscan origin of the Alpine peoples, especially the Raetians.
- 3) The double linguistic *facies* of ancient Raetia, where we find evidence of both Celtic language – mainly onomastic data – and Etruscan language – mainly epigraphical data – as has been traditionally accepted.

2 “El único caso de relación muy plausible entre un grupo de Campos de Urnas – Canegrate, N. de Italia, o mejor su evolución directa al grupo de Golasecca – con una lengua es el lepóntico, la más antigua lengua celta conocida”.

The Case of Etruscan

Regarding the origin of the Etruscan language and the Etruscan people itself there has been a sharp, millennia-long controversy – as the debate already existed amongst the Greeks and Romans – between those defending the autochtony of the Etruscan language on Italian soil and those supporting the arrival of the Etrurians from somewhere else, particularly the Eastern Mediterranean. In the first case, the Etruscans would of course be an unmistakably *pre*-Indo-European people, whereas the second option would make them an intruder folk, probably *epi*-Indo-European, that is to say, subsequent to the presence of Indo-European languages in that part of Italy. In other words, people who came to an already Indo-European territory, or, as traditionalist scholars would have it, *Indo-Europized*.

Nowadays this controversy seems definitively to have been settled in favour of a *foreign* origin of the Etruscans or, as we might say with a little malice, admitting the *invasionist* character of Etruscan and the Etrurians on Italian soil. The formerly native inhabitant turns out to be a rather recent invader. Certainly we shall continue to discuss whether the Etrurians came from Lydia in south-west Turkey, or from the Aegean islands or continental Greece or somewhere else, and whether their language was Turkic, Uralic, Turko-Uralic or something else, but in Italy the Etrurians were definitely not indigenous. They seem to have reached Italy mainly via the Raetian Alps. It is thus widely accepted today, even by ultratraditionalist scholars, that the Etrurians were not a pre-Indo-European people.

However, there is yet another argument against the claim that the Urnfield culture was brought directly to Italy by Lepontians: the analogy with the Spanish situation.

The Celtiberian Analogy

Although we possess more than 2,000 inscriptions written in Iberian, many of which are easily legible, the language of the ancient Iberians is, from the grammatical point of view, still an almost complete *aenigma*. Present-day knowledge of Iberian is however sufficient to be able to confirm that it

is without doubt a non-Indo-European language. We also have some clear ideas on the origin of the Iberians, and incidentally it is very interesting to re-analyse the historical background of studies on the Iberian language, since here again we find many failed predictions by Indo-European traditionalist scholarship. We must stress that the predictability of theories is a very important matter in this particular scientific field of language reconstruction, as tested predictions remain one of the few ways of assessing the correctness of any hypothesis.

The first hypotheses on the origin of the Iberians made them a typical pre-Indo-European folk: the aboriginal inhabitants of the whole of the Iberian Peninsula. It was only in the mid 20th century that the presence of Celts – an Indo-European nation – became undeniable in the centre and west of the Peninsula. This location once again collided with mainstream Indo-European theory, as the most predictable location for Indo-European speakers in Spain would be the north-eastern corner – modern-day Catalonia – the area closest to Central or Eastern Europe where the Indo-European *homeland*, the old Aryan *Urheimat*, was supposed to be.

What we in fact find in that Catalan corner of Spain are indeed the expected *Urnenfelder*, that is to say Urnfield culture, but alas! the unexpected and unpredicted non-Indo-European Iberians. Thus, if any one people can be directly related to Urnfield culture in Spain, it is the non-Indo-European Iberians and not the Indo-European Celts. Another awkward result, another failure of standard Indo-Europeanist theory, or of the equivalent peaceful but invasive Neolithic expansion, heralded by Renfrew, for whom the wave of agriculturalist advance in Spain would not have been Iberian, a clearly agricultural society, but Celtic, a pastoral or fishing culture.

Invasive Iberians

A new hypothesis is emerging – sparked by the presence of an important Indo-European *substratum* in the toponymy of those lands historically belonging to Iberians, in combination with other (cultural, geographic, graphematic...) arguments – according to which the Iberians – the idiosyncratic ancestors of the Catalans – were also an intrusive, invasive people in the

Peninsula which historically bears their name, just as the Etrurians were latecomers in Italy.

As is clear from ancient sources (Martial 4,55,8: *nos Celtis genitos et ex Hiberis*) and confirmed by archaeological and epigraphical data, the Celtiberians were a Celtic nation which became deeply iberianized during the Iron Age by their Iberian neighbours. For example, the Celtiberians adopted the Iberian hemialphabet from their neighbours and used it extensively for writing their own Celtic language. So, for the late Bronze Age in Spain, we can resume the archaeological and linguistic situation as follows:

<i>culture</i>	<i>People</i>	<i>language</i>
Urnfield	Iberians	non-Indo-European
non-Urnfield	Celtiberians	Indo-European

Analogy would predict a similar state of affairs for late-Bronze-Age Italy:

<i>culture</i>	<i>people</i>	<i>language</i>
Urnfield	Etruscans	non-Indo-European
non-Urnfield	Lepontians	Indo-European

Mainstream Indo-Europeanists interpret the Canegrate culture as representing the first migratory wave of a Proto-Celtic population from the North-eastern Alps and, on the basis of this somewhat meagre argument, come to categorical conclusions about the linguistic prehistory of the Celts and other European peoples. However, it is far from clear that the Urnfield *emigrés* in Canegrate were really Celtic Lepontians, and the reverse hypothesis remains no less plausible: that the Lepontians were the autochthonous population and not the invaders.

But there still remains one non-Indo-European language, Aquitanian-Basque, as a pre-Indo-European relic. Basque still resists alone, or perhaps not...

Once Upon a Time: Palaeolithic Basque. A Myth?

It is now time to consider, from the historiographical point of view, the idea – rather the conviction – that Basque is today the only living *relictum* of what was once the general linguistic situation in earliest Europe, that is, Palaeolithic Europe. In Trask's (1995, p. 91) words: "Basque, as is commonly believed, is the last surviving pre-Indo-European language in Western Europe". We would rather say: as *was* commonly believed...

Non-Indo-European = pre-Indo-European. Again we see this simplistic equation operating, as a direct result of that basic axiom of standard scholarship according to which Indo-Europeans in Europe were necessarily newcomers. But as we have seen, this scientific bias has led to several hazardous conclusions and subsequent disappointments. And the predictions fail again.

The well-reputed Germanist Theo Vennemann (1994, 2003) concluded that all ancient Indo-European hydronyms – the often-called *Palaeo-European*, a *blemish on their nose on their wedding day* for mainstream Indo-Europeanists – was not Palaeo-[Indo-]European nor Indo-European but simply Palaeo-Basque. From the traditionalist point of view, this is a completely logical and congruent statement. If in Palaeolithic times, and for such a long period, there was a vast pre-Indo-European substratum all over Europe, that old Vasconic layer would inevitably have left many linguistic traces.

The problem is that Palaeo-European and Basque have almost totally incompatible phonologies. Palaeo-Basque or Proto-Basque was a language without an initial /r/, almost without a final /a/, without *muta cum liquida* and so on... (see the sharp criticism by Lakarra, 1996).

However, Vennemann stayed fully in line with with standard Indo-European reconstruction. Although Proto-Indo-European did not possess a final /a/, it *did* have a very handy vowel-consonant "for all seasons" available upon request: a kind of universal trump-card called a *laryngeal*. Accordingly, given that (a) Palaeo-European had so many /a/s; (b) the only *surviving* pre-Indo-European language was Basque; (c) Indo-European languages had recently entered Europe; (d) mtDNA analysis revealed a major Paleolithic population expansion from the "Atlantic zone" (southwestern Europe) 10,000–15,000 years ago, after the Last Glacial Maximum; and (e) *geneticists* confirmed a Franco-Cantabrian glacial refuge as a major

source for the European gene pool, and attested that the Franco-Cantabrian refuge area was the source of late-glacial expansions of hunter-gatherers who repopulated much of Central and Northern Europe..., then the logical conclusion was that the Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers who repopulated much of Central and Northern Europe were Proto-Basques!

It was the genetic output from the so-called *Franco-Cantabrian* or *Iberian* refuge which seemingly inspired Oppenheimer's (2006) *Germanophile* hypothesis, replacing the traditionally assumed autochthony of the Celts in the British Isles by Basques coming from Iberia. Thus, according to Oppenheimer, the Celts would have been preceded by Proto-Basque speakers for some millennia in *maior Britannia*. Again, this proposal is fully consistent with the Indo-Europeanists' traditional approach: if in Palaeolithic times Basque, "as is commonly believed", was spoken in that part of Europe and the Celts only reached the British Isles several millennia later, logically...

However, firstly, from the genetic point of view there is no special connexion between the Cornish, Irish, Welsh, Scottish or even English populations and the Basques (Izagirre – De la Rúa, 1999; cf. also Villar, 2005, pp. 409–14; Almagro, 2008, pp. 51–2 and 63–4), and secondly, *mutatis mutandis*, the same is true from the archaeological viewpoint (Almagro, 2005; 2008).

Again, alongside the catastrophic explanation, we should also consider the more obvious, banal, economical, direct and simple one: if we detect a clear predominance of Celtic languages in Western Europe – Including the Franco-Cantabrian refuge zone – in Roman times and we do not find Basque in the same area and at the same time, why only consider the possibility of a Europe repopulated by Proto-Basques and not by Proto-Celts?

Aquitaine and Navarre: Urnfield Culture too

Going one step further, even from the linguistic point of view (Villar, 2005, pp. 503–14; Villar – Prósper – Jordán – Fernández, 2011, pp. 144–45) many doubts have been raised concerning the antiquity of the Bascophone populations in their historical *headquarters* in the Cantabrian corner. Did the people who left the Cantabrian genetic refuge during the Palaeolithic

to populate *en masse* large zones of Western Europe, including pre-insular Britain, speak Proto-Basque or Proto-Celtic?

It was, *pace* Oppenheimer and Venneman, undoubtedly not Proto-Basque. Indeed in Roman times Cantabria still retained its archaic *Celtic flavour*. The different tribes that lived in most of the present Basque Country during the Roman period – *Autrigones, Berones, Caristi, Turmogidi, Varduli*... – came from an old – at the very least Bell-Beaker culture – Proto-Celtic substratum (Almagro-Gorbea, 2014a, p. 192); they were “people of Celto-Atlantic culture, language and nation, as were all the populations in the Cantabrian region” (Almagro-Gorbea, 2014b, p. 318).³ Let us not forget that Basque appeared in history literally amid Celtic-speaking peoples in Aquitaine in the South of France, and in close contact with Indo-Europeans in Spain, with Celtiberians to the south, almost definitely Celtic speakers to the east in Cantabria, and almost certainly Iberians to the east. So far, all linguistic data – onomastics and the very few inscriptions found in the area – point to the presence of Celtic languages, and languages akin to Celtiberian, in the Cantabrian region.

Finally, Aquitaine, together with Navarre – where we find the first testimonies of Basque on Spanish soil during Roman times –, were also territories deeply influenced by the Urnfield culture (Almagro-Gorbea, 2008, pp. 83–93; Torres-Martínez, 2013, pp. 261, 265–66; Almagro-Gorbea, 2014b, p. 321): “some elements of the Urnfield culture, such as the incineration rite, spread in parallel across the north of the Pyrenees towards Aquitaine [...] giving rise to the Aquitanian Iron Age culture [...], a culture that might correspond to Aquitanian-speaking peoples along the Garonne basin, as is attested by Roman epigraphy” (Almagro-Gorbea 2008: 92).⁴

In short, three idiosyncratic ancient non-Indo-European languages may safely be related, directly or indirectly, to the Urnfield culture. In schematic terms:

3 “gentes de cultura, lengua y etnia celto-atlánticas como todas las poblaciones de la región cantábrica”.

4 “algunos elementos de los Campos de Urnas, como el rito de incineración, se extendieron paralelamente por el Norte de los Pirineos hacia la Aquitania [...] dando lugar a la Cultura Aquitana de la Edad de Hierro [...] cultura que quizás corresponda a gentes de habla aquitana extendidos por la cuenca del Garona, como documenta la epigrafía romana”.

<i>people</i>	<i>language</i>	<i>culture</i>
Iberians	non-Indo-European	Urnfield
Aquitanians	non-Indo-European	Urnfield
Etruscans	non-Indo-European	Urnfield

Iberian and Basque: the Eastern Connection

Moreover, the assumption that the Basque or Iberian languages were pre-Indo-European remnants does not fit in well with their linguistic structure. Although our linguistic information is of course almost exclusively phonological in the case of Iberian, typologically both Basque and Iberian point to a greater proximity to Eastern linguistic groups, Uralic and especially Turkic, than – as one should expect for a pre-Indo-European relic – to the neighbouring Indo-European stock. Since we have dealt more extensively with this topic elsewhere, let us just quickly consider some phonological, morphological and syntactic affinities between these linguistic entities: a total of 23 potential isoglosses that are not shared by the Indo-European linguistic group.

	<i>Iberian</i>	<i>Basque</i>	<i>Turkic</i>	<i>Uralic</i>
Oxytony	possible	possible	yes	no
Vowel Harmony	possible	possible	yes	yes
No vowel length	possible	yes	yes	no
Rarity of initial /d/	yes	yes	yes	no
No /m/	yes	yes	yes	no
Loss of intervocalic /n/	no	yes	yes	no
Absence of /p/	yes	yes	yes	no
No initial /r-/ or (/l-)	yes	yes	yes	yes
No [w] before vowel	yes	yes	yes	no
Implosive poliphonematism	yes	yes	yes	yes
Nominal reduplication	?	yes	yes	no
Limited initial occlusives	yes	yes	yes	no

	<i>Iberian</i>	<i>Basque</i>	<i>Turkic</i>	<i>Uralic</i>
Limited initial consonants	yes	yes	yes	yes
From mono- to disyllabism	possible	yes	possible	possible
Agglutinative	yes	yes	yes	yes
No dual	?	yes	yes	no
No grammatical gender	?	yes	yes	yes
Interrogatives with *n-	?	yes	yes	yes
Complex verbs	possible	yes	yes	yes
No concordance in numerals	?	yes	yes	yes
No concordance in quantity	?	yes	yes	yes
No repetitive desinences	possible	yes	yes	no
Pre-verbal focalization	?	yes	yes	no

Food and Shelter: *Paradigmatic* means ‘Not Dogmatic’

A *Paradigm* is a theoretical and, above all, a methodological, applicable and flexible frame, not a coercitive one, not a *doctrina* or dogma the implementation of which is mechanical and inflexible. The Paradigm of Neolithic Discontinuity implies neither that all non-Indo-European languages necessarily arrived during Neolithic times nor that they arrived from the same source or during the same period. The new paradigm just invites us to give serious consideration to the alternative possibility: that the Urnfield culture meant the arrival of agglutinative non-Indo-European languages in some parts of Europe. To assume that the Urnfield culture is linguistically related to Celtic or even to Indo-European becomes a far less economical hypothesis than the contrary view: that it conveyed almost exclusively non-Indo-European languages.

We would not wish to conclude without mentioning the rejection by Alinei – our *maestro* and the *father* of the modern Palaeolithic Continuity Paradigm, with his major exposition in the two volumes of his ‘*Alineida*’ (Alinei, 1996–2000) – of the Indo-European character of the Kurgan archaeological culture. Alinei firmly defends the Altaic linguistic component of this culture, symbolically beginning with the name *Kurgan* itself, which

is Turkic (Alinei, 2000, pp. 99, 114): “there can be [...] no doubt that this culture belongs to Altaic stock” (Alinei, 2000, p. 98).⁵ If, as we firmly believe, this is true, Europe would have received at least two non-Indo-European components during the long Neolithic Age:

<i>language</i>	<i>millennia</i>	<i>Culture</i>
non-Indo-European	IV – III BC	Kurgan
non-Indo-European	II – I BC	Urnfield

As to the possibility of a Kurgan-Urnfield *connection*, this has been defended by mainstream Indo-Europeanists themselves, because Urnfield is traditionally seen as a kind of important second stage – food and shelter – of Kurgan (= Indo-European) invasions in the heart of Europe. But, for the time being, we would rather not go so far, leaving the question open to further study and debate.

In this new emerging picture of European linguistic prehistory, a third question which begs debate is the role played by Hungarian – traditionally described as a Uralic language with a considerable input of Turkic components – in the very heart of the Urnfield homeland.

The linguistic adscription of the Neolithic farmers who crossed over from Anatolia to Eastern Europe and settled close to the Urnfield domain remains unclear. Since Anatolia and particularly western Anatolia is a mainly Indo-European territory, some or all of those settlers – Renfrew’s Neolithic farmers – may have spoken an Indo-European language, as he suggests, or not. However, in view of the Kurgan and Urnfield cultural expansions, the European Neolithic was probably characterized by a kind of linguistic discontinuity, a circumstance that legitimizes our proposal of accepting a model characterised by some Neolithic discontinuity along with general Paleolithic continuity.

Thus, although it is possible for both theories to be completely autonomous and independent, we can nevertheless conclude that the Neolithic Discontinuity Paradigm offers a clear corollary to the Paleolithic Continuity Paradigm, being its most natural counterpart. If this is so, both the Neolithic theory of Renfrew and the traditional theories on the Kurgan and Urnfield cultural expansions may in fact postulate exactly the opposite of what really happened in the linguistic prehistory of Europe.

5 “non vi è [...] alcun dubbio sull’attribuzione di questa cultura al ceppo altaico”.

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