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Questions of Onomastics at the 10th International Congress on Finno-Ugric Studies

One of the roundtable sessions of the 10th International Congress on Finno-Ugric Studies organized in the Mari capital, Yoshkar-Ola in August 2005, was on onomastics: the discussion focused on “Onomastica Uralica”. The Russian, Finnish and Hungarian researchers participating in the project discussed the previous achievements and delineated the future tasks of this international co-operation, which was started 5 years ago. The present article contains the edited version of the keynote lecture given by ISTVÁN HOFFMANN, as well as a summary of the other lectures given the same day and of the rich onomastic programme of the congress.¹

I. Onomastica Uralica

1. The framework of the programme

Five years ago, at the 9th International Congress on Finno-Ugric Studies in Tartu, Estonia, we launched an initiative addressing onomasticians of the Uralian languages. Our aim was to facilitate international co-operation on hitherto isolated projects, which were restricted by national limits at that point of time. Our basic idea was that a programme such as this can mainly support those languages—at least in the long run—whose results in onomastic research had been relatively scarce so far. At the same time, even languages with extensive onomastic research can profit from the initiative, especially by achieving further results in the fields of comparative and general onomastics.

We thought that the basis of a possible co-operation between onomastic researchers could be created by launching a periodical, which would provide a direct forum of communication between researchers and academic centres of the field. Having this in mind, we founded the periodical “Onomastica Uralica” (OU), whose financial background is ensured by the support of Országos Tudományos Kutatási Alap (Hungarian Scientific Research Fund; code numbers: OTKA T 029406 and 042919).

¹ This volume contains the papers of Tatyana Dmitrieva, Sándor Maticsák and István Hoffmann from the lectures presented at the round table conference.



In order to ensure that this periodical was not solely accessible to researchers of Uralian languages, we decided to publish it in English, as this is the most obvious way to connect the series to international onomastic research. Also the fact that the periodical is published on the internet as well (at <http://onomaural.klte.hu>), contributes to its broader availability. The electronic version of OU does not only contain the articles in English, but also in their original language.

The editorial board of the series was set up by scholars of onomastics representing languages with a great tradition of onomastic research. The president of the editorial board is ISTVÁN NYIRKOS, Professor (Debrecen) and the co-president is RITVA LIISA PITKÄNEN (Helsinki). Other board members, representing Finno-Ugric languages from Russia, are F. I. GORDEEV, Professor (Yoshkar-Ola) and D. V. TZIGANKIN, Professor (Saransk). Estonia is represented by PEETER PÄLL (Tallinn), while the Hungarian members are SÁNDOR MATICSÁK and ISTVÁN HOFFMANN (Debrecen).

2. Research results of the past 5 years

The “Plan of Series” was published in the year 2000, for the congress in Tartu, in five languages: Russian, English, Finnish, Estonian and Hungarian, which can be regarded as the **zeroeth** issue of the series (ed. ISTVÁN HOFFMANN. Debrecen–Helsinki, 88 pages).

The **first** issue of *Onomastica Uralica* was the “Selected Bibliography of the Onomastics of the Uralian Languages” (ed. ISTVÁN HOFFMANN. Debrecen–Helsinki, 2001, 469 pages). The preparation of this bibliography was a long and difficult task, given that a unified view had to be guaranteed, but the results show that it was fruitful work: due to the great length of the material collected, this issue had to be published in two volumes. The bibliography is arranged according to languages, Volume 1a contains Balto-Finnic languages by the following authors: Estonian: PETER PÄLL (Tallinn), Finnish: EEVA-LIISA STENHAMMAR (Helsinki), smaller Balto-Finnic nations: MARJE JOALOID and partly LEMBIT VABA (both Tallinn), Saamic: GEORGIJ KERT (Petrozavodsk) and KAISA RAUTIO HELANDER (Norway). The bibliographies of the other Finno-Ugric languages can be found in Volume 1b: Mari: IVAN GALKIN and OLGA VORONTSOVA (Yoshkar-Ola), Mordvinic: SÁNDOR MATICSÁK (Debrecen) and NINA KAZAEVA (Saransk), Komi: ALEKSEJ MUSANOV (Syktyvkar), Udmurt: LYUDMILA KIRILLOVA (Izhevsk), Hungarian: EDIT HLAVACSKA and VALÉRIA TÓTH (both Debrecen), Samoyedic: SÁNDOR SZEVERÉNYI and BEÁTA WAGNER-NAGY (both Szeged). The greatest defect of the volume is that it doesn't contain a bibliography of Ob-Ugric languages, as we didn't manage to find a researcher who could compile one. Within each language, the selected items are grouped according the following categories:



bibliography, general onomastics, place names, personal names, other names and applied onomastics.

Based on our experience so far, it seems that the Selected Bibliography of the Onomastics of the Uralian Languages has become an indispensable handbook for onomastic researchers.

The **second** issue of the series was prepared with an aim similar to that of the bibliography: to collect all results of Uralian onomastic research that had been carried out hitherto. This issue bears the title “History of the Study of Toponyms in the Uralian Languages” (ed. ISTVÁN NYIRKOS. Debrecen–Helsinki, 2002, 275 pages) and includes 10 papers by 14 authors. The authors are the same as those of the bibliography in the chapters on Udmurt (KIRILLOVA), Komi (MUSANOV), Mordvinic (KAZAEVA and MATICSÁK), Samoyedic (SZEVERÉNYI and WAGNER-NAGY), as well as partly the chapters on Mari (VORONTSOVA) and Saamic (KERT). The article on Estonian toponomastics was written by MARIA KALLASMAA (Tallinn), the Finnish chapter is the work of TERHI AINIALA and RITVA LIISA PITKÄNEN (both Helsinki), while the author of the Hungarian article on toponymic research is ISTVÁN HOFFMANN (Debrecen). It was our pleasure to be able to publish a summary on Ob-Ugric languages by GÁBOR SZÉKELY (Pécs), but unfortunately there is no contribution on the smaller Balto-Finnic languages. The volume is opened by an article by MIHÁLY HAJDÚ (Budapest), outlining the general history of toponymic research.

After the publication of *Onomastica Uralica* 2, a special volume was edited under the number 1c, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of *Onoma*, which is the international periodical of onomastics (Hungarian Onomastics in *Onoma*. ed. ISTVÁN HOFFMANN–ISTVÁN NYIRKOS–FERENC ÖRDÖG. Debrecen, 2002, 289 pages). This volume contains all articles ever published in *Onoma* by Hungarian onomasticians. Since these contributions were written primarily in German, English and French, they can prove to be useful not only for Hungarian researchers. Apart from this, all Hungarian onomastic bibliographies that appeared in *Onoma* on an annual basis were collected and published again. The re-publication of these works is also justified by the fact that the individual issues of *Onoma* can only be accessed at a very few places.

What the previously mentioned volumes of *Onomastica Uralica* have in common is that they aim to assess and describe the situation of Uralian onomastics. They do not only open up new ways of gathering information mutually, but the individual papers also provide insight into the onomastic research of the various languages.



The feedback on the start of a common onomastic project of Uralian languages and on the first volumes of OU has been utterly positive. The research programme was reviewed in Finnish, Estonian, German, Italian and Hungarian periodicals, and positive book reviews were published on the first volumes. The ones published up until then were presented at the international congress on onomastics in Uppsala, Sweden in 2002 and the series was also mentioned at a recent conference in Pisa, Italy.

After the publication of the first two volumes, there was a short break of continuity but the **third** volume managed to appear some weeks before the congress in Yoshkar-Ola, under the title “Settlement Names in the Uralian Languages” (ed. SÁNDOR MATICSÁK. Debrecen–Helsinki, 2005, 182 pages), containing articles by 12 different researchers. From the authors of the previous volumes, some also published in this one: GEORGIJ KERT (Saamic), LYUDMILA KIRILLOVA (Udmurt), ALEKSEJ MUSANOV (Komi), MARJA KALLASMAA (Estonian) and SÁNDOR MATICSÁK (Mordvinic). Furthermore, there is an article on Mordvinic settlement names by Professor TZIGANKIN, one on Finnish place names by LAILA LEHIKONEN (Helsinki), one on Karelian place names by N. MAMONTOVA (Petrozavodsk) and another paper on Vepsian settlement names by I. MULLONEN (also Petrozavodsk). There are three contributions to the widely investigated system of Hungarian toponyms: by GYULA KRISTÓ (Szeged), VALÉRIA TÓTH (Debrecen) and ANDREA BÖLCSKEI (Budapest). It is a lamentable fact that there are no papers on Ob-Ugric, Samoyedic and Mari settlement names.

The most challenging task so far has been the edition of the **fourth** volume of *Onomastica Uralica*, which deals with interlingual relations between Uralian languages in the field of place names: “Borrowing of Place Names in the Uralian Languages” (ed. RITVA LIISA PITKÄNEN and JANNE SAARIKIVI).

Observing exclusively the quantitative data, we can assert that so far three volumes of *Onomastica Uralica* have been published and a fourth one is in a phase immediately before publication. These four volumes have been or are going to be published in eight sub-volumes, with a total length of 1600 pages. 40 authors representing 15 research centres have made their contributions in the form of articles. Evaluating solely these statistical data, our satisfaction cannot be complete, as originally two further volumes were planned in the above-mentioned period of time. On the other hand, the number of sub-volumes that were published exceeded our previous expectations, because we had calculated one volume per issue, which did not prove to be feasible, due to the great length of the material to be published.

If we want to extend our evaluation by looking further than just quantitative data, we can ascertain that the series has mostly met the expectations. A great deal of co-operation had been made possible between the onomastic



researchers of the Uralic languages, which did not exist before. Moreover, the high standards of the contributions indicate that getting to know the research results mutually can be extremely beneficial to all onomasticians. The actual manifestation of this advantage has not been observable yet, due to the shortness of time that has passed, but we are sure that this process will get stronger in the future.

3. Tasks for the future

One of the important results of launching the series is the experience we have gained while editing the first volumes. In order to improve cooperation for the future, we made the following decisions at the congress, in agreement with the colleagues participating in the project:

3.1. The first question concerns the composition of the editorial board. We regret to have been informed that one of the board members, Professor GORDEEV passed away. To fill his position, we asked Professor I. GALKIN (Yoshkar-Ola) on the basis of his rich work in the field of onomastics, whose wide experience can be very beneficial for the project.

Independently of all these, we believe that the publication of the series would gain momentum by the extension of the editorial board. We wish to include especially those colleagues in the work who have been involved actively in making the individual volumes. Based on the suggestion of the board members from Debrecen, the editorial board was extended by the following new members: from the Finno-Ugric territories in Russia: NINA KAZAEVA (Saransk), LYUDMILA KIRILLOVA (Izhevsk), IRMA MULLONEN (Petrozavodsk), ALEKSEJ MUSANOV (Syktyvkar), TATYANA DMITRIEVA (Yekaterinburg) and OLGA VORONTSOVA (Yoshkar-Ola); from Estonia MARJA KALLASMAA (Tallinn) and from Finland JANNE SAARIKIVI (Helsinki).

3.2. The edition of the volumes and day-to-day communication between the authors and the editors have been made possible mainly by the internet. This has been a great opportunity to communicate and its advantages were particularly felt when editing the volume containing the bibliographies. The internet will continue to be the major communication medium between the editors but the fact cannot be denied that personal encounters and consultations are also of great importance. Accordingly, RITVA LIISA PITKÄNEN and JANNE SAARIKIVI visited Debrecen and ISTVÁN NYIRKOS was in Finland. We would like to make these occasions more regular and more widespread in the future.

As the typographical preparation of the individual volumes takes place in Debrecen and they are also printed there, it would be sensible to define the editors of the further volumes in a way that a researcher from Hungary



(preferably from Debrecen) and one representing another Uralic language could cooperate. Also personal collaboration would facilitate the work process to a large extent, which can be realized through a visit to Debrecen of the researcher in question. The costs of his/her stay in Debrecen for a few weeks (accommodation and meals) can be financed by the programme, while the travel costs will have to be covered by the guest.

3.3. The research programme and its seat, the University of Debrecen, are happy to form bilateral agreements with institutions where Finno-Ugric onomastics have an academic basis. Such contracts are advantageous also from the point of view that in this way researchers connected to the project can be financially supported by their home institution too. We entered such a contract with the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland (Kotimaisten Kielten Tutkimuskeskus) in Helsinki and we are open to similar cooperation with any research centre (university, college, academic institute etc.).

3.4. Although it may seem a minor technical issue, translating the articles into English is a factor which determines the publishing process to a great extent. The Finnish, Estonian and Hungarian colleagues send us their papers apart from the original version also in English. We undertook the task to translate into English all articles written in Russian. Bearing in mind the goals of *Onomastica Uralica*, it has been decided that besides English, also Russian will be included as a language of publication in the future.

3.5. The forthcoming volumes of *Onomastica Uralica* are planned to be edited thematically, just like the preceding ones. In the following we would like to make some suggestions concerning the areas that we think should be dealt with. Based on what has been suggested so far, we would like to propose who the editors of the individual volumes should be.

Water Names in the Uralian Languages. Ed. ISTVÁN HOFFMANN and OLGA VORONTSOVA. This volume pays special attention to river and lake names which were coined by language-internal processes, as loans are a general topic of the fourth volume, which is to be published soon. The stock of hydronyms and the structural types of names in the various languages are to be investigated and the semantic groups of water names and the word-stock making up the names are to be presented. Apart from characterising the process of how water names came about, change processes typical to hydronyms are also to be touched upon.

The Theory and Practice of Collecting Toponyms. Ed. ISTVÁN NYIRKOS and RITVA LIISA PITKÄNEN. The individual Uralian languages have achieved very different results in collecting toponyms and, even in those areas where ample material is available in the field, the research methods were rather different.



In Finland, for instance, there is a rich tradition of archives, whereas in Hungary the practice has been the publication in volumes. Summarising the methods can serve as a great help for those Finno-Ugric languages where the collection of toponyms has only been sporadic so far.

Name Geography and Toponymic Research. Ed. VALÉRIA TÓTH and LYUDMILA KIRILLOVA. The use of name geography in toponymic research has been focused on in the most varied ways by Finnish researchers. Hungarian onomastics has dealt with the current place names rather as sources of dialectology. The onomastics of Finno-Ugric languages in Russia has put the greatest emphasis on the name geographical examination of water names. The differences and similarities of research results in this field can have essential theoretical and practical consequences.

Nation and Tribe Names—Personal and Place Names. Ed. SÁNDOR MATICSÁK and TERHI AINALA. Personal and place names in every Uralic language are strongly connected to the names of nations, tribes or clans. The borderlines of the individual classes are often blurred up to the extent that even assigning such elements to the categories of proper versus common names can prove to be problematic. The way in which ethnonyms can be applied in proper names can be defined by various rules and the articles of this volume can account for such differences too.

Geographical Common Names in the Uralian Languages. Ed. ISTVÁN HOFFMANN and ALEKSEJ MUSANOV. Geographical common names, which designate the types of places, belong to the core vocabulary of each language and also historically they tend to be one of the best-documented word groups of a language. As they play a crucial role in toponyms, their investigation can explore their cultural, geographical and linguistic aspects.

In the planned volumes, apart from the characterisation of the individual Uralian languages, increasing attention could be paid to the similarities and differences between these languages as regards their toponyms, as well as the linguistic and cultural factors behind them.

Furthermore, we find it conceivable to prepare one or more volumes on the personal names of the Uralian languages. Both the history of the investigation of place names and the development of their systems in the individual languages could be presented.

We would also like to continue the ***bibliographic work*** initiated in Volume 1 of *Onomastica Uralica*. The entire onomastic bibliography of the individual Uralian languages should be compiled and published, of the years 2000–2005, as the closing year of the previous one was 1999. It is our great pleasure that a selected bibliography of the Ob-Ugric languages can be prepared additionally, by TATYANA DMITRIEVA from Yekaterinburg.



It has been suggested to publish not only thematically compiled volumes in the series, but also books and monographs, which, due to their thematic, general and methodical results, exceed the framework of just one individual Uralian language.

3.6. The need to strengthen the periodical character of the series was clearly emphasized at the roundtable discussion. We hope that the publication of *Onomastica Uralica* can be more continuous than before and we can view it more and more like a periodical. As we are fully convinced that it would be of great use to publish reviews of books that can be considered important also for researchers of other languages, we are planning to devote a part of each volume to book reviews. This is feasible already from the next volume, so we are calling for book reviews and articles on Uralian onomastics. The language of the papers has not been defined because these contributions—as opposed to the general, thematically arranged volumes in English—could be published in their original languages.

3.7. We would like to develop the homepage of *Onomastica Uralica* in a way that it would not only contain the articles themselves but also general information to researchers. Previous news and reports on important events in onomastics, conferences, lectures etc. could be presented here.

3.8. We have always aimed at sending copies of *Onomastica Uralica* to all the places where researchers could need them. Also in the future we will keep sending volumes for free to all institutions and colleagues who order them. We invite those who would like to receive the series to let us know. We are also happy to receive each of their own publications in return.

We truly hope that our research programme will bring mutual benefits to the participants and can provide possibilities for fruitful and successful cooperation.

II. Onomastic lectures of the congress

1. Questions of hydronym research

The central topic of the afternoon programme of the roundtable discussion on *Onomastica Uralica* was research into water names. After the keynote lecture by SÁNDOR MATICSÁK, “On the Etymological Analysis of Hydronyms, Demonstrated on Mordvinic Material” (К этимологическому исследованию гидронимов — на мордовском материале), three other lectures were held in the field: by LEONID ARSLANOV (Yelabuga), ALINA SOSAEVA (Cheboksary) and TATYANA DMITRIEVA (Yekaterinburg).



SÁNDOR MATICSÁK emphasized in his lecture that research into the hydronyms of smaller Finno-Ugric nations raises a number of important

questions. As the Russian territory is inhabited generally by speakers of (at least) three, typologically different language families (Finno-Ugric nations, Russians and Turkish nations), by determining the chronological layers we can, not only gain insight into their migration history, but also make an etymological-typological description of the hydronyms. Furthermore, we can collect information about the migration processes of extinct nations and research into hydronyms is also essential for the description of settlement names formed out of water names by means of metonymy.

A crucial, well-investigated area of Russian hydronym research is the examination of the oldest layer in Northern Russia. These names are etymologically opaque; they cannot be originated from any known language today and they have some common features from the morphological point of view. A wide zone of these formally cognate names can be found from Northern Russia, going through Moscow, Jaroslav, Kostroma, Nizhnij Novgorod and Rjasan', down to the Southern border of Mordovia.

All this work delineated above needs a reliable etymological background. The author of the keynote lecture called attention to the fact (just as he had done on several previous occasions) that a kind of "etymological purification" is needed in the onomastics of the smaller Finno-Ugric languages, alongside the need for a reliable etymological database. It is a lamentable fact that false etymologies have been dominating the field for decades, which should be reinterpreted by young researchers. It is a commonly known fact that in the case of etymologically opaque names, the need to be able to make names fit into the system is very strong. That is why those etymologies are rather problematic which, conceivable as though they may seem, oppose the rules of the system of names used in the given territory. A further source of problems can be if researchers arbitrarily cut up words and intend to explain the individual parts from random languages, regardless of the migration processes of the given area, or even make conclusions as to the migration processes from these etymologies, which is even worse.

As regards the other three lectures, the one by TATYANA DMITRIEVA deserves special attention: the author made an analysis of words meaning 'lake' in Khanty, drawing on a large body of examples. SOSAEVA spoke about the difficulties of onomastic research in the Chuvash Republic. The etymological analyses of ARSLANOV triggered serious debates, with IRMA MULLONEN and JANNE SAARIKIVI in particular contradicting the majority of his examples in a convincing way.

2. On the onomastics section of the congress

There were 372 lectures announced on linguistics in the programme of the congress. However, we experienced that due to the uncertainties before the



congress, problems concerning travelling there and because of problems in the information flow, not more than 50–60% of the announced lectures were actually held. We were glad that the section on onomastics was working for three days. In the forthcoming part we would like to present some lectures held at the congress.

ANATOLIJ KUKLIN (Yoshkar-Ola) in his lecture entitled “Theoretical and Methodological Problems of Onomastic Research” (Теоретические и методологические проблемы ономастических исследований) looked at those methods which can help in preparing an ethnolinguistic characterisation of the Ural–Volga area. He touched upon how to define the linguistic typology of the names to be investigated (which can only be carried out by concentrating on the “linguistic realities”), he spoke about substratum names, the theoretical questions of loan names and the difficulties in describing the migration processes.

LYUDMILA KIRILLOVA (Izhevsk) examined an important area of Udmurt and Komi toponomastics in her lecture bearing the title “Basic Word-Formation Models of Microtoponyms in Permian Languages” (Основные словообразовательные модели микротопонимии пермских языков) with a precision and theoretical well-preparedness that are typical of her. The question of word-formation is a cardinal one in the onomastics of the smaller Finno-Ugric languages, containing lots of pitfalls, as the topoformants can only be defined by taking into account the results of investigations in language history.

IRMA MULLONEN (Petrozavodsk) spoke about a project in the Institute of Language, Literature and History Studies of Karelia that has been running for several years already. Her lecture had the title “Analysis of Karelian Toponyms from an Areal Point of View” (Ареальное исследование топонимии Карелии). The basis of the electronic database is formed by 300 000 paper slips which were gathered through microtoponymic collection. The individual slips contain information as to the type of the given object, its geographical and administrative characteristics and the origin, as well as the structure of the name. Relying on this material, the aim of the researchers is to create an onomastic-topographical electronic database of Karelia. Apart from its great onomastic importance, this project also has a great historic value: with its help it is easy to follow the expansion of the Karelian and Veps people. Another lecturer of the congress, DENIS KUZ'MIN also from Petrozavodsk, showed the usefulness of the database in practice: he systematized those place names of the Karelians living by the White Sea which contain Saamic nation names.

TATYANA DMITRIEVA, who was already mentioned in connection with the roundtable discussion, held a lecture on the relationship between the Khanty from Kazym and the Nenec of the forest, with the title “Khanty–Nenec Rela-



tionships in the Kazym River Valley, Based on Toponymic Data” (Хантыйско–ненецкие контакты на территории бассейна реки Казым по данным топонимии). The tight relationship between these two nations living in the area by the Agana and Kazym Rivers and Lake Numto, can be observed not only in various fields of culture, but also attested in their name material: about one hundred of the 2400 names collected here are of Nenec origin.

Three researchers looked at ethnonyms: YEVGENINA AYVABINA from Syktyvkar (“Ethnonyms in the Komi Language”, Этнoнимы в коми-зырянском языке), and NIKOLAJ MOKSHIN (“On Some Mordvinic Ethnonyms of the Turkish People by the Volga River”, О некоторых мордовских этнонимах тюркских народов Поволжья) and NINA KAZAEVA (“Ethnonyms in Mordvinic Toponyms”, Этнoнимы в мордовских топонимах) from Saransk.

Altogether, 34 lectures on onomastics were held at the congress, constituting 9.1% of all lectures. Is this a lot or a little? Comparing the numbers with those of previous congresses, we can be satisfied: Tartu 2000: out of the 214 lectures held, 12 were on onomastics (5.6%), Jyväskylä 1995: 184/20 (10.8%), Debrecen 1990: 195/12 (6.2%), Syktyvkar 1985: 146/9 (6.2%). Thus, it would seem that onomastics has become fully accepted as an integral part of the congress programme.

