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**PREHISTORY OF THE EUROPEANS****A COMMENT ON : CAVALLI-SFORZA<sup>1</sup>**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Although impressed by the work of geneticists (e.g. Cavalli-Sforza 1997; Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1994) based on contemporaneous populations of Europe, we would nonetheless like to emphasize here the substantial contribution which archaeological data can provide to their interpretations of the topic of the prehistoric peopling of Europe.

In effect, for more than a century, successive generations of archaeologists have assembled a considerable and coherent corpus of information spanning the whole prehistory of human occupation of Europe.

Even if diverse tendencies have passed through these reconstructions and, particularly, even if the avatars of ~~the~~ World War II destroyed the most brilliant synthetic attempts (e.g. the schools of Vienna and Moscow), we cannot ignore their experience.

Given the importance of cultural understanding of the origins of Europe, we can only regret the absence of consideration in reconstructions of linguistic or biological phenomena, precisely where linguistic and biological information is most deficient, namely, in the early phases of human occupation of the continent.

The argument typically advanced against the existence of interrelations among populations, traditions, and languages, is easily refuted by sub-contemporaneous observations and in the development of historical European research (e.g., the *Annales* school): behavior, languages, and people develop in intimate coordination.

Simple logic confirms this fact: the ancient Celts, as much as the recent Germans, Hungarians or Basques, can at the same time be identified by their customs (diet, modes of dress, etc.) as by their genes or by their language. It is in this manner that, beyond linguistic influences, only archaeology can legitimately push the survey of the history of populations back into remote time.

Archaeology possesses a critically solid methodology, which is both competitive and contestable (Gardin 1979; Hodder 1986).

<sup>1</sup> Translated by R. Miller, P. Noiret, and L. Straus.

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Thus, European "paleo-histories" must be met (to be either accepted or refuted) with new arguments, for example, genetic, if they are to be called into question. To ignore the content of the prehistoric record or, worse still, to hold onto much abused, outmoded generalizations, would be regrettable today in the conduct of such an enterprise.

## PREHISTORIC EUROPEAN POPULATIONS

Biologists and linguists should know that there exists an elaborate, complex, and well-founded prehistory of European populations, constituted on archaeological bases. It is not possible to make this record simply into an abstraction, or to reduce it to rudimentary schemas, with the goal of creating a semblance of coherence within a theory founded on contemporary genetics or linguistics (Kozłowski and Otte 1994).

✓ The paleoanthropological record shows that the only time when a total break (anatomical and/or cultural) occurred in European prehistory was with the appearance of Cro-Magnon; all the rest of prehistory has amounted only to development of this basic phenomenon, *within* Europe. Migrations of exterior origin were subsequently limited, in time (e.g., the Huns), in space (e.g., the Iberians), and in their demographic density (e.g., the Hungarians). I must clearly state that not a single trace of a pan-continental Indo-European invasion exists, either during the Neolithic (expansion limited to the Balkans), or during the Bronze Age (with only an expansion into extreme eastern Europe, and then only among existing European populations). "Historic" populations, attested to linguistically by their texts or by their spoken languages as being "purely" Indo-European, are precisely those that are today most marginal geographically: the Celts of Ireland and Brittany, the Scandinavians, and the Germans, for example.

Yet archaeology demonstrates that there had occurred in precisely these regions only very late acculturation of populations, which had remained Mesolithic until late, and which adopted only certain aspects of the Neolithic and, much later, metallurgy. Since Mesolithic times, development has been progressive and obvious towards known historic phases and, conversely, local continuity can be traced back to the local Paleolithic. This phenomenon, already accepted by certain scholars (Renfrew 1991 [in spite of his more recent views;] and especially Cauvin 1992; Van Berg 1990), must be connected to the development of the Paleolithic in Europe, where all cultures follow each other without *important* contributions from outside. The Danubian Neolithic civilizations, in the heart of Central Europe, contain obvious traces of external borrowings (notably cereals and ceramics), but also manifest such a profound break with the Near East that their ethnic base cannot be derived from there. Whatever it may be, the *Anatolian* migration (not Levantine, as is often stated), which began the Neolithic in Europe, was itself included within the initial Indo-European sphere, if one relies on the first linguistic information available for the ✓ Anatolian population (Özdoğan 1997).

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## RHYTHM

Schematically, therefore, if one takes as a base the "history" of the European continent, as reconstructed by archaeology during almost two centuries, one can observe a fundamental migration - that of the Aurignacian - which ruptured local evolutionary trends. But it is hardly probable, 1) that even this would have exterminated preceding local populations; 2) that it would correspond to the modern-age Basques; 3) that it would have been the first to possess an elaborate language; or 4) that it would have had subsequent strong external influences.

- 1) Obvious traces of anatomic continuity are present on skeletons dating as late as the Early Gravettians in Moravia (Brno, Predmosti: e.g., Frayer 1986; Smith et al. 1989). It is not a matter of "persistent Neandertals", but of secondary traits, such as those resulting from racial interbreeding (Henke 1992). The same cultures possess identical characteristics of acculturation at the beginning of their development: foliate points, particular hafting and debitage techniques (Kozłowski and Kozłowski 1979). The western-most populations (e.g., sites of Couvin in Belgium, Saint Césaire in France, Zafarraya in Spain) of the Upper Paleolithic remained anatomically Neandertal until very late (at least until 30,000 BP in southern Iberia).
- 2) At the margins of the European continent, some populations settled along the littoral environments: Iberians in Catalunya, Etruscans in Tuscany, Myceneans on the Peloponesis, for example. The case of the Basques is very similar and *seems* to correspond to a "late" Neolithic maritime migration along the Atlantic, which was nonetheless limited and of distant origin (were the other coasts already occupied?). In this case, a Caucasian relationship (noted many times before) appears plausible. There exists no relationship, in any case, with the Aurignacian *sensu stricto*, which however existed everywhere else and which had provoked this movement under a form which, we must recognize, remains mysterious.
- 3) Anticipatory concepts, required for language, are already largely represented as early as the Lower Paleolithic (Goodenough 1990), by reduction strategies (Geneste 1991) and by hunting organization (Otte and Patou-Mathis 1992), for example.
- 4) A "marginal" effect is also observed with the Lapps and the Finns, who penetrated late the less densely populated zones. And, via another process, was the similar case of the Ugric and Bulgarian peoples, assimilated late, respectively to a particular environment (the Pannonian Basin) or to a dispersed cultural milieu (the Balkans). Fundamentally, while these "exceptions" remain limited, they confirm the general rule of *in situ* development from local population substrates.

Differences vis à vis modern humans are therefore: 1) secondary, as to capacities, and 2) crucial, as to results. That is to say that they are exclusively of a historical nature and not simply biological (Leroi-Gourhan 1964). Behavioral models brought by the Aurignacians when they arrived in Europe were so specific and so elaborate that they demanded new modes of thought, based on different values (metaphysical and social) than those of their local predecessors. Yet even

these differences were not of profound nature, they consisted simply of "archaeological syntax", as a linguist would say...

Although we totally approve of the spirit of integration of biological and cultural approaches professed by Cavalli-Sforza, we cannot imagine that one is better than the other, particularly, on one hand, because genetic modes of transmission do not seem to be either fully elucidated or complete, as much as we emphasize it outside of the biological realm (Henke 1992; Otte 1995; 1997), and, on the other hand, because the *only* diachronic data are the affair of archaeologists, whose methods, results and theoretical reflections merit as much consideration as those of disciplines "auxiliary" to archaeology. Finally, the historico-cultural context of the European field of experience must be understood as being exceptional, precisely for its marginality. Phenomena of change have probably been precipitated there more than elsewhere, in continents where development was more harmonious and continuous. The European "model", limited by its regional value, cannot therefore be used as a global "explanation" applicable to the human adventure in general.

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