

CLUPEA HARENGUS MEMBRAS: ABOUT THE ETYMOLOGY OF A CERTAIN FISH NAME IN ESTONIAN, LATVIAN AND LIVONIAN

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Abstract. In this article, the names of *Clupea harengus membras* will be considered in Estonian, (Salaca) Livonian and Latvian (respectively *räim*, *reņģ* and *reņģe* ‘Baltic herring’). It will be shown that the source of all of these words is the Estonian-Swedish *sträm̄g* (*sträng*), or its preceding word shape **sträim̄g*. The Latvian *reņģe* is borrowed from Estonian-Swedish through Salaca Livonian. Paul Ariste proposed an adequate etymology for the Estonian *räim* as early as 1933.

Keywords: lexicology, etymology, loanwords, Estonian-Swedish dialect, Estonian, Livonian, Latvian

The Baltic herring (in the taxonomy of Linné, *Clupea harengus membras*) is a small-sized fish, living in the inner parts of the Baltic Sea. In Standard Estonian the word for the fish is *räim*; in dialects, it is also known as *räime* or *räimes* (VMS II: 357). The word has been documented in the literary language since the first Estonian grammar (Stahl 1637: 119 *Strömling* / *Reim*; see also: Kikas 2002: 114).

The word *räim* has, etymologically, been mainly understood as a loanword, based on the Estonian-Swedish dialect word *sträm̄g* ~ *sträng* ‘strömming, clupea harengus’ (Friedenthal, Vendell 1886: 217). The etymology was presented by Paul Ariste in his Master’s thesis, which deals with Estonian-Swedish loanwords (Ariste 1933: 99) and it is accepted by most of the researchers of Estonian word origins (Saareste, Raun 1965: 45, with a question-mark, Raun 1982: 147, without a question-mark, Mägiste 2000: 2593, Rätsep 1983: 546, etc.). Being apart from the etymological disquisition’s mainstream, there has been an attempt to see the word *räim* as a form of a substrate speech originating from some type of vanished primal language (e.g. Blesse 1933: 379, Laumane 1973: 190).

The idea of a form of a substrate speech is probably based on the fact that for Latvians (the southern neighbors of Estonians) the same fish is known as *reņģe*. These two words are in some ways similar – they both have a trill, a front vowel and a nasal – but it is phonetically impossible to assume a borrowing from one language to another. In this vague similarity, some scholars tend to rely on an assumption of some primal contacts with unfamiliar languages.

In the Latvian etymological disquisition's mainstream, the word *reņģe* 'Baltic herring' is assumed to be a loanword, whose source is either the German *Hering* 'herring' (Mühlenbachs, Endzelin 1927–1929: 512) or its East Frisian equivalent *hereng* (Karulis 2001: 749), and the Salaca Livonian *reņģ* 'Baltic herring' (Kettunen 1938: 333, Winkler and Pajusalu 2009: 165) is thought to be borrowed from Latvian. This interpretation presupposes a stressed first syllable's ellipse and an unstressed non-initial syllable's takeover, which would be possible only in exceptional circumstances and is certainly not expected. This is probably one of the reasons why, for Jānis Enzelīns, this etymology is not definite and why he added a question-mark to it.

The origin of the Latvian word does not have an adequate solution because it was borrowed by Latvian from an unusual source. The source of the Latvian *reņģe* is the Estonian-Swedish *sträm̄g* ~ *sträng*, which (probably from the Swedes on the island of Ruhnu¹) was borrowed by Salaca Livonian as *reņģ*. In Livonian, the word has lost its word-initial consonant cluster, which is not common among Balto-Finnic languages, and from there it was borrowed without the consonant cluster by Latvian as *reņģe*. Phonetically, everything is as expected, so there is actually no need for further comments. Perhaps it should be mentioned that the Latvian *reņģe*'s second syllable *e* does not have to be epenthetic. This is indicated by the word shape *Renge*, written once in 1821 in Salaca Livonian (Winkler and Pajusalu 2009: 165),

1 In fact, the word shape *sträm̄g* ~ *sträng* is documented in the 19th century from the Swedes in northwestern Estonia. The same word is documented in the 19th century from the Swedes in Ruhnu as *stræmm* (Vendell 1882–87: 137), where the final *g* has already blended into the preceding phone.

and the fact that in Estonian *räim* is also an *e*-stem word (Nom. *räim*, Gen. *räime*).

However some questions regarding phonetics can arise with the Estonian *räim*. The word's connection to the Estonian-Swedish *sträm*g does not seem to be self-evident, due to the Estonian word's first-syllable diphthong. Estonian *räim* does not originate from the Estonian-Swedish documented word shape *sträm*g, but from its preceding word shape **sträim*g, which in turn developed from the word shape **sträim*ling. That is derived from the Germanic stem **strauma-* 'current, stream'. In the Estonian-Swedish word, a syncope has occurred, and thereby a simplification of the consonant cluster in the derivative's second syllable evolved, as well as a simplification of the diphthong in the first syllable. Because of this, the connection with the derivational base has disappeared. Unlike in the Estonian-Swedish word, the derivation has remained transparent in the Middle Low German word *stromelink* "ein Fisch: die kleinere Sorte Hering" 'a fish: Herring of a smaller sort' (cf. *ström* 'Strom; Strömung, bes. Flut- und Ebbestrom'; see Lübben 1888: 386) and in the Swedish word *strömming* 'Baltic herring' (cf. *ström*, 'current, stream'; see Hellquist 1980: 1093).

The Estonian-Swedish word's *sträm*g underlying form **sträim*(lin)g reflects the diphthong's **au* palatal umlaut **ey*, which allegedly evolved after the collapse of the Scandinavian proto-language in the middle of the first millennium. This type of umlaut is distinctive in the Old Norse western dialects (Ralph 2002: 707) and is nowadays shown in the Icelandic and Faeroese languages (the Faeroese *streymur* 'a flow', Icelandic, Faeroese *streyma* 'to flow', see Magnússon 1989: 969, 971). However, it is known that many distinctions of the Scandinavian western dialects also occur on the opposite side of the North Germanic linguistic area, being reflected in Old Gutnish and in Estonian-Swedish and Finland Swedish dialects. There are a lot of examples of the **au* : **ey* umlaut in the Estonian-Swedish dialect. One of these is the geographical name Reigi in Hiiumaa. Its etymology has been related to the Estonian-Swedish *räik* (cf. German *Rauch*, Swedish *rök*, Icelandic *reykur*; see Ariste 1935: 11–13),

which is an equivalent of the Germanic word for smoke (in the figurative sense, also a dwelling or a house).

The fact that Estonian *räim* does not originate from the Estonian-Swedish documented word shape *sträm̄g*, but from its predecessor with a diphthong, was clearly stated by Paul Ariste in the phonetic introduction of his Master's thesis: "The situation of these two languages does not let us directly unite Estonian *räim* and Estonian-Swedish *stræm*. Keeping in mind the Estonian-Swedish stem word *straim*, *stræum* etc. 'ström' ~ isl. *Straumr*, it has to be assumed that the word's *stræmg* older shape is **stræim*- (< *stræum*-), which fits well with the Estonian equivalent" (Ariste 1933: 23). Unfortunately, the statement was not repeated in the dictionary part of the thesis (cf. Ariste 1933: 23 and 99), and it seems that later researchers failed to note it.

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Kokkuvõte. Udo Uibo: Clupea harengus membras: ühe eesti, läti ja liivi kalanime etimoloogias. Artiklis vaadeldakse *Clupea harengus membras*²e nimetusi eesti, (Salatsi) liivi ja läti keeles (vastavalt *räim*, *reňg*, *reňge*) ja näidatakse, et nende kõigi algallikas on eestirootsi *sträm̄g* (*stränḡ*) või sellele eelnenud sõnakuju **sträim̄g*. Läti

reņģe on eestirootsist laenatud liivi keele Salatsi murde vahendusel. Eesti *räim*'e adekvaatse etümoloogia on esitanud juba Paul Ariste 1933. aastal.

Märksõnad: leksikoloogia, etümoloogia, laensõnad, eestirootsi murre, eesti keel, liivi keel, läti keel