

Toponymy of Irkutsk Region as a Part of Linguocultural Space of the Region

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Abstract. The article deals with the toponymy of Irkutsk region as a significant component of regional linguocultural space. A brief history of the territory development is offered, as well as information on indigenous peoples due to the fact that the toponyms of Eastern Siberia date back to different language sources. The paper examines the ethno-linguistic layers of toponyms, analyses the results of cross-language contacts reflected in geographical names, and draws conclusions on cultural syncretism on the region's territory. Authors analyze captured in Russian and foreign toponymy peculiarities of the world perception by local old residents, their attitude to a man, family, family line, flora and fauna. Value orientations of the locals are identified. On the material of official and unofficial toponyms the following phenomena of regional ethnic culture are described: ethnic unity, life, traditions, religion, rituals, and symbols.

1 Introducing

In recent years, onomastics research papers [1], [2], [3] are of particular importance for the scientific community, since the onyms of any ethnic group contain valuable historical, ethnographic, and linguistic information.

The toponymic material analysis [4], [5], [6] is one of perspective directions in studying the names, and various aspects can be taken into consideration.

Toponymy as a discipline inevitably relates to other ones of the Humanities, hence, opening for linguists a vast possibility of using new approaches. According to Stephan Fuchs [7], research interest in toponyms and material culture has been revived in recent decades while studying the symbolic meanings and policy of spatial inscription. Names of places and physical objects, such as public facilities, monuments, and buildings, provide access to complex aspects of history, memory and place, but studies on toponymy and material culture often do not have a coherent integration. It is this question that is considered by Stephan Fuchs in his article analyzing the preservation of history and heritage in two towns in the Midwestern United States.

The work by Joshua Nash and Peter Mühlhäusler discusses the lexical fields that are used to illustrate the key criteria of the relationship between knowledge of place and linguistic knowledge [8]. The article by Patricia Beatrice Mireku-Gyimah, Anthony Armstrong Mensah examines the original local names of some towns in the district of Tarkwa in Western region of Ghana [9].

Toponyms are geographical names, when assembled together they form general toponymy of any country,

state, which consists of toponymic system of individual regions. Consequently, to represent the geographical names of the country holistically, it is necessary to describe the regional toponyms, thus, determining increased interest of modern science in studying local toponymic vocabulary.

The authors turn their attention to the toponymic system of Irkutsk region as part of the toponymic system of Russia. However, the importance of studying these lexemes is not limited to it, since the description of regional toponyms also reveals specific features of the linguocultural space of Eastern Siberia: local "geographical names ... reflect the resettlement of the people on the territory, cultural and historical background of the eras, the world perception of the Siberian old residents, cross-language contacts (contacts between autochthonous peoples and the Russian people) [10].

In addition, as scholars note [11], names of places (toponyms) can be considered as an important mirror of local knowledge and understanding of the ambient living space.

Toponyms tend to accumulate and preserve cultural information. They are verbalized indications of the culture of a particular region. Their study and description are necessary in order to preserve cultural and historical heritage of the region, including the Irkutsk region's heritage.

There were the following sources of material for this study:

1. The data obtained during the survey of old residents of Irkutsk region.
2. The data of district and regional museums of Irkutsk region.

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3. Scientific and popular science papers on local-lore study (Irkutsk region).

The collected material includes the following:

1. Official names, for example: the city of Irkutsk, the town of Angarsk, the town of Baikalsk, the village of Goryashina, the river of Angara, lake Dabahtay-Nur, lake Baikal, the Kartagonskiye peat bogs (the peat bogs of Kartagon), the Sayan mountains, and others.

2. Unofficial names, for example: the settlement of Mironikha, the settlement of Bedushkina, the settlement of Kukuy, the settlement of Nakhlovka, lake Utinoye, lake Chertovo, field Ugol, Uzkolugskie caves, mount Popikha, and others.

Unofficial names refer to microtoponyms, i.e., "proper names of small geographic objects ..., known to a narrow circle of local people" [12]. Such names are not recorded in official documents and maps of the region. They are used only at the level of everyday communication and, most likely, will never be included into the category of official names.

Based on the understanding of linguocultural space and its components by E. V. Terentyeva [13] and dealing with toponyms and microtoponyms, we believe that we can consider the following as the components of the linguocultural space of Irkutsk region:

1. Ethno-linguistic layers of toponyms. Interaction of languages.

2. Regional perception of the world, as reflected in the toponyms.

3. Peculiarities of regional ethnic culture captured in toponyms.

Further, each component will be considered separately.

2 Ethno-linguistic layers of toponyms. Interaction of languages

This component is associated with a complex concept of "ethnos". Traditionally, in the Russian Ethnology terms "ethnos" and "people" are used interchangeably. Still in everyday language these concepts are synonymous [14], which is reflected in this work.

Distinguishing ethno-linguistic layers in toponymy of any region is directly related to the history of the region, the past of the indigenous population, development of new land by new peoples.

Historical data show [15], [16] that the history of colonization of Eastern Siberia begins with the upper Paleolithic period (40-50 thousand years ago), which can be inferred from finding at least 150 sites. Prior to the development of Eastern Siberia by Russian Cossacks (up to 17th century) the territory was home to the Buryats, Evenks, Yakuts and Tofalars. It is believed that the Tofalars occurred as a result of complex ethnic processes in Southern Siberia and the Sayan mountains: the Tofalars' ethnos is influenced by Samoyed and Ket tribes, Tuvans, as well as the influence of Turkic tribes and the Mongols.

As I. A. Tyunkova writes, "an important feature of the development of new territories of Siberia by the Russians was the preservation of territorial and national

domains and customs of aboriginal peoples. They could keep the land previously used by them – for hunting and fisheries, rangelands. Colonization of this territory by the Russians was usually by "wrapping" the Buryat and Evenki villages or "inclusions" of Russian villages with the consent of the local population into their compact placement. In colonized parts of Siberia, as a rule, there was no evidence of forced evictions and especially destruction of the natives. In general, in Siberia, since its joining the Russian state there was friendly good-neighborly relationship formed between local peoples and newly-arrived Russian people" [17].

Soon after, the Russians in Irkutsk region were followed by Ukrainians, Belarusians, Poles, Lithuanians, Chuvashes, Tatars, Germans and others. Thus, Eastern Siberia is multinational, and this is reflected in the toponymy of the region.

There are the following kinds of toponyms in terms of origin:

1. Russian names, for example: the village of Granovshchina, the village of Paberega, the town of Slyudyanka, the river of Talovka, the spring well of Tarzanov, the island of Ryzhev, and others.

These toponyms represent the most recent layer of geographical names of Irkutsk region (they began to appear only in the 17th century). Initially the names were created by the Cossacks, the state peasants (attached to the land), newcomers, escaped convicts, ascetics and others, to mark the place out of a number of similar, and even secure it for themselves. For example:

Granovshchina, a village in Irkutsk region. It is designated after people with names Matyushka and Senka with last name Granin, who received the permission to settle there for tillage in 80's of 17th century by Decree of the Irkutsk voevoda office.

Donskaya, a village in Bokhansky district. The toponym derives from the onym "Don" (the river of Don). Both the settlement and its name were created by Russian settlers from the Don river.

The village of Zhigalovo was named after a state peasant (attached to the land) Yakov Zhigalov, who is mentioned in historical documents of 1723.

Smolenskoe, a village in Irkutsk region. The name is believed to reflect the occupation of the population of this village, that is tar distillation. There lived smolyagi - people involved in tar ("smola") distillation, and the place was called Smolyaga, later - Smolenshchina. Besides, according to historical sources, a man named Mitka Smolensky was exiled to the Irkutsk Ostrog in the 70's of the 17 century and became a state peasant.

Geographical objects were named in honor of famous personalities as well as Orthodox churches, memorable events, important items, etc. For example:

The village of Voznesensk in Cheremkhovskiy district got its name because it appeared on the territory of the wine distillery belonging to the Voznesensk monastery.

The lake, located near the village of Tunguska, is called by locals as Poganoye (meaning "nasty"): according to the legend, followers of Kolchak dumped dead bodies of the killed there.

Burkovo, a village in Cheremkhovsky district. A long time ago, in the beginning of the revolution, the Buryat people created squads against Kolchak and his followers. Those squads were located in a small village. Soon the Buryats began to come to the village from other territories. There were so many of them gathered together that a Cavalry Regiment was formed, it was called Big Buryat Regiment. The name came from the clothing of cavalry soldiers – burka (meaning "felt cloak"). Since then, the settlement has been called Burkov regiment, and now Burkovo.

2. Foreign-language names. The following subgroups are included:

– The Buryat language, for example:

Nukuty, a village in Nukutsky district. The name came from Buryat word "nukhen" (meaning "the pit"), "nukhud" (meaning "pits", "place with pits"). On the village territory there are depressions in the topography, sinkholes, funnel-shaped pits, formed by ground subsidence due to leaching out of the land of water soluble rock gypsum, limestone, which are common in the basin of the Unga river.

Nur, a lake in Olkhonsky district. In the Buryat language "Nuur" means "lake." The word "Nuur" ("nor") combined with some attribute often forms proper names: Kukunur is a "blue lake", Ongonur – "sacred lake", Kharanur – "black lake".

–The Evenki language, for example:

Turuka, a river, a village in Ust-Kutsky district. In Evenki "turuka" means "salt". There is a deposit of salt, back in 1639 famous Russian explorer E. P. Khabarov near the Turuka river initiated the salt production.

Alendar, a river. The name comes from the Evenki word "Alan" (meaning "pass, the road across the ridge"), and -dar- (changed suffix -dyari-).

Biryulka, a village in Kachugsky district. It is named after the Evenki word "Bira" (meaning "the river").

– The Turkic language, for example:

Baytog, an ulus in Ekhirit-Bulagatsky district. This name can be comprehended in the Turkic language as follows: "Bay" is an ancient Turkic word meaning "rich, large", "tag" means "mountain", so it means "great mountain". Indeed, it is the highest place in the Kudinsky steppe.

Yelan, a village in Cheremkhovsky district. The word "yelan" ("yalan") comes from the Turkic word "yalant" (meaning "plain, valley, meadow").

Zaglik, a village in Bokhansky district. According to one version, the name comes from the Turkic languages, meaning "healthy, prosperous", "good", "clean", "drinking (of water)", "anything calculated".

– The Ket language, for example:

Kitoy, a river, a tributary of the Angara river. The name is believed to mean "wolf flow" in the language of the ancient tribes of Kets.

Tayshet, a river. In the language of Kets it means: "ta" – "cold," "sheth" – "river" or "water", so "Tayshet" means "cold water/river".

Foreign toponyms on the territory of Irkutsk region are the most ancient class, called the substratum toponymy.

3. Syncretic names. The following subgroups are included:

– Russian-Buryat, for example:

Russky Zabituy, a village in Cheremkhovsky district. Translated from Buryat "Zabituy" means "made a stop", "halt". Buryats were the first inhabitants of the village. Now in Russky Zabituy there is no Buryat resident. Apparently, therefore, this village became known as Russkiy Zabituy to distinguish it from the village Zabitui of Alarsky district.

Verkhniy Bulay, a village in Cheremkhovsky district. According to one version, the name came from the Buryat word "bulay" (meaning "the pit"). The Russians added the spatial-orienting word "verkhniy" (meaning "upper").

Sharagunchik, a creek in Cheremkhovsky district. Toponym is formed with the help of the Russian diminutive suffix -chik-, attached to the Buryat word "Sharagun" to indicate that it is a small water object.

– Russian-Turkic, for example:

Bolshaya Yelan, a village in Usolsky district. The name comes from the Turkic word "yalant" (meaning "plain, valley, meadow"), i.e. a place which is a large depression, the lowland. To give another qualifying characteristic of the object, the Russians added to existing toponym the word "bolshaya" (meaning "great").

Similar is observed in the following example, only the Russian word indicates that the river is small. Compare:

Malaya Ordynka, a river. The name comes from the Turkic "orda" (urda) (meaning "camp", "headquarters of an influential rich owner, prince", "main village" + the Russian word "malaya" (meaning "small") as opposed to the similarly named the Ordynka river (respectively perceived as a large river).

– Russian-Evenki, for example:

Bolshaya Iret, a river. The name originates from the Evenki word "irecte" (meaning "larch"), "irecteg" (meaning "larch forest"). Indeed, in the Iret river basin the larch taiga zone of the territory called Prisayanye begins. There is a river Malaya Iret. The Russians added the corresponding Slavic words "bolshaya" ("big") / "malaya" ("small") to foreign language name to indicate the size of the object.

Verkhnyaya Iret, a village in Cheremkhovsky district. The toponym arises from the name of the Iret river (see above). There is a village of Nizhnyaya Iret. As in the previous case, the substrate name is specified in terms of the location due to the Russian lexemes "verkhnyaya" ("top") / "nizhnyaya" ("bottom").

– Turkic-Buryat, for example:

Karbulak, a small river valley in Bokhansky district. The name comes from the Turkic Word "kar" (meaning "snow") and the Buryat word "bulak" ("spring, source, stream").

Khayta, a river in Cheremkhovsky district. Toponym appeared from the Turkic word "khai" ("cliff", "rock") and the Buryat suffix -ta-: "hai + ta" means "rocky place".

– Evenki-Buryat, for example:

Olkha, a river and a village in Shelekhovsky district. The toponym is believed to come from the word of syncretic origin "alacha" ("kill", "stab", "score") and means "a hunting place".

Bugutuy, a small river valley in Bokhansky district. The name comes from the Evenki word "bugu" ("strong") and the Buryat suffix -tu-.

This group of names, including several subgroups, indicates the close relationship between peoples, their respect to each other, cross-language contacts, cultural syncretism taking place on the territory of Irkutsk region.

Cultural syncretism is also reflected in the changes the names have undergone in different periods of their functioning. The phonetic transformation is rather frequent (when foreign names were subjected to the Russian language influence).

The name of the village of Malta in Usolsky district originates from the Buryat word "moyelta" ("bird cherry place"), which was difficult to pronounce for the Russian people, thus, it was phonetically transformed.

The toponym Bratsk appeared due to phonetic modifications by the Russian explorers of the ethnonym "buriaty" ("Buriats") into "braty" ("brothers"). According to sources, in those days it was very difficult for the Russians to pronounce the word "buriaty" ("Buriats").

For the same reason the Russians changed the substrate name of the village in Katangsky district: the village Erbogachyen originally had the name Nerbekechen (in Evenki "nerbeke" means "hill covered with pine forest").

Of great interest is the history of phonetic transformations in the name of the village Chernorud in Olkhonsky district. In ancient times this area was inhabited by Buriats of Shono-rod, that is a family line "Shono", which means "wolf". The name "Shonorod" was initially modified by the Russians into "Shenorod", then – into "Chenorod", and finally – into "Chenorud".

There is also a derivational transformation of geographical names. Names like "Bolshaya" ("large") Iret", "Malaya" ("small") Iret", "Verkhnyaya" ("upper") Iret" and so on are formed by means of lexical and syntactic method: the combination of a foreign word and a Russian one becomes a new name. New names could appear not only by using the words "small" – "large", "upper" – "lower", "near" – "far". Other lexemes could be used in the formation of toponyms. For example, the village of Klyuchi-Bulak in Bratsky district was originally called in the Buryat language "Bulag", which means "key", "source". The Russians added their word "key", and, accordingly, it resulted in the name "Klyuchi-Bulak", which is literally translated as "key + key".

Thus, the toponymy of Irkutsk region includes Russian, foreign and bilingual toponyms, analysis of which shows the natural fusion of different cultures in the region.

2. Regional perception of the world, as reflected in the toponyms

Analysis of the toponymic material has identified the following important components in the regional picture of the world.

First, there is anthropocentrism of toponymy: many toponyms originate from personal names:

Allaguy, a village in Olkhonsky district, is named after the founder of the Buryat of Alaguy family line of Bulagat tribe.

Bayanday, a village in Ust-Ordynsky district, is named in honor of the Bayanday – the founder of the Buryat of Bayanday family line of Ekhirit tribe.

Stolbova, a village in Irkutsk district, is named after the founder with last name Stolbov.

Secondly, of great importance for the local population, was the cult of the family, clan, tribe, as evidenced by toponyms like:

Anzyeb, a river in Bratsky district. The origin of the name is associated with the following legend. Once on the shore of a small brook there lived an old Tungus nomad (Evenk) named An with his wife Zeb. They had a son, whom they named An-Zeb. This name was given to the river, and later to the village.

Gorokhovo, a village in Irkutsky district. According to locals the village was founded by four brothers, whose last name was Gorokhovy (Gorokhovs), resulting in the name of the place.

Nygda, a village in Alarsky district. The name of the village comes from the Buryat word "nygdykhyn", which means "unification". Legend says that the village was named to honor the unification of several Buryat family lines.

Tangutov, an island in Cheremkhovsky district. The toponym originates from the Turkic-Mongol word "Tanguty", designating the people of Tibeto-Burman group who spoke the Tangut language.

Thirdly, it is possible to speak about the importance of water as a source of life, since the toponyms of the semantic field "water" are abundant:

Arshan, the name of villages in Ust-Udinsky, Kuytunsky, Tulunsky, Alarsky districts. The name is derived from the Buryat word "arasan", "arshan", which means "a mineral or warm spring of curative value".

Gorkhon, the name of several small rivers, streams and settlements. The toponym comes from the Buryat word "gorkhon" ("river", "stream").

Muntbuluk, a village in Nizhneudinsky district. The name goes back to the Buryat phrase "Mungutu-Bulag" ("Silver Spring").

In our region there are the following Russian names of settlements: Rucheyek, Rechushka, Sukhoy ruchey, Goryachiye Klyuchi, Klyuch, Brody and others.

Fourth, flora and fauna were of great importance for the old residents of this area, as evidenced by the large number of toponyms of this semantic group:

Listvyanka, a village in Irkutsk district. The name was given due to larch trees growing here.

Travyanistaya, a mountain on the range Khamar-Daban, South of Utulik. On top of this mountain (altitude more than 1000 m) there are grassland meadows, rare on Khamar-Daban, resulting in the name "Travyanistaya" ("grass", "covered with grass").

Babagayta, villages in Zalarinsky and Cheremkhovskiy districts. Toponym was formed from the Buryat word "babagay" ("bear"), "babagayta" ("bearish/bear's").

Fifth, in the toponymy of the region it is possible to observe the representation of the geo-object perception by the locals. The attitude to the referred object, the feelings involved in the act of nomination are reflected, for example:

Mugay, small settlement in Bokhansky district. From the Buryat-Mongolian word "muukhay" ("dirty, muddy, filthy, ugly, hideous, nasty, despicable, mean, repugnant").

Muka. This River used to be called Talmyshan but was renamed Muka ("torment") by Russian explorers, because part of the road along the Lena river portages to the mouth of the Muka river was the most difficult, complicated, and painful.

Nygdushka, a river in Cheremkhovskiy district. The name is formed by using the diminutive suffix -ushk- from the Buryat word "nygda" (see above).

There is no doubt that the identified constants of the regional language picture of the world, captured in the toponyms do not constitute a complete and comprehensive list and may be enlarged or clarified, as the toponyms of the region is a treasure trove of conceptual and cognitive knowledge on the world perception by Siberians.

3. Peculiarities of regional ethnic culture captured in toponyms

The toponymy of Irkutsk region reflects the following phenomena of ethnic culture:

1. Ethnic unity reflected in the ethnonyms, for example:

Uda, a tributary of the river. The name is believed to originate from the name of the Merkits' tribe "Ude" ("udeit").

Ekhirit-Bulagatsky district. The toponym is associated with the names of two main Buryat tribes: Ekhirits and Bulagats. Ethnonym "ekhirit" is not interpreted properly yet, but they believe that "ikir", "ekhir" means "double", "twins"; "ekhirid" is the plural of "ekhir". The ethnonym "bulagat" ("bulagachiny") means "sable hunters".

2. Peculiarities of life, lifestyle, for example:

Bazoy, a village in Bokhansky district. According to one version, the name is derived from the Buryat word "bozo" ("barda") (the sediment remaining after the distillation of lactic vodka), indicating manufacturing specific alcoholic beverages by locals.

Tyrgan, a village in Olkhonsky district. The toponym originates from the Buryat word, "terge" ("cart"). The name is considered to be associated with a new form of transport among the local population – "terge" ("cart" or "farm wagon"). Overall, it can be noted that the Buryat toponymy involves names associated with characteristic features of economic life, especially with household innovation.

Luchikha, a village in Bratsky district. The toponym was formed from the Russian verb "luchit" ("to fish", "to beat the fish with a fish-fork at night, by lighting from lit splinters fire". Thus, the toponym is associated with fishing villages located along the banks of the Angara river.

3. Folk traditions.

The names reflecting the Buryat national traditions are quite common, for example:

Anyutka, the place near the cape Ryty in Olkhonsky district. The toponym derives from modified by the Russians Buryat word 'anyurkhla', which means "to close eyes to a woman or to blink before the holy place". In the old days women were forbidden to set foot on the cape Ryty. Faithful men and shepherds also could not move around the Cape: after visiting it, they had to leave there insoles from their shoes.

The toponyms include those that reflect some traditional activities typical of different peoples of our region:

Bazarnaya Bukhta (bay) in Olkhonsky district. On the shores of this convenient bay before the revolution, they traditionally organized the Olkhonsk trade fair or bazar. Therefore, the bay became known as Bazarnaya.

Znamenka, a village in Zhigalovskiy district. In the 17th century the Russians founded Ilginsky Ostrog (prison) on the Ilga river, and they built Znamenskaya tent-shape type church, which has been preserved up to the present time. Then the village was named after the church. Northern Russian traditions were clearly reflected in constructing wooden churches, with bell towers and tent-shape roofs.

4. Religion.

Toponyms record shamanism of the Buryats and the Orthodox faith of the Russians, for example:

Yedogon, a village in Tulunsky district. The name originates from the Buryat word "odegon" ("female shaman", "sorceress").

Vvedenshhina, a village in Shelekhovskiy district. It was named to honor the annual Christian holiday of "The presentation of the blessed virgin Mary", celebrated on December 4.

5. Rituals.

Toponyms reflecting this phenomenon are mainly represented by substrate names highlighting the rituals associated with beliefs of the indigenous peoples of Irkutsk region:

Zakuley, a village in Alarsky district. The name comes from the Buryat obsolete word "sukheli" meaning the skin of sacrificial animal with head and legs on the long birch pole. The name reflects the past of the shaman culture of the Buryats.

Yandy, a river in Ust-Udinsky district. The toponym came from the Evenki verb "yandy" ("kalmunit", "shamanit' around the campfire"). So, Yandy is a place where in the past the Evenks conducted shamanistic rituals around the campfire.

6. Symbols.

Toponyms reflect the peculiar symbols of Russian culture and the culture of indigenous peoples of Irkutsk region, for example:

Burgutun, a river. According to one version, the name originates from the Buryat word "burged" ("golden eagle, eagle").

It is possible to assume that there was ancient cult of the eagle in the Buryat culture. For the Buryats this bird symbolizes power, strength and courage. There is a bronze sculpture of an eagle in Tazheranskaya steppe of Olkhonsky district: Legend says, a formidable spirit, the king of all shamans in the image of an eagle descended on Olkhon. Since then, all shamans perform the dance of the eagle. White eagle is a symbol of Olkhon island.

The names of many official settlements, unofficial names of territories, as well as some rivers are connected with the bird cherry: the town of Cheremkhovo, the village of Cheremushki, Cheremushka village settlement, River Cheremshanka and others. This is no coincidence: in Russian culture this tree is associated with nature's tenderness, purity, and love. Some of the Russian people even think the bird cherry is a symbol of Russia.

Thus, the toponymy of Irkutsk region provides an opportunity to present and describe linguocultural space of the region in different ways. Origin of names can demonstrate multi-ethnic character of the population, a large number of bilingual names and the extant substrate toponymy highlight good neighborly relations between the peoples of the region, their cultural relationships. Toponyms preserve the memory of different historical events of the region since ancient times, they broadcast information about the way of life, occupation, traditions and beliefs of indigenous peoples of Eastern Siberia as well as the Russian people who came to these lands in the 17th century. Toponymy of the region shows close fusion of the Siberian nature, the human struggle with the elements, faith in man and his powers, the importance of bringing people together to explore our vast territory and improve life.

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