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From Surging Waves to the Spirit of Waves – On the Germanic and Sami Origin of the Proper Names *Ahti* and *Vellamo* in Finnic Mythology¹

Abstract

This article mainly deals with the origin of the proper names *Ahti* and *Vellamo*. They both occur in Finnic mythology, where *Vellamo* is a female water-deity while *Ahti* has several manifestations, e.g. a male deity of water and forest as well as a skilled warrior. *Ahti* also occurs in farm, village and family names, mainly in southern and western Finland. I propose that the proper name *Ahti* is diachronically a triple homonym. I suggest that two of these three homonymic lexemes have a Germanic etymology. The third lexeme is likely to be of Proto-Sami origin. In addition, I argue that the verbal root in the name *Vellamo* is a Germanic loanword, too. From this and my previous study on the topic (Heikkilä 2012b), I draw the conclusion that a significant number of names of characters in Finnic pre-Christian mythology stem from the Iron Age and are of Germanic origin. It also appears as if some fictional mythical characters may ultimately have been based on a real-world person.

1. Introduction

This onomastic and etymological article continues a discussion of the origin of the names of the characters in Finnic mythology (see Heikkilä 2012b; cf. Salo 2012; Siikala 2012). The primary purpose of the present article is to discover the origin(s) of the polysemic Finnish proper name *Ahti*, whose etymology is obscure (see SMS s.v. *ahti*, SSA s.v. *Ahti*). The name *Ahti* has several manifestations. For instance, *Ahti* is a male deity of water and forest as well as a skilled warrior known as *Ahti Saarelainen*. The origin of the semantically related characters *Kaukomieli*, *Faravid* and

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Torre as well as another aquatic theonym, *Vellamo*, is discussed, too. In addition, the question about the ultimate historicity of some characters in Finnic mythology is discussed in this article. Where does a particular word come from? This question is often posed by both etymologists and lay people. The answer that one encounters in etymological dictionaries is most often one of the following three alternatives: the word in question is autochthonic and descends from Proto-X; the word is a borrowing from language X; or the origin of the word is unknown/obscure/disputed. In the case of the Finnish proper name *Ahti*, however, it seems as if the lexeme had several different (so far unknown) origins of different ages (cf. Turunen 1979: 12–14; SSA s.v. *Ahti*; Siikala 2012: 280, 283, 372–374).

2. The multiple origins and original meanings of *Ahti*

“Aika on Ahtia sanoa” (Lönnrot 1849 11:1).² In the major manifestations of Finnic mythology, that is to say the Kalevalaic rune songs, *Ahti* is among other things a male water spirit, and another water spirit, *Vellamo*, is said to be his wife. In fact, the name *Ahti* occurs in as many as four contexts in the Finnish language, in each of which it turns out to have a different being; two of these *Ahtis* are mythical and the other two are real. Firstly, *Ahti* is best known as the king of waves (Fin *Ahti aaltojen kuningas*), i.e. a deity of water, and his spouse *Vellamo* is the mistress of water (Fin *Vellamo veen emäntä*). In addition, this mythical *Ahti* has also been attested in the meanings ‘deity of forest, wind and earth’. This first use of *Ahti* has a cognate only in Karelian poetic language, where *Ahto* means ‘deity of the forest’ (cf. *oksi* ‘bear’ → *ohto* ‘bear’). The earliest attestation of the mythical *Ahti* is found in Mikael Agricola’s catalogue of pre-Christian Tavastian gods in the foreword to his Finnish translation of Psalter from the year 1551 CE. Agricola writes that “Ahti wedhest Caloia toi” [‘Ahti brought fish from the water’]. (Haavio 1967: 87–94; Turunen 1979: 12–13; SSA s.v. *Ahti*; Vahtola 1997: 268–270; Siikala 2012: 372–375.)

Secondly, Finnic epic folk poetry knows a character called *Ahti Saarelainen* (“Ahti the Islander”), a skilled warrior who lives on an island and owns a great deal of gold and silver gained as booty from wars (see further in Chapter 3) (Haavio 1967: 87–94; Turunen 1979: 12–13; SKVR 2006; SSA s.v. *Ahti*; Siikala 2012: 372–375). Thirdly, the name-element *Ahti* commonly occurs in names of farms and villages and related

² “It is time to speak about Ahti” (translated by the present writer).

surnames, such as *Ahtiala* (e.g. *Achtialast*, *Achtialan* in 1478 CE), mainly in Finland Proper, Tavastia and Satakunta, and many of them stem from the Middle Ages (SPNK 2007: 16; MapSite). Old Finnish toponyms, mainly farm names, augmented with the common locative and oikonym suffix *-la/-lä* are almost exclusively based on a personal name (Kiviniemi 1975: 55). Consequently, *Ahti* too must have been a medieval male name, e.g. *Erich Ahti* in 1465 CE (see Mikkonen & Paikkala 2000: 59–60). The three earliest attestations of the medieval personal name *Ahti* are found in a Papal bull from the year 1340 CE, which mentions <Hactissænpoysca> which must be read **Ahtisenpoika* [‘Ahtinen’s son’]³ (Diplomatarium Fennicum No. 467).⁴

Fourthly, *Ahti* is a Kalevala-inspired Finnish neo-ancient male name in use since the Finnish National Romantic era at the end of the 19th century. This male name is the youngest of the uses of *Ahti* and its model is Kalevala’s character *Ahti*; a mixture of the folk poetry characters *Lemminkäinen*, *Ahti Saarelainen*, *Kaukomieli* and *Veitikka/Veitikkä* created by Kalevala’s compiler Elias Lönnrot. (Haavio 1967: 87–94; Turunen 1979: 12–13; USN: 24–25, 271–272; Vahtola 1997: 268–270; Siikala 2012: 279–283).

So where does the noun *Ahti* come from? The sound shape of the word accidentally resembles that of the Finnish verb *ahtaa* ‘to stuff, cram, pack; hang up to dry’ (SSA s.v. *ahtaa*), but this is a pure coincidence because *Ahti* cannot be a *j*-derivative from the Proto-Finnic protoform **akta-tak* of the verb *ahtaa*, which would have rendered either **Akta-j* > ***Aktoi* > ***Ahtoi* or **Akta-j* > ***Akti* > ***Aksi* instead of *Ahti* (cf. **tala-j* > *taloi* > *talo* ‘house’, *lakka* ‘shelter’ → **lakka-j* > *lakki* ‘cap’, *väljä* ‘spacious’ → **väljä-j* > **välji* > *väli* ‘space’, (*lape* : *lapeet* ‘edge, side’ ←) *lappa* ~ **lappa-j* > *lappi/Lappi* ‘Sami/Lapp’, *enä* ‘big’ → **enä-j* > *enoi* > *eno* ‘maternal uncle’, *kolja* ‘supernatural being’ ~ **kolja-j* > *koljoi* > *koljo* ‘supernatural being’ and *lentää* ‘to fly’ → **lentä-j* >> *lensi* ‘(s)he flew’ (see SSA passim)). I suggest that the polysemic name *Ahti* has a triple origin, i.e. that there are three different origins behind the four uses mentioned above. In fact, I argue that *Ahti* is originally not one proper

³ The suffix *-(i)nen* is another very common derivational suffix in Finnish farm names (see MapSite).

⁴ A mute prothetic initial letter <H> in a word beginning with a vowel is not an uncommon phenomenon in Medieval Latin texts (see e.g. *Gesta Danorum* by Saxo Grammaticus).

name but three homonymic proper names, which have become contaminated to a large extent due to their homophony.

Of these different origins I will first discuss the Continental Germanic etymology for *Ahti* posited by onomastician Viljo Nissilä (1980), because it is already commonly known, although this particular *Ahti* is in my view the second youngest *Ahti*, after the modern male name *Ahti*, which is the youngest one. Nissilä convincingly argues that the medieval male name *Ahti* occurring in farm and village names is a borrowing from an Old Saxon, Middle Low German and Frisian male name which is attested in the forms *Ahti*, *Ahto* and *Achte* (Nissilä 1980: 156; USN: 271–272; Vahtola 1997: 272; Mikkonen & Paikkala 2000: 59–60). The Finnish name *Ahti* also has a variant form *Ahto*, which may be another direct loan from Middle Low German or a Finnish *o*-derivative from the stem-form *Ahti*. Besides *Ahto*, the name *Ahti* has the attested variant forms *Atti* (see footnote 9 below) and *Ati* (USN: 24–25). The form *Ahtiainen* occurs as a family name. The family, farm and village names *Ahti*, *Ahtia*, *Ahtiala*, *Ahtiainen* and *Ahtonen* are noticeably older than the modern first name *Ahti*, which was introduced as late as towards the end of the 19th century (USN: 24–25, 271–272; Mikkonen & Paikkala 2000: 59–60).

The Low German personal name *Ahti* is itself a borrowing from the Greek personal name *Autonomos* ‘Autocrat’. The homonymic Karelian male name *Ahti* is probably of the same origin as the western Finnish male name *Ahti*, but it may alternatively be a borrowing from the Russian male name *Avtonom*, which is itself a borrowing from the Greek name *Autonomos* mentioned above (Nissilä 1976: 49; Mikkonen & Paikkala 2000: 59–60). The many farms and villages called *Ahtiala* in the provinces of Finland Proper, Satakunta and Tavastia are of the same origin (SPNK 2007: 16). I find Nissilä’s etymology for the farm, village and family name (element) *Ahti*- convincing and I have nothing to add as to this particular context of use of *Ahti*.

However, the Christian medieval Low German male name does not account for the pre-Christian – and thus pre-historic – Finnic mythological name(s) *Ahti* ‘deity of water (forest, wind, earth); skilled warrior in Kalevalaic rune songs’. I therefore suggest that the mythical name *Ahti* is of a completely different origin. I argue that there are two further homophonic mythical *Ahtis*, each of which has an etymology of its own. The invariable vowel /i/ in the second syllable of the name *Ahti* (nom.) : *Ahdin* (gen.) (cf. *risti* : *ristin* ‘cross’) suggests that the word cannot descend from Early Proto-Finnic or even further back, because the word in that case

should show the /i/ ~ /e/ vowel alternation in the second syllable, as in inherited words and old loanwords, e.g. *kivi* : *kiven* ‘stone’, *nimi* : *nimen* ‘name’ and *vesi* : *veden* ‘water’. Consequently, *Ahti* must be relatively young. It very likely stems from the Iron Age, since the “new” /i/ in non-initial syllables emerged in Middle Proto-Finnic at the very beginning of the pre-Roman Iron Age, ca. 500 BCE (Heikkilä, forthcoming). Thus, all the homophonic *Ahti*-names must be younger than ca. 500 BCE.

I argue that the name of the skilled and rich warrior character is a borrowing from the Proto-Scandinavian common noun **āxtiR* ‘wealth, property; family’, which has rendered Old Norse *átt*, *ætt* ‘family, tribe’ and Swedish *ätt* ‘noble family’. In Proto-Germanic, the word had the form **aixtiz*, whence Gothic *aihts*, OHG *ēht* and OE *æht*, all of them meaning ‘property’ (cf. SaN *áittar* ‘owner’ ← EPScand **aixtēr* > PScand **āxtēr* > LPScand **āttir* > OSwe *iorþattari*⁵ ‘land owner’ (Sköld 1961: 110; Álgus s.v. *áittar*)). This noun is a derivative from the Proto-Germanic verb **aigana* ‘to own’, whence Got *aigan* ‘id.’, OHG *eigan* ‘id.’, ON *eiga* ‘id.’ etc.⁶ In Proto-Scandinavian, the meaning has changed from ‘property’ (“something that one owns”) to ‘family, relatives’ (“the ones who are related to one by blood”, i.e. “one’s own folk”). (Bjorvand & Lindeman 2007: 1353; Hellquist 2008: 1449–1450.) Thus, the proper name *Ahti* is like a personification of wealth and property. No wonder *Ahti* was described as being rich, because the common noun constituting his name means exactly that.

A slightly older borrowing from the same Proto-Scandinavian lexeme has been preserved in the Finnish place-name *Aihtia* (< LPFin **Aihtia* ← EPScand. **aixtiz*), which is the name of a farm situated on the shore of the lake *Aihtianjärvi* in the Orivesi municipality in Tavastia (MapSite; Names Archive).⁷ The onomastic collection of *The Names Archive* also has information about an old-fashioned name of a promontory called

⁵ Cf. OSwe *iorþ* with Eng *earth* and Ger *Erde* ‘earth’.

⁶ As to semantics, the Finnish proper names *Ahti* and *Aihtia* and the Sami common noun *áittar* ‘owner’ can be compared with the Finnish common noun *haltija* meaning both ‘holder’ and ‘sprite’. This lexeme is a Germanic loanword, too. The etymon is a Proto-Scandinavian **haldijaz* ‘holder’ (SSA s.v. *haltija*). Even the date of the borrowing is approximately the same as in the case of *Ahti* judging from the word’s sound shape *haltija* (***kalsia*).

⁷ There exist parallels for the adding of a secondary final vowel /a/ in Finnish toponymy, e.g. *Nokia*, *Averia* and *Kauttua* (cf. *Ahtiala*) (see Heikkilä 2012a: 63).

Aihtionkärki in the Vesilahti municipality of Tavastia.⁸ In addition, the Proto-Scandinavian etymon **ĀχtiR* of the personal name *Ahti* seems to have been recorded in a Danish runic inscription which reads *HarkilaR* (nom. sg.) *Ahti* [āχtī] (dat. sg.) *anul* ‘HarkilaR (a male name) to **ĀχtiR* (another male name), little-forefather’. The inscription was carved on a bronze strapring sometime between 250 and 320 CE. This personal name has been etymologically linked with the Finnish personal name *Ahti*. (Antonsen 2002: 113–114; Samnordisk Runtextdatabas 2008 s.v. *ahti*).⁹ This occurrence suggests that **ĀχtiR* was a Proto-Scandinavian male name, from which the Finnish *Ahti* ‘skilled rich warrior’ was borrowed.

When was *Ahti* borrowed? The probative sound shape of the name indicates that *Ahti* was borrowed after the Proto-Scandinavian sound change /aiχ/ > /āχ/, but before the similarly Proto-Scandinavian sound changes *i*-umlaut and /χt/ > /tt/ (Wessén 1966: 18–22, 29, 1968: 15–21, 33, 36; Haugen 1976: 153, 155; Ralph 2002: 706–708, 710, 714; Heikkilä, forthcoming). These facts strongly suggest that *Ahti* ‘skilled rich warrior’ was borrowed from Proto-Scandinavian into Early Finnish between ca. 300 and 500 CE, i.e. approximately during the Migration Period (ca. 375–550 CE) (cf. the dating of the name *Kaleva* in Heikkilä 2012b: 109). This *Ahti* is probably the oldest one, excluding the marginally used name *Aihti*, which is of the same origin and even older.

I further argue that the homophonic *Ahti* with the attested meanings ‘deity of water, forest, earth and wind’ is of a completely different origin (cf. Siikala 2012: 374). This *Ahti* was probably borrowed into Finnish and Karelian from the Late Proto-Sami noun (SaN *áhčči*, SaLu *áhttjē* ‘father’ <) **āhččē* ‘father’ (← EPSa **áćá* ~ **ęćá* ~ **εćá* ~ PF **isä* > Fin *isä* ‘father’) (cf. Lehtiranta 1989: 10–11; Álgu s.v. *áhčči*). The Sami word *áhčči* ‘father’ occurs as an element (epithet) in many ancient Sami deity-names, e.g. the supreme god *Radien Attje* (cf. *Juppiter* “Skyfather”, *Pater Noster* and *Our Father*), and it is also an honorific name in the Sami

⁸ Another marginally used form of the same personal name is included in the rhyme verses “Armas *Haahti* (< **Aahti*, cf. **ĀχtiR*) saaren vanhin, saaren kuulusa kuningas” [“Dear Ahti, the eldest one on the island, the king of the island”] (SKVR 2006). The initial consonant is prothetic. There are parallels for both the prothetic initial /h/ and the lengthening of the initial syllable vowel before /h/ (see SSA passim). In this case, the prothesis is probably explained by influence of the common noun *haahti* ‘boat’ after the analogical new base form *haahti* had arisen from the earlier and regularly developed *haaksi* (see SSA s.v. *haahti*).

⁹ The Old Danish male name *Atti* possibly has the same etymon (Jørgensen 2011: 53–54).

languages (see Laestadius 2011: 53–58, 63–64, 74, 77). A similar initial syllable vowel substitution occurs, for example, in the names *Tammerkoski/Tampere* (← LPSa **TǣmBǣlkuoškǣ*) and *Pajainen* ‘name of the Finnish thunder-god in the landscape of Savo’ (← ESa **Pǣjānjǣ* > SaN *baján* ‘thunder’, *Baján*, *Päjän* (Haavio’s orthography) ‘thunder-god’) (see Haavio 1967: 85; Sammallahti 1998: 89–90; Heikkilä 2012a: 60–65). A similar medial consonant substitution occurs in the Finnish common noun *auhto* ‘damp depression, grove along a river’ (← LPSa **āvčō* > SaN *ávžu* ‘damp grove’, SaLu *ávttso* ‘thicket in damp terrain’) (cf. Fin *aihki* ‘very tall pine’) (SSA s.v. *aihki*, *auhto*; Álgú database s.v. *ávžu*; Aikio 2009: 245). The theonym *Ahti* was probably borrowed from Late Proto-Sami during the Late Iron Age and the already existing homonymic *Ahti* possibly slightly affected its phonetic shape.

In conclusion, the synchronically polysemic name *Ahti* is actually likely to be diachronically a triple homonym of 1) Proto-Scandinavian, 2) Continental Germanic, and 3) Late Proto-Sami origin, but because of this homonymy the originally different lexemes have become intermingled, contaminated, and they have affected each other both phonetically and semantically. A parallel case is found in the Finnic runes, where the warrior *Ahti* (i.e. *Ahti Saarelainen*) and the similar figures *Kaukamoinen* (*Kaukomieli*, *Kauko(i)*), *Lemminkäinen* and *Veitikka/Veitikkä* are often intermingled (Turunen 1979: 12–13, 111; Siikala 2012: 280).

3. On the semantically related characters *Ahti Saarelainen*, *Kaukomieli*, *Faravid* and *Torre*

One of the several manifestations of the polysemic name *Ahti* is *Ahti Saarelainen* (see above). I assume that the characters *Ahti Saarelainen* and *Kaukomieli* (*Kaukamoinen*, *Kauko(i)*), both occurring in Kalevalaic folk poetry and meaning ‘skilled rich warrior’, are partly historically motivated. Like some other scholars, I equate *Kaukomieli* with the King of Kvenland, *Faravid*, mentioned in the Icelandic Egil’s Saga (NB Icel *saga* means ‘history’, not ‘fairytale’). The name *Faravid*¹⁰ “Wide-traveller”, which is not authentic Old Norse, is probably a “home-made” translation of an Old Finnish personal name **Kaukamieli* “Mind longing for the faraway”.

¹⁰ The lacking Old Norse nominative singular ending *-r* points to a foreign origin of the name (cf. the autochthonic North Germanic male name *Eiríkr* with the originally Continental Germanic male name *He(i)nrík_*).

(Julku 1985: 88–92, 1986: 72–80; Salo 2003: 47–52, 2008: 275–282). Unto Salo (2003: 52, 2008: 276–279) has surmised that Faravid, alias **Kaukamieli* (cf. *Kaukamely* from the municipality of Köyliö in 1422 CE), once lived in the manor on *Saari* “Island” (whence *Saarelainen* “Islander”) in the Köyliönjärvi lake. Next to this island lies a smaller island called *Kaukoluoto/Kaukosaari*. Lalli, the murderer of the apostle of Finland Bishop Henry (“herra Heinärikki”) who died in Köyliö in the 12th century CE, is commonly associated with the same island and manor (Haavio 1948: 70–77; Suvanto 1987: 150, 157; Ahl 2007: 138; see also Heikkilä 2013). It is precisely here on Saari in the Köyliönjärvi lake that Finland’s richest Iron Age pagan graveyard has been excavated (Salo 2004: 376–382).¹¹ The burial place dates back to 975–1150 CE. The historical King Faravid was obviously a very wealthy and famous warrior and chieftain from the historical province of Satakunta, and *Aihti/Ahti* appears to have meant property, as I have suggested above. The difference between a chieftain and a king is purely semantic, and indeed the Finnic word *kuningas* ‘king’ is an old Germanic loanword, whose *terminus ante quem* for the borrowing is *i-*umlaut and the syncope of the final syllable, i.e. ca. 600 CE at the latest.

Unto Salo (2008: 158–163) has proposed that another King of Kvenland, Finland and Gotland mentioned in Icelandic sagas, namely *Porri* (< LPScand **Porrē*), could have been a historical person as well. A rich chieftain grave of the Gotlandish type was found and excavated in Kalanti (on whose name see Heikkilä 2012b: 111–113) in the year 2004. The site is situated in the modern village of Soukainen. In the vicinity, there is a village called *Torre* (cf. the old farm name *Torra* in Sastamala in Satakunta), where there is a spring called *Torren lähde* “Torre’s spring” (Salo 2008: 163, 2012: 205, 394; Heikkilä 2012b: 110). The grave dates to the second half of the 4th century CE (cf. the age of the names *Ahti* and *Kaleva*). A Scandinavian mythical giant called *Fornjótr* (“Ancient Giant”), who is claimed to have been the first King of Kvenland in the Icelandic saga *Fundinn Noregr* (“Found Norway”), is certainly a totally fictive mythical being, but his grandson’s grandson *Porri* need not necessarily be that (see Julku 1986: 60–72). It would not be the first time in the history of humankind that a historical king is claimed to be a descendant of a divine supernatural being.

¹¹ Another old and famous manor called *Saari* is situated on the coast of the Archipelago Sea in the municipality of Mynämäki in south-western Finland (Diplomatarium Fennicum No. 219; MapSite).

Consequently, there may after all have been chieftains called *kuningas* ‘king’ in southwestern Finland during the Roman Iron Age (ca. 1–400 CE), the Migration Period (ca. 400–600 CE) and the Merovingian Period (ca. 600–800 CE), as some Finnish nationalistic circles claim in their alternative, “non-Swedish-minded” interpretation of Finland’s history based on for example medieval Icelandic sagas (see e.g. The Association of Finnish Culture and Identity), but – slightly embarrassingly for such Finnish nationalists – these “Kings of Finland and Kvenland” would not have been ethnic Finns by birth, but Scandinavians (cf. Kallio 2000: 96–97; Salo 2008: 156–163). However, I think that *Porri* is more likely a fictive figure, but *Torren lähde* may well have functioned as an ancient place of worship, where the Finns (Kvens) and Scandinavians from the Laitila-Kalanti region (= the original Kvenland (Heikkilä, forthcoming)) sacrificed to *Porri* (= a god) in order to ensure good skiing conditions in winter. Good skiing conditions were needed in excursions to Lapland (Salo 2003: 34–36, 54–58; Heikkilä, forthcoming). One of the dead in the Saari graveyard was indeed buried wrapped in a reindeer hide (Salo 2004: 382). The sound shape points to the conclusion that the name *Torre* was borrowed from the Late Proto-Scandinavian stratum of mythical proper names because *Porri* still had the sound shape **Purzan* ‘dry snow’ in Early Proto-Scandinavian (Heikkilä 2012b: 110). Regardless of the historical authenticity of the Kings of Finland and Kvenland, the lexical and cultural Germanic influence on Finnic has indisputably been both strong and prolonged in any case.

4. *Vellamo and velloa*

It is commonly assumed that the name of the female water spirit *Vellamo* and its variant form *Vellimys* have emerged by agent participle derivation from the Finnish verb *velloa* ‘surge, heave’ (cf. Fin *vellova* ‘surging, heaving’), whose only cognate is the Karelian verb *velluo* ‘id.’ (Turunen 1979: 377–378; USN: 176; SSA s.v. *velloa*). I find this etymology quite obvious. However, the verb *velloa* itself lacks a convincing etymology. In the etymological dictionary *Suomen sanojen alkuperä* (SSA), this verb is assumed to be descriptive and descriptiveness is implicitly taken as being the origin of the word. But a descriptive word can equally well be a loanword. Descriptiveness does not in itself indicate the origin of the lexeme in question but its semantic properties. Besides, when the origin of the word in question is unknown, it is easy for the etymologist to hide

behind the distribution and descriptiveness of the word (see Anttila 2002: 93–94; Räsänen 2010: 512–513).

A straightforward Germanic loan etymology can be posited for the verb *velloa*. The Old Icelandic verb *vella* means ‘to flow, well forth, boil, bubble, gush’ (< PScand **wellan*), and the Old Saxon verb *biwellan* means ‘foam, boil’ (Bjorvand & Lindeman 2007: 1280–1281). However, this etymology has previously been overlooked (see SKES s.v. *velloa*). The Finnish noun *velli* ‘gruel’ has been borrowed from the Swedish word *välling* ‘gruel’, which is a nominal derivative from the same Germanic verb (SSA s.v. *velli*). The Lithuanian word *vilnis* ‘wave’ and the Old Church Slavonic *vlina* ‘wave’ also belong to the same Indo-European word family, but judging from the phonetic shapes, *velloa* can hardly be considered a Baltic or Slavic loanword. Furthermore, the Germanic verbs lie semantically closer to the Finnish verb *velloa* than the Baltic and Slavic noun. Thus, the Germanic word matches better as the etymon of the Finnish verb *velloa*.

Similarly descriptive are the verbs *vipattaa* ‘swing to and fro’ and its variant forms *vipajaa* and *vipottaa* (SSA s.v. *vipattaa*). However, one can find rather a straightforward Scandinavian loan-etymology for these as well. The etymon is the Proto-Scandinavian verb **wībatjan*, from which the Swedish verb *vifta* ‘to swing’ has developed (Hellquist 2008: 1340). A phonetically parallel case to the second-syllable syncope and the derivational suffix is the Swedish verb *vänta* ‘wait’, which has developed from the Proto-Scandinavian form **wānatjan* (Bjorvand & Lindeman 2007: 1285). Also consider PScand **ainakjōn* > OSwe *ænkia* ‘widow’ (> Swe *änka* ‘widow’), Nor *enkja* ‘widow’, Icel *ekcja* ‘id.’ as regards the phonetic developments (Hellquist 2008: 1440).

5. Conclusions

The main purpose of this article has been to throw light on the etymology of the proper names *Ahti* and *Vellamo* as well as the verb *velloa*. As I have suggested above, *Ahti* is not one diachronically speaking, but an interesting case of triple homonymy. It has hopefully become evident in both this article and my previous article (Heikkilä 2012b) that there are significant Germanic elements in Finnic Iron-Age mythology, since the names of a number of important characters in Finnic mythology are Germanic loanwords stemming from different periods of the Iron Age, e.g. *Ahti*, *jatuni* ‘giant’, *Kaleva*, *kalevanpoika* ‘strong giant’, *kave(h)* : *kape(h)en*

‘creature, mythical being/maiden’ (~ SaLu *guobas* ‘witch’), *menninkäinen* ‘troll’, *Niera*, *Tiera* and *tursas* ‘sea-monster’ (cf. Siikala 2012: 432–449). This is not, however, surprising considering the fact that a considerable amount of the whole Finnic lexicon is of Germanic origin (on which see LÄGLOS I–III), which makes the Finnic languages an essential source of knowledge in historical Germanic linguistics (Koivulehto 1984: 15; Heikkilä, forthcoming). As regards the discussion about *Ahti Saarelainen*, *Kaukomieli* and *Faravid*, for instance, it appears as if some fictional mythical characters may have been based on a real-world person or persons.

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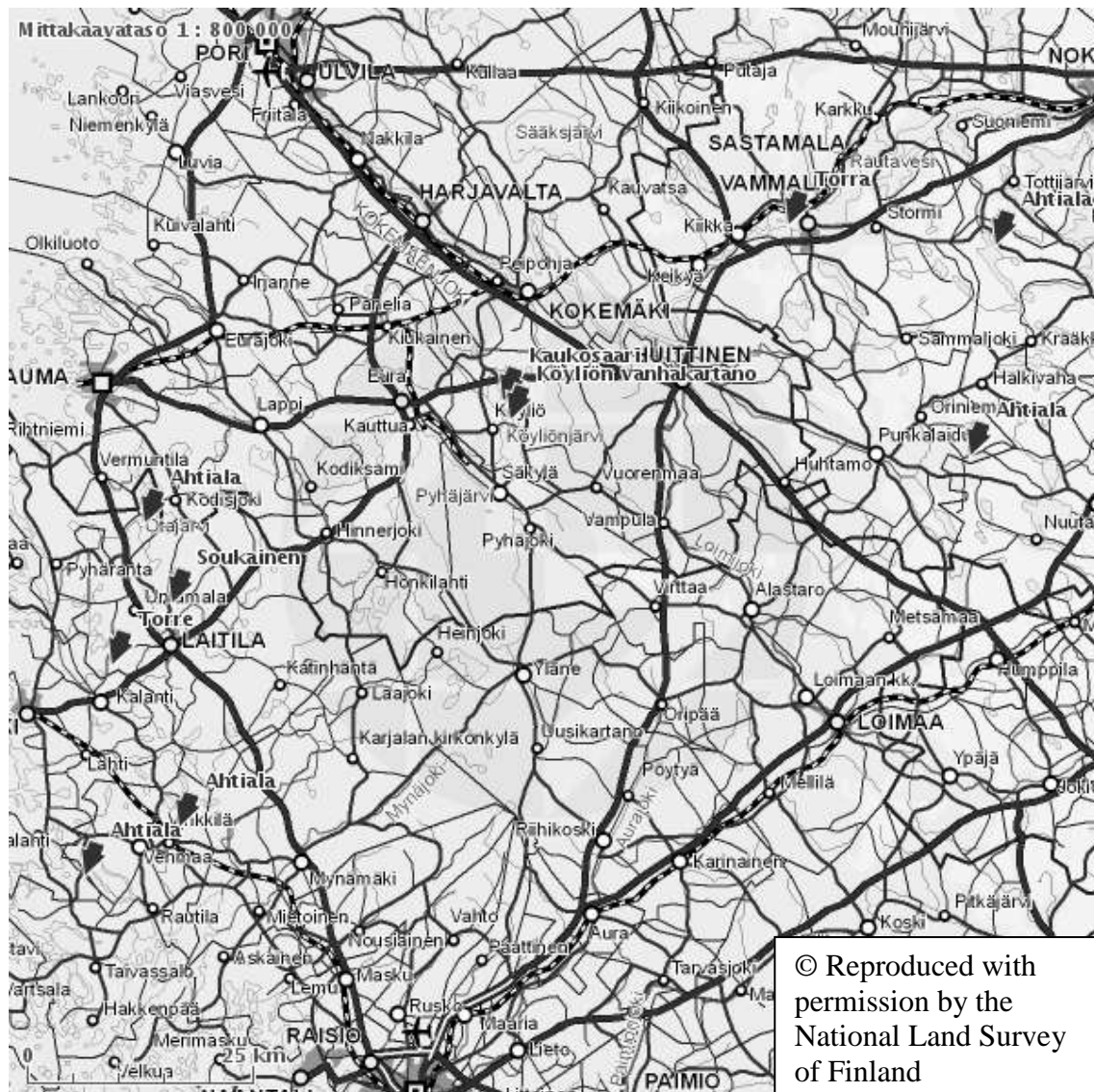
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Appendix

A map of place-names referred to in the article



Abbreviations

A → B = B is borrowed from A; B is derived from A

A > B = A develops into B

* = reconstructed sound shape

** = impossible or non-existing sound shape

dat. = dative

Eng = the English language

EPSa = Early Proto-Sami (ca. 600–1 BCE)

EPScand = Early Proto-Scandinavian (ca. 160–500 CE)

ESa = Early Sami (ca. 600–1000 CE)

Fin = the Finnish language

gen. = genitive

Ger = the German language

Got = the Gothic language

Icel = the Icelandic language

LPFin = Late Proto-Finnic (ca. 1–500 CE)

LPSa = Late Proto-Sami (ca. 1–600 CE)

LPScand = Late Proto-Scandinavian (ca. 500–800 CE)

nom. = nominative

Nor = the Norwegian language

OE = Old English (ca. 700–1100 CE)

OHG = Old High German (Althochdeutsch) (ca. 750–1100 CE)

ON = Old Norse (fornvästnordiska = norrønt) (ca. 800–1350 CE)

OSwe = Old Swedish (ca. 1225–1526 CE)

PF = Proto-Finnic (ca. 1000 BCE–500 CE)

PScand = Proto-Scandinavian (urnordiska) (ca. 160–800 CE)

SaLu = Lule Sami

SaN = North Sami

sg. = singular

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