The (in)stability of interrogatives

— *The case of Indo-European* —

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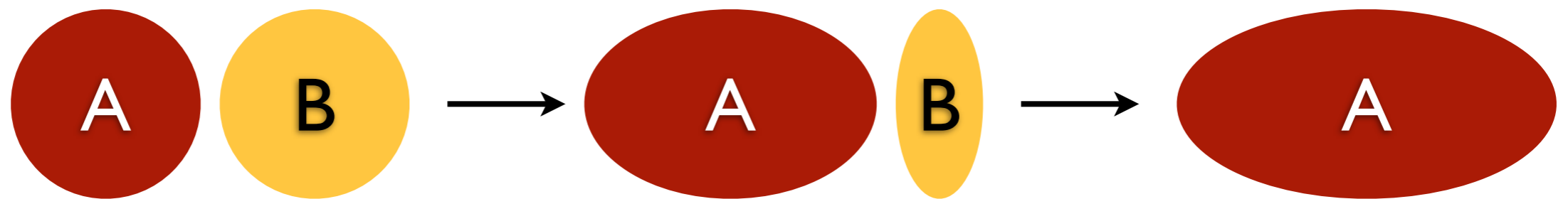
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Stable Interrogatives?

- Apparently straightforwardly **reconstructable** for PIE: *k^wo-, *k^we-, *k^wi-, *k^wu-

- 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)

    $*k^w\bar{e}$ + 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 *kìi* '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'
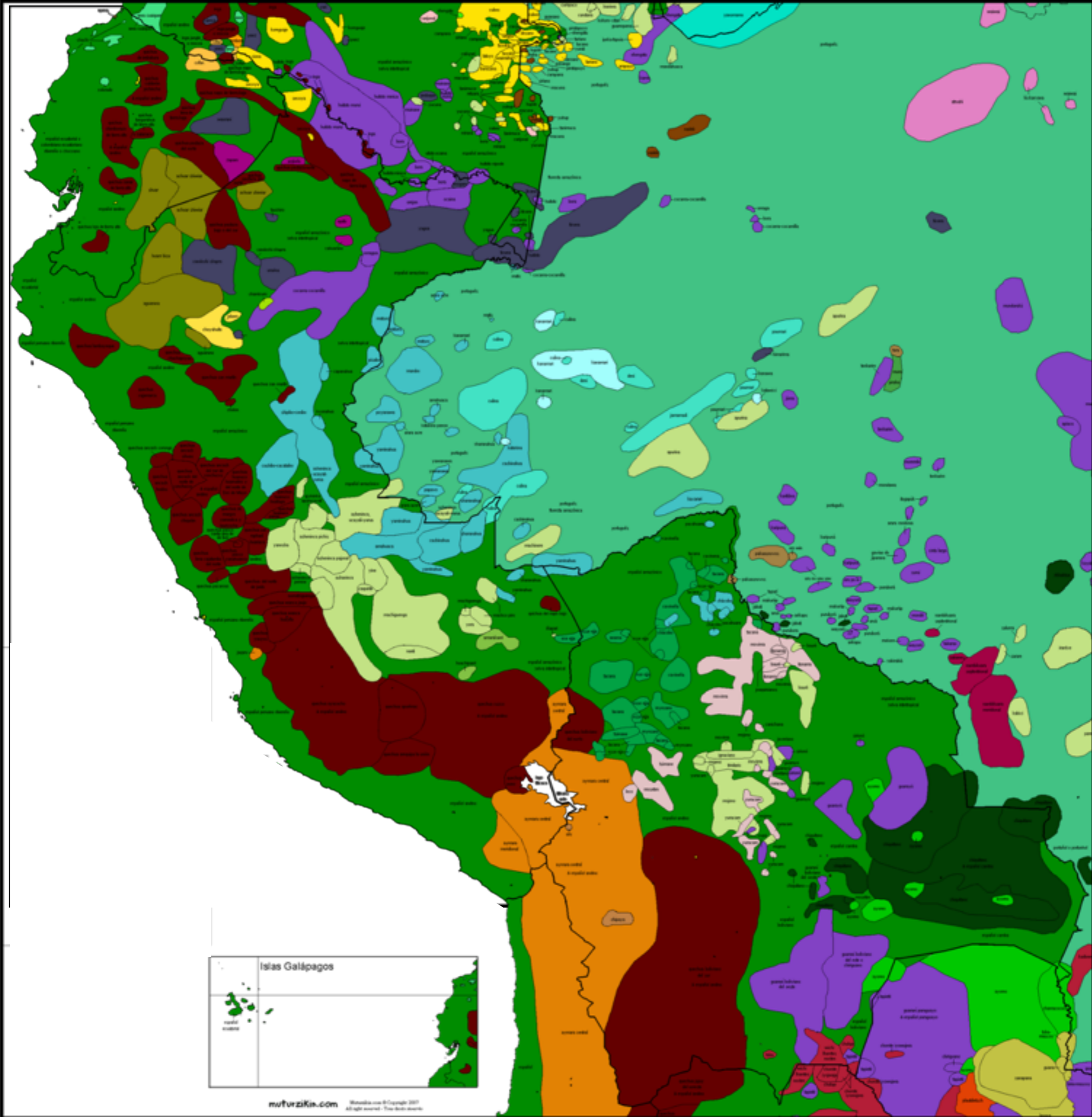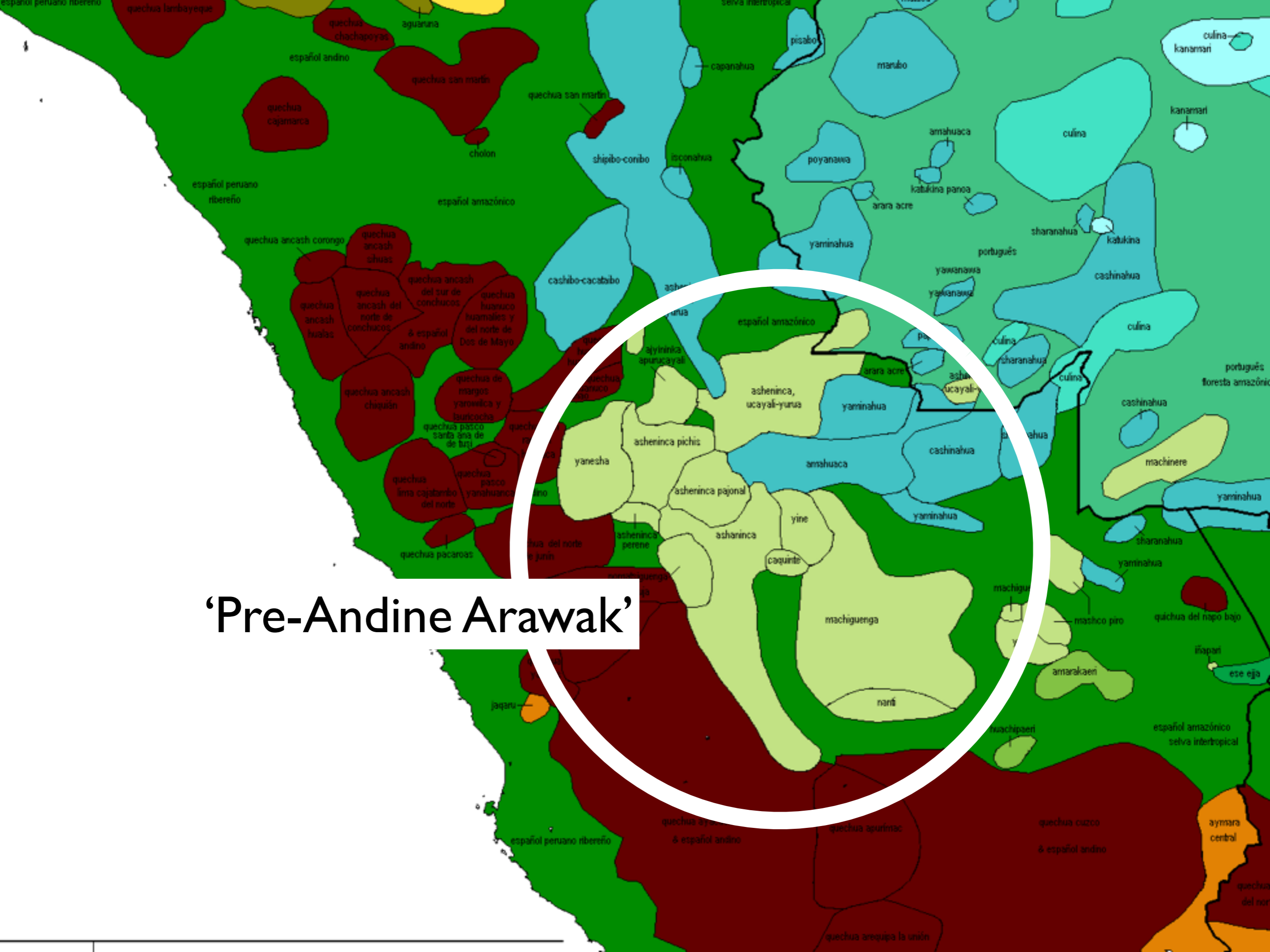
'Pre-Andine Arawak'

Non-reconstructable ?

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

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

Recycling structure
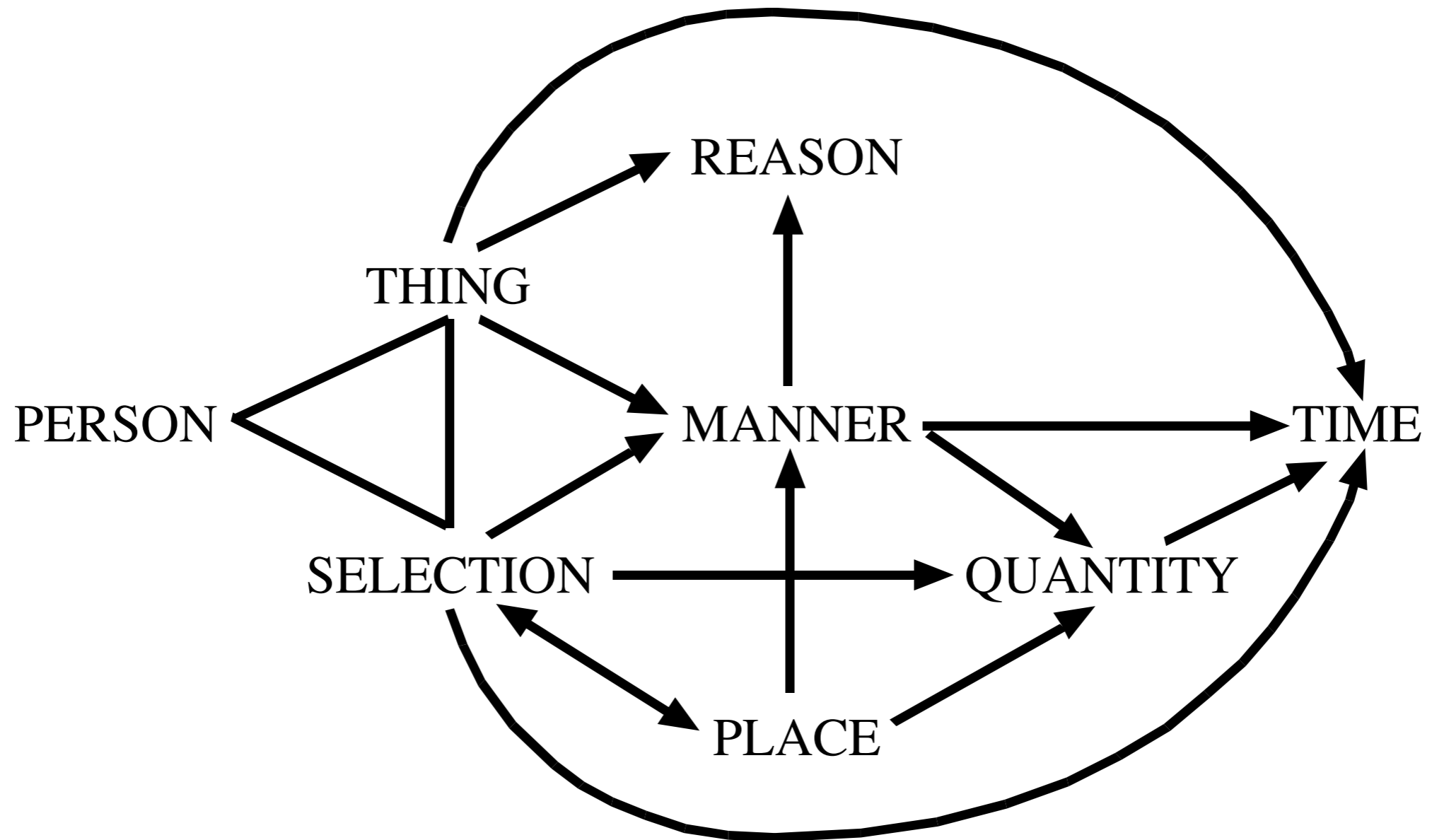
B: Indo-European

- 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   *mänt*   'how'

- Palaic   *mas*   'as much as'

- Hittite   *masi*   'how, as much as'

'Reason' recycling

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

Tocharian	A *mänt nu täṣ* 'how is this, why'; B *kā* 'warum', *kātstsi* 'why

'Reason' recycling

Language	MANNER → TIME → REASON

Language	PLACE → REASON ([e]r-locative)
OHG	PIE *$k^w eh_2 m{=}do$ temporal 'how-until' → TIME (cf. Latin *quandō* 'when')
Latin	*cur* (cf. PIE ... / early OHG *hwanda, hwanta* 'why, because, when')
PD German	*war-um* < ahd. *war(e)* + *umbi* 'wo' + '(her)um'

Language	GOAL/PURPOSE → REASON
Old English	*for whon* 'why'
Old Armenian	*zmê* 'why' (*z* + ablative *imê*)
Old Albanian	*përse* lit. 'for what, why; because, so that, how' (*$*pro\ k^w ioh_1$*)
Old Irish	*cair*
Middle Welsh	*pyr* 'why' contain PERSON/THING interrogative + preposition 'for' (Old Irish *air, ar* 'for; because of')
French	*pourquoi*

'Reason' recycling

Language	SOURCE → REASON
	Skt. *kutaḥ* 'whence, why'

MANNER → REASON

Language	MANNER → REASON
Old Icelandic	instrumental PIE *$k^w ih_1$ > *hví* 'how' and causal 'what for, why'
Old English	instrumental PIE *$k^w ih_1$ > *hwī* ‚why'
Ancient Greek	*pôs*
Sanskrit	*katham* 'how, why'
Tocharian	A *mänt nu täṣ* 'how is this, why'; B *kā* ‚warum', *kātstsi* ‚why

MANNER → TIME → REASON

Language	MANNER → TIME → REASON
OHG	PIE *$k^w eh_2 m$=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   *duƕê*   'why'

'where' in old IE

Language	*kʷo-	*kʷe-	*kʷi-	*kʷu-
Hittite		kuēdani		
Sanskrit				kū́
Avestan				kū
Greek	póthi			
Latin				ubī
Old Church Slavonic				kŭde
Old Irish	codu ('which place')			
Gothic	hʋar			
Old Armenian				owr
Tocharian	ente/tā (? < *kwente,*kwäntā)			
Albanian				ku

'who/what' in old IE

Language	*k^wo-		*k^we-	*k^wi-		*k^wu-
Hittite				*kwiš* (A)	*kwit* (I)	
Sanskrit	*kaḥ* (A)	*kad* (I)	*kā́* (F)			
Avestan	*kas* (A)	*kat* (I)	*kā́* (F)	*ciš* (A)	*cit* (I)	
Greek				*tís* (A)	*tí* (I)	
Latin				*quis* (A)	*quid* (I)	
Old Church Slavonic	**kŭto** (A)			**čĭto** (I)		
Old Irish				*cía* (A)	*cid* (I)	
Gothic	*ƕas* (A)	*ƕa* (I)	*ƕô* (F)			
Old Armenian	**or/o** (A)			**zinčᶜ** (I)		
Tocharian				*kus(e)* (A + I)		
Albanian	**kush** (A)			**qish** (I)		

'whose' in old IE

Language	*kʷo-	*kʷe-	*kʷi-	*kʷu-
Hittite		kuēl		
Sanskrit	kasya			
Avestan	kahiiā (A)	cahiiā (I)		
Greek		téo		
Latin	cuius			
Old Church Slavonic	kogo (A)	česo (I)		
Old Irish	coich			
Gothic		ƕis		
Old Armenian	oyr (A)	êr (I)		
Tocharian	ke/ket(e)			
Albanian	kujt			

'whose' in old IE

Language	*kʷo-	*kʷe-	*kʷi-	*kʷu-
Hittite		kuēl		
Sanskrit	kasya			
Avestan	**kahiiā (A)**	**cahiiā (I)**		
Greek		téo		
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Gothic		ƕis		
Old Armenian	**oyr (A)**	**êr (I)**		
Tocharian	ke/ket(e)			
Albanian	kujt			

'What-that' construction

Greek:	**τί τοῦτ'** ἔλεξας ?
Tocharian:	**kuc ne täm** weñāṣt ?
Russian:	**čto ėto** ty skazal ?
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

- **Interrogatives are never reinvented from scratch**

  ▶ Please prove us wrong!