
**Twenty-eight session
28 April – 2 May 2014**

Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda

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

**Research results from the onomastic project “WippDigital –
GIS-supported field name research in the Wipptal-area”***

Submitted by Austria

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Abstract

The onomastic research project “WippDigital - GIS supported field name research in the Wipptal-area” is a cooperation project of the Austrian Science Academy (Institute for Corpus Linguistics and Text Technology (ICLTT), research group DINAMLEX¹) and the University of Innsbruck (Institute for Language and Literature, department of Linguistics). It started in October 2009 and will be finished expectedly in August 2014.

The objectives of this onomastic research project are to collect the toponyms and field names (*Flurnamen*) of the Wipptal-area (Austria, Tyrol) and to analyze them with regard to their linguistic, historical and geographical content. There is also a strong focus on the question to what extent onomastics, especially field name research, can utilize the rapid developments in related disciplines, such as geoinformatics. A further aim of the project is to enhance data collection in quality and quantity by using new methods from these disciplines.

¹ Formerly Institute for Lexicography and Austrian Dialects and Names, Austrian Science Academy.

Remarkable research results from the onomastic project “WippDigital - GIS supported field name research in the Wipptal-area”

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This working paper concentrates on the advantages of geographical information systems as a support for onomastic research goals, especially in etymological work.

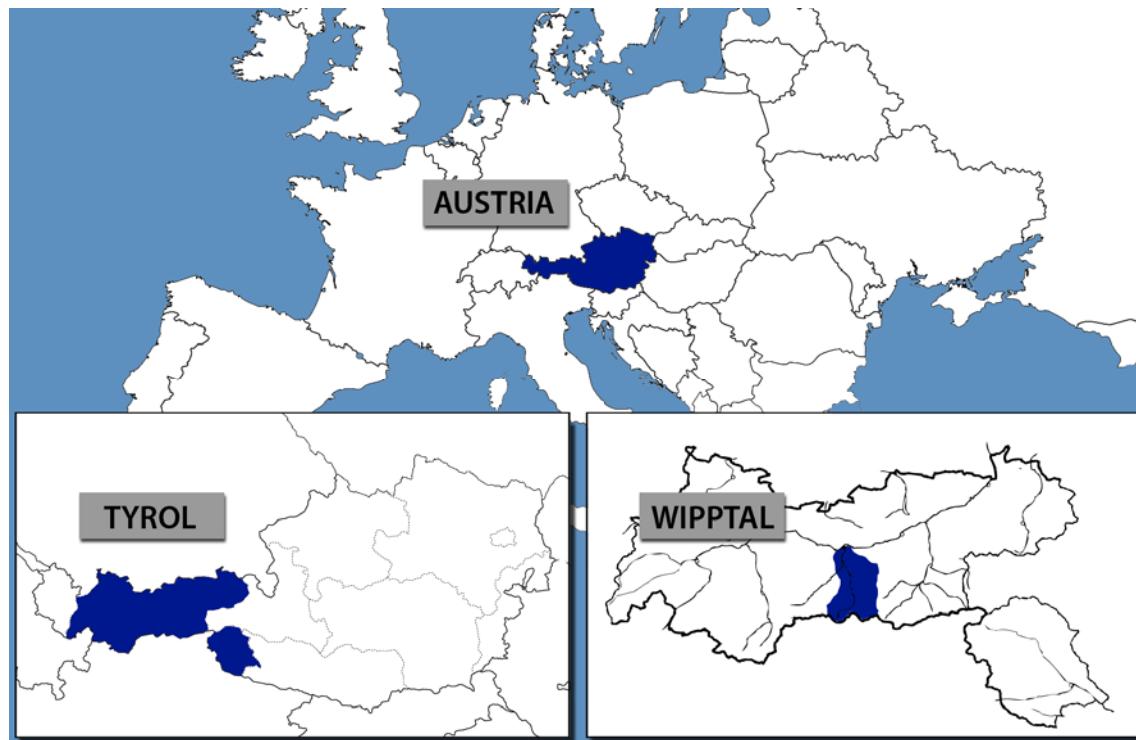


Fig. 1: Investigation area „Wipptal“ in its geographical context.

The investigation area (fig. 1) consists of 10 municipalities and covers an area of 350.000 km², which is about twice as much as the Principality of Liechtenstein. Due to the fact that the lowest of the Alpine passes, the “Brenner”, is located in this investigation area early and enduring settlement as well as linguistic heterogeneity is expected. To underline this, in the *Tabula peunitingeriana* (copy from the Middle Ages, fig. 2) we find one of the earliest names of Tyrol, *Matrei* as “Matreio”.

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Fig. 2: One of the first, ancient street maps of the Roman empire: *Tabula peutingeriana* in a copy of the Middle Ages.

In the Wipptal we find names of three different language layers that are important for the toponymic structure:

- pre-Roman layer (Breonic)
- Romance layer
- Bavarian layer (with very early settlements).

The Wipptal is a typical Alpine valley that covers all main landscape structures like mountains, (side-)valleys, Alpine pastures, forests etc. Because of that the Wipptal area is toponymically representative for the Austrian province Tyrol.

One of the research findings was the answer to the question of the etymological root of the oikonym *Pfons*. Two competing but equally plausible etymological approaches appear in the literature: The first opinion is, that the name *Pfons* can be traced back to a pre-Roman root **pan-* in the meaning “meadow, wetlands, swamp” and therefore shows the High German consonant shift #*p-* > #*pf-*. The second, quite different approach, says that *Pfons* arises from the Romance word *vannu* < lat. *vannus* “winnowing fan (basket)”, with the toponymic meaning “area with hollows or pits”. This hypothesis indicates the preocclusion of rom. #*v-* → bav. #*f-* > bav. #*pf-*. So, which etymon is to prefer for the name *Pfons*? To find an answer we conducted a linguistic-geographic distributional analysis. In a first step, we filtered all names in our investigation area with #*Pf-* and excluded the ones of the Bavarian language layer. Subsequently, we verified whether their etymon is of Romance or pre-Roman origin and finally we embedded these names in their geographical context and examined their distribution in the investigation area (fig. 3).

The outcome of this linguistic-geographic distributional analysis within “WippDigital” is quite clear and significant: All of the examined names can be explained very convincingly with Romance origin. All these names are within the lower areas of the main valley. Semantically all of the names are connected to the shape of the landscape or its agricultural usage. Hence, we propose the etymological approach of *Pfons* < rom. *vannu* (< lat. *vannus* “winnowing fan (basket)”) in the meaning of “area with hollows or pits”. This research outcome remarkably underlines the advantage of a GIS-application in linguistic-toponymic studies.³

³ For further information see: Feistmantl, Daniela: „Namengeographische Analyse des Oikonyms Pfons.“ In: Hausner, Isolde/Rampl, Gerhard (ed.): *Namen im alpinen Raum. Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Onomastik* (ed. Peter Anreiter). In preparation.

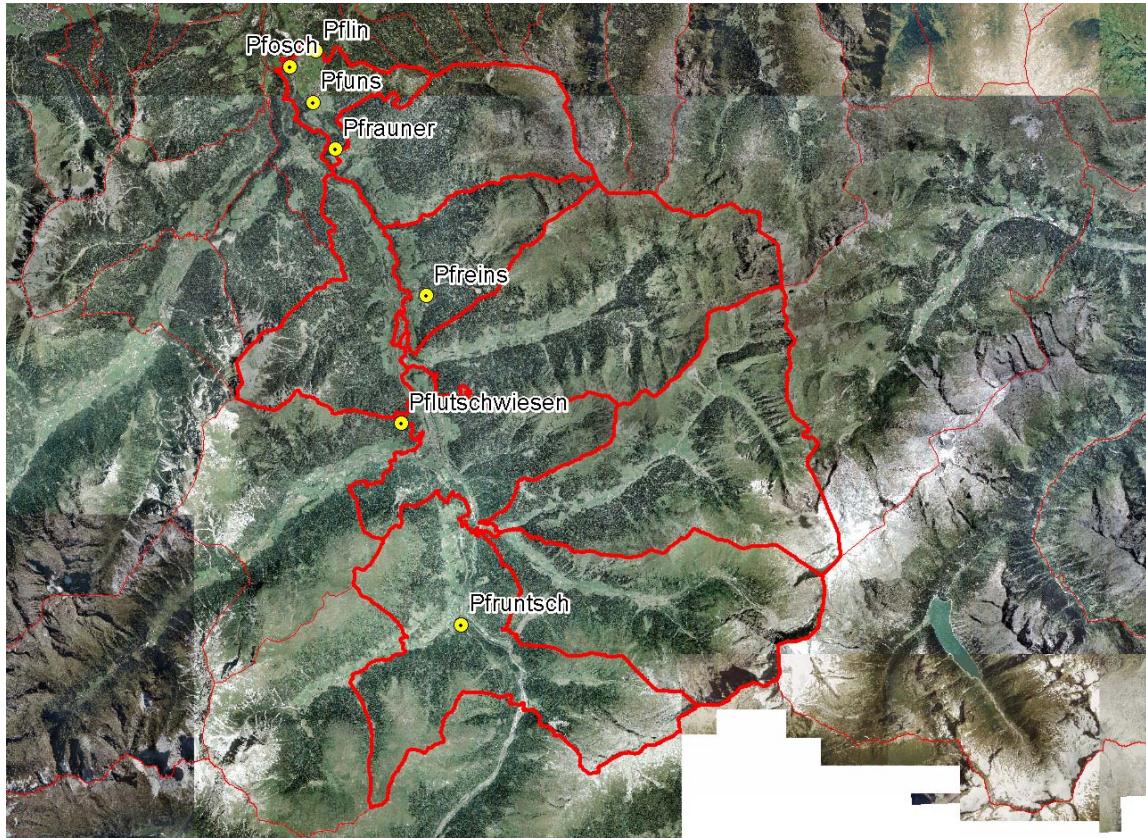


Fig. 3: Distribution of the pre-Bavarian names with #Pf- in the investigation area.

The GIS-application supports the etymological work in linguistic research also in another way as the second example of research findings shows:

In one of the ten municipalities of the investigation area, *Mühlbachl*, the name *Schöpfaumähder* appears first in the following historical form: 1574: ... von *Rinder Pergers Ängerle In der Schopfer aw gelögen...* The preferable etymological approach that links the recent name *Schöpfaumähder* to this historical form is – at this point – “meadows that are within an area owned by a person with family name Schopf (Schöpf)”. This family name frequently occurs within the investigation area and also in Tyrol.

If we enlarge the onymic search and embed the name in its linguistic-geographical context, we find three interesting names in close vicinity to the object named *Schöpfaumähder*: *Tschopfboden*, *Tschopfmähder* and *Tschöpfen* (fig. 4).

Tschopfboden and *Tschopfmähder* as compound words arise from *Tschöpfen* or *Tschöpf* respectively and therefore this name is our onymic basis. The name appears early – for a toponym – in historical forms: 1502: ... vonn aine(m) schopff so claws ramss(er) verckawfft hat. And this historical line explains the meaning of *Schöpf* or *Tschöpf(en)* respectively: The dialectal appellative (*t)schopf* was used as a unit for a meadow or pasture and is certainly not related with the Tyrolean family name *Schöpf*.

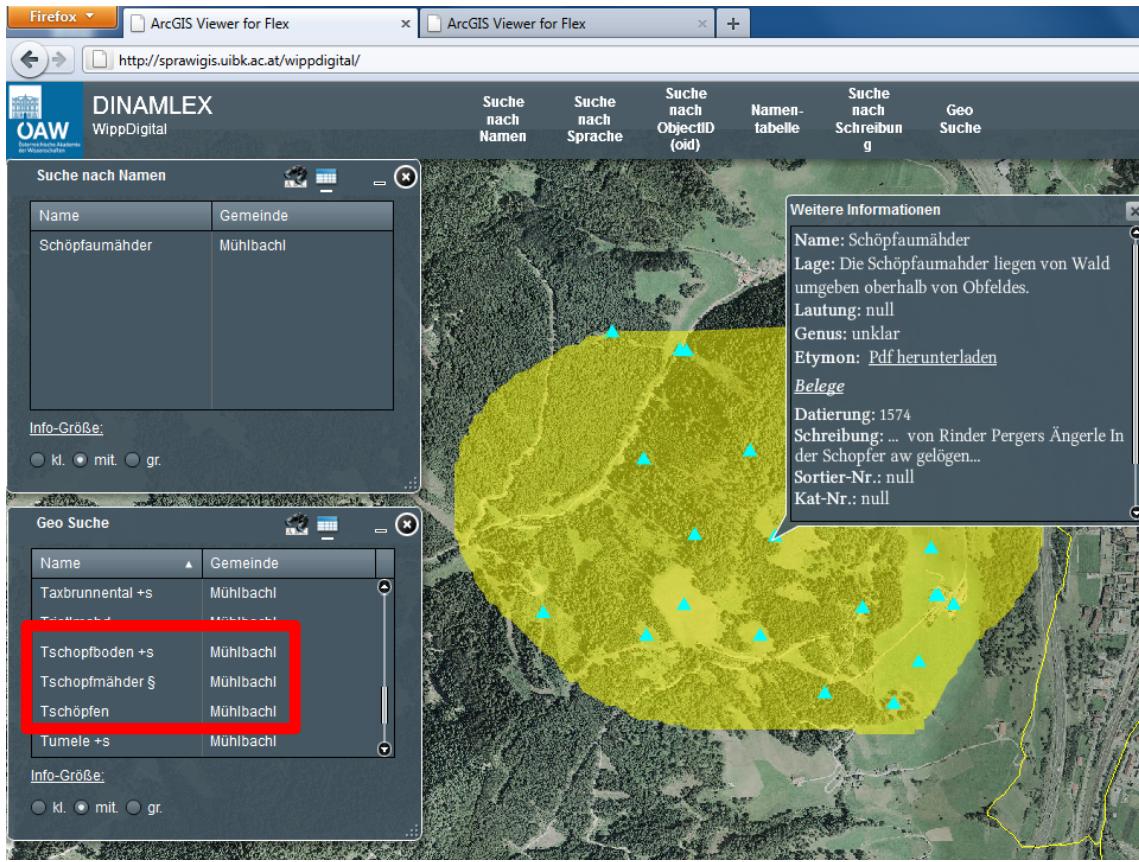


Fig. 4: Linguistic-geographical context of *Schöpfaumähder*.

Thus, onomastic research combined with GIS – geographical information systems – supports not only the step of locating onymic objects and names, but also helps to find and clarify etymologies of these name objects. The onomastic research project “WippDigital – GIS supported field name research in the Wipptal-area” was able to show and underline this, referring to a modern state of the art research method.