19th century fieldwork methodology in Southern Mansi and the reliability of data

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aim of the investigation

- to explore the methodology of late 19th/early 20th century descriptive fieldwork in Uralic studies

- in comparison with the present day linguistic fieldwork methodology requirements

- case study: Southern Mansi – extinct dialect, highly endangered at the end of the 19th ctr.

justification of the aim

- early and only sources of extinct languages/varieties
- dialect: regional variety/subdivision of a language
- boundary between dialects vs. languages: blurry (cf. structural affinity, mutual intelligibility)
- identification of dialects, distinction of neighbouring dialects: $\Rightarrow$ **large** corpus of utterances by **many speakers** (preferably by means of face-to-face interviews)

Overview

1 Definitions and historical background

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2 Basic requirements of linguistic fieldwork
3 Goals in early Uralic fieldwork
4 The Southern Mansi dialect
5 Experts of Southern Mansi
6 How did they collect their data
7 Interpretation of their data
8 Proposal

linguistic fieldwork is

„...the investigation of the structure of a language through the collection of primary language data gathered through interaction with native-speaking consultants"

(Chelliah & Reuse 2011. 7)

early fieldwork traditions

- missionaries
- travelers
- "gentleman scholars"
- prisoners
- exiled fieldworkers
- neogrammarians
  - early dialectological fieldworks
  - comparativist fieldwork

early fieldwork traditions

- structuralists: Boas – Sapir – Bloomfield tradition
- based on Boas trilogy:

  - collection of texts

  - writing of a comprehensive grammar

  - compiling of a dictionary

    „Since at least the late-nineteenth century, linguistic field research has been identified with cultural anthropology, whose practice has been to study „exotic" cultures and their languages…"

    (Geertz 1984)

2 Requirements of linguistic fieldwork

descriptive vs. documentary fieldwork

Type of data	Documentary	Descriptive
Word data	Word recordings	Dictionaries
Sentence data	Sentence recordings	Analyzed sentence examples
Discourse data	Text recordings	Analyzed texts
Integration of the above	-	Reference grammars

(Chelliah – Reuse 2011. 15)

requirements of descriptive linguistic fieldwork

	Fieldwork prototype	Fieldwork countertype	Least field-work-like
Elicitee	Other	Self	Introspection
Elicitor/obeserver	Self	Other	Secondary data
Distance	Far	Near	One's domicile
Setting	Small	Large	City, university
Duration	Long	Short	Brief stopover
Language	Exotic	Well-known	One's own
Subject matter	Language in its natural/cultural context	Language in general as a formal system	Abstract syntax
Data	Naturalistic	Controlled	Synthetic speech
Motivation	Languages-driven	Theory-driven	

?

Hyman 2001. 21

3 Goals in early Uralic fieldwork

primary goal served the aims of language comparison = comparativist fieldwork

- for languages without written records (e.g. Romani, Slovenian, Lithuanian, etc.)
- is in accordance with the historical goals of fieldwork recently   (Vaux et al. 2007: 351–381)
- A. Catrén (19th ctr.) – for Uralic (especially Samoyedic) languages
- A. Reguly (19th ctr.) – to uncover the origin of the Hungarian language

followers of Castrén and Reguly

working on the Mansi language:

• to decipher the material of A. Reguly

• to collect the ancient folk traditions (texts with ethnographic descriptions) of the Mansi people

• to compile dictionaries

• grammatical descriptions

4 The Southern Mansi dialect

Uralic language family

Proto-Uralic					
		Proto Samoyedic			Nganasan, Selkup, Kamassian, Koibal, Mator, Karagas, Taygi
	Proto-Finno-Ugric	Proto-Finno-Permic	Proto Permic		Udmurt/Wotyak, Komi/Zyryan
			Proto-Finno-Volgaic		Mari/Cheremis, Mordvin (Erzya, Moksha), Saami/Lappish
				Proto Balto-Finnic	Finnish, Estonian, Karelian, Olonets, Ludic, Veps, Votic, Ingrian, Livonian
		Proto-Ugric			Hungarian
			Proto-Ob-Ugric		Khanty/Ostyak, Mansi/Vogul

Mansi language

Western Siberia

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District

(534,800 km²)

Yekaterinburg Oblast'

Native speakers: 2,746 (2002)

Mansi dialects

- Northern Mansi (Sosva, Upper Lozva): strong Russian, Komi, Nenets, Northern Khanty influence – seriously endangered

- Western Mansi (Pelym, Vagilsk, Middle and Lower Lozva): Russian and Komi influence – extinct

- Eastern Mansi (Konda): Khanty and Tatar influence – extinct

- Southern Mansi (Tavda): strong Tatar and Russian influence – extinct
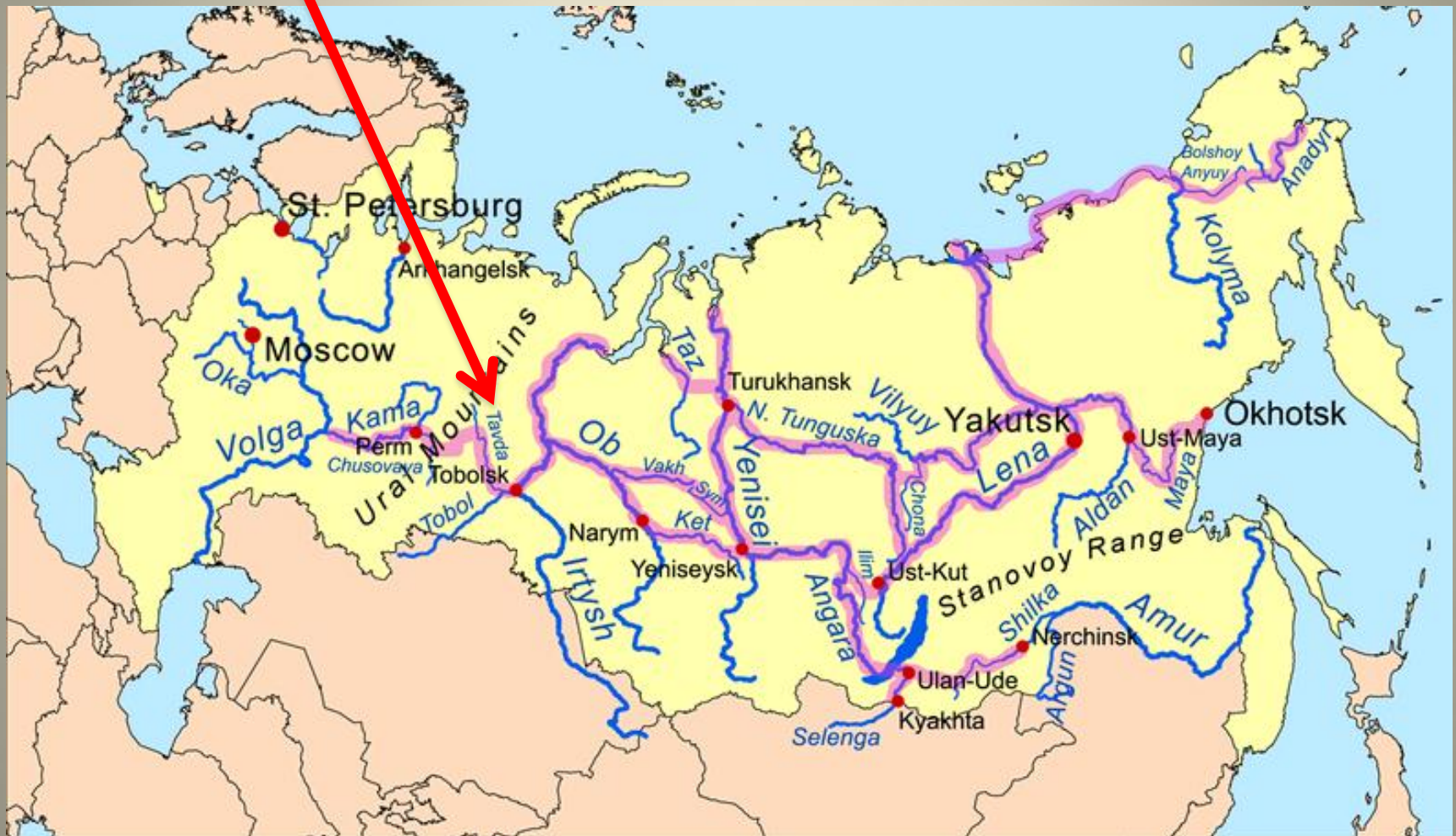
Southern (Tavda) Mansi

- extinct: ca. 1920 – 1950
- number of native speakers at the beginning of the 20th ctr: ca. 325
- 7 villages along the Tavda river (3-5 yurts, houses/village)
- Russian ethnographic map in 1950: no traces of them

end of the 19th ctr.

"Everything develops differently now: we were becoming Russians. As the old people lived, we are not that way anymore. We forget the Mansi language of our own: there is no 150 people out there who could speak it."

(Munkácsi's consultant 1889. 407-408)

Tavda river

beginning of the 20th ctr.

"Their customs and beliefs seem to be very Russinized. Of their nationality, they have retained little more but their language, the young generation has started to forget it, too."

(Kannisto: JSFOu. XXIV/3: 1)

Southern (Tavda) Mansi

text corpus: mere 100 pages
+
grammatical and significant lexicographic material

collected by

Bernát Munkácsi from the late 1880s
Artturi Kannisto in the early 1900s

5 Experts of Southern Mansi

fieldwork
among the Mansi

Bernát Munkácsi
1860-1937

fieldwork:
May, 1888 – April,1889
11 months

primary goal: to decipher and to translate Reguly's texts
secondary goal: to collect/edit ancient folkloric texts

fieldwork
among the Mansi

Artturi Kannisto
1874 - 1943

fieldwork:
September, 1901 –
December, 1906
4 years, 5 months

primary goal: to collect/edit
ancient folkloric text, compile
dictionary, provide grammatical
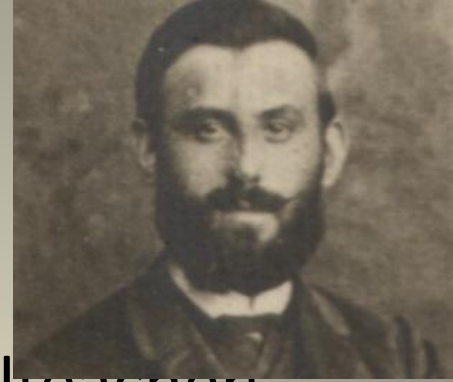descriptions

6 How did they collect data

Munkácsi

- well-trained fieldworker
- good knowledge of Russian (metalanguage)
- no previous information on the Tavda dialect; initially assumed that it was a separate language:
- "The language of a small number of surviving people on the lower reaches of the river is an independent and most specific variant … as if the last relics of an independent member of the Ugric languages would have been preserved…"

Munkácsi

- got leads on speakers from officials: schoolteachers, resident officials

- fieldwork in 3 villages
  - Kuzyayeva: Pavel Ignatich *Simpaev* ♂
  - Chandyri: Arzentey Terentich *Kostyn* ♂
  - Yanichkova: Filimon Kharitonovich *Matykov* ♂

- one native speaker / village

- in his works no distinction is made among the dialects (= Tavda/Southern Mansi)
  - Vogul népköltési gyűjtemény (Vogul Collection of Folk Literature) Budapest, 1892-1896
  - Wogulisches Wörterbuch Budapest, 1986

Kannisto

- trained fieldworker
- good knowledge of Russian (metalanguage)
- previous informations on the Tavda dialect (cf. publications and communications of Munkácsi)
- got leads on speakers from officials: schoolteachers, resident officials, informations by Munkácsi

Kannisto

- fieldwork in 4 villages
- Shaitanskaya
- Chandyri
- Yanichkova
- Gorodok
- more native speaker/ village

Kannisto

native speakers

Shaitanskaya: Anisim Feodorovich *Esenbaev* ♂

Yanichkova: Andrian Kharitonovich *Matykov* ♂

Matvei Andrianovich *Matykov* ♂

Alyona Filipovna *Matykova* ♀

Chandyri: Logan Sidorovich *Kostyn* ♂

Tatyana Gerasimova *Kostyna* ♀

Aksinya Ivanovna *Kostyna* ♀

Gorodok: 2 old native speakers ("who drank a lot") ♂

residents of Shaitanskaya village on the Tavda

Anisim Feodorovich Esenbaev

Kannisto

native consultants

Shaitanskaya: Anisim Feodorovich *Esenbaev*

Yanichkova: Andrian Kharitonovich *Matykov*

Matvei Andrianovich *Matykov*

Alyona Filipovna *Matykova*

Chandyry: Logan Sidorovich *Kostyin*

Tatyana Gerasimova *Kostyina*

Aksinya Ivanovna *Kostyna*

Kannisto

- distinction of 3 dialects: Yanichkova, Chandyri, Gorodok

- if there is no significant difference among them = T / Southern Mansi, e.g.
  – Wogulische Volksdichtung I-VI, Helsinki 1951-1958

- if there are differences TJ (=Yanich.), TČ (=Chan.), TG (=Gor.)

fieldwork on Tavda Mansi

	prototype	Munkácsi	Kannisto
Elicitee	other	native speakers of Tavda Mansi	
Elicitor/Observer	self	+	+
Distance	far	Western Siberia	
Setting	small	3 small villages	4 small villages
Duration	long	couple of weeks	4 months
Language	exotic	unknown variant of Mansi	poorly described variant of Mansi
Subject matter	language in its natural/cultural context	?+	?+
Data	naturalistic	+	+
Motivation	language driven	language and culture driven	

?

7 Interpretation of their data

Finno-Ugristics

- paid little attention to the variaties within the same dialect

- treated Munkácsi's and Kannisto's collections as a single unit, saying

"Sehr wenig Zeit, etwa anderthalb Jahrzehnte sind zwischen den Reisen den beiden Forscher vergangen, die in der untersuchten Sprache [Southern Mansi] keine wesentliche Änderungen hat verursachen können"

(Honti 1975. 10)

varieties within the same dialect: individual or dialectal?

in text edititon (WV 3: 180)

[pɛstørkai] 'a bird that used to live on earth and ate people'

dial.: Yanichkova

speaker: Anisim Feodorovich *Esenbaev* from Shaitanskaya (!)

in the notes (WV 3: 253)

[pɯstørkai] 'id.'

dial.: Yanichkova

consultant: Andrian Kharitonovich *Matykov*

variants within the same dialect: individual or dialectal?

in text edititon (WV 3: 174)

[jikwɛ] ʿ(old) woman'

dial.: Yanichkova

speaker: Anisim Feodorovich *Esenbaev* from Shaitanskaya (!)

consultant: Andrian Kharitonovich *Matykov*

[jükɛ] ʿid.ʾ (WV 1: 322)

dial.: Yanichkova

Speaker: Andrian Kharitonovich *Matykov*

grammatical variations between Munkácsi and Kannisto

differences in syntax (Sherwood 1996)

object marking (-*M*)

uncompensated reduction in the verb system: loss of the marking within the verb of the plurality of a definite object in Kannisto (compared to Munkácsi)

Rapid, uncompensated syntactic change between the time of recording Munkácsi and that of Kannisto, consistent with changes found in other dying languages.

8 Proposal

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variations within and among dialects

idiolects or dialects?
variants or change?

Proposal:

•linguistic data should be considered as variants of linguistic variables and

•should be assigned to the social variables of the native speakers

•in doing so the reliability of Southern Mansi linguistic data can be increased

•variation in grammar should be considered as a change in progress of a dying language

Thanks for your attention!

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