

WHY DID LATIN CHANGE DURING ITS SPREAD MORE THAN PROTO-SLAVIC?

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1. Slavic and Romance: the same period of spread, different results

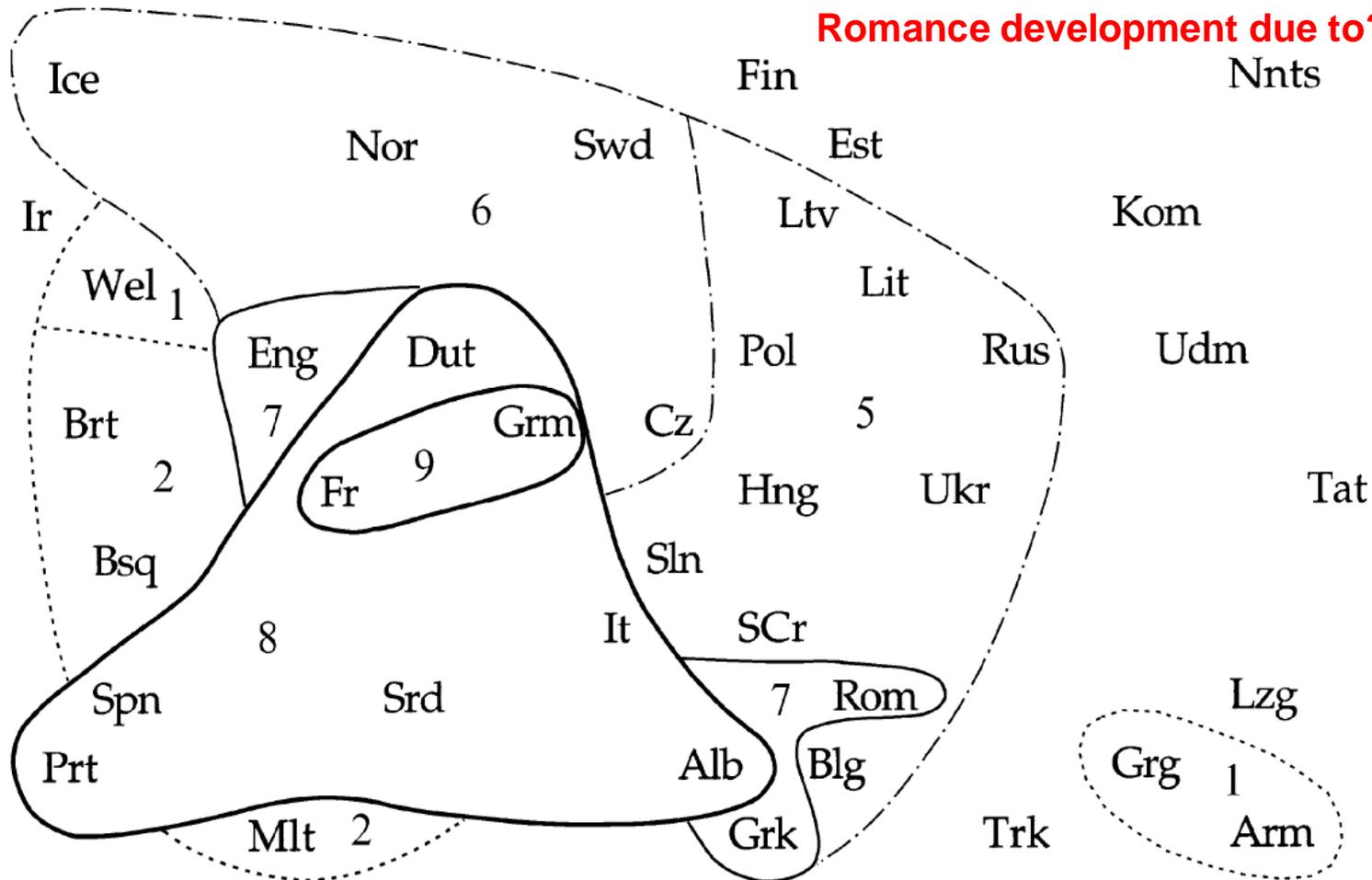
- Slavic and Romance groups: both originated in the second half of the first millennium CE, during the Migration Period and Early Middle Ages
- the history of the individual languages of both groups is relatively well-documented
- and a written variety structurally close to the proto-language is attested in both groups:
 - varieties of late Proto-Slavic attested through Old Church Slavonic texts
 - Proto-Romance attested through late Latin texts

1. Slavic and Romance: the same period of spread, different results

- the Romance languages lost the Latin case inflection (except in the Balkans)
- the Slavic languages retained the Proto-Slavic cases (except in the Balkans!)
- Romance: many SAE features (as defined by Haspelmath: definite and indefinite articles, 'have' perfect, participial passive, dative external possessors etc., 9–17 features)
- Slavic: only a limited amount of SAE features
- Haspelmath: SAE features spread during the Migration Period

Haspelmath's (2001) cluster map of nine SAE features in different languages

What was the difference between Slavic and Romance development due to?



2. Migration model vs. language shift model

- although “Romance peoples” are sometimes seen as a cultural area, they have never been assumed to all be descended from colonists coming from Latium
- the language shift model is prevalent in Romance linguistics, but most of comparative linguistics of other Indo-European branches from the 19th century on was still based on the migration model
- a demographic expansion from the Slavic homeland was the basic model in Slavic studies as well
- national Romanticism: the unity of Slavic languages, history, and peoples
- so, is the difference between expansion by migration and expansion by shift the reason for different structural changes in Latin/Romance and Slavic?

3. Proto-Slavic as a lingua franca?

- in the end of the past century, a language shift model was proposed also for the Slavic spread: Proto-Slavic spread as the lingua franca of the Avar Khaganate 567–804 (Pritsak, Lunt, Nichols, Holzer)
- would make the spread of Proto-Slavic much more similar to the spread of Latin / Proto-Romance
- would also explain the rapid expansion of Slavic in a relatively unitary form, perhaps as a koiné
- but would of course not cover the whole of Slavia:
 - the *early* Proto-Slavic vocalism is reflected in Slavic loans in Finnic (Kallio), far from the Avar Khaganate and too early for the lingua franca / koiné explanation

Map: Magocsi, A Historical Atlas of Central Europe



3. Proto-Slavic as a lingua franca?

- shouldn't the relative quick language shift have left more substratal traces in Slavic than in Romance? (The language shift triggered by the Avar khaganate would have been a much shorter process than the spread of Latin in the Roman Empire!)
- substrate evidence for a large-scale language shift into Slavic does not exist
- substrate evidence only far away from the Avar khaganate: the Finno-Ugric substratal origin of some Russian features (the possessive construction, the partitive genitive, the loss of the present copula) seems possible

3. Proto-Slavic as a lingua franca?

- in Romance, the spread of the analytic structures is often attributed to the wide-spread use of (Vulgar) Latin as a lingua franca / L2
- nothing of this kind of structural change can be observed in Slavic, except in the Balkans
- notice that Balkan Slavic is the only kind of Slavic that has lost case inflection, whereas Balkan Romance is the only kind of Romance that has retained it!

4. Human genetic evidence

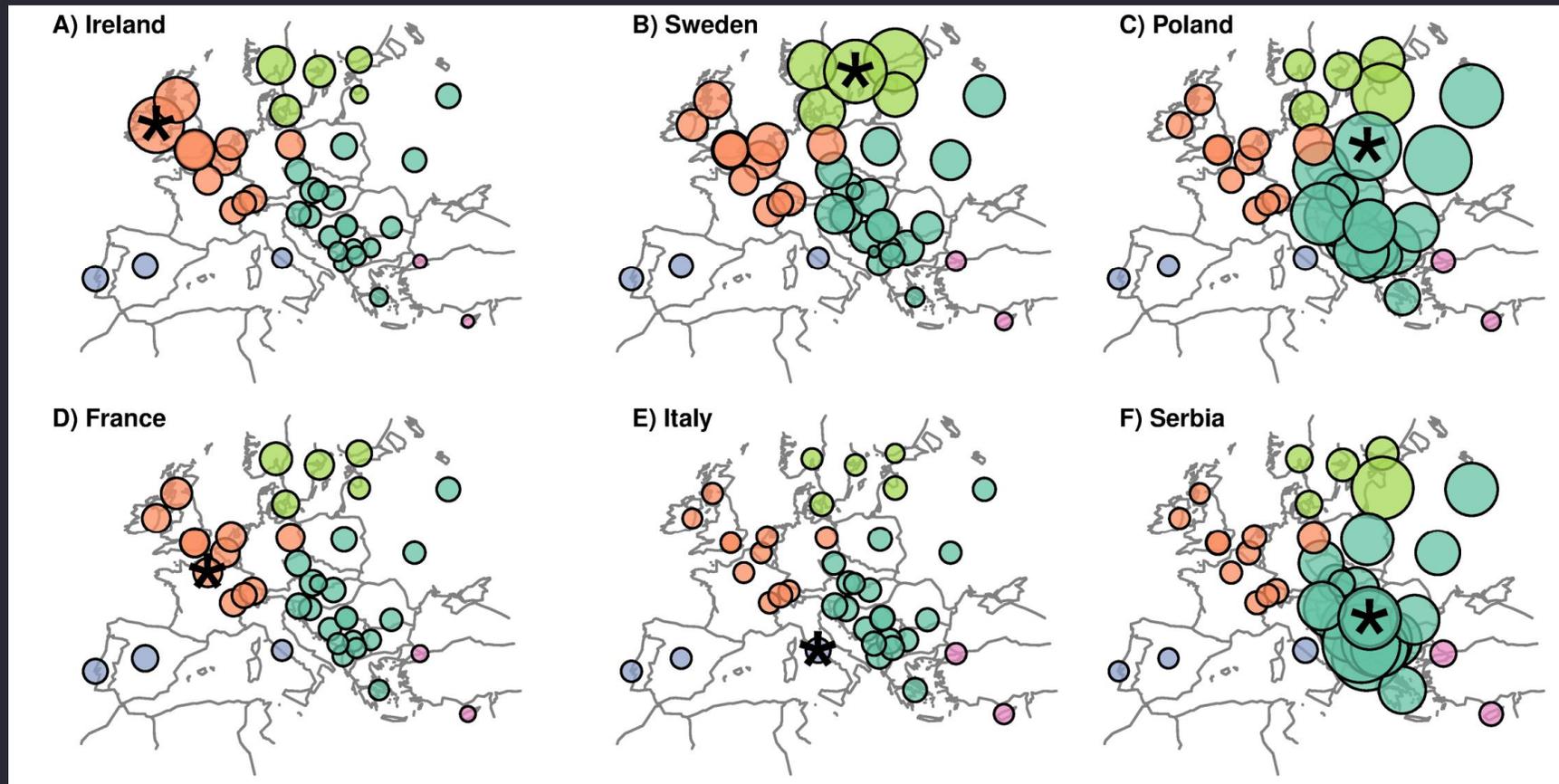
Nichols (1993: 378): “...since in their physical anthropology the various modern Slavic populations resemble their respective nearby non-Slavic neighbors more than all Slavs resemble each other, there is no reason to assume the Slavic expansion was primarily a demographic event [...] the Slavic expansion was primarily a linguistic spread” [=shift]

A recent study of human genetic admixture indicates that various Slavic peoples do indeed resemble their neighbours more than other Slavs...

However, it is also the case that all East European populations, Slavic and non-Slavic, share a much more recent common ancestry than West European populations (including the Romance peoples!):

Ralph P, Coop G (2013) The Geography of Recent Genetic Ancestry across Europe. PLoS Biol 11(5): e1001555. doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.1001555:

Figure 3: *Geographic decay of recent relatedness*



4. Human genetic evidence

- Ralph & Coop: genetic evidence is consistent with the idea of Slavic population expansion into regions of low population density in about 500–1000 CE
 - “even geographically distant individuals in these eastern populations share about as many [recent] common ancestors as do two Irish or two French-speaking Swiss” (p. 7)
- but this genetic similarity includes the non-Slavic peoples of East and Southeast Europe as well (Hungary, Romania, Albania, Greece)
- there is no “Romance” counterpart to this: Italy, France, the Iberian Peninsula, and Romania genetically much more distant from each other

5. Slavic demographic expansion – or language shift to Slavic?

- the Slavic expansion to Eastern Europe must after all have been a demographic process to a greater extent than the Roman(c)ization of Western Europe was
- larger-scale language shift to Slavic seems to have occurred only later, in what is now European Russia
- the Slavic adstratal/substratal and toponymic traces in Hungarian, Romanian, Albanian, and Greek are paralleled by traces in human genetics: the “Slavic signal” all over Eastern and East Central Europe
- there must also have been language shifts *from* Slavic in these areas

5. Slavic demographic expansion – or language shift to Slavic?

- Slavic demographic expansion is not inconsistent with the theory of Slavic as the lingua franca of the Avar Khaganate if the population density in Eastern Europe in the 5th century was initially low
- so, the Slavic spread may have been different from the Romance spread not only because of difference in sociolinguistic situations but also because of much lower population density in Eastern Europe after the Great Migrations – and perhaps also after the short extremely cold period and famine in 530s and Justinian's Plague in 540s: less shift effects if there are less people shifting!
- Central and Eastern Europe vs. the Balkans: it is not the Balkans but the rest of Slavic that is “different” (Aronson)