

ĒRIKA SAUSVERDE

Vilnius University
erika.sausverde@flf.vu.lt

Linguistics, archeology and genetics – premises of pre-Indo-European substratum in languages around the Baltic Sea

Question of possible pre-Indo-European substratum in north-western Europe has been mostly discussed within the framework of Germanic languages (e.g. maritime vocabulary, with starting point in the works of Sigmund Feist). Though nowadays the amount of unclear Germanic etymologies does not exceed the amount of unclear etymologies in any other language, the question is still relevant. The possible substratum in neighbouring languages has also been considered. The analyses of possible borrowings from pre-Indo-European language(s) in Baltic Finno-Ugric languages (idea first suggested by Paul Ariste) shows, that there is still a lexical layer which could be considered as borrowings from non-Uralic languages (Koivulehto, Itkonen, Kallio). Separate Baltic words have also been discussed, cf. e.g. fish-names in the area, which traditionally are interpreted as borrowings from one language to another (i.e. Germanic, Baltic, Baltic Finno-Ugric), some of them really being borrowings dating back to different epochs (Laumane, Blažek). However, an overview of etymological material in these languages often ends in a closed circle or with an admission of an impasse (cf. *āl* 'eel' in Bjorvand, Lindeman 2007).

The question of possible non-Indo-European substratum in the area is dealing with the question of the linguistic continuum in north-western Europe, language contacts, the origin of Germanic, Baltic and Baltic Finno-Ugric peoples. Archaeological data testifies that people had lived in this area for a long time before the arrival of Indo-Europeans. The last decades have brought new data into research, namely the vigorous development of genetics caused a fundamental change in our views on characteristics of the populations. Due to the fact that analysis of genetic variations in modern humans is providing us with an insight into prehistoric events, it seems worthwhile revising our knowledge of old languages and their possible contacts in prehistoric times. The present paper aims to review the perspectives of such an approach by dealing with the question of the oldest contacts around the Baltic Sea.