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***From the History of the Study of Hydronyms
of the Mari El Republic***

The study of toponyms in the area where the Mari live at present began at the end of the 19th century, although several hydronyms of the region had been recorded by travellers a long time before. ADAM OLEARIUS, a German by nationality, spent some time with the Mari during his journey from Moscow to Persia along the Volga in 1634–1636. In his book entitled “Описание путешествия в Московию” (A description of the journey to Muscovy) he gives an interesting account of his visit to the district of Sernur and is the first to mention the holy riverlet *Шокшем* (OLEARIUS 1906).

The participants of the Second Expedition to Kamchatka (1733–1743) and the Expedition of the Academy (1768–1774) collected a huge amount of data about the population of Kazan’ province. As a result of these expeditions, in 1791 G. F. MILLER edited a book “Описание живущих в Казанской губернии языческих народов, яко то черемис, чуваш и вотяков” (Description of the pagan peoples living in the Kazan’ province, i.e., the Cheremiss, the Chuvash and the Votyak), in which the names of a few rivers and towns are fixed: *Науградъ — Вятка, Чолман — Виць — Кама, Жуть — Волга, Шокшем — Онжу, Лашь* and seven Mari personal names are also mentioned. G. F. MILLER even made an attempt to etymologize some of the toponyms. What he writes is that the Mari call the river Vyatka *Науградъ — Вичь*, the Tartars call it *Наукрат — Идель*, whereas the Udmurts called it *Вятка (Bätka) — Кам*. The words *Вичь* or *Виць, Кам, Идель* have the meaning ‘river’ in these languages (MILLER 1791, pp. 3, 11, 15).

Another researcher, N. P. РYСНКOV mentions a few Mari data in his book “Журнал или дневные путешествия ... по разным провинциям Российского государства в 1796 и 1770 гг” (A journal or diary of the journey across different provinces of the Russian state in 1796 and 1770; РYСНКOV 1970).

In the third volume of “Путешествие по различным провинциям Российской империи” (A journey across different provinces of the Russian Empire) P. S. PALLAS, head of the expedition of the Academy, gives a very correct etymology to the hydronym *Кама*. “*Кам* означает на вотяцком (удмуртском) языке вообще великую реку” (*Kam* means a great river in general in Votyak [Udmurt]; 1788, pp. 29–30).

It was D. E. EUROPÆUS who, however indirect this could have been, had been the first to touch upon the place names in the Mari area as part of his research into the north of Russia and Scandinavia. He mentions a substratum layer of the toponyms in North Russia, considering it to be of Ugric origin. Its relicts can still be traced between the rivers Vetluga and Vyatka (EUROPÆUS 1868, 1876). M. CASTRÉN (1856) and M. WESKE (1890) also paid attention to the toponyms of the Mari area in their investigations. The main initiator of the collection and contrastive analysis of Mari toponyms was, however, I. A. IZNOSKOV, one of the founders of the Kazan' toponymic school. The Archeological, Historical and Ethnographic Society, established in the 70s of the 19th century in Kazan', had a division of toponymy, whose members took an active part in collecting the geographical names of the Middle Volga region. "Список населенных мест уезда с кратким их описанием" (A list of the district's settlements with their short description) is a most valuable source for researchers (IZNOSKOV 1885).

The author does not restrict himself to mere description; he also provides etymologies of some names, e.g. *Бизюргуб*, *Бизюргу* + *баш* — village near a nameless source. The first name derives from Cheremiss *Бизюр* + *губ* / *куп* (Cher.) 'moor, marsh', whereas the second comes from the same *Бизюр* and *баш* (Turkic) 'summit, head'. Near the village *Бизюргуб* there are the following settlement districts: 1. *Васютин* (in Cher. *Ватын дер* 'women's lake'), on the lake that has the same name, 2. *Качейкин* (in Cher. *Чанай-сола*); 3. *Томскин* not far from a nameless source. In these settlements there used to live Cheremiss people. *Ильинское* (in Cher. *Ошландер*) is a village on the lake Urazlin 31 versts from the town. The founders were Cheremiss people, later coalescing with the Tartars.

I. A. IZNOSKOV used written answers from local dwellers of aboriginal nationality for the study of geographical names. Generalizing his observations he came to the conclusion that "многие инородческие и, может быть, мерянские названия удовлетворительно объясняются при посредстве черемисского языка" (many foreign and, possibly, Merian names can satisfactorily be explained via the Cheremiss language; IZNOSKOV 1891, p. 225).

T. S. SEMENOV made a list of geographical names of the Vladimir, Kostroma, Nizhegorod, Moscow and Yaroslavl' provinces. He also compared the toponyms of other regions with similar Mari names, e.g., *Ерга*, *Ошма*, *Шокшем*, *Пижда*, to be found in the V'atka, Kazan' and Ufa provinces. It is noteworthy that the names analysed by T. S. SEMENOV are not of Slavic origin but partly Mari, while others belong to the substratum. Some of his etymological interpretations are rather naive, but his work is still significant, because it is the first to deal with the question of how the ancient Mari had been scattered about Kostroma province (SEMENOV 1891). In B. A. SEREB-

RENNIKOV's view, T. S. SEMENOV put forward a hypothesis of a population speaking closely related languages and formerly living in the territories of what is the Moscow, Vladimir', Kaluga, Nizhegorod and Kirov provinces now (SEREBRENNIKOV 1967).

There is some information on Mari and also substratum toponyms in the area contained in I. N. SMIRNOV's book entitled "Черемисы" (The Cheremiss), in which he writes the following: "В Котельницком уезде всего 600 черемис обоого пола, но существует около 60 селений по названиям черемисские: *Пишнур, Моркинская, Черемисская, Туманур, Климанер, Кугунур, Кугенер, Шапшанер*" (In the Kotelnich district there live only 600 Cheremiss people of both sexes, but there about 60 settlements bearing a Cheremiss name: ...). By now the Mari inhabiting this district have become Russianized. I. N. SMIRNOV goes on to say that "Главные воды территории от Волги до Вятки были известны человеку задолго до начала черемисской колонизации. Все они имеют названия, не соответствующие по своему составу черемисским, реки: *Ветлуга (Вытля), Кокиага (Кашан), Каньга, Нулга, Ронга, Шурма, Юргема, Аджим, Уржум, Удюрма, Пижма, Вылом, Пима, Муйма, Рой, Руй, Люй, Шимья, Орья, Куртъя, Турья, Патъя, Руя, Курья, Унжа, Сарда, Немда, Инда, Кунта, Ухта, Орша, Тумша, Турша, Пильба, Курба*" (The main waters of the area from the Volga to the V'atka had been well-known to people well before the Cheremiss colonization began. All the rivers have names that do not correspond to Cheremiss ones in their structure: ...; SMIRNOV 1889, pp. 18, 20).

In P. M. RUZSKIJ's "Лимнологические исследования в Среднем Поволжье (озера северо-западной части Казанской губернии)" (Limnological research in the middle Volga area [the lakes in the north-west of the Kazan' province]; RUZSKIJ 1916) and A. N. SOBOLEVSKIJ's "Названия рек и озер русского Севера" (River and lake names in the north of Russia, 1927) hydronyms of non-Russian origin can be pointed out.

The early and mid 20th century (up to the 60s) saw a significant decline in Mari toponymic studies. It was only enthusiastic non-professional historians of the area who wrote a few articles whose main target was entertainment and popularization. Discussing the origin of hydronyms in the Mari territory, F. Y. YEGOROV notes that the river names *Рутки, Парата, Ронги, Илети* and *Юшута* are not Mari and considers them to be of Finno-Ugric descent. However, he fails to support his view with reliable examples (YEGOROV 1926, p. 31).

In the eight issues of his "Описание Маробласти" (A description of the Mari territory) M. N. YANTEMIR provided a physico-geographical characterization of the area. He also attached a hydrographical map to this work, which, unfortunately, has not survived (1926–1930).

In 1954 a rather voluminous book by К. А. СЧЕТКАРЕВ entitled “Значение топонимики для древней истории мари” (The importance of toponyms in the study of ancient Mari history) came out. Focusing on previous toponymic research and, toponyms, the author makes an attempt to outline the territory once occupied by the ancient Mari and examines geographical names that “sound Mari” in Central Russia and in the Volga-Kama region. The etymological explanation supplied is rather naive or simply defective: *Кокша* ‘furuncle’, *Курмышевка* ‘birch’ (used as an adjective), *Шижма* ‘sensitive’, *Уста* ‘artisan’, *Мушюра* ‘bee, drone’, *Вая* ‘collar, lapel, flap’ (СЧЕТКАРЕВ 1954, p. 123).

In V. M. VASILYEV’s monograph “Материалы по грамматике мари́йского языка” (Materials for the grammar of the Mari language) one can find a small amount of toponymic data (1958, pp. 22–23). In the chapter “Из топонимистической и ономастической лексики” ([A selection] from the toponymic and onomastic lexis) he interprets the origin of the hydronym *Pürö* (Бирь) as one having emerged under the influence of folk etymology and relates it to Cheremiss *pürö* ‘home-brewed beer’. In all probability, the variant *Бирь* can be regarded as primary with the meaning ‘river’. In MURZAEV’s dictionary Nanai *бюра* is recorded with the meaning ‘brook, small river’ and compared with Manchu *бюра* ‘river’ (MURZAEV 1984, pp. 85–86).

It was in the 60s that the diachronic description of the language began. The geographical names of the area attracted the attention of not only linguists, but also historians, folklorists, ethnographers and geographers.

In the same year steps were taken towards a more up-to-date understanding of toponyms, including hydronyms. The systematic and purposeful collection of toponymic material of the Mari ASSR and the bordering republics and provinces was made part of the project launched by the linguistic section of Mari Scientific Research Institute. It is to be regretted that the collection of geographical names and their systematization has not been finished so far.

F. I. GORDEEV also began his work in the field of toponymic research in the sixties. His first article “Русская топонимика Марийской АССР” (Russian toponyms in the Mari ASSR) deals with the analysis of Russian settlements with Russian and Mari names. He was the first to group the toponyms according to their word-formational types. Their etymology is also supplied, but we are primarily concerned here with oikonyms, whose origin is connected with hydronyms (GORDEEV 1964).

The proceedings of the conference devoted to the ethnogenesis of the Mari people came out in 1967. The volume was entitled “Происхождение мари́йского народа” (The origins of the Mari people), in which toponyms of

the Mari area were given a thorough consideration. In our view, F. I. GORDEEV's study "Балтийские и иранские заимствования в марийском языке" (Baltic and Iranian loans in Mari) is not correct in every respect, as a number of genuinely Mari (Finno-Ugric) place names are explained with reference to data taken from the Iranian and Baltic languages (GORDEEV 1967). It is undoubtedly true that the Iranian languages could have influenced the development of Mari but, in anticipation of what will follow later, it can be stated that no such influence can be observed in the hydronyms between the rivers Vetluga and V'atka. P. ARISTE is of the opinion that the Baltic loans in the East Finnic languages represent either the substratum of an extinct language or are common Indo-European by origin (ARISTE 1973).

It should also be noted here that F. I. GORDEEV is often clearly mistaken in his etymological observations concerning Mari toponyms, which he treats mainly as loans, ignoring lexical evidence of Finno-Ugric languages and their dialects, as well as word-formation types in genetically related languages (1966, 1969). What he should be given credit for, however, is that his somewhat hasty conclusions are later revised in favour of the Finno-Ugric languages (1973, 1975, 1985).

Professor I. S. GALKIN's contribution to the study of toponyms is especially noteworthy. He laid firm foundations for the study of Mari toponyms by compiling a questionnaire of geographical names with great care, thoroughly processing and systematizing the material collected, training a new generation of researchers at Mari State University, organizing and editing the issues of the periodical "Вопросы марийской ономастики" (Questions of Mari onomastics) and publishing numerous articles and books on toponymy.

I. S. GALKIN's article "Топонимика Марийского края в связи с вопросом происхождения марийского народа" (Toponymicon of the Mari area in connection with the origin of the Mari people; 1967) is an important hallmark in the research of Mari geographical names and can undoubtedly be regarded as the methodological basis for the study of toponyms in the territory once inhabited by the Mari people. Critically approaching the existing views on Mari and Finno-Ugric toponyms, I. S. GALKIN came to the conclusion that at the beginning of the first millenium the territory of the Mari Republic was occupied by tribes other than Mari. Relying on the purely Mari hydroformants *-нер (-нар)* he makes the following statement: "Расположение гидронимов на *-нер* между ареалами на *-я (-ю)* и *-лей* говорит о том, что древнемарийские племена территориально находились между древнепермскими племенами с северо-востока и древнемордовскими с юго-запада" (The fact that hydronyms ending in *-нер* can be found between those ending in *-я (-ю)* and *-лей* respectively, is indicative of the ancient Mari tribes occupying the territory between ancient Permians in the north-

east and ancient Mordvins in the south-west. GALKIN 1967, pp. 200, 203–210).

Consequently, the basic core of the population that can be considered to have been the ancestors of the present-day Mari was constituted by tribes closely related to the Mordvins. The same views are developed in his works “Об угорских элементах в топонимике Республики Марий Эл” (On the Ugric elements in the place names of the Mari El Republic; 1998), “О прародине мари по данным языка и топонимии” (On the primordial habitat of the Mari as evidenced by the language and toponyms; 1995) “Тайны марийской топонимики” (The secrets of Mari toponyms; 1985), “Кто и почему так назвал?” (Who was it named by as it was and why?; 1991), “Марий ономастика” (Mari onomastics; 2000). In the studies listed Professor I. S. GALKIN pays special attention to the hydronyms of the present-day Mari El Republic.

V. V. KUZNETSOV’s PhD dissertation, entitled “Ойконимы бассейна реки Илеть Марийской АССР” (The oikonyms of the Ilet’ river basin in the Mari ASSR; 1985) is worthy of attention for its being the realization of an ambitious research plan. Its author carries out a historico-etymological analysis of geographical names, also touching upon the hydronyms current in the area.

Since the edition of the periodical “Вопросы марийской ономастики” (Questions of Mari onomastics) was begun, a new generation of researchers have grown up and published studies in toponymy. It is mainly L. S. ARSLANOV, A. N. KUKLIN, S. Y. CHERNYKH, K. N. SANUKOV, V. I. VERSHININ, V. SHAJMARDANOV and O. P. TERYTYEVA who deal with water names to be found in the territory between the rivers Vetluga and V’atka, where the ancestors of the Mari used to live and also live now.

In the article “Переселение марийцев в бассейн реки Белой (по данным топонимии)” (The migration of the Mari to the basin of the river Belaya as evidenced by toponyms) S. Y. CHERNYKH, relying on archive material and toponymic data, examines the migration of the Mari eastward to Bashkortostan (1982).

In his ethnographic research “Восточные марийцы” (The eastern Mari) G. A. SEPEEV uses meadow-eastern toponyms for the definition of their primordial habitat. He has found about 50 names of settlements and rivers that correspond to analogical formations in the Middle Volga region: *Шуар* (river) — *Шуарсола* (village) *Арбан* (river) — *Арбан* (village) (1975, pp. 47, 51).

Hydronyms are used for the location of the primary dwelling area of ancient Mari tribes and other Finno-Ugric peoples by D. Y. KAZANTSEV (1985, p. 56) and L. SH. ARSLANOV (1993, 2001).

In his study “О некоторых марийских ойконимах Прикамья” (On some oikonoms of the Kama region) V. I. VERSHININ points out a one-time link between the oikonoms *Йыгра, Йырса, Кокшан, Кяанэне, Памашэнер, Пелемеш, Шия, Элнет* and hydronyms (1990).

In his paper published under the title “К вопросу о субстратной топонимике на территории Марийской АССР” (On substratum toponyms in the territory of the Mari ASSR), V. SHAJMARDANOV proves the presence of Iranian and Baltic hydronyms in Mari El Republic (1990).

One can find interesting explanations of the origin of the water names *Arda* and *Vetluga* in Professor K. N. SANUKOV’s articles “К этимологии топонима Арда” (On the etymology of the toponym Arda), “К этимологии гидронима Ветлуга” (On the etymology of the hydronym Vetluga); however, his interpretations are difficult to accept (1983, 1985).

A significant contribution to Mari toponymic research is made by L. SH. ARSLANOV, Professor of the Teacher Training College at Yelabuga, testified to by the following list of his works: “Топонимия финно-угорского происхождения в районах западного и восточного Закамья Татарской АССР” (Toponyms of Finno-Ugric origin in the west and east of the trans-Kama region of the Tartar ASSR; 1987a), “Марийский пласт в топонимии Мамадышского района ТАССР” (The Mari layer in the toponyms of the Mamadysh district; 1987b), “О происхождении топонима Кинер” (On the origin of the toponym Kiner; 2001b), “К этимологии названий татарских населенных пунктов Вятско-Полянского и Кильмезского районов Кировской области” (On the etymology of the Tartar settlement names of the V’atka-Pol’ana and Kil’mez districts of the Kirov province; 2001a), etc.

The hydronyms of the region between the rivers V’atka and Vetluga are investigated by O. P. TERYTYEVA in her dissertation “Гидронимы Ветлужско-Вятского междуречья (потомонимы)” (The hydronyms between the rivers V’atka and Vetluga [river names], 1994). She analyzes over 1500 river names, giving their lexico-semantic characteristics and defining their structural types. She has devoted a whole series of articles to the topic: “Гидронимы бассейна реки Немда” (Hydronyms in the basin of the river Nemda; 1993a), “Марийские гидронимы в русском оформлении” (Mari toponyms in Russian form; 1993b), “Стратиграфия гидронимов Ветлужско-Вятского междуречья” (Stratigraphy of hydronyms between the rivers Vetluga and V’atka; 1995a), “Этнонимы в топонимии Ветлужско-Вятского междуречья” (Ethnonyms and toponyms between the rivers Vetluga and V’atka; 2001b), “Угорские апеллятивы в гидронимах Ветлужско-Вятского междуречья” (Ugric appellatives in the hydronyms between the rivers Vetluga and V’atka; 2001a).

Professor A. N. KUKLIN has been concerned with the study of toponyms and hydronyms of the Volga-Kama area since 1978. The names of gullies (small valleys worn away by running water) are given in an alphabetical order in his article “Гидронимы Марийской АССР” (Hydronyms of the Mari ASSR; 1985). In his study “Уральская гидролексема *-си (-ши)* в топонимии Волго-Камья” (Uralic hydrolexemes with *-си (-ши)* in the toponyms of the Volga-Kama region; 1993) he agrees with Professor I. S. GALKIN in principle. A valuable summary of his observation is given in his doctoral dissertation “Топонимия Волго-Камского региона (историко-этимологический анализ)” (Toponyms of the Volga-Kama region [a historico-etymological analysis]; 1998). He points out three chronological layers in the region: a *l o w e r* (substratum) layer, tentatively called Uralic, was created by tribes speaking some Ugro-Samoyedic language. Later this was partly covered by a Finno-Ugric and an old Saami component. The *m i d d l e* layer can be considered to be Mari proper. It was then that the Turkic component made its appearance. The third layer is constituted by Russian toponyms. The author supplies the etymology of the following hydronyms: *Юнга, Сундырь, Уньжа, Турья, Какшан, Немда, Шуй, Шуда, Шора, Шара, Шиндур, Шишнур, Сердеж* and others. There is a detailed analysis of the hydronyms with *-си (-ши)*, *-шош*, and those with the formants *-енга (-еньга)*, *-ельга*, *-ва*, *-га*, *-да (-та)*, which are exactly located.

Scholars working in other republics or provinces also make frequent use of Mari toponymic data. We should mention the toponymists and geographers L. L. TRUBE and N. V. MOROKHIN, the philologists A. I. TURKIN, M. G. ATAMANOV, L. SH. ARSLANOV, A. K. MATVEEV, L. Y. KIRILLOVA, F. G. GARİPOVA and M. R. FEDOTOV.

Work on the toponyms in general and hydronyms in particular continues in the Mari El Republic at present and joins the general line of Finno-Ugric onomastics. The research initiated by the older generation of professors such as I. S. GALKIN, S. Y. CHERNYKH and F. A. GORDEEV has been taken up by experts belonging to a younger age group, such as Professor A. N. KUKLIN or O. P. VORONTSOVA (TERENTYEVA) and others.

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