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Mouse in Saami and Related Problems

Abstract

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The article discusses Saami terms for ‘mouse’ (e.g. Northern Saami *sáhpán*, Inari Saami *sáplig*, Pite Saami *saahpiék*), explaining them as a common heritage of Uralic origin. It is suggested that the related words are to be found in Selkup Samoyed and Kolyma Yukaghir with the meaning ‘squirrel’ or ‘flying squirrel’, as well as in Ugric. The present author explains semantic aspects of this comparison and presents similar instances attested in the Uralic languages, e.g. Khanty *aj-łanki* ‘mouse’ (originally ‘small squirrel’). It is additionally concluded that the Proto-Finno-Ugric term for ‘mouse’, **šijir3*, must be related to Proto-Samoyed **tārä-* ‘squirrel’.

Keywords: animals, language contacts, mammals, rodents, Saami, Uralic.

1. Introduction

In his excellent article on the origin of the Saami people and language Ante Aikio (2004:5-32) mentions the Northern Saami term for ‘mouse’, *sáhpán*, among typical substrate words. This term cannot be related to FU. **šijir3* ‘mouse’, attested in West Finnic, Mordvin, Udmurt, Zyrian, Khanty, Mansi and Hungarian (Colinder 1977:98; Rédei 1986–1988:500-501). Moreover, the Saami lexical material hardly demonstrates one uniform archetype. In fact, there are as many as three different Proto-Saami prototypes derived from PSaa. **sāppē* by means of three different particles:

- 1.1. Saa.N *sáhpán* ‘mouse’, *godde-sáhpán* ‘lemming, *Lemmus lemmus* L.’ (< PSaa. **sāppānjē*) (Aikio 2004:11, 15; Koponen/Ruppel/Aapala 2002–2008);

- 1.2. Saa.P *saahpiek* ‘mouse’ (< PSaa. **sāppēkkē*) (Aikio 2004:15);
- 1.3. Saa.I *säplig* ‘mouse’, *kodde-säplig* ‘lemming’ (Koponen 2005:133-134; Itkonen 2011:474); Saa.Sk *kå’dd-sä’ppli* ‘lemming’; Saa.A *sahplīk* ‘mouse’; Saa.K *sāppli’nyg* ‘mouse’ (< PSaa. **sāppēliykē*) (Aikio 2004:15), dial. (Tyloma) *sahpli*, (Varzino, Lovozero) *sahplink*, (Jokańga) *sahplińke*, (Babino) *sahplīk* ‘mouse / мышь’ (Елисеева/Зайцева 2007:55, No. 0198).

It is obvious for all Uralists that the Saami languages lexically differ from a number of Finno-Ugric languages, which demonstrate straightforward reflexes of FU. **šijirz* ‘mouse’, cf. Fi. *hiiri* ‘mouse’, Est. *hiir* ‘id.’, Hu. *egér* ‘mouse’. Taking into account the threefold diachronic differentiation of the attested Saami lexemes, Aikio (2004:11, 15) strongly suggests the substrate origin of the Saami terminology for ‘mouse’.

In my paper, I would like to explain the Saami appellatives for ‘mouse’ as native words of Uralic origin. I intend to demonstrate in the next two sections that the close equivalents of the Saami lexemes are attested in the Samoyed and Ugric languages.

2. The Uralic origin of the Saami term for ‘mouse’

The Saami appellatives, discussed by Aikio (2004:11, 15) show the basic root (PSaa.) **sāppē* ‘mouse’, which theoretically can represent the Uralic archetype **sāpā* (or **šāpā*) ‘red squirrel, *Sciurus vulgaris* L. / Eichhorn’ (Colinder 1977:32; Rédei 1986–1988:436; Décsy 1990:107; 2006:121). Observed differences between three reconstructed prototypes in Proto-Saami may easily be explained as native derivatives created by means of three different elements:

- 2.1. the Proto-Saami suffix **-njē* (as if from Ur. **-ńA*, cf. Mordvin diminutive suffix **-ńā*, e.g. Md.M *kalńā* ‘little fish’ ← Md. *kal* ‘fish’);
- 2.2. the Proto-Saamic diminutive suffix **-kkē* (< Ur. **-kkA*, cf. Mordvin diminutive suffix **-kā*, Selk. **-ka*, Ngan. **-ku*, e.g. Ngan. *kola?ku* ‘little fish’ ← Ngan. *koli* ‘fish’);

- 2.3. PSaa. **-liŋkē* (< FU. **liŋkä*), which can be interpreted not only as a separate suffix (of unclear function)¹, but also as the second member of the Proto-Saami compound noun².

The Pite Saami term for ‘mouse’, *saahpiek*, appears to represent the diminutive formation **säppēkkē*, which can go back to Uralic **säppä-kkä* (or **šäppä-kkä*). In my opinion, close equivalents (with the different meanings ‘squirrel’ and ‘flying squirrel’) are attested in the Samoyed and Yukaghir languages, see Selk. (Tym) *täpäk*, (Middle Taz) *täpäŋ*, (Low Taz) *täpäk*, (Turuchan) *tēpeq* ‘red squirrel / Eichhorn’ (< PSam. **tepekā*) and Yuk.K *te:kā* ‘Siberian flying squirrel (*Pteromys volans* L.)’ (Nikolaeva 2006:427, No. 2393). The Selkup Samoyed and Kolyma Yukaghir forms in question clearly derive from PSam. **tepekā* ‘squirrel’³. Their comparison with Saa.P *saahpiek* ‘mouse’ is phonologically and morphologically impeccable⁴. It is possible to reconstruct the Uralic archetypic **säppä-kkä*

¹ One of the anonymous reviewers is convinced that the same Proto-Saami suffix **-liŋkē* appears in a number of the Eastern Saami words, e.g. Saa.Sk. *akkli* ‘shark’, *čedäkkli* ‘gnom’ and *čičžli* ‘lizard’, Saa.I *tažalig* ‘common lizard’ (Itkonen 2011:7, 652, 580). Unfortunately, the Proto-Saami particle **-liŋkē* cannot be directly juxtaposed with the West Finnish suffix **-likkoj*, cf. the Estonian and Võro diminutive suffix *-lik* (Plado/Lindström/Iva 2023:402), Vo. *-likko*, e.g. Est. *sisalik*, Võro *sisalik* (gen. *sisaligu*), Vo. *süsälikko* ‘lizard’ (< PFi. **sisalikkoj*). It is worth adding that Sugurt Khanty demonstrates the augmentative-pejorative suffix **-liŋki*, e.g. Kh. *sörtliŋki* ‘really big pike’, *ikiliŋki* ‘poor fellow’ ← Kh. *sört* ‘pike’, *iki* ‘fellow’ (Csepregi 2023:718). Is the Khanty suffix related to the Saami one?

² Below I intend to develop my own interpretation, according to which PSaa. **-liŋkē* represents a different (lexical) item.

³ Tundra Yukaghir and Kolyma Yukaghir contain numerous morphological, structural and lexical ingredients of Uralic (especially Proto-Samoyed) origin. It is disputable whether these Yukaghir-Uralic elements demonstrate a common heritage or rather a prehistoric influence of the East Uralic languages on Yukaghir. Some diachronists believe that the Yukaghir languages are distantly related to the Uralic family, constituting the most eastern branch of this family (Blažek/Piispänen 2024:25-28). Others explain all common Yukaghir-Uralic phenomena as early Proto-Samoyed borrowings in Proto-Yukaghir (Aikio 2014:7-76; Saarikivi 2022:46; Georg 2023:193-195). I prefer the second option, thus I am inclined to explain Yuk.K *te:kā* ‘Siberian flying squirrel’ (< PYuk. **tewekā*) as a possible loanword from PSam. **tepekā* ‘squirrel’ (< Ur. **säppä-kkä* or **šäppä-kkä*), though I cannot dismiss the alternative possibility that the Kolyma Yukaghir term represents a Proto-Uralic heritage.

⁴ The Uralic phonemes **s* and **š* yield [t] in Proto-Samoyed and [s] in Saami, whereas **p* and **k* remain unchanged (Aikio 2022:6). The Uralic vowel **ä* regularly develops into PSam. **e* (Sammallahti 1988:484) and PYuk. **e* (cf. PYuk. **eme*

(*šäppä-*kkä*) ‘squirrel or a similar kind of small rodent’ on the basis of the Samoyed, Yukaghir and Saami forms (see Table 1).

Languages	Attestation	Meaning	Comments or references
Uralic	*šäppä- <i>kkä</i> or *šäppä- <i>kkä</i>	‘squirrel or a similar kind of small rodent’, secondarily ‘mouse’	Ur. *- <i>kkA</i> is a common suffix forming both nouns and adjectives (Aikio 2022:19)
Saami	Saa.P <i>saahpiek</i> (< PSaa. *šäppēkkē)	‘mouse’	Aikio (2004:15)
Samoyed	Selk. (Tym, Low Taz) <i>täpäk</i> , (Middle Taz) <i>täpäŋ</i> , (Turuchan) <i>tēpeq</i> (< PSam. *tepe-kā)	‘red squirrel, <i>Sciurus vulgaris</i> L.’	
Yukaghir	Yuk.K <i>te:kə</i> (< PYuk. *tewekə)	‘Siberian flying squirrel!’	Nikolaeva (2006:427)

Tab. 1: The Uralic reconstruction for ‘squirrel or a different kind of small rodent’

Source: my own work.

Some etymologists (e.g. Rédei 1986–1988:436; Benkő 1993:342) suggest that Hu. *evet* ‘squirrel / Eichhorn’ derives from Ur. *šäpä (*šäpä) ‘squirrel / Eichhorn’. In fact, Hu. *evet* can go back to the Proto-Ugric archetype *θäpättš (< Ur. *šäpä-ttä or *šäpä-ttä). Also Mansi *tap*, attested in the dialectal compound (Northern, and Sygva) *mā-tap-riś* ‘mouse, mole / Maus, Maulwurf’ (cf. Ms. *mā* ‘earth, land’ < Ur. **maxi* ‘id.’), may be treated as a reflex of PUG. *θäpä ‘squirrel’ (< Ur. *šäpä / *šäpä ‘id.’).

3. Finno-Ugric *liŋkä ‘squirrel’

The most representative prototype, attested in most Eastern Saami languages (cf. 1.3), is PSaa. *šäppēliŋkē. It seems to represent a copulative compound containing two members denoting small animals: (1) PSaa. *šäppē (< Ur. *šäppä or *šäppä, orig. ‘squirrel or a similar kind of small rodent’) and (2) PSaa. *liŋkē (as if from FU. *liŋkä, originally ‘squirrel’, secondarily ‘mouse’). The second member of the Proto-Saami compound is clearly attested in the Ob-Ugric languages, cf. Kh. (Vah, Vasjugan) *läŋki* ‘squirrel / Eichhorn’, (Tremjugan, Jugan) *läŋki*, (Upper Demjanka, Konda) *täŋkə*, (Nizjam) *taŋkə*, (Kazym) *lan̄ki*, (Obdorsk) *läŋki* ‘squirrel’ <

‘mother’ vs. PU. **amä* ‘id.’). The suffix *-*kkA* creates the diminutive nouns and adjectives in the Uralic languages (Aikio 2022:19), as well as in Yukaghir.

PKh. **läjkə* (Honti 1982:159, No. 348); Ms. (Western) *léene*, (Northern) *léngen*, (Eastern) *lín*, *líne*, (Tavda) *läjən*, (Low and Middle Konda, Pim) *lijən*, (Upper Lozva, Sosva) *lējən* ‘squirrel / Eichhörnchen’ < PMs. **l̥ijə-n̥* (Honti 1982:159, No. 348).

Languages	Attestation	Meaning	Comments and references
Finno-Ugric	* <i>lijkä</i>	‘red squirrel’	
Khanty / Ostyak	Kh. (Vah, Vasjugan) <i>läjki</i> ‘squirrel / Eichhorn’, (Tremjugan, Jugan) <i>läjki</i> , (Upper Demjanka, Konda) <i>täjəkə</i> , (Nizjam) <i>tajkə</i> , (Kazym) <i>lanki</i> , (Obdorsk) <i>läjki</i> (< PKh. * <i>läjkə</i>)	‘red squirrel, <i>Sciurus vulgaris</i> L.’	Honti (1982:159)
Mansi / Vogul	Ms. (Western) <i>léene</i> , (Northern) <i>léngen</i> , (Eastern) <i>lín</i> , <i>líne</i> , (Tavda) <i>läjən</i> , (Low and Middle Konda, Pim) <i>lijən</i> , (Upper Lozva, Sosva) <i>lējən</i> (< PMs. * <i>l̥ij̥jə-n̥</i>)	‘red squirrel, <i>Sciurus vulgaris</i> L.’	Honti (1982:159). The suffix *- <i>n̥</i> is perhaps identical to *- <i>ŋj̥</i> in Saa.N <i>sáhpán</i>).
Saami	Saa.I <i>säplig</i> ‘mouse’, Saa.K <i>säppli</i> ‘ <i>ŋg</i> ’ ‘mouse’, dial. (Tyloma) <i>sahpli</i> , (Varzino, Lovozero) <i>sahplink</i> , (Jokaŋga) <i>sahplinke</i> , (Babino) <i>sahplik</i> ‘mouse’ (< PSaa. * <i>säppē-lijkē</i>)	‘mouse’	The protoform * <i>lijkē</i> is attested only in an Eastern Saami compound * <i>säppē-lijkē</i> .
Khanty	Kh. (Kazym) <i>aj-lanki</i> (< PKh. * <i>āj-läjəkə</i>)	‘mouse’ (orig. ‘small squirrel’)	As if from PUG. * <i>äji-lijkä</i> ‘mouse’
Khanty	Kh. (Tremjugan) <i>päläjki</i> ‘ordinary mouse / gewöhnliche Maus’ vs. Kh. (Krasnojarsk) <i>päläjəkə</i> ‘a species of bat / eine Fledermausart’ (< PKh. * <i>pä-läjəkə</i>)	‘mouse’ vs. ‘bat (i.e. flying mouse)’	As if from FU. * <i>poxi-lijkä</i> ‘tree-squirrel’ (orig. ‘flying squirrel’?)
Khanty	Kh. (Vah) <i>iwə läjki</i> , (Tremjugan) <i>jipet läjki</i> , (Upper Demjanka) <i>imət täjkə</i> (< PKh. * <i>ipət läjkə</i>)	‘Siberian flying squirrel, <i>Pteromys volans</i> L.’	As if from PUG. * <i>äpätts-lijkä</i> ‘flying squirrel’
Khanty	Kh. dial. <i>maɣpäläjəkə</i> ‘mole / Maulwurf’ (< PKh. * <i>maɣ-pä-läjəkə</i>)	‘mole’ (orig. ‘earth mouse’)	As if from FU. * <i>maxi-poxi-lijkä</i>

Tab. 2: Finno-Ugric **lijkä* ‘red squirrel’ and its derivatives

Source: my own work (on the basis the Finno-Ugric, Saami and Ob-Ugric dictionaries)

The relationship of the Saami, Khanty and Mansi forms, quoted in Table 2, is phonologically perfect⁵ and semantically acceptable ('mouse' vs. 'squirrel'). It is worth emphasizing that the lexical material, attested in the Khanty dialects, demonstrates additionally four innovative meanings: 'mouse', 'flying squirrel', 'mole' and 'bat'. The Khanty noun (Kazym dialect) *aj-łanki* 'mouse' is semantically clear. It derives from PKh. **āj-lāŋkə* 'mouse', originally 'small squirrel', cf. Kh. (Demjanka, Obdorsk) *āj* 'small, young', (Vah) *āj* 'small, low, cramped'⁶. There is also a different compound in the Khanty dialects: Kh. (Vah) *iwə lāŋki* 'flying squirrel / Flughörnchen'; (Tremjugan) *jipet lāŋki* 'id.'; (Upper Demjanka) *imət tāŋkə* 'id.' (< PKh. **ipət lāŋkə*). The Khanty forms in question go back to PUg. **āji-liŋkä* 'mouse' and PUg. **āpəttə-liŋkä* 'Siberian flying squirrel', respectively.

Note that the same semantic difference is excellently attested in the first comparison (cf. Tab. 1) based on three Uralic languages: Saami ('mouse'), Selkup Samoyed ('squirrel') and Yukaghir ('Siberian flying squirrel').

4. Finno-Ugric **šijirə* 'mouse' = Proto-Samoyed **tārü-* 'squirrel'

The semantic change from 'squirrel' to 'mouse' (or in the opposite direction) is well attested in different prehistoric phases of the Uralic languages. Yet, it has been overlooked in previous research that the Proto-Samoyed term **tārü-* (or **täre-*) 'squirrel / Eichhorn, Eichhörnchen', attested in most Samoyed languages except the Selkup subgroup (Janhunen 1977:149; Helimsky 1997:357), can be related to FU. **šijirə* 'mouse'. The Finno-Ugric archetype was earlier reconstructed as **šije-re* (Rédei 1986–1988:500; Редєи 1996:221; Вершинин 2011:488) or **šijiri* (Sammallahti 1998:498, 550) or **šijir(i)* (Aikio 2022:7, 10, 24) or **šijiri/*šijir* (Zhivlov 2023:123, 129, 137, 142, 169).

The Uralic lexical material can be presented as follows:

⁵ Note that FU. **l* yields [l] in Saami and Mansi, but three different reflexes in the Khanty dialects: [l], [ʌ] and [t] (Aikio 2022:6). Also the original cluster **ŋk* gives expected continuants in Saami, Mansi and Khanty. The root vocalism [i] is preserved not only in Saami, but also in Proto-Mansi (with the regular equivalent [ä] in Proto-Khanty). The final vowel [ä] is reconstructed on the basis of the Saami data. The final vowels are completely lost in the Ob-Ugric languages.

⁶ The same explanation is suggested by Rédei (1986–1988:436): "Vgl. auch Kaz. *aj-łanki* 'Maus (eigtl.: kleines Eichhörnchen)'."

- 4.1. FU. *šijirz ‘mouse / Maus’: Fi. *hiiri* (gen. *hiiren*) ‘mouse’, Ingr. *hiiri*, Kar. *hiiri*, Ol. *hiiri*, Lud. *hiir(i)* ‘id.’; Est. *hiir* (gen. *hiire*) ‘mouse’, Võro *hiir* ‘id.’; Vot. *iiri* ‘mouse, rat’; Veps *hiir* ‘mouse’; Liv. *īr* ‘mouse’ (< PFi. **hīri* ~ **hīre*-; Zhivlov 2023:123, 124, 126, 169)⁷; Md.M *ueep / šejer*, Md.E *ceep / čejer*, dial. *čever* ‘mouse’ (< PMd. **čejar*; Zhivlov 2023:129, 131, 169); Udm. *шыр / šjr* ‘mouse’, also ‘stangles (disease of horses)’⁸, (Kazan) *šār*, (Glazov) *šjr* ‘mouse’; Zyr. (Sysola) *шыр / šjr*, Pe. *шыр / šjr*, Yaz. *šor* ‘mouse’ (< PPerm. **šjr*; Zhivlov 2023:135, 137, 169); Kh. (Southern) *teŋkər* ‘mouse’, (Vasjugan) *jöŋkər*, (Vah) *löŋkər*, (Obdorsk) *loŋkər*, *leŋkər* ‘mouse’ (< PKh. **Läŋkər*; Zhivlov 2023:144, 169); Ms. (Tavda) *taŋkər*, (Low Konda, Pelymka, Upper Lozva) *taŋkər* ‘mouse’, (Sygva) *taŋkər* ‘northern water vole, *Arvicola amphibius* L. / Wasserratte’⁹ (< PMs. **täŋkər*; Zhivlov 2023:144, 169); Hu. *eger* (acc. *egeret*) ‘mouse’, also ‘rat’ and ‘bat’ (Лыткин/Гуляев 1970:326; Colinder 1977:98; Rédei 1986–1988:500-501; Benkő 1993:295-296; Реден 1996:220-221; Вершинин 2011:488; 2015:243).
- 4.2. PSam. **tārä*- ‘squirrel / Eichhörnchen’ (Janhunen 1977:149): Ngan. *тэры?ка / təry?ka* ‘squirrel / белка’ (Костеркина/Момде/Жданова 2001:187, 229), dial. *tarréga* (< PNgan. **tārä-kkâj*); Yur. *tarréku* ‘squirrel’ (< PYur. **tārä-kkâj*); Nen.T *täre* ‘squirrel’, Nen.F *taré*¹⁰ (< PNen. **tārä-tʰ*); Nen.T *таряв* ‘squirrel’, Nen.F *tarâβ* (< PNen. **tārä-wâ*); Nen.T ям. *таряха* ‘squirrel’, Nen.F O *tarëxâ* (< PNen. **tārä-kâ*); Nen.T *tarreku* ‘squirrel’ (< PNen. **tārä-kkâj*); Yen. *torre*, *toŋeha*, *toŋeha* ‘Eichhorn’ (Katzschmann/Pusztay 1978:219); Kam. *t’âžəβ*, *t’âžəw* ‘squirrel / Eichhorn’ (Donner 1944:69); Mat. *taeret* ‘*Sciurus varius*, белка / squirrel’; Karag. *derèt*, *derjât* ‘sciurus’; Mat. *téren* (gl. ‘sciurus’), *taeret*, *дерань* ‘squirrel [белка]’; Taig. *teran*, *derèn* ‘squirrel’; Karag. *derèt*, *dèren* ‘squirrel’ (< SSam. **tārät* ~ **tārä-n*) (Helimsky 1997:357).

⁷ Lap.L *šnjierra* (*šñērra*) ‘mouse’ (*šñēdàrà*) seems to represent an irregular (perhaps substrate) reflex of FU. **šijirz* ‘mouse’ (Kulonen 2006:331-332). It cannot be treated as a native (i.e. purely Saami) heritage of Uralic origin (Rédei 1986-1988:500). Björn Collinder expresses similar doubts, when he is asking the right question: “Does lpLule *šnjierra* ~ *šnjiera*- belong here?” (Collinder 1977:92).

⁸ Note that an analogous double meaning is attested in Cher. *коля / kol’a* ‘mouse; strangles (disease of horses, demonstrating fist-sized swelling on the neck) / Maus; Pferdekrankheit (faustgroße Geschwulst am Hals) / мышь; мыт (болезнь лошадей)’ (Beke 1997:852; Вершинин 2015:243).

⁹ See also two Mansi animal names, attested in the Jukonda dialect: (1) *wit-täŋkər* ‘northern water vole / Wasserratte’ (as if from Ur. **weti-šijirz*, orig. ‘water mouse’); (2) *mā-täŋkər* ‘mole / Maulwurf’ (as if from Ur. **maxi-šijirz*, orig. ‘earthen mouse’). The Mansi zoonyms in question are quoted by Rédei (1986-1988:436).

The basic Proto-Samoyed noun **târä-* ‘red squirrel’ appears in some derived nouns, e.g. PSam. **târä-t*, **târä-kâ*, **târä-kkâj*, **târä-wâ* ‘id.’, registered in Nganasan, Yurats, Nenets, Enets, Kamassian, Mator, Taigi and Karagash. It is absent in Selkup Samoyed (where an alternative term for ‘red squirrel’, representing PSam. **tepekâ*, is attested, see Tab. 1).

The relationship between FU. **šinjirə* ‘mouse’ and PSam. **târä-* ‘squirrel’ was not taken into account in the modern scholarship. It is worth emphasizing that the phonological correspondences are perfect, as demonstrated in Tab. 3. Also semantic aspects (‘mouse’ vs. ‘squirrel’) are fully acceptable.

Uralic	*š-	*-i-	*-ŋ-	*-i-	*-r-	*-i or -ä
Samoyed	*t-	*š	*-ŋ- or Ø	*š	*r	*-ä
Mansi	*t-	*ä	*-ŋk-	*-ə-	*r	lost
Khanty	*L-	*ä	*-ŋk-	*-ə-	*r	lost
Hungarian	lost	*e	-g- or -v-	*e	*r	lost
Permic	*š-	*i	Ø	*i	*r	lost
Mari	*š-	*i	*-ŋ- (> -j-, -v- or Ø)	*i	*r	lost
Mordvin	*č-	*e	*-ŋ- > -j- or -Ø-	*ə	*r or *rʲ	lost
Finnic	*h-	*i	-j-, -v- or Ø	*i	*r	*-i or *-ä
Saami	*s-	*â	-ŋŋ- ~ -ŋ-	*â	*-rr- ~ -r-	*-ë or *-ē

Tab. 3: Regular correspondences in the Uralic languages

Source: My own work (on the basis of the standard works of the Uralic phonology, including Aikio 2022 and Zhivlov 2023)

It is uncertain whether the meaning ‘mouse’, preserved in most Finno-Ugric languages, was primitive and original in Proto-Uralic, as it is frequently suggested (Sammallahti 1998:489, 550; Aikio 2022:24), or secondary. The semantic innovation in the Finno-Ugric languages seems to have more solid grounds. If the Proto-Uralic homeland is to be placed in the Siberian Asia, somewhere between the Ural and the Sayan Mountains (Janhunen 2009; Nichols 2021; Saarikivi 2022:56-57; Grünthal/Heyd et alii 2022:490-524), then preserving the archaic meaning by most Samoyed tribes (as well as the Kolyma Yukaghirs) seems more probable than the opposing alternative. In other words, the Finno-Ugric tribes introduced a new, innovative meaning ‘mouse’ (< ‘squirrel’) during their expansion to the European area beyond the Ural Mountains.

My interpretation can be confirmed by the semantic change of ‘squirrel’ to ‘mouse’, observed in all the Saami dialects (see Tab. 1 and 2). This change appeared as early as in the Proto-Saami period. If the copulative compound **sāppē-liŋkē*, reconstructed for the Eastern Saami languages, originally meant **sāppä* ‘squirrel’ + **liŋkä* ‘squirrel’, as it is suggested in my paper, then the Proto-Saami change from ‘squirrel’ to ‘mouse’ appears to be additionally verified and strongly confirmed. Also the individual examples in Khanty, quoted in Tab. 2, document a similar semantic development (‘squirrel’ > ‘mouse’).

5. Finno-Permic **ora* / **orapa* / **orawa* ‘squirrel’ = South Samoyed **orâp* ‘Siberian chipmunk’

Additionally I would like to discuss the Finno-Permic term for ‘red squirrel’, *Sciurus vulgaris* L., **ora* : **orapa* : **orawa*, attested in Saami, Finnic, Mordvin, Mari and Permic. The lexical data can be presented as follows:

- 5.1. FP. **ora* / **orapa* / **orawa* ‘red squirrel’ (Rédei 1986–1988:343; Sammallahhti 1988:552; Aikio 2020:78; Zhivlov 2023:162): Saa.S *âeruve* (gen. *âeruvén*), Saa.U *ârrêva*, Saa.L *oar’re*, Saa.N *oar’ri*, Saa.I *várree*, Saa.Sk *vuâr’rev*, Saa.K *vuarřey*, Saa.T *vjerřey* ‘squirrel’ (< PSaa. **oarêvê*; Zhivlov 2023:162); Fi. *orava*, Ol. *orau*, Veps *orav*, Vo. *ôrava*, Est. *orav* (gen. *orava*); Võro *orrav* (gen. *orava*) ‘squirrel’ (< PFi. **orava*; Zhivlov 2023:162); Liv. *vôrâbôz* (gen. *vôrâbô*) ‘squirrel’ (< PFi. **orapas*); Md.M *ura*, Md.E *ur* ‘squirrel’ (< PMd. **ur*; Zhivlov 2023:131); Cher. *ur* ‘squirrel’ (< PMa. **ur*; Zhivlov 2023:133); Pe. *ur* ‘squirrel’ (also ‘money, kopeck’), Yaz. *ur* ‘squirrel’ (< PPerm. **ür*; Zhivlov 2023:136).

A close equivalent of the Finno-Permic terms for ‘red squirrel’ can be found in South Samoyed:

- 5.2. SSam. **orâp*¹⁰ ‘± the Siberian chipmunk, *Eutamias sibiricus* Laxmann’: Mat. *oro?b*, *orop* ‘Siberian chipmunk / *Sciurus striatus*, бурундук’, Karag. *órob* ‘Siberian chipmunk / Burunduk, gestreiftes Backenhörnchen, *Eutamias sibiricus*’ < PU. **orapa* (Helimsky 1997:330; Aikio 2020:78).

The related words, attested in Finno-Permic and South Samoyed, demonstrate two different meanings: ‘red squirrel’ and ‘Siberian chipmunk’. It is worth emphasizing that the semantic aspects of the comparison are

¹⁰ Zhivlov (2023:162) suggests an alternative reconstruction (PS. **ârop*). Aikio (2020:78) gives two possibilities (PSam. **orâp* / **ârop*). In my opinion, the first reconstruction is preferable.

perfectly acceptable. Chipmunks (called also ground squirrels) are small, striped rodents belonging (like squirrels and flying squirrels) to the Sciuridae family. Ante Aikio stresses that the Proto-Samoyed reconstruction “remains somewhat unclear, however, due to lack of cognates in other Samoyed languages” (Aikio 2020:78). Nevertheless, he does not discuss which meaning is primary (‘squirrel’ or ‘chipmunk’), but there is no doubt that he accepts the sense attested in Finno-Permic *a priori* (Aikio 2020:70; Aikio 2022:24). Of course, it is uncertain whether or not the meaning ‘Siberian chipmunk’, registered exclusively in Mator and Karagash, was original in Proto-Samoyed. If the Proto-Uralic homeland is to be placed in Western Siberia, then we can suggest that the Proto-Uralians must have been familiar with the Siberian chipmunk (*Eutamias sibiricus* Laxmann), which is native not only in Siberia (from the Ural Mountains to Sakhalin), but also in Japan, Korea, northern and central China, northern Mongolia and extreme eastern Kazakhstan. Moreover, it cannot be excluded that PU. **ora/pa/* referred originally to ‘the Siberian chipmunk’ (as the South Samoyed lexical material suggests) and secondarily to ‘the red squirrel’ (as in Finno-Permic). The Siberian chipmunk also lives in coniferous forests of the European part of Russia, where probably appeared late as an invasive species. Chipmunks are completely absent in Laponia, Finlandia, Estonia and Hungary, thus we can easily indicate the probable cause of the semantic change (as early as in the Finno-Permic phase) or the reason for the complete loss of the appellative (e.g. in Hungarian). It is highly probable that the Samoyeds, who have lived for millennia in Siberia, have preserved the primitive semantics of the two discussed zoonyms (PU. **ora/pa/* ‘Siberian chipmunk’ vs. PU. **šijirə* ‘squirrel’),



Illustr. 1. Siberian chipmunk

whereas most Finno-Ugric tribes during their expansion from the Siberian Asia to Europe either lost the two primitive terms or transferred them to another animal. This is why I am inclined to suggest the double semantic shift on the basis of the Samoyed and Finno-Ugric lexical data: PU. **ora/pa/* ‘Siberian chipmunk’ > (FP.) ‘red squirrel’ and PU. **šijirə* ‘red squirrel’ > (FU.) ‘mouse’ (the secondary meaning is attested in most Finno-Ugric languages, except for Saami and Mari).

Abbreviations

Cher. – Cheremis (Mari); dial. – dialectal; Est. – Estonian; Fi. – Finnish; FU. – Finno-Ugric; Hu. – Hungarian; Kam. – Kamassian Samoyed; Karag. – Karagash; Kh. – Khanty (Ostyak); Liv. – Livonian; Mat. – Mator Samoyed; Md. – Mordvin; Md.E – Erzya dialect of Mordvin; Md.M – Moksha dialect of Mordvin; Ms. – Mansi (Vogul); Ngan. – Nganasan or Tavgi Samoyed; Nen. – Nenets Samoyed; Nen.F – Forest Nenets; Nen.T – Tundra Nenets; Ol. – Olonets; Pe. – Permyak; PFi. – Proto-Finnic; PKh. – Proto-Khanty (Proto-Ostyak); PMa. – Proto-Mari; PMd. – Proto-Mordvin; PMS. – Proto-Mansi; PPerm. – Proto-Permic; PSaa. – Proto-Saami; PSam. – Proto-Samoyed; PUg. – Proto-Ugric; PYuk. – Proto-Yukaghir; Saa.A – Akalla Saami; Saa.I – Inari Saami; Saa.K – Kildin Saami; Saa.L – Lule Saami; Saa.N – Northern Saami; Saa.P – Pite Saami; Saa.S – South Saami; Saa.Sk – Skolt Saami; Saa.T – Ter Saami; Saa.U – Ume Saami; Selk. – Selkup Samoyed; SSam. – South Samoyed; Taig. – Taigi Samoyed; Udm. – Udmurt (Votyak); Ur. – Uralic; Vo. – Votic; Yaz. – Yazvian (Eastern Permic dialect); Yen. – Yenisei (Enets) Samoyed; Yuk.K – Yukaghir (Kolyma dialect); Yur. – Yurats Samoyed; Zyr. – Zyrian (Komi-Zyrian).

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