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THE STEMS *est* AND *finn* IN SOME OLD ENGLISH WORDS

1. INTRODUCTION. A few place-names and other words containing the stems *est* and *finn* occur in some well-known OE¹ literary records. It is only natural to ask whether such words have any connection with the ancestors of the present-day Estonians and Finns or the territories they inhabited. Indeed such a link was taken for granted by many 19th and early 20th century commentators of OE texts because of the obvious formal similarity of the names concerned. Even more recently, too, some linguists and geographers have tended to identify the OE *Estas* and *Finnas* with the ancient Estonians and Finns.

The present paper contains a brief survey of the relevant names and discusses their presumable origin and meaning. A few notes have been added on certain other OE words that probably have a Fenno-Ugric background.

2. OCCURRENCE IN OLD ENGLISH TEXTS. The elements *finn* and *est* occur in, e. g. the OE poem "Widsith", the folk epic "Beowulf" and in the West Saxon translation of Orosius' "History".

The poem "Widsith" deals with the wanderings of an OE gleeman or minstrel. The poem dates back to the end of the 7th century A. D. or even earlier. Part of the material presented probably originated before the Anglo-Saxons settled in Britain in the 5th—6th centuries. In addition to shorter passages and fragments of stories it contains several lists of personal and tribal names. The following references to an ethnic unit, the *Finnas*, are made in the poem: *Caelic (weold) Finnum* (line 20); ... *ic wæs ... mid Finnum* (76); ... *mid Scride-finum* (79).

The OE epic "Beowulf" is believed to have been composed originally in an Anglian dialect about A. D. 700. The only surviving MS is usually assigned to the late 10th century. In the 3182 lines of this version the element *finn* occurs once in a place-name *Finna land* (580) and repeatedly as a personal name (1068, 1128, etc.).

Of much greater interest than the isolated words occurring in these poetic texts are the relevant names in the late 9th-century West Saxon translation of Orosius' history "Historiarum adversus Paganos Libri septem". This abridged translation, undertaken on King Alfred's initiative and probably with his active participation, is especially valuable for the additions that bring the original 5th-century Latin text down to the 9th century. Among these insertions containing interesting geographical

¹ The following abbreviations are used in this paper: OE = Old English, MoE = Modern English, Russ = Russian, OSc = Old Scandinavian, MoHG = Modern High German, OIr = Old Irish, MoSw = Modern Swedish.

and ethnographical information there are the narratives of Ohthere's and Wulfstan's voyages.²

Ohthere (Scandinavian *Ottar*) was a Norwegian who, while in the service of King Alfred, made two exploratory voyages: one to Schleswig and the other round the North Cape into the White Sea. It is in the narrative of this northern voyage that several references are made to the *Finnas* and the *Terfinnas* as well as to their way of life, customs and languages.

Wulfstan is believed to have been a Dane. On orders from King Alfred he made a voyage along the southern Baltic to a point somewhat eastward of the mouth of the Vistula, where he met the *Estas*. An account is given of this tribe and their home, *Estland*.

The place-names, ethnonyms and names of persons with the stems *est* or *finn* mentioned above constitute the OE material that is examined in the present paper. This material is obviously scanty and does not enable one to identify the ethnic units concerned or to ascertain their settlement history and mutual relations. Very much in this connection remains vague and contradictory. This is mainly due to the unreliable and superficial picture of the geography of Northern Europe available in the early Middle Ages when the whole of Scandinavia was still regarded as consisting of a number of islands.

3. PROBABLE BACKGROUND AND INTERPRETATION. Many 19th-century commentators erroneously identified the *Finnas* and *Finna land* in "Widsith" and "Beowulf" with the ancestors of the modern Finns and their home, respectively.³ In a very interesting paper the Swedish scholar Gösta Langenfeldt has shown that the OE names containing the element *finn* may derive from two different sources.⁴

In some cases they are obviously related to a Celtic proper name *Finn*. The hero Finn dominates the folklore of the Gaelic peoples in Ireland and Scotland.⁵ The name is probably derived from the OIr *fiønn* 'fair-haired, white' (cf. the OIr *Fēni* < **venii* 'warriors' and *Fēne*, a name for the ancient Celtic inhabitants of Ireland).⁶ Line 20 in "Widsith": *Caelic (weold) Finnum* should apparently be translated as *Ceallach* (= the name of an Irish chieftain⁷) *ruled over the Fēne* (i. e. ancient Irish).

It is not quite clear what is behind the other two references to the *Finnas* in "Widsith": *ic wæs . . . mid Finnum* (76) and *. . . mid Scridefinnum* (79). G. Langenfeldt points out that Otto von Friesen derived OE *finn(e)* and OSc *finnr* 'tracker, hunter' from a verb **finthnan* 'to pursue, find, hunt'.⁸ OSc *finnr* can be regarded as an ordinary noun applicable

² There are two extant MSS of the OE translation. One dates from the 9th, the other from the 11th century; see, e. g. King Ælfred's Orosius, ed. by H. Sweet. Early English Text Society, London 1883.

³ See, e. g. J. Bosworth, *A Compendious Anglo-Saxon and English Dictionary*, London 1849, p. 80, where the name *Finnas* is defined as "Fins, people of Finland".

⁴ G. Langenfeldt, *Finns in Widsith*. — *Svio-Estonica. Akadeemilise Rootsi-Eesti Seltsi Toimetised*, vol. XIV, Lund 1958, pp. 9—18.

⁵ Finn Mac Cumhaill. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed., vol. 9, p. 257.

⁶ See A. Machain, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language*, Stirling 1911, p. 174.

⁷ Inconvincing attempts have been made to link *Caelic* with the Fenno-Ugric proper name *Kalev*; see, e. g. R. Heinzel, *Über die Hervararsaga*, Wien 1887, p. 507, and K. W. Chambers, *Widsith, a Study in Old English Heroic Legend*, Cambridge 1912, p. 192.

⁸ G. Langenfeldt, *op. cit.*, pp. 12—14; cf. also T. E. Karsten, *Germanisch-finnische Lehnwortstudien*, Helsingfors 1915, p. 288; E. Björkman, *Studien über die Eigennamen in Beowulf*, Halle a. S. 1920, pp. 26—27; B. Collinder, *Comparative Grammar of the Uralic Languages*, Stockholm 1960, p. 12.

to any individual engaged in hunting, i. e. not necessarily to the members of any definite ethnic or linguistic group. It is probably in this general sense that the word is used in "Widsith" (76).

In OE personal names of Scandinavian origin the element *fin(n)* presumably also refers to a hunter and reflects the esteem attached to the hunter's occupation. In "Beowulf" we have, for instance, *Finn*, king of the North Frisians and Jutes (line 1068, etc.) and in "The Battle of Finnesburh" the place-name *Finns-buruh* 'Finn's town or fort' (line 36).⁹ The *Finna land*, i. e. 'land of the Finns', mentioned once in "Beowulf" (580) should be located in central or north Norway. The Finns referred to here were either the Lapps or, perhaps, some other tribes of hunters inhabiting central and northern Scandinavia, who later withdrew northward before the advancing Scandinavians.¹⁰

The name *Finnas* in the narrative of Ohthere's northern voyage in all likelihood denotes the Lapps. Being a Norwegian, it was only natural for Ohthere to use his native term for the Lapp inhabitants of northern Scandinavia and the Kola peninsula. In Norway the Lapps are occasionally still called *finner*, whereas the Finns of modern Finland are referred to as *kvæner*.

Ohthere's voyage began on the coast of central Norway.¹¹ After fifteen days during which he sailed north, then east and southward, Ohthere came to the mouth of a great river (*ān mycel ēa*) which turned inland in a northwesterly direction. This river has been identified variously as the Varzuga or the Gulf of Kandalaksha.¹² The far, i. e. northern bank of the river was inhabited by the *Terfinnas*, the opposite bank by the *Beormas*. Ohthere gives a fairly detailed account of the life and customs of these two peoples, adding that "the Finns, it seemed to him, and the Permians spoke nearly one language" (*þā Finnas, him þūhte, and þā Beormas spræcon nēah ān zeþēode*).¹³

Ohthere's *Terfinnas* were in all probability Lapps living on the south-east coast of the Kola peninsula. The name (< OE *Trefinnas* 'forest Lapps'; the form *ter* being the result of metathesis; cf. OSc *trē*, MoSw *träd*, OE *trēo(w)*, MoE *tree*) survives in the toponym *Терский берег* which denotes the south-eastern coast of the peninsula of Kola. The River Varzuga is still regarded as the western boundary of this region.¹⁴

The *Beormas* of Ohthere (cf. OSc *Bjarmar* and Russ *пермь*) were

⁹ For a discussion of the OE poem "The Battle of Finnesburh", see, e.g. M. Trautmann, *Finn und Hildebrand*. — Bonner Beiträge IV, Bonn 1903.

¹⁰ Note in this connection the place-names *Finnhaden* (modern *Finnvedan*) in south Sweden, *Finskogen* (on the border of central Sweden and Norway), *Finmark*, the district in north Norway which even in the 13th century stretched far into Sweden. For various interpretations of *Finna land*, see E. Björkman, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹¹ A full account of and a bibliography pertaining to Ohthere's second voyage is given in A. L. Binns, *Ohtheriana VI. Ohthere's Northern Voyage*. — English and Germanic Studies, vol. VII, University of Birmingham, Cambridge 1961, pp. 43—52; see also Archibald R. Lewis, *The Northern Seas (Shipping and Commerce in Northern Europe A. D. 300—1100)*, Princeton N. J. 1958, pp. 301—316.

¹² It has also been maintained that Ohthere reached the mouth of the Northern Dvina, see, e.g. M. Zsirai, *Finnugor Rokonságunk*, Budapest 1937, p. 473. This view appears to be erroneous as Ohthere does not mention sailing south-east after entering the White Sea.

¹³ For the OE text, see, e.g. А. И. Смирницкий, *Хрестоматия по истории английского языка с VII по XVII в.*, Москва 1953, p. 26.

¹⁴ See В. В. Мавродин, *Русское многонациональное государство и финно-угорские вопросы*. — Ученые записки ЛГУ, № 105. Серия востоковедческих наук, вып. 2, Ленинград 1947, pp. 34—35; Г. М. Керт, *Некоторые саамские топонимические названия на территории Карельской АССР*. — ВЯ 1960, № 2, p. 86.

apparently North Karelians or Komis, i. e. Fenno-Ugrians whose territory stretched from the White Sea (Kandalaksha) to the Urals (Perm).¹⁵

The narrative of Ohthere's northern voyage also refers to the *Scride-finnas*. The same name occurs once in "Widsith" (79). The ethnonym *skriithiphinoi* is used already by Procopius and in a garbled form *screrefennæ* by Jordanes. The element *scrid*, *skriith* refers to the ski, i. e. the contrivance used by the ancient Lapps as a means of locomotion and not employed elsewhere at the time.¹⁶ *Scride-finn* would consequently be equivalent to 'skier-hunter', a very appropriate name for the Lapp.

Wulfstan's voyage along the southern shores of the Baltic took him from Hedeby in East Schleswig to Truso and Elbing in Samland¹⁷ some twenty kilometres east of the mouth of the Vistula. Wulfstan describes the Ests (OE *Estas*, *Eastas*) whom he met here, and their territory *Estland*. He gives an account of the customs of the Ests, especially famous being his description of the funeral rites among them. It is not clear from Wulfstan's narrative whether he met any Ests personally or what was the source of his information. What seems certain, however, is that Wulfstan's Ests were not the ancestors of the modern Estonians, but probably the same ancient Baltic people (the forbears of the Old Prussians who died out in the 17th century) that are mentioned as the *Aesti(i)* by Tacitus, Jordanes, Einhard, and as the *Haesti* by Cassiodorus. These early historians are supposed to have obtained the name from ancient Germanic sources. It is believed that the ethnonym *est* (of Scandinavian origin (< the stem **aist*, cf. OSc *eistr*) originally denoted the ancestors of the Estonians.¹⁸ At a distance from the Baltic the original meaning of the word could have faded. Thus the early medieval historians as well as Wulfstan used ethnonyms containing the stem *aist* to designate tribes and peoples who were evidently not the ancestors of the modern Estonians.¹⁹

The numerous OE compound names containing *Est* or *East* as a first element obviously connected with the cardinal point do not concern us here.²⁰

4. SOME OTHER CASES WITH A PROBABLE FENNO-UGRIC BACKGROUND.

We have attempted to show in the foregoing that the OE *Estas* and *Finnas* are not the ancestors of the modern Estonians and Finns. Wulfstan's

¹⁵ Cf. J. Raith, *Altenglisches Lesebuch*, München 1940, p. 70. It is of interest to note that the name *Bjarmaland* was formerly used in the Scandinavian languages for the region on the White Sea coast adjacent to the mouth of the Northern Dvina. See, e. g. *Ordbok öfver Svenska språket*, 4. bd., Lund 1916, col. 2880; cf. also the map of Northern Europe in Abraham Ortelius' atlas "Theatrum Orbis Terrarum" (Antwerp 1573) where the Kola peninsula is called *Bjarmia* and the region about the mouth of the Petchora River is marked as *Permia*.

¹⁶ See G. Langenfeldt, *op. cit.*, pp. 17—18; note OSc *skrida* 'to slide', MoSw *skridsko* 'a skate'; cf. MoE *stride*.

¹⁷ See Archibald R. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

¹⁸ Regarding the origin of the word *eesti* see P. Ariste, *Maakeel ja eesti keel*. — ETAT US 1956 2, pp. 122—124.

¹⁹ The *Estas* of Wulfstan have repeatedly been mistaken for a Finnish people, especially the Estonians. Thus, e.g. on p. 259 of J. Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller's "An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary" (Oxford 1882) we find the following: "Este, Estas... The Esthonians or Osterlings are a Finnish race, — the Estas of Wulfstan are the Osterlings of the present day"; cf. H. Geidel, Alfred der Grosse als Geograph (Autoreferat), München 1902, p. 2, where Wulfstan's narrative is described as "...ein Bericht, mit welchem uns auch die älteste ausführliche Beschreibung des Esthenvolkes vermittelt wird." For some other more recent cases where the Estas have been taken for a Finnish people, see O. Mutt, *Vana-inglise kirjalikes mälestistes leiduvatest est-ja finn-elemendiga nimedest*. — KK 1961, nr. 12, pp. 741—742.

²⁰ E.g. *East-folc*, *East-rice*, *East-rihte*, etc.; see also, e.g. W. G. Searle, *Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum. A List of Anglo-Saxon Proper Names from the Time of Bede to That of King John*, Cambridge 1897, p. 236.

Ests were a non-Fenno-Ugric people while the Finns in "Widsith", "Beowulf" and Ohthere's narrative were probably Fenno-Ugric Lapps. It remains to be asked whether there are any references to other Fenno-Ugrians in OE literary records.

In addition to the *Beormas* mentioned above it would appear that the *Cwēnas* were also Fenno-Ugrian. The *Cwēnas* are referred to by Ohthere who distinguishes them from the *Finnas*, i. e. Lapps. Ohthere says that the *Cwēnas* inhabited *Cwēna land* (*Cwēnland*). The latter is described as lying a fortnight's journey to the north-west of the *Beormas*, behind bogs and swamps. Judging by this as well as other OE and Scandinavian sources *Cwēnland* lay between the White Sea and Norway around the northern end of the Gulf of Bothnia. Opinions differ as to the identity of the *Cwēn sǣ*. The majority of authors regard it as the White Sea, others, however, as the Baltic.

The OE *Cwēnas* and its OSc prototype *kvenir*, *kvæmir* (Latin *Cayani*; Russ *кяены, кяяне*, MoE *Quaines*) are usually explained as derivatives of the Finnish *kainuu* (*kainu*) 'low-lying land',²¹ denoting the lowlands round the northernmost end of the Baltic. The origin and ethnic identity of the *Cwēnas* still remain debatable. It is now generally believed that they were Fenno-Ugrians, a part of the ancient Finns with a considerable Karelian substratum.²²

When the Fenno-Ugric word *kainu* was borrowed into the Germanic languages, it was mistakenly associated with the Germanic stem **queno*, *qēniz* 'woman' (cf. Gothic *qinō*, *qens*; OE *cwēn*; MoE *queen*, *quean*; OHG *quena*; OSc *kvinna*, *kvenna*). This gave rise to rumours of a land of women or Amazons somewhere in northern Scandinavia or present-day north Finland. These tales were apparently behind Tacitus' reference to a people dominated by women (*femina dominatur*) in the north of Europe.²³ Similar references can also be found in later medieval literature.²⁴ It is not quite clear, however, whether this is merely a case of mistaken etymologization (cf. the phonetic similarity of the words *Cwēn* and *kainu*) or whether some survivals of a remote matriarchal order still lingered on.²⁵

²¹ Cf., e.g. Y. H. Toivonen, Suomen kielen etymologinen sanakirja I, Helsinki 1955, p. 142; see also the article on *kainulaiset* in Tietosanakirja, Helsinki 1909—1919, 3. osa, col. 1719—1720; cf. G. Langenfeldt, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

²² See P. Ariste, Läänemere keelte kujunemine ja varem arenemisjärk. — Eesti rahva etnilisest ajaloost, Tallinn 1956, p. 20; see also Д. В. Бубрих, Происхождение карельского народа, Петрозаводск 1947, p. 10 ff., where the Quaines are linked with the Hämaläiset. A detailed survey of the Quaines is given in K. Vilkuņa, *Kainuu — Kvenland. Missä ja mikä?*, Helsinki 1957.

²³ Tacitus' Germania. Erläutert von Heinrich Schweizer-Sidler. Achte Auflage, Halle 1923, p. 102: «Suionibus Sithonum gentes continuantur cetera similes uno differunt, quod femina dominatur.»

²⁴ E. g. Adam of Bremen refers to a land of women (*Terra Feminarum*) he had heard mentioned by Sweyn Estrithson, king of Denmark («Filius regis ... in Quenland, patriam feminarum, pervenisset, quas nos Amazonas vocamus»; see A. Bremen, *Hist. Eccl. Lib. III*, c. 17; quoted after J. Bosworth, T. N. Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, Oxford 1882, p. 172 under *Cwēnland*). Adam's knowledge of Danish was very imperfect and apparently he made the absurd mistake of confusing *Quenland* or *Quena-land* with *Quinna-land* 'land of women'; cf. J. Fritznér, *Ordbog over det gamle norske sprog*, 2. bd., Kristiania 1891, p. 370; see also K. Vilkuņa, *op. cit.*, pp. 92—93.

²⁵ M. Steblin-Kamenski believes that traces of an earlier matriarchal order survived among the ancient Scandinavians at the beginning of our era. He has shown that even in later OSc literary sources there are references to matrilineal descent, the special position of the mother's brother, matrilineal marriage, etc.; see М. И. Стеблин-Каменский, История скандинавских языков, Москва—Ленинград 1953, p. 14; cf. F. Engels' reference to the "Elder Edda" where the sons of sisters (OSc *systrungar*) are regarded as closer relatives than blood brothers; see К. Маркс и Ф. Энгельс, Сочинения, т. XVI, ч. I, Москва 1937, p. 115.

The study of additional material from early Scandinavian sources would probably help to shed further light on the problems reviewed in this paper. In OSc documents and sagas the words *est*, *eistr* and *Estland* are generally clearly used with reference to the ancestors of the Estonians and to their home.²⁶

ОЛЕГ МУТТ (Тарту)

ОБ ОСНОВАХ *est* И *finn* В НЕКОТОРЫХ ДРЕВНЕАНГЛИЙСКИХ НАЗВАНИЯХ

В ряде древнеанглийских (др. а.) письменных памятников IX—X вв. встречаются названия типа *Estas*, *Estland*, *Finnas*, *Finna land* и т. п.

На основе внешнего сходства лингвисты, географы и другие исследователи до последнего времени иногда ошибочно отождествляют упомянутых в др. а. источниках эстов, финнов и обитаемые ими территории соответственно с современными эстонцами, финнами, Эстонией и Финляндией.

В данной статье автор пытается показать, что, в действительности, основа *finn* в др. а. письменных памятниках может иметь двойное — или кельтское или древнескандинавское происхождение. В последнем случае она обозначает финно-угорских саамов, а не финнов в современном значении слова.

Названия *Estas* и *Estland* (в повествовании о путешествии Вульфстана в др. а. переводе «Мировой истории» Орозия) относятся не к предкам финно-угорских эстонцев, а к балтийским племенам, предкам древних пруссов, издревле населявшим нижнее течение реки Вислы.

Финно-угорскими являлись, по всей вероятности, племена *Beormas* и *Cwēnas*, описанные Охтхером (Оттар) в повествовании о его путешествии в Белое море в конце IX в. (в том же переводе «Мировой истории» Орозия).

²⁶ For details see P. Ariste, *Maakeel ja eesti keel*. — ETAT US 1956, 2, pp. 122—123; see also B. Thorpe's commentary to the entry under the year 1046 in his edition of the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" (London 1861, p. 137) where he refers to the "Saga Olafs Tryggvasonar" and "Saga in Snorri" in connection with the fact that Olaf Tryggvason's mother, who had been captured by pirates, was found exposed for sale in a slave market in *Esthonia*.

Note: the present writer has dealt with the same subject at somewhat greater length in his article «Vana-inglise kirjalikes mälestistes leiduvatest *est-* ja *finn-*elemendiga nimedest». — KK 1961, nr. 12, pp. 736—743.