

Slavica Helsingiensia 32

Juhani Nuorluoto (ed., под ред., Hrsg.)

Topics on the Ethnic, Linguistic and Cultural Making of the Russian North
Вопросы этнического, языкового и культурного формирования Русского Севера
Beiträge zur ethnischen, sprachlichen und kulturellen Entwicklung des russischen Nordens

Helsinki 2007

ISBN 978-952-10-4367-3 (paperback), ISBN 978-952-10-4368-0 (PDF), ISSN 0780-3281

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**Ancient Place Names of Obonež'e in the Context of Ethnic
and Linguistic Contacts**

Through the entire second millennium C.E., the area around Lake Onego, Obonež'e, has been a zone of active ethnic and linguistic contacts. This is because Lake Onego has acted as a kind of junction connecting the waterways running from south to north and from west to east. As a result, the place names of this area have preserved clear traces of the Sámi substratum. There is also a Vepsian and Karelian layer of place names, but mainly these are a substratum, since the living Karelian and Vepsian toponymy is present only in western Obonež'e. Another important influence is that the Obonež'e territory is predominantly Russian. This means that interlingual interactions and their mechanisms must be taken into account in the etymological interpretation of place names, as they are conservative in nature and their address function facilitates their transfer from one language to another by adapting to specific features of the latter.

Below let us consider three widely known place names from Obonež'e, each featuring a long history and linguistic adaptation.

Vyg – Uiku

The etymology of most river names in Karelia has not been convincingly determined (Kert & Mamontova 1982). An example is the name of the River Vyg, emptying into the White Sea and long known as a part of the boating and portage route connecting Lake Onego to the White Sea.

For the etymological sources of a place name, one should first of all decide which variant came first: the Russian *Выг* or the Karelian *Uiku*. The Karelian variant mentioned above was recorded in 1871 by A.A. Borenius.

This was not on the Vyg itself, but much further north, and has since then been officially used in Finland. Our files of Karelia's place names contain another phonetic variant – *Vuikka*, recorded from the Tunguda Karelians. It is no longer possible to ascertain how that name sounded in Karelian, since Karelian settlements along the river and along Lake Vygozero had grown Russified perhaps already by the second half of the 19th century. For example, the 1873 register of inhabited places of Karelia reports this area to be Russian-populated (SNM 1873), although distinct Finnic heritage is present in both the language and the culture of the Vyg area.

In Karelia and the adjacent regions located to the north of European Russia, many Russian forms of river names are based on the original Finnic ones. For this reason, it is rather easy to understand why the researcher Matti Pöllä (1995: 30–31) proceeds from the Finnic variant *Uiku* in his interpretation of *Быг*. I have referred to the etymology proposed by Pöllä because it appears to have been the only attempt to reconstruct the origin of that ancient hydronym. Unlike Pöllä, other researchers usually limited themselves to acknowledging that the source of *Быг* is unknown, without going into details of its genesis. Matti Pöllä suggests a Vepsian etymology for the place name *Uiku*, and compares it to the Vepsian *uig*, 'stubble field nook'. The suggested interpretation is highly doubtful. This is not so much owing to the lexeme being extremely rare among Vepsian place names, occurring only in microtoponymy, but rather because the word is likely to be a relatively late Russian borrowing: *uig*, like its variant *uuk*, may stem from the north-Russian dialectal *улка*, 'corridor in the house; corner (of a house)'. Taking into account phonetic issues, the Finnic diphthong *ui* is easily assimilated into Russian usage as *yǔ*, as evidenced by the north-Russian dialectal lexemes borrowed from the Finnic source: *yǔma*, 'rain pool' (Veps. *uit*), *кyǔнога*, 'ebb tide at sea; sea shore exposed by ebb tide' (Karel. **kuivapohja*, lit. 'dry bottom'), etc. In this context, the transformation of *Uiku* into *Быг* looks out of place.

This irregularity would disappear, however, if the Karelian and Russian forms were interchanged, and the Russian *Быг* would be held primary to the Karelian *Uiku*. In this case, this duo easily fits into the set of examples where Russian *ы* is assimilated into the Finnic usage in the form of the diphthong *ui*. It is also important to take into account the two well-known examples once given by Jalo Kalima (1952: 125, 188): Rus. *выть*, 'land lot, piece of communal land', which was borrowed into east Finnish patois as 'vuitti', Rus. *мыло*, which was assimilated into Karelian and Vepsian as

muila, *muil*. At least one toponymic example can be added to the appellative borrowings – the name of the north Vepsian locality *Muiz*, descending from the Russian *мыза*. A position in the same series duly belongs to the Russian *Быг* – the Karelian *Uiku* or *Vuikka*. The latter variant is closer to the Russian original than the traditionally mentioned *Uiku*, which lacks the initial *v* before the *u*. Such phonetic evolution has positional reasons and is quite natural, as evidenced by quite a few examples, including those from borrowed vocabulary: *unukka*, *vunukka* (< Rus. *grandson*), *uomen*, *vuomen*, ‘special fencing for driving animals in’ (< Sámi. *vuobmán*) (SSA).

When looking for etymological sources, one should therefore proceed from the archaic Russian original rather than from the Karelian variant based thereon. It is also important to note that *ы* standing after *в* may in fact be of secondary nature, having replaced the original *u* to conform to the laws of north-Russian phonotactics. This assumption is corroborated by numerous facts from the vocabulary (Kalima 1919: 51) and by the toponymy of Karelia and the adjacent regions. The name used in official documents for the district *Viččataipale*, which is situated on the White Sea coast and populated by Karelians, was *Вычетайбольская*; The Vyrozero (*Вырозеро*) Lake and district on the northern shore of Lake Onego, which were consistently named *Вурозеро* in the 16th century census books; and the River Vilega (*Вилега*) (Svir River watershed) is also known as *Вылега*. In view of all this, one can presume the initial form of *Быг* to be **Вуг*, and seek to find etymology for this form.

Searching for that etymology, it is often essential to determine where the name emerged from – which portion of the river, which flows for hundreds of kilometers. This task is very challenging, most often unsolvable. My assumption about the site of origin of the Vyg River name is based on the fact that in the local tradition, the most downstream part of the river, before it empties into the White Sea, is called the River Soroka, not the Vyg. This tradition can be traced from the earliest written sources on the White Sea area dating back to the 16th century. The name Vyg appears approximately 10 km upstream of the estuary, the boundary between Vyg and Soroka marked explicitly by the Vygostrov Island and the village with the same name, situated at its southernmost point. Downstream of that island, the Vyg breaks into a number of branches, the largest one being the River Soroka. Later in the 20th century, the Soroka community that had formed on the bank of the river Soroka, was granted the status of a town and

subsequently renamed Belomorsk. According to the local tradition, the name of the settlement is related to its original location on ‘forty (Rus. *сорок*) islands’. An attempt has been made in the toponymic literature to relate the name of the river to the Karelian *soari*, ‘island’ (Kert & Mamontova 1982: 39–41). Meanwhile, landscape features unambiguously point to the Sámi genesis of this place name: north-Sámi *suor’ge*, ‘one of the two small rivers that join together to form a large river; a branch formed by a river breaking up into two or more parts’ (Nielsen). Dictionaries do not record those words from the east-Sámi patois which are geographically closer to the White Sea area than north-Sámi, but geographic characteristics of the White Sea Soroka incontestably provide evidence that the word existed in the Sámi patois that the authors of the place name spoke. The north-Sámi *suor’ge* could perhaps be phonetically close to the Proto-Sámi **sōrkē* (Lehtiranta 1989), where the pleophony characteristic of the Old Russian language of the place name during the adaptation period resulted in adding an *o* within the word: **Sōrkē* > *Сорока*. Similarly, phonetic adaptation of Finnic *salmi* > *солома*, ‘straight’ or *kalma* > *коломище*, ‘cemetery’, took place in Old Russian times.

Other branches in the downstream of the Vyg are called *pudas’* (*пудасы*), including *Кисльй Пудас*, *Ертин Пудас*. This fact indirectly corroborates the inferred Sámi etymology for *Сорока*, since the meaning of *пудас*, borrowed from a Finnic source, in Belomorian patois is ‘river branch’, and the word is therefore equivalent to the Sámi **sōrkē* (>*suor’ge*) which is the word denoting the most significant branch of the Vyg downstream.

The transition of the Vyg into Soroka is marked with another noticeable object, which is actually the most noticeable of the ones mentioned thus far. This is the powerful Šoirukša (*Шоёркуша*) Rapid, situated in a river bottleneck confined between a rocky bank and Vygostrov Island. It is perhaps this feature – a narrow and long channel – that the name of this rapid reflects. One can trace it back to the Karelian *šoilukka*, *šoirukka*, ‘about a long and narrow place’ (KKS). The etymological leader in this pair is the variant with *l*, but the *l* ~ *r* variation well-known for Finnic languages also legitimizes the variant with *r*, resulting in *šoirukka*. The Karelian language dictionary KKS also gives the variants *šoilakka*, *šoirakka* as having the same meaning of ‘narrow and long’. As for the final *-куша* in the place name, its formation was influenced by such circumstances as the adaptation of the Finnic double consonant *kk*, which is

atypical of Russian phonetics, and the assimilative impact of *u* in the first syllable. One should probably also recognize that an accompanying factor was the widespread use of place names ending in *-kuu* in the north.

Such intense focus on the rapid and its surroundings is due to the assumption that it might be the reason for naming the River Vyg. The place name *Šoirukša* is Karelian. Meanwhile, quite a number of facts, including the significant evidence of the world-known petroglyphs recovered near *Šoirukša* by archaeological excavations, attest to human presence in the downstream of the Vyg goes much further back in time than the Karelian period in the history of the White Sea area. What would the name be then of the rapid during the Sámi period? It is quite tempting to assume it could be the Vyg or, to be more exact, the Sámi word it stems from. The grounds for such an assumption were listed above: the rapid signifies the termination of the River Vyg, and among all islands downstream of the river, it is the one opposite the rapid that is called Vygostrov. Yet, the most convincing argument is the place name itself, which can be traced to the Sámi lexeme with a semantic indication of a rapid.

Of greatest interest in this context is the east-Sámi *veγγaš*, 'rapid stretch, site with strong current in a river' (KKLS), which derives its name from the historical Proto-Sámi **vęķę*, 'fast, rash' (Lehtiranta 1989). However, when connecting the place name *Bыг* < **Buz* to **vęķę*, one encounters a problem, since in Karelian toponymy, the Proto-Sámi **ę* (< **i*) is represented as an *e* (*El'muz*, *Petdärν*), not an *i*. The *i* equivalent is found in southerner Vepsian and in the adjacent Russian areas (*Ilmez*, River Pit' (*Питъ*)), the areal distribution probably caused by a different nature of the sound in the Proto-Sámi: an older one, close to *i* in the south, and a later one, approaching an *e* in quality in the north (Mullonen 2002: 232–244, 284–286). How does the history of *Bыг* then fit into this context? Several options can be suggested. On the one hand, the emergence of the *u* in the Russian variant could be provoked by an assimilation of the Finnic (Sámi) *e* in Belomorian patois (e.g., Kalima 1919: 52). On the other hand, one cannot exclude the possibility that in the period when the place name was getting established in Finnic or Russian usage, the sound was narrower and approaching an *i*. An analogue to be considered here is the Finnish *niva*, 'rapid', borrowed from the Sámi source which used to be **ę*: **ńęvē* (Lehtiranta 1989). Finally, it may be that the retracted *ę* could have been assimilated into Russian usage through *ы*, that is, without the stage of adaptation through *u*,

as also evidenced by materials from the Russian North (Matveev 2001: 136–140).

Basically, one cannot exclude another possible etymology of the rapid name, ascending to the north-Sámi *viekká*, or eastern *vīgg*, *vikk*, ‘power, big and strong’ < **vēke* (Lehtiranta 1989). The use of a stem with such semantics, describing the power of the water flow, appears natural in naming rapids, as confirmed by some names of the rapids in northern Finland recorded in the Onomastic Archives of Finland: *Väkevåkoski* (*koski*, ‘rapid’), *Väkevåniva* (*niva*, ‘rapid’), *Väkevåvirta* (*virta*, ‘current’), etc. These words comprise the Finnish ‘*väkevå*’, ‘strong’, a derivative from the word ‘*våki*’, which shares etymological sources with the above Sámi word, *viekkå*.

The quest for the toponymic series for *Bыz* have led us to northern Finland, where a corresponding stem has been embodied in a number of the names of the rapids at about the same latitude as the downstream of the Vyg, or provoked by the presence of large rapids: *Vikaköngås* (*köngås*, ‘steep waterfall’) and *Vianta*, where attachment of the suffix *-nta* weakened the stem morpheme: **Vika-* > **Viyanta* > *Vianta*. This stem is also present in two phonetic variants – a strong and a weak one – in the names of the rivers *Vikajoki* (*joki*, ‘river’) and *Vianjoki*. The latter has a powerful rapid called Venåläistenkoski, which literally means the ‘Russians’ rapid’. Perhaps it was this rapid that had once, at a stage preceding Russian contacts, been the original source of the river name.

Summary: *Bыz* appeared in ancient times in the language of the Sámi (or Proto-Sámi) inhabiting the White Sea coast, and it was the name of a powerful rapid in the river downstream. This name apparently spread to the whole river and to the lake (*Bыzозеро*) the river originates from already in Sámi times. Since the Vyg has since ancient times been an important part of the transit boating and portage route connecting Lake Onego and the White Sea, the name soon grew firmly established in Russian usage to be assimilated later by the Karelians. Having vanished as a rapid name, the place name survived to the present day as the name of the river.

Paleostrov

Paleostrov is one of the most widely known islands in Lake Onego, where the Paleostrovsky Nativity monastery was founded in the 14th century. Its history is reflected in many 15th–16th century documents, where the variants

were used alongside *Палеостров* are *Пальяостров* and *Палий остров* (with the declension forms 'конец Палья острова', 'на Палье острове').

The name of this island is traditionally related to the name of the salmonid Arctic char *палья* or *палия*, which once was abundant in the waters surrounding the island. This presupposition is expressed both in historical studies, and in stories narrated by the local people.

In reality, the etymology of that place name is not so obvious as it may seem at first glance. Firstly, the very morphological appearance of the place name permits a non-Russian interpretation alongside the Russian one, since there is a composite place name with a fossilized first component, which is atypical of place names with a Russian genesis. Furthermore, the variant *Палий остров* may in fact coincide in form with the Russian adjectival place names only outwardly. This variant fits well in the series of Finnic place names which were adapted into Russian usage in the Zaonež'e Peninsula: *Перый наволок* (*perä*, 'hind'), *Ширый наволок* (*surjä*, 'lateral'), *Турий остров* (*turo*, 'roach spawning area'), *Мурый мох* with the variant *Муромох* (Кар. *muuroi*, 'cloudberry'), etc.

Regarding the sources of the Obonež'e word *палья*, these are traditionally related to the Vepsian *pal'*, 'Arctic char'. This etymology was first suggested by Kalima (1919:180) and then repeatedly reproduced in etymological studies (Fasmer & Gerd 1988: 10; Myznikov 2003: 182). Assuming that the Vepsian lexeme became established in the stem of the island name, both variants – *Палеостров* and *Палий остров* – appear quite reasonable from the point of view of structural expression.

Yet this interpretation confronts the following contradiction that the authors mentioned above have probably disregarded. No words correspond to the Vepsian *pal'* in the Finnic languages, suggesting that word to be non-native in Vepsian. Moreover, it is atypical of Vepsian phonotactics to use the non-paired palatalized *l'* in the end of monosyllabic words (Tunkelo 1946: 417–448). The word *pal'*, by the way, is also absent from the Vepsian Language Dictionary, apparently owing to its fragmentary use in the patois of the Veps. Jalo Kalima adduces the Vepsian *pal'* with reference to E.N. Setälä, whose Vepsian materials were largely made up of data on the northern dialect, represented on the south-western shore of Lake Onego. Taken altogether, these facts suggest that the Vepsian *pal'* is a borrowing from the spatially adjacent Russian patois of Obonež'e, i.e. the borrowing pathway was the reverse: not from the Vepsian language into the

Russian patois, but from the Russian patois into Vepsian, most probably into the north-Vepsian dialect of the south-western Onego area.

In Russian patois, *палья* (*пальга*) is known first from Zaonež'e, where the lexeme has been recorded from nearly all the settlements. In the adjacent areas, however, such as the eastern and southern shores of Lake Onego, and the White Sea area and Ladoga area, occurrences of this lexeme have been singular (Myznikov 2003: 181–182). A range becomes visible with a clear centre in the Zaonež'e Peninsula and in the periphery of the White Sea and Ladoga areas. Given the structure of that range, a logical assumption would be that the word had originated from Zaonež'e, then dispersed along waterways to the White Sea area on the one hand, and to the Ladoga area on the other hand, without becoming particularly productive there.

If one agrees that the term *палья* was coined in the Russian patois of Zaonež'e, what may then be the source of its emergence? One of the most realistic options is that the name of the island, the surrounding waters, which were known for high stocks of fish, grew associated with and named after the fish species name. There are therefore good reasons that a monastery was built exactly in this place, and that the monks gained support from the state to prohibit the local peasants from fishing on their estate: “вкруг Палья острова и Грецкого (i.e. Речного – И.М.) острова тонь не ловити селяном, с лучом не ездити (the villagers must not fish around Palij island and Gretsoj (i.e. Rečnoj – I.M.) island)” (from *Данная новгородского посадника 1415–1421 гг.* [Novgorodian Mayor's Donation Deed]) (Materials 1941: 99). Such a pathway of term coining occurs, although not as frequently, in the practice of naming fish, primarily of those with a local distribution range, like the one demonstrated by the Arctic char.

All these speculations disprove the traditional version of the genesis of the term *палья*, but do not bring us closer to finding the sources of the Paleostrov Island name. One of the versions allows reconstructing the Finnic *paljas*, ‘barren, unvegetated’, in the stem and representing the place name's initial appearance as **Paljas/soari*, ‘Barren island’, which was later transformed through the superposition of the final *s* of the determined component and the initial *s* of the determinant in **Palja/soari*, resulting in the hybrid *Пальяостров*. The model ‘barren’ for islands with no vegetation is well known in Zaonež'e, in both Russian (island *Гольй*, *Голяши*, etc.) and in the Finnic (*Пальяк*, ‘Paljakko’ island) toponymy. This

phonetically logical and semantically well-grounded hypothesis has, however, one essential fault – all ‘barren’ islands in Zaonež'e are small rock outcrops where a forest cannot grow, whereas Paleostrov is an extensive forested island, which could be described as ‘barren’ only if completely burnt down, yet the term in this case would rather be ‘burnt’. Hence, the aforementioned hypothesis can be contested.

Another potential etymological interpretation of the place name *Палеостров* is related to Sámi linguistic data, cf. Sámi. *bælle* ‘edge, side’. This interpretation is based on the geographic location of the island, which remained to the side of the main waterway for those leaving Tolvujskaja guba Bay for the open lake.

The toponymy of Russia's north-western regions comprises quite a number of ‘side’ objects with the stem *нал-* present in the name (Mullonen 2002: 257–258). It may be that *Палеостров* is one of them. Even so, an additional comment on the phonetic aspect of the toponymic stem is, however, warranted. The Sámi *æ*, ascending to the parent language **e*, is as a rule reflected in Obonež'e toponymy in the form of *ä* (in Finnic usage) and *я* (in Russian usage). On the other hand, a more pronounced back vocalism is also possible in the form of *a*. This sound may reflect specific features of Finnic adaptation. This is suggested, for instance, by the coexistence of two variants *Pal'larvi* and *Päll'ärvi* (Russian *Палье озеро* and *Пялезеро* variants, respectively) of the lake name at the western margin of Zaonež'e, in the Ludic language range. But sources of the back *a* may in principle be rooted in the very Proto-Sámi linguistic development, which is known for a tendency towards greater openness, for a backward shift of the first-syllable vowel depending on the final vowel of the stem (Korhonen 1981: 89). A tendency towards a more open sound is also known for the north-Russian patois in the way they conveyed Finnic borrowings (*вахма* from *vehka*, *надра* from *petra*, etc.). The sources of this phenomenon are nevertheless not very clear, although Matveev (1995: 32–33) has suggested that it is an influence from the local substratum language. It was perhaps in this context that the toponymic stem *нал-* evolved into *Палеостров*, especially given that another place name with Sámi sources has been recorded from around Paleostrov, where the Sámi *æ* from the historical **e* was also conveyed as a Russian *a*. This place is the Kainos (*Кайнос*) Island, situated along the route connecting the two shores of the Zaonežskij Bay, Lake Onego, as well as Cape Kain Navolok (*Каин наволок*), known from 16th and 17th century sources, and bearing the name

of the village of Krivonogovskaja. This name stems from the Sámi *gæid'no*, 'road', descending from the earlier phonetic variant **kejnō*.

Pigma

The River Pigma in north-western Obonež'e is not very long, but is mentioned in early written sources, for it marked the boundary of the Medieval Šungskij pogost (administrative unit).

This river name is one of Zaonež'e river names ending in *-ма*: *Судма*, *Падма* (*Падьма*), *Кажма*, and **Вожма*. To analyse this group of names, one first needs to solve the problem of the nature of *-ма*: whether it is a formant or part of the underlying stem. Essentially, its stability in the river place names in Zaonež'e gives ground to presume a suffixal element in it, (although Zaonež'e toponymy also contains opposite examples having *-ма* as part of the word stem: *Ладм/озеро*, *Салма*, *Лижда*). A suffixal nature is also suggested by the pattern identified in *-ма* functioning within the place names of Zaonež'e. The fact is that alongside the examples where *-ма* occurs in the second syllable (*Пигма*, etc.), there is group of place names with *-ма* occurring in the third syllable: *Яндомма*, *Шайдомма*, *Пегрема*, *Линдомма*. A comparison of the sound structure of these two groups of place names indicates that the former one has most probably lost a vowel from the second syllable (*Пигма* < **Пигама*), which could not happen in the latter group owing to the combination of consonants at the juncture of the first and second syllables. In other words, the factor determining the situation was the openness/closeness of the first syllable. Which language does this phenomenon then stem from? Among Finnic languages that used to circulate in Zaonež'e in the past, vowel reduction is known in Vepsian, but occurred there in a situation that is directly opposite to the one seen in Zaonež'e, i.e. after a closed first syllable (Tunkelo 1946). Hence, the nature of the syllable is more likely to have originated from Russian in relation to the adaptation of Finnic place names with a stressed first syllable. Another point is that hydronyms with *-ма* in the second syllable are found more in the same area of Zaonež'e which had experienced Russian linguistic impact relatively early.

There are circumstances also suggesting the presence of the 'river' formant *-ма* in *Пигма*, the river name *Судма* and other names in the Zaonež'e Peninsula. The River Sudma originates from the *Suda* (*Суда*) or *Sudoč'ja* (*Судочья*) bay (Lake Kosmozero), which has no formant *-ма* in

the stem of its name. Equally illustrative is the etymological interpretation: having isolated the final element *-ma*, one can suggest a fairly convincing etymology for most of the listed names, whereas complexes with *-ma* in their composition can hardly be etymologized at all. For instance, it is quite enticing to trace the name of the River Kažma (*Кажма*), which is a short channel connecting the vast Svjatuxa Bay of Lake Onego and Lake Kosmozero, back to the Finnic *kasa* (Veps. *kaza*, Karel. *kasa*), 'corner, edge, side'. Such an interpretation is supported by geographic characteristics: Lake Kosmozero, which River Kažma originates from, is in a corner, lateral position relative to Svjatuxa Bay¹. The banks of River Padma are known as the main hay-mowing area in central Zaonež'e, prompting an etymology with the Finnic *pata*, *patoi*, *patama* (where *-ma* is the word-formative suffix), 'extensive treeless depression with water rising above the surface in spring and autumn (sometimes also the whole summer)' (KMS). However, a more traditional etymology exists for the hydronym, relating it to the Finnic *pato*, *pado*, 'dam on a river'.

The name of the River Vožma (**Вожма*) in the Kiži area is reconstructed from the modern, obviously secondary form *Вожмаруха*. This is where one finds the Russian suffix *-уха*, and the Finnic element *-ap* < *-ar*, which is a clipped variant of the Finnic determinant *-järv*, 'lake'. Thus, the modern name of the river descends from the Finnic (perhaps Vepsian) name of the lake *Vožmar'* (**Važmar'*)² < *Vožmajärv* (**Važmajärv*), Rus. *Вожмозеро*, from which the river originates. In fact, 19th century archival materials have recorded the name in the above reconstructed form *Вожмарь* – the name of a hayfield by the stream. In turn, the lake name in the initial formation period might descend from the river name **Vožm(a)* or **Važm(a)* ending in *-ma*, also found in other river names in Zaonež'e.

¹ *Космозеро* and *Кажма* definitely have common sources, and their modern phonetic distinctions are due to the fact that different end parts of Lake Kosmozero, cutting through nearly the whole central Zaonež'e south to north, experienced different ethnolinguistic influences in the course of human history in that area. The name of the River Kažma, situated at the northern extremity of the lake, apparently reflects Karelian colonization, whereas the name of Lake Kosmozero might reflect the relatively early Russian impact that the southern Zaonež'e had experienced. It is quite tempting to see the sources of the name in the Vepsian language – an assumption corroborated by the use of the lexeme *kaza* in Vepsian toponymy (Mullonen 2002), as well as by the archaeologically confirmed presence of the Vepsians in Zaonež'e at the turn of the centuries (AK 1996).

² For considerations concerning the feasibility of the original variant with *a* in the stem, see below.

Evidence of such multistage formation and, what matters most, the possibility of singling out the final element *-ma* in the toponymic stem is the name etymology. This could be based on the Sámi *vuoč'č'o*, 'a bog with water flowing in from higher surroundings and flowing out in a stream', *vuačču*, 'a long narrow marsh or bay' (SKES), or on the Finnic (possibly Vepsian) **važ* 'marsh', reconstructed using data from Vepsian toponymy and related languages (Mullonen 2002: 287–288). In the latter case, the Vepsian place name fell into the sphere of relatively early Russian colonization marked by the conveyance of the Finnic *a* as the Russian *o*. The proposed etymology, already discussed in other toponymic studies (Agapitov 2003: 283), is convincingly supported by the landscape characteristics of the area, which is a marshy shore of Lake Onego.

In this context, two structural elements can also be distinguished in the name of the River *Pigma*, flowing from the fairly large lake Pigozero to the Unitskaja Bay of Lake Onego: the toponymic stem *nuz-* and the formant *-ma*. That toponymic stem can be traced back to the Finnic *pyhä*, but in its original meaning of 'fence, border' rather than the modern 'holy'. It is a known fact that the stem *pyhä* was actively used in Medieval Finnic toponymy to name objects at tribal borders during the Iron Age. The suggested interpretation of *Pigma* as a border river relies not only on the association of the lake and river with the boundary of the Šungskij pogost in the 16th century (Vitov 1962: 176), but also on the location of Lake Pigozero in a drainage divide. The latter fact is highlighted by the name of Lake *Ladmozero* (*Ладмозеро*), situated one km south of Pigozero, but on the other side of the drainage divide, its name descending from the Ludic Karelian *ladm* (cf. Karelian *latva*, *ladva*, *ladv*), 'source, river head'. Thus, the place name *Пигма* points to a sacral status of the areas and its boundaries as perceived by the authors of the Zaonež'e toponymy.

Another point worth mentioning is that the boundaries of the Medieval Šungskij pogost are marked with another 'sacred' place name – that of the Svjatuxa (*Святуха*) Bay, Lake Onego, which appears to be a Russian calque of the original Finnic place name (for details, see Mullonen 2005). Furthermore, 'sacred' hydronyms in Zaonež'e belong to the same distribution range as the corresponding Vepsian names, so that one can speak of Vepsian sources of the model in Obonež'e. This naming model is absent from the pathways of the Karelian expansion from the Northern Ladoga area to Obonež'e.

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