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Analyzing the Finnic ethnonyms

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The Finnic languages are a typical group of closely related languages that are characterized by many common phenomena. Although these phenomena are abundant at all structural levels, beginning with vocabulary, phonology, morphology and the syntactic use of various grammatical elements, there is both a linguistic and historical basis for distinguishing between various Finnic dialects and languages. On the other hand, it is also typical of Finnic languages that in addition to the existence of some clear language borders, the shift from one language to another often takes place across dialectal isoglosses.

Although the mutual linguistic borders have traditionally been considered somewhat ambiguous, some of the structural differences are quite old. In the research into the Finnic languages the ethnonyms have often been regarded as a special subgroup of vocabulary which conserved a piece of information on the early division into ethnic groups and subgroups. Nevertheless, a more detailed analysis shows that this type of inductive conclusion can easily be misleading, and that some of the ethnonyms have begun to refer to peoples and their languages only later.

How to define the Finnic ethnonym?

As a definition will be seen below, the definition ”ethnonym” is not as clear-cut as the word itself (cf. Greek *éthnos* ’people’ + *ónoma* ’name’) at first sight appears. Actually, only a part of the Finnic ethnonyms are originally ‘people names’, and many of them are structurally and etymologically in the first instance (macro) place names, e.g. country or county names.

The semantic field of Finnic ethnonyms consists of a bifold relation where the real meaning of the expression, the name itself, is hidden in the stem of the word, and the character of the proper noun (ethnic group, lan-

guage, country, place) is defined by means of word formation, i. e. either by a derivation or a compound word.

An ethnonym can be etymologically either a common noun or a proper noun that has been borrowed into some language originally as a proper noun. They are typically introduced in a situation, in which one wants to distinguish one's own group from another. The reason for this may be anything from a linguistic difference up to complete mutual unintelligibility, but also other factors such as religious and enviromental concerns or political borders easily lead to the use of proper nouns, ethnonyms. Further, the ethnonyms can be used in two directions: to distinguish reflexively one's own group from anothers or to determine some other group.

The difference between two ethnic groups can also be determined, when there is no linguistic reason and the people speak the same language. Thus, it is well-known that the Finns can be divided on a geographical and areal basis into several internal subgroups, such as *hämäläinen* 'people living in Häme county (sg.)', *savolainen* 'people living in Savo county (sg.)'. The Estonians use the ethnonyms *setu* 'Setu (Estonians living in the district of Petseri)', *järvalane* (< *Järvamaa*) 'people living in Järvamaa county (sg.)' etc. in the same way. In the case of *setu* the distinction is partly based on linguistic criteria, and in general this linguistic difference is less ambigous than other means (like geographic) of distinguishing between the familiar and the strange.

While defining the character of a Finnic ethnonym, a central problem is to decide, where is the border between toponyms (macro toponyms, such as country and county names) and people's names (ethonyms). At a terminological level this ambiguity doesn't exist, but in practice many Finnic ethnonyms refer equally either to a place or its inhabitants. As has already been mentioned above, some of the ethnonymic word stems have originally referred to people, while some of them seem to have originated from place names. In many cases, derivations are used to express the other meaning. Thus, for instance (Estonian) *Eesti* 'Estonia; Estonian (language)' > *eestlane* 'Estonian (people)', (Finnish) *Karjala* 'Karelia; Karelian (language)' > *karjalainen* 'Karelian (people)', (Finnish) *Suomi* 'Finland; Finnish (language)' > *suomalainen* 'Finnish (people)', (Finnish) *Viro* 'Estonia; Estonian (language)' > *virolainen* 'Estonian (people)', reveal the two semantic dimensions that ethnonyms have. Some of the Finnic ethnonyms do not have any areal connotation, but the existence of the first type (*Eesti* etc.) excludes any possibility of concluding that ethnonyms primarily refer to people, although this seems to be the main tendency. Those ethnonyms with a mere ethnic

meaning are: (Vepsian) *vepsań kel'* 'Vepsian language', *vepsl# ńe* 'Vepsian' (Ludian) *l'É d'i* 'Ludian (language)', *l'É d'iköi* 'Ludian' and (Russian) *chud'* 'Finnic (some of the neighboring Finnic tribes)'.

A division into ethnonyms and toponyms (including country and district names) can be criticized after analyzing and deciphering the structure of Finnic ethnonyms. Also an etymologic approach to this issue reveals the ambiguity of many ethonyms and the question of whether the semantics of ethnolinguistically and areally broader complexes should rather be treated as a bunch of meanings than as a clear-cut hierarchy based on a binary distinction between ethnonyms and country names (like person names and toponyms).

The surface structure of the ethnonyms and their toponymic equivalents (country names etc.) is at first sight quite consistent in the Finnic languages: some of them are underived word stems and the rest are derivations of place names (country or county names).

Type 1: Deriving from an ethnonym

(Swedish) *finne* 'Finnish (people)'	→	*Fin* + *land*
(Ludian) *l'É d'i*	→	Ø
(Vepsian) *vepsa*	→	Ø
(Votian) *vad'd'a*	→	cf. (Estonian) *Vadja* + *maa* 'Votian land' (secondary)

From an etymological point of view *Eesti* 'Estonia(n)' belongs to type 1, but if one's point of departure is the structure of Modern Estonian, it has to be classified as an example of type 2.

Type 2: Deriving from a toponym

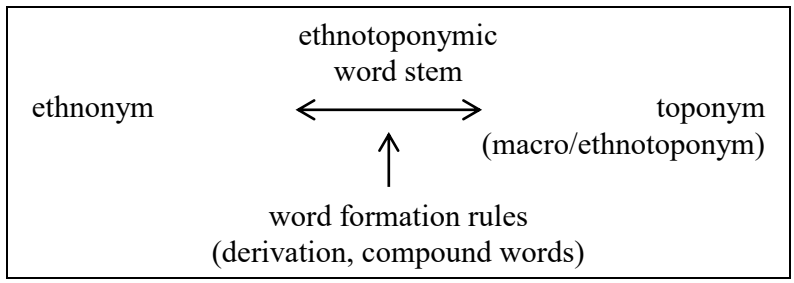
(Finnish) *Suomi*	→	*Suomalainen*
(Finnish) *Karjala*	→	*Karjalainen*
(Estonian) *Virumaa* 'Virumaa county'	→	*Virulane*
(Finnish) *Viro* 'Estonia'	→	*virolainen* 'Estonian'

According to their derivational scheme, the ethnonyms could thus be divided into two subgroups, those that primarily lean on an ethnic meaning, and those that primarily have a geographic meaning. Although the most Finnic ethnonyms may be used to refer to both people (language) and area,

in the majority of cases a surface analysis is enough to reveal whether a derivative and secondary meaning is used to denote the people or the area.

A generative argument for the formation of the ethno-toponyms would be that the character of the name is first decided through a process in which the suffixation or compound word formation determine the type of name. There is no self-evident rule that would lead one to conclude whether a derived form is an ethnonym or a toponym. Actually, names behave very inconsistently and every ethnonymic lexeme has its own morphological and word formation rules.

The interrelation of Finnic ethnonyms and ethnotoponyms, the ethnotoponymic entity, can be schematized in the following way, if the name is based on a semantically opaque word:



In area that are ethnically relatively homogenous, the distinction between one's "own" and "other" people can be drawn quite straightforwardly on the basis of language borders that sometimes are quite linear. This is typical in a situation in which the languages are genetically of a different origin and migration is a more likely reason for contact between the two groups, than the dispersal of one unit originally. With respect to their mutual relations, the Finnic languages and their speakers represent the latter type of ethnic picture, where neither linguistic nor ethnic borders are clear-cut, and although the main lines of their taxonomy are generally accepted (cf. Salminen 1998), there still remain a number of definitional and taxonomic problems. On the other hand, the ethnic and linguistic differences compared to neighbouring Indo-European peoples is absolutely clear. Thus, the ethnolingual framework of Finnic ethnonyms is characterized by a dichotomy. The way the Finnic peoples themselves envisage their mutual relations differs considerably from the way their Indo-European neighbours, Baltic (later especially Latvian), Germanic (later especially Swedish and German) and Slavic (later especially Russian) tribes have formed a general concept of the Finnic peoples.

Some structural remarks

From a functional point of view the difference between ordinary place names and country names may seem to be clear, although country names can also be regarded as macrotoponyms. Similar methods can be applied while reconstructing their history. Likewise, ethnonyms may have an origin of more restricted meaning that initially referred to a smaller area and its inhabitants like (Finnish) *Karjala* 'Carelia' (< 'a district on the north-west coast of Lake Ladoga'), *Suomi* 'Finland' (< 'South-West Finland') or *Viro* 'Estonia' (< 'North-East Estonia'). Historically they belong to the same onomastic category as county names *Häme*, *Kainuu*, *Pohjanmaa*, *Satakunta*, *Savo*, *Lappi* (its meaning 'the northern-most part of Finland') in Finland or Estonian *Harjumaa*, *Järvamaa*, *Saaremaa* etc., and their derivatives which make possible the naming the local people *(hämäläiset*, *kainu(u)laiset*, *pohjalaiset*, *savolaiset* and, respectively, *harjulased*, *järvalased*, *saarlased).* Except for *Saaremaa* all these have lost their transparency with respect to the rest of the vocabulary of the languages that are spoken in those areas today.

Although the semantic motivation for some of the Finnic ethnonyms is transparent and many others have a reasonably realiable etymology, it is not possible to determine a limited semantic category from which they would have been derived. Yet, there are some tendencies that are common to place names. The transparent ethnonyms with an obvious connection to existing common nouns are especially valuable in this analysis, because it is quite likely that they reveal an idea of a more detailed semantic typology of Finnic ethnonyms. For instance, the use of some names of people that are based on common nouns like (Livonian) *r# ndali* 'inhabitant of the coast, Livonian', respectively, *s? rli* 'inhabitant of the island, Estonian' and *r# nda-kuràli* 'the people of coastal Churland, Livonian' with respect to *m? -kuràli* 'the people of inland Churland, Latvian' clearly take advantage of the existence of a binary opposition: island ≠ coast, coast ≠ inland. Similarly, in Northeast Estonia a distinction has been made between the language of the coast *rannakiel* and the inland *maakieli* (note!: both 'Estonian'), although the difference here is not supported by linguistic taxonomy but merely by geographic facts.

On the other hand, many etymologies of Finnic ethnonyms suggest that quite neutral meanings like 'land', 'man', 'people' and 'language' etc. provide us with the idea that relatively neutral semantic entities are of the most importance in the formation of ethnonyms. The first type is presented in such examples as (Estonian) *maarahvas* 'the Estonians' (cf. (Votian) *m#*

tš# li 'Votian language'). But, second, also opaque proper nouns like (Finnish) *Viro* 'Estonia', *viro* 'Estonian (language)' ~ *Vironmaa* 'Estonia (archaic)', *viron kieli* 'Estonian language' reveal the importance of the grammatical head of the compound word that happens to be the neutral 'land', 'man', 'people' or 'language' (the form *viron* is syntactically a genitive attribute) that finally defines the meaning of the proper noun. This is why the newest country or people's names, which have been introduced in e. g. Finnish or Estonian, follow the analogy of old ethnonyms, respectively country and county names (irrespective of whether they were originally place names or ethnonyms). In Finnish the syntactic pattern is as follows:

	kieli 'language'
STEM + GEN. +	*maa* 'land, country'
	kansa 'people of the country'

In most cases (with some exceptions that are due to language planning and the use of the names by the speakers of these languages themselves) in modern Finnish the people of a specific area or the speakers of a certain language etc., are referred to with a derivation:

STEM (+ NOM. Ø) + *lAinen*:
englanti + *lainen* 'English(man)'
ranska + *lainen* 'French(man)'

Also topographic terms like *maa* 'country, land; soil, earth', *mäki* 'mountain, hill', *ranta* 'shore, coast' and *saari* 'island, isle' have been important in some multinational areas and sometimes they have been even more important than opaque ethnonyms and proper nouns. In Ingria the Votians have called their language *m# tš# li* 'the language of the country, Votian', and reflexively distinguished between two groups by means of topography: *mäčiläizeD* 'hill (gen.) people' *orgolaizeD* 'valley (gen.) people'. Nevertheless, this is also based on the fact that the Votians and the Izhorians used to form a mixed population and also the local Finns were linguistically quite close to them, which in its turn increased the ethnic variety of West Ingria. On the east coast of the Baltic Sea the Livonians similarly took advantage of topographic or even ethnographic relations by distinguishing between the people of the island, the coast and the (in)land. The Livonians called themselves (see above) *kalàmi'eD* literally 'fishermen' or *r# ndali* 'inhabitant of the coast', whereas the Estonians of Saaremaa over the sea (Germanian 'Ösel') were called *s? rli* (possibly borrowed from Estonian) and their language *s? rm? k# l'*.

The majority of country names, ethonyms and language names in modern languages have been borrowed as proper nouns from local languages and there is usually no way to see whether they have any connection with some existing noun or person name. Hence *France* doesn't have any connotation in most other languages that, yet, do have a name for 'France', e.g. (English) *France*, (Russian) *Franciya*, (Hungarian) *Franciaország*, (Finnish) *Ranska* etc.

Similarly it is very likely that, words have been borrowed from one language into another in prehistoric times if other means, for instance topographic vocabulary, have not been efficient enough to differentiate between one's "own and odd".

Early literary records on Finnic peoples

One of the most striking differences in research into the Finno-Ugric (Uralic) languages compared to the historical prerequisites of the research into Indo-European languages is that most of the literary records originate from modern times, whereas only very few records originate from the Middle Ages. The oldest quotations that have been preserved are in Hungarian and date from the 11th century A.D., after which slowly more and more written fragments and texts began to appear (Hajdú 1966: 19–20, 1987: 30–31). The scarcity or complete lack of early written data has been frequently lamented by scholars and specialists of comparative and historical Finno-Ugric studies (Sinor 1988: XVII). Due to this, historical research into Finno-Ugric languages has been forced to build partly on other and more hypothetical and deductive methods like internal reconstruction, than has, for instance, the study of different Indo-European language groups, which can often rely on the literary evidence of ancient data.

Unexpected though it may be to some extent, the analysis of Finnic ethnonyms can profit from the existing old descriptions of North Europe and its people, the oldest records originating from the first century A.D. The way in which current Finnic ethnonyms are presented in historical writings, again, suggests a variety of reasons why Finnic tribes were included in the reports of the authors of ancient records. Some Finnic ethnonyms were repeated in many quarries already during the first millenium A.D., while many of them were first mentioned only occasionally, or after the turn of the millenium.

These records also give some idea of the connections that Finnic peoples have had with other peoples. The western Finnic areas, that we know today as Estonia and Finland, were of constant interest to Roman and West European voyagers of the northern seas. In the east the old descriptions, which

give access to the formation of Russia and its history, are also of great importance for the history of East Finnic peoples, especially the Vepsians and the Votians.

Germania (98 A.D.) by the famous Roman writer Cornelius Tacitus (for details, see e.g. Much's constitutional work 1967) is an early source that is referred to time and again. In its last chapters Tacitus writes about the northernmost tribes, and the equivalents of the ethnonyms (Swedish) *finne* 'Finn' etc. (Tacitus: (Latin (pl.)) *fenni*), which is used in Swedish when referring to Finland, the Finnish language and the Finns, and (Estonian) *Eesti* 'Estonia; Estonian (language)' (Tacitus: *aesti*), with which the Estonians refer to themselves, are first met there. Nevertheless, although this piece of information is of unique value to present-day scholars, it was not as unique for Tacitus and his contemporaries (Pekkanen 1984a, 1988). Tacitus also had at his disposal many references that later disappeared and are only known through secondary sources.

The early writings and data of Tacitus confirm the long age of this type of name in the ethnic and language contact areas. However, at the time of Tacitus *aesti* did not refer to the Estonians, nor to any other Finnic peoples. Tacitus provides the reader with sufficent information, from which one can conclude that the *aesti* people lived further south on the southeast coast of the Baltic Sea. This is an area which is considered the land of the ancient Baltic tribes (see, e.g. Mallory 1994: 23). *Estonia* (Estonian *Eesti*) was introduced as the name of today's Estonia only after the turn of the first millennium A. D., and it took several hundred years until (in the 19th century) the name finally gained a foothold in Estonian.

Nor was Tacitus' *fenni* used as a synonym of the present (Swedish) *finne* 'Finnish', but of an unknown northern tribe, whose way of living without permanent huts resembled the dwelling of the Sami – and this was the reason too, why the Sami were repeatedly considered the real target of Tacitus' description. Yet, also this view is too straightforward a generalization of ancient ethnic relations.

Similarly the eastern neighbours of the Finnic peoples, the Slavs, knew a people called (Russian) *chud'* that, like *Eesti* and *finne*, was never originally used by the Finnic people about themselves. The Slavs (late Russians) in their turn, imported the name of this people in their folklore to the north (> (Northern Sami) *čuhti* ~ *čuđđi* 'unknown hostile people, persecutor') and to other parts of Russia.

The first literary record by Jordanes (550 A.D.), the form being *thiudos*, does not refer to the Finnic peoples and does not have much in common with

the Slavs either, as yet. Nevertheless, a comparison of (Russian) *chuď* with Jordanes' *thiudos* (and (Gothic) *thiuda* 'people', (German) *deutsch*, (Dutch) *duits* etc. < Germanic **þeud#* 'people'; Kluge 1989: 138–139) is the most reasonable attempt at an etymology for this ethnonym. Earlier some scholars presupposed that (Sami) *čuhti* cannot be a Russian loan word, but at the present stage of research it seems that there is nothing in language history that would refute the Russian origin of (Sami) *čuhti*. I have (see Grünthal 1997: 150–171) argued using new criteria for a direction Russian > Sami and not vice versa.

In texts from the early Middle-Ages, we find references to Finnic peoples, as well, but mostly in the form of ethnonyms, although none of them is as compact as the description in Tacitus' Germania. Information on the Finnic areas becomes more detailed only when the connections with other countries and peoples become closer and especially when the political outlines of North Europe start to be formed by the turn of the first millenium, i.e. the Scandinavian, German and Russian invaders attempt to force these territories more closely under their control.

A few, but nonetheless valuable, records about the Finnic peoples have been preserved in Nestor's chronicle, a recitation on the formation of the Russian empire during the period 852–1116 A.D. Besides data on the rulers of Kiev, the chronicle lists many peoples and ethnonyms of North-East Europe.

The chronicle of Henricus de Lettis is an extremely important source of the history of Estonia and Latvia which depicts the German invasion and the beginning of the forcement of the local peoples under the yoke of a new power for centuries, the Livonians, the Latgallians and Estonians. The author of the chronicle could observe in the vicinity the on-going fights and the baptisms of the local people, that was carried out by force. Hence, he was able to write a contemporary and detailed description of the German military expedition and the ethnic circumstances at that time. "Henry's chronicle of Livonia", as it is often referred to in modern scientific texts, also contains plenty of valuable information concerning the organization of the Old Estonian provinces. (Tarvel 1982.)

As already stated above, Henry's chronicle of Livonia is an exceptional document with its punctual and accurate description. In general, there are only few writings that have been preserved until today and that might shed more light on the early history and the Middle Ages in the areas, in which the Finnic peoples lived. The scanty existing records, on the other hand, re-

flect the various connections that northern districts had with the writers' cultures.

The history of the northern regions and the countries around the Gulf of Finland becomes more exactly documented only at the beginning of the Modern Ages, and also the ethnolinguistic process can be followed more reliably from the 15th and 16th century on. As regards prehistoric times, one has to construct up theories by bringing into line the viewpoints of archaeology and language history.

Etymological approaches to the Finnic ethnonyms

Historically, besides (Finnish) *Suomi* and *Karjala*, also (Votian) *vaďďa* : *vaďď# tš# li* etc., 'Votian: Votian language' seems to originate from a (macro) place name, whereas (Swedish) *finne*, (Finnish) *lyydi*, *vepsä*, (Russian) *chuď, chukhonec, chukhonka* 'Finnic (some Finnic language or tribe, e.g. Finnish, Carelian, Vepsian, Votian, Estonian)', *Eesti* and *liivi* are etymologically closely tied to ethnic connotations. In other words, they are structurally underived ethonyms. In the case of *Suomi* the meaning 'Finnish language' is the result of a secondary development based on metaphory and semantic expansion starting from its original meaning 'South-West Finland'. The inhabitants of the area have then been named with an ethnic derivative *-lAinen*.

The ethnonyms with a (macro)toponymic background may also have some connection with historical events such as the constant fight between the Scandinavians, the Novgorodian Russians and the Baltic Germans over the lordship of the Baltic countries and the shores of the Gulf of Finland. The gradual semantic spreading of *Suomi* is a good example of the parallel expansion of a name and a political power (South-West Finland) during the last millennium. The development of *Suomi* as the name of a modern state is a typical example of the expansion of an originally narrower meaning as a county or province name, that has many parallels in Europe ('South-West Finland > Finland'). The progress and change of *Ingria*, *Ingermanland* and (Votian) *vaďďa*, (Estonian) *Vadjamaa*, maybe (Finnish) *Karjala*, as well, may have some connection with the ethnopolitic changes in the Middle Ages. The country or county names *Eesti*, *Viro* and *Livland* are illustrative examples of how modern country and county names may occur in historical sources and cover a whole group of meanings (Tunkelo 1929).

Many Finnic ethnonyms seem to be opaque proper nouns that appear to have no concrete connection with the rest of the vocabulary of a given lan-

guage. In fact, many of them have apparently been borrowed into the Finnic languages as lexicalized proper nouns, not as neutral common nouns with respect to their ethno-areal connotations.

Other are Finnic ethnonyms, however, structurally and semantically transparent and they have respective common noun equivalents. This type provides a valuable piece of information for the etymologic research of ethnonyms, and they also give an idea of the first stages of lexical polysemy that may ultimately end with opaque ethnonyms that are separated from any concrete lexical meaning in the modern languages. Before introducing *Eesti* in the 18th and especially the 19th century, the Estonians – and respectively also their close neighbors Votians – used to refer to themselves with a word combining *maa* 'land, soil; country' to *rahvas* 'people' or *keel* 'language' (Ariste 1956, 1968). The ethnonym (Livonian) *r# ndali* 'inhabitant of the coast, Livonian' has shifted from its binary opposition with (Livonian) *s? rli* 'inhabitant of the island, Estonian' towards polysemy and the lexically more abstract meaning 'Livonian'.

An illustration of lexical extension and polysemy:

(Livonian) *r# ndali*
Stage 1
r# ndali 'inhabitant of the coast' (deriv. of *r# nda* 'shore')
→
Stage 2
r# ndali 'inhabitant of the coast' ~ 'Livonian'
→
Stage 3
r# ndali 1. 'inhabitant of the coast'
r# ndali 2. 'Livonian'

Which form stage 3 actually existed in is a matter of dispute, because no phonological attrition had yet taken place. Be it as it is, one can still speculate that finally polysemy leads to an unpleasant homonymy and one would likely expect that either the language would begin to give up one of the meanings or find an alternative way of expressing it. On the other hand, it could also be possible that the next step in the development of the given ethnonym (cf. below the development of (Votian) *vad'd'alaine* 'Votian' etc.) would be a complete phonological split.

Recapitulating the diachrony of (Votian) *vaď'd'a*

Although the examples above might lead one to suspect that they are simply examples of a chronologically late layer, this need not be the whole truth. Their transparency is extremely valuable for the reconstruction of the opaque ethnonyms and, consequently, the etymologic analysis of the latter type can profit from the existence of the first type. Similarly we might illustrate the development of *vaďďa* in the following way (according to Grünthal 1997 and Koivulehto 1997). Earlier (see, e.g. Itkonen 1961: 104–131, Vilkuna 1957, Pekkanen 1984b), the homonymy of (Votian) *vaďďa* 'wedge' and *vaďďa*: *vaďď# tš# li* 'Votian (language)', *vaďďalaine* 'Votian' etc. (both can be reconstructed to Late Proto-Finnic as **vakja*) was the starting point for a widely shared view that many Finnic ethnonyms could be derived from the original meaning 'wedge', which would have symbolized Finnic traders and "clubmen". Recent research (Grünthal 1997, Koivulehto 1997 independently of each other) has shown that, in fact, this theory is too inductive and based on wrong generalizations, and that all the etymologies derived from the meaning 'wedge' can be discarded after a more thorough etymological analysis.

Nevertheless, we recall the reader's objectivity also in the next two tables. Although the main lines of the etymology itself and the phonological changes in the word form are well argumented from many point of view, this need not be the only possible way, how the split may have taken place. As a matter of fact, as pointed out by Hofstra (1989: 188–189), Finnic **vakja* 'wedge' etc. can equally be explained as either a Baltic or a Germanic loan word. As for the development of the ethnonym, it makes very little difference, whether one proposes a Germanic or Baltic origin for **vakja* 'wedge'.

The etymological development of (Votian) *vaďďa*:

Alternative A (building on a twofold origin of (Votian) *vaďďa(laine)* 'Votian' (< Baltic) etc. and (Votian) *vaďďa* 'wedge' etc. (< Baltic (B) or Germanic (G)) and a secondary homonymy in Votian):

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3 (in Votian)	Stage 4
1. B/G →	1. Finnic →	homonymy	→ 1. Finnic
2. B/G →	2. Finnic (↗) →		(↘) 2. Finnic
Proper noun ≠ common noun	proper noun ≠ common noun	proper noun = common noun (Votian)	proper noun ≠ common noun

1. **vagç a*	1. **vakja*	> (Votian) *vaďďa*, (Finnish) *vaaja*, Estonian *vai* 'wedge'
2. **vakç a*	2. *vakja*	> (Votian) *vad'd'a(laine)* > (Finnish) *vatja(lainen)*, (Estonian) *vadja(lane)*

The homonymy of Proto-Finnic **vakja*[1] 'wedge' and **vakja*[2] 'Votian (language, people)' exists only in Votian, and even there the ostensible similarity is actually somewhat misleading, because the difference between the two meanings is always made clear by context. In no other Finnic language is there even a secondary homonymy between 'wedge' and 'Votian', for instance (Finnish) *vaaja*, (Estonian) *vai* 'wedge', (Finnish) *vatja(lainen),* (Estonian) *vadjalane* 'Votian', because the latter has spread to other Finnic languages from the territory where Votian was spoken.

Alternative B (building on one Baltic or Germanic source, with an original meaning 'wedge' splitting through polysemy and leading finally into homonymy in Votian):

Stage 1	Stage 2		Stage 3	Stage 4
1. B/G →	1. Finnic	→	→ 1. Finnic (↘) 2. Votian	→ 1. Finnic → 2. Finnic
Common noun	common noun = proper noun		Homonymy in Votian	proper noun ≠ common noun

1. **vagç a* >	1.**vakja*	> 1. *vaďďa* ~ (Finnish) *vaaja*, > 2. *vaďďa(laine)* > (Finnish) *vatja(lainen)*, (Estonian) *vadja(lane)*

Both of the concepts presented here are based on the assumption that at some stage there arose a homonymy between the Finnic words meaning 'wedge' and 'Votian'. Be it only secondary (alternative A) or not (alternative B), linguistic methods are not efficient enough to enable one to decide, whether this homonymy already had its roots in a Baltic or Germanic origin. The question that remains unanswered is whether it was only the word 'wedge' (that would have later given a motivation to a country name, too) that was borrowed from the Baltic or Germanic languages (Hofstra 1985: 188–189), or do the predecessor of (Votian) *vaďďa* and the Old Estonian

county name *Vaiga* have an ancient equivalent in the Baltic languages (cf. (Lithuanian) *Vókia*, (Latvian) *V# cija* 'Germany' etc.).

Without paying too much attention to the details (see Grünthal 1997, 113–149) of the etymology of (Votian) *vaďďa*, the tables are an attempt to show how complex the layers of the ethnonyms and their etymological analysis are. Although the main lines of the etymology are based on a relatively unambiguous sound history and supported by historical language contacts around the Gulf of Finland, the layering of the process is not self-evident.

As was already mentioned in earlier research into Finnic ethnonyms, it was axiomatic to propose a common origin for (Votian) *vaďď# (tš# li)* 'Votian (+ GEN) (language)' → *vaďďalain(*[illegible]*)* 'Votian' and *vaďďa* 'wedge' (gen. *vaďď# ;* ~ (Fi.) *vaaja* etc.). It is surprising, how dominant this view became, and how many other etymologies were based on a putative theory of parallel development. For instance, (Swedish) *finne,* (Finnish) *karjala, vepsä* and *tšuudi* etc., were all given a more a less dubious or refutable origin that would be derived from the meaning 'wedge' or something similar. (For details, see op. cit.)

As was already pointed out, the earlier unambiguous explanation for Finnic 'Votian' and 'wedge' has lately been under considerable suspicion. It is more likely that the homonymy between 'Votian' and 'wedge' is secondary (even were the alternative B above to be the right explanation for the origin of *vaďďa*) and there is no supportable base for a theory that assumes the Votians' original tribe or club sign to have been a 'wedge'. The most apparent etymology deriving from 'wedge' now refuted, the other etymologies also based on 'wedge' lose their potency.

The motivation for 'wedge' as a symbol of ethnicity declined, and one has to pay attention to a parallel explanation that sets out of the place name origin of (Votian) *vaďďa* : *vaďď# tš# li* 'Votian' etc. Again the evidence from historical sources is twofold: the early Russian scripts use derivatives of an ethnic variant of the name, and the earliest underived form *vod'* (1149 A.D.) clearly reflects the Votian wordinternal *ď*. On the other hand, since A. J. Sjögren (1861) at least, a commonly shared opinion has been that also the name of the Old Estonian province *Vaiga*, noted by Henricus de Lettis (early 13th century), must be considered when explaining *vatja*. As a matter of fact, the name *Vaiga* may well be the relic of an original common noun **vakja* and its meaning 'wedge' (Grünthal 1997, Koivulehto 1997). On a mere sound historical bases, it is most likely, that (Votian) *vaďďa* is borrowed from the place name: the phonological form of (Votian) *vaďďa* can be

explained from *Vaiga*, which in its turn reflects a typical sound change (metathesis) of the dialect of North Tartumaa. According to this explanation the ethnonym (Votian) *vaďďa* : *vaďď# tš# li* must be considered as a secondary loan word, like *Eesti* in Estonian. This gives support to Paul Ariste's (1956, 1968) view that as in Estonian, also in Votian the ethnonym (Votian) *maarahvas* 'people of the country', *m# tš# li* 'language of the country' is the one with older roots.

Recent explanations for (Finnish) *Suomi*

Finally, I would briefly like to deal with the origin of the (Finnish) *Suomi* 'Finland', *suomi* 'Finnish (language)' → *suomalainen* 'Finnish (man)' and present an overview of the discussion that has mainly prevailed in Finland during the 1990's. The revision of *Suomi*'s etymology has mainly concentrated on an analysis of the phonological development of the name.

Until 1990's the etymologies proposed as an explanation for *Suomi* were either phonologically or semantically unsatisfactory. The circle was completed, when Jorma Koivulehto (1993), using modern etymology and argumentation, rehabilitated the etymology that had been proposed by the foundator of Finnish national sciences, Henrik Gabriel Porthan at the turn of 18th and 19th centuries. The main idea is that despite the difference between (Finnish) *Suomi* and (Sami) *sápmi, sápmelaš* 'Sami, Lapp', they are both of a common Baltic origin, from the predecessor of the present (Latvian) *zeme* and (Lithuanian) *žem*[illegible] 'land, country'. The Baltic origin for *sápmi* and (Finnish) *Häme* 'province of Häme, (Swedish) Tavastland' has already been suggested by Tunkelo (1899). Later, Koivulehto's etymology was further improved by Kalevi Wiik (1995) and myself (Grünthal 1997: 62–72), and was attested even by archaeologists (Carpelan 1998).

Despite deeper analysis and more profound argumentation, the phonological development of *Suomi* cannot be mechanically explained by straightforward sound changes. On the other hand phonological attrition and the simplification of consonant system in the Finnic languages have given rise to the possibility that *Suomi* might be derived from some other Indo-European words, as well, and, as a matter of fact, Koivulehto (1997, 1998) and Petri Kallio (1998) have seized the opportunity to suggest some new alternative explanations. Nevertheless, as I have tried to stress (Grünthal 1999), Koivulehto's later theory about the Germanic background of

a) (Finnish) *Suomi* and (Finnish) *Häme*, (Sami) *sápmi* (< Germanic **s, ma-* 'dark etc' (> Old Icelandic *sámr*))

and Kallio's theory that is based on the meaning 'man'

b) (Finnish) *Suomi* (but not *Häme* and (Sami) *sápmi*!) < Early Proto-Finnic **ćoma* < Pre-Germanic **ĉʰ! -# n* (> (Gothic) *guma* etc.)

in their turn, have also be met with criticism, especially that based on the morphology of the Finnic languages and semantics.

For this reason, at the present stage I personally believe that the most likely theory explaining the origin of *Suomi*, follows the hypothesis that it was originally borrowed from an Indo-European word meaning 'land, country', the alternatives being

c) *Suomi* (not *Häme* and (Sami) *sápmi*) < Early Proto-Finnic **ć# me* < Proto Indo-European **ĉʰ# m* 'country, land' (> (Avesta) *zəm*) (Kallio 1998),

d) *Suomi* (not *Häme* and (Sami) *sápmi*) < Early Proto-Finnic **ćoma* < Proto Baltic **ĉʰom-y#* (> Lithuanian (dial.) *žãmˣ* etc. (Kallio 1998) and

e) *Suomi* (through Baltic and Germanic), *Häme* and (Sami) *sápmi* < Early Proto-Finnic **šämä* < Proto-Baltic **žem#* 'country, land' (Koivulehto 1993, Wiik 1996, Grünthal 1997, 1999).

Without proposing to cite the whole discussion that has been summarized above, it is worth mentioning that none of these theories unambiguously and without taking into account equally all the details of language history, explains the story of *Suomi*. Nevertheless, the etymologies that have been suggested in the 1990s are much more reasonable than the earlier haphazard attempts, and they are based on scientific argumentation and a modern concept of the prehistory of the Finnic territories. It is therefore possible to sketch tentative outlines for the etymology of *Suomi*, that are justified even if they are dubious in some details.

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In this article I have attempted to give a short overview of the structure, semantics and current etymologic theories of some Finnic ethnonyms. The structural and semantic analysis of Finnic ethnonyms reveals their close connection to toponyms, especially macrotoponyms like country or county names. I have tried to show that the semantic diversity of the ethnonyms might in some interpretations even allow one to argue that the character of the name – ethnic or toponymic – is defined by word inflectional means like derivations (suffixal word formation) or compound words.

Although earlier research tended erroneously to be extremely abductive in its conclusions, there is no basis to think that the occurrence of ethnonyms in place names would provide proof of the location of the original homeland of a given people. A functional answer would be that what we do know through ethnonyms is, first and foremost, that those who used them have had a good reason for doing so, associated with either the language and ethnoculture or the place.

Etymologically the motivation Finnic ethnonyms has been bifold, many of them being original or even transparent ethonyms, while some others were initially place names. Many etymologies suggest that ethnic and language contacts have always played an important role in the formation of ethnonyms.

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