

# THE FIRST WRITTEN SOURCES IN THE MANSI LANGUAGE<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** The article is a brief overview of the history of the Mansi language - its first written artifacts and the first expeditions of A. Reguly and A. Ahlqvist to the native speakers of the Mansi language, which aim not only to record information about the culture and language of the Mansi people, but also to attempt a scientific understanding of these new data.

**Keywords.** Mansi language, first sources, XVI century, P. S. Pallas, A. Reguly, A. Ahlqvist.

## 1 The first written sources in the Mansi language

The earliest fixations of Mansi words or small dictionaries, including the names of some objects, are dated to the XVI–XVII centuries. Since the XVIII century, dictionaries containing dialect vocabulary have come down to us in handwritten or printed form: «Dictionary of the Vogul language» (1736) of 60 words in different dialects, compiled by I. Kuroedov; «Latin-Vogul-Ostyat dictionary», consisting of 286 words; «Brief Vogul Dictionary with Russian translation, collected and located according to various matters, the city of Solikamsk and the Holy Trinity Cathedral by Simeon Cherkalov in 1783» from 611 words on various topics; «Latin-Vogul Dictionary» by the Adelung Foundation (1775), including 600 Mansi words [Vdovin 1962: 155-157]; the Mansi section in the work of P. S. Pallas «Comparative dictionaries of all languages and dialects collected by the right hand of the Most Exalted Person», dated 1787 [Fundamentals 1976: 233] For recording Mansi words in these the

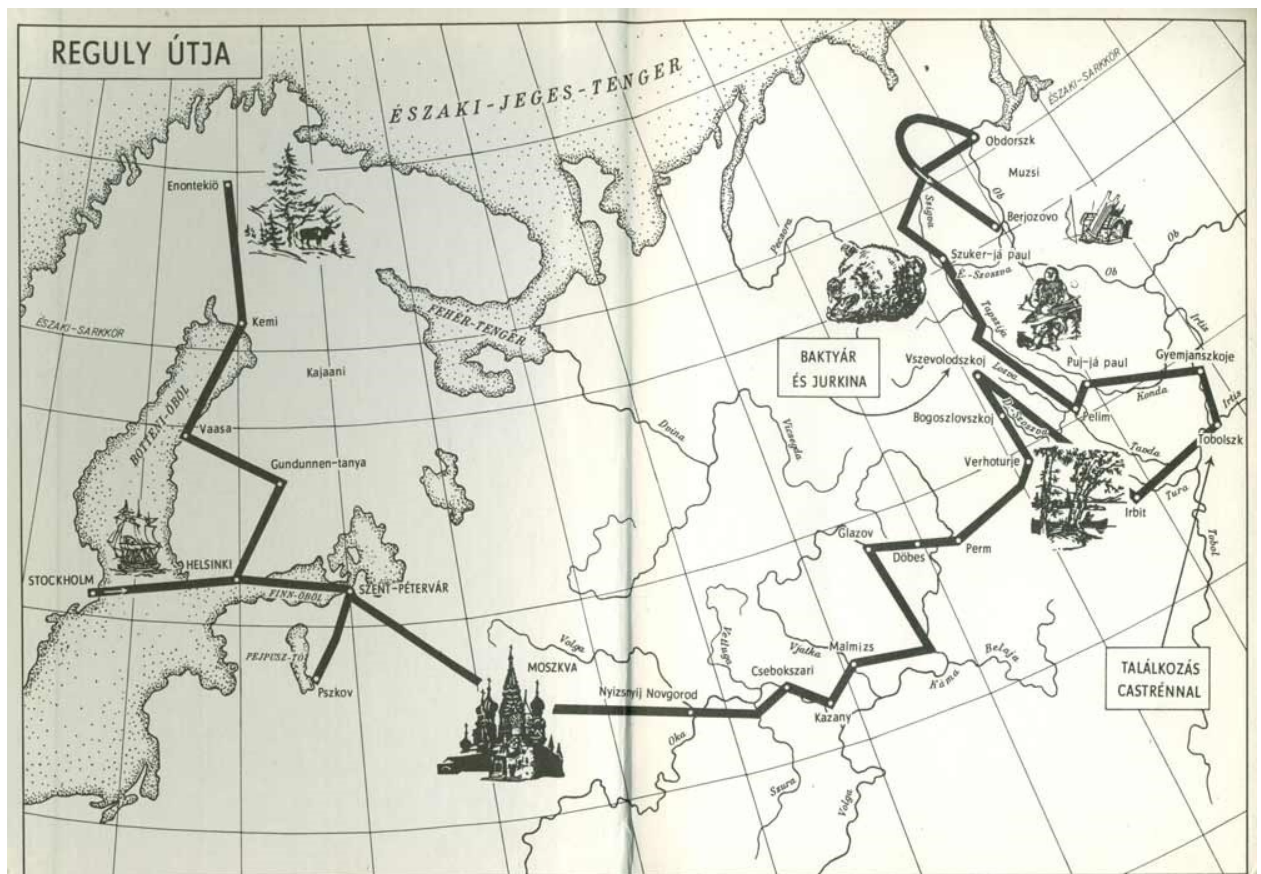
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Cyrillic alphabet was used in the works, less often Latin. It is worth noting that the materials of the XVIII century were mainly collected and compiled by travelers and missionaries who found themselves at different times among the Mansi and did not set themselves the task of a special study of the Mansi language. Despite this, dictionaries provide valuable material that allows you to study the Mansi language from the perspective of historical linguistics. For example, it turned out that some dictionaries of P. S. Pallas (XVIII century), currently stored in the A. M. Sjogren archive in St. Petersburg, contain records of previously undocumented and undescribed Mansi dialects. Now these materials have been digitized and are gradually being introduced into scientific circulation. The first results of their study already show that the archival data of the Pallas dictionaries significantly complement the existing knowledge about the Mansi dialects. For example, it became known that the Mansi dialects of the XVIII century do not quite fit into the existing dialect classification (see [Normanskaya, Koshelyuk 2020], [Normanskaya 2020]).

## **2 Formation of scientific development of the Mansi language**

The Mansi language has been the subject of linguistic research since the middle of the XIX century. The starting point is considered to be the expeditions of Finnish and Hungarian scientists. The first of them was Antal Reguli (1819-1858), a Hungarian linguist and ethnographer who lived among the Mansi for more than a year and managed to collect a rich linguistic and ethnographic material. The expedition took place in 1843-1845 and covered the territory from Perm to the shores of the Kara Sea [Raspopov 2018]. The main points of the expedition were the following cities and settlements: Perm, Solikamsk, Usolye, Irbit, Tobolsk, Verkhny Pelym, Berezovo (Fig. 1).



*Fig. 1. Map of the Mansi expedition of A. Reguly (1843-1845)*

In early October, Reguly left Moscow for the Urals, by mid-November he reached Perm and Solikamsk, from where he went along the historical Verkhoturuskaya road along the eastern slope of the Ural Mountains to the Sosva River, near the village of Vsevolod-Bogatyrskoye, where he lived among the Mansi for about three months. Then the route of the scientist's trip ran to the south, through the cities of Verkhoturje, Irbit and Tobolsk. From March to June 1844, he explored the western Mansi, staying in the village of Pelym. At the beginning of summer, after climbing up the Pelym River to its upper reaches and crossing the Tapsui River, Antal Reguly arrived in Northern Sosva. By mid-August, the researcher arrived in the village of Shchekuryinsky, where he found speakers of the Lyapinsky dialect of the Mansi language. By the end of September, on reindeer sleds, he managed to cross the Arctic Circle and arrived in the village of Obdorsk (now Salekhard). By the end of October, Reguly reached the northern limits of the Ural Mountains, reaching the coast of the Kara Sea at the Yugorsky Shar Strait. Having reached the northernmost point, the scientist moved along the Latin

Passage to the south of the country. His path ran along the Ob River, through the village of Muzhi, to the Mansi habitat – the city of Berezovo. Here Antal Reguly stayed until the beginning of March 1845, when, feeling very unwell, he decided to complete the expedition and at the end of August, through Yekaterinburg, returned to St. Petersburg [Koshelyuk 2020: 749-750].

As a result of the expedition, the scientist managed to collect information about the way of life, everyday life, folklore, the Mansi (and Khanty) language. At the request of the Russian Geographical Society, A. Reguly also compiled a detailed map of the Urals and its mountain ranges, according to the places of settlement of Mansi, which he managed to visit. As noted by N. P. Arkhipova and E. V. Yastrebov, "the main value of the map was that geographical objects on it had Mansi names, which for the most part have survived to the present day (especially in the names of mountains)... For the first time, the ethnic boundaries of the settlement of the indigenous inhabitants of the Urals – Voguls, Ostyaks, Samoyeds and Zyryans were drawn on it. Comparison of the Reguli map with modern ethnographic maps shows that these boundaries were shown very accurately" [Arkhipova, Yastrebov 1990]. The map was published in St. Petersburg in 1846 (Fig. 2).

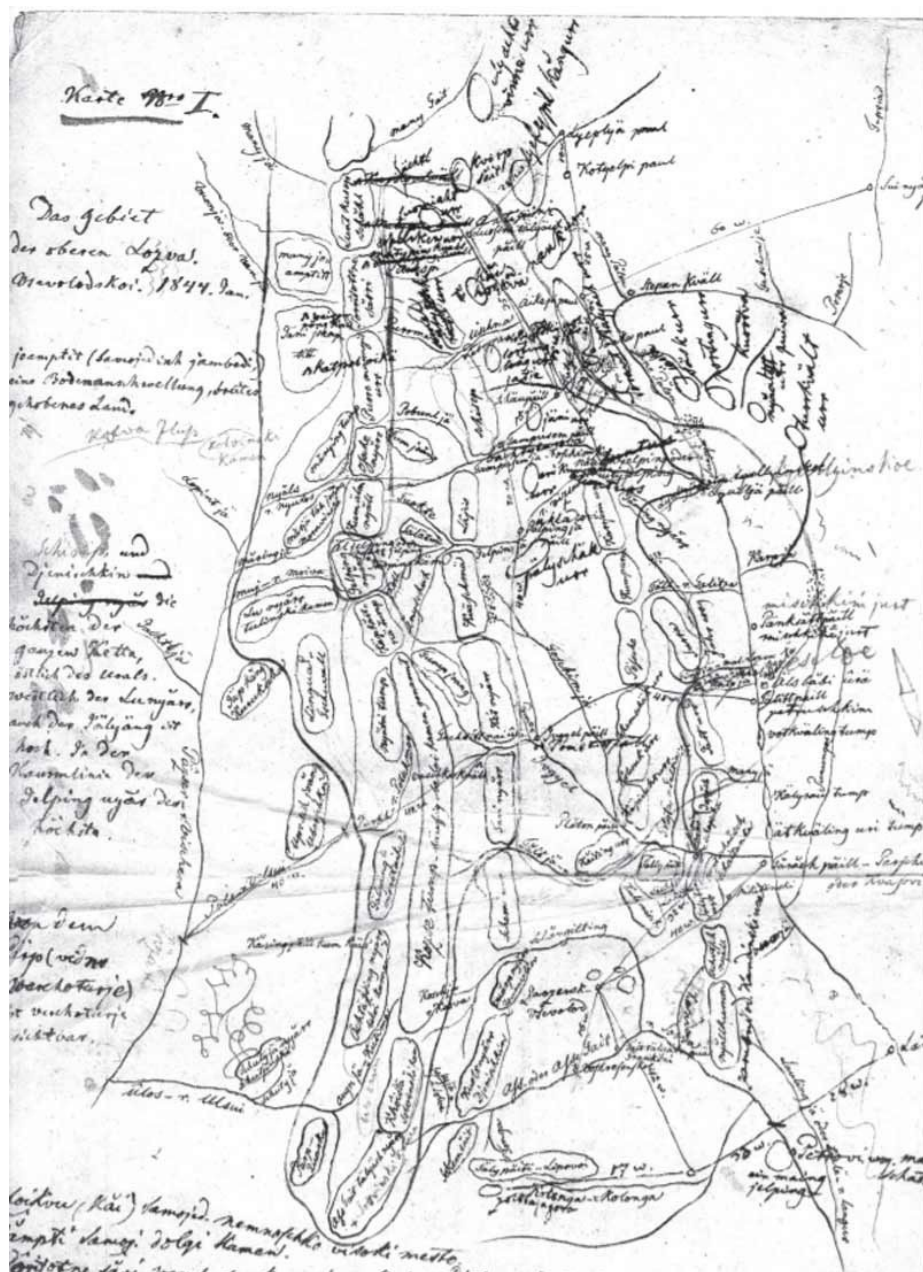


Fig. 2. Ethnographic and geographical map of the Northern Urals, compiled by A. Reguly during the expedition of 1843-1845

Based on the material collected during the trip, Antal Reguly was able to prove for the first time the genetic connection of the Finno-Ugric languages. He processed the material brought from the Urals throughout his life and prepared a sketch of a large research work – "Vogul life and its inhabitants". During his lifetime, A. Reguly did not have time to publish his work, it was completed by other Hungarian researchers – P. Hunfalvy and F. Torenets. The book was published in 1864 in Budapest [Hunfalvy 1864].

In the second half of the XIX century, several linguistic and ethnographic expeditions on the territory of Russia were conducted by the Finnish researcher August Ahlqvist. In different years (1854-1859, 1877-1880), in order to study the language and culture of the aborigines, he visited many settlements in central and western Siberia, including the Ob north – the region of Mansi residence. The result of the study was the creation of the first description of the grammatical structure of several Mansi dialects, mainly Konda dialect [Ahlqvist 1890; 1891; 1894]. Ahlqvist also compiled a dictionary combined from different Mansi dialects [Monitoring 2010-2019].

At the end of the XIX century, in order to collect additional linguistic and ethnographic data, the route of the Antal Reguli expedition was repeated by Hungarian scientists Jozsef Papay and Bernat Munkaci.

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