

TIIT-REIN VIITSO (Tartu-Helsinki)

LIVONIAN *neitsõ kuolm p'ññõ*

I was ten years old when I met Professor Paul Ariste. It must be June 1948 when he and a colleague visited my aunt. She was also a professor of Tartu University and she had been looking after me for two years. Somehow Livonians became the topic of discussion. Ariste demonstrated what the Livonian language sounded like by saying in Livonian that he was leaving for the Livonian Coast for two weeks and reciting the first stanza of the song «*Knaš neitst, vāldapuškōz*» («The beautiful maiden, a white flower»). I was childish enough to try to verify his knowledge asking the meaning of the Livonian sentence «*Tām paikõ enim āb uo tundõ*» that I had read in a novel of Andrus Saal. Ariste knew where the sentence was from and noted that there must be *õ*-s instead of *ō*-s. Some weeks later Ariste rang me up and invited me to his home on Jakobsoni Street 8. He had just arrived from the expedition to Livonians and wanted to make me a present of a smoke-dried flounder from Courland and of two Livonian books — the book of Karl Stalte's poems («*Livõ lōlōd*») and the 1937 edition of the New Testament.

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The phrase *neitsõ kuolm p'ññõ* [*neitsõ kūõlm p'ññõ*] 'the maiden's three dogs' consists of three extremely interesting words.

1. The Livonian noun *neitst* 'maiden' is one of the four nouns whose stem-final *-t* alternates with zero. Nevertheless it is unique in alternating *-t* with zero even in genitive singular,

	nsg	gsg	psg	isg	ilsg	ngpl	gloss
(1) <i>neitst</i>	<i>neitsõ</i>	<i>neitstõ</i>	<i>neitsõks</i>	<i>neitsõ(z)</i>	<i>neitsõd</i>		maiden
(2) <i>va'it</i>	<i>va'it</i>	<i>va'itõ</i>	<i>va'ikõks</i>	<i>va'izõ</i>	<i>va'itõd</i>		gap
(3) <i>laint</i>	<i>laint</i>	<i>laintõ</i>	<i>laintkõks</i>	<i>laintõ</i>	<i>lāinõd</i>		wave
(4) <i>paint</i>	<i>paint</i>	<i>paintõ</i>	<i>paintkõks</i>	<i>paintõ</i>	<i>pāinõd</i>		herd

In the stems *va'it*, *laint*, and *paint* the stop *t* has been introduced from the partitive sg forms, where it originally belonged to the case suffix, cf. PF (= Proto-Finnic) **vajeh/ta*, **laine/ta*, **paimen/ta*. The generalization of *t*-stems in the corresponding paradigms has been an ongoing process, which can be confirmed by the parallel existence of such innovative forms as isg *va'itkõks* and npl *lāntõd*, *pāntõd*. The stop *-t* in the nsg form *neitst*, on the contrary, seems to have preserved the PF final **-t* of the PF diminutive **neitsüt* : gsg **neitsüte/n*, psg **neitsüt/tā*. In the PF gsg form the intervocalic **t* has undergone the so-called suffixal gradation, i. e. the weakening of intervocalic single stops after unstressed syllables, in addition to Livonian also in Estonian, Votic, Finnish, Ingrian

and Karelian, cf. Finnish *neitsyt* : gsg *neitsye|n* : psg *neitsyt|tä*. However, one cannot entirely rule out the possibility that the form *neitst* has arisen from the psg form *neitstō* by the analogy of such cases as e.g. *rūost* 'rust' : psg *rūostō*. In any case there must have occurred a specifically Livonian syncope of the last non-low stem vowel if that was preceded by a long syllable and followed by an obstruent different from the consonant standing before the vowel, cf. **neitsüt* » *neitst*, **lapset* » *lapst* 'children', **pōlet* » *pōold* 'halves', **varikset* » *varikšt* 'crows'.

**neitsüt*, as such, contains the deminutive suffix *-ut/-üt*. In what remains the cluster **ts* is an innovative one. It is believed to have appeared first in some Proto-Finnic borrowed stems as a substitute of Proto-Baltic and Proto-Germanic **dj*. **neitsüt*, however, is not a borrowing but a derivate of a stem that had no **s*, cf. Estonian *neid* 'maiden' : psg *neidu*, Finnish *neito* 'maiden', *neiti* 'miss'. This stem has been preserved also in a Veps derivate of the stem, cf.

neižnie 'maiden' : gsg *neižne|n* : psg *neižiš|t* : npl *neižse|d*
from

**neisinen* : **neitise|n* : **neitis|tä* : **neitise|t*.

Up to now this Veps paradigm as well as certain similar ones, cf. e.g. *eñžne* 'former' : sgs *eñžen* : psg *eñžišt*, *mitte* 'which' : gsg *mišžen* : psg *mittušš*, have been explained as those resulting from the Veps (and Lude) vowel drop in an open unstressed syllable that was preceded by a long stressed syllable; the sibilant *ž* < **s* in *neižnie* results from the Proto-Finnic change **ti* > **si*, which occurred everywhere except (a) directly after **s* or **h* and (b) when followed by a stem syllable beginning in **s*. The Veps case, however, cannot be ignored when explaining the consonant cluster *ts* in **neitsüt*. We are actually confronted with two possibilities: (1) **neitst* comes from the protoform **neitis|üt* via an hitherto unknown Proto-Finnic apocopation of the vowel of the second syllable or (2) **neitsüt* outside the Lude-Veps area is a loanword from Lude-Veps.

The first explanation was presented, somewhat hesitatingly, by Lauri Kettunen (1922 : 43); his reconstruction **neitisut*, by the way, is partially incorrect because of misdating the age of the Veps and the Proto-Finnic vowel harmony. The second explanation is improbable because of the total absence in Livonian, Estonian, and Votic of elements of Lude or Veps origin. Hence, it makes sense to look for more potential examples of vowel apocopation in Proto-Finnic.

2. The declination of the Livonian numeral *kuolm* [küõlm] 'three' and its Estonian and Finnish counterparts is somewhat peculiar, cf.

	nsg	gsg	psg	npl
Livonian	<i>kuolm</i>	<i>kuolm</i>	<i>kuolmõ</i>	<i>kuolmõ d</i>
Estonian	[<i>kolm</i>	<i>kolme</i>	<i>kolme</i>	<i>kolme d</i>]
Finnish	<i>kolme</i>	<i>kolme n</i>	<i>kolme a</i>	<i>kolme t</i>

First, although *e* of the second syllable points to the Proto-Finnic stem vowel **e*, the lack of palatalization of *l* in the nsg forms in Livonian and Estonian and the final *e* in the corresponding form in Finnish make this numeral different from **e*-stems, e.g. of Livonian *suołm* [süõłm] and Estonian *sõlm* 'knot', cf.

	nsg	gsg	psg	npl
Livonian	<i>suołm</i>	<i>suołm</i>	<i>suołmõ</i>	<i>sūołmõ d</i>
Estonian	[<i>selm</i>	<i>selme</i>	<i>selme</i>	<i>selme d</i>]
PF	<i>*solmi</i>	<i>*solme n</i>	<i>*solme ta</i>	<i>*solme t</i> .

At first glance one can reconstruct for Proto-Finnic the protoform *kolme on the basis of the corresponding Finnish paradigm. Nevertheless, in the framework of the PF stems *kolme is exceptional, being the single PF nsg form ending in *e. Such cases as Votic kōlmōd, Ingrian kold (< *kolmet) seem to result from an attempt to eliminate the exceptionality of the form by adding a final consonant (note that Arvo Laanest 1982:187 reconstructs for PF the protoform *kolmet). Note

that even the Veps numeral koume ~ koume must have had some final consonant that has been dropped only after the vowel apocope had occurred in Veps, otherwise the present shape of the nsg form of the numeral were *koum. No matter whether one agrees with the traditional theory, which accents for early Proto-Finnic only the vowels *a, *ä, *e in non-initial syllables and the subsequent change *e > *i word-finally, or the theory, which accepts *i instead of *e and the subsequent change *i > *e in non-final non-initial syllables, the exceptionality of the nsg form *kolme needs an explanation. Obviously such an exceptionality may mean that (a) we are still unable to reconstruct the PF vowel system of non-initial syllables in an entirely satisfactory manner or (b) *kolme is an innovational nsg form generalized from such forms as *kolme'n etc. Although our reconstructions of the PF vowels of non-initial syllables are sometimes somewhat problematic, the problems concern individual cases, hence the general theory cannot be wrong in principle. If *kolme is an innovative nominative form then the original nominative form could not be *kolmi: there were four numerals with *e-stems that ended in *i in nominative and thus there were excellent conditions for preservation of such a nominative case form. Moreover, in the framework of Uralic languages the Finnic numeral declension is a relatively late innovation. If so then the former nominative case form could be somehow related with the corresponding Ugric forms, cf. Vach Hanti kōlām 'three': kōlmāt 'third', Surgut Hanti kōlām: kōlmāt, Hungarian három: harmadik. E. g., it could well be *kōlem and the corresponding ordinal could be *kōlmanti > *kolmanti. The cardinal numeral declension was first based on the nominative: *kōlem: gsg *kōlemeln. Inasmuch the above speculations on vowel syncope in *neitsūt > *neitsūt are correct one can suppose a similar development for *kōlemen > kōlmen. In view of the Baltic borrowing *sēmen 'seed': *sēmenen that has retained its long vowel in modern Finnic languages except in Veps and exhibits in Estonian a quantity alternation pattern which differs from that of the numeral kolm, cf.

[sēme]: gsg [sēmne]: psg [sēmet]: npl [sēmned],
the long vowel *ō in *kōlmen must have shortened before *sēmen was borrowed. The resulting stem alternation *kōlem: *kolme'n could well be eliminated by the substitution of *kolme for *kōlem.

3. The Livonian noun pi'η is an i-stem and its South Estonian counterpart pi'η̃ is an i-stem, cf.

	nsg	gsg	psg	npl
Livonian	pi'η	pi'η	pi'ηηō	pi'ηid
South Estonian	[pi'η̃]	pi'η̃	pi'η̃η̃	pi'η̃[?]

As the standard theory of the vowel system of non-initial syllables accepts *i in a non-initial stem syllable only in nominative sg forms of *e-stems, where it results from the change *e > *i, this stem, in the framework of the theory, must have generalized the *i of the nominative sg allomorph. Or, in the framework of an alternative theory, it must

be exceptional in escaping the change $*i > *e$ in non-final position. Nevertheless there is no reasonable explanation why this stem of high frequency is exceptional in not alternating $*i$ and $*e$ and not having a consonantal stem in partitive sg, cf., on the other hand, the noun $*uni$ 'sleep' that exhibits forms which are entirely regular for a biradical $*e$ -noun, cf.

	nsg	gsg	psg	npl
Livonian	<i>u'n</i>	<i>u'n</i>	<i>ūnda</i>	<i>*unū d</i>
South Estonian	[<i>uñi</i>]	<i>unē</i>	<i>uñ p</i>	<i>unē ʔ</i>
PF	<i>*uni</i>	<i>*une n</i>	<i>*un ta</i>	<i>*une t</i>

In view of such circumstances one can suppose that Livonian *pi'n* and South Estonian *peñi* do not come directly from an $*e$ -stem but form $*penei < *penej$ where $*-j$ is a diminutive suffix. $*ej$ of non-initial syllables has regularly developed into $*i$ in Finnic.

Abbreviations

gsg — genitive singular, ilsg — illative singular, isg — instrumental singular, ngpl — nominative & genitive plural, npl — nominative plural, nsg — nominative singular.

LITERATURE

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ТИИТ-РЕЙН ВИЙТСО (Таллинн-Хельсинки)

ЛИВСКАЯ ФРАЗА *neitsõ kuolm pi'nõ*

В ливской фразе *neitsõ kuolm pi'nõ* 'девушкины три собаки' все три слова интересны. Существительное *neitsõ* 'девушка', вероятно, образовалось от раннеприбалтийско-финского деминутива $*neitsiit$ путем двух синкоп: прибалтийско-финской синкопы гласного второго слога и ливской синкопы гласного второго слога: $*neitsiit \gg *neitsiit \gg *neitsiit$. Числительное *kuolm* $< *kolme$ 'три', возможно, представляет собой основу, обобщенную в номинатив из формы генитива $*kolmeln$ и претерпевшую ту же праприбалтийско-финскую синкопу, от $*kõlemeln$. Существительное *pi'n* 'собака' и его южноэстонское соответствие восходят не прямо к $*e$ -основе, а к деминутиву $*penej$.