

Onyms of Kursk City as Language Indices of Ethnocultural Landscape of Urban Space

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Abstract — In this article we analyze significant onyms of Kursk city, indicating the sources of the formation of urban space in the diachronic aspect. We conduct an etymological analysis of some onyms with the help of which we can restore the cognitive processes caused by the peculiarities of the ethnic culture of this region.

Keywords: urban space, diachronic aspect, region, onyms, Kursk city

I. INTRODUCTION

The Russian language, like any other language, containing a national-cultural component is a method of culture encoding. The language in various forms of its existence and at different stages of historical development influenced the history of the people.

One of the most striking components of the national language is regional onomatology (name-study), which is closely related to ethnic consciousness and ethnic culture. A characteristic feature of ethnic consciousness is the presence of emotions which is reflected in the use of personal names, as well as the names of geographical areas. In the names of the past and the present one can find a lot of ethnocultural material which tells us about the state of the society at certain stages of its development, the peculiarities of its spiritual culture and ethnic heritage. The cultural peculiarities of each ethnic group and each person are embodied in the onomastic picture of the world.

Recently research devoted to onyms as language indices of the ethnocultural landscape is becoming increasingly relevant, since it is hydronyms, toponyms, urbanonyms (urban names), etc. that are a living historical memory, a recorded experience of hundreds of generations and the richest cultural heritage of our ancestors.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Kursk emerged on a high hill of the Tuskar River bank at the confluence of two rivers the Tuskar and the Kur, the latter divides the city into two parts. The city was situated on the site of a Slavic settlement which was turned into a fortress to protect lands from nomad raids.

M. Fasmer following I.I. Sreznevsky, in his «Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language» explains the lexeme *kur'ya* with the root *kur-* as «oblong river bay», «marshy arm of the river», «old riverbed», from ancient-Rus. *kur'ya* – «bay, backwater» (Fasmer: 2: 431). In the «Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language» by V.I. Dahl the word *kur'ya* is also etymologically derived from the meaning of «river bay, backwater» with the addition of the connotation «flooding tributary that has no name». The toponym Shenkursk, a town standing at the confluence of two rivers the Shenga and the Vaga, «that is why the name Shen-Kur'ya, Shenkursk» is given as an example (Dahl: 2: 225).

The year of 1095 is considered to be the birthdate of Kursk, although there are earlier dates in written records. Thus, in «The Life of Theodosius Pechersky» an eleven-year-old boy «came from near Kiev to that town named Kursk in the summer of 1032 A.D.» (Eukov 2015: 40, 42). In the same source it is said what Kursk was like at that period of time when it was ruled by the governors of the Kiev prince.

In 1146 Svyatoslav Olgovich gave Yury Dolgoruky's son Ivan «Kuresk and Posemye», and in the year of 1149 Svyatoslav took «Kuresk and Posemye» from Vladimir Davydovich who owned them. In the annals Posemye was described as a territorial equivalent of the Kursk reign (Eukov 2005: 12).

The lexeme Posemye is associated with the name of the Sem River (the modern name of the Seim River appeared only at the end of the 17th century). There were two waterways on the Kursk territory: one flows from the Donets to the Volga, the other – from the Dnieper to the Don. The boats reached the upper of the Seversky Donets, and on the other side of the watershed, the Sem River rose (Yashchenko 1974: 32).

According to V.V. Yenukov, director of the Research Institute of the South-East of Russia, a professor of Kursk State University, «the complete semantic identity of two definitions «Kursk» and «Posemye» = «Kursk reign» is observed only when Kursk is in the combination with Posemye. This identity is violated if Kursk is removed from it ... Thus, the notion of «Posemye» must have been formed before Kursk as a new state Kiev-based power structure emerged on a historical arena and before its lands joined Old Russian state. In the middle of the 10th century in Severskaya land a complex socio-political community known from written sources as *semichy* or *semsy* was formed. This community played a significant role in the life of the Slavs of the East-European forest-steppe area» (Yenukov 2005: 11–27).

The ancient Russian lexeme *sem'tsa* (Teaching by Vladimir Monomakh and others) from *sem'ya* (Sobolevsky) – Ukrainian word *sim'ya*, ancient-Rus. *semiya* which means «servants, households, family; husband, wife» is recorded in the «Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language» by M. Fasmer. Cf. here: *semya*, Ukr. *simeya* (*sim'ya*), Blr. *semya*, ancient-Rus. *seme* (*сѣмѣ*) in the meaning of «seed, offspring», lat. *sēmen*, *-inis* – «seed, genus, descendant», *sēmōnes* «sowing deities», *sāmō*, then «*seyat'*, *seyu*», goth. *mana-sēps* – «the human race, the world», literally «human seeding» (Fasmer: 3: 599–601, 615).

The word *semya* is traditionally associated with «fertility». It is a symbol of potential development, the focus of vitality and continuity of existence. As such, it becomes one of the images of the centre. As a metaphor, *semya* is the source, the prototype of something (CESS 2007: 458).

Thus, «it can be assumed that there is *sema* «seed, race, descendant, sowing deities, human race, world, human sowing» in the semantic structure of the hydronym Sem (Malykhina 2015: 81–82; Malykhina 2015: 122–123), and «a comparison of linguistic units and fragments of the linguistic picture of the world of different nations can be the evidence of the ethnic labeling of the linguistic system» (Bobunova 2018: 149).

We have already noted that Tuskar is the most important hydronym in the urban landscape, as Kursk stands at the confluence of the rivers the Kur and the Tuskar, the latter being the right tributary of the Seim. The etymology of the hydronym Tuskar is interpreted ambiguously: V.N. Toporov and O.N. Trubachev see in the name «Iran. **tusk* – «empty» with a common suffix *-ara*» (Toporov 1962: 227). Another explanation is not excluded: «from ancient-Rus. *tusk* – «dim» using the suff. *-or'*, which later gave way to the suffix *-ar'* (Fasmer: 3: 156). According to A.I. Yashchenko, compiler of the «Hydronymic Dictionary of Posemye», «the Tuskar flows through the territory that represents fertile black soil, only in some places there is clay loam soil and

stony soil. A lot of black soil, which gives the water a dark shade, enters the river» (Yashchenko 1974: 102).

A.E. Avdeeva, the Kursk writer of the 19th century and publisher of Russian folk tales in her book «Notes about Old and New Russian Life» (1842) writer: «The location of Kursk is very good. Half of the city is spread out on the mountain and the other part – at its foot. The outskirts are made up of settlements (*sloboda*) – Yamskaya, Pushkarnaya, Kazatskaya, Streletsкая ... When you come to Kursk along Moscow highroad, the post road goes through Yamskaya settlement (*sloboda*) ... It has quite a lot of stone houses and a stone church. The Tuskar River which is quite large flows half a verst from this settlement (*sloboda*) just outside the city and supplies it with water. If you climb up the so-called Yamskaya mountain, you will enter the city through the triumphal gate to Moskovskaya Street which is the best in the city and leads to a beautifully built Znamensky monastery. The miraculous icon of the Sign of the Mother of God is kept here. The monastery is located on the most elevated place in the city. Around it there are government offices on the one side and on the other side there is Secondary School, Uezdnyaya and Public (*Narodnaya*) Schools in the same building. The view from the monastery over the Tuskar River is adorable: the river flows around the foot of the mountain, behind it the Streletsкая settlement (*sloboda*) with its small houses and a stone church of St. Nicholas is located. On the other side of the monastery mountain one can see the lower part of the city with its Pushkarnaya and Kazatskaya settlements (*sloboda*)... Going down the mountain, you can cross the Kur River over the bridge... The city is built properly, the streets are paved ... There are 15 churches in the city including a convent and a monastery situated in the settlements (*sloboda*)» (Avdeeva 2014: 51–52).

It should be noted that the outer boundary of the city Kursk, a city line was limited by several streets and the Tuskar River according to the general plan of the city approved by Catherine II in 1782.

Gradually, the boundaries of the city extended and, as a result, outside adjacent areas began to enter suburban settlements (*sloboda*): Yamskaya, Pushkarskaya (Pushkarnaya), Kazatskaya, Streletsкая.

The author of «Historical and Etymological Dictionary of the Modern Russian Language» P.Ya. Chernykh connects the lexeme *yamskaya* with the work of post stations, carrying mail, passengers and load by horses. The noun *yamshchik* (coachman) has the meaning of «post-horse driver», *yamshchina* – «coachman profession» ... The adjective *yamskoy* and its derivatives are mainly characteristic of the Russian language. In Russian these words belong to the category of historical vocabulary. However, they are preserved in toponymy (Yamskaya *sloboda* (settlement) in Kursk, Yamskaya street in Moscow). The etymology of the lexeme *yamskoy* (<*yam'sky*) which goes back to the word *yam* (the so-called «duty imposed by the Tatars in the middle of the 13th century which obliged people having draught animals take part in *gon'ba* – delivering load and carrying passengers) is rather interesting. Later the word *yam* began to be used in the meaning of «camp on a highroad where horses are changed; institute in charge of *yamskaya gon'ba* – delivery of post,

load and carrying of passengers». The word was commonly used in the middle of the 18th century. Hence, the expressions *yamskoy dvor* (post coach station), *yamsky den'gy* (money), *yamskaya gon'ba* (delivery). At first *yamshchiky* (coachmen) (the word is known since 1356) were officials of the prince and they were in charge of doing coach duty. Later *yamshchik* meant «the driver selected by *yam* (post coach station)» (see Code of Law of 1649). The word *yam* is Turkic. Let us compare the data from various Turkic languages: *yam* – «courier spare horse», «courier», «message deliverer»; *jam* – «post station», «post horses». In modern Turkic languages the word is almost out of use. Let us compare, however, the Turkish *yamcı* (pronounced as *yamdzhi*) – «yamshchik», the Yakut word *djam* – «station» (Chernykh: 2: 470).

The onym *Pushkarskaya* (modern *Pushkarnaya sloboda* (settlement) «goes back to the word *pushka*. Cf. ukr. *pushka* in the meaning of «tin, gun», blr. *pushka* – «box», ancient-Rus. *push'ka* – «cannon» (Novgorod 1st annal)... From here come *pushkar*, *Pushkarskaya sloboda* (settlement) (Fasmer: 3: 415–416).

P.Ya. Chernykh notes that the name *Kazatskaya sloboda* (settlement) dates back to the ancient word *Cossack*. The oldest example refers to 1395 (Civ. affairs «On the borders of the Kirilovsky monastery») with the meaning of «employee» (servant) ... The nickname *Kazak* has been known since 1495 in the meaning of «serf of Kholmsh churchyard». Among adjectives the oldest one is *Kazachy* (Cossack). The lexeme *kazachestvo* (the Cossacks) is used in the meaning of «free Cossacks» and the word *kazatsky* (cossack) has been registered in dictionaries since 1771. The Turkic word *kazak* (cossack) meant «free independent man, adventurer, wanderer»... Kумык word *kazak* (cossack) meant «armor-bearer of the feudal lord, military servant, warrior» (Chernykh: 1: 367–368).

According to V.I. Dahl onym *Streletskaya sloboda* (settlement) dates back to the lexemes «shooter, rifleman, *strelets*, shooting, i.e. one who shoots. Shooter, skirmisher, a soldier from advanced extended ranks, serving in the shooting infantry which is especially accustomed to a single accurate fire. These soldiers are supplied with the best rifled guns». The most interesting are the following expressions «*streletsky* head, head of the *Streletsky* regiment; *prikaz* (department) in charge of *streltsy*; *sloboda* where they lived. *Strelets strel'tsa vidit izdaleka. U strel'tsa ne khodi do kryl'tsa. Strelets strelyaet, da i moshnu ne zabyvaet (grabit). V strel'tsy dobra stavka, da vystavka plokha. Kupets chto strelets: oploshnogo zhdet»* (Dahl: 4: 345).

It is necessary to note the basic principles of nomination of godonyms (street names) of that time:

- according to the direction of the movement (Belgorodskaya Street, Khersonskaya Street, Vorotnyaya street, Verkhne-Gostinnaya Street, Moskalevskaya Street, etc.);
- according to class status (Dvoryanskaya Street, Verkhnyaya Meshchanskaya Street, Meschanskaya Street, Sirotskaya Street, etc.);
- according to occupation (Myasnitskaya Street, Pastukhovskaya Street, Pushkarnaya Street, etc.);

- according to the name of churches, cathedrals (Sergievskaya Street, Akhtyrskaya Street, Preobrazhenskaya Street, Frolovskaya (Florovskaya) Street, Pokrovskaya Street, Spasopreobrazhenskaya Street, Troitskaya Street, Uspenskaya Street, Mikhailoarkhangelskaya Street, Bogoslovskaya Street, etc.).

The famous Kursk writer E.I. Nosov colorfully describes his childhood impressions about the city of Kursk, its streets in the 30-ties of the 20th century in his story «UFO of our childhood»: “My early boyhood falls on that faraway time – the very beginning of the 30-ties... With the declining of the day, especially in dull autumn weather, Kursk outskirts were plunged into total darkness – all these *podgor'ya* (foothills) and *ponizov'ya* (lowlands), *zatuskarny* and *kurovy* back streets, *progony* and *lugovy*, *polevsky* and *leskovsky obyvalovky*... And also impenetrable darkness of *Kazatskaya sloboda* (settlement) situated behind nine ravines which is wrapt by dreary dog barking. And faraway *Yamskaya Murynovka*. And to recollect *Gypsy*-mount gambling outlaws. And *Streletskaya* wilderness behind the *Krivetsky* creek ... Or *Ochakov* side streets with their persistent mud, weak bridges, two-three-board walks over black standing waters overgrown with poisonous hellebore and arrowhead ... And only in the very centre of the city on the ascended hills, somewhere in *Khersonskaya* street and even more in *Moskovskaya* street the windows of high-storeyed buildings were filled with light honey coloured electricity and some letters on building gables blinked and flashed...» (Nosov: 2: 195–196).

The culturological semantics of street names and their influence on the formation of a person's world outlook have been sufficiently studied by toponymic experts and are so obvious that this problem can be left without detailed discussion. Cities, regions and, of course, streets were renamed [14]. They received the names of significant great events of the past or the present life, or the names, immortalizing politicians, leaders, heroes of the Revolution and Great Patriotic War, Russian writers and Soviet scientists.

Thus, the following streets were renamed in Kursk: *Moskovskaya Street* – to *Lenin Street*, *Spasopreobrazhenskaya Street* – to *Red Army Street*, *Troitskaya Street* – to *Pionerov Street*, *Bogoslovskaya Street* – to *Dzerzhinsky Street*, *Znamenskaya Street* – to *Lunacharsky Street*, *Dvoryanskaya Street* – to *Frunze Street*, *Verkhne-Gostinnaya Street* – to *Marat Street*, *Mikhailoarkhangelskaya Street* – to *Karl Liebknecht Street*, *Petrovskaya Street* – to *Kommunisticheskaya Street*, *Pokrovskaya Street* – to *Bolshevikov Street*, *Veselaya Street* – to *Katya Zelenko Street*, *Cherkasskaya Street* – to *Chernyshevsky Street*, *Frolovskaya Street* – to *Radishchev Street*, *Sergievskaya Street* – to *Gorky Street*, *Knyazhaya-Beregovaya Street* – to *Semenovskaya Street*, *Syromyatnaya Street* – to *Kurchatov Street* and etc.

Perestroika (reforms), i.e. the 90-ties of the 20th century caused re-renaming: sometimes old names were restored (*Bebel street* – to *Serafim Sarovsky street*), sometimes new streets appeared (*Fetovskaya Street*, *Yeseninskaya Street*, *Nadezhda Plevitskaya Street*, *Yevgeny Nosov Street*, etc.).

Both processes (renaming and re-naming) are of great cultural and ideological significance and, undoubtedly, create a certain cultural and ideological worldview and a system of values for those generations that come to this world without the burden of the names of past years.

III. CONCLUSION

Thus, the onymic space of the city reflects the stages of its historical development. Onym is one of the most important components of the ethno-cultural landscape of Kursk. Indexation and re-indexation affect the formation of the world outlook of inhabitants of a particular region and determine the peculiarities of their spiritual culture. It is impossible to form a value-symbolic system for future generations without knowledge of the cultural heritage of our ancestors.

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