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## **MILTON G. NUNEZ'S MODEL FROM A LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE**

The model developed by Nunez is, undeniably, a clear and coherent description of the early stages of settlement in Finland, the Baltic regions and northern Russia after the Ice Age. However, it does not provide a solution for linguistic problems. On the contrary, it emphasizes to an even greater extent the discrepancy that has existed for a long time past between dates obtained by using archaeological methods and those of historical linguistics.

Nunez bases his model on the assumption that the zone bordering the ice sheet in eastern Europe was inhabited in the first place by Proto-Uralian populations. After 10 000 bc, they had started to spread on the eastern side of the Urals on the one hand (forefathers of the Samoyeds and Ob-Ugrians), and north and west across the Russian Plain on the other hand (other Finno-ugrians). The whole of the area between the Urals and Finland was occupied as early as c. 6000 bc by a population speaking mainly Proto-Finnougric. The dates are very early: according to even the boldest estimates of linguists, Proto-Uralian split into Proto-Finnougric and Proto-Samoyed between 6000 and 4000 bc at the earliest; the separation of the Ugric branch is generally dated to the period between 4000 and 2000 bc. In other words, the dates for the proto-languages would have to be moved considerably back in time. As far as I can see, this is not totally impossible as far as Uralian linguistics is concerned but it would require corresponding changes in the developmental history of Indo-European languages.

In addition to the problems of dating, Nunez's theory has other difficulties. One of them is embedded in the basic assumption itself, i.e. that the population of the glacial border zone was Proto-Uralian. The languages of primitive peoples liv-

ing in Stone Age conditions cannot be usually divided into language groups; instead, they are mostly isolates unrelated to any language. True, in the regions that are easy to travel, such as steppes, deserts and tundra, even natural language areas can be relatively large. Of course, this is also true when people have to move far and wide in order to win their subsistence. A situation like this may indeed have existed in eastern and northern Europe during the Ice Age and also afterwards, but the idea of a linguistically uniform settled zone reaching from the Urals to the Baltic and Finland seems rather bold. It is more likely that, originally, a very large number of different languages was spoken in eastern and northern Europe and that Proto-Uralian was one small language among many; see e.g. Korhonen 1984: 67–69. As it is, the archaeologists and linguists would be well advised to set about finding out together what it was that later caused the expansion of the Uralian and Finno-ugric languages and to what period of time this could be most naturally dated. Without a drastic rise in the cultural level of population, expansion of this kind would scarcely have been possible under any circumstances.

There is another difficulty with Nunez's line of thought that is not so easy to overcome: it is a well-known fact that there are features in Baltic-Finnic and Lapp that cannot be explained as an outcome of either their own internal development or influence from a neighbouring language. What seems to remain, then, is the possible influence of a very old non-Uralian language substratum. This simply means that an unknown non-Uralian language was earlier spoken in the area of the modern Baltic-Finnic languages and Lapp, and traces of this unknown language can still be found in the phonology, vocabulary and place-names of the modern languages; see Ariste 1971: 251–258 on vocabulary, Nissilä 1962: 108–110 on place-names. Of

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course, this does not refute the idea that there could have been Uralian elements among the first inhabitants of Finland, as well.

In light of what has been stated above, Nunez's model appears too straightforward. At this stage, when differences between archaeological and linguistic views are still quite huge, I will for my part propose the following compromise: after the Ice Age, the first inhabitants arrived in Finland and the Baltic from east about 7000 bc. The newcomers consisted of small groups speaking languages unrelated to each other. These people were most probably not Proto-Uralian. Later several waves of migration were directed towards Finland and the Baltic from the Russian inland, mainly from the Volga region, which caused finnougric elements to become dominant here. Perhaps the most vigorous period of expansion for these groups was the Typical Comb ceramic phase (3200–2500 bc) when the Finnougric protolanguage was already splitting up. True, the direction of this movement from southeast to northwest was more towards the Baltic than Finland, which retained its contacts with the Volga region as late as the Neolithic period, and even the Bronze Age. This fact may have affected linguistic development as well.

According to the latest estimates of linguists, the spread of Baltic loans into Baltic-Finnic started between 1800 and 1500 bc (Korhonen 1976: 12; Sammallahti 1977: 130). This is based on the assumption accepted also by Nunez that the late Stone Age Battle Axe culture (2500–2000 bc) was brought to the Baltic and Finland by Indo-Europeans, i.e. above all by Baltic tribes. This means that dates obtained earlier must be moved back in time considerably: Baltic contacts were earlier dated as late as around 500 bc. It is to be noted that this change was not made for linguistic reasons; instead, it was based on archaeological views. However, Jorma Koivulehto (1983: 109–110) has recently pointed out that the new date is too early as far

as the Baltic contacts are concerned: Proto-Baltic had not yet developed into an independent language at the time of the Battle Axe culture; the language was still at its Proto-Indo-European stage. Consequently, on the basis of the chronology of Indo-European languages, the language spoken by the people of the Battle Axe culture could not have been Baltic. Instead, Nunez is certainly right in his assumption that the Battle Axe culture radically affected the population and linguistic conditions of Finland. The same holds for his description of the Scandinavian Bronze Age.

Time after time the attempts to reconcile archaeological and linguistic views seem to run into insuperable difficulties of dating. The model proposed by Milton G. Nunez is no exception in this respect. However, it is strong proof of the fact that Finnish prehistory is open to new interpretations, and continues to stay that way. As there has been a great deal of productive work done in different disciplines to solve the problematic areas of Finnish prehistory during the past decade, it is surely again time to convene an interdisciplinary seminar such as the Tvärminne symposium was in 1980.

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