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EDGE, BORDER, SEPARATION: ETYMOLOGICAL MARGINALIA

Abstract. This paper discusses three lexemes found in Western Uralic languages, for which no Samoyed cognate has previously been suggested: 1) Fi *malo* 'ending, edge; beach' ~ MdE, MdM *mala-* 'near' ~ SaaL *muolōs* 'thawed place near the beach of a lake in spring' (?PU **mala*), 2) PSaa **loŋke-*, **loŋk-o-* 'to remove turf or tree bark' > Fi *luŋka* 'easily detachable tree bark' (?PU **luŋka-*), and 3) PU **wäri*(-) 'hillside; roll down'. While the Proto-Uralic origin of **wäri*(-) has been generally accepted, the first two lexemes have previously been considered borrowings from Baltic into Uralic. In this paper, I suggest possible Samoyed cognates for all of these words, arguing for their Proto-Uralic origin. If the Samoyed cognates are accepted, the previously suggested Baltic etymologies will have to be reconsidered.

Keywords: Proto-Uralic, Proto-Samoyed, etymology, reconstruction, historical linguistics.

1. Introduction[1]

The Proto-Samoyed lexicon continues to pose a dilemma for researchers of Uralic language history: despite recent advances in Samoyed etymology (e.g. Aikio 2002; 2006; Salminen 2023), some 70% of Proto-Samoyed stems remain without an etymology (Kaheinen & Salminen 2025). The conventional wisdom has long been to assume that Proto-Samoyed replaced a large part of its lexicon with loans from unknown sources (Grünthal et al. 2022 : 491). Less often, some researchers have considered whether a part of the Western Uralic lexicon, typically assumed to go back to Proto-Uralic, could consist of very early borrowings from e.g. Indo-European languages (cf. Holopainen 2025

[1] The Proto-Samoyed reconstructions in this paper are based on the work of the author and follow the updated system of vowels. Reconstructions from Janhunen (1977) are cited in square brackets. Nenets and Selkup data are cited according to the conventions employed in Salminen 2024. For the purposes of this paper, the Common Selkup reconstructions in SkWb (2004) can be considered to reflect Proto-Selkup forms and are therefore marked with an asterisk. Enets, Kamas, and Mator data are cited according to source. Nganasan data are cited following the phonological transcription in Kaheinen (mscr.). All other data are cited according to their respective sources, unless indicated otherwise.

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for a recent discussion).[2] This would mean that, at least technically, their semantic equivalents in Proto-Samoyed could be considered the descendants of the original Proto-Uralic lexemes, even if this is difficult to prove in practice. (For a recent critical evaluation of some of the earliest Indo-European etymologies, see Metsäranta 2025.)

In practice, there is still a lot to be done on the front of Proto-Samoyed etymology alone before we can hope to reach any sort of clarity concerning the historical development of the Uralic lexicon. It is likely that as new advances are made in the reconstruction of Proto-Samoyed, new Uralic cognates will be discovered as well. Competing etymologies that might arise in the process will have to be carefully considered.

In this paper, I suggest three new Samoyed cognates for Uralic lexemes. One of the three, PU **wäri(-)* 'hillside; roll down', already has a fairly certain Proto-Uralic etymology, to which the Samoyed cognates can be added. The remaining two have pre-existing Baltic etymologies or at least Baltic cognates, the validity of which is called into question in light of the possible Proto-Uralic origin of the stems. The lexemes discussed in this paper are coincidentally unified by a loose semantic connection, as all of them happen to be related to the concepts of 'border' or 'separation'.

2. PS **jə¹ŋkə¹-* 'divide, detach' ?< PU **luŋka-* 'separate, detach'

TE *ďogo-* 'divide' ~ FE *ďɔgode* ~ *ďɔgade* 'other' [ADJ.ABL], *ďɔgoš* 'separately' [ADV] ~ TN DRV *yəŋkaq-* 'separate (e.g. something glued on), take apart (e.g. a building, a box)' ~ FN *jăŋkă-* 'separate, take apart' — ? ~ Ng [DRV] *jeŋkile-* 'fall apart'

PS **jə¹ŋkə¹-* 'divide, detach'

? DRV > **jə̂ŋkå* 'missing an eye' > TE *ďoga* ~ TN [ADJ] *yəŋkey°* ~ Ng *jeŋka* (< **jə̂ŋka*) id.

? DRV > **jə̂ŋkoj* 'trap' > Ng *jeŋguj* : *jeŋku* : *-cü* (U) ~ TE *ďogu* ~ FE *ďɔgo* ~ TN *yəŋko* ~ FN *jăŋku* ~ Slk **ćaŋku* / **ćaŋko* id.

BV, EnSl, FED, JrWb 82—83, Ng20, SkWb 1560, SNg; T65

< ? PU **luŋka-* 'detach, separate'

? =/= Kh **ļaŋk* 'split off; split' (? ~ Mansi *låŋmat-* 'burst') (DEWOS 841—842)

? MdE: *luvoďems* 'become separated; lose colour; become loose' (MdWb II 1085—1086)

Fi *longota* 'be separated (e.g. tree bark, moss, shoe sole, wallpaper), be opened (door)' (SSA 2 : 62); *lunka* 'tree bark that separates in one piece', *lunka-aika* 'time of the year when tree bark is easily separated', *lunkaa* 'be easily detached (of tree bark), come off' etc. (SSA 2 : 74, s.v. *lunka*) < Saa

SaaN *log'go-* 'remove turf or tree bark' ~ Ume SaaP SaaL SaaA Sko Kld (Lehtiranta 1989 : 70—71) < PSaa **loŋke-*, **loŋk-o-* 'remove turf or tree bark' (Aikio 2009 : 115)

UEW 256 **luŋkɜ-* 'split off, be separated' | SSA 2 : 62 s.v. *longota* ← ?Saa, ?Balt; 74 s.v. *lunka* | Aikio 2009 : 115—116 Fi *lunka* ← PSaa **loŋkē-*

[2] Even though the particular lexeme discussed by Holopainen (2025 : 98—99), PU **weti* 'water' (? < IE), has a cognate in Samoyed, in contrast to the supposedly more original PU **ćäčä* 'water', which has reflexes only in Khanty and Saami (Salminen 1989), my general point still stands.

← Balt.; Saa & Fi =/= MdE *luvoďems*, *lungiďums* | Mansi *låŋmat-* ?=/= Kh **ļaŋk* (DEWOS 842)

UEW (256) gives the reconstruction **luŋkś-* 'split off, be separated', listing cognates from Ob-Ugric, Erzya, Finnish, and Saami. Aikio (2009 : 115) does not mention the Ob-Ugric cognates, while SSA (2 : 62) regards them as uncertain. Nowhere, as far as I know, are any Samoyed cognates mentioned. SSA (2 : 62) gives an uncertain Baltic etymology for the Finnic words (cf. below).

The Ob-Ugric forms given in UEW (256) are semantically compatible, but the phonological correspondences seem problematic. If the word family were to go back to PU **luŋka-*, one would expect POU **u* in the first syllable, which would yield PKh **ŭ* and PMs **a* (Живлов 2007 : 282). Instead, the attested Khanty cognates in DEWOS rather refer to POU **ā* > Kh **a* (cf. Zhivlov 2023 : 149). Mansi T *låŋmat-* 'bersten' is mentioned in DEWOS (842) in connection with Kh **ļaŋk*, but due to its consonantism, it cannot be a regular cognate of this word family.

In Finnic, the word *lunka* 'easily detachable tree bark', etc. (SSA 2 : 74) is attested only in and around the Finnish dialects of Satakunta. It is technically a perfectly regular cognate of the Saami words (Aikio 2009 : 115) and could therefore even go back to Proto-Uralic **luŋka-*. However, Aikio (2009 : 115) considers its narrow distribution to be evidence that it is more likely a borrowing from Saami into Finnish, from PSaa **loŋkē-*, **loŋk-ō-* 'to remove turf or tree bark'. Since the sound substitutions between Saami and Finnic have parallels, borrowing from Saami should be considered a viable possibility. The eastern dialects of Finnish have a parallel borrowing, *longota* 'come off easily', from the same Saami word family (Koponen 1988; 1996; SSA 2 : 62). According to Aikio (2009 : 115—116), this further supports the borrowing argument for Fi *lunka*.

The Finnish and Saami words are compared to Baltic, cf. Lith *lùnkas* 'bast', OPr *lunkan*, Ltv *lūks* id. (SSA 2 : 74), although SSA remarks that the etymology can only be accepted if the meaning 'bast' is considered more original on the Uralic side, rather than 'split, separate'. Aikio (2009 : 115—116) accepts the Baltic etymology for the Saami word, which, according to him, was later borrowed into Finnish. Erzya *luvoďems* 'split, become separated' and *lungiďums* id., both compared to the word family by SSA (2 : 74, s.v. *lunka*) and UEW (256), are criticised by Aikio (2009 : 116), who notes that neither *-v-* nor *u* corresponds to the Saami and Finnic cognates.

According to Grünthal (2012 : 320), MdE *luvoďems*, *lungi̯ďums*, MdM *lungə̑ďəms*, *luvə̑ďəms* 'loosen, become uneven; peel' etc. (MdWb II 1085—1086) cannot go back to a common form with PSaa **loŋkē-* due to first-syllable vocalism; if the words were of common origin, one would expect to find first-syllable *o* instead of *u*. Accordingly, he maintains that the Mordvin verb is a parallel loan to Saami **loŋkē-* from Proto-Baltic **lunka* > Lith *lùnkas* 'bast', OPr *lunkan*, Ltv *lūks* id. (cf. Derksen 2015 : 296), although he also notes that the Baltic original is presumably a noun, while in Mordvin, only verbs are attested. This weakens the etymology somewhat, albeit without making it outright impossible (Grünthal 2012 : 320). It should be noted that the Baltic word family has cognates only in Slavic and no clear etymology beyond that, according to Derksen (2015 : 296).

MdWb lists the forms as derived from MdE, MdM *luv* 'space between two fingers' (MdWb II 1085—1087), which cannot, however, be the underived

form of MdE *lungɨďums*, MdM *lungə̑ďəms*, since Mordvin *ng* cannot be derived from *v* (Grünthal 2012 : 320). Instead, MdE, MdM *luv* is a separate Baltic loan (Grünthal 2012 : 319).

At least the Saami-Finnic words may turn out to be Uralic after all, since the word family has possible cognates in Samoyed: TE *ďogo-* 'separate', FE *ďɔgode* ~ *ďɔgade* 'other' [ADJ.ABL], *ďɔgoš* 'separately' [ADV] ~ TN DRV *yəŋkaq-* 'separate', FN *jăŋkă-* id. (cf. also Ng [DRV] *jeŋkiľe-* 'fall apart'), which can be reconstructed as Proto-Samoyed **jə¹ŋkə¹-* (see above for dictionary sources). Since PU **l* changes to PS **j* almost regularly in this position, and **u* in **a-*stems changes to **ə̑*, the correspondence PU **luŋka-* ~ PS **jə¹ŋkə¹-* can be considered plausible. The change of second-syllable **a* to **ə̑* is regular as well, although the exact conditions remain controversial (Zhivlov 2023 : 151).

The underived Proto-Samoyed stem does not appear in Janhunen (1977) due to the narrow distribution of cognates. Cognates preserving the primary meaning 'separate, split (v., tr.)' are found only in Enets and Nenets (unless the scarcely attested Nganasan *jeŋkile-* 'fall apart', found in the NSL corpus (Brykina et al. 2018, cf. Ng20), is a cognate). However, there are several possible deverbal derivatives of the stem that have a wider distribution, e.g. TE *ďoga* 'one-eyed' ~ TN *yəŋkey°* ~ Ng *jeŋka* id. < ? DRV PS **jə̑ŋkå(-jə̑)* ~ Ng **jə̑ŋka*. It should be considered a possibility that even the hitherto unetymologised PS **jə̑ŋkoj* 'trap' (> Ng *jeŋguj* : *jeŋku* : *-cü* (U) (SNg) ~ TE *ďogu* (EnSl) ~ FE *ďɔgo* (FED) ~ TN *yəŋko* (T65) ~ FN *jăŋku* (JrWb 83a) ~ Slk **ćaŋku* / **ćaŋko* (SkWb 1560) id.) is ultimately a derivative of this stem, the tentative semantic development being 'separate' > 'enclose, capture' (cf. also TE *ďogo-* > DRV.INST *ďogoďe?* 'reindeer corral [for separating reindeer]'). The suffix would be the same rare albeit salient **-j* as in PS **aŋoj* 'chin' ← DRV **aŋ* 'mouth' < PU **aŋi*, which, as demonstrated here, is able to labialise the preceding vowel.

In any case, Nenets and Enets alone provide sufficient evidence for the reconstruction of PS **jə¹ŋkə¹-* 'separate', which is in principle a perfect match for PU **luŋka-*. Due to insufficient evidence, relating PS **jə̑ŋkoj* 'trap' to this word family should be viewed cautiously for now.

The only possible caveat with the comparison PS **jə¹ŋkə¹-* ~ PU **luŋka-* lies in the fact that, at least based on the Tundra Nenets participle *yəŋk°nya* 'separated' (T65), the Proto-Samoyed stem would have to be reconstructed as front-vocalic: **jəŋkə-*, instead of the back-vocalic **jə̑ŋkə̑-* that would be the expected cognate of the back-vocalic PU stem. According to the unpublished data of Valentin Gusev (Gusev mscr.),[3] Nganasan *jeŋkile-* ~ *jeŋkele-* belongs to the (I) class, i.e. it appears to be historically front-vocalic, which contradicts the presumed back-vocalic parent stem in Proto-Uralic. Although vowel harmony is highly stable in Nganasan (cf. Хелимский [1993] 2000), a change of harmony class might be marginally possible (cf. Гусев 2025). As there is nothing to rule out absolutely the possibility of reconstructing PU **luŋka-*, given that the Saami cognates are regular, it should still be considered a potentially viable etymology.

3. PS **målə̑* 'end, edge, shore; closed' < ?PU **mala*

Ng *mole* : *-du* (U) 'cape, sandbank, shallow place'; *mou mole* 'Yamal', TN *mal°* 'end, top, top of the head; upper course of a river, fountainhead; treetop; closed (e.g. a lake without a river)'; DRV v. *maləq-* 'end, have something

[3] I thank Valentin Gusev for allowing me to utilise his data.

as an ending; go from beginning to end, look through completely', *Yamal°* 'Yamal, the northern part of the Yamal peninsula' < *yah mal°*, lit. 'the end of the land'; FN *mał°* 'end, top, treetop, top of the head; upper course of a river, fountainhead', TE *maro* 'whole, complete; not having an exit (e.g. a box)' (EnSl), FE DRV *marida-* 'wrap (tr.)', *mario-* 'lock (itr.)' (FED)

BV; EnSl; FED; JrWb 250b; NgSl; SNg; T65

< PS **målə* 'end, edge'

Fi *malo* 'edge, side; slit, hole; bay, shore'; Ka *malo* 'shallow water'; Est *mala* 'sandy shore' (SSA 2 : 116)

SaaL *muolos*, *muolun*, Sko *muâlas* 'ice-free area in a lake near the shore in springtime' (= current literary language *mue´les* (Sammallahti & Mosnikoff 1991 : 104)), SaaL *muolostit* 'become free from ice' < PSaa **muolōs*, ?SaaN *moalus* 'small fragments of ice on the water' ?SaaA *muálus* 'ice melting at the shore (in the spring)' (Olthuis & Valtonen & Seurujärvi, & Trosterud 2015—2022); Ter *mī̮l̥l̥e* < PSaa **muolē* (Kuokkala 2018 : 28; Lehtiranta 1989 : 78—79)

MdE *malaso* 'close' (LOC), MdM *malasa* id., MdE *malasto*, MdM *malasta* (ABL) (MdWb II 1166)

Nuutinen 1987; SSA 2 : 116 Fi *mala* ~ Ka, Est, Saa, Md ← Balt | Sanat PFi **mala* | Kuokkala 2018 : 28 PSaa **muolōs* ?~ Fi, Md | Grünthal 2012 : 311, 322 Md ?~ Fi, Saa

The Nganasan and Nenets words in this comparison refer to various endings, especially of geographical kind; in Nganasan, the main meaning seems to be 'cape', whereas in Nenets, the endings are of a more vertical kind ('treetop; fountainhead'). The semantic comparison is generally unproblematic. A further interesting parallel is found in the toponymic usage of the word: TN *Yamal°* < *yah mal°* [earth-GEN end] 'Yamal, the north part of the Yamal peninsula', lit. 'the end of the land' (JrWb 87a; T65) ~ Ng *Mou mole* [land.GEN end] 'Yamal' (NgSl). The Yamal Peninsula is inhabited mainly by Tundra Nenets reindeer herders, and there is no record of Nganasan being spoken in the area, but Nganasans must nonetheless have been aware of its existence, since it is not located too far from Taimyr, the principal area where Nganasan is spoken. Another name for Yamal, clearly borrowed directly from Tundra Nenets, is attested in the sung folklore (*śitebï*) of the Nganasans: *Jalumale* ~ *Jaumale*, cf. the NSL corpus (Brykina et al. 2018). This corroborates the Nganasan narrative, according to which they borrowed the *śitebï* tales from the Nenets (Долгих 1976 : 17). However, *Mou mole*, attested in Helimski's dictionary manuscript (NgSl), seems to be the more original Nganasan name for Yamal, and it cannot be a borrowing. At most, it could be a calque of the Tundra Nenets toponym, as the first parts of the respective names, TN *ya* and Ng *mou*, both meaning 'land, earth', are not etymologically cognate, and the second parts are attested independently and regularly go back to Proto-Samoyed.

The Nenets languages have the phonologically identical stems TN *mal°* 'whole, complete, closed from all sides' (JrWb 251b; T65), e.g. *mal° to* 'lake with no river', *mal° myaq* 'tent with no smoke hole' (T65) ~ FN *mał°* id. (JrWb 251b). Some Nenets dictionaries, such as BV, combine the word families 'end' and 'complete', but they are treated as separate in e.g. T65 and JrWb. Since the meanings are nonetheless very close, the words can be considered part of the same family. This allows us to add the Enets cognates, which

lack the meaning 'end, edge' but have the meaning 'closed': TE *maro* 'whole, complete; not having an exit (e.g. a box)' (EnSl) ~ FE DRV *marida-* 'wrap (tr.)', *mario-* 'lock (itr.)' (FED). Another possible derivative of this word family is Tundra Nenets *malcya* 'sack-like man's fur coat, with fur on the inside and the cap sewn on' (JrWb 251), not attested in Forest Nenets.[4] FE *malča* 'fur coat' (FED), TE *malʹca* id. (EnSl) are clearly loans from Tundra Nenets.

The regular underived Proto-Samoyed form can be reconstructed as **målə̑*.

Given the narrow distribution of the stem in the Samoyed languages and the curious fact that it appears in the name of a major geographical formation on the Siberian coast, one could still speculate whether the Nganasan and Nenets words actually go back to Proto-Samoyed at all, or whether they might be exceptionally early borrowings from some local, extinct language into the already separate pre-Nenets and pre-Nganasan languages. However, there are possible cognates of this word elsewhere in the Uralic family, which, if they can be accepted, would confirm the Uralic and, consequently, the Proto-Samoyed origin of **målə̑*.

Nganasan *mole* ~ TN *mal°* ~ FN *mał°* can be compared to Fi *malo* 'edge, side; slit, hole; bay, shore', Ka *malo* 'shallow water', Est *mala* 'sandy shore' < PFi **mala*[5] (?) ~ SaaL *muolos* ~ *muolun* ~ Sko *muâlas* 'ice hole forming at the shore of a lake in spring', SaaL *muolōstit-* 'be freed of ice (a shore in the spring)' < PSaa **muolōs* < DRV PSaa **muolē* > Ter *mīļļe* (Kuokkala 2018 : 28—29) ~ MdE *malaso* ~ MdM *malasa* 'close, close by' (MdWb II 1166) (cf. Kuokkala 2018 : 28—29; SSA 2 : 116; Jakob 2023 : 206 for comparisons). These could technically go back to Proto-Uralic **mala*, which corresponds to Proto-Samoyed **målə̑*; compare PS **sålə̑-* 'flash' < PU **śala-* 'flash, lighten' (Aikio 2002 : 27—29).

The only direct obstacle to supposing a common Proto-Uralic origin for the Samoyed and Western Uralic words is the Baltic etymology proposed for the latter: the Finnic, Saami, and Mordvin words are compared to Lith *mala* 'edge, shore', Ltv *mala* 'edge, shore, boundary', cf. Ltv dial. *lȳg malis* 'filled to the brim' (Nuutinen 1987; SSA 2 : 116; Junttila 2012 : 281; Jakob 2023 : 206). A Latvian etymology for the word family was proposed as early as 1929 by Loorits (1929 : 175—176).[6] The Estonian cognate *mala* 'sandy shore' is attested only once in one parish and as part of a toponym (Loorits 1929 : 176). The etymology is regarded as relatively clear by Junttila (2012 : 281). Grünthal (2012 : 311, 322) considers the Mordvin forms to be borrowings from Baltic and either parallel to or of common origin with the Finnic and Saami forms. Jakob (2023 : 206) generally accepts the comparison of the Uralic and Baltic words but notes that the Baltic forms do not have an unambiguous Indo-European origin. Agreeing with Nuutinen (1987), he considers Old Irish *mala* 'eyebrow' < **mlH* (Pedersen 1913 : 99, via Jakob 2023 : 207) to be a possible Indo-European cognate, which, despite the semantic distance, can be considered plausible, as there are apparent parallels for this semantic development (Jakob 2023 : 207, footnote 272).

[4] This connection was brought to my attention by Juha Janhunen at the etymological workshop at the University of Helsinki in April 2026.
[5] Reconstruction according to the Sanat database: https://sanat.csc.fi/wiki/Etymologiadata:imsm:mala.
[6] I thank my peer reviewer for relaying this information to me.

If the Samoyed cognates can be accepted, the Baltic words would have to be considered either borrowings from Uralic or an instance of chance resemblance between the two families. Considering the large semantic distance between the Baltic words and their alleged Indo-European cognates, the former option is not entirely implausible. Even if the Baltic words turn out to be Indo-European in origin, contamination from Finnic affecting their meaning cannot be ruled out, as has already been pointed out by e.g. Mägiste (1939 : 69).

Selkup **mālmə-* 'come to an end', e.g. Ket Selkup *kueit malməŋ* 'the soul leaves (a person dies)'; *sɐ̨rrot mālmaŋ* 'the rain ends' (SkWb 900), is a marginally possible cognate of PS **målə̑* 'end, edge, shore', although one would expect Proto-Selkup **ō* or **ū* (~ **o*, **u*) in the first syllable instead of **ā*, which is a possible, albeit rare, cognate of PS **å*.

Reconstructing PU **mala* remains a valid possibility.

4. PS *wärə 'border, edge' < PU *wäri 'hillside; roll down'

Ng PP *bere-* 'edge' : ABL-1DU *bere-te-ni* 'by the two of us' : LOC-1SG *beretene* 'on my own'; Slk **kerə̨*: Tym *kɐ̨r* 'seam; the hemmed edge of a Samoyed coat'; Taz *sōlʹ kēr* 'collar (e.g. in a shirt)'

Ng20; SkWb 2323

< PS **wärə*

Fi *vieri*(-) 'side, flank; (v.) roll down' ~ Ing Ka Lu Ve Est Liv (SSA 3 : 415)

SaaS *vïere* 'hillside' ~ Ume SaaL SaaN SaaA Sko Kld Ter; SaaN *fierra-* 'roll down' ~ SaaP SaaL SaaA Sko Kld (Lehtiranta 1989 : 150—151)

MdE *veŕe* 'up high' MdM *väŕä* id.[7] (MdWb IV 2573)

< PU **wäri*(-) (Aikio 2012 : 234) | Itkonen 1975 : 170—171; UEW 820 ?~ MdE, MdM *viŕ* 'forest' (cf. MdWb IV 2661)

Aikio (2012 : 234) reconstructs Proto-Uralic **wäri*(-) 'hillside; roll down' with the following cognates: Fi *vieri* 'side; place or space along something', *vieri-* 'roll down' ~ SaaS *vïere* 'steep hillside' ~ SaaN *fierra-* 'roll down'; MdM *väŕä* 'up high'. Cognates are widely attested in the Finnic, Saami, and Mordvin branches (see above). Mordvin *viŕ* 'forest' (MdWb IV 2661) is connected to the word family in UEW (820), although already Itkonen (1975 : 170—171), who discusses the etymology at length, notes that *viŕ* is not a regular cognate and it is therefore unlikely that it should belong to this cognate set. He later speculates about the possibility of including the stem anyway, on the basis that forests might have been particularly common in elevated areas where Proto-Mordvin was spoken, but as Itkonen himself acknowledges, the historical phonology of the stem meaning 'forest' would nonetheless be irregular (Itkonen 1975 : 173).

To the Finnic-Saami-Mordvin comparison, one can add Ng *bere-* 'edge' and Slk **kerə̨* 'seam, collar' (= 'edge in a piece of clothing'), which provide a good phonological and semantic match for the Western Uralic cognates. The Proto-Samoyed form **wärə*, reconstructed on the basis of Nganasan and Selkup, corresponds unproblematically to PU **wäri*, although one would expect the second-syllable vowel to be dropped in Samoyed. The reconstructed vowel

[7] These appear to be derivatives, but the presumed underived stem, M **väŕ* 'heights, highness', is only given as a reconstruction, rather than being attested by itself.

stem could be secondary, with the restored stem vowel probably originating from an epenthetic vowel, something that is not uncommon in Proto-Samoyed stems (cf. e.g. PU **suŋi* 'summer' > TN *təh* < PS **tə̑ŋ* but Ng *teŋe* < PS **tə̑ŋə̑*). Given that the Nganasan stem is only attested bearing suffixes, joined with the mid vowel /e/ [*ə*] that can also act as an epenthetic vowel, reconstructing an original vowel stem in PS seems even more probable. In that case, the Selkup vowel stem would have to be a post-Proto-Samoyed innovation.

In a stem of the type PS *CVC*ə*[1], i.e. a vowel stem, the first syllable **ä* is expected to be lengthened and raised to Proto-Selkup **ī* (Хелимский 2007). Alatalo (SkWb 2323) reconstructs a short **e* in this stem, although the Taz cognate *kēr* appears to show lengthening. Stems that have undergone the regular lengthening proposed by Helimski sometimes lack the expected raising (e.g. PS **kär-* ~ **kärə-* 'get dressed' > Slk **śēr-* id. (SkWb 2701)), so Slk **kerə̄* (?**kērə̄*) could also qualify as an example of Helimski's Law, if the Tym Selkup cognate *kȩ̨r* is taken to be secondarily shortened. The available evidence is too inconclusive to decide whether the word has undergone lengthening or not, but I do not regard it as a decisive factor in assessing the acceptability of the Proto-Uralic etymology, either way.

Although direct cognates of PU **wäri* are attested only in Nganasan and Selkup, it is possible that a derivative exists in PS **wärə-* (?→ DRV **wäri-*, **wärus-*) 'cut through, divide': Ng *beri-* (I), DRV *beris-* (I) 'cut, cut up' (SNg), TE *beri-* 'cut, divide' [often used as a term for processing fish], DRV *berus-* 'take apart' (EnSl), FE DRV *beriču-* 'cut out' (FED), TN DRV *yerəq-* 'cut into strips, take apart; clean up the insides', FN *wyełă-* 'cut apart with a knife (e.g. a piece of clothing, a pelt, a fish); clean up a fish' (JrWb 109a). The semantic distance between 'edge' and 'cut through' is perhaps not too vast to include the verbal stems in the comparison as derivatives. Although there are, to my knowledge, no direct parallels for such a semantic shift, the word family appears to have had both the meaning 'edge' and 'move along the edge of sth.' already in Proto-Uralic, cf. Fi *vieri-* 'roll down'. The polysemy of 'cut' and 'move through' is also attested in the Nganasan verb *motu-*. Considering that in Selkup the cognates of PS **wärə* refer specifically to edges (hems) of clothing, the action of cutting (e.g. leather to make clothing) is not very far away semantically. However, the connection between the noun **wärə* and the verb stems **wäri-*, **wärus-* etc. may be considered uncertain at this point.

Nganasan *bere*(-) 'side' should not be confused with *bore* (U) 'side' (SNg *бəрə* 'край'), which is part of a different word family: PS **wårə̑* < PU **wara* 'edge' (Zhivlov 2014 : 120). Both lexemes are attested multiple times in the NSL corpus (Brykina et al. 2018) and recorded in the materials of Valentin Gusev,[8] confirming that neither of them is an isolated spelling error, even if the front-vocalic *bere-* cannot be found in SNg.

There is little room for doubt that Nganasan *bere*(-) and Selkup **kerə̄* belong to the Uralic cognate set of **wäri*.

5. Conclusion

Important advances in the documentation of the Samoyed languages and the reconstruction of the Proto-Samoyed lexicon and its connections to Proto-Uralic have been made over the last 25 years. As work on Proto-

[8] I thank Valentin Gusev for allowing me to access his unpublished Nganasan data.

Samoyed continues, novel etymological proposals will keep emerging from the data, complementing and occasionally contradicting pre-existing views on the origin of certain items in the Uralic lexicon. All these proposals should receive adequate scrutiny, so that, in the end, we may hope to have a clearer conception of the relationship between the Samoyed languages and the rest of the Uralic family. With this paper, I hope to contribute to the ongoing discussion.

Data availability statement. The lexical data cited in this paper are from published dictionaries, as well as unpublished word lists and manuscripts, as indicated in the References. The data contained in the "Nganasan Corpus Word List" (Ng20) were extracted from the publicly available "Nganasan Spoken Language Corpus" (Brykina et al. 2018) and arranged into a word list by the present author.

The Nganasan and Enets data cited as NgSl and EnSl, respectively, refer to the electronic versions of unpublished word lists by Eugene Helimski, made available to the author by Valentin Gusev. The author has also been granted access to Valentin Gusev's unpublished Nganasan lexical data (Gusev mscr.).

All other data are from publicly available sources.

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Abbreviations

Est — Estonian, **FE** — Forest Enets, **Fi** — Finnish, **FN** — Forest Nenets, **Ing** — Ingrian, **Ka** — Karelian, **Kh** — Khanty, **Kld** — Kildin Saami, **Lith** — Lithuanian, **Liv** — Livonian, **Lu** — Ludic, **Ltv** — Latvian, **MdE** — Erzya, **MdM** — Moksha, **Ng** — Nganasan, **OPr** — Old Prussian, **PFi** — Proto-Finnic, **PKh** — Proto-Khanty, **PMs** — Proto-Mansi, **POU** — Proto-Ob-Ugric, **PSaa** — Proto-Saami, **PS** — Proto-Samoyed, **PU** — Proto-Uralic, **SaaA** — Aanaar Saami, **SaaL** — Lule Saami, **SaaN** — North Saami, **SaaP** — Pite Saami, **SaaS** — South Saami, **Sko** — Skolt Saami, **Slk** — Selkup, **TE** — Tundra Enets, **TN** — Tundra Nenets, **Ve** — Veps.

Glossing abbreviations: 1DU — first-person dual, ABL — ablative, ADJ — adjective, ADV — adverb, CAUS — causative, DRV — derivation, GEN — genitive, INST — instrumental, **itr.** — intransitive, PP — postposition, **tr.** — transitive, **v.** — verb.

BV — М. Я. Бармич, И. А. Вэлло, Словарь ненецко-русский и русско-ненецкий, Ст. Петербург: Просвещение, 2002; **EnSl** — Е. А. Хелимский, Энецкий словарь [Unpublished manuscript]; **FED** — Andrey Shluinsky, Forest Enets Dictionary, Szeged: University of Szeged, 2025 (Studia Uralo-Altaica 58). https://doi.org/10.14232/sua.2025.58; **JrWb** — Toivo Lehtisalo, Juraksamojedisches Wörterbuch, Helsinki: Suoma-

lais-Ugrilainen Seura, 1956 (LSFU XIII); **MdWb** — H. Paasonens Mordwinisches Wörterbuch, Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura, 1990—1999 (LSFU XXIII); **NgSl** — Е. А. Хелимский, Нганасанский словарь [Unpublished manuscript]; **Ng20** — Kaisla Kaheinen, Nganasan corpus word list [Unpublished manuscript]; **Sanat** — Sanat database. Etymologiadata:imsm:mala. Kielipankki. The Language Bank of Finland. https://sanat.csc.fi/wiki/Etymologiadata:imsm:mala; **SkWb** — Sölkupisches Wörterbuch. Aus Aufzeichnungen von Kai Donner, U. T. Sirelius und Jarmo Alatalo. Zusammengestellt von Jarmo Alatalo, Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura, 2004 (LSFU XXX); **SNg** — Н. Т. Костеркина, А. Ч. Момде, Т. Ю. Жданова, Нганасанско-русский и русско-нганасанский словарь, Санкт-Петербург: Филиал издательства Просвещение, 2001; **T65** — Н. М. Терещенко, Ненецко-русский словарь, Москва: Советская энциклопедия, 1965.

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КАЙСЛА КАХЕЙНЕН (Хельсинки)

КРАЙ, ГРАНИЦА, ОТДЕЛЕНИЕ: ЭТИМОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ МАРГИНАЛИИ

Статья посвящена этимологии трех слов, встречающихся в финно-угорской ветви уральских языков, для которых до сих пор не были представлены соответствия в самодийских языках: фин. *malo* 'конец, край; берег' ~ эрз., мокш.

mala- 'недалеко' ~ луле-саам. *muolōs* 'берег озера, оттаявший ото льда весной' (?прауральское **mala*); прасаамское **loŋkē-*, **loŋk-ō-* 'сдирать мох или кору дерева' > soome *luŋka* 'легко отделяющаяся кора дерева' (?прауральское **luŋka-*); прауральское **wäri(-)* 'склон горы; скатываться вниз'.

Считается общепринятым, что слово **wäri(-)* имеет прауральское происхождение, однако первые два слова принято считать заимствованиями из балтийских языков. В данной статье предложены самодийские соответствия для всех трех слов и обосновано их прауральское происхождение. Если признать саамодийские соответствия, то ранее предложенные балтийские этимологии необходимо пересмотреть.

KAISLA KAHEINEN (Helsingi)

SERV, PIIR, EEMALDAMINE: ETÜMOLOOGILISI MARGINAALE

Artiklis on käsitletud kolme läänepoolsetes uurali keeltes esinevat sõna, millele ei ole seni esitatud samojeedi vastet: soome *malo* 'lõpp, serv; rand' ~ ersa, mokša *mala-* 'lähedal' ~ Lule-saami *muolōs* 'kevadine sulanud koht järve kalda lähedal' (?alguurali **mala*); algsaami **loŋkē-*, **loŋk-ō-* 'mätast või puukoort eemaldama' > soome *luŋka* 'kergesti eralduv puukoor' (?alguurali **luŋka-*); alguurali **wäri(-)* 'mäenõlv; alla veerema'.

Sõna **wäri(-)* alguurali päritolu on üldiselt omaks võetud, aga kaht esimest on varem peetud balti laenudeks. Olen pakkunud artiklis kõigile neile sõnadele samojeedi vasted ja põhjendanud nende alguurali päritolu. Kui samojeedi vasted heaks kiita, siis tuleb varem esitatud balti etümoloogiad uuesti üle vaadata.