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Abstract:

The paper is an attempt to reconstruct the linguistic map of Northern Europe in the late medieval era, the founding period of the University of Vienna. It is based on an article series by the author jointly with another scholar published in Retrospective Methods Newsletter (<http://www.helsinki.fi/folkloristiikka/English/RMN/current.htm>). The language areas are reconstructed on the basis of scant historical record including archaeological and other relevant evidence that is interpreted in the framework of comparative, areal and contact linguistics. Especially, the importance of toponymic data is stressed in the reconstruction of the external history of the languages.

The language areas of the Northern Europe have changed dramatically since the medieval times. Most notably, Germanic, Finnic and Slavic languages have spread to the north and many Finnic and Saami groups have become extinct. In most cases, Slavic and Germanic languages are now spoken in their medieval areas.

Among the questions touched upon in the paper are:

- The spread of Finnic and Saami languages in the medieval times (as compared to their present spread)
- The chronology and mechanisms of Slavicization of Northern Russia
- The location of language contacts between Finnic, Germanic, and Slavic
- The characteristics of the extinct Finnic (Livonian, Chud, Bjarmia) and other Finno-Ugrian (Merya, Muroma, Mescera) language forms
- The role of inland vs. Baltic sea cultural and trade networks in transmitting linguistic features and languages