LEXICAL NOMINATION AS A REFLECTION OF CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE IN OLD ENGLISH SEAFARING

Natalia A. Atnabayeva¹, Vladimir G. Baltachev², Yekaterina V. Troynikova³,
Lilia I. Khasanova⁴

Abstract: The theory that nominative processes extended through centuries to systematic formations of special terminological meanings of professional Old and Middle English marine terminological vocabulary had already been explained in different ways based on an evidential linguistic material. There is no doubt of the historical and philosophical approaches employed to describe the ancient language representation of the native speakers' world, as well as of the role and degree of their participation in the formation of nominations inclusive of those of ancient seafaring vehicles. Having been referenced repeatedly, both conceptually and through documents, they had confirmed their right to exist.

In several topical articles, terminological units have already been represented by a synonymous series of proper nominations for the seafaring vessels (boats/ships) of various types by respective lexically-organized terms according to their word-formation, structural and content design in the Old and the Middle English. Despite the apparent decline of interest towards the subject of historical nominations in general, and the history of the English Marine language in particular, there are unsettled challenges in the field. Specifically, more clarity is required regarding the incentives, degree of participation and the role of extralinguistic (human) factor in the history of a vessel-name formation, as well as in the mode of operation of the nominative apparatus for the above marine terms with respect to the of intralinguistic (language) factors involved.

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Introduction

The solution of problems referring to the description of the origin of the terms naming the sea crafts in the history of the English is directly concerned with the study of the means of expressing a given concept, i.e., *onomasiology*. The onomasiological aspect of historical semantics, in conjunction with the historical nomination that reveals the specifics of the nomination as a term-naming process, has until recently been recognized by the community of linguists and historians as a crucial one. It is used for obtaining the most far-reaching and most adequate representation of the structure of an OE and MdE (Old and Middle English) terms' meaning. One should pay tribute to those scientists-historians in linguistics staying faithful to Germanic languages studies, and who continuously raise issues on the formation of the historical nomination in the field of OG (Old-Germanic) lingual-and-cultural studies. (Arakin, 1955)

It would be logical to tie the preceding historical and linguistic studies (Baltachev, 1991, 2009, 2013) to one common goal: to offer for contemplation from the standpoint of historical linguistics *the lexical and nominative specifics* of the nominative and semantic organization of nominations for identified groups of boats/ships in the OE. The above publications specifically deal with the structural and nominative peculiarities of the nominations for small (coasting), medium, and large-sized (tonnage) vessels classified by their functional tenacities – as commercial, military, cargo, etc. vessels.

A renowned Russian philologist-teacher D. Petrov (Petrov and Boreiko, 2010) in one of his lectures has opined that a language is also an evidence of empirical capacity to sense the world around them and to feel themselves within it. Because of the sense and of humans' mental activity there appear what we call *nominations (names)* as a result of people's mental activity and their cognitive bearing. It should only be precised that any mental, creatively directed activity of a person to craft artifacts that are significant for his life, is invariably preceded by the so called *semantic mapping* (objectification) - activity related to evaluating the matter, i.e., to the selective interest of a naming person. (Serebrennikov, et al., 1988). At the same time, the \nominee objectively is often not individualized. Though not lost so far, since they, as a probable member of the incipient big or small professional community, would follow the general principle of priority allocation of properties and characteristics of the objects of interest, compared to those of similar objects within the same generalized class. Thus, in the mind of a nominee, the necessity and possibility of establishing a synonymous series of subject-

¹ Izhevsk State Agricultural Academy, Russian Federation, atnabaeva.nataly@mail.ru

² Izhevsk State Agricultural Academy, Russian Federation, genizh@yandex.ru

³ Udmurt State University, Izhevsk, Russian Federation, ekatroj@gmail.com

⁴ Udmurt State University, Izhevsk, Russian Federation, hasanovalilia@gmail.com

fixed, lexically designed terminological units with a generalizing invariant term-classifier would have been targeted at the beginning. This is how today's researchers do fancy the process of determining the most meaningful thing in any process of *naming an object*, and in the case - of a boat/a ship respective to her subject-and-functional tenacity.

Object, subject and the goal of the research

The goal of the research is to investigate and to indicate potential causes and means of the ancient seafaring vehicles' name-inventory formation followed by its description from the point of view of modern lexical semantics.

The object of the research is the description of a seafaring term-formation mechanism in the OE.

The subject of the research is to determine semantically and numerically a would-be list of nominations for the seafaring means in OE.

To achieve the goal of the research the following tasks were to be completed:

- restore the historical backgrounds and concepts for the North German shipbuilding culture foundation;
- determine the principal ways and means of ancient term-word coining structurally and semantically, while picturing the seafaring vehicles' constructs;
- deliver lexico-semantic principles and methods of nomination of the terms naming the seafaring vehicles in the OE.

Lexical and cultural OE seafaring vehicles' nominations' resumes

Many of the scientists are quite dissimilar in the results of chronologically defining when the formation of the OG boatbuilding culture started. The Encyclopaedia Britannica narrates of rather a postponed time of the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon (North German) tradition of professional shipbuilding. By the beginning of the AC, the ancient Germans (North of the European continent) were to begin constructing the prototypes of modern sailing ships - with the keel, stern, bow, and sides (the port side and the starboard) (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1964). An appeal to the historical annals containing, e.g., the facts of *factae ex robore* (Lat.) "large sea boats made of oak wood" and used in shallow waters, shows that they were steered by a (stern/starboard) oar. Then, with a fair wind, a sail was set on to proceed with navigating (Bosworth, Toller, 1882). According to the German seafaring historian I. Firks, the most active professional navigation in Northern Europe was developed in the 8th century when there gradually a professional community of seafarers was established (Firks, 1982). He also narrates, that the Northern German seafarers undertook the earliest long-distance sea navigation without any navigating instruments. Experience and luck have long been the only criteria for success in seafaring. Perhaps, that was one of the reasons why in the extant monuments of writing, discrete categories of vessels of the above cultural-and-historical periods are not available to distinguish.

While construing the story of Britain's beginning, a reader will run across *Vikings*, as they were called from the *viks*, and who set out sailing in fleets of long, narrow, open-decked war-boats, with carved dragon-heads, raven banners, and bright, striped sails to invade the North-East coast of Britain (Bryant, 1972). Thus, the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" (Robertson, 1939) says, «... and then in 897 AC, king Ælfred ordered that *lange scipu* (Lat.) "longships" be built against Danish ships – *aescas* (made of oak wood), and they would be twice as long as all the others... They would be faster and more stable, as well as taller than others; in their form would differ from the Frisian and Danish ...but, as Ælfred himself believed ...should bring great benefit". Since the back door to the ocean was almost undefended, Ælfred worked incessantly, laying the first foundation of what would be a mighty English fleet. Realizing the only way to ensure safety was to defeat the invaders before they could land, he began to build ships (Ibidem).

Semantically, the word combination *lange scipu*, either Danish or English was not an individualizing specific name when meaningfully evaluated. Rather it was some onlooker's *generally working* name for the type of ships the ancient Germans, including the Anglo-Saxons, used to sail. Further acquaintance with historical and special literature, or written manuscripts, descriptions of in-vicinity and open sea-trips, as well as the selection of OG glossary from lexicographic sources indicate the period of the 7th - 9th centuries when a sufficiently large group of words-names for the sea vessels already settled in the OE. More than 30 discrete names were described in the run of several pieces of

research, thus naming the types of vessels distinguished by their conceptual characteristics (Baltachev, 1991, 2009, 2013). The OE nominations of vessels (ships) with all the variety of ways of their historical and semantic education in mind were considered in their historical and semantic ontogenesis - as the OG terms, many of them of Latin origin. Presumably, they were single-component (single-root) lexemes by their morphology. At the same time, there were existing the so-called generalizing nominative terms with the concept of generality, or *hyperonyms*, functioning for a researcher as *semantic classifiers*. Thus, in the OE, there can be traced OE *bot* (*bat*) "a boat, a small vessel"> MdE *bat(e)*; cf. ME *boat*; and the OE *skip*>MdE *skip(ship)* "for long sea voyages, shipping"; cf. ME *ship*, *vessel* (Sandahl, 1981). These hyperonyms can be traced as heading two broad classes of marine crafts with the common feature or the identifier for both classes being a specifying semantic attribute "size, quantity." Following the criterion of generalization, vessel names for the *bat* class has been selected to denote the type of a vessel not adapted for sailing on the high seas. The second class of vessel-types is headed by the hyperonym *skip*, which assumes the type of a vessel intended for entering the open sea and making continuous sea voyages.

The *bot* (*bat*) and *skip* categories of vessels linguistically highlighted as *hyperonymic* concepts are considered as *semantic model-invariants* within respective vessel classes. According to the written manuscripts, these are the most ancient *vessel-concepts* verbalized for distinct water vehicles in the history of the English, and which are verified as the most regularly mentioned in the earliest written manuscripts (Robertson, 1939).

The ongoing analysis of the semantics of the OE *bat* has not proven any facts in the history of the English language that could shed light on the history or etymology of its semantics. Neither has its Indo-European origin been deduced. The authors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica believe this name initially referred to the most ancient type of a boat vaguely resembling a modern canoe, and with a processed animal skin given a rounded shape using fitted and fastened together pieces of tree bark or even wood itself (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1964). However, they all have one functional characteristic in common - in terms of their size and seaworthiness - these boating crafts were chiefly cruising in coastal shipping serving as fishing boats, small-transports, and vessels akin.

The list of hyponyms of this class can be enriched with a line of nominations as OE *rewet*, *thurruc*, *ced*, believed to be of the Lat. origin. According to the definitions available, different types of the above hyponyms often echo those of big ships' design configuration – the presence of the keel, a high-rising stem, and the ability of some of them to set sail(s), etc. A list of particularly small boats enrolls some boats of peculiar configurations: cf. OE *trog* "hollow-out-boat" (with a rounded bottom), cf. OE *naca*, *punt*, *cuopel* (of-punt-type boats), et al. Researchers believe that the etymology of the OE *naca* dates back semantically to denoting a certain type of wood by her etymology, while the OE *punt* is a case of assimilation of the Lat. *punta*, in which the donor-Latin name called a flat bottom boat, or even a small barque (Dvoreckij, 2002).

Analysis of the semantics of the second hyperonym – the OE *skip* shows this name etymologically dating back to the designation of a piece or a part of a hollowed-out tree. Basing on this, O. Kurti ((Kurti, 1978) suggests that the creation of hollowed-out boats just marked the beginning of the shipbuilding culture among the Germanic tribes of Northern Europe. Numerically, much a larger group of nominations than those of the boating class represents the class of ships. More or less sturdy classification of names for the *skip* class can be lined out as military/commercial ships, according to their functional burden.

However, as the semantics of the selected categories for the class show the latter as a group of hyponymic terms betray an evident nominative syncretism of their conceptual characteristics, thus naming two or even three different types of ships by one the same term simultaneously. For example, the OE *ceol* used to be referred to large merchant and transport ships of that time. There is every reason to believe this name might have appeared because of extrapolation of the original nomination of a constituting part of the ship, namely, the keel - on the typed ship as a whole unit. In terms of modern nominative techniques, the metonymic model "part-as-whole" was applied. It is interesting to note that the authors of ancient poetic legends (*the sagas*) preferred to send their leading characters on long and dangerous voyages aboard *ceols* that were distinguished by their reliability of construction and their high sailing speed. Again, from Bryant's "Makers of the Realm" (Bryant, 1972), a fellow-historian can observe that the king of Mercia Æthelred (879-883) had taxed all such vessels.

Among other ships' names, there appears one more type of a marine craft mentioned - the *hulc(k)* - a cargo or transport (merchant) ship for its intended purpose. The OE ship's name is marked as the earliest borrowing from the Old Greek through the Latin. In these languages, related names refer to a ship that sailed only under cargo; cf. OE *hulk* "clumsy vessel"; "something bulky, ungainly" (Pokorny, 2010). In OE, this name followed suit.

The OE *cnear* seems to name a vessel whose configuration and seaworthiness made her possible to successfully use vessels of the type both as a merchant and as a military shipping vessel. In the shipbuilding culture of Northern Europe, this ship was known primarily as a cargo vessel. (It is noteworthy that the very merchant ships of this category – *knorr* ships were known in ancient Russia of the 9th-12th centuries). The name *knear* is borrowed from the Old Norse; cf. ON *knorr* "ship, galley," denoting the configuration and construction of the ship typical for Scandinavian shipbuilding tradition. (Sandahl, 1981).

No less of interest is the story of another OE nomination – *snace*, referring to a war-type ship; cf. MdE *snake* "snake." The name of the vessel traces in ancient Russia, in the Novgorod Chronicle (1284). One of the ancient manuscripts states that the ship "is termed *shneka*." Although, for the residents from Northern Russia, it could mean *any* extraneous sea vessel of a sufficiently sizable marine tonnage at that time. Due to the design features and her seaworthiness, primarily - her sizable length and low draft, these ships have more than proven themselves as passing safely through the narrows, channels, narrow straits, i.e., when it was necessary to "slip" through a narrow hazardous place, to "crawl" when closing to the shoreline; cf. ME "to sneak." The ancient Scandinavians called this type of vessels *ormina langi* "long worms" (Ibidem).

It would be appropriate, and even necessary, to turn to the name of the vessels that had artificial towers with a fortress-like structures erected in the bow and /or the stern of the ship. Visually, they resembled castles, which they decidedly resembled, and were erected on the deck; cf. ME *castle* "tower, castle." These fortifications were aptly called *forecastle* (bow tower) and *aftercastle* (aft tower). Inside them archers, slingers, and spearmen hid when being targeted by the enemy's arrows and stones either in the sea battle, or even from the land (Baltachev, 1991).

In the Marine Chronicles and glossaries of both historical periods, another marine name is regularly being witnessed – an OE *cræft* > cf. MdE. (*cræft*) *craft*; cf. ME *craft*, which, at first glance, semantically should serve as a new hyperonym, and which should be and is distinguished by the lack of morphologically developed structure, i.e. as a mono-syllable lexeme. However, unlike the above mentioned generic categories (*bat* and *skip*), the OE *cræft* does not confirm its generic tenacity contextually, and cannot even be looked at as a member of the synonymous series with the meaning of a "marine vessel" by its origin. Further analysis in terms of a universal inventory of the *cræft*'s semantic components and their possible combinations (as a set of semes) shows that its semantic continuum does not contain explanatory, or conceptual semantic features (semes) that could have admitted to refer to it as a hyperonym-name for a class of means of water transport in OE. Contextually, this name appears to nominate a watercraft from the *bat* class as well as from the *skip* class, with no explicitly marking features.

Perhaps, we should agree with those historians of the English who consider this nomination primarily as a *broad-valued* lexeme with a high degree of generality; hence, with a cluster of non-relative lexico-semantic variants betraying the ambiguity of its semantic combinatorics (Feoktistova, 1984). According to J. Bosworth (Bosworth, Toller, 1882), originally, the OE *cræft* could denote physical strength or mental abilities: *On ðam gefeohte Mæda cræft gefeól* "In that battle, all the power of Mæda ran out." *Mid eallum hiora cræftum* "With all your strength." The same lexeme admits similarity to the concepts of deftness, dexterity, cunning, gift, talent: *Ða yfelan næfre habbaþ nænne cræft* "Atheists never have any abilities". Before acquiring meanings related to the sea and professional activities in the field, the lexeme functions as the category denoting, at least, a set of other concepts: the *cræft* as a lexico-semantic variant could semanticize non-discrete concepts referring to science and knowledge, as well as to any art, craft, and even work: *Se cræft ðæs lareowdōmes biþ cræft earla cræfta*. "The art of learning is the art of art." (Ibidem) Thus, when investigating the features of the semantic structure of the OE *cræft* it should be concluded that the above name has a broad meaning. It is practically impossible to trace the implementation of this name in the nomination of any specific type of the sea craft since this lexeme very likely not to have a specifically expressed dentate assigned

to it. The secondary nature of the nomination is admitted when, from the position of a formalized description of lexical semantics of the language units, the contextual frequency and significance of the encountered nominations are available in the function of a *substitute invariant* for sea craft. Displaying peripheral signs of metonymy, this lexeme has, in fact, one the most general conceptual features that lets include this name in the class of marine crafts in general, and the feature is “the ability to stay on the water surface and ship loads”, but devoid of an individually displayed denotation.

Conclusion

While researching on lexical and semantic realities connected with ancient seafaring practices, it should be emphasized that the semantics of a particular marine vehicle term-nomination should be regarded as a set of extra-linguistically determined and intra-linguistically semantic features embedded in its inherent structure. Besides, the ancient terms that name boats and ships in the history of Britain represent a detailed group of generic concepts united by a generic invariant of the “ship”-concept denoting diversified means of navigation. Consequently, the above conclusion confirms that phenomena and objects of a historically remote time when studied, lead to the most reliable and complete description of the nominations supported by deep historicism and strict adherence to the principle of *realities of existence*. The list of above seafaring vehicles’ nominations detected and described numerically and semantically so far, does serve as an authentic proof of the Anglo-Saxons’ earliest professional occupation as those of the seafarers.

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