To understand where Finnish comes from, we need to put it in historical context.

- Prehistoric Finnish people
- What is the Finnish Language
- Mythology of Ancient Finland
- Rune singing (oral poetry) of Ancient Finland

Keywords
- Finnish language
- Finnish mythology
- Rune singing (oral poetry)
- Sampo

Prehistoric Settlement Around Eastern Baltic

- Suomusjärvi culture 7,000-3,000 BCE
- Comb Ceramic Culture 3,000 BCE—1500 BCE (Bronze age)
- Iron age tribal Life around the Baltic 500 BCE (iron age)
- 1042-1249 CE Orthodox and Roman church crusades around Baltic
- Tribal differences

Gold necklace found in SW Finland 1770

Iron Age Population Patterns in Finland

Settlement c. 500 BCE
Settlement c. 1150 CE

Origins of Finno-Ugric Peoples

- Diachronic
- Original proto-Finno-Ugric group emerges from shared past in Urals

- Synchronic
- Exchange among groups influenced by mode of production
The Finnish Language

► Finno-Ugric Languages
  • A group of languages with similar linguistic features, including Finnish, Estonian, Hungarian
  • Cultural affinity
  • Political history in Russian sphere
    ► Not dominant language
    ► Not a literary tradition

► Shared Linguistic Features
  • No grammatical gender (hän)
  • Agglutinative (tietä/mättömyyd/essä/ni/kin)
  • Postpositions instead of prepositions

Finnic Mythology in Baltic Area

► Animism: Attribution of a living soul to inanimate objects and natural phenomena
  • Experiential world
  • Explanation of activities
  • Three-part cosmos
    ► Underworld
      ► Tuonela
    ► Manala
    ► World of the living
    ► Spirit-world
    ► Spirits
    ► Fantastic Creatures
  • Shamans as communities’ spiritual leaders
  • Gods or men?
    ◆ Väinämöinen the singer
    ◆ Ilmarinen the blacksmith

Towards an Explanation of Finnish Mythology

► Why this type of mythology?
  • Persistence of non-hierarchical hunter-gatherer societies
  • Distinct mythological tendencies
  • Shaman
    ◆ Spiritually-gifted member of community
    ◆ Medium between worlds
    ◆ Knowledge of animistic world and its symbols
      ◆ Trance practices
      ◆ Väinämöinen as shaman
  ► Oral Tradition
    ◆ Circulation of knowledge without writing
    ◆ Oral transmission
    ◆ Mythological and cognitive
      ◆ Latin
      ◆ Estates and church power

Pre-History and Epic Poetry

► Outside Roman Sphere
  • Roman empire
  • Church
  • Rune songs from oral tradition
    ◆ First notes on rune songs in 1500s
  • Archaeological artifacts
  • Reconstructions of experiential worlds
Where did rune-singing occur?

- **Uniqueness to Finno-Ugric groups around eastern Baltic**
  - “Runo”
  - “Runonlaulaja”
- **Areas**
  - Eastern Finland
  - Karelia
  - Ingria
  - Estonia
- **As prevalent in Western Finland?**
  - Any extant tradition lost?
  - Cultural differences
- **What constitutes the rune-singing tradition?**

Rune-Singing Features

- **Trochaic tetrameter**
  - Four beats per lines
  - Stress on first syllable of each beat
  - “Male- / ni mi- / nun te- / kevi
  - Aivo- / ni a- / jatte- / levi”
  - Kalevala-meter
- **Alliteration**
  - Two or more words repeating same letter or sound
  - “Lähe nyt kanssa aamu’nah
  - saa kera sanek’tah”
- **Repetition, or, parallelism**
  - Semantic redundancy
  - Call and response

Kantele

Context of Singing

- **Where did singing occur?**
- **Who sang?**
- **Rune song genres**
  - Epic
  - Sampo song
  - Väinämöinen
  - Lyric
  - Laments
  - Gender associations
  - Ritual songs
  - Charms
  - Origins
  - Performative aspect
The Sampo Song

- Epic heart of the Kalevala
- Actions of heroes
- Sampo narrative
  - Creation of the world
  - Väinämöinen floats to Northland
  - Sampo for freedom
  - Return to Northland to forge the Sampo
  - Väinämöinen et al. Return to reclaim Sampo
  - Battle at sea
  - Destruction of Sampo

- A sowing song to bring good fortune?
- Analogies to Norse folklore?
- A creation myth?

Forging of the Sampo, A. Gallen-Kallela (1892)

Conclusion

- Distinct language and cultural history
- Mythology and singing tradition from hunter-gatherer culture
- Sampo poem and Kalevala