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Interlinking language and material culture – a study of European populations in time and space

This project brings together the disciplines of archaeology and toponomastics to test recent theories explaining the early spread of Slavic culture and language. Using the tools of modern data sciences and statistical analysis, it investigates three language contact zones on the outer reaches of early medieval Slavic settlement: (i) the eastern frontier of the Franconian Empire, (ii) the trade and settlement zone of the north eastern Baltic Rim, and (iii) the north-western continental contact area with the Viking world. In each region, the use of Slavic ceased already by the 12th century, and so their toponymic systems contain elements of only early Slavic name-giving. Through geospatial analysis of the distribution of early Slavic vs. other name types in comparison to archaeological evidence, we aim to discover new diagnostic patterns for revealing early sites of Slavic settlement. We will also pursue the question of what the toponymic outcomes of language contact scenarios can reveal about the sociolinguistic contexts from which they emerged.

We hereby continue the cooperation of archaeology at Charles University with Heidelberg University in the field of linguistic research.