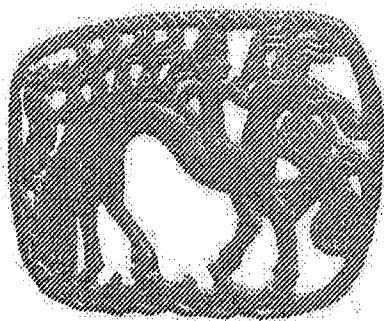


URÁLISZTIKAI TANULMÁNYOK 14.

# ***PERMIEK, FINNEK, MAGYAROK***

Írások Szíj Enikő 60. születésnapjára



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URÁLISZTIKAI TANULMÁNYOK 14.

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# Reason against Feeling or the First Pages in the History of Udmurt Studies

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Izhevsk

The history of Udmurt people studies has already passed a considerable way. There have been periods of brilliant discoveries as well as periods of stagnation when well-known facts were being discussed over and over again, or, what was even worse, periods when what was said depended on what market demanded<sup>1</sup>. Looking back now we are to some degree able to reconstruct facts and see the development of the ideas that contributed to contemporary studies.

European history studies of the XVII–XVIII centuries, badly in need of positive impetus, turned to myths and Atlantic images quite often. Deprived of ethnic peculiarities those legends were very helpful for antiquarian understanding of historical process, especially in its local interpretations. Early Finno-Ugric historiography also followed the tradition when reasonable empiricism did not stop the desire to admire oneself in the light of great ancestors from “Golden Age”. It is enough to remember works by the first scientists-fennomans who pointed at the shared origin of Finno-Ugric languages and languages of Ancient Greeks and Jews. Ironical attitude to these facts could be possible if not to take into account broad public resonance that appeared as a result of G.W. Leibniz’ ideas regarding usefulness of language comparison in order to study nations’ histories and to search for global language “universum”<sup>2</sup>. Comparative studies pioneers appealed for help to the Royal Families of Europe in order to find support for their own rationalism.

Curiosity of a traveler, a merchant or a diplomat found a new way out through a fresh approach to the history of mankind. It is not a mere coincidence that it was a Dutch ambassador Nikolas Witsen (1641–1717) who, upon making his trip to the Vjatka-river, was the first to make scientific discoveries in the eastern parts of Russia. N. Witsen’s observations, summed up in his work “Noord en Ost- Tartarye” gave an impetus to further interest in fieldwork where

<sup>1</sup> Владыкин В. Е., Христолюбова Л. С. История этнографии удмуртов. Краткий историографический очерк с библиографией. – Ижевск, 1984.

<sup>2</sup> Stipa, G. J. Finnisch-Ugrische Sprachforschung von der Renaissance bis zum Neupositivismus // Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne. – Helsinki, 1990. Vol. 206. S. 162.

reason and system were to replace occasional notes on trip impressions<sup>3</sup>. The context and some ethno-geographical peculiarities allow suggesting that the pages devoted to "Vjatka pagans" contain remarks concerning Udmurts as well. Foreseeing ideals of the Enlightenment he writes that the people he saw were gentle, kind, fair and religious.

In 1718 Russian tsar Peter I signed an order to send Doctor of Medicine Daniel Gottlieb Messerschmidt (1685–1735) from Danzig to Siberia to search for rarities and carry out research in zoology and botany. Several Swedish prisoners of war were to help him. Among them there was a subaltern officer Phillip Johann Tabbert (more known under his noble name: von Strahlenberg) (1676–1747)<sup>4</sup>. On their coming back to the Saint-Petersburg in winter of 1726 D.G. Messerschmidt and his team visited a few Udmurtian villages on the Cheptsä River. Notes on lifestyles, appearance, religion, family relations and work were put into the diary. They got elements of women's national dress for Academy of Sciences in Saint-Petersburg, and made up a hand-written dictionary of up to 350 Udmurtian words which make it the most complete and high-quality Udmurtian vocabulary collection of the XVIII century<sup>5</sup>. The diary dwells upon a hypothesis of the origin of ethnic name "Udmurt" and issues of early ethnic history of the region. Although D.G. Messerschmidt's historical concept does not completely refuse from "Atlanticism" tradition and ranks Udmurts to Scythian peoples one can feel his urge for the grounds of empirical data and for critical attitude to original sources, the thing in which his Siberian companion Ph.J. Strahlenberg was more successful.

After Ph. J. Strahlenberg returned from Russia he published his paper "Das Nord- und Östliche Theil von Europa und Asia..." He gives arguments to prove multinational nature of Eastern Russia population and classifies them into 6 groups<sup>6</sup>. Ph. J. Strahlenberg's classification is based on language relationship

<sup>3</sup> Witsen, N. Noord en Ost-Tartaryen. – Amsterdam, MDCLXXXV.

<sup>4</sup> Härmäläinen, A. Nachrichten der nach Sibirien verschickten Offiziere Karl XII über die finnisch-ugrischen Völker // Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrenne. – Helsinki, 1937–1938. Vol. 49.

<sup>5</sup> Напольских В. В. Удмуртские материалы Д. Г. Мессершмидта. – Ижевск, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Das Nord- und Östliche Theil von Europa und Asia, in so weit solches das gantze Russische Reich mit Sibirien und der grossen Tatarey in sich begreiffet, in einer Historisch-Geographischen Beschreibung der alten und neuern Zeiten, und vielen andern unbekannnten Nachrichtenvorgestellt, nebst einer noch niemahls ans Licht gegebenen Tabula Polyglotta von zwei und dreyssigerley Arten Tatarischer Völcker Sprachen und einem Kalmückischen Vocabulario, sonderlich aber einer grossen richtigen Land-Charte von den benannten Ländern und andern verschiedenen Kupferstichen, so die Asiatisch- Scythische Antiquität betreffen; bey Gelegenheit der Schwedischen Kriegs-Gefangenschaft in Russland, aus eigener sorgfältigen Erkundigung, auf denen verstateteten weiten Reisen zusammen gebracht und ausgewerfertiget, von Philipp Johann von Strahlenberg. – Stockholm, 1730.

that was discovered by means of comparative method. His scheme allowed to clearly seeing similarities between the languages that Ph. J. Strahlenberg ranked to the first group – those languages would later be called Finno-Ugric (Uralic) ones. Besides he suggested that the peoples that spoke those languages and presently lived partially in Europe, partially in Siberia in old times could have lived in one place and made up for one nation<sup>7</sup>. This idea will be guiding scholars of the next century interested in Finno-Ugric studies. Yet, first of all it was necessary to collect primary field, historical and archive material related to work of Saint-Petersburg Academy of Sciences' expedition.

Participants in Great Northern Expedition, professor of history Gerhard Friedrich Müller (1705–1783) and professor of chemistry and natural history Johann George Gmelin (1709–1755) arrived at Kazan province in autumn of 1733. There they started studying Volga region peoples and ancient monuments. Professors urgently asked the Governor's office "to find them two old respectable men from each tribe who could be asked to tell about their religion, life, trade, crafts, customs and history, and in order to be able to communicate to give two skillful translators at their disposal to travel with them from village to village"<sup>8</sup>. Near Jelabuga the professors visited several Udmurtian villages and even met the local "tuno" (shaman and fortune-teller) to test his skills of predicting the future. Moving forward to the east they stopped at settlements of Sarapul Udmurts. Taking note of their diligence and wits G. F. Müller writes: "I noticed that Votjaks are very obstinate in other people's presence and this makes them similar to the Finns. They are also very much alike in appearance"<sup>9</sup>. By the way, D. G. Messerschmidt and J. P. Falk also noticed some similarities between Udmurts and Finns. However, G. F. Müller was observant enough to see that "Votjaks living down the river Vjatka are different from those living up the river" and that the Udmurt language "can be divided into two local dialects"<sup>10</sup>. It's G. F. Müller's merit that he helped A. L. Schlözer to publish

<sup>7</sup> Manaster Ramer, A., Sidwell, P. The truth about Strahlenberg's classification of the languages Northeastern Eurasia // *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne*. – Helsinki, 1997. Vol. 87. P. 139–160.

<sup>8</sup> Харлампович К. Известия И. Гмелина о Казани и казанских инородцах (1733) // *Известия ОАИЭ*. – Казань, 1904, т. 19, С. 253.

<sup>9</sup> Müller, G. F. Nachricht von Dreyen im Gebiete der Stadt Casan wohnhaften heidnischen Völkern, den Tscheremissen, Tschuwascheen und Wotiacken. – *Sammlung Russischer Geschichte*, III Bd., 4 Th. – St.-Petersburg, 1759. S. 14.

<sup>10</sup> Миллер Г. Ф. Описание живущих в Казанской губернии языческих народов, яко то черемис, чуваш и вотяков с показанием их животноводства, политического учреждения, телесных и душевных дарований... Санкт-Петербург, 1791. С. 27–28.

"Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte" which summed up all the previous discoveries in Finno-Ugric studies, ranking ancient Finns to world ancestors<sup>11</sup>.

Physical (academic) expedition of 1768–1774 enriched Udmurt studies with notes of scholars P. S. Pallas and J. G. Georgy and other participants in this "Ekaterina's II great project". Clerical pathos and moralistic ideas of scientists and travelers of the beginning of the century gradually receded under J.-J. Rousseau's influence. Sympathy to the ingenuous formed the basis for scientific relativism and simple human tolerance. In this respect, diaries of one of the heads of the expedition, a Swedish naturalist Johann Peter Falk (1725–1774) are indicative. J. P. Falk notices, that though Udmurts are shy and not determined, they are more open, than others Finnish tribes. They live peacefully and virtuously, loathe abuse and deceit and sing willing...<sup>12</sup> Orientation to education is supplemented with an idea they have known since the Middle Ages, an idea of censure of vain city dwellers, as opposed to simple villagers, which has essentially affected the outlook of scientists of Romantic period.

So, lives similar to the one of Robinson Crusoe allowed scholars of the XVIII century to find, surprisingly and also logically, their kind savage, who was to become another Friday. Or in other words, a sentimental person who had forgotten his nature and was deeply interested in his self, made a step towards a naïve one to see more truth, creativity and sense in his lifestyle and ideas.

In the first decades of the XIX century the intellectual pendulum of the European history shuddered and rocked, as if physically having felt the change of the epoch, and swiftly moved towards new ideals, involving a young generation of scientists into a romantic stream. Having overcome the universal nature of reason cult, romantics believed in two basic values – heroism of a free person capable of individual struggle up to self-sacrifice and creativeness of national spirit, forming national culture<sup>13</sup>. Thus they perceived a nation as a family that originated from common ancestors and has consciousness relating through blood.

History of Finno-Ugric studies of the period is closely related with the time of Finnish national consciousness awakening when they more clearly realized their ethnic unity. It was then when comparative studies of history and languages of related peoples found its ideological and field material basis and

<sup>11</sup> Schlözer, A. L. Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte. – Halle, 1771.; Weithmann, M. W. Fenno-Ugrica in August Ludwig Schlözers "Allgemeiner Nordischer Geschichte" // Finnisch-Ugrische Mitteilungen. – Hamburg, 1983. Vol. 7. S. 182 – 183.

<sup>12</sup> Schwamm, K. Johann Peter Falk's Bericht über die Wotjaken aus dem Jahre 1772 // Finnisch-Ugrische Mitteilungen. – Hamburg, 1980. Vol. 3. S. 104.

<sup>13</sup> Glaser, R. Aspekte der Herder – Rezeption in der deutschen Volkskunde // Ethnologia Europea. – Copenhagen, 1994. Vol. 24, № 2. S. 133.

financial support<sup>14</sup>. In 1821 a graduate of Turku/Åbo University Anders Johann Sjögren (1794–1855), following his student's oath: "...to search for and collect spiritual legacy of ancestors", submitted a project of a big expedition to possible living places of Finno-Ugric peoples in the Russian empire<sup>15</sup>.

In autumn of 1827 A. J. Sjögren started to study ancient history and collect language material in Udmurt settlements, working in the vicinities of Glazov, villages Balezino and Alnashi, in archives of Vjatka, Kazan and Perm. A. J. Sjögren got information mostly from orthodox priests from Udmurt parishes who helped him get Udmurt translations of religious texts representing sources for studies of the grammatical system, dialects and lexical structure of the Udmurt language. The Finnish scholar who in the empirical way singled out three basic groups of the Udmurt population of Kama–Vjatka region and raised "a question of origin Besermian people", informs, that local people do not call themselves Votjaks – their self-name is "Ud-mort". The journey was not devoid of funny and yet annoying things – in the vicinity of Izhevsk factory A. J. Sjögren was robbed and thus lost a significant part of his "Udmurt materials", but to honor the local police almost all papers were soon found and returned to the owner<sup>16</sup>.

Having completed his six-year expedition, A. J. Sjögren entered the service in the Emperor's St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences where he soon became the head of Finnish and Caucasian philology and ethnography department. The material he collected appeared enough not only for the scientist himself, but also for his successors. Relying on A. J. Sjögren's field material, in 1851 F. J. Widemann published the first scientific (descriptive) grammar of the Udmurt language<sup>17</sup>.

Yet earlier A. J. Sjögren had noticed Mathias Alexander Castrén's (1813–1852) talent to research. Keen on ideas of fennomans, M.A. Castrén readily responded to the offer to take part in work of the Academy of Sciences Siberian expedition as he long before had made a decision – to devote all his life "... to studies of language, religion, customs, lifestyle and all other ethnographic conditions of the Finns and other related peoples"<sup>18</sup>. Following the tradition of

<sup>14</sup> Загребин А. Е. Финны об удмуртах: Финские исследователи этнографии удмуртов XIX – первой половины XX в. – Ижевск, 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Branch, M. A. J. Sjögren studies of the North // *Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne*. – Helsinki, 1973. Vol. 152.

<sup>16</sup> Sjögren, A. J. Bericht über wissenschaftliche Reise zur untersuchung der finnischen völkerschaften in Russland // A. J. Sjögren *Gesammelte Schriften*. – St.-Petersburg, 1861. S.83.

<sup>17</sup> Widemann, F. J. *Grammatik der wotjakische Sprache*. – St.-Petersburg, 1851.

<sup>18</sup> Castrén, M. A. *Reiseninnerungen aus den Jahren 1833–1844* // Castrén M. A. *Nordische Reisen und Forschungen / Im Auftrage der Wissenschaften herausgegeben von A. Schifner*. Bd. I. – St.-Petersburg, 1853. S. 3.

European North studies, he tried to find traces of Finno-Ugric "Golden Age" and in Great Asia to find the starting point – a legendary ancestral home of ancient Finns.

In February 1845 the traveler, exhausted by consumption, arrived in Kazan where local scientists helped him. In particular, A. A. Fuchs, a researcher from Kazan who had visited Udmurts of the Kazan province to collect material, shared it with him. Moving deeper on the territory of Vjatka province to Perm, M. A. Castrén writes: "Passing the Votjaks' places, I never ceased to feel myself in Finland. The nature evoked memories of home..., and then, originally, both places are occupied by the same people". Comparing Udmurts with Finns, he continues: "This similarity can be generally seen in quiet, traditional working life very different from all that can be seen in the majority of other provinces ... so, I found Votjaks trustful and naive, as well as our Finnish peasants"<sup>19</sup>. Together with writing a field diary, M. A. Castrén suggests a hypothesis about the origin of the ethnic name "Udmurt", studies materials from Russian annals, tries to reconstruct the most ancient period of the Finnish tribes history in the region.

M. A. Castrén's purposefulness and diligence were reflected not only in his publications, but also in numerous followers who took up, perhaps, the key idea of his short life: "If people study their past and their historical development with love it is a true sign, that they have good sense and one of the main conditions for the further perfection".

In conclusion to this discussion of the first stage of Udmurts' history studies it is necessary to say that creative approach to work and enthusiasm in research ensured success to the majority of undertakings in those years. Solving problems that seemed purely scientific, scientists interested in Finno-Ugric studies were the first to move along back roads of history to open Udmurt people to the world and to themselves. Understanding of the importance of the described events and the phenomena required deep internal experience from them as their texts were tempted by "Atlanticism" of local history, and on the other hand, were under the influence of classical models supporters' skepticism. Localization of history, criticism of sources and desire to rely on the scientific method, peculiar to their works, is to be shown to the full in future research on Udmurts.

<sup>19</sup> Castrén, M. A. Reise von St.-Petersburg nach Tobolsk // Castrén M. A. Nordische Reisen und Forschungen. Bd. III. – St.-Petersburg, 1856. S. 26–27.