

TIIT-REIN VIITSO (Tartu)

LIVONIAN *mīez*, VEPS *mež* 'MAN'

1. At first glance the Livonian case forms of the noun *mīez* 'man; husband'

nsg *mīez* : gsg *mī'e* : psg *mīestō*

(the apostroph in the Livonian genitive form stands for *stød* or laryngeal tone), as well as their Veps cognates, cf. North Veps

mež : *mehen* : *mešt*,

represent quite uninteresting reflexes of what are considered their Proto-Finnic underlying forms, viz.

**mēs* : **mēhen* : **mēstā*.

On the other hand, it is a well-known fact that the Finnic stem is unique, viz. exceptional in two aspects. First, it is the only noun that has in nominative singular a monosyllabic consonantal stem, second, it is the only noun in Finnic that alternates *s* and *h* after a vowel of an initial syllable, while the normal behavior of **s* in that position can be seen in the Finnic stem for 'fir' that has been inherited from Proto-Uralic:

nsg **kūsi* : gsg **kūsen* : psg **kūsta*.

Veps *-ž* in *mež* seems to indicate that the nominative form has formerly ended in **-i*. However, if the protoform had ended in *-i* the Livonian nominative were not *mīez* but †*mēž* and one should then explain why Votic, Finnish and Ingrian have exceptionally apocopated **-i* in only the nominative singular form. Therefore, the Finnic stem has rather had formerly a disyllabic consonantal stem in nominative and partitive singular and a trisyllabic vocalic stem, e.g. in genitive singular. An additional interesting point is that the Finnic stem has no cognates elsewhere in the Uralic family. I have proposed in an article submitted in 1990 that the Finnic stem for 'man' comes from Germanic **mēgaz*, cf. Gothic *mēgs* 'son-in-law', Old Nordic *mágr* 'male relative by marriage', Old English *mēž* 'relative, kinsman', Old Frisian *mēch* (Viitso, forthcoming).

2. In the framework of the standard theory of the Proto-Finnic consonant system this etymology meets certain difficulties. From a purely formal point of view, the Germanic **mēgaz* could have been adapted in Finnic either as **mēkäs* (following the older pattern of adaptation) or as **mēkas* (following the newer patterns of adaptation). **mēkas* is counterevidenced because the Finnic stem has had a front vocalism: no Livonian, Estonian or Votic *õ*-dialect exhibits traits of the sound change {**e* **ẽ*} > {**ē* *ē̃*} characteristic of stems with a back vocalism as, e.g., in Livonian *võrõz*, Estonian *võõras*, Votic *võõraz* from **vēras* 'foreigner; guest; strange; foreign', which I now consider more likely a borrowing from Germanic **vēraz* (cf.

Gothic *wair* 'man', Old Icelandic *verr* 'husband', Old English, Old High German (*wer*) rather than that from Baltic **vīras*, cf. Latvian *vīrs* 'man', Lithuanian *vīras* (Viitso 1978 : 90) or a derivative from the Finnic stem **vēri* (SKES 1726). Nevertheless, even **mēkäs* causes a serious problem. The consonant **-k-* here would have undergone the weakening **k > *k̃* at the beginning of a closed posttonic syllable according to the general stop mutation (gradation) rule in most Finnic dialects.

Notably, one would expect in most Finnic dialects the development of
nsg **mēkäs* : gsg **mēkāhen* psg **mēkästä*
into

**mēkäs* : **mēkāhen* : **mēkästä*.

(Note that most coursebooks of the Finnic historical grammar use the "spirant" notation **γ* instead of the weak grade variant **k̃* of **k*, and some linguists still seem to believe that the weakened variant of the stop was really pronounced as a voiced spirant.) Although there are no conclusive examples of the development of the sequence **ēk̃ä* in those modern dialects that have undergone the stop mutation, it is conceivable that this sequence was obligatorily subjected to (a) the loss of **k̃* and (b) contraction, i.e. its reflex in most of the dialects was *ē* or, when the latter had undergone breaking, *ie*; hence one can speculate that either the nominative or partitive stem has been generalized throughout the paradigm in those dialects. Still, the regular reflex of the nominative singular form **mēkäs* would be, anyhow, *†miegōz* in Livonian and *†megaz* in Veps: there are no known characteristic reminiscents of the weak variant **k̃* in Livonian nominal paradigms, and Veps is known as the Finnic language bearing no traits of the Finnic single stop mutation. The expected reflexes of the genitive singular form **mēkāhän* would have been *†miegō* in Livonian and *†meghan* in Veps (and, by the way, *†meega* in Estonian, *†mee-cää* in Votic, *†miekään* in Finnish, *†meekähän* in Ingrian).

Apparently, in view of the absence of any case forms where the absence of the stop *g* were explainable as resulting from a known sound change, both Livonian and Veps as remote marginal languages give sufficient evidence to maintain that the Proto-Finnic forms

nsg **mēs* : gsg **mēhen* : psg **mēstä*

cannot be derived from the former underlying forms

**mēkäs* : **mēkāhen* : **mēkästä*.

3. In view of the apparent difficulties raised by the Livonian and Veps data, it is highly probable that the Proto-Germanic voiced velar fricative **g* of the word **mēgaz* was accepted as a voiced velar fricative **γ* also in Finnic.

This explanation meets the difficulty that up to now no **γ* has ever been proposed for Proto-Finnic except when handling the weak grade variant of **k̃* that, however, was written as **k̃* above. On the other hand, several Finno-Ugricists reconstruct an intervocalic velar fricative (or spirant) **γ* for a consonant that has been lost in Finnic but has reflexes similar to those of **k̃* elsewhere in Finno-Ugric; in East Hanti and in North Lapp even the fricative *γ* occurs as one of the reflexes. In Finnic **γ* has been lost in such stems before the rise of stop mutation, i.e. before the rise of the weak grade of **k̃*. As the modern Finnic languages have mostly long monophthongs in stems with the former **γ*, Erkki Itkonen has proposed an alternative way of reconstructing the corresponding stems, namely with a long monophthong followed by **k̃*. Actually, the stem with the meaning 'to row' makes rather a counterindication to Itkonen's proposal than an exceptional development of a sequence of the type, cf. Livonian (infinitive) *sōidō* : (prisg) *sōidab*, Estonian *sōuda* : *sōuan*, Votic *soutaa* : *sōvvan*, Finnish *soutaa* : *soudan*, Veps *soutta* : *soudan*.

If the Proto-Germanic voiced velar fricative in **mēgas* was accepted as a velar fricative also in Finnic, the following development of the Finnic word for 'man' can be described without difficulties in terms of well-known historical changes, cf.

	<i>*mēγās</i> : <i>*mēγäsen</i> : <i>*mēγästä</i>
<i>*s > *h / VCV_V</i>	<i>*mēγās</i> : <i>*mēγähen</i> : <i>*mēγästä</i>
<i>*γ > ø</i>	<i>*mēās</i> : <i>*mēāhen</i> : <i>*mēästä</i>
Contraction	<i>*mēs</i> : <i>*mēhen</i> : <i>*mēstä</i>

4. If the Finnic word **mēs* is a Germanic loanword, then the following conclusions can be drawn: (1) **mēs* has been borrowed earlier than those Germanic loanwords in Finnic where either **-h-* or **-k-* have been substituted for the Germanic intervocalic **-g-* and (2) **γ* was not lost in Finnic, at least when contacts with Germanic began.

Abbreviations

g – genitive, n – nominative, p – partitive, pr – present tense, sg – singular. Abbreviations form compounds, cf. e.g. gsg – genitive singular.

LITERATURE

Viitso, T.-R. 1978, The history of Finnic *õ* in the first syllable. — СФУ XIV, 86—106.
— (forthcoming) The puzzle of the Proto-Finnic **h*.

ТИЙТ-РЕЙН ВИЙТСО (Тарту)

ЛИВСКОЕ *mīez*, ВЕПСКОЕ *mez* 'МУЖЧИНА'

Склонение прибалтийско-финского слова со значением 'мужчина', ср. номинатив ед. **mēs* : генитив ед. **mēhen* : партитив ед. **mēstä* уникально в двух отношениях: во-первых, налицо единственное слово, имеющее в номинативе ед. числа односложную согласную основу и, во-вторых, единственное слово, в парадигме которого чередование *s* : *h* встречается на границе первого слога. Поэтому, вероятно, слово имело раньше двусложную согласную основу и трехсложную гласную основу. Предполагается, что слово заимствовано из германского **mēgaz*, ср. гот. *mēgs* 'зять', древнеисл. *mágr* 'свойственник', древнеангл. *mēz* 'родственник', древнефриз. *mēch*. Ввиду того, что в ливской парадигме, ср. *mīez* : *mī'e* : *mīestō*, и в вепсской парадигме, ср. *mez* : *mehen* : *mešt*, отсутствуют рефлексы германского интервокального звонкого велярного фрикативного **g*, причем это отсутствие никак не объяснимо чередованием ступеней одиночных согласных, утверждает, что в этом слове рефлексом германского звонкого велярного фрикативного **g* и в прибалтийско-финском сперва был звонкий велярный фрикативный, ср. **mēγās* : **mēγäsen* : **mēγästä*.