

Ago KÜNNAP

*Department of Estonian and Finno-Ugric Linguistics,**University of Tartu**Ülikooli 18, EE-50090 Tartu, Estonia**e-mail: ago.kunnap@ut.ee*

ON THE INTERDISCIPLINARITY IN THE PRESENT-DAY HISTORICAL URALISTICS

Our eminent jubiliarian Professor Rif Nasibullin is a distinguished and widely acknowledged researcher and research organizer in Uralic languages. For decades, he has had fruitful contacts with the Uralists of Tartu University. On the occasion of his jubilee I would like to greet my colleague of many years with some reflections on the problematics in the historical Uralistics.

In the framework of a novel approach to the history of Uralic – Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic – languages the data from archaeology and population genetics as well as physical anthropology, geology, climatology and many other branches of science are taken into consideration. Such a complex approach might first of all be associated with the notion *linguo-archaeo-genetics* as proposed by an outstanding representative of the approach Kalevi Wiik [8]. I believe that today such an approach is singularly appropriate because in observations of more distant past of languages there are no documented linguistic data at our disposal. True enough, there are archaeological findings from that distant period but their interpretation is considerably hard for a number of reasons. Namely, artefacts of material culture could have spread together with the carriers of a respective culture as well as without them: the artefacts could have been produced independently or procured from the neighbours. On the other hand, genes could spread only together with people and that is why the data of population genetics create a most reliable picture about a onetime location and movement of population groups. Likewise, phylogenetic trees under reconstruction also provide temporal specifications with a definite level of precision. As far as precision is concerned, the latter lag behind the precision of temporal specification of artefacts, so that here archaeology enjoys definite advantages over genetics. (See also [3].)

Such an approach to language history has become possible and even indispensable thanks to major changes in a number of man-addressing sciences. The most rapid development of human genetics and newest research results in the field of population genetics can be regarded as the most noteworthy among them. In turn, archaeology has given up observing cultural shift as a primary consequence of mass migration of population. Linguistics has begun to emphasise an overwhelming importance of language contacts, both in the formation of single languages and language groups to counterpoise exaggerations in postulating proto-languages and language trees. The fact is that although it is not possible to prove the reliability of *linguo-archaeo-genetic* hypotheses with a hundred-percent veracity, it would only be scientifically resourceful to

bring forth suppositions whose truthfulness can be proved only in the future. Colin Renfrew writes [6], "For experience shows that in the development of any discipline, new configurations begin to emerge which are not at first clear, and which are sometimes at first contradicted by counter-examples."

Consequently, today we face a fact that archaeology, genetics and numerous other sciences yield data that would not coincide with Uralic linguistic tradition. However, a great number of representatives of traditional Uralic linguistics wish to know nothing at all about it. I think that the latter situation is not only quite unacceptable to common sense but undoubtedly also shameful in the world of science. Science philosophers have been claming more and more emphatically that science exists only in situations where each new idea and result will be questioned from the moment of their emergence.

An example about such an application of interdisciplinarity takes us back to the second half of the 1990s when at the University of Tartu, in the field of research on Uralic languages, a trend of preference studies of language contacts between Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic languages, on the one hand, and various other languages, on the other, was launched. Based on the results gained in the area, a more critical view has been taken towards hitherto traditional Uralistics and its comparative-historical principal research method of comparativistics together with its inherent conceptions about Proto-Uralic and Proto-Finno-Ugric, language tree and a proto-home somewhere further east. This new trend is developed in the spirit of *linguo-archaeo-genetics*. To date, Tartu researchers of Uralic languages work in the symbiosis with population geneticists, in particular with the Tartu University working group headed by Academician Richard Villems as well as with representatives of so called New Physical Anthropology. Archaeological data are also taken into account as much as possible. Close contacts have been established with the all-European interdisciplinary working group "The Roots of Peoples and Languages of Northern Eurasia" that has organised symposiums with invited participants in a number of European countries since 1997.

Such an interdisciplinary approach to language history has caused embarrassment among traditional Uralists. However, everything new is strange in the beginning. And what is more, traditionalist Uralists do not resent archaeological data in their research on language history, although, as pointed out above, archaeologists themselves are hard put in relating their artefacts with demographic locality or movements. Population genetics can extend a helping hand in this, nothing else. We can hardly claim to suppose that linguistic and genetic data could be related one-to-one to each other or that linguistics could take over methods of genetics as science.

More and more publications are issued that emphasise a spontaneous change of whatever language although it is a very slow process. Only a contact with another language or other languages evokes faster and more extensive changes. See e.g. [2]. We could, of course, argue that it would be possible to draw far-reaching conclusions about linguistic incidence across ages in case our data were based on population genetic pool. However, there is no distinct formula available about historical relationships between genes and languages and apparently creating such a formula can never take place.

As is known, all attempts to create credible methodology for making language-historical absolute dating have failed. Thus, e.g., Professor of linguistics Robert M. W. Dixon from La Trobe University (Melbourne) [2] and Professor of archaeology Colin Renfrew from Cambridge University [6] complained that they could not understand from where language historians take their absolute dating. Certainly, often they are based on archaeological data, yet it is quite clear that such an association is a very unreliable method.

To illustrate the whole problematics, the origin of the Saamis, long since under discussion could be brought to mind [7]. Based on the newest results of population genetics gained by the working group of 46 researchers in 2004, and headed by Richard Villems, it was found that from among maternal and paternal lineages of the modern Saamis two-thirds, in sum, descend from West Europe and one-third from East Europe. At that almost all maternal lineages came from West Europe, although an overwhelming majority of them first moved to East Europe, to the Volgaic area and only thereafter to Finno-Scandia from there. Paternal lineages of the Saamis are divided into two, more or less, slightly lower than a half come from West Europe, a little over a half from East Europe. This suggests a new Baltic Sea area settlement picture about the end of the Ice Age as well as post-Ice Age, by the nature of things: primarily here the whole population consisted of the Saamis' ancestors. It is only based on such a new genetic finding that we can begin to make suppositions about the linguistic origin of the Saamis.

Another example to address involves the problem of the Samoyeds' descent (see first of all [4]). Since the time when, by the beginning of the 18th century, a definite similarity was noticed between Samoyedic and Finno-Ugric languages, and particularly since the mid-19th century when Samoyedic languages were studied in greater detail, the latter have obtained an important place in Uralistics. At the same time those languages have posed a source of problems in Uralistics. Namely, it was observed long ago already that despite their similarity with Finno-Ugric languages, Samoyedic languages are essentially different from Finno-Ugric languages. Thus, when Proto-Uralic was first postulated along with its further distribution, it was supposed that the very same proto-language was first distributed into Proto-Finno-Ugric and Proto-Samoyedic. It is just the location of the Samoyedic linguistic area mainly in West Siberia, consequently, in the easternmost Uralic linguistic area, that together with the linguistic areas of Mansi and Khanty – Ob-Ugric languages also locating in West Siberia – has inspired the placement of the Uralic proto-home to West Siberia or at least to the vicinity of the South Urals, partly reaching it. In case of postulating the location of the Uralic proto-home like that, Samoyeds – just like Ob-Ugrians – have been supposed to be that part of Proto-Uralic-speaking population who remained in the bounds of their proto-home or in the neighbourhood when the rest of Proto-Uralic-speakers moved on westward, eventually arriving at the Baltic Sea. In that case the Samoyedic languages that stayed put must be very archaic while Uralic languages on their move westward came into contact with Indo-European languages and received various influences from the latter.

Population geneticists have determined a number of instances concerning the genetic pool of Uralic-speaking population. Namely, the whole European Finno-Ugric-speaking population has primarily been Europoid. Only a more recent Altaic-speaking migration from Eurasian steppe belt that started 1,600 years before has more extensively introduced Mongoloid features in the centre of the Finno-Ugric settlement area. European Finno-Ugrians descend, both in their maternal and paternal lineages, from Europoid gene lineages, common with the rest of Europeans. Their maternal lineages have been studied better, that is why we have to base our observation on the data of maternal lineages. In maternal lineages among Finno-Ugric-speaking peoples in Europe Mongoloidness is represented only to the following extent: Estonians – 0.5 %, Finns, Mordvins and Hungarians – 2 %, Saamis and Zyryan Komis – 5 %, Karelians and Maris – 7 %, Permyak Komis – 17 %, Udmurts – 31 %. On the other hand, on the Asian side in West Siberia, Mongoloid maternal lineages of the Uralic-speaking

population can be detected to the following extent: among Finno-Ugric-speaking Zyryan Komis – 12 %, Hantis and Mansis – 31 % as well as among Samoyedic-speaking Nenetses – 53 %, Nganasans – 82 %, Selkups – 36 %. The figures presented here show that among Uralic-speaking peoples, the most typical Mongoloid representatives are Samoyeds. Besides, Selkups with their outweighing Europoid maternal lineages that have scarcely branched off seem to have obtained the lineages relatively recently.

In addition to this, it should be kept in mind that the so called classical set of Mongoloid maternal lineages, occurring in Chinese, Mongols and Kirghizians, for instance, contain maternal lineages A, B, F and M. On the other hand, out of the four one can find practically only M and even that in the form of single variants in Saamis, Finns, Karelians and Nenetses. Consequently, in case of Finnic peoples and Nenetses it cannot be Mongoloidness from Altaic-speaking settlers who immigrated from the Eurasian steppe belt but it is rather those M-lineages that could dominate and even so in single variants among Paleosiberian settlers. On my part I would add that in case of low incidence of M-lineages in Finnic-speaking peoples I fail to see any other source than partly Mongoloid Nenetses (Mongoloidness of maternal lineages 53%) whose settlement area in the west today extends up to the White Sea, in other words up to the linguistic area of Finnic and Saamic speakers. Besides, based on substrate toponymic data, the Finnic-speakers' area could sometime earlier extend considerably more eastward than it is now, to the south-western corner of Europe, at least to the present-day Komi-speaking area.

The fact that strongly Mongoloid Samoyeds (and also enough Mongoloid Ob-Ugrians) speak Finno-Ugric type of languages could only be explained, as noted above, by the spread of Finno-Ugric languages from Europe to West Siberia. Would it also suppose a definite migration of Europoid Finno-Ugric population in that direction? Such a migration-based supposition is also backed up by an analysis of the N3 paternal lineage, carried out by population geneticists. The newest research by population geneticists has convincingly shown that present-day European Finno-Ugric populations were primarily Europoid. On the other hand, Samoyed-speaking populations were primarily and are now strongly Mongoloid. Therefore earlier Samoyedic-speaking peoples used a Paleosiberian language or languages and received their Uralic language from the south-western direction.

In the light of population genetic data I fail to see any other possibility of explanation least Samoyeds replaced their primary language with a Finno-Ugric language. Quite another question arises which Finno-Ugric language Samoyeds obtained. Based on everything said above I think there is enough evidence for the supposition that Samoyeds obtained their modern language from the speakers of onetime Finnic or similar to the latter language. Time and space of the Samoyeds' language shift will regrettably remain open. But it could have taken place thousands of years ago somewhere in North-Eastern Europe or in the vicinity where Nenetses still keep living.

Thus Samoyeds had to shift their former language and transfer to a Finno-Ugric type of language. Or at least adopt powerful linguistic influences of a Finno-Ugric type. Exceptional common features of Samoyedic languages with Finnic in the first place, lacking mainly in Mari and Permic languages, speak for the supposition so that a new language or a main source of influence for the Samoyeds was a Finnic or a Finnic-type language or languages. The latter supposition is also supported by both the earlier and present-day vicinity of the two – Samoyedic and Finnic – linguistic areas in North-Eastern Europe, indicated above already. A significant fact to note is that Northern-Samoyedic languages (Nenets, Enets and Nganasan) whose linguistic area is

closer to the former Finnic linguistic area in North-Eastern Europe indicate a considerably higher similarity with Finnic languages than Southern-Samoyedic languages (Selkup, extinct Kamass and Mator) do. At the same time Southern-Samoyedic languages are considerably more of an Altaic-type than Northern-Samoyedic ones, while a relatively later interference with Altaic neighbouring languages is also conceivable. Here we should not ignore the fact, pointed out earlier and based on given genetic data, that in Northern-Samoyedic Nenets meant a major disseminator of possible Finnic language interference while it comes from the paternal lineage N3 (30–40.7 %) which according to current data is completely lacking in Southern-Samoyedic Selkups.

Returning to the observations of linguistic data I have to admit that Samoyedic enjoys a number of features that are inherent namely to Paleosiberian languages. Thus, for instance, Samoyedic – as well as Ob-Ugric – and Paleosiberian languages are dual languages (exceptionally, duality occurs also in Saamic languages), in those languages the number of objects is shown inside verbal forms (as is also done in Mordvin languages) and, likewise, nouns are also conjugated (in Ugric languages in 3P), in Mordvin, Hungarian, Samoyedic and Paleosiberian languages a direct object may be in the locative. Westernmost Finno-Ugric languages are temporal languages and Paleosiberian ones – aspect languages while Ugric and Samoyedic languages represent a blend of both systems.

The third example could include speakers of Baltic languages (see first of all [8]). In addition to numerous similarities between Baltic and Finnic languages as well to the occurrence of Finnic toponymy in Latvia in particular as well as in the Lithuanian territory, a decisive indicator of direction in language shift remains the gene pool of Latvians and Lithuanians that is most similar to that of Estonians, first of all. Owing to all this, now no doubt remains that the speakers of Baltic languages are, at least in their best part, former Finnic-speaking peoples who replaced their earlier Finno-Ugric language with Baltic languages, belonging to Indo-European language group.

I would also mention that Professor of linguistics Els Oksaar of the University of Hamburg fully accepts the replacement of old theories of Finno-Ugric proto-language and proto-home with new ones that are based on interdisciplinary researches and data drawn from the fields of genetics, archaeology and language contacts [5]. Likewise, an Italian linguist Mario Alinei who has written a bulky two-volume work about the history of European languages has acknowledged the Continuity Theory born thanks to the linguo-archaeo-genetic approach to the originality and continuity of Finno-Ugric population in Europe (see first of all [1]). Alinei writes that the Continuity Theory was first introduced into archaeology and Finno-Ugristics in the 1970s already. He may be right in dating the period in his own way, since it was the period when theoretical contemplation in these fields of science became again more active. However, it was only in the 1990s that the Continuity Theory began to more consistently take into account the data of genetics. At any rate, Alinei recommends Indo-Europeists to follow the Finno-Ugrists' example and give up the theory of late eastern immigration of Indo-European languages to Europe: he considers it much more probable that the speakers of Indo-European languages – just like those of Finno-Ugric ones – have always lived in Europe, already since man first appeared in Europe (probably 35,000 – 40,000 years ago). Years to come will tell whether the linguo-archaeo-genetic approach used in Finno-Ugristics will indeed develop as an example worth being followed in Indo-Europeistics.

References

1. Alinei M. The Paleolithic Continuity Theory on Indo-European Origins: An Introduction // <http://www.continuitas.com/intro.html>, 2005.
2. Dixon R. M. W. The rise and fall of languages. "Cambridge University Press", 1997. 169 pp. (Reprinted in 1999.)
3. Künnap A. Contact-induced Perspectives in Uralic Linguistics (LINCOM Studies in Asian Linguistics 39). München–Newcastle, "LINCOM EUROPA", 2000. 77 pp.
4. Künnap A. Main Language Shifts in the Uralic Language Group (LINCOM Studies in Asian Linguistics 45). München–Newcastle, "LINCOM EUROPA", 2002. 62 pp.
5. Oksaar E. Terminologie und Gegenstand der Sprachkontaktforschung // Werner Besch, Anne Betten, Oskar Reichmann, Stefan Sonderegger (eds.), Sprachgeschichte. Ein Handbuch zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und ihrer Erforschung. 2., vollständig neu bearbeitete und erweiterte Auflage. 4. Teilband, Berlin – New York, "Walter de Gruyter", 2004. Pp. 3160–3171.
6. Renfrew C. At the Edge of Knowability: Towards a Prehistory of Languages // Cambridge Archaeological Journal 10, 2000. Pp. 7–34.
7. Wiik K. Suomalaisten juuret. Jyväskylä, "Atena Kustannus Oy", 2004. 368 pp.
8. Wiik K. Eurooplaste juured. Tartu, "Ilmamaa", 2005. 494 pp.

This article is supported by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Science, target-financed project No. 0182124s02

Аго Кюннап
Отделение эстонской и финно-угорской лингвистики
Тартуского университета
Ülikooli 18, EE-50090 Tartu, Estonia
email: ago.kunnap@ut.ee

Об интердисциплинарности в современной исторической уралистике

В современной исторической уралистике образовалось интердисциплинарное направление, учитывающее данные не только лингвистики, но и археологии и генетики. В статье приводятся три примера необходимости такого комплексного подхода: проблемы происхождения саамских, самодийских и балтийских языков.

Статья написана при поддержке Министерства образования и науки Эстонии, целевой проект номер 0182124s02