

Eco - Visszhang

12 February 2009

ETRUSCANS AND HUNGARIANS

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Etruscan is an ancient language of the Italian Peninsula, now extinct. Reading the Etruscan alphabet is not a major problem for the experts, who have deciphered a large corpus of inscriptions. Understanding the language, however, is a different issue. A



limited list of words and a series of grammatical and phonological features have been identified, but, on the whole, Etruscan remains a bit of a mystery. And also a **language isolate**, because no clear connections have been found between Etruscan and any other known language. In 2003, the Italian linguist **Mario Alinei** published a book with a new theory about the origin of Etruscan, linking it to Old Hungarian (Alinei, Mario. *Etrusco: una forma arcaica di ungherese*. Bologna, Il Mulino, 2003; also translated into Hungarian: Alinei, Mario. *Osi kapocs: A magyar-etruszk nyelvrokonság*. Kladó, Budapest, 2005).

According to Alinei, the Etruscans were an intrusive elite that expanded from the Carpatho-Danubian area to northern Italy at around 1000 BC, spreading over a territory which was already (and still is) Italic-speaking. During the Bronze Age, the Carpathian Basin the most important metallurgic centre in Europe. This is where the common ancestor of Old Hungarian and Etruscan was spoken, a language belonging to the Uralic group but highly influenced by Turkic elements through a process of acculturation. Needless to say, this theory can only be understood in the context of the **Paleolithic Continuity Theory**, with its revised chronology for European languages and an innovative, multidisciplinary approach to the study of languages in prehistory. Alinei's book is 481 pages long and it includes an impressive amount of evidence from various disciplines, especially from archaeology, to support his theory, which is inevitably bound to be controversial, because it challenges both the linguistic establishment and the historical tradition that sees the arrival of the Magyars at their current territory as a result of Arpad's conquest in 895 AD. Obviously, the only way to understand the full extent of Alinei's theory is by reading the book itself. Unfortunately, it has not yet been translated into English. On [this web-page](#), you can find a summary of the book written in English, and also some additional material. It is a useful summary, but I must say I don't like it much, because the main points of the theory are presented without a clear context, and the layout is rather inelegant. However, one of the good things about this summary is that it provides some practical examples adapted from Alinei's book, where relevant, sometimes striking similarities are found between the texts of Etruscan inscriptions and Hungarian (see pp. 15-15 of the summary: **grammatical words and morphemes**; pp. 16-17, **names of political leaders, officers and public institutions**; p. 17: **kinship terminology**; p 18: **religion**; p. 19: **professions**; p. 20: **place names**; pp. 21-28: **translation of inscribed texts**, for example the *Vetulonia kyathos*, see images below).



To get a more complete view of Alinei's Etrusco-Hungarian theory I recommend a series of alternative sources, some of them included in the above mentioned [web-page](#):

Intro

This blog aims to discuss the origin and evolution of human language. It also focuses on historical linguistics and Indo-European studies.

But not only.

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- **Léonard, Jean-Léo.** *Review of M. Alinei, Etrusco: una forma arcaica di ungherese [L'etrusco: une forme archaïque du hongrois]*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2003, published in "Etudes finno-ougriennes", 38 (2006), pp. 228-237. The author of this review provides a complete summary of Alinei's book, including the most relevant information and putting it in the right context. He also discusses some previous reviews of the book, by Gheno and Szilágyi. Let's see a quote from Léonard's article: (p. 229): "Le livre récent de Mario Alinei, qui présente une thèse à première vue audacieuse sur la filiation entre l'etrusque et le (paléo)hongrois, n'est pas un délire étruscomaniaque ou magyaromane de plus. On pourra en critiquer de nombreux détails, corriger des correspondances étrusco-ougriennes et des interprétations philologiques, mais on pourra difficilement ignorer la solidité de l'édifice construit par l'auteur".

- **Morris, Jonathan.** *Review of Mario Alinei, Etrusco: Una Forma Arcaica di Ungherese [Etruscan: An Archaic Form of Hungarian]*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2003, published in "Mother Tongue", n. 9 (2004). A detailed review of Alinei's book, written in English by Jonathan Morris. I would like to quote the final remark of this review, which is quite significant: "Alinei's linguistic conclusions may thus be as important for Uralic studies as Ventris' decipherment of Linear B was for Greek".

- **Tamas-Tarr, Melinda.** *Corrispondenza con Mario Alinei e documentazione e riflessioni sull'eco ungherese a proposito del volume "Etrusco: una forma arcaica di ungherese"*, published in "Osservatorio Letterario", n. 47-48, Nov-Dic/Jan-Feb. 2005-2006. In this interesting article, Melinda Tamas-Tarr offers an accurate account of Alinei's theories and also quotes some Hungarian authors who have expressed their opinions about the book. Alinei's response to this criticism is also included. One of the commentators (András Bencsik) relates a funny anecdote. Some years ago he attended a speech given by Alinei in Budapest. The Italian linguist greeted the audience with the following words: "I have never spoken in front of so many Etruscans".

In my opinion, the link between Hungarian and Etruscan is one of the most extraordinary discoveries that have been made in the field of historical linguistics in recent times. Mario Alinei's theories are a real turning point in our understanding of languages and prehistory.

Posted by Jesús Sanchis at 10:18 0 comments

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Links: Web-pages

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Fonte: <http://languagecontinuity.blogspot.com/2009/02/etruscans-and-hungarians.html>



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