

### The Italo-Celtic question: did Italo-Celtic exist?

Garrett (1999, 2006) offers some modifications to the traditional methods of linguistic reconstruction and dialectal groupings, and his outlook on the reconstruction of proto-languages is negative as he provides evidence against the postulation of proto-Greek and proto-Italic. I therefore re-consider the old Italo-Celtic question (Watkins (1966)) in light of Garrett's new theoretical insights. This paper has three aims: 1) to re-evaluate the existence of proto-Italo-Celtic using Garrett's new and recent methodologies, and my outlook on Italo-Celtic is negative 2) to use Italo-Celtic as a case study for demonstrating that Garrett's approaches towards proto-Greek and proto-Italic are not mutually exclusive and can be combined into a more coherent attack on the traditional methods of linguistic reconstruction 3) to develop Garrett's arguments further and to incorporate them within the traditional methods of linguistic reconstruction, again using Italo-Celtic as my case-study.

Garrett's attack on proto-Greek relies on the chronologies of the innovations: 1) he provides evidence from Mycenaean Greek for arguing that certain pan-Greek innovations cannot go back to proto-Greek (even if it existed), as they are not attested in Mycenaean Greek, a super-early Greek dialect, and therefore cannot predate it (Garrett (1999:148-149, 2006:140-141)) 2) he argues that certain dialectal innovations must predate proto-Greek (even if it existed), since they seem to have Indo-European (IE) correspondences (Garrett (1999:149, 2006:142)). Such chronological discrepancies raise doubts as to whether proto-Greek existed, and even if it did, it could not have been a homogeneous proto-language embracing all the pan-Greek innovations and predating all the dialectal idiosyncrasies.

Garrett's approach towards proto-Italic is different (Garrett (1999:150)), as he follows previous scholarship in deciding whether the postulated proto-Italic innovations could have been the results of linguistic borrowing (Beeler (1966:55-56)) or genetic inheritance (Watkins (1966:43)). Following Baldi (2002), proto-Italic is postulated if and only if the innovations are so spectacular that they are 'unborrowable'. If, on the other hand, they are paralleled in typological examples of language contact, secondary areal convergence in the absence of a proto-language is equally valid.

Garrett's approaches towards proto-Greek and proto-Italic are not mutually exclusive, since while the former is chronological the latter is qualitative. One can therefore combine them as follows: 1) decide which innovations go back to the proto-language by considering their relative chronologies, and pan-dialectal innovations that can be shown to be late do not qualify for the proto-language, while dialectal idiosyncrasies that can be shown to predate the proto-language can be used to question the existence of the proto-language 2) work out the likelihood of these proto-innovations (which may be very few, since many pan-dialectal innovations may have been eliminated in 1)) being the results of linguistic borrowing or genetic inheritance, and a proto-language is justified if and only if linguistic borrowing is rejected as an explanation for these innovations.

In the case of Italo-Celtic, the number of innovations is smaller than previously thought, since some of them have now been shown to be relatively late and therefore postdate proto-Italo-Celtic (even if it existed) e.g. the genitive singular of the thematic conjugation in  $-\bar{i}$  (Clackson and Horrocks (2007:chapter 2)). Furthermore, there are dialectal idiosyncrasies within Celtic that may have IE correspondences e.g. Old Irish  $-na-$  present stems vs Vedic Sankrit  $-nā-$ . There are therefore chronological discrepancies which cast doubts on the existence of proto-Italo-Celtic, even if it existed.

Within the small number of innovations which could go back to proto-Italo-Celtic, only morphological ones can be used to justify the existence of proto-Italo-Celtic, since lexical and phonological borrowings are well-attested in language contact (Clackson and Horrocks (2007:chapter 2), Clackson (2004:5-15)). Yet the morphological innovations of Italo-Celtic are also paralleled in language contact e.g. the nominal ending in Irish nouns in *-tiu -ten* vs Latin *-tiō -tiōnis*, the future ending in Old Irish *-f-* vs Latin *-b-*. Garrett's methodologies therefore provide us with a negative solution to the Italo-Celtic question.

By rejecting proto-Italo-Celtic, however, one reaches a dilemma, as we have reconstructed an IE family tree that is less economical than the previous one that incorporated proto-Italo-Celtic, since the revised tree contains more branches and nodes than before. This is a contradiction to 'Occam's razor', which favours simplicity in scientific explanations. I therefore propose to incorporate Garrett's methodologies into the traditional methods of linguistic reconstruction and dialectal groupings by arguing that the traditional way of reconstructing proto-languages is still valid, given its scientific economy, but it is only justified if there is no evidence in support of Garrett's chronological or qualitative counter-arguments. If Garrett's methodologies do not have empirical support, the traditional method should be adopted for the sake of scientific economy, but if, as in the case of Italo-Celtic, Garrett's methodologies are empirically justified, a more complicated tree model is necessary.

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