

ON SOME VIEWPOINTS OF RICHARD INDREKO

Ago Künnap

University of Tartu

Abstract. Estonian archaeologists deny their role in enhancing the theory about the coming of Uralians from the east. They accuse the Uralic linguists who proposed such a way of migration for the Uralic-speaking populations. I entirely agree with Estonian archaeologists in this matter.

It is quite clear that Indreko's work, published in 1948, cannot be expected to tally with the newest modern viewpoints.

Based on the results of modern research into human genetics we can easily discard Lapps from among Mongoloids. Samoyeds, however, extending as far as the eastern coast of the White Sea are undoubtedly non-Indo-Europoid Mongoloids. For clarifying the Mongoloid origin of Samoyeds, it is quite suitable to turn to Indreko's position about their migration from Asia westwards. Samoyeds are rather the former Mongoloid speakers of the Paleosiberian languages who have adopted the Uralic language form. It is clear today that the interpretation of part of Estonian archaeological bone findings as Mongoloid is erroneous: these are barely pseudo-Mongoloid.

Indreko's viewpoints undoubtedly back the hypothesis about a very early and extensive spread of Uralic languages in northward Europe.

At the outset, permit me as a linguist to cite a far more competent person in archaeology, namely a well-known Estonian archaeologist Valter Lang,

“Already in 1948 Richard Indreko claimed that neither archaeological nor linguistic materials make it possible to indicate a more expansive migration from the eastward forest belt to the shores of the Baltic Sea as was supposed by E. N. Setälä's theory about the language tree (Indreko 1948[b – A.K.]:406–409). Based on his opinion, the first post-Ice Age inhabitants in the area between the Baltic Sea and the Urals were Finno-Ugrians of the Europoid anthropological type, having moved there in the wake of the receding ice sheet from southern and western Europe. In connection with the transition to farming subsistence Finno-Ugric cultural groups developed; yet they were separated from one another by sparsely inhabited zones. Each group of that kind had separate and differing-in-directions cultural contacts with their (Indo-European) neighbours which in the long run brought about the development of

differences both in the material culture as well as in the language. (It sounds a very modern contact theory, doesn't it?) Indreko's standpoint did not find any expression in the research of ethnogenesis in Estonia, though.

Hence, the "new" theory of ethnogenesis seems to contain more by-gone old than really new aspects. Nevertheless, Wiik passes Indreko considerably, supposing that Finno-Ugric languages were once spoken also in Scandinavia and Germany. Unlike Indreko, the conclusion now is first of all based on linguistics, on the substratum found in northward Indo-European languages and which can possibly be explained by the Finno-Ugric influence. This is a hypothesis, still expecting to be proved in detail." (Lang 1997:74–75.)

I fully concur with Lang's view. Estonian archaeologists deny their role in enhancing the theory about the coming of Uralians from the east. They say they have never seen any routes of population migration to the Baltic Sea area from east. They accuse the Uralic linguists who proposed such a way of migration for the Uralic-speaking populations. Estonian archaeologists say: we have always seen the south-eastern or southern or south-western sources of today's Estonian population. And we have never said anything about languages: our archaeological findings do not speak. (See also Künnap 1998:112) I support this point of view of the Estonian archaeologists as well.

Reading Indreko's work, dedicated particularly to the primary settlement area of Finno-Ugric peoples (Indreko 1948a), only very little can be added.

First of all, it is quite clear that a work, published in 1948, cannot be expected to tally with the newest modern viewpoints. I would still touch upon a few single cases in Indreko's above-mentioned work.

As a Samoyedologist, I will start with the Samoyeds. Indreko wrote that before the end of the Palaeolithic period already part of the autochthons of Europe migrated via southern Russia to Asia where at about the upper course of the River Yenisei, in the centre of the Asian Palaeolithic culture, they came into contact with the Mongol autochthons and intermingled with them. A migration also started from this centre, first of all northwards and later westwards along the coast of the Arctic Ocean, reaching Scandinavia in the Mesolithic period. The mingled population, reaching northern Europe, again intermingled with Europeans in the course of thousands of years and so formed a mixed race known today as Lapps and Samoyeds.

Based on the results of modern research into human genetics we can easily discard Lapps from among them as non-Mongoloid Europoids (see Villems et al. 1998:185–186). However, Samoyeds, extending up to the eastern coast of the White Sea are undoubtedly non-Indo-Europoid Mongoloids. For clarifying the Mongoloid origin of Samoyeds it is quite suitable to turn to Indreko's position about their migration from Asia westwards, although we can question if the starting point for their migration was necessarily the upper course of the Yenisei (a number of researchers consider this area as the ancient home of Samoyeds, see e.g. Helinski 1997:17–18). Samoyeds are rather the former Mongoloid speakers of the Paleosiberian languages who have adopted the Uralic language form. The representatives of the speakers of the above-mentioned languages are the Chukchi,

living mainly in north-eastern Asia, Eskimos and others. Certainly, it is not easy to explain the existence of the Samoyed-speaking Mongoloids in the north of north-eastern Europe and so Indreko may have been quite right. Although the appearance of the Mongoloids in the area under observation was undoubtedly a complicated process since in Samoyed languages one can find transparent, conceivable common features with the languages of their present-day westward neighbours – Lapps and Finnic-speaking peoples (see Künnap 1998:90–94), whereas the age of the common features is still far from clear.

According to Indreko a part of archaeological bone findings from the Oleni Island of Lake Onega testifies to the one-time existence of the mixed population, referred to above. Regrettably, I do not know anything in detail about these findings, but it may easily be the same error made in the case of similar bone findings on the Estonian territory. Namely, it is now clear that the interpretation of part of Estonian archaeological bone findings as Mongoloid is erroneous: these are maybe no more than pseudo-Mongoloid, i.e. somewhat similar to Mongoloid, but without any actual Mongoloid impact. (See particularly Heapost 1998, Niskanen 1998.)

There is, alas, nothing to be found in Indreko's work that would inspire me to dwell upon the linguistic subject (besides the little said above) any longer. One can only admit that his viewpoints undoubtedly back the hypothesis about a very early and extensive spread of Uralic languages in northward Europe, and give no ground for suppositions about a relatively recent spread of these languages from east to west.

Address:

Ago Künnap
Chair of Uralic Languages
University of Tartu
Ülikooli 18, Tartu,
51014 Estonia

Ph: +372 7 375 221

Fax: +372 7 375 222

E-mail: kunnap@ut.ee

Rereferences

- Heapost, Leiu (1998) "Eestlaste antropoloogias, keelest ja geenidest". *Akadeemia* 10, 2147–2165.
- Helimski, Eugen (1997) "Die matorische Sprache. Wörterverzeichnis – Grundzüge der Grammatik – Sprachgeschichte. Unter Mitarbeit von Beáta Nagy". In *Studia uralo-altaica* 41. Szeged.
- Indreko, Richard (1948) "Origin and Area of Settlement of the Fenno-Ugrian Peoples". In *Science in Exile. Publications of the Scientific Quarterly "Scholar"*, 1, 3–24, Heidelberg.
- Indreko, Richard (1948a) "Die Mittlere Steinzeit in Estland". In *Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademiens Handlingar, del 66*, Stockholm.
- Künnap, Ago (1998b) *Breakthrough in Present-Day Uralistics*. Tartu: University of Tartu. Chair of Uralic Languages.

- Lang, Valter (1997) "On the Roots of Northern Europeans. Some Thoughts from the International Symposium Dedicated to the Ethnogenesis of Northern European Peoples in Turku 29 May to 1 June 1997". In *Fenno-Ugristica 21. Western and Eastern Contact Areas of Uralic Languages*. Ago Künnap, ed. 72–79, Tartu: University of Tartu. Division of Uralic Languages.
- Niskanen, Markku (1998) "Itämerensuomalaisten alkuperä fyysisen antropologian näkökulmasta". (Manuscript.)
- Villems, Richard, Maarja Adojaan, Toomas Kivisild, Ene Metspalu, Jüri Parik, Gerli Pielberg, Siiri Rootsi, Kristiina Tambets, Helle-Viivi Tolk (1998) "Reconstruction of Maternal Lineages of Finno-Ugric Speaking People and Some Remarks on Their Paternal Inheritance". In *The Roots of Peoples and Languages of Northern Eurasia I. Turku 30.5.–1.6.1997*. Kyösti Julku & Kalevi Wiik, eds. 180–200, Turku.