

Problems of Ugric etymology and linguistic palaeontology

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Current issues in historical linguistics

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Aims of this talk

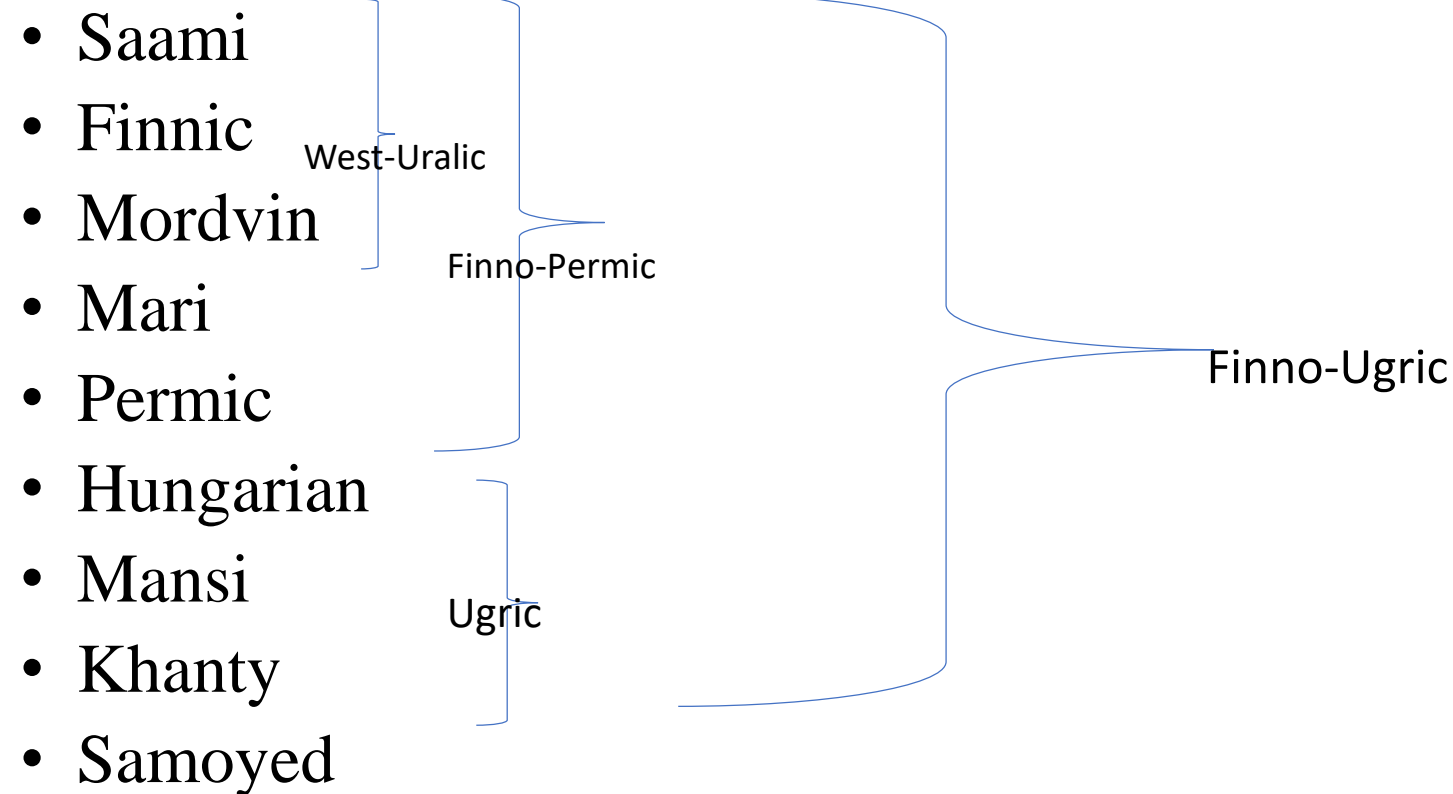
- Scrutiny of cultural lexicon reconstructed to the Ugric proto-language in earlier etymological sources (MSzFE, UEW)
 - Case study: equine vocabulary
 - Can equine vocabulary be reconstructed to **Proto-Ugric**?
 - Analysis of suggested loan etymologies
- Impacts of the scrutiny of etymologies to Uralic linguistic palaeontology/ "cultural reconstruction"
 - Case study on the problems of cultural reconstruction on a proto-language level (cf. Clackson 2000, 2007: 196–197 , 210–213)

The Ugric languages

- Hungarian
- Khanty
 - North
 - East
 - South
- Mansi
 - North
 - East
 - South
 - West

Ugric and the structure of the Uralic language-family

- **9 clearly defined branches, unclear larger taxonomical units**

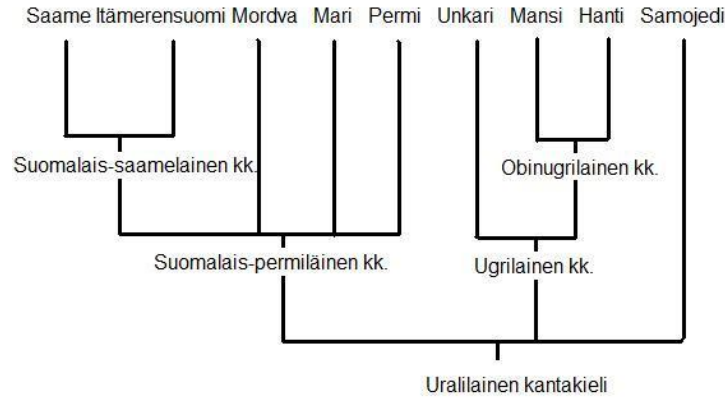


**Helmski 1982, 2003,
Salminen 2002: "areal
genetic units"**

Taxonomy of the Ugric languages: different views



Uralilainen sukupuu Tapani Salmisen mukaan (1999).



Uralilainen sukupuu Ulla-Maija Kulosen mukaan (2002).

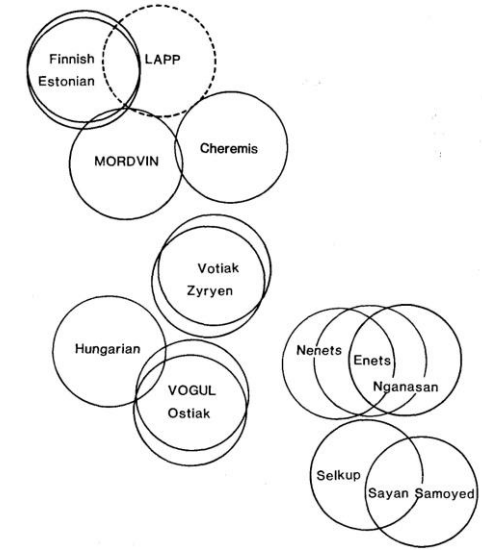
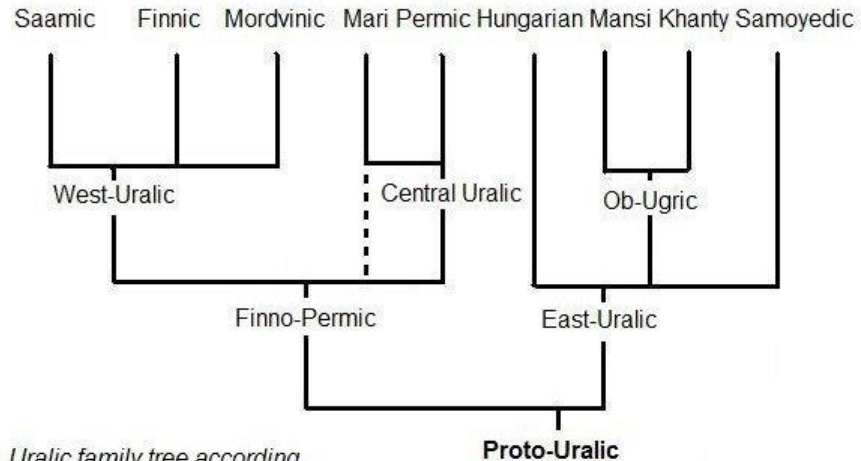


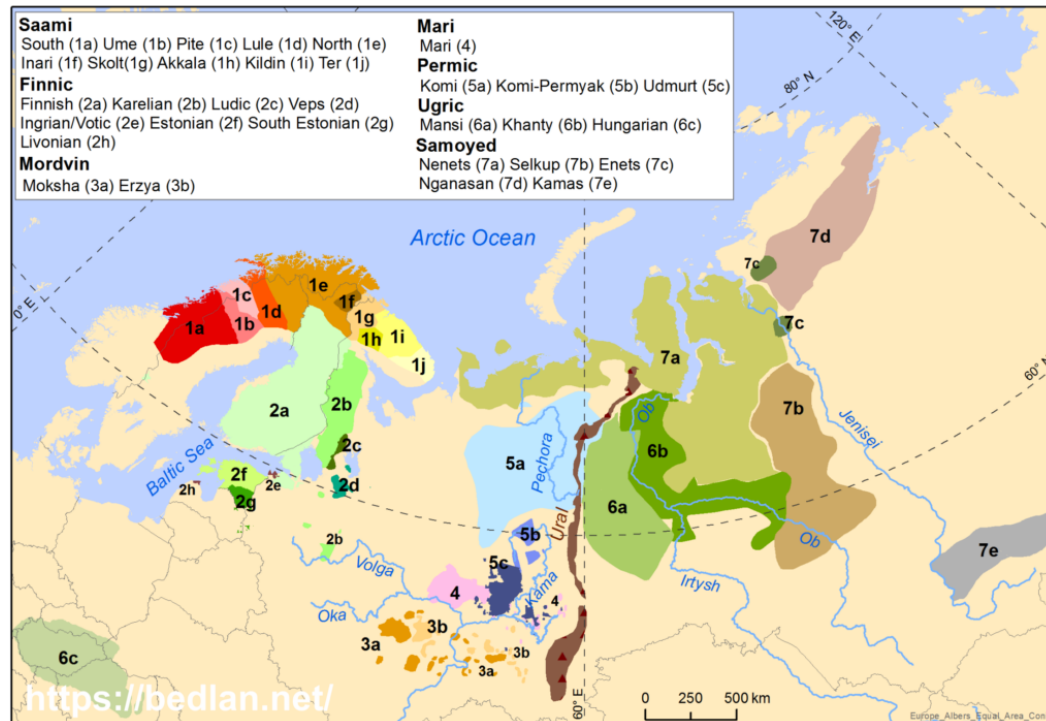
Figure 2



Uralic family tree according to Jaakko Häkkinen (2007)

Geographical distribution of Uralic

Early spread of Uralic according to Grünthal et al. (forthcoming), map by Nora Fabritius.



- Map by Timo Rantanen. Source <https://bedlan.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Uralic-web-1024x709.png>

Ugric languages and cultural reconstruction

- It is usually assumed that speakers of Proto-Ugric were pastoral nomads
- Common vocabulary referring to horses and riding: 'horse', 'saddle', 'whip', 'quiver (on belt)', 'charriot' + some other etymologies
 - Most of these words lack loan-etymologies and are assumed in standard sources (MSzFE, UEW, WOT to be Ugric lexical innovations; however, cf. Harmatta 1997; Zhivlov 2016)
 - Some loans from (Indo-)Iranian, also Turkic etymologies suggested for some
- Significant role of horses in the culture and mythology of the Ob-Ugrians
- Lack of Turkic loans pertaining to horses in Hungarian: Hungarians must have been pastoralists already before they came into intense contact with the Turkic languages of the East European steppe (WOT)

Ugric languages and cultural reconstruction

- The cultural reconstruction of Ugric is noteworthy as it gives quite different picture from the reconstruction that can be drawn from the PU/PFU vocabulary (K. Häkkinen 2001) that includes very few "cultural" items
- The situation is similar with the reconstruction of the vocabulary of other "intermediary proto-languages" in the Uralic family: also the vocabulary traditionally reconstructed to Finno-Permic and Finno-Volgaic includes more cultural vocabulary (such agriculture terms) and vocabulary referring to animals, trees etc.
 - However, recent research (Aikio 2015) has shown that much of the "Finno-Permic/Volgaic" vocabulary is irregular and probably results in loans from substrate languages; these layers also include well-known loans from Indo-European, many of which are clearly parallel borrowings (Fi *porsas* 'pig' ~ Komi *parś*)
 - Ugric vocabulary has not been analysed to same extent

Ugric lexicon: equestrian terms

- Parpola 2012: 168

“That the Ugric speakers were horsemen in ancient times is suggested by a number of equestrian terms in the Ugric languages (cf. Hajdú 1987: 331–333). Particularly interesting is the word for ‘horse’, Hungarian *ló*, Mansi *lū*, Khanty *law* < Proto-Ugric **lox*, which is neither of Uralic nor Indo-European origin, nor does it agree with any of the other Eurasian words for ‘horse’: Proto-Yeniseic had **kuqs* and Proto-Turkic **(x)at*, while all East Asian terms (Mongolic, Tungusic, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, etc.) go back to Pre-Proto-Mongolic **mori* (cf. Janhunen 1998: 415–416).”

Ugric lexicon: equestrian terms

- Kálmán 1988: 398: "The Hungarian words of Ugric origin ... are at any rate evidence of horse-breeding and riding."
- Zhivlov 2016: 104: "Judging by irregular vowel correspondences, the word for 'saddle', together with other horse-related terms, was borrowed separately by different Ugric languages in Common Ugric times from an unknown source."

Ugric languages: taxonomy and common innovations

- **No commonly accepted reconstruction of Proto-Ugric! (cf. Bakró-Nagy 2013: 174)**
- Ugric reconstructions in the MSzFE and UEW pay little attention to vocalism, based on intuition; many etymologies are unreliable
- Many details of Ugric historical phonology unclear; new views on Ob-Ugric historical phonology (Zhivlov 2006) and Proto-Uralic phonology (Aikio 2012, 2015 etc.) impact the reconstructions of Ugric phonology
 - Many "irregular" and sporadic changes postulated in the history of Hungarian > reconstruction of vocalism difficult
 - Proto-Khanty and Proto-Ob-Ugric vowel history is very complicated, no commonly accepted reconstruction of Proto-Ob-Ugric exists; Honti 1982, Tálos 1984, Helimski 1985; Zhivlov 2006 presents a new Proto-Khanty (and Proto-Ob-Ugric) reconstruction
 - Many changes postulated by Sammallahti 1988 and Róna-Tas for Proto-Ob-Ugric are obsolete
 - Few phonological innovations: ? *ś > s, merger of *s and *š
- Etymological studies in the late 20th century concentrated on Uralic the western (Finnic, Saami, Mordvin) and eastern (Samoyed) parts of the Uralic family
- Lexicon: Ugric lexicon reconstructed in MSzFE, UEW 126 / 178 (additional notes by Abondolo 1996)
- Possible morphological innovations: *l*-ablative, ? local cases from Uralic **nV*-, personal pronouns, "unstable verbs"
- **The vast time depth of Proto-Ugric (and Proto-Ob-Ugric)** makes the reconstruction of phonology and lexicon challenging
 - Tálos 1984: 95–97; Sammallahti 1988: 499, 502; Aikio 2014: 29–30
 - Time depth: must be close to Proto-Uralic (4000 BCE); as shown by Proto-Iranian or Old Iranian loans and lack of phonological innovations

Ugric languages: taxonomy and common innovations

- Taxonomical questions concerning Khanty, Mansi and Hungarian: traditional (UEW; Honti 1997, 2013) vs. alternative views (Gulya 1994; Salminen 2002; Janhunen 2009; Häkkinen 2007)
 - Ob-Ugric node sometimes discarded; closer connection of Hu and Mansi suggested by Janhunen (2009) on the basis of few trivial innovations
 - Ugro-Samoyed innovations few and disputed, no convincing arguments for "East Uralic" (contra J. Häkkinen 2009)
 - The lexical evidence frequently invoked in support of the traditional model (see esp. Honti 1997: 45–49)
 - Noteworthy also that the vocabulary exclusively shared by the Ob-Ugric languages includes many clearly irregular cognates (Honti 1982; Sipos 2005)

Ugric lexicon

- UEW: 126 etymologies + uncertain
- Few examples of probable innovations that replace a PU item (cf. Gulya 1994; Salminen 2002), possible examples
 - PUg **tüγ3-t3*, **tüw3-t3* 'fire' (vs. PU **tuli*)
- PUg lexicon includes loans from Indo-Iranian: several layers of Iir loans in Hungarian, Khanty and Mansi
 - Many parallel loans (Hu *hét*, Kh East (V) *läwət*, Ms North (So) *sāt* ← Iranian **sapta-*, Korenchy 1972; Sammalahiti 1988: 503–504) > disputed evidence for contacts on Proto-Ugric level
 - Earliest loans (Ob-Ugric **päčäy* 'reindeer calf' ← PI **patsu-ka-*, Kh East *᠕ᠣᠶ᠋ᠢᠷ* etc. 'Panzerhemd' ← Alanic **zyar-*) confined to Hu, Mansi or Khanty have to be equally old (Koivulehto 2007; Holopainen 2019: 341–344)
 - Various ideas concerning the donor language and the stratigraphy of the loanwords: Proto-/Old-Iranian type loans followed by Alanic loans; Harmatta (1997) suggests a layer of "East Iranian loanwords"
- Turkic-Proto-Ugric contacts disputed (Róna-Tas 1988:): problems with phonology and time-depth; common Wanderwörter (Ug ?? **kottaŋV* 'swan' ~ Turkic **kotan*, **kuntV* 'beaver' ~ Turkic **kunduz*)

Lexicon and cultural reconstruction: methodology

- Lexical innovations in Ugric – where do words come from?
- Derivatives, loans, onomatopoeia – no *Urschöpfung* (K. Häkkinen 1983: 20)
- Problems and caution with cultural reconstruction: Anttila 1989: 372–374, Clackson (2007: 209–210) etc.

? *oćtVrV 'whip'

- Hu *ostor*, OHu *ustor*
- Ms South (TJ) *aštə·r*, (KU) *ōštər*, North *ašter* (< PMs *aćtər)
 - PIIr *(H)aštraH- > OI *aštrā-*, Av *aštrā-*
- Widely accepted and unproblematic (Indo-)Iranian etymology (Korenchy 1972: 56–57)
 - The Hu and Ms words have to reflect separate loans, however
 - The vowel-relation is not regular; the Old Hungarian forms with *u* unclear and difficult to explain
 - The meaning 'whip' fits best the meanings attested in Iranian, regardless of what is the precise meaning that can be reconstructed for the Proto-Indo-Iranian word (see Wojtilla 2002)
 - Both Mansi and Hungarian point to an archaic donor: Mansi *ć is difficult to explain from a late form, Hu *s* can also reflect earlier *ć
 - Zhivov 2013 assumes a loan from an unattested branch of Indo-Iranian ("Andronovo Ayran", but this idea is quite speculative, see Holopainen 2019: 156–158)
- Not a Proto-Ugric innovation

? **närkV* 'saddle'

- Hu *nyeräg*
- Kh East (VK), (Vakr) *nöγər* 'Sattel' (< PKh **nōγər*)
- Ms South (TJ) *näwrā*, East (KU) *naγər*, West (P) *naγər* (< PMs **nāyrā*)
 - Irregular Ugric cognates, mismatch of both consonants and vowels (WOT 1210–1213; Zhivlov 2016: 300)
 - Zhivlov (2016) suggests that the word is a loan, even if the source language is not known
- Suggested loan-etymologies not convincing:
 - Harmatta (1997: 72–73): East Iranian **nəγər* < ? PIr **niwara-* 'saddle' hypothetical, no reason to reconstruct **nəγər* on the basis of Khotanese Saka *nyūrr*
 - Bailey (1979: 11, 118, 194): *nyūrr* 'cover, harness' (< **ni-war-n-*); (compound *aśā-nyūrrāna* 'with horse harness'); no meaning 'saddle' is listed by Bailey
 - Turkic loan etymology likewise untenable (cf. Middle Turkic *egär* 'saddle' < ?? Pre-Turkic **ńeger*) (WOT (1210–1213); unclear whether the Turkic word can in any-way be connected with the Ugric words)
- Not a Proto-Ugric innovation

**päkkä* ~ **päkki* 'bridle, rein'

- Hu *fék* 'Zaum, Gebiß, Zügel, Halfter; Bremse'
- Kh East (V) *päk* 'Zügel (des Rentiers); Zaum (des Pferdes)' (< ? PKh **päkV*)
- ? Ms (18th c.) *пехъ* 'дюжина уз(д)а'
- Ugric etymology regular (at least the Hu and Kh cognates < PUg/PU **ä*, Mansi unclear due to poor attestation)
- Not clear that the word has specifically pointed to horses (Khanty 'Zügel (des Rentiers)')
- Harmatta (1997: 73) has suggested a loan from "East Iranian" **pekkə*" < Proto-Iranian **paxštaka-* 'binding, reins (megkötés, kötőfék)'
 - ad hoc (?) reconstruction (*kk, vocalism)
- A possible Proto-Ugric innovation but little evidence for equestrian culture

? **säkVrV* ~ **śäkVrV* 'wagon, vehicle?'

- Hu *szekér* 'wagon'
- Kh East (V) *liker*, (Vj) *ikər, jikər* 'Schlitten; Narte' (< PKh **liker*)
- The irregular anlaut consonant correspondence (Hu *sz* < **ś*, Kh **l* < **s*) noted in earlier research (Korenchy 1972, UEW etc.)
 - Clearly not a Proto-Ugric item
 - Very uncertain Indo-Iranian etymology: ← **ćakarta-* > OI *śakaṭa-*, *śakaṭi* 'has been suggested (Korenchy 1972, UEW etc.)
 - OI *śakaṭa-*, *śakaṭi* 'wagon' of uncertain origin (EWAia s.v. *śakaṭi-*; Harmatta 1997: 76 reconstructs **saka-tra-* [sic]); no cognate in the Iranian branch; Harmatta assumes East Iranian (?) **saka-kara-*
- Not a Proto-Ugric innovation

**tänV-tV* 'quiver'

- Hu *tegöz, tögöz*
- Kh East (V) *tüyət*, South (DN) *tiwət*, North (O) *tiwət* (< PKh ? **tīyət*)
- Ms East (KU) *tāwət*, West (LM) *täut*, North (So) *tawt* (< PMs **tāwət*)
 - Honti 1982: 188 no 632 reconstructs Proto-Ob-Ugric **tūyət*
- Hu *g* can reflect PUg **ŋk* < PU **ŋ*, Khanty and Mansi forms rather point to **γ* or **w* (**ŋ*?)
 - Irregular cognates (one would expect similar reflex of **ŋ* here)
 - However, the development of **ŋ* and **γ* not completely clear (conditions?)
 - Variation between Hu *e* and *ë* unclear
- Probably not a Proto-Ugric innovation

? **luwV* ~ **luɣV* 'horse'

- Hu *ló* (: *lovat*)
- Kh East (V) *loɣ*, South (DN) *taw*, (O) *law* (< PKh ?)
- Ms South (TJ) *low*, East (KU) *lo*, West (P), North (So) *luw* (< PMs ? **luw(V)*)
- The Ugric words are not regular cognates: Honti 1982 reconstructs POUg **lVVɣ*, and even no Proto-Khanty or Proto-Mansi words can be regularly reconstructed
- Hu *lova-* probably points to Pre-Hu **luwV-*
 - Quite possible that word-internal **w* has influenced the vowel-developments, but parallel cases would be needed before the Ugric etymology can be accepted

? **luwV* ~ **luɣV* 'horse'

- Different loan-etymologies have been suggested:
- Turkic loan etymology: ← **ulay* > OT *ulag̃* ‘post horse, transport animal’
 - Criticized by MSzFE s.v. *ló*, Róna-Tas (1988: 749–750), WOT (1192–1195)
 - Not impossible, but no parallels to the dropping of the anlaut vowel are known
 - Time-depth problematic and no other convincing Turkic loans in Proto-Ugric
 - Other Turkic words for horse would probably be more likely sources of borrowing: **at*, **yunta* (borrowed into Proto-Samoyed as **yunta*, Róna-Tas 1988: 745)

? **luwV* ~ **luγV* 'horse'

- Harmatta 1997: 72 suggests a loan from “East Iranian” **loyə* < **vlayə* < PIr **bāraka-* (> Middle Persian *bārag* ‘horse’)
 - The donor form is ad hoc (unclear on what criteria the reconstruction is based on)
 - No suitable source form can be reconstructed to the stages of Iranian that have been in contact with (Proto-)Ugric (Proto-Iranian, “Old Iranian”, early Alanic)
- Napol'skich (2001: 371) has argued that the Ugric word (**luw* in his reconstruction) is from “Para-Tocharian” **ləwā-* ‘Vieh’ < Proto-Tocharian **lūwā-*
 - This etymology is likewise quite improbable (the meaning of the attested Tocharian words A *lu*, B *luwo* is ‘animal/bird’, Adams 2013: 606); no other Tocharian loans in Ugric are known

? **mänV* 'some animal (?); stallion?'

- Only the Hu word an equestrian term; the semantic connection between Hu and Kh words quite vague
- Hu *mén*, *ménes ló* 'stallion'; dial. *mínes* 'stallion', obs. *mínes* 'horse'
- Kh North (Ni) *manəŋ* 'Herde von Rentieren Pferden, Kühen'
- TESz, UEW and WOT: 1320 consider the Ugric etymology uncertain, EWUng mentions the Hu word is of unclear origin (no mention of Khanty)
- The Khanty word is found only in one (sub)dialect in the northern group, making the idea of an old word very suspicious; difficult to reconstruct a Proto-Khanty form, technically Ni *manəŋ* can reflect Proto-Khanty **mänəŋ*
 - MSzFE notes that Kh **ä* does not regularly correspond to Hu (dial.) *i*

? **mänV* 'some animal (?); stallion?'

- The Hu word has also been derived from Alanic *moj* < **manu-* (Munkácsi 1904) but the etymology has not been widely accepted (Sköld 1925, TESz, MszFE)
 - An Alanic form based on Ossetic *moj*, *mojnæ* ,husband (!)' would be an improbable source on phonological and semantic grounds; Cheung (2002: 205–206) notes that *moj* is not from Ir **manu-* 'human, man' but rather from < **dmanya-* 'pertaining to the house'
 - Ir **manu-* 'man' would technically suit a PUg/Pre-Hu **mänä* or **mäni* but the semantic connection is quite doubtful (Ir **manu-* 'human > 'man', not 'male' in general)
- Probably the Hu and Khanty words are not real cognates, and the words have no relevance in the discussions of Ugric linguistic prehistory

Other cultural terms and animal names

- Irregular Ugric cognates (potential substrate items, cf. The criteria listed by Aikio 2012b, Salmons 2015):
 - Words with unexplained variation of $*\eta$ and $*\gamma$
 - Hu *nyű* 'worm' < ? $*\acute{n}\eta V$
 - Hu *ág* 'twig' < ? $*\acute{\eta}a\eta ka$
 - Words with unclear "suffixes"
 - Hu *epër* 'strawberry' < ? PUg $*\acute{a}pp\grave{a}rVkV$
 - Hu *harkály* 'woodpecker' < ? PUg $*kar-$
 - Hu *köles* < ? PUg $*kil\acute{a}ci$
 - Words with irregular sound-correspondences (cf. similar situation with Iranian and disputed Turkic loans borrowed after the split of Proto-Ugric)
 - Hu *fű?* 'grass' < ?? $*pimV$
 - Hu *levél* 'leaf' < ? $*lVpV$
 - Hu *savanyú* < ? $*\acute{c}akV-$ (if not from some reflex of Iranian $*tsawk-$ < PIr $*\acute{c}awk-$, cf. Khotanese *suttä* 'vinegar'; Skr *śuktá-* 'sour')

Conclusions

- Only the following equestrian term is borrowed from Indo-Iranian (parallel loan)
 - Hu *ostor* 'whip', Mansi *aćtar*
- The following equestrian terms are irregular cognates, pointing to loans, even if the source form and donor language is not known
 - Hu *ló* 'horse' ~ Kh *law*, Ms *low*; Hu *nyerög* 'saddle', Kh *nöyər*, Ms *naγər*
- The following terms are irregular and their connection with horses is far from certain
 - Hu *mén* 'stallion' ~ Kh *manəŋ*; Hu *szekér* 'wagon' ~ Kh *liker* 'sled'
- The following term is formally a regular Ugric etymology, but it is unclear whether they have originally had anything to do with horses
 - Hu *fék* 'reins' ~ Kh *päk*
- Many other cultural terms and animal names likewise irregular

Conclusions

- The majority of the etymologies are irregular cognates
- Many words cultural words, plausible to assume that they are loans (superstrate or substrate words?)
- It is important that despite the irregularity, most loans have to be old as they show certain sound-changes that are common to the Ugric languages (development of sibilants and affricates, retroflex nasal in Hu and Kh)
 - Although more evidence is needed, this points to separation of Pre-Kh, Pre-Ms and Pre-Hu at the time these sound-changes have operated
- Even though there is little evidence for Proto-Ugric equestrian culture, it seems quite clear that many equestrian terms ('horse', 'quiver', 'saddle') were acquired to the Ugric languages/dialects simultaneously from the same sources (during a later "Common Ugric" period?) and in this sense the equestrian culture reflects a "common innovation"

Conclusions

- However, many words related to horses in Hungarian and the Ob-Ugric languages clearly have different backgrounds and do not form a single layer of loanwords or derivatives
 - Hu *ellik* 'mount a horse': the PU word **sälä-* had a more general meaning 'rise, place oneself (to a boat)' (MszFE s.v. *ellik*); Hu *kengyel* 'stirrup' of unclear origin (connection to West Uralic **kečä* (UEW) impossible)
- Linguistic paleontology can lead to erroneous results, if it is based on dubious cognates; exact semantic reconstruction is often very difficult, especially if the time depth is significant
 - The danger seem to be especially big with the lexicon of "intermediary proto-languages"; in Uralic both Ugric and Finno-Permic/Finno-Volgaic cultural vocabulary includes clear loans and irregularities as well as obsolete etymologies

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