

### Old Finnish units of length and weight

To measure length, weight, volume or break-bulk goods, people of old times generally used the names of body parts and household utensils. Most of the oldest units of length derive from parts of the hand (or arm) and the foot (or leg). Already in ancient times, the use of units of weight often served commercial purposes, which caused these names to gradually turn into currency names. The exact lengths or weights of units were very varied for a long time, and it was only in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that standardisation began. The majority of the European countries switched to the decimal system at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Some of the old Finnish units came from the ancient measurement system that used the hand (or arm) and the foot (or leg) as reference (*syli* 'fathom; lap', *kyynärä* 'cubit; ell', *jalka* 'foot', *vaaksa* 'span'). *Kortteli* 'quarter' and *tuuma* 'inch; thumb' were Swedish loan words. *Virsta* 'verst', *saseni* 'fathom', *arsina* 'cubit', *setvertti* 'quarter', and *versokka* 'inch' are of Russian origin.

Most of the old units of weight are of Swedish origin. The basic unit of the system was the *naula* 'pound' that weighed 42 dekagrams. *Lästi* and *kip-punta* were used to express heavy weights (*leiviskä* weighed 8,5 kilograms), while *markka* (which later came to be a currency) and *luoti* were smaller units. *Kvintiini*, *skrupeli* and *graani* were used by jewellers and pharmacists.

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