

Blažek, Václav

Introduction

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1 INTRODUCTION

The whole book is divided into three parts. The first part summarizes the oldest linguistic, epigraphical and archaeological traces of the ethnic groups using one of the Germanic languages. The second part outlines the history of all Germanic languages, from the oldest times of tribal society up to the modern dialects if they still exist. Each of these histories begins with quoting of selected historical texts which mention the given people. Then, brief historic descriptions of the migration from the Migration Period follow together with the delineation of the processes which formed the future nations. Further, the respective ethnonyms are analysed from the etymological point of view. The epigraphical stage in the development of the majority of the old Germanic languages is illustrated by examples of the early runic inscriptions with their interpretation. In case any literary texts were written, at least one is cited together with its translation. A brief overview of the literary works constitutes a bridge to the present days. The third part brings the representative bibliography chosen especially from the diachronic perspective, consisting of both the used and recommended works which are arranged in both alphabetic and thematic order.

The attachment consists of eight parts. The first two parts comprise graphs which model the position of the Germanic language branch within the Indo-European language family and its inner classification. The third and fourth ones present an outline of comparative Germanic phonetics and morphology. The fifth one mediate some longer Latin texts relating to the history of Germanic tribes with translations. The sixth part bring clearly structured tables with variants of runic and Gothic script. The seventh part demonstrates the application of so-called ‘recalibrated’ glottochronology to the classification of the Old Germanic languages, including the used lexical lists of the Gothic, Old Norse, Old English, Old Saxon and Old High German languages, plus reconstructed Proto-Germanic. The eighth part is devoted to the classification of the modern Frisian dialects, applying the same glottochronological method.

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