

Kalevi Wiik

Who Are the Finns?

Abstract

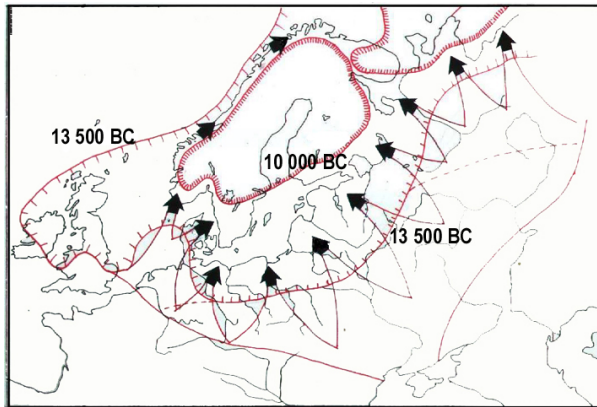
In order to give valid answers to questions like “Who are the Finns?” and “Where did the Finns come from?” it is not sufficient to consider exclusively the Finns; it is of vital importance to consider also the genetic, linguistic and cultural relationships of the Finns to many other populations of their neighbourhood. The populations dealt with in this article for this purpose are the Sami, the Samoyeds, the peoples speaking other Finno-Ugric languages (i.e. the Volgans, Permians, and Ugrians) as well as the populations speaking Germanic, Baltic and Slavic languages.

1. Old and new theories

For more than two hundred years there have been differing opinions as to the origin of the Finns. At times they were regarded as Mongols (Blumenbach 1775), and at others it was thought that they migrated from the bend of the Volga about six thousand years ago. More recently views have begun to coincide so that today we may even dare to claim that there exists a certain consensus about who the Finns are and where they came from (Dolukhanov 1998). They are typical examples of the Cro-Magnon type of man, a type that is predominantly Eastern European and made up of people who trekked north from the Ukrainian refuge during the Ice Age. Their ancestors moved to their present habitats in connection with the resettlement of Northern Europe following the retreat of the continental ice sheet during the period 9,000–8,000 BC (cal.).

Consequently, today we have broken free to a large extent from the idea that the Finns came to present-day Finland as part of some migratory movement. Their arrival was the result of their following in the wake of the melting ice sheet and they gradually moved (at an average rate of 100–150 m/a) to the region left bare of ice; see Map 1. This is the theory put forward by Milton Nuñez (1987 and 1989) and Pavel Dolukhanov (1989), for

example. The first people to arrive in Finland at the end of the Ice Age were thus the genetic ancestors of today's inhabitants, in other words they were "Finns" who, in the light of the preceding, lived during the Ice Age south of the margin of the ice sheet, in other words in Central Russia (see the Desna, Kostenki-Avdeevo and Kapova regions on Map 5).

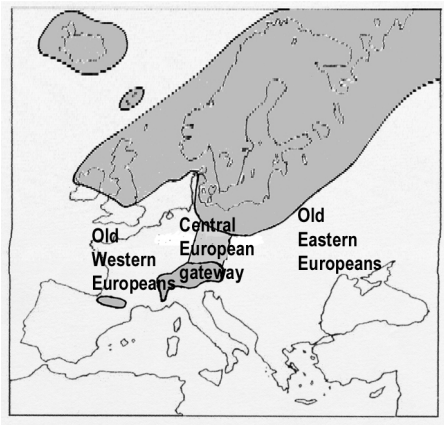


Map 1.

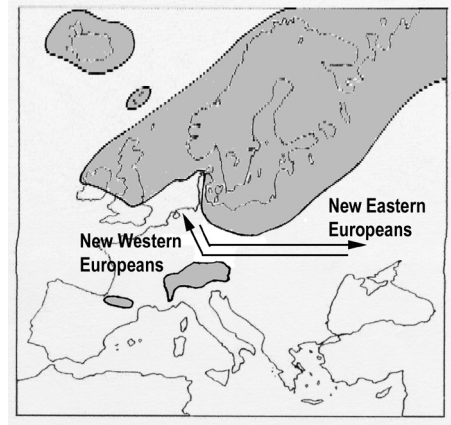
There are six things associated with this "margin of the ice sheet theory" that are important for an understanding of the total picture. These are by their nature of a kind that not everybody seeking the roots of the Finns can accept them; nonetheless, they form a decisive part of the overall picture. I will use the following names for these six factors/phenomena: (1) the Central European gateway, (2) the Post-Swiderian people, (3) the resettlement of Northern Europe, (4) the first inhabitants of Finland, (5) the new mixed northern population, and (6) the linguistic evolution of Post-Swiderians.

2. The Central European gateway

During the coldest parts of the Ice Age the glaciers covering Fennoscandia and the Alps were so large that they almost touched. The region lying between the glaciers, which I have called the Central European gateway, was, at times at least, impassable. As a result Europe came to be divided into two separate parts, Western Europe and Eastern Europe. Each evolved its own culture and the peoples of each region developed in different ways as a consequence of genetic mutations. This process led to a Western European and an Eastern European type of man. I will refer to these as "Old Western Europeans" and "Old Eastern Europeans" (see Map 2).



Map 2.



Map 3.

During warmer periods of the Ice Age the Central European gateway remained open and people were able to move from west to east and from east to west (see Map 3). This brought about the emergence of two mixed types: in Western Europe there were the “New Western Europeans”, of which the “Old Western Europeans” presumably formed the majority and the “Old Eastern Europeans” the minority while in Eastern Europe there were the “New Eastern Europeans” in which the “Old Eastern Europeans” probably comprised the majority and the “Old Western Europeans” the minority. The miscegenation of these two groups of people was extremely strong after the Central European gateway became permanently open ca. 13,500 BC (Nuñez 1998). In Eastern Europe there lived, then, the “New Eastern Europeans”, whose culture was Post-Swiderian culture.

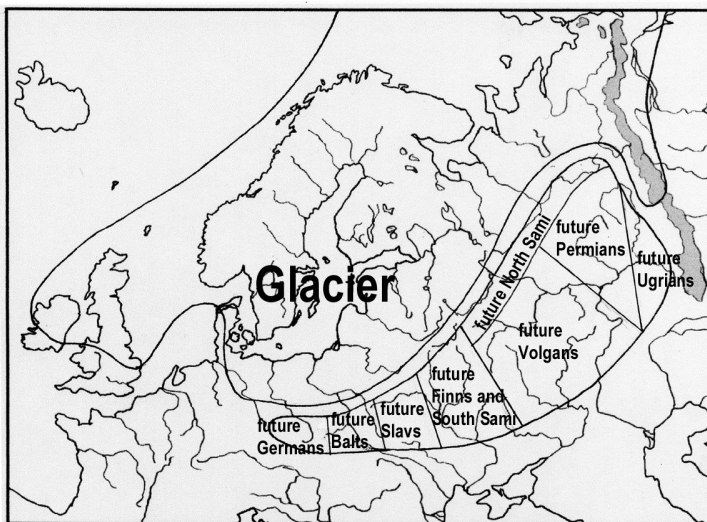
3. The Post-Swiderian population

The Post-Swiderian (Krasnosillyan) people are likely to have been genetically and perhaps also linguistically relatively homogeneous. The dominant type in the northern parts of the region they inhabited was the haplotype N3 of the Y chromosome while in the southern parts the haplotype R1a predominated. The northern areas were part of the large mammoth-hunting region that stretched as far as Southeastern Siberia. Pauli Saukkonen assumes that the languages of the N3 region and the R1a region of Europe were Finno-Ugric or Uralic (Saukkonen 2005). We can examine the peoples of the Post-Swiderian region from the perspective of the present-day populations and ask, “In what respects can the Post-Swiderian people of the Late Ice Age possibly be considered the genetic

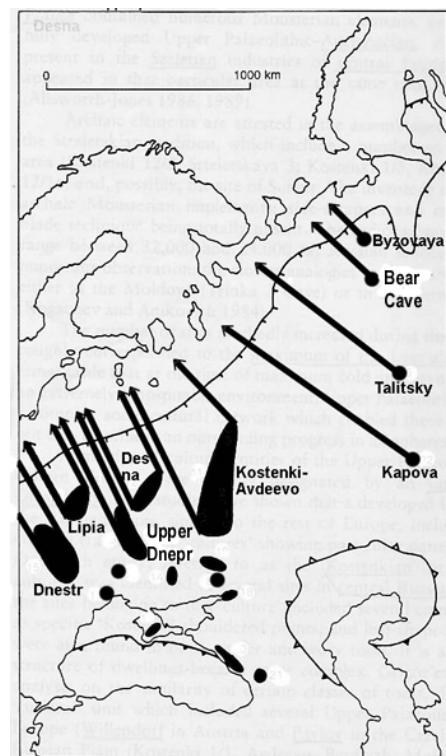
ancestors of the present-day inhabitants?” We can seek an answer to this question in the light of the fact that peoples in general moved from the southern edge of the ice sheet towards land newly laid bare of ice. Map 4 shows the regions that were the probable ancient habitats of the “future Germans”, “future Balts”, “future Slavs”, “future Finns and Southern Sami”, “future Northern Sami”, “future Volgans”, “future Permians” and “future Ugrians”. These people presumably formed a west-east genetic continuum with those populations living farther west having a stronger western genetic heritage and those living in the east having much more of an unadulterated “Old Eastern European” genetic make-up.

4. The resettlement of Northern Europe

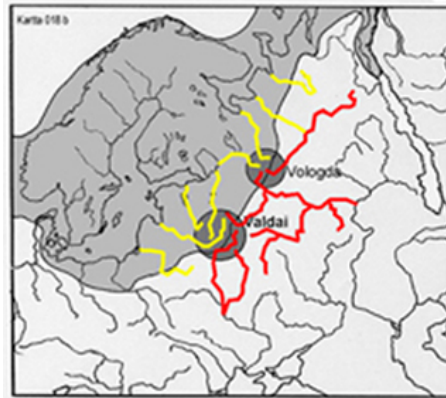
The Resettlement of Northern Europe for the eastern half of Europe meant that the Post-Swiderian people moved to those regions from which the ice had retreated. This migration began ca. 13,500 BC (see Map 5).



Map 4.



Map 5.



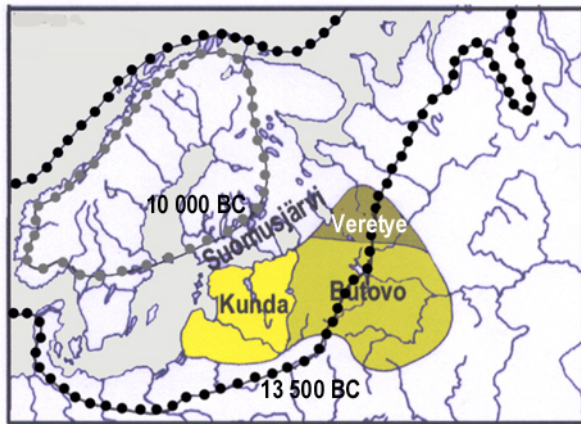
Map 6.

As the edge of the ice sheet gradually moved over the period 13,500–9,000 BC farther and farther north and the people living close to the edge of the retreating ice followed in its wake, they probably followed large rivers as their route. These provided a suitable both in summer and in winter. Access to the edge of the ice sheet was along the Dnepr from the south and along the Volga from the east. Both of these large rivers led to the Valdai plateau and it is probable that the Valdai region served as a meeting place for different peoples towards the end of the Ice Age. A second place where different peoples tended to congregate was probably the Vologda plateau. When the ice began to retreat in a northwesterly direction ca. 13,500 BC, the people who had gathered at the two meeting places again found a number of rivers that they could exploit. They could follow the Nemunas (Nemen) or the Daugava Rivers to the Baltic Sea, the Velikaya-Peipus-Narva watercourse to the Gulf of Finland and the course of the Lovatj and Volkhov to Lake Ladoga. There was also a river route from the Vologda plateau to Lake Onega. Map 6 shows the main rivers that the “future Finnic and Southern Sami peoples” had at their disposal.

Similarly, the westernmost Post-Swiderians, e.g. the “future Germanic tribes” could avail themselves of the Bug-Vistula, Oder and Elbe rivers to travel to those regions on the south side of the Baltic Sea left by the retreating ice.

5. The first inhabitants of Finland

For Finland and the Finns the key period of time was that of the centuries 9,000–8,000 BC. At that time the resettlement of Northern Europe reached Finnish territory, and with it came the first inhabitants of Finland.

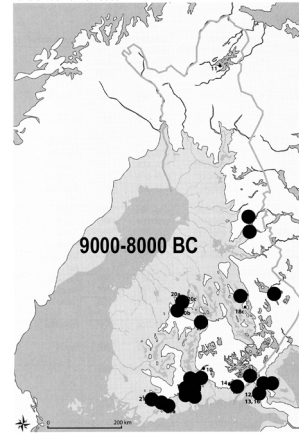


Map 7.

During the period from 13,500 to 9,000 BC three clear cultural regions emerged: Kunda, Butovo (or Butovo-Yenevo) and Veretye (or Aunus) (see Map 7). All three represented Post-Swiderian cultures, the peoples of which originated from the Post-Swiderian region shown on Map 4. When the inhabitants moved during the period 9,000–8,000 BC to what is now Finland, the two principal areas from where the people came were the Kunda and Veretye regions. This meant that the first inhabitants of Finland came from the south (the region of Kunda culture and, in particular, from the Pulli settlement site) and the east (Veretye or Aunus culture). By 9,000–8,000 BC there were people living in almost all parts in Finland that were fit for habitation. They lived mainly in southern and southeastern Finland (see Map 8).

6. A new mixed northern population

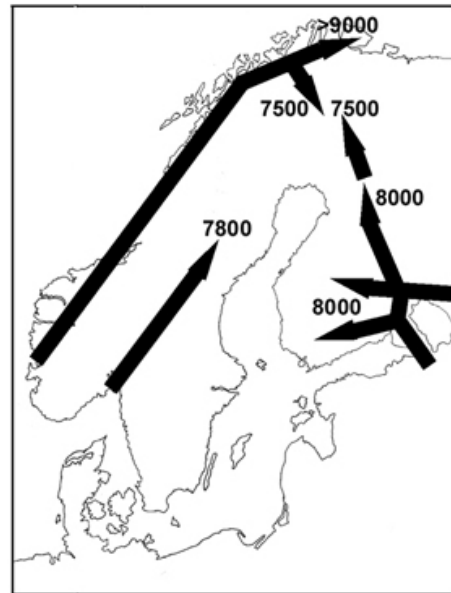
A key factor in the evolution of the people living in Finland and neighbouring areas was the establishment of a land link between Eastern Karelia and northernmost Fennoscandia. Ca. 9,500–9,000 BC the ice covering Fennoscandia had shrunk to such a degree that the people of these areas were able to make contact with each other by the new land connection (see Map 9).



Map 8.



Map 9.



Map 10.

About 7,500 BC the two different populations began to intermarry (see Map 10). These populations comprised (1) the “New Western Europeans” (the northernmost representatives of which we can also call the “Old Northern Sami” or “Old Komsa people”) that originated primarily from the Iberian refuge and (2) the “New Eastern Europeans” that had come mainly from the Ukrainian refuge. As a result of miscegenation the “**New Northern Sami**” came into being. It seems likely that a new north-south genetic-anthropological continuum was thus created where the genetic composition of the inhabitants was related to where they lived. The farther north the people lived, the greater the proportion of “Old Northern Sami” genes they had and the farther south they lived, the greater the proportion of “New Eastern European” genes. This continuum is still apparent today insofar as the proportion of dark people increases as one gradually proceeds farther north while the predominance of fair-skinned people increases the farther south one goes.

7. Linguistic development of the Post-Swiderian people

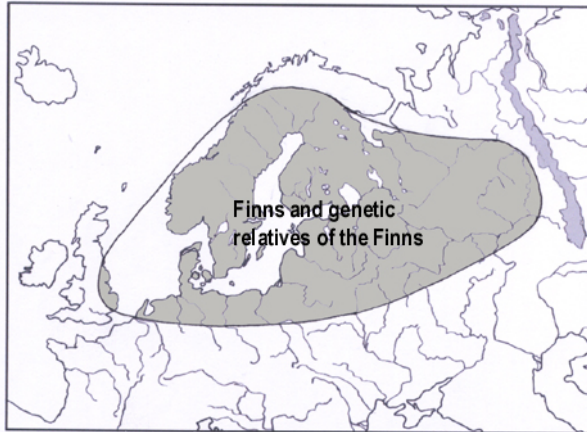
It was assumed above that the languages spoken by the Post-Swiderian peoples at the end of the Ice Age were Finno-Ugric (traditionally Uralic). What, then, happened to them later?

The Post-Swiderian peoples moved west and northwest in conjunction with the resettlement of Northern Europe so that the regions they inhabited

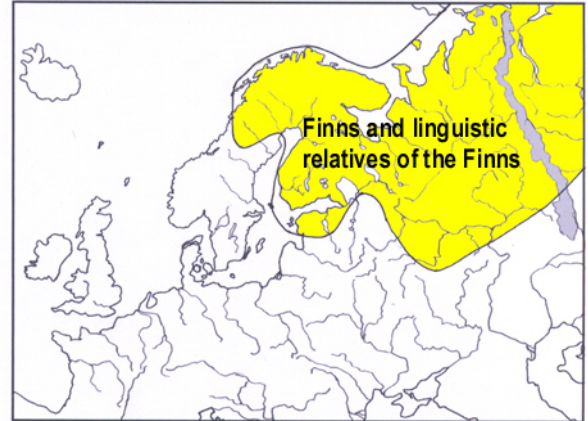
coincided largely with the area shown on Map 11. Roughly speaking, we can claim that the inhabitants of the Post-Swiderian region, in other words, the “New Eastern Europeans”, migrated to the parts of Europe shown on Map 11 as part of the resettlement of Northern Europe. This is the region where even today the people living there constitute both genetically and anthropologically a fairly homogeneous type. The most suitable name for these people at the end of the Ice Age would be “Post-Swiderians” or “New Eastern Europeans”. But after their migration it would perhaps be better to refer to them as “Northern Europeans”.

The belt to which the “Post-Swiderians” migrated when Northern Europe was resettled after the Ice Age can also be determined using archaeological methods. The new region was a belt that followed the southern and eastern shores of the Baltic when they were laid bare by the melting ice sheet. During the Early Mesolithic period this was the home of the Maglemose-Nemen-Kunda chain of cultures (that included at a later stage also Suomusjärvi), and during the Late Mesolithic period where the Ertebølle-Nemen-Narva-Sperrings flourished. During the very earliest stage (before that of Maglemosian culture) when the “Post-Swiderians” reached what is today Denmark and Northern Germany, they came into contact with Hamburgian and Ahrensburgian cultures. According to Pauli Saukkonen (2005) the German archaeologist Alfred Rust “came to the simple conclusion that the people of Hamburgian and Ahrensburgian cultures came from the east (Rust 1951: 48–52, 1972: 64) and not from the Magdalenian regions [Western Europe] as was thought earlier and as is still assumed in Finland. They [the Hamburgian and Ahrensburgian people] had narrow Brünn-type faces (after finds made at Brünn) as opposed to the broad-faced Cro-Magnon type (ibid. 200–201). Finds from Hamburgian culture reveal Gravettian influence, and it belongs to the sphere of Abschlag culture, which extended from the Black Sea to Germany (...)”.

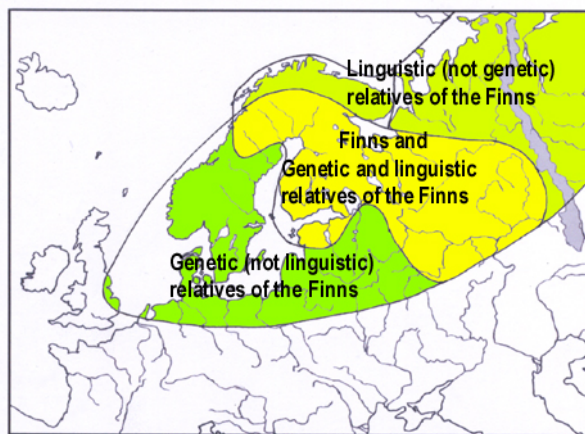
It must be assumed that these people had, right up to the final period of the resettlement of Northern Europe, retained (not only their genetic but) also their linguistic origins. Perhaps the people of Hamburgian and Ahrensburgian cultures living in this region still spoke Finno-Ugric (Uralic) languages.



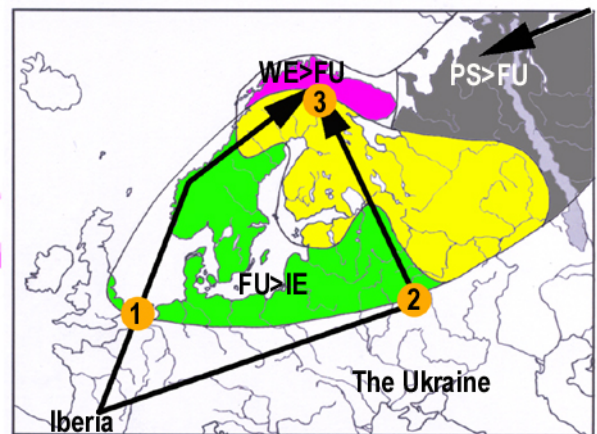
Map 11.



Map 12.



Map 13.

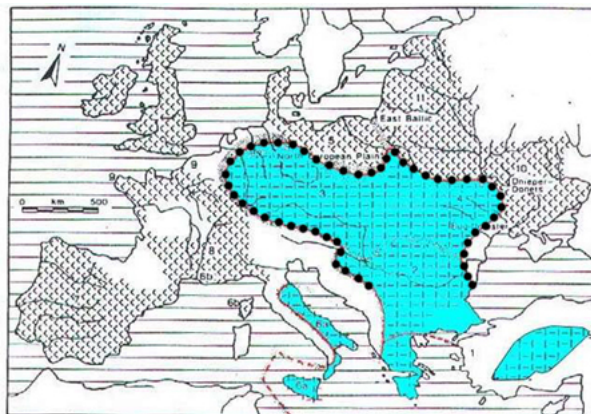


Map 14.

The linguistic nature of Northern and Eastern Europe subsequently changed, however, following two different directions: (1) New Finno-Ugric-speaking (Uralic-speaking) areas were attached to the old one in the north and northeast (northernmost Fennoscandia, northeasternmost Europe and Northern Siberia) and (2) the Finno-Ugric-speaking region has shrunk in the northern parts of Central Europe, Scandinavia, Poland, the Baltic, White Russia (Belarus) and Russia. At the beginning of the Christian era the region where Finno-Ugric (Uralic) languages were spoken covered approximately that shown on Map 12. Map 13 shows three different regions: (1) a central region where the Post-Swiderian genetic and linguistic heritage has been preserved, (2) the western region where the Post-Swiderian genetic heritage persists but where Finno-Ugric languages have given way to Indo-European languages, and (3) the eastern region where people with non-Post-Swiderian genetic heritage have adopted a

Finno-Ugric (Uralic) language. The people of region 1 represent “the Finns and their genetic and linguistic relatives” on Map 13, the people of region 2 are “genetic (but not linguistic) relatives of the Finns”, i.e. original Germanic-speaking, Baltic-speaking and Slavic-speaking peoples, and the people of region 3 represent “the linguistic (but not genetic) relatives of the Finns”, i.e. the Northern Sami and Samoyed people.

The language shift from Finno-Ugric to Indo-European in the western region occurred during the period 5,500–3,000 BC when agriculture advanced from the south, mainly from the Band Ceramic, or LBK, region, bringing it to those regions inhabited by Finno-Ugric-speaking hunters. The spread of agriculture and with it the Indo-European language to the north took the form primarily of cultural and linguistic diffusion, not demic diffusion. In other words, it was only agriculture and the Indo-European language that spread; there was no migration of people. The people remained largely where they were and only agricultural skills and linguistic skills (as a consequence of the change of the subsistence system and language) were transferred. This idea has been put forward by the archaeologist Marek Zvelebil, for example, and it is now generally accepted (for example, by Colin Renfrew and Pavel Dolukhanov) (see Map 15, where the boundary of black dots shows how far agriculture spread mainly as demic diffusion and how north of it agriculture spread as cultural diffusion). The claim of the cultural rather than demic diffusion of agriculture is extremely central regarding the origins of the Germanic, Baltic and Slavic peoples.



Map 15.

This process resulted in the Germanic-speaking, Baltic-speaking and Slavic-speaking peoples, who even today represent to a large extent the same genetic and anthropological type as their ancestors, the ancient Post-Swiderians. The main difference is that they speak a different language from their ancestors. The evolution of the Finns has been much the same insofar as they are also of the same genetic and anthropological type as the Post-Swiderians but they differ from the Germanic, Baltic and Slavic populations in that they still speak the same Post-Swiderian language as their ancestors.

There is no firm evidence of the stage at which the northern Sami underwent the language shift WE > FU (where WE is some western European language, possibly a form of Basque).

There exist three possibilities (see Map 14 and the three numbered circles). The first is that the language shift took place at the time when the genetic ancestors of the Northern Sami lived on the North Sea continent ca. 10,000 BC and represented Brommian culture. The second is that it occurred within Eastern European Post-Swiderian culture when the Western Europeans had started moving to Eastern Europe via the Central European gateway after ca. 13,500 BC. The third possibility is that the language shift did not take place until ca. 7,500 BC after the land link between northernmost Fennoscandia and Eastern Karelia had come into being. The fourth possibility, that the Northern Sami became speakers of a Finno-Ugric language as late as the Bronze Age can hardly be deemed credible.

We do not know when the Palaeosiberian people, the ancestors of the Samoyeds, moved to northeastern Europe and there gave up their Palaeosiberian tongue in favour of some Finno-Ugric language(s). It has been thought possible that this did not happen until after 2000 BC.

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