

CONCLUSIONS

Everything has its end, so does this book. “Our play is played out,” as William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–63) would have said. Our peculiar journey in space and time to the sources of Indo-European cultures and languages is also over. It is left only to draw important conclusions.

The world of Indo-European cultures and languages is really huge, diverse, and marvelous. The history of the ancient Indo-Europeans and the peoples with whom they communicated in prehistory in many aspects is still shrouded in mystery. We know for sure that the Indo-Europeans were not autochthones neither in Europe nor in India. Although the word *Europe* is originally a prominent concept of Greek civilisation, basically used in a large number of modern languages, its etymology (as well as that of *Asia*) is of unknown ultimate provenance, which also speaks in favour of the later appearance of the Indo-Europeans on this continent. We also know that other civilisations flourished before them, but the origins of these civilisations or the specific circumstances of the invasion of Indo-European tribes there – all this is the subject of much speculation impossible to verify.

According to the Kurgan hypothesis that seems the most likely, the tribes who spoke Proto-Indo-European dialects originally occupied the territory that stretched between the Pontic steppe (the region of modern southern Russia and eastern Ukraine) and the Ural Mountains, and between the upper reaches of the Volga and the foothills of the Caucasus. Approximately during the 5th and 4th millennia BC, they split into various parts and began their movements in three main directions: to the east into Central Asia and later farther, to the south through the Caucasus into Asia Minor, and to the west into Europe. It was the beginning of the history of the peoples that in the 19th century were called Indo-European. The advance of Indo-European tribes into the mentioned directions led to their constant splitting and coming into contact with ethnic groups, different in origin, cultures, and languages. Some of them settled down to a constant sedentary life, others continued their movement, finding territories of their future spread. From there, separate Indo-European ethnic groups and their languages started to emerge. The influence of various native cultures and vernaculars was often decisive for all Indo-European cultures and languages. The absorption of these cultures and assimilation of local idioms at different times and under different conditions were a major reason of emergence of different Indo-European peoples, their cultures and languages.

After the separation of the ancient Aryan tribes in the northern Eurasian steppe on the borders of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, one group of them reached the northern part of South Asia where previously the Indus Valley civilisation had flourished and where they came into contact with numerous Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman tribes. It was the land where about 1750 BC the Vedic civilisation began to surface and later different Indo-Aryan ethnic groups and languages developed. The other group of Aryans began its migration in the second millennium BC into the opposite direction

and gradually settled in vast areas of south-eastern Europe, the Iranian plateau, and Central Asia. The territory of the Iranian plateau, wedged between the Arabian and Indian plates, was the cradle of the tremendous Iranian culture. It spread together with the Avestan language, linked with ancient north-eastern Iran, and Old Persian, which emerged in its southwest. The Iranian culture was originally impregnated by other ancient civilisations of the East, e.g. the famous Behistun inscription (522/21 BC), besides Old Persian, is done in Akkadian (*ca.* 29th–8th centuries BC – 100 AD) and in Elamite (*ca.* 2800–300 BC). Later, Arabic and Turkic cultures and languages also exerted a prominent influence upon the development of cultures and languages of Iranian peoples.

One group of Indo-Europeans, the Tocharians, moved far to the East and reached the Tarim River Basin in Chinese Turkistan, where they long lived in an ethnically and linguistically diverse environment. The Tocharians and their two languages (A and B) became known from the manuscripts of the 5th–10th centuries AD, discovered at the beginning of the 20th century. After the 8th century, the Tocharian languages were gradually supplanted by the Turkic languages of the Uyghur tribes.

One of the earliest migrations of the Indo-Europeans was to Asia Minor that became home of the Anatolians and their languages. They reached this territory sometime in the 3rd millennium BC. About 1600 BC, one of the Anatolian peoples, the Hittites, established a powerful empire in the Middle East, identified with *the land of Hatti* and the capital *Hattusa* in north-central Anatolia (the site of modern Boğazköy). Asia Minor was constantly inhabited by a multi-ethnic population. The name of the Hittite state and its capital was of Hattian origin. The Hattians belong to pre-Indo-European residents of the land, known from *c.* 2300 BC and assimilated by the Hittites *c.* 2000–1700 BC. The spiritual life of the Hittites was significantly influenced by the Hurrians, another non-Indo-European ethnos. For instance, their mythology entered Hittite epic poems, the carvings at Yazılıkaya (a holy site for the Hittites) witness that the official pantheon of the Hittite Empire was thoroughly Hurrianised, and Hittite queens bore also Hurrian names. The Hurrians were assimilated *ca.* after 1300 BC, except one region where the kingdom of Urartu was later created. It enjoyed considerable political power in the Middle East in the 9th and 8th centuries BC, but in the 6th century BC the Urartians were superseded by the Armenians, an Indo-European ethnos, related to the Phrygians who entered Asia Minor from Thrace. In the first millennium BC, the Anatolian languages became extinct and were replaced by other languages. From the late 8th century BC, Anatolia was touched by new waves of Indo-European invasions, undertaken by the Cimmerians, Scythians, Phrygians, etc. The Medes and Persians included Anatolia in their empire after the victory over the Assyrians in 627 BC and thus put an end to their dominance in its eastern part. The conquest of Asia Minor in 334 BC by Alexander the Great led to its gradual Hellenisation. It had been for long centuries one of the most prominent centres of Greek culture and language until the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453.

The invasions of Indo-European tribes into Europe took place in four main directions. A big and diverse group of Indo-Europeans invaded the Balkans and the neighbouring islands in the Mediterranean Sea. Its territory became the cradle of European culture, linked first of all with the ancient Greeks and their civilisation. Its history includes different periods. Mycenaean Greece (*ca.* 1600–1200 BC) inherited all main achievements of the non-Indo-European Minoan civilisation (*ca.* 2700–1420 BC), having accommodated its syllabic script (Linear A) for the Greek language (Linear B, later sunk into oblivion). Archaic Greece (*ca.* 800–510 BC) borrowed much from the cultures of peoples of Asia Minor and other regions of the Mediterranean Sea. It is known that earlier Greece was inhabited by the Pelasgians, Leleges, and other non-Indo-European peoples. One of the most important borrowings of the Greeks was probably the script that has been used to write their native language since the 8th century BC. It was derived from the earlier Phoenician alphabet. Besides Greek, many other Indo-European idioms had spread in the Balkans, called now Paleo-Balkan (Macedonian, Illyrian, Thracian, Phrygian, etc.). They are all long extinct.

It is thought that the Celts and ancient Italic peoples originally belonged to the same tribes, as reconstruction of their primitive languages indicates. From their homeland in Central Europe, the Celts spread in all directions and populated huge territories from Spain to Anatolia and from Ireland to the northern part of Apennine Peninsula where various ethnic groups lived. We may suppose that these peoples and their languages had a definite impact on Celtic culture and idioms. Later, the Celts were wiped out or assimilated in almost all territories, except Ireland, Wales, and northern France.

Ancient Italic peoples moved to the Apennine Peninsula, which became their home. They remain anchored in the names of the regions of Roman Italy – Latium, Campania, Apulia, Bruttium, Lucania, Samnium, Picenum, Umbria, Etruria, Venetia, and Liguria. The most powerful nation of this territory were the Etruscans whose origin and language continues to be an enigma. The emergence of the Roman civilisation, one of the greatest civilisations of the past, and the spread of Latin were amazing in all aspects. It sprang from a small area named Latium on the outskirts of the Etruscan territory, along the lower Tiber River. At that time, a big part of the Apennine Peninsula was already populated by the Italic tribes who spoke Umbrian and Oscan dialects, and non-Italic languages. The Latin tribes originally established themselves on the isolated mass of the Alban Hills that was defensible. In prehistoric times, they were influenced by the civilisation of the Iron Age of southern Italy. In *ca.* 600–425 BC, Latium was occupied by the Etruscans, whose impact on the Romans was very significant. Besides the Etruscans, the Romans inherited much from the cultures of the Greeks, Phoenicians, and numerous other peoples of the Mediterranean region. By about 100 AD, Latin drove out all the other idioms between Sicily and the Alps, except Greek in the colonies of Magna Graecia. Later, it also replaced many languages in the territories conquered and incorporated into the Roman Empire. The fall of

the Roman Empire in 476 gave rise to the formation of the nations on its former territories that created the Romance languages.

The northern part of Europe was inhabited by peoples of non-Indo-European origin (Finno-Ugric and others) that due to the existing life conditions led mostly a primitive life. A group of the Indo-European tribes, which began a gradual settlement there, split at first into two parts, giving birth to the future Germanic and Balto-Slavonic tribes. Their migrations continued many centuries and ended on the shores of the North and Baltic Sea. They were included in the orbit of European civilisation later than other Indo-Europeans. That allowed them to maintain the archaic character of their languages for a long time. The split of the Germanic tribes into many parts and their intensive contacts with various Indo-European and non-Indo-European ethnic groups were one of the main causes for serious and rapid changes that had touched their languages. The Slavonic tribes became known much earlier than the Balts. Despite having spread from their original homeland (somewhere between the rivers Oder and Dniepr) over huge territories of Europe, they all spoke one mutually intelligible language. Many scholars postulate that the Slavs and Balts originate from the same tribes. The first literary language of the Slavs, Old Church Slavonic, appeared already in the 9th century but in many aspects it reflects deep transformations of the language structures, maintained even in modern Baltic languages. The Balts and their languages became well-known only after the Reformation in the 16th century. The investigations of the Baltic languages, predominantly Lithuanian, have revealed their extraordinarily archaic character. That is why Lithuanian was chosen in the book to explain the evolution of the ancient languages that became the sources of many modern IE languages. In a little more than three centuries after the discovery of America in 1492, due to colonial and commercial contacts Indo-European languages had already spread to all continents of the Earth.

Lithuanian presents a peculiar phenomenon for comparative linguistics and Indo-European studies. It can also be regarded as one of the peculiar marvels of Indo-European cultures. Its essence is that Modern Lithuanian can be directly compared with the IE languages that have long vanished or been changed in such a way that they are now no longer intelligible to modern speakers of Indo-Aryan and Iranian languages, Greek, Romance, Germanic, Celtic and Slavonic languages. Modern Icelandic and Faroese have changed slightly over a thousand years, but in comparison with Lithuanian they are not so archaic. Even the long extinct Anatolian languages had lost many Indo-European forms now still present in Lithuanian. We can conclude that it has maintained much of the grammatical structures of the ancient Indo-European languages and their vocabulary. In many cases, Modern Lithuanian stands close to Primitive Indo-European and helps us to reconstruct it. Many words and forms of Modern Lithuanian differ slightly from those existed in ancient IE language, e.g. Lith. *diēvas* 'god' / *deivė* 'goddess', *gyvas* 'alive', *pàts* (arch. *patis*) 'husband', *výras* 'man', *móteris* 'woman', *tētis* 'father', *sūnūs* 'son', *duktė* 'daughter', *šuō* 'dog', *avis*

'a sheep', (arch.) *ašva* 'horse', *rātas* 'wheel', *aušrà* 'dawn', *dienà* 'day', *naktìs* 'night', *ugnis* 'fire', *vāsara* 'summer', *girià* 'forest', *vėjas* 'wind', *javai* 'grain, cereal', *ùpė* 'river', *akmuō* (stone), *rasà* 'dew', *miglà* 'fog', *dūmas* 'smoke', *keturi* 'four', *penki* 'five', *ėsti* 'is', etc. Lithuanian helps us to reconstruct vanished forms of different Indo-European languages and is also of peculiar importance for studying their ancient history.

Languages are very important phenomena of global culture. Every language is unique and significant, and must be protected, because it reflects the spiritual and material culture of a specific nation that is unique. In Lithuanian is reflected not only the spiritual and material culture of the Lithuanian nation but also that of the distant ancestors of all Indo-European nations, living now on all continents. That is why the Lithuanian language is worthy of recognition as part of the UNESCO World Heritage.

Since our early years, many of us have got used to staring at the starry sky in the evening. It is long known from Giordano Bruno that "the unnumbered worlds in the universe are all similar in form and rank and subject to the same forces and the same laws." He also spoke about the universality of terrestrial laws throughout all worlds and of the similarity of all substances in the universe. It means that representatives of extraterrestrial intelligence would also use a big variety of languages on the planets inhabited by them, and these languages would also belong to the most wonderful achievements of their civilisations. Their history, their knowledge, thoughts, and feelings would also be unthinkable without languages they use or used. Humankind still believes that one day it will find intelligent beings outside Earth and a common language for communication and it surely will mark the start of a new epoch. Its beginning is impossible to imagine without systematic knowledge of languages and their history, as well as language as the most important tool of human communication in general. Thus, the discovery of new worlds and search of extraterrestrial intelligence in the universe is impossible without linguistics and investigation of a plethora of languages, in other words – without the study of all spheres of human spiritual life. We have yet so much to learn on the Earth...

In the starry sky in the evening, I always stare at the Little Bear when I return home. You will not believe but it is really true – it is as if its ladle hangs or lies above the roof of the building where I live in Vilnius. I look up to the stars and my flow of thought is always accompanied by the Andante of Mozart's Piano Concert No. 21. I think this music can successfully accompany the flight of any spaceship of Earthmen to the universe. I gaze into the sky and think that probably somewhere there, near the Little Bear, there exists an extraterrestrial life like on our cozy globe and people there also love and suffer, laugh and weep, despair and hope – the same as we. They communicate and express their thoughts and feelings in different languages. Probably, everything may be even much better there, but it is so good to live on our blue planet, meeting spectacular sunsets and dawns, and hearing various languages... It is so good that it moves... And yet linguistics, the science about what makes the human being a human being, is a wonderful matter!



OLEG POLJAKOV, professor at Vilnius University since 1998, a Dr. phil. habil. of Heidelberg University (1996) is the author of several books and more than a hundred fifty academic publications. His first speciality was Germanic languages. As a postgraduate student, he studied Indo-European linguistics. Following a tradition of the Moscow linguistic school established by F. F. Fortunatov, which calls for Lithuanian to be studied in Lithuania, the author spent three summers (1982–1984) in western Lithuania, working and studying Lithuanian in a village near Marijampolė. After defending his PhD thesis at the Academy of Sciences in Moscow in 1985, his life and work have been attached closely to Vilnius University. In 1988–1990, he taught at the University of Greifswald (former East Germany), and in 1991–1994, 1996 was a habilitand at the University of Heidelberg in Germany, working as an academic researcher and running seminars for students. He has delivered lectures in Great Britain and Sweden. The main objects of his research are the relationships of Baltic, Slavonic and Indo-European languages, morphophonology, accentology, cultural studies, and edp. Since 1992 he is a member of the Society for Indo-European Studies, and since 2008 a member of its Scientific Advisory Board.