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Saami Substrate Toponymy in Northern Russia

SJÖGREN, A. I. (1861) and CASTRÉN, M. A. (1862) were the first to identify a few Saami names in the substrate toponymy of northern Russia. Later, this field of research was further developed by M. VASMER (1936, 1941) and A. I. POPOV (1947, 1948). Several studies, more or less related to the topic of the Saami substrate toponymy of northern Russia, have been published by the author of this article (MATVEEV 1969, 1973, 1976, 1979, 1995, 2001, etc.). At present there are a number of linguistic features characteristic of northern Russia that can be interpreted as of Saami origin. The first attempts to analyse Saami (i.e. Proto-Saami) toponyms have been made and this makes it possible, at least to a certain extent, to describe more exactly the prehistory of the Saami and their language, insofar as the Saami substrate toponymy provides the only clues to its history. However, traditional Saami and, in general, Finno-Ugrian studies appear to have made hardly any use of this new material. The reasons for this can be both objective and subjective, although it seems rather difficult to distinguish Saami toponyms from Finnic names, which are widespread in northern Russia and to which the former are genetically related.

In this paper some of the results of a study of the Saami substrate toponymy will be discussed. Further, ways in which Saami components can be identified in the substrate toponymy of northern Russia and how they can be distinguished from Finnic names will be outlined.

It would seem that the substratal Saami place names of northern Russia could be compared to the Saami toponyms of Karelia, but such a comparison would be insufficient. The toponymy of northern Russia consists of a Russian upper layer with underlying Finnic (basically Karelian) and Saami layers. These latter can be considered a substrate and sub-substrate in respect to Russian. In Karelia, however, Saami toponymy is to be regarded as a substrate of the Karelian layer, whereas the upper layer is a Karelian-Russian adstrate.

The sub-substratal character of the majority of the Saami names in northern Russia is primarily supported by the small number of ethnonyms formed from the endonym for the Saami people *лопь* (or *лопарь*), whereas formations from the ethnonym *карел* 'Karelian' are frequent in northern Russia. Nevertheless, there are a few reliable ethnotoponyms derived from *лопь* (*лопарь*) in northern Russia that point to Russian-Saami contacts: the lake name *Лонское* in the Pleseck and Kholmogorskaya districts of the Ark-



hangelsk Region, the toponym *Лонари*, a natural areain the Vozhega and Sokol districts of the Vologda Region, the oikonyms *Лонариха*, in the Kotlas district of the Arkhangelsk Region and in the Ust'-Kubenskoje district of the Vologda Region and the forest name *Лопяки* in the Vel'sk district of the Arkhangelsk Region. Such names are, however, too few for drawing any well-founded conclusions concerning the areas that used to be inhabited by the Saami in northern Russia.

Another factor suggesting that the Saami substrate toponymy is basically sub-substratal in character is the small number of Saami borrowings in the appellative lexicon of the northern Russian dialects (cf., however, *чѣлма* 'strait', 'narrow opening of a fishing snare' ~ Saami *čoalbmī* 'strait', *мярда* 'fishing snare' ~ Saami *meardi* id., etc.). This is even more remarkable taking into consideration the substantial number of Finnic loans in the Russian dialects (for more details see MATVEEV 1995).

The assumption that the ancient Saami dialects of northern Russia are mostly sub-substratal in character also allows us to reveal the basic difficulties in determining the Saami substrate toponymy. Firstly, the Saami languages are very close to the Finnic languages, and in the past these two groups of languages were even closer to one-another than now. This closeness is well reflected in the remarkable similarity in geographical terminology and, consequently, of the bases of compound toponyms, compare Finnish *joki* ~ Proto-Saami **jokē* 'river', Finnish *vaara* ~ Proto-Saami **vārē* 'hill', and others (the Proto-Saami forms are taken from LEHTIRANTA 1989). Naturally, if only the frequently occurring word final toponymic elements (*-Vza* 'river', *-vapa* 'hill', etc.) are considered, it is impossible to decide whether the substrate toponym in question is of Finnic or Saami origin. Secondly, in the process of acquisition of the Saami substrate toponymy by Finnic speakers, formants could have been directly translated, that is, a Saami geographical term could have been replaced by a Finnic one. Thus, the name of the natural area *Шублохта* in the Mezen' district contains the Proto-Saami base **supē* 'aspen' and the formant *-лохта*, which is close to Proto-Saami **lōkte* 'inlet'. On the other hand, in a document from 1627 the variant *Шублахта* is attested, which refers to a portage (a stretch of land or road between two navigable waters over which boats can be carried, hence "portage") in the vicinity of the town of Pinega (SGKE 533) and can be interpreted by comparing it with Proto-Saami **supē* and Finnish *lahti* 'inlet, bay'.

This may explain why distinctive Saami formants like *-ринда* in *Шандо-ринда* 'on the moss lake' (Plat. 288), compare Finnish *ranta*, North Saami *riddu*, Kildin Saami *rin^dt^A* '(river) bank', are rarely found in the substrate toponymy of northern Russia, and, apart from some exceptions, do not play



an important role in distinguishing Saami toponyms from Finnic. Compare, however the names *Канзобала*, *Рындобала*, *Чучебала*, etc., in which the formant *-бала* can be compared with Proto-Saami **pēlē*, North Saami *bealli* ‘half; side’, together with Finnish *puoli* id., as well as bases that can be related to Proto-Saami **kāncē* ‘fellow; community’, Kil’din Saami *kāñz*, Norwegian Saami *riddu* ‘(river) bank’, Kil’din Saami *rin^dt^(A)*, Proto-Saami **čēcē* ‘uncle’, North Saami *čeahci*. Moreover, the etymology of the toponym *Чучебала* is also supported by a metonymic calque documented in a census and inventory book from 1678: “д. Чючюбала, д. Сеталская пуста” ‘Čučubala village, [beside] the deserted village Setalskaja’ (~ Finnish *setä* + locative suffix *-la*). For different interpretations of such names, *Чучебала* among others, see MATVEEV 1995: 38, 1996: 20–21, 2001: 206–210.

What has been stated so far complicates the study of the Saami substrate toponymy. However, there are also facts which help to identify the Saami elements in the substrate toponymy of northern Russia.

1. If the linguo-ethnic identification of substrate toponyms with a specific base is uncertain, it is necessary to investigate its distribution in relation to other areal phenomena. Thus, substrate toponyms with the base *курья* ‘river inlet; small river’, which can be compared to Proto-Saami **kure* and Finnish *kuri* ‘long and narrow cavity; crevice’, may derive either from Finnic (*Тойнокурья* ~ Finnish *toinen* ‘second; other’) or Saami (*Нюхкурья* < **Нюхкурья* ~ Proto-Saami **ñukce* ‘swan’). The distribution of this toponymic type, however, is primarily confined to the eastern part of the region, in which Finnic names are less frequent. Toponyms with the base *-курья* are especially numerous in the Kuloj and Mezen’ basins, where no traces of the distinctive Finnic bases *ихал-* ‘wonderful, lovely; delightful, enchanting’, *муст-* ‘black’, *ранд-* ‘riverside; bank’, *хаб-* ‘aspen’ have been found so far. Therefore, it can be concluded that in the Mezen’-Kuloj sub-region names with the base *-курья* are of Saami rather than Finnic origin. Such reliably distinctive Saami names as *Толбаскурки* < **Толбаскурья* ~ Proto-Saami **tōlpe*, North Saami *duolbas* ‘plain; flat’ well confirm this hypothesis. Toponyms with typical Saami bases such as *чач-* (Proto-Saami **čāčē*) ‘water’, *чухч-* (Proto-Saami **čukčē*) ‘woodgrouse’, *шид-* (Proto-Saami **sijte*) ‘settlement’, and others, are also common in this region.

The linguistic affiliation of hydronyms with the formant *-бой* in the Lake Beloye region can be defined in a similar way. This base can be compared with the Saami *vūqij^e* (Notozero), *vūqij^e* (Kil’din), *vūqij^e* (Jokan’ga) ‘stream’. The comparison with Livonian *vojā* ‘water-filled hollow’ is less convincing both geographically and semantically. But the main factor connecting the Lake Beloye names with *-бой* to Saami languages is their co-occurrence in this subregion with toponyms of other types that contain Saami bases and



stems, compare *Куклохта* (~ Proto-Saami **kukkē* ‘long’, **lōkte* ‘inlet’), *Чёлмосора* (~ Proto-Saami **cōlmē* ‘waterflow’, **sōrē* ‘branch’, etc.).

2. Phonetic features also provide the means for identifying Saami substrate toponyms. Thus, *Чёлмосора* and *Шублохта* are defined as being of Saami origin on the basis of a comparison between Proto-Saami **cōlmē* ‘sound, channel’ and **sōrē* ‘branch’ and the corresponding Finnish words *salmi* and *haara* ~ *saara*. In a similar manner, Proto-Saami **supē* ‘aspen’ and **lōkte* ‘inlet’ can be compared to Finnish *haapa* and *lahti*. There are, however, debatable cases. To mention one, Finnic *ǎ* could have been, in the early period of Finno-Ugrian-Slavic contacts, rendered by the Russian *o* (MIKKOLA 1938: 20–21, KALIMA 1919: 46–47). Thus, toponyms with the bases *-лахта* ~ *-лохта*, *-матка* ~ *-мотка* (cf. Finnish *matka* ‘[stretch of] road’, and Proto-Saami **mōtkē* id.), *-сара* ~ *-сора* and the corresponding stems *лахт-* ~ *лохт-*, *матк-* ~ *мотк-*, *сар-* ~ *сор-* could also be considered borrowings from Finnic acquired in different periods.

3. In debatable cases it is important to take the toponymic environment of a given name into account, which involves taking a micro-regional approach to the etymological analysis of adjacent names. The toponyms *Габлахта* and *Куйкалахта* in the basin of Kenozero must be interpreted as Finnic (cf. Finnish *haara* ‘aspen’, *kuikka* ‘black-throated diver’), whereas *Пышелохта* and *Чухлохта* (< **Чухчлохта*) in the region of Lake Mosha should be traced back to Saami (cf. Proto-Saami **psē* ‘holy’, **čukcē* ‘capercaillie’).

Such a micro-regional approach may enable us to solve rather complicated problems. Thus, in the basin of the River Laja that flows into the White Sea west of the Northern Dvina estuary, seven meadow names with the base *-мотка* ‘(stretch of) road’ are attested. As mentioned above, the formant *-мотка* can be considered either Finnic (~ *matka*) or Saami (~ **mōtkē*, cf. above) in origin. It should be noted, however, that since there are a number of other Saami microtoponyms attested in the area that were subject to Russian adaptation at a relatively late date, and a substitution of Finnic *a* with the Russian *o* is characteristic of the initial period of Finnic–Russian contacts, a Saami origin for these names seems better founded. Unfortunately, these do not contain unambiguous Saami lexemes that might support this hypothesis, rather this proposal is supported by other evidence: the lake and river name *Чёлма* (Proto-Saami **cōlmē* ‘strait, sound’) in the Laja basin as well as a number of meadow names with the formants *-нема* and *-мина* (< *-нема*), which can be interpreted as of Finnic origin (Finnic **nēti* ‘promontory’) but combining with Saami bases, compare *Небрисмина* and Proto-Saami **nēvrē* ‘bad’ (a connection with Finnish *nauris*, North Saami *navrraš*, Kildin Saami *nauras* ‘beet’ [SSA 2: 210] is less likely), *Силосмина* (and Lake *Силозеро* in its immediate vicinity) and Proto-Saami **silē* ‘tired, ex-



hausted', Kil'din *si'll* 'poor in fish' (ITKONEN 1958: 498), *Шубнема* and Proto-Saami **supē* 'aspen', and others. Of course, it might be proposed that these names represent Saami–Finnic semi-calques¹ that are examples of Saami toponymy acquired by Finnic people, but it would seem much more natural to assume that in the language of the local Saami there was a term referring to such features as 'promontory' and 'meadow on the promontory', and that this was related to the Finnish *niemi* (for details see below).

4. The most reliable indicators of the Saami character of the toponymy are those lexemes differentiating Saami from other languages that occur frequently in certain areas and, therefore, permit us to outline the territory of ancient Saami dialects with a relatively high degree of certainty. The most characteristic lexemes of this kind are, for example, *нюхч-* (*Нюхча, Нюхчозеро*), in the Lake Beloye region *нюки-* (*Нюкиша, Нюкиозеро*) ~ Proto-Saami **niukce* 'swan', *чач-* (*Чача, Чачема*) ~ Proto-Saami **čāčē* 'water', *чѐлм-* (*Чѐлмозеро, Чѐлмус*) ~ Proto-Saami **cōlmē* 'waterflow', *чухч-* (*Чухча, Чухчерьма*), in the Lake Beloye region *чуки-* (*Чукиша, Чукиобой*) ~ Proto-Saami **čukcē* 'wood-grouse', *шид-* (*Шидбой, Шидкурья*) ~ Proto-Saami **sijtē* 'settlement'. Investigating the distribution of the toponyms with these lexemes enables us to outline two zones of Saami dialects in northern Russia: a northern one, which is larger, from the White Sea to, approximately, the line Kenozero — lower Vaga — upper Pinega, and a southwestern one, relatively isolated from the former, in the Lake Beloye region. Thus, the northern zone covers the lower reaches of the River Onega, the lower reaches of the Northern Dvina, the River Pinega basin (except for the upper reaches), the lower reaches of the River Vaga and the River Kuloj and River Mezen' basins. Within this area, the following toponymic bases can be considered Saami: *кук-* (*Кукобой, Куколохта*) ~ Proto-Saami **kukkē* 'long', *куч-* (*Кучева, Кучепалда*) ~ Proto-Saami **kōccēk*, Kil'din *ku'dis* 'rotten; sour', *лохт-* (*Лохтозеро, Лохтура*) ~ Proto-Saami **lōkte* 'inlet', *мотк-* (*Моткас, Моткозеро*) ~ Proto-Saami **mōtkē* '(stretch of) road', *нѐрм-* (*Нѐрмуга, Нѐрмус*) ~ Saami Kil'din *hōrm*⁽⁴⁾ 'meadow; grass covered with water', *печ-* (*Печгора, Печкурья*) ~ Proto-Saami **pēcē* 'pine', *пыш-* (*Пышега, Пышелохта*) ~ Proto-Saami **psē* 'holy', *руш-* (*Рушева, Рушемин*) ~ North Saami *ruošša*, Kil'din *rūšš*⁽⁴⁾ 'Russian' *шуб-* (*Шубач, Шубоя*) ~ Proto-Saami **supē* 'aspen', *шунд-* (*Шундова, Шундозеро*) ~ Proto-Saami **suntē* 'ice free, unfrozen', *явр-* (*Яврогора, Явроя*) ~ Proto-Saami **jāvrē* 'lake', and others. In a number of cases the bases are indistinctive from the point of view of distinguishing between Saami and Finnic origin, compare *ак-* (*Акозеро, Акокурья*) ~ Proto-Saami **ākkē* 'old woman', Finnish *akka* id. Nevertheless, the majority of names discussed

¹ i.e. partial direct translations (editor)

above can be related to Proto-Saami with a considerable degree of certainty, which also accords with the zone of their one-time distribution. Consequently, it is preferable to regard names that can be traced back either to Saami or Finnic as Saami toponyms in this zone, or seek further arguments to establish their Finnic origin.

In view of the established facts, it is the presence of the consonant *u* (< *š), corresponding to modern Saami *s* and Finnish *h*, which can be considered the most salient feature of the Saami substrate toponymy, distinguishing it from modern Saami languages. Examples supporting this include, for example, *uʏō-* ‘aspen’ ~ Finnish *haapa*, Northern Saami *suhpi* (Proto-Saami **supē*), *uud-* ‘settlement’, Finnish *hiisi*, North Saami *siida* (Proto-Saami **sijtē*), *nyu-* ‘holy’ ~ Finnish *pyhä*, North Saami *bassi* (Proto-Saami **pesē*). Since not too much factual evidence has so far been gathered, the question arises as to whether it is really the ancient Finno-Ugrian *š (> Saami *s*) that is reflected in the Saami substrate toponymy or whether the Saami **s* has undergone a secondary change to š in extinct Saami language(s) of this area. This suggestion, in turn, raises certain doubts, although it can be supported with such correspondences as the Finnish *s* ~ Saami *s* ~ Proto-Saami **s* side by side with *u* (< *š) compare *uund-* ‘ice free’, still taking into consideration the Finnish *sunta* id., North Saami *suddi*, Proto-Saami **suntē* (< Finnic) as well as *uoʒ-* (in *Шоговары*) ‘birch’ as opposed to North Saami *soahki*, Proto-Saami **sōkē*. This problem will require further research.

On the other hand, there are plenty of phonetic features relating the Saami substrate toponymy to the adjacent Kola Saami dialects. The most conspicuous of these is the preservation of nasals in the group nasal + homorganic stop. This is an archaic feature, which is typical only of Proto-Saami and the Kola Saami (Kił'din, Jokaŋ'ga), compare the bases *лонд-* (*Лонда*, *Лондушка*) ‘bird’, *рынд-* (*Рында*, *Рындобала*) ‘(river) bank’, *шунд-* (*Шундова*, *Шундозеро*) ‘ice free’, *янг-* (*Янгозеро*, *Янголохта*) ‘marsh’ and Ter Saami (Jokaŋ'ga) *loŋ^dte*, *riŋ^dt^A*, *suŋ^de*, *jie'ŋke* along with North Saami *loddi*, *riddu*, *jeaggi* and Proto-Saami **lontē*, **suntē*, **jēŋkē*.

Another phonetic feature is the shift **k* > *χ* in the combinations of *k* with dentals (**kt*, **kc*, **kč*). This feature is shared by the Saami substrate toponymy and Kił'din Saami and is present in Skolt and Inari Saami, as well. On the other hand, Proto-Saami **k* survives in the dialects of the Ter Saami as well as in all the other dialects of Saami, compare the bases *лохт-* (*Лохтура*) ‘inlet’, *нюхч-* (*Нюхча*) ‘swan’, *чехч-* (*Чехча*) ‘autumn; autumn rest’, *чухч-* (*Чухча*) ‘wood-grouse’, and, correspondingly, Proto-Saami **lōkte*, **ñukce*, **čekče*, **cukcē*, Kił'din *lūχt^A*, *ñuχt^č^A*, *tšexč^š^A*, *tšuxč^š^A*, Skolt *luχt^A*, *ñuχt^š^A*, *tšexč^š^A*, *tšuxč^š^A* but Jokaŋ'ga *ñukč^š^A*, *likt^A*, *tšaktš^š^A*, and North Saami *luokta*, *ñjukča*, *čakča*, *čukcá*.



It should also be noted that the voicing of intervocalic single consonants as well as clusters is common in the Saami substrate toponymy, compare the stems *нез-* ‘nest’ ~ Proto-Saami **pesē*, *шуд-* ‘settlement’ ~ **sijtē*, *шоз-* ‘birch’ ~ **sōke*, *шуб-* ‘aspen’ ~ **supē*, *лонд-* ‘bird’ ~ **lōntē*, *шунд-* ‘ice free’ ~ **suntē*, etc. This phenomenon is also characteristic of the of Kil’din and Jokaŋ’ga Saami, for example, in combinations with nasals, though in Saami substrate toponymy it is more widespread. At present it is difficult to say whether this can be traced back to a substrate Saami forms or whether it has emerged under Russian influence in the process of the acquisition of medialised stops in intervocalic position. Thus, the study of the consonant system of the Saami substrate toponyms and its features disclosed so far reveals that Kil’din Saami is closest to the northern (Dvina) dialect of those Saami who used to inhabit northern Russia. In the speech of south-western (Lake Beloye) Saami there was a significant phonological peculiarity: the **kt > χt* (*Лохтозеро*) shift had also occurred here, whereas the northern *χt* was acquired by Russian as *ки* (*Нюкша, Нюкиозеро; Чекиша, Чекиозеро; Чукиша, Чукишобой*).

As far as vocalism is concerned, the most interesting correspondences are those of Proto-Saami **o*, contradictory in character which are not altogether clear. What should first be noted is that in a number of formants the Russian *o* is a fairly regular substitute for the reconstructed Proto-Saami **o*, compare **lōkte* and *лохт-*, *-лохта* ‘inlet’, **mōtkē* and *мотк-*, *-мотка* ‘(stretch) of road’, **sōlāj* and *сол-*, *-соло*, *-солово* ‘island’, **sōrē* and *сор-*, *-сора* ‘branch’. However, some bases reflect facts of a different character, compare **kōlē* ‘fish’, *yet кул-* (*Кулой*), **hōnē* ‘nose’ (in toponyms: ‘headland’), *yet нюн-* (*Нюнега*), etc. It can be inferred that *o* in bases is the Russian reflex of the Finnic *a*, which emerged when Finnic speakers adopted the Saami substrate toponyms, calquing the Saami words with the Finnish *lahti*, *matka*, *salo*, etc. If all this is accepted, the Russians must have acquired such names at a very early date, when the substitution of Russian *o* for Finnic *a* was still taking place, which is highly unlikely. It should also be assumed that, in the Russian forms, both *o* and *y* correspond to Proto-Saami **o*, which may be accounted for by the peculiarities of the local Saami dialects as well as the specific features of phonological adaptation (e.g. combinatoric changes in the vocalism) of different words in Russian.

In the ancient Saami toponymy there are a number of distinctive lexemes belonging to geographical terminology and referring to flora and fauna, which constitute toponymic types and unequivocally corroborate the presence of a Saami component in the substrate toponymy of northern Russia, distinguishing it from Finnic phonologically or lexically, compare *кул-* ‘fish’ ~ Finnish *kala*, *лохт-* ‘inlet’ ~ Finnish *lahti*, *мотк-* ‘(stretch of) road’ ~ Finnish *mat-*



ka, нёрм- ‘meadow’ ~ Finnish *nurmi*, нюхч- ‘swan’ ~ Finnish *joutsen*, палд- ‘field’ ~ Finnish *pelto*, печ- ‘pine’ ~ Finnish *petäjä*, рынд- ‘(river) bank’ ~ Finnish *ranta*, чёлм- ‘waterflow’ ~ Finnish *salmi*, чехч- ‘autumn; autumn dwelling place’² ~ Finnish *syksy*, шид- ‘settlement’ ~ Finnish *hiisi*, шуб- ‘aspen’ ~ Finnish *haara*, явр- ‘lake’ ~ Finnish *järvi*, чач- ‘water’ ~ Finnish *vesi*, чухч- ‘capercaillie’ ~ Finnish *metso* and others. On the other hand, there are lexemes attested in the substrate toponymy of northern Russia that are not characteristic of Saami, but are present only in the Finnic languages. Thus, the Saami word for ‘stone’ (Proto-Saami **kēðkē*, North Saami *geađgi*, Kiŕdin *kied^{gk}*, Jokan’ga *kied^{gk}*) is not found in the substrate toponymy of northern Russia. This calls to attention the highly frequently occurring base *кив-*, *кев-* ‘stone’, as it can be compared with various Finno-Ugrian words, from Finnic (Finnish *kivi* ‘stone’) to cognates in Mordvinian, Permian and Ugric. If the adjacent Saami names are also taken into consideration, toponyms with the base *кив-*, *кев-* may be regarded as Saami (*Кивокурья*, *Кевбово*, etc.). Such a conclusion, however, must always depend on the linguistic environment, because names of this kind may also be related to Finnic languages.

The absence in the Saami substrate toponymy of the important standard Saami base with the meaning ‘promontory’—Proto-Saami **nārke*, North Saami *njárga*, Kiŕdin *nār^{gk}*(^A), Jokan’ga *nār^{gk}*(^A), is also worth mentioning. As the combination of the standard Saami bases with the formants *-нем*, *-нема* (> *-мень*, *-мин*, *-мина*, etc.) and with the meaning ‘promontory’ as well as their equivalents in the Finnic languages (Finnish *niemi*, etc.) frequently occur (*Чухченема*, *Шиднема*, *Шубнема*, *Явромень*, etc.), it would seem likely that in the micro-regions where other Saami names are also regularly attested, toponyms of this kind are not Saami-Finnic semi-calques, but rather genuine Saami constructions with a base akin to the Finnish *niemi*, which has replaced **nārke* in the substrate toponymy of northern Russia, where there are very compact areas covered by names of this type. For example, in the basin of the River Jerga numerous forest and terrain names have the formant *-мин(а)* attached to obvious Saami bases (*Чухмин* < **Чухчмин*, *Шубачмина*, etc.). It remains an open question whether the toponymic lexemes, surviving in the forms *кив-*, *кев-* and *нем-*, *нема-*, were shared by Finnic and Saami and later lost in modern Saami or, on the other hand, borrowed by the Saami from a Finnic-speaking population. However, the latter alternative is less likely, as it seems that Finnic speakers at some period in history replaced the ancient Saami population in the territory of northern Russia.



² This meaning is only attested as a naming motivation.

The suffixes *-Vч* and *-Vc* are rather clearly identifiable elements of word formation in the Saami substrate toponymy. The formant *-Vч* has a high frequency of occurrence both in baseless toponyms (*Шубач*, fairly widespread) and in those with a base (*Шубачмино*, *Шубачвина* < **Шубачмина*). Comparable adjectival suffixes are also found in Saami languages as well (KORHONEN 1981: 315–329). The semantics of the suffix can with caution be understood: names like marsh *Редкошубачное*, *Шубачи Первые* и *Шубачи Вторые* suggest that a derivation from the base *шуб-* (< Proto-Saami **supē* ‘aspen’) could have been used as a geographical term in the substrate language and could have meant ‘aspen grove’, that is *-Vч* (< **-Vc* or **-Vč*) is a denominal suffix that forms nouns. It is to be observed, however, that not all names with *-Vч* are Saami in the substrate toponymy of northern Russia: this group includes Finnic as well as genuine Russian formations.

The suffix *-Vc* with its variants (see *Небрисмина*, *Силосмина*, *Толбаскурки* above) may be considered a Saami suffix of qualitative adjectives in at least some of the cases (see KERT 1971: 166).

At present, it would seem too early to present an overall linguistic, historical or ethnographic summary from the results of Saami substrate toponymy research. Nevertheless, some general and more or less well-founded ideas can be formulated which, however, should be regarded merely as attempts to interpret one particular source of information concerning the ethnic history of the Saami people, namely, substrate toponymy.

1. The Saami layer of the substrate toponymy of northern Russia is older than Finnic. It is related to the north-western part of northern Russia and is clearly divided into two zones: the northern one (Dvina region), which is linguistically close to the dialects of Kola Saami, especially Ki’din Saami, but has a few features not yet fully clarified, and the south-western one (Lake Beloye region), which also has its own characteristics.
2. In the territory of northern Russia, a period of intensive Saami-Finnic linguo-ethnic interaction was followed by the assimilation of the Saami into the Finnic population. For this reason one of the most topical issues in the study of Saami and Finnic toponymic systems concerns their differentiation, especially on account of the fact that the migrations of the Finnic peoples to the region under consideration occurred in several waves.
3. In several micro-regions of northern Russia, the Slavs came into direct contact with the Saami population.

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