

Human Evaluation in Russian Appellative Anthroponymy (on Zauralye Archival Sources of the 16th–19th Centuries)

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Abstract

This paper deals with research on Russian anthroponyms using an analysis based on the linguocultural concept of “human evaluation”. The original handwritten records created in the Zauralye territory during the 16th–19th centuries were used as documentary sources. The Russian people’s mentality during this particular period of development was reflected in these anthroponyms, as were the perception of the world and the reflection of Russian inner life during the 16th–19th centuries. Nowadays interest in this particular topic has increased: Russians are trying to discover their origins and history, while foreigners attempt to learn “the secrets of the Russian soul.”

Appellative anthroponyms are a large group of names that express an emotional evaluation of a human being. At the moment of naming, nicknames performed a characterizing function, they named a person and evaluated a person’s personality on the basis of the most obvious distinguishing features. Later on, family names, derived from nicknames, became non-semantic and began to carry out only the identification function typical for a proper name.

Nicknames, and Russian family names derived from them, fixed the evaluation of different human qualities and characteristics: emotionality, open display of feelings, extroversion, talkativeness, collectivism, superstition and a belief in fate. The cultural component of proper names is indirectly reflected in the semantics of appellative anthroponyms and provides an opportunity to understand the history of Russian culture and the psychology and mentality of Russians.

In recent years, interest in the following topic has increased: Russians trying to discover their origins and history, and foreigners attempting to learn “the secrets of the Russian soul.” Scholars, such as Апресян [Апресян] (1995: 37–67), Wierzbicka [Вежбицкая] (1997), Kolesov [Колесов] (2000), and Jurkenas (2003), have devoted their work to the study of the image of the human being in the Russian language.

This paper deals with research on Russian anthroponyms using an analysis based on the linguocultural concept “human evaluation”. The theoretical treatment of the topic was done on the basis of material already presented in the publications of the author (Parfenova [Парфенова] 2000; 2001; 2005).

The original handwritten records created in the Zauralye territory during the 16th–19th centuries were used as documentary sources. These form a vast amount of material from the following archival repositories: Russian State Archives of the Ancient Acts in Moscow; Manuscripts’ Department of the Russian State Library in Moscow; Manuscripts’ Department of the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg; Tyumen State Archives and their branch in Tobolsk; as well as the branch in Shadrinsk of the State Archives in the Kurgan Region. The territorial approach reveals the numerous genealogies of residents’ kinship, whose history began at the end of the 16th century, in a period when the settlement and development of Siberia by Russians took place.

Modern linguistics investigates the world image from different viewpoints. The term (*Linguistic*) *World Image* is generally accepted nowadays; it means the idea, notion and perception by a human being of the surrounding reality and people. The LWI exists in the mind and is verbalized in language. The LWI of each nation is characterized by its national specific traits, i.e., its national character. The language of each nation reflects its mentality.

Appellative anthroponyms consist of a large group of names that express the emotional evaluation of human beings. There is a human being intrinsic in language and in proper names in particular, and undoubtedly, such a person attracts interest. Research on cultural and historical aspects of proper names is of current importance because it gives an opportunity to discover the origins of the creation of the “human being” concept.

The selection of particular anthroponyms by each nation is motivated by mentality, history, religion and culture. An anthroponym conceptualizes a human being as a unique individual. Functionally there is a pragmatic meaning in an anthroponym, reflecting the character of personal relationships. The meaning of an individual name reflects the perception of the human being by other people in society.

At the time of origin, appellative anthroponyms performed a characterizing function; they named persons and evaluated their personality on the basis of the most obvious distinguishing features that individualized the personality. Later on, family names, derived from nicknames, became non-semantic and began to carry out only the identificational function typical of the proper name.

These theses were clearly presented in non-canonic proper names and nicknames functioning in the 16th–19th centuries and later on firmly kept within the family vocabulary. We analyze here the nature of the evaluation of Russians that is presented in the nicknames under consideration. The nicknames and derived Russian family names held an evaluation of different human qualities and characteristics: emotionality, open display of feelings, talkativeness, extroversion, kindness, love; and moral valuations, pessimism, patience, collectivism, and a belief in fate and superstition. It should be noted that in Russian nicknames negative connotations predominate.

There were nicknames throughout the Zauralye territory that described people by speech behaviour. Let us demonstrate this with the following specific examples given in sections I and II below.

I. Nicknames characterizing the person as a talker, windbag, phrase-monger.

These nicknames reflect the talkativeness of Russians, their extroversion, their wish for talking. Qualities such as garrulity, idle talk, twaddle were disapproved of:

Bakin < *Baka* < *baka* – ‘windbag, phrase-monger, talker, narrator’;

Bakulin < *Bakulya* < *bakuly* – ‘mere words, speech, rumors’;

Balakirev < *Balakhir* < *Balakat* – ‘to throw words around, to speak jokingly’;

Bakharev < *Bakhar* < *bakhar* – ‘talker, windbag, narrator, story-teller, boaster, braggart’;

Besedin < *Beseda* < *beseda* – ‘conversation’, ‘meeting, feast’;

besedovat – ‘to throw words around, to talk’;

Chekishev < *Chekish* < *chekusha* – ‘talker, phrase-monger, fibber’;

Chivolotachin < *Chivolotacha* The nickname is motivated by the interrogative pronoun (colloquial form) *chivo* (chego?) + *lotokha* – ‘chatterer, bustler, vain person’;

Govorkov < *Govorko* < *govor* – ‘pronunciation, accent’; ‘talk, rumors, gossip’;

Govorukhin < *Govorukha* < *govorushka* – ‘gabber, talker’;

Roskazov < *Roskaz* < *roskaz* – ‘a person who likes to tell something’;

compare: *roskazni* – ‘idle talk, foolery’;

Torotorin < *Torotora* < *taratora* – ‘phrase-monger, talker’;

Treshchotkin < *Treshchotka* < *treshchotka* – ‘a person who jabbbers, doesn’t stop talking’.

II. Nicknames with evaluation of spoken speech.

Speech predominates in the evaluation of Russian nicknames and derived family names:

- Barbolin* < *Barbola* < *barmolit'* (*bormolit'*) – ‘to murmur, to mumble’, ‘to growl’;
Barmín < *Barma* < *barma* – ‘murmuring’;
Bormotov < *Bormot* < *bormotat'* – ‘to speak unclearly’, ‘to growl’;
Chilikanov < *Chilikan* < *chilikat'* – ‘to twitter’;
Erykalov < *Erykalo* < *erykala* – ‘a person having a burr’, ‘ribald’;
Gorlov < *Gorlo* < *gorlo* – the nickname could be given to a ‘a very loud, noisy, vociferous person’;
Kartashev < *Kartash* < *kartash* – ‘a burring person’;
Lyapín < *Lyapa* < *lyapa* – ‘slap, box on the ear’;
Rozmazin < *Rozmaza* < *razmaza* – ‘a person who draws his words’;
Rychkov < *Rychko* < *rychati* – ‘roar, howl, low, cry’;
Shamonín < *Shamonya* < *shamonya* – ‘a person who has mumbling or hissing speech’;
Susorov < *Susor* < *susor'* – ‘speaking slowly and indistinctly’;
Vaulín < *Vaula* < *vaula* – ‘tongue-tied stutterer’;
Zaika < *Zaika* < *zaika* – ‘stutterer’;
Zychikhín < *Zychikha* < *zyk* – ‘cry, noise, uproar’.

III. Nicknames characterizing industry and blaming careless attitude to work.

The inclination to categorical judgments and moral appraisal is reflected in the following list of the names:

- Kislov* < *Kisloi* < *kislyi* – ‘sour’ (direct meaning), ‘sluggish, lazy person’ (metaphorical meaning);
Kuchkov < *Kuchko* < *kuchkat'sya*, *kuchat'* – ‘delay, linger’;
Legostaev < *Legostai* < *legostai* – ‘a harum-scarum, hasty person’;
Legot'ev < *Legotei* < *legota* – ‘easiness, light-mindedness’;
Lyamín < *Lyama* < *lyama* – ‘gawk, sluggish person’;
Nepryakhín < *Nepryakha* < *nepryakha* – about a male person ‘a lazy person, negligent’;
Neupokoev < *Neupokoi* < *neupokoi* – ‘tireless, untiring person at work, doesn't know any rest’;
Shishelyakín < *Shishelyaka* < *shishelyaka* – ‘an idle, lazy person’;
Trudonoshkín < *Trudonoshka* < *Trudonoshka* – ‘industrious’;
Varaksin < *Varaksa* < *varaksa* – ‘a person who isn't an expert, his work is useless’;
Vikhlyayev < *Vikhlyai* < *vikhlyai* – ‘a clumsy, sluggish, lazy person’;

IV. Nicknames blaming heavy drinking and dissoluteness.

The Russian people are blamed for heavy drinking and dissoluteness. It is reflected in the list of nicknames:

- Babikov* < *Babik* < *babik* – ‘ladies' man, lady-killer’;
Basargin < *Basarga* < *basarga* – ‘a dissolute person’;
Bludov < *Blud* < *bludnyi* – ‘reprobate’;
Glotov < *Glot* < *glot* – ‘drunkard’;
Kabakov < *Kabak* < *kabak* – ‘public house’, ‘drunkard’ (metaphorical meaning);
Kachalov < *Kachalo* < *kachalo* – ‘a person who walks reeling from side to side’, ‘drunkard’ (metaphorical meaning);
Kataev < *Katai* < *katat'* – ‘to live hastily, arouse, go on the spree’, ‘drunkard’ (metaphorical meaning);
Klevakín < *Klevaka* < *klevat'* – ‘to peck at some seeds (about birds)’, ‘drunkard’ (metaphorical meaning);
Klyukov < *Klyuk* < *klyukat'* – ‘to be intoxicated by alcohol, drunkard’;
Korchemkín < *Korchemka* < *korchma* – ‘heavy drinking’; ‘tavern, public house, coach house’, ‘drunkard’ (metaphorical meaning);
P'yankov < *P'yanko* < *p'yanko* – ‘drunkard, toper’;
Skurikhinykh < *Skurikha* < *skurekha* – ‘libertine woman’, ‘dissolute woman’;
Suslov < *Suslo* < *suslo*, *suslya* – ‘sot’;
Susolín < *Susolya* < *susolya* – ‘drunkard, toper’;

Zamataev < *Zamatai* < *zamotai* – ‘unreliable, dissolute person, harum-scarum’;
Zapivalov < *Zapivalo* < *zapivat*, *zapit* – ‘to be given to drink, to drink heavily’;
Zyuzin < *Zyuzya* < *zyuzya* – ‘drunkard’.

V. Female nicknames given to a male.

Industriousness, force, courage were highly appreciated positive male qualities and characteristics. The lack of these characteristics was condemned, with the man receiving a female nickname:

Babinov < *Babin* < *baba* – ‘ladylike’;
Moloditsyn < *Moloditsa* < *moloditsa* – ‘a young woman’;
Polbabin < *Polbaby* < one half of a woman (direct meaning) – a very low evaluation of a man;
Svat'in < *Svat'ya* < *svat'ya* – ‘mother of daughter-in-law’ (for naming a man);
Tyutin < *Tyutya* < *tyutya* – ‘milk-sop’.

VI. Nicknames with positive appreciation of wit, sharpness.

Qualities, such as wit and sharpness, were highly valued among people:

Gramoteyin < *gramoteya* < *gramoteyka* – ‘a person who can read and write, who knows reading and writing’;
Lutokhin < *Lutokha* < *Lut* < *lutoshlivi* – ‘too bright, clever, wise for his age’;
Smetkin < *Smetka* < *smekalka* – ‘intellect, intelligence, keen wits, shrewdness’;
Sorokoumov < *Sorokoum* < *sorok umov* – ‘forty heads, brains’ (direct meaning), ‘a very bright man, a man of great intellect’ (metaphorical meaning);
Svetolobov < *Svetoloboy* < *svetlyi lob* – ‘a light, bright forehead’ (direct meaning), ‘a clever man, bright intellect’ (metaphorical meaning).

VII. Nicknames blaming foolishness, slow-wittedness and ignorance.

Stupidity, slow-wittedness and ignorance were disapproved of from olden times. It is reflected in the following list of the family names:

Durakov < *Durak* < *durak*;
Duranin < *Duranya* < *duranya*;
Durankov < *Duranko* < *duranko*;
Durashev < *Durash* < *durash*;
Durasov < *Duras* < *duras*;
Durintsov < *Durinets* < *durinets*;
Durnitsyn < *Dyrnitsa* < *dyrnitsa*;
Durnyagin < *Durnyaga* < *durnyaga*;
Durukhin < *Durukha* < *durukha*;
Durygin < *Duryga* < *duryga*;
Durynin < *Durynya* < *durynya*.

All the above-listed nicknames with one root and different suffixes have the common meaning ‘a fool; a not very bright, foolish, silly, stupid person’.

Nezhakhin < *Neznakha* < *neznakha* – ‘a fool, a not very bright, foolish, silly, stupid person’;
Neznaev < *Neznai* < *ne znat* – ‘unknowing’;
Neznaykin < *Neznayka* < *neznayka* – ‘unknowing, light-hearted, carefree person’.

VIII. Nicknames that have a ‘saving’ function.

Newborn children were given not only a canonic church name, but also a special non-canonic name as a second name that carried a ‘saving’ function. The canonic name was kept secret as people were afraid of some damage, spoiling, or incantation. The second talisman-name performed the ‘saving’ function and was used with the prefix ne-:

Nechai, Neelo, Negodyai, Nekhoroshko, Nekras, Nelyuba, Nenash, Nerad, Nesgovor, Nesmeyan, Never, Neudacha, Nezhdan, etc.

Numerous talisman-nicknames also show a saving function; the fear of the evil spirit is present in their semantics:

Bes, Buka – ‘devil’;
Deder – ‘evil spirit’;
Dedyunya – ‘wood-goblin’;
Nekoshnyi – ‘evil, devilish’;
Ozhgibes, Chertovik – ‘imp’.

These talisman-names carry from ancient times the superstition and fatalism typical of Russians.

The Russian people’s mentality at that particular period of development was reflected in the analyzed anthroponyms, as were the world perception and that of Russian inner life during the 16th–19th centuries. The cultural component of proper names is indirectly reflected in the semantics of appellative anthroponyms and provides the opportunity to understand the history of Russian culture and the psychology and mentality of Russians.

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