

Color Symbolism in the Bashkir Toponymy

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ABSTRACT

The author attempts to explain the origin of place-names with components *aκ* (white) and *κara* (black) in the Bashkir toponymy based on a wide involvement of the facts of mythopoetic symbolism. The study of color symbolism in place-names helps to reveal the code of ethnocultural information embedded in place-names, as well as to identify people's worldviews and fragments of the ethnic view of the world. As the analysis shows, the colors *aκ* (white) and *κapa* (black) in the Bashkir folk culture, including the toponymy, create a binary opposition *white - black*, often correlated with the opposition *good - bad*. In the formation of linguocultural competence of students of philological faculties studying the language of the region, in particular the ethno-linguistic, ethno-cultural, linguocultural, and socio-cultural aspects of its studying play an important role.

KEYWORDS

Bashkir language, toponymy,
ethnolinguistics, color symbolism,
linguocultural competence

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 22 October 2016
Revised 27 November 2016
Accepted 05 December 2016

Introduction

The relevance of research

The study of regional onomastics in line with the latest achievements of modern linguistics is very relevant. The data of onomastics allow to solve not only common and linguistic problems of modern science, but also socio-pragmatic

problems that arise in today's society. Each region has its own linguocultural specifics, that is why when teaching linguistic disciplines it is appropriate to offer special integrated courses aimed at studying the linguistic and cultural aspects of the region's language.

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The relevance studying of the language of the region in terms of reflecting in it a variety of information (cultural, historical, geographical, etc.) is of no in doubt.

The concept of "language of the region" is capacious and includes literary language (national languages of the Republic Bashkortostan: modern Bashkir language, the modern Russian language, dialects, colloquialisms, jargon, the phenomenon of mixing and contamination of related or contacting languages, regional onomasticon (toponymy, ethnonymy, anthroponymy, etc.). The language policies in the region are also included in the concept of the "language of the region". In the works of writers and poets, in fiction the theme of „ancestral birthplace" is reflected and contains various information on regional studies.

One of the culture-based and culture-oriented courses is regional onomastics. It is one of the sections of onomastics, integrating the achievements of the language, history and geography and has a large scientific-educational and ideological and moral potential in the implementation of the regional policy in the field of science and education. The regional onomastics is an integral part of the spiritual culture of different ethnic groups living in the area. The development of scientific and educational programs and books of a new generation, reflecting linguocultural approach to language learning in close connection with the culture of ethnic groups and the national peculiarities of the region and their implementation into the socio-cultural and educational space of the region allows us to solve current ethnocultural and sociolinguistic problems of modern society.

The results of this study can be implemented in teaching and educational process of philological faculties of the Republic of Bashkortostan. This will be a definite step towards the realization of the linguocultural approach in training students in close connection with the ethnic culture and with consideration of national peculiarities of the region.

Hypothesis

The study of regional linguistic and cultural material related to the history, geography, cultural studies, ethnography, sociology contributes to cultivation of love of students to their native language, respect for other languages and cultures, the cultural heritage of the native land and the acquisition of certain social and moral experience and thus will contribute to the spiritual enrichment of students.

Materials and methods

The object of research is regional onomastics, the subject of analysis are geographical names of the Republic of Bashkortostan with the color symbolism ак (white) and kara (black).

The purpose of research is to reveal the ethnocultural information code embedded in geographical names, to explain their origin and functioning in the language for further implementation of the results of research in teaching and educational process.

The methodological basis of the research are the works of well-known Russian ethnolinguists, onomasts, toponymists such as N.A. Baskakov (1980), A.N. Kononov (1954), O.N. Trubachov (1992), I.V. Kormushin (1997),

A.V. Superanskaya (1990), R.A. Ageeva (1990), E.L. Berezovich (2009) and others.

The research was conducted using the methods of ethno-linguistic and linguocultural interpretation.

Results and Discussions

Color is one of the objective properties of our material environment, which exists independently from the consciousness of a human being and his sensory organs, but is reflected in his mind through visual perception. A human being's ability to perceive colors of the surrounding environment is one of his fundamental characteristics.

In folklife culture not only color is indicated with the help of color tokens, but also ideas, thoughts and information are expressed. Through linguistic resources related to color categorization and conceptualization of reality is carried out, since color terms are characterized by a large imagery, semantic capacity, have a symbolic meaning, and evoke different associations among the culture-bearers. In each national culture (material and spiritual) color terms are associated with the knowledge of the ethnicity about the world and have a certain aesthetic and ethical value.

In the modern linguistics, including the Turkic studies, more and more attention is paid to the study of color-names and their symbolism. I.V. Kormushin (1997), who semantically reconstructed the ancient Turkic vocabulary related to color-terms, came to the conclusion that color is among the most accessible to a human being's perception features of the objects of the environment and that is why this group of attribute words is one of the oldest in all languages; at the same time, this group of vocabulary is one of the most important in the lexical and grammatical system of the language. According to I.V. Kormushin (1997), the reconstruction helps to see the creative act of an ancient human being, when he correlated an undifferentiated idea of a situation with its specific components and features through a metaphor and metonymy, isolating and building substantive and adjectival words. Therefore, color adjectives state a transition from the world of objects to concepts of spiritual culture.

The perception of color is reflected in mythology, traditional culture, religious beliefs, rituals and folklore texts, and in onomasticon.

The aim of this article is to describe the Bashkir place-names formed from color-names ак "white" and кара "black", and to extract ethno-cultural information by identifying the motives of nomination.

In the onomastics there are a variety of interpretations of "color" names. Color names often found in Turkic ethnonymy are explained by the resettlement of this ethnic group in countries, sometimes they refer to some external characteristic features of people (Baskakov, 1980; Uraksin, 1986).

According to our observations, color adjectives are used widely in relation to geographical features in almost all nations.

According to the conclusions of the well-known onomast A.V. Superanskaya (1990), color names do not always indicate the color. The author after analyzing the names of rivers and mountain ranges concluded: „... you can widely spread attributes „black“ and „white“: Black Mountains – White Mountains, Black



River – White River (Aksu – Karasu)“. According to her, "... the names „black“ and „white“ correspond to the concepts „north“ and „south“, in Azerbaijan they may mean „east“ and „west“, at least in the names of winds white wind means eastern and black –western. From her analysis it follows that „... the motivation of names depends largely on the latitude of the geographical horizon of the one who gives it, on the degree of his awareness, as well as the era“. Analyzing the origin of the names of White Russia, O.N. Trubachov (1992) concludes that adjectives of color are the symbol of cardinal points. „This system has much deeper roots than one might think, at the same time, it is residual, which also speaks in favor of its antiquity, and it is multi-layered in the sense that it includes relatively recent influences from the East, (the name „Rus“ itself is probably a color name, and thus is likely to be orientational!)“. The name White Rus originally referred to a large area of the Rostov-Suzdal Rus and emerged from the side of khans of the Golden Horde as Ak-Urus, i. e. White Rus. For the Tatars geographically it was the "Western Rus". Since this name has not been a self-designation, it was forgotten, and later referred to the western territory, populated by Belarusians (Great, Small and White Rus - respectively - Black, Red and White Rus) (Trubachov, 1992).

Indeed, the Polish linguist W. Manczak (1975) claims that three different Rus initially appeared in the Tatar environment and have been adopted by the Slavs: the Northern part of Russia got the name Black Rus, the Western – White Rus, the Southern – Red Rus. Later, the meaning of these names has been transformed. Firstly, the names always had book character and could not be firmly rooted in the people's consciousness. Secondly, there were changes in the political situation: in 1480 Muscovy freed from the power of the Tatar khan and the term „white“ began to be used in the sense of "free", etc..

R.A. Ageeva (1990) concluded that cardinal points orientation by color is typical for the pan-Eurasian culture. Thus, the capital of the Khazaria, according to Ibn Fadlan, "split" into two parts which „were called White and Black Khazars". From the text of Ibn Fadlan it is not clear why they were called so. "If a city was called „White“ due to its geographical position (on the west bank of the Volga), it is consistent with the pan-Eurasian symbolism of the cardinal points: "white" = "western"".

In the Slavic lingvokulture place-names associated with color do not have a connection to the geographical orientation. This is evidenced by conclusions of the famous toponymist E.L. Berezovich (2009). On the basis of the analysis of about 1100 black, 300 white, 200 red rivers and streams in the Russian north, E. L. Berezovich (2009) concluded that color-names have no connection with the spatial conception: "no connection with cardinal points is evidenced".

In studies of A.N. Kononov (1954) ак means "to flow", hence aksu "flowing water", кара - "earth".

E. Koychubaev (1967) binds place-names with component ак, with the word акык "flowing", which subsequently lost the affix -ык: Аккүл – акык күл, Аксу – акык су "flowing water", Акком – акыкком "flowing sands". Then the names of rivers, having component кара must obviously mean "not flowing", "simple". According to him, these names do not correspond to the geographical landmark. E. Koychubaev (1974) also believes that color adjectives often act in other meanings than color. He believes that the word кара besides its basic meaning

"black" is used in the meanings "land, ground, hill, ridge, distance, famine, frequent, west," etc.

In the following, we will consider Bashkir place-names with the component ак and ҡара. Ususally, the word ак in the Bashkir toponymy is used in the meaning of color. According to M.G. Usmanova (1994), in the Sakmara river basin, in many cases the color of rocks, sediments, area serves as a motive for naming; in the names of rivers and lakes, ак means color.

While analyzing names reflecting some features of geographical objects, A.A. Kamalov (1994) concludes that in the Bashkir toponymy among the adjectives used in non-color meaning only the word кызыл "red" can be specified, which is used in the meaning of "Soviet". According to him, in other cases color adjectives are used in their direct meanings.

F.G. Hisamitdinova (1992) in the historic-etymological dictionary of Bashkortostan's place-names explains the name of the lake Akkul as follows: from ак "white" and күл "lake"; or from ак "clean" and күл "lake"; or ак "sacred" and күл "lake". The author adds that "... the Bashkirs from the clan Tabyn consider the lake Akkul sacred".

Considering the ambiguity of the word ак, it can be concluded that the characteristics of the object by the word ак does not always have the meaning of color.

Place-names with color components in the toponymic system of Bashkortostan are very ancient (except the adjective кызыл "red" in the meaning "Soviet"), and many of them have connections with the mythology of the Bashkir (Bukharova, 2003). In the mythopoetic view of the world color terms are a way of perception and explanation of the world.

In the culture of the Turkic peoples, including the Bashkirs, the white color has a certain position in the system of color terms. There are many examples of deification of animals of a white color, and of white birds. For example, the mythical horse Акбузат, literally "a light gray horse," аккош, literally "a white bird", "swan", ак йылан, literally "a white snake" and many others. In beliefs and legends of the Bashkirs, as well as in the epics the appearance Акбузат and Ак йылан is associated with a favorable combination of circumstances, they represent happiness and prosperity.

The Bashkirs considered especially honorable when they sacrificed to the gods a pet of a white color. They used to have rituals sacrifice, a so called ак корбан салыу.

For consecration of residence when building a house, the Bashkirs used to put a large white stone – ак таш on its foundation or on the threshold. As can be seen from the ritual, the Bashkirs considered a white stone to be sacred.

In order to comprehend the way of thinking of people associated with color terms, we turn to the Bashkir mythology, to the text of the epos "Ural-Batyr". The Bashkir mythological epos "Ural-Batyr" possesses color symbolism, rooted in antiquity. For example, the use of color terms of the group "gold" is associated with the image of the sun. The daughter of the king of birds Samrau and the goddess of sun (Bash. Koyash) Humay is golden-haired. When combing her hair at the day time she illuminates the earth and at night – the moon.

Color terms in the epos are used to create not only external but also internal appearance of the heroes. The human creature (Һәң әһәһе) is identified with the



flower that each subsequent generation of "colored" (төрлө төскэ бизэгэн) in a certain color: vilified, denounced (таплаган) or rehabilitated, justified - аклаган.

The white and the black color have a special place in the Bashkir folk culture and in the system of color names in the Bashkir language. These colors create a binary opposition white - black, correlated with the opposition good - bad. In the text of the epos this opposition is used for characterizing a human being, of his moral character.

The word ак is used in the text is not in the direct meaning of the color "white", but in the figurative meaning "pure". For example, the pure, light side in a human being is expressed in phrases һөтгөй таза "pure as milk", ак йөрәк, literally "a white heart" in the sense of "a pure heart". In the epos the evil in man is associated with black color - капа. As can be seen from the context, Ural Batyr wants to turn his brother Shulgan in a black rock.

Perhaps the idea of stopping evil deeds of the brother Shulgan lies in this wish of the hero. The meaning of "remedy the evil, bad action, bad behavior" is passed through the collocation капа йөз йыуу, literally "to wash the black face". Evil and misleading can only be justified by good deeds. The word ак retained in the custom ак һүз биреу, literally "to give a white word" in the sense of "to swear".

A quick look at the Bashkir mythology suggests that when choosing a sacred object, thing, animal, or bird people, first of all, paid attention to its the color. The Turkic peoples associate with white color something unearthly, holy, it is an epithet of the gods. For example, the Khakases imagine Humay as a gray-haired old woman, and, according to the Teleuts and Shors, Humay is a tall, white-haired woman in a long white robe. In the epos the white color represents something divine and light. After the death of Ural-Batyr Humay says that if she bears a baby-swan, it will be light as the light dreams of Ural-Batyr.

Thus, the symbolism of colors ак and капа correlates with manifestations of mythological thinking. Epy opposition white - black (ак-капа) relates to the concepts of good - evil, and is used in the epos for creating not only the external but also internal appearance of the characters.

The materials of R. Fahretdinov (1993) help to understand the nature of color signs in toponymy. The scientist writes in his work "Bulgarian and Kazan Turks" that he has heard of the Bulgarian state from the Arab historians. Bulgarians in those days were called Олуғ Болғар and Капа Болғар. According to R. Fahretdinov (1993), Олуғ Болғар are Bulgars, who had gone to the Danube, Кеңе Болғар and Капа Болғар - Bulgars, who after converting to Islam took black color as the symbol of the state and remained to live on the river Itil.

As this material shows, the Turks used the symbolism of flowers. The motive for the nomination Капа Болғар perhaps was the fact that Капа Болғары (Kara Bulgars) have stayed at the motherland and chose the color of the earth. Hence it can be assumed that the black color gets the meaning "true", "earth", "real".

Thus, white color expresses divinity, holiness, "unearthly" color and the black color, in contrast, the "earth" color, "true" color.

In this work of R. Fahretdinov (1993) interesting information regarding the names Ак һарай and Капа һарай are contained. The author writes that the

people call Капа һарай Хөкөм һарайы, i. e. the execution yard of bad people (Fakhretdinov, 1993). In this case, Капа can mean „bad”.

It is interesting to find out the motives for using colors in formation of color-names. As seen from our observations, color-names in some cases can mean only the color, in other cases, the color of an object gets further rethinking in the minds of the people. In particular, the word ак, except the meaning „white” got the meaning „holy”. For example, in the name Акташ, literally „a white stone”, the color of the rock – white quartz – served as the motive for the nomination. At the same time, the color of the object got an additional rethinking in the minds of the people and the mountain is considered sacred.

In other cases, the word “ак” is the synonym of the word изге – “holy”. This is evidenced by the place-names Акбура, Акзырат, Ак төйәк, etc. Акбура means literally “a white log-house”, but the mountain got its name not due to the color of the log-house – according to the legend, on this mountain a brave warrior was buried with full honors. The Bashkirs usually used to bury most respected people separately, on a mountain, and their graves were considered holy. Акзырат//Акзират, literally “white grave”. This area is also a sacred one, because at the lake Акзырат according to legend the Muslim missionary Husainbek is buried. In the name Ак төйәк, literally “a white haven” the word ак (white) gets the meaning „sacred”.

Conclusion

Thus, taking into account not only linguistic, but also extra-linguistic factors in the formation of place-names, consideration of the religious and mythological beliefs of the people leads to the conclusion that the white color, besides the actual color meaning, in toponymy symbolizes the "sacredness" of the object, and the black color – “earthy, real” and sometimes has a pejorative meaning “bad”. As known, the black color except the meaning of color, in many linguocultures is a symbol of darkness and represents the bad in the linguistic view of the world.

From the standpoint of linguocultural approach, the native language is seen as a tool for acquiring the knowledge about the world, it reflects the world view of native speakers. The study of onomastic space of the Republic of Bashkortostan should be based not only on the language of people, who created it, but also through the history of onyms an attempt to identify the cultural and linguistic competence of the founders of onomasticon of the region as a fragment of the world view, of the collective memory should be made.

The introduction of materials on regional onomastics relying both on the onomastic theory and regional national component, to the cultural and educational space in the region will contribute to the spiritual development of modern moral and ethical and at the same time, ethnic and cultural identity, capable of tolerant thinking and understanding the history of his multinational republic.

Acknowledgments

The publication was prepared within a research project Nr. 15-04-00414 supported by the Russian Humanitarian Science Foundation.

Disclosure statement



No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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