



Cultural Reconstruction

Methodological Considerations

Frog

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Part 1

Considering Culture from Folklore Studies

Culture as Social Semiotic

- 'Language' easily dominates our vision
 - Signifiers + meanings, concepts
 - Weakness of early folklore studies
 - Overcome across recent decades
- Variety of expressive media
 - Embodied action / activity / performance
 - Material culture
 - Construction of space & environment
 - *Linguistic behaviour may complement or mediate*
 - E.g. articulate mythic images, actions and events in ritual
 - Explain or narrate mythic events and concepts

Comparison as Basis for Historical Reconstruction

■ Formal typologies

- Lexicon, stories
- Artefacts
- Burial types & building foundations, etc.

■ Chronologize

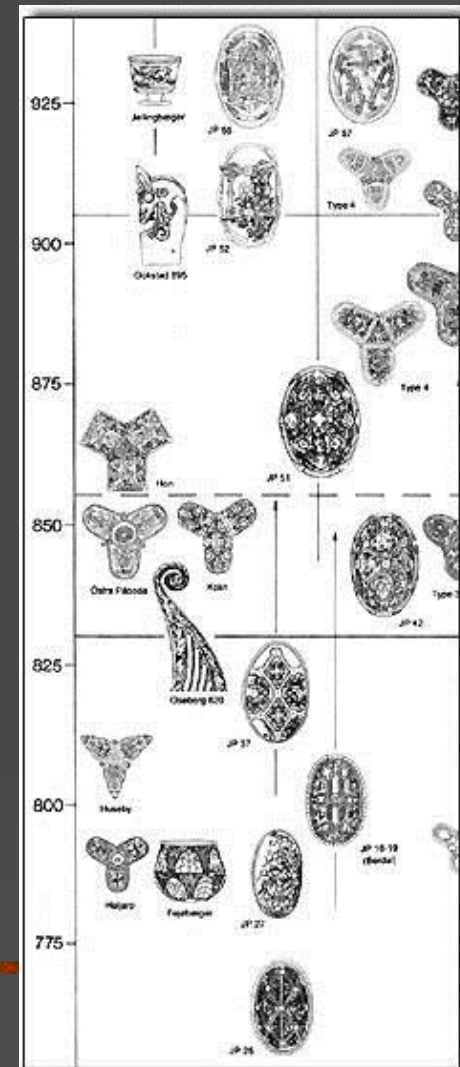
- Absolute chronologies
- Relative chronologies

■ Infrastructures for comparison

- Discipline-dependent (formal criteria)

■ But what about culture?

- Linking data and interpretation
- Analogical comparisons





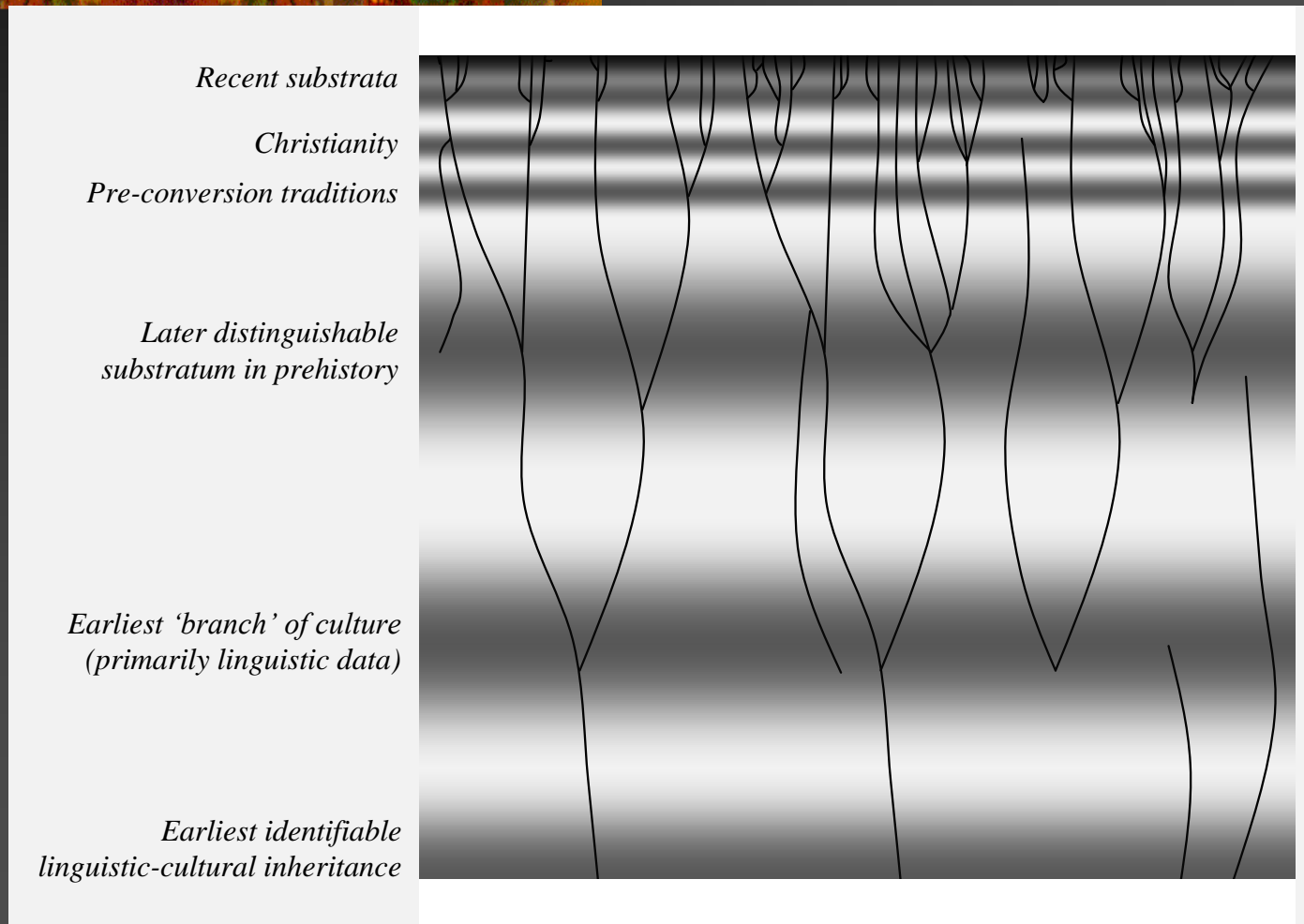
Part 2

Correlating Diverse Data

Correlation

- What is being compared?
 - Signifieds rather than signifiers
 - Fields of culture
 - Ethnocultural substratum
 - A tool for correlating diverse data
 - Innovations but also what was inherited
 - Networking data
 - Correlation of minimal elements
 - May bring together unexpected elements
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Ethnocultural Substratum as an Indexing Tool



Problem of Correlation

- Different Trails through History
 - Language shifts
 - Religious / ideological conversion
 - Spread of technologies
 - Livelihoods / social structures
-



Part 3

The Example of **Ilma – Ilmarinen*

Ilmarinen and Proto-Uralic Heritage?

■ Sky-gods in Uralic

- **ilma* – Finnic (> Sámi), Udmurt, Komi, Khanty
- **juma* – Finnic (> Sámi), Mari, Mordvin
- **tōrəm* – Mansi, Khanty (most often with *numi/num*);
- **nu-ma* – Samoyedic (cf. Khanty, Mansi)

- Loans extend semantic field to 'sky'
 - Semantic correlation reflects conceptual modelling
 - Proto-Uralic theonym = 'Sky'

- Proto-Uralic probable designation **Ilma*
 - = theonym or 'sky/weather' not epithet or noun 'god'
 - Common noun in all but Samoyedic, Mari and Mordvin
 - Absence of **ilma* cognates from Mari and Mordvin
 - **Ilma* – background as name (**Ilma* / **Il-*) vs. noun 'sky'

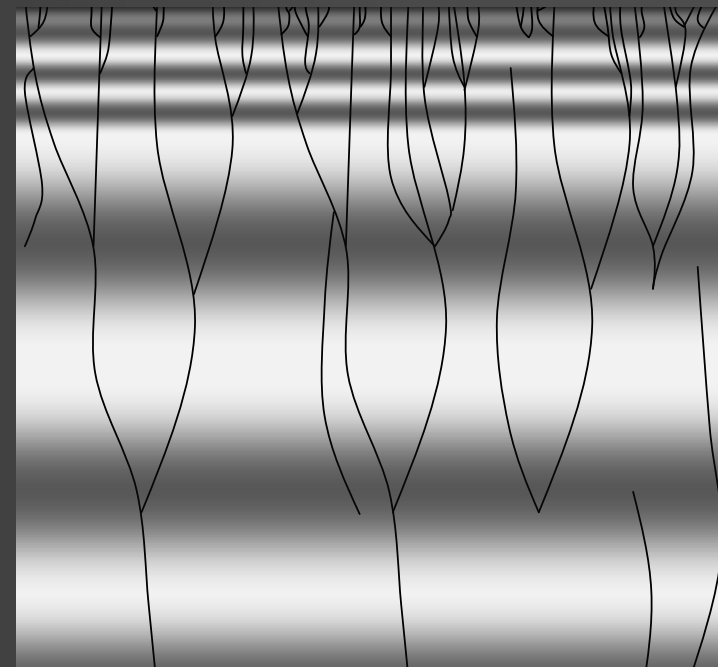
Proto-Uralic **Ilma*

■ **Ilma* in mythology/religion

- Dualist system
- Dualist diver myth creation
- Center of shamanic activity

■ **Ilma*-theonyms

- Khanty *Num-Iləm/Itəm*
- Komi *Jen (Jenm-)*
- Udmurt *Inmar (< Fi. Ilmarī)*
- Finnic *Ilmarinen*
 - (> Sámi *Ilmaris*
- *Ilmarinen* : discontinuity from Proto-Uralic

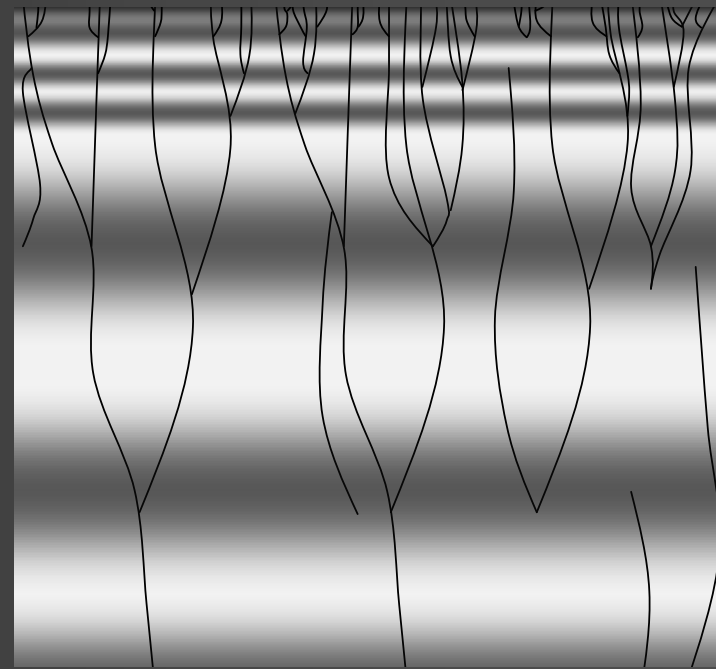


Figure

- (central?) sky-god
- central sky-god
- central sky-god
- mythic smith (sky-god)
- = *Biegolmai*, 'Wind-Man')

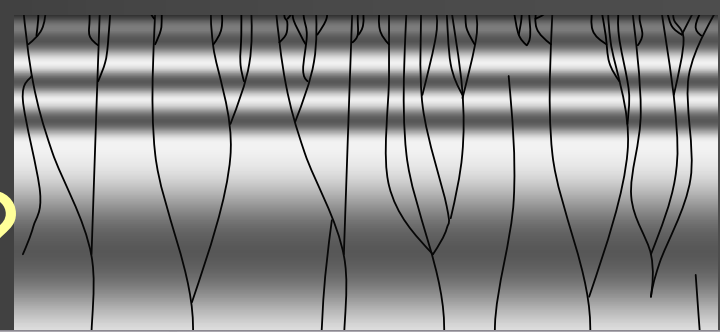
Ilmarinen and et al.

- > Proto-Finnic **Ilma-ri*
- The 'smith of heaven'
 - Circum-Baltic phenomenon
 - System of mythic images and stories (or core motifs)
 - Links to god of thunder (most central sky-god)
 - Associated with change in technology
- Restructuring of mythology
 - Technology of incantations (vs. shamanism)
 - *Väinä-möinen* – demiurge and god of poetry
 - Thunder god *Ukko* – disconnected from mythology
 - Broader semiotics of kalevalaic poetry



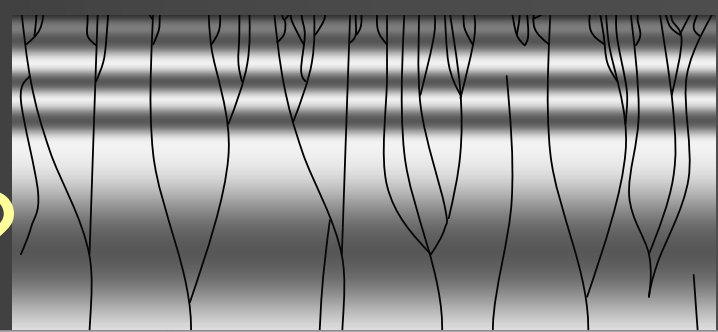
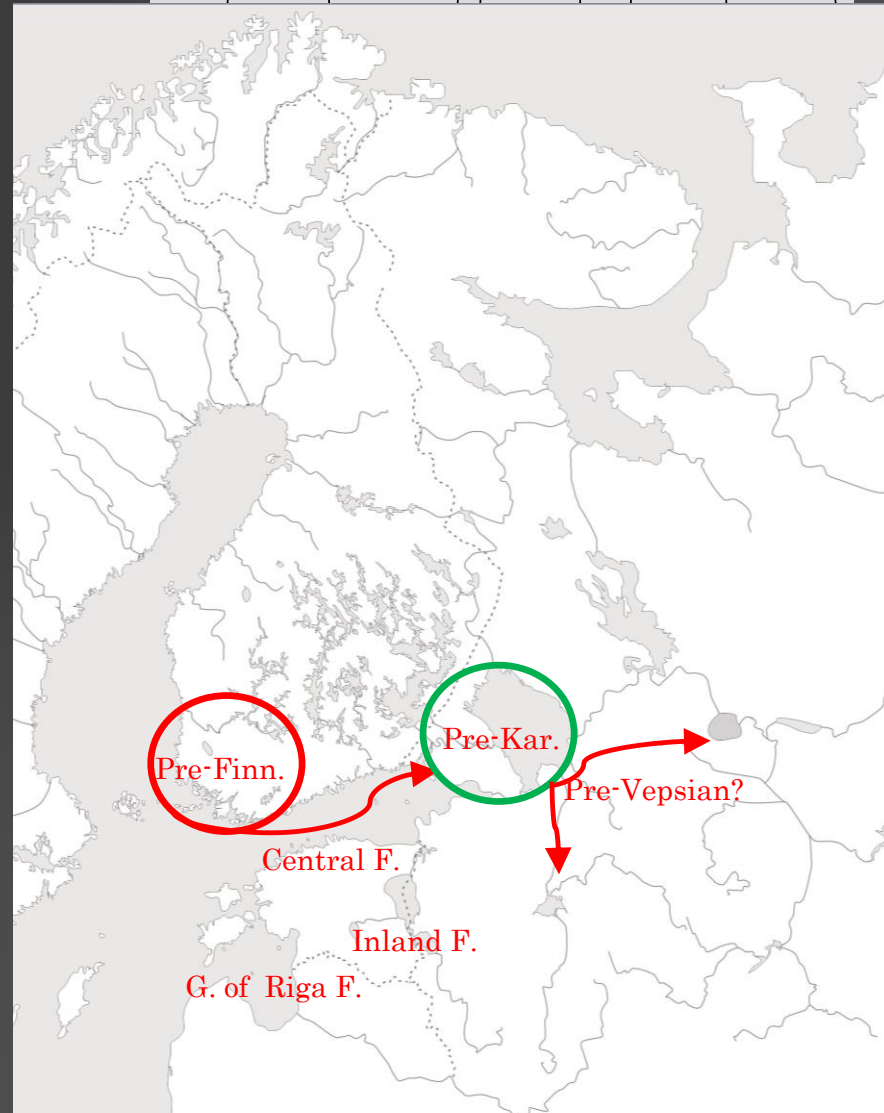
Cultural Bottle-Neck?

- Specific to Finno-Karelian
 - Most likely spread 8th cent.
 - 'Finland'/'Karelia' mostly Sámi
 - Spread = culture shift
 - Core mythology & practices
 - Substrates possible



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 - Substrates possible
- Comparison with other Finnic
 - Traditions in Estonia
 - Did not undergo shift
 - Vepsian unclear
 - Spread of language only?
 - Novgorod birch bark 292
 - Independent tradition?





Part 4

Perspectives

Problems and Possibilities

- Finno-Karelian traditions have rich data
 - May be very different from other cultures
 - 'Revolution' in religion did not affect all areas of culture
 - E.g. lament (*itkukieli*) lacks central innovations in symbolics
- Possibilities
 - Local religious substrates and early Vepsian religion
 - Contrastive perspectives for Estonian
 - Earlier emphasis on correlation and common heritage
- Ethnocultural substratum for dynamic models
 - Attend to the interconnectedness of cultural phenomena
 - Consider sameness–difference, establishment–spread



Thank you!

