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The History of Samoyed Toponymic Research

1. Works treating Samoyedic languages in general

Research in Samoyed onomastics was started in the 60s and can mainly be linked to A. P. DUL'ZON's name. He focused his attention on geographical names, which he summarized in 1965, 1966, 1969. His work was continued by I. A. VOROBYEVA, who described the geographical names taken over by Russian from the West Siberian languages (1973). Unfortunately, works dealing with onomastics almost totally disappeared after the 70s and reappeared only in the mid-80s. It was primarily A. K. MATVEEV who had been engaged in the topic (1980, 1989). Special attention should be paid to M. F. ROZEN and A. M. MALOLETKO's monograph (1986), in which the co-authors collected geographical names of West Siberia. It is to be regretted, however, that no comprehensive and systematizing study in the field has been published so far.

Personal names have been studied by two authors. P. J. SKORIK (1970) examined the name-giving habits of northern peoples, making valuable references to Samoyedic. In an article on a similar topic G. M. VASILYEVICH, however, hardly mentions anything new as to Samoyedic peoples.

Samoyedic animal names were listed and systematized by M. Y. BARMICH (1983).

Reviewing research done so far all that we can state is that studies in Samoyedic onomastics are at an initial stage and there are a number of topics still to be covered.

2. Works on Nenets

Research in Nenets onomastics was started in the early 60s, although works in the field were few and far between at the time. From the mid-60s, however, they began to multiply. The articles and studies may not have been too voluminous, but they first targeted proper names as a research topic and not just as a research tool. The feature they share is that it was only PÉTER HAJDÚ and some Soviet scholars who had embarked upon the theme. The works that emerged can be divided into two groups: in one of them semantic analysis of the names dominates, in the other their morphology is the chief concern. In both of them lists are given rather than interpretations.

A considerable amount of onomastic material is processed in works of ethnography and history, in which names are used as tools for research. These are mainly concerned with personal names scattered and mostly hidden in ethnographic and anthropological studies. Books by L. V. KHOMICH (1966, 1976, 1995), B. O. DOLGIKH (1970) and V. I. VASILYEV (1979) are the most significant of them.

No systematic and comprehensive work has been produced so far, although there have been some remarkable achievements in the study of personal names and geographical names.

PÉTER HAJDÚ was the first to deal with Nenets tribe names in his paper “Die Benennungen der Samojeden” (1948–1950), later completed with some new material by N. M. TERESHCHENKO (1960). Then it was again PÉTER HAJDÚ’s turn to continue TERESHCHENKO’s work, to which his is closely related (1970). Both studies mentioned were published in Hungarian. M. Y. BARMICH (1980) examined personal names from a semantic aspect, but his work can be characterized rather as a list. In the 90s Y. T. PUSKAREVA investigated Nenets names occurring in old documents.

Hydronyms have been treated by O. A. OSIPOVA (1969). In her short, two-page article she groups the names containing the element *jaxa* ‘river’ according to their morphological structure. B. A. SHEDEL’NIKOV describes the hydronyms of the Yamal Peninsula from a semantic point of view in a paper slightly longer than OSIPOVA’s (1969).

Concerning studies on geographical names, G. G. BARAKSANOV and Z. P. ANUFRIEVA’s (1977, the theses have been republished several times) and N. K. FROLOV’s shorter piece (1975) are worth mentioning. The co-authors described Nenets toponymic elements to be found along the Pechora (although their work also resembles a list), whereas FROLOV examined Nenets geographical names to be found in the basin of the river Taz.

Extensive work on geographical names was done by A. K. MATVEEV. His most important studies were published in the 80s, in which he systematized the toponyms of the Ural mountains. Apart from the considerable amount of material taken from Russian, Turkic and other languages spoken in the Ural, he used Nenets data, too. On pp. 29–33 of his book “Топонимия Урала” (Toponymy of Ural; 1985) he deals with Nenets geographical names and makes the following remark: “Ненецкая топонимия пока не только недостаточно изучена, но и собрана очень фрагментарно. Эта обширная область топонимии ещё ждёт своих исследователей.” (Nenets toponymy is not sufficiently described and even what is collected is fragmentary. This wide area is still awaiting its researchers.).

3. Works on Nganasan

Researches in Nganasan onomastics are rather limited in their range, which is also typical of other Samoyedic languages. There are but a few studies from the late 60s and early 70s. These are typically rather short and were published in Siberian periodicals very hard to come by.

The first works on onomastics were written by P. M. KOPTELOV (1969a, 1969b, 1973a, 1973b). In them, the author is mainly concerned with geographical names and hydronyms. It is to be regretted that these are not analysed in detail, but the semantic classification of geographical names is supported by numerous examples, capable of being used as a secondary source for further research.

Nganasan personal names were touched upon by N. M. TERESHCHENKO (1969) in a lecture, a topic taken up by him again in 1971.

Unfortunately, research in Nganasan onomastics can be illustrated only with KOPTELOV's and TERESHCHENKO's work. No new, up-to-date and comprehensive studies have come to light. Neither is an explosion to be expected, in view of the general plight of Samoyedic studies and of this small language, although much could be done to cover other areas of onomastics.

4. Works on Enets

Of all the living Samoyedic languages, Enets seems to be the most neglected as far as toponymic research is concerned. The main reason for this is that this language is just about to die out and one can hardly find a reliable informant. There is very little written material available, which is not enough for writing a comprehensive study in onomastics. Older Russian tax censuses have not yet been fully processed either. What has been done is scattered in different studies in the ethnography, anthropology, history and ethnogenesis of Nordic peoples (e.g., DOLGIKH 1970). Another reason for Enets being neglected may be the researchers' preference for Nenets, which is spoken in a far larger area.

For the past decades there has appeared one single study in Enets onomastics. In the first part of his work, E. HELIMSKI (1981) deals with the etymology of the tribe name *Somatu*. Then he goes on to divide all the Enets names of this kind into three groups: 1. tribe names of the Enets living in the tundra, 2. tribe names to be found in both Enets dialects, 3. Enets names in the foresty area. In the third part, women's names and collective nouns are analysed. Finally, in the fourth, the etymology of Enets *Ratta*, which occurs in the toponymy of Tazov Selkups, is disclosed.

Other areas of onomastics such as place names, hydronyms, settlement names, etc. have not yet been investigated. Considering the situation Enets is

in, no positive change is likely to take place, although quite a great deal of onomastic material should still be available for study.

5. Works on Selkup

Selkup onomastic research is basically linked with E. G. BEKKER, who published studies in this area since the 60s. He carried out a morphological grouping of hydronyms (1965) and examined the parallels between West Siberian and European water names (1970a), devoting special research to the various Selkup denominations meaning ‘moor, swamp, marsh’ (1970b).

Personal names have been described by two authors. BEKKER examined the name-giving habits of the 70s (1976). This is a relatively short piece, but the illustrative material is voluminous. Another researcher of the topic, S. M. MALINOVSKAYA, touched upon Selkup name-giving in an article and a lecture (1987, 1989). In them she grouped personal names occurring in old documents according to their semantics and morphological structure. A dictionary-type summary of personal names appeared in 1979.

It is to be regretted that studies in Selkup onomastics had completely ceased to interest researchers by the 90s.

6. Works on Sayan Samoyedic

Sayan Samoyedic onomastics has hardly been studied. There are just a few papers that contain some data on geographical names. E. HELIMSKI is the only author who published a study on this topic (1999), listing a few toponymic details from Mueller’s manuscript in order to promote further research.

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