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Similarities and differences in English and Russian surname origins.

Every day we listen, read, pronounce and write dozens of surnames, but we do not think about their origin. It is interesting, at least, to know the history and meaning of your surname. There are surnames in every language, so we can find similarities and differences in the history of surnames in the most spoken languages, Russian and English.

The surname is the kind of anthroponym, inherited official naming which indicates the person's belonging to a particular family.

The appearance of surnames is associated with the 11th-12th centuries in the English history and the 13th century in the Russian one. At those times, society was divided into estates, so the rich were first who had surnames. And only by the 17-18th centuries each person had a surname in both countries.

There are many ways family names began. First of all, surnames appeared from nicknames: Gavrilov, Colonels. It is worth taking notice that those surnames could change during a person's life according to his/her occupation. They also described physical or other characteristics and served in the past to distinguish one man from another, and then his family from another one. "Strong", "Short" and "Long" are only a few of the many names which first came from nicknames. Those surnames are called descriptive.[3]

We can learn that surnames appeared from geographical locality: and topographic terms Rostovtsev, Moskvichev, Hill, Brook. For example, if John lived near the water, he was called "John at water" or simply "John Atwater". Another John who lived by the brook could be described as "John Brook".

Most of all surnames emerged from the names of professions and handicraft industries: Bochkarev, Kuznetsov, Miller, Taylor. Some names go back to different titles, ranks and posts, whose bearers in medieval England were engaged in direct service of the king: Stuart, Butler. A number of surnames is associated with agricultural trades: Coward, Goddart. These words are characterized by suffix -ard or -art which appeared from the word herd. [1]

As both countries have a religion, many surnames have come from the names of saints and churches: Uspensky, Churchman.

Many names appeared as a result of borrowing from other languages. Tatar word Kiryan gave rise to the Russian surname Kiryanov. Many Russian surnames have a German origin: Brooder, Wagner. The French influence is most evident in such names as Bruce, Davidson in the English language.

Surnames appeared from the names of animals, birds, insects, and reptiles: crow, beetles, wolf. Here is an example. Everyone knows the surname Zuev, but what zuy is? A kulik bird is called so in some areas. So, Zuev and Kulikov have the same meaning. The wolf in many areas is called a biryk, hence we have numerous Biryukovs. Surnames can start from the names of plants: Malinina, Kornev. Naturally, the names and nicknames used only the names of those animals and plants that could be found in the area. For example exotic names could not become the names of ordinary Russian people. Crocodiles, Camels, Ostrich can only be found in humorous stories - Lianov, Kaktusov, Bambukov.

Surnames appeared from the names of color: White, Black, Belov, Krasnov

Some surnames descended from the popular names: Robert, William. Those surnames did not change. Many English otantroponimic surnames contain a formant-son (Thompson, Johnson,), meaning "son of such and such". Many names originated from abbreviated names of parents. In the Middle Ages, the name David was often abbreviated in Dawe, hence we've got such names as Dawe and Dawson. Unchangeable surnames formed from names are rare in the Russian language.[2]

The Russian language has such surnames as Ukraintsev and Khokhlov, Belorus because of the names of peoples who has lived in a another state for a long time.

There are some differences between Russian and English surnames, for instance, several personal names with one surname in English: Herbert George Wells, George Bernard Shaw, William Somerset Maugham. In Russia there is no tradition to give a person 2 (3 or even 4) names, but there is such an unusual anthroponymic system component in English as a surname-patronymic (Edward Bulvert Lytton Dickens). In Russian there is a considerable number of formants, which form the surnames: -ov (a), -ev (a), -in (a), sometimes -sk (-skaja), -sky (-skaja) and allow to identify the surnames in the flow of speech very easily. In addition, in Russian there is an opposition of male and female surnames, which is absolutely not typical for the English language. In England you can address to a wife through her husband's personal name or surname: Mrs John Smith, Mrs William Brown, Mrs Frank Algernon Cowerwood. In Russian, only the surname of the spouse applies to the wife, but not his personal name.

In conclusion, I would say that the origin of the English and Russian surnames is a very interesting and important aspect of learning the history and culture of the country. The surname can tell about the ancestors of a person, about the place where they lived, what they did and much more.

Literature

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