

Title: The Diffusion of Slavic, Part I: History, Archeology, Onomastics, Sociolinguistics

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In a few short centuries Slavs and their language spread over much of Europe, a demic and linguistic diffusion of impressive breadth and speed. This paper offers a synthetic summary of the diffusion, leading to a theoretical discussion of the mechanism of diffusion.

From their homeland Slavs spread westward into Central Europe (Bohemia) and northward along the Vistula (Poland), then further into the Elbe and Oder basins. Pollen remains suggest that Germanic tribes withdrew before Slavs arrived (Kaczanowski & Kozłowski, *Najdawniejsze dzieje*), thereby limiting linguistic interference.

In the east, Slavs followed the Dniepr north, assimilating Baltic and Finnic substrata with convergence effects, possibly from Baltic (akan'e?), certainly from Finnic (nominative object with infinitive: *надо земля пахать* = *(täytyy) kyntää maa*).

In the southeast, the Slavic archeological footprint is faint and hard to interpret (Curta, *Making of Slavs*). Assuming bulky pots and sunken houses are Slavic (Barford, *Early Slavs*), we see Slavs moving first along the Carpathians, then on to the lower Danube and then westward along the southern shore of the Danube in the early seventh century (Koleva, "Za datiraneto"). Slavic spread under Avar protection through colonization: local, incremental demic movement (not migration), sustained by mobile agriculture and elimination of the prior population through depopulation, enslavement (Procopius), and linguistic assimilation.

The Slavic diffusion, then, involved demic movement and linguistic dominance through colonization, not through dominance of an elite culture. Slavic was not a lingua franca; Slavs had no empire. Theirs was a strategy presupposing cohesion of a group defined by language: there was an ethnos. On a theoretical level, this interpretation of the Slavic spread contradicts the understanding of mechanisms of linguistic spread among Indo-European archeologists such as Colin Renfrew.