

and using these reconstructions to build up branches of a linguistic genealogical tree is even less promising. Matasović's conclusion that "finally, the fact that there appear to be only a few words of non-IE origin shared by Goidelic and Brythonic, but not by other Celtic or Indo-European languages, points to the conclusion that Proto-Insular Celtic was not the language spoken by the Celts who first came into contact with the pre-Indo-European inhabitants of the British Isles. As far as the evidence of these loanwords is concerned, Proto-Insular Celtic never existed" (p. 160) may be agreed with, but for a different reason — from the viewpoint of the conventional Gaulish-Brittonic theory. Analysis of obscure words held to be of substratal origin does not significantly change things. Insular Celtic is nothing more than a modelled molecule of imaginary substance, completely out of place within the linguistic model based on glottochronology. Of course, Matasović is not the only scholar to be blamed for that.

In this case, is there any positive agenda in the substratum theory at all? For a long period of time, before Celtic languages were introduced to Britain and Ireland, earlier peoples must have used local toponyms for at least the most prominent features of the landscape, and some of these could have possibly survived

the shift from languages now lost to those now present on the British Islands. One such group of identifiable toponyms consists of river-names that date from a very old stage of Western Indo-European. Such names have been identified on the Continent by Hans Krahe (Krahe 1962, 1964) and are also present in Britain (Nicolaisen 1976, 1982) and Ireland (de Bernardo Stempel 2000, 2005, 2007 and Vennemann 1998). These names are described as 'Pre-Celtic' or 'Old European' (*Alteuropäisch*). The development of this trend seems to be the only prospective way, but, although it was first contemplated quite a while ago, it has not yet yielded any linguistically reliable basis. Residues of so called «Old European» hydronymy have indeed been identified within Celtic-speaking regions — for example, the stem **ausa-* or "the well-known hydronymic base **dura-/duria*" (De Bernardo Stempel 2000: 99). To those, we could add the etymologically obscure Irish hydronyms **ness-* and **úr*, but in any case, the whole matter lies in the domain of "the unresolved question about the real nature of the river-names ascribed to 'Old European' hydronymy" (ibid.). This issue goes beyond the subject of Indo-European or Celtic studies and has little to do with either the construction of a genealogical tree for Celtic or arguments in favour of the Insular theory.

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Reply to Tatyana Mikhailova

In her comments on my article on the substratum in Insular Celtic, Tatyana Mikhailova raises some important questions. The first is the genetic classification of Celtic languages, on which I personally prefer to remain non-committed, but which is a matter of serious disputes in Celtic linguistics. I would say that the majority of scholars now seems to accept the "Insular Celtic" hypothesis of McCone, Schrijver, and others, but I agree with Mikhailova that the alternative, Gallo-Brythonic hypothesis, remains a viable option. I cannot agree, however, with her thesis that the distribution of non-Celtic loanwords in Insular Celtic languages is irrelevant to the issue of genetic classification.

It is true that Irish and English share many loanwords from Old Norse, but the crucial thing is that we can show that they were borrowed *independently* in those languages. Of course, it would be absurd to assume that Irish and Welsh arrived to the British Isles before their separation because they share a huge number of loanwords from the same source (English), but this is because historical phonology of these languages shows that these loanwords entered both Irish and Welsh *after* certain exclusive Goidelic and Brythonic innovations. For example, although both W *papur* and Ir. *páipéar* come from English *paper* (ultimately, of course, from Gr. *pápyros*), it is clear that these words were borrowed after lenition and apocope that affected both

Goidelic and Brythonic, with different results. I believe the same argument holds for non-IE loanwords in Insular Celtic: since the number of such loanwords that are attested in both branches of Insular Celtic is rather small, it is more plausible to assume that the ancestors of the Irish and Welsh did not speak a single language at the time of borrowing of the substratum vocabulary. The opposite case (that the Insular Celts arrived to the British Isles as a single linguistic community, but borrowed very few common substratum words) remains a possibility, but to my mind it is clearly less probable. It is also possible that Celts simply did not borrow many words from substratum language(s) in the British Isles, but this is improbable considering the large number of words in Irish and Welsh that do not have any etymology at all and that cannot be projected to Proto-Insular Celtic. Of course, future etymological research could disprove this claim.

Mikhailova is correct in arguing that the exact number of substratum words in Insular Celtic is uncertain, and I am quite convinced that it is indeed larger than the number indicated in my *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic* (Matasović 2009). However, I do not find justified Mikhailova's criticism of my ety-

mology of OIr. *fannall*, MW *gwennol* "swallow". The avocalism in Goidelic may be due to a trivial assimilation (**wesnālā* > **wennālā* > **wannālā*), similar to well-established Joseph's rule (**eRa* > **aRa*), which operated in Proto-Celtic. The existence of Gallo-Roman *vanellus* "Northern lapwing, *vanellus vanellus*" only shows that the reflex of Proto-Celtic **wesnālā* "swallow" may have existed in Gaulish, where the Celtic suffix **-ālā* was apparently replaced by the similar Latin *-ellus*. I believe that, when a plausible Celtic and Indo-European etymology of a word exists, we need very strong reasons to assume that it was borrowed from some unknown source.

Note, finally, that Proto-Celtic **brokko-* "badger" may have an Indo-European etymology after all. Irene Balles (2010: 15–16) suggests that this word is derived from PIE **brog^h-ko-* (with the same suffix as in **sukko-* "pig" and **bukko-* "goat"). The root would have been **b^hreg^h-* "to smell, to stink" (Lat. *fragrāre*, OIr. *braigid* "to fart"). This etymology will be discussed in detail in the second, enlarged and corrected edition of my *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic* (preliminary *Adenda et corrigenda* are available for free download from my website (<http://www.iffzg.hr/~rmatasov>)).

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