

# **The handwritten heritage of Pápay József in Debrecen**

## **THESIS**

### **1.1. Preliminaries**

Pápay József (1873–1931) took part in Zichy Jenő's third Asian expedition between 1897 and 1899. During his research expedition, with heroic work, he managed to decode the Ostyak chant of heroes recorded by Reguly Antal on the winter of 1844. Besides all this, he also collected a very rich linguistic and ethnographic material on the scene as well. Pápay published books between 1905 and 1911 from the decoded Reguly-texts, and his own collections. Throughout the rest of his life, he has not had any of his Ostyak material published, even though he had been working on it endlessly.

Pápay worked from 1908 until his unexpected death in 1931 in Debrecen: he taught in the Academy of Sciences of the Calvinist College, and from 1914 to 1931 he became the first professor of the faculty of Hungarian and Finno-Ugrian Studies on the Tisza István University (later Kossuth Lajos University of Sciences, its present name is University of Debrecen).

The Hungarian Academy of Sciences purchased his heritage after his death which had been deemed proper enough to be published, and the material considered less valuable had been transported into the library of the Debrecen Calvinist College due to the wish of the Pápay family. When it came to the Pápay heritage, the scientists thought mostly about the texts collected by Reguly, and had encouraged the publication of these works. The publication started in 1944, and finished in 1965. The publication of Pápay's own, rich collection had begun in 1972, and ended only in 1988. This way, most of the academic Ostyak heritage could become a public treasure. A less glamorous destiny awaited the handwritten heritage of Debrecen, as most of the material considered improper for publication remained here. This heritage is undoubtedly less valuable than the academic one, but there are also significant records, outlines, and fragmented paragraphs in this one as well. There has been a relatively small amount of material published from the Debrecen heritage (see Literature), even though the scientist warned the publicity many times about the value this heritage could contain.

### **1.2. Purpose of discussion**

I have established a primary goal of thoroughly examining the Debrecen heritage, and to publish the material, which is ready to be published either in part or in whole.

Throughout the precedent presentations of the material, I could count on a great amount of historic surplus. I wished to focus on the so far less well known details of the Zichy-expedition by means of journals and correspondence. I also wished to point out the details of Pápay's research expedition, his connections with fellow Hungarian and foreign scientists, his position in the scientific environment, and his role in the education of the city of Debrecen. I have considered the evaluation of so far unknown, handwritten works, many of which are especially focused on the Ostyak language as my task as well. The analysis of the heritage made the more delicate description of Pápay's importance possible.

### **1.3. About the utilized methods**

The heterogeneous state of the handwritten material offered different processing methods. The journal entries follow each other in chronological order, consequently I have described the most important events of the expedition by means of these. I have correlated these data concerning places and persons with Pápay's great amount of correspondence, and the articles, reports of the contemporary press concerning this topic, and the critiques of contemporary scientists. The multiple-sided and impartial judgment of events has been made possible by means of the records of the other members of the expedition (Jankó János, Pósta Béla), and the journal entries of fellow Finnish scientists (Sirelius, Karjalainen).

I have compared the text of the journals with Pápay's published comments, as he has utilized one part of these comments without alteration in his works. In my thesis, I have put emphasis on the so far unmentioned details.

The outlines of Pápay's university lessons are especially valuable concerning the Ostyak language: as he was the one who knew the language and culture of the northern Ostyaks the best among the scientists of the turning of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. We also know from Pápay's published comments that he had been working on the grammar of the northern Ostyaks. The many times revised, reedited version of this work can be found in the Debrecen heritage. The work containing many examples gave opportunity for comparison with Ostyak grammar of later times, and the observation of the changes in the Obdorsian dialect.

His original records of the Ostyak collection, which were written down on the scene can only be accessed partially. The comparison of these with the final versions provided some amount of completion concerning Pápay's much-criticized linguistic encoding methods.

During the course of my work, I have constantly utilized the records (ÉOM XLI-XLVII) edited by Fazekas Jenő, with great precision nonetheless, however the list created by him needed completion at some points; I have separately considered the texts and records not mentioned in this list.

#### **1.4. The buildup of the thesis**

In the first, largest part of my thesis, science-historic chapters created with the help of the material of the heritage follow each other, and in the second part, I have given account of so far unpublished linguistic, ethnographic and literary writings from Pápay's heritage. Due to the variety of the processed material, there is a sort of eclectic blend to my work, and is situated on the boundary of multiple sciences (science-history, linguistics). All of the material however is bound together by the fact, that it is all about the Debrecen Pápay-heritage, and the purpose of the dissertation is exactly the presentation of this.

### **2. Biographic, science-historic correlations**

#### **2. 1. The stimulation**

Pápay's so far published biographic details can be completed by many new details by using the journals and correspondence. From these sources, we can find out, that the talented, but poor student has found sponsors throughout his studies at the school of Pápa. It also proved to be a fact, that throughout his university studies, he has carried out a significant amount of research concerning Obi-Ugrian languages, and he has had the strong determination to decode Reguly's Ostyak collections given once the chance. Among his professors, he has been especially sponsored by Simonyi Zsigmond, who has published his smaller articles in the magazine "Magyar Nyelvőr" and later on, he recommended Pápay's participation in the Zichy-expedition, and he has also ensured the copying of the Reguly-texts and forwarding them to Siberia.

#### **2.2. The III. Zichy-expedition**

The chance presented itself unexpectedly and by chance, that Pápay could get into the squad of Zichy Jenő's third Asian expedition. Throughout this, he had traveled to St. Petersburg in the December of 1897, to carry out the necessary pre-studies. By this time, there had been two other colleagues of his staying in St. Petersburg, namely Jankó János ethnographer, and Pósta Béla archeologist. Pápay's correspondence and journals contain a great amount of details concerning the circumstances of the expedition. I am going to give account of these completed with other sources. It becomes clear from the heritage, that

Zichy was the supporter of the Hungarian-Turkish-Tatar-Bashkir ancestry, and had illusive plans about finding his own ancestry, and that of the Hungarian people. These hypotheses were welcomed by the non-expert Hungarian publicity. Among the Hungarian scientists, there were only a few (Herman Ottó, Munkácsi Bernát) who has openly criticized the work of the duke. It was also clear, that Pápay was going to carry out linguistic work, it was however uncertain for a great deal of time, whether he would manage to get a chance to travel to the Ostyaks. We can also find quotations, that Pápay, long before his journey, in the spring of 1897 mentioned his travel to the Ostyaks to the duke. The young linguist had hoped to get the rich duke to sponsor him. Even during his stay in St. Petersburg, it became clear that there have been contrasts forming between the two other members, Jankó and Pósta, which have only become more serious later on, especially due to the uncertainties of the program. It was so, that the scientist headed off to carry out their pre-studies without knowing Zichy's exact conceptions, as the duke himself has adjusted his grand plans before the journey and during the expedition as well. The St. Petersburg studies of Pápay had been followed by a short stay in Finland (1898. from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> of March), and afterward he headed to Tbilisi (Tiflis). This is where Jankó, Pósta and Pápay met the duke and his escort, who had also been traveling to this location. The contrasts have reached their climax at this point. It took great debates to reach an agreement concerning independent research expeditions and their funding. The quarrel has reached a point, where Jankó and Pósta were actually considering leaving the expedition and heading back home. However, this was not to be, but the endless hours of debate took up much energy of the scientists. It was firstly the Ostyak journey they had managed to fight out. Consequently, it was Pápay who first broke free from the expedition.

### **2.3. Pápay's indepent research journey**

Pápay headed off for his journey on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April, 1898, after some weeks of pre-studies in Casan, after which he had carried out some amount of Chuwash language studies. He reached Tobolsk on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June. There had been of Finnish linguist, namely Karjalainen staying here, with whom he has gathered information in the rich library o the local museum. Pápay took off from here, and headed Northwards, and he reached Obdorsk in the middle of August. The first segment of his Ostyak journey is especially important from the point of view of his ethnographic collections. He took excursions from Obdorsk to the winter colonies of the northern Ostyaks. Our language-relatives have shortly accepted him, but he had still had a significant amount of tume to wait for an information provider, who had possessed the ancient chant of the heroes. For a

long time (until the April of 1899) he had an Ostyak escort, and information provider, called Pjotr Muchrin, who Pápay has simply named Peter in his journal. Pápay also got acquainted with the members of the orthodox mission staying in the colony, who taught the Ostyak and Samoyedic children to read and write. The copy of the Reguly-chant of heroes only reached Pápay in the middle of January. This was when with the help of an Ostyak called Mikolka, he managed to comprehend the text of the four chants of heroes through endless hours of tough work. The singing skills of Mikolka, and his strong memory enchanted Pápay, as his information provider could tell the tales, and sing the chants of neighboring peoples as well. Due to the fierce work, Pápay began to suffer from headaches and sicknesses. He had left his friends from Obdorsk at the end of March, and headed south. He wrote his last entry about his journey on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, but we know from later publications, that this last period spent on Ostyak soil proved to be a very flourishing one concerning the collection. His new information provider, Torikoptin helped Pápay to decode the parts of the Reguly-chants of heroes so far embedded in shadow, and he managed to record the customs and beliefs surrounding the Ostyak bear-cult with the help of an Ostyak named Mikiskin. Later on, with the help of Vogulka, an Ostyak from the mainland, he managed to translate the example words of Munkácsi's work entitled *Vogoule dialects*. Even though it had been Pápay's plan to observe the Nizjamic dialect, and – because of Zichy's wish – to collect Bahskir material, he had felt the traits of physical and mental fatigue. This is why he had given up his planned journeys, and traveled home. He arrived in Budapest on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, 1899.

#### **2.4. Reception and admiration**

The results of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Zichy-expedition brought about tremendous admiration. Even the status of the duke had changed, as he had surrendered to the wishes of the scientists (Jankó, Pósta and Pápay), and he was willing to alter his original ideas, so, as such, the observers of the expedition could come home with glorious results. Pápay himself had also been honored after his return. The immediate popularity and the social obligations that came along with it have proved to be an obstacle in his urgent work: the decoding of the Reguly-chants of heroes left home, and the preparation of the presentation in the Academy. This presentation took place in the spring of 1900. Zichy published on part of the results of the research journeys in 1905. Pápay worked in the library of the Academy from 1901 to 1908. Meanwhile, he has acquired the membership of numerous scientific societies, and he has obtained the associateship of the Academy.

## **2.5. The Debrecen era**

Pápay lived in Debrecen from 1908 to his death of 1931, excluding the summer brakes. First, he taught on the Academy of Sciences of the Calvinist College, and afterwards, in 1914, he became the first professor of the faculty of Hungarian and Finno-Ugrian studies of the then forming university. The teaching brought about many responsibilities, as according to the tradition, in humane studies, it was only the professor who held the lectures and seminars, sometimes even for two grade levels at the same time, and it was also him who had to carry out the examinations. It wasn't until 1928 that an assistant without salary had begun working for Pápay, who has not participated in the teaching, however. We know from his handwritten outlines, that Pápay prepared very thoroughly for his lectures, and tried to make them as interesting as possible (for example the outline of Hungarian sentence-grammar).

At the same time, however, he had begun to publish less and less, like as if his impulse had immediately disappeared after 1914. His fellow scientists encouraged him in their correspondence to publish his collection and studies. From his Ostyak collection, he had not published anything after 1911. The reasons for this silence have been searched in the negative critiques concerning his phonetics, but the bad economic circumstances of the period between the two world wars could also have played a tremendous role in this, as well as the financial crisis of the Academy, and his own teaching work, formal duties and personal problems. There is, however, a precise, constantly working teacher behind the not too flourishing scientist. He has made many of his students like linguistics, which could seem a little impersonal sometimes. This is confirmed by the doctoral works controlled by Pápay, the thesis written very precisely, and the letters kept from the students. In his direct surroundings, he was respected by his colleagues and employees. Pápay had not only stood in vivid correspondence with several Hungarian scientists, but with numerous Finnish ones as well, who have even visited him at his Debrecen and Igmand home (Karjalainen, Wichmann, Passonen).

## **3. Linguistic, ethnographic, and literary writings in the Debrecen heritage**

### **3.1. Northern Ostyak grammar and dictionary; additions to the Ostyak language**

We can find the series of studies entitled *The Northern Ostyak language* in his Debrecen heritage (under the number of R 1681/XVII.).

The notes mentioned at this point were obviously not created with the sole purpose of serving the goals of the university teaching, but it was also the pre-work of a work which was to be published.

The outline reflects long years of work. The prepared parts support the ideas of the author by means of rich Ostyak linguistic material. This work could have been a pioneer, as it could have been the first scientifically written Ostyak Grammar university textbook. However, this was not to be unfortunately.

The author introduces the place of living of the Ostyaks, their demographic conditions, and afterwards he is concerned with the phonetic differences which separate the different dialects from each other.

After the few pages of writing about his research concerning the Ostyaks, Pápay moves onto the description of the system of vowels and consonants, the symbols of sounds, and his comments concerning time intervals and verbal stresses (quoting the work of Karjalainen, entitled *Zur ostjakischen Lautgeschichte* {1904}).

He proves the fact that the *-n* suffix plays an important role in the northern dialects, which are not rich of cases, by means of a large range of examples. He lists thirteen adverbial phrases to prove this. This suffix has kept its many functions up to the present day, as it is proven by the very latest Obdorskian grammar (Nyikolajeva 1995: 82-83).

The functions of the *-* translatus ending are also introduced: The translatus suffix has however disappeared from the northern and southern dialects except for the Obdorskian. The most recent Obdorskian grammar edited by Nyikolajeva (1995:83, 1999:13) also prove the continuity of the suffix, and the assimilation of the previous consonants, to which Pápay has also referred.

In the formation of numerals, Pápay also points out rare, and interesting data:

91 *s tt - d rt ʉnd m*

92 *s tt - d ʉ l ʉnd m*

93 *s tt - d l b t ʉnd m...* (R 1681/XVII 94).

We can find data similar to this unique way of numeral formation in the records of Rosljakov and Bartienv. (Honti 1982: 36/293). One of the characteristics of this phrase is, that they name the numbers between 90 and 100 without using the units: “to be one hundred, we need nine more”, or “to be one hundred, we need two more”. It seems as though such rare word formation has not remained in the contemporary Obdorskian dialect, at least we have not found such entries in the latest Obdorskian grammar (Nyikolajeva 1995). Pápay also quotes interesting details about the formation of fragments: *k m t p l k 'one and a half'*. The utilization of the work *pel k 'half'* used to be a characteristic throughout the whole Ostyak language territory; the Obdorskian dialect of today however expresses the same function by means of different elements (Nyikolajeva 1995: 92).

The notes recorded about objective conjugation are also very interesting: There are two objectively conjugated forms in each objectively conjugated line in the first number first and second person: *s kl m v. s kl m*, and *s kl n v. s kl n*. In the mentioned first number first and second personal verbal forms in the Northern Ostyak dialect according to records of later times, the reduced consonant form is of subjective conjugation, and the whole word with the consonant is the one with the objective conjugation. Pápay's records are in contradiction with these. One of the reasons of this could be, the Pápay has not always felt the difference between the two sounds. This opinion has also been confirmed by Karjalainen in his critiques (1906: 26), and by Steinitz later on (1964: 70-71). Pápay, however mentioned the same examples, in the exact same way (297-298) in a study published in 1913 about Ostyak subjective conjugation (FUF 13: 296-303), and he has explained the existence of parallel verbal forms with the mixing of subjective and objective conjugation (uo. 300).

The Obdorskian dialect has a special trait: the separate suffix referring to multiple subject. Even though Pápay thought this had been an archaism, it was still used in everyday language throughout Steinitz's collection (uo. 78), and the most recent collections also confirm their existence (Nyikolejeva 1995: 138–141).

The syllables of the infinitive according to Pápay's records are: *-t* , *-d* , *-d* . Nowadays, the *-ti* ending is used in the Sobian, the *-ta* in the Polujian dialect (Nyikolajeva 1995: 142).

Afterwards, there are Ostyak texts (161–185) and dictionary (186–197) in one piece, without translation. Pápay mentioned even back in his very first work entitled *Northern Ostyak Language studies* that he intended to publish a small grammar outline and a dictionary, which could provide help to comprehend different texts (NyK 1906: 347). This handwritten dictionary contains the words of seven texts in the order of their appearance frequency. Among these texts three are found in the work entitled *Northern Ostyak Language Studies* (1910: 1–3; 3–7; 166–169), one in the work called *Northern-Ostyak Bear-chants* (1934: 117–122), and all the others in the volumes of *Bibliotheca Pápayensia* (BiblPáp V: 52–61; 236–245; BiblPáp VI: 110–116). The dictionary however was first published in the publication of the person writing the thesis (FUD 11: 113–126). Throughout the comparison of the tales published in the work entitled *Northern Ostyak Bear-tales* with the dictionary that remained from the handwritten notes, that the style of the latter is slightly complicated, in this one Pápay has used many different side-signs. This could be, because the encryption of the heritage is much more complicated than that



of those texts, which were published throughout Pápay's lifetime (Fazekas 1934: XLVII; Vértés 1991: 49).

In his dictionary, Pápay, besides giving the simple meaning of characteristic expressions and phrases, he gives the parts of the expressions separate from each other as well: *t l a* (animal with wings) bird, *k r - a* moose (animal with feet) etc.

The mentioned texts can be found in the part following the dictionary (198–216), and there are also Ostyak texts, of which we can also read the Hungarian translations. All of them had been transferred into the library of the Academy in unaltered form, and as such into the volumes of *Bibliotheca Pápayensis* (1988–1998). Their exact places of origin can be found in the work.

According to the outlines of the lectures, a very sympathetic way of presentation emerges. Pápay did not only want to get his students to know the structure, phonetics, morphology of the relative language, he did not only teach linguistics, he also tried to get his students to know the religion, customs, and the everyday lives of the people speaking the language.

There is a notebook one can find in the Debrecen Pápay-heritage (R 1672), which is an Ostyak grammar book in Pápay's copy, entitled: *Bartenev's (Rosljakov's ?) Ostyak Grammar (obdorszki dialect)*. Pápay copied the work during his stay in Siberia. Honti László, during his 1975/76 stay in Leningrad found the same copy of the exact same grammar book in the Library of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. I. N. Rosljakov was born in Obdorsk, was of Zurjenic origin, spoke Ostyak quite well. He helped Beatenov edit his grammar book, who was sent to exile to Obdorsk for a few years.

We can regard this grammar book as a contrastive Russian-ostyak grammar, because the authors were looking for the equivalents of Russian phonetics, grammar system and morphologic categories: this is what leads to their mistakes. Despite of the work's mistakes, its linguistic value is undoubted.

Pápay recorded unique names of months in one of his journals (R 1674/IV. 25<sup>th</sup> of July 1898). The Obi-Ugrian, and other Siberian peoples have measured time according to the alterations of the moon. This resulted in the year of 13 months. For naming the seasons, they have used the phenomena of the direct environment (for example the melting of snow, floating of ice, birth of fish, flood, appearance of the eagles, etc.) and the works related to the seasons. There were many names to snow even among those speaking the same dialect, depending on what was considered an important activity in the life of the group (deer-husbandry, fishing, hunting, etc). Pápay's data complete the previously

published studies (of Csepregi 1978, 1979; Snellman 2001) concerning the system of names of the known time measurement.

### **3.2. Philological comments, memorial speeches, literary outline**

I have considered some of Pápay's works found in his handwritten heritage to be mentioned separately as well, which I have given account of in my thesis. Among these, you will find the notes entitled *Notes to Reguly's one chant of heroes*. This work is related to one of the texts (2-165) of the book entitled *Ostyak chant of heroes* (Published by Zsirai Miklós in 1944), and contains details about recording the chant of heroes and details by Reguly.

There is one outline, which has remained among the handwritten notes, and which is all about the naming of the Ostyaks (R 1674/I/18), which might have been intended to be written as an answer to the letter of Pápay to Melich dated as of 10<sup>th</sup> of January, 1917 (R 1670/IV). One version of the collection of Ostyak names has also appeared as part of the Budapest heritage (BiblPáp VI: 214–238), however, the notes, which you will find in my thesis could give a completion to this work as well.

There is a note among the notes of Pápay's lectures, a memorial speech about Simonyi Zsigmond, which might have been written right after the death of the professor (1919). He tries to avoid mentioning personal bonds, however, behind the seeming formality, there is the pain of remembrance, as he has received a tremendous amount of encouragement and help from his "dear master" as a student and as a scientist and professor as well. The text can be read in an unaltered state in the thesis. I am also giving account of the memorial speech about Budenz (R 1670/V/6), which might have been read out loud on a memorial dinner in Budapest commemorating Budenz.

Pápay's interest in literature is proved among others by the paragraph about Bogáti Fazakas Miklós's Psalm-translations (R 1680/III/a). According to Pápay, these translations have just as high an artistic merit, as those of Szenci Molnár Albert, and one more of its advantages is that Bogáti has translated these psalms into the form of Hungarian folksongs and historian chants. .

### **4. Summary**

Pápay was the one to decode Reguly's Ostyak texts, and this, all by itself is a tremendous deed. His own collections however also exceed that of his ancestor in size, however this was not honored as it should have been by the scientific publicity. Some of the main reasons of this were the negative critiques he had received for his phonetics,

which partially were unjust, and the decline of publication afterwards. He has worsened the phonetic precision of his works by using the encryption method he was forced to use by the fellow scientists of his era. However his records, when regarded strictly from a linguistic and folk literary point of view are also really valuable. On the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was only Pápay alone, who was collecting a big amount of Northern-Ostyak material. In later times (in the 1930's) it was Steinitz who had the chance to carry out research in this territory, however the language of texts recorded by him were much different than that of the archaic chants of heroes, and tales

As such, the works of Pápay have contributed greatly for Ostyak people to get to know their own folk poetry and traditions better, as these chants have conserved a long gone state of language. Pápay's Ostyak grammar book could have proven to be a pioneer in his era, this is why it is worthwhile to examine the outline of the planned grammar book. It was the – sometimes too deep – precision of the author that prevented this work from being ready to be published. This is why Pápay's scientific status was much worse than he would have deserved based upon his real works (he has not published anything for a long time). Unfortunately, he also did not publish a Chuwash etymology, which could have brought him the success he had deserved.

Getting to know the handwritten material, and as such Pápay's whole load of works, brings us closer to judge his scientific activity more realistically, and to properly place him according to his importance into Finno-Ugrian language studies. Besides all this, the handwritten material – as I have mentioned before – is such a science-historic, geographic, Ostyak linguistic, and ethnographic value, which deserve attention nonetheless.