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Snow on the Kola Peninsula. Dialectal words with the meaning of ‘snow’

This article presents the first results of my study of the ‘snow’ lexicon on the Kola Peninsula. The study is to be completed in the autumn semester 2002.

In every northern country there is snow and in every northern language there are words that refer to snow in one way or the other. Russian is a language that is used in a very large area and in some parts of it, snow is rarely seen. It is therefore interesting to look at a northern Russian dialect and compare it to the language spoken on a small island in the north, namely Icelandic. These two nations – Russia and Iceland – are of course very different and so are the languages, but it is interesting to see if they have something in common when dealing with such a usual and common thing in the north, as snow. The Russian dialect on the Kola Peninsula will be the main subject here and Icelandic will be used for comparison.

The best source of words from Kola, is Merkuriev's dictionary of dialectal words, *Живая речь кольских поморов*, which was published in Murmansk 1979. From this dictionary I first gathered all words meaning ‘snow’ and ‘ice’, but then I decided to concentrate on snow; snow when falling, lying on the ground or being blown around. I have a list of 38 words. In addition, there are 7 more words which were gathered in an expedition to the Kola Peninsula in August this year. They are from the country villages Varzuga and Umba on the south side of the peninsula. So all in all there are 45 words in the study.

More than half of the words in the list (24 words) are nouns. Half of these, namely 12, are formed by suffixation, and 2 have both suffix and prefix, *вѣтадка* and *поносѹха*. The rest of the nouns have neither a visible prefix nor suffix. Here we have words like *брод*, *порѹха*, *тѹрок* and *чамрѹ*. It is interesting to note that many nouns are formed with the suffix *-ин-а*, which is the most common suffix here with four examples: *брѹдина*, *лѹмбина*, *снежѹина* and *снежурѹина*. In addition,

there is one with a combined suffix where the first part is *-ин-а*, *бро́д-ди́нушка*. We also find a very strange suffix, *-анд-а* in *ляпа́нда*, which needs to be looked at closer to be explained.

There are 13 verbs, and most of them – 9 verbs – are formed by prefixation. The most common prefix is *за-*, which is found in 4 of the verbs. Other prefixes are *по-*, *про-*, *рос-*, *у-* and *с-*, which only occur once each. Two of the prefixed verbs are also suffixed, *закуреви́ть* and *попряди́вать*. 2 others are just suffixed, *куреви́ть* and *тropicну́ть*. The last 2 have neither a prefix or suffix visible, *кури́ть* and *кути́ть*. They both form pairs with verbs with the prefix *за-* (*кури́ть/закури́ть*, *кути́ть/закути́ть*). A similar case is *куреви́ть* (*куреви́ть/закуреви́ть*).

There are 4 adjectives and they all have different suffixes: *бро́д-ный*, *ро́хлый*, *курева́тый*, *снежанно́й*. The last 4 words are adverbs and they are also quite different in formation. Two have the same suffix: *бро́дно* and *уся́дно*, but otherwise they are different as the former is derived from an adjective but the second from a verb. Then we have one adverb with a prefix: *взусту́*. The last one, *бро́дко*, has the root *брод* like the first one but has a different suffix.

The words can be divided into three groups based on their connection with other dialects. The first group consists of words which are used in other dialects and carry the same or a similar meaning. It is interesting to look closely at the connection to the dialects of Novg(orod), Psk(ov) and Rostov because the first Russian settlers on the Kola Peninsula came from those areas. It is also interesting to see how much the lexicon of snow on the Kola has in common with the dialects spoken in other northern areas. The crucial source for this study is the dictionary of Russian dialects *Словарь русских народных говоров* (SRNG).

In the second group we have words whose form is used in other dialects or even in the literary language but in a different meaning. The connection to Novg., Psk., Rostov as well as other northern dialects is also worth looking at in this context. The words in both of these first groups offer an opportunity to study how the different meanings are related to each other. I ask myself if it is always possible to find a com-

mon aspect of these different meanings that can explain the dialectal meaning this word has gained on the Kola.

The third group consists of words unknown in other Russian dialects and in Russian literary language. What kind of words are these and where do they come from? Other languages may have influenced the dialect and supplied these words; it may be a regular word formation from normal Russian roots that by coincidence does not exist in other Russian dialects, or it could be an irregular word formation. Now let us take a closer look at a few examples from these groups.

In the first group there are 17 words, 16 from Merkuriev and one from the expedition this year. They include five which are derived from the root *кур-*. These are *кури́ть*, *закури́ть*, *куреви́ть*, *закуреви́ть*, *курева́*. The intransitive verbs *кури́ть* and *куреви́ть* both mean 'to blow snow around' while their ingressive variants *закури́ть* and *закуреви́ть* have the meaning 'to start to blow'. *Закури́ть* has an additional transitive meaning 'to cover with snow'. All these words are used in this meaning in Arkh(angelsk), and that is the only area besides the Kola Peninsula where they can all be found. *Куреви́ть* and *закуреви́ть* are both found in Novg. in this meaning and so is the noun *курева́*. *Курева́* means 'snowstorm' and is found in many dialects besides Novg. and Arkh. All these words have many other meanings in different areas. In the literary language *кури́ть* has the meaning 'to smoke' and most likely that is the connection point. When the snowstorm is so dark it looks like smoke; you can't see through it, it starts to be named after the smoke instead of the snow.

Actually there are more words derived from this root on the list, namely *ку́рень* which belongs to the second group and *курева́тый* and *ску́рить*, which are in the third one. *Ку́рень* has many other meanings in Russian dialects but only in Murm(ansk) it means 'snowstorm'. *Курева́тый* and *ску́рить* are not found in other dialects.

In Icelandic there is the word *kóf* which can be used both about smoke (*reykjarkóf*) and snow (*snjókóf*). That is the kind of weather when the snow is blown around and nothing can be seen, similar to the meaning of the words with *кур-* in the Kola dialect. *Reykjarkóf* is used about smoke when it is dark and it is difficult to see through it.

Another example from this group is *поносúха* 'snowstorm'. It is derived from the verb *носúть* 'to carry'. With the prefix *но-* and the suffix *-úха* it has the meaning 'that which carries something around', and strong wind indeed carries the snow and blows it around. According to SRNG this lexeme is quite common in other dialects, mainly northern, such as Arkh., Komi ASSR, Belomor(sk), and Murm. When I asked about this word in Varzuga an informant said they used *понанесло́* but not *поносúха*.

In Icelandic there is the word *ffjúk* which is derived from the verb *ffjúka* 'to drift with the wind'. *Fjúk* has the underlying meaning of 'that which is carried around by the wind' and is used in the meaning 'snowstorm'. This is, in a sense, the opposite from the *поносúха*, that is, in Icelandic we have a word meaning 'that which drifts with the wind' while the Russian word means 'that which carries things around'.

The last example from the first group is *норо́ха*. On the Kola Peninsula it means 'newly fallen, loose snow', similar to lit. *норо́ша*. At first one might think that the dialectal word is derived from the latter, more common one, but it is not so. According to Vasmer's etymological dictionary¹ it is derived from the Old Russian word *но-рохъ* 'dust', 'ash' (*нрax* being the Church Slavonic counterpart). The literary word *норо́ша* has then been derived from that. It is therefore not surprising to find this word in many dialects around Russia, including both Novg. and Psk. The two meanings are not far apart, the likeness of dust or ash and newly fallen, loose snow is obvious; both are small, light flakes that almost seem to float on the ground.

In Icelandic there are compound words which include the word *aska* 'ash' and mean 'snowstorm'. For example the word *öskubylur*, which is formed from the words *aska* 'ash' and *bylur* 'snowstorm' and means 'great snowstorm'. But as you can see, it has a very different meaning from the Russian word. This Icelandic word is more connected to 'smoke' or 'bad view' than 'loose snow on the ground'. There is also the uncommon Icelandic word *maldur* which has both the meaning of 'flour'; 'meal' and 'snowstorm of small corns'. Here we also

¹ Фасмер, Макс. 1964. Этимологический словарь русского языка.

have some similarity in thinking though, once again, it is not quite the same.

The second group consists of 12 words, all but one from Merkuriev. My first example from this group is *брод*. The literary meaning is 'a shallow part of a body of water that may be crossed by wading'; 'ford'. On the Kola Peninsula it has an additional meaning of 'deep and loose snow'. The two meanings are not that far apart. It is not that different to wade over a river on a ford and 'wade' in deep snow. And if we look at the verb *бродить* we can link them even closer together. According to Dal², *бродить* has a few different meanings and one of them is 'to walk with difficulty' and another is 'to walk in high grass, wet mud'; 'wade either on a ford or in deep snow'.

I have come across many other words that are derived from *брод*. In Merkuriev's dictionary you can find both *бродко*, *бродно* and *бродный* as well as the noun *бродня*. The meanings of all these words are connected to *брод* in the meaning of 'snow'. They fall in different categories here; *бродно* is in the first group as it is used in other dialects, Arkh., Ural, and Sverdlovsk, in the same meaning. *Бродный* is in the same group even though it is only found in Arkh. besides the Kola peninsula meaning 'loose' (about snow). *Бродко* falls in the third group as this form of the word is not registered anywhere else. In Merkuriev *бродня* means 'slush' but informants in Varzuga used this word as a synonym to *брод*, that is, 'deep, loose snow'.

In our expedition to the Kola Peninsula we came across two more words derived from the root *брод* and used as a synonym to it. The feminine nouns *бродина* and *бродинушка* were mentioned by inhabitants of Varzuga but are not in Merkuriev's dictionary. The first one, *бродина*, also belongs to the second group because it is found in Novg. but has a different meaning there ('a certain part of a meadowland'). Actually that is quite close to one of the meanings *брод* has according to SRNG. There *брод* has in many dialects the meaning of 'boundary between two parts of a meadow'. *Бродинушка* is, on the other hand, not mentioned in SRNG so it falls in the last group. It is most likely a

² Даль, Владимир. 1903. Толковый словарь живого Великорусского языка.

diminutive of *бродина*, which, in turn, seems to be augmentative of *брод*.

Icelandic has no noun meaning both 'snow' and 'ford', but it is common to talk of 'wading in snow' (að vaða snjó) if the snow is deep. Here we have a similar thinking though it is used in a different way in the two languages.

The next example is *снежина* which in the Kola dialect means 'shallow snow'. In other dialects it can be found in the meaning of 'snowflake' or something compared to snow, like 'white face of a child' or even 'paleness in the face of a sick child' in a few dialects including Psk. The suffix *-ина* most likely is a diminutive to *снег* 'snow', meaning here 'snow lying on the ground'. In that way we get the meaning of 'little snow on the ground' or 'shallow snow'.

Кисель denotes 'wet snow' on the Kola. In other dialects it has the meaning of something soft and/or wet, like 'dough', 'mud', 'porridgelike food' or 'a sick man who can't stand on his own feet'. In the literary language the stress is on the second syllable and the word means 'jellylike, floating food'. The substance of wet snow is soft and wet, so it fits well the definition above. When asked about this word, an informant in Varzuga pointed out the word *рóскись* in the same meaning. This word is not mentioned in any of the dictionaries I have looked into. But in the literary language there is a verb *раски́ать* 'to become limp'. It is most likely that *рóскись* is derived from this verb since the prefix is the same (but stressed in the noun) and then it means 'that which is becoming limp, soft'. That meaning fits very well. I have not been able to find any Icelandic word that resembles this one in thinking.

Now we have reached the third group. There are 16 words, 11 from Merkuriev's dictionary and 5 new ones. The first examples are *ш́инша* and *росш́иншитъ* or *расш́иншитъ*. *Ш́инша* is used on the Kola Peninsula in the meaning of 'wet snow' and the verb means 'to get wet, soft' (about snow) and it is not recorded in any other dialect, according to Dal' (SRNG has only been published up to *r*). But Vasmer mentions this word in his etymological dictionary and there he states that it is derived from the Karelic word *tšipšu* meaning 'wet snow', and in Finnish there is *sipsu* meaning 'thaw, when the snow gets soft in soft

weather'. According to this, it seems that *шúнииа* was taken in unchanged from another language and the verb then derived from it in a normal way. *Рас-/рас-* is a common prefix of verbs and indicates spreading.

Лянáнда is one of the new words from Varzuga. It means 'wet snow when falling in large flakes'. An informant explained this word as being similar to *лянúха* which in Nižnegorskij means 'wet snow in flakes'. In SRNG there is also the word *лянúга* from Vologda in the meaning 'wet snow' but *лянáнда* is not found there. The suffix *-анд* sounds very strange and its origin needs to be studied further. The root *лян-* could be related to the verb *ляпать* which in a few other dialects can have the meaning 'to throw something sticky, adhesive'. That connects this word also to the word *улипáть* which is found in Merkuriev. In the Kola this word means 'to stick, get stuck in something (for example wet snow)'. Dal' includes *лянúха* in his dictionary and there it is synonymous to *липúха* and *лепéн* meaning 'wet snow in flakes'. In his list of roots Townsend³ states that the roots *лин* and *л/п* bear the meaning 'stick, adhere'. *Улипáть* fits that very well and *лянáнда* could also fit there. So it seems that more than one vowel can be used between *л* and *п* to produce the meaning 'stick, adhere'.

If we look at all the words in the first group, where the words are known in the same meaning in other dialects, we see that only 6 of the 17 words are found in Novg., Psk. or Rostov. 4 of these make two pairs: *куреvíть/закуреvíть*, *кутúть/закутúть*. The last two are *порóха* and *куреvá* which both are known in more than 7 other dialects. *Кутúть* is also used in many other dialects. So the connection to the dialects of Novg., Psk. and Rostov does not seem to be strong.

On the other hand, there seems to be a very strong similarity between the dialect on Kola and the one spoken in Arkh. In fact, I found that 14 of the 17 words in the first group carry the same meaning in the region of Arkh. One of the reasons for this could of course be that the weather on the Kola is more like the weather in Arkh. than in

³ Townsend, Charles. 1975. Russian Word-formation. P. 252.

Novg., Psk. or Rostov and therefore words used in Arkh. describe better the kind of snow the people there have around them.

The words in the second group exist in other dialects but carry a different meaning. 6 words of the 12 in this group are known in Novg., Psk. or Rostov, but 8 are used in Arkh. It is likely that the settlers took these words with them from their home and then added new meanings to them later on. Two of these words, *кисель* and *кúрень*, are also found in the literary language so that could have influenced the speakers of Kola, too. The other words, *снежи́на*, *тpóпнуть*, *бpóдина* and *бpодня́*, suggest a certain link to Novg., Psk. and/or Rostov.

Regarding Icelandic there seems to be some similarity in thinking but in most cases this is expressed differently. We saw that in examples like: *að vaða snjó* 'to wade in snow', *kóf* 'dark snowstorm' or 'smoke', *ffjúk* 'snowstorm or 'that which drifts', *öskubylur* 'very strong snowstorm' and *maldur* 'flour' or 'snowstorm of small corns' in connection with the Russian words *бpод*, *куpи́ть*, *пoнoсу́ха* and *пopóxa*. Interestingly, it seems that in both languages the connections between snow-words and others seem to be caused by a similar or an identical visual effect that viewing the snow in motion, or as a substance, produces despite the the fact that the languages are independent of each other.

These are just the first results of my study. In the near future these words need to be studied more closely. I need to complete the analysis of them in order to understand fully where they all come from and how they are formed. Only then will I be able to get a good view of what is special in the dialect on the Kola Peninsula.