

**Twenty-fifth session  
Nairobi, 5 – 12 May 2009**

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**Item 10 of the provisional agenda**

**Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers**

**Onomastic Research within a Project on Historical Meaning Sites.  
The Research Program “HiMAT” in Austrian Tyrol \***

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## **Abstract**

Starting in March 2007 the University of Innsbruck (Austria) conducts the special research program „HiMAT – History of Mining Activities in Tyrol and Adjacent Areas. Impact on Environment and Human Societies“ (sponsor: Austrian Science Fund [FWF]). In the next ten years the project aims at an interdisciplinary approach by combining natural sciences and humanities – the former represented by mineralogy, petrology, archaeometallurgy, archaeobotanics, dendrochronology, zoology and geodesy, the latter by archaeology, history, ethnology and linguistics.

One of the project parts is carried out by the Institute of Germanistics and the Linguistic Section of the Institute of Languages and Literatures. „Onomastics in Mining“ (project number F 3103), as it is called, adds to the project by collecting and interpreting names such as microtoponyms, vulgo and family names on a synchronic and diachronic basis. This includes interviews with local informants, inspection of mining sites and photographic documentation as well as archival research. In the first four years, the main area of interest (so-called „key area“) is Schwaz, a country town in North Tyrol (Austria), one of Europe’s most important mining places in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Times.

## Onomastic research within a project on historical mining sites. The research program “HiMAT” in Austrian Tyrol

Starting in March 2007 the University of Innsbruck (Austria) conducts the special research program „HiMAT – History of Mining Activities in Tyrol and Adjacent Areas.<sup>1</sup> Impact on Environment and Human Societies“ (sponsor: Austrian Science Fund [FWF]). In the next ten years the project aims at an interdisciplinary approach by combining natural sciences and humanities – the former represented by mineralogy, petrology, archaeometallurgy, archaeobotanics, dendrochronology, zoology and geodesy, the latter by archaeology, history, ethnology and linguistics.

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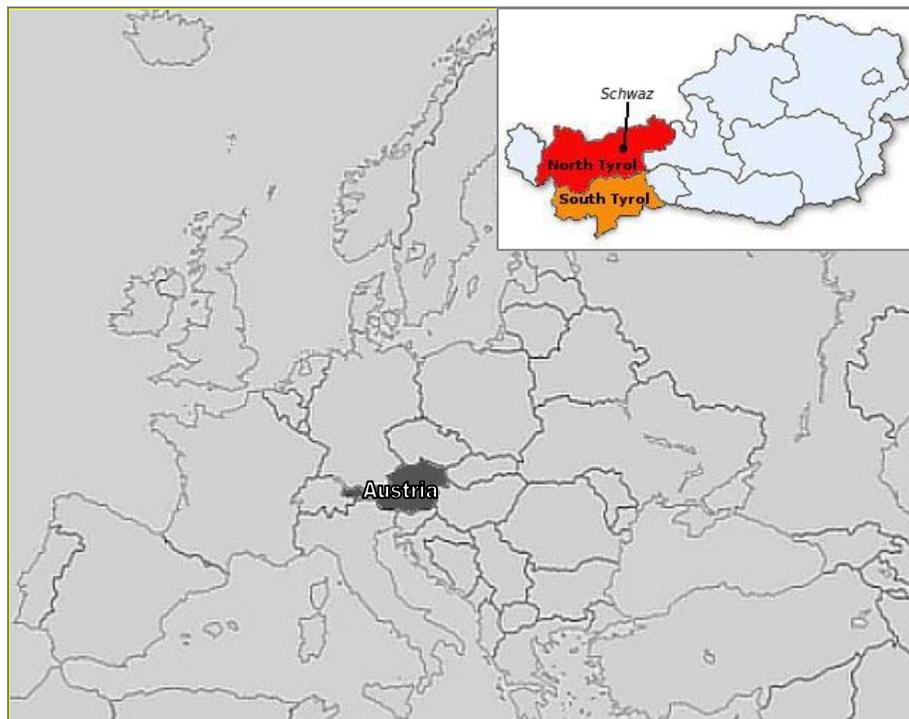


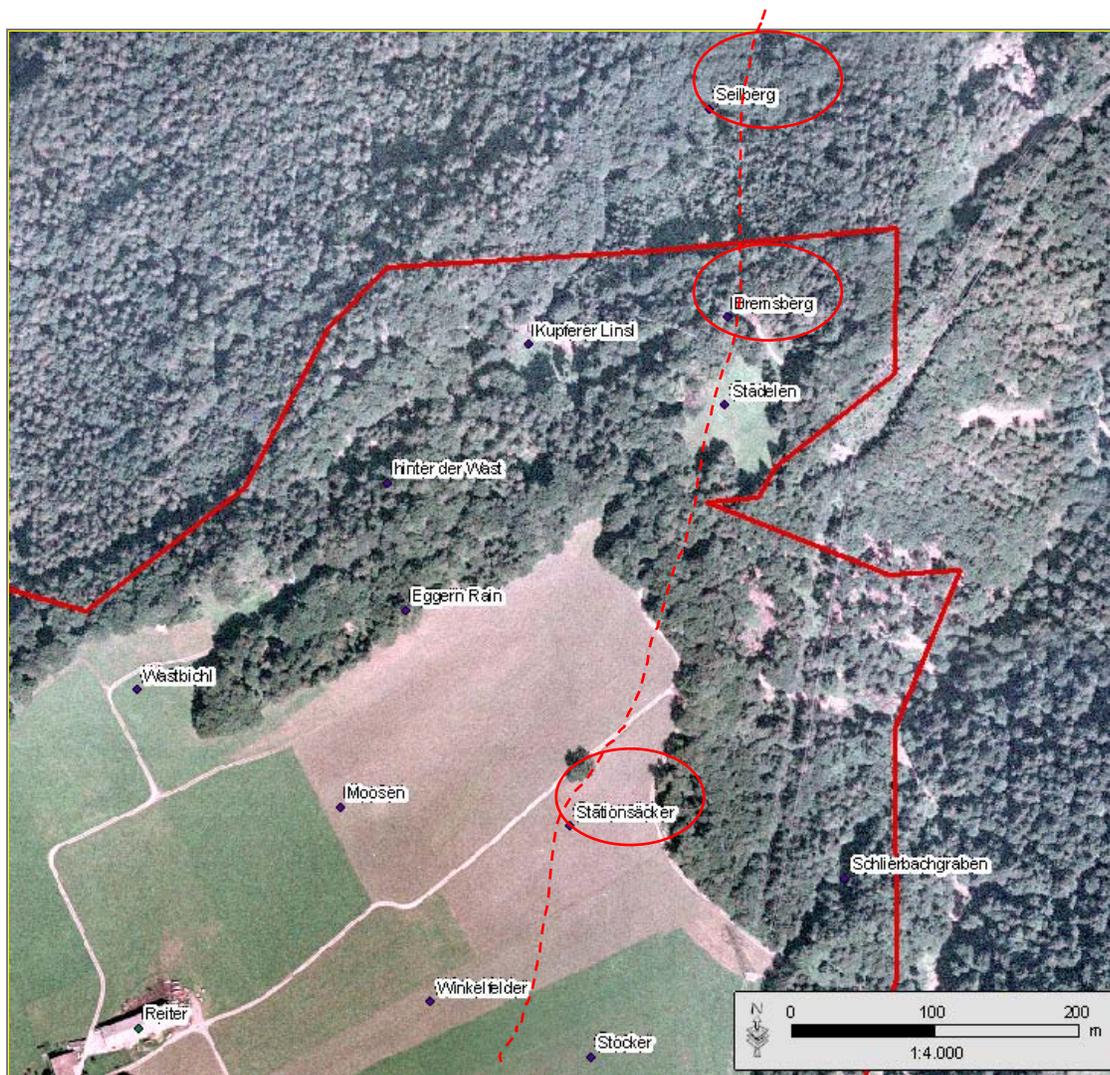
Fig. 1: The key area Schwaz in its geographical context

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<sup>1</sup> This report highlights only the most important features. For a more detailed description (in German) see <http://www.icosweb.net/>.

Due to the fact that some place names have a long tradition, they allow to reconstruct historical situations. They thus contribute to reveal former natural conditions such as vegetation, hydrology, geology or topography as well as former human activity such as mining, clearings, infrastructural measures (roads and paths, ore dressing and smelting sites, on-site-forges etc.) and industries closely connected to mining (charcoal burning, forges, transportation and shipping). In line with the general objectives of the project, also onomastic research focuses on ecological and socio-economic aspects.

As far as the **ecological aspect** is concerned, microtoponyms such as names of farmsteads and houses, pits and galleries deliver information on former mining sites and their infrastructure.

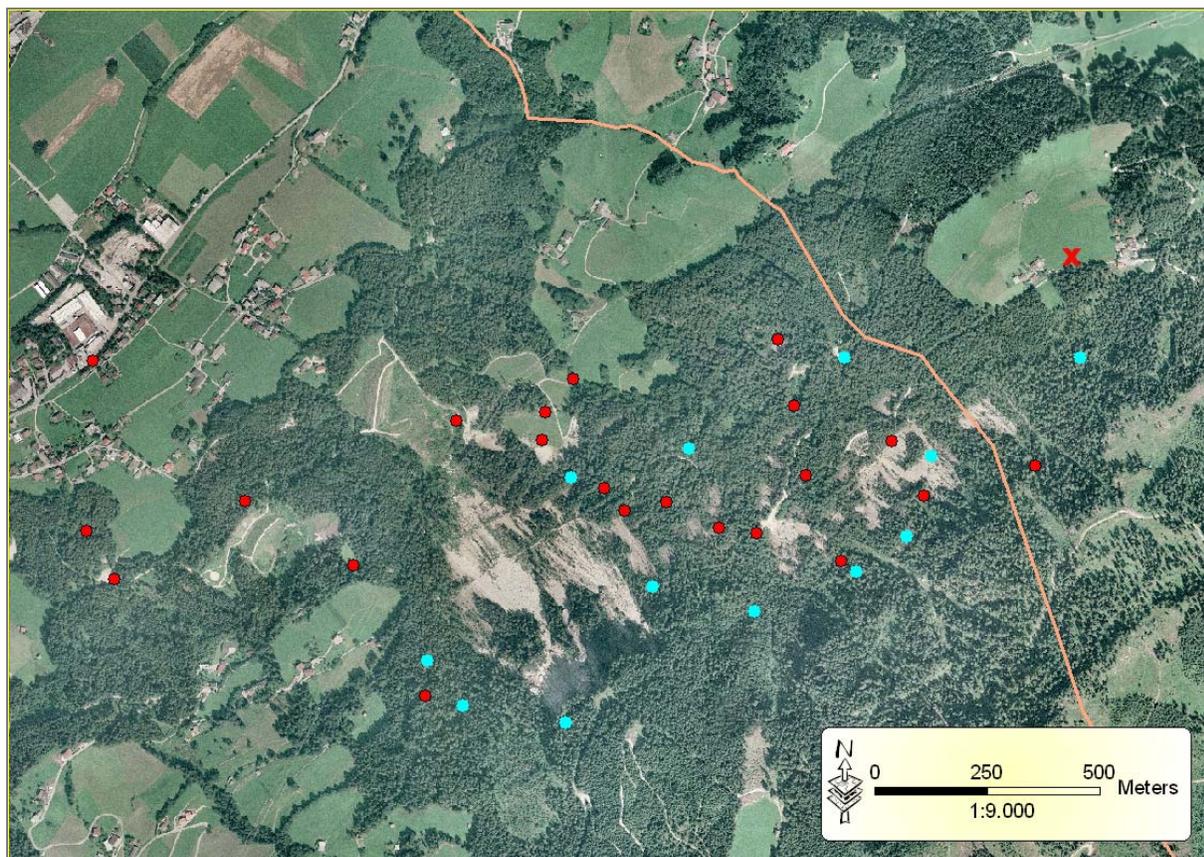


**Fig. 2: Microtoponyms help to trace former infrastructure in the village Gallzein (east of Schwaz) (Orthophoto © Land Tirol)**

As Fig. 2 shows, microtoponyms help to trace the course of a cable railway (from the 1880s) used for ore transport from a mining site to a dressing and smelting site.

Microtoponyms such as names for pits and galleries can even help to answer botanical questions, e.g. in supplementing a pollen profile compiled by the archaeobotanical project part. This profile

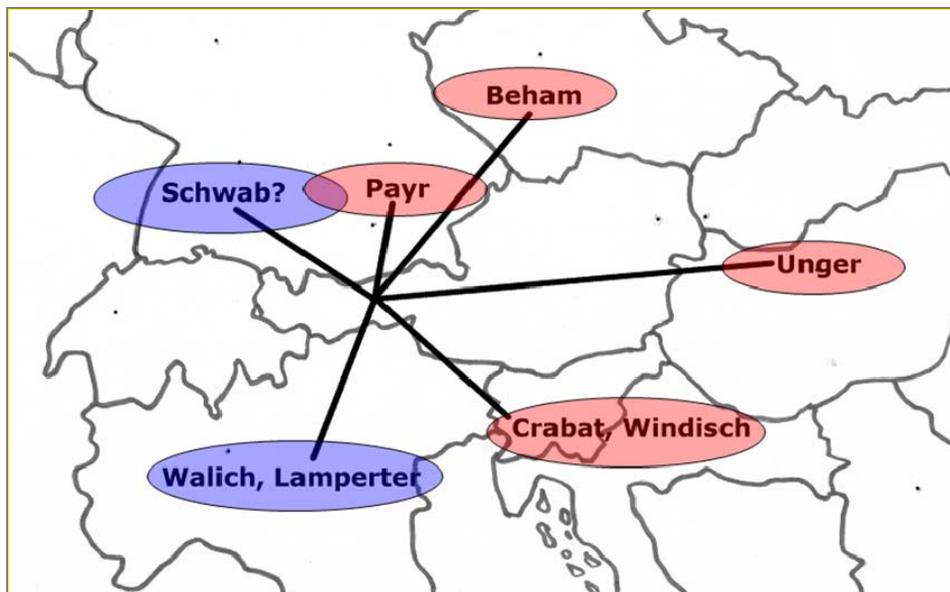
indicates – apart from the augmentation of lead and scandium in the sediment – increasing local fires from the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. With the help of pit names collected from a fief book from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century we can verify these findings: from the year 1464 onwards pit names with the supplement „im Brand“ (= by the burned site) occur in the surroundings of the place where the core sample was taken. A specification of these findings can be achieved by several microtoponyms nearby: the names „Schmiedböden“ (= smith grounds), „Schmiedboden-Stollen“ (= smith grounds pit) and „Schmiedplatzl-Stollen“ (= smith site pit) indicate former on-site forges where the battered miners’ tools were repaired and where local fires certainly played a role. The existence of such infrastructure can be traced back to the 1590s. From a description of all pits of the main mining region in Schwaz in operation at that time we know which pits ran forges.



**Fig. 3: Existing pits in 1590. Blue dots: pits with forges; red cross: place where the core sample was taken (Orthophoto © Land Tirol)**

Thus, onomastic research supports various disciplines in our research program.

The **socio-economic aspect** is mainly supported by by- and family names occurring from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Having analyzed the family names taken from a list of inhabitants from the year 1427 and from rent rolls from the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it is for example possible to define main sources of migration that made late medieval and early modern Schwaz a mining metropolis recruiting people especially from Central European countries.



**Fig. 4: Family names indicating the origin of the named person or its ancestors reveal migration patterns. Blue: first half 15<sup>th</sup> century, red: first half 16<sup>th</sup> century**

By- and family names reflect also the professional structure and help to clarify, when mining in Schwaz might have begun. Fig. 5 and 6 show the distribution of profession names with a possible connection to mining as occurring in a tax list from 1312 and the list of inhabitants from 1427 cited above.

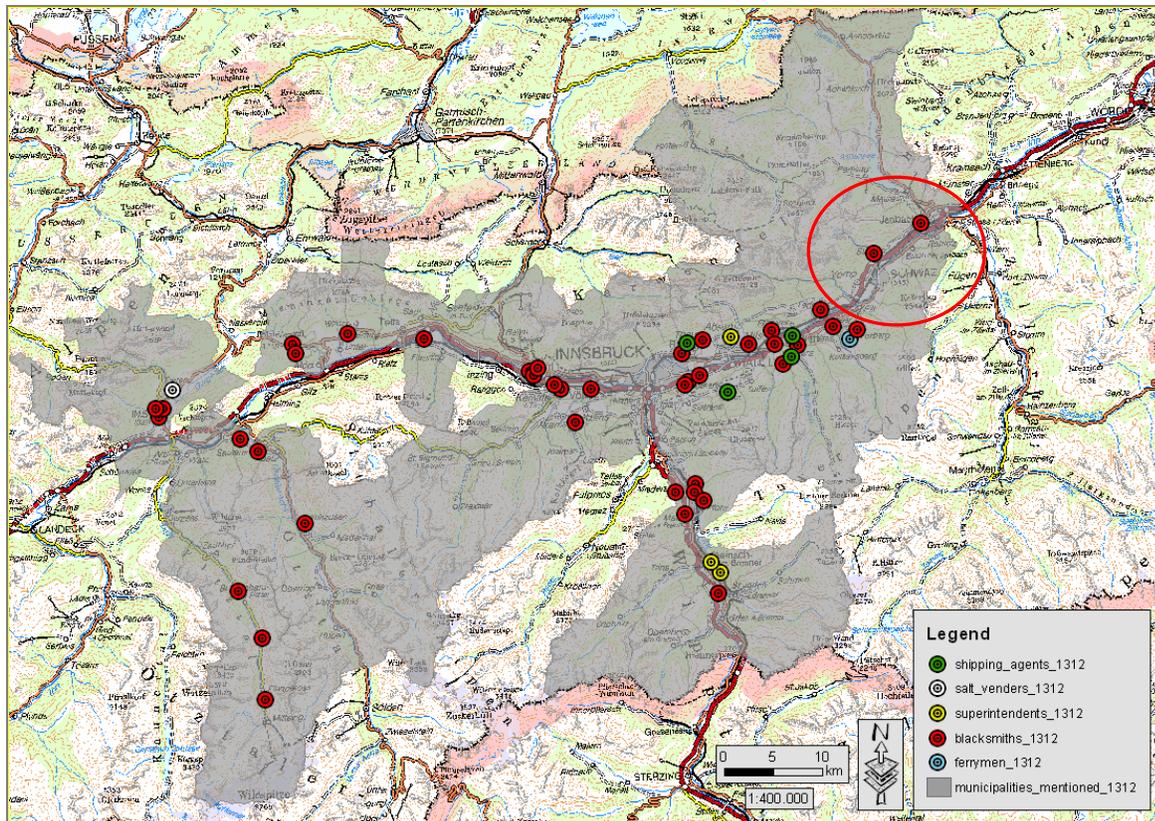
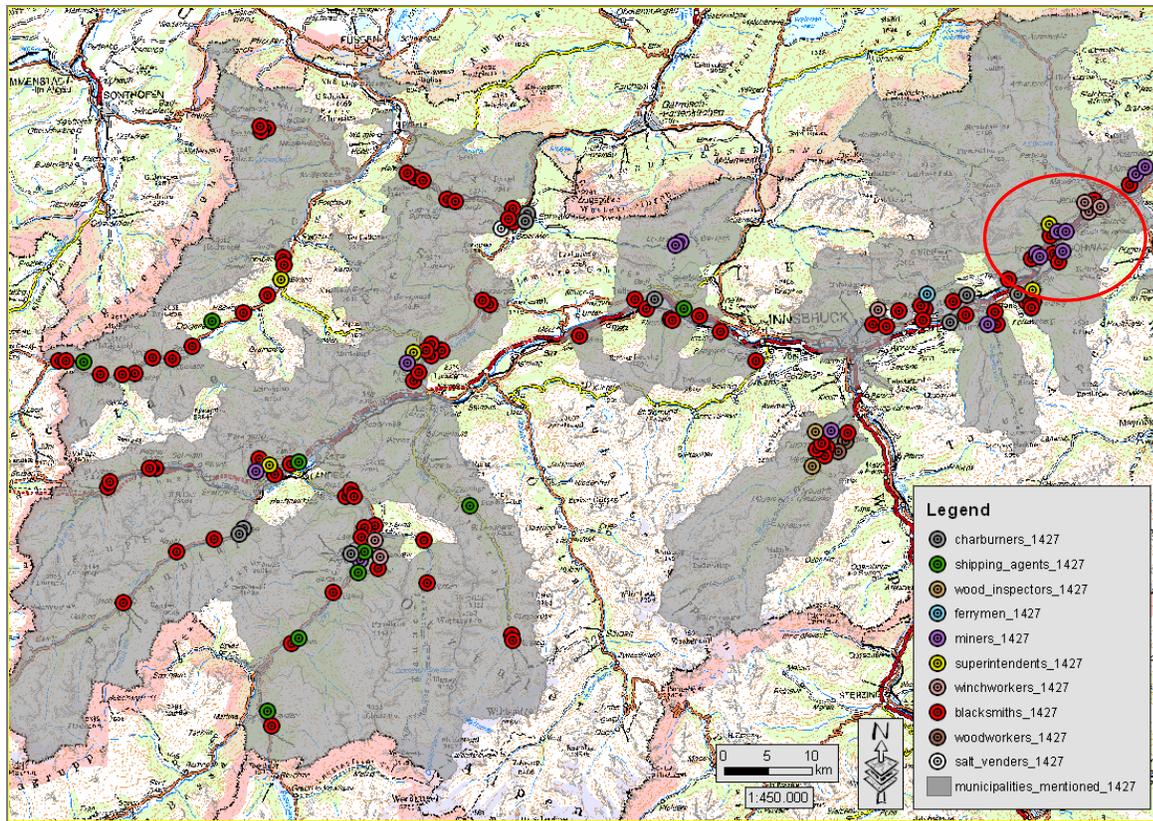


Fig. 5: Profession names in 1312 in Tyrol. Red circle: Schwaz region. (Topographic base © BEV 2007 [ÖK 500])



**Fig. 6: Profession names in 1427 in Tyrol. (Topographic base © BEV 2007 [ÖK 500])**

Comparison of profession names in the region around Schwaz for both years shows that mining did (if at all) not play an important role in the first decades of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, whereas a hundred years later this is quite different.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, onomastic research embedded into an interdisciplinary context constitutes an integrated part in approaching the central question of „HiMAT“: the interaction between man and environment on a mining background as well as the reasons for the rise and fall of mining in Tyrol and adjacent areas.

<sup>2</sup> For further information on this topic see: Kathrein, Yvonne (2009): Bei- und Familiennamengeographie im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert in Tirol. Ein onomastischer Beitrag zur Beginnphase des Schwazer Bergbaus. In: Anreiter, Peter (ed.): *Miscellanea Onomastica* (= Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Onomastik 7). Wien, in print.