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A Historical Survey of the Study of Komi Toponyms

The rich and highly varied system of place names in the Komi area attracted researchers' attention as early as in the 15th–16th centuries, but it was only the early 20th century that saw the appearance of linguistic studies in the real sense of the word.

S. HERBERSTEIN's (1486–1566)¹ “Записки о Московитских делах” (editions in English: Notes upon Russia: being a translation of the earliest account of that country, entitled *Rerum Moscoviticarum commentarii* by the Baron Sigismund von Herberstein; translated and edited, with notes and an introduction, by R. H. Major. London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1851–1852; Description of Moscow and Muscovy, 1557, by Sigmund von Herberstein; edited by Bertold Picard; translated [from the German] by J. B. C. Grundy. London: Dent, 1969) can be considered to be one of the most important sources on the beginnings of Komi toponymic studies. As envoy of the Austrian court, the author visited Russia twice, in 1516–1518 and 1526–1527. In compiling his notes he drew upon the oral and written sources of his time. Apart from information on neighbouring countries, peoples and lands, they contain a geographical survey of Muscovy (or *Moscow Rus*) in the 16th century. As far as Komi toponyms are concerned, it is the names of rivers and hills in the northern area that are of special interest. S. Herberstein makes use of a Russian travel book entitled “Дорожник” (Book of Roads), which has not come down to us, in describing the journey to *Pechora*, *Jugra* and *Ob*. Besides *Pechora*, the following hydronyms are mentioned: *Подчерем*, *Уса*, *Щугур*, *Чирка*, *Цильма* as well as rivers, now flowing in the Udorsk district of the Komi Republic: *Вычегда* and *Мезень*. The author lists several names current in the Ural mountains: *Земной пояс* ‘earthly belt, belt of the earth’, *Каменный пояс* ‘stone belt’, *Пояс* ‘belt’, *Камень* ‘stone’, *Большой Камень* ‘big stone’, *Камень Большого Пояса* ‘stone of the big belt’, *Пояс мира и земли* ‘stone of the world and the earth’, *Столп* ‘column, post’. HERBERSTEIN's work is interesting as a historical guide in the first place.

The most ancient monument of historical geography of the 17th century is “Книга Большому Чертежу”,² which is a rather detailed explanatory text supplied to two sketches of the Russian state: to the old one, whose date of emergence is unknown, and to the new one, which was made in 1627. In it

¹ ГЕРБЕРШТЕЙН, С. *Записки о Московитских делах*. Санкт-Петербург 1908.

² *Книга Большому Чертежу*. Москва–Ленинград 1950.



the geographic description is based mainly on rivers as the most important transport routes of the time. Komi place names figuring in the *Book* is partly described by the German scholar V. STEINITZ (1962, 1963). In the *Book* there is a small group of Komi toponyms listed with their translations into Russian: “Воикар или Ноцной” (cf. Komi *вой* ‘nightly, nocturnal’, *кар* ‘town’, ‘fortress’), “Уркар или Белои” (cf. Komi *ур* ‘squirrel’) and others.

In 1724, Peter I decreed to establish the Academy of Sciences. The research work within its framework soon embraced mathematics and sciences as well as the examination of natural resources and the ethnic distribution of Russia’s population.

At the end of the 17th century, member of the Academy, I. I. ЛЕПЕХИН (1740–1802) made a journey to Komiland as participant of the Orenburg expedition. This famous geographical expedition between 1768 and 1772 set the goal to study the Volga area, the Ural, part of Siberia, the Arkhangelsk region and the coastline of the White Sea. The most complete information on the route of the Orenburg expedition is given in “Дневные записки путешествия доктора и Академии наук адъютанта Ивана Лепехина по разным провинциям Российского государства” (Daily notes on the journey made by Ivan Lepexhin, doctor and aid of the Academy of Sciences, into different provinces of the Russian state). The publication was begun in 1771 and finished in 1814, well after I. I. ЛЕПЕХИН’s death.

I. I. ЛЕПЕХИН started exploring the Komi area from the south along the rivers Luzi, Sysola, and Vymi up to the estuary of Vychegda. According to the author, the Komi inhabited the territory from the settlement Ust-Pyras (today Kotlas), situated near the estuary of Vychegda. In the 3rd volume of “Дневные записки” there is a description of several rivers and populated areas, as well as valuable information on the Komis’ language and their way of life. The 4th volume, the greater part of which was written and edited by N. Y. ОЗЕРЕТСКОВСКИЙ, I. I. ЛЕПЕХИН’s aid in the expedition, has short chapters entitled “О Устьцыльме” (On Usttsylm), “О Ижме” (On Izhma), “Сведения о зырянах” (On the Zyryan) and contains a variety of toponyms.

In 1837 the Botanic Gardens in St Petersburg entrusted A. I. ШРЕНК (1816–1876)³ to lead an expedition to the undisclosed areas of the northwest of European Russia. The description of the journey was written in German and published in two volumes. The Russian translation of the first volume came out in 1855. The author lists places names current in the tundras of Малая земля (small land) and Большая земля (large land) and in



³ ШРЕНК, А. *Путешествие к северо-востоку Европейской России через тундру самоедов к северным Уральским горам, предпринятое по высочайшему повелению в 1837 году*. Санкт-Петербург 1855.

the lower basin of Pechora. He also relates legends and gives the etymology of a number of Nenets toponyms. For their rendering into German he invented an original system: the vowels after palatalized consonants were recorded with complementary marks and letters, e.g. *Nådʹ/j*, *Reumbʹ/j*.

In the geographical and historical works by S. HERBERSTEIN, I. I. LEPEKHIN and A. I. SCHRENK there is interesting toponymic material and successful attempts to give them an etymology.

The description of Komi toponyms from a linguistic perspective is connected with the name of A. M. SJÖGRÉN (1794–1855), the first Russian scholar and academy member in Finno-Ugric studies. Dealing with the problem of ancient Finno-Ugric settlements and studying historical, ethnographic and linguistic data for this purpose, he used a rich variety of toponymic data in many of his papers, especially in “Die Syrjänen”.⁴ His ideas about toponyms were thoroughly analysed in studies by I. N. SMIRNOV and A. K. MATVEEV.

A. M. SJÖGRÉN describes a great number of geographical names in his work. He copied them from cadasters — official lists — or collected them in his journeys. He placed the Komis’ habitat around the upper reaches of the river Kama, the north of the Perm’ province and the ridges of the Ural. In the east the Komis inhabited the area as far as Siberia and were either ousted by Ugric tribes or coalesced with them. He believed the river Dvina to be the border from the west, the name of the river itself was derived by him from Komi *вына* ‘powerful, strong’. He was more uncertain about the southern border of Komi settlements, bringing it down to Moscow. In his view Russian *Москва* had Komi origin and can be traced back to *Mössku* ‘cow’s hide’. The northern borderline was drawn along the river Pechora up to Pustozersk, which is called *Сардор* (Sardor) ‘the edge of the sea’ in Komi.

Despite a few false statements and mistakes like, e.g., the overestimation of the Permian component, A. M. SJÖGRÉN laid the foundation for the scientific study of substratum toponyms in the North.

The expeditions led by M. A. CASTRÉN (1813–1852)⁵ were of vital importance to the study of Finno-Ugric-Samoyedic peoples in the European North and Siberia from an ethnographic and linguistic point of view. He was “employed to work for the Academy as a traveller-ethnographer and join the expedition to the north, having been conferred all the rights and prerogatives

⁴ SJÖGRÉN, J. A. *Gesammelte Schriften. I. Historisch-ethnographische Abhandlungen über den finnisch-russischen Norden*. St. Petersburg 1861.

⁵ *Путевые записки Кастрена по северной России*. In: *Современник* 39/7–9 (Санкт-Петербург 1845), pp. 36–74; *Путешествие Александра Кастрена по Лапландии северной России и Сибири (1838–1844, 1845–1849)*. Москва 1860.



of the Academy's assistant researchers from the departure to the submission of the final report" (BOGORAZ 1927, p. 5).

M. A. CASTRÉN investigated almost all the northern territories and the whole of Siberia, collecting an enormous amount of material. His illness and early death, however, prevented him from sorting it out properly. All his diaries, notes and letters written during the journey contain geographical names, carefully collected by him throughout his career as a scholar. If there was a possibility, he also recorded toponymic legends. Using toponymic evidence in identifying the ancient inhabitants of the North with the Biarms and the Biarms with the Karelians he proved that Baltic Finnic tribes used to live not only about the northern reaches of the river Dvina but also along the river Mezen.

After M. A. CASTRÉN's death his material was edited and published by academician A. A. SCHIFNER in 12 volumes. Their significance is invaluable in that it has the richest store of toponyms that are also important from a historical perspective (AGEEVA 1970, MATVEEV 1971, pp. 9–10).

From about the middle of the 19th century special scholarly societies and institutions were formed for geographical and ethnographic research. The first of this kind in Russia was the Russian Geographical Society with a branch of ethnography, which conducted extensive expeditions, brought out publications and popularized its findings from the very beginning of its existence. The first instance of the individual activity of the society was the organization of an expedition to the Ural Mountains with the aim of drawing the borderline between Europe and Asia along the whole chain of the Ural. The expedition was headed by Professor E. K. HOFFMAN (1801–1871),⁶ an expert in mineralogy and geology at St Petersburg University. His book was published in Russian and German simultaneously and can be regarded as the first systematic description of the Pay-Hoy area and the Ural beyond the Polar Circle.

In E. K. HOFFMAN's work toponyms are more varied than in that of A. I. SCHRENK with regard to both the area covered and the bulk of linguistic material discussed. E. K. HOFFMAN collected material for a toponymic dictionary of the Northern Ural (names of hills and rivers) as well as made a list of non-Russian geographical names. Part of these is contrastively presented, with one and the same place named in different languages, such as *Komi Сабля-Из*, *Nenets Саукка-Ур*; *Komi Барабан-Из*, *Mansy Кoun*; *Komi Адэва*, *Nenets Хирмор-Яга*, etc.



⁶ Гофман, Э. К. *Северный Урал и береговой хребет Пай-Хой*. Исследования экспедиции, снаряженной Императорским русским географическим обществом в 1847, 1848 и 1850 годах. 2. Санкт-Петербург 1856.

D. F. YUR'YEV, a member of E. K. HOFFMAN's expedition, made a special contribution to the latter's work (YUR'YEV 1852). Besides a very detailed description of settlements, rivers and mountain chains of the Northern Ural, he gives a list of geographical terms in Khanty, Mansi, Nenets, Komi and Russian.

As regards toponymic research, V. N. LATKIN's (1809–1867)⁷ "Дневник" (Diary) is of particular interest as a vivid and amusing description of his journeys made in 1840 and 1843 to the river Pechora. In his diary the author gives an account of a number of villages he had visited, including information on their location, the number and the structure of their population, the number of houses, people's occupations, the condition of local churches and sights of interest. Unlike other travellers, V. N. LATKIN spoke Komi, so he made exact records of names of villages, rivers and lakes, which gives a clue to the decoding of a great many geographical names in the Pechora basin.

The Russian Geographical Society made a very active contribution to the expeditions that were to study the Finno-Ugric peoples. One of these was the journey of D. E. EUROPAEUS, a man of wide scholarly interest. He was engaged in Finno-Ugric studies, folklore, archeology and toponymy. In 1845–1854 and 1872–1879 D. E. EUROPAEUS conducted 14 expeditions to various Finno-Ugric peoples in Karelia, in the Dvina basin, in the Tver and Novgorod provinces. He wrote more than ten papers on toponymy and, beyond them, he touched upon questions of toponymic studies in a number of his works in linguistics.

In his toponymic studies⁸ two basic trends can be distinguished: 1) place names of Karelia and Finland; 2) place names of the Russian North. He considered almost all the substratum toponyms of Middle and North Russia as well as those of Finland and northern Sweden to be Ugric, comparing the hydroformant *-егда, -огда* in some of them with Khanty and Mansi *тагет, шагет* 'branch, tributary of a river'. The name of the river *Вычегда* is derived by him from *Вытшагет* with the possible meaning 'water branch, tributary abundant in water'. In the hydroformants *-сора, -сара, -сар, -шера, -шира* the Komi word *шор* 'river, brook' is pointed out.

It was in the 1860s that the Russian Geographical Society began to publish its great "Географическо-статистический словарь Российской империи"

⁷ ЛАТКИН, В. Н. *Дневник во время путешествия на Печору в 1840 и 1843 годах*. In: *Записки императорского русского географического общества*. 8/1–2. Санкт-Петербург 1853.

⁸ ЕВРОПЕУС, Д. Э. *К вопросу о народах, обитающих в средней и северной России до прибытия славян*. In: *Журнал М-ва народного просвещения* 139 (Санкт-Петербург 1868), pp. 55–71; *Об угорском народе, обитавшем в средней и северной России, в Финляндии и в северной части Скандинавии до прибытия туда нынешних их жителей*. Санкт-Петербург 1874. 23 pp.



(Geographico-statistical Dictionary of the Russian Empire), edited by P. P. SEMENOV.⁹ The dictionary contains the characteristics of all mountain systems (some of the knolls/hillocks and peaks of the Urals are also given), information on the provinces and towns, lakes, moors, islands, capes and rapids. It has about 16,000 descriptions of locations and short monographs based on original sources. Over a hundred entries are devoted to Komi names. It is especially noteworthy that several of them are given in different languages, e.g., the river *Колва*, *Тоди-яга* or *Точьяга* in Nenets; *Сереговское*, *Серег-Ыб* in Komi; *Тельнос-Из*, Khanty *Не-Пуби-Ур*; *Тима-Из*, Russian *Тимофеев камень*, etc. P. P. SEMENOV's Dictionary is frequently used by researchers even today, although not each piece of information and not each attempt at the interpretation of geographical names is fully trustworthy. It can be, however, unanimously stated that the Dictionary is the most complete work with its voluminous material on the geography of contemporary Russia.

In 1878 the Archeological, Historical and Ethnographic Society was founded at the University of Kazan'. It set the goal to study the Volga–Kama area. A circle of onomastics was also formed within the framework of the Society, in which M. P. WESKE, I. N. SMIRNOV, N. I. ANDERSON and others played an active role. The members of the Society published their studies in the “Известия Общества археологии, истории и этнографии” (Journal of the Archeological, Historical and Ethnographic Society).

As regards Komi toponyms, it is the works of I. N. SMIRNOV (1856–1904),¹⁰ an ethnographer of fame and professor of general history, that are of special interest. His book “Пермяки” (Permians) has a noteworthy inventory of Komi toponyms, although it is Komi Permians that are the chief target of his investigation, which is based on rich archival material and direct observations made during his expeditions. All this is a valuable source of research of Komi toponyms and anthroponyms, with over 300 geographical and personal names taken from old documents and collected from the local population. What deserves attention is his conclusions about the one-time presence of Karels near the river Pinega as well as the Ugric tribes having once inhabited the Vycheгда and Pechora regions and the Saami and the Komi having lived in adjacent areas in the Vycheгда and Suhona basins at one point of their history.

At the end of the 19th century M. P. WESKE (1843–1890), a widely known expert in Finno-Ugric studies, published a book entitled “Славяно-финские культурные отношения” (Slavic-Finno-Ugric cultural relations), in which

⁹ СЕМЕНОВ, П. П. *Географическо-статистический словарь Российской империи*. 1–5. Санкт-Петербург 1863–1885.

¹⁰ СМІРНОВ, И. Н. *Пермяки. Историко-этнографический очерк*. Казань 1891.



he discusses Finnish (mainly Baltic Finnic) loans in the dialectal lexis of Russian and Russian words in the Finnic (Baltic Finnic) languages. There are, however, few etymologies given, and they are incorrect at times. In the river name *Вымь-Емва*, e.g., he points out the word *йэм* ‘needles (of a fir tree)’.

Professor at the University of Kazan’, N. I. ANDERSON (1845–1905)¹¹ was mainly concerned with the genetic relationship between Finno-Ugric and Indo-European languages. In his article, published under the title “Об этимологии названий *Биармия, Пермь, пермяки, зыряне*” (On the etymology of the denominations *Biarmia, Perm’, Permian* and *Zyryan*) he notes the names *Biarma-land, Beormas*, occurring in Scandinavian sagas, and *Буармия* and *Пермь* in the Russian sources, which correspond to Norwegian Saami *Bärma, Biärma* and are of common origin. In N. I. ANDERSON’S view, the Zyryans (Komi) and Permians received their names from previous inhabitants of the respective areas.

It was in the year 1883 that the Finno-Ugric Society was established in Helsingfors (now Helsinki). Its purpose was to study the Finno-Ugric peoples, primarily their languages, ethnography and archeology. Annual expeditions were arranged to do field work in Finno-Ugric languages. The Finnish linguists Y. WICHMANN and T. LEHTISALO and the ethnographer U. T. SIRELIUS visited the Komi area at different times.

Receiving a grant from the Finno-Ugric Society, the famous Finnish linguist and ethnographer A. KANNISTO (1874–1943) made a long expedition to the Ugric peoples along the Ob. He stayed with the Mansi for five years (1901–1906), studied all the dialects of their language, recorded huge folklore material, collected the toponyms, then he collated all the names with those in the maps to be found in the archives of Tobol’sk, Perm’ and Yekaterinburg. In his paper on the one-time settlement of the Mansi about the region toponyms is also treated (KANNISTO 1927). Hydronyms with the formant *-я* (Mansi *я* ‘river’) as well as all the other names that are interpretable from Mansi in the Arkhangelsk, T’umen and Sverdlovsk provinces and the Komi Republic, are subjected to analysis. A. KANNISTO discusses 262 names altogether with their variants and etymologies. 26 of them are mentioned as recorded in the basins of the rivers Vychegda, Mezen’ and Pechora in the Komi Republic.

The enormous significance of A. KANNISTO’S work lies in pointing out the potential hidden in toponyms for linguistic research. At the same time the author makes a wide use of methods of formant analysis and toponym cartography.

¹¹ АНДЕРСОН, Н. И. *Об этимологии названий Биармия, Пермь, пермяки, зыряне*. In: *Труды 10-го археологического съезда в Риге, 1896*. V. 3. Москва 1900, p. 125.



Several dictionaries published in the 19th century contain plenty of reliable information on the natural objects in the Komi region. Among these, the dictionary compiled by P. МАКСИМОВИЧ and A. ШЧЕКАТОВ¹² deserves special attention as one having a huge list of provincial and regional towns, settlements, monasteries and the “most famous rivers”. Particularly interesting are the details given about the rivers Vychegda, Pechora and the town Ust'-Sysol'sk.

At the beginning of the 20th century toponymic research acquires a linguistic character. One of the first scholars to be mentioned is I. Y. KRIVOSHCHEKOV, geographist cartographist historian, archeologist, ethnographist and economist. He made the first geographical maps of the Solikamsk, Yekaterinburg, Verkhoturya and Cherdyn' districts of the Perm province. The map of the Solikamsk district has an index attached, which was the first in a series of articles on the various districts. The next two dictionaries by I. Y. KRIVOSHCHEKOV were published in 1910 and 1914, continuing previous studies of the Perm' region. All the geographical dictionaries by I. Y. KRIVOSHCHEKOV comprise a rich store of Komi-Permian toponyms. His successor in the field was A. F. ТЕПЛОУХОВ,¹³ who continued to study Komi-Permian and substratum toponyms also in the Kama region. He pointed out that there used to be an Ugric population inhabiting the Kama region and the neighbouring Komi territories before the Komi occupied it. He quotes a number of interesting hydronymic parallels discovered in the habitat of present-day Ob Ugric peoples: the lakes *Синдор* and *Синтур*; the rivers *Кулом* and *Кулом-еган*, *Вымь* and *Вым* around the mouth of the river Irtysh; *Визинга* (Komi *Визин*), *Визин-еган* and *Визим* (a tributary of the river North Sos'va).

Concerning foreign authors, the prominent German Slavist M. VASMER (1886–1962)¹⁴ published studies that are of particular significance for toponymic research. He has a series of articles on pre-Russian toponyms, in which he makes an attempt to fix the one-time distribution of Permian peo-

¹² МАКСИМОВИЧ, П.—ШЧЕКАТОВ, А. *Географический словарь Российского государства, сочиненный в настоящем оного виде*. 1–7. Москва 1801–1808.

¹³ ТЕПЛОУХОВ, А. Ф. *Следы былого пребывания угорского народа в смежных частях Пермской и Вятской губернии и последующая смена его пермским и русским народами*. In: *Записки Уральского общества любителей языкознания* 39 (Свердловск 1924), pp. 81–112; *Фамилии и географические названия Пермского края в этимологическом и историко-географическом отношении*. In: *Колми му* 9 (Усть-Сысольск 1925), pp. 32–45; 10–11, pp. 83–95; 12, pp. 15–24; *О происшедшей некогда смене угров пермяками на верхней Каме, коми на верхней Вычегде и удмуртами на Чепце*. In: *Ученые записки Пермского университета* 12/1 (Пермь 1960), pp. 270–274.

¹⁴ VASMER, M. *Beiträge zur historischen Völkerkunde Osteuropas IV. Die ehemalige Ausbreitung der Lappen und Permier in Nordrussland*. In: *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse*. XVI–XX (Berlin 1936), pp. 176–270.



ples in the North on their basis. He divides all the Permian names into certain structural and semantic types according to the following formants: *-uop* (*-uyp*) ‘brook’, *-ea* ‘water, river’, *-eaii* ‘branch’, etc. There are also a considerable number of etymologies supported by present-day Komi and Udmurt.

By the second half of the 20th century toponymy had already had a great number of special works in which questions raised by Komi toponyms were touched upon in one way or another. This period presents such outstanding figures as V. I. LYTKIN, A. K. MATVEEV and B. A. SEREBRENNIKOV.

In his special studies devoted to toponymy, V. I. LYTKIN makes an analysis of names that sound different but refer to one and the same geographical object in adjacent, but genetically unrelated languages. The present-day differences in their pronunciation can be explained by their being submitted to a certain phonetic rule in one language whereas they are preserved in their ancient form in the other. Such toponyms represent an important source of historical phonetics (LYTKIN 1966, 1970).

In his works on toponymy A. I. POPOV¹⁵ (1899–1973) makes use of the valuable material to be found in Russian chronicles and charters, scribal books and ancient acts. He holds the view that toponyms in the North can be descended from different Finno-Ugric and Samoyed languages. Those that cannot be interpreted on this basis could have belonged to the extinct language of the Zavolotsk Chud'. A. I. POPOV makes plenty of interesting observations on the formants *-ega*, *-uga*, *-oga*, *-yga*, *-yoga*, *-ga*, *-nga*, *-ma*, *-sha*, *-ca*, *-ksha*, *-kca*, which, in his opinion, do not all have the meaning ‘water, river’. Many of them may contain word-formational elements.

A. K. MATVEEV, a prominent toponym expert and Professor of Ural University has collected and generalized a tremendous amount of substratum toponyms of the North in his numerous works. He has worked out his own methodology of applying questionnaires in research. This methodology has no analogy in the practice of data collection.

A. K. MATVEEV is also well-known as the organizer of the first Russian Student Scientific Conference on Onomastics and Dialectal lexis, an event unique in the history of national higher education; which also meant the start

¹⁵ Попов, А. И. *Топонимическое изучение Восточной Европы*. In: *Ученые записки* 105. Серия востоковедческих наук. 2. Советское финно-угроведение. I. ЛГУ. 1948, pp. 103–113; *Из истории славяно-финно-угорских лексических отношений*. In: *ALH* 5 (1955), pp. 1–19; *Основные задачи исследования финно-угорской и самодийской топонимики СССР*. In: *Вопросы финно-угорского языкознания. Грамматика и лексикология*. Москва–Ленинград 1964, pp. 205–219; *Географические названия. Введение в топонимику*. Москва–Ленинград 1965; *Названия народов СССР. Введение в этнонимику*. Ленинград 1973; *Основные задачи исследования финно-угорской и самодийской топонимики СССР*. In: *ALH* 34 (1974), pp. 395–400.



of a career for many future onomatologists and dialectologists. Almost all the staff of the Department of Russian and General Linguistics at Ural University, headed by A. K. MATVEEV since 1961, are made up by their former students, now noted scholars of their own fame, such as M. E. RUT, G. V. GLINSKIKH, T. N. DMITRIEVA, Y. L. BEREZOVICH, M. L. GUSEL'NIKOVA, N. V. KABININA and many-many others.

It is also A. K. MATVEEV who has initiated and directed the creation of the first Russian toponymic laboratory for scientific and educational purposes. This scientific community, unique in kind and called the North Russian Toponymic Expedition of Ural University, has opened up the vast stretches of the North of Russia and the Ural Mountains, having piled up millions of cards containing lexical and onomastic material as a result of extensive field work; thus laying down the foundation for a whole series of new research.

The numerous expeditions resulted in the collection of an enormous material, whose interpretation required new methods. The innovative concept suggested by A. K. MATVEEV exceeded all expectations. His law of the motivatedness of toponyms, based on the data of field work, on the achievements of areal linguistics and the consistent application of phonetic correspondences refuted the idea of arbitrariness of geographical names and advocated the possibility of finding the cognitive basis of their emergence.

This concept has had to be defended in stormy debates with colleagues more than once. The hottest and longest of these debates was carried on with B. A. SEREBRENNIKOV. After the publication of A. K. MATVEEV's dissertation "Русская топонимия финно-угорского происхождения на территории севера Европейской части СССР" (Russian toponyms of Finno-Ugric origin in the European north of the USSR), brilliantly defended in 1970, the controversy died down. In the interpretation of substratum toponyms A. K. MATVEEV relies on the data taken from Baltic Finnic, Saami, Volga and Permian languages.

A. K. MATVEEV's interest in the interrelation between Russian and Finno-Ugric is typical of his work as a scholar. As a result of this permanent interest, a number of popular books and articles have also been published: "Неройки караулят Урал. Путешествие в топонимию" (Neroiki guard the Ural. An excursion into toponymy, Sverdlovsk; 1976), "Семь названий на карте Урала" (Seven names on the map of the Ural, Sverdlovsk; 1979), "Географические названия Урала. Краткий топонимический словарь" (Geographical names of the Ural. A short toponymic dictionary, Sverdlovsk; 1980, 2nd edition 1987), "От Пай-Хоя до Мугоджар. Названия уральских хребтов и гор" (From Pay-Hoy to Mugodzhar. The names of hills and ridges in the Ural, Sverdlovsk; 1984), "Вершины каменного пояса" (The peaks of the stone belt, Chelyabinsk; 1990), "Вверх по реке забвения" (Up



the river of oblivion, Sverdlovsk; 1992). In all these remarkable works A. K. MATVEEV discusses new and rich toponymic material, referring to written sources and successfully contrasting parallel names of one and the same object to each other. The author quotes legends and traditional beliefs, addresses issues like folk etymology and analyses a number of geographical names of the Komi Republic, mainly in its north-east along the river Pechora and the Ural ridges.

Komi toponyms are treated by A. K. MATVEEV in the following articles: “Вашка и Вага” (Vashka and Vaga; 1976); “Топонимические ареалы на *-вей* и *-вожа* на русском севере” (Toponymic areas with names ending in *-вей* and *-вожа* in the north of Russia; 1965); “Топонимические типы Верхнего и Среднего Прикамья (О древнепермской топонимике, о гидронимах на *-ва*, *-ай*, *-юг* и о названиях населенных пунктов на *-кор*)” (Toponymic types of the Upper and Middle Kama [on old Permian toponyms, hydronyms ending in *-ва*, *-ай*, *-юг* and settlement names ending in *-кор*]; 1961), “Пермские элементы в субстратной топонимике Русского Севера” (Permian elements in the substratum toponyms of North Russia; 1968), and others.

In the article “Займствования из пермских языков в русских говорах Северного и Среднего Урала” (Loans from Permian languages in the Russian dialects of the northern and Middle Ural; 1964) A. K. MATVEEV discusses 73 certain and 33 dubious loans. Their majority, in his view, comes from Komi and only a small proportion may be of Udmurt origin. In the study “К этимологии коми-зыр. *вис-* (*виск-*)” (On the etymology of Komi-Zyryan *вис-* [*виск-*]; 1974) the term *вис* ‘stream, linking a lake with a river’ is compared with a large group of relict words like *Выкса*, *Векса*, *Икса*, *Икша*, which used to exist in a number of Finno-Ugric languages.

Great attention is paid to the toponyms of the North by B. A. SEREBRENNIKOV, who has devoted more than 20 research papers to the topic.¹⁶ What he holds is that the North, also including the present-day territory of the Komi Republic, began to be populated by immigrants from Middle Russia, who used toponyms in *-ма*, *-га*, *-ша* (*-жа*), *-са* (*-за*), *-та* (*-да*), *-ра*. Later the North was occupied by Ugroid tribes, having previously lived in West Siberia and made up names in *-ым*, *-им* in the Trans-Ural and near-Ural areas as well as hydronyms in *-еньга*, *-ега*, *-анга*, *-онга*, *-юга*, *-юг*, *-уг* in the North.

¹⁶ СЕРЕБРЕННИКОВ, Б. А. *О местных названиях на лук в районе села Яренска Архангельской области*. In: *Историко-филологический сборник Коми филиала АН СССР* 7. Сыктывкар 1962, pp. 3–5; *К проблеме этнической принадлежности древнего населения Вычегды (по данным гидронимии)*. In: *Вопросы финно-угорского языкознания* 3. Москва 1965, pp. 24–28; *О гидронимических формантах -ньга, -юга, -уга и -юга*. In: *СФУ* 2 (1966), pp. 59–66; *К уточнению некоторых этимологий. Рус. Вычегда*. In: *СФУ* 9 (1973), pp. 35–37.



They also assimilated the dwellers of the Volga-Oka region. In his works on toponymy B. A. SEREBRENNIKOV makes an active use of archeological and anthropological data.

A systematic research of Komi toponyms has been going on since 1970. There are four PhD dissertations written Y. I. OVCHINNIKOVA: “Коми топонимия в лексической системе русского языка” (Komi toponyms in the lexical system of Russian; 1970); A. I. TURKIN: “Топонимия Нижней Вычегды” (Toponyms along the lower Vychegda; 1971); Z. P. ANUFRIEVA: “Топонимия Ижмо-Печорского бассейна” (Toponyms in the Izhma-Pechora basin; 1982); A. G. MUSANOV: “Топонимия Верхнего Прилузья” (Toponyms in the upper Luz’ region; 2000). A. I. TURKIN has successfully defended his doctoral dissertation: “Топонимия Коми АССР” (Toponyms of the Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic; 1989). Several books and articles have also been published.

In Y. I. OVCHINNIKOVA’s dissertation the following tasks are set and successfully solved: 1) the description of the Komi toponymic system; the definition of the structure and semantic types of Komi place names; 2) the fixation of correspondences between the toponymic systems of Komi and Russian at different linguistic levels; 3) the outlines of how Komi toponyms are regularly adapted to Russian. Basically, the study is interesting.

Z. P. ANUFRIEVA’s dissertation is devoted to the study of toponyms (basically microtoponyms) in the basin of the river Izhma and the middle Pechora with its tributaries. Linguistically this territory belongs to the Izhma dialect of Komi, with respect to administration it is part of the Izhma and Usin districts. The author has set up lexico-semantic classes of Komi toponyms and principles of naming geographical objects, has pointed out those dialectal, archaic and borrowed words which have been preserved only in toponyms, has defined layers of place names in the district studied and has characterized the formal morphological structure of Komi toponyms.

The basin of the river Mezen’ has been examined from a toponymic aspect by A. P. AFANASYEV¹⁷, a geographer by training. His work is based on the

¹⁷ АФАНАСЬЕВ, А. П. *Роль терминов юган, еган и я в образовании некоторых формантов речных названий европейского Севера.* In: *Топонимика 1.* Москва 1967, pp. 28–29; *О передаче коми географических названий на картах.* In: *Материалы 4-й Коми республиканской молодежной научной конференции.* Сыктывкар 1970; *Архаические коми топонимы в бассейне Мезени.* In: *Вопросы советского финно-угроведения.* Саранск 1972, pp. 5–7; *Карта речных названий бассейна Мезени.* In: *Известия Коми филиала Географического общества СССР 98.* Сыктывкар 1972, pp. 168–171; *Субстратные названия бассейна Мезени.* In: *Исследования по топонимике.* Москва 1974, pp. 11–18; *Формирование русской ойконимии в бассейне Мезени.* In: *Проблемы восточнославянской топонимии.* Москва 1979, pp. 54–69; *Русские топонимы и антропонимы в северо-западной части Коми АССР.* In: *Перспективы развития славянской ономастики.* Москва 1980, pp. 259–266; *Древнесамодийские (саамского типа) названия в бассейне*



material of scribal books, which enables him to trace the ways of the development of Russian oikonyms in the basin examined. His studies are mainly historico-geographical in nature and linguistic analysis is reduced to a minimum in them.

A. I. TURKIN's dissertation "Топонимия Нижней Вычегды" (Toponyms of the lower Vychegda; 1971), supervised by the noted scholar of Finno-Ugric studies V. I. ЛУТКИН and defended by him at the Institute of Linguistics of the Soviet Academy of Sciences of the USSR in Moscow in 1972, can be regarded as the first inclusive work on Komi toponyms. What is worked out in it is the foundations for their scientific investigation. The author subjects previous literature on the topic to a critical analysis, fixes the regularities of the adaptation of Komi names by the Russian toponymic system, defines the lexico-semantic classes of Komi toponyms, discloses relicts of the extinct and archaic words of the Komi language and makes a record of ethnolinguistic layers.

After the defence of his dissertation A. I. TURKIN began to work extensively on the creation of dictionaries of Komi toponyms. The book entitled "Кони тэ олан?" appeared in 1977, followed by the "Краткий коми топонимический словарь" (A short Komi toponymic dictionary) in 1981 and the "Топонимический словарь Коми АССР" (The toponymic dictionary of the Komi Autonomous SSR) in 1986. In contrast to the first book, which contained just a few dozens of etymologies, the second (1981) one included about 250 names, culminating in the 644 detailed entries of the 1986 edition. It is true that these books have a popular scientific character, they are written inventively and in a simple style, without any excesses in the use of special terminology, since they address a wide circle of readers. In the dictionaries the author also shows himself as an outstanding philologist and historian.

A. I. TURKIN had a thorough knowledge of toponymy and, first of all, toponymic etymology. He possessed the ability to analyze the linguistic material at his disposal in a very subtle way and was characterized by a special linguistic gift, erudition and love of meticulous work. He traced the development, i.e. the phonetic, orthographic and other changes in geographical names, all that have occurred for over 500 years. The author refers to written sources and successfully applies research methods like the contrastive analysis of parallel names denoting identical geographical objects.

Мезени. In: *Ономастика Европейского Севера СССР.* Мурманск 1982, pp. 36–38; *Западные и юго-западные границы гидронимов пермского типа.* In: *Проблемы этногенеза народа коми.* Труды Института ЯЛИ Коми филиала АН СССР 36. Сыктывкар 1985, pp. 68–77; *Финно-угорская гипотеза топонима Москва.* In: *Географические названия в Москве* 126. Москва 1985, pp. 90–100; *Пермь, саран и одо (воть, ветьке, вядь, вятичи).* In: *Этническая топонимика.* Москва 1987, pp. 104–113; *Проблемы написания и передачи географических названий народов СССР.* In: *Топонимика СССР.* Москва 1990; *Топонимия Республики Коми.* Сыктывкар 1996. 207 pp.



In his studies legends and traditional beliefs are quoted and folk etymology is used. The following example is highly illustrative in this respect: the name of the hill *Сабля* (*Сабляиз*) derives from the Nenets word *Саук-Пай*, which first penetrated into Mansi in the form *Саукка-Ур* ‘sharp hill’. A. I. TURKIN asserts that from Nenets it entered Komi or Russian, where the incomprehensible *саук, совак, савлюй* was reinterpreted as *Сабля* ‘sabre’. It is in this shape that the name emerged in maps and guides (TURKIN 1986, p. 100). No less interesting are the legends and beliefs about the origin of hydronyms and oikonyms like *Болбанью, Кочпель, Габов, Гаждор*, etc. In A. I. TURKIN’s dictionaries there is rich comparative material taken from genetically related, adjacent or formerly adjacent languages.

It is widely known that the present-day territory of the Komi Republic has been the scene of numerous and various contacts between tribes and peoples replacing one another over the millenia. This is evidenced not only by written sources but also by lexical, ethnonymic and toponymic data. Relying on them, A. I. TURKIN made an attempt to solve the problem of Komi ethnogenesis in the preprint “Этногенез народа коми по данным топонимии и лексики” (Ethnogenesis of the Komi people as suggested by toponymic and lexical data; 1985). In it, side by side with genuinely Komi names, several ethnic layers, such as Russian, Nenets, Ob-Ugric, Baltic Finnic (Karelo-Vepse) and Saami (old Saami) are clearly outlined. The names of unknown origin are treated separately and are given the tentative tag “West Siberian” by the author himself.

A. I. TURKIN’s doctoral dissertation “Топонимия Коми АССР (лингвистический анализ)” (Toponyms of the Komi Autonomous SSR [a linguistic analysis]; 1989) proved to be yet another invaluable contribution with its sound theoretical and applied linguistic foundations to further studies in Komi toponymy. The dissertation was defended at the Institute of Linguistics of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in 1989. He examined several questions concerning the emergence of the Komi toponymic system, making a wide use of different methods — such as the historico-comparative, contrastive, areal, structural-derivational, etymological and statistical —, which enabled the author to give a multilateral analysis of the native and borrowed toponymic lexis with reference to their structure and phonetic, morphological and semantic adaptation.

The significance of the doctoral dissertation also lies in the rich linguistic material collected by the author himself during his expeditions to 109 settlements of the Komi Republic.

His studies of loans are also of great interest from the point of view of theoretical linguistics. Resorting to anthropological, toponymic and historical data and also including toponymic material and lexical loans in his research,



A. I. TURKIN made a successful attempt to describe the Vilegda-Vycheгда (the district of lower Vycheгда) and Pinega (the upper reaches of the river Pinega) dialects of Komi-Zyryan that disappeared at the end of the 17th century. They used to occupy the territory from the estuary of the river Vycheгда upstream to the village Mezhog and were of the transitory type: the former (Vilega-Vycheгда) shared features with the present-day Komi-Zyryan dialects, namely, with those of the lower Vycheгда, Luza-Letka and the adjacent Udora, whereas the latter belonged to the *-l-* dialects. A. I. TURKIN used complex distinctive (vocalic and consonantal) features as well as their grammar and lexis for the definition of the status of these dialects. Such a grouping really corresponds to the historically established diversity and configuration of the dialects spoken in the given river basin.

“Топонимический словарь Коми АССР” (A toponymic dictionary of the Komi Autonomous SSR; TURKIN 1986), which came out as an appendix of 311 pages containing over 1000 geographical names, is of special value.

With his toponymic research A. I. TURKIN opened a new trend in Komi linguistics. It would not be an exaggeration to say that his works occupy a distinguished place among the books on regional toponymy that have contributed to the development of proper scientific methods in this field. A. I. TURKIN’s studies represent the methodological basis on which new concepts of investigations into Komi toponyms can be built in the 21st century.

A. G. MUSANOV’s dissertation “Топонимия Верхнего Прилузья” (Toponyms in the upper Luz region) is devoted to the analysis of geographical names to be found in the Luz district (Прилузский район) of the Komi Republic. It is in this work that toponyms have been examined from the point of view of their origin and in connection with the historical conditions of the local population’s life for the first time. Geographical names are given a structural and word-formational analysis and their productive models are defined. The typical semantic and the following phonetic features of Komi place names are considered: assimilation, the fall of the consonant /т/ in *-ст*, *-сьт*, *-шт* clusters; the use of the fricative *зь* instead of *дз*, the loss of the vowels *и*, *у*, *ы*, *ө* in the last syllable of the stem before suffixes beginning in a vowel; the metathesis of consonants, etc. Lexical units like *пач*, *курлага*, *кожа*, *коному*, *лабдовник*, *ташкыр*, etc. are treated both in their individual use and as parts of toponyms. What makes the dissertation interesting is that the author has collected huge and unique material.

As for today, toponymic work is done in the linguistics section of the Institute of Language, Literature and History of the Komi Scientific Centre of the Ural Section of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The Komi toponymic expedition (headed by A. G. MUSANOV) was established in 2000. Its task of primary importance is the collection and recording of toponymic material



across the whole of the Komi Republic. This material is then put in the computer for further processing, which will allow a quick and high-quality recovery of any toponymic information.

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