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**The “Northwestern” Group of Finno-Ugric Languages and its
Heritage in the Place Names and Substratum Vocabulary
of the Russian North**

Introductory remarks

The years 2001 and 2004 saw the appearance of two volumes of the “Substratum toponymy of the Russian North” («Субстратная топонимия Русского Севера», STRS) by Aleksandr K. Matveev (Ekaterinburg). This book presents the main results achieved by the author himself as well as by his pupils and colleagues in the study of the toponymic and microtoponymic data from many regions of Northern European Russia, and especially from the Archangel and Vologda Regions. These territories underwent an extensive investigation by the toponymic expeditions of the Ural State University led by Matveev between 1961 and 2000.

The combination of these results create a much more detailed – and, I would say, a much more intriguing – picture of the linguistic and ethnic composition of the Pre-Russian population of the Russian North than the works of Matveev's predecessors, Max Vasmer and Aleksandr I. Popov. Without even attempting to review these results, I refer the reader to the STRS (with its maps) and to other publications by Matveev, including his most recent congress paper (Matveev 2005). I must also omit any special discussion of the issues of methodology, stressing only that the priority given by Matveev to the analysis of the compound toponyms with reoccurring final (determinative) components proved to be a very effective and secure approach to solve the riddles of the substratum toponymy.

But the relevance of these new findings extends far beyond the domain of toponymy. In my opinion these new findings constitute the most important and innovative contribution to the history of Finno-

Ugric peoples and languages made in the course of the last decades, since they – without contradicting the previous mainstream tradition of the discipline – shed principally new light on the original composition of the Uralic language family and reveal a new source for historical and comparative studies.

The results presented and mapped in the STRS make it expedient and even necessary to introduce the new notion of the Northwestern (NW; for its designation, see below) group of the Finno-Ugric (FU) languages. The proto-language of this group can be, however, roughly identified with what is referred to as the Proto-Fenno-Lappic, or the Early Proto-Fennic (*varhaiskantasuomi*) language, which is relatively well reconstructed.

(1) Within the Northwestern group, it is possible to reckon with the existence (about ca. 1000 AD – at the time, when the Russianisation of what is now known as the Russian North was already in progress) of the following branches, the differentiation of which is based on both linguistic (lexical and phonetic) and territorial criteria:

(a) **Fennic**, or **Baltic Fennic** (BF), which probably arose by way of partial convergence between two distinct but closely related branches. One of these finds its continuation in Livonian, and the other in the rest of the Fennic languages.

(b) **Lapp**, or **Sámi** (Sámi proper); its formation was primarily determined by the strong influence exerted by the non-Uralic Palaeoeuropean substratum language(s) of Northern Fennoscandia (the so-called *Protolappish*, see Helimski 2000: 202–217).

(c) **Lop'** (Old Ru. *лонъ*¹): this branch corresponds to Matveev's Sámi (*caa-mы*) in the Beloe Lake (Beloe Ozero) area, to the south-east from Lake Onega, as well as in the north of the Archangel Region. This branch underwent no or only very weak influence from the above-mentioned non-Uralic substratum (as distinct from the Sámi proper) and probably never knew the word **sāmē* as a self-appellation². As far as the presence of the substratum is concerned, the pre-Fennic population of Southern and Central Finland and of Karelia

¹ The same word as *Lapp*, Fi. *lappi*; to avoid misunderstandings, I prefer Lop' to Lapp as the name of this branch.

² Cf., however, the well-known (though controversial, see Hajdú 1985: 124) explanation of the ethnonym *Samoyed* as being etymologically connected with **sāmē* and resulting from a transfer of the Sámi self-appellation to the Nenets who came to the same territories later. This transfer could have happened only in the zone of possible earlier contacts between the Lop' and the Nenets, that is, in the tundra areas between the Mezen' and Pečora rivers.

(*lappi*) must have been closer to the Sámi proper than to the Lop’, see Šilov (1999: 103); Saarikivi (2004b).

(d) **Toima** in the southern part of the Northern Dvina river basin: this branch approximately corresponds to Matveev’s *Northfinns* (*севернофинны*) and to the *Zavoloč’e Čud’* (*заволоцкая чудь*) of the Old Russian chronicles. I suggest the designation *Toima* in view of the ethnonym used in “Слово о погибели Русской земли”, ca. 1237 (“...от корѣлы до Оустыюга, гдѣ тамо бяхоу тоимици поганий...”³, quoted from Nasonov 2002: 252), as well as of the data of chronicles (“И поиде тои зимѣ Семьюнъ Іминъ въ 4 стѣх на Тоимокары...”⁴, the First Novgorodian Chronicle under 6727 [1219]) and of the hydronymy (the Upper and Lower Toima rivers – *Верхняя*, *Нижняя Тойма* – in the Northern Dvina river basin).

(e) **Merya(nic)** in the contemporary Jaroslavl’ Region and in adjacent parts of several neighbouring regions. Its NW affiliation looks very probable, though the issue remains disputable. The vast majority of the lexical and toponymic items identified as stemming from the Merya language finds direct counterparts in other NW branches, esp. in BF (Bereczki 1998). The Merya-Mari (Cheremis) parallels are much more rare; they are explained by the former adjacency of the language areas (with the Merya-Mari border lying somewhere in the basins of Unža and Vetluga, the northern tributaries of the Volga) and hardly justify the treatment of Merya as a language closely related to Mari (Vasmer 1935; Napol’skix 1997: 42–43) or as a language linking Volga-Fennic with Fenno-Lappic (STRS I: 286). There are, however, grounds to assume that the Merya language underwent a phonetic evolution (massive reductive processes in word-final syllables, etc.) which in general was more typical of “central” (Volga-Fennic, Permic, Ugric) Uralic languages than of BF and Lapp (STRS I: 300). Besides, the study of the material presumably stemming from the Merya substratum started long before than that of the presumable Lop’ and Toima heritage – it is therefore natural, that this material contains a number of etymologically unclear, “specifically Meryanic”, stems.⁵

³ “From Karelians and till Ustjug, where the pagan Toimans dwelled”.

⁴ “And in the same winter went Semjun the Tavastian with 400 men to Toimokary”.

⁵ The study of toponymic determinatives, which are typical of the former Meryanic area, was initiated by Vasmer (1935) and intensively continued in the last 10 years (Matveev 1996; 1998; 2001; Šilov 2001; Ahlqvist 1997; 2001; STRS). The only determinative having a cognate in Mari only is *-ингирь* (-нгирь, -нъгирь, -енгеръ, -енгаръ, etc.) as the second part in the river names and as an independent hydronym (*Ингирь*, *Ингеръ*, *Ингаръ*), cf. Mari *ejər* ‘river, rivulet, brook’. Significantly, this determinative is attested only in the eastern and southern

(f) One has to reckon with the possible former existence of still another territorial group – and a branch of NW languages – in the Tver' region. A strong piece of evidence is given by Russian dial. (Tver') *вийша, виши* ‘речная зелень, Spongia fluviatilis (a kind of green duckweed in rivers)’, which Popov (1957: 26, footnote 1) convincingly compared with FU **wiša* ‘gift, poison; green’ > BF **viha*. What is also worth noting is the phonetic shape of this word, with the *š preserved, because in adjacent NW areas, this consonant changed into *h* (BF) or into the voiced ž (the substratum vocabulary of the Beloe Ozero area, see STRS II: 235).

(2) It is very probable that the NW proto-language originates from the Upper Volga area (the contemporary Tver', Jaroslavl', Kostroma Regions, the southern part of the Vologda Region); the separation of branches was hardly completed earlier than in the first half of the first mill. BC (Hajdú 1985: 202; Napol'skix 1990: 48–51; Manjuxin 2002). In any case, it seems expedient to refrain from applying the traditional names Fenno-Lappic or Early Fennic to its proto-language, both in view of the fundamentally new results obtained by the research of the last decades and in order to avoid misunderstandings which can arise from assuming a “Fenno-Lappic” or “Early Fennic” substratum in the territories which never had any Finnish, or other Baltic Finnic, or Sámi population.

(3) Both historico-geographical and linguistic data suggest that the Lapp and Lop' branches had especially close ties to each other, as well as the BF and Tver' branches. Besides, it is probable that all branches developed from and preserved some characteristics of a primary dialectal continuum (cf. STRS II: 276), so that drawing exact borders between Lapp and Lop', Lop' and Toima, Toima and Merya may prove difficult or purely conventional⁶, and the isoglosses showing the spread of some lexical or phonetic features may overlap the borderlines between branches.

parts of the Meryanic area, as well as in the area of the late Merya (Eastern Merya?) colonisation in the Archangel Region, in the river basin of Ust'ja (the right tributary of the Vaga, the left tributary of the Northern Dvina), see Matveev (1996: 11), STRS I: 284–285. It does not occur in the Jaroslavl' Region (Matveev 1996: 8), which supports the treatment of *-ингиръ* as an element borrowed into Merya from the Mari (or possibly Muroma) adstratum (Popov 1974: 24–25). Šilov (1997: 5–8) has shown that the majority of the Mari-oriented toponymic etymologies for the Meryanic territory are unreliable or superfluous.

⁶ A. Matveev (STRS) defines the individual substratum areas through lexical criteria, tracing the spread of characteristic determinatives and toponymic stems. The systematisation of data on other, first of all phonetic, peculiarities of the corresponding substrata must be viewed as the primary task of further research, cf. STRS I: 123 ff.

This does not refer, however, to the relationships between BF and the branches which are in many respects clearly distinct from BF. The presence in the same territory of both BF and Lop' or Toima substratum components (and this situation is typical of many parts of the Archangel Region) hardly is a result of anything other than the secondary, relatively late BF expansion (colonisation), which was parallel to and inseparable from the Russian expansion on these territories. The agents of BF colonisation were mainly Karelians, Vepsians, and possibly “the Onega Häme (Tavastians)” (*прионежская емь*, see Nasonov 2002: 85, 111 – however, Nasonov’s interpretation of the sources from the 11th and 12th century is disputable)⁷. The same refers to the eastern parts of the Archangel Region and to the northwest of the Komi Republic – to the zones of Komi late mediaeval expansion, where the earlier Lop' and Toima substratum components co-occur with Permian components of a much later origin.

(4) The lexical stock of Lop', Toima, and Merya dialects, which disappeared due to Russianisation (or, in some areas, Fennisation and Permisation later followed by Russianisation) by the middle of the second mill.⁸, must have been up till that time significantly closer to the Proto-NW (and, accordingly, to the Proto-FU) state than to the lexical stock of the mediaeval (and, the more so, of contemporary) BF and Lapp dialects. The reason for this is evident: the lexical development on the sparsely settled territories which lay relatively close to the Upper Volga proto-home was essentially immanent and therefore slow in comparison with the major changes which the Lapp branch underwent due to the Protolappish substratum, and the BF branch under the significant Indo-European (Baltic and Germanic) influence. Consequently, turning to the data of the NW (de facto Fenno-Lappic) and FU reconstructions for the interpretation of the toponymy and other substratum heritage in the Russian North must be at least as effective and as methodologically correct as relying upon the data of the contemporary BF and Lapp dialects, to say nothing of the data from the individual Volga-Fennic, Permic, Ugric, or Samoyedic languages.

⁷ More recent ethnographic and ethnolinguistic materials from the Onega Lake area contain no indications that a Häme population could be present here, cf. the papers by Vinokurova, Mullonen and Loginov in Očerki (2001).

⁸ The Russian historical sources pay little attention to the preservation or loss of local languages, and the dating of language deaths remains obscure. At any rate, these languages were no longer spoken by the beginning of the 18th century, when a systematic study of non-Russian population of the Empire began.

I would like to add that the above presentation of the NW language group (and the corresponding etymological material, found first of all in the STRS) supplements the system of notions and views developed within the Uralic comparative and historical studies by the mid-20th century, but does not contradict this system. It is, on the other hand, absolutely clear that the idea of this group is not – and cannot be – compatible with the views propagated in the last fifty years by many Estonian and Finnish archaeologists and linguists, such as, for instance, the thesis of the ethnic continuity of Baltic Finns in the Baltic area for 5,000 years and more, or the assumption that the oldest layers of the Baltic Finnic vocabulary are swarming with disguised Germanic and other Indo-European loanwords⁹. For a review and a critical assessments of these views, see Helimski (1985: 291–292; 1997: 232–238; 2000: 499–501, 511–535); Napol'skix (1990; 1997: 169–170).

The above considerations, and, in particular, the point (4), serve as guidelines for a series of etymological explanations and comments on some place names and dialectal words attested in the Russian North. The contemporary views concerning the phonetic state of the North Slavic (Pskov-Novgorodian) dialects (Zaliznjak 2004) and of the (properly) East Slavic dialects at the time of the most active Russian colonisation in the North – between the 7th – 8th and 13th century – serve naturally as another important guideline.

NW *juka, *-n juka : -(ū)ga, -ньга

About 600 larger and especially smaller rivers in the Russian North end in *-ньга* (most often in *-енъга*), sometimes in *-(e)нга*: *Кипиенъга*, *Мехренъга*, *Печенга*, *Рабанъга*, *Шадренга*, *Шебенъга*, etc., etc. The observations made in connection with this most widespread and at the same time “most enigmatic” determinative, as well as the long history of the search for an etymological explanation, are presented and discussed in detail in STRS (I: 261–275), see also Matveev (1960); Šilov (1998); Mullen (2002: 197–198).

The present author is absolutely sure that the adequate etymology, explaining *-ньга* from the genitive construction with the word for ‘river’ (Fi. *joki*), has been found at least as early as in 1948–1949 by A.I. Popov and thereafter substantiated by A.K. Matveev in one of his early papers (Matveev 1960) – even if

⁹ Fifty years must be a long time... The young Finnish scholar Janne Saarikivi refers to these views as „die klassische ‘Kontinuitätstheorie’ der Finnougristik“ (Saarikivi 2004b: 224) and formulates the evident conclusion – the data of toponymy cannot be tied in this continuity theory – very reservedly and very cautiously.

in his later publications, including the STRS, Matveev appears to be critical and even sceptical in regard to this explanation.

First of all, however, attention must be drawn to an important result of Uralic/FU historical phonetic research, which remains, as it seems, little known and never taken into consideration in connection with the *-ньга*-problem. This result consists of reconstructing the original Uralic and FU, resp. also the original NW form of the word for ‘river’ as **juka* (Janhunen 1981: 223; Sammal-lahti 1988: 537). Its direct continuations are Fi. dial. *juka* ‘waterfall, cataract, rapids; wake’ (cf. also *juva* ‘riverbed; ruvulet’), Kar. *juka*, Est. *juga* ‘waterfall’ (SSA 1: 245), while BF **joki* and Lapp **joke* (< **juki*) – the forms which are usually referred to in this context (cf. STRS 2: 211) – result from secondary transformations of this stem.

The NW determinative *juga* (from the original **juka* with the intervocalic voicing, which is an almost universal phenomenon in the substratum toponymy of the Russian North) must have become known both to the North Slavs (Novgorodians) and to the East Slavs (from the Rostov-Suzdal’ lands) at a very early date – at the time, when the Slavic “jers”, ѿ and ѿ, were not only far from being reduced to zero, but were still pronounced as short vowels *u* and *i*¹⁰. Accordingly, the regular phonetic development in the non-first syllables¹¹ could only be – and was – *-juga* > (*-jъga* >) *-jьga* > *-йга*, further usually contracted to *-га*¹². When the determinative was preceded by the genitive marker *-n*, the development took the form *-n juga* > (*-нъга* >) *-нъга* > *-ньга* (in some instances, with

¹⁰ Cf. the numerous typical cases of phonetic substitution: *Mcma* (river, Novgorod Region) < *Мъсма* < BF *Musta* (‘Black’), Fi. *palttina* ‘linen’ < Sl. **paltina* (in traditional notation **polъno*; > Ru. *полотно*). – There is almost no evidence for the fall of word-medial weak reduced vowels in Old Novgorodian before 1160, and even until 1210 one reckons with their facultative preservation (Zaliznjak 2004: 58–60). Thus, even as late as in the 12th century, word-medial reduced vowels, pronounced already as *ő* and *ě*, were a phonetic reality (Matveev’s dating of their loss with the mid-11th century in STRS I: 131–133 appears to be too early).

¹¹ The role of a determinative corresponds to a suffixal position. In absolute, non-determinative usage, *juga* would have produced *uga*.

¹² The loss of *ü* before a consonant is a frequent phenomenon, which partly found its way into Standard Russian (cf. *небось* < *не бойсь / не бойся*, *приду* < *прийду*, *поди* < *пойди*) and was often reflected in birch-bark letters and other Old Novgorodian sources, see examples with explanation in Zaliznjak (2004: 71). – This type of phonetic adaptation can be illustrated i.a. with the pair of well-known river names in the Russian North, Onega and Pinega: **Enä juga* (‘Big river’) > **Enejъga* > **Onejъga* > **Онейга* > *Онега*, **Pēni juga* (‘Little river’) > **Репъյга* > **Pinъյга* > **Пинейга* > *Пинега*.

further depalatalisation to *-нга*¹³), resp. *-i-n juga* > (*-ыньга* >) *-ыньга* > *-енъга*, *-e-n juga* > (*-енъга* >) *-енъга* > *-енъга*, etc.

The high frequency of these two complementary models for the Russian adaptation of NW river names, which must have already arisen in the territories of the initial Russian colonisation, that is, on the south-western and southern periphery of the corresponding toponymic areas (very probably, in the regions adjoining the big lake Kubenskoe, see STRS I: 263¹⁴), led to establishing a stable correlation between the substratum river names in (*-n*) *juga* and their Russian adaptations in *-(и)га*, *-ньга*. This correlation determined, in its turn, the productivity of the same two models also in those regions where the Russian population appeared only much later¹⁵, at the time when, taking into consideration the changes that the Russian vocalism underwent meanwhile, the simple rendering of (*-n*) *juga* with Russian *-(н)юга* could be expected; the determinative *-(н)юга* is indeed also attested, but its occurrence is much lower¹⁶. In addition, it is likely that the determinative *-ньга*, due to its high frequency in river names, acquired the status of an independent topoformative (cf. *Бабеньга*, *Пустыньга*, most probably from Ru. *баба* ‘woman’ and *пуст(о)й* ‘empty’, see Matveev 1960: 97, 102). For this reason, this determinative can be found in river names, the substratum prototypes of which contained the complex *-n juga* in a phonetically modified form (for example, in the form *-n jugə* ~ *-n jug* in the south-eastern part of the Russian North, where the river names in *-юг* are more typical than those in *-га*, but where *-ньга* remains nevertheless frequent) or did not contain this complex at all (STRS I: 263–364).

The following additional considerations deserve special attention as arguments in favour of the above etymological explanation for the determinative *-Ньга*. Most of them serve simultaneously as arguments against an alternative

¹³ The occurrence of depalatalisation is predictably higher after non-palatal vowels *a*, *o*, than after *e*. This consideration accounts for the neighbourhood of hydronyms in *-енъга* and in *-анга*, *-онга* and renders the admission of two different and only later mutually attracted sources (STRS I: 264–265) unnecessary.

¹⁴ Isolated names in *-нга* in the southern, right part of the Volga river basin, see STRS I: 49, 263, do not necessarily belong here – perhaps not more than the river names ending in *-нга* in Siberia (like *Хатанга*, *Киренга*, *Каманга* – all of Evenki origin) or in other parts of the world.

¹⁵ The determinatives under discussion are very numerous in Zavoloč'e (the southern part of the Northern Dvina river basin), though this was hardly the initial area of their spread.

¹⁶ The concomitant factor could lie in the tendency for vowel dieresis after palatal consonants (STRS I: 164): *-юга* > *-ыга* > *-га*, *-нюга* > *-ньга*.

etymology, which postulates the existence of a “Čud” word **eŋgə* ‘river’ (Šilov 1998), and against several earlier etymological attempts of the same type:

- (a) *Vnъga* (*Енъга*, etc.) never occurs as an independent toponym (STRS I: 178, 269). This is what must be expected: indeed no substratum toponym could ever begin with the genitive ending.
- (b) The areas of the river names in *-Vnъga* and in *-Vga* almost exactly coincide (STRS I: 272). The cases of the parallel occurrence of the names in *-Vga* and in *-nъga* (*Мегрега / Мехренъга*, etc.) reflect the coexistence of appositional and relational attributive constructions (‘Badger-river’/‘Badger’s river’, cf. Fi. *mäyrä* < **mäkrä* ‘badger’), which is very typical of the Uralic languages. Besides, the suggested treatment of *-nъga* and of *-Vga* as complementary determinatives serves as an answer to the objection against Matveev (1960) which was once put forward by B. Serebrennikov and was partly responsible for Matveev changing his own position. Namely, Serebrennikov emphasized that “the marking of the first components of hydronyms exclusively with genitive endings is not typical of Baltic Finnic hydronymy” («сплошное генитивное оформление первых составных частей гидронимов для прибалтийско-финской гидронимии не типично») (Serebrennikov 1966: 59; cf. STRS I: 271). In fact, the names having a genitive ending before *joki/jogi* comprise, as tentative calculations show (on the base of the data in Suomi käsikirja and in Katalog 2001), between 25% and 40% of the corresponding river names; nothing will contradict an assumption that the share of genitive constructions in the hydronymy of Toima and of adjoining areas was the same or even higher.
- (c) The statistical distribution of vowels that precede *-nъga* (*e* in 428 cases, *a* in 95, *o* in 41, *u* in 16, only occasionally *y*, *ю*, *ы*, see STRS I: 262), stands very close to the distribution of the BF vowels that precede the genitive ending *-n* (it must be taken into consideration that the vowel *e* appears not only in BF *e/i*-stems, but also in consonantal stems; besides, Ru. *e* also substituted the vowel of *ä*-stems); it can be assumed that the NW or Toima stem-final vocalism resembled that of the phonotactically archaic BF.
- (d) The western border of the mass spread of the determinative *-Vnъga* is essentially identical with the eastern border of the BF language area proper (STRS I: 340 – map), in which river names have, and presumably always had, the determinative *joki/jogi* (instead of *juka/juga*). This determinative was not supposed

(also in the position after the genitive ending *-n*) to be rendered in Russian as *-нъга*¹⁷.

(e) It can be expected that the element *-нъга* must frequently occur with the substratum stems that can be identified as substantives (as well as with etymologically unclear stems, most of which can go back for example to proper names, see below) and must never (or only exceptionally, due to secondary processes) occur with substratum stems which can be reliably identified as adjectives. In other words, numerous substratum names such as **Must(a) juga* ('Black river') are expected to produce the Ru. *MycmVga*, while the river name *Мустанъга* or *Мустенъга* must be absent, or if present, reflect a significantly more rare type **Mustan juga* ('Musta's river = the Black Man's river'). Regrettably, I do not have access to the complete collection of relevant data, but its published part does not seem to contradict this assumption. For example, Matveev particularly emphasizes (in another connection) that the Russian North abounds in "Sacred rivers" – *Пышига* (NW **piūšā juka*) (STRS II: 156, 354), while the name **Пышиенъга* "has not been attested until now" (STRS II: 156)¹⁸ – and, if the above considerations are correct, will hardly be ever attested¹⁹.

What may require further comment is the fact that the high frequency of **juka* in genitive constructions contrasts with the rare occurrence of other substratum geographic terms as second elements after *-n-*. One of the reasons for this could consist in the large number of deanthroponymic hydronyms of the type 'X's river', especially in the case of small rivers and rivulets named after their first/only inhabitant or the person fishing or hunting in their basin. Such a tradition of hydronymic nomination was dominant, for example, in 17th century, for the Selkup hydronyms in the sparsely settled basin of the Ket' River, cf. the data and explanations by Nikolaj Spafarij in *Zemlja verxneketskaja* (1997: 239–256). An important role could, however, be assumed by phonetic factors, for instance the tendency to drop or to assimilate the *-n* of the genitive before certain consonants. So, for example, it is simply not possible to distinguish between the

¹⁷ The rare occurrences of *-нъга*, *-нга* in Karelia, etc. are partly due to the adaptation of the BF names with the suffix *-nki/-ngi* (*Kiestinki* – *Кесменъга*); this fact, however, cannot justify the explanation of other river names in *-нъга* as containing originally the same BF suffix, cf. STRS (I: 264); Mullen (2002: 197–198).

¹⁸ The hydronyms *Пышиенка* (WRGN III: 830) and *Пыженка* (~ *Пыжебка* ~ *Пыжеба*) (STRS II: 234) obviously contain other suffixal elements.

¹⁹ In connection with the hydronym *Еменъга*, A. Matveev admits the possibility that "the language of *-Vn(ь)ga*-toponyms" could contain the stem **jem-* 'sacred' (~ Ostyak *jeməj* 'id.') (STRS II: 156). It is, however, much more probable that the hydronym *Еменъга* (as well as the river name *Емца*) reflect the Old Russian ethnonym *емъ* (= Finn. *Häme*).

original genitive and nominative constructions in the numerous names ending in *-нem(a)* (‘cape, headland’, Fi. *niemi*) – the most wide-spread determinative in the substratum microtoponyms of the Russian North (STRS I 203).

NW **ukt3* : *Yxma*

This etymology, which has already been suggested by Saarikivi (2004a: 349), can serve as an especially clear example of the mutual corroborative properties of the results achieved by the study of the substratum heritage from extinct NW languages, on the one hand, and by the Uralic comparative research, on the other.

The entire formal and semantic substantiation of this substratum etymology is provided by the studies of Irma Mullonen. She confirmed that the reconstructable toponymic stem *Yxm-*, frequently occurring in the Russian North (also beyond the Archangel and Vologda Regions, cf. *Yxma*, a major left tributary of Pečora in the Republic of Komi), is typical of the names of hydronymic objects lying close to land watersheds between two navigable waters and on ancient boat portage paths. Mullonen expressed the opinion that the toponymic stems *uht-* and *matk-* (< BF *matka* ‘path, road, way’) may be synonyms stemming from two different language sources (Mullonen 2002: 210–212).

Mullonen did not, however, notice – this has been done by Saarikivi – that her reconstruction practically coincides, formally and semantically, with Uralic **ukti* (Sammallahti 1988: 536; cf. UEW I: 546 with the proto-form **utka*, which is phonetically less precise), reflected as Hung. *út* ‘road, way’, Vogul N *āχt* ‘river channel’, Ostyak O *oχət* ‘isthmus, boat portage path’²⁰, and Sam. **uət* ‘road, way, trace’. The spirantisation of *k* to *χ* before *t* is characteristic both of the BF languages and of the entire substratum toponymy of the Russian North. It was formerly believed that this Uralic stem has not been preserved in the Finno-Permic branch, but the geographical distribution of *Yxm-* (*Yxma*, *Yxmiča*, *Yxm-ozero*, *Ухтома*, *Ухтомица*, *Ухтомка*, *Ухтомъярское оз.*, *Ухтюга/Уфтиуга*, cf. WRGN IV: 722–725)²¹ proves that it was also preserved in NW languages –

²⁰ Cf. the direct comparison between the stem *Yxm-* and these Vogul and Ostyak words in the studies by Afanas’ev (1976; 1979; 2002: 42) which lack, however, the adequate etymological and historical context.

²¹ Some toponyms with the stems *Oxm-* and *Boxm-* (Šilov: 1999: 106–107; 2001: 15; STRS I: 79) may also belong here, though they can equally well contain other toponymic stems, in particular, Fi. Kar. *ohto* ‘bear’. Another possibility consists in treating the relatively frequent toponymic determinative *-xma* as a possible continuation of the stem *Yxm(a)*, see Šilov (2001: 15–16), STRS II: 28–29; much less probable, however, is the comparison with still another

in their Toima branch, possibly also in BF (as a relic word generally replaced by the innovative *matka*).

NW *ōnto : Ундо, (?) Ондо, (?) Андо; NW *ōksi : -(o)кса/-(o)киа

The original NW source of Fi. (arch. and dial.) *vuo* ‘stream, riverbed’ must be reconstructed after consideration of its FU cognates (SSA 3: 472) as *ō. A number of derivatives of this Finnish word function as geographical terms or as toponyms, cf. *vuoksi* ‘flood, flow, high tide’, river *Vuoksi*, *vuolle* ‘current, eddy, whirl’, *vuolas* ‘rapid, abundant, violent [stream]’, etc. Besides, Finnish has a suffix of nomina loci *-nto* (Hakulinen 1957: 159). The data analysis in STRS I: 118 shows that this suffix belongs to the common NW heritage; therefore it is possible to assume the former existence of still another derivative (with a meaning from the same semantic field), namely *vuonto* (*ōnto). As an appellative this word is, according to dictionaries, unknown in Finnish, but cf. *Vuonto* as the first part in the name *Vuonnonkoski* (rapids in the Tornionjoki river, in the province of Ylitornio) and – with the parallelly functioning suffix *-nne* < *-ntek – *Vuonne* in the name *Vuontensalmi* (lake, province Laukaa) (Suomi käsikirja: 1366).

On the other hand, the assumed *ōnto in the NW substratum finds its probable continuations in several North Russian hydronyms with the stem *Ундо-* (lake *Ундоозеро* with river *Ундоуша* e.a., see STRS II: 140²²), probably also with the stem *Онд(o)-* (big lake *Онд-озеро* in Central Karelia). Ru. *y* regularly substitutes ō in relatively early borrowings, cf. *Suomi* (*Sōmi) : Old Ru. *сумь* ‘Finns’, while the diphthong *uo* that developed in Finnish and Karelian from *ō can be rendered both by Ru. *o* and *y* (STRS I: 141). If we make a still stronger assumption – namely, that during the earliest stages of contacts the Old Novgorodian/Old Russian *a* (= Slavic ā, going back to IE *ō, *ā) still preserved the “memory” of its sources and could therefore substitute a foreign ō²³, or that in

determinative, -*gda* (ibid.), as long as the voicing of a cluster consisting of two voiceless stops (-*kt*- > -*gd*-) is phonetically very unlikely.

²² This confirms Matveev’s conclusion (l.c.): “In any case, the stem *унд-* obviously denotes something relevant from the viewpoint of hydronymy, and must be of Finno-Ugric origin”.

²³ Precisely this type of substitution is characteristic of Slavic-Baltic contacts, including also the relatively recent ones: Belor. *зáума* < Lith. **gošta* (*góštauta*, *gōštelka*) ‘Lychnis chalcedonica L.’, Belor. *скáрапáч* and Pol. *skaracz* < Lith. *skarōčius* ‘towel’ (Nepokupnyj 1976: 185, 195). The phenomenon of “preserved memory” (when the substitution may follow a historically correct pattern, though it looks unnatural from the viewpoint of synchronic phonetic values) must also be taken into consideration when dealing with the contacts among individual

certain substratum dialects, the NW *ō* was pronounced as a non-diphthongal and relatively open vowel, then the same source **ōnto* can also explain some toponyms with the stem *Aнð(o)-*, first of all, the big lake *Андоzero* with river *Андоога* (to the south-west from Beloe Ozero).

Besides, some North Russian hydronyms in -(o)κса/-(o)κиua may contain the determinative **ōksi*, which is etymologically identical with Fi. *vuoksi* and with the river name *Vuoksi*, Kar. *Vuokši* (for relevant data and for other possibilities to explain the hydronyms with this determinative, see Mullonen 2002: 217–222; STRS II: 27–28).

NW *lačz : *Лача*

Taking into consideration that the FU *č may result in Fi. *h* (on a line with *t*) and Lapp *c (Collinder 1960: 88; Korhonen 1981: 159), a following new Finnish-Lapp comparison can be suggested:

Fi. *laho* ‘mouldered, rotten’ (~ Veps. *лаho* ‘mouldered wood’, etc., s. SSA 2: 35²⁴), Lapp **lōcę-*: N *luoccât* ‘get soaked through (from lying in water; of skins, of wooden materials)’ < NW **lačz* (**lačo*, **lače-*).

It can be further assumed that this Fenno-Lappic (NW) stem lies behind the name of the big lake Lača (Lače, *Лача/Лаче*), from which the Onega River takes its source. This lake “has silty peaty bottom and boggy shores” (Geografija Rossii: 322). One cannot exclude completely an alternative etymology suggested by Popov (1973) and explaining this limnonym from Kar. *lačču* ‘sloping; depressed, low-lying’. However, the weak point of Popov’s etymology lies in the fact that Kar. *lačču* is of descriptive (probably relatively late) origin and reflects a specifically Karelian phonetic development (cf. Fi. *latsakko* ‘id.’, see SKES II: 269) – this makes the word a poor etymological candidate for the name of a major lake which is located outside the ethnic territory of the Karelians.

Cf. also *Лаго-* < BF *laho* in later substratum toponymic layers (STRS II: 45, 143), *Laho-* in Finnish place names: *Lahola*, *Laholuoma*, *Lahovaara* (Suomi käsikirja: 868).

branches of the NW language groups, cf. the examples of phonetically anomalous, but “historically correct” adaptation of Lapp loanwords in Finnish, see Saarikivi (2004b: 193).

²⁴ The Germanic etymology for *laho*, quoted in SSA according to Koivulehto (from Germanic *lēgō(n)* ‘to lie’ > Old Scand. *lág* ‘gefällter Baum, liegender Baumstamm’), deserves no attention. Similarly, there is no reason to accept the comparison between *laho* and Lapp Ko *luess* ‘rubbish, useless thing; bad, holed boat’ (this word, as well as Lapp N *loasse* ‘id.’, cannot be separated from Fi., Est. *losa*, Fi. *losu* with the same meaning, see Itkonen 1958: 218a, 228; SKES II: 304; SSA 3: 94).

NW *woše(k), *woši : *Воже*

Fi. *ohi*(-), *ohe*(-) ‘wayside; alongside, by, past’ (*ohitie* ‘detour, roundabout way’), cf. also several Finnish toponyms with this stem – *Ohemäki*, *Ohennäki*, *Ohenneva*, *Ohensaari*, *Ohenvuori* (Suomi käsikirja: 1007) seems to have no cognates in Lapp, but is firmly believed to originate from FU (or Uralic) *woša ‘branch, hook’ (SSA 2: 259); see further Helimski (1976: 117) and UEW: 825–826. The FU counterparts enable us to reconstruct the NW source of this stem as *woše(k), *woši.

This stem, with intervocalic voicing typical of substratum toponyms in the Russian North (STRS II: 235), provides a likely explanation for the lake name *Vože* (*Воже*). This name may refer to the outskirt position of this big lake – in a marshy region which even today remains much less densely settled than the adjoining regions, aside from all the major ways that used to connect the Onega Lake territories with the river basins of the Onega River (to which this lake belongs) and of the Northern Dvina. Cf. also the name of the main influent of the *Vože* Lake, river *Вожега* < **Вожејга* < **Wožbjьga*/**Wožejьga* < **Woši juka*/**Woše juka*.

The two other etymologies for this lake name, which Max Vasmer quoted in his etymological dictionary (*Воже* < *Bodje* to *воды* ‘the Votes, the Votic people’; from Komi *vož* ‘fishing fence of stakes’), are deprived of any phonetic and historical probability. However, Nikonov (1966: 87) compared *Воже* with the Komi *vož* ‘tributary, effluent’; this comparison is closer to the etymology suggested above, because the Komi word itself continues the same FU *woša.

NW *počja : *поча*

The comparison between Fi. *pohja* ‘bottom, ground’ (dial. also ‘narrow end of a bay; long narrow bay; shore on the distant end of a bay – kapea lahdenperä; pitkä, kapea lahti; lahden perukan rantoo, lahden pohja, pohjukka, pää’, see Nissilä 1939: 53) and Lapp **păššă* ‘backside of a house’ is well known from etymological works, see YSS: No. 978; Korhonen 1981: 170 (Lapp < Fi.); SSA (2: 383 with an awkward attempt to explain it as being a Germanic loanword). The main difficulty consists in establishing the source of the unique correspondence Fi. *-hj-* : Lapp. *-šš-*; perhaps the optimal solution would lie in the reconstruction of NW **počja*: the cluster *-čj- is not attested in other BF and Lapp stems, but the reflexes observed in phonetically similar clusters (see Korhonen 1981: 163 ff.) appear to support this assumption (which also remains valid if the

Lapp word is not a genuine cognate but an early borrowing from a BF source, cf. Korhonen 1981: 170).

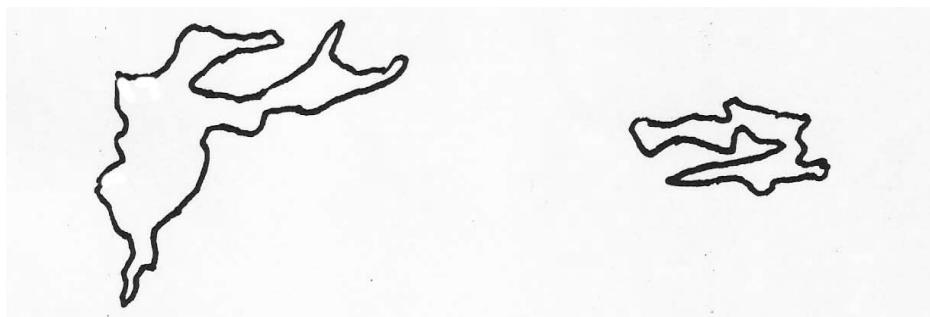
NW **počja* (with a non-palatal č), or rather its continuation in Lop' with the assimilation čj > čč (cf. the geminate in Lapp), must be viewed as the source of Russian dial. (Archangel, Olonec) *помча*, *пocha*, *почча*, *помшиа* ‘bay, old riverbed, riverarm’ and of toponyms which contain this word as determinative (STRS I: 222–223)²⁵.

NW *waka : Вага

The name of the Vaga River (*Вага*, left tributary of Northern Dvina) can be led back to NW **waka* > Fi. *vaka*, *vakaa*, *vakava* ‘firm, stable, secure’, Lapp **vōkē* ‘habit, custom’ (YSS: No. 1428; SSA 3: 395). This name possibly reflects the properties of this big river, a very long stretch of which is easily navigable (and suitable for rafting timber). As far as former explanations of this hydronym are concerned, its comparison with Lith. *vagà* ‘furrow, riverbed, riverarm’ (Pospelov 1998: 87) is historically preposterous and semantically doubtful, and that with Komi *vož* ‘tributary’ (Afanas'ev 2002: 18) is phonetically impossible.

Fi. keno (NW *keno?) : Кенозеро

The lake name Kenozero (*Кенозеро*) occurs twice in the Archangel region (STRS II: 141, 157) and in Karelia as *Кен-озеро* (Katalog 2001: 44). Two major lakes bearing this name are known for their peculiar curved form:



Кенозеро
(Pleseck district, the Archangel region)

Кен-озеро
(Louhi district, Karelia)

²⁵ Among various conjectures concerning this Russian dialectal word made by Šilov (1997: 14–15), Fi. *pohja* is also mentioned as its possible source (but his further comparisons – e.g. with Vepsian *poze* ‘boggy place, puddle’, with Ru. dial. *noxma*, *naxma* ‘marsh’ – should be rejected).

This peculiarity suggests the connection between the stem *Кено-* and Fi. dial. *keno* ‘arched, curved, bent’ (SMS 6: 788), Standard Fi. *kenossa* ‘bent backwards’, Est. *kenus* ‘id.’ Further etymological connections are unclear (cf. SSA 1: 342 – a very dubious Germanic etymology deserves, as usual, little attention); this BF stem may have as its source a NW stem of the same phonetic shape.

The name of the effluent river *Кена* (full-flowing and having many rapids, but with the entire length hardly surpassing that of the lake) must have been derived from the lake name.

Concluding remarks

In his study on the substratum toponymy in the Russian North, Max Vasmer (1936) often presents the reader with a dilemma of choice between Baltic Finns and Lapps as the creators of certain place names; this approach of posing such a dilemma became a tradition and, as it seems, is also partly present in some of the most recent publications, especially in connection with the idea of hybrid toponyms consisting of Lapp and BF components. The concept of the NW language group as presented in the beginning of this paper makes it possible to avoid this dilemma (the majority of the substratum toponyms belonged to NW languages which were neither BF nor Lapp) and besides, to give up the search for the ubiquitous Lapps in the regions which are located too far away from those which are really connected with the ethnogenesis of the Sámis, see also Saarikivi (2004b).

In some cases, the Lapp etymology advocated by Matveev in the STRS or by other researchers needs to be corrected or replaced “against the NW background”; here only one of these examples is discussed:

Numerous toponyms having the stem *IIIuð-* can be reasonably led back not to Lapp **sijte* ‘village’ (STRS II: 107, 213–217; Saarikivi 2004b: 211–212), but to NW **šīti*, **šīte-*²⁶ which is the source of this Lapp word, as well as of BF **hīte-* (Fi. *hiisi* ‘heathen sanctuary, holy grove; evil spirit, devil’) (YSS: No. 1132). Accordingly, **sijte* needs not be treated as the unique specifically Lapp stem found not only in the toponymy of Finland and Karelia but also in the Russian North (Saarikivi 2004b: 212), and place names such as *Шиðнема* in the Beloe

²⁶ This stem, for which three (!) different Germanic etymologies have been suggested (LÄGLOS I: 101–102), must be genuine after all even if the corresponding Uralic etymology (UEW I: 499–500) does not look reliable. It is extremely strange that the authors of SSA (1: 162) are easily carried away by one of these explanations from Germanic (from Old Scand. *hīð* ‘cave, den’) and as a consequence, completely disregard the traditional Finnish-Lapp comparison.

Ozero region (which are “hybrid”, according to Saarikivi 2004b: 194) can be viewed as reflecting a homogenous Lop’ or Lop’-Toima source (NW *šīti nēmi ~ *šīten nēmi); this option concurses with Matveev’s opinion (STRS 2: 226) and with conceptual doubts concerning the linguistic reality of such hybrids, which Saarikivi expresses in another section of his paper (Saarikivi 2004b: 217).

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