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Article



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ETHNOEYDEM MARKERS IN “THE TALE OF IGOR’S CAMPAIGN”: TOWARDS A REASSESSMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Abstract: The article examines the potential of the ethnoeydem approach for analyzing hidden ethnocultural layers in Old Russian texts, primarily in *The Tale of Igor’s Campaign*. The author substantiates the need to employ the term ethnoeydem as a more precise tool for identifying culturally marked elements compared to traditional notions used in lacunology. Using the expression “the creaking of carts” as an example, the study demonstrates the transformation of its semantics from a negative association – linked to Turkic invasions – to a positively connoted image in the Tale. The analysis shows that the ethnoeydem method can refine cultural context, reveal intercultural influences, and contribute to new interpretations of the text’s authorship.

Key words: ethnoeydem analysis, Turkic mental values, semantic transformation, cultural identity of the author, hidden cultural layers, Old Russian chronicle.

Language: English

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Introduction

The problem of identifying and analyzing hidden layers in ancient texts remains relevant and insufficiently explored for a number of reasons. One of these reasons is the diversity and inconsistency of the conceptual and terminological apparatus used to examine discrepancies between languages and cultures. In contemporary linguistics, the term “lacuna” is often employed to denote such gaps in a text, as it enables scholars to record and systematize instances of incompleteness or culturally specific content. It is known that the concept of a “lacuna,” purportedly encompassing all ethnonational “gaps” in a text, was first introduced by J.-P. Vinay and J. Darbelnet: “Il y a lacune chaque fois qu’un signifie de L.D. (‘langue de depart’ – Z.A.), ‘l’absence d’un seul mot pour rendre shallow (peu profound)’” [11, p. 3]. Subsequently, methods for identifying textual lacunae were further developed in the works of the Russian linguist Yu.A. Sorokin [16]. In general terms, all research devoted to locating “incomprehensible” segments in texts may be reduced to a common principle: scholars interpreting a culturally foreign

text emphasize the importance of understanding textual lacunae from the standpoint of the reader’s native culture. Everything that appears unusual or unclear to the recipient is regarded as a signal of the presence of national-cultural elements that differ from the original ethnocultural features encoded by the author.

However, in addressing this issue, scholars proceed from different terms (cf.: “burrs,” “non-equivalent vocabulary,” “gaps,” “background,” “obscure places,” etc. [10, pp. 11-13]), which often complicates the resolution of the problem: the concentration of attention on selecting an appropriate term or concept for identifying ethnocultural elements prevents researchers from uncovering the original nature of textual lacunization. Moreover, the terms and concepts proposed at various times by different scholars, in our view, cannot comprehensively characterize ethnocultural divergences in language by means of a single analytical framework. For this reason, we propose applying the concept of the ethnoeydem (introduced at the time by L.A. Sheiman and N.M. Varich) to the study of ancient texts that

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have undergone the greatest degree of lacunization. By **ethnoeydem**, we understand “a pervasive image representing national worldviews and the traditions of various ethnic communities as reflected in linguistic material” [17, p. 44]. In other words, ethnoeydems are stable cultural-semantic constructs that embody specific national representations, values, and traditions manifested through linguistic forms and texts, enabling the reconstruction of the worldview and cultural identity of native speakers [1, pp. 37-38].

We consider this term to be the most appropriate for a comprehensive and internally consistent analysis of the national and cultural features of an ancient text from the perspective of intercultural elements. In this regard, the present article undertakes the first attempt to apply the theory of the ethnoeydem to the study of hidden ethnocultural layers in Old Russian texts. This approach makes it possible to reveal subtle cultural and linguistic connections that previously remained unnoticed, as well as to substantiate new interpretations of the authorship of ancient texts and the semantic structure of literary monuments. In addition, the use of ethnoeydem analysis opens up opportunities for comparing the cultural codes of different peoples and identifying their influence on the shaping of the text.

As for the study of the text of “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign” itself, it is worth noting several key results of previous research, since issues related to the originality of the work, its authorship, and the presence of numerous Turkic borrowings in the Old Russian text have attracted the attention of many scholars – from Turkologists to Slavists. Given the scope of the present study, it should be emphasized that the most comprehensive reviews of research on the text, its content features, linguistic characteristics, and questions of authorship of “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign” are presented in the works of M.G. Bulakhov, B.A. Rybakov, and D.S. Likhachev [4; 15; 25, Chapter 1]. Among more recent studies, particular attention should be paid to the works of A.N. Uzhankov, A.A. Utkin, A.M. Ranchin, V.V. Vasilik, Yu.A. Zakhvatkin, A.L. Nikitin, V.A. Tikhonova, E.V. Mareeva, and many others. These studies cover a broad range of issues, including textological analysis, the identification of borrowings, and the reconstruction of the historical and cultural context of the work.

Contemporary research also emphasizes intercultural and interlingual connections, revealing the influence of Turkic and Slavic traditions on the formation of the text. Their results form the basis for the application of new methodological approaches, such as ethnoeydem analysis, and make it possible to formulate updated hypotheses regarding the authorship and ethnocultural affiliation of “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign”. Furthermore, applying these findings within the framework of ethnoeydem analysis helps to refine the cultural and linguistic

context of the text by uncovering hidden layers of national and intercultural influences.

In the most relevant studies of recent years, several scholars have proposed the hypothesis that the author of “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign” (“The Tale”) was either Hegumen Moisey Vydubychi or the Galician prince Vladimir Yaroslavich [12; 20; 21, etc.]. Without delving into the details of the refutations of this hypothesis, it should be noted that it has already undergone critical reassessment by a number of researchers [12; 18; 22, etc.]. In this regard, it must be emphasized that the present study does not aim to provide a comprehensive critical analysis of the extensive literature concerning the authorship of “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign.” Instead, our research framework makes it possible to approach traditional problems from a new perspective – through empirical-hermeneutic analysis and the application of the ethnoeydem approach to identifying the ethnocultural codes embedded in the text.

The use of ethnoeydem analysis enables the identification of hidden cultural layers and intercultural influences that previously remained outside the scope of scholarly attention. This approach allows for the reconstruction not only of the linguistic structure but also of the ethnocultural context of the work. It opens up perspectives for uncovering new connections between the text and the historical environment in which it was created, including the influence of Turkic and Slavic traditions. Ethnoeydem analysis contributes to a more accurate interpretation of the imagery, narrative lines, and symbolic structures encoded in the text. Ultimately, the application of this methodology creates the foundation for formulating updated hypotheses regarding the authorship, functional organization, and cultural identity of “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign.” This approach also provides opportunities for comparing “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign” with other ancient sources, thereby facilitating a more precise reconstruction of the historical and cultural milieu in which it emerged. Finally, the integration of previous research findings with new methodological approaches provides grounds for advancing updated hypotheses concerning the authorship and the intercultural interactions reflected in the text.

Research Method

The present study employs the ethnoeydem approach as the principal method for analyzing the Old Russian text “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign.” This method makes it possible to identify and systematize the hidden ethnocultural layers of the text that reflect the national worldviews and traditions of various ethnic communities. The analysis includes the identification of key linguistic forms and symbolic structures that function as carriers of cultural meaning. All surviving versions of the text are used as primary

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material, ensuring the comprehensive nature of the study.

Particular attention is devoted to detecting Turkic ethnocultural codes at the levels of vocabulary, semantics, and figurative constructions. The research is conducted in several stages: collecting and classifying potential ethnoeydems, interpreting them, and comparing them with historical and cultural data. To refine the cultural context, parallels with analogous structures in Turkic and Slavic sources are employed. Hermeneutic analysis is also applied, enabling the interpretation of hidden meanings and cultural implications within the text's fragments. Special attention is given to the functions of ethnoeydems in shaping the plot, characterizing its figures, and organizing the structure of the text. The application of the ethnoeydem method makes it possible to reconstruct the cultural layers of the text, identify intercultural influences, and propose new hypotheses regarding the authorship of "The Tale of Igor's Campaign."

Main content

As noted above, debates concerning the authorship of "The Tale of Igor's Campaign" continue to this day, both in Russian and international philological scholarship. Within the framework of the present study, through an analysis of the phrase "**скрип телег**" ("**the creaking of carts**") from the standpoint of the ethnoeydem approach, we seek to offer a new perspective on the question of the authorship of "The Tale." This approach makes it possible to reveal hidden cultural and ethnic codes that previously remained outside the field of scholarly attention and to compare them with the historical and cultural context in which the text was created. The application of ethnoeydem analysis makes it possible to reconstruct the functional and semantic role of specific linguistic constructions, which may contribute to refining hypotheses regarding the cultural affiliation and authorial identity embodied in the work.

The ethnoeydem "**скрип телег**" is first encountered in the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle in the account of the capture of Kyiv by Batu in 1240: "*Въ лѣтѣ .ѡѣ. ѡѣ. мѣ [6748 (1240)] Приде Батыи Киевоу в силѣ тажѣ цѣѣ многомъ множествомъ силы своеи и вкrouжи градъ и встоли си Татарская и бысѣ градъ во обѣдержаньи велицѣѣ и бѣ Батыи оу города и троци его вѣбсѣдахоу градъ и не бѣ слышати ѡ гласа **скрипання телегъ** егѣ множества ревенія вельблудъ его и рѣжания ѡ гласа стадъ конь его и бѣ исполнена*" [24, T. 2, c. 536]. In this passage, it is described that Batu arrived at Kyiv in great force with his numerous troops, surrounding the city and establishing a siege with his Tatar columns. The text emphasizes the overwhelming noise of the army – specifically, the «скрип телег» (creaking of carts), the roaring of

camels, and the neighing of horses – which filled the city with terror and demonstrated the immense scale of the siege.

Here, the ethnoeydem "**скрип телег**" is used within a semantic network, creating an image of military threat and the panic associated with the Mongol invasion. It simultaneously conveys the auditory characteristics of the events and serves as a marker of the cultural and military context of the time. Looking ahead, it should be noted that the application of ethnoeydem analysis in such cases allows us to reveal that this linguistic construction carries both informational and emotionally expressive meaning, thereby opening new possibilities for interpreting the textual structure and understanding the author's artistic intentions.

Within a similar semantic network, this ethnoeydem is also encountered in "Zadonshchina" (in "The Tale of Sofoniy Ryazanets" regarding the victory of the Russian princes over the Polovtsian Khan Mamai): "*Уже бо возвѣяша силнии вѣтри с моря на устьѣ Дону и Непра, пригълѣяша великиа тучи на Рускую землю, из нихъ выступаютъ кровавыя зори, и в нихъ трепещутъ синие молнии. Быти стуку и грому велику на рѣчьки Непрядвѣ межѣ Дономъ и Непромъ, пасти трупу челоуѣчью на полѣ куликовѣ, пролитися кровъ на рѣчьки Непрядвѣ. Уже бо **въскрипѣли телегы** межѣ Дономъ и Непромъ, идоутъ хинове в Рускую землю*" [23, c. 164]. In this passage, it is described that strong winds and heavy clouds swept over the mouths of the Don and the Nephryadva rivers, heralding bloody dawns and flashes of blue lightning, and that the battlefield of Kulikovo would be soaked with human blood [23, p. 164]. It also emphasizes that the ethnoeydem "**скрип телег**" resounds between the Don and the Nephryadva, signaling the advance of the enemy into Russian lands and creating an atmosphere of imminent military threat.

Thus, in this text, the ethnoeydem "**въскрипѣли телегы**" ("the carts creaked") retains its function of conveying auditory and emotional expression, heightening the sense of impending danger and chaos on the battlefield. It functions as a semantic marker of military threat while simultaneously linking the narrative to a specific cultural and historical context, conveying the scale and drama of the events. A comparison with the use of the same ethnoeydem in the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle demonstrates the stability of its function across different sources and underscores its role in shaping the epic imagery of the Russian chronicle text.

Thus, it can be concluded that in all Old Russian texts, this ethnoeydem represents the following semantic network: the invasion of the Polovtsians into Ancient Rus is embodied in the "**скрип телег**" ("the creaking of carts"), which for the Old Russian reader signified the beginning of the end – killings and plundering, the abduction of wives and children,

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destruction and famine, fear and violence, in short, the devastation of the Russian land. Amid the dreadful noise of the creaking carts, the “roaring” of camels and the “neighing” of horses were barely audible; from the creaking of carts, even the birds began to chirp, crows cawed, jackdaws spoke with their voices, eagles cried out, wolves howled menacingly, and foxes gnawed on bones: “А уже бѣды их насоша птицы крилати, подѣ облакы летаютъ, ворони часто грають, а галицы своею рѣчью говорятъ, орлы восклегчють, а волицы грозно воють, а лисицы на кости брежють” [23, с. 164-165].

The same connotations of the phrase “*скрип телег*” are noted by A. A. Pautkin: “...with such a depiction, the Old Russian chronicler highlighted the strength and power emanating from the creaking of the carts and its consequences” [13, pp. 77–78].

In other words, the ethnoeydem «скрип телег» performs a complex function in Old Russian texts: it simultaneously conveys the auditory characteristics of events and symbolizes destruction, violence, and chaos brought by the enemy’s invasion. Through this linguistic construction, chroniclers transmit the emotional perception of threat, creating in the reader a sense of all-encompassing fear and catastrophe. Analysis shows that this ethnoeydem also serves as a marker of intercultural interactions, reflecting the perception of the military technology and tactics of neighboring peoples. Furthermore, “*скрип телег*” is integrated into the epic imagery of the text, enhancing its artistic expressiveness and the dramatic tension of the narrative. Thus, the ethnoeydem becomes a key element of the semantic network through which the understanding of historical and cultural realities of Old Russian society is formed.

However, a reasonable question arises: if the phrase «скрип телег» in all its occurrences across Old Russian texts of different genres and historical periods expresses the same semantic content – the fear of Mongol-Tatar and Turkic invasions – how could a positive connotation of this epithet emerge within the Old Russian book tradition? **How is it possible that “скрип телег” for a Russian person could suddenly become something familiar, well-known, and perceived as a pleasant phenomenon?**

The answer to this question likely lies in the complex processes of cultural interpretation and the transformation of symbolic meanings, where an initially negative or threatening connotation is gradually reinterpreted and perceived as something positive, which may be related to a shift in the worldview of the chronicler or author of the text. **In cases where a positive connotation appears in the text, its source is often to be sought not in the Old Russian author, but in an intercultural agent or representative of another cultural tradition who influenced the content of the work.** Such a semantic shift illustrates the dynamics of intercultural exchange and allows the mechanisms of adaptation of

ethnocultural elements within the text to be identified. Moreover, the study of these transformations opens new prospects for reconstructing the cultural environment and understanding the processes by which external influences were integrated into the Old Russian book tradition. It may also indicate intercultural borrowings and adaptations through which elements of Turkic culture and technology became part of the everyday experience of the Old Russian person. Thus, the study of positive connotations of ethnoeydems expands our understanding of the dynamics of semantic changes and the transformation of cultural codes in Old Russian literature.

Let us now consider and conduct an in-depth analysis of the positively connoted usage of the phrase “*скрип телег*” in “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign”, and attempt to substantiate our position that in this context, the phrase functions not merely as a lexical designation of a sound, but serves as an ethnocultural indicator – a historical-national code and a mental value for the community, for whom the sound of wagon wheels becomes a sign of daily life and cultural identity. This semantic shift presupposes, first, the presence of stable cultural scripts for perceiving the auditory world, and second, a process of interiorization of intercultural elements, turning the external, “other” into the familiar, “one’s own.”

In the course of this study, we will compare the contextual parameters of the ethnoeydem’s usage in “The Tale” with similar occurrences in other sources, analyze linguistic and paralinguistic markers, and demonstrate how the positive connotation represents changes in the value orientations of the text’s bearers. The results obtained will allow not only the reconstruction of the cultural-semantic landscape of the era but also contribute to the discussion of the multi-layered nature of authorship and intercultural interactions in the Old Russian book tradition.

Thus, the author of “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign” depicts the “*скрип телег*” with nobility and particular affection, comparing this sound to the melody of “swans soaring in the sky”: «...Свистъ звѣринъ вѣста збися дивъ, кличетъ врѣху дрѣва, велитъ послушати земли незнаемъ, влѣзъ, и по морию, и по Сулию, и Сурожу, и Корсуню и тебѣ Тьмутараканьскій блѣвань. А половци неготовами дорогами побѣгоша к Дону великому: **крычат тѣлѣгы полунощы, рцы, лебеди роспушени**» [23, с. 97-98]. In this passage, the author conveys an atmosphere of anxiety: nature and mythical forces seem to signal, awakening the wonder (“диво”) and spreading the news across distant lands – from the maritime frontiers to Tmutarakan. Against this backdrop, the Polovtsians, in confusion, retreat to the Don along unfamiliar and difficult paths, and the noise of their carts (“*скрип телег*”) is likened by the author to the piercing cries of swans scattering through the night.

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How can this epithet be explained, given that in all known contexts it invariably signifies terror and the bloody consequences of the Polovtsian and Mongol-Tatar invasions? The Old Russian written tradition generally interpreted “*скрип телез*” unambiguously as a symbol of the formidable movement of Turkic hordes. From the perspective of modern lacunology, the question arises: how could such a bold and unconventional comparison appear in an ancient text? For what reason was this epithet included in the structure of the narrative, and should its use be understood as a random deviation from the norm or as an intentional artistic device employed by the author? It is possible that this reflects a literary etiquette typical of that era, embodying the tradition of depicting the punitive campaigns of steppe peoples. These questions are particularly relevant, since Old Russian chroniclers, judging by their manner of describing military events, did not generally aim for a detailed analysis of individual elements of the narrative.

The fact is that “the chroniclers were primarily interested in events and actions, rather than states and attributes” [13, p. 213]. Academician D.S. Likhachyov defines the method of the Old Russian chronicler as the activity of “not so much a narrator, but rather a ‘registrar’” [25, p. 262], indicating his function primarily as a recorder, transmitting not his own observations but ‘other speech’, the testimony of eyewitnesses or participants in the events. In this context, the question naturally arises as to how the Old Russian scribes themselves related to the texts they produced. The author of the “Primary Chronicle explicitly” states: “*Хронографу же нужна есть писати все и вся бывшая*» [24, Vol. 2, p. 720] (“A chronographer must write down all that has happened”). But how is it possible to “write down everything and all that occurred” if the chronicler is not a direct witness to the events?

It is possible that such a position of the author reflects a conscious effort to encompass the widest possible range of information, regardless of its origin. In this case, the chronicler could act not only as a mediator but also as a kind of interpreter of the recounted tradition, filtering it through his own cultural and linguistic lenses. **The question of whether he could have been a carrier of “other”, including Turkic, ethnocultural elements becomes particularly acute, since such cultural mediation could have facilitated the penetration of Turkic images and meanings into Old Russian written tradition.**

It is known that Turkic steppe nomads in antiquity moved and conducted military campaigns exclusively using carts and carts, which were an integral part of their daily life and culture. The wheels of these carts were often left ungreated, producing a sharp, rasping, sometimes deafening sound, perceived by others as a sign of impending disaster and

destruction. For the steppe nomad himself, however, this creaking was a natural element of everyday life: it accompanied him on journeys, in migrations, during rest, and even at the threshold of death. This cultural and everyday specificity is vividly reflected in N. S. Borisov’s testimony: “**The entire life of the steppe dweller passed to the accompaniment of the monotonous and somber sound – the creaking of wooden wheels. To this sound he departed into the other world... For a contemporary townsman, however, it is difficult not to shudder at this wild music** (emphasis added – Z.A.)” [2, p. 252].

From a theoretical perspective, such an acoustic dominant allows “*скрип телез*” to be considered a stable ethnocultural marker, deeply rooted in the mentality of the Turkic world. This sound shaped the specific auditory environment of the nomads, becoming part of their ethnic identity and collective memory. For the Turkic consciousness, the creaking carries no negative connotation; on the contrary, it symbolizes movement, life, journey, and the continuity of existence. In the context of intercultural contacts, this image could penetrate Old Russian texts, transform traditional associations and create new semantic nuances. Thus, the positive or neutral connotation of the “*скрип телез*” in “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign” can be understood as a manifestation of cultural “duality,” reflecting the interaction of Russian and Turkic semiotic systems.

Therefore, the epithet “*скрип телез*” in “The Tale” represents not merely an artistic image, but a full-fledged ethnoeydem, whose functioning is governed by the laws of ethnocultural semantics. Its use in this context can be adequately interpreted only within the framework of ethnoeydem theory, since it carries an “other” (Turkic) connotative load, which does not coincide with the traditional evaluations typical of Old Russian written culture. For this reason, explaining such an unusual usage solely based on the internal content of the monument is impossible.

Moreover, this semantic anomaly indicates deep cultural interaction, reflecting not only contact but also the mutual penetration of symbolic systems. The inclusion of an “other” ethnic sign into the Russian narrative creates an effect of cultural duality, expanding the interpretive possibilities of the text. In this way, the epithet functions not merely as a stylistic device, but as a key to reconstructing the complex ethnocultural situation of the era, in which the Old Russian author, consciously or unconsciously, transmits elements of steppe mentality.

Furthermore, such a comparison, while enhancing the image of chaotic flight, simultaneously reveals a special inner harmony in the events: the sound symbolism of the “*скрип телез*” is organically interwoven into the collective image of the retreating Polovtsians. For this nomadic people, the creaking of wheels was not a random acoustic background, but a culturally recognizable and familiar sound,

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accompanying their daily movement and nomadic life. For this reason, the author deliberately correlates it with the cries of soaring swans, creating a metaphorical unity of the earthly and the aerial, the mundane and the sublime. This comparison produces a subtle aesthetic effect: the flight acquires not only dramatic, but also ethnoculturally motivated imagery, allowing the “*скрип телез*” to be perceived as a distinctive auditory code of Polovtsian identity.

The inclusion of “avian” imagery in the description of the “*скрип телез*” allows the author to emphasize the deep natural rootedness of this sound in the life of the Polovtsians, for whom the movement of carts was a natural accompaniment to existence. Thanks to this metaphorical framing, the creaking of the carts loses its purely mundane character and becomes part of the overall auditory landscape of the steppe, where human actions and natural phenomena form a unified harmonic whole. Consequently, the atmosphere is not one of collapse, but rather of organic coherence and cultural regularity: the flight of the Polovtsians is perceived not only as a historical episode, but also as an ethnoculturally conditioned rhythm, in which the «скрип телез» resonates in unison with natural signs and the mental representations of the nomadic people.

We argue that the «скрип телез» in “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign” represents an ancient Turkic ethnoeydem, whose inclusion in the structure of the work is atypical for Old Russian chronicle and literary tradition. The appearance of this image, carrying stable Turkic semantics and distinctive cultural content, suggests a possible othercultural origin of the author of “The Tale”, or at least his profound familiarity with the steppe ethnic environment. This conclusion is further supported by the presence of a substantial layer of Turkicisms in the text, the nature and function of which remain insufficiently explained in scholarly literature. Our assertion is based on a series of theoretical and practical considerations, which will be systematically presented below.

Moreover, the very fact of the organic inclusion of a Turkic ethnocultural code into the artistic fabric of the text indicates a more complex model of intercultural connections for the period than is usually assumed. Such elements cannot be regarded as random or merely decorative: they possess high semiotic significance and function as cultural markers, reflecting the worldview of a bearer of the steppe tradition. In this context, the analysis of the ethnoeydem “*скрип телез*” becomes a key to reinterpreting the authorship and cultural nature of one of the most important monuments of Old Russian literature.

The point is that the ethnoeydem “*скрип телез*” is not limited to signaling the invasion of the Kipchaks; it reflects the holistic culture, distinctiveness, and customs of Turkic steppe life. For

the steppe dweller, the sound of creaking carts embodies everyday existence, the rhythm of nomadic life, and the symbol of movement across the steppe. In this regard, its use in the “Secret Tale” (13th century) in the description of Temüjin’s death is perceived as organic and justified by the context itself: “**Отошель ты государь мой, став поклажей скрипучен телеги...**” (emphasis added – Z.A.) (“You have departed, my lord, becoming the load of a creaking wagon...”) [8, p. 69].

From an ethnocultural perspective, this epithet serves not only a descriptive function but also an identificatory one, capturing the habits and lifestyle of the nomadic people. It acts as a marker of cultural memory, through which the modern reader gains access to the worldview and behavioral patterns of the steppe dweller. Moreover, the inclusion of such a characteristic auditory image in the narrative demonstrates the stability of Turkic semantics in the written tradition and its capacity to shape the perception of historical events.

The same “true purpose” of the ethnoeydem “*скрип телез*” is emphasized by the renowned Russian scholar of Old Russian culture, N.S. Borisov: “The smell of wormwood and the endlessly fading horizon – this, so to speak, is the ‘poetry’ of steppe life. Yet it also had its own ‘prose’: the dirt and squalor of a felt dwelling... the sour smell of sheepskin and long-unwashed human bodies... and finally, the same monotonous sounds – the bleating of sheep, the lowing of cows, and the *creaking of carts*...” [2, pp. 251-252]. Borisov demonstrates that the «скрип телез» is an organic part of the everyday acoustic environment of the steppe dweller, reflecting both mundane and cultural reality. This sound functions not merely as background, but as a marker of steppe life and the identity of the nomadic people. Thus, the “*скрип телез*” (“creaking of carts”) acquires a semiotic function, uniting the material and mental culture of the steppe into a single imagistic complex.

Consequently, **we suggest that the author of “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign” was a bearer of a foreign, non-Russian ethnoculture, likely closely connected with the Turkic steppe tradition.** Our hypothesis is supported by N.S. Borisov’s observations on the cultural and acoustic features of the steppe: “... **But if, one day, you notice that the creak of ungreased wheels no longer irritates your hearing – you may congratulate yourself: you have awakened the dormant genes of the steppe civilization within you... Perhaps those who believe that the veins of the poem’s author ran with steppe blood are not entirely wrong?**” (emphasis added – Z.A.) [2, p. 252]. Thus, N.S. Borisov confidently indicates that perceiving the creak of carts as something familiar points to a profound ethnocultural identity linking the author to the world of the steppe. The inclusion of such an imagistic element in an Old Russian text reflects a conscious or

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subconscious transfer of Turkic cultural codes into literary narrative. Accordingly, the ethnoeydem “*скрун телез*” becomes a compelling argument in favor of the foreign, including Turkic, cultural affiliation of the work’s creator.

From the perspective of L. Gumilyov’s “landscape theory” (“where the basis of an ethnos lies not in the similarity of its constituent individuals but in the bonds that cement the collective and extend to the natural features of the landscape it inhabits” [6, p. 44]), it becomes evident that the natural and steppe features of Turkic peoples directly influence the formation of their identity and, consequently, their ethnoculture. In this context, the ethnoeydem “*скрун телез*” emerges as an expression of the Turkic “ethnosphere” (a term of L. Gumilyov), representing a landscape-conditioned characteristic of the nomadic way of life. It functions as a connotative marker linking the historical terrain and specific conditions of a people’s existence with their cultural and ethnic identity, reflecting the genesis and traditions of the Turkic nomads.

It should be added that in F. Rashid-ad-Din’s “Collection of Chronicles”, when describing the territories inhabited by ancient Turkic tribes, their names and epithets, a geographical principle is applied, which is regarded as one of the key factors shaping the ethnosphere of these communities: “Although the appearance, dialects, and manner of speech of the Turks are similar to one another, differences in climate and the natural features of the territories inhabited by individual tribes are reflected both in their appearance and in their speech” [14, p. 75]. Thus, natural and geographical conditions exert a direct influence on the everyday life, lifestyle, moral norms, and cultural practices of ethnos’s, serving as an important indicator of ethnosocial identity. In particular, the creak of carts functioned as a stable ethnic marker for the Turkic nomads, symbolizing their specific cultural and everyday environment, which is also confirmed by references in Old Russian sources.

Consequently, the inclusion of the ethnoeydem “*скрун телез*” in Old Russian texts logically corresponds with the Turkic cultural context: the sound of the wagon, as an organic part of steppe life, performs the function of an identification marker of the ethnic environment. This allows “*скрун телез*” to be regarded not merely as a literary device but as a culturally conditioned sign reflecting the everyday life and worldview of the nomadic people. Considering these circumstances, it can be asserted with a high degree of probability that this image has a Turkic origin and entered Old Russian literature through interaction with a foreign cultural milieu.

Continuing our discussion of Turkic ethnoculture and its reflection in Old Russian texts, it is important to note the persistence of the cultural and everyday practices of nomadic peoples, despite

changes in their political formations and ethnic names. Language, customs, lifestyle, and material culture remained relatively constant, ensuring the continuity of ethnic identity. It is precisely through such stable elements – everyday sounds, rituals, and habitual practices – that the influence of Turkic culture on the written tradition of neighboring peoples can be traced. These observations suggest that images associated with the everyday life of nomads entered literature as connotative markers of the ethnocultural environment. This view is supported by the words of researcher N. Budaev: “Like meteors, nomadic empires appeared and disappeared, their ethnic names changed (Scythians, Sakae, Huns, Alans, Avars, Bulgars, Khazars, Savirs, Polovtsians, Pechenegs, Tatars), but despite the change of name, the language of the ancient nomads did not change, nor did their everyday life, lifestyle, ethnic character, or culture: **the Turks continued to live under the creak of carts, in round or octagonal yurts, ate horsemeat, drank sour milk (kumis), and herded livestock...**” (emphasis added – Z.A.) [3, p. 73].

Thus, the extension of the concept of “ethnoeydem” to the study of words and expressions that embody the national-cultural identity of a given ethnos seems both appropriate and theoretically justified. Such an expansion of the term “ethnoeydem,” on the one hand, relies on the recognized close connection between language and culture, and on the other, opens up opportunities to analyze longstanding problems from new, more productive perspectives, allowing for the identification of specific historical manifestations of the correlation between language and culture.

In the context of studying the “Word of Igor’s Campaign”, the ethnoeydem “*скрун телез*” itself serves as convincing evidence of foreign, particularly Turkic, influence on the text. The appearance of this figurative element in the Old Russian literary tradition, seamlessly integrated into the narrative, indicates the author’s profound familiarity with the steppe lifestyle and acoustic environment of the nomads. Analysis of such ethnoeydems not only supports the hypothesis of the author’s Turkic origin but also sheds light on contentious issues concerning authorship, source borrowings, and cultural influences. Moreover, these research approaches make it possible to reconstruct intercultural contacts and the dynamics of cultural transformation, revealing hidden layers of ethnic and cultural information. Overall, the study of ethnoeydems like “*скрун телез*” opens new horizons for interpreting Old Russian texts and strengthens the methodological foundation of historical-linguistic analysis.

Conclusion and Findings.

Thus, understanding an ancient text, its deeper meaning, and its connotative “density” represents a process of correctly interpreting ethnic markers,

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intertextual lacunae (= ethnoeydems), and national-cultural mnems, through which readers can form both convergent and divergent images of national-cultural identity. These images, in turn, create certain difficulties in interpreting the text as a whole, making it necessary to consider them as ethnoeydems – ethnic markers of national-cultural identity. The ancient author could have deliberately employed these ethnoeydems. Commenting on the philosophical essence of “intentional” lacunae, Ya.G. Fogeler writes: “The appearance of ‘intentional’ textual lacunae (= ethnoeydem – Z.A.) seems to be predetermined by the author’s inclination toward esotericism, itself conditioned by the peculiarities of the author’s personality, the ideological orientation of the text, and the poetic devices he employs” [7, p. 143].

Consequently, the analysis of ethnoeydems allows for the identification of hidden cultural codes and for understanding which elements of the text convey information about foreign ethno-cultures. In particular, the use of the ethnoeydem “*скрун телез*” in the “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign” demonstrates the author’s deep knowledge of Turkic steppe culture and its everyday practices. Such research approaches make it possible to reconstruct intercultural contacts and better interpret the author’s intentions within the context of Old Russian literature.

It should be noted that, in most cases, the use of ethnoeydems creates a certain illogicality of expression, which complicates a full and adequate understanding of both the ethnoeydem itself and the intentions of the Old Russian chronicler. Therefore, the degree to which ethnoeydems can be identified directly depends on the linguocultural competence of the scholar and on the extent of their perception and understanding of foreign culture, as clearly demonstrated by the examples analyzed in this study. The study of foreign-cultural elements in ancient texts remains relevant today, not only due to the high connotative density of such texts but also because there is no unified approach to their systematization and interpretation.

Moreover, the study of ethnoeydems provides opportunities for a more precise identification of cultural borrowings and interactions between ethnic groups, allowing the reconstruction of the historical context of their emergence. Analyzing these elements helps determine which cultural codes were perceived as natural for a particular people and how they were transmitted through the text. Ultimately, the systematic study of ethnoeydems contributes to a deeper understanding of intercultural processes and the author’s strategy of incorporating a foreign ethnoculture into literary narration.

Consequently, the term “ethnoeydem” can be regarded as a general concept for describing the phenomenon of textual lacunarity, where the emphasis is on the ethnic and national specificity of

linguocultural differences. If culture is understood in an axiological sense as a set of values, then ethnoeydems represent specific value orientations with which the author of the text operates. Within our working hypothesis regarding Old Russian works, an ethnoeydem functions as an inherent property of the text’s ethnic and national-cultural richness. It allows for the identification of textual ethnic markers – elements of folklore, art, cultural symbols, traditions, and customs, as well as features of mental frameworks that distinguish one ethnic group from another. Thus, ethnoeydems become a tool for a deeper understanding of the cultural-psychological structure of the text, as well as the interethnic connections reflected in the literary source.

In our case, as we have seen, the single ethnoeydem “*скрун телез*” is capable of shedding new light on the question of the authorship of the Tale of Igor’s Campaign. The use of this expression, organically integrated into the narrative, indicates a profound knowledge of the steppe way of life, the acoustic environment, and the cultural practices of Turkic nomads. For the steppe dweller, the creaking of carts was not merely background noise, but a marker of everyday life, a sign of ethnic identity, and part of the people’s mental code. This makes the use of the ethnoeydem in the Old Russian text unusual and extremely informative for analyzing authorial affiliation. The fact that the author of “The Tale” consciously or subconsciously incorporates such a foreign, Turkic cultural element suggests an other-cultural origin. Moreover, the inclusion of the ethnoeydem demonstrates not only knowledge of everyday details but also an understanding of the cultural and psychological characteristics of the steppe people, which would have been difficult to achieve without direct experience or deep assimilation of that culture. **Taken together with other Turkicisms in the text, this creates a compelling picture that allows the author to be considered a bearer of a foreign, Turkic ethno-cultural environment.** Thus, the analysis of the ethnoeydems in “The Tale” opens the way to a more precise and well-grounded determination of authorship, highlighting the necessity of taking intercultural influences into account when studying Old Russian chronicles.

In conclusion, it is worth returning to the thoughts of Prince N.S. Trubetskoy, whose reflections on the Turanian element in Russian culture seem particularly significant and encouraging. N. S. Trubetskoy wrote: “To see only negative traits in Turanian influence is ungrateful and unfair. We have the right to be proud of our Turanian ancestors no less than of our Slavic ancestors, and we are obliged to gratitude to both. Awareness of one’s belonging not only to the Aryan but also to the Turanian psychological type is necessary for every Russian who seeks personal and national self-knowledge” [19, pp.

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375–376]. Thus, N.S. Trubetskoy's idea emphasizes the complexity and multicultural roots of Russian identity, urging recognition of both Slavic and Turanian contributions. It suggests that cultural self-awareness involves not only acknowledging heritage but also integrating its diverse psychological and cultural patterns. In this light, his reflections resonate with the study of ethnoeydems, demonstrating how intercultural elements shape collective memory, identity, and literary expression.

Thus, acknowledging foreign cultural influences, including Turkic ones, opens new horizons for understanding Old Russian literature and its distinctive authorial features. Ethnoeydems, such as the “*скрип телез*” (“creaking of carts”), serve as tools for identifying hidden cultural codes and interethnic connections. Ultimately, systematic study of such elements allows not only for more precise assessments

of authorship but also for a deeper comprehension of the cultural multilayering present in historical texts. Moreover, these ethnoeydems reveal the ways in which external cultural influences were assimilated into the literary imagination, shaping narrative strategies and stylistic choices. They demonstrate that Old Russian authors were not isolated from the broader Eurasian cultural sphere but actively engaged with it. The presence of Turkic elements highlights the permeability of cultural boundaries and the dynamic exchange of ideas across ethnic lines. By examining these markers, researchers can trace the transmission of social norms, material culture, and auditory experiences embedded in the texts. Finally, the study of ethnoeydems contributes to a more nuanced understanding of historical consciousness, showing how authors encoded collective memory and cultural identity within their works.

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