

RLMSEE-2020**The Russian Language in Modern Scientific and Educational Environment****THE THEMATIC FIELD “CHINA” IN GEOGRAPHICAL
PERIODICALS OF THE XIX CENTURY**

Ekaterina Shcheglova (a)*, Natalya Prokofeva (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) Saint Petersburg State University, Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation

e.scheglova@spbu.ru

(b) Saint Petersburg State University, Institute of linguistic studies RAS, Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation

n.prokofeva@spbu.ru

Abstract

The XIX century may be called the continuation of the geographical discoveries' epoch in a certain sense. This is the time of dynamic development of trade connections with bordering countries and the fight for influence on the territories of newly discovered countries. The rise of interest to pop science journalism in the mid-XIX century is not accidental and the future direction of travel-journalism is formed within this branch. For example, the official printed organ of the Russian Geographic Society “Notes of the Empire Russian Geographic Society” is quite interesting. Peculiarities of presentation of information about the country allow considering the state interests connected with the whole country. The middle of the century is the time of contradiction on the external political ground between the Russian Empire and England which ended with the Crimean War. Within the present study we suggest considering the peculiarities of demanded nominations within the thematic field “China” in the aspect of key social interests reflected in them. The English sovereignty in this region was percept as a challenge, and Russia needed data to establish the perspectives of development of trade relations in the future. Here come the thematic specifics of the vocabulary, involved in the presentation of China in this journal's articles. The thematic dominant of these texts is trade.

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Keywords: China, lexical representation, Notes of the Empire Russian Geographical Society, thematic field, vocabulary history, XIX century



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1. Introduction

The XIX century is the time of the Russian national self-identity rise. This is reflected in the following processes: the Russian language system is formed on the national foundation (Kalinovskaya & Starovoitova, 2016; Kalinovskaya, 2018; Sorokin, 1965; Vinogradov, 1982), the folk language study is experienced and the folk culture is deeply considered (Dahl's dictionary), there appears the understanding of borders between "ours" and "theirs" due to the geographical discoveries both in the Russian Empire and abroad. This period, in a certain sense, may be called the continuation of the geographical discoveries epoch which contribute to the development of the state economy: the trade connections with bordering countries are actively developed, the newly found countries territories are fought to be influenced. The geographical searches are focused on the elimination of stereotypical presentations about mysterious people, and the information checked and written by scholars about various lands is highly valued. This is greatly assisted by the rise of periodicals (Dyagileva, 2015, 2016), including pop science (Gromova & Balashova, 2017), which were focused on the representation of geographical discoveries, correction and clearance of existing knowledge. This time may be considered the beginning of formation of travel-journalism, which presents the basic information about the newly discovered borders, countries, people (Kislova & Erther, 2019). One of such editions is the official printed organ of the Russian Geographic Society "Notes of the Empire's Russian Geographic Society" (further referred to as NERGS).

2. Problem Statement

The lexical representation of information about a country allows judging which interests are followed by the government of this country. In XIX century, the pop science journalism performed a whole number of tasks, not connected with education: it informed about the state politics, it transmitted the governmental interests, drew attention of business social circles to the problems of state expansion. Due to this, NERGS reflected not only scientific interests, but the interests of state politics (Pavlov, 2010).

It must be considered that the XIX century may be called the rise of scientific knowledge, this period saw the final formation of the most significant for modern society concepts and theories (Darwin, 1859), which pushed the development of civilization in various spheres. The pathfinder for the way of knowledge was often the word with its nominative function: the named is already known (Shcheglova, 2020). It is quite common for this time to create lists of words, accompanying the geographical description of a territory (Starovoitova, 2017). This reflects the whole feature of the epoch – faith and love for word as the value in itself (it is enough to remember how much honor was valued (Katsura, 1999): one might pay his life for words). The word, being a value in itself, is the reflection of the world view of contemporaries, so the peculiarities of word usage, usage meanings, presence of connotations shows the social attitude to a subject, a kind of interest for that subject from the government and specialist of various spheres (Leonard et al., 2019).

In this sense it is extremely interesting to consider the thematic field "China". In the mid-XIX century this is a closed state which is nevertheless considered as a potential trade partner.

3. Research Questions

The main questions which the authors pose are:

- the content and stratification of the thematic field “China” in NERGS articles;
- pragmatics of use of lexical means of this thematic field in NERGS articles about China;
- semantic dominants of the representation of the region in NERGS;
- connection between the content of the thematic field, the nature of use of forming units and the external Russian politics in the corresponding period.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is the determination of lexical means of representation of China in NERGS articles as well as distinguishing the connection of external political interests of the Russian Empire in this region and the content of the thematic field.

5. Research Methods

The main research method is diachronic with the elements of synchronic one: lexical units are studied in the context of the corresponding political background; the lexemes themselves are studied in the aspect of lexical semantic analysis.

6. Findings

The publications devoted to the description of those territories which are in the close focus of external political attention of Russia are extremely interesting. The middle of the century is the time of contradiction on the external political ground between the Russian Empire and England which finally ended with the Crimean War. A special sphere of interest for both countries are the states which have new sale markets in the forming system of world trade. Russia and China are connected with long trade relations, but they were mostly private (Kyakhta) (Akhmadeev & Gayazov, 2017; Kalvina & Kuras, 2019; Tagarov, 2015). The sovereignty of England in this region was perceived as a challenge; Russia needed information to establish the perspectives of the development of trade relations in the future. Here comes the thematic specification of vocabulary, exploited in the representation of China in NERGS articles.

The thematic field “China” in NERGS is presented by classic segments: geography, customs and traditions, flora, fauna. But as it often happens in publications all these fragments strictly follow one main idea. This is the idea of trade in the texts under analysis.

When we speak about the geographical position of the country, its climate, relief etc., the focus is made on comfortable travels with (small) caravans, road quality, including transportation by camels (!), the whole convenience of trade communications. The people’s customs and nature are described only concerning the trade, attitude to money, goods, foreigners as potential buyers.

6.1. Representation of trade ways

The vocabulary group “Trade ways” possesses a special completeness and wholeness of presentation. On the external level the lexical representation of this thematic group is organized through the system of geographical names, the frequency of which may seem exuberant for contemporary reader: *From Erkend through Badakhshan the road stretches to Khulum, then to Bukhara, Balkh and Kabul...There is the only way to Kuen Lun – the pass Kara-Khurum, which is used by the eaten Turkistan to contact Tibet and India* (“About the state of Altyshtar or six eastern cities of the Chinese province”, NERGS, 1861, No.3). But such refinement of the text with exotic, sometimes hardly pronounced toponyms had a pragmatic sense: orientation in badly known territory if the expeditions are necessary. In such a situation the original names might become the only way to trace the path, a unique code of communication with local pathfinders.

The same means of orientation serves the quantitative data about the distance between the important points of the way. It must be noted that the distance is defined with time periods: *It is 40 days from Erkend to Tibet; it is 12 days from Tibet to Kashir* (“About the state of Altyshtar or six eastern cities of the Chinese province”, NERGS, 1861, No.3). The means of transportation mentioned has a significant meaning: *It is 18 days of caravan on this way from Khokada to Kashgar* (“About the state of Altyshtar or six eastern cities of the Chinese province”, NERGS, 1861, No.3).

The internal content contains the assessing elements, describing various troubles on the way. The prior types of assessment are utilitarian and rational: *It is worth paying attention to extremely profitable position of the Chinese ports* (“About the trade ways around China and its dependents. NERGS. 1850. No.4); *Tyan Shan has a more comfortable access among all the ways* (“About the state of Altyshtar or six eastern cities of the Chinese province”, NERGS, 1861, No.3); *Terektin way is full with firewood and food* (“About the state of Altyshtar or six eastern cities of the Chinese province”, NERGS, 1861, No.3). Only in some cases the article authors apply to emotional assessment, warning the would-be travelers about “*extreme difficulties and dangers*” of any way. But in this case the authors do not limit themselves with emotional assessment but give certain factual data, which became the foundation for the assessment: *The main obstacle here is the Kunlun ridge (Kundulun means “obstacle” in Mongol), covered with permanent snow and stretching as the unbreakable wall from Yarkend to Khotana* (“About the trade ways around China and its dependents. NERGS. 1850. No.4). The presence of several variants of toponyms in this case and the translation from Mongol speaks about the importance of this geographical object.

6.2. Representation of trade-money relations

As the main interest in the presented publications is the trade, a special attention must be paid to the representation of the supposed trade-money relations. Excluding the cognition aspect of knowledge about the country from the sphere of the reader’s interest, the author mainly refers to the nominative function of the word, listing the names of goods which may be interesting for the reader:

A piece of satin: taxes – 1 chin 3 phyns 8 lees. The same way with gum state fabric. A piece of velvet: - 1 c. 1 p. 4 lees. A piece of simple taffeta: - 3 p. 4 lees 23 khaos. A piece of colored taffeta: - 2 p.,

5 lees, 6 khaos. A piece of tiffany: - 1 p. 7 lees, 8 sys... (“About the trade ways around China and its dependents. NERGS. 1850. No.4).

It is obvious that the text of publication is an attempt to inform the trade people about the Chinese prices and possible profits. The extremely factual approach with definite prices provides the extra opportunity for the reader to know the range of goods and their prices, which is very important considering the specifics of the Chinese trade traditions when the highly increased price is named first. Also, we must notice that the content of trades in the list is not randomly selected. It is obvious that the names in the list were thoroughly selected from those, which could really interest a Russian trader and were traditional goods between Russia and China. Almost complete absence of exoticisms, presence of complex names (a noun with attributive adjective) allowing to introduce a more exact definition of goods speak about that.

The representation of goods is accompanied with the exact definition of measuring units and prices because the inevitable part of the message is the transmission of the exoticisms of the thematic field “monetary units” and “measures of weight and length”. Here the authors are extremely detailed, comparing the traditional Russian notions with those unknown, existing in the system of another national world view:

...we must notice that in the Chinese weight: *Gin* (*Gin* or *Zin*, catty with Western Europeans) equals 1 pound 36 g[olds] 39 21/29 shares; *Lana* (*Lyan* or *tael*, tale with West.Europeans) is the 16th part of *Gin* = 2 r[ubles] 15 13/29 k[opek] of sil[ver]; *Chin* (*Zyan*, mace with West.Europ.) is the 10th part of *Lana* = 21 16/29 k.sil... (“About the trade ways around China and its dependents. NERGS. 1850. No.4). It seems that such a detailed description of monetary units and measuring units is caused by the desire to equip the reader with basically useful knowledge which will later help him exist in a strange reality. The author’s communicative task is obvious: to completely inform the potential participants of the trade process about strange realities of another people’s life.

6.3.Representation of animals and flora

Some other thematic groups fall under the influence of the determined thematic dominant. Thus, flora and fauna are described mostly in the same pragmatic way with the perspectives of agricultural work on the land: *Mountains Syrt, excluding the valleys of the rivers Abash, Arpa and Naryn are incapable of agriculture, with no forests, covered with small but thick grass. The Kirgiz plant wheat, barley and millet in the land of Atbash and Arpa; they also lack of trees and bushes and are covered with small grass: feather grass and mugwort* (“About the state of Altyshar or six eastern cities of the Chinese province”, NERGS, 1861, No.3). The authors are also interested in the cooking features of various animals. For example, a bird with the name *ular* is mentioned: *Such chickens are common for mountains: ular with the size of great grouse with smoky grey feathers and red circles under the eyes and with black and red stripes on the chest... Ular has soft meat and is considered the best roast meat in Kokand; keklik also has tasty meat and is trained for fights like a rooster in England* (“About the state of Altyshar or six eastern cities of the Chinese province”, NERGS, 1861, No.3).

We must notice the typical for travel descriptions comparison of the unknown to the known (*ular* – grouse, *keklik* – rooster). The name *ular* is not mentioned in any lexical graphic source of the XIX

century. Probably, we deal with one of the first mentions of this bird in the Russian language space. We also discovered only the use of this word during the later period of Przhevalsky's travel, describing the same geographical regions. The word *keklik* is found only in "The Russian dictionary of foreign words" by Chudinov (1910). The textual use refers to some significantly later time.

6.4. Representation of local customs

Even those themes which have a greater cognitive potential and provoke the reader's interest to the described territory suffer from the pressure of the general country-representing dominant. The selection of factual information is completely submissive to the purpose-driven practicality. For example, the information about the so-called "lucky and unlucky days" is necessary for the correct planning of the trade relations with locals: *Speaking about the trade Chinese class it is important to notice the superstitions about lucky and unlucky days... In such things as trade lucky and unlucky days play an important role among Chinese so they are enlisted in the Trade Manual in details... Unlucky days a year are exactly the half, according to the Trade Calendar* ("About the trade ways around China and its dependents. NERGS. 1850. No.4).

In a number of cases the description of local life is typical XIX-century consideration about the life of "backward" people, who did not receive civilized bonuses yet: *Hunger, another enemy of these poor people. In spite of the amount the land gives to the industrious peasants, relative cheapness of food and Chinese modesty these beggars-parasites often have to eat everything they can chew and event their friends' corpses, as they say* ("Thermal metric observations in the city Kuldge, in Western China". NERGS. 1864. No.1). The set metaphor *enemy of poor* is used in this case solely as a figure of speech, nomination *beggars-parasites* does not leave any doubt in the assessment of the observed phenomenon by the author.

6.5. Representation of climate

The presentation of information about climate conditions in the NERGS articles is also dominated by the presentation of factual information, potentially being useful for the supposed trade relations. Here we speak about the possibilities of travelling at various time of the year, the comfort of such travels and availability of trade ways in winter. The information is provided in a clearly objective way, with no assessment, completely abstract. This is done to create the impression of the objective picture, so that the reader could understand his profit and opportunities in planning the trade relations with potential partners.

In spite of the vast space, the Eastern Turkistan is a wonderful similarity of climate which may be explained only with peculiarities of its geographical position... During summer it is filled with cold, snow in the valleys lie until May and June, not mentioning the mountain peaks which are always covered with snow; the winter starts in October, at least the caravan which left Kashgar when we came (October 1) came back because the Terektin gorge was covered with thick snow. ("About the state of Altyshtar or six eastern cities of the Chinese province", NERGS, 1861, No.3).

As we see, metaphors which are encountered in this text, perform only the nominative function: these are language metaphors with the usage meaning, not possessing any figurativeness necessary for the expression of the subjective attitude to the subject of speech.

6.6. Representation of the transportation means

The exotic reality is represented in transportation means. The author of the text gives a detailed description of transportation means which do not exist in the Russian reality: *There are also ways of travelling by one-wheeled vehicle, which are moved by the hired peasants from behind; these carts are used in South China for close distances and appear in North China when students arrive in Beijing from south regions to take exams* (“About the trade ways around China and its dependents. NERGS. 1850. No.4). But the most attention is paid to the variety of ships and boats as the most available and comfortable means of transportation. The attention is also paid to the tonnage and function: *The most common ships for transportation in China are bread ships, which carry the state bread... The form of bread ships and all the Chinese ships in general is long square; the ship snout is dull, the back is high, the deck contains tents made of wood instead of cabins; there are three masts: the middle one is the highest, the back one is lower and the front is the lowest; the sails are made of mats... The ship capacity is usually up to 13,000 poods (about 300 tons). Of other smaller ships sailing in the rivers and near the Chinese shores are known: a) Zyan and Khuguan, with many departments; they differ each other actually in the form of their body (oval or straight), back and snout (cut or pressed), deck tents (cloth or wood) etc.; b) light boats called khua-ry and used for speed sailing and river crossing; c) “night” boats sailing at night which is not common for China; d) “warm” boats protected from wind and rain, e) “crab-like” boats, narrow and long with many paddles used for opium smuggling* (“About the trade ways around China and its dependents. NERGS. 1850. No.4). The water ways of transportation are traditionally mostly demanded as the most comfortable and available in Russia and abroad. This explains the detailed description of the ship construction, so that the reader may know what the potential partner may offer him. The nature of nominations of various boats also demands our attention. Sometimes it is the translation (and it is placed in inverted commas by the author), in other cases this is the name which corresponds to the name of the territory where the boats are used.

7. Conclusion

Summing up the study we may draw the following conclusions:

- pop science direction of journalism was greatly developed in the mid-XIX century with the appearance of periodicals aimed at describing certain fields of knowledge
- consideration of peculiarities of single territory representation in the geographical edition demonstrates both the system of presentations about the region in a certain period of time and the dependency from the governmental external political interests of the Russian Empire;
- China in the mid-XIX century was interesting mostly from the view point of expanding the external market in the situation of formation of the world economy, thus the trade became the thematic dominant for the NERGS articles about this country;
- according to this thematic dominant the thematic field China is formed in this edition: the main thematic groups of vocabulary are “trade ways”, “trade-money relations”, “transportation means”;

- the thematic fields which do not directly refer to trade are influenced by the dominating theme, which is reflected in selection of lexical means and the nature of their use.

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