

## Excavating an extinct Finnic language

WINKLER, EBERHARD: Krewinisch. Zur Erschließung einer ausgestorbenen ostseefinnischen Sprachform. (Veröffentlichungen der Societas Uralo-Altaica 49). Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz 1997. 468 S.

The Krevins (Latvian *krievīni*, literally: “little Russians”) were a small

ethnic group, presumably never more than ca. 3000 people, in southern Latvia near the town of Bauske and the Lithuanian border. According to their own traditions, their ancestors would have been serfs bought and brought from the island of Saaremaa in Estonia, but later investigations showed the Krevins to be descendants of Votian

prisoners-of-war brought from Ingria in the 1440's. Their language and ethnicity disappeared already during the first half of the 19th century; in 1846, Sjögren's informant, who had not spoken Krevin for many years, found it difficult or impossible to translate even quite short and simple sentences into his half-forgotten mother tongue.

The Krevin language, now presented and analyzed in Eberhard Winkler's new monograph, has only been preserved in half a dozen short texts and word lists, from 1774 (the Bacmeister sample, i.e. a few dozen words and sentences, and an independent word list) to 1933 (one vaguely remembered sentence, the second half of which is unintelligible). The first and, until these days, last more extensive linguistic study on Krevin was written by F. J. Wiedemann in 1871. Wiedemann discovered the Votian origin of the Krevins and their language, and he also published the previous Krevin materials. As Winkler convincingly shows, these "canonized" editions contain some errors and misinterpretations.

Because most of the Krevin materials were written down by people not acquainted with modern phonetics or the Finnic languages, and because the spelling (especially for the quality and quantity of the vowels) seems very inconsistent, the value of these materials to Finnic linguistics has generally been neglected, at least beyond the simple fact that they show no trace of the Votian sound change  $k > \check{c}$  before front vowels (e.g. Kr. *<kessi>*, *<kiesse>*, *<käsi>* 'hand' – cf. Votian

*čäsi*). Winkler, however, has taken a different starting-point in believing that the collectors of these early materials, despite their "foreign" (mostly Baltic-German) background and lack of competence in any Finnic language, did strive to accurate description of the Krevin sounds. Thus, the vacillating spelling must reflect something.

According to Winkler's reconstructions, Krevin would have had a Latvian-like intonation system – like the other Finnic languages spoken in Latvia, i.e. Estonian of the Leivu islet and Livonian (the latter is an important parallel for Winkler, who has already in 1994 published a collection of materials from the extinct Salaca Livonian dialect preserved in equally old manuscripts; cf. Suhonen's review in this volume). Thus the mysterious *h* (normally used to mark the length of the vowel in German and old Latvian orthography), and the horizontal bar, when used together with short vowels, would reflect an original *stød* or *Stoßton* (e.g. *<ihsa>*, *<ihse>* = *i'žǣ* 'father'). Similarly, the inconsistently spelled vowels represent what a foreigner's ear would make of *ē* (in the 1st syllable, e.g. *<ähppi>*, *<œupi>* = *ē'bǣ* 'silver') or centralized or reduced vowels (in non-first syllables, e.g. /a/ in non-first syllables is interpreted as [ǣ] as the average between the usual spellings *<a>* and *<e>*: *<poika>*, *<pojka>* ~ *<poike>* = *po'igǣ* 'son'). An interesting discovery is that the middle-high vowels in Krevin, contrary to Wiedemann's reconstructions, were obviously slightly diphthongized; the seemingly monophthongical spelling

in e.g. *mees* 'man' must be seen in the light of old Latvian orthography, where <ee> was used for *ie*.

Thus, on the basis of re-evaluation and meticulous analysis of the few existing sources, Winkler manages to reconstruct a credible system of Krevin phonetics and phonology (*Lautelehre*). Some of the orthographic inconsistencies can be ascribed to the influence of German and Latvian orthographies, others can be explained away as phonetic variation producing transitory sounds (e.g. [ʔ] in <jahasab> = /johzɛp/ = [joʔʔzɛb] 'run-3sg') or secondary features like labialization (e.g. *a* > *o* after *p* in <polge> = /paljɛ/ = [poʔʔljɛ] 'much'). In some cases, interpolation is used like in the <poika> ~ <poike> example above. The result, plausibly enough, is a phonologically rather simple but phonetically more complex system; many of its main differences compared with Votian proper seem to be features induced or strengthened by Latvian influence, e.g. the reduction of unstressed vowels.

After these phonological interpretations, even morphology can be reconstructed to some extent, although e.g. all case endings have not been attested for all stem types. The Krevin morphology also shows signs of heavy Latvian influence, e.g. the use of the Latvian deminutive suffix *-iņ* also with native stems, and some simplificatory tendencies (the shifts towards morpho-phonologically less complicated stem types like *ampa* 'tooth' for *ammas* : *ampā*-) could be regarded as typical signs of approaching language death. On the other hand, Krevin seems to

have preserved interesting morphological elements like the prolative ending in *vēnutsē* (<woennutzi>) 'slowly', and even created a new case ending, the lative in *\*-tī*.

The chapter on Krevin syntax is inevitably scanty, also because practically all Krevin texts are more or less clumsy translations. In addition to Krevin phonology and syntax, the book also includes a list of the Krevin vocabulary complete with translations, phonological and phonetical interpretations and etymologies (in addition to 455 Finnic lexemes, Winkler has identified nine Estonian, 113 Latvian, three German, two Lithuanian and two Russian loanwords), and all the Krevin texts likewise translated and analyzed. While the systematic presentations of Krevin phonology, morphology and vocabulary have been synchronic, the last part of the book comprises the diachronic developments from Pre-Votian (*Vorurwotisch*) to Krevin as reconstructed.

Eberhard Winkler has done a great work in showing how careful analysis, meticulous criticism and deep knowledge of the historical and linguistic backgrounds can help us retrieve valuable knowledge from scanty and seemingly unreliable sources. Although the result will inevitably remain a tentative construction only, the basic principles in Winkler's work seem sound and solid enough. Of course, there will be many details one can disagree about: for example, I am not quite satisfied with Winkler's reading of <miul leep nelke kolamma> as /miull lēp nälkä [= nsg] kōlē mā/ 'ich habe

Hunger zum Sterben'.<sup>1</sup> In any case, the reader must admire the creative talent Winkler shows e.g. in reading <*Šiwu meelee se iggau ka*> as /*siū mēli seikaugō*> 'thy will ["mind"] be done', with a hypothetic verb derivative \**seikau*- 'happen'.<sup>2</sup> Some riddles remain: what might be the origins and correct interpretations of e.g. <*liāhud*> or <*liend*> 'threshold' or <*nisi meli jad*> '[to] those who trespass [against us]'?

JOHANNA LAAKSO

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> To me, Airila's interpretation with \**nālkā* [illative], i.e. "I shall have to

die of hunger" or, literally, "for me [it] will be to hunger to die", seems more plausible; Finnic modal clauses of this type often lack a formal subject.

- <sup>2</sup> This reflexive derivative in *-u* does have parallels in Krevin, at least *stellau* 'I leave' ["I send myself"] from Latvian (<German) *stelle*-, and the word boundaries are also sometimes incorrectly marked in these texts. However, considering that the translator of the Lord's Prayer had obvious difficulties with abstract concepts and imperative forms (e.g. <*Tulap meģģi tiwi šiwu kikki!*> 'comes to us thy everything' instead of 'thy kingdom come'), I would rather propose a reading like, for example, \**se ikā elkō* '[may] it always be' (cf. Vot. *iččā* 'always').

# Eine neue deutsche Kanteletar-Übersetzung

Kanteletar – Alte finnische Volkslyrik. Ausgewählt, ins Deutsche übertragen und herausgegeben von TRUDE-LIES HOFMANN. Eugen Diederichs Verlag, München 1997. 333 S.

Die neue Kanteletaranthologie ist die dritte Ausgabe des Werks in deutscher Sprache. Ihr gingen Ausgaben von 1882 und 1976 voran. Sie wurde fällig, nicht nur weil die alten längst vergriffen waren, sondern auch weil sie, wie es Ingrid Schellbach-Kopra in ihrem Vorwort feststellte, "als übersetzerische Leistung jeweils einer anderen Epoche" angehörten. In der Anthologie von 1882 hatte Hermann Paul 299 Lieder vorgestellt. Diese Ausgabe bot eine ganze Anzahl poetisch ansprechender Übertragungen, aber auch Texte dar, die viel romantisierendes und aus-

schmückendes Beiwerk enthielten. Der Einfluß der Spätromantik kam deutlich in den Urteilen des Verfassers in seinem Vorwort zum Ausdruck, der die Lieder hier als den "Erguß der reinsten Naturpoesie" charakterisierte, als den "ungetrübten Spiegel eines Volkes, das in vollständiger Abgeschlossenheit sich den Eindrücken der Natur und den Regungen eines unverdorbenen Gemüthes ohne Störung überlassen durfte". H. Pauls Ansichten schlugen sich sowohl in der Auswahl als auch in der Übertragung der Kanteletarlieder nieder.

Mit der zweiten, 1976 von Erich Kunze herausgegebenen und übertragenen Kanteletarauswahl wurde eine Ausgabe vorgelegt, die sich sowohl durch Genauigkeit der Übersetzung als auch durch philologische Sorgfalt