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RENEWAL OF FINNIC DEMONSTRATIVE SYSTEMS IN THE CIRCUM-BALTIC CONTEXT

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Abstract. The present study examines the diachronic development and renewal of demonstrative systems in the Finnic languages within the Circum-Baltic context. Drawing on usage-based data from existing Finnic corpora, the reconstruction addresses historical changes from Proto-Finnic to modern Finnic, identifying processes of reduction and restructuring, while unveiling also obsoletion of specific demonstrative forms. The analysis reveals that while Finnish and Karelian proper retain relatively archaic tripartite systems, Livonian, North Estonian, Votic, and Veps display substantial renewal, often leading to bipartite or monopartite paradigms. Comparative evidence indicates that contact with Slavic, and to a lesser extent Baltic and Germanic languages, played a key role in shaping these developments. Parallels with Russian compound demonstratives and Old East Slavic forms highlight recurring patterns of areal diffusion and contact-induced change within wider Circum-Baltic language ecology. At a theoretical level, the findings affirm the instability of demonstratives as a grammatical category prone to contact influence.

Keywords: Finnic languages, demonstratives, language change, language contact, Circum-Baltic area

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1. Background

Demonstrative systems across Finnic languages spoken around the Baltic Sea have undergone typological changes and renewal, being in several cases quite radical. From various aspects such as etymology, typology, and language contact, there are numerous interesting areal patterns across Finnic, which are crucially related to contact with other languages in the Circum-Baltic area. In the Finnic dialect continuum, there

are similarities and dissimilarities among the demonstrative systems, and the isoglosses are clearly observable for several typological features concerning demonstratives, which are discussed in the present study.

The current study is grounded in primary language data, which can reveal hidden information at the language-specific and usage-based levels, not necessarily described in shallow typological generalisations based on insufficient data on Finno-Ugric languages, such as that encountered in the *World Atlas of Language Structures* (Dryer & Haspelmath 2013). The data have been gathered from the sources indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Varieties and corpora used as primary data in this study (based on Yurayong 2020: 5).

Language	**Variety**	**Source**	**Size**	**Genre**
Livonian		Mägiste (2006)	ca. 25,000 words	narrative
South Estonian		Estonian Dialect Corpus (EDC)	168,587 words	narrative, dialogue (between L1 and L2 speakers)
North Estonian			38,427 words	
Votic	Western	Kettunen & Posti (1932), Archives of Estonian Dialects and Kindred Languages (AEDKL)	ca. 10,000 words	narrative
	Eastern		ca. 10,000 words	
Ingrian	Soikkola	Laanest (1966)	ca. 5,000 words	narrative, dialogue (between L1 and L2 speakers)
	Heva		ca. 12,000 words	
Karelian	Olonets	Makarov & Rjagoev (1969)	ca. 35,000 words	narrative
Lude	Northern	Ojansuu et al. (1934)	ca. 40,000 words	narrative
	Southern	Pahomov (2011)	ca. 30,000 words	narrative, dialogue (between L1 speakers)
Veps	Northern	Kettunen & Siro (1935), Open corpus of Veps and Karelian languages (VepKar)	ca. 70,000 words	narrative
	Central			
	Southern			

Note that Finnish and Karelian proper are not included as primary data, for the reason that the grammars of Finnish and Karelian proper have previously been described in sufficient detail in terms of demonstratives (e.g., Larjavaara 1986, 1990; Laury 1997; Etelämäki 2009), which enables efficient use of secondary sources in the current study. The data coverage corresponds to the geographical area illustrated in Figure 1.

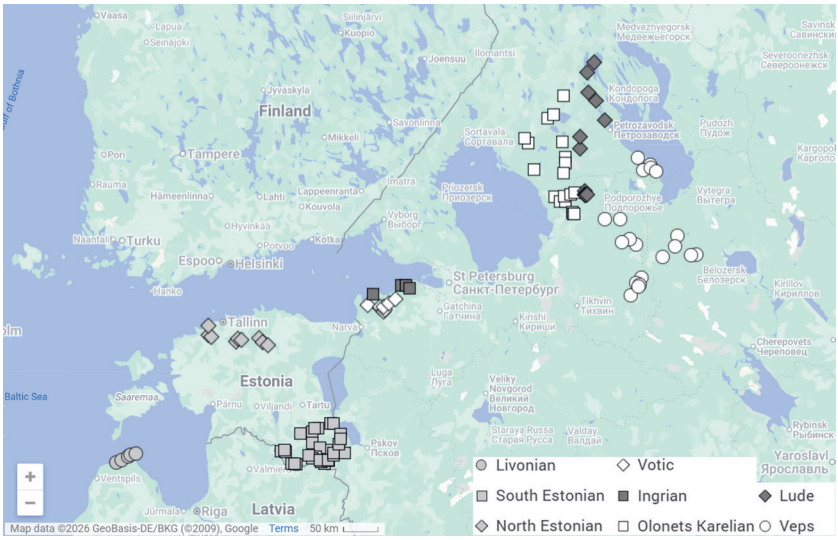

Figure 1. Geographical coverage of the corpus data (adapted from Yurayong 2020: 4).

The objectives of the present study are to provide a relative chronology of individual changes in the Finnic demonstrative systems and to identify the motivation and source of changes where possible. As a methodological precaution, a contact-based explanation might not always suffice to uncover the whole story behind a particular language change without also taking into consideration the force of internal development (Curnow 2001: 422–425; Thomason 2010). In the same spirit as Grünthal (2025) in prioritising inherited tendencies in a language prior to contact, the present study applies the method of internal reconstruction to describe changes in the demonstrative systems in Finnic and other neighbouring languages in the Circum-Baltic area, first independently. Reconstructions of demonstratives in each language

group will then be compared to determine whether similar tendencies and directionalities are observed, on the basis of which the contact-based explanation will then be applied.

The present study is divided into the following sections. Section 2 discusses morphological and semantic changes in demonstratives from Proto-Finnic to modern Finnic, first through internal reconstruction based on language-internal data and then through usage-based data, which reveal some cases of obsolescence and paradigmatic renewal of the demonstrative systems. Section 3 conducts an external comparison of Finnic demonstrative systems by extending the context beyond Finnic to the Circum-Baltic linguistic area, discussing parallels in neighbouring Indo-European languages, particularly Slavic, Baltic, and Germanic. Section 4 concludes the study with remarks on the state of the art in diachronic and areal studies of Finnic demonstratives, as well as the potential relevance of and evidence from neighbouring Indo-European languages, which future studies should investigate in greater detail.

2. Finnic demonstratives

2.1 From Proto-Finnic to modern Finnic

In the Proto-Finnic demonstrative system, a tripartite formal distinction has been reconstructed, including a proximal **tämä*, distal **too*, and a third series **śej* (Larjavaara 1986: 69–75; Kallio 2020; Grünthal 2023: 456). Note that there is also an alternative interactional approach to the semantic classification of demonstratives based on inclusiveness or exclusiveness between the speaker's and addressee's attention and engagement in the state of affairs: **tämä* [speaker-proximate], **too* [speaker-centred], and **śej* [addressee-centred] (Larjavaara 1990: 95–100). At the same time, another conversation-analytic approach treats the demonstratives based on their communicative functions performed by the speaker: **tämä* [presenting], **too* [pointing], and **śej* [referring] (Grönroos 1980: 18–21; Laury 1997: 146; Etelämäki 2009: 43–44). Particularly tricky to determine is the distance contrast of the third series **śej* with the other two series, as the structuralist tradition might simply label it as medial, while its interactional aspect emphasises the relation to the addressee's attention.

While maintaining awareness of the alternative interactional and conversation-analytic classifications mentioned above, the current study represents historical-comparative research with a structuralist approach. Therefore, the more straightforward formal triad consisting of the proximal, distal, and third demonstrative series is used throughout the study. The term "third series" was adopted from Coventry et al. (2023), who have shown that a third term in the demonstrative paradigm, contrasting with proximal and distal, does not always function as a medial term but should be described language-specifically for a cross-linguistic comparison. As quality of the Finnic data significantly varies from the two state languages (Estonian and Finnish) to the other minority languages, this study maintain the third series at the level of a comparative concept for the sake of formal comparability with the equivalent demonstrative paradigms in other neighbouring Indo-European languages to be discussed in Section 3 (see also the comparison between different approaches to demonstratives in Dixon 2003: 86–89).

Synchronically, some modern Finnic languages have retained the three Proto-Finnic demonstrative stems, as is the case for Ingrian, Finnish, and Karelian proper. In contrast, in Livonian and North Estonian, the system manifests a strong tendency of reduction to a one-way system, in which the third demonstrative stem **śej* has taken over the other spatial references (see Pajusalu 2015), although the distal **too* still marginally occurs (see Viitso & Ernštreits 2012; Tomingas 2022, 2023). Following the reduction of the system, at the same time, Votic and Veps have developed compound demonstratives by applying deictic intensifiers (see more details in Section 2.2). From a cross-Finnic perspective, the development of the demonstrative system from Proto-Finnic has resulted in a notable variation across the modern Finnic demonstrative systems shown in Table 2. Based on these demonstrative paradigms, it can be said that Ingrian, Finnish, and Karelian have best retained the formal distinction of the three Proto-Finnic demonstrative stems, whereas the Livonian, North Estonian, Votic, and Veps demonstrative systems are significantly more innovative than the rest.

Table 2. Modern Finnic demonstrative systems (adapted from Laanest 1982: 196–199, with updates for specific Finnic languages: Livonian from Tomingas 2023; South and North Estonian from Pajusalu 2015; Votic from Agranat 2007; Ingrian from Markus & Rozhanskiy 2023; Finnish from Etelämäki 2009; Karelian from Larjavaara 1986; Lude from Pahomov 2011; Veps from Grünthal 2015b).

Language	Proximal	Distal	Third series	3rd person pronouns
Livonian		*sie* *ne*		*tämä (ta)* *nämä (nää)*
South Estonian	*sjoo* *njooq*	*tuu* *nuuq*	*taa* *naaq*	*timä (tiä)* *nimäq (niäq)*
North Estonian		*see* *need*		*tema (ta)* *nemad (nad)*
Votic	*kase* *kane*	*see* *ned (nee)*		*tämä* *nämäd / näväd*
Ingrian	*tämä* *nämät*	*too* *noot*	*se* *net*	*hän* *hö*
Finnish	*tämä* *nämä*	*tuo* *nuo*	*se* *ne*	*hän (se)* *he (ne)*
Karelian proper	*ťämä* *ńämä*	*tua* *nua*	*še* *ńe*	*hiän (še)* *he (ne)*
Olonets Karelian	*tämä* *nämät*	*tua* *nuat*	*se* *net*	*häi* *hüö*
		netše *nenne*		
Lude	*tämä* *ńämäd*	*tuo* *nuod*	*se* *ńed*	*häin (se)* *hüö (ńed)*
		ńetše *ńeńe*		
Veps	*ńetse* *ńene*	*se* *ne*		*hän* *hii*

(The forms are presented in singular and plural, while alternative forms are given in brackets.)

However, when it comes to actual language use, some demonstrative stems may have become obsolete even though they are included in paradigms described in earlier grammatical works. This is particularly the case for Ingrian, among others (see Markus & Rozhanskiy 2023: 42, and discussion in Section 2.2). With this factor in mind, the usage-based

aspect has been taken into account in the *Uralic Areal Typology Online* (UraTyp) database (Norvik et al. 2022). According to the typological distribution of the feature "Are there three or more distance contrasts in adnominal demonstratives?" (GB035), South Estonian and Olonets Karelian are classified as productively distinguishing three deictic spheres whereas two-way contrast is given to other Finnic languages. The reduction of Finnic demonstrative systems in some modern languages shown in the UraTyp database still calls for critical consideration, especially whether the third demonstrative series is interpreted as part or not part of the spatial deictic system alongside the other two. In any case, their observation crucially highlights the importance of a usage-based account in the description of Finnic demonstrative systems, as will be discussed in Section 2.2.

2.2. Usage-based evidence for the internal reconstruction

Given the varying distributions of demonstratives in different Finnic languages, their frequencies in actual language use also differ. In this study, the usage-based analysis collects occurrences of different demonstrative stems, considering also their syntactic behaviours as independent pronouns and adnominal modifiers. Table 3 and Figure 2 illustrate the proportions among occurrences of different Proto-Finnic demonstrative stems in the corpora listed in Table 1. Note that this is based solely on historical forms, and their deictic values in individual languages may vary, as Proto-Finnic demonstrative stems have shifted their semantics in terms of deixis in some modern Finnic languages, as was shown in Table 2. Due to this historical-comparative focus, the series *taa/naaq* characteristic of South Estonian are not considered here, as they are not etymologically comparable to any demonstrative series in other Finnic languages, and because their short forms *ta/nad* are also often confused with the 3rd person pronouns (see also below).

Table 3. Occurrences of the different series of demonstratives observed in the Finnic data (based on Yurayong 2020: 127).

Language	**tämä / *nämä(t)*	**too / *noo(t)*	**śej / *nek*	Compound forms	Total
Livonian	807	0	1319	0	2126
South Estonian	2412	129	989	0	3530
North Estonian	715	0	1407	0	2122
Western Votic	414	0	208	11	633
Eastern Votic	330	0	64	265	659
Soikkola Ingrian	53	0	219	0	272
Heva Ingrian	33	0	258	0	291
Olonets Karelian	131	8	323	39	501
Northern Lude	359	1	616	18	994
Southern Lude	838	3	413	7	1261
Northern Veps	0	0	206	245	451
Central Veps	0	0	515	621	1136
Southern Veps	0	0	131	112	243

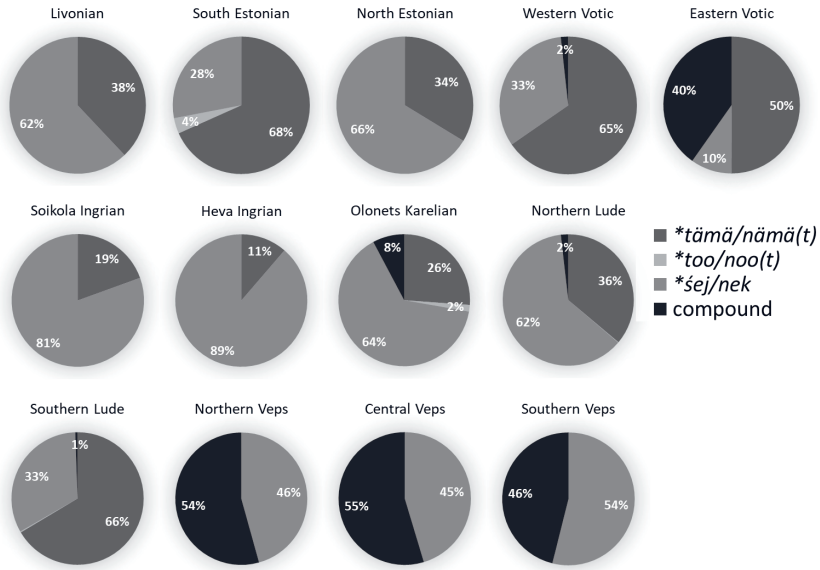

Figure 2. Proportion of the different series of demonstratives observed in the Finnic data (based on Yurayong 2020: 127).

As described earlier in Section 2.1, the Ingrian, Karelian, and Finnish demonstrative systems appear more archaic in their paradigms as given in earlier language descriptions. Nevertheless, the frequencies show that demonstrative systems in the Ingrian varieties, for instance, have reduced to a bipartite system, in which the use of the distal demonstrative series *too* has become obsolete (see also usage-based evidence for this tendency in the Ingrian varieties in Markus & Rozhanskiy 2023: 42). The low frequency of the distal series **too/*noo(t)* across Finnic languages in general might also suggest their marginal presence in actual language use and perhaps a tendency to disappear from the demonstrative paradigms. For example, obsoletion tendency of the distal series *tūo* in Livonian and *tuu* in South Estonian has likewise been observed in the spoken data, in which Proto-Finnic **śej* is the dominant demonstrative series (see Pajusalu 2006, 2015; Tomingas 2018, 2022, 2023). Meanwhile, the Proto-Finnic proximal stems **tämä/nämä(t)* predominantly occur in the Livonian data as independent 3rd person pronouns (96%), with few percentages of occurrences as prenominal demonstrative modifiers (4%). This resembles the situation in South Estonian, North Estonian, and Votic where the proximal series **tämä/*nämä(t)* have shifted to function as 3rd person pronouns.

Although the results suggest that a two-way deictic contrast, as proposed in the UraTyp database (introduced in Section 2.1), may be more common in naturally occurring data across Finnic languages, this study adopts a conservative stance and does not use these findings directly to argue for revising the Proto-Finnic reconstruction to a bipartite system. This caution is motivated by persistent differences in data quality across the Finnic languages, which remain a significant challenge. It is uncertain whether an interactional approach would produce comparable results for other languages like Olonets Karelian with smaller or genre-wise less diverse corpora as it does for well-documented and high-resource languages such as Estonian and Finnish. A more detailed usage-based description crucially contributes to internal reconstruction regarding the renewal of the modern Finnic demonstrative systems, particularly in those languages where renewal has involved multiple processes. Based on the data discussed in Section 2.1 and above, the readjustment of distance contrasts in the demonstrative paradigms can be postulated in a relative chronology of individual changes, as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4. Renewal of demonstrative systems in Livonian, North Estonian, Votic, and Veps.

Change	Livonian & North Estonian	Votic	Veps
The development **tämä* to 3rd person pronoun	**tämä* > PRON.3 **śej* > PROX **too* = DIST		**tämä* = PROX **too* = DIST **śej* = THRD
The neutralisation of deictic distinctions by **śej*	**too* > ∅ **śej* > all		
The emergence of compound demonstratives	**śej* = all	**śej* = all **ka+śej* > COMP	**tämä* = PROX **too* = DIST **śej* = THRD **näet+śej* > COMP
Readjustment to a bipartite system (through the obsoletion of **tämä* and **too*)		**ka+śej* > PROX **śej* > DIST	**näet+śej* > PROX **śej* > DIST **tämä* > ∅ **too* > ∅

(Grey shading indicates no change.)

An instance of the first change concerns the series **tämä* shifting its function from proximal demonstrative to 3rd person pronoun, as in North Estonian ***ta*** *metsa-s oli* [**3SG** forest-INES be.PST.3SG] 'She was in the forest' (EDC). Under the same change, the series **śej* subsequently took over the proximal deictic sphere. Despite this functional shift, several cases of adnominal use as proximal demonstratives are still observed in the data. On the one hand, this may involve confusion between the short forms of **tämä* and South Estonian *taa* as *ta*, as in ***tast*** *Tal'l'inast* [**DEM.PROX/THRD.ELAT** Tallinn.ELAT] 'from this Tallinn' (EDC), or a sporadic occurrence in North Estonian, as in ***talle*** *karjatselle* [**DEM.PROX.ALL** cattle.ALL] 'to these cattle' (EDC). A similar confusion of the form *ta/tä* whether it was a demonstrative or 3rd person pronoun has also been reported for Livonian (Tomingas 2022: 169). On the other hand, such adnominal use is preserved in idiomatic time and manner adverbials, such as Livonian ***täm*** *õdõg* [**DEM.PROX.GEN** evening] 'this evening' (Mägiste 2006: 160), and Votic ***tä-nä*** *vō-na* [**DEM.PROX-ESS** year-ESS] 'this year' (Kettunen & Posti 1932: 2, 130).

As a chain effect of the first change, the series **śej* extended its range of use further and eventually began to take over the whole paradigm,

causing a gradual obsolescence of the distal series **too*, which resulted in a monopartite demonstrative system (Pajusalu 2006). To compensate for the neutralisation of the paradigm, North Estonian developed the use of adverbial modifiers to mark deictic contrast when explicitness is required in the context, as in ***siin*** *metsa-s* [**here** forest-INES] 'in this forest' vs. ***seal*** *linna-st* [**there** town-ELAT] 'from that town' (Pajusalu 1997: 149). Note that the adverbial modifiers do not necessarily agree with the head words morphologically.

At the same time, Votic adopted a different solution from North Estonian in marking deictic contrast – a strategy which gave rise to the compound demonstrative series *kase*, with an analogous emergence of *ńetse* in Veps. The compound forms consist of a combination of the stem **śej* and intensifiers: Votic *ka-* < *kattsoa* 'to watch' and Veps *ńe-* < *näged* 'you see' (see proposed etymologies of these intensifiers in Kettunen 1943: 403). Note that the series *ńetse* has also been borrowed from Veps into Olonets Karelian and Lude, but it has not been reported to have caused any significant change to their demonstrative paradigms, which remain largely tripartite (Larjavaara 1986: 154–155). This is evident from its frequency difference, being marginal in Olonets Karelian and Northern Lude but frequent in Southern Lude and Veps. While this is regarded as compensation for the paradigmatic neutralisation by **śej* in Votic, the new compound forms in Veps initially coexisted with other plain demonstratives before the paradigm was remodelled into a bipartite system (Grünthal 2015b: 277), an outcome similar to that of Votic.

Given that Votic and Veps belong to different Finnic subbranches, the convergence discussed above represents a good instance of areal diffusion among Finnic languages, which took place after the dispersal of intermediate protolanguages. The cross-Finnic contact scenarios which play a crucial role in the development of demonstrative systems are discussed from an areal perspective in Section 2.3.

2.3. Drawing isoglosses across Finnic demonstrative systems

Numerous isoglosses regarding the development of the demonstrative systems, based on the paradigmatic and usage-based evidence discussed in Sections 2.1 and 2.2, can be observed across more than one Finnic language belonging to different dialect groups. Focusing on the paradigmatic changes, five isoglosses can be identified, as given in

Table 5. The first four isoglosses follow the explanations of forms, functions, and areal distributions, as given in Tables 2 and 4. Meanwhile, patterns under isogloss 5 are based on the usage-based distribution of different demonstrative stems presented in Table 3 and Figure 2.

Table 5. Isoglosses across Finnic demonstrative systems.

Isogloss	**Distribution**
1. The development of the demonstrative series **tämä* to 3rd person pronouns	Livonian, North Estonian, South Estonian, Votic
2. The neutralisation of deictic distinctions by the demonstrative series **śej*	Livonian, North Estonian, Votic
3. The emergence of compound demonstrative series	Votic, Veps
4. The renewal of deictic distinctions of demonstratives to a bipartite system	Votic, Veps
5. Distribution of frequency of use among different demonstrative series	5.1: Livonian, North Estonian 5.2: Olonets Karelian, Northern Lude 5.3: Southern Lude, Veps

Characteristics of each frequency pattern under isogloss 5 can be summarised as follows: a two-way contrast between **tämä/*nämä(t)* at ca. 30% and **śej/*nek* at ca. 60% (isogloss 5.1); a three-way contrast and marginal occurrences of compound demonstratives with **śej/*nek* at ca. 60% (isogloss 5.2); and a two-way contrast high frequencies of postnominal demonstratives **śej/*nek* over 30% (isogloss 5.3). These patterns crucially also reflect the formation of the Lude language, in which Northern Lude emerged from Karelian while Southern Lude has a Veps base (Pahomov 2011: 10–12).

The observed isoglosses can be plotted onto the Finnic taxonomical structure in Figure 3, which highlights cross-branch contact taking place after the dispersal of Proto-Finnic into later intermediate stages and indirectly provides some indication of relative chronology.

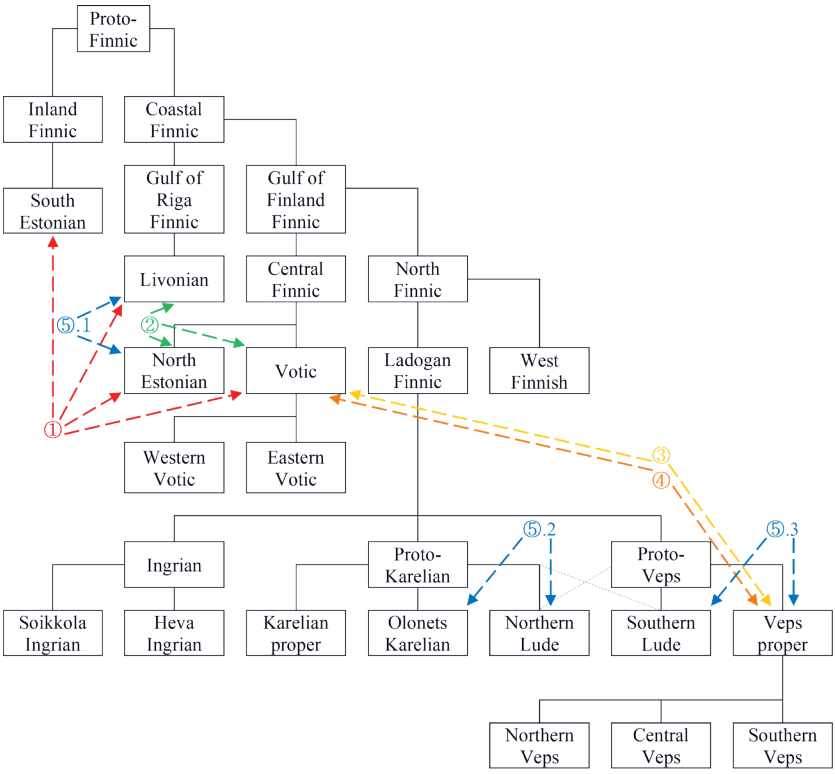

Figure 3. Diversification of Finnic languages and isoglosses across demonstrative systems (a tree adapted from Kallio 2014: 163; annotation of isoglosses adapted from Yurayong 2020: 209).

The incorporation of isoglosses into the Finnic taxonomy illustrates that changes in the Finnic demonstrative systems took place only recently as areal diffusion and therefore do not affect the structure of the Finnic taxonomy proposed by Kallio (2014: 163). This aligns with the observation that demonstratives belong to grammatical categories which are not stable across genealogically related languages (see a similar divergence scenario among Saami languages in Ylikoski 2020). Instead, demonstratives are often prone to contact influence and areal diffusion (see Blokland 2012 for discussion of the borrowability of pronouns in a Uralic context, and Sidnell & Enfield 2017 for discussion of demonstratives at a general level).

In terms of areality, the distribution of the isoglosses shown in Figure 4 provides information about their areal coverage. It implies

the status of Votic and Ingrian as forming the central area and lying at the crossroads of the Finnic dialect continuum, where two typological tendencies from the east and the west encounter.

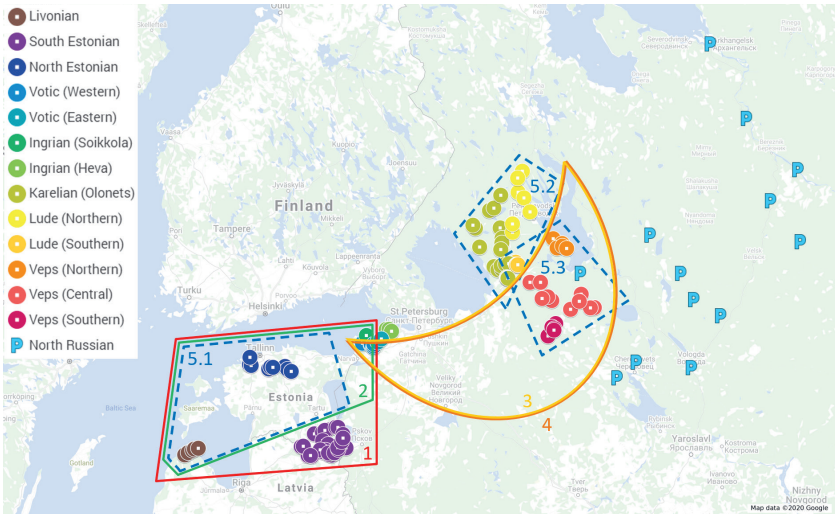

Figure 4. Geographical distribution of isoglosses across the Finnic demonstrative systems (based on Yurayong 2020: 210).

Several isoglosses can be dated within a narrower time frame based on the taxonomical structure and other historical evidence. The broader distribution of Isogloss 1 suggests its early spread, which may date back as far as the off-branching point of North Finnic from Central Finnic, as it largely distinguishes Finnic languages in the west from the rest and created a chain effect for later isoglosses. Isogloss 2 is likewise concentrated in the west, being shared among Finnic languages spoken along the coast of the Baltic Sea (see also Pajusalu 1996a; Tomingas 2018, 2022, 2023). In a micro-areal contact scenario, Isogloss 2 seemingly spread from North Estonian (possibly the Insular dialect) to Livonian towards the end of the 19th century through contact between fishermen across the Gulf of Riga (see Kettunen 1938; Ariste 1981: 78; Grünthal 2015a: 127–137). The contact scenario between Livonian and North Estonian is also supported by shared lexical evidence (see Koponen 1990 and comments in Viitso 1990) and by a lesser degree of interference from South Estonian (see Ariste 1954: 260).

Isoglosses 3 and 4, meanwhile, might not necessarily have resulted from direct contact between Votic and Veps, which would have taken place in the 15th–16th centuries along the border between the historical Vodskaja and Obonežskaja Pjatinas (Raunamaa & Kanner 2022). Both Votic and Veps might instead have separately adopted the model from Russian: *èto* [PROX] vs. *to* [DIST] (see Yurayong 2020: 209–210, and further discussion in Section 3). A similar Finnic-Slavic contact scenario could also have been the case for South Estonian and Old East Slavic in an earlier stage (see Section 3.3). Isogloss 5, however, divides into several areal patterns which largely follow the geographical adjacency of the present-day Finnic-speaking areas with attested instances of intense micro-areal contact: 1) Livonian and North Estonian, 2) Olonets Karelian and Northern Lude, and 3) Southern Lude and Veps (see also discussion of secondary integration of Finnic varieties in Grünthal 2020: 22, 2025: 83–85).

In the Finnic-external context, some of the isoglosses discussed above have parallels in Russian and may have been influenced by the Russian model. Among the Finnic languages spoken adjacent to the Russian-speaking area, Votic underwent earlier changes active among coastal Finnic varieties, and later another change leading to paradigmatic convergence with Veps in the east, following the bipartite model provided by Russian. This particular case of Veps-Votic convergence under Russian influence highlights the role of neighbouring languages – Slavic in particular – which will be discussed as parallels to the development of Finnic demonstrative systems from a broader Circum-Baltic perspective in Section 3.

3. The Circum-Baltic context

3.1. Parallels in Slavic languages

Based on the demonstrative paradigms in Old Church Slavonic (OCS) and other ancient and modern Slavic languages, a tripartite system is generally reconstructed for Late-Proto-Slavic (e.g. Leskien [1871] 1955: 96–101; Babič et al. 2003: 122–123). The reconstructed system etymologically reflects the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) system, with noticeable remnants (Kortlandt 1983; Derksen 2008). The paradigm includes the following demonstrative roots. Note that there are

two proximal series attested in OCS and possessing cognate with other Indo-European languages. Their distributions, however, vary across modern Slavic languages, with the second series **ovъ* used mainly in South Slavic languages, as shown in Table 6.

Proximal I	**sь*	< Proto-Balto-Slavic **śis*
		< PIE **ḱi-* ~ Hittite *kās*, Gothic *hina*
Proximal II	**ovъ*	< PIE **h₂eu-o-* ~ Avestan *ava*
Distal	**onъ*	< Proto-Balto-Slavic **anos*
		< PIE **h₂en-o-* ~ Greek *ǎn*, Latin *an*
Third series	**tъ*	< Proto-Balto-Slavic **tos/tod/ta?*
		< PIE **so/tod/seh₂* ~ Sanskrit *sá/tád/sā́*

Several changes which later took place in the Slavic languages yielded the modern Slavic paradigms shown in Table 6. The development of demonstrative paradigms in Slavic languages also shows directions similar to those discussed for Finnic in Section 2.2 (see Table 4). From the perspective of deixis, apart from Slovene, Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian (BCMS), and Macedonian, most modern Slavic languages have reduced their demonstrative paradigms to bipartite systems. In Slovincian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Belarusian, and Russian, the paradigms are based solely on a demonstrative element from the Proto-Slavic third series **tъ*, which can be regarded as evidence for the neutralisation of the demonstrative systems into a monopartite system, similar to what occurred in Livonian and North Estonian. Slovincian, in this respect, evidently maintained the monopartite system before its extinction, while the other Slavic sister languages continued with further development through the application of deictic intensifiers to the demonstrative paradigms.

Table 6. Slavic demonstrative systems (adapted from Yurayong 2020: 35).

	Language	PROX	DIST	THRD	PRON.3
South Slavic	OCS	*sь ovъ* *se ovo* *si ova*	*onъ* *ono* *ona*	*tъ* *to* *ta*	*onъ jь* *ono je* *ona ja*
	Slovene	*ta* *to* *ta*	*oni* *ono* *ona*	*tisti* *tisto* *tista*	*on* *ono* *ona*
	BCMS	*ovaj* *ovo* *ova*	*onaj* *ono* *ona*	*taj* *to* *ta*	*on* *ono* *ona*
	Macedonian	*ovoj* *ova* *ovaa*	*onoj* *ona* *onaa*	*toj* *toa* *taa*	*toj* *toa* *taa*
	Bulgarian	*tozi* *tova* *tazi*	*onzi* *onova* *onazi*		*toj* *to* *tja*
West Slavic	Polabian	*sǫ* *sü* *so*	*tǫ* *tü* *to*		*vån* *våno* *våna*
	Slovincian		*tien nien* *tuo nuo* *ta na*		*vuon* *vuono* *vuona*
	Polish	*ten* *to* *ta*	*tamten* *tamto* *tamta*		*on* *ono* *ona*
	Lower Sorbian	*ten* *to* *ta*	*tamny wóny* *tamno wóne* *tamna wóna*		*wón* *wóno* *wóna*
	Upper Sorbian	*tón* *to* *ta*	*tamny wony* *tamne wone* *tamna wona*		*wón* *wono* *wona*
	Czech	*ten(hle)* *to(hle)* *ta(hle)*	*tamten* *tamto* *tamta*		*on* *ono* *ona*
	Slovak	*ten tento* *to toto* *tá tato*	*tamten henten* *tamto hento* *tamta henta*		*on* *ono* *ona*

(The forms are presented in singular masculine, neuter, and feminine, while alternative forms are given in brackets.)

Table 6. Continued.

	Language	PROX	DIST	THRD	PRON.3
East Slavic	Belarusian	*gèty* *gèta* *gètaja*	*toj* *toe* *taja*		*ën* *jano* *jana*
	Russian	*ètot* *èto* *èta*	*tot* *to* *ta*		*on* *ono* *ona*
	Ukrainian	*ce* *ce* *cja*	*to* *te* *ta*		*vin* *vono* *vona*
	Rusyn	*sys'* *syse* *sysja*	*tot* *toto* *tata*		*vin* *ona* *ono*
	Old East Slavic	*(se)sь* *sej* *se* *sije* *sja* *sija*	*(to)tь* *to* *ta*		*onъ* *ono* *ona*

(The forms are presented in singular masculine, neuter, and feminine, while alternative forms are given in brackets.)

Similarly to the Votic and Veps compound demonstrative series, the East Slavic deictic intensifier *(g)è-* may trace back to the presentative demonstratives *èvo* and *èna* 'here, well, see!', which also yield dialectal variants *èvtot* and *èntot* 'this'. The application of multiple demonstratives to form a new demonstrative stem is also found in the dialectal form *èstot* < *è-se-tot*, in which **se* derives from the Proto-Slavic proximal series **sь* (Vasmer [1950–1958] 1987: 4523). Crucially, the formation of modern Russian proximal demonstratives with a deictic intensifier *è-* and the Proto-Slavic third demonstrative **tь(tь)* emerged in spoken language only in the 16th–17th centuries (Vlasto 1986: 129). On the one hand, the application of deictic intensifiers can be understood as a mechanism for levelling asymmetries in the language system (Meillet 1921: 26–27, 36–37), which in this case were created by the neutralisation of the demonstrative paradigm; a similar phenomenon is attested independently in Bulgarian and Slovene. On the other hand, the change in northern East Slavic – Belarusian and Russian – may have specifically provided a model for the rise of the Votic and Veps compound demonstratives (Yurayong 2020: 206, and discussion in Section 2.3).

Numerous similarities observed in the renewal processes of the Finnic and Slavic demonstrative paradigms support a contact-based explanation for changes in the demonstrative systems as mutual reinforcement. However, to explore further whether the contact scenarios responsible for these changes might have extended beyond the pair of Finnic and East Slavic, the present study also surveys other neighbouring languages – namely Baltic and Germanic – to complete the picture of the history of demonstratives in the Circum-Baltic area in Section 3.2.

3.2. Interaction among demonstrative systems in the Circum-Baltic area

Geographically, a large proportion of the languages undergoing neutralisation of the demonstrative system are spoken along the Baltic coastline. This implies areal diffusion in the renewal processes of the demonstrative systems in the Finnic languages, as discussed in Yurayong (2020: 204–211), with the following points to be considered.

The Livonian and North Estonian systems, for instance, might have been influenced or motivated by the model found in earlier West Slavic or western East Slavic languages spoken along the coast of the Baltic Sea. At the same time, neutralisation does not appear to be common among the major Baltic languages, which can therefore be ruled out as the source of innovation. Consider the Old Prussian and Lithuanian demonstrative paradigms below.

Old Prussian	*schis* [PROX]	*stas* [DIST]	
Lithuanian	*šìs* [PROX]	*tàs* [DIST]	*anàs* ~ Slavic **onъ*

In any case, Latgalian possesses a similar morphologically bipartite demonstrative system with the use of a deictic intensifier for paradigmatic extension: *šys* and *i-tys* [PROX] vs. *tys* [DIST]. This formation pattern with the intensifier *i-* could ultimately be part of a broader areal tendency, which has parallels in Votic and Veps compound demonstratives (as discussed in Section 2) as well as in several Slavic languages of the region. The Late-Proto-Slavic demonstrative stem **tъ* was retained and served as the base for the new compound demonstratives, with

deictic distinction analytically expressed by an additional morpheme. Consider the following proximal-distal pairs of demonstratives in Russian and Polish, in contrast to East Slavic languages in the south – Rusyn and Ukrainian – which maintain another Proto-Slavic demonstrative series **sъ* used as proximal alongside the series **tъ*. In any case, the Votic and Veps cases most likely followed the East Slavic model rather than the West Slavic one, because the proximal demonstrative was chosen for overt marking, as is the case for Russian and Belarusian.

Votic	***ka**-se* [PROX]	*se* [DIST]
Veps	***ńet**-se* [PROX]	*se* [DIST]
Polish	*ten* [PROX]	***tam**-ten* [DIST]
Russian	***è**-tot* [PROX]	*tot* [DIST]

Recall that the modern Russian proximal demonstrative *ètot* was observed in the language only in the 16th–17th centuries (as discussed in Section 3.1). This chronology suggests that the emergence of the Votic and Veps compound demonstratives *kase* and *ńetse*, as replications of the Russian model, should not have occurred before the 16th century. They could possibly have emerged even later, after *ètot* had been accepted into the literary norm of Russian in the 18th century (see Vlasto 1986: 129). The occurrence of *ètot* in Russian could ultimately have spread from Belarusian (or possibly from a West Slavic language), given that Standard (Moscow) Russian, with an admixture of the western (Smolensk) dialect, evolved in the 16th century, corresponding to the earliest attestations of *ètot* in Russian.

A similar strategy of applying a deictic intensifier to a single-morpheme demonstrative paradigm is also observed in spoken varieties of Germanic languages, particularly Scandinavian and German. However, at the level of the standard languages, this phenomenon has been accommodated only to literary Swedish: *den* ***här*** 'this' vs. *den* ***där*** 'that', while such a formation strategy has not been fully accepted into literary Danish or Norwegian literary languages, apart from fossilised idioms, such as *dette og hint* 'this and that', as *hin(t)* is obsolete in literary Danish and Bokmål Norwegian but remains in use in Nynorsk. Modern spoken German likewise employs the deictic adverbials *hier* 'here' and *da* 'there' to compensate for the lack of deictic contrast in

demonstrative stems, as in *das Auto* ***hier*** 'this car' vs. *das Auto* ***da*** 'that car', similarly to the North Estonian strategy (Pajusalu 1997: 149, as discussed in Section 2.2).

With regard to contact history, Scandinavian-speaking populations – initially Viking traders and later peasants and fishermen – were present on the islands along the Gulf of Riga and the northwestern coast of Estonia from the second half of the 1st millennium until the 20th century (see Figure 5), resulting in contact with their North Estonian and Livonian neighbours (see Grünthal 2015a: 118–126, 139). Whether contact scenarios from this particular period were also responsible for the spread of the above-mentioned phenomenon concerning changes in demonstratives remains to be investigated in further detail.

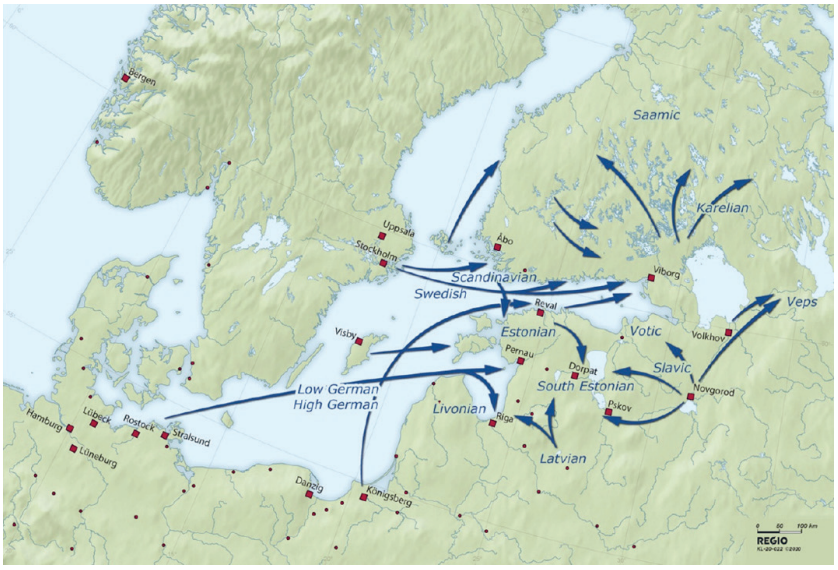

Figure 5. Medieval language contact scenarios in the northeastern Baltic Sea area (reproduced from Grünthal 2020: 14).

The survey and comparison of Circum-Baltic languages in this section suggest that the demonstrative system was evidently one of the grammatical domains that was significantly affected by language contact and areal diffusion around the Circum-Baltic area, as attested in the Finnic contact history (see also Ariste 1981; Grünthal 2015a, 2020, 2025). The areal diffusion may have reached its peak approximately

in the mid-2nd millennium CE, as confirmed by existing written data from Finnic languages. However, there may also have been remnants of earlier contact between Finnic and Slavic demonstrative systems, which likely took place between the southernmost varieties of medieval Finnic and Old East Slavic – an issue to be discussed in Section 3.3.

3.3. The South Estonian story

The South Estonian system, with the proximal series *sjoo* and the distal series *tuu*, bears a suspicious resemblance to the Old East Slavic demonstrative stems *sь* and *tъ*, as well as to those in the extinct Polabian language with respect to both form and meaning, as illustrated in Table 7 (also noted earlier by Pajusalu 1996: 150–151).

Table 7. Comparison of the demonstrative systems in South Estonian, Old East Slavic, and Polabian.

Language	**PROX**	**DIST**	**THRD**	**PRON.3**
South Estonian	*sjoo*	*tuu*	*taa*	*timä (tiä)*
Old East Slavic	*(se)sь* *sej* *se* *sije* *sja* *sija*	*(to)tъ* *to* *ta*		*onъ* *ono* *ona*
Polabian	*sǫ* *sü* *so*	*tǫ* *tü* *to*		*vån* *våno* *våna*

(The forms are presented in singular only, while alternative forms are given in brackets.)

It is also worth mentioning that the South Estonian demonstrative series *taa* is currently reported to be disappearing from the spoken language. Consequently, the paradigm has been reduced to a bipartite system with the proximal series *sjoo* and the distal series *tuu*, following the Standard Estonian model with *see* and *too* (Pajusalu 2015; Tammekänd 2015). In addition, the series *taa* has been proposed as a borrowing from Baltic into Late-Proto-Finnic (Larjavaara 1986: 73–75). In such a scenario, *taa* can be considered a later addition to the Inland Finnic system, in which the Proto-Finnic proximal and distal series had previously been reorganised into a bipartite system **śej* vs. **too*, following a model similar to that observed in Old East Slavic. How-

ever, the etymology of *taa* series remains uncertain, and this hypothesis would require also a broader comparative investigation of demonstrative systems in other Uralic languages.

At a later stage of contact history, these parallels imply that Slavic contact with South Estonian occurred earlier than the contact with Votic and Veps, which was responsible for the emergence of compound demonstratives in the post-16th century. The dating could trace back to the Late-Old East Slavic period in the 12th–13th centuries, when the Old East Slavic bipartite system with **sь* and **tь* was still in use, in both Old Rus' and Old Novgorod dialects (Vlasto 1986: 127–128; Dolgova & Maksimova 1996; Zaliznjak 2004: 125). Several other typological changes in Finnic due to early Slavic contact also support this chronology (see Grünthal 2025). Ariste (1981: 85–86) suggests that Livonian and South Estonian were the first Finnic groups to receive Slavic loanwords before spreading them as intermediaries into North Estonian and beyond, in line with the evidence that old Slavic loanwords are found in Estonian more frequently than in other Finnic languages (see also Must 2000). Ultimately, this lexical evidence could date the restructuring of the South Estonian demonstrative system even further back to the first wave of Slavic migration in the 5th–8th centuries.

Another link in this South Estonian story is Polabian, which also exhibits a similar system on the Slavic side. It can be assumed that the bipartite pattern under discussion was, at some point, a more widespread pattern along the coast of the Baltic Sea before the further renewal processes which took place in West and East Slavic. Whether this parallel with the Slavic languages of the Circum-Baltic area is the result of an early contact-induced change remains a matter for future studies to investigate with a sufficient amount of usage-based data. With the current evidence, however, the hypothesis still appears plausible.

4. Conclusions

The present study has discussed issues in the diachronic study of the Finnic demonstratives. The investigation has also empirically presented usage-based data which contribute to updating the descriptions of the Finnic demonstrative systems provided by earlier studies. On the one hand, variation across the demonstrative paradigms is now presented

in greater detail in terms of alternation and frequency, and on the other hand, some demonstrative forms are found to be obsolete in actual language use in the late-20th and early-21st centuries. Most significantly, this observation challenges the view that Ingrian is as archaic as Finnish and Karelian proper in terms of the demonstrative paradigms, as the reduction of the Ingrian demonstrative system to a bipartite system has now been reported in the most recent studies.

At a more general level, Finnic makes no exception to the general tendency for demonstratives to be diachronically unstable across a language family and prone to contact-induced changes, which can sometimes yield a relatively radical renewal. Most notably, Livonian and North Estonian have reduced the system to a monopartite demonstrative paradigm, which has been, to a certain extent, compensated analytically using adverbial modifiers, similar to Germanic languages, Swedish in particular. Through the lens of language-internal evidence, the Finnic demonstrative systems may have undergone more or fewer changes in individual languages. Interestingly, several changes show similar patterns shared among the Finnic languages themselves, which may at times also extend towards neighbouring languages in adjacent areas, indicating areal diffusion. The case of the Votic and Veps demonstrative systems shows an instance of a system operating on a single-morpheme demonstrative paradigm with deictic intensifiers, which has a close parallel in the Russian demonstrative system as a source model.

From an areal-linguistic perspective, consideration of neighbouring Indo-European languages has revealed that the renewal of demonstrative systems from reconstructed tripartite systems is also a tendency observed among Slavic, Baltic, and Germanic languages. By examining the distribution and different stages of change in individual language groups, the evidence more strongly points to contact between Finnic and Slavic as being primarily responsible for the renewal of the Finnic demonstrative systems. The roles of Baltic and Germanic, meanwhile, appear to have been, at best, marginally influential. The Finnic-Slavic contact scenario, however, does not seem to concern only the recent period in the second half of the 2nd millennium, but may have been active in the domain of demonstratives as early as the second half of the 1st millennium, when Slavic-speaking populations arrived from the south. Some remnants of this early contact appear to remain in the South Estonian demonstrative system, whose demonstrative paradigm

is morphologically similar in appearance to that of Old East Slavic. A closer examination of the forms and functions of demonstratives in South Estonian, in comparison with Old East Slavic textual data, should provide further insights into this hypothesis concerning early Finnic-Slavic contact.

In terms of reconstruction, both internal and external, what remains interesting and worth further investigation in future studies is the chronology of changes. This could ultimately determine when, in attested history, and where, within the Circum-Baltic area, different processes of renewal and their directionality within the demonstrative systems took place. Such analysis should help to resolve some remaining issues raised in the present study, particularly the widespread intermediate and transitional stage of the demonstrative paradigm from a multiple-morpheme to a single-morpheme pattern before the application of deictic intensifiers to compensate for such a paradigmatic simplification. This situation has, notably, left traces in Slovincian before its extinction and could potentially apply likewise to some of its Slavic sister languages and those Finnic languages spoken along the coast of the Baltic Sea.

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Abbreviations

3 – 3rd person, ALL – allative, BCMS – Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian, COMP – compound, DEM – demonstrative, DIST – distal, ELAT – elative, ESS – essive, GEN – genitive, INES – inessive, OCS – Old Church Slavonic, PIE – Proto-Indo-European, PRON – pronoun, PROX – proximal, PST – past, SG – singular, THRD – third series demonstrative.

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Kokkuvõte. Chingduang Yurayong: Läänemeresoome keelte demonstratiivsüsteemide uuendamine Läänemere keeleliidu kontekstis. Uurimus käsitleb demonstratiivide diakroonilist arengut ja uuendamist läänemeresoome keeltes Läänemere keeleliidu kontekstis. Tuginedes olemasolevate läänemeresoome keelte korpuste kasutuspõhistele andmetele, käsitleb rekonstruktsioon ajaloolisi muutusi alates läänemeresoome algkeelest tänapäeva läänemeresoome keelteni ja toob esile süsteemide lihtsustumise, ümberkorraldumise ja paradigmade uuendamise protsesse, samuti konkreetsete demonstratiivsete vormide kasutusest välja jäämise. Analüüs näitab, et kuigi soome ja karjala keeled on säilitanud suhteliselt arhailised kolmetasandilised süsteemid, on liivi, põhjaeesti, vadja ja vepsa keeles toimunud märkimisväärsed uuendused, mis on viinud kahe- või üheosaliste paradigmadeni. Võrdlevad andmed osutavad nende arengute kujunemisel slaavi ning vähemal määral balti ja germaani keelte mõjule. Paralleelid vene liitdemonstratiivide ja vanaidaslaavi vormidega rõhutavad areaalse leviku ja kontaktmuutuste korduvaid mustreid laiemas Läänemere keeleliidu kontekstis. Teoreetilisel tasandil tõstab uurimus esile demonstratiivide ebastabiilsust grammatilise kategooriana, mis on keelekontaktide mõjudele kalduv.

Märksõnad: läänemeresoome keeled, demonstratiivid, keelemuutus, keelekontaktid, Läänemere keeleliit