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### A GEOLINGUISTIC COMPARISON OF SOME FINNIC LEXICAL ISSUES\*

**Abstract.** The study is based on material collected for the *Atlas Linguarum Fennicarum* (ALFE), which is a joint project prepared by Finnish, Estonian and Karelian linguists. Several lexical issues, the areas of which tend to cross language borders, are discussed. The analysis reveals certain mutual relationships of languages and dialects. On the one hand, we can see the historical ties of South-Estonian dialects with the Eastern or Northern Finnic languages, as well as the contacts of Southeast-Finnish dialects with North-Estonian dialects. On the other hand, the contrasts between the Eastern and Western Finnic languages, as well as between the Northern and Southern Finnic languages are visualised.

My paper is based on the analysis of lexical maps of the *Atlas Linguarum Fennicarum* (ALFE). The ALFE, which is a joint project prepared by Finnish, Estonian and Karelian linguists, is meant to serve parallel mappings of the dialect material of all seven languages of the Finnic branch of the Finno-Ugric family. These languages are Estonian, Finnish, Ingrian, Karelian, Livonian, Votic and Veps (Figure 1).

The ALFE is one of the few atlases involving a whole group of cognate languages. ALFE is the first linguistic atlas designed specifically for the Finnic languages. It is also the first lexicographical project in which all Finnic languages are treated by local experts. In addition to traditional lexical atlas information, the ALFE will also include some semantic information. A novel approach has produced maps displaying the distribution areas of one or several phonological words, called formatives, and their meanings.

On the one hand ALFE enables one to concentrate on phenomena specific to the Finnic languages as well as point out the differences and similarities within cognate languages and within dialect groups. On the other hand, it helps the researchers of other languages, in particular of those spoken in the adjoining areas, such as Russian, Saami, Scandinavian and Baltic, decide on the intensity of historical contacts between those languages and the Finnic ones.

In order to illustrate the basic dialectal boundaries that are revealed on onomasiological maps of the Finnic area by mapping the distribution

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\* The study has been supported by Estonian Science Foundation grant No. 4193.

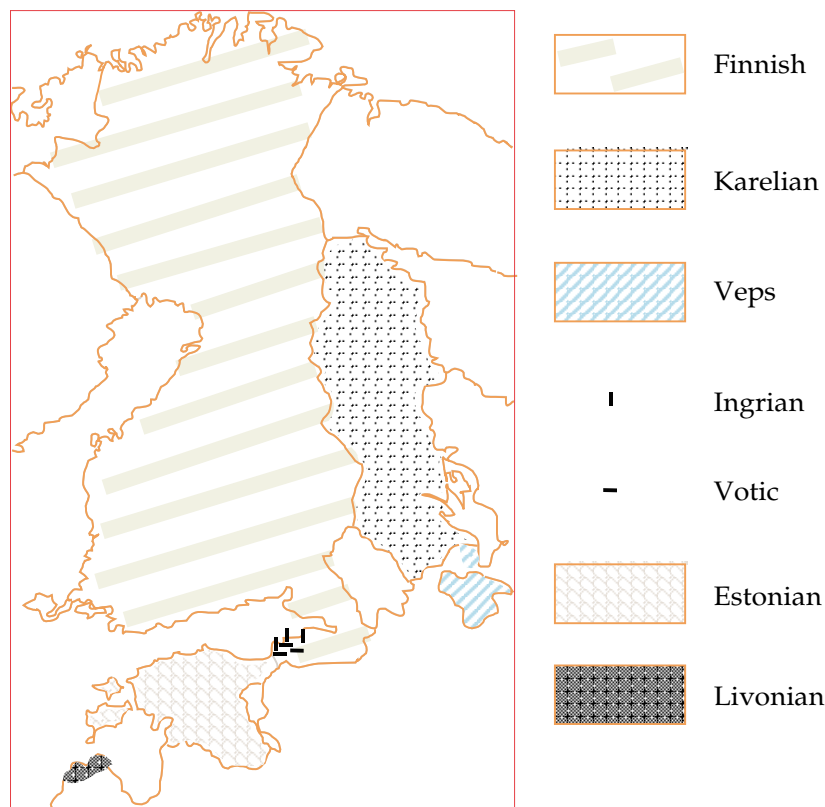


Figure 1. The Finnic languages.

of words with different stems I have chosen ten clear and characteristic examples from Volume 1 of the ALFE. In this report the selected words and their spreading areas are represented by means of generalised isoglosses. On ALFE maps, however, symbols are used to demonstrate the areal distribution of the words in great detail. In addition, the ALFE provides an exact representation of dialectal expressions as well as comments on several nuances relevant to the material or the way of its representation (see Oja 2002).

**'sauna whisk' (ALFE, map 29)**

A classical example to illustrate the contrast between the East and West Finnish dialects is the word for 'sauna whisk'. On the onomasiological map of all Finnic languages we can see that in Estonian and in Votic the word *viht* or *vihta* is used like in West Finnish dialects, while in Ingrian, Karelian, Veps and in East Finnish dialects the word for 'sauna whisk' is *vas-ta* (Figure 2). Hence we can argue that these words carry on the boundary between the eastern and western Finnic dialects to the south, where it separates the Votic and the Ingrian languages. Livonian, however, stands alone as in this language the Baltic loan *luudõ* is used to denote the both the broom and the sauna whisk. In the rest of the Finnic languages the word *luud* or *luuta* means only 'besom' or 'broom'.

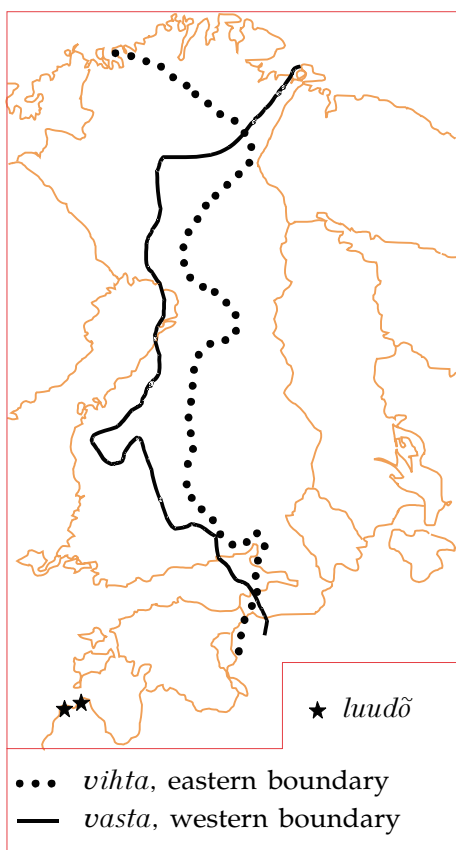


Figure 2. 'sauna whisk'.

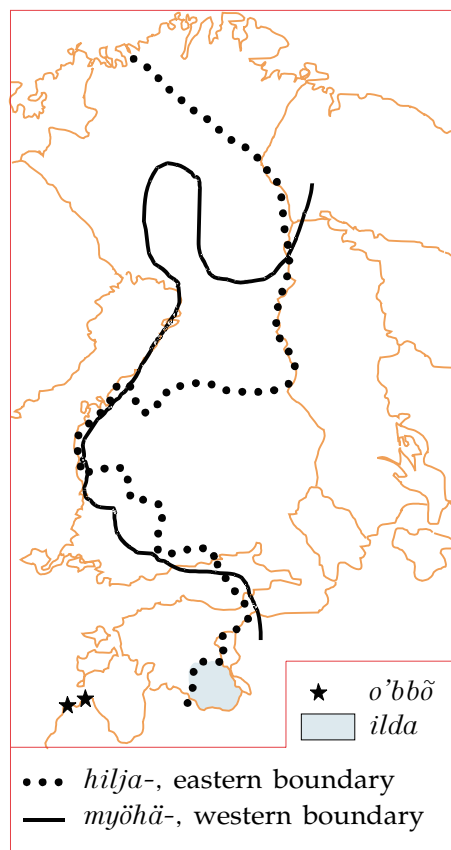


Figure 3. 'late'.

### 'late' (ALFE, map 47.1)

Adverbs denoting 'late' come from the stem *myöhä-* in Finnish, Karelian, Veps, Ingrian and Votic. The Estonian adverbs are *hilja* in North Estonian and the Mulgi dialect in the western part of the South Estonian area, and *ilda* in the Tartu and Võru dialects of South-Eastern Estonia (Figure 3). The same word stem of the North Estonian *hilja* can be seen in the South-Western Finnish dialects and in the dialects spoken in the northern regions of Finland — in Länsipohja, Peräpohjala, Kainuu and Ostrobothnian dialects. In many Finnish dialects the stems *hilja-* and *myöhä-* exist in parallel. As both are old Finnic stems they may well be eloquent of the old naming motives of the concept 'late' or the remoter semantic source of the words now used to denote this concept.

The original root of the *myöh-* adverbs is *möö-* to be recognised in some remoter cognate languages as well (SKES 357–358; SSA II 190). The whole Finnic area features numerous words with that stem, meaning 'past', 'along', 'together with' etc. (e.g. the Finnish and Karelian *myötä*, *myöten*, Finnish *myös*, Ingrian and Votic *möö*, *mööta*, Estonian *mööda*, Livonian *miede* etc.). The common Finnic stem *hilja-*, however, appears in many adverbs meaning 'quietly' or 'slowly', e.g. the Finnish *hiljaa*, *-n*, *hiljakkaiseen*, *hiljaksseen*, *hiljalleen*, *hiljan*, *hiljoitellen* etc. (SMS I 492–504), Ingrian *hiljä*, *hil-*

*jakaista* (Nirvi 1971 : 61), *hiljakseen, hiljan* (Laanest 1997 : 36), Karelian *hill'aa, hill'ah, hill'an, hill'oillah* etc. (KKS I 269–271), Veps *hill'ei, hill'äs, hill'äšti* (CBЯ 122), Estonian *hilja, hilju, hillakesti, hilläkesi* etc. (EMS I 930–938), Votic *iljaa, ill'aa, ill'akoo, ill'ää* etc. (VKS I 287–289), Livonian *ilig* (Kettunen 1938 : 80), as well as adjectives of the same stem.

From the point of view of language history the *hilja-* and *ilda* stems have been considered cognates interpretable as the Genitive (*hilja-*) and the Illative or Partitive (*ilda*) Singular forms (Wiedemann 1923 : 115; EEW 499–500). The ALFE, however, treats them as two separate stems; the same approach has been taken by the Finnish etymological dictionary (see SSA I 163, 225). Phonetically, the South Estonian adverb *ilda* 'late' corresponds to the noun *ilta* 'evening' used in Karelian, Ingrian and Finnish (except South-Eastern Finnish) dialects (see ALFE, map 65). As the concepts 'late' and 'evening' are pretty close semantically the map seems suggestive of a connection between the South Estonian dialects and the Northern and Eastern groups of the Finnic languages. In the Livonian language the concept 'late' is expressed by means of the adverb *o'bbõ*.

#### 'to rinse' (ALFE, map 42)

On the map depicting the distribution of verbs meaning 'to rinse' the contrast between the Western and Eastern Finnic dialects in general is revealed again. A verb with the *huuhto-*, (*h*)*uhto-* stem denotes this concept in East Finnish dialects, in Ingrian, Karelian and Veps, while the *uhta* : *uha-* is used in South Estonian dialects (Figure 4). Here too, we can see a similarity between the South Estonian dialects and the Eastern Finnic languages, as the stems *huuhto-*, (*h*)*uhto-* and *uhta* : *uha-* come from the same root (SKES 98; Itkonen 1987 : 169).

A word with the *virut-* or *verot-* stem is used in West Finnish dialects, in Votic, Livonian and in some Estonian dialects. In addition the North Estonian dialects have taken another, descriptive verb *loputama* or *lopetama*.

The Karelian Djorža<sup>1</sup> subdialect differs from the rest of the Finnic area by using *pešš* for 'rinse'. Generally, the Finnic verbs with a *pese-*, (*pess-*, *pešš-*) stem denote the concept 'to wash' (see ALFE, maps 41.1, 41.2).

#### 'key' (ALFE, map 8)

The Finnic words for 'key' come from two verbs: *avada*, which means 'to open' and *võtta*, with the meaning 'to take'. The nouns with an *ava-* stem are used in Finnish, Ingrian, Karelian, Veps and Kukkusi dialect of Votic, while the word *võti* or its phonetic variants characterise Estonian, Votic (except the Kukkusi dialect) and Livonian (Figure 5). The respective areas where the nouns of the two roots occur coincide with what have traditionally been called the Northern (*ava-*) and Southern (*võti*, *utim* etc.) Finnic groups. For most of northern Finnish territories no dialect word for a 'key' has been recorded. This might mean that in the early 20th century, when the material was collected, key was either unknown or a rather new concept for the informants who lived along the Oulu-Joensuu line and north of it.

<sup>1</sup> The South Karelian linguistic enclaves of Djorža, Tolmačču, Valdai, Tihvin and Vesjegonsk are located outside the territory depicted in the figures presented here.

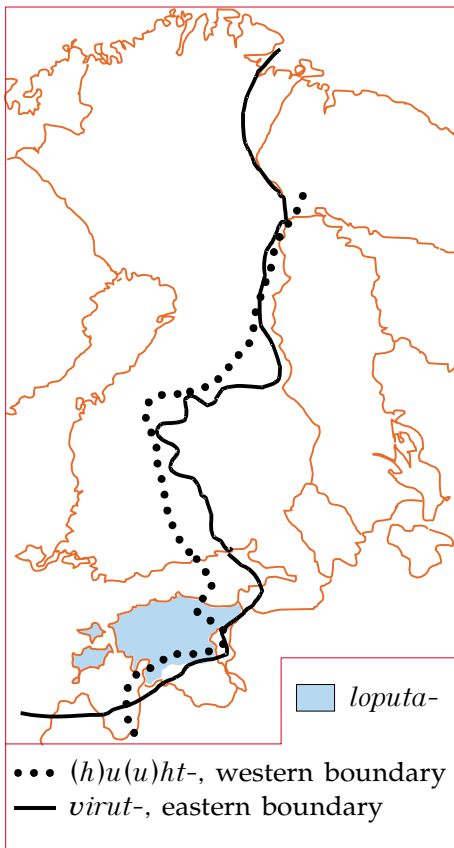


Figure 4. 'rinse'.

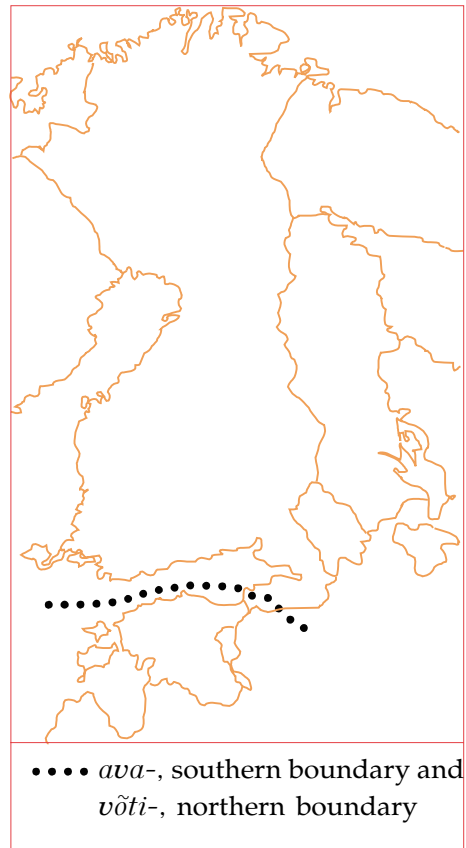


Figure 5. 'key'.

#### 'early' (ALFE, map 48.1)

Adverbs for the concept 'early' have come from two stems: *varha-* and *aika-*, the first of which is probably a Baltic loan (< *\*vāras* 'old'; SSA III 409), while the other has been derived from the word *aika* 'time' (?< Old Germ. *\*aiwa-z*; GL 10–11; SSA I 57). Words with the stem *varha-* we meet in Finnish, Estonian, Ingrian, Votic and Livonian, while *aika-* occurs in Finnish, Karelian and Veps. Both are used in parallel in a majority of Finnish dialects. Accordingly, we can see words on the map separated by two distributional boundaries (Figure 6). One of the boundaries separates Karelian and Veps dialects from the rest of the Finnic languages. The other boundary runs along the Gulf of Finland, while in this case the usage in Ingermanland is similar to that of the Southern Finnic group.

#### 'year' (ALFE, map 69)

More or less similar boundaries are apparent on the map where the spread of two different words for the concept 'year' is shown. The *aasta-* or *ajasta-* stem is found in the Western Finnic area, whereas *vuosi* is spread over the Northern Finnic area (Figure 7). So there are two words meaning 'year'

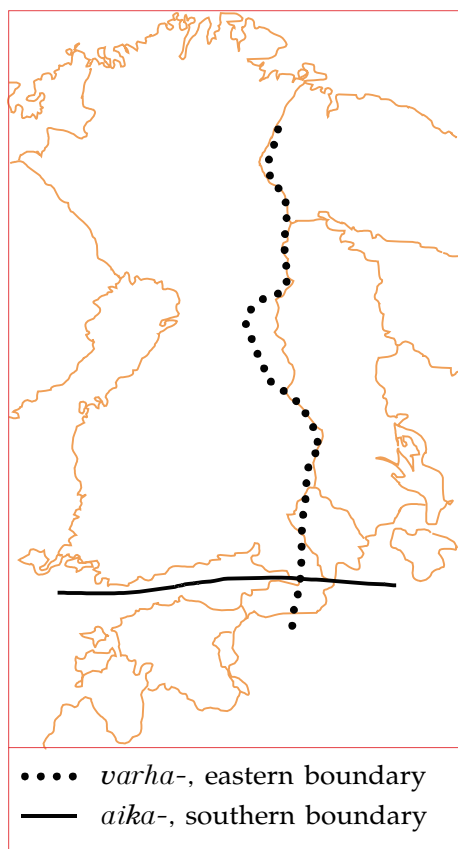


Figure 6. 'early'.

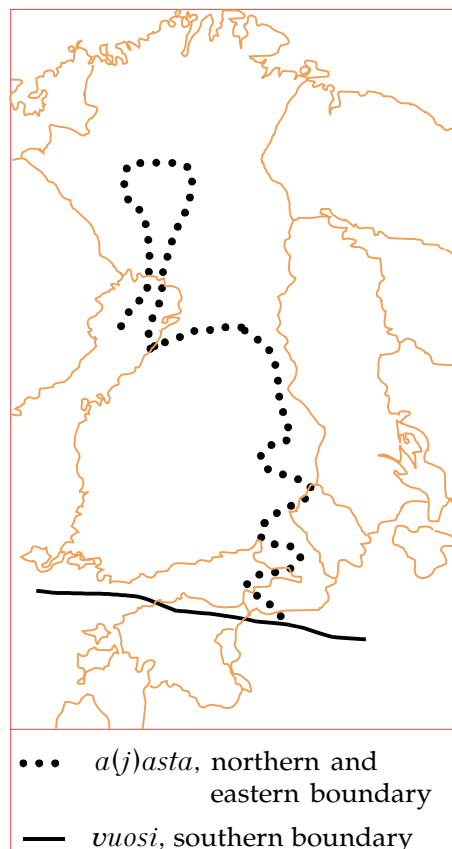


Figure 7. 'year'.

in Finnish, while a parallel usage of both is more frequent in the southern and western regions of Finland. As the two synonyms can also be found in the North-Eastern Coastal dialect of Estonian and in the Votic Kukkusi dialect, the boundary between the Western and Southern Finnic groups appears a little further south than in the previous example.

**'summer' (ALFE, map 67)**

The onomasiologic map for 'summer' shows a similarity between South-West Finnish dialects and the Southern Finnic language group (Estonian, Livonian and Votic). In the latter group the word *suvi* is used for 'summer' (Figure 8), while *kesä* is used throughout the rest of the Finnic area. Two words, *kesä* and *suvi* are used for 'summer' only in a few Finnish dialects on the boundary of the distribution area of both words, in the Votic and and in Vaivara, which is the north-easternmost Estonian subdialect. Both nouns exist in most Finnic dialects, but their meanings differ. In the South-West Finnish and Estonian dialects *kesä* or *kesa* is usually understood as 'fallow' (SMS VI 898–899; EMS II 1039–1940). In the eastern Finnic area (Karelia, Veps, South-Eastern Finland) *suvi* means 'south' (see ALFE, map 82.1), whereas in northern Finland it means 'winter thaw, a mild winter day' (SSA III 228).



Figure 8. 'summer'.

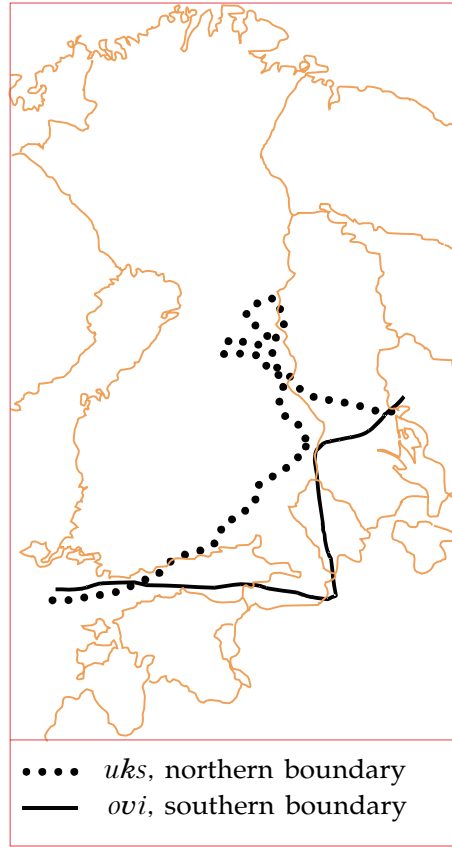


Figure 9. 'door'.

### 'door' (ALFE, map 10)

On the map for 'door' there are two word-stems: *ovi* in Finnish, Ingrian and dialects of Proper Karelian and *uks(i)* or its phonetic equivalents in Estonian, Livonian, Votic, Ingrian, Veps, in South-East Finnish dialects and the neighbouring Karelian dialects as well as the Lude and Olonec Karelian dialects (Figure 9). Here the distribution of the two stems shows the contacts between the Southern Finnic and Eastern Finnic languages.

Tentatively, *uks* has been considered a Baltic loan (SSA III 369). Looking for etymological equivalents for the Uralic word *ovi* south of the Gulf of Finland we find the North Estonian *õu(e)*, *õvv* and the Votic *õvvi* 'yard' (Mägiste 1929 : 10—11; 1982—83 : 4037—4038).<sup>2</sup> The interior local cases of the North Estonian and Votic *õu(e)/õvvi* have developed into separate adverbs meaning 'out', 'outside', 'from outside', the same development as in the South Estonian *uś* (< *uksi*) (see ALFE map 78).

<sup>2</sup> According to another theory the Estonian *õu*, *õvv* (gen. *-e*) and Votic *õvvi* 'yard' are German loans of *hof* and thus should not be associated with the Finnish-Karelian-Veps word *ovi* (SKES 82, 446). J. Mägiste's hypothesis seems more likely, though. A similar paradigm can be observed in other words of this phonetic type, e.g. 'breast' or 'bosom' sounds in Finnish, Karelian and Ingrian *povi* (gen. *poven*), in Estonian *põu*, *põvv* (gen. *-e*), in Votic *põvvi*, in Livonian *po'i* (SKES 616; SSA II 408).

The next two examples illustrate such cases where words deriving from one and the same root can be found in all Finnic languages, but in a certain sphere the word usage stands out as different from the rest of the Finnic region.

**'warm' (ALFE, map 31.1)**

All Finnic languages use an adjective with the stem *lämm-* or *lämp-* in the meaning 'warm', but in North Estonian dialects only a few such examples have been recorded as *lämmi leib* 'warm bread' or *lämmi ilm* 'warm weather', while the words *lämm*, *lämb*, *lämbe* mean 'sultry; stuffy; stifling'. The common adjective for 'warm' is *soe* or *suoja* in North Estonian dialects and the Votic, Ingrian and South East Finnish dialects spoken in the vicinity (Figure 10). The same word *suoja* occurs in Finnish and Karelian in its primary meaning, which is 'protection'; 'building for shelter' etc. The meaning 'warm', spread the widest in North Estonian dialects, let alone standard Estonian, has been attached to the word later (Saareste 1924 : 259).

**'morning' (ALFE, map 64)**

The concept 'morning' is expressed by the word *aamu* in Finnish and Ingrian dialects. In the rest of the Finnic languages a word with *hoom-*, or *homm-* stem is used (Figure 11), for instance in Estonian dialects 'morning' is *om-mik*, *oomik*, *ommuk*, *hummog*, *oming* etc. In Ingrian dialects *aamu* is used in parallel with a synonym that has come from the *hoom-* or *homm-* stem. In Finnish words with a *huom-* stem meaning 'morning' have been recorded in South-Western Finland mainly. The greeting *huomenta* 'good morning' is used more frequently than the noun in Finnish (see SMS IV 88). Besides, the *hoom-/homm-* stem lies in the origin of adverbs for 'tomorrow' that are used throughout the whole Finnish area except in East Livonian (ALFE, map 55).

**Conclusion**

Even on the basis of the few examples given above, we could see that the boundaries of dialects in the Finnic region do not coincide with the boundaries of languages. In most cases the Western Finnic group contrasts with the Eastern group (Figures 2–4, 6, 7), or the Southern group with the Northern group (Figures 5–8).

At the same time the lexical comparison revealed, on the one hand, the contacts between the South-West Finnish and North Estonian dialects (Figures 3, 8, 11), and, on the other hand, the historical ties between the Eastern Finnic language group and the South Estonian dialects or the whole Southern Finnic group (Figures 4, 9, 10).

Of bigger dialect groups, differences more often appear in the periphery: e.g. Livonian uses a different word for 'sauna whisk'; 'to rinse' is denoted by a different word in the Djorža subdialect of Karelian; the words for 'late' differ in two peripheral usages, one of which occurs in South Estonian subdialects and the other in Livonian.



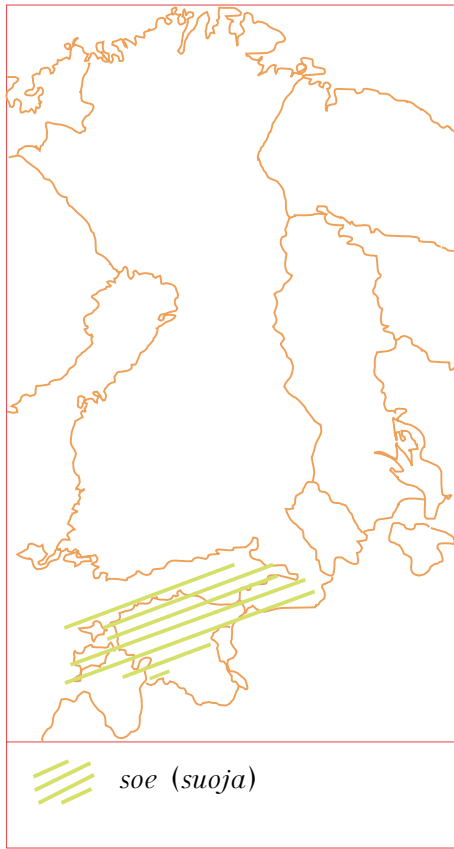


Figure 10. 'warm'.

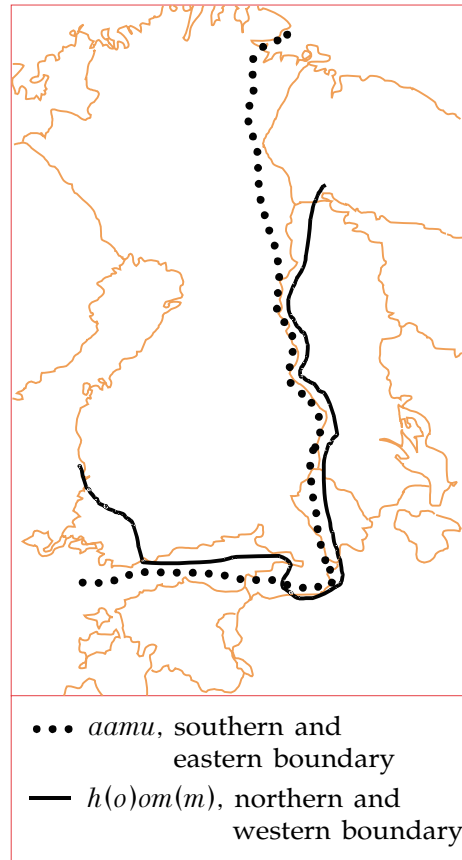


Figure 11. 'mourning'.

If an expression exceptional to the other Finnic dialects occurs in Finnish or North Estonian dialects, its isogloss often approximates the boundary of the language, e.g. the Finnish *aamu* 'morning' (Figure 11), the North Estonian *loputama* 'to rinse' (Figure 4), *soe* 'warm' (Figure 10). This may be indicative of an influence of literary languages.<sup>3</sup>

This was a short review of the most general geolinguistic tendencies of Finnic lexis. A more detailed look would reveal much more complicated lexical relations. It is interesting, for example, to follow the integral map of a formative, or the spread of loans borrowed into the Finnic languages in different periods (see Laanest 1995).

The above discussion addressed the mutual relations of the Finnic languages mainly from one aspect, which is the areal distribution of words denoting one and the same object, but having different stems. More or less similar dialect boundaries have been revealed by a geolinguistic comparison of the phonetic changes in the common Finnic vocabulary (Viitso 2000) and the semantics of the Finnic words (Oja 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Two of the Finnic languages — Finnish and Estonian — have a literary standard. Up to the mid-19th century Estonian had two literary standards — North Estonian and South Estonian, of which modern literary Estonian is closer to the former one.

On the basis of ALFE information, it is possible to study developments in lexical semantics, morphological and phonetic changes, relicts and innovations, as well as various issues of the Finnic cultural and settlement history. Part One of the ALFE contains 213 linguistic maps. Besides onomasiological maps there are phonetic maps, morphophonological maps, semantic maps, motive maps etc. The whole atlas is envisaged as consisting of three volumes.

#### Abbreviations

**ALFE** — Atlas Linguarum Fennicarum (ALFE) I (manuscript); **EMS** — Eesti murrete sõnaraamat, Tallinn 1994—; **GL** — A. D. K y l s t r a, S.-L. H a h m o, T. H o f s t r a, O. N i k k i l ä, Lexikon der älteren germanischen Lehnwörter in den ostseefinnischen Sprachen I. A—J, Amsterdam—Atlanta 1991; **KKS** — Karjalan kielen sanakirja 1—5, Helsinki 1968—1997 (LSFU XVI. Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja 25); **SMS** — Suomen murteiden sanakirja 1—6, Helsinki 1985—1999 (Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja 36); **VKS** — Vadja keele sõnaraamat 1—4. Toimetanud E. Adler ja M. Leppik, Tallinn 1990—2000; **СВЯ** — М. И. З а й ц е в а, М. И. М у л л о н е н, Словарь вепского языка, Ленинград 1972.

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ВИЛЬЯ ОЯ (Таллинн)

#### ЛИНГВОГЕОГРАФИЧЕСКОЕ СОПОСТАВЛЕНИЕ ПРИБАЛТИЙСКО-ФИНСКИХ ЛЕКСИЧЕСКИХ ЯВЛЕНИЙ

Карты атласа прибалтийско-финских языков (Atlas Linguarum Fennicarum — ALFE), работу над которым завершают лингвисты Финляндии, Эстонии и Карелии, позволяют нам сделать некоторые выводы о взаимосвязях между этими языками и диалектами. Сопоставляя распространение разнокоренных слов, выражаю-

щих одно и то же понятие, обнаруживаем, что границы их ареалов не совпадают с границами языковых ареалов. Чаще всего противостоят друг другу западная и восточная (рис. 2—4, 6, 7) и южная и северная (рис. 5—8) группы прибалтийско-финских языков. Подобные лексические явления свидетельствуют, с одной стороны, о ранних контактах между юго-западными финскими и северными эстонскими диалектами (рис. 3, 8, 11), с другой стороны, об исторических связях южной и восточной групп прибалтийско-финских языков (рис. 4, 9, 10).

От более крупных диалектных групп чаще отличается периферия, например, для понятия 'веник (в бане)' иное, чем в остальных языках, слово используется в ливском (*luudõ*), для понятия 'полоскать (белье)' — в дьержанском диалекте карельского языка (*pešš*), для понятия 'поздно', в периферийных ареалах встречается два разных словоупотребления: в ливском языке *õ'bbõ* и в юго-восточных эстонских диалектах *ilda*. Распространение слова, отличающегося от остальных прибалтийско-финских диалектов, в финских или северо-эстонских диалектах иногда довольно близко к границам языковых ареалов, например, фин. *aamu* 'утро' (рис. 11), эстС *loputama* 'полоскать (белье)' (рис. 4), *soe* 'теплый' (рис. 10). Возможно, свою роль при этом сыграло влияние литературного языка.

В статье приведены самые общие тенденции распространения лексики. При более детальном подходе лексические отношения в прибалтийско-финском языковом ареале представляются все же гораздо более сложными, чем можно судить по приведенным примерам.