

The role of toponymic objects in the system of settlement and reconstruction of landscapes in the Pre-Volga Region of the Republic of Tatarstan

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ABSTRACT

Aim: Work on the study of geographical names (toponyms) which include natural and anthropogenic objects is relevant to the present. Toponymy is a relatively young science that studies geographical names, their origin, patterns and conditions of formation, semantic content, grammatical form, pronunciation, and transmission from one language to another. Toponymy stands at the intersection of such sciences as geography, history, architecture, linguistics, etc. With the help of toponyms, it is possible to trace the history of the development of the territory, to understand what alien and indigenous people inhabited a region, and also to reveal the landscape features of the studied area. **Materials and Method:** A total of 882 toponyms in the territory of Pre-Volga Region of the Republic of Tatarstan which included the names of settlements (553), natural sites such as rivers, lakes, springs (158), terrain forms, geology, and flora and fauna (171) have been studied in this work. The formation of geographical names in this territory is associated with the history of its settlement, ethnographic features, and the diversity of natural conditions. **Result and Discussion:** Studies have shown to us that the old names of geographical objects were either completely replaced by Russian names, or moved into a group of mixed ones. The toponyms of natural objects initially closely associated with the components of nature, nowadays, continue to bear the names of pre-existing flora, fauna, or water objects on anthropogenically changed territories. **Conclusion:** The information obtained in the course of work on the toponyms of the Pre-Volga Region of the Republic of Tatarstan is of great importance for paleogeographers and historians and can be widely used in ecology and geography and local lore studies.

KEY WORDS: Anthropogenic toponyms, Natural toponyms, Oikonoms, Orographic toponyms, Toponymy

INTRODUCTION

The understanding of geographical names, learning of how they appear, develops, and change and what they designate, altogether, make the sphere of interests of toponymic science. The toponymy is located at the junction of several sciences (Figure 1).

In toponymy, the methods of the above-mentioned and a number of other scientific directions are widely used, and the names of various objects make it possible to reliably and fully understand the nature of the studied region, as well as the historical prerequisites of human activity.^[1,2]

Interest in geographical names and their semantic content arose at the earliest stages of the formation

of human civilization. At that time, names were often associated with some mythological subject, with real signs of the object or with geographic factors. The first attempt of scientific use of toponymic data was undertaken by the ancient scientist Pomponius Mela in the first century AD.^[3] In Russia, interest in geographical names as an important source of scientific, geographic information was manifested since the beginning of the 18th century. Historian and geographer V.N. Tatishchev who considered toponymy as an element of geography was the founder of the toponymic direction in the studies.

In the 50s and 60s of the 20th century, in the heyday of domestic toponymic researches, toponymy took one of the leading places among the scientific areas. Among the Russian researchers, Nikonov,^[4] Pospelov, and^[5] Superanskaya^[2] reiterated the importance of collecting, classifying, studying, and

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using of national geographical terms and toponyms in the interests of geography, linguistics, understanding of landscape transformation processes, and their typification. In the Republic of Tatarstan, in the field of toponymy, large-scale researches were conducted by Subaeva,^[6] Garipova,^[7] Sattarov,^[8] Kurbanova *et al.*,^[9] as well as their followers.^[10-13] Sattarov identified about 100 ancient Bulgarian names and made a great contribution to the study of the history of the formation of oikonyms on the territory of the Republic of Tatarstan.

It should be noted that currently an active study of toponyms in several areas is continued in Kazan Federal University and the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan. At first, there are researchers in the field of theoretical toponymy. Second, the analysis of the geographical aspect of toponymy which covers the geographical conditions for the creation and functioning of names, as well as an understanding of the origin and meaning of names, as this allows us to trace and restore both the history of the land settlement and its landscape conditions.

The purpose of this research is to study the geographical names of the Pre-Volga Region of the Republic of Tatarstan as important elements in the study of the history of settlement and further natural and social reconstruction of the territory.

MATERIALS AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

There are different methods for studying geographical names depending on the principles lodged in the basis of classification.^[14,15] Analyzing the works on classifications of toponyms, we made an attempt to construct a more universal scheme that divides geographical names into two large groups: Natural and anthropogenic, which in turn include national affiliation, the objects of nature and objects of anthropogenic activity (Figure 2).

This classification allows us to study the geographical name in more details, to determine its national affiliation as well as to position it into a specific group based on the main feature which is an important aspect for the researcher's work during compilation of the database.

Geographic, cartographic, expeditionary, linguistic, historical, ethnographic, and factual-systematical methods collected over 35 years, as well as stock materials of the central state archive of the Republic of Tatarstan and documents, scribe books, and stock materials of the Scientific Library named after Lobachevsky^[16-26] were used during the work with toponymic material. In addition, the obtained

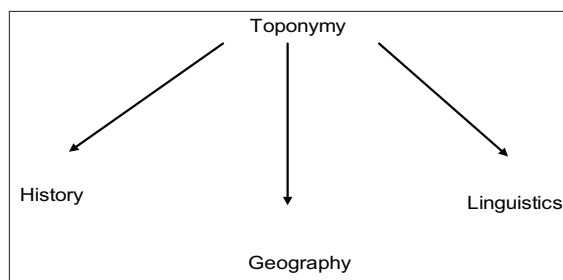


Figure 1: The relationship between toponymy and related sciences

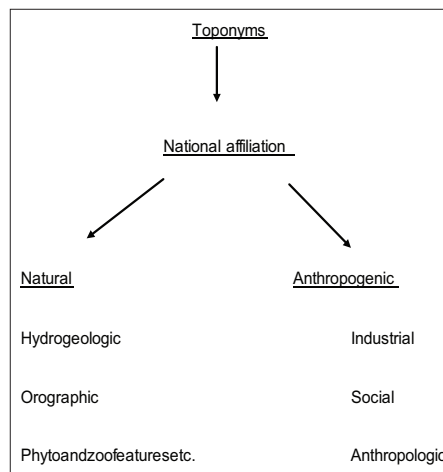


Figure 2: Groups of toponyms distinguished by certain features

information in afterward was reconciled in various expeditions in the course of 32 years, together with such ethnographers of the Kazan University (E.P. Busygin, G.R. Stolyarova, A.N. Zorin, etc.).

A total of 882 toponyms of settlements and large physical and geographical objects (hydrological and orographic) in the territory of the Pre-Volga Region of the Republic of Tatarstan were used as one core object for study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among the 882 toponyms studied, 553 - settlements (62.6%), 158 - hydrological objects - hydrotoponyms (17.9%), and 171 - terrain elements - orotonyms (19.5%).

The study of the toponyms of the territory of the Pre-Volga Region of the Republic of Tatarstan within the historical period showed its great variety in terms of national affiliation (Figure 3).

Out of the 882 titles, the maximum number of titles is Tatar (46%) since as the history of area settlement showed the formation of the Bulgarian Khanate and the Kazan Khanate has deep roots. The share of names of other indigenous people (Chuvash and Mordovian) comes to about 12% and 2%, respectively. Younger geographical names consisting of Russian toponyms

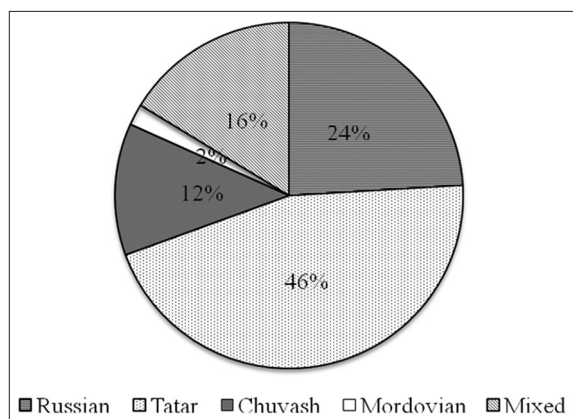


Figure 3: National composition of settlements of the Pre-Volga Region of the Republic of Tatarstan

make up $\frac{1}{4}$ of all the research names. In the 18th century, in connection with the accession of the Kazan Khanate to the Russian state, mixed names appeared (16%). The old names that existed from ancient times among the indigenous people were eventually either completely replaced by Russians or passed into a group of mixed ones (Russkoye Islamovo village, Koshki-Tenyakovo village, Chuvashskoe Cherepanovo village, etc.).

The obtained data make it possible to say that the main nationalities of settlements in the territory of the Pre-Volga Region of Tatarstan are Tatar and Russian (70%). Moreover, the areas with the majority of Russian settlements tend more toward Kazan city, the Chuvash and Mordovian settlements - to the border with the Chuvash Republic and the Republic of Mordovia, respectively.

Thus, historical and archaeological researchers show that the settlement of the territory of modern Tatarstan began from the earliest times, in the Paleolithic era, that is about 100-40,000 years ago. The oldest settlement was located on the bank of the Volga River, in the tract Krasnaya-Glinka near the Bessonovo village in the Tetyushsky district of the Tatarstan Republic. Primitive inhabitants led a nomadic way of life moving from place-to-place after the herds of animals, and since there was no written language in those days, the names were preserved only in large settlements, most often represented as caves and huts.

During the Neolithic period (4 - the first half of 3000 years BC), the territory of the Tatarstan Republic became more populated, and the huts were replaced by log crib house and dugouts, which were equipped with improvised materials. Such sites were studied, for example, nearby villages of Observatory, Borovoye Matyushino on the Volga River, Dubovaya Griva, Igim - on the Kama River.

It should be noted that the network of permanent settlements and their names began to take shape only after the fall of the Kazan Khanate and its accession

to the Russian state through the emergence of Russian settlements as frontier areas for protection from nomadic tribes. The formation of settlements was also determined by the nature of the occupations of the inhabitants. Hence, the fishermen arranged their villages on the shore of the fish richest areas of rivers (Rybnaya Sloboda village [Rus]). Hunters, as well as people engaged in beekeeping, settled inside forests or in the territories mostly rich in game animals (Kuyan-Zayachya village [Tat], Medvedevka settlement [Rus], Atabay-Ankebe village, where “at” - horse, “bay” - rich land [Tat], etc.).

The work of monasteries on the development of lands significantly contributed to the settlement of areas in the 17th-18th centuries. The monasteries were assigned with land mainly near Sviyazhsk and Kazan where Russian peasants formed new settlements (Gorodishche settl. and Verkhny Uslon settl.) from which smaller settlements and small villages later emerged. Furthermore, Russian settlements were formed within the frame of frontier lines to protect against the raids of the Nogais, Kalmyks, Crimean Tatars, and other alien people. The erection of such guard fortifications began initially on the right bank of the Volga River which is high and difficult for the nomads. There is a so-called “Tetyushskaya line” which passed south of Tetyush near the village of Prolei-Kashi to the Kilninsky Island where it was connected to the previously erected “Karlinskaya line” along the Karla River. Along the new Tetyush settlement, there were fortresses of Buinsk and burg of Kirteli. Under their cover, the emergence of the first settlements of Russian immigrants begins. Later construction on the left bank of the Volga River of Zakamskaya defensive line (frontier line) began. Along it fortresses of Bilyarsk, Sloboda Ekaterininskaya, and suburbs of Zainsk and Menzelinsk emerged.

The location of settlements was greatly influenced by natural factors - terrain, proximity of water objects, forest areas, and open spaces. When studying the location of settlements in river basins the following picture can be observed, beginning from the 16th to the 17th centuries, there was a sharp increase in the valley type of settlement (Figure 4). All the rest-slope and watershed consist 1-3%. Since the 19th century, due to the change in the structure of land use the slope-watershed type of terrain started to increase. All these are associated with a change in natural factors and an increase in anthropogenic load. In toponymy, valley types have a close relationship with the names of hydrological objects, for example, Kurbash village (Tat), Nurmabash village (Tat), Gremyachy Klyuch village (Rus-Chuv), and Kolunets village (Chuv). At the watersheds, since their development has been associated with the last decades, the anthrotoponyms are predominated in the names (Fedorovka village, Alekina Polyana village, Ivanovka village, etc.).

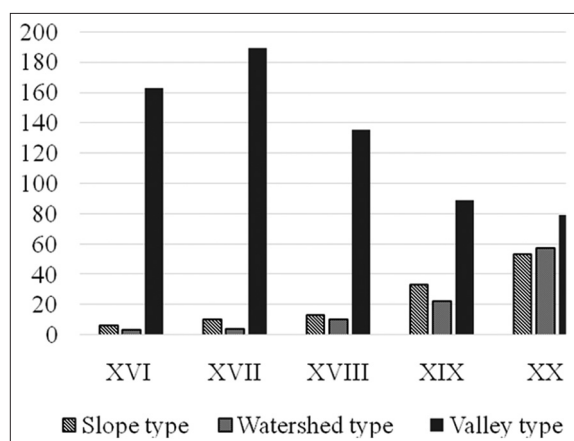


Figure 4: Distribution of settlements by geomorphological type of settlement. On the abscissa - the century, along the ordinate (the number of toponyms of this type)

As examples of natural groups of toponyms are the names given according to the peculiarities of the landscape, orography, the hydrological sign, the plant, and animal world which have features of both natural objects and those reflected in the geographical names of settlements. For example: Kyzyl Tau village (from the Tatar “Kyzyl” - red, “tau” - a hill), Sredniy Biyabash village (from the Tatar “bash” - the upper reaches, “Biya” - by the name of the river), and on the plant world - Narat village (from Tatar “narat” - pine). Imenle Burtas village (from the Tatar “imen” - an oak, “burtas” - a pocket); on the animal world - Ayu-Kudergan village (from the Tatar “ayu” - a bear corner”), etc.

When studying the landscape component of the toponyms of natural objects close links with the components of nature were revealed. Even in the transformed territories, they continue to bear the names of vegetation, fauna, and water objects that existed before. For example, river Nurbash (upper reaches)-the old source dried up and the new one is at a distance of 180 m. Such a picture can be observed on many rivers. Similar can be observed in the vegetation - Sosnovka village, at present, it is completely deforested territory.

Another group of toponyms relating to human and human activities is of great interest to geographers, ethnographers, and other researchers involved in the study of the history of the region. We identified the following groups of anthrotoponyms of settlements in the studied territory indicating the type of settlement (Vvedenskaya Sloboda village [Rus]) formed from personal names, surnames, and nicknames (Stepanovka village [Rus]), (Adam-Tulumbaev village [Tat]), (Elizavetino village [Rus]), (Tingash village [Tat]), etc.; made on the basis of a religious sign (Pokrovka village [Rus]), (Monastyrskoye village [Rus]), (Tatarskoe Islamovo village [Tat]), etc.

SUMMARY

Favorable natural conditions and a complicated history of the settlement of land determined the variety and diversity of the toponymy of the region. Among the 882 studied toponyms of the Pre-Volga Region of the Republic of Tatarstan, 553 are settlements (62.6%), 158 - hydrotoponyms (17.9%), and 171 - orotoponyms (19.5%). The largest number of names belongs to the Tatar (46%), the Chuvash, and Mordovian names make up about 12% and 2%, respectively, mixed by origin names - 16%, Russian - 24% of the total. The old names that existed among the indigenous people since ancient times were gradually replaced by the Russian names or moved into a group of mixed ones. Formation of settlements in the early stages of the development of the territory of the Pre-Volga Region of Tatarstan was determined by the nature of the occupations of the inhabitants, or by the natural features of the landscape, or obtained names given as proper names.

Changes in the composition of the population, and as a consequence, changes of the names of settlements (oikonyms) are closely related to the transformation of names both populated areas and geographical objects. Analysis of the oikonyms showed that the indigenous people due to the colonization of the territory in the 16th-17th centuries moved from the valleys of major rivers to the upper sites and watersheds forming new names. The toponyms of natural objects interconnected with the components of nature, even in the form of a transformed territory, continue to bear the names of vegetation, fauna, and water objects.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the study of the geographical names of settlements can reflect most aspects of human life: The nature of people and their relationships, national composition, religious beliefs, etc. The information obtained in the course of work on the toponyms of the Pre-Volga Region of the Republic of Tatarstan is of great importance for paleogeographers and historians and can be widely used in ecology and geography and local lore studies. This is related to the fact that the study of the names of objects of nature and human activity allows us to trace the history of the settlement of the region and to reveal the landscape features of the territory which in future will serve as an impetus for increasing cognitive activity and creative potential in various social strata of the population.

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