

Wanderworten Etymological Format: a ‘Hemp’ Case Study, Starting from Votic and Baltofinnic.

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Abstract

The main theme of this short paper will be the format of the etymological section of dictionaries for the *Wanderworten*. The case study will be provided by the etymology of the word for ‘hemp’ in the Baltofinnic languages, starting with the Votic *kañevo*, an entry that I have already dealt with in my VoEG.

In the VoEG, I attempted to forge an intermediate structure (expounded in Barbera 2002; for a general introduction to VoEG cf. Barbera 2000) between the ample and circumstantiate formats, most exemplarily exhibited by Wartburg in the FEW, and the (often too much) shorter formats. I will argue that even if more models can exist between the shorter and the longer ones (and the VoEG is one of those), even the shorter for the *Wanderworten* should be more detailed than usual for more “normal” etymologies.

But before analyzing the different possibilities, let us recount the story of the word *hemp* in a relatively leisurely form.

Keywords: etymology; *Wanderworten*; Baltofinnic languages

The immediate sources of the words for ‘hemp’ in the Baltofinnic languages are already mixed.

The usual word in Western Votic is *kañevo* (VoEG *s.v.*, 98-9; data from Ariste 1968 grounded on Kattila), *kanevo* (VKJMS *s.v.*, 86b: Jöggöperä) or *kañiva*, GEN *-ā* (VKS *s.v.*, II.72-3); that is mainly the same in Eastern Votic: *kanava*, GEN *-ā* (VKMM *s.v.*, 48: Mahu). In Kukkuzi Votic there was *kaneppi*, GEN *-pī* (VKKMS *s.v.*, 127); *kaneppi*, GEN *-pii*, following VKS (II.70), is also marginally attested in Western Votic at Kattila and at Jöggöperä. At Jöggöperä VKS (II.72) reports from Mustonen 1883 *koneva* as well. In the old Kreevin Votic, the word is unattested.

Following a suggestion by Mägiste (EEW, 689), all the Votic forms, with the exception of the *kaneppi* type, suppose some crossing with the well-known derivative nominal suffix **-pA* (cf. Hakulinen 1957-60, I. 99). Mägiste also proposed that the vowel *-o-* of the old Mustonen form was likely «kontaminiert mit Russ.», cf. Russian *конопля* (cf. ÈSRJa, II.312).

The same source is shared by Estonian, both Northern, cf. the standard *kanep*, GEN *-i* (cf. EEW, 688-9 and ÕS06, 292b) and Southern, cf. the old Tartukeel *kanep*, GEN *-i* (cf. EhdW, 201), Eastern Livonian *kañip* and Salats Livonian *kanep* (LiW, 105a).

Another kind of stem is specific only of Finnish: *hamppu* (cf. SKES, 54ab and NyS, I.652a)

Both Northern and Southern Karelian and Olonezian have *liina* (KaKS, III.101b), which is ambivalent, between ‘hemp’ and ‘linen, flax’;¹ more southerly Lydo *lʹīn* (LyS, 208b) and Veps *lin*, GEN *-an* (SveJa, 291) mean only ‘hemp’. Finnish has *liina* as well, but on the contrary it means only ‘linen, flax’ (cf. NSuS II.158ab). Obviously this family of forms goes back to another etymon (cf. SKES, 293a).

Ingrian, as it often happens, is fragmented (cf. InS, 131): Western Ingrian has *kaneppi* (Laukansuu) but also *līna* (Rosona, Kurkola), whilst Central Ingrian has only *līna*, GEN *-ā* (Soikkola, Metsäkülä).

¹ The exchange between ‘flax’ and ‘hemp’ is a very frequent and a natural one, giving the obvious motivation that both are plants providing fibres.

Summing up, in Baltofinnic we have to deal with three kinds of word families: the first is widespread in Votic (where it occurs plain or with the derivative **-pA* suffix), in Estonian and in Livonian; the second is peculiar only to Finnish; and the third, with its semantic deflection, is typical of Karelian and Veps.

Here we shall leave out the third etymon, which is clearly unconnected. It is an Old Norse loanword, cf. *lin* ‘leinen,² linnen, flachs’ (aNEW, 307b; cf. SKES, 293a), which has undergone a meaning shift. At its turn, the Scandinavian form is somehow connected with Latin *līnum*, but it is «nicht aus dem lat. entlehnt [...]; die idg. verwandten dürfen sogar auf eine vorgerm. entlehnung hinweisen (aus dem Orient?)» (aNEW, quoted); cf. the forms gathered by Pokorny under IEW, 691 *li* ‘-no- ‘Lein’?. Still, another *Wanderwort* is quite another story: let us stick to the other two etyms.

The first group of forms is, obviously, a Baltic loanword, and was always recognized as such. Cf. Lithuanian *kanāpė* ‘Hanf, Hanfstaude’, Latvian *kaņepe* and old Prussian *knapios* ‘Hanf’ (LEW, 214b). At its turn Baltic goes back via Slavic (**konop’a* LEW, 214b and ÈSRJa, II.312; cf. Russian *конопля*), to Middle Latin *canabis*|-pus etc. ‘canvas, hemp-linen; hempen rope’ (since VII c.: MLLM, 124; cf. also REW, 150a § 1599), whence to Old Latin *cannābis* ‘hemp’ (Varro, etc.).

The second group of forms is also, obviously, a well-known borrowing from Germanic, namely from Swedish, or more likely from an intermediate state of language between Old Norse and modern Swedish (so already SKES, 54ab and aNEW, 208a). Proto-Germanic **hanapa* can be easily reconstructed on Old Norse *hampr* ‘Hanf’ (aNEW, 208a), Modern Icelandic *hampur*, Old High German *hanaf* (Modern German *Hanf*: KIEWd, 292a), etc.

The two groups of forms (Slavic < Latin, and Germanic) are connected but not in a direct way, and it is difficult to establish the nature of the connection.

The immediate source of Latin *cannābis* (cf. LtEW, I.154) is Greek *κάνναβις* (cf. DÉLG, 493a; GrEW, I.779; Happ 1963, 99), that, following a famous passage of Herodotus (IV.74-5 with confirmations also in Hesychius), is thought to be, at its turn, a loanword from Scythian:

74. ἔστι δὲ σφι κάνναβις φυομένη ἐν τῇ χώρῃ πλὴν παχύτητος καὶ μεγάλους τῶ λίνῳ ἐμπερεστάτη· ταύτη δὲ πολλῶν ὑπερφέρει ἢ κάνναβις. αὕτη καὶ αὐτομάτῃ καὶ σπειρομένη φύεται, καὶ ἐξ αὐτῆς Θρήκες³ μὲν καὶ εἴματα ποιεῦνται τοῖσι λινέοισι ὁμοιώτατα· οὐδὲ ἄν, ὅστις μὴ κάρτα τριβῶν εἶη αὐτῆς, διαγνοίη λίνου ἢ καννάβιός ἐστι· ὅς δὲ μὴ εἶδε κω τὴν κανναβίδα, λίνεον δοκήσει εἶναι τὸ εἶμα.

75. [1] ταύτης ὧν οἱ Σκύθαι τῆς καννάβιός τὸ σπέρμα ἐπεὰν λάβωσι, ὑποδύνουσι ὑπὸ τοὺς πῖλους, καὶ ἔπειτα ἐπιβάλλουσι τὸ σπέρμα ἐπὶ τοὺς διαφανέας λίθους· τῶ πυρὶ τῶδὲ θυμιάται ἐπιβαλλόμενον καὶ ἀτμίδα παρέχεται τσοαύτην, ὥστε Ἑλληνικὴ οὐδεμία ἄν μιν πυρὶ ἀποκρατήσειε. [2] οἱ δὲ Σκύθαι ἀγάμενοι τῇ πυρὶ ὠρύονται· τοῦτό σφι ἀντὶ λουτροῦ ἐστι· οὐ γὰρ δὴ λούονται ὕδατι τὸ παράπαν τὸ σῶμα. [...]⁴

² De Vries does not use the capitalization rules now standard in German.

³ Nobody has ever paid much attention to the mix-up of the Thracians with the Scythians, as it was thought to be usual. But, perhaps, the matter deserves to be followed, obviously not here.

⁴ So the classical LOEB translation runs: «74. They have hemp growing in their country, very like flax, save that the hemp is by much the thicker and taller. This grows both of itself and also by their sowing, and of it the Thracians even make garments which are very like linen; nor could any, save he were a past master in hemp, know whether they be hempen or linen. 75. The Scythian then take the seed of this hemp and, creeping under the rugs, they throw it on the red-hot stones; and, being so thrown, it smoulders and sends forth so much steam that no Greek vapour-bath could surpass it. The Scythians howl in joy for the vapour-bath. This serves them instead of bathing, for scarce ever do they wash their bodies with water» (Godley 1921, 273 and 275).

The immediate source of Proto-Germanic **hanapa* must be an ancient one, since the borrowing still shows no trace of *Lautverschiebung*. It is generally held that Germanic likely came from the same source of Greek (KIEWd, 292a; and cf. aNEW, 208a), viz. Scythian.

Also Armenian *կանեփի կանեփ* (cf. SKES, 54b) and Georgian *კანეფი k'anap'is*⁵ (cf. SKES, 54b; in Proto-Kartvelian a native basis is reconstructable only for 'flax': **sel-*, cf. Old Georgian *seli*, EDKL, 163) are thought to be old Scythian loanwords. And this is at least reasonable, since the cultivation of hemp in the ancient Colchis is well known.

Albanian *kanep* (sic aNEW, 208a. Mann gives *kānp* and *kanëp*: HAED, 182. The more usual word however is *kërp*, that, following Orel, comes ultimately from the same source but through Latin and Proto-Romance: AED, 182) might be (but is uncertain, as it often happens in Albanian etymology) either the modern outcome of an old Thracian word (aNEW, 208a), i.e. a parallel cognate to the Scythian form represented in Greek, or a modern internationalism.

However the Scythian word which is the base of the European forms (as pointed since Thomsen 1890, 178, quoted by LtEW, 154 with other bibliography) is reflected by some Middle and Modern Iranian language as well, e.g. Khotanese *kamha-* 'Hanf' (Bailey in KEWaI, III.292), Kurdish *kinif* 'Hanf' (LtEW, 154), and Ossetic, Iron *gæn* = Digor *gænæ* 'Hanf, Flachs' (KEWaI, III.292 and IËSOJa, I.512), Modern Persian *گَنف ganaf*.

This Iranian stem (cf. also Witzel 1999, 55) was also borrowed by Proto-Finnopernic (cf. Erzya Mordvin *кансть*, Komi *кӧнтусь*, etc.) **kän3* 'Hanf' (UEW, 651; cf. KËSKJa, 141a; SKES, 54b), and by Proto-Turkish (VEWT, 252b,⁶ usually in a derived form **кән-дур*: ÈSTJ, V.39-41), cf. Osmanlı *kändir* 'hemp', etc.; at its turn Hungarian *kender* presupposes a loan from some Old Turkic form (TESz, II.441ab).

The picture is moreover entangled by the existence of reflexes of a *satem*-form in Indo-Iranian as well, cf. Sanskrit *śaṇāh* 'eine Hanf-Art (*Cannabis sativa* oder *Crotolaria juncea*)' (KEWaI, III.292), Pehlevi *šan* 'Hanf' and Khotanese *šāmvām* 'id.' (Bailey in KEWaI, III.292): this double outcome of the initial consonant⁷ points to a borrowing in Indo-Iranian as well, that happened in two periods, a first in Early IIR period (in which satemization took place) and a second in Early Middle IIR period (with occlusive unchanged). An hypothetical connection with Dravidic was proposed by Burrow (Burrow 1940, 717, quoted in KEWaI, III.292), cf. Tamil *caṇal* \ *caṇappu* and Kanarese *saṇabu* 'Hemp', but (as clear at least since Witzel 1999) these are merely peripheral knots in a wider web of borrowings.

The ultimate source (a pre-Indo-European one) is far from clear (cf. KEWaI, III.292, with bibl.). The often alleged Sumerian *kunibu* 'Hanf' (Räsänen 1946, 198 quoted in ÈSRJa, II. 312; cf. also GrEW, I.779, Happ 1963, 99, SKES, 54b and KIEWd, 292a) has proved to be illusory, and is maybe a misunderstanding of Sumerian *gu* = Akkadian *qû* 'Hanf, Faden' (Borger 1978, 194 Nr. 559; for the Akkadian, going back to Old Babylonian, loanword cf. CAD, XIII.285-8 s.v. *qû* 'flax; thread, string; filament, capillary; net, web' and AHw, 924b-5a⁸) or of late Akkadian *qunnabu* (discussed here below; quoted also by LtEW, I.154 as *qunuba*/*qunnab* 'Hanf').

A Mesopotamian origin would however be out of question because there the hemp «erst in der Mitte des I. Jt. v. Chr. bekanntgeworden sein» (W. Röllig in RIA, IV.104a s.v. *Hanf*⁹); Akkadian

⁵ In SKES it is spelled without the final -s.

⁶ Räsänen doubted a Persian intermediary.

⁷ A different kind of explanation is offered by Witzel 1999, 30; but it eventually amounts to the same thing: that is a matter of loanwords. Possibly also Dravidian is involved in this borrowing: cf. KEWaI, III.292 quoted, and cf. *infra*.

⁸ Moreover «Sum. *gu* bezeichnet ursprünglich wohl nur Flachs und die aus dieser Pflanze gewonnenen Fasern, dann auch die daraus gefertigten Fäden, Garne und Schnüre», H. Waetzoldt 1983 in RIA, VI.584a s.v. *Leinen (Flachs)*.

⁹ Cf. also H. Waetzoldt 1983 in RIA, VI.583a-94a s.v. *Leinen (Flachs)* for an exhaustive discussion and bibliography.

qunnabu ‘Hanf’ (AHw, 928a¹⁰) is known only from New Assyrian and Late Babylonian sources (cf. AHw and CAD q.a.); in Hurrian and Urartean, as far as I know, no useful word is attested, neither in Elamic.

The basis, however, is widespread in Semitic. One may then quote, at least, Syrian *qannaḫā* (AHw, 928a) ~ **قناب** (TS, II.671 *qnpz*; **قناب** *m. κάμβησις, cannabis sativa qnnbs [qannabis]* TS, II.459 must be a Greek loanword), Arabic **قنب** *qnb* [قنب *qanub* or also *qanib*], Hebrew **קנבוס** *qnbuṣ* [קנבוס *qanabus*], etc., and its source may be in some later cases, viz. Greek,¹¹ or earlier, viz. some undetermined Iranian language through Assyrian.

This complex picture has arisen many “popular” theories as the Indo-European or the Semitic hypotheses, which, for example, one can find in Wikipedia,¹² in reality we know only for sure some source whence the word diffused in Scythia, in Europe, in India and in the Middle East must have existed, but we do not know what this source was.

A supposition, at least worth testing, is that this diffusion followed agricultural paths (the usual *Wörter und Sache* assumption). But, alas, paleobotany will not aid us providing a sure localization of the original wild variety diffusion: «*Cannabis sativa* is widely regarded as indigenous to temperate, western or central Asia. However, no precise area has been identified where the species occurred before it began its association with humans. [...] For at least the last 6000 years, *C. sativa* has been transported widely, providing extensive opportunities for establishment outside of its original range» (Small 2015, 194); «there is no concerted agreement among botanists as to where the plant originally grew wild and where its cultivation first began» (Li 1974, 293). Still, it is generally held that domestication had initially take place in Northern China in the VII millennium (cf. Fleming - Clarke 1998; for the European data cf. instead Godwin 1967): «historically, the oldest records in existence seem to place the origin of cultivation in north-eastern Asia, a portion of which falls in present northern China, where the early Chinese civilization began. Cannabis has left a continuous record of its presence in this area from Neolithic times down to the present day, and its uses were closely integrated with the life and culture of the people throughout all periods» (Li 1974, 293; cf. also Li 1973). Given this location, Chinese evidently needs some attention; but it is not encouraging: Modern Chinese 麻¹³ *má* = Old Chinese **mrâi* (EDOC, 373) is likely unconnected, and so also the other East Asian main proto-languages, namely Proto-Kadai **ḡra¹*, Proto-Mon-Khmer **lḡaw* and Proto-Austronesian **leḡa* (in seek of brevity, I take the reconstructions indirectly from EDOC, 373). Therefore, nothing accomplished; the only, meagre, consolation is that for Chinese as well, Schuessler states: «etymology [is] not clear» (EDOC, 373).

It is not a happy ending, but I am quite afraid that at the moment the story ends here.

With this case study as an example, let us return to theoretical matters.

Usually most generic dictionaries, from small sized to medium sized ones, if they give an etymological indication at all, content themselves with no more than (taking our ‘hemp’ case as example) “< Baltic” for Estonian, “< Latin” for Italian, “< Greek” for Latin, and so on. I contend that in this case the main intermediary (Scythian) must be stated however, and should be clearly told that it is a *Wanderwort* of unknown origin; otherwise it is far better to give no etymology at all (etymologies in generic dictionaries are a luxury not called for). To put *hemp* on the same level of straightforward loanwords, recent and between single languages like Estonian *arssin* < Russian *аршин* ‘0.71 meters’, or older and between proto-languages like Votic *ammaZ* ‘tooth’ << Baltic, will be misleading at least.

¹⁰ For the meaning cf. also more exactly and in detail CAD, XIII.306b: ‘an aromatic; also as feminine personal name; possibly the seed of flower of hemp (cannabis)’.

¹¹ Likely the cultivation of the hemp itself may have been introduced from Greece: cf. Röllig in RIA, IV.104a s.v. *Hanf*.

¹² Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etymology_of_cannabis.

¹³ The *hànzi* in the Old Seals Script was simpler and contained only the pictogram «representing fibres hanging on a rack and placed under a roofed shack» (Li 1974, 294).

Entering the category of etymological dictionaries, obviously, things shape themselves in another fashion. Here the main choice is between large articles (like in ÈSTJa) and synthetic ones (like REW), with all the in-between sizes possible, interwoven with the verses bottom-up (e.g. in SKES or in IÈSOJa) or top down (e.g. in UEW or in IEW). But this topic I have already dealt with elsewhere.

Abbreviations

AED	= Orel 1998.	KaKS	= Virtaranta 1968-2005.	TESz	= Benkő <i>et alii</i> 1976-84.
AHw	= Soden 1965-81.	KIEWd	= Kluge 1989.	TS	= Payne Smith 1879-1901.
aNEW	= De Vries 1962.	KEWal	= Mayrhofer 1953-80.	UEW	= Rédei 1986-88.
CAD	= Aa Vv 1956-...	LEW	= Fraenkel 1962-65.	VEWT	= Räsänen 1969.
DÉLG	= Chantraine 1968-80.	LiW	= Kettunen 1938.	VKJMS	= Tsvetkov - Laakso 1995.
EDKL	= Klimov 1988.	LtEW	= Walde - Hoffmann 1938-56.	VKKMS	= Posti - Suhonen 1980.
EDOC	= Schuessler 2007.	LyS	= Kujola 1984.	VKMM	= Kettunen - Elomaa <i>etc.</i> 1986.
EEW	= Mägiste 1882-3.	MLLM	= Niermeyer 1984/76.	VKS	= Adler <i>et alii</i> 1990-2011.
EhDW	= Wiedemann 1866/93.	NSuS	= Sadeniemi 1951-61.	VoEG	= Barbera 2012('94).
ÈSTJa	= Sevortjan 1974-...	AED	= Orel 1998.	ÕS06	= Erelt 2006
FEW	= Wartburg 1928- ...	REW	= Meyer-Lübke 1972/35.		
GrEW	= Frisk 1960-72.	RIA	= Ebeling - Meissner <i>et alii</i> 1928-...		
HAED	= Mann 1948.	SVeJa	= Zajceva - Mullonen		
IÈSOJa	= Abaev 1958-95.				
IEW	= Pokorny 1959-69.				
InS	= Nirvi 1971.				

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¹⁴ The workshop of the FEW spans over near a century, and produced 25 volumes (often in more parts), for about 160 *Lieferungen*; moreover fascicles and volumes didn’t follow the same order, that was often a very whimsical one (e.g. *Lieferungen* 14, 15 and 16 were never issued). Therefore, for correct quoting one must provide a more detailed account, which, alas, requires a lot of space, unpractical here: for a fuller account the reader may instead turn to Barbera 2015, 112-114, where references are given in full.