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## Historical Linguistics Applied: Finno-Ugric Narratives in Finland and Estonia

Finno-Ugricity is one of the linguistic concepts whose meaning and usage have been extended beyond the boundaries of linguistics and applied in identity-building projects. The geographically and historically related cases of Finland and Estonia provide a good illustration of the uses of linguistic scholarship in the service of nationalism. More elusive than ties of “Slavic kinship” and not as easily translatable into a pan-ethnic ideology, the concept of Finno-Ugric kinship has nevertheless had a steady presence in the development of Finnish and Estonian identities throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, entangling the two countries’ linguistic traditions in a web of national engagements. In both cases, the original idea of linguistic kinship was subject to non-linguistic interpretations so as to highlight and contextualize various aspects of the Finnish and Estonian self-images, notions of collective past, and cultural heritage. In both cases, the concept proved highly flexible.

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### *What is Finno-Ugric?*

In an article published in 2009, Stefan Troebst notices the problematic nature of “Slavic studies” as a unitary field of research. As he points out, there are two academically institutionalized areas of study with strong links to the “Slavic world”; however, he goes on, “while the historical field of East European history has [...] emancipated itself from the ‘Slavic world’ as a framework of reference, Slavic philology remains chained to it.” He then quotes German Slavist Norbert Franz, who suggests that one sensible way of integrating the field would be to focus on the “discourse of Slavicity” [*Slawen-Diskurs*].<sup>1</sup>

That philology’s connection to its titular language(s) should be perceived as “enchainment” is not obvious. After all, language affiliation is what defines a philology in the academic taxonomy of departmentalized fields. If anything, it seems that Slavic philology lends itself to this kind of criticism particularly easily because of the relative geographical consistency of its titular language

1 Stefan Troebst, “Slavizität,” *Osteuropa* 59, no. 12 (2009): 12–13.

area. The overlapping of “Slavic” and “East European” is extensive and easy to take for granted, while the discrepancies (i.e. the non-Slavic-speaking parts of Eastern Europe) may easily come to be seen as proof of the insufficiency of the “Slavic” label, a notion reflected by the frequent use of the combination “Slavic and East European.” Originally, however, it results from the assumption that the language-based concept of “Slavicity” encompasses so much more than language that it should work just as fine as a name for a whole region.

Paradoxically, in the case of “Slavicity” this assumption is perhaps more accurate or usefully descriptive than in most other cases. The problem discussed by Troebst, it seems, does not concern Slavic studies in particular, but the very notion of “philology”: an area of study defined by language and therefore expected to combine linguistics and literary studies as parts of one field; expected, at the same time, to focus on language and/or literature, and yet somehow to transcend them, covering other spheres of knowledge concerning a geographical or cultural area. It rests on the old Humboldtian idea that language, in all its diversity, is so central to “mankind’s spiritual development” that it should form the fundamental criterion in the classification of the human world—cultures, ethnicities, nations, parts of the world or trends in world history. The Slavic case is relatively unproblematic in this respect; there are other philologically defined areas of study whose linguistic foundations have a much more limiting effect than in the Slavic case.

Finno-Ugric studies is a case of an institutionalized field in which the Humboldtian glottocentrism (i.e. the notion of language as the ultimate core of human nature and linguistics as the ultimate core of any human science) proves poignantly inadequate in providing extralinguistic frameworks. The name refers to a family of languages, divided into several subgroups and scattered across Northeastern Europe (parts of Scandinavia, the east-Baltic coast, Russia between the Volga and the Urals), Central Europe and Western Siberia. They are geographically dispersed and their mutual affinity is close only within particular branches, especially when it coincides with territorial proximity—as in the case of Finnish and Estonian. The same pattern applies to communities of speakers, who represent a variety of ethnic, cultural and religious affiliations. Even the oldest elements of their cultural heritage tend neither to cover the entire language group nor be exclusively “Finno-Ugric.” The distant nature of linguistic kinship combined with the lack of any non-linguistic bonds that would encompass all speaker communities arguably make the Finno-Ugric family more like the Indo-European, another broad, highly diverse group that includes e.g. German, Rumanian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Greek, Welsh, Sanskrit and Persian,

all bound by a reconstructed proto-language. In fact, the linguistic concept of Finno-Ugric kinship was established at about the same time as the notion of an Indo-European proto-language, i.e. late in the eighteenth century, along with the rise of comparative and historical linguistics. This parallelism, however, is not reflected in the two groups' institutional academic status. Indo-European studies have a distinct identity: they belong to the field of historical linguistics, devoted to the study of the common origins of the Indo-European language family. The academic position of Finno-Ugric studies as a field with departments of its own makes it more of a traditional "philology," parallel to Slavic, Germanic or Romance studies. The proto-Finno-Ugric linguistic heritage may be the core area of interests, but the name is also used as an umbrella term that covers the study of particular languages of the group, as well as Hungarian, Finnish and Estonian literatures, and, to some extent, the ethnography of Finno-Ugric-speaking peoples. The linguistic connection thus serves as the basis for lumping together a number of largely unrelated research areas, suggesting an extralinguistic community that in fact hardly exists.<sup>2</sup>

There is one aspect of "Finno-Ugricity," however, where the concept convincingly transcends linguistics and acquires a historical and cultural dimension. Compared with the periods of time involved in the inquiries of historical linguists, it is a relatively recent phenomenon, because it has to do with the emergence of modern nationalism and the growth of linguistics as a science. Starting in the eighteenth century, the discovery of a linguistic affinity between Finnish, Estonian, Hungarian, Sámi (Lapp) and a number of indigenous languages of Russia<sup>3</sup> has been elaborated upon by nationalist-minded intellectuals of the three countries in order to develop and reinforce concepts of pan-ethnic kinship. Constructed as they may have been, these concepts did

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2 This popular misapplication of linguistic terms and of the kinship metaphor beyond historical linguistics accounts for some of the resistance to Fenno-Ugricity in the Hungarian tradition as well as for some forms of Fenno-Ugric enthusiasm elsewhere. See Johanna Laakso, "Interpretations and misinterpretations of Finno-Ugric language relatedness" (paper presented at the 45th Annual Meeting of Societas Linguistica Europaea in Stockholm, 30.08.2012, available at [https://www.academia.edu/1896628/Interpretations\\_and\\_misinterpretations\\_of\\_Finno-Ugric\\_language\\_relatedness](https://www.academia.edu/1896628/Interpretations_and_misinterpretations_of_Finno-Ugric_language_relatedness), accessed July 2, 2014) for a concise, sober discussion of both phenomena.

3 The less known Finno-Ugric languages include Karelian, Votian, Livonian, Vepsian, (closely related to Finnish and Estonian and used in the vicinity of the Baltic Sea), Komi, Udmurt/Votyak, Mari/Cheremis, Erzya, Moksha (between the Volga and the Urals), Khanti/Ostyak and Mansi/Vogul (West Siberia). Together with the Samoyed languages of Northwestern Siberia (e.g. Nenets, Nganasan), the Finno-Ugric languages form a greater Uralic family. Some linguists classify the Samoyed languages as part of the Finno-Ugric group, thus treating the terms "Finno-Ugric" and "Uralic" as synonyms.

affect collective self-images and, to some extent, actual policies of the emergent national movements. The ways in which the notion of Finno-Ugric kinship stimulated the collective imagination bears some resemblance to the better known and more effectively politicized ideologies of Slavicity. The direction proposed by Franz and Troebst for Slavic studies, focusing on the “discourse of Slavicity,” seems at least as sensible for the Finno-Ugric equivalent.

### *Origins of the Concept*

The Pan-Slavic movement was in fact a point of reference for the early Finnish proponents of Finno-Ugricity. In 1844 the young intellectual Zacharias Topelius, later known as one of the grand old men of the “Fennoman” movement and the person who introduced the notion of “national history” to the wider public, published an essay on “Finnish Literature and its Future,” in which he made the following remark:

Two hundred years ago few would have believed that the Slavic tribe would attain the prominent (and constantly growing) position it enjoys nowadays in the history of culture. What if one day the Finnish tribe, which occupies a territory almost as vast, were to play a greater role on the world scene than one could expect nowadays? [...] Today people speak of Pan-Slavism; one day they may talk of Pan-Fennicism, or Pan-Suomism. Within such a Pan-Finnic community, the Finnish nation should hold the leading position because of its cultural seniority [...].<sup>4</sup>

The boldness of the Pan-Slavic parallel makes Topelius’ statement rather unprecedented, but as it so happens it sprung from a tradition that was about a quarter of a century old at the time, i.e. about as old as Finnish nationalism and national discourse.

The linguistic kinship itself had been recognized somewhat longer. The idea formed gradually in the course of the eighteenth century and came to be solidly established by its last third. According to most of the early concepts, Finnish was a central point of reference for other related languages, and the family was usually referred to as “Finnic.” This terminological tradition continues in today’s term “Finno-Ugric,” which has been in use since the 1860s and reflects the fact that

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4 Zacharias Topelius, “Den Finska Literaturen och dess Framtid,” *Helsingfors Tidningar* 40 (May 22, 1844): 2.

the foundations of modern Finno-Ugric studies were laid by demonstrating the common origins of the already recognized “Finnic” language group *and* Hungarian.

Despite the Finno-centric terminology, the early period of Finno-Ugric language studies was marked by the absence of Finnish scholars. For a long time, due to the peripheral position of the country and of its only academic center, the Royal Academy of Åbo (Turku), Finns played virtually no role in the field. Throughout the eighteenth century, most significant works were published in Stockholm, Göttingen and St. Petersburg. Meanwhile, some Finnish scholars still produced old-fashioned studies based on supposed affinities between Finnish and Hebrew or Finnish and Greek. Outside the academia, there had always been some popular awareness of linguistic affinities between the closely related Baltic Finnic dialects spoken in Finland, Estonia, Russian Karelia or Ingria, especially in the border regions, where language contact was frequent. The scientific concept of linguistic kinship, however, had to be brought from abroad. Until 1883, when the Helsinki-based Finno-Ugric Society was founded, the most important center of Finno-Ugric research was the Imperial Academy in Petersburg. The polyhistor H. G. Porthan, the most distinguished figure of the Finnish Enlightenment, was a useful source of knowledge about Finland and its language for foreign scholars, particularly A. L. Schlözer. His contribution to Finno-Ugric studies, however, was of local importance. It consisted of making use of the knowledge of the Finno-Ugric language family in his historical works and thus making it accessible to the local educated public. This in itself was not without significance. Through Porthan’s works, the notion of Finno-Ugric kinship played a role in shaping the early Finnish historiography, serving as a point of reference in the reconstruction of the country’s distant past before Swedish rule.<sup>5</sup>

After 1809, when Finland became part of the Russian Empire as an autonomous Grand Duchy, a national movement began to emerge and language acquired new significance. Spoken by the majority but marginalized by Swedish in the spheres of high culture, administration, science and education (beyond the most elementary), Finnish was now endorsed as a foundation of national identity. Starting in the second decade of the century, the Fennomen, many of whom spoke Swedish as their mother tongue, stressed the symbolic value of Finnish and strived to elevate its social and cultural position. The growing

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5 Henrik Gabriel Porthan, “Paavali Juustenin Suomen piispain kronikka huomautuksin ja asiakirjoin valaistuna” in *Valitut teokset*, transl. from Latin by Iiro Kajanto (Helsinki: SKS, 1982), 155–60; Günter Johannes Stipa, *Finnisch-ugrische Sprachforschung von der Renaissance bis zum Neupositivismus* (Helsinki: Suomalais-ugrilainen Seura, 1990), 226–28.

importance of Finnish stimulated the development of linguistic studies in Finland, including the study of languages related to Finnish.

The trend was characteristic of its time: the political relevance of language and comparative and historical linguistics were intellectually backed and stimulated by the Herderian concept of language as organically interwoven with the mind, simultaneously reflecting and affecting the speaker's perceptions and thoughts, both individually and collectively. This concept made language the most reliable marker of nationhood, and it was easily extended into the belief that the common origins of two or more languages establish a natural bond between the nations who speak them. The discovery of the relationship of most European languages to Sanskrit gave powerful impetus to the emergent Indo-European studies and the whole field of comparative and historical linguistics. Throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, it also stimulated the imagination of many European intellectuals, giving rise to new ways of thinking about history, cultural and spiritual heritage, national identity and race. Finnish nationalism was quick to follow the trend, integrating linguistics into its agenda. With the eastern border open, the Russian interior became accessible to Finnish scholars, allowing field studies on Finno-Ugric languages and their speakers. The authorities in St. Petersburg were eager to support scientific exploration of the Empire's vast but still largely unexplored natural and cultural resources. The Finns' interest in Finno-Ugricity was also a welcome trend in that it seemed to strengthen Finland's eastern bond, while distancing it from Sweden. With financial and organizational support from the Imperial Academy of Sciences, Finnish expeditions into Russia were undertaken starting in the 1820s. The pioneers Anders Johan Sjögren (1794–1855), Matthias Alexander Castrén (1813–1852) and August Ahlqvist (1826–1889) established a research tradition before it was fully institutionalized with the founding of the Finno-Ugric Society in Helsinki in 1883. By that time, Finno-Ugric studies were tightly interwoven with the Finnish national project, and the concepts of “kindred languages” and “kindred peoples” were part of its discourse.

### *The Pros and Cons of the Eastern Connection*

What was the attraction of Finno-Ugricity to the aspiring national movement? To a large degree, it was welcome as a linguistic, cultural and historical alternative to the Swedish heritage. Having decided, as the popular slogan has it, to be Finns rather than remain Swedes or turn into Russians, and having chosen language as

the common denominator to consolidate Finnishness *in statu nascendi*, Finland's patriots had to face the challenge of evaluating the Swedish legacy. The 1809 treaty kept most of it intact, with Swedish as the official language, though now, within the new borders, it clearly had become a minority language, spoken by little more than 10 percent of the population. Before 1809, its usage had been steadily rising for several centuries, but it was a slow process that involved some migration from "Sweden proper" and the very limited upward mobility of pre-modern society. It is not clear how the language situation in Finland would have developed had the country not been cut off from Sweden. Some scholars believe the nineteenth century would have brought top-down linguistic assimilation of the Finnish-speaking majority.<sup>6</sup> By 1809, in any case, no coordinated top-down attempts at assimilation had yet begun, but sociolinguistic hierarchies had solidified and Finland's cultural and intellectual life were nearly monopolized by Swedish. Even in the changed political situation, it took a century to reverse this trend. In 1844, when Topelius was formulating his Pan-Finnic vision, Finnish was just beginning to transcend its traditional position of a spoken vernacular which was seldom used in written form which beyond the church. National literature written in Finnish was still a theoretical postulate rather than a cultural fact, and it would remain so for another quarter of a century, despite all the symbolic significance of the national epos *Kalevala* (first edition in 1835, second in 1849). The first Finnish-language high school was opened in 1858. Five years later, an imperial decree stated that Finnish would be raised to the status of state language alongside Swedish within two decades. In practice, overcoming the social and cultural supremacy of Swedish took about twice that time. The Finno-Ugric kinship was thus a useful emblem of the Finns' distinct identity: a unique, ancient heritage that was neither Swedish nor Russian. At the same time, it was a suitably eastern connection, linking the Finns with other peoples of the Empire, and therefore acceptable to the Russian authorities.

One might argue there was also a distinct attraction inherent in the very idea of belonging to a greater family of nations. Early in the nineteenth century, it provided Finno-Ugricity with some prestigious parallels. First and foremost, there was the Indo-European language family, a discovery still relatively fresh that fascinated some of the greatest minds of the European academies and made linguistics a trendy, rapidly developing, intellectually dynamic branch of

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6 Michael C. Coleman, "You Might All Be Speaking Swedish Today: Language Change in Nineteenth-Century Finland and Ireland," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 35, no. 1 (2010): 44–64.

science. There were also the increasingly visible Pan-Slavic and Scandinavian trends, a sign that linguistic affinity can acquire more direct political relevance. The link between academic linguistics and the national cause can be seen in a letter written by M. A. Castrén in 1844 to Johan Vilhelm Snellman, philosopher, journalist, statesman, and probably the most influential theoretician of the Fennoman movement. Convinced as he was that Finnish had to be studied, standardized and developed as a language of high culture, Snellman had serious doubts about the relevance of Castrén's far-ranging comparative research to the objectives of the national movement. Reproached for his supposed escapism, Castrén replied:

I am determined to show the Finnish nation that we are not a solitary people from the bog, living in isolation from the world and from universal history, but are in fact related to at least one-sixth of mankind. Writing grammars is not my main goal, but without the grammars that goal cannot be attained.<sup>7</sup>

Castrén classified the Finno-Ugric group as part of an even broader Ural-Altai family, together with the Mongol, Turkic (e.g. Turkish, Tatar, Kirghiz) and Tungusic (e.g. Manchu, Evenki) languages, a popular notion among nineteenth-century linguists, supported by Rasmus Rask, Wilhelm Schott and Max Müller.<sup>8</sup> In a public lecture made in 1849, he pointed to the Altai as “the cradle of the Finnish people,” elaborating on the alleged cultural affinities between the peoples of this great family.<sup>9</sup> By placing the Finns' uniqueness in a supranational constellation, language kinship lent itself to a somewhat Hegelian reading and could be seen as a means of gaining legitimate access to “universal history.”

Historicity was indeed a challenge for the theoreticians of Finnish nationalism. Attempts to create a glorious image of the Finnish past dated back to earlier times. As early as 1700 the local patriot Daniel Juslenius adapted some concepts of Swedish antiquarianism in order to craft an image of the Finns as an ethnic group that was related to a number of renowned ancient tribes (i.e. the Vandals),

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7 Letter from October 18, 1844 in Johan Vilhelm Snellman, *Snellmanin kootut teokset. Osa 7: elokuu 1844 – toukokuu 1845*. (Helsinki: Edita Oyj, 2002), 142.

8 Nowadays the Uralo-Altai family is an obsolete concept. In fact, even the idea of Turkic, Mongol and Tungusic languages (according to some versions, also Korean and Japanese) forming one Altaic family is not universally accepted.

9 Mathias Alexander Castrén, “Über die Ursitze des finnischen Volkes (Vortrag in der litterarischen Soirée am 9. November 1849)” in idem, *Kleinere Schriften* (St. Petersburg: Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1862), 107–22.

claiming they had once created a great civilization that had been destroyed by the Swedes. He went so far as to produce a list of Finnish kings who had ruled before the Swedish conquest. Over a century later, when the need for a historical self-image became much more urgent than it had been in Juslenius' times, this kind of uncritical attitude was no longer an option. In his controversial lecture of 1843, Zacharias Topelius stated that before 1809, the Finns had had no history of their own, but had been part of Swedish history. Starting with Yrjö Koskinen, a new ethnocentric Finnish historiography was born, in which *Suomen kansa*, "the Finnish people" (meaning nation), was presented as an independent historical subject rather than part of Swedish history. Indeed, its distinctly non-Swedish, "Turanian" origins were mentioned at the outset.<sup>10</sup> To claim the status of a historically distinct entity, a nation which had only recently won some degree of political independence needed other criteria of historicity than the political. The search for a past of one's own affected the making and the early readings of the *Kalevala*. Consciously hovering between the roles of an erudite folklorist and self-styled national poet, Elias Lönnrot, heir to the illiterate epic singers, produced a monument of the oral poetic tradition that was simultaneously genuine and forged. He selected, reworked and rearranged his primary material into a national mythology that could be referred to as a vision of the Finnish past—prehistoric, pre-political, but nevertheless distinctly Finnish in its splendor.<sup>11</sup> The nationalist message that he labored to convey in the epic lacked a specific Finno-Ugric dimension, but the archaic nature of the poetry and the ancient setting suggested a heritage going all the way back to the common origins of the Finno-Ugric peoples and thus transcending "Finnishness" defined by political borders. Indeed, much of the material was collected in the White Sea Karelia, outside the Grand

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10 In the nineteenth and early twentieth century the term "Turanian" was applied to various non-Indo-European languages (and their speakers) of Eurasia, often acquiring a racial meaning; in this case, as in the case of the manner in which it was used by Max Müller, it is synonymous with the equally obsolete term "Uralo-Altaic." Yrjö-Koskinen [Yrjö Sakari], *Oppikirja Suomen kansan historiassa* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran kirjapainossa, 1869), 1–4. Otherwise, Yrjö-Koskinen's interests in the Finnish people's past were largely limited to the administrative territory of Finland. The "Turanian" opening served mainly to make a sharp distinction between the Finns and the Swedes as "peoples." Cf. Matti Klinge, *A History both Finnish and European: History and the Culture of Historical Writing in Finland during the Imperial Period*, transl. from Finnish by Malcolm Hicks (Sastamala: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 2012), 194–95, 210–16; Timo Salminen, *Aatteen tie. Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura 1883–2008* (Helsinki: SKS, 2008), 16–17.

11 The romantic interpretation of the *Kalevala* as a depiction of distant historical events and proof that the Finns had had a heroic period of history like the Greeks was subject to dispute among the Fennomen, opposed by the Hegelian J. V. Snellman. More on the discussion in Pentti Karkama, *J. V. Snellmanin kirjallisuuspolitiikka* (Helsinki: SKS, 1989), 19–20, 138–45.

Duchy of Finland, and the form and style of the songs itself was not exclusively Finnish, but part of the cultural heritage of most Baltic Finnic peoples: the Karelians, the Estonians, the Votes. The Finno-Ugric kinship was part of the linguistic-ethnographic packet that provided the Finnish claims to historicity with handy references.

On the other hand, the concept had its drawbacks. Unlike the Indo-European heritage, which had links to the ancient traditions of India, Persia, Greece and Rome, Finno-Ugricity had very little to offer in terms of cultural and historical prestige. To some degree the comparative-historical linguistic approach could be seen as emancipatory: with the philosophical foundations provided by Herder, the Schlegels, Humboldt et al., it seemed to liberate the perspectives on Finnish from traditional cultural hierarchies, allowing it to be analyzed and described in strictly linguistic terms as a language among other languages, on equal grounds with Latin, Greek or Hebrew. However, even the strictly linguistic perspective was not judgment-free, and in particular, it was not free from Indo-Euro-centric bias. The concept of language and thought as an inseparable whole was elaborated into hierarchic typologies in which certain types of grammatical structures were seen as particularly effective in stimulating intellectual development, and therefore superior. Abundant in organic metaphors, the linguistic discourse of the period showed a strong tendency to favor the “organic” over the “mechanical”: internal transformation of stems over suffixation, inflection as a whole over agglutination, synthetic structures over analytical. Finnish had some allies among the comparativist greats: Rask praised the aesthetic quality of its structures and sounds, and Schott spoke with great reverence about all “Tataric” (i.e. Altaic and Finno-Ugric) languages. The dominant tendency, however, was to situate the heavily inflected Indo-European languages as the highest language-making achievement in the history of mankind. Sanskrit, Greek and Latin featured particularly high in this scheme, closely followed by German, while the characteristically agglutinative Finno-Ugric structures were deemed intellectually and/or aesthetically inferior, a result of the mechanical assembly of separate elements, a poorly made mosaic,<sup>12</sup> a failed attempt at inflection, indicating weaknesses of the nation’s “inwardly organizing sense of language.”<sup>13</sup>

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12 Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1861), 278–79.

13 Wilhelm von Humboldt, *On Language: On the Diversity of the Human Language Construction and its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species*, transl. from German by Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 106–07.

On the whole, it was not a very favorable approach to Finnish, especially given that the criteria of evaluation were not free of extra-linguistic considerations. Despite all the internal rigors of the comparative method, one of its main attractions was that linguistic genealogies and reconstructed proto-language forms promised to offer new analytical perspectives on the history of peoples. The development of linguistics was closely followed by that of physical anthropology, and it was common for linguistic classifications to be interpreted as simultaneously ethnic or, indeed, racial. Already in the previous centuries, scholars had tended to associate the Finns with (depending on the currently dominant spatial images of Europe) the barbarian North or the barbarian East. In the growingly racialized nineteenth-century scientific discourse this “Scythian” image of the Finns was acquiring “Mongol” features, and this called their European credentials into question.<sup>14</sup> Some Finnish scholars were painfully aware of this unfavorable bias inherent in the intellectual school which inspired them so profoundly as linguists and patriots. The Orientalist Herman Kellgren, very Fennoman-minded and at the same time a follower of Humboldt’s language philosophy, addressed some of the sensitive issues head-on, analyzing Finnish from a Humboldtian perspective and arguing that Finnish was in fact an inflected language and therefore perfectly able to meet the requirements of the Humboldtian language ideal.<sup>15</sup> Castrén, though convinced of the importance of linguistic bonds, was aware that the emphasis on allegedly kinships carried some inconvenient implications. In his lecture about the Altaic “cradle,” he mentions the chilly reception of the Finno-Ugric idea in Hungary:

This is hardly surprising, for the idea of being related to the Lapps and the Samoyeds stirs us up, too. That same feeling—the commendable desire to have distinguished and splendid ancestors—has driven some of our scholars to seek our cradle in Greece or in the Holy Land. We must, however, give up all possible kinship with the Hellenes, with the ten tribes of Israel, with great and privileged nations in general, and console ourselves with the notion that “everyone is heir to his own deeds” and that real nobility has to be achieved with one’s own skill. Whether the Finnish nation will manage to make itself a name in

14 Aira Kemiläinen, *Finns in the Shadow of the “Aryans”: Race Theories and Racism* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 1998), 46–50, 59–95; Anssi Halmesvirta, *The British Conception of the Finnish “Race,” Nation and Culture, 1760–1918* (Helsinki: SHS, 1990).

15 Herman Kellgren, “I hvad mån uppfyller Finska språket fordringarne af ett språkideal?” in *Fosterländskt album II* (Helsingfors: A. C. Öhman, 1845), 118–88; Herman Kellgren, *Die Grundzüge der finnischen Sprache mit Rücksicht auf den ural-altäischen Sprachstamm* (Berlin: F. Schneider & Comp, 1847), 45–47.

history is uncertain; what is certain is that the generations to come will judge us by our own achievements and not by those of our ancestors.<sup>16</sup>

In a letter to Snellman, he also argued that linguistic kinship does not imply racial affiliation:

As the results of my current expedition are going to prove that the Finnic languages are related to the Samoyedic and that the Finns are evidently related to the Turks and the Tatars, the next task for linguistics will be to demonstrate, through the Samoyedic languages, the Finns' affinity with the Tunguses. From the Tunguses we are led all the way to the Manchu, and all roads lead us to the Mongols, because they are believed to be related to the Turks, the Samoyed, the Tunguses and the Manchu. We should then start getting used to the idea that we are descendants of those despised Mongols, but with the view to the future we can also ask ourselves: is there really a noticeable difference between the Caucasian and the Mongolic race? I think not. The naturalists may say all they like about the differences between Caucasian and Mongolic skulls, but what matters is that a European Finn has Caucasian features while an Asiatic Finn has Mongolic features; that Turks look European in Europe and Asiatic in Asia.<sup>17</sup>

Behind these issues of historical, linguistic or racial prestige, there was also the question of civilizational affiliation. Finnish nationalism owed its initial impetus to the great transition of 1809; it was separation from Sweden and autonomy within Russia that made Finland a sharply delineated territory and a single administrative unit, stimulating the development of Finnishness as a cultural and political concept. On the other hand, there was the Swedish legacy of self-definitions, in which Russia figured as the political archenemy and the cultural other. Embracing autonomy, Finland's elites accepted the new political loyalties, but the cultural estrangement was harder to overcome. A poem written in 1809, dedicated and recited to Alexander I at the Diet of Porvoo by the poet and history professor Frans

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16 Castrén, "Über die Ursitze des finnischen Volkes," 122. See Tiborc Fazekas, "Die Rolle der soziologischen und ideologischen Komponenten in der Entstehung der ungarischen Finnougristik 1850–1892" in *History and Historiography of Linguistics*, vol. 2, ed. Hans Josef Niederehe, Konrad Koerner (Amsterdam–New York: John Benjamins Series, 1990), 747–57.; László Kontler, "The Lappon, the Scythian and the Hungarian, or Our Former Selves as Others: Philosophical History in Eighteenth-Century Hungary," *Cromohls – Cyber Review of Modern Historiography* 16 (2011): 131–45, and Stipa, *Finnisch-ugrische Sprachforschung*, 255–56, 331–32; for more information about the Hungarian reception of the discovery of Finno-Ugric kinship.

17 Letter from March 17, 1846 in Snellman, *Snellmanin kootut teokset*, 419.

Michael Franzén, can be seen as an early symbolic attempt to tackle this confusion. The Emperor is welcomed and thanked as a benefactor of the “orphaned” Finns, while Finland is referred to as a “child of the East,” who has spent its childhood years under Sweden’s civilizing rule, but now is returning home.<sup>18</sup> Franzén was a disciple and close collaborator of Porthan’s, and indeed the whole formula seems to be an adaptation of Porthanian concepts on Finnish history—those of Finns as a people with eastern origins (as demonstrated by linguistic evidence), who owe their enlightenment to their contact with Scandinavians. The language kinship, though unmentioned in the poem, is an important part of this concept; thus already in 1809, it was referred to with the aim of helping the Finns accept the new situation and open up to the east.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Finnish nationalism struggled to keep equal distance from Sweden and Russia, and much of its focus was on overcoming the cultural domination of Swedish. At the same time, however—the debt of the Finnish nationalists to Russia and their anti-Swedish stance notwithstanding—the Finnish national movement remained deeply conditioned by the pre-nationalist identity of Finland’s elites and by the *long durée* legacy of Swedish rule. This included public institutions, traditions of social order, the relatively strong position of peasants, Lutheranism as the official religion, and, last but not least, the high literacy rate in Swedish *and* in Finnish.<sup>19</sup> All this contributed to a social landscape very different from Russian, which had formed the pre-nationalist identities of Finland’s elites and which was on the whole favorable to the development of the national movement. For all the urgency of the new tasks, such as linguistic emancipation or the recreation of the historical narrative, the emergent notions of Finnishness remained culturally tied to Scandinavia, and this fundamental orientation was ultimately something the Fennomen had no intention of abandoning, even if some of the anti-Swedish rhetoric would suggest otherwise.

The concept of Finno-Ugricity did little to change this orientation, and indeed sometimes it had the opposite effect, as it brought cultural contradictions to the surface. In 1844, Snellman wrote to Castrén, “It is a great fortune in our misfortune that the power which is suppressing the Finns’ national awareness

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18 Frans Michael Franzén, “Untitled [“Prins! hwars dygd, stöd för jordens halfway klot...”],” *Åbo Tidning* 27 (5 April 1809): 2–3; cf. Klinge, *A History both Finnish and European*, 20.

19 Even the sociolinguistic hierarchies were not as sharp and exclusive as in some of the neighboring areas, where most of the linguistic majority was subject to serfdom (as in the German-dominated Estonia) or where the religious tradition did not favor literacy (as in Russian Karelia).

is not the same as that which blocks them from political independence.” As Finno-Ugric studies in Finland developed, more scholars had the opportunity to travel to East Karelia, the Urals or Siberia, and encounter the “kindred peoples” whose political and cultural lives were determined by one and the same power—and their impressions were not always enticing or encouraging. Facing Finno-Ugricity in the field had an alienating effect.

One of the more characteristic examples was August Ahlqvist, who started his career as an enthusiast of romanticized Finno-Ugricity, but soon turned into a hard-headed Scandinavian Occidentalizer, despite his unchanged commitment to the Finnish language. He made his debut in 1847 with “Fairy Tale, or an Ethnographic Dream,” in which the Castrénian concept of the Altaic cradle becomes a folk legend, which the narrator, an ethnographer, hears from an old Karelian. The sisters’ names allude to Finno-Ugric peoples. Their initials, if put together, spell the word VAPAUS “freedom,” and, as in Topelius’ Pan-Finnic vision, the sister representing Finland plays the leading role.<sup>20</sup> In the 1850s, after several research expeditions to East Karelia, the Volga Region and Siberia, Ahlqvist’s attitude began to change. The poverty, backwardness, low social position and weak sense of ethnic identity among the Finno-Ugric-speaking peoples of Russia are recurrent themes in his travel reports. Over time, he increasingly perceived the Finns’ position within the Finno-Ugric family as unique and privileged because of their close ties to the cultural heritage of Western Europe, Northern, Germanic and Protestant in particular.<sup>21</sup> In one of his best known linguistic works, he argued that much of the Finnish “cultural vocabulary” consists of old Germanic and Baltic loanwords.<sup>22</sup> In 1875, in a speech delivered at the quadricentennial celebration of the (Swedish-made) fortress of Olavilinna, he spoke of a Finnish “debt of gratitude” towards Sweden, whose rule had saved the Finns from the misfortune of their linguistic relatives who ended up in Russia. This phrase

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20 August Ahlqvist, “Satu. Kansantieteellinen unelma kirjoitettu v. 1847,” *Suometar* nos. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (1847).

21 This approach also affected Ahlqvist’s attitude towards Hungary, the one Finno-Ugric-speaking country with state traditions and a vibrant national culture at the time. Although he remained in close contact with a number of Hungarian intellectuals, Ahlqvist considered Hungary too distant, geographically and culturally, to be a model from which Finland could benefit. Tuomo Lahdelma (“August Ahlqvist ja Unkarin kulttuuri” in *Kulttuurin Unkari*, ed. Jaana Janhila (Jyväskylä: Atena Kustannus, 1991), 9–41, 25–45) points out that Ahlqvist’s perception of Hungary as provincial and peripheral was a logical corollary of view of the Protestant Germanic North as the core of European culture.

22 August Ahlqvist, *Die Kulturwörter der westfinnischen Sprachen. Ein Beitrag zu der älteren Kulturgeschichte der Finnen* (Helsingfors: Voss, 1875).

antagonized much of the Fennoman milieu.<sup>23</sup> From an unreserved enthusiasm regarding panethnic kinship anchored in language, his views evolved towards an appreciation of cultural bonds. The Occidentalist development can also be traced in some of Ahlqvist's poems (published under the penname Oksanen). In *Suomen valta* ("The Finnish Realm"), which was published in 1860, he presented the image of a Finland that transcended the boundaries of the Grand Duchy, one defined by the community of "Finnish speech and Finnish mind" and encompassing the territory between *Äänisjärvi, Pohjanlahti/Auran rannat, Vienan suu* (Onega Lake, The Gulf of Bothnia, Aura's shores, Viena's delta), i.e. all of Karelia.<sup>24</sup> By 1868, his concept of Finnishness had shifted westward, as shown in the poem "Meidän vieraisa-käynnit" ("Our visit-making"), in which the Finns' neighbors are characterized as peoples one might visit. The kind-hearted Lapp is dismissed as too uncivilized, the Ingrian is in fact Russian and therefore alien, and the food they both serve (the Lapp's reindeer hearts and kidneys, the Ingrian's sauerkraut) scare the Finn off. The Estonian, a close kinsman, is an object of pity: enslaved in his own country, he does not even get to speak in the poem. The "German knight" speaks instead, telling the Finn to back off from the shore. Only Sweden remains a proper place to visit, praised as "Finland's source of light" and, indeed, "Finland's great mother."<sup>25</sup>

23 August Ahlqvist, "Olavinlinnan 400-vuotisessa juhlassa 29 p. Heinäk. v. 1875" in *Suomalaisia puhe-kokeita* (Helsinki–Porvoo: Werner Söderström, 1889), 1–14.; Rafael Koskimies, *Nuijamieliseksi luotu. Yrjö Koskisen elämä ja toiminta vuosina 1860–82* (Helsinki: Otava, 1968), 196–205.

24 August Oksanen [Ahlqvist], *Säkeniä. Kokous runoutta – ensimmäinen parvi* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1860), 4–5. The poem is also interesting for its double debt to the German nationalist tradition. Its overall concept, i.e. the poetic vision of "the real Finland" as defined by language, bears strong resemblance to *Des Deutschen Vaterland* (1813) by Ernst Moritz Arndt, while the form and meter were modelled on *Das Lied der Deutschen* (1841), better known as the national anthem of Germany, and indeed the poem was sung to the same melody by Joseph Haydn. The territorial definition of the "Finnish realm" by four natural borders, too, is an echo of the German song.

25 August Oksanen [Ahlqvist], *Säkeniä. Kokous runoelmia – toinen parvi* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1868), 65–73. Like the reference to the Finnish "debt of gratitude," the poem was controversial among Fennomen. It even provoked a polemic in verse from the self-taught Ingrian peasant poet Jaakko Räikkönen, who stood in defense not only of his own home province, but also of the Estonians, the Lapps and a number of Finno-Ugric peoples, criticizing Ahlqvist for having abandoned his kin and "made friends with Swedish, an alien tongue," – "Suomelle" in Kustavi Grotenfelt, ed., *Kahdeksantoista runoniekkeä. Valikoima Korhosen, Lyytisen, Makkosen, Kymäläisen, Puhakan, Räikkösen y.m. runoja ja lauluja* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1899). Ahlqvist's literary activities also reflected this westward trend. He rejected the notion that Finnish poetry should remain faithful to the archaic folk tradition embodied by the Kalevala. Instead, he made a point of following European forms, e.g. writing the first Finnish sonnet and introducing hitherto unfamiliar metric forms into Finnish verse.

### *Panfennicism – Finnocentricism – Greater Finland*

One element that remains stable in Ahlqvist's thought, from the romantic visions of 1847 to his late praise of the Swedish legacy, is his view of the Finns' special position within the Finno-Ugric family. This conviction formed the core of his changing notions of Finno-Ugricity, which he shared with Topelius and many other Fennomen, and indeed, it indicates one of the main attractions of the Finno-Ugric idea. Unprestigious as a source of historical and cultural references, it nevertheless provided Finnish ascendant nationalism with a context in which the Finns could see themselves as a civilizational avant-garde, the best educated, most thoroughly modernized, most "European" member of the family, as well as the one with the most thoroughly developed national culture. It was not so much Ahlqvist's disdain for the less fortunate kindred peoples which made his statements controversial as his growingly outspoken view of Finland as having been civilized by external force. The idea that the Finns themselves would naturally qualify as civilizers and awakers of other Finno-Ugrians was not contested; on the contrary, the notion of language kinship was consistently used to construct an imagined community in which the Finns were naturally predestined to lead. Ahlqvist's youthful tale of the five sisters is one of those acts of construction, as was Topelius' prediction of Pan-Fennicism under Finnish leadership. The concept found additional support in the traditional ethnolinguistic nomenclature, which favored the Finns and their language. The contemporary term "Finno-Ugric" became widespread only in the second half of the nineteenth century, "Ugric" being the new element, whereas in most of the earlier taxonomies the group figured as "Finnish" or "Finnic" (even if it was classified as a branch of a larger "Turanian" or "Altaic" family). The basic terminology used by the Fennomen thus seemed to legitimize their claims to tribal eldership. Thirty years after his Pan-Finnic vision, Topelius published the famous *Boken om vårt land* or *Maamme kirja* ("The Book of our Country"), a school textbook of Finland's geography, history and cultural traditions. There, he stated that "the Finnish language does not belong to any of those (i.e. Romance, Germanic or Slavic languages), but stands *in the forefront of its own great department* of Finnic languages (italics mine – ŁS)."<sup>26</sup> The perception of eastern Finno-Ugrians as poor relatives endangered by Russification rather than material for Pan-Fennicism did not weaken the

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26 Sakari [= Zacharias] Topelius, *Maamme kirja. Lukukirja alimmaisille oppilaitoksille Suomessa*, transl. from Swedish by Johan Bäckwall (Helsinki: G. W. Edlund, 1876), 152.

Fennomen's sense of mission: the founders of the Finno-Ugric Society in 1883 were strongly motivated by the notion of Finns being naturally predisposed and in fact obliged to form the main center of Finno-Ugric research; voices were raised that emphasized the national responsibility of Finnish scholars to support and educate kindred peoples and help save their languages from extinction. According to some, the imminent assimilation of Finno-Ugric peoples in Russia would make Finns the rightful heirs of their cultural legacy.<sup>27</sup>

The Fennomen's belief in the Finns' special position in the Finno-Ugric group was particularly suggestive and politically potent when it involved the areas near Finland where Baltic Finnic languages or dialects were spoken. In this case, proximity, border changes and long traditions of cross-border contacts coincided with close linguistic affinity, comparable to Slavic or Scandinavian linguistic bonds. However, unlike in the cases of the Slavic and Scandinavian languages, Finnish nationalism had no serious rivals in the area. This, combined with the Finno-centric terminological tradition mentioned above, made the area prone to be included in the still forming and therefore expandable spatial images of Finland and Finnishness. The line between Finnish dialects and closely related Finnic languages was fuzzy, much like the one between a regional branch of the Finnish nation and a separate kindred people. This was particularly true of Karelia, which for centuries had been divided, culturally as well as politically, between Russian and Swedish zones of influence. The religious divide (Lutheran vs. Orthodox) reinforced the political, giving a double meaning to the word "Karelian": in the Swedish part, Karelians became one of the ethnic subgroups of the Finns (along with the Finns Proper from the southwest and the Tavastians from the center of the country), while in Russia they remained more of a separate people. There were also linguistic divisions with various degrees of similarity to Finnish. After 1812, the once Swedish part of Karelia became a province of Finland, but the Russian part also became an object of interest to some of the Fennomen. As a distant and backward periphery, it was a gold mine for folklorists, including Elias Lönnrot, who created the *Kalevala*. The high status of the *Kalevala* in the canons of Finnish culture strengthened the perception of all Karelia, and its eastern parts in particular, as an ur-Finnish land of ancient songs. Ahlqvist's broad outline of Finland's "spiritual" borders in *Suomen valta* was a reflection of this concept.

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27 Salminen Timo, "In between Research, the Ideology of Ethnic Affinity and Foreign Policy: The Finno-Ugrian Society and Russia from the 1880s to the 1940s," in *The Quasiquincentennial of the Finno-Ugrian Society*, ed. Jussi Ylikoski (Helsinki: Societé Finno-Ougrienne, 2009), 227; Salminen, *Aatteen tiede*, 24.

Other linguistic and national borderlines in the Baltic Finnic area also proved flexible. Several years before *Suomen valta*, in one of his travel reports from Russian Karelia Ahlqvist characterized Ingrian Finns, all Karelians, Votians, Estonians, Livonians and Vepsians as “Finns living in Russia, outside the borders of Finland,” and this broad definition of Finnishness was not without political overtones:

Most of these Finns, together making up about one-million people, live in territorial continuity with Finland, and *even separate from Finland (or better still together with it) they could form a small state* (italics mine - LS), although one must note that there is a gulf of several centuries between most of these peoples and the Finns from Finland in terms of education and culture.<sup>28</sup>

The notion of all Karelians being part of the greater Finnish nation was not left uncultivated. Throughout the nineteenth century, Karelia was an object of growing fascination to many Finnish intellectuals and artists; it occupied a special place in the Finnish self-image as a territory that was somewhat exotic and different from mainstream Finnishness yet at the same time represented its ancient source. In the twentieth century, cultural Karelianism acquired a political dimension, and in the first years of independence Finland made a number of unsuccessful attempts to annex Russian Karelia. Despite interwar Finland’s policy of restoring ties with Scandinavia and reaffirming its position as part of the emergent Nordic community, the idea of a Greater Finland lingered on in politically influential milieus, e.g. the Academic Karelian Society, and it was briefly realized during World War II, when Finnish troops advanced all the way to Petrozavodsk.<sup>29</sup> Following the military defeat in 1944, the notion of Greater Finland collapsed, as did the entire culture of politicized Pan-Fennicism; Finno-Ugric studies retreated to the academia and kept a rather low profile throughout the Cold War.

### *The Unequal Brotherhood*

More complex was Finland’s relation with Estonia, a territory clearly distinct from Finland and the only Finno-Ugric nation in the region with a well developed national movement. In this case, Pan-Finnic aspirations met a dynamic national ideology with its own self-images and its own readings of the linguistic bond.

28 August Ahlqvist, *Muistelmia matkoilta Wenäjällä 1845–1858* (Hämeenlinna: Karisto, 1986), 59–60.

29 Mauno Jääskeläinen, *Itä-Karjalan kysymys. Kansallisen laajennusohjelman synty ja sen toteuttamisyriytykset Suomen ulkopoliitikassa vuosina 1918–1920* (Porvoo–Helsinki: Helsingin Yliopiston, 1961).

Separated from Finland by the sea, Estonia in the nineteenth century was in many ways culturally closer to Finland than Russian Karelia. It was predominantly Lutheran, relatively modern and economically more developed than most of the Russian Empire, with high literacy and an old, if feeble, literary tradition in the local language. Unlike the Orthodox Karelians, Vepsians or Votes, the Estonians were not exposed to massive assimilatory trends. In the nineteenth century, they became one of the three Finno-Ugric communities to be integrated and mobilized by the nationalist message. Estonian nationalism emerged later than Finnish nationalism, and its development was slowed down by unfavorable socio-historical circumstances. Finnish nationalism was launched by members of the Swedish-speaking elite, who were determined to “be Finns” and attempted to appeal to the Finnish-speaking majority, while in Estonia the local German elite was not motivated to embrace Estonian identity or support the national movement. From on the outset, Estonian activists were keen to watch their more successful “linguistic relatives,” and Finland was present in the Estonian-language press as early as the 1820s. Starting in the 1840s, Finnish activists began to visit Estonia, and prominent representatives of the two national milieus were in regular contact.<sup>30</sup> The interest was thus mutual, but not symmetrical. The Finns were perceived as more advanced in the pursuit of their national goals, but also as more successful in retaining their original national uniqueness. Meanwhile, Finnish reports and comments on Estonian affairs, though generally sympathetic towards the kindred nation and its struggle for its cause, were not free from patronizing accents. Ahlqvist’s *Meidän vieraisa-käynnit* is a good example. Some Fennomen were skeptical about the Estonians’ potential as an aspiring nation, finding them too small and the dominant German culture too powerful.<sup>31</sup> Even linguistic works were affected by this attitude. One example is the frequent classification of Estonian as genetically or otherwise subordinate to

30 Kari Alenius, *Abkeruus, edistys, ylimielisyys. Virolaisten Suomi-kuva kansallisen heräämisen ajasta tsaarimallan päättymiseen (n. 1850–1917)* (Oulu: Pohjoinen, 1996), 47–50.

31 E.g. Yrjö-Koskinen, one of the most ardent fighters for the advancement of Finnish in Finland, expressed deep skepticism about the potential of analogous options for Estonian. He predicted that German would have to remain the dominant language of cultural and intellectual life even among patriotic Estonians, or else it might be replaced by Finnish: “Many Estonians believe Finnish would be the most agreeable tool of higher education [...] In fact, Finnish grammar is the source from which the Estonian language derives its rules of correctness.” (Yrjö-Koskinen [Yrjö Sakari], “Wiron kirjallisuutta,” *Kirjallinen kuukauslehti* 7 (1868): 179–83, see also Marko Lehti, “Suomi Viron isoveljenä. Suomalais-virolaisten suhteiden kääntöpuoli,” in *Suomi ja Viro yhdessä ja erikseen*, ed. Kari Immonen and Tapio Onnela (Turku: Turun yliopiston historian laitoksen julkaisuja, 1998), 85–91.

Finnish.<sup>32</sup> In Finland this was a tradition going back to the eighteenth century,<sup>33</sup> but now it was adopted on both shores of the Gulf of Finland and reflected in language planning policies. Some Finnish scholars suggested linguistic cooperation to bring the two literary languages closer to each other. In 1822, the journal *Beiträge zur genauern Kenntniss der estnischen Sprache* published an article by the influential Finnish activist I. A. Arwidsson in which he advised Estonians to reform their orthography according to the Finnish model,<sup>34</sup> while August Ahlqvist considered, as a young man, the possibility of creating one common literary language for Finns and Estonians. The idea was rather eccentric and Ahlqvist abandoned it as soon as he learned more about Estonia's linguistic realities.<sup>35</sup> Otherwise, cooperation did develop, but the results were unilateral. Estonian language planners were keen to follow inspirations from Finland, but Estonian influence in Finnish was hardly noticeable. This trend continued for well over a century.<sup>36</sup> In 1917–1919, when Estonia was struggling for political independence, the ephemeric concept of political integration with Finland had supporters among influential statesmen of both countries.<sup>37</sup>

32 The Estonian linguist and orthography reformer Eduard Ahrens characterized the Estonian language as a “daughter of Finnish.” In his view, it was a language that could not be properly learned without knowledge of Finnish (Eduard Ahrens, *Grammatik der Estnischen Sprache Revalschen Dialektes* (Reval: Laakman, 1853), 1). Early in the twentieth century, the Estonian ethnographer Mathias Johann Eisen stressed the secondary position of Estonian even more emphatically in his *Eestlaste sugu* (“The Estonian Kin”) which was, incidentally, the first popular-scientific presentation of the Finno-Ugric languages and peoples in Estonia. In it, he divided the Finno-Ugric languages into seven “main languages” rather than sub-groups, and made Finnish one of them. “Finnish is the largest in the (Baltic-Finnic) group, hence the entire family is called Finnic or Common Finnic (*Ühis-Soome*). Science thus does not put Estonian, but Finnish in the forefront, because it is used by a larger group of people.” M. J. Eisen, *Eestlaste sugu* (Tallinn: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, 2008), 23–24.

33 In 1700, Daniel Juslenius (*Aboa vetus et nova/Vanha ja uusi Turku/Äbo förr och nu/Turku Old and New* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2005), 45) referred to Finnish as the “parent language” (*mater*) of Estonian, Permic and Lapp. Porthan (“Paavali Juustenien Suomen,” 161) characterized Finnish and Estonian as “dialects of the same language.”

34 Adolf Ivar Arwidsson, “Über die estnische Orthographie. Von einem Finnländer,” *Beiträge zur genauern Kenntniss der estnischen Sprache* 15 (1822): 124–30.

35 August Ahlqvist, *Kirjeet. Kielmiehen ja kaukomatkailijan viestejä 1845–1889* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1982), 26–27; Eemil Saarimaa, “Ahlqvistin ja Lönnrotin kirjeenvaihtoa suomen ja viron kirjakielen yhdistämisestä,” *Virtutäjä*, no. 8 (1910): 131–33.

36 Kari Alenius, “Kieli kulttuurivaikutusten ilmentäjänä. Suomen ja Viron tapaus” in *Suomi ja Viro yhdessä ja erikseen*, ed. Kari Immonen and Tapio Onnela (Turku: Turun yliopiston historian laitoksen julkaisuja, 1998), 144–47.

37 Seppo Zetterberg, *Suomi ja Viro 1917–1919. Poliittiset suhteet syksystä 1917 rennavaaliopoliittikan alkuun* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1977), 35–49; Marko Lehti, “Suomi Viron isoveljenä. Suomalais-virolaisten suhteiden kääntöpuoli” in *Suomi ja Viro yhdessä ja erikseen*, 104–09.

Among many other aspects of national image-building, this tradition of unequal brotherhood affected Estonian perspectives on the Finno-Ugric heritage. Finnish nationalism made Finno-Ugricity part of its message early on, whereas in the case of Estonian nationalism it was adopted at a later stage and, again, the Finnish model played an important role. The Estonians' role in the nineteenth-century development of Finno-Ugric research was insignificant. Before independence, they carried out practically no field research of their own, at least not beyond the borders of the Baltic Provinces.<sup>38</sup> While Finnish scholars tended to perceive their nation as central to the whole concept of Finno-Ugricity, their Estonian colleagues largely adopted the Finnocentric perspective, acknowledging their own position as secondary. It took political independence and the Estonization of the University of Tartu for the Estonians to develop Finno-Ugric studies of their own and simultaneously integrate Finno-Ugricity into their canons of national self-image.<sup>39</sup>

### *Epilogue: Memory, Survival and Nation Branding*

As the idea of Finno-Ugricity seemed to be in retreat in Finland, it began to acquire new meanings in Soviet Estonia. Apart from the fact that Estonian scholars had easier access to Finno-Ugric territories in Russia than scholars from Finland, language kinship again became a historical and cultural point of reference and provided politically acceptable forms with which to convey national-minded messages, or more acceptable, at least, than the Baltic or Scandinavian links that interwar Estonia used to highlight in its unsuccessful attempts to join the emergent Nordic community.<sup>40</sup> The ethnographic films by Lennart Meri, which were directed between 1970 and 1988, provide an interesting example of Finno-

38 Sirikka Saarinen, "The Myth of a Finno-Ugric Community in Practice," *Nationalities Papers* 29, no. 1 (2001): 44; Eduard Vääri, "Eestlaste tutvumine hõimurahvastega ja nende keeltega kuni 1918. aastani" in *Hõimused. Fenna-Ugria 70. aastapäeva album* (Tallinn: Fenna-Ugria, 1997); trükkis ilmumata, <http://www.suri.ee/hs/vaari.html>, accessed June 30, 2014.

39 Ergo-Hart Västriik, "Archiving Tradition in a Changing Political Order: From Nationalism to Pan-Finno-Ugricism in the Estonian Folklore Archives" (Paper prepared for the conference "Culture Archives and the State: Between Nationalism, Socialism, and the Global Market," May 3–5, 2007, Mershon Center, Ohio State University, USA), 6–7. [http://kb.osu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/1811/46903/FolkloreCntr\\_2007conference\\_Vaatrik7.pdf?sequence=1](http://kb.osu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/1811/46903/FolkloreCntr_2007conference_Vaatrik7.pdf?sequence=1), accessed June 30, 2014.

40 More on these attempts in Marko Lehti, "Non-reciprocal Region-building: Baltoscandia as a National Coordinate for the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians," *NORDEUROPAforum*, no. 2 (1998): 19–47; Vahur Made, "Estonia and Europe: A Common Identity or an Identity Crisis?" in *Post-Cold War Identity Politics: Northern and Baltic Experiences*, ed. Marko Lehti and David J. Smith (London: Frank Cass, 2003);

Ugricity used to articulate politically delicate statements on the Estonian identity and its current condition. Better known to the world as the first post-Soviet president of independent Estonia (1992–2001), in the Soviet times Meri was a popular author of travel books in which he frequently transcended reportage to venture out into idiosyncratic, erudite, highly imaginative historical meditations. In his films, later collectively retitled “The Film Encyclopaedia of Finno-Ugric Peoples,” he explores the notion of Finno-Ugricity as a common spiritual heritage, reflected in the most archaic layers of language and culture. Memory is a recurrent theme, featuring alternately as a reliable safeguard of identity, operating deep beneath the conscious (e.g. through the old vocabulary or folk superstitions), and as a vulnerable resource that requires deliberate cultivation and therefore relies on individual responsibility for the collective heritage; in both variants, it is tightly bound to the no less prominent theme of survival. Meri’s narrative can be seen as a continuation of the nineteenth-century tradition of romanticized ethnography and linguistics, but it gradually shifts towards the indigenous peoples’ perspective. Through a series of cautious signals, Finno-Ugricity is reinterpreted: from a bond of an imagined ancient past it becomes a modern bond of common experiences: foreign domination, dispossession, and endangerment.<sup>41</sup>

At the same time, the Finno-Ugric bond had other meanings, too, the most tangible of which was the mass following of Finnish television, after its signals began to reach northern Estonia in 1971. This was indeed one of the rare situations when the core linguistic dimension of Finno-Ugricity became a real cultural asset for the Estonians, bringing virtual access to the physically inaccessible world on the other side of the iron curtain. The tradition of Nordic yearnings returned to Estonia’s public discourse as soon as the country reclaimed independence; the concept of Estonia as a Nordic rather than a Baltic or East European country was propagated steadily throughout the 1990s as part of the official cultural policy. President Meri himself was active in promoting this trend, but it was the Foreign Minister (and currently President) Toomas Hendrik Ilves who proved to be particularly inventive. In 1999, he proposed the concept of “Yuleland,” a region spreading across the north of Europe, from the British Isles to Finland and Estonia (but not to Latvia), a community of “Protestant, high-tech oriented countries form[ing] a Huntingtonian sub-civilization, different

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Lukasz Sommer, “Ugrofińskie pogranicza nordyckości,” *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, no. 1 (2012): 73–83. Mart Kuldkepp, “The Scandinavian Connection in Early Estonian Nationalism,” *Journal of Baltic Studies*, no. 3 (2013): 313–38.

41 Lennart Meri, *Soome-ugri rahvaste filmientsüklopeedia*, DVD Eesti Rahvusringhääling ([1970–1997] 2009).

from both its southern and eastern neighbors” with a shared cultural heritage symbolized by the common word for winter solstice (*yule, jul, jol, joulu, jõul*).<sup>42</sup>

For all its focus on modernity and economic success, Ilves’ prehistoric references and his implicit belief in the political relevance of philology bring his arguments close to the rhetoric Meri employed back in the 1970s and 1980s. But the Finno-Ugric link was even more directly present in his Nordic campaign. In 1998, Ilves argued at a public forum that Finland was an example of successful national rebranding which should be just as available to Estonia: “Finland marketed itself into a Scandinavian country. (...) Why should Finland be more of a Scandinavian country than Estonia? We’re all the same Finno-Ugric sort of swamp people. But the point is that they turned themselves into Scandinavians. [...] My vision of Estonia is doing the same thing.”<sup>43</sup>

In the Estonian nation branding campaign, one might argue, Finno-Ugricity has proven to be a highly rotatable category in the construction of identities and historical affiliations. Originally established to help Finnish nationalism achieve symbolic emancipation from Sweden, it became attractive to the Estonians as a link to the more successful Finland, and then, with Finland’s Nordic identity reaffirmed, as a direct passage to Scandinavia.

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42 Toomas Hendrik Ilves, “Estonia as a Nordic Country,” Speech by Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the Swedish Institute for International Affairs, (14 December 1999), <http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/3489>, accessed June 10, 2014, presently not available.

43 Quoted in Julia Keil, “Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia: a Baltic Union? About the Cooperation Between the Three Baltic States” in *Estland, Lettland, Litauen – drei Länder, eine Einheit?* ed. Antje Bruns, Susanne Dähler and Konstantin Kreiser (Berlin: Geographisches Institut Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2002), 113.

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