



The (in)stability of interrogatives

— *The case of Indo-European* —

Michael Cysouw & Olav Hackstein

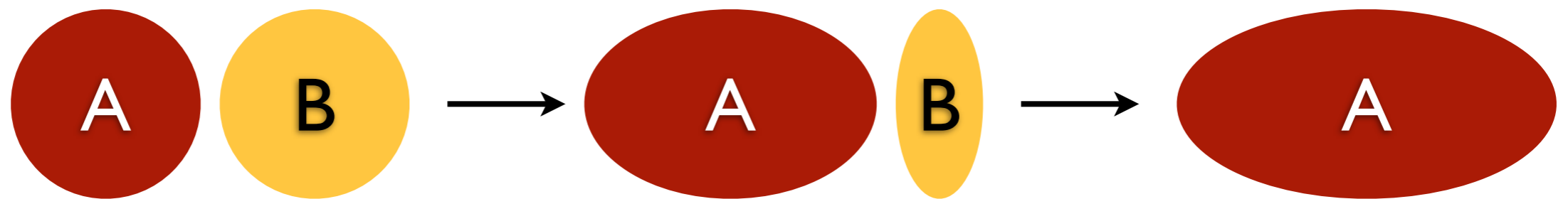
Ludwig Maximilian University Munich

Stable Interrogatives?

- Apparently straightforwardly **reconstructable** for PIE: $*k^w o-$, $*k^w e-$, $*k^w i-$, $*k^w u-$
- Phonemes uniting all interrogatives exist in many languages worldwide (“wh” elements)
- These **regularities** suggest easy reconstruction
- The details turn out to be messy !

Lexical Change

- Semantic Shift – Replacement – Loss



- Reinforcement – Recycling

- ▶ **Reinforcement:** same function doubled (e.g. negation)

ne → *ne ... pas* → *pas*

- ▶ **Recycling:** use items to make others (e.g. interrogatives)

**k^wē + r* → *war(e)*

war(e) + umbi → *warum*

A: Typological background

- Regular structure ?
- Ease of reconstruction ?
- Patterns of Recycling

Examples of regularity

- **Apalai** (Carib, Brazil)
almost all start with *o-*, except *ahtao* ‘when’
- **Killivila** (Austronesian, Papua New Guinea)
almost all start with *a-*, except *class marker + vila* ‘how much’
- **Desano** (Tucanoan, Brazil/Colombia)
almost all start with *d-*, except *ye?e*, ‘what’
- **Tamil** (Dravidian, India/Sri Lanka)
almost all start with *e-*, except *yar* ‘who’.
- **Maybrat** (West Papuan, Irian Jaya)
all end in *-ya/yo/ye*
- **Thai** (Daic, Thailand)
almost all end in *-ay*, except *kii* ‘how much’

Irregularity also exists !

- **Wardaman** (Non-Pama-Nyungan, Australia)

yinggiya

‘who’

ngamanda

‘what’

guda

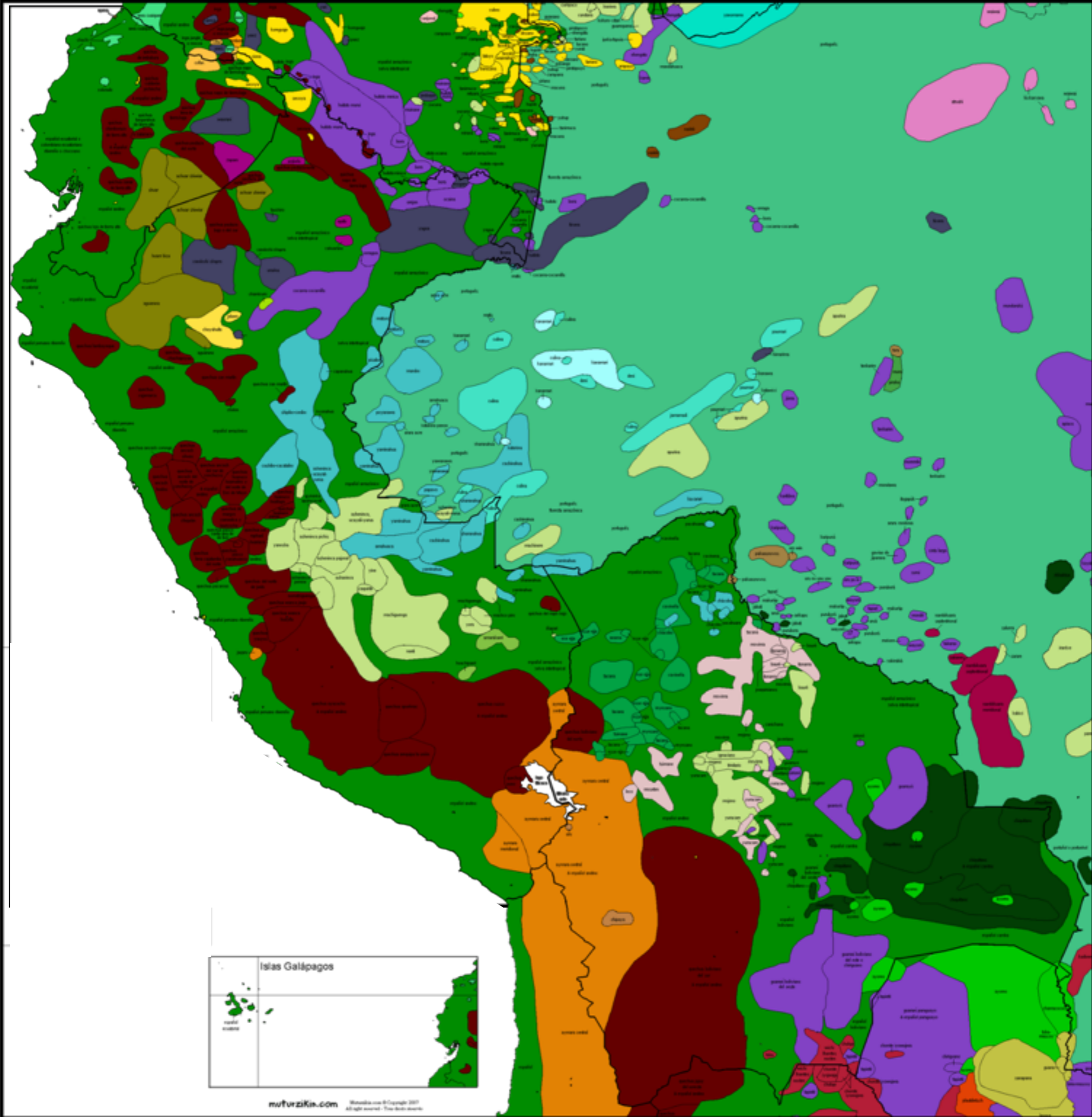
‘where’

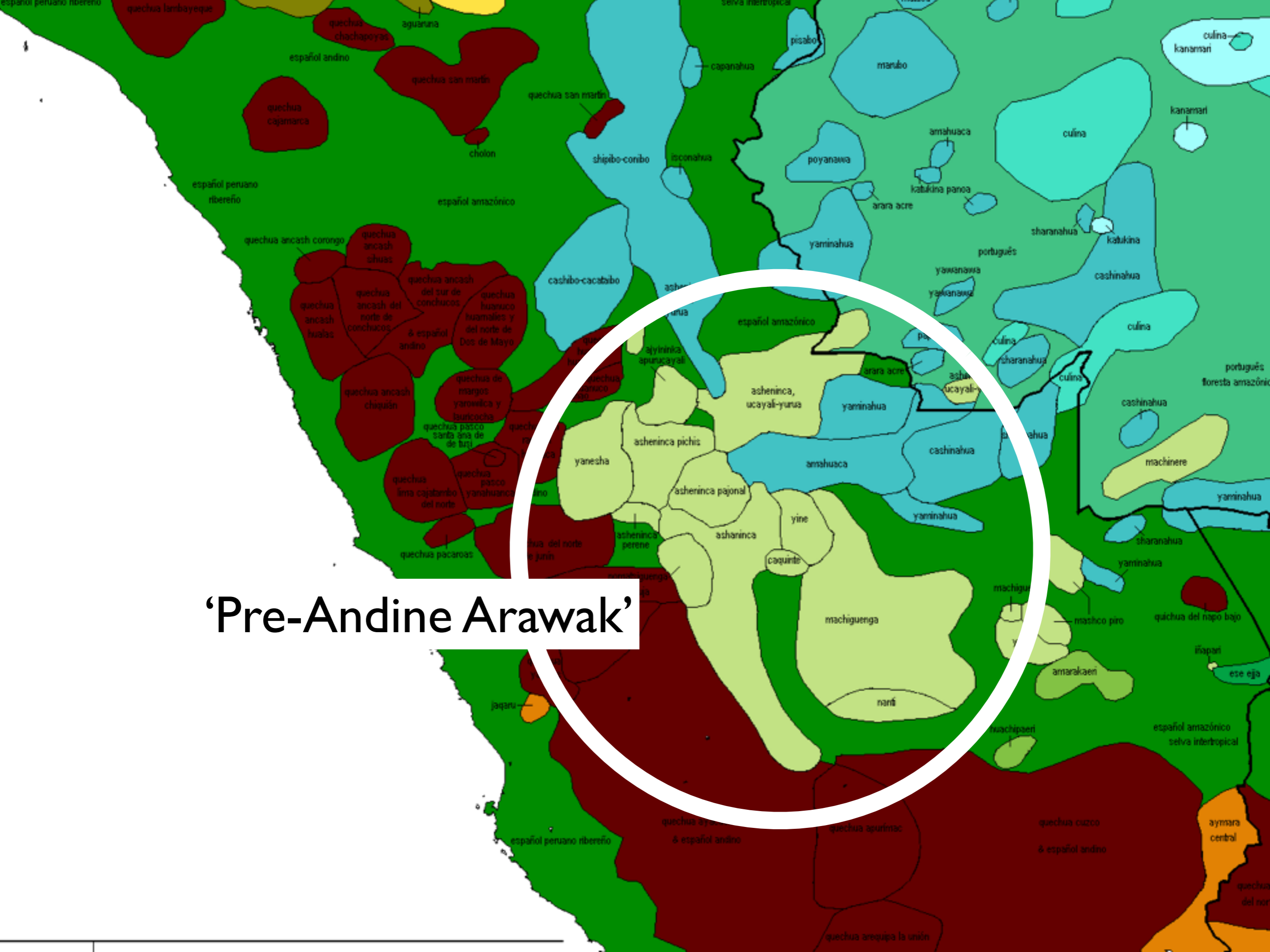
nyangurlang

‘when’

gungarrma

‘what kind of’, ‘how’, ‘how many’





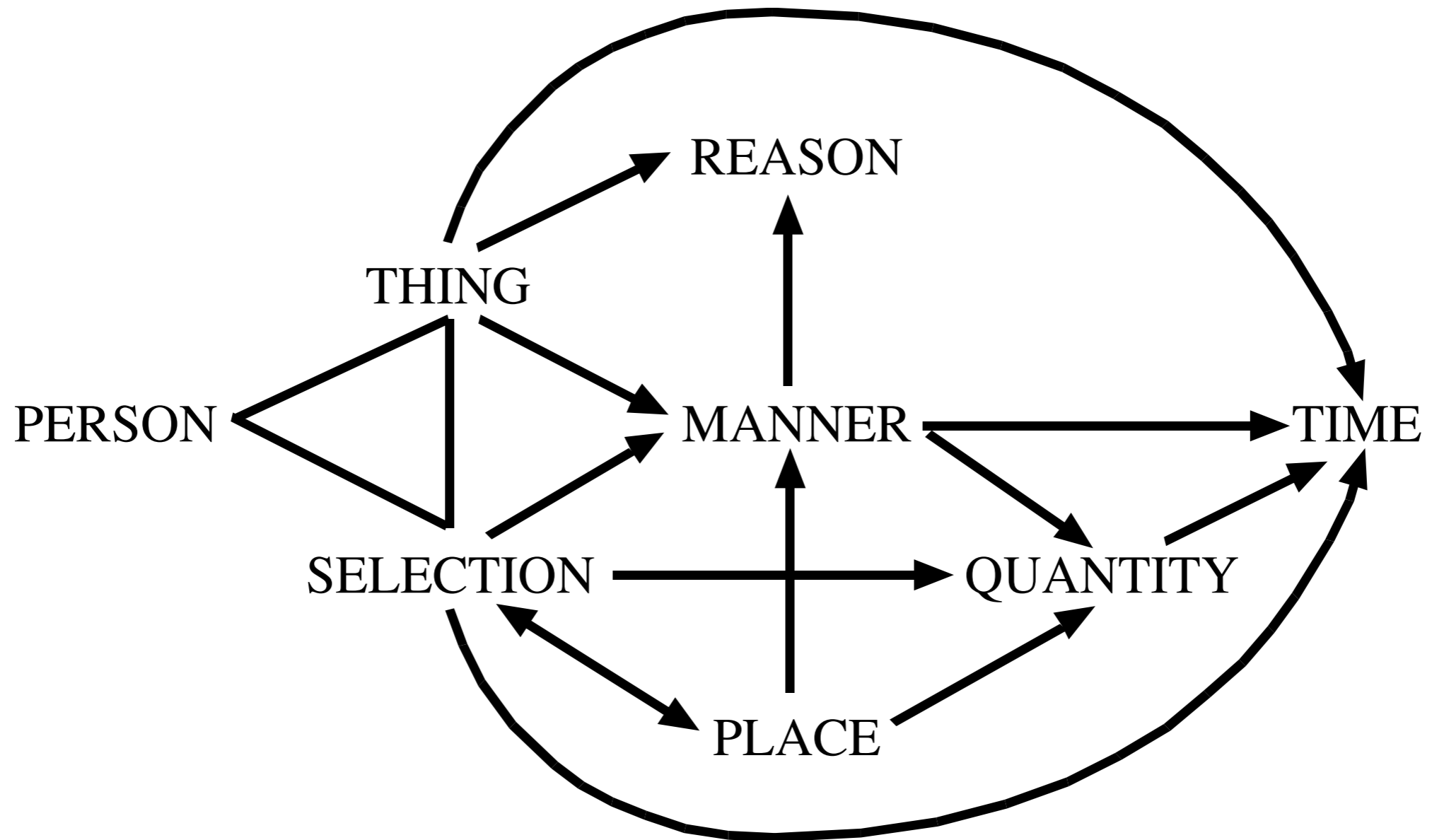
‘Pre-Andine Arawak’

Non-reconstructable ?

	Perené	Asháninca	Machiguenga	Nanti	Nomatsiguenga
who	<i>ninka</i>	<i>janica</i>	<i>tyani</i>	<i>tsini</i>	<i>paírí, paíró</i>
what	<i>paita</i>	<i>paita</i>	<i>tata</i>	<i>tata</i>	<i>paírí, paíró</i>
how	<i>t^{sh}ika</i>	<i>paita, ocanta</i>	<i>tyara</i>	<i>tyara</i>	<i>áti</i>
where	<i>t^{sh}ika</i>	<i>jaoca</i>	<i>tyara</i>	<i>tyara</i>	<i>átini, átiti</i>

Cysouw, Michael. 2007. Content interrogatives in Pichis Ashéninca: Corpus study and typological comparison. *IJAL* 73(2): 133–63.

Recycling structure



B: Indo-European

- There is regular structure
- Recycling paths are manifold
- Forms are reconstructable
- Also *who/what* expressions show change

A further interrogative root in Indo-European?

- Hittite *mān, mahhan* ‘how’
- Tocharian A *mānt* ‘how’
- Palaic *mas* ‘as much as’
- Hittite *masi* ‘how, as much as’

‘Reason’ recycling

Language	THING → REASON
Hittite	nom. sg. n. <i>kuwat</i> *‘what’ → ‘why’
Old Latin	<i>quia(nam)</i> *‘what’ → ‘why’
Old Latin	<i>quid ni fleam</i> ‘why shouldn’t I be crying?’ (Pl. Mil 1311)
Latin	Latin <i>quid tandem?</i> ‘why now?’ (Cic. Tusc. 1.12)
Ancient Greek	<i>tí</i> , dialectal Doric <i>sa</i> *‘what’ → ‘why’ <i>tí klaíeis</i> ‘why are you crying?’ (Iliad 1. 362) <i>Tí hóti eze:teíté me?</i> ‘why were you searching for me?’ (Lk. 2, 49)
Old Church Slavonic	<i>čĭto (se) ježe ...</i> (LLP IV 912 sub B1)
PD German	<i>Was lachst du denn?</i> ‘why are you laughing’
Sanskrit	<i>kím</i> ‘why’

‘Reason’ recycling

Language	PLACE → REASON ([e]r-locative)
----------	--------------------------------

Latin	<i>cur</i> (cf. PLACE Lith. <i>kur</i> ‘where’; PLACE → TIME Alb. <i>kurr</i> ‘when’)
PD German	<i>war-um</i> < ahd. <i>war(e)</i> + <i>umbi</i> ‘wo’ + ‘(her)um’

Language	GOAL/PURPOSE → REASON
----------	-----------------------

Old English	<i>for whon</i> ‘why’
Old Armenian	<i>zmê</i> ‘why’ (z + ablative <i>imê</i>)
Old Albanian	<i>përse</i> lit. ‘for what, why; because, so that, how’ (* <i>pro k^wioh₁</i>)
Old Irish	<i>cair</i>
Middle Welsh	<i>pyr</i> ‘why’ contain PERSON/THING interrogative + preposition ‘for’ (Old Irish <i>air</i> , <i>ar</i> ‘for; because of’)
French	<i>pourquoi</i>

‘Reason’ recycling

MANNER → REASON

Language

MANNER → REASON

Old Icelandic instrumental PIE $*k^wih_1 > hví$ ‘how’ and causal ‘what for, why’

Old English instrumental PIE $*k^wih_1 > hwī$,why‘

Ancient Greek *pô̄s*

Sanskrit *katham* ‘how, why’

Tocharian A *mānt nu täṣ* ‘how is this, why’; B *kā* ,warum‘, *kātstsi* ,why

MANNER → TIME → REASON

Language

MANNER → TIME → REASON

OHG PIE $*k^weh_2m=dō$ temporal ‘how-until’ → TIME (cf. Latin *quandō* ‘when’)
→ REASON (cf. early OHG *hwanda*, *hwanta* ‘why; because’)

Non $*k^w$ -initial

interrogatives are rare

- Old Armenian *zmê* ‘why’
- Old Albanian *përse* ‘for what, why’
- French *pourquoi* ‘why’
- Gothic *duhê* ‘why’

Interrogatives in old IE

Language	*k ^w o-	*k ^w e-	*k ^w i-	*k ^w u-
Hittite				
Sanskrit				
Avestan				
Greek				
Latin				
Old Church Slavonic				
Old Irish				
Gothic				
Old Armenian				
Tocharian				
Albanian				

‘where’ in old IE

Language	*k ^w o-	*k ^w e-	*k ^w i-	*k ^w u-
Hittite		<i>kuēdani</i>		
Sanskrit				<i>kū</i>
Avestan				<i>kū</i>
Greek	<i>póthi</i>			
Latin				<i>ubī</i>
Old Church Slavonic				<i>kūde</i>
Old Irish	<i>codu</i> (‘which place’)			
Gothic	<i>hvar</i>			
Old Armenian				<i>owr</i>
Tocharian	<i>ente/tā</i> (? < *kwente, *kwāntā)			
Albanian				<i>ku</i>

‘who/what’ in old IE

Language	*k ^w o-	*k ^w e-	*k ^w i-	*k ^w u-
Hittite			<i>kwiš</i> (A) <i>kwit</i> (I)	
Sanskrit	<i>kaḥ</i> (A) <i>kad</i> (I)	<i>kā</i> (F)		
Avestan	<i>kas</i> (A) <i>kat</i> (I)	<i>kā</i> (F)	<i>ciš</i> (A) <i>cit</i> (I)	
Greek			<i>tís</i> (A) <i>tí</i> (I)	
Latin			<i>quis</i> (A) <i>quid</i> (I)	
Old Church Slavonic	<i>kŭto</i> (A)		<i>čito</i> (I)	
Old Irish			<i>cía</i> (A) <i>cid</i> (I)	
Gothic	<i>has</i> (A) <i>ha</i> (I)	<i>hō</i> (F)		
Old Armenian	<i>or/o</i> (A)		<i>zinč</i> ^c (I)	
Tocharian			<i>kus(e)</i> (A + I)	
Albanian	<i>kush</i> (A)		<i>qish</i> (I)	

‘who/what’ in old IE

Language	*k ^w o-	*k ^w e-	*k ^w i-	*k ^w u-
Hittite			<i>kwiš</i> (A) <i>kwit</i> (I)	
Sanskrit	<i>kaḥ</i> (A) <i>kad</i> (I)	<i>kā</i> (F)		
Avestan	<i>kas</i> (A) <i>kat</i> (I)	<i>kā</i> (F)	<i>ciš</i> (A) <i>cit</i> (I)	
Greek			<i>tís</i> (A) <i>tí</i> (I)	
Latin			<i>quis</i> (A) <i>quid</i> (I)	
Old Church Slavonic	<i>kŭto</i> (A)		<i>čŭto</i> (I)	
Old Irish			<i>cía</i> (A) <i>cid</i> (I)	
Gothic	<i>hwas</i> (A) <i>hva</i> (I)	<i>hō</i> (F)		
Old Armenian	<i>or/o</i> (A)		<i>zinč</i>^c (I)	
Tocharian			<i>kus(e)</i> (A + I)	
Albanian	<i>kush</i> (A)		<i>qish</i> (I)	

‘whose’ in old IE

Language	*k ^w o-	*k ^w e-	*k ^w i-	*k ^w u-
Hittite		<i>kuēl</i>		
Sanskrit	<i>kasya</i>			
Avestan	<i>kahiiā</i> (A)	<i>cahiiā</i> (I)		
Greek		<i>téo</i>		
Latin	<i>cuius</i>			
Old Church Slavonic	<i>kogo</i> (A)	<i>česo</i> (I)		
Old Irish	<i>coich</i>			
Gothic		<i>hvis</i>		
Old Armenian	<i>oyr</i> (A)	<i>êr</i> (I)		
Tocharian	<i>ke/ket(e)</i>			
Albanian	<i>kujt</i>			

‘whose’ in old IE

Language	*k ^w o-	*k ^w e-	*k ^w i-	*k ^w u-
Hittite		<i>kuēl</i>		
Sanskrit	<i>kasya</i>			
Avestan	<i>kahiiā</i> (A)	<i>cahiiā</i> (I)		
Greek		<i>téo</i>		
Latin	<i>cuius</i>			
Old Church Slavonic	<i>kogo</i> (A)	<i>česo</i> (I)		
Old Irish	<i>coich</i>			
Gothic		<i>hvis</i>		
Old Armenian	<i>oyr</i> (A)	<i>êr</i> (I)		
Tocharian	<i>ke/ket(e)</i>			
Albanian	<i>kujt</i>			

‘What-that’ construction

Greek: τί τοῦτ’ ἔλεξας ?

Tocharian: kuc ne tām weñāṣt ?

Russian: что это ты сказал ?

Bengali: eṭā ki balecha ?

Hittite: kī kuit iyās ?

What did you say/do?

No *who-what* distinction

“The number and kind of distinctions which QWs ... vary considerably from language to language, but at least one contrast appears to be nearly universal: Q-pronouns show a human/nonhuman or, in a few cases, an animate/inanimate dichotomy.” (Ultan 1978: 229)

- Lithuanian/Latvian *kas*
- Tocharian *kuse*

Conclusions

- Form-regularity in interrogatives is widespread
- Not necessarily a sign of diachronic stability
- Interrogatives change by **recycling + reduction**:
 - ▶ *Aaa* → *Aaa-Bbb* → *AaBb* → *ABb-Ccc* → *ABCc*
original 'Aaa' remains visible when attachment occurs at the same side for a long period of time
 - ▶ *Aaa* → *Aaa-Bbb* → *AaBb* → *Ccc-ABb* → *CcABb* → *CBb*
original 'Aaa' might vanish when trapped inside

Conclusions

- Form-regularity in interrogatives is widespread
- Not necessarily a sign of diachronic stability
- Interrogatives change by **recycling + reduction**:
 - ▶ *Aaa* → *Aaa-Bbb* → *AaBb* → *ABb-Ccc* → *ABCc*
original 'Aaa' remains visible when attachment occurs at the same side for a long period of time
 - ▶ *Aaa* → *Aaa-Bbb* → *AaBb* → *Ccc-ABb* → *CcABb* → *CBb*
original 'Aaa' might vanish when trapped inside
- **Interrogatives are never reinvented from scratch**

Conclusions

- Form-regularity in interrogatives is widespread
- Not necessarily a sign of diachronic stability
- Interrogatives change by **recycling + reduction**:
 - ▶ $Aaa \rightarrow Aaa-Bbb \rightarrow AaBb \rightarrow ABb-Ccc \rightarrow ABCc$
original 'Aaa' remains visible when attachment occurs at the same side for a long period of time
 - ▶ $Aaa \rightarrow Aaa-Bbb \rightarrow AaBb \rightarrow Ccc-ABb \rightarrow CcABb \rightarrow CBb$
original 'Aaa' might vanish when trapped inside
- **Interrogatives are never reinvented from scratch**
 - ▶ Please prove us wrong!