

Eight Indo-Uralic verbs?

Károly RÉDEI (1986) lists 64 words which were supposedly borrowed from Indo-European into Uralic at an early date. The material is divided into three groups: 7 Proto-Uralic (PU) etymologies, 18 Finno-Ugric (FU) etymologies, and 39 Finno-Permian (FP) and Finno-Volgaic (FV) etymologies. The source of the borrowings is specified as "vorarisch" for the PU words, "vorarisch oder frühurarisch" and "urarisches" for the FU words, and "frühurarisch" through "uriranisches" for the FP and FV words (RÉDEI 1986: 26). There are several reasons to call this account into question.

Firstly, it is difficult to determine a place and a time which are suitable for borrowings from Indo-European into Proto-Uralic. We can probably identify the Proto-Indo-Europeans with the Sredny Stog culture in the eastern Ukraine around 4000 BC (cf. MALLORY 1989 and KORTLANDT 1990). This clashes with the concept of direct borrowings from Indo-European into Proto-Uralic: "All that seems to be certain is that in the fourth millennium B.C. the ancestors of the Finno-Ugrians and the Samoyeds had lived on the eastern side of the Urals" (FODOR 1976: 50). The earliest contacts between Indo-European and Uralic languages must probably be identified with the eastward expansion of the "vorarische oder frühurarische" Yamnaya culture around 3000 BC and the simultaneous spread of the Finno-Ugric Ural-Kama neolithic culture to the southwest. Even if we were to assume an Uralic homeland west of the Ural mountains, earlier borrowings could only have been taken from the Samara and Khvalynsk cultures on the Middle Volga. Though it is conceivable that the languages spoken in that area were genetically related to Indo-European, or to Uralic, they cannot be identified with the language of the Sredny Stog culture.

Secondly, the number of verbs in the oldest material is too large to support the hypothesis that they were borrowed: 3 out of 7 (43%) in the first group, 5 out of 18 (28%) in the second group, and 2 out of 39 (5%) in the third group. Moreover, the two verbs from the third group have questionable etymologies. The verb **kara-* "graben" (RÉDEI 1986: 51) is attested in the Volgaic languages (Mordvin and Chereemis) only. The corresponding words in the Permian languages (Votyak and Ziryene) and in Ob-Ugric (Ostyak) require a reconstruction **kurz-*, which is incompatible both with the Volgaic forms and with the alleged (Indo-)Iranian source. The verb **niḍa-* "befestigen, heften, binden" (RÉDEI 1986: 53) is limited to Finno-Volgaic, e.g. Finnish *nito-*. RÉDEI doubts the connection with Skt. *nāhyati* 'binds' himself: "Zufälliger Gleichklang?" If we eliminate these two items from the list, the presence of eight verbs in the older material becomes even more significant.

Thirdly, the derivation of the Proto-Uralic forms from their alleged Indo-European sources involves considerable formal difficulties. I shall briefly discuss the four nouns of the first group (RÉDEI 1986: 40-43).

PU **nīme* "Name", Finnish *nimi*, Mordvin *l'em*, Votyak and Ziryene *ńim*, Ostyak *nem*, Hung. *név*, Tavgi (Samoyed) *ńim*, etc. The PIE word must be reconstructed as **H₃neh₃mn*, Latin *nōmen*, Hitt. *lāman*, Skt. *nāma*, Arm. *anun*, oblique stem **H₃nH₃men-*, Gr. *ónoma*, OIr. *ainm*, OPr. *emmens*, Russ. *imja*, Alb. *emër* (cf. KORTLANDT 1984: 42, 1987: 63). The only Indo-European language which has a front vowel in the root is Tocharian, where A *ñom* and B *ñem* point to a reconstruction **nēm̄n*, with delabialization of the second laryngeal. But even this form does not account for the high front vowel of the Uralic words, which may represent the original Indo-Uralic vocalism.

PU **sene* (**sōne*) "Ader, Sehne", Finnish *suoni*, Mordvin *san*, Votyak and Ziryene *sen*, Hung. *én*, Tavgi *taŋa*, etc. The word is compared with PIE **sneH₁ur*, obl. *-en-*, Skt. *snāva*, Toch. B *ṣñor*, Arm. *neard*, Gr. *neūron*. Here again, the Indo-European forms do not explain the Uralic vocalism, which may be original if the words are related at all, whether the PIE word is a derivative of the root **sneH₁-* or not. A comparison with English *sinew* from **sH₁inu-* is no better. It is actually worse because the meaning of the latter word is the result of a Germanic innovation.

PU **waške* "irgendein Metall, ?Kupfer", Finnish *vaski*, Mordvin *uške*, *viškä*, Votyak *veš*, Hung. *vas*, Tavgi *basa*, etc. This is the only "Kulturwort" in the list. It may be compared with Toch. A *wäs*, B *yasa* 'gold', which point to earlier **wesa*. The latter word cannot be identified with Latin *aurum*, Lith. *auksas*, and besides does not explain the Uralic vocalism. It is much more probable that the Tocharian word was borrowed from Samoyed **wesä* (JANHUNEN 1983: 120).

PU **wete* "Wasser", Finnish *vesi*, Mordvin *ved'*, Votyak *vu*, Hung. *víz*, Tavgi *bē?*, *beda-*, etc. In Indo-European, the *e*-grade is attested in Hittite obl. *weten-*, Phrygian *bedu*, Arm. *get*, and in Germanic and Slavic derivatives. If the word was actually borrowed into Uralic, this must have occurred at a very early stage. But it is not the kind of word that is easily borrowed, and the Indo-European forms rather look like derivatives of the (Indo-)Uralic word.

Against this background, we must consider the possibility that the eight verbs in RÉDEI's first and second groups were inherited from Proto-Indo-Uralic. I shall give a brief summary of the material (cf. RÉDEI 1986: 40-48).

PU **mīye-* "geben, verkaufen", Finnish *myy-*, *myö-*, Mordvin *mīje-*, Vogul (Ob-Ugric) *mā(j)-*, *mī-*, *māj-*, Yenisei

(Samoyed) *m̄iʔe-*, PIE **mei-*, Skt. *mināti* 'exchanges', Latvian *mīt*.

PU **muške-* (**moške-*) "waschen", Estonian *mõske-*, Mordvin *muške-*, *muško-*, Votyak *m̄ššk-*, Hung. *mos-*, Yenisei *musua-*, PIE **mesg-*, Skt. *mājjati* 'sinks', Latin *mergere*, Lith. *mazgóti* 'to wash'.

PU **toʔe-* "bringen, holen, geben", Finnish *tuo-*, Mordvin *tuje-*, Ostyak *tu-*, Yurak (Samoyed) *tā-*, PIE **deH₃-*, Skt. *dādāti* 'gives', Hitt. *dā-* 'take'.

FU **aja-* "treiben, jagen", Finnish *aja-*, Ziryene *voj-*, Vogul *wujt-*, *wojt-*, PIE **H₂eǵ-*, Skt. *ájati* 'drives', Latin *agere*.

FU **kan₃-* "streuen, schütten, werfen, graben", Ziryene *kundj-*, Ostyak *k̄iŋ-*, Vogul *kōn-*, Hung. *hány-*, PIE **kH₂en-*, Skt. *khānati* 'digs'.

FU **teke-* "tun, machen", Finnish *teke-*, Mordvin *t'eje-*, *t'ije-*, Hung. *tē(v)-*, *tész-*, PIE **dheH₁-*, Skt. *dādāti* 'puts', Hitt. *dāi-*, Latin *facere*.

FU **wetä-* "führen, leiten, ziehen", Finnish *vetä-*, Mordvin *ved'a-*, *vet'a-*, *vit'i-*, *väd'a-*, *vät'e-*, Hung. *vezet-*, PIE **uedh-*, OIr. *fedid* 'leads', Lith. *vėsti*.

FU **wiʔe-* "nehmen, tragen", Finnish *vie-*, Mordvin *vije-*, Votyak and Ziryene *vaj-*, Hung. *vi(v)-*, *visz-*, *vē(v)-*, *vész-*, PIE **ueǵh-*, Skt. *vāhati* 'carries', Latin *vehere*, Lith. *vėžti*.

Apart from Skt. *khānati*, all of the Indo-European words are basic verbs with impeccable etymologies. This is a strong argument against borrowing and in favor of an original genetic relationship. As I have indicated elsewhere (1990), we may conceive of Indo-European as a language of the Uralic type which was transformed under the influence of a Caucasian substratum. Following this line of thought I tentatively

reconstruct Proto-Indo-Uralic **miye-*, **muske-*, **tagu-*, **gaki-*, *?*kkan-*, **deka-*, **weda-*, **wige-*¹⁾.

It has been argued that the small number of Indo-Uralic etymologies favors the assumption of borrowing rather than genetic relationship (e.g., RÉDEI 1986: 10, 20). I am afraid that I fail to understand this reasoning. When we are dealing with distant linguistic affinity, we cannot expect to find large numbers of obvious cognates, which would be contrary to the idea of distant affinity. What we do expect to find is morphological correspondences and a few common items of basic vocabulary. I think that this is precisely what we find in the case of Indo-European and Uralic²⁾. Advocates of the alternative hypothesis, viz. that the verbs listed above were borrowed into Uralic, are faced with two insurmountable problems. First, they have to explain the prominent place of basic verbs among the oldest borrowings. Second, they do not account for the differences in the Uralic vocalism, e.g. **nime-*, **miye-*, **wiye-* versus **wete-*, **teke-*, **wetä-*. It therefore seems to me that the burden of proof is now on the opponents of the Indo-Uralic theory.

Footnotes:

- 1) Thus, I think that the PIE laryngeals developed from velars in the neighborhood of back vowels, as did Yukagir *h-* (COLLINDER 1965: 168) and the uvulars in Turkic and Mongolian.
- 2) UHLENBECK (1935: 9ff.) makes a distinction between two components of PIE, which he calls A and B. The first component comprises pronouns, verbal roots, and derivational suffixes, and may be compared with Uralic, whereas the second component contains isolated words, such as numerals and most underived nouns, which have a different source. This is a simplification because we can find good Uralic etymologies for some B words, e.g. Finnish *källy* 'sister-in-law', Gr. *gálōs*, Russ. *zolōvka*, but I think that the distinction is basically correct. The wide attestation of the Indo-European numerals must be attributed

to the development of trade resulting from the increased mobility which was the primary cause of the Indo-European expansions. Numerals do not belong to the basic vocabulary of a neolithic culture, as is clear from their absence in Proto-Uralic and from the spread of Chinese numerals throughout East Asia (cf. also COLLINDER 1965: 113 and PEDERSEN 1906: 369 on Swedish *kast* '4', *val* '80', Danish *snes* '20', *ol* '80', German *Stiege* '20', Russ. *sórok* '40', *kopá* '50, 60'). Though UHLENBECK objects to the term "substratum" for his B complex, I think that it is a perfectly appropriate denomination. The concept of "mixed language" has done more harm than good to linguistics and should be abandoned.

References:

- COLLINDER B. : 1965. Hat das Uralische Verwandte? Eine Sprachvergleichende Untersuchung. (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Acta Societatis Linguisticae Upsaliensis, 1/4, 109-180.) Uppsala
- FODOR I. : 1976. The main issues of Finno-Ugrian archaeology. Ancient Cultures of the Uralian Peoples, 49-78. Budapest.
- JANHUNEN J. : 1983. On early Indo-European-Samoyed contacts. Symposium Saeculare Societatis Fenno-Ugricae (Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne, 185), 115-127. Helsinki.
- KORTLANDT F. : 1984. PIE. *H- in Armenian. Annual of Armenian Linguistics 5, 41-43.
- : 1987. Notes on Armenian historical phonology V. Studia Caucasica 7, 61-65.
- : 1990. The spread of the Indo-Europeans. Journal of Indo-European Studies.
- MALLORY J.P. : 1989. In Search of the Indo-Europeans. Language, Archaeology and Myth. London.
- PEDERSEN H. : 1906. Armenisch und die Nachbarsprachen. Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung 39, 334-484.
- RÉDEI K. : 1986. Zu den indogermanisch-uralischen Sprachkontakten. (Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, 468.) Wien.

UHLENBECK C.C. : 1935. Oer-Indogermaansch en Oer-Indo-germanen. (Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeeling Letterkunde, 77/4.) Amsterdam.