

Bridging the gap between two inchoative suffixes: -škande- and Lapp -škoatte-

The surprising similarity between the Vepsian inchoative suffix *-škande- ~ -gande-* and the Lappisch one *-škoatte- ~ -goatte-* has led scholars to suspect some kind of a connection between the two, either by common descent or by convergence. (For the history of the different points of view, v. Turunen 1973.) The question has also been dealt with, though not in public, by Professor Lauri Posti in the seminars on Baltic-Finnish linguistics which he conducted at the University of Helsinki during the sixties. His views have largely coincided with those put forward by Turunen 1973. So far the gap between the suffixes has not been bridged. In this short notice I intend to show how this can be done.

The main obstacles to bridging the two have been (a) Veps *n*, which lacks an equivalent in Lapp, and (b) the vowels *-(š)k(nd)e-*, which do not show regular correspondence with Lappish *-(š)k(oa(tt)e-*. Both of these obstacles are immaterial.

(a) The *n* in Veps can be considered secondary: note that there are variants without *n* (*-škade- ~ -gade-*; cf. Turunen 1973) and that in many cases there is an *n* where it is clearly secondary, e.g., *rubeta : rubendab* 'to begin, inf.: sg3prs', cf. Finnish *rupeaa*. (This information has kindly been supplied by Reino Peltola.) On the whole, the Vepsian preposive *n* in suffixes is in a state of flux, occurring where it should not and remaining silent where it should be observed (e.g., *parata : paradab* 'mend, inf.: sg3prs', cf. Finnish *parantavi*). Thus, a proto-form **(s)kate-* can be reconstructed.

(b) The Lappish suffix — if it is as old as is suggested by its presence in all the Lappish dialects from Härjedalen to Ter — goes back to an Early Pre-Finnic form **(s)kota-*. Now, the

relationship between the vowels in Finnic **(s)kate-* and in the Early Pre-Finnic **(š)kota-* is exactly the same as that between the vowels in Finnic *salme-* 'sound, strait' and in the Early Pre-Finnic **šolma* id. (> IpN *čol'bme* id.). In an open syllable, it is true, one would have expected a long vowel *ō* instead of a short *a* (as in Finnic *sōle-* 'intestine' from Early Pre-Finnic **šola*), but long vowels are not permitted in Finnic suffixes, i.e., **(s)kōte-* would have been impossible.¹

Bergsland (1946: 217) links the Southern Lappish verb suffix *-skuottə-* (= IpN *-skud'dá-*) with the Veps *-škande-*. Though there is a regular phonetic correspondence of the forms, the Lappish suffix can be neatly explained from Proto-Lappish elements: it is a combination of the translative verb suffix **sk(ě)-*, the reflexive suffix **-u(o)-*, and the frequentative suffix **-ndě-*. The combination of the first two is not found in Norwegian Lappish, but Bergsland reconstructs it for Southern Lappish (**-skuowə-*, 1946: 197). From verbs with the derivational suffix *-uvvá-* (= Southern Lapp *-uowə-* < Proto-Lapp **-u(ově)-*), frequentatives are formed by adding *-d'dá-* (= Southern Lapp *-ttə-* < Proto-Lapp **-ndě-*), yielding *-ud'dá-* (= Southern Lapp *-uottə-*; cf. IpN *bivástuvvát* 'get sweaty' → *bivástud'dát* 'to sweat').

The *š* in Lapp *-škoatte-* may very well turn out to be of Vepsian origin. In Veps it can be explained as in Turunen 1973 (i.e., as the conditional suffix *-š-*). The Lapp dialects west of Norwegian Lappish show no *š* in this suffix, and in Norwegian Lappish, *š* occurs only after trisyllabic stems. East of Norwegian Lappish, forms with *š* are either exclusive (as in Inari Lappish²) or combine freely with all kinds of stems (although disyllabic stems can take the *š*-less alternant, too).

¹ Note that in the case IpN *doaggjet* 'to break' ~ Finnish (**taje-* >) *tai(tta)-* id., Early Pre-Finnic **(t)o(ja-)* gives short **(t)a(je-)* in Finnic.

² In Inari Lappish the suffix has undergone phonotactic adaptation and has the form *-škyettid*, as *oa* is generally not permitted in suffixes. According to information kindly supplied by Erkki Itkonen, the *š*-less alternant is found in Inari Lappish as well, but mainly with a subitive meaning, e.g. *šurragyettid* 'to make a buzz'. Rare inchoative cases can be found too, e.g. pl3impf *toarugittii* 'to start fighting'.

Of course, it is not impossible to render the š in Lappish suffix autochthonous in the same way as in Veps: it is connectable with the potential mood suffix (which, in turn, is the same as Veps conditional -š-). Vepsians and Lapps are known have lived in close proximity as late as the 14th century (Pesonen 1972: 102), so that the presence of š can be attributed to interlingual influence one way or the other.

If true, the above explanation takes us back to remote times indeed. But to me, there seems to be no obstacle which should prevent us from taking this step.

PEKKA SAMMALLAHTI

References:

- BERGSLAND, KNUT 1946: *Roros-lappisk grammatikk*. Oslo.
- PESONEN, P. E. 1972: Pamyatniki rannego srednevekov'ya na muromskom ozere. In: *Arheologičeskie issledovaniya v Karelii*, pp. 95–102. Leningrad.
- TURUNEN, AIMO 1973: Vepsän ja lyydin verbinjohtimet *-ganden ~ -gänden ja -škanden ~ -škänden*. *Commentationes Fenno-Ugricae in honorem Erkki Itkonen*. Suomalais-ugrilaisen Seuran Toimituksia 150: 433–452. Helsinki.