

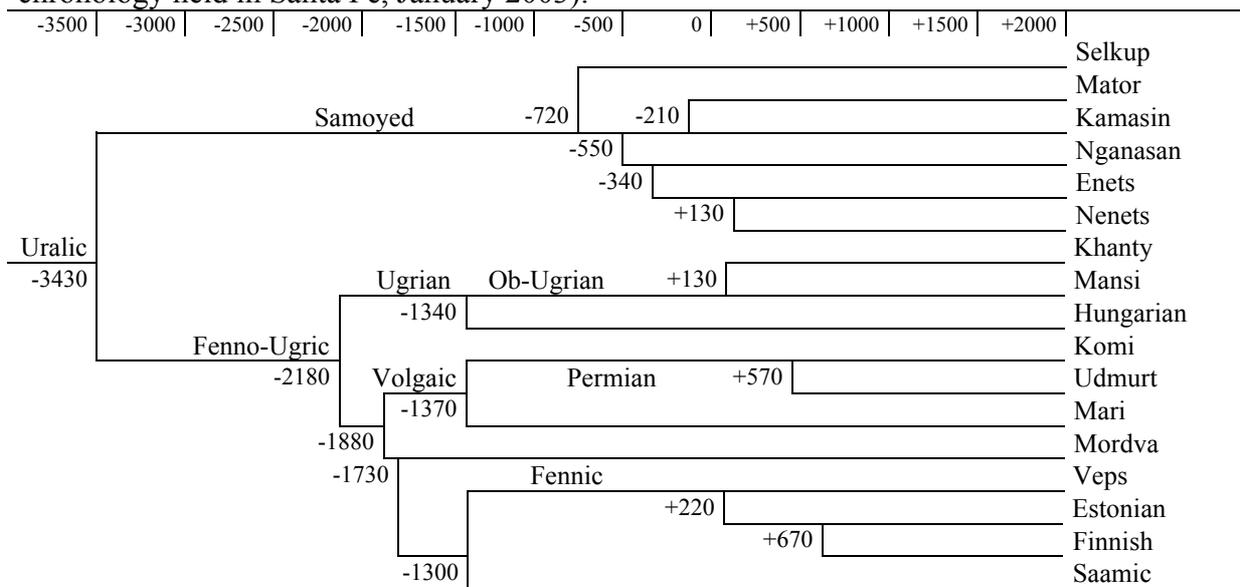
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Angela Marcantonio

The Uralic Language Family. Facts, myths and Statistics.

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In **Introduction** (pp. 1-18) the author designates as her aim to demonstrate ‘a total absence of scientific evidence in favour of the notion that the Uralic languages form a language family, that is, a genetically coherent group of related languages’ (p. 1). Here she also summarizes the ‘standard Uralic theory’ referring to the ‘mainstream’ handbooks. One of her postulates says that the authors of the standard handbooks reject any genetic relative of the Uralic family in the surrounding languages (p. 3). But it was e.g. Björn Collinder, one of the greatest linguists in the field of Uralic linguistics and the author of several important handbooks, who presented serious arguments supporting the genetic relationship of Uralic with Yukaghir, Altaic and Indo-European. His article "Indo-Uralisch oder gar Nostratisch" (1974) confirms his agreement with the Nostratic theory. From the leading uralists the same point of view is kept e.g. by E. Helimski or V. Napólskix. In the chapter **The historical foundation of the Uralic paradigm** (pp. 19-54) Marcantonio evaluates the oldest historical sources about various Fenno-Ugric (why also not Samoyedic?) populatins. It would be advisable to mention that Jordanes was the first who informed us about *Mordens* (§116) 600 years before Nestor’s chronicle. On the other hand, in his text there is nothing about ⁺*Sremnisc* = *Cheremis* quoted by Marcantonio, only *Imniscaris* (§117) which could reflect a mistaken record of this ethnonym, first safely recognizable as *Carmis* in the letter of the Khazarian khagan *Yosip* from 10th cent. (Hajdú 1985, 66). The biggest space is devoted to the historical and onomastic identification of Hungarians and especially to their links with Turkic languages. The chapter **Modern interpretations of the Uralic paradigm** (pp. 55-68) starts with comparison of various models of the genetic classification of Fenno-Permian, including the attempts to apply glottochronology (pp. 57-64). Let us quote the most recent result of the application of glottochronology, based on the programme developed by Sergei Starostin. Just the automatic elaboration excludes any prejudice. The model was first proposed at the workshop on chronology held in Santa Fe, January 2003):



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This model differs from others in the new interpretation of the Volgaic node, here consisting of Permian and Mari, in contrary to the usual connection of Mari and Mordvin.

From the fact that for the internal classification of the Fenno-Ugric/Uralic languages there are various models, the author concludes that no common Uralic protolanguage existed. But the same could be said about the Indo-European, Semitic etc. families. Even for so closely related language groups as Celtic, Germanic, Slavic or Turkic various alternative classifications were proposed and I hope nobody doubts their genetic unity. The author also enumerates various hypotheses of external relations for Uralic: Uralo-Yukaghir, Uralo-Altaic, Uralo-Dravidian, Indo-Uralic, and Eurasiatic/Nostratic. But it is difficult to believe that it should be a proof demonstrating the unrelationship of the Uralic languages. Applying the same logic, the fact of relationship of Slavic, Baltic, Germanic etc. languages with Celtic would imply that there was no relationship between the Celtic languages. The number of common Celtic lexical isoglosses is not big, there are also problems in phonetic correspondences, at least two various models of the internal classification (*p-* / *q-*Celtic vs. insular / continental Celtic) were postulated. In the chapter **Reconstructing the sound structure and lexicon of the Uralic family tree** (pp. 69-135) the author tries to doubt the proto-Uralic reconstruction, confronting the differing protoforms postulated by various scholars. Again there is a convincing contra-example in Indo-European, where almost every scholar presents his own reconstructions, sometimes radically dissimilar. For example, O. Szemerényi, operating (almost always) without laryngeals or only with one laryngeal, with **k* = **š* and with 5 vowels, against R. Beekes, consistently using 3 laryngeals, **k* ≠ **š*, no **a*. The chapter **False matches or genuine linguistic correlations?** (pp. 136-153) has to demonstrate that in the Uralic protollexicon there are false matches. The author judges that if they are excluded, the remaining corpus is too poor. Again, the existence of the external parallels is a reason for her to reduce the own Uralic corpus (it would be the same, if one concludes from the existence of Celtic, Baltic, Slavic, etc. cognates to some Germanic lexems that this part of the Germanic lexicon is not genuine ..). Here the author categorically says: ‘The lexical material clearly suggests that the P-Uralic numeral system comprises only the items for "2", and "5" or "10".’ In a special study devoted to the Uralic numerals the reviewer tried to demonstrate that it is possible to find more from the original numerical system in proto-Uralic (Blažek 1996-97, 1-7; the Fenno-Permian reconstructions follow P. Sammallahti).

	Fenno-Permian	Ugric	Samoyed	Etymological notices
1	<i>*ükti</i>	Mansi TJ <i>ük</i>	Selkup T <i>ukkÓr</i>	FV <i>*wükti</i> "end" Sm <i>*uk•</i> "end; front"
2	<i>*kakta</i>	<i>*kektä</i>	<i>*kitä</i>	FU <i>*kektä</i> < <i>*ket(V)</i> + dual. <i>*-kä</i> with metathesis after <i>*-kt-</i> in <i>*ükti</i> "1"?
3	<i>*kolmi</i> & Khanty <i>*käälem</i>	Hungarian <i>három</i> Mansi <i>*kuurem</i>	<i>*näkur</i>	FU <i>*ko[r]mi</i> (<i>*r</i> > <i>*l</i> after <i>*l</i> in <i>*neljä</i> "4") <i>*nä-</i> in Sm < U <i>*nä</i> "these"?
4	<i>*ń/neljä</i>	<i>*ńilji</i>		Samoyed <i>*te(j)t;t•</i> < Turkic, cf. Lobnor <i>töjt</i> , Chuvash <i>tävattä</i> , Volga Bulgarian <i>*tüät</i> "4"
5	<i>*vi(i)t(t)i</i>	<i>*wittī</i>	<i>*wüt</i> "10"	
6	<i>*ku(u)t(t)i</i>	<i>*kottī</i>		<i>*"beyond [5]"</i> , cf. U <i>*kuttV</i> "back"
			<i>*m•ktut</i>	<i>*"beyond 5"</i> , cf. U <i>*mukā</i> "back" + Sm <i>*wüt</i> <i>*"5"</i>

Accepting the fact that the numeral "4" was borrowed from some Turkic source into Samoyed, it seems probable to accept the complete quinary system for Uralic. It is important to stress that the numeral "6" was formed according to the same semantic pattern, namely "beyond (five)". Similarly Ugrian **ńalV-(kV)* "8" represents the dual of the numeral "4", while Samoyed **kit•ntett•* "8" = "2 x 4" (Blažek 1996-97, 10).

How it was already said, the external parallels play important role in the argumentation of the author. But her knowledge in this field is surprisingly limited. Let us add the comparisons from the sources which were not taken in account by Marcantonio.

P. 147: U **šilmä* "eye" - Koskinen (1980, 46-47, #159) compares it with Irish *sell* "eye" (together with Welsh *syllu*, Breton *sellout* "anschauen" it has been connected with Greek st...lbw "glänze, schimmere", see Pokorny 1959, 1035) and Tungus **silma-* "to choose, test" > Evenki *sinma-*, Orok *sÁlma-*, Manchu *simne-* | Written Mongolian *šili-* "to choose", *šilga-* "to test" (Poppe 1960, 115).

P. 147: U **muna* "egg" - add the metathesized Altaic **nYmo* > Tungus: Evenki *nām!*, Even *maŋa* "testicle" | Written Mongolian *nim, im* id. | Turkic *jumurтка* "egg" (EDAL 962; Räsänen 1969, 211: Finnish + Turkic).

P. 149: U **meni* "to go" - Räsänen (1969, 338) adds Turkic **min*/**bin* "besteigen, reiten". Čop 1974, 39, #30 & Illič-Svityč II, #295" compare U with Indo-European **men-* "emporrigen" (Pokorny 1959, 726).

P. 150: U **kaδ'a* "to remain" - Collinder (1957, 118) compares it with Yukaghir South *kudie-* "lassen".

P. 150: U **ala* "under" - besides Turkic **alt* "lower side, below" add Middle Korean **rái* "below, lower side" | Old Japanese *oru-* "to lower, go down" (EDAL 285-86).

P. 150: U **joki* "river" - there are promising cognates in Altaic: Turkic **iak-* "to flow" (the initial after Chuvash *jo7-*) | Tungusic **iaku* > Manchu *jd7on*, Evenki *jaku* "swamp, ditch", *jakta* "brook", Udihe *jakpa* id. | Old Japanese *ike* "pond" (EDAL 598).

P. 151: U **uji* "to swim" - besides Tungus cognates (Evenki *uju-* id., Udihe (*w*)*ujana*) there are also cognates in other Altaic branches: Middle Mongolian *ojna-* id. | Middle Japanese **y-g-* id. (EDAL 1043). Cf. also Yukaghir North *waj-l* "flow, stream" (Krejnovič 1958, 271). In the chapter **Borrowed or inherited** (pp. 154-179) the author again concludes that the existence of the external parallels to many of the Uralic lexemes implies the nonexistence of the Uralic language family at all. It was already explained above, how illogical point of view it is. The example with the Indo-European languages should demonstrate that the idea of the genetic relationship, in this case called Nostratic (or Eurasiatic by Greenberg and his followers) represents the most natural solution. On the other hand, Marcantonio's knowledge of both the Uralic lexical material and the external comparisons is incomplete:

Pp. 160-61: U **aŋÓ* "mouth, opening" - add Yukaghir South *áŋa* "mouth", *aŋi-l* "opening", Chuvan *aigga* = **angga* "bouche", Northwest *angga*, Omok *aigg* = **angg* id. (Tailleur 1959, 82 & 1962, 64).

P. 161: Samoyed **küŋ* "navel" (Janhunen 1977, 79; not **kün!*) has the exact cognate in Permian **g&g®* "navel" > Udmurt *gogŪ*, Komi *gŪ&g* id. (Napol'skix 1995, 170-72: U **küŋ®*). On the other hand, in the most recent handbook of the Altaic etymology, EDAL, there are different etymological explanations for both Turkic **kīn-dük* "navel" (p. 818-19: Tungusian **xulŋu-* | Mongolian **köjil-sü* id. < **k'Óš'ŋu*) and Mongolian **köj* (p. 723-24: Turkic **gipek* | Middle Korean *päi-s-kop* id. < Altaic **kgp'i*).

The final message of this chapter is that sometimes it is difficult to recognize the borrowings from the inherited words.

In the chapter **The Antiquity of Proto-Uralic** (pp. 180-202) the author discusses various evidences, how old is the Uralic family. She mentions that there are two most important approaches: (i) study of the tree-names; (ii) study of the borrowings of Indo-European origin. Again it is surprising, why she does not take in account the external, here concretely Altaic, parallels to some of these dendronyms:

P. 181: U **kuusi* "spruce, fir" - cf. Altaic **k'usa* > Mongolian **kusi* "thuja, cedar" | Tungusian **xusi-hta* "oak-tree; acorn" | Old Japanese *kasi* "Quercus acuta" (EDAL 857).

P. 181: U **näŋ®* "Siberian larch" - cf. Altaic **ŋŌYŋe* > Tungusian **ŋiāŋ-ta* "fir-tree" | Middle Japanese *m"mz* id. (EDAL 1030-31)

P. 181: U **soksi* "Siberian pine" - cf. Altaic **suk'e* > Turkic **süksük* "tamarisk" | Mongolian **sukaj* id. | Tungusian **suktu* "cedar; branch" | Korean *sakčəŋ* "dry branch" (EDAL 1316-17).

In this chapter the author discussed the (Indo-)Iranian, Baltic and Germanic borrowings into Fenno-Ugric, but probably the oldest stratum borrowed from one of the Indo-European branches, Tocharian, remains omitted (cf. Napoľ'skikh 2001, 367-383).

In the chapter devoted to **Morphology** (pp. 203-251) the author concludes that 'the complex case endings in the Uralic languages appear to have formed individually, and relatively recently' (p. 250). In the chapter **Completing the picture: proper names, archaeology and genetics** (pp. 252-268) she studies some ethnonyms, e.g. *Suomi*, *Magyar*. In the latter case, the author develops the idea of the specific Hungarian-Bashkir relations. It is difficult to understand, if she thinks the contact or genetic relationship. Just the doubts about the standard model of the genetic relationship represent a backbone of the book at all. In **Summary and Conclusion** (pp. 269-278) she judges that the comparative method is not sufficient for the Uralic languages. The book is supplemented by the map of the Uralic languages (p. 279), Appendix 1: distribution of body-part terms from UEW (pp. 280-81), Appendix II: Distribution of terms from Janhunen's (1981A) corpus (pp. 282-83), Appendix III: The primary case endings and their distribution within and outside the Uralic area (pp. 284-86), Appendix IV: The self-denominations in the Uralic languages (pp. 287-88), Appendix V: Common Hungarian/Bashkir toponyms (pp. 289-90), plus the detailed **Notes** (pp. 291-305), **References** (pp. 306-328: c. 770 titles) and **Indexes** (pp. 329-335). Let us add to the self-denominations (Appendix IV: p. 287) that for *Udmurt* there was proposed a promising etymology by Napoľ'skikh (1997, 49) who derives it from (Indo-)Iranian **anta-marta-* "man from the border / periphery", cf. Ossetic *JndJ* "outside", Avestan *azt%oma-* "next", Old Indic *anta-* "end, limit, boundary".

One of the basic features of the comparative-historical method consists in its ability to present only positive proofs. It means, that the standard method can formulate only the existence of the genetic relationship, not its absence. Summing up the most important result of the book of Angela Marcantonio, it consists in conclusion, that applying the standard comparative-historical method, she did **not** prove that Uralic languages are **not** related.

Misprints:

Pp. 66 & 325 - Shevoroshkin was the editor of *Explorations in Language Macrofamilies* published in 1991 and not 1971.

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