Paolo Bertini – English Translation

Who were the Achaeans (and others)

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"... they speak a mixture of German, Polish and Hebrew ..."

(from a letter from Heinrich Heine)

Premise (the big mistake).

Probably all the efforts that are made to support the kinship, the sympathy, the importance and the strength of linguistic "strains" are in reality, inadvertently, efforts to trace the written material that one has to the great written bulwarks of the cultural heritage available , that is - limiting ourselves to the West - the Bible and the Homeric texts (not surprisingly two of the greatest exercises in the birth of philology in Alexandria), to which we can add the Babylonian material (Gilgamesh, etc.) and the admirable Hesiodic effort . Without distinguishing between mythology, true history, allusions to the past and contemporaneity of the drafters, we see that these are strongly ordering and morally interpretative interventions that stand - as progressive and concrete elaborations prior to their "writing" - between 2000 (for the experts of the period of great movements) and the first centuries after 1000 BC (exit from the Neolithic period and stabilization of the idea of ​​the city). There is nothing wrong with all this, if you are aware of it. It is also legitimate to include concrete micro-languages ​​in the large languages ​​present in these texts (which in reality are much more elaborate and very little "spoken"), as well as, for ease of research and brevity of expression, it could be said that La Spezia and Arcolano, two dialects of the Far East of Liguria, so close but belonging, for the expert dialectologist, to two different groups, “come” from Latin, even if to be precise it wasn't exactly like that.

It is worse to want to identify in those great "languages" and in those cultural moments (among other things within them already composed by periods, small peoples and sub-languages ​​in which they were written), also and above all ethnic strains, of the genea, something completely indemonstrable if not as a program, an interpretation of modern culture retrofitted on the ancient one. We all know of the contradictions of a Bénveniste between ideas of individual psychology, linguistic comparisons and personal interpretative bets; nor should we forget the fate of Dumézil (whose researches contain various points of weakness): so contrary to global and definitive interpretations, he was prey to historians and philosophers hungry for these…. In fact, every people moves a little and fixes themselves a little, a little mixes and a little rejects the encounter with others: in each of these moments we have a substantial but not total change, so when we reaches a very distant point, it is not possible to know how much a great basic culture has been maintained and how much it has swallowed up those gradually encountered, or how much a great empire has really mastered it also in the linguistic and anthropological aspects . Ultimately we cannot know how much that language and that people are “testimony of a strain”, unless we honestly mean by that strain our current idea of….

The first three chapters of this work are presented as a discourse contrary to "fundamentalist" Indo-Europeanism; by this term I mean the convinced position of the existence of an original Indo-European people, which from some very specific point on the earth would have moved or at least expanded its language and its "institutions". Usually those who are not "fundamentalists", but moderate, resort to the concept of "stock" and "civilization". But, in practice, what does it mean? Personally I don't understand much….

These chapters are in my opinion superfluous and substantially useless; there would be no need to resort to what has long been affirmed by some scholars, including Giovanni Semerano in the methodological introductions to his main works: on the level of common sense, with regard to the discourse of "basic civilizations", a example: we all know what the ethnic and linguistic "strain" of the current Israelis and Palestinians is, yet the languages ​​they speak, the favorite religious rituals and the way of moving within the family and between families, vulgarly generalizing, appear difficult to assimilate, without going to disturb politics.

Even on a linguistic level, in a purely technical sense, there is no need to ask for help from the great enemies of the Indo-European (which in any case I largely agree with and will quote): it would be enough to recall pp. 122-129 of Tristano Bolelli's lecture notes on glottology. (Pisa 1970, a teacher who certainly did not present himself as explicitly anti-Indo-European), on which all the students of classical literature and many of modern literature have studied at the University of Pisa; I quote the last sentence: all these concordances, taken together, strike and lead us to believe that they are due to commonality of civil development, to closer contacts between speakers of these languages; but neither anthropology nor prehistory say anything about it. This way of seeing seems to me more understandable and sensible.

Unfortunately, the presence in excellent school manuals, in cultural gadgets of popular newspapers, in teachers, including university teachers, in other respects very prepared, in good encyclopedias, of "fundamentalist" positions or almost, induces me to continue to lend a hand in the sense contrary. In fact, the suspicion arises that the problem is not << Indo-Europeanism yes or no >>, but << certain philosophies, religions and lifestyles cannot, originally, have had anything to do with each other, while others must surely have had contacts >>. Also recently we have seen appendages of this mentality.

I hope that the superfluous of the first chapters can be forgiven by occasional hints regarding single problems of linguistics or anthropology that seem nice to me, without exaggerating.

1. Traditional and fundamentalist Indo-Europeanism writes its own condemnation. When he assumes the existence of a "stock" common to distant populations - excluding from it populations close to each other - on a phonetic basis only, he forgets that the most recent linguistic history, recognized by all and historically verifiable ( we refer to the neo-Latin one) does not work so precisely for the "Indo-European" factor.

2. We know in fact that populations such as the Latin and the Germanic had known each other for a long time, and had not very numerous but effective phonetic and semantic neighborhoods. On the European territory, standard Latin (which in fact never spoke anyone at home) dominated a series of regions and populations, in various ways and for various reasons, above all political, administrative and military (sooner or later producing the neo-Latin languages ); but not the Germans, or the future English (despite having such peoples in their lexicon with a strong percentage of Latin words, and having been effectively influenced by the Romans in lifestyles). Thanks to the "Indo-European" idea, therefore, we get this dynamic:

A) Base common to Latins, future Germans and English (the so-called "Indo-European")

B) Prevalence of Latin on some territories, but not with the same force on future Germans and English

3. Strong difference compared to the Neolatine of the German and English, which still maintain the already existing affinities of the first phase, further enriched by subsequent contacts.

A1) What is more important is that we cannot know whether the situation hypothesized in A) stemmed from a great people once migrated or from millennia of trade, friendships, oppression of cities and large families in continuous dynamic contact with each other, which would have nullified differences and magnified other differences that are actually only apparent (such as quinque-five). Since it is the second thing that has actually happened since 500 AD. In our days including ...

Wanting to proceed in the same way for the Europe - Western Asia territory before 1500 BC, something like this would make sense:

common situation of great dynamism, analogous to what is described here in A) with the specification A1); within it there already exists, in some way and somewhere in Greece, what will later become the Hellenic language, even if between before and after the disruptive intervention of the "peoples of the sea", and no less than the resumption of contacts and trade in past danger, will certainly have changed a lot (the dynamics is understandable if we remember this process 500 BC - 1900 AD: different Italic languages ​​but which are understood each other (including the future Latin itself) - expansion of standard Latin, that no one speaks in the language of use - barbarian invasions - resumption of Italic languages ​​and the base of standard Latin significantly changed, but not dead - literary prevalence of the Tuscan model - unification of Italy - school, radio and TV diffusion - current Italian standard; the time indicated is precisely equivalent to that which goes from the supposed "Indo-European migration" to classical Greece ...)

beginning of the prevalence of those who will later call themselves "Hellenes", and of their expansion

this "expansion" (by greatly simplifying and skipping intermediate encounters and mixtures) occurs in various directions and moments; it will then be repeated, in the South, by the Doric and Aeolian colonization, while however the initial phase ("Pelasgic"?) continues, and in various points of Central Europe (here "snubbed" for the sake of brevity) the micro-expansions of the groups continue fixed on certain territories for 1000/1500 years; it is clear that whoever moves in different directions loses and acquires characteristics in a different way, but nevertheless does not completely lose the previous characteristics.

A picture like the one just described would account for both the phenomena pleasing to the "Indo-Europeanists", both the strong differences and equally strong similarities between Greek and Latin, and the phonic-semantic relationships (some, it seems to me, evident) sustained by Semerano between "Indo-Europeans ”, Semites, Akkadians and Etruscans, both of the fact that the phonetic regularities and Indo-Europeanists sometimes appear not to be realized, although at least it remains probable, both from the semantic point of view and for the phonic aspect, the superimposition of certain seeds of different and distant populations.

The second, older picture also appears even more probable because its dynamic is not supported by a strong and taxing empire-state like the Roman one, but acts for foundations of isolated cities, colonies and federations. This framework does not require the intervention of any "Indo-European stock". Also those languages ​​that the traditional linguist would call Akkadian or Semitic or Pelasgic or Tyrrhenian are part of this framework already in place - and absolutely never in potentia, also and above all through the foundation of colonies and migrations that put bridgeheads destined to remain but not to expand: their linguistic influences therefore do not die, but are not very pervasive and imposing.

In this sense, it appears more than legitimate the suspicion that certain "regularities" and certain welcome by scholars, compared to other definite denials, have been produced by the commitment put in certain directions of study rather than in others, as well as by historical and , unfortunately, ideological.

3. I don't think it is difficult at least to support an idea of ​​this kind. In addition to considering the opinion of historians and linguists who are unconvinced of the existence of "Indo-Europeans", note a linguistic series like this:

quinque pente five

quis tis who

pes pous foot

puer pais boy

The linguist knows well that the coexistence of regularity / irregularity is given by the derivation from qw- or from p- more or less "original" or subjected to Lautverschiebung, dialectal variations and random factors, while for the coexistence of puer, pais and boy one can also think of the fact that the child and the puppy are generally referred to by the sounds pu-, pič-, po- / pa-, regardless of genealogies and loanwords. But this is precisely the point: what does "original" mean? At what moment, how and why did the Germans "decide" to do Lautverschiebung by "deceiving" the progeny of their f-? When in the third column we see identical outcomes for different derivations, alongside outcomes that keep the superficial relationship between the various languages ​​clearer, and we are going to explain all this, we do not construct retroformed explanations, which exchange the effect with the "cause- effect"? In other words: if the quantity and variety of cases is equal to that given by "necessity" (the supposed great Indo-European migration), it is more scientific to think that necessity was itself a whirlwind and not perfectly recoverable encounter of cases.

After these reflections, consider a series like the following (taken from SEMERANO 2003, PP.130-131, with my additions):

ETRUSCAN LATIN GREEK SEMITIC LANGUAGES

heram = sacrario erus (spelling herus) = master (?) ieròs = sacred hrm = apart; heram = temple; harem = reserved place

mex = ruler magnus mega mah = great

turu-ce = was offered donum dooron tarku / sharaku = to offer

munistas = dispenser munus - - - - - - minha = offering; manaha = to give; munnû = to give

by now everyone knows that of these series, quantitatively speaking, one can find really many: for example, working on the reading of the Etruscan sheets of Pyrgi elaborated by Semerano, I believe that evident phonic-semantic relationships can be proposed with practically Greek terms for all the words present. But it would be enough to reflect on why, in the Etruscan numbers, śa, semf, nurf (six, seven, nine) show a clear connection with those we now use, while the other seven numbers allow less immediate connections or do not allow them at all: the numbers do not they are instruments that are put on a bit as they come, and that are partially changed for various loans within a few centuries. Why continue to affirm the strong contact of peoples who were then distant from each other, and continue to deny meaningful and substantial contacts, and not only late and occasional, between other cultures?

Or again: if you take all the lemmas of a reduced "Greek-Italian" vocabulary (at this moment I refer, for example, to the commendable ANDREA SORCI, First Greek dictionary, Florence 2003) for a not very fruitful letter such as th (theta ), we will see that in most cases the "Indo-European regularity" fo th (from "ie" \* dhu) will be observed, but we will also obtain phenomena such as the following:

thaptoo sepelio

thenar teneo

therap- servus, servio

thorubos turbo

thoussoo tussis

Furthermore, we do not have obvious correspondences in Latin for a lemma like throoskoo, but for English we could think of throw….

Random similarities and differences? Fantasies? ...

Let's put the first verse of the Odyssey and Odysia by Livio Andronicus in a column:

moi, ennepe are the same words that mihi and insece (already changed in the superficial aspect), but this cannot be said of andra, Mousa and virum, Camena, both from the phonetic aspect as for the anthropological field; or one case is "substratum" (?) and the other borrowing and mutation, or vice versa (greatly simplifying the terms of the question): in any case, it will not be possible to say: "the Latins, as well as the Greeks, were Indo-Europeans" ... . Who among us would call the millions of Brazilian mulattos, or the Algerians, just like human persons and way of life, "Neolatini"? Perhaps, taking on a lot of imprecision, we could call them Christians and Muslims, but it would not be a good move….

Added to this are phenomena of both linguistic and anthropological relevance, such as the fact that thugateer (for me, personally, to be traced back without many problems to yug-, spouses- Latin) corresponds perfectly to the English daughter, which in addition to being daughter means daughter-in-law (and not because the daughter-in-law is the new daughter, but because the daughter is - in one family - the element destined to become a daughter-in-law in another), but in Latin we have filia and nurus.

Finally: let's take any example like Semerano's proposal which reconnects the Etruscan word raufe with the Semitic word rabba in the context of governing and being at the head: in Greek we have nothing similar; however (and I am reasoning starting from the fact that branch, stick, scepter and command are things that "stand up", and recalling the same metonymic relationship that exists for example for the Latin scipio and the skeeptron of the Homeric heroes) rabdos, as well as a normal cane or stick, it indicates the caduceus of Hermes, the scepter of command, the staff of the "graduate poets"; remember also the Cypris who rabdonomei, that is, "acts as arbiter", in verse 516 of Sophocles' Trachinie…. The Latin has ramus, which does not obtain the connotation of a "sign of government or value"; I would not go too sure though: we remember in fact the centuries of knights established by Romulus: Ramnes, Tities, Luceres, on which one has the patience to see, here, Appendix 2. Well, in Akkadian "branch" is said rabû: will we keep the Greek-Latin relationship rabd - ram and reject all the rest of the series hypothesized here? But then why continue to believe, for example, in a relationship anemos - animus, if the first corresponds in the semantic sense only to ventus and the second only to thumòs (which in turn has the equivalent in the Latin fumus)? Have we ever found a single attestation of a Greek who calls the thumòs "a) nemos", and of a Latin who calls the animus "fumus"?

In short, wherever we turn, we obtain confirmations of certain strong "regularities" of the Indo-Europeanists, but at the same time we obtain other semantic-phonic links at least proposable and not foreseen by the Indo-European methodology, or contemplated by it in variable and "irregular" ways. An explanation for this could be the one proposed above: that is, that the "Indo-European" photographs only a few moments, particularly strong perhaps as regards the "migratory vehicles" that brought them, of the encounters between languages ​​and peoples in the Euro-Asian area , but it does not exclude other actual linguistic encounters, nor does it necessarily establish a progenitor "stock" of a human culture with its own institutions, its own "philosophy of life" and its customs that are repeated, unconsciously, hundreds of years and kilometers apart , like the one that Bénveniste or Dumézil studied with so much effort. Perhaps a reverse path will help us, that is of training (as we find in Pallottino's precious research for the Etruscans), for which the phase of nomadism and semi-nomadism, more vast and complicated than we are willing to imagine, ended (and never everywhere), some peoples fixed languages ​​and characteristics more similar, even casually, to others, and further contacts further strengthened some and weakened or canceled others.

4. I think that one of the main errors of the "Indo-Europeanists" and their Greek friends has so far been to think of the "Achaeans" as a people, a lineage, such as the Medes, the Persians, the Jews of Moses or the Romans already formed and advanced. Naturally everyone knows that they were federated cities and autonomous peoples (either through xenia, fratria, kinship, or through a temporary military alliance), but no one wants to depart from the original idea of ​​lineage, of genos, for which a dialect and a civilization with common characteristics, which would then substantially be the "Mycenaean", antechamber of the definitive judgment on the first descent of the Indo-Europeans in Greece .... This appears in contrast to the fact that the Homeric "Catalog of Ships", while perfectly quoting the various peoples of the coalition, continues to speak of the "Achaeans" as a group of Great Lords whose parents or grandparents, or themselves, have made a decidedly strong and obligatory pact, but neither absolute nor necessarily deriving from a blood, a dialect or from common micro-traditions (while the “macro” traditions, such as the prayer before the great enterprise or the common meal, are evident). This P It can be strengthened by the strange phenomenon whereby the attestations on the mythical Achaeus and Hellenes as ancestors, on the one hand want them to be sons (Achaeus) or fathers (Hellenes) of very different heroes or gods, on the other hand they are maintained by relatively late sources (not, absolutely, Homer himself; which is very strange, given the well-known Homeric digressions on family trees and the great precedents). Throughout the Iliad, the Achaeans seem to resemble more the Lombards, or the allies of Charlemagne in the pen of writers much later than the sovereign, such as the author of Chanson or Ariosto; or even better: like the rulers of Europe in the anti-Napoleonic coalition and in the Restoration. It should be noted, among other things, that in the entire "Catalog" the Achaeans are not named except in these three cases:

II, 530

(Aiace d’Oileo) with the spear overcame Panellenoi and Achei

II, 722

(Philoctetes was lying) in sacred Lemnos, where the sons of the gods abandoned him

Achaeans

II, 684

(Achilles' fighters) called themselves Myrmidons, both Hellenes and

Achaeans.

Two of these cases (Ajax, Philoctetes) obviously do not directly and punctually concern the genos we are talking about (ie that of Ajax or Philoctetes themselves); I think this also applies to the Achilles contingent (see below).

5. In short, in my opinion, the "Achaeans" would be the Greek warrior aristocracy (the archaic one, according to all the researches deriving from contacts with Anatolia and the Near East) who decided to unite (with all the boredom and advantages deriving from it), rather than an original group identifiable with the Mycenaeans, the Thessalians or the like.

6. What has been said here in 2. is in reality, peer-to-peer, what Thucydides informs us of in I, 3. Let us reread his words:

… Before Hellenus son of Deucalion there was not even such a denomination: it was the single populations, and in particular the Pelasgians, who gave their name to large regions (note the plural). Then when Hellenus and his sons settled and consolidated in Phthiotis, and were called to help in the various cities, these one after the other began to call each other, due to the assiduous contact, <<Elleni>>: and yet again for a long time this name was not able to assert itself in a generalized way: the main clue is provided by Homer…. (translation by L.Canfora, my italics).

Thucydides shows that he knows Homer well: in fact it is true that the word "Hellenes" is mentioned only in the passage of the Catalog of Ships referring to Achilles. Thucydides makes no problem to consider the Pelasgians as a Greek people in all respects; a population, as well as other related ones, divided into cities and families, not very connected and not militarily strong. We will have to return to their name and their reality (see Appendix 1). Thucydides, between the lines, also informs us of another phenomenon witnessed by Homer: speaking of the help that the various cities and families ask to Hellenus and his descendants, and underlining in this homily (frequentation) he identifies those groups that Homer calls panelleenoi. We need to think well about the construction of this word and its formation in Greek: the words formed in this way (with pan-stuck at the beginning) do not in fact mean all the Xs, all the Xs, but I do X all the Ns: pandeemios is not "All that is popular", "all the people", but "public"; panaoorios is the one who appears "completely premature"; panodurtos is the "wholly lamentable" person; the objection that the panoikios is someone who moves "with the whole house" is only apparent: it does not mean that he makes home what he touches, but that he does not forget anything. Rightly, my colleague Barbara points out to me that the lexicons have no doubt that the Panioones are the faithful belonging to the Ionian confederation…. In looking at the Homeric Panhellenes we are misled by the future Panhellenic feasts and by the Panhellenic Zeus, but in reality for Homer these are those cities that had been "completely Hellenized", that is, to say it with Thucydides, they were allied and strongly protected by Hellenes , which will be continued for the children and descendants of one and the other…. I don't think this has anything to do with the helloi, the priests of Dodona; or better: yes, it probably has to do in the sense that the sema \* hell- could be the same for both (including the proper name Hellen and the geographic toponyms) with a meaning like "guardian, guarantor, defender, security "(cf. Assyrian sillu and Etruscan zilath, and again English shell, German schale = protective shell, bark, ted.shal, Persian sāl = shawl, English shelter = protector, German. schalten = regular, command, administer).

The Homeric Panelleenoi would therefore be the first example of a potential “spontaneous” coalition of Greek cities, not necessarily for war purposes. A confederation.

In this regard, we are also helped by the depth of Aeschylus, that poet who knows how to deal with men, feelings, ide and without abandoning the function of "teacher" expert in religion, myths and "homeland history": in verses 234 ff. of the Supplices he makes the king of the Pelasgians say that the Danaids do not seem to him, from their clothes and physical appearance, either of an Argive type "or of the places of Hellas", but then he recognizes them as argive either through an "oral examination" of knowledge genealogical and mythological (precisely in the sense that the girls know what is said about certain ancient facts), and from the way of appropriately using the rite of suppliant. Aeschylus attests to us, for ancestral eras, the multiplicity, weakness and the successful mixing with different (Egyptian) populations of Greek peoples, and at the same time the beginning of strengths and above all of "Hellenic" association. In my opinion it is negatively "modern", and offensive towards the poet, to think that these are literary news managed by him for his own use and consumption….

At the same time, we have known for some decades (thanks to traditional Homeric research) that the ancient "Hellas Minimal" was the strip of land near the Spercheo - a kind of bridge between the North Epirota and Thessalian and the Central-South Attic and Peloponnesian (Fenice “crosses Hellas” to get to Ftìa); in the same way we know that the Argives and Danai were ancient lineages, certainly already present in the Anatolian and Cretan worlds. I see no difficulty in this, in an age in which one lives with languages, techniques and rituals in easy contact, loan, movement and mutual understanding, but also limited to one's own city or a little more, once the place has been found. : I do not see the need for a great "Mycenaean" lineage to replace the Cretan thalassocracy .... Finally, Hesiod historically preserves the moment of transition between the "panellenoi" as outlined here and the Panelleenoi intended to indicate all the Greeks, then simply called Hellenes: bradion de Panelleenessi faeinei (Op.528): (the winter sun) appears later to the Panelleni.

How did the Achaeans fit into all this? Who were they really?

1. If the reader is willing to accept as correct and possible the way of looking at the Homeric "panellenoi", then the Achaeans should be a new type of coterie. We should be suspicious of the fact that in the sources, all extremely late compared to archaic Greece, the mythical ancestor Achaeus is considered the son of different characters and of exceptional caliber: Poseidon (it can't be further back ...), Haemon (Thessalian progenitor) , Xutus (the husband of the Creusa loved by Apollo, daughter of the Athenian hero Erechtheus). It would seem the usual retrofitting: the Achaeans were very important in archaic Greece, so much so that they left their name to an entire region, and therefore many want to grab their progenitor. But it may be that this was easy because the Achaeans were never a genos in the literal sense of the term….

2. Homeric passages already cited, especially from the Catalog of Ships, show us how Hellenes, Panhellenes and Achaeans are superimposable but not identifiable realities:

II, 530 does not mean that the Oileo (certainly from an oriental family, with its linen robe, its light armament, the skill that does not correspond to large tonnage and exceptional wealth) exceeded two of the most famous groups, but that it surpassed the “panellenoi”, that is any valid “Greek” participant, and also the “big ones” who had started the coalition;

II, 684 does not mean that the inhabitants of the Phthiotis, of Argos Pelasgica, Alo, Alope, Ellade belong to three different lineages; it means: 1) whoever is one of the chosen heroes of Achilles calls himself “Myrmidon”; so much has been said about the meaning of this name, in reality once again we are misled by looking for genee everywhere: Mirmidoni, from the root morm = fright, or marm (r) = brilliance, meant "terrible looking" or "looking bright, clear-faced "(idoo, -onos as well as the very normal eikoo, -onos; 2) they are particularly advanced and chosen fighters: they are Hellenes and have also long been part of the coalition of the great Achaeans (kai \ ... kai \ = both ... and).

The relations between Panhellenes and Achaeans seem to have been good, if Hesiod (Op.653) tells us that "the Achaeans gathered against Troy from sacred Hellas": the sacred land of Hellenus must therefore have been the point of reference for those who formed coalitions and started businesses.

It has rightly been noted that the Homeric attributes of the Achaeans are somewhat particular compared to those given to other presences of peoples. In reality, they all concern strength, hair length and armament: there would seem to be no ethnic signs, but rather of caste and level ....

Finally: we speak of Mycenaean civilization on the basis of the power of Agamemnon and the wealth of archaeological finds from Mycenae, but neither in Homer nor in Hesiod speaks of it in this sense; for them "Mycenaean" means only "of Mycenae", single city. And we have created the "Mycenaean culture", its displacements and even Achaean and Mycenaean colonization.

c. Let's try to draw the strings of what has been tried:

the Achaeans would be the powerful components, who bring with them the self-sufficient free people of their cities and fratrias (as the episode of Thersites would seem to suggest) of a series of groups (soon I will be more precise) of the Aegean-Middle Eastern area (a in my opinion - very personal and not indispensable -, moving back in time with respect to the Trojan facts, of a Hittite environment) that they had probably already decided on a fixed and aristocratic alliance before intervening against Troy, an occasion in which they widened the link on them same official request to characters like Odysseus, Oileo, etc ..

We will find confirmation for their denomination and its meaning not in a proper name or genos, but in a normal expression in different peoples and eras, which then comes to indicate a specific group, and when it practically no longer exists, even a region (as happened for the Lombards, the Vietnamese, the Franks and probably the Germans themselves, and not - for example - for the French; similarly, calling a region "Achaea" in historical times is equivalent to those modern phenomena that we see in "Marche, Liberia, Basilicata"); in this regard I propose the Akkadian ahu = companion, ally; this term was also used by the Etruscans (see Semerano 2003, p.93): Axu- is in fact the first part of a word that in representations is written with male or female "protective geniuses" next to characters such as Eros, Turan, Achilles and Teti. It will not be out of place to remember that in Arabic, even today, Ach- means both brother and companion, comrade. Another possible etymology could derive the name from Chaios = "good, noble", with a- confirmative-reinforcing (cf. a- delphos = "which came out of the same uterus"), rightly connected by Semerano with Hebrew gasva . In short, the Achaeans, in my opinion, constitute a kind of hyper-fratria, a phenomenon that can occur independently in different spheres and periods. For example, one can start from a single dominant family in a single city, which then expands its group through clienteles, minor relations and alliances with other cities and lords. The way of reasoning for large "stocks", in short, as we have already proposed for the Hellenes and we will return to propose for the meaning of "Pelasgians", must be reversed: they are small families and powers (so to speak) that exploiting means and particular moments found larger and more successful groups. We find confirmation of this in Herodotus when in I, 125 he informs us that among the Persians pushed to rebellion by Cyrus there were various tribes (genea!); among these the Pasargadis were the noblest (aristoi), because they include the freetree of the Axaimenidai, from which the kings were drawn: well, if the Pasargadis and the other families named among them are already genea, and if the Medes and Persians are extended structures, and if Herodotus speaks of fratria, the latter cannot be a copy of the structures already mentioned, but will be a particular structure dealt with through and within them.

It will be objected that the news we have about fratrìa, in Greek, concerns family structures; but whatever treatment we read, we then see that this was not entirely true: it is known that new elements could be associated with fratria, and above all that the powerful and aristocrats always tried to influence, form fratrias and participate in them.

It will also be objected that the Hittite, Mycenaean and Egyptian documents speak of the (J) Ahijva; in this regard, I would like to ask: what certainty do we have that such inscriptions speak of a great, very specific people? In them it is explicitly written that to move, to dominate, etc. was it a genos or a single ethnos previously identifiable as such in a clearly identifiable place? How many of the Greek scholars who cite this information in Homer's presentations are sure and aware of this?

Finally, it will be objected that Greek, Akkadian, Etruscan and Persian do not come together. I have nothing to argue about this. Nor am I interested in doing it.

Further methodological considerations.

If everything that has been attempted so far can arouse even minimal and partial interest and yet full of reservations, then the way of expressing the Homer of the Odyssey in the nineteenth 173-177 appears very beautiful:

(in Crete)… and there men

many, without borders, and ninety cities:

and languages ​​now mingled (perfect participle) between one and the other: there Achaeans,

there genuine, generous Cretans, there Cidoni,

Died in their three groups and bright Pelasgians.

It is known that the Odyssey was later than the Iliad, and this passage appears more elaborate than many others ... the passage to the meaning of Achaeans as an attested and well identifiable group is probably already underway. Homer does not speak of genea or ethnee, but of men and ninety cities: men who understand each other, who keep their languages ​​and their groups but at the same time they have already mixed them together.

Like Herodotus in 1.57 ff. he noted that there were very close cities that spoke very differently for a long time, and distant cities that spoke in the same way (in the dialects of where the writer lives, that is, in the La Spezia area, this is strikingly evident), as he assumed that the reader would accept (while we today, rightly, are more prudent) a “Pelasgic” Athens that totally changed language and became Hellenized, so all this could have already happened even before; indeed: always. We are the ones who make a mistake on the concept of genea (common birth) and eth - we (similar ways of doing things): it is not these, except in very advanced and particular cases, that spread their families, their alliances, their city; they are families, alliances and cities that progressively decide to form more institutionalized groups, or, enormously grown, they see this result; just as it happened in ancient Rome, for whose history archeology finally seems to help us in the truthful sense: the Latin that was spoken all over the world, and which now modulates the languages ​​of half the world, no one ever spoke: when Rome was realized that it had a worldwide responsibility, it became the dominant international and literary language. It is difficult to know whether the Germans of North and Bavaria differed after Catholicism, Luther's Bible, the Third Reich and Communism, or whether such interventions offered very different people points of reunion between them.

It is obvious that the linguist and the anthropologist must use the noble texts, but if they wanted to be hyperscientific they should start only with the Akkadian and Eblaitic bricks and the "Mycenaean" inscriptions: by doing violence to oneself, one must avoid crossing the border between our image of the "ancients", - which is a real phenomenon that must be lived, discussed, enjoyed and deepened - and the linguistic and historical study of ancient men.

In a vision to which neither the Bible nor Darwin could reproach anything, our aim is not to fix points of support, moments in which one is born and is and in which one changes, but to deepen the encounters and clashes that limited and in any case enormous possibilities of the human being built.

Paolo, La Spezia 25 July 2005

Appendix 1: another "misunderstanding"?

In the previous discussion we have sometimes met the Pelasgians. The existence of this "people" is certainly attested both in the Homeric poems and in the Greek writers of the historical era. The most important steps appear as follows:

Iliad: II 684 (which speaks of "Argo Pelasgica"), II 840 (which speaks of a people of Pelasgians near Troy and its ally in the war), XVI 233 (in which Achilles, for Patroclus, prays "Zeus Pelasgo" of Dodona), XVII 288.

Odyssey: XIX 173 ff. (quoted and translated here above, in which Odysseus lying to his wife about his origin says that Crete is also inhabited by Pelasgians).

Thucydides: I, 3 (which we have already mentioned and on which we will return), IV, 109 (the famous pass of the Pelasgians / Tyrrenoi).

Herodotus: I, 56ff. (in which it is said that the ancient Spartans were of Doric lineage, descendants of Hellenes, a people who wandered a lot, while the ancient Athenians were of Ionian lineage, formerly Pelasgic, people who remained more or less where they were; but then it is added that the surviving Pelasgians are found in the city of Crestone (or Cortona?) beyond the Tyrrhenians and that from their language one would say that the Pelasgians once spoke a barbaric language).

II, 51 ff. (passage concerning the learning of religious representations and rites between Greeks and Egyptians).

The Supplici of Aeschylus: in which the king of Argos is called Pelasgo and is called "son of Palaichtone" (speaking name = "ancient land").

Modern scholars tend to take it for granted that the Pelasgians were the ancient indigenous inhabitants of Greece. This derives in part from an unproven vox populi, in part from the interpretation of Took. I, 3 and Er. I, 56; at the same time, it is believed (also based on Od. XVII, 301) that these Pelasgians came from nearby eastern regions. All this is a bit contradictory, unless the traditional Indo-European view is adopted: non-Indo-European Greeks of Anatolian origin, early Indo-European Greeks Mycenaean Greek Dorians from the Balkans. At this point I am not interested in supporting or denying this vision, but only trying to show how it is not indispensable at all, and how the definition of the "Pelasgians" stands for the umpteenth time in simpler and basically banal linguistic choices, that is, more human.

The passage I, 3 of Thucydides is usually translated with a certain elegance and interpretative will, but reasoning "literally" the author puts it this way: once upon a time there was not even the denomination of Hellenes and (the Greeks) kata ethnee de alla te kai to Pelasgikon, depending on the ethnicity and among other things also of the Pelasgic type (neutral singular noun + adjective in -ikos , and not simply in –os) in most cases they procured the denomination themselves. So the passage is clearer: it means that we were called on the basis of different small peoples who quite often had the requisite of “Pelasgicity”.

As for Herodotus in I, 56, then, it is important to note that for both the Hellenes and the ancient Pelasgians the author never speaks of displacements outside Greece, but inside it, and as the hypothesis of the Pelasgians -barbari is given by the author in moderation, precisely as a personal hypothesis that is not at all stringent. If you read the passage carefully, the Hellenes might seem almost more "autochthonous" and ancient than the Pelasgians.

Finally, I would like to reiterate how in my opinion Aeschylus was not just a poet, but someone who truly believed in an ancient relationship between Danai and "Pelasgo".

Moving on to the ancient Homeric vision of the world, it is impressive how "Pelasgians" are found both in the North of the West and in the East of Greece (Dodona and Argo Pelasgica) as well as in Crete and in the Trojan territory.

The "simple solution" would be to consider the "Pelasgians" Pelasgians, that is, not a people but the denomination of a phenomenon applicable to different peoples and cities, and more precisely the denomination corresponding to the Latin colonists that the writers of the Augustan age apply for example to the Etruscans and the ancient Ausoni. It is impressive how the proximity of the term with the Greek adverb pelas = close has gone completely unnoticed, which in historical times gives rise, thanks to the success of the article, to the expression oi pelas = neighbors, neighbors, relatives. The absence / presence of the infix -G- (in many cases archiphoneme of -K-, -KH-) in ancient Greek is in my opinion easily sustainable based on these examples:

ana - agxi, en - eggùs

apo - apoxee

ollumi - olekoo

pnoee-, pneu-, - pnigoo

pioon - Latin pinguis

the letter s called by the Greeks themselves "sigma"

titheemi - theekee

Troy - Troikos

truoo, teiroo, words related to sema \* ter- indicating consumption and chewing - truxoo, troogoo

\* fan-, faos - feggos (pronounced fengos)

the list can be enriched with less obvious hypotheses, but in my opinion probable, such as: theloo (I want, I like) - thelgoo (fascinate, attract); krainoo (accomplish, attested forms in kreen-) - kreeguos (useful, truthful, fulfilling); dagùs (wax puppet for spells in Theocritus 2, 110) - daioo = burn; we can then think that the term purgos (tower) derives from pur-gos (place where the fire is lit for signaling, as in Aeschylus' Agamemnon), or that in ancestral times the sema AGO does not derive from AG + O, but from A + GO (see English to go).

Returning to the testimonies of historical times, in my opinion it is strange that these "Pelasgians", so ancient, sedentary in their places, and so widespread as to found distant colonies, and at the same time considered weak and various (note that Herodotus is sometimes he expresses by saying “these Pelasgians”, that is, he seems to speak of Pelasgians who are gradually different from each other), to change the name of their cities and completely assimilate a new language, were almost never driven out with wars, but always assimilated willingly. At the same time, Hellenus does not report any origin from outside Greece: considering the passage quoted above "literally", Thucydides only says that he and his sons "gained strength" isxusantoon) first in Phthiotis and then, because they accepted and called, elsewhere. It is possible to think that Hellenus and his children are not "Indo-European newcomers", but simply the first to receive the new wind: aristocracy, weapons, expansion; perhaps the Agnelli "arrived" in Turin and colonized it? And Julius Caesar with Rome? Not to mention that by giving "Pelasgians" a basic meaning of this type, the passages we cited (especially the Homeric ones) take on a much richer meaning: for example, the Zeus of Dodona was probably the one that protected the vast population that worked the land , not to mention that Patroclus was a guest of Peleus' family, where he had taken refuge due to an assassination, and it is better to understand how the allies of the Trojans are explicitly mentioned the city and the king (Larissa, Leto Taumatides) and add, to these denominations, “Pelasgians”. It is better to think of archaic Greece as a land of various colonization by cities and small towns, over which then a region and a family prevailed. It is very little biblical, very little Darwinian and above all very little sense to establish ab origins two or three "stocks" at most - very different from each other - for the settlements on this "bridge" in the Eastern Mediterranean. Above all, the Rome of Romulus, the Macedonia of Philip and Alexander the Great (whose ancient language, whatever Demosthenes says, was Greek), the dynamics of the success of the Achaemenids or the prevalence of the Tuscan vernacular as the maximum reference for an Italian do not give this suggestion. standard. Not to mention the more fruitful settings of the Etruscologists a (Pallottine's concept of "formation"); nor does one have this idea for central-northern Italy if one reads an extremely meticulous and informed work such as Gli Etruschi in Val Padana by Luigi Malnati and Valerio Massimo Manfredi (Milan 1991). I don't know if the Pelasgians of Attica had a barbaric language, nor is Herodotus absolutely calm about this: sometimes changes and returns make islands of our ancient language incomprehensible; it is also true that there are incontrovertible and strange examples of the coexistence of different languages, as in the relationship between Etruscans and Latins. It is certain, however, that all these people had practices and words in strong natural and peaceful contact with each other for a long time.

It will therefore be necessary to conclude that the ancients of historical times spoke of migrations and ethnicities bearing in mind at least two directives: on the one hand, they noted the formation of states, of strong cities, with the consequent possibility of a precise name and a language. destined to last and expand without substantial changes; on the other hand, they were aware of periods of varied and composite migrations over time, starting from single cities, which settled populations on virgin spaces, but more often received hospitality according to the practice of the neighborhood, the one that will then be formalized and regulated by phenomena such as fate dei Perieci or the treatment of meteci in Athens (in Italy, for example in Trentino, it was a practice still in use until less than a century ago): names such as pelasgoi or Turseenoi (builders of towers?), applicable in several places and in several cases, they once indicated phenomena of this type. The Romans of the Augustan age, like Livy, commonly use this way of reasoning for the Etruscans, who were certainly a welcomed component of the formation of Rome, but were also powerful lords of Tuscany, sometimes adversaries, and still gave rise to periods of enlightened tyranny on the city, as in the case of Tarquinio Priscus. Let's not talk about certain dynamics narrated in the first books of the Bible…. Reasoning in an absolute way, for wars and impositions or clear alliances or large, incontrovertible and original lineages, is our mentality, especially the nineteenth century, which we attribute too quickly to the ancients: they were not without them, but their horizon was necessarily things broader, their possibilities were more varied….

Appendix 2 on Ramnes, Tities, Luceres.

Thus Livius expresses himself in I, 13 on the famous first three centuries of Roman knights established by Romulus immediately after the clash and the consequent pacification with the Sabines:

Ramnenses ab Romulo, ab T.Tatio Titienses appellati; Lucerum nominis et originis causa incerta est.

The interpretation of this reality (which most likely, from a morphological point of view, is affected by the Etruscan language) has given rise to many and varied identifications. The most evident defect of most of them is that they do not present themselves as historical and / or anthropological interpretations, playing between language itself and claimed social structures (according to traditionalist historians) or anthropological-structural (according to anthropologists). It would not be the first time if the sufficient gaze of modern historians towards ancient writers were denied by archaeological finds and by a more careful and at the same time simple consideration of words.

What is most striking is the tranquility with which Livio refers the first two names to Romulus and Titus Tazio, while he confesses the existence of doubts, and does not provide his own interpretation, on the Luceres, a term most likely to be connected to the Etruscan lucumones (between the other both terms have the first - short, as opposed to lucus and lux, lucis). The astonishment is reduced if we remember that in the Augustan age the use of the Etruscan language was lost, and that Livio and others considered "Lucumone" a proper name (to refer, for example, to Tarquinio Priscus). The coexistence, however, of foregone interpretation and confession of uncertainty cannot, in my opinion, be explained only by a historiographical construction that tends to be consistent with the history of the momentary concord between Romans and Sabines and their two kings: it reveals, however, that the readers of Livio had no major problems in considering this way of treating the three names in question obvious and acceptable.

As already mentioned above, I believe that a banal and basic understanding of the three terms must precede the interpretation of their use for ethnic or political purposes, and in this sense the three names are to be traced back to signs of recognition, of habitation, of command. to which the interested equites should have referred, according to the well-known intertwining between inhabited neighborhood, family, coterie, military structure indispensably practiced throughout the ancient world (fyla, fratriai, etc.).

The precious work of Giovanni Semerano (Semerano 2 003, p. 120), which refers the name of Romulus to the entry ruma (height of the rock) and also to the Babylonian ramû (to found, to allow the foundations to be laid); we can also stop, but the sema in my opinion could not be extraneous, as an original concept, to the series ramus, rabdos, Akkadian rabû (branch), (interesting also that ramnos, in Greek, indicates a type of fruit), and again Akkadian rubû, Etruscan raufe, Hebrew rabba (governor, chief): the sense of height, of coming up, of development and of command is linked to the phonic proximity of all these realities.

The stem tit / tith / titth in turn in ancient languages ​​had to be used to indicate something that reaches up and / or forward (,), with a consequent idea of ​​elevation and power. Also in this case I would not exclude effective links with the bases of tendo, teinoo titainoo on the one hand and, since light, strength, momentum, divinity, height are certainly not alien concepts, with the famous roots of (n), ti ( n), zeen-, theen-, thin- (we also remember, in addition to the already obvious links, the Titans and Titone).

In any case, as evidence for the first proposed connection we can offer Tith-orèa (a peak of Parnassus according to Herodotus 8,32), Titaros (mountain and city of Thessaly see LIC. 904), tituros (both satyr and ram, with clear emphasis on physical and sexual prominence); this last example leads us to remember how the titi for the Latins were the agrestes pigeons (SERV. in Buch. 1, 58), an appellation given ironically to the Roman senators (probably for fattening and arrogance; perhaps there is also the scorn for being stationed in the curia, white and stiff) but, as the scholias surprisingly declare for Persio's satire 1 (v.20): titi (= the pigeons), certain a members virilis magnitudine dicti sunt; we therefore think of a prominent and large phallus. Remember also that Tizio, the great damned of Hades, was an exceptional giant. Also the term tith- = "breast", "tit", to be obviously connected to tithee- (breastfeeding) can have in the use of the reinforcement -t- next to -th- a psychological aspect that adds to the image of breastfeeding of reaching up and rising. The initial -t- sound, however, must have to do, already in itself, with tensing and rising; let's look at these series: tilia, per-tica, ti-gillum, Tissa (Sicilian city near Etna), the tull-tall-toll formants in multiple fields and various languages ​​...

Probably all this is to be referred to the well-known intuition of Varro (original or taken from other previous scholars), for which the mimicry of the mouth in the gesture of t- or yù or up - replaces the gesture in the will to point forward (for this see the excellent work of LICINIA RICOTTILLI, Gesture and word in the Aeneid, Bologna 2000, especially pp. 72-80 and all the introductory part in general).

For the Luceres, as we have already said, we must think of a link with the initial part of lucumon, which is rightly reported to Akkadian le'û (being superior, powerful); in short, this would be the contingent of knights "with the Etruscan head". In this regard, it is important to distinguish a Rome that was born also with Etruscan language and components, from real Etruscan immigrants officially welcomed into its already formed organization; in this way (which we mean settlers as "peasants" or as "new inhabitants welcomed") we explain the coexistence in Properzio (IV, 1) of two verses like these:

37. hinc Titiens Ramnesque viri Luceresque settlers

32. prima galeritus posuit praetoria Lygmon (= Lucumon, ie Tarquinius Priscus who, already “received”, then became king and instituted various novelties).

The linguist must stop here; then, the exploitation of such ideas can undergo interpretations. The picture, in my opinion (obviously) of high probability, outlined a little above would at least push us to refer, given the conformation of the original Rome (the two peaks of the Campidoglio, the valley below) the three denominations of the greatest defenders to something like: those of fortress, those of the hill, those of the Etruscan chief (perhaps inhabitants the lower part, to be cultivated), or in an even more banal and less interpretative way: those who call the chief "Ram", those who call the chief "Tit", those who call the boss "Lucu". Probably, if there had been a Gallic component, it would have been the "Brennes", sema which meant precisely "chief", and which also gave its name to the well-known Alpine pass. How much then certain subdivisions and denominations can be interpreted according to concrete sociological history, or even according to an ancestral anthropology, which however at the same time rejects other possible ancestral commonalities, I leave to those who are more prepared than me to explain it. In conclusion, I would like to say jokingly but not too much: “Livio was right…”.