INTRODUCTION

According to the traditional view, the Khanty and Mansi languages constitute the Ob-Ugric subgroup of the Uralic family, which together with Hungarian forms the Ugric branch. As all the Uralic languages, the lexicon of the Ugric languages contains a number of Indo-Iranian loanwords dating from different periods of contact. Korenchy (1972) has dealt with the early Indoiranian-Ugric contacts, but many of her conclusions can be considered outdated by now. Also the traditional taxonomy of Ugric has frequently been challenged in recent research (cf. especially Bakró-Nagy 2013).

My research aims to explain why the three Ugric language branches were separate entities already when the Indoiranian loanwords common to them were acquired and how can the different loanword layers be distinguished.

OVERVIEW OF THE CONTACTS

There are different layers of Indo-Iranian loans in the Ugric languages, the oldest ones inherited from the Proto-Finnic-Ugric period. The loanwords common to Khanty, Mansi and Hungarian are traditionally derived from the Ugric proto-language and are thought to be Proto-Iranian loans. It is also usually assumed that Proto-Ob-Ugric and later Khanty and Mansi separately had contacts with later Middle Iranian languages. There are also multiple later Iranian loans in Hungarian.

Helinski (1997) has claimed that many of the loans in Ob-Ugric can be derived from an unattested branch of Indo-Iranian, a language he dubes "Andronovo Aryan". Some of the loans are from an Alan-type Iranian language (Helinski 1997; Korenchy 1972). Traditionally the loans have been stratified according to their distribution, but a closer look at the material shows that this is an erroneous way to distinguish the chronological layers of Indoiranian borrowings.

EXAMPLE ETYMOLOGIES


POG *maʃI\v~ 'ethnonym' > Hu magy-ar, Mansi moaI\s, Khanty moI\s < PI *maI\si\s 'man'
- The vowel relations between Mansi and the other languages are irregular. Probably a parallel loan.

POU *m\j\a > PM *m\j\a(-)Ar < PKh *m\j\a 'wedding' < PII *m\j\a 'maya'-mating, OI m\j\a- 'enjoyment'
- There are no phonological problems in the etymology, but the semantic connection is not straightforward. The Ob-Ugric cognates are regular. The vowel seems to continue Pre-OU *a.

POU *päčä > PM *päčI < PKh *päčI 'reindeer calf' 'reindeer calf' < PI *pI\- 'animal', cattle'
- 'c' is an expected substitution of Proto-Iranian *c'. POU *u is probably reflects the Proto-Iranian *a; this seems to be a common substitution. Ob-Ugric cognates are regular.

Pre-Kh *say\vV > *s\y\a r'ing armour' < MI *zyar-; compare Ossetic zyur 'armour'
- Although limited to Khanty, the word was acquired before the Proto-Ugric sound change *s > *O (Khanty *s).

CONCLUSIONS

• Many of the loans are difficult to date, and it is hard to distinguish the different loanword layers.
• The earliest loans can date from Proto-Indo-Iranian.
• 'a' seems to be a common substitute for Indo-Iranian *a, but based on Zhivlov's (2006) Ob-Ugric reconstruction, there were other kinds of substitutions for *a as well, the conditions of which are hard to determine.
• Contrary to Zhivlov (2013) and Helinski (1997), there are no loans in Ugric that point to the "Andronovo Aryan" donor language (this view is supported also by Napol'skh 2014).
• Among the presumably oldest loanword layer there are phonological irregularities that point to parallel loans.
• The loans from Proto-Iranian and (at least one of) the Ob-Ugric languages are acquired before the Proto-Ugric consonant changes, and it is notable that some loans attested only in one Ugric language also point to equally early origin.
• The loans in Ugric should not be attributed according to their distribution.
• Many unclear points in Ugric historical phonology still need thorough working out before the problems with the Indo-Iranian contacts can be convincingly solved.

REFERENCES


Sources of the picture:

The map of settlement areas: Ob-Babel project: http://www.obabel.gwdg.de/maurerchen/medien/pa/obbabelkart.png Obtained 20th August 2015

My research has been supported by the Wilusi foundation.

Map © Ob-Babel.