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Unde venisti? The Prehistory of Italic through its Loanword Lexicon

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7 Archaeological Theories on the Italicization of Italy

The history of the field of prehistoric archaeology in Italy is a nuanced one, presented by Guidi (2010) as a discipline that competed with the much more well-funded historical (Classical) archaeological field and which was shaped by methodological rivalries and political ideologies. Discoveries beginning in the mid-1800s led to the recognition of many of the major prehistoric cultures of the Italian peninsula and its environs (though their contemporary recognition as prehistoric was not always immediate). One of the first to begin to using the archaeological evidence to theorize on the arrival of Italic-speaking populations in Italy was Luigi Pigorini.

Having had his start in the field of prehistoric archaeology under the mentorship of Pellegrino Strobel (the first to recognize Terramare sites prehistoric and with whom he published a seminal work on the Terramare: Strobel and Pigorini 1864), Pigorini became a juggernaut that dominated the field for decades. Throughout numerous articles in the *Bullettino di Paleontologia Italiana* (starting with e.g. Pigorini 1875), he developed what would come to be called by some his *teoria pigoriniana*. The narrative that he supported was that Neolithic Italy had been inhabited by a homogenous population of autochthonous Mediterranean origin that practiced inhumation burial. The Copper Age saw the arrival of peoples who built pile-dwellings over lakes (the *palafitticoli* of the Polada Culture) like those across the Alps in Austria and Switzerland. Then in the Bronze Age, the eastern part of these regions saw the arrival of a people who built their pile-dwellings over dry land and practiced cremation and intensive metallurgy. This was the Terramare Culture, responsible for disseminating bronze metallurgy throughout the Italian peninsula. They left their settlements in the Po Valley, either willingly or due to another wave of invaders, and marched/treked southwards and over the Apennines whereupon they became the Iron Age Villanova and Latial cultures and eventually founded the city of Rome using the city plan of a Terramare settlement (summarized in e.g. Randall-MacIver 1939, Guidi 2010).

Though highly influential, the sacrosanctity of Pigorini's *teoria* began to come into question in the 1900s. The Terramare origin of Rome and the Roman military *castra* was revealed to have been based on precious little evidence (Säflund 1939, further e.g. Barocelli 1942). Several alternative accounts reduced the role of foreign invasions, with varying degrees of ideological bias. Patroni (e.g. 1939: 215), on the basis of racial phenotypical analysis, argued that Indo-European languages could only have come to Italy "by exchanges and imitations and by slow but very extended infiltrations of individuals."⁵⁵⁶ Ugo Rellini's work on the Apennine Culture (originally called the *extra-terramaricoli*), highlighted the continuity in many areas with the earlier Neolithic and Copper Age cultural materials and disproved the existence of Terramare sites outside of the Po Valley (cf. Rellini 1929, 1933). Thus several scholars gave up the idea that

⁵⁵⁶ "Per scambi e imitazione e per lente ma lunghissime infiltrazioni di individui".

Terramare was “portato bell’e fatto” by a “popolo speciale” (Barocelli 1942: 138) and some suspected instead that it was but a local development instigated by geographical and environmental conditions (cf. Barocelli 1942: 136) of “una diretta emanazione” of the Apennine Culture (Laviosa-Zambotti 1937: 54): rather than Terramare being a great influencer, it would instead have been a local development in the North of a culture further South.

After the era of Fascism, archaeological research on the Italian peninsula continued to develop, gradually at first (especially with the work of Massimo Pallottino beginning in the 1940s, then Salvatore Puglisi and Renato Peroni beginning in the 1950s), with methodological and ideological innovations throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s when Processualist methodology began to be taken up (Guidi 2010: 17-18). Several additional hypotheses as to the dating of the arrival and archaeological cultural affiliation of the first Italic speakers in Italy have been proposed, summarized in archaeological chronological order.

7.1 Single Origin Theories

7.1.1 The Copper Age Cultures

The transition from the Neolithic to the Copper Age (Chalcolithic/Eneolithic) in Italy (ca. 3600 to 2200 calBCE) is marked by the intensification of the use of copper and the appearance of three archaeological cultures: Remedello (North), Rinaldone (central), and Gaudio (Southwest)(Baldi 2002: 98, Dolfini 2014: 477).⁵⁵⁷ Metalwork was theorized to have been brought to these areas by a nomadic warrior elite (e.g. Laviosa Zambotti 1939: 58, Puglisi 1959: 89-90, Trump 1966: 69), possibly Indo-European speaking due to the appearance of e.g. horses and battle axes at this time (e.g. Laviosa Zambotti 1949, discussion in Mallory 1989: 93). However, even if the technology of copper metallurgy may have been introduced from abroad (cf. Dolfini 2014), others are not convinced that there is strong enough evidence for its introduction being accompanied by a migration (Barfield 1971: 59, Barker 1981: 81-9, Mallory & Adams 1997: 318). More definitively as regards a possible Indo-European connection, genetic sequencing of individuals from Remedello (Allentoft et al. 2015, Mathieson et al. 2015) and Rinaldone/Gaudio (Antonio et al. 2019) contexts do not show steppe ancestry, indicating that they predate the arrival of Indo-European speakers.

7.1.2 Side Note: Bell Beaker and Polada Cultures

Bell Beaker cultural material (potsherds) appears in over 80 North Italian Copper Age sites (Trump 1966: 70, Nicolis 2001: 208, Dal Santo et al. 2014), and is found in more limited amounts at least as far South as Campania (Aurino & De Falco 2022).⁵⁵⁸ Three

⁵⁵⁷ Dolfini also includes a fourth culture, Laterza (Southeast).

⁵⁵⁸ It is also found in Sicily, but here its development is separate from the Italian mainland (Aurino & De Falco 2022: 211).

Bell Beaker burials have been found near to the cemetery at Remedello, culturally distinct from the cemetery burials (Barfield 1971: 62), along with perhaps a few other sites (Nicolis 2001: 209). As noted above (§6.3.2), it is in one of these three burials that some of the earliest steppe ancestry in Italy is found (Saupe et al. 2021). This nicely parallels the conclusion of e.g. Barfield (2001: 516), on the basis of a combination of new (Bell Beaker) and persistent (Copper Age) lithic forms, that the appearance of Bell Beaker material in Italy involved some population movement but also intensive interaction with already present populations. Thus the Bell Beaker culture seems to be the earliest possible candidate for a bearer of Proto-Italic into Italy. But compared to later possibilities, there seems to be simply too little Bell Beaker material to represent the arrival of a language that would dominate the peninsula. Thus, even if the bringers of Bell Beaker materials were Indo-European speaking (cf. Gallay 2001: 54-6, Waldman & Mason 2006: 453-4), and even if their languages persisted, it seems quite likely that “more evolved forms of Indo-European, including Italic, may have spread across Italy at a later stage” (Posth et al. 2021, cf. Stifter *forthc.* on a similar situation Celtic regions).

Nor has the Polada Culture (ca. 2200-1500 BCE) been proposed as a vector of the Italic languages, at least not in isolation. It does feature in some of the multiple-origin theories below (§7.2). The Polada sites are characterized by pile-dwellings (*palafitte*) at the edges of lakes and watercourses. The culture is often connected to pile-dwelling cultures in Alpine Switzerland and Austria/Southern Germany (though confirmation of the connection is still elusive, cf. Marzatico 2004), from which it would represent a “numerically weak infiltration” (wording from Pulgram 1958: 108-9, cf. also Watmough 1937: 210-11, Bietti Sestieri 2010: 21). On the basis of this trickle, like the case for Bell Beaker, some exclude that the Polada Culture individuals could have spoken Indo-European languages (Palmer 1954: 34, Kaschnitz-Weinberg 1954: 343-6, Devoto 1962: 382-5). A clear continuation with the previous Neolithic Lagozza culture of the area has been claimed (e.g. Barfield 1971: 68, 70), though it is no longer supported by e.g. Fasani (2002: 108), who emphasizes that the style of pile-dwelling and the material culture is not comparable to Neolithic geographic predecessors. Instead, the sudden appearance of the Polada over a relatively large area contemporaneously, interrupting the development of Bell Beaker sites where it appears (though Bell Beaker elements remain visible in the grave goods related to archery [Barfield 1971: 77] and ceramics [Gallay 2001: 47, Nicolis 2001: 212, 218]), suggests the arrival of a new people; whence they originated remains unknown (Fasani 2002: 108, Dal Santo et al. 2014: 225). Their technologically advanced bronze work attests to contact with cultures north of the Alps (Barfield 1971: 77 mentions specifically Únětice) and the *Brotlaibidole/tavolette enigmatiche* attest to contact with the Carpathian basin (Barfield 1971: 74-5, 77; Fasani 2002: 109, Cardarelli 2009: 458, Cavazzuti et al. 2022: 46).

7.1.3 Terramare Culture

The Terramare Culture existed from ca. 1650-1150 BCE (Middle to Late Bronze Age) in

the Po Valley, principally in the modern provinces of Cremona, Mantua, and Verona as well as south of the Po River in the historical region of Emilia. Terramare settlements were quadrangular, surrounded by an embankment and ditch into which a natural watercourse was diverted. The houses were raised on piles, even when the settlement was on fully dry land, in a grid-like network of perpendicular streets. In the beginning of the Terramare period, the settlements rarely exceeded 2 hectares, but by the end of their existence a few reached sizes of up to 20 hectares. The name of the culture comes from the *terra marna*, thick deposits of fertile soil produced by piled up refuse (Cardarelli 2009: 449-51).

The idea that the Terramare Culture represents the first Italic speakers goes back at least to Gaetano Chierici⁵⁵⁹ (Chierici 1871, 1881: 69), who conceptualized similarities between the wall and ditch of the Terramare sites and the ditch and *agger* in Roman city founding as well as between the grid structure of Terramare roads and the *cardō* and *decumānus* of Roman military camps. As mentioned above, Pigorini was inspired to develop the idea further (e.g. Pigorini 1903). Another early proponent of the idea was Wolfgang Helbig (e.g. Helbig 1879). Many would come to disagree with the idea, and a crucial part of the debate centered on whether a foreign origin could actually be established for the Terramare. Some claimed that similar settlement types and ceramics found in the Danube valley, especially Hungary, meant that this was where the Terramare Culture began (e.g. Peet 1909: 505-7, Wilke 1919: 177, Kaschnitz-Weinberg 1954: 344, Trump 1966: 128). Others disagreed that the Terramare materials were related or even similar to those discovered at the Hungarian site of Tószeg (Leopold 1929: 26-7, Rellini 1933: 93-4). V. Gordon Childe agreed that the identification of Tószeg as a *terramare* was baseless, but nevertheless argued that the Terramare Culture represented an invasion from across the Alps, descended from “an as yet undiscovered prototype developing perhaps in Carinthia or Western Hungary” (Childe 1925: 269), with it being “not therefore impossible that Tószeg, or some more westerly stations of the same type, may contain the germs from which the *Terramar[e]* culture of Italy sprang” (Childe 1929: 265). Modern research indeed points in this direction. Around 1500 BCE, the population of the Terramare region suddenly drastically increased (as did human activity like deforestation), too quickly to have been due to demographic growth alone and instead suggesting something akin to a colonization (Cardarelli 2009: 450, 458-9). This corresponds to the same time at which the Tell cultures of the Hungarian plain were collapsing. Noting a similarity in the organization of the Tell settlements and the Terramare, Kristiansen (2018: 118) suggests that inhabitants of the Tells migrated to the Po Valley and became incorporated into the Terramare Culture (cf. earlier Barfield 1971: 95).

Around 1150 BCE, the region of the Terramare settlements was abandoned, perhaps due to a combination of overpopulation, climatic stress, and the political turmoil that resulted

⁵⁵⁹ The archaeologist and priest who lived from 1819-1886, not the painter who lived from 1838-1920.

in the collapse of the Bronze Age elsewhere around the Mediterranean (Cardarelli 2009: 465-72).

7.1.4 Apennine Culture

The Apennine Culture is *sensu stricto* the technological complex, especially the ceramic assemblage, of Central and Southern Italy in the 15th and 14th centuries BCE. *Sensu lato* it is sometimes extended to include the prior 16th c. Proto-Apennine and Grotta Nuova as well as the subsequent 13th c. Sub-Apennine facies. Earlier studies of material and settlements concluded that the Apennine Culture represented a nomadic pastoralist economy, with seasonal grazing lands connected through a series of seasonal camps (Puglisi 1959, Trump 1966: 109-113, Barker 1975). The perceived unity and in part a nationalistic desire to reduce the importance of external influences led Rellini (1933: 94) to write, “I have come to believe that in the Apennine peoples, having reached the advanced stage of their civilization, we can recognize the *italici* or, if you will, the *proto-italici*.”⁵⁶⁰ He was not the only one to consider that the pastoralist Apennine peoples represented the origins of the Italic *koine* (cf. Puglisi 1959: 96, Barker 1975: 157-8). But his position of an autochthonous Apennine Culture was difficult to reconcile with the fact of the Italic languages’ Indo-European pedigree (cf. Pallottino 1975: 40).

More recent research has shown the Apennine Bronze Age to have been home to a mixed economy of nomadic pastoralism, stock-breeding, and agriculture (Östenberg 1967, Barker 1981: 90-5, Lewthwaite 1981, Albarella 1999: 326-7, Skeates et al. 2021). That some of the Apennine Bronze Age population may have been Indo-European speaking is in fact not impossible. Saupe et al. (2021) confirmed the presence of steppe ancestry in Central Italy by 1600 BCE, and at least one of the sites where it was present (Grotta Regina Margherita) has Middle Bronze Age potsherds assignable to Grotta Nuova and Proto-Apennine facies (Skeates et al. 2021). An additional point of interest is contact between Apennine sites and the Mycenaean civilization. Trade networks have long existed in the Mediterranean, and Mycenaeans came to play an important role in transmitting influences between East and West (Kristiansen 1998: 360), attested in part by the Mycenaean pottery in Apennine sites (e.g. Puglisi 1959: 92-3, Trump 1966: 124-7) and in the Po Valley in the 12th c. BCE (Smith 1996: 25).

7.1.5 Urnfield Horizon

The Urnfield Culture represents the adoption of a series of burial practices (deposition of cremated remains into an urn/container, placement of the urn into a pit, frequent exclusion or reduction of grave goods, esp. weapons) that first arose in central Hungary ca. 2000 BCE. From around 1300 BCE, the Urnfield burial package spread over wide swaths of Central Europe (Cavazzuti et al. 2021), where it gave rise to or at least strongly influenced, among others, the Hallstatt Culture of Western and Central Europe (ca. 1200

⁵⁶⁰ “Ho creduto che nelle genti apenniniche, pervenute alla fase progredita della loro civiltà, si possano riconoscere gli ‘italici’ o se si vuole i ‘protoitalici’.”

to 500 BCE), the Canegrate Culture of Northwest Italy (ca. 1300 to 1200 BCE), and the Proto-Villanova Culture in the whole rest of Italy (ca. 1200 to 1000 BCE).⁵⁶¹ The Proto-Villanova culture underwent regionalization at the beginning of the Iron Age (e.g. Pallottino 1975: 45) into the Este Culture in Veneto (ca. 1000 BCE to 1st c. BCE, famous for its *situlae*), the Villanova Culture of (principally) Tuscany (ca. 900 to 700 BCE and regarded as the earliest phase of the Etruscans),⁵⁶² and the Latial Culture in historic *Latium* (ca. 900 to 700 BCE, famous for its hut urns). Early Latial Culture necropoleis are very similar to those of late the Proto-Villanova in Etruria. While it would continue to be influenced by the Villanova Culture, it would also develop in its own independent ways (Poucet 1985: 21-2).

Because the Latial Culture extends into the historical period and the area of Rome, many have postulated that it was it was the (Proto-)Villanovans, offshoots of the Urnfield tradition, that represented the appearance of the Italic languages in Italy. Gimbutas (1965: 340) proposed that Proto-Italic was spoken in one of the populations of the Urnfield Culture. Von Mehrlhart (1942: 65-66) considered it possible that all Italic groups had entered Italy as Proto-Villanovans, perhaps Indo-Europeanizing the Terramare Culture along the way (cf. similarly Freu 1989: 28, who proposed that the Terramare Culture may have spoken an older dialect of Indo-European). Kaschnitz-Weinberg (1954: 354-6) suggested that the regionalization of the Proto-Villanova Culture was due to the influence of a autochthonous Bronze Age Mediterranean substrate, perhaps in some places strong enough to outcompete non-Italic Indo-European dialects. That the Italic languages were brought into Italy with Proto-Villanova is further supported by e.g. Sergeant (1995: 418), Gamkrelidze and Ivanov (1995 I: 845), and Anthony (2007: 367).

It was with the arrival of the Urnfield tradition (already in some Terramare sites) that an interesting pattern appeared on the peninsula, one which has led to a series of multiple origin theories for the Italic languages. Cremation burial as a rite was introduced to the Italian peninsula. But it was not ubiquitous. Instead, it was restricted to the North, Latium, Tuscany, and part of Umbria. In the rest of Italy southwards, inhumation was the exclusive funerary practice (Pallottino 1975: 45, cf. von Duhn 1924 on the *verbrennenden* and *bestattenden Italiker*). Several scholars have interpreted these as representing different migrations of peoples, leading to theories involving multiple origins for the Italic languages in Italy.

⁵⁶¹ The latter term was coined by Patroni (1937).

⁵⁶² This is of course potentially problematic for theories that have Italic languages arrive with Proto-Villanova: the descendant populations spoke both Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages (i.e. Etruscan, cf. Mallory 1989: 92-3, Mallory & Adams 1997: 318 on this being a reason to doubt a Villanova origin of Italic). Several possible explanations present themselves: 1) If the Proto-Villanova Culture arrived with a migration, it may have been a multi-ethnic confederation. 2) The Proto-Villanova Culture may have spread into an Italy where Etruscan was already spoken. 3) The Etruscan language may have arrived sometime after the spread of Proto-Villanova.

7.2 Multiple Origin Theories and the Question of Proto-Italic Unity

The geographical position of the Italian peninsula is such that it can be entered relatively directly from the North over the Alps by land or from the East over the Adriatic by sea. There are archaeological connections in both directions (cf. Mallory 1989: 91-2, Recchia 2020 on trans-Adriatic links). Thus Italic languages have been envisioned as arriving from across the Alps (Meyer 1893: 499; von Duhn 1924: 116-17, 439; Ebert 1927: Tafel 103; Watmough 1937: 118), across the Adriatic (Meyer 1909: 792, Patroni 1939: 214-15, Pallottino 1975: 56), or, especially given the possibility of a non-monolithic Italic, both (Palmer 1954: 36-9; Devoto 1962, 1974).⁵⁶³

Early works on Indo-European (e.g. Aufrecht & Kirchhoff 1849: 11, Mommsen 1850: 101, Brugmann 1886: 8-9) took for granted that the Latin (or Latino-Faliscan) and Sabellic (or Osco-Umbrian) language families descended from a Proto-Italic node intermediate to Proto-Indo-European. Walde (1917) challenged this assumption by arguing that a more accurate grouping comprised Proto-Gaelo⁵⁶⁴-Latin and Proto-Sabellic (alongside Proto-Brittonic). A combination of archaeological (the two different burial practices) and linguistic arguments led the idea to develop, rather rapidly, that Latin and Sabellic were independent Indo-European daughter languages. Most proponents of this idea argued that they had converged after migrating into a geographic Italic *Sprachbund* (e.g. Kretschmer 1923a: 105; Devoto 1929: esp. 239-40; Devoto 1931: 51-2; Pisani 1932: 88;⁵⁶⁵ Devoto 1940: 54, 59-69;⁵⁶⁶ Kretschmer 1943: 136-7). Muller (1926: v) had suggested that, if there ever had been a Proto-Italic period, it had been well before the arrival of Latin and Sabellic in Italy. And Ribezzo (1932) proposed that Latin and Sabellic had earlier belonged to a dialect continuum, and that Sabellic diverged due to contact with other languages.

Despite this, the Italic branch continued to be accepted without any mention of question in several handbooks (e.g. Hirt 1927: 20, Buck 1928:2-3, Buck 1933: 23-5, Bloomfield 1933: 61⁵⁶⁷). A brief recognition of the controversy was made by Meillet (1948: 48,

⁵⁶³ Similarly, there are those who are explicitly undecided and consider both options possible (Devoto 1940: 5, Pulgram 1958: 157 [though he prefers the Alpine direction on pg. 136], Mallory 1989: 91-2).

⁵⁶⁴ i.e. Goidelic.

⁵⁶⁵ “Besides the fact that I do not believe in a common Italic at all, it would be time to frankly declare that there has never existed an *Urgriechisch* from which the Greek dialects are derived, an *Urbaltisch-slavisch*, father of the various Baltic and Slavic languages, an *Urgermanisch*, *Urkeltisch*, *Urarisch* in similar relationship with the Germanic, Celtic, and Aryan languages. There have existed, and exist, and will always exist territorial zones...” (“Astraendo dal fatto, che io non credo affatto ad un italico commune, sarebbe ora di dichiarare francamente che non è mai esistito un *Urgriechisch* donde siano derivati i dialetti greci, un *Urbaltisch-slavisch* padre delle varie lingue baltiche e slave, un *Urgermanisch*, un *Urkeltisch*, un *Urarisch* in simile realzione colle lingue germaniche, celtiche, arie. Sono esistite, ed esistono, e sempre esisteranno zone territoriali...”).

⁵⁶⁶ Often cited is his quip, “Le affinità fra latino e osco-umbro sono recenti, le diversità sono antiche” (pg. 67).

⁵⁶⁷ Pagination from the 1984 reprint, (perhaps) not the 1933 first edition.

“L’unité «italique»...est évidente, bien qu’elle ait été récemment contestée”), followed by a full defense of Proto-Italic (pp. 53-72). Jones (1950: 61-2) used Meillet’s own logic against him: after showing in *Dialectes indo-européens* that Indic and Iranian were so similar that passages of Avestan could be transformed into valid Vedic through the application of sound laws, he (Meillet) nevertheless concluded that Indic and Iranian were separate families that fused due to contact. “It is then clear,” Jones (1950: 62) wrote,

that the hypothesis of a common Italic language, parent of Latin and of Osco-Umbrian is not immediately proved by the existence of a few innovations common and peculiar to Latin and Osco-Umbrian, nor on the other hand is it wrecked if some isoglosses of Indo-European date be discovered separating them. An attempt must be made to weigh the *prima facie* evidence for and against unity and to strike a balance.

Touching on the infuriating difficulty of differentiating between archaism and common innovation, he further wrote, “With the exception of obvious borrowings of late date, almost any common feature peculiar to Latin and Osco-Umbrian may, taken in isolation, be regarded as evidence for their earlier unity or as a dialect phenomenon of Indo-European date or again as a product of the period of contact in Italy” (pg. 66). Like those before him and Beeler (1952) after him, Jones (1950) rejected Proto-Italic because he did not see the shared innovations of Latin and Sabellic as numerous, non-trivial, and exclusive enough to reject positions like that of Ribezzo: separate dialects in close proximity whose closeness to each other waxed and waned. Those who supported Proto-Italic (cf. at this time Martinet 1950: 188, Watmough 1951: 82⁵⁶⁸) on the other hand did.

The back-and-forth would continue for decades. Those who rejected Italic unity factored this into their ideas on the Indo-Europeanization of Italy. Devoto (1940: 17) argued that Latin was more archaic than Sabellic and proposed that it had occupied a place on the Western margin of the expanding Indo-European languages. Thus it had arrived in the Italian peninsula first and was subsequently pushed aside and partially overlain by Sabellic (pp. 59-61). He considered an interim homeland to be in Central Germany, but was at first not sure of the details, writing “The two endpoints Thuringia and Rome were joined by a line, how twisted and in what ways we cannot say”⁵⁶⁹ (pg. 5). Pallottino (1940: 28-30) expanded on the idea by pointing out that the trench graves (*Fossakultur*, coined by Säflund 1938: 23, in Italian *cultura della tombe a fossa*) of Italy’s South and Southwest potentially matched the exact area in which Proto-Latin would have been spoken.

⁵⁶⁸ His credibility on linguistic topics is perhaps bolstered by his willingness to admit a less than perfect competence in biology: “The whole discussion reminds me most vividly of a spider, spinning threads out of its belly—or wherever spiders spin threads from.”

⁵⁶⁹ “I due punti estremi Turingia e Roma sono stati congiunti da una linea, quanto e come totuosa non sappiamo dire.”

Devoto (1962: 383-4) accepted the suggestion and revised his hypothesis: Proto-Latin had spread from across the Adriatic to Apulia and fanned out westwards. Other inhuming cultures representing Sabellic, with links to the Danube, spread from the area around Novilara southwards, pushing Proto-Latin further into the West. A third wave of Indo-Europeanization entered Northern Italy as the Terramare Culture, continuing on through the Urnfield horizon, resulting in the languages Lepontic and Venetic and a third language, spreading with the Proto-Villanova culture, which left no trace. Devoto (1974: 51) refined the theory even further by conceiving of a Proto-Latin-Venetic language. It had split up North of the Alps, with Proto-Latin travelling through the Balkans to enter Italy from the Southeast. He again saw Sabellic (this time explicitly travelling across the Adriatic) pushing Proto-Latin to the West and Venetic coming in from the Northeast. His ideological bent culminated in his discussion of the mechanisms behind the language shifts. "The Mediterranean world, including the Italian one, was superior in civilization; an Indo-European cultural conquest is unthinkable,"⁵⁷⁰ he wrote.

This force could only have been social. The nuclei of Indo-European linguistic tradition...maintained their compactness [and] constituted a force of attraction and comparison for the previous inhabitants: first a source of attraction and curiosity, then models of a psychologically urban life, then a solid, fixed point of reference in the changing of daily life, something comparable to a "market". Only in this way is it possible to effect such a powerful and lasting accomplishment, and at the same time an invisible one"⁵⁷¹ (Devoto 1974: 46).

Palmer (1954: 11) criticized Devoto's conceptualization of the convergence of Latin and Sabellic as "too remote from the realities of actual speech" but in general agreed with the rejection of Italic unity. He saw Latin and Sabellic as both ultimately originating in Central Europe, with Latin having entered Italy from the North as cremators and being cut off by Sabellic entering from across the Adriatic as inhumers. Venetic, as a separate branch originally closely related to Latin, entered into the North (Palmer 1954: 36-43). The same year, Pisani (1954: 56) quite patronizingly lamented that there were still "hervorragende Anhänger des alten Glaubens" who saw language as an organism that can only change via sound laws and that, "wenn sie sich daher vor zwei ähnlichen Sprachen befinden, so können diese Gelehrten nur an eine Muttersprache denken, davon sich jene unabhängig entwickelt haben."⁵⁷²

⁵⁷⁰ "Il mondo mediterraneo, ivi compreso quello italiano, era superiore per civiltà; una conquista culturale indeuropea è impensabile."

⁵⁷¹ "Questa forza non poteva essere che sociale. I nuclei di tradizione linguistica indeuropea...mantenevano la loro compattezza [e] costituivano una forza di attrazione e confronto per gli indigeni: prima, fonte di attrazione e curiosità, poi modelli di vita psicologicamente urbana, poi solido, fisso punto di riferimento nel mutare della vita quotidiana, qualcosa di paragonabile a un "mercato". Solo in questo modo è possibile rendersi conto di una affermazione così potente e durevole, e nel tempo stesso invisibile."

⁵⁷² Astoundingly, he continued, "Sie [diese Gelehrten] sind immer bereit zu schwören, dass das Englische eine germanische Sprache ist, ohne darum zu kümmern, wie viel französisches—und nicht nur

Pulgram (1958: 217-18) did not make his position on the existence of Proto-Italic entirely clear, but he envisioned the Indo-European languages of Italy trickling into the peninsula from a source in the Danube Valley as the Polada, Terramare, and Villanova Cultures (pp. 115-15, 120-21). He criticized the idea of the cremating vs. inhuming Italici, suggesting that only cremation was introduced by Indo-European speakers (pp. 220-21).⁵⁷³

Polomé (1972: 59-64) supported a separate Latin and Sabellic as well as a multi-wave migration to Italy based on shared innovations in the political vocabulary between Sabellic and Germanic (e.g. lack of the inherited lexeme *rēx*), suggesting that Latin left before Sabellic.

Pallottino (1975) marks a relatively drastic shift from the variations on a theme so far, undoubtedly because he was informed by a much more up-to-date understanding of the archaeological situation, specifically the fact that Proto-Villanova cultural materials had in fact spread over the whole of the Italian peninsula, with regional differences—including cremation vs. inhumation—developing in response to this (pg. 45). He maintained that the linguistic situation of ancient Italy “is a far cry from the over-simple ‘Italic’ unity conceived by scholars in the past” (pg. 53), and still supported the idea that Latin was pushed into the West by incoming Sabellic (pp. 54-5). But he now argued that 1) all Indo-European languages had entered Italy from across the Adriatic, given that the position of the non-IE languages of Italy cuts them off from the North and 2) that Indo-Europeanization had started well before cremation, already with the Neolithic Square-Mouthed Vases Culture (pp. 58-9). Venetic looks close to Latin (cf. Devoto’s 1974: 51 Proto-Latin-Venetic) simply because it was in contact with the same non-IE languages as it (pg. 55).⁵⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Piazza et al. (1988: 210-11) still seemed to prefer a multi-Italic trickling of tribes into Italy as cremators and later inhumers.

Though Rix (1983: 95, 104) subtly yet negatively assessed the ability to reconstruct a Proto-Italic that was significantly different from Proto-Indo-European, he would change his mind, emphasizing e.g. that the existence of an Italic cultural *koiné* could explain *how* linguistic borrowings occurred, but it is not proof *that* they occurred; each potential case of borrowing must have its own valid, linguistic proof (Rix 1994). Szemerényi (1991:

französisches—darin zusammen geflossen ist...” For someone who is meant to be arguing that Latin and Sabellic were always two separate branches that influenced each other, one would think he might cherish the case of French influence on English as an apt parallel. Instead he uses it to reject the Neogrammarian model. No amount of French influence on English can erase its historically documented development from clearly Germanic Old English to heavily Romance-influenced Present Day English.

⁵⁷³ He further proposed that iron technology was introduced to Italy both from the North, with these cremating Indo-European speakers, as well as from the South, with non-Indo-European Mediterranean peoples who practiced inhumation like the already-present inhabitants of Italy (pp. 121-3).

⁵⁷⁴ He also suggested (pp. 59-60) that Indo-Europeanization may actually have spread from the culturally advanced centers in the South to the more backwater North, but “we have no reliable evidence, and speculation is therefore pointless.”

682-5), based on an analysis of the treatment of the inherited voiced aspirates, had proposed that all the Italic languages had spent time in the region of the Danube, in contact with Greek. He then had a Sichel-Ausonian (cf. §1.2.1.2.3.1) group travel down the West of Italy to reach Sicily, with Proto-Latin moving in behind it. Sabellic would have been displaced and sent into Italy by the Illyrian migrations. Rix (1994: 24-5), though he admitted it was based on little more than linguistic possibility, proposed a similar idea (cf. also the much earlier position of Muller 1926). He saw Proto-Italic (freshly defended by him) as having been spoken in the Sava-Drava watersheds. Venetic left first, then Latin, and finally Sabellic.

Despite some assessments of the Proto-Italic school as outdated, despite e.g. Silvestri (1998) still rejecting Proto-Italic (using “Italic” to refer exclusively to Sabellic) and Clackson and Horrocks (2007: 65-74) considering the evidence cautiously “vague”, the model of a reconstructible Proto-Italic is still held by the majority of scholars today (cf. Poccetti 2017, definitively Weiss 2022b: 116-22). The question is not if Latin and Sabellic share innovations, but rather if they share *enough* to warrant classification as a subgroup (cf. similarly for Italo-Celtic, §4.3.2.3.2). The debate is thus sustained by the fact that an answer to such a question is necessarily subjective. I side with those who consider the body of evidence to be large enough (the gerundive, the treatment of the voiced aspirates, the imperfect subjunctive in **-sē-*, the imperfect indicative in **-fā-*,⁵⁷⁵ etc.). Furthermore, the archaeological details are even better understood today. Thus many of the archaeological scenarios proposed in the literature are impossible, and others can be reevaluated from the better-informed perspective of today’s scholarship (see §8.2).

⁵⁷⁵ Following the Proto-Italic notation I have been using in the linguistic section.

