



A reconstruction of Cro Magnon mother with her son – by Ateliers Daynès (Courtesy: Lascaux International Exhibition)

SESSION ORGANISERS

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The Session will focus on the distribution and chronology of languages particularly Indo-European, spoken by people in Europe from the Palaeolithic to the Iron Age. Speakers will draw on a range of methods, including phylogenetic, toponymic, numismatic and historiographic to examine alternative models for the dating and dispersal of Indo-European languages.

MULTILINGUAL COIN INSCRIPTIONS IN PRE-ROMAN EAST ANGLIA



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Inscriptions on ancient British coins mostly name the war-lords, rulers, or officials responsible for the coinages in question, and lend scraps of insight into language use, at least amongst the senior social elite in southern Britain, between the late first century BC and c. AD 45 or 60, or whenever native coinage ended after Claudius' conquest. Almost all such names are plainly in Brittonic, or are in Latin reflecting Brittonic (an interesting language choice in its own right). There are, however, some conspicuous exceptions, all in Norfolk, where several coin inscriptions record non-Latin, non-Brittonic, but plausibly West Germanic names and speech-forms. These must belong to some of the richest and most influential families in the northern cantons of the Civitas Icenorum, long before the Romans can have had any direct influence on the character of Britain's ethnic mix. They therefore raise some very interesting questions about the identity and maritime connections of some of the permanent residents of the Fen edge and North-Sea shoreline.

USING PLACE-NAMES TO BUILD ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGIES FOR LANGUAGE: THE CASE OF ENGLISH IN PREHISTORIC BRITAIN



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While linguistic methodologies can analyse complex relationships between languages and can establish relative chronologies, it has proven difficult and controversial to establish absolute chronologies. The development and dispersal of the Indo-European languages are variously attributed to the Upper Palaeolithic, the Neolithic and the Bronze Age, the last of which is currently most favoured by linguists.

Through the study of place-names in relation to environmental change and archaeology, it is suggested in this paper that we can suggest absolute time-frames.

The methodology adopted in this study is to analyse landscapes in eastern Britain that are known to have changed significantly between the prehistoric and the medieval periods. Most place-names in the English landscape are made of elements of “Old English”, the name we give to the language spoken in parts of Britain between the end of the Roman period (conventionally 410AD) and the Norman Conquest

(1066AD). If groups of Old English place-names indicate a landscape that prevailed in prehistory, then this would suggest that a Germanic language, an ancestor to English was being spoken.

Key landscape features that change in the Holocene are large bodies of water (“meres” in Old English) and islands (eg or “ey” in Old English). Analysis of evidence from landscape and environmental archaeology demonstrates that some meres had dried out by the Roman period, yet the surrounding English place-names describe their extent in the prehistoric period.

While the arrival in Britain of a Germanic language can be established from this research as having taken place no later than the second millennium BC, it is not yet possible to determine the period more precisely. It is hoped that the other papers and discussion in this session might throw some light on the most likely chronology.

DNA AND THE ORIGINS OF THE BRITISH



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Several DNA surveys have revealed current geographic subdivision in the genetic landscape of the British Isles. The next phase will be to attach dates to when these genetic units came into being. Such dates can be obtained by applying the molecular clock to modern DNA, or to analysing ancient British DNA directly from archaeologically dated sites.

WRONG HORSE? WRONG WHEEL? WRONG LANGUAGE?

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The Kurgan theory, first formulated by Gordon Childe and revised by Marija Gimbutas, is enjoying a zombielike afterlife, bolstered by new ancient DNA results, which suggest that Europe was extensively repopulated by migrants from the Pontic Steppes, following the failure of the farming systems established in the Neolithic.

The most salient archaeological proponent of this case in recent years has been David Anthony, who has proposed a sweeping invasionist theory based on his discovery of a wheeled wagon in this region dating to the middle of the fourth millennium BCE. Anthony's case for such Bronze Age horsemen conquering the world by virtue of this putative massive technological breakthrough is nevertheless spurious. Indeed, while it is only possible to observe the development of Indo-European languages to a time depth of some 1 to 4 millennia, representing only the latter third or half of the period over which, in Antony's view, Indo-European languages spread over Eurasia and differentiated into highly diversified families, my own work suggests that Anthony is blithely assuming linguistic behaviour during the initial unobservable phase of this process which is diametrically opposed to the behaviour during the observable period. Furthermore, his linguistic archaeology of wheel words systematically ignores all comparative data from other language groups and as such, fails to address the likelihood that such words are nothing more than loanwords. The evident implication is that Indo-European is older.

THE PALAEOOLITHIC HYPOTHESIS FOR INDO-EUROPEAN



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A central claim of the now so-called Palaeolithic Continuity Theory or Paleolithic Continuity Paradigm is that most or possibly all major linguistic groups (Afro-Asiatic, Amerind, Australian, Khoisan, Niger-Kordofanian, Nilo-Saharan, Uralic...) already existed in the Upper Palaeolithic. Although this is a date far beyond the traditional horizon of Indo-European studies, through independent and convergent research the new paradigm has been collecting many arguments to support the hypothesis of a Palaeolithic time slot and consequently a hunter-gatherer culture for Proto-Indo-European too. On the contrary, although the prehistoric Urnfield Culture has traditionally been linked to Indo-European people, there are good reasons to believe that it would better be attributed, at least partially, to non-Indo-European speakers (Basques, Etrurians, Iberians).

THE ORIGINS OF INDO EUROPEAN LANGUAGES IN THE PALAEOOLITHIC



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The origins of IE languages during Palaeolithic times especially with the movements of modern people, from the steppic asiatic areas towards continental Europe, the so-called "Cro-Magnon" people are at the roots of our present European populations, The genetic data also indicates the same conclusion, Nothing has really changed for about forty thousand years, and all the succeeding civilisations have always been founded on the local peopling. Our challenge now is convincing our colleagues who are attached to their faith, this is the most difficult task.

"It's easier to break a particle than a conviction", said Einstein.

THE NEW GENETIC NARRATIVE OF THE KURGAN HYPOTHESIS : SOME PROBLEMS



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The canonical Indo-European model, which was originally a purely linguistic one, is founded on a central assumption: that of an original people (Urvolk in German), who inhabited an original homeland (Urheimat) where they spoke an original language (Ursprache). They left this homeland to spread progressively throughout a large part of Eurasia, giving rise through the process of scissiparity to all of the historically known Indo-European languages and to the peoples who spoke, or still speak, them. In fact, the Kurgan hypothesis, the most popular one, lacks real archaeological proofs.

Nevertheless, palaeogenetics was recently supposed to bring new proofs of a massive migration from the steppes to North-Western Europe. A new narrative try now to bridge the gap between archaeology and genetics. But is the traditional canonical model the only possible one?

INDO-EUROPEAN: THE LANGUAGE OF CRO-MAGNON



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The emergence of Indo-European people in Europe and Asia must be seen as one of the major episodes of the emergence of Homo sapiens in Europe and Asia from Africa, and not as an event of recent prehistory. Cumulative evidence shows a complete continuity between the Palaeolithic hunters and the Indo-European population known from texts: Celts, Germans, Slavs. In archaeological and paleontological terms, the only observable break corresponds to the transition from the Middle Palaeolithic (Neanderthal) to the Upper Palaeolithic (Cro Magnon), and it is from this moment onward that a history of languages and cultures develops in an autonomous way. The differentiation process of IE languages from the Proto-IE common language, reconstructed by comparative linguistics, as well as that of their already separated branches (Proto-Celtic, Proto-Germanic, Proto-Italic, Proto-Balto-Slavic, Proto-Greek etc.) into their presently 'substandard', 'dialect' varieties, must have taken an extremely long time, and they must have been associated first with the varying episodes of the original migration from Africa, and then – with an increasingly faster tempo as social stratification and colonial wars began – with the varying cultural, social and political stages the new fragmented groups went through in the different settlement areas.

GEOLINGUISTIC CONTINUITIES IN THE CELTO-ATLANTIC AREA AND IN WESTERN EUROPE



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The archaeological discoveries of the last thirty years show at an overwhelming majority that there is no evidence of an Indo-European invasion during the 4th Millennium BC at the scale of the European continent. The traditional “Kourgans’ theory” is confronted with numerous contradictions and constitutes no longer a satisfactory hypothesis.

In that context of reconsidering the origin of European languages, the Celtic people would not come anymore from a territory situated between Austria and southern Germany, as being accepted since the nineteenth century. Since the Mesolithic they could have settled as groups of fishermen and seafarers along the Atlantic shores from the Iberian Peninsula to the British Isles passing through the ancient Gaul (Alinei 1996- 2000, Alinei-Benozzo 2008, Ballester 2012).

On the basis of dialectal and geolinguistic data, this approach tries to understand better this hypothesis. By studying geolinguistic variations, it considers the Celto-Atlantic area and the exchanges it may have had over the long term with the linguistic areas in contact like the Germanic and the Romance one. New lexical insights of Celtic on Romance and Germanic (and vice versa) open research perspectives and raise real questions about the phenomena of the continuity of languages and populations in the Atlantic zone of Europe.

A GEOGRAPHY OF P-CELTIC



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I shall consider the group of P-Celtic languages that have been spoken on the Atlantic seaboard of Europe – Cornish, Breton, Welsh and Cumbric. If one or more Germanic languages were spoken in the east of Britain, what scenarios might account for how these languages were conveyed to this area and how, when and where did they divide into the distinct languages that we know? The traditional view, with origins in the 16th century, was that these languages were spoken by “Celts” who occupied much of western and north-western Europe until displaced, first by speakers of Romance languages (in France and Spain for example) and then by speakers of Germanic languages as the Western Roman Empire succumbed to invasion. This same view sees the arrival of P-Celtic speakers in Brittany displaced from their British

home in the post-Roman period.

This paper considers a number of alternatives; that the speakers of Breton are a Celtic fringe that was not displaced by the Roman invasion; that speakers of Cornish and Breton had once migrated from Wales; or that the Cornish colonised Wales and Brittany; or that at some in the prehistoric period, groups of Breton speakers moved north to settle in Cornwall and Wales.

The distinctiveness of the Breton place-names from those in Cornwall suggests that the separation of the two groups must have taken place much earlier than the post-Roman period.

The geography supports a more radical interpretation that fits the Palaeolithic Continuity Paradigm.

At a stage in the Late Pleistocene or Early Holocene a group of proto-P-Celtic speakers lived at the mouth of the Channel River – now the Celtic Sea. At that time, this group could survive on the bounty of Europe's largest river, filled with nutrients, as it reached the Atlantic and collided with the Gulf Stream.

THE LOST TWIN: AN ALTERNATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF PROTO-INDO-EUROPEAN MYTH



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As with their proto-language, the earliest myths of the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) peoples have been tentatively reconstructed by scholars (most notably Bruce Lincoln) based on the premise that the culture that produced such myths was androcentric, pastoral, and nomadic in nature; accordingly, the rich vein of female/cow/farming symbolism

found in extant Indo-European myths is viewed as the result of interactions with non-PIE farmers encountered during the language spread, rather than being primary. But is this the case?

Renfrew's 'Anatolian hypothesis' posits the alternate idea that the Indo-European languages spread with farming, and in this paper, I will also be arguing that the farming metaphors and imagery in the myths are primary, not secondary, supporting his theory. I will show that although Lincoln's chief source for his reconstructed creation myth (in which the world is formed by the brothers 'Twin' and 'Man') are Indo-Iranian, Doniger O'Flaherty has demonstrated that these myths were once rich in female/cow symbolism which had been expunged over time due to a 'power shift' in these cultures – the opposite process to that suggested above where cow symbolism was presumed to have arrived later. Indeed, I will show how Lincoln's reconstructed cosmogonic myth does not bear scrutiny: instead of an all-male creation, we find numerous examples of male and female cosmogonies, the female partner being associated with cows and rivers, and who with her male partner form the cosmos in the same way as the primal parents found in Near Eastern myths.

Accordingly, I will argue that the current reconstructions of PIE myth are invalid and must give way to a new reconstructed cosmogony – one whose direct and obvious parallels to the Near Eastern myths suggests a re-evaluation of the time and place of the genesis of the Indo-European languages is necessary.