

## A Germanic etymology for Saami *liiki* '(human) skin'

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Germaaninen etymologia saamen *liiki* 'iho' -sanalle

Yleissaamelainen 'iho' merkitsevä sana, pohjoissaamen *liiki*, koltansaamen *le'sk̄k̄* ym. on toistaiseksi ollut vailla vakuuttavaa etymologiaa; esitetty (laina)rinnastus itämerensuomen *liha*-sanaan on varsinkin äänteellisesti ongelmallinen. Artikkelissa esitetään uutena selityksenä sanan olevan germaaninen laina, lähinnä kantaskandinaavin sanasta *\*lika* > muinaisskandinaavin *lik* 'hahmo, keho, ruumis'. Itäsaamen sanoissa esiintyvä *-šk*-yhtymä selittyy saamen muinaismurteiden välisessä lainautumisessa tapahtuneella etymologisella nativisaatiolla.

The North Saami noun *liiki* '(human) skin' has recognized cognates in all Saami languages, including South Saami *lijhkie*-, Ume *lijkkie*, Pite *lijkke*, Lule *lijkke*, Inari *liške*, Skolt *le'sk̄k̄*, Akkala *l'ešk*, Kildin *l̥i'skk* (лышшык), and Ter *l̥i's̄k̄e*, which can all be traced back to the reconstruction Proto-Saami *\*liškē* (Lagercrantz 1939 № 3395; Lehtiranta 1989 № 588). The attested primary meaning is 'human skin' everywhere from Lule Sami eastwards and can be inferred to be close to that in the other varieties, too; in published sources, the Pite Saami word is found only in Lehtiranta 1989 without a gloss of its own, but it obviously originates from a manuscript attestation with a meaning reasonably close to the listed cognates. The Ume word is glossed as 'surface' ('Oberfläche') in Schlachter 1958. In South and Ume Saami, the wordstem seems to usually appear in compounds such as S *lijhkie-gaep̄tie*, U *lijkkie-gápt̄tie*, *l̥ijkuor-gápt̄tie* 'undershirt', and S *lijhkie-vaarjoeh*,

*lijhkier-gaarvoeh* ‘underwear’ (Bergsland & Mattsson Magga 1993 s.v.; Barruk 2018 s.v.; Hasselbrink 1981–85: 854; Lagercrantz 1939 № 3395). These compounds are most plausibly analyzed as based on the etymon treated here with the motivation ‘skin-shirt’ or ‘body-shirt’, cf. the similar Finnish compound *ihopaita* ‘undershirt’ (from *iho* ‘skin’ + *paita* ‘shirt’), and not the partly homonymous S *lijkie* ~ *lijhkie* ‘abundance, extra’ (← Finnic *liika* id.), under which they are listed in Hasselbrink’s dictionary. In addition to ‘skin’, the Skolt, Akkala, Kildin, and Ter words have been recorded with the meanings ‘body (alive or dead)’ and ‘flesh (as opposed to spirit)’ (Itkonen 1958: 215; SSA s.v. *liha*). South Saami also has the adverbially used derivatives *lijhkielisnie* ‘bodily, pertaining to body’ (‘körperlich, inwendig bzw. äusserlich (Befindlichkeit)’), *lijhkielistie* ‘id., with motion away from the body’ (Hasselbrink 1981–85: 854).

Previous etymological literature has connected North Saami *liiki* with Finnish *liha* ‘flesh’ (with cognates in all Finnic languages). T. I. Itkonen (1918: 19) and SKES (II, 1958) have hesitantly treated the items as etymological cognates, while Koivulehto (1979: 275) and SSA (2, 1995) have considered the Saami item a possible loanword from Finnic. Either way, the comparison appears phonologically problematic: the consonant correspondence of Finnic *-h-* to Saami *-šk-* or *-jk-* is not known from other cognate or borrowed vocabulary, and the possible Proto-Finno-Saamic reconstructions diverge as Proto-Saami *\*liškē* ? < Pre-Saami *?\*liška*<sup>1</sup> versus Proto-Finnic *\*liha* ? < Pre-Finnic *\*liša* or *\*likša*. It may also be noted that the semantic match is not quite perfect, as the prevailing Finnic meaning ‘flesh’ is attested only marginally in a figurative sense in eastern Saami.

Instead, a Germanic (Proto-Norse) loan etymology will be proposed here for the Saami item. A suitable source is provided in Proto-Norse *\*līka*, represented by Old Norse *lik* n. ‘shape, body (alive or dead)’ and going back to Proto-Germanic neuter *\*līka-* (< *\*leika-*), which is in other Germanic branches represented as Gothic *leik* n., Old English *līc* n., Old Frisian *līk* n., Old Saxon *līk* n., and Old High

1. The usual Uralic source of Proto-Saami *\*i* is a sequence *\*ij* or *\*ej* (cf. Aikio 2012: 241–243), and a single Proto-Uralic *\*i* is regularly reflected as Proto-Saami *\*e̅*. However, in a position next to a palatal consonant, Proto-Uralic *\*i* has in some cases developed into a Proto-Saami *\*i* (Korhonen 1981: 79–80).

German *līh* n./f. 'body'. The usage in modern Germanic languages, such as German *Leiche*, Swedish *lik* only for 'dead body' is historically secondary; formerly the word used to mean 'body' in general, as can be still seen in the compound (Swedish, Norwegian) *liktorn* 'corn (in foot)', literally 'body-thorn' (Bjorvand & Lindeman 2007 s.v. *lik*<sup>1</sup>; Kroonen 2013 s.v. *\*līka*<sup>1</sup>; Vries 1962 s.v. *lik*<sup>1</sup>). Probably the word was borrowed into Proto-Saami with the meaning '(living) body', which is more or less rudimentarily attested in eastern Saami varieties and South Saami. The primary meaning has then apparently shifted from '(human) body' to '(human) skin'. As a semantic parallel, it can be pointed out that the cognates of Finnish *iho* 'human skin' in southern Finnic languages, such as Estonian *ihu*, mean '(human) body'. Furthermore, Tundra Nenets *ngaya* 'skin, body' clearly shows the semantic shift 'body' > 'skin', considering the Samoyedic cognates – Forest Enets *aja* 'body', Selkup *\*uâćə*, and Kamas *uja* 'meat, body' – and possible further Uralic cognates (see Aikio 2006: 11–12). Finally, the Saami denotation of 'skin' might also reflect the supposed original meaning of the Germanic word, i.e. 'likeness, shape' (Kroonen *ibid.*) if that was still extant at the time of borrowing.

As regards phonology, the western Saami forms can be straightforwardly derived from Proto-Norse *\*līka*, borrowed as Middle Proto-Saami *\*lijkkā* or the corresponding Late Proto-Saami *\*lijhkē* (> South Saami *lijhkie* etc.). The problem is that eastern Saami forms instead point to PSa. *\*liškē*, which is a possible reconstruction for western Saami, too (cf. Pre-Saami *\*koški* > PSa. *\*kuoške* > S *goejhke*, N *guoika*, In *kuoškā* 'rapids'). As a solution, I propose that the eastern forms have come about through etymological nativization in inter-dialectal borrowing. It can be assumed that at the time of the Proto-Norse borrowing, there was already a dialectal split between western Saami, which had gone through the sound change *-šk-* > *-jhk-*, and eastern Saami, which had retained the original *-šk-* cluster. The word initially entered western Proto-Saami as *\*lijhkē*, and when it spread to the eastern proto-dialect, its phonology was adapted according to the known correspondence pattern West *-jhk-* ~ East *-šk-*, yielding the form *\*liškē*.

At least one parallel case can be presented where a Proto-Norse loanword seems to show an adaptation from western Saami *-jht-* to

eastern *-št-*, namely North Saami *áitit*, corresponding to South *aejhtedh*, Lule *ájtjet*, Inari *äštiđ*, Skolt *ä'stted* ‘threaten’, and others. The western Saami form *\*ājhtē-* appears to be a borrowing from Proto-Norse *\*haita-* > Old Norse *heita* ‘call; promise; threaten’. This loan etymology was presented already by Qvigstad (1893: 86) and mentioned by Sammallahti (1998: 128), but the phonology of the eastern Saami forms has not been discussed in any way. Additionally, such a case can be mentioned where eastern *-šk-* has been borrowed to give western *-jhk-*: North Saami *njuikut* ‘jump, hop (several times)’, not found in more western Saami varieties. This must be a loan from Inari *njuškođ* id., which according to Kildin *ñučkađ* «нющкэ» and Ter *ñičkad* id. goes back to Proto-Saami *\*ñučkō-* containing the cluster *-čk-* and thus cannot historically correspond to a western form with *-jhk-*.<sup>2</sup>

To conclude, the Proto-Norse loan etymology for western Saami *\*lijhkē* ~ eastern Saami *\*liškē* ‘human skin’ seems justifiable. Further research on the particular phonological scheme of Saami discussed here and inter-dialectal adaptation patterns in general would be desirable to advance our understanding of the phonological mechanisms of lexical diffusion, and would possibly help to discover even further loan etymologies which otherwise would appear untenable in the light of the chronology of sound shifts.

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2. The North Saami form *njuikut* has, in turn, been borrowed into Skolt Saami as *njoikkad*. A reviewer of this paper also made a note of the North Saami derivatives *njuikun* ‘weaving reed’ (= Finnish “pirta”) and *njuikkohit* ‘weave a band with a reed’ (= Finnish “kutoa pirtanauhaa”). In the Torne dialects there is a similar noun *njiškun* ‘weaving reed’ and a verb *njiškut* ‘weave with a reed’, which show the expected regular reflex of Proto-Saami *\*-čk-* but an unexpected initial-syllable vowel, a possible sign of an eastern Saami loan as well (cf. the Ter Saami form with a regular illabial vowel /i/).

## Abbreviations

f. = feminine

n. = neuter

In = Inari Saami

N = North Saami

PSa. = Proto-Saami

S = South Saami

Sk = Skolt Saami

U = Ume Saami

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